Southern Maryland: A Wealth of Lightouses

By Richard J. Dodds, Curator of Maritime History

Perhaps nowhere else on the Chesapeake Bay is there such a concentration of surviving historic lighthouses within an hour's driving distance. There is, of course, the museum's 1883 Drum Point Lighthouse, now joined by the recently acquired Cove Point Lighthouse of 1828. In St. Mary's County there is the 1836 Piney Point Lighthouse, operated by St. Clement's Island-Potomac River Museum. Now, with the announcement earlier this year that the state of Maryland has approved $450,000 to purchase the Point Lookout Lighthouse from the U. S. Navy, this unique 1830 site will at long last be able to take its place among Southern Maryland's accessible lighthouses.

A fifth lighthouse – Point No Point – stands one-and-a-half nautical miles off the St. Mary's County shoreline, and is still an active aid-to-navigation under the control of the Coast Guard. Taken together, these five survivors represent the three major building styles found on the Chesapeake: the land-based tower, the screwpile, and the iron caisson.

Cove Point, Piney Point, and Point Lookout, while different in many respects, share a similar origin. All three are of the earlier, land-based tower type, constructed by the noted lighthouse builder John Donaho of Havre de Grace (1786-1858). Donaho built twelve of the first seventeen lighthouses in Maryland.

The original keeper's house at all three light stations was a one-and-a-half-story brick dwelling, consisting of four rooms. In the case of Cove Point and Point Lookout the dimensions were identical – twenty feet by thirty-four feet – with attached kitchen wing. Point Lookout is unusual, however, in that an eight-light tower was built on top of the keeper's house, rising sixteen feet above the walls. In contrast, both Cove Point and Piney Point were built with separate masonry towers.

In later years, the keeper's house at all three stations was altered in similar fashion. In 1883-84, each house was heightened to a full two stories, topped by a new metal roof (at Point Lookout this had the effect of shortening the height of the tower). The residences at Cove Point and Point Lookout underwent another similar enlargement in 1925-28 when they were made into two-and-a-half-story duplexes with the addition of a large dormer structure. The exterior walls were stuccoed and a new metal hip roof added (Piney Point never underwent this final alteration). All three lighthouses were equipped with either 4th or 5th order Fresnel lenses.

Located at the sandy spit of land on the north side of the Potomac River where it meets the Chesapeake Bay, Point Lookout Lighthouse is rich in history. From the outset, the Lighthouse Service was forced to pay $1,100 to a recalcitrant land owner for less than four acres described as "a bleak sand point without the least particle of vegetation and utterly useless for any other purpose." By contrast, the properties at Piney Point and Cove Point cost the government $300 each.

In 1862, during the Civil War, Hammond General Hospital was established adjacent to the lighthouse by the Union Army. The following year, the hospital was converted to a prisoner-of-war camp, the Union's largest, accommodating over 52,000 Confederate soldiers by the end of the war. Close to 4,000 prisoners died from starvation and disease.

In 1883 a buoy depot was built next to the light station to handle the navigational requirements of the middle section of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. A large buoy shed and coal shed were built, serviced by a sixty-five-foot wharf (later replaced by a 365-foot wharf in 1890). In the early twentieth century a large hotel was established near the lighthouse. The owners at one time attempted to get the use of the government wharf for landing their excursionists from steamboats.

Other features of Point Lookout of note were the presence in the ranks of keepers of three women, Ann Davis (1830-47), Martha Edwards (1853-55), and Pamela Edwards (1855-69). Ann Davis was the daughter of the first keeper, James Davis, who died after less than a year in office. In 1930, a wind-driven electricity generating plant was added – the first such installation of its kind

Aerial view of Point Lookout light station and buoy depot in 1931. The bell tower at left was moved to the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum in 1968.

U. S. Coast Guard photo
Those of us who go to the Waterside concerts and have a good time do not get the true flavor of what goes on months in advance behind the scenes. To make it all happen seamlessly and to provide a wonderful, entertaining, trouble-free evening, it takes many hundreds of hours of work beforehand.

