



Pages from the Past

Sand Island Light Station

Great Lakes Light Stations were seasonal and operated from the time ice broke up enough in the spring to allow ships to move until shipping ceased in the fall. A season could be as long as March to December or as short as mid May to early November. Most of the Great Lakes light stations were small single or two family stations. However, the addition of a fog signal at a station would require more than two keepers. Because the stations were seasonal, Great Lakes Keepers were paid less than their counterparts on the coasts. If a keeper became incapacitated at a single family station, his wife and older children took over his duties.

At Sand Island, Ellanuel Luick's wife, Ella, was an unpaid keeper during those times when Keeper Luick was gadding about Bayfield or sick. Ella was at Sand Island from 1889 to 1905 when she went back to Rhode Island and divorced Emmanuel. Although an assistant was assigned from time to time, they didn't stay long. Perhaps Keeper Luick was a tough man for which to work. Henry Irvine arrived on May 12, 1902 and departed 14 days later. On November 23, 1903 the Lighthouse Service assigned Ella Luick as an Assistant Keeper at a rate of pay of \$400 a year.

Sand Island was also a seasonal island for the fishermen's families in the village of East Bay. Most of their families and the lighthouse keepers moved to Bayfield for the winter months. If keepers had children, the wives and children usually left the stations at the beginning of the school year.

The following are excerpts of the Sand Island Log which was mostly kept by Ella Luick. The weather is mentioned every day, but we have only included a smattering to give you the feel of life at the station. Much of their time was spent on chores around the station, picking berries, fishing, shooting game, and chopping wood — always chopping wood. They maintained a garden and often interacted with the other families on the island. Almost daily the Keeper or Mrs. Luick would walk to the fishing village as that is where a vessel called on a regular basis with supplies and mail.

The following entries are published as they appear in the station log, in most cases we have not changed the spelling.

PHOTO BY JOEL LAUTERBACH

Excerpts from Ella Luick's 1899 Sand Island Light Station Diary

The 1899 Year at Sand Island

Friday, May 5, 1889 — SW Breeze, very nice morning. The tug R. W. Currie left Bayfield at 7 a.m. with the light keeper of Raspberry Island and Sand Island and Devils Island. Six men, and two women and two children. Lots of ice in Bayfield Harbor but the lake was quite clear, but the rocks and dock [Ed. at Sand Island] was one bank of ice so it was hard to land. Keeper arrived at 11 a.m. and found everything o.k.

Saturday, May 6 — Keeper went to East Bay to get his chickens. Returned and put the cellar in order. At 1 p.m. the Str. Hunter passed up. Mr. L. Moe stopped here and gave us some fish, first of the season.

Thursday, May 11 — Keeper painted his skiff and made garden at 12 noon. Str. Hunter passed up.

Friday, May 12 — Keeper worked in the garden until noon then went with wife to East Bay with mail.

Saturday, May 13 — NW Terrible gale, and clear, cold. The heavy ice was washed from the dock last night by the heavy NW gale and sea. It also carried two large logs on top of the breakwater and broke one 16 foot plank. It was so cold all night and morning that wherever the spray touched the brush it froze and the brush glimmered all morning, of the many icicles hanging on it. It looked more like fall than spring.

Wednesday, May 17 — Keeper and wife took the measure of the house to see how many square yards of paint surface there is.

Saturday, May 20 — Keeper put the tower in nice order and got ready for painting and white washing as soon as it gets warm enough. Keeper shot a duck at noon.

Monday, May 22 — Keeper spaded his garden and went to East Bay for mail at 2 p.m....It was a very bright moonlight, but

the air was so clear that we seen Two Harbors; the ore dock lights and the light at the [Ed. Two Harbors lighthouse] station we could see very plain with the naked eye.

Wednesday, May 24 — Keeper shot a loon in front of the station, will use the feathers for headrests. Keeper planted corn and lettuce in the garden.

Thursday, May 25 — Keeper finished planting potatoes and cleaned the boathouse inside and put things in order.

Saturday, May 27 — Keeper put the barn in order and cleaned the chicken coop and worked in the house making door ?

Monday, May 29 — Devils Island Light not visible due to fog. Keeper whitewashed the tower during the morning. After dinner [lunch] went to meet the tug and put mail on board. At 3 p.m. it rained heavy. Keeper planted peas and set one hen with 13 eggs.

