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Historic Light Station Information GEORGIA

COCKSPUR ISLAND LIGHT

Location: OFF THE EASTERLY END OF COCKSPUR ISLAND, AND ON THE NORTHERLY SIDE OF THE CHANNEL PASSING TO THE SOUTHWARD OF THE ISLAND, SAVANNAH RIVER

Station Established: 1772

Year Current Tower(s) First Lit: 1857

Operational: No

Automated? No

Deactivated: 1909

Foundation Materials: Oyster Shell

Construction Materials: Brick

Tower Shape / Markings / Pattern: White conical tower

Height: 22'

Relationship to Other Structure: Separate

Original Lens: Fourth Order, Fresnel, 1857

Characteristic: Fixed white

Fog Signal:

Historical Information:

- Also known as the South Channel Light or Little Tybee Light.
- Between 1837 and 1839 a brick tower was built for use as a daymark.
- 1848 – 1st illuminated tower built.
- 1853 – Keeper Cornelius Mather capsized his boat and drowned.
- 1857 – Lighthouse rebuilt.
- 1862 – Fort Pulaski attacked by Union troops.
- 1866 – Light relit after the end of the Civil War.
- 1880 – Keeper's house struck by lightning.
- 1881 – Hurricane blew away the rest of the Keeper's house.
- 1891 – New Keeper's house built on top of Fort Pulaski.
- 1909 – Light deactivated.
- 1958 – National Park Service took over the lighthouse.
- 1960, 1978, 1996 – Tower restored by National Park Service.

Keepers:



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- John Lightburn (1849)
- Cornelius Maher (1851-1853)
- Mary Maher (1853-1856)
- Thomas Quinfiven (1856 for 4 months)
- Patrick Egan (c. 1871)
- Charles Poland (unknown)
- George Washington Martus (1881 – 1886)
- Jeremiah Keane (c. 1893)
- Charles Sisson (Asst. Keeper c. 1893)

Researched and written by Marie Vincent, a volunteer through the Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Lighthouse Society.

LITTLE CUMBERLAND ISLAND LIGHT

Location: NORTH END LITTLE CUMBERLAND ISLAND

Station Established: 1838

Year Current Tower(s) First Lit: 1838

Operational: No

Automated: No

Deactivated: 1915

Foundation Materials: Brick

Construction Materials: Brick

Tower Shape / Markings / Pattern: White tower

Height: 71'

Relationship to Other Structure: Separate

Original Lens: 14 Lamps; later a Third Order, Fresnel

Characteristic: Fixed white

Fog Signal:

Historical Information:

- The first lighthouse to mark Little Cumberland Island was built in 1820. This light was moved to Florida in 1838 and became the Amelia Island Lighthouse.
- In 1838 the current tower was completed.
- Prior to the Civil War the tower was often referred to as the St. Andrew Light because it is on St. Andrew Sound.
- During the Civil War the tower was damaged and the light was darkened as were so many other lighthouses during the conflict.



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- In 1874 a brick wall was built to surround the tower and protect it from the encroaching sea.
- In 1890 an Oil House was built near the tower and in 1896 a boathouse was added to the station.
- In 1915 the light was decommissioned and the 3rd order Fresnel lens that had been installed at some point was removed.
- In 1920 the lighthouse became privately owned. In 1961 Little Cumberland Island Association purchased the light.
- In 1968 the light was briefly relit. It was also in this year that the keepers house was destroyed.
- From 1994-1995 the interior was renovated. By 1998 exterior renovations were also completed. In August of 1998 the light was added to the National Register of Historic Places.
- The light is not open to the public.

SAPELO ISLAND LIGHT

Location: SOUTH END OF SAPELO ISLAND, NEAR DARIEN, GEORGIA

Station Established: 1820

Year Current Tower(s) First Lit: 1820

Operational? YES

Automated? UNKNOWN

Deactivated: 1998

Foundation Materials:

Construction Materials: BRICK

Tower Shape: CONICAL

Markings/Pattern: 6 RED AND WHITE BANDS

Relationship to Other Structure: SEPARATE

Original Lens: FOURTH ORDER FRESNEL

Historical Information:

- The 80 foot Sapelo Island Light was built in 1820. Originally equipped with fifteen 16-inch parabolic oil lamps on a revolving platform, a fourth order Fresnel lens was installed in 1854.
- Confederate troops removed the lens and destroyed the reflector system during the Civil War. They did not harm the tower. The tower was repaired and the light was relit in 1868.
- In October of 1898 Sapelo Island was hit by a hurricane which caused serious damage to the light tower and its foundation. Attempt to make the structure



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sound where unsuccessful. In 1905 a new 100 foot steel skeletal tower was built.

