



# The Lighthouse Log

Fall 2023

## Quarterly Newsletter of the BLMA

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## Fall 2023 President's Message

Hello Everyone,

It's that time of year when we wrap up another fantastic season at Beavertail. It's hard to believe summer is over; the leaves are starting to change, and there is a new chill in the air.

The culmination of a process that began two years ago was this summer's most significant news. In July, the National Park Service recommended the transfer of Beavertail Lighthouse and the surrounding buildings to the State of Rhode Island. The RI Department of Environmental Management will be the new owner. The NPS also recommended the transfer of Westerly's Watch Hill Light and Prudence Island Light. We hope that the deed transfer from the General Services Administration to the State of Rhode Island will occur in late October. We are excited for this new partnership to begin.

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There were lots of fun things going on this past season. The first ever Beavertail walkathon started us off in May. It was a huge success, raising \$8,300 to benefit the museum. We had almost 150 walkers and Sam Read from Channel 10 was there to cut the ribbon along with Patricia Orsi of William Raveis, our presenting sponsor—a big thank you to all our sponsors and supporters of the raffle.

Our biggest fundraising initiative of the past two years was the Beavertail charity plates. We were thrilled to have reached our goal of 600 pre-orders in approximately 4 ½ months. BLMA distributed the plates on September 9th at Beavertail. From these initial orders, we raised \$11,128 for the maintenance and preservation of Beavertail. And Beavertail will continue to benefit from future orders and renewals.

Yoga classes led by Nicole Contino continued on the grounds at Beavertail and raised \$600 during the season. She and her yoga colleagues also hosted several “Sound Baths” at Beavertail and raised \$ 1,337 thus far.

In July, Fox Nation, a streaming service, filmed an episode for their Lighthouse series at Beavertail featuring Varoujan Karentz and Linda Warner. It was available to view on their streaming channel as of early September.

We are also participating in another Giving Tuesday on November 28th. Please consider Beavertail if you are thinking of donating that day.

We will be gearing up for our annual membership drive now that it is fall. This year, we have made it easier than ever to join our excellent association. Early this year, as we prepared for our two significant fundraising efforts, we researched and found a fundraising platform called Zeffy. Zeffy is a Canadian-based firm that performs payment processing for Non-Profit Organizations with no transaction fees. Zeffy instead asks the patron to contribute voluntarily to offset the processing fees. The Zeffy system will suggest an amount, but the donor can override the suggestion and even enter \$0. We have now moved the payment processing of all donations and membership fees to Zeffy. When you renew your membership in a few weeks or donate to BLMA, you will be directed to Zeffy.

For memberships, you can automatically renew your membership annually, and for Donations, we will offer you the option of making it a monthly or yearly donation. You can opt-out by simply “unchecking” the auto-renew box.

Of course, you can drop a check in the mail, as we have all done for years. However, if you provide us with your email address, we can communicate more easily with you through periodic emails and save postage on mailing newsletters by delivering them electronically.

As you may recall, Santa came to hang a wreath on the Tower last December, helped by our very own Jamestown Fire Department. This annual tradition will continue with the museum open December 2nd & 3rd and December 9th & 10th. Our Holiday Open house will be on Sunday, December 3rd, and again, we hope for a visit from the big guy himself. Yankee magazine will feature this event in the December issue in October.

Finally, at our Annual Meeting on September 28th, we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the creation of the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association. For the past 30 years, many people from this island and beyond have labored to establish our museum and exhibits with one goal: to preserve and maintain Beavertail as a place of historical and educational significance for current and future generations.

Here's to 30 more years!

Best wishes,  
Diane

## Department of Environmental Management's Molly Ogren and Team of Interns Visit Beavertail Lighthouse



*RIDEM's Molly Ogren (r) with RIDEM Interns (l.)*

RIDEM, the town of Jamestown, and BLMA plan to work together to preserve this historical treasure for future generations to enjoy.

Diane Bakley, said the association is very pleased with the plan. And Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association will continue to

oversee the operation of the lighthouse and museum.

