



The Lighthouse Log

Winter 2014

The quarterly Newsletter of the BLMA

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Published by

iCopy, Kingston

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Message From The President

As we enter 2015 with its challenges and opportunities, I think it appropriate to look back at 2014 and our many accomplishments. Thanks to our loyal docents the museum was open and staffed every day of the season (except during movie filming) with approx. 35 docents per week, allowing approximately 30,000 to 32000 visitors to explore the shipwreck story board and the wall mounted screen display and updated storyboards in the lens room. The tower was opened 11 times and 15 group tours were conducted.

To expand our educational offerings a partnership was established with the CG Heritage Museum and loaned materials were used for an exhibit highlighting the record keeping, paperwork and details characterizing the life of the lighthouse keeper by the end of the 19th century.

External renovation of Fog Signal building was done, along with installation of two replica fog horns. The Lighthouse was used in an upcoming Woody Allen film that will be released this year. BLMA received a check for \$3000 as compensation for loss of gift shop sales and donations.

The Board has begun the review of the Master Plan and decided at the last meeting that primary focus for 2015 should be refining our operations, maintenance of the facilities and increasing publicity. It was agreed that the time period that the buildings and grounds should be restored to is the late 1930's.

If you have room for another New Year's resolution -have fun, meet interesting people- become a docent.

SM ■

HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

The first Sunday in December is set aside each year for the holiday open house. In preparation, the interior of the museum and gift shop is transformed by an enthusiastic group of BLMA members into a wonderful seasonal setting, ideal for renewing old and making some new friendships.

Candles in the windows, roping on the stairway, pine and holly boughs plus an ample supply of beach treasures occupy virtually every flat surface, ready for the Sunday visitors. This is an annual event so be sure to get it down on those new



After finishing the lens room, Joanne Dunn takes on the south facing window in the Interactive Room.



The decorating folks annually vie for the tasks of lens decoration and stairway roping.

2015 calendars.

A Beavertail Light Station holiday tradition is the visit to the museum and grounds by the children of grades 4 and 5 from the Richmond elementary School. Approximately one hundred children, teachers and chaperons arrived December 12th for a two hour visit of the museum and grounds. A beautiful day saw visitors spending time outdoors viewing the extensive signage on the buildings and light station property as well as the Oil House “Lights, Lenses and Illuminants” exhibit.

Indoors, Richard Sullivan, Alex Brincko and Linda Warner spoke with groups of children and adults that circulated among the rooms. Joan Vessella manned the gift shop for the Christmas shopping typical of these visits.

RES ■



Joan Vessella getting everything ready. Note the many trays of treats prepared by BLMA Board Members.



Connie Rainone, Brenda Johnston and Joan Vessella “catching up” at the holiday open house.

RHODE ISLAND'S PERILOUS COAST - BONNET POINT (PART 1)

On the west side of the western passage into Narragansett Bay about two miles from Beavertail Light there is a crescent shaped sandy beach at a point known simply as "The Bonnet". Over the years the rocky shores along the eastern side of the point have been the scene of a number of maritime disasters which have resulted in the loss of more than a half dozen vessels including one of the earliest shipwrecks in the state and one of the most prominent of the "night boats" that routinely traveled a course between Providence and New York City. The following is a brief description of these ill-fated vessels whose final voyage left them there.

Let's start with a look at the merchant ship ANASTASIA. Few details have been discovered about this incident, including the exact date. The

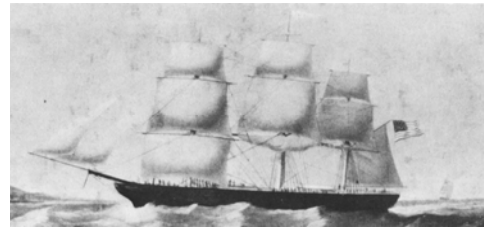


ANASTASIA was a merchant ship, probably an American vessel, which ran aground around the year 1700. The story says she came to grief on the inside of the point and is memorable in that a pair of oxen which were being transported managed to escape from the wreck and swim to the beach. As more details of this incident come to light, the full story of her loss will surely prove to be an interesting addition to the maritime history of Rhode Island.

