

# The Lighthouse Log

A publication of the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association  
Members of the New England Lighthouse Association

Summer 2005

Beavertail Lighthouse  
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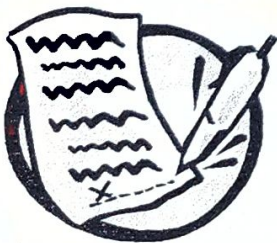
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Dear Lighthouse Friends;;

Spring was a very long time in coming this year, but the museum is open for the 2005 season. Starting on Monday, June 13<sup>th</sup> the Museum will be open everyday from 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.

Richard Koster, our docent coordinator, has been busy setting up the new schedule. There are openings that we need to fill. Please consider giving Richard a call at 423-1465 to volunteer your time. It is a very interesting and enjoyable way to spend a few hours. The view is magnificent, of course, and the visitors are happy to be there.

A lot happened during the winter months. The Lighthouse Acquisition Committee, headed by Varoujan Karentz, has been hard at work, detailing how we plan to operate the Lighthouse, once the government releases it. We are working toward a cooperative agreement between BLMA, the State of RI and the Town of Jamestown. You can read more about this elsewhere in this newsletter. In the meantime we have petitioned the Coast Guard to allow us to control the tower in return for its maintenance. The lantern room will not be included in the arrangements, as the light will continue to be an active aid to navigation under the jurisdiction of the US Coast Guard.

We thank Jim Filkins for his work during the past two years, as buyer for the Beavertail Lighthouse Store, and for finding all the wonderful new items for the pleasure of our visitors. Charlie and Karan Ostenton have taken over those duties and are already hard at work. Charlie's business experience makes him a natural for this position.

New book racks have been installed in the Gift Shop, freeing up shelves for more and more new items and the interactive map has been covered with plexiglass to protect it from curious fingers. Our thanks to Jack Willis and George Warner for their time and expertise on both of these projects.

One of the highlights for BLMA members and friends was a bus tour to the Portsmouth Harbor Lighthouse in Portsmouth New Hampshire. We were able to climb the tower and enter the lantern room. The more adventuresome of us climbed through a hatch out on to the observation deck. It was exciting to look at the views from that height, even though the weather was a bit overcast. We also visited the Lighthouse Depot and Museum of Lighthouse History in Wells Maine, followed by a delicious meal in a dockside restaurant, and then on to Kittery, Maine for shopping at the outlet stores. Pat Lucas was chair of the arrangements and did an excellent job (which we all hope she will do again one day). She certainly deserves the many thanks we are sending her way, from all of us who thoroughly enjoyed that wonderful day.

Sincerely,

*Linda Warner,*  
President BLMA



## **BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS**

When the summer season drew to a close, after a very busy and successful 2004, we were pleased to learn that BLMA had received a grant from the Rhode Island Historic Preservation Commission to restore the windows in the Keeper's and Assistant Keeper's quarters. Storm windows will be purchased to preserve and protect the newly restored windows and will serve to lower the heating costs for both buildings, as well. All of the building improvements are costly and continuous, and we will continue to search for grant funding. But we need your support, as well, to succeed in our mission, to preserve and educate the public about Beavertail Lighthouse, the third oldest in our nation.

And so we ask that, if you have not yet sent in your dues payment, please take a moment to do so now as we depend on your support to keep the Museum in operation. People by the hundreds stop by, rain or shine, all throughout the summer to see and hear about this lighthouse and others. Lighthouses are too quickly becoming but a memory in too many places. We need to pull together to keep Beavertail Lighthouse and its history for generations yet to come.

## **BEAVERTAIL LIGHTHOUSE ACQUISITION PROGRESS UPDATE.**

**Varoujan Karentz, Chairman**

While the US Coast Guard has not yet declared the Beavertail Light Station as excess government property ready for transfer, there are some upcoming changes in process.

The BLMA Board of Directors have approved the Light Station management concept which sets up a partnership identifying the State of Rhode Island as the potential transferee of the property, the Town of Jamestown as a second partner and the BLMA as the Light Station's operational manager and principle partner. Initial discussions have begun with both RI Department of Environmental Management and the Town of Jamestown aimed at developing a mutual agreement regarding

the site's future operations and preservation. This is in anticipation of responding to the US National Park Service (NPS) request for application when the Light Station does become available.

This past spring the BLMA petitioned the USCG to allow more frequent visitor use of the granite light tower and authority to begin some repairs that have been neglected by them. The USCG has not appropriated any maintenance funds for any site upkeep except for emergencies. The residents in the Keeper's house, the RI DEM who use the old whistle building and BLMA have been the sole providers of maintenance services for the past few years.

