Organizational Meeting

The first meeting of the “New Jersey Lighthouse Society” took place on June 23, 1990 at the Atlantic County Library, in Mays Landing, NJ. In preparation for this, surveys were designed by Jim Gowdy. Kim Ruth printed and mailed 90 surveys and a few others were distributed by other means. To date we have received 35 responses. 31 said they would join, and 3 were maybe’s or conditional yes’s, and 1 was no. Of the responses 16 said they would attend the meeting, and 19 did attend.

Opening remarks were made by Jack Granger. Getting to know each other a little, some of the issues facing the group were discussed.

It was agreed that the group would meet four times a year and that we would try to keep the travel distance to meeting places to 50 miles or under. There was also a definite desire expressed to keep the group South Jersey based. We don’t want to exclude anyone from membership. The consensus was that we would concentrate on getting a group going in South Jersey first. Those present seem to have a broad interest in lighthouses, and did not limit themselves to New Jersey Lights.

The greatest percentage of the group seem to be photographers, with collectors of various types (mostly books and postcards) coming in second.

Some of the directions that the group could take, such as helping in restoration efforts, organizing trips to various lights, etc., were discussed but the consensus we came to was that we all like lighthouses, and that the group would serve as a means to share resources and knowledge.

The meeting lasted until around 1:00 p.m., after which we broke for lunch. Most of us met after lunch at the Absecon Lighthouse, to which Jim Gowdy had arranged access. We had time to give it a good look, and I think the photographers must have covered it from every conceivable angle. Some went to see the Lightship at Gardiner’s Basin afterwards. [K. Ruth].

Next Meeting

The fall meeting of our chapter will be held on Saturday, September 29th, starting at 10:00 a.m., at Riverview Beach Park in Pennsville, New Jersey. The meeting is open to everyone.

A lot of details have yet to be worked out in regard to the running of our newly formed chapter; during the business meeting quite a few decisions will need to be made, such as setting dues, electing officers, naming our chapter, and so on.

Our speaker for the day will be Betty Husarik, who is the coordinator for the volunteers’ group at the nearby Finns Point Rear Range Light. Betty will tell us about the history of the lighthouse and the efforts taken to date to restore the structure and open it to the public.

The meeting will probably be adjourned at 1:00 p.m. so that we can break for lunch.

After lunch, those who are interested can drive the short distance over to the Finns Point Rear Range Lighthouse for a tour and photo opportunity.

Directions - Riverview Beach Park in Pennsville is just off Route 49, and about 2 miles southwest of Route 40 and the Delaware Memorial Twin Bridges. At the main entrance to the park on Route 49 there is a large wood lattice entryway with a sign: Riverview Beach Park. Do not enter there. Go instead about half a block south to Pittsfield Street (Laughrey Funeral Home is on the corner) and turn west onto Pittsfield Street.

Go about one half block more toward the river and a small sign on your right will point to "Riverview Parking” straight ahead and "Parks and Recreation” sign pointing to the right.

Turn right and follow the narrow track into a small parking area next to a large cream-colored metal building. This is where the meeting will be held, and there will be a USLHS sign on the building to show you where to enter. The building itself is a maintenance and storage building.
for the park, but there is a separate meeting room we will use on one side of the building.

There will be a Salem County Women’s Fair going on at Riverview Park on the day we will be there, but it should not interfere with our meeting. There is some parking in the area around the maintenance building, or there is a large grassy area which can be used for parking. If you have any questions in regard to finding the meeting place, please call one of the following persons: Betty Husarik (609-678-2400), Barbara Gowdy (609-299-2609), or Jim Gowdy (609-476-4532). [Jim Gowdy].

Tinicum Island Range

Since there are a number of obscure and seldom visited lighthouses in the area between New York City and Cape Henlopen, Delaware, we decided to devote a part of each newsletter to introducing one of these lesser known lights and letting our members know how to find them.

To start things off I’ll focus on the Tinicum Island Range - so named because that segment of the Delaware River channel through which it guides ships happens to pass alongside Tinicum Island.

As with all navigational ranges, this range consists of two lights - the front range and the rear (or the lower and upper), which work as a pair to guide ships through a shipping channel.

The Tinicum Island Range aims downriver and currently exhibits red lights. This range is somewhat unique because its front range light station also serves a second range; the Mifflin Bar Range, which shines its guiding lights upriver toward Philadelphia.

As the postcard above shows, the front lighthouse for this range was once a two story dwelling on the bank of the Delaware River at Billingsport, New Jersey. Due to a shift in the channel, in later years the lights were removed from the dwelling and placed in a short wooden tower at the waters’ edge. Today all traces of the former dwelling and wooden tower have vanished, having been replaced in their duties by automated lights atop two metal skeleton towers.

