U.S. Life-Saving Stations

by Jo & Ted Panayotoff

If you are like us, then your interest in lighthouses has probably led you to other related subjects. In our case, it is to the related service, the U.S. Life-Saving Service. While, Life Saving stations are arguably, not as majestic as lighthouses, the remaining ones along our coasts speak eloquently of the time when the unofficial motto of the life-saving service was something to the effect of “The rules say that you have to go out, but not that you have to come back.” This was, unfortunately, a situation that occurred all too frequently during the distinguished history of the U.S. Life-Saving Service.

The official beginning of the U.S. Life-Saving Service was August 14, 1848, when the Federal Government appropriated funds to support the Massachusetts Humane Society. This organization had established a number of small huts along the Massachusetts coast at which shipwreck survivors who had reached the shore could find shelter and supplies.

By 1850, Congress was providing funds for stations along the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts. These were manned largely by volunteer crews which were not always under effective management and the practical result was less than satisfactory. In 1871, the Secretary of the Treasury, under which the service operated, reorganized the operation with paid crews of surfmen under a keeper at each station.

On the East Coast, stations were typically open 10 months. Crews were on leave for July and August, but subject to call if required. In 1879, the Life-Saving Service became a separate establishment under General Superintendent Summer Kimball. The Service grew and many new stations were constructed under his effective leadership. Along many stretches of coast, stations were built about 7 miles apart.

During the day a lookout watch was kept for ships in distress. At night, and during bad weather, the beach was patrolled by surfmen on foot. Two surfmen from each station walked the beach, one going north and one going south until each met the surfman from the adjacent station. Patrol checks (tokens) were then exchanged to verify that each had covered the area and the surfmen then returned to their respective stations. If a ship in distress was sighted, the surfmen fired a Coston flare which warned the ship that it was straying into danger; or if it was too late, alerted the ship’s crew that help was on the way. The surfman then had to return to the station where the rescue would be conducted by surfboat, or if the ship was close enough, by breeches buoy from the shore.

On January 28, 1915, the Life-Saving Service was combined with the Revenue Cutter Service to form the U.S. Coast Guard and it was placed again under the Treasury Department.

As life-saving technology and communications improved, the small surf-side stations were closed and the functions assumed by larger Coast Guard Stations with motorized life-boats and surfboats. The last breeches
buoy rescue was performed at Race Point on Cape Cod in January, 1962.

Life Saving Stations seemed to have been constructed in a number of shapes and sizes. Some were large with extensive living quarters, office space, a boat house and a lookout tower, others were nothing more than a large shed for the surfboat and beach apparatus, which consisted of breches buoy equipment on a cart. A well-preserved example of the former type is the Visitors Center at the Sandy Hook National Seashore, while an example of the latter type can be seen next to the Twin Lights Historic Site in Atlantic Highlands. During our early Fall, 1992 visit along the North Carolina Outer Banks, we were able to visit seven Life-Saving Station locations, which gave us an opportunity to see and photograph a number of different types.

Starting at Corolla, North Carolina, about 24 miles north of Kitty Hawk, there is a small Life-Saving Station on Route 12 at the corner of 2nd Street. It has been restored and is now a really office. It is a nice example of the smaller style station with the equipment storage area on the first floor and bunk room above.

Further south at Sanderling, North Carolina, is Station #3, which was the Caffey’s Inlet Station. It has been preserved and is the office and restaurant for a beach resort. The Caffey’s Inlet Station is a good example of the larger type station with a lookout tower, and is similar to the one at Sandy Hook.

Further south in Kitty Hawk, at mile marker 4.5, is Station #6. This station has been converted into a beachfront restaurant and is almost unrecognizable in its original function. The restaurant appears to be out of business. We hope this historically significant building will not deteriorate further and will be restored. It looks like it was originally of the smaller station variety, similar to the one at Corolla.

On the south side of Oregon Inlet, at the north end of Hatteras Island, is the abandoned Oregon Inlet Coast Guard Station. The present Coast Guard Station has been moved to the north side of the inlet due to the continued southward migration of the inlet. While this probably was not a life-saving station in the strict sense, it is a good example of the larger Coast Guard Stations which evolved from the original U.S. Life-Saving Service.

At 7.5 miles south of Oregon Inlet, just across from the Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters, is the location of the Pea Island Life-Saving Station. Not much remains beyond some foundations on the beach; however, this station is historically significant because it was manned by a black crew that was one of the most highly decorated in the service.

About 7 miles further down Route 72, is the Chicamomico Life-Saving Station. This station remained in operation until 1954. Now it has been restored by the Chicamomico Historical Association which operates displays in the station building. The station site includes the original boat house and other related buildings. During the summer the National Park Service conducts life-saving drills with the breches buoy apparatus in front of the boat house. This station is well worth a stop, especially in the summer when it is open and the drill can be included included in your visit. For more information, contact Superintendent, Cape Hatteras National Seashore, Route 1, Box 675, Manteo, NC 27954 or phone (919) 473-2111.

