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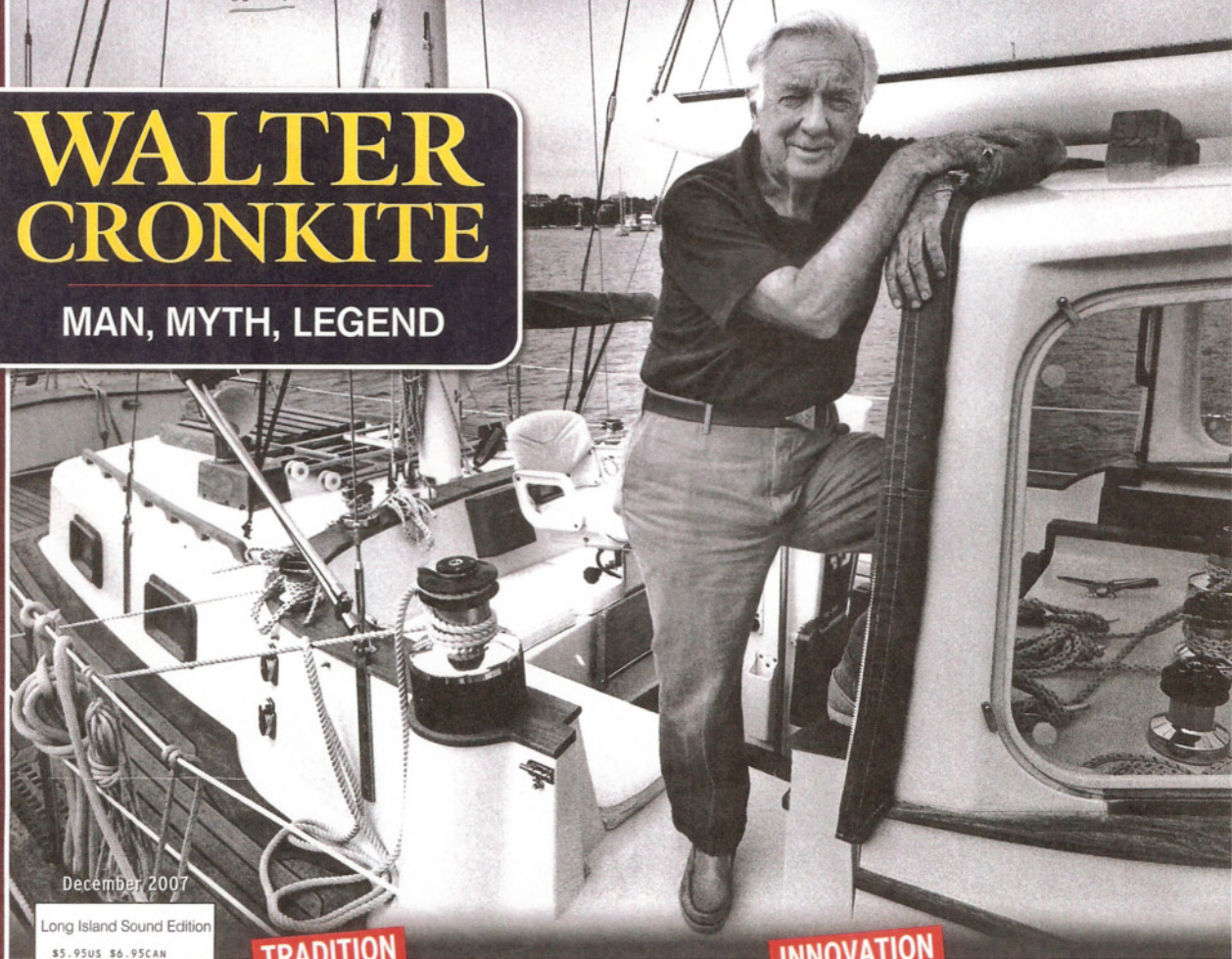
Soundings

DECEMBER 2007

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December 2007

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Ever dream of owning a lighthouse? Goose Rocks Lighthouse, off North Haven, Maine, was deemed "excess property" by the government and put up for sale. For more on the fate of our lighthouses, turn to Page 28.

