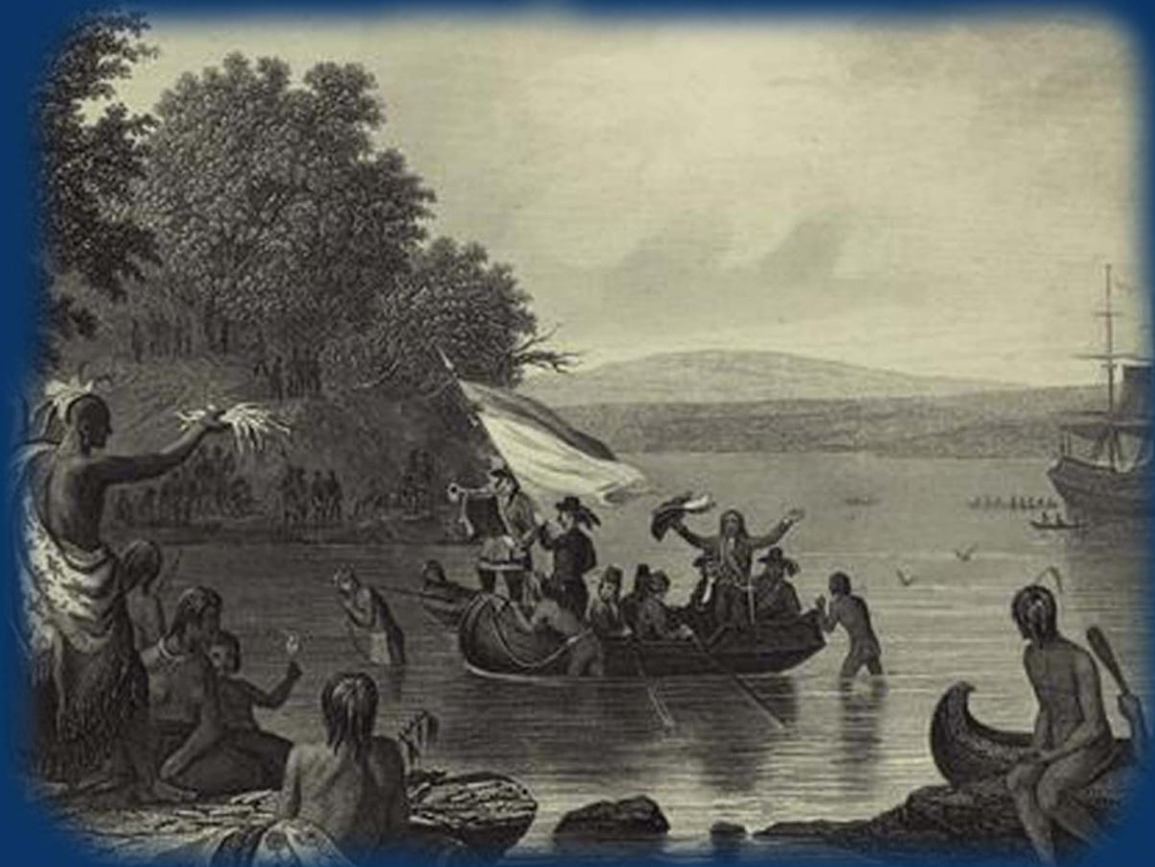


# Broken Chain

How the White and Indian  
Worlds Remembered  
Henry Hudson and the Dutch



An Illustrated Pamphlet  
to Commemorate the 400th  
Anniversary of Hudson's Arrival

**Bill Greer**

# Broken Chain

## How the White and Indian Worlds Remembered

### Henry Hudson and the Dutch

By Bill Greer

*As New York commemorates the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Henry Hudson's arrival, we know much about what he and the Dutchmen who followed encountered during their early years on the Hudson. But the Dutch perspective is not the only view passed down the centuries. Two powerful tribes greeted the Dutch around Albany. The Mohicans and the Mohawks each retained legends of the early encounters.*

#### About the Author

Bill Greer has spent much of his working life in the heart of New Amsterdam and is a Trustee of the New Netherland Institute. His novel of New Amsterdam, **The Mevrouw Who Saved Manhattan**, paints a real and humorous portrait of Dutch life on the Hudson through the eyes of a sharp-tongued bride who comes among the first settlers.

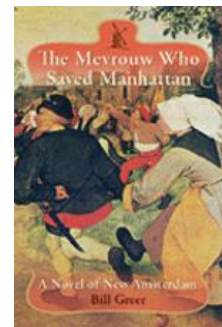
#### Reviews for The Mevrouw Who Saved Manhattan

**From de Halve Maen, Journal of the Holland Society  
of New York, Summer 2009**

"[A] romp through the history of New Netherland that would surely have Petrus Stuyvesant complaining about the riot transpiring between its pages ... Readers are guaranteed a genuine adventure that will evoke the full range of human emotions. Once begun, they can expect to experience that rare difficulty in putting down a book before they have finished."

**From Historical Novels Review,  
August 2009**

"Bill Greer has deftly blended fact and fiction in his humorous tale The Mevrouw Who Saved Manhattan ... The characters are rowdy, raunchy, loveable, and sometimes despicable, but thoroughly believable ... This is a thoroughly delightful story that brings the Dutch colonies to life. The Mevrouw Who Saved Manhattan is heartily recommended with or without a tankard of beer, not ale, to accompany it."



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#### Henry Hudson and the Dutch

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**T**HE *UNITY* SAILED from Amsterdam in 1623, first ship of the Dutch West India Company, Arien Jorise commanding. As soon as she reached Manhattan Island, the party split. Two families and six men headed for the Harford River to the east, another two families and eight men for the Delaware to the south. Eight of the crew stayed behind to take possession of Manhattan while the *Unity* continued up the North River, what would one day be called the Hudson.

