

New England Lighthouse Lovers

A Chapter of the American Lighthouse Foundation

NELL Beacon



ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY PART II

Mike Boucher

Like all movies, the sequel is never as good as the original movie. Last year's spring trip to the St. Lawrence Seaway was a beautiful day, blue skies and comfortable. This year the trip was cold, foggy and rainy, but Lake Ontario was smooth as glass.

We left Newburgh, NY early Friday to misting skies. By the time we got to our hotel, the Captain Thompson Resort in Alexandria Bay, the weather was almost perfect. We went to the American Legion's Friday night fish fry and then walked around and met many friends on the main street. We had an early departure the next day to see 9 lighthouses, 5 along the river and 4 on Lake Ontario.

We awoke to light rain and fog but smooth waters. We boarded Uncle Sam's tour boat at 7 AM, next door to the hotel, and, we left the dock around 7:15. Since this was going to be a long trip, 10 hours or longer, we went right past Sunken Rock Lighthouse, you can shoot that one from the hotel and we shot it on the last trip.

Because of our early departure we had a continental breakfast on-board the boat. We headed up river to the Rock Island Lighthouse, where we stopped for pictures. This was another light from last year's trip. Along the way the fog was heavy in some areas and none in others. As we got closer to the Rock Island Lighthouse, the fog lifted for some nice photos. The State owned lighthouse is in the process of being repaired and all the windows were boarded up. Located on each side of the river were some spectacular homes and some small fishing cottages.



As we sailed closer to the entrance of the river, the fog was getting thicker and the rain a little heavier. The next light was Tibbetts Point at the junction of the St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario. Since I've shot this station on land many times I was looking forward to photographing this light from the water. Even though it was not sunny I got some decent pictures.



We entered Lake Ontario and for the next hour or so we traveled in fog. During this time everybody had time to socialize with one another as there wasn't much else to do or see. Our next lighthouse was East Charity Shoal about 7 miles out into Lake Ontario. As we got closer to the light, the fog lifted and we got to see this light. The lighthouse was placed here in 1934 and marks a 3000 foot shoal. Even though the lighthouse was new, in reality it dates back to 1877. The

structure had served on the pier marking the entrance to the Vermilion River in Ohio on Lake Erie. After the pier was damaged in an ice storm and the lighthouse was leaning, it was removed and

replaced with a lighter tower. End of story, but the cast iron tower was dismantled, repaired and placed in storage at the Buffalo Lighthouse Depot in 1929. People living in Vermilion thought the lighthouse had gone to the scrap pile and it wasn't until the 1970's, when someone looking for a relative found out what happened to the tower - it was used to mark East Charity Shoal in 1934. The 40 foot tower sits on a one story octagonal concrete base and shows a white flash every 4 seconds. The lighthouse is privately owned now, a lady from Dallas, TX, bought the lighthouse for \$25,501 at an auction from the government. As we left the lighthouse it was enveloped in fog and disappeared.

The next lighthouse was Galloo Island almost 10 miles away. Another hour of foggy, rainy weather, but the water was as smooth as glass. During this time we had a nice buffet lunch.



As we pulled up in front of Galloo Island, the fog had lifted somewhat and there was no problem getting our photos. The active lighthouse was sold to a private individual back in 2000. The lighthouse had been up for sale many times over the years with no takers until it was sold on eBay for \$205,100 in 2005. Built in 1867, it replaced the 1820 lighthouse. The older keeper's house was used for an assistant keeper. The older buildings all leaked very badly and the foundation of the keeper's house had settled, making the windows all out of alignment. It would not be replaced until 1899. The limestone used for the new lighthouse came from a quarry on the island. The tower was connected to the keeper's house by a walkway. Because of the foggy weather, a fog signal building was added in 1897. A white light flashes every 6 seconds from a 55 foot tower. All the property is in need of repair with broken windows and lack of paint. The island and lighthouse are privately held and are closed to the public.



