

**Ashtabula Lighthouse
Restoration
&
Preservation Projects
May - December, 2007**



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Photos courtesy of Robert Frisbie, Bill Knipper & Mike Adley

In May 2007 the Ashtabula Lighthouse Restoration & Preservation Society (ALR&PS), a not for profit group, received the official ownership of the Ashtabula Lighthouse from the U.S. Federal government via the National Parks Service. President Joe Santiana & Vice President Lloyd Bogue noted several projects that were completed.

The exact location of the lighthouse should be noted. The Ashtabula Lighthouse is not located on the Ohio mainland. The lighthouse is located approximately one mile and a quarter out from shore next to a breakwater wall owned by the U.S. Corps of Engineers. It sits on the Lake Erie “bottom land” which is owned by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. The building is in Ashtabula County, in Ashtabula Township, north of Ashtabula City.

It was the middle of summer before we received the key and actual ownership. This limited our time to attack major problems and repairs because of weather conditions at the site.

A total of 8 trips were made to the site. Several more visits/inspections were made by divers and others who did not go inside.

The first trip to the Ashtabula Lighthouse was made possible with the use of a work boat owned by the Ashtabula Yacht Club. During the first part of the year the ALR&PS did not own a boat so we were at the mercy of anyone who could provide transportation for us. During this visit a total assessment of the 2006-2007 winter damage was completed and a plan for the summer was formulated. Some cleaning such as sweeping, cleaning spider webs, shoveling dirt and animal feces (raccoon) was done during this visit. The raccoon’s entrance was located. Unfortunately repairs to this small hole will have to be made in 2008 due to poor fall weather conditions.

Attempts to attack some large and small repairs, along with doing cleanup work, were made during the rest of the visits:

1. Insurance was acquired for volunteer workers so repairs could begin on and around the structure.
2. The small groups of volunteer workers freed up the rusted hinges on the main entrance man door, exterior shutters and the shutters over the four windows.
3. Volunteers worked with the Corp of Engineers to remove a large breakwater stone leaning against the west side of the lighthouse caused by severe winter storms and ice. The west side stones of the breakwater were then repaired or restacked for better protection on the north side of the lighthouse.
4. The heavy main floor “deck access hatch covers” were retrieved from the basement and reinstalled.
5. The Lantern Room external door latch was made operational.
6. All grass growth was removed from the main outside deck.
7. The roof was evaluated and found to be stable, but will need attention soon after next season begins. Rust is deteriorating the roof near the edge and it was found that water will soon be running down the inside of the walls. Water in the walls will begin corroding the structure, thus threatening the stability of the lighthouse.
8. The group worked on the large south doors where several hinges were frozen, broken and unusable in some cases. These doors were secured and made tight for the winter 2007-2008.
9. In several locations, both on the first floor and the second floor, the interior window coverings were removed to allow evaluation of the current window conditions so plans for next year could include them.
10. They set up and tested future equipment for a water source (pump, tank, hoses, etc.). All equipment is in working order.
11. Some scraping and cement pointing was begun on the south and west sides of the lighthouse – much more needs done, both inside as well as outside.
12. Early on in our attempts to acquire the lighthouse, Joe Santiana contacted the (then CEI) Illuminating Company. He was able to speak to an old-time CEI employee who actually knew where the AC service entrance for the lighthouse was located and also provided Joe with a layout print of the shore power

service location. Armed with this information and a mission, Joe & Lloyd removed the old tree growth and weeds on the west corner of Ashtabula's now "paper streets Franklin and First" (First Street is also referred to, on City of Ashtabula maps, as Chestnut Street). They were able to locate the power feed pole(s) and the beginning of underground feed cable. Contact was then made with a diver(s) to find the other end at the lighthouse. It was our understanding that it was cut off, but it was still in the conduit. This was not correct. The following is the divers report of what was actually found:

The First Official Commissioned Dive at the Ashtabula Lighthouse

The following report was written by the divers and forwarded to the Ashtabula Lighthouse Restoration & Preservation Society.

