



## The Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association Scholarship

*In Memory of W. Craig Armington*

*Awarded Annually by the*

**Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association**

**[www.beavertailight.org](http://www.beavertailight.org)**

The first Beavertail Light was constructed in 1749, just the 3rd of the 11 lighthouses constructed along the Atlantic seacoast by the colonies prior to the American Revolution. Since then, the lighthouse has served as a landmark for navigators and a guide for safe passage through the east and west passages of Narragansett Bay. For those passing by it, Beavertail's powerful beacon light and fog signal devices provided both warnings and a welcome through the unfailing service of dedicated keepers and administrators.

The Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association (BLMA) was created as a commitment to preserve and protect the site and to provide visitors with opportunities to learn about the role of this historic site and those involved with its purpose, functions, and care.

The Scholarship Fund was established for **high school seniors living in Jamestown, RI** who intend to further their education at an institution of higher learning. It is awarded in honor of W. Craig Armington, who served many years as an enthusiastic and hardworking member of the BLMA. Thus, the Beavertail Light and the BLMA continue to share a common goal of promoting learning, building awareness of our surroundings, and helping to preserve our environment. The student selected will receive a \$1,000 scholarship to be applied toward college tuition, books, or fees related to the courses of study.

### **APPLICATION**

#### **TO BE COMPLETED BY HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS**

Process and Deadline:

If you would like to be considered for a scholarship, please complete this application. The entire package is to be placed unfolded in a large envelope and mailed to:

**Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association**

**Scholarship Award**

**PO Box 83**

**Jamestown, RI 02835**

**Application package must be post-marked no later than April 7, 2025**

## BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

To be completed by the student and submitted directly to BLMA

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

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

High School Class Rank: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Most Recent)

Graduation Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Point Average: \_\_\_\_\_

**Note: Attach an official copy of your current or most recent high school transcript:**

\_\_\_\_\_

College(s) or institution(s) of higher education to which you have applied or been accepted (indicate which):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Indicate your anticipated area(s) of professional interest:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## **GUIDELINES AND CRITERIA**

The following criteria will be considered by the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association's Scholarship Committee:

- Scholastic record, including current official transcript, Grade Point Average.
  - Honors and awards.
  - Essay: content, focus, coherence, organization, and style.
  - Participation in extra-curricular school activities.
  - Community service activities (as a volunteer).
  - A Letter of Reference.
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## **LETTER OF REFERENCE**

To be written in support of Beavertail Lighthouse Scholarship applicant by one specific individual

**To the applicant:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Print or type your name)

A letter of recommendation about attributes that the recommender thinks will serve you well in your college career should be requested from a school instructor or administrator or active member or leader of a civic or cultural group. This needs to be a person who has known you for at least the past full year and is not related to you, the applicant.

Insert your name in the space provided. Make a copy of this page for the person who writes your reference. **Include a self-addressed stamped envelope** for his or her reply directly to you. Enclose his or her **unopened response** in the completed Application and forward it to the Scholarship Committee.

### **To the person submitting the Letter of Reference:**

The above-named student is seeking consideration for a scholarship offered by the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association. In addition to the Guidelines and Criteria listed above, the Committee will consider such factors as personal or academic goals and achievements, character, and willingness to work with people in school and in the community.

If you are aware of any special circumstances that you feel may warrant consideration, please include such information in your response.

**Note: Submit your answers to items 1, 2 and 3 on a separate sheet of paper and include it, and your essay, in your application package. Follow formatting instructions for attached sheets. (See Item 4).**

1. List any honors or awards (such as citizenship award, membership in honor societies or clubs, sports awards, etc.) which have been presented to you by your school, church, community or other organization since you entered high school.

2. List past employment, years and hours worked, and briefly describe your responsibilities.

3. List community activities (those without compensation) that you chose to become involved with after school hours and/or during summer vacations. Indicate the hours per activity per year and your particular role for the activity or activities involved.

#### **4. ESSAY ASSIGNMENT:**

**Read and follow instructions for the written essay.** Make sure your name and information outlined below is in the upper left corner of the page, and the single-spaced ID information **is formatted as follows.**

Name: Last, First, Middle Initial (For subsequent pages, just list name, and “Essay: page #” Write: “Essay Assignment, 2025 BLMA Scholarship Application”

Title: Write an appropriate title for your essay. (centered, 2 spaces above first paragraph)  
Use title case [Use Format Menu/Change case]. Do *not* use “Essay” as your title.

