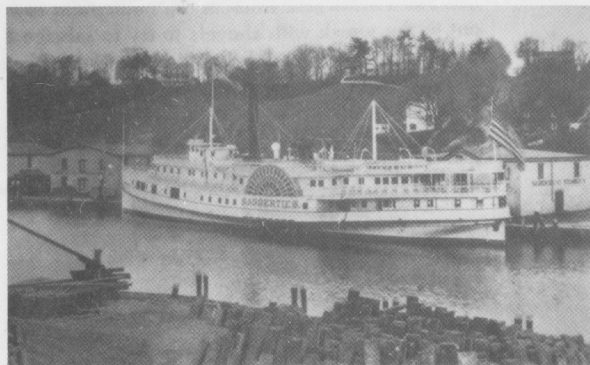


HISTORY

In 1834, Congress appropriated \$5,000 for a lighthouse at the mouth of the Esopus Creek. In 1838, a stone house was completed on a 40 by 50 foot timber-framed pier, lighted by five whale oil lamps with parabolic reflectors. The foundations remain as the island to the east of the present lighthouse.

In 1867 funds were provided for the present lighthouse, which was constructed on a massive circular stone base 60 feet in diameter and 12 feet deep. The stone base sits on three rows of 56 pilings topped with three layers of 6 inch planking. The 20 inch thick brick cavity walls were constructed on stone fill within the circular pier. A fourth-order Fresnel lens, fueled with kerosene, provided the light for the new lighthouse. In 1888, the harbor was enlarged by building jetties and a small road was built to connect the lighthouse to Saugerties. The boathouse, which was originally on the island, was moved to the circular pier around the turn of the century. In 1910, a wooden platform extension and fog bell were added to the top of the lighthouse. The lights directed traffic on the river when Saugerties was a major port, with daily passenger boats to Manhattan and frequent ferries to Tivoli.

Drinking water for the keeper and his family was provided by a cistern located under the floor in the northeast corner of the building. This cistern was supplied by rainwater from the roof. Major repairs were made in 1940, and shortly after the war, electricity, steam heat and telephone were provided. The light was automated in 1954; the fittings were removed and the building sealed airtight.



Saugerties night boat with bluestone in foreground

Dampness accelerated the deterioration of the building, and the Coast Guard engineers deemed the building too expensive to repair. They removed the light to the original island and made plans to demolish the lighthouse.



1834 lighthouse

Ruth Reynolds Glunt, local historian and author of *LIGHTHOUSES AND LEGENDS OF THE HUDSON*, mounted a campaign and successfully halted the demolition. The Village of Saugerties then obtained a short lease. Many years of negotiation to buy the building or obtain a permanent lease were fruitless. Elisse Berry, a young architect, further ensured its preservation by placing it and the other three Upper Hudson River lighthouses on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1976, the Saugerties Arts Council formed a committee headed by Clifford Steen to again attempt to save the lighthouse.

PRESERVATION

The Saugerties Lighthouse Conservancy was formed in 1985 as a not-for-profit corporation with members from both sides of the Hudson River. The Coast Guard gave up jurisdiction, and the property reverted back to New York State. In 1986, Assemblyman Maurice Hinchey and Senator Charles Cook passed a bill selling the lighthouse and the adjacent wetlands to the Conservancy for the sum of \$1. The conservancy received a loose pile of bricks ready to collapse into the river. The roof and floors had rotted and caved in and the road to the mainland was long gone.



1886 photo of the lighthouse; from the National Archives

Reid Beilenberg and John Kurowski were hired to stabilize the building. A barge was constructed to transport heavy materials to the building and to remove tons of rotten debris. The island was cleared and a work platform constructed. A bridge with a trolley and trap doors was constructed. An elaborate scaffolding and shoring system was designed to hold up the tower, floors and roof so that new brick walls could be constructed. At this time Alex Wade was hired as architect and construction manager. More than 10,000 new common brick were required to

replace bricks that had crumbled to dust from moisture. Columbia University tested the mortar and provided the formula for matching the original lime-based mortar. Tons of masonry materials were loaded by hand on the barge. The entire masonry structure has now been rebuilt, including the massive stone base. The wood from the scaffolding was recycled to replace the rotted floor joists and roof rafters. Because the wood was built into the masonry, carpentry and masonry work had to proceed concurrently. Dale Moisse, a local mason, performed this seemingly impossible task very efficiently. Ken St. John restored the badly damaged slate roof and fabricated new flashings.

The lantern that houses the light was removed from the building and completely restored to its original condition. Stairs, rails and floors have been reconstructed. The Coast Guard has installed a fourth-order solar powered light. After 36 years, the light was restored to operation on August 4, 1990.

The building was replastered by Frank Mangione, a local restoration expert. Handcrafted interior trim was fabricated by Steve Thomas, owner of an original Chinese junk, who acts as our caretaker. Steve has done most of the final finish work on the building. The final touch is a "memorial" picket fence with the names of hundreds of donors inscribed in the pickets as a permanent memorial to all those who helped with the restoration and lived in the lighthouse.

ACTIVITIES

The Saugerties Lighthouse is open on weekends and holidays from Memorial Day through Labor Day, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. It is available at other times by appointment throughout the year, weather permitting.

Transportation by boat is available from the south side of the Esopus Creek. The conservancy maintains a nature trail and private dock on Lighthouse Drive just past the Coast Guard Station on the north side of the creek. The nature trail (½ mile long) can be used by small groups with permission from the conservancy. The nature trail cannot be used by large groups, in periods of flood tide, or during nesting season for endangered bird species. Our dock can be used **ONLY** by special permission. Parking at this site is limited to six cars.

The lighthouse proper contains a museum, a caretaker's apartment, two bedrooms and a living room with merchandise displays. A common kitchen serves the apartment and bedrooms. Overnight accommodations are available on weekends by advance reservation.

Our museum displays artifacts of the lighthouse and of the commercial heyday of the Saugerties waterfront. Models and displays from the reconstruction of the lighthouse are