



The Lighthouse Log

Summer 2022

Quarterly Newsletter of the BLMA

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Jim Jenney

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Front Cover Photo

Nicole Contino

Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association

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



Summer 2022 President's Message

Greetings Everyone.

It's wonderful to be back for the season! We had a successful opening on Memorial Day weekend. So many new volunteers have joined us, and we met several of them at our Docent Appreciation Breakfast on May 14th. It was a great event, with good food and company. Anyone who still wants to have training for the gift shop, please reach out to us. Thanks to Dave Smith and Nancy Beye, our updated Docent Handbook is a great resource for all of us, and it provides up-to-date information and pictures of each part of the museum. And even better, docents can download it to their phone or tablet to aid them as they highlight artifacts and exhibits to guests at the Museum.

A lot was happening before the start of the season. Linda Warner and her band of helpers have been making sure inventory has been replenished, tagged, and put into the system. New museum exhibits, particularly about Navy seaman Clayton Wood, were crafted by Board Members Ursula Parenteau and Varoujan Karentz. You can read more about them, and the scholarships BLMA granted this year later in this Newsletter. Board members are also busy working on restoring some of the interpretative signs outside that the elements have damaged. Board member, Leo Orsi, has been hard at work having the basement sewer lines replaced, getting a new generator installed, and trimming bushes around the buildings.

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We are proceeding with the completion of a new Master Plan for the Museum and Lighthouse. This summer, we are also scheduled to meet with the engineers doing the Master Plan for Beavertail State Park. You can find more information on these topics in the newsletter.

In our last issue, I told you that a RI House Committee passed a bill to establish a Beavertail Charity License Plate. Our State Senator Dawn Euer then sponsored a similar bill in the Senate. I am pleased to report that the full RI General Assembly has now passed our bill. By the time you read this, Governor McKee will have signed it. We are very excited about this opportunity and will be working on finalizing the design and the details necessary to bring this before the public.

We started two shifts at the Museum on June 20th, so we are open from 10:30 -4:30 seven days a week. We have a new volunteer ad you may see around town providing information about volunteer opportunities at Beavertail. Please let us know if you or anyone you know is interested.

Best regards,
Diane

W. Craig Armington Memorial Scholarship

On our cover, left to right: **Varoujan Karentz**, Committee Member, W. Craig Armington Memorial Scholarship winners **Hannah Contino**, and **Abigail Wagner**, and **BLMA President, Diane Bakley**.

The Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association (BLMA) honored two senior high school students with winning competitive scholarships to help them further their college education this fall. Both Hannah Contino and Abigail Wagner, Jamestown students completed narratives for the W. Craig Armington Memorial Scholarship Fund promoting a common goal for awareness of our surroundings and preservation of our environment.

BLMA Master Plan



Left to Right: Diane Bakley, Varoujan Karentz, Sandy Paterson, Lisa Bryer (Jamestown Planner), Nicole Contino and Ursula Parenteau.

In late April, BLMA's Master Planner, Newport Collaborative Architects (NCA) conducted a "Charette" Meeting with representatives from RI DEM, the RI Historical and Heritage Commission, the town of Jamestown and BLMA Board Members at Town Hall to brainstorm ideas for study in the development of the van Beuren Charitable Foundation grant funded project. The results of the Light Station plan will merge with the RI Department of Environmental Management (RI DEM) Master Plan also under study for the entire Beavertail State Park.

The Origin of National Lighthouse Day



Did you know that on April 28, 1988, Rhode Island Senator John H. Chafee sponsored a joint resolution to introduce to Congress a proposal designating the day of August 7, 1989, as "National Lighthouse Day"? The resolution designates August 7, as National Lighthouse Day and calls for lighthouse grounds, where feasible, to be open to the public. The resolution passed the Senate on July 26, 1988, and the House on October 21, 1988. President Ronald Reagan signed the Bill into public law (No. 100-622) on November 5, 1988. Come celebrate National Lighthouse Day at

Beavertail Lighthouse on Sunday, August 7, 2022!

Meet Our BLMA Directors

We will feature some of our wonderful Directors in each of the next few issues.

