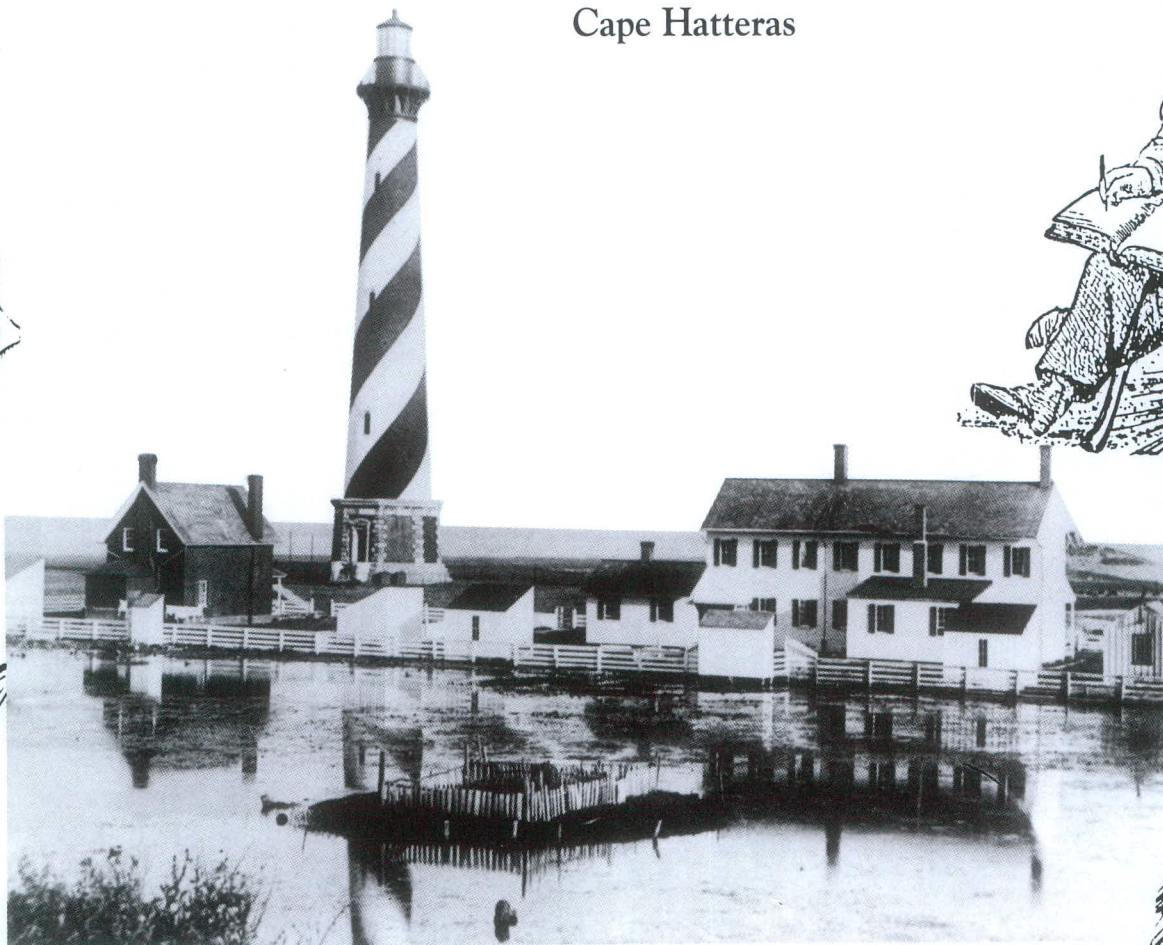


Pages from the Past

Confederate Letters on Cape Hatteras



The history of many southern lighthouses, probably hastily researched, states that during the Civil War the lens from the tower was “buried in the sand” by the Confederates to keep it from the Yankees, or in some cases the lens was destroyed. The buried in the sand theory even followed a 1st order lens to the Pigeon Point lighthouse in California.

