

LOG

THE KEEPERS

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Whitehead Light Station

St. George, Maine

By David A. Gamage



Whitehead Light Station after a wooden second story was added to the original one story stone house. National Archives photo.



From pre-Colonial times through the mid to late 1800's, the development of business and industry of the mid-coast and Penobscot Bay region of Maine was highly dependant on sailing vessels to transport to market the raw materials and finished products of coastal and inland areas. Fish, lumber, ice, lime and granite were the significant products derived from the abundant natural resources of the coast and inland along the extensive Penobscot River system. Returning vessels supplied the region with salt, cloth, metals, machinery, sugar and flour needed to support the area economy and to meet the needs of the growing population. In later years, steamships became a quicker and reliable means of transportation for

people and merchandise.

Mariners approaching from the southwest have two choices of passage into West Penobscot Bay. One is the Two Bush Channel leading easterly into the open expanse of the outer bay. The other is the Muscle Ridge Channel, which on a navigation chart looks more like an eight-mile long northeasterly obstacle course than a navigable passage. The prominent white granite headland of Whitehead Island long served as a daymarker to identify the southern entrance of the Muscle Ridge Channel. It was on this headland at the eastern end of this 70-acre island that construction of the third light station on the Maine coast was authorized in 1803.

The Muscle Ridge Channel was a hazardous passage with many ledges, small islands and reefs, and it had no channel buoys or day beacons until the middle 1800s. It was

often difficult to enter this channel during adverse wind and sea conditions. The recommended approach from the south was to head for the white headland of Whitehead Island and then to pass between it and the South Breaker Ledge 800 yards to the southeast. Norton Island to the west also had a white granite headland, which in poor visibility was easily mistaken for Whitehead, and with disastrous consequences on the treacherous Norton and Browns ledges. Likewise, nearby to the east are the numerous ledges and the cliffs of the lower Muscle Ridge Islands: Graffam, Crow and Two Bush.

The northeasterly alignment of the several Muscle Ridge islands, parallel to the mainland, defines the eastern side of the channel and gives protection from easterly storm winds and waves of the open expanse of Penobscot Bay.

On the western side of the channel between Spruce Head and Whitehead Islands is Seal Harbor, often used by the coasters for sheltered anchorage in bad weather. For reasons of protection and sheltered anchorage, the Muscle Ridge Channel was the choice route for the highly maneuverable sloops and schooners, the earlier vessels of choice for coastal trade. Side-wheel steamships also favored this protected passage.

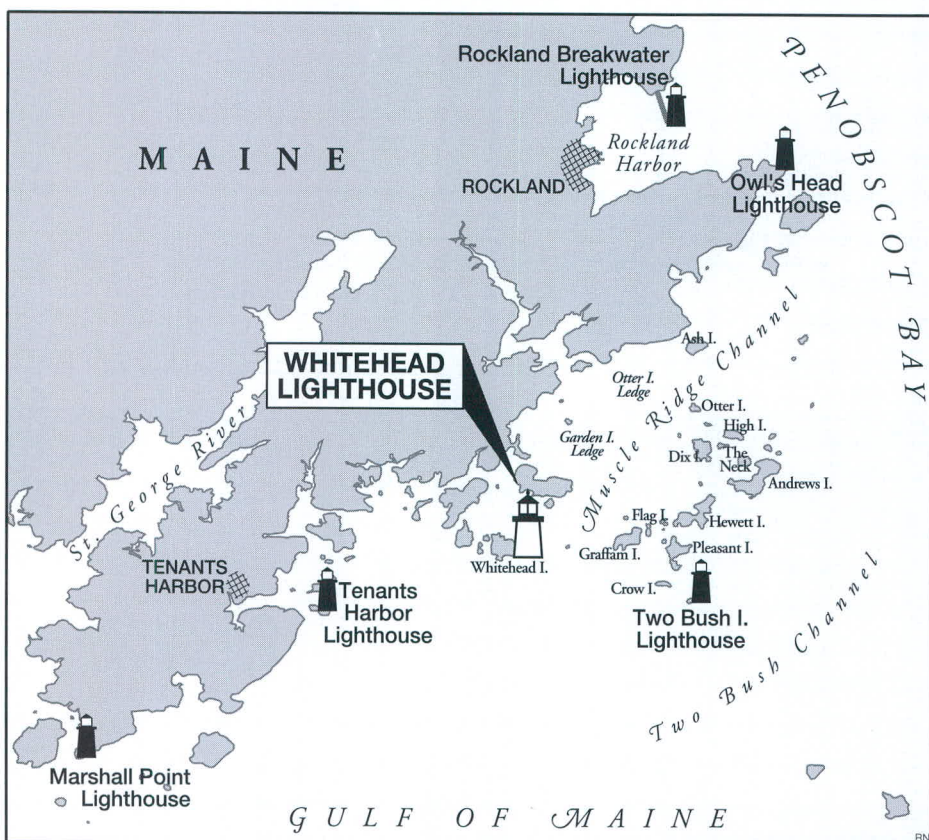
In the 1800s, sailing vessels carried the granite quarried from several islands on both sides of the channel. To the north were the many lime kilns of Rockland and Rockport that annually produced many thousands of casks of lime and lime products, which became cargo for hundreds of vessels sailing down the channel.

cove at the northern end of the lighthouse property. The first illumination was probably provided by inefficient "spider lamps", which consisted of an arrangement of flat wicks protruding from a reservoir of whale oil. In and about 1812, ten Lewis lamps with 13-inch reflectors were installed. Eight more lamps were added in 1824. The light was then classified as 2nd Order clear.