Some ways upstream, the eighteen families still aboard transferred to a lighter boat left by the Dutchmen who had traded on the river the year before. They traveled again as far upriver as they had come until they landed at a spot on the west bank where a stream spilled into the main flow. Here they would settle. They built a small fort and huts of bark.

No sooner had they moved into their crude homes than the Indians came, the Mohicans who lived along the river, and the Mohawks. The natives brought great presents of beaver and other pelts and told Commander Jorise of their desire that they might come and have a constant free trade. And so they made a Covenant of Friendship with the new arrivals.



Settlers Landing at Fort Orange

Broken Chain  
by Bill Greer

That's the way Catalina Trico remembered her journey to her new home, a newlywed, not twenty years old.<sup>1</sup> By the time she looked back, she was over eighty. The years or her age had fogged her memory. The ship was more likely named the *Nieu Nederlandt*, not the *Unity*, and Cornelis Jacobsen May skippered her. She had sailed on January 25, 1624. She carried fewer people when she ventured up the Hudson. Eight families plus ten or twelve men would plant the settlement to be called Fort Orange.<sup>2</sup> However garbled Catalina's memory, Commander May had left Arien Jorise to govern Fort Orange when he sailed back downriver. The Covenant of Friendship that Jorise concluded with the Mohicans and the Mohawks would lead to a prosperous start for the new community.

The Dutch had been laying the groundwork for this first settlement for more than a decade. Henry Hudson had brought back word of the wonders of the Hudson Valley in 1609. His expedition had aimed to discover a Northeast Passage to Asia, but ice had turned him west. In September his ship the *Half Moon* entered the river that would bear his name. The Dutchmen spent two weeks on the river, proceeding 44 leagues above its mouth. Hudson sent a smaller boat several leagues further, past the confluence with a major river from the west that would be called the Mohawk.



Henry Hudson

Hudson and one of his officers, Robert Juet, sang the praises of the land in their journals. The country was the finest for cultivation of any they had seen, abounding with trees of oak, walnut and chestnut, fruits of grape and pumpkin. The river was filled with mullets, breames and barbils. The River Indians along the upper stretches welcomed the Dutch ashore with song. Within a couple of years, the maps would label these people the Mohicans. When these Indians feared the visitors were afraid, they broke their arrows into pieces and threw them into the fire. The chiefs gave the Dutchmen great stropes of beads, the belts of wampum with which the tribe preserved its memories. They orated and motioned that all the country about them was at their command. The people brought

corn, tobacco and fruits to trade for beads, knives and hatchets. And they brought furs of beaver and otter, eager to exchange them for trifles.<sup>3</sup>

When news of the furs reached Amsterdam, it launched an intense competition. France had shut foreigners out of the fur trade in her North American territories, nor had the Dutch penetrated the territories of the mid-Atlantic coast through which the English were gathering pelts. But here was a no man's land between the French and English. The merchants of Amsterdam quickly stepped in to fill the void. By May, 1611, the group of Arnout Vogels and brothers Leonart and Francoys Pelgrom had chartered the *St. Pieter*. Cornelis Rijser skippered the *St. Pieter's* voyage. Hendrick Christiaensen and Ariaen Block went along as supercargoes to conduct the trade. While the merchants' instructions were intentionally oblique, "to carry on trade at places appointed by the supercargo," the ship's destination was evidently the Hudson.

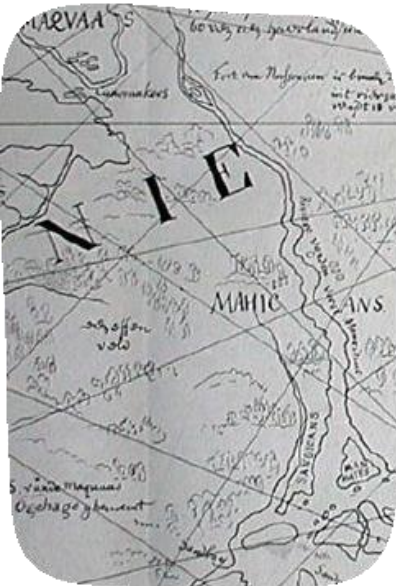
The returns were sufficiently attractive to enlist additional merchants. Hans Hunger and Lambert van Tweenhuysen joined the original trio to form the Van Tweenhuysen Company. The company sent two more ships in 1612 and 1613 with Ariaen Block as skipper.<sup>4</sup>

Block was not pleased in the spring of 1613 to see the *Jonge Tobias* under Thijs Volckertsz. Mossel arrive on the Hudson. A rival group, the Hans Claesz. Company, had outfitted the ship. The supercargo aboard, Hans Jorisz. Hontom, offered the natives double Block's usual price for furs. After considerable distrust and negotiation, the competitors agreed to split the skins, with two-thirds going to Block. Both ships sailed for Amsterdam. Jan Rodrigues, one of Mossel's crew who had grown discontented with his lot aboard ship, decided to stay behind. Block also left a few men, who began construction of a more permanent facility. Fort Nassau rose on Castle Island a few leagues below the confluence with the Mohawk. Here a smaller stream entered the Hudson, a stream that would enter history as Nordman's Kill.<sup>5</sup>

Both competition and luck turned for the worse the next year. The Van Tweenhuysen Company sent two ships, the *Tijger* under Block and the *Fortuyn* under Hendrick Christiaensen. The Hans Claesz. Company sent the *Nachtegael* under Mossel.

