



The Lighthouse Log

Spring 2023

Quarterly Newsletter of the BLMA

President

Diane Bakley

Vice President

David Smith

Secretary

Joan Vessella

Treasurer

Sandy Paterson

Board of Directors

Robert Bendick

Nancy Beye

Nicole Contino

Mary Hamilton

Varoujan Karentz

Robert Langton

Stewart Morgan

Leo N. Orsi, Jr.

Ursula Parenteau

Linda Warner

Log Editor

Cheryl Vislay

Marine Historian

Jim Jenney

Published by

Sir Speedy, Cranston

Front Cover Photo

Demi Pita

Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association

PO Box 83
Jamestown, RI 02835
401.423.3270
Email:
info@Beavertailight.org
Web site:
www.beavertailight.org

Spring 2023 President's Message



Hello Everyone,

As I write this message, we see many signs of spring already. The spring equinox is here, and we have made the switch again to Daylight Savings Time!

Dave Smith and I were pleased to welcome the new Executive Director of the Rose Island Lighthouse Foundation, Sean O'Connor, and his Island Manager, Mike Healey, on March 3rd for a Beavertail Lighthouse and Museum tour. We shared some great ideas and look forward to continuing this partnership with them. And, we welcomed a Boy Scout Troop from New Jersey.

This year, our opening weekend will be Saturday and Sunday, May 20th and 21st. Our Board members and docents are looking forward to a new season at the Museum, and we will have our 2023 Docent Breakfast on Saturday, May 13th. The breakfast is an excellent opportunity for our docents to meet, hear about training, and sign up for their desired shifts.

BLMA is planning lots of fun activities for this season. First, we will participate for the second time in the statewide initiative 401Gives. This year the event is a "weekend edition" starting Friday, March 31st, and going through Monday, April 3rd. Please consider Beavertail Lighthouse when you are making your donations.

Continued on the next page

Continued from previous page

We plan to continue with yoga training sessions on the lawn at Beavertail this season. Then, we are excited to have our first-ever Beavertail Walkathon on Sunday, May 21st. More details on this beautiful family event are below and on our website.

Last fall, on September 9th, we had a very successful Sound Bath conducted by our yoga instructors. This year we plan to have more events like this throughout the season; these events will follow the full moon cycle. Our first will be on Saturday, June 4th. Look for more details on social media and our website as we get closer to June.

Last but certainly not least, our License Plate campaign is going gangbusters!!! We are so thankful to those who have participated so far to make this a tremendous success! We already have well over 300 pre-orders since starting on February 1st. Don't be left out - read more about how to order yours later in this issue. Thank you so much for being members of our outstanding Association.

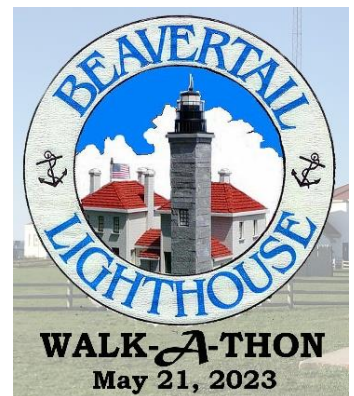
Happy Spring!
Diane

Beavertail Walk-A-Thon

The Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association (BLMA) is hosting a first ever Walk-a-thon at the Lighthouse on Sunday, May 21, 2023, from 9 am-11 am to raise funds to support the Lighthouse property and museum.

The Walk-a-thon will benefit our mission to preserve and maintain the historic buildings at the Lighthouse and to maintain its public museum for future generations. The museum provides education to the visiting public, school tour groups, historians, and researchers through exhibits, displays, presentations and docent interpretations. The walk officially is the one-mile loop road around the park. Walkers will also get a map of the park with additional hiking trails.

Walkers will receive a complimentary t-shirt and one ticket for a tower climb that day. We will have raffle tickets for purchase at the check-in area for assorted raffle items. Find details on the www.beavertailight.org website. Check the website after April 10th to register to walk or to sponsor.



New Jersey Boy Scout Troop Visits Beavertail Lighthouse



Board Member Bob Langton (left, in blue) Speaking with the Scouts

A Boy Scout Troop from Clinton, New Jersey, visited Beavertail Lighthouse on March 25th. There were 24 scouts and six adults in the group. They camped in Connecticut on the way to Jamestown and then were headed to Battleship Cove in Fall River, MA, to continue their journey.

