



## FIRST ANNUAL NEWSLETTER TO FRIENDS OF THE SWAN'S ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE

December 2005

This letter is to give Friends of the Lighthouse an update on plans and progress in restoring the Burnt Coat Harbor Light Station and particularly, the keeper's house, plus some information about financial reporting and future needs.

*Why are we doing this?* Every Friend of the Lighthouse is important, and all the assistance you have given is deeply appreciated. The lighthouse is on the National Historic Register, and restoration will be a careful, long term process – at least 3-4 years. Once restoration is completed, all the buildings will need to be maintained. In short, the Swans Island Lighthouse (actually officially the Burnt Coat Harbor Light Station), will always need friends,

even long after we are gone. We want to maintain and grow a network of friends and make sure it has longevity. We hope that this letter will encourage your continued support and will help you find more friends for the lighthouse. Please pass this letter around to others.

**WHO IS A FRIEND?:** Anyone who contributed to the Roberta Joyce Memorial Lighthouse Fund or supported restoration in other ways. If you wish to be taken off this list, just let us know. If you received this letter by mail and are willing to save us paper and postage and be kept up to date by e-mail, we would appreciate your sending us your e-mail address. Send it to [burntcoatlight@aol.com](mailto:burntcoatlight@aol.com).

Also, later on, we will publish this newsletter and some additional lighthouse information on the Town website, [www.swansisland.org](http://www.swansisland.org).

### UPDATE ON PLANS AND PROGRESS

*A little recent history.* Most of you know about the work done over the last 10 years: the International Masonry Institute did considerable repointing on the lighthouse tower and keeper's house; the badly deteriorated keeper's house front porch, bellhouse ramp and bellhouse underwent extensive carpentry and painting repairs; and, in 2002 the Town received a \$15,000 grant from the Virginia Wellington Cabot Foundation to launch historical restoration planning for the keeper's house. Now there is an architectural study and plan for exterior restoration approved by the State of Maine Office of Historic Preservation. This plan, including detailed specifications, covers roofing, chimney and foundation repair, re-nailing and recaulking clapboards, restoring all windows, and repainting. There doubtless will be other problems discovered along the way. We already know of some rotted sills on the weather side.

*Progress during 2005 – Work on the Roof.* Mark Stanley was competitively awarded the roofing and chimney rebuilding job. It turns out that the supplier will guarantee the prescribed Hatteras Red roof shingles only if the shingles are secured to 6 inch roofing boards, so extensive reboarding of the roof must be done. To seal the house for the winter, Mark tarped over the roof. Shingling will be done in the spring as soon as it is warm enough for the shingles to seal properly.

*Sealing the Structure.* In addition, all missing doors and windows for the keeper's house and bell house have been boarded up to fully seal both structures. There were holes in two of the light tower windows (vandalism) and these windows have been replaced now by the Coast Guard. (The Coast Guard has responsibility for the navigational aid, including the light system and

windows but the town has responsibility for all structures, including the tower.) We are keeping the Coast Guard apprised of progress and news so they know that their light is not part of an otherwise neglected structure. The Commandant at the SW Harbor station has expressed an interest in being helpful.

*Next Steps.* After the work on the roof and chimney, the next steps will be repair of sills, restoration of windows and doors, and prepping and painting of the exterior. The Lighthouse Committee expects to contract for some of this work over summer 2006, providing funds are available (see below).

*Summer Events.* Highlights of Summer 2005:

- Two lighthouse benefit concerts were held over the summer – one on the July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend by David Dodson with Doug Day, one by Broadway Show and now Country star, Katy Blake, with Silverado Special and John Follis. To see pics of this packed house concert, and of the local artists, visit Katy's web site at [www.katyblake.com](http://www.katyblake.com) and click on Photos.
- Two special events were held at the lighthouse (one in July, one in August) to introduce potential supporters to the restoration project so that they could explore the needs and potential first hand. Many useful ideas came out of these meetings, some of which have already been initiated, including this letter.
- The town selectmen agreed on future uses of the keeper's house – general community use and functions downstairs with upstairs available for artists and writers (user fee basis). They authorized the Lighthouse Committee to prepare grant applications on behalf of the town for the restoration work. A scope of work for the interior design work is in preparation.
- Annette Joyce joined the Lighthouse Committee and we look forward to her energy and ideas providing a boost in the coming year, including her idea for concerts on the lighthouse lawn.

