



# LIGHTHOUSE NEWS

DEDICATED TO THE  
UNITED STATES LIGHTHOUSE ESTABLISHMENT

Volume XVIII Number 4  
Winter 2012

## Bodie Island Lighthouse Restoration Nears Completion

by Cheryl Shelton-Roberts



*Judy Moon captured the Bodie Island Lighthouse in November 2012. The lantern room area is no longer covered and major cleanup is obvious at ground level. Scaffolding will come down during November and December and the first-order Fresnel lens will go back into the lantern room in February. A relighting ceremony is planned for spring 2013.*

Bodie Island is the site of three lighthouses, two sites are now in Oregon Inlet. Why did Bodie Island rate so many lighthouses? And why has the 1872 lighthouse earned millions in restoration funding?

John Gaskill lived at the Bodie Island Light Station for many years during the 1920s and '30s and helped his father, Keeper Vernon Gaskill, Sr. with his duties. John tells us in clear terms of the importance of this light to maritime trade before the advent of radio navigation:

“Bodie Island Light was one of the most significant lights on the East Coast. It signaled southbound ships sailing close to shore and cruising towards Hatteras to turn out to sea. If a captain didn't heed the light's warning, his ship would wreck on Diamond Shoals about 35 miles south.”

The lighthouse was completed in 1872 by supervisor of construction, Dexter Stetson. Stetson was a fine, New England builder who came on board with the U.S. Lighthouse Service to complete the tallest brick lighthouse in North America at Cape Hatteras. When Hatteras was complete, Stetson moved extra materials, workhouse, blacksmith, and brick layers to Bodie Island. This was the second of the country's finest tall coastal lighthouses built during the Golden Age of Lighthouses that lasted roughly during the years post-Civil War until the 1890s.

This significance afforded the light station Historic Register status, which became a boost towards its restoration—evenually, that is. The Outer Banks Lighthouse Society (OBLHS) began working for its rescue as well as retainment of the first-order Fresnel lens back in 1994. The first step toward saving this lighthouse, which was literally falling apart, came on July 13, 2000, with ownership of the lighthouse being transferred from the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) to the National Park Service (NPS) as provided in the National Historic Lighthouse Preserva-

tion Act of 2000. The next and critically important step came when the U.S. Coast Guard transferred the Fresnel lens and the operation of the lamp as an active aid to navigation to the NPS April 25, 2005.

These were the needed ingredients for this lighthouse's recovery. The missing item to a successful recipe? Money.

Then, the exciting news finally came:

During 2009-10, the federal Omnibus Budget Bill included long-sought after funding for repair and replacement of ironwork as well as repair of masonry and stone, treatment of floors and other interior work. Funds already in hand would aid in the restoration of the first-order Fresnel lens. Additionally, the 1879 Bodie Island Life-Saving Station, 1916 boathouse, and 1925 U.S. Coast Guard Station were relocated from their oceanfront sites at Coquina Beach to the west side of U.S. Highway 12 at the entrance of the Bodie Island Light Station. That was it! Things were really looking up. But, then, bad news came.

Work on the lighthouse had to be halted for several months during the latter part of 2011 and early 2012. Funds had been exhausted on planned restoration work; however, unplanned, needed repairs were mandatory at the gallery deck level. The Park called this the end to Phase I.



*John Gaskill served as a volunteer at the Bodie Island Lighthouse where he grew up during the 1920s and '30s. His father was keeper at this light from 1919 until 1939. Tens of thousands of visitors over recent years left with more than just a snapshot of the tower, thanks to John who shared stories of growing up at one of America's most important lighthouses. Turning 97 in February 2013, he vows to see completion of the restoration project.*

## Restoration Today

During the second phase of this restoration project, scaffolding again enveloped the tower during most of 2012. The signature white shroud capped the lighthouse and hid the lantern room area from view. Work began in earnest. And here's where we stand today:

- The lantern-room cover has been removed from the top of the lighthouse.
- Eight additional brackets are complete; all sixteen support iron brackets are in place and welded at the gallery deck level. The NPS stated that they will not be noticeable to anyone at ground level and they will not detract from views at upper window areas.
- Both exterior and interior surfaces of the lighthouse have been painted.
- New windows have been installed.

