This issue is dedicated to the Drum Point Lighthouse Restoration. To all who have helped in this project, the Museum extends its warmest appreciation for a job “Well Done.” The Calvert Marine Museum has taken a giant step forward in completion of this restoration. All Museum members, friends, staff, and Calvert Countians should be proud. What follows is a history of the light.

A History of DRUM POINT LIGHTHOUSE

A Drum Point light was first proposed in 1853, more than 30 years before it was built, to replace a single red buoy which marked the river entrance. The light was requested as vessels of all classes took advantage of the Drum Point lee, and in thick weather several were grounded on the spit making off from the point.

An Act of the Maryland Legislature, approved March 3, 1853, ceded jurisdiction over the site to the United States, and an Act of Congress, dated August 3, 1854, authorized $5,000 for the project. In 1882 an appropriation was made for the establishment of two range lights at the mouth of the Patuxent River; however, the amount allocated was so small the Lighthouse Board decided to build only one.

Erection of the lighthouse at the site commenced July 17, 1883. By the 24th of July, the seven screw-piles were in position and work on the wooden superstructure had begun. By mid-August the cottage was finished, and only a small crew remained to complete the painting. As most of the building components had been prefabricated and the location was in relatively sheltered shallow water, construction took only 33 days and cost $5,000. The lighthouse was commissioned and its light first lit on August 20, 1883.

The first keeper of Drum Point Lighthouse was Benjamin Gray. James Lock Weems was assistant keeper from 1887 to 1890 and acting keeper from 1891 to 1918. Descendants of both men reside in Calvert County today. Each of these men was paid $575 annually for his services. By 1938 the keeper earned $1,740 yearly. In addition to salary, the keepers were annually issued staples such as pork, beef, flour, coffee, and brown sugar. Keepers were required to keep the station clean and record the weather and their daily activities. The oil lamps had to be filled, wicks trimmed, and the lens cleaned and polished daily.

Lighthouse keeping at Drum Point had its disadvantages. Only a privy, built over the water, was available for sanitary facilities. Rain water was piped from the gutter and downspouts to four 200-gallon water tanks inside the cottage. Frequent washing of seagull droppings from the roof was necessary to assure a clean water supply. Ice and fire posed a constant threat as evidenced by the destruction of several Bay lighthouses. Storms were also a continual worry. A letter from
keeper J. J. Daley, dated August 24, 1933, tells how a storm on the previous day sank his motorboat, washed away his skiff and the weather instruments, and flooded the rooms on the lower floor, which were 16 feet above mean high water level. He had to swim to shore.

Not all conveniences were unavailable, however. In 1919 the keeper requested a telephone for government business. In 1923 his request was granted, stating the telephone was to be listed under Drum Point Light Station and not under the name of the keeper. Isolation was not the usual problem for the keepers, as Solomons Island was only two nautical miles away, an easy row for a waterman in those days. Families were allowed to live with the keepers to help fight loneliness and monotony. On August 13, 1906, Anna Weems Ewalt was born in the Drum Point Lighthouse.

The List of Lights, Fog Signals, etc., 1892, described the Drum Point light as ... “North side of entrance to Patuxent River, S. of Drum Point, MD. White hexagonal screw-pile structure; piles and roof, brown; lantern, black. Built in 1883.

Light, 4th-order, fixed red. Bell struck by machinery, a double-blow every 15 sec. Stands in 3 feet at mean low water. Bay light, and marks the entrance to Patuxent River. Vessels drawing 20 feet can run to within 120 feet of the SW, side of light.”

The two-story hexagonal cottage portion of the light station is solidly built with mortise and tenon joints and sheathed with weatherboards. There is an unroofed open gallery encircling the lower story of the structure. The first floor is divided into four equal sized rooms: kitchen, dining room, living room and bedroom. The second floor consists of two rooms, the bell room where the kerosene was kept and a second bedroom. On top is a cupola containing the lens, surrounded by a second, smaller open gallery.