The original rear range lighthouse tower remains, however, and is still in operation, although long since automated. It is 85’ in height, with an octagonal lantern room, and described in recent USCG records as being a black painted cast iron cylinder with exterior girder framework, a rubble masonry foundation, and a neo-classical entry pavilion. The structure is in very good condition both inside and out, having been spruced up by the Coast Guard for an open house in the summer of 1989.

First put into operation on December 31, 1880, the Tinicum Island Rear Range Lighthouse was once accompanied by a small white wood-framed dwelling, white picket fence, wood-framed barn or garage, and a brick oil house.

Traces of the other structures have vanished, and the tower stands alone amid recreation fields between Second and Third Streets in the village of Billingsport, just west of Paulsboro. A nearly identical tower was also built in 1880 near Essington, Pennsylvania, and served until 1919 as the rear range lighthouse for the Schooner Ledge Range. All that remains at the Essington site today are vine and brush covered concrete foundations.

To find the Tinicum Island Rear Range Light: from Route 44 in Paulsboro turn west onto Billingsport Road and continue toward the Delaware River until you reach Second Street, then turn right and head to the ballfields. [Jim Gowdy].

Books

Two new books have come to our attention in recent weeks - John Bailey’s Sentinel of the New Jersey Cape, a History of the Cape May Lighthouse and Beacons of Light: Lighthouses, by Gail Gibbons.


The Bailey book is a paperback published by the Mid-Atlantic Center for the Arts, 1989, iv + 56 pages, illustrated, with index and bibliography. It is available through the The Mid-Atlantic Center for the Arts, P.O.Box 340, Cape May, NJ 08204 for $7.55 postpaid. A full review of the book by Tom Laverty, Curator of Twin Lights, appears in the June 1990, NJ Historical Commission Newsletter, page 4. [K. Ruth].
Of Newsletters, Names & Logos
- and other things to think about before the next meeting

At the organizational meeting June 23rd in Mays Landing, we agreed to begin a quarterly newsletter to exchange and disburse information on lighthouses. We need to have a name for this publication. Some time ago I came up with the following suggestions. I would like to have your suggestions, because this is your newsletter. Bring your suggestions to the next meeting or send to me and I’ll report on that at the meeting. Here’s my list.

- Jersey Lights
- Jersey Jottings
- Light Happenings
- The Flashlight
- Flashes
- New Jersey Lighthouse News

My wife has suggested "Illuminations." The Virginia Chapter’s newsletter is called "Light Flashes."

I called it "The Flash-light" for now, just to have something to fill the Banner area. On some old maps a lighthouse with a flashing light was called a "Flash-Light."

We should have a logo for the club and newsletter. They could be separate logos, or the newsletter could incorporate the club’s logo. We need your ideas on design, and your sketches or finished artwork. I have absolutely no artistic talent, so if it can’t be drawn on a computer I won’t be much help. Even if you have an idea and can rough sketch it out for us, we may be able to find the talent to do a professional drawing.

We could use a stylized lighthouse or we could use a depiction of a New Jersey Lighthouse in the logo. We have a common interest in New Jersey Lighthouses, but our interests in lighthouses exceed the boundaries of state and nation. The difficult part might be to convey a sense of a “New Jersey Lighthouse Society” without seeming to limit our scope to New Jersey.

I would also like to distribute copies of the newsletter to libraries. I believe I can distribute copies without cost to us through the interoffice mail system we have with 6 branches and 10 member libraries and all of the school libraries in Burlington County. Anyone else in the club who may be able to do similar disseminations please let us know.

We didn’t go into this at the last meeting, but we don’t really have a name as yet. We have been referred to variously as the South Jersey Lighthouse Society, New Jersey Lighthouse Society, and New Jersey Lighthouse Society - South Jersey Chapter. I think we need to finalize this at the next meeting as it has implications for our logo. [K. Ruth].

Jack Granger’s Trip to Maine, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick


For those who have travelled the shore route you know most of it is a two lane highway after you get to Brunswick and Bath, Maine. Although the speed limit is 55 mph or 100 kph, the locals drive at 25 mph or 45 kph. Do not try to make any time in driving.

Lights that should be seen are Portland Head and Portland Breakwater. (From Portland Head you can see Ram Island Ledge, Cape Elizabeth, and if the sun is shining you can see Halfway Rock Light), 3 in Boothbay Harbor, Pemaquid Point, Owls Head, Dice’s Head, Bass Harbor, West Quoddy, Lubec Channel, East Quoddy on Campobello Island (summer home of Franklin Delano Roosevelt), Peggy’s Cove and Portuguese Cove in Nova Scotia and Halifax Head Light.

The Canadian racing schooner Bluenose II can be seen in Halifax.

St. John’s and Moncton, New Brunswick are nice. Halifax is a beautiful city in Nova Scotia. Do not waste your time in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia.

Going back to Maine for a minute: the light at Petit Manan Point is a very popular light but after driving 23 miles one way, you can only see it about 8 miles off-shore. Even with a 200mm lens and a 2x teleconverter you can hardly make it out on a clear day.