The first well-documented loss on Bonnet Point involved an American merchant vessel which sailed from Providence, Rhode Island bound for London, England. The date was January 12, 1722 and the ship LONDON with a cargo of oil under the command of a Captain Folger, ran ashore in stormy seas on Newton Rock, off Beavertail Point. The ship remained in the firm grasp of Newton Rock until the strength of the easterly storm began to pound her to pieces. Driven by high winds the wreck (or perhaps, more correctly, the wreckage) was finally pushed over the rock and made its way across the West Passage, ending up on the shore near Bonnet Point, a

total loss. As no loss of life was stated, it can be assumed that her crew managed to save themselves. The vessel and cargo were valued at \$20,000, a considerable sum at that time. It was reported that more than half of her cargo of oil was saved. After the LONDON, it would be more than a century before another cargo-carrying ship would come to grief at Bonnet Point.

On December 18, 1822, the MARIA CAROLINE, inbound from New Orleans for Providence, with 300-400 bales of cotton,



barrels of flour and some 3 tons of lead, ran ashore here due to stormy weather. She had left New Orleans, homeward bound, under the command of Captain Nathaniel Bishop, who was also her owner. The MARIA CAROLINE was 85 feet in length and measured 270 tons. Built in Saybrook, CT in 1816 this wooden sailing ship spent her entire career in the coastal trade. With good fortune (and good weather) her cotton and flour were removed from the wreck, most in fairly good condition, but some 6,000 pounds of lead remain on the bottom at this wreck site.

Caught in a late season snowstorm, the schooner CLARA E. MCCONVILLE was the fourth victim to end her days in this area. Although we know that she sailed out of Bangor, ME, it is unclear whether she was inbound or outbound from Narragansett Bay at the time of her stranding. The schooner was just a bit shorter than the MARIA CAROLINE but, at 76 tons, was considerably smaller. As was typical at that time, her master Captain Eaton, was also a partial owner and it is likely, though not conclusively proven at this time, that this was his only vessel. She would never sail again.

In the next edition of the log, the story of the other three known wrecks to have occurred at Bonnet Point will be detailed, including one of the well-known night boats which travelled routinely between New York and Providence.



SCHOLARSHIP SEASON

The Craig Armington Memorial Scholarship Fund will award a \$1000 scholarship to a deserving Jamestown resident going on to postsecondary education. With education costs at an all time high every financial aid source needs to be explored by students and families.

Applications will be available at the BLMA website, Beavertailight.org, as well as the Jamestown Library. The due date will be available at the Website and on the application.

A gift to support the fund is most welcome and fully deductible.

RES ■

Rhode Island Lighthouse Association (Rhodylights)

Newporter Jan Slee, builder of a very detailed model of Rose Island Light, has created this association as a way bring together R.I. light house folks who “ don’t talk to each other”. An informal gathering was held at the Newport Visitors and Transportation Center in December and again January 20th.

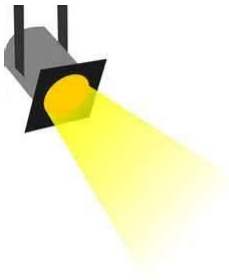
Lighthouse representatives included Beavertail, Dutch Island, Rose Island, Pomham Rocks and Bullocks Point.

Jan’s plans for increasing lighthouse visibility in R. I. include a series of library visits with his Rose Island model, Varoujan Karentz’s Beavertail model and the 24 models in the collection owned by BLMA of R.I. lighthouses built by former BLMA Board of Directors member Robert Dennis.. The initial library is scheduled for East Providence’s Riverside library.

Jan who successfully created and marketed a Newport version of Monopoly is developing a R.I. lighthouse version known as Rhodylightopoly. Lighthouse organizations wishing to participate will buy space on the board, advertising will be sold and the games will be marketed in stores and gift shops in the region.

Stay tuned.

RES ■



THE SPOTLIGHT SHINES ON

A MEMBER OPPORTUNITY

A number of members have commented on their enjoyment of the Jim Jenney shipwreck and marine mishap articles that have appeared in The Lighthouse Log for the past six years. These articles are an outgrowth of Jim's research and are just a sampling of the almost 2000 wreck data sheets he has created with more on the way. These shipwrecks and marine disasters have taken place within Narragansett Bay and surrounding waters.



David Smith and Anne Livingston admiring the updated touch screen in the interactive room.

David Smith has been working with Jim to create an online database that will be a rich source of information available to researchers as well as the curious.

At the January Board of Directors Meeting It was unanimously voted to invite BLMA members to participate with the Board in the field test prior to putting the database up on the BLMA website for public access. This field testing process will, hopefully, surface any problems that need to be corrected prior to the database being available to the general public.

