



The Bay Run

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

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Winter 2019

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

LIGHTHOUSES OF "THE FIRST STATE" – PAST & PRESENT

(Editor's note: I thought it would be a good idea to present a Newsletter with information on the lighthouses of Delaware since the New Jersey lights are usually featured. Enjoy!)

Perched at the Delaware-Maryland border is the Fenwick Island Lighthouse where the light was first lit in August of 1859. This light continued guiding ships until it was deactivated by the US Coast Guard in December of 1978. The characteristics of the light were changed from time to time so that mariners could more easily differentiate between that light and other lighthouses to the north and south. The lighthouse is in very good condition having undergone extensive repairs to the metalwork and repainting processes. The State of Delaware now owns the lighthouse and thanks to a community organization, "Friends of the Lighthouse," it is open to the public.

Appearing near the Cape May-Lewes Ferry dock is Delaware Breakwater East End Light. In 1884, this light came into being as a replacement for the nearby Cape Henlopen Light which was being undermined by wave action and declared unsafe for habitation. The long term plans for Breakwater are to provide transportation to the site and eventually have the structure open for public visitation.

Since the harbor near Breakwater was too shallow for the newer and larger navy vessels, work on the outer Breakwater began in 1897. The National Harbor of Refuge Light was completed in 1901. Harbor of Refuge was built on the Breakwater's southern end to mark it for seagoing vessels. In 1926 the original lighthouse was replaced by the one which guards the area to this day. The final cost of this lighthouse was close to \$50,000. "Harbor" has become a familiar sight to the thousands of travelers who pass by each year on the Cape May-Lewes Ferry. The Cape May Lewes Ferry passes closest when the ferry schedule is the heaviest. One of the last Coast Guard keepers (Engineman and Acting Officer in Charge) was our own Association President, Angelo S. Rigazio. The station was eventually



Fenwick Island Lighthouse

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Angelo S. Rigazio, Jr.



As I sit here writing this column, I glance out the window and see that it is snowing. It's early November and I am witnessing our first snow of the season. Even though I know these flakes are not going to accumulate, it makes me wonder how much snow will be in store for us this winter since a very cold winter season has been forecast.

The NJ Lighthouse Challenge had an amazing number of participants this year. I was at the Cape May Lighthouse with Maxine and Rod Mulligan, Katie Moser and my wife, Darlene. We had an enjoyable time until it began raining on Sunday. When we left the lighthouse early that afternoon, the count for Cape May was 1,800 visitors with time still left for people to tour the area.

As the 2019 holiday season begins, we already have the inside of the house decorated and shining brightly. It takes a full week to decorate so it's necessary to start early. We are planning a big Thanksgiving dinner; our grandchildren love to see the lights and play with the trains. (NOTE: And the executive/board always enjoys meeting at the "Rigazio's Winter Wonderland".) I am working on the outside decorations which will be finished shortly. Having only 4 weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas this year, we have less time to get this completed. From the Rigazio household to all of you, Merry Christmas and a Healthy, Happy New Year. Buon Natalie!! Keep the lights shining. *Angelo*

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*The Delaware Bay Lighthouse Keepers and Friends Association, Inc. (DBLHKFA)
is a 501(c)(3) non-profit preservation and educational organization.*



Our fall meeting aboard the Cape May – Lewes Ferry was quite enjoyable. The bay was calm, the weather perfect and we enjoyed a smooth, peaceful crossing. President Rigazio conducted the meeting on the return trip to Cape May after picking up our Delaware members.

October 19 & 20 some of our members volunteered at Cape May Point Lighthouse; others were at East Point. The weather on Saturday was sunny, cool & windy; Sunday was a completely different story. Despite the rainy weather on Sunday, a total of 1971 lighthouse enthusiasts took part in the NJ Lighthouse Challenge at Cape May; 1955 at East Point. It was interesting as always, meeting people from all over the country. We had some informative chats with people from Delaware, Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio, Kansas and of course, New Jersey. We not only distributed information on the Delaware Bay Lights, we learned a lot from our visitors. (NOTE: Special thanks to Darlene Rigazio for providing hot beverages and refreshments. Thanks to Katie Moser for the statistics.)

We hope to see you all at the Winter Meeting at East Point on January 25. Happy holidays to all.

NJ LIGHTHOUSE CHALL.

2019 Final Stats

2019

	Starters	Visitors	Completers	Total
Abesecon Lighthose	101	2058	58	2217
Barnegat Light Hist. Museum	20	2044	19	2083
Barnegat Lighthouse	85	2021	94	2200
Cape May Lighthouse	135	1971	73	2179
Delaware LH Keepers & Friends	0	2179	0	2179
East Point Lighthouse	28	1955	38	2021
Finns Point Lighthouse	79	1787	38	1904
Sandy Hook / Gateway NRA NSP	693	906	579	2178
Sea Grit Lighthouse	71	2147	21	2239
Squan Beach Life Saving Station	59	1984	80	2123
Tatham Life Saving Station	22	1877	15	1914
Tinicum Rear Range Lighthouse	881	517	714	2112
Tuckerton Seaport	85	1842	41	1968
Twin Lights	288	1746	175	2209
US Lifesaving Station 30	28	1800	40	1868
	2575	26834	1985	31394



