

The Keeper's Log

Spring 2020

Welcome Julia

Welcome to our new administrative assistant, Julia Liu. Julia will be working with us about 15 hours a week, taking on many of the daily tasks that keep us going. Julia recently created a mail chimp account, then developed and sent out our first e-blast which will be coming to you on a regular basis.



Julia has worked with several non-profits, helping them grow their membership and increase their fundraising. Her work experience is varied and that is what makes her successful.

She has worked as a bookkeeper, office administrator and development specialist. Whatever job needed to be done, Julia tackled it and made it hers.

She grew up in the Midwest and entered the Air force shortly after graduating high school. She spent 8 years in the USAF and separated in upstate NY. She obtained her degree in Professional and Technical Communication from SUNY Institute of Technology. Julia then moved to New Jersey where she did intranet management and technical writing as an independent contractor. After many years living in New Jersey, Julia moved to the Hudson Valley to raise her family. She has worked for several non-profits in the area including Catholic Charities and the Hudson Valley LGBTQ Community Center.

In addition to her paid work, Julia volunteers for several youth sports organizations, holding board positions. This work has been fulfilling and has helped her network and hone her skills.

Julia will gradually become involved with all phases of our operation, starting with upgrading and streamlining some of our record keeping systems, becoming familiar with the history of the Hudson-Athens Lighthouse and HALPS. Her background in development will help as we are able to re-open to the public and as we go forth with fund raising. If you want to reach out to Julia, you may contact her at halpsoffice@gmail.com

From the HALPS President:

Dear Lighthouse Friends,

This issue of our newsletter is overdue. We usually summarize last year's events and project what is happening going forward. With such uncertainty about this season, we decided to wait a bit so we could be more accurate with our news. We think you will enjoy this issue as it brings to light all that goes into making the "lighthouse" happen, its problems and solutions, as well as some of the people who make it all happen. And, it makes for some good reading. Julia will soon send it as an email and later you can decide how you would like to receive future issues.

2019 Reflections:

After faced with the decision about whether to open last year, we had a number of potential volunteers come to our recruiting sessions with Fran Martino, and fortunately, almost everyone who attended, signed up to serve. We were able to staff each tour without overworking anyone. Our attendance at tours was the best we've had in years.

We had 393 on our Saturday tours, about 180 on our school tours, and roughly 120 on special tours and events. Two Saturday tours were sold out.

Additionally, two very experienced Master Captains hopped on board. Bill Palmer, a volunteer for years as he was able, retired in June and took over responsibility for the boat - doing repairs, streamlining the passenger policy, restoring the seats and replacing the hardware. On many a Sunday, he could be seen at the dock, patching and painting the seats, drying out the PFD's and washing down the deck. We also replaced the engine, and it was "smooth sailing" from there.



Van Calhoun, a long time boater and master of many things, also contributed his expertise. He will tell you later about his volunteer recollections but did not tell you that while he was working with the second graders, he spoke about trashing the river and appropriately recycling material. That mini lesson turned into a real life experience a few minutes later when the baggie from a child's sandwich blew over the deck near a kayaker. As the children signaled and waived to him, he successfully picked up the baggie and a great cheer went out! Trash retrieved. Lesson learned, and a nice fit for second grade curriculum. The story went viral = Field trip scheduled for next year!

Just a few days before our September tour, we noticed we had lost power - presumably because of a break in the power cable from shore. We operated our September tour with no videos but the following stories will fill you in on the power saga - the big event of the year.

We began rotating our meetings to better accommodate some of our board members. We voted to hire some administrative help, and applied for designation as one of the Seven to Save Historic Structures or Sites, recognized by Preserve NY. We received notice in early February that we were one of seven winners from 17 applications. This designation will give us some needed recognition and support as we move forward. We will be sharing much more about this in the coming months and are delighted with the honor!