The skippers immediately entered a dispute over the services of Jan Rodriguez, the man Mossel had left behind. They negotiated that problem, agreeing again to split the trade. Then the *Tijger* burned and a disaffected portion of her crew mutinied and captured the *Nachtegael*. Finally, two more competitors arrived, a second ship named the *Fortuyn* under Cornelis Jacobson May and backed by merchants from Hoorn and the *Vos* under Pieter Fransz and belonging to another Amsterdam rival. Ultimately, the season ended with an agreement to split the ten thousand furs collected into quarters, one share for each company. The two *Fortuyns* and the *Vos* sailed for home in June, 1614.<sup>6</sup>

The destructiveness of the competition was obvious to everyone. In March, 1614, the States General promulgated a new policy: the discoverer of new countries would be given an exclusive patent for four voyages, to be undertaken over three years. In October, it deemed the four companies on the Hudson in 1614 the “discoverers,” consolidated them into the New Netherland Company and granted them a patent until January 1, 1618.<sup>7</sup>



Hudson River

Hendrick Christiaensen skippered a New Netherland Company ship in 1615, with Jacques Eelkens along as supercargo.<sup>8</sup> Having managed to eliminate the competition among themselves, the Dutch started worrying more over supply. By now, the Dutch had learned the Mohicans controlled the territory for 75 miles along both sides of the upper Hudson.<sup>9</sup> In their initial trading, they relied on the Mohicans to collect furs, and as the demand increased, the Mohicans traveled north to secure more from related tribes speaking Algonquin languages similar to their own. But eventually the more distant tribes realized they could gain higher prices by bringing their pelts to the Dutch directly.

At about this time, another tribe began bringing furs from as far as sixty leagues in the interior to the west, a tribe whose language was completely different from the Algonquin tongues. The Mohawks were a belligerent lot, frequently selling everything, then returning thirty or forty strong to retract the bargain and demand better terms.<sup>10</sup>

The animosity between the Mohicans and the Mohawks was clear. Nonetheless the Dutch persevered in their contacts with the tribe from the west. The furs they brought were excellent and the Dutch demand outstripped the purely local supply. The Dutchmen encouraged the Mohawks to come to Fort Nassau, though it lay within Mohican territory on land that tribe had granted. Three Dutchmen traveled with the Mohawks to explore their lands. To avoid confrontations, the Mohicans began drifting gradually to the eastern side of the Hudson.<sup>11</sup>

In 1615, Hendrick Christiaensen sailed for Amsterdam and left his supercargo Jacques Eelkens in command at Fort Nassau.<sup>12</sup> Eelkens evidently decided he needed to take some action to keep the rising tensions in check while maintaining the supply of furs from the diverse tribes. The Dutch records are silent on precisely how he orchestrated events. But the indirect evidence - the timing of his tenure and the location of Fort Nassau combined with the traditions of the participating Indians - indicates he brought the Mohicans and the Mohawks together on the banks of Nordman's Kill. There they forged the original Covenant Chain, an agreement by the three parties to permit a free trade in furs on the banks of the upper Hudson. Nine years later, Catalina Trico was witnessing a second gathering, watching the Fort Orange commander Arien Jorise renew the Covenant of Friendship with the Mohicans and the Mohawks as the Hollanders established a permanent colony, New Netherland.

And so the settlement of Fort Orange prospered. Before the ship that brought Catalina sailed away, the grain sowed in the fields offered by the Mohicans reached as high as a man. The gardens had grown green and a mill was turning on Nordman's Kill. Commander May filled his ship with 500 otter skins and 1500 beaver. By the end of 1624, he was selling his cargo in Amsterdam for 28,000 guilders. Before Christmas, the yacht *Maeckereel* arrived in New Netherland, bringing Daniel van Krieckebecck to take

Broken Chain  
by Bill Greer

over the command of Fort Orange. Three more ships followed in 1625 bringing cattle, horses, hogs, and sheep, plus equipment with which to build a dairy. And forty-five more people came to New Netherland, six families and several freemen.<sup>13</sup>

Catalina Trico and her husband Joris Rapalje had a special reason to celebrate. Their daughter Sarah was born in June, the first Dutch child to open her eyes in North America.<sup>14</sup>

Indeed if Catalina felt trepidation living in an uncharted wilderness surrounded by savages, she didn't mention it when she looked back sixty years later. The Covenant of Friendship Jorise had renewed upon the settlers' arrival endured. The Indians daily brought great multitudes of beaver, she remembered, and they were all as quiet as lambs and came and traded with all the freedom imaginable.<sup>15</sup>

But Catalina's memory was fogged.

IN TIMES OF OLD, there were no Christians on the river, the Mohican sachem Soquans told the New York governor and his council in 1700. The first Christians that came settled upon Rensselaer's Island, he said. We loved them as soon as we saw them, and received them as Brethren, and we made a strict alliance and a Covenant Chain which has been kept always inviolable ever since.<sup>16</sup> A year later, Soquans returned before the Council. In ninety years, he reiterated, there has never been a crack in the Chain. Though there had been breaches and great differences, that Chain wherein the Mohawks and the Mohicans are linked has been kept inviolable and we pray that our Fathers will keep the same so forever.<sup>17</sup>



Mohican Village

The Mohicans' memory was vivid, extending back to the first white men and beyond. It was recorded in belts of wampum that marked the important events of the tribe, a treaty, a call to war, the death of a sachem. The wampum belts strung together



**Broken Chain**  
by Bill Greer

seashells, the colors and patterns signifying the message. White wampum denoted good tidings as in peace and friendship, and if white shells were unavailable, chalk or clay would be daubed on colored ones to make them white. Black was more ominous, as in the black belt painted with a red hatchet that invited an ally to war. A sharp orator would wield a belt as he spoke, turning it just so to signal how far his speech had progressed and pointing to the places on the belt which corresponded to the elements of his message.<sup>18</sup>

To invest the memories throughout the tribe, the people gathered at certain seasons. The historian, the keeper of the wampum, would remove a belt from the bag where it was stored and say aloud its meaning. The belt would be passed among the people, and each repeated its message, so that at least once a year, every person, male and female, recited the meaning of the belts.<sup>19</sup> Periodically Grand Councils would be held, where over two moons the memories were recited to compare stories, correct differences and pass the knowledge down the generations.<sup>20</sup>

