

The Lighthouse Log

A publication of the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association, Inc.

Ahoy there! Hope this issue finds everyone well and happy, and that all is right with your world!

250TH ANNIVERSARY 1749-1999

Beavertail Lighthouse, its museum and the Ranger's Naturalist program have enjoyed a banner year. As our 250th Anniversary year counts down to a close, (along with the 20th century) we look back over the summer for a retrospective view of the events.

On Memorial Day, Director Hugh Bucher, wearing the old lighthouse keeper's uniform, and officers of the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association, marched proudly, carrying our new 250th Anniversary banner. And thus, did our Anniversary Year of Celebration begin.

On June 19th an impressive and well attended Memorial program, was held, put together through the efforts of our association President, Eric Armour and Celebration Chairman, Richard Sullivan.

The weather was cooperative, the sea calm, and Eric, in full Scottish kilt opened the program stood on the lawn facing the sea, and welcomed visitors with a bagpipe prelude of traditional Scottish selections. As the light sea breeze carried the music to the far corners of the Point, people gathered to listen and enjoy.

Eric addressed the assembled visitors with his opening remarks, which included a short history of the building and then called upon the five pastors present for their prayers. Reverend William O'Neill, St. Mark Church, Jamestown; began with an invocation and reading, followed by Pastor Mark Cote, Jamestown Chapel; Reverend Frederick Spulnik, St. Matthew's Episcopal Church;

Jamestown, Reverend W. Scott Axford, First Universalist Church, Providence and Reverend Robert Morton-Ranney, Central Baptist Church, Jamestown, the benediction.

Throughout their prayers and readings, the fog whistle blew its intermittent warning, and the pastors, one and all, quickly adapted to its rhythm so that nary a word was missed by the listeners.

A memorial wreath was placed by the Board of Directors of the Museum Association, which was followed by the reading of the names of Keepers from 1749 to 1999, Linda Turillo Levesque, daughter of Coast Guard Lighthouse Keeper, Domenic Turillo, called the role. Linda is a very enthusiastic member of the Board of Directors and treasures her childhood memories of Beavertail Lighthouse.

Everyone present joined in the singing of the hymn *Travelers* (Melita) written by William Whiting, and John B. Dykes in 1860/61, accompanied by Eric with the bagpipes. The program closed with remarks from Eric, after which he marched to the site of the original lighthouse and played the closing hymns.

The memorial service having been completed, Craig Armington moved to the award of the Beavertail Scholarships to two very deserving young women, Jenna Morton-Ranney and Emma C. Lichtenstein, both graduating high school seniors. Jenna was present to accept her award, which also included a complimentary student membership in the Museum Association and a framed print of Beavertail Lighthouse. Emma, unable to be present due to scheduling difficulties, was represented by her grandmother, who was justifiably proud of her granddaughter's accomplishments and achievements.

On July 5th, the celebration accelerated as the first in a century event began at dusk - Fireworks! Beautiful, bright and thunderous fireworks! Never before, and probably never again, approval was granted by all of the regulatory agencies, to hold the dual celebration at the Beavertail Point, 1749 - 1999 - a light at the Point; 1776; 1999, the birthday of the United States of America.

People came from everywhere, without benefit of an advertising campaign - they gathered all over the point and watched while the 'bombs' burst in the air. The endless sea and sky were lit up and the Lighthouse was silhouetted against that glorious backdrop. The copy of the front page photo of the Jamestown Press (Vic Richardson, photographer) captured the spirit of occasion, the object of our donation - the finale which was dedicated to the 250th anniversary of a light at Beavertail. The whole display was made possible by donations to the *Rocket Dawgs*, organizers of the fireworks display for the past few years. Many people took advantage of the opportunity to honor or memorialize people and events by a donation for that purpose. Others donated just to help out and the whole event became a radio broadcast by B.J. Whitehouse of the 'Dawgs



And yet there was still more to come - as August 14th dawned overcast, misty and setting off mixed emotions about the impending rain. Throughout the months of June, July and to date in August, less than two inches of rain had fallen on Conanicut Island, and though we all knew we badly needed the rain, we were saddened to think of a washed out program.

