



PROSPECT HARBOR LIGHTHOUSE

Information found in Historical Researches of Gouldsboro indicates the first lighthouse in Prospect Harbor was "built in 1847, rebuilt in 1867 and again built in 1891." No explanation was given for the necessity to rebuild at the 20- and then 24-year dates.

In a Bangor Daily News article by John Stephens, another source, Barbara Riley, indicates the U.S. Government bought the land the lighthouse occupies from J. Wilson Godfrey (a Gouldsboro merchant) for \$150.00. The same article claims that the first light was built in 1850 and rebuilt in 1891.

The most recent refurbishing took place in the spring of 2000. The Coast Guard completed the renovations at a cost of \$15,000 - a little more than twice the \$6,250 which the 1891 rebuilding is reported to have cost.

Along with the tower, the site included a cottage, a boat house, and a whale oil storage shed. The cottage and tower were connected by a breezeway at one point in time. However, daughters of Ambrose Wasgatt (light keeper for 34 years) related that sometimes heavy storms in conjunction with high tides converted the lighthouse point into an island; thus, one could assume the breezeway did not last many years of such exposure.

The first lighthouse was reportedly made of stone. The cottage was remembered by those who lived there as a pleasant, comfortable home. Many guests at the lighthouse enjoyed playing croquet on a course set up on the grounds. An Open House day was held every year which included a "boathouse" supper. Long tables were set up in the boathouse and loaded with food for all who had come to visit the lighthouse. Open House day is still held, however, the boathouse supper is no longer a feature of that special day.

Ambrose Wasgatt (mentioned above) was a Civil War veteran. Each year during his tenure he invited the local chapter of the G.A.R. to spend a day at the light. They always brought a band and put on a concert in front of the lighthouse. This was followed by speeches, hymn singing and a lobster and clam bake.

World War I had lighthouse men on the lookout for German U-boats. The Coast Guard stationed a wigwag man (one who had special training in the art of using signal flags) at the Prospect Harbor lighthouse.

The present light atop the 38-foot tower casts a red beam for seven miles and a white beam for nine miles. The original Fresnel lens, which was removed in 1951, was three or four times larger than the present lantern which is about the size of a large hatbox. Light for the old lighthouse was originally provided by an oil-burning lamp, vented through a hole in the roof. In the earliest days, the light was turned by means of a windup mechanism which had to be wound every two hours throughout the day and night.

Some of the lighthouse keepers were: P. Stevens, John Royal, Horatio Allen, A. M Wasgatt and Floyd E. Singer.

The Prospect Harbor lighthouse was turned over to the Coast Guard in 1938. The light tower itself is still under U.S. Coast Guard jurisdiction, and both the cottage and the tower are on the State Historic Register.

Sources of information:

Historical Researches of Gouldsboro, published by Daughters of Liberty, Gouldsboro, Maine, W.H. Sherman Press, Bar Harbor, Maine, 1904.

"Lighthouse At Prospect Harbor, Deserted, Remembers Full Life", by Jonas Crane in The Ellsworth American, Sept. 3 edition, 1957.

"Prospect Harbor Lighthouse", by John Stephens in the Bangor Daily News, Friday, May 31, 1966 edition.

"Prospect Harbor Light Gets A Facelift", by Anne Porter in The Ellsworth American, Thursday, April 27, 2000 edition.