These memories passed to the white men through conferences with the colonial authorities, Moravian missionaries who lived among the Indians, even in a speech at an 1854 celebration of the white man's independence. The chief John Quinney remarked on that irony as he sharply chastised his listeners over their treatment of the Mohicans.<sup>21</sup> At the last Grand Council the Mohicans convened, circa 1750, two of their young men, students of the Moravians, committed their tribe's history to paper, and though it was feared lost, a portion written by Hendrick Aupaumut was rediscovered.<sup>22</sup>

The story that led the Mohicans to the Covenant Chain began thousands of years before the white man's coming. Their ancestors came from the Northwest, crossed over the salt-waters, and after a long and weary pilgrimage, built their fires upon the Atlantic Coast. Here the people dispersed into many tribes. The Delawares would remain the Grandfather of the River Indians. Others drifted south to the Potomac or north to the Penobscot. One group settled where the waters flowed and ebbed, and they took the name Muh-he-con-new – "like our waters, never still." The waters were the Hudson, and the newly-named Mohicans occupied its valley from the tidewater to Lake Champlain.<sup>23</sup>

Broken Chain  
by Bill Greer

The land was rich in game, fertile in soil and free of disease. The tribe seldom felt want, easily finding the food and raiment which was their only aim.<sup>24</sup> Every year, delegates would go to a Council of all the related River Indians and deliberate on the general welfare and invoke the blessing of the Great and Good Spirit.<sup>25</sup> The tribes remained so united that whoever attacked the one, it was the same as attacking the whole, and they would make common cause against the enemy.<sup>26</sup>

Though the Mohicans distinguished themselves in their peaceableness and taught their children to be kind and generous, their men were the best warriors in the field, truly formidable to any nation and acknowledged so by the unrelated peoples living to the west.<sup>27</sup> On the eve of the white man's arrival, they numbered 25,000 and could lead four thousand warriors into battle.<sup>28</sup> With their strength, they lived in peace. Friends could cross their borders, enemies feared to. A Mohawk appearing in their country knew he would be hunted down as a beast of prey.<sup>29</sup>



Half Moon on the Hudson

One day a Mohican walked out of the castle the tribe had built on the river. He saw something on the water. At first he thought it was a great fish, and he ran to the castle to call others to look. Two of the men went to examine it closely. They discovered a vessel with men in it. They immediately joined hands with the people in the

vessel and became friends.<sup>30</sup> Though the Mohicans did not record the names, the ship was the Half Moon and her commander was Henry Hudson.

The Mohicans were astonished at the pale faces of the visitors and thought the white men must be ill. When the strangers asked for rest and kindness, the Mohicans took them in, naked as they were, and clothed them.<sup>31</sup> The white men said they would not stay, but they promised to return in a year's time.<sup>32</sup>

In remote times, the wise men of the Mohicans had foretold the coming of a strange race from the sunrise, as numerous as the leaves upon the trees. The strangers would eventually crowd them from their possessions, the ancestors had predicted. Still, as the white men sailed away, the Mohicans suffered little anxiety, for the prophecy also said that this land was not their original home and that one day they would return to the west from whence they had come. The Great Spirit who had made the red men from red clay would unite their strength to avert a calamity.<sup>33</sup>

So when the white men returned, the Mohicans welcomed them ashore and said to them, we will give you a place to make a town, from here up to such a stream and from the river back up to the Hill. You are a small people, they told the families who had come to settle, but in time you will multiply and fill up the land we have given you.

After the white men were ashore for some time, other Indians came, ones who had not seen the strangers before. They looked fiercely at the newcomers. The Mohicans, seeing the threat and the whites so few in number, took and sheltered their visitors under their arms, lest they be destroyed.<sup>34</sup>

Another Mohican sachem, Solomon Wahaunwanwaumeet, reminded the whites of this kindness a century and a half later. "You remember when you first came over the great waters," he told a Provincial Congress in 1774, "I was great and you was very little, very small. I then took you in for a friend, and kept you under my arms, so that no one might injure you; since that time we have been true friends."<sup>35</sup>

And how did the whites repay the kindness? They did what no other nation could have done, that's what the Mohicans concluded. The Dutch turned the Mohicans into women. And in doing so, they laid the foundation for the greatness of the Iroquois. The Iroquois, the confederacy of the Five Nations in which the Mohawks played the role of eldest brother. The Iroquois, who the Dutch called friend. The Iroquois, who the Mohicans called enemy, an enemy they were on the verge of extirpating before the white men interfered.<sup>36</sup>

The conspiracy began when the Iroquois found themselves between two fires, squeezed by war with the French and their Algonquin allies to the north and the

Broken Chain  
by Bill Greer

Mohicans and their grandfather the Delaware to the east and south. Realizing they could not prevail, the Iroquois turned to intrigue. They must persuade their enemies to lay down their arms, they decided, convince them that the wars would exterminate them all if they could not be ended.

What was needed was a people who would assume the role of mediator among the warring neighbors. A people who would assume the role of women, who would become women. For it was always the women who ended wars. A man would never express a desire for peace. No matter how tired, he would fear being called a coward. A warrior must show courage to the end, never hold the peace belt in one hand and the tomahawk in the other.

But the tender and compassionate sex would come forward and lament with great feeling the losses suffered. The women would describe the sorrows of widowed wives and bereaved mothers. They would cry how cruel it was to see their sons slaughtered on the field of battle or tortured as prisoners. When the warriors began to pity the suffering of their wives and helpless infants, the women would argue that both sides had proved their courage, that the contending nations were alike high-minded and brave. Now they must embrace as friends those whom they respected as enemies.

