



'DECISION LIGHT'

Fall 2011 Edition, Volume 23

Annual Newsletter of the
Cape Decision Lighthouse Society
224 Katlian, Sitka, Alaska 99835

'Dedicated to the preservation of the Cape Decision lighthouse and surrounding wilderness areas for public recreation and education'

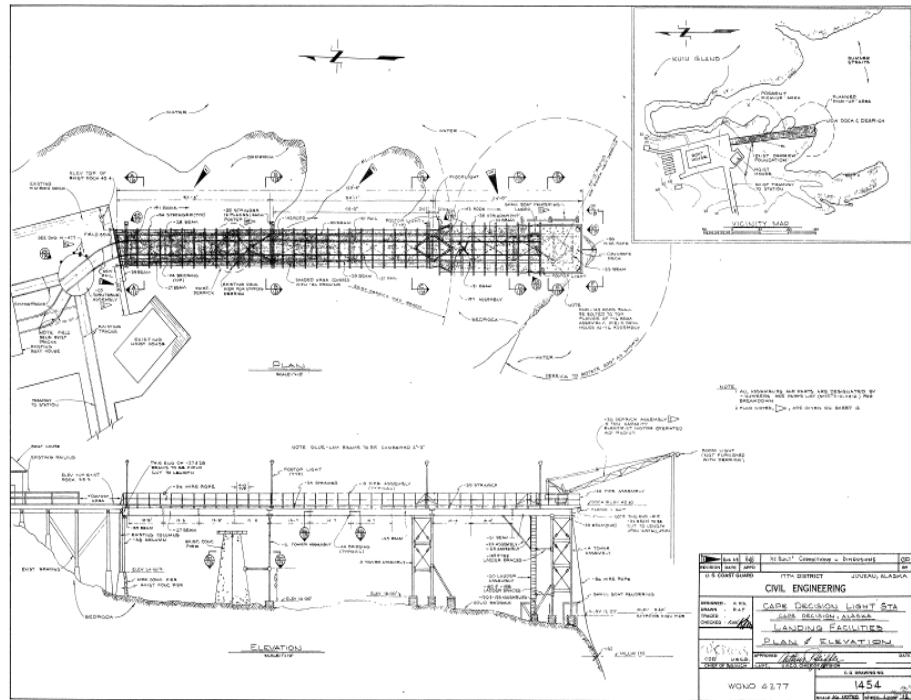


The Cape Decision Light Station prior to the helipad, circa 1937

The Pier

The original Cape Decision Light Station was completed on July 29, 1932. The story is told that the very first lightkeepers hiked 4.5 miles from Port McArthur over extremely rugged terrain carrying all supplies on their backs when access by boat was impossible due to weather conditions. Soon after, the boat house was constructed for the three station dories that were hoisted from the gut with a boom derrick. Only the old footings remain from this initial access system. Some time after the WWII in the late 1940's, many improvements were made including a remodel of the interior of the lighthouse, and the construction of the pier and tramway. The

USCG blueprint (right) shows a new boom derrick secured on a cement pad at the end of the pier, railroad irons in the pier decking that lead to a turnstile which rotated the tram either into the boathouse, or 90 degrees onto the next set of railroad irons on pier decking that proceeded to the lighthouse. Seen next to the turnstile is the tram-house location situated on another cement slab on pilings which controlled the movements of the tram. In the early 1960's, the USCG constructed a helipad that essentially, made the tramway obsolete, and the old access system began to fall into disrepair from lack of use. In 1989, a fire destroyed the boathouse, tramhouse, some pier and boathouse decking, and all that remains is the skeleton of the pier unattached securely to the land, cement footings, charred timbers, the twisted wreckage of the turnstile on the rocks below, and other debris.



