



The Bay Run



Newsletter of
The Delaware Bay Lighthouse Keepers
and Friends Association, Inc.

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"Our mission is to preserve the history of the
Delaware Bay and River Lighthouses, Lightships and their Keepers"

THE "GHOST FLEETS" OF NEW JERSEY AND DELAWARE

Close to 5,000 known shipwrecks have been charted off the coasts of New Jersey and Delaware. One of the most well-known locally is the *Sindia* which ran aground between 16th and 17th Streets in Ocean City in December of 1901. Artifacts of this ship are on display at the library located on 17th and Simpson in Ocean City. Then of course, there is the concrete ship, *Atlantus*, that rests in the Delaware Bay off Cape May Point.



There are many other ships that make up this so-called "ghost fleet". Some of them were the victims of torpedoes from the German U boats during World War II. Not too long ago, in 1991, an unidentified U boat wreck was discovered off the New Jersey coast. It was nicknamed the **U Who** since the exact identity of the wreck was unknown. The **Miraflores**, a freighter carrying fruit from Haiti to New York, was torpedoed in 1942. Thirty-four crew members were lost; there were no survivors.

Bound for New York City with a crew of 75, a Brazilian freighter steam ship also became a casualty in 1942. Ten passengers and the crew of 38 all fell victim to a German torpedo.

An oil tanker built in New Jersey in 1936, the **R P Rasor** was torpedoed off the coast of Barnegat Inlet. Only 2 survived out of a crew of 50.

The **USS Jacob Jones**, a navy destroyer built in 1918, was torpedoed off the coast of Cape May. The explosion killed 109 of the 120 crew members on board.

Listed as part of this so-called ghost fleet is a passenger-cargo ship, the **Vizcaya**, built in 1872. This ship was carrying \$350,000 worth of merchandise and collided with the **Cornelius Hargrave** in Barnegat Inlet. All sixty-nine people on board were lost.

The **HMS Mermaid**, an English merchant ship, sank off Egg Harbor killing 150 of the 170 crew members. A ship belonging to the United States, sailing from France to New York City, the **Powhatan** was stranded in a strong snowstorm and eventually sank off the New Jersey coast. Three hundred forty crew members were lost.

New Year's Eve of 1777 proved to be fateful for 3 British Ships that were stripped and burned by Americans off the coast of Marcus Hook in the Delaware River. This event took place during the Revolutionary War.

There are approximately 2,400 shipwrecks contained in the waters between the Delaware and the Chesapeake Bays. The **John J. Phillips** (formerly the **USS Chesapeake**) managed to escape Delaware's watery graveyard. It was the only ship from a fleet of 5 that wasn't destroyed. Its history spans 2 wars and many voyages. One particular spot in Delaware, off the Atlantic Ocean, that claimed a lot of ships is Coin Beach near the Indian River Inlet. Coins from sunken ships occasionally wash up on the shore. It is stated that if you visit this area after

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Angelo S. Rigazio, Jr.



Greetings from North Cape May, New Jersey. Our second meeting for 2023 was held at the Absecon Lighthouse in Atlantic City on April 29. Once again, it was an interesting, informative meeting. It was nice catching up and chatting with our members. We had the opportunity to meet Buddy Grover, the 95-year-old lightkeeper of the lighthouse. He has a great personality and with a twinkle in his eyes, he tells the story of the lighthouse and relates the fact that he enjoys climbing to the top of the lighthouse every week on the tours. You will not be disappointed when you visit the lighthouse and have a chance to talk to Buddy. One thing I did not know was that Absecon Light is the tallest lighthouse in New Jersey, with Barnegat and Cape May following in second and third place for height. Buddy informed us that we can remember this by associating it with the alphabet, ABC: Absecon, Barnegat, Cape May. All three lighthouses were designed by the Civil War General and army engineer, George Meade.

