

**YEAR BOOK OF THE
HOLLAND SOCIETY OF
NEW-YORK: THE STORY
OF NEW AMSTERDAM, 1917**

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THE HOLLAND SOCIETY

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NEW-YORK: THE STORY
OF NEW AMSTERDAM, 1917**

YEAR BOOK

or

The Holland Society

of

New York

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THE STORY OF NEW AMSTERDAM

1917

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PREPARED BY THE RECORDING SECRETARY

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Executive Office
90 WEST STREET
NEW YORK CITY

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BY
THE HOLLAND SOCIETY OF NEW YORK

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Raymond Van Santvoord

PRESIDENT 1894

CT.

THE HOLLAND SOCIETY OF NEW YORK

THE STORY OF NEW AMSTERDAM

by

WILLIAM R. SHEPHERD

Professor of History in Columbia University

TO NEW AMSTERDAM AND NEW YORK

By history's pen thy rise is thus explained:
An island wild, a busy mart, the scene
Of struggle for a city's rights attained;
Metropolis become, the New World's queen
Of empire, in the arts of trade renowned—
A tribute to thee on historic ground!

THE TRADING STATION



THE seventeenth century was peculiarly the age of great commercial companies, organized for trade and colonization, endowed by their governments with extensive powers, and given a monopoly in their various transactions. Of these corporations the Dutch East India Company was a notable example. A few years after its foundation it entrusted to Henry Hudson, an English sailor who had done good service in Arctic waters, the task of finding a northwest passage to Asia, which would lessen the long journey around the Cape of Good Hope, or through the Straits of Magellan.

Though French and Spanish navigators may have seen the river that was to bear the name of Hudson, eighty years and more before the "Half Moon" cautiously poked its nose into the lower bay, the real credit for its discovery belongs to the Anglo-Dutch captain. It was his achievement that made the stream known to the European world and rendered it commercially useful. Here local legend affirms the sober truth of history, for when it thunders in the Catskills the children and the old people say that Hendrik Hudson and
his

his phantom crew are playing at skittles. Could Hudson have peered through the mist of the coming centuries and have caught a vision of the mighty city on Manhattan for whose Dutch foundation he had himself provided, the thought of seeking a northwest passage to India must have seemed a trivial thing.

Though variously derived and interpreted, the commonly accepted meaning of the Indian word from which the name "Manhattan" was taken is "island of the hills." In the seventeenth century its southern part showed a series of wooded hills, some of them eighty feet above the present street level, interspersed with grassy valleys, a chain of swamps and a deep pond. To the northward lay high and rocky ground rising at times to 240 feet above tide-water.

While it is true that the Dutch East India Company, interested only in Asiatic commerce, saw fit to ignore Hudson's report on the possibilities of the fur trade in the region that he had visited, certain shrewd merchants of Amsterdam dispatched a number of small ships to traffic with the Indians on Manhattan. By 1613 it appears that their agents had built three or four rude cabins in the neighborhood, perhaps, of 39 Broadway. Another vessel, the "Tiger," commanded by Captain Adrian Block, happened to burn up, but the loss was quickly repaired. "The oaks that sheltered bears on the slopes of Wall Street, where today bulls as well as bears are found, were fashioned into a trim sloop of sixteen tons and christened the 'Orrust' or 'Restless,' a name prophetic of that restless or unresting commerce of which it was the tiny germ." With this product of Manhattan raw material Block sailed into the Sound via the East River, which he called the "Hellegat" after a branch of the river Scheldt near Hulst in Zealand. Whether the word means "clear inlet," or figuratively what its present English spelling and pronunciation might indicate, the name is now applied only to that part of the East River where its waters mingle with those of the Sound.

Two young savages brought back by the Dutch captains may have imparted a zest to the spirit of enterprise