Work for the typical Memorial Day concert starts in January, produced and run by the Development Department under the leadership of Lee Ann Wright, with her trusted lieutenants Debra Strozier and Vanessa Gill. While development is directly in charge, many other departments of the museum are also involved. For example, they work closely with George "Nicky" Nichols for coordination on grounds issues, and with the Exhibits Department on signage. In January they start the search for a band. The museum's budget for the group is limited, but at the same time, we have been able to attract bands that charge, usually, much more then we can afford. Lee Ann works her magic, first, by trying to find a band that will be in our area and, second, that will be available in our time slot. By finding a band with an off day near Solomons, she has been able to attract name groups for a fraction of their normal price. The process is not easy, and takes months to arrange.

By March, the lead band is usually booked and the final negotiations with their manager begin, hammering out the fine points of the contract to everybody's satisfaction. Show times, accommodations for the band and crew, celebrity photo opportunities, and other matters are difficult to finalize. The concerts provide an excellent source of revenue for the museum that does not come out of taxpayer pockets. To make that money, the museum not only sells tickets, but recruits corporate sponsors, in exchange for advertising. The Waterside Concert Series has been so successful that almost all of the corporate sponsors have remained with the series for years. Also, the series has been so popular that businesses have actually contacted the Development Department in an effort to get on board. Corporate sponsors, however, do not simply hand over their money: they require concessions (such as free advertising) in return, and all the details must be worked out at the same time as the negotiations with the band.

By April, the corporate sponsors are in place, the band's contract is usually finalized, and the remaining details addressed. Spring is a busy period for the museum, with a number of other activities. Nonetheless, Lee Ann's crew finalizes plans with the ground's crew, the publicity contractors, printers, and concessionaires.

If they were busy in April, in May they go into hyper drive. Last minute problems crop up with the band's road crews who may require, among other things, a particular brand of soda (chilled to a particular temperature), a particular brand of paper plates (the size specified), and a particular style of mixed nuts (with all pecans removed) in the dressing room. Ticket sales, announced in the spring Bugeye Times, begin approximately one month in advance to museum members. The series has been so successful that often 80 percent of total tickets will sell out to museum members before they are available to the public. For Travis Tritt, the tickets that were left for the public sold out in nine hours.

In May, all final supplies are ordered and details are worked out with security. Primary security is handled expertly by the Calvert County Sheriff's Department, but a number of other volunteer organizations are involved, such as the Calvert High School Junior ROTC and the Sheriff's Explorers. All security personnel require food and beverages, and the security volunteers require such supplies as T-shirts and flashlights. Ticketing problems become acute when last minute requests from VIPs come in. The week before the concert finds Lee Ann, Debbie, Vanessa, and others working twice their normal hours. On the day of the concert, they arrive as early as 7:00 a.m. and do not leave until everything is cleaned, put away, and the grounds are spotless – usually 2:00 a.m. If any of you have walked by the museum on a Sunday morning after a concert, you may have been amazed to see that it is perfectly clean, put back together, and ready for business.

To the credit of the Development Department, things go so smoothly, everyone has a good time, and money is generated for the museum. The next time you go to a concert, you may be able to appreciate all the hard work that made it possible – thanks to Lee Ann, her staff, museum employees, and, as always, the indispensable volunteers.
TRAVIS TRITT: A Big Hit at Calvert Marine Museum

Not even the misty rain could keep the 4,500 Travis Tritt fans away from his August 31, sold-out performance at the Calvert Marine Museum. Following a quick set from opener Kyle Davis, Travis Tritt hit the stage around 7:00 p.m. Wearing black leather pants and jacket, this long-haired country star won the crowd’s hearts with a two-and-a-half hour set of current hits, classics, and even a few new songs off of his upcoming album, Strong Enough. After a quick break, Travis came back to a roaring applause as he broke off into one of many encores. During the encore set, Travis spoke of the late Waylon Jennings’ impact on his music as he played “Mama, Don’t Let Your Babies Grow Up To Be Cowboys.” Other encores included Lynyrd Skynyrd’s “Sweet Home Alabama,” and songs by Steve Earle and the Georgia Satellites. By the end of the evening, Tritt had proven why he remains a chart-topper, and the Calvert Marine Museum had raised thousands for its programs and exhibits.

