



Steamboat C A Shultz on the Rondout

# Hudson River Maritime Museum

## Pilot Log 2008

# The Third Journey of Henry Hudson and HRMM's 'Aft' Cabin

By Lana Chassman

In 1609, an experienced English explorer named Henry Hudson, along with a crew of Dutch and English men, accepted a very specific contract from the Dutch East India Company - and that was to find a passage from Europe leading to Asia for trading purposes. As one knows after reading about life in 17<sup>th</sup>-century Europe, this was a time of eager exploration, trade, discovery and basic curiosity about the world. Successful transportation over bodies of water was restricted to "sea-worthy" vessels powered by the wind and/or human strength, and under the guidance of determined and accomplished captains.

And so, in early April of 1609, fate brought captain and vessel, the "Half Moon", together - under Hudson's able command, and with its rudimentary navigational charts, maps, instruments, supplies and crew - courageously set sail from Amsterdam on this adventurous mission, which ultimately shaped and changed history as we know it today.

Through the "Half Moon's" log or journal entries made by his first mate, Robert Juet, along with a few surviving entries made by Hudson himself, we have been able to gain firsthand insight into the bounty of this new territory's natural resources. September 12, 1609, marks the date when Hudson and crew entered "*as fine a river as can be found*". The specific and accurate notations made in these journals aided in further European explorations. Future journeys and subsequent colonization ultimately led to the development of what we know of today as New York.

In anticipation of the 2009 Quadricentennial Celebration, the Hudson River Maritime Museum wanted to give the museum visitor this unique feeling - as if one were truly "following the river back through time" and, in some small way, offer a similar sense of wonderment Hudson and his crew must have shared when

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19th century lithograph depicting Henry Hudson in Newburgh Bay

they ventured into this unfamiliar territory four centuries ago.

This entire project became a labor of love – joining the talents and ingenuity of artisans, Museum staff and volunteers. The walls and floor of the Maritime Museum's reproduction of the 'aft' cabin are ship-lap joined oak and pine – crafted with generously donated lumber from one of the Museum board members' property.

Ironically, no blueprints were used to build the original "Half Moon" which had been built of German and Dutch lumber. This was due to anticipated espionage and competition from other sea-faring countries. The "tangent arc" system of design and construction, which is used today in many computer generated designs for large ships, was used for its design. Since the original 1609 vessel was destroyed, Museum staff and volunteer artisans closely studied and recreated the interior shape and layout of the famous vessel's 'aft' or rear cabin, by using documented measurements and photographs of the 1989 replica of the "Half Moon".

A scene depicting the Hudson Highlands, used with permission by Hudson River Valley artist Thomas Locker and his publisher, Fulcrum Publishing, enhances our understanding of the view Hudson and his crew must have witnessed. A traditionally crafted Native American dugout canoe, similar to those used by the Lenape, offers an example of the vessels used by these indigenous peoples who had been inhabiting this region long before Europeans made contact.

We are fortunate to have on loan for two years – through the 2009 Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial – a 1909 expertly handcrafted six foot model of the "Half Moon". This model, which was made in France, had been built for the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hudson's voyage, and will now celebrate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the Hudson River Maritime Museum.

For educational purposes, the installation and exhibit "*Hudson's Journey*" has been designed as an "active learning environment", and therefore, has been equipped with clothing, a hanging lantern, storage trunks or footlockers, sleeping bunks as well as navigational tools similar to those used by Hudson, such as a *quadrant*; *chart table*; *compass*; *binnacle*; *sand glass*; and *rope* for a brief knot-tying seminar. Sounds of the ocean's waves complete the experience for the museum visitor.

Six months after having departed Amsterdam, the "Half Moon" left North American on October 4, 1609, and arrived in England (rather than Holland), a little over a month later – on November 7. History tells us that Hudson embarked on his fourth and final voyage in 1610. Sadly, a mutiny finally was actualized on this voyage in 1611. Hudson, his son and a number of other supportive crew members were set adrift in a small boat in Hudson Bay (Canada) with very few provisions. He and his mates were never seen again.

Even though Hudson was not successful in terms of the original 1609 Dutch contract to find a passage to Asia, he has left a legacy far more valuable in today's way of thinking – he had explored, documented and navigated the body of water we know and cherish as *The Hudson River*.