



The Bay Run



Newsletter of
The Delaware Bay Lighthouse Keepers
and Friends Association, Inc.

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“Our mission is to preserve the history of the
Delaware Bay and River Lighthouses, Lightships and their Keepers”

SALUTING THE HORSESHOE CRABS ET ALL

The Horseshoe crabs are a fundamental part of the Delaware Bay ecology and are an essential part in the lifecycle of migratory shore birds. Each year migrating shorebirds stop along the Delaware Bay and River, part of their yearly migration cycle, to feast on exposed eggs left by the horseshoe crabs. This migration is prompted by a number of variables including: food availability, safer nesting sites, weather conditions and breeding locations. The Delaware Bayshore is a critical stopover site enroute to the shorebirds nesting grounds in the Arctic. Their arrival on the Bay coincides with the horseshoe crab spawn since the exposed horseshoe crab eggs are critical food and fuel after the birds have traveled nonstop for thousands of miles on their trip North.



Besides providing food, the Horseshoe crabs are important for another reason. Their blood saves human lives by ensuring that vaccines, implant devices, and medical tools are free of dangerous bacteria. In the early 1950's, Fredrick Bang discovered that Horseshoe crab blood cells contained a clotting agent that bonds with hazardous endotoxins produced by some bacteria. Also in the 1950's, it was discovered that chitin, a material found in the crab's carapace, contains wound-healing characteristics. Some bandages and sutures use this chitin because of its unique antiseptic properties, placing more stress on the Horseshoe crab population.

During the month of May, the Delaware Bay plays host to the crabs' largest and most viable population in the world. Their numbers have been threatened by over-harvesting for bait, making the Horseshoe crab the center of a number of protection controversies. New Jersey has adopted restrictions to help protect the crabs but many other states did not, consequently, the crab population remained at risk. Today, the Atlantic Marine Fishery regulators have instituted protective measures that transcend state boundaries.

Showing that people do care, every year hundreds of volunteers, following detailed marching orders, are coordinated by the conservation community in a rescue effort. On the Bayshore, some of the horseshoe crabs inadvertently have flipped over or are stranded in beach rubble. They can often right themselves but occasionally need a helping hand from volunteers. Citizens United to Protect the Maurice River and the Wetlands Institute are

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Angelo S. Rigazio, Jr.



Ahoy from the desk of the president and a happy spring to you all as the year nears April 1. Due to a mild winter, (we only suffered through a few cold and windy days), we already have trees, shrubs and flowers blooming. Come on, Spring!!

On February 22, our winter meeting was hosted by Nancy Patterson-Tidy at East Point Lighthouse in Heislerville, New Jersey. Not only did we share fellowship and socialization, but the entertaining and informative meeting proved to be a learning experience for all of us. It was a pleasure meeting people interested in gleaning knowledge and learning more about the future of the Delaware Bay Lighthouses. So, welcome aboard!

Our guest speakers, Meghan Wren and her husband, Captain Jessie Briggs, gave a brief history of the Bayshore Center at Bivalve and New Jersey’s tall ship, the AJ Meerwald. Meghan explained what it was like growing up in the Delaware Bay area and how both she and Jessie worked to make the Bayshore Discovery Project so successful.

Our neighbor, Marie, attended the meeting with us. She stated she was fascinated by the information she learned and loved visiting the beautifully refurbished lighthouse. I invite you all to join us at future meetings so that you, too, can hear stories from the people that actually lived them and learn more about the history of the Delaware Bay and its surrounding areas. Keep the lights shining.

Angelo

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**For Newsletter ideas, Contact
DBLHKFA c/o Maxine Mulligan**

1049 Simca Terrace, Vineland, New Jersey 08360
Email: Memax1@juno.com

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Phone Numbers and Email Addresses

- | | |
|---|---|
| A. Rigazio-(609) 884-1329 • Keeperang54@yahoo.com | R & M Mulligan-(856) 691-8224 • Memax1@juno.com |
| Katie Moser-(215) 884-8548 • KatieMos@aol.com | K. Mulligan-(856) 691-8224 • Kellys.light.house@gmail.com |
| D. Rigazio-(609) 884-1329 • Darlenej50@yahoo.com | P. Stapleford-(484) 947-3191 • mspegstapleford@windstream.net |
| T. Giletto-(856) 482-8874 • Nino21328@aol.com | Mary Ellen Walker - (856) 447-3158 |



On Christmas Day of 2019, Marvin White, Charles Bolton, a few other former “coasties” and I spent the day with recruits from Base Cape May. Three bus loads of recruits were driven from Cape May to the Elks Club in Millville, NJ where they were entertained and enjoyed a delightful buffet for the entire day. I was lucky enough to sit with some of the recruits from Idaho and California. It is always enjoyable spending time with these young recruits; it brings back many fond memories of my coast guard experience.