**Study the passage that follows and expand on its main idea(s) by planning and writing a well-structured, focused essay of 800-1000 words that answers any one of the three questions listed below.**

- What do I believe is particularly meaningful about our nation’s history as it occurred in places like Beavertail Lighthouse?
- To whom do museums (or historic preservation endeavors) mean the most, and why?
- How will I think differently about the lighthouse now that I have learned and written about it?

Whichever question you address, make certain you support your argument with examples from your own experience. Feel free to draw on your impressions of other museums or historic preservation sites you’ve visited or studied.

Your essay will be evaluated on six criteria: Reflection of the ideas expressed in the reading; an effective thesis statement; the cohesive organizing of sentences and paragraphs; the effective selection and use of examples in making your point, correct grammar and mechanics, and attention to readers' information needs.

## **READ AND RESPOND TO THIS PASSAGE IN PLANNING YOUR ESSAY:**

### **Beavertail Lighthouse: Its Unique Place in U. S. Lighthouse History**

The Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association (BLMA) works to sustain a dual mission of preserving the remaining buildings of the site of Rhode Island's first lighthouse, and sharing key aspects of Beavertail's history with new generations of learners. This entails both protecting the buildings and recreating past buildings and showing how and why they functioned as they did.

The present Beavertail Lighthouse tower and keepers' buildings reflect the kinds of improvements made to U.S. lighthouses as of 1852, when the Lighthouse Board was established. The U.S. Congress approved the creation of this board of scientists, military officers, mariners, and administrators to improve all aspects of the lighthouse system, from locating, designing, and building lighthouse buildings to developing and operating the signaling devices to managing the keepers and other personnel. As part of this 25-year improvement campaign, Beavertail became a test site for new sound-signaling (foghorn) devices. The mid-late 1800's was not the first era of innovation at Beavertail Lighthouse, but it is the era of the current towers and buildings, and so motivates the BLMA to plan displays and educational programs about this robust period in lighthouse history.

Beavertail was always an important light within the U.S. system, and one of the earliest of the 12 Colonial lights. As early as 1705, mariners and merchants with shipping interests in Colonial Newport's busy harbor began arguing for a lighthouse. They saw that several shipwrecks could have been avoided if there were a tower to mark the land by day and a light to warn navigators by night. It was nearly forty-five years before the Rhode Island General Assembly finally approved funding to build the tower. Unfortunately, the octagonal wooden tower, designed by Peter Harrison, a noted Newport architect and merchant, burned to the ground just four years after it was erected. (An interesting note: Peter Harrison was a British Tory rather than an American Colonist. He fled to England during the Revolutionary War.) Funds were allocated quickly to build another tower in 1754, this time constructed of brick upon the same stone foundation (part of which is visible today) as the first tower. The second tower lasted, with several problems and fairly constant repairs, until 1856, when the present tower was built about 40 feet further back from the water. The original 1749 foundation was exposed after the Hurricane of 1938 and preserved by the State of RI in 2017 as a monument and to prevent crumbling.

Keeping the light burning in the second tower was a challenge for early keepers, in part because the lantern house at the top was not constructed properly. A committee was formed to find a better lantern design, and apparently a new lantern - a duplicate of the Boston Lighthouse lantern - was built at Beavertail. However, there were still problems. Smoke from the oil lamps filled the space, choking the keepers and covering the glass with a film that, despite regular removal, reduced the brightness of the light. The tower was heavily damaged in 1779 by British soldiers retreating from Newport and Jamestown by setting it afire and removing the lighting apparatus. Adding to local issues were the difficulties of the young nation in managing the lighthouse system over which it had assumed control by Act of Congress in 1789. Prior to the formation of the Lighthouse Board in 1852, lighthouse keepers had to use lower-quality lamps, reflectors, and fog-signal devices - bells, horns, whistles, etc. than their European counterparts, because the U.S. Treasury Department that oversaw lighthouses, was led by a superintendent intent on saving money by consolidating contracts for such equipment and fuel through one main vendor. There was also unfairness in hiring practices (keepers with no political connections might lose their positions to those that had them), and rough conditions in often run-down quarters.

