The Little Red Lighthouse

By Katherine House

Jeffrey's Hook lighthouse in New York is one of the most famous in America, yet many people are surprised to find out that it actually exists. That's because the lighthouse was depicted in a classic children's fiction book, The Little Red Lighthouse and the Great Gray Bridge. Readers of all ages fell in love with "Little Red" as it struggled to define its role next to its new neighbor, the Great Gray Bridge, which in real life is New York City's George Washington Bridge. The children's tale ultimately helped save the lighthouse from destruction in the 1950s, but the story of the Jeffrey's Hook lighthouse begins much earlier.

Jeffrey's Hook, a rocky promontory along the Hudson River in upper Manhattan, was marked by a post light in 1889. From the wooden post, hung two oil lanterns with fixed red lights which were spaced vertically 10 feet apart. Apparently, the lights were inadequate for ships navigating the Hudson. In 1895, the Lighthouse Board's Annual Report noted that a larger light and fog bell were needed. According to this document, "The point extends well out into the river, with deep water close to its outer end. The usual route of steamers passing up and down the river is close to the point. The present post light should be replaced by a new structure, upon which should be the lantern with the bell below."

The Lighthouse Board Annual Report in 1897 said that the New York City Department of Public Parks had granted permission for construction of a more powerful light at the site.

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Jeffrey's Hook was part of Fort Washington Park, which had been established a year earlier. Money for the light tower was not appropriated until 1916, and the lighthouse that stands today next to the George Washington Bridge was erected on the site in 1921.

The red cast iron lighthouse was not a new structure, however. Originally, it had been erected in 1880 at Sandy Hook, N.J., replacing a wooden tower referred to as the East Beacon because it stood on the eastern side of the north tip of the Hook. When the cast iron tower was erected, it was known as the Hook Beacon or the North Hook Beacon. During World War I, the tower was in the firing line of Fort Hancock's gun batteries, and the Army requested its removal. The structure was dismantled and probably stored at the Third District depot on Staten Island.

A 100-candlepower acetylene lamp and a fifth order lens were installed in the tower at Jeffrey's Hook. The 40-foot-tall lighthouse is the only lighthouse on the island of Manhattan, although there is a lighthouse on Roosevelt Island in New York City's East River. In 1921, when the tower was built at Jeffrey's Hook, the Lamplighter position was upgraded to Lamp Attendant with a base pay of $540 per year.

Information about the lighthouse keepers at Jeffrey's Hook is scarce. An article in a Bergen County newspaper from the 1960s mentions that a building superintendent in Manhattan's Washington Heights area kept the light at the time the George Washington Bridge was constructed. In the article, a former manager of the bridge remembers a day when the bridge was under construction and a contractor was washing down a section of the roadway. Water landed on the keeper, and the bridge manager recalls, "[He] had just finished cleaning the interior and he came storming out, ready to lay hands on the culprit." The man also recalled for the newspaper that the lighthouse's fog bell was loud enough that the residents of Fort Lee could hear it.

Three years before the East Hook beacon was installed at Jeffrey's Hook, the New York City Commissioner of Parks sent a letter to the Lighthouse Service in Tompkinsville, N.Y., saying that if the lighthouse tower ever outlived its usefulness, it would need to be removed immediately and the park territory restored to its original condition. Perhaps even 80 years ago, city officials were concerned about liability, or maybe they didn't see how a lighthouse could enhance a city park.

Whatever the reason, that agreement was the start of Little Red's troubles because the tower became obsolete sooner than anyone could have imagined. For years, engineers, politicians and others had been debating the feasibility of a bridge spanning the Hudson and linking New Jersey to Manhattan. Ultimately, the site for the bridge was chosen in upper Manhattan across the river from Fort Lee, N.J. Politicians and local residents crowded the area around the Jeffrey's Hook lighthouse in the fall of 1927 when a groundbreaking ceremony for the bridge was held. Construction crews then occupied Fort Washington Park when the New York bridge tower was built adjacent to the lighthouse. The bridge was opened in 1931, and its lights rendered the Jeffrey's Hook lighthouse obsolete.

![The George Washington Bridge dwarfs the Jeffrey's Hook Lighthouse](image)

The tower, which appeared miniature next to the massive George Washington Bridge, captured the imagination of author Hildegard Swift, who lived in the area. Her book, illustrated by Lynd Ward, was popular with reviewers and children from the outset. Book Review Digest quotes a review in Booklist as saying, "There is just enough humanizing in the pictures—the intimation of a face on the tower, fog forming a grasping hand—to maintain the human spirit of the story and lead to its message: 'Each to his own place, little brother.' In three colors, the night scenes are especially beautiful."