The fog signal building

Once again we headed out into the fog and our next light. Along the way we passed by Pigeon Point Lighthouse was not originally not on the list of lights to be seen, it was going to be a bonus light. On a clear day we could have gotten a photo. Well after another hour or so of foggy weather, the captain stopped the boat abruptly and announced that Pigeon Point Lighthouse was located 400 feet in front of the boat. I took a picture of



where the bow was pointing, hoping that I could bring the lighthouse out of the fog with Photoshop. As you can see by the photo to the left the fog was VERY thick. So much for bonus lighthouses. Shortly after leaving Pigeon Point the captain announced that the American

Narrows side of the Seaway was closed due to the fog. We were

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St. Lawrence Seaway Part II

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going to have cancel our last lighthouse because of it. We still had one more lighthouse to see before we had to go through the Narrows.



Our next light was Nine Mile Point located at the south-west point of Simcoe Island on the Canadian side of the Seaway. Built in 1833, the 40 foot tower is nine miles from the City of Kingston, ON, thus the name. As early as 1803 the Canadian Government wanted to build a lighthouse here to mark the entrance to the Canadian side of the St. Lawrence River. In researching information for this article I found several conflicting sources, some sources claim the light was taken out of service in 1994. The light is listed on the U. S. Light List as being a seasonal light. The light was automated in 1978, while some state it was in 1990. The lighthouse was manned until 1990 which makes sense for automating.

After leaving Nine Mile Point we headed down the St. Lawrence River on the Canadian side. We passed by the City of Kings-

ton and shot several minor lights around the harbor.

Our next lighthouse, Knapp Point, was also cancelled due fog. It's no longer in service and is the usual peppershaker type light. It was located on the west side of Wolfe Island.

About this time the captain informed us that the American side of the waterway was now open. So we were off to get our last lighthouse, Wolfe Point Lighthouse, which is located on the eastern end of Wolfe Island, the largest of the islands on the St. Lawrence River. Built in 1861, the wooden square tower was rebuilt in 1912 with another square wooden tower. The 33 foot



tower, showing a fixed white light, was changed from acetylene fuel to electricity in 1954 and it

lost its lantern room in 1971. Located behind the Wolfe Point Light is a replica of the Thomas Point Lighthouse.

As we headed back to the dock and our hotel, it was raining steadily. By the time we got back to Alexandria Bay, the fog was slowly disappearing. Before docking the



captain swung the boat around the Sunken Rock Lighthouse and, as can be seen from the two pictures, the fog had completely lifted. We arrived at the dock after 5 PM to complete a very long day. After we docked we had the customary group photo.



Even though the weather was not the best it was better than Sunday's weather - when we woke up to waves lapping up against the hotel's foundation and white caps on the river. The lake would have been very rough and our trip might have been cancelled.

And, even though the weather was not the best, we still had a good day of lighthouseing and chatting with friends.

LIGHTHOUSE CHALLENGE OF NEW JERSEY OCTOBER 15 & 16

Margo Harvey, Communications Coordinator

New Jersey Lighthouses and selected museums are pleased to again be hosting the "Lighthouse Challenge of New Jersey" weekend on Saturday, Oct. 15 and Sunday, Oct. 16. Take the challenge, tour the state and visit each lighthouse over the weekend to help raise funds for continued lighthouse preservation.

These majestic beacons have played an important role in New Jersey's history, guarding mariners and protecting our coasts for more than a century. Lighthouses serve as a reminder of American ingenuity while honoring the values of safety and heroism. Visit the lighthouses and museums on the Challenge for an opportunity to step back in time and learn more about our state and country's history.

Begin the Challenge at any of the participating lighthouses, and purchase a souvenir pamphlet (\$1), which will be used with stickers as proof of your visit at each lighthouse and will be your souvenir to commemorate your participation in the event. Hours of operation for each lighthouse can be found at participating lighthouse and museum websites and at www.lighthousechallengenj.org, www.njlhs.org and www.visitnj.org. You can also find the Lighthouse Challenge of NJ on Facebook and communicate with other lighthouse fans.

LIGHTHOUSE CHALLENGE

of New Jersey

OCTOBER 15-16, 2011

A Weekend of Exploration

Visit New Jersey's historic lighthouses during this weekend of fun and exploration and help raise funds for continued preservation!

Hours of operation & directions for each lighthouse are listed at www.lighthousechallengenj.org

Night climbs will be offered at Absecon, Barnegat, Cape May, Sandy Hook, Tinicum and Tuckers Seaport.