The Travis Tritt show was part of the Ralph’s Dodge-Jeep and Cumberland & Erly, LLC, Waterside Music Series 2002. Sponsors for the series include Ralph’s Dodge-Jeep; Cumberland & Erly, LLC; Williams Corporation; Coors, Coors Light, and Killian’s (Bozick Distributors); Dean Lumber & Supply Company; RadioShack- Prince Frederick • Dunkirk • Charlotte Hall; Solomons Landing; Papa John’s Pizza; DM Group; WKIK Country 102.9; Star 98; Mom’s in the Kitchen Catering; Southern Maryland Newspapers; Bay Weekly; Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative; Main Message Center; Comcast; and the Holiday Inn Select Solomons.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

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museum has come out stronger than ever.

Staying on the agenda, Ms. Mihursky introduced the nominated new officers for the executive board. It was unanimously voted that the following would make up the new executive board: Richard Rogers as president, Lee Gandy as vice president, Donna Miller as recording secretary, Debbie Carlson as corresponding secretary, and Maarjia Gandy as treasurer.

Then came my nail-biting moment — closing remarks. How many ways can you say thank you? So in addition to some serious words, I told the crowd “why” we were thanking them for their services. What it all amounts to is that in the fiscal year of 2001–2002, volunteers contributed 17,689.5 hours of service to CMM. I also asked the group of dedicated souls who attended to help increase these hours next year. And I’ll tell you, faithful reader, how you can help us achieve greater numbers as well. If you are already a volunteer, please, please, oh please log your hours. These are extremely valuable when it comes to budgets and funding. If you are not a volunteer, perhaps you should become one. We can use all sorts of different skills, knowledge, and experience, from Ph.D. types to people who just like being around other people. I am hoping, with the help of our volunteer Webmaster, Jim Ward, to keep position openings on our website, as well as on the volunteer bulletin board on the third floor of the exhibit building. And, most importantly, if you have any ideas, questions or concerns, please pull up a chair, grab a cup of coffee, and tell me all about it (well...give me call so I can arrange a time...410-326-2042, ext. 19).

With the close of the meeting, those in attendance had the huge decision of Chardonnay or White Zinfandel. We never really came to a conclusion about which appetizer was the most tasty, and finally resigned ourselves to just enjoying the culinary talents of the executive board who provided the sustenance. That, and just enjoying the company.
"Cradle of Invasion" – 2002

The fourth annual commemoration of the role of the U. S. Naval Amphibious Training Base at Solomons during World War II was the most successful to date. Events took place on Friday, August 9, through Sunday, August 11, at the museum, as well on the Dowell peninsula (site of the base), in Glascoc field across from the museum, and at the fishing pier of the Navy Recreation Center north of the museum. The weekend included the groundbreaking on Friday for a Solomons World War II monument at the end of Dowell peninsula, an impressive welcoming ceremony on Saturday, a 1940s Night Club and Fashion Show, cruises on the Wm. B. Tennison to the base and the landing sites at Cove Point, the encampment at the 1944 USMC “Camp Goldstein,” a simulated landing on the beach at the Navy Recreation Center, and many other activities. There will be another “Cradle of Invasion” program on August 8-10, 2003. 

Friends and relatives of Tage Jensen, Solomons-trained veteran who died during the past year, receive the memorial wreath during the welcoming ceremony. Staff and others sang the Navy Hymn in tribute.