Alas, although the storybook showed that the bridge and lighthouse could work together, a happy ending was not to be in real life—or so it seemed. The Coast Guard decommissioned the light in 1947. In keeping with the Parks Department's wishes, the Coast Guard put Little Red up for auction in 1951. Interested parties were required to submit bids to the Coast Guard, with the stipulation that the successful bidder would remove the structure and the foundation within 30 days and clear away all debris without assistance from the government.

No one was prepared for what happened next. Children began sending pennies, nickels and dimes to the Coast Guard so the lighthouse could be saved. A child psychologist was quoted in the New York Times as saying the lighthouse had "become a symbol of security for many of the city's children." A writer in the Times said:
“Suddenly the darkened tower at the foot of 168th Street has become as conspicuous to New Yorkers as it was when it lighted up the shoals of Jeffrey's Hook, before it was overshadowed by the springing span of the bridge. They [passers-by] lament its loss for the sake of the children, to whom it is a kind of fairy fortress on the river bank. Or for the sake of the birds that nest where the flashing lanterns used to be. Or for the sake of the picture it makes: it might have been placed there by an artist as an exclamation mark to point up the mighty proportions of the soaring arc above. Or just for the sake of itself, a useless little lighthouse that adds a smile to the landscape because it brings past and present into quaint and happy juxtaposition.”

Indeed it does, and children and adults everywhere are very, very proud of New York’s Little Red Lighthouse.

Katherine House, an NJLHS member now living in Iowa, visited the Little Red Lighthouse often when she lived in Bergen County, N.J. While in the New York area, she researched the Jeffrey's Hook lighthouse. She is interested in hearing from other members who have photographs or written materials about Little Red. Her address is 233 Linden Ct., Iowa City, IA 52245, or send e-mail to khouse3676@aol.com.

Even so, Little Red's woes weren't over. The doors were welded shut, its concrete base was cracked, and it became a popular target for graffiti. Many years later, New York City Comptroller Harrison J. Goldin was driving down Riverside Drive with his 10-year-old-son Matthew, who had read the book about the lighthouse in school. Father and son began talking about how nice it would be if the lighthouse were open to the public. In 1982, the city's Parks Commissioner announced that the lighthouse and surrounding Fort Washington Park would be restored.

The wheels of government can turn slowly, however, and restoration was not complete until 1986. Little Red was declared a city landmark in 1991 by the city's Landmarks Preservation Commission. Today, the New York City Urban Park Rangers are responsible for taking school groups and visitors through the tower. The Park Rangers have organized a Little Red Lighthouse Festival every fall since 1992 featuring food, music and lighthouse tours. Visitors can climb to the top of the lighthouse and enjoy magnificent views from the 10-sided lantern room and the gallery. On a clear day, you can see apartment buildings in Fort Lee, the skyscrapers in Manhattan and boats on the river. You can always hear and see the traffic on the George Washington Bridge.

More than 40 years ago, a stationery company published an advertisement featuring famous lighthouses of the United States. Information about the Jeffrey's Hook Lighthouse was included in the ad, which said “The Little Red Lighthouse now belongs to the City of New York as a beacon to children instead of to ships.”

Society News

NJLHS Annual Elections
At the September meeting/cruise, the nominating committee, consisting of members Jim and Nancy Cope, Bill Volpe, Bill Geilfuss and Steve Swiencki submitted the names of 3 candidates for Director and 1 for Corresponding Secretary. The candidates for the Board of Directors are: Al Smith (seeking his second term), Ray Vliet and Bill Volpe. The candidate submitted for Corresponding Secretary is Rich Hellenbrecht. Betty Smith was nominated from the floor for Corresponding Secretary. Her nomination was noted and accepted.

Al Smith
Husband of Betty Smith, Al is running for his second term on the Board of Directors. Al lives in Audubon Park in Camden County and works for PSE&G as a Collection Representative. He is a long-time member of the Audubon Park Fire Company, United States Lighthouse Society and USLHS-Chesapeake Chapter and the Maurice River Historical Society where he also serves as Treasurer. He has been a member of NJLHS since 1991. Al organized this year’s Photo Contest and Raffle. He is also one of the volunteers conducting the Sandy Hook Lighthouse tours. In his spare time he travels from Nova Scotia to Florida in search of lighthouses.