- Lighting within the tower is complete.
- There is a new cedar shake roof and copper flashing on the oil house; this returns the tower to its original 1872 appearance.
- The cable installed after pieces of the iron corbel below the gallery deck fell in 2004 will remain in place as added support. The most stress is focused where the iron collar of the lantern room sits on the brickwork.
- Final inspection of the restoration work went well November 15, and after a little more painting, the scaffolding will be disassembled, expected to be completed before the end of November 2012.
- The first-order Fresnel lens is planned to be returned to the lantern room in February. The Lighthouse Lamp Shop team is on standby to accomplish this.

- The Park has established that approximately 350 people will be allowed to climb each day. The Park is charged with maintaining the historic fabric of the stairs, which means restricted stress on these stairs.
- Tickets to climb will be sold in the north portion of the keepers' quarters.
- Tickets to climb can be ordered online where a specific day/time can be reserved.
- 80% of climbing fees will stay within the Park; 20% will go to parks that do not charge fees including Fort Raleigh. Fees will help with funding additional parking lots, contact stations, restrooms, and other identified areas of need in the Park.
- Guided tours will be provided all climbers with additional events including full-moon tours in consideration.
- There will be a relighting ceremony in spring. Stay tuned....



*The Bodie Island restoration project cannot be considered complete until the magnificent first-order Fresnel lens is returned to the lantern room and made operational again. Lighthouse Lamp Shop, the team that disassembled the lens for safe storage during the restoration, will reassemble the lens and put it back in the lantern room during February 2013. Above is a view looking up and inside the lens canopy. Photo courtesy of De. Laddie Crisp, Jr.*

When the Bodie Island Lighthouse opens to the public for climbing, its historic significance will continue to grow. It will be one of only a handful of American lighthouses to have been restored, opened to the public, and to have retained its original, operational Fresnel lens. It is also one of a very few lighthouses to afford panoramic, sound-to-sea views without intrusive modern development. Visitors will get a good idea of what this light station looked like 140 years ago.

## *A Homecoming October 18-19, 2013*

The Outer Banks Lighthouse Society will join the National Park Service and other fine sponsors to host a homecoming for lighthouse descendants October 18-19, 2013. Plans are well in progress. If you are a Bodie Island Lighthouse keeper's direct descendant, please see <http://www.outer-banks.com/bodieislandhomecoming/>. Fill out the brief form, and our genealogist, Sandra MacLean Clunies, will review your application. If approved, you will receive a second form (that automatically contains the info you wrote into the first form) along with a userid and password. Or you may call Cheryl Shelton-Roberts at (252) 247-5436 or email her at [cheryl@ec.rr.com](mailto:cheryl@ec.rr.com).

# North Carolina School in Clayton Donates to the Outer Banks Lighthouse Society

by Bett Padgett

Each year East Clayton Elementary School (Johnston County) fourth-grade classes build a lighthouse museum. These fourth graders study state history, and the team leaders at this beautiful country school are lighthouse enthusiasts and encourage their nine and ten-year old students to learn all that they can about all of our lighthouses. The students do extensive research and build lighthouse models fashioned after the lighthouse on which they choose to concentrate. Their “lighthouse museum” is open for parents, students, and teachers in the spring. PTA night is the biggest draw to the museum and donations are taken to help preserve the towers on the coast. The fourth graders have collected nearly \$1,000 in the past few years and donated it all to the Outer Banks Lighthouse Society. I have been fortunate to visit the school and meet these excited and eager groups of kids. The spark of enthusiasm on their faces when they meet

someone who has visited and climbed every tower in NC is heartwarming and thrilling. They are so excited to hear stories about the lighthouses, the keepers, and what it was like for children to grow up at a lighthouse. Watching them pass a quarter that was flattened by the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse when it was relocated from the edge of the sea is like seeing a child on Christmas morning or what it's like to see the ocean for the first time. There isn't enough time to answer all their questions, so I look forward to going back each year to see another group of students who are eager to learn more about our beautiful lighthouses. Kudos to April Taylor and Amy Plabuta (past team leaders) and all of the fourth-grade teachers at East Clayton Elementary School who instill a love for NC's lighthouses and maritime history in these youngsters. These are the preservationists of the future and they will carry the flame with them.



*Amy Plabuta, teaching team leader at East Clayton Elementary School, presents OBLHS president, Bett Padgett, with a check. Fourth graders here have raised over \$1,000 for the Outer Banks Lighthouse Society. We thank these future preservationists!*



On a warm October day, a group of OBLHS weekenders met at Battle Acre at Ft. Fisher State Park. This hallowed ground is where Col. William Lamb, Maj. Gen. W.H.C. Whiting, and their brave rebels made a last stand against attacking Union troops. It was here that the last Confederate port near Wilmington was closed, essentially ending the War Between the States.

