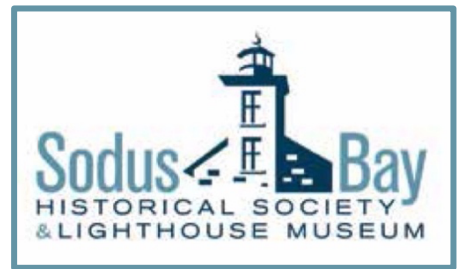


SBHS Newsletter

Fall 2024



Fall Colors Frame Sodus Bay Lighthouse



Photo contributed by Werner Lutz



Sodus Bay Historical Society & Lighthouse Museum

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Letter from the President

As the days grow shorter, our gardens having been put to bed and the lighthouse activities slowing down, it is a good time to reflect on our past season.

We again saw an increase in the number of visitors who toured the Lighthouse, already seeing, as of this writing, more than 3300 people over last season.

The season started with our Eclipse event, it was a magical day full of the wonders of the universe. We are so happy our organization was involved in this once in a generation event. Thank you to our friends who helped us pull it off.

Our 5K run had the largest participation we have ever seen, as did the golf tournament. We are lucky to have amazing organizers who continue to build on their success each year.

We held our inaugural Artisan Festival in July and had artists from many genres. This is an event that is building into a major happening – one that will be attracting major artists from throughout the area and beyond. With this active and dedicated Artisan Festival committee, it is exciting to think about the future of this event.

The Sodus Bay Lighthouse concert series continues to provide a variety of musical entertainment during those Sunday afternoons in the summer. Sometimes Mother Nature got the best of us, but still it was fun to hear the music and watch the audience having a good time. The success of the Lighthouse Concert series is because Nell Gardner is dedicated to finding the bands, and because of the terrific volunteers who are willing to work during those summer Sundays.

Our new speaker series was a success, thanks to our guest speakers.

Sodus Bay Historical Society has the best group of volunteers working at the Lighthouse. We were able to develop a new docent led tour that we offer on weekends. Of course, the garden club keeps the grounds spectacular, making the Sodus Bay Lighthouse a most beautiful place to visit.

As you can see, I have many to thank for making our season such a success. I am grateful for all those who dedicate their time and talents to the Sodus Bay Historical Society and Lighthouse Museum.

Thank YOU!

Donna F. Stern

Donna F. Stern, President of the Board of Trustees

Letter from the Executive Director

Greetings!

I want to dedicate this letter to all the volunteers who graciously assisted us all year. Our volunteers made all the difference in the success of our museum, gift shop, events, and gardens. You are helping to continue our Mission. My deepest thank you to all of you. We hope to see you all next year.

As winter approaches, we are happy to announce that the Lighthouse & Museum will be open on Saturdays until Christmas from 11 am-4 pm. It will be warm and cozy here so I hope you can find the time to stop in and say hello. The Museum is a wonderful place to bring your family on a chilly winter's day to learn about the magnificent history of the area. It is spectacular here in the winter months. Our gift shop will be open as well for your holiday shopping needs.

I want to thank you all for a successful summer season and wish you all a safe and happy holiday season. Hope to see you at the Lighthouse!

Sincerely,

Elaine Comarella

Elaine Comarella

Sodus Bay Lighthouse Museum Executive Director

Sodus Bay Historical Society Mission

TO TELL THE STORY OF SODUS BAY

We do that by:

- *Actively maintaining a museum where we collect, preserve, and exhibit records, writings, historical items, and artifacts;*
- *Preserving and disseminating historic information about the Sodus Bay area;*
- *And maintaining a historic lighthouse.*



Sodus Bay Historical Society Vision

Within 3-5 years, our work will have a strong regional focus, including Sodus Bay and the surrounding communities. Our educational activities will involve presentations, speakers, videos, and both group gatherings and opportunities for individual learning. We will serve both children and adults with both interactive and online education, as well as regularly changing museum displays with helpful docents available. And, in addition to our historic lighthouse, we will feature a multi-use facility with revolving museum exhibits and a place for gatherings three seasons of the year, to support our educational and regional focus.

