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Summer 2014

Cape St. George Light Hosts 100,000th Climber

An important milestone was celebrated at the Cape St. George Lighthouse on Saturday, July 26, when the 100,000th individual to climb the lighthouse since its reconstruction made it to the top of the 77-foot tower.

Karsyn Rae Nauss, age 10, from Forsyth, Georgia was the history-making climber. She was awarded a Lifetime Free Climbing Pass, a framed commemorative certificate, and a gift basket from the Lighthouse Gift Shop.



Jeannie, Avery, and Karsyn Nauss, as Karsyn accepts her certificate from Gift Shop Manager Carol Talley.

Jeannie Nauss accompanied her two daughters, Karsyn and her eight-year-old sister Avery, on the lighthouse climb. Jeannie said that the family visits St. George Island often for fishing and beach vacations, but that this was their first visit to the historic lighthouse.

Karsyn said that she loved the view from the top of the lighthouse, looking out over the Gulf of Mexico and Apalachicola Bay, and said she felt “really special and lucky” to be the 100,000th climber. She said that she plans to climb to the top of the lighthouse every time the Nauss family visits St. George Island.

After keeping a close count of climbers every day through the month of July, Lighthouse Keeper Jim Dunkin and Gift Shop Manager Carol Talley were on hand to participate in the milestone moment and make the award presentation to the 100,000th climber.

Prior to automation of the lighthouse in 1949, lighthouse keepers made thousands of climbs to the lantern room to light or extinguish the lamp and perform daily maintenance duties. After 1949, U.S. Coast Guardsmen made the occasional climb to change the batteries that operated the modern beacon. When the lighthouse

was decommissioned in 1994, only the rare curiosity seeker or lighthouse enthusiast attempted the increasingly treacherous climb.

After the lighthouse collapsed on October 21, 2005, the St. George Lighthouse Association led the effort to reconstruct the lighthouse. Rebuilt at the center of St. George Island to protect it from continued erosion on Little St. George, the Cape St. George Light opened to the public in December of 2008. In five and a half years 100,000 individuals have replicated the climb up the 92 stairs and the eight-rung ladder to the top, just like the keepers of old.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

While much remains unknown about the more than 30 men who worked as Keepers or Assistant Keepers at the Cape St. George Light from 1833 to 1949, recent research has shown that a number of them are still here, not far from the beacon they tended.

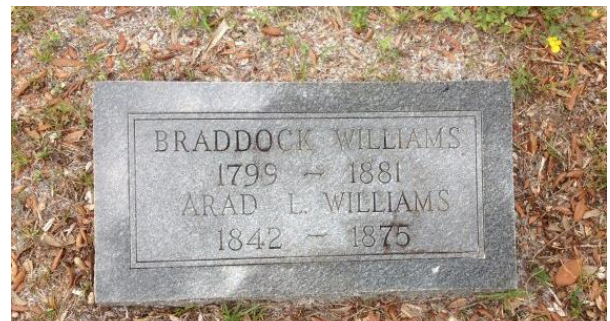
Chestnut Street Cemetery and Magnolia Cemetery, both in Apalachicola, are the final resting places for at least six, and perhaps as many as 10, of our former keepers.

Our journey back in time began with a 20-year-old note passed on to us by local historian Mark Curenton. The note contained scant information on what was believed to be the graves of Braddock Williams and his son Arad Williams, both keepers at Cape St. George, and was sent to Mark by a colleague at the Confederate Naval Museum in Columbus, Georgia. The graves, near the 8th Street gate to Chestnut Street Cemetery, are designated by two wooden markers, long missing any legible inscription.



Wooden markers with no remaining inscriptions that are believed to mark the graves of Braddock and Arad Williams.

