I met Tom and his lovely wife, Bonnie about 1995. We went to dinner a few times over the years and this past winter we joined them in a Bible Study every other Sunday evening. Had some great times together.

I knew Tom was raised in Ludington, MI and that his father, Francis K Bourisseau was a judge in Ludington for 45 years. They also knew we were Lighthouse Keepers for SPLKA, but all of a sudden it clicked that Tom’s grandfather, Frank Bourisseau and his great grandfather, Lewis E. Bourisseau, were both keepers of the Ludington North Breakwater Light. Likely stationed at the Ludington Coast Guard Station. That got the ball rolling! Tom has a beautifully framed sketch of the six lighthouses his grandfather’s served as keepers. Tom got on the phone with his uncle, Zane Bourisseau, son of his grandfather, Frank Bourisseau from Ohio, gathered information, photos and documents, and we are both very anxious to complete our Interview and research.

Tom had never met his Great Grandfather, Lewis Bourisseau but since his recent research he has grown to appreciate and honor his great grandfather as one of the first keepers in the early 1800’s attributing his time in serving as a lighthouse keeper.

Tom remembers as a young boy walking out to
the North Breakwater Lighthouse with Grandfather Frank Bourisseau.

**Great Grandfather Lewis E Bourisseau**
1st Asst 8-9-1886-1-4-1891 Prmtd.  
Act. Kpr 1-4-1891-25-6-1891 Perm  
Appt. Kep. 25-6-1891 – 26-7--1915 Rsgd  
2nd Asst 7-2-1899 – 1-7-1899 Rsgd  
5th Asst 4-6-1901 – 7-9-1901 Chicago  
Harbor

**Grandfather, Frank M. Bourisseau born 1894 died 1977**
Poverty Island from 1928 – 1929  
South Fox Island 2nd Asst 1928-July. 1 -1937  
Ludington North Breakwater Light 1st Asst. 1-7-1937 – 1940.  
Milwaukee North Point Wisconsin stationed under the US Coast Guard from 1-7-1940-1941  
Trsfd.  
Chicago Breakwater Light 1941-1947  
Muskegon Pier Lighthouse 1947 Retired.

Already, Tom and Bonnie are visiting the Lighthouse in Aug 2010 along with their application to become future volunteers of SPLKA.

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As the Interview unfolds we learn that Tom was a cook at Epworth in the summers of 1954 -1955. Tom: 1st row on left with the Chef’s hat.

Bonnie and Tom were interviewed by Coordinator, Carmelitta Tiffany of SPLKA. It happen to be our half day off so the 4 of us ventured to the gate at Epworth and Tom simply told the guard he was a cook at Epworth in the 50’s and asked if we could visit the premises. We walked around the old hotel which opened in 1894 and soon picked up a chat with one of the Cottage owners, Mary June Wilkinson and she invited us to her lovely home where we captured many beautiful photos.

The following week my husband and I toured the museum and hand delivered a group photo of the cooks from the 50’s to the museum director, Duane Wolf. During our visit the director printed a photo of the South Breakwater Light dated, 1909 which we have never seen.
before and we are researching the possibility of this move from SBL to NBL, never the less we were once again delighted to capture a new photo.

We presented a written request to be submitted in the last edition of Epworth’s news letter year 2010 as a plea for an original photo of BSPL tower in yellow limestone brick before the steel clad was installed in 1900. Hopefully over the winter months we might be able to obtain a photo.

We were also asked if we would like to attend one of the resident’s monthly meetings and again make a plea for the search of the photo.

We were invited to be guests speakers at one of Epworth’s association meetings in 2011 to present the history of SPLKA, and invited to join their Genealogy Committee. It seems like a new adventure unfolds weekly with Tom Bourisseau’s findings.

Tom’s uncle, Zane Bourisseau from OH, sent Tom a CD with 675 scanned documents from the late 1800’s and a CD of the latest renovation of SO Fox Island light which we passed on to the Terry Peppers web-site.

Tom is in the process of further research, waiting for a reply from The National Personnel Records, “Civilian Records Facility”, St Louis MO. and from the National Archives in Washington, DC, “Registers of Lighthouse Keepers, 1845-1912” available on 6 rolls of microfilm and possibly the Michigan State Library in Lansing, MI. Tom has searched via the Internet and found many relatives as Lighthouse Keepers on the shores of Lake Michigan and Little Sable Point Lighthouse, dating back to 140 years.
At one time in Tom’s adult life he had in his possession a beautiful brass clock which was handed down from Grandfather Frank Bourisseau to Francis Bourisseau and then to Tom. On the back of the clock it is written *Sept 25, 1909 Chelsea Mass # 59406 US Lighthouse Estab*. Since Tom didn’t have a big interest in Lighthouse History as a young man, he gave the clock to a personal friend who was much involved in nautical memorabilia.

With Tom’s rising interest these past few months, he wondered to himself, “Do I dare to ask for the clock to be returned to me?” In September of 2010, Tom’s friend, Jack Cooper, gladly returned the clock and it is now beautifully displayed in their home today. Jack’s reply was, “Since you have Indian Heritage, I can classify you as an Indian Giver!”

We just recently discovered that Tom’s Grandfather Frank and 2nd Great Grandfather, Lewis Bourisseau were also keepers of LSPL but not certain of the year. We are still searching past records.

Our last discovery unfolded 9 generations, titled, “Ancestors of Thomas Bourisseau” dating back to 1733. Prepared by Family History Research Service.
Grandpa Frank Bourisseau

**South Breakwater Light est. 1910**

If anyone reading this Interview should happen to have any insight on the Bourisseau legacy of NBL and LSPL, please contact me with your information. We would love to add this to the Interview.

NBL 2010