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Pages from the Past

Hillsboro Inlet (Florida) Light Station

The year was 1907 and the keeper was A. A. Berghell.

May 25: A baby girl was born to the keeper and wife at 9:30 a.m.

May 26: Today I told the Ass't keeper to sweep out the boathouse and he refused to, said I can report him and be damned.

May 30: I took the foreman to Deerfield and found out that the 1st Asst. had our launch right up to the bridge against express orders not to do so, and that was the reason why the pump was out of order and the engine overheated. The water [in that area] is too shallow and full of sand banks to go within ¾ mile of the bridge.

May 31: 1st Asst. kicking about killing work.

June 21: 8:30 p.m. 1st asst. reported he couldn't wind up the clockworks [for the lens],went up but couldn't find out the cause, so he took the clockworks to pieces and found that the key to the rod parallel to drum shaft had worn out, he fixed it as well as he could and put the clockworks together again.

Feb. 5, 1908: At sunrise the keeper on watch saw what looked like a tramp steamer ashore about 7 miles S by W from the light. Went down from the tower and told the assts. to make the launch ready to go out to her. 1st Asst. Keyes refused to come saying we were no life saving crew. Keeper went south along the canal nearly abreast of the steamer which was flying signals of distress. Dr. Pete, a northern gentleman living nearby, offered to come out with me to the wreck and carry some of the men with him.



Hillsboro Inlet Lighthouse, September, 1955. U.S. Coast Guard photo.

Went back to the inlet and crossed same with trouble and reached steamer which was hard on inner reef, head toward shore. Went aboard and asked their captain to fill out a wreck report and asked for cause of casualty. The captain said he could see the white flash [from the lighthouse] but not the red sector [the Hillsboro light displayed a white flashing light and had a red sector showing a red light in the direction of the reef]. He said he could get his whole crew to testify to that effect. She ran aground at 5 a.m. While I was aboard getting the paper filled out, they started the engine full speed astern causing a heavy strain on the launch line and when a heavy sea came the launch broke adrift. Dr. Pete and his men sat down in the launch without throwing anchors overboard. I got a boat from the tug to take me to the launch. But before I got there she was right in the breakers beginning to fill up. I jumped overboard and got the men in the launch to hold her bow on until we got it through the surf and hauled her up [on the beach] as far as we could. We emptied the water out of her. Ten colored men from Pompano helped us get her back through the surf and afloat and we were towed back to the station by Mr. Hardy's launch.

When I asked the 1st asst. why he didn't come out in Hardy's launch to help get the station launch off the beach, he told me that two men had to be at the station by law. I have come to the station several times and found him out fishing.

Feb. 7: 1st and 2nd asst. cleaning out the launch, let them off at 12 noon. Keeper overhauling machinery. Repairing hole in

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the stern, caulking bottom seam from daylight to dark getting her in good condition. I told the 1st and 2nd asst. that they would have to keep watch between them as I had worked hard all day and intended to go out the next night, weather permitting, to the steamer and take bearings. The 2nd asst. was willing to keep watch, but 1st asst. refused to do so saying he had no sleep in the afternoon.

He had only worked 4 hours in the forenoon and spent the afternoon digging clams for a tourist.

Since he came to this station he has registered a kick against almost every kind of work he has been told to do and several times he has come to my dwelling and called me out and asked me to show him a law for this and that. Hardly any of his work has been satisfactory. I often have to send him to do things over again until they are done properly. I have tried to instill some ambition in him but he does not take any interest in lighthouse work. In fact he is not fit to be left in charge of the station when I am absent.

Feb. 13: Rain during the night. At daybreak saw a three-masted schooner right in the breakers about one mile from the light to the north. Went out to her and ascertained that she was the *Mollie S. Look* from Jonesport, Maine, coal laden and bound for Port Ingles, from Norfolk, Virginia. The captain and men were in the rigging when I came abreast of the vessel. The large life boat was carried away from the davits and went ashore. I got what men I could and rolled life boat up on the beach and dug a log in the sand to act as an anchor. The vessels floated a line ashore.

At 12:30 p.m. I got a line ashore and launched the larger life boat in the surf with a line bent to the bow and the stern and signaled the men on the vessel to haul her out. At 2 p.m. had the captain and seven men at the station all safe. Captain had to send a telegram to his owners so I took him to Ft, Lauderdale in the station launch. Returned to the station at 10:30 p.m.

July 26: A son born to Keeper at 8:05 a.m.. At 9 a.m. sighted a steamer that had gone aground about one hour before about 3 ½ miles south from the station. She had a heavy list to port when sighted. Put out the station launch and went out to her to have the wreck report filled out and to give what assistance I could. The captain requested that I stand by until he saw if he could get the steamer off. I waited four hours and then took telegrams from the captain to owners and underwriters. The steamer is Norwegian named *Derainore*. It is loaded with coal machinery, powder an dynamite. Returned to station at 7:30 p.m.

Two days later the Texas Oil Co. steamer *North Western* came to the assistance of the Norwegian steamer and the two pulling together got her back into the channel.

Nov. 14: The 1st Asst. had a party of eight men and women staying in his dwelling overnight.

1st Asst. took 30 days leave in December.

Feb. 7, 1909: Inspector arrived and delivered mail for keeper and 1st asst.

Feb 8: 1st Asst. tendered his resignation. 2nd asst. asked to be allowed to stay at the station.

March 6: 1st Asst. W.A. Lopez reported for duty at 10 a.m. He moved in with his family and all went quite well now that the troublesome ex 1st Asst. had departed.

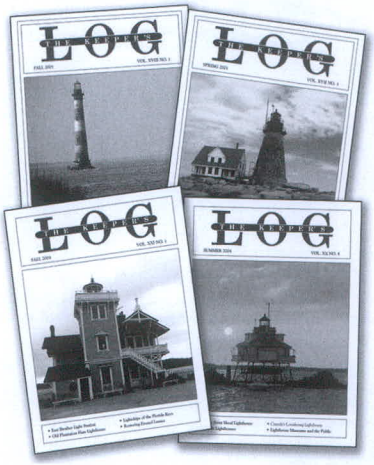
[All went very well until]

Aug. 25: At 5 a.m. keeper and family went to Palm Beach to dentist and returned at 8 p.m. 2nd asst. reported that the 1st Asst. Lopez maltreated and shot three times at his brother who is visiting him. I went and told Lopez that he would have to send his brother home at once. He asked permission to take his brother home himself.

Sept. 7: Received a letter from 1st Asst. that he had resigned and to forward his goods to Key West via Fort Lauderdale. Took same to RR depot.

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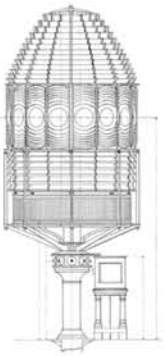
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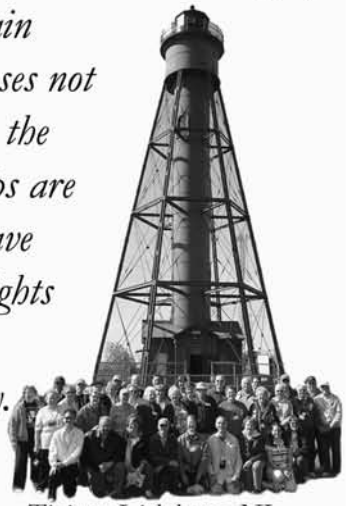
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