



# *The Lighthouse Log*

Summer 2024

## *Quarterly Newsletter of the BLMA*

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## **Summer 2024 President's Message**



Dear Members,

Having the warmer weather here and our excellent museum opened for the season is so nice. We officially opened for weekends only on Saturday, May 18th. On June 24th, we went to a daily schedule until Labor Day, September 2nd. You can find our full schedule and dates for tower climbs in this newsletter and on our website.

In April, we were thrilled to see our beautiful lighthouse and all its beauty overlooking Narragansett Bay featured as part of the WJAR Skycam network, showing weather conditions throughout the state. You can also check out the Skycam on WJAR's website to see Beavertail.

Before our opening, we welcomed back our docents and greeted new volunteers at our annual Docent's Breakfast on Saturday, May 11th. You can see some great photos of the event further in this issue. Training for the new software in the gift shop is underway, and everyone is happy that it is easier to use than our old system. As you read in our Spring Newsletter, we have some new exhibits to share with our visitors

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and have rearranged some of our current ones to make our space more accessible and user-friendly. We are excited that yoga classes are returning to the lawn at Beavertail. And we have several Sound Baths planned for the season. You can read more about these happenings on our Facebook and Instagram pages.

I am happy to report that several of our Board members contributed their time as filmmakers and storytellers to document their stories of Beavertail for the RI PBS series “Our Town,” which will focus an episode on Jamestown. This show will air sometime in September 2024. We will send a blast email to our members when we get more information about the show’s airing. This past April, we also participated in 401Gives and raised \$1,560 to benefit our preservation efforts.

We are pleased to announce that Quinn O’Connell received the W. Craig Armington Memorial Scholarship this year. You can read more about this further in the newsletter.

Some of our Board members are planning a trip to visit Pomham Rocks Lighthouse in Riverside, RI, this summer. We are also hoping to visit Watch Hill Lighthouse this summer.

Finally, I am pleased to announce that Beavertail Lighthouse and the surrounding buildings are now the property of the RI Department of Environmental Management. A ceremony was held on June 21st to commemorate the transfer. Please see the wonderful pictures from that event later in these pages.

Best wishes for a beautiful summer season!  
Diane

## BLMA Directors Prepare for a Busy Season

BLMA Directors have been working tirelessly to prepare the Museum and Beavertail Lighthouse for another busy and inspiring summer season.

Ursula Parenteau was busy designing a vivid new wall display. The display features many of Conanicut Island’s beautiful wildlife species. Especially interesting is that the Harbor Seal is the state marine mammal of Rhode Island. Lucky park visitors may spot the harbor seals in the winter and spring months sunning on the rocks.

Sandy Paterson, Diane Bakley, and other BLMA Directors hosted docents for a lovely breakfast at the lighthouse as the docents prepared to greet the many visitors who will visit the museum this summer (center, top right).

Director Leo Orsi spearheaded the installation of a high-speed internet cable out to the lighthouse via Cox Communications so that the Channel 10 Skycam could be installed (bottom right).

Leo worked diligently with Cox CEO Mark Greatrex to install the quarter-mile high-speed cable line for the lighthouse, and BLMA is very grateful. Thanks to the Cox cable installation, the WJAR Skycam is one of the great benefits of installing that cable. The lighthouse now appears frequently on the Channel 10 evening weather newscast. Leo is excited about the next major storm being broadcast live on Skycam.





## Beavertail Lighthouse Transfer Ceremony

On June 21st, the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) held a ceremony at Jamestown Town Council chambers to commemorate the transfer of Beavertail Lighthouse to the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RI DEM). Katy Kale, Deputy Director of the GSA, presented the Deed to Terrence Gray, Director of RI DEM. U. S. Senator Jack Reed of R.I., the National Parks Service, the U.S. Coast Guard, the Town of Jamestown, and the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association (BLMA) also participated in the ceremony. Board Member Varoujan Karentz spoke on behalf of BLMA, highlighting the history of the Lighthouse and the various changes and enactments that happened over the years, culminating 30 years ago with the formation of BLMA as steward of the iconic landmark. Senator Reed and other members of various organizations toured the Lighthouse and grounds, climbed the tower and enjoyed the beautiful vistas. Now begins a new chapter for Beavertail as we forge ahead and continue our maintenance, preservation, and education mandate.



