



# Henry Hudson and the Dutch in New York

*The University of the State of New York  
The State Education Department  
Albany, 1964*

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By  
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*Senior Historian*

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## Foreword

NEW YORK STATE'S "YEAR OF HISTORY" is being celebrated during 1959 throughout the State in observances of various kinds. Begun in recognition of the 350th anniversary of the explorations of Samuel de Champlain and Henry Hudson in 1609, it is of particular interest to students of history in our schools. Essay contests have been held and the winners have made visits to Holland where they were entertained by the Dutch government. Crown Princess Beatrix of the Netherlands is visiting us, retracing the voyage of Hudson from New York to Albany. And the Board of Regents has taken action in suggesting certain types of participation by our schools in the statewide observance. To provide teachers with convenient information for use in their classes, the State Education Department has prepared two booklets: *Henry Hudson and the Dutch in New York*, written by Milton W. Hamilton, senior historian; and *Champlain and the French Influence in New York*, written by William G. Tyrrell, historian, of the Division of Archives and History.

The material for these booklets has been drawn from original sources and provides for illustrative use many quotations from documents which are not readily available to teachers in school libraries. While giving fuller accounts than most textbooks, they are briefer than full-scale biographies or the larger histories. Bibliographies list the principal sources, and a separate reading list has been prepared by the Department giving a variety of titles available for student readings and assignments.

Fifty years ago the celebration of the Hudson tercentenary was marked by the building of a replica of the *Half Moon*, which was sailed from Holland to New York and up the Hudson River. One of the illustrations of this booklet is a sketch of the rigging for the replica, giving an idea of the workings of that tiny sailing vessel.

In 1909 also a watercolor painting of the *Half Moon* was made by H. J. Köhler of the Netherlands, and reproductions of this painting were given to schools of the cities and villages of the Hudson River Valley. The cover of this booklet has a copy of this painting,



from the frontispiece of *Hudson-Fulton Celebration 1909* (Albany 1910).

Evidence of the Dutch influence still prevalent in the Hudson Valley is found in Fort Crailo, Rensselaer, onetime home of the Van Rensselaers, a historic site under the supervision of the State Education Department, which is open for school visits throughout the year.

Acknowledgment is made elsewhere for the courtesy of organizations and publishers in permitting the use of illustrations. Special thanks are also due to Mildred F. McChesney, supervisor of citizenship education, and Laura M. Shufelt, associate in secondary curriculum development in the State Education Department, who critically reviewed the manuscript.

ALBERT B. COREY  
*State Historian*

# Contents

	PAGE
Foreword .....	3
Introduction .....	7
The Dutch Background .....	8
Henry Hudson .....	10
Hudson's First Voyage (1607) .....	11
Hudson's Second Voyage (1608) .....	13
Hudson Engaged by the Dutch .....	15
The Voyage of the <i>Half Moon</i> —Hudson's Third Voyage (1609) .....	20
Hudson's Fourth Voyage (1610-1611) .....	34
The Dutch Follow Through .....	39
The West India Company .....	42
Settlement of Manhattan .....	44
Peter Minuit .....	46
Wouter Van Twiller .....	49
William Kieft .....	50
Peter Stuyvesant .....	51
Expulsion of the Swedes .....	53
Surrender to the English .....	55
The Dutch Colony .....	56
Dutch Survivals .....	59
Sources .....	61

