

THE *SEGUIN SENTINEL*



FRIENDS OF SEGUIN ISLAND LIGHT STATION

Eben Hall photo,
Contour Flight,
August 27, 2025

The Return of the Ox-trail:

For one hundred years on Seguin, from the commissioning of the first light by President George Washington in 1795 until 1895, when the inclined tramway was constructed to haul coal to the top of the island to generate steam for the fog whistles, oxen had been the main motive force responsible for hauling up every aspect of the station.

A yoked team of oxen requires the same width as a large pickup. Once superseded by the tram, the original Ox-trail either grew in to the more recently familiar footpath to the top of the island, or actually disappeared entirely at its upper end. That is, until this year, when we began to reclaim the original full width, which angles up the island's shoulder supported by a running stone wall "curb" of varying height. (More on the Ox-trail inside.)

An 1895 photograph by Seguin Keeper Herbert Spinney at a transitional moment, with the island ox team paused by the new tramway, about to head up the trail hauling a cart fully packed with station supplies.



FROM THE TOWER

FRIENDS OF SEGUIN ISLAND LIGHT STATION

OUR CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

We continue building out the FOSILS Board with enthusiastic and multi-talented members of our local communities:

Steve Cohen has decided to add to his role of the past few years as a Wednesday Warrior volunteer, becoming a member of the board. His accounting degree and background has already provided a great deal of structure to our on-island effort, creating a tools and equipment inventory/maintenance program. We look forward to more great thoughts from Steve to go along with his work effort. We are pleased he could add FOSILS to his many volunteer efforts with other organizations.

We have continued our connections with many other nonprofits such as the US Lighthouse Society, and Maine Preservation.

This past spring and summer were busy and exciting. We are engaged through this winter in many projects preparing for our pier to be ready for next summer. We will continue to review the needs and opportunities that the new pier will present, not least of which will be a greatly expanded number of visitors well beyond our 1400 seasonal average.

We are excited to be able to utilize the old Ox-trail thanks to the efforts of Chris, Tom, Steve and Fred in clearing it this summer. Maine Island Trails Association and several day volunteers also contributed to this multi-week effort. More to come on that and other projects in the Spring Newsletter.

~ Read Armstrong, *President, FOSILS Board*

This issue of the *Sentinel* marks an important milestone in our ongoing mission of making Seguin more accessible to visitors. After receiving several bids for the construction of our pier and float system, the Board voted to have Prock Marine out of Rockland, Maine build the stacked granite pier itself, while obtaining separate bids for the ramp and floats. The construction of the pier system has been met with great excitement from Seguin members and those who have heard about it “along the waterfront”, and will be a significant asset for making Seguin a more convenient destination for visitors, campers and future educational programs.

~ Gordon Reed, *FOSILS Board*

Seguin Island Light Station is helping to establish the newly formed Kennebec Lighthouse Alliance, along with our other “sister”-lights along the river: Perkins Island, Squirrel Point, the Range Lights, and Doubling Point.

In partnership with Maine Maritime Museum, the Alliance will be preserving and promoting the unique 19th-century navigational system formed by this series of lighthouses that has guided uncountable tons of commercial and naval vessels along the lower Kennebec River.



Friends of Seguin Island Light Station is now entering year three of our capital campaign. A capital campaign isn't just about asking for money for the sake of having money. We have had to develop a plan, estimate the costs, and demonstrate to potential donors where your contributions will go. Replacing the Keepers' House windows has played a huge role in our capital campaign and island activities. As regulated by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, new windows for Seguin have to be replicas accurate to the light station's 1857 era. Given the logistics endemic to the island, this puts a price tag of nearly \$10,000 per window; the house has 25 windows. How do we safely transport nearly a quarter of a million dollars-worth of windows from a boat up to the Keepers' House?

The answer is the new pier that potentially will be open for the 2026 season. Not only will it ease the traditional challenge of visitors getting onto the island, it will also allow us to land the windows safely.

But then, up the hill?

Initially we thought the only way was to restore the tramway to a functioning state, which would cost as much as the windows themselves. But this past summer, our Wednesday Warriors resurrected the island's original 19th-century Ox-trail, clearing back the brush to reclaim the original traveled way, enabling the potential for an all-terrain-vehicle with trailer to transport window units (and all other station supplies) up the hill.

The oxen have seen this all before!

And now for the windows themselves: this is where FOSILS is looking for donors' help. New windows for the Keeper's House are the last major project in our initial three-year strategic plan. With your support, we can make this final hurdle a reality. Thank you and please come see your island in 2026; you might even step onto a new pier.

~ Tip Koehler, *Capital Campaign Chair*



Schematic of the new pier, ramp and float system

Eben Hall photo, Contour Flight

Highlight of a busy summer season: the rediscovery and resurrection of the original Ox-trail. (cont.)



Steve Cohen and Fred Sargent pushing back on the island's thicket to reveal the full scope of the trail. More on the island's fruit trees in the coming Spring newsletter.