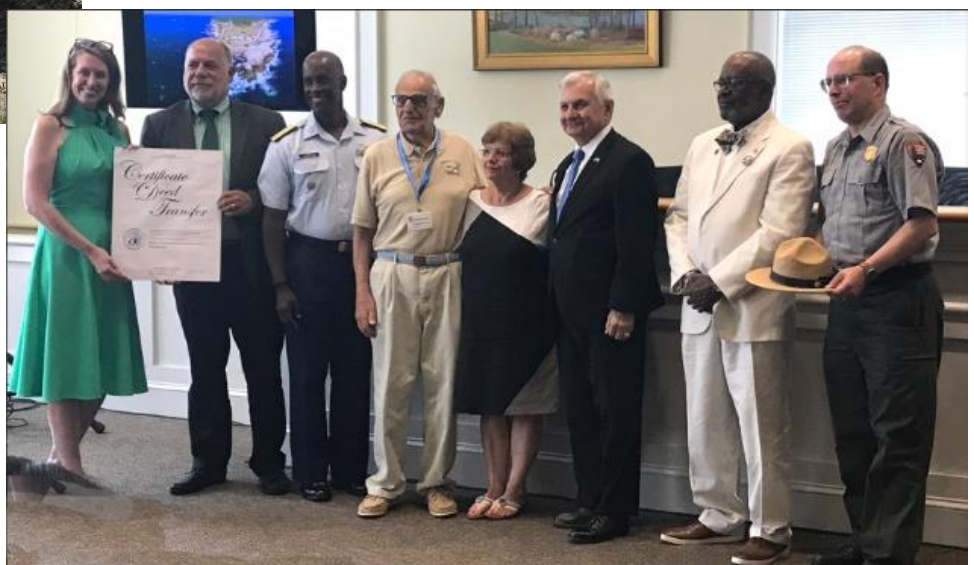
Left to right, Linda Warner-BLMA Vice President, Diane Bakley- BLMA President, Katy Kale, Varoujan Karentz, Senator Jack Reed, and Francis Thomas in front of the Beavertail Lighthouse tower.



Left, Senator Jack Reed and Varoujan Karentz discuss soil erosion at the original Beavertail lighthouse base.

*All photos by Ursula Parenteau*

(Left to right) Katy Kale, Deputy Administrator U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), Terry Gray, Director Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Rear Admiral Michael E. Platt, Commander, First Coast Guard District, U.S. Coast Guard, Varoujan Karentz, Board Member BLMA, Nancy Beye, Town Council President, Jamestown, The Honorable Jack Reed, US Senator- Rhode Island, Francis Thomas, Regional Administrator GSA, Eric Bretkreutz, Superintendent of Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park and Roger Williams National Memorial, National Park Service.



## Full Moon Sound Bath at Beavertail



Take advantage of this season's Beavertail Lighthouse Sound Bath events on July 20, August 17, September 14, and October 19 at 7:00 PM. This event has gone viral in the past and is back again this summer. Petra Napolitano and Allison Schumann will lead our Sound Baths. Please arrive at 6:30 PM to settle in. We start at 7:00 PM—park in parking lot two. The event is 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.

Starting in July, we will have yoga on Fridays at 9 AM. Call Nicole with any questions at 860-912-5720.

## A Lovely View: WJAR Skycam Installed



Cox Communications installed a high-speed internet cable for the museum.

This installation made the new gift shop software application possible, and the WJAR Skycam is another great perk of having high-speed internet at the lighthouse.

Below is the link to the Beavertail Lighthouse Skycam.

<https://turnto10.com/weather/webcams/beavertail-lighthouse-jamestown-speedcraft-auto-group>



## Women Keepers: Sally Snowman The First and Last

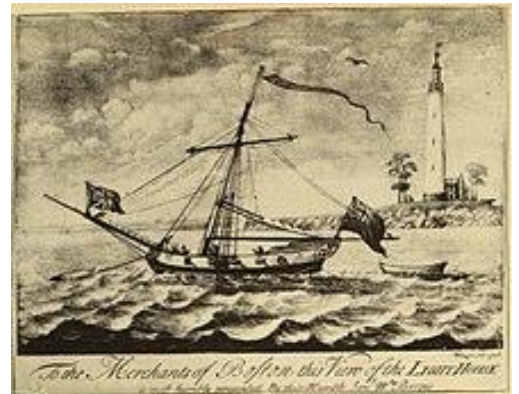
The Boston Light is situated on Little Brewster Island in outer Boston Harbor and is the oldest light station in the United States. It is also the last manned or, more accurately, “womanned” Lighthouse in the United States. Initially built in 1716, the lighthouse tower burned down and was rebuilt several times. Interestingly, the original 1859 Fresnel lens, similar to the one displayed at the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum, is still used on the Boston