Volunteers at the Lighthouse Challenge (Left to Right): **Katie Moser, Maxine Mulligan, Darlene Rigazio, Angelo Rigazio & Rod Mulligan**

PEGGY'S CORNER – Event Calendar

by Peggy Stapleford Activities/Program Chairperson



SAVE THE DATES – Mark Your Calendars:

Winter meeting, Saturday, January 25, 2020 (inclement weather date February 8) –
East Point Lighthouse Schedule: 10 – 11 AM Meet & Greet; 11 – Noon meeting; Noon –
1 Lunch (brown bag); 1 PM Guest speakers Megan Wren & Jessie Briggs “Experiences on
the Delaware Bay”. Come out and enjoy East Point in a winter setting.

Saturday, February 1 – Raptor Festival Mauricetown Fire Department

East Point Fall Schedule: Open every 1st & 3rd weekend of the month. Sunday, December 8; Saturday &
Sunday, December 21 & 22 **Special Events:** December 7 – Santa Visits the Lighthouse 4 – 6 PM; Saturday,
December 21 – Night Climb 6 – 8 PM

Sunday, April 19 – Annual Keepers Banquet to be held at Charlesworth Inn, Fortescue, NJ Guest speaker:
Marvin White, Retired Chief Petty Officer, USCG “My Coast Guard Adventures” (*More information to
follow*)

**(NOTE: We are always looking for interesting guest speakers, topics and maritime locations.
Suggestions can be sent to: mspegstapleford@windstream.net)**

ELMA GARDNER CROSSES THE BAR



It is with deepest regrets that I announce the passing of **Elma Gardner**, our membership chairperson, one of the coordinators of our Delaware Bay cruises and a good friend, who passed away on September 2 at her home in Vineland. Elma received her Associates Degree in Accounting from Cumberland County College and worked for several local companies for many years in the accounting field. She also volunteered at Inspira Medical Center, East Point Lighthouse and was a loyal, hardworking member of our association. We could always depend on Elma to keep the membership lists accurate and her information for our summer cruises was always precise. One never had to check her input; what she did was always impeccable. We knew we could depend on Elma for correct information. She was a soft spoken, lovely lady, with a good sense of humor, an asset to our organization and any other group to which she belonged. Elma will be greatly missed by all of us. *“Perhaps my time seemed all too brief. Don’t lengthen it now with undue grief”* – Sounds like “our Elma” (Taken from the tribute in her memory)

LIGHTHOUSES OF “THE FIRST STATE” – PAST & PRESENT

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automated, without keepers to maintain it on a daily basis and with a limited Coast Guard budget committed more to rescues at sea and drug interdiction. Due to this limited budget, the lighthouse received only the most necessary maintenance.



***Delaware Breakwater
Light***

In the past, petitions to the US Lighthouse Service suggested that lighthouses were needed on 3 of the rivers flowing out of Delaware into the Delaware Bay. Due to the demand and the fact that there was enough commerce, in 1831, 3 lighthouses were built, each one at the mouth of a small river that flowed into the Bay. Bombay Hook was constructed at the entrance of the Smyrna River and Mahon River Light and Mispillion River Light at the mouth of the rivers of their respective names.

During the 8 years Bombay Hook was in operation, there were 6 keepers and their families in residence. The lighthouse went through periods of time where erosion and storms took their toll. In 1974 the State Division of Fish and Wildlife felt it necessary to demolish the deteriorating structure and remove the safety hazard it presented. Anyone wishing to view the remains of this lighthouse may do so since it is on public land.

Mahon River Light was constructed in 1875 and also went through a series of natural disasters, various owners, and various names. In 1955, the abandoned lighthouse property was turned over to the US Air Force. It became the site of an off-loading facility for tankers and a jet fuel pipeline for nearby Dover Air Force Base. In 1976 it was put on the National Register of Historic Places only to be destroyed by fire 8 years later. The cause of the fire was never determined.

Mispillion River Light guided vessels to the inland port of Milford where, over the years, more than 400 ships were built and christened. Thomas Carlisle was appointed the first keeper. Since the water was extremely low when the tide changed, the original Mispillion was torn down and in 1839, a new lighthouse was constructed. It was decided, that this lighthouse was no longer needed due to the erosion during the high tides and winter storms, so in 1929 the light was deactivated, and the lighthouse was eventually replaced by an iron tower. This tower, built at the entrance to the Mispillion River, was removed in 2016. The remains of the historic lighthouse were purchased and moved to Shipcarpenter Square. A portion of this historic lighthouse was restored and incorporated within a private home construction to keep the memory of Delaware's last standing wooden frame lighthouse alive.

