



CHESAPEAKE LIGHTS

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE
CHESAPEAKE CHAPTER, U.S. LIGHTHOUSE SOCIETY

Herb Entwistle, Founding Chapter President, 1989-1997

Maryland Lighthouse Challenge

Special Edition No. 4 - 2006

Keepers of the Maryland Challenge Lighthouses

by Sandra Sableski

During the years that lighthouses were staffed, men, women and yes, even children gave of themselves to keep mariners safe. Some gave the ultimate sacrifice, and died on duty. Keeper positions were acquired through political affiliation, military service and even inherited through death within the family.

Do you have what it takes to be a lighthouse keeper? Are you between the ages of 18 and 50? Do you know how to read and write, do basic arithmetic, handle a boat, and keep and file accurate reports to the government? Willing to work long hours and carry fuel to the top of the light? Able to maintain all equipment and buildings? Salary is based on experience, rank and ancillary duties (\$250 - \$600 a year). Wife and children beneficial.



Turkey Point's spotlight keeper: Fannie May Salter took over her husband's duties at his death in 1925. But it took special authorization granted by President Calvin Coolidge. The issue, Fannie's age. However, she appealed to her senator who took it to the White House, which then overruled the Civil Service. She served until August 1947 when she retired at age 65, with 22

years of service as lighthouse keeper – the last woman keeper in the United States. That did not include the 23 years assisting her late husband who was keeper at several stations. When asked about being a keeper she stated, "Oh, it was an easy-like chore, but my feet got tired, and climbing the tower has given me fallen arches."

Concord Point's spotlight keeper: John O'Neill was named as the first lighthouse keeper in recognition of his heroic defense of the city of Havre de Grace against the British during the War of 1812. May 3, 1813 the British forces under the command of Admiral Cockburn landed, pillaged and burned the city. The only major defenses were two small batteries on Concord Point. The "Potato Battery," as it was known, was manned to the last by John O'Neill. Held by the British, the wounded O'Neill was eventually released through the negotiations of his young daughter Matilda.



Seven Foot Knoll's spotlight keeper: Thomas Steinhise is particularly famous for his actions. During the infamous storm of 1933, Steinhise single-handedly went out in his small tender boat and rescued five men from a foundering tugboat in 90mph winds and 15-foot seas. He was awarded a Congressional Medal of Heroism (the highest civilian honor) for his bravery.

Lightship Chesapeake spotlight crewmen: From 1933 to 1971, the *Chesapeake* guided ships on the Chesapeake Bay and then the Delaware Bay. Her crew of 16 was charged with providing weather information and helping with rescues as well as warning of navigation hazards. Crewing on a lightship—two weeks on, two weeks off—was routine and often boring. However there were times when it was dangerous, as when a 1962 hurricane hit the *Chesapeake* with a 20-foot wave that damaged the fittings and steel pilot house, swept the lifeboats away and tore her from her anchor. Within 24 hours, the *Chesapeake* was repaired and back on duty.



Fort Washington's spotlight keeper: Following the recommendations of the Secretary of War, the care of the light was placed under the command of the Ordnance Sergeant, Joseph Cameron. Cameron who joined the Army in 1806 served for 66 years, 37 of these years were at Fort Washington where he died in 1872. Cameron remained light keeper from 1857 until 1869. His light? It was an 18.5-foot iron post.

Piney Point's spotlight keeper: Mrs. Eliza Wilson, who had carried out her husband's duty during his long illness, finally replaced him as keeper after his death in 1873. Eliza served until 1877, when she resigned. She was one of four women keepers who served at this light.



Point Lookout's spotlight keeper: Pamela Edwards served from 1855-1869.

She was keeper of the light during the Civil War. Four thousand prisoners died at the nearby prison camp during her service as keeper. There have been numerous reports of paranormal activity at Point Lookout, much of it attributed to the spirits of those from the camp. Interestingly, none of these reports came from any of the keepers or their families. All reports that the station was haunted came from those who visited the lighthouse after it was closed in 1965.

Drum Point's spotlight keeper: James Weems served at Drum Point for over 25 years. Keeper's families typically did not live on screw-piles, but Drum Point was an exception. Unlike other screw-piles, Drum Point stood only a few hundred yards from shore. With his request for transfer to a station on land, as he wanted to be near his family, Weems and his family were transferred to Drum Point in 1891.



Cove Point's spotlight keeper: David Wadell Collison's service began in 1907 as assistant keeper at the Seven-Foot Knoll

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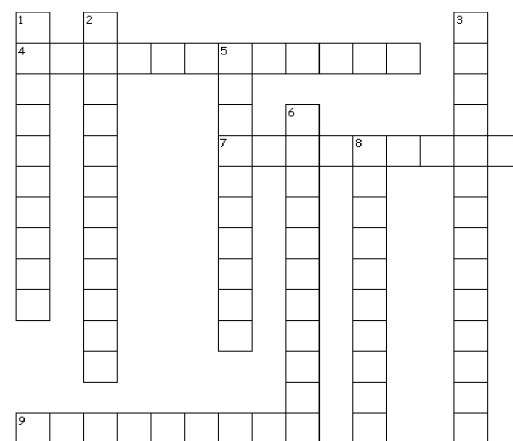
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Pasek's Puzzlers Challenge Lighthouses

by Tony Pasek

The Challenge lighthouses are all unique in their history, construction and service on the Bay. As you enjoy our fourth annual Challenge, complete the crossword puzzle. There are no spaces between word solutions.