The BLMA proposal to use the tower has been approved by the Coast Guard and changes are in process as a license modification to the Town of Jamestown. The changes to the license include the maintenance of the other site buildings by adding BLMA as one of the principles in the license. The modification will also remove the present restricted access to the tower with the exception of the lantern room, which remains an active navigational aid.

When the license modification is received, your association plans to open the tower on more frequent occasions this fall where visitors will be able to climb the spiral staircase and enjoy the spectacular view surrounding terrain from the circular catwalk.

The Site Acquisition Committee continues to update the planning documents for BLMA's future application to the U. S. National Park Service. NPS has established new guidelines and submittal requirements for agencies and organizations applying for lighthouse acquisition. A new Beavertail Light Station "site use plan" is being developed by the Acquisition Committee that will show how the entire site and all its buildings will be envisioned as a public use, historic, recreational and preserved entity. This use plan will outline, both near term and future plans in addition to facility



requirements and building restoration needs. Since some concepts extend into a longer term period and have funding constraints, the new use plan will be developed around a multi-year phased implementation.

The committee is looking for a volunteer artist to help conceive some sketches for purposes of illustrating future site layout options. Contact Varoujan Karentz at 423-0636 or Brenda Johnston at 295-7907 for further information.

### **LIGHTHOUSE IN GOOD SHAPE**

Don Barrows reports that during the winter 04/05, a committee consisting of Board members, Guy Archambault, Don Barrows, and Joe Bouchard, have accomplished their assignment to compute the measurements of the site. Joe has prepared the prints and sent them to the Committee. They also met with Keith Lescarbeau, President and owner of Abcore Restoration Company, which was responsible for completing the restoration of Plum Beach Light and Sakonnet Light. Although Don, has not yet visited the lighthouses on site, he notes that from a distance they look very nicely restored. Many can attest to that regarding the Plum Beach Light, which sits just north of the Jamestown Verrazano Bridge and is seen by many who cross the bridge daily Keith has toured the Beavertail Light Station property and overall, he has found the structure to be sound, although there is considerable cosmetic work to be done. He has submitted a schedule to Don, who looks forward to a follow-up in the near future. We expect to have more detail, very soon on where we go from here.

### **DOCENT HIGHLIGHTS**

Richard Koster, BLMA's able Docent Coordinator, needs people to fill in some slots in the roster for July and August. Please call him, at 423-1465 and tell him that you'd be delighted to help out. You'll love it down at the point – there's no prettier or more refreshing spot on earth and you'll

meet many interesting people. Give him a call, won't you? You'll be glad you did!

Docents! Take heart! Your parking problems (particularly the afternoon shift) have been addressed. An **Authorized Parking Only** " sign has been affixed to the split rail fence warning others away. But be sure that your Museum Staff Sign is visible on your vehicle so you don't get ticketed!

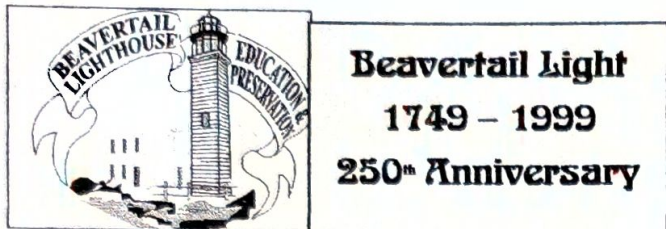
That new cash register which gave us all the jitters is becoming just part of the scenery, with most docents quickly catching on to its mysteries. We still need the sales record sheets filled out, though, for inventory purposes. AND! We now have a counting device to find out just how many people really do come down to visit our famous Lighthouse and its lovely museum. Don't forget to urge visitors to sign the guest log – it's nice to know where they all hail from – near and far.

The Museum mannequin dressed up as a Lighthouse Keeper will not be the only one in uniform in the lighthouse. Alan Bestwick has gone to great lengths to find an authentic Lighthouse Service Uniform to wear on his watch as docent. Alan tells us that there was never an official uniform for Lighthouse Keepers during the days of the Lighthouse Service, now long gone, but he has found a company that specializes in tailoring uniforms bearing authentic buttons and insignia and one is currently under construction to his measurements. In the very near future guests will be greeted and escorted by Alan in his Assistant Lighthouse Keeper's uniform with the insignia #2 on the lapels. During the winter months, Alan serves as a tour guide at Florida's tallest lighthouse. The Ponce de Leon Inlet Lighthouse is located in the Daytona area of Florida.

