



# The Lighthouse Log

Summer 2013

## *The quarterly Newsletter of the BLMA*

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## Message From The President

Most all of the renovations described in the last newsletter have been accomplished thanks to the dedicated efforts of the BLMA Board and others. The expanded museum is open and many positive comments have been received. This season will be one of learning – are exhibits in the right locations, when should exhibits be changed, what is the best traffic flow to maximize the visitor experience, gift shop operation, best storage locations, best hours of operation, number of docents needed, etc?

I encourage all members to find time to come to the museum and see the changes first hand.

For BLMA to provide the best museum experience for our visitors, it is clear that more docents are needed. If more docents are not available most likely there will be times when the Museum will not open. The expanded museum requires three docents per shift, while four would be optimum. This does not include docents needed those days when the tower is open. **Please consider becoming a docent or volunteering for more shifts if already a docent.** If you know someone who you think might like to be docents, please contact them.

While grant monies allow BLMA to make the changes to the buildings and tower, they do not contribute to covering the daily costs of operating the museum. These costs are met primarily by profits from the gift shop and monies from tower openings.

I would like to thank Suzi Andrews for her outstanding leadership as Acting President during my absence.

SM ■



# The Creation of Beavertail State Park

## The Culmination of Many Years of Passive Recreation at Beavertail Point

### Brief Recap, Part 1

Beavertail Point was a destination for sightseeing and fishing for many years prior to a military takeover at the beginning of WW II that would have an impact until 1974.

The Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949 described the policy of excess government land being made available to municipalities and states for parks or recreational uses.

Jamestown applied for and received the first parcel of land to be declared surplus, 20+/- acres on the east side of the point abutting the US Coast Guard property. The purpose was passive recreation. The deed was filed July, 1973.

In late 1976 an agreement was reached between Jamestown and the Coast Guard for a caretaker to "be a presence" for both CG property and Beavertail Park. The town was given use of CG property exclusive of the light tower.

In the summer of 1978 the federal government announced as excess a 158 +/- parcel. A 6.8 acre parcel within the larger acreage was excluded. The State submitted application with Jamestown as a partner.

As part of the partnership the Beavertail Advisory Committee was created.

In April 1979, the town leased to the State the 20 acre Beavertail Park for 40 years with a renewable option.

April 1980 a deed was filed for a 158.2 acre parcel. A Memorandum of Understanding was drawn up outlining the responsibilities of the partners.

In the fall of 1981 the federal government announced that the 6.8 acre parcel containing the Harbor Entrance Control Post was excess and available for transfer. A joint application was made by the state and town.

### Executive Order 12348

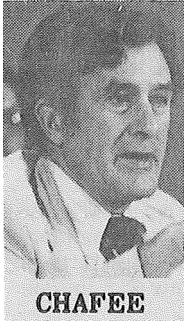


The Federal Register of March 1<sup>st</sup> 1982 described a change in policy for handling excess property. As of the March 1<sup>st</sup> printing, property was to be made available for its most beneficial use. The Federal Property Review Board, newly created by the Executive Order, was to consider taxpayer benefit in determining how land was to be dispersed. A bidding process was to include private developers as well as nonprofits. The award of land for residential use was justified on the basis of the positive impact on local employment and the tax revenue generated for the local community. The General Services Administration had determined that the highest and best use for the 6.8 acre parcel was residential.

The 6.8 acre parcel had been applied for prior to the December 28, 1981 deadline. The only communication addressing the joint application came to the R.I. Historical Preservation Commission on January 26, 1982 informing the Historical Preservation Commission that within the deed of conveyance would be conditions for the protection of any prehistoric archeological resources in the area. It would seem from this communication that things were moving in the right direction.

According to correspondence from Senator John Chafee dated October 13, 1982 to the administrator of the General Services Administration (GSA), the State and Town had submitted a proposal under the 1949 guidelines by the December due date and only found out during the preceding week that the practice of giving land was no longer a possibility and they would have to resubmit an application.

The Jamestown Recreation Committee under the leadership of John Doyle Jr. was reactivated, renamed the Beavertail Committee and expanded to include state representative Norma Willis, a representative of Sen. Chafee's office, and officials of DEM. Senators John Chafee and Claiborne Pell successfully introduced legislation which prevented sale of the property until March 31, 1983.



A clarification of sorts was received by the Town and State that they would be first in line to acquire the property as long as they were willing to pay the appraised value, \$100,000. A nearby 7 acres plus or minus adjoining state property at Ft. Wetherill was also on the market with an appraised value of \$250,000.