Instructions

The search engine is easy to use. Go to <http://5thirdstreet.com/db/>. To log in, User Name is "blma"; password, "blma1749". You will be instructed to enter the user Name and Password a second time. Please do not share this information with folks who are not members during the field testing. Public release will be announced.

Click "Database Search" and then "Search by Column". You can then explore. Select any one or more of the "filters" on the left to narrow the search. Use the "Reset All Filters", last block on the left side, to clear any entries and perform a new search.

Clicking the "Green Icon" under the "More Info" next to the "Vessels Name" will bring up the detailed data sheet if one has been completed.

Please pass your comments to wreckcomments@beavertailight.org.

Have fun exploring!



WATER INTRUSION

Over the years BLMA has addressed and solved numerous structural site issues. One of the more perplexing problems has been water intrusion into the basements of the two historic Keeper buildings. The problem existed years before BLMA accepted the caretaker responsibility. The Keeper building basement is more serious, with its stone and mortar basement walls constructed in 1856. While still structurally sound the walls are porous to ground and surface water. Both major and moderate rain storms have caused flooding. As much as 3 feet of water has been experienced. Over the years a perimeter trough had been constructed at floor level and accumulated water diverted to a sump, which in turn automatically pumps water outside. The system has failed a number of times. BLMA is now taking action to resolve this problem.

Engineering studies have been conducted, professional basement contractors have posed solutions and various fixes proposed. The situation is compounded by leaking bulkhead doors, inadequate grading of soil against the building and soil contamination requiring removal by the Coast Guard. During the next few months grading, higher capacity pumps and raceways will be cleaned out and monitored.

VK ■

DOCENTS NEEDED

With the BLMA museum expanded into all the major site buildings, and from the experience we had this past summer, the museum needs more docents to help and guide visitors. 30,000 visitors came through the doors at the Beavertail site during the 80 plus days this past summer. In addition to staffing the gift shop, we need two more docents on each shift. This is a good time to talk to friends, acquaintances and relatives about joining us this coming summer and helping staff the site. Every docent will tell you meeting new visitors from all over the world is both fun and satisfying. Get them thinking about the idea now, and pass along names and contact information to our new Docent Coordinator, Brenda Johnston gardner0101@verizon.net.

VK ■



Alex Brincko speaking with a group of Richmond Elementary School students.

THE HARVEY PAYTON STONES

In 1859 the vessel "Harvey F. Payton" came ashore near the lighthouse carrying a load of carved granite blocks destined to be used on a government building in Washington DC. The vessel was a total loss and the cargo still remains visible both above and below the tide levels on the east side of Beavertail Point. Docents often tell the story of the shipwreck to visitors and it is also highlighted in the museum's Interactive Room.

Presently there are about 20-30 stones along the shoreline just north of parking lot #3 and storms have caused some damage as did Hurricane Sandy 2 years ago. The stones after 150 years are also showing severe wear and tear from the constant wave action and gravel abrasiveness.



A BLMA committee of Varoujan Karentz, Paula Samos and Richard Sullivan have examined the possibility of relocating one of the stones next to the lighthouse explicitly to be used as an historic artifact to allow visitors to identify the stone with the story. We believe it will be an interesting educational exhibit and supplement our historical programs. Approvals by RIDEM, RIHPHC and RICRMC have been received, since the wreck is considered an historic archeological site.

A new organization identified as the "New England Explorers" under the direction of Michael Girard have offered to survey the waters around the wreck site with an underwater "ROV" and help identify one or more stones for possible use.

Watch for more information in upcoming issues of the Log.

VK ■

AN ALEX AND ANI FUNDRAISING EVENT

The Spring newsletter will have complete information about an opportunity for all who enjoy giving or receiving jewelry to participate in a BLMA/Alex and Ani fundraiser.

The date will May 26th, location, Newport. Watch for the Spring newsletter and mark your calendars.



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and engaging in fund raising
activities necessary for enhancing
visitor experiences.*

Visit us on the web at
www.beavertaillight.org



Mark your calendar!

**May 26, 2015 Alex and Ani Fundraising Event
Spring 2015 Newsletter will have more details**



HAVE YOU PAID YOUR DUES FOR 2015? IT IS EASY TO
FORGET WITH ALL THE END OF THE YEAR ACTIVITIES.