To better mark the entrance to the Christiana River, land was purchased where the river empties into the Delaware River and in 1835 the Christiana River Light was contracted. In 1843, the lighthouse was part of a lengthy experiment using gas instead of oil to light the lamp. People involved in this experiment agreed that the light emanating from the lighthouse was significantly brighter than the one when oil was being used. The experiment proved to be less than conclusive and it was eventually replaced by the Bellevue Rear Range Lighthouse. No longer used as an aid to navigation, it was used as a residence for the keepers. The area that once housed the Christiana Light is now part of a huge landfill for the City of Wilmington.

Many more range lights and aids to navigation other than the aforementioned lighthouses were established to help guide ships up and down the Delaware River to the ports of Wilmington and Philadelphia. Take a scenic drive along the 25 miles that makes up Delaware's Atlantic coastline where many visitors from Washington, DC, Baltimore, Wilmington, Philadelphia and South Jersey gather during the various seasons. Check out these lighthouses and some of the range lights. Another PLUS, Delaware is a tax-free state.

UPDATE ON THE FRIENDS OF HEREFORD INLET LIGHTHOUSE

A settlement agreement between the Friends of Hereford Inlet Lighthouse and the City of North Wildwood was finally agreed to and signed by both parties in June of this year. Due to this fact, and the fact that the Friends have not had a management agreement with the City since 2017, the Friends Trustees have voted to dissolve the non-profit corporation by the end of 2019.

In recent months we have made a monetary donation to the Delaware Bay Lighthouse Keepers & Friends, Assoc. and have donated all of our artifacts, research materials and educational displays to several of New Jersey's maritime history museums. Upon our dissolution, we will be donating our remaining funds and any other assets to the East Point Lighthouse.

It goes without saying that these past two years have been incredibly difficult and heartbreaking. All of us that have given so much of our lives to Hereford Inlet Lighthouse however, are proud of the work we accomplished at this beautiful and important site to make it what it is today.

I am also extremely proud of my fellow board members who stood their ground, despite obvious consequences, against a mayor afflicted with megalomania. In a fair and just world, anyone like this professional politician would never be able to be involved in decision making regarding such an important historic building.

I want to thank the New Jersey Lighthouse organizations, the State's historic and cultural communities, the visiting public and the many former dues paying members of the Friends of Hereford Inlet Lighthouse for their strong and long support. I am still receiving letters and emails after these past two years. The total of the letters is well over 1,000.

Some of our board members, myself included, will still be involved in and be advocates for historic preservation. This is a passion and a life-long commitment. I can't think of a more important cause than working to preserve our historic buildings and helping to educate the public of our great Country's important heritage. I urge all of you to discover, visit and help in any way you can, the historic sites in your own communities. And, most importantly, please help your children and grandchildren discover these places as well.



Steve Murray, *Chairman*
Friends of Hereford Inlet Lighthouse

LIGHTSHIP SAILORS MEMORIAL DEDICATED

It has often been said and agreed by most historians that lightship duty was the most dangerous duty of the US Lighthouse Service and later the US Coast Guard. This past fall, association members, Charles Bolton and his wife Joanne, had the honor of going to New Bedford, Massachusetts to attend the US Lightship Sailors Association's dedication of the Lost Lightship Sailors Memorial, a memorial dedicated to the "recognition of all that sailed in lightships 1820 – 1983". Bolton was stationed on the Lightship Ambrose; former DBLHKFA members, Bobby Daniell and Fritz Heipertz were also in attendance and were once stationed aboard lightships.

In this area, there is a monument dedicated to the crew stationed aboard the Vineyard Lightship (LV73) that was lost in a violent hurricane the night of September 14, 1944. Five men survived simply because they were not onboard at the time of the hurricane. At that time, Harold Flagg and the others made a vow that the memories of those sailors lost at sea would never be forgotten. It wasn't until 1963 that divers found the wreck of the Vineyard Lightship. Shortly after that, the enormous fog bell was recovered from the sunken lightship and eventually went on display at the Nauset Lifesaving Museum in Massachusetts. Many years later while visiting the Vineyard bell, Flagg, was able to get the bell moved to the lightship where the history of the Vineyard would be kept alive. Thanks to Bill Collette and Harold Flagg, and under the new leadership in the City of New Bedford (a mayor who had a firm desire to preserve the City's maritime heritage), the bell was removed from the lightship and placed on a granite block near the city's harbor. The complete project would take place in two phases. By Veterans Day 1999, Phase I of the memorial was done and dedicated during a very emotional ceremony. During this ceremony, the names of those who lost their lives on the Vineyard Sound and the Lightship Nantucket were inscribed on the north and south sides of the memorial. Phase II involved having Rick Bennett and Dennis Cosmo, Jr. of the Lightship Sailors coming on board. This phase took two years to complete due to raising the necessary funds and the additional research needed to be done to insure accuracy of the names and facts. More names of lost crew members were added in 2014.

The completed project was dedicated in October of 2019. The USCG Lightship Sailors Association dedicated the memorial "created in memory of all lightship sailors lost in performance of duties". "May Their Service Never Be Forgotten". This project was inspired by Harold Flagg, LV 73. *(See photos p. 8)*



From Left to Right: Bobby Daniell, Charlie Bolton, Fritz Heipertz