Ray Vliet
Born in the Gladstone-Peapack area, Ray graduated from Highland Park High School and attended Queens College. He served 18 months in the U.S. Army and retired fifteen years ago as Chief of the Edison Fire Department. Ray was an instructor/lecturer at Middlesex County College for 12 years. He was President of the National Association of Arson Investigators. Ray and Ilse have been members of NJLHS since 1993.

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Bill Volpe
Bill is running for his first term on the NJLHS Board of Directors. He lives in North Brunswick with his wife of 33 years, Ann. They have four children. Bill is the Assistant Controller of Rutgers University. He joined NJLHS in 1995 and has attended all of the society's trips since joining. He volunteers as one of the Sandy Hook Tour Guides, and is working on plans for the society's first dinner/dance social. His lighthouse travels have taken him from New England to South Carolina.

Rich Hellenbrecht
Rich is one of the founding members of NJLHS. He served on the Board of Directors from January, 1992-September, 1993. He designed the original logo for the organization. He is a member of GLKAA, USLHS, and the New England Lighthouse Foundation. A former IBM employee, he is interested in lighthouse and Life-Saving Service history.

Betty Smith
A graduate of Camden Catholic High School, and wife of Director Al Smith. They have two grown children and run a small information retrieval service in addition to her regular job as a para-legal. Betty serves on the Sandy Hook Tour Committee. She originated and has served on the hospitality committee since its beginning in September, 1993. She has also worked with husband Al, on the Photo Contest.

5th Annual
NJLHS Photo Contest
Encouraged by the number of entries and participants in last year's contest, we're going to follow a similar format this year. The winners will again be decided by popular balloting. The categories again are Close-up, Documentary, and Landscape. A Master's category has been added.

Entrants in the close-up category cannot show the entire lighthouse, only a portion or detail of the lighthouse. The documentary category should show the lighthouse and a minimal amount of the surrounding area. Entries in the landscape category will show the lighthouse with a generous amount of the surrounding area. Contestants will be permitted to suggest in which category they feel their entry should be, but the decision of the Photo Committee is final.

Contestants are permitted three entries in the show, but there is no limit to the number of entries by a contestant in any category.

While not prohibited, entries smaller than 5"x 7" do not show well against larger pictures and your chances of winning are greatly reduced.

Winning 1st, 2nd and 3rd place entries in any previous NJLHS contest must be entered in the Masters category. There are no sub-divisions of the Masters category.

The deadline for entries is March 21, 1998 at the Spring Meeting. If at all possible, please have entries submitted prior to the contest date. Entries may be delivered to Twin Lights, Sandy Hook (on NJLHS tour dates and times) or mailed to Al Smith, 7 Goldfinch Road, Audubon, New Jersey 08106. This will help eliminate some of the craziness on the day of the contest.

Rules and entry form are enclosed with this issue of The Beam.

Little Red Lighthouse Bus Trip
by Carole DiNapoli

Our fall '97 activity took us to the "Little Red Lighthouse" in New York City on October 19th. Once again, the weather did not cooperate. Lucky for us we switched from boats to buses.

Our trip took us from the Sears parking lot in New Brunswick, New Jersey to 181st Street in New York City. There we were met by two New York Urban Rangers, Delli and Mark. Under their capable supervision 65 NJLHS members hiked into Fort Washington Park. We followed the Little Red Lighthouses that were painted on the sidewalks, while Delli gave an informal talk. It was quite a strenuous walk and I thank everyone for their endurance. Delli had the magic key and soon we were taking turns going to the top. Lunch at the picnic tables was cut short by the cool, windy drizzle, but this didn’t stop the photographers.

Thanks to all who made our first bus trip a success, and special thanks to Delli and Mark.

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Little Red Lighthouse Excursion

Photo Credits
Left—Stave Martarano
Above—Carole DiNapoli
NJLHS Spring Activity
Maine Lighthouse Bus Trip

by Carole DiNapoli

NJLHS Spring '98 Activity will be our first extended lighthouse adventure. Plans are in the works for a 4-night, 5-day bus trip to Maine. The trip is scheduled to begin on Sunday, May 31, 1998. Some of the highlights of the trip will be: Cape Neddick Light (The Nubble), Cape Elizabeth Light, Portland Head Light, a Boothbay Harbor Cruise, a visit to the Shore Village Museum, and a stop at Lighthouse Depot. More details will be available soon.

