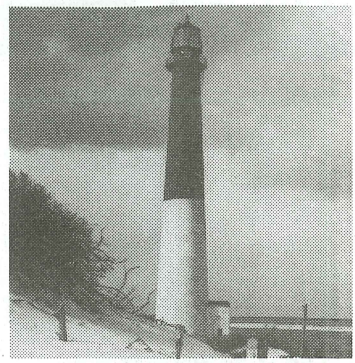
The Friends of Barnegat Lighthouse Celebrate Landmark's 150th Birthday



"Old Barney" Looking North

Some might say the jewel in the crown of Barnegat Lighthouse State Park is the breathtaking view from atop the 165-foot-tall beacon, or its new Coast Guard-approved lens, purchased with funds raised by the Friends of Barnegat Lighthouse organization and recently relit with much fanfare after decades of inactivity. Others might say it is the interpretive center at the foot of the lighthouse, which houses information and resources and serves as a meeting space for the organization's popular lecture series.

But whatever the reason for visiting, whether lured by the height or the ground-level attractions or the 217-step journey in between, it seems everyone can agree, the lighthouse, having stood watch over the inlet at the north end of Long Beach Island for 150 years, is an important historic landmark worthy of preservation and celebration.

Just ask any of the thousands of people who turned out to witness the historic relighting on Jan. 1. Even the event organizers were astounded by the showing of support, given the holiday weekend and the bitter cold. Or ask any of those who have attended the standing-room-only lectures delivered in the interpretive center.

The job of preserving and celebrating the lighthouse belongs to the Friends of Barnegat Lighthouse, an all-volunteer, non-profit organization led by a small core of dedicated lighthouse enthusiasts and supported by about 100 members. Vice president and volunteer

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- **Barnegat Lighthouse & Interpretive Center** will reopen weekends April through June & resume daily hours from 10:00 am - 4:00 pm from Memorial Day to Labor Day.
- **March 7, 1:00 pm** - *Real Monsters from New Jersey's Prehistoric Past.* Free admission. Please see event listings for details.
- **March 28, 1:00 pm** - *Local Shipwrecks of Barnegat Lighthouse.* See event listings for details.

For more information on events or how to become a member of the Friends group, call (609) 494-2016 or submit written requests to Barnegat Lighthouse State Park, Broadway, PO Box 167, Barnegat Light 08006

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program director Serena White said the organization's mission is to enhance the park, to encourage barrier and ecosystem protection and to provide programs that educate the public and increase historical and environmental awareness.



"Old Barney" with Keeper House

The recently renovated interpretive center features, in addition to signage, stories, models on display and official souvenir hats, a large flat-screen television that shows a live feed of the view from the top, for visitors who may be elderly, disabled or otherwise unable to make the rigorous climb.

For White, like so many Island residents, the Barnegat Lighthouse has always held special meaning to her and to her family. Her father is an avid boater, and White recalls many fond memories of being out on the water with him, seeing the lighthouse as a familiar and comforting symbol of home. As she grew up, the state park was a place she often went to hang out and clear her mind. So, three years ago, when she heard the Friends were seeking volunteers to help out with the interpretive center, she was quick to sign up.

She still climbs the lighthouse a few times a season, an experience she described as tiring but invigorating. And every time she accomplishes the feat, she said, she can't help but reflect on what life must have been like for the old-time lighthouse keepers, who had to make that trip multiple times a day, toting heavy cans of lamp oil to the top to keep the wick burning.

"You kind of feel a connection to the past," she said, adding with a laugh: "We're such wimps today."

White said she believes it is important to keep people interested in lighthouses, and in maritime history in general, because "past lessons and our learning experiences help define our futures." The more we learn about shipwrecks, weather, erosion and the environment, the safer and better off we'll all be, she explained.