WORDS OF WIT & WISDOM

'All deep earnest thinking is but the intrepid effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her sea, while the wildest winds of Heaven and earth conspire to cast her on the treacherous, slavish shore.' Herman Melville

After years of deliberation about the possibilities of reconstruction, demolition or rehabilitation of the burned section of deck and extensive pier, the CDLS board has approved the demolition of the pier, to create a more realistic contemporary access plan that retains some of the historic characteristics. Our proposal is to demolish the pier, lower the existing south tower by one section and maintain a hoist there, reconstruct the old boathouse site and adjoining helipad access structural timbers, footings, cross bracing and decking, and install a new hoist there to hoist cargo up to the level of the lighthouse and helipad.; and to reconstruct a cement tramway access road with imbedded railroad iron on the rock below the now existing pier to the reconstructed boathouse deck location, 8' wide X 135' long, with two 14'X14' concrete



pads to stage the handling of cargo. Pedestrian walkways, and stairs will be built from the second hoist area with the lay of the land under the helipad to a small set of stairs on the west side of the helipad. CDLS has every intention of rebuilding the boathouse to historic dimensions with historically correct materials once the burned section of dock has been reconstructed in the location it once stood before the fire of 1989. The rehabilitation of the old pier is fiscally, physically and practically a difficult and imprudent plan for contemporary use and access to the lighthouse with Cape Decision's new function of facilitating public visitation through our organization. The pier needs to be demolished to mitigate the dangerous liability of the burned section, the helipad access and dilapidated pier before we can begin to build the new deck, tram road, and two hoist system. CDLS is working with the State Historic Preservation Office in the Section 106 process (instituted to identify means to address preservation issues of Historic Properties on the National Register), and the US Coast Guard in our mutual use and care of the Cape Decision Light Station.

K.Lucas, Editor



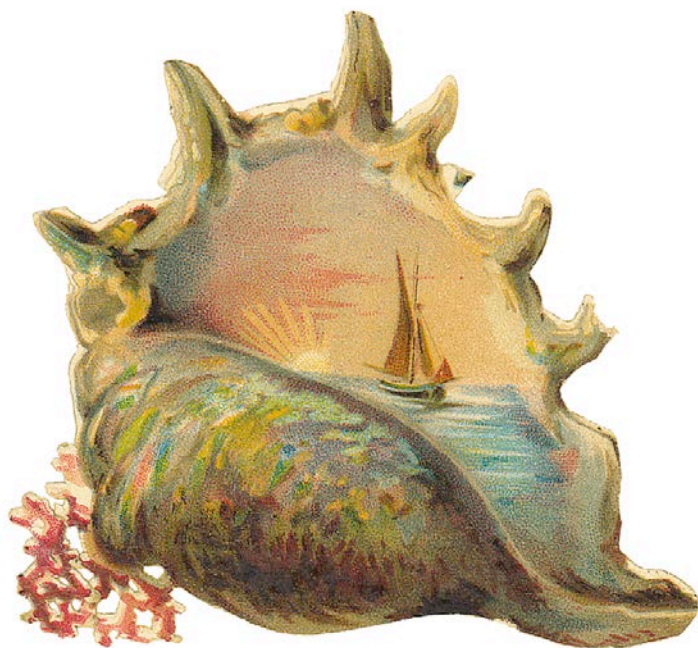
The pier looking south to the Spanish Islands, note the tram rails, and the immense footings and charred timbers



In Sincere Appreciation to:

- Scott Higgins for all the firewood, the beautiful cedar outhouse, masonry and carpentry work, and loading freight from Juneau
- Allen J. McIntosh Fund of the Community Foundation for Palm Beach and Martin Counties
- Kevin Cavanaugh for the two donated antique Aladdin lamps
- Rachel Brown for her volunteer labor
- Roger Hames of SeaMart Quality Foods, Sitka for the groceries for our volunteers
- Steve Lanwermeyer for serving on the board, wiring, energy systems, internet, and bringing UAS students to the lighthouse
- Coast Guard Spouses and Wives Association for the mini-grant for lead paint abatement
- Sheila Finkenbinder for the donation of the lighthouse book for our archives
- Sean Cavlan for repairing the handrails, and helping with departure and skiff detail
- Patrick Cavlan for the weed-whacking, and labor
- Chris Brooks for being such a great Lightkeeper, carpenter, electrician, plumber, mason, painter and engineer
- Ed Page, MXAK, for transporting the materials and cabinets from Juneau, and hauling out old batteries, and trash

- Port Alexander Historical Society for safe-keeping the archives
- The Sitka Elks Lodge for letting us use the lodge for our dinner dance fundraiser
- Tom Penny for the books for our library
- The Daily Sitka Sentinel for publishing our psa's
- To all of our dues paying members who have faithfully supported this work over these many years since 1997.



