



The Lighthouse Log

Summer 2026

Quarterly Newsletter of the BLMA

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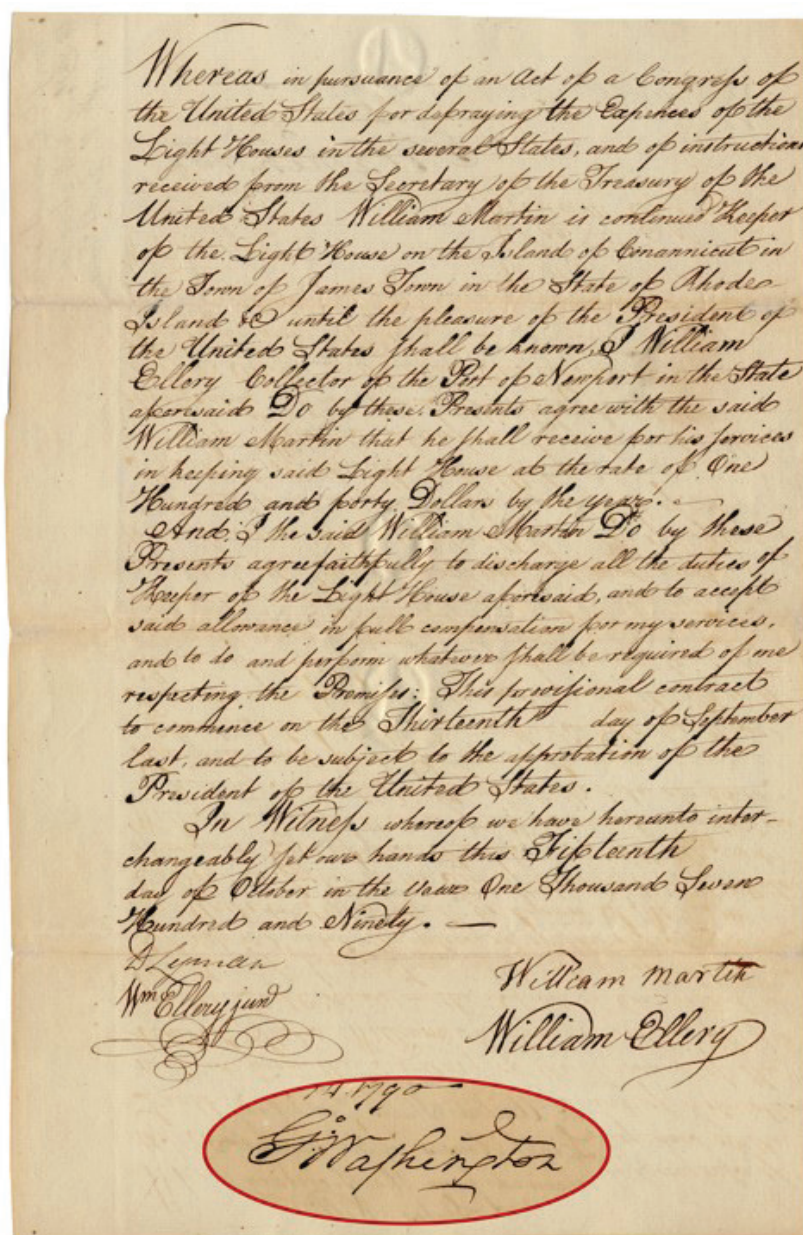
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Beavertail Lighthouse: Beacon of History Celebrating 250 Years of America's Story



President's Summer 2026 Message

Our season has officially begun!

It is always a pleasure to see the wonder in the eyes of first-time visitors as they catch sight of the tower and explore the museum and its exhibits. Their excitement reminds us why preserving and sharing the history of Beavertail Lighthouse is so important.

As you read about BLMA activities that board members have been working on, you can see that caring for a lighthouse is both rewarding and exciting. From maintaining the museum and grounds to welcoming visitors from near and far, there is always something happening at Beavertail. Our dedicated volunteers and supporters make it all possible, and we are grateful for their continued commitment.

Thank you for being part of the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum community. We look forward to another wonderful season of sharing the history, beauty, and significance of this special place.

