



The Lighthouse Log

Autumn 2019

The Quarterly Newsletter of the BLMA

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The Newport Film festival came to Beavertail on August 15



We just wrapped up a truly memorable season. These aren't just overused words. There were more visitors than ever, special events and tower climbs drew record numbers enjoying the incomparable vistas. Amazing, given the absence of an infamous cetacean sculpture. It's a view we never tire of. An individual climb record was set on August 3rd. The tower also hosted a group of summer employees of Jamestown Parks & Recreation on Aug. 22.

There were several first of a kind events: the Newport Film festival, Scavenger Hunts and Yoga at the Light. The East Coast Paranormal Research Team conducted a study on site, free of charge. (No unfriendly spirits were discovered!)

Many visitors continued to inquire about the beacon light and fog signal. We had followed the Coast Guard improvements closely and all work is now completed. They replaced the tower light with a VRB25 model beacon and installed a new mariner-controlled fog signal. In actuality Beavertail is an even more complete museum & light station, featuring a spectrum of site attractions, displays and activities that might be unequaled anywhere. Dizzy Dean once said "If ya done it, it ain't braggin." That may not be grammatically correct. But it's no exaggeration claiming 2019 was a banner year at Beavertail.

On the national level the U.S. Lighthouse Society has provided a series of podcasts dubbed "Light Hearted" for fans of podcast media. Each program offers local perspectives of other light stations from those best qualified to provide them. The podcasts can be accessed at <http://news.uslhs.org>, or on Apple Podcasts or Spotify. They provide "features related to lighthouse preservation, history, literature and movies" in the words of USLHS and I heartily recommend them. Give them a try and I think you will be pleased.

As far as site enhancements go, a new wood fence will be installed soon in the small yard north of the light station. The old fence was in obvious disrepair. Many thanks to BankNewport for a generous grant funding this important site improvement.

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We also extend heartfelt thanks to National Grid & Verizon. They combined to eliminate overhead lines and the poles closest to the light station. A new pole and power transformer now connect to a buried electric feed, with a new telecommunications cable as well. The new lines were installed by Brittain Electric. Burying the lines is a two-fold upgrade, making for more reliable service & internet access, plus an aesthetic improvement on site. (No more cluttered photos with overhead lines spoiling those selfies.) Not to mention kites escaping those predatory overhead wires! If you wish to help us in this endeavor the Renew the View program has been established to fund this effort.

As to the events mentioned above, they were special in the true sense of the word. We had a huge turnout at the Newport Film Festival ala Beavertail, on August 15. All attending were treated to not only food and live music but the film "Jawline." Our Yoga at the Light feature has been well attended, with sessions Monday nights led by Andrea Brayman. Last but not least kids had a lot of fun completing the scavenger hunt designed by Ursula Parenteau.

Just in case you think we forgot about end of year events, not to worry. The Christmas Open House will be held Sunday December 8th from Noon to 4PM. Complimentary food and soft drinks will be served. We will also open the museum and gift shop one day earlier on Dec 7, and the following weekend. We hope you join us for a fitting close to a great season. In the interim have a safe and very happy Thanksgiving.

That's it for now but one can already foresee all the word play using "2020" in ads, news programs, etc. I may give in to the inevitable but won't overdo it.

Warm regards,

Bob Dutton

Lighthouse Humor

It may seem counterintuitive but there is a funny side to light stations. In their day keepers had to be dedicated, hard working and tough people. If not they folded under the pressure, became ill or were fired. It was by nature a no nonsense business.

But a close look at some framed photos in the Richard Sullivan room convinces me a different side of their natures is apparent. If personalities can be deduced from expressions and how they posed for the camera, most of them enjoyed a good laugh. And some wild times.

A couple of 19th century photos of a Block Island keeper and his clan almost have an audible quality to them. Their appearances are redolent of hijinks. There are three guys who almost certainly enjoyed practical jokes and seriously good times. (Willett & Henry Clark, plus Simon Dodge, Southeast Light Keepers, 1875- 1932) There is also a scrappy, ready for a fight look in Dodge's luminous eyes (or so it seems to me.) There's no way to prove any of this short of borrowing a family log or diary, but he looks like someone you would want as a friend but dread as an enemy.

As far as real lighthouse humor goes we only have one display on site devoted to a good laugh. If you look carefully in the Fresnel Lens room it will be obvious to you. I googled Lighthouse Humor and sadly it's not a big area of interest. There are a bunch of puns & one liners aimed mostly at children, which are fine as far as they go. Others were slightly different variations on our display mentioned above, involving a difference of opinion between a Canadian Keeper and a US Navy ship.