We had a great winter meeting at East Point Lighthouse in February. Our guest speakers, Megan Wren and Jessie Briggs, gave an interesting power point presentation on the Delaware Bay and the surrounding coastal settlements in New Jersey. Both speakers were raised near bodies of water; their families were involved in several nautical activities which had a great impact on their lives. Raised in the Chesapeake Bay area where Jessie’s father owned a tugboat, Jessie was constantly involved in various boating activities. His father was instrumental in beginning the Norfolk, VA Boat Festival. Megan, whose family had a summer home in the Delaware Bay area, stated that when she visited the Statue of Liberty’s 100th Birthday Celebration in New York Harbor, the Parade of Tall Ships drew her interest and she was “hooked”. Their interest drew them together and they became involved in the Bay Shore Project, (and each other). This Project concerned the restoration of The AJ Meerwald and the shipping sheds in BiValve, NJ. Many fund raising activities were conducted to help finance these restoration efforts. One of these activities came to fruition with Megan’s swim of the 13.1 miles across the Delaware Bay from Port Mahon, Delaware to Fortescue, New Jersey. This couple is married and has a 14 year old son, Delbay.

Megan and Jessie also spoke of the deterioration of the small towns along the shore of the Delaware Bay. These towns have suffered through several high tides, storms and hurricanes, so much that some of them are now deserted. Many people, still suffering the impact of “Super Storm Sandy,” have had to leave their homes. At present, that is what Megan and Jessie are doing since their home on Money Island is also slowly being destroyed by the rising tides and storms in the Bay area. It has become necessary for them to pack up and move on.

We thank them for their interesting, informative presentation and wish them best of luck in their new home. We also appreciate all they have done for the Port Norris/Bivalve area. I am sure the Bay Shore Project would not have been so successful without all their input and hard work. Thanks for all the time and effort you both have put forth.

A plaque was presented to Nancy Patterson-Tidy, Manager of East Point, and her husband, Carl, thanking them for all their work in restoring East Point and fighting to keep the lighthouse and surrounding area intact. They were named “Volunteers of the Year” by our association. Nancy brought us up to date on the happenings at East Point. Our thanks go out to them and the volunteers of Maurice River Township for all their efforts to save East Point Lighthouse.



Left: Pres. Rigazio Presents a plaque to Nancy Patterson - Tidy



Right: Pres. Rigazio thanks guest speakers Megan Wren and Jessie Briggs

by Peggy Stapleford Activities/Program Chairperson



SAVE THE DATES – Mark Your Calendars:

East Point Schedule: Open first and third weekend every month. Special events coming up for spring and summer.

Sunday, April 19 – 25th Annual Keepers Luncheon to be held at Charlesworth Inn, Fortescue, NJ 11:30 AM – 3 PM Guest speaker: Marvin White, Retired Chief Petty Officer, USCG “My Coast Guard Adventures” Please see reservation form for further information.

Monday, August 17 – National Lighthouse Day celebrating all the lighthouses nationally

Summer Picnic/Meeting -- To be announced

Saturday & Sunday, October 17 & 18 – Take the New Jersey Lighthouse Challenge. Visit all New Jersey’s lighthouses in one weekend. “A Fall Weekend of Family fun!”

A bit of organizational history in honor of our 25th anniversary: In 1995, Carole Reily, of Buena, NJ (known locally at “The Lighthouse Lady”) decided to get a group of former lighthouse keepers, their friends and other lighthouse buffs together. It was agreed upon that the goals would be educating the public about the history and tradition of the Delaware Bay Lighthouses and helping to preserve the lighthouses for future generations to enjoy. Meeting 4 times a year, it was decided that one of these meetings would be the Annual Keepers Banquet; another meeting a summer picnic. Meetings would be held at various maritime locations and have speakers on diverse sea worthy subjects. A quarterly newsletter, “The Bay Run” would be published. Consequently, in an effort “to keep the lights shining,” we are celebrating our 25th anniversary this year. Please make an effort to come out to celebrate this occasion with us.

