

SPRING 2009

# THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY REVIEW

*A Journal of Regional Studies*

**Hudson • Fulton • Champlain  
Quadricentennial  
Commemorative Issue**



Published by the Hudson River Valley Institute



THE  
HUDSON  
RIVER  
VALLEY  
REVIEW

*A Journal of Regional Studies*

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## From the Publisher

Arguably the most important year in Hudson River Valley history since 1909, we are already in the midst of celebrations surrounding the Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial. This issue commemorates the accomplishments and legacies of all three honorees—Henry Hudson, Robert Fulton, and Samuel de Champlain—as well as the lasting contributions of the commission that planned events surrounding the 1909 Hudson-Fulton Tercentenary.

We open with a review of the 1909 festivities and follow with a brief survey of Dutch archival history from the preeminent historian and translator of New Netherland manuscripts. For the complete story on Robert Fulton, readers should reference our Autumn 2007 issue, which contained a lengthy biography of the inventor. Here its author offers a brief summary of Fulton's steamboat voyage and how it revolutionized transportation, in America and around the world. Delving into the Champlain Valley for the first time, we begin at the beginning, with an article tracing the Native American presence there from prehistory to the American Revolution. We return to Hudson with an overview written by William T. Reynolds, the captain of the replica ship *Half Moon*, and an excerpt of Robert Juet's journal of the voyage. Joyce Goodfriend illustrates both the power of the Dutch cultural legacy and the tensions caused by the British control after 1664. Lastly, André Senecal explains Champlain and the circumstances that led to his actions in 1609. We conclude with two more articles exploring the signal contributions Hudson and Champlain made to local and world history.

Our Regional History Forums focus on the Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial Commission, which has organized the yearlong celebration, and Walkway Over the Hudson State Park, perhaps the greatest legacy of the 400<sup>th</sup> celebration. Finally, we close with one author's musings over the lasting mysteries surrounding Hudson's 1609 journey. As Executive Director Tara Sullivan and Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites Superintendent Sarah Olson note in their foreword, there are a plethora of once-in-a-lifetime events taking place throughout the state this year. We encourage you to take advantage of them.

*Thomas S. Wermuth*



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## Call for Essays

*The Hudson River Valley Review* is anxious to consider essays on all aspects of the Hudson Valley—its intellectual, political, economic, social, and cultural history, its prehistory, architecture, literature, art, and music—as well as essays on the ideas and ideologies of regionalism itself. All articles in *The Hudson River Valley Review* undergo peer analysis.

## Submission of Essays and Other Materials

HRVR prefers that essays and other written materials be submitted as two double-spaced typescripts, generally no more than thirty pages long with endnotes, along with a computer disk with a clear indication of the operating system, the name and version of the word-processing program, and the names of documents on the disk. Illustrations or photographs that are germane to the writing should accompany the hard copy. Otherwise, the submission of visual materials should be cleared with the editors beforehand. Illustrations and photographs are the responsibility of the authors. No materials will be returned unless a stamped, self-addressed envelope is provided. No responsibility is assumed for their loss. An e-mail address should be included whenever possible.

HRVR will accept materials submitted as an e-mail attachment (*hrvi@marist.edu*) once they have been announced and cleared beforehand.

Since HRVR is interdisciplinary in its approach to the region and to regionalism, it will honor the forms of citation appropriate to a particular discipline, provided these are applied consistently and supply full information. Endnotes rather than footnotes are preferred. In matters of style and form, HRVR follows *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

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**Charles Gehring**, Director of the New Netherland Project in Albany, has spent thirty years translating seventeenth-century documents from the Dutch colonial period. He has translated and written numerous guides to historic manuscript collections, and articles on the Dutch and Native Americans in New Netherland. He received gold medals from the Saint Nicholas and Holland Societies of New York as well as the New Netherlands Society of Philadelphia.

**Cynthia Owen Philip**, an independent historian, has written extensively on the Hudson River Valley. She is the author of *Robert Fulton: A Biography* and the prize winning *Wilderstein and the Suckleys: A Hudson River Legacy*. Her articles and essays have appeared in national and local magazines, and her history *Rhinecliff, N.Y., 1686-2007* was published this year by Block Dome Press.

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**On the Cover:** Hudson-Fulton Tercentenary Postcard. Courtesy of Hudson River Valley Heritage, HRVH.org, from the collection of Vivian Yess Wadlin

# Introduction to the Quadricentennial Commemorative Edition

This is a momentous year in New York State and especially the Hudson River Valley. We are commemorating the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the simultaneous explorations of Henry Hudson and Samuel de Champlain on the waterways that now bear their names, as well as the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Robert Fulton's successful maiden steamboat voyage on the Hudson River. At the same time, we are celebrating the cultures that colonized this land—Native American, Dutch, and French—as well as the legacy of New York's Hudson-Fulton Tercentenary in 1909.

One important focus of the celebration 100 years ago was the protection of open space, including parkland in New York City, Bear Mountain, and, perhaps most important, the Palisades. In addition to its environmental legacy, the Tercentenary was marked by bridge and roadway improvements, parkways that facilitated transportation and recreation, and a strong cultural-preservation movement. We continue to benefit from all of these.

The completion of three Quadricentennial Legacy Projects will build upon the tremendous work accomplished by organizers a century ago. The Crown Point Lighthouse on Lake Champlain, dedicated in 1912 to commemorate Champlain's exploration, has been completely restored and relighted. In October, Walkway Over the Hudson will open, completing the stunning transformation of the historic Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge into our newest state park—and the world's longest pedestrian walkway. In New York City, a new public promenade surrounding Governor's Island will provide thrilling views of Manhattan and New York Harbor.

Planning and implementing the Quadricentennial celebration has been a collaborative venture. Nowhere is this better illustrated than Walkway Over the Hudson, which began with a grassroots movement and has involved legislators on the federal, state, and local levels; state agencies (including the Bridge Authority; the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation; and the Department of Environmental Conservation); the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area; the Governor's Office; and nonprofit organizations such as the Dyson Foundation and Scenic Hudson. Working together, each individual, agency, and organization has built upon their own mission to achieve something far greater than they could have accomplished alone. This and other efforts throughout the region have served to strengthen communication and cooperation—another important legacy of this celebration that we hope will benefit the region for generations.

Myriad communities, national and state parks, historic sites, and museums from Manhattan to the Adirondacks have planned exciting and educational events throughout the year. Festivities officially kicked off at the Knickerbocker Ice Festival at Rockland Lake in February and will continue throughout the year with parades, expos, demonstrations, concerts, lectures, exhibitions, and conferences. A complete listing of over 1,000 Quadricentennial events is available at [www.exploreny400.com](http://www.exploreny400.com); [www.hudson400.com](http://www.hudson400.com); and [www.Dutchess400.com](http://www.Dutchess400.com).

We invite you to learn what the hoopla is all about by reading this commemorative issue of *The Hudson River Valley Review*.

Tara Sullivan  
Sarah Olson

## Regional History Forum

*Each issue of The Hudson River Valley Review includes the Regional History Forum. This section highlights historic sites in the Valley, exploring their historical significance as well as information for visitors today. Although due attention is paid to sites of national visibility, HRVR also highlights sites of regional significance. Please write us with suggestions for future Forum sections.*

# The Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial Commission

*Lindsay Moreau*

2009 is a year for much celebration. It marks the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Henry Hudson's travel up the river bearing his name and Samuel de Champlain's discovery of the lake he named after himself, as well as the celebration of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the maiden voyage of Robert Fulton's steamboat. Because of the importance of the celebration and its historical significance, the 334<sup>th</sup> section of the federal Consolidated Natural Resources Act of 2008 officially formed the Champlain and Hudson-Fulton commissions, and sanctioned them with the authority to create and execute an extensive educational and celebratory nationwide event.

