Indigenous Peoples of the Hudson Valley

Prior to European arrival, the Hudson River Valley was home to many Native American societies—from the Munsee Indians of the lower valley (also known as Lenape), to the Mohicans and Mohawks of the upper valley. Early Dutch settlers, about one-half of whom were not ethnically Dutch, learned important survival techniques from Native Americans, and adapted many of their diplomatic, cultural, and social practices. Manhattan retains the Monroe Indian name Amostacke, “the island of many hills.” The Mohawk Indians were the caretakers of the land of the Six Nations of the Iroquois.

New Netherland

In 1609, Henry Hudson sailed into what is now called the Hudson River Valley. Exploring for the Dutch East India Company, he half-heartedly traded with Lenape and Mohawk Indians. Although they failed to discover a northwest passage to Asia, Hudson returned to Amsterdam to report of beautiful land, rich in resources, and navigable “as a fine river as can be found.” Dutch traders soon dominated the economy. The Fort Orange (1624), Mohawk and Mohawk trappers served as an important source for beaver pelt, which were then in high demand in Europe. The truce was so critical that the northern outpost was called Beverwijk (loosely translated as Beaver District), which was subsequently renamed Albany.

Dutch and Native American Heritage in the Hudson River Valley

From 1833 to 1946, the Mohawk Mountain House was the site of the annual Lake Mohonk Conference of Friends of the Indian, where leaders of various faiths strove to make Native Peoples adopt European ways and cultures. As one of America’s most influential political families, Theodore Roosevelt, the 26th U.S. President, was the first to prioritize protecting the country’s natural resources. As governor of New York, he founded the Palisades Interstate Park Commission, an organization that maintains Bear Mountain and Storm King Mountain State Parks.

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The Van Schaick Mansion (1735) served as military headquarters for the English during the French and Indian War, and the Continental Army during the American Revolution.

Visit the Home of President Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site in Hyde Park to learn how FDR expanded the National Park Service to preserve historic sites, including his own. Vanderbilde Mansion (1899) was a lifelong resident of the Hudson Valley, Roosevelt incorporated Dutch-style into his family’s home Springwood (1913), his wife’s retreat Up Country (1937), and his wife’s retreat Val-Kil (1924).

The Hudson River Sloop Clearwater was launched in 1969 through a campaign for stronger environmental protection that was supported by legendary folk musician Pete Seeger. It’s now a traveling museum with a home port at the Hudson River Maritime Museum in Kingston.

Seasonal festivals, museum exhibits, and community events celebrate the Native American and Dutch influences that still shape the Hudson River Valley. The Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, a reconstruction of an 18th-century Dutch sloop-rigged sailing ship, was launched in 1969 through a campaign for stronger environmental protection that was supported by legendary folk musician Pete Seeger. It’s now a traveling museum with a home port at the Hudson River Maritime Museum in Kingston.
The Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area is a federally funded program created by Congress in 1986. The mission of the Heritage Area is to interpret, preserve, promote, and interpret the nationally significant cultural and natural resources of the Hudson River Valley for the benefit of the nation. The Heritage Area and the National Park Service funded the production of this map and guide. Please send your comments or map requests to Hudson River Valley Greenway, 625 Broadway, 4th Floor, Albany, NY 12223-2935; call 518-473-3035; or email hrgn@hudsonrivervway.org.

Upper Hudson Valley

The Papasannis Island Nature Preserve, named for a 17th-century Mohawk sachem, Papasannis, was the site of a Mohawk village dating back thousands of years. This 116-acre nature preserve offers access to two miles of the Hudson River shoreline.

Built in 1737, the Leykau Van Alen House is a designated National Historic Landmark and home museum authentically representing 18th century Dutch colonial life.

The Van Schuyler Mansion is near an original Mohawk village site called “Morismen’s Castle.” It was a strategic meeting point for Naumdauwauke and other Native Americans who became a critical military headquarters.

In Albany, Ten Broeck Mansion (pictured above), Catskill State Historic Site, and Schuyler Mansion State Historic Site preserve examples of the Dutch colonial lifestyle, and honor three of the most influential families in the city’s history.

The Hudson Valley offers recreation areas amidst the last natural forest and salt marsh in Manhattan. Shorakkopoch Rock honors Native Americans who fought against New York’s Dutch settlers. The site was previously occupied by the Wappingers, a stockade was built here, but later abandoned.

Mid-Hudson Valley

The City of Kingston is on land originally farmed by the Esopus tribe. In 1624, Dutch traders purchased the land from the local sachem, Tamanend. Visit the Senate House Museum, the McWane Farmhouse, and the Old Dutch Church to learn the history of the Upper Hudson Stuakada District in Kingston, which is the largest remaining early Dutch settlement in New York State.

Walk through the Hudson Highlands State Park or Clermont State Historic Site and take in nature’s history as the English appeared during the 18th-century.

The Tarrytown Sleepy Hollow Cemetery is the site of the Battle of Saratoga. In 1777, General Horatio Gates ordered the English to leave their imprints on the site architecture, room interiors and landscape, all of which may be visited.

In Tarrytown, Sleepy Hollow offers a look at the life of Washington Irving. America’s first internationally famous writer, Explorer of the Hudson of Sleepy Hollow” with a walk through the Old Dutch Church of Sleepy Hollow and Sleepy Hollow Cemetery. Visit at Halloween to catch a performance of the famous tale.

The Philipse Manor is Sleepy Hollow together with Philipse Manor Hall in Yonkers were once part of the 52,000-acre Philipse Manor. It is now features a restored 18th-century manor house and history museum through an 18th-century Dutch barn, and education about the manor’s history and its role as the first employer of the labor force of the manor.

The Dutchman’s Cave was a popular spot for picnics, swimming, and fishing in the early 19th century. Today, it is a designated National Natural Landmark and offers a scenic view of the Hudson River.

Lover Hudson Valley

The Tappan Zee Bridge is one of the most iconic bridges in the United States, connecting Westchester and Rockland counties. It is a designated National Historic Landmark and offers a scenic view of the Hudson River.

The Van Cortlandt Park was the site of the Battle of Kingsbridge in 1778. Indian soldiers fought for the British, including Chief Daniel Fanning’s Iroquois. The British controlled the Hudson River until 1783.

Inwood Hill Park offers recreation areas amidst the last natural forest and salt marsh in Manhattan. Shorakkopoch Rock commemorates Peter Minuit’s purchase of Manhattan Island for a trinket.

Kubuk, the Rockefeller estate, exemplifies the Gilded Age lifestyle of a prominent New York family. The estate includes a number of buildings, gardens, and greenhouses, and is open to the public.

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