This the Iroquois told the Mohicans and the other River Indians. Some magnanimous nation must assume the situation of the woman. A weak or contemptible tribe could not play the role for no one would listen. No, only the River Indians commanded the respect and influence. As men they were dreaded; as women they would be honored and could stop the quarrels and the bloodletting. If only they would lay down their arms, they would bring peace and harmony to the nations.

The Mohicans would not be so easily fooled. But the Mohawks told the Dutchmen who had penetrated their country that they were warring against the Mohicans. And the Mohawks said they would not suffer the Dutch to trade with their enemies, that the Iroquois were the most powerful of all the Indian nations and if the whites were friends to their enemies, the Five Nations would turn their full fury on them. But if instead the Dutchmen helped them bring peace with the Mohicans, then the Mohawks

would support and protect the white men in all their undertakings. The white traders were afraid, for they had seen great bodies of warriors pass and repass and they could not avoid being disrupted and molested.

So the Dutch called a grand council, and the Mohicans and the Mohawks gathered on the banks of a stream near where the Dutch had built their fort, a stream to be known as Nordman's Kill. With many speeches and supplications, the white men got the hatchet out of the hands of the River Indians. They buried the weapon and said that they would build a church over the spot so that the weapon could never be stolen except by lifting up the whole church. If any nation dared to steal it, the Dutchmen promised to take revenge on them.

Then a great ceremony was held to invest the River Indians in the role they had accepted. "We dress you in a woman's long habit, reaching down to your feet, and adorn you with earrings," the Mohawks told the River Indians, and delivered a belt of wampum. "We hang a calabash filled with oil and medicine upon your arm," they continued. "With the oil you shall cleanse the ears of the other nations, that they may attend to good and not to bad words, and with the medicine you shall heal those who are walking in foolish ways, that they may return to their senses and incline their hearts to peace." The Mohawks delivered another belt of wampum, and then a third as they concluded. "We deliver into your hands a plant of Indian corn and a hoe."

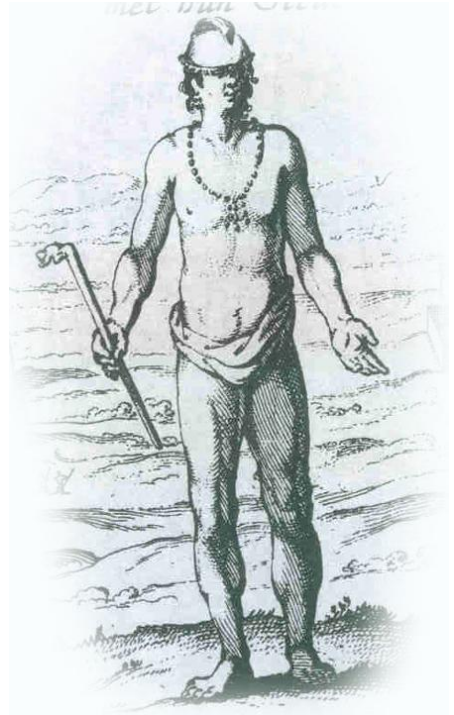
And with the River Indians installed in the situation of the woman, a great belt of wampum and chain of friendship was laid across their shoulders as the mediators, and one end was held by all the other Indian nations and the other by the Dutch.<sup>37</sup>

**T**HE SACHEMS OF THE FIVE NATIONS, the Iroquois Confederacy, had come to the New York governor with many presents. On the first day of the conference, May 26, 1691, they offered three fathom of wampum, a half dozen beaver and otter pelts and a pouch of porcupine quills with which they adorned themselves when they went to war. A week later, they opened a second address with a gift of four otters. "We have been informed by our Forefathers that in former times a Ship arrived here in this country,

Broken Chain  
by Bill Greer

which was a great admiration to us,” the speaker said. “Especially our desire was to know what was within her Belly. In that Ship were Christians, amongst the rest one Jaques with whom we made a Covenant of friendship, which covenant has since been tied together with a chaine and always ever since kept inviolable by the Brethren [white men] and us, in which Covenant it was agreed that whoever should hurt or prejudice the one should be guilty of injuring all, all of us being comprehended in one common League.”<sup>38</sup>

So the memory of Jacques Eelkens had been handed down for three-quarters of a century. No wonder, the Mohawks’ meeting with the Dutchman left in command of Fort Nassau in 1615 was an important event. For five years, the Dutch had been trading on the Hudson, but the Mohawks had failed to make contact. Certainly, they knew the value of the goods the Europeans could bring. They had learned it from the French along the St. Lawrence. But the French had sided with their enemies, the Algonquin tribes living in the north, and together these allies had warred against the Mohawks.<sup>39</sup> Now here was another white man eager to buy pelts. The Mohawks controlled rich furring areas to the west where they made their homes along the Mohawk River. They could bring canoe-loads downstream, to the great falls that tumbled over the precipice just before the confluence with the Hudson. From there, they could portage over to another stream, Tawalsantha, later to be known as Nordman’s Kill, which led to the fort the newcomers had built.<sup>40</sup>



A Mohawk

The journey required them to encroach on the territory of the Mohicans, but they were willing to take that chance. Admittedly, the Mohicans and their allies were a ferocious enemy. Not two decades past, the wars had reduced the Mohawks so low that

scarcely any of them were left on the earth. Though they had recovered, increasing their numbers like a noble germ and conquering their enemies, they could not maintain their victory. The Mohicans had prevailed again in recent years, once more rendering the Mohawks almost extinct.<sup>41</sup>

But now the tribes were at peace, if only because the Mohawks avoided their enemy rather than friendship. They were eager to exchange furs for the iron implements and other materials the whites promised, and they were willing to fight for the right. For a lifetime now, the Five Nations had been *Aquanoshioni*, “one house, one family,” ever since the Mohawk chief *Thannawage* had united his people with the Oneidas, Onondagoes, Cayugas and Senecas, and given his tribe the role of eldest brother. Did that not make them strong? And did they not call themselves *Ongwe-honwe*, “men surpassing all others, superior to the rest of mankind?” Had they not eaten up a whole body of the French king’s soldiers, the flesh flavored like bear meat?<sup>42</sup>

So the Mohawks came to find out what the Ship’s Belly held.