CMM photo by Bob Hall

The welcoming ceremony on Saturday was held on the museum’s west lawn. In the left background is the “USO Booth” that provided information and refreshments to WWII veterans attending the weekend’s events.

CMM photo by Bob Hall

To add to the 1940s flavor of the weekend, the Calvert County Cultural Arts Council sponsored a USO show that featured “Abbott and Costello,” played by Joe Zeigler (left) and Bill Riley (right) of Baltimore.

CMM photo by Bob Hall

Capt. Philip Briscoe VI (at podium), from Little Creek, Virginia, was the keynote speaker at the dedication of the site for the future Solomons World War II monument, and he presented a flag for the memorial when it is completed. Behind him are (left to right) Chaplain Richard Gates of the Patuxent River Naval Air Station, Maryland delegate Anthony O’Donnell, Capt. Dane Swanson, NAS Patuxent River commanding officer, state senator Roy Dyson, and county commissioner David Hale.

CMM photo by Bob Hall

During the reenactment of a typical amphibious landing, held at the Navy Recreation Center’s beach, “marines” disembark from a landing ship.

CMM photo by Bob Hall

A “bar” set up during the 1940s Night Club and Fashion Show in the museum lobby on Friday evening was extremely popular. Bartenders (in foreground) were Tim Scheier, Laura O’Neill, Chris Scheier, and Debbie Carlson.

CMM photo by Bob Hall
SharkFest!
2002

A popular activity at Sharkfest! was the game of "pin the fin on the shark."

CMM photo by Debra Strozier

Many young visitors to Sharkfest! added color to the outline drawings on a four-by-sixteen-foot shark mural prepared by the Exhibits Department. One of the young artists is shown here. Since Sharkfest!, the mural has been mounted on the west exterior wall of the Small Craft shed.

CMM photo by Debra Strozier

Young visitors to Sharkfest! 2002 on July 20 showed their interest in anything relating to these fascinating marine fishes. Scott Werts, paleontology assistant (right), answered numerous questions.

CMM photo by Debra Strozier

NEW PUBLICATION ON POUND NET FISHING IN CALVERT COUNTY

In the spring 2002 issue of the Bugeye Times, the preparation of a new book on pound netting in Calvert County was described. This book - Fishlighters, by Harry C. Knott, a staff member at the Flags Ponds Nature Park - has now been published and is available at several places in the county. Published by the Battle Creek Nature Education Society, in cooperation with the Calvert Marine Museum, the 110-page, illustrated book is available for $8.95 from Battle Creek Cypress Swamp Sanctuary, Flag Ponds Nature Park, and the Calvert Marine Museum Store. Funding for the project was provided by both the Battle Creek Nature Education Society and the Maryland Historical Trust, a division of the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development.

Author Harry Knott presented a copy of his book, Fishlighters, to the museum library. CMM volunteer Sandy Younger, a member of the Woolford family included in the book, attended the presentation. Left to right: Sandy Younger, Harry Knott, Paul Berry (CMM librarian), and Richard Dodds (CMM curator of maritime history).

CMM photo by Bob Hall
in the continental U.S. The lighthouse also has the reputation of being one of the most haunted, although strangely no record of this activity was noted before the light was decommissioned in 1965.

With the building of a new offshore light beacon, the property was turned over to the U.S. Navy on January 11, 1966. It was subsequently leased to the state, which used the keeper's house as a residence for rangers at Point Lookout State Park, or as a rental property. In the 1980s this arrangement ceased when the navy installed tracking and testing equipment, protected by a security fence. In recent years the old keeper's house has been opened annually to the public on the first Saturday in November. In 1996 the exterior was given a much-needed facelift as a Christmas in April project.

