



# The Lighthouse Log

Summer 2023

## Quarterly Newsletter of the BLMA

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## Summer 2023 President's Message



Hello Everyone,

Well, we have had a busy spring at Beavertail. First, we welcomed our new and old docents to our annual Docent Breakfast on May 13th. Then, BLMA held its first-ever Beavertail walk-a-thon on Sunday, May 21st, which was a big success. Despite starting with gray skies, about 150 walkers participated in walking the loop around the park. A huge thank you goes out to our sponsors, raffle item providers, volunteers, and walkers.

Later in May, Sean O'Connor, the Executive Director of Rose Island Lighthouse, treated a group of Board members to a personal tour. It was a great trip and a beautiful day for the tour. We were fascinated to hear about the historical significance of the Lighthouse and the island. Photos and details on these events are inside the Log.

Work on our new Courtyard is finished, and it looks great. Our museum opened for the weekends only on May 20th, and things have been humming along. As I write this, we are starting our daily schedule on Monday, June 19th. Our website has all the information regarding the full museum schedule, tower climb dates, volunteering opportunities, and Sound Bath event dates. In addition, Nicole Contino will conduct yoga on the Lawn on Thursdays at 10:00 AM.

We were pleased to have Governor McKee come to Beavertail to sign a new gubernatorial compact focusing on education on June 1st, making Jamestown the 10th

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municipality to do so. I am delighted to report that our charity license plate fundraiser has been a success. Thank you to everyone who purchased a plate and helped us complete this endeavor in just four and a half months! As you may have heard, we have now handed over the process of ordering the license plates to the RI DMV. Read on in the Log for more information on the Plates. And a huge shout out goes to our sister organization, the Jamestown Historical Society, for their support of our Charity license plate campaign. They have been supportive of our efforts from the very beginning.

Stay tuned for more information about BLMA's 30<sup>th</sup>-anniversary celebration! It falls on July 22<sup>nd</sup>, and we are working on the details. It's incredible to think that our Association has existed now for 30 years, largely due to the many talented and dedicated Board members that have served and our loyal membership. I am so proud of the outstanding work of everyone involved with Beavertail over the years.

Best wishes,  
Diane

## Beavertail Walk-A-Thon A Great Success!

The Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association (BLMA) hosted its first-ever Walk-a-thon at the lighthouse on Sunday, May 21, 2023, to raise funds to support the lighthouse property and museum.

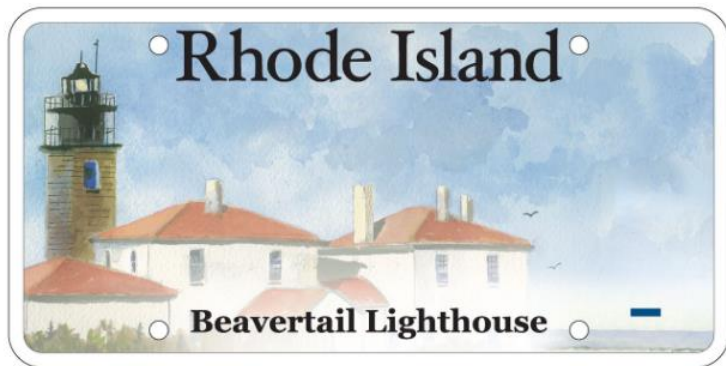
Channel 10 News was on hand for the ribbon cutting, and BLMA Director Joan Vessella dressed in a Lighthouse Keeper's outfit for the occasion (see photos below.) Jamestown Boy Scout Troop #1 was on hand to help direct parking for the good-sized crowd that turned out. Many people from near and far joined in on the fun to help raise money. Walkers and Troop #1 members received a complimentary Lighthouse Tower climb for their efforts (see photos below.)





## Beavertail Charity License Plate Goal Met

The Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association is happy to announce that we have reached the point in



our Beavertail Charity Plate campaign where we can turn the process of collecting orders over to the Rhode Island Division of Motor Vehicles (RI DMV). Within a few weeks, we should announce when and where you can pick up your Beavertail Charity Plate. Due to the time it takes to complete ordering and producing the plates, we expect this "distribution event" to occur near the end of this summer, possibly around Labor Day.

We want to thank everyone who has ordered the Beavertail Charity Plate for making this drive

a tremendous success. The Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association charity license plates are now available for purchase directly from the RI DMV website. Each set of plates costs \$42.50, with \$22.50 being paid to DMV to process the plate, and the Museum's profit is \$20. Your purchase is a charitable donation.

