



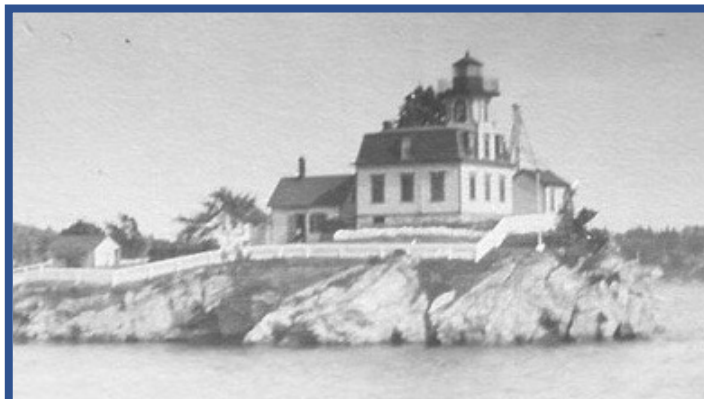
# THE POMHAM GLOW

Friends of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse,  
*A Chapter of the American Lighthouse Foundation*  
**Mission Statement**

To ensure the historic restoration and preservation of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse and to improve public awareness, appreciation and access to Pomham Rocks Lighthouse.

AUGUST 2021

## EXTERIOR MAINTENANCE TO ISLAND UNDERWAY



1905

2020



2021

## GROUNDS UPDATE

This season of work parties has had a major focus on the continued restoration of the grounds surrounding the lighthouse. A few Friends of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse board members met with representatives of the RI Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission in Fall 2020 at the lighthouse to receive approval and guidance on how to better restore and preserve the grounds.

The season started with the removal of the 2,000-gallon oil tank on the northside. Removal of this tank would bring back a view that has not been experienced since the days of the lighthouse keepers at Pomham Rocks. We are pleased to announce that the oil tank has been removed, restoring a view not seen for 60+ years. A huge thank you to the following members who volunteered for the painstaking task of removing the oil tank piece by piece; Rick Lux, Andy Leddy, Alex Dias, Dennis Tardiff and Jay Dent.



*Oil Tank Removal*

Behind the oil tank revealed a portion of stone wall. The area was excavated revealing two stone walls that surrounded the lighthouse from the north side to the west side. These stone walls date back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century and have been covered for decades. Work parties have now begun restoring these stone walls back to their former glory.



*Oil Tank Removal*



*Uncovered Stone Walls*

Routine maintenance continues at the lighthouse such as brush cutting, lawn cutting and interior cleaning.

### **LIGHTHOUSE EXTERIOR MAINTENANCE AND PAINTING**

Keith Lescarbeau, President of Abcore Restorations, will be returning to Pomham Rocks Lighthouse for some needed repairs and painting.

Keith's relationship with Pomham Rocks began in 2006 with the total restoration of the exterior of the Lighthouse. While there in 2006, Keith discovered the tower was leaning 7 degrees due to wood rot. He straightened the tower and replaced the rotted wood underpinnings with new resulting in a stabilized structure no longer in danger of falling in on itself. Among other needed repairs, the building was restored to its 19<sup>th</sup> century look by removing the cedar shingles installed in 1939 and replaced with shiplap siding duplicated to match the original.

In 2018, Keith returned to the Lighthouse to historically restore the inside of the lighthouse. Both phases of restoration required extensive work to replace rotting framing, floors, walls, and ceilings taking months to complete resulting in the beautifully restored Lighthouse we're privileged to enjoy now. I invite you to check out the before and after photos of the restorations on our website.

As with any wooden structure though, especially a lighthouse in a saltwater environment, there's continuing need for repairs and maintenance. Since the restoration of 2006, some wood rot has developed in various exterior areas, mostly around the second floor window dormers, the roof fascia as well as the wooden stairs leading into the kitchen. The original 150-year old cast iron cupola roof is rusting and needs repair and painting. The windows of the lantern room need to be resealed. Additionally, the exterior of the building was last painted in 2015 and is now showing some checking and fading. Before the failing paint allows water intrusion that would damage the siding and trim, the exterior will be prepared and repainted. The continuing mission of Friends of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse is to keep the Lighthouse in good repair and historically accurate for future generations to enjoy and learn from.

### **CELEBRATE 150<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY AT LOOFF ARTS FESTIVAL**

Join us at Rose Larisa Park on Saturday, August 14 from 11:00 a.m. to 6 p.m. at our booth at The Loeff: East Providence Arts Festival. Raise a toast to us. We will be handing out complimentary bottled water to attendees. Children are welcome to have their photo taken through one of the windows of the wooden lighthouse photo display. Foam board posters of the winning entries in The Lighthouse's recent 150<sup>th</sup>

anniversary Photo/Art Contest will be on display. Three East Providence residents were recognized as winners in the competition.

