



PORTSMOUTH HARBOR LIGHTHOUSE / WHALEBACK LIGHTHOUSE
Portsmouth Harbor Beacon

Newsletter of the Friends of Portsmouth Harbor Lighthouses, a chapter of the American Lighthouse Foundation

www.portsmouthharborlighthouse.org

Quarterly Newsletter

Fall 2011

Greater Portsmouth Deals: The Best Little Coupon Book

If you live in or near Portsmouth, New Hampshire, you've probably noticed that some of the coupon books you can buy feature too many coupons far from the Seacoast region.

Here at last is a coupon book that concentrates on the NH Seacoast. There are restaurants (Blue Mermaid Island Grill, Bob's Broiled Chicken, Café Nostimo, Dos Amigos Burritos, Joe's NY Pizza, Popovers on the Square, Beach Plum, and many more), shops (Abode Home Furnishings, A & M Paint & Wallpaper, Mainely Gourmet Chocolate Factory, the Meat House, When Pigs Fly, and more), and museums & entertainment (Children's Museum of NH, Granite State Whale Watch, Isles of Shoals Steamship Co., Strawberry Banke Museum, Water Country, York's Wild Kingdom, and many more).

All in all, this great little book contains a

total of about \$1500 in savings!

You can read the complete list online at dealsbooknh.com.



The Greater Portsmouth Deals coupon book makes a wonderful gift for anyone in the Portsmouth area, and the profits benefit our efforts to preserve our lighthouses.

Only \$30 (plus \$3 shipping) while the supply lasts! You can order on our website at www.portsmouthharborlighthouse.org or by sending the order form at the right.

Please mail the form to FPHL, P.O. Box 8232, Portsmouth, NH 03802-8232.

Please send me ___ copies of the Greater Portsmouth Deals coupon book at \$30 each, plus \$3 shipping per order.

Total enclosed _____

Paid by check (payable to FPHL) _____

Credit card # _____

Exp Date _____

Security Code _____

Name _____

Street address _____

City, state, and zip code _____

Preparing for a dock at Whaleback



(L to R) Duncan Mellor, P.E., Waterfront Engineers, LLC; Bob Trapani, Jr., executive director of American Lighthouse Foundation; Ken Anderson, Riverside & Pickering Marine Contractors; and Deane Rykerson, Rykerson Architecture, at Whaleback Lighthouse on October 7, 2011.

We were awarded ownership of Whaleback Lighthouse in Kittery, Maine, in 2009. The installation of safe boat landing facilities is a key step as we move forward with our plans to restore the site and to provide public access. On October 7, 2011, a group of experts visited Whaleback to gather information that will be used to formulate a plan for a permanent landing solution.

ALF Executive Director Bob Trapani Jr. commented, "Lighthouse enthusiasts and the Piscataqua River communities alike very much want to see Whaleback Lighthouse saved, but that is a future bridge to be crossed. In order to arrive at that moment in time where restoration becomes reality, the Friends of Portsmouth Harbor Lighthouses must first establish a safe/stout docking system at this wave-swept location. A docking system at Whaleback is possible, but not without an ample financial investment first. So, if you share the dedicated spirit of our modern day keepers who comprise the Friends of Portsmouth Harbor Lighthouses, please consider putting your 'hard hat' on by making a much needed donation to FPHL so that Whaleback's 'bridge' to a brighter future can be built!"

FPHL Chairman Ross Tracy added, "A docking system will open up countless opportunities to ensure the restoration process progresses smoothly and efficiently. A safe and functional landing area will eventually become the welcome mat for the many visitors we are eager to host in the future. It's certainly a challenge for us to raise awareness and adequate funding for a project of this nature. Creating interest and excitement for a place that is out of the physical reach of a majority of people will most certainly put our board and volunteer corps to the test. Nonetheless, we'll do our best as lighthouse stewards to guide the restoration of this historic and wondrous treasure to completion."

The Flying Santa Tradition Continues

This holiday season marks the 82nd anniversary of the birth of a wonderful lighthouse-related tradition, the Flying Santa. The yearly flights date back to 1929, when a pioneering Maine aviator named William Wincapaw flew his seaplane over the lighthouses of midcoast Maine on Christmas Day, dropping presents for keepers and their families as an expression of gratitude for their valuable and often thankless service.



William Wincapaw (right) and his son William Jr.

The gesture was greatly appreciated by the people at the lighthouses, and Wincapaw expanded the flights in the subsequent years. His son, Bill Jr., who became a licensed pilot at the age of 16, aided his father in the yearly effort. By 1933, the Wincapaws were delivering presents at 91 lighthouses and Coast Guard stations.