The Hudson-Fulton Commission is comprised of fifteen members, and the Champlain Commission ten. In order to create knowledgeable and hard-working groups, the majority of commission members come from state-sanctioned Quadracentennial commissions or the National Park Service. Each commission was awarded \$500,000 a year from 2008 through 2011 to fulfill its fiscal needs. Their purposes are defined to include the preparation and implementation of a national observance by working alongside the state commissions from New York, New Jersey, and Vermont. Encouraging civic, patriotic, historical, educational, artistic, religious, and economic organizations to participate in the Quadricentennial commemoration is another duty of both commissions. Furthermore, each commission was charged to aptly recognize the diversity and development of the Hudson River and Lake Champlain valleys and the growth that has occurred in these regions throughout the past 400 years.<sup>1</sup>

Creating and coordinating the commemoration celebration is the primary duty of both commissions, but the legislation also requires specific work to be

done for the environment in the Champlain and Hudson River valleys. The Champlain Commission works with the Lake Champlain Basin Program, funding initiatives that benefit the water quality, fisheries, wetlands, wildlife, recreation, and cultural resources of the Lake Champlain watershed area.<sup>2</sup> The Hudson-Fulton Commission must coordinate with the American Heritage Rivers Initiative Interagency Committee. The initiative's objectives include historic and cultural preservation, economic revitalization, and natural-resource and environmental protection.<sup>3</sup>

By 1608, the Dutch East India Company, which had a monopoly on trade with the Orient, was anxious to find a northerly water route to Asia.<sup>4</sup> They hired Henry Hudson to lead the expedition and he set sail on the *Half Moon* in April 1609. Hudson first encountered the shores of Novoya Zambla before heading south along the coast of North America.<sup>5</sup> He sailed into Delaware Bay, hoping it would provide a passage to Asia, but was unsuccessful in navigating through the shallow current. Continuing north along the coast, he entered the river near present-day Manhattan on September 2. Instead of finding a shortcut to the Orient, he discovered a valley filled with natural resources, a river teeming with fish, and Native Americans who were both friendly and hostile.<sup>6</sup> Just north of present-day Albany, the water became too shallow to proceed, and Hudson turned around. Both he and the Dutch East India Company were disappointed in the failure of finding a quicker route to Asian markets; however the company saw the potential commercial benefits of the area Hudson had explored, and the Dutch soon established profitable trading centers there.

While Hudson was exploring the Hudson River Valley, French explorer Samuel De Champlain was already making his way through the interior of North America as requested by France's King Henry the IV. Founding a settlement at Québec City in 1608, Champlain used his expertise in cartography to draw up detailed maps of the area and his diplomatic skills to maintain good relations with local Native Americans. Desiring a commercial treaty with the northern Indians—the Montagnais, Algonquins, Hurons, Nipissings, and Ojibways<sup>7</sup>—he agreed to fight alongside the tribes at the battle on the shores of what he called Lake Champlain in July 1609. The battle was one of many that occurred over the next 150 years, and eventually led the French to leave the area.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, Champlain's discoveries, maps, and alliances led him to be exalted for his finding of the beautiful and resource-full Champlain Valley, and known as the Father of New France.

Almost two hundred years later, Robert Fulton approached the Hudson River in a new way. A Pennsylvania native, Fulton studied engineering, mathematics,

and chemistry in England and France.<sup>9</sup> He partnered with Robert R. Livingston to create a practical steamboat for commercial use. Livingston provided monetary and political assistance while Fulton used his engineering expertise to design and construct the boat. Fulton saw the importance of rivers in the opening up of the Midwest, while Livingston saw the opportunity to gain control of commercial navigation along the Hudson. The New York State Legislature had granted Livingston exclusive privileges of steam navigation on the Hudson if the boat was able to operate at a speed of at least four miles per hour. Fulton's craft, originally named the *North River* (and much later changed to the *Clermont*, after Livingston's Columbia County estate), fulfilled this obligation, giving him and Livingston control of travel and trade on the Hudson for two decades.<sup>10</sup> On August 17, 1807, the *North River* left New York and arrived at Albany within twenty-four hours. Fulton's steamboat revolutionized commercial trading and leisure travel along rivers throughout America.

In 1909, New York State hosted an extensive celebration of both Hudson and Fulton. The 1909 Hudson-Fulton Celebration Commission spent several years planning and coordinating the event; first and foremost, their purpose was to make the commemoration an educational exercise without commercializing it.<sup>11</sup> All events were free of charge and commercial advertising was not permitted. The commission also strived to make New York's great history known to all by fostering a deeper knowledge of the state's historical significance among America's people and by binding New Yorkers together on the basis of state pride and loyalty. Because the responsibility for much of the discovery and development of the United States rested upon pioneers from other nations, the commission also set out to promote international friendship. Every nation with which the United States had diplomatic relations was invited to attend the commemoration via ship or navy vessel.<sup>12</sup> Senator Elihu Root explained the importance of an international presence:

We are not celebrating ourselves. We are not celebrating the greatness and wealth of our city... We celebrate in Hudson the great race of men who made the age of discovery... We celebrate in Fulton the great race of men whose inventive genius has laid the foundation for a broader, nobler and more permanent civilization the world over... Standing at the gateway of the New World, we celebrate the immense significance of America to all mankind... You who have come to us from abroad, from what-soever country you come, find here the children of your own fatherland. In all that you find here that is worthy of admiration and commendation, you find in part the work of your own brothers . . . This is your celebration as well as ours.<sup>13</sup>

Between September 25 and October 11, 1909, the celebration traveled 200 miles along the Hudson River from Staten Island to Troy and Cohoes.<sup>14</sup> Replicas of Hudson's *Half Moon* and Fulton's steamboat were built and sailed up the river, just as the originals had centuries before. Stops were made at several cities along the route, where the communities gathered to host parades, speeches, and parties. The commemoration was a success: commerce increased significantly throughout the Hudson Valley, international relations flourished, and the people cherished the celebration of their history and culture.

To make this year's celebration as legendary as 1909's, New York Governor George Pataki created a Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial Commission (HFCQ) in 2002. The commission's mission is not only to commemorate Hudson, Fulton, and Champlain, but to engage civic, cultural, educational, environmental, and heritage organizations to participate in the Quadricentennial. This participation will lead to creation of a solid infrastructure that future generations can utilize. Lastly, the commission was charged to focus attention on New York's history, culture, and natural resources at the local, state, national, and international levels.

Tara Sullivan was named executive director of the HFCQ in February 2008. Formerly Governor Eliot Spitzer's regional representative for the Hudson River Valley and director of Community Relations and Internal Affairs at Bard College, she has a strong past in community involvement and event organization, as well as extensive knowledge of the region. The commission's chairwoman, Joan K. Davidson, has served as chair of the New York State Council on the Arts and commissioner of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The remaining eighteen commission members represent state agencies and counties within the Hudson Valley and Lake Champlain region.

Thrust into her position with little time to spare, Sullivan re-evaluated the commemoration to include more of New York's history since 1609 and focus the event on the environment, economy, education, and energy.<sup>15</sup> Instead of simply celebrating the accomplishments of three men, Sullivan employs the theme "Explore New York's 400 years of progress," which highlights the achievements of Hudson, Fulton, and Champlain as a catalyst for New York's subsequent advancement. This allows the entire state to participate in the celebration.

Sustaining New York's historic, cultural, and geographical attributes is another theme of the Quadricentennial. Vincent Tamagna is a leader in maintaining the quality of the Hudson River and the historic towns and parks alongside it. Tamagna was named the Hudson River Navigator in September 2003, after spending several years working with the American Heritage Rivers Alliance

and serving as a Putnam County legislator. He works to preserve the economic and environmental benefits of the Hudson River and its surrounding valley. His Quadricentennial contributions include advocating for Putnam County's Preserve America grant (which was received in time to coincide with the 400<sup>th</sup> celebration); working on the Hudson River Valley Lighthouse Trail; and striving to protect, preserve, and revitalize riverside communities.<sup>16</sup>

The HFCQ Commission and its partners have created numerous events and programs to accomplish their mission and vision. The commission believes in the importance of curriculum that incorporates more New York State history in schools throughout the state. Comprehensive lesson plans and activities that focus on the Quadricentennial have been prepared and distributed statewide. Several schools throughout the Hudson and Champlain valleys have been authorized as Quadricentennial Schools and have agreed to integrate Quadricentennial materials into their classroom activities.<sup>17</sup> The 2009 statewide summer reading list will expand to incorporate Quadricentennial themes.