The Mohicans didn’t like the intrusion for they had long guarded their borders jealously. The tensions escalated almost immediately. But the Mohawks kept coming. Encouraged by the Dutch, they felt free to act belligerently, to disrupt the traffic of the Mohican allies who brought furs from the north, to congregate around the Dutch fort on the west side of the river and to push the Mohicans to the eastern shore, skirmishing with their enemy if necessary.<sup>43</sup> Encountering little resistance, they increased the pressure, beating the Mohicans in fair battle until that enemy was forced to become a woman to avoid total ruin.<sup>44</sup>

And with furs, persuasion and belligerence, the Mohawks enlisted the support of the Dutch. The white men coveted the pelts the Mohawks brought from the vast inland lakes, but they could not lose the support of the Mohicans. So they were willing participants when the Mohawks orchestrated their plot. Sganarady, an old Mohawk, recalled his grandfather saying he had attended the gathering and how the Mohawks were the ones to make it happen. They met on the banks of Nordman’s Kill. There the

covenant of friendship was established between the Dutch, the Mohawks and the woman who the Mohicans had become.<sup>45</sup>

**T**HE COVENANT CHAIN HELD STRONG FOR TEN YEARS. But the situation was one of tolerance, not peace, no matter the friendship professed. The three parties holding the ends and the middle not only told different stories of how the Covenant Chain was forged. Their interests diverged as well. Catalina Trico might recall a time of peace, quiet and all the freedom imaginable, but beneath the surface, trouble was brewing.

The Dutch were not long satisfied with the land the Mohicans granted for their settlement of Fort Orange. Now headed by Daniel van Krieckebecck, hailed as Beeck, the community asked the Mohicans for more in 1625. The Mohicans resisted, probably resentful of how the Dutch welcomed the Mohawks in and around Fort Orange. By now, the Mohicans themselves had all moved their homes across the river. The Mohawks were no happier with their lot. Too many Mohican allies from the north were carrying furs to the Dutch. The Mohawks' interference with that trade aggravated the tensions with the Dutch and the Mohicans.<sup>46</sup>

The first trouble started in 1625 away from Fort Orange. The Mohicans ventured up the Mohawk River to attack a Mohawk village just across the boundary between the two tribes. They drove the villagers away.

Emboldened and with war flaring, the Mohicans decided on another attack in the summer of 1626. They asked Beeck to help them, and he agreed, perhaps hopeful of receiving more land if he curried favor, and eager to punish the Mohawks for interfering with trade from the north, and confident Dutch guns would prevail.<sup>47</sup> Beeck and six of his men set out with the Mohicans. A league from Fort Orange, they met the Mohawks – and disaster. The enemy flew boldly upon them with a discharge of arrows. The Dutchmen and the Mohicans turned to flee. Many Mohicans were killed. So were Beeck and three other Dutchmen. The Mohawks were brutal. They devoured one of the dead Dutchmen, Tymen Bousensz. They burned the others, except for a leg and an arm they carried home to divide among their families as a sign of their victory.<sup>48</sup>



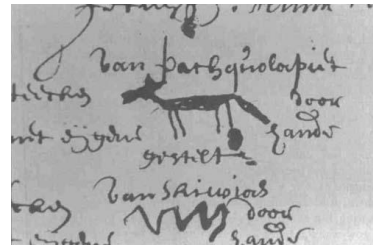
Broken Chain  
by Bill Greer

For the Dutch, the defeat was a serious setback. The new Director in Manhattan, Peter Minuit, sent Pieter Barentsen to assume command of Fort Orange. Barentsen's first task was to meet with the Mohawks. He got little satisfaction. The Mohawks simply pleaded that they had never before acted against the whites. Why had the Dutch meddled with them? Without that, they would never have shot them.

Barentsen's second task was to remove the families. They would leave for the colony on Manhattan. The settlement at Fort Orange was over, at least for now. Only sixteen men would remain to garrison the fort. The episode was not so disastrous as to abandon the trade.<sup>49</sup>

The setback was only temporary, of course. The Manhattan community, New Amsterdam, thrived in the coming years. As the Mohicans had predicted, the small people multiplied and filled up the land. Catalina Trico contributed her share. She bore eleven children. As an elderly widow, she guessed her progeny totaled 145. An estimate of her descendants four centuries later exceeded a million.<sup>50</sup>

Within a couple of years, a clever Dutchman realized that perhaps he could turn the disaster into a boon. In 1628, Kiliaen van Rensselaer sent his agents up the Hudson. Many of the lands had gone vacant. It took two years to close the sale from the Mohicans. But to hear Van Rensselaer describe his purchase, it was worth the wait. His new Patroonship would comprise "the whole district with all the lands formerly inhabited by and belonging to the free, rich and well-known nation named the Mahikans. . . Since Daniel van Krieckebecck ... involved and engaged these same Mahikans in needless wars ... [they] were so hard pressed ... that they resolved in the years 1630 and 1631 to sell and transfer their said lands with all their rights, jurisdiction and authority ... everything along the west side of the river, and inland indefinitely."<sup>51</sup>



Land Deed with  
Mohican Pictographs

For the Mohicans, the defeat was the beginning of the end. The war lasted intermittently for two more years. Early in 1628, another battle broke out near Fort Orange. The Mohawks again defeated the Mohicans and vanquished them to the east, to the Fresh River, probably the river that would become the Connecticut.<sup>52</sup> The Mohicans clung to some hope for a couple of years. They resisted selling their lands along the Hudson. But in 1630, they agreed to their first land transaction, though they likely did not understand they were permanently assigning the title to Kiliaen van Rensselaer.<sup>53</sup> For many years, the Mohicans would reside at Stockbridge in Massachusetts, and they would become known as the Stockbridge Indians. About 1825, the prophecy of their forefathers was fulfilled. The strange race from the sunrise had grown as numerous as the leaves upon the trees and crowded them from their possessions. Chief John Quinney led them back to the west, to where the few remaining members of the tribe found a home at Green Bay in Wisconsin.<sup>54</sup> The migration fulfilled only part of the prophecy, however. The Great Spirit had not averted a calamity.

