

Pages from the Past

Cape Henry, VA



1881 tower

1791 tower

U.S. Lighthouse Society photo

May 16, 1873 — A keeper applying to this office will be given a leave of absence for 10 to 14 days a quarter between March 31 and Nov. 31, at other times leave will only be granted to the applicant having a substitute who must be a person of good character and also fair ability. A leave for three or four days can be granted by the principal keeper. The two assistant keepers are entitled to three rooms between them, a bedroom each and a kitchen on the third floor. This leaves the keeper two bedrooms on the second floor and a parlor, dining room and kitchen [on the ground floor]. W.F. Stanley, Inspector

May 17 — John S. Watergeild, 1st Asst. Keeper of this light station, absented himself from this station without permission or without letting me know he was going and did not return until Saturday 24th. He offered no explanation for his absence. Witness Mahala Moody.

June 1 — 1st Asst. Keeper, during my absence in the City for business connected with this Lt. sta., absented himself from the sta. early in the morning and did not return until after lighting up time the same evening. witness Mahala Moody.

Nov. — [The District Inspector arrived and really laid it on regarding the poor condition of the station, the keeper replied] —

Nov. 18 — I desire to account for the condition of the light station at the recent visit of the Inspector. The fact that from the 1st of Sept. until Nov. 17, I had no assistants for two months and was obliged to watch the light in the tower nearly every night. The only assistance I had during this period of time I received from my wife and family, and it was simply impossible under the circumstances to keep the station in the condition that the Inspector desires, or that I should have liked to had it upon the Commandant's recent visit.

Since my [new] assistant's have reported for duty I have thoroughly cleaned, painted, etc. Henry Richardson, Keeper.

[On subsequent visits to the station the Inspector noted that the oil burners were dirty and informed the keeper the correct method of cleaning them. The keeper would then write to the Inspector that they were being properly cared for now that he had assistance. Then the Inspector would return and find them still unacceptable, matches on the lantern room floor, etc.]

Aug. 17, 1874 — Harry Richardson was released as Principal Keeper and replaced by Horatio Creekman. Three weeks later both assistants were fired and replaced a week or two later. On the next visit the inspector found a lot of improvement in the station.

Feb. 1, 1878 — The Steamer Metropolis Capt. Ankers from Philadelphia bound to Brazil sprung a leak at sea and was run ashore near the station on the Carolina coast to save their lives, the crew and passengers consisting of 260 of which about 100 were lost.

Aug. 19 — Inspected the station today and found it in very bad condition. The lamp, burner, storm panes, inside of lens, service box, etc. were far from being properly cleaned. There is an evident want of care and industry in keeping things clean and the keeper was informed that I shall take steps to have him removed unless there is a change for the better at once. Left L.H. Library #145. Silas Terry, Inspector.

Dec. 17, 1879 — Inspector visited today. Found the station very much improved since my last visit. It is now in good order.

Mar. 10, 1880 — I received the appointment of the Cape Henry Lighthouse from Secretary Sherman. Took inventory of Light House property. Jay Edwards

Mar. 16 — Mr. Brown the former keeper moved away leaving the house in bad order. We cleaned over two cart loads of sand and dirt out of his kitchen.

July 20, 1880 — Mr. Lewis commenced work on the foundation for the new Light House [tower].

Oct. 3 — Asst. Pettigrew left on what he said was thirty days leave of absence. He refused to show his authority or put a person in his place. Gave me much abuse and telegraphed Collector Bowden that I refused to let him off. I telegraphed that it was a lie. That I would be glad to have him away. Pettigrew reported Nov. 5 for duty, absent 353 days.

Nov. 19 — 1st Asst. Pettigrew transferred to Craney Island.

Dec. 15, 1881 — Extinguished light in old tower and lighted new one (in the very front of the Log book is this statement: "old tower was erected in the year of our Lord 1783.")

Dec. 19 — Took down lens in old tower.

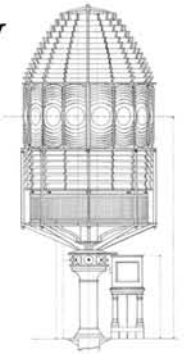
Dec. 20 — Commenced to clean up new tower.

May 8, 1883 — Hundreds of small birds killed last night by striking the tower and lantern.

Oct. 14, 1885 — received my discharge as keeper of Cape Henry Lighthouse on account of being a Republican.



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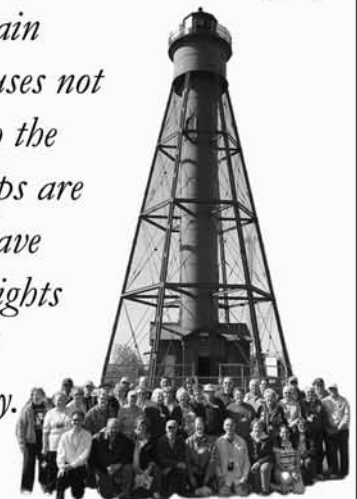
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Tincum Lighthouse, NJ