



The Lighthouse Log

Spring 2025

Quarterly Newsletter of the BLMA

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Published by

Sir Speedy, Cranston

Front Cover Photo

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Spring 2025 President's Message

As spring returns to our beautiful island, so too does a season of renewal and activity at the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum. With the winter behind us, we look forward to welcoming visitors back to our historic site, where the stories of our maritime past continue to inspire and educate.

This year brings exciting opportunities for growth and preservation. Our dedicated volunteers and supporters have been hard at work ensuring that our museum remains a beacon for those who cherish the history of Beavertail and its role in guiding mariners for centuries. We are also collaborating with organizations like the United States Lighthouse Society to enhance communication and outreach within the lighthouse community—an effort I am thrilled to be a part of.

Spring also reminds us of the importance of stewardship. From the ongoing care of our exhibits to the preservation of our coastal surroundings, we rely on the dedication of our members and friends to keep this landmark shining. Whether you lend a hand as a volunteer, visit with your family, or contribute to our mission in other ways, your support is invaluable.

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I invite you all to join us in celebrating another season at Beavertail. Stay tuned for upcoming events, educational programs, and ways to get involved. Together, we ensure that our lighthouse remains not only a historic treasure but a living part of our community.

With gratitude,

Nancy Beye

President, Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association



Beavertail Sound Bath Coming Soon!

Take advantage of this season's Beavertail Lighthouse Sound Bath events. This event has gone viral in the past and is back again this summer. The Sound Bath events are free and will take place on the lawn of the lighthouse. However, donations are welcome and will benefit the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association. All ages are welcome.

We will stretch, breathe, relax, and open ourselves to the sounds of the bowls and other Sound Bath instruments.

Please bring a yoga mat or blanket for your comfort.

Snowstorm at Beavertail Lighthouse - WJAR Skycam



Thank you to BLMA Director Bob Langton for checking the WJAR Skycam and getting this great shot of the lighthouse all aglow in a snowstorm as the spray from a great wave hits the cliff to the left of the lighthouse.

Beavertail Lighthouse Archives Project



The BLMA board recently formed a new Archives Committee responsible for overseeing and managing the preservation, organization, and accessibility of the museum's archival materials, including documents, photographs, artifacts, records, and other historical items. The committee is working to ensure that these materials are preserved for future generations, properly cataloged, and made available to researchers, the public, and museum staff.

We are primarily working on the 2nd floor of the museum, and since this is a long-term project, we wanted to open up participation to anyone who would like to volunteer to help. In addition to working on the archival material, we would need help moving items and organizing space to store the materials. If you are interested in volunteering to preserve Beavertail's history, please get in touch with Dave Smith at: davesmith@beavertailight.org.

Attention: Membership Renewal

Now is the time to renew your membership in BLMA if you still need to do so. There are several levels of membership to choose from on our website. By renewing, you will continue receiving our quarterly newsletters, email notifications of special events, and a 10% discount on all items in our gift shop. Remember that you can also choose automatic renewal each year if you renew online. Please help us continue our mission of preservation and education by renewing your membership. More information is available at www.beavertailight.org.

Local Wildlife at Beavertail State Park

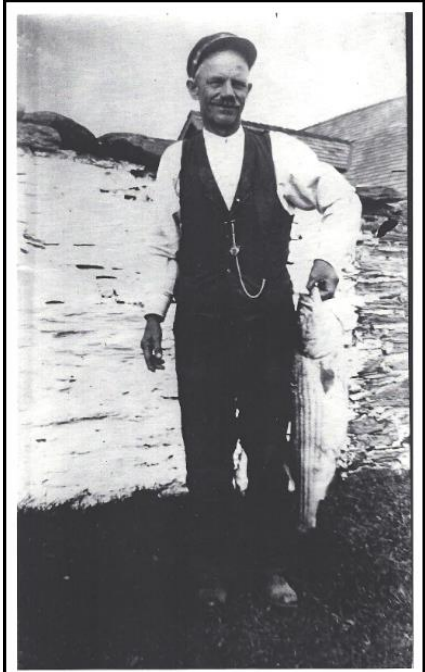


Thank you to BLMA Director Ursula Parenteau for snapping a great photo of this handsome coyote at the hairpin curve in Beavertail State Park.