So I may have to dig a little deeper. If there are a few good jokes or cartoons worth repeating, we may start a new regular 'column' in the newsletter. For now though, it's just the germ of an idea. (Did you hear about the Keeper who was allergic to seafood?) Look for the answer in a subsequent issue.

Just to test the waters and see how many readers might enjoy a more humorous slant on things, I've included an article titled "UFOs and Keepers." It was easier to write than a story about lead sinkers and Einstein that's for sure (see Summer 2019 issue.) Hopefully it's received as intended, with a slightly caustic mix of lighthouse, geopolitical and SciFi themes, all meant to be taken lightly.

We could all use a bit of a chuckle when it comes to world affairs, which are the main reason I skip the evening news. So I'm looking for ideas for future issues from any and all who look at life with a semi-serious slant. But for now the fishing is hot, and other priorities are calling. Tune in next time.

BD

UFO's and Keepers

Brace yourself lighthouse fans. Better yet, find a comfortable seat before you read this. Much research into the history and geographic placement of light stations has led to a startling conclusion. Many former keepers, worldwide, and their families were actually highly advanced alien life forms! They landed in wormhole-capable craft during thunderstorms when bright lights and loud sounds are easily explained. Their progeny have already been assimilated into societies in all countries; many of them hold high government positions and have acquired great wealth. (Who do you think really profited from the stock market crashes, which they themselves created by stock manipulation, whilst average citizens were already poor, or soon would be? Well, I'll give you one guess!)



Their current leaders, now hunkered down at Pennsylvania Avenue as well as Moscow, Beijing, Tehran and a satellite branch at a Senator's office in Kentucky, are in constant telepathic contact with one another* This makes it very difficult to prove any or all of what I'm revealing to you here. Their communications leave few traces and evidence is almost nonexistent. Indiana Jones would be stumped, but not me! *Any perceived similarities to actual persons are purely coincidental.

NOTE: The aforementioned resident in DC has fallen out of good graces with his peers lately. There is talk about him going too far, even for the Dorkian race. It was rumoured that even Darth Vader (who was a real individual by the way) wouldn't dare to behave as this specimen has. Some believe his parenting must be at fault, or something is just haywire upstairs. So they are giving him enough rope, or whatever it is they use to fasten things, to suspend himself (so to speak.) Note to anyone in law enforcement or security agencies who may intercept this literary work: none of this should be interpreted to suggest I might wish this individual any misfortune! He is after all representative of the wishes of all the wonderful, caring & open minded citizens who voted for him.

As a side note, regarding that totally incomprehensible world figure in Pyongyang, he is NOT from another solar system. He was actually the result of a failed recombinant DNA test by the Dorkians, conducted on certain lower IQ humans. Unfortunately instead of increasing his intelligence it lowered it by 45%. The Dorkians watch this individual VERY closely, however, because his citizens now fear and worship him like a Blatost (Dorkian for deity.)

But back to the proof I mentioned: through meticulously planned and secretly conducted undercover activity, I've compiled enough evidence to reveal all of it. And yes, this is extremely risky to my own life. But the risk to humanity is even higher if I don't come forth with all the terabytes of text, photos and interpreted communications kept in a special Cloud account.

You may ask how I managed all of this without getting caught. It wasn't easy let me tell you! Doubtless many are skeptical but please hear me out: I concealed this data research under the guise of working as a government engineer at offices in New York and DC. Very much under the radar so to speak. My accomplices are all missing. Or so I was told by a very nice woman who called me by name and said my dog was too cute for words. Wait, how did she know me?!

All this must seem bizarre at first glance. I understand some readers may already be rolling their eyes, thinking "Where is Bob going with THIS one?" But I have incontrovertible evidence this all factual! (See photo taken at Beavertail lighthouse, and a detailed explanation below)

Secretly concealed antennae were found during my investigation. These mockup fog horns have been used for alien message transmissions. The Dorkian race learned early on that their telepathic abilities were known to certain humans with high ESP quotients. So they often travel on cruise ships, figuring very few regular passengers are conscious after 8 PM. They conduct strange ceremonies at sea while most other passengers are passed out on the deck.