Diane Bakley



“I am President of the Beavertail Board of Directors and have been serving in this capacity since September 2019. My first sighting of the Lighthouse came in 1983 during our first visit to Jamestown to watch the final races of the America’s Cup held in Newport. Sailing then brought us back to Narragansett Bay and it became a favorite vacation destination. Upon leaving a career in banking in 2014, my husband and I left the Garden State astern and sailed into the gentle breezes and calm seas of retirement in Jamestown. Beavertail Lighthouse, Museum and the State Park became a popular stop. What better way to spend time in retirement than to volunteer there and greet all the visitors who come to learn about its history and significance to mariners and enjoy the wonderful views out over the horizon. Beavertail has overseen the entrance to the Bay for over 270 years and will continue to be a shining beacon because of the many volunteers over the years who will not let it fail. I am honored to be one of those volunteers and to play a small part in helping maintain and preserve the Lighthouse for future generations.”

Sandy Paterson



“I’m a local Jamestown resident who absolutely loves Beavertail. It’s the place to be. I have forty years of Banking experience so the BLMA Board has put their trust in me to be Treasurer.”

Nicole Contino



“I am a native Rhode Islander who lives in Jamestown. I fell in love with volunteering and putting effort into missions that were close to my heart when I was a teenager- inspired by all the fundraising I did for my older sister, who had cystic fibrosis.

My family and I were involved in walk-a-thons and other grassroots efforts. I quickly developed a deep passion for charitable work and trying to make a difference. This resolve stuck with me through college, leading me to a career as Director of the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation of Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Currently, I work for the Dept. of Homeland Security with FEMA. I provide individual assistance to people after a disaster. I also support fundraising and development for the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association. My fundraising background and passion for maintaining the lighthouse are key reasons I volunteer my time to BLMA. I am happily married and have one daughter who is in college.”

Cheryl Vislay



“In 2009, after researching my family’s history I discovered that my great-grandmother’s grandparents, Silas G. and Ann Neal (Goddard) Shaw, were Lighthouse Keepers at Beavertail Lighthouse in the 1860’s. I then remembered that my great grandmother had, in 1938, published a book about her grandparents. Later, I inherited a large box of old family photos, letters and objects and found that many of items were related to Silas and Ann- one letter was even written from Beavertail Lighthouse in 1868. After that, I visited Beavertail Lighthouse several times and it has become a very special place for me. I am thrilled to be the Editor of the *Lighthouse Log* and to share stories about the happenings and history of this unique and wonderful Lighthouse.”

Linda Warner



“From 1990 to the present time I have been continuously involved with Beavertail Lighthouse helping to operate a museum there. I helped to found BLMA in 1993, serving as its first Vice-President. It has been extremely gratifying to see the museum grow into such a wonderful place to visit. I have worn many hats including President, Docent Coordinator, Tour Coordinator, and Gift Shop Manager. I most enjoy sharing my knowledge of lighthouses operations and Beavertail in particular.”

Clayton Wood World War II Hero Remembered



On December 5, 1943, Clayton A. Wood, a sailor attached to the Command Control Post at Fort Burnside, single-handedly rescued two aviators who crashed their Navy dive bomber off Beavertail Point. Their engine failed after take-off from Quonset Point. Wood watched the crash, ran to Beavertail, took off his jacket in freezing weather, swam out to the aircraft, unhooked the pilot, and brought him to shore. He went out a second time to pull the injured gunner out of the aircraft and tow him ashore. The Navy decorated Wood with the highest Navy/Marine Corps non-combat medal.

We thought our visitors would like to know about Clayton Wood's heroic deeds. Pictured are his son Bryon Wood and Fiancée Kimberly Vitagliano from White River Junction, Vermont. Bryon and Kimberly viewed the exhibit, which resulted from the information passed along to us this past May.

The Bombing of Beavertail's Resilient Keeper House

Besides the British destroying the lighthouse during the Revolutionary War, the lighthouse has gone through decades of wars like the 1860s Civil War, WWI, and WWII. However, in 1908 it was bombed by a couple of 5-inch shells from its friendly Newport neighbor, Fort Adams National Guard's artillery cannons.

Hidden in the National Archives in Washington D.C. was an exchange of letters between Keeper John Wales, the U.S. Lighthouse Establishment, and the Secretary of War, Luke Wright, describing the incident. "There is a rent in the northwesterly corner of the house where a 5" standard shell from Fort Adams in target practice hit. The keeper has this and another shell he picked up near the house. Other shells have been observed flying over the point close to the tower".

