



PASSAGES



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Issue 15

We'll Keep the Light on for You!

August 2008

Ten Years of Preserving the DeTour Reef Light Keeping the Light On for You - 1998-2008

The reason for the lighthouse.....

Long before the DeTour Reef Light was built, there was a need for a navigational aid at the mouth of the St. Mary's River. In 1847, construction began on the DeTour Reef Light Station located on shore near DeTour Village. The original structure is storied to be a white stone tower approximately 65 feet high although there are no known pictures or drawings. In 1861, an iron tower was constructed and served as the Light until the offshore Light, as we know it now, was erected.

As a result of the increasing ship traffic, partially because of the "new" Soo Locks and the dangerous offshore reef, a new lighthouse was built in 1931 called DeTour Reef Light. This Light is located a mile offshore and is well known to captains and pleasure boaters who sail the upper Great Lakes.

The lighthouse foundation is resting in 23 feet of water and is made of crib style concrete 20 feet high and 60 feet square. This square base supports the reinforced concrete/steel Art Deco building that extends 63 feet over the deck of the Light making the tower 83 feet above the water. The light was a 3-1/2 order Fresnel lens flashing white light. This light had a characteristic of a one-second flash and a nine-second eclipse and could be seen from 30 miles away. The light remained white until the 1936 season when the color changed from straight white to white with a red sector that faced land.

The Light was automated by the Coast Guard in 1974. After it was automated, it was no longer manned and effectively abandoned by the Coast Guard as they boarded up the windows and left it to sit in the elements untended to.

In 1997, the Light became classified as excess property by the Federal Government. This got the attention of Dick Moehl, a well-known lighthouse preservationist and president of the Great Lakes Lighthouse Keepers Association. In August 1997, he contacted Bob Jones and Jim Charles of DeTour Village and they (along with Dick's wife Margaret, son Mike and a Coast Guard Sault Ste Marie crew) took a boat ride out to the lighthouse to investigate its condition.

After the ride out to the Light, Dick and Bob inspired some people from the community to come together for a common cause to save the Light; and, in January 1998, the DeTour Reef Light Preservation Society was formed as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) volunteer organization to restore and preserve the lighthouse.

The reason for DeTour Reef Lighthouse Preservation Society....

The purpose of the DeTour Reef Light Preservation Society (DRLPS) is to establish, support and promote efforts in the preservation and restoration of the DeTour Reef Light; to achieve the safe keeping of the building, artifacts



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and records; to educate and inform the public on lighthouse and regional maritime history; to enhance public awareness of the value this lighthouse and its keepers brought to our nation's development; to make the DeTour Reef Light a premier tourist attraction in Michigan's Upper Peninsula as the best example of a faithfully restored offshore lighthouse in the Nation; to provide the public safe access to the lighthouse; to raise awareness about the importance of volunteers in maintaining and preserving the DeTour Reef Light and the DRLPS for all present and future generations.

While the purpose fits neatly into one paragraph, the work that went into creating this organization was immense. It took reams of paperwork to create the *Articles of Incorporation*, *Bylaws*, *EIN*, tax-exempt status for the 501(c)(3), logos, stationery, newsletter, memorabilia, brochures, and a website. This was just the beginning of the hard work and commitment that it would take to make DRLPS a successful organization.

Fundraising began in 1998 to help with many of the projects that would need to be completed in order to restore the Light. Annual dues and annual donations support much of the operating cost of the Society. Money has been raised through annual events, such as Evening Under the Stars dinner, the boat cruise on the St. Mary's river and through the Soo Locks, auctions, memorabilia logo items, and raffles. Lighthouse tours and overnight keeper programs have also become a major source of funding. The Society has raised an incredible \$150,000 from all these sources.

Since the inception of the Society, DRLPS has applied for and received 14 grants that have helped the success of the restoration. Total historical and restoration grants awarded from state, federal, and private agencies to the DRLPS to date total over \$1,000,000 matched by \$124,463 in donated (in-kind service) labor, and \$61,786 in cash from fundraising efforts.

