



# 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.

JANUARY 2026

## A GRANDDAUGHTER'S HOMECOMING



## **GRANDDAUGHTER OF KEEPER WILLIAM HOWARD RETURNS TO HER CHILDHOOD HOME - POMHAM ROCKS LIGHTHOUSE**

July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2025 was a momentous day for Priscilla Howard Davis and Friends of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse. The Friends had arranged an exclusive visit to the Lighthouse for Priscilla and her family. It would be Priscilla's first visit back to her childhood home since she left the island in 1951 when her grandfather, Keeper William Howard, retired. Born in 1945, Priscilla spent the first six years of her life living at the Lighthouse with her paternal grandparents and her parents.

Now living in California, Priscilla had for many years continued to correspond with a friend, Cilla Chace Horst, whom she met while a youngster living at the Lighthouse. Cilla, a member of the Friends, was in turn instrumental in making the arrangements with the Friends to have Priscilla visit the Lighthouse.

After the visit, Priscilla reminisced about life at the Lighthouse. The kitchen brought back memories of her grandmother making her breakfast and learning about Will and May from her grandmother. She commented that she at first thought Will and May were people, but finally realized she was being taught social graces - "Will you do this?" and "May I do that?"

She talked about playing with dolls - and the loneliness that comes from having no childhood friends. She remembered how difficult it was for her to meet Cilla Horst, then a child of the same age living on the nearby mainland who had been invited to the Lighthouse for a visit by her grandfather. "I had not been taught how to interact with children of my own age, and at first deeply resented being told that I had to share my dolls with Cilla for the day."

"I remember how both my parents and my grandmother helped my grandfather with the chores, and how he would always find something for me to do - even if it was only to hand him things in the tower. My happiest days at the Lighthouse were the ones when he told me there was a chore he needed help with."

"Just before bedtime, there being no electricity, he would play the guitar for us and then would sing me a song to help me fall asleep."

"This past Spring I was very excited when my own daughter told me there was a chance for me to return to the Lighthouse - my first home. It was in many ways so different from my subsequent homes, and in many ways much more difficult than living elsewhere, but as Lady Pomham pulled up to the dock at the Lighthouse, I was amazed at how the Lighthouse looked exactly as I have remembered it, and how wonderful I felt about coming home after all these years."

## SUMMER FUN AT SQUANTUM

On July 10<sup>th</sup>, Friends of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse hosted a special "A Taste of Summer" event at the Squantum Association. Nearly 100 guests came for delicious cookout fare at the Bake House and two-thirds of the partygoers took advantage of the cruises to the lighthouse provided by Save the Bay. Members and guests were treated to an abbreviated tour of the lighthouse, where they witnessed the extensive restoration that has been going on in recent years.



*Squantum Association*



*Guests returning from their tour*

## ANNUAL MEETING RECAP

Friends of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse, a chapter of the American Lighthouse Foundation, held its Annual Banquet once again at the Squantum Association where members were treated to delicious food and a presentation by the Executive Director of ALF, Bob Trapani, Jr. Part of Bob's speech was the surprise presentation of the prestigious "Keeper of the Light Award" given to Board Member Nate Chace. Nate is one of FPL's founding members and he has shown tremendous support to the organization throughout the years. Our heartfelt congratulations to Nate! Congratulations are also offered to Alex Dias after his first successful year as

Chair of FPRL, as well as to Patty Louro, who was approved as the newest member of the FPRL Board.



*Patty and Brian Louro*



*Alex Dias addressing the crowd*

### **NATE CHACE HONORED AS KEEPER OF THE LIGHT**

For centuries, lighthouse keepers maintained a shining light to safeguard those at sea. The American Lighthouse Foundation (ALF) annually recognizes an individual who has demonstrated exceptional dedication to lighthouse preservation with

the “Keeper of the Light” award. At the annual meeting of Friends of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse in December, Bob Trapani, Executive Director of ALF, presented this special award to Nate Chace of Riverside.

A founding member of Friends of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse in 2004, Nate has served on the board of the volunteer organization for more than two decades. A resident of East Providence for most of his life, Nate grew up in a house at the end of a street facing the lighthouse, and befriended Pomham’s sixth lightkeeper, William Howard. After marrying and living in Providence for 25 years, in 1997 he and his wife moved back to another house in Riverside, overlooking the light station. Board members meet there regularly, with Pomham Rocks in clear sight.