Whitehead Light Station was officially established in 1807 but may have been operational in 1805 when the first keeper was alleged to have begun the practice of selling quantities, occasionally barrels, of government lamp oil to local businessmen. This scheme to supplement his income was discovered in 1807 when it was noticed that the amount of oil requested by Keeper Dolph far exceeded expected consumption by his lamps.

ance to vessels leaving the inner bay by the channel route. Whitehead Light Station was the lone sentinel in Penobscot Bay for two decades until the offshore Monhegan Island Light Station was established in 1824, followed by Owls Head Light Station at the northern end of the channel in 1825. Matinicus Rock Light Station was established in the outer bay in 1827.

In 1831, a \$6000 contract was awarded to Jeremiah Berry of Rockland to rebuild the light station. A 29-foot high tower of split undressed stone was constructed—18-foot diameter at the base and 10-foot diameter at the top. The focal plane of the lamps in this new tower was 69 feet above sea level and the light was visible for 12 miles. A new 34' x 40' foot single story three-room dwelling was also built of split stone.



Whitehead Fog Bells

Penobscot Bay is notorious for fog, which caused great difficulties, and sometimes, disasters for mariners attempting to locate the narrow channel entrance. In 1829, a Luther Whitman design fog bell and bell tower were installed at Whitehead. Similar weight powered fog bells were also installed at light stations at Seguin, West Quoddy Head and Cape Elizabeth. The Whitehead bell sounded three consecutive strikes each minute and the operating weight required winding every six hours. The Whitman fog bell barely satisfied the needs of sailing vessels but not the steamships. The bell was not loud enough to be heard over the noise from steam-powered machinery so steamship captains were compelled to slow down and even stop to listen for the fog bell.

In 1838, a larger and louder fog bell was installed to replace the Whitman bell. The 15-pound striking hammers and clockwork were powered by a 2000-pound weight that caused the bell to strike four times each minute. This bell was equipped with an innovative and unique tide and wave powered winding mechanism designed by Andrew Morse, Jr.

The winding device was described in a letter written by John Ruggles and Sullivan Dwight. "The power that rings the bell is obtained by the rise and fall of the tide and the swells, which at that place are constant and unceasing. One end of a large timber, nearly 30 feet long, projects out upon the

The Light Station

In 1803, funds in the amount of \$7000 were appropriated for a lighthouse at Whitehead Island, of which \$4800 was spent to build a light tower and dwelling on 10 acres of land beside the channel. The low bid for structures of wood was accepted. A landing place was constructed at a sheltered

This prompted an investigation that led to Dolph's dismissal. Subsequently, keepers of all lights were instructed to maintain a daily record of hours and minutes their lamps were lit and to accurately measure and record the quantity of oil consumed each night.

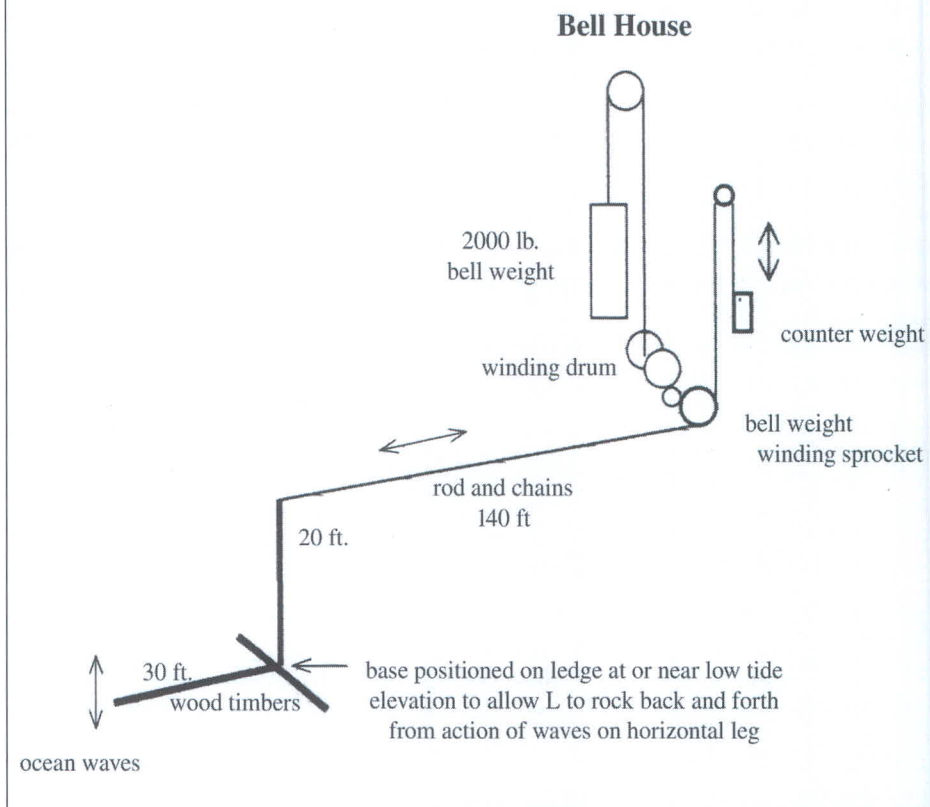
This lighthouse served primarily to identify the Muscle Ridge Channel entrance for vessels approaching the bay region from points south and southwest. It also gave guid-

water, the other end being confined by chains and braces to the middle of another stout timber, some 20 feet long, which lies along the shore, hinged at each end of a projecting rock, both together forming a "T." From the point of juncture, a small timber rises vertically to a height of 18 or 20 feet, being well braced to its position; to the upper part of this mast is attached a chain, which with a continuous rod of iron, extends up to the bell-house, a distance of about 140 feet. The chain received the vibrations from the outer end of the long timber, and a "take-up" weight in the bellhouse gets a constant reciprocating motion, which, acting upon the machinery in the bellhouse, winds the heavy weight of about 2000 pounds, that drives both the regulating and striking part of the apparatus... Bell is struck four time a minute by 15-pound hammers. Object sought has been fully and successfully accomplished by it, and that for such purpose is a valuable invention."