On Friday and Saturday, June 15 and 16, 2007 divers, Lynn Straight, Bill Morrissey and Dan Riddell, from Saybrook Township Water Rescue Services, performed diving operations around the base of the 1905-1915 Ashtabula Lighthouse. The main objective of the divers was to locate the submarine power cable that once supplied electric power to the lighthouse.

On Friday afternoon, the power cable was located on the south side of the lighthouse in about 8 to 10 feet of water. However, the cable was tangled and lodged in between the breakwater (also called break wall) stones. It is questionable whether this cable is usable.

On Saturday divers, Lynn straight and Bill Morrissey, dove on the power cable again in hopes of dislodging the end of the cable from between the breakwater stones. The power cable is still lodged. A heavy rope was left tied to the power cable.

The depth of the water in which the power cable lies is about 8 to 10 feet and then slopes to a depth of about 26 feet away from the breakwater.

Also, one power cable was found still attached to the base of the lighthouse on the east side and about 10 feet below the water line.

Note that the divers discovered several feet of heavy power cable coiled on the bottom in the area of the south side of the base of the lighthouse.

Also some "artifacts" were brought up from the area of the lighthouse and were turned over to the Ashtabula Lighthouse Restoration & Preservation Society and were shown to the membership at the June 20th meeting.

All dive operations were conducted from Paul Hiendlmayr's 30-foot boat.

The divers at the membership meeting on June 20th reported that their plan was to return to the site at the south end of the lighthouse soon to try to chip away the stone which is lodging the power cable between the breakwater stones. Once the power cable is free they are going to try to push the power cable up the conduct into the lighthouse basement (when someone can be there to pull it up at the same time). The power cable which was found coiled up may be too short to reach the inside of the basement on the south side of the lighthouse. If so, Joe Santiana and Lloyd Bogue said that while they were on an inspection tour, they found another conduct on the east side which was used for a phone line or phone alarm circuit going to the dock or USCG Station on land. This hole or conduct may possibly be used to make the power cable reach inside. Once the power cable is inside and made fast Joe Santiana will have it tested. He and Lloyd found the CEI or Illuminating Company meter box located at the corner of the "old" Franklin Street and (once called Chestnut Street) 1st Street. The power company still has a meter connected to the line going into a disconnect box. The line is removed and cut off where it enters the ground. The power cable test will be made between this point and the end of the cable in the basement of the lighthouse.

End of the divers report.

13. The power cable was tested and found to have an “open” somewhere between the meter and the end at the lighthouse. The cable was pulled back out of the basement of the lighthouse for the winter 2007-2008 and coiled up on the floor of the harbor near the lighthouse for winter protection. One possibility is that it may have been cut by the “old” Ashtabula Water Company when they rerouted some supply lines out into the lake a few years ago. That area will be one of the places checked next year to find the location of the “open”. The group will pursue this project further during the next work year.
14. While the divers were in the surrounding water of the lighthouse they also found some discarded items. **Artifacts found** during the dive are as follows:
 1. A portion of a 2 foot turn buckle – well rusted but recognizable
 2. A 2 ½ foot pipe wrench – well rusted but recognizable
 3. A ¼” X 10” piece of tubing on a round steel item – well preserved
 4. A can opener without a base that was used to open gallon cans - well rusted but recognizable.
 5. A white porcelain bowl with the USCG emblem about the size of a silver dollar still very visible. It has a hairline crack in the bottom. It has no chips in it - well preserved and is very recognizable!
15. A small boat and motor were purchased to transport workers and volunteers to the lighthouse.



A ceremonial key to the Ashtabula Lighthouse was passed via U.S. Mail from the National Parks Service to Ohio State Representative George Distel of Conneaut, Ohio in May of 2007. Mr. Distel passed the key to Neil Barton, Ashtabula Light Keeper (1957-59), shown in his original issue USCG uniform. Neil then passed the key to his daughter Brooke, who is presently in the U.S. Coast Guard Reserves.



Brooke Barton presents the key to the lighthouse to the Ashtabula Lighthouse Restoration & Preservation Society President Joe Santiana. The restoration and preservation work can finally begin!