

New England Lighthouse Lovers - NELL

Fall Tour 2002

WHALE OF A WEEKEND IN NEW BEDFORD MA by Tom Pregman

(Unless otherwise noted - photos by Tom Pregman)

The NELL Fall Tour of the three local lighthouses, two lightships, and the Lightship Sailors Memorial in the Port of New Bedford was a smashing success. The weather was great this time. No Hurricane NELL as we experienced in May on the Vineyard.

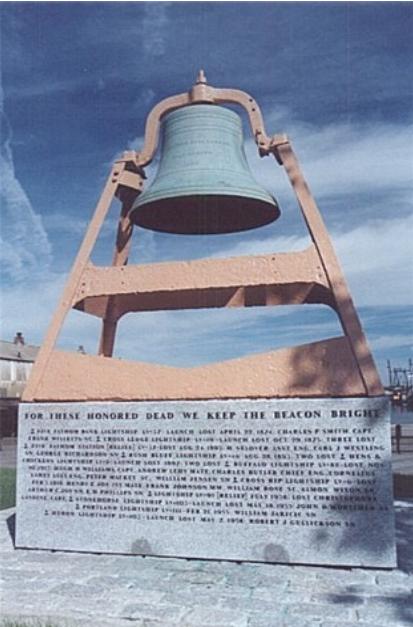
The City that has done so much to restore and preserve its lights, hosted, and, with the American Lighthouse Foundation, sponsored the first International Lighthouse Conference (ILC) with the educational purpose of developing a curriculum guide for use in the 5th and 6th grades. Workshops were held for much of the week preceding our visit with leaders from all over the country and Canada. Three NELL members, Bob Taylor and new members Gary and Jean Zunda, attended the conference and seventeen of us started our weekend by participating in the Friday evening celebratory dinner at the close of the event, and appeared to outnumber the other guests. The buffet was terrific, and the Lighthouse team trivia game led by conference Chairperson Sally Snowman was the hit of the party. (Sorry Tim, your speech was as usual way too long). Our table, the "FresNELLS" finished a close third place behind two other teams which had the advantage of committee member players. A play down was held to decide the winner while Sally danced around all night accompanying herself by "do-doing" the music from Jeopardy.

ALF congratulated and awarded conference committee persons and conducted the usual raffles and drawings. They offered one of only three Clark's Point Harbour Lights, signed and postal cancelled

from the conference, for auction. It was won in competitive bidding by our own President Ron Foster for only \$200. Way to go Spooler !! The second one is destined for the lighthouse museum in Wells ME., and the third was awarded this night to Art Motta, New Bedford Director of Tourism and Marketing for his two years of tireless preparation for this conference. Art was also most helpful in putting our trip together and he and Mayor Frederick Kalisz, Jr. treated NELL royally during our stay. More to follow on that below.

ALF also offered many of the Clark's Point pieces for sale, and several of us couldn't leave for home without one. They were purchased with all proceeds going to ALF. Tim Harrison also donated a signed piece for our meeting door prize drawing which was awarded on Saturday night.

On Sat. AM we all gathered at the Lightship Memorial, took a group photo, and tolled the bell for all those lost in service on the lightships and engraved on the monument. This included those "uncles" of Seamond Roberts lost when the Vineyard Sound sank off Cuttyhunk. (See her letters in the NELL web archives.) The engraving on the back of the monument was paid for in part by all the funds raised at our Spring meeting in Falmouth.



Lightship Sailor's memorial plaque dedicated August 4, 2002 and partially funded by NELL



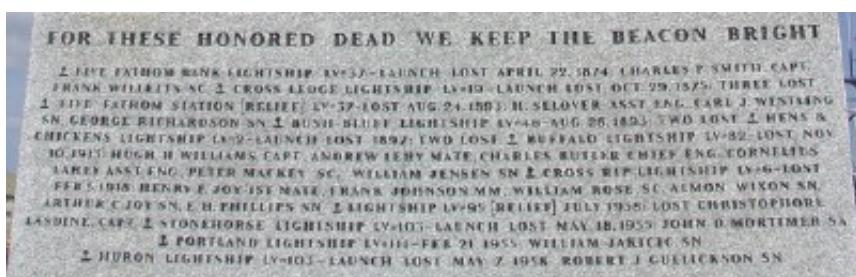
Dedication Ceremony August 4, 2002



Mayor Frederick Kalisz addresses the gathering including NELL members Arlene Pregman and MJ Foster in the front row.