Tuesday, May 30 — Keeper painted the ironwork on the tower outside and finished up the day whitewashing the out-buildings.

Wednesday, May 31 — Keeper painted the tower stairs and dining room and hall. The last ice melted away today under the rocks in front of the station.

Thursday, June 1 — Keeper painted bedroom floor and kitchen floor and outhouse floor. Mr. Louis Moe stopped at the station to see keeper and left two fish.

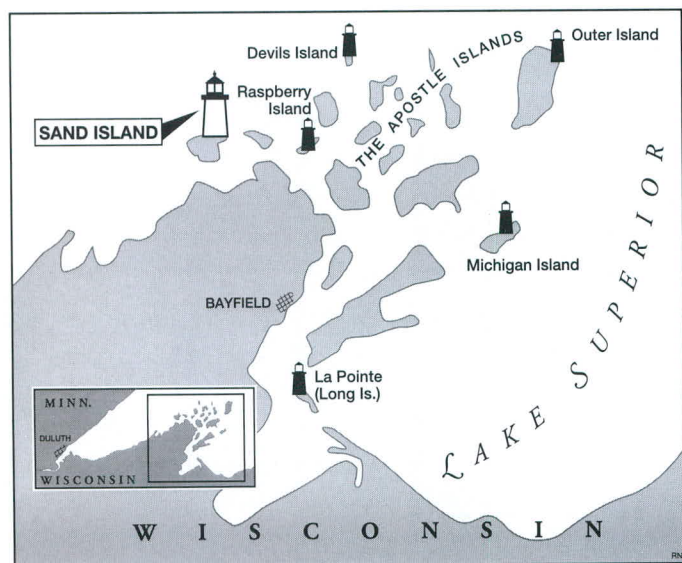
Friday, June 2 — Keeper whitewashed the garden fence and worked around the station.

Monday, June 5 — Keeper painted in the tower and worked the garden. At 1:00 p.m. he left for East Bay, from there he took the tug Currie to Bayfield...Mr. Luick wanted to come home from East Bay and go on the Hunter, but he was afraid he would be too late and have to wait until Wednesday. I think it would have been perfectly safe as the tug left East Bay at a little after 3 p.m. and the Hunter did not go by until 8:50 p.m.

Friday, June 16 — Keeper helped clean house and cleaned windows. At 2:15 p.m. keeper went to East Bay and got mail, got home at 4:30 p.m. and went out and lifted hooks — got 4 lawers and 4 trout. Keeper and wife set herring net. At 8:15 p.m. keeper shot a large owl and after dark set a hen with 13 eggs.

Tuesday, June 20 — One hen came off the nest with 12 little chickens. Keeper and wife lifted hooks and got three large trout. Keeper worked in the garden in the afternoon.

Wednesday, June 28 — NE hurricane, clear and cold. The worst blow of the season. After 1 p.m. the wind decreased in violence till at 5:00 p.m. It was only an ordinary gale. Freddie Hanson and his friend came over to borrow some gun powder of Mr. Luick and were quite surprised to learn he was in Bayfield. I found the first ripe strawberry this afternoon. It was a wild one and I found it in the front yard.



Thursday, June 29 — I cleaned the tower windows and afterwards did general house work and sewing. At 5 p.m. the keeper returned from Bayfield at 8 p.m.. The keeper absent 3 days 1 1/4 hours [Ed. during absences the keeper's wife was actually the keeper, although most of the time she received no pay. In 1903 the Service did make her an Assistant Keeper at a rate of \$400 per year.]

Tuesday, July 4 — [written by Keeper Luick] ...After attending to the lamps and the housework Ella and I proceeded to celebrate by firing off some fire crackers and torpedoes and having as good a time as possible. The best however is a very poor imitation of a "fourth."...

Thursday, July 13 — NE breeze and cloudy with fog outside. At 9:00 a.m. NE fresh with fog. Keeper worked in the garden until noon. At 1:40 p.m. Keeper and folks were startled by the blast of a steamer whistle just under the east side of the island, not more than a half mile from the station. It was the first sound of a whistle since the fog set in at 9 a.m. . . . Keeper left the dinner table and started at once in the direction of the whistle, which called for help. I had not gone far til I see she was on the shore where there is a rocky reef that extends out. I went out to her to see what could be done and [to] learn her name and where she was bound for. [she was] the Lizzie Madden of Bay City loaded with 650 thousand feet of lumber taken on at Bayfield and Buffalo Bay and bound for Duluth to pick up her three vessels which is also loaded with lumber and bound for Detroit, Michigan. Captain J. M. Madden, of Port Huron, MI is master of her with a crew of 11 men and two ladies...the str. is 517 tons burden. She is broadside to the island and out of the water forward two feet and aft 8 inches. The Capt. waited for the Str. Hunter, which arrived at 4:30 p.m.. The Keeper took the mate out to board the Str. Hunter to go to Ashland to call for tugs. It was very thick during the evening and most of the night, but quite calm, so the steamer was resting easy. Cause of the casualty, compass deranged.

