

## Sailing vessel, horse-drawn wagon deliver cargo to industrial Red Hook

May 24, 2021 Mary Frost



The horse and wagon delivery and its team were hosted by John Quadrozzi, Jr, an owner of the historic Prospect Park Stable. Two horses from Brooklyn equine, the new operator at Prospect Park Stable, accompanied the wagon team and one is being trained for future deliveries. Eagle photo by Mary Frost

It might have been a scene from the 1800s: The two-masted sailing schooner Apollonia docked in the industrial waters off Red Hook on Saturday and unloaded its cargo of rye, honey, hot sauce and cider from the Hudson Valley.

As musicians played and sang traditional American folk songs and curious passers-by stopped to watch, the crew loaded 50-pound these sacks of rye onto an impressive wooden horse-drawn wagon and pedal-powered cargo bikes, where they were delivered to nearby Brooklyn breweries and distilleries.

Horses hauling wagons laden with goods were once a common sight on Brooklyn's industrial waterfront. But rather than being a quaint reenactment, the Apollonia and its horse-drawn deliveries are the latest example of "retro-innovation" — taking the best from the past to solve the problems of the present.

Saturday's delivery was a pilot run for the Apollonia, Capt. Sam Merrett told the Brooklyn Eagle. The rye was grown just outside of Hudson, N.Y., where the Apollonia is based. The voyage, with a crew of four, took four days.

"We met with the farmers and personally loaded it onto the ship," Merrett said. "We sailed down here using the power of the wind, and now we are unloading the vessel with our friends the RETI Center at GBX~ [Gowanus Bay Terminal]. Our last mile, which is the delivery from this to the actual end user, is being done by renewable resources as well."

"This is our first-ever dabble with horse power for the last mile, but we are hoping to build a future in which transportation is interesting, intriguing, renewable and sustainable," he said.

Part-time crew member Emily Hickox joined the voyage for the last day. "For things that aren't time-sensitive, sailing could be the future way of shipping things again."



Red Hook industrialist John Quadrozzi, Jr., owner of the Gowanus Bay Terminal~ (GBX), is a longtime proponent of sustainable industry. Eagle photo by Mary Frost

### **Horse and wagon delivery in the age of technology?**

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“This project has involved multiple parties,” said John Quadrozzi, Jr., the owner of the Gowanus Bay Terminal (GBX~) and a longtime proponent of sustainable industry.

“The Apollonia is bringing cargo down the Hudson on a traditional sailing vessel. They’re loading and unloading it at our dock at the RETI Cool Streets barge, sponsored by Quadrozzi GBX~, and we’re using alternative means for transport. So we have the sea transport, we have wind transport, we have pedal power and we have traditional horsepower. No fossil fuels were involved in this project,” Quadrozzi said. “That’s the message: moving away from fossil fuels to sustainable means and rethinking how we live.”

Quadrozzi is working with the nonprofit RETI Center to build a [floating industrial eco-lab](#) and community space (dubbed BlueCity) in GBX~’s industrial waters.

Quadrozzi, a lifelong horseman who revived the historic Prospect Park Stable (with equine operations by his daughter Xiana Quadrozzi as Brooklyn equine, aka “Be”), arranged for the wagon team run by Bob Tronsky’s Triple T Farms in Connecticut to come down.

Two of Be’s horses and riders accompanied the wagon team through the streets of Red Hook and Gowanus: “Windsor Terrace,” an in-training Hunter Jumper and Cross Country horse, and “D.U.M.B.O.”, a Draft X (cross) with Quarter Horse. D.U.M.B.O is in training for making future deliveries.



Captain Sam Merrett and his crew personally loaded and unloaded the cargo, with the help of volunteers from the RETI Center. Eagle photo by Mary Frost

### **Biked in from Bed-Stuy**

Families came from Brooklyn and beyond to see the past come to life on the Red Hook waterfront.

“We biked here from Bed-Stuy to see the horses and the Apollonia,” said Sara Eichner, visiting with her son Calvin Eichner-Kruger, age 9. “We have been to the RETI barge before but we especially wanted to see the horses. It’s exciting to see people demonstrating alternative ways to transport goods.”

“I think it’s good that human beings are finally thinking about a way to pollute less,” Calvin said. He noted that the horses were huge. “They look like Godzilla horses!”