## Preserve Rhode Island Grant

Preserve Rhode Island (Preserve RI) awarded one-for-one matching grants totaling \$125,000 to 16 nonprofit organizations, including Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association and the Jamestown Historical Society. BLMA received \$8,450 for exterior repairs and repainting on the 1856 buildings.

Preserve RI received its highest number of requests to date, with over 40 organizations requesting \$369,000 for important preservation work across the state.

Preserve RI has partnered with The 1772 Foundation to provide vital funding to help nonprofits around Rhode Island with important capital repair projects for their historical sites. All the projects allow these historic buildings to continue benefiting all Rhode Islanders.

## W. Craig Armington Memorial Scholarship



*Nancy Beye presenting the Scholarship award to Callum Heffernan*

Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association typically awards one senior high school student \$1000 annually to help them further their college education in the fall. However, the qualifications submitted by these two high school seniors were so close and outstanding that BLMA made an exception and awarded two \$1000 scholarships. The scholarship winners are Callum Heffernan, who attended North Kingstown High School, and Rian Hines, who attended LaSalle Academy – Providence.



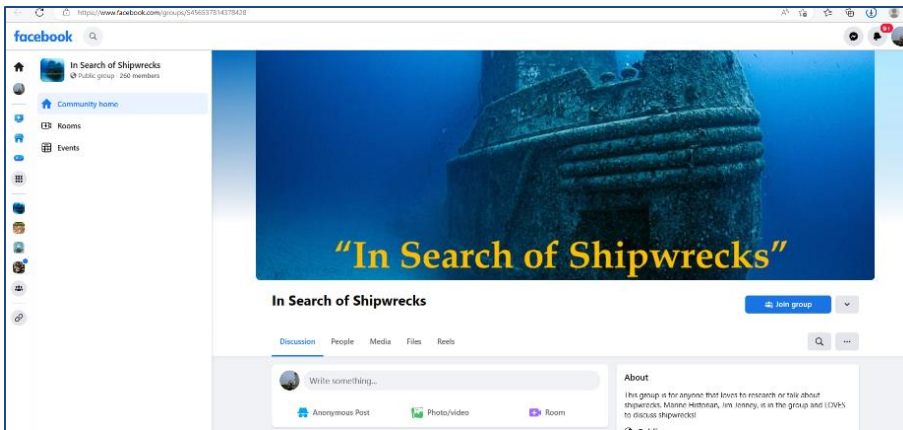
*L to R, Varoujan Karentz, recipient- Rian Hines, Diane Bakley, and Bob Langton.*

## In Search of Shipwrecks Facebook Page

On May 12, 2022, Judy Jenney, the wife of BLMA Marine Historian Jim Jenney, began a Facebook group page, **In Search of Shipwrecks**, as a tribute to Jim, who works tirelessly researching the history of

shipwrecks. Jim's research appears in every issue of this publication.

Judy notes, "Jim had begun a new project, researching shipwrecks in the Bahamas and became discouraged that no one would ever see or benefit from this work he loves." Judy knew that people would be interested in reading about the fates of these ill-fated ships, so she began a Facebook page. Each day Judy posted a "SHIPWRECK OF



THE DAY" where she noted the history of each wreck that occurred on that date from Jim's research.

Judy considers herself fortunate to have access to the Beavertail Shipwreck database, available online from the beavertailight.org website. Judy gets many stories from the Beavertail Shipwreck database but does intersperse them with shipwrecks from other public databases. She always gives credit when using another resource for the shipwreck information. After all, she knows how much effort goes into researching this information.

Judy says, "I am not a marine historian; I will leave that to the experts, but I do like to bring the wonderful information that I have read to anyone that wants to read about amazing marine history."


Judy and Jim were in town recently to visit Beavertail Lighthouse and met with some of the BLMA Directors to review the exhibits at the museum.



Jim and Judy Jenney Visit Beavertail Lighthouse with BLMA Director Varoujan Karentz

**YOGA @ Beavertail**  
**Thursdays at 10 am**  
*on the lawn behind the lighthouse*

all levels  
bring your mat  
weather permitting



100% of your Donation  
supports the  
Beavertail Lighthouse  
Museum Association

Details on  
beavertailight.org  
Or, Text Nicole  
860-912-5720

**Yoga at Beavertail Lighthouse**

**JOIN NICOLE CONTINO AT  
BEAVERTAIL LIGHTHOUSE EVERY  
THURSDAY AT 10 AM THROUGH  
AUGUST 25<sup>TH</sup>!!!!**

## Ronald P. Bugenske, US Coast Guard Assistant Keeper, Beavertail Light

When Ron, or “Bugsy” as he was known to his friends, and Mary Bugenske moved into the Assistant Keeper’s quarters at Beavertail Lighthouse in the early 1960s, they brought with them their twin 5-year-old daughters Tammy & Terry, their 3-year-old son Jack, a cat named Snooky and a flatulent Dalmatian named Spot.