Another description of the Morse apparatus states that the tide powered winding device consisted of two timbers connected to form the shape of a letter "L" attached at point of juncture to the mid-point of a third timber mounted horizontally and parallel to the shore line on ledge at ocean level. The longer 30-foot leg of the "L" extended out into the water. Up and down motion of waves caused the L to rock back and forth. Attached to the top of the 20-foot vertical leg of the "L" was an iron rod and chain assembly that connected to the bell weight winding sprocket in the bell house 140 feet distant and to a counter weight (take-up weight) suspended in the bellhouse to maintain tension on the connecting chains. The wave induced "rocking chair" motion was transmitted by the rod and chain to the bell winding mechanism causing the one ton bell operating weight to rise slightly with each back and forth cycle of the rocking "L."

This larger bell met with the approval of steamship captains. However, the ocean end of the winding mechanism repeatedly failed when damaged by the violent action of storm seas. The size and weight of the beams made repairs by the lone keeper impossible. Also, the fog bell operating weight mechanism was not designed for hand winding. In 1842, Keeper Joshua Bartlett wrote, "There is a very good clock machine attached to the fog bell, which has but one defect, and that is, it

Morse Fog Bell Winding Mechanism Whitehead Light Station 1840



The 1853 two-story wooden tower and bell fog signal. The bell was struck by an automatic striking mechanism. Photo courtesy of the author.

takes the force of a luff tackle and two men to wind up the bell weight that sets it in motion. I generally ring the bell by hand, though during fogs of long duration it is impossible for me do so. The use of a fog-bell here is very great—I have seen fifty sail a day pass the rocks here by the sound of the bell alone; for compass courses cannot be relied upon, owing to the set of the tides.” On the other hand, Keeper Bartlett was admonished by I.P.W. Lewis in 1842 for having “adopted the novel experiment of attaching a line to the clapper of the bell, the other end of which leads through a hole in the window of his bed chamber, and amuses himself after retiring for the night with tolling an hour or two.”

The Morse fog bell was replaced in 1853.



The 1871 whistle house. Note the multi-directional fog signal horns on the skeleton tower and the standby bell signal. Photo courtesy of the author.

A Jones Patent fog bell was installed on a two story high wooden tower at a cost of \$2500. This hand wound bell struck three times each minute. With installation of the Jones Bell, the position of assistant keeper was created at Whitehead. At the outset, problems occurred with the striking mechanism and the keepers often resorted to ringing the bell by hand. In 1861, the Jones Bell was completely overhauled and remained in operation until replaced by steam whistles in 1869. Jones fog bells were also placed at Cape Elizabeth, Seguin, Petit Manan and West Quoddy Head, and later at other locations such as Boon Island and Matinicus Rock.

In his 1842 inspection report, in addition to the Morse Bell failure, I. P. W. Lewis

described conditions at the Whitehead Light, “The tower was found to be laid up without mortar except pointing inside and out. The space between the inner and outer walls was filled with stone chips and sand. The pointing had fallen out, the tower leaked, the roof leaked, frost had moved several stones causing the lantern deck to become three inches out of level. The lintel of the upper window was broken. The lantern was glazed with impure glass, the lamps were poorly positioned and all of the lamp reflectors were out of required perpendicular alignment. One lamp and reflector faces the door and two face over land. The tower ventilation was inadequate for lamp operation, and by reason of which the glass is covered with vapor so as to

obscure the light. The tower shakes during storm winds so much as to break the glass panes. The tower requires to be rebuilt.”

“The dwelling windows leak. The house is damp. During storms water drives in over the lintels, about the eaves and other joints of the building. There is no floor in the cellar to prevent wet from spoiling the oil butts, and to give a place for stores. Plastering is falling from the ceiling and walls. Chimneys smoke in all weather. The boathouse and slips are in need of considerable repair. There is neither well nor cistern. The keeper obtains fresh water from hollows in the rocks after a rain, or when this resource fails, obtains water from the main land.”

In 1852, a new tower was constructed

from granite blocks and lined with brick. This structure was designed by Alexander Parris and was erected by Jeremiah Berry immediately adjacent to the older tower. The old tower was razed, leaving only the foundation stones that remain today. In 1855, the lamps and reflectors were replaced by a 3rd Order Fresnel lens illuminated by a single lard oil lamp and with a focal plane 75-feet above sea level. Lard oil continued to be used for lamp fuel until replaced by mineral oil in 1883.

Three miles west of Whitehead, at the entrance to Tenants Harbor, Southern Island Light Station was established in 1857. Not only did this fixed red 4th order Fresnel lens mark the harbor entrance, but when approaching Whitehead from the southwest this light provided a bearing to locate the correct point to turn easterly for safe passage through the Two Bush channel.

The Steam Whistle Era

In 1867, the Whitehead keeper's dwelling was repaired and painted throughout; a new cistern pump was provided; a new stove and fixtures were supplied; a new boat and equipment was furnished; and the illuminating apparatus was repaired. Whitehead was now a comfortable duty station for light-keepers but not for long. This soon came to an abrupt end when a 10-inch diameter steam fog whistle replaced the Jones bell.

Steamships transporting passengers and freight were now running routine schedules between Boston and Bangor. With competing steamship lines operating, meeting arrival and departure schedules was as significant for the steamship companies as it is with today's airlines. Steamship masters demanded a fog signal that could be heard at a greater distance to minimize delays in the fog.