The Current

7 Seven PDQ power catamarans, shipped abroad on cargo ships, complete a summer cruise of Scandinavia. The first "Baltic Adventure" was so successful that PDQ might do it again next year.

10 The two men who chartered the 47-foot sport-fisherman Joe Cool claim it was pirates who killed its four crewmembers. The FBI thinks otherwise and has charged the two with murder.

14 Is it a record? A British sailor is completing a "vertical circumnavigation," but only after his 38-foot sloop is carried through Arctic ice on a cargo ship.

17 After a public outcry over live-ammo training on the Great Lakes, the Coast Guard could turn to a sort

of laser tag, which boaters seem to feel is preferable to bullets on the water.

18 MerCruiser brings joystick control and pod-drive maneuverability to smaller boats with its Axius sterndrive control system.

20 Rob McDonald has 90,000 believers. That's how many people he says applied to crew on an Atlantic crossing in a boat he built of popsicle sticks — 15 million of them.

21 It's sort of a big, floating CARE package. Freelance do-gooder John Norris is sailing a sloop filled with goodies for troubled teens across the Atlantic.

22 A helicopter flying just feet above a speeding power catamaran during a photo shoot dips too low and crashes, killing a magazine photographer and a videographer.

26 IN DEPTH Googling the name of a previous owner turns up a fascinating history of Phoenix, believed to be the last commuter yacht designed by Sparkman & Stephens, and built by the renowned Consolidated Yard in City Island, N.Y. Subsequent e-mail exchanges produce a joyful dockside convergence of owners from opposite coasts.

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Casey Jordan and her husband, George Northrop, own Goose Rocks Lighthouse, off the island of North Haven, Maine.



GOOSE ROCKS LIGHTHOUSE: RICH ARMSTRONG

A new life for our lighthouses

The government is passing ownership of certain beacons to people and groups that agree to care for them

By Elizabeth Ellis

STAFF WRITER

Old Saybrook, Conn., has an old friend known locally as the Breakwater Light, which stands at the end of a jetty that extends into Long Island Sound at the mouth of the Connecticut River. Identified by the Coast Guard as "excess property," this lighthouse on the tip of the west breakwall off Fenwick Point is on the list to be passed to a new owner. The town would like to be that new owner ... if only it can wade through the red tape.

"The lighthouse is the defining characteristic of this town, and if anyone should secure it the town should," says first selectman Michael Pace. "But my belief is that a lighthouse ought to stay in the government's ownership."

With many of these sentries getting on in years, the Coast Guard is passing ownership of them to willing communities or non-profit organizations. The agency has transferred 37 lighthouses under the provisions of the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act, established in 2000, according to Daniel Koski-Karell, a cultural resources specialist from the environmental management office at Coast Guard headquarters in Washington. "An additional 51 lights are at various stages in the transfer program," says Koski-Karell. (The program is administered by the U.S. General Services Administration.)

The act states that the government can pass these structures to non-profit groups, state and local governments, educational agencies and community development organizations at no cost, provided they comply with the conditions set forth in the Lighthouse Preservation Act. Those include making the light station available to the general public for education, recreation, cultural or historic preservation pur-

poses. If a group isn't found, the lighthouse is auctioned off. The Coast Guard continues to maintain the actual light equipment, fog signal and functions under the new ownership, but the new owners must be financially able to maintain the light stations.

Koski-Karell says each lighthouse goes through a process where the Coast Guard determines that the property can be given away, then the GSA determines when and if the lighthouse will be made avail-

able for ownership. The National Park Service evaluates each light station and determines how many it can handle passing on in a given year.

"There are many steps in the overall process," says Koski-Karell. "After they are evaluated, the Park Service might say they can only handle two, three or four in any given location."

David Siegenthaler, manager of the National Park Service's National Historic Lighthouse Preservation



Saybrook Breakwater Light in Old Saybrook, Conn., has been identified as "excess property" by the Coast Guard.

