

On Friday, September 12, 2008, 110 NELL members and non-members alike made the trip to the Wyndham Hotel located in Newark Airport in very heavy rain and winds. I'm sure we were all wondering what the lighthouse gods had in store for our cruise of N.Y. Harbor and the surrounding lights the next day. We didn't have long to wait. In the morning as we finished breakfast and looked outside, we all breathed a collective sigh of relief. The sun was starting to peek thru from behind the last remnants of the storm clouds.

By the time we got to Liberty State Park, N.J. to board the yellow N. Y. Water Taxi the sun was in full shine mode and the lighthouse gods were smiling down on us once again.

We left the dock at 9 a.m. sharp as planned, passing by the Lightship Liberty heading for our first lighthouse of the day, the Statue of Liberty (yes, she is a lighthouse). Leaving Lady Liberty we went to Fort Wadsworth, Coney Island, West Bank, Romer Shoals, Sandy Hook and the Navesink Twin Lights of New Jersey, aka Highland Lights.

I had been to and climbed Sandy Hook and Navesink lights several times, but seeing them from the water for the first time was quite a surprise. They look very different. Especially Sandy Hook. It seemed so much smaller with the landscape being totally different from the land view. When you're at the tower you are looking down and out from atop a small knoll. On the boat you're looking almost straight ahead instead of up, with the lighthouse being partially blocked by trees and houses. When our narrator and NELL member, Mike Boucher announced Sandy Hook Lighthouse he added a very nice personnel touch stating "that's where Judy and I met and got married." Congratulations Mike and Judy, you picked a beautiful surrounding for a very important day in your lives.

Cruising a little further you'll immediately recognize the twin towers standing guard above the tree line. That too is a much different view, but still very recognizable. Unfortunately the main section of the building is blocked by the trees and the boats that are in dry storage at the numerous marinas that line the waterfront.

With the schedule calling for the viewing of 20 lighthouses and lightships we headed for Conover Beacon, Great Beds, Old Orchard Shoals, Elm Tree Light and Robbins Reef.

We also saw the 4 "Waterfalls" of N.Y. City. This was an art project similar to the Gates of Central Park 2 or 3 years ago. Four different platforms were constructed on the river and river water was diverted to the top of the platforms making a waterfall.

We finished the day seeing Lightship Ambrose, Blackwell's Island, U.S. Lighthouse Tender Lilac, Lightship Frying Pan and concluded a great day of light-housing with Lefrak Memorial light.

I've been a New Yorker all my life -- all 39 years, (lol,) and I'd like to mention a very interesting piece of history that I never knew until I got into light-housing years ago.

Blackwell (Welfare) Island (1872) was built for N.Y. City by convicts from the former Blackwell Island Prison. The lighthouse now serves as a tourist attraction and is located in Lighthouse Park at the north end of what is now known as Roosevelt Island. Roosevelt Island is only accessible by a bridge at 36th Avenue and Vernon Blvd. Astoria, Queens or the Roosevelt Island Tram from Second Ave. and 60th Street Manhattan.

We had beautiful weather, a great crew and a swift boat.

The 50-50 raffle produced winnings for Amy W. and NELL of \$215 each. Amy donated a good portion of that back to NELL in memory of her cousin Laurie S. who suddenly passed away earlier in the year.

Our thanks go out to all that attended with our apologies to all that were left on the waiting list. We are working on next years cruise and its shaping up to be as good or better than this one.

One of the non members, that attended this cruise (he became a member shortly after the cruise) had this to say when he sent in his membership application; "Thanks for the best (best was underlined twice) 1 day lighthouse cruise I have ever been on. I've been on quite a few." We thank you very much for the compliment and are happy you were able to get off the waiting list and on the boat – even if it was at the eleventh hour. We're delighted to have you as a member.

I hope to see many of you in Rhode Island at Lighthouses Hot Chocolate and You (LHHC&Y) Friday January 16 thru Sunday Jan. 18, 2009.

Tom Kenworthy