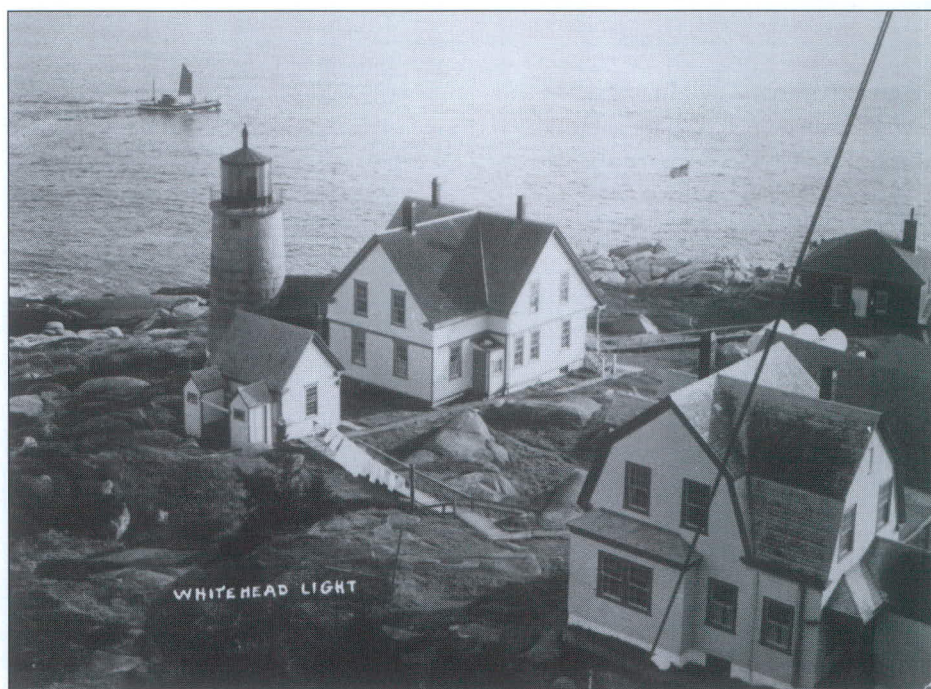
To accommodate this new Whitehead fog signal, a steam boiler was installed in a new wood frame structure in 1869 to provide steam to the whistle protruding from the roof. Steam whistles were previously installed at Cape Elizabeth and West Quoddy Head. A 12,000-gallon open cistern was constructed to provide boiler feedwater. In 1871, a stone whistle house was constructed for a duplicate boiler and steam whistle. The keepers were left to their own devices to haul the boiler coal from the distant boat landing to the coal

bins in the whistle houses. The bell tower was removed and the bell was mounted in a wood frame at ground level for use in the event of steam whistle failure. That same year the Lighthouse Service built beside the boat landing in Boathouse Cove, a wharf of granite blocks with a landing stage and a 300-ton capacity coal storage shed on shore to serve as a coaling station for lighthouse tenders. In 1870, the recently repaired dwelling was rebuilt and a wood frame second story added.

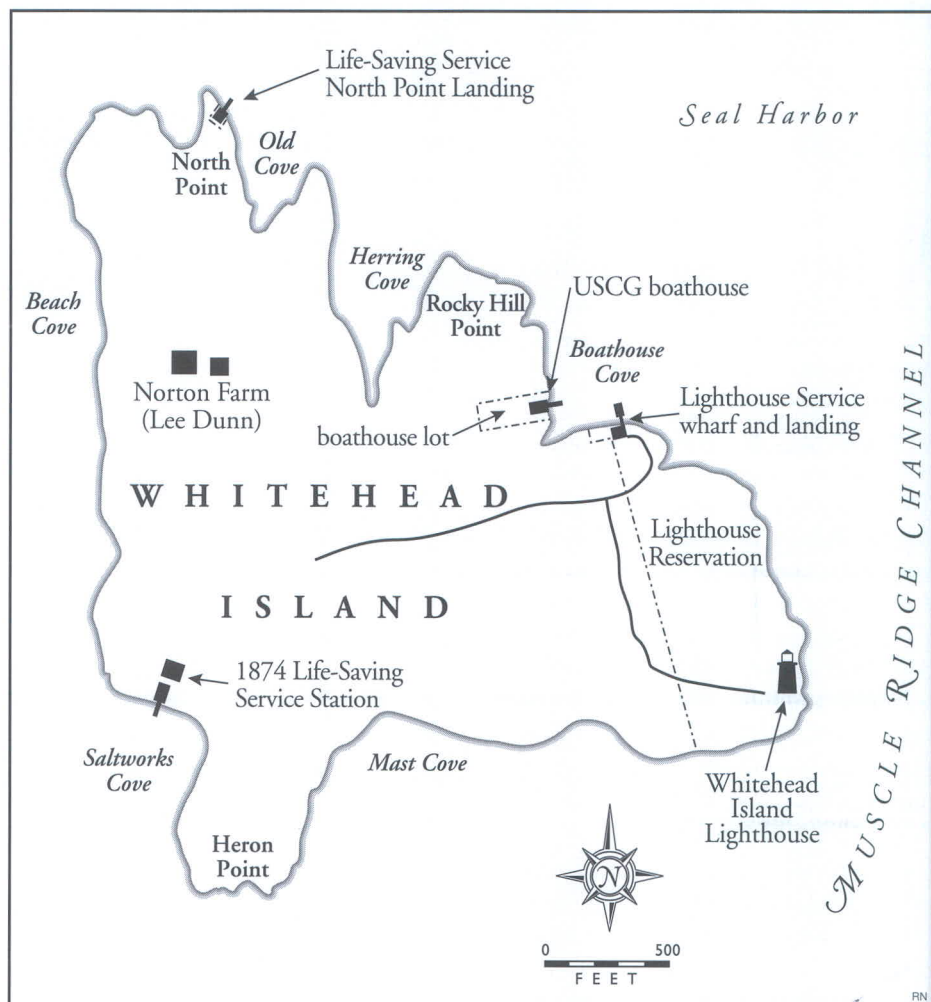
The era of the steam fog whistle changed the jobs and the lives of the keepers. After having served with the 20th Maine Regiment from the time that regiment was formed, and until mustered out in 1865, Hezekiah Long was appointed keeper of Whitehead. In four years, Long and his family acclimated to rather pleasant island life, with the only the occasional disturbance being the bell in the front yard tolling during periods of fog. The ambiance of station life was not to be the same with the arrival of the steam whistle. The winding mechanism of the bell was replaced by obstinate steam boilers. The three bell strikes per minute were replaced by the obnoxious 8-second blast of the 10-inch whistle. This equates to 3 hours and 12 minutes of whistle sound in 24 hours or operation. It was not unusual for this whistle to operate continuously for two weeks or more. And unlike the bell, the boilers had to be fed, watered and ash shoveled out. Close attention was required to steam pressure and water level, draft, intensity and uniformity of fire, and a host of other needs. The coal for the boilers had to be hauled from the landing over a rough road through the woods. A supply of wood fuel was needed with which to start the coal fire.

