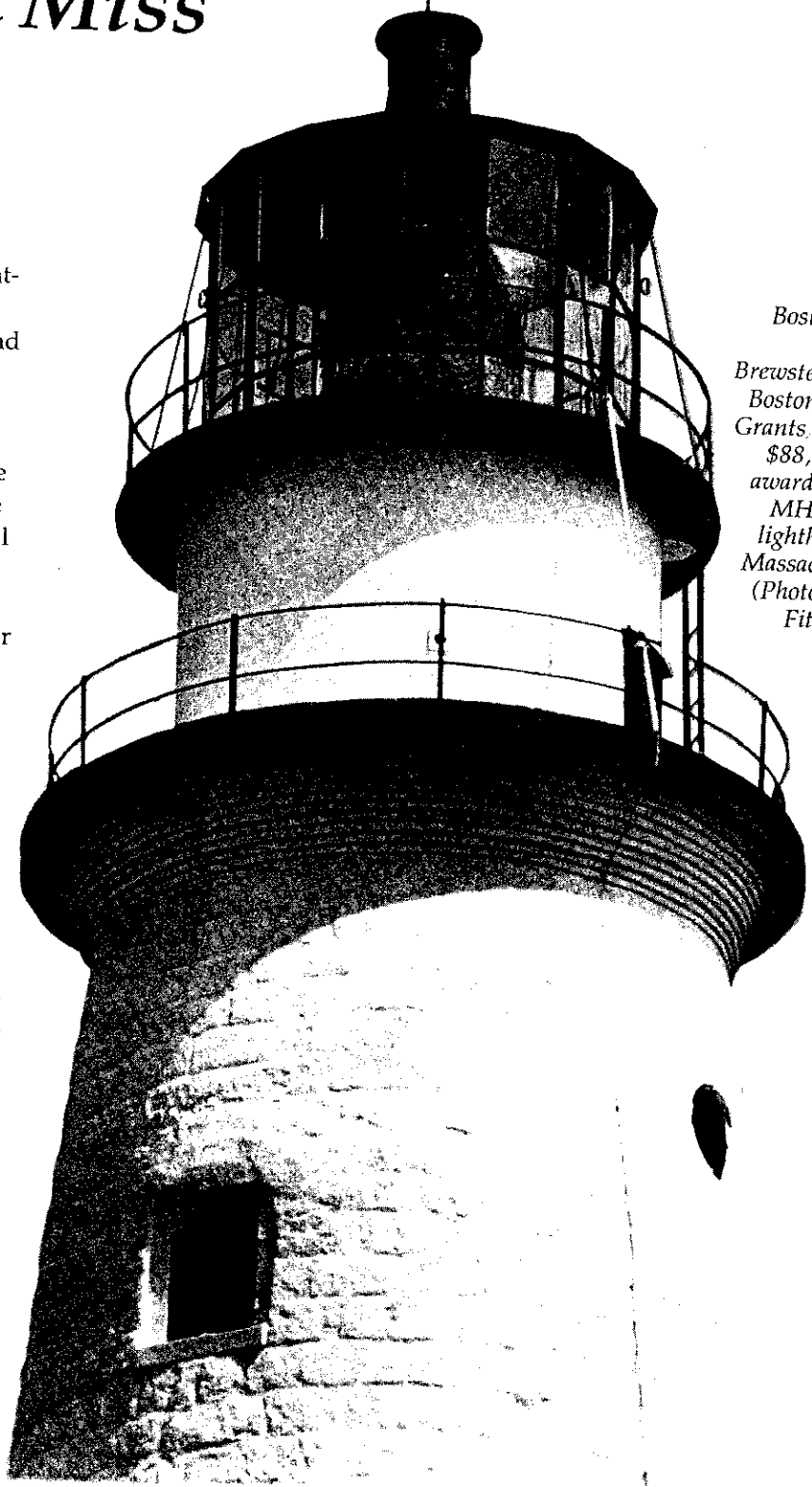
PRESERVATION
Advocate
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
A Division of the Office of Secretary of State, Michael J. Connolly, Secretary, Chairman / Fall & Winter 1989 / Vol. 16, No. 3 &

MHC Didn't Miss the Boat!

hat do Boston Light in Boston, Thacher's Island North Tower Lighthouse in Rockport, Derby Wharf Lighthouse in Salem, Palmer's Island Lighthouse and Butler Flats Lighthouse in New Bedford, all have in common? First and foremost, they are all lighthouses! Second, they are lighthouses in need. Third, they are all recipients of the 1989 Bicentennial Lighthouse Grant.

Little Brewster Island in Boston Harbor set the stage for a spectacular check presentation event on the ninth of August. Guests of the Massachusetts Historical Commission were transported to the island via the "Martha Washington," owned by Boston Harbor Cruises. An enjoyable and informative tour was given on the boat by Friends of Boston Harbor Islands, Inc. Once on the island, recipients of the 1989 Bicentennial Lighthouse Fund Grant were welcomed by MHC Executive Director Valerie Talmage. Secretary of State Michael J. Connolly awarded each recipient a mock check toward their respective project and explained "how fortunate Massachusetts is to have so many historic lighthouses. It is an honor and a privilege to present money to these communities for the preservation of their lighthouses."

