



The Lighthouse Log

Summer 2025

Quarterly Newsletter of the BLMA

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Varoujan Karentz

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Summer 2025 President's Message



Hello everyone,

Summer has arrived at Beavertail, bringing with it the energy and enthusiasm of our dedicated volunteers. While the grounds are now bustling, preparations for the season have been ongoing throughout the fall and winter months. Behind the scenes, our Program Development Committee has been hard at work creating engaging new displays, while the Archives Committee has spent countless hours sorting and cataloging years of historical documents. Thanks to their efforts, our visitors will enjoy a richer and more organized experience. We're especially proud to share that maintenance on the lighthouse tower was completed just in time for opening day. The newly renovated tower is a highlight of the season, and we're thrilled to showcase it to the public.

In addition, our Board of Directors has been connecting with other lighthouse organizations to share best practices and historical insights. Next week, we look forward to hosting the team from Pomham Lighthouse for a day of collaboration and conversation.

Looking ahead, summer promises to be a lively season at Beavertail, with returning favorites like bi-weekly tower climbs and Sound Baths — and a new event we're excited to introduce: Member Appreciation Day! If you find yourself nearby, please stop in. We'd love to show you around.

Warmest regards,

Nancy Beye

President, Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association

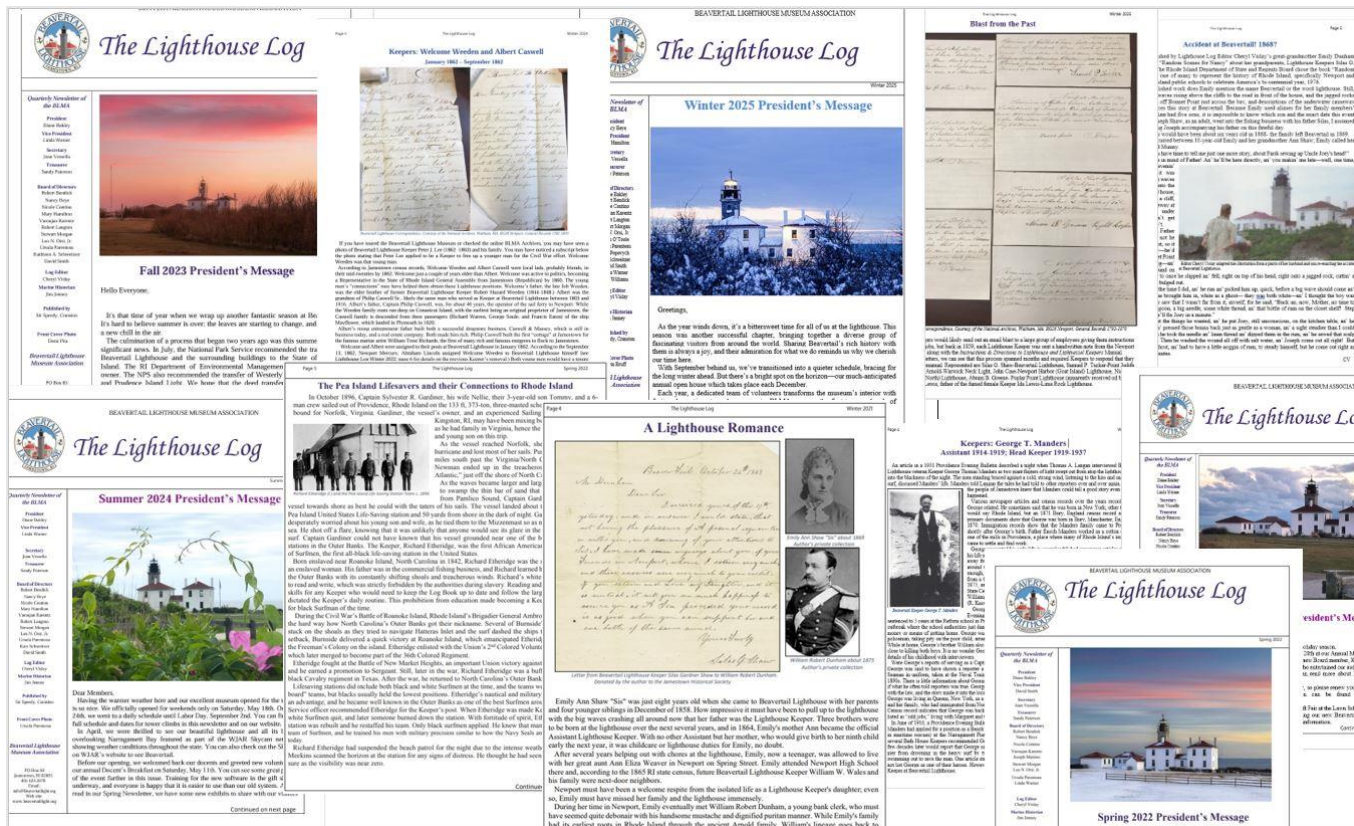
W. Craig Armington Memorial Scholarship



BLMA Director Bob Langton (center) presents scholarship certificates to North Kingstown HS students, Alexander Ashton (left) and Emma Kolodziejczak (right.)

This year, the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association awarded \$1,000 BLMA 2025 Scholarships in memory of W. Craig Armington to two deserving Jamestown residents who attended North Kingstown High School, Emma Kolodziejczak and Alexander Ashton. Emma completed her HS studies in 3 years. She will be attending Indiana University majoring in Human Biology on the pre-med track. Alexander will attend the University of Rhode Island in the fall with a major in Computer Science. BLMA Director Bob Langton presented Emma and Alexander with their checks at the NKHS Senior Awards Night on June 2nd. BLMA usually awards only one scholarship per year, but these two students were so evenly accomplished based on the metrics used that the Board decided to award two scholarships. Congratulations Emma and Alexander!

Five Years as BLMA Lighthouse Log Editor



I am delighted to be celebrating my fifth anniversary as BLMA Lighthouse Log Editor, documenting, sharing, and preserving stories about this national treasure by highlighting the people who helped keep this light shining through the centuries and spotlighting the people who continue to keep its legacy alive today and for the future. As they say, “Time flies when you are having fun.”

