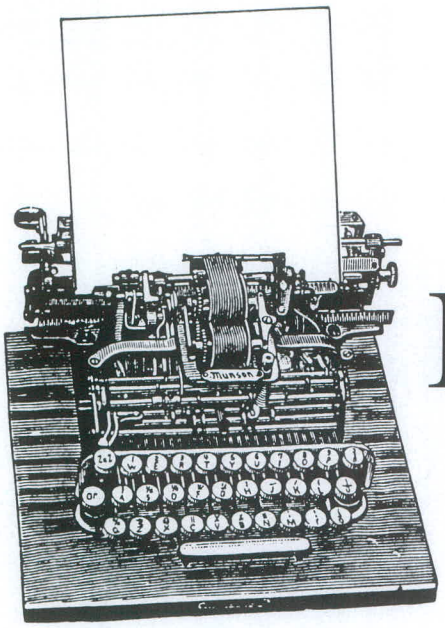
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Report of a Visit to Tillamook Rock

Astoria, April 4, 1937

Mr. Paul E. Hartmus, Regional Director
Survey of Federal Archives, Portland, Oregon

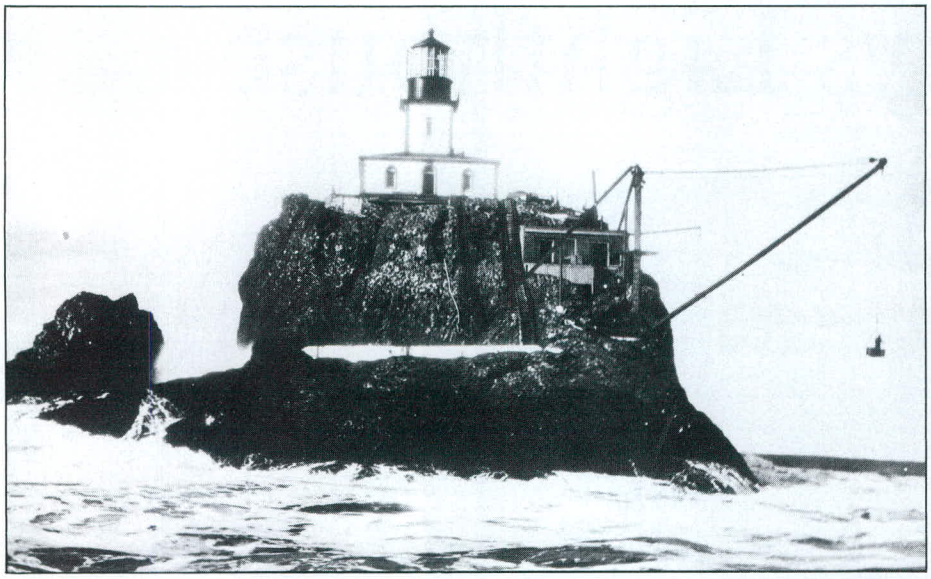
Dear Sir:

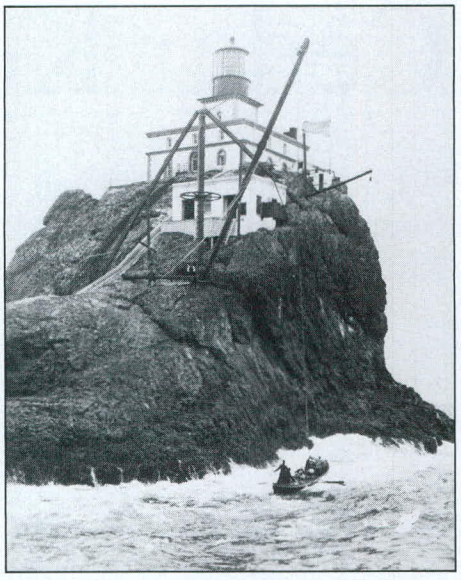
I hereby respectfully submit a supplementary report on the survey of Federal Archives at Tillamook Rock Light Station, made on April 2, 1937, by the undersigned, accompanied by David H. Ellis, photographer for the survey. This particular survey is probably unique in the annals of the Survey of Federal Archives and the National Archives because of the difficulties attendant after leaving the mainland until the destination was reached. The humor of the situation and the point at issue will be more obvious when one considers an archivist to be a studious and bookish person and of sedentary habits.

