



The Lighthouse Log

Fall 2022

Quarterly Newsletter of the BLMA

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Published by

Sir Speedy, Cranston

Front Cover Photo

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Fall 2022 President's Message

As I write this, we are starting to wind down our season at the Lighthouse. It has been a very successful season, and I would like to share some of the highlights.

We had a tremendous number of visitors this year,

and our gift shop sales, cash donations at the museum, and tower climb donations exceeded 2021 numbers. Our new and improved docent manual was a massive hit with all our volunteers.

We were very excited to have a lot of publicity this spring and summer. The U.S. Lighthouse Society featured Linda Warner on one of their podcasts. A show on Channel 5 in Boston featured Jamestown, the State Park, and the Lighthouse. And The Rhode Show on Channel 12 was filmed live from Beavertail, with its beautiful vistas, on July 29th, featuring fantastic interviews with Varoujan Karentz and Linda Warner.

We had yoga classes on the lawn at Beavertail this summer and a wonderful "Sound Bath" event on September 9th, which featured yoga stretching, and meditation. All were very successful.

Our building and grounds committee, headed by Leo Orsi, had a busy season and accomplished a lot in our efforts to keep the Lighthouse buildings and grounds clean, maintained, and functioning well.

We were happy to celebrate National Lighthouse Day on August 7th, with Sarah Gleeson doing a book signing of her book, "Kindly Lights," and Joyce Leech, one of our docents, starting our very own children's story time. We are hoping to continue this tradition next year with more activities.

We held our Annual Meeting on Thursday, September 15th. Our speaker was Christian McBurney, publisher and editor in chief of an online review of Rhode Island history entitled "Small State/Big History."



Continued on the next page

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We also elected two new Board members, Mary Hamilton and Robert Langton. You will learn more about them in the *Meet Our BLMA Directors* section of this newsletter. We are pleased to welcome them to our Board.

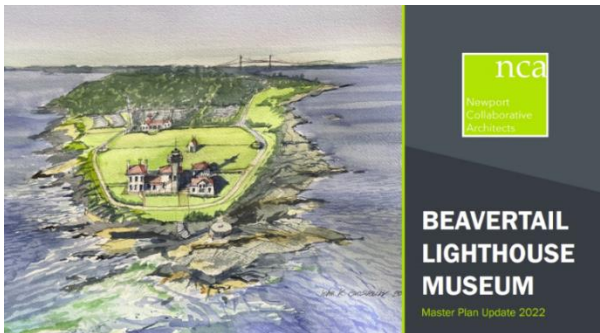
Our new charity license plate featuring Beavertail Light was approved by the General Assembly earlier this year. We are actively working with RI DMV to finalize the plate. Read more about it further in this issue.

Finally, I would like to thank all of our volunteers who worked tirelessly this past season. From managing the gift shop, tagging inventory, and replenishing shelves, to greeting visitors in the museum and sharing the remarkable history of Beavertail Lighthouse, and even doing maintenance to help preserve the museum buildings. We cannot do it without you!

Enjoy a beautiful fall season. We hope to see you all for our Holiday Open House in early December.

Best regards,
Diane

BLMA Master Plan



BLMA has completed its second Master Plan for the future. Following the first one in 2006, which BLMA successfully followed, expanding the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum as a premier visitor destination while restoring the site buildings.

Newport Collaborative Architects (NCA) conceived the new Master plan, which the van Beuren Foundation of Newport funded with a special grant. NCA configured the design, getting feedback at a “Charrette” meeting with BLMA Board members and stakeholders at Jamestown’s Town Hall; the sub-

committees prepared and ranked the suggested improvement options. The plan will remain a guide since it also addresses exterior features that BLMA could merge with the Beavertail State Park, such as road variations, staff parking, and utilization of the present Fog Signal building. Additionally, plans to construct abutments at the East and West Narragansett Bay passages will provide natural history information with interpretive signs and mounted telescopes. BLMA will also consider providing an outdoor children’s area for special events.

Fall Members Meeting

BLMA held its Annual Meeting on September 15, 2022, at the clubhouse at the Jamestown Golf Course. We were pleased to have Christian McBurney, publisher, and editor-in-chief of *Small State/Big History*, an online review of Rhode Island history, as our guest speaker. After a brief business meeting and the election of officers, Mr. McBurney previewed his new book *Dark Voyage: An American Privateer’s War on Britain’s African Slave Trade* (Westholme, 2022). The book is a fascinating microhistory of a Rhode Island privateer during the American Revolutionary War. It was an engaging presentation that everyone who attended enjoyed. Refreshments were served, including a beautiful



Author Christian McBurney speaks to BLMA members at the Annual Meeting.



Beavertail Lighthouse cake provided by BLMA Director Nancy Beye.