James Gill (left), Pres. USCG Lightship Sailor's Assoc., Inc., Harold Flagg, last surviving member of LV Vineyard Sound who was on shore duty when it sank, and Art Motta, NB Director of Tourism and marketing, pose at the Memorial.



Names on the Lightship Memorial in New Bedford, MA

We then walked to the privately owned lightship Nantucket being refurbished in New Bedford before being moved to Boston for office use. Members crowded on the edge of the pier to see who could get the best pictures. Following that we made a brief stop along the beach road to see Butler Flats lighthouse, then made our way to Fort Taber.



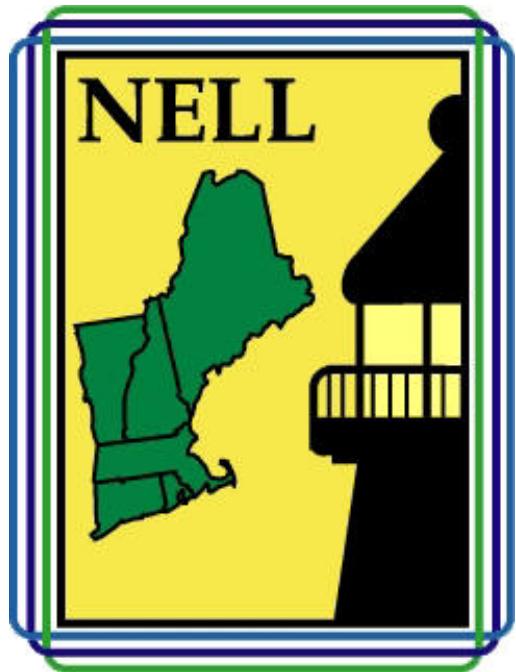
Arlene Pregman "weighs anchor" at the Lightship Nantucket



Lightship beacon on the forward mast.



Ron Drummer and Ron Foster stop to "shoot the bird" and Butler Flats Lighthouse



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The Flying Santa arrived by helicopter and was greeted by the Mayor before being mobbed by kids who received ILC coloring books and balsam airplanes to fly. Rumor has it that Santa was also seen hugging Penny Patch-Bartnicki. Rumor also has it that NELL member Seamond Roberts will be flying as Elf with Santa on his rounds this December, a ride she is anxious about but can't wait to go. :)



Three NELL "couples" await the arrival of the Flying Santa at Clark's Point Light in Fort Taber. John and Noreen Waters (left) Shirley and Ron Drummer (separate benches) and Bob Taylor with Frank Carbone.



The Flying Santa pilots the helicopter to a soft landing.



Mayor Kalisz Jr. (wearing a NELL trip button) welcomes Santa.

The buttons Ron Foster made for this trip depicting the Lightship Memorial and Nantucket moored nearby from a photo taken at the original dedication ceremony. were presented to the Mayor, Art Motta, and ALF officers Tim Harrison, Kathy Finnegan, Bill Collette and Jim Walker. The Mayor and Art tried to have the fort opened for NELL to better view the light from its courtyard, but the man who showed up with all the keys in town couldn't find the right one and was willing to cut the lock off before we insisted it was not necessary.

We all enjoyed a bountiful picnic lunch from Subway in the Park and then were supposed to split up with roughly half going to the US Coast Guard Band Concert at the Zeiterion Theater in town, and the others trekking-out to Palmer Island Lighthouse at low tide. Well, our good friend Art Motta was so appreciative of NELL's preservation efforts that he decided to take us out and open the light for us to climb. Everyone was so pleased that we got access, that nearly everyone planning to go to the Coast Guard Band concert trekked out to the island instead. Thanks to Arlene Pregman, Bob Wolfson And Gary and Jean Zunda for representing NELL at the concert which played a variety of music to a full house and was very well received with a rousing standing ovation.



