

Loggerhead Key Lighthouse, Dry Tortugas, Florida

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- 1838** Ship America wrecked near the Dry Tortugas LH on Garden [Bush] Key. Source: 161.
- 1838** July 7, 1838: Determine if expedient to have two lighthouses as a substitute for the Bush Key lighthouse. Reply is in Source: C-102, p.115: Survey by Capt L. Rousseau, letter dated October 29, 1838. "I can see no advantage to be derived from placing a light at East key, and one at Loggerhead key in lieu of the present one on Bush key; which latter I believe to be the most suitable site for a light-house. I would recommend that the height of the present light-house be increased thirty feet." Source: 1 and C -102, p.115.
- 1849** Collector at Key West, S.R. Mallory, in letter to A. D. Bache, Supt of USCS recommended lighthouse at Loggerhead Key, Dec. 28, 1849. Source: C-88, p.13.
- 1871** [1851? Check.] Keeper R. H. Thompson, assistants William Taylor, Jeremiah Buckley. Pay \$820, \$460 and \$460. Some of the highest pay in service. Source: 85.
- 1853** Letter from Lieutenant George G. Meade, Corps of Topographical Engineers, to LHBoard, October 26, 1853: "A day beacon is wanted on one of the outer shoals of the Tortugas, which is at such a distance from the light on Garden key, that navigators should have their attention called to it before getting too near." Source: AR53, p.258,259.
- 1855** Captain Horatio Wright of the Corps of Engineers admitted his innocence in the lighthouse-building trade. His experiments showed that a tall tower could be built here with almost no settlement into the sand, but he worried about undermining of the base not by sea action but by rats and crabs, which he felt could burrow under unless a wide grillage foundation were laid. Pensacola or Mobile bricks should be used "as it is believed they will resist the action of the sea air, whilst many kinds of northern bricks are known to yield." Exterior diameters should be 30 feet at bottom and 15 feet at top. Deck 146 feet above foundation and 150 feet above sea level. Walls six feet thick at base and two feet thick at top. Should use old keeper's house on Garden Key. Note that all this appears to be a plan for a lighthouse on Garden Key, not on Loggerhead. He estimated that the project would cost \$35,806.25, including a \$10,000 lens and \$5,000 lantern. Source: Nat Archives clips.
- 1855** LHBoard estimates \$35,000 required for "rebuilding the light-house at Dry Tortugas and fitting it with first-order apparatus." Source: AR55, p.274.
- 1855** In 1855 Fort Jefferson under construction. Brick tower built at Loggerhead Key and lighted 1858. Source: 11, p.215.
- 1856** Act of August 18, 1856, authorized \$35,000.00. Plans in preparation. Source: 97, p.611.
- 1856** Construction will be commenced as soon as materials can be procured. \$35,000 available; plans in preparation. Source: AR56, p.601,611.
- 1857** Light List. Under construction. Fixed first order. Source: Nat Archives clips.
- 1858** Built 2-5/8 miles WNW of Dry Tortugas Harbor. Source: LL1907, p.217.
- 1858** Date for filing only; undated doct, c.1858. Natural brick color on southernmost key in Tortugas group. Source: Descriptive List of Lighthouses, Nat Archives, c.1858.
- 1858** Built in 1858 to relieve Dry Tortugas LH. 152 feet above sea level. Source: 3.
- 1858** Light List. On Loggerhead Key, Southwesternmost of Dry Tortugas Group. 24-37-20N x 82-55-10N. One light, fixed, first order, viz 20. Brick-color tower, 150 feet. FP 152 feet above sea level. Dwelling two-story brick, a little south of tower. Island 700 feet wide, one mile long, running NE to SW. Source: LL1858, p.108,109.
- 1858** Entry in Receipts and Expenditures, 1858: "For rebuilding the light-house on a proper site at Dry Tortugas, Florida" \$1,788.88. Source: 68, p.37.