In addition, an attractive sign (by Mohr Signs in Trenton) for Burnt Coat Harbor Light Station will be delivered in early spring and placed at the beginning of the town land on which the lighthouse is located (in the valley).

Eric and Fran Chetwynd attended the Lighthouse Preservation and Restoration Conference October 29<sup>th</sup> in Rockland at the Maine Lighthouse Museum. They picked up many practical tips on restoration, funding and grants. Because our lighthouse is on an island, some of the big fundraisers for mainland lighthouses (for instance, lots of bus tours) are not practical for us. Their conference notes will be on the Town web site ([www.swansisland.org/lighthouse.htm](http://www.swansisland.org/lighthouse.htm)).



Photo by Donna Wiegler

## UNDERSTANDING THE FINANCIAL NEEDS

*Task # 1.* Presently, the financial focus is on getting the keeper's house restored and doing so in compliance with the rules and guidelines for historical preservation. The roof and chimney work will use about half or more of what is now in the lighthouse account (see below).

*Cost of External Repairs.* After the roof and chimney work, we estimate we will need around \$73,000 for the other external repairs and restorations, though we are prepared to be pleasantly surprised. To reach this figure, we started with estimates from the original 2002 architect's report (by Roc Caivano, Architect, of Bar Harbor), which included estimates for carpentry, windows, painting and miscellaneous repairs. We added a 20% inflation factor as suggested by the architect this year. We will contract for this work as funds become available through contributions from friends such as yourselves, and through grants we are able to obtain.

## FINANCIAL REPORTING

The Lighthouse Account is managed by the Town Selectmen and Treasurer and is subject to an annual audit. A regular report is included in each year's Town Report. The Town provides funds for regular routine maintenance such as lawn mowing, brush removal and electricity. Funds for restoration **do not** come out of the town budget from tax resources, but are built up through contributions of Friends of the Lighthouse and from grants. Currently, this account has a balance of \$37,000, including contributions this year and last from 150 Friends of the Lighthouse such as yourselves. This account will be partially drawn down by the roofing and chimney work this spring, but hopefully will be built back up through grants and individual contributions so that we can get on with the rest of the work, like windows and painting.

We welcome your contributions to the restoration account and also any thoughts you might have on grant possibilities and other funding sources. Grant applications will be underway this winter and we expect that about one third to one half of the cost of renovation will be covered by grants. The very fact that we have such a large group of "Friends of the Lighthouse" who contribute from their own resources is a point in our favor in the world of grants.

## IDEAS TO DATE AND ASSISTANCE NEEDED

Like any historic enterprise the Lighthouse will need volunteers to make it a going concern and to help raise money on a regular basis for routine maintenance. The Lighthouse Committee has received many suggestions for ways to make this happen. However, every good idea that deserves pursuing requires one or more volunteers to make it work.

For instance, we need energetic people to help with clean-up days at the keeper's house and on the trails around Hockamock Head. Attention artists and performers – how about organizing events for children and/or adults that will bring attention to lighthouse issues while adding to the renovation fund? (Now is the time to plan these programs for summer 2006.) No need to wait for summer. Keep Swans Island in your thoughts this winter by helping the Lighthouse Committee follow up on leads for historic preservation grants, or by doing some research on the history of "our" light station. If you even think you might be interested in any of these possibilities, contact us at [burntcoatlight@aol.com](mailto:burntcoatlight@aol.com). The Committee will help you get started.

Last of all – you knew this was coming – the EASIEST way to contribute to lighthouse renovation is to WRITE A CHECK to the ROBERTA JOYCE MEM. LIGHTHOUSE FUND, and send it to TOWN OF SWANS ISLAND, SWANS ISLAND ME 04685. The suggested contribution for an annual membership in Friends of the Swans Island Lighthouse is \$50 (all tax

deductible), but as you can see from the needs set out above, larger contributions would be very helpful and smaller ones happily accepted.

Restoration and preservation of the keeper's house and ultimately also the light tower and grounds require both money and volunteers. But, once the buildings are preserved and a scheduled maintenance plan is in place, the community and visitors to the island will have a treasured resource in which we all can take pride and pleasure. Also, we can know we are passing on something very worth while to future generations.

Happy Holidays and Best Wishes for 2006.

SWANS ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE COMMITTEE

John Bryan and Debbie Staples

Co-Chairpersons