While at Beavertail, the Troop enjoyed the exhibits and were excited to climb the lighthouse tower and take in the incredible view from the top.

Board Member Bob Langton spoke to the Scouts about the Fresnel lens on display at the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum.

Don't Wait, Buy Your Beavertail License Plate

The Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association is now taking pre-orders for Rhode Island's newest charity license plate.

Your purchase will support the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association's efforts to preserve the historic buildings, and keep Beavertail Light shining for future generations.

Artist Don Mong has created the original design for this charity plate which costs \$42.50 for a set of two plates (front and back of vehicle.) BLMA collects the money for the plate, and it is distributed this way: \$20 of the order will go to BLMA to be used towards the preservation of the Beavertail Lighthouse buildings, and for program development at the Museum. \$20 will go to the state to make the plates. \$2.50 is a "technology surcharge" for the DMV. Note: \$20 of the \$42.50 is a tax-deductible charitable donation as is the \$10 registration renewal surcharge. When you switch to the Beavertail Lighthouse plate, your current plate number is transferred to the new plate.

At this time, BLMA needs to collect 600 pre-orders for RI DMV to fully process the plates. Once the minimum number is reached, plates may be ordered directly from the DMV.

Did you know that you can track sales of the charity plates on our website thermometer on the www.beavertailight.org website as well as click to pre-order your plate?

In just over 6 weeks we now have 331 orders towards our 600-plate goal.

**Don't Wait
Get Your Plate!
Beavertail Lighthouse
RI License Plate**



The Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association is now taking pre-orders for Rhode Island's newest Charity License Plate!

[Click to Pre-Order a Beavertail Plate](#)

We have 331 plate pre-orders towards our 600 plate goal.



Ghost at Beavertail Lighthouse?

This story and photo by Don Bucklin are taken from the Beavertail Lighthouse Archives:



In March 2000, Don was taking a picture of Beavertail lighthouse. As Don and his wife Hope walked back to their car, Hope asked who the young man in the upper window was who was waving at them in such an odd fashion. She said she couldn't see him very clearly. Don said he didn't see the young man, but when he got his photos developed, he did see the figure of what appeared to be a young man in his twenties with dark hair wearing a tan shirt and dark vest in that location. Don pondered whether Hope had seen a ghost as people are not often on the second floor of the building as that area is closed off to visitors. He thought the image in the window did look a lot like a young man he once knew. Don remembered that Charlie Manders, the son of George T. Manders who was a Keeper at Beavertail

Lighthouse from 1919 through the 1930's, had Huntington's Chorea, a nerve disease that can cause involuntary muscle movements such as hand waving. Don's family had a summer cottage nearby when he was a boy and Charlie was the same age, so they knew each other well. Hope did not know about Charlie, so Don thought she might have seen a ghost.

Do you see the ghost?

Coming Soon: More Sound Bath Events at Beavertail Lighthouse

After the massive success of the first Beavertail Lighthouse Sound Bath event, held on September 9, 2022, Nicole Contino and BLMA plan on having additional Sound Bath events this season, which are scheduled to align with the full moon starting at dusk on June 4, August 1 and September 29, rain or shine. Join us for a few magical evenings full of healing sounds and good vibrations under the full moon and the beacon of the lighthouse.



Beavertail's Horse Powered Fog Signal



Model of Daboll's Horse Run Fog Horn

During the 1850s, the U.S. Lighthouse Board, under the direction of Joseph Henry, the first Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, added new lighthouses and related equipment throughout the United States.

Hard to believe, but in 1851 at Beavertail Lighthouse, a system developed by Connecticut's famed Inventor, Celadon Daboll, was installed and operated as the first horse-powered Fog Signal.

Daboll also invented steam and compressed air-modulated horns. These powerful horns were more effective than bells. He developed one design where a horse walked a ramp to pump air into a tank reservoir. The pressurized tank, in turn, was fed into the manifold of a vibrating steel reed device which pumped air into the trumpet. The width and length of the reed determined the tone and volume of the horn.

The W. Craig Armington Memorial Scholarship

The W. Craig Armington Memorial Scholarship Fund was established by BLMA for high school seniors living in Jamestown, RI, who have been accepted at a college or university and will begin studies in the fall. The student selected will receive a \$1,000 scholarship to be applied toward college tuition, books, or fees related to their course of study.

