



BEAVERTAIL LIGHTHOUSE MUSEUM ASSOCIATION

The Lighthouse Log

Summer 2009

BEAVERTAIL LIGHTHOUSE MUSEUM ASSOCIATION

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Guy Archambault

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Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association

PO Box 83

Jamestown, RI 02835

401.423.3270

E mail:

info@Beavertailight.org

Web site:

www.beavertailight.org

A Message from BLMA President, Richard Sullivan

If you have been out to Beavertail this summer, you have seen the staging and all the equipment associated with the repairs to the tower and keepers' quarters.

ABCORE Restoration has done a wonderful job of doing their work with minimum impact on property access. Both the aquarium and museum have seen the usual steady stream of visitors. Perhaps you were among them. Work is almost completed and a grand reopening of the tower is planned. More information on repairs inside.

If you haven't been to Beavertail this season

you must get down for the tower reopening and see the newly repainted keepers' houses. They are beautiful. Be sure to notice the rebuilt chimney on the west side of the Assistant Keeper's house. Also while you are looking, take note of the new cellar window casings, frames and sash, custom built with red cedar.

A tower reopening is being planned for the Columbus Day weekend. Watch the local press, call the museum, 401.423.3270 for a message or visit the website www.Beavertailight.org

More information about the website can be found on page 5 of this issue.

Don't miss our Annual Meeting scheduled for Tuesday, September 15, 7pm in the Community Room at the Jamestown Library. Guest speaker Rod Smith will present a talk on Narragansett Bay Shipping. As usual, good company and refreshments. Come early or stay late!

1749 Foundation Engineering Report

As the newsletter is about to go to press, the engineering report commissioned by BLMA was received. The Survey and Cost Estimate was undertaken and prepared by long-time Jamestown resident Victor Calabretta, PE, Vice President recently retired from The Maquire Group.

The document calls for an on-site restoration of the original foundation, using local materi-

als, removing the non-historic mortar mix and replacing with the original mix. Victor, an engineer with a great deal of experience in the hostile along shore marine environment, reached the restoration conclusion



intuitively, after a study of the original foundation's success at withstanding major storm events for many years.

The document, along with two other reports commissioned by BLMA, will be examined by the committee convening this fall and referred to in the 1749 foundation article by Varoujan Karentz found on page 2 of this issue.

-RES

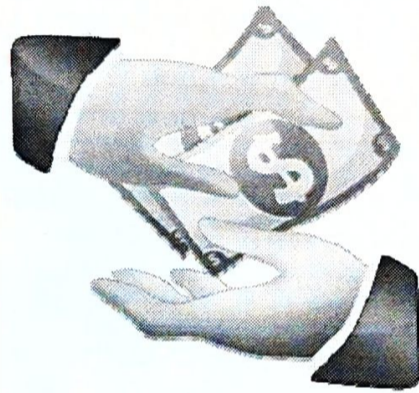
BLMA Launches Capital Campaign

An additional \$150,000 is needed to fully stabilize the light tower

BLMA recently formed a capital campaign committee, chaired by Mr. Anthony Antine, to obtain necessary funding to complete phase one of the Lighthouse restoration. Although BLMA is the recipient of generous grants from the Champlin Foundations and the R.I. Historic Preservation Heritage Commission, an additional \$150,000 is needed to fully stabilize the light tower and adjacent structures.

The committee developed a plan of action to meet that financial goal by the end of 2009. It is reaching out to marine related businesses and organizations that have used Beavertail Light for navigational purposes through the years. Letters have been sent to shipping companies, yacht clubs, marinas, ship and boat repair yards, nautical supply wholesalers and retailers. Essentially, the letters request financial support

in return for the 259 years of navigational guidance that Beavertail Light has consistently provided. Local Jamestown business owners have also been contacted to seek their participation in return for the increased clientele generated by visitors attracted to Jamestown because of the lighthouse presence.



