



The Lighthouse Log

Spring 2015

The quarterly Newsletter of the BLMA

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Message From The President

Happy that spring has arrived after the long cold snowy winter. Once again Beavertail Light has taken whatever Mother Nature had in store and continues to stand tall and provide a beacon for mariners. The upcoming season will hopefully bring many new visitors plus familiar faces to the museum to see new exhibits and others that have been updated.

BLMA is seeking biographical information and pictures of the following Lighthouse Keepers to add to our exhibit about these dedicated people. John S Wales, John A Overton, Joshua A Overton, George B Wales Thomas King, Peter Lee, William D Weeden, Joshua B Rathbun and Robert M and Damaris Weeden.

Please contact Varoujan Karentz (epic@juno.com) or me (roch.ada@cox.net) if you wish to contribute information on these people.

The Woody Allen film, part of which was shot at Beavertail, is scheduled to be released this year.

Kudos to Richard Sullivan for his outstanding work as editor of the Lighthouse Log.

With the expanded museum and tower openings BLMA needs more volunteers and docents, if you have time please contact Brenda Johnston (www.gardener0101@verizon.net) or Linda Warner(www.mailmum@aol.com). It will be a very rewarding experience.

Please attend the Alex and Ani event at their Newport store on May 26th, a percentage of the sales will go to BLMA.

SM ■

NEW MUSEUM STORY BOARDS AND EXHIBITS FOR THE 2015 SEASON

Story Boards

By the time the museum opens to the public this spring two new storyboards will have been completed and installed. One, located in the theater room will highlight some of the Keepers and their families who were stationed at Beavertail along with a description of their duties. Unfortunately few photographs or images exist in BLMA files of the light stations crews, although photography was in general use by the mid 1800's. We remind any readers to contact Varoujan Karentz at epic@juno.com if they have any image of any of the fifty or so men, women or families who served at Beavertail.

The other storyboard will be installed the newly designated "RI Lighthouse Room" (old gift shop). This room contains the lighted navigation chart of lower Narragansett Bay and the popular visitor "push button" lighthouse locator display. Its purpose is to provide visitors more information about the other lighthouses which stand or were operational in Rhode Island waters. The new story board will portray images of all RI Lights along with data describing when they were constructed and characteristics of each light. This board will supplement the post card display located in the hallway which shows only the location of these RI lights.

Video Modules

Two new video modules have been added to the large touch screen display in the interactive room. They include the Newport Ida Lewis Story and our Fog Signal Building Restoration, which was completed last year.



Michael Girard of New England Explorers and a colleague attempting to raise the granite block enough to insert a mirror to examine the underside for carving detail. Michael, with the interest in our project, has a remotely operated vehicle that allows for underwater exploration. In the case of the Harvey Payton granite, he can look for detail on the granite underwater.

Captain George T. Manders


Promoted from Assistant Keeper to Keeper in 1913, he served until 1937 retiring after a total of 24 years at Beavertail.

Manders was considered one of Beavertail's more colorful keepers.

Over his tenure of service he repeatedly told stories of his own heroism and exploits, many of which were questionable to his listeners.

He lived with his son in the Keeper residence and ushered in electricity in 1931 replacing kerosene.

As a boy he had signed onto whaling expedition, then joined the Navy, serving on square riggers in the China Sea



Your Exhibit Committee would like to have images for all our keepers. Can you help?

Rose Island Light Model

An additional exhibit feature this summer will include a large model of Rose Island Light on loan from the Rose Island Lighthouse Foundation. The exquisitely detailed model was made by Jan Slee. This model along with our large Beavertail and other BLMA owned models were on display this past winter in the Newport Visitor Center.

Harvey Payton Shipwreck Exhibit

A new storyboard is planned detailing the wreck of the schooner Harvey Payton in 1859. A number of carved granite blocks carried aboard the Payton lie along the east shore of Beavertail Point. BLMA has received permission to collect one of the stones and display it on the grounds of the light station. A plan for moving the sculpted stone is being developed. It is hoped to have the artifact on display before the end of summer.

