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## East Point Light

By Jane Galetto

The word light has been used as a symbol to evoke so many different ideas. But to a mariner seeing the light means a safe harbor after a long night at sea. In Southern New Jersey on the shores of Delaware Bay one such light marks the entrance to the Maurice River Cove. When constructed in 1849 it was known as Maurice River Light. Since 1912 the official name of the light is as we know it today, East Point Lighthouse, so as not to be confused with the once existing Maurice Range Light on the opposite side of the cove.

Early in 1849 Joshua Brick, the founder of Bricksboro, a former village just south of Port Elizabeth's Post Office, solicited Congressman Charles Brown to have the US Government construct a lighthouse on his property at the mouth of the Maurice River. When permission was granted, Brick asked to be the contractor, but the bidding process eventually awarded the job to Nathan and Samuel Middleton. The original contract was a one-story structure at a cost of \$1975. Again, Brick influenced the process offering additional money to have the structure be two stories tall. By September of that same year a light keeper was assigned to man the light. Today's House of Representatives might look to the Congress of 1849 to shed some light on how to get things done expediently.

The ensuing years were not without problems for the light. At the onset of World War II the light was extinguished and remained so till 1980. By 1955 the government had decided to decommission the lighthouse and sell the property to the highest bidder. The New Jersey Division of Fish and Game (now called Fish and Wildlife) intervened in the bidding process declaring the Division had the first right of refusal. Today the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife owns the property and rents the light to its caretaker, Maurice River Historic Society. The Society has over come many obstacles to allow the light to be the regional icon as we know it today. The most severe blow to the lighthouse came in 1971 when vandals set it a flame just a few months after the Society took over responsibility for the light. Over \$600,000 in restoration and countless blood, sweat and tears have brought the light to its former glory.

Today its 40 foot high Fresnel lens guides boats into the mouth of the Maurice River just as it did from 1849 to 1941.