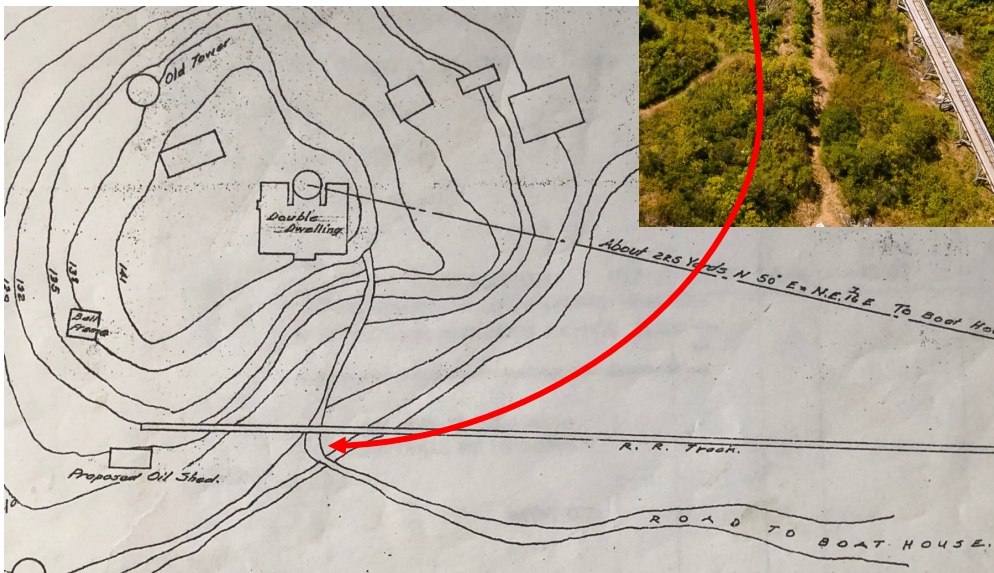
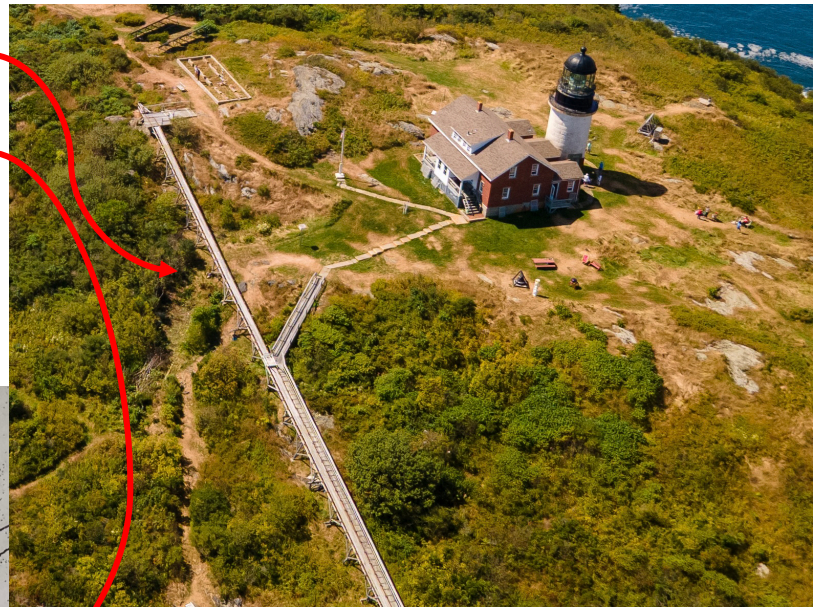


A day spent whacking back brush by Eben and Henry Hall revealed a long-forgotten iron pin hook imbedded in the ledge at the top end of the Ox-trail. This may have been a purchase point for rigging to assist heavy loads up the last curve onto the topside "plateau".

Right: The newly cleared top of the Ox-trail curves up into the open field that surrounds the Keepers' House.

The same curve is delineated in the map below, an 1870s survey updated with subsequent infrastructure, such as the 1895 tramway, about 1923.

All the structures shown are long gone, except for the "Dwelling", the "R.R. Track" (tramway) and the light itself.



By the time Seguin station was closed for the winter on September 12th, close to 1400 visitors had reached the island since opening on June 4th.



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Did you know? European fire ants are reported to be living on Damariscove Island, just 6 miles east of Seguin, but fortunately none are to be found on our island. These small red invasive ants, which have spread to a number of sites along the Maine coast since the 1950s, inflict a painful bite. How they reached remote Damariscove is a mystery, and this gives us pause.



Mission: *To distinguish Seguin Island Light Station as part of Maine's maritime heritage through education and preservation.*

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Seguin Island's role in protecting the North American Right Whale through a collision avoidance system (StationKeeper) went fully operational this summer. StationKeeper systems are now spread along the east coast from Maine to Florida. Each station monitors commercial shipping traffic entering Right Whale protection zones and advises them of the NOAA requirement to reduce their speed to 10 knots, allowing whales to move out of the path of oncoming vessels. Vessels also have more response time to maneuver around a pod of whales. Seguin's contribution to this network covers the area between Monhegan Island and Halfway Rock. A 12-volt system runs StationKeeper during the off-season on two solar panels independent of the island's larger solar array, which we close down for the winter. For more information, go to our "Protecting the Right Whales" link on our web site.