# Illustrations

	PAGE
The <i>Half Moon</i> .....	Cover
From a watercolor painting by H. J. Köhler of the Netherlands. In the <i>Hudson-Fulton Celebration 1909</i> (Albany, 1910)	
St. Ethelburga's Church, London .....	12
Courtesy of Vestry of St. Ethelburga-the-Virgin	
Rigging of the <i>Half Moon</i> .....	19
Plans of <i>Half Moon</i> replica built in 1909	
<i>Fifteenth Annual Report</i> , 1910, of the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society	
First Page of Juet's Journal .....	24
From <i>Purchase: His Pilgrimes</i> (London, 1625). Courtesy of the New York Public Library	
Map of New Netherland, 1656 .....	32
Van der Donck's map. From engraving in E. B. O'Callaghan's <i>History of New Netherland</i> (New York, 1855)	
Map of Hudson's Voyages .....	37
From <i>Henry Hudson</i> , by Nina Brown Baker. Courtesy of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.	
The West India House, Amsterdam .....	43
Emmet Collection, New York Public Library	
New Amsterdam, About 1630 .....	45
Stokes Collection, New York Public Library	
Fort Crailo .....	48
Photograph by John J. Vrooman	
Peter Stuyvesant .....	52
Courtesy of the New-York Historical Society, New York City	

## Introduction

LIKE OUR MODERN SCIENTISTS who are probing the limits of outer space, the early explorers of the New World sought to extend man's reach into the vast unknown—the uncharted seas and distant lands of their day. They were not yet thinking of settling these lands. Their efforts were based on the geographical knowledge they had and upon the hopes and prospects held forth by each new discovery. Yet it was all worthwhile only if it added to man's wealth and well-being.

After the voyage of Columbus many navigators came forward with plans to sail westward, still thinking of the route to the East. The fabled wealth of the Orient and the luxury products that were obtained from the East induced rulers of states, who alone possessed enough wealth to risk on such ventures, to sponsor voyages of discovery. For a while it was not realized that Columbus had touched upon a new world; to many the coasts of America seemed like a barrier reef, which lay off the coasts of Japan and China. Not until the successes of Cortez and Pizarro did anyone realize that the New World—the West Indies—might be as valuable as the East. At the beginning of the 16th century the discoveries of Spain and Portugal had surpassed all others and so between these countries the Papal Bull of 1493 divided all that lay to the west.

Therefore, to all the daring navigators, inspired by the records of their predecessors and poring over the rude maps of their findings, the sole object must be a new route to the East—either a "northwest passage" or a northeastern route over the Arctic—which would be the greatest discovery imaginable. Only with such a prospect could they get the needed support. Like Columbus they roved from court to court, petitioning kings, queens and princes to outfit their ships. Everyone knows it was the generous support of Queen Isabella of Spain that made possible the little fleet of Columbus; and that the patronage of Prince Henry, "the Navigator," of Portugal placed his kingdom in the forefront of discovery. Other monarchs lacked their imagination, or their funds, and were too engrossed in the politics and wars of Europe to be concerned. Yet occasionally the persistence of the petitioners won a grudging sponsorship.



Italy was the source of much of the new geographical information. The intellectual stirring of the Renaissance there affected scientific knowledge as well as art. But the Italian states—though often possessing such wealth as that of the Medici in Florence, famous for their patronage of art—were unstable and engaged in turbulent wars. So their best minds often turned to rulers elsewhere. Amerigo Vespucci, a Florentine, became the pilot major of Spain; the Venetian, Giovanni Caboto (John Cabot), sailed for Henry VII of England; and Giovanni da Verrazzano, also from Florence, was sent out by the king of France.

John Cabot in 1497 touched upon the coast of Newfoundland, but the parsimonious Henry VII showed little interest in his report, granting only 10 pounds "to him who found the New Isle."

Then in 1524 Verrazzano, sailing for Francis I of France, entered what is now New York Harbor and hence is hailed as the discoverer of New York. He observed the shores of Staten Island and the mouths of the East and North Rivers. He entered the river in a small boat but an unfavorable wind forced him to return to his ship. So he went out of the harbor, past Block Island and the coast of New England. But his records leave no doubt that he had visited the harbor and was the first European to do so. We have his description of the new land submitted to his patron. But France did nothing to follow up this discovery. Francis I, the Renaissance King of France, was more interested in the wealth and art treasures of Italy so near at hand; and his successors were involved in internecine wars and intrigues. Clearly westward exploration was for someone else. In fact it was to be another century before the voyagers could persuade their governments not only to seek but also to colonize new lands. But with the beginning of the seventeenth century France, England and the Netherlands—or Dutch Republic—were ready to settle the New World.