The Lighthouse booth will offer a number of special items for sale. Get a head start on holiday shopping by purchasing gifts for local family members or for friends or family who have moved out of the area. A new handcrafted ceramic mug, produced in two sizes by Deneen Pottery in St. Paul, Minnesota, and featuring an embossed emblem of The Lighthouse, will be available for the first time at \$25. Newly designed boxed keychains, featuring a photo of The Lighthouse, produced locally by Barlow Designs, will be offered for \$15, as will coaster sets, trivets, and ornaments. T-shirts, commemorating the first annual Pomham Rocks Lighthouse Run, will be available for \$10 each, and hats, embroidered with the Pomham Rocks Lighthouse logo, will sell for \$20. Payment can only be made by cash or check at the event. No credit cards will be accepted.

### **LADY POMHAM II HAS BEEN CERTIFIED BY THE U.S. COAST GUARD**

At long last, our new in 2020 26' motor launch Lady Pomham II has been certified by the U.S. Coast Guard. If you have been following the story of the launch, we took delivery of it in June of 2020 only to have to return it to the manufacturer in the fall for a

USCG required Stability Test that they did not perform before they delivered the launch to us. The stability test was performed last fall, spent the winter there in winter layup and was returned to us last April. We then began the process of getting the launch and the crew ready for USCG certification. The crew members underwent training on the launch systems and the required drills such as Man Overboard, Fire, Flooding and Abandon Ship scenarios.

On July 8<sup>th</sup>, the USCG inspectors did the initial inspection as well as getting underway from drills. All went very well except for a few minor items to correct along with a totally unexpected and normally unrequired item to install. Due to the nature of shipping traffic and the presence of a high-speed ferry in the Providence River, the local USCG Sector Southeastern New England office in East Providence required us to install a fixed VHF DSC Marine band radio so we can call for assistance if needed or call a boat, ship or the high-speed ferry to clarify our transit intentions to avoid a collision. The radio was procured, installed by FPRL personnel and approved by the USCG on August 2<sup>nd</sup>.

As a result of the certification, we are now able to carry our full complement of 2 crew members and 17 passengers instead of the total of 6 persons we had been restricted to. We fully intend to use the new passenger loading when we start tours to the lighthouse next year and to increase work party participation.



*Certificate of Inspection*

### **WINNERS ANNOUNCED IN POMHAM ROCKS LIGHTHOUSE RUN**

The weather was warm with a slight breeze. People, who had waited more than a year to resume normal activities, were anxious to begin again. Combined with a worthy cause, they made perfect conditions for the first annual Pomham Rocks Lighthouse Run, held April 24 in Riverside. Two hundred thirty-two runners and walkers of all ages participated in the event. The benefit road race was one of a number of events planned to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the historic lighthouse.

First Place Winner Overall in the 10K run was Chris Knighton of Providence with a time of 35:18 and Hailey Searles of Barrington, who ran her first 10K and clocked in at 46:57. Other 10K First Place winners included: Junior (18 and under), Dylan Furtado of Middleboro, MA; Open (19-29), Kiefer Calisto of New Bedford, MA

and Andrea Jeniski of Douglas, MA; Sub-Master (30-39), Jason Yee of Brookline, MA and Katie Weygand of Bridgewater, MA; Master (40-49), Iain Ridgway of Worcester, MA and Sarah Bena of Plymouth, MA; Senior (50-59), James Hurley of Peterborough, NH and Pauline Entin of South Dartmouth, MA; Veteran (60-69), Kenneth Arruda of Fall River, MA and Marge Bellisle of Warren.



*Start of the Race*

Coming in First Place Overall in the 5K run was Corey Hebert of New Bedford, MA, with a time of 18:51 and Renae Cicchinelli of Bristol, at 20:07. Other 5K First Place winners included: Junior (18 and under), Jackson Cicchinelli of Bristol and Britney Carlson of East Providence; Open (19-29), Chip Redihan of Cumberland and Erin Rome of Charlestown, MA; Sub-Master (30-39), Paul and Kelly Savickas of Barrington; Master (40-49), Brian Sperlogano of North Kingstown and Tammy Harrigan of

Harrisville; Senior (50-59), Russ Carlson of East Providence and Marianne Currie of Smithfield; Veteran (60-69), Mark DiFranco of Foster and Kathy Maclean of Vernon, CT; and Grand Veteran (70 and over), Mike Lozan of South Weymouth, MA and Joan Johnson of Warwick.

The Friends of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse acknowledge the generous support of Bell Sponsors: Crosby Yacht Yard, Navigant Credit Union and Pawtucket Credit Union. Key Sponsors included Coca-Cola Beverages Northeast, East Bay Ice Company, East Providence FOP #1 and Garceau & Co. LLC. They also recognize the Corporate Team sponsored by ExxonMobil.