Molly Ogren, wrote the application for the DEM, and the National Park Service chose RIDEM to get custody of the lighthouse.

On August 4<sup>th</sup>, BLMA President Diane Bakley hosted Molly Ogren, Chief of Program Development at RI Department of Environmental Management, along with several interns who worked with Molly over the summer. The group toured the museum, grounds and also climbed the tower.

BLMA was notified that the National Park Service has recommended that the Rhode Island Department of Environmental

Management be the

recipient of Beavertail Lighthouse and the surrounding buildings

based upon their application pursuant to the National Historic

Lighthouse Preservation Act. RIDEM, the town of Jamestown, and

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*RIDEM's Molly Ogren (center) with RIDEM Interns.*

## Former Docent Visits Beavertail Lighthouse



*Former Beavertail Lighthouse Docent Allen Bestwick*

Allen Bestwick, a former Docent, visited Beavertail Lighthouse on August 13 from Florida. While working as a Docent at Beavertail, Allen always enjoyed dressing as a Keeper in his 1930s-era uniform, which he kept crisp and neat.

A former "Snow Bird," Allen spent many years dividing his time volunteering between the Ponce de Leon Inlet Lighthouse in St Augustine, Florida, and Beavertail Lighthouse here in Jamestown.

As a Docent, Allen enjoyed meeting guests and sharing his wealth of knowledge with them. In addition to knowing his

lighthouse history, Allen is a member of the Daytona Beach Amateur Radio Association, where he is on the Honor Roll. The Honor Roll designation means that Allen has successfully communicated by radio with every country worldwide except North Korea. At Beavertail Lighthouse, Allen would show visitors how radio transmission functioned. He had models of antennas and radio equipment and even taught some visitors Morse Code.

When he moved to Florida permanently, Allen continued as a Docent at the Ponce de Leon Inlet Lighthouse. It was great to see Allen at Beavertail again and to know he is sharing his talents with another lucky Lighthouse community.



## Filming of Fox Nation's *America's Most Beautiful Lighthouses*



*BLMA Director Varoujan Karentz with the Fox Nation Production crew.*

On July 13th, BLMA Directors Varoujan Karentz, Linda Warner, Dave Smith, and Diane Bakley met with a production team from Fox Nation. Fox Nation, a streaming subscription service associated with Fox News, was planning a series of stories on Lighthouses nationwide. They chose Beavertail Lighthouse as one of the sites they wanted to feature.

Varoujan Karentz sat down for an in-depth historical interview, and Linda Warner gave them a tour of the museum and tower. Dave Smith made sure all the technology worked smoothly. Filming began at sunrise and continued till noon. The show started to stream on Fox Nation in early September.



*BLMA Director Linda Warner with the Fox Nation Production crew.*

## Elbow Reef Lighthouse Update



*Repairs underway for the Keeper's House*

You may remember that in the Winter 2021 issue of the Lighthouse Log, we featured a story about the Elbow Reef Lighthouse located in Hope Town, Abaco, Bahamas, and its Keeper, Jeffery Forbes Jr.

Hopefully, you recall that the Elbow Reef Lighthouse is the last manual, kerosene-fueled, intact, and complete light station on the planet. In other words, it is the only manned lighthouse tower in the world whose burner has not been



*The Assistant Keeper's Family is happy to have the repairs.*

electrified. You may recollect that in 2019, hurricane Dorian devastated the Elbow Reef Lighthouse. At that time, the Directors at the Elbow Reef Lighthouse Society reached out to BLMA's Marine Historian, Jim Jenney, for advice on raising funds to restore their Lighthouse Station. Since then, the Elbow Reef Lighthouse Society has made tremendous progress in repairing and restoring the Light Station buildings and tower despite the slowdown created by the COVID-19

epidemic. Overcoming this setback, the Society has restored the Keepers' Houses and the beautiful lighthouse to its original candy-striped splendor.