Warm regards,

Nancy Beye

President, Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association

The Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association

Join us for an unforgettable evening by the sea in support of preserving the historic Beavertail Lighthouse and its buildings, including critical restoration projects such as window replacement

Night for the Light
An Evening Under the Stars
Cocktail Gala Fundraiser

Sunday, August 9

5 pm to 8:30 pm

Cocktails and Heavy Hors d'oeuvres

Live and Silent Auctions

**Live Music by Decades by DeZyne
at Fort Getty Pavilion, Jamestown, RI
Tickets \$300. pp**

Sponsored by



Visit the website for details
Purchase tickets online only
beavertailight.org/night-for-the-light



Beavertail Lighthouse Scavenger Hunt Updated

BLMA Director Ursula Parenteau created the original scavenger hunt in 2019 and has updated it to reflect recent changes in the museum.

Enjoy a fun way for you and your family to explore the museum and celebrate the USA's 250th Anniversary.



1. The Lens Room Who made the very first light at Beavertail? a. Boy Scouts, b. Native Americans, c. Animals

2. The Fireplace Room

How many pounds did Arthur Clarke's striped bass weigh?

3. Rhode Island Lighthouses Room

Is Castle Hill Light an active or inactive lighthouse?

4. Monitor Room

Name one shipwreck that happened in your birth month.

5. Theatre Room

Ida Lewis, a woman lighthouse keeper, worked at Lime Rock Light for how many years?

Check your answers on the monitor in the Keeper's House Hallway near the gift shop.

For participating, ask for a free Beavertail Lighthouse Explorer postcard at the gift shop

On the Cover: US Semiquincentennial Beavertail Lighthouse: Beacon of History

On the Cover: The original contract between Beavertail Lighthouse **Keeper William Martin** (1783-1803) and the federal government; signed by **George Washington** and **William Ellery**, September 13, 1790.

Few American landmarks have served the nation so continuously, from colonial bonfires to modern rotating beacons and through every major chapter of U.S. military and maritime history.



*Photo: BLMA Director
Ursula Parenteau*

Beavertail Light Station becomes especially powerful in the context of America's 250th anniversary because it embodies something the nation rarely gets to see so clearly, a physical place where the ideals of the Revolution, the creation of the federal government, and the lived experience of ordinary Americans all converge in one enduring landmark.

Beavertail's story begins decades before the American Revolution, but its strategic importance became unmistakable in December of 1776, when British forces occupying Newport quickly seized Conanicut Island to control the lighthouse that marked both the east and west Passages of Narragansett Bay.

At the end of the war, as British forces prepared to evacuate Newport in October 1779, they enacted a scorched-earth policy denying the Americans and their French allies any navigational advantage. They burned the lighthouse, destroying the structure, and to ensure the light could not be relit, they stole the optics. The light remained dark for the remainder of the war.

Not long after the Revolutionary War ended another war with the British emerged. Beavertail **Keeper Sylvester R. Hazard** was a veteran of the War of 1812, defending Newport from a naval assault by the infamous British vessel Nimrod.

By 1856, the installation of a new tower and cutting-edge lens placed Beavertail among the most sophisticated lighthouses in New England, just as the country edged toward civil war. **Assistant Keeper, Ann Neal Shaw**, who was at Beavertail throughout most of the Civil War carried a lineage intertwined with America's earliest fight for independence. Her great-grandfather, Colonel John Topham, had marched as a captain beside his wife's first cousin, the then-celebrated Colonel Benedict Arnold, during the daring but disastrous Expedition to Quebec. Decades before his name became a byword for betrayal, Arnold was one of Washington's most promising officers.

Keeper William W. Wales was a Union veteran of the Civil War. His son **John S. Wales** would be Keeper during the first World War. At this time, German U-boats were active in the Atlantic, and the U.S. government strengthened coastal surveillance and communication systems around Beavertail.