*Race Runners*

The Friends thank Partners: BankRI, Community & Teachers Federal Credit Union, East Providence Paint & Wallpaper, Guardian Pest Control, Inc., U.S. Congressman David Cicilline and Wood's Heating & Oil Service. They are grateful for

the generosity of in-kind donors: BJ's Wholesale Club, Dunkin – Willett Avenue, Eastside Marketplace, Shaw's Supermarket and Tom's Market.

Pix 10K, 5K, FPRL tent, Mark Searles, race announcer & daughter Hailey Searles, winner of 10K overall, women's division.

A big thank you to all the members who helped the race be successful:

David & Kathy Ashton, Sandi Barber, Barbara Bunker, Cheryl Campbell, Russell Carlson, Karen Robert, Britney Carlson, Karissa Carlson, Roberta Carlson, Nate & Mary Chace, Renee Chicoine, Alex Dias, Joanne Donahue, Jennifer Estrella, ExxonMobil (corporate team of Michele Jasper & crew), Carlene Joiner, Dave Kelleher, Deborah Laughlin, Karin Lukowicz, Laura McNamara, Anne Greene, Albin & Eileen Moser, Robert Ortoleva, Donald & Louise Paiva, Nancy Phillips, Gary & Judianne Point, George Primmer, Sara Schiavoni, Dennis Tardiff, Inna Walker, and Paul Williams.



*10K Participants*

### LIGHTHOUSE PHOTO/ART CONTEST WINNERS ANNOUNCED

The Friends of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse (FPRL) announced the winners of their recent photo/art contest, held to celebrate The Lighthouse's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. A total of 57 entries were received in the contest, including 48 photos and 9 visual arts works.



*First Place Winner Visual Arts*

In the visual arts category, *Pomham Rocks*, a watercolor featuring reflections from across the bay, by Donna Kenny Kirwan of Rumford was the First Place winner. Honorable mention was awarded for *Tommy III, The Fishing Cat*, a watercolor by Thea Ernest of Riverside, which featured Pomham's famous fishing cat and *Pomham L'Attitude*, an acrylic on gessoed cardboard, depicting the longitude and latitude of The Lighthouse, by Mary Ann Rossoni of Providence.



*Honorable Mention*



*Honorable Mention*

First Place winner in the photography contest was *February Snow Sunrays*, by Hillary Gillinder of Warwick., which caught the rays of winter sun through the clouds

over The Lighthouse. Honorable mention was awarded to Thomas Duffy of Seekonk, MA for *Pomham Lighthouse at Sunset*, a golden sunset scene; David Zapatka of North Kingstown for *Pomham Rocks Landscape*, showing The Lighthouse among the stars; and Daniel LaCroix of Riverside for *Through the Tower*, a drone view in which he captured the setting sun through the glass panes of the lighthouse tower.



*First Place Winner Photography*



*Honorable Mention*

Photo entries were received from amateur and professional photographers and included



views taken from every angle from the East Bay Bike Path and the Providence River, as well as drone views. There were distant views, close ups, sunny days, snowy days, sunsets and moonlit reflections on the bay. Entries in the visual arts contest used a variety of media, including pastel, watercolor, acrylic and gouache. Each entry was unique and depicted a different perception of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse.



*Honorable Mention*

Entries were evaluated on creativity, visual impact and technical excellence, as well as adaptability for intended use. Judging took place in April. The committee of five judges included a professional photographer,

a professional illustrator, a retired public relations and marketing professional, FPRL's Facebook page editor and FPRL's Chair of the 150th Jubilee Committee.



*Honorable Mention*

First Place winners received a one-year family membership in Friends of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse. Honorable Mention winners received a boat trip and tour of The Lighthouse. Winning entries will be displayed in the Gift Shop at PRL and in a special 150th anniversary display at East Providence City Hall later this year. A selection of photos submitted will be featured on a 2022 calendar and on merchandise sold in the Pomham Rocks Lighthouse Gift Shop.

### **GRAVESIDE CEREMONY**

Friends Honor Pomham Rocks' First Lighthouse Keepers at Gravesite Ceremony.

About 20 people gathered at South Burial Ground in Warren, RI on Sunday afternoon, June 27<sup>th</sup>. Participants heard about the life of the deceased and placed markers on the

graves. But despite appearances, this was not a normal gravesite ceremony.

Members of Friends of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse were on site to pay homage to Captain Charles H. Salisbury, the first Lighthouse Keeper of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse, and his wife, Mary, Pomham's second Keeper. A Civil War veteran, Mr. Salisbury served as keeper at The Lighthouse, located on an island off the coast of Riverside, from its opening, Dec. 1, 1871 until his death in May 1893 at the age of 89. At that time, his wife took over as Keeper until a replacement was hired in November of that year.



