

Seen in the July 19, 2004 - SeacoastOnLine Paper - thanks to Henry Winkleman...

Oil house restored at New Castle light

NEW CASTLE - Since 2001, volunteers of the Friends of Portsmouth Harbor Lighthouse, a chapter of the American Lighthouse Foundation (ALF), have shown thousands of visitors through the 1878 cast-iron lighthouse at Fort Point in New Castle.

Now, according to a press release from the New England Lighthouse Lovers, another chapter of ALF, the group has renovated a 1903 oil house, a long-abandoned but once vital component of the light station.

The oil house will be used in house displays and will be open to the public during the monthly open houses held at the site from spring through fall.

Funds were allotted in 1903, and a small brick building for the storage of kerosene was built at Portsmouth Harbor Light Station. When the light was electrified in the 1930s, the oil house was eventually abandoned to the elements.

The oil house repairs were carried out in May by the Campbell Construction Group of Beverly, Mass. This company has performed renovations at 16 lighthouses and related buildings, including Brant Point Light on Nantucket, Mass., and Point Judith Light in Rhode Island.

About 30 roofing slates were replaced, some of the exterior brickwork was repainted, some minor wood restoration was performed, and all the exterior woodwork was painted.

The oil house, which had not had a door in many years, received a new one that matches the door that had been on the building for many years. A new stairway to access the oil house was also added. The renovation was done at a cost of about \$5,600.

At a meeting in Rockland, Maine, in mid-June, the membership of the New England Lighthouse Lovers voted to pay the entire cost of the oil house renovation. In addition to offering lighthouse tours and other events for its members, NELL has raised funds to aid many restoration projects throughout New England.

NELL President Ron Foster said the group decided to fund the project at Portsmouth Harbor because "NELL is a six-state club and we had not yet given any substantial amount to a New Hampshire lighthouse."

Last year NELL raised more than \$41,000 for the restoration of Block Island Southeast Lighthouse at a fund-raiser on Block Island in Rhode Island.

The Friends of Portsmouth Harbor Lighthouse hold open houses on one Sunday each month from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. This year's remaining open houses will be on Aug. 15, Sept. 19 and Oct. 17.

For more information on these and other events, visit www.portsmouthharborlighthouse.org