The grant funding process has been a challenging, yet exciting and rewarding effort of applications, negotiations and operations. The grant agencies have been a pleasure to work with and DRLPS is very grateful for the funding received.

After wading through all the paperwork to get the Society up and running, it became crucial to find historical documents including photos and original architectural/engineering drawings, prepare an existing conditions report, create a restoration plan, work schedule and detailed budget, and acquire a 20 year lease from the U.S. Coast Guard.

The restoration of the Light.....

The first part of the major restoration began in mid-2002 with the preparation of the Engineering drawings and a breakdown of work processes. Finally in 2003, exterior work began. Roof repairs were made, windows were refurbished, repaired, repainted and new glass installed when necessary. Exterior walls were scraped and repainted, a new flag pole was installed along with a new smoke stack. Interior work included demolishing walls that needed replacement, cleaning and repainting of walls. By the end of 2003, work was 38% complete. By September 2004, the remainder of the restoration work was complete. A final inspection was held for State and Federal government authorities on September 15, 2004, and the project passed with flying colors.

In July 2005, the first ever public guided tours and overnight keeper programs were offered. This has proved to be a very popular and successful venture. Visitors to the Light take a 10 minute charter boat ride from Drummond Island to the lighthouse where they climb a 20 foot vertical ladder to the pier deck. Each visitor is fitted with a full body safety harness while climbing the ladder to the deck. Tours last

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about 2.5 hours and feature all of the parts of the Light including a crib model, photos of the Light, spectacular views from the upper levels, and fresh baked cookies from the 1931 oven in the Light's kitchen. Overnight keeper programs include a two-night unique offshore experience not offered anywhere else on the Lakes.

The future of the Light....

The future is bright for the Light. It will continue to be restored, maintained and preserved by the DeTour Reef Preservation Society for all to enjoy. Restoration is ongoing and current projects include restoration of the second deck crane, and getting the foghorn blowing again. Future projects include work on the pier vertical surfaces, interpretative displays and furnishings, safety signage, installation of a video security system and a "River Watch" web cam that can provide 24 hour viewing of boat traffic, and development of an onshore viewing station.

Thank you to all those that have contributed.....

The success of DRLPS over the past 10 years could not have happened without the dedicated people that have volunteered their time and effort:

Founding members of the Board of Directors included Bob Jones (President), Jim Charles (Vice-President), Jeri Baron Feltner (Secretary), Dick Moehl, and Barb Snider (Treasurer). Other past board members included Bob Den-Boer, Bruce Glupker, and Sherry Vermeulen. Sadly, our founding President Bob Jones passed away in 2002, and our founding Vice-President Jim Charles passed away in 2007. Bob and Jim were passionate about preserving the light-house and dedicated themselves to this work and we'll keep the Light on for these two good men.

Current members of the Board of Directors (as of April 2008) are Denny Bailey; Dave Bardsley, Vice-President, Keeper Program Chair (Past-President 2004-2006); Chuck Feltner, Treasurer, Chief Historian, (Past-President 2001-2004, Past Restoration Chair, 2000-2006); Jeri-Baron Feltner, Founding Director Emeritus (Founding Secretary 1998-2004); Ann-Method Green, Public Relations Chair; Don Gries, Preservation Chair; Clif Haley, Grants Chair, Legal Advisor, Stars Co-Chair; Dick Moehl, Founding Director Emeritus; Russ Norris, President, Youth Program Chair; Jim Woodward, Honorary Director; and Sandy Wytiaz, Memorabilia Co-Chair.

Other committee chairpersons and key team members include Paula Bardsley, Membership Chair and Database Manager (Acting/Recording Secretary 2002-2007); Joyce Buckley, Stars Co-Chair; John & Sunny Covell, Tour Program Co-Chairs 2008; Dawn Gibbons, Accountant; Matt Sawyer, Webmaster; Sheila Sawyer, Newsletter Editor; Anne Stafford, River Cruise Chair 2005; and Dotty Witten, Memorabilia Co-Chair, Annual Ornament.

