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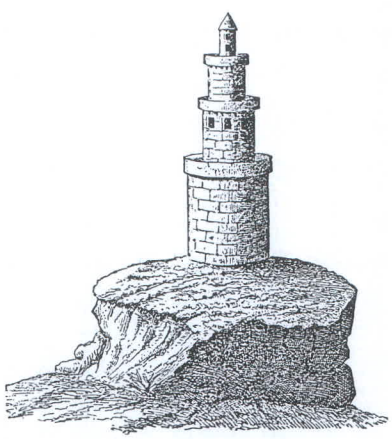
ROMAN LIGHTHOUSES



Roman Pharos on a medal of Apameia

The first crude beacons to serve as lighthouses, in what is now Italy, were probably constructed during the heyday of ancient Greece. Before the rise of the Roman Empire the Greeks traded heavily with the colonies of the southern Italian peninsula and Sicily. However, we only have documentation of lighthouses in Italy from Roman times. Evidence comes from the writings of the Roman historian Pliny, bas reliefs, coins, decorations on vases, mosaics and even sarcophagi. The lighthouse at Messina, guarding the dangerous whirlpool of Charybdis, as depicted on a coin produced by Sextus Pompeius (75-35 BC) is considered to be the oldest of the Roman Lighthouses in Italy.

As the Romans began to dominate the Mediterranean and expand their empire, they constructed lighthouses to guide vessels and protect their ports. They are even credited with the first lightships; such vessels served more to protect their harbors than as navigational aids, but they did display fire baskets in the rigging which showed the way into Roman ports.

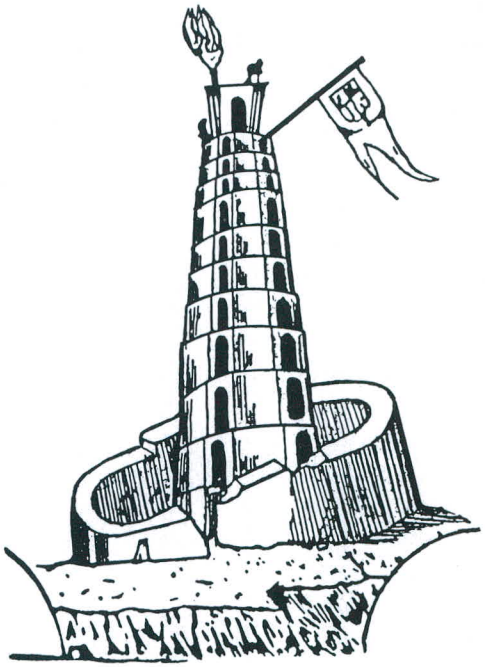


From a Roman medal



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Another famous Roman lighthouse, Tour d'Ordre, was built in 40 AD by Emperor Caligula on the English Channel near present day Boulogne, France. The Romans had a fortified port at Boulogne. It was from this port that Claudius embarked on his expedition to Britain. The Tour d'Ordre, an octagonal tower situated two to three hundred yards from the edge of the cliff, was 192 feet in circumference, about 64 feet in diameter, and from 124 and 200 feet in height (depending on the era and historian quoted). It was built along the lines of most Roman lighthouses in that it had 12 stories each 1½ feet narrower than the story immediately below so as to form a pyramid shape. It was so well constructed that it lasted until the 17th Century.



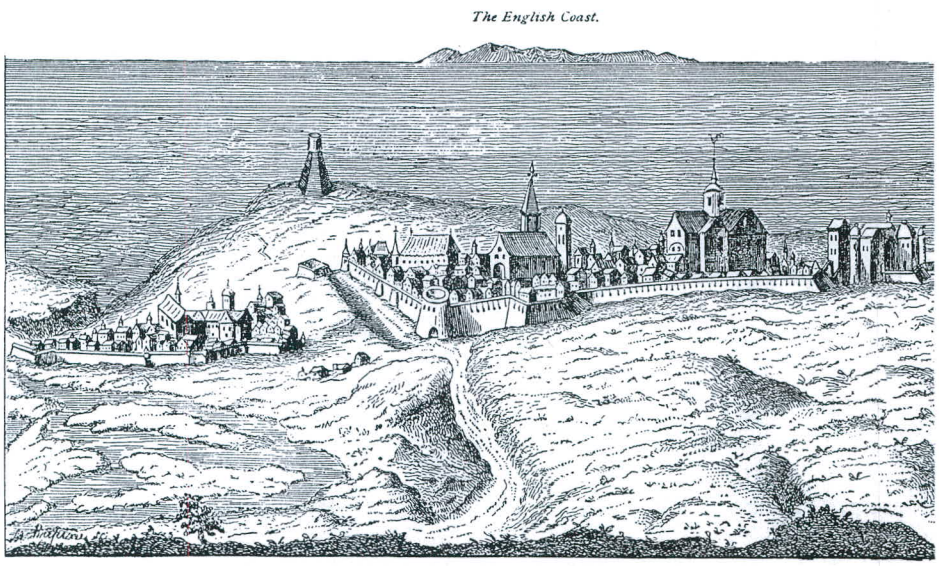
The Tour d'Ordre at Boulogne as depicted on an early sea chart.