I had the opportunity to tell my lighthouse story on www.capemayradio.org WCFA 101.5 FM. Thank you, Mark Allen, for having me as your guest on “The Other Side”. As most of you know, once I start telling my story, I have no problem continuing and enjoy every minute doing so. Everyone should tune in to hear Mark on Fridays at 1:00 PM; you’ll hear about “the harbor side of Cape May.” *Angelo*

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FROM THE LOG OF THE INTERIM VICE PRESIDENT & CHAIRMEN OF THE BOARD *by Rod Mulligan*

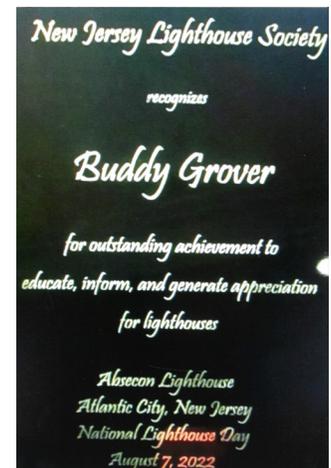


of Historic
or “little stream”.)

On a dreary, dismal day at the end of April, we had a cheerful, sunny meeting at the Absecon Lighthouse in Atlantic City. Our very interesting speaker was Buddy Grover, the 95-year-old lighthouse tour guide. He takes pride not only in the lighthouse but in the fact that he climbs the 228 steps taking tourists on tours. Absecon is the tallest lighthouse in New Jersey and the 3rd tallest in the United States. Built in 1856, Absecon Lighthouse was designed by George Meade; is one of the oldest lighthouses in the country and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. (NOTE: Absecon is derived from the Native American word meaning “little water”

There was a total of six men who served as principal lightkeepers over the course of the lighthouse operation. The first was Daniel Scull appointed in 1856; he was paid a yearly salary of \$600. The last was Knud Hansen, who left the office in 1930. The longest serving keeper was Abraham Wolf, who dedicated thirty-three years of his life to guarding the waters of Absecon Bay.

When asked about the reports that this lighthouse is haunted, Grover replied when he was checking out the other night, he heard a strange noise, went back to check it out but saw nothing. As he attempted to leave again, the same thing happened. He said that the famed ghost hunters would be returning in a month or so to check out the premises once again. It has been reported that there are over a dozen spirits residing there, some of them former keepers.



HEARING FROM A FORMER “COASTIE” *by Bill Perkin*

(Editor’s note: Thanks to member, Joanne Bolton for sharing Bill Perkins’ letter.)

Back in the mid 50’s, I was a 20-year-old Coast Guard stationed on Brandywine Shoal Light. I would like to share some of my memories with you all.

I was taken to Brandywine from Lewes, DE, in a 40-footer and introduced to a second class boson’s mate who piloted the boat. Facing a strong outgoing current, a three foot chop and a swirling wind of about 15 knots, we approached Brandywine’s wooden pier. This guy certainly knew how to handle a boat as we powered down and he gently put the port side of the 40 footer firmly against the pier and held it there. No lines ashore, no tying off, just incredible boat handling. I disembarked and watched as the boson’s mate backed away from the dock, made a 180 degree turn and headed back to Lewes. In the year ahead, I was to make many trips up and down the Delaware Bay.

Slowly I learned how to help with the work that had to be done on each trip like: assisting the lighthouse crew members who were coming on and off duty; helping with crew members’ baggage and food; offloading the lighthouse materials and supplies; delivering and picking up mail and eventually learning how to handle lines well enough to avoid the shouting instructions and directions from my boson “friend”.

Remembering back to that first day on Brandywine, I picked up my gear and slowly climbed up the steep steps to the main deck that encircled the lighthouse. Setting my gear down, and with more than a little apprehension, I opened the old wooden door. The first thing I saw as I entered the room was an old wooden kitchen table. Sitting in the middle of the table was a small, snowy, hissing television set showing some unidentified program. There was no one in sight. A shout came from the other side of the roundabout room, “Shut the door”. I put my gear down and slowly took steps toward the area from where the voice had come. There, his back to me, sitting in a rocking chair, reading a book, pipe smoke circling over him was Harry. “Kicked you out here, huh?” he said. That was the beginning of my lighthouse education.

It’s been a long time since my experience at the lighthouse. I was a green SN1 serving on the light with a career CG Engineman and a “wickie,” one of the old-time lighthouse keepers. We did the real work of keeping the lighthouse running. I was delegated to painting, cooking and keeping watch so as I am writing this, I am not able to describe much about the lighthouse facilities and mechanics. I wrote down, to the best of my ability what it was like for a young “Coastie” to spend an incredible year on Brandywine Shoal Light. I hope you enjoyed reminiscing with me.

