



Esopus Meadows Lighthouse

(Courtesy of the Save Esopus Lighthouse Commission) The Esopus Meadows Lighthouse, fondly nicknamed the “Maid of the Meadows”, was completed in 1871. It replaced an earlier structure built in 1839 on land ceded to the United States Government from the state of New York. A lighthouse was needed on the Hudson River to warn mariners of the mud flats known as the Esopus Meadows located off the western shore of the river.

The lighthouse was built on a new foundation, located to the south of the former location, traces of which are still visible on the adjoining small island. Two hundred and fifty piles, each 40 feet long, were driven into the river bottom. They were cut off three feet below the mean water mark, capped with 12 inch square timbers and topped with a deck of three-inch pine. Granite blocks were stacked 16 feet high producing a pier with a diameter 49 feet at the base and 46 feet at the top. On top of this pier was built a wooden keeper’s dwelling with a mansard roof and clapboard exterior. Inside the house is a kitchen, sitting room and equipment room on the first floor and three bedrooms and a bath on the second.



The light tower extends above the living quarters with an octagonal deck housing the light. Situated 53 feet above the mean water line, the lantern room contained an optic fifth-order Fresnel lens providing a 270 degree arc of light that was visible for 12 nautical miles. The lighthouse was tended by resident keeper until 1965 when it was converted to an automatic solar powered system. Although only accessible by boat, without the care of on-site keepers, the

lighthouse fell into the ruinous hands of vandals and Mother Nature. In 1979, the Esopus Meadows Lighthouse was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The road to restoration didn’t really begin until 1990 when the Save Esopus Lighthouse Commission was formed. The concerned volunteers, under the direction of Arline Fitzpatrick, leased the site from the Coast Guard and began extensive restoration efforts. SELC raised funds from various sources to cover emergency repairs, extensive carpentry, painting and shingling of the mansard roof. By 1997, a reorganization of SELC, as well as new volunteers from Aids to Navigation Coast Guard Station in Saugerties, continued to bring the lighthouse back to life. The fall of 2000 brought an impressive milestone in restoration efforts – stabilization and leveling of the house was completed. July 2001 brought another milestone for the lighthouse. The restoration was reorganized as a museum under the New York State Regents providing a provisional charter as the Esopus Meadows Lighthouse which allows the pursuit of additional funding and ownership of the house. In September 2002, the lighthouse stewardship was formally granted by the General Services Administration to the newly-chartered Esopus Meadows Lighthouse.