The commission also envisioned celebrating the multiculturalism of New York. An emphasis on Dutch and French culture will celebrate Hudson's benefactors and Champlain's native country. The commission is also encouraging recognition of local Native American history. The commemoration embodies the idea that New York has progressed as a result of the entrepreneurial minds of the Native Americans who already lived here and the foreigners who eventually made their homes here. Events include an exhibition of Dutch culture in Westchester, a Dutch walking tour of New York City, concerts of French music in Saranac, a conference and exhibit on the Native Americans of Esopus, and a visit from Crown Prince Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands.<sup>18</sup>

Creating more opportunities for tourism is another vision for the Quadricentennial.<sup>19</sup> By renovating historic sites and towns, and working on the preservation of the river and waterfront parks, Lake Champlain, and New York Harbor, the commission (with the help of Tamagna) hopes to attract local, national, and international tourists long after the Quadricentennial celebrations are over. The Crown Point Lighthouse on the shore of Lake Champlain is being completely restored, while Manhattan's Battery, on New York Harbor, will be renovated into a park with a new pavilion donated by the Dutch.<sup>20</sup> There are events throughout the year that promote outdoor recreation and appreciation of the natural environment. A kayaking trip from Lake Champlain to New York Harbor, hikes through various parks along the river, and walking tours of the region's historic communities are scheduled.<sup>21</sup>

The Quadricentennial commemoration is a year-long celebration with events

that will suit people of all ages and interests. But behind all the festivities, the reason for celebrating should not be forgotten. Between Henry Hudson, Robert Fulton, and Samuel de Champlain, New York was navigated, explored, mapped out, and revolutionized to become a center of commerce. New York State is much obliged to these great men. Participation in the Quadricentennial celebration will bring about a wealth of state pride, loyalty towards its people, and knowledge of its history—all of which can only result in greater entrepreneurship and future accomplishment. As the HFCQ Commission explains, the Quadricentennial commemoration is not only about honoring the past, but celebrating the present and paving the way for a successful future.

For more information on the Quadricentennial visit the following Web sites:

[www.exploreny400.com](http://www.exploreny400.com)

[www.hudson400.com](http://www.hudson400.com)

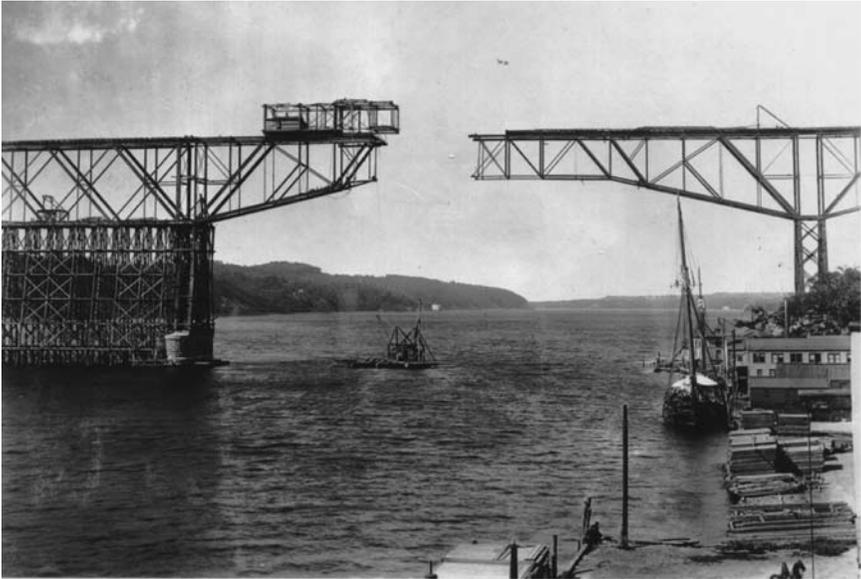
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[www.hudsonrivervalley.org](http://www.hudsonrivervalley.org)

## Endnotes

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Lowering the last portion into place on a cantilevered span

# Walkway Over the Hudson

*Elizabeth Vielkind*

Finished in 1888, the Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge was a vital link in connecting the coal fields of Pennsylvania with industries in New England. At the time of its construction, it was considered the longest steel span in the world and an engineering marvel. It also was the first bridge built across the Hudson River south of Albany.

The bridge's importance lessened in the twentieth century, due in part to a decline in manufacturing in the Northeast, the construction of the interstate highway system, and increased costs to maintain the span. New bridges and tunnels across the Hudson and East Rivers also contributed to its downfall. Following the absorption of the New Haven Railroad by Penn Central Railroad in 1968, traffic over the Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge dropped even further because of Penn Central's policy of abandoning less profitable routes. By the spring of 1974, "only one train crossed the bridge daily, round trip, and it was 'poorly patronized'" (Mabee 244).

After taking control of the Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge in 1969, Penn Central halted inspections of the span and reduced the amount of maintenance and repairs it undertook on it (Mabee, 244). During the winter of 1973 to 1974, the steel pipeline used to feed fire hydrants on the bridge was not drained. When it froze and burst in cold weather, it was not repaired. To lessen their financial morass, Penn Central also eliminated the watchmen who walked across the bridge around the clock and let go of the bridge maintenance crew. Protests were initiated by the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, who stated that “Penn Central was disregarding its responsibility both to its employees and to the public” (Mabee, 245). This neglect would prove nearly fatal for the bridge.

On May 8, 1974, at 12:42 pm, a freight train—the only regular eastbound train that day—crossed over the Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge. A spark from it presumably caused the fire that would effectively end the span’s use by the railroad. According to Fire Captain Thomas Ringwood, it “may not have been the biggest fire we’ve ever had in the city, but it was the most difficult.” The fire was not detected right away because of the lack of watchmen. When firemen arrived, all they could see “was a cloud of black smoke that hung over the Poughkeepsie end of the bridge. On the bridge deck, wooden railroad ties were smoldering, and next to them, wooden walkways were burning, fanned by a moderate breeze” (Mabee, 246).

The immediate issue the firemen faced was the need to get water to the top, no easy feat because of the height of the bridge and the failure to replace the burst pipes (Mabee, 246). The fire destroyed 700 feet of track. Immediately after the blaze, Penn Central officials estimated it would take four to six months to repair the span. According to Joseph Harvey, a railroad spokesman, “we have no plans at this time to close down the bridge... freight service will be continued after repairs are made.”



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Historic images of the bridge, c. 1900



View north from the bridge c. 2000

These repairs were never made. Penn Central and later Conrail (who took over ownership of the bridge in 1976) kept the bridge closed and did not maintain it. “Spikes and chunks of charred wood occasionally fell from it, some of them close enough to Poughkeepsie houses to alarm residents” (Mabee, 254). In 1984, in an effort to eliminate its liability, Conrail disposed of the bridge and approximately ten miles of right-of-way for one dollar.

Disputes over ownership, liability, and access continued for more than ten years. Different organizations and individuals came up with a variety of ideas for the future of the Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge, ranging from demolition to redevelopment as a commercial property with housing. In 1991, the Coast Guard called for the bridge to be demolished as a hazard because its navigation lights were out and no one was maintaining the structure.

In the 1890s and again in the 1920s, the public had unsuccessfully campaigned to open the Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge to pedestrian traffic. The concept eventually reemerged in the 1990s, when a handful of citizens began yet another campaign to preserve the bridge by adapting it for use as a public walkway (Mabee, 267), a “walkway across the Hudson.”

The dreams of creating a pedestrian walkway came a step closer to reality in June 1998 when ownership of the bridge was transferred to Walkway Over the Hudson, a non-profit organization “committed to developing a group of dedicated



Walkway volunteers leading a tour of the bridge

supporters and volunteers who will fight for the creation of a walkway, who will support the bridge financially, and help develop the vision of Walkway Over the Hudson.”

Walkway Over the Hudson completed two in-depth studies demonstrating the long-term viability of the non-profit’s plan to transform the bridge into a lofty pedestrian park spanning the Hudson River. “These two studies—one reviewing the bridge’s structural soundness and the other analyzing its potential impact as an economic development initiative—demonstrate conclusively that the dream of restoring the historic Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge can be realized and will ultimately prove to be a tremendous economic benefit to the entire region,” said Walkway’s Chairman Fred Schaeffer.

