



The Lighthouse Log

Summer 2014

The quarterly Newsletter of the BLMA

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Richard E. Sullivan

Shipwreck Historian

Jim Jenney

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Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association

PO Box 83

Jamestown, RI 02835

401.423.3270

Email:

info@Beavertailight.org

Web site:

www.beavertailight.org

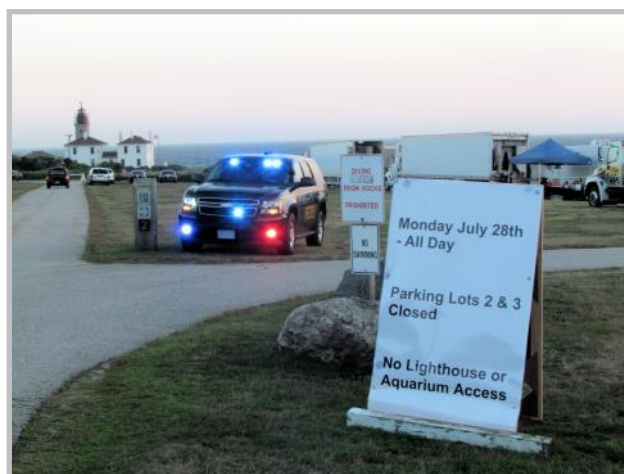
Message From The President

The official opening of the Museum was a success with many compliments on what has been accomplished over the past several years. For BLMA to continue 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 and or Gift shop will not be open. We are as some say victims of our success as the public now expects the Museum be opened per our published schedule. **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 a docent please contact them.

The BLMA Board is searching for possible candidates to fill terms that are expiring as well as expanding the Board to meet new challenges as we go forward. Please contact any current Board member if you wish to be considered.

SM ■

Visitors to Beavertail State Park were greeted with this sign when they arrived Monday, July 28th.... More inside.



“GRAND REOPENING” A SUCCESS

Approximately 75 invitees enjoyed a beautiful June evening celebrating the virtual completion of six years of restoration and repair. Finishing touches were underway to complete the exterior restoration of the Fog Signal Building.

The invitation list included grant awarding agencies, contractors who had participated in restoration, repairs and exhibit development, major donors, elected officials and consultants who had provided guidance and insights.

Bill Munger, President of Conanicut Marine Services provided a tent for a brief outdoor ceremony that included remarks by Rep. David Cicilline.



David Cicilline extends his congratulations for the accomplishments being celebrated.

BLMA's Shipwreck Historian Jim Jenney was in attendance and enjoyed explaining his shipwreck Data Sheets to interested viewers. Seventeen hundred marine disasters are available for the casual visitor or the scholar doing research.

The exhibit "Lighthouse Keeper Daily Duties" an exhibit created from material on loan from the Coast Guard Heritage Museum in Barnstable MA. received considerable attention.

RES ■

Photo to the Left: Guests at the short presentation under the tent include: Ellie Chase, Agnes Filkins, Jessica Burrows, Anna Templeton-Cotill, Linda Peterson, Josie Wright, Paul Peterson, Amanda Woodward, David Lamontagne, Bruce Livingston and Clarice Willis.

Scholarship Awarded

The Craig Armington Memorial Scholarship was awarded to Marc Laflamme prior to the July Board of Directors meeting. Ranking in the top 5% of his graduating class at The Prout School Mark will be attending Lehigh University and plans on majoring in Physics.

As a participant in the rigorous International Baccalaureate program he earned membership in the National Honor Society and was a qualifier for a National Merit Scholarship. Outside of the classroom Marc was an outstanding tennis player being named to the First Team All Division. He received the Outstanding Service Award from the Rotary Youth Leadership. His essay, "History as a Personal Connection" was the best this Scholarship Committee member has read in many years.



BLMA President Stewart Morgan awards \$1,000 scholarship to Marc Laflamme.

