



# South Fox Island Review

www.southfox.org

SUMMER 2014

FILA P.O. Box 851, Traverse City MI 49685



501c3 Non-Profit Donations Tax Deductible

*MISSION: The Fox Island Lighthouse Association will work to restore and assist in the over-all management of the South Fox Island Light Station and connecting grounds for the public good, while maintaining good stewardship.*



“Friends of the DNR”

To learn more about the South Fox Island Light Station, please visit:

[www.southfox.org](http://www.southfox.org)



Search South Fox Light Station



## FIRST TRIP TO STATION FULL OF SURPRISES

By Phil Von Voigtlander

On Thursday, June 5 we (John McKinney, John Nelson, Don Stauffer, John Wells and I) traveled to the light station on South Fox aboard the *Islander*. This was our first trip of the season and as such was the latest start FILA has had; a month ago the southern end of the island was still locked in ice. We had a cloudless and calm day for the uneventful run out there despite the 35 degree water temperature. We were carrying one of our recently rebuilt lawn mowers and as soon as we got it ashore it was put to use cutting all the lawn areas. Other team members cleared the sidewalks, cut brush along the paths, maintained the equipment and inspected all the buildings. All appeared as we left them last autumn. There was some evidence of ice damage in the harbor with the landing crib sustaining minor damage (loss of a portion of the deck).



*View from window of 1867 Lighthouse*

In the afternoon, we continued mowing while others policed the beaches. We were joined by a seaplane of University of Minnesota Plover habitat investigators and spent some time with them discussing their project and our earlier bird surveys. Later we loaded up the last of the worn out mowers and our gear and departed. Though the pleasant weather continued, the return trip was eventful: a short distance from the island we suffered a major engine failure (the first problem we have had with the *Islander*). We deployed our emergency propulsion unit ( 6 hp outboard) and had a leisurely return voyage. This was the first full test of the outboard to go the whole distance; slow but sure we returned to Northport in the late evening. Subsequent investigation revealed a likely blown head gasket and the boat was delivered to Manitou Marine for repairs.



*An unexpected visit by Sarah Saunders and Stephanie Schubel of the University of Minnesota, who arrived by float plane with a mission: Surveying for Piping Plovers at the south end of Station.*

## From the President

Dear Friends of South Fox,

Fox Island Light Station is certainly special. We invite everyone to be part of our effort to save this unique Maritime Heritage site. This property is state-owned so we all own it, and have responsibility for it. FILA (Fox Island Lighthouse Association) has for 10 years been working to clear, repair, clean, recover and improve accessibility to the seven buildings on the 115 acre southern tip of South Fox. If you have an interest and some time or other resources which might help please contact me or any FILA member. For a really enlightening view of what has been done and what could be done go to the FILA Website, Facebook pages or call me (231-947 1926). My email is mckinne8@msu.edu. John McKinney FILA President



Early view of South Fox Island Lighthouse  
Photograph courtesy National Archives



Zane Bourisseau and son John at the station in 1999



## FILA AWARDED GRANT TO REPAIR WINDOWS IN 1867 LIGHT HOUSE

FILA President John McKinney and Vice President Catherine Allchin are pleased to announce a partnership grant for \$3400 has been awarded to the group.

The Michigan Historic Preservation Network of Lansing, MI working in conjunction with the State of Michigan State Historic Preservation Office has chosen FILA and its work at South Fox Light Station a grant to reconstruct and repair the windows of the 1867 Light house and the Assistant Keepers Quarters. The work will be done as a learning program under the direction of professional restoration expert Mr. Steve Stier. Mr. Stier will be leading a group of experienced and casual woodworkers in the sessions.

The work shop for the actual repairing will be the DNR facility on Mill Road south of Traverse City. There are 3 phases, 1- remove the window, 2- take to mainland and repair, and the third phase will involve returning the renewed windows to the Station for reinstallation. Approximately 10 woodworkers from around the area and Michigan will participate. If you are interested in attending this workshop, please contact John Wells 231-933-0125 or email: kjwells@speednetllc.com

### UPDATE: Construction of a Day Dock gains momentum through persistence

On Feb 2, 2010 a work item proposal was initiated within the DNR that stated the installation of a dock and break-wall should be constructed out at south fox island, that it was a safety issue and should be addressed as quickly as possible. A list of requirements was created which included: completing the Historic Structures Report and a marine archeological study of harbor area which were completed in 2011 and 2012. In 2013 engineered drawings were created and this year we have applied for permits to start construction. Hurdles that we still need to address include raising funds for the \$250,000 project. The DNR has been supportive and everyone is excited about this major access improvement to the station. If you would like to help please contact us! We appreciate you your support.

## A FRIEND OF SOUTH FOX LIGHTSTATION PASSES

### Zane Udell Bourisseau

(June 12, 1922 - October 26, 2013)

For nine summers as a young boy, Zane Bourisseau was on the Island. His father Frank Bourisseau, was the assistant light keeper at the Station from 1928 to 1937. Zane recalled in a 2012 oral history interview done with FILA his many experiences on South Fox. He related wonderful memories being a young boy working with the light keepers and family life on the Island.

