



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Owen H. Johnson

Fresnel Lens Building Grand Opening Ceremony at Fire Island

OWEN H. JOHNSON August 4, 2011



Senator Owen H. Johnson assisted in the ribbon cutting at the Fresnel Lens Building Grand Opening Ceremony on July 22, 2011. Members of the Fire Island Lighthouse Preservation Society and the National Park Service were among those who joined in the celebration. The Fresnel Lens Building is now the home of the First Order Fresnel Lens; a beacon that guided mariners into New York Harbor. For many European immigrants, the Fire Island Light was their first sight of land upon arrival to America.

“To bring home the original Fresnel Lens that was once atop the Fire Island Lighthouse has been a very exciting project,” Senator Owen H. Johnson said. “I am pleased that I was able to

secure a grant to aid in the preservation of Long Island's rich nautical history and happy to see the project completed."

The Fire Island Light Station's Original 1858 First Order Fresnel Lens was restored by a team of highly skilled technical specialists and is now displayed as a historic artifact and maritime educational aid in the new Fresnel Lens Building. The 10-foot-tall brass and glass lens sits on a 10-foot-tall cast-iron base inside the new cedar-covered building that was erected above the foundation of an 1895 generator building.

From November 1, 1858 until it was removed from the Fire Island Lighthouse in 1933, the First Order Fresnel Lens had been visible to mariners from more than 20 miles at sea. After its removal, the 9000-pound lens was displayed at the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia until 2000. It was returned to Long Island in 2007 and its 900 pieces were stored until the reconstruction project began.

Senator Johnson's grant represents a portion of the total project cost. The Fire Island Lighthouse Preservation Society embarked on a major fundraising campaign to raise the additional funding necessary to complete the Fresnel Lens Building. The restoration of the Fresnel Lens was a National Park Service-managed project, funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

Photograph left to right: Ken Herman, longtime member of the Fire Island Lighthouse Preservation Society and Fresnel Lens Building Project Manager; K. Christopher Soller, Superintendent, Fire Island National Seashore; Owen H. Johnson, NY Senator; Thomas F. Roberts, III, longtime President of the Fire Island Lighthouse Preservation Society; and Stephanie Toothman, Ph.D., Associate Director for Cultural Resources, National Park Service.