Electric Cable to the Lighthouse Fails

The Hudson Athens Lighthouse preservation Society (HALPS) has, for many years, joined in the holiday spirit with Columbia and Greene County residents. Thanks to ongoing financial support from the Bank of Greene County, the lighthouse annually adorns itself with holiday lights. In September of 2019, the 1946 electric cable running from the Athens shore and buried in the Hudson River, failed. In addition to the holiday lights, HALPS uses electricity to run two flat screen TV's, one of which has a program with Emily Brunner talking about living in the lighthouse from 1930 to 1936 with the entire Brunner family when her father was the lighthouse keeper. The other gives a news-clip history of the Hudson River lighthouses and the restoration of the Hudson-Athens Lighthouse. We also use electricity to operate the composting toilet and to light the house on dark days and for interior painting and cleaning projects. "People are under the impression that the federal government and the Coast Guard are responsible for maintaining the lighthouse" said Carol Gans, president of HALPS. "The truth is HALPS is responsible for everything other than the Navigation beacon" including paying the electric bill 12 months a year! HALPS is funded by tour receipts, donations and grants. This cable failure jeopardizes the continuance of HALPS' mission to preserve the most northern of the remaining Hudson River lighthouses and providing the public with access to the lighthouse. The flashing green navigation beacon, the only part of the lighthouse maintained by the US Coast Guard, is powered by a small solar panel and rechargeable batteries and works whether or not the lighthouse is supplied with electricity.

Small Generator installed – part I

Based on talking to other lighthouse volunteers at lighthouses with failed cables, replacing the under-water electric cable is very time consuming and the cost is prohibitive. When our failure occurred, HALPS still had two public tours remaining for the season and the holiday light display to set up. There were two problems: the immediate tours and a long range solution which would include the holiday lights operating without the daily task of refilling a generator with gasoline at the lighthouse. Bill Palmer started exploring the acquisition of a small portable gasoline run generator to solve the tour issue. The photo is the Honda generator under an outside grill on the deck of the lighthouse. It worked well and saved the day for the remaining public tours. It ran very quietly and unless a visitor walked over to the



back side of the lighthouse you might not even realize it was there. The other part of the problem was more difficult to resolve, namely the holiday lights.

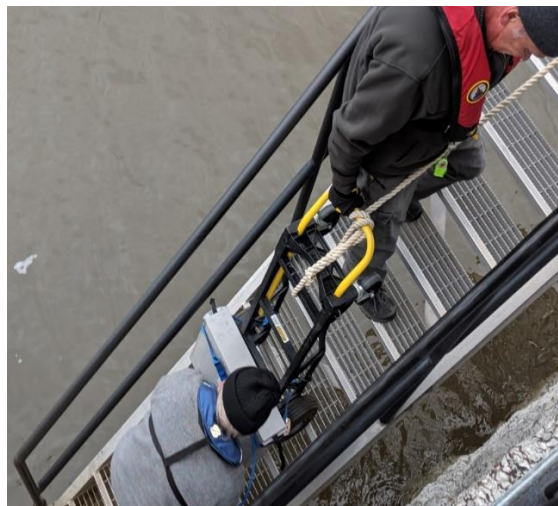
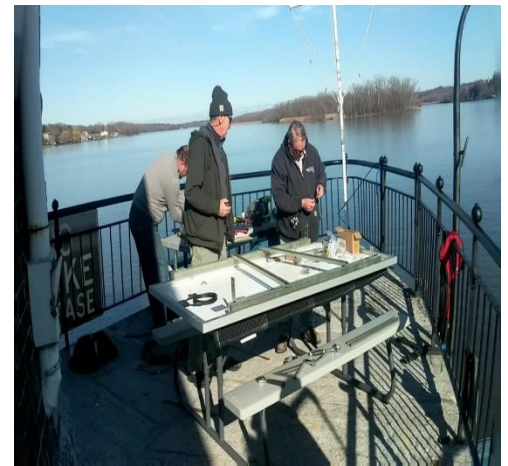
Lighthouse goes solar – part II