The navy, however, is not in the business of operating historic lighthouses, and restoration has not been a priority. The announcement that the state of Maryland is ready to step in as the new custodian can only be good news for lighthouse preservationists. Congressional approval is still required before the navy can sell the land, but the wheels are in motion. A considerable amount of money and effort will be needed before some of its former glory can be brought back. It is possible that the fog bell tower, moved to the Eastern Shore in 1968, may be returned. Whatever develops, the Calvert Marine Museum looks forward to the time when Point Lookout can be added to already existing preserved lighthouses open to the public on a regular basis. Together, Drum Point, Cove Point, Piney Point, and Point Lookout will be a focus for heritage tourism in Southern Maryland. 

The lighthouse, the Union military hospital, and a prisoner-of-war camp occupied the land at Point Lookout during the Civil War. Portion of a lithograph by E. Sachse & Co., in the collections of the Library of Congress.

Point Lookout lighthouse in 1928. Note that the building is larger and is divided into two living units (two doors). There is also a change in the roof and tower from 1885.

U.S. Coast Guard photo

An original drawing of the Point Lookout lighthouse was presented to the museum in 1987 by the commanding officer of the Patau Aer Naval Air Station, Capt. Stuart J. Fitrell (right). Accepting the copy are Ralph Rhedelman, CMM director (center), and Paul Berry, board chair (left).

U.S. Navy photo

Point Lookout lighthouse as it appeared in 1885. Notice the shallow-pitched roof. U.S. Coast Guard photo

Point Lookout light station and buoy depot in 1885. National Archives photo. (Neg. #26-LC-24-8)

Lighthouse keeper Herman Metvier (left), previously (1930-1939) the assistant keeper at Cove Point, assistant keeper Wallace Sturges Sr., and five Coast Guard personnel during World War II. Photo from CMM archives from original loaned by Eunice Metvier Knott

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What's Happening...  
ON-LINE RENEWALS  
www.calvertmarinemuseum.com

The membership office is proud to announce its latest and greatest secure website – online membership renewals and donations!

Save 37 cents and renew your membership online! This new secure encrypted site will allow you to renew your membership by using your Visa or MasterCard. It takes just five minutes, and once you send your renewal, you will receive an immediate response from us confirming receipt of your membership.

In addition to renewals, memorial donations, year-end appeal donations, or any other financial donation can be made to the museum quickly, securely, and easily! Just go to www.calvertmarinemuseum.com and click on membership, then just follow the instructions on that page. It’s as simple as that!

Our next step will be to begin sending out renewal notices online to members who are interested. So if you would like to decrease the amount of mail in your mailbox, and save the museum additional mailing and postage costs, please include your email address in your renewal notice and we’ll soon have the ability to send your renewal notice electronically!

FYI – we don’t sell or share our email addresses; they are for internal use only. So don’t worry about any Spam coming from us.

Members' Yule Party  
Sunday, December 8th

Enjoy an evening at the museum celebrating the holiday season. This traditional event brings families together for an evening of music, food, and celebrating. Santa makes a visit with the kids, local performers tell original holiday stories, and all varieties of finger foods and desserts are served. Please plan to join us for this exciting evening! Your invitation will be mailed in November.

Society Snapshot
Welcome New Members!

The museum welcomed 317 new members last year – but since the start of the new fiscal year in July, the museum has already welcomed 122 new members. Our latest Bugeye Society member is The Ryan Corporation-Dick and Patty Ryan. Welcome!

Please keep in mind, members who upgrade their membership to the $100 Sustaining level (50% tax-deductible) or above receive the book Working the Water, by Paula Johnson, as our gift.

We have been lucky to have twenty-three members decide to upgrade their membership, and they include: Ms. Elma Williams, Andrea, Ms. Ann Barber, John & Kathy Brauner, Mr. & Mrs. Ron Dufresne, Edward & Donna Fay, Mr. & Mrs. Grant Graessle, Ms. June Hall, Mr. & Mrs. Jack Hammett, Mr. & Mrs. Larry Howard, Robert & Jennifer Hupp, Mr. & Mrs. Dallet Jencso, Mr. & Mrs. Tom Kemp, Walter & Shirley Leyland, Mr. Timothy Long, Ms. Doris Matteson, Mr. & Mrs. Robert Moore, Mr. Charles Rosenfield, Dr. & Mrs. David Secor, Ms. Susan Shaw, Mr. & Mrs. Charles Strickland, Mr. & Mrs. Jim Ward, The Watkins Family, Mr. & Mrs. Richard Woodall.