RES ■

Fog Signal Building Gets Back its Original Look

Constructed in 1938 after the famous Hurricane of the same year, Beavertail's Fog Signal Building was recognized by its two large trumpet diaphone fog horns protruding through the seaward facing south wall. Operated by compressed air when needed, the horns provided an audible signal to navigators of their proximity to the entrance of Narragansett Bay whenever fog obscured the light in the tower. The horns were removed in 1972 when a new siren system was installed. Later in the late 1970's the Light Station was automated and the present electronic tone signal was installed, first on the old lighthouse foundation and later within a chain link fence next to the perimeter road.

For the next 37 years the building was used as an office and then a small aquarium presently operated by RIDEM. All that remains of the original diaphone signal are the compressed air tanks vividly apparent in the ceiling truss structure of the building.

Extensive repairs to the building exterior, have recently been undertaken including new parge coat, replacement of broken windows and doors thanks to a matching grant from the Champlin Foundations. The restoration provided the opportunity to construct two replica horns and give the building back its original look. Fortunately original design drawings were available. Contractor David Lamontagne constructed the replicas to those specifications.

VK ■



BEAVERTAIL MAKES IT TO HOLLYWOOD



Woody Allen and Emma Stone confer during shooting.

With Rhode Island becoming more popular as a movie site, Beavertail State Park and the Light Station have a role to play in a new movie directed by Woody Allen. On 28 July a film crew, over a 100 people and a large number of trailers and support vehicles took over the Light Station and the State Park to shoot scenes.

Principal actors Emma Stone and Joaquin Phoenix will appear in the yet untitled movie to be released in 2015. Most of the filming took place on the rocks overlooking the West Passage with the light station buildings in the background.

VK ■

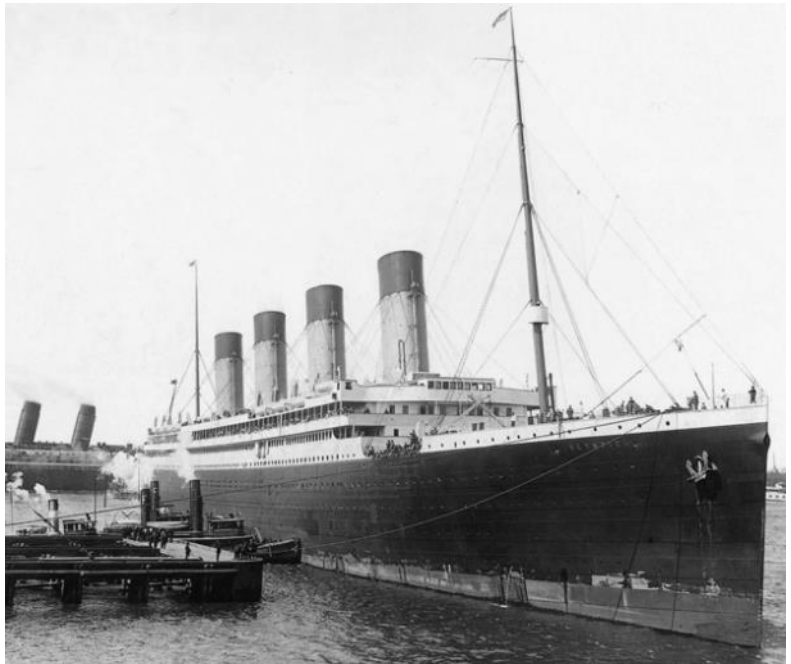


Filming on the west side of Beavertail Point near Parking Lot #2.

LLEWELLYN HOWLAND STORY

I would be most surprised to learn that anyone reading this article is not familiar with the name *Titanic*. Without a doubt this was the greatest maritime disaster in modern times. The sinking of the liner took place many miles from Rhode Island but there is an interesting connection between her loss and a shipwreck in our state waters. Just to briefly recap the highlights of the story of the loss of the *Titanic* – the “unsinkable” steamer departed on her maiden voyage from Southampton, England to New York City in early April, 1912. When two days out in the North Atlantic, and right on schedule to set a new record for transatlantic travel, she entered an area of the ocean where at that time of year the appearance of icebergs was common. As the story goes, despite the protestations of the captain, a representative of the company who was on board insisted the steamer’s speed be increased beyond what the master considered to be safe in these waters under these conditions.