BEAVERTAIL LIGHT'S OFFSHORE COMPANION

From 1853 to 1992 a Brenton Reef Lightship, later Offshore Light Station, served to warn ships of the dangerous shoal waters south of Newport's Brenton Point, until the early 20th century, Brenton's Point and Reef. Located 3.5 miles southeast from Beavertail Station and moored in 78 feet of water, the entrance from sea to the east Passage of Narragansett Bay was well marked during a period when Narragansett Bay was one of the busiest bodies of water in the country.



LV39 Postcard

The first lightship went on station in 1853. Designated LV 14, it quickly became apparent that the vessel was too small for the location (159 tons) and was replaced three years later with the substantially larger (320 tons) LV 11 which served until 1897, the longest tour of duty at the station. The LV 39 (387 tons) the last wooden hull lightship assigned to the station, was built

in 1876 and served several locations on the east coast before taking on the Brenton Reef assignment.

LV 39 was the first lightship built with two steam boilers and a steam fog signal device. Subsequently she was one of a handful of ships fitted out with a submersible bell. Ships outfitted with underwater listening equipment could time the intervals of sound to determine distance from the sending vessel. This research proved to be successful and updated versions of the equipment were added to other lightships. The LV 39 served until 1935 when she was replaced by the steel hulled LV 102 (360 tons). She was equipped with a radio beacon and in 1945 was outfitted with radar. From 1935 to 1955 the light was a 5th order Fresnel lens. In 1955 it was replaced with a Duplex 375 mm lens lantern. In 1962 LV 102 was replaced by a steel tower, an Offshore Light Station. Resembling an offshore oil drilling platform, it was known as a Texas Tower. The unmanned station served until 1989 when corrosion necessitated its removal. An ocean buoy was its replacement.



The need for repairs necessitated the use of relief light ships, designated RELIEF on the side. During the period 1883 to 1962 there were four relief vessels, the largest being the Relief LV 71 at 668 tons. Repairs/overhauls at New Bedford or New York Navy Yard typically took six months to a year.

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DOCENT APPRECIATION BREAKFAST

"No matter how bad a day you may be having, when you come around that corner and see the lighthouse and the ocean, it just lifts your spirits." Brenda Johnston, Docent Coordinator.



On May 2, the BLMA held its volunteer docent appreciation breakfast, an annual event to both welcome and thank our happy crew who meet and greet the steady stream of visitors to the park and the lighthouse.



About forty of the more than fifty volunteer docents showed up to enjoy a delicious repast provide by "The Traveling Gourmet." New volunteers like Courtney Crimi, an architectural designer from Newport and long-time volunteer Jean Blanchford from Jamestown, had an opportunity to share breakfast and their enthusiasm for the lighthouse, a jewel in the crown of Conanicut Island.

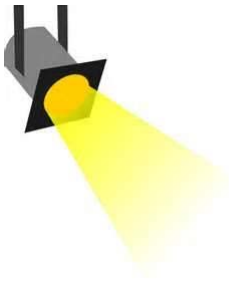


Linda Warner herded the docents out of the building into the rather chilly morning sunlight for a preliminary orientation. Inside, the new story boards and newly improved touch screen table were viewed with awe. David Smith was credited for much of the work by his fellow technical volunteers. They provide the BLMA with untold hours of specialized technical skills that make our little museum a lively educational experience for young and old. The gift shop also reflected many hours of talent and skill, looking beautiful and ready for business.

Linda went over the changing hours and the list of tower openings which can be found on the website. If you want to brush up on your lighthouse history, the website is the place to do it, especially the time-line of the history of the lighthouse and the history of the Fresnel lens.

Linda will conduct another orientation for the museum and the gift shop, possibly on May 9. Volunteers will receive an e-mail regarding the date and time. A suggestion was made that new docents might want to come down before their scheduled day and just watch their fellow docents in action for an hour or so.





THE SPOTLIGHT SHINES ON

New Board of Directors member Steven Meade brings to BLMA many years of experience with physical plant maintenance and project management. Currently Maintenance Supervisor for Child and Family Services of Newport County, he came to R.I. from Guilford College in North Carolina

where he spent seventeen years managing maintenance projects of all sizes and complexities.

Steve grew up in Haverfodt, Pennsylvania. His first job using tools to solve problems was as a bicycle mechanic. He served a number of years as a sales consultant to industrial clients on tool uses in solving complex problems.



Steve is the new Chair of the Buildings and Grounds Committee, a position filled so well by George Warner for many years. He has immersed himself in basement water issues and water intrusion into the Assistant Keeper house.