For the Mohawks, their victory began a rise to domination. As the Mohicans said, the Dutch had laid the foundation for the future greatness of their Iroquois friends. The Mohawks began using Mohican lands with impunity, fishing, hunting, trading and warring.<sup>55</sup> No longer would a Mohawk fear he would be hunted down as a beast of prey when he crossed the Mohican boundary. In the 1640s, the Reverend Johannes Megapolensis observed the Mohicans bringing annual tribute to the conquerors.<sup>56</sup>

At about this time, the Mohawks obtained guns, first from the English, then from the Dutch. No matter the law, the traders could not resist the twenty beavers they could obtain for a musket or the ten guilders for a pound of powder.<sup>57</sup> As the first Indians to use firearms, the Mohawks earned a new name from the River Indians for the gunlocks on their weapons— *Sankhicanani*, the fire-striking people.<sup>58</sup> Four hundred Mohawk warriors wielded guns to claim victories over their enemies along the St. Lawrence, who had so long held them at bay. With their new power, the Mohawks were feared by all the Indians around them, as far as the sea coast, and they compelled tribute from the weaker

Broken Chain  
by Bill Greer

tribes.<sup>59</sup> The Mohawk ascendancy would continue for over a century, until a new power emerged with the American Revolution.

No matter how tarnished and scratched, by wars, epidemics, land swindles or the flood of white immigrants, the Covenant Chain never actually broke. One end passed to the British in 1664 when the Dutch handed over their New Netherland colony. In 1700, the Five Nations of the Iroquois reminded the English governor of New York, the Earl of Bellomont. “We are of a peace,” the speaker Sadergenaktie said. “Our hearts are steady and constant, and we lay hold of the old Covenant Chain made with this government under the Crown of England, which we will keep firm and inviolable.”<sup>60</sup>

At the next year’s conference, Lieutenant-Governor Nanfan, standing in for the dead Bellomont, reiterated the commitment from the English side. “There is a Covenant chain wherein all His Majesties Christian subjects on this main of America and the Brethren [the Five Nations] are included which I am now come to renew, according to the ancient custom. Let that be kept clean and bright on your parts as it is and shall be on ours.”<sup>61</sup>

It was all a bit of a pretense, of course, a chain pitted with the chinks of war and covered in the rust of deceit. The Mohican sachem Soquans perhaps expressed it best at the 1701 conference in his message to the Lieutenant-Governor. After once again promising to keep the Covenant Chain inviolable, he reminded the governor how the links were kept shiny. “We have observed that neither Bears grease nor the fat of deer or elks are so proper to keep that chain bright. The only foreign remedy that we have found by experience in all that time to keep the chain bright is beavers grease.” And with that he handed over the item that bound the parties together, two pelts of beaver.<sup>62</sup>



Beaver, source of trade  
and conflict

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> “The First White Woman in Albany - Deposition of Catelyn Trico, October 17, 1688,” in *The Documentary History of the State of New York*, ed. E. B. O’Callaghan (Albany, NY: Weed, Parsons, 1849-1851), 3:50-51.

<sup>2</sup> George Olin Zabriskie, “The Founding Families of New Netherland, No. 4 – The Rapalje-Rapelje Family,” *De Halve Maen* 46 (January 1972), 7-8.

<sup>3</sup> Hudson’s journal was lost but excerpts were published by Johannes de Laet in 1625. See Johannes de Laet, “New World, or Description of West-India,” in *Narratives of New Netherland 1609-1664*, ed. J. Franklin Jameson (New York: Charles Scribner’s and Sons, 1909, Reprint New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1959), 31-60. Juet’s Journal was published by Samuel Purchas in 1625. See Samuel Purchas, *Purchas His Pilgrimes* (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1906), 13:333-374, or excerpt in Jameson, *Narratives*, 13-28. On the early maps which identified the River Indians as the Mohicans, see Shirley W. Dunn, *The Mohicans and Their Land, 1609-1730* (New York: Purple Mountain Press, 1994), 67-71.

<sup>4</sup> Simon Hart, *The Prehistory of the New Netherland Company: Amsterdam Notarial Records of the first Dutch Voyages to the Hudson* (Amsterdam: City of Amsterdam Press, 1959), 12-22. Companies are referred to by one of their backers. These are not official names.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-27.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-31.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 33-34.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>9</sup> Nicholas Wassenauer, “Description and First Settlement of New Netherland (selections from *Historisch Verhael*)”, in *The Documentary History of the State of New York*, 3:27.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:30-32.

<sup>11</sup> De Laet, “New World, or Description of West-India,” in *Narratives of New Netherland*, 47. Also Dunn, *The Mohicans and Their Land*, 68-69.

<sup>12</sup> Hart, *Prehistory of the New Netherland Company*, 52.

<sup>13</sup> Wassenauer, “Description and First Settlement of New Netherland,” in *The Documentary History of the State of New York*, 3:35-39.

<sup>14</sup> Zabriskie, “The Founding Families,” 46:7-8.

<sup>15</sup> “The First White Woman in Albany - Deposition of Catelyn Trico, October 17, 1688,” in *The Documentary History of the State of New York*, 3:50-51.