On the night of April 14 the unthinkable happened and the *Titanic* struck an iceberg mortally wounding the vessel. During the investigation that followed her loss, testimony from survivors indicated that there was a vessel near enough to render assistance to those in distress but did not do so. Those in maritime circles put



their heads together and came to the conclusion that based on her departure date and normal course followed when on this route, and the description of the ship, that the most likely vessel involved was the *Californian* whose master was insistent that he did not put eyes on the *Titanic* at any time during his voyage. He added in his testimony that an unidentified vessel was seen from the bridge of the *Californian* but which was, by its size, too small to be the *Titanic*. This mystery ship was not immediately identified and, in fact, was believed by some to have come from the imagination of the captain of the *Californian*. But since there was a major outcry over the loss of so many lives when the *Titanic* sank, no stone was left unturned in the search for the identity of the mysterious and seemingly uninterested vessel which continued to steam along while countless passengers aboard the liner died.



The experts determined that there were several vessels that could have been in the area at that time and in between the *Californian* and the *Titanic*. There were more than a half-dozen vessels that were possible

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candidates to be the mystery ship including the *Antillian*, *Campenello*, *Louisianian*, *Memphian*, *Paula*, *President Lincoln* and *Trontenfels*. Five of these were eliminated as suspects based on the fact that they showed no reported position on April 14 though by mathematical calculation should have been at least in the vicinity of the sinking. The two remaining vessels, the tank steamer *Paula* and the steamer *Trontenfels* were estimated to be very close to the scene at the time. In the end, neither of these was confirmed to be the mystery ship; however, the *Paula*, by her description and her log entry appeared to be the most likely candidate to be the vessel sighted by the captain of the *Californian*. And since she did not carry a wireless radio, she might have been totally unaware of the disaster taking place nearby. So how does all this relate to Rhode Island?

The steam tanker *Paula* was launched in England in 1888 for a German shipping company involved in the transatlantic trade of bulk petroleum. Quite possibly due to the publicity of her association with the sinking of the *Titanic*, the *Paula* was renamed *Wico* sometime after the incident. In 1923, a decade after the *Titanic* had sunk to the bottom of the Atlantic, the tank steamer *Wico* was sold once more and this time would take on a name that might be more familiar to Rhode Islanders. She was renamed the *Llewellyn Howland*. Less than a year after taking that name, the deeply laden tanker ran ashore off Seal Rock, east of Brenton Reef, off Newport's Ocean Drive. The *Llewellyn Howland* was intentionally set fire by the US Army Corps of Engineers to eliminate the threat of her leaking cargo of oil which was being washed ashore with every incoming tide. In fact, the tanker made quite a spectacle as she burned furiously for almost an entire week before the fuel cargo was essentially exhausted. Just getting the fire started in the half-sunken tanker was a major project in itself but the persistence of the officers of the Corps, albeit under considerable pressure from the local inhabitants who did not want their beaches despoiled with oil, paid off and today there is little that remains of the tank steamer..

JJ ■

JOHN WRIGHT DONATES STAINED GLASS WORK OF ART

John Wright a stained glass artist born and raised in Jamestown presented a lovely rendering of the light station to the museum during a recent visit to the island.

After attending the Carr and Clarke schools he graduated from Rogers High School and entered the Air Force in 1950. His duty stations included bases in the Pacific, Alaska, Germany and Viet Nam. He retired in 1973 as Chief Master Sgt.

His interest in stained glass artistry was cultivated by his wife Sally who encouraged his work. As can be seen in the accompanying photo he is an accomplished artist and the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum is a beneficiary. It is displayed prominently in the museum. Be sure to look for it on your next visit.