Across

4. St. Michael's Light
7. Otter's Delight
9. MD's Oldest Operating Light

Down

1. Classroom at Hains Point
2. Ghostly Beacon
3. Red Tuna Can
5. Bay Bridge Beacon
6. Highest Light
8. President's Light

see **Pasek's Answers** on page 4

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visit us at <http://www.cheslights.org>

Individual membership in the
USLHS is encouraged.

Glimmerings

by Henry Gonzalez

Welcome to the Chesapeake Chapter of the United States Lighthouse Society! If you like lighthouses, their history, enjoy seeing them, and want to help preserve them, you've come to the right place. The U.S. Lighthouse Society, which is celebrating its 22nd year, has about 10,000 members nationwide. The Society has several regional chapters, such as the Chesapeake Chapter, which is celebrating its 17th anniversary and has about 600 memberships. We are the Society's most active and diverse chapter and offer something for just about anyone.

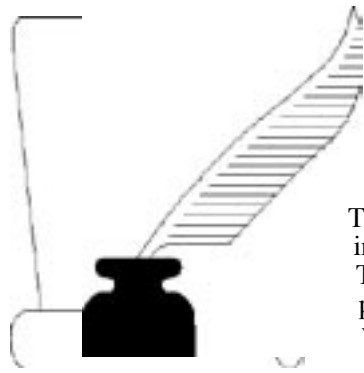
We offer a quarterly newsletter, of which this is a special sample. The newsletter typically contains articles about recent trips, information about upcoming trips, articles about lighthouse history and preservation, and news about the lighthouse community. But if reading a newsletter and seeing pictures of lighthouses isn't enough, then you can come join us on one of our several trips and cruises that we take every year to visit lighthouses. Quite often we are allowed inside an active lighthouse by the Coast Guard or the lighthouse owner, a treat not normally available to the general public. Most of our trips are within the Chesapeake Bay extended area, but we conduct one or two trips a year a little further up or down the east coast; we have been as far south as South Carolina and as far north as Maine. It's a lot of fun seeing lighthouses with a group of other people who share your passion.

We have a preservation program that has offered its services to many lighthouses up and down the Bay area, as well as to the Coast Guard itself. Authorities throughout the area have recognized our volunteer program. That experience helped lead us to our latest and largest opportunity – the preservation of the Thomas Point Shoal lighthouse, located offshore of Annapolis, and the only remaining operational cottage-style screwpile lighthouse in the country still located in its original location. We have a wonderful partnership on this effort and have a lease with the City of Annapolis to manage the lighthouse for the next 90 years! Stay tuned to our progress at www.thomaspointhouse.org and come join us as a volunteer preservationist or volunteer docent!

But what about the next generation of lighthouse lovers? For them we have an education program. We go to schools in the area and teach our youngsters about the importance of lighthouses as aids to navigation. The kids love it and teachers keep asking us back for more.

We sell great and unique lighthouse merchandise, we hold an annual photo contest, and we sponsor the Maryland Lighthouse Challenge where you have an opportunity to see all of Maryland's land-based lighthouses in one weekend.

So whether you want to go on unique trips to lighthouses, get your fingernails dirty working on them, teach school children about them, take pictures of them, research their history, or just read our newsletter, you've come to the right place. Welcome aboard to our all-volunteer lighthouse society!



To Preserve

by Anne Puppa

One of the goals of the Chesapeake Chapter, USLHS is to help preserve the lighthouses in the Bay area. During the Challenge weekend, you are visiting just some of Maryland's lighthouses. There are many more lighthouses in the area that need attention.

There are many ways to help preserve these historic structures. You can support them by visiting them and providing funds for organizations that are trying to restore or maintain them, you can educate the next generations about their importance and history, or you can volunteer to get some hands-on preservation work done. This last option is what our volunteer preservation program is all about.

We have about 35 volunteers who sign up each year to work on our projects. For many of these, we are just providing some additional help to the organizations that care for these beacons. In some cases, we will show up on an annual basis during one weekend of the year. In other instances, we may have several weekends scheduled. It all depends on what is requested and how much work there is. On average there are two volunteer opportunities per month.

We generally start the year off up at Baltimore's Inner Harbor working on either the Seven Foot Knoll Lighthouse or the Chesapeake Lightship. We spend a couple of Saturdays up in the harbor. Work ranges from the every day brass polishing to some less routine tasks such as fiberglass repair or cleaning the Lightship engines.

Some of our volunteers start the year at the Coast Guard Exhibit Center where the classic Fresnel lenses are stored. Volunteers have been cleaning and stabilizing the lenses there for several years now and usually go to the Exhibit Center every other week throughout the year. The program has been suspended recently due to some personnel changes at the Coast Guard. We hope to get it started up again next year.