Beavertail Lighthouse's long history of fog-signal experimentation, bells, horns, whistles, and trumpets tested over decades made Beavertail a natural site for continued federal technical innovation. During WWII, the East Coast faced real danger from German submarines. The "bunker" at Beavertail Point is the remains of Fort Burnside's World War II Harbor Entrance Command Post, a disguised, hardened military nerve center built to guard Narragansett Bay from enemy submarines and surface attacks. At this time, lighthouses were integrated into the U.S. Coast Guard and Navy's coastal defense systems.

Many of Beavertail Lighthouse's Keepers during this period were Coast Guardsmen. Keeper **BM 1st Class Carl S. Chellis** was the first when the Coast Guard took over Beavertail Lighthouse operations in 1938. Beavertail Lighthouse's high vantage point made it perfect for watch duties, communications, and monitoring ship movements in Narragansett Bay which was a major naval hub. Despite the hurricane of 1938 which had destroyed some structures at the lighthouse, the tower survived, and the station was quickly restored, ensuring it was operational for the duration of WWII. **BM 1st Class Edward A. Donahue**, **CBM Dominic M. Turillo**, and **CPO Assistant Ronald P. Bugenske** are some of the Coast Guardsmen who served at Beavertail Lighthouse through to the 1960's. Beavertail Lighthouse's last Keeper was **BM 1st Class John E. Baxter**. Beavertail Lighthouse was automated in 1972.

Even now, Beavertail Lighthouse is not a relic. It is still an active aid to navigation, and continues to guide vessels into Narragansett Bay. Maintaining this lighthouse honors a 277-year tradition of maritime safety, technological innovation, and stewardship. Few historic sites still perform their original national function. Beavertail Lighthouse does.

Happy 250th Anniversary America!

CV

BLMA Welcomes Summer Intern Bella Guertin

Bella Guertin is a senior at the University of Rhode Island studying anthropology with a concentration in biological anthropology and archeology. She is from Rhode Island and lived on Jamestown briefly as a child. She has experience in human subjects research, library services, archaeological fieldwork, and is now learning about working with historical archives at the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum. BLMA is so thankful to Bella for helping with organizing the BLMA archives.

After she graduates in August, Bella will be pursuing a career in commercial archaeology and would like to further her studies on how social marginalization appears in death culture throughout time and space.

In her free time Bella enjoys relaxing on the beach in the evenings and listening to a wide variety of music. She believes that her time at the museum will allow her to not only grow a new skill set but also connect with the history of where she lives. Bella hopes that her work will make a positive impact on Jamestown's community, visitors, and its history as a whole.



A New Tax Benefit Shines on Lighthouse Giving

A recent change in federal tax law makes it easier to receive a tax benefit for supporting not-for-profit organizations, even if not itemizing. Effective 1/1/26, taxpayers who claim the standard deduction will also be able to deduct up to \$1,000 in cash donations (\$2,000 for married couples filing jointly) to not-for-profit organizations, in addition to their standard deduction. This new “above-the-line” deduction is designed to recognize smaller gifts and broaden the tax incentive for charitable giving. Because each person's tax situation is different, we encourage donors to consult their tax advisor about how this new rule might apply to them.

It's that Time of Year Again: Beavertail Lighthouse Sound Bath

Enjoy a peaceful evening on the lawn while listening to the gentle sounds of wind chimes, humming bowls and the ocean waves. Beavertail Sound Bath returns July 10, August 7, and September 11 starting at 6:30PM. Suggested donation is \$10 which benefits the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association.



Honoring a Legacy of Service



At this year's May docent breakfast, Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association celebrated the extraordinary contributions of longtime BLMA Director Linda Warner and her late husband, George, with a brass plaque rededicating the Tower Room; an enduring tribute to their many years of service and steadfast commitment to Beavertail Lighthouse.

BLMA 2026 Scholarship Winner Zoe Melucci

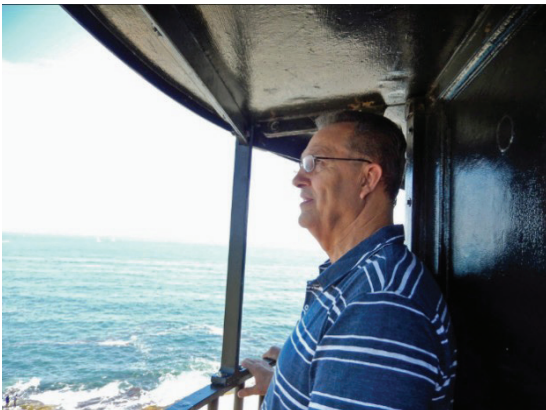
Each year, the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association awards the **W. Craig Armington Memorial Scholarship** to a Jamestown high-school senior pursuing higher education. The award honors Armington's longtime dedication to BLMA and his enthusiastic commitment to education, stewardship, and community service.