Cheryl Vislay

Meet our Newest BLMA Directors



Karen O'Toole

I was appointed to the Beavertail Lighthouse Association Board in September 2024. Prior to my appointment, I volunteered as a docent at the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum for two seasons and developed an appreciation for the quality of the exhibits at the Museum and the educational experience it offers to the many visitors from all over the world. I enjoy being a docent and learning about the history of the lighthouse and the waters of Narragansett Bay.

I was born and raised on Cape Cod. After graduating from Northeastern School of Law, I worked at a Boston maritime law firm. Unfortunately, the Big Dig forced a reduction in the firm's attorneys and I began work as Associate General Counsel to the Massachusetts Board of Bar Overseers and General Counsel to the Massachusetts Clients' Security Board until my retirement in February 2020. My husband and I bought our home in Jamestown in October 2020. Our two sons, one lives in Boston and one lives in Brooklyn, enjoy visiting us and exploring Jamestown and boating on the Bay.



Ross Williams

I have been a seasonal resident of Jamestown for 24 years before retiring here in 2021. I am a CPA and life-long "Finance guy" having worked in a variety of accounting and finance roles for large multinational corporations. I am one of the newest members of the BLMA board and am passionate about caring for this historic and beautiful landmark that we are so privileged to have on our idyllic little island. I also serve on the Board of Directors of the Jamestown Historical Society as their Secretary and Finance Chair and as Treasurer of the Upper Shoreby Hill association. I have been married to my wife Brenda for 32 years and have three children Nicole (30), Danielle (29) and Graham (22).



Alex Popovych was born in the Ukraine and is of Hungarian descent. From elementary through high school, Alex attended formal art classes and was recognized for his accomplishments with acceptance to the prestigious Academy of Art in Uzhhorod. He double majored in Fine Art and Sculpture. During his sophomore year, he was selected from hundreds of other artists as the youngest

artist to represent his native city in an annual countrywide exhibit. He moved to the United States in 2000 while pursuing his law degree. Alex held a position as a sculptor for eight years in Brooklyn, NY and his work can be seen on many historic landmark buildings throughout Manhattan and the boroughs. From 2008 and until 2018 Alex has held various positions working in the field of finance and compliance for multiple Wall Street firms. Between 2010 and 2014 Alex served as a trustee on the Board of Trustees for Széchenyi Hungarian School in New Brunswick, NJ. After spending many years on and off-season in Rhode Island, in 2019 Alex and his wife Jennifer permanently relocated to Rhode Island and have been full time residents of Jamestown. In the same year Alex founded his Island Restoration general contracting company, specializing in historical preservation and home remodeling.