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- 1858** Completed. Source: AR58, p.5.
- 1858** [Putnam] Dry Tortugas on Loggerhead Key was brick lighthouse, 157 feet in height [total to top of lantern?] built 1858. Source: 4, p.110.
- 1859** One keeper @ \$550, two assistants @ \$300. Source: 76-61, p.123.
- 1860** Rather interesting affair is described in a series of letters in National Archives Seventh District Inspector letters, July 1859-June 1860. Approx date of letters is 8 June 1860. Describe how eldest daughter of keeper is engaged to assistant keeper and frequently assists him in tending the light at night. Wife of keeper apparently attacked her husband with a carving knife; had been jailed once for attacking her first husband and was divorced for being a shrew. Husband accused of being a "brutish" man whose victim was his wife. Keeper Kerr. Source: NA Letters from 7th District Inspector.
- 1861** Keeper B. H. Kerr, assistants William Bates and W. Roberts. Source: 85.
- 1862** 01 August 1862. Robert H. Thompson appointed keeper vice James P. Lightburn, resigned.
- 1862** Keeper B. H. Kerr, assistants William Bates and W. Roberts. Source: 85.
- 1865** Light List. On Loggerhead Key, southwesternmost of the Tortugas group. 27-27-20N x 82-55-10W. Fixed, viz 20. Brick circular 150-foot tower; brick keeper dwelling two stories high just a little south of tower. Focal plane above sea level 152 feet. First order lens. Built 1858. Island bordered all around by cedar bushes. Source: LL1865.
- 1865** Keeper Robert H. Thompson, assistant John Thompson and John Trow. Source: 85.
- 1866** Thorough and extensive renovations and repairs. Source: AR66, p.219.
- 1866** 24-37-20N x 82-55-10W. Fixed, first order, viz 20. Brick. Base 150 to focal plane. Sea level 152 to focal plane. Source: LL1866, p.56-57.
- 1867** Keepers same as 1865. Source: 85.
- 1868** Heavy rains of climate wearing away mortar. "Much of the mortar on the south and southwest sides is washed out, in some places to the depth of nearly half an inch." Source: AR68, p.57.
- 1868** Light List. On LHKey, SWernmost of Tortugas group. Fixed first order, viz 20. Brick tower. Focal plane 150 feet above base, 152 above sea level. Circular tower, 150 feet high. Keeper dwelling two stories, of brick, a little to the south of the tower. Key nearly one mile in length, bordered with cedar bushes. Source: LL1868.
- 1869** Light List. Same as 1868. Source: LL1869.
- 1869** Rigid quarantine at Fort Jefferson has prevented repointing of mortar. Needs to be painted with white and black bands from base to lantern to improve appearance as daymark. Repairs to be made in August after mosquito season. Source: AR69, p.54.
- 1873** Badly damaged in hurricane of 1873. Lighthouse Board asked for new light but repaired the old one before a new one could be built. Top nine feet below lantern rebuilt. Shortly afterward, another hurricane swept through; repaired tower withstood so well that a new tower was considered unnecessary. Downgraded to Second Order lens. Source: 3.

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- 1873** Buildings and tower damaged in hurricane of October 1873. Temporary repairs made. Tower should be rebuilt in dangerous condition. Probable cost would be \$150,000. LHBoard asks \$100,000 to start work. Source: AR74, p.58.
- 1873** Keeper Thomas Moore, assistant James Martin. \$820 and \$465. Source: 85.
- 1874** "The buildings and tower of this station, which were seriously damaged in the hurricane of October, 1873, have been temporarily repaired. The tower is considered to be in a dangerous condition and should be rebuilt. It will probably cost \$150,000. An appropriation of \$100,000 is asked to commence the work." Source: AR74.
- 1875** James A. Lockhart, second assistant. Source: 85.
- 1875** Act of March 3, 1875, made \$75,000 available to start work. Upper portions unsafe in high winds. Top 8-9 feet of tower rebuilt. Anchors of lantern (rods) extended downward through entire 150-foot structure. [This would make it a ferro-reinforced brick tower.] This was done by cutting out masonry in vertical sections, replacing each section before removing the next. Received black and white paint bands. Misc repairs to station. Will carefully examine the area for a site for a new foundation. Source: AR75, p.54.
- 1875** Hurricane September 1875 badly damaged somewhat, but not seriously. Appropriation of March 1875 for \$75,000 for new tower "deferred in the hope that it might not be found necessary. Owing to the isolated location, the engineer has had no opportunity of observing the present tower in high winds." Keepers report great vibrations which injure masonry. Plans for new tower still proceeding, however. Source: AR76, p.43.
- 1877** Proposes to make further examinations of damage done by 1875 hurricane. Source: AR77, p.36.
- || **1875** Light List. Same as LL1880. Source: LL1875.
- 1877** Assistant keepers Joseph C. Fontane and Rudolph Wentzel. Source: 85.
- 1879** Assistant keepers John J. Larner and Josephus Packer. Source: 85.
- || **1880** Light List. Fixed white. Tower white/black, 150 ft. FP 152 above sea level, 1st order, viz 19. Refitted 1875. Source: LL1880.
- 1881** Keeper Robert H. Thompson, assistants Frank W. Knight and William A. Bethel. Source: 85.
- || **1883** Light List. Same as 1880. Source: LL1883.
- 1883** James A. Roberts replaced Bethel. Source: 85.
- 1884** New mineral oil lamps installed. Source: AR84.
- 1885** Keeper Robert H. Thompson, assistants William A. Bethel and Charles A. Robert. Source: 85.
- 1887** Keeper still Thompson, assistants now Charles A. Roberts and Louis Italy, who later went to DTHarbor. Source: 85.
- 1888** Light List. Fixed white, viz 18.5 miles. Conical tower, lower half white, upper black. Oil room and dwelling of yellow brick. First Order. Source: LL1888, p.68-69.
- 1889** Keeper George R. Billberry, assistants John Watkins and Calvin L. Park. Source: 85.
- 1891** Park replaced Watkins; Henry Johnson replaced Park. Source: 85.