The following lighthouses and museums invite the public to take advantage of this special weekend to support and preserve the maritime history of our state:

- Absecon Lighthouse
- Barnegat Lighthouse
- Barnegat Lighthouse Historical Museum
- Cape May Lighthouse
- Cape May County Museum
- East Point Lighthouse
- Finns Point Lighthouse
- Hereford Inlet Lighthouse
- Navesink/Twin Lights
- U.S. Life Saving Station
- Sandy Hook Lighthouse
- Sea Girt Lighthouse
- Tatham Life Saving Station
- Ticum Lighthouse and
- Tuckerton Seaport

AWAYCATION TO THE ISLANDS: LONG AND RHODE

Kevin Sullivan

In last fall's issue of the NELL Beacon, I reported that Connecticut's governor had encouraged residents to engage in "staycations" to keep money within the state and support our businesses and shopkeepers. I believed it to be a good idea, and travelled from the northwest hills to the southeast shores of New London and Groton to visit the Avery Point, New London Ledge and New London Harbor lights and also the Submarine Museum and the Coast Guard Academy with its maritime museum.

This summer, our new governor is trying to address a huge state deficit, in part, by ordering massive state employee layoffs and raising the income and sales taxes to basically impose a levy on anything that doesn't breathe. Seriously, he's even put a tax on yarn. I took that message to read "get out of Dodge this summer."

So during July 4th week, I took two day trips: one to Montauk Point Light on Long Island and one to Providence, Rhode Island to sail with Save the Bay's "Final Ultimate Lighthouse Tour 2011" around Narragansett Bay and Newport Harbor.

Montauk

Riding the 9:00 a.m. car ferry from Bridgeport, CT to Port Jefferson, NY I enjoyed a beautiful smooth ride across Long Island Sound. Along the way, we passed five lights, including Tongue Point and Fayerweather Island (Black Rock Harbor) on the Connecticut shore, Penfield Reef and Stratford Shoal (Middle Ground) in CT waters on Long Island Sound, and Old Field Point in New York. To keep things accurate, although Stratford Shoal was granted to NY in the late 1800's, today's official maps confirm it is in CT waters by 1,000 feet. Will leave it up to the lawyers, but it seems both states have legitimate claims to ownership.

Arriving in bright sunshine and under blue skies in Port Jeff, I headed west across Long Island and made my way to Route 27, through the Hamptons, and arrived about 90 minutes later at Montauk Point...



...shrouded in fog. Undeterred, I paid the \$9 entry fee to the grounds which includ-

ed climbing the 130 steps to the catwalk. As you can see from the photo, I had a spectacular view...of the fog.



The fog was coming from due west and hung all the way to the light. Was Tom Pregar here, too? Just kidding and, by the way, he is too hard on himself. He arranged a 'Hot Chocolate' trip to Portland, Maine in January 2006 and it was sunny and near 60° the day of our lighthouse visits. Anyway, the Mets must have lost the night before because the fogbank stopped just past the park grounds in NY. Eastward, over the water toward New England, it was sunny. The Red Sox must have won.

According to the brochure, Montauk was the first lighthouse built in New York State and it was on this site that the Montaukett Indians once built watch fires to guide their canoes home. Later, the Revolutionary War saw the British occupy the site, which they called Turtle Hill, and they too built watch fires for their fleet blockading Long Island Sound.

With the war over, the Second Congress under President Washington authorized the building of the lighthouse in 1792 to safeguard ships and promote trade. The light, automated in 1987, remains an active aid to navigation today. Ownership was transferred from the Coast Guard to the Montauk Historical Society in 1996.

The beautiful and spacious grounds contain a fog signal building, fire control station, Lost at Sea Memorial, oil house and gift shop. The light and keepers' house, once home to keepers from the US Lighthouse Service and the Coast Guard, are open for visits or tours. The house has been converted into a museum that contains artifacts and exhibits, including an interactive model of the 28 lighthouses surrounding Long Island from Manhattan to Point Judith, Rhode Island.

Having spent too much time enjoying the lighthouse and views of Montauk Point, I decided to head back to Port Jeff so I wouldn't miss my return trip on the ferry. And at this time, of course, the fog began to dissipate and the skies cleared. It figures! I had an enjoyable time and left some CT money in the gift shop. I'm hoping to return to Long Island one day and

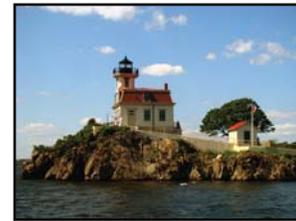
visit its other lights, including Fire Island.