RES ■



BLMA Receives Hurricane Sandy Restoration Grant

When Hurricane Sandy hit Rhode Island in late October 2012, the BLMA had engaged Contractor David Lamontagne two weeks earlier to restore the deteriorated 1749 lighthouse foundation. Lamontagne had collected matching stones and was concentrating on rebuilding the SW face. Sandy not only washed away all the collected stone, but heavily damaged the SE face and dug troughs and gullies on the north side of the foundation. The damage exceeded the original cost estimate.



FEMA allocated recovery funds for historic sites damaged by Sandy and BLMA submitted a claim for the lost stones and extra work required for restoration. The application was denied, because the site was owned by the Government. BLMA appealed the decision citing nonprofit status, its stewardship role of the property and the site's historic importance. The appeal was reinstated and a \$3500.00 grant was awarded. The Beavertail grant along with other RI locations was acknowledged at ceremonies in Narragansett by a number of state congressional officials on 7 July.

VK ■

CLEAN-UP BY U.S. NAVY

Under a community volunteer service program the U.S. Navy Supply Corps School located in Newport provided a team of young officers to spend 12 July at Beavertail and help manicure the museum buildings.

Directed by Ensign Lamarr Stovall a group of men and women officers cleaned up the basements of both Keeper houses, the two car garage and polished the tower's brass spiral railing. BLMA members, Guy Archambault and Varoujan Karentz, both Navy veterans welcomed the group, provided guidance, cleaning equipment and a tour of the museum.



US Navy members help clean up.

VK ■

DOCENT APPRECIATION EVENT

Saturday May 3rd was a busy day at the museum as fifty-five docents returned for a well deserved thank you brunch and opportunity to renew acquaintances. This event has been held in the spring for the past three years and provides a good opportunity for docents to get geared up for the upcoming season. Volunteer Coordinator Linda Warner had the schedule available for 2014 and encouraged docents to select shifts. This early choosing of shifts is a win-win situation for both Coordinator and docent-openings are filled by docents who have a particular preference for day and partner and the Coordinator gets a good start on the summer schedule.



Linda Warner takes a break from training a new docent on a recent Saturday afternoon.

RES ■

Shipwreck Project Update

With the Shipwreck identification project authored by Jim Jenney now exhibited in the museum on a large wall mounted touch screen display, two Rhode Island historical organizations have asked to archive the collection. The project started five years ago now has over 1700 maritime events documented covering the RI waters of Narragansett Bay, Block Island and Rhode Island Sounds. Meetings with the RI Historical Society and RI Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission archives and archeological departments including the RI Marine Archeological Project (RIMAP) encouraged continued co-operation with BLMA and exchange of information.

The BLMA team led by docent David Smith along with Alex Brincko are developing a museum and web based search engine for the projected 2700 shipwreck file data base.



Retired Beavertail Lighthouse Keeper Dominic Turillo and son Michael paid a visit to the lighthouse early this summer. Serving from 1953 to 1966, Dominic and his wife raised eleven children while maintaining a spotless light station. "You knew there was to be an inspection when the helicopter landed in the field behind the Oil House."

VK ■



BEAVERTAIL LIGHTHOUSE
MUSEUM ASSOCIATION
P. O. Box 83
Jamestown, Rhode Island 02835

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educational experiences reflecting the
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and engaging in fund raising
activities necessary for enhancing
visitor experiences.*

Visit us on the web at
www.beavertaillight.org

Mark your calendar!



Annual Meeting: September 16 at 7pm, Community Room

Jamestown Library

**Speaker and Book Signing: Lenore Skomal, author of
The Lighthouse Keeper's Daughter, will talk about Newport's
famous Ida Lewis and the video that accompanies the book.**

Ed. Note: The Coast Guard legal unit has conferred with the CG Curator and a determination has been made that the bricks in question are considered part of the heritage asset and as such cannot be altered. The Brick "Pathway to History" fund raising initiative will not happen. Your Executive Board is hard at work thinking of an alternative. Stay tuned!