Shortly after the steam whistle began operation, inhabitants of the one mile distant mainland village complained about the noise. It was disturbing to them and their animals. It was the cause of the cows going dry or the chickens not producing eggs. And this was the fault of Keeper Long, no matter his cow and chickens at the lighthouse were still producing. There was to be no relief for the neighbors, with the Whitehead fog signal averaging 1920 hours (80 days) of operation annually, the highest in the 1st District.

The new steam whistle was installed at Whitehead to improve the sound signal for vessels, particularly the steamships. However, complaints came forth from vessel captains



A lobster boat sailing past Whitehead Island Light Station. Keeper's house attached to tower, store house with two attached privies left below the tower and assistant keeper's duplex center with fog signal building at right. Photo courtesy of the author.



who expected the whistle, like the bell before it, to be promptly sounded at the outset of fog, heavy rain or snow. One captain wrote to the local newspaper stating that the fog whistle was not operating from 2 am until daylight during a thick snowstorm and he supposed the keeper was sleeping. Keeper Long was compelled to respond with his own letter stating that "it had taken over 2-1/2 hours to get up steam and thaw out the well before he could start the machine to blow the whistle." These were locomotive style boilers not particularly suited for this new application. No provisions were made initially to preheat water. The boiler chimney pipes were too short to provide adequate draft when starting a coal fire from scratch or to maintain a banked fire in anticipation of fog.

Vessel captains reported that sometimes when approaching Whitehead from the southwest, the whistle would be heard several miles distant but would cease to be heard when three miles distant and not be heard again until they were but a few hundred yards from it. Initially it was suggested Keeper Long was not operating the whistle properly. It was discovered that this diminished sound problem was due to a sound transmission anomaly and had nothing do with Long or the operation of the fog signal. This same acoustical phenomenon had also been observed to a

lesser degree at other fog signal stations. This was a troubling problem for the Lighthouse Service and vessel captains.

The Lighthouse Board began an investigation that continued for more than 30 years to find the cause and to fix this problem. The British Lighthouse Board was consulted. Renowned physicist Professor John Tyndall of the Royal Institution of London spent nearly three months in 1873 on a lighthouse tender off Whitehead recording steam whistle sound observations and climate data.

District Inspector, Commander H. F. Pickering, observed this first hand in July 1877. On a southeast approach to Whitehead in thick fog he heard the whistle from six to four miles distant, and then lost the sound completely until within 400 yards, "when the blast from the whistle hit him so hard he almost went overboard." In September 1877, Professor Henry, chairman of the Lighthouse Board personally investigated this phenomenon. For several days in 1878 the lighthouse tenders *Iris*, *Myrtle* and *Daisy* together were employed here for sound studies and experimentation. Surprisingly, the keepers could hear the smaller steam whistles on vessels even when the vessels could not hear the fog whistle.

The final result of years of study was a notice to mariners advising, "not to rely on

fog signal sound intensity alone to judge distance, and, occasionally there may be areas close to a fog signal in which it is not heard, and, not to assume the fog signal is not operating if it is not heard." This was neither solution nor comfort for vessel masters depending on this fog signal to guide their approach to the Muscle Ridge Channel.

Water for domestic use was often a challenge at Whitehead and at other stations, particularly in times of extended drought. Demand for water greatly increased with the installation of the steam boilers. The new boiler water cistern was not adequate so the water collection and storage capacity was improved. A 100 ft-long rainshed was built in 1876. Water from the roof of this structure was collected in two 2500-gallon wooden tanks in a tank house built beside the rainshed. The original open cistern was covered to provide protection from contamination and from freezing solid in the winter. Twelve years later in 1888 a new brick whistle house was built and with a 5000-gallon cistern below the floor. In June 1888, Keeper Isaac Grant had to resort to using ocean water in the boilers when the water supply was nearly exhausted.

In 1890 a 45,000-gallon reservoir was dug in a swamp area near the lighthouse property. Water was piped to the whistle house cistern, but this new source sometimes contained mud and debris that plugged pipes. The reservoir was an irresistible attraction to the occasional moose, compelling the keepers to evict the beast however they could and without benefit of official instructions from the service to deal with such matters. In 1893 a new 4000-gallon water tank was built beside the whistle house. The station now had over 70,000 gallons of boiler water capacity, but with no replenishment during long periods without rain; ocean water still had to be used. In 1901, permanent arrangements were made for supplying ocean water to the boilers. Poor quality water contributed to numerous boiler replacements during the years of the steam fog whistle at Whitehead.