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Boston Light on Little Brewster Island, Boston Harbor. Grants totalling $88,000 were awarded by the MHC to five lighthouses in Massachusetts. (Photo by T.C. Fitzgerald)

1989 Lighthouse Grants Awarded

On August 7, 1789, President George Washington signed the first Lighthouse Act which established the first federal program for the construction of lighthouses. Two hundred years later Congress voted to establish the Bicentennial Lighthouse Fund, a $1 million appropriation to be divided among qualifying states. Because the program was extremely successful last year, the Department of the Interior has extended the program for a second year. The Massachusetts Historical Commission received $88,000 this year to distribute among five significant lighthouses: Boston Light, Boston; Palmer's Island Light and Butler Flats Light, New Bedford; Thacher Island North Tower Lighthouse, Rockport; and Derby Wharf Lighthouse, Salem.

Boston Light, the oldest lighthouse site in the country, is located on Little Brewster Island, and has guided ships to safe harbor since 1716 when it was the first lighthouse built in America. It was destroyed during the Revolutionary War and was rebuilt in 1783 by Governor John Hancock. Boston Harbor Light was awarded $8,000 for a feasibility study to be conducted by the Department of Environmental Management and Historic Boston, Inc. to determine solutions for the future management of this historic lighthouse and its setting.

Butler Flats Lighthouse, New Bedford, was designed and constructed in 1898 by F. Hopkinton Smith, and is a prominent feature in the lower Acushnet River Channel. In 1975, the lighthouse was scheduled to be dismantled, but the local residents rallied to save their historic beacon. The $31,800 grant will be used for the stabilization and restoration of the structure.

Palmer's Island Lighthouse, New Bedford, was constructed in 1849 and is one of the few early 19th century lighthouses remaining in the U.S. Through the years, hurricane damage and serious fire destroyed much of the twentieth century interior and light mechanism. Palmer's Island light received $10,000 for restoration and stabilization.

Thacher Island Twin Lights, Rockport, utilizes two towers to perform its original function as one of the most visible navigational aids on the entire northeast coast. Established in 1771, and one of the few remaining twin lights in the country, Thacher's Island Lights were known as "Ann's Eyes" to both sailors and Cape Ann residents alike. With the advent of coded signals, only one tower is still in automated use.

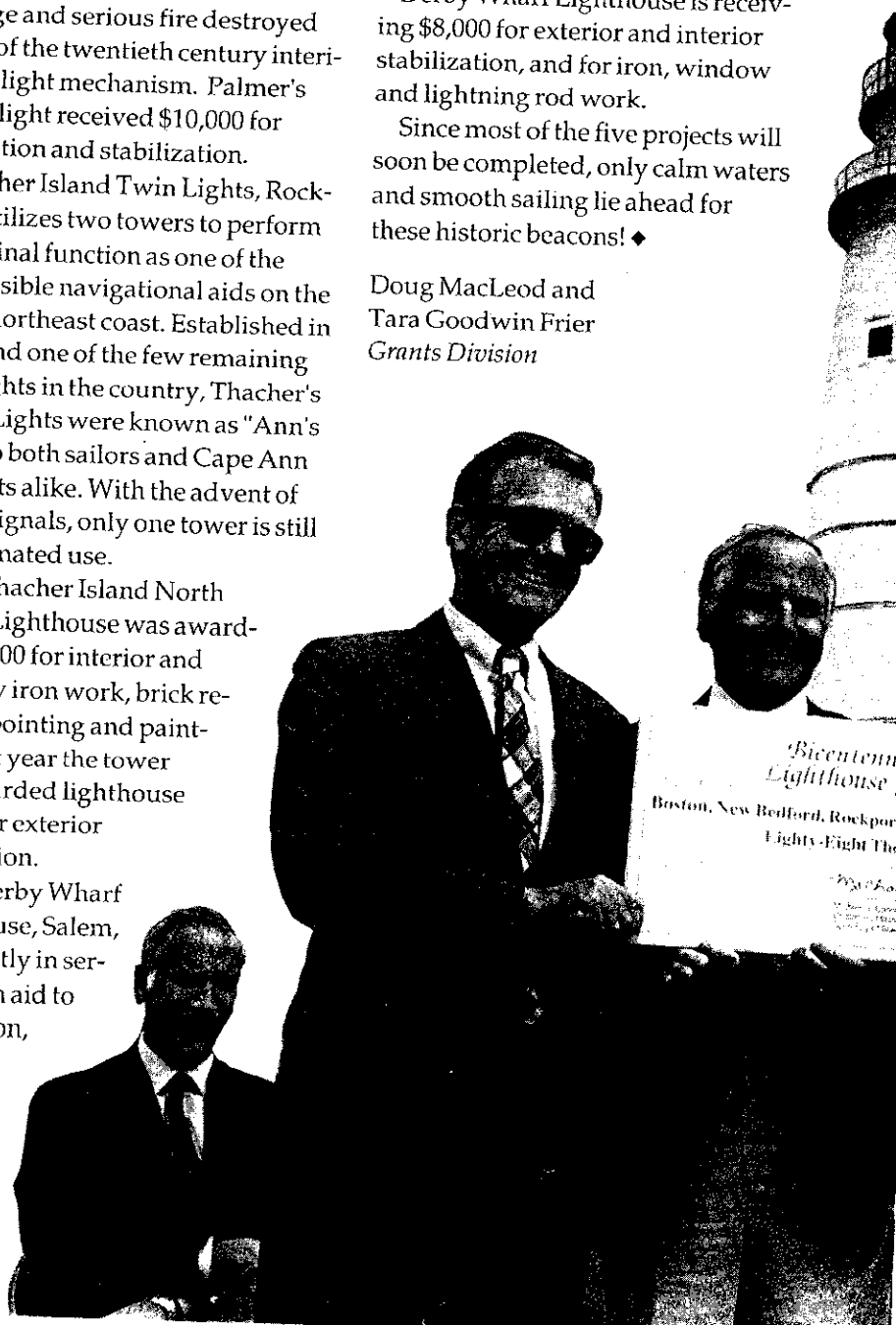
The Thacher Island North Tower Lighthouse was awarded $30,000 for interior and stairway iron work, brick repair, repointing and painting. Last year the tower was awarded lighthouse funds for exterior restoration.

