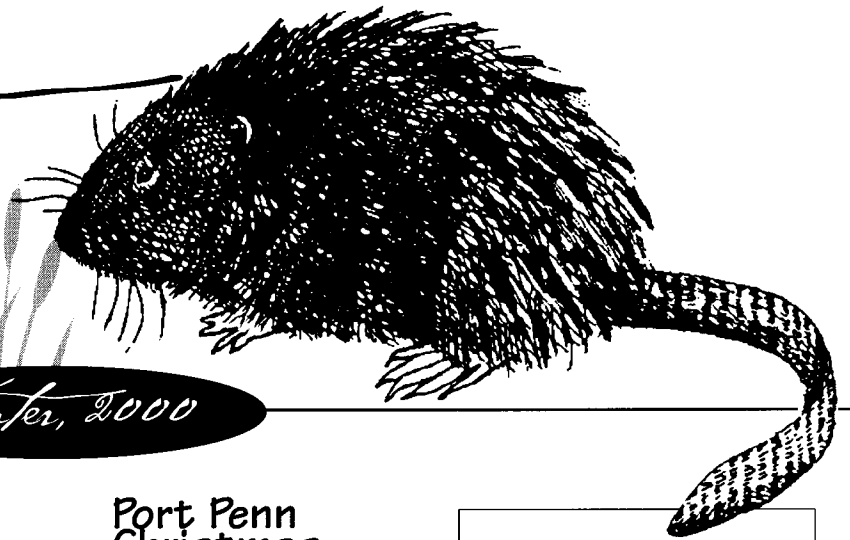


Port Pennings

Winter, 2000

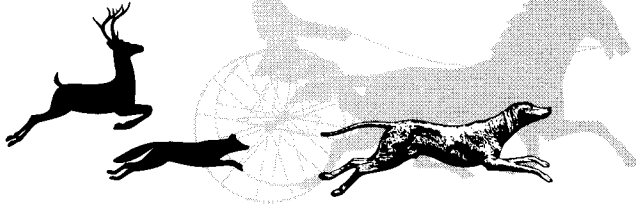


From the President

Clyde Roberts

I would just like to take a moment to say thank you to all the members and friends of the Port Penn Historical Society. Your support and effort has made 1999 a successful year and it is greatly appreciated. We could not have done it with you. Some of our projects included the annual Marshland Dinner; the creation of the Port Penn Area Preservation Coalition made up of all the organizations in the village to bring to life the goals outlined in the Port Penn Master Plan with special emphasis on creating a buffer zone around the town; the establishment of a tree planting committee for the purpose of beautifying the village by planting trees; and commissioning an outdoor wood sculpture by Jacquin Smolens to be installed in the village. This has all been accomplished only because you cared and got involved. Let's all continue to work together and make the year 2000 even better.

Port Penn Area Preservation Coalition



People living in the Port Penn area are blessed with relative isolation from the hurly-burly of rapidly growing, increasingly congested Delaware. Since the 1700s the Village of Port Penn has been somewhat physically isolated by its location along the river, surrounded by marshlands and farm fields. This isolation accounts to a great extent for the preservation of Port Penn's way of life and its physical integrity as a village, but is now threatened by the rapid and basically unplanned suburban development beginning to engulf our area of New Castle County. The Port Penn community has responded by forming a coalition (including the Civic Association and expected to include other important institutions in the area) to create a protected buffer around the Village. This project is supported by strong community sentiment as well as by the Port Penn Master Plan, Port Penn Preservation Project, Phase II, and other studies and reports. Coalition members have begun to meet with owners of area properties to discuss preservation possibilities. The State of Delaware Division of Parks and Recreation has provided strong support, and the Coalition is hoping for equally strong support from the New Castle County government and other public and private organizations. Your help is needed. Please contact Alan Muller (834-3466) or Linda Beck (834-7525).

Port Penn Christmas Party a Smash Hit!

by Kim Burdick

Fifty-six members of the Port Penn Historical Society came from as far away as Radnor, Pennsylvania for the Port Penn Christmas party, Sunday, December 5, hosted by Bill & Doris Duncan at their 1908 Liston Point Lighthouse. Historical Society members were thrilled to climb to the top levels of the Liston Point Lighthouse where the view on this warm and sunny afternoon was magnificent. The beautiful white and gray Liston Point Lighthouse is a Victorian four-square with original wainscoting and cabinetry and was festively decorated with greens and holly, and many wonderful family heirlooms from both Bill's and Doris's families as well as a number of very special items related to the history of the Lighthouse, including a ship model made by the last keeper of the Liston Point Lighthouse, Harry Spencer.