University of Alaska SE-Discover Design Research at Cape Decision, Summer 2011

By: Ester Bower of Port Alexander & Haines, Alaska

On June 15th a group of seven students and two instructors flew into Port McArthur ready to begin a weeklong journey at the Cape Decision Lighthouse. This group was part of the recently created program that began at UAS called Discover Design Research. The program was designed to get high school students into the field to record real scientific data. The mission of this year's group was to study the Marine Biology of Kuiu Island.

We began by hiking the coastal route to the lighthouse, taking eight hours to complete. This march gave everyone a good idea of the common flora and fauna we would see on the island. It also gave us an idea of how much marine debris there is on Kuiu Island. The group picked up a variety of marine debris to try and track using the computer. Among the things we found was a Nike Strike Force (pump) shoe from the 1990 shoe spill, a three gallon Korean soy sauce container, various plastic bottles and floats and a hockey glove.



Marine debris plays a large role in the island's ecosystem. This was very evident after finding pieces of plastic in river otter scat. Collecting and analyzing scat was a large part of the curriculum we followed on this trip. We collected deer, elk, river otter, wolf, bear and martin scat. Overall we ended up with 20 various scat piles to clean and sort. To clean the scat we placed the whole pile in a tin that has a special screen on the bottom and used water and paint-brushed to sort out the bones, grass and anything else the animal might have eaten. We then let the remains dry and proceeded to record the objects in the scat.

Our main focus for this trip was intertidal studies. We did four days worth of transect lines. We spent many hours on the beach studying our various quadrants and recording the percent cover of any and all species we found. The highlights of our beach investigations were a baby octopus, nudibranchs, crabs, sculpins, goose-neck barnacles, gunnels and starfish. Everything was amazing.

Being at the lighthouse was a very great and important experience for every student who ventured to Cape Decision this year. For anyone who had never experienced a real beautiful, remote area really had their eyes opened. To see so much marine life such as orcas, humpback whales, sea lions, otters and many different bird species really touched a place in our hearts that can't be truly reached in other places. The cozy feel of the lighthouse provided a safe-haven of warmth and delicious food at all times of the day. A major bonus was the amazing people that keep the lighthouse going every year.



We got to enjoy their wonderful company the whole time! Cape Decision is truly an exquisite place that only the people who visit can truly understand. This was an experience that binds the seven of us together forever and shines like a light in our memory.

Ester Bower was one of seven students who participated in the UAS-DDR program at Cape Decision this summer. The other students included: Kieran O'Neil, Mark Plumb, Marlena Sloss, Thomas Morino, Taylor Stumpf, Annie Sisson

Summer 2011: Work Parties at Cape Decision

This summer proved to be another remarkably productive and fun experience for those who participated in our volunteer work parties.

During our work parties there are all kind of projects happening at the lighthouse. Our volunteers usually pick a project where they see a need or find something that they enjoy doing. There is always something to do, and never a dull moment. In addition to our ongoing restoration work which includes painting, masonry and infrastructure repair, etc.. we usually take on one or two large projects each season. This summer we completed the galley restoration, painted the entire lower part of the lighthouse, and touched up the upper white, repaired facade masonry on the tower, reconstructed the handrails, and overhauled the entire electrical system at the lighthouse.