Oh, Pretty, Pretty *Polly Hopkins!*

Rosa Fox

Prelude

Funny thing how researching one subject can lead a writer off in a completely different direction than down a wickedly tempting rabbit-hole! Such is the case behind this article. While reviewing old newspapers for an article to be in this issue, the following poem in the July 18, 1894, **Arcadian Weekly Gazette** piqued my curiosity. The author is not noted in the **Gazette**, however, thanks to the eagle eye of the poet's great nephew, Gilbert Burgess, the creator of this poem is possibly Winford C. Burgess, co-editor of the **Arcadian Weekly Gazette** and author of the column "About the Bay." I decided to postpone the intended research/article, and instead jumped on board an old ship's story to get to the bottom of Sodus Bay's **Polly Hopkins**. (No pun intended - yet!) Enjoy!

A Poem

from *About the Bay Column* - July 18, 1894

Arcadian Weekly Gazette

If you cannot at Big Sodus
Sail among the swiftest fleet,
If you cannot own a racer,
Or a Daimler launch complete,
You can charter 'Polly Hopkins',
Or Jo Jones' low, rakish craft,
You can cruise upon the Unknown,
Or, still better, build a raft.

If you cannot own a house boat,
Or a boat house, either one,
If you cannot build a cottage,
On the Bluff, or over town,
You can camp out on the Sand Bar,
Or in Briscoe's classic cove,
You can still have fun at Sodus -
We will bank on that, by Jove!

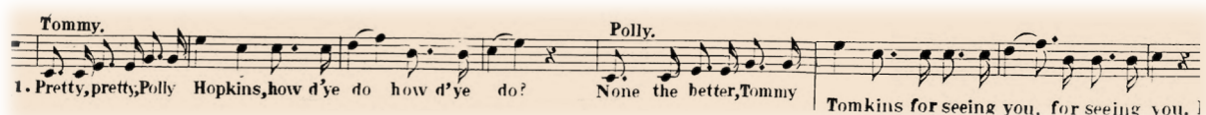
What a delightful piece of history with four very specific Sodus Bay historical markers mentioned in this poem. Some brief remarks about three items from the poem before we get to the featured subject of this essay:

Daimler launch. In August of 1888, William Steinway (1835-1896) - Yes! – Steinway pianos! began a relationship with German engineer, Gottlieb Daimler (1834-1900). Daimler is known for the development of the internal combustion engine. One month after their meeting, Steinway contracted with Daimler and became a US subsidiary of the German company, opening the Daimler Motor Company on Long Island. It was not long before Steinway, in an effort to avoid import taxes, began manufacturing Daimler motors for use in boats and equipment. A November 1893 **Arcadian Weekly Gazette** news clip relates that C. P. H. Vary, P. R. Sleight, and the Elliots "have their new 25-foot Daimler launch on the canal... and will take it to Sodus Point in the spring." This launch would be named **Marjorie**.

Jo Jones. Joseph Jones (1850-1909) was a well-loved Sodus Point fisherman, who enjoyed giving people pleasure rides on his boat. Jo Jones appears in another Sodus Bay poem of the early 1900s era.

Briscoe's Cove. The small cove just east of Thornton Point, where, on May 22, 1791, a young British member of the survey team for the Pre-emption line, A. N. Briscoe, fell ill with a severe fever and died. Briscoe was buried "precisely on the Meridian of Washington, a stone placed at his head with his name and date carved on it. Hence the naming of Briscoe's Cove." [Green]

So, what about **Polly Hopkins**?



Is it possible Sodus Bay's **Polly Hopkins** was the name for a local gal? Hopkins was a fairly common name across Wayne County, including the Great Lakes Captain Benjamin Hopkins from Sodus Point. There was a popular 19th Century English folk song (above) titled "Polly Hopkins" that became a popular fiddler's waltz, printed in Elias Howe's **Musician's Companion** in 1842. (Yes, Howe is credited with the invention of the sewing machine.) Seems there were a number of vessels across the globe from the US to Australia during the mid-1800s named **Polly Hopkins**. With the popularity of the song, it is not surprising Sodus Bay would have a vessel so named. If anyone has an idea of a woman in the area named Polly (or Pauline) Hopkins, please let this author know.

Unraveling "Polly Hopkins"

Polly Hopkins was constructed by Captain Henry Howard (1851-1911). In the 1880 census, Henry was listed as a Sodus farm laborer. According to records in the Alpena County George N. Fletcher Public Library Thunder Bay Research Collection, a "scow schooner" **Polly Hopkins** was built at Sodus Point in 1887 – a perfect date for the 1894 poem! The 1900 census notes Henry's occupation as being a sailor.

