



U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

Historic Light Station Information **ALABAMA**

MOBILE BAY / "MIDDLE BAY" LIGHT

Location: MOBILE HARBOR/MOBILE BAY

Station Established: 1885

Year Current Tower(s) First Lit: 1885

Operational: No

Automated: Yes, in 1935

Deactivated: 1967

Foundation Materials: Screw piling with platform

Construction Materials: Wood

Tower Shape: Hexagonal without lantern

Markings/Pattern: White dwelling with red piles

Height: 41'

Relationship to Other Structure: Integral

Original Lens: Fourth Order, 1885

Characteristic: Fixed white varied by a red flash every 30 seconds

Fog Signal: Bell struck by machinery every 5 seconds

Historical Information:

- The station was activated in 1885.
- 1916 was a busy year. The keeper's wife gave birth to a baby that summer at the station. According to the Alabama Lighthouse Association web site the keeper brought a milk cow to the station and corralled it on a section of the lower deck because his wife was unable to nurse the newborn baby. All had to be evacuated when the station survived but was damaged by a hurricane that year.
- The light was automated in 1935.
- Lighthouse was deactivated in 1967.
- In 1984 the lighthouse was stabilized by Middle Bay Light Centennial Commission in preparation for the centennial celebration.
- Mobile Middle Bay Lighthouse was placed on National Register of Historic Places in 1985. Reference #74000429
- In 1996 the Coast Guard loaned the Fresnel lens from the lighthouse to the Ft. Morgan Museum for public display.
- In 2002 restoration efforts were begun to repair the light.



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MOBILE POINT RANGE LIGHTS

RELOCATED FROM MOBILE BAY ENTRANCE

Station Established: 1821

Year Current Tower(s) First Lit: 1873

Operational? NO

Automated? NO

Deactivated: 1966

Foundation Materials: CONCRETE

Construction Materials: IRON

Tower Shape: SKELETAL

Height: 49'

Markings/Pattern: BLACK

Relationship to Other Structure: SEPARATE

Original Lens: FOURTH ORDER, FRESNEL 1858

Characteristic: Fixed red

Fog Signal:

Historical Information:

- The station was first established in 1821, but the history of the station between then and the 1873 is hard to come by. Photos indicate the original lights to be conical stone towers.
- An Iron skeletal tower was built in 1873 and originally had a red fourth order Fresnel lens installed.
- The lighthouse was deactivated in 1966 and lens was put on display in Fort Morgan Museum. A radio style skeletal tower was built to replace the original structure. The new tower stands 120 feet and was painted red and white.
- The 1873 tower was dismantled in 1979 and later restored near the entrance to Fort Morgan.
- In 1981 a DCB 24 optic was installed in the replacement tower.
- According to the web site coastlights.com, in 2004 the State of Alabama dismantled the original light that had been restored near the entrance to Fort Morgan and stored it in a warehouse. It is currently in storage awaiting restoration efforts.

SAND ISLAND LIGHT



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Location: Off Mobile Point south of Fort Morgan

Station Established: 1838

Year Current / Last Tower(s) First Lit: 1873

Operational: No

Automated: Yes, 1921

Deactivated: 1933

Foundation Materials: Stone

Construction Materials: Brownstone

Tower Shape: Conical

Height: 131'

Markings/Pattern: Unpainted Gothic tower with black lantern

Relationship to Other Structure: Separate

Original Lens: 1838: 14 lamps with 16-inch reflectors; 1859: First order Fresnel lens; 1862-63: Fourth order Fresnel lens; 1873: Second order Fresnel lens, now at the Fort Morgan Museum.

Characteristic: Fixed white

Fog Signal: Bell struck by machinery every 20 seconds.

Historical Information:

- In 1837 the building of Sand Island Light was approved and \$10,000 was authorized for the building of Alabama's only seacoast light. The tower was designed by Winslow Lewis and was completed in 1838. Construction came in under budget costing \$8,899.00. The lens consisted of 14 lamps with 16-inch reflectors. John McCloud was installed as the first Keeper.
- First tower was replaced in 1859 under supervision of Danville Ledbetter an Army Engineer. This was then the tallest lighthouse built on the Gulf Coast. A first order Fresnel lens was installed.
- The lighthouse was intentionally destroyed in 1863 by Confederate soldiers when it was discovered that Union soldiers were using the tower as a lookout to spy on Fort Morgan.
- From 1864 to 1873 a temporary wooden structure was used which displayed a fourth order lens.
- Current tower was completed and lit in 1873. The same plans used in the Currituck Lighthouse were also used for construction of this one. A second order Fresnel lens was installed.
- In 1889 1,600 tons of granite was placed around the tower as rip rap to fight erosion that was washing away the Island.
- In the 1903 Light List, the "Description of Station" reads: "Black conical tower; white dwelling with green blinds, on pile foundation 768 feet N. by WE. 3/4 W. from tower. Square, white, pyramidal fog-bell tower about 470 feet N. by W. 1/4 W. from the light-tower. Rear light on the middle of the ridge of the roof of the



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keepers' dwelling." At this time the station was a range, with the tall tower being the front range light and the rear beacon was a 35 foot tower that was 768 feet North by West 3/4 West in the rear. Ships approaching the area noted "The rear light should be kept open just to the westward of the light tower."

- In September 1906 a hurricane struck. The tower withstood the hurricane but Assistant Keeper Andrew Hansen, his wife and another Keeper's wife were killed. The surviving Keeper had gone ashore a few days prior to the storm. The storm destroyed the two story keeper's house.
- A second hurricane struck in 1919. None of the Keeper's survived this second storm. The log indicated they had gone to pick up a second assistant Keeper and it was thought they must all have been caught in the storm.
- The light was automated in 1921.
- Deactivated in 1933.
- In 1971 the second order Fresnel lens was removed from the lighthouse and is on display at the Fort Morgan Museum.
- In 1973 the Keeper's house rebuilt in 1925 burned down.
- In November of 1975 the light was added to the National Register of Historic Places.
- Lighthouse is owned by the town of Dauphin Island. Efforts have begun to preserve the structure.

Note:

Much of the historical information included on this page was provided by Ms. Anne Puppa of the Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Lighthouse Society and we are grateful for her efforts.