## Dutch Background

**I**T BEATS THE DUTCH was an expression often used by our ancestors. Perhaps such a saying arose from the fact that so often the Dutch excelled in one way or another. Indeed, they brought to the New World habits of thrift, industry and stability that have characterized them to this day, even though they were at times ridiculed by writers

such as Washington Irving. Yet in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries these people were struggling for their very existence.

The Low Countries, the Netherlands, as they were called, were located at the crossroads of the maritime world. Sea traffic from all the coasts of Europe touched at the ports there or was harbored in the sheltered waters—the zees of Holland. From France, Spain and Portugal to the south—and even from the Mediterranean—and from England, the Baltic ports, Russia and Scandinavia to the north came traders, sailors, merchants, fishermen and travelers of all kinds. The herring fisheries alone provided a thriving business, especially when the Dutch learned a better way to preserve the fish. The prosperity of these hard-working people soon became the envy of their neighbors.

Commonly called the Spanish Netherlands, these territories were part of the vast empire of Emperor Charles V and then of Philip II of Spain. The latter, it will be remembered, was a fanatical defender of the Catholic faith and he was disturbed by the fact that the Netherlands became an asylum for religious dissenters. The religious wars had displaced many people from the realms of France and the Germanies, and even from England. Some were French Huguenots; others were Calvinists from Geneva; and there was also the Jews from Portugal and Spain. Like all refugees they sought not only asylum, but a means of livelihood; and in the prosperity of the Netherlands there were places for them. The Flemish weavers were famous in their day; Jews, forbidden to enter craft guilds, engaged in trade.

Had Philip II been wiser, he would have recognized the value of these rising towns and seaports with their new commerce and trade. Instead he sought to punish their religious nonconformity and so drove them to armed revolt. In the course of their struggle for freedom the Dutch consolidated their institutions, strengthened their commerce and industry and laid the basis for independence. Industrial towns and seaports, realizing their strength, found means to govern themselves; but when faced with foreign war, they banded together in a confederation, the Union of Utrecht, in 1579. This union eventually became the United Netherlands, or the Dutch Republic. In the struggle, however, they were moved to preserve their old freedoms and modes of life; they were not trying to change the world order, least of all the economic order that brought them

their wealth. They desired nothing more than to carry on commerce with all the world. In fact, it was trade and commerce that provided the means for the worldwide influence of the Dutch.

Commodities from far-off countries—Russia, the Levant and Cathay—entered the marts of the Low Countries, stimulating trade. Silks, spices, furs and paper, even gems and other rare items of great value, often brought high prices. An increase in this trade by an easier route to the East, and one less perilous, was greatly to be desired. To promote this trade, and also because these ventures required larger amounts of money, Dutch merchants began to form joint stock companies. These increased available capital for business at the same time that they reduced the risk of the adventurers. In these measures, the Dutch in fact were following the example of English traders.

Behind the expedition of Columbus had been the desire of Spain to break the Mediterranean monopoly on trade with the East. Behind the Dutch explorations was a similar ambition: to sail northeast around the Arctic North Cape or to discover a northwest passage across North America. Already a new continent to the west was recognized; but it seemed only a sort of barrier to the Orient beyond. In 1602 the Dutch East India Company was chartered (two years after the English East India Company) to carry on trade via the Cape of Good Hope. But how much better would be the direct and shorter northern route! To find such a route various navigators offered their services. One of these was the English Henry Hudson.

