A QUEST FOR FULFILLMENT

by George M. Feirer, Historian

PART I

I had my last live view of the California coast 45 years ago, allowing me plenty of time to "chase" lighthouses almost anywhere else. Fortunately, my son Glen found it desirable to move there, and shortly thereafter, desirous of my company for three weeks. During that period, we managed to visit a few of the west coast lighthouses that we had heard and read about for so long.

One must have a starting point for any investigative trip and ours started at a very notable point--Point Loma. Having traveled south from Orange County on U.S. 5, we turned west on U.S. 8 to head toward Ocean Beach and the point. As San Diego is a Navy town, we passed a great many U.S. ships preparing for the Persian Gulf (This took place last November). Taking Route 209 through Fort Rosecrans' Military Reservation we arrived at the Cabrillo National Monument; a memorial honoring Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, explorer, and the man accredited with the discovery of the west coast of California.

The monument grounds contain the old Point Loma Lighthouse; built on the Point's highest elevation. A great view of San Diego Bay, North Island, Ballast Point and the Pacific Ocean, but soon to be found a very impractical location for a lighthouse. Building started in April of 1854 with materials being landed at Ballast Point, east of the Point Loma site. The Lantern, when completed in 1855, received a third order lens that was a bit over three feet in diameter and five feet high.

It continued in use for thirty-six years and with a cost of construction almost double the original estimate of $15,000, it's annual cost of being in existence, without including upkeep and maintenance, just matched the Head Keeper's salary, reported to be $1,000 per annum.

At an elevation of 462 feet above sea-level, it could be seen 28 miles at sea. That was on a clear night; and that proved to be it’s eventual downfall.

As the California coast frequently is unhappy recipient of "high" fogs, the country's highest lighthouse became a misplaced beacon. By the 1880's, plans were made for a new light, this one 30 feet above sea-level, on the tip of the point and some 400 feet lower. Construction of the "New Point Loma Lighthouse" began in 1889 and was finished in 1891. On March 23rd of that year, the new light at Pelican Point became operational.

There is a current service road that leads down to Pelican Point from the Cabrillo National Monument. The gate is closed at 5:00 P.M., but with judicious planning good photo opportunities are available at both the old and new Point Loma Lighthouses.

OLD POINT LOMA LIGHTHOUSE
(Photo credit George Feirer)

In 1894, and additional light was erected at Ballast Point at the entrance to San Diego Bay, just across from North Island. This light station no longer exists and the land is being used by a U.S. Navy facility. Comment offered by an employee at the Cabrillo Visitor's Center indicated that they were looking for the exact location of the original lighthouse. A photograph can be made of Ballast Point from the grounds.
of the monument for a general view of the area.

The citizens of San Diego and the local sea-farers’ cries were heard for a relighting in effect of the old lighthouse. Though not an aid to navigation in its original sense, the curtained light does shine toward the city and the pleasure boat owners in the bay; while the "new" light 400 feet below serves the vessels at sea.

Point Loma Lighthouse, according to a San Diego publicist is the second most visited site in the country, surpassed only by the Statue of Liberty.

Suggested Reading:

"The Old Point Loma Lighthouse", by F. Ross Holland. Pub.: The Cabrillo Historical Assn. 1978

President visits Trinity House

by Jack Granger

Our President, Jack Granger, who is an Adjunct Professor of Economics at Ocean County College in Toms River, New Jersey accompanied a group of 30 students on a two week trip to England during Christmas break.

While in England he met with Trinity House, the organization that is charged with operation and maintenance of aids to navigation such as lighthouses, light ships, buoys and beacons in the British Isles, the Channel Islands between England and France as well as the facilities on Gibraltar.

In this regard, Trinity House is like our U.S. Coast Guard, but that is where the similarity ends. Trinity House was started under a Royal Grant issued by King Henry VIII in 1514. Among its duties was to control traffic in the River Thames, license pilots to guide ships into harbors, erect beacons, lay buoys, train examine and license ship masters and mates and collect fees from ships that utilize the navigational facilities at sea.

The Master of Trinity House is always the male heir on the Throne of England whether he be King or not. At the present time the Master is His Royal Highness, The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, the husband of Queen Elizabeth II. The members of the Board of Directors are always ships captains or Admirals of the Fleet.

