



A Smattering of Books

Books on lighthouses continue to drop like the leaves of fall. They range in quality from tacky to mediocre with an occasional excellent effort. Everybody is an expert!

Of the four recent arrivals, the most flimsy excuse for a book (booklet actually) is one with the improbable title of *Lighthouse or Outhouse*. This little 40-page pamphlet tries to make the case that the minor light at Rubicon Point on the west shore of Lake Tahoe, California is, at 6,300 feet, America's highest lighthouse

A sentence in the second paragraph of the booklet states, "... indeed a lighthouse ... had been built on Rubicon Point in 1916 by the United States Coast Guard..." That pretty much sums it up. The Coast Guard didn't take over our aids to navigation until 1939 and it's a minor, lighted aid-to-navigation, not a lighthouse. The booklet contains copies of government paperwork authorizing this minor aid, one of 40,000 throughout the United States. I'll leave it at that.

Another "quick and dirty" attempt to sell a book is titled *Women and the Lakes* by Frederick Stonehouse. This hastily compiled mishmash of Great Lakes tales is divided into five chapters with such knock-your-socks-off headings as "The Captain Was a She" and "Skirts In The Tower." The latter contains sketchy tales of some female lighthouse keepers who for the most part were either their husband's helpers or acquired the position when he became incapacitated or died.

Other chapters speak of women as vessel captains or otherwise involved with adventures on the Great Lakes. It appears to be rather thinly researched, rehashed material from other books and not much meat.

Soft cover 5 1/2 by 8 inches, 188 pages, and several photos. \$15.95

The Light on the Island

by Helene Gliddensome

This reprint of a 1951 book chronicles life of a lighthouse keeper's family on Patos Island, in Washington State's San Juan Islands, from 1905 to 1915. A young girl – one of 13 children of the keeper's family, tells the story.

It's an interesting story of the trials and tribulations experienced during the family's time at the light station and best suited to grade school children.

Soft cover, 6 by 9 inches, 215 pages with several historic, black and white photos of the island and the light station. Available through San Juan Publishing, Box 923, Woodinville, WA 98072 for \$16.95 plus \$3.00 shipping and handling.

Out of Harm's Way, Moving America's Lighthouse

by Mike Booher and Lin Ezell.

Of the four books mentioned here, this is the only one with any meat on it, and it does have a lot of meat. It's a very well researched and detailed book about the Cape Hatteras Light Station and the effort to move and save America's tallest lighthouse.

Chapter 1 – Lighting the Shoals. Outlines the early history of the area and the need for a lighthouse at Cape Hatteras. A brief history of the first and second lighthouses on the site follows.

Chapter 2 – The Sea Comes to Cape Hatteras. A discussion of lightships and buoys in the area, erosion and the efforts to stem its march toward the lighthouse. After the National Park was created in 1936, the lens was moved to a skeleton tower out of harms way. The sea recedes and the lens is moved back to the tower, only to be threatened in recent years. Efforts to stop the erosion are described and other proposals

mentioned, from planting artificial sea grass to constructing groins (breakwaters perpendicular to the beach). Options, controversy and politics are all detailed. Finally, the National Park Service and Congress decide on the move.

Chapter 3 – Preparing to Save the Beacon. This chapter details with words and photographs the incredible effort that went into preparing the tower for the move. All the safe guards to ensure a safe move are outlined.

Chapter 4 – Abandoning the Old Site. Numerous photos support the discussion of how all the buildings of the station were prepared for the move and how the new site was prepared to receive the buildings.

Chapter 5 – Moving the Light. The effort of International Chimney Company to move the tower is explained in words and, again, with excellent photos.

Chapter 6 – The Beacon Stands. A nice wrap-up and discussion of the publicity and celebration of the move is followed by a photographer's scrapbook and a wonderful chronology of the history of the light station.

This is a fine publication and chronicle of the historic relocation of the lighthouse as well as a broad-brush history of the station. The hundreds of photographs bring the move to life and preserve the event for future generations. It certainly shows those naysayers that it could be done. The book will be a wonderful addition to your lighthouse library.

Hard cover, 9 by 11 1/2 inches, 123 pages hundreds of color photographs. \$39.95 plus shipping. Available at our affiliate – Lighthouse Gallery & Gifts (800) 320-2130.