THE MORRO CASTLE SHIPWRECK - The New Jersey coastline has forged a notorious reputation for engulfing doomed ships that ventured too close to her treacherous sandbars running parallel to the shoreline. Many ships have fallen victim to the raging breakers. Despite this reputation, in September of 1934, one such wreck off the Jersey coast was not due to the conditions of the sea. The events leading to the final voyage of the luxury liner, Morro Castle, (built in 1930 and named for the Morro Castle Fortress guarding the entrance to Havana Bay), remain a mystery. It was considered one of the most elite coastal liners in existence. While en route on her 174th trip from Havana, Cuba to New York, a wide range of mysterious events began to unfold. Despite the liner being outfitted with smoke detectors, fire doors, fire hoses and extinguishers, on the second day of the voyage a fire broke out on the ship. It was quickly brought under control and extinguished. A few days later, the captain suddenly died of mysterious causes. The Chief Officer, William Warms, assumed command but shortly after the captain’s death, another fire broke out. At the same time rough seas were being churned up by a northeast wind which added to the confusion amidst the firefighting efforts of the crew. Minutes later the fire was raging out of control. People could view this floating inferno from the beach. Sleeping passengers were awakened and having no other choice, they began jumping overboard into the mounting seas. Many didn’t have the capability to swim the seven miles to the shore. Some people were trapped below the deck by the uncontrollable blaze. The lifeboats were never launched; passengers clung to life jackets or floating debris. Rescue ships responded to the distress calls and arrived on the scene to promptly start picking up survivors. The next day, the Coast Guard tried to tow the still burning ship to New York only to have the towline break, allowing the ship to go adrift. The liner finally grounded broadside off Asbury Park just north of Sea Girt Lighthouse. This lighthouse played a key role in the rescue operations as it served as a provider of first aid and refuge for many of the passengers. It was quite a sight to see; a 508 foot long, 11,500 plus gross ton luxury liner grounded 70 foot off the Jersey coast. Aboard the liner’s final voyage were 316 passengers and 232 crewmembers, (a total of 124 people tragically died). Shortly thereafter, the acting captain and chief engineer were brought to trial for negligence; subsequently, they were convicted and sentenced to two years in prison. They were released two years later when this ruling was overturned. The Morro Castle was eventually gutted and towed to Baltimore for scrap. To this day, the circumstances surrounding the fire remain a mystery. (O’Neill, Patrick, “Atlantic Lighthouse,” Summer, 2000)

DID YOU KNOW?



One of the South Jersey “Top Stories for 2019” concerned the fact that Ocean City had a sea gull problem. It seems that the gulls were “dive bombing” the tourists as they walked on the boardwalk, taking their food and disturbing the populace in general. In order to solve the problem, the city hired a team of professional bird trainers to deploy hawks, falcons and owls above the boardwalk to frighten the gulls and restore order to the popular vacation destination.



Another “Top Story” regards the disappearance of little 5 year old Dulce Marie Alvarez who went missing from Bridgeton City Park in September. Her 3 year old brother saw a man lead Dulce away from the park. She is still missing. THE FBI has been informed and search parties organized. A \$75,000 reward has been offered. Sad, indeed.



In January, a North Carolina man was arrested at the Cape May Coast Guard Base after multiple firearms were found in his vehicle at the base’s security checkpoint. He was found in possession of a handgun, an assault weapon, numerous high capacity magazines, body armor and multiple rounds of ammunition. He claimed to be in attendance in order to observe a friend’s graduation ceremony.



A report from the Annual February Raptor Festival states that the statewide population of Bay Shore eagles is up seven pairs from last year; the nesting population has produced 248 young. (*SNJ Today, February 2020*)



The oldest hotel in Delaware is the Inn at Montchanin Village & Spa which was built in the 19th Century. It consists of 11 buildings dating from 1799 to 1910. Cape May claims the oldest hotel in New Jersey, Congress Hall, which opened in 1816. (*Internet Information, 2020*)



Cove Beach, New Jersey, located near the Cape May Lighthouse, and Rehoboth Beach, Delaware were named the “Best Beach in Each State”. (*Internet information 2020*)



Welch’s Grape Juice once had a stand on the boardwalk in Wildwood, NJ.