Lighthouse Tower Renovation

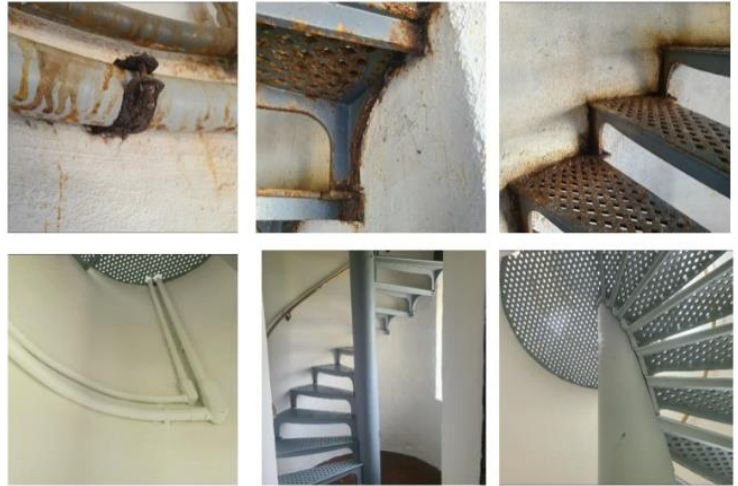
BLMA recently completed the refurbishment of the inside of the light tower. The interior walls and iron stairs up to the light beacon had become victims of the saltwater environment and constant moisture levels over many years. The stairs were seriously rusting, and the walls were stained with rust runoff. The clamps holding the electrical conduit servicing the light beacon were also disintegrating and staining the interior walls.

The renovation required a multitude of trades. The entire interior of the light tower stairway had to be professionally sand-blasted to remove all the rust. The electrical conduit clamps had to be removed and replaced with new stainless-steel clamps. Workers

coated the iron stairs with a special rust-preventing epoxy. Then, they sealed and coated them with marine-grade epoxy paint to prevent future corrosion from the harsh saltwater environment. Likewise, the interior walls of the light tower required a special sealant and four coats of special elastomeric paint.

The project took four weeks to complete and now looks like new (see the before-and-after pictures above.) Many thanks to all those who donated funds to the lighthouse. The cost to complete the interior tower refurbishment was just over \$34,000. Without the generous donations of many who support and contribute to the lighthouse and BLMA, this project would not have been possible.

Leo Orsi



The Beavertail Lighthouse Gift Shop



The shop began with a few items for sale on the stairs of the Assistant Keeper's house and has grown, thanks to the efforts of Linda Warner and Joan Vessella, into the delightful space it is today. The shop has fantastic books - many by local authors,

Beavertail-specific items (several made in Rhode Island), lots of regular kids' stuff, and more. All the profit is directly allocated to BLMA's operating

income to fund projects, repairs, and maintenance.

As with everything at the Museum, many volunteers make it work. Obtaining high-speed internet last year, thanks to the efforts of Leo Orsi and the diligent technology work of Dave Smith, has enabled the seamless use of credit cards through the Point of Sale (POS) software, which utilizes high-speed connectivity. Most important are the docents who train to use the POS system and staff the gift shop.

The gift shop is open for the season. Don't forget that the gift shop is also open in December, just before the holidays. We encourage people to come and purchase special Beavertail gifts during this time as well!

Mary Hamilton

Annual Docent Breakfast and a Special Birthday Celebration

On June 3, BLMA hosted the annual Docent Breakfast at the museum. Many of the wonderful volunteers who dedicate their time serving as docents at Beavertail Lighthouse were in attendance. Long-time BLMA Director Varoujan Karentz attended the BLMA Annual Docent Breakfast, where he was serenaded in celebration of his birthday with his beloved wife Rose by his side.

BLMA President Nancy Beye baked a cake in celebration of Varoujan's birthday. Varoujan Karentz, now retired, is the author of three books and many articles on Rhode Island history. Besides BLMA, Varoujan has served on the boards of many organizations, including Heritage Harbor Corporation and the Armenian Historical Association.

A special thank-you to Varoujan and our docents. It is their dedication and knowledge of the lighthouse that help make the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum such a memorable experience for the museum's numerous visitors.