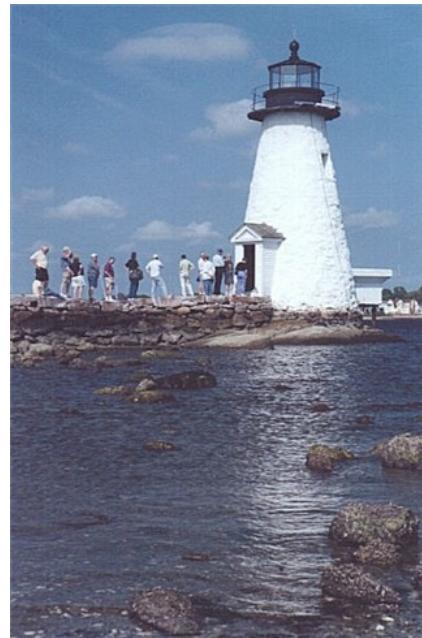
Palmer Island Light in New Bedford Harbor



Bob and Nina Wolfson contemplate the long trek out along the hurricane barrier ending in a split decision. Bob enjoyed the USCG Band Concert



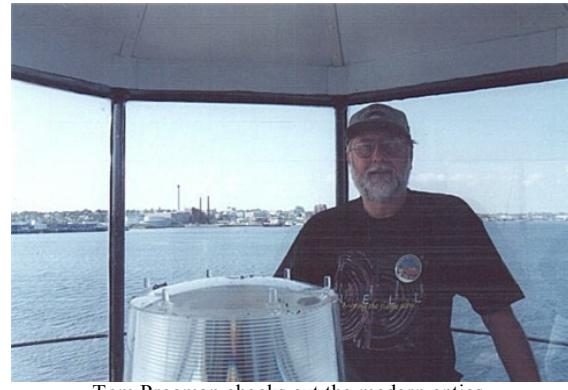
Bob and Ellen Granoth wave as Bob Taylor and Reg and Maureen Kitching check out the Palmer Island Lighthouse



Members line up to climb the tower



Art Minor and Carolyn Carbone are ready to go while the others appear tired after reaching the island.