## Annual Keeper's Weekend on the Cape Fear

By Gail Keresey

The 2012 Annual Keeper's Weekend was held in Carolina Beach October 5-7, 2012. The event kicked off on Friday at Ft. Fisher State Historic Site where the group assembled in the auditorium to hear Nathan Henry speak about the history of the Federal Point Lighthouse. Many objects that were found in an excavation of the historic site were on display. We then walked to Battle Acre and learned of the excavation locations for the Keeper's House by Stanley South in 1962. We also were privileged to learn about the 1816 Federal Point Lighthouse excavation, which was uncovered in 2009. Members then toured the grounds of Ft. Fisher to learn about its overall history.

Friday evening, the group boarded *Royal Winner Princess II*. Leslie Bright, founder of the Federal Point Historic Preservation Society, narrated the historic sites by which we cruised. We enjoyed shopping in the Keeper's Store, perusing and bidding on the silent auction baskets, and eating a scrumptious buffet dinner. Bett Padgett presided at the members' meeting, which included the election of board members

and the presentation of Society awards. Raffle ticket winners were drawn, and we were really excited that three of the four winners were present! The auction ensued. Some of the items purchased were a replica of the Price's Creek Lighthouse engineered and built by board of directors member Rick Ward, lighthouse wall hangings by Theresa Ward, the "traveling necklace," which is a lighthouse pendant that is bid on to allow a new person to wear it each year, bids on Harbour Lights replicas, t-shirts from Chicamacomico that survived hurricane Irene, and a signed Hatteras Lighthouse crossing sign donated by John Havel—the original crossing sign resides within the Cape Hatteras National Seashore's warehouse/museum.

Bright and early at 7:45 am on Saturday, members boarded the Ft. Fisher to Southport Ferry. From there we were chauffeured to Deep Point Marina where we climbed aboard a pontoon boat for an exciting trip to Price's Creek Lighthouse. The two boats were captained by Bert Felton and Rick Brown, both excellent captains and interpretive guides. We

*Continued on page 6*



*At left: Happy adventurers boarded a pontoon boat headed to Price's Creek—a rare opportunity. Lower middle and bottom: Other exciting parts of the weekend included Diana Chappell's gift of a bound set of *The Lighthouse News* for her outstanding contributions to OBLHS and NC lights. Diana is in the bottom picture. Likewise, president Bett Padgett received a gavel on a plaque for her exceptional dedication to OBLHS and NC lights. Bett's picture is in the middle. Below are a few of the auction items for this year's event. The striking model of Price's Creek was created and donated by board member Rick Ward.*



hiked through the “pluff” mud (rich, fertile, mucky soil that lines marsh areas), and climbed the stairs. The open windows offered lots of photo ops for excited members. Nicole, an Archer Daniels Midland employee from the Human Resources Department that owns the historic site, led us through the woods to the biggest treat of all—the ruins of the foundation of the rear range light, which had once been used as the Keeper's Quarters!

We shuttled back to the ferry with many memories and a bit of pluff mud on our shoes. A big thank you goes out to our chauffeurs: Lois Taylor, Jean Amelang, and Rebecca Taylor.

After the ferry ride back to Ft. Fisher, we drove to the Federal Point History Center. Under the welcome shade of old trees on that hot, early fall day, we enjoyed our boxed lunches. John Golden, a folksinger/storyteller from Wilmington, sang songs from the Civil War period. He then donned his cap and became Captain Roberts, who piloted blockade runners during the Civil War. The final song featured OBLHS President, Bett Padgett, on banjo singing her original song about Mary Catherine Ruark at Price's Creek, “It's Not Safe Outside.” For the lyrics, see page 17 of the previous *Lighthouse News* (Summer 2012).

The group then went inside the History Center for a presentation on the Lost Lights of the Cape Fear by Rebecca Taylor and Gayle Keresey. Chris Webb, Mary Beth Springmeir, and Kim Gottshall from the Old Baldy Foundation (OBF) presented “Bringing Home the Light.” They talked to the members about the recovery of the first order Fresnel lens from the Cape Fear Lighthouse. They also presented plans for displaying the lens. Passionate in their work, OBLHS cheers their efforts to recover precious, irreplaceable prisms to make the 1903 first-order lens as complete as possible for the OBF.