The Congressional delegation, John Chafee, Claiborne Pell, Claudine Schneider and Ferdinand St. Germain, very aggressively pursued every legislative angle to delay any auction. In early February a nine month extension was obtained by the Congressional delegation for both the Beavertail and Ft. Wetherill properties. Several other pieces of property in the area were to be auctioned. These included a Nike site in North Kingstown, a portion of Gould Island and a portion of Dutch Island. In spite of the extension the General Services Administration (GSA) went ahead with announcing an auction within a few weeks. The Congressional delegation pursued this and the auction was dropped at the last minute.

In March, Rep. Claudine Schneider hosted a visit by the Director of the Property Review Board, the regional administrator of the GSA, the Congressional delegation, Robert Bendick, Director, DEM, Jamestown town council, Bob Sutton, Jamestown Manager and Trudy Cox, Exec. Director, Save the Bay and the Beavertail Committee. About 45 concerned citizens were also at the Beavertail site. By all accounts it was a beautiful day.

The visitors flew in several helicopters to view the sites available as surplus. Robert Bendick took the opportunity to emphasize the role of these properties in the rapidly developing Bay Islands Park System. Comments gathered subsequently indicate that the federal visitors were quite taken by the physical beauty of the sites in question and indicated a greater understanding of the urgency and aggressiveness of local supporters and the Congressional delegation.

In March the Beavertail Committee, the group that had taken the lead in terms of marshalling the Congressional and local leadership through letter writing and the organizing of meetings to keep everyone focused on the task, stepped aside and turned

over organizational responsibilities to the permanent Beavertail Advisory Committee. A good deal of the work as well as personnel had been shared between the two committees.

It was over. In May a transfer of property was announced at a reduced price. In early October Secretary of the Interior Watt directed the GSA to transfer the 6.8 parcel to the state of Rhode Island at no cost. Three weeks later the GSA was requested to transfer the Ft. Wetherill property to the State at no cost. It would be many weeks before the deeds would be filed.

## **The Bay Islands Park Concept**

A teen-aged shellfisherman, later Governor, Philip Noel pledged in 1972 to more completely develop the recreational potential of Narragansett Bay. The appointment of a Citizen's Advisory Committee by Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Director Dennis Murphy and the assignment of professional staff to the project followed. Lower Bay island properties in the process of being declared excess were the focus of the research. The result was a feasibility study in which the islands of the Bay from Prudence and Patience south to Jamestown were thought of as a system with individual parks linked by ferry. Major ferry landings in the Quonset area, Melville in Middletown, India Point in Providence and the former Navy property at the southern end of Prudence Island would be the locations for embarking or transferring to or among the island parks. As these properties became available from the government, development plans were being put in place and a gradual phase in of parks emerged.

The 1974 feasibility study was developed further with the 1977 publication of "Bay Island Park: A Marine Recreation Plan for the State Of Rhode Island" published by the Coastal Resources Center at URI. The portion of each island targeted for the park was described in detail--geological features, flora and fauna as well as features of the marine environment relevant to ferry access. The vehicle-accessible park sites, including Brenton Point, Ft. Wetherill, Ft. Adams and Beavertail were to develop with individual timetables. This gradual phase-in reflected the reality of property ownership.



*(Continued on page 4)*

(Continued from page 3)

The assistant Keeper House at Beavertail had been identified as a site for a marine biology educational facility. Subsequently this idea was expanded to include a unique exhibit. "The Light Must Be Kept Burning- R.I. Lighthouses Past, Present and Future". An individual membership organization, the R.I. Parks Association, under the initial leadership of Sarah Gleason, was created as an important step in broadening involvement and promoting the development of the parks through fund raising, membership building and "hands on" labor. A series of festivals through the 1980s and early 1990s brought attention to the possibilities for recreation as well as education with the ranger/naturalist program and the R.I. lighthouse exhibit.

A celebration in October 1983 at Beavertail State sponsored by DEM, town of Jamestown and US Coast Guard highlighted the completion of exterior repairs to light station buildings and the dedication of a flag pole. The tower was open for visitors. The celebration anticipated the successful awarding of the 6.8 acres to complete the 185 acre park and recognized the success of the partnership among the three agencies in moving forward the vision of Philip Noel and Dennis Murphy in establishing a network of recreational facilities within and around Narragansett Bay.

The full potential of the Islands Park idea has yet to be realized. A key ingredient for success of the islands only accessible by water, an inexpensive ferry system, has not materialized. Prudence and Patience islands became involved in the Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve program a number of years ago. The identification of several tick borne diseases including Lyme disease in the mid-late 1970s served as a new concern for hikers and campers on several of the bay islands. In 1993 the R.I. Parks Association was dissolved. A new organization, the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association, emerged to further develop, in cooperation with DEM, town of Jamestown and the U.S. Coast Guard, the educational and aesthetic appeal of Beavertail State Park for thousands of visitors.

This work continues....