Hugh Bucher, BLMA's first board president often wore a uniform during special events on the grounds and in the museum. Hugh



appeared in full uniform in the 1999, Jamestown Memorial Day Parade. He marched proudly at the head of the Beavertail Lighthouse Contingent which carried the banner proclaiming the 250<sup>th</sup> year of a 'Light' at Beavertail Point. 1749 - 1999.



### **W. CRAIG ARMINGTON MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED.**

Scholarship Committee Chair, Linda Jacobson reported she met with committee members, Linda and Don Barrows to begin the difficult task of narrowing down to two, the twelve applications received for the BLMA W. Craig Armington Memorial Scholarship program. The end result was that Lauren Evangelista, a North Kingstown High School graduate and Caitlin Kozel, a Lincoln School graduate were the winners of the two scholarship awards. Lauren received her certificate and check during Honors Night at NK High School and Caitlin received hers at the Lighthouse with Linda and her husband Jim Myers. What could be more appropriate than that!

### **A TALE OF TWO LIGHTHOUSES, A FIERCE AND UNEXPECTED STORM AND THE ITS DEVASTATING BLOW.**

Here we are in July, the earlier part of 2005 Hurricane season, and already we have been subjected to Mother Nature's fury with the fourth storm dancing around in the Gulf. Early warnings have been given and many have already evacuated the area which is considered to be the destination of Hurricane Dennis, reported to be a Category 4 storm headed for the USA Mainland, This is to be a fierce storm, according to the Weather Bureau, following closely in the path of

Ivan, only ten months ago. We're told that the cleanup from Ivan has not been completed and fear and awe of Dennis's arrival permeates the south. Continuous breaking news alerts and predictions broadcasting all day long, yet hurricanes are hardly a new phenomenon.

Come with us, back into history to the year 1938, down through the years to revisit a fierce and dangerous hurricane which howled its way up the East coast and inflicted unbelievable damage and destruction throughout Southern New England. There was no warning - no minute by minute reporting - no television broadcasts to track the storm from its earliest moments - no preparation nor chance to prepare. Kids were dismissed from school to make their way home, as best they could. Waves - enormously big and terrifying waves crashed down on the shores, relentlessly and death and destruction were the record of the day.

In Narragansett Bay there still stands (now newly renovated and equipped with a solar light in its tower), Plum Beach Lighthouse, a small structure of the 'spark plug' design. There was no bridge in place at the time of our story and the little lighthouse was indeed a vital navigational aid. In it were two men, Keeper John Ganze, and a visiting substitute keeper, Edwin Babcock. Babcock tried to row back to shore, but was forced back to the light by the raging waters.

The story goes on to tell us that the two men were trapped and as the crashing waves assaulted the tiny island and its tower they were driven ever upward by the rising and raging waters. Eventually they were trapped in the very upper lantern area that housed the light. One of them knew the urgency to open portholes and windows for fear the entire structure would burst open from the outside pressure (like an egg as we're told). They opened all they could and sooner or later the water drained away. They looked



southwest but could not see Whale rock's Light, and when morning finally broke they could see that it was not just that the light was out – the lighthouse had disappeared, equipment, tower, keeper and all.

What had happened to the remains of? Whale Rock Lighthouse? What kind of fury was packed within that powerful storm, that it could remove all trace of the structure and its keeper without a trace? It had stood as a lonely and vital sentinel outpost at the mouth of Narragansett Bay's west passage since 1882 to caution ships away from the deadly reef hidden below the surface. Fifteen years before it was built a schooner hit the reef, and five of the six men aboard were lost. The station was never a favorite of neither keepers nor assistant keepers – it was lonely, cold and isolated from families, friends and life in general. Keepers came and went with great frequency, preferring other less hostile assignments.

When the infamous 1938 Hurricane let loose its fury that fateful day of September 21<sup>st</sup>, Walter Barge Eberle, assistant keeper was on board. He was 40 years old, a 20 year navy veteran and a master diver. He was father of six children and alone in the lighthouse. His family waited anxiously throughout the storm to hear word of Walter, but when word came it was the simple message "The lighthouse is gone". His body was never found. Eberle had been in the lighthouse service only one year.

David Robinson, an Undersea Archaeologist from the Public Archaeology Lab in Pawtucket, RI. has located some of the remains of the lighthouse. He has begun a campaign to establish a plaque dedicated to the memory of Walter Eberle, to be placed somewhere in the area where Beavertail Lighthouse stands,

If you would like to hear more about this riveting story of Walter Barge Eberle, learn more about what has been found of Whale

Rock Lighthouse, don't miss Beavertail Lighthouse Museum's annual meeting to be held on August 16, 2005. See flyer enclosed for more details.

