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Landmark lighthouse celebrates century

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At 8:42 p.m. on June 16, the Huntington Lighthouse is scheduled to illuminate -- as it did a century ago at the same time. And if the people who have dedicated the past 27 years to preserving the historic landmark have their way, the beacon will light the way through the next centennial.

With a \$250,000 grant the [New York](#) State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation awarded last month to lighthouse guardians, the likelihood that it will continue to operate and guide mariners seems very high. The money would be used to repair the lighthouse's concrete foundation and to purchase 650 tons of riprap, which are 3- to- 5-ton granite boulders used to protect the foundation, as well as extend the riprap 25 feet. Years of erosion, storms, ice and heavy boat traffic have contributed to the decline of the lighthouse's foundation, causing concern about the structure's longevity.

"We're so excited about winning this grant in this economic climate," Pam Setchell, president of the Huntington Lighthouse Preservation Society, the nonprofit group that leases and maintains the lighthouse, as she stood on one of the boulders Tuesday. "If this lighthouse goes away, you can't tell the story, a huge part of our history will be lost."

The only catch is the grant is a matching one, and the preservation society must have a large percentage of the money or in-kind service, by October. Setchell said the project will cost about \$450,000.

"This is a tremendous project," Setchell said, "And it has to be done properly. We need to go to the next level, so we have no choice but to raise the matching funds."

The lighthouse, at the junction of Huntington Harbor and Lloyd Harbor, was slated to be torn down in 1984 and replaced with a steel tower. But a year later, some residents organized efforts to preserve the structure. In 1989, it was named to the [National Register of Historic Places](#).



Festivities to commemorate the lighthouse's centennial and help raise money to insure its future include a restaurant week from June 9 to 16 with some of the proceeds going to the preservation society, a pub crawl the same week and a fundraising cocktail party at the lighthouse the night of the anniversary lighting. The society raises money by having patrons buy boulders, windows, steps and engraved blocks, tours of the offshore lighthouse are offered with donations suggested. The [United States Coast Guard](#) maintains the navigational aids.

Robert Muller, a local historian on lighthouses, said although most boaters use [GPS](#) devices, lighthouses are still relevant for historical and practical reasons.

"If you want to get where you're going, it's best to know where you've been," Muller said. "This was a way of life, and coming here, you see it and it gives you a perspective, plus it's a nice to have a low-tech option, when the high-tech goes."

Lighthouse facts

- The Huntington Harbor Lighthouse was completed in 1912 and is a Beaux Arts style structure.
- It stands 42 feet tall in at the neck of Huntington Harbor.
- It was built at a cost of \$32,500, \$7,500 under budget.
- It was listed on the [National Register of Historic Places](#) in 1989.
- It was first automated in 1949, when an electrical cable was put in place from the shore.

- It is now fully solar-powered.

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