



Newark, NJ  
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# The Beam

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## MEETING AT RIVERVIEW PARK, PENNSVILLE

### Minutes

Sept 29th - The second meeting of the United States Lighthouse Society-New Jersey Chapter was held at Riverview Park in Pennsville and attended by forty people. We had a lot of business left from the first meeting in June. Among the items discussed and resolved were such essentials as our club name, election of officers and committees, and the establishment of dues. We also discussed logos for the newsletter and club. This should take care of most of the business for a while, so more time can be devoted to roundtables, programs, and other items of interest. After the business meeting, Betty Husarik of Finns Point Rear Range Lighthouse shared with us the history of the lighthouse and the efforts of the *Save the Lighthouse Committee* to restore the lighthouse and keep it open to the public. We toured the lighthouse after the meeting. We thank Betty, and the Finns Point Volunteers for opening the lighthouse to us.

Dues were established at \$15.00 for singles and \$20.00 for families. There was discussion of setting them from \$7.50 - \$20.00 with the majority at \$15.00. Dues paid now would cover the period from September 29th to December 1991. Thereafter dues should be paid in January and run for the calendar year. Back issues of newsletters will be sent to those who join during the year.

The newsletter and postage are our biggest expenses. The first issue of the newsletter went into a "second printing"; over 325 copies were printed and distributed. Some copies are distributed free to organizations involved with lighthouses, such as the Sea Girt Lighthouse Citizens Committee, and Maurice River Historical Society. Membership cards and an informational brochure/membership application are two other expenses that will be forthcoming. The balance of dues would be used for operating expenses, programs and, as funds permit, to aid groups in the restoration of lighthouses.

## New Jersey Chapter Officers at Finns Point Rear Range Light



(Left to Right, Front to Back) Teri Dusing - Secretary, Jack Granger - President, Betty Husarik, Carl Nelson - Treasurer, Kim M. Ruth - Editor, Jim Gowdy - Vice President. Missing - George Freirer - Librarian/Historian and Barbara Nelson - Memberships.

We adopted "United States Lighthouse Society - New Jersey Chapter" as our official name; not Flashy, but that's what we are.

A wide range of names were suggested for the newsletter from the obvious to the sublime: You might recall from Volume 1, Number 1 that "The Flashlight" was only to fill up the banner area. Henceforth "The Flashlight" shall be known as "The Beam".

Some of the names that were considered: The Lumicon, Beacons, Light Source, Illuminations, Lens Scape, Jersey Lens, Light Happenings, New Jersey Log, Coastal Lights, Winky Inky, Light Lines, New Jersey Fog Horn, New Jersey Light, Keepers Comments, Fresnel Frolics, The Flashlight, and the popular choice - The Beam. [K. Ruth].

## NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of our chapter will take place on Saturday, December 8th, at the Sea Girt Lighthouse, starting at 10:30 a.m. Located in Monmouth County in the small town of Sea Girt, the lighthouse stands at the corner of Ocean Avenue and Beacon Boulevard, and is only a short distance from the beach. Exits 88 and 98 of the Garden State Parkway would seem to offer the best access to Sea Girt. Once you get onto Route 71 and reach the town of Sea Girt, head toward the ocean as far as you can, then turn left and go north toward Beacon Boulevard.

Following our business meeting, which should be refreshingly short, a member of the Sea Girt Lighthouse Committee will present a program highlighting the history of the lighthouse and the renovation efforts which have been conducted there to date. Afterward, there will be a short lighthouse tour. The meeting should finish by 3:00 p.m.

There should be plenty of parking available near the lighthouse. Everyone is requested to bring his/her own bag lunch. Coffee will be available in our meeting room, and directions will be given to a nearby convenience store for those who forget to bring a lunch.

Some display tables will be available if you have some photos, postcards, albums, or other lighthouse items you would like to display.

The meeting room is comfortable and spacious and the Sea Girt Lighthouse is attractive and photogenic both inside and out. Please plan to join us for an enjoyable get-together. [J. Gowdy].

## FINNS POINT LIGHTHOUSE

Betty Husarik reports their last open house of the year broke all previous attendance records totalling 297 visitors, 1 of whom was a great-grandson of the first keeper, and another a great-grandson of the second keeper. The new handrailing also has been installed. [K. Ruth].

## CAPE MAY LIGHTHOUSE

We don't advocate setting world's records for speed flights in lighthouses, but feel it's worth mentioning that 12-year-old

Mike Mollet from the Pitman Middle School, New Jersey, made it up and down the 199 steps in the Cape May Lighthouse in the time of 4 minutes 34 84/100 seconds. Worth mentioning also is the fact that it was Mike's third trip that day. [Katherine Von Ahnen].