Keepers: George T. Manders

Assistant 1914-1919; Head Keeper 1919-1937

An article in a 1931 Providence Evening Bulletin described a night when Thomas A. Langan interviewed Beavertail Lighthouse veteran Keeper George Thomas Manders as two giant fingers of light swept out from atop the lighthouse tower into the blackness of the night. The men standing braced against a cold, strong wind, listening to the hiss and snarl of the surf, discussed Manders' life. Manders told Langan the tales he had told to other reporters over and over again. Locally,



Beavertail Keeper George T. Manders

the people of Jamestown knew that Manders could tell a good story even before it happened.

Various newspaper articles and census records over the years recorded what George related. He sometimes said that he was born in New York; other times, he would say Rhode Island, but an 1871 Bury, England census record and other primary documents show that George was born in Bury, Manchester, England, in 1870. Immigration records show that the Manders family came to Providence shortly after George's birth. Father Enoch Manders worked as a cotton carder at one of the mills in Providence, a place where many of Rhode Island's immigrants came to settle and find work.

George recounted his early life in several published newspaper articles and made his life seem romanticized and adventurous. He always told interviewers that he ran away from home at age 12 to serve on a whaling vessel for 26 months, sailing around the world. What George described as his young life sounds challenging enough, but the truth of George's childhood is a narrative that could have been lifted from a Charles Dickens novel. George's mother, Martha Ann, died in January of 1875, and by June of that year, 6-year-old George is found in the Providence, RI State Census records at the Children's Home orphanage, with brothers Richard and William, aged 3 and 8. Father Enoch wasted no time remarrying a second Martha (R. Knowles) later that same year.

George's life did not improve with his father's marriage. An 1883 Providence Evening Bulletin article shows that in 1882, at age 12, George Manders was sentenced to 5 years at the Reform school in Providence for Vagrancy. He was released in 1883, early, due to a Typhoid outbreak where the school authorities just dumped the child on the street with no money or means of getting home. George was so sick with Typhoid fever that a policeman, taking pity on the poor child, arranged for a grocer to cart him home. While at home, George's brother William also contracted the disease, which came close to killing both boys. It is no wonder George did not want to share the actual details of his childhood with interviewers.

Were George's reports of serving as a Captain in the Navy fabricated as well? George was said to have shown a reporter a photo of himself as an apprentice Seaman in uniform, taken at the Naval Training Station in Newport during the 1890s. There is little information about George during this period, so it is unclear if what he often told reporters was true. George had at least one other minor brush with the law, and the story made it into the local papers. Still, by 1900, 29-year-old George was living in Queens, New York, as a Fish Dealer with his wife Margaret and her family, who had immigrated from Northern Ireland. By 1910, the Federal Census record indicates that George was back in Rhode Island; his occupation is listed as "odd jobs," living with Margaret and their three children in Narragansett.

In June of 1910, a Providence Evening Bulletin article mentions that George T. Manders had applied for a position as a Beach Surferman (a coastal lifesaver skilled in maritime rescues) at the Narragansett Pier. The Pier operators hired him as several Bath House Keepers recommended George. Newspaper articles written a few decades later would report that George saved a Steward at the casino on the pier from drowning in the heavy surf by tying a rope around his waist and swimming out to save the man. One article stated that this rescue won George a Carnegie Hero's Medal. Carnegie does not list George as one of their heroes. However, Manders is known to have helped in other documented rescues as the Keeper at Beavertail Lighthouse.



Photo of Keeper George T. Manders accompanying the Thomas A. Langan Article.

