Owls Head Lighthouse

Proposed License from U.S. Coast Guard to American Lighthouse Foundation

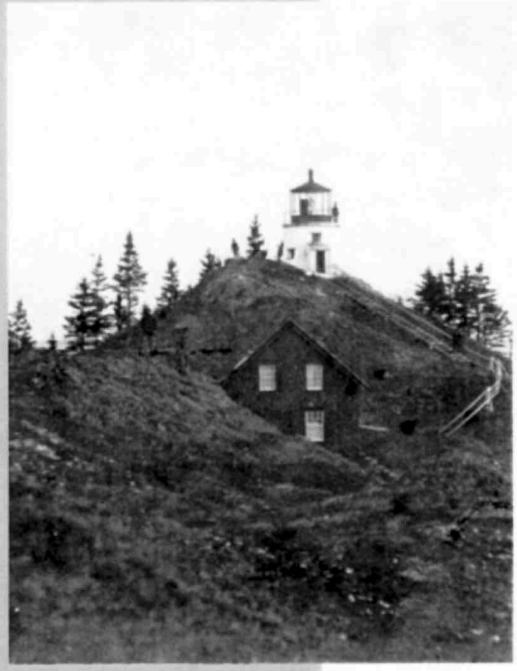


Prepared by Bob Trapani, Jr., Executive Director
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Owls Head Lighthouse

The United States Coast Guard has approved of entering into a license agreement with the American Lighthouse Foundation for Owls Head Lighthouse (tower only). The license agreement will provide our organization with the opportunity to open the publicly accessible light tower to visitors for educational purposes. In addition, ALF will be authorized to restore the light tower, which is one of the state of Maine's most widely recognized beacons.

Quick Facts:



Location - West Penobscot Bay, entrance to Rockland Harbor

Nearest Town - Owl's Head

Light Station Established - 1825

Construction Material (light tower) - Brick

Height of light tower - 30 feet

Height of focal plane (above sea level) - 100 feet

Optic - Fourth order Fresnel lens

Characteristic - Fixed white light

Accessibility - The lighthouse is located in Owls Head Light State Park. There is a large parking area near the lighthouse, and the grounds are open to the public.

Owls Head Lighthouse History:

(The historical information below is excerpted with permission from the website, ***New England Lighthouses: A Virtual Guide****, by Jeremy D'Entremont)*

"Owl's Head ushers at once upon a scene almost too beautiful to profane with speech when we are looking at it, impossible to find language to do it justice when memory would summon it before us again." - Samuel Adams Drake, The Pine Tree Coast, 1891

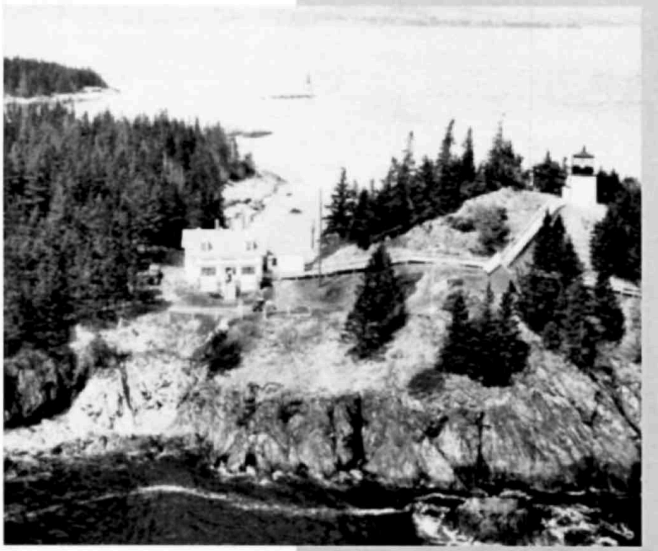
The growing lime trade in nearby Rockland and Thomaston led to the establishment of a light station at Owl's Head, at the entrance to Rockland Harbor. President John Quincy Adams authorized the building of Owl's Head Light in 1825.

The lighthouse is an unusually short 30-foot brick tower. A tall lighthouse was not necessary because of the height of the promontory. The light is exactly 100 feet above sea level. The original lamps and reflectors were replaced by a fourth-order Fresnel lens in 1856, and the lens remains in use today.

Augustus B. Hamor, previously keeper for 17 years at Maine's Egg Rock Light, came to Owl's Head as keeper in 1930. Keeper Hamor had a Springer spaniel named Spot who gained wide fame among local mariners. Spot learned to pull the rope that rang

the fog bell with his teeth, a ritual he repeated for every approaching vessel. The boats would answer with a whistle or bell, and Spot would bark excitedly.

