

LIGHT READING



**Quarterly Newsletter
Winter 2017**
St. George Lighthouse Association
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RECORD SETTING SGI TOUR OF HOMES THANKS TO PERFECT WEATHER & BEAUTIFUL HOMES



Seven fabulous island homes, a stunning exhibit of photographs of Apalachicola working watercraft at the beautiful Plantation Clubhouse, a magnificent Fresnel lens on display at the Keeper's House Museum, the historic white lighthouse against a perfect blue sky -- what was not to love about the Sixth Annual St. George Island Tour of Homes?

And love it they did – all 700+ guests who participated in the Tour on February 11 and helped raise more than \$15,000 for care of the Lighthouse, Keeper's House, and Lighthouse Park in the coming year!

The 2017 Tour was another tremendous success, with large and enthusiastic crowds on hand from the Friday evening Kick-Off presentation by acclaimed photographer John Spohrer, through the festivities of Tour Day on Saturday. Ticket sales again set a record, with 2017 totals surpassing 2016 numbers by about four per cent.



Local resident Sabra Thornton on right was the raffle winner of a framed print by Neal Smith-Willow. Photo by Kate Aguiar

2017 TOUR OF HOMES *continued from Page 1*



Visitor Kathy Hoefs of Pequot, MN was the winner of the Shrimp Boats photograph taken and donated by Apalachicola photographer Ed Tiley. Photo by Kate Aguiar

Comments from the Tour participants, about half of whom were “snowbird” visitors representing 25 different states and Canada, were very positive and complimentary of the homes, the docents, the Plantation shuttle drivers, and all of the 130+ volunteers who enjoyed sharing the island with our visitors.

A new and successful twist this year was the addition of a small raffle featuring three framed works of art and John Spohrer’s book “The Seasons of Apalachicola Bay” which he donated to the effort. Spearheaded by Elaine Kozlowsky, the raffle added more than \$600 to the Tour profits and will most likely be a regular feature of future Tours.

The weekend got off to a great start when a near-capacity crowd filled the Jay Abbott Firehouse to hear John Spohrer talk about “Photographs to Take on St. George Island” accompanied by explanations of how he took many of his extraordinary shots. Guests enjoyed home-made hors d’oeuvres, wine, and more than a dozen door prizes donated by local businesses and individuals.

We can’t say thank you enough to everyone who participated in the Tour – from the gracious homeowners, to the generous sponsors, to the committed volunteers, to all the guests who visited on Friday and Saturday. As one participant said on their comment card: “A delightful day. See ya next year!”

THANK YOU TO SGI TOUR OF HOMES COMMITTEE FOR A GREAT EVENT

Kate Aguiar

Ellen Ashdown

Jackie Bell

Diane Bodenhamer

Adele Colston

Linda Hockman

Terry Kemp

Billie Kinnett

Elaine Kozlowsky

Phyllis Lewis

Mike O’Connell

Ann Siculiano

Coral Sprouse

Carol Talley

Lon & Penny Wilkens

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Click on any of the Business Members to be directed to their Website or Facebook page

RENEW YOUR SGLA MEMBERSHIP

If you're a member of the St. George Lighthouse Association, Spring is renewal time. Renewal letters will be mailed in late March and we look forward to your valued support of our beautiful lighthouse. If you are not a current member we invite you to join in. Membership categories are:

- \$25 for Individual Membership
- \$50 for Family Membership
- \$100 for Keeper Membership
- \$500 for Lifetime Patron Membership
- \$125 for Business Membership

Your membership includes a 10% discount at the wonderful Lighthouse Gift Shop and members climb the Lighthouse for free.

Please visit our website for a membership form; <http://www.stgeorgelight.org/support-us/membership/> or email info@stgeorgelight.org for more information.

Apalachicola's Superintendents of Lighthouses by James Hargrove

When the U.S. House of Representatives approved funding to build a lighthouse on St. George Island at West Pass in 1833, the Collector of Customs in Apalachicola acquired a new job title, Superintendent of Lighthouses. The first superintendent was Gabriel J. Floyd. He acquired 10 acres of land at West Pass and oversaw the construction of the first lighthouse by Winslow Lewis of Boston, even though Mr. Floyd argued that Cape St. George was a superior location.

In 1841, Hiram Langdon Nourse, Sr., was appointed Collector of Customs when Gabriel Floyd resigned. Mr. Nourse was a cotton factor who managed the firm of Nourse and Stone, which arranged shipments of cotton from Columbus, Georgia to the wharves of Apalachicola, and then exported the bales of cotton to markets including New Orleans, New York and Liverpool.