*Grave of Captain Charles H. Salisbury, First Keeper of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse*

The Friends were joined by Keri M. Cronin, President of the Warren Town Council, who brought greetings from the town. Also attending were Kate Michaud, Warren Town Manager, and Taylor Croft, U.S. Coast Guard Boatswain's Mate. Judith Fardig represented Warren American Legion Auxilliary Unit 11 and David McCarthy represented Warren American Legion Post 104.



*Guests who attended the ceremony included, left to right: FPRL Vice Chair Alex Dias, Board Member Adam Dias, U.S. Coast Guard Boatswain's Mate Taylor Croft, FPRL Chair Dennis Tardiff, member Gary Point, Board Members Judianne Point, Anne Greene and Louise Paiva, Warren American Legion Post 104 member David McCarthy, Warren Town Council President Keri Cronin, Warren Town Manager Kate Michaud and FPRL Board Member David Kelleher.*

David Kelleher, board member of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse, and one of the original founders of The Friends, addressed the guests at the historic cemetery. He told

them how it was Capt. Salisbury's responsibility to light the oil lamp in the lantern room, check on it every four hours and trim the wicks so that the light would shine brightly from dusk to dawn. At sunrise, he would extinguish the light, clean the glass panels and oil lamp – before 10 a.m. each day – and refill the oil in the lamp.

Life in the northernmost lighthouse in Narragansett Bay was challenging for the Salisburys. In cold winters, one could walk across the ice the 800 feet from the light station to the shore. But in milder winters, a path needed to be cut through the ice to allow a boat to reach the island. There was no electricity, telephone, running water or indoor plumbing for a bathtub or toilet at Pomham Rocks at that time. Oil lamps produced the only light. Rain water was collected from the roof, stored in a brick and concrete cistern below the house, and pumped up to kitchen by means of a cast-iron hand pump. An outhouse was in the backyard.



*Grave of Mary Anna Salisbury, Second Keeper of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse*

In addition to keeping the light burning to safeguard vessels in the area, Captain Salisbury, in his wooden rowboat, saved six people from drowning in a three-month period, from May to July 1876 at the age of 72. Mrs. Salisbury had applied for the position of Assistant Light Keeper in 1872, but had been turned down. Upon her husband's death in May 1893, she was appointed Light Keeper. Mr. Salisbury's salary remained the same \$500 a year for his entire 22 years as keeper. When Mrs. Salisbury was hired to replace him, performing the same duties with 22 years of experience, her salary was reduced to \$480.

As part of a year-long celebration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Riverside light station, Dennis Tardiff, Chair of the Board of Directors of Friends of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse, placed special historical markers on the Salisburys' graves. Initiated by Tim Harrison, of the international publication "Lighthouse Digest," the markers honor the sacrifices made by Lighthouse Keepers of the United States Lighthouse Service. The bronze markers which hold a U.S. flag, recognize the service and dedication of Lighthouse Keepers to the safety of those at sea. To learn more about Pomham Rocks Lighthouse, visit [www. pomhamrockslighthouse.org](http://www.pomhamrockslighthouse.org).



*Grave Marker*

## **POMHAM ROCKS DISPLAY AT CITY HALL**

Take a glimpse back at 150 years of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse history in a special exhibit at City Hall. The glass cases at East Providence City Hall will feature historic photos, news clippings and printed materials related to the city's noted landmark. Awards will be displayed, as well as select artifacts related to the island lighthouse. The display will be open to the public during City Hall hours from August 30 to September 13.

### **POMHAM ROCKS LIGHTHOUSE: GUIDING MORE THAN SHIPS**

Pomham Rocks Lighthouse sits high on an island across the bay from Rhode Island Hospital. But that's not the only connection they have. As The Lighthouse celebrates its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, a bit of its history has come to light. A 1959 graduate of Rhode

Island Hospital School of Nursing, Joan O'Sullivan, of Warwick, shared information from hospital and nursing school publications explaining the lighthouse-hospital link.

It started in 1892 when Charlotte Peters, wife of the Rhode Island Hospital Superintendent, Dr. John M. Peters, designed a pin, which was later presented to each graduate of the Hospital's nursing school until they closed in 1973. Mrs. Peters was an invalid who spent much time on a couch in their apartment above the entrance to the hospital, facing Pomham Rocks. From her window, she watched the ships as they sailed on Narragansett Bay.

An article published in the July 1974 Rhode Island Hospital newsletter, entitled *Another Era Ends: Pomham Lighthouse is Automated*, the editor sadly relates that the "lighthouse mounted on a rocky projection in the middle of the Providence River, was decommissioned this past June 1, in traditional Coast Guard ceremonies... Since 1892, the lighthouse has appeared on the nurses' school pins and has symbolized a guiding light for the sick in their search for the care provided by this Hospital."