Narragansett Bay

On July 9th, I arose early and traveled to Providence, Rhode Island to cruise on Narragansett Bay and into Newport Harbor aboard the Alletta Morris with the Save the Bay organization, which had recently lost federal funding and billed this as their "Final Ultimate Lighthouse Tour 2011." The 7-hour tour cost \$85 for members and \$100 for non-members and included close-up views of over 20 active and former lights. Proceeds help support Pomham Rocks and Rose Island lights and Save the Bay's educational and awareness programs.



Plum Beach



Pomham Rocks



Prudence Island

The 16 lights still standing included Beavertail, Bristol Ferry, Castle Hill, Conanicut, Conimicut, Dutch Island, Hog Island Shoal, Ida Lewis, Nayatt Point, Newport Harbor, Plum Beach, Pomham Rocks, Poplar Point, Prudence Island, Rose Island (where we stopped for an hour and enjoyed our included brown bag lunch), and

Warwick Point. Preservationists have done an incredible job restoring several of the lights in recent years, and all (at least from the boat) look fit and healthy.

We also viewed the Nantucket Lightship docked in Newport Harbor by the bridge to Goat Island. In the era of lightships, it was common for one lightship to 'relieve' another as repairs and overhauls were sometimes needed. It was also common for the relief ships to be renamed for the site at which they were moored. This one has been restored and serves as a luxury charter yacht with five staterooms.

We also passed the sites of lost lights, including Musselbed Shoal, destroyed in the hurricane of 1938, and Bullock's Point, se-

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WE'RE ON THE WEB!
WWW.NELL.CC

The NELL Beacon is a publication of
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A Chapter of the American Lighthouse Foundation

Have an article to submit?

Send it to

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NELL'S TRIPS FOR NEXT YEAR

Bill Kent has been working hard putting together some great trips. Here is what he has tentatively planned for us. Remember that this far out the dates are still tentative.

LHHC&Y 2012: Portsmouth Harbor, Maine for MLK weekend

Spring 2012: Nantucket probably the first weekend in May

Fall 2012: Boston Harbor

I'd like to invite you to go to our website at www.nell.cc and give the last edition of the on-line version of the Beacon a good look. Any member that would prefer an electronic copy of the Beacon sent to you **INSTEAD** of the hard copy we mail via the U. S. Postal Service please let me know. You will receive your first pdf electronic copy starting with the fall issue. It will be the online version using a larger font for easier reading, stories continued on the following page, more pictures and its printable if you feel you want a hard copy. We are doing this as a cost saving measure and hope to get a good response for the online version. This will free up some funds to go into our preservation fund.



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Awaycation to the Islands

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verely damaged by the same hurricane and replaced by a skeleton tower. Our narrator, Dave Kelleher from the Friends of Pomham Rocks, had Harbour Lights replicas of both those lost lights to aid our imaginations. Dave, along with Save the Bay Lead Captain Eric Pfirrmann and able assistant Grainne Lanigan, did a fantastic job on the cruise and during our lunch at Rose Island.

Rose Island Light was built on the old circular bastion of Fort Hamilton, named for Alexander Hamilton, the dude on the \$10 bill. The first fort was erected in 1780 during the American Revolution and saw additional building in subsequent years. In the late 1800's, Rose Island served as a torpedo station, followed by a munitions storage site in WWI, and an anti-aircraft station in WWII.



The light itself was built in 1870 and operated for 100 years. It was abandoned with the completion of the Claiborne Pell (Newport) Bridge in 1969, which replaced the light as the aid to navigation, and soon fell victim to the elements and vandalism. In 1984, the Rose Island Lighthouse Foundation was organized to restore and operate the building and grounds and they, through continuous hard work and fundraising, have turned the lighthouse into both a museum and guest house where visitors can sign up to stay for a night or a full week as keepers, who can do as much or as little as they choose. I was able to spend a night in the first floor museum on my birthday in early April 2002. The keeper that week was a carpenter from Georgia who built the outhouse that graces the grounds. A true gem.

I had beautiful weather for both journeys and was able to climb a new light in New York on one day and be on the water enjoying over 20 existing and former lights in Rhode Island on another. Even if only daycations, it was good to take an awaycation.