End of Part I

BD

Soil Removal

Finally after many years of delays due to unavailable Government funding, contaminated soils surrounding the lighthouse buildings are scheduled for removal to take place in mid-November. The contamination is from lead deposits in the soil most probably from lead based paint used by keepers of the light in earlier years. U.S. Coast Guard's contractor "Renova Environmental Services" has analyzed and identified soil deposits required to be removed and backfilled with clean soil or sod. Underground radar has detected and identified buried power and water lines. Flag pendants have been pinned at all the hot spots. RIDEM with EPA oversight will monitor the removal. Beavertail Light is not alone in this process. Watch Hill Light is also scheduled for mitigation of this same contamination.

VK

Power and Telephone Lines Due for Removal

Probably at the top of "Things to do List" for the past 20 years was the removal of the unsightly sagging overhead electric cables and telephone wires in the back yard of the site. Children and families would fly kites dangerously into the wires. Picnicking, playing ball, walking the dog or just taking photographs with those poles and wires in sight ruined the view of the historic buildings. This past spring, the BLMA board took a bold step saying "Times up ... Let's do it". A committee was formed to restore the skyline back to its 1935 historic scene with a fund raising motto "Renew the View".

Three Four hundred (400) feet conduits for power and telephone were laid, buried and connected within the buildings by Brittain Electric Inc of Jamestown, after RIDEM graciously dug the cable trench. National Grid installed a new pole and transformer at the feed location. Power was transferred to the buried cable on 11 September with less than an hour downtime of the navigation light.

Since the poles belong to Verizon (Bell Atlantic) there was some administrative delay removing the poles. Verizon workers removed their telephone lines and poles on Oct. 7th to restore the vista as we had hoped to do for years.

VK

*National Grid cutting overhead cable**DEM digging 400 ft Trench**Connecting conduits**Feeding cable into conduit**The View Renewed!*

BLMA's Shipwreck Data Base

Ten years ago, while researching a shipwreck on Conanicut Island, Varoujan Karentz came across a Florida marine historian, Jim Jenney. Jim is a native Rhode Islander from Newport, who over his lifetime had been researching and collecting information of shipwrecks in Rhode Island waters and lacked a repository to archive them.

Together, they developed a 2 page format identified as an "Wreck Data Sheet: (WDS) and geographic sectors where events occurred. Week after week, Jim researched, created and forwarded these data sheets for review and inclusion into a database and search engine designed by Dave Smith.

The result this past June was the completion of the project numbering 2,968 documented maritime events which have occurred in Narragansett Bay, Block Island and Rhode Island Sounds covering a period of over four centuries. Another 435 events, while identified by name have incomplete authenticated references. The database of 3,403 events is viewable on our website. <https://www.beavertailight.org/wrecks/index.html> and in the museum.

Additional wrecks or events that take place subsequently will be added to the database periodically.

VK

Historical Light Characteristics

Over the 270 years of light service to mariners, Beavertail's light characteristics have been changed 12 times mostly because other lights within sight were established and recognition had to be distinctive. In addition, technical improvements, in both lenses (optics) and lanterns provided better efficiency and visual range. During the evolution, various fuels for the lamps were also used.

Records prior to 1839 are both vague and non-existent excepting the 1749 and 1753 archives describing its early lamps, lenses and reflectors. Below is a compilation of Illumination changes that took place at Beavertail.

VK

Illumination Methods at Beavertail		
TYPE	DATES	Fuel
Open Fires	1712-1749	Wood
Wick Channel Lamps with Reflectors	1749-1855	Whale Oil
Spider Lamps	1760-1810	Whale Oil
David Melville Gasometer	1817-1818	Gas
Argand's Lamps with Reflectors	1810-1890	Whale, Lard & Kerosene Oil
Funk-Heap Lamps	1890-1935	Kerosene
Fresnel Lenses 3rd and 4th Order	1856-1972	Kerosene Electricity
Rotating Aero Beacon 1000 Watt	1972-2019	Electricity
Rotating 12 volt 50 Watt Acrylic Lens (VRB-25)	2019-	Electricity

BLMA Annual Meeting

BLMA held its annual meeting on Sept 19, 2019 with members, docents and the general public in attendance. The guest speakers were two reps from ECPRT which conducted the earlier study at Beavertail. They gave a very enlightening presentation about their "Paranormal" studies at numerous establishments around the region. During the meeting Diane Bakley was confirmed as the new President and Dave Smith as new Vice President.