The Lighthouse has always been an integral part of his life, and as the years progressed, his involvement with Friends of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse also grew. His advice and support have been instrumental in the restoration of the century-and-a-half-year-old landmark. As Director of Development for the organization, he has helped to raise the funds needed for the exterior and interior restoration, return of electricity to the island lighthouse, and its transformation into an outstanding maritime museum. ALF Executive Director, Bob Trapani, noted that people often envision the finest lighthouse preservationists in the country as dedicated individuals swinging

paint brushes or with tools in hand making good things happen at a light station. And although these hands-on contributions are vital, he said, they alone do not restore and preserve lighthouses. “The ability to provide steady leadership, create public awareness and forge meaningful partnerships,” Trapani added, “is just as important. Within the American Lighthouse Foundation, few people have ever done this better than Nate Chace. He is without question a difference maker that history cannot help but smile upon.”

Trapani noted that Nate Chace does not seek the public spotlight, but that his longstanding passion and array of talents are admired by those within the Riverside community, the State of Rhode Island and the national lighthouse preservation movement, as well. For more than two decades, Nate Chace has been a constant for the Friends of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse. “Thanks in large part to Nate’s indomitable effort,” Trapani stated, “Pomham Rocks Lighthouse is an historic treasure restored – a gleaming treasure gifted to posterity. For this and so much more, the American Lighthouse Foundation is very proud to present Nate Chace with the 2025 “Keeper of the Light” award.”

Humbled by the prestigious award, Nate is grateful for the appreciation that the lighthouse community has expressed for the role he has played in preserving and maintaining this historical maritime

landmark. "I didn't even know the award existed," he admits, "but restoring the lighthouse and seeing how far we have come has been one of the finest experiences of my life."



*"Keeper of the Light"* award presentation. (Left to right: Bob Trapani, Judianne Point, Nate Chace and Alex Dias)

## REMEMBERING NANCY DOUCETTE

Friends of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse is deeply saddened by the recent passing of one of its founding members, Nancy Doucette. Always supportive of her late husband Don's efforts as first president of the newly formed organization in 2004, Nancy was an

enthusiastic and dedicated member of Pomham's Board of Directors for many years. A talented craftsperson, she shared her projects with Pomham's members. Over the years, she created and donated dozens

of hand-crafted fleece blankets, often with a lighthouse theme. These were used as prizes for fund raising events and as door prizes for the annual meeting. Her contagious smile and generous spirit will be missed.



*Nancy Doucette*

## THE LOOFF

A perfect day for a festival, the sun was shining and live music filled the air at this year's East Providence Art Festival, known as The Looff. Friends of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse sponsored a booth to promote tours, membership, license plates and sale of Pomham merchandise. Events committee members spoke to festival attendees about The Lighthouse and heard many stories from local residents. Friends handed out free prints of Castle Hill Lighthouse, and by the end of the day, as word spread to attendees and vendors, all 75 watercolor prints had found new homes. Young and old enjoyed the interactive Pomham Pets, Tommy the Fishing Cat and Jennifer, Dennis Tardiff's lighthouse dog. Six lucky children were winners of a pair of tickets for rides on the Carousel, as they picked a winning lollipop from the lighthouse candy jar. Sales of merchandise and raffle tickets were brisk and we were able to inform more residents about the lighthouse.



*FPRL booth at the Looff*

## TROLL BUILDERS VISIT POMHAM ROCKS LIGHTHOUSE

East Providence recently joined the worldwide Troll Trail of larger-than-life wooden figures hidden in natural settings. After weeks of creating Mrs. Skipper on the East Providence shore, the three builders of the giant troll sculpture enjoyed a welcomed break and tour of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse. Members of the Friends of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse (FPRL) Board of Directors hosted staff members of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and the troll builders in mid-August, as the completion of the project drew near. Rhode Island now has five trolls, with two located in Charlestown's Ninigret Park, one in North Kingstown's Ryan Park and one in Richmond's Arcadia Management Area. The trolls were designed by Danish artist Thomas Dambo. An advocate for nature, his structures are fashioned from discarded and

recycled wood. In the last ten years, he has installed more than 100 of the whimsical creatures all over the world on five continents, spreading his message of sustainability and stewardship.