Some articles and books on Pigeon Point state that the present lens was removed from Cape Hatteras, buried in the sand during the Civil War and then dug up and shipped to Pigeon Point. Because numerous Lighthouse Service records were destroyed by a fire around 1920 it cannot be proven that the Pigeon Point lens came from the Cape Hatteras tower. And as far as being “buried in the sand” goes, the following two letters puts another ‘light’ on that theory.

We feel that the South considered the lighthouses and equipment in their territory as their property. Confident that they would win the war, the lenses were carefully concealed from the enemy with the intention that they would be returned to their towers once the battle was won. Most lenses were removed, carefully packed, and stored as far from the enemy lines as possible.

Cape Hatteras Light Station in the 1860's. U.S. Coast Guard photo.

Tarboro, NC

March 23, 1862

Sir,

I have to inform you that I have received the entire apparatus of the Hatteras Light at this point and placed it in as secure a place as possible. The apparatus was removed some time ago and stored at the warehouse of Mr. John Meyers of at Washington, NC who has brought it to this place and put it in my charge.

I would suggest that an agent be sent on immediately to attend to the packing and forwarding of the above, as, the Federals are in force at Washington and there after the private property of the parties who took part in sending it away if it is not returned, and intimated that force would be used to possess themselves of it at all costs. To date the destruction of the town of Washington, if the apparatus was not forthcoming.

The light fixture referred to are as you must be aware very valuable having cost several thousand dollars. Therefore I deem it important to apprise you of these circumstances in detail. Your immediate attention as herein requested will doubtless retain it to the Confederate States.

I am Respectfully

G.H. Brown

P.S. The probable cost of getting the fixtures to this point will be \$90. The agent that is sent here to superintend the transportation of the lens should be provided with a voucher for his expenses.

Tarboro, NC
Office of Quartermaster staff

March 27, 1862

Sir,

Your communication of the 24th ultimo. by Mr. J.B. Davidge has been received, but I regret that I have to say that Mr. D has been unfit to attend to any kind of business since his arrival and has given little or no assistance or direction relative to the packing of the Lighthouse apparatus. I find that his habits are those of intemperance and although a delicate matter, I feel it my duty as an officer to furnish the department with the facts of the case. I have had the apparatus all packed as carefully as possible in cotton, and it is now awaiting transportation. I saw Mr. Davidge yesterday and he promised to attend to it his course, urging the necessity of having the apparatus removed to a point of safety as speedily as possible, and he made no effort whatever at once, but unfortunately to this date he has made no effort whatever for doing so. The expenses incurred to the conveying of it to a very responsible gentleman here to attend to the packing of the apparatus amounting to about \$106 which has been refunded by Mr. D. I can get a place of safety in this state, free of any charge of his service, if you can furnish the means of transportation. It will require large Box Car as there are about 45 boxes and some pieces of castings.

The place I would suggest sending the articles is in Granville County in this state on the Rail Road, where they can be stored at a small expense at a good warehouse. I would suggest therefore that a large Box Car be sent to this place at as an early a date as possible. The enemy below this point are still threatening property etc. if the apparatus is not delivered up. Your immediate attention will facilitate the matter.

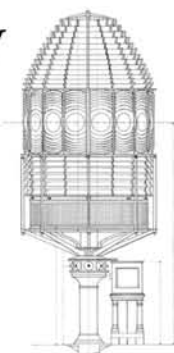
Very Respectfully

Your Most Obt. Servant

G. H. Brown



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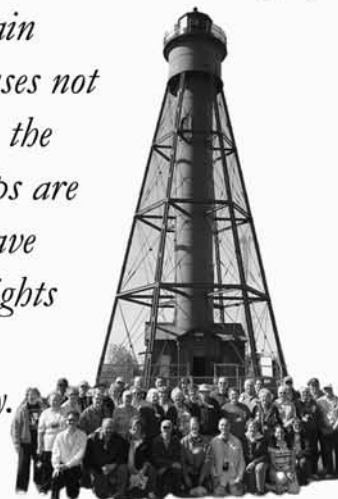
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Tinicum Lighthouse, NJ