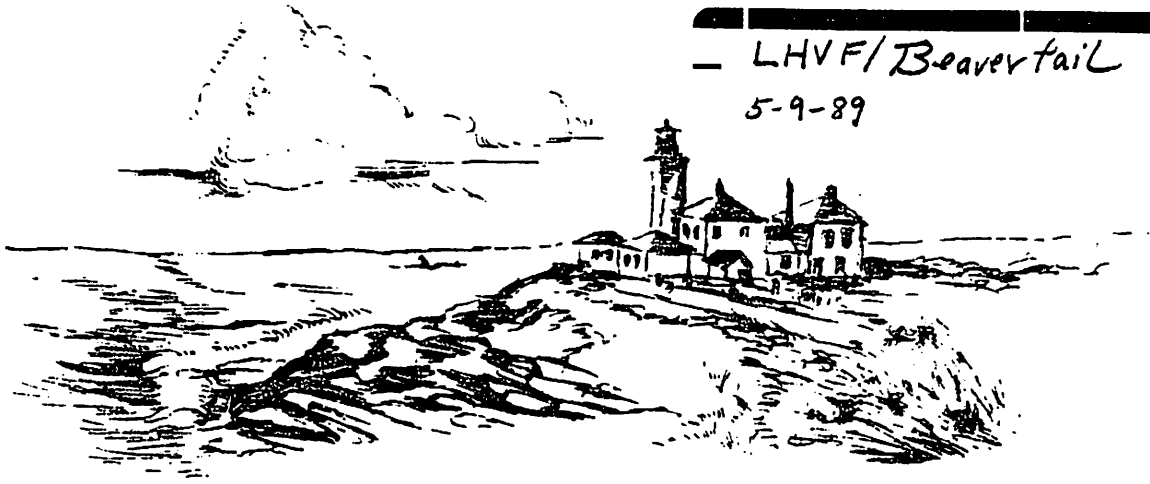
BEAVERTAIL LIGHTHOUSE (1749)



LHVF/Beavertail Light
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The following are some of the events in the history of Beavertail Lighthouse, the third oldest continuously-operating lighthouse in North America. While it is only a partial list, the intention is to transmit some of the 'character' of this lighthouse.

1705 - The first navigational aid was built at Beavertail, consisting of an open pitch fire. Built and manned by local Indians, the fire was not considered to be dependable.

1712 - The first official request for a permanent navigational aid (a lighthouse) was recorded in the records of the Newport Town Meeting.

1719 - The first fog-warning device was installed at Beavertail, consisting of a large cannon which was periodically fired during periods of poor visibility.

1731 - In order to raise funds for lighthouse construction, the first tariff was placed on imported and exported cargo passing through Newport (10 shillings per ton foreign; 18 shillings per ton local).

1738 - War between France and Britain prevented the planned construction. The war lasted eleven years.

1749 - In February, the following appeared in the Newport Town Record:

> "A committee was appointed to build a lighthouse at Beavertail on the island of Jamestown, alias Conanicut, as there appears a great necessity for a lighthouse as several misfortunes have happened lately for want of a light."

Construction of the first lighthouse (originally named the "Newport Light") began in May and ended in September. Peter Harrison was the architect. The original lighthouse was constructed of wood with a square base, 58' high. Abel Franklin, a local resident, was appointed the first keeper.

1753 - The lighthouse was rebuilt following a fire which destroyed the original structure. Stones from Goat Island were used as building materials. Abel Franklin continued to man his post during construction, warning ships with a hand-held lantern.

1779 - British soldiers burned the lighthouse during their evacuation of Newport and removed the light equipment. After the war, this equipment found its way back into several lighthouses in New England, including the first Point Judith Light (1825).

1790 - Ownership and control of Beavertail Lighthouse was transferred from the State of Rhode Island to the U. S. Government. President Washington personally approved the transfer. At the end of the transfer deed, the following passage appeared:

> "If the U. S. shall at any time neglect to keep lighted and in good repair the lighthouse, then the grant of said lighthouse shall be void and of no effect."

1817 - David Melville, an inventor from Newport, was given permission to experiment with a new method for lighting the lamps using natural gas. Despite the apparent improvement of gas over the sperm whale oil customarily used, the new technique was not adopted.

1852 - The first in a series of experiments involving fog-warning devices took place at Beavertail. A Daboll "Fog Trumpet", driven by compressed air, was tested. This was followed by the installation of the first steam-powered foghorn in 1857. Several other 'firsts' in foghorn equipment were tested at Beavertail over the next 40 years.

1856 - A new lighthouse was constructed in order to replace the original stone lighthouse. The new structure measured 10' square, 45' high, and 64' to the light. The original tower was removed and on its foundation was built a fog-whistle house.

1859 - The present lighthouse keeper's house was built (the assistant keeper's house was constructed in 1898).

1930 - The first electric light-beacon was installed.

1938 - The Hurricane of '38 destroyed the whistle house, re-exposing the original lighthouse foundation. A new whistle house was built next to the lighthouse.

TODAY - The present lighthouse has remained standing since its construction in 1856. It is fully automated, containing a fourth-order Fresnel lens, using a 45,000 candlepower lamp, and is visible for seventeen miles. The present fog-signalling device is located on the foundation of the original lighthouse, consisting of an electric diaphragm. Beavertail Light continues as the third oldest operating lighthouse in North America.