Former Governor Eliot Spitzer committed state funds to “transform the long-dormant Hudson River crossing into an awe-inspiring historic park.” In his 2008 State of the State Address, Governor Spitzer committed “state dollars to develop the bridge into a walkway and bikeway park with breathtaking views of the Hudson.” When the bridge was built in 1888, it was the longest bridge in the world, “an engineering marvel,” Governor Spitzer said. However, “for the last three decades the bridge has sat empty and unused. As a pedestrian walkway



Artist's depiction of the finished walkway

over the Hudson, it will allow New Yorkers to connect to the history and natural beauty of our state and draw them to Poughkeepsie, Kingston and surrounding communities.”

The Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge will be dedicated as New York State’s newest park on October 3, 2009, as part of the Quadricentennial commemoration of Henry Hudson’s exploration of the river now bearing his name. In addition to funding from the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, generous support has been provided by the Dyson Foundation, Scenic Hudson, and many other organizations and individual donors.

Soon the Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge will regain the distinction it earned when it opened 120 years ago, standing 212 feet above the water and spanning 6,767 feet across the Hudson River, Walkway Over the Hudson will be the longest pedestrian span in the world.

*To learn more about the history of the Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge, visit Walkway Over the Hudson’s Web site [www.walkway.org](http://www.walkway.org), and read Carleton Mabee’s Bridging The Hudson: The Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge and Its Connecting Lines A Many-Faceted History, published by Purple Mountain Press.*

# The Twin Mysteries of Henry Hudson—His 1609 Voyage

*Charlie Stark*

## Introduction

On September 2, 1609, the Dutch ship *Half Moon* sailed into what is now New York Harbor and anchored near Staten Island. For the next five weeks, the Englishman Henry Hudson and his crew of sixteen men explored the river that now bears his name. They traveled approximately 150 miles northward making contact with Native Americans and recording the observations that would eventually lead to the colonization of New Netherland. Then they returned to Europe, stopping first in England and continuing on to the Netherlands. End of story? Not quite, for two aspects of this voyage have puzzled historians and others for centuries.

The first mystery is why the *Half Moon* was in North American waters. The orders given to Hudson by his employer, the Dutch East India Company, were quite explicit: find a route to the Dutch East Indies (present day Indonesia) by sailing northeast past the northern tip of the Scandinavian peninsula, sail along the northern coast of Russia, and eventually enter the North Pacific Ocean via the Bering Strait.

The second puzzlement is that Hudson departed from Amsterdam and was expected by his sponsors to return directly there. In fact, part of his contract stipulated that Hudson's family actually move to Holland and remain there until his return. Why did he stop in England first?

## The Age of Discovery

Before exploring the rationale for Hudson's actions, a quick review of certain aspects of early seventeenth-century geopolitics is in order. Since the days of Portugal's Prince Henry the Navigator, the Portuguese had a virtual monopoly on the southern trade routes linking the Far East with Europe. It was this trade that brought tropical goods, especially spices, silks, and cotton to European markets through Portuguese ports. The newly independent Dutch, seeking to avoid

conflict with the Portuguese, decided to investigate the northeastern route to the Orient. The year 1609 also marked two important events: first, it was the year that the Bank of Amsterdam was established, an important part of the system of commerce then developing. This year also marked the beginnings of a twelve-year truce between Holland and Spain, thus freeing the smaller nation to concentrate on trade and exploration. In addition, in response to French explorations of North America, especially by Cartier and Samuel de Champlain, traders and men of commerce in England were also interested in alternate routes to the Orient. Indeed, John Cabot was sent to explore the North Atlantic shortly after the news of Columbus' discoveries. Cabot was interested in the mythical Northwest Passage to the Orient. Although he was unsuccessful in finding such a route, it was suspected that traveling north or northeast past the northern tip of Norway might be ice-free for at least two or three summer months. Finally, it should be noted that this era was in the middle of what was known in the northern hemisphere as the Little Ice Age, a time when cold winters caused the canals of Holland to freeze for months at a time. (Remember Hans Brinker and his silver skates?) It is evident that this period of the mid-sixteenth century appealed to the adventurous spirit of those looking to the New World to satisfy their ambition. And Hudson was definitely one of these ambitious and courageous men.

## Hudson's Qualifications



This portrait in  
New York's City  
Hall may  
be Hudson

Almost nothing is known regarding Hudson's education. He must have known how to read and write, analyze charts, and perform accurate readings of celestial navigation. His expertise in ship-handling in foul weather and unknown waters, and his leadership as a ship's captain, are evidenced by the four voyages of exploration that he undertook. Hudson is known to have had direct contact with the foremost cartographers of his day<sup>1</sup> as well as corresponding with John Smith, the leader of the Virginia Company's colony at Jamestown.<sup>2</sup>

There is little known about how Hudson was able to secure the position as Captain of his first two voyages to the northeast; only conjecture provides any insight. Although no record of previous leadership has emerged, he was a seafaring man in his mid- to late-thirties; no one would have been named to lead such a perilous journey without either prior experience of command at sea or the influence of men of high standing in the circles of commerce or government. There is some evidence that Hudson's older brother was at the Muscovy Company, which had been established in London in 1553. One co-founder of the Muscovy

Company was Sebastian Cabot, the son of John Cabot, the explorer. Interestingly, another co-founder was one Henry Heardson. As the spellings of names were not exact at this time, it is possible that one of Heardson's eight sons might have been Henry Hudson's father.

From documents of the time, it is clear that Hudson was the captain of four voyages of discovery, two of which were prior to the voyage of 1609 and the last in 1610. His first two voyages on behalf of the English were unsuccessful, in that his ship was unable to penetrate the Arctic ice, or proceed further than the twin islands of Novaya Zemlya, in the Arctic Ocean north of Russia. Even though both voyages found his ship in these waters in mid-June, sea ice as well as ice in the riggings prevented further progress. The Muscovy Company, a private stock company looking for a route to the East, had sent Hudson on these trips. But after the second unsuccessful voyage, which may have included a mutiny by the ship's crew in late 1608, Hudson found himself ashore with no immediate prospects for a ship or voyage.

## The *Half Moon*

Early seventeenth-century ships the Dutch used for ocean trade were built with a hold designed to carry approximately thirty to 100 tons of cargo and supplies, much of which was food and water for the crew. In size, a ship like the one Hudson used on his third voyage would not have been much larger than four inter-city buses parked two abreast. It would have had three masts and been capable of no more than ten knots of speed in optimum conditions. A minimum safe depth of water for such a vessel would have been two fathoms (approximately twelve feet). A typical crew would have been fifteen to twenty men. These ships did have a high stern and considerable freeboard along each side which made for safer sailing, even in stormy weather. And as demonstrated by the survivors of Hudson's fourth voyage, a crew of six or seven sailors would have been able to keep her afloat. After this voyage, little is known of the *Half Moon*, except that five years later it ran aground and sank off the island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean, suggesting it was used for trade with the Orient.

## The Dutch Connection

Seeing no likelihood of a third posting as a ship's captain in England, Hudson began to look to the Continent, specifically France, and then Holland for more opportunity. France was an early entry into the utilization of the resources of the New World, as evidenced by the explorations of Jacques Cartier in the first half of the sixteenth century. Hudson was able to use James LeMaire,<sup>3</sup> a Dutch naviga-



tor living in France, as his agent to secure another voyage. And through Hudson's acquaintance with Flemish mapmaker Jodocus Hondius,<sup>4</sup> discussions with the Dutch had begun. These discussions were the first to bear fruit. With Hondius acting as interpreter, the contract for the *Half Moon's* exploration via the northeast route to the Orient was signed in Amsterdam with two representatives of the Dutch East India Company on January 8, 1609.

The contract stated that Hudson would be provided with a vessel of about thirty tons (rather small for a voyage to the Arctic region) to depart on or about April 1, proceeding north and then *east* past Novaya Zemlya until he was able to sail south to about latitude sixty degrees. This location would have demonstrated that Hudson had entered the Pacific Ocean. Upon returning directly, he was to report to the Dutch East India Company's director, and furnish all *journals, logs, and charts*.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the contract stated that neither Hudson nor his crew was to enter into any other arrangement or employment agreement, and the captain's wife and children were to remain as virtual hostages in Holland until his return. Hudson began to equip his ship for the voyage.