Our next stop is down at Calvert Marine Museum where we schedule an annual weekend to help out with their spring cleaning at both Drum Point and Cove Point. This can consist of jobs such as dusting and polishing, up to replacing shingles on the roof of the bell shed at Cove Point.

As the weather improves we add a monthly trek out to Thomas Point to do what ever needs to be done out there. Transportation is an added issue with this one since volunteers can't just drive up to the lighthouse. But here again, it is volunteers who step forward and provide us with transportation out and back.

Once we can count on warmer days, we have several weekends at Fort Washington – the little bell tower light that sits right along the Potomac River. We schedule about four Saturdays at Ft. Washington. Most often we are replacing some of the rotted wood. We've already painted just about everything that doesn't move there. Part of the challenge for us now, is getting to the wood at the top. Although the structure isn't that tall as lighthouses go, you still need some sturdy scaffolding and some folks who don't have acrophobia. You'd be surprised how many lighthouse fans are not keen on heights - especially when ladders are involved.

see *To Preserve* on page 4





Light Station. Other assignments took him to Greenbury Point Shoal, Thomas Point Shoal, and two assignments at Cove Point. He resigned his commission in 1917 after receiving an appointment at the U. S. Naval Academy.

Sandy Point Shoal's spotlight keeper:

Alonzo Hubbard was only 24 years old when appointed in 1880 as the last keeper at the land-based Sandy Point station, which was discontinued in 1883. Alonzo was then transferred to become the first keeper at the new replacement Sandy Point Shoal caisson. It's good that families did not live at that station as the Hubbards eventually had fourteen children.



Hooper Strait's spotlight keeper: Head light keeper John S. Cornwell served on the first lighthouse in 1877, which was swept away by ice. He vowed he would be ready to resume his duty when the second replacement lighthouse was established.

Cornwell fulfilled his promise and by the end of 1879, he had his commission back.

These are but a few of the many keepers who served in the Bay region. Thanks for keeping the "lights" on!

Sandy Point photo by Alma Pasek; all others by Don Gold.

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In early July, we head over to Hooper Strait and do a little cleaning and polishing over there. We'll spend the Saturday working on the lighthouse and then spend the night there, waking up to a sunrise over the bay. It is not a bad way to spend a weekend!

Later in the year, as summer turns to fall, we head on over to the Old Coast Guard Station on Assateague Island. We do whatever is on the agenda for the year. We've cleared out the old garage and basement area, fixed some of the screens, scrubbed the quarters down and done some basic grounds keeping. We spend the night in the station sharing our meal and having a rousing game of Balderdash. We do this event when the weather has cooled and the mosquitoes have left for their winter vacation homes elsewhere!

We close out the year where we started, up in Baltimore. This is a nice time of year to be working up there. We generally go up the weekend before Thanksgiving when we can view/hear the parade from our worksite and then we close out the year with a work day in December - weather permitting.

Our volunteers provide hundreds of hours of service and have a lot of fun while doing this. Each of the organizations we have the pleasure of working with has some fantastic people. It is a pleasure and an honor to be part of the effort to preserve our regional treasures. If you know of a project where our volunteers would be helpful, contact us via our website. Just select the preservation contact and we'll get back to you with information about if and when we can help. If you wish to be part of the fun you can fill out a volunteer registration form located on our web site. Just remember, you have to be a Chapter member to participate in this activity!



Greetings, and Welcome to the 2006 Maryland Lighthouse Challenge...

We are very pleased you are participating in this year's event and we hope you have a wonderful time touring Maryland's lighthouses--whether you visit just one or two of your favorites in one day, or go on to visit all of the lights along the Challenge route in a weekend-long adventure.

It is with pleasure that we partner with the lighthouse organizations again this year to host this event. Truth be known, the only place we might rather be this weekend than volunteering at the Challenge is with you all--taking it! So if you get a chance, drop us a line after the event at dkrosage@comcast.net and let us know how you enjoyed your Challenge experience. We'd love to see your photos too! And by all means, if you can think of ways to improve the Challenge for next year, we aim to please--and want to hear those as well.

When all is said and done--the statistics of this event recorded, and memories preserved--we would love nothing more than to know that each of you will remember your time taking the Challenge as time very well spent. It is our sincere hope that the Challenge is as educational for you as it is fun, and as *memorable* for you as it is challenging!

Enjoy yourselves this weekend and enjoy our unique and beloved Chesapeake Bay beacons. And if you would...take just a moment at some point to close your eyes and think back to a simpler time, when keeping the light burning atop these altruistic structures often meant the difference between life and death, safe travels vs. peril. It is easy to be swept away by their beauty, their architectural design, and their gorgeous settings. But the real mystery, the real allure of lighthouses remains ever etched in their history, the countless lives they spared, and the *remarkable* men and women who kept their watch.

*The 2006 Maryland Lighthouse Challenge
Planning Committee*

Pasek's Answers from page 2

Across - 4. HooperStrait, 7. DrumPoint, 9. CovePoint.

Down - 1. Chesapeake, 2. PointLookout, 3. SevenfootKnoll
5. SandyPoint, 6. TurkeyPoint, 8. PineyPoint

*For more information about our Chapter, visit our
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