



A Record-Setting Season

We are on track to smash all previous attendance records at our Sunday open houses at Portsmouth Harbor Lighthouse, with an expected total of more than 3000 visitors. Last year's total was about 2400. Even with less than ideal weather some weeks, there have been around 150 or more visiting just about every Sunday, peaking with 214 on August 26 and 215 on September 2.



We typically staff our open houses with at least five volunteers, with a merchandise table and various positions inside and outside the lighthouse. Unlike tours at many other lighthouses, these events at Portsmouth Harbor Lighthouse are guided historical tours lasting around a half hour. Visitors learn about the reasons why Portsmouth got the first lighthouse north of Boston back in 1771, and about the previous lighthouse structures that have stood at the peninsula in New Castle known as Fort Point. Most importantly, they learn about the keepers and families who "kept a good light" for 177 years at the station.

At this writing, 32 different people have volunteered at our open houses and/or other events this season. Leading the way in volunteer hours are Ed Stevenson and E.J. Warren, with well over 100 hours each.

We've also had three nights of "Haunted Tours," all sold out as usual. These popular 90-minute tours are led by author and radio personality Ron Kolek, founder of New England Ghost Project, and author/PHL Operations Manager Jeremy D'Entremont. The tours include Portsmouth Harbor Lighthouse and adjacent Fort Constitution, and participants hear about the history of the sites along with stories of paranormal activity and investigations by New England Ghost Project and others. There's one night of "Haunted Tours" left for this season, on September 29.

The Things Kids Say

(As collected by volunteer E. J. Warren during open houses at Portsmouth Harbor Lighthouse.)

"The lighthouse is a big green 'go' light at night for boats!"

"That's a sad lighthouse out there (Whaleback), with no one to visit it."

"My daddy calls my mommy a keeper, but we ain't got no lighthouse."

"Do you know where the sea horses are?"



"You can't wear your slippers on the gray stairs -- they will fall through and hit my father!"

"The oil house is where the salad stuff is kept!"

"The Coast Guards live here and they go out in orange boats and save people who drink too much sea water."

"The sea monster comes out only at night? Right?"

"I would like to paint your light house pink. Pink is pretty."

"Do you get dizzy in the round lighthouse?"

"Can I stay here till the light comes on? Then I'll go home, I promise."

Meet the Gundalow *Piscataqua*

Visitors to Portsmouth Harbor Lighthouse this season may have noticed a newcomer on the Seacoast maritime scene – the sail vessel *Piscataqua*. This picturesque boat, now carrying passengers on public sails from Portsmouth's Prescott Park, is a replica of the flat-bottomed sail barges that carried freight on the waterways of our region for hundreds of years.



On August 30, 2012, historic preservation architect Deane Rykerson and lighthouse historian Jeremy D'Entremont were the guest speakers on board a special evening sail of the *Piscataqua*. Deane and Jeremy told passengers about the rich history of our lighthouses.



L to R: Deane Rykerson, Jeremy D'Entremont, Captain Matt Glenn, and Onboard Educator Megan Glenn. Photo by Ed Stevenson.

The *Piscataqua* is a very welcome addition to our maritime scene. Along with our lighthouses and other historic sites, this vessel will serve to teach local citizens and tourists alike about the amazing historic legacy and scenic beauty of our area. Long may she sail!

Travels with Sharon

By Sharon Mills

Sharon Mills is a member of the board of directors of Friends of Portsmouth Harbor Lighthouses. She has photographed more than 1200 lighthouses worldwide.

Although I haven't been volunteering this summer, my interest in lighthouses has not lessened. My husband Bob and I took a 13-day vacation earlier in the summer that ended on July 4. We visited many lights around Lake Michigan that we haven't seen in over 10 years and we had the chance to stay at Braddock Point Lighthouse Bed and Breakfast in New York on Lake Ontario.

On many weekends we've been trying to visit lighthouses I haven't climbed yet, so on August 18 we took a boat out to the Cape Ann Light Station on Thacher Island off the coast of Rockport, Massachusetts. It was an overcast day with a few light showers in the air, but it ended up being a very nice trip.



We walked all over the island. I climbed the north tower, which is open for visitors, and enjoyed the view of the whole island from the top. There are a keeper's house and assistant keeper's house on the island. We were able to peek into the keeper's house and see how it is furnished for overnight stays.



There is a small museum in the assistant keeper's house. Longtime friend of the American Lighthouse Foundation, Don Perkins, recently donated a replica he had made of Cape Ann Light Station to the Thacher Island Association, and it is now housed in the museum.



The old whistle house that contains the original air-powered foghorns is also open. There is a campground on the island where a few scouts were camping when we visited.

Unlike Portsmouth Harbor Light, which can be reached by car, it does take a little more planning to reach Thacher Island. But the trip is well worth the effort for a nice day on an island that contains the only operating twin lighthouses in the United States.



For more information on the Thacher Island and how you can visit, see the Thacher Island Association website at www.thacherisland.org.

