

Sable Points Beacon



Fall 2009

Sable Points Lighthouse Keepers Association, splka.org

A Day in the Life of North Breakwater Lighthouse Keepers

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“Sooo..., what’s it like working at the North Breakwater?”

North Breakwater veterans frequently find themselves addressing Big Sable and Little Sable keepers’ curiosity about the latest SPLKA acquisition. North Break-



water has been the most visible of the Ludington-area lighthouses for generations of residents and vacationers, but until two summers ago the tower’s interior was an inaccessible enigma. While the North Breakwater lighthouse can’t boast the height or 19th-Century pedigree of either Big

Sable or Little Sable, the “leaning tower of Ludington” has a charm and heritage all its own. SPLKA keepers are uniquely positioned to introduce visitors to this legendary jewel of the Ludington waterfront; a day at the end of

the pier offers keepers a wealth of adventures unique to the North Breakwater’s location and his-

tory. All day long, North Breakwater keepers find themselves surrounded by a whirlwind of activities in the air, in the harbor, and on the pier. While Big Sable and Little Sable keepers get accustomed to sea-gull-watching from high above the birds, North Break-



water keepers get a birds-eye view of the gulls swooping near the lantern room and practicing their diving and fishing skills below. Be on the lookout, because Coast Guard helicopters **continued on page 3**



President's Message

It has been a productive and busy summer. Thank you to all volunteers who, when cancellations occurred, stepped in to help out. I know Carmen is especially thankful.

On July 3, I had the extreme pleasure to be among some of the best minds around. We assembled at Big Sable to hear expert opinions regarding our seawall. Each individual present will be a valuable asset to this project. Those present included Dick Smith, Owner of Ludington Plumbing and past President of SPLKA; Al Hardman, previously of Hardman Construction (Dick and Al were both instrumental in saving BSP in 1985-86 and have donated their time, sweat equity, and money to saving Big Sable Point Lighthouse.); Anne Smith, Naval Engineer with Wilcox Professional Services (Anne is my cousin and Dick's daughter. She has donated her time and expertise to recommend ideas that will fit within our limited budget.); Robert Sperling, who has been SPLKA's Restoration/Maintenance Director for many years (He is very knowledgeable about lighthouses and is an excellent resource. We can thank Dick Smith for bringing Robert to us.); Doug Buikema, a new Board Member who will take office in Jan. 2010 (I have seen Doug working side by side with Robert. He will be an excellent asset to SPLKA and will probably be the seawall liaison for this project.); and Ric Heller, my husband, who has been a lifetime member since 1987 (Ric joined me for this meeting as an interested bystander and my extra set of ears.).

To have these great minds all together at one time to discuss our seawall is PRICELESS. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for giving of your time and rendering your opinions - especially on a busy holiday weekend.

Thank you again to all of our members and keepers for your continued support. Special thanks to the Little Sable Seekers for all of their ongoing support. Thank you also to current and future board members; your support means a great deal to me. We would not be successful today without your help.

As Always, Ceil

The Reeds at Big Sable Point



Having Todd and Brad Reed visit Big Sable Point for a photography workshop is always a special occasion. This July's evening on the beach was no exception. The evening was filled with examples and great photography tips. Those present were first-hand recipients of Brad and Todd's photo tip of the month for August, "Our **photo tip of the month** ... has to do with the concept of **immediacy**. One of the most

important tools we use in building our compositions is making sure there is something immediate or close to the camera... Compositions that have immediacy also appear much more three dimensional. The viewer will feel like they are really "there" and not just looking at a picture." Enjoy Brad's example of immediacy in his photograph of Todd and Big Sable Point Lighthouse - and our photo of him taking this picture.



Tiffany Radka, our wonderful plover steward at Big Sable Point, reports that of the 12 plover eggs that hatched, only 1 did not fledge!

Volunteer Keeper Applications Due October 1st

Volunteer Keeper applications for the 2010 season are coming due on October 1. If you haven't returned yours, please do so as soon as possible, so that we can begin planning for a wonderful 2010! If you're just now thinking about volunteering as a keeper at one of the lights, please e-mail Carmen Tiffany as soon as possible at splkavol@t-one.net or leave a message for her at 231 845-7343. We'll do our best to be sure that all who volunteer have a chance to serve!

A Day in the Life of North Breakwater Lighthouse Keepers, continued from page 1

occasionally drop “victims” and divers into the harbor during air-sea rescue exercises. A riot of water craft navigate in and out of the harbor throughout the day under sail, motor, and manual control. Sailors, wave runners, and kayakers wave to keepers as they pass the pier and make way for the occasional



dredge, barge, or construction vessel.

Despite the continuous parade of vessels, interacting with visitors offers perhaps the most rewarding aspect of a day at North Breakwater. Locals, anglers, and vacationers from across the nation and around the globe visit the lighthouse during their visits to the pier. Many of these visitors have lived or vaca-

tioned in the Ludington area for years, and their eyes dance at the chance to finally see the inside of the lighthouse. These visits often include animated tales of Ludington history, past harbor activity, and earlier versions of pier construction.