*Ronald Paul Bugenske  
Assistant Keeper (US Coast Guard) at  
Beavertail Lighthouse 1962-1965*

Born on May 15, 1936, in Saginaw, Michigan, Ron joined the Coast Guard while still a teenager. Not long after, 19-year-old Mary Turner had noticed the tall, blonde, and handsome Coast Guardsman from her bedroom window in Pine Point, Maine. He was living with her next-door neighbors. Little did Mary know then that she would soon meet the handsome stranger and he would be the love of her life. Ron and Mary married in April 1957.

BLMA Director Linda Warner, who met the Bugenskies when they first moved to Jamestown, recalls that Beavertail was always a hopping place between the Bugenske family’s three young children and Head Keeper Dominic M. Turillo’s 11 children. Linda chuckles when she recalls that Spot the Dalmatian would slink away guiltily when one of the children would call out, “Pee-Yew!” It was a merry time at Beavertail, indeed! Filled with laughter, play, and many great memories.

Linda would often head up to Beavertail Lighthouse with a large bottle of Pepsi and a big bag of Fritos for an evening chat with Mary while the children snacked and Ron and Dominic had target practice on the “back 40” between shifts of tending the light. Sometimes on her visits, Linda would leave her baby asleep in the car in the early evening on the road in front of the lighthouse with a cool breeze blowing in while she and Mary chatted nearby. Often, the baby was so deep in sleep that not even the blaring of the foghorn could rouse the child from her slumber.

Linda recalls a couple of rough storms during the Bugenske’s tenure at Beavertail, where some big rollers threatened to come up the cliffs towards the Lighthouse, but, luckily, the Bugenske’s never experienced anything like hurricane Carol which roared through Jamestown in 1954 during the Turillo’s time at Beavertail. Dom Turillo stayed in the Keeper’s House to man the Lighthouse during Carol, but helped the children to escape through a window to the Assistant Keeper’s house, as a precaution, when a chimney fell in the main house. The Turillos survived the storm without injury.

Following his Beavertail deployment, Ron was stationed on the USCG cutter Point Cypress in Newport, while Mary remained in Jamestown with the children. Ron retired from the Coast Guard in 1973.

After the Coast Guard, Ron followed in the footsteps of his father, Joseph Edward Bugenske, working with the local Police Department. Joseph had risen from a foot Patrolman with the Saginaw Police Department to become its Chief of Police. Ron spent five years with the Scarborough, Maine, Police Department, working as a Youth Aid Officer and Hunter Safety Instructor. According to the 1920 Federal Census, Ron’s grandfather, John Bugenske, the son of Polish immigrants, was also a Police Officer in Saginaw.

Mary and Ron spent 58 loving years together, and Linda remained friends with the Bugenskies even after their move back to Pine Point, Maine. Linda and her husband visited Ron and Mary there. After Mary died in 2015, Ron visited Linda and BLMA Director Varoujan Karentz at Beavertail Lighthouse, where Ron shared some of his most precious memories. Of course, the Lighthouse was automated by this time, and there was no longer a Keeper.

Ron Bugenske passed away on December 13, 2021, at age 85. Like the other men and women who have served as Keepers at Beavertail Lighthouse, Ron’s legacy lives on through the efforts of the BLMA, helping to discover and preserve these wonderful bits of history.

Special thanks to BLMA Director Linda Warner for sharing her memories of Ron and his family.



*Ron donated this  
navigation light to the  
museum.*



## Rose Island Lighthouse Visit

On May 22, several BLMA Board Members took a trip to Rose Island, located in Narragansett Bay between Jamestown and Newport, to visit the Rose Island Lighthouse.

If you will remember, in the Spring 2023 issue of the Lighthouse Log, Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association teamed up with the Rose Island Lighthouse Foundation's Executive Director, Sean O'Connor, and Island Manager Mike Healey to share ideas on maximizing the potential of these two Non-profit organizations. BLMA Directors visited Rose Island Lighthouse to continue this relationship.



*BLMA Directors Visit the  
Rose Island Lighthouse*



*Rose Island Lighthouse*



*Nesting Gull with Chicks  
at Rose Island*

## BLMA Docent Breakfast

All who attended our Docent Breakfast with delicious food provided by Ann Deffley, our local caterer, had a great time. It was fun to see old friends come back as docents and new volunteers who wanted to learn how to be a docent. Dave Smith provided training on our Team Up Calendar so volunteers can pick the day and time most convenient for their shift. Mary Hamilton trained docents in the Gift Shop, and Linda Warner helped new docents learn how to describe and illustrate the historical exhibits in the museum's front room.



## Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Schedule

*The Museum will be open every day from Monday June 19th through Labor Day, September 4th, 10:30 AM to 4:30P unless otherwise noted. Open weekends in the fall till October 9th.*

## Rhode Island's Perilous Coast South Shore of Block Island

As the years passed, a trend in maritime disasters on the south side of Block Island appeared. The vessels lost tended to be northbound with cargoes of farm produce and, later, raw materials for the growing industrialized cities of New England. March 9, 1840, was another foggy day when the schooner NILE, under the command of Captain Small, found herself lost off the Rhode Island coast. In her hold were 844 barrels of flour and 400 bushels of corn, the latter cargo almost entirely lost during the disaster. Although it would be another three decades before an actual life-saving station would be established near Southwest Point, the Block Islanders were familiar with and kept their eyes open for ships in distress. As for the NILE, salvagers saved most of the flour, but the corn sank along with the vessel.

Another winter storm struck Block Island in February 1842, driving the schooner GLOBE ashore. It was on the morning of the 17th that the incident occurred. According to the Collector of the Port, *"there came on shore, on the south side of the island, in a most tremendous gale of wind with her sails literally torn to rags, the schooner GLOBE, Grant, of Duxbury, Mass., from New Bern, NC, bound to Boston – cargo naval stores."* The 13-year-old schooner was no match for the elements and became a total loss as she lay ashore. As there was no mention of the crew's fate, we can assume they survived the loss.

The WILLIAM & JOHN was a 123-ton schooner that ran ashore shortly after the loss of the GLOBE. The stranding took place on June 24, 1842, in this area's most favorable sailing months. And since there was no mention of either a storm or fog, we can only surmise that the cause of the loss of this vessel was a navigational error.

Of the 100 barrels of flour aboard at the time, salvagers saved 60 barrels but in a damaged state. Of the 300 bushels of corn aboard, the salvagers saved 200, and these were also in a damaged condition. Captain Sawyer was in command of the coastal trader when the incident occurred, and no loss of life was reported. His schooner, however, was not so lucky as this was her last voyage.

A decade would pass before the rocky southwestern corner of Block Island would be responsible for another loss. On September 5, 1854, the American schooner STATESMAN of Camden, ME, would succumb to the ever-threatening fog to be found in this vicinity. Northbound from Norfolk, VA, and headed for Portsmouth, NH, with corn and flour, Captain Emerson was caught on a Tuesday night between 8 and 10 o'clock and would be lost. In this instance, the fog must have been extreme, indeed, for six vessels ran ashore on the west side of Block Island that night. The location of the STATESMAN was the farthest south of the group and one of three vessels lost. Salvagers rescued three other vessels from their perilous positions ashore.

Eighteen months after the most notable foggy night when the STATESMAN was lost, another schooner would bring her career to an end on the rocky southwestern shore of Block Island. On March 2, 1856, the merchant vessel LUCULLUS would be caught in a snowstorm off the island and tossed ashore. In her hold and on deck, she carried between 8,000 and 9,000 feet of ship timber from St. Mary's, GA, for Pembroke, ME, when the incident occurred.

At first glance, the islanders were optimistic that they could save both the vessel and cargo, but, in the end, some weeks after the stranding, she went on the auction block for all concerned. Her hull with all materials fetched \$147.00, while the cargo, which landed mainly on the beach, fetched \$38.00. For their efforts, the salvors would receive 75% of the proceeds.

The 350-ton bark PARODI was the next victim to the southern side of Block Island, and this one is fascinating. Unlike most victims in this area, the bark set sail from Providence, her home port, destined for Zanzibar, Africa. The true intent of the voyage was likely to bring back human cargo. Before her loss on October 15, 1857, the PARODI had initiated this voyage sometime in September and, due to a leak, had been forced to return to Providence for repairs to her oakum. Whether or not these repairs and her condition were directly responsible for her loss is unclear but certainly worthy of consideration. The 119-foot-long vessel ran ashore and had her stern stove in by the action of the sea.





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](http://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 is open 1:30pm -4pm these days in 2023:**

Tuesday July 4  
Saturday July 15  
Saturday July 29  
Lighthouse Day Monday August 7  
Saturday August 12  
Saturday August 26  
Labor Day Monday September 4  
Saturday September 23  
Columbus Day Monday October 9

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

## Group Tours & Events

We will announce any updates and/or changes to the schedule on our website at [BeavertailLight.org](http://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.