- In 1933 the skeletal was removed and sent to South Fox Island in Lake Michigan. It still stands there.
- The original 1820 tower was not dismantled. In 1997 restoration began on it. The tower was re-lit on September 6, 1998. The tower has been repainted with its noticeable 6 red and white bands.
- The tower is part of the Sapelo Island Estuarine Reserve and is open to the public. It is operational.

SAVANNAH LIGHT

Location: SAVANNAH RIVER ENTRANCE

Station Established: 1922

Year Current Tower(s) First Lit: 1964

Operational: No

Automated: Yes

Deactivated: 1996, see information listed below;

Foundation Materials: 4 Steel pilings

Construction Materials: Steel

Tower Shape / Markings / Pattern:

Relationship to Other Structure: Separate

Original Lens: DCB 24

Characteristic:

Fog Signal:

Historical Information:

- The Savannah "Texas Tower" was originally constructed and placed in operation in 1964 and was set up from the start as an automated light, controlled by the personnel at the Tybee light station.
- In 1996 it became the second "Texas Tower" to be demolished in a collision with a foreign-flagged freighter, the first instance being the Ambrose tower. In the case of the Savannah structure, the Singapore-flagged container vessel *Neptune Jade* struck the tower in November 1996. The collision sheered off and destroyed the entire structure. A buoy marked the wreckage until a salvage company, Donjon Marine Company, was contracted to retrieve the wreckage off the ocean floor for scrapping.



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ST. SIMONS ISLAND LIGHT

Location: ON THE SEACOAST OF GEORGIA, ON THE SOUTHERLY END OF ST. SIMON ISLAND, NORTHERLY SIDE OF THE ENTRANCE TO ST. SIMONS SOUND

Station Established: 1811

Year Current Tower(s) First Lit: 1872

Operational? Yes

Automated? Yes, 1954

Deactivated: n/a

Foundation Materials: Tabby

Construction Materials: Brick/Iron

Tower Shape / Markings / Pattern: White conical tower, with black lantern, attached to a two-story brick dwelling with red roof.

Height: 104'

Relationship to Other Structure: Attached

Original Lens: Third Order, Fresnel, 1872

Characteristic: Fixed white varied by flashes, alternately red and white; interval between flashes 1 minute

Fog Signal:

Historical Information:

- Apparently the only station in which a fatal shooting incident took place between employees of the Lighthouse Service. On 29 February 1880 the assistant keeper argued with the head keeper, Fred Osborne. Osborne brandished a pistol and the assistant reached for his shotgun. At a range of nearly 98 feet the assistant fired his shotgun, which was loaded with buckshot. He hit Osborne in four places and Osborne later died from his injuries. The assistant, after summoning medical assistance, turned himself in to authorities. He was later acquitted of any wrongdoing.
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TYBEE (KNOLL) CUT RANGE FRONT LIGHT

Location: ON THE NORTHERLY SIDE OF THE EASTERLY END OF LONG ISLAND, SOUTHERLY SIDE OF THE MAIN CHANNEL OF SAVANNAH RIVER

Station Established: 1878

Year Current Tower(s) First Lit: 1878

Operational:



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Automated:

Deactivated:

Tower Shape / Markings / Pattern: Lantern on white dwelling

Height: 24'

Original Lens: Sixth Order

Characteristic: Fixed white

Fog Signal:

Historical Information:

- Built to replace lightships that had been on station since 1848.
- 1881 – Lighthouse survived hurricane that wiped out a village on Cockspur Island.
- 1911 – Lighthouse renovated, repaired or rebuilt in July.
- Building was destroyed sometime after 1914.

Keepers:

- Arthur Burn (Head Keeper, sometime after 1913)

Researched and written by Marie Vincent, a volunteer through the Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Lighthouse Society.

TYBEE ISLAND LIGHT

Location: SAVANNAH RIVER ENTRANCE, NORTHEASTERLY END OF TYBEE ISLAND

Station Established: 1736

Year Current Tower(s) First Lit: 1867

Operational: Yes

Automated: Yes, 1972

Deactivated: n/a

Foundation Materials: Dressed stone/timber

Construction Materials: Brick

Tower Shape / Markings / Pattern: Octagonal brick tower; lower 50 feet black, upper part white; lantern, black

Height: 144'

Relationship to Other Structure: Separate

Original Lens: Oil lamps, 1791; First Order, Fresnel, 1867



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Characteristic: Fixed white

Fog Signal:

Historical Information:

Tybee Light was under construction by the State of Georgia when that State became part of the Federal Union in 1788. The lighthouse was believed to have been ceded to the Federal Government in December 1791, although no records to substantiate this are available. In 1791 it appears that the tower was in commission under a keeper named Higgins and that spermaceti candles were being used in the lantern.