The keepers' dwelling was razed in 1891 and a new duplex dwelling was built on the same foundation. Near it was built a small storage building for each keeper to store his household fuel. Then in 1895, after 26 years of steam fog signal workload, the position of second assistant keeper was created, but housing was not adequate for three keepers and



Lighthouse tender *Myrtle* and crew. This vessel was used in the fog signal experiments off Whitehead Island. National Archives photo held by the U. S. Lighthouse Society.

their families. The new fuel house was rebuilt and converted to temporary housing for the second assistant keeper. A new dwelling was built for the keeper in 1900. The two assistants then occupied the duplex dwelling.

The keepers converted the former fuel house, the temporary residence, to a one-room school for children of Whitehead and neighboring islands, and used it as such for the next 30 years. Keeper Frank Jellison bought the seats, desks and equipment for this little school, which had 16 pupils at that time.

The light station land was surveyed in 1889. A new boundary line was run that increased the lot size from the 10 acres described in the 1803 deed to nearly 15 acres. The adjacent landowner contested the survey. The government again surveyed the lighthouse reservation and discovered that, the boat landing, coaling station wharf and storage shed, the reservoir, and more than half the road from the landing to the lighthouse was on private land. The decision was made not to take this additional land by eminent domain because the owner of the former Norton land was a Treasury Department official, Sumner I. Kimball, General Superintendent of the U.S. Life-Saving Service. Eventually a deal was made in 1902 whereby Kimball gave the government an additional acre of land and easements for the road and reservoir. Kimball received perpetual right to use the landing and wharf for himself, his heirs and assigns.

In the latter part of the 1800's there were more propeller driven vessels in use and many of these ran at night, choosing the Two Bush Channel and not the Muscle Ridge Channel with its many obstacles. Also, tows of barges would not have been able to navigate the numerous course changes and narrow passages of the Muscle Ridge. Shipping interests petitioned for a new light station to mark the Two Bush Channel.

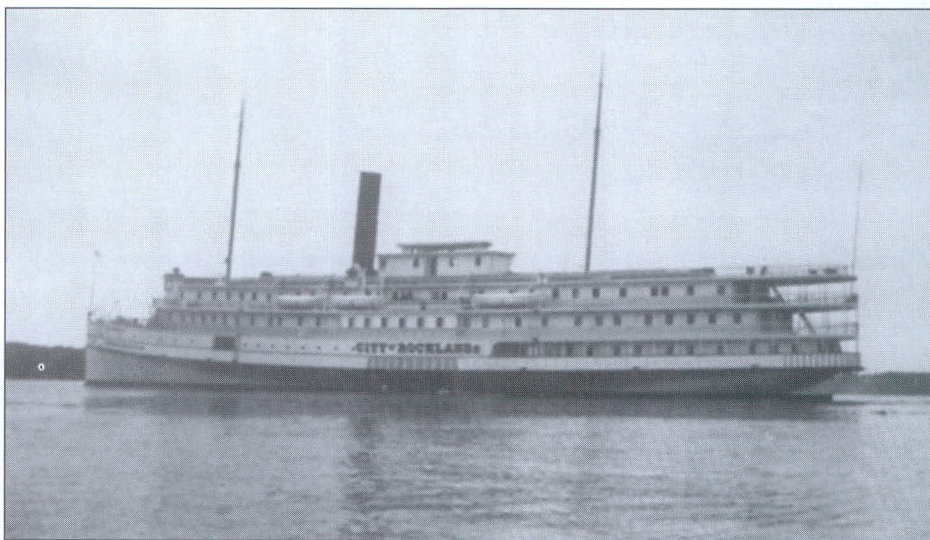
In 1897, Two Bush Island Light Station, with a flashing white with red sector 5th Order Fresnel, was established 2.5 miles east of Whitehead to aid in navigation of the Two Bush Channel. This light station was initially equipped with a fog bell, which was later replaced by an air operated diaphragm horn. Vessels using the Two Bush passage to enter the bay proceed easterly beyond Two Bush light until this light and the light at Whitehead aligned and then turn northerly

up the bay, passing west of the reefs and ledges of the Muscle Ridge islands.

In 1904, the 274-ft side-wheel steamer *City of Rockland* grounded on Grindstone Ledge at the northern end of the Muscle Ridge. Subsequently, the steamship company erected and manned a fog bell nearby on Otter Island, and petitioned the government for a lighthouse to be built at that location. Funds were allocated but the project did not receive final approval. Likewise, suggestions for a lightship offshore from Whitehead to identify the junction of the Muscle Ridge and Two Bush channels received no government response.



Water cistern building with keepers' dwellings left and right. Photo courtesy of the author.



Below – The side-wheel-steamer *City of Rockland*. Photo courtesy of the author.

Modernization

In 1933, the Whitehead steam fog whistles were removed and replaced by equally obnoxious diaphragm air horns mounted on a steel tower beside the whistle house. One horn faced southwest and the other aimed northeast up the channel, together sounding two consecutive blasts of 1.5-second duration every quarter minute. This later was changed to two 2.5 second blasts every half minute. A third horn facing southeast was tried, but discontinued.

The steam boilers were removed from the whistle house and replaced by duplicate engine-powered air compressors and air receiver tanks that supplied air to the horns. The wooden water tanks were removed and three large fuel tanks were mounted in the yard where the Jones bell stood years before.