*The front range light at Price's Creek Lighthouse has been stabilized by owner Archer Daniel Midland corporation. OBLHS members have the distinct privilege of being invited to visit the old tower that once served as a signal station for blockade runners during the War Between the States. Marsh and mud didn't slow a single person down. Everyone appreciated the excitement of viewing the ruins of the rear range light that also housed the keeper and his family. The window of the front range light made a perfect frame for portraits. At right, top to bottom: Bob and Nicole Davia, John and Aida Havel, Roy and Bettye Jones.*



**SOCIETY AWARDS** presented: Rebecca Taylor, President's Award; John Havel, Cape Hatteras Award; Tracy Norris, Currituck Award; Bob Ahlers, Oak Island Award.

**BOARD MEMBERS** elected for a three year term: Nicole DaVia, Richard Meissner, Judy Moon, Jim O'Donnell, Mabry O'Donnell, Bett Padgett, Bill Padgett, Bruce Roberts, and Cheryl Shelton-Roberts

#### **RAFFLE TICKET WINNERS:**

**1st prize:** One week stay at a 1910 Hatteras Classic Cottage in Frisco, NC: Angelo Micale

**2nd Prize:** Romantic Weekend at First Colony Inn in Nags Head, NC: Helen Munro

**3rd Prize:** North Carolina Collection of rare, signed books: Judy Rosson

**4th Prize:** Signed Canvas print of Cape Hatteras Lighthouse by Bruce Roberts: Bob Paisley

What a great weekend with OBLHS friends!

Join us next year!

Gayle Keresey

# JOSEPH DIXON FARROW

*Keeper at Seven Foot Knoll, Gull Shoal, and Pamlico Point Lighthouses 1912-1935*



*Keeper Joseph D. Farrow c. 1935*

Among piles of papers, pictures, and mementoes, Arvella Willis Peele keeps records on her large family. One of her treasured memories is that of her grandfather, “Papa” Farrow. Recently she shared his Lighthouse Service personnel records and related her personal experience with him as a child represented in the only pictures she has of him and memories passed on to her by her mother, Martha Davis (Farrow) Willis.

Keeper Farrow, born April 21, 1876, began his civil service with the US Lighthouse Service September 1, 1912, at Seven Foot Knoll Lighthouse, a screwpile originally built in 1856 at the mouth of the Patapsco River to mark a shallow area known as Seven Foot Knoll. It was replaced around 1875 with a round dwelling unit composed of wrought-iron plates and is now a living classroom located on Pier 5 on Baltimore’s Inner Harbor. This is the screwpile that Farrow called home for a year’s service.

After only a brief duty in Maryland, Farrow transferred to the 1891 Gull Shoal Lighthouse May 13, 1913. He was hired as an assistant keeper in a newly created position there. The screwpile was

sited in western Pamlico Sound just south of Engelhard, which served as a fueling station for area boaters. Obviously he did a good job because Jan 1, 1916, his pay increased from \$480 to \$516 per annum.

Farrow’s granddaughter was born in Hatteras Village in 1927. Arvella Willis Peele was one of nine children born to Martha Davis Farrow and Hobson Willis. She called her grandfather “Papa,” and remembers well where he lived “up the road” at Trent, known today as Frisco. She is frank in her description of the demanding duties of keepers who lived at sound and river lights offshore. “The keepers at the big lights had it easier because they had a house for their families.” This was not so at a sound light like Gull Shoal and Pamlico Point Light Stations surrounded by water. “It was as bad as being in prison,” Arvella still feels. The nearest town was miles away and reachable only by boat. While Farrow was a keeper, he had to stay on the light station more than three weeks on each watch, his granddaughter noted. Being away from home and family including newborns, church and community duties was difficult for many of these keepers at “stag stations” where families were not invited to visit, much less to stay overnight as guests. And many keepers did this for most, if not all, of their careers.

Challenges abounded at these offshore stations. A fog bell was to be rung by mechanical clockwork, but when the mechanism failed, a keeper had to physically strike the bell with a hammer by hand. Additionally, oil to supply the light in the Fresnel lens arrived in barrels that had to be rolled into place. The only complaint Farrow documented is that he had to move 250-pound tanks alone. These were likely the acetylene gas tanks used to fuel the “minor lights” he also was in charge of maintaining, known as post lamps or lanterns. At five-foot-four-inches and less than 140 pounds himself, Farrow strained to manage this duty single handedly. There is no doubt that this affected his health, noted later in this article.