*Work in Progress on the Tower Repair*



*The finished results-Beautiful!*

Keep in mind that this lighthouse still has active Keepers living in the Keeper's quarters, doing the manual work necessary to keep the lamp functioning as an essential navigation aid. To learn more about the Elbow Reef Lighthouse and its Keepers, go to [www.elbowreeflighthousesociety.com](http://www.elbowreeflighthousesociety.com). All photos from the Elbow Reef Lighthouse website.

## Josiah Arnold, Beavertail's Third Keeper

NEWPORT, November 22, 1766.

**I** John Hooche do, upon Oath, declare, That on the Sixth Instant I was sent for by his Honor the Governor, who gave me a Letter to Josiah Arnold, Esq; of Jamestown, the Contents of which, I understood, were to desire Mr. Arnold to give Orders for keeping a Light in the Light-House as usual, there having been no Light kept there the Two preceding Nights; and that, at the same Time, I received a Warrant from his Honor, directing me, if Mr. Arnold would engage that sufficient Lights should be maintained, to return to Newport; but if he should refuse, then to take Possession of the Light-House, and to keep the usual Lights therein until further Orders: That I accordingly carried the said Letter to Mr. Arnold, who absolutely refused to take any further Care of the Light-House; whereupon I proceeded directly to the Light-House, and procured a sufficient Light to be kept therein that Night: That I returned to Newport the next Day, and informed his Honor of what had been done, and told him, that I believed Mr. Aulin (the Person who attended the Light-House under Mr. Arnold) would keep the Lights for the future, unless Mr. Arnold should forbid him; upon which his Honor directed me to carry a Letter to the said Aulin, desiring him to keep good Lights until the Monday following, and that he would see him paid: That I went the same Afternoon to Aulin's, and delivered him the Letter, who was going thereupon to light the Lamps, but his Wife told him he had better see Mr. Arnold first: That then Aulin went to Mr. Arnold's, and I followed soon after; and when I came there, Mr. Arnold had read the Letter, and seemed to be in a great Passion, and threw the Letter into the Chimney, and Aulin went away with a Resolution not to light the Lamps; and I believe, before I came in, Mr. Arnold had forbid Aulin to keep a Light, for he was very willing to comply with the Governor's Orders before he went to Mr. Arnold, and I heard Mr. Arnold tell him, that if any Body came to turn him out of Possession, to kill them, and that he would stand by him, adding, that no Body had any more Right to turn him (Aulin) out of his own House: That in my Way to Aulin's, to deliver him the aforesaid Letter, Mr. Arnold told me, that they should take it, and pay him for it, and that he would prosecute me for a Trespass for lighting the Lamps the Night before; which he also repeated in the Evening when I followed Aulin to his House; though, at the same Time, he said, he should not do it from any particular Prejudice to me, but in order to bring the Government to Terms: And that I should certainly have

*Original Advertisement from the Newport Mercury  
November 21, 1766*

he mistook a private residence's light as the now defunct Beavertail light. Salvagers refloated the vessel, and no harm was done, but everyone knew that tragedy was imminent.

When the local government sent their agent, John Hookey, to pay Mr. Austin directly to tend to the light, Arnold blocked him. Arnold flew into such a passion that he told Mr. Austin, "if anybody comes to turn you out of possession of the lighthouse, kill them, and I will stand by you." Arnold said no one had a right to turn Mr. Austin out of the lighthouse any more than they had a right to turn Arnold out of his own home; after all, it was his property. Arnold threatened a lawsuit and said that any juror would side with him as he spent the last two years sacrificing his "private fortune" for the benefit of the public good.

Apparently, Josiah Arnold made his point with the local government. They must have paid him and paid him well because no issue was ever recorded again after this well-documented event, and Josiah Arnold was made the official Keeper at Beavertail Lighthouse from 1770 through 1783. Of course, the Revolutionary War impacted Josiah. The British burned the lighthouse in 1779, and at the same time, they stole the lamp, and the tower would remain dark until 1783. Josiah died on September 26, 1789, at age 83. Josiah Arnold outlived two wives and all but one of his children, with that child dying only a few weeks after himself. He is buried in his grandfather, Governor Arnold's, Burying Ground in Newport.