Friday, July 14 — At 3:30 a.m. very calm and cloudy but quite a swell rolling. The tugs B. B. Inman and Zenith of Duluth and the Steamer Joseph C. Smit arrived to render assistance to the Str. Lizzie Madden. 4 p.m. after taking over a third of her load off, the tugs pulled her off and at 4:15 p.m. she passed the station bound for Duluth, nothing lost.

Wednesday, July 19 — Lighthouse supply Str. Marigold arrived at 1:15 p.m. All landed down by the breakwater and boathouse. CDR Duncan Kennedy, USN and Rear Admiral F. J. Higginson, USN Chairman of the Light-House Board and Mr. Sides, Clerk, came up to the station. After inspecting the station, they picked some strawberries and then departed for Two Harbors. They delivered 40 cans of oil, 20 up to the station and 20 to the boathouse, and 2 [cans] of white and one of black paint, 1/4 bbl. of lime, 1/2 bbl. of flour, 1 brush, 1 pump, 2 gals. linseed oil, 1 gal. turpentine, 1 broom, 45 bars of soap, 2 bottles of ammonia, 8 boxes of glass polish, sand paper, emery paper and stationary. Keeper gave them 11 qts. of strawberries to take to the steamer with them to treat the ladies and the crew. At 2:45 p.m. the Str. Marigold steamed for Two Harbors...

[Ed. the Log was signed] — Duncan Kennedy, Commander, USN, Inspector. Inspected the station, excellent condition. Signed — Francis J. Higginson, Rear Admiral, USN, Chairman, Light-House Board.

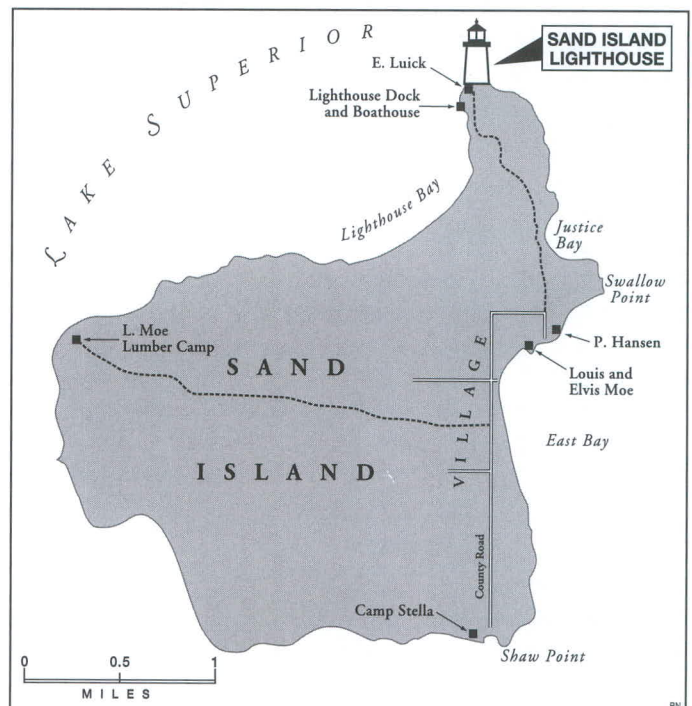
Thursday, July 20 — Mr. L. Moe left two fish for the keeper as he passed the station on his way home from fishing. Keeper replaced the old pump with the new one and started to restock a gun. At 6:30 p.m. the Government Survey Str. Pickett steamed into the bay and three officers came up to the station to see the keeper in regards to the shoal on which the Str. Romania grounded on July 12, and to see if they could take observations from the tower to help locate the place [Ed. this is a different grounding than the Lizzie Madden, which grounded on July 13].