The Pharos of Boulogne on medal of Commodus

Originally it served as a signal tower and as a memorial of imperial vain-gloriousness. There is evidence that a light was blazing from the top in 191 AD, as a bronze medal was struck showing the tower with an open fire and celebrating the departure of the Roman fleet and its victory over the Britons.

A smaller version of the Tour d'Ordre tower stands today on the cliffs of Dover, England. The structure, of which only the octagonal basement remains from the original Roman tower, is married into the Dover Castle. The upper portions were constructed during the reign of Henry VIII (who established Trinity.



The Tour d'Ordre with England in the distance.

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House, caretaker of British lighthouses). It is conjectured that it served as a signal tower with its mate in Gaul and as a lighthouse lighting the imperial galleys in the nearby port and guiding the English oyster boats returning from market in Boulogne.

The Romans are also credited with having built the world's oldest existing lighthouse, LaCoruna, at Julio Briga, Spain. It was constructed prior to the turn of the millenia. Historians mention repairs made by Julius Caesar (100-44 BC). It is also altered several times over the years with the last major alteration occuring in 1790. At one time known as the Column (or Pillar) of Hercules, La Coruna is still a functioning lighthouse.

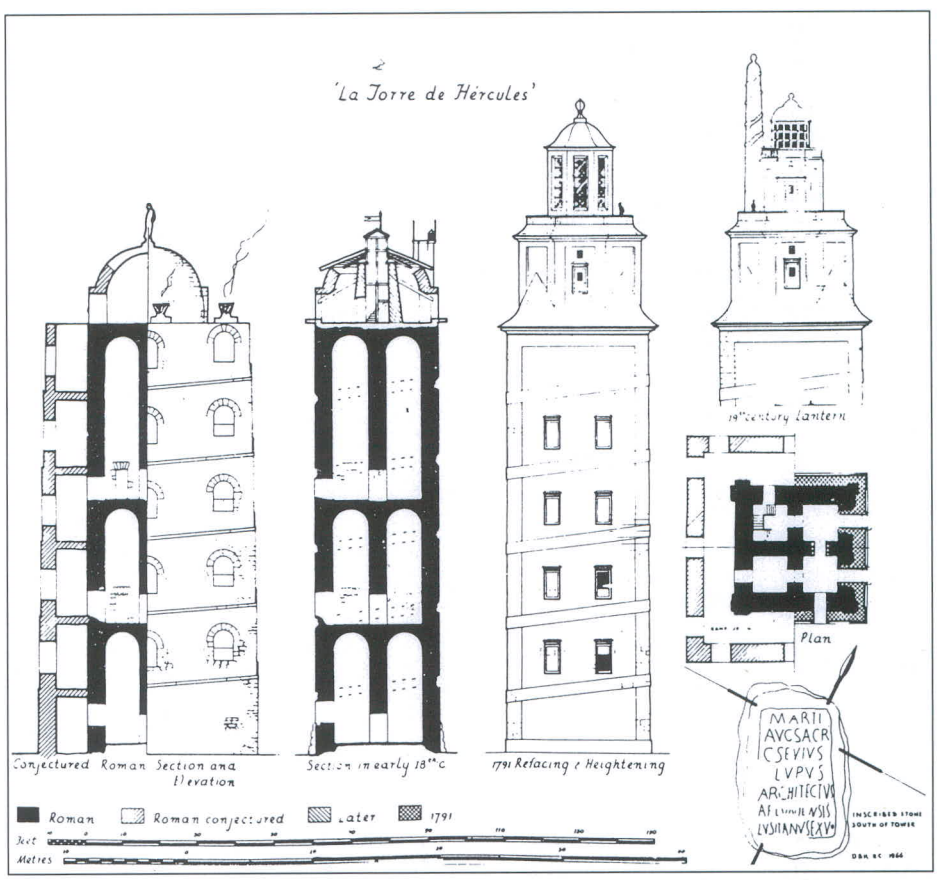
Every Roman port had some sort of lighthouse; some merely beacons, others also serving as a harbor defense. The ports of Ancona, Messina, Capri, Civitavecchia and Ostia all had a lighthouse guarding their entrances. The most famous was that at Ostia constructed by Claudius around 50 AD. Ostia was a man-made harbor that served Rome, although it was located some distance from that city. Today this port has been "filled in" and very little evidence of this once thriving harbor remains. The emperor Claudius had a 100 foot high, four story quadrangular structure constructed on an island at the entrance to the port. The island was made of a ship sunk for the purpose and filled with rocks. Ostia's lighthouse, like many Roman lighthouses, also served as a fortification and there is evidence that it was modeled after the great Pharos of Alexandria, though smaller.

