



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. 10 – 2015

Form Meets Function: The Diverse Architecture of the Maryland Challenge Lights

by Tony Pasek

The Chesapeake Bay beacons are a unique group of structures designed to fit their topographical locations and were built with durability and effectiveness in mind. We are truly fortunate to have several different styles to protect the long bay coastline and changing water depth. The combined variety of construction is found nowhere else in the nation. From caisson, to freestanding conical tower, to converted bell tower, to integral, to lightship, to screwpile cottage, to skeletal tower, all styles are represented by one or more of this year’s Challenge lights.

We would be remiss not to mention master builder John Donahoo who built 12 lighthouses in Maryland and one in Virginia (Watts Island). With four sites and one replica based on his original, Donahoo’s projects are well represented in this year’s theme.

The Architectural Styles

The Caisson – a hollow cast-iron cylinder barged to site and sunk deep into the soft bottom of the bay, then back-filled with boulders. On top of this almost unmovable base, a tower and dwelling of usually iron and/or brick was built and fitted with a lantern.



While Challenge cruise participants will view a few of these structures out on the bay there is only one caisson lighthouse along the Challenge route – Sandy Point Shoal, a bonus light. This light was built in 1883 and is near Sandy Point State Park in Annapolis. This beacon, familiar to Bay Bridge motorists, was electrified in 1929 and automated in 1963. The absence of keepers was costly when vandals broke into the off-shore tower in 1979 and destroyed the priceless Fresnel lens. The lighthouse has fallen into disrepair, but recently scaffolding has been observed on the super structure, so a restoration may be “in the works”.

The Freestanding Conical Tower – a tall, stone, brick, or block, land-based tower with a wide base that tapers ascending to the top and fitted with a cupola and light. The most recognizable lighthouse style to many travelers.

There are three freestanding conical towers in this year’s “road rally”.



Concord Point, built by John Donahoo in 1827 of Port Deposit granite. This basic and durable beacon with a height of 36-feet was maintained by a succession of O’Neill family members before custodianship was transferred to the Friends of Concord Point Lighthouse of Havre de Grace in 1979.

Cove Point, also a John Donahoo project, built in 1828. This 40-foot tall tower located near Lusby remains an active aid to navigation with a fourth order Fresnel lens. It was automated in 1986 and the tower, duplex keepers house, and grounds were transferred to the Calvert Marine Museum in 2000.



Piney Point – another John Donahoo creation. Located near Valley Lee, this 36-foot tower was built in 1836 and is known as the “Lighthouse of Presidents” for the commander-in-chiefs who would vacation near the light during the summer months. Piney Point was decommissioned in 1964, acquired by St. Mary’s County and placed under the jurisdiction of the St. Clement’s Island - Potomac River Museum in 1980.

The Converted Bell Tower – like the name implies, a land-based fog bell tower was modified to serve as a light tower.



Only one Challenge light fits this style, the unique Fort Washington Light. Fort Washington Light doesn’t match any of the other designs, but is a unique beacon on the Potomac River. The still-active light started its “career” as a 32 foot pyramidal wooden tower in 1882. After an existing tower was found to be inadequate to mariners, the bell tower was raised to support a lens and the old tower torn down with the intention of building a new free-standing tower. This temporary arrangement is now permanent. In 2005 the U.S. Coast Guard transferred the light to the National Park Service. Recognizing its historical significance, the park service has done an outstanding job in preserving this “one-of-a-kind” beacon for future generations.

see **Form Meets Function** on page 4

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Glimmerings

by Tony Pasek

Greetings and Welcome to the 10th Anniversary Maryland Lighthouse Challenge from Challenge Coordinator Karen Rosage, AKA “*The Contessa*” and committee members Dave Rosage, Maria Alvarez-Lundie, Lauren and Paula Liebrecht, and Kaye Gonterman. This dedicated and talented crew have worked hard to build another event showcasing Maryland’s finest maritime attractions.



The Challenge is indeed the Chapter’s premier educational and promotional activity of 2015. I recall our first Challenge held in 2003 and subsequent challenges to 2013. Though a majority of our challenges have had dry, sunny weather, the 2004 event occurred on the heels of a hurricane and I remember “battening down the hatches” at Fort Washington.

