



Old News Circa 2000

The Very Latest from Outer Banks Conservationists

THE TIES THAT BIND



Keepers' Descendants Gather at Lighthouse Homecoming

Clutching scrapbooks and photo albums, they followed yellow ribbons down Corolla Village Road. Their destination—the Currituck Beach Lighthouse on a sunny fall day, October 23, 1999. Some moved slowly, using canes or wheelchairs. Others, decades younger, raced ahead to reach the tall brick lighthouse. They came from Delaware, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Tennessee, Florida, South Carolina, Iowa, Maryland, West Virginia, and western North Carolina. Many knew each other, yet were surprised to find their friends there. For some, it was their first glimpse of the 1875 beacon. Others had climbed its steps many times.

The some 300 people who gathered at the lighthouse that day were not random visitors ready to climb the lighthouse. They were descendants of the keepers who had once tended the light, whose families had once lived in the keepers' quarters. Some came armed only with curiosity, others came filled with valuable stories, artifacts, and photographs. All went away feeling connected, generation to generation, with renewed ties to a very special time and place—the days between 1875 and 1939 when resident keepers climbed the spiraling steps of the lighthouse to trim the wicks, fuel the flame, and clean the lenses.

Lloyd Childers, executive director of Outer Banks Conservationists, with the help of volunteers and lighthouse staff, organized the lighthouse descendants' homecoming, which grew from an initial list of approximately 40 families known to have lighthouse ties, to some 600 people, nearly all interested in attending the reunion.

The impetus for the reunion, according to Childers, was the realization that first, second, and third-hand accounts of life at Currituck Beach Lighthouse were rapidly disappearing. More than two generations had passed since 1939, when the light was automated. With the approach of the 125th anniversary of the first lighting of the lighthouse, now was the time to gather stories and memorabilia.

Oral historian Jenny Edwards was on hand to record people's recollections and volunteers Michael McOwen and Beth Storie scanned guests' photographs, documents, and newspaper clippings, adding to the repository of knowledge about life at a lighthouse.

But most importantly, descendants made their own history, posing for photographs on the steps of the Keepers' House, and celebrated their common heritage as they toured the double keepers' quarters, climbed the lighthouse, visited the museum shop, and walked the grounds.

A brief program included remarks by Edwards, along with Lt. Commander Christopher J. Olin's comments about the U. S. Coast Guard's role in present-day aids to navigation. Musician Bob Zentz lent atmosphere with his sea chanteys. But no reunion is complete without food, and there was plenty of it. A breakfast buffet was provided by Twiddy and Company Real Estate, and lunch was a

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Standing Tall & Shining Bright For 125 Years

December 1, 2000, marks the 125th anniversary of the first lighting of the Currituck Beach Lighthouse. Outer Banks Conservationists is having a special community celebration commemorating the 125th anniversary of the first lighting of the light on that day. Special guests will include Corolla residents who were formerly associated with the lighthouse. As part of the celebration, a temporary post office will operate at the lighthouse on Dec. 1 to issue a pictorial cancellation on envelopes, cards, or other items bearing the applicable 1st. class postage. A special t-shirt will be available as well. For more information, please call (252) 453-8152.



FOOTSTEPS LEAVE THEIR MARK:

Helping Fund Major Lighthouse Restoration

If you and your family have climbed the steps of the Currituck Beach Lighthouse at any time during the past several years, your footsteps have provided the financial fuel for restoration of the lighthouse. Through revenues generated by admissions to the lighthouse, much needed repairs and restoration were completed in time for the April 1, 2000, opening of the lighthouse compound to visitors.

The first phase of restoration of the Currituck Beach Lighthouse was completed during the winter of 1999-2000 by International Chimney Corporation following their successful move of the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse last summer. The work was done as a joint project of International Chimney of Buffalo, New York, and Metal and Design, Inc. of St. Petersburg, Florida and funded by Outer Banks Conservationists, Inc.

While not as spectacular as the Cape Hatteras move, the work ranged from the painstaking to the artistic. Metal designer Alex Klahm recast the gallery hand rails and posts, the cornice below the gallery deck, decorative acorn nuts, the exterior door at the watch level, brackets, door hardware, and other architectural elements, and repaired

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IN THEIR WORDS



Oral History

Illuminates Lighthouse Past

In the fall, an expanded and reformatted version of oral historian Jenny Edwards' work, *To Illuminate the Dark Space: Oral Histories of the Currituck Beach Lighthouse*, will be available for sale at the Currituck Beach Lighthouse Museum Shop. The volume, created in anticipation of the 125th anniversary of the lighthouse's first lighting and as part of the first Keepers' Descendants Homecoming, is a tribute to the memory of those who made their homes at the Currituck Beach Lighthouse between 1875 and 1939.