At the North Kingstown High School Awards Night on June 1, 2026, BLMA member **Pat Perry** presented this year's scholarship to **Zoe Melucci**. Zoe graduated from North Kingstown High School and will attend the **University of Rhode Island**, where she plans to study **Nursing** with a minor in **Psychology**. BLMA congratulates Zoe and wishes her continued success in her academic journey.



Zoe Melucci (l) and Pat Perry (r)

George J. Light: Beavertail's Last Assistant Keeper 1869 - 1971



*Beavertail Assistant. Keeper George Light
Photo Provided by: Varoujan Karentz*

In the twilight years of manned lighthouse service, **Coast Guardsman ENG 2nd Class George J. Light** stood watch at Beavertail Lighthouse as its Assistant Keeper between 1969 and 1971. His name endures in local memory not only for his dedication but for his humor; he famously answered the station's telephone with the cheerful greeting, "*Beavertail Light, Light speaking.*"

Light lived in the Assistant Keeper's house; a residence built in 1898 for keepers and their families. His service came during the final years before automation, when the daily rhythm of lighthouse life still demanded early mornings, meticulous maintenance, and constant vigilance.

In 1972, Beavertail Light was automated, closing the chapter on more than two centuries of resident keepers. George Light's brief but memorable tenure marks the end of an era; one last human voice echoing from the tower before the beacon became fully mechanized.

Rhode Island's Perilous Coast Point Judith (Part 9)

It would be seven years after the dramatic rescue of a pair of stranded fishermen from the center wall of the Point Judith breakwater before another vessel would be totally lost at Point Judith. This one would be a really small vessel and a simple rescue as told in the report of the life savers, “*May 1, 1921 - Sloop **PORTUGAL** (6T) - 1 1/4 miles west of Station #55 (Point Judith Station) - cargo: fishing gear—parted anchor cable and struck breakwater—men taken aboard cutter, taken to station, and furnished with dry clothing—unable to save sloop.*” It doesn’t get much simpler or straightforward than this.



Two years after the loss of the **PORTUGAL** it was time for yet another major event when a trio of coal-carrying schooner barges added their names to the long list of disasters at Point Judith. The trio started their final voyage, along with a fourth barge named **RANDOLPH**, from South Amboy, NJ. Only the **RANDOLPH** and the tug **WATUPPA** survived the storm they encountered. As reported in the Boston Globe of April 30, 1923, “*Providence, April 29. George Gardner of Fall River was drowned and three coal laden barges were lost in the gale off Point Judith last night. The barges were part of a tow of four when the tug WATUPPA of the Staples Company, commanded by Theodore Almy of Fall River, was bringing from South Amboy to Fall River. Captain Almy brought the barge RANDOLPH to the shelter of the Point Judith breakwater and returned to aid the crews of barges **CANTON**, **TAUNTON** and **BRADDOCK**. Captains and deckhands of the three craft, with the exception of Captain Gardner of the **BRADDOCK**, were saved by the tug. The barges swamped and were broken up on the rocks. The Coast Guard crew from the Point Judith station has been unable to find Gardner’s body.*” The reason for the survival of one of the four barges is a result of the normal practice of anchoring all but one barge in a string so that they can be moved to safety one vessel at a time. It would have been impossible to have brought a tug with a four-barge tow into the harbor of refuge as one unit. The **RANDOLPH** just got lucky. The specifications of the three lost schooner barges were as follows: **BRADDOCK** – 176’ X 35’ X 14’, 678 tons, built at Noank, CT in 1895; use: bulk cargo transport; **CANTON** – 170’ X 34’ X 11’, 531 tons, built at Noank, CT in 1899; use: bulk cargo transport; **TAUNTON** – 142’ X 31’ X 8’, 318 tons, built at Noank, CT in 1893; use: bulk cargo transport. There is a postscript to this story...apparently at least one of them was not completely broken up on impact. A report from the US Coast Guard reads, “*On July 6, 1923 the derelict barge **CANTON** was sunk, broken up by mines to a least depth of 4 1/2 fathoms off Point Judith, R.I.*” In the end, the result was the same, three schooner barges were lost and a very large pile of coal deposited on the bottom to mark their graves.