## Juet's Journal

Robert Juet was an English sailor of considerable skill and experience. In addition to his seamanship, he could write. He kept the only firsthand and complete account of the 1609 voyage that has survived.<sup>6</sup> He had accompanied Hudson on the 1608 voyage, which was unable to pass further than Novaya Zemlya.

Juet's journal is a daily account of all manner of navigational, ship-handling, and other events, including position statements from which we are able to approximate the location of the ship at any time.<sup>7</sup> Included in it are items such as sightings of quantities of fish and marine mammals, storms and fogs, birds (which indicate the ship's proximity to land), as well as notations regarding the injury or death of crew members, sightings of land, etc. Because most of Hudson's papers have not survived, Juet's journal gives the most complete picture of the voyage.

## The Voyage

On March 25, 1609, Hudson and his crew of sixteen sailed the *Half Moon* away from Amsterdam into the North Sea. For almost the next two months, the ship sailed further north and east, only to encounter cold, ice, and storms. Quarrels and fighting broke out among the crew, and perhaps a mutiny ensued. The mixed crew of English and Dutch may have had different expectations regarding the voyage. The Dutch were experienced in warmer-weather sailing; the English, especially those who had accompanied Hudson on the previous voyages, may have been more accustomed to the cold. In any event, by May 19, the ship seems to have progressed as far east as ice would permit. Juet's log conveniently skips most of the first part of the voyage with the notation "because it is a journey usually known,"<sup>8</sup> and so, if a mutiny was instrumental in Hudson changing course to the west, it cannot be confirmed. What is confirmed by Thomas Janvier's work in the nineteenth century is that Hudson sought out Emanuel Van Meteren, the former Dutch consul in London, upon his return to England following the voyage to show him the charts and logs.<sup>9</sup> Relying on information from Van Meteren, Janvier's work states that upon encountering pack ice, Hudson presented two choices to his crew: either go to North America to explore an area north of Virginia, or proceed due west to explore the Davis Strait, the entrance to Hudson's Bay. The crew agreed to the latter proposal, and after a watering stop in the Faeroe Islands, proceeded westward. At this point, it is important to note that if the above is true, namely that Hudson would allow the crew to set the sailing direction, he must either have lost control of the crew (as in a mutiny), or he had intended all along to ignore the Dutch East India Company's directions.

## Into North American Waters

With the decision made to sail toward Davis Strait, the ship sailed slowly westward, losing its foremast in a storm on June 15. Gradually moving southwestward, the first landfall was Sable Island, off the coast of Nova Scotia. By mid-July, the ship was off the coast of central Maine, where Hudson took the opportunity to get freshwater, lobsters and fish from the local waters. By August 24, the ship, having skirted Cape Cod, was in the vicinity of Cape Hatteras. Interestingly, although Hudson was aware of his proximity to Jamestown and his friend John Smith, he made no attempt to enter the Chesapeake area. Four days later, Hudson entered Delaware Bay, but soon found the river too shallow to be a possible northwest passage to the Orient. On September 2, the *Half Moon* passed Sandy Hook on its port side and entered lower New York Harbor.

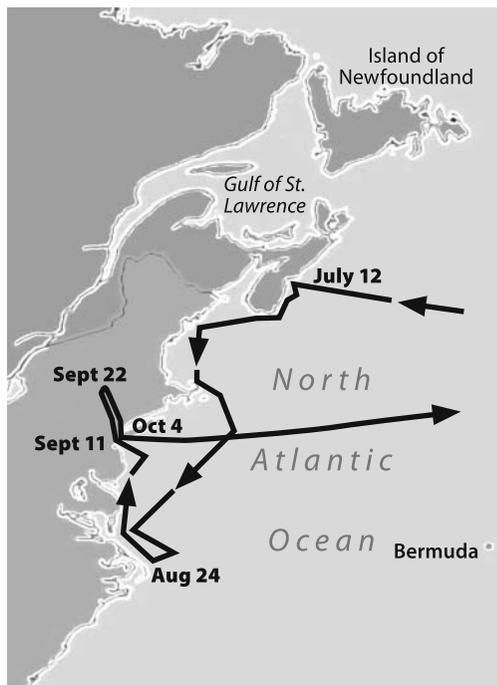
## Exploring the River

The *Half Moon* was to spend almost five weeks in the river. On the second day in the harbor, three rivers were sighted (possibly the East River, the Hudson, and a body of water separating Staten Island from Bayonne, New Jersey, which is still called the Kill Van Kull). The latter river was determined to be too shallow to explore, and Hudson used these first few days to send a small ship's boat to take soundings to determine the depth of the waterways. On one of these trips on September 6, the Europeans were attacked by hostile natives and one crew member, John Colman, was

struck in the throat with an arrow and killed. The men had to spend a stormy night in the bay; the next morning they were able to return to the ship. Later, Hudson led another party ashore, and John Colman was buried on a point of land, probably in Brooklyn.<sup>10</sup>

By September 14, the *Half Moon* had proceeded north into the Tappan Zee (the term *zee* meaning sea in Dutch), and Hudson was encouraged by the fact that here the river is more than a mile wide, giving all indications of being a channel or strait between two oceans. Also, the water was still salty, adding to this possibility. By September 18, the ship was near the present village of Catskill, and here Hudson went ashore. An old chief and sixty members of his clan prepared a meal for the Europeans. In a fragment of Hudson's log that does survive, he describes them "as a very good people...and when they supposed that I would not stay overnight with them for fear of their bows, they broke the bows and arrows and threw them into the fire"<sup>11</sup>. On September 22, Hudson anchored and directed the small boat to proceed further upriver to take more soundings. It returned in the early evening, with Juet reporting that some twenty miles further the water was but seven feet deep. The search for the Northwest Passage in this region had ended.

The return trip, taking advantage of the river's flow and the ebbing tide, was concluded in ten days. Some of the same natives the crew had met on the way north now wanted Hudson to come ashore again. The old chief and another older native, along with four women, did have a meal with Hudson on board the



ship. Through signs and gift exchanges, the natives made the point that they wished Hudson to again have a meal with them on shore. He refused, wishing to take advantage of a favorable wind. By September 30, the ship anchored near present-day Newburgh, which Juet in his log called “a very pleasant place to build a town...”<sup>12</sup> By October 2, the *Half Moon* was near its original anchorage, where Colman had been killed. This time, the ship was attacked over a period of several hours. Using muskets and a light cannon, the crew was able to disperse the attackers, killing about a dozen.

The following day, a storm arose which caused the ship to go aground on a soft, sandy beach, but the crew was able to refloat her at high tide. By midday on October 4, the *Half Moon* had cleared the Narrows between Staten Island and Brooklyn and turned toward Europe.

Juet’s entry for October 5 is telling, for he writes:

“We continued our way to England...”<sup>13</sup> Clearly, upon their departure, the first mate was well aware that they would again break contract with the [Dutch East India Company] and not return directly to Amsterdam. The ship arrived at the English port of Dartmouth on the south coast on November 7.

Here, therefore, is the second mystery. What was the reasoning for Hudson, with his family in Holland, to ignore a very important stipulation of the agreement he had signed in January? Unfortunately, there is scant evidence upon which to make a determination of intent. But there are a few potential reasons Hudson might want to break his contract.

## Conclusions

The first mystery has at least three possible answers as to why Hudson ultimately sailed westward, in direct contradiction of his orders. He had two recent prior voyages into Arctic waters north and east of Scandinavia; both had encountered pack ice in May or June, theoretically the warmest season of the year. Knowing this, Hudson may have agreed to his contract with the Dutch East India Company while secretly planning that if conditions were similar to his prior experiences, he would turn westward and search for the mythical Northwest Passage. Another possibility is that his crew may have been near mutiny as they struggled with the ice and cold in the northern latitudes, with little prospect for continuing further east. Handling rigging and sail in severe conditions is dangerous, especially when considering the primitive clothing and living conditions onboard such a small ship. Turning away from the ice may have enabled Hudson to continue his voyage in better conditions. Finally, Hudson was English, and the Dutch were rivals on

the world stage of trade and commerce. Hudson is known to have corresponded with Captain John Smith, leader of the English colony in Virginia. It is possible that Hudson and Smith had a previous agreement to share navigational information in support of the English colonies. Unfortunately, there is little beyond circumstantial evidence to provide clues to attempt to solve this mystery. One letter of Smith's to Hudson does survive, but nothing of a reply from Hudson. The reader is left to her choice in deciding on a solution.

