



The Lighthouse Log

Spring 2010

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A Message from BLMA President

Spring has arrived in Rhode Island, although as I write this on May 9th a freeze warning is forecast. The light station did not escape the fate of thousands of Rhode Islanders and hundreds of Jamestowners with basement flooding resulting from extraordinary spring rains. Our light station security person, Lanette Macaruso, played a key role, working around the clock to prevent serious furnace damage.

A successful docent orientation was held on May 8th. Mary Kelley has been diligently working on the schedule. If you would like to become involved, please contact Mary at 401.846.7847

Varoujan Karentz has been actively writing grants and providing assistance to groups supporting continued federal funding of the very successful Save America's Treasurers initiative. Proposals have been submitted for SAT funds and congressional grant funds as well as Champlin Foundations funds. Time will tell.

Two events in June are well worth scheduling on your calendars:

1. The Department of Environmental Management is planning R.I. Great Outdoors Pursuit on Sunday, June 13th

2. The Paint Beavertail event from June 24th to the 27th will culminate in a silent auction on Sunday. Read more on both these events inside.

New member Judy McNamara, a descendant of Beavertail's first keeper Abel Franklin, has written an article with new information about a significant figure in the history of 18th century southern Rhode Island.

A membership application/renewal is enclosed. Consider renewing now and save BLMA the cost of a mailed reminder this summer.

The U.S Coast Guard has announced that environmental remediation will be undertaken this year. This is the removal of soil with significant lead deposits and is good news in terms of the acquisition process. The area to be remediated is in the vicinity of the granite bench just to the west of the tower.

Finally, for the past year or two, local newspapers have carried articles and Letters to the Editor addressing issues related to LNG shipping in Narragansett Bay. Accidents can happen, as Jim Jenney relates in his latest installment.

- RES

Volunteers Needed!!

The Paint Beavertail Event will need many volunteers to ensure success. If you can give some time on June 24, 25, 26, or 27, please contact: **Suzi Andrews** at 423.1460 or **Joan Vessella** at 423.0208.



Abel Franklin: Mariner

Abel Franklin was born May 18, 1690 in Dartmouth, Massachusetts. The child of Unice Barnes (daughter of Samuel Barnes of what is now Barrington, R.I.) and James Franklin. Abel was probably a second generation American. His grandsons would fight as patriots in the Revolutionary War.

James Franklin had been a soldier in King Philip's War, was married in c. 1680 and became a free-man of Dartmouth in 1686.

Abel was one of three to five siblings, all of whom married into families of large landholders in R.I. After his mother's death, his father married Elizabeth Hammond in Rehoboth/Swansea in 1695. Swansea was a ship building center and it is assumed that this is where Abel learned maritime trade skills. His family was cordwainers, leather workers and shoemakers.

Abel first appears in Jamestown in 1713 when he married Sarah Remington (b. 8/29/1688), the daughter of Stephen and Penelope Parker Remington, an old Jamestown family and owners of a tannery.

Sarah and Abel had seven children, all born on Jamestown. Three of his sons married girls from Block Island families. Abel had purchased land on Block Island in 1731. Abel began purchasing real estate in 1721 and within a few years owned property in Jamestown, Dutch Island, Block Island and Westerly, later Charlestown.

As early as 1734 Abel owned and operated a house of entertainment at the ferry landing in South Kingstown, later Narragansett. He became active in civic affairs and served as deputy to the General Assembly in 1743 and a member of the town council from 1744 to 1748.

Abel was a member of the Newport Lighthouse Commission and appointed to a commission to oversee the installation of docks at Block Island harbor.

After being a ferryman for many years, he began to purchase ferry licenses in 1750.

These ferries, known as the Franklin Ferries were owned and operated by his descendents for over 100 years. Produce from the Narragansett Plantations was ferried across to Newport for shipment to southern colonies.

In 1740, fearing war with Spain, the Newport Council directed Abel to build a beacon at Beavertail Point. The records do not show that it was built. In 1749 the General Assembly authorized the construction of a lighthouse on Beavertail point. Abel was appointed first keeper. The light was made of wood and burned to the ground July 23, 1753. It was reported that Abel continued his duties at night with an ordinary lantern. Abel served as keeper until 1755.