Edmund Renner
Memorial Fund Established

Edmund Renner, known as Ted, crossed the bar in late October, 1997. He was the General Manager of Petro Federal Oil Company in Vineland, New Jersey. He was an avid sportfisherman and was intensely interested in lighthouses and lighthouse preservation. According to daughter Melissa, whenever they went on vacations he had to seek out all the lighthouses on the route and in the area. The family wanted to have contributions made to a cause in lieu of flowers. Melissa found NJLHS on the Internet, and said “I wish I had it sooner, for I am certain that he would have liked to have participated.”

NJLHS has received a number of contributions and is establishing the Edmund (Ted) Renner Memorial Preservation Fund. The Board is examining a number of options for the use of the contributions and will make decisions in consultation with family members. We are deeply appreciative of this gesture.

Jack Granger Speaks at Elderhostel

In August, Jack Granger had the privilege of being one of three presenters offering a week-long program on lighthouses and other topics at an Elderhostel held at Fort Monroe in Hampton Bays, Virginia. The location was right across the James River from the Norfolk Naval Base. As a result, he saw a week-long “parade” of naval vessels from the nuclear submarines to a gigantic nuclear carrier.

The site of the Elderhostel was the historic Chamberlain Hotel at equally historic Fort Monroe, which dates back to the early 17th century. It is the location of the headquarters of the Training and Indoctrination Corps of the Army. It is also the site of the Old Point Comfort Lighthouse (VA not NJ). The fort was built and partially designed by Robert E. Lee, then a young Lieutenant in the US Corps of Engineers. His first child was born at the fort. Its prison or “casement” held Jefferson Davis for two years. The post chapel is the oldest chapel on any military installation and was the site of the wedding of President Eisenhower’s son, John.

Jack’s program consisted of a brief history of lighthouses, and a slide presentation of about 100 lights on the East Coast, Canadian Maritimes, Great Lakes and West Coast, weighted heavily towards lighthouse preservation.

The program highlighted the preservation efforts underway and planned in New Jersey. Jack also showed three tapes covering the moving of the Southeast Light on Block Island, the Highland Light in North Truro, Massachusetts, and of the repair work that was done at Cape May.

The 46 attendees came from all over the United States; most already had a favorite lighthouse, which made for good audience participation. Subsequently, some of the attendees sent Jack letters and gifts, including sweat shirts and even a historic book covering Fire Island, including the Fire Island Lighthouse and its restoration, which one person in the group had written.

President's Corner

by Tom Laverty

As the year comes to an end I would like to thank all the members who worked so hard to make 1997 a success for the organization. More members than ever were involved in the operations of the Society. We participated in more festivals, lighthouse celebrations, dedication ceremonies and lighthouse programs than in any other year of our existence.

Tours of Sandy Hook Lighthouse have been well received by the public. More than two thousand visitors were able to climb

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that historic structure because of the efforts of our lighthouse volunteers. We had several great meetings and, despite the weather, managed to take trips up the Hudson River, out into Delaware Bay, and across to New York City to see the Jeffrey's Hook Lighthouse. In 1998, we will be looking at a proposal by the National Park Service to take over part of the Sandy Hook lighthouse keeper's quarters, plan a four-day-three night lighthouse trip to New England, and assist with a television documentary about New Jersey Lighthouses. The New Jersey Lighthouse Society has come a long way. I hope you can join us.

Tom Laverty being interviewed by NJN on the Delaware Bay trip
Photo by Rich Hellenrech

Please remember that December is our annual election meeting. Your participation is needed to select people to continue the growth and positive activities of the Society. (Ed. Absentee ballots enclosed with this issue of The Beam).

Have a safe and happy holiday! We will see you in 1998.

Notes from Near and Far

Conover Beacon Update:
Middletown Township has leased the Conover Beacon from the federal government. Conover Beacon was established in 1856, as part of a system of range lights guiding mariners through the Raritan and Sandy Hook Bays at the entrance to New York Harbor. Conover ranged with the Chapel Hill Lighthouse marking the Chapel Hill Channel. In the 1940's, the current skeleton tower moved from Keansburg, New Jersey, where it had been the Point Comfort front range light, and replaced the original wooden Conover Beacon. The lease will allow a citizens group in the Leonardo section of Middletown, to become involved in its preservation.

