



The Tucker Beach lighthouse from the edge of the surf before the ocean started to encroach. Station cistern can be seen at left. Photo courtesy of Evelyn Suter who lived on the island in 1913 & 1914 when her father Ralph Cummings, was a member of the Life Saving Service.

The Tucker Beach light station of New Jersey not only disappeared but the entire island on which it stood — along with several cottages, a Coast Guard station, a school, two hotels, a boarding house and other buildings — also vanished under the Atlantic.

At one time Tucker Island (also called Sea Haven, Short Beach and Tucker's Beach at different times) was part of the mainland attached to the south end of Long Beach Island. Eventually the sea encroached on the north causing an island some 8 miles long. By 1877 Tucker Island was reduced to a mile in length.

The island was named after one Reuben Tucker who purchased the island in 1765. He eventually opened his home as a boarding house to fishermen and hunters from Philadelphia and other areas of the east coast, creating the first resort on the new Jersey shore. There were excellent hunting and fishing on the island that lured the sportsmen as well as those seeking the "healthful" salt air. Many kinds of fish were found in the local waters and terrapin, oysters, water fowl and red deer were plentiful.

The original Tucker Beach station (also called Little Egg lighthouse after nearby Little Egg Harbor) was established in 1849. The original lighthouse,

Only Yesterday — will appear periodically in the Log to reflect on light stations that no longer exist. Over the years our federal government probably established over 2,000 light stations, although no more than 850 were ever in operation at any one time. Some stations were sold, others abandoned and some destroyed by fires, storms and erosion. Up to now the Log has concentrated on the history of existing lighthouses and those that are being returned in some manner to the public domain. But we felt that there may be some interest in those lighthouses that have "crossed the bar," stations which were there to serve the mariner . . . "only yesterday."

a small brick one-story brick structure with a detached kitchen, was replaced in 1879 by a wooden two story structure surmounted by a wooden tower, similar to the Hereford Inlet, NJ station.

A 4th order fixed Fresnel lens displayed a white light visible for 12 miles. Over the years the island was slowly eaten by the sea, with huge chunks carved out by particularly vicious storms. But after the turn of the century the erosion occurred more quickly gobbling up a hotel and several cottages. Finally, the lighthouse had to be abandoned in August of 1927 when a Northeaster caused the sea to undermine the front portion of the structure. Paul Rider, the

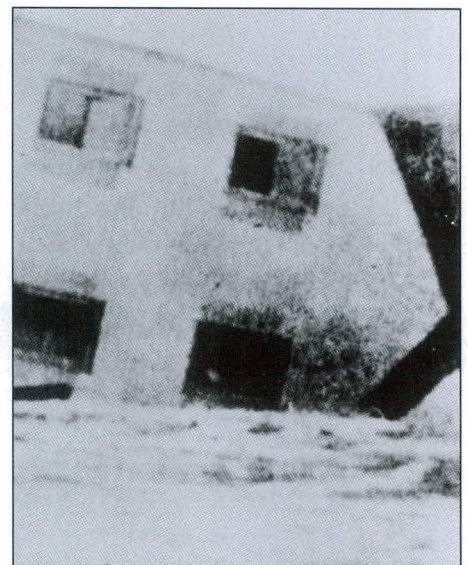
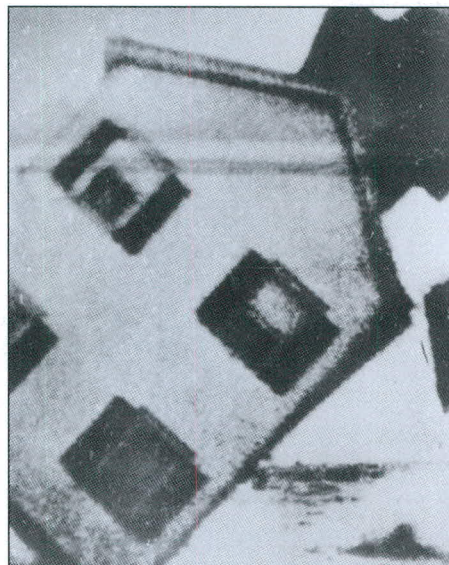
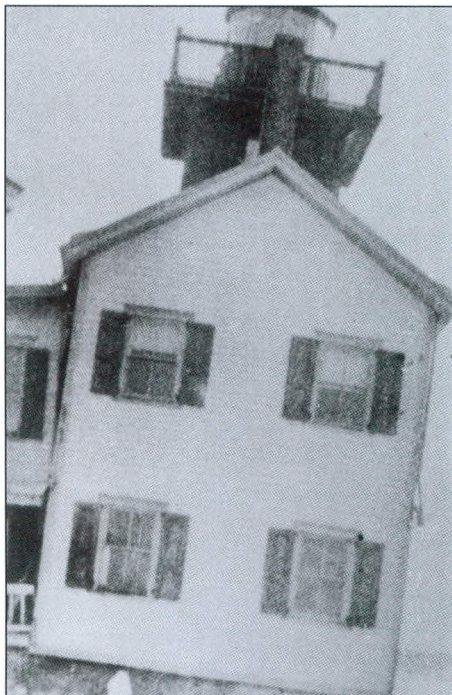
great grandson of one of the first keepers of the Tucker Beach lighthouse Eber Rider, was with the lighthouse when she was claimed by the sea. He said, "I slept in the old lighthouse at Sea Haven, camera in hand, the night before she toppled [on October 12, 1927]. The government had officially abandoned her some weeks before and we knew she could go any minute," he said, "Earlier storms had broken and undermined the foundation and the sands around it were constantly being washed away." Paul and his uncle Art went to the beach when the first crack appeared, "but the beach was caving in and we had to step backwards with every wave," he said. Nevertheless he managed to catch in step by step photos the claiming of the 79 year old structure by the relentless sea.

The Coast Guard station fell eight years later, the schoolhouse in 1938; in the 1940's only birds could find land upon which to rest and by 1952 all traces of the island were gone.

During the summer of 1990 the waters south of Long Beach Island retreated surrendering a portion of the island that was once Tuckers Island, a lost jewel that was once New Jersey's first beach resort. Like an emerging Atlantis a five acre sandbar appeared where Tucker's Island had been.



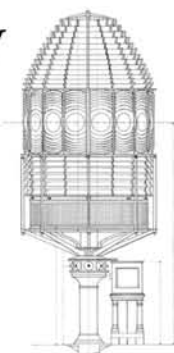
Above – The Tucker beach lighthouse in 1927 shortly before it fell into the sea. Photo courtesy of the National Archives.



Going, going, gone! Dramatic, if unclear, photos of the Tucker Beach lighthouse falling into the sea were taken by Paul Rider, grandson of one of the first keepers. Paul slept in the structure on the night of October 11, 1927 and took these photos the next morning. Photos courtesy of Evelyn Cummings Suter.



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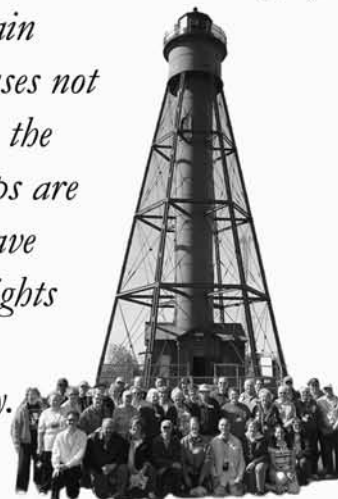
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Tinicum Lighthouse, NJ