*Photo of Sally Snowman at the Boston Light: Photo Credit: Hakai magazine (Coastal Science and Societies); for more information on this organization visit [hakaimagazine.com](http://hakaimagazine.com)*

Light. The current tower was built in 1783, and of its seventy Keepers who have kept the light burning through the centuries, Sally Snowman is Boston Light’s first and only female Keeper. Sally also has the distinction of being the last official Coast Guard Keeper in the United States. While a girl, Sally visited the Lighthouse with her father, Roger, who was a member of the Coast Guard Auxiliary, and she fell in love with the Lighthouse, so much so that at the time, she told her father that one day she would be married at the Boston Light. Her love for the Boston Light only grew as she got older. Luckily for Sally, while all other lighthouses had been automated and no longer required a Keeper to maintain them, in 1968, the United States Senate passed a law requiring that the Boston Light be maintained by a

Keeper (this to commemorate the fact that the Boston Light is the first Lighthouse in what would become the United States.) Eventually, Sally joined the Coast Guard Auxiliary, where she volunteered for decades. Sally would meet her future husband, James “Jay” Thompson, at the Boston Light. True to her word, Sally married Jay at the Boston Lighthouse in 1994. Sally finally got to serve as the Keeper, where she worked as a civilian for the U.S. Coast Guard. Like Beavertail Lighthouse, Boston Light was deemed excess inventory by the U.S. Coast Guard, and ownership of the Lighthouse will change hands from the U.S. Coast Guard to a new owner soon. With the transfer from the federal government to a new owner, the official keeper’s position was no longer required, and Sally’s final day as Keeper was the last day of 2023. With any luck, Sally Snowman can continue volunteering at the Boston Light once the transfer of ownership to the lucky organization, which will be its steward for the next chapter of the Boston Light’s long history, is complete.



*1729 Illustration with the Boston Light in background*

## Museum Schedule

The Museum will be open every day from **Monday June 24th** through **Labor Day, September 2nd**. Museum hours are from **10:30 AM to 4:30 PM** unless otherwise noted.

In the fall the Museum will be open weekends starting on **September 7th** through **October 12th** and on **Columbus Day October 14th**.

## Rhode Island's Perilous Coast

### Point Judith (Part 1)

Situated at the eastern end of a 20-mile-long beach known to Rhode Islanders as the "South Shore," you will find a small finger-shaped point of land that sticks out from the mainland for little more than a mile. In the vicinity of this point, Point Judith by name, lies the state's second most extensive collection of lost ships. There are a couple of solid reasons for this. Principally, the danger comes from the eastward-running waters of Block Island Sound at the point where they collide with southern trending currents from out of Narragansett Bay. Where these currents meet the surface often takes on a condition known as a confused sea. Depending on the wind direction and intensity, this condition makes the point very difficult to pass in either direction, particularly for a wind-powered vessel. Another threat comes at night and in conditions of limited visibility. Imagine, if you will, that you are headed outbound from Newport toward a southern port. As an experienced mariner, you would know that



there is a lighthouse on the tip of Point Judith. You would also know there is another light ten miles away on the northern tip of Block Island. In the limited visibility, or because the Block Island light is not visible, you can mistake the Point Judith light for the island light, which one must pass to the south to be safe. As you turn, you will run directly into the eastern side of Point Judith, and only a calm sea and good fortune will save you. Conversely, if you are headed inbound for Newport from a southern port and make the same mistake, you will end up on the west side of Point Judith. A similar condition appears when Block Island light is mistaken for Point Judith. If northbound and you know you must pass to the south of Point Judith light, then making this mistake will put you ashore on the west side of Block Island. Despite the different frequencies of the two lights, this scenario has happened more times than you might think. But enough of the reasoning for the wrecks; it is time to look at the specifics of the forty-five incidents that led to the total loss of a vessel in these waters.

The first shipwreck of note at Point Judith occurred early in the 18th century, on April 7, 1728. An unidentified sailing vessel headed for Rhode Island from Boston ran on rocks near Point Judith. The report of the loss of the ship emphasized the ordeal undertaken to save lives. From the New England Weekly Journal of April 15, "... the mate who was an active man carried the master and men (which were six or seven) to the shore, but their being so long in the water, and undergoing other hardships, proved too hard for them, and they all died soon after they got out of the water, though some walked nearly half a mile and some farther before they expired..."