New Displays at the Museum

Over the winter months, BLMA Director Ursula Parenteau crafted some vibrant new wall displays. The Ida Lewis display is done in a child-friendly format, but suitable for the whole family. Ursula's goal is to have one room in the museum dedicated to children's exhibits.

Also new this year, is the beautiful Aurora Borealis photo display by photographer David Zapatka which hangs in the Monitor room. This photo was featured in the Winter 2025 edition of the Lighthouse Log.

Ida Lewis - Lighthouse Keeper

Ida Lewis was born in 1842 in Newport, Rhode Island.
Ida loved the sea.
Her father was a lighthouse keeper at Lime Rock in Newport Harbor. Every day Ida would row out to the lighthouse with her father to check on the light. When her father got sick and was no longer able to care for the lighthouse, Ida would keep watch in the harbor, scanning the seas for any ship in trouble.



One winter evening, Ida heard loud laughter from a small boat bobbing in the ocean. Four boys were having fun in the rough waves. Suddenly a wave pitched the boat and all four boys tumbled into the ocean. Ida quickly rowed out to pull the boys from the icy ocean into her boat. She frantically rowed back to shore and brought the boys into the house to warm them up.

The Bravest Woman in America

Ida's first rescue was at age 12. She continued to serve as an official keeper for 39 years saving nearly 25 lives. Ida was given the Gold Lifesaving Medal in 1881, the first woman to receive this award. The Lime Rock Lighthouse was renamed "Ida Lewis Lighthouse" in her honor. During her life time, Ida Lewis was known as "the Bravest Woman in America"

A Keeper's Jobs


- Tend the Light to never, ever let it go out.
- Wind the clockwork to make the lens turn.
- Trim the burnt ends of the wick.
- Carry the buckets full of oil to the top of the tower and fill the lamp several times a day.
- Keep the lens polished and free of dust.
- In foggy weather, strike the bells and later maintain the foghorns.

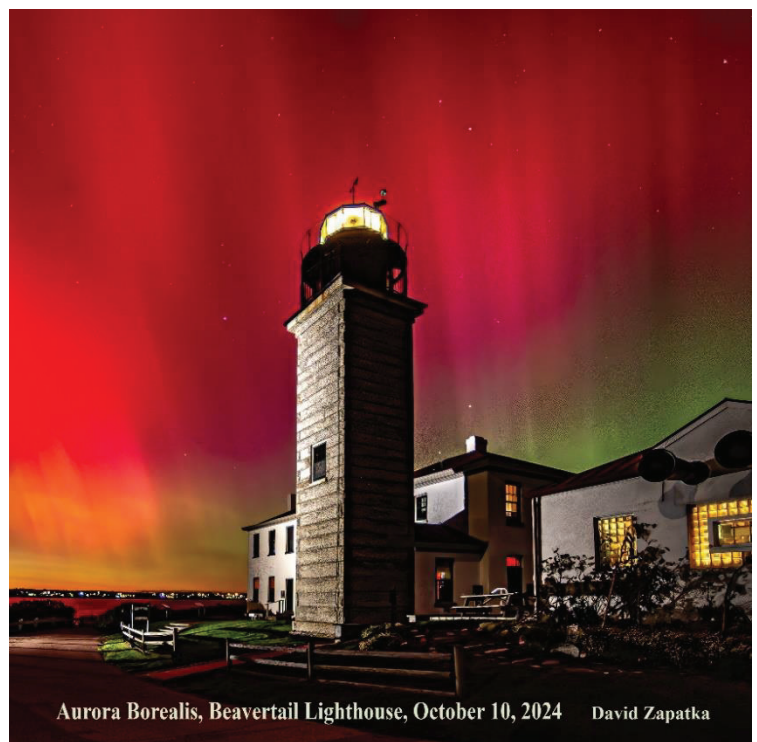



Keep daily records of weather, how much oil was used, and which ships passed by.

Maintain the buildings, cook food, stoke the fires and pump water from the well.

Watch for ships in distress, house the survivors of shipwrecks and entertain visitors to the lighthouse.





