

LIGHTHOUSES OF TEXAS

by T. Lindsay Baker
with paintings by Harold Phenix

This book fills a long-standing need for a solid reference work on the Texas lighthouses. Member Baker's use of historical resources gives us all the facts, presenting these ten gulf coastal lighthouses and two lightships in a thoroughly accessible manner. The thoughtful tone of the text in this oversized book and the soft, antique-like quality of the historic photos create a sense of nostalgia. Then a brilliant contrast is introduced, with full-page watercolor paintings by Harold Phenix (at the center of the book), so that a feeling of contemporary vitality comes to the whole.

Baker gives us social and political information in the context of the times, commenting upon such issues as "... keeper . . . argued in favor of appointing his wife . . . as assistant because 'no man can be found who will perform the duties for the salary paid.'" (page 7). and, "... the Lighthouse Service actively practiced racial discrimination. Although there were a handful of instances in which blacks worked at American light stations, they were rare exceptions to the unwritten rule that all regular employees of the service were white." (page 9) We also learn (as Ross Holland's foreword indicates) of the diversity of lighthouse

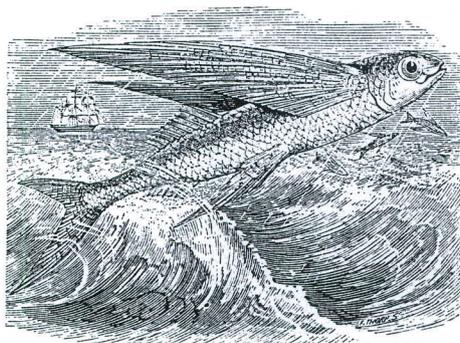
architecture used in the area, including the only caisson lighthouse built south of the Chesapeake: Sabine Bank.

Throughout, Baker's gentle style brings to life the human dramas played out during historic changes: the Civil War, reconstruction, and technological advances. His chapters on two lightships, *Galveston* and *Heald Bank*, are in themselves concise reviews of the history of navigational aids in the gulf region. These short histories, blending issues of politics, funding and construction, could each stand as an example of the type of story we feature in our Log's "Only Yesterday" section — recalling the memories of light stations now all but forgotten.

Baker's research — the extent of which will be immediately understood by anyone who has spent hours poring over a microfilm reader — is impressive, and reveals a heroic devotion to his subject. His efforts have produced a carefully written book (with an excellent index) — one filled with a sense of affection for his subjects, resulting in a highly informative, charming 'read.' Baker dedicated his work to his "Auntie Etelka Baker Williams, who introduced me to Texas lighthouses." His aunt should be proud.

Hardcover, 11 1/4" square, 128 pages with 16 B & W photos, 12 color prints of watercolor paintings. Texas A & M University Press, 1991; available from our Keeper's Library for \$39.95 + S&H.

Crossed the Bar



Ned Cameron

We were sad to learn that District Inspector Ned Cameron, of Rockport, MA, Crossed the Bar this past February.

Ned was one of those prime movers so essential to making something work in any community. One of the things that he made work, as President of the Thacher Island Association, was the restoration of the Thacher Island north tower, fog signal building, keeper's house and other buildings. He also designed a special boat hull which would "work" in landing people and supplies on the island under many different weather conditions. Through his efforts Thacher Island opened to the public on weekends and at no cost.

The Rockport newspaper reported that he had been a valuable asset to the community and was "more of a giver than taker." He was described as "industrious, ingenious and dedicated." Ned had a deep love for the sea and yachting. He spent time giving sailing lessons to young people. President Cameron represented our Society at meetings with the Coast Guard in Boston, and kept the Society informed about what was happening with lighthouses in his neck of the woods.

Lighthouses, Thacher Island and the good people of Rockport have indeed lost a friend and one of those rare "prime movers" that make things happen. Our sincerest sympathy to his lovely wife Lois.

Donations in his name may be made to the Thacher Island Association, P.O. Box 73, Rockport, MA 01966.



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