Two and a half years later, on October 14, 1730, another unidentified sailing vessel traveling northbound was caught in a storm and driven ashore on Point Judith. Again, it was the New England Weekly Journal that reported her loss, "We learn that on Wednesday night last, Mr. Thomas Davis on his voyage from Connecticut to this place [Boston], by a violent stormy wind was drove on shore at Point Judith, and is like to lose his vessel, but saves his cargo." Three years later, almost to the day, Jeremy Finny, the owner and master of an unidentified sloop, reported to be about 60 tons, had the misfortune to end her career on Point Judith. Where she was from or bound is not stated in the brief report that appeared in the New England Weekly Journal on October 29, 1733, "We hear some days ago, a sloop of about 60 tons, Jeremy Finny of Bristol master and owner, ran ashore on Point Judith, and stove, but the men all saved."

Although Researchers have yet to be successful in locating wreck reports, it is reasonable to expect that the period between 1733 and 1777 was not wreck-free. Still, no reports have been found between 1733 and a day in 1777 during the American Revolution. The date was November 6, 1777, and a gale raged off Point Judith. A contemporary account has not been located, but in January of 1924, a historian penned the following report, found in the Rhode Island Historical Society Collections, Vol. XVII, No. I. "During a gale on the morning of

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November 6, 1777, the British frigate SYREN, sailing in company with the ship SISTERS and the tender MATES, was driven ashore near Point Judith and was captured by the battery of artillery stationed at that place, assisted by members of the Second Regiment of the Kings County militia under Colonel Charles Dyer. The American forces rescued those aboard the three vessels, but before long, the British troops got word of their plight and sent four ships from Newport to recapture their warship. The Americans quickly set to the work of demolition using explosives, and HMS SYREN ended her days. The other two vessels also went down at the Point, but not so violently.

In the next segment of this story, you will see that Point Judith's record will continue with at least one more vessel lost before the American Revolution ends.

JFJ

## 2024 W. Craig Armington Scholarship Winner



BLMA awarded the 2024 W. Craig Armington Scholarship to Jamestown resident and North Kingstown High School student Quinn O'Connell (l). BLMA Director Bob Langton (r) presented Quinn with a \$1,000 check and an award certificate on June 3rd at the Kingstown High School Honors Night. Quinn will be attending Georgia Tech in the fall. Congratulations Quinn!

## Funck-Heap Lamp Finds a Home Again

In 1892, the U.S. government installed the Funck-Heap lamp in all fourth-order lenses in lighthouses across America. How did this particular Funck-Heap lamp end up at Beavertail Lighthouse? This lamp once lit up the lens of the Conimicut Point Lighthouse, built in 1883 at the entrance to Providence River on Narragansett Bay, between



Warwick and Barrington. After electricity made the lamp obsolete, the Conimicut Lighthouse Keeper gave the lamp as a gift to a senior member of the Reilly family who lives in Warwick. The lamp has been in the possession of the Reilly family for the past 64 years. Mike Reilly, who lives in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, casually mentioned the lamp to Christopher Karentz, who also lives in Florida and is the son of BLMA Director Varoujan Karentz.

Christopher mentioned the lamp to his father. Three years later, the Reilly family realized their valuable historic lamp belonged in a museum and donated it so that BLMA could share its story. The lamp is now on display with the fourth-order Fresnel lens in the museum.



*BLMA Director Varoujan Karentz Receiving Funck-Heap Lamp Donation from Sandra Reilly.*





BEAVERTAIL LIGHTHOUSE  
MUSEUM ASSOCIATION  
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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](http://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.



## Tower Climb Schedule

**The Tower will be open for climbing on the following dates from 1:30 PM to 4:00 PM (unless otherwise noted):**

- Memorial Day May 27
- June 8, June 22
- July 4, July 6, July 20
- August 3, August 7 (National Lighthouse Day), August 17, August 31
- September 2 (Labor Day), September 14, September 28
- Columbus Day October 14

**Please note: Tower Climbing is weather dependent; if uncertain, call 401-423-3270.**

## Group Tours & Events

**We will announce any updates and/or changes to the schedule on our website at [Beavertailight.org](http://Beavertailight.org).**

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