

City of Newburgh

Press Release

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For Immediate Release

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Capt. Henry Hudson & the Half Moon Welcomed in Newburgh Saturday

Kick-off of Newburgh Beacon Bay Quadricentennial Festivities
Draws Residents from Four Centuries

Henry Hudson, an Englishman sailing under contract to the Dutch East India Company, was among the first Europeans to explore the river as far north as Newburgh. His ship, the Half Moon, sailed into Newburgh Bay twice in 1609, and his first mate's journal entry notes this as "a pleasant place to build a town." Hudson then sailed away, not to return until 2008.

Saturday, Nov. 8, at the official start of the Hudson- Fulton- Champlain Newburgh Beacon Bay 2009 Quadricentennial and Newburgh's 300th Birthday celebration, people from the last four centuries gathered at Newburgh Landing to welcome Capt. Hudson and the replica ship Half Moon.

Despite the rain, several hundred people came to Newburgh Landing on Saturday to attend the welcoming ceremony, and a couple of thousand on Sunday, to enjoy the River Art Walk vendors, and of course, tour the Half Moon, which more than an unprecedented 1,300 visitors boarded throughout the weekend.

City of Newburgh Mayor Nicholas J. Valentine was Master of Ceremonies for the welcoming, portraying Newburgh's first mayor, George Clark. The festivities began with a musical prelude by the Cole Family, who sang "Old Man River," accompanied by Consuelo Hill.

Rev. Twila Rucker Caines, Pastor of Newburgh's A.M.E. Zion Church, the oldest African-American Church in the Hudson Valley, gave the invocation. Sojourner Truth (Praise James), Harriet Tubman (Miracle James), and Mrs. Mary Gilchrist Thompson, (Veronica Robinson) represented the A.M.E. Zion Church.

Anthony Van Dunk offered a Native American prayer, and with Cynthia Fountain, a Lenape/Penobscot Native American, and Mayor Valentine, presented Capt. Henry

Hudson and Capt. William T. (Chip) Reynolds, Captain of the replica Half Moon, with welcoming gifts.

Senator William J. Larkin, Jean Wort, this region's New York State Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Commissioner, Beacon Mayor Steve Gold, Lisa Silverstone, Director of the Historical Society of Newburgh Bay and the Highlands, and City Manager Jean-Ann McGrane were among the speakers, as was George Washington (portrayed by John Koopman III).

Members of the Hudson- Fulton- Champlain Quadricentennial Newburgh Beacon Bay 2009 Committee, which includes the City of Newburgh, the Towns of Newburgh and New Windsor, Town of Marlborough, City of Beacon, Walden, Town of Cornwall, Village of Cornwall-on-Hudson, Montgomery, and Fishkill, were on hand for Saturday's festivities. Representatives from area historical sites including Washington's Headquarters State Historic Site, Madam Brett Homestead, and Gomez Mill House also attended.

Mayor Valentine commented, "The Quadricentennial celebrations are so important because they give our young people, who will build the future, a connection with history, and with those who helped shape our City and our neighboring communities. This collaboration with the City of Beacon and our sister municipalities is bringing history alive."

City Manager Jean-Ann McGrane, who portrayed Newburgh resident Emily Ferry Gardner, sister of Andrew Jackson Downing, added, "We are excited to have this opportunity to kick-off the Newburgh Beacon Bay Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial 2009 celebration. This weekend is a symbol of all to come during 2009, when we will also celebrate the 300th birthday of the City of Newburgh. Members of our community and our neighboring municipalities have come together to make this a very special year."

At the program's conclusion, Ulysses J. Alsdorf, (Kevin Barrett) performed a spirited rendition of the 1909 Hudson- Fulton Celebration, *Dear Hudson Fulton Days*, and the Cole Family sang a stirring *God Bless America*. The audience joined in both songs with enthusiasm. The cutting of the Quadricentennial Cake, provided by Rockland Bakery, followed.

TD Banknorth helped make it possible for school tours of the Half Moon during the week, and public tours on the weekend. Other sponsors included Dunkin' Donuts on Broadway, Price Chopper, Mid-Valley Mall, Barnes & Noble Booksellers, Hudson Baylor Corporation, County Legislator James Kulisek, and Metro North Railroad and New York State DOT who sponsored the weekend's free ferry service.