For the past 4 years our volunteers have been working

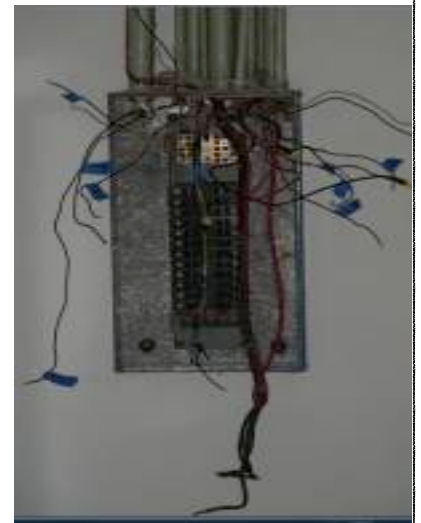


tirelessly to restore the lighthouse galley. A new floor was installed, all the plastered walls were repaired and painted, an antique wood stove was reconditioned and installed, and all the lower cabinets and countertops had been replaced. This summer our volunteers completed the final phase of the galley reconstruction and installed the upper cabinets. The cabinets were constructed out of solid wood and have glass paneled doors. The galley is finally complete! A huge thank you goes out to Ed Page and his crew at the Marine Exchange of Alaska for transporting our cabinets to the lighthouse from Juneau and hauling out freight aboard their vessel the *Cleat*.

Another huge improvement made this summer at Cape Decision was a complete overhaul of our electrical system. When operated by the coast guard, Cape Decision Lighthouse could have been considered an industrial 'powerhouse.' A large, 30kw ONAN diesel generator ran night and day to power all of the building's electrical loads (except for the navigational aid). The ONAN is noisy, thirsty beast and anybody in the vicinity had to wear ear protection. Even outside of the generator room people would have to speak loudly to be heard over the monotonous background roar. In addition, the ONAN consumed huge amounts of diesel fuel. CDLS still maintains the ONAN for its historical value but does not have the resources to purchase or deliver such large amounts of fuel.

Three years ago the Marine Exchange of Alaska (MXAK) installed a renewable energy system at Cape Decision Lighthouse to power their AIS radio and a Starband internet connection (used by the MXAK to transmit data and by our staff to organize logistics and for communications at the lighthouse). The MXAK system includes a small solar array mounted on the lighthouse's south lawn and a wind turbine on the roof. The system was connected to a large battery bank that had been donated to CDLS in 2009 by Ed Johnson. The power generated by MXAK's system and stored in the CDLS batteries exceeds the small amount of energy used by the AIS equipment. Former CDLS board member Steve Lanwermeyer donated a large inverter to connect to the batteries to create usable AC power in the lighthouse. The entire AC electrical system was disconnected from the ONAN and its archaic AC power distribution system. New wires, switches and plugs were installed throughout the lighthouse and highly efficient light bulbs and motion sensors were added to reduce electrical consumption and maintain energy conservation.

For the first time in CDLS history, we are able to walk into any room at the lighthouse, plug into an outlet, or flip a switch, and have a light go on without running the ONAN generator.



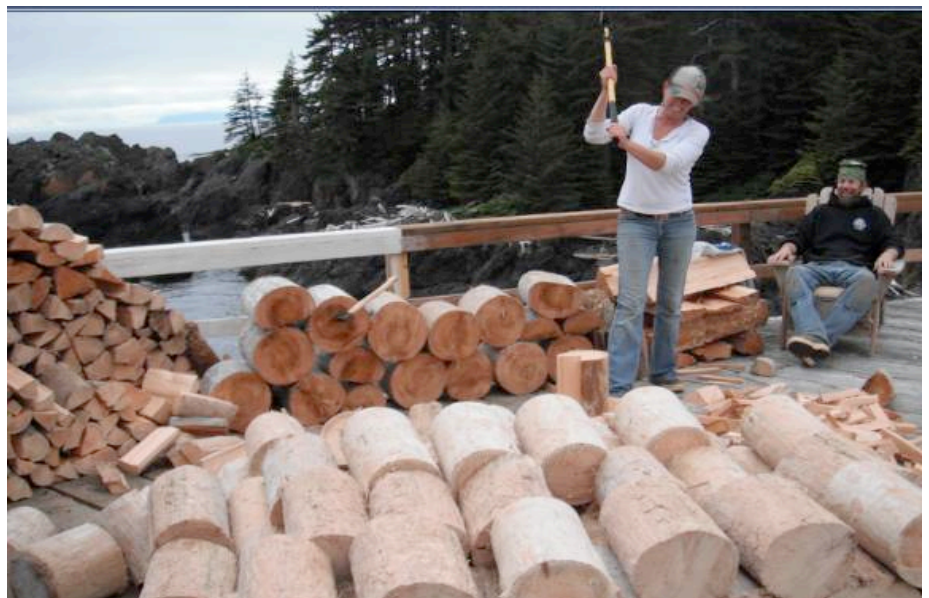
The advent of reliable electricity and lighting (without noisy generators and fuel) gave us the opportunity to take advantage of many of the rooms in basement of the lighthouse that were “lost in the darkness”. One such room was originally used by the resident coast guard keepers as a coal storage room for the large boiler. Over the years the coal chutes had been boarded up and the room remodeled by the coast guard into a recreation room. A full size pool table was brought in for the coasties (presumably in pieces) and comfortable chairs and couches were provided for lounging around. CDLS had been using the “Rec Room” as deep storage and only rarely did brave volunteers venture inside to look for something or attempt a game of pool by flashlight. The Rec room was rewired by our volunteers (as were all the rooms in the basement) and