The "new" Whitehead Island keeper's dwelling, possibly in the 1920's. Note the crude scaffolding indicating that the house had just been painted. U. S. Lighthouse Society photo.

Perhaps to retain the audio ambiance of the place, no mufflers were installed on the exhaust pipes from the compressor and generator engines. The unusual sound phenomenon observed with the steam whistles still occurred with the new air horns. It was reported that the sound of the compressor engine could be heard when the sound from the horns could not.

Two electric generators were installed in the whistle house to supply a bank of glass wet cell storage batteries, which provided electricity for the station. Electric lighting was installed in the dwellings. The I.O.V. lamp for the Fresnel lens was replaced with a large

incandescent lamp. The fixed white light had a calculated visibility of 14 nautical miles. Later the light was changed to fixed green.

Neighbors on the island

When the lighthouse was established, Whitehead was a tiny island community—the light keeper and his family and the Norton family at the other end of the island. The Norton's had acquired 60 acres of this 70-acre island in 1805. Nearly half of the island became pasture and farmland. Joseph Norton, and his son Horace, often served as temporary keepers at the light on occasions of a keeper being ill or having extended business on the mainland. Horace Norton was officially appointed assistant keeper for one year in 1866-67. Various keepers employed him to haul coal and supplies from the land-

ing to the light and to assist with other tasks including road maintenance. Norton was also employed building the first whistle house and the rain shed.

The island community grew in 1874 when a life-saving station was established on Whitehead at the southwest side of the island. This island was chosen for the first such facility in the region because of the significant shipping activity in the Muscle Ridge Channel. Six surfmen and a keeper initially manned the station. Horace Norton was the first life-saving station keeper. Records of the late 1880s reported 36,000 vessels passing Whitehead annually. Many vessel strandings

occurred in and around the channel. The Whitehead Life-Saving Station became one of the most active in the 1st District.

In 1885, a telephone line was run from the mainland to the life-saving station. This gave all islanders improved contact with the mainland. This reliable communication made it possible for the Weather Bureau to establish a storm warning signal station on Whitehead. Storm warning flags were initially displayed on a tall flag pole erected on a small hill behind the lighthouse. In 1904, an 80 foot steel tower was erected at that same location for display of flags during the day and lanterns at night. A Displayman employed by the Weather Bureau was responsible for the storm warning display. Years later this duty was shifted to the lightkeepers.

Life-saving station manning was increased after 1915 when the Life-Saving Service and Revenue Service were merged to form the U.S. Coast Guard. In 1921, a Chatham style barracks was constructed and a double-bay boathouse with a marine railway was built. Motor-powered craft replaced the oar-powered surfboats. The Coast Guard mission now included apprehending rumrunners during Prohibition. A new lookout tower was built on the low hill behind the lighthouse. The light station and boathouse were connected to the telephone line through a switchboard in the lookout tower watch room. Eventually an underwater telephone cable connected Matinicus Rock, Matinicus Island and Two Bush Island to the lookout tower switchboard.

The presence of the life-saving station was of benefit to the lightkeepers. Emergency routine transportation to and from the mainland was more readily available and in a boat more substantial than the small boat provided by the Lighthouse Service. In a 1927 newspaper article there appeared the following comment, "Capt. Wallace Brown and his crew are proving of great service this winter to the people who are sick and unable to reach medical attendance from all the surrounding islands, answering emergency calls day or night. Everyone appreciates the kindness of Capt. Brown and his crew."

Mail delivery became daily rather than when the light keepers had only occasional opportunity to go to the mainland post office. During the WWII rationing period the keepers were assisted with food items and supplies available to the Coast Guard but not to civil-

ian keepers. In return the keeper's wives might bake pies or cakes for the Coast Guard crew, which was something the station cook was unwilling or unable to do to the crew's satisfaction.

Unlike the more isolated family light stations, sharing Whitehead Island with neighbors created some semblance of community life for the keepers and their families. This was perhaps of greatest long-term benefit to the lighthouse children.

Whitehead Light Keepers

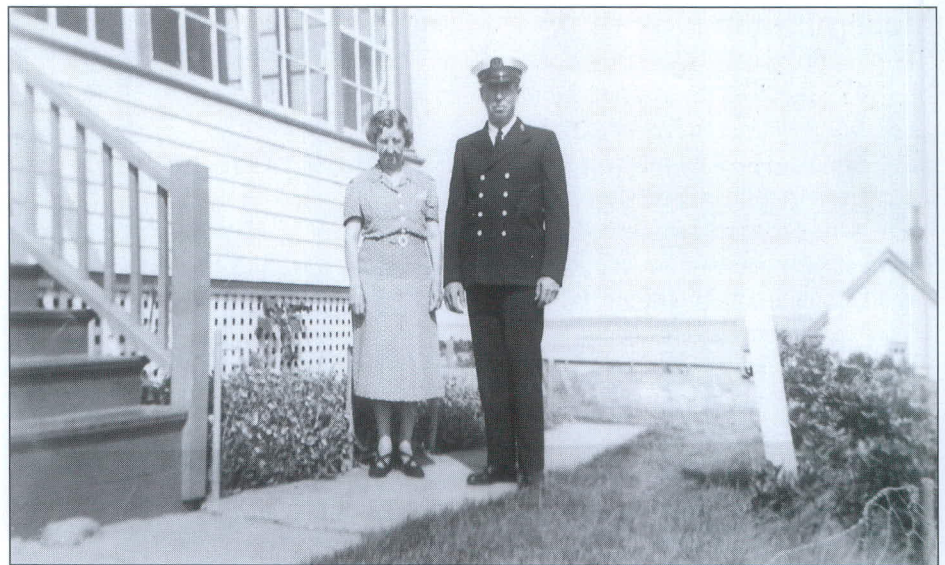
Civilian keepers manned Whitehead Light Station from 1805 until Keeper Arthur Beal retired in 1950. Fifty-five keepers and assistant keepers have been identified as serving at Whitehead Light Station from 1805 and until the last civilian keeper retired in 1950.