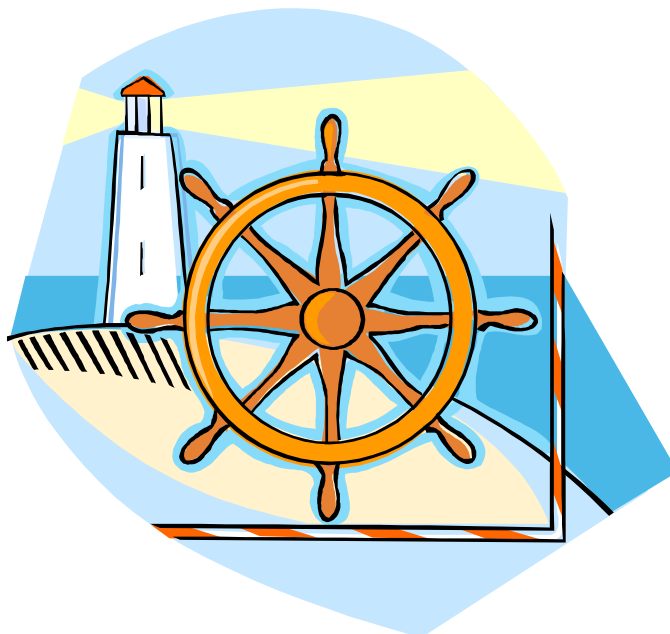
Abel moved to South Kingstown where his son John operated the ferries. He died March 3, 1758 and is buried in the Old Friends cemetery on Jamestown, although Abel, as a slaveholder, was not a Quaker.

Abel had given several parcels of real estate to each of his sons during his lifetime. His will indicated that he owned considerable property at his death. To his oldest son Stephen he left 100 acres on Block Island. To Abel, his second

son, he left 100 acres adjoining Stephen's and 85 acres in Westerly. He left his half interest in the Franklin ferry running from South Kingstown to Jamestown to his son John who had purchased the other half interest in 1754. The second ferry from South Kingstown to Jamestown he left to his son George. Each daughter received 1200 pounds. His wife Sarah received 500 pounds, all household goods, a riding mare, a cow and a slave named Margaret.

Sarah died in 1778 and is buried in the Franklin Cemetery on South Ferry Road in Narragansett, across from the church. At the time of her death the British occupied Jamestown. Buried nearby is her son Stephen, his wife Margaret Mitchell and several grandchildren.

- J McN Abel's 7 G Niece



Save America's Treasures Program in Jeopardy!

Recent budget cuts by the Obama Administration will eliminate the National Parks Service famed America's Treasure Program (SAT). SAT in existence since 1998 has been the driving force in the effort to protect the places which tell America's historical sto-

ries. Over 1,110 preservation projects have been supported coast to coast.

BLMA has been asked to help overturn the budget cut by urging congress to reinstate funding for the Fiscal 2011 year. Varoujan Karentz is representing BLMA on

the national committee providing the Washington D.C. SAT office with recommendations, local information, contacting RI Congressional staff and describing Beavertail as one of the nation's treasures needing funding. Part of the promotional effort included a request for photographs from around America identifying important historical sites needing help.

Our organization will submit an application for preservation funding this May, competing with many others to win one of the remaining 2010 awards.

Taken by Lanette Macaruso, this photo of the Light Station shows Caroline Crabtree of Jamestown holding a sign "This Treasure Matters". It has been included in the National photographic montage in their promotional campaign.

-VK



R.I. Great Outdoors Pursuit



Subtitled "No Child Left Indoors", this award winning family event is sponsored by the Department of Environmental Management, and BLMA has offered to play an important role. During the hours of 11:00 am to 3:00 pm on **June 13th**, a variety of activities for children and families will take place. Rock wall climbing, kite flying and nature walks are only some of the activities planned.

Dorrie Linn, BLMA Gift Shop Buyer, has conceived a tee shirt designing contest for elementary school aged children. All materials will be provided and children may go wherever they would like to think about and draw their entry. A winner and series of runners up will be selected. The winning design will be silkscreened on tee shirts for children and sold in the shop this summer.



Fund Raising Activities

Grant writing continues to excel for BLMA

A series of fund raising events is being planned, building on the initial success of last summer and fall. With the end of the first year of fund raising in sight, a series of invitational gatherings as well as events for the general public are on the agenda for the light station and private homes.

Grant writing continues to be an excellent source of funds. Most re-

cently, the Newport Restoration Foundation announced an award of \$2500 from the Doris Duke Preservation Fund. These funds will be used to purchase material for the restoration of the Oil House. There are currently three grant applications pending, thanks to the efforts of Varoujan Karentz.

