

ALONE IN THE NIGHT: LIGHTHOUSES OF GEORGIAN BAY, MANITOULIN ISLAND, AND THE NORTH CHANNEL

by Andrea Gutsche, Barbara Chisholm,
and Russell Floren

Reviewed by Lisa M. Truesdale

"The fate of many Canadian and Great Lakes and coastal lighthouses currently swings in the balance. One by one they are being torn down." When I read this statement in the preface to *Alone in the Night*, I was as disturbed as any lighthouse lover might be when reminded of what has happened to so many beautiful lighthouses with the advent of modern technology. But this didn't prepare me for how attached I would become to several Georgian Bay lighthouses by the end of the 292-page volume.

Sure, I had heard of Georgian Bay, a body of water roughly one third the size of Lake Huron, from which it extends to the northeast. I had no idea, however, that the bay, along with nearby Manitoulin Island and the North Channel, was home to over 50 light stations, each with a fascinating history and stories to tell.

"Lighthouse Basics," Part 1 of this well-written and well-researched book, provides an introduction to the history of lightkeeping. Though it of course focuses on the origins of Canadian light station, the authors also give readers a crash course in such sub-

jects as "What did they look like?" (from Imperial to wooden towers) and "How did they work?" (illuminating apparatus, fog alarms, etc.). The rest of the book devotes several pages to each light station, beginning with Cove Island, called "the Jewel of Georgian Bay Lighthouses" because it was not only the first light station to be lit (in 1858), but also the last to have its keeper removed (in 1991). Each light's own history is honored in a variety of ways, with archival photographs, excerpts from keeper's logs, anecdotes, ghost stories, and factual data. Regarding the photographs, I especially enjoyed the fact they contained more than just different views of each light; there were also interesting pictures of keepers and their families, sometimes engaging in activities that didn't even involve their official duties.

The 72-minute video serves as a nice companion to the book, though I don't think it provides enough information to stand on its own. Still, it is enjoyable enough, with live-action footage (including some dramatic underwater shots of a shipwreck), as well as still photographs, interviews with former keepers, tours of several sites, and even good background music that includes a talented fiddler.

The end of the tape was quite sobering, with video epitaphs of sorts showing certain lights and their ultimate fate, like "Demolished, 1969" or "Abandoned, 1982." The book concludes in the same fashion, with a summary entitled "Destaffing and Destruction: The Future." After falling in love with several lighthouses throughout the book, I wanted to be reassured about their fate, but it wasn't to be; the authors paint a grim yet realistic picture of how there is virtually no protection available for this crucial part of Canada's maritime history. As the authors state, "In the U. S., [lighthouses] are protected monuments. Even the most remote tower attracts thousands of visitors each year and provides welcome income for local communities. Can we not emulate their concern and enterprise?"

I, and anyone who reads this book, can only hope so.

Soft cover, 8 1/2" x 11", 292 pages, 394 black and white photographs, 29 maps, and seven drawings. The book may be purchased through the Keeper's Locker for \$24.95 plus \$4.00 shipping and handling; the video is available for \$19.95 plus \$4.00 shipping and

handling. The book and video may be purchased as a set for \$39.95 plus \$6.00 shipping and handling.

ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE INN — A CHRONICLE

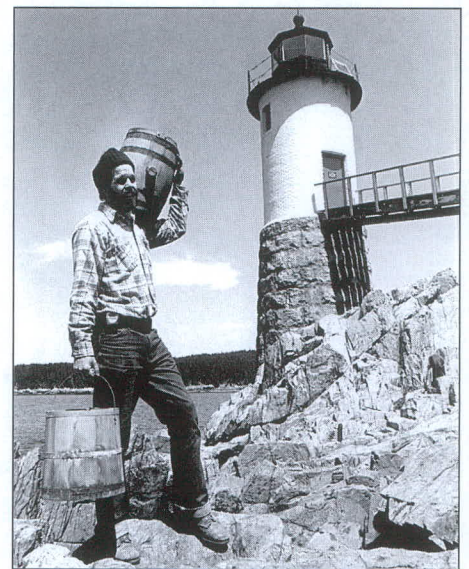
By Jeffrey Burke

Reviewed by Wayne Wheeler

There have been so many lighthouse books flying off the press in recent years that I feel overdosed, like having had one too many helpings of a Thanksgiving dinner with no room for the pumpkin pie. Most of the time I barely finish the first chapter before sending it off for someone else to review. It's not that they are all bad, it has just been too much of the same.