Another major difference between Trinity House and our U.S. Coast Guard is that Trinity House is a form of a trade guild that concentrates mainly on the state of the art in ships operation and navigation. Lighthouses and navigational aids are only important in how they assist in ocean and ship operations. Trinity House has set up a pension plan for retired mariners and has a fund to aid needy family members of seaman.

Trinity House receives no funds from the British Government. It exists solely and exclusively on the fees paid by ships using the navigational aids at sea and in ports. These fees are based on the net registered tonnage of the ships.

At present Trinity House maintains 85 lighthouses, 13 light ships, 6 Large Automatic Navigational Buoys, 2 light floats and over 600 buoys of which 400 are lighted. About one third of the lighthouses are manned and there is not the pressure to automate the rest that we have in the U.S.

The Large Automatic Navigational Buoys mentioned above are rather unique. They are all steel construction weighing about 40 tons plus and equal weight of sea water for ballast. They are about 40 feet in diameter. The light and fog signals are powered by diesel generators with back-up equipment. Some of the new ones planned will be solar powered.

A few of the lighthouses are being fitted with helipads on top where the design will permit such an operation. Trinity House also operates two lighthouse tenders which are 125 feet long and displace some 500 tons. Each of these tenders is serviced by a fleet of tugs and work boats. A majority of buoys are powered by dissolved acetylene gas stored in cylinders in the buoy body. The gas bottles need to be replaced on average every nine months. These are slowly being converted to solar power.

On the international scene Trinity House is active in the International Association of Lighthouse Authorities (IALA) which has a permanent secretariat in Paris that holds 5 yearly International Lighthouse Conferences.

Trinity House is also responsible for dealing with wrecks around the coasts of the British Isles in addition to controlling the 400 ships that pass through the English Channel daily.

The headquarters building of Trinity House is directly across the street from the Tower of London in the ancient part of London starting in the year 1070 A.D. There are displays of sailing ships models, light ships models, nautical memorabilia from the 1400’s on, nautical art and a sterling silver and gold lighthouse approximately 40 inches high.

Unfortunately Jack's planned trip to several lighthouses did not materialize due to terrible storms in the southern part of England and the increasing international tension toward the end of his stay.

The Information Officer for Trinity House is Mrs. Jane Wilson. Jack made Mrs. Wilson a member of our New Jersey Chapter and she, in turn, made him a member of Trinity House, so we will be getting regular information from them.

Mrs. Wilson's address is:

Trinity House Lighthouse Service
Trinity House
Tower Hill
London, EC3N 4DH

MINUTES FROM SEA GIRT MEETING

by Kim M. Ruth

December 8, 1990 - The third meeting of the New Jersey
The Mispillion River Lighthouse

By Angele L. Deodato

The Mispillion River Lighthouse, located a few miles east of Milford, Delaware at the mouth of the Mispillion River, is the last surviving wood frame lighthouse in Delaware and one of the last of that state’s coastal lights still standing. Although the site has been on the National Register of Historic Places since January 30, 1986, it is deteriorating badly. Visitors to the site find peeling paint, rotting boards, and cracked and boarded up windows. Next to the lighthouse is an equally decrepit, rusting skeleton tower which amazingly is still operational.

The lighthouse has had some good news lately. New owners have purchased the lighthouse and adjacent marina, are they eager to see the property restored.

The new owners are Eileen and Galen Stauffer. They purchased the property in early February and are investigating ways to get the repairs made. Although it is too late to obtain matching Federal funds, there may be some other sources of funding. Action must be taken soon to prevent further deterioration of the lighthouse.

The first lighthouse on the site was commissioned in August, 1831 and completed in October of the same year. It soon fell victim to erosion.

Steel Skeleton Tower with Mispillion lighthouse in rear
(Photo Credit Diane Frazine)

In 1857, the light at Mispillion Creek was decommissioned. Reports of the Lighthouse Board deemed it "unnecessary even for the local interests of that vicinity...for the general navigational of the bay this light is useless." The reason for this, they stated, was that at low tide the river is only one foot deep, and only small, flat-bottomed boats could go in and out of the channel. According to James H. Bell’s history of Milford, a Mr. W. N. W. Dorsey bought the old lighthouse for $136, then moved it to downtown Walnut Street.