As you visit the ten staffed sites, please say hello to our stalwart volunteers. Many have worked at Challenge venues from the start and are among the most enthusiastic group of lighthouse fans on the Chesapeake Bay. The Chapter is fortunate to have volunteers in several endeavors – preservation, publicity, the newsletter, the web site, education, history, and the Loft. We also rely on our excellent treasurer, dependable secretary, and diligent membership chair, and three active advisory board members.

In the near future, the preservation team hopes to begin restoration of the last unfinished area in the main cabin – the equipment room of Thomas Point Shoal Lighthouse. We received a large boost when contact with the last Coast Guard commanding officer, Frank Remaly, was established with former site coordinator, Hobie Statzer. His insights and recollections of life about the iconic screwpile will be most helpful as we learn new information about the last manned lighthouse on the bay.

Have a great time doing the Challenge and if your travel includes a stop at Sparrows Point, near Edgewater, please say hello to Site Coordinator Andy Gray and his wife Angie. They will be stationed at the Dock of Bay restaurant with a terrific view of the new Bonus Light – Millers Island Lighthouse, formally known as the Craighill Channel Lower Range Rear Light.

Greetings and Welcome to the 10th Anniversary Maryland Lighthouse Challenge – Which We Hope Will Meet With Your “Stamp” of Approval!

by Karen Rosage

We hope you enjoy touring Maryland’s lighthouses this weekend whether you plan to visit just one or two, or travel around the bay to visit them all. At each stop, you will be collecting a specially designed stamp depicting that lighthouse, artfully created by our Graphics Designer, Maria Alvarez-Lundie. These stamps whether single, or in a complete set are sure to be collectors’ items in years to come!

This year marks our 10th Anniversary Challenge celebration and as our theme, we have chosen lighthouse architecture. As such, we are thrilled to be including, for the first time in the event history, a skeletal style lighthouse – our Bonus Light, Millers Island. This represents the only style lighthouse never before viewed along a Maryland Lighthouse Challenge route. In the past we have included all other types which grace Maryland shores and waters: converted bell tower, caisson, conical, integral dwelling, screwpile, and lightship.

When touring each unique structure this weekend, or viewing them from off shore, we hope you can appreciate its design and architecture, and why that particular style may have been chosen over another. These are a diverse group of sentinels that have served faithfully over the years; and for your viewing pleasure, they just happen to be perched at some of the most beautiful locations statewide!

In the words of George Bernard Shaw:

“I can think of no other edifice constructed by man as altruistic as a lighthouse. They were built only to serve.”

This weekend, we salute the lighthouses of Maryland, and the builders who constructed them.

As we partner with the “modern-day” lighthouse keepers at the various lighthouse organizations across the state to host this event we salute them as well. The Chesapeake Chapter stands committed with them to preserve these historic structures for future generations. You will find our green Chapter brochure along the Challenge route. Please consider joining if you are not already a Chesapeake Chapter member. If you would like to become active in some of our Chapter’s volunteer activities, we’d love to have you join our ranks. Whether you are interested in hands-on preservation projects, helping to preserve lighthouse history and/or educating or entertaining the public about them, the Chesapeake Chapter has something to offer everyone.

But for now...we simply invite you to enjoy a weekend of fun and discovery, as you make Maryland Memories...one lighthouse at a time!

See you along the way!...The 2015 Maryland Lighthouse Challenge Committee



The Integral Light – After a dwelling was constructed on the station grounds, a lantern and light was built on the roof. Talk about an easy “commute” to work for the keepers!!

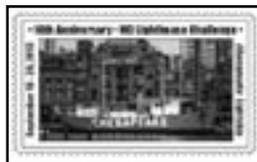


Two Challenge lights fit the integral dwelling style – the Replica Blackstone Island (a bonus light) and Point Lookout. The original Blackstone Light was built by John Donahoo in 1851 on St. Clement’s Island. This light was automated in 1932, but a fire of mysterious origin gutted Donahoo’s twelfth project in 1956. The present faithful-to-the-original replica was built in 2008 and opened to the public. The other integral light is the Point Lookout Lighthouse. Yes – it was built by John Donahoo in 1830. In 1883, the dwelling was raised to two full stories. In 1927, the structure was again enlarged to become a duplex allowing both a keeper and assistant keeper to live onsite with family. Point Lookout was deactivated in 1966 and transferred to the U.S. Navy. In 2006, the light was turned over to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and later that year the Point Lookout Lighthouse Preservation Society was founded. The light and grounds have long been considered one of the most haunted lighthouses in the United States.



Also, note that Jones Point, a 2013 Challenge bonus light in Virginia is an integral dwelling lighthouse.