CASEY JORDAN; RICH ARMSTRONG (FROM TOP); INSET (NONE)

Divers salvage lighthouse history

By Elizabeth Ellis

STAFF WRITER

Program, says the process for non-profit groups to attain a light station is rigorous. "It has to be for the benefit of public education and interest," says Siegenthaler, who is overseeing the transfer of the Burroughs Island Lighthouse in Washington State off Anacortes. "And we require details about the organization, like how they are funded and how they would be able to sustain the facility."

And although the cost of maintaining each lighthouse varies, Koski-Karell says they all require a significant investment.

Pace, the Old Saybrook first selectman, says making the Saybrook Breakwater Light available to the public would be difficult since there is no easy access by land or water. "There are a lot of intricacies for this particular lighthouse," he says.

The Saybrook Breakwater Light (also known as the Outer Light) was first lighted June 15, 1886. It cost \$20,000 to build and was erected to warn sailors of the shoals at the mouth of the river. The 49-foot cylindrical cast iron structure — with a "basement," four main floors, a watch room and a lantern room — has withstood the test of time, including the powerful New England Hurricane of 1938.

"It's been a part of the scenery for the past 80 years I've been here," says local resident Lafayette Keeney, 81. "I remember when a couple lived in that lighthouse."

In fact, Keeney remembers bringing magazines out to the keepers. "We used to walk out there when the jetty was pretty level, but now it's all broken up."

"The light is ... automated [in 1959] just like the foghorn, but it serves a very important job," says Keeney. "It's located right by the mouth of the Connecticut River, and we have boats that come from all over. I think it is important enough that [the Coast Guard] should just hold on to it."

Jeremy D'Entremont, author of the "Lighthouse Treasury" series of books on the history of these structures, says he's particularly concerned about the future of offshore lighthouses, those located on islands or other structures and not easily accessible. "I believe the Coast Guard needs a different system for the offshore [lights], because they are very different from onshore," says D'Entremont, 51. "Access is such a problem for them."

D'Entremont says the lack of easy public access makes it difficult for organizations to raise money to preserve lighthouses because they cannot be used as tourist attractions. "They are trying to shoehorn a policy into any situation," he says. "Most of the time it works, but sometimes it doesn't."

D'Entremont says the drawback of auctioning off a lighthouse as a last resort is not knowing whether the individual will actually continue to care for it or appreciate its history. "There was a lighthouse [Hog Island Shoal Lighthouse] in Portsmouth, R.I., that was sold to a couple in North Dakota," says D'Entremont. "Maybe they will take good care of it, but the idea of selling a Rhode Island lighthouse to a couple in North Dakota seems risky."

Casey Jordan, 44, of Ansonia, Conn., is carrying the torch for offshore lighthouses through private ownership. Jordan, an attorney and professor in the Division of Justice and Law Administration at Western Connecticut State University, owns Goose Rocks Lighthouse off the island of North Haven, Maine. "I'm not what you'd call a lighthouse expert, but I got the appeal of it," says Jordan. "Historic preservation is a labor of love."

Jordan acquired her island lighthouse in a sealed-bid auction in July 2006 and has been pouring time, money and resources into renovating it. "I've been involved in historic preservation since I was 25 years old, when I bought a 23-room mansion in upstate New York," she says. "It is always a challenge to get

See Lighthouses, next page

The Coast Guard this summer teamed up with local archaeologists at Minot's Ledge Lighthouse off Cohasset, Mass., to dive into history.

Under the stone tower that stands today lies what Victor Mastone, director and chief archaeologist of the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management, hopes to find: the remnants of the original lighthouse that stood there 156 years ago. "Our purpose of the dive[s] at Minot's Ledge was to actually identify the remains of the 1850 lighthouse and develop data with long-term goals," says Mastone. While the existing lighthouse has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 1987, Mastone would like to see the underwater remains commemorated as well.

Sitting about a mile off Cohasset, Minot's Ledge Lighthouse marks a hazardous area known as Cohasset Rocks. The Boston Marine Society repeatedly petitioned Congress for a lighthouse between 1839 and 1841 after more than 40 vessels had been lost on the ledge, according to a history compiled by Jeremy D'Entremont, author of the "Lighthouse Treasury" series. In March 1847 Congress approved a \$20,000 appropriation for a lighthouse and eventually set aside an extra \$19,500 for completion.