In 1873, the light was reactivated with a $5000 Federal grant, followed by a matching grant the following year for a Keeper’s dwelling. The tower was outfitted with a fifth-order Fresnel lens. It is this structure which currently stands today. The City of Milford at that time boasted a brisk shipping and ship-building trade, and produce travelled to Southern markets down the Mispillion to the Delaware Bay.

In 1911, the oil lamp was removed, and an automated acetylene lighting system was installed. Although a keeper was no longer needed, someone was hired to live in the house to prevent vandalism. Repairs were made to the house or the site almost every year.

The lighthouse was deactivated in 1929, and replaced with a steel skeleton tower 60 feet high. This tower had previously stood a Cape Henlopen, but when the Old Cape Henlopen Tower collapsed, the Coast Guard abandoned this site for a light. It was moved to a spot a few feet from the old lighthouse, and is still in use.

Although the old lighthouse today is in a sad state of
disrepair, its new owners are hoping to be able to set that right. The Stauffers have brought in historic preservation builders to examine the lighthouse. The Stauffers have also been fixing up the marina and restaurant next door. They are not certain what will become of the lighthouse; it might be restored as a dwelling, a museum, or even be reactivated as a lighthouse. The historic and architectural importance of the lighthouse make it well worth preserving.

Anyone who is interested in the site or would like to help is welcome to write or call:

Mispillion Lighthouse Marina
R.D.#1, Box 417
Milford, DE 19963
(302) 422-2626

Can you identify this beacon?

We are seeking information about the lighthouse shown in the below picture. The photo is from an old family album and was taken 1900-1910, somewhere between Long Branch, New Jersey and Atlantic Highlands. It appears to be on a pier and may have been a privately maintained aid to navigation. Any information can be sent to Kim, and we’ll mention it in the next issue.
Chapter was held at the Sea Girt Lighthouse on Dec 8th. We had over 65 people attend, including late comers.

From the south - Ocean Avenue, bear left at the entrance to Sandy Hook Park, and cross the Highlands Bridge. Turn right at the west side of the bridge and proceed downhill to Bay Avenue. Turn right beneath the bridge and take an immediate right on Highland Avenue (you will have made a U turn under the bridge). Proceed up the hill, cross Portland Road and continue up the hill to the entrance road on your left.

**Message From Your President**

I am so thrilled at the progress we have made in our chapter that I want to share my euphoria with all you fellow members.

When Jim Gowdy, Kim Ruth and I planned our first ever meeting in Mays Landing, N.J. in June 1990 and welcomed 17 enthusiastic members we had no idea of how the fledgling organization would grow. Now, in only 7 months and after two membership meetings, we have 127 memberships with 172 members. We have a treasury with approximately $1,673.00 which will help fund some activities in the future.

On Wednesday, January 30, 1991, our organization was featured in a full page article in the Newark Star Ledger that told of what we are doing and hope to do with lighthouses. It announced our next quarterly meeting scheduled for Saturday, March 9th at 10:30 a.m. we are looking forward to greeting our new members at that time.

I would like to take this opportunity to speak to you about a very important item, that of individual participation. I realize that some people are reluctant to speak out at group activities. This reluctance to speak can be a serious problem for our organization. The people serving as your officers are trying to give overall direction to the group. the group can only be successful if it reflects and acts on the general desires of all the memberships. That point has been brought out at each of our meetings. Our chapter must be a “round-table” where ideas and experiences are shared with each other. Unless all members share and are privy to each other’s information and experiences with lighthouses, we will not be getting what is available in the organization. Please get completely involved.

See you at Twin Lights in Highlands, N.J. on March 9th. New members are invited. If for some reason you cannot make the meeting and have information to share, please jot it down and send it to Kim Ruth, 425 Summer Avenue, Beverly, NJ 08010, so that it can be used at the meeting or included in a future edition of "The Beam."

**NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the New Jersey Chapter will be held on March 9th, 1991, at the Twin Lights Historic Site in Atlantic Highlands, N.J. at 10:30 a.m.

From the north take the Garden State Parkway to Exit 117 and follow Route 36 East about 12 miles to the Highlands Bridge. Do not cross the bridge. Turn right at Portland Road and take an immediate right on Highland Avenue. Proceed up the hill [steep] to the entrance road on your left.

