

HENRY HUDSON



Henry Hudson was born in 1565 in England. He was possibly the grandson of an Englishman who helped found a trading organization, the Muscovy Company. This company supported exploration of a possible Northwest Passage through North America to Asia.

Hudson was commissioned by the Muscovy Company in 1607 to seek a Northwest Passage. He made two voyages, landing on the Greenland and the Svalbard Islands. He failed to find a route to Asia.

In 1609 Hudson was hired by the Dutch East India Company to find a Northwest Passage farther south than his first two voyages. On a ship called the Half Moon Hudson again tried to find a passage through the ice. His crew suffered extremely cold and harsh weather. They mutinied. Hudson sailed to Nova Scotia, then south and found what is now the Hudson River. He began to explore the river and anchored off the tip of Manhattan. His crew traded for oysters with the Native Americans. However, as he neared Manhattan, some natives became unfriendly and Hudson ordered his sailors to fire at them. Several were killed.

Hudson left the river and headed to England where he and his crew were arrested for sailing under another nation's flag. The English government seized his ship as well. From that time on, Hudson was ordered to sail only for the country of his birth.

In 1610, Hudson made his final voyage to the New World. He was sponsored by a group of wealthy Englishmen who still believed there was a Northwest Passage to Asia. Hudson sailed north past Iceland into the Hudson Strait and from there into Hudson Bay. His crew and he sighted whales, dolphins, and walruses. The land was frozen and barren. The ship became trapped in ice near the end of the year. In early 1611, the crew mutinied and put Hudson, his son, and seven others of the company in a small boat and set it adrift. A few of the mutinied crew were able to return to England. The remaining crewmembers either died of scurvy or starvation or were killed by the Inuit (Eskimos). Hudson and the others were never seen again.

Hudson's contribution was the exploration of the Arctic Ocean and northeastern North America. The Hudson River, Hudson Strait, and Hudson Bay are named for him.