The popular New England maritime historian Edward Rowe Snow became involved in the flights in 1935, and he eventually took over as the sole Flying Santa.

Snow, who was not a pilot, hired a pilot and plane each year at his own expense. He was joined for the flights each Christmas season by his wife, Anna-Myrle, and later by their daughter, Dolly. The Snows kept the tradition alive through 1980.

One of the most memorable incidents involving the Flying Santa took place in the mid-1940s. It involved a little girl named Seamond, daughter of Keeper Octave Ponsart at Cuttyhunk Lighthouse in Massachusetts.



Edward Rowe Snow with his wife, Anna-Myrle, circa 1940.

Here is the story in Seamond Ponsart Roberts' own words:

I was barely five, and my mother had read a story that Mr. Snow would be dropping presents to the families at the lights. She wrote to him, telling of our little family, and saying I was a little girl out there with my dogs, cats, and chickens, and I would really love to get a doll from the Flying Santa.

Every time I saw an airplane I called out, "Is that him? Is that MY Flying Santa?" until December when he finally did show up. You know, I still remember that very special day. The plane came over and circled and we were ready. We had a dory ready, in case the bombardiering wasn't too on-target and we had to fish the packages out.

Three packages fell! One made the pond and Dad had to row out and get it. No problem, though. He had the packages heavily wrapped and rewrapped in slick paper with lots of raffia inside and string and more string. Two packages made the ground, and one hit one of the huge boulders that are part of the Cuttyhunk Island landscape. We all rushed to the house.

We knew that Mr. Snow always included wonderful things in his packages: books, magazines, candy, cigarettes, little odds and ends of things, always one of his new books. And I knew in one of them would be my doll.

There it was, in the last package, the one that hit the boulder. My doll. And there it was all in pieces.

I could not believe it! My doll I had waited on for so long, the one my Santa had promised, and now it was broken. I was inconsolable and as mother put it in her letter to him, I cried myself to sleep. My father patched up

the doll as best he could. Daddy, being a lighthouse keeper, could fix anything. And this became my play-sick doll, complete with band-aids and slings. Still, I was so disappointed.

We moved to West Chop Lighthouse on Martha's Vineyard during the following year. My Santa received a letter from my mother telling him about my disappointment on finding the broken doll. "Well, this would not do to have a little girl heartbroken over a doll," he said. Do you know what this extraordinary man did? The next Christmas, he personally chartered a helicopter to land on Martha's Vineyard.

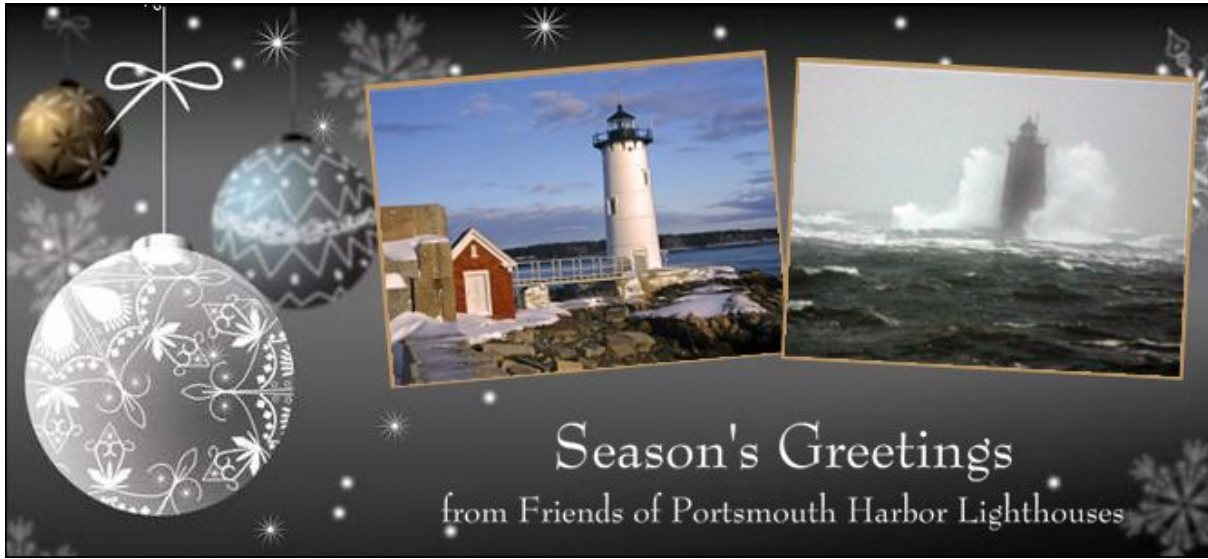
On December 12, 1946, Edward Rowe Snow flew in a helicopter from Boston to the Gay Head Lifesaving Station. There, like a fairy tale, I had Santa Claus hand me a doll to replace the broken one. It was so very touching that nearly everyone was crying. Not me. Did I ever have a big hug for this hero of mine!