**Bibliographical**

Most of these citations are available from our Librarian - George Feirer.

"Lighthouse Hunt," Syracuse Herald American, October 14, 1990, page 8. Article on eight lighthouses along the Lake Ontario shoreline. [Joan Lange].

"Light at the end of the tunnel," Historic Preservation


Memberships

by Barbara Nelson

The compliments and words of encouragement enclosed with membership dues have certainly been appreciated.

Many suggestions were sent along also - giving a Chapter Membership for Christmas was a popular idea and used by many. One man gave ten gift memberships.

To all of you a sincere thank you for your support.

We were approached with offers of creating an “institutional membership” for groups involved with the preservation and restoration of lighthouses. We have eight such organizations at this time. We have decided to offer groups free membership in the United States Lighthouse Society - New Jersey Chapter. We feel that their contribution to the preservation and restoration of Lighthouses far outweigh whatever remuneration we would receive from them, and we would rather allow them to utilize their funds for the projects to which they have been devoted. Some, like The Sea Girt Lighthouse Restoration Committee, have allowed us to use their facilities without charge, and we feel it is the least we can do to return their gracious hospitality.

The Keeper’s Corner

Hassan Cigarette Cards

Kim is seeking information about a series of cigarette cards featuring lighthouses of the United States. The cards were apparently collectible included with packs of Hassan, “The Oriental Smoke” Cork Tip cigarettes. There were fifty in the series. I believe they were published about 1920-1930, but other than that I don’t know much about them. I have 21 of the fifty. I’d like to know when they were published, and any other information about them.

NOTES FROM NEAR & FAR

Tom Whitehead, of Temple University’s Paley Library, Special Collections Department send us the following.

The National Archives has three lighthouse items available - A Lighthouse lamp and lantern, and Chatham Lighthouse Mugs. The lamp design is adapted from a drawing an original drawing of 1854 of the Petit Menan Island Lighthouse, Maine. The lamp is mounted on a handsome wooden base, has an in-line on/off switch, and comes with a 25 watt bulb. The lantern comes with a refillable, adjustable burner, which fits inside and burns liquid paraffin or lamp oil. A candle can also be used. Handcrafted in Wisconsin. The lamp is 16 inches tall, the lantern 15 inches. They are priced at $125.00 each plus 5% shipping.

The Mug commemorates the Bicentennial of the United States Coast Guard and features a drawing from 1841 depicting the Chatham, Massachusetts lighthouse constructed by Winslow Lewis. The mug is 4 inches tall, and 3.25: inches in diameter. Price is $12.00 and $3.00 shipping.

Order from the National Archives Trust Fund, NEPS, P.O. Box 100793, Atlanta, GA, 30384, Visa and MC accepted.

Ken Werring of Mahwah tells us that a Goebel porcelain lighthouse is now available.

He also reports that the “See the Lights” folder is still available. Produced by the Department of Commerce and Economic Development, New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism, CN 826, Trenton, NJ 08625. Ken reports you can obtain some of the folders by calling 1-800-Jersey7, unless Governor Florio has had the phone disconnected.

Our logo this issue, “Barnegat Light-The Light that never fails,” was sent to us from Charles Crowell, of Hamilton Square, NJ. It was taken from old postcard.

Cacheted Covers Available

by Kim M. Ruth

In conjunction with the 1990 Clifton Stamp Show - Fall Bourse which was held October 27-28, 1990, the Clifton Stamp Society is offering cacheted covers picturing the Sandy Hook Lightship and franked with a random example of the .25 Lightship booklet stamps.

The Show cancel honors the 200th Anniversary of the United States Coast Guard and features an illustration of the modern Coast Guard Ensign (flag).

Also available is a cacheted cover commemorating the 225th Anniversary of the Sandy Hook Lighthouse (1764-1989). The show cancel honors the 200th Anniversary of the United States Lighthouse Service (1789-1989) and features an illustration of the Lighthouse Service pennant.

Serviced covers are available for $1.00 each, plus a large SASE. Make Checks payable to the Clifton Stamp Society. Order from Herbert Aschoff, 207 Fort Lee Road, Apt. “D”, Leonia, NJ 07605.