## Henry Hudson

LITTLE IS KNOWN about the early life and family of Henry Hudson, but from a few significant scraps of knowledge we learn that he had some real training for the role he was to enact. Another Henry Hudson, probably the grandfather of the navigator, was an alderman of London. Since the family of this Hudson was involved in the affairs of the Muscovy Company, chartered in 1555 to carry on trade with Russia, it is likely that Henry received his apprenticeship training with the ships of the company and finally advanced to command status. Such a connection would have opened vistas for the future and would have grounded the young man in the nautical lore of his

day. Later he is revealed well acquainted with the literature of geography and the maps that had been compiled by the learned scholars of Europe. He knew of the voyages of John and Sebastian Cabot, who long before had sailed westward for England. But he probably was more impressed by the recent voyages out of the North Sea, over the North Cape route toward Russia. The Dutch pilot, William Barents, had made the most recent and celebrated voyages in 1594, 1595 and 1596 to these arctic regions and added to geographical knowledge. The factories of the Muscovy Company no doubt buzzed with speculation over the northeast passage and the adventurous soul of Hudson was inspired with a lifelong ambition.

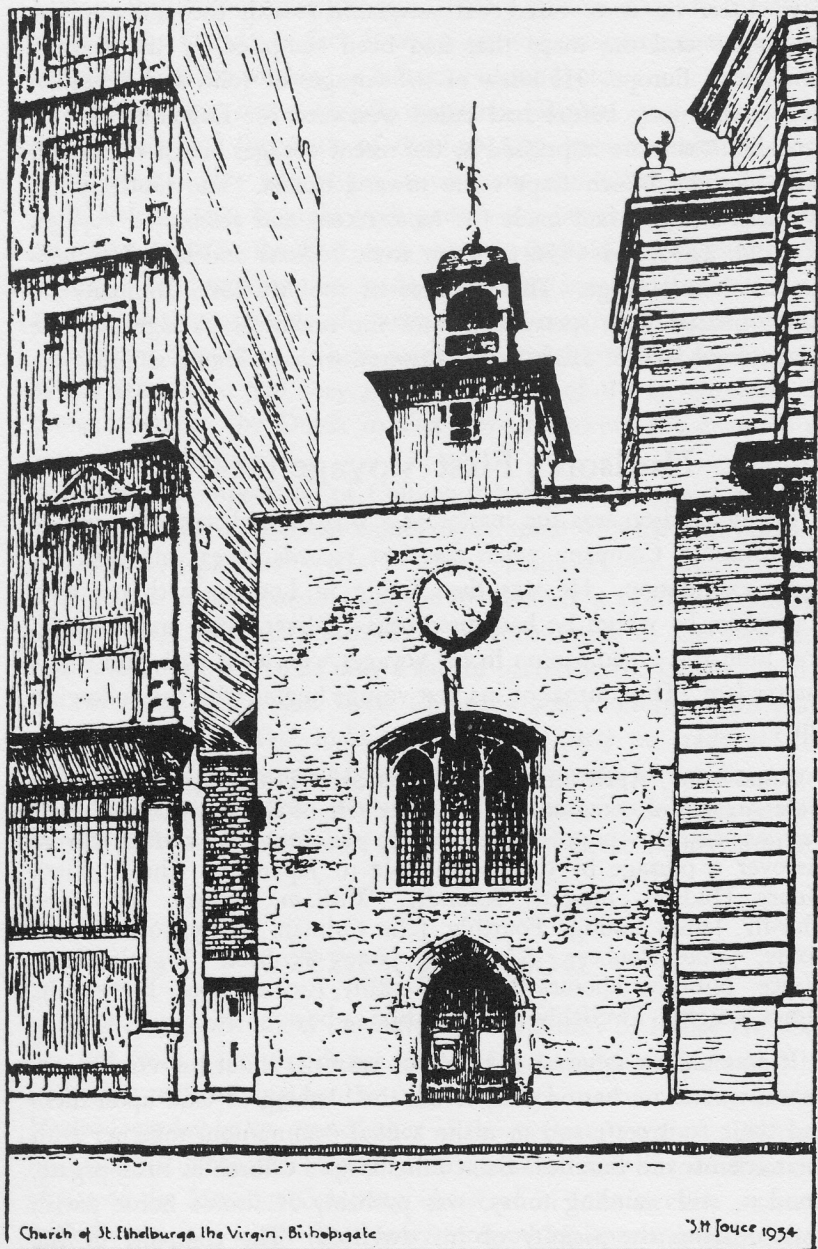
## Hudson's First Voyage (1607)