While exploring the cemetery with Apalachicola Times reporter Lois Swoboda, we discovered another plain wooden marker and next to it a granite marker inscribed with the names of Braddock and Arad Williams. According to Mark, the City of Apalachicola has permitted families of relatives in unmarked graves to install a modern marker in recent years. The granite marker is not necessarily on the site of the original graves, but is proof that Braddock and Arad are buried at Chestnut Street Cemetery.



A more recent granite marker for Braddock and Arad Williams in Chestnut Street Cemetery.

The Williams family has a complicated history of working as lighthouse keepers at Cape St. George and at other area lighthouses. Braddock, born in 1799, first served as keeper at Cape St. George from 1854 to the start of the Civil War in 1861. He then again served as keeper from 1868 to 1874, and during those years his son Arad served as assistant keeper. In 1874 they reversed roles, with Arad becoming keeper and his father serving as assistant keeper. In 1875 Arad fell to his death while painting at the light station. He was

succeeded as keeper by his brother James Albert Williams, and Braddock continued on as assistant keeper until 1879. Braddock passed away in 1881. James Albert worked as keeper until 1893, when he moved into the keeper's position at the Crooked River Lighthouse in Carrabelle. From 1879 to 1893 two of James Albert's sons worked as assistant keepers at Cape St. George. So far, we have no knowledge of where James Albert and his sons are buried.

One of the best known of the Cape St. George keepers is buried at Magnolia Cemetery on Bluff Road in Apalachicola. Edward G. Porter, keeper from 1893 until his death in 1913, is buried alongside his wife Joseph Charlotte Porter. One of their daughters, Pearl Porter, is also buried in Magnolia with her husband Herbert Marshall. Edward Porter and his family loved St. George Island, and purchased a large piece of acreage on Little St. George. The many descendants of the Porter and Marshall families, in Franklin County and elsewhere in the state, keep the family's legacy alive.



The Porter gravesite in Magnolia Cemetery.

Walter Andrew Roberts Sr., assistant keeper from 1894 to 1902 and again from 1909 to 1912, is buried in Magnolia Cemetery with his wife Ada Florence Roberts and son Claude John Roberts, who died at the age of 19 from the after-effects of gassing in World War I. Another of Walter Sr.'s sons, Walter A. Roberts Jr., spent 13 years serving as assistant keeper and then keeper at Cape St.

George, and is buried in Mary Esther, Florida. Items used by both Walter A. Roberts Sr. and Jr. during their years with the U.S. Light House Service are on display in our Lighthouse Museum, the gracious gift of Walter Jr.'s son Bill and his family.



Stones covered in lichen are difficult to read but mark the graves of Walter A. Roberts Sr., his wife Ada, and their son Claude.

Also buried in Magnolia Cemetery are Sullivan Richard White, keeper from 1939 to 1944, and Ulyses M. Gunn, assistant keeper from 1917 to 1923. When Lois Swoboda published a note about our search for the graves of lighthouse keepers in her Apalachicola Times feature "Chasing Shadows," she got a call from Eastpoint resident Mike Millender who gave her the location of his grandfather Sullivan Richard White's grave. While looking for Keeper White in the new section of Magnolia Cemetery, Lois happened upon U.M. Gunn's marker.



Ulyses M. Gunn was Assistant Keeper at Cape St. George from 1917 to 1923.

Several other keepers are likely buried in either Chestnut Street or Magnolia Cemeteries, but their graves have not yet been verified. A marker in Chestnut St. for Sanders Nichols, who died in 1850, may be the keeper from 1841 who is listed in our records as Saunders J. Nichols. William Austin, keeper from 1850 to 1851, is buried in Chestnut Street Cemetery, but his grave has not been located. Keeper David D. Silva's son, also named David D. Silva, is buried at Magnolia Cemetery, but so far no trace has been found of his father's final resting place. The grave of Robert Knickmeyer, Civil War veteran and the father of assistant keeper William J. Knickmeyer, is marked by a prominent monument at Chestnut Street Cemetery. But there

is no information about his son, assistant keeper from 1902 to 1909, in the Chestnut Street Cemetery records, and it is thought he may be buried at Magnolia Cemetery.

