

# THE DAILY GAZETTE

WHEN CREDIBILITY MATTERS

## Down to Business: A new wave of shipping cargo emerges

By Marlene Kennedy | [October 12, 2022](#)

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**DOWN TO BUSINESS** – Sam Merrett tells the story of docking his schooner, Apollonia, on the Hudson River in Newburgh and having to bike sacks of malt over the Newburgh-Beacon Bridge for delivery to a brewery on the other side because the vessel was unable to tie up in Beacon.

The snafu, since resolved, illustrates one of the challenges in trying to return sail freight to the Hudson: landside infrastructure lost over the decades as other modes of transport rose to dominance.

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A century ago, sailing ships still plied the river delivering goods to ports as they had since Colonial times. Today, the Apollonia is attempting to replicate the practice as a carbon-neutral alternative to trucking, at a time when worries about climate change abound.

“We’re not Amazon; we’re not guaranteeing this thing in six hours. ...[W]e’re guaranteeing you a responsibly delivered good,” Merrett says in “WindShipped,” a short documentary on Apollonia and her mission, screened last week in Troy.

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A Rensselaer County native now based in Columbia County, Merrett found the



This month, Apollonia closes out her second full season of two-week, May-to-October runs, delivering cargo between the city of Hudson and Manhattan/Brooklyn. In that time, she's carried bulk cargo (malt, produce, salt, wine, coffee) and smaller cargos (condiments, yarn, skin-care products) both south and north in her 10-ton hold.

In a paper on the schooner's 2021 season published this year in the Journal of Merchant Ship Wind Energy, Merrett and Steven Woods, education coordinator at the Hudson River Maritime Museum in Kingston (and a walking encyclopedia on sail freight), roughly calculated Apollonia's environmental impact. Primary reliance on wind - the ship has a small diesel engine to assist in docking - avoided the use of nearly 68 gallons of fuel when compared to a 12-foot box truck that would carry a comparable 600 cubic feet of goods.

While sail freight is not uncommon these days overseas, recent U.S. attempts originating in Vermont and Maine soon ran aground financially.

In a question-and-answer session after the "WindShipped" screening in Troy, Merrett admitted his operation now covers about 40% of its costs working only with locally owned small businesses and charging them no more than they would have spent shipping by truck. He hopes that becomes 100% "in the next five years."

"We have focused on building out a network with over 15 ports of call throughout the Hudson Valley and a growing array of over 50 shipping partners," he told me by email this week. "We've also diversified our cargo routes to include bulk, wholesale and individual orders. We are building for the longer haul."

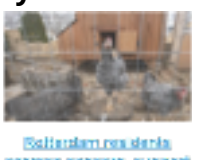
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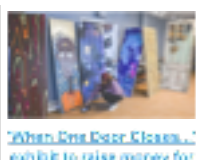
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