Hours: The Cape May Lighthouse will be open Friday, November 23, and Saturday, November 24 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and Sunday, November 25 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. In December, the lighthouse will be open Saturdays, December 1, 8, 15, & 22 from 12:00 noon to 3:00 p.m. and Sunday, December 30 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

## ARTICLES WORTH NOTING

Snodgrass, Paul, "Beacons of the Sea," *Gulfshore Life - The Lifestyle Magazine of Southwest Florida*, October 1990, pages 78-81. Pictorial article on Sanibel and Boca Grande Lighthouses.

Artman, A.J., "He Lives in a Lighthouse and Builds Ships," *New York Times*, Thursday, August 30, 1990, page C10. Article on Gilbert Charbonneau, a marine architect who builds ships in bottles, and lives in the Hendricks Head Lighthouse, in Maine.

Grimmer, Mary, "Lightship NANTUCKET Back in Safe Hands," *Historic Preservation News*, September 1990, pages 8 & 17.

Devils Island Lighthouse, Wisconsin - lens - *Historic Preservation News*, October 1990, page 10.

Saugerties Lighthouse, Hudson River, New York, - relighted, *Historic Preservation News*, October 1990, page 11.

*South Jersey Magazine*, "Tucker's Beach on Tucker's Island....New Jersey's First Ocean Resort," Fall Issue, 1990, pages 20-25. Excellent article on Tucker's Island and the Little Egg Harbor Lighthouse, including pictures. [K. Ruth].

## BOOKS

**M**ary Elizabeth and the Cape May Point Lighthouse, by Katherine Von Ahnen is a children's historical fiction work recounting the adventures of Mary Elizabeth (the author's mother) at the Cape May lighthouse during the summer of 1912. Fascinating fictional glimpses into the life of a lighthouse keeper, including some little known

gems as the traveling libraries rotated among light-stations. Softcover, 40 pages illustrated with period photographs and original drawings. Order through MAC (Mid-Atlantic Center for the Arts), P.O. Box 340, Cape May, NJ 08204. Cost is \$7.95, + 7% New Jersey Sales Tax, and \$1.00 shipping and handling (total cost per book is \$9.51).

Guardians of the Golden Gate: Lighthouses and Lifeboat Stations of San Francisco Bay, by Ralph and Lisa Shanks. Softcover edition \$14.50 (ISBN 0-930268-08-3), hardcover \$28.50 (ISBN 0-930268-09-1). Please include \$1.50 shipping and handling. Available through the Shore Village Museum, 104 Limerock Street, Rockland, Maine, 04841.

Up & Down the Beach, by June Methot, (Navesink, N.J.: Whip Publishers, 1988). Not really a "lighthouse book," but mentioned here because it is a well researched book on the people, history, and environment of the Jersey shore from the first English settlement to the present. The chapter and information on lighthouses alone makes this book a "must have." Available at various outlets along the coast. [K. Ruth].

## SEA GIRT LIGHTHOUSE

In 1889 Congress appropriated \$20,000 for the purchase of land near Squan Inlet (now Manasquan Inlet) on which to build a lighthouse. It was felt that some sort of light was necessary to illuminate the long stretch of unbroken coast between Barnegat Inlet to the south and Sandy Hook Bay to the north. Since Squan Inlet was the best refuge for vessels along the coast, it was deemed an appropriate place for the erection of a lighthouse.

The papers for the purchase of a site were drawn up, but before payment was made, it was discovered that the lot to be transferred was not the site selected and agreed upon by the Light-House Board and was unfit for the intended purpose. The sale was subsequently called off.

Efforts to locate a new and more suitable site were begun and by 1894 were successful, but there was difficulty in obtaining a clear title to the tract located 1 5/8 miles north of the Inlet. The difficulties were resolved the following year, however, and title was transferred.

Construction began on the lighthouse, which up until this point had been called the Squan Inlet

Light-Station, in 1896, and it was completed and first illuminated the night of December 10, 1896.

The lighthouse was described at the time as a two-story brick with tower on top, built of red brick, with lead colored shutters and green blinds. The lantern was painted black, it's top 44 feet above the ground. When first constructed the lantern was equipped with a 4th order lens having 8 sides and a vertical arrangement of bars.