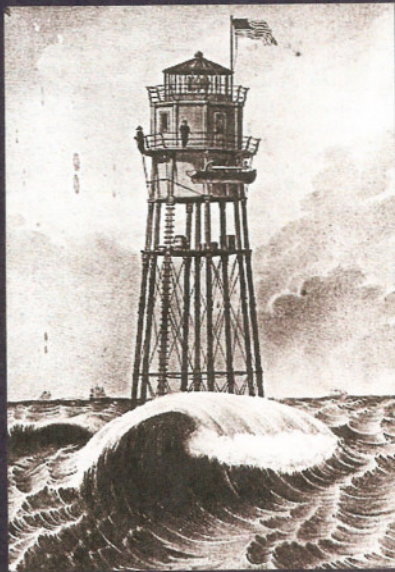
Capt. William H. Swift was commissioned to build the lighthouse, and he approved an iron pile structure with legs drilled into the rock. His theory was that the structure would be more secure if waves passed through it rather than slamming against it. Congress supported the project because it would have been much more costly to build a stone tower on the shallow ledge. It was lighted for the first time Jan. 1, 1850. Shortly thereafter came reports from keepers that the structure was unsteady, swaying 2 feet in each direction during a storm.

The warnings should have been heeded. In April 1851 a storm ravaged coastal New England, and sometime during the three-day storm, the lighthouse tumbled into the sea. "It was a three- to four-day storm, and Boston became an island for a while," says William Thiesen, the Coast Guard's Atlantic Area Historian. "It was tragic because two of the lightkeepers [Joseph Wilson and Joseph Aintone] died going down with the structure."

From 1851 to 1860 a lightship served as a replacement, and July 9, 1857, the first granite block was laid for the present tower, which was completed in 1860 and illuminated for the first time Nov. 15 of that year. It is still owned by the Coast Guard.

The Coast Guard divers were unable to locate any part of the original lighthouse on their first series of dives, from June 17 to 22. "They were able to get some experience, and we also honored the loss of the two lightkeepers, who were killed doing their duty, by placing an underwater memorial marker near the site," says Thiesen. "It was a good learning experience, and everyone has been dedicated to the process."

See Minot's Ledge, next page



The original Minot's Ledge Lighthouse collapsed a little more than a year after it was first lighted, killing two keepers. The divers this summer paid respect to the two men by placing an underwater marker at the site. Like the first beacon, the present tower marks an area known as Cohasset Rocks.



A simple twist of fate

John Eraklis was the proud owner of a 1967 37-foot Egg Harbor that he kept at Marina del Rey, Calif. His wife, who was expecting their first child, was having a baby shower with her girlfriends, and John and a buddy decided it was the perfect time for a fishing trip to Catalina Island.

The two spent the day fishing on the way over. As night fell, they throttled up to make it to the harbor before dark. A little after 8 p.m. there was a terrific impact, so strong that John's friend fell off his seat on the flybridge and down about 8 feet to the deck. Terrified that his friend had been severely injured, John stopped the boat and went to check on him. He was unconscious, but there was no blood, which he figured was a good sign.

As his friend started to regain consciousness, John managed to get him to the couch below deck. Visibility in the cabin was limited, and John went back to the bridge. About five minutes later his friend yelled, "John, there's a lot of water down here."

Just as John went below to investigate, the bilge hatches burst open with the force of a water cannon. It was clear they were going to sink — and fast. John called in a mayday, and the first question was their location. The VHF was at the lower helm station and the GPS on the bridge, so John ran up to the flybridge and yelled the coordinates to his friend to give the Coast Guard.

It was then time to abandon ship. They donned their life jackets and sat on the

gunwales as the boat slipped out from under them on a moonless night. John managed to get off a flare just as the boat went down, and they were left in the dark water, hoping to be rescued before hypothermia set in. As it turns out, it was the flare that saved them, as John's friend, disoriented with a concussion and unfamiliar with GPS, had relayed the wrong coordinates. (They later learned that they'd struck a submerged shipping container, which tend to float just below the surface and are invisible to a helmsman.)

