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Spring 2015

SGLA Annual Meeting Brings Leadership Changes

St. George Lighthouse Association Vice President Jim Kemp succeeded Dennis Barnell to become the second president in the association's 10+ year history at the Annual Meeting held on April 25.

Dennis was honored as Founder and President from 2004 to 2015 with a plaque that recognizes "his years of service rescuing, rebuilding, and protecting the Cape St. George Light." The plaque hangs on the wall on the ground floor of the lighthouse.



Incoming SGLA President Jim Kemp presents plaque to longtime President Dennis Barnell.

The change in leadership reflects the implementation of a Time Service Limit Plan adopted by the board to create a line of succession from vice-president to president after a two-year term of office. The departing president continues to serve on the board for an additional year as immediate past president.



Also approved by the membership at the Annual Meeting was the nomination of Vito Bell to the position of vice-president.

Stanley Colvin

joined the board as a director to fill the remaining term of Brant Banks.

We thank Dennis for all that he has done and will continue to do for the lighthouse, and hope he enjoys a much-deserved break from presidential responsibilities!

Windows Installed, Lighthouse Painted

Work that started last fall continued this spring, as two lighthouse windows were replaced and the tower received a second coat of paint. The windows were custom-built by island woodworker Paul McBee. They were installed by Todd Griffith; lift driving and painting was done by Dave Armentrout.



Board Approves Purchase of Replica Lens

The hunt for the Cape St. George Light's original third order fixed Fresnel lens, which began soon after the reconstruction of the collapsed lighthouse was initiated almost 10 years ago, has taken a new turn.

The Board of Directors of the St. George Lighthouse Association has voted to direct funds raised for repair of the original lens to the construction of a replica lens to be exhibited in the Lighthouse Museum. Artworks Florida of Kissimmee has been engaged to build the lens, which should be completed early next year. The lens will have acrylic prisms, which are lighter weight and less costly than glass prisms, and have been used in the lenses that Artworks Florida has produced for the Crooked River and Anclote Key Lighthouses.

The decision to halt the search for our original Sautter lens was not made lightly. We have pursued several possibilities for recovery of our lens over the last 10 years with no success. We have good evidence that our lens was moved to New Orleans by the U.S. Coast Guard when the lighthouse was automated in 1949. After Hurricane Katrina in 2005, a third order fixed lens stored in a USCG facility was recovered in a severely damaged condition. We hoped to be able to determine that the "Katrina lens" came from Cape St. George -- and even raised some funds for its repair -- but most lenses do not have serial numbers and record-keeping at the time was incomplete. Careful comparison of characteristics of the Katrina lens with old photos of the Cape St. George lens led to the conclusion that the Katrina lens did not come from Cape St. George.

Attention was refocused on other known third order fixed lenses that were not currently installed in existing lighthouses. This led to the discovery of a third order fixed lens on casual display in the town hall in Berwick, Louisiana. Although there is no foolproof method of identifying the origin of an orphan lens, the preponderance of the evidence established by lens experts led us to believe that this lens was likely to have come from Cape St. George. Neither the USCG curator nor Berwick town officials had any documentation as to how this lens came to be in the possession of the Town of Berwick. The town did not have insurance on the lens, and it was not displayed with the protections required by the USCG for lenses on museum loan. Efforts to negotiate with the Town of Berwick proved futile. In spite of USCG's stated goal of reuniting lenses with their lighthouses of origin, the USCG entered into an official loan agreement with Berwick, which ended any hopes that we had of negotiating for this lens.

The USCG curator suggested that we consider another damaged third order fixed lens currently in storage at a museum in Virginia. The characteristics of this lens indicated that it certainly did not come from Cape St. George.

We evaluated the wisdom of investing the funds to repair, transport, and display a lens of unknown origin -- that would remain a USCG asset on temporary loan to us -- and determined that our funds would be better used in the construction of a replica lens that will be the property of SGLA.

The replica lens will be a spectacular addition to the collection in the Keepers House Museum, and will further preserve the history of the Cape St. George Light for future generations. SGLA Director Bob Heide noted that the unsuccessful efforts to locate our lens have left us with a "beautiful engagement ring without its diamond." After 10 frustrating years, the diamond will soon join the ring once again.

New Signs on Highway 98 Show Way to Lighthouse



New signs directing visitors to the Cape St. George Light, as well as to St. George Island State Park and the ANERR Nature Center, were recently installed on both east and west approaches to Island Drive on U.S. Highway 98 in Eastpoint. When the lighthouse was first reconstructed, former State Representative Will Kendrick saw to it that the brown signs used by Florida DOT to designate points of interest were installed to point the way to the lighthouse. These signs were damaged during road construction, and it is a pleasure to see the beautiful new signs!

SGLA Hosts Plein Air Student Art Day



The crowd assembles for a morning of art.



Indiana water color artist Luke Buck with his student.

Lighthouse Park was filled with artists and students on May 6, as SGLA helped host the Student Art Day event of the 2015 Plein Air Paint-Out. After two hours of painting on this lovely spring morning, participants and guests enjoyed lunch of AJ's fried chicken, with cole slaw, baked beans, and desserts provided by SGLA. Many thanks to all who baked goodies or volunteered at the event.