The team of Bill Palmer, Joe Kenneally, Van Calhoun, Sonny Brignull, Scott Davis and Peter Rowland started to work at once researching solar, talking to solar businesses and at the same time sizing up the room for solar panels at the lighthouse without making a “visual mess” of an historical building at the same time determining the amount of electricity we would need to run



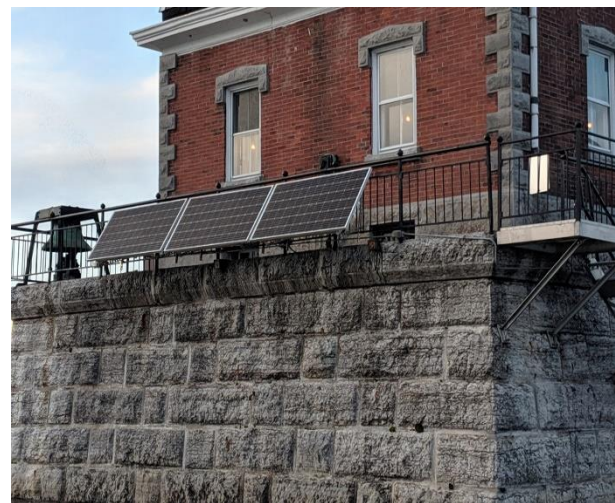
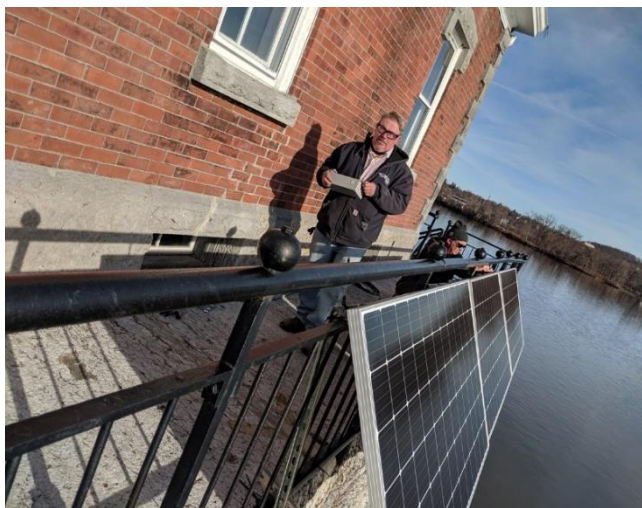
everything on cloudy days. David Borton and Van are checking out the south facing side of the lighthouse. It is lucky for HALPS that the side of the building facing down the river is south and is an ideal location for solar panels and does not interfere with the stairs to enter and exit the lighthouse. Every project needs a work space and one of the picnic tables was pressed into service. You will notice in the photo that there is a metal railing that goes around the entire deck of the lighthouse. This will

serve as a place to fasten the solar panels. Once all the decisions had been made, it was then time to order the parts with the “hoped for” delivery schedule as promised. To make matters more interesting, the floating dock was taken out of the river as is done every year by the Hudson Power Boat Association. This favor is most appreciated by HALPS. When



the solar batteries arrived they weighed 150 pounds each and had to be taken from the pontoon boat to the landing at the bottom of the stairs and up to the first floor deck. To accomplish this they were placed into a sack and strapped to a hand truck for transport. The photo on the left shows one battery on its journey to the first floor. Each battery went up one at a time.

The next set of two photos show the deck where the solar panels were to be mounted to the left of the stairs on the outside of the railing over-hanging the Hudson River.



The bottom photo on the right shows the final installation. A very neat piece of work carried out on cold days.

And Ahead for 2020

UNFORTUNATELY, the Covid 19 virus has affected everyone and shows little sign of allowing us to return to normal in time for our usual summer season. In the works, we had 3 school trips scheduled, the Hudson Children's Book festival, a special tour from overseas, a senior group, possible weddings. All of these have been cancelled. We also were hoping to support a musical event with the Hudson Festival Orchestra on August 1st. (Postponed until 2021) The Athens Street Festival on June 13th is unknown.