Some newspaper articles refer to **Polly Hopkins** as a sloop, and other reports note her as a schooner. By definition, a sloop is a single-masted sailboat with a jib and a mainsail. A schooner has two or more masts, with the second mast being taller than the first. The vessel pictured below and on the next page appears quite skow-like, and is referenced in the Thunder Bay source, but she is certainly a sloop – not a schooner.



*Likely **Polly Hopkins** at dock at Charles Point - a favorite playground for the children of Charles Point. Very similar to the photo of Polly Hopkins on the next page but in much better condition. [Fox Postcard Collection].*

1901: James Cory Sheffield in his 1901 **Point Charles Sketch** writes, "For many years, one of the most trustworthy aids, in our work has been Captain Henry Howard, and his craft the **Polly Hopkins**. This boat has always been a source of great interest to the children, and they delight to play on its deck, swing on its heavy boom, climb on the rigging and work its wonderful rudder."

Sheffield continues, "But for the Captain and his boat, we should have had a sorry time, in getting

our heavy timbers and stone from up the Lake and planning our work to stand the heavy seas and ice of the winter. In the meantime, as the storms were not so severe on the East bank, we protected it by a system of logs about three feet wide loaded with stone, these logs were gathered up from various places."



***Polly Hopkins** shows signs of aging. Newspaper reports about her activities through the years give evidence as to why. Note the aft cabin, mast, boom, bow sprit, and chain plates as compared to the vessel on the previous page.
[Sodus Bay Lighthouse Museum Collection].*

1902 "Capt. Howard of the schooner **Polly Hopkins** brought a load of lumber for the "Hotel DeWelch [sic]." [Sodus Record, 5/2/1902]

*Confusion is now introduced to the **Polly Hopkins** story.*

1903 "Captain Hopkins has launched a new **Polly Hopkins**, which is a great improvement over the old craft. It will be used as a freight carrier."

[Newark Courier, 4/9/1903]

*Note: This is the only connection found to this date of **Polly Hopkins** and Captain Benjamin Hopkins. The detective work will continue.*

1904 It was announced that **Polly Hopkins** would be transporting sand, gravel, and stone from the lake shore to the construction site of the Sodus Bay Bridge at Resort. [Lake Shore News, 8/4/1904]

1906 **Polly Hopkins**, now owned by George Carson, Jr. was used for shipping. [Sodus Record, 5/11/1906]

1908 "**Polly Hopkins** was sunk...during the high wind. She was tied at the elbow in the west pier, near the range light, and in some manner slipped her moorings and beat upon the pier until a hole was stove in her side and she sank in about five feet of water. Captain [Angus] McLeod made plans at once to have her raised and repaired." [Sodus Record 8/7/1908].

1909 After a picnic at the Sodus Bay Yacht Club, the Newark Baptist Church Choir members went for a sail aboard **Polly Hopkins**. [Union Gazette, 7/24/1909]

1911 A couple newspapers during the summer of 1911 issued news that **Polly Hopkins** sank in the bay, using the same wording that was found regarding the sinking at the pier in 1908. One article, however,

noted something different. August 27, 1926, in a "Fifteen Years Ago" segment of the **Sodus Record**: "The **Polly Hopkins**" sank in Sodus Bay, having been too heavily loaded with freight."

So, what happened in the summer of 1911? We know Captain Henry Howard passed the first week in September 1911. [see Captain Howard's obituary at right] Henry's wife Mary passed in 1902. Was the cause of the Captain's death perhaps the loss of his beloved ship **Polly Hopkins**?

The two photos of the **Polly Hopkins** accompanying this article appear to be very much the same vessel, in altered states of condition – perhaps due to the rebuild following the 1908 storm damage. But wait! There is another image of **Polly Hopkins** in the Sodus Bay Lighthouse collection! This photo is of an entirely different vessel – a pleasure craft and not a work boat. And getting back to Captain Hopkin's **Polly Hopkins** - the ketch in this photo does not appear sturdy enough for hauling freight, as reported in the 1903 article of Hopkin's "new" vessel. The boat below with "Polly Hopkins" printed upon it does appear to be a good sailing craft for pleasure cruises. Were there possibly three **Polly Hopkins** on Sodus Bay?

The death of Captain Henry Howard occurred Wednesday morning at the home of his brother-in-law, John Porter, in this village, where he had resided several years. Captain Howard was the builder of the schooner "Polly Hopkins," and owned and sailed her for many years. Several years ago he sold the boat and retired from active work and has since lived in this village. Mrs. Howard died some years ago. He is survived by one brother, Philander Howard of Michigan, and two sisters, Mrs. Julia Foulton of Michigan and Mrs. George Carsons of this village. Funeral services will be conducted at the residence of Mr. Porter to-morrow afternoon at two o'clock, at which Rev. A. W. Battey of the Methodist church will officiate. Burial will be made in the Rural cemetery.