Interested in buying a lighthouse? The Historic Wolf Trap Lighthouse, built in 1894, and located in Horn Harbor in the Chesapeake Bay is for sale for \$249,000. It has 5 levels which include 3 bedrooms on the third level and a kitchen and living room on the first level. Call Hunter Law Real Estate at (804) 435-2444 for further information.



Plans are being made to restore the USS Ling, an abandoned 312’ long, 1,500 ton WWII submarine afloat in the Hackensack River in New Jersey. (*Associated Press, March 2020*)



January is named for the Roman god, Janus, who is depicted with two faces; one looking into the past, the other into the future. February comes from the Latin word februa which means “to cleanse”. At one time, Februlia was a month long festival of purification and atonement. March is named for the Roman God of War, Mars, since this was the time of year when military campaigns were resumed after being interrupted by winter. April is derived from the Latin word aperio (to open) because plants begin to grow during this month and buds start to open. And that, my dear friends, is the month name derivation for the first third of the year. (*The Old Farmers’ Almanac, 2020*).

THE DEMISE OF BAY SHORE SETTLEMENTS

After listening to our interesting speakers at the winter meeting, I decided I wanted to learn more about what was taking place in some of the small settlements along the Jersey side of the Delaware Bay. I wanted to see for myself how climate change, hurricanes, storms and rising tides had affected these areas.

Our first stop was **Money Island**, the primary oyster landing port for the State of New Jersey AND the state's second most productive seafood landing port overall. Located in rural Cumberland County, it is the smallest and most remote community in Downe Township and has been promoted as "The nature lover's paradise" of the Delaware Bay shore. The area has been devastated by sea level rise and Hurricane Sandy. More than a dozen seafood harvesters and aquaculture businesses remain. Even with estimated annual sales of about \$20 million including: oysters, conch, eels, blue claw crabs, soft shelled crabs, and Horseshoe crabs (used for medical research), some businesses still remain. Full time residency is slowly dwindling; the island has dropped below 20 occupants. People are slowly giving up their homes, packing and moving inland.



Next on the itinerary was **Gandy's Beach**, which bears the slogan, "The town of Gandy is just so fine and dandy". **Gandy's Beach** was named for a local business man who owned a lot of property in the area. This small village supports a marina and a wildlife conservation area along the route of the yearly bird migration. Residents cruise Cove Road, the town's only road, in golf carts. There are approximately 70 houses in Gandy's Beach, 5 are occupied year round. This settlement has taken the brunt of various storms that struck harder than residents expected. These storms left the community under several feet of water and washed out their only road. A few porches are twisted and/or collapsed; stairs leading up to decks are rickety. Protection projects will probably have to be started by the state or local residents with no help from the federal government. The help, if any, would not be on the scale of the work that would take place along the Atlantic Ocean. Gandy's Beach is listed on the "Top Places to Visit in the Philadelphia Area" so if you are planning to visit, visit soon. (*"Demise of Settlements" to be continued in summer issue.*)