This wonderful celebration was catered by Brockson Caterers of Middletown, and on the Historical Society Christmas celebration committee were Linda Beck, Carlene Lewandowski, Tracy Beck and Kim Burdick. Door prizes included books by Doris Duncan and Jim Goudy and Kim Ruth, and a framed reproduction of a poster advertising the river boat, the Thomas Clyde. This event was such a big hit, that one member, John Ringer, suggests doing a quarterly house tour!

Port Penn Area Dates to Remember

Below are dates for future Historical Society meetings & events at the Museum sponsored by DNREC.

Port Penn Interpretive Center Open
Wednesday through Sunday,
First weekend in June
through Labor Day
Weekends only in September
Hours: Wednesday through Sunday,
10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
(302) 836-2533

Visit old one-room schoolhouse at Port Penn now a folk museum
Sponsored by Division of Parks & Recreation

Ongoing Programs at Port Penn Interpretive Center

Walking the Wetland Trail
Saturdays at 2:00 p.m.

Port Penn Village Tour
Sundays at 2:00 p.m.

Muskrats A-Z
Thursdays at 2:00 p.m.

A Siege of Herons
Saturdays at 11:30 a.m.

Open House at the Port Penn Interpretive Center
Saturday, May 20, 2000
Sponsored by Division of Parks & Recreation

Port Penn Area Historical Society Quarterly Meeting
Wednesday, April 5, 2000
7:00 p.m.
Port Penn Interpretive Center

Open to the public.
PLEASE JOIN US.

Lighthouses and Buoys mark the roadway on the Delaware River

Excerpted from an article written by the late Bob Beck for the Island Paper, November, 1987

To realize the important role that navigational aids play in today's shipping and boating, one has to think back to what it was like for the first sailing ship to work its way up this uncharted waterway. This had to be done in daylight and with only the aid of a sounding line. After a few trips up the river, these early sailors charted their course by the use of landmarks and again in daylight, they moved from point to point, up or down the river, which reduced the sailing time by many days. In later years after the deep water or channel had been located and charted in the Delaware River, lighthouses were constructed throughout the entire river basin.

We should take an imaginary boat trip from the Atlantic Ocean to the Delaware Memorial Bridge. Keep in mind that every lighthouse and buoy has a way of identifying itself. This is laid out this way so that the navigator knows what light signals they are seeing. They then can find it on their charts and use it to plot the ship's position.

In the Delaware, there are six basic signals we will see or hear that will keep us on course as we move up the channel in the middle of the night. These are (1) fixed, a steady light; (2) flashing, at different time intervals (in seconds); (3) colored lights, white and red; (4) group occultating, a fixed light with two periods of darkness at regular intervals; (5) fog horns and bells; and (6) red sectors.

As we move past the Harbor of Refuge at Lewes, Delaware and proceed up the bay as far as Bombay Hook Point, we will have been guided by four huge lighthouses. These structures are built on man-made islands and were constructed in a tall circular shape to ward off storm waves and high wind pressures. The Ship John light is the last of this type of light we will see on our voyage up the river and is located about 7 miles north on the Liston Range. We identified it from the navigational chart as follows: Ship Joan Shoals - (FL. 6 SEC. - 50 ft. - HORN MAR 15 to DEC 15.) meaning Ship John's white light flashes every 6 seconds. It is 50 feet high from mean high water between the months of March and December.

Keep in mind as we travel between these large offshore lighthouses that we have passed many small buoys in between, each one flashing its light to keep us on course. When moving up

the channel, the green can buoy is always on the left and the red on the right, and they are each numbered to further aid navigation.

The Liston Range is over 23 miles long and is the most powerful of all the range lights on the Delaware. Instead of following one flashing light as we did in the lower bay, we now have two lights. When these lights line up, it will guide our craft safely up the deep-water channel.