Artist Charles Dickinson and student paint the lighthouse.



Nancie King Mertz of Chicago, who works in both oils and pastels, with her student.

CALL FOR SUMMER DOCENTS

If Memorial Day weekend was a valid indication, this summer will be very, very busy. Once again we are seeking docents to help in the Lighthouse Museum. We provide new docents with a short training session and plenty of information to help answer questions about the lighthouse and the island.

If you are interested in spending a few hours helping at the museum and meeting our happy summer guests, please stop by the Gift Shop or call 850-927-7745 and we will get you on the schedule!

Kids at the Lighthouse

About 70 second graders from the Franklin County School visited the lighthouse in May with teacher Christy Thompson. Lighthouse Keeper Mark Vail hosted the group as they climbed to the top.



Looks like they had a great time!

Keeper Jim Dunkin enjoys meeting young people at the lighthouse. On April 1, Brian and Paige Huckabay of Atlanta visited with their three sons – Dylan, Jacob, and Aiden – adopted from Crimea, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan. Jim was happy to give these young new Americans an opportunity to fold the lighthouse flags.



Lighthouse Gets TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence

The Cape St. George Lighthouse has been awarded a 2015 Certificate of Excellence from travel website TripAdvisor for the second year in a row, achieving a 4.5 star rating out of a maximum of 5 stars.



The hotels, restaurants, and attractions honored with the Certificate of Excellence represent “the upper echelon of businesses listed on TripAdvisor” which is considered to be the world’s largest travel site. TripAdvisor says that its honorees are those that consistently impress travelers. Winners are determined by a combination of review comments, ratings, and the quantity and timing of reviews.

Recent reviews have extolled the lighthouse for its “views in the round,” “great history,” as a “fun family outing” – and of course, for the spectacular views from the top and the friendly staff. A visitor from St. Louis, Missouri just this month said it was “such a joy to climb this quaint small tower and end up INSIDE the light room at the top.”

Thank you to all our guests. We love you too!

Membership Renewal Reminder

Our spring membership renewal campaign is in full swing! At this time, SGLA has 182 paid memberships, 13 honorary memberships, and about 50 sponsor memberships, for an estimated total of more than 500 members! If you have not yet renewed your membership, you can do so by credit card at the Lighthouse Gift Shop (850-927-7745) or by sending payment to SGLA, 2B East Gulf Beach Drive, St. George Island, FL 32328. Membership levels are \$25 Individual, \$50 Family, \$100 Keeper, \$125 Business, and \$500 Lifetime Patron. In addition to free climbing, members get a discount at the Gift Shop, email updates, and this newsletter. Most importantly, your tax deductible membership dollars help protect the Cape St. George Light.

Please Patronize Our Business Members

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Suncoast Vacation Rentals
Survivors Bait and Tackle
St. George Island Civic Club
Jerry Thompson, Realtor

2015 SGLA Board of Directors



SGLA Officers and Directors for the year starting with our April 2015 annual meeting are, from left: Terry Kemp, secretary; Vito Bell, vice-president; Phyllis Vitale-Lewis, treasurer; Stanley Colvin, director; Bud Hayes, director; Dennis Barnell, past president; Jim Kemp, president; Fred Stanley, director; and Bob Heide, director.

Quick Blinks

- The four Forgotten Coast Lighthouses – Cape St. George, Crooked River, St. Marks, and Cape San Blas – have been awarded a Visit Florida matching grant for the reproduction of the popular Forgotten Coast Lighthouse Driving Tour brochure. Funds will be available in July. A temporary brochure was produced in limited quantity by the Franklin County Tourist Development Council. Be on the lookout for both publications highlighting our lighthouses!
- A terrific article about St. George Island, prominently mentioning the Cape St. George Light, appeared in the spring issue of Subaru's Drive Magazine. The article was written by Robert Bundy, one of the journalists we hosted during the press tour funded by the TDC following the BP oil spill. Here's the link: <http://drive.subaru.com/spr15-st-george-island.aspx>
- The Cape St. George Light was recently featured on WTXL-TV Channel 27, the ABC affiliate in Tallahassee. The station is publicizing "One Tank Trips" from Tallahassee, and broadcaster Abbey Maurer visited the lighthouse and interviewed Keeper Jim Dunkin earlier this month. Thanks to Abbey and WTXL for the great publicity, and thanks to movie star Jim Dunkin for representing us well! Click on this link to view the clip on the WTXL website: http://www.wtxl.com/features/one-tank-trip-franklin-co-cape-st-george-lighthouse/article_d1727b1c-ff34-11e4-a172-a38acdee224e.html.
- We note with sorrow the passing of SGLA Honorary Member Joe Barber, a descendant of Lighthouse Keeper Edward Porter.

A Parting Shot



Leanne M. Cena of Crawfordville visited "one of her favorite lighthouses" and shot the photo on the left through our blooming oleanders.

Her mother, Donna Adle of New Port Richey, did the painting on the right from the photo.

Thank you, Leanne, for the Double Delight!