



Spring 2021



Photo By: Gary Ennis

A Message from the President

We hope to soon welcome everyone back to a normal season at Point Betsie! However, as spring unfolds here in northern Michigan, the ongoing state of the pandemic is still somewhat unclear. While Covid cases currently remain present, we were able to open in a limited capacity on June 16, 2021.

Our renovated Keeper's Quarters apartment is fully booked, and we are busily reorganizing and updating our Gift Shop, which we also expect to open. The question of whether to operate tours of the Tower depends on further progress against Covid. We have a tentative date to open the tower on July 1st. We will certainly prioritize the safety of all our visitors, staff, and docents in our decision. Please refer to our website for any updates or changes.

Despite Covid, the Friends of PBLH have been busy in the off-season. Progress continues in addressing much needed repairs to the Shoreline Protection System, details of which can be found elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Our new Executive Director, Casey Ottinger, has immersed himself in every aspect of PBLH, and we are thrilled that he has joined the team. Among many other tasks and events, Casey is planning a virtual 5k running race spanning from July to the end of our traditional season in mid-October.

Bill Cotsworth has worked tirelessly and generously in updating our new website, with increased functionality, interactivity, and many improvements. The drone footage on the opening page is by itself worth a visit to pointbetsie.org. Thank you, Bill!

The Gift Shop reorganization is creating a more attractive and functional space, with a lot of great new merchandise to peruse. We have instituted a new range of Membership levels, and encourage renewals at as high a level as possible after the down year of the pandemic.

Lastly, we are very pleased to announce the addition of three new Directors: Kelly Winter, Mike Musgrave, and Grant Porteous. We welcome them to the Friends of PBLH team, and we look forward to welcoming all our guests to PBLH this season!

With Best Regards,

The Friends of Point Betsie Lighthouse

3701 Point Betsie Road | P.O. Box 601
Frankfort, Michigan 49635

Mission

To support Benzie County in the restoration and maintenance of the Point Betsie Lighthouse facility through advocacy, fundraising and volunteers. Our goal is to promote related educational opportunities for the benefit of all, while maintaining the historical and environmental integrity of the site.

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Continuing the Legacy of Life at the Lighthouse

Mary Hamilton's annual vacation at Point Betsie is like a reunion with an old friend.



Mary holds daughter Amy at Pt. Betsie

upkeep and continuing restoration of the lighthouse.

"We've had a lot of good memories at Point Betsie," says Mary, who is preparing for her eighth summer stay in the Keeper's Apartment. She has talked about forming an alumni group for former keeper families and their descendants. "I always love to look in the lighthouse's daily tour visitor log to see if I know anyone."

This summer the Keeper's Apartment will also host Myra Elias, the great-great granddaughter of storied Light Keeper Alonzo Slyfield (1861-1882). (Slyfield's son Edwin held the position from 1882-1888.) Although Myra's family traveled to Benzie County and visited Point Betsie often when she was a child, the downstate native and longtime Frankfort resident had never been inside the lighthouse until she rented the apartment for the first time last summer.

Mary is one of several regular Keeper's Apartment summer rental guests who have a family connection to the lighthouse. She lived there in the early 70s with her then husband, former Coast Guard Commanding Officer Kenneth Rachford. Daughter Amy was a toddler and son Chuck was born during the memorable months Kenneth worked around-the-clock to keep the light shining across the Manitou Passage.

"I cried when we moved there," said Mary, who followed Kenneth on various Coast Guard assignments before moving to Point Betsie, "and then I cried when we left."

At its peak the lighthouse was divided into three apartments that housed the families of the head lightkeeper and his two assistants. The practice was discontinued when the light was automated in 1983.

The Keeper's Apartment, located on the second floor, was established by the Friends of Point Betsie Lighthouse. It is available for rental from May through October, with proceeds benefitting the



Mary and daughter Amy recently in the tower

She was curious about what life was like for her ancestors, who left behind a diary and a memoir about their time as light keepers. Although the Keeper's Apartment is furnished with comfortable modern amenities it was easy for her to imagine how they might have lived and worked in the space.

"For years I had wanted to stay there," said Myra, who looks forward to having her local friends visit this summer to experience the unparalleled sunset views from the apartment's many windows.