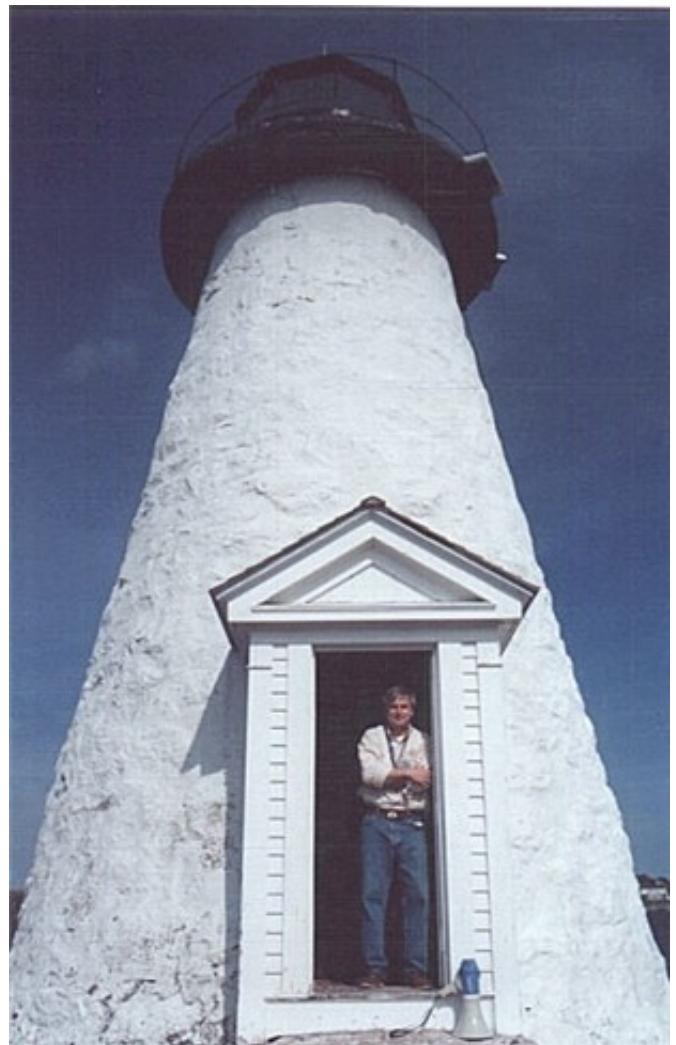


Tom Pregman checks out the modern optics.

The rest of us were treated to a detailed history of the 1938 Hurricane and its devastation of Palmer Island on this date, Sept. 21, the loss of lightkeeper Small's wife, and their continuing "presence in the tower" as told by its present keeper, Mr. Motta. The high water mark is still marked well up on an interior wall. We got to climb to the lantern room with its modern lens. Those present when Chris and Fred Thumm climbed the red spiral ladder got a great chuckle when some unnamed member called out "Two Thumms Up".



Ron and MJ Foster along with Carolyn Carbone enter the tower.



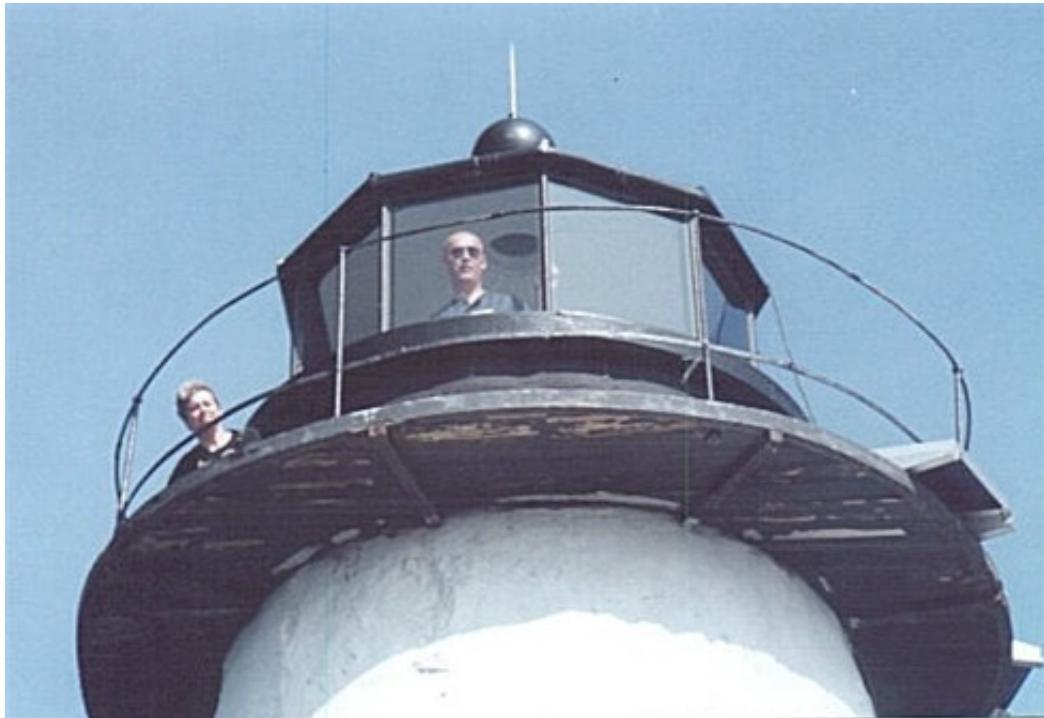
Today's guardian of the Palmer Island Light, Art Motta



"Two Thumms Up" as Fred and Christine climb the red spiral stairs.



Art Motta still feels the presence of Lightkeeper Small and his wife from the Hurricane of 1938. Note the high water mark indicated on the wall.