Aurora Borealis, Beavertail Lighthouse, October 10, 2024 David Zapatka

Women Keepers: Ida Lewis and her Connection to Beavertail Lighthouse



What can one write about Ida Lewis (Idawalley Zoradia Lewis) that numerous authors haven't already written? Arguably, she is the most famous Lighthouse Keeper in America and probably the world. She is an impressive woman and the only Keeper with a lighthouse renamed in their honor. She also has a drive named after her at the Arlington National Cemetery.

Ida's family was a dynasty at Lime Rock Lighthouse, which was rechristened the Ida Lewis Lighthouse in 1924. Their collective tenure as Keepers at Lime Rock is just shy of 58 years. Lighthouse records show that when Ida was about 11 years old, her father, Captain Hosea Lewis, was assigned Keeper of Lime Rock Light on November 15, 1853. The lighthouse tower would be built the next year. Keeper's quarters would be built a few years after that. Shortly after, Hosea suffered a stroke, but he kept his position as Keeper as his family pitched in and performed most of the lighthouse duties. It was well known that young Ida with the help of some of her siblings did most of the Keeper's work during these years. At Hosea's death in 1872, his wife, also named Idawalley Zoradia Lewis, took over as the official Head Keeper at Lime Rock.

By 1879, the younger Ida became the official Head Keeper at Lime Rock. At her death in October of 1911, her brother Rudolph, who was her Assistant, became Head Keeper for one week only, bringing the Lewis dynasty at Lime Rock Lighthouse to an end.

One fact about Ida Lewis that is not well known is her connection to Beavertail Lighthouse's first Keeper, Abel Franklin. Ida's mother, born Idawalley Zoradia Willey, is the great-great-granddaughter of Abel Franklin through her maternal grandmother, Penelope Franklin. Penelope married Mark Dodge, and their daughter, Lydia, married Aaron C. Willey.

Penelope Franklin, Lydia Dodge, and Idawalley Zoradia (Willey) Lewis were all born in New Shoreham, RI (Block Island). Penelope's father, Abel Franklin Jr., inherited 100 acres on Block Island from his father Abel Franklin Sr., one of Jamestown's most influential inhabitants and Beavertail Lighthouse's first Keeper. It is no wonder the younger Ida Lewis was such a renowned Keeper for her work at Lime Rock Light. Lighthouse Keeping was in her blood!

According to Jamestown Town Council records, Abel Franklin Sr. was very active in Jamestown's municipal administration and commerce; he ran a public house, the Jamestown ferries, and he was Beavertail Lighthouse's first Keeper starting in 1749 until about 1755.

Interestingly, Jamestown Town Council records show that in February of 1724/5, a group of Jamestown Administrators met at the home of Abel Franklin to execute the will of Captain Josiah Arnold, whose son Josiah Arnold Jr. was still a minor. Young Josiah was there to select a guardian; he would become Beavertail Lighthouses' third Keeper.

On May 24, 2025, the United States Lighthouse Society, along with the Newport Historical Society, U.S. Coast Guard, and U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, celebrated Ida Lewis' life and legacy with a graveside ceremony at the Common Burying Ground in Newport. The crew of the USCGC *Ida Lewis* placed a new bronze U.S. Lighthouse Service grave marker upon her grave. According to Wikipedia, the USCGC *Ida Lewis* (WLM-551) is the lead ship of the United States Coast Guard Keeper-class of Coastal Buoy Tenders, which launched in 1995. The USCGC *Ida Lewis* primarily maintains navigational aids near her homeport of Newport, RI.

CV

Poplar Point's Light Shines Again

Poplar Point Lighthouse, set at the mouth of Wickford Harbor, just across the bay from Conanicut Island, shines again! Built in 1831, the light was active until 1882. According to Wikipedia, the tower is the oldest surviving wooden lighthouse tower built on the roof of a Keeper's house in the United States. The Poplar Point Light is now privately owned and was not functional as an aid to navigation until recently.

Photographer David Zapatka, who has been a speaker at BLMA events in the past and whose photos have been displayed in past editions of the BLMA Lighthouse Log, helped the current owners work with the Coast Guard to get permission to shine a light from the lighthouse tower once again. On Christmas night, 2024, the owners of the Poplar Point Lighthouse turned on the lighthouse beacon for the first time in 142 years and it is once again an active aid for navigation.



