▷ ×

Lighthouse friends look to future

| September 17, 2018

By TAMMY WELLS
Senior Staff Writer



Friends of Wood Island Lighthouse chairman Brad Coupe explains the history of this new, handmade "artifact" unveiled Saturday as the group met to talk about the year the organization has had and look to the future. The compact lighthouse libraries were first send to lightkeepers by the Lighthouse board in 1876. TAMMY WELLS/Journal Tribune

BIDDEFORD POOL — The fog was thick on Saturday morning — so thick that it was hard to see much offshore.

But the lighthouse on Wood Island is still there — as it has has been since President Thomas Jefferson authorized construction and the first wooden structure was built in 1808. The wooden building was replaced by a granite lighthouse in 1839.

Automated since 1986, the nonprofit Friends of Wood Island Lighthouse, a chapter of the American Lighthouse Foundation, has been looking out for the lighthouse structure, the keeper's home, outbuildings, and the grounds, since 2003.

They've accomplished a lot, and there is more to do.

The lightkeeper's house was constructed in the 1800s but expanded to the Dutch colonial style it bears today in 1906. The dwelling's interior has been restored to that year, with the furnishings and fixtures coming as close as possible to the period.



Shirley Stallings, a member of the Friends of Wood Island Lighthouse since its inception in 2003, was behind the counter, selling sweatshirts and caps with the group's logo, on Saturday. The group has projects to complete and is looking ahead to the future. TAMMY WELLS/Journal Tribune

FOWIL host tours of the property, reachable by boat, three days a week in July and August.

The Friends group gathered at the Biddeford Pool Fire Station to hear about how the season had gone. Tour donations averaged less than the suggested $20 a head but were still lucrative, volunteers have faithfully visited to plant flowers and mow the lawn, and the website has been updated, making it easy for people to reserve a tour online.

The group applauded the 2015 donation of $200,000 by Savannah, Georgia, resident Judy Klement, who summers in the area. The donation has been a major factor in the restoration of the interior, including upgrades that cannot be seen, like the wiring in the nine-room home.

Photos showed how the keeper's house looks today, with donations of furniture and fixtures — right down to the floor cloth made of Number 10 canvas and sporting 17 coats of paint.

FIND YOUR TOWN

BIDDEFORD SACO
OLD ORCHARD BEACH SANFORD

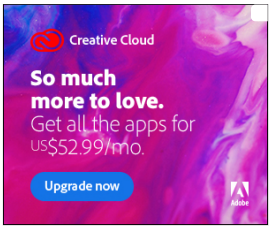




journaltribune.com
Get a little bit of everything you need to know, delivered straight to your inbox. Sign up below:
Email
Subscribe

▷ ×
TECOVAS

HANDMADE & AFFORDABLE



One photo showed a pair of shoes resting beside a rocking chair. “We tried to make it look like someone is (living) there,” said George Bruns, the groups’ treasurer.

The home sports a working kitchen, in order to provide lunch or snacks should day programs be scheduled for the island, he said.

Now, with the major restoration behind them, FOWIL Chairman Brad Coupe told the membership on Saturday, its time to look forward.

“Now, we have a new course of history to chart,” he said. “We are the keepers of the day.”

There are projects left to complete, a new 5-year business plan to write, and more, like expanding the resource to the community, Coupe said.

Advertisement

“We hope to find interest for younger people to see the value and fun in working on a lighthouse,” he said.

The group is considering whether to host overnight stays on the 32-acre island. Coupe acknowledged that prospect would have hurdles to overcome.

The tour season had been good, Bruns said, but high winds and rough seas on Maine Lighthouse Day meant six trips had to be canceled.

Projects that remain include using the connector — the enclosed passage from the house to the light — as a display space, featuring keepers, family life, shipwrecks, and the like. That project has been approved by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission.

As well, some steel doors needs replacing, the above-ground portion of the septic system required an enclosure, and the group hopes to reconstruct a small barn and outfit it as a handicapped accessible bathroom and quarters where a summer keeper could live. Coupe said summer keepers are so popular elsewhere that often, the keepers change every couple of weeks, so several people can take in the experience.

Advertisement

He said erosion control in front of the tower, where the seas are most active, will have to be undertaken, at a projected cost of $35,000.

Another vital concern is upkeep to the boardwalk, the half-mile wooden walkway that stretches over high vegetation from the boathouse to the lighthouse property.

As the group prepared to wind up the session, a new “artifact” was revealed — a handmade pine replica of a library — a desktop, cabinet-style library — that would have been part of the lightkeeper’s household goods. It was crafted by Peter Oleson.

In 1876, the Lighthouse Board, the entity eventually replaced by the Lighthouse Service, which merged with the U.S. Coast Guard in 1939, provided the libraries to help lightkeepers “be happier and more contented with their lot,” Coupe read from a historic piece about the libraries.

— Senior Staff Writer Tammy Wells can be contacted at 282-1535, ext. 327 or twells@journaltribune.com.



Tell your story...
Blurb
Visit Site

More From Front Page

Go To The Front Page Section



Lamontagne says she ‘can’t live in a world of regret’



Motorist injured in Sept. 12 crash in Lyman has died



Arundel marks its heritage with special day

Contact Us
Advertise
Staff Directory
About Us
Archives

Subscribers
Account
Subscribe
E-Edition
Delivery Stop & Start

Network
pressherald.com
centralmaine.com
sunjournal.com
theforecaster.net
coastaljournal.com
mainetoday.com
timesrecord.com

Submit News
Editorial Policy

Connect With Us
Newsletter Sign Up
Facebook
Twitter

journaltribune.com

457 Alfred Street Biddeford, ME 04005

(207) 282-1535

jtcommunity@journaltribune.com

Our Hometown
DMCA Notices
Newspaper web site content management software and services

© 2018 | All Rights Reserved | Privacy Policy