We were able to collaborate on two presentations about lighthouses with The Columbia County Historical Society. Bob Taylor presented at two sessions on consecutive Saturdays in February. HALPS netted \$200.42. Thank you Bob! Also a thanks to Bob Green for initiating the event.

We have been in consultation with Sam Merrett, who is a local resident and skipper of the Schooner Apollonia (sail boat seen docked at the riverfront last season) trying to co-ordinate Waterfront Wednesdays where the focus would be on creating activities for local residents. He recently presented his plans to the Tourism Board. HALPS would have an information table and offer free trips to the lighthouse for potential volunteers. Kayakers might also be able to visit at this time. Whether this can happen is unknown at this time. While Marinas are open, physical distancing has to be maintained, and tours are not yet allowed. **Good news, though, is that members of the Hudson Power Boat Association put in our dock on April 25th. Thanks Scott!**

We have long talked about virtual tours and are pursuing this with fervor. With Julia, our new administrative assistant on board, we will be able to keep members with email more up to date with at least monthly e-blasts. (More as needed) A generous gift from the Reinhart Foundation and several other lighthouse friends are supporting costs of our assistant. Their efforts are already beginning to show returns.

Our emergency solar install last November will be re-evaluated and adjusted as necessary to improve the quality of our lighting and hopefully allow us to bring our holiday lighting back to what it was in previous years. We received a grant from the Athens Community Foundation for installing our solar power system. A Speenburgh (Green County Legislature) grant enabled us to purchase the generator, and a grant from the Bank of Greene County again supported our holiday lighting and will help make it better than ever.

We are pursuing a new underwater study to determine the effectiveness of the work that was done over 12 years ago and what further needs to be done, whether it be shoring up our rip rap, and/or building a coffer dam, or whatever else the engineers recommend. We will then go after funding, with a personal goal of having the underwater phase totally completed by 2024, when it will be the Hudson-Athens Lighthouse's Sesquicentennial and the 40th anniversary of HALPS leasing (and now owning) the lighthouse.

We are looking forward to working with Preserve NY to take full advantage of our Seven to Save designation. Watch our email blasts, web site and other media sources for updates.

I can't thank our vast supporters, members, friends, volunteers and board members enough for coming together this past year and for helping to infuse us with renewed energy as we forge ahead under this almost surreal state of living. Emily and the spirits of our former lighthouse keepers would be proud!

And Now the Masters..... The Buccaneers, the Musketeers, the Commodores

There are 3 volunteers who have made significant contributions to HALPS this year. Pictured below on November 22nd, just after lugging the solar batteries up the stairs and just as a pounding cold rain hit on our return trip, are Joe Keneally, Van Calhoun and Bill Palmer. Each has shared his thoughts on the lighthouse and/or their involvement. Next time you see them, please thank them for helping to keep us afloat. They are just a few of many dedicated people and a few that make volunteering a lot of fun.

Joe

Van

Bill



HALPS/ Hudson Power Boat Association Celebration

Well we did it again. Against all odds the HALPS/HPBA members thank you party was a success. First, I would like to thank everyone who came to the event and brought all of the delicious food and drink. Every year the food and drinks are fantastic. I believe there were about 50 some people at the party. A thank you to Bill Palmer, a long time HALPS member, and Sonny Brignull, life member of HPBA who worked all week to make sure we had our quiet running generator in time for the event. Thank you to many lighthouse members who helped to get the lighthouse ready. Thank you

to Jon Bogardus, HPBA, who operated the boat back and forth from the boat club to the lighthouse and to Sonny Brignull who rode with him to show him the way. A big thank you to Bob and Judy Weinman, HPBA, for the use of their beautiful pontoon boat.