Santa's Near Miss at Whaleback

In December 1948, the historian Edward Rowe Snow, famed as the "Flying Santa" to lighthouse keepers, dropped a bundle from a plane containing Christmas gifts for the keepers at Whaleback Lighthouse in Kittery, Maine.



Snow's first drop was too far away for the keepers to recover. Three weeks later, a man walking on a beach in Sandwich on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, found the package, 90 miles from where it had been dropped.

Years later, the man still had the book that was in the package, Snow's *Storms and Shipwrecks of New England*.



Boston Light, 1958

The annual tradition of the Flying Santa began in 1929. It continues today as a way of showing appreciation to Coast Guard families in the Northeast. Visit www.flyingsanta.org for more information.

Marion E. Petlick 1920-2012

Marion E. "Mickey" Petlick, 92, of New Castle, New Hampshire, died on Aug. 23, 2012, at her home. Marion was the daughter and granddaughter of lighthouse keepers. She was the mother of Friends of Portsmouth Harbor Lighthouses volunteer Chuck Petlick and his sister Joann Ireland. Both have been members of our organization for several years.

Marion's grandfather, Leander White, had a career as a lightkeeper that spanned more than 40 years, including 21 years at the famous Two Lights in Cape Elizabeth, Maine. He was principal keeper at Whaleback Light in Kittery, Maine, 1878-87, and principal keeper at Portsmouth Harbor Lighthouse, New Castle, NH, 1909-15. Her father (Leander's son), Arnold B. White, was keeper at Whaleback Light for an incredible 20 years (1921-41).

He then spent four years as keeper at Portsmouth Harbor Light. Marion didn't live at Whaleback as a little girl, but she recalled frequent visits in summer. She enjoyed fishing from the rocks around the lighthouse, and she also recalled that her father was an excellent baker. The appetizing smell of bread pudding and other desserts cooling on the windowsills often filled the lighthouse.

Prior to her retirement in 1978, Marion was employed as a supervisor at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. She was a volunteer for AARP and Hospice, retiring at the age of 80. She was a member of the Third Friday Club of Rye, Rye Garden Club, New Castle Historical Society, and National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association. At the request of the family, memorial contributions may be made to Friends of Portsmouth Harbor Lighthouses, P.O. Box 8232, Portsmouth, NH 03802-8232, or Rockingham Visiting Nurses Association and Hospice, 137 Epping Road, Exeter, NH 03833.

2012 Open Houses at Portsmouth Harbor Lighthouse are on Sundays, 1 to 5 p.m., through Columbus Day weekend. For details and information on more events, visit www.portsmouthharborlighthouse.org

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1826 Fire at Portsmouth Harbor Lighthouse

Allan Porter, a New Castle, NH, native, keeper of Portsmouth Harbor Lighthouse from 1820 to 1839. The lighthouse at that time was an 80-foot octagonal wooden tower, on the same foundation as the extant (1878) cast-iron tower. It's safe to say that few nights in Porter's tenure were as memorable as the bitterly cold evening of January 31, 1826.

At about 10:00 p.m., with an outside temperature of 15 below zero, a fire started in the lighthouse lantern and spread quickly. An alarm was sounded.

Many of the soldiers in the fort, who had been sleeping, responded immediately, some of them running to the lighthouse with blankets wrapped around them rather than taking the time to dress. A sergeant named Chickering was praised for his role in extinguishing the blaze; he fought the flames from the level below the lantern until most of his clothes were burned from his body.

The fire was soon out and the lighthouse was saved. The customs collector, Timothy Upham, wrote a letter of thanks to the commander of the fort:

Few opportunities are presented in times of peace for brilliant achievements, but services so frequent and various as voluntarily rendered by the officers and soldiers of the fort and their readiness on all occasions is fully appreciated by the public and is acknowledged with pleasure by one who has no greater pride than in the recollection that he was once a soldier.



The 1804 lighthouse

Some of the soldiers suffered frostbite. One of them, Sergeant Henry Becker, sustained a severe hernia when he accidentally ran into a fence during the crisis, leaving him permanently disabled. Upham presented \$20 from the U.S. Treasury Department to the company for replacement of the men's fire-damaged clothing, and he suggested that any funds left over could be used to purchase wine to drink to the health of the President.

Five Lighthouse Cruise on September 15

Join us aboard the M/V *Granite State* for the most extensive lighthouse cruise in this area! The cruise leaves Rye Harbor at 8:30 a.m. and will return at 1:00 p.m.



We will travel to White Island Light, Boon Island Light, Cape Neddick "Nubble" Light, Whaleback Light, and Portsmouth Harbor Light. We'll also enjoy great views of the Isles of Shoals, southern coastal Maine, Portsmouth, and the Piscataqua River.

The cruise will be narrated and there will be a raffle with lots of great prizes. There is a snack bar on board the vessel.

Tickets are \$45 for adults and \$30 for children under 12. Call 1-800-964-5545 for reservations. Rye Harbor State Marina is on Route 1A in Rye, New Hampshire. There is a large parking lot (\$5 fee) at the marina.



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. Memberships at the \$100 level and higher also include a \$25 "assistant keeper" membership in the American Lighthouse Foundation. 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 _____

PO Box 8232
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