REMEMBERING PETER HARP *by Steve Murray*

It is with great sadness that I report the news of the passing of Peter Harp. DBLHKFA members may remember him as the Honorary Keeper of Hereford Inlet Lighthouse from 1997-2017, as well as being a board member of “The Friends of Hereford Inlet Lighthouse”.

Although his Cornell degree was in restaurant management, he minored in American History and that was his passion. Peter joined us at Hereford LH in 1997 after he sold the family business, the famed Tuckahoe Inn in Beesley’s Point, NJ. Giving his own special, extended tour, he would enthrall visitors with his great knowledge and enthusiasm for maritime history and unique charisma. Many times, he would turn even the most disinterested tourist into a lighthouse or Life Saving Service lover. He traveled throughout the state giving presentations to various schools, fraternal organizations and history groups. As a media spokesman for the lighthouse, he gave interviews for television, radio, newspaper and magazine features.

Peter created and helped produce a CD of traditional and original sea chanty songs, at his own expense, to raise funds for the Friends of Hereford Inlet Lighthouse. He played banjo and sang accompanied by his friend, grammy nominated musician, Lou London. Pete was a true renaissance man with many varied interests and skills. He was a Revolutionary War interpreter (with a vast collection of arms and uniforms), an antiques expert who appeared regularly on the television show, “Let’s Talk Antiques”. He also portrayed various historical figures on the children’s TV show, “Captain Noah”. He had an unparalleled and vast personal collection of 18th Century furnishings and antiques; entering his home was like a trip to Colonial Williamsburg. He was a first-rate banjo player, crack shot with a musket, an avid pilot and a member of the Screen Actors Guild.

With all his accomplishment and travels, not too long before he passed away, Peter told me that his association with Hereford Inlet Lighthouse was the highlight of his life. Being his friend was a highlight of mine. We will all miss you dearly Keeper Harp. Peter is survived by his daughters Jennifer Harp Douris, Marla Peterson and five grandchildren.





SAVE THE DATES – Mark Your Calendars:

Tuesday, June 27, 2023 – is the date set for our summer meeting to be held at the Cape May County Museum and Genealogical Library located at 504 US Route 9, Cape May Court House, NJ 08210 (609) 465-3535. The meeting will begin at 10 AM, followed by a tour of the museum. Three historic buildings showcase the county life from Native Americans through the 21st Century. The museum also houses the original Fresnel light from the Cape May Lighthouse. Picnic grounds are available for “brown bagging” a lunch. (*NOTE: The museum is only open on Wednesdays and Fridays but is opening on Tuesday especially for our group. We hope to show our appreciation by having good attendance.*) **PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF DAY AND TIME.**

Saturday, July 22, 2023 – Four-hour cruise to Brandywine Light, south in the Bay. We will be cruising on the Bonanza II out of Fortescue, NJ leaving the dock at 3 PM. Check Cruise News insert for more information. Reserve soon.

Monday, August 7, 2023 – National Lighthouse Day celebration. We will be at East Point Lighthouse. Volunteers always welcome.

Saturday, August 26, 2023 – Four-hour cruise to Ship John Shoal Light, north in the Bay leaving the dock at 3 PM on the Bonanza II out of Fortescue, NJ. Check Cruise News insert for more information. Reserve soon. .

October 21 & 22, 2023 – Lighthouse Challenge of New Jersey. Take the Challenge. Can you visit ALL the New Jersey Lighthouses in one weekend? Give it a try!!

JUST ARRIVED – brand new Lighthouses of the Delaware Bay sweatshirts (contain pictures of ALL the Delaware Bay Lights). Available at the June meeting, on the cruises and at the Challenge. Price of a sweatshirt \$40 – L & XL sizes available in light blue or navy blue.

CAROLE RIELY SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

The winner of the Carole Reily Scholarship this year is a 2023 Cum Laude graduate of Vineland High School, Madison Tomasso. Madison has been accepted at the College of New Jersey and will be majoring in Biology, Secondary Education. We wish her the best of luck in her endeavors and in her future as a high school science teacher.