Henry Hudson was the master of a small vessel in the service of the Muscovy Company when the first records reveal his plan for arctic exploration. He was then living in London with his wife Katherine, by whom he had three sons—Oliver, John and Richard. Son John was a companion in his voyages who went with him to his martyrdom. The journal of his first voyage begins with the following entry:

Anno 1607, April the nineteenth, at Saint Ethelburge, in Bishop's Gate street, did communicate with the rest of the parishioners these persons, seamen, purposing to goe to sea foure days after, for to discover a passage by the North Pole to Japan and China. First, Henry Hudson, master. Secondly, William Colines, his mate. Thirdly, James Young. Fourthly, John Colman. Fiftly, John Cooke. Sixtly, James Beubery. Seventhly, James Skrutton. Eightly, John Pleyce. Ninthly, Thomas Baxter. Tenthly, Richard Day. Eleventhly, James Knight. Twelfthly, John Hudson, a boy.

It was not an unusual practice for seamen, about to venture into unknown and uncharted seas, to ask the blessing of God upon them and their frail craft and to make a final communion, together with their friends and families. Saint Ethelburga's Church in Bishopsgate, London, still standing today, was probably Hudson's home parish and indicates the vicinity of his dwelling. The company of the crew, 10 men, with himself and his young son, were thus bound with a religious sanction for their announced purpose. And what a thrilling declaration for all present—"purposing to goe to sea foure





Church of St. Ethelburga the Virgin, Bishopsgate

S.M. Joyce 1954

St. Ethelburga's Church, London  
*Courtesy of Vestry of St. Ethelburga-the-Virgin*

days after [i.e. April 23], *for to discover a passage by the North Pole to Japan and China.*"

Here, indeed, was an original plan. Hudson did not intend to seek a northeast route; he believed that one could sail directly through the arctic sea over the North Pole. Incredible as it seems to us, Hudson had an idea that the waters would be warmer nearer the pole because the days were longer and there was more sunlight. North to the Shetland Islands sailed the little craft; along the shore of Greenland, where Hudson mapped and named some capes and headlands; in and out of the coves and bays of the irregular shores of Spitzbergen (called Newland); Hudson believed he was above 80 degrees, though he was probably not much above 79, when his further progress was halted by an ice barrier. He had failed but he had added a great deal to geographical knowledge. He had explored much of Spitzbergen and had clarified knowledge of that area. He had proved that a direct northern route was not feasible. Moreover, he had paved the way for a new industry. He named the Bay of Whales and his reports of the number of these animals led others to begin whaling. Smeerenburg ("Blubbervtown") was established on a southern cape of Spitzbergen. In 1613 James I gave the Muscovy Company a monopoly of the business, but no one could prevent whalers from other nations coming in—the Dutch, French and Spaniards—and new uses for the oil of the whale became known.

The fame of Hudson also increased. He had sailed farther north than any other man. In fact, he held this record until 1773. Explorers now turned their attention to the northeast passage and it was for this purpose that the Muscovy Company sponsored his second voyage.

## Hudson's Second Voyage

The next year Hudson again sailed for the Muscovy Company, this time seeking the northeast passage. On Friday, April 22, 1608, he set out in a small craft with its crew of 13. Two of his crew had been on his previous voyage; one of these was John Hudson, his son, who is no longer called "a boy." One season in the Arctic and he had become a man. Of Robert Juet, the mate, we shall hear more anon, and not all of it good. On June 15 two of the crew reported seeing a mermaid and Hudson has left us this record of the observation.

This morning, one of our companie looking over boord saw a mermaid, and calling up some of the companie to see her, one more came up, and by that time shee was come close to the ship's side, looking earnestly on the men: a little after, a sea came and overturned her: from the navill upward, her backe and breasts were like a woman's, as they say that saw her; her body as big as one of us; her skin very white; and long haire hanging down behinde, of colour blacke: in her going down they saw her tayle, which was like the tayle of a porposse, and speckled like a macrell. Their names that saw her were Thomas Hilles and Robert Rayner.