The front light on this range is located at Bay View Beach and is a 6-second equal interval flashing light, 45 feet high. The rear light is located four miles back in the country on Port Penn Road near Biddles corner. It is a fixed light and is 176 feet high. We will follow this set of lights until the river starts to bend. At this point, two more lights will line up. We will then leave the Liston Range and enter into the Baker Range for a distance of just a little over a mile. As the channel starts to bend again, we will see behind us another set of range lights lining up called the Reedy Island Range, which is over four miles long. The front light is at the mouth of the Appoquinimink River and is 22 feet high with a quick flashing light. The rear lighthouse is located at Taylor's Bridge and is a fixed light standing 134 feet above the ground.

The Finns Point Rear Range in Pennsville Township on the New Jersey side was discontinued in 1950 after dredging changed the channel making the Finns Point Range obsolete. The Reedy Island Range marks the new alignment. Thereafter, are the New Castle Range, the Bar Range, the Deepwater Point Range and the Cherry Island Range on which the Delaware Memorial Bridge is located.

Additionally, there are many buoys and an occasional red sector to move us safely along. A red sector is a fixed light that turns red if a vessel gets off course near any sunken obstacle such as a jetty, wreck, or shallow water. This is a warning to move back on course or until the light turn white again.

A few years back these lighthouses were all manned. It had to be a labor of love, for those keepers spent weeks alone performing their duties. Today, all the lights are automatic, but they still bring a smile to all seafaring men when they see that twinkle of light on the horizon.

Bay View Beach

By Doris Duncan

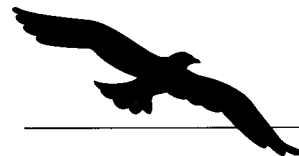
The village of Bay View is situated south of Port Penn, Delaware on Route 9 on the shore of the Delaware River. Sarah Ridgeway Burbridge inherited the land, known as Bay View farm, in 1903. Her second husband, Michael O'Rourke joined her, and they resided in a cottage in the area now identified as Lot #2.

Soon after inheriting the property, Sarah Burbridge sold a portion of the land to the United States government to build the Liston Range Front Lighthouse. By 1914, ten lots with cottages, houseboats or tents had been established and rented from the Burbridges. Gradually more cottages were built on rented lots.

In June 1924, the farm was auctioned by the Orphans Court of Delaware. At that time members of the community each contributed \$1,000 for the purchase of the property, the cottages and a farmhouse. Subsequent to the purchase of the property a certificate of incorporation was issued in the name of the Bay View Improvement Company in September, 1924, and the investors were issued stock in this new corporation. Bay View became a popular summer resort. In 1931 a community house was built in which dances, suppers, bingo parties, community meetings and Sunday school were held. From the shoreline, swimming, boating, fishing and crabbing were among the other popular activities. It was a close-knit community.

Storms, always a major concern at Bay View, completely destroyed ten cottages at the north end of the community in 1933. As a result, the remaining cottages were moved back from the river and a seawall was gradually constructed along the entire waterfront to protect the community.

Today most of the 40 waterfront cottages including the farmhouse located on the road into Bay View are occupied by full time residents. The community is served by a county sewer system and water is provided by the Artesian Water Company. The residents continue to enjoy the same water related activities that first attracted visitors so many years ago.



Doris Duncan is a native Delawarean who was raised in Talleyville. She graduated from P.S. Dupont High School in 1947 and from the University of Delaware. She has served on the Board of Directors of the Bay View Improvement Company. Her interests include watercolor painting, genealogy and local history and she was an early life member of the Port Penn Historical Society. In 1998, Doris published the book, "A History of Bay View Beach". Her keen interest in history and preservation are reflected in the Liston Front Range Lighthouse, the residence she shares with her husband Bill in Bay View.

Liston Range Front Lighthouse

by William H. Duncan, M.D.



The Liston Range Front Lighthouse was developed after 1904 when the channel in the Delaware River/Bay was changed and the Port Penn Front Lighthouse, located on Route 9 below Port Penn just south of Augustine Creek became obsolete. Port Penn Historical Society member Bill Duncan's grandfather, George Washington Duncan was Keeper of the Port Penn light from 1885 until 1906. Bill's father, Silas Blake Irwin Duncan, the last son of George and Anne Jane Duncan, was born in that house on June 1, 1894.