It doesn't seem possible our organization has been awarding Carole Reily Scholarships since 2010. Where does the time go? These scholarships are awarded to honor the memory of our Founder and President of the Delaware Bay Lighthouse Keepers and Friends, Association, Carole Reily who passed away July 7, 2007. The first two winners were graduates from Vineland High School, Elle Rivera in 2010 and Rebecca Sheridan in 2011. Both graduates were planning on continuing their education at selective colleges.

Ryann Ervin, who was presented with the scholarship award in 2012, and is the granddaughter of member Anthony Giletto, is currently working as a medical technician. Completing her studies at Cameron University in Oklahoma, RyAnn is using her knowledge working in a laboratory in Oklahoma. Her mom stated she has made her family very proud.

Erika Coughlin won the scholarship in 2013 and studied psychology at Stockton University. She married John Edwards in May of 2015 and is now the proud mother of three children: Logan, Charlotte and Emilia. Erika lives in Cape May Court House and is employed at the Day Care Center at the USCG Base in Cape May.

In 2015, the scholarship was awarded to William Coughlin. After completing Computer Engineering at the Rochester Institute of Technology, he is currently living in Durham, North Carolina and is employed by Infosys in Raleigh. Caitlyn Muller, our 2016 scholarship awardee and granddaughter of members Joanne and Charles Bolton, is currently finishing her second year of teaching at Dane Barse, an elementary school in Vineland. She also works at WAWA trying to save enough money to begin her master's degree classes in the fall. She is well liked by her peers and enjoys working with underprivileged students.

Kylie Herb, the 2018 awardee, was studying Economy at the University of Miami in Ohio but transferred to West Chester University in Pennsylvania where she is majoring in Business Administration. To supplement college expenses, she is working at the Split Rail Tavern in West Chester, currently residing in the area with her two cats, Bean and Peanut. Kylie was and is still very active in athletics.

In 2022, Brianna Robinson, was awarded the Carole Reily scholarship. She is the niece of members Angelo and Darlene Rigazio and is attending Stockton College with a concentration in physical therapy. During her first two semesters as an honors student, she earned a total of 36 credits towards her degree and made the Dean's List. An athlete, Brianna, played for the Stockton Women's Basketball and Lacrosse teams.

CONGRATULATIONS ALL!!

THE “GHOST FLEETS” OF NEW JERSEY AND DELAWARE

(Continued from Page 1)



a storm, you may be able to find some coins that have washed in from sunken ships. Many of these coins and other artifacts are on display at the Indian River Life Saving Station. Check out the artifacts from various ships such as: the **Faithful Steward** (1785), the **DeBraak** (1789) and the **Count Durant** (1783) also on display at the lifesaving station. The US Coast Guard ship that helped rescue 7 people during the infamous “Perfect Storm” of 1991 now rests at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean.

Wars, storms and poor navigational choices led to dozens of shipwrecks along the coast. Most of these shipwrecks took place before lighthouses were constructed: to serve as an aid to navigation, to warn of hazards, to establish their positions and to guide mariners to their destinations. Lighthouses mark dangerous shoals, reefs, rocks and lead seafarers to safe entries to harbors. Without these navigational assistants, there would have been many more shipwrecks and appropriately named ghost fleets.

*(Editor's note: Plan to visit the DiscoverSea Shipwreck Museum when in Delaware. The museum contains one of the largest collections of shipwreck and recovered artifacts in the Mid-Atlantic. Offerings include about 10,000 artifacts on display from as long ago as the 1500's, including cannons, daggers, bottles of rum, gold chains, and more. Located at 708 Coastal Highway, Fenwick Island, DE 19944 302-539-9366 www.discoversea.com)
Harbor City, NJ. 1999.)*

DID YOU KNOW?



Congratulations to Captain Sharon Urban, first permanent female captain of the Cape May-Lewes Ferry. In total, only four women have served as captain with the first being Linda Douglas in 1991. Today Captains Meghan Palmer and Melissa Vallia are also part of the growing roster of women at the helm.



Split Rock Lighthouse in Minnesota lit the light for 2 hours in memory and respect for Gordon Lightfoot who immortalized “The Wreck of The Edmund Fitzgerald,” the ship that sank in Lake Superior in 1975. All twenty-nine crewmen aboard were lost.



The United States boasts the world’s most urban population. Our ten most populated cities are (1) New York, (2) Los Angeles, (3) Chicago, (4) Houston, (5) Philadelphia, (6) Phoenix, (7) San Antonio, (8) Dallas, (9) San Diego, and (10) San Jose.



