

Saugerties Haibuns



On Hudson River day I took my class, “Reading and Writing the Hudson” at Bard College to visit the Saugerties Lighthouse. Lighthouse keeper, Patrick Landewe was kind enough to give us a tour of the lighthouse—up into the observation tower! I asked the students to write Haibuns in response to this experience—the haibun includes prose and poetry. The “poems” here are haiku.

What follows are a few of the writings.
Thanks - *Susan Fox Rogers*

The path wound. Wet spots and high water line, the tide comes up, marked by residual plant particles.

First cold morning of the year and the quiet waters sits still.

Serene and frigid. Slowly lapping the dock's edge, stirring lightly with a breeze.

A single boat bobs a little off, man and dog sit like hawks, watching water.

Across the water Clermont stands, white houses with cascading lawns cordon off the river.

Prominent on Hudson, Saugerties Lighthouse towers. Remnant of river days. Contrast to muddy path.

Inside clean teal trim,
Stark wall to grey blue water,
Quiet creaks of stair.

The pinnacle of light rests atop the rounded chamber.
Try to listen for the days past here, murmuring wind and pariah's eyes.

--Katherine Rose

Grey brick set on round stone foundation. Eagles crossing. Wind Shimmies in ears.
Which way is North? Cold wind down from Albany. Woman sings, "Daddy!" Holding onto orange fishing bucket.

Woman sings "Daddy come!"

Land spits out to the lighthouse

Dad stumbles, "hold-on!"

Fake white roses in parlor. Preserving history in pictures, idleness, and cacti. A Historic preservation Nation. Ancient music hums in kitchen. No waking the lighthouse. Idleness amidst expanse. Loneliness and fear of boredom outside Saugerties town. Hudson waters crash on chiseled foundation. Fake white flowers safe and resting inside.

--Julia Wallace

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Arms crossed tightly while walking. Wind constant. Steady whaap of windbreaker behind. Hollow wooden sound of Japanese sandals as we clattered over the boardwalk to Saugerties Light House. Then a solid stone base, thick and sturdy, and seated squarely on top a brick wall, mottled peach and grey. We get to go in. It smells like a gas stove and little hallways. There are old maps in the kitchen. The stairs creak under our cautiousness. Upstairs a red spot of a geranium in the window in front of layers of grey water and sky.

Up once more twice up

Teeth dry from smiling in the wind

Come round and point there

Up top my hair whips. Shy pillars of Rose Hill across the water, and a delicate spiders tangle is the Kingston-Rhinecliff bridge in the distance. Up top by the light I can see all the boats coming.

--Annie Trowbridge

Growing up in a historic part of the country has spoiled me with the ability to see preserved memories from our past, but it has not desensitized me to the significance of these experiences. Each new place has a different story to tell of a time that we will only be able to understand through stories and artifacts. It's why it is so important to appreciate and absorb all the history surrounding us. We become so involved in our own lives that we fail to notice, especially in this Hudson Valley, how much there is to explore around us. It's often taken for granted.

Darkened skies above,

Brightened by a contained light.

A history found.

That's why being able to see the Saugerties Lighthouse was such an exciting event. We were able to see how the lighthouse functioned when it was initially built, and how it has changed in its present. Through pictures, preservation, and a little museum, the evolution of the lighthouse has been documented. Even still it is making new history as it is one of four lighthouses to even offer overnight stays. In just a few hours, I was able to learn so much about just one landmark in the vast Hudson River.

--Victoria Castiglione

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In Saugerties the lighthouse blinks thrice
thrice in 1869
three cheers in amsterdam 1609
building brooklyn with burnt red bricks
plastic clay swept from the river's depths

watching cold wind sweep
ominous clouds through grey sky
through billowing sails

calm waters on the surface, but beware, currents lay beneath
the blue bellied bird knows this all
the deer may not be so lucky
hunters rifles sounding
wave goodbye to the valley's shores
trains rumbling waking many through the night

--Katherine Sopko

A winded morning at the Saugerties lighthouse,
leaves yellowing in their own sweet death,
hills cambering toward the gray-green of the Hudson River.

The tide laps at stone,
A brown dog barks from the boat-
Tivoli in sight.

Life here consists of woodstoves,
artifacts from days spent lighting the path of those
who ride the currents of water and wind.

--Audrey Batchelder

Like termites, the river ate out the inside.
Abandoned, the structure had no defense
The cement wash eventually betrayed the brick
The river lead the invasion
and each winter followed suit
But still there it was
Feeble and lightless
Giving way stubbornly

The once ill lighthouse
now stands, longing for the lost

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old wooden tender

The north side remains windowless,
blushing in places,
Ten thousand new bricks later.
Once an island, veering ships from hidden mud
Now automated, electric, with fresh yellow trim
home to the couples daily reenactment
to the weekenders imagination.
It mindfully grips the mainland.

--Bea Abbott

30 feet renews the browns, the reds.
Dead matter cries a warning, extends an invitation.
The lighthouse surveys and considers.
Its bell sings and confirms.
Altitude is a sickness, a cure.

Proportions they lie
Elevation is sacred
As long as you fall

On top of the mountain, only seeing mountain.
On top of the river, reflecting a great silvery silence.

--Doug Friedman