

"A Brief History of Early Halfmoon"

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The Halfmoon story begins with the Native Americans who were important to the settlement of this area before the European exploration.

Natives of the Algonquin language group inhabited this part of North American from Canada to North Carolina and east to the Atlantic Ocean. A subgroup called Mohicans or River Indians lived in the area surrounding Albany from the Catskills to Lake Champlain.

The Mohicans lived in small groups with "castles" or fortified villages from Cohoes to Schodac. Their lifestyle included farming on cleared flats near the river and hunting over a vast forested area. Their small villages were moved as necessary to preserve their way of life.

When Henry Hudson sailed up the river named after him and anchored below Albany, the friendly Indians he encountered were Mohicans who lived on both sides of the river from the Catskills north to Washington County. These natives offered friendship and protection to the early traders who followed Hudson.

The second group of Native Americans important to this story, the Mohawks, an Iroquois tribe, traditional enemies of the Mohicans, lived to the west. At the time of contact the Mohawks were at war with the Hurons, an Algonquin group who lived to the north in Canada.

Mahican Village was located on what is today called Peebles Island. Early Fur traders met the natives here to trade and barter. The point and the islands where the Mohawk River entered the Hudson provided easy crossing places to access trails running both, east, west and north, south. This crossroads was a hub for native trade.

The shallow rivers with many riffs or rapids and Cohoes Falls on the Mohawk were natural barriers which blocked the free flow of river traffic. Batteans and canoes had to be unloaded and carried north to Stillwater or west around the falls and returned to the water.