Ticket Sales Record

The summer has been a very busy time for the membership office. We have been enjoying an influx of members due to the recent performance of Travis Tritt. Apparently these and many other members were anxious to reserve their seats at the concert. Nearly 85 percent of our premium seating and 25 percent of our reserved seating was bought by our members. So when tickets went on sale to the general public, we sold out in just two days.

Thanks for your tremendous support of the museum. We hope to keep bringing you performers you enjoy so you can use your membership benefits to the fullest!

If any of your friends were disappointed about not getting a ticket for the concert, remind them that as a member of the museum they can reserve seats before the general public! We issue seats on a first-come, first-served basis, so if you want the closest seat, be sure to watch for your Bugeye Times and fax, mail, or deliver your ticket reservation form as quickly as possible! 🌟

HOLIDAYS IN 2002

Plan now for the annual holiday events in Solomons this coming December. Bring family and friends to the Solomon’s Christmas Walk on Friday evening, December 6, continuing on Saturday into the evening, and on Sunday until 5:00 p.m. Wander from store to store, following the luminaries. There’ll be carolers, Santa will listen to your children’s wish lists, and the museum will host a “Coffee House” on Saturday evening. Meet your neighbors here on Saturday evening before you head out, or return as a final stop for warm drinks and cookies.

The Museum Store will be open each evening during the Christmas Walk, as well as its usual hours of 10:15 to 4:45 each day. The enclosed flyer offers a special gift wrap opportunity, and there will be the traditional 20 percent discount on most items (10 percent on books) during the entire weekend. Take advantage of these special savings! Of course, the store will also be open during the Members’ Yule Party on Sunday, December 8, and your extra discount in the store will still apply that evening.

We hope to see you at the museum this holiday season, and to wish you and your family a safe and prosperous New Year. (Maureen Baughman)
VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

The Volunteer Council Annual Meeting, 2002

By Leslie King, Volunteer Coordinator

Was it the fabulous sausage and cheese balls that Francis Person brought, Debbie Carlson’s decadent desserts, or Robert Pfeifer’s prowess as a bartender that made the Volunteer Council’s annual meeting such a delight? Or perhaps it was the camaraderie between council members and staff? Or maybe, just maybe, it was the thought-out words of those participating in the meeting? But deep in my heart, I know it was the combination of all the above that made this September 10 meeting so meaningful. Call it the right mix of people or the common denominator of similar agendas, the amalgamation of Shirley Mihursky, Richard Rogers, Donna Miller, Debbie Carlson, Maarjia Gandy, and the department liaisons brought the council a most successful year.

After niceties were dispensed with, Richard Rogers (vice president) and Shirley Mihursky (president), presented three awards, reflecting the council’s belief in acknowledging major achievements and loyalty of volunteers who show special dedication to the museum community. The board chose to pay tribute to Paul Adams, Sandy Roberts, and Bill Lake by giving them Exemplary Service Awards, with an accompanying special certificate of appreciation. Unfortunately, Bill Lake was an election judge and could not be present.

Other speakers of the evening included director Doug Alves, president Shirley Mihursky, and Board of Governors liaison Mary Anne Harms. Mr. Alves heartily thanked all volunteers for their commitment to the museum, while Ms. Mihursky spoke of the accomplishments of the council. These included funding very much needed replacement window blinds in the museum lounge, a toaster oven for Scout overnights, supplies for summer camps, a fax machine for the development office, and an audio player system for maritime history for oral history tapes. Mrs. Harms very eloquently discussed the impact of September 11 on the community and how, thanks to the support of volunteers, the

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