Other advantages await SPLKA keepers during their North Breakwater tours. Although keepers generally pack their lunches, the concession stand at the foot of the pier offers an excuse for a midday stroll down the pier. For those who enjoy chatting up visitors on a more personal and less “historical” level, the North Breakwater’s relatively recent construction and proximity to “civilization” reduces the amount of historical information you might feel obligated to master. The

limited gift shop inventory and low-tech accounting procedures offer an attractive alternative for those intimidated by the cash register and larger inventory at Big Sable. Morning and evening strolls down the pier and a much shorter tower offer North Breakwater keepers a daily workout that’s easier on the legs than climbs of the taller towers. Furthermore, altitudinally challenged keepers find the North Breakwater lantern room surprisingly palatable. Also, the chance to serve for just one week enables keepers to schedule their tours more flexibly and to combine a week at the North Breakwater with a week at Little Sable or two weeks at Big Sable.

North Breakwater keepers enjoy very comfortable accommodations in the former state park superintendent’s residence. The location of the residence affords easy access to the state

park and Hamlin Lake during off-duty hours. As an added bonus, the day often begins and ends with visits from deer families nesting in a nearby grove of trees.



The Ludington North Breakwater lighthouse offers a unique volunteer experience for seasoned keepers and newbies alike. There’s nothing quite like showing a wide-eyed resident or regular vacationer around a legendary building they never imagined having the chance to visit. For a unique experience that offers variety and unexpected surprises, keep the North Breakwater in mind as you plan your future tours.

Lighthouse Travel Tips: North Point Lighthouse, Milwaukee, Wisconsin by Nancy Hallenbeck

After spending a wonderful Thanksgiving weekend with my extended family, what could make a more perfect ending to our trip than a visit to a lighthouse! Because my brother and his family live in Milwaukee, we have tried to visit the North Point Lighthouse in the past. Little did we know that this was a lighthouse up on a hillside overlooking Lake Michigan, not a lighthouse on the shoreline. After searching the shoreline and the loca-

tion of "Lake Park," we discovered the beautifully restored monument on a main street - even decorated for the holidays. The lighthouse is quite easy to find if one follows the lakeshore several miles north of downtown Milwaukee. It is visible right from Wahl Avenue, the street on the western edge of Lake Park. Unlike our SPLKA lights, this lighthouse has been restored as a museum and meeting area. One of the association volunteers gra-

ciously allowed us to tour the inside, climb to the top of the tower - and even shop in their gift shop! Nice display cases have been made to house the lighthouse's bell and lens. Check the North Point

Lighthouse's website for hours of operation—www.northpointlighthouse.org.

**Six Degrees of Separation**

How many times have you met someone at the lighthouses and found people from your past? Tell us your stories, and enjoy the pictures we've included here. The top picture is of Mark Hallenbeck and Dave Yakowich. Dave is a Ludington neighbor of Bill and Shirley Mitchell; he and Mark discovered that they grew up just a few blocks from each other and probably even attended the same kindergarten! The bottom picture is of Sue Leonard of Maumee, Ohio, and Shirley Mitchell. Sue was the Mitchells' son's 2nd-grade teacher in Maumee! Small world!

**2010 Annual Dinner Meeting**

SPLKA's 2010 annual dinner meeting will take place on Saturday, May 15, 2010, at 6:30 p.m. Mark the date on your calendar! We'll be returning this year to Ludington's Harbor View Marina. Our guest speaker will be a representative of DeTour Reef Lighthouse. Expect your invitation and reservation form to arrive via mail in early April.

Also, again in 2010, we'll be having a silent auction. If you wish to donate an item, please contact Ceil Heller at ciellpn28@aol.com, or leave a message for her at 231 845-7343.

A BIG SABLE CHRISTMAS

To keep your lighthouse memories warm this winter, available for purchase are packets of five blank note cards (with envelopes) depicting Big Sable Lighthouse festooned for the holidays. The note cards are the work of lighthouse artist and SPLKA member, Bill Mitchell. Also available is this imported, hand-painted glass, Big Sable Christmas ornament in its own presentation box. Quantities of both items are limited, so order soon! Prices include shipping and sales tax, and payment may be made by cash, check, or money order. Please use the order form below. Allow two weeks for delivery.



Name: _____
 Street Address/PO Box: _____
 City, State: _____ Zip code: _____
 Phone number: _____ E-mail address: _____
 Mail form and payment to: SPLKA, PO Box 673, Ludington, MI 49431

Item	Quantity (please fill in)	Price per item	Subtotal/Total (please fill in)
Mitchell Note Card Packet		\$6.00	
Big Sable Ornament		\$11.00	
TOTAL			



**Sable Points Lighthouse Keepers
Association
P.O. Box 673
Ludington, MI 49431**

Keeper Applications Due October 1st!

**Sable Points Lighthouse Keepers Association
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