Edwards, a graduate student, was engaged by Outer Banks Conservationists, the nonprofit group which manages the lighthouse, to conduct interviews and compile them, providing a valuable record, both oral and written. The raw material, oral history tapes and transcriptions, will be housed permanently at the Outer Banks History Center in Manteo, but it is Edwards' treatment of the material, and the involvement of those interviewed, that brings these stories to life.

You don't have to be a descendant of the lighthouse keepers to enjoy this book. For anyone interested in coastal history and daily life in the remote village of Corolla, Edwards' work shines light on what life was like during the late 19th and early 20th centuries on the Currituck Outer Banks.

According to Sarah Spinks Downing, assistant curator of the Outer Banks History Center, during June and July of 1999, Edwards "drove two thousand miles to get twenty-five interviews, listened to nearly seventy-five hours of tape, made in excess of two hundred phone calls, and spent approximately three hundred twenty hours writing." All those numbers add up to a valuable addition to the history of the Outer Banks in general, and the Currituck Beach Lighthouse in particular.

Michael McOwen and Beth Storie, former publishers of *Insiders' Guide* books, combined text and photographs into a published form that is attractive and highly readable. Both the limited first printing and the expanded second printing were published by Outer Banks Conservationists, Inc.

For a copy of *To Illuminate the Dark Space*, visit the Currituck Beach Lighthouse Museum Shop; write to Outer Banks Conservationists, Inc., PO Box 58, Corolla, NC 27927. For more information, call OBC at (252) 453-8152. A copy is also in the library stacks of the Outer Banks History Center. ★



SUPPORT HISTORIC PRESERVATION

TYPES OF SPONSORSHIP:

INDIVIDUAL TWO FREE VISITS to the Currituck Beach Lighthouse and lighthouse compound and annual newsletter Cost \$10.00

FAMILY SIX FREE VISITS to the Currituck Beach Lighthouse and lighthouse compound and annual newsletter Cost \$25.00

Name _____

Address _____

DONATION \$ _____

Clip & Mail to: OUTER BANKS CONSERVATIONISTS, INC.

P.O. Box 970, Manteo, NC 27954 (Sponsorship is Annual Until Dec. 31 2000)

MAJOR STRIDES:
**Wild Horse Management
 Plan Is Adopted**

What do you do when a thief blatantly trespasses, crossing a fence to steal fruits and vegetables in broad daylight? When the thief is the stallion Little Red Man, along with his two mares as accomplices, then the Corolla Wild Horse Fund jumps into action. They repair the fence, pay the bill at the local fruit stand and finally round up the herd sending them to a nearby island in Currituck Sound. Now the herd, with the addition of a colt and three new foals, has the run of some 400 acres of pasture and woodland. And the Corolla Wild Horse Fund has just performed one of their major responsibilities, as outlined in the new 13-point Wild Horse Management Plan developed and adopted this past winter.

Currituck County officials spearheaded the effort, bringing together representatives of the Horse Fund, the Currituck National Wildlife Refuge, and the North Carolina National Estuarine Research Reserve. Each of these groups has assumed responsibility for some phase of the management plan, with the help of a new advisory board.

The main goals of the plan, as summarized by Horse Fund Director Lloyd Childers, are to:

- Manage a viable herd of no more than 60 horses;
- Prevent wild horse access into the developed areas of Corolla and Virginia;
- Conduct a periodic census and health evaluation of the horses;
- Provide corral facilities for a few horses at the Whalehead Club or the Currituck Beach Lighthouse;
- Relocate rogue horses to sites within Currituck County;
- Reintroduce relocated horses to the Outer Banks only under limited circumstances; and
- Evaluate the development and use of private pasture areas within the off-road area.

The plan represents a major change in the federal and state agencies' position. Their original opposition to the horses' presence at the refuge and reserve centered around their contention that the horses are incompatible with the species the agencies are mandated to protect. Now, as a result of the plan, these agencies will include the horses in their own management plans.