The Stamp Cancellation was held indoors and although the threatening weather kept the less hardy away, a good sized crowd appeared for the event. Jamestown Postmaster Ed Booth, and member of his staff Paul Brunelle were on hand to man the "Beavertail Post Office" better identified as the southwest corner room of the Museum. With help from some of our Association Volunteers. The Postmaster and staff had designed an envelope which featured a drawing in the lower left corner, by well known Jamestown artist and charter member of BLMA, Connie Armbrust (now 92 years old) and donated 200 of them to the Museum to sell. The cancellation stamp was designed by Association member Josephine Wright, especially for the 250th Anniversary. For two hours, the crew worked steadily to cancel the stamps for mailing, for all of those who ventured out. Both envelopes and postcards were available, although the humidity necessitated the use of a hair dryer for the glossy paper of the postcards. A bit of Yankee ingenuity there! We're told that one forward thinking bride had all of her wedding invitations stamped and mailed. What a great wedding souvenir her guests will have!

Well, at the appointed time, the "Post Office" closed and the rain stopped, although it continued to threaten most of the day. It was nearly time for the Family Outing to begin and the rain would be no problem there - for a huge green and white tent dominated the back field of the Lighthouse. Right on schedule the kite flying demonstrators arrived with a myriad of kite shapes and designs of every color and description imaginable. Throughout the afternoon, the kites rocked and rolled, wiggled and jiggled, danced with the music when the

bands played and were a delightfully, free spirited addition to the afternoon's festivities.

The Jamestown Community Band under the direction of Bill Lawrence, filled the tent with the songs we all love to hear, much to the delight of the crowd which was growing bigger by the minute. And then came members of the Jamestown Community Chorus and the All Guy Chorus to entertain us with their beautiful voices joined by the audience for a rousing round of sea chanteys.

A Storyteller kept his audience spellbound as he told the tale of the two lighthouse keepers trapped by the 1938 Hurricane, in the Plum Beach Lighthouse (1897 - 1941) located just north of the Jamestown Bridge). The assistant keeper attempted to row ashore, but was forced back by terribly strong winds and tides. The keeper of Sakonnet Lighthouse was substituting for the Plum Beach Keeper, who was on vacation. The story goes that the two keepers on board were unable to get away, and were gradually forced upward by the storm's surging waters. Eventually they were trapped in the very upper area which housed the light. One of them knew the urgency to open port holes and windows for fear that the entire building would burst open from the outside pressure (like an egg, as the story teller described it). They opened all they could and sooner or later the water drained away. They looked southward and could not see Whale Rock Light and when morning broke, they could see that it was not just the light that was gone, but the entire lighthouse had disappeared, keeper and all.

Remains of what was Whale Rock Lighthouse can be seen to the south west of Beavertail Light to this day and the stories of both lighthouses are included in the museum displays.

Hyannis Sound, a group of 8 young men from various colleges around the nation were present and brought us a wonderful *cappella* concert. Their voices blended and merged and accented the rhythm like musical instruments as they sang a variety of songs to please everyone. We were told that the group was formed 6 years ago, by an enterprising

young man, to raise the funds needed to continue his education. Each year a group gets together in Hyannis Massachusetts and from there, range out around New England with their delightful program. They love to sing, include much humor in their presentation and love what they are doing. It shows, for their audiences greet them with great glee wherever they perform, and travel far and wide to their concerts. What an inspired way to work your way through college! - sure beats selling magazine subscriptions!

Linda Turillo Levesque, daughter of Domenic Turillo, keeper of Beavertail Lighthouse for many years, regaled the audiences with tales of what it's like to grow up in a lighthouse. She has 10 brothers and sisters and lived at the light from her tot to teen years. To hear her tell it from her own memory was to hear first hand about many hair-raising adventures and hilarious escapades. The keepers cottage was vacant at the time of our Family Day, and tours through it were conducted throughout the afternoon.