The lighthouse and interpretive center will reopen for weekends in April through June and will resume daily hours from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

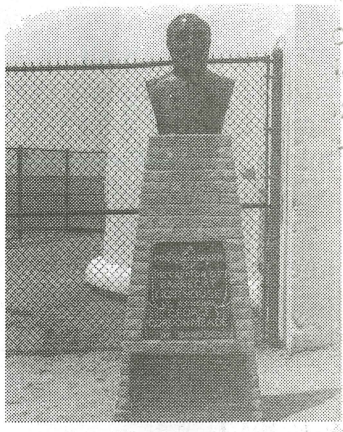
Last fall and winter, lectures series topics included native birds, lighthouses throughout New Jersey, Fresnel lenses, pound fishing, the Tuckerton Railroad, life saving stations, estuarine ecology, the Morro Castle wreck of 1934, seasonal occupations of Pinelands natives and baymen, and Barnegat Lighthouse design engineer George Meade.

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Every lecture was so wildly popular, White said, the room was filled to capacity and the volunteers actually had to turn people away. She recommended arriving early to be guaranteed admission.

Coming up on March 7 at 1 p.m., retired high school science teacher and amateur paleontologist Ray Young will present "Real Monsters from New Jersey's Prehistoric Past" – a startling look at some of the creatures that roamed the Garden State's land and waters 65 million years ago, separating some myths and legends from fact. Admission is free.



A portrait in bronze of the creator of Barnegat Lighthouse, Lt. General George Gordon Meade by Boris Blai.

Young's presentations have been requested by such Ocean County organizations as the Pinelands Preservation Alliance, the Beach Haven Maritime Museum, Southern Regional High School and High Point Volunteer Fire Co. in Harvey Cedars.

And, while his 40 years of scientific, geological and paleontological study would qualify him as an expert by most anyone's standards, Young humbly insists, "I am not a professional." Instead he considers himself "a hobbyist, who has some background." His background also includes membership in the Delaware Valley Paleontological Society, in the company of some "top-notch experts," he said.

Young's slideshow presentation will introduce the audience to some familiar, and some not-so-familiar, beasts that have been evidenced to have inhabited the region: wooly mammoths, mastodons, mosasaurs and plesiosaurs (marine reptiles), as well as prehistoric sharks' teeth, which are surprisingly rather easy to find. He will also show examples with photographs, models and actual specimens he has found, in his own digs in the Pine Barrens and in river areas, where he uses a quarter-inch screen to shake through sediment, a process he likened to panning for gold.

To this day, the discovery of a prehistoric treasure – a less common occurrence today than it was 35 years ago – is every bit as satisfying as it was the very first time, like opening a window to the almost inconceivably distant past.

"The thrill has never left," he said. A person may uncover a piece of an ammonite, for example, an ancient mollusk relative of the chambered nautilus, "and you think, 'Nobody's ever seen this but me. Nobody but me!'"

Locally, Young said, fossils are often dug up in what's called marl (the kind of soil for which the New Jersey towns of Marlton and

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Marlboro are named), which farmers used to add as a soil sweetener and is plentiful in and along the inner coastal plain. In fact, the world's most nearly complete dinosaur ever assembled, a duckbilled hadrosaurus, was dug and mounted in nearby Haddonfield in the mid-19th century. Often fossils are dredged up from New Jersey's continental shelf.

Though definitions of "monster" vary, he said, generally they conjure frightening, imaginary creatures that are also very large. For educational purposes, Young hopes to leave the audience with, perhaps, a different understanding of the word "monster" than they had considered before.

Later in the month, historian Tom Farner will deliver an in-depth discussion of local shipwrecks, on March 28 at 1 p.m.

The work of the Friends is supported entirely by donations, White said. The public is really generous, she added. And 2009 is proving to be an especially exciting year, as the lighthouse celebrates its 150th birthday and the annual Lighthouse Challenge marks its 10th event, with extra special surprises in store.

Dues fees for the Friends of Barnegat Lighthouse are as follows: individuals pay $25 for a one-year membership, or $150 for a lifetime membership; families pay $35 for the year, $200 for a lifetime; businesses pay $50 or $300; patrons contribute $500; and benefactors contribute $1,000.

For more information about getting involved with Friends, call (609) 494-2016 or submit written requests to Barnegat Lighthouse State Park, Broadway, PO Box 167, Barnegat Light, NJ 08006.

- Victoria Lassonde