Continued from previous page

Eleven years after the loss of the BRADDOCK, CANTON and TAUNTON barges, a small auxiliary sloop came. Owned by Ralph Pearson who was also her master on the fateful voyage, she had come to grief on the breakwater. The vessel's name was **MAXWELL** of Gloucester. She measured 46' x 15' x 6' and had been employed to carry artist's supplies from New York to Gloucester when she was lost in the fog. Poor visibility combined with questionable navigational skills resulted in the yacht's destruction near the point of the center section of the breakwater at Point Judith. The Master and his Assistant made it to the breakwater where they were rescued. The craft was a total loss but some of the supplies were saved for the art school in Gloucester where they were bound.

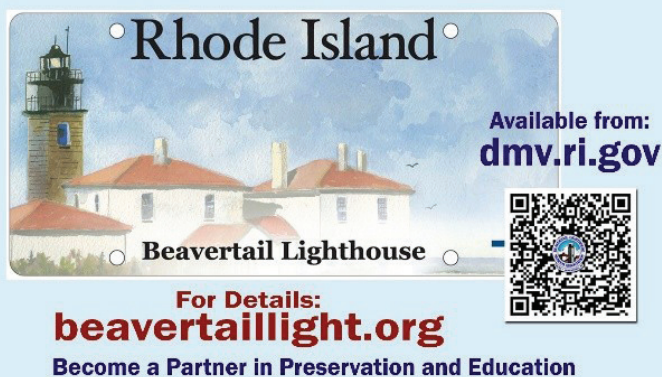
As the years passed and navigational equipment and skills improved, the number of totally lost vessels at Point Judith began to diminish though accidents did not come to a complete halt. On July 12, 1956, the 30-ton fishing vessel **WILLIAM D.** had the misfortune to run into the breakwater for an undetermined (or unreported) cause. The vessel measured 56' x 15' x 5' and had been built in Fernandina, FL in 1943. Her owner was William D. Parsons who may or may not have been her master when she ran into the south wall of the Point Judith breakwater and became a total loss.

Less than a year after the WILLIAM D. crashed into the south wall, another small fishing vessel, the **SHANGRI-LA** found herself in trouble and ran aground 100 yards off Point Judith light. She was 40' x 10' x 5' and displaced 13 tons. She was owned by John E. Briggs, of Providence, R.I when lost. Little is known about the details of this shipwreck. The local newspapers did not even report the incident but she appears in the Loss List of the Merchant Vessels of the United States for that year. No record of salvage has been found.

The log of totally lost ships at Point Judith will continue in the next segment of this series.

JFJ

Beavertail Lighthouse RI Charity License Plate



Rhode Island's charity license plates are a long-running program that lets drivers support local nonprofits while displaying a distinctive specialty plate. The Beavertail Lighthouse plate is one of the newest and one of the most locally beloved options. Just a reminder: the plates are still available. See details at www.beavertailight.org.



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 Our Updated
Website!**

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.



Museum & Tower Climb Schedule

BLMA Museum is open from 10:30am to 4:30pm each day through Labor Day

The Museum will be open weekends and weekdays from 10:30am to 4:30pm each day thru Labor Day and weekends only again after that until October 12th - Columbus Day.

The Tower will be open for climbing from 1:30 PM to 4:00 PM on July 4, July 18, August 8, August 22, September 7 - Labor Day, September 12, September 26, October 3, and October 12 - Columbus Day.

Remember: Openings are weather-dependent; if uncertain, call 401-423-3270.

Please see our website www.beavertailight.org for details on the reopening of the Tower and Museum.

Group Tours & Events

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

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