The lighthouse was laid out on a portion of the Bay View farm, with the appropriate right-of-ways, the land having been purchased by the United States government from Sarah Ridgeway Burbridge, owner of the farm, in 1904.

Plans were developed and contracts let for a lighthouse, oil-house, outhouse and barn in 1905. A temporary light was mounted on a wooden pole to guide the newly directed river traffic. An oil house was located near the temporary light. The light itself was a kerosene Baldwin locomotive headlight. The house, barn and oil house/privy were built from 1906 to 1908. The records of the United States Lighthouse Service list George Washington Duncan as the first Keeper. During this period however Keeper Duncan and his family continued to live at the Port Penn Light.

The Liston Lighthouse is a Victorian foursquare design, a working man's architecture of the time with none of the excessive interior or exterior ornamentation usually attributed to the Victorian era. The interior woodwork is of chestnut wood and the mantels are white oak. The floors are red (heart) pine. The house was first occupied in December, 1908, by Keeper Edward H. Long and family. The light was first displayed on December 22, 1908. A

Fresnel lens was mounted in the light room on the fourth story of the house. A kerosene lamp mounted behind the lens illuminated the light.

Shutters were mounted in front of the lens and operated by ratchets and weights on chains, much like a grandfather's clock mechanism, which hung in a chase from the light room to the basement. This operated the shutters to open and shut every three seconds. The weight and chain had to be reset by the Keeper every twenty-four hours.

The Liston Range Light is a steady beam located on top of the 176 foot steel tower, located near what is now the Ches Del Diner, on Port Penn Road. To stay in the channel river traffic lined up the two lights, one over the other, to move safely up the channel of the Delaware River/Bay.

In the home, a wood stove and water pump were put in the kitchen. In 1935 a central coal burning furnace, an interior bathroom and electricity were installed in the house. The beacon was also electrified with batteries as a backup.

Erosion by storms has always been a serious problem. In 1911 a wall was built, to protect the lighthouse. This wall collapsed in 1913. A heavier wall was built and in 1915 it was supported by riprap, large irregular stones to break water action and perpendicular jetties, also with riprap, were constructed.

In the early 1930s, a lodge of the International Order of Odd Fellows developed a club house on the property of the Bay View Improvement Company just south of the lighthouse. The clubhouse was called "The Triple Link Club." Many social activities were held at this club, dinners and dances, as well as the many activities that would be associated with a waterfront club, swimming and boating.

During World War II, troops from Battery C, 261st Coast Artillery Battalion (Harbor Defense) (Separate), a Delaware National Guard Unit from Sussex County, were stationed at the lighthouse using the Triple Link Club, south of the lighthouse, as their headquarters, day room and mess hall. The troops lived in pyramidal tents west of the Club. Two permanent gun emplacements and a magazine were constructed on lighthouse grounds to guard against attack from any effort by the enemy approaching Wilmington or Philadelphia from the river. A range finder tower was also erected on the lighthouse property.

When electric service became more dependable, around 1950, a steel tower, with the navigational light mounted on top was erected in the front yard. An emergency power pack was placed on one of the gun emplacements. The house was abandoned from 1952 to 1954. It became private property when Kathleen Skelton, later Herbert, purchased the property by auction from the United States Government. Her niece, Eleanor Hardin, inherited the property on Mrs. Herbert's death. In 1998, William Herbert Duncan, Keeper George Washington Duncan's grandson and son of S. B. I. Duncan purchased the property from Mrs. Hardin. Bill and his wife Doris plan to preserve the Liston Range Lighthouse as a historic property.

(Bill Duncan's bio is located on the following page.)

Membership Application

Port Penn Area Historical Society P.O. Box 120 Port Penn, Delaware 19731

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ Fax _____ Email _____

Membership Categories Individual \$5.00 Joint (Husband and Wife) \$7.50 Family \$10.00 Life \$100.00

I/We would like to volunteer help with Port Penn Activities.

The Port Penn Area Historical Society Newsletter is interested in your comments and ideas. Please write or call.
Please return this form with your remittance to the above address. For information call: (302) 762-6472



Port Penn Tree Planting Project

Tim Kaden, Division of Parks & Recreation, met with committee chairperson, Carlene Lewandowski on November 3rd to tour the village and note the properties of individuals who have requested trees. Mr. Kaden will provide expertise in identifying species that are appropriate for individual sites. Plans include planting six trees on the Campbell property directly across from the Port Penn Interpretive Center. They also reviewed old photographs of the Cleaver House, located on the corner of Market and Congress Streets, noting the species of trees that were popular in earlier times.