*Captain Henry Howard Obituary
Sodus Record, 9/8/1911*



*Photo of "the other" Polly Hopkins.
Sodus Bay Lighthouse Museum Collection*

While this "discovery" of a vessel with such a storied past on Sodus Bay is fascinating – yet even more fascinating are the many questions remaining. First and foremost - What happened to her/them? Where is/are she/they? We know one of them went down in 1911 - but which one and – curiously – WHERE? Can we find her somewhere in the depths of Sodus Bay? When was and who built the smaller **Polly Hopkins** ketch pictured (right)? If there is anyone out there reading who may have some answers to these

questions, we welcome your input. Please consider reaching out to the Lighthouse Museum to share your knowledge on this subject or the stories of other Sodus Bay crafts as we move forward to tell stories Sodus Bay's diverse boats of days gone by. Thank you!!

For resources used in research of this article and additional notes – please see bottom of page 9.

Schooner Lotus Update

Holger Stave

In December of 2023, Friends of the Schooner **Lotus** (FOTSL) was awarded a New York State Department of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation grant through the Environmental Protection Fund. The grant monies, totaling \$266,687, are dedicated for the restoration of **Lotus**, a historic 1918 wooden schooner that has plied the waters of Sodus Bay, Lake Ontario, and beyond over the past century. FOTSL has partnered with the Cayuga Wooden Boat Works, located in Cayuga, NY, to undertake the restoration, with the goal of having **Lotus** return to her home port of Sodus Point and once again take her place as an important historical entity in Wayne County.

Some unexpected discoveries have emerged during the work that has begun on **Lotus**. Echoes of past repairs have presented new challenges for the restoration team. During the last major restoration in 1994, the original keelson was not replaced. Instead, a new keel plate was placed beneath it, between the original and the iron ballast keel. This revealed two critical findings that have reshaped our plans.

1. The original keel plate, now effectively acting as the keelson, has suffered significant rot, running through the center for much of the ship's length.

2. Stainless steel threaded rods, used to secure the keel assembly, were paired with steel nuts at the keelson. Over the decades, these nuts had rusted so badly they crumbled with barely any effort.

The implications were clear. The entire keel assembly must be carefully lowered to remove and replace the keelson. To achieve this, the engine had to be painstakingly removed, which necessitated lifting off the aft cabin top—a complex but necessary step.

But there's more! The U.S. Coast Guard ultimately decides how many visitors **Lotus** can welcome aboard. The restoration includes replacing the cabin tops, which will include secure, comfortable and safe seating for future passengers. Life vests will be conveniently stored in the centers of the cabin tops, ensuring swift access.

In preparation for replacing the horn timber—a component whose deterioration led to the **Lotus** being pulled from service back in 2017—all fluid tanks have been removed. The aft portion of the cockpit



sole was also lifted to allow access to these tanks and the horn timber, marking another step forward in the restoration.

Lotus has now been moved to a protected space where she can be enclosed for the winter, ensuring work can proceed without interruption. Our immediate focus is on the vital task of replacing the keelson and horn timber, the very backbone of this grand old schooner. Once this is complete, we can turn our attention to replacing planks and other essential structural components, bringing the **Lotus** one step closer to her glorious return.

Two substantial pieces of perfectly dried white oak have been sourced for the new keelson and horn timber, honoring the craftsmanship and authenticity this vessel deserves.

For those eager to follow along, we have documented much of this intricate work on video, now available on our website, www.lotusny.org. You can witness firsthand the careful restoration process and share in the excitement of this historic journey.

But the members of FOTSL can't do it alone. We need your support to meet the 25% matching fund requirement of our grant. Thanks to the generosity of the Rochester Area Community Fund and many dedicated supporters, we've raised nearly \$50,000 toward our ambitious \$95,000 goal. Every donation brings us closer to restoring this proud schooner, ensuring she can sail into the future as a beacon of maritime history and education. Donations may be mailed to FOTSL, PO Box 2, Sodus Point, NY or submitted on line at our website www.lotusny.org.

We hope those of you reading this will join us in this momentous journey to revive the Schooner **Lotus**. With your help, we can make history together.