Most of us who visit Beavertail Lighthouse look around and imagine what it would be like to own this fantastic property with the open sky, beautiful scenery, and waves crashing all around.

It is hard to imagine that 18-year-old Josiah Arnold may have been disappointed to learn that he would inherit, when he came of age, this piece of property at the southernmost tip of Conanicut Island as stated in his father's proven will. Josiah's grandfather, colonial Governor Benedict Arnold, was one of a group of settlers allowed to graze their animals on Conanicut Island by the Sachem Conanicus of the Narragansett tribe. In 1657, Governor Arnold, along with about a hundred other settlers, purchased the land from the Narragansett, paying 100 pounds wampumpeage (the native word for "white bead.") Arnold had the largest share based in proportion to his investment; he owned 1,411 acres from Beavertail neck to Beavertail point. Even then, there was a crude light built, which was tended to by the Indians.

As the youngest son of Josiah Arnold and his second wife Mary, young Josiah inherited the less desirable half of "Beaver Head" farm. His older brother Benedict Arnold (not the traitor-the traitor was a great-grandson of Josiah's uncle, also named Benedict Arnold) inherited the more desirable property known as "Beaver Hill". Josiah's father, also a younger son, had inherited what was deemed the less desirable portion of the property to the south of Beavertail Neck.

As you will see, this inheritance became a headache for the younger Josiah later in life. As he owned Beavertail Point, the site of the first official lighthouse since 1749, he was responsible for keeping the lighthouse functional at all times. Interestingly, Josiah also inherited an interest in Dutch Island, home to another of Rhode Island's premier lighthouses. According to a November 21, 1766, Newport Mercury Advertisement, Josiah Arnold finally got frustrated with the lighthouse situation and blew up! At his own expense, he had been paying Mr. Austen to tend to the lighthouse; the local government had not reimbursed Arnold for the costs in almost two years. This after threatening to take his property through eminent domain. As far as Josiah was concerned, enough was enough. In order to bring the "Government to Terms," as he said, Arnold forbade Mr. Austin to tend to the light.

It didn't take long for Arnold to make his point, shortly after a Captain Spencer sailed his sloop onto Sachuest Beach near Purgatory Rock after

## This and That

### Docent's Picnic Held at Beavertail



Every year, BLMA holds a docent appreciation event. This year, BLMA Director Nancy Beye coordinated a picnic on Thursday, July 27, at Beavertail Lighthouse on the lawn. The weather cooperated, and it was a lovely sunny day. It was great to see old friends and new volunteers all working together to present the story of our beautiful lighthouse to visitors from across the country and the world.

**GIVING TUESDAY**  
**November 28, 2023**

Giving Tuesday is a Global Movement unleashing the power of radical generosity. Your **DONATION** to the **Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association** will help us continue our mission to inspire and educate, and to maintain the third oldest lighthouse in North America.

**100% of your DONATION goes directly to BLMA. Visit [beavertailight.org](http://beavertailight.org) for more information and to DONATE**




An AED has been installed within the museum at Beavertail Lighthouse. An AED, or automated external defibrillator, is used to help restart the heart of a person who has experienced sudden cardiac arrest. It is a user-friendly medical device that can evaluate the heart's rhythm and, if needed, deliver an electrical shock, or defibrillation, to help re-establish an effective rhythm within the heart.



It is that time of year again. BLMA Director Ursula Parenteau, while out for her morning's walk at Beavertail, came across these beautiful Monarch Butterflies roosting on a goldenrod bush. Ursula noted, "The Monarchs are seen at this time of year on their annual migration to Mexico. It's one of the very special things about Beavertail!"



BLMA volunteers distributed over 500 plates at the Beavertail license plate distribution event held on September 9. Don Mong, the plate artist, autographed 300 postcards of the original plate art.

