

PROJECT OVERVIEW

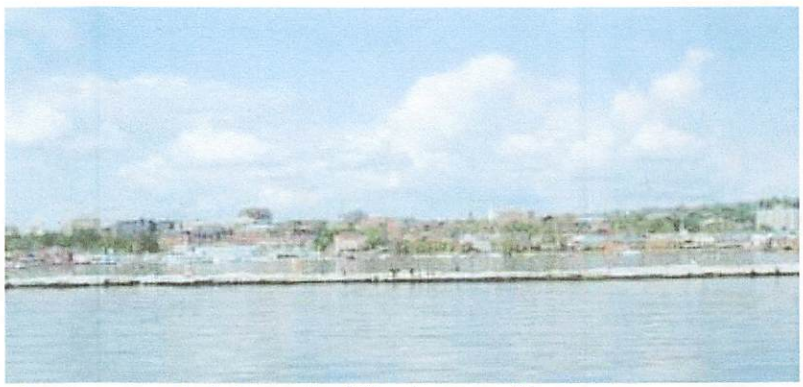
PHOTOS

FACTS & TRIVIA

SPONSORS

KIDS CORNER

BURLINGTON BREAKWATER LIGHTS



The Burlington breakwater was constructed to accommodate increased commercial traffic on Lake Champlain following the opening of the Champlain Canal in 1823, connecting Lake Champlain and the Hudson River. In 1826, the first federal lighthouse, Juniper Island Light, was erected to guide mariners into Burlington's port. As the breakwater expanded, it required illumination of its own.

The original Burlington breakwater lights went into service on the north and south ends of the breakwater in 1857. A middle light was added in 1890. The original structures were all-wood and were destroyed by ice. Over the years, several attempts were made to maintain wooden lights on the breakwater--all succumbed to ice. Ultimately the lights were replaced by steel light towers: the North and Middle lights in 1925 and the South light in 1950. Briefly, a keepers house was installed on the breakwater but remained empty for a decade, at which time it was sold at auction, relocated and is now a private residence in Burlington.

Today, the North and South lights are being replaced by replica lighthouses designed to withstand the environmental challenges that plagued previous lighthouses on the breakwater. The replica lights are fully functioning Aids to Navigation; defining and illuminating the ends of the breakwater.

This project and the rehabilitation of the Burlington Breakwater was made possible through the continuing support of Senator Patrick Leahy. Join Senator Leahy, Mayor Peter Clavelle, and representatives from the United States Coast Guard for the relighting ceremony on September 12, 2003, with music, dedication speeches, kids activities, and the formal relighting of the two historic replica towers. The festivities begin at 6PM in Waterfront Park and are free and open to the public.



PROJECT OVERVIEW

PHOTOS

FACTS & TRIVIA

SPONSORS

KIDS CORNER

FACTS & TRIVIA

Did you know...

• Construction of the Burlington Breakwater began in 1836 as a part of a federal program to improve harbors on Lake Champlain. Improvements to Lake Champlain harbors was necessitated by the increase in commercial traffic on the lake after the opening of the Champlain Canal in 1823, connecting the lake with the Hudson River.

• The Burlington Breakwater is a significant example of 19th century timber crib construction.

• A lightkeeper's residence, destined for Buffalo, New York, arrived in Burlington, Vermont. It was installed on the breakwater but remained vacant for a decade. It was sold at auction and relocated to the city, where it remains as a private residence.

• The General Butler, an 80-foot sailing canal schooner, crashed into the breakwater during a violent storm on December 9, 1876. The ship's captain, William Montgomery, was able to off-load his passenger and crew onto the breakwater. Fortunately, they were rescued by James Wakefield and his son in a rowboat.

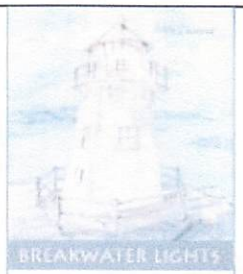
• The wreck of the General Butler is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is also a State of Vermont Underwater Historic Preserve. There are marker buoys at the fore and aft ends of the shipwreck, which is located on the outside edge of the breakwater near the south end.

• The basin area was filled in during the 1860s and the Pine Street Barge Canal was created. This canal is currently an EPA superfund site, filled with byproducts of the coal yards that replaced the timber mill industry, which declined after the 1897 Lumber Tariff.

• The Burlington Bay Horse Ferry, the only known surviving example of a turntable "team-boat", is located at the bottom of Lake Champlain near the north end of the Burlington Breakwater.

• The Burlington Schooner Project of the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum is building a reproduction 1862-class sailing canal boat at Burlington Harbor.

• There are five federal breakwaters on Lake Champlain: Burlington, Plattsburgh, Swanton, and Grand Isle, Vermont and Rouses Point, New York.



PROJECT OVERVIEW

PHOTOS

FACTS & TRIVIA

SPONSORS

KIDS CORNER

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Burlington Breakwater Lights project encompasses the construction and installation of two fully functioning lighthouses to the Burlington breakwater. These lighthouses will be replicas of the original breakwater lights located at the north and south ends of the breakwater. The restoration of lighthouses to the breakwater is a part of the city's waterfront revitalization and renovation program. Although the lights will look like their predecessors, they will employ modern engineering and technology to withstand the environmental conditions responsible for the destruction of the original lighthouses.

The lighthouses will be built on-shore to allow public access and viewing of the construction process then installed on the breakwater. During the construction phase, a kiosk will be staffed with an historic interpreter to provide information about the history of the Lake Champlain area--especially the Burlington breakwater and harbor, lighthouses and other navigational aids and the construction process. The kiosk and interpreter will be located near the staging area, on the waterfront between the USCG station and the Lake Champlain Sailing Center.