

Lighthouse News Line

Lighthouse Dedication Draws Huge Crowd



Neil Hurley, retired U.S. Coast Guard Commander and Historian for the Florida Lighthouse Association, delighted the crowd with facts and anecdotes about the history of the lighthouse. (Photo by Jerry Murphy)
Please see the Photo Gallery for more shots of this historic day.

The Cape St. George Light was officially dedicated on April 4, 2009, in a spectacular ceremony attended by over 400 people. In the crowd were many descendants of former Keepers and Assistant Keepers of the historic lighthouse.

After a week of torrential rains and tornado watches, Saturday dawned sunny and bright.

At 10:00 a.m. alto saxophonist Karl Dappen played a musical prelude as the crowd took their seats. The ceremony began with the Presentation of Colors by the Air Forces Honor Guard from Tyndall Air Force Base, and Boy Scout Troop 22 and Venture Crew 22 of St. George Island.

The National Anthem was sung by Dr. Tamara Marsh, setting up one of the dramatic highlights of the day. A U.S. Coast Guard HU-25 Falcon Jet from Air

Training Center Mobile flew over the lighthouse in tribute to the members of the U.S. Lighthouse Service and U.S. Coast Guard who tended the light from 1833 to 1949. As the jet returned for a second pass, the crowd erupted into cheers and tears. Master of Ceremonies Jim Kemp noted that the Lighthouse Service had become part of the USCG years ago.

Rev. Kay Wheeler, in her invocation, prayed, "Dear Father in Heaven, we ask that this lighthouse may be a symbol of your saving grace and of our commitment to be faithful stewards and caretakers of this pristine place in which we have been given the privilege to live."

Dennis Barnell, President of the St. George Lighthouse Association; Fred Gaske, Director of the Florida Division of Historical Resources; and Lee Edmiston, Director of Coastal & Aquatic Managed Areas for DEP all addressed the crowd.

In his keynote address, retired U.S. Coast Guard Commander and Lighthouse Historian Neil Hurley recounted the history of the lighthouse, saying, "The lighthouse had fallen down before, and parts of it were used, not once, but twice to rebuild the tower. But a small group of your friends and neighbors didn't know that, and it was certainly a very audacious idea to think that a pile, a very big pile, of 150 year-old brick, stone and twisted metal could be put back together again....Partnerships were forged between people and our government to make this happen. In the end, countless people reached out to save the Cape St. George Lighthouse and the result is the beautiful structure that you see before you today."

After a rousing fanfare on French Horns played from the top of the lighthouse by Sivan Adato and Monika Warchol, a letter of congratulations from Gov. Charlie Crist was read by his representative, David Mica. Franklin County Commissioner Pinki Jackel delivered the County's Proclamation declaring April 4 as Cape St. George Light Day.

Then Lighthouse Keeper Stanley Colvin officially dedicated the Cape St. George Light "To the Volunteers and Contributors who Rescued the Light, to the Keepers and Assistant Keepers who Watched Over the Light, and to All Those who Have Been, and Will Be, Guided by the Light."

And so the Cape St. George Light officially resumes the work it did so well for 172 years, and continues to do for the future.