On behalf of the Board of Directors,

Holger Stave, President, Friends of the Schooner **Lotus**



Resources for Oh, Pretty, Pretty Polly Hopkins!

- Link to YouTube Polly Hopkins. <https://tinyurl.com/2y7dz2av>
- Daimler engines: <https://tinyurl.com/2zpnbs43>
- You may also enjoy the William Steinway Diary entries: <https://tinyurl.com/47tw2yb>
And <https://tinyurl.com/3b3ts8by>
- Briscoe's Cove: Green, Walter Henry. *Great Sodus Bay: History, Reminiscences, Anecdotes, and Legends*. Rochester, NY: Henderson-Mosher. 1947. page 53-54.
- Alpena County George N. Fletcher Public Library Thunder Bay Research Collection. <https://greatlakeships.org/search>
- **Sodus Record** may be found at: <http://sodus.advantage-preservation.com>
- Other newspaper clips for this article may be found at: <https://nyshistoricnewspapers.org>.

Many thanks to Gilbert Burgess of Lake Bluff for reading this article and identifying the possible poet as his great uncle, Winford C Burgess, co-editor of the Arcadian Weekly Gazette with his brother Frank D. Burgess, Gil's grandfather. Gil's historical and literary knowledge are very much appreciated!

Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary

Rosa Fox

Sweet Sixteen is the newest National Marine Sanctuary's affectionate nickname. The Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary was officially recognized in a celebration on September 6, 2024, at the William S. Cahill Pier in Oswego. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's sixteenth federally designated marine sanctuary encompasses the Lake Ontario waters of Wayne, Cayuga, Oswego, and Jefferson Counties. With many state, local, and federal leaders on hand for the celebration, the ribbon was cut, a celebration held, and the charge put forth for the work to begin.

The Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary is the third National Marine Sanctuary for the Great Lakes, following Thunder Bay in Lake Huron, and the Wisconsin Shipwreck Coast in Lake Michigan. The Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary boundary encompasses over 1,722 square miles of eastern Lake Ontario waters and is home to approximately 43 known shipwrecks and one aircraft.

Did you know there are several vessels at rest off the shores of Wayne County? In September of 1899, the 104-foot-long, two-masted schooner **W.Y. Emery** sank near the town of Ontario with her load of coal headed from Rochester to Kingston, Ontario, Canada. **W.Y. Emery's** story is told at the Heritage Square Museum in Ontario, NY. The 136-foot long **St. Peter**, carrying a load of coal headed to the Welland Canal from Oswego, sank near Pultneyville in October of 1898. **St. Peter's** story is shared at the Pultneyville Historical Society Museum. Originally built as the **Robert Taylor** in 1853, and renamed the **Queen of the Lakes**, this three-masted 129-foot schooner was headed from Rochester to Kingston with a load of coal when a hole in the hull of the ship and gale force winds took the ship down about 10 miles east of Sodus Point in November of 1906. There are more ships at rest for us to discover. Future issues of the SBHS Newsletter will attempt to bring to life some of these wrecks, sharing their stories and helping to promote an interest in this vast storehouse of history off our coast being preserved by the efforts of the Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary.

To learn more about the Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary – visit:

<https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/lake-ontario/>

For more on the other Great Lakes National Marine Sanctuaries – visit:

<https://tinyurl.com/2jrj4952>

Want to read up on local wrecks?

In local shipwreck discovery leader Jim Kennard's book, **Shipwrecks of Lake Ontario: A Journey of Discovery**, the stories behind a host of vessels sunk in the waters beyond our shores makes for great reading. Kennard also tells the story of the events and inspirations that set him in pursuit of looking for the various wrecks over the years. Available in libraries in the OWWL Library system. Also available from National Museum of the Great Lakes: <https://nmgstore.org/products/pre-order-shipwrecks-of-lake-ontario-a-journey-of-discovery>.

Dan Scoville has worked with Jim Kennard and others on a number of shipwreck expeditions. Scoville has a website dedicated to local wrecks full of excellent photos and stories. Visit: <https://www.shipwreckstories.com>.

THANK YOU!

TO THESE

SODUS BAY LIGHTHOUSE SPONSORS

In addition to our loyal members, the Sodus Bay Historical Society appreciates the generous support from area businesses and foundations. Their ongoing contributions help the Sodus Bay Historical Society and Lighthouse Museum move forward with the summer concert series, student activities, exhibits, and other programming. Please be sure to show your support by visiting these local establishments and let them know how important their support of Sodus Bay history is to you!

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