The Corolla Wild Horse Fund will continue many of its duties, either under the auspices of Outer Banks Conservationists or another nonprofit group. "The Horse Fund will assume the major responsibilities of implementing the plan," said Childers.

On the local level, Currituck County has agreed to consider using funds from the occupancy tax to protect and maintain the herd living freely in the wild.

Childers complemented Currituck County officials for bringing the parties together. "We agreed not to leave the table until everyone approved the plan."

"It's not a perfect document," said Bill Richardson, Currituck County manager. "But considering all the groups involved, it's a major step forward." ★

Outer Banks Conservationsists, Inc.
 Post Office Box 970, Manteo, NC 27954



Help Keep Corolla Wild Horses Living Freely in the Wild!

Please Check Appropriate box(es)

- \$15 Sponsorship (includes decal, bumper sticker, newsletter)
- \$35 Adoption (includes 5x7 color photo of wild horse, "adoption" certificate & bumper sticker)
- \$50 Adoption and Sponsorship (includes decal, bumper sticker, newsletter, 5x7 photo of wild horse & "adoption" certificate)
- \$ _____ Contribution (includes newsletter and bumper sticker)

Name _____

Address _____

PLEASE CLIP AND ENCLOSE WITH YOUR CHECK MADE OUT TO:

Corolla Wild Horse Fund, and mail to: P.O. Box 970, Manteo, NC 27954. Thank You!
 (Sponsorship is Annual Until Dec. 31, 2000)



FOOTSTEPS Continued

interior stair treads and exterior window frames.

International Chimney installed the scaffolding and a 500-pound hoist needed to perform structural and safety repairs, and worked from the top down to make the lighthouse waterproof by replacing missing elements, sealing, and painting. The brickwork was carefully examined, and minor cracks repaired, and the ledge beneath the cast-iron deck support brackets was inspected for signs of loosening away from the brickwork.

Both old and new ironwork were treated to promote longevity. The gallery deck and brackets were waterblasted to remove chlorides, and sandblasted in segments, then washed with a solvent to remove dirt, oil, and grease, and finally primed and painted. New castings and ironwork were also sandblasted and cleaned with solvents before being primed and painted.

In addition to age-old iron-casting techniques, modern materials such as stainless steel, Teflon tape, and moisture-cured urethane coatings were used to increase the life of the repairs.

Future phases of restoration will focus on lantern repairs and masonry restoration of the lighthouse exterior. Long-term goals identified by Outer Banks Conservationists include complete restoration of the lantern room, interior lantern deck and lens, lens pedestal and interior at the watch level, interior masonry, and refurbishment of the lower cast-iron belt course.

Once again, future restoration and repairs will be paid for by the thousands of footsteps of those climbing the lighthouse each summer. For the price of your admission, you'll not only receive a spectacular view from the top, perhaps losing a few pounds in the process, but you'll also be a part of the Currituck Beach Lighthouse restoration project. Put on your walking shoes, and help make it happen! ★

UPDATE ON THE ETHERIDGE HOUSE

Restoration of the Etheridge House, a ca. 1840-1850 Roanoke Island farmhouse, is moving forward with the completion of architectural research by Penne Smith, and structural work has begun on the house itself. Outer Banks Conservationists, Inc. has also been able to acquire an adjacent piece of property which was once part of the original homeplace.

Calvin Gibbs Building Contractor, which has completed many preservation projects on Roanoke Island, has begun removing newer paneling, scraping paint, and removing more recent additions to the house to return it to its original form. Site work has also been completed, including returning some wooded portions of the site to open farmland.

When restored, the farmhouse will open to the public as an interpretive museum, providing a look at everyday life on Roanoke Island during the mid-1800s. ★



DESCENDANTS Continued

catered meal of grilled tuna, barbecue, sweet potato biscuits, and all the trimmings. Local merchants donated door prizes and ice cream as the reunion concluded in mid-afternoon.

At the end of the day, participants went home with their information packets containing a chronological list of keepers and their assistants, and keepers' descendants; official t-shirts; and copies of Edwards' *To Illuminate the Dark Space: Oral Histories of the Currituck Beach Lighthouse*. But they also took home a new understanding of what their forebears endured as keepers of the light before the age of automation, and what they enjoyed as part of a close-knit coastal community on the Currituck Outer Banks. ★

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