Regarding the second mystery, as to why the ship returned to England first, speculation provides the only avenue of analysis. Here are the known facts: the ship arrived in an English port, the English crew was allowed to leave, Hudson and the remaining Dutch crew were held in virtual house arrest. During the course of his forced delay in England, Hudson was able to show at least some of his logs, charts, and other information to Emanuel Van Meteren. By April 1610, Hudson again was captain of a voyage of discovery, backed by private English investors, on a ship called *Discovery*. In that interval, Hudson and the *Half Moon's* Dutch crewmen were released and allowed to return to Amsterdam. Juet's log makes no reference to the return voyage at all after October 5, only noting the fact that they made no landfalls until arriving at Dartmouth about five weeks later.

So, as to why Hudson detoured to England, the answer seems lost to history. He may have been moved by his allegiance to his native England, or it could have been that his crew had turned on Hudson and forced him to return to England so they could see their families sooner.

If his final voyage in 1610-1611 had ended with Hudson's return, there might have been more incentive to retain the records of the 1609 voyage. Because his fourth trip ended in mutiny, abandonment, the death of several remaining crew members, and official inquiries as to the circumstances of the end of the voyage, it probably made more sense to suppress his logs and charts so as not to stir up more controversy. The Dutch East India Company now concentrated on direct sailings to the Orient. It was left to a new company, the Dutch West India Company, founded in 1624, to look westward and begin to colonize New Netherland.

There seems to be no one logical reason for the *Half Moon* to have deviated from its final destination. The only thing that can shed more light on this final mystery of the 1609 voyage is new documentary discovery.

## Endnotes

1. Sandler, Corey *Henry Hudson, Dreams and Obsession* (Citadel Press, New York, 2007), p. 146. Hondius had lived and worked in London and was acquainted with Hudson.
2. *Ibid*, p. 42. Hudson and Smith were both acquainted with Richard Hakluyt, a director of the Muscovy Company.
3. *Ibid*, p. 142. LeMaire recommended Hudson to the French king, Henry IV.
4. *Ibid*, p. 146.
5. *Ibid*, p. 145.
6. Juet's log of this voyage was published in London in 1625 by Samuel Purchas, in Part Three, *Purchas, His Pilgrimes*. The practice of a ship's log as a formal, running account of a vessel's daily activities continues to this day in all the navies of the world. It is usually written in the wheel-house, signed by the officer of the watch, and preserved for future reference.
7. Sandler, p. 149.
8. *Ibid*, p. 149.
9. *Ibid*, p. 150.
10. "Legacy: A Hudson Crewman is killed", by S. Wick *New York Newsday*, copyright. 2007.
11. Sandler, p. 164.
12. *Ibid*, p. 167.
13. *Ibid*, p. 169.

# Cut By The River's Edge

*Robert Vivona*

## I. River Reveries

the morning sun  
glistens high overhead  
struggling to rid the air  
of its chill

it fails

its southern journey  
has taken its warmth  
out of reach of the river  
has taken the shine out of the light  
it sends to the river  
has left the river to meander  
with the wind rippling  
its surface into waves  
longing for the shelter  
of the shore

where one lonely man sits  
at a solitary bench  
with a black pen  
writing darkening thoughts

## II. Back At You River

why so silent  
not even a simple hello  
nice to see you again

a pair of geese are settling  
into last years nest

I'm back astride the weathered bench  
you just glassily glide by  
reflecting your banks  
and the gathering clouds

your silence seems to treat me with disdain

who are you to cast that stone  
you have hardly changed  
in the million years  
since your birth

the river answers

I have been a home to sturgeon  
longer than your ancestors  
have walked my shores

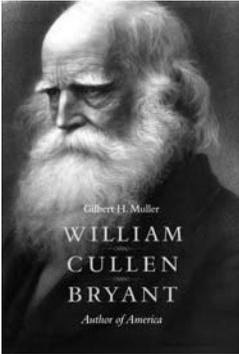
I have been a highway  
guiding with my winding  
wooded shores my lush green landings  
the migrations of Canada's geese

I have been a source of sustenance  
for pilgrims priests and pioneers  
top that with your little poems

in my constancy  
I put in a claim  
for those

# Book Reviews

***William Cullen Bryant: Author of America*, Gilbert H. Muller  
Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008 (410 pp.)**



In the summer of 1840, William Cullen Bryant traveled up from New York City to explore the Catskill wilderness with his friend Thomas Cole, founder of the Hudson River School of art. Bryant wrote excitedly about the journey in the *New York Evening Post*, describing his wonder at the headlands above the source of the Plattekill Creek as “a grand mountain ridge, indented by deep notches, in one of which, a dark ravine called Stony Clove, the ice of winter remains unmelted throughout the year.” Bryant’s fascination and respect for the unique Hudson Valley landscape started early in life, for as a young man traveling between the Berkshires and New York City, he chose to first journey westward to the Columbia County port of Hudson, to sail down the river and gaze at its beauty, instead of embarking on the much more direct (and mundane) land route. To be sure, from an early age the natural world shaped the poetic lens of this man who started life in a log cabin and died as perhaps the most iconic literary figure of his time. That poetic lens, in turn, shaped the rest of his many endeavors during his long life.

In his excellent and thorough biography *William Cullen Bryant: Author of America*, Gilbert H. Muller focuses on Bryant as poet. Students of American history may know Bryant best as the influential editor of the *Evening Post*, but here we see Bryant as an American poet whose deeds in other arenas—journalism, politics, naturalism, world travel, to name a few—stem from his primary love as a creator of verse.

Time has not been kind to Bryant’s literary legacy; today, we may come across one of his more celebrated poems such as “Thanatopsis” or “To a Waterfowl” in an anthology, but his significance as a purely American poet has largely been lost, overshadowed by Whitman and Dickinson. Muller’s innovative biography, however, examines Bryant’s public life as an extension of his writing life and reminds us how popular and influential Bryant’s poetry was by the time of his death in 1878. Here was a poet writing on the unique American landscape in the 1820s with passion and confidence, some thirty years before Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*. Indeed, as Muller describes the scene at Bryant’s funeral, “[o]ne mourner, Walt

Whitman, vividly recalled the crowd's final salute to the great man. 'The bard of river and wood,' Whitman said of his old friend, was a poet who stood 'among the first in the world.'

Consider Bryant's poem "Oh Mother of a Mighty Race," which chides Europe for meddling in the affairs of the New World:

They know not, in their hate and pride,  
What virtues with thy children bide;  
How true, how good, thy graceful maids  
Make bright, like flowers, the valley-shades;  
What generous men  
Spring, like thine oaks, by hill and glen;  
What cordial welcomes greet the guest  
By thy lone rivers of the West....

Today, it may be difficult for some to fathom the political and social impact of a man who was first and foremost a poet, but Bryant's list of accomplishments is undeniably formidable: from champion of the arts in New York City (Central Park and the Metropolitan Museum of Art owe him a huge debt, for example) to cultural explorer of Cuba long before Ernest Hemingway ever saw his *Finca Vigia*. Bryant was a prolific writer throughout his long life, and counted Whitman, Cooper, Hawthorne, Emerson, and even Charles Dickens among his admirers. The thrill of composing verse that glorified the new America or attacked the ills of society was unquestionably Bryant's passion; even his widely read newspaper editorials were sometimes composed in verse. Muller looks past Bryant's mere celebrity to show him as poet of the highest order who deserves credit as a defining influence on American culture in the nineteenth century.

