

You oughta know...



"Mind the light, Kate."

You oughta know that these were the final words of Captain John Walker to his wife, Katherine, as he succumbed to pneumonia in the year 1886. He was the keeper of the Robbins Reef lighthouse, and for the next 33 years Katie Walker would, indeed, mind the light.

A German immigrant, Katie met and married Captain Walker when he was the keeper of the Sandy Hook Light Station, and by assisting her husband gradually learned the trade. Within a few years he was transferred from the land-based Sandy Hook lighthouse to Robbins Reef, which still sits on a lonely sand bar in the Kill van Kull.

Until her retirement in 1919, Katie Walker lived on that tiny, man-made, 45 foot tall island in the bay. She rowed her children to and from school on Staten Island, where she would eventually spend the rest of her days in a small cottage situated in a spot where she could keep a sharp eye on Robbins Reef. During her tenure as keeper, she was credited with fifty rescues.



Kate at Robbins Reef
Isaac Almstadt (1851-1921)

You oughta know that Katie Walker died in 1931, and is buried, most appropriately, at Ocean View Cemetery. As was so aptly said in her obituary, she kept her "lamp alight and her windows clean, so that New York Harbor might be safe for ships that pass in the night."

Katherine Walker was a sturdy and proud wife, mother, protector - and a Staten Islander.

— **BOROUGH PRESIDENT JIM ODDO**
WITH FRANK SANTARPIA

