

Lighthouse News Line

The Light Shines Again!



The Cape St. George Light has resumed its original purpose as an aid to navigation.

The Cape St. George Light was lighted at midnight on Saturday, October 31, 2009 for the first time since being decommissioned by the U.S. Coast Guard in 1994.

A crowd of over 100 people braved chilly weather in St. George Lighthouse Park to watch the light come on with the flip of a switch by Lighthouse Keeper Stanley Colvin and Assistant Keeper Jim Dunkin. Champagne toasts of "To the Light!" echoed through the festive crowd.

The USCG has designated the lighthouse a Private Aid to Navigation in its new location at the center of St. George Island. The St. George Lighthouse

Association purchased the VLB-44 LED beacon from Vega Industries Limited in New Zealand, a frequent supplier of optics for the USCG. The 5-tier white VLB-44 has a 13 nautical mile range and will flash for a fraction of a second every six seconds. The light is shielded on the north side to accommodate the concern of the USCG that the beacon could interfere with traffic crossing the bridge to St. George Island. It is estimated that the focal plane of the light at 76 feet is approximately the same height as the "big hump" of the bridge.

The modern optic replaces the third order Fresnel lens which was removed from the lighthouse when it was automated in 1949. While it is thought that the lens was taken to a Coast Guard facility in New Orleans, the current disposition of the Cape St. George lens has yet to be proven. "We hope that one day we will find the magnificent Fresnel lens that once illuminated our lighthouse," said SGLA President Dennis Barnell. "However, it is unlikely that we would ever install it in the lantern room because of its size and value. But it would be a wonderful addition to our Keeper's House Museum," Barnell said.

The small size of the new optic will not interfere with visitors who climb the lighthouse to enjoy the view from the lantern room. Over 17,000 people have climbed the lighthouse since it was reconstructed and opened to the public on December 1, 2008.