Sara Eichner-Krueger and her son Calvin, 9, biked in from Bedford-Stuyvesant to see the ship and the horses. Eagle photo by Mary Frost

Susan Buchanan, who lives in Delaware, said she came into town for her brother's birthday — but confessed that she had ulterior motives.

"I came here for his birthday but this was the event," she told the Eagle.

"My sister-in-law emailed me a link about the Apollonia coming to Red Hook and I said, 'Oh, I have to come up!' I'm very much into net zero carbon neutral. To me, it's everything," she said. "I see this as setting off a spark. The idea of coming by wind and delivering by horse? What a thing! Only in New York."



Brad Vogel, captain of the Gowanus Dredgers Canoe Club, helps unload the cargo from the Apollonia. Eagle photo by Mary Frost

### **Climate change as an opportunity**

“RETI stands for resilience, education, training and innovation,” said Tim Gilman, executive director of the RETI Center. Conceived after Superstorm Sandy, the nonprofit is “essentially about taking climate change as an opportunity to create a new way of dealing with the economy and the ecology so it is more sustainable and more equitable,” he said.

RETI’s fabrication lab is based on the notion of circular economy. “So we recycle plastic and turn it into products — we make our own circuit boards, stuff like that,” Gilman said. With Quadrozzi as their sponsor, RETI is building a solar-powered training and education center on the barge.

“We would love to be a very active port of call for sustainable grain industry,” he added.



Tony Schloss, RETI Center's education director, shows off the Center's biodigester, which will convert animal and human manure and food scraps into clean gas. Eagle photo by Mary Frost

The Apollonia is not the only sail-based cargo ship to dock recently off Brooklyn's waterfront. Last week, the French company [Grain de Sail's](#) sailing cargo ship, which set off from France's northwest region of Brittany, arrived at the marina in Brooklyn Bridge Park with a shipment of wine and chocolate after a 27-day sail across the Atlantic Ocean. Gilman said the RETI Center was in talks with Grain de Sail about having their ship dock in GBX~ South Red Hook after their next voyage.

Tony Schloss, the RETI Center's education director, pointed out the gas-generating toilet biodigester which has been installed next to an on-deck restroom on the barge. The anaerobic biodigester uses bacteria to accelerate the breakdown of human and animal waste — including manure from the horses from Prospect Park Stable — along with

food scraps, creating clean gas and compost.

“It cooks and gas comes out,” Schloss said.

Quadrozzi will be trialing a larger anaerobic digester at GBX~ to turn manure from his 20 Brooklyn horses into energy and organic compost. That, he said, is a bigger a step towards a larger scale anaerobic digestion system taking in not only manure, but brewery/distillery residual and food waste to power the entirety of GBX~ and be finished with fossil fuel in its entirety.



The canvas sign says the schooner Apollonia provides “carbon neutral sail freight on the Hudson River.” Eagle photo by Mary Frost

### **Walking the walk**

“This is a pilot project to show that sustainable, carbon neutral shipping is a possibility — but it’s not just a pilot. It’s actually doing the work, walking the walk, not just talking the talk about sustainability,” said Brad Vogel, executive director of the New York Preservation Archive Project and captain of the Gowanus Dredgers Canoe Club.

“And even if it’s just a little incremental step in the right direction, to me that’s a huge thing,” Vogel said. “Somebody has to do the work of leading the way and showing that for the right cargos and the right routes, you can actually make it work with boats.”

Vogel invited musician Sander Randall to play on the barge for the first cargo run. Randall brought along fellow music enthusiasts Melissa Henni, Nick Ferrone, Pablo Conrad and Justin Cornell and festive music filled the air.





From left: Musicians Sander Randall, Melissa Henni, Nick Ferrone and Justin Cornell (Pablo Conrad, not pictured) created a festive atmosphere during Saturday's event. Eagle photo by Mary Frost

### **Can wind power ever compete with trucking?**

Can wind power ever compete with faster and cheaper fossil fuel-based cargo delivery?

"Cost is a funny thing," Captain Merrett said. "Yes, it is true that if you are just paying for the time of the people involved, one person driving a truck for several hours versus a crew of four sailing a ship for several days, you're never going to come out even in comparison. But you're not looking at the whole picture there ... The true cost of shipping, we are just starting to understand. You are not paying for the emissions coming out of the tailpipes, you're not paying for the animals run over on the highway, you are not paying for the future we have with impermeable surfaces and more blacktop absorbing sun rays."

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