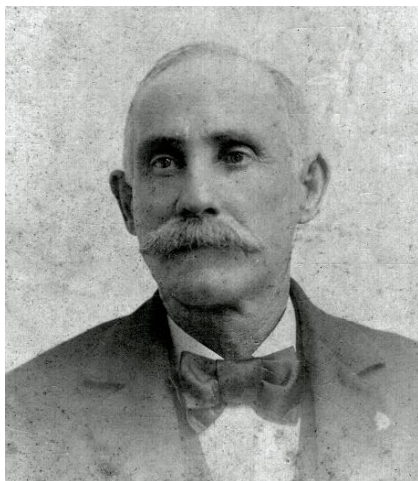
Scholarship applications must be postmarked no later than May 15, 2023. Applications can be downloaded from the website: <http://www.beavertailight.org/scholarship/ScholarshipApp2023a.pdf>. Copies are also available at the Jamestown Library.

Benjamin W. Walker, Assistant Keeper Beavertail Light

John D. Tew and William E. Newcomb

Benjamin Wells Walker was an Assistant Keeper at Beavertail Light. According to the online database, *Lighthouse Explorer*, Benjamin served at Beavertail Light circa 1862. This would place him at Beavertail during the tenure of Keeper Silas G. Shaw. According to the Newport Mercury, February 1, 1862 edition, lighthouse authorities removed Shaw and Benjamin Walker from Beavertail Lighthouse a few days earlier.

Benjamin did not have a straightforward life. His mother died at an early age, and Benjamin began a peripatetic journey from his youth to adulthood, and into his mid-sixties.



*Benjamin Wells Walker in his later years.
Assistant Keeper at Beavertail Lighthouse
c. 1862*

Benjamin Walker was born 25 August 1838 in Coventry, RI. He was the fifth of eight children born to Nathan Walker (1808-1885) and his wife Polly Wells (1809-1847.)

In 1847, when Benjamin was only seven years old, his mother Polly died at age thirty-seven, leaving Nathan Walker, a carpenter/wagon maker, to care for their five surviving minor children. Their first-born child, daughter Susan Walker, was already married to Adam Tew*, and she was busy raising her first child, Mary. Often, in tragic family situations like this, the eldest girl would take on the role of assisting her father in the raising of any minor children. Still, Susan was unable to do so because she had already married and started a family of her own. The result was that Nathan was left with no choice but to find families willing to foster his minor sons Stephen (age 11), Benjamin (age 7), Arnold (age 5), and Joseph (age 8 months.)

The Walker brothers were disbursed to willing families across Rhode Island and Massachusetts—and, so far as is known, none of the brothers lived with the same foster family. Stephen was living with the Stephen Mathewson family in Cranston. Arnold (who would later die during the Civil War) lived with the William Mathewson family in Foster, RI. Joseph, the youngest, was taken in as an infant by Daniel and Susan Battey, also of Foster. The Battey's and the William Mathewson's were neighbors, so Joseph lived close to brother Arnold.

In 1850, the John Corey family in Coventry, RI, fostered Benjamin, and in 1860 (at age 22), he was living with the William H. Knowles family in Jamestown, where he was a farm laborer. By 15 August 1862, Benjamin enlisted in the Army with Battery B, 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery. Before this enlistment, Benjamin Walker served as an Assistant Keeper at Beavertail Light, but the precise date of the start of his service is unknown.

Benjamin was a private, and based on the record of action for his unit; he saw service at the battles of Antietam, Fredericksburg, and Gettysburg before being wounded and absent from 2 February 1864 until 3 August 1864. During his Civil War service, Benjamin's younger brothers, Arnold and Joseph, served in the same unit (Battery B, 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery). Soon after Benjamin's return to duty, Battery B, 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery, was involved at the Battle of Reams Station in Virginia on 25 August 1864. The battle was a strategic victory for the Union forces, but they suffered 2,046 missing or captured. Benjamin Walker was among those captured. The Confederates imprisoned him at Ream's Station until he was released on 8 October 1864 and reported to Camp Parole in Annapolis, Maryland. He mustered out at Providence, Rhode Island, on 12 June 1865.

By 1870, 32-year-old Benjamin moved to Lincoln, Nebraska, where he worked as a carpenter. His 61-year-old father, Nathan, a wagon maker, lived with Benjamin. Ten years later, Benjamin had removed to Seward City, Nebraska, where he worked as a carpenter. By 16 June 1900, when he was 61 years old, Benjamin's health was failing, and he was back in Rhode Island living as a boarder in the Providence home of Phillip and Susan (Burnham) Carr. While his occupation was still listed as a carpenter, he was noted as an "invalid."