The goal is bring back the feeling the town used to have when the streets were lined with big, beautiful, mature shade trees. Over the years many trees were neglected, diseased or just not properly cared for. The committee hopes to enlist the help of the residents in the village in the future caring of the newly planted trees.



William H. Duncan, M.D., an early life member of the Port Penn Historical Society, is a native Delawarean who was raised in old New Castle and Wilmington. He graduated in 1947 from P. S. Dupont High School and from the United States Military Academy, West Point, New York. He retired from the Delaware National Guard as a Major General and from St. Francis Hospital, Wilmington, as Vice President of Medical Affairs. Bill has served on the Board of Directors of the Bay View Improvement Company. In addition to his research on lighthouses, Bill pursues his hobby of military research and has had several magazine articles published about World War II. Bill resides at the Liston Range Front Lighthouse in Bay View and in Wilmington with his wife Doris.

New Delaware Books

Guiding Lights of the Delaware River & Bay

by Jim Gowdy & Kim Ruth

A comprehensive book that covers every lighthouse and lightship every built in the Delaware River and Bay. To order, send a check for \$28.45 (includes postage & handling) to Jim Gowdy, 2615 Fifth Avenue, Sweetwater, NJ 08037

A History of Bay View Beach

by Doris Duncan

Includes many pictures, a chronological history of ownership of each cottage plus personal stories gathered from past and present residents. To order, send a check for \$15.00 (includes postage & handling) to Doris Duncan, Liston Range Front Lighthouse, 1600 Belts Road, Middletown, DE 19709

Town and Country New Castle

by Kevin Fleming and Nancy E. Lynch

Delaware's own award-winning photographer Kevin Fleming and writer Nancy E. Lynch have combined their talents to produce a pictorial sampler of New Castle with commentary. To order, send a check for \$40.00 (includes postage & handling) to Nancy E. Lynch, Box 9, RR 3, Bethel, DE 11931. Also available at the same price are *The Colors of Kent* and *The Beaches of Delaware and Historic Sussex County*.

Baseball Display Added to Port Penn Interpretive Center

By Michael Miller

Delaware Folklife Program, Division of Parks and Recreation

A new exhibit, on baseball in Port Penn's past, recently improved the displays at the Interpretive Center. Created from historic baseball jerseys donated by Bill Marshall, Jr., the display features this little-known aspect of our community's life. In the first part of the century, local leagues were a part of a town's day-to-day life, although few teams exist today.

The Port Penn "Peaches" won the 1916 state independent league championship. The display features the jersey of center fielder Conard Dyer who also served as relief pitcher. The exhibit also includes a photograph of the 1916 team and newspaper excerpts detailing some of the games the team played. Dyer and his teammates were local celebrities of a sort, and the team was known as a powerhouse. When they played at Augustine Beach, hundreds of people attended the games. Tourists who visited the area on the steamer "Thomas Clyde" bolstered the crowd on weekends.

Port Penn continued to field teams until after World War II. Yet, changes in the world changed how the local teams were organized. In the 1910s, before roads were very reliable, every



player was from Port Penn. By the 1930s, ball teams, including Port Penn's, had players from Wilmington and other towns on their roster. In fact, a few of the best players were paid to play with a particular team. By the late 1940s, major league baseball had captured the nation's attention through radio, and later, television. By that time, our country had changed, our economy had changed, and our communities had changed. Local league baseball was gone.

Yet community spirit still lives, as shown by Marshall's donation. The jerseys and display help tell Port Penn's story more completely. Bill has helped Port Penn retain an important part of its past.

Thanks are due to Bill Marshall, Jr. for his generosity in donation the jerseys to the Division. More important, they are a gift to the Port Penn community and citizens of the state. We hope the citizens of Port Penn will continue to support the Interpretive Center and think of donation important artifacts to help preserve the town's past.

Port Penn Area Historical Society
P.O. Box 120
Port Penn, Delaware 19731

Address Correction Requested