

NEW YORK

# Hudson river voyage goes back in time to preserve the future

By BILLY SHANNON

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The Apollonia on the Hudson. (Courtesy of Hudson Riverwise)

They may be coming to a port near you — via wind, sun or tidal currents.

The Schooner Apollonia, a new sail-freight project, and the Solaris, believed to be the country's first fully solar-powered passenger boat, will traipse along the Hudson River's Manhattan shore Thursday.

It marks the Apollonia's maiden voyage from upstate Hudson to Brooklyn, carrying various Hudson Valley products. The Apollonia project is a throwback to a time before fossil fuels. Shipping goods by sailboat was commonplace in the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries. While it may have skipped the 20th, Apollonia's Captain Sam Merrett is determined to find out whether it can be viable in the 21st century.





A view from the Solaris on the South Hudson Voyage. (Courtesy of Hudson Riverwise)

“It’s not a stunt and it’s not a living history thing,” Merrett explained while sailing past the Yonkers waterfront.

“We’re really trying to demonstrate that sail freight is a relevant, intelligent solution now.”

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Merrett said shipping by sail can be an antidote to fossil fuel reliant truck shipping for many products that don’t spoil quickly.

“There are many items that can be moved effectively by schooner,” Merrett said. “With truck shipping, best case scenario, if there’s not an accident or an oil spill, or an animal gets run over, is that the same product that was shipped arrives at its destination. We’re trying to say we can have a better product show up than what was shipped.”

In addition to goods that people are happy to have age while aboard, Merrett said some products may be improved in value by its sail journey. Brooklyn distillers can brag their casks were shipped by sail; microbrewers can point out their ingredients came by way of the Hudson River.

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“The story of the product is improved by its journey,” Merrett said.

Crew members of the Apollonia in Hudson, about a hundred miles up the river in Columbia County, loaded the steel-hulled vessel with 700 pounds of corn destined for Van Brunt Still House in Red Hook, Brooklyn. They also piled in 600 pounds of malt for Strong Rope Brewery in Brooklyn, empty oak casks, petroleum-free pillows, hemp goods and bags of alpaca wool.

But the primary purpose of this trip, Merrett said, is to connect with communities along the way and to partner with the Hudson River Maritime Museum, which created the RiverWise project to stay afloat.



The Apollonia passes under the Newburgh-Beacon bridge. (Courtesy of Hudson Riverwise)

RiverWise, “was definitely born out of the COVID challenges. We had a full docket of school tours and boat tours and of course all of that had to be canceled. We were very frustrated that we could not teach and couldn’t fulfill our mission. And we were sitting here watching our boats bob in the

water and we were asking ourselves what we can do,” explained Lisa Cline, executive director of the Hudson River Maritime Museum in Kingston.

Partnering with the Apollonia, going back to the river and telling stories as they pass through Hudson River towns and cities became the museum’s way to offer virtual programming.

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The boat joins the Solaris, the ’ first Coast Guard-approved passenger boat that runs entirely on solar power, Cline said. In a normal year, the Solaris is the museum’s tour boat.

## LINK TO VIDEO :

<https://www.facebook.com/100002516136969/videos/3260128967414276/?extid=syicX5Uc1iK2jgjd>

When the Solaris and the Schooner Apollonia sail into New York, they’ll be met by Classic Harbor Lines and private boat captains to conduct a fleet sail past the Statue of Liberty.

Merrett estimates they will sail past the statue between 6:30 p.m. and 6:45 p.m. in the evening and the Apollonia will hang around Battery Park around 7:00 p.m. if currents and conditions agree.

On Friday the Apollonia will unload its cargo at the GBX Gowanus Bay Terminal, Merrett said. From there, new-age stevedores will unload the goods using tricycles and possibly a horse-drawn trailer.

