



CHESAPEAKE LIGHTS

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE
CHESAPEAKE CHAPTER, U.S. LIGHTHOUSE SOCIETY

Herb Entwistle, Founding Chapter President, 1989–1997

Maryland Lighthouse Challenge

Special Edition No. 9 – 2013



The Maryland Challenge Light Keepers – Then and Now

by *Tony Pasek*

The past is blending with the present during this year’s “Maryland Lighthouse Challenge +1”. Our “Beacon Bucks” remember the men and women who diligently maintained the lights through storms, loneliness, and incredibly adverse conditions. One historic figure served in the first cabinet of the young American government. Here are brief bios of Yesterday’s Keepers of the Challenge lighthouses and lightship you’ll see on the front of this year’s souvenirs. We also recognize Today’s Keepers – those groups and organizations striving to keep history alive for future generations - with a rendition of the Challenge lighthouse as it appears in the present day on the reverse side.

The Lights of the Maryland Challenge:

Blackistone – Yesterday’s Keeper – **Josephine McWilliams Freeman**. Mrs. Freeman succeeded her father, Dr. Joseph McWilliams and served at the original Blackistone Lighthouse for 37 years from 1875 to 1911. Mrs. Freeman was one of only 49 women to serve as a keeper in American history.

Today’s Keeper – The **Blackistone Lighthouse Foundation** continues the work begun by the St. Clement’s Hundred which laid the groundwork and proceeded with the construction of the replica lighthouse in 2007. The lighthouse opened to the public in 2008.

Chesapeake Lightship – Yesterday’s Keeper – **Captain Alexander Andersen** the first captain of *LV116* and served on the lightship from 1930 to 1937. His first station was the Fenwick Island Shoal in Delaware. He emigrated from Norway and had a long career with the U.S. Lighthouse Service.

Today’s Keeper – **The Historic Ships in Baltimore**. This organization acquired the lightship in 1982 when they were known

as the Baltimore Maritime Museum. The lightship is kept by a group of dedicated preservationists led by Greg Krawczyk and receives four annual visits by volunteers from the Chesapeake Chapter.

Choptank River – Yesterday’s Keeper – **Harold Messick** was the last keeper of the original Choptank River Lighthouse which was stationed at the mouth of the Tred Avon River, south of Oxford. Mr. Messick (along with his dog named “Chop”), served at the screwpile from 1945 to 1964 when the light was decommissioned and dismantled.

Today’s Keeper – Owned by the City of Cambridge and managed by the **Cambridge Lighthouse Foundation**. Construction of the replica lighthouse began in August, 2011 and was completed in September, 2012.

Concord Point – Yesterday’s Keeper – **John O’Neill, Jr.** Mr. O’Neill served at the lighthouse from 1861 to 1863 succeeding his father, a hero of the War of 1812. At least one member of each generation of O’Neills served as keepers – John, Jr. and Esther in 1863 and later, Henry in 1881 and Harry in 1919. Truly, the O’Neills “kept the light in the family”.

Today’s Keeper – **The Friends of Concord Point Lighthouse** in Havre de Grace was formed in June, 1979 and first, restored the lighthouse, then the keeper’s dwelling and finally upgraded the grounds and created a terrific walkway along the shoreline.

Cove Point – Yesterday’s Keeper – **James T. Somers**. As a member of the U.S. Coast Guard, Mr. Somers was the last keeper at Cove Point Lighthouse and served at the station from 1943 to 1958.

Today’s Keeper – **The Calvert Marine Museum (CMM)** acquired the lighthouse station in September, 2000. Because the tower remains an active aid to navigation, the light in the cupola is still maintained by the U.S. Coast Guard. CMM completed restoration and renovation of the duplex keeper’s quarters in 2012.