A display with a list of donors at the Benefactor levels is being designed

and will be installed in the museum before the end of the season. The BLMA is deeply appreciative of past gifts. Please consider a gift during the upcoming season. A complete list of donors will be published in the summer newsletter.

The Fund Raising Committee welcomes your thoughts and assistance. Contact Tony Antine at 401.423.2823. -RES

“Paint Beavertail” UPDATE



“Paint Beavertail-Thru the Artist’s Eye” is a joint venture between the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association (BLMA) and the Conanicut Island Art Association (CIAA). Both non-profit organizations have committees busy working to make this June 24-27 event a success.

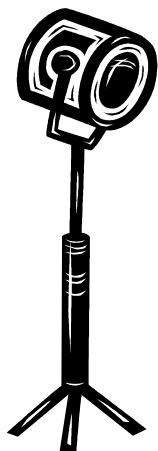
Registration applications have been mailed to numerous art associations. Entry forms can be downloaded on the organizations’ websites. On site registration is also possible.

All artists will be encouraged to “Paint Beavertail” from dawn to dusk on June 24-26. Construction of the framework for hanging the “wet paintings” is underway.

A silent art auction will be held on Sunday, June 27th from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm in the keeper’s house. Come place your bids and enjoy the event. Refreshments will be available.

For more information or to offer your assistance, call Joan Vessella at 423.0208.

-JV



THE SPOTLIGHT SHINES ON ...

Joan Vessella! One of the busiest members of BLMA. When she is not serving as the Director, she is our book buyer for the Gift Shop, co-chair of the Paint Beavertail Committee, creative designer of posters, flyers and the new Beavertail children’s attire and the list goes on and on.

Joan minored in art in college and had a 34 year teaching career in East Providence.

The next time you see Joan, thank her for all she does for BLMA.

- RES

One Ship, Two Crews . . . Bad Luck?

With a crew of thirty four men, an unanticipated event took place...

In 1912 the Norwegian engineer N.K. Fougner patented a plan for the construction of a floating ship built of concrete. Four years later, with the launching of the coaster **NANSENFJORD**, his idea proved to be a sound one. In April of 1918, just months before the armistice was signed ending World War I, the US Emergency Fleet Corporation placed contracts for 43 vessels to be constructed of ferro-cement after Fougner's design due to a shortage of steel during the war. One of these vessels would be named **CAPE FEAR** and would become a vessel which earned a place in Rhode Island's maritime history when lost on her maiden voyage in our waters. But there is more to this tale and as with many of the most interesting stories, truth is often stranger than fiction.

The **CAPE FEAR** was at the port of Providence on Friday evening April 29, 1920. As she prepared to depart for Norfolk, VA in ballast, with a crew of thirty four men, an unanticipated event took place. A second crew of men arrived to serve aboard the new freighter on her voyage.

Apparently the agent at each port had arranged for a crew to sail the freighter and neither had communicated that fact to the other. The result was confusion and disappointment on the part of those who arrived second. Turned away before they could board these men headed home feeling unjustly denied the opportunity of work and income. Little could they know that their being turned away was, at least for some, an unexpected stroke of good luck. As she cast her lines and backed away from the wharf, the **CAPE FEAR** headed south down the Providence River and into the upper part of Narragansett Bay. Her trip was, thus far, uneventful but that was soon to change.

Inbound for Providence, the freighter **CITY OF ATLANTA**, carried a cargo of pig iron from Savannah. As she was nearing the end of her voyage and it was early in the evening on a Friday night, it can be certain that the members of her crew were looking forward to having a night to themselves in port. But that is not to say that they were not being attentive to their assigned tasks. In fact details of the account indicate that there was no need for alarm as the vessel approached Narragansett Bay. The weather was reported as clear with only a slight cloudiness and a light sea running.

As the distance between the two vessels narrowed, there did not seem to be any reason that the passing of the two vessels would be anything but routine. The account in the Newport Mercury states, in part, "According to the statements of the officers on the **ATLANTA** proper signals were given for passing when the **CAPE FEAR** suddenly shifted her course and tried to pass on the other side. The **ATLANTA** was quickly reversed, but before her headway could be sufficiently checked she crashed into the side of the other steamer. Lines were thrown out and the two vessels held together for a brief time, while a few of the officers and crew of the **CAPE FEAR** scrambled aboard the **ATLANTA**. Then the concrete steamer sank, and others of her crew were picked up from the water, but seventeen men were unaccounted for.... The accident occurred well inside the Castle Hill light and only a short distance from Fort Adams. The water is very deep there and the tide runs strongly, so the bodies of the missing men have been carried out to sea. Officials of the Engineer Department have made an examination of the locality to see if the vessel is a menace to navigation." Captain Garfield's freighter struck the concrete ship squarely amidships cutting a deep hole in her side and it was reported that she sunk in less than three minutes taking half of her "lucky" crewmen to the bottom.