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Manders had started his lighthouse career with a short stint in 1914 as Assistant Keeper at Penfield Reef Lighthouse located at the entrance of the Long Island Sound. According to the 1915 RI State census, George was made the Assistant at Beavertail Lighthouse by then, serving under Head Keeper John S. Wales until 1919. Published obituaries recounting George's life mention that he had served as a Captain in the Navy during WWI, but George had been in the Lighthouse service for a few years before the US engaged in the war in 1917. While it is true that some East Coast lighthouses and tenders served under the jurisdiction of the Navy during the US involvement in WWI, it would probably be an overstatement to say that George served in the Navy during WWI if he was working as a Keeper at Beavertail Lighthouse during that time. George assumed the position of Head Keeper at Beavertail in 1919.

Whatever George's troubled beginnings were, he certainly turned his life around, raising a family and serving honorably as a Surfman and then later as Keeper at Beavertail Lighthouse for about 23 years.

As Thomas Langan so expressively described in his 1931 Beavertail article, "At the exact moment of sunrise Mr. Manders goes to the cellar of his house and throws a switch, and when he does so the giant fingers of light are withdrawn and the revolving lamp comes to a stop." George T. Manders retired as Keeper at Beavertail Lighthouse in 1937; he died in a nursing home in Jamestown in March of 1954 at age 83. CV

Visit from National Lighthouse Society's Jeremy D'Entremont



l. to r. BLMA Director Varoujan Karentz, BLMA President Nancy Beye, BLMA Director David Smith with Jeremy D'Entremont of the National Lighthouse Society

BLMA Directors had a delightful visit from Jeremy D'Entremont of the **National Lighthouse Society** and of the website **New England Lighthouses: A Virtual Guide**.

Jeremy was visiting a lighthouse in the area and asked if he could stop by the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum for a visit as he hadn't been here in several years.

BLMA President Nancy Beye and BLMA Directors Varoujan Karentz and David Smith met with Jeremy, who even got to climb the lighthouse tower for a photo.

The W. Craig Armington Memorial Scholarship

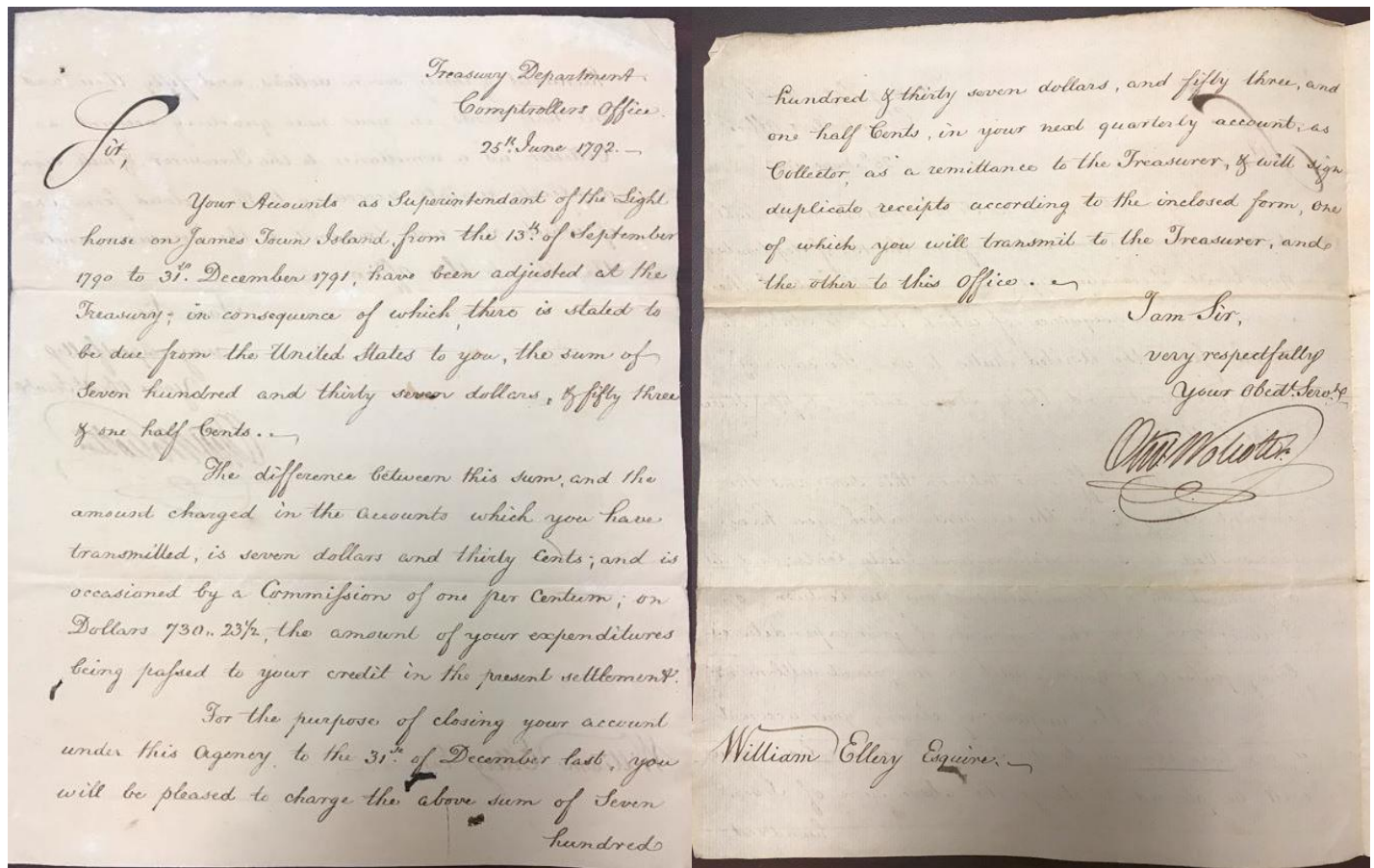
It's that time of year again! The W. Craig Armington Memorial Scholarship Fund was established by BLMA for high school seniors living in Jamestown, RI, who have been accepted at a college or university and will begin studies in the fall. The student selected will receive a \$1,000 scholarship to be applied toward college tuition, books, or fees related to their course of study. Scholarship applications must be postmarked no later than April 7, 2025. Applications can be downloaded from the website:

<https://www.beavertaillight.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/BLMA-2025-Scholarship-Application-Form.pdf>

Applications are also available at the Jamestown Library.



Illuminating History: Founding Fathers and Their Connections to Beavertail Lighthouse



Letter on Beavertail Lighthouse account settlement from U.S. Comptroller, Oliver Wolcott, Jr. to Newport Collector, William Ellery.
Beavertail Lighthouse Correspondence,
Courtesy of the National Archives, Waltham, MA. RG26 Newport, General Records 1792-1870

This letter from Oliver Wolcott Jr., Comptroller of the United States, to William Ellery, the Newport Customs Collector and Lighthouse Superintendent for Rhode Island, is dated June 25, 1792, and covers the Jamestown Lighthouse accounts for the period from September 13, 1790, through December 31, 1791.

Wolcott Jr. graduated as valedictorian of his class at Yale and was a skilled mathematician. His letter notifies Ellery of his account balances for the "Lighthouse on James Town Island," now known as Beavertail Lighthouse. Interestingly, the expenditure listed was \$730.23 ½. First minted in 1793 as part of the Coinage Act of 1792, the half-cent was the smallest denomination of United States coin ever minted.

The Secretary of the Treasury was, of course, Alexander Hamilton. The Lighthouse Service being under the management of Hamilton's Treasury Department. William Ellery and Wolcott's father, Oliver Wolcott, Sr., signed the Declaration of Independence.

Oliver Wolcott, Jr. took over Hamilton's position as Secretary of the Treasury, first under George Washington in February 1795 and then under President John Adams on December 31, 1800.

As Secretary of the Treasury, Wolcott suggested builders for east coast lighthouses such as Long Island's Montauk Point Lighthouse. In a letter to President Washington, Wolcott suggested a builder who he noted had the attention, skill, and fidelity that inspired confidence and whose offer was lower by two hundred dollars than any other.