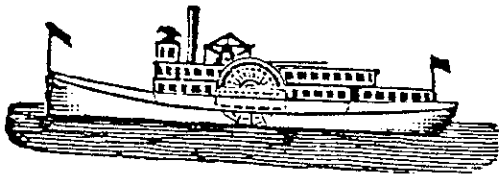
The Derby Wharf Lighthouse, Salem, is presently in service as an aid to navigation, with maintenance of the structure being the responsibility of the National Park Service. The lamp is under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Coast Guard. The light serves as a focal point for interpretation of Salem's China Trade heydays and shipping activities on Derby Wharf and in Salem Harbor.

Derby Wharf Lighthouse is receiving $8,000 for exterior and interior stabilization, and for iron, window and lightning rod work.

Since most of the five projects will soon be completed, only calm waters and smooth sailing lie ahead for these historic beacons! ◆

Doug MacLeod and
Tara Goodwin Frier
Grants Division





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The grant award presentation was followed by a history of Boston Light and lighthouses given by Professor William Fowler, a former MHC Commission Member. Boston Harbor Light was the first lighthouse in America, authorized by Congress in 1715. During the 1700s such tragedies as fire and a British invasion destroyed the original lighthouse. The present structure was constructed of stone in the early 1780s and has a second order fresnel lens. Group Commander of the U.S. Coast Guard, Captain Joseph O. Bernard, offered comments on the Coast Guard, and Friends of Boston Harbor Islands, Inc. presented a framed photo of Boston Light to the Coast Guard. Also in attendance were MHC Commission members Jean Harrington, Len Tucker, Barbara Mahoney, Lowell Warren, Jim Igoe, Robert Rettig, and Charles Sullivan.

Following the speaking program, guests were free to tour Boston Light and Little Brewster Island. Structures on the island include the lighthouse/entryway (1783-1790), keeper's dwelling (1884), oilhouse (1780-1790) and two storage sheds which house the 1890 fog signal and boathouse. The island itself consists of one acre with interconnecting paths running through the grounds, which are impeccably maintained by the Coast Guard. The shoreline of the island is rocky and access by boat can be difficult. The Coast Guard, which was instrumental to the success of the whole event, was on hand to answer any questions guests may have had about the lighthouse and the island.

Media coverage of the event was exceptional. In addition to several stories in local papers, the Boston Herald ran a third page story. Channel 5 News Reporter Judy Fortin showed a segment on Boston Light and the award presentation, as well as featuring interviews with Secretary Connolly, Executive Director Talmage, and Coast Guard Captain Bernard.

Arriving back at Boston Harbor, guests were overheard saying that this was one of the finest events they had ever attended. Of course, the nature of the event was one reason, but combined with clear blue skies, 80.F temperatures, and a relaxing boat trip, how could MHC miss? ◆

Sandra A. Curro
Director, Public Information and Administration



Lighthouse Grant Check Presentation at Boston Light: (l.to r.) William Fowler, former MHC Commissioner; Stanley Smith, Director of Historic Boston ,Inc.; Richard Anderson, DEM; Secretary of State Michael J.Connolly; and Valerie Talmage, Executive Director, MHC (Photo by T.C. Fitzgerald)