

U.S. Coast Guard  
Light Station Boston

## **Boston Light Augmentation Program**

### **Little Brewster Island**

*Sally Snowman, U.S. Coast Guard Keeper*

*12 February 2016*

#### **Background**

*U.S. Coast Guard Light Station Boston* is located on Little Brewster Island at the entrance of Boston Harbor and is the oldest light station (1716) in the country. It is currently the only Coast Guard Light Station that remains “manned” due to a congressional law passed in 1989 proclaiming that it being the first established lighthouse in colonial America it is to remain manned. As of August 2003, three active duty Coast Guardsmen have been replaced with a CG civilian (paid) Keeper augmented by specially trained and qualified Coast Guard Auxiliary Assistant Keepers. Re-assignment of active duty billets was for the Nation’s Homeland Security efforts. Coast Guard Sector Boston ensures the facilities remain habitable with the Aids to Navigation Team (ANT) Boston maintaining the Tower and optic. This is a significant shift from earlier times when Auxiliarists performed duty at Light Station Boston, without any formal training program, as a means to allow one of the active duty personnel to have time off from the island. In 2000, an advanced training program was formalized to “qualify” Auxiliarists as Assistant Keepers with the vision of the Coast Guard, at some point in time, reducing the number of active duty personnel assigned to Boston Light. The occurrence of 9/11 brought such thoughts into fruition.

The Boston Harbor Island National & State Park was established in 1996 with Little Brewster Island being one of the 34-islands and peninsulas comprising the Park. Boston Light is referred to as the “Jewel” of the park, holding centerfield in the marketing strategy to draw tourists to the harbor islands. As of 27 July 1999, Boston Light was officially opened for "public" tours, for both park service sponsored tours as well as for pleasure craft to drop off passengers for a visit during the summer months at specified days and times.

In 2000, the *Boston Light Augmentation Program* was established to recruit and train Auxiliarists as Historical Interpreters (tour guides) to support the National Park Service Rangers on days when they offered tours, as well as for Watchstanding, qualifying Auxiliarists as Assistant Keepers to augment the Coast Guard’s effort in “manning” the island 24-7. The Program is managed via a Sector Boston Instruction overseen by the Sector Commander.

There are a total of 13-private and public organizations that comprise the “Partnership” in operating the Park. This particular National Park is unique because it owns only a minuscule piece of property (1/6<sup>th</sup> of an acre). The Coast Guard continues to own, manage, maintain and staff Little Brewster Island. Approximately 3,200 tourists visited Boston Light in 2015. Currently, there are 37Auxiliary Assistant Keepers and 23 Historical Interpreters. Each year at Boston Light, Auxiliarists volunteer for over 10,000 hours as direct service to the Coast Guard.

#### **Current Needs**

Both the National Park Service and the U.S. Coast Guard have very tight budgets, being dependent upon volunteers to ensure the success of their missions. The Boston Light Augmentation Program continually seeks dedicated Auxiliarists for the Historical Interpreter and Watchstander-Assistant Keepers.

#### **Components to the Program**

1. *Historical Interpreters* (tour guides) are sought to augment the National Park Ranger staff during the days the island is open for tours for 16-week from mid-June to early fall – Fridays-Saturday-Sunday. The Interpreter program is “day duty” from 0915 to 1630 departing from down-town Boston.
2. *Watchstander - Assistant Keeper Program: This is advanced on-the-job training* with pre-requisites of having completed the Historical Interpreter Program and being/maintaining boat crew qualification. The island is staffed 24-hours a day, 7-days a week when weather/sea/wind conditions permit. Candidates apply for this advanced program, committing 4 to 7 days of consecutive duty, staying over night on the island from a Wed-Sun, Wed-Sun, Sun-Sun, or Wed-Wed.

## Success of the Program for the Past Fourteen Years

The *Boston Light Augmentation Program* was introduced to Auxiliaries in the spring of 2000. During its first season, 56 Auxiliaries were trained as Historical Interpreters (tour guides) with 27 of them qualifying as Assistant Keepers for the Watchstander Program. This was a phenomenal accomplishment considering recruiting and training occurred over a short, eight-month period of time.

## Historical Interpreter Recruitment and Training for 2016

National Park Service sponsored tours are typically offered at Boston Light during the summer and early fall dictated by sea and weather conditions for safe landings. Due to the “short season,” there is only a small window of opportunity for offering Historical Interpreter (tour guide) training. Training takes place for 2-days, one mainland-classroom held in the spring at CG Base Boston, and a second that takes place on the island in June. Attendance is required for both training days. Historical Interpreter commitment is to perform 3-days of duty throughout the 16-week season. Assistant Keeper candidates are required to successfully complete the Interpreter training as one of the pre-requisites for the Watchstander Program. If you are interested in the Historical Interpreter Program, please contact either AUX Colleen Kloster 617-586-9908 Coordinator of the Interpretive Program or the Keeper: [sally@bostonlightkeeper.com](mailto:sally@bostonlightkeeper.com)

### Pre-Requisites for Participation:

**Historical “Interpreters”** (Tour Guides): Pre-requisites for this duty: have an Auxiliary member number and own the prescribed ODU with sew-on or Velcro **member** collar devices. Interpreters are scheduled for **day duty** from 0915- 1630. NPS tours are offered Friday, Saturday, and Sunday starting the third Friday in June and ending the first weekend in October. “Ashore” training date is in May from 0830 to 1300 **and** an “On-island” orientation scheduled on the third Saturday in June.

**Process for participation:** Submit a *Pre-registration Historical Interpreter Training Form* to the Keeper.

**Watchstander Program for Assistant Lighthouse Keeper Qualification** – advanced on-the-job training: Pre-requisites: (1) own prescribed ODU with sew-on or Velcro **member** collar devices, (2) Boat Crew Qualified (with mindfulness given to health conditions), (3) Interpreter Qualified, (4) ability to climb a 100 foot tower twice a day, (5) available for **24 hour duty for 4 to 5 consecutive days** (Sun-Wed, or Wed-Sun). Training consists of a minimum of 2 on-the-job training duties overseen by the Keeper.

**Process for participation:** when pre-requisites are completed or “in process,” submit an *Assistant Keeper Program Application* and be interviewed by the Keeper. Questions are to be directed to the Keeper.

### Access to Little Brewster Island

Access to the 1 ½ acre island (at high tide) is by boat. It is located 1-mile off the Town of Hull, MA and approximately 10-miles from down-town Boston. A pier is located on the western end of the island. This is a concrete pier with a vertical ladder affixed to the face of it. During the 16-week tour season, a National Park Service owned floating dock system is in place for easier and safer access to the island.

## Transportation

*Interpreters* come out to the island on the National Park’s chartered vessel from Boston.

*Aux Assistant Keepers* depart from Coast Guard Station Point Allerton, Hull. An Auxiliary operational facility usually provides Assistant Keeper transportation with a CG vessel from Station Point Allerton as back-up.

**Interested?** Interpreter Program: AUX Colleen Kloster, Coordinator 617-568-9908

Watchstander-Assistant Keeper Program:

Keeper Sally Snowman - [sally@bostonlightkeeper.com](mailto:sally@bostonlightkeeper.com)