If anyone has any information about the final resting places of any of these keepers, please let us know. We would be happy to provide more specific information, including GPS coordinates, to anyone interested in visiting the graves of any of the keepers that we have found. At a future date, this information may be incorporated into a "Where Are They Now?" exhibit for the Lighthouse Museum.

Old Neb to Ride Again

Old Neb was the lighthouse horse at Cape St. George for much of the first half of the 20th century. The horse lived his entire life of almost 50 years on the island, and Keeper David Silva requested funds to purchase the horse and a wagon in 1931. His request generated some controversy when the Deputy Commissioner of Lighthouses countered that a secondhand Ford truck would be more serviceable and economical than a horse and wagon. But Keeper Silva knew that a truck would have a difficult time negotiating the soft sand on the island. Correspondence from the Superintendent of Lighthouses in June of 1931 reveals the resolution of the issue: "In view of the cheap price at which the Keeper stated he could purchase the horse now on the island, and which is acclimated, it is believed more economical to recommend the purchase of the horse rather than an automobile equipped with tractor wheels." And so Old Neb became the official horse of the U.S. Lighthouse Service on St. George Island.



Cover art for "Old Neb and the Lighthouse Treasure" by Apalachicola artist Leslie Wallace Coon.

Apalachicola Times reporter Lois Swoboda, inspired by tales of Old Neb told by lighthouse keeper descendant Joe Barber of Carrabelle, is bringing the lighthouse horse back to life in a series of children's books. "Old Neb and the Lighthouse Treasure" tells the story of eight children looking for pirates' treasure on the island in the 1930's. Based on true characters, the book is historical fiction for readers age 9 to 12, and will be published by Pineapple Press in March or April of 2015. With anticipated publication around Christmas

of 2015, the second book in the series will be "Old Neb and the Island Ghost," which will tell the tale of the same children and their adventurous encounter with rumrunners on the island.

According to Joe Barber, a descendant of Keeper Edward Porter who visited the lighthouse frequently as a child and knew Old Neb personally, the Lighthouse Service built a handsome barn near the lighthouse for their new horse. Neb, however, had lived for years in an old pole barn by the bay and much preferred it to the

fancier quarters. So when the keepers needed Neb's services, they had to hunt him down across the island. Old Neb worked at the lighthouse until the U.S. Coast Guard took over the Lighthouse Service prior to World War II, and is supposedly the only horse to be pensioned by the U.S. Government.

Thank You, Summer Docents!

Another summer season is coming to an end, and we owe a huge thank you to all of the docents who helped in the Lighthouse Museum over the busy summer months. The docents were a great help to the Gift Shop staff, especially on days when we saw record-breaking crowds! So here's to you: Ellen Ashdown, Mary Jean Heide, Terry Kemp, Rhonda Lambert, Patti McCartney, Mike O'Connell, Sherri Roberts, Pam Vest, and Pearle Wood.

And an extra special thank you goes to "retiring" Docent Coordinator Pam Vest, who did an extraordinary job of keeping the museum as well-staffed as possible during the months when many of our regular docents are away for the summer. Pam has devoted almost two years to keeping our docent volunteers scheduled, and now wants to move on to other projects. We appreciate Pam's commitment and the many hours that she has devoted to this task. Thankfully, she is not leaving us completely, as she will continue to volunteer as a docent herself – and for that we are very grateful!

And welcome home to our docents who are returning from their summer travels. We look forward to seeing you at the Lighthouse Museum in the coming months!

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Cape San Blas Lighthouse Now Open in Port St. Joe

A rainy day in July heralded the start of a new life for the Cape San Blas Lighthouse when on July 15 the lighthouse and associated buildings were moved from the Cape to downtown Port St. Joe. Hundreds of local residents, lighthouse enthusiasts, and curiosity seekers lined C-30 and U.S. Highway 98 to marvel at the sight of the 900-foot long caravan taking the lighthouse, two keepers' residences, and the fuel house to their new bayfront home in George Core Park.