Spot's unusual abilities turned out to be good for more than entertainment. One stormy night the Matinicus mail boat almost ran aground at Owl's Head. It was Spot's loud barking that warned the captain just in time and enabled him to steer clear of the rocks. The much beloved Spot is said to be buried on the side of the hill near the former location of the fog bell.



The 1854 keeper's house remains a residence for Coast Guard personnel while the surrounding grounds are now a state park.

The bell tower is gone, but an 1895 oil house remains. The wooden ramp and stairway leading to the tower are unique among New England lighthouses.

One of the most beautiful lighthouses in Maine from land or water, Owl's Head Light is a must-visit for the lighthouse fan. The grounds at Owl's Head Light State Park are open daily; there is a large parking area and a moderate walk to the lighthouse.

American Lighthouse Foundation Plans:

Presently, the chances to obtain a high profile lighthouse for preservation / education purposes are few and far between, which makes this license agreement possibility with the U.S. Coast Guard at Owls Head Lighthouse a desirable opportunity.

As noted above in the historical information, few lighthouses in Maine offer a more spectacular view than Owls Head. The lighthouse is well known and beloved by Mainers and visitors to the Pine Tree State alike. The historic site, which is open to the public, attracts year-round visitors who seek to photograph and enjoy the lighthouse and the breathtaking seascapes its magnificent perch high above West Penobscot Bay affords.



Some of the positives associated with the American Lighthouse Foundation entering into a license agreement with the Coast Guard at Owls Head Lighthouse are:



- The land-base lighthouse is located only about five miles from the ALF office at the Maine Lighthouse Museum, which enables the organization to uniquely utilize the site for local activities and events…and the opportunity to work jointly in such efforts with the Friends of Rockland Breakwater Lighthouse and the Maine Lighthouse Museum.

- Paul Dilger, retired U.S. Coast Guard Chief Warrant Officer, who lived at Owls Head Light Station from 2003 to 2006, will spearhead local activities at the lighthouse for ALF. Mr. Dilger intimately knows the site and is active in the surrounding community.

- The lighthouse is publicly accessible and will be opened to the general public, which will yield donations from visitors that can be reinvested back into the restoration and long-term care of the tower. The Coast Guard estimates that over 1,000 people visit Owls Head Lighthouse each week during the summer season, and this number may be conservative. Such numbers ensure that with the tower open for climbing, donations will be a natural benefit derived from the commitment.

- The light tower's lantern is one of the most spacious of any lighthouse and is very conducive to safe public access. The fact that the lighthouse still possesses its Fresnel lens adds to the historic fabric and overall enjoyment of the tower.

- ALF has the opportunity to market merchandise possessing the popular image of the lighthouse, which can add to the revenues associated with managing the light tower.

- The light station property is more secure than most lighthouses from adverse activities such as vandalism since the former keeper's house serves as housing for Coast Guard personnel. The storekeeper aboard the USCGC ABBIE BURGESS and his family presently reside in the home.

- Insurance costs related to adding Owls Head Lighthouse to ALF's liability insurance policy are negligible. It is estimated that the addition of Owls Head Lighthouse to the ALF liability policy will cost an additional $35 annually.

- Any future leasehold improvements (following eventual restoration) that ALF wishes to cover under the organization's property insurance policy can be supplemented by donations anticipated to be obtained from opening the lighthouse to the public.

- ALF recently declined to renew the Coast Guard license agreement on Maine's offshore Ram Island Ledge Light, thus enabling the organization to add a more attractive land-base site with revenue generating capabilities.



- Owls Head Lighthouse is structurally in fair condition overall, with no exterior or interior deficiencies that would prevent a safe environment for ALF volunteers and the visiting public. Like any old structure, there is a need to repoint brickwork, renew ironwork, etc., but the lighthouse is in otherwise fair shape.

- Per the recommendation of the ALF directors at the September 8, 2007 board meeting, Owls Head Lighthouse will fall under the immediate oversight of the Friends of Rockland Breakwater Lighthouse.

- An appointed sub-committee will be formed (Owls Head Lighthouse Restoration Committee...OHLRC) that will work under the Friends of Rockland Breakwater and with the parent organization since all three entities are located within sight of each other in Rockland Harbor. Paul Dilger will be the sub-committee chair for Owls Head Light, and will be added as a board member to the Friends of Rockland Breakwater.

- Mr. Dilger and interested volunteers will work with the ALF executive director on the restoration of the lighthouse, in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Preservation, and under the oversight of the Maine Historic Preservation Commission.

- The FORB treasurer, ALF associate director and the ALF treasurer will monitor / help maintain the financial accounting / reporting of the efforts by the Owls Head Lighthouse Restoration Committee.