Steve and his wife Laura, a sociologist who has been serving as Dean of Arts and Science at Salve Regina University, enjoy docent shifts on the weekend, much to the delight of Docent Coordinator Brenda Johnston. The couple have one adult son and live in Newport.

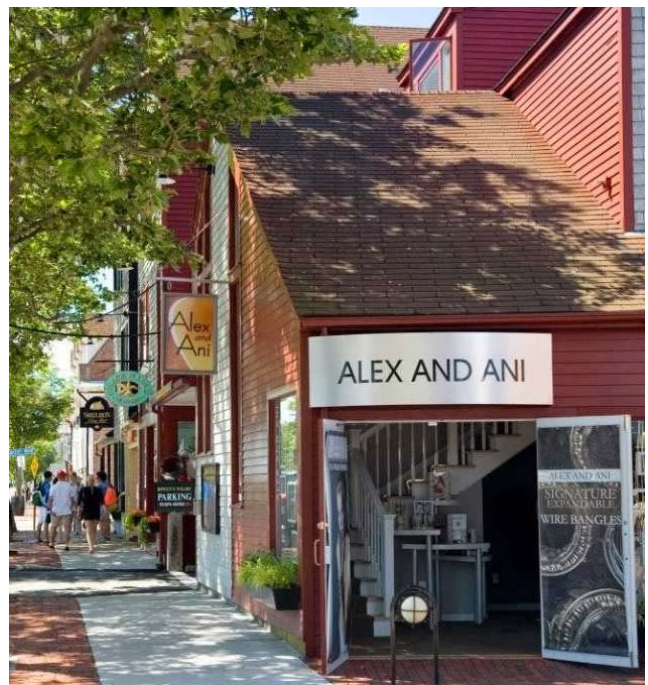
RES ■

ALEX & ANI NEWPORT GIFTING TO BLMA

On May 26, 2015 between the hours of 5:00 and 7:00 PM BLMA will be hosted at Alex and Ani's Newport retail store. The store will be offering a unique experience for purchasing signature Alex and Ani jewelry pieces. The evening will allow socializing and shopping with one-on-one attention from their staff, with Alex and Ani gifting 15% of all sales to BLMA.

All BLMA members and friends are invited. Complementary lite bites and drinks will be served. A good opportunity to visit Newport and meet with other BLMA supporters. The Alex and Ani store is located on America's Cup Avenue at Bowen's Wharf. Be sure to tell our friends.

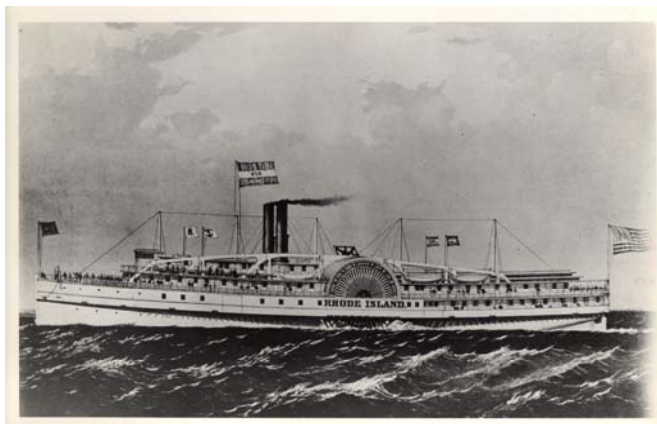
VK ■



RHODE ISLAND'S PERILOUS COAST—BONNET POINT (PART 2)

This is a continuation of a discussion of ships wrecked on Narragansett's Bonnet Point, situated just a few miles from Beavertail Lighthouse. Previously detailed were four of the seven known total losses. We will look at the other three including what could arguably be called one of the top ten shipwrecks in the state's maritime history.