Was this "mermaid" a seal, as Dr. Asher of the Hakluyt Society suggests, a hallucination or just a faulty observation? We are reminded of similar reports today—of sea serpents of Loch Ness or of flying saucers from outer space. These men were exploring unknown seas and they were on the lookout for strange phenomena. Had they not a year ago found the Bay of Whales?

The little company sailed on past Spitzbergen (Newland) and to the shores of Nova Zembla, where they found their eastward passage blocked. Unable to pass to the northward, through seas of ice, Hudson sought to enter the Kara Sea by the straits of Vaygats (Vaigach), and then go on to the fabled River Ob. By all the early charts he believed he then would reach the "North cape of Tartaria" (Cape Tabin on the Hondius map). From there he believed he would find clear sailing to Cathay and northern China. As we now know, the great northern wastes of Siberia lay beyond. Though he once reported it in the offing, Hudson never reached this northern cape.

The detailed observations of the log now become sparse; on July 27, "we began to burne candle in the betacle, which we had not done since the nineteenth of May, by reason wee had alwaies day from thence till now." The long arctic summer was ending. Worse still, as we read between the lines, the ugly head of mutiny was rising—so great a menace on later voyages—and Hudson turned back: "The seventh of August, I used all diligence to arrive at London, and therefore now *I gave my companie a certificate under my hand, of my free and willing return, without perswasion or force of any one or more of them.*" Even so he spoke of turning to the northwest, "and to make triall of that place called Lumleys Inlet, and the furious over-fall by Captain Davis [Davis Strait]." Finally, however, he concluded:

But now, having spent more then halfe the time I had, and gone but the shortest part of the way, by means of contrary winds, I thought it my duty to save victuall, wages and tackle, by my speedy returne, and not by foolish rashnesse, the time being wasted, to lay more charge upon the action then necessitie should compell, I arrived at Gravesend the sixe and twentieth of August.

## Hudson Engaged by the Dutch

If the failure of this voyage was a disappointment to Hudson and the company, it did not detract from his reputation. He became known as one of the most courageous and knowledgeable navigators of his time. His fame spread to other countries and his voyages were studied wherever geographers and scholars corrected and annotated their charts and maps. The rivalry of various kingdoms for the trade of the East, and hence for priority in the search for a passage, brought about a lively competition for his services.

Was he somewhat disgruntled with the Muscovy Company, with which he and his family had been so long identified, that he took service with a rival in another land? Or were the offers made him so attractive—certainly his contract was not very lucrative—that he could not resist? Or was there more chance under foreign sponsorship to make the trial westward, which was his secret ambition? We have no answers to these questions, but one writer has suggested that Hudson's zeal for discovery, his unaccountable drive and curiosity rose above all reasonable and pecuniary considerations, like Captain Ahab's pursuit of the Great White Whale, *Moby Dick*.

In the winter of 1608-09, the marts and courts of western Europe buzzed with reports and proposals. Willem Usselinx of the Netherlands was an advocate of an aggressive policy, challenging the Spanish control of the West Indies. He wrote several pamphlets urging his views and undoubtedly this desire to expand in the trading field in opposition to Spain was behind much of the geographical activity in the Lowlands. But the merchants generally preferred the safer policy of seeking the northeast passage, which would require less expenditure for armament.