National Lighthouse Museum
National Lighthouse Museum Steering Committee held their 2nd meeting on October 24-25 1997, in Alexandria, Virginia. NJLHS was represented by Yvonne Miller and Al Smith. The purpose of this meeting was to review and select the site for a future National Lighthouse Museum. Several areas around the United States presented proposals and the site selection sub-committee narrowed them down to three sites: Staten Island, NY, (former Tompkinsville Lighthouse depot), Mackinac City, and Hull, Massachusetts (home of the U.S. Life Saving Service Museum).

All three sites will be submitting financial proposals and other site proposals will be reviewed as long as their proposals include the established criteria. The Site Sub-Committee will be making site visits between now and March 28, 1998.

Tom Laverty, President of NJLHS, has been appointed to the steering committee. Interim officers of the Committee are:

President, Ralph Eshelman; 1st V.P., Wayne Wheeler, USLHS; 2nd V.P., Dick Moehl, G.L.L.K.A.; Secretary, Charlotte Johnson, Rose Island Lighthouse, R.I.; Treasurer, Ken Black, Shore Village Museum, Rockland, Maine.

Mira Books contest — Win a Lighthouse Getaway
MIRA Books has announced a contest in anticipation of the publication of The Lighthouse, by Susan Wiggs.
Contestants must tell why they would like to go back in time for a romantic retreat in 100 words or less. The prize is a 3 night stay for two at the Keeper's House, an inn off the Maine Coast on Isle Au Haut.

Contestants must submit essays by January 1, 1998 to:

Lightkeeper Contest
Dunwoodie Communications
386 Park Avenue
18th Floor
New York, NY 10016

Include your name, address and daytime phone number with area code. Entries will become the property of Mira Books and may be used for publicity purposes. The winner will be announced on February 1, 1998 and the trip must be taken in the summer of 1998, subject to the availability of lodging within the Keeper's House operating schedule.

BOOM! BOOM! It was no doubt the most beautiful Fourth of July you ever saw! Just beautiful!

The child's play seemed fun at the time, but its consequences weren't. Anna's father, Vern Bowen had to write a special report to explain why his supply of gasoline was depleted. Anna herself had to talk to the lighthouse inspector and explain that her father had warned her frequently not to go near the gasoline barrels. The inspector lectured her and told her airplanes could crash because she simply wanted to smell the gasoline on her island. That, she says, was the beginning of her respect for lighthouse work.

Anna's harrowing story is one of dozens of interesting anecdotes told in Lighthouse Families that provide insight into everyday life at lighthouse stations earlier this century. Shelton-Roberts is founder and president of the Outer Banks Lighthouse Society and editor of the society's publication Lighthouse News. Her husband Bruce is a well-known photographer who has co-authored the popular lighthouse books by Globe-Pequot Press, including Mid-Atlantic Lighthouses and New England Lighthouses.

In the introduction to their book, published this summer by Crane Hill Publishers ($29.95), the authors say, "While the future of lighthouse buildings looks relatively secure, the memories of the U.S. Lighthouse Service and the families and children who called lighthouse keeper's dwellings 'home' are still in jeopardy of being lost forever. That's why we compiled this book." The authors spent more than five years seeking out and talking with lighthouse children for this remarkable volume that highlights a facet of lightkeeping that is often neglected by writers.

The results of the authors' hard work are impressive. The book is divided into 13 chapters about life at a variety of light stations, including Cape Flattery, Washington; Old Mackinac Point, Mich.; Outer Island, Wisconsin; and Morris Island, South Carolina. Several southeastern lights are featured, including Cape Hatteras as well as the screwpile Croatan River Light and Long Shoal River Light in North Carolina, which no longer survive. Some of the lighthouse children interviewed recall life at multiple lighthouses. There are no chapters about life at New Jersey lighthouses, however.

Nearly every chapter opens with a color photo of the lighthouse as it appears today. The text is supplemented by numerous black and white photos taken from family scrapbooks of the people interviewed. Each chapter includes a family recipe or two, such as the one for cinnamon rolls, a specialty of Anna Bowen Hoge's mother. The final section of each chapter explains the current state of each lighthouse profiled, such as restoration efforts and accessibility to the site.

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I had a hard time putting this book down. It's must reading for anyone interested in family life at the nation's lighthouses. Although the authors have a clear understanding of the Lighthouse Service and how lighthouses work, those interested in the technical workings of lighthouses won't find much to satisfy them here. Instead, the volume is filled with priceless stories about topics such as going to school, gathering food, doing chores and finding entertainment, sometimes on a rocky island miles from shore and other playmates.

