

# SHIP CANAL TO BE FINISHED

## Bend in Harlem River Will Be Cut Away By Government to Improve Waterway

The straightening of the bend of the Harlem River Ship Canal at Spuyten Duyvil by the Federal Government is expected to begin the latter part of this month, thus reviving a project long deferred. Several minor contracts have been let and bids have been received by the United States Army engineers on other operations.

The work was made possible a few days ago by the State of New York giving the War Department a clear title to all lands, including those under water, necessary for the dredging of the new channel.

Attorney General John J. Bennett Jr., in making this announcement, said the need for this improvement had long been evident and that civic associations and shipping interests had expressed deep satisfaction over the completion of the legal formalities.

### Work Long Delayed.

The improvement was broached many years ago, yet engineers have yet to banish the last obstacle that has prevented the satisfactory navigation of the tortuous Harlem, which links the Hudson and East Rivers and makes Manhattan an island. So long has the project been delayed that many New Yorkers do not know the broad channel which sweeps around Inwood Hill is a United States ship canal. Indeed, the Department of War, in charge of this waterway, has dropped the designation canal in its reports and includes the proposed straightening in the Harlem River improvement.

The Harlem River and the ship canal with which it is merged make a tidal strait eight miles long. The water distance from the Battery to where the Harlem meets the East River is eight and one-half miles and the confluence of the canalized stream and the Hudson River is about thirteen and one-half miles from the tip of Manhattan Island. Originally, the tide swept up from the East River into the Harlem and up Spuyten Duyvil Creek from the Hudson. The Harlem, shallow, narrow and twisted, wound around the base of Marble Hill.

Old maps and prints show a reef or bar across the mouth of Spuyten Duyvil Creek, over which it is said

the rushing waters produced a turmoil. Possibly this suggested a spouting devil. In Indian legend the place was haunted by a sputtering evil spirit. Another legend concerned an intermittent spring near by. Washington Irving tells us that the designation came from the valorous but ineffectual effort of Peter van Corlear, the trumpeter, to swim the creek "in spite of the devil."

### Canal Through Rock.

The Department of War in 1874 conceived the idea of converting the Harlem into a ship canal deep and wide enough for the navy to use in time of war. There were then few bridges across the stream. In 1890 much of Marble Hill was blasted away for a new channel from Broadway to the Hudson. This left the village of Marble Hill on the north side of the Harlem, and one would think it would have been transferred to the Bronx. It is still in Manhattan, however.

Spuyten Duyvil Creek and its small tributaries were absorbed by the dredging of the waterway from Marble Hill to the Hudson. Part of Spuyten Duyvil Creek was filled in, as its course was much like that of Pearl Street, famed as the most crooked thoroughfare in this city.

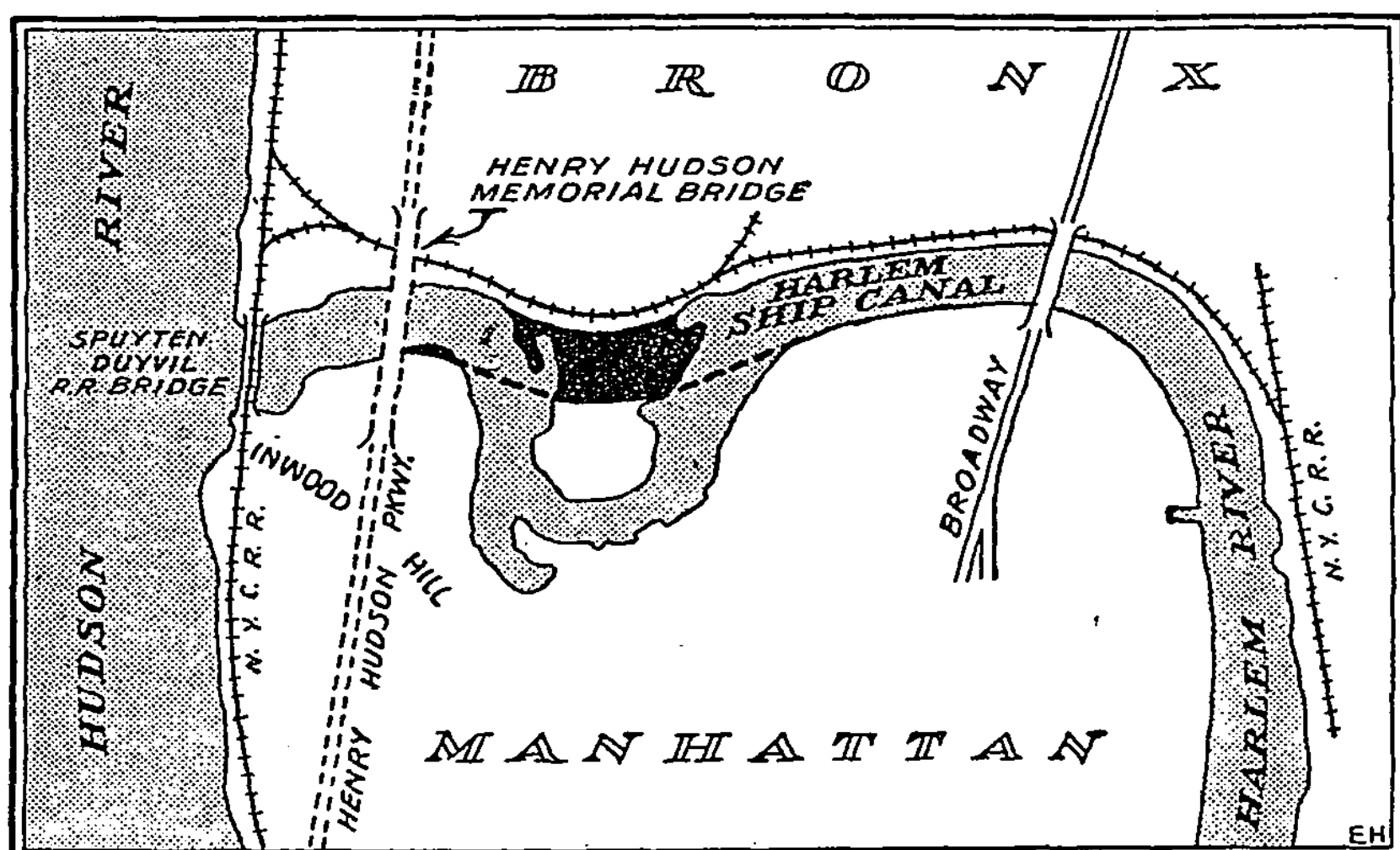
Despite the millions the Federal Government has spent on the Harlem River and the ship canal, there remains a peninsula jutting into the waterway near where it joins the Hudson—thus producing a bend difficult of navigation and often dangerous.

The peninsula concerned was owned by Isaac G. Johnson, and was the site of the Johnson Iron Works, famous as a cannon factory in Civil War times. The State of New York in 1926 acquired this property.

In addition there are certain lands under water for the purchase of which the State Legislature appropriated \$30,000. The War Department will cut a 400-foot channel through the peninsula and what land remains will probably become a city park.

Over the ship canal, forty feet above mean low water, will be the Henry Hudson Bridge, the construction of which already has begun.

## NEW CHANNEL FOR SHIPPING



Harlem Canal is to be completed by the cut shown in solid black on the map. Henry Hudson Bridge also is indicated.

The New York Times

Published: August 4, 1935

Copyright © The New York Times