Henry IV of France was urged by his ambassador at The Hague to take steps to enter the field; it is this French report that tells about Henry Hudson's dealings with the Dutch. The East India



Company had called Hudson to Amsterdam to report on his voyages and the prospects for a northern passage. The merchants were reluctant to engage him, however, so they paid him his expenses and told him to come back next year. This left Hudson free to offer his services to others. In the meantime he had conferred with the Dutch geographers, Peter Plancius and Jodocus Hondius. Plancius in turn had talked to a merchant named Le Maire, who offered to engage Hudson in the service of the French. Now some of the Dutch merchants became alarmed, as they saw opportunity slipping from their grasp. A group from Amsterdam resolved to back Hudson, even if the other chambers of the Netherlands would not go along. Thereupon, Hudson was recalled and eventually signed a contract with the Dutch East India Company. The French, persuaded by these negotiations, engaged another navigator, who sailed to the north that same year. Had the Dutch delayed a bit more, perhaps Henry Hudson would have sailed for the French—with what consequences we can only speculate.

On January 8, 1609, the following terms were made with Henry Hudson by the representatives of the Dutch East India Company. Jodocus Hondius, the geographer, served as witness and interpreter. It was agreed:

That the said directors shall in the first place equip a small vessel or yacht of about thirty lasts [60 tons] burden, with which, well provided with men, provisions and other necessities, the above named Hudson shall about the first of April, sail, in order to search for a passage by the North, around by the North side of Nova Zembla, and shall continue thus along that parallel until he shall be able to sail Southward to the latitude of sixty degrees. He shall obtain as much knowledge of the lands as can be done without any considerable loss of time, and if it is possible return immediately in order to make a faithful report and relation of his voyage to the Directors, and to deliver over his journals, log-books and charts, together with an account of everything whatsoever which shall happen to him during the voyage without keeping anything back; for which said voyage the Directors shall pay to the said Hudson, as well for his outfit for the said voyage, as for the support of his wife and children, the sum of eight hundred guilders; and, in case (which God prevent) he do not come back or arrive hereabouts within a year, the Directors shall further pay to his wife two hundred guilders in cash; and thereupon they shall not be further liable to him or his heirs, unless he shall either afterwards or within the year arrive and have found the passage good and suitable for the Company to use; in which case the Directors

will reward the before named Hudson for his dangers, trouble and knowledge in their discretion, with which the before-mentioned Hudson is content.

An additional clause provided that if the voyage were successful, and the company followed it up, Hudson should continue in the employ of the company and reside with his family in the Netherlands.

The financial provisions, indeed, seem far from liberal—800 guilders, or about \$336, as a total remuneration and a quarter of that sum for his wife should he fail to return. But for us the important things are the details of the voyage: a craft (*yacht*) of 60 tons, fitted out with men and supplies, with the explicit purpose of searching out the northeast passage, north of Nova Zembla; and the details of his journals, logs and his scientific information to be returned to the company. There were both the hope and expectation of a new route, fully suitable for the passage of commercial ships. And the directors also hoped that if all went well Hudson would continue to serve the company—perhaps as a kind of “pilot major.”

Somewhat later, and before he sailed, Hudson received further instructions, with this explicit prohibition:

But he was farther ordered by his instructions to think of discovering no other route or passages except the route around the north and north-east above Nova Zembla; with this additional proviso that, if it could not be accomplished at that time, another route would be the subject of consideration for another voyage.