## Rhode Island's Perilous Coast South Shore of Block Island (Part 4)

In the years immediately before the US Civil War, the normal coastal trading between the northern and southern states continued as before. Northbound cargoes would be generally agrarian, and southbound cargoes would be typically industrial goods. On February 19, 1860, the schooner FRANKLIN TREAT was bound for Frankfort, ME, with a cargo of corn when she ran into a snowstorm off Block Island. The 109-ton vessel was fairly new, launched in 1858, with Captain Crocker, an experienced master, at the helm. On the morning of the 18th, the master spotted Block Island at a distance, but almost immediately, a snowstorm came up, which closed out his visibility to zero. He set his course for Newport and relied on his experience to avoid contact with Rhode Island's offshore island. Toward sunset, he sighted the island once more before the visibility closed in yet again. An exciting set of circumstances led to this stranding. Although no high winds were associated with this storm, the air became almost dead calm, and there was a heavy sea. To be prudent, Captain Crocker brought his schooner to anchor, but the seas proved relentless, and inevitably they dragged her ashore. For the next 14 hours, the crew stayed aboard the vessel, lashed to the masts and other rigging, but the temperature dropped dramatically, and they knew that they must make an effort to save themselves or die where they were. The crew tied a rope to one of the schooner's spars and set it adrift toward the rocky shore, and, with great efforts and a bit of luck, all managed to escape the fate of their wreck. The vessel and cargo proved a total loss.



With the Civil War underway, coastal trading took on a different pattern. No longer was there an almost constant flow of food being sent north from the south. And, of course, sending industrial equipment to the Confederacy was out of the question. On September 21, 1861, the schooner WILLIAM H. SHELDON was on her way north from Philadelphia with a different kind of cargo, which would be in greater and greater demand over the coming years. The 180-ton SHELDON carried in her hold a shipment of 219 tons of coal. The 10-year-old schooner was under the command of Captain C. Cox (some sources say Collins) when she added her name to the list of those to become fogbound and find the Block Island shore. Reported as an unidentified vessel, she bilged almost as soon as she struck the beach. Over the next couple of days, salvagers retrieved eight tons of coal from the ship, and by the following Wednesday, the salvors had managed to save almost 40 tons of her cargo. The vessel broke up shortly after and was lost.

When the war was over, politicians began to listen to what mariners had been asking for for decades. They needed an organization to formulate plans to save the lives of imperiled seamen. In the 1870s, the newly established Life Saving Service built lifesaving stations in earnest. It was evident to those who routinely plied the coastal waters of the United States that Dickens Point, Block Island, in the vicinity of Southwest Point, was the greatest danger to ships in the area. It is no surprise that by 1872, the Life Saving Service established a lifesaving station there.

On May 23, 1875, the three-masted schooner ANNIE K. EATON came ashore in the area. At 185 tons, the EATON measured 114 feet in length with a beam of 29 feet and drew 9 feet of water. The vessel was under the command of Captain W.D. Stanley when the stranding occurred. She was northbound from Baltimore, MD, for Portland, ME, with a whole load of coal. Details of the incident are vague, but the outcome was not. Salvagers saved some of her cargo, for which they received a 45% share of the profit, but the tern schooner did not survive. It is unclear, but the vessel was nearly new and may have been on her second voyage when lost.

Another schooner filled with coal, this time 315 tons of it, was the CAROLINE J. KIENZLE. Her master, Captain C. Dilke, was northbound from Philadelphia, PA, when his 207-ton vessel ran into fog off Block Island on the Sunday morning of June 10, 1877, at about half-past nine. She struck with sufficient force to almost immediately bilge and start to break apart. Reports indicated that part of her crew made it to Newport, but it is not certain that all survived the incident. It was common for a captain to stay with his stranded vessel or appoint another crew member. The Captain did this to prove that the vessel was not officially abandoned and to protect that portion of the cargo that could be recovered from theft.



BEAVERTAIL LIGHTHOUSE  
MUSEUM ASSOCIATION  
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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 Museum will be open weekends through October 8 and also on Columbus Day October 9.**

**The Museum will also be open December 2 & December 3 (Holiday Open House), and December 9 & 10**

**The Tower is open 1:30pm -4pm: 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.**