Two Bartnicki's way up at the lantern room.

Our Sat. night dinner meeting was a disappointment in that the restaurant stuck us in much too small a back corner space and provided only one waitress for over 30 members (so she wouldn't have to split the tip). The food was good but service was slow and atmosphere were non-existent. (Editorial comment - We need to hold breakfast meetings and do it in our own room !! These at night try to include too much after a busy day and go way too late, after 10:00 PM this night).

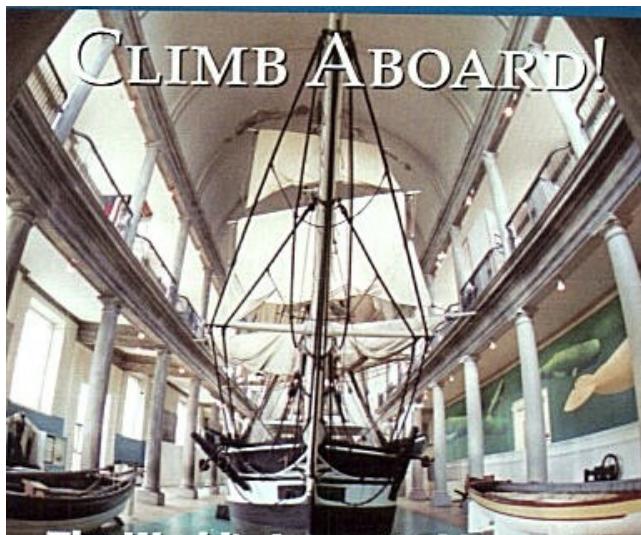
The business meeting accomplished a lot including authorization of funding for three lighthouse restoration projects, and changes in our by-laws. We also discussed a major fund raising event for South East Block Island Light for next August, and conducted the usual drawings and bids on lighthouse memorabilia. One of the highlights of the evening was of course the passing of the paddle and crown. Fred Thumm was appointed Mr. NELL and Arlene Pregman Ms. NELL.



I'm sure I didn't cover everything, and defer to the Secretary or President to report in more detail on the real business conducted there, but will also mention that Sally Snowman summarized the conference and gave NELL a copy of a manual developed for use in planning school curriculum integrating lighthouse maritime history into various disciplines. She also agreed to work with Nina Wolfson who is very interested in this effort for New Haven, CT schools.

Oh yes I almost forgot, but he didn't. The Mayor was going to a birthday dinner at the same restaurant as our meeting, so he personally delivered a whole bag of "Port of New Bedford" lighthouse pins for the members. He heard that I had asked Mr. Motta for enough for the group but the Office of Tourism was fresh out. Mayor Kalisz delivered.

Sunday most of us toured the New Bedford Whaling Museum and Seaman's Bethel (Chapel) in the National Historic Park. The centerpiece of the museum is the Lagoda, the largest ship model in the world, built at half scale, which we boarded, and around which people gather each January for a round-the-clock reading of Moby Dick. In the Bethel a sign denotes Herman Melville's pew and the walls are covered with remembrances of those from New Bedford lost at sea, both historically and from recent times.