Drum Point – Yesterday’s Keeper – **Benjamin Nathaniel Gray**. Mr. Gray was appointed assistant keeper in 1883 and was promoted to primary keeper at Drum Point in 1884. He served at the screwpile

see *Keepers* on page 4

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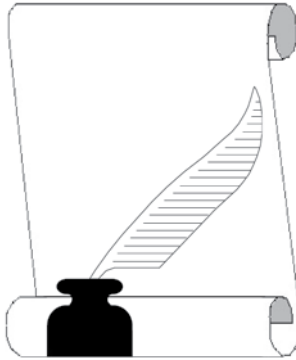
Glimmerings

by Paula and Lauren Liebrecht

It is September ... are you ready for the Challenge ... the Maryland Lighthouse Challenge? The challenge allows you the opportunity to visit nine lights, one lightship and three bonus lights.

While participating in the Challenge we hope you take the opportunity to talk with our Chapter Challenge volunteers and learn about what the Chapter does.

Chapter members participate in preservation projects, such as the *Chesapeake* Lightship, Thomas Point Shoal Lighthouse, and Hooper Island Lighthouse, and publicity events, such as the Point Lookout Lighthouse Open Houses and Patuxent River Appreciation Days. If you are interested in volunteering at preservation projects or publicity events, please contact the Preservation Officer at preservation@cheslights.org or the



Publicity Coordinator at publicity@cheslights.org. The best part of volunteering with the Chapter is the fun you will have meeting folks from around the beautiful Chesapeake Bay area and the country who share your “love of the lights!” Thanks to all the people who do volunteer work for the Chapter. You help to make it the great organization that it is.

Next year, the Chapter will be celebrating its 25th anniversary and we hope you join us for the celebration. Along with the opportunity to participate in preservation, publicity events and Chapter trips, you will receive a quarterly newsletter letting you know what is going on in the Chapter. As part of our celebration next year, we are working on having a special trip to visit several lighthouses in the Chesapeake Bay area. Our trip to the Chesapeake Light Tower this year was a success and we look forward to more of those trips in the future. A Chapter membership envelope is included in this newsletter; Chapter brochures which include membership information will also be available at several locations along the Challenge route.

Whether you travel the entire Challenge route or just part of it, we hope you have a great time visiting the lighthouses and seeing the beautiful scenery that Maryland has to offer.

The Maryland Lighthouse Challenge ... Creating Maryland Memories, *one lighthouse at a time!*

Visit our website at cheslights.org and “LIKE” us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/cheslights

Greetings and Welcome to the 9th Maryland Lighthouse Challenge +1, where we intend to give you a “Run for the Money!”

by Karen Rosage

We hope you enjoy touring Maryland’s lighthouses this weekend whether you plan to visit just one or two, or travel around the Bay to visit them all. At each stop, you will be collecting a \$9 bill commemorating that lighthouse, artfully created by our Graphics Designer, Maria Alvarez-Lundie. These bills have been cleverly coined “Beacon Bucks” by our Chapter President, Tony Pasek.

On the front of the bill you will find the photograph of a lighthouse keeper who served at that lighthouse or in the few cases where a photo of a keeper of that light could not be found, another distinguished figure in lighthouse history. On the back of each, is a beautiful photographic rendering of the lighthouse, supplied by master photographer and Chapter member, Bill Conway.

I think everyone on the Challenge Committee agrees that these are probably our most inspired event souvenirs to date!

When touring each lighthouse this weekend, we encourage you to take a moment to remember the men and women who served faithfully at them. Often a lonely, sometimes even a harrowing



existence; keeping the light shining to ensure the safety of others was always their challenge, their life’s work. For their dedicated years of service, and for a job well done, we owe them a debt of gratitude.

As we partner with the “modern-day” keepers to host this event, we salute them as well. The Chesapeake Chapter stands committed with them to preserve these historic structures for future generations. You will find our green Chapter brochure along the Challenge route. Please consider joining if you are not already a member. If you would like to become active in some of our Chapter’s volunteer activities, we’d love to have you join our ranks. Whether you are interested in hands-on preservation projects, helping to preserve lighthouse history and/or educating the public about them, the Chesapeake Chapter has something to offer everyone.