The whole day was quite wonderful, and many of us hope the Family Day will become a tradition at Beavertail Lighthouse. It took a great many people to make it all work, but behind the success, excitement and excellence of all of these events stands Richard Sullivan, chairman for the 250th Anniversary programs. Although he'd be quick to tell you that he had a lot of help, he deserves accolades without end for the great job he did! No detail was too small to escape his attention, no one's suggestion or idea went unconsidered, and no goal or ambition was too big to be left out. He was on the job, day and night for weeks and months and the success of every program is certainly measurable by the effort he put into it all. The old cliché says it best - "the proof is in the pudding!"

THANKS FOR GREAT JOB, RICHARD - EVERYTHING WAS SUPERB!

Labor Day Weekend will mark the end of our daily schedule at the Lighthouse, and the

weekends only schedule will be in place until Columbus Day and then it's Adios Friends until next summer.

We're pleased to let you know that it has been a most enjoyable summer, with many people visiting Beavertail for the first time - and very much in awe of the ocean. One of our board members, Peter Frazier, has conducted special tours for nearly 400 visitors at various times. Many of them were school aged children and their awe of the ocean and of the sea life displays in the Rangers Aquarium impressed him with the need for kids to know about these things. He did a wonderful job of teaching and pointing out the wonders of nature which abound at Beavertail.

A great volunteer crew served as docents, seven days a week (10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.) from May to September. Many people from all over the country came through to satisfy their absorption in lighthouses, some on a lighthouse tour of their own design.

One of the features in the Museum is a large wall-mounted location map of Rhode Island Lighthouses. It has a switch operated system whereby you can identify and light up the still active, extinct, deactivated and abandoned lights around Rhode Island. This attraction fascinates children and adults alike, all of whom enjoy locating their home or where they are staying and trace their path to Beavertail.

Twenty one of the original thirty lighthouses protecting Rhode Island waters, still stand. Ten are active and operated by the United States Coast Guard; nine succumbed to storms, demolition or fire and some are now private dwellings. Fortunately there are several preservation groups, such as Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association ours, working diligently to keep the history and mystique of lighthouses alive. And just as fortunately there are thousands upon thousands of people interested in lighthouses everywhere who help with encouragement and support.

This summer, the keepers cottages and out buildings at the Lighthouse were brought back to the height of their beauty and can be seen

with ease from Newport as well as the mainland. They sparkle in the sun, bright with a brand new paint job. The grounds are trimmed and neat with the dedicated attention given them by a volunteer member. Inside the museum, repair and maintenance is also done by a volunteer - we'd mention their names at risk of our neck - but they're there, mostly unseen except for the results of their labors. The gift shop is staffed by smiling, welcoming and knowledgeable people, who often know the answers to questions about other lighthouses as well as Beavertail. Service is their goal and without it and them we'd be lost. If you think this is leading to Thank You, One and All, you're absolutely right. Very soon, we will be celebrating their value to the Museum and Beavertail Light with an Appreciation Day Dinner. Don't miss it!

We call your attention to the insert flyer which gives full details. That meeting will mark the end of their hitches on the Board of Directors for two very dedicated and appreciated volunteers - Jean Boschen and Bob Dennis. Both have contributed much time and effort to our activities over the past years and we hope that after a bit of well earned relief off board they will come back one day.

Bob has built models of many lighthouses which are on display in the Museum. Our guests enjoy identifying the ones they know and are keenly interested in the those new to them. The display attracts a great deal of attention.

As another year of the on going story of BLMA and Beavertail Lighthouse slips into history, we can report that a lot has happened. We celebrated our anniversary with style, cleaned up the grounds, once again manned the gift shop and museum, repaired where necessary and painted the buildings surrounding the light and we "blew up our money", in grand style celebrating ...

10 years = BLMA;

203 years = USA and

250 years = a light at Beavertail Point!

IT WAS, INDEED, A BANNER YEAR!