The full name of Los Angeles is El Pueblo de Nuestra Senora la Reina de los Angeles de Porchiuncula. Thank heavens, it was shortened to LA.



Founded in 1565 by Spanish explorers, St. Augustine, FL is the oldest continuously inhabited European-established city in the continental United States.



Jefferson City, Missouri; Madison, Wisconsin; Jackson, Mississippi, and Lincoln, Nebraska are four US state capitals named for former US presidents. (Question recently on “Jeopardy”)



Canada and the United States share the largest body of fresh water in the world, Lake Superior. The Great Salt Lake in landlocked Utah, is the largest body of saltwater in the United States. It is so salty, that in the coldest winter it has never frozen over (Ledler, Richard & Caroline McCullagh, AMERICAN TRIVIA, Smith Publishing, Layton, Utah, 2014.)



The USCG Cutter Eagle recently left New London, CT for 4 month’s training deployment. Coast guard officer candidates embark for a portion of the trans-Atlantic voyage to complete the at-sea requirements needed to become leaders in the United States Coast Guard.



The USCG and Canadian Coast Guard participated in the first ever coast guard ice breaker hockey invitational at the North Pole. Crews aboard the USCG Polar Star and the CCGS Louis S. St. Laurent will gear up and face off on the ice. It is hoped that a new annual tradition will showcase the friendship of the two nations.



In the 1950’s a million eggs a day moved through the Vineland Egg Auction on Delsea Drive. It was once home to the largest egg auction in the USA. (Editor’s Note: I remember going there with my father to take the eggs from our farm. Information from the Internet)



In the 1930’s, moving an officer’s house across the Delaware River from Fort Mott to Fort Delaware required floating it across the water. This was done to help solve a housing problem. (Internet)



UPDATE ON EAST POINT LIGHTHOUSE

The people in charge of the East Point Lighthouse are still battling the DEP and the State of New Jersey. Mountains of paperwork are involved. An application for a lease had to be filed, a fee of \$10,000 had to be paid along with the full responsibility to pay all the costs of maintaining the property as well as the costs of offering it to the public; in addition, all of this had to be submitted to the state to meet a deadline. None of the others in charge of area lighthouses have had to follow this procedure. Now, all those concerned must sit back and wait for Governor Murphy to make the decision as to what will determine the future of this lighthouse.

Many people do not realize how many visitors the lighthouse and surrounding area attract every year. Thousands of people from various states and other countries attending the New Jersey Lighthouse Challenge in October visit East Point. Other events the lighthouse offers throughout the year attract many visitors including civic & maritime groups, school groups, horseshoe crab training teams, boy scout and girl scout troops, holiday celebrations, etc. Families bring their children to tour the lighthouse and learn about this historic building. Currently, East Point is open the first and third weekend of each month. If the lighthouse could be open more often, it would be able to handle and educate more people. Thanks to the leadership and many volunteers, to date, much has been accomplished.

The life of East Point Light has spanned 165 years and three centuries. If steps are not taken to protect this structure and the land on which it stands from the slow degradations of time and tide, it may not see a fourth. The lighthouse is a symbol of the maritime history of the Delaware Bay and its place in the development of Southern New Jersey. It must be preserved for future generations to enjoy.

(Editor's note: In December 2014, I wrote an article regarding "East Point Light – An Endangered Lighthouse". At that time there were problems. Almost ten years later, the problems and battles still exist. Recently the DEP posted signs restricting access to the beach from May 7 – June 7. Summer events cannot be planned at the lighthouse due to this ongoing dispute. What is next? How long must one wait before these problems and battles are straightened out?)

THE STAR OF INDIA

While visiting in California, I was fortunate enough to visit the Star of India, the World's Oldest Active Sailing Ship. Docked in San Diego Harbor, it was put to sea once again in November of 2018 to celebrate its 155 years of service. This vessel is the oldest iron-hulled merchant ship still afloat. In 1863 it was launched as the fully rigged ship Euterpe at Ramsey Shipyard on the Isle of Man, located in the Irish Sea between Great Britain and Ireland. Iron ships were experimental at that time when most vessels were made of wood. The Star of India is part of the Maritime Museum in San Diego Harbor.