"We opened the door and went up the stairway and there it was - an 'aha' moment. One of the things we enjoyed most was sharing it with other people who have an interest in the lighthouse. There is some sort of draw there for me. It feels like going on vacation at home."

Does your family have a connection to Point Betsie's light keeping history? Please share your stories at reservations@pointbetsie.org.



Myra and Jim Buzzell pose with Alonzo's Portrait

For information about the Keeper's Apartment visit www.pointbetsie.org/stay.

Change Continues at Point Betsie Lighthouse

Being closed during the 2020 season allowed us to review and amend many aspects of our work. Following the success of our Keeper's Quarters apartment update leading to a fully booked 2021 season, The Friends of Point Betsie Lighthouse sought areas to expand while we had the time to create lasting change. We are aiming to open with guided tours of our ground floor on June 16 and resume access to our tower on July 1. Please keep an eye on our website and social media pages for updates or changes to our intended schedule.

Membership

We have updated our Membership program to include a senior discount as well as various levels of giving. We still have our Basic Annual Membership levels. We have adjusted the price structures to \$30 for Seniors, \$35 for individuals, and \$60 for Families. We have added Annual Leadership Circle Memberships at various tiers. All members will receive our newsletter twice a year and a Point Betsie Lighthouse bumper sticker. Family Membership and all Leadership Circle Annual Memberships will receive two tour tickets. A 15% Gift Shop discount is provided at the

\$250 (Lamplighter) annual level and above. A recognition gift is sent to our members at the \$500 (Beacon) annual level and up. Finally we will be hosting a recognition event for \$1000 (Lifesaver) annual members.

Website

Our website has undergone a significant update. The new site aims to create a platform that is dynamic and interactive for repeat visitors rather than a static repository of information. Our update is ongoing, but please check out our new Sunset Countdown, Virtual Tour, Event Calendar, and much more at www.pointbetsie.org. This new site allows us more freedom to make routine updates and expand what we offer virtually!

Gift Shop

The Keeper's Quarters rental apartment is not the only property getting an update. When our gift shop opens its doors, there will be a new design and layout. We have missed our visitors this past season and are excited to share what we've been working on with them soon. We hope that you make the Point Betsie Lighthouse Gift shop a gift destination. All proceeds go to the

continued restoration and preservation of the lighthouse.

Virtual 5K

We will kick off our virtual *Race to the Light 5K* in late July. This event will be a way for our supporters from all over to engage with us and support the lighthouse. This event asks that you complete a 5K (3.1 miles) by walking or running before the end of our traditional season (October 17). Participants will receive a shirt and medal for a \$25 registration fee. Wear your shirt with pride and share photos from your walk or run on social media. It is our hope that this event evolves into an in person event to kick off our 2022 season. Please keep an eye on our website and social media pages for information on registration.

USLHS Grant

Point Betsie Lighthouse was one of 35 Lighthouses across the nation to receive the \$1,000 United States Lighthouse Society Emergency Relief Grant. This will assist us in our operational budget as we prepare for opening. We greatly appreciate the assistance and the USLHS creating this opportunity for lighthouses.

An Update on our Shoreline Protection System

Over the course of the winter the water level in Lake Michigan has thankfully receded by ten inches or so. While that is a helpful and wonderful short-term blessing, it cannot responsibly be assumed to be permanent, or even a harbinger of more to come. So, our efforts to address the SPS repairs remain in urgent mode.



Lower water levels increase the visibility of the damage

with a matching-grant program requiring local participation. More details will follow as this continues to unfold, but in the meantime, please contact Board President Dick Taylor with any specific questions at rrtaylor57@gmail.com.

Thank you for your continued support!

Moving this project forward is complicated. We have solicited the input of several relevant permitting agencies to enroll them as early as possible in the process and to try to avoid unnecessary delays and expenses. With their input, we now have the most recently completed version of the amendment to our Historic Structures Report. That will be used as the basis for soliciting a more detailed engineering study, which itself will be necessary to solicit bids for the actual work. Only after this process is complete will we have firm cost numbers. The responsible repair options are all expected to be significantly more expensive than the original rough estimates from 2019, so substantially more funding will need to be raised. We are currently looking at various governmental programs for help, but expect the end result to be some form of public/private partnership,