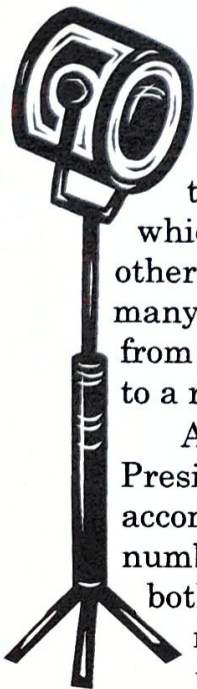
In addition to contacting marine commercial and recreational establishments the committee is hosting a series of social gatherings to educate friends and

neighbors of the planned improvements to Beavertail Lighthouse and to solicit their financial support. Two such gatherings have already occurred in the form of wine and hors d'oeuvres parties. Preliminary results are most encouraging since those gatherings have realized approximately 15% of goal, thus far. Readers of this report are asked to consider hosting such an event to help BLMA reach their objective.

Meeting the goal of raising \$150,000 will lay the foundation for accomplishing phase 2: museum expansion and phase 3: creating new museum experiences and developing more educational programming.

Please contact any BLMA board member or call (401) 423-3270 if you want more information or if you would like to participate in preserving our Jamestown treasure. -GA

THE SPOTLIGHT SHINES ON...



When someone contacts BLMA via our website, **Alan Brunner** swings into action.

For the past 8 years Alan has monitored the inquiries, answering those with which he felt comfortable, and farming out other inquiries. Alan, a dedicated volunteer for many years, has been known to get an item from the gift shop and mail it out in response to a request.

Alan has served as a Director and Vice President as well as a docent on weekends. An accomplished pianist, he has played with a number of orchestras and symphony groups both in the United States and in Europe. He made be heard playing at Trattoria Sympatico Friday evenings. -RES

1749 Foundation Status

Thanks to the donations of BLMA members and a gift from Mae and Bill Munger for use of their boat as a fund raiser, the U.S. National Trust for Historic Preservation matching grant, the radar imaging research project of the 1749 foundation ruin is now completed. BLMA is now faced with determining the best option presented by the analysis and consultants to save the remains of the ruin. Since the US Coast Guard still owns the property and the RI Historic Preservation and Heritage Commission's archeologist must approve of actions as does the RI Coastal Resource Management Council, BLMA plans to formulate these options with a feasibility study and cost estimates for review by the authorities. -VK



Restoration Progress

This past July and August showed considerable work being completed by our contractor ABCORE Restoration Inc. This is the first major restoration of the light tower in 150 years. Both the Granite Light Tower and the two Keeper houses have been shrouded with staging. Under the direction of ABCOR's owner (Keith Lescarbeau), the restoration crew have demonstrated a par-excellence attitude and a remarkable performance for attention to details. Every procedure and repair task undertaken to date has been accomplished with an uncanny fetish by his team to maintain the highest quality and assurance that no short-cuts or sub quality material be used. The restoration work to date is not only historically accurate, but the quality of workmanship is exceptional

The "iron" and metal work above the granite portion of the tower has either been replaced or repaired. All the window panes surrounding the



turn were sandblasted preparatory to metal priming, then painted white on the interior side and black on the exterior as before. These panels, along with the glass panes were bedded in with sealant and the bronze stops reinstalled after they were scraped clean of old paint, brightly hand polished, then clear lacquered to retain the bright finish. The upper section of the tower is now sealed and watertight.

gallery main deck external railings were removed and new sections forged. New corroded corner plate castings were cast and welded to the existing lower deck structure. The gallery deck railings and balusters were then removed, recast as necessary, sandblasted, prepared for hot zinc galvanizing, then epoxy coated, painted and reinstalled. The interior side of the gallery deck "Watch Room", paneled with decorative wooden vertical siding has been meticulously scraped clean of paint layers and will be sanded to its original condition preparatory to applying a finish coat.

Masonry reconstruction work on the external granite blocks of the light tower is 100% complete. Old deteriorated and loose mortar between each seam of each granite block, both horizontally and vertically was removed by hand tools to a depth of at least 2 inches. Over 1400 liner feet of mortar was removed. The replacement mortar, formulated to replicate the original lime and cement mix used a hundred and fifty years ago was then re-pointed.