Meet Our BLMA Directors

David Smith



"I am currently the Vice President of the BLMA Board of Directors. I became a docent in 2013 and then got involved in developing the Museum's interactive computer displays. Lately, I've become interested in our Archives project and hope to continue working on that, cataloging the Museum's holdings and presenting them on an online platform.

I am semi-retired, having worked in Sales and Marketing for a software development company for nearly 30 years. I have recently moved from North Kingstown, RI, to Jamestown."

Mary L. Hamilton



"I am a retired businessperson residing in Narragansett, RI, with my husband, John. I was born and raised in metro Boston and lived in Foxborough, MA, for 27 years before we relocated permanently to Narragansett in 2017. I have two grown children who live in Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

My business background primarily focused on business analytics and process development and optimization. I started volunteering as a docent in the summer of 2022 and immediately fell in love with the museum and the wonderful people who give their time and talents there.

I hope to help the museum continue to thrive by utilizing some of my business background and experience."

Bob Langton



"I was born and raised in Providence, RI. I have lived in Mansfield, MA, since 1986. I started coming to Beavertail Point in the early 1970s while a student at URI. It has been my "go-to" spot ever since when I feel the need to fill my lungs with salt air while taking in the most beautiful views in Rhode Island. After retiring, I came across the opportunity to be part of BLMA as a docent. It has been a rewarding experience, and I look forward to undertaking the position of new BLMA Board Member."

Jim Jenney



"I was born and raised in Newport, RI, and being from the "City by the Sea" in the "Ocean State," how could my interests lie anywhere other than the ocean. I had the good fortune to be the son of an adventuresome father who was one of the earliest sport SCUBA divers in the state. My life changed forever when, at the age of eight, I was introduced to SCUBA diving. I was also fortunate that at my local beach, there was an old wreck that lay on the shore creating tidal pools for crabs, which instilled me with an unexplained need to know everything about it. My search for knowledge of shipwrecks began when I was about twelve and when most kids were playing with toys, I spent all my free time reading about lost shipwrecks. At eighteen, a family friend teased me that there might be a shipwreck around Butterball Rock, off Castle Hill. I took "the bait" and started looking. I soon learned that finding shipwrecks was more than stumbling on wreckage on the bottom. My next greatest discovery was the local historical society and copies of the earliest newspapers in Rhode Island. I was "at the right place, at the right time" and managed to obtain 57 linear feet of old Providence Journal newspapers, which were being discarded since no one in the Newport Historical Society could fathom why the city clerk of Newport took the time to save and bind these papers covering a period from 1832 to 1888. The rest, as they say, is history. I read through all the newspapers with great interest in all things shipwrecked. At about the same time, I began writing about what I was learning, as sharing the data brought me even more pleasure. As the years passed, I specialized in Newport history, then Rhode Island, then New England, and finally, I went completely crazy and started studying wrecks throughout the entire coastal United States! In 2008, Varoujan Karentz contacted me as he was looking for more information about some of the wrecks around Beavertail. We became friends from the start, and his enthusiasm fueled mine with the result of the current shipwreck database at the museum and online. I continue to this day, some 55+ years after my first newspaper excursion to the historical society, constantly reading, documenting, and preparing to share information on even more shipwrecks. My focus now is on the West Indies, but my roots will always remain in Rhode Island."

Sound Bath at Beavertail to Be an Annual Event

Organized by BLMA Director Nicole Contino for September 9, 2022, over one hundred fifty people of all ages and from all over the state attended the "Sound Bath" event. Attendees were still walking up to the concrete block where organizers were setting up. Just like that, nature did her thing. The Sun went down in the west and a beautiful orange harvest moon rose in the east. Wow; what a show! This magical evening under the harvest moon and the beacon of the lighthouse was one we will all remember. The event raised over \$1200 for the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum.

Petra Napolitano and Allison Schumann were our valiant leaders in this event. Petra, a Lululemon Ambassador, is a highly respected yoga teacher in the Newport area and is a local Jamestown resident. Allison Schumann is a wellness consultant and an experienced yoga teacher. She brings meditation through sound therapy to clients and local yoga studios.

Allison played bowls on this unforgettable evening. The attendees came to rest, relax and renew to the sounds of nature and ringing bowls. The night was full of healing sounds and good vibrations. We will continue the Sound Bath as an annual event at the beginning and end of summer 2023.

We began as the sun set and ended with light from the full moon and the lighthouse. People were left feeling calm and at peace.



Photography by Andrea Alpen, a Jamestown local.

Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Donation

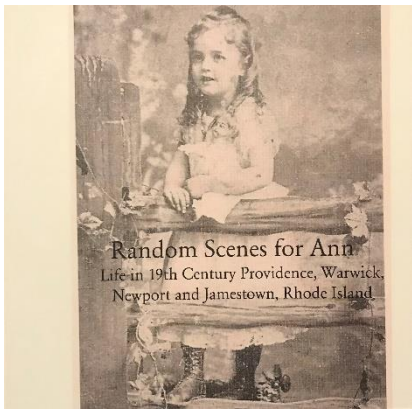


Lighthouse Log Editor Cheryl Vislay and son Sean at Beavertail Lighthouse

In July 2022, Lighthouse Log Editor Cheryl Vislay and her son Sean made a whirlwind trip from their home in North Carolina to Beavertail Lighthouse. They came to personally deliver and donate to BLMA some old family photos and items related to Lighthouse Keepers Silas G. Shaw and his wife, Ann. Cheryl and her son are fifth and sixth-generation descendants of Silas and Ann. Through Ann, they also share ancestry from Colonial Governor Benedict Arnold, who once owned the land where Beavertail Lighthouse now stands. This Benedict Arnold is not to be confused with Benedict Arnold, the infamous traitor, who was the great-great-grandson of Governor



*Emily Ann (Shaw) Dunham
c. 1869*



Arnold.

Included in the collection donated is an updated copy of the book **Random Scenes for Nancy**, published in 1938 by Cheryl's great-grandmother and the Shaw's granddaughter Emily (Dunham) Hall (the front cover features a photo of young Emily c. 1887.) This book is a lightly fictionalized account of the Shaw family using aliases for the characters' names. Silas and Ann are called Fardi and Munny Muchmore in the original book. Cheryl has rechristened the book **Random Scenes for Ann** and has updated the story with the corrected names and dozens of family photos that bring the stories and characters to life. She kept the names



Lile (Shaw) Rutherford

Fardi and Munny in the updated book as they truly captured the essence of who these two Lighthouse Keepers were.

Also included in the donation is an original, large photo of Assistant Lighthouse Keeper Ann N. Shaw dating to the 1870s. An inscription on the back of the photo reads "Munny Muchmore-Mrs. A. Shaw, Newport." Also included is the original photograph of Emily Ann Shaw, daughter of Silas and Ann, circa 1868, featured in the Winter 2021 Lighthouse Log article- A Lighthouse Romance, along with a photo of Ann's younger sister Lile. The sisters grew up at Beavertail Lighthouse between 1858 and 1869.

Cheryl also donated two issues of Rhode Island Roots (a publication of the Rhode Island Genealogical Society) with articles describing the Shaw family's connections to the Revolutionary and Civil Wars and an eight-generation genealogy of this Shaw family.



*"Munny Muchmore"
Assistant Keeper Ann Neal Shaw*

The final item donated is a bookmark stitched by Ann Shaw's sister Mary for their mother, Emily (Topham) Goddard featuring an Angel resting on a lead beaded anchor. The bookmark is a fitting gift for Ann and Mary's mother, who lost her father, several uncles, and three brothers to the sea. Ann lost a son, Joseph, born at Beavertail Lighthouse, when his boat capsized during a sudden squall just offshore of Fort Adams. The Newport Mercury, on October 22, 1887, noted that Joseph had recently been in the fishing business with his father, former Beavertail Lighthouse Keeper Silas G. Shaw. He was an excellent swimmer and would undoubtedly have been able to save himself had he not been encumbered by his oilcloth suit and heavy rubber boots.



Rhode Island's Perilous Coast Brenton Point & Reef-Part 6

So far, in the discussion of ships totally lost in the vicinity of Brenton Point and Brenton Reef, I have detailed the stories of almost two dozen vessels over 138 years. There are two left to bring into the discussion, and these may be of interest to many of you who may, from personal memory, recall at least one that has taken place within your lifetime.