Roman lighthouses were maintained by freedmen who burned resinous woods or mineral oils in huge copper kettles.

During the Middle Ages shipping declined thoughout the "modern" world and very few lighthouses were constructed. City states, wary of others, more often than not extinguished the flame of their lighthouses. The Meloria lighthouse was twice destroyed by rival Genoa and twice rebuilt. Genoa's first lighthouse was constructed in 1139 and operated, off and on, for 400 years. It was



The Roman tower at Dover, England appears today as it does in this 19th century wood cut.



The Pillar of Hurcules at La Coruna, Spain was constructed by the Romans and altered over the years.

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so damaged by the city state wars that in 1543 it was completely rebuilt. The new 240 foot high tower, named The Lantern, stands today as the symbol of Genoa.

In the late 15th Century Christopher Columbus's uncle was keeper of the Genoa lighthouse. Young Christopher, whose parents were in the weaving trade in Geonoa, used to visit and stay with his uncle at the lighthouse during the Summer months. Perhaps Columbus noted a ship on the horizon that disappeared when he descended the tower, and reappeared when he climbed higher. It could very well be that from these observations he discovered the world was round and that this (lighthouse experience) eventually sent him on the quest that discovered America.

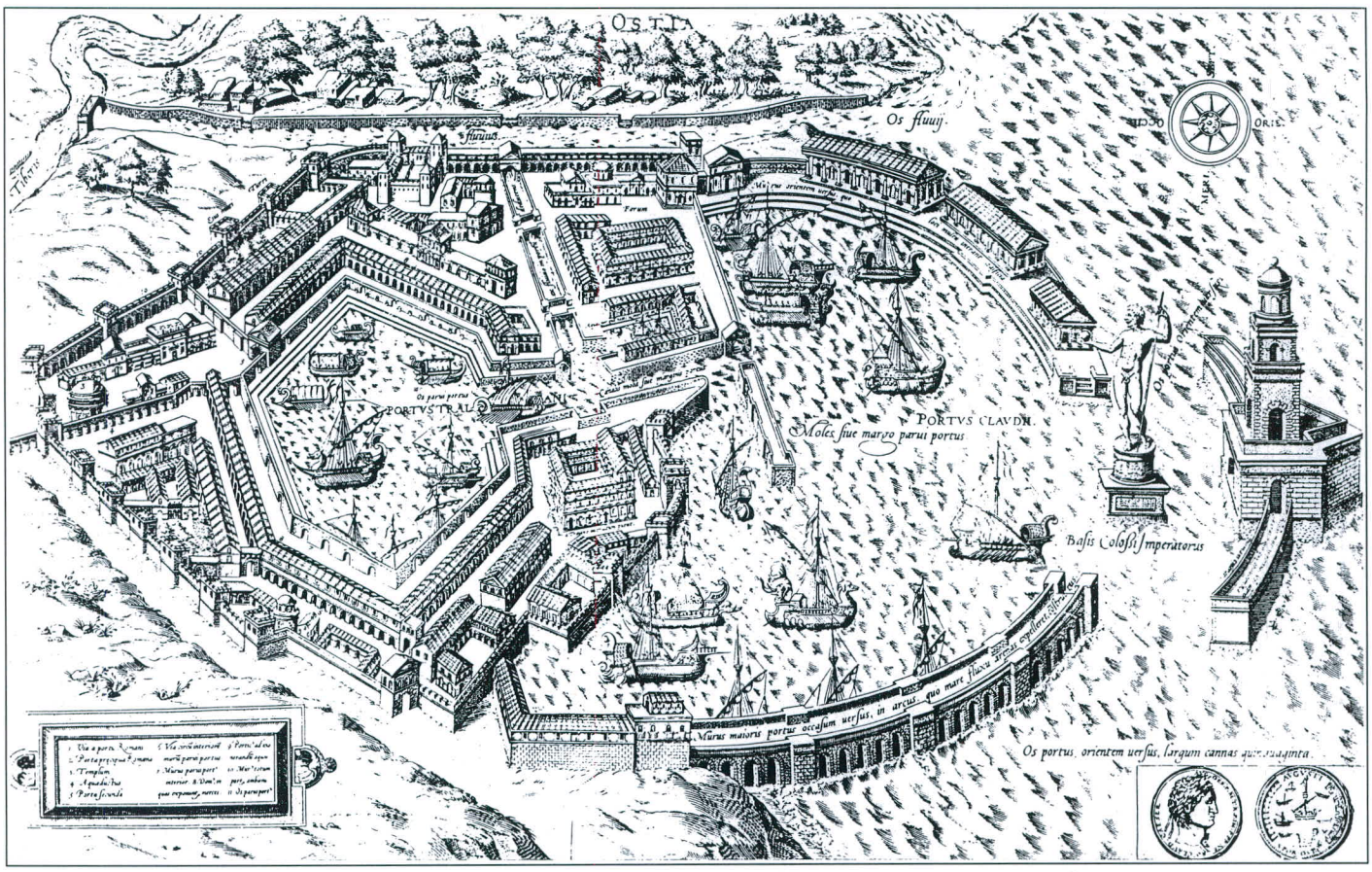