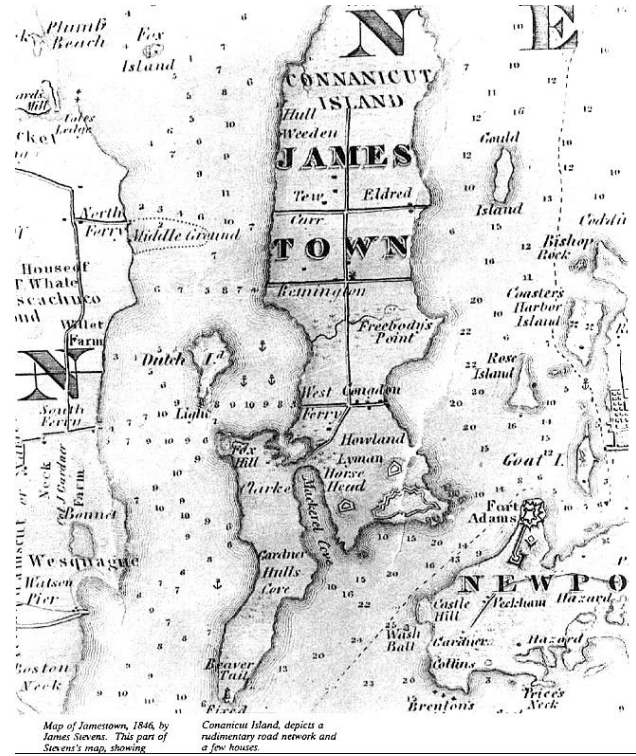
continued on next page

continued from previous page

Benjamin Walker died at Central Falls, Rhode Island, on 11 April 1904 at age 65. Because there is no record of Benjamin having a marriage, wife, or children, and all census enumerations show him as single, it is assumed he remained a bachelor his entire adult life. When Benjamin died, he lived in the home of his nephew, John Andrew Tew*, and his wife, Maggie, and their children. Sadly, John Andrew Tew died on 27 January 1903 when a train hit him on his way to work.

Benjamin Wells Walker had a hard start in life and could never put down solid roots anywhere. Like many men of his generation who served in the Civil War, he suffered battle and incarceration in the notoriously appalling conditions of a prisoner of war camp and parole detention. One can imagine that his brief time at Beavertail Light looking out on the bay must have been, for him, a time of peace and tranquility in his otherwise turbulent journey through life.

* Adam Tew was the grandson of John Tew (1746-1827) and his wife Hannah Stafford (1749-1827). John Andrew Tew was the great-grandson of John and Hannah Tew. John owned a 14-acre farm on the west side of North Main St. on Jamestown that was the remnant of Tew holdings on Conanicut Island going back to Richard Tew's purchase as one of the original proprietors of the purchase from the Narragansett. At one time, the Tew holdings amounted to 120 acres in the northwest section of the island.



Map of Jamestown showing the Tew family property in the Northwest corner.

John D. Tew was born in Providence, RI. He is a retired attorney living in Allentown, NJ, and the author of the family history/genealogy blog Filiopietism Prism. Benjamin Walker is John's 2nd great-granduncle and brother to John's 2nd great-grandmother, Susan (Walker) Tew.

William E. Newcomb was born in Providence, RI. He is a dedicated family historian residing in Rhode Island. Benjamin Walker is William's 2nd grand uncle and brother to William's great grandfather, Joseph Manchester Walker. John and William are 3rd cousins, 1x removed.

Are You Ready to be Part of 401Gives?



We are excited to participate for the 2nd year in 401Gives powered by United Way of Rhode Island. This year features a "weekend edition" of the event starting on Friday March 31st and ending Monday April 3rd. This is a statewide effort to give back to those local non-profits in your community like us that need your help.

Please see our website or the link below for more details on how to participate. Our first year was very successful as we raised \$4,100 to benefit our maintenance and preservation projects as well as maintaining and increasing the educational exhibits we offer to the public.

Please consider donating to us for the "weekend edition" of 401Gives. Thank you for your support. Between March 31 and April 3, 2023 go to the

<https://www.401gives.org/organizations/beavertail-lighthouse-museum-association> website

to make your donation to the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association through **401Gives**.

