

# Beavertail Lighthouse beckons visitors worldwide

## You can tour the lighthouse tower this Saturday

By Michaela Kennedy

The volunteers at the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum often ask visitors how they found out about the lighthouse. "We've had up to 17,000 visitors sign our guest book in a season, and that doesn't include the people who come in without signing," says Linda Warner, president of the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association.

At the southern tip of Conanicut Island, the Beavertail Lighthouse is fast approaching rock-star status with the age of the Internet, historical preservation awareness and lighthouse lovers' frenzy. Not only guests from around the country, but tourists from as far away as Russia and Japan have signed the guest book at the museum.

The BLMA Web site has helped to boost interest for globe trekkers, and anyone interested in a beacon of history.

Warner says that the association needs 28 volunteers a week just to staff the museum that is open every day during the summer. "I don't know how many volunteers we have total, but there are a lot," she adds.

Even more guests are expected at the lighthouse on this Saturday, Aug. 20, and again on Saturday, Sept. 10, when the lighthouse tower will be open to the public. The tower will be open from noon to 2 p.m. After 260 years, it still remains an active navigational aid, a working U. S. Coast Guard light for ocean traffic.

The lighthouse tower was first opened to the public in 2003, Warner notes. Before that, the tower was never open to visitors as far as Warner remembers. The idea to open the lighthouse tower started with a call she received from the New England Lighthouse

Lovers, a chapter of the American Lighthouse Association, asking if the BLMA would host them for a visit. The NELL also asked if they could go up into the tower, which required permission from the Coast Guard.

According to Warner, a Coast Guard representative must come and turn off the revolving light before anyone is allowed up to the lantern room at the top. The event triggered more requests to open the tower to the public.

"We must get permission from the Coast Guard when we want to open the tower," says Warner. She adds that it's an exciting event and the view is amazing.

Built in 1856, the tower is the third lighthouse built on the Atlantic coast. The first was erected in Boston Harbor, and the second was on Nantucket Island.

At the top of the Beavertail light, to the south, portions of Block Island can be seen on the horizon. To the far north, outlines of the buildings of Providence can also be seen.

This summer, the BLMA newsletter, the association's board of directors gave an update on some changes in the works.

According to Varoujan Karentz, chairman of the BLMA board of directors, initial discussions have begun with the state Department of Environmental Management and the town. The discussions are aimed at developing an agreement concerning future operations and preservation.

"Anything we do will be in cooperation with the state," Warner

points out.

Warner also points out that the association seeks to have what could be called a partnership with the state, which would keep ownership of the property. "You never know if a volunteer organization were to falter," she says, noting the importance of keeping ownership in the hands of the state.

Both Warner and Karentz stress that administrative control of the lighthouse buildings is crucial to the survival of the lighthouse itself. Karentz said that the Coast Guard has been negligent in restoration efforts of the lighthouse, and the only money put into the building would be in case of an emergency, such as the burning out of the light. Local administrative control would allow the association to do more restoration and make changes that would include more historical exhibits of the area. "We will also be able to open the tower more often," Warner adds.

The Beavertail Aquarium, beside the museum, is a good example of an expanded exhibit. "The aquarium is complementary to what we're doing here," Warner says, adding that the museum's docents often send visitors next door to see the marine life exhibits.

The Beavertail Lighthouse is recognized on the National Register of Historic Places. For more news on the Beavertail lighthouse, upcoming events, or how to get involved, log on to [www.beavertailight.org](http://www.beavertailight.org) or call 423-3270.



You can tour the Beavertail Lighthouse tower this Saturday, Aug. 20, from noon to 2 p.m. The event is free. Photo by Jeff McDonough



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The photo on page 1 of the NY Times of August 11, 2005 was startling. And troubling. It showed Israelis carefully disassembling homes in a Gaza area being turned over to Palestinian custody. In other photos, of other places, one sees the Israeli military demolishing houses which otherwise would be left behind intact for new occupants.

☹ ☹ ☹

This in an area where livable housing is in extremely short supply, and where, presumably, housing should be immediately provided for persons now living in squalid refugee camps.

☹ ☹ ☹

This at a time when Israel, and its one stalwart ally, the US, desperately need to engender as much good will as possible in the world Muslim community.

☹ ☹ ☹

Even if the two indigenous populations, sadly, at this time, cannot live together, wouldn't it be better for the Israelis, with US aid if necessary, to donate the housing to the Palestinians, simply as a gesture of good will?

☹ ☹ ☹

Such a gesture would not detract, but would rather enhance, the strength of Israel and the US. This type of enlightened benevolence is what once made the US the most respected nation on earth. This would be the encouragement of democracy and peace on a real and practical scale.

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