<sup>16</sup> “Conference of the Earl of Belmont with the Indians, August 26-September 4, 1700,” in *Documents Relative/Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, ed. E. B. O’Callaghan (Albany, NY: Weed, Parsons and Company, 1853-1857), 4:743-744.

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<sup>17</sup> “Conference of Lieutenant-Governor Nanfan with the Indians, July 10-July 21, 1701,” in *Documents Relative/Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, 4:903.

<sup>18</sup> Reverend John Heckewelder, *History, Manners, and Customs of the Indian Nations Who once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighboring States* (Philadelphia, 1819, Reprint New York: Arno Press, 1971), 107-110.

<sup>19</sup> Electa F. Jones, *Stockbridge, Past and Present, or Records of an Old Mission Station* (Springfield, MA: Samuel Bowles and Company, 1854), 23.

<sup>20</sup> John W. Quinney, “Speech by John W. Quinney, Chief of the Stockbridge Tribe of Indians, at the Celebration of the Fourth of July, 1854, at Reidsville, New York,” in *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin* (Madison, WI: State Historical Society of Wisconsin), vol. 4 (1857): 315.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 313-320.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 315. The most complete preservation of Hendrick Aupaumut’s history is in Jones, *Stockbridge, Past and Present*, 14-23.

<sup>23</sup> Quinney, “Speech by John Quinney,” in *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, 4:316-317. Though a century apart, Hendrick Aupaumut relates an almost identical origin; see Jones, *Stockbridge, Past or Present*, 14-15.

<sup>24</sup> Jones, *Stockbridge, Past or Present*, 15.

<sup>25</sup> Quinney, “Speech by John Quinney,” in *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, 4:316.

<sup>26</sup> Heckewelder, *History, Manner and Customs*, 60.

<sup>27</sup> Jones, *Stockbridge, Past or Present*, 16-18.

<sup>28</sup> Quinney, “Speech by John Quinney,” in *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, 4:318.

<sup>29</sup> Heckewelder, *History, Manner and Customs*, 64.

<sup>30</sup> “Speech of the Scaakticook Indians, July 8, 1754,” in *Documents Relative/Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, 4: 800-882.

<sup>31</sup> Quinney, “Speech by John Quinney,” in *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, 4:317.

<sup>32</sup> “Speech of the Scaakticook Indians,” in *Documents Relative/Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, 4: 881.

<sup>33</sup> Quinney, “Speech by John Quinney,” in *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, 4:317.

<sup>34</sup> “Speech of the Scaakticook Indians,” in *Documents Relative/Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, 4: 881.

<sup>35</sup> Dunn, *The Mohicans and Their Land*, 32.

<sup>36</sup> Heckewelder, *History, Manner and Customs*, 60-61.

Broken Chain  
by Bill Greer

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., xxxvi, 56-62.

<sup>38</sup> “Propositions of the Christian Mohawks to Governor Slaughter, May 26, 1691,” “Answer of the Five Nations to Governor Slaughter’s Address, June 2, 1691,” in *Documents Relative/Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, 3: 771-775.

<sup>39</sup> Dunn, *The Mohicans and Their Land*, 79.

<sup>40</sup> Dunn, *The Mohicans and Their Land*, 84. Heckewelder, *History, Manner and Customs*, xxix.

<sup>41</sup> Dunn, *The Mohicans and Their Land*, 92-93.

<sup>42</sup> Heckewelder, *History, Manner and Customs*, xxxi-xxxii, 55-56, 96-97.

<sup>43</sup> Dunn, *The Mohicans and Their Land*, 79-81.

<sup>44</sup> Heckewelder, *History, Manner and Customs*, 60-62.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 60-61.

<sup>46</sup> Dunn, *The Mohicans and Their Land*, 96-97.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 96-97.

<sup>48</sup> Wassenaer, “Description and First Settlement of New Netherland,” in *The Documentary History of the State of New York*, 3:43-44.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>50</sup> Russell Shorto, *The Island at the Center of the World* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 41.

<sup>51</sup> Dunn, *The Mohicans and Their Land*, 99-101.

<sup>52</sup> Wassenaer, “Description and First Settlement of New Netherland,” in *The Documentary History of the State of New York*, 3:48.

<sup>53</sup> Dunn, *The Mohicans and Their Land*, 100-102.

<sup>54</sup> “Death of John Quinney, July 28, 1855,” in *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin*, vol. 4 (1857): 309-311.

<sup>55</sup> Dunn, *The Mohicans and Their Land*, 111-112.

<sup>56</sup> Reverend Johannes Megapolensis, “A Short Account of the Mohawk Indians,” in *Narratives of New Netherland*, 172.

<sup>57</sup> “Journal of New Netherland, 1647, described in the Years 1641, 1642, 1643, 1644, 1645, and 1646,” in *Narratives of New Netherland*, 274.

<sup>58</sup> Heckewelder, *History, Manner and Customs*, 99.

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by Bill Greer

<sup>59</sup> “Journal of New Netherland, 1647,” in, *Narratives of New Netherland*, 274.

<sup>60</sup> “Conference of the Earl of Belmont with the Indians, August 26-September 4, 1700,” in *Documents Relative/Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, 4:729.

<sup>61</sup> “Conference of Lieutenant-Governor Nanfan with the Indians, July 10-July 21, 1701,” in *Documents Relative/Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, 4:901.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 4: 902.

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# The Mevrouw Who Saved Manhattan

by Bill Greer

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## About the Author

Bill Greer has spent much of his working life in the heart of New Amsterdam. He is a Trustee and Treasurer of the New Netherland Institute, a membership organization supporting research and education in Dutch-American history. Visit him at [www.BillsBrownstone.com](http://www.BillsBrownstone.com) for more on Mevrouw's world and old New York and to read an excerpt of fifty pages from *The Mevrouw Who Saved Manhattan*.

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