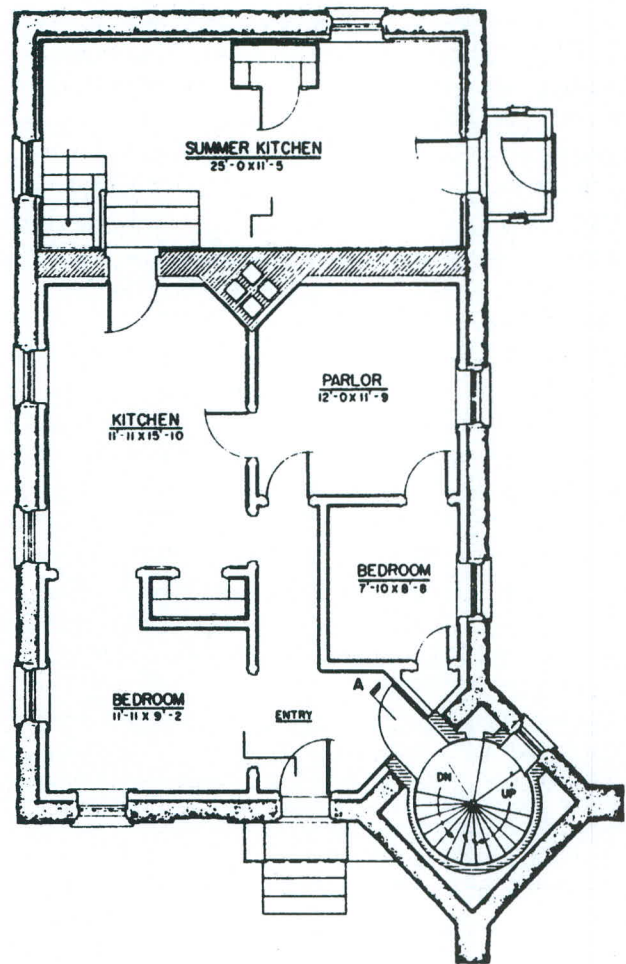
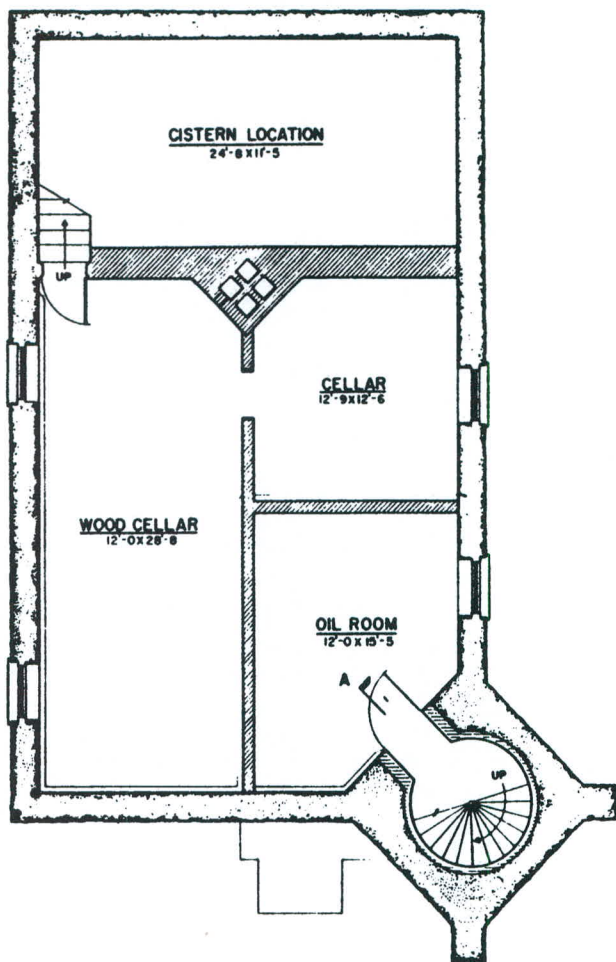
Friday, July 21 — NE fresh and cloudy, very cold with some rain. The U. S. Str. Pickett is still laying to anchor and waiting for better weather. The officers were at the station most of the day, taking pictures and picking strawberries.

Saturday, July 22 — Keeper left the station at 9 a.m. on the Str. Pickett to help locate the shoal where the Str. Romania grounded. The least water found was 8 feet 4 inches, high water mark. Keeper and Arty returned at 7:45 p.m.

