

Walk Thru A Bit of Dutch History

by Linda Morzillo

What would the Englishman Henry Hudson think if visited Albany today? The Dutch West India Company funded his third voyage in 1609 to find the Northwest Passage to Asia. His explorations included sailing his ship, the Half-Moon, upstream on the river that now bears his name. The ship's personnel saw the substantial harbor that later became the gateway to New York City, sailed past the steep cliffs on the western shore known as the Palisades, saw the Shawangunk Mountains (the "Gunks"), the Catskills and beautiful scenery that later inspired the Hudson River School of landscape painters.

But, after sailing 150 miles to near where Albany is today, the river had become too shallow to continue and Hudson had to return to the ocean. The area was inhabited by people of the Algonquian tribal group, the Lenni Lanape, who lived in small groups: Mohicans (or Mahicans), Tappans, Wappingers, Delaware, Esopus, Munsee and others. In 1626, the Munsee "sold" Manhattan Island to Peter Stuyvesant for iron kettles, axes and other items. The European concept of land ownership was not understood and later caused the Dutch to be at odds with the various tribes along the Hudson River.

We know Henry Hudson failed in his quest, but did claim the lands for the Netherlands. The area near present-day Albany was rich in furs and trading posts were established, first at Fort Nassau (1614) and later at Fort Orange (1624). The latter was incorporated into the Village of Beverwijck, in 1652. In 1664, New Netherland was surrendered to the English without bloodshed and Beverwijck was renamed Albany.

If Henry Hudson could retrace his journey in 2019, he might be pleasantly surprised at how the Hudson Valley, and the area near Albany, has changed in over 400 years. In particular, the Capital District, including the Tri-Cities (Albany, Schenectady and Troy), 10 smaller cities, 143 towns, and 62 villages in 11 counties have grown to take their central places in the region's government, education, architecture, culture, transportation and economic spheres. In addition, Albany is the capital of the Empire State.

As walkers enjoy the President's walk on Friday, June 14, 2019, evidence of both Albany's Dutch and English past will be seen. Albany is noted for 65 properties on the National Register of Historic Places, (63 still standing), 6 of which are also National Historic Landmarks. In addition, some are located among 14 Historic Districts.

Starting at the Corning Preserve alongside the Hudson River, which rises and falls with the tide from the Atlantic Ocean, walkers will see several other parks. Tricentennial Square with the "Assiduity" statue, Academy Park and Lafayette Park with the old Albany Academy (attended by Herman Melville), West Capitol Park, East Capitol Park and Lincoln Park.

The first church in Beverwijck was organized in 1642 and was located in the middle of what is now State Street. With a pulpit purchased with 25 beaver skins and imported from Amsterdam, the First Church (Dutch Reformed), continues in its present building on North Pearl St since

1798. Walkers will see St. Mary's, the oldest Roman Catholic Church (1792), and St Peter's Episcopal Church (1712).

Walking past Albany's City Hall (1882), may give many walkers a sense of *déjà vu* because the same architect, Henry Hobson Richardson, with his distinct style, designed the Cheyenne, WY train station as well as numerous additional structures seen on many Volkswalks.

The beautiful New York State Education Building (1912), was designed by Henry Hornboste and is noted for the longest colonnade in the United States with 36 Corinthian columns.

The New York State Capitol is one of twelve Capitols lacking an external dome. A massive dome was originally planned, but the sheer weight of the building was causing stress fractures making the building shift downhill! The Neo-Romanesque style was popular at the time the building was first used in the 1880's and a massive renovation was completed in 2012. This general area of downtown Albany includes the Empire State Plaza housing state offices, the Egg (theater), the New York State Museum (free admission; try to see the special Erie Canal exhibit), and the New York State Library. The walk route will pass by numerous stately memorials and statues.

The Schuyler Mansion State Historic Site dating from the early 1760's and originally 80 acres in size, was the historic home of the Revolutionary War General Philip J. Schuyler, later a Senator. Yes, this is the same General Schuyler who also owned the Schuyler Mansion that is now a part of the Saratoga National Historical Park. The Albany (winter), residence was the location of daughter Elizabeth Schuyler's marriage to Alexander Hamilton in 1780.

The D&H Building at the base of State Street was designed by Marcus Tullius Reynolds. Inspired by Cloth Hall in Ypres, Belgium, the gray stone building built between 1912 and 1918 features dormers, ornate towers, filigree and Flemish Gothic flourishes. Originally the headquarters of the D&H and New York Central Railroads, it now houses the central administration of the State University of New York. Be sure to note the largest working weathervane in North America! In the shape of Henry Hudson's Half-Moon, it's 8-foot tall and weighs 800 pounds!

As walkers return to the start point by passing under the Dunn Memorial Bridge, they will be passing the original site of Fort Orange.

You may wish to read two books documenting the early days of European settlement in Albany: *Beverwijck : A Dutch village on the American Frontier, 1652-1664*, written by Janny Venema in 2003 and *Possessing Albany, 1630-1710: the Dutch and English Experiences*, by Donna Merwick.

Albansians continue to celebrate the city's Dutch heritage during the Tulip Festival held the second weekend in May. Streets are scrubbed, the city is ablaze with tulips, a scholarship-oriented Tulip Queen and Court are installed and a lively festival is enjoyed. You, too, commemorate New York's Dutch heritage when you eat a *koejke*, drink *bier*, see a *mannequin* in a store, fish in the *Normanskill*, listen to your *baas* at work and have your *rugzak* when you

vrolijk on a Volkswalk along *Paarl* St. with people whose surnames names begin with Van!
What would Henry Hudson think, indeed?