In the earlier years of the service, keepers were appointed and removed according to the rules of political patronage. An example of this involved Keeper William Perry and Keeper Joshua Bartlett. In 1841, Bartlett replaced Perry. In 1845, Perry replaced Bartlett. Then Bartlett again replaced Perry in 1849.

Keeper Isaac Stearns was appointed keeper in 1859. He came to Whitehead with prior experience as the first keeper at Owls Head Light Station and a keeper assignment at Libby Island. His career abruptly ended after one year at Whitehead when he died sitting in his chair in the keepers dwelling. His wife and son took over light station duty until an official replacement was named.

In 1853, when the assistant keeper position was created, housing was not a great issue if the two keepers were of the same family. If not, this living arrangement often led to less than pleasant consequences. This probably contributed to a dispute in 1861 between Keeper Ephrim Quinn and assistant keeper William Perry (relation to former Perry unknown) that later caused Perry to quit and leave the light. Quinn was removed very soon after.

Keeper Hezekiah Long was appointed Whitehead keeper in 1865 after his service with the 20th Maine Regiment during the Civil War. His daughter Abbie became the first of two lady lightkeepers at this light station when she was appointed assistant keeper in 1867. In late 1872, Keeper Long



Keeper Arthur Beal and wife at Whitehead Light station. Photo courtesy of the author.

and his daughter accepted transfer to Cape Elizabeth Light, but later declined because of reluctance to relocate the family following the death of Mrs. Long in December. Marcus Hanna was then offered the Cape Elizabeth keeper position. Keeper Long was removed in 1875 after 10 years of service and replaced by Isaac Grant from Matinicus Rock. Abbie Long then resigned and was replaced by Whitehead's second lady lightkeeper, Abbie Burgess Grant.

The Grants served at Whitehead for 15 years. In addition to lightkeeping duties, Grant and keepers before him were often teachers for island children. Horace Norton's daughter Clara wrote many years later, "In the winter months we had school for about six or eight weeks, taught by Captain Isaac Grant at the lighthouse. He was a wonderful man. He used the very finest language and taught us so many things that aren't usually taught in school. It was understood that we were never to show up for school on inspection days, as Captain Grant was supposed to always be busy with his work and was not supposed to teach school."

Keeper Isaac Grant was awarded the silver lifesaving medal in 1882 for the daring rescue of two people from the bottom a capsized yawl boat in the channel entrance near the South Breaker. The Grants resigned in 1890 because of Abbie's failing health. Isaac Grant later rejoined the lighthouse service as keeper of the lamp shop in Portland. Abbie Burgess Grant died in 1892.

Keeper Frank Jellison served from 1892 to 1905. On June 30, 1893, tragedy struck

the Jellison family when 15 year old Walter Jellison was fatally crushed between the rail of the life-saving station surfboat and the hull of the Steamer Hurricane that was stranded on the Browns ledges not far from the lighthouse. Keeper Jellison transferred to St. Croix Light. Keeper Elmer Reed, who began his career at Great Duck Island, succeeded him.

Hervey Wass, a former surferman at the life-saving station, became Reed's assistant keeper at Whitehead and later was promoted to become keeper of Libby Island Light Station. Wass's son, Philmore Wass, was born at Whitehead. Years later he wrote about the Wass family at Libby Island in his book, *Lighthouse in My Life*.

Keeper Reed transferred to Curtis Island Light and was replaced in 1919 by Arthur Mitchell from Matinicus Rock. Keeper Mitchell served at Whitehead for 10 years. He then transferred to become keeper of Fort Point Light Station until his retirement in 1950.

Keeper Arthur Beal replaced Keeper Mitchell at Whitehead in 1929. Beal began his lightkeeping career as third assistant at the Rock in 1919. He retired in 1950 after 21 years at this light. Keeper Beal was the longest serving keeper of Whitehead and with his retirement came the end of the civilian keeper era at Whitehead Light Station.

Epilogue

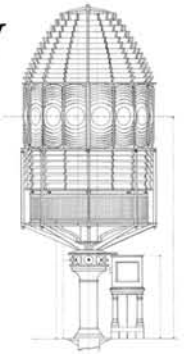
The Coast Guard lifeboat station closed in 1956. The crew and boats moved to a new location to become the present day C.G. Station Rockland. Coast Guard personnel continued to man Whitehead Light Station. Electric power was eventually supplied to the light station by an underwater cable from Spruce Head. In 1982, the light and the fog signal were automated. The light characteristic was changed to occulting green. The Fresnel lens was removed and is now on display at the Shore Village Museum in Rockland. In 1998, by virtue of the Maine Lights Program, Pine Island Camp became the present day steward and keeper of Whitehead Light Station.



Overall view of the Whitehead Light Station from an old post card.



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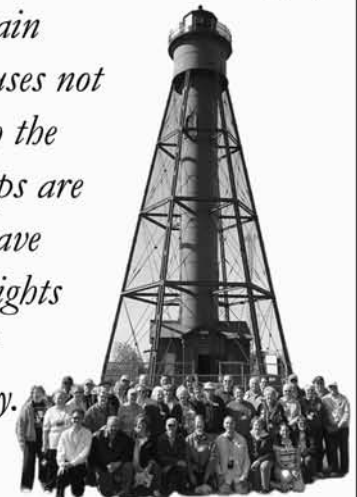
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Tincum Lighthouse, NJ