Rhode Island's Perilous Coast South Shore of Block Island-Part 2

Seven years after the loss of the schooner AMERICA in 1819, another schooner met with disaster in the early spring months of 1826. It was on March 24th that the northbound coastal schooner MIDAS, sailing from Havana for Boston with a cargo of sugar, boots, and shoes, ran into a storm and was driven ashore on the south side of Block Island. As reported in the news, *“on the night of the 24th at a quarter before 11, it being very dark, and wind a gale from the south by east, the schooner struck on the south side of Block Island and bilged in five minutes”*. The captain and one man made it to shore within four hours and the remainder onboard made it to shore by about 6 o'clock the next morning. Captain Patterson of Saco, ME, was glad to see that no lives were lost except for a few hundred pairs of boots and some of the fore rigging; his vessel was a total loss.



One year later, the 74-ton sloop FULTON met a similar fate in the same general area as the MIDAS. Built in Haddam, CT, in 1816, the sloop measured 60 feet in length and was 11 years old. The southbound sloop was four days out of Boston and sailing for New York City with a cargo of hardware and other unidentified goods when she ran ashore on the night of April 24, 1827, in a gale. Once again, all aboard made it to shore, but the sloop almost immediately opened her seams and let the seas rush in to smash her into small pieces.

Jonathan Godfrey, her master, worked with the local islanders and managed to save some of the cargo, but the sloop would not sail again.

It would be almost six years before the island's south shore would claim its next victim. This time it was another schooner named MARK, heading northbound from Alexandria, VA, for its home port of Boston. The captain's name was Cowell, and, in his hold, he carried a cargo of corn that would never arrive at its destination. As with the case of the loss of the AMERICA fourteen years earlier, the immediate cause of the loss was the fog. The date was September 4, 1832, when the small schooner made it ashore for the final time in her career.

Only months after the stranding of the schooner MARK, another, much larger, vessel – the full-masted ship RUTH & MARY paid a visit to the rocky south shore of Block Island. Unlike the others who had preceded her, this ship had set out from New England in search of whales. When lost, she carried all of the necessary equipment for a long voyage to the Indian Ocean in search of her quarry. Captain Braddock N. Chester began his journey on Saturday, May 16, 1833, and within ten hours, ran hard aground off the southwest point of Block Island. For a voyage of this anticipated duration, she had likely spent weeks in preparation to see that all the necessary equipment, provisions, and such were in order. The 292-ton ship measured 94 feet in length with a 26-foot breadth and drew 13 feet of water when she met her end on a foggy evening in May. Although there were no casualties in the crew when all was said and done, her remains sold for just \$45.00.

Captain Lancaster and his crew were headed home, to Salem, MA, with a cargo filled with 600 barrels of flour and 3,000 bushels of corn loaded at Baltimore, MD, when she was caught in a gale and tossed ashore. Although the vessel became a total loss; some were able to save her cargo but in a damaged state.

Six months later, on November 9, 1833, the northbound merchant schooner PANAMA also ran ashore on the south shore of Block Island, this time on the ragged southwestern corner that caught numerous vessels over the years.

When the schooner COLUMBUS came to grief on November 14, 1837, she was carrying a varied cargo which included fish and wooden spars for new vessels being built in New York. She had set sail from Castine, ME, under the command of Captain Eldred and was hopeful of a quick and peaceful trip south despite the time of year. Such was not to be the case, and when off the coast of Rhode Island, the crew was caught in an early winter snowstorm. Try as they might, the schooner ended her days on the rocks off Block Island's Southwest Point. Fortunately, the crew escaped the wreck, but the cargo and vessel were lost.



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

www.beavertailight.org

Our newsletter is published four times per year for members. If you would like to receive each issue immediately after publication, please provide us with your updated email address.



Tower Climb Schedule

The Tower and Museum are closed for the winter season.

BLMA plans to reopen the Tower and Museum in late May. Please see our website for details on the reopening of the Tower and Museum.

To contact the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum please call (401) 423-3270, or email us at info@BeavertailLight.org.

Group Tours & Events

We will announce any updates and/or changes to the schedule on our website at BeavertailLight.org.

Weddings and private events on the Lighthouse grounds are not allowed by the U.S. Coast Guard. For information on scheduling events at Beavertail State Park contact the RI Dept. of Environmental Management (RIDEM) at 401.884.2010.