However, even during that period of management problems, Beavertail had at least one important research and development “first”. Newport inventor David Melville developed a breakthrough gas-powered system for lighthouse lamps, which he tested at Beavertail beginning in 1817. With Melville’s gas system, the lamps burned cleaner and brighter. One mariner, in fact, reported that Beavertail’s gas light viewed from Block Island shined so brightly he thought a whole new lantern had been installed. The gas fuel was easier for keepers to use because it was piped into the lamps (whale oil had to be carried up the tower stairwell) and the gas produced no smoke. Despite this successful trial however, gas lights were never implemented at Beavertail, or at U.S. lighthouses in general. Long-term vendors of whale oil influenced the Superintendent of Lighthouses to decide against further tests of gas illumination for lighthouses. Thus, Beavertail and the other lighthouses in the country stayed with expensive, less efficient, more costly whale oil until the 1860’s. Professor Joseph Henry, science advisor to President Lincoln and direction of experiments for the U.S. Lighthouse Board, was asked by the President to develop an alternative fuel to whale oil, which had become prohibitively expensive because of Civil War blockades by the Confederacy to the trade routes of whaling ships. Professor Henry developed both lard oil and colza oil alternatives to use in lighthouses, which saved \$100,000 in fuel costs in the first year they were used. Lard oil completely replaced whale oil by the 1870’s when kerosene was introduced as an even more cost-efficient fuel.

Other lighthouse technologies began moving forward rapidly after 1852. Beavertail was subsequently designated - as one of only a few lighthouses - as a center for studying sound transmission, or foghorn devices. Again, it was Professor Joseph Henry who conducted the experiments - including several at Beavertail Point - and discovered problems with audibility. He shared his findings with scientists in the US and Europe. Information from these studies was used to guide the development of improved fog trumpets, whistles, sirens, and the engines and compressors that powered them. The combined efforts of Lighthouse Board scientists, engineers, inventors, industrialists, navigators, and keepers in this development process was a welcome departure from the trial-and-error methods common during the first part of the 19th century. Because of this and system-wide improvements made during this period, it is often called “*The Golden Age of US Lighthouses*”.

This and other aspects of Beavertail’s story inspire members of the BLMA to learn as much about its functions, equipment, and public administration as possible. We are fortunate that those entrusted with its care and oversight in the past maintained records of their endeavors. Finding, studying, interpreting, and sharing those records will be essential to developing museum displays and educational programs meaningful to today’s learners, particularly those interested in today’s innovations in infrastructure improvements aimed at achieving environmental and economic sustainability. The BLMA believes that much of lighthouse history can illuminate systems today - and tomorrow - that must function on a 24/7 basis, as lighthouses did.

Today, Beavertail remains an active aid to navigation. Its light and sound signaling devices are automated and maintained by the U.S. Coast Guard. In 2024, the property title to the tower and its surrounding buildings was formally transferred from the U.S. Coast Guard to the State of Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management. In the words of U.S. Senator Jack Reed: “Beavertail Lighthouse is an iconic landmark and a symbol of our cultural and maritime heritage. Today’s transfer of ownership to the state ensures that Rhode Islanders and visitors alike can enjoy this piece of history for generations to come,” Like the U.S. Lighthouse Board of 1852 that instilled a new level of excellence in the operation and care of our nation’s lights, members of the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association will continue to reach out to individuals and groups of people in education, business, government, as part of our mission to help protect the historic buildings of Beavertail Lighthouse and share its story through a variety of learning experiences. Together we will develop our museum to serve several functions, including that of a center for understanding both historic achievements and forward-thinking innovation that connects with the drive for sustainability in the technologies on which we rely in our communities, our nation, and our world. Now, as in centuries before, challenges and opportunities abound to keep Beavertail Lighthouse shining brightly, sounding clearly, and serving as a community treasure and symbol of a nation-building record of achievement.

## **THE SELECTION PROCESS**

A Scholarship Committee comprised of members of the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association will review the applications using the guidelines and criteria indicated above. In addition, as part of the evaluation process, a candidate may be asked to appear before the Scholarship Committee prior to the final determination of awards.

Acceptance of the Application and supporting documentation will be acknowledged as promptly as possible and formal notification is anticipated before the senior class graduation exercises.

## **AGREEMENT**

If selected to receive a Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association Scholarship, I understand that my presence will be requested to appear at an appropriate presentation ceremony. I give permission to the Scholarship Committee to notify local newspapers who may wish to promote this Scholarship Award, including taking photographs of the event.

Select one:

I have enclosed an official transcript from my high school.

I have requested an official transcript from my high school be sent directly to BLMA Scholarship Award, PO Box 83, Jamestown, RI 02835

Applicant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Please print name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Applicant's Checklist**

Your application should include:

1. Your responses to the information sought.
2. One letter of reference (in sealed envelope).
3. An official high school transcript.

Only a completed application will be considered.

**Make sure the completed package is postmarked by April 7, 2025**

Mailing address: Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association Scholarship Award, PO Box 83, Jamestown, RI 20835