Since then, we are happy to report the only bombing of buildings have been from the seagulls.

Beavertail Visitor



This Snowy owl stopped by the shores of Beavertail Point for a visit. Also called Arctic owls, they often migrate to the lower 48 during the winter months and migrate back to the Arctic tundra to raise young in the summer. Researchers believe there may only be about 30,000 successfully breeding Snowy owls left in the world; it is a rare treat to see this beautiful bird in the wild.

Thank you to BLMA Treasurer Sandy Paterson for sharing these photos.

The 1789 Act to Establish Beacons and Buoys

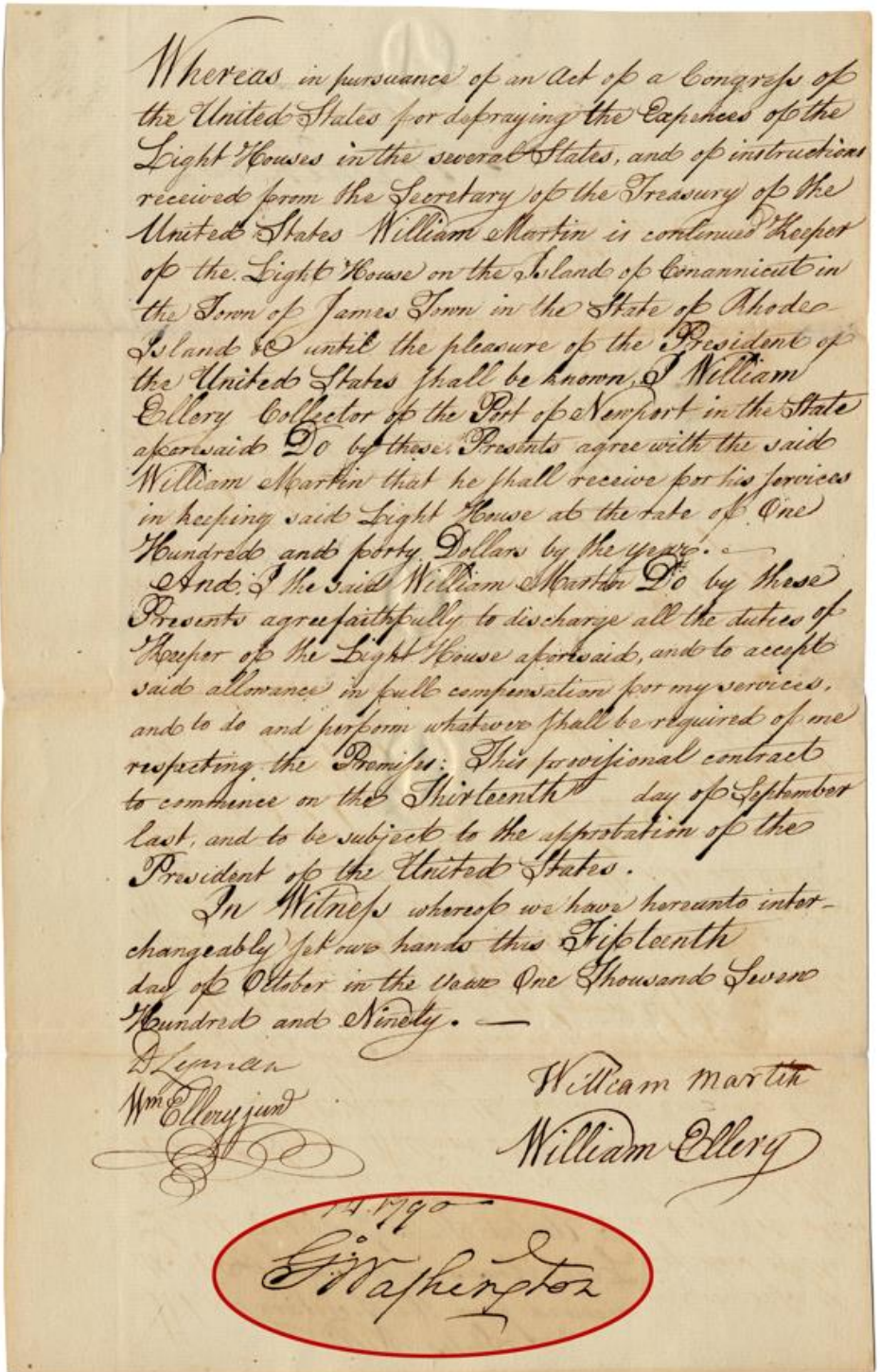
The Act of August 7, 1789, signed by President George Washington, accepted the consigns, title, and joint jurisdiction of eight lighthouses with the agreement that the new Government of the United States maintain them thereafter. Washington knew the importance of protecting its shores and providing safe entrance into the country's harbors. The new government selected the following lights: Boston Light on Little Brewster Island at the entrance to Boston Harbor, Gurnet Light near Plymouth, Brant Point on Nantucket Island, "Beaver Tail" at the opening of Narragansett Bay, Sandy Hook, New Jersey at the entrance to New York Harbor, Cape Henlopen in Delaware and Morris Island at the mouth of the Charleston Harbor, SC.