"The restoration work to date is not only accurate, but the quality of the workmanship is exceptional"

- Varoujan Karentz

light have been replaced with new glass, included the removable and refurbishment of the bronze pane stops, the 10 deteriorated metal panels below the glass. All castings were taken down to bare metal. Corroded panels were replaced by a new fabricated stainless steel ones which in

The entire external lantern deck, railings and supports were removed. New deck plates were cast from molds designed by ABCORE and manufactured by a foundry, sandblasted and prepared for painting. New deck supporting members were fabricated and installed. The

Restoration continued page 4

Restoration from page 3

Concurrently with the work on the tower funded by the Champlin Foundations, ABCORE is also working on the repair of the two Keeper houses funded by a matching grant from the RI Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission (RIHPHC). This work is primarily concerned with sealing the buildings from water and moisture deteriora-

tion. Rotted roof soffets have been replaced along with floor joists and entrance thresholds. The gutters of both houses have been repaired, a new chimney on the Assistant Keeper's house has been replaced and all of the loose and peeling brick "parge" coating removed. Both buildings were "re-parged and repainted.

Representatives from the RI Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission and the Executive Director, Keith Lang of Champlin Foundations visited the site commenting favorably as to the quality and progress of the work. On site work will continue on the tower and the buildings through September.

-VK

1749 Light Images

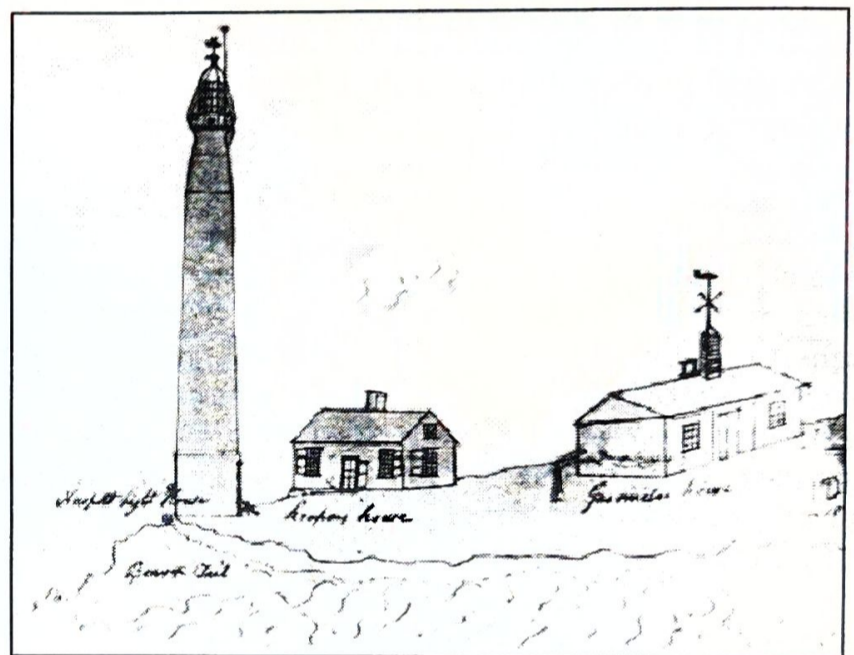
The BLMA is looking for a drawing, image, painting or photograph of the early Beavertail Lights built by Newport's Peter Harrison "America's First Architect".

The original light built in 1749 burned down and was rebuilt in 1753. There exists only two known crude sketches shown below.

We are puzzled that a more detailed image of the lights which stood at southern tip of Conanicut Island for 107 years before the present tower constructed in 1856 has never surfaced or been seen.

Of the two sketches, neither shows any detail. One was drawn by a French Navy Officer named "Ozanne" in 1779 and the other from "David Melville's" sketch of his 1814 gas house, which lit the light for a period of about one year.