Another 15 miles south on Route 12, on the west side on the road, is another station, the Little Kinnakeet Life-Saving Station. This station consists of a large main building and a boat house. When we visited the site in September, 1992, it was fenced in and looked to be awaiting the start of a restoration project.

The last Life-Saving Station we found is about 2 miles
Lake Champlain Mini-Trip

by Jack Granger

In past issues of "The BEAM," I have shared many trips with the readers. For the most part, these trips have covered thousands of miles over a period of several days and have gone to far off places, like Nova Scotia, the Great Lakes, Florida, Texas and the West Coast.

HOW ABOUT A TRIP THAT GOES TO ONE STATE OUTSIDE NEW JERSEY AND CAN BE DONE IN 3 DAYS????

The Place - Lake Champlain, New York. I left on a Monday, drove up to Albany, New York, on the New York State Thruway, then took the Northway to Ticonderoga, circled Lake Champlain, passed through Rouses Point, New York, into Vermont to Burlington, ending up at the Shelburne Museum in Vermont, which has moved the Colchester Reef Lighthouse to a new location at the museum. The museum is well worth seeing.

Directions are rather simple. Take the New York State Thruway to Albany and pick up the Northway (Route 87) as far as Exit 28, where you pick up Route 74 into Ticonderoga. Then take Route 9N to Crown Point Lighthouse.

For Further Reading:

Life-Saving Nantucket, by Edouard A. Stackpole. Nantucket Island, Massachusetts: Stern-Majestic Press, Inc., 1972. (Also has a lot of information about the lighthouses and lightships of Nantucket).


Continue north to Barbour Point Lighthouse. Further north you will reach Split Rock Lighthouse on Whallon Bay. This light is about a 1/2 mile walk.
Lights of Lake Champlain

Photos by Jack Granger

(Clockwise)

Cumberland Head Lighthouse (1838, 1868, 1934), Plattsburg Harbor, New York.

Crown Point Lighthouse, (1912) NY, built as a memorial to the French explorer Champlain, on the foundation of the 1856 tower.

Colchester Reef Lighthouse (1871) at Shelburne Museum Village, Vermont.

Windmill Point Lighthouse, Vermont.
The next light is across a channel on Valcour Island. Look for the town of Day Point. Find the local marina which is the best vantage point to see Bluff Point Light. Next town is Plattsburgh, New York. Supposedly, there are 3 markers on the breakwaters. Since I am not particularly interested in skeleton towers, I did not try to find them.

North of Plattsburgh is Cumberland Head, a point of land jutting out into the lake. Here you will find the Cumberland Head Light, a beautiful light in a gorgeous location.

Now you are off to Rouses Point, New York, about 5 miles south of the U.S.-Canadian border. Here you will cross Lake Champlain into Vermont. In the town of Alburg, Vermont, you will find the Windmill Point Light.

Continuing in Vermont, on Route 2, you will see Isle La Motte. It is a short pink lovely light. Lastly, continue on to Burlington, Vermont. There are two breakwater towers that I skipped. About 5 miles south of Burlington on Vermont Route 7 is the Shelburne Museum that you should visit. The Colchester Reef Lighthouse has been relocated here and can be seen.

You have a choice for your return. Either go down to Chimney Point, Vermont, and over the bridge to Crown Point and retrace your route south, or you can continue south in Vermont to Bennington, and return via the New York Thruway.

A great short trip - beautiful country - beautiful lights.

The Grand Lighthouse Ferry Cruise

by Al Smith

Those of us that were able to make the June 26th meeting at Cape May Point Lighthouse were treated to a beautiful, sunny, albeit breezy, day.

The folks of the Mid-Atlantic Center for the Arts (MAC) have done a fine job with the lighthouse and the trip to the top was as information-packed as it was tiring. Each landing gave an excuse to catch our breath while getting to know the history of the lighthouse and its surroundings. The view from the top was fabulous although the wind made us glad for the 'cage' around the catwalk.

Although I didn’t get to see it, they tell me the museum on the grounds is very good also. I hope I’ll get back for that later in the summer.

The Cape May Point Volunteer Fire Company’s new

The Keeper’s Cache

NJ Patch and Pins - $4.00 each + shipping

We now have available New Jersey Chapter patches and pins. Your choice, $4.00 each plus $1.00 shipping and handling for two of either. We also have a stock of NJC sweatpants, in birch color, for $13.00.

If ordering by mail, please make checks payable to U.S.L.H.S. - New Jersey Chapter. Send mail orders to U.S.L.H.S. - New Jersey Chapter, Attn: Katie Moser, P.O. Box 4228, Brick, NJ 08723.
meeting room was very nice and filled quickly with the

nicest part of the day. MAC and Borden Inc. Seafood
Products sponsored a 2 hour cruise aboard the ferry
Twin Capes, past the Cape May Point Lighthouse to the
Brandywine Shoals Lighthouse. Onboard was the Cape
May County String Band, which entertained
throughout the trip. There were also light refreshments
in the form of mini-sandwiches, fruit and cake. Door
prizes were provided by Cape May businesses.