Some people and places to visit:
- Ken Black, Curator of the Shore Village Museum, 104 Limerock Street, Rockland, Maine (207) 594-4950 - probably has the most complete lighthouse museum in the United States.
- Clifford Shattuck, Owner of the Lighthouse Museum in Camden, Maine (207) 236-2758. Cliff prepared all the information on all 88 Maine Lighthouses for the National Archives in Washington, D.C., as well as U.S.C.G. He has a library of 200+ books on lighthouses around the world that he has visited.

Anyone interested in the area, contact me; I have a stack of pictures and information. The seascapes and the tidal action in the Bay of Fundy are fantastic. [Jack Granger].
Frying Pan Shoals Lightship

Several years ago, a couple of young fellows acquired the former Frying Pan Shoals Lightship with the intention of making it into a restaurant in the Baltimore area. This endeavor never materialized and they left the area and anchored in the Delaware River off the south end of Petty Island for the winter and spring of this year, where, from the Benjamin Franklin Bridge, it looked like a large sailboat since it had been painted white.

They have pulled up anchor and when it was last seen early this summer, it was in the mud near the American Dredging facility at the foot of State Street in Camden, N.J. The lightship was originally painted the traditional red with white lettering and yellow masts.

Frying Pan Shoals is at the mouth of the Cape Fear River, North Carolina. The first lightship there began operation in 1854 and functioned there until the outbreak of the Civil War. In 1865, service was restored and remained so until 1966, when it was replaced by a Texas Tower. [Helen Mountney with credit to Paul Schoop and David Stick’s North Carolina Lighthouses].

Letters

Since our last meeting we have heard from many of you, including Johanna Trowbridge, George M. Feirer, Carl & Barbara Nelson, Helen Mountney, and Nancy Matthews. Nancy have been positively prolific in keeping us informed on lighthouse-related events she comes across.

I ask your indulgence for not responding to each of you individually. I have been involved in keeping up and entering the mailing list data for USLHS Members in New Jersey and Delaware (now over 425 entries), and Jack and I have sent out over 30 letters requesting information about the club to people from as far away as Kentucky, and Virginia. This first newsletter has taken a considerable amount of time. Sharon and I are also involved in preparations as we await the birth of our first child. [K. Ruth].

Newsletter

This publication is our first attempt at a newsletter. As anyone who has ever written creatively knows, publications are often begun in the style of the author, but soon take on a life of their own, and develop characteristics often far different from that of their creators. This is your newsletter. We want nothing more than for all of you to have a part in its upbringing.

If anyone wants to write articles, or experiences, or has news about lighthouses anywhere that they would like to put in the newsletter, I would welcome it. I can’t do it all myself.

If you want to submit anything, it would be great if anyone who has access to a computer would write their submission in their word processor and save the file in ASCII format. This enables the article to be imported into my page layout program with a minimum of effort and re-typing. We will take submissions, however, any way we can get them; we don’t want to discourage anyone.

At present the newsletter is being written using First Choice and then imported into ‘Timeworks’ Publish It! I have a 386SX clone, 16mb, with a 5.25” HD drive and a 3.5”HD drive, a 65mb 20ms RLL hard drive, a 16 bit 512K super VGA card and multisync monitor, and 2mb ram. I have a 2400 baud modem also.

The newsletter masters will have to be printed on either a borrowed or rented laser printer or my dot matrix printer, whichever I can get access to at the time and printed on a copy machine. If anyone has any other computer or printing capabilities and would like to help with the newsletter, please contact me.

Contributors to this issue include Jim Gowdy, Jack Granger, Helen Mountney, Nancy Mathews, and Kim Ruth. Kim did the layout and editing, and my wife, Sharon proofed it.

Coming Events

Bike to the Beacons

September 15, 1990, Sponsored by the Shore Cycle Club. Start from the Davies Sport Complex in Middle Township, Cape May Court House, ride north from Central Cape May County to the East Point Lighthouse which will be open for tours in the morning. Then south to Cape May Point Lighthouse. Registration is $8.00, $10.00 after August 20th. For more information call Alex or Nancy May (609) 628-2358. [Nancy Mathews].

South Jersey Lighthouse Tour

September 22, 1990 - Sponsored by the Egg Harbor Township & Somers Point Recreation Departments. For more information call (609) 926-4029 or (609) 927-5253. The cost is $15.00. [Nancy Mathews].

Future Meetings

Our winter meeting will almost certainly be held at the Sea Girt Lighthouse in New Jersey. We need only to set a date for that meeting and arrangements will be made.

Good possibilities for meeting places in 1991 include the BARNEGAT LIGHTSHIP at Penn’s Landing in Philadelphia, and the Navesink Twin Lights, near Sandy Hook, New Jersey.

We’ll look into other possible locations such as near the Cape May and Hereford Inlet Lighthouses, and possibly in Northern Delaware near one of the rear range lights there.