Based on a recent underground radar imaging project sponsored by the "National Trust for Historic Preservation" of the existing foundation ruin, the original foundation was octagonal in shape and suggests that the first light tower was constructed of wood, shaped as a flat sided octagonal structure. The rebuilt 1753 structure was built of brick and rubble taken from Fort George (Goat Island) and took on a spherical cone shape.



Anyone who can produce an authentic image of either light or who knows the existence of one, please contact Varoujan Karentz at 401.423.0636 or via email: epic@juno.com

An Upgraded Website



Thanks to the hard work of David Auld and Lanette Macaruso, our website is sporting some new features that enhance BLMA's image and capacity.

David is the son of Anna Auld, a long time member and her late husband Charlie, who served BLMA as Board member and President. Lanette is an enthusiastic Board member who has contributed greatly to our fund raising activities and media capability.

Lanette has developed BLMA's ability to have PayPal available for

donations, as well as for an online gift shop that Dorrie, our Buyer, has had on the drawing board for sometime. Initially, a sampling of our gift shop will be available. The goal is to have the shop available for this year's holiday season.

Be sure to visit the website, www.Beavertailight.org, particularly if you have not had the opportunity to get to Beavertail this season. You will find the pictures quite impressive. -RES

Guest Speaker at our Annual Meeting

Jamestown resident Rod Smith to be featured

The annual meeting scheduled at the Jamestown Library on 15 September will feature Guest Speaker and local Jamestown resident Rod Smith.

Rod operates and maintains one of the most unique websites about Narragansett Bay www.narragansettbayshipping.com. The web site comprises an ongoing information series about commercial shipping entering and departing the bay. Coupled with

photographs and information the site enables the reader to find why and where these hundreds of ships come to Rhode Island ports and load or unload cargoes. His web site tracks vessels due to arrive in our local waters and a link to the location of ships worldwide.

Coastal shipping and vessels from around the world are daily visitors passing Beavertail light. His talk at the annual meeting includes a video presentation pro-

viding insight as to significant maritime traffic that we see passing and anchoring off our shores. In 1982 Rod sailed as crewman on the old passenger ferry MV Yankee which ran from Providence to Newport to Block Island and he has been watching ships ever since. -VK

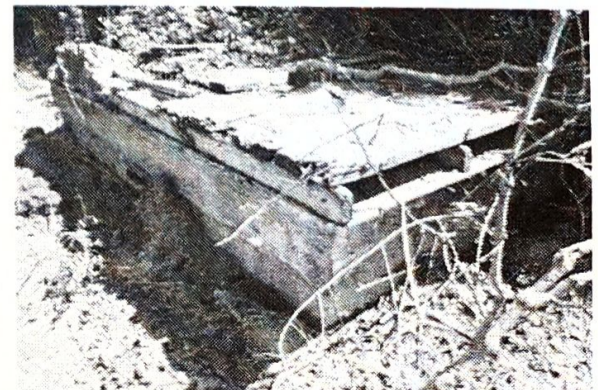


New Find

Coupled with the good news from DEM that Beavertail will soon see some modern solar powered composing toilets to replace the infamous "Porta Potties" at the north edge of the light station, the

DEM brush cleaning crews exposed a previously unknown casement structure on the light station property. Measuring 12 x 8 and possibly 8 ft deep into the ground, the concrete structure at one time was covered with a wooden canvas covered top.

A review of documents by Coast Guard real estate personnel indicate that this casement was the entrance to a well dug in 1939. There is however, no evidence that it was ever used. -VK