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Photo by Kristina Lishawa

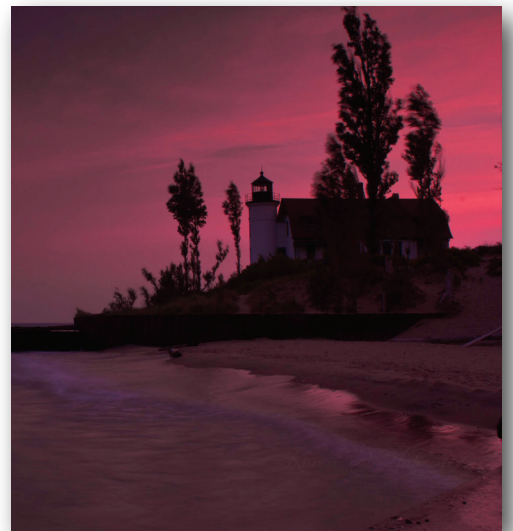


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Photo by Jay Burt

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Alan Zetterberg in memory of Ruth Ann Millikan

Become a Friend of Point Betsie Lighthouse!

Point Betsie Lighthouse is maintained through the support of many generous people from near and far who treasure our historic site and the memories made over generations on our sandy beach. Although we believe our decision to close the Lighthouse for the summer of 2020 was the correct strategy, we unfortunately lost essential revenue from our Gift Shop and public tours. We are also continuing our Capital Campaign, which raises funds to support critical infrastructure repairs that will protect Point Betsie from rising and ravaging Lake Michigan waters. We need you more than ever!

There are several ways you can support Point Betsie:

- Purchase individual or family memberships, which help cover operational expenses
- Donate in memory or in honor of a loved one
- Make a directed contribution to our Capital Campaign

To make a donation please return the enclosed envelop. If you prefer to donate electronically, please visit us at www.pointbetsie.org and click on "Support">"Make a Contribution." As always, you are welcome to contact us directly via email at pointbetsie@gmail.com. Thank you for your support!

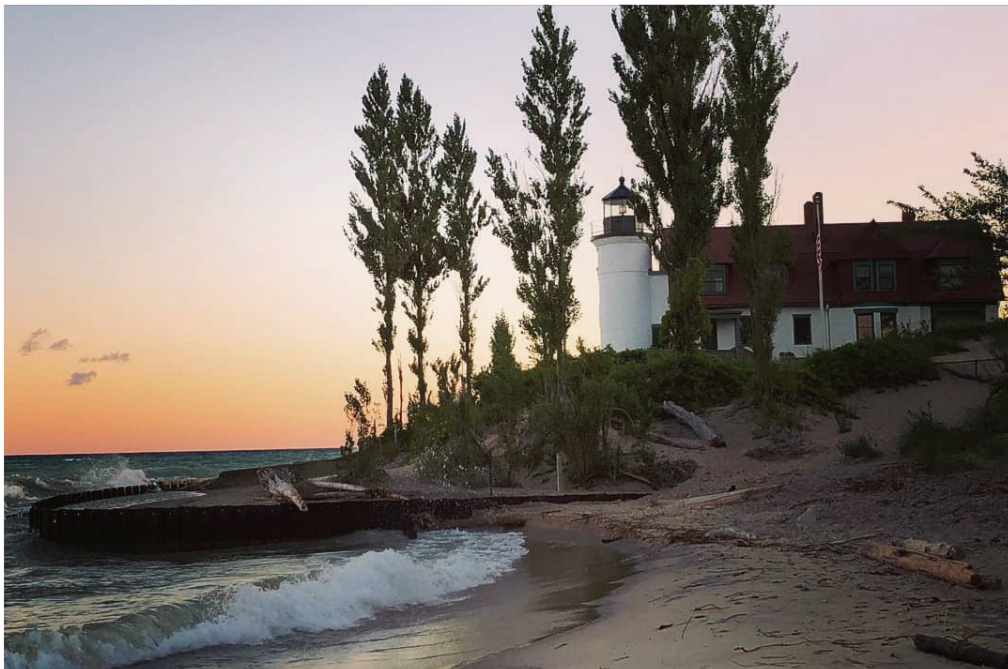


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Now that we are open, we hope that you will come visit us or volunteer! If you are interested in volunteering please visit pointbetsie.org/volunteer or contact us at staff@pointbetsie.org. Please remember to keep an eye on our website and our social media pages for any updates about our summer season. We have missed you and hope to see you soon!