Readers will delight in Anna Hoge's story about how she and her sister lowered a visiting boy down the side of a cliff on a rope to retrieve a bird's nest, only to be unable to pull the lad back up by themselves. His parents never let him visit again. Or how an enterprising Wilma and Cracker Daniels gave tours of the St. Augustine Lighthouse to visitors during the Depression. They always handed tourists a "free" post card, which resulted in a donation of a nickel or a dime, a pretty good gift for kids then since movies cost 10 cents.

June Dudley Watts, who was born in 1908, recalls how she sometimes was picked up by a derrick and swung in a bosun's chair to transport her on and off Saddleback Ledge Light Station when the weather was too rough for a safe landing. A photo shows June riding in the chair circa 1920. The most startling stories come from the Owens sisters, who lived at Point Arena (California) light station during World War II. Joan recalls when the Coast Guard ordered blackouts and how her parents moved their children from an upstairs bedroom to a downstairs bedroom near theirs as a precaution. Keeper Bill Owens periodically spotted Japanese subs just offshore.

And in a bizarre footnote to history, Keeper Owens heard what sounded like a nearby battle in August 1945, two days before the war ended. It turns out that the Japanese had landed on a nearby beach. Although Lighthouse Families says that the U.S. Navy never released an account of what happened near the lighthouse, Bill Owens told a local newspaper of seeing rice bowls and blood plasma bags on the beach after he heard the sounds of battle.

Lighthouse Families is must reading for lighthouse enthusiasts. Its anecdotes are warm, funny, interesting and at times poignant. But they are invaluable because the words of the keepers' children paint a picture of daily life in a world that no longer exists.

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Groundbreaking for Keeper's House at Absecon Light

by Rich & Elinor Veit

On September 17, 1997, the Inlet Public/Private Association (IPPA) and the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority (CRDA), in a joint effort, held the groundbreaking ceremonies for the reconstruction of the Lightkeeper's House at Absecon Lighthouse.

After an introduction by Sara Cureton, Executive Director of Absecon Lighthouse, and speeches by a number of state and local dignitaries, the actual groundbreaking got under way. Gregory Foran, great-great-grandson of the last lighthouse keeper of Absecon Lighthouse, assisted by Bill Geifuss of NJLHS (dressed in a lightkeeper's uniform), turned the first shovel of earth.

The festivities were attended by a number of NJLHS members as well as IPPA and CRDA members, local residents of the Inlet Section of Atlantic City and representatives of the press. After ceremonies, refreshments were served, including lighthouse shaped cookies.

Almost immediately after the ground breaking ceremonies, a fence went up around the new construction site. During the first week in October, an archaeological dig was begun. The old foundation of the lightkeeper's house was first exposed with the help of a backhoe, carefully directed by Tom Crist, archaeologist in charge of the dig. The dig went on for about ten days. It yielded a number of old bottles and other artifacts as well as old masonry edging used in the original landscaping.

At the same time the archaeologists were working, masonry restoration was started on the tower. A lot of the old mortar and some of the old brick had to be removed. Fresh cement was mixed on site. However, matching brick had to be brought in from the demolition of an old building in Pennsylvania.

Funding for the reconstruction of the lightkeeper's house is provided by the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority. Restoration of the Absecon Lighthouse Site is a project of the IPPA.

Absecon Lighthouse is a state-owned historic site within the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Parks and Forestry. It is listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Sites. (See photo spread page 10)

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Ground Breaking for Absecon Lightkeeper's House
Photos by Elinor Veit

Ground Breaking for lightkeeper’s house
September 17, 1997

Gregory Foran, great-great grandson of the last keeper of Absecon Lighthouse, breaking ground for the construction of the lightkeeper’s house. He is aided by Bill Geifflus of NJLHS (in keeper’s uniform). Looking on is Sara Cureton, Exec. Dir. of the IPPA, Frederick Nickels, Chairperson of CRDA, Stuart Wiser, President of the IPPA, and Gibb Jones, councilman of the district that includes the lighthouse.

Archaeologist Crist and assistant Wandy Perry guide a backhoe to expose the foundation.

Tom Crist, head Archaeologist, showing some bottles found at the Absecon Lighthouse site.