Allentown Rolling Mills of Philadelphia furnished the metalwork for the lighthouse. The bell weighs 1,400 pounds and has the following inscription: “McShane Bell Foundry, Henry McShane and Co., Baltimore, Maryland, 1880.” A weight-driven mechanical bell striker is located in the bell room on the second floor. A chain passes through two holes in the floor to the weight closet below on the first floor. It takes six hundred pounds of weight to drive the 30-pound striker hammer. In foggy weather, the weights had to be wound by hand every two hours, day and night.

The lens is a fourth-order prism, unusual in that only 270° of arc is present, the remaining 90° section is open to the landward side. It is a fixed light or non-rotating type. Originally the entire light was colored red by a red chimney, however, sometime before 1932 the red chimney was replaced with a white chimney and three sheets of ruby red glass were attached to the cupula. This modification created three red sectors from 204° to 239°, 274° to 10°, and 74° to 97°, separated by white sectors. A mariner could then easily navigate into the mouth of the Patuxent River by staying in the white sectors, regardless of his approach from the Bay.

The maker of the lens was Henry LePaute of Paris, France; the year is unknown. Augustin Fresnel, a French physicist, invented the lens which featured a unique prism and a powerful magnifier. The Fresnel lens is the single most outstanding contribution in the design of lighthouse optics. Used throughout the world, many are still in service. The focal plane of the light is 45½ feet above mean high water which could be seen, from the deck of a vessel 15 feet above the sea, 13 nautical miles in clear weather.

In 1932 the illuminant for the light was changed from oil to incandescent oil vapor, increasing the candlepower from 490 to 680 for the white sectors, and from 150 to 200 for the red. The light was changed to electrical power on August 5, 1944, easing the job of the lighthouse keeper tremendously.

### DRUM POINT LIGHTHOUSE HISTORICAL CHRONOLOGY

**1853, March 3** – Act of Maryland Legislature ceded jurisdiction of site to the United States for location of Drum Point Light Station.

**1854, August 3** – Act of Congress authorized $5,000 for project.

**1882, August 7** – Act of Congress authorized $25,000 for the building of two range lights at the mouth of the...
Patuxent River. The Lighthouse Board felt there was no need for two range lights and decided to construct one screw-pile light.

1883, JULY 17 — Construction of light station.

1883, AUGUST 20 — Light station commissioned with fixed red beacon.

1899 — New model fourth-order lamps installed.

1900 — Fuel and supply platform built under the dwelling.

1909, AUGUST 1 — Sometime prior to this date the light was changed from a fixed red to a fixed white light with three red sectors.

1923, MARCH 5 — Bureau of Lighthouses approves installation of telephone.

1932, AUGUST 1 — Office of Superintendent of Lighthouses approved change of illuminant from oil to incandescent oil vapor which increased the light's visibility.

1933, AUGUST 24 — Storm isolates keeper, destroys lighthouse boat, provisions, and weather instruments.

1939 — United States Coast Guard takes over all light stations.

1962 — Drum Point Light Station decommissioned and replaced with automated beacon.


1975, MARCH 22 — Drum Point Lighthouse moved to Calvert Marine Museum waterfront.

1976, FEBRUARY 24 — Drum Point Lighthouse designated a Calvert County Historic District.

1978, JUNE 24 — Official dedication of a restored Drum Point Lighthouse.

Drum Point Lighthouse was operated by the United States Lighthouse Service, Department of Commerce, until 1939 when the United States Coast Guard took over. In 1962 the Coast Guard replaced it with an automated beacon-type light and deeded the structure and property back to the State of Maryland in accordance with Sec. 4 of the Act of 1883. Today only 32 lighthouses remain out of 74 that once dotted the Chesapeake Bay. Three are still manned by the U.S. Coast Guard, two are owned by museums, two are privately owned, and the remainder, for the most part, are abandoned and in ruin. Restoration of the Drum Point Lighthouse at the Calvert Marine Museum is an effort to preserve a part of this fast-disappearing era.

**ACQUISITIONS**

CHARLES BUDDENHAGEN. Paleontology library (over 300 books).

RALPH T. WARD. Books.