**Note:** 100 Years of Rhode Island State Parks by Albert T. Klyberg, L.H.D. provides an excellent overview of park development. The monograph highlights the visionaries of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Metropolitan Park Commission who conceived of public spaces throughout the state connected by parkways and bikeways, allowing an urban population access to "restful, natural settings".

Available in R.I. public libraries.

RES ■

## DOCENT BRUNCH



On May 4<sup>th</sup> fifty-five docents, friends and board members gathered at the Jamestown Tavern for the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Annual Docent Appreciation Brunch. It was a lively gathering with much sharing of experiences and anticipation of the upcoming summer Lighthouse season.

Acting President Suzi Andrews welcomed everyone and presented Dorrie Linn with a beautiful Lighthouse pendant. Dorrie is retiring after a long career as the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Gift Shop coordinator. She also received a well-deserved standing ovation for her dedicated service.

MM ■



Dorrie Linn and Jean Blatchford  
enjoying the brunch.

*Photo courtesy of Elaine Porter.*

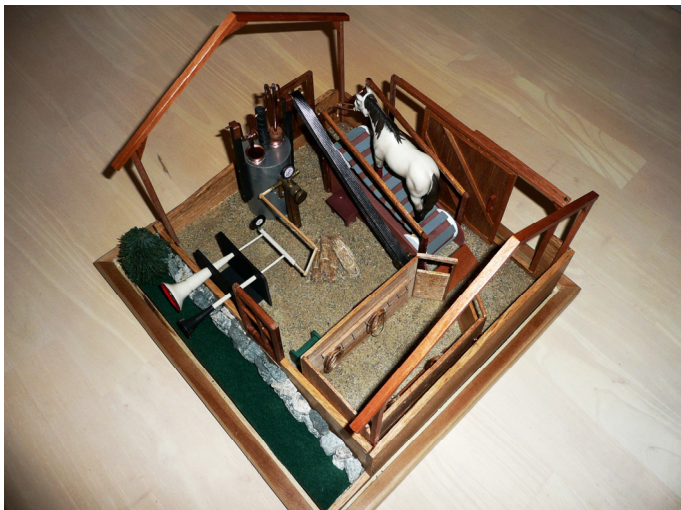
## HORSE POWERED FOG SIGNAL

Beavertail has long been recognized as a test site for various types and styles of fog signals. Even the controversial 1880 wreck of the side wheel passenger vessel Rhode Island and the associated sound dead zones investigations were never solved. Both the U.S Lighthouse Board and later the U.S. Coast guard continued for decades to try to find a better fog signal.

At Beavertail a novel adaptation was tried, which included a horse powered signal. In 1850 a large Daboll trumpet horn was installed and along with it, the designer Celadon Daboll constructed a rotary treadmill on which the horse walked, providing "one horsepower" to operate a compressor system capable to generate 15-20 psi of air, which in turn was coupled to the horn signal. Two different systems were designed and operated until 1884 complete with a barn adjacent to the light tower to house the horse and the air equipment.

Varoujan Karentz constructed a model that is on display in the museum to engage the curious visitor.

VK ■



## THE 1749 FOUNDATION

Despite the interruption and environmental damage caused by Hurricane Sandy this past October, The base of the historic 1749 Peter Harrison designed lighthouse was saved and restored. The result is a sound artifact, which will continue to remind visitors and historian alike for years to come the legacy of Beavertail Light and the keepers who so vigilantly kept the light for vessels to safely enter or leave Narragansett Bay. Funding for this restoration was provided from membership dues and gift shop sales.

The job is still not finished and a design scheme to cap the top provide safe walkways and safety railings has been approved. Some individual BLMA members have stepped up with significant funds to complete this project, yet more is needed. **Send your donation to "1749 Foundation Project" BLMA PO Box 83 Jamestown, RI 02835**



VK ■

## AN UPDATE ON MUSEUM EXPANSION

The new expanded museum opened in mid June and in addition to the relocated gift shop, our new theater and interactive rooms, although not complete, were ready and operating. These three rooms in addition to 11 new wall storyboard panels increases the museum's exhibit venue and will provide Beavertail visitors new historical experiences.



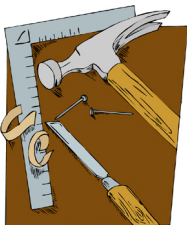
The theater seats 12 people and shows a continuous DVD loop about Rhode Island lighthouses, displayed on a 55 inch video wall mounted screen. It's an interesting introduction to Rhode Island Lighthouses and includes documentary comments by Beavertail docents.

The interactive room contains a state of the art Ideum manufactured table top touch screen display and places the museum in the forefront with other institutions providing visitor interactive electronic exhibits.

The 55 inch display allows visitors to select Power Point or Video modules of historical or informational content about Beavertail, other Lighthouses and related topics. At the present time 25 different modules are available with more in the development and planning stage. A broad range of information can be selected by the viewer, which includes , the 1938 Hurricane, Beavertail lighthouse restorations, Beavertail special events, creation of Beavertail State Park, shipwrecks, Narragansett Bay Pilots, ships they navigate, other lighthouses and World War II military activities at Beavertail.