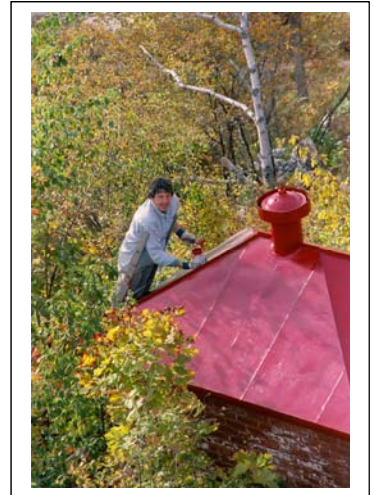
Zane's Grandfather, Louis Bourisseau, was the first native American lightkeeper who served 30 years at the station and in 1892, built wooden walkways connecting the buildings and a few years later oversaw the construction of an oil storage building. In 1903 he petitioned the Government for a new Assistant Keepers Quarters. It took 7 years but in 1910 the 3 story, red brick, 3 apartment structure was built complete with hot running water and electricity. Thank you, Zane for your contributions to the Station. You will be remembered.

# Fox Island Lighthouse Association Celebrates 10 years

The Fox Island Lighthouse Association is celebrating its tenth anniversary this year with much progress made in stabilizing the light station. All of the seven structures have received some attention:

- The 1867 Lighthouse had a temporary metal roof installed to address recurring leaks. Ventilation has been added. The lantern room & deck was scrapped and painted.
- The 1910 Keepers Quarters has had temporary roof repairs & ventilation added.
- The Fog Signal Building has had its smokestack shored up from beneath.
- The Carpenter's Shop got a new cedar shake roof, threshold repair, and a paint job.
- The Oil House got paint and roof repairs
- The Boathouse had yards of stone removed, got realigned on its foundation, re-roofed, painted, and has rebuilt windows and doors ready for installation this season.

The 1934 Light has had brush removed and a new, safer, portable ladder acquired to facilitate access. While we have accomplished much there is still much to do, and we look forward to the next 10 years.



## EXTENSIVE LIGHTSTATION RECORDS NOW ONLINE

Find them at: [bentley.umich.edu/](http://bentley.umich.edu/)

Old and new records, Historic Structures Report, photos, letters, oral histories, historical data and more are now available via the Internet thanks to the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan. FILA work closely with Mr. Leonard Coombs in the Acquisitions area and others at the Library to catalog hundreds of pages relating to the Station at South Fox. Now after several months of additional work by Library staff, the many files are "on line" at the Bentley Historical Library web site: [bentley.umich.edu](http://bentley.umich.edu).



## FILA Shares Insights at the DNR Sponsored Friends Summit

On February 28 to March 1 2014 FILA participated in a DNR/Friends Summit at the Ralph A. MacMullan Conference Center at North Higgins Lake State Park. The DNR sponsored two day meeting brought together non-profit Friends organizations from the various DNR locations and sites around Michigan. John and Karen Wells from FILA presented a 40 minute power point presentation detailing procedures and steps on how to hold a successful breakfast/lunch fund raiser. John and Karen drew on FILA's experience for over 6 years of holding a successful breakfast and lunch cookout in conjunction with the Fall Harvest Festival at Leelanau State Park. Ideas on how to increase event profit and how to organize better the use of volunteers were shared. 60 to 70 people were in attendance to learn from FILA's successes.



Fox Island Lighthouse Assoc.  
 PO Box 851 Traverse City MI 49685

**FILA - MINI MEMBERSHIP FORM**

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ New \_\_\_ Renew

Name (please print)

Address

City, State, Zip

E-mail

Phone

\_\_\_\_\_ \$25 \_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_ Other

Membership includes subscription to "Fox Island Views" Newsletter and the opportunity to join work crews on the island, participate at festival events, as well as knowing that YOU are a part of preserving this historical treasure. Thank you!

**Mail to: FILA**

PO Box 851 Traverse City MI 49685  
 President John McKinney 231-947-1926

**www.southfox.org**

**HATS FOR SALE**

Be cool! Show your support!  
 Limited availability.



Light color tan with blue lettering. One size fits all.

\$25 ea.

Plus \$5 SH

Contact

Pres John McKinney

231-947-1926

[Mckinne8@msu.edu](mailto:Mckinne8@msu.edu)

**HELP WANTED**

There are many projects to be done at the station. We need skilled and unskilled workers. If you are a carpenter, mason, painter, builder, or just interested in helping preserve the station, please contact John McKinney or join us at our monthly meeting always held the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the month at the Great Lakes Children's museum in Traverse City. 5:30PM



**PLEASE Support!**

If you have not already done so, please become a member. Your donations make a big difference in the success of the mission.

[www.southfox.org](http://www.southfox.org)