John had put on his PFD over a large hooded sweatshirt. Once in the choppy water it acted almost like a sea anchor, the hood filling with water and pulling his head back every time a wave broke over them. Finally, after around 30 minutes — which seemed more like hours — a sailboat that had seen the flare arrived to help. John's friend was quickly plucked from the water,

but John was too weak to swim to the boat. At that moment a lifeguard boat arrived. Thinking both men had been rescued, the crew almost ran over John before the sailboat could radio that he was still in the water, at which point they circled back and picked him up.

Back at the lifeguard station on Catalina, they were given hot showers, dry clothes and dinner. The lifeguards filled air mattresses and let them sleep on the floor of the station. John and his friend promised not to tell their wives anything until they were standing in front of them. The next morning they awoke to find that the ferry to the mainland was out of commission, so they split the cost of a helicopter trip. As they boarded, the pilot remarked, "You guys are in for a treat. We've been spotting some monster sharks from up here." John and his friend could only laugh nervously.

— Jennifer Rahel Conover

LIGHTHOUSES *from previous page*

buildings to be historically accurate but update them for modern living."

Jordan says the suggested bid for Goose Rocks Lighthouse was \$45,000; she bid \$23,000. She also had bid on Hog Island Shoal Lighthouse, but when the bidding passed \$100,000, she says it moved way out of her league. "That sealed my fate because we could never go near that, and I don't think it's worth that," she says. "[However] I thought that my bid for Goose Rocks was so cheap, I'd never win."

Jordan says the bidding process for these lighthouses differs from typical auctions because the GSA reserves the right to reject the highest bid if it isn't close enough to lighthouse's appraised value. "I believe that \$30,000 to \$35,000 was the GSA's target amount on Goose Rocks," she says. "However, I argued that the additional expense of the remote location [11 miles

from the mainland] would require so much more time, effort, coordination and transportation costs that I would split the difference with the GSA and up my price to \$27,000. The GSA accepted that amount, based on the logic of the remoteness of the location."

And remote it is. In order to make repairs, Jordan has to load materials onto a truck and then take a ferry to the island. From there, the materials are taken out to the lighthouse in a small boat and hoisted up. "If a saw blade breaks, the nearest replacement is a day away," says Jordan. "Because we are so far from the mainland, we got a generator for our power tools. We've done new flooring and trim. We are also in the works of obtaining lead-encapsulating paint. Even though we have no proof of lead it's good to take precautions."

Though the light, fog signal and horn on Goose Rocks are run on solar receptors provided and maintained by the Coast Guard, Jordan says the power system for the facility is completely separate.

She has handed over her lighthouse to Beacon Preservation, a non-profit agency she spearheaded to help ensure that historic light stations don't disappear into the past. She hopes to finish the renovations and open Goose Rocks to the public in spring 2008. "I think lighthouses represent a very romantic time in our history," says Jordan. "When I am up on the beacon deck and can see 360 degrees — the pines, cliffs at 60 feet up — it's a feeling I cannot describe. There's a freedom, a hopefulness, and it makes me giddy like a child. They are very important, and I hope my non-profit can help preserve these valuable pieces of our past."

For more information on available lighthouses, visit propertydisposal.gsa.gov and click on "Lighthouse Program." For more information on the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act, visit www.nps.gov and enter "National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act" in the search window. ■



MINOT'S LEDGE *from previous page*

On Aug. 30 Mastone and Coast Guard teams from Massachusetts and New York met at the site to try their luck again and may have struck historical gold. "We found some pipe down in the area, and based on the descriptions of the joint structures we feel pretty confident it was part of the original metal structure of the old lighthouse," says Mastone. "It was found on the last dive of the day."

Mastone says the group was broken into two teams that each did 12 dives on the ledge. "They all had a good interest in artifacts, and their skills were very useful," says Mastone. "We covered a lot of ground."

When the dives were completed, Mastone was encouraged by the find. "We have to get it tested, but we're really excited we finally found something," he says. "The Coast Guard enjoys it because it is something different they [the divers] can participate in to hone their skills, and I get the byproduct of that." ■

The Coast Guard performed two series of dives on the site and found what is believed to be part of the original structure during the second.