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DeTour/Drummond Residents Organize to Save Light

by Jim MacLaren

Getting their feet wet seems to be habit-forming for many residents of the DeTour/Drummond Island area as over 30 area residents attended an organizational meeting of the DeTour Reef Light Preservation Society at the Fog Cutter Restaurant on Sunday afternoon.

The event was meant to introduce residents and those interested in preservation of lighthouses and marine artifacts to the possibility that the DeTour Reef Light is on the sales block with the General Services Administration.

Several of the DeTour residents already have their feet wet as efforts are underway to gain the Underwater Preservation in DeTour Harbor area, as well as the Frying Pan Island lights.

The DeTour Reef Light is one of 15 offshore lights to be "excessed" by the General Services Administration in the next 10 years, according to Richard L. Moehl of Ann Arbor, president of the Great Lakes Lighthouse Keepers Association.

Construction was started on the DeTour Reef Light in 1929 and completed in 1931. Attending the meeting was Alfred LeMieux of DeTour, one of the persons that worked on construction of the original project. LeMieux explained the work that had gone into the construction and the pride that the workers had.

Moehl explained how he became aware of the proposed disposition of the Light and that he contacted Bob Jones in DeTour and the two had checked the facility out, both inside and out. "It is in real good shape," said Moehl. "The paint is chipping away inside, but a good scraping and a paint job will have it looking like new."

Primary contacts have been made to start the ball rolling on acquiring the light. Moehl, Jones and several area residents, including Barb Snider of the Fog Cutter, Jim Charles a retired worker from the Corps of Engineers and Jeri Baron Felner of Drummond Island have started working on the "paperwork trail."

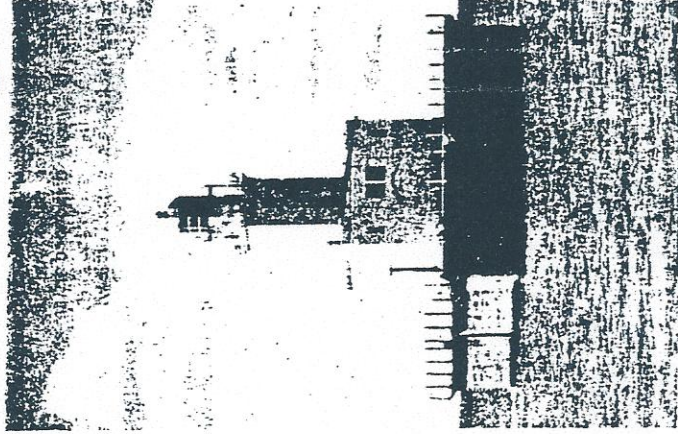
The group started organizing the DeTour Reef Light Preservation Society and elected their officers at a meeting prior to the public gathering, where a slide presentation of several Great Lakes Lighthouses was featured. Named as president is Bob Jones, while Jim Charles will be vice president and Jeri Baron Felner, the secretary. Barb Snider will handle the treasurers duties. Moehl will serve as a director for the organization.

Members reviewed proposed by-laws and made corrections and improvements at their Sunday meeting. Fundraising possibilities were also discussed for the coming season. Memberships, dues, memorabilia, cruises, when the fiscal year would be and a million-and-one other issues were on the agenda Sunday.

The next meeting of the organization will be conducted at Noon Saturday, January 17, 1998 at the Fog Cutter Restaurant in DeTour Village. New members are invited to attend and bring their questions and interests with them.

After their business meeting was completed, the members invited guests present to watch the slide presentation and then held a question and answer session following the slide show. The interest was high and the organization will work closely with the DeTour Chamber of Commerce and the Drummond Island Tourism Association.

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The latest object of a renovation and preservation campaign in the DeTour/Drummond Island area is the DeTour Reef Lighthouse, which is scheduled to be one of several Great Lakes lighthouses to be "Excessed" by the General Services Administration and the Coast Guard in the next few years. The drive is on by EUP residents to save the facility and put it back in service.

Preservation Society Forms in DeTour

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The organization proposes to re-establish the Reef Light as a private aid to navigation and will work with the Coast Guard on restoration and preservation and maintenance.

Questions regarding insurance, taxes, maintenance costs and restoration costs were tossed on the table for discussion, which did not seem to slow the interest one bit.

"We want to enter the Coast Guard and the State Historic Preservation Commission that there is great interest in area ownership and preservation of the Reef Light," said Moehl. "Nothing is cast in concrete as to just what is going to happen yet though."

The group agreed that lease agreements should be long term agreements and that a wish list must be put together for the project.

Those interested in joining with the organization, or wishing to gain further information, are asked to contact the DeTour Reef Light Preservation Society, 115 S. Huron, Suite C, DeTour Village, Michigan 49725.

"We are always looking for new faces and new ideas," said a smiling Barb Snider.