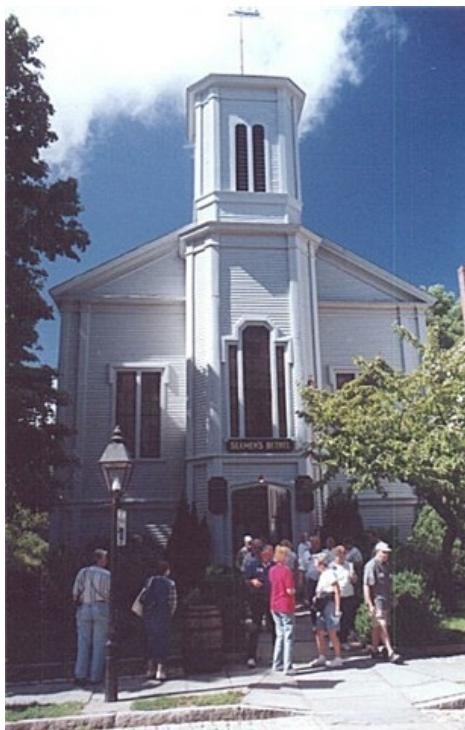


The World's Largest Ship Model

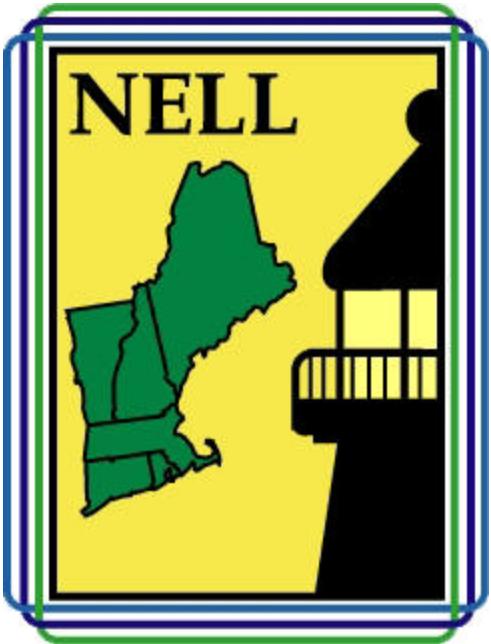
The 1/2 scale whaling ship Lagoda in the NB Whaling Museum built to house the huge model



The 66' rare Blue Whale skeleton hangs in the museum entrance hall.



Members break for lunch after touring the Seaman's Bethel.



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On our last afternoon we took a harbor cruise on the launch Acushnet with Captain Don at the helm. We cruised close to the commercial fishing fleet, lightships Nantucket and New Bedford, and Palmer Island Light. Then we sailed out of the safe harbor through the hurricane barrier and into the choppy waters around Butler Flats Light before returning to port through Fairhaven Harbor. While there we called out to Jeanne Panciera's Dad (to no avail) who is a watchman at the marina. No one would have fessed up to knowing those on our boat. :)



New Bedford fishing fleet



Lightship Nantucket from the tour boat.



Cruising past the City's Lightship.



New Bedford Lightship awaits funding as the City's next restoration project.



Cruising



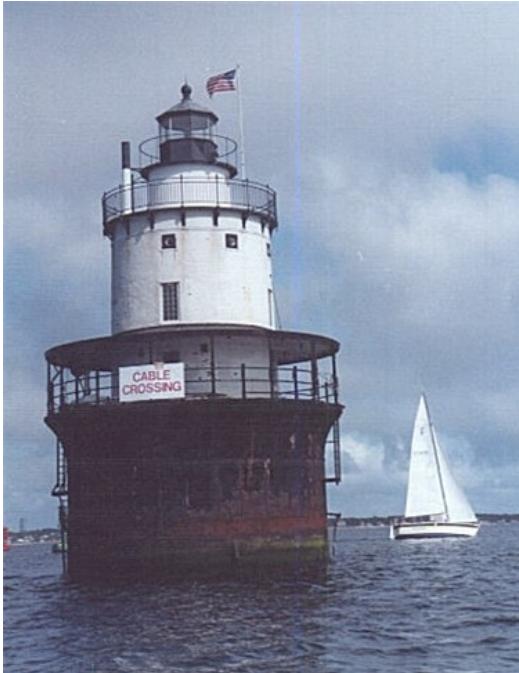
Passing Palmer Island Light



A giant freighter dwarfed the hurricane barrier as it swiftly passed through the narrow flood gates.



Butler Flats Light



The Tequila Sunrise



..... sails off into Buzzard's Bay as we all called it a day.



Our "Star Spangled Banner" reflects off the lantern room glass

All good things must come to an end and so as we left the launch we gathered again on the city wharf, said our farewells, and called it a day, getting into our cars for the long ride home. We all had a good time on this *Whale of a Weekend* in the port of New Bedford, "the city that lit the world".

Tom Pregman