In all my life, I have to say that it was a pinnacle event. He knew this would make me happy and he did it because he was a big-hearted man and knew the real meaning of reaching out to people. I felt like I had been crowned queen forever.



Seamond Ponsart (center) with Santa Edward Rowe Snow and her parents in 1946.

The Flying Santa flights still continue today by helicopter, sponsored by the nonprofit Friends of Flying Santa. Santa lands at Coast Guard stations along the Northeast coast every Christmas season, handing out hundreds of gifts to the children of Coast Guard families. Station Portsmouth Harbor is one of Santa's regular stops. It's a wonderful way of saying thank you to Coast Guard families for their service and sacrifices. You can read more and donate to help keep the tradition going at www.FlyingSanta.org.



2011-2012 Board of Directors

- Ross Tracy, Chairman
- Joanne Yeaton, Vice Chairman
- Sharon Mills, Secretary
- William Marshall, Treasurer
- Janice Desmarais, Director-at-large
- Pat Heffernan, Director-at-large
- Robert Kearns, Director-at-large
- Sam Knowles, Director-at-large
- Ron Kolek, Director-at-large

Staff

Jeremy D'Entremont,
Operations Manager

Gary's Doing it Again!

Many of you know Gary Sredzienski of Kittery, Maine, as one of the most popular musicians in our area. His accordion playing has been heard in many movies and TV shows, and his band, the Serfs, are a popular draw in clubs. Earlier this fall, Gary recorded a solo accordion album inside Portsmouth Harbor Lighthouse.



Gary recording inside Portsmouth Harbor Lighthouse in September

Gary is also an avid swimmer, and his long-distance winter swims have raised many thousands of dollars for local Maine and New Hampshire charities. This past February, Gary raised \$10,000 for the American Lighthouse Foundation and Friends of Portsmouth Harbor

Lighthouses by swimming four miles near the entrance of the Piscataqua River.



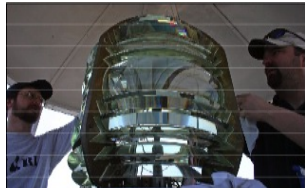
On December 10, Gary will swim 3.3 miles in the harbor of Rockland, Maine, to raise funds for the American Lighthouse Foundation and the Friends of Rockland Breakwater Lighthouse (FRBL). The FBRL chapter cares for two historic lighthouses in the Rockland area: Rockland Breakwater Light and Owl's Head Light. Both have undergone extensive restoration in recent years.

Following his Rockland swim, Gary will entertain at a celebration party at the Owl's Head Community Center at 6:30 p.m. You can read more about the event – and donate to support Gary's commitment – by visiting www.lighthousefoundation.org or by calling 207-594-4174.

2012 Open Houses at Portsmouth Harbor Lighthouse

During our 2011 season, we welcomed about 2500 visitors during our open houses at Portsmouth Harbor Lighthouse. The lighthouse will again be open in the 2012 season (late May to mid-October) from 1 to 5 p.m. every Sunday afternoon. There will again be a suggested donation of \$4 for adults and \$2 for children 12 and under. All the details of our open houses are on our website at www.portsmouthharborlighthouse.org. Watch for announcements regarding more events in 2012!





Membership in Friends of Portsmouth Harbor Lighthouses

We'd love to have you as a member. Members receive discounts on FPHL merchandise at events, and receive our newsletter and emails with up-to-the-minute news and announcements. Also, please let us know if you're interested in volunteering at open houses or other events. To join, please fill out the form below and mail with a check or money order (payable to FPHL) and mail to Friends of Portsmouth Harbor Lighthouses PO Box 8232, Portsmouth, NH 03802-8232. You can also join through our website at www.portsmouthharborlighthouse.org.

Annual dues (dues in all categories and other donations are tax-deductible):

Commissioner: \$500 ___ Inspector: \$250 ___ Keeper: \$100 ___ Assistant Keeper: \$50 ___

Family Membership: \$25 ___ Individual Membership: \$15 ___ Child Membership (12 or under): \$5 ___

Name _____

Address _____ City/State: _____

Zip code: _____ Phone: _____ Email address: _____

You may also pay with a Visa or Mastercard. Please fill in your name and contact information above along with the credit card information below.

Card number _____ Exp. date _____ Three-digit security code _____