RANDOLPH W. CHALFANT. Books.

5th COAST GUARD DISTRICT. Cove Point Lighthouse clock radio beacons.

ALTHEA MCKENNEY. American Flag.

MIKE BASHAM. Barometer.

STEVE & JOAN SIMKO. Folder of prints by Melbourne Smith.

ANNA W. EWALT. Navigation books, lifesaving with fancy ropework.

PETRINI SHIPYARD. 300 ft. of Chinese linen rope.

JOHN SANDS. c.1939 Elto outboard engine.

BETTY C. BUNCH. Line drawing of German ships at Solomons, WWI.

BEULAH VAILLANCOURT. Watercolor of James Aubrey (boat).

NORMAN C. EVANS. Cabinet maker’s rabbit plane.

BALTIMORE GAS & ELECTRIC. Photos of donated exhibits being dismantled.

DAVID HARPER. Photo and story of USS Missouri, WWI.

GORMAN BUCKLER. Two windlass from M. M. Davis & Son Shipyard.

WTOP TV-9. Video tape by Andrea Mitchell of Mr. Leon Langley and story of Solomons Ferry Service to Patuxent River Naval Air Station.

**ACQUISITIONS**

For the Drum Point Lighthouse

RUTH CHURCHMAN. Blue spatterware coffee pot.

DOROTHY OURSLER. Picture, doilies, cup.

ROBERT CHEEL. Print “Sailor’s First Love,” two hand-carved wooden boxes.

NORMAN LOWRY. Vintage milk bottles.

STANLEY CLABAUGH. Nickel lamp.

ROBERT SWIFT. Bible c. 1900.

**ACQUISITIONS**

Intra-Museums Loans

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION. Loan of six superb Chesapeake Bay boat models to CMM.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE. Loan of two British cannons (c. 1814) for future Patuxent River Naval History exhibit to CMM.
SUMMER CALENDAR AND PROGRAM SCHEDULE

* All tours/trips/instructions require reservations. 326-4162.
* Programs begin 7:45 p.m. at the Museum — unless otherwise noted.
* Programs are free to Museum members and $1.00 to non-members unless otherwise noted.

JULY
Chesapeake Bay Cruises on Lady Katie (last working skipjack built). Space limited. Reservations required.
- July 1-2 Overnight $75.00
- July 3 Day trip (8 hrs.) $30.00
- July 4-7 Four day cruise $150.00
- July 8-9 Overnight $75.00

JULY 5 thru AUGUST 23.
- Each Wednesday, 10:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. For kids 6 to 60. Enjoy a movie plus day trips including fossil hunting, marsh exploring and other different as well as interesting activities.
- For young children — "hands-on" learning experiences and "do-it-yourself" projects.
- For youth and adults — opportunities to learn skills (nautical knots, crab and eel pot making, small craft handling, model making, plus others).

AUGUST
- 9 “Fun and Games on the Potomac.” A slide lecture by Fred Tilp, Potomac River historian and author.

SEPTEMBER
- 12 D & E Lab “Fossils and Past Life.” Saturday fossil collecting field trip for grades 5 thru 7. Reservations required.
- 30 “Waterfowl at the National Zoo.” Tour led by Sally Tongren of the waterfowl exhibits and habitats plus a behind the scene look at the operation. Bring your lunch or buy lunch at the zoo.
  - Members: $4.75 round trip (including bus fare).
  - Non-members: $6.00 round trip (including bus fare).

SPECIAL RECOGNITION
ROBERT BOWERS. Repairing air conditioning units.
HAMMETT ELECTRIC. Hooking-up attic fans.
BEDFORD C. GLASCOCK. Donation of property adjacent to CMM.

Calvert Marine Museum Membership Application

MEMBERSHIP IS FOR ONE YEAR

☐ $5.00 Individual
☐ $7.50 Family
☐ $50.00 Supporting ☐ $100.00 Sustain
☐ $250.00 Student ☐ $500.00 Patron**
     (under 25 years old) ☐ $1,000.00 Benefactor**

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