Readers interested in the romantic poetry of this time period will particularly delight in the frequent citation and analysis of verse throughout the book. This is not merely a study of Bryant's lesser-known poetry, however; the author wants his reader to understand that Bryant saw the world through the eyes of a poet. The thoughts contained in the poems here complement many political issues of the time such as slavery, capitalism, and nationalism. With an entertaining yet clearly organized prose style, Muller constantly explores the myriad connections that exist between Bryant's poetry and his public persona.

Even the most casual reader interested in American literary history will enjoy and appreciate this book, but its value may be greater for Muller's fellow historians, since his painstaking research includes Bryant's collected letters, which have been

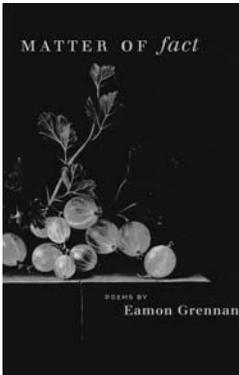
previously unavailable to biographers. Muller displays the skill of creating a solid narrative thread through varied correspondence, a talent he has shown previously in his fine epistolary work *Dear Chester, Dear John: Letters Between Chester Hines and John A. Williams* (Wayne State University Press, 2008). He is presently Professor Emeritus of English at the City University of New York.

*William Cullen Bryant: Author of America* gives long overdue credit to a man now all but forgotten for his contributions to American literary history. Perhaps even more important, Muller's fine work reminds all of us of the long-surrendered notion that poets and artists can indeed have a lasting and powerful impact on American society as a whole. Here in the Hudson Valley, we only have to look to the natural world for inspiration, as Bryant did almost two centuries ago.

Tommy Zurhellen

### **Matter of Fact, Eamon Grennan.**

St. Paul, Minnesota: Graywolf Press, 2008. (96 pp.)



*Matter of Fact* is Eamon Grennan's sixth book of poetry. Like the previous volumes, this one includes material that is bound to intrigue residents of his adopted second home. An Irishman transplanted to Poughkeepsie for much of his adult life, he views the mid-Hudson Valley from a special, often poignant, perspective. Very much at home in the local environment that inspires much of his poetry, he attends to details of flora, fauna, landscape, and climate with an intensity that betrays a sense of otherness—or, rather, a sense of otherness overcome. His appreciation of Poughkeepsie and the surrounding region rests on a foundation of slowly won familiarity with an alien place. Frequently his poems recall his homeland, juxtaposing memories of Ireland and his family of origin with the here-and-now of Dutchess County and the domestic life he has created for himself. As the biographical note to his book states, he is a man with two homes who “lives in Poughkeepsie, New York and west Ireland.” The counterpoint between there and here, then and now lends a unique flavor to his perceptions. Only a sensibility at home in the British Isles would remark upon the “tweed-folds of the Catskills” (“Innocence of Things”) or could delight in “the musical chuckle / the American robin shares with his cousin the Irish blackbird” (“Soundings”).

The particularity with which Grennan describes the natural world marks him as a passionate and knowledgeable observer. With a birdwatcher's eye, for example,

he recognizes kestrels, doves, gulls, finches, starlings, bluebirds, ducks, geese, phoebes, hawks, and crows. He records the “cacophonous...scales and prattlings” of smaller birds, or a hawk’s voice “filing sky to wildness” (“Hawklight”). Pausing to watch the stalking behavior of a marsh hawk, he carefully notes “the hook of his beak and the livid black / and yellow target-circles of the eye.” He is alert to the “strung silence” in which the raptor’s prey “shiver[s]”: “a squirrel...with stuttering pulse.” At the same time, he marvels at the hawk’s fiercely harnessed energy: “I learn how the heart heaves, how flexed muscle keeps / leashing, unleashing in a book of feathers.” Finally he realizes that the “sawtooth screams” of the hawk have triggered memories of his father’s death in Ireland: “twenty years gone by like a shot.” The “moonless void / of lethal patience that knows when-where / to strike / once in an explosion of bones” propels him into the “sudden absence” of human loss. Seamlessly the poem moves from the immediacy of sensory experience to emotions originating in another time and place.

Weather and seasonal change are frequent topics in *Matter of Fact*. Spring, with its promise of vitality and renewal, receives enthusiastic attention. The month of March brings “brazen / daylight; acres of snow under a sky / of sapphire” (“Innocence of Things”). “Beyond the Hudson a shadow of green / says grass,” and a starling “with straw in its beak” hunts “eager-eyed for a site” (“Exhibition”). Birds “rejoice in the later / and later light,” a recurring “wonder” (“April Note”). As Canadian geese “wind-sail” by on their journey northward, it seems as though everything is “taking off / lighting out, embracing change” (“April Note”). Later in the season, Grennan finds “everything flushed, fattening to overload. Pinks, greens, whites gleaming towards the somnolent luxury of their own abundant coming” (“Weather Channel”). “Tall nameless flowers” blossom into “huge scarlet vowels setting minds on fire” (“With Flowers and Curtain”). “Cicadas tear the air to flitters” at summer’s end, but “stitch it together again” as the locust trees are “leached of greenness” (“Signland”). With the advent of autumn, the poet salutes sheer “plenitude”: “the odour of apple pulp up and down the Hudson Valley, whole orchards crushed and milled into cloudy cider.” The accompanying “scents” and “earthen flavours” are completely satisfying, “filling every corner of the mouth and mind, drawing us back as if we’d never abandoned or been cast out of that first garden” (“On Change”).

Not hesitating to characterize the mid-Hudson as paradisiacal in the warmer seasons, Grennan confronts winter, “a world encased in cold” but enlivened by “the crisp crunch of our footsteps over snow” with equal exuberance (“Weather Channel”). He applauds the “contrary instinct in the blood / that sets itself against the weather” of a northeastern winter (“Opposing Forces”):

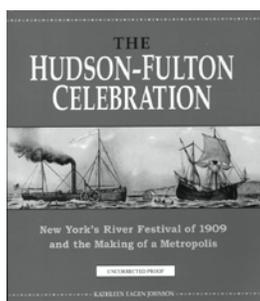
...the silver-grey catkins  
I saw this morning polished to brightness  
by ice overnight. Geese, too: more and more couples  
voyaging north, great high-spirited congregations  
taking the freezing air in and letting it out  
as song, as if this frigid enterprise were all joy.

On another “frigid... morning” in February, he is enchanted by the seemingly mundane phenomenon of hot air escaping from a pipe, which he redefines as a “brief love affair” between “frozen air” and “a great burst of steam / funneling from the powerhouse valve.” “Exploding in a huge white bloom of cloud,” this elemental encounter between natural and manmade energies creates an evanescent but precious brilliance: “nothing in this grey morning / is as bright” (“In Passing”). Repeatedly Grennan’s reflections on winter weather target subjects that prove unexpectedly fertile for imaginative rumination. He observes the irregular icing-over of the Hudson River. For example, as an exercise in visual patterning: “its white blobs / and bobbers on the water” representing “space integrated / and put to good use” (“Of Space and Skin”). He interprets the hoof prints of deer, etched in snow, as “cloven ideograms for cold-open-field-fright” (“Going Gone”). Once deciphered, the fleeing tracks illustrate “the way things rush away from us” into the ultimate “shade / of our unknowing”: the unstoppable passage of “time gone by.” Yet traces of each “going” remain, even in the trackless air: “as five high sky-ducks, for example, / leave a vacant space of blaze in their wake, that cross / a gem-like sky, flashquacking at the sound barrier.”

Thoughtful and subtle, these poems connect the realm of cloud and pond, raccoon and skunk, dragonfly and heron to the everyday human world of memory, desire, and domesticity. Bringing a passionate attention to things outside himself, frolicking with the sound and sense of words (flutterjazz and raindazzle), Grennan strives to renew “our hidebound five senses,” which he finds “stumped and blunted by being too long / in the cushioned grip of ease to be unscripted” (“What Happened”). He takes us to places and to realizations we otherwise might not reach, creating lasting images of the “vanishing” earthly reality around us: “the provisional slippery dissolving dissolute thing it is—which we have against all the evidence set our hearts on” (“Steady Now”). Readers have reason to rejoice that his poet’s eye so often is directed toward the Hudson River Valley, mining its natural riches in order to preserve them in well-wrought cadences and vivid metaphors.