On April 21, 1924, a shipwreck was about to take place, which would most accurately fit the description of a major maritime disaster. Built at Low-Walker-on-Tyne, England, in 1888, this steamship was launched under the name PAULA, but this trip would be her maiden voyage under her new name, LLEWELLYN HOWLAND. The HOWLAND was a 2,748-ton oil tanker with eight pairs of tanks carrying 26,000 barrels (equal to 1,092,000 gallons). Her dimensions (283' x 40' x 30') were not unusual for the day and certainly not record-shattering, but she was no small fishing boat either. On her first and final voyage, the HOWLAND was sailing under the command of Captain Larson from Fall River, MA, for Portland, ME. Her loss was not a question of foul weather but rather became an argument of whether it was caused by pilot error or a misplaced or dragging buoy. The tanker stranded off the outside of Seal Rock, and soon after the initial thump when her keel struck the rocks on the sea floor, she came to an unexpected sudden stop at a location from which she would never leave. Almost immediately, the controversy began. There was the threat of a huge oil spill, the question of fault, and, of course, who would pay for the potential damages to the pristine shoreline. After much hand-wringing and certainly some unseen arm twisting, authorities determined that the New England Oil Company, owner of the tanker, would have to officially abandon the vessel before the US government could step in with any remedial action. What action that would be was unknown at first. Although the vessel's loss would not be considered major after she had provided forty years of service, the question of her problematic cargo and its safe removal was at the heart of the issue for all. Three possibilities were suggested: 1) raise the ship, tow it out to sea and sink it; 2) pump the oil from the stranded tanker, or 3) set fire to the oil and burn it. Number one was impracticable due to timing and expense. Number two was deemed not possible due to the cold temperature of the surrounding ocean water. Number three was the only feasible means of removing the oil. With that settled, the question became about how to start the fire. Much testing, mostly right on the wreck itself, took place, and more than one failed test did not encourage the locals or the government, but finally, after more than a week of worrying that the next storm could open her hull completely, the plan was set and soon after that the fire was started. The plan worked, although in a somewhat surprising and spectacular fashion. Although some thought the oil would burn off in about 24 hours, it burned for five days around the clock. When the fire finally died, almost all of the oil was gone. The wreckage of the LLEWELLYN HOWLAND remains today and is occasionally visited by divers who most likely do not know the difficulty that was involved to give them a fun shipwreck to visit.



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The final wreck to be discussed took place not too far from the site of the LLEWELLYN HOWLAND and almost on top of Seal Rock. This wreck is the Norwegian freighter BELLEVILLE which ran aground "trying to cut the corner too close" as she approached the entrance to the East Passage into Narragansett Bay. The nine-year-old, 4,946-ton freighter measured 434' x 58' x 19' and dodged several shallower spots before ending up ashore less than 1,000 yards from Brenton Point. The stranding occurred on September 24, 1957, at 5:22 AM, and it was only through good fortune that the vessel was not subsequently struck by a hurricane, given the time of year. The nine-year-old, 4,946-ton freighter measured 434' x 58' x 19'. Traveling from Boston, MA, for Philadelphia, PA, with an assorted cargo which included crude rubber, tin, and tapioca, the freighter sat quietly as if parked at a dock, completely upright. Still, the damage was unseen and well below decks. From the stern through the number three hold, her bottom was opened up as if with a can opener. Salvage efforts soon began though it was reported that tapioca was "free for the taking" at the shore. After a few months, her back broke utterly, making it evident that she would never be moved and certainly never carry another cargo again. Remnants of the wreck are still visited occasionally, even today, by ambitious young SCUBA divers. Thus, it ends a discussion of the twenty-five vessels lost at Brenton Point and Reef off the southern end of Aquidneck Island.

The next edition of the Lighthouse Log will investigate an area with even more wrecks.

JFJ

One of the most exciting happenings this past year was working with our State Representative Deborah Ruggiero and our State Senator Dawn Euer in getting legislation passed through the RI General Assembly for a new license plate celebrating Beavertail Light.

Board member Ursula Parenteau worked with artist Don Mong to design a beautiful drawing of Beavertail Lighthouse for the plate. Part of the proceeds from each plate will go towards the preservation of the museum and lighthouse. We are happy to say that this process is moving forward, but we will need 600 pre-orders to have DMV proceed with implementation.

BLMA will be marketing these plates very soon. Information and an application to purchase the plate will be on our website as soon as we receive all approvals on the plate design. We will keep our members and the general public posted on our progress via email or advertisement. Stay tuned!

COMING SOON
Beavertail Lighthouse
RI License Plate



Rhode Island
Beavertail Light

The Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association will be taking pre-orders for Rhode Island's newest Charity License Plate! Your purchase will support our efforts to maintain the historic buildings and keep Beavertail Light shining for future generations.

Details will be posted pending upon all approvals
beavertailight.org

Fall Museum Hours

Museum closed weekdays after Labor Day

October 2022 Museum Hours

Saturdays & Sundays only through Columbus Day

10:30 AM - 4:30 PM

October 10th (Monday, Columbus Day)

10:30 AM - 4:30 PM

Museum Closed for the season after Columbus Day

The Tower is open October 10, 2022 (Columbus Day) from 1:30 -4:00 PM and is closed for the season after that.



Remember the Holidays are Right Around the Corner!

BLMA is planning a Christmas Open House at Beavertail Lighthouse on the first Sunday in December. Mark your calendars for December 4th!

Please, check the website for December Holiday shopping hours.



BEAVERTAIL LIGHTHOUSE
MUSEUM ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 83

Jamestown, Rhode Island 02835

BLMA 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 at
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 from 1:30 -4:00 PM on October 10, 2022 (Columbus Day) and is closed for the season after that.

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 Beavertailight.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.