The Lightship – in a nutshell, this is a floating lighthouse. A sturdy vessel, usually with a steel hull was built at a shipyard, fitted with one or more lights on the tall masts and launched at sea. The **Chesapeake** Lightship, AKA LV116, LS116, WAL538 and WLV538 was built at the Charleston, S.C. Dry Dock and Machine Company in 1930. It measured 133 feet long with a 30 foot beam. A 375mm electric lens was fitted on each masthead. Being “mobile” the **Chesapeake** served mariners well at numerous locations – Fenwick Island Shoal (1930 to 1933), Chesapeake, Virginia (1933 to 1942) as an Examination and Guard assignment at Chesapeake, VA from 1945 to 1965. 1966 to 1970. The **Chesapeake** was the last lightship in 1971, ownership was transferred to the National DC. In 1982, it was moved to Pier 3 in Baltimore’s Baltimore organization. The Chapter lends a hand to four times a year.

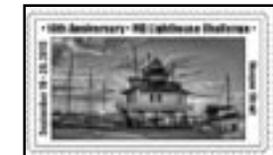


The Screwpile Cottage – a design well suited for the soft, sandy bottom of the bay. This design has its roots in Europe when blind Irish engineer Alexander Mitchell devised a method of building a cottage lighthouse on top of long piles literally screwed into the bay. An inexpensive and quick and easy structure to build off-shore, the screwpile was a very popular design on the bay.

Four screwpile cottages are represented in the Challenge. First, the original Choptank River Light was built in 1871 and stationed at the mouth of the Tred Avon River. After the nemesis of the screwpile – ice – claimed the beacon in 1918, a replacement, the recycled Cherrystone Bar from Virginia was moved to the Tred Avon River and placed into service. This became the only working lighthouse to be moved from one location to another in the bay. It served admirably until 1964 when it was dismantled by the Coast Guard as part of their modernization program. The present replica was built in 2012 on the waterfront in Cambridge.



The Drum Point Lighthouse was built in 1883 at the mouth of the Patuxent River. While many screwpile and off shore lights were kept strictly by male keepers, Drum Point boasted women and children as its occupants. Drum Point was converted to electricity in 1944 and automated in 1960. The deteriorating lighthouse was rescued from vandals and the elements in 1975, when the iron legs were cut and the multi-ton structure moved to the grounds of the Calvert Marine Museum in Solomons and gently restored.



Hooper Strait – In 1867, a screwpile light was built at the entrance to Tangier Sound in Dorchester County. The square-sided cottage beacon succumbed to ice in 1877. In 1879, the present hexagonal structure was built near the site of the original. Automation followed in 1954 and decommissioning in 1966. The dependable screwpile was acquired by the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum and Historical Society of Talbot County and barged to museum grounds in St. Michaels in 1966. It was later restored and opened to the public.



Seven Foot Knoll – This is the oldest screwpile cottage light on the Chesapeake Bay and was built at the mouth of the Patapsco River in 1855. Here, it served captains and sailors for nearly 100 years. The red, round, cast iron sentinel was automated in 1948, deactivated in 1988, and moved to Baltimore’s Inner Harbor (Pier 5) and donated to the City of Baltimore. Restoration followed and it’s now a proud jewel

of the Historic Ships in Baltimore.

Finally, the **Skeletal Tower**. This design consists of a central cylinder housing a staircase and supported by four iron legs and several cross braces. A lantern and light was built on the top of this water-borne cylinder.

The last design is a new addition to the Challenge. This year we are pleased to include the Craighill Channel Lower Range Rear Light AKA Millers Island Light as a bonus light. Built in 1873, one could call this beacon an integral light as a square keepers dwelling was built on the base of the tower. It was removed in 1938 when the light was automated. At a height of 105 feet, Millers Island Light is the tallest beacon in Maryland and partners with the Craighill Channel Lower Range Front Light to guide ships into Baltimore. Special thanks to Dock of the Bay Restaurant owner Ken Boone for allowing the Chapter to “set up shop” to greet Challengers as they view the off-shore tower from his pier.



A special tip of this “keeper’s hat” to Chapter Historian Emeritus Sandy Clunies for her outstanding *Channel Marker* write up in the Summer 2015 newsletter. Your research and information was most valuable as I wrote this cover story.

As you navigate the interstates and secondary roads this Challenge weekend, drive safely, take your time and note the great diversity of our bay’s historic sentinels.