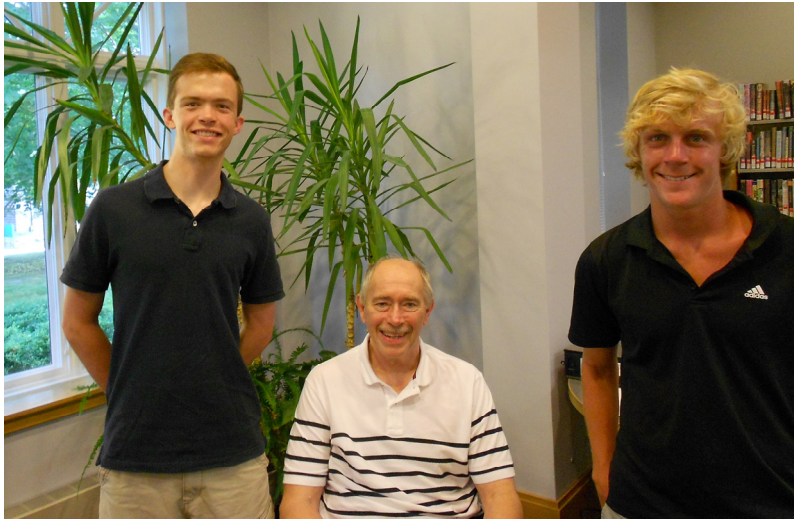
The display system with a built-in processor and large memory enables the storage, retrieval and display of extensive historical information and stories previously unable to be displayed for lack of wall space.

The Ideum interactive display will be supplemented by two other Kiosk touch screen displays to track commercial and recreational vessels navigating Narragansett Bay and waters of Block Island and Rhode Island Sound. Weather data, cam and shipwreck data files are planned to be included for information retrieval by visitors.



BLMA has invited other Rhode Island Lighthouse organizations to share some of the additional new wall space and storyboard panels to help promote awareness to their sites, particularly those with no public access. Both Plum Beach Light and Pomham Rocks Light Associations are participating.

VK ■



*Scholarship winners:*

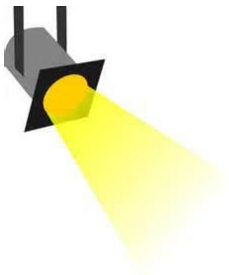
**Nathan Lambert ( L )**

and

**Sean Stanford ( R )**

with President **Stewart Morgan.**

The awards were made at the  
BLMA Board July meeting.



## THE SPOTLIGHT SHINES ON . . .

Our organization has been very fortunate in attracting members who have stepped forward to take leadership roles, bringing experiences and insights from diverse careers including engineering, finance, management and planning, education and this month the military.

**Guy Archambault** had a distinguished career in the U.S. Navy, serving 30 years and retiring as Captain, U.S.N. He graduated Providence College in 1957, graduated from OCS Newport the following fall and left for his first assignment at the Pentagon with his new bride Jeanne. His second assignment was sea duty aboard a destroyer escort serving in the North Atlantic. Having experienced both the administrative and shipboard sides of the Navy, Guy decided to leave the service when his obligation was complete.

A year later he was involuntarily recalled and was off and running. He rose rapidly in rank with assignments rather evenly divided between shore assignments, primarily Washington D.C. and shipboard, rising to the rank of Commodore when given command of a destroyer squadron.

He captained one of the first naval ships to have women assigned to the crew. His final assignment was back in Newport as Commander, Naval Reserve Unit Readiness for New England.

Guy retired in 1987, managed the Armed Forces YMCA in Newport for a year, managed a yacht club for a year or so and went sailing for a year. He settled into the position of Executive Director, Battleship Massachusetts for a ten year tour of duty.

Guy had discovered Jamestown early in his career. In 1969 while assigned to the Office of Naval Personnel he visited family in the area and bought property in Jamestown. It would not be until 1999 that the family moved into the newly built home he designed. Guy and Jeanne have four daughters and six grandchildren.

He has served as BLMA President, B of D member, chair of the oil house restoration project, an active member of the Capital Campaign and as a member of numerous committees. Guy has been a real asset to your organization.

RES ■



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***Mark your calendars . . . . .***

**Annual meeting September 17<sup>th</sup>**

**7:00 pm at the**

**Community Room Jamestown Library**

Guest Speaker: Sarah Gleason, author, *Kindly Lights, A History of the Lighthouses of Southern New England*. She also was involved in creating the traveling exhibit, *Keep the Light Burning: R.I. Lighthouses Past, Present and future*. This exhibit served as the basis for the creation of the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum..