BD

Rhode Island's Perilous Coast Sakonnet Point (Part 2)

This is a continuation of a discussion of the ships which have been wrecked on Sakonnet Point, at the mouth of the Sakonnet River. Previously detailed were five of the seventeen known total losses here.

On October 29, 1864, more than twelve years after the previous total loss at Sakonnet Point, the sloop OREGON, of East Greenwich, which had departed from Providence for an undisclosed location met with grief on the rocks at Seaconnet Point. Her master, Captain Cole, was also her owner and when caught in a storm at the mouth of the Sakonnet River was surely not pleased with the outcome. The brief account of the incident simply states, "... [the OREGON] was driven on the rocks at Seaconnet Point during the heavy blow of the 29th and is so badly damaged so as to be abandoned after being stripped of sails and rigging." Exactly where on the point the OREGON's remains are located is unknown.

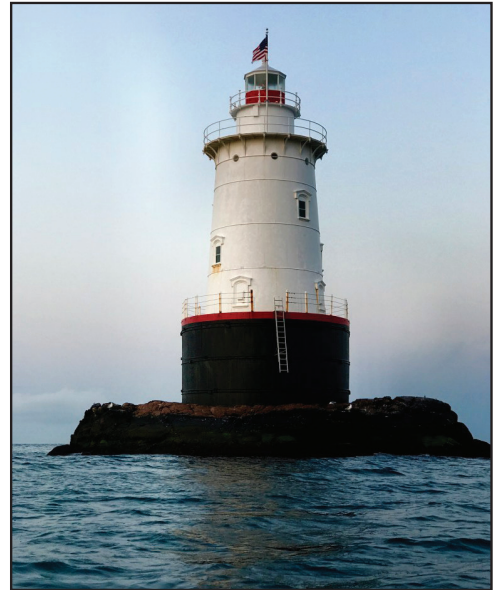
It would be another twenty years, and four more totally lost vessels, before Congress would approve funding for the erection of a lighthouse off the point at Sakonnet. These losses all took place during the 1870's.

On December 20, 1875 the schooner NICANOR, headed for Newport from Boston in ballast, became yet another victim to the dangers off Sakonnet Point when she ran ashore at West Island and was lost. Built in Castine, ME in 1844 this schooner had spent more than thirty years at sea. Her home port was Newport so it would seem logical that her master, Captain Gray, was somewhat familiar with these waters but the 86-foot long, 131-ton schooner nonetheless ran ashore on that cold winter's day. At first, all were optimistic that the vessel would be saved and a local tug was dispatched to pull her off the rocks. Unfortunately, the tug did not arrive quickly and when a vessel is hard aground, saving her is something that must be done immediately if the chances of a successful rescue are to be good. Failure of the tug to move the schooner from her perilous position resulted in the dispatching of the local wrecking schooner YOUNG AMERICA but by this time the intent was to strip the schooner of any materials that could be saved rather than try to pull her off. Within a week the NICANOR was reported as badly broken up though the YOUNG AMERICA arrived back in Newport with her spars, mass, sails, rigging, chains and anchors.

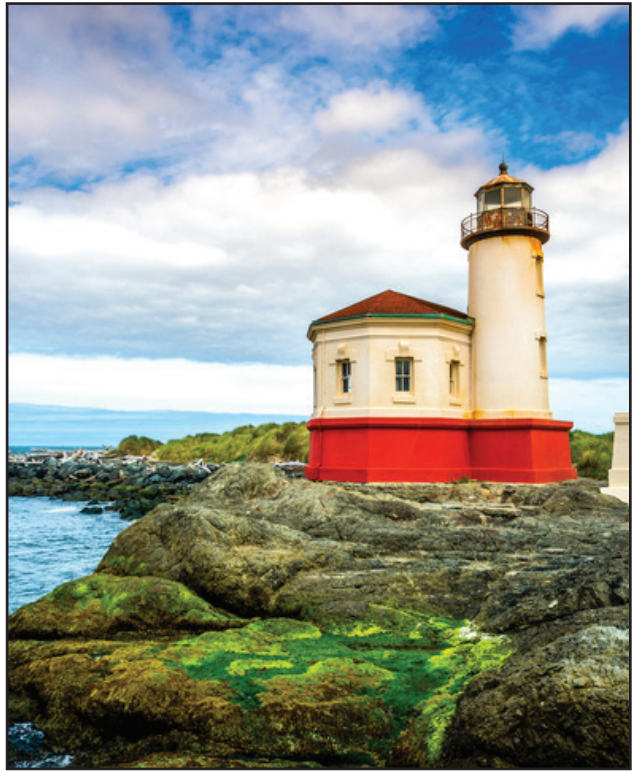
The local coastal trading sloop LEADER, just 30-tons, visited the southeast part of Sakonnet Point on November 2, 1877. The 51-footer called Tiverton, RI home and had probably come directly down the river when she ran into trouble at Sakonnet. Captain Cook was her master as she fought her way through the winter storm which would see her end. The Boston news reported, "A cyclone of unusual severity reached here about five o'clock yesterday, causing trees to rock frantically and the sea to break on the coast very high". Although this weather report and the loss of the sloop aren't clearly connected, I would suggest that it may have been the storm in which the LEADER became a total loss.