The lighthouse museum has no photographs of any keepers or superintendents that predate the Civil War. However, while working on the new souvenir booklet, *Cape St. George Lighthouse, A Florida Treasure*, watercolor portraits of Hiram Nourse and his wife, Abigail, were located (see accompanying images.) Mr. Nourse became the second Superintendent of Lights in the Apalachicola Customs District, and supported a petition from David Raney and the city council to move the lighthouse, as Gabriel Floyd had originally requested.

Hiram Nourse had moved from Massachusetts to Columbus, Georgia, in 1830 and arrived in Apalachicola in 1831, the same year it was officially named and organized by the Florida Territorial Legislature. At the time, all the land included in the Forbes Purchase was claimed by the Apalachicola Land Company, and no one could obtain a valid deed to build homes or businesses. When the U.S. Supreme Court validated the land claim, the company began auctioning its holdings at prices that many residents thought were exorbitant.

Many residents of Apalachicola objected to the Apalachicola Land Company's prices, and founded the nearby town of St. Joseph on the deeper waters of St. Joseph Bay. They intended to capture the downriver cotton trade and put Apalachicola out of business. Naturally, Hiram Nourse opposed that attempt to redirect cotton exports because his business was based in Apalachicola. The matter was settled by a yellow fever epidemic that decimated St. Joseph and turned it into a ghost town.

Hiram Nourse persuaded the Land Company to offer reasonable settlements with people who had already built homes and businesses in Apalachicola. He also insisted that any new buildings along Water Street should be made of brick, and he recommended draining marshy areas in town that could breed malaria.

In his portrait, Hiram Nourse is holding an object that his descendants think may be a syringe, according to Dana Huddleston. It was well known that Mr. Nourse suffered from poor health, which was one factor that led him to resign from his position as Collector of Customs in 1843. However, this potential medical connection led to another discovery about the work of Collectors of Customs in every port.

Lighthouses and customs houses were maintained by the U.S. Treasury because duties and tariffs were the major source of income for the federal government until an income tax was instituted in 1913. Lighthouse keepers forwarded their reports to the collectors (Superintendents of Lights), and the collectors corresponded directly with the Fifth Auditor of the Treasury. That post was held by Stephen Pleasonton from 1820 until 1852, and all correspondence was copied into the National Archives.

In order to assess duties on imports, the Collector of Customs would meet all incoming ship captains and ask to see their manifests. He would also inspect the ship and its contents because duties were based on weight and size of the goods. Because it was well known that ship's crews often brought communicable diseases, the Collector would also inspect the seamen for signs of illness. It turns out that the Collectors of Customs were also port agents for a system of United States Marine Hospitals that attempted to quarantine seamen who had contracted contagious diseases, notably yellow fever, cholera, and malaria.

Apalachicola's Superintendents of Lighthouses by James Hargrove *Continued from Page 4*

In about 1833, a young physician named Dr. John Gorrie had been recruited to supervise a marine hospital in Apalachicola. No funds had been obtained to build a hospital at that time, and Dr. Gorrie probably bought or rented a building that could be converted into a hospital. The Collector of Customs assessed a surcharge for every crew member of incoming ships and placed the income in a bank account that was used to pay Dr. Gorrie and other physicians based on the number of patients being treated.

Because the Collector of Customs was usually the first person other than the harbor pilot to board a ship, in a sense he served as admitting officer for the marine hospital. It is not difficult to infer that Gabriel Floyd and Hiram Nourse were both well acquainted with Dr. John Gorrie. And it was while Dr. Gorrie fretted about how to cool his patients with yellow fever that he hit upon the idea of creating artificial refrigeration and, by serendipity, ice production. He had built a refrigerating device and noted that it tended to freeze up, and literally become blocked by ice.

After Hiram Nourse moved on to Pascagoula, Mississippi, and then New Orleans, he was replaced as Customs Collector and Superintendent of Lights by Samuel Spencer (1847-49) and Benjamin S. Hawley (1850-52). It was Spencer who oversaw the contract to move the 1833 lighthouse to Cape St. George and the construction of the 1848 lighthouse, the first one on the Cape. And after massive hurricanes in 1850 and 1851, it was Benjamin Hawley who arranged for the contract to rebuild the lighthouse on Cape St. George in 1852.

In 1852, the U.S. Congress created a new Lighthouse Board to manage the lighthouses. The Board was still part of the Department of Treasury, but was staffed by navy officers, engineers and scientists. Instead of relying on Customs Collectors to manage the lighthouses, the new system created 12 lighthouse districts with their own superintendents and inspectors. The Collectors of Customs gradually stopped being involved in lighthouse upkeep, but continued to collect revenues from incoming ships and continued to serve as port agents for the United States Marine Hospital system that eventually gave rise to the U.S. Public Health Service.