Rhode Island's Perilous Coast

Point Judith (Part 4)

The 298-ton schooner WILLIAM H. TIERS was yet another “winter storm” victim when she ran ashore at Point Judith on December 10, 1872. Bound from Baltimore, MD for Fall River, her master, Capt. Hoffman would never make the delivery. According to a New York Times report, *“Heavy Weather on the East Coast—A Number of Vessels Driven Ashore - Newport, R.I., December 11. The recent gale has been even more severe along the coast than last week, and many vessels have been put into this port for a harbor. Schooner WILLIAM TIECE [sic WILLIAM H. TIERS], loaded with coal for the Old Colony Railroad Company, went ashore early this morning at Point Judith. As soon as the cutter arrived, Capt. Ritchie was informed of the disaster, and he immediately steamed up, and at this hour (8 P.M.) has just left port to render what assistance he can. He will make an attempt to haul her off at high water. 10½ P.M.—The MOCSASIN has just arrived, and Capt. Ritchie states that he could render no assistance to the schooner WILLIAM TICE, reported in a previous dispatch ashore at Point Judith. The vessel is from Philadelphia, and is loaded with 400 tons of coal. At 4 o'clock this morning she struck a rock and immediately broached to and went ashore and sunk in less than an hour. Water is now over the main deck. Her captain will commence to strip her in the morning. He has notified his owners and consignees.”*



Three years later the three-masted schooner VICTORIA added her name to the list when she added 350 tons of coal to the growing pile of coal on the bottom off the beach at Point Judith. Reports were slim but offered the following: *“The three-masted schooner VICTORIA of and from Rondout with 350 tons of coal for Providence went ashore on Point Judith in the fog of Saturday night. She is full of water and her decks have been washed off.”* That report was in the Newport Daily News of June 14, 1875. Three days later came the end of the story from the same newspaper, *“The schooner VICTORIA, ashore on Point Judith, has gone to pieces. She was a very old vessel and partly insured.”* This tern schooner weighed in at just 145 tons (small for this rig) and measured 176' x 31' x 10'. She was built in Philadelphia in 1855 and owned by G.W. Morgan of Mystic, Ct. Once again, in a contest between mariner and fog, the latter is often the victor.

On August 5, 1881, the news headline focused on the abnormal number of vessels that ran aground in dense fog – nine in all. But another incident involving a small schooner had nothing to do with the fog. According to the US Life Saving Service report, *“The schooner, TILLIE E., of Provincetown, Massachusetts, 93 tons, with a crew of three men and laden with coal from Weehawken for Provincetown, sprung a leak when about five miles south of Point Judith. The weather was foggy, with a light southwesterly breeze. Seeing she must sink before long, the captain, to save the lives of himself and crew, ran her ashore half a mile west of Station No. 2 Third District (Point Judith, Rhode Island). She grounded at 8 A.M., but as the station was closed for the season. The crew disbanded; any person on shore did not discover their position until 11 o'clock when a member of the life-saving crew happened in the vicinity and, seeing the schooner, he at once hurried to the point and telegraphed the fact to the station keeper at Narragansett Pier, five or six miles distant. The keeper, in company with another crew member, drove in haste to the station, and as the sea was smooth, they launched a fishing skiff and pulled down the shore to the wreck, reaching her in an hour after receiving the dispatch. Finding her deserted, they landed on the beach and found her crew safe in the company of the surfman who had reported her. The crew gladly accepted the keeper's offer of the hospitalities of the station, and they remained there for five days. When they were ready to leave, the keeper furnished them with a letter to the railroad officials at Narragansett Pier by means of which they obtained free transportation to their homes, they being destitute of funds. Their vessel became a total wreck, although part of the cargo was saved.”* Like many merchant vessels at this time, the TILLIE E. was carrying a cargo of coal.

The log of totally lost shipwrecks at Point Judith will continue in the next segment of this series.



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 us on the web

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 Tower and Museum are closed for the winter season through May 16, 2025.

The Beavertail Lighthouse Museum will be open on weekends from Saturday, May 17 through Sunday, June 22nd. Museum hours are from 10:30 AM to 4:30 PM unless otherwise noted.

The Museum will be open every day from Monday, June 23 through Labor Day, September 1, and weekends September 6 through October 12 and on Columbus Day October 13.

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.