Less than a year following the loss of the sloop LEADER, the schooner W.W. BRAINARD, added her name to the list of the lost near Sakonnet Point. The BRAINARD was a 144-ton coaster launched in Saybrook, CT in 1849 and on the fateful day was northbound from Perth Amboy, NJ and had almost reached her destination, New Bedford, MA. In her hold she carried 200 tons of coal, one of the most common cargos for New England ports. Her master, Captain Fitch, found himself fogbound as so many before him and in short order found his vessel ashore about ½ mile northwest from West Island, just off the point. She must have almost immediately bilged as she was reported full of water in the earliest account. There is no report of any attempted salvage and as she was approaching the 30-year mark in her career, she may have been deemed not worth the expense to get her off the rocks.

In the next edition of the log, the list of losses at Sakonnet Point will continue with the final reported totally lost vessel before the construction of the Sakonnet Lighthouse but, as you shall see, the list did not end at that point. JFJ



How Many Lighthouses?!



According to the Lighthouse Directory website, started by Russ Rowlett in 1999, there are over 21,400 lighthouses worldwide. That number changes often and it's rarely if ever exact. Thus, the site gives an estimate with a nice round number. It was last updated on Sept 14 2019 when this piece was written.

The same tack is used by the US Lighthouse Society. The USLHS approximates that the most ever in operation at any time in the US was 850 and the total 'over the years' including those no longer in existence is 1500. The first estimate applies to the heyday of active lighthouses around 1910.

Given those numbers, being ranked 3rd oldest in America means Beavertail is in some pretty lofty company. Boston Harbor lighthouse is the oldest and the sole remaining with a Keeper. (All others still operating are automated.) Brant Point on Nantucket is second oldest in the country. In other words, right here in nearby MA and our own RI we have the 3 oldest lighthouses. Considering the volume of shipping around southern New England during colonial times and our abundant maritime hazards it's not surprising. Boston, Newport and Nantucket probably accounted for over 95% of shipping business.

Numbers don't give a feel for the architectural grandeur or picture postcard vistas you might see in person. If it were feasible to see all of them it would make for one long, expensive but fabulous tour. It would help a lot if you were immortal. In fact, one could actually see a very large number here in the US and overseas if you are inclined, assuming you have a hefty bankroll*

An obvious alternative is searching on line. You'll see for yourself the imagination and skills the designers of some locations brought to the table. As hard as it is to admit (for us at the tip of Conanicut Island) there are indeed stations with taller profiles, more natural beauty and colorful patterns. See for yourself, and as a teaser, a couple of personal favorites are shown above.

* The USLHS arranges various group tours every year throughout the world and locally. Reportedly reservations need to be made soon after the schedule is posted as they are very popular.



BEAVERTAIL LIGHTHOUSE
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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 at
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

MONDAY MAY 27 12-3	SUNDAY JULY 21 1-4	SUNDAY SEPT 15 12-3
SATURDAY JUNE 8 12-3	SATURDAY AUGUST 3 1-4	SATURDAY SEPT 28 12-3
SATURDAY JUNE 22 1-4	SUNDAY AUGUST 18 1-4	MONDAY OCT 14 12-3
SATURDAY JULY 6 1-4	MONDAY SEPT 2 12-3	

If you would like to schedule a tour of the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum please call (401) 423-3270, or email us at info@BeavertailLight.org.

Group Tours & Events

To arrange Lighthouse tours for school or senior groups please contact Mrs. Linda Warner at:
info@beavertail.org

Weddings and private events on the Lighthouse grounds are not allowed by the U.S. Coast Guard.

For scheduling special events, including weddings at Beavertail State Park contact the RI Dept. of Environmental Management (DEM) at 401.884.2010.