As always the music was fantastic. Loud enough to hear and soft enough to talk, and songs you knew the words to. Mike Pagnani is a lucky man. He gets to fiddle with two talented women in public with his wife sitting there enjoying it. I also want to thank Scott Davis who held down the fort at the boat club while we were at the lighthouse, and kept the club house open until the wee hours of the morning just for our enjoyment.

We are very fortunate to have something like our lighthouse so near. As you walk around the deck you can tell that time is taking its toll on the building. If you are a member of the Hudson-Athens Lighthouse team, we thank you. If you are not a member, please consider joining. Donations of any size are welcome.

Joe

Meet Bill Palmer – otherwise known as Captain Bill

Bill Palmer is a lifelong resident of Athens and a long time member/supporter of the lighthouse. Retiring from KeyBank after a 39 year corporate banking career, Bill became a more active volunteer in June of last year. As a life-long boater on the Hudson River, Bill has familiarity with the lighthouse and its importance to the Village of Athens, the City of Hudson and the boating community.

Bill began his direct involvement with the lighthouse many years ago when his children, Jonathan and Audrey, were high school volunteers. Bill would transport both to the lighthouse in the family boat for their various volunteer activities. Within a year or two, both Jonathan and Audrey worked as deckhands for Hudson Cruises, Inc. One of them was usually the deckhand on the Little Spirit for lighthouse tours. During this time, Bill would occasionally fill in for Captain Stan or Captain Guy as captain of the Little Spirit making for an all family crew on lighthouse tour day. It is worthy to note that both Jonathan and Audrey continue to volunteer for HALPS whenever possible.

Bill holds a US Coast Guard Master License and is a certified instructor for the New York Safe Boating Course. He has assumed responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of HALPS' work boat, The Lighthouse Lady, which is used to ferry volunteers and materials to and from the lighthouse.

Recently, Bill was actively involved in the acquisition and installation of the lighthouse generator and solar array that were necessitated by the loss of shore power in late summer 2019. Bill looks forward to the 2020 season. Fine tuning the solar array along with other ongoing maintenance projects are some of the early season activities before the public tour season begins. He is definitely a volunteer extraordinaire and we are fortunate to have him and his many skills.

Along with his volunteer activities for HALPS, Bill was recently appointed to the Board of Trustees of The Columbia Memorial Hospital and is Vice Chair of the Center for Disability Services Foundation Board of Directors.

A Volunteer Sees the Light

Thirty-five years ago, Mike Klein of Hudson, one of the first HALPS Presidents, brought me out on the River to meet Emily, one of the last children to grow up in the Hudson-Athens Lighthouse. Her father was the last occupying lighthouse keeper. I always wanted to be involved with the lighthouse but life can be very messy. After attending a meeting of the Mohawk Hudson Council of Yacht Clubs in 2018 where Marilyn Rositzke spoke, I signed up to receive the HALPS newsletter. That led me to a training for lighthouse volunteers last spring, led by Fran Martino. There I met Carol Gans, Bob Taylor, Bob Green, and other longtime devoted volunteers. A light was rekindled for me. Being a lifelong Columbia County resident, boater, and past Commodore of the Mohawk Hudson Council of Yacht Clubs, it seemed to me that Hudson-Athens Lighthouse, alone on her little island in the middle of the mighty Hudson River, was a ship at sea. She needed a crew and I knew about crews and crewing.

I volunteered then to drive the Lighthouse Lady's new keepers, docents, and guides, ship to lighthouse, ship to shore. But the next thing I knew, I found myself sitting on the floor of the lighthouse with a group of second graders talking about the river, boats, the history of Hudson and Athens, the environment, and what is important to them about the river. Out of the blue a student raised his hand and answered, "My cat had kittens last night!" Another light blinked a beacon in my mind, "So this is what volunteering here at HAL looks like!" I thought.

The summer with newbies like myself ebbed and flowed. Lots of tours. Lots of visitors. It went by in the flash of a lighthouse beacon. And then the lights went out. Literally. All of a sudden, the power cable was cut, HAL's electric lifeline across the waters to shore. My newly assigned ship was adrift in the middle of the Hudson River. No room lights, no video displays, no hot water for tea or coffee or hot dogs. No composting toilet!