One of the most challenging parts of the journey was making the curve from Cape San Blas Road onto C30. Ducky Johnson's crew executed it perfectly.

The 12.3-mile move took about nine hours and was conducted without a hitch by a phenomenal team from Ducky Johnson House Movers. The convoy was preceded and followed by Duke Energy personnel who dropped and reconnected power lines as the historic procession made its way into town. Nine days later on July 24 cranes raised the skeletal lighthouse to its vertical position.



The convoy proceeds up Hwy. 98 led by the two keepers' houses and followed by the lighthouse and the fuel building. A "blue house" used at the Cape site brings up the rear.

Cape San Blas "Lighthouse Lady" Beverly Mount-Douds reported that the lighthouse opened for climbing on September 12 and 13 during the annual Florida Scallop Festival held in the park. She said that large crowds of festival revelers came to climb the lighthouse in its new home, and that the lighthouse will continue to be open on Fridays and Saturdays until an extended schedule can be established. Renovation work needs to be done on the two keepers' houses, so for the time being the Gift Shop and Museum remain in their existing location in the Maddox House at the edge of the park.

Keep up with progress at the Cape San Blas Lighthouse on Facebook and on their new website at www.capesanblaslight.org.

Congratulations to Beverly, Charlotte Pierce of the St. Joe Historical Society, and the many supporters and contributors who helped make this historic move possible.



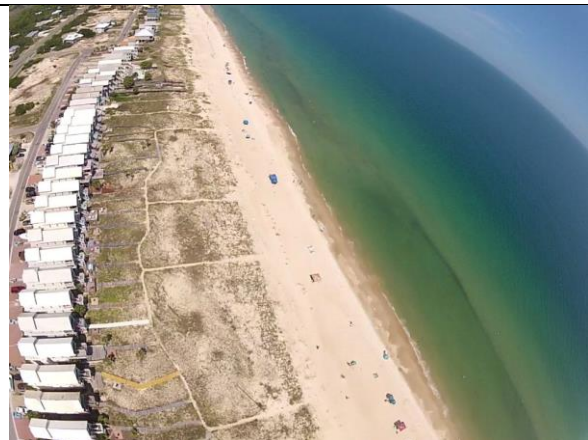
The Cape San Blas Lighthouse, two Keeper's Houses, and the Fuel House at their new site in George Core Park, in downtown Port St. Joe.

SGLA member Lou Kellenberger took this spectacular shot on September 12, 2014 – the grand reopening day for the Cape San Blas Lighthouse!

Quick Blinks

- A new daily record for climbers at the Cape St. George Lights was set on July 25, 2014 when 312 people climbed to the top of the lighthouse. But the record didn't hold for long . . . 319 people climbed to break that record on August 1, 2014!
- Mark your calendars for the 2015 St. George Island Tour of Homes, which will be held on Saturday, February 15, 2015. Work is underway to select the line-up of homes for the fourth annual tour, and we already have some fabulous homes on board. The TOH is the major fundraising event for the Lighthouse, Keeper's House, and Lighthouse Park.
- A number of the "Harbor Lights" lighthouse miniatures donated by Derith Bennett and Stan Farnham are now displayed in two curio cabinets outside of the conference room on the second floor of the Lighthouse Museum. One cabinet displays Florida lighthouses, and the other houses unique lighthouses from New York and New Jersey to the Carolinas, along with a few international lighthouses. Come check it out!

A Parting Shot . . .



These unusual shots of Lighthouse Park and the surrounding area were taken by summer visitor Dave Lampert using a GoPro Hero2 camera mounted on a Prism single-line kite. Dave said that the camera has a fish-eye lens which accounts for the apparent curvature of the earth and water at the edges of the photos.