However, the latest lighthouse book to cross my desk is a world apart from recent volumes. The setting is literally a world apart, and the literature soars above the rest. *Island Lighthouse Inn* is an extremely well written and very clever book. It chronicles Jeff and Judy Burke's transformation of an old, abandoned light station dwelling into a warm and successful inn.

From the time I opened this charming book and read the first sentence of the Preface — "I never asked for this life — living in a run-down lighthouse on a rocky island off the coast of Maine ... " — tip-toed through Phoebe's chocolate birthday cake



Keeper and author Jeff Burke doing his chores at Isle au Haut. Photo courtesy of the Burkes.

recipe, and paused at the Memoriam, I was hooked. *Island Lighthouse Inn* is a difficult book to put down. It's a warm opus laced with colorful descriptions and wry humor. Jeffrey Burke drinks in events and funnels them through his pen, creating a canvas of the page, painted with words which open up the vista that is the rocky shoreline of Maine, shrouded in fog or kissed with sunshine.

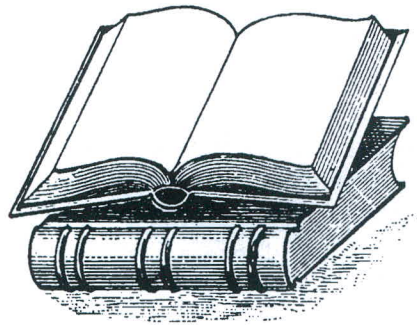
Remarkably, Jeffrey has combined the clever and warm prose style of Peter Mayle (*A Year in Provence*) with the poetry of Emily Dickenson (Two butterflies waltzed upon a farm ...). His imagery is powerful and descriptive — "Tall swaying spruce trees stirring the stars ... " or "The onshore breeze makes my willowy perch [a 40-foot ladder used in painting the house] sway. Synchronized in an aerial ballet, as nimble as a ladybug on a blade of blowing grass."

The book is a compilation of chapters devoted to a thing or event: Fogbound, The Chair, Walking Sticks, and Chloressa (their private sewage system with a mind of its own) are a few of the titles.

Sprinkled throughout the book are crude, but charming, black and white scratch board line cuts which illustrate the odyssey. Each chapter ends with a recipe, usually from some event in the preceding chapter. The recipes are juicy, too.

If this warm and lively book doesn't win a literary award I will be very much surprised. It may be fashioned of black type on white paper and illustrated with black and white line art, but it reads in color. Well done Jeffrey, I want more of the chronicle.

Hard cover, 5 3/4" x 8 3/4", 182 pages, and 21 drawings. Available through the Keeper's Locker for \$21.95 plus \$4.00 shipping and handling.



LIGHTHOUSES, LIGHTSHIPS, AND THE GULF OF MEXICO

by David L. Cipra

Reviewed by Dr. Robert Scheina
Professor of History, National Defense
University

The best books are those created out of love. This surely describes David Cipra's *Lighthouses, Lightships, and the Gulf of Mexico*. It has all the right touches — careful research into virgin materials, thoughtful analysis, and crisp, clear writing. After reading this book, it is easy to believe that David dedicated much of his life to its creation.

Of all the lighthouses and lightships within the United States, those of the Gulf of Mexico were, prior to this book, the least well known and appreciated. Many reasons contributed to this. The colonial powers were Spain and France and not England. Thus, access to colonial documentation was difficult. During the early republic the Gulf possessed none of those stately Federal towers which inspired the great poets. Many of the early Gulf lights were failures, victims of the soft and sandy soil. Their construction had to wait mid-19th Century technologies. So, the history of the Gulf light stations remained unchampioned until now.

The early chapters of Cipra's book are chronologically organized. David takes us back to the colonial days, carries us through the cotton boom, fights the Civil War, and reconstructs the lights following that national confrontation. David's special interest in the Civil War years is discernable. The remaining ten chapters are geographically arranged. David writes a concise history of early light stations, addressing each and every tower built on any given site. Lightships are given the attention due them as well.

David touches upon political, economic, and social issues related to the lights. What influenced their construction? Who paid the bills? What technologies permitted their construction? And who were the families and what were their lives like at these frequently remote outposts of humanity?

Lighthouse libraries will be incomplete without this fine work. This soft cover, 7" x 10", 266 page book has 63 black and white photographs, 20 drawings, and four maps. It is available through the Keeper's Locker for \$24.95 plus \$4.00 shipping and handling.



The Isle au Haut keeper's house and tower in 1990. Photo by Elliot Tayman.