#### **A POSTSCRIPT TO KEEPER EBERLE**

Two of our docents, Linda Jacobson and her husband Jim Myers, who stand regular watches at the museum every summer, had an encounter with some history one day, four or five years ago. Linda tells us that an agitated elderly woman came into the Museum, and asked 'How can I get to Whale Rock Lighthouse? Linda explained that you can't get there from here without a boat. The lady seemed extremely upset and said that she just had to get there! She had to see it! Linda led her to the window and pointed out where the Lighthouse had once stood and suggested that she drive to the mainland and perhaps be able to see a better view of it. The lady became quite distressed and began to cry, and in trying to console her, Linda learned that she is the youngest of the six Eberle children. She went on to say that on that day, September 21, 1938, her father, an assistant Keeper, had sensed the bad weather brewing. He rowed out to Whale Rock to get the Keeper out of the light and sadly, as we all know now, was never heard from again. Her mother was completely devastated by the loss of her husband and the tragedy of it all, and died two years later - her heart broken. The children were all separated to live in different homes. In all of the sadness of her plight, we never got her name, Linda tells us, but only know that she lives somewhere in Florida now.

We'd love to be able to reach her to let her know that a plan is in place to memorialize her father. If you have information please let us know by phone, mail, or email,





**2005 NORTH EAST LIGHTHOUSE  
CONFERENCE: APRIL 10-13, 2005  
NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND:**

The conference was sponsored by the US General Services Administration, US National Parks Service and the US Coast Guard. Among the 115 attendees were seven members of the BLMA. Several presentations were made by both Government Agencies and various lighthouse groups over a two-day session. Plum Beach Lighthouse restoration was highlighted during the conference dinner. Charlotte Johnson of the Rose Island Light House Foundation provided considerable assistance and support to guests and attendees, including program arrangements.

The USCG confirmed that 300 lighthouses will be declared excess, among them 140 sites from Maine to Delaware. Capt. Keene (Chief Aids to Navigation Branch) of the USCG stated that to date 51 have been transferred, with 29 to non-profit organizations. Another 37 are licensed to non-profits.

The light station disposal priority is first those located in the water, and last, those where USCG personnel are in residence.

The Coast Guard has budgeted only \$200,000 in year 2005 for maintenance of all New England light stations, supporting the position that transfers of light stations will be sooner rather than later.

USCG representative Kebby Kelly (Cultural Resource Program Manager) stated there will be 21 lights excessed in 2005. (Beavertail is not among the 2005 listing). She stated that Beavertail ROE (request for excess) has not been received but could be in process for the 2006 list.

It was noted that Nantucket Light Station is no longer considered the 2<sup>nd</sup> oldest station in New England because it has been totally replaced by a newer structure. Hog Island Light located in Narragansett Bay has had

no interest since it was declared excess, and consequently, GSA will take steps to sell the light at auction.

Detailed presentations were made on how to fill out the new requirements of the National Park Service Application. The State Historical Preservation Office will play a significant role in application review processes as will a new point rating proposal evaluation system. Most Historical records of Light Stations are kept in Federal archived files called "Record Group 26".

In a brief meeting with CWO Peter Boardman, he indicated that the USCG had received BLMA's proposal for access to the granite tower and re-licensing the site, and it had been favorably approved by the Commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> District.

Statements were also made by USCG attorney and NPS representatives that affordable housing utilization would not be acceptable on light station excessed properties used for historic preservation. The NHLPA specifically exempts lighthouses from falling under the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act.

On April 13<sup>th</sup>, a tour of nearby lighthouses was conducted for attendees. Beavertail Lighthouse was the highlight of the tour, which included access to the granite light tower.

Our Board was well represented at this great learning experience and were pleased to receive all of the good information as well as the news regarding our use of the tower in return for some of the repairs. Attending were, President Linda Warner, Acquisition Committee Chair, Varoujan Karentz, Treasurer Richard Sullivan, Board members Guy Archambault, Joe Bouchard, and Frank Meyer. George Warner also attended with his wife, Linda. They came home filled with exciting news, great ideas for the Gift Shop and a whole lot of new information.



# BLMA

## Membership Enrollment Form

I want to be an active participant of the **Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association!** I have indicated my areas of interest below:

- Volunteer Museum Attendant
- Building Maintenance Committee
- Fund Raising Committee
- Nominating Committee
- Archives Committee
- Museum Clean-up Committee
- Group Tours Liaison
- Publicity/Newsletter Committee
- Oral History Project
- Holiday Open House
- Naturalist Program Liaison
- Other?