Though it was a damper on the season's end, we took it with the tides. The board of directors approved a small quiet generator. Bill Palmer set it up. The HALPS/Hudson Powerboat Association end of season gathering and the last tour in October came off without a slipped knot.

Being interested in solar electricity (Sue and I installed solar panels on our home eight years ago), I volunteered to initiate a solar study to quantify our long term energy needs at HAL, determine whether we could save our severed power cable from Athens' shore and cost out viable alternatives to full operational power.

Viewing HAL as a ship, I called solar expert, Dr. David Borton, to come and assess our needs and options. He is creator of Solaris, a 100% solar electric boat. This USCG craft, certified for 34 passengers, is the first and only all-solar boat in America, now owned by the Kingston Maritime Museum here on the Hudson River. I also sought out Mike Stengl, an international solar consultant on US Embassies and institutional buildings, for his opinion on solving our energy needs dilemma. Together with their comments and suggestions, we defined our own usage needs and chose a way to power our lighthouse. One thing came to light immediately. Our single, largest, constant duration demand for electricity at HAL is her annual winter lighting. And in the still waning sunshine of the season, Joe Kenneally and Carol Gans had just rung the hazard bell..."What will we do about Lighting HAL for Christmas ?" This cherished tradition for twenty-five years, loved by both sides of the river's communities and residents, was in jeopardy.

There was a great pulling of the wheel at the HALPS' helm. Port to starboard, starboard to port. There were budget concerns, weather concerns, work boat accessibility concerns. And all these with no electricity. A quiet resignation began to settle like an evening fog. HAL may have to go dark, go into mothballs for a long winter of dark solitude, disconnected from her shores while the big problem of full repowering was focused on. But, the organic process of percolation pushed a light to the surface. A good idea could become a reality. We would wrap her in a warm winter's glow yet again. The heartfelt need to keep the Holiday lights on for the 26th year in a row for the joy of Athens and Hudson could not be dimmed.

Joe Kenneally led the charge of the effort. Bill Palmer grabbed onto the mechanics. Malcolm Bliss consulted on solar systems. Scott Davis, Sonny Brignull and Pete Rowland simplified the electric hookups. Before you knew it, solar parts were delivered, trips were made to HAL, wicked heavy batteries were hauled up the gantry steps. Volunteers assembled solar panels on frames. Finally, across this small sea of dedication, the system was "hot." The lights were on again for the 26th year. All of Hudson and Athens and their adjacent shores saw "THEIR Lighthouse" sparkle in the bold winter sky. I, too, see these lights now, and think with a smile, "Yeah, now THIS is what volunteering looks like....a real inner glow!"

Van Calhoun

Membership Information: We are in the process of reviewing our membership procedures. Whether you are a donor or member, your contributions are tax deductible. Eventually you will receive an email when it is time to renew. In the top left corner of your mailing label, there may be some letters. A “D” means we have you as a Donor. An “L” means you have a Life membership. An “M” with a date tells you when your membership is up for renewal. A “C” means you are receiving a complimentary issue due to what you may have done for us, are a public figure, or a media contact. If you have any questions about membership, please email at lh1874treasurer@gmail.com, halpsoffice@gmail.com lighthouse@hudsonathenslighthouse.org or call 518 828-5294 and someone will get back to you. To become a member or donate, go to hudsonathenslighthouse.org. Or mail to HALPS, PO Box 145, Athens NY 12015.

HALPS officers 2020-2021

Carol Gans – President
Bob Green – Vice President
Marilyn Rositzke – Treasurer
Rebecca Martin – Secretary

Additional Board Members:

Louise Bliss	Marc Dolan
Tom Hoffman	Bob Ihlenburg
Katherine Lasher	Josh Lipsman
Michele Tarsa	Bob Taylor

Newsletter Editor – Bob Taylor

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