some of the original glass light fixtures were reconditioned and mounted above the table. The walls were cleared of years of dusty storage and painted a bright white. The old furniture and pool table were cleaned and redeployed. Tables and desk lamps were also installed. Even the old coal-fired boiler was cleaned up, reconditioned, painted and transformed into a large wood-fired stove to provide dry heat to the entire basement. After renovation the Rec room was used by the visiting UAS students as a gathering place to conduct lab work, watch slide presentations, and play pool! Future plans include the refurbishment of some of the other rooms of the basement that are no longer lost in the dark.

C. Brooks



Top Left: Board members Bryan Cornelius, Chris Brooks, Sean Cavlan with Patrick Cavlan to right. Rachel Brown & Steve Lanwermyer chopping wood, not pictured Scott Higgins wood man extraordinaire, and Karen Lucas in the galley.



LITERARY CORNER

'Alaska'

Written by Charles Keeler aboard the George W. Elder on passage through SE Alaska during the Harriman Expedition of 1899

Fjords of the far west shore, where peaks sublime
Are cloudward thrust 'neath folds of glistening snow,
With hoar and frigid streams that tideward flow,
Sculpturing their cliff and crags which mount and climb
Full in the sight of Heaven---grim heirs of time,
Stern children of eternity, that grow
Austere and terrible 'mid storms that blow
Their lusty trumpets in the tempest's prime.
What joy is this to float upon the tide,
So blue, so beautiful, to gently glide
'Mid islets forested, past shores that stand
Dark portals opening to enchantment's land,
Where all is but a dream, soon to be
Lost in the purple mist of memory.

From the Archives:

Excerpted from the United States Coast Pilot, Alaska,
Part 1, Dixon Entrance to Yakutat Bay, 1932

Cape Decision, the southern extremity of Kuiu Island, is a low, bare rocky point, from which the land rises gradually to an irregular, timbered ridge. It stands out well when approached from a direction to pass through the passage between it and the Spanish Islands. Two large kelp patches 1 1/2 and 2 miles westward from the cape and about 3/4 miles off the Kuiu Island shore should be avoided.