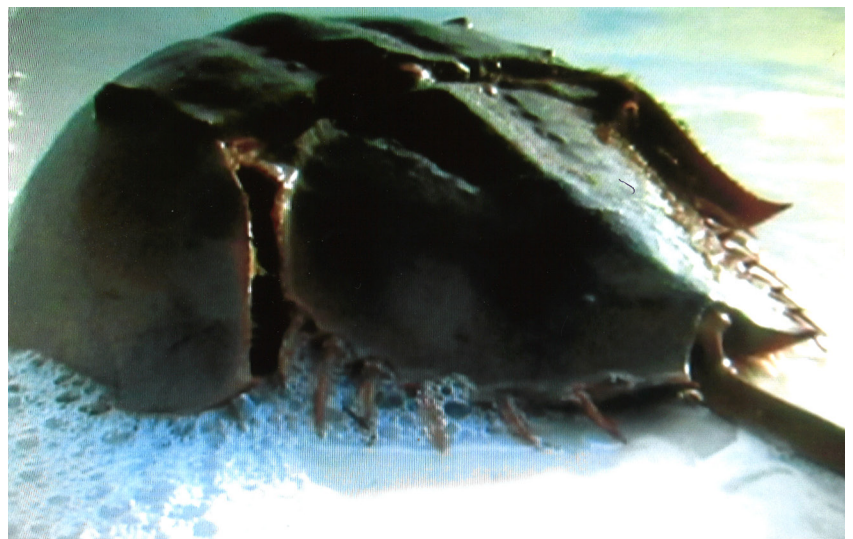
THE COHANSEY LIGHTHOUSE AND THE COHANSEY RIVER

The Cohansey River is a 30.6 mile long river that flows through Cumberland County, NJ. It becomes navigable in Bridgeton, NJ although it is very shallow at low tide making the city boat ramp unusable. The river continues to flow south, then west entering into the Cohansey Cove on the Delaware Bay. In colonial times, that area of the river provided an excellent anchorage for vessels approaching Philadelphia. The river was important back then for transporting goods and supplies as well as providing an avenue for oystermen and fishermen to reach the Delaware Bay.

There is some evidence that there was once a lighthouse near the mouth of the Cohansey in 1816, but to date, no drawings nor depictions have been found. It is not known who constructed the lighthouse nor who maintained it. Even though it was in poor condition, this lighthouse was essential in guiding vessels in and out of the winding Cohansey River. In 1878, the entire bay area was hit hard by a storm; the lighthouse was damaged so badly that emergency repairs had to be made to make it habitable. It was said that the sea had entirely passed over the site to the depth of several feet. Consequently, a new Cohansey Lighthouse was built in 1883 and the remains of the old one were sold for salvage. The new lighthouse was equipped with a 5th order Fresnel lens that projected a light 42 feet above mean high water. The light was visible for 23 nautical miles in clear weather. In July of 1933, this lighthouse was destroyed by a mysterious fire.

SALUTING THE HORSESHOE CRABS ET ALL (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

just two of the organizations coordinating their teams of volunteers in this effort. Last year, 100 crew leaders led 698 rescue walks to assist stranded and flipped over crabs. If you are interested in helping any of the organizations listed above for a few weeks in May and/or June, contact one of these organizations and come out on a new or full moon to help tag these crabs or just to give a helping hand. (SNJ Today, May 2019).



“LETTERS, WE GET LETTERS (AND ARTICLES)”

Information from The Boston Globe sent from our “Boston correspondent” – It seems that the Wood Island Lifesaving Station in the Piscataque River off of Kittery, Maine was nearly the victim of the maritime scrap heap. This lifesaving station, a 111 year old sentinel that silently testified to feats of daring and the courage of brave men in small boats who saved many lives, nearly disappeared into a fog of political inertia. It was being swallowed up by financial distress. Then something remarkable happened. A station once devoted to saving lives was itself thrown a lifeline. By a 4-3 vote of the town council, the life saving station was allowed to be restored and opened to the public. This very rare historic building, known as the “Jewel of the Harbor,” was brought back to life. New sea walls were built using a \$200,000 grant from the State of Maine plus local and federal funds. One of the councilmen stated: “Once it’s gone, it’s gone forever. It’s a very special place; it was worth fighting for.” (Boston Globe, July 2019)



From the pages of The Tampa Bay Times sent by our “Florida correspondent”—A team is capturing 3-D images of historic Egmont Key State Park before the property disappears. Built in the early 1900s, the electrical plant that powered the community of Egmont Key sat smack in the middle of the island. Today the plant stands partly submerged off the western shore, stranded by the erosion that has claimed about half of the island’s 580 acres--it is slowly disappearing. Egmont Key is listed as the most threatened historic property in the state. A team of University of South Florida faculty and graduate students and a Seminole Tribe archaeologist are creating 3-D images of Egmont Key and its lighthouse to remember it when it fully disappears. This Key was formerly home to a prison and later was a military installation. The 3-D images focus on three sites: the lighthouse (completed in 1858), the cemetery (where 19 white crosses still remain marking the burial sites of former lighthouse keepers, armed forces and Seminoles), and the Mellon Battery (the only part of the old fort safe for tourists to climb). The people involved in working on the 3-D images hope to one day give virtual tours of this historic site.

The current Egmont Key Lighthouse is the Key’s second lighthouse. The original was complete in 1847 but destroyed by the storm known as the “Great Gale of 1848” registered as a Category 5 hurricane. The keeper rode out the storm by hiding in a rowboat tied to a palm tree. He quit 6 months later since, after going through all of that, he was refused a raise. (Tampa Bay Times, May 2019)