After leaving Astoria, Oregon, on the U.S. Lighthouse Tender *Manzanita,* my intentions were to survey the records of this vessel with the assistance of Mr. Ellis. This intention I was soon compelled to forget because of my own personal physical discomfort. This distraction came about through mal de mer, or just plain seasickness. The vessel's archives were furthest from my thoughts and so were those on Tillamook Rock. Mr. Ellis experienced the same symptoms, but in a lesser degree. Captain Charles A. A. Modeer and the mates assured us that this was fine weather, although a heavy westerly swell was going and a south wind of near gale velocity blowing. Their assurance did not fool me; I know rough water when I see it and feel it; besides, it brought back memories of similar "smooth water" on the Atlantic coming back from the AEF in France.

After a bleak trip and still bleaker outlook the *Manzanita* finally arrived at its destination, a quarter of a mile from the rock. At this position somebody wrapped me up in a life preserver, Mr. Ellis too, and hustled us into a life boat. Before we knew what had happened we were adrift in the Pacific Ocean between the good ship *Manzanita* and Tillamook Rock, wolfish waves licking at our life boat and jagged rocks beckoning our frail craft to destruction. However, under the skillful guidance of the second mate of the *Manzanita* and its gallant boat crew we managed to evade both evils; but more was in store for us. A few feet from the rock where billowing waves surge madly into foamy spray, a crate was lowered from the boom on the lighthouse onto the bow of the boat. Expert oarwork by the men and surprisingly skillful timing by the second mate kept both boat and crate together. This crate is about 3 feet square and 2 feet high, sides and bottom latticed to allow draining. Into this contraption Mr. Ellis and I were hustled by experienced hands who knew the timing to a nicety. While contemplating my present predicament with great misgivings, and daring a look at Ellis (whose countenance verified what I feared: the worst is yet to come), devilish waves reached up through the latticed floor trying to wet our feet. It was only a matter of seconds before we dangled over a hundred feet high between the sea and the sky. The good keeper of Tillamook Light did as is the custom: let us dangle for what seemed an interminable time, evidently to enjoy the three elements of nature—land, sea and air—from a vantage point such as we had in that suspended crate. Being ignorant at the time of his good intentions, and apprehensive lest the cable break, besides being unable to enjoy and appreciate the spectacle from that position in the sky, I tried to convince our host above the roar of the ocean and the fury of the gale, biting cold and fusilade of rain, that of the elements we were beholding, we were most beholden to only one: land. Still the boom did not move landward; finally in desperation and in agony of fear I yelled uncomplimentary remarks about his ancestry. This had the desired effect, for immediately understanding dawned on his face as he nodded affirmatively and swung the boom inland, lowering us carefully and gently on the concrete landing base. After climbing something like eighty steps we reached the feudal-castle-like shelter of the lighthouse. Warmed by a cheery fire and a steaming hot cup of coffee, we proceeded on our missions, Mr. Ellis to his and I to mine.