Back in History

On October 13, 1790, President George Washington, William Ellery, the Newport Customs inspector, and his son William Ellery Jr. all signed this contract making William Martin the official Keeper at the lighthouse on Conanicut Island now known as Beavertail Lighthouse (technically, Martin was already Keeper there.)

The document itself was conceived by Alexander Hamilton who was then the Secretary of the Treasury. The contract sets forth the details of the agreement between William Martin, Lighthouse Keeper and the newly established Federal Government, "Whereas in pursuance of an act of a Congress of the United States for defraying the expenses of the Light Houses in the several States, and of instructions received from the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States William Martin is continued Keeper of the Light House on the Island of Conanicut in the town of James Town in the State of Rhode Island until the pleasure of the President of the United States shall be known. I William Ellery Collector of the Port of Newport in the State aforesaid do by these presents agree with the said William Martin that he shall receive for his services in keeping said Light House at the rate of One Hundred and forty dollars by the year.

And I the said William Martin do by these presents agree faithfully to discharge all the duties of Keeper of the Lighthouse aforesaid and to accept said allowances in full compensation for my services, and to do and perform whatever shall be required of me respecting the Promises. This provisional contract to commence on the thirteenth day of September last, and to be subject to the approbation of the President of the United States. In witness whereof we have here unto interchangeably set our hands this thirteenth day of October in the year One Thousand Seven Hundred and Ninety."



This Original Beavertail Lighthouse Contract with William Martin, October 13, 1790 was recently up for sale at auction and was sold for \$10,000.

Rhode Island's Perilous Coast Brenton Point & Reef-Part 5

Though Brenton Point and Reef have claimed more than their share of fishing and merchant schooners as victims of the rugged shallow reef rocks, other types of vessels were also unlucky in this area. On July 3, 1892, the catboat FALCON, used as a pleasure craft, came to grief in these waters. Three young men set out from Newport on a day cruise to sail entirely around Aquidneck Island. Although it is unclear whether they headed out of the bay first or were approaching it near the end of their journey, they made the mistake of trying to pass between Brenton Reef and Brenton Point. Although local boatmen were aware of the single narrow channel they could have passed through safely, they were unaware of it or were simply unlucky. Another version of this story says they were outside the main reef between the reef and the buoy marking it. The catboat capsized, and the three men were unceremoniously tossed into the water by the choppy seas. One swam to shore with great difficulty, but the others drowned. Nine days later, a member of the life-saving station at Price's Neck found the body of one of those lost. The third man's body was never recovered, nor was the catboat. Catboats in and around Newport were not an uncommon sight, and they came in all sizes. Most often used as a pleasure boat, they could also serve commercially. On December 28, 1901, a small catboat of just 5 tons, being used as a commercial fishing boat, found herself in trouble in the vicinity of Brenton Point. Specifics of the loss of the vessel have been elusive, but her Master, Edward N. Lawton, surrendered her license on March 27, 1902, with a notation of her loss on this date at Brenton Reef. He was at least the fourth owner of the craft over her twenty-year career. The RHODE ISLAND, as she was named, measured 25' x 11' x 3'. Whether her owner was lost when she foundered and sunk just west of the reef is unclear.