A Reason for Giving Thanks

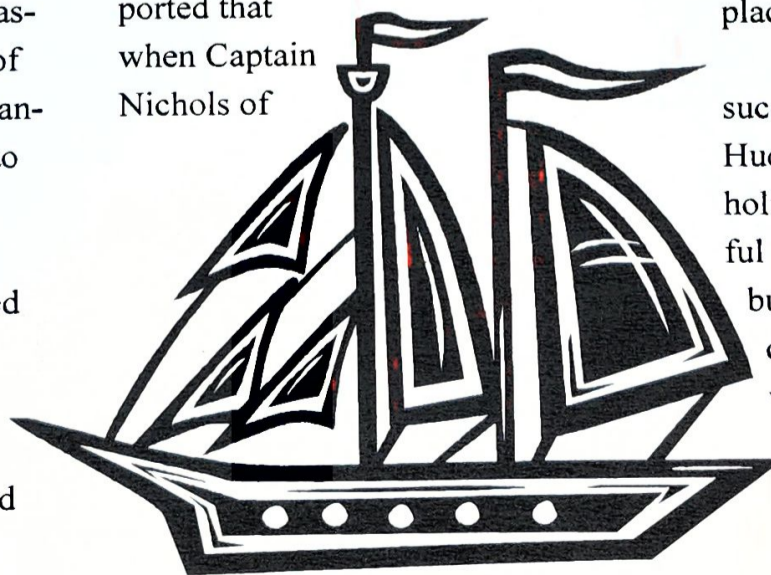
The celebration of Thanksgiving was observed in America as early as 1607. For a number of years thereafter, the chosen date for the occasion was the first Thursday in the month of November. President Abraham Lincoln changed Thanksgiving Day to the fourth Thursday of November in 1863. Just one year and six days earlier a New England mariner named Walter Hudson had the opportunity to learn a most appropriate reason for celebrating Thanksgiving when his small schooner, the ANNA M. STILL, struck on Whale Rock, in the west passage of Narragansett Bay and sank within fifteen minutes, taking his entire crew to their grave.

We have all heard the term “wooden ships and iron men”, and there are countless stories in the annals of lost ships which detail the unbelievable suffering that mariners often endured and survived when radar, cell phones and GPS were not an option. The loss of the ANNA M. STILL and the suffering of her master illustrates the rigorous nature of the marine environment and the dangers faced by those who decided to make their career at sea.

On November 22, 1862 this small work-a-day schooner, loaded with a cargo of oysters bound for merchants in Fall River who would further transport the delicious fare to buyers in Boston, had

the misfortune to run onto Whale Rock, a small but prominent obstruction in the passage. It was twenty years later before a lighthouse was finally positioned on this rock and little more than a half century after that when the lighthouse was completely washed away along with her 2nd assistant keeper, Walter B. Eberle, during the infamous hurricane of 1938). There was so little time between the initial striking of the schooner and her sinking that Captain Hudson could barely have had time to do more than shout the alarm to his hands and then head for the high ground, in this case, the tip of the topmast. But fate was to work in favor of the master on this fateful day.

Although certainly benumbed by the cold all through the night of the 22nd, he was sighted in that position on the following morning by the local sloop ROCKY BROOK. The hapless mariner surely appeared more dead than alive and it was reported that when Captain Nichols of



the rescuing craft reached the spot where the exhausted captain clung to the rigging, he literally fell into the boat “like a log” in such an insensible condition that it was more than twenty four hours before he could gain his senses sufficiently to relate the story of who he was and the name of his vessel. Apparently one of his crewmen had also managed to reach the comparative safety of the uppermost rigging but his strength ebbed with the temperature and long before the early morning rescue the man had fallen off to his death.

The newspaper accounts at the time of the disaster noted that the captain was cared for at the boarding house of a Mr. Edward Whaley at Narragansett Pier where he was made “as comfortable as can be expected” The identity of the other crewmembers was never made public but it was determined that the vessel was homeported at Brookhaven, Long Island, not too many miles away from her final resting place.

There can be no doubt that in successive years Captain Walter Hudson marked the Thanksgiving holiday with mixed emotion - thankful that he survived such an ordeal - but saddened at the loss of his crew. Such was the life aboard a work-a-day schooner in New England. - J.F.J

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 the preservation
of 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 the date!

*Holiday Open House
December 6, 2009*

Look for more information in
our next publication!

Did you know that as a member of BLMA, 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!