Vintage postcard of the Poplar Point Lighthouse

Rhode Island's Perilous Coast Point Judith (Part 5)

Three years passed after the loss of the **TILLIE E.** before another fatal wreck would take place near Point Judith. The date was May 10, 1884, when the schooner **JULIA A. TATE** ran ashore about ½ mile west from the point. The **TATE**, northbound from Brooklyn, NY, and headed for Boston, carried assorted cargo that included logwood, pig iron, and car axles. Like many vessels of this era, she was owned by her master, Captain Joseph M. Tate. At 77' x 27' x 7', she registered 96 tons and had an impressive career spanning almost 50 years in service. Like the **TILLIE E.** before her, the details of her loss were not particularly dramatic. She struck a rock in fog and sunk near enough to shore that her crew landed safely in their boat. As was the norm, when the lifesavers arrived, they did what they could to save the vessel, and when that failed, they extended the hospitality of their station for several days before ensuring the crew made their way to the railroad station so they could return home.



The schooner **MARY NATT** was next to succumb to the dangers of Block Island Sound when she sprung a leak on December 1, 1866, and was reportedly run ashore to prevent the loss of her crew. The thirty-nine-year-old vessel was lost, but the lure of a potentially successful salvage job surfaced soon after. Years after the **MARY NATT** had been forgotten, an associated memory of the salvage was penned when the noted deep-sea salvage diver Michael J. Sullivan died. Sullivan spent three weeks continuously working to salvage the pig iron from this wreck. However, there appears to be an error in his obituary as it states that the wreck was in 117 feet of water when the Life Saving Service report clearly indicates that she was beached ¼ mile north of the station. It is possible that she worked her way off the beach and sank, but with such a heavy cargo as pig iron, that is unlikely. The schooner measured 75' x 24' x 7' and registered 96 tons. She was built in Tuckahoe, NJ, and was owned by D. Crowley of New York City. She was under the command of a captain named Harrington on a voyage from Perth Amboy, NJ, to Somerset, MA, when she was lost.

The report of the lifesavers at the Point Judith station tells the story of the loss of the three-masted schooner **HARRY A. BARRY**, which came to grief in 1887, *"February 20. Shortly after 4 a.m., during misty weather, the three-masted schooner **HARRY A. BARRY**, of New Haven, Conn., went ashore about 400 yards south of the Point Judith Station (Third District) and subsequently became a complete wreck. She was bound to Fall River, Mass., from Baltimore, Md. With a cargo of coal and carried a crew of seven men. At the time of the accident, there was a light northwesterly breeze with a high sea running. The vessel was discovered by the patrol immediately after she struck, and in less than thirty minutes, the surfmen had reached the scene in the lifeboat. It was still very dark, and the heavy breakers made it impossible to go alongside immediately. The keeper, on seeing that the schooner's yawl had been lowered, called to the captain to remain on board until daylight, when the people could, in all probability, be landed in safety, as any previous attempt to reach the shore through the surf would be attended with great danger, if not with serious results. One of the sailors, however, heedless of the advice, jumped into the boat and began to stow the crew's baggage, which the crew passed over the side. No sooner had he got fairly to work than several tremendous seas were seen coming that were certain to sweep the vessel with terrific force. The keeper again hailed the crew and besought them to seek shelter, or else the waves would wash them overboard. As predicted, the onrushing waves crashed violently over her, nearly submerging the hull, but the timely warning saved those on her decks. The waves capsized the yawl, and the sailor who was in it dashed against the fore rigging, whence he fell into the sea. He fortunately grasped a piece of board and was carried shoreward in the surf."* The vessel would ultimately prove a total loss. JFJ

Summer Events at the Lighthouse





BEAVERTAIL LIGHTHOUSE
MUSEUM ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 83

Jamestown, Rhode Island 02835

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 Our Updated
Website!**

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.



Museum & Tower Climb Schedule

The Beavertail Lighthouse Museum is open every day from 10:30am-4:30pm, including weekends, starting Monday June 23 through Labor Day, September 1, and weekends only starting September 6 through October 12 and on Columbus Day October 13.

Don't forget, BLMA Holiday shopping days on December 6 & 7, and December 13 & 14, 12pm – 3pm

Please, see our website for Tower Climb dates.

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 www.Beavertailight.org.

Weddings and private events on the Lighthouse grounds are not allowed. For information on scheduling events at Beavertail State Park contact the RI Dept. of Environmental Management (RIDEM) at 401.884.2010.