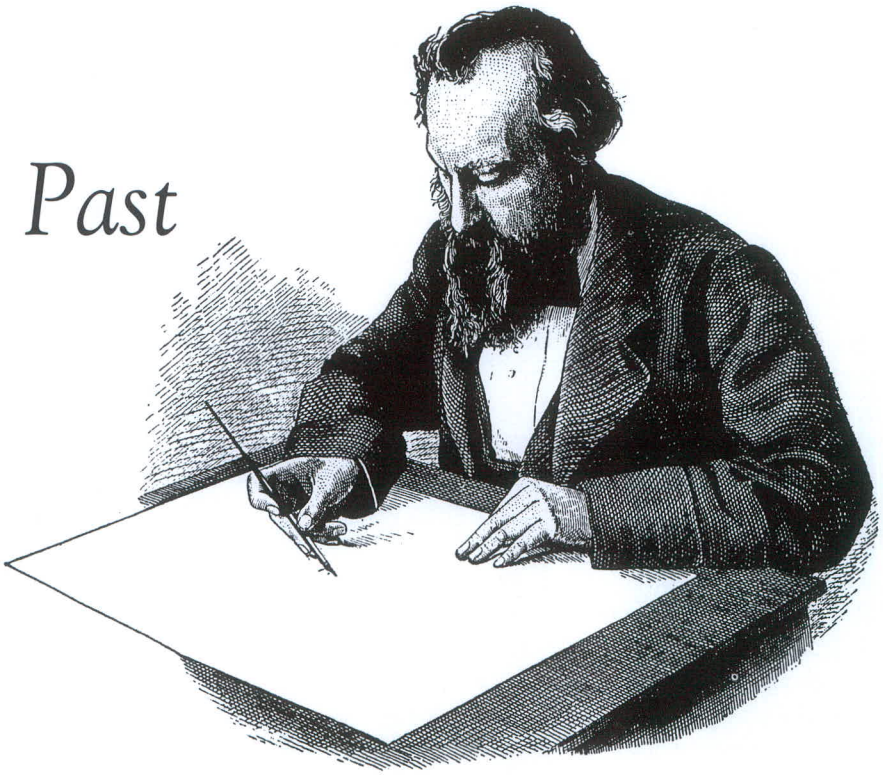
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Pages from the Past



FARALLON ISLANDS

U.S. Lighthouse Society Photo



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Farallon Light Station, August 15, 1958

Dear Brother Horace,

Your letter of July 1st was sent out to me a few days ago by Sodowick and I can assure you I was glad to hear from you, as I always am to hear from home.

Since I wrote you last I have been to town [San Francisco] spending the Fourth with Sod. and settling up the accounts of the Light House for the last fiscal year. The late keeper was an ignorant man and the accounts were all hurly burly but they are straight now, and correct up to the close of the fiscal year (30th June). We have been having beautiful weather (for the Farralones) for several days past, and Mr. Maynard (1st Asst.) and I have been making us a little skiff to pull aboard of the fishing boats that come out here to get our letters, etc. We are considerably bothered about getting news here as it is very difficult to land. The island as you are perhaps aware is a high, rugged and barren mass of rocks in the open ocean. There are but two places where you can land at all, and then only with a small boat and in smooth weather. I have written to the inspector at San Francisco (who has charge of the Lighthouses on the Pacific coast and he writes me that he will have a boat as I recommended, and also endeavor to make arrangements with someone to come out here twice a month. There has never been any regular communication with the city except by the boat which brings out our provisions once in three months, and the reason has been that the late Keeper in the first place could hardly write an intelligible letter, and further more if he asked for anything more than the regular supply of oil etc. for the Light, he was afraid he would be blamed for being too expensive. But the case is exactly the opposite, for since I have told the facts to Maj. Bache (the inspector) he has been very much blamed for not applying to the department for such things as were needed, and Major B. told me that he took a great interest in our Light, etc. (as it is the best and most important on the whole Pacific coast and also the most isolated) and would do all in his power to make us as comfortable as possible, so I hope in the future we shall not be bothered so much about getting our letters.

My eyes have not gotten well yet, but they are much better and I hope they will not plague me much longer. I'm sorry to hear that yours are so bad and I don't understand the cause of it. I do not think it is from hereditary causes, and am inclined to believe it is caused partially, if not wholly, from an impure state of the blood. I am now taking some syrup for my blood (which I know is impure) and also using Thompson's Eye Water. I reduce it one half and put a few drops in my eyes every night when I go to bed, and it has helped much, but I expect one reason why yours are so much inflamed, is looking at the "female form devine." I presume my eyes would be worse than they are now if I could be at home this winter and go to a few parties and school exhibitions. A great trouble for us, are they not, these women.

"In our hours of ease
Uncertain, coy and hard to please.
When pain and sickness send the brow
A ministering angel thou"

With this addition which is perhaps true in many cases,

"Striving at every art to rule,
Stubborn as any pig or mule."

