Rockland Breakwater Light Gets Help from U.S. Navy Volunteers

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The 1902 Rockland Breakwater Lighthouse with a ...
Photo by: Timothy Harrison

Thanks to some hearty volunteers and sailors from the United States Navy Destroyer USS Stump, Maine's historic Rockland Breakwater Lighthouse got some much needed help this past August.



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Glenn Desormeaux from the USS Stump was in charge ...
Photo by: Timothy Harrison



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Although you can reach the lighthouse by foot on ...
Photo by: Timothy Harrison

Each year the United States Navy sends a ship to Rockland to participate in Maine's famous Lobster Festival. This year it was the USS Stump, a 563 foot, 9200 ton, destroyer with a crew of over 300. As part of its community involvement, program they asked the City of Rockland, what they could volunteer for, and the immediate response from the local Chamber of Commerce was, "How about the Breakwater Lighthouse?"



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The USS Stump commissioned in 1978, is the ...
Photo by: U.S. Navy photo.

One thing led to another, and soon local volunteers were lined up, local



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From the roof of the boat house of Rockland ...
Photo by: Sandra Grady

restaurants donated food for the workers, and the local Sherwin-Williams Paint Store came up with 52 gallons of a new high-endurance latex paint.



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Beverly St. Clair and Len Hadley staff the ...
Photo by: Timothy Harrison

Not only did the volunteers scrape and paint the exterior of the lighthouse, they removed debris from the interior, scraped the interior walls, including the lantern room, and cleaned the interior tile walls of the brick part of the lighthouse.

A light was first established at the end of the breakwater as early as, or before, 1880, with a lantern hanging from a pole. It is known that a small portable light station was erected here in 1888, which was a small wooden building surmounting a stone beacon with two fixed lanterns with red lenses. The station was moved four times over the next few years and was maintained by a lamp-lighter for a fee of $25 per year.

The current station, the only type of its design in the nation, was constructed at the end of the nearly mile long breakwater between 1900 and 1902, when it was first lit. It was staffed by Keepers of the U.S. Lighthouse Service until 1939, when the Coast Guard took over. The Coast Guard de-staffed the station in 1963 and it has been empty ever since.

Under the Maine Lights program, the lighthouse was given to the City of Rockland in 1998 by the United States Coast Guard. About the same time, the American Lighthouse Foundation (ALF) formed the "Friends of Rockland Breakwater Lighthouse," as a chapter of the Foundation to raise funds for the restoration of the structure. The local Lions Club assisted the first year, but has since bowed out due to other commitments. ALF started the group out with an initial $12,000 raised from a dinner meeting held at the MBNA Convention Center, which MBNA donated for the fund raising kick off. ALF then donated the initial supply of coffee mugs, sweatshirts and other items for the Friends group to sell for fund raising.

This year, thanks to the efforts of Lighthouse Depot and Lighthouse Digest, the George Zoltan Lefton Company created an exquisite miniature of the Rockland Breakwater Lighthouse for the group. Lefton has also announced that they will release a lighted replica of the station in the very near future.

The goal of the Friends group is to restore the interior of the station and open it up as a type of living history museum for all to enjoy.

If you would like to help you can purchase one of their heavy duty, old-fashioned, diner-style mugs for $10.00, or a beautiful sweatshirt for $35.00. Please add $4.95 for shipping. Send to Friends of Rockland Breakwater Lighthouse, P.O. Box 741, Rockland, Maine 04841.

Our thanks go out to the many sailors from the USS STUMP who worked on Maine's Rockland Breakwater Lighthouse. We salute you!