*The Troll*

The builders had been staying in an Airbnb in Riverside which provided a view of The Lighthouse. Laura McNamara of the Tourism Council, and a founding member of FPRL, reached out to The Lighthouse group to request a special tour. One of the builders, Scott, from Texas, said he loved staying in a house overlooking the water. "I could look

out the window and see the lighthouse every day. What is better than that?" he asked. The anticipation of actually going inside the lighthouse was high, and it delivered, he noted. It also sparked his interest in lighthouses, and he said he'll be visiting more of them as he travels because of this experience. Scott was glad to learn about East Providence's efforts to reclaim the shoreline and beaches and stressed the importance of restoring and protecting the environment.



*Troll Group heading to the Lighthouse*

Hailing from California, another builder, Raven, enjoyed the tour of the cistern most. Water from the lighthouse roof is directed through gutters to two downspouts into pipes in the cellar that lead to a waterproof brick room that holds more than 4,000 gallons of water. The cistern served as the only water supply for the lightkeeper and his family. In a previous job, Raven had experience in

building rain water systems. “It’s great how you’ve saved and brought back to life a piece of history,” he said, “so that people can see how things were done before.”

Lead builder, Sebastian, a native of Puerto Rico, was interested in the structure of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse. As a builder, he understood the effort that went into making it. Sebastian was intrigued with photos in a notebook in the kitchen that show the interior of The Lighthouse before restoration. He applauded the Friends for restoring and preserving the historic structure and serving as stewards of history. He was impressed with the Fresnel lens and brass artifacts throughout the museum that brought the past to life. “It is so cool to be in this house on top of a rock,” he stated.

The giant female troll, named Mrs. Skipper, is located about 1.5 miles north of Pomham Rocks, on a rocky shoreline off the East Bay Bike Path. Smiling from ear to ear, she carries a red boat above her head and looks ready to launch it in the Providence River. Prior to the lighthouse tour, the group was brought by boat to the site, so that they could see their creation from the water. The three builders of the East Providence troll pointed out the parallel in what they do with the building of The Lighthouse. As builders, they take pride in their work. Like Pomham Rocks, their structures are sometimes built upon rocks or uneven terrain, making it a challenge to construct something that is a work of art. And as the trolls demonstrate the

art of using reclaimed materials to educate future generations, restoration and preservation of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse serves to reclaim the maritime history of the past.



*Group photo in front of the lighthouse*

## **LIGHTHOUSE HERALDS THE HOLIDAYS WITH A THOUSAND LIGHTS**

Pomham Rocks Lighthouse is known for its bright red beacon that shines on Narragansett Bay. But for the 2025 holiday season, the light station cast an even brighter glow. Members of Friends of Pomham Rocks Lighthouse took advantage of the mild fall weather to string over a thousand

colored lights on the century-and-a-half-year-old landmark to herald the holiday season. From the top to the bottom of the lighthouse and all around the island, the historic site shined for the festive season. Kudos to Pomham Rocks President Alex Dias and Treasurer Adam Dias for planning and putting up this year's holiday decorations.

The railing of the catwalk surrounding the lantern room, atop the island light station, was aglow with decorative white lights. Red, white and green lights framed all sides of the lighthouse.

Even the flagpole was trimmed with lights. The white picket fence surrounding the half-acre island glowed in a rainbow of colors. Local residents were able to view the holiday lighting each night from 4:00 PM to 11 PM from November 22<sup>nd</sup> through December 27<sup>th</sup>.



*Hanging up the lights*

## THANK YOU, MICHAEL W. TRIPP CPA

Sadly, we want to advise the membership of the death on December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025, of our longtime Treasurer, Mike Tripp, who served as Treasurer from 2008 to 2024. He was an invaluable member of the Board — not only handling our financial record keeping but also offering years of practical advice to us and regularly volunteering hands-on help with many of our day-to-day chores. He was gregarious, had a great sense of humor, and was a leader who regularly got his point across using very colorful language.

One of the stories Mike loved to tell was about his introduction to the Friends:

"My pal, Nate Chace, who was on the Board of FPRL, called me one day in 2008 to explain that the organization was having some bookkeeping problems and would I be willing to attend a Board meeting to give the then treasurer some tips. Having known about the Lighthouse since I was a kid, I said I'd be happy to help. Well, I walked into the Board meeting a free man — and left the Board meeting the newly elected Treasurer."

Mike gave us his all — when he resigned as Treasurer in 2024 due to ill health he was honored at our Annual Meeting with a standing ovation.

We will miss you, Mike — thank you for being you — FPRL is a better place because of your many contributions.



*Michael Tripp*

# EVENTS

- Stay tuned on our website for upcoming event dates, including our spring speaker program, summer gala, and more!

<https://pomhamrocksighthouse.org/events/>

