

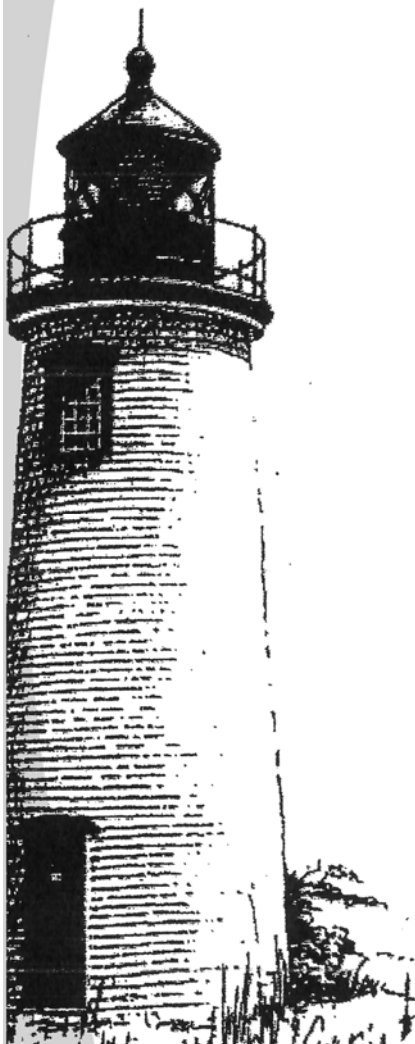
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Newsletter assembled by the
Friends of the Plum Island Light
PO Box 381
Newburyport, MA 01950

Contact the Friends by email:
friendsofpilight@aol.com

By phone:
603-672-5379 (John Vogl)
978-462-4593 (Roslin Esposito)



Friends of the Plum Island Light Spring, 2018 Newsletter

Friends hear tales of Haunted Lighthouses

It was a dark and stormy night... at least that's how they say all good ghost stories begin.

Last October, the Friends were privileged to host Elinor DeWire, author, educator and Board Member of the US Lighthouse Association deliver a presentation on Haunted Lighthouses at their annual meeting. The talk featured a slide presentation with stunning photography of lighthouses, scenery and history.

Elinor's presentation was as captivating as the visuals. It was as if your favorite teacher was telling stories of their favorite subject. Elinor's fascinating and lively talk blended history, reality and little bit of legend. For those of you who missed it, she had some great stories to tell. The following are some notes from the talk.

For many reasons, Lighthouses are a natural and apropos setting for ghost stories. The unique settings and circumstances the lights were designed for lend themselves to an unusual backdrop for spooky legends. Lighthouses exist at the edge of the world, usually distant from settled places, on rocky, treacherous waters. They are built to light in stormy weather. They have witnessed all the sea can throw at us including shipwrecks and drownings. They are mys-

terious, dark, hollow towers with a "Cyclopean" light that penetrates for miles. They work unceasingly when others would retreat for cover. In many ways, Lighthouses invite hauntings and ghost stories.

One story concerned the Yaquina Bay Lighthouse in Newport, Oregon. This is a decommissioned light that had fallen into disrepair in late 1800's. Legend tells of teenagers who trespassed into the tower one night. As they left, one of the teens – Muriel – turned around and returned to the light. The remaining group later heard screams. They looked for Muriel but found only a pool of blood. 100+ years later, the stain remains.

Another story is the tale of Ernie, the ghost of New London Ledge Light in Groton, Connecticut. Legend says he can be

experienced as unexplained whispers in the night, cold spots, doors opening and closing, televisions turning on and off, and linens and sheets disappearing. "Ernie" was a former keeper who had leapt from the top of the tower upon learning of his wife's infidelity.

Less destructive perhaps is the story of the Fairport Harbor Light on Lake Erie in Ohio, which features a ghost cat! To this day, visitors report seeing a ghostly kitten wandering, playing in the halls of the tower and museum/residence. A museum exhibit on site displays the remains of a cat that was walled in during tower repairs. The cat was said to be the companion of ailing keepers and suffered an untimely and accidental death. It is possible the cat's spirit continues to play there today!

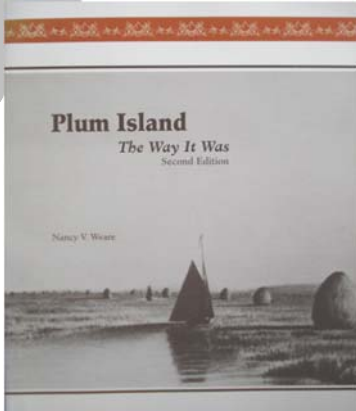
Despite the stories, there are many reasons for the mysterious creaks and groans inside a lighthouse, including the normal expansion/cooling of metal staircases during changing temperatures.

The Friends hold their Annual Meeting in the Fall and feature guest speakers of interest to the membership. All are welcome. *The 2018 Meeting will be Sept 19th, 7:30 PM at PITA Hall.*



Elinor DeWire

In Memorium



The Friends are mourning the loss of long-time Newburyporter Nancy Weare. Nancy was a steadfast fan and promoter of Plum Island and a generous supporter of the Light. She will be recognized for her work as author of *“Plum Island, the Way it Was”*. She leaves a legacy of support for historic preservation and education. She was a dear friend to all of us and will surely be missed.

Maintenance Activities

Like any old house on the Island, the lighthouse tower needs constant attention. In 2017, the Friends were awarded Communi-

ty Preservation funds from the City of Newburyport for a project to paint the Lighthouse and replace 2 windows. The intent was to provide for timely routine maintenance and stave off future costly repairs. The Friends were awarded up to \$12,000, (including a 20% match).

The Friends chose local contractor 2Penn, LLC to carry out the work. Both projects were completed by May of 2017; both on time and under budget. As a result, the Friends were able to successfully complete the work and return allocated funds to be redistributed to other needy projects through the CPA program.

Over the winter, Board Members Bill Cooper and Steve Atherton started a project to mitigate rust that had formed on the upper deck’s post and railing system. Steel cables that form safety rails are presently installed through drilled holes in the vertical posts. Through the years, this has allowed water to enter the posts and cause rusting. The members presented a solution to relocate cabling to the outside of the posts and clean, seal, prime and paint all exposed areas. Their design also provides additional cabling closer to the deck to close an excessive gap and improve public safety on the deck.

Both improvements will help extend the life of the tower for many years to come!

2018 Open House Schedule

For 2018, the Friends have opted for a new, regular schedule of openings. The new calendar better utilizes active volunteers and follows a regular schedule of opening every third Sunday of the summer months. The exception is a 2nd September opening for Sails and Trails.

May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Sep
20	17	15	19	16	30

Tours are from 1 to 4 pm

MEMORIAL BRICK ORDER FORM

Honor the memory of a loved one, celebrate the birth of someone special, commemorate even yourself - the possibilities are vast. Memorial gift cards are available. Due the size of the brick, the inscription may only contain up to 3 lines with a maximum of 14 letters. Nick names and cottage names are fine.

To order, fill out coupon below. Please print clearly. Enclose your check or money order in the amount of \$50 and mail to:

Friends of Plum Island Light, P.O. Box 381, Newburyport, MA 01950

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