Suggestions:

Please Check one

- New Member
- Renewal

Membership period ending 12/31/20\_\_\_\_

New Dues Rates:

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual, Life | \$100.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family, Life     | 200.00   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual       | 15.00    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family           | 25.00    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor          | 75.00    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student          | 5.00     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Donation         | \$_____  |

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

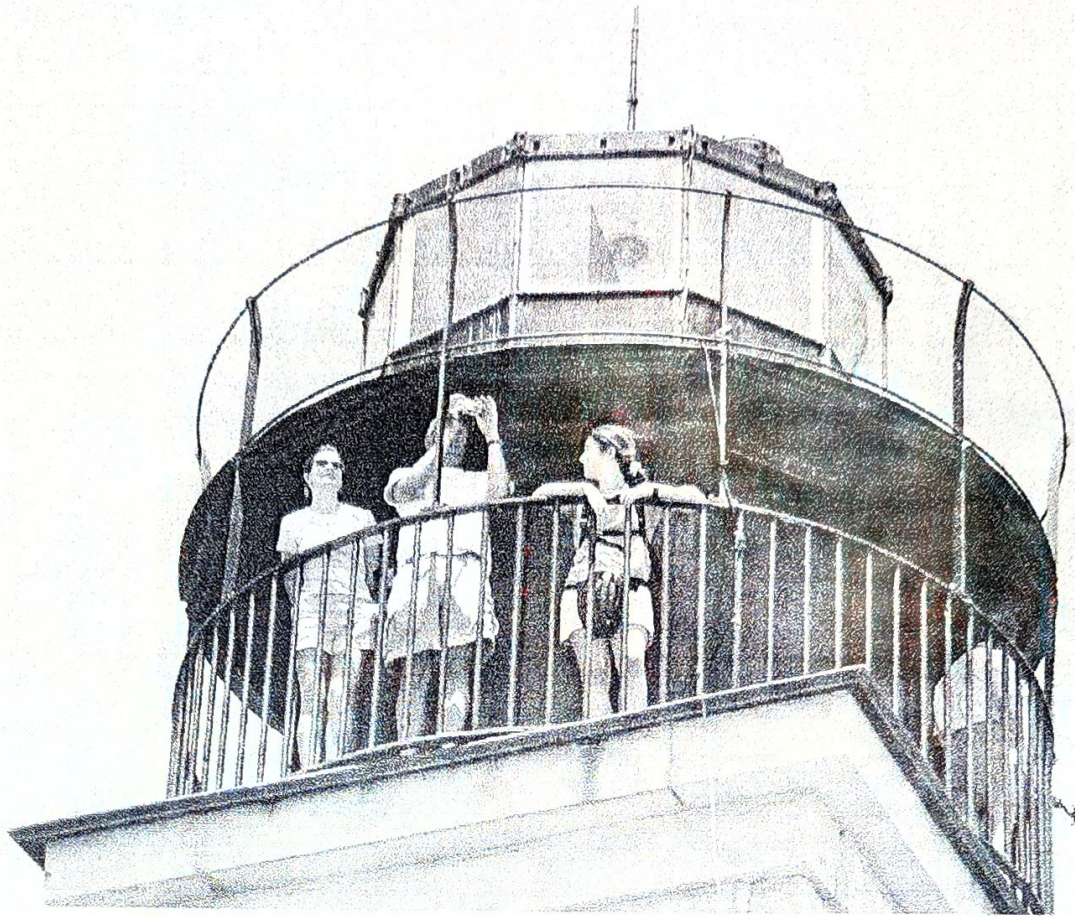
Mail To:  
 Beavertail Lighthouse Museum  
 Association  
 P. O. Box 83  
 Jamestown RI 02834

All members will receive a 10% discount at the museum giftshop.



**This can be YOU!**  
 enjoying the majestic view of the  
 vistas surrounding  
**Beavertail Lighthouse.**  
 Come and visit us on  
**Saturday, August 20, 2005**  
**Saturday, September 10, 2005**  
 And climb to the observation deck.  
**We'll be looking for you!**





**DON'T FORGET TO SAVE THESE IMPORTANT DATES!!!!**

Tuesday – August 16, 2005 – 7:00 p.m.

BLMA Annual Meeting.

Come and listen to our Guest Speaker

David Stewart Robinson, M.A., R.P.A. Undersea Archaeologist  
On Whale Rock Lighthouse and Keeper Walter Barge Eberle

Saturday – August 20, 2005 – Noon until 3:00 p.m.

Saturday – September 10, 2005 – Noon until 3:00 p.m.

COME ON DOWN AND CLIMB THE TOWER  
TO THE OBSERVATION DECK



**We'll be looking for you!**