In December 1892, Mrs. Peters had a pin made from a \$20 gold piece and presented it on Christmas Day to her private duty nurse, Eugenia D. Ayers, a graduate of the class of 1888. In the center of the pin is the State seal in blue with a gold anchor. To the left, atop

white waves is a sailboat. To the right, Pomham Rocks Lighthouse, described in the nursing school's publication, *The Story of the Nursing Badge*, as "a beacon to guide in darkness, a tower of strength by day, directs the ailing traveler to the sturdy ship from which he can regain his own strength."

The first pin, now in the nurses' alumni's historical collection, bears the number one on the back. Each pin that followed is numbered sequentially. The photograph featured here shows pin No. 3,053, and belongs to Joan Knox O'Sullivan.



*Hospital Pin*

### **NOTED LAMPIST TO RETURN POMHAM ROCKS LIGHTHOUSE'S ICONIC LENS**

What do an Academy Award nominated film and Pomham Rocks Lighthouse have in common? A lampist. Kurt Fosburg, one of

only a handful of Coast Guard certified lampists in the country, created the realistic lighthouse props for the 2019 motion picture, "The Lighthouse." He will be traveling to Riverside, RI in September to transfer Pomham's original lighthouse lens home. The fourth order Fresnel lens has been on display at the Newburyport, MA Custom House Maritime Museum for more than four decades. To celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse, a chapter of the American Lighthouse Foundation, it is returning to its island home.

From the Marquette Maritime Museum in Michigan, where he is vice president of the board of directors, Fosburg shared his thoughts about lighthouse lenses in an interview recently with representatives of the Riverside and Newburyport museums. His career began in 1999 when Marquette received a Fresnel lens on loan from the U.S. Coast Guard. The lens arrived with a lampist to assemble it – James Woodward from Cleveland, Ohio. Fosburg assisted him, apprenticed for several years, then worked in business with him for more than a decade.

The Michigan lampist has had a diverse career history. "I've never sat behind a desk," he affirmed. From his Lake Superior home, he ran a fishing charter boat, then a ferry full time. "Ironically," he noted, "I ran people to a lighthouse and gave a lighthouse tour." He also worked locally in Warren, RI on Blount's cruise ships, giving tours. "I'm a mechanical engineer and a jeweler by trade

and a kind of jack of all trades,” he explained. He added that the Fresnel lens is “like a really, really big jewelry, in a way.” Developed by French civil engineer and physicist Augustin-Jean Fresnel in 1822, the lens which bears his name was revolutionary in focusing a lighthouse’s beacon, and in turn, improving the safety of those at sea. The intricate arrangement of prism-shaped pieces of glass in concentric circles, supported by a brass frame, concentrated light by reflecting and refracting, or bending, it into parallel horizontal beams which could be seen over long distances. It was the task of a professional lampist to assemble, clean and repair this fragile optical equipment. In 1871 when Pomham Rocks Lighthouse was built, there were hundreds of active lighthouses lit by Fresnel lenses in the country, and the United States Lighthouse Service employed lampists to care for them. A century and a half later, the number of both has declined sharply.

Since the U.S. Coast Guard replaced the U.S. Lighthouse Service in 1939, the original Fresnel lenses have been replaced with more current technology. Many of the antique lenses were destroyed. Those remaining were stored and later transferred to maritime or lighthouse museums. Fosburg has moved, repaired and conserved more than a hundred Fresnel lenses, ranging from small sixth order ones to the largest, more powerful first order size, throughout the country.

Logistics is what Fosburg describes as the most challenging part of his job. “Moving priceless objects that can be broken” is a great responsibility, he notes, and every move presents its own challenges. He admits that the most terrifying part of this job will be going through Boston. To transport the antique lens, weighing from 150 to 175 pounds, from Newburyport to Riverside, he has built a special wooden crate. “It’s a good, old-fashioned, what I call Egyptian-style,” he explained. The crate will have two holes on each side and rods running through it.

Owner of Superior Lighthouse Restoration, LLC, Fosburg is experienced in caring for these antique lighthouse lenses. Once at Pomham, he will make any necessary repairs, clean and install the classic antique lens for display. He is currently creating a replica of the brass oil lamp that was placed inside the beehive-shaped lens. He is also making a replica of the pedestal on which Pomham’s original sixth order lens was stationed from 1871 to 1926 and a display platform for the lens. The newly created pedestal will be placed in the tower of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse to be used as a stand for the existing LED light. The brass pedestal currently in the tower, which is original to The Lighthouse, will be moved to the first floor Pomham Room in The Lighthouse’s Museum, and will hold the returned fourth order Fresnel lens. Assisting Fosburg with the move and installation will

be Alex Dias, vice chair of the board of Friends of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse.

