Sept. 7, 2003
Tarpon Springs, Fla.

Dear Jeremy,

This story about Dumpling Rock was told to me many times over the years that I knew Octave and Emma. I didn't go into all the details of what they had told me as that would have taken too long, I tried to stick to the basic facts. I don't know if Seamond had sent you the story or not.

Best wishes and keep up the good work. I will try to get some pictures of Anclote Light for you. *Norman G. Andersen*

Dumpling Rock Lighthouse
Surviving the 1938 hurricane

It was the year 1938 and all of New England was blissfully unaware that a massive hurricane was approaching. So it was on a pleasant September day Octave and Emma Ponsart carefully packed their suitcases with their best clothes and money in preparation for their vacation that was to start the next day. But as they worked Octave noticed that there was a storm brewing. Then the winds started howling and the seas building up, soon the water was coming over the rocks that made up that little island. Octave and Henri, the assistant keeper, retreated to the house but it soon became evident that they were in trouble since the floors kept rising and falling. Octave then decided to try something to try and save the building. Using Henri as an anchor Octave tied a line on himself and with a fire axe went around the building smashing the basement windows. This relieved the pressure that was building under the floors in the basement that threatened to lift the house off the foundation. Now the house settled down but the water was still rising so they all went upstairs. The building now was shaking very bad and Emma and the Assistant's wife Prayed. Octave could see that the water had risen almost to the ground floor ceiling and estimated that the building would soon go. Suddenly there was a loud crashing followed by a long rumbling sound and the house suddenly quit shaking. The next morning when they went downstairs they found everything in shambles. Most of the furniture was gone also all the suitcases with their clothes and money along with all the beautiful ship models that Octave had spent many hours building. Then when they checked the kitchen they found what had saved them. One wall of the kitchen was totally gone and the room filled with rock rubble that extended all the way to the ceiling on one side and in the middle of the room was this huge granite portion of the seawall that weighed several tons. All this weight had acted to anchor the house in place. Divine answer to their Prayers, who knows. Later as Octave cleared the rubble out of the kitchen he kept finding parts of the kitchen stove and tossing them in a pile, the amazing thing was that he was able to completely reassemble the stove with no lost parts. Later the CG sent that stove on up to Cape Elizabeth lighthouse. The huge boulder was never removed but the wall was patched up and Octave continued on there while the CG experimented with automatic signals to turn on the light and fog signal. This is where my future wife Bette got her first lesson in electricity. She was busy with her

home work for school and Octave and Emma were going ashore to shop. Octave took her over to the relay panel and told her that if fog came in and the horn didn't blow she was to tap on the switch relay with a wooden stick. Of course the fog came and the horn didn't blow so she took a wooden stick and taped on the relay and promptly got knocked on her fanny. When Octave returned she heatedly told him he had given her the wrong instructions, he asked to see the stick and then laughed when he pointed out the brass edge that all rulers have and how that provided a good path for the electricity, she never forgot that lesson. Octave, Emma and Bette continued to live on Dumpling Rock despite the battered condition of the station as the CG worked to improve the radio controls. Shortly after the birth of Seamond Octave was reassigned to Butler Flat Lighthouse in New Bedford harbor. From there he went on to Cuttyhunk where I met them in 1943. Late in 1946 Cuttyhunk was discontinued and Octave and family was transferred to West Chop Light on Martha's Vineyard, Mass. Where he retired a few years later.

As narrated to Norman G. Andersen by Octave and Emma Ponsart



Dumpling Rock
Lighthouse