Two years after the loss of the RHODE ISLAND, a wreck occurred at Brenton Reef on a foggy day representing a different type of vessel. Although this one was another fishing vessel, it was the first that was a steam-powered fisherman of considerable size. The GEORGE W. HUMPHREY was an early menhaden fishing steamer built in 1877. She measured 142' x 22' x 14' and displaced 215 tons, clearly the largest vessel claimed by the reef. Owned by Joseph Church & Company, she called Greenport, NY, her homeport and did her job well. On her final voyage, she was inbound to Newport from a fishing trip on a day when the fog was memorable, July 6, 1904. She struck at a location about two-thirds of the way out from Brenton Point to the outer reef. Initially, Salvagers thought they might rescue her from her perilous position, but within two weeks, the fishing steamer was stripped of all removable material and abandoned. Two other steamers found themselves ashore and in trouble in the fog, but only the HUMPHREY was to end her career that day. One of the more unusually rigged vessels to be lost off Brenton Point was an unnamed naphtha launch that sunk in a heavy sea on May 25, 1910. Her owner and Master was Walter Chase of Newport, who used her for lobstering in the vicinity of Seal Rock, just to the east of Brenton Reef. The lifesavers from Price's Neck responded and recorded their support: "*Gas launch, NO NAME. Capsized 1 mile west southwest of station and sunk. After learning of the disaster, the power lifeboat crew returned to the scene. A small boat nearby rescued the occupant and transferred them to the power boat on its arrival. He was hurried to the station, rubbed briskly, given restoratives, and furnished dry clothing...*"

Later in 1910, on August 18th, another small vessel was lost at Seal Rock. This one, the schooner MARGUERITE, was just 15 tons and measured 40' x 13' x 4'. Launched in Boston in 1872, she was almost 40 years old at the time of the incident. Although there is no mention of the loss in the local newspapers or even at the life-saving station nearby, she is listed in the Merchant Vessels of the United States for 1910 as a lost vessel belonging to the port of Providence, RI, and owned and operated by Edgar L. Smith. Her demise was via stranding at Seal Rock.

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Rock Ledges at Beavertail



This photo of Beavertail Point visitors was taken about 100 yards north on the west side of the lighthouse buildings facing the West Passage of Narragansett Bay. The rocks are a beautiful feature of Beavertail Point that make it an exciting destination for tourists, fishermen, and nature lovers.

Beavertail Lighthouse License Plates Coming Soon!

The new law to create a special license plate depicting Beavertail Lighthouse would permit BLMA to design a license plate to be approved by the Department of Motor Vehicles. Part of the proceeds of the sales of the license plates will go to the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association. More details to follow in our fall newsletter and on our website.

Local Legend

Local legend says that in the 1750s, a British vessel wrecked near Brenton Point, and a young girl, the only survivor of her family amongst the passengers, was left orphaned. Jahleel Brenton of the distinguished Rhode Island Brenton family, a Vice Admiral in the British Royal Navy, adopted the young girl and named her Alice. After about 15 years, Jahleel Brenton had a young British Naval officer named Jared Stanley to his home.

Stanley noticed a strong resemblance between Alice Brenton and the women of his own family. When he inquired of Brenton about the teenage Alice, he found that a shipwreck orphaned her about the same time he lost his sister Beatrice at sea some 15 years earlier. To their surprise, Jared realized that he had found his long-lost sister!

Season Museum Hours

July & August 2022

Sunday thru Saturday	10:30 AM - 4:30 PM
Monday July 4 th (Independence day)	10:30 AM - 4:30 PM
Sunday August 7 th (National Lighthouse Day)	10:30 AM - 4:30 PM

September 2022

September 1 st thru 4 th	10:30 AM - 4:30 PM
September 5 th (Monday, Labor Day)	10:30 AM - 4:30 PM
Saturdays & Sundays only after Labor Day	1:30 PM - 4:30 PM
Museum closed weekdays after Labor Day	

October 2022

Saturdays & Sundays only through Columbus Day	1:30 PM - 4:30 PM
Monday October 10 th (Columbus Day)	1:30 PM - 4:30 PM
Museum Closed after Columbus Day	



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
July 4, 2022
July 16 & 30, 2022
August 7 (National Lighthouse Day)
August 13 & 27, 2022
September 5 (Labor Day) & 17, 2022
October 10, 2022 (Columbus Day)

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.