Fosburg is a recognized expert in creating replicas of lamps and pedestals. He built the rotating clockworks, lens pedestal and lamp for the Academy Award nominated motion picture, "The Lighthouse," starring Willem Dafoe and Robert Pattinson. "I was their technical advisor," he recounts. "The set director was fanatical about accuracy. So, the things you see are actually very, very accurate," he stated.

What he enjoys most about his job is that he gets to go to unique places. "I get to work on something mechanical, something unique and something historical, all at the exact same time. And I think it fits very well that I can do that because I have knowledge of the item, the artifact, and history's my thing," he said. "I like to tie it all together."

And that makes this particular job all the more noteworthy. "I understand that Custom House is losing the lens, but you (Pomham Rocks) are getting the lens... So, I understand the significance of that," he stated. "It's nice to see them reunited." Members of Friends of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse are forever indebted to Custom House Maritime Museum for caring for the antique lighthouse lens for more than forty years and for generously allowing it to return it to its home. This will enable visitors from Rhode Island and surrounding areas to view the historical artifact when tours resume in 2022.

**LETTER TO THE EDITOR, THE  
DAILY NEWS OF NEWBURYPORT -  
7/30/21**

**A RELATIONSHIP FORGED IN  
ANTIQUÉ GLASS**

The past year has taught us much about the value of relationships and the importance of helping each other. As one of the twentieth century's greatest leaders, Mahatma Ghandi, said, "Relationships are based on four principles: respect, understanding, acceptance and appreciation." The outstanding collection of exhibits, models and artwork at Custom House Maritime Museum is indicative of the respect that the people of Newburyport have for their maritime heritage. Each artifact is precious and brings to life the rich maritime history of the seaside port. One jewel in the collection is the classic Fresnel lens that once lit Pomham Rocks Lighthouse in Riverside, Rhode Island.

Perched high on a rocky, half-acre island, Pomham Rocks is celebrating its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. The Lighthouse was decommissioned by the U.S. Coast Guard in 1974. It became home to a few civilian families, before being abandoned. Then, in 2004, a group of local concerned citizens formed Friends of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse, with a mission to restore and maintain Rhode Island's northernmost light station. More than a million dollars and much hands-on work later, by 2018, The

Lighthouse was fully restored inside and out. The only thing missing was its iconic Fresnel lens.

And that's where understanding comes into play. A few board members from Pomham Rocks met with Joan Whitlow, Executive Director of Custom House Maritime Museum, to request the return of the lens. They understood that they were asking the Museum to part with a treasure that had attracted visitors for decades. And Joan fully understood what the classic lighthouse lens meant to those who had worked so hard to restore and preserve its original home.

With unparalleled generosity and a heavy heart, Custom House accepted the request to return the antique Fresnel lens to its original home. It had been loan from the U.S. Coast Guard for more than forty years.

December 1, 2021 will mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first lighting of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse. Words cannot express the appreciation that Friends of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse has for Custom House Maritime Museum for so diligently caring for this adopted lens for decades and then graciously returning it to its home. There will be much celebrating in Rhode Island to mark this momentous year. But above all, we celebrate the people of Newburyport for giving us the best birthday present ever.

*Dennis Tardiff, Chair*

*Board of Directors*

*Friends of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse*

## **HANDCRAFTED Lighthouse MUGS**

We are happy to announce a new merchandise item for sale. Handcrafted pottery mugs, from the noted Deneen Pottery of St. Paul, Minnesota are now available while supplies last. These are the same high-quality mugs sold at inns and fine gift shops throughout the country. The 14-ounce tall belly mug is great for when you crave a big cup of your favorite hot beverage. It comes in bright red and in teal. A 10-ounce round belly mug is perfect for those who prefer a smaller beverage mug. It is available in bright red or sage green. All mugs are made with a distinctive hand-applied glaze that give them a unique look. An emblem of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse was specially designed for the project and is featured on the front. Each mug sells for \$25. They will be available at the Pomham Rocks Lighthouse booth at The Looff: East Providence Arts Fest on August 14. Mugs can also be purchased by sending a check, payable to Friends of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse, P.O. Box 15121, Riverside, RI 02915. Requests from local residents will be delivered. For orders outside East Providence, please call 401-433-3463 to determine the cost of shipping and handling.