For anyone who had a telephoto lens on his camera,
good shots of the Brandywine Light were readily avail-
able as Mother Nature very generously provided some
great clouds and lighting.

The proceeds of the $20.00 (for adults) cost went to
the continuing restoration of the Cape May Point Ligh-
thouse. Maybe you can make it next year!

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President’s Message

By Jack Granger

First, I apologize for the mix up concerning the visit
to Jeffrey’s Hook Lighthouse on July 24. The circular I
received from the New York City Park Commission
gave the time as 1:30 p.m. The time was later changed
to noon. I have complained to the Commission and I
apologize to those of you who were inconvenienced.

I am pleased to announce that the New Jersey Chap-
ter Board has approved a $600.00 contribution to the
Maurice River Historical Society to construct a per-
manent bulletin board at the East Point Lighthouse.

I hope that your summer has been pleasant and that
you will be sharing your experiences with us in the
future.

See you soon!

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NJC Fall Meeting

The next meeting of the chapter will be held Septem-
ber 25, 1993, in Heislerville, N.J. The meeting will begin
at 11:00 a.m. in the Heislerville Community Hall (Bingo
Hall) on Main Street in Heislerville.

In the afternoon, Jim Gowdy and the Maurice River
Historical Society graciously arranged for us to tour the
East Point Lighthouse. Please bring your lunch as res-

taurant facilities in the area are few and far between.

A map is enclosed with this newsletter. If you have
any questions or you need better directions, you may
call Jim Gowdy at (609) 476-4532.

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Recent Lighthouse News

"High Seas," by Michael Redmond, The Star-Ledger,
Friday, July 9, 1993 (Weekend Section, page 41), a
review of Opera Festival of New Jersey’s Production of
Sir Peter Maxwell Davies chamber opera, "The Lighthouse," which is based on the Flannan Isles, Scotland, incident.


"Peggy's Cove a picture-perfect fishing village" by Steve Silk, *The Star-Ledger*, Travel/Resorts section.

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**The Language of Lighthouses**

by George M. Feirer, Historian

Not living in a uni-lingual society, we humanoids on the planet Earth have developed a proliferation of diversity in our terminology. This may add a certain amount of color and richness to our communications, but it also presents an opportunity for confusion, consternation and, ultimately, constraint, in dealing with our fellow man.

The general development of the human mind has resulted in groups who cherish order and therefore tend to compartmentalize and label their thoughts and possessions. All of which has brought me to the point of developing a glossary for one of our favorite subjects.

Certain languages have developed codes that apply to objects, in more or less common use, pertaining to aids-to-navigation, primarily lighthouses. Some are quite familiar to us, others reasonably obscure, a few totally alien. Printed languages such as Cyrillic, Japanese, Chinese, Arabic, Hebrew and a few others that do not use symbols or letters that we encounter on a day-to-day basis, are less-often needed.

What has been listed below can really be considered a very basic primer, to be built upon as the need or occasion arises. Let's consider it a fun list, with useful overtones.

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<th>Language</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Arabic</strong></td>
<td><strong>空前</strong></td>
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<td>svjetionik</td>
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<td><strong>Spanish</strong></td>
<td>farola, faroles</td>
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- 7 -
Slovak
Lighthouse maják
Lighthouse Keeper strážca majáka

Spanish
Lighthouse faro, farola, faral
Lighthouse Keeper guardafaro
Lightship buque faro o faral

Swahili
Lighthouse mnara wenye taa

Swedish
Lighthouse fyrtorn
Lighthouse Keeper fyrvaktare
Lightship fyrskepp

Thai
Lighthouse gra-jo姆ei

Vietnamese
Lighthouse Hài dằng, dên bê
tháp dên

For Sale
Mrs. William Roche, 207 Claremont Blvd., San Francisco, CA, 94127 has an unusual lighthouse Fresnel lens table for sale. The table is built on a 375mm lens and is 19" high on casters, and has a 1" thick wooden top, 26 inches in diameter. Asking price is $1,000. Call her at (415) 566-7508 or write her at the above address. See Kim Ruth if interested in seeing a color laser copy of a photograph of this table.

Post Card Pals
Marlyse Milburn, 3455 North Valencia Avenue, San Bernardino, CA, 92404 is interested in obtaining postcards and photos of lighthouses in our area. Anyone want to help??

Mark Kucera, 23538 Lorain, North Olmsted, Ohio 44070, collects post cards (has over 1,300), brochures, magnets of lighthouses and their museums. He wants to obtain same of New Jersey Lights via trade, purchase, etc.

Coming in December Beam
Lighthouses of Iceland and the Faroe Islands, by Jim and Nancy Cope.

Winner’s of the postponed many times 1st (and maybe last-ed.) Annual New Jersey Chapter Photo Contest.