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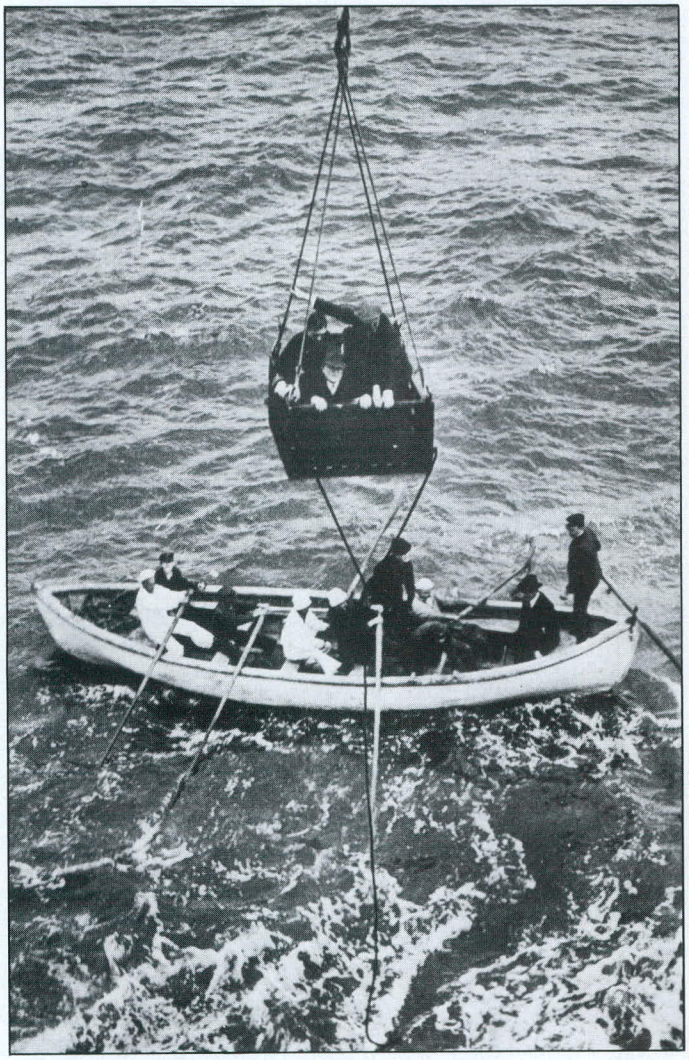


When our work was finished, the keeper summoned the *Manzanita* by radio phone. She came up speedily from her position, about a mile to sea from the rock. I saw the launching of the life boat with great misgivings, for only I knew what great spiritual agony I suffered.

Back in the crate, in the air, Ellis signalling higher. High in the air, Ellis focuses camera, standing up to take shot of lighthouse, myself crouching in the crate trying to keep it balanced, wishing Ellis would hurry up. Ellis makes shot, signals lower away. We go lower and swing out to sea; life boat tries to meet us as we are lowered, we make contact. I climb out and sprawl into life boat, crate unbalances and Ellis almost goes into water, crew steady crate, Ellis in boat with me. Trip to *Manzanita* through high choppy waves, we go to leeward of ship, waves dash us against ship, crew struggles to keep us from smashing, two of them try to connect with rope from davits, everything is a drunken crazy twisting and bouncing. Crew starts hauling, somebody places a rope in my hand, I start pulling like in the tug of war for dear old alma mater. The life boat is steady fore and aft but swings terribly from the ship to the ocean and back. We are even with the deck; the boat is made fast and lashed secure. Some men jump on deck, mate beckons to me to jump, I jump with brief case containing serials tightly clutched in my hand, I land on deck and stumble like a spavined horse. Into the cabin, seasick again. No survey of the *Manzanita* on return trip.

Back in the Columbia River, smoother water. We land, thank the captain for a pleasant trip, say good bye to officers, wave to crew, go down to office for mail, then home. On the way home I muse, "This ought to be good for a medal of honor—or at least a National Archives medal." Anyway it was some trip. You can't be a sissy working on archives; it may be a rat-infested cellar, a musty attic, a lighthouse at sea, or a luxuriously appointed office. Archivisits go where they send them.

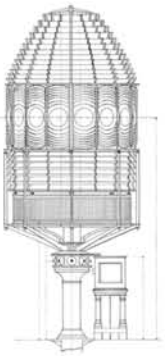
Very respectfully,
A. J. Tittinger



Top Left—Up, up and away! Top right—The tender's boat maneuvers under the hook preparing to place cargo in the "crate." Oregon Historical Society photographs.

Above—A bird's eye view of A. J. Tittenger "bravely" clutching the sides of the crate as he assends to inspect Tillamook Rock Lighthouse. Columbia River Maritime Museum photograph.

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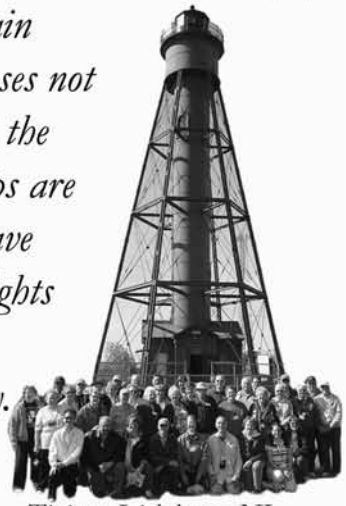
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