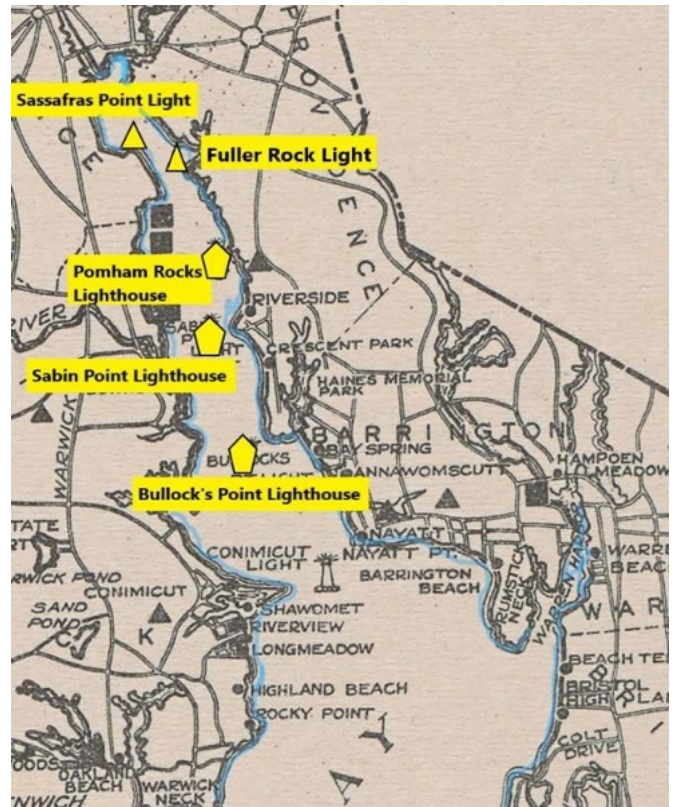


*New Mugs for Sale*

## STORIES FROM THE LIGHTHOUSE PART 3: LIGHTING THE WAY

In 1871, Pomham Light was thrilled to greet her first lighthouse keepers, Mr. and Mrs. Salisbury. Mr. Salisbury lit the oil lantern for the first time on December 1st, and it felt like a birthday party. From that moment on, nothing was more important than her beautiful light. Mr. Salisbury checked on it every 4 hours and trimmed the wicks so that the light would burn brightly from dusk to dawn. First thing at sunrise, up to the lantern room he would go to extinguish the light, clean the oil lamps, and keep the glass prisms sparkling and spotless. All this had to be completed before 10 AM each day – those were his orders from Washington DC – and the lamps had to be filled with oil and ready to relight at sunset. Some days Mr. Salisbury would be climbing up even earlier if it was foggy or stormy.

Mr. Salisbury had to stay at the lighthouse all day and all night, except for special reasons, and even then he had to have a substitute on duty. Well, when you live on a tiny island with no neighbors, it's hard to find substitute light keepers to fill in. So Mrs. Salisbury took on that role. In 1872, she applied to be the Assistant Light keeper, but she was turned down.

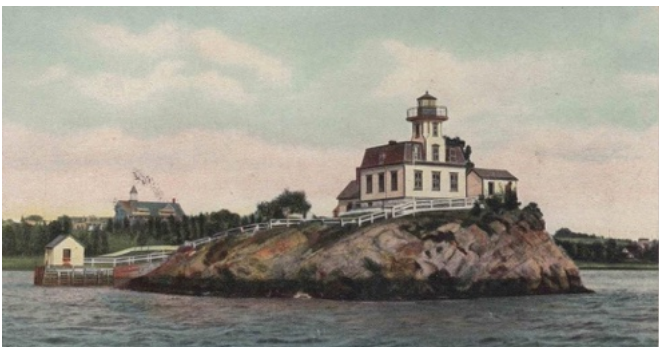


*The Five Sister Lighthouses, imposed on detail of map, Rhode Island Vacation Resorts, 1936. John Hutchins Cady Scrapbooks, Providence Public Library*

Pomham Light was sorry for her. Mary Salisbury was an amazing person. She knew how to do everything to operate the light, and she assisted her husband faithfully with no

pay. Besides that, she managed a home with no electricity. For lighting they had oil lamps, and there was a coal stove for heating and cooking. Their water supply was from rain water that collected in a big hole under the house that was lined with bricks and concrete, called a cistern. And they pumped up that water with a hand pump in the kitchen for their washing, cooking, drinking, and cleaning. There was no indoor plumbing – no bathtub or toilet. The outhouse was in the back yard.

Speaking about the back yard, Pomham Light was happy that at least the Salisburys had a back yard! Her two sister lighthouses – Sabin Point and Bullocks Point – had no yards at all. They were perched right above the water (and so were their outhouses) But at Pomham Rock, the Salisburys could keep gardens for growing food and flowers, and they could keep small livestock like chickens on their little island.



