

Woods Hole Historical Collection
P.O. Box 185
Woods Hole, MA 02543

REGISTER
TARPAULIN COVE LIGHTHOUSE
1896-1930

1 box

TARPAULIN COVE LIGHTHOUSE

HISTORY

Tarpaulin Cove is located on Naushon Island which is part of the Elizabeth Islands. The current lighthouse is a registered national historical site; the structure is considered an excellent example from the great age of lighthouse design and construction in the late 19th Century. It is also the only standing lighthouse in the Town of Gosnold.

The first Tarpaulin Cove Light was built and operated by Zaccheus Lumbert from 1759 to 1864 who also kept a tavern at the cove. In the 18th and 19th Centuries, the Vineyard Sound was a busy and a dangerous channel with many dangerous currents and shoals. Lighthouses were very important for navigation in those days. The Tarpaulin Cove Lighthouse was the fourth lighthouse built on the east coast of the American colonies.

After Mr. Lumbert gave up the tavern and the lighthouse in 1764, various other tavern keepers maintained the light until 1818 when the U.S. government bought it. The powerful interests on the Island opposed the government acquisition of the lighthouse and there was an eleven year delay between appropriation of funds and action in 1818. Finally in 1817, Massachusetts ceded land for the lighthouse and the U.S. government bought the land for \$216 and began construction (\$6,062). The tower, thirty eight feet high and nineteen feet in diameter at the base, and the keepers house were of rubble stone. The lamps were 80 feet above the sea and the fixed white light had a range of thirteen miles. By 1842, an inspection report found the buildings to be in partial or complete ruin and require rebuilding. The tower leaked and the keeper had to chip ice off the stairwell in winter. The well was dry. In 1845 permission was granted to dig a new well.

It was not until 1888 until something was done about the leaky stone house of 1818. It was replaced with a new two story house at a cost of \$3000. In 1891, a new brick tower, twenty eight feet in height, took its place. A 1200 pound fog bell and bell tower were installed.

After the light was automated in 1941, the house and other buildings fell into disrepair and were torn down in 1962. The Fresnel lens was replaced by a modern optic.

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SCOPE NOTE

This box contains photographs, correspondence, and records of purchases and acquisitions from the Tarpaulin Lighthouse as well as a number of US forms and instructions from various U.S. government agencies which would be applicable to lighthouse keepers.

Two photographs taken by Baldwin Coolidge in 1896 show the light house and the residence.

The records in this box cover the years 1918 to 1930 include:

Original Documents - Multiple orders for supplies and services for the lighthouse. Order forms include description of articles, quantity and price for such items as cement, rope, wicks, paint, engine parts, rowing dory, hardware, supplies, gasoline (to the Woods Hole Garage 20 gallons at \$.27 a gallon), and a wide variety of other items.

A notice from the U.S. Civil Service Commission warning employees that they are forbidden to take an active part in political campaigns.

A number of generic memos and notices from the Lighthouse Service of the Department of Commerce on the proper forms to use for employees injured on the job, instructions for using the Lighthouse Service Technical and Scientific Books, identifying hospitals, physicians, and relief stations, Certificate for Lost (Lighthouse Service) Property, and regulations as the leaves of absence of lighthouse keepers (stating that "there is reason to believe that a considerable amount of laxity in this respect has existed...and notice that no leniency will be shown..in the future..").

"Keepers Annual Requisition" (Form 36) from the Department of Commerce, Lighthouse Service, Tarpaulin Cove Light Station for the years 1917, 1921, 1923, 1927, 1930, 1933. Form 36 lists articles and supplies which may be requested. Form (Book) is prepared in duplicate and one copy forward to District Office. Certificate on inside of back cover asks Keeper to certify that expenditures were actually made. In another folder is a 1901 pamphlet listing the "Allowances to Light Stations" which itemizes each and every item that should be in a light house. From 6 pencils, 10 pounds of putty, brushes, paints, fog bells, and one rowboat of proper size,, completely equipped.

Directions for Operating Incandescent Oil Vapor Lamp, 35 MM, Type B, Single Tank with Type C Pump, Arrangement and Instructions, dated September 1915.

Map of Nantucket, updated. Annotated: "Heavy Lines indicate Macadam road".

Chart of Cuttyhunk Harbor and Penikese Island, No. 297, June 1939 by the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey.

The 1917 Submarine Silhouette Book showing shapes and photographs of German Submarines and a copy of the form which was to be used to "Report Warships, Armed Merchant Vessels, and all Other Suspicious Vessels of Whatever Nationality" which was to be forwarded to the Office of Naval Intelligence, Navy Department.

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BOX 1

General Histories (2): “The Tarpaulin Cove Lighthouse” monograph from the Cuttyhunk Historical Society, spring 2001, 4 pages and handwritten (by John Valois c. 2006?) early history (1759).

Photographs. Tarpaulin Cove Lighthouse and Bell by Baldwin Coolidge, August 1896. Page proofs from *New England Views, The Photography of Baldwin Coolidge 1845-1928*, pages 76 and 77.

Tarpaulin Cove Lighthouse: Allowances of Light Stations (1901), “Length of Nights” Book (1917), Submarine Silhouette Book (1917), and “Report of Warships, Armed Merchant Vessels, and all Other Suspicious Vessels of Whatever Nationality (no date).

Tarpaulin Cove Lighthouse: Map of Nantucket, Directions for operating incandescent lamp (1915), and map of Cuttyhunk (no date).

Tarpaulin Cove Lighthouse: Keepers Annual Requisition for years 1917, 1921, 1923, 1927, 1930, 1933 – Station inventories.

6. Tarpaulin Cove Lighthouse: 1919 – 1931 invoices for sales and services and correspondence.
7. Tarpaulin Cove Lighthouse: Correspondence - 1921 – 1925.
8. Tarpaulin Cove Lighthouse: 1924 – 1932 invoices for sales and services.
9. Tarpaulin Cove Lighthouse: Miscellaneous

Battery Oil Bottle. Donated by Nick Witzell, Accession Number 98 – 31.

Tarpaulin Cove Lighthouse Wick holder for the Light found on the beach at Tarpaulin Cove. Donated by Martin Bartlett. Accession Number 99-11.