Retired team members include Sis Bailey (Stars 1999-2000); Candis Collick (Newsletter Editor 2005-2007); Barb Gusfa (Memorabilia 1998-2000), Sheryl LaMotte (Webmaster 2003-2007), Carol Melvin (Finance 1998-2000), Mary Rogers (Membership 1998-2007), Anne Westlund (Special Projects 2000-2001).



DeTour Reef Light with DeTour Point in Background (note white roof of 1861 Keepers quarters on shore)



**DeTour Reef Light (DRL)
As Built in 1931**



**USCG Declares DRL
as Excess Property in 1997**



DRL as Restored, September 4, 2004



Before

Southeast corner of Office/Radio Room



After



Before

Dining Room Looking Toward South Wall with Sitting Bench and Upper Access to Fog Horns



After



Before

The Bathroom in the Keepers Quarters



After



Former Fuel Storage Area in Machinery Room With New Water Treatment System Installed



Lower Tower being Prepared for Painting



Sand Blasting Shroud Around Upper Tower



Above: The office, complete with rolltop desk and storage cabinet. Photo by Sheri Stephen.

**On the left:
The “F2T” fog horn on the right is original**



Above: The assistants room, complete with bunk beds.

On the left: The main entrance to the Lighthouse Quarters.

From the President

By Russell Norris

During a recent taco night at Chuck's Bar I couldn't help but notice a photograph of the DeTour Reef Light adorning the menu. The following Monday at a school board meeting in the DeTour library I admired the three pictures above the door depicting the lighthouse at various times in the past. Once you start to notice, it's actually quite amazing how many places in the area have pictures or merchandise depicting the DeTour Light and it makes you appreciate what an important symbol it is for our community. How fortunate we are that instead of a structure on the verge of demolition the DeTour Reef Light is now a national historic monument with a bright future. When we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the DRLPS later this month we will be joined by as many as ten former keepers many of whom will actually visit the light, a fitting tribute to the success of the organization in restoring the Light to its original condition. As part of our celebration we had local students write on the topic *The Importance of Preserving Lighthouses* and I wasn't really sure what to expect. As usual the students really came through and we had some tremendous entries. One of my favorites talked about the "less obvious" things such as setting an example to young people that preserving history is important (music to a history teachers' ears) and the idea that if a community works together it can accomplish almost anything. There is much to be proud of in what has been accomplished over the past ten years but there is also still much to do such as making the light more accessible to a wider audience and assuring that the organization will be able to maintain the light well into the future. With your help we hope to accomplish these goals and keep the light on for future generations. Thank you to everyone that has supported the DRLPS and congratulations on ten great years!

SEE THE LIGHT that was used on the DeTour Reef Light at the DeTour Passage Historical Museum 8/30&8/31

A special showing of the 1907 3-1/2 order **Fresnel lens** used at DeTour Reef Light from 1931 to 1974 will be held at the DeTour Passage Historical Museum in DeTour Village, Michigan, near the Ferry Dock on Saturday, August 30 at 11:30 a.m., and Sunday, August 31 at 12:30 p.m.

The lens was originally used at the onshore DeTour Point Light Station, then transferred to the offshore DeTour Reef Light, and was dismantled when the Light was automated in 1974.

Thanks to Dick Moehl and Bob Jones, the U.S. Coast Guard subsequently loaned this lens to the DeTour Passage Historical Museum where it has been on display since 1993.

An informative narration of the lens will be provided by **Jim Woodward**, a world-renown lighthouse lens expert (www.lighthouseconsultant.com). Additionally, former U.S. Coast Guard lighthouse keepers who worked at the DeTour Reef Light will be present to talk about their experiences with the lens.



Keeping the Light On for You for Ten Years 1998-2008!