In 1838 the lighthouse was described as being "a fixed light, 15 lamps, 15-inch reflectors. Height of lantern above the sea, 100 feet. Height of tower from base to lantern, 95 feet." The light was refitted with 16-inch reflectors in 1841. In 1857 the light was renovated and fitted with a second-order lens. In 1862, during the Civil War, the interior of the tower and the lantern were destroyed by fire and the lens was removed. By 1865, the beacon had been relighted but not the main light.

In 1866, \$20,000 and, in 1867, \$34,443 more, was appropriated for rebuilding the tower and keeper's dwelling. "The work was progressing satisfactorily" the Lighthouse Board reports "until the 18th of July 1866, when all labor was interrupted by panic among the workmen, caused by the arrival of a detachment of U. S. troops on the island, with cholera prevailing among them. The foreman in charge of the work, and four of the mechanics died of the epidemic and the work was suspended. The troops, while on the island, did much damage to the lighthouse establishment; an additional appropriation for this work is therefore desired."

Tybee Light had formerly been a second-class station but in reestablishing it, it was made into a first-order light, having a focal plane 150 feet above the sea. "When the rebels extinguished the light" the Lighthouse Board reported in 1867, "they attempted to destroy the old tower by fire, but without complete success, and it was found that a considerable part of it could be used. It was consequently torn down to the proper point, and the new masonry carried up from there to the requisite height." The new light was first exhibited October 1, 1867. The old tower had been finished in wood. The new one consisted of masonry and metal only and was completely fireproof.

In 1869 Tybee beacon was moved back 165 feet as the site was threatened "by washings of every gale." In 1871 gales, which had caused great damage along the southern coast, had so greatly damaged the lighthouse tower as to render it unsafe "and require the speedy erection of a new tower." The tower was reported cracked and liable to fall at any time. "Its great age (78 years), the frequent necessary repairs to it



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during the time it has been standing, and its total neglect during the war of the rebellion, render it impossible to properly repair the present tower.

The encroachment of the sea upon the southerly point of Tybee Island made it necessary to remove the front beacon, a skeleton frame structure, and set it back 400 feet on a new foundation in 1873. It had to be moved still farther back in 1879. Between 1871 and 1879 the recommendations for a new structure were repeated annually by the Lighthouse Board. In 1879 the Board reported "During the September 1878 gale, the tower vibrated to an alarming extent and the cracks, which had been pointed up, opened and extended." Nothing, however, was ever done to replace the structure and it stands today as it was rebuilt in 1867.

In 1884 the illuminating apparatus was changed to burn mineral instead of lard oil. The earthquake of August 1886 extended the cracks in the tower but not to any dangerous extent. The quake displaced the lens and broke the attachments to its upper ring.

Historical Chronology:

- 1736: The first lighthouse, a wooden tower, on Tybee Island, was built.
- 1741, August: The first light was washed away by a storm.
- 1742, March: The second lighthouse, made of stone and wood, was finished.
- 1768 The building of a third lighthouse was authorized.
- 1773: The third lighthouse was completed. This brick lighthouse with wooden stairs was 100 feet tall.
- 1790 The lighthouse and its property were ceded to the Federal Government.
- 1857: A 2nd order Fresnel lens was installed.
- 1861: Confederate troops set fire to the light to prevent its use by Federal troops during the Civil War. Union forces watched rebel troops at the nearby Fort Pulaski using the damaged tower.
- 1866: Anew brick and cast iron lighthouse was authorized. The lower sixty feet of the previous light was used as the foundation for the new 154 foot tall tower equipped with a 1st order Fresnel lens.
- 1867, October 1: The new light was first lit.
- 1933: The fuel to light the lamp in the lens was converted from kerosene to electricity.
- 1939: The USCG took over operations at the light until 1987.
- 1987: The USCG moved their operations to Cockspur Island.
- 2002: The Tybee Island Historical Society operates the lighthouse. The octagonal brick tower now rises 145 feet above ground and 144 feet above water, exhibiting a fixed white electric light of 70,000 candlepower from a first-order lens visible for 18 miles. The public is able to climb the 178 steps to the



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top of the light. Restoration of several buildings on the site is currently underway.

Chronology was researched and written by Diane Hackney.