# New & Noteworthy Books Received

*Andrew Villani*



## **The Hudson-Fulton Celebration: New York Festival of 1909 and the Making of a Metropolis**

By Kathleen Eagan Johnson (Tarrytown, NY: Fordham University Press, 2009). 228 pp. \$39.95 (cloth).

[www.fordhampress.com](http://www.fordhampress.com)

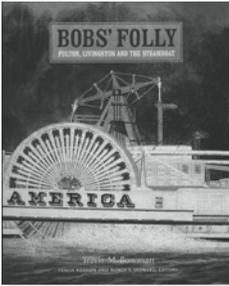
The Hudson-Fulton Celebration of 1909 was more than just a series of commemorative events. The festivities put on in New York City and the Hudson River Valley served as a catalyst that cemented New York City as the metropolis it is known as today. Through the use of images and artifacts, this book displays how New York City capitalized on the Hudson-Fulton Celebration to establish itself as a cultural, artistic, and commercial center, while developing a political identity all its own and serving as a jumping off point for Hudson River Valley towns to the north.



## **Hudson-Fulton Celebration of 1909**

By Edward F. Levine (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2009). 128 pp. \$21.99 (paperback). [www.arcadiapublished.com](http://www.arcadiapublished.com)

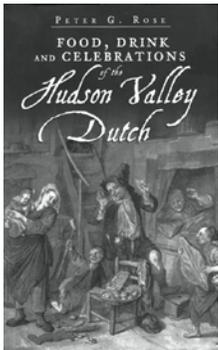
A collection of postcards commemorating the Hudson-Fulton Celebration of 1909. Photographic images as well as drawings present a wide lens through which to view both the history that was celebrated in 1909 and the broad scope of the events themselves. In this Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadracentennial year of 2009, Edward F. Levine's 40 years of collecting postcards provides the opportunity to appreciate the parades and events that made the celebration of 1909 an historic event.



### **Bob's Folly: Fulton, Livingston, and the Steamboat**

By Travis M. Bowman (Germantown, NY: Friends of Clermont, Inc., 2008). 96 pp. \$17.95 (paperback). [www.harperperennial.com](http://www.harperperennial.com)

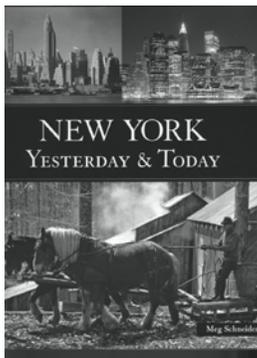
In 2007 Clermont State Historic Site hosted a special exhibit to commemorate the bicentennial of Fulton and Livingston's collaboration to launch the *North River* steamboat. This collection of essays, images, and photographed artifacts is the resulting literature borne out of that special exhibit. The essays within focus on the steamship's contribution to the social, economic, political and military history of the Hudson River and the Hudson River Valley. They also highlight the business and engineering acumen possessed by Fulton and Livingston that allowed the steamboat to become successful.



### **Food, Drink, and Celebrations of the Hudson Valley Dutch**

By Peter G. Rose (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2009). 157 pp. \$19.99 (paperback). [www.historypress.net](http://www.historypress.net)

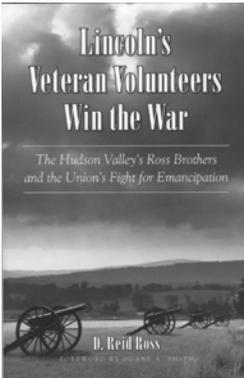
When Henry Hudson landed in what would become known as the Hudson River Valley, the influence of Dutch culture, including food and celebrations, became forever tied with the region. In this book Peter G. Rose highlights those two aspects of Dutch culture, Dutch staples of beer and bread. She also discusses how the Dutch and Iroquois dietary habits influenced the American kitchen, and the book provides a section on the Dutch use of spices and a collection of Dutch recipes.



### **New York: Yesterday and Today**

By Meg Schneider (Minneapolis, MN: Voyageur Press, 2008). 144 pp. \$25.00 (hardcover). [www.voyageurpress.com](http://www.voyageurpress.com)

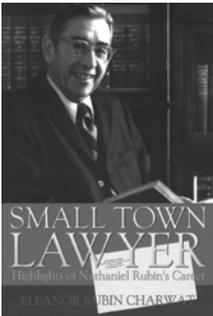
New York State is a complex combination of historic landmarks and modern wonders. Over centuries, some regions have seen tremendous growth, while others seem to have changed little over as many years. In this photographic history, Meg Schneider juxtaposes historic images with present day photographs to present 400 years of transformation that has taken place throughout New York State. From New York City to Buffalo and all points in between.



**Lincoln's Veteran Volunteers Win the War:  
The Hudson Valley's Ross Brothers and the Union's  
Fight for Emancipation**

By D. Reid Ross (Albany, NY: The State University of New York Press, 2008). 450 pp. \$35.00 (hardcover).  
[www.sunypress.com](http://www.sunypress.com)

This expansive story of Union volunteer soldiers is both an in-depth look into the values and principles of an unexplored group and a family history. Through extensive research and inquiry of memoirs, records, and publications, D. Reid Ross has constructed a comprehensive account of the four Ross brothers from Washington County, New York, all of whom enlisted in support of the Union cause and fought to uphold the ideals they believed in.



**Small Town Lawyer:  
Highlights of Nathaniel Rubin's Career**

By Eleanor Rubin Charwat (Poughkeepsie, NY: 2008). 64 pp.  
(paperback).

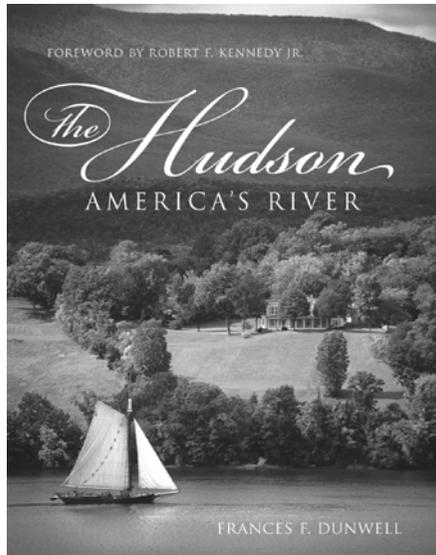
This career retrospective of lifelong Poughkeepsie defense attorney Nathaniel Rubin summons memories for anyone who can relate to the legal profession before technology, or anyone who called the City of Poughkeepsie “home” during the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Through a revisiting of Rubin's most memorable cases, his daughter Eleanor Rubin Charwat not only highlights his long and successful professional career, but also pays tribute to the moral character of a man who worked tirelessly to promote the betterment of the local area and those in it through his love of the law and strong sense of justice.



**Half-Past Nowhere**

By Joseph Cavano (Charlotte, NC: Central Piedmont College Press, 2008) 155 pp. \$13.99 (paperback)  
[www.cpcc.edu/servicescorp/products/cpcc-press-store](http://www.cpcc.edu/servicescorp/products/cpcc-press-store)

A local author's first work, this collection of ten short stories builds upon itself to recount a coming of age that ranges from New York City to the mid-Hudson region and touches on ethnicity, race, and religion as well as the timeless themes of love, lust, and loss. The reader follows young Joey from his Italian Grandma's backyard to St. Michael's College in Kingsport (which bears a certain resemblance to Poughkeepsie), to the nearby Catskills and beyond.



## The Hudson: America's River, *Frances F. Dunwell*

Frances F. Dunwell presents a rich portrait of the Hudson and of the visionary people whose deep relationship with the river inspires changes in American history and culture. Lavishly illustrated with color plates of Hudson River School paintings, period engravings, and glass plate photography, *The Hudson* captures the spirit of the river through the eyes of its many admirers. It shows the crucial role of the Hudson in the shaping of Manhattan, the rise of the Empire State, and the trajectory of world trade and global politics, as well as the river's influence on art and architecture, engineering, and conservation.

**Paper**, 392 pages, 80 illus.; ISBN: 978-0-231-13641-9; \$29.95/£21.95

**Cloth**, 392 pages, 80 illus.; ISBN: 978-0-231-13640-2; \$74.50/£53.00

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