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- 1893** Red sector placed in lens bearing ENE toward Florida Bay. To warn of shallow bay waters and safe turning point. Done April 30, 1893. Source: AR93, p.16.
- 1896** Put up 728 feet of wire fence. [Note: this was a desert island. The lighthouse keepers were the only living beings around, except for the turtles from which the island's name was derived. Only a low fence would have been needed to keep these benign creatures out of the way.] Source: AR96, p.106.
- 1897** Samuel L. Lowe replaced Park. Note that there is a George E. Billberry at Alligator Reef lighthouse. Source: 85.
- 1901** Characteristic change on November 1, 1901. No indication of what the change was. Note that lens may have been downgraded to Second Order, unless this was accomplished earlier. Source: AR1902, p.16.
- 1901** Light List. Fixed white first order. Same in 1903. The characteristic change was temporary. Source: LL1901, 1903.
- 1903** Keeper George R. Billberry, assistants Lucius H. Deason and Harry B. Lester. Source: 85.
- 1905** The keeper finally got some neighbors besides his fellow employees. This year, the Carnegie Biological Laboratory was granted a site for laboratory buildings on the island. Source: AR05.
- 1905** Keeper Billberry, assistants Willard R. Johnson and Henry A. Keyes. Source: 85.
- 1910** Converted to Incandescent Oil Vapor. Source: AR10, p.48.
- 1913** Crew: Keeper, E.J. Russell; first assistant, H. M. Roberts; second assistant, C. Johnson. Brought captain and crew of wrecked schooner to light house for aid. Source: AR13, p.66.
- 1914** Keeper Edgar J. Russell; First Assistant Holton M. Roberts; Second Assistant Theophilus Sawyer. Brought crew of disabled ship to station, took captain to Key West. Source: AR14, p.65.
- 1916** Light List. Flash white at 151 ft, viz 19. Candlepower 370,000. Source: LL1916, 1919.
- 1916** Coast Pilot. Conical tower, lower half white, upper half black. Flashing white light visible for one second every 20 seconds. 151 feet above water and visible 19 miles. Source: 91.
- 1917** Old wharf destroyed in hurricane of July 5, 1916. Was on east side of reservation. 140-foot wharf, ten foot-wide with landing platform at end of dock, measuring 20 ft x 3 ft. Completed by hired labor in May 1917 at cost of \$2,631.19. (\$2,800 allotted.) Source: AR17, p.84.
- 1919** Keeper Charles Johnson, Assistant Robert J. Fine, pulled schooner off rock with station motorboat, towed to Garden Key. Source: AR19, p.61.
- 1920** \$6,500 authorized for a two-family dwelling. No progress made, since no technical assistance could be hired at any cost. Made repairs to roof of old dwelling. Source: AR20, p.47, repeated AR21.
- 1922** Dwelling started. Estimate to be completed by December 31, 1922. Source: AR22, p.43.
- 1922** On March 22, 1922, materials for dwelling ordered and on barge for delivery to island. In June arrived on scene with construction party. Source: 41, v.2, p.223,234.
- 1923** Dwelling 90 percent completed. Needs interior trimming work done. One-story, seven-room bungalow measuring 32 x 50 feet. Cost \$6,498. Source: AR23, p.42.
- 1931** September 1, 1931 became the most powerful lighthouses in America with three million candlepower due to electric light being installed. By comparison, the original colza-oil lamp produced about 400 candlepower; typical

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incandescent oil vapor produced about 12,000. A LH in New Jersey had been the most powerful with 1,100,000 CP. Source: 165.

1947 Light List. Second order flashing white, electric. Source: LL1947, 1951.

1988 Light List. Flash white at 151 feet, viz 28. Lower half white upper black. Source: LL1988.

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