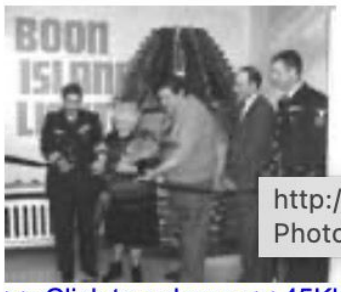
Boon Island Light

By Timothy Harrison Comments?



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Connie Small and Capt. Blaine Horrocks (l) had ...
Photo by: Kathleen Finnegan

Boon Island is not the place most people would spend a lot of time. It is nothing more than a bunch of rocks sitting about six miles out in the ocean from Maine's Nubble Lighthouse. However, some of the tation there, especially William an amazing 27 years there as the keeper of the light.



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Bill Thomson, author of the new book Boon Island, ...
Photo by: Timothy Harrison

The island is often plagued by storms and high water - the first two lighthouses built here were both destroyed by storms. The current tower was built in 1852 and stands 133 feet tall, making it the tallest lighthouse not only in Maine but also all of New England. Celia Thaxter described the lighthouse in her 1873 book as "a slender column against the sky." She goes on to say, "Sometimes it looms colossal in the mirage of summer; in winter it lies blurred and ghostly at the edge of the chilly sea and pallid sky." Her statement rings so true for the many tourists who view the lighthouse from binoculars at Sohier Park by Nubble Light on the mainland. Unfortunately most of them don't even know the name of the lighthouse, but you'll hear them say, "Wow, look there's another lighthouse way out there, I wonder what the name of it is?"



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Boon Island Lighthouse as it appears today. The ...

Boon Island Light is famous as the site of the wreck of the Nottingham Galley on December 11, 1710. The survivors shipwrecked on the island for three weeks struggled to stay alive. They finally resorted to cannibalism of two of their dead comrades. After this disaster, locals began to leave supplies on the island. Kenneth Roberts made the grueling story famous in his book Boon Island, available at Lighthouse Depot as item #91747 for $15.95.



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A helicopter from Salem Air Station lands at Boon ...
Photo by: Tom Dunwoodie

The daughter of one of the keepers, Annie Bell Hobbs, did not like life on the island describing her life there as a prisoner with the privilege of a yard. One 19th century keeper died at the lighthouse during a gale and his wife, despite her grief, kept the lights burning until she went insane. She was found walking about aimlessly on the island and died a few weeks later.



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Tom Dunwoodie today at 58 enjoys his retirement ...

Coast Guardsman Kendrick Capon who was stationed at the light in the 1950's remembered the hardships, but said life there was completely relaxed, a feeling he was never able to capture again.

Tom Dunwoodie of Kearny, New Jersey, stationed at the lighthouse in the early 1960's, agrees with Capon, he loved living at the lighthouse because of its peacefulness saying, "Boon Island was probably the most relaxing lighthouse anyone could be stationed at. The ocean breeze with waves breaking on the rocks, along with the noise of seagulls and seals, made this a perfect setting. The weather did get bad at times, but this was also enjoyable. You could watch the waves hit the rocks and spray in the air all day. This sounds good now, but it is being recalled 40 years after the fact."

The keepers stationed there in the Blizzard of 1978 probably would not agree with Capon and Dunwoodie. The 1899 Keepers House was destroyed and boulders were strewn around the island with a force that had never been witnessed before. With the entire island under several feet of water, they had to be rescued from the tower where they had taken refuge.

Dunwoodie says he would like to be able to walk that island again. However, he would settle for a boat ride around it. He may now be able to thanks to the occasional lighthouse cruises offered by the Isles of Shoals Steamship Company out of Portsmouth, NH. This summer, they will offer several cruises that will circle Boon Island and other nearby lighthouses.

Dunwoodie says, "When life gets difficult, we all have someplace to go. Well, for me, I will always have Boon Island."

To learn more about Boon Island we recommend the book, Boon Island by William O. Thomson. It is available from Lighthouse Depot as item #91589 for $5.95 plus shipping by calling 1-800-758-1444 or by mail from Lighthouse Depot, P.O. Box 427, Wells, Maine 04090.