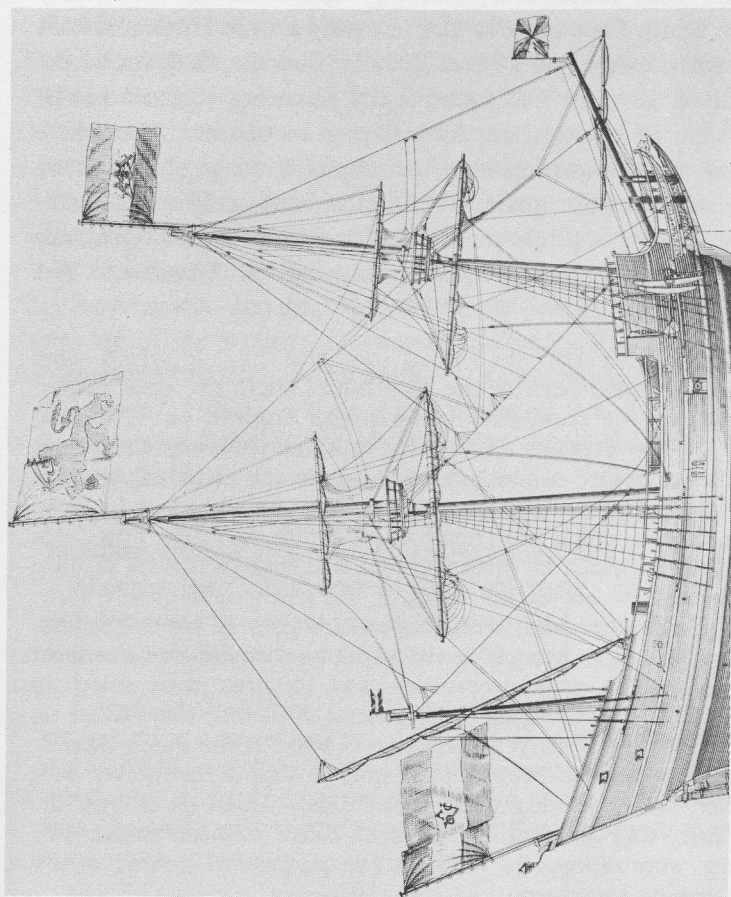
Although Hudson had failed on his first voyage to sail directly north over the pole, he still argued for the “warmer water” route that way, as shown by the letter to Henry IV; and yet the directors explicitly ruled it out. There was also some thought given to the possibility of the western route; they knew that Hudson on his second voyage had considered the “furious over-fall” (the heavy tide that rushes in and out) of Davis Strait before he turned back. If he still had thoughts of such a hazard, it should not be on this voyage. Was this overriding purpose of Hudson to go westward so evident in his negotiations as to alarm the directors? Were they suspicious of his intentions? Hondius, his second, was known for his knowledge of the northern explorations. But in the interval between January and April, Hudson studied and conferred with others. The Reverend Peter Plancius, minister of the Reformed Church and geographer, was his confidant, from whom he now

obtained the journals of Weymouth's voyage to Davis Strait in 1602. He also heard from Captain John Smith of Jamestown, Virginia, who had made voyages along the coast to the north and who had suggested that there was a passage somewhere north of Virginia. No one was ever given a more positive directive than Hudson; but he chose to disregard it. He carried with him, perhaps he was completely absorbed with, the idea that destiny pointed westward.

In the interval of several months before sailing, Hudson was busily engaged in preparing his vessel, its stores and equipment, and in recruiting his crew. He was advanced 150 guilders on account of his wages, and somewhat later 25 pounds in Flemish currency. He had a dispute with the company's boatswain over the wages to be paid the English members of his crew. Temporarily at least, he left Holland; whereupon the Zeeland chamber demanded his dismissal and the return of the 25 pounds. But the dispute was patched up, perhaps in fear of his employment by France or England, and preparations went on.

Since of this alone of Hudson's four voyages, we have no master's log, there is no list of the crew. They were less than 20 in number, some Dutch and some English, the former probably being the majority. Besides Hudson, and possibly his son John who went with him on other voyages, the names of two Englishmen are known—John Colman, mate on the voyage to Spitzbergen, and Robert Juet, whose journal is our principal source of information. Colman was killed by the savages in America.

Robert Juet of Limehouse apparently was close to Hudson and was his choice for mate on his second as well as on his fourth voyage; an unnamed Dutchman was the mate as they left Holland. Yet one writer has called Juet an "evil genius," whose influence was often used against the master. He was perhaps the source of discontent in the first stage of the voyage, which he did not report, and we know that he was a leader of the fatal mutiny on the last voyage. Knowing his dangerous character, why did Hudson continually take him along? He could write well, as his journal is evidence, and he may have had other talents sorely needed. No doubt this crew, like so many in those days, was composed of men so rough and unprincipled that the most strenuous means were needed to control them—men compared with whom this Englishman of parts was a welcome addition.



Rigging of the *Half Moon*  
*Courtesy of the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society*