But for now...we simply invite you to enjoy a weekend of fun and discovery, one lighthouse at a time!

See you along the way...

The 2013 Maryland Lighthouse Challenge Committee

Keepers from page 1

located on the north side of the Patuxent River from 1884 to 1890. Drum Point Lighthouse was unusual in that most screw-piles were “stag” lights and Drum Point was one of the few off-shore beacons that allowed family members. Keeper Gray recorded tremors from the great Charleston, SC earthquake in 1886.

Today’s Keepers – **CMM** acquired the lighthouse in 1975 and moved it two miles upriver to Solomons, Maryland. CMM restored the lighthouse, adding furnishings of the early 20th century and it was opened to the public in 1978.

Fort Washington – Yesterday’s Keeper – Despite a concerted effort from several Chapter members, we were unable to find a photo of a keeper stationed at Fort Washington Light. Our research indicated that a U.S. Army Ordnance Sergeant – Joseph Cameron – maintained the first light– which consisted of an 18.5 foot iron pole with a light on top – from 1857 to 1869. The Challenge committee decided to use a photo of the country’s first Secretary of the Treasury – **Alexander Hamilton**. Hamilton served as the first superintendent of lighthouses from 1789 to 1792 and drafted the contracts of lighthouses under construction and the appointment of the first lighthouse keepers. He then sent them to President George Washington for his signature.

Today’s Keeper – **The National Park Service (NPS) and Fort Washington Park** with an occasional assist from the Chesapeake Chapter. The Park Service acquired the light from the U.S. Coast Guard in 2005 and did extensive restoration in 2009. The U.S. Coast Guard still maintains the modern light on this riverine light.

Hooper Island – Yesterday’s Keeper – **Kenneth Dickerson**. In the mid 1930s, Mr. Dickerson became an assistant keeper at Hooper Island and served as a civilian until 1939. Mr. Dickerson married into a family of keepers – the Jennettes – best known for keeping the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse.

Today’s Keeper – **The U.S. Lighthouse Society and its Chesapeake Chapter**. The U.S. Lighthouse Society acquired the lighthouse in 2009 through the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act of 2000 and has been restoring this off-shore caisson in Dorchester County for the last several years.

Hooper Strait – Yesterday’s Keeper – **George Leikam**. Mr. Leikam was the last keeper and served from 1945 to 1954 when the beacon was automated. Like many keepers who moved from station to station, Mr. Leikam also served at Choptank River Lighthouse, the Holland Island Bar Lighthouse (1942 – 1945) and the Thomas Point Shoal Lighthouse (1954 – 1960).

Today’s Keeper – **The Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum** in St. Michael’s, Maryland acquired the lighthouse in 1966 from a demolition contractor for \$1,000 and moved it 40 miles upriver to museum grounds. Restoration began and the lighthouse was opened to the public in 1967.

Jones Point – Yesterday’s Keeper – **Frank Wilkins**. By his a-typical attire (cowboy hat) in the archival photo, we surmise that Mr. Wilkins was an unusual and down-home keeper. We don’t know Mr. Wilkins’ tenure at the Jones Point Lighthouse, but he served in 1912 and was the last keeper before automation in 1919. We also learned that Wilkins was the son-in-law of keeper Benjamin Greenwood. Greenwood served at Jones Point from 1866 to his death in 1903. Greenwood raised 14 children at the lighthouse from two marriages. The lighthouse’s resemblance to a one-room schoolhouse is most appropriate.

Today’s Keeper – Rangers with the **George Washington Memorial Parkway office of the National Park Service**. In 1926, the Mt. Vernon Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution acquired the lighthouse and in 1986 signed an agreement with the NPS to restore the lighthouse. In 2011-2012, the NPS did extensive renovations to the park and the lighthouse exterior.