*Pomham Rocks Lighthouse circa 1899  
Postcard image Courtesy of Friends of  
Pomham Rocks Lighthouse*

Down at Sabin Point in 1872, things were hard in the beginning. Joseph Bowes was working double duty. Besides being the first light keeper there, he also had to take care of Bullocks Point, which had a small light at that time. Each evening about two hours before sunset, Mr. Bowes rowed a mile and a half from Sabin Point to Bullocks Point to light the little light, and then mile and a half back to light up Sabin Point. In the morning he had to do it all over again to put out the lights, clean them, and refill. So pretty much, Mr. Bowes' days and nights were spent caring for both lights. Some months later, an Assistant Light keeper was appointed to help out. For three years, several more Assistants came and went while the Lighthouse Board and Congress fussed in Washington DC over what type of light was needed.



*Sabin Point Lighthouse circa 1890  
Postcard image Courtesy of Jeremy  
D'Entremont*

At last, they passed funding for an actual lighthouse to be built right in the middle of the Providence River to warn ships and keep

them away from the large shoal, or shallow waters, off Bullock's Point. It took three years, but it was a joyful day when the last of the Five Sisters – Bullocks Point Lighthouse – lit her light in 1876.

Now there were three beautiful houses. Pomham Rocks and Sabin Point were the twins, and Bullocks Point was one of the most unusual lighthouses anyone had ever seen. The two small lights, Sassafras Point and Fuller Rock (who were also twins) never became full-fledged lighthouses, but they were happy enough as they straddled the final entry to Providence Harbor, keeping ships and boats safely away from both shores.

For all three lighthouses, trips to the mainland were necessary for getting supplies, food, visiting doctors, taking children to school or church, seeing friends and everything else. Again, Pomham Rocks was lucky that her lighthouse was not too far from the shore – only 800 feet. It was a short row in good weather, and in the winter when the river was frozen, you could just walk to shore on foot. But sometimes the ice was too thin, and Mr. Salisbury would have to cut through the ice as he rowed ashore. For Sabin Point it was harder as she was further from shore, and Bullocks Point was very far out in the water.

The job of light keeper was not for everyone. Light keepers often transferred from one lighthouse to another, and most did not stay long in one place. But the Salisburys

remained at Pomham Lighthouse for 22 years. During that same period, Bullocks Point had seven light keepers. Over at Sabin Point, there were just two light keepers in the early years. The first one served from 1872 – 1875 and the second one, John Weeden, came in 1875 and stayed for 36 years!

During his years at Sabin Point, Mr. Weeden saw his share of maritime disasters, and he played a role in saving some lives. In April, 1877, a schooner ran aground right near the lighthouse. He rowed out and helped everyone aboard to safety.



*Bullock's Point Lighthouse circa 1880*  
Postcard image Courtesy of Jeremy D'Entremont

Mr. Salisbury was also a hero. In 1876, he saved seven people! In May he had rescued three people and two more in June. Then in November, he noticed two men struggling in the water near a capsized fishing boat. He rowed to help them and rescued one who was a former police officer. The other man was helped by two good Samaritans onshore. Both victims had to be resuscitated and they both survived.

But rescues can work both ways. Down at Sassafras Point Light in the 1890s, the keeper Jack Mullen was dressed as warmly as possible to tend the light on New Year's Eve. It was rough going and his boat overturned near Kettle Point. Not able to touch bottom, he was sinking fast in his heavy clothes, and he thought it might be the end. But lucky for him, a nearby resident noticed him in the water, and he rowed out in his own boat and rescued the popular "Captain Jack."

For all their hard work, you would think that lighthouse keepers were well paid, but to the dismay of all the Sister Lighthouses, none of them were. Mr. Salisbury earned only \$500 per year. The same was true at Sabin Point and Bullock's Point. At Sassafras Point and Fuller Rock, the pay got to around \$400 in the 1870s and even rose to \$550 by the mid-1880s. This was because of how hard it was to row out to these lighthouses twice a day to tend them, especially in winter when the rocks surrounding them were covered with ice.

Mr. Salisbury's salary at Pomham Rocks remained at \$500 for the whole time he served there – no raise for 22 years! Sadly, in 1893 Mr. Salisbury died, and not surprisingly, his capable wife Mary was appointed light keeper. The Five Sisters were so proud. Finally, a female light keeper in the family! But then something strange happened. The salary for Pomham Rocks was reduced to \$480! All the Sisters were

furiously, but there was nothing they could do. Mary resigned six months later, and it was sad to see her go after 22 years. Pomham Light just hoped that in the future, women would be paid equal to men for the same job.

It was 1900 now, and the Five Sisters were living in one of the most exciting times in American history. Join them for our next story, *Steaming into the 20th Century*, where the light houses reach their peak popularity. But in the midst of change, a pandemic, and a world war, they suffer the loss of two of their sisters.

# EVENTS

- August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021: Looff Arts Festival
  - 11:00am – 6:00pm @ Crescent Park in Riverside, RI
- December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021: 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of The First Lighting of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse

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