Hiram Langdon Nourse, Sr., Collector of Customs and Superintendent of Lights in Apalachicola Bay circa 1841-1843, and his wife, Abigail Merritt Goodwin, are depicted in two rare watercolor portraits. Mr. Nourse was also the port agent for Dr. John Gorrie's marine hospital, which may be why Nourse is holding an object that appears to be a syringe. (Images sent by Dana Huddleston, courtesy of the Estate of Irma O'Bryan.)

Full Moon Climbs for 2017



Photo by James Hargrove

The Cape St. George Lighthouse will again be open for Sunset/Full Moon Climbs in 2017. The schedule is listed below, and pre-paid reservations for the sunset and moonrise portion of the climb are accepted in advance for any climb dates.

Full Moon Climbs at the Cape St. George Lighthouse include light hors d'oeuvres and a sparkling cider toast to the full moon. Cost is \$15.00 for the general public and \$10.00 for members of the St. George Lighthouse Association.

After sunset, people are invited to climb to the top of the lighthouse for a breathtaking view of the full moon, as space and time permit. Cost is \$10.00 for the general public and \$5.00 for SGLA members.

Parking is available in lots at either side of the park. Because space is limited, reservations are recommended. For reservations or more information, please contact the Lighthouse Gift Shop at 850-927-7745.

2017 Schedule of Full Moon Climbs At the Cape St. George Lighthouse

March 12, 2017	7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.
April 10, 2017	7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.
May 10, 2017	8 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.
June 9, 2017	8:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.
July 9, 2017	8:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.
August 7, 2017	8 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.
September 5, 2017	7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.
October 5, 2017	7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
November 3, 2017	6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.
December 3, 2017	5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m.



Photo by James Hargrove

SGLA HONORS RETIRED LIGHTHOUSE KEEPER JIM DUNKIN



President Skip Kemp, Keeper Jim Dunkin, Board Member Stanley Colvin and Current Keeper Susan Uhl

At the St. George Lighthouse Holiday Party in December of 2016, retiring Lighthouse Keeper Jim Dunkin was honored with an original framed photograph of the Cape St. George Lighthouse and Keeper's House taken by local photographer Betsy Kellenberger.

Due to the Lighthouse's popularity Jim was hired in 2009 as Assistant Lighthouse Keeper to Keeper Stanley Colvin and served in this position until 2016 when he retired due to health issues.

After first retiring from the banking profession, Jim and his wife Donna are full time residents on St. George Island. Jim was also a volunteer for the SGI First Responders and also worked as an agent for Weichert Real Estate.

Thank you Jim for your dedication to the St. George Lighthouse and beautiful St. George Island.



Jim Dunkin pictured with Stanley Colvin in 2009.

Photo by Skip Kemp

Thank You Jim!!!

LUCKY VISITOR FINDS TREASURE ON THE BEACH

I am from south Alabama. My best friend from Tennessee and I were staying on St. George Island in January doing what we love to do - walking on the beach, looking for treasures from the sea and eating lots of seafood. The first few days were spent driving to lighthouses in the area and climbing St. George Light during a full moon. That was our first experience climbing a lighthouse at night and we certainly hope it won't be our last!



Dianne Rippetoe on right & friend Gale



One evening we went walking on the beach just west of St. George Light and found several whole, beautiful shells that were to be added to our collections back home. In the distance, I spotted something in the gentle sway of the waves that was larger than a shell and shaped quite differently. Never in my wildest dreams would I have expected to

find an arrow head! It has to be the most thrilling treasure I have ever found in my many years of beach combing all over the United States.

Are there other such treasures to be found on St. George Island?

There is only one way to find out.....

Quick Blinks

- Lighthouse climbers set another new record in 2016, with 21395 individuals climbing to the top of the Cape St. George Light. The 2016 number exceeds 2015's record of 19501 by almost 10 per cent. The total number of climbers since the lighthouse was reconstructed and opened to the public in December of 2008 is 147,079. Look for us to hit the 150,000 climber milestone early in 2017!
- The U.S. Lighthouse Society, which offers a robust schedule of lighthouse tours worldwide, is offering to share the profits from their popular tours with other non-profit lighthouse organizations – like us! For every tour registration that references the St. George Lighthouse Association, we will receive a \$200 donation from USLHS. The tour line-up this year includes domestic destinations like the Outer Banks of North Carolina, the Hudson River in New York, Cape Cod, the Oregon Coast, and Maine; as well as international trips to Estonia, Latvia, & Finland; and Scotland & England. You can view their digital tour catalogue at <http://uslhs.org/tours>. So take a look, book a trip, and be sure to say you heard about it in the SGLA newsletter!

A Parting Shot . . .



**Morning sunrise taken on Highway 98
in Eastpoint. Life is Good! Take the
time to enjoy the simple pleasures
around you.**