Piney Point – Yesterday’s Keeper – **Helen C. Tune**. Mrs. Tune was appointed acting keeper in March, 1877 and promoted to permanent keeper in July, 1877. She continued in the footsteps of several lady keepers- Charlotte Suter (1845), Martha Nuthall (1850) and Elizabeth Wilson (1873). Mrs. Tune remained in her post until 1883.

Today’s Keeper – **The Piney Point Lighthouse Museum and Park**. The Museum Division of St. Mary’s County Department of Recreation and Parks acquired the 1836 lighthouse in 1980 from the U.S. Coast Guard and restoration began. It was then placed under the jurisdiction of the St. Clement’s Island-Potomac River Museum.

Point Lookout – Yesterday’s Keeper – **Raymond Hartzel**. Mr. Hartzel served as the last U.S. Coast Guard keeper at Point Lookout from 1964 to 1966 when the tower was decommissioned. He also served at Piney Point Lighthouse in 1963. After his tenure at Point Lookout, he was stationed at the Cape St. Elias Light station in Kayak Island, Alaska. Mr. Hartzel retired in 1987 and now lives in Pennsylvania.

Today’s Keeper – **The MD Department of National Resources and the Point Lookout Lighthouse Preservation Society (PLLPS)**. Ownership of the lighthouse was transferred to the MD Department of National Resources in February 2006. The two organizations work in conjunction to restore the lighthouse. PLLPS was founded in August, 2006 and has been meticulously restoring this integral lighthouse. The Chesapeake Chapter provides an occasional “assist” with preservation efforts.

Sandy Point Shoal – Yesterday’s Keeper – This was another lighthouse our investigative crew had difficulty in locating a keeper photo. We found several keeper names, but could not locate any photos. One notable keeper was Alonzo Hubbard. Mr. Hubbard was the last keeper at the shore-based Sandy Point light and at age 27 was the first keeper at the caisson light in 1883. We decided to use a classic keeper’s photo provided by our parent organization – the U.S. Lighthouse Society. The Society was unable to determine the keeper’s identity, but is believed to be **representative of a U.S. Lighthouse Service keeper** from the 1880s era. This keeper is also featured on the Challenge souvenir tee shirt.

Today’s Keeper - We’ve learned that a new group has recently been formed to restore this off-shore lighthouse and wish them success in all their endeavors.

Sevenfoot Knoll – Yesterday’s Keeper – **Thomas J. Steinhise** who served from 1930 to 1941. During a severe nor’easter in 1933, Mr. Steinhise with the help of his son, rescued five members of the sinking tug *Point Breeze* and received the Commerce Department’s Silver Life Saving Medal.

Today’s Keeper – **The Historic Ships in Baltimore**. The group acquired the oldest screw-pile on the Chesapeake Bay in 1988 from the U.S. Coast Guard and moved the beacon from its Patapsco River location to Pier V in Baltimore and restoration began.

Completer — Yesterday’s Keeper – **Fannie May Salter**. It is most appropriate that we honor Mrs. Salter on the completer souvenir. Mrs. Salter was named keeper of the isolated Turkey Point Light station in 1925 by President Coolidge upon the death of her husband, Clarence. She served as the last lady civilian keeper on the Chesapeake Bay in 1947.

Today’s Keeper – **Turkey Point Light Station, Inc. (TPLS)**. The organization was founded in 1995 and restored the tower and hopes to rebuild the keeper’s house. After several years of darkness, the light was reactivated in 2002. Ownership of the light station was transferred to the MD Department of Natural Resources. TPLS, Inc. and Elk Neck State Park continue to upgrade and preserve the tower.

Note: Sincere thanks and a tip of our “wicked” hat to the many volunteers who assisted with finding elusive photos and information on these special lighthouse keepers. We also received valuable historical information and photos from several keeper families.