Monday, July 24 — Keeper cleaned brass work and tower and hall at 11 p.m.. Picked strawberries at 2 p.m. Keeper took his wife, Mrs. Ella Luick, to East Bay to meet the Str. R. W. Currie on which she will go to town for a few days. Keeper returned with mail and whitefish at 4 p.m., the Gaflies are terrible and thick, never was so bad before.

Tuesday, July 25 — Mr. L. Moe and a man came out to cut hay around the station. Keeper got the oil, lime and flour up from the dock and got one load of wood with the boat and split it and picked a basket of strawberries.





Wednesday, July 26 — Keeper picked one crate of strawberries and at 2 p.m. went to East Bay with them and shipped them on the Str. R. W. Currie

Thursday, July 27 — SW Breeze and clear, cool and very pleasant. Keeper cleaned windows and got dinner for four persons who were putting up hay. During the afternoon worked on gun stock.

Friday, July 28 — Keeper picked strawberries and cleaned the house.

Tuesday, August 1 — Keeper made out reports and picked strawberries.

Sunday, August 6 — Keeper and wife went to East Bay, returned at 4 p.m., found many raspberries there [Ed. variety at last!]

Monday, August 7 — Keeper cleaned brass work and picked strawberries.

Wednesday, August 9 — Calm and cloudy, foggy, heavy swell from the NE. Keeper sawed wood until 2 p.m., then keeper and wife picked four quarts of raspberries. Very hot all day..

Thursday, August 10 — Calm and clear, changed to NE and heavy thunder and rain storms at 5 p.m.. Keeper cleaned tower and windows and picked currents.

Friday, August 11 — Keeper and wife went to East Bay to meet tug and get mail and fish. Keeper sawed wood during the forenoon. In the evening picked 4 quarts of strawberries and had a shortcake for supper.

Friday, August 18 — Keeper cleaned the house, flies terrible bad, put up 16 quarts of raspberries.

Thursday, August 24 — The [USLH Service Tender] Amaranth arrived at 12:20 p.m. with Major Handberg, USA [Ed. he was the District Engineer] brought plane to repair the dock. The Amaranth brought the new Funk Heap lamps. Keeper will try them tonight and see how they will work.

Friday, August 25 — Keeper tried the new lamps and found them a great deal of trouble. From 7 p.m. until 10:30 p.m. it melted one chimney and from 12 to 2 p.m. it melted one chimney so the lamp smoked so bad I had a terrible time cleaning the tower. This is my third smoke up, but never as bad as this time. The lamps are a very poor lamp for the place where they were intended to be used. Government Str. Marigold arrived at 2:45 p.m.. The Supply Clerk F. Sides brought the window glass and a Szythe stove.

Monday, August 28 — Yacht Stella with a party of 14 came to visit the station. At 1 p.m. a very heavy squall came up and lasted until 3:30 p.m. when the yacht left for Cape Stella on the south side of Sand Island. Keeper and wife picked wild cherries for fall.

[Ed. During September the Keeper and his wife Ella picked 15 quarts of blueberries one day, 14 quarts of blackberries another day, worked around the station and continued to catch fish and chop wood].

Sunday, September 17 — At 8:15 a.m. Mr. Luick left the station to go to Bayfield. It is the first time I was over here alone on a Sunday. I was very much surprised at 1200 by seeing the tug Eliza of Bayfield coming here. She had on board a party consisting of [10 people from Bayfield] and Mr. & Mrs. Johnston of Chicago. They brought their lunch baskets up to the house and made tea in the kitchen and also ate their dinner [lunch] in the kitchen. Mr. Johnston had never seen pine growing before, and was nearly wild to pick blackberries, raspberries and blueberries.

Monday, September 18 — Nothing happened until about one o'clock this afternoon when as I was sewing at the machine I run the needle through the end of my second finger on my left hand tearing about half the nail off and cutting my finger through in two places. It was not very painful, but I fainted twice from nervousness. Later I found three four leaf and one five leaf clovers and saw a large white headed eagle sitting on a stub over on the east bank. At 4 p.m. it began to blow from the NE and in fifteen minutes was blowing what the fishermen call a "rattling good sailing breeze" and continued so. A little snake got in the storm shed today.

Thursday, September 21 — Mr. Luick expected to be home at five o'clock this morning, but it's nearly ten and he is not here yet.