Without question, the most memorable and costly maritime disaster to take place at



"The Bonnet" occurred on a cold November day in 1880. The side wheel steamer RHODE ISLAND left New York bound for Providence on her final trip of the season with Captain Jesse Mott in command. Due to the vagaries of tide and current, and in a dense fog, the steamer "missed her marks" and ran ashore about 300 feet from a bluff called "Jacob's Ladder", some 300 feet north of the southern extremity of Bonnet Point. Over the next few weeks and months

the side wheel steamer was torn to pieces with little being saved except for her machinery which would eventually be used in a later steam vessel of the same name. The wrecked RHODE ISLAND measured 335' x 45' x 15' and displaced 2,742 tons and although loaded with passengers as she normally was, no lives were lost and only one person aboard was injured by the falling of a smokestack. Perhaps the most memorable aspect of this incident was the controversy that began immediately following the stranding. Although Captain Mott stated that he saw the light at Beavertail and heard the sound of the horn, accusations arose regarding whether or not the fog horn at Beavertail was being correctly operated at the time as the search for a specific cause other than a navigation error was sought. This controversy prompted an extensive study of the effects of fog on sound, a study which ultimately led to improved equipment for all lighthouses.

On August 23, 1893 another unlucky schooner ended her career on the rocks at Bonnet Point. This time, unlike the other wrecks which have taken place in this location, the wreck occurred at the north part of the point. Captain Kemp, in command of the schooner ETHEL SWIFT of Provincetown, encountered bad weather while fishing near the entrance to Narragansett Bay. The 95' long, 141-ton schooner had been a commercial fisherman for just ten years when lost. Her owner was S.S. Swift who was a fairly well known owner of a number of fishing vessels based in Provincetown. An interesting anecdote to the loss of the ETHEL SWIFT is that within a one-week period there were three very boisterous storms that claimed numerous vessels throughout Rhode Island. The ETHEL SWIFT was lost between the first two of these storms which struck on August 21st, 24th and 29th of 1893.

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One more lost vessel in the Bonnet Point area is worthy of mention. The 38-foot cabin cruiser ARNIE BOY had the misfortune to be the victim of an engine room fire. The date was August 10, 1965 and the only person aboard was the owner, Armand Quarante. The cause was stated as leaking gasoline in the bilge area of the small craft. The Coast Guard was quick to respond and despite conditions of heavy fog at the time, managed to rescue the distressed mariner from his precarious perch on an unspecified rock in the area.

The seven wrecks lost at Bonnet Point represent just a small portion of the number of vessels which have found themselves in trouble along the shore of the town of Narragansett but illustrate the dangers of this site to maritime interests. Only one other area in the West Passage can be considered by its record to be more dangerous – Whale Rock. That area will be the subject of a later article as the study of Rhode Island's perilous coast continues.

NOTE: Our museum highlights the RHODE ISLAND disaster with a story board presentation about probable cause and fog signal anomalies. Ed.

JJ ■

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Storms and collisions were part of life for lightship crews. LV 11 was blown off station and was heavily damaged on Brenton's Point. In December 1873 LV 11 broke loose from her mooring and was found just off Beavertail Point by the steamer Newport. In 1890 the British schooner Curlew collided with LV 11 necessitating removal for repair. The winter 2013 Lighthouse Log describes the collision between the Battleship Iowa and LV 39 in heavy fog.

A BLMA personal connection: Linda Warner's great-grandfather Capt. Peter H. Armbrust went to sea in 1863 and ten years later arrived in Newport. In 1875 he married the daughter of a Narragansett Bay Pilot Capt. Roderick Macdonald and settled in Jamestown. In 1883 he took temporary command of the Brenton Reef Lightship when her Captain became ill. When the captain was unable to resume command the position was offered to Captain Armbrust on a permanent basis. He declined and soon began to work for the Jamestown and Newport ferry Company in command of the ferry Jamestown. Linda believes he didn't want to be the captain of a ship that didn't go anywhere.

Note: The research of Richard Holmes and Robert Bachand was a valuable resource for this article.

RES ■



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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!

Alex and Ani Fundraising Event
May 26th 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm
Bring your friends

Tower Schedule 2015

May 25	Monday	12-3	
June 13	Saturday	1-4	First day of summer schedule
June 27	Saturday	1-4	
July 11	Saturday	1-4	
July 26	Sunday	1-4	
Aug 8	Saturday	1-4	
Aug 23	Sunday	1-4	

Sept 7	Monday	1-4	Labor Day Last day of summer schedule
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Sept 19	Saturday	12-3
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Oct 3	Saturday	12-3
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Oct 11	Sunday	12-3
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All dates are weather permitting.

Please check Visitor Information at the website,
www.beavertaillight.org for more information about
the tower climb