At the location where the collision occurred the depth of the water is almost two hundred feet, more than enough to cover the lost vessel with no fear of its presenting a menace to even the deepest of vessels. This area also is the narrowest part of the passage with little more than a half mile between the Newport shore and "The Dumplings", off Jamestown. One can only wonder what the "unlucky" crewmen, those who were turned away before the **CAPE FEAR** sailed, felt after they learned the news of the disaster. One can only wonder what the "lucky" crewmen, those who sailed aboard the **CAPE FEAR**, felt as their ship sank out from under them. Fate has a strange sense of humor and the irony for both crews surely remained with all of them for the rest of their lives.

-JFJ

Oil Storage Shed Needs Help This Spring

With the help of a small “Doris Duke Preservation Grant” from the Newport Preservation Society, BLMA is going to tackle the restoration of the historic oil storage building in back of the Keepers Building. The building has been vacant for many years and other than new roof shingles donated by BLMA a few years ago, no maintenance has been performed on the building since it was abandoned by the U.S. Coast Guard in 1971. The

single story brick structure is 13 x 17 ft in size requiring repair of exterior brick surfaces, deteriorated doors, wood soffits, treatment of interior walls and overhead wooden trusses, addition of a usable floor surface with raised ramp for handicap entrance access, removal of decrepit electrical service and re-installation of electrical service plus overhead track lighting.

The building will be used to tell stories of early lighting used at

Beavertail, lamp fuels and light characteristics. The work will be undertaken by volunteers directed by Guy Archambault. BLMA is asking anyone who can wield a paint scraper, paint brush or has any wood working or repair talent to contact Guy at 423-2823. All that is needed is a few hours of your time as part of the team to get the oil shed looking as good the two keeper buildings completed last year. -VK

Beavertail Photo Gallery



Jamestown firefighters Christian Texeira and Joshua Page responded to the request of Lanette Macaruso for assistance with basement flooding the weekend of March 29 - 31, 2010.

The month of March was one of the wettest on record and Lanette spent time the weeks before cleaning up after a flood at the end of February.

Photo by Lanette Macaruso

Carl Welshman, left, is thanked by Richard Sullivan after presenting a lighted nautical chart of lower Narragansett Bay to BLMA. Carl's unique charts have aids to navigation lighted with the correct flashing characteristic. This is a MUST SEE on your next visit.



Lighthouses are rapidly disappearing all around the world, and with them goes an invaluable link to our past. Your membership will help a great deal to keep Beavertail Lighthouse, the third oldest in the United States, from following that sad pathway. Please talk to your friends, neighbors, and family members and urge them to join all of us who are thoroughly convinced that Beavertail Lighthouse is most worthy of our efforts to save it. Thank you in advance for sharing this membership application!



WE OFFER THE FOLLOWING MEMBERSHIPS:

ANNUAL DUES

- Family Life \$ 300
- Individual Life \$ 200
- Sponsor \$ 100
- Family \$ 40
- Individual \$ 25

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____ email _____

Please contact me about helping with BLMA projects and services.

Please make your checks payable to: BLMA
 P.O. Box 83, Jamestown, RI 02835

BLMA is a 501 (c) (3) non profit organization



BEAVERTAIL LIGHTHOUSE
MUSEUM ASSOCIATION
P. O. Box 83
Jamestown, Rhode Island 02835

*BMLA is dedicated to preserving
America's third oldest light, providing
educational experiences reflecting the
best current thinking for all learners
and engaging in fund raising
activities necessary for enhancing
visitor experiences.*

Visit us on the web at
www.beavertailight.org



Mark your calendars and save these dates . . .

- Great Outdoors Pursuit *Sunday, June 13*
- "Paint Beavertail" *June 24-27*
- Annual Meeting *September 21, 7pm at the Library*



FYI

Did you know that as a **BLMA member**, you will receive our newsletter, email notifications of special events, a **10% discount** on purchases from our gift shop *and* discounts on event admission fees.

Don't delay—join today!