Friday, September 22 — Mr. Luick did not come home yesterday so it is useless to expect him until tomorrow. Mr. Louis Moe came over this morning to bring me news from town.

Saturday, September 23 — Keeper returned from town at 4 p.m. on the Str. Hunter. Absent five days and twenty hours. Found everything in good order except Keeper's wife was not very well.

Sunday, September 24 — Keeper took care of the house as Mrs. Luick is sick. Mr. and Mrs. L. Moe came over to pick blackberries. Keeper lost his large rustler.

Monday, September 25 — Keeper's wife is still unable to do any work. Keeper shot the hawk that caught the rustler.

Thursday, October 5 — At 9:10 last night the chimney melted down and light went out. At 9:30 p.m. everything was in order again and lamp lit up. These new lamps are just a nuisance and a lot of trouble and a lamp that can not be trusted.

Tuesday, October 10 — Keeper dug 3 1/2 bushels of potatoes and replaced a broken window light.

Wednesday, October 11 — Keeper finished digging his potatoes, got 5 1/2 bushels in all. Keeper and wife walked to East Bay and put some things on board [vessel] to be taken to town. Keeper also took two chickens and one rustler over to L. Moe to keep over the winter for me.

Saturday, October 21 — Calm and very cloudy, heavy NE swell, Devil Island Light visible. Keeper finished repairing the dock and worked at the storehouse on the dock. At 3:30 p.m. the Str. S. Barker arrived at the dock to land a cow for L. Moe.

Friday, October 26 — Keeper took in his chicken netting and got his skiff near the house to protect it from the spray and ice. At 1 p.m. Keeper and wife went to East Bay to put mail on the Str. S. Barker as the boat came out to move Mr. P. Johnson to town, keeper got mail from home.



Emmanuel & Ella Luick

Tuesday, October 31 — WSW fresh and clear, cool changed to N heavy gale. Keeper went over to help Mr. L. Moe take his horse to the mainland but got there too late so returned and sawed wood. Keeper's wife helped saw down a birch tree, 2 feet 3 inches in the stump.

Wednesday, November 1 — Keeper sawed and hauled 8 wheelbarrows of wood and killed two chickens and helped eat them for dinner.

Thursday, November 30 — Keeper sawed wood and done some work in the shop. This has been a very pleasant month such as I have never seen since I am up in this country, which is 13 years and I have not met anyone who does not remember of such a fall, no snow on the ground and no ice to speak of until today. This is Thanksgiving Day and I think we have a great deal to be Thankful for. USL Keeper E. Luick

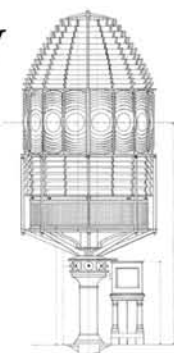
Saturday, December 2 — Ice all around the shore and in the trees near the shore it froze hard last night. Keeper and Mrs. Luick went over to East Bay to bid fishermen and families good bye, it was quite cold and froze all day.

Thursday, December 7 — SW terrible gale and changed to clear. At 1:30 p.m. Mr. P. Hansen tried to go out and set nets but the gale drove him home at 2:30 p.m. Mr. Fred Hansen came over with the mail from town, the first since Nov. 14th and was glad to get it. The A. Booth tug expected to come Monday. Last week a young man drowned between Bayfield and LaPointe last night the sail boat was found on Bass Island. The young man's name was Francis Bachand of Bayfield. Keeper done some bone carving a watch charm.

Saturday, December 9 — South gale and cloudy and rain. At 11:30 a.m. the tug came for us. Closed the light for the season.



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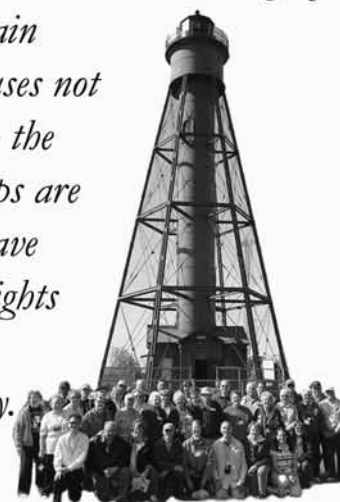
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The Society organizes domestic and international lighthouse tours. Many of our excursions gain access to lighthouses not normally open to the public. These trips are a great way to have fun, see lots of lights and learn about lighthouse history.



Tinicum Lighthouse, NJ