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New England Lighthouse Stamps Commemorate Rich History, While Highlighting Ongoing Need for Historic Preservation



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Summary: The Lighthouse Preservation Society Nominates Stamp Series to Promote Public Awareness of Lighthouses, and the Need to Rescue them from Government Neglect and Mismanagement

Dover, New Hampshire (PRWEB) July 12, 2013 – The Lighthouse Preservation Society announces the release of a new set of U.S. postage stamps on Saturday, July 13th, entitled the Lighthouses of New England, which is the latest installment of the Lighthouses of America stamp series that the nonprofit organization has successfully nominated. The stamps feature one historic lighthouse from each of the coastal New England states, including the Portland Head Light in Maine, the Portsmouth Harbor Light in New Hampshire, the Boston Light in Massachusetts, the Point Judith Light in Rhode Island, and the New London Harbor Light in Connecticut. It is the 6th set of 5 American lighthouse stamps that have been issued so far, depicting lighthouses from the various regions of the United States. The first set of stamps, nominated by The Lighthouse Preservation Society, a nonprofit organization, appeared in 1990, in celebration of America’s Lighthouse Bicentennial, which the group orchestrated nationally. It was followed by additional sets of regional lighthouse stamps in 1995, 2003, 2007, 2009, and 2013, for a total of 30 stamps, making the American Lighthouses series one of the most popular stamp series in the history of the U.S. Postal Service.

James Hyland, president of The Lighthouse Preservation Society, understands the popularity of the series. “Lighthouses are to America, what castles are to Europe”, he says. “They’re a bit like people, they’re all unique, and have their own individual charm. They were designed that way, so they wouldn’t be confused with each other, making it difficult for mariners to identify their location. Each lighthouse also had its own unique

identity with a coded address of timed flashes of light at night, and a series of timed fog horn blast sequences to help announce the lighthouse's location to sailors.

Hyland has worked closely over the years with famed stamp illustrator, Howard Koslow, providing photographic images, in many cases, from which to render his artwork. His fascination with lighthouses began in the early 1980's, when he received a grant from a Boston-area maritime museum to document the lighthouses of New England for a museum exhibition. It was the decade in which the Coast Guard had decided to automate all the nation's lighthouses, and Hyland was able to document the last of the region's lighthouse keepers before their jobs became obsolete.

While in the field, Hyland began to notice problems with the way the buildings were being closed up. In order to prevent vandalism, the lighthouses were being boarded up very tight, so they could not breathe. Upon entry into the boarded-up buildings, he sometimes would find huge sheets of plaster and paint curling off the walls because of the trapped humidity inside the buildings. The buildings were not being aerated, so the trapped moisture was destroying the buildings. Sometimes he found the historic woodwork exteriors encased in aluminum siding, which left the only exposed wood, like frames around windows and doors, saturated with water, and wet like a sponge. Clearly these buildings, which looked good for the public, at a distance, were actually rotting from the inside-out. Sometimes the lighthouse stations were being demolished without public notice. Frequently, the lighthouse structures showed signs of years of neglect, with evidence of vandalism, rusting metal, and unpainted buildings. In asking around, Hyland discovered that in many cases, with the removal of the keepers, the Coast Guard had no plan for what was going to happen to these historic light stations. They also had very little funding available for buildings that had become largely obsolete, and they had no mission for historic preservation, whatsoever.

Out of concern for the potential demise of America's lighthouses, which Hyland had been witnessing during his documentation work, he founded The Lighthouse Preservation Society and took his concerns to his congressman, who decided to hold a congressional hearing on the subject of lighthouses. It was there that the Coast Guard Admiral in charge of the nation's aids-to-navigation, confessed that they were \$7 million behind in deferred maintenance, with no hope of ever catching up. When the national press got hold of the story it launched national concern over the fate of America's lighthouses, and, together with The Lighthouse Preservation Society's national ad campaign to "Save the Lights", marked the beginning of the lighthouse preservation movement.

Hyland's organization then pressed for a congressionally mandated Coast Guard policy review on lighthouses to address the preservation issues surrounding the nation's lighthouses. His group also initiated a Lighthouse Bicentennial Fund through the National Park Service, a program which finally got most of the nation's lighthouses on the National Register of Historic Places, and which raised nearly \$6 million for over 160 lighthouse restoration projects. The funding program was so successful that it earned a Presidential Achievement Award from Congress for its overwhelming success and popularity. Through a series of meetings in Washington, D.C., the society then brought

together a variety of governmental and nonprofit organizations who were interested in preserving America's lighthouses, and hammered out the new policies that would finally become the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act of 2000, which is the program that presently regulates how the government will work with the public to rescue our nation's lighthouses, and open them up to the general public. In New England, The Lighthouse Preservation Society has led the way with creative adaptive reuses of historic lighthouse buildings, such as the opening of the Keeper's House Inn at Isle au Haut, Maine, and the society's romantic dining program at the top of the Newburyport Lighthouse in Massachusetts. The Lighthouse Preservation Society's achievements, in addition to nominating the postage stamps, can be viewed on its web site, which is www.lighthousepreservation.org.