Detail from a 100 year old snapshot showing the lightkeeper’s house (on left). Note the 3rd floor which was replaced by a hip roof in 1908. Courtesy of Marine Printing, Atlantic City.
Program Signals
by Yvonne Miller

Winter Meeting - December 6, 1997
The Winter Meeting will start at 11:00 a.m. at the Henry Hudson Regional High School, Highlands, New Jersey. Hospitality will be served at 10:30 a.m. This is the annual election meeting. Slides and commentary by Jim and Nancy Cope will be presented. Please bring your lunch. There will be a break for lunch between the meeting and the presentation. Visits to the Conover and Chapel Hill Rear Range Light will be arranged. Because of limited parking at both sites, specific instructions and directions to the lighthouses will be distributed at the meeting. We ask that you please respect the privacy of the residents at Chapel Hill and not visit in advance of the group.

Directions to Henry Hudson Regional High School
A. From South Jersey: Get onto the Garden State Parkway North and proceed to Exit 105 (Eatontown). Take Highway 36 North for Eatontown, Monmouth Park (but beware, you will actually be going East). Stay on 36 as it goes through the towns of Long Branch (it turns left and actually heads North along the ocean), Monmouth Beach, and Sea Bright. When you see the signs for the entrance to Sandy Hook stay on Route 36 which bears left and crosses the Highlands Bridge. If you are on the correct bridge Navesink Twin Lights is on the hill overlooking the bridge. (If you are crossing the bridge and do not see a hill with a lot of condos and the lighthouse looming ahead, turn around, you're in the wrong place!) Go over the bridge and make the first right turn as you come off the bridge. Go down the hill, under the bridge and back up the hill on the other side. At the top of the hill by the bridge you will make a left turn onto Portland Road (if you went straight, the road would take you to the entrance for Twin Lights, but we are not going there). The meeting will be at the Henry Hudson High School. See PART C below for further directions.

B. From North Jersey: Get to the Garden State Parkway and proceed South to Exit 117 (Keyport/Hazlet). Take Highway 36 South (yes, you will really be going East) for about 12 miles into Highlands. Make the last right turn before crossing the bridge, which is Portland Road. Go straight up Portland Road (you will see the Twin Lights signs indicating a right turn. We are going to the Henry Hudson High School for the meeting - so go straight). See Part C below for further directions.

C. Portland Road winds up the hillside eventually making a sharp right turn at the top (If you go straight at the top of Portland you will go into the County Park entrance known as Rocky Point). After turning right, proceed to the next intersect-

(Continued on page 12)
tion. The school parking lot is in front of you. The school is to the right and condominiums on the left. Park in the school lot and enter the building at the doors off that parking lot. Once inside, you will walk down a long hallway to the end, passing the gym, and make a left turn. The cafeteria is right around the corner to the left.

Spring Meeting

Arrangements are being made for the Annual Photo Contest Meeting to be held on March 21, 1998 at Fort Wadsworth on Staten Island, New York. Guest speaker will be Elinor De Wire, noted lighthouse lecturer and author of Guardians of the Lights, and Guide to Florida Lighthouses. More details will be published in the March Beam.

Fall Meeting Recap

The meeting/cruise on the Delaware Bay from Cape May was attended by 160 members and guests. While high winds and rough seas at first threatened to drastically curtail our itinerary, the bay calmed down and we reached Ship John Shoal Lighthouse in record time. Despite the rough beginning, we smoothly cruised past Miah Maull, Elbow of Cross Ledge, the Rockpile, Fourteen Foot Bank, and Brandywine Shoal. Jim Gowdy gave us the history of each light as we approached and Captain Jeff Stuart gave us plenty of time to take photos. Captain Stuart gave us a bonus with a rounding of Cape May Point. We glided past the concrete ship, Cape May Lighthouse and through the canal from the ocean past the Coast Guard station. I think everyone would agree it was one of the most successful meetings we have had. The Stuart Family and crew of the Cape May Whale Watcher were attentive and the food was great! They even provided a sheet cake decorated with the Brandywine Shoal Lighthouse.

Happy Holidays

Editor Kim, wife and proofreader Sharon and the rest of the envelope stuffin’, stamp lickin’ gang (a.k.a. The Wrecking Crew): Mike (top), (l-r) Kevin, Eamonn and Sean Colin, at The Beam wish all of you the happiest of holidays and a safe and prosperous New Year.

Thanks to all of you who have made this newsletter possible.