But seriously Horace, you must be careful of your eyes, and not allow yourself to read much, and none at all by candlelight, for that is one of the worst things for weak eyes.

I was greatly surprised to hear of the efforts you were making in my behalf at the [unreadable] and I earnestly hope that no blame may attach to you for the course you have pursued, and my only fear is that she or her parents may possibly surmise that it was contrived, or that Sod's letter was written "expressly for the occasion," and sooner than you should be blamed by them for adopting the course you did to sustain the character of a brother, I would deliberately renounce all claims which I may have, or ever hope to have for her friendship and esteem, and meet her, if ever we should meet, as an entire stranger, but I sincerely hope that the explanations you made her may be satisfactory to her mind, and that you may not fall in her esteem for displaying a brother's

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The Farallon Island tower shortly after it was constructed in 1856. One of these three keepers is probably Amos Cliff. The wooden structure they are leaning against is a temporary work shed which was replaced by a brick watch room shortly after this photo was taken. USLHS photo.

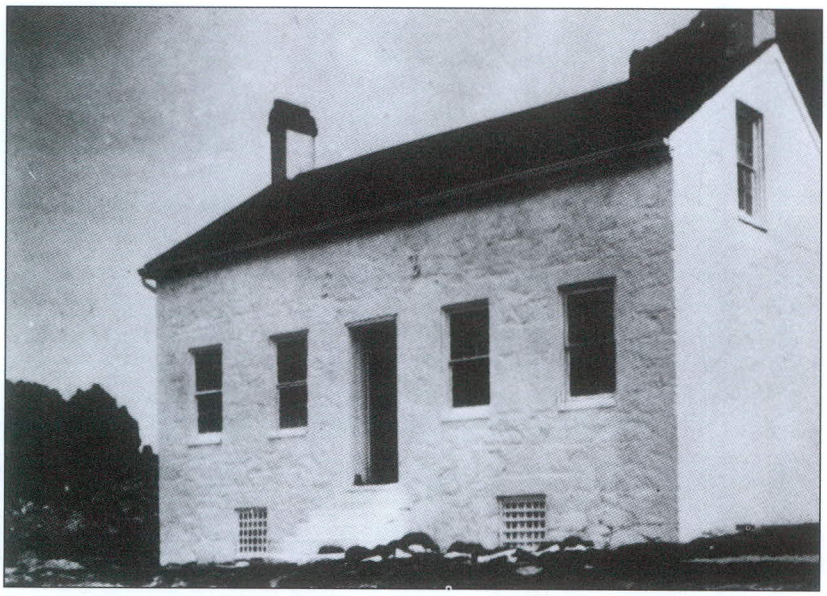
interest for one whose character and reputation had been well-nigh ruined in the esteem of her who is as dear to him as life itself.

It was a very delicate business you were engaged in and I do not wonder you felt somewhat embarrassed, and also herself and were she not one of the noblest of women, she would not have deigned to receive the proffered letter and explanations but you would have met with a reception not to be misunderstood. I have always loved her since we first became acquainted, and my heart tells me I always shall, no matter what our future lot may be, and should Providence direct that we never meet again, I shall love her with my last thoughts. She once loved me as she will never love another, of that I am as confident as I am that I am writing it, but whether she loves me at this time is a question which time must determine, when I was with her I was wild and wayward and hardly knew what love was, but the sober second thoughts mingling through years of absence and bitter sorrow have revealed to me her character and worth, and my own folly and unworthiness. The time is yet distant, when I hope to see you all, but a light heart and fair prospects will make it fly more swiftly and "all go merry as a wedding bell."

. . . The Light here is bad for [my eyes] and I must therefore be as careful as possible, for I want to hold my present position until I am ready for home. Write me often, and should you hear any news from below "therein fail not but due service and return make."

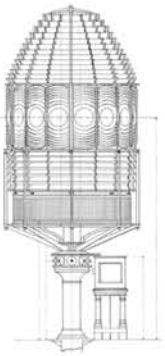
Give my love to the family, and particularly to little Lydia, and believe me, as ever.

Your affectionate brother
Amos



The Cape Cod style keepers' house on the Farallon Islands housed three keepers. The design for the first eight west coast lighthouses called for this style house with the tower through the center. However, there wasn't enough space at the peak to construct the house and tower, so the house was located at the base of the hill. The keepers had to walk a switch back trail to the 425 foot high summit. USLHS photo.

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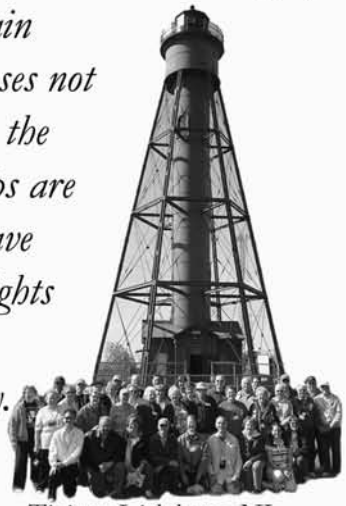
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