DETOUR REEF LIGHT PRESERVATION SOCIETY

www.DRLPS.com



906-297-3231

Memorabilia Order Form—DeTour Reef Preservation Society

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email (very important) _____ Phone _____

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	Price Each	Color	Size	Quantity	Total
1	Decal with Society Logo	\$1				
2	Bumper Sticker with Society Logo	\$1				
3	Cup with Society Logo	\$3				
4	Embroidered patch of DeTour Reef Light— 2 3/4 inch square	\$6				
5	DeTour Reef Light Collectors Pin— 1 1/8 inch	\$6				
6	Hat (khaki, khaki/blue, or wheat/pine) with Lighthouse Crest	\$15				
7	Visor with Lighthouse Crest (navy)	\$10				
8	T-Shirt w/Lighthouse Crest (stone blue or light green — S, M, L, XL, 2XL)	\$20				
9	White Golf Shirt w/Lighthouse Crest (unisex — S, M, L, XL, 2XL)	\$32				
10	Denim Shirt with Lighthouse Crest (unisex — S, M, L, XL, 2XL)	\$39				
11	Crew Neck Sweatshirt with Lighthouse Crest (stone — S, M, L, XL, 2XL)	\$28				
12	Full Zip Hooded Sweatshirt with Lighthouse Crest (birch — S, M, L, XL, 2XL)	\$35				
13	Sterling Silver Charm of Lighthouse	\$20				
14	Tote Bag with Lighthouse Crest (natural/red trim or natural/navy trim)	\$28				
15	Note Pads w/Lighthouse Logo (pack of 3 — 50 sheets per pad)	\$2				
16	Note cards, ivory, showing Lighthouse in 1931 (10 cards & envelopes)	\$8				
17	8x10 Color Photo of 2004 Lighthouse	\$10				
18	8x10 Black & White Photo of 1931 Lighthouse	\$10				
19	DVD video of the Lighthouse before/during/after restoration	\$20				
20	2007 Ornament (tear-shaped glass etched with Lighthouse image)	\$16				
21	1931 Limited Edition Lighthouse Window Pane (9 1/4 X 11 X 1/4 inch) w/Etching of Lighthouse	\$300				
22	Custom Framing for item #20	\$150				



*Thank You
for your
Support!*

*We'll Keep the
Light on
for You!*

Value of Order	S&H
Up to \$10	\$4
\$10.01—\$25	\$5
\$25.01—\$45	\$7
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**DETOUR REEF LIGHT
PRESERVATION SOCIETY**

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MEMBERSHIP:

\$30 Basic (includes family members), \$50 Patron, \$100 Keeper, \$500 Lifetime,
\$1000 Grand Keeper. Memberships include family.

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DeTour Reef Lighthouse Preservation Society

DRLPS is a volunteer nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization established in 1998 to restore and preserve the DeTour Reef Light. Donations are welcomed and are tax-deductible (EIN 38-3387252, MIC 27001).

The Light was automated in 1974. In 1997, the lighthouse was declared surplus property by the U. S. Coast Guard due to sophisticated navigational systems aboard ships, and the Coast Guard's not having the funding to care for the structure in accordance with historic preservation guidelines. In January 1998, local citizens joined together to save the Light.

The lighthouse was built in 1931, and proudly stands guard a mile offshore in northern Lake Huron at the far eastern end of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The structure rises 83 feet above the water and marks a dangerous reef to help guide ship traffic from and to Lake Huron and Lake Superior via the strategic St. Mary's River.

The DRLPS received the 2005 Governor's Award for excellence in historic preservation, and the Superior Award in 2006 from the Historical Society of Michigan. The DeTour Reef Light is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

PURPOSE: the purpose of DeTour Reef Light Preservation Society (DRLPS) is to establish, support and promote efforts in the preservation and restoration of the DeTour Reef Light; to achieve the safe keeping of the building, artifacts and records; to educate and inform the public on lighthouse history; to enhance public awareness of the value this lighthouse and its keepers brought to our nation's development; to make the DeTour Reef Light a premier tourist attraction in Michigan's Upper Peninsula as the best example of a faithfully restored offshore lighthouse in the Nation; to provide the public safe access to the lighthouse; to raise awareness about the importance of volunteers in maintaining and preserving the DeTour Reef Light and the DRLPS for generations to come.

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To submit comments and/or articles to the Editor, email newsletter@drlps.com or send by mail to: Sheila Sawyer, 49434 Tarrytown Ct., Shelby Township, MI 48315

Your input for the future issues of *Passages* would be appreciated. Thank you!