The lighthouse was frequently threatened by the nearby Wreck Pond (Sea Girt Inlet). In 1900, a 240 foot sand fence was installed to protect the grounds from further encroachment. In 1904, the Annual Report of the Light-House Board noted that "a sand fence was erected and kept in position during the winter. The sand that had drifted upon the lawn was removed, a quantity of fertilizing material was applied and some resodding and reseeding was done."<sup>1</sup>

Two years later the report stated that the "Sea Girt Inlet approached very near to the northeasterly corner of the reservation," and that "sand bags were stored at the station for use in making temporary revetments in case of necessity."<sup>2</sup>

An inspection report of 1907 notes that the lighthouse was 80 feet to the nearest high water mark. By the 1920's the ocean, too, had encroached upon the lighthouse to the degree that the government feared its ultimate demise. Water lapped at the foundation of the dwelling. Catastrophe was prevented with the addition of interlocking steel pilings which were installed around the seaward side of the lighthouse.

In 1921, the Sea Girt Lighthouse became the first shore light-station to be equipped with a radio fog signal:

The system of radio signals is surprisingly simple. They are flashed far out to sea from three stations in the vicinity of the entrance to New York Harbor, each being distinctive so that it can be instantly identified. One of the sending stations is aboard the Ambrose Light-ship directly before the entrance of the harbor. A second station is located at Sea Girt on the New Jersey coast, about thirty miles to the south. The third station is aboard the Fire Island Light-ship, about thirty miles east of the Ambrose Light-ship, off the south shore of Long Island. The signals thrown out from Sea Girt have a range of two hundred miles, while the other two stations can be clearly heard forty miles

away. Even the speediest liners therefore can pick up the radio signals several hours' sail from the harbor entrance.

The radio compass signals are distinctive, so that they cannot by any chance be confused with the sending of other shore or ship stations. The Ambrose Channel Light-ship sends out a series of signal dashes continuously for twenty seconds, and then remains silent for twenty seconds. The signal of the Fire Island Light-ship station is a series of double dashes continued for twenty-five seconds, followed by a silence of the same duration. The Sea Girt station throws out a series of triple dashes, for sixty seconds, and then remains silent for six minutes.

By listening in on these three signals it is possible to lay the ship's course with amazing accuracy. The new system has the great advantage of being both simple and inexpensive.<sup>3</sup>

Vessels equipped with a radio compass detected the transmissions with the aid of a small loop mounted above a compass. The antenna could be moved in any direction. By listening with a headset, an operator rotated the antenna until the best (strongest) signal was heard, then adjusted the frequency and took a bearing from another station. Plotting the directions of those signals on a chart, the point of intersection of those bearings is the ship's position. By listening to the characteristic signal each station was transmitting, it is possible to identify the station. There were many advantages to this new method of navigation, which was the forerunner of today's LORAN.

The Sea Girt lighthouse was used until 1955, when the increased cost of continued operation, availability of more economical options, and the change of the shipping lanes to a more easterly direction were all factors in the decline of the usefulness of the lighthouse.

The lighthouse was offered for sale to the state, but the state waived its priority right to purchase the property. The Borough Council of Sea Girt advised the General Services Administration that it would be interested in acquiring the property.

For a time the lighthouse was used as a meeting place for various civic groups, but in 1980 a group was formed with the intention of restoring the lighthouse. The Sea Girt Lighthouse Citizens Committee leased the

property from the town for twenty-five years. The group was incorporated in 1981, and consists of over 200 members.

Some of the work so far accomplished has been the rebuilding of the wrap-around porch, a new roof, pointing of the brick work, and replastering of walls and ceilings throughout the building. [K. Ruth].

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Annual Report of the Light-House Board 1900.*

<sup>2</sup> *Annual Report of the Light-House Board 1906.*

<sup>3</sup> Collins, Francis A., *Sentinels Along Our Coast*, (New York, New York: The Century Company, 1922), pgs. 257-258.

## THAT UNPLEASANT SUBJECT

Nothing in life is free. As much as we'd like to send you *THE BEAM* free every quarter, we cannot afford to do so. For some, this is the second issue you have received, for others it is the first. The first issue was distributed free to over 325 people, we expect to print and distribute over 500 copies of this issue. We have not asked for money before this, because we were not certain that we had a viable organization with enough interest to keep our momentum going. We know now we have that interest, and we are an active and growing organization. We would cordially invite you to join us. It is the only way we can continue to keep the newsletter coming to you.

We must ask that if you want to continue to receive *THE BEAM*, and join an active and growing organization you respond by returning the enclosed membership application with your check for \$15.00 or \$20.00 for family memberships. If we do not hear from you, we must regretfully remove your name from our mailing list. [K. Ruth].

## SUBMISSIONS

Please send submissions to Kim M. Ruth, Editor - *The Beam*, 425 Summer Avenue, Beverly, N.J. 08010. UPDATE - since I mentioned it in the previous issue, and my wife is looking over my shoulder, I must announce that Fitz and I are the proud parents of a baby boy, Michael, born September 12, 1990, 7 lbs, 10 oz.