

Adventures on the American Frontier

EXPLORERS in a NEW WORLD

Part Six

The Half Moon on the Hudson



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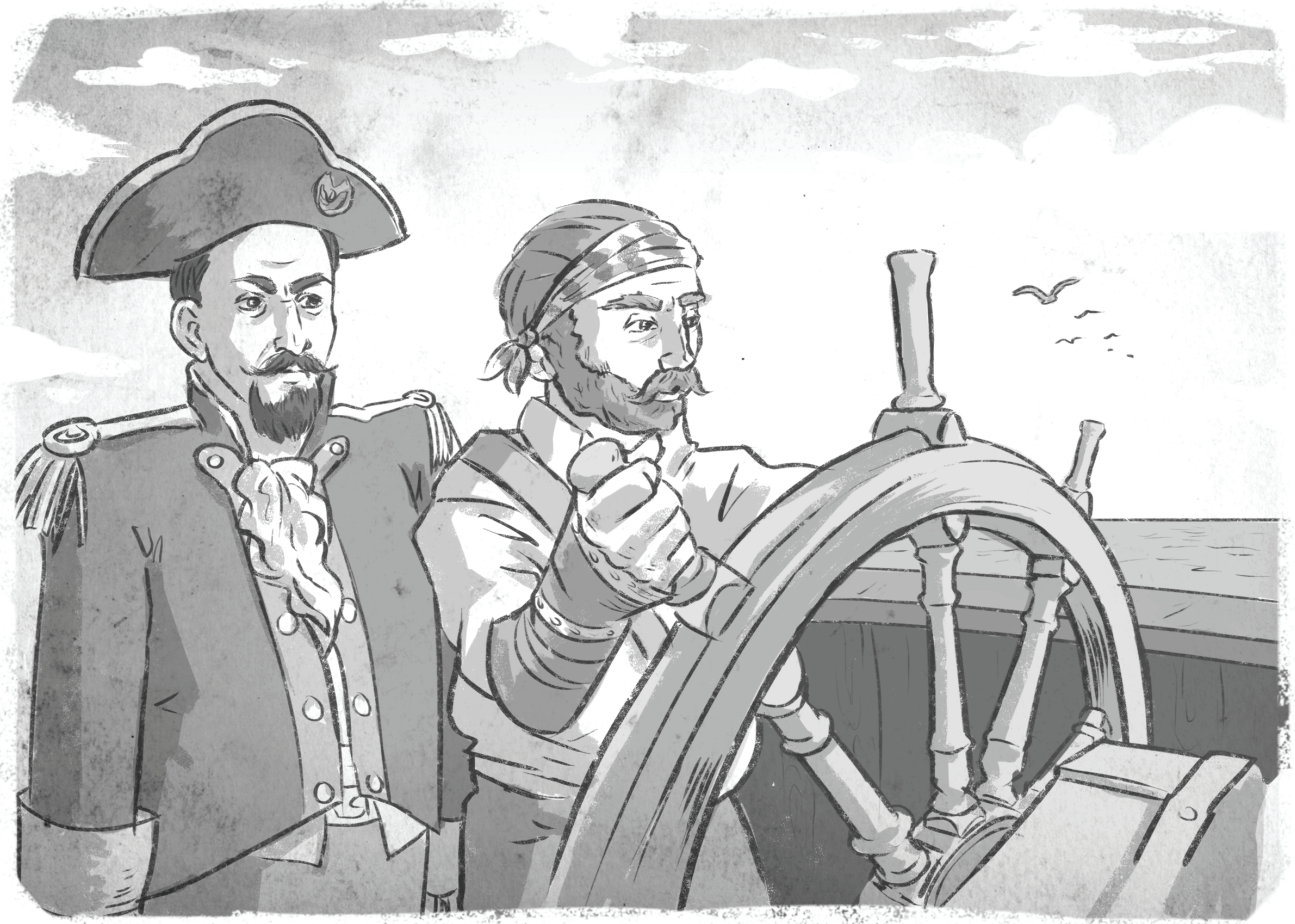
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“Why has the course been changed?”

Captain Hudson asked. The ship under his command, the *Half Moon*, was heading back the way it had come, south toward the coast of Norway.



The man at the wheel shook his head.
“The men won’t go on, Captain,” he said.
“They say that nothing but ice lies ahead.
We’ll sit on a frozen sea until we’re all as
stiff as the frozen sails.”

Captain Henry Hudson turned and went
to his cabin. He knew that he should give
firm orders for the ship to follow the course
set by the Dutch company that owned it.
He was supposed to be finding a way to
China by going over the North Pole.

Captain Hudson had sailed north



twice before, trying to find a northeast passage through the New World—not for the Netherlands but for his own country, England, which had not wanted to let France and Spain get all the glory of discovery. But when he had failed to find a route, the merchants funding his voyages became unhappy with him. This journey was being funded by a Dutch company. The men who ran the Dutch company believed that a ship could reach China by sailing east through the Arctic Ocean above Russia.

“All you have to do, Captain Hudson,” the Dutch company men had explained to him, “is make your way through a few miles of ice. Then you’ll have clear sailing over the North Pole.”

Captain Hudson had shaken his head. “But the ice gets thicker as you go farther north,” he said. “It can squeeze a ship until the timbers break into pieces no larger than matchsticks.”

The company men did not agree. “Over the pole is the shortest way, as anyone can



tell by looking at a globe,” they said. “When you reach that part of the Earth where the sun shines three months of the year with no darkness at all, there can’t be much ice. All that sunshine is bound to have melted it.”

And so in 1609, Captain Hudson found himself sailing a route that he knew was wrong. He couldn’t blame his men for their mutiny.

The next day the captain met with his crew, half of whom were Englishmen; the other half were Dutchmen.