Italy has many unique and charming lighthouses scattered along its coasts, some dating from Roman times. In 1817 the world's first gas operated lighthouse was constructed at Salvore, 20 miles from Trieste and today one of the world's most magnificent lighthouses stands at Trieste. Constructed in 1927 it is over 220 feet high and has one of the largest lanterns in the world, containing an optic that produces a whopping 1,240,000 candlepower. The lantern is surmounted by a huge statue entitled 'Lighthouse of Victory.' At the base is a large statue of a sailor and the anchor of the *Audace*, the first ship to tie up at Trieste after World War I.

The present lighthouse at Messina, in Sicily, was reconstructed in 1546 by Charles V, and named Saint Raineri, after a monk who made his life work the tending of a flame to warn mariners of the danger of the coast. Further south at Syracuse, the Castello Maniace was constructed on the ruins of a small castle in 1038 by Byzantine General Maniace. Also in Sicily is a lighthouse constructed on Fort Avalos in 1570. From some angles this structure resembles a ship, especially in reduced visibility or at dusk...so much so that during WWII it was actually torpedoed.

In 1861 Italy had about 50 lighthouses. By 1916 the number had swelled to 512, a considerable number for so small a country, although this did include those in the Italian Territories of the day. A great many lighthouses were destroyed during WWII. Today Italy has a network of 168 lighthouses, all automated.

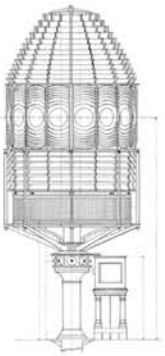


Early Christian sarcophagus depicting a lighthouse was found in the lighthouse at Genoa.



The bustling Roman port of Ostia was guarded by a lighthouse modeled after the great Pharos of Alexandria, Eygpt.

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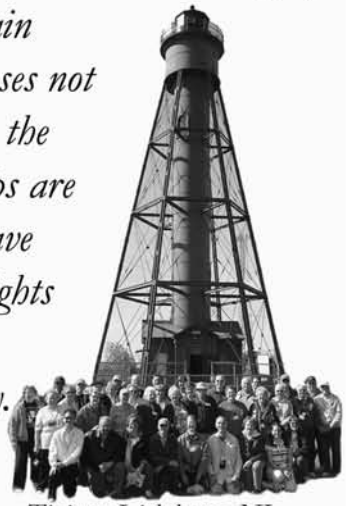
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