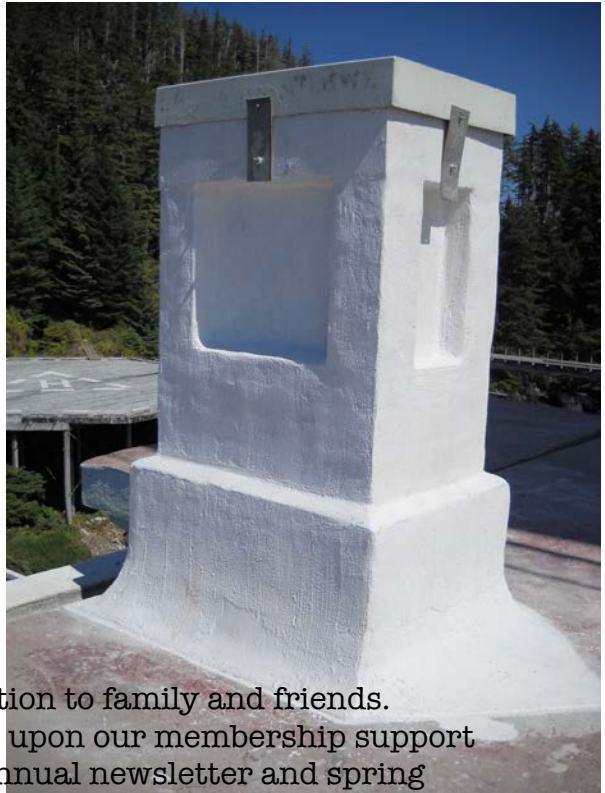
Cape Decision Light, on the bare rock at the south end of the cape, is exhibited from a white, square, concrete tower on a white, square concrete house, 96 feet (29.3 m.) above the water. The **fog signal** is an air typhon, and is synchronized with the radiobeacon for distance finding. A radiobeacon is located here. From the 'Radiobeacon Table: Cape Decision Light, call letters 'KCAB,' Latitude North, 56' 00", Longitude West, 134' 08", Signal, groups of two dots, two dashes, Clear weather transmission, first 10 minutes of each hour and half hour.' These radiobeacons are intended for vessels equipped with radio compass (also termed radio direction finder), the bearing of the radiobeacon can be determined with an accuracy of approximately 2 degrees and at a distance considerably in excess of the range of visibility of the most powerful coast lights. The apparatus is simple and may be operated by a navigator without the assistance of a radio operator or without knowledge of the telegraphic code. The radio direction finding apparatus consists of a radio receiving set similar in operation to those used in radio telegraph or telephone reception, and a rotatable coil of wire in place of the antenna. By rotating the coil the intensity of the signal received from the transmitting station is caused to vary, and by noting the position of the coil when the signal is heard at its minimum intensity the bearing of the transmitting station is readily obtained. It is important to note that the bearing of the incoming radio wave is subject to errors not unlike the deviation of the magnetic compass. Radio compass bearings may be subject to what is called 'night effect,' and indeterminate error sometimes experienced near nightfall and sunrise.

Decision Passage, 1 mile wide, lies between Cape Decision and the Spanish Islands. This passage is used by large vessels bound from Sumner Strait to Chatham Strait or Cape Ommaney. The passage has been examined by means of a wire drag, and is clear, however, the cape and the islands should be given a berth of at least 1/4 mile.

This closet radio room with a built in desk was uncovered during the galley restoration, as was a closet mop sink!



The new chimney, 2010. leaks stopped, ceiling and roof repaired, with smoke seen from the wood stove coming out of the stack!



Know Yer Board

- Chris Brooks, president
- Brandon Marx, vice president
- Karen Lucas, secretary/treasurer
- Dick Dapcevich
- Sean Cavlan
- Mike Mayo
- Kari Johnson Fish
- Byran Cornelius

Dues are Due!

A reminder that the annual membership dues for 2012 of \$25 can be sent to the CDLS office now at 224 Katlian, Sitka, AK 99835. Call Karen to check the status of your membership, (907) 747-7803. Thanks!

Membership Application

Please pass on this newsletter with membership application to family and friends. Leveraging funding for our projects at the lighthouse depends upon our membership support and contributions. Members are entitled to one vote, the annual newsletter and spring announcement of volunteer summer work parties, with some transportation provided to the lighthouse. All contributions are tax deductible!

Name: _____ Vessel: _____
 Address: _____ City: _____
 State: _____ Zip: _____
 Tel.: _____ Email: _____

Yes, I would like to become a member of the Cape Decision Lighthouse Society, a 501 (c)3 Alaskan nonprofit corporation, at the level indicated below:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Donation: | Receives these gifts: |
| ❖ Lightkeeper \$10,000 or above | All premiums & your name on a brass plaque at lighthouse |
| ❖ Life Line \$5,000 or above | Cape Decision chart artwork, woodblock, mug & decal |
| ❖ Life Saving Station \$1,000 | Cape Decision chart artwork & decal |
| ❖ Friend of the Light \$500 | Cape Decision lithograph or woodblock print & decal |
| ❖ Business \$100 | Lithograph print or Cape Decision mug & decal |
| ❖ Family \$50 | Lithograph print & decal |
| ❖ Individual \$35 | Lithograph print & decal |
| ❖ Student or Senior Citizen \$20 | Lithograph print & decal |

Make checks or money order payable to:
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