*Continued on page 10*

“Being an Isolated station, a trip ashore to secure mail and supplies requires a run of 90 miles a round trip, and this must be made through the roughest portion of Pamlico Sound.”

*Keeper Joseph D. Farrow on his duties at a lighthouse on North Carolina's sound*

*Quote is from Keeper Farrow's annual report to the U.S. Lighthouse Service circa 1928.*



*A lighthouse tender is delivering supplies to Pamlico Point Lighthouse at the mouth of the Pamlico River. In this circa 1890s photo, the isolation that Keeper Farrow often spoke of is obvious. The lighthouse tender's occasional visit or a passing sailing vessel was the only punctuation in what must have been a lonely vigil on a sound or river light station. Tenders brought coal, wood, and maintenance supplies including new lamp wicks and paint to these far-flung sites only twice a year. Note the U.S. Lighthouse Service insignia on the captain's cap. Sometimes a Lighthouse Inspector was on board to make sure that keepers were doing their duties according to strict Lighthouse Service regulations. The Pamlico Point Lighthouse had a fog bell, which can be seen at the top right of the structure, and had to be struck by mechanical clockwork, and in case of failure, it was struck manually by the keeper for hours at a time. These sound lights were in shallow water and miles away from a post office, general store, or medical assistance. Additionally, keepers at these "stag" stations were responsible for numerous smaller lights such as post lanterns, and trips to tend these smaller lights required a trip in foul weather in the dark.*

*Photo courtesy of the U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office*

Another challenge was to render aid to disabled boaters when needed. On March 12, 1924, he received a commendation from the Superintendent of Lighthouses in Baltimore, Harold King, for rescuing a stranded motor boater. After towing the boat to harbor, Farrow was hurt “very bad” while hooking the boat into safe landing, according to Assistant Keeper Watson in a letter to the superintendent. Watson took Farrow to Wysocking for medical help; today we know this area as Engelhard.

Farrow moved on to a position May 22, 1925, at Pamlico Point Light Station located in the vicinity of the mouth of the Pamlico River leading to the port of Washington, N.C. and served as warning of the shallow area for those traveling to Engelhard for fuel. The light was originally established in 1828; it

was extinguished during the War Between the States and rebuilt in 1877.

When Farrow first took the position, it was considered a “temporary Keeper position,” but the keeper on the job at the time died, and Farrow took over as principal keeper with a salary of \$1,500 annually. According to his assignment record, he was expected to purchase a new uniform that cost approximately \$15.00. Harold King, superintendent of the 5th District US Lighthouse Service headquartered in Baltimore, signed the appointment letter. His assistant keepers were J.D. Barnett and J.H. Stowe. While in this job, Farrow was required to describe his duties in an annual report for government records. Here are Keeper Farrow’s own words and quoted *exactly as he wrote the report*:

“I am Keeper in Charge of Pamlico Point Light Station, Situated on the west side of Pamlico Sound. This an isolated station having a personnel of three men.

My principal duties at the station consist of my regular catch, cleaning painting and sealing Iron, and the writing of the daily log and other reports.

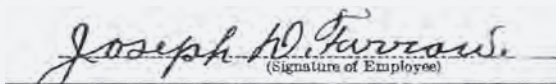
We stand an alternating watch of two men 22 days each month. This requires about one half my time while at the station, or about one third my entire time. The other duties are those mentioned above, and any additional work that in my opinion is necessary to keep the light and station in general in excellent condition.

We have under our care 7 gass beacons requiring attention once each month or oftener. A round trip to these beacons requires 13 hours. Also 9 oil burning beacons, which must be visited 4 times each month or oftener, each trip requiring 12 hours. In addition to this I now have official notice that 9 more beacons will be placed in our charge, on the inland waterway.

Being an Isolated station, a trip ashore to secure mail and supplies requires a run of 90 miles a round trip, and this must be made through the roughest portion of Pamlico Sound.

I estimate my official time about 10 hrs. per day.”

Signed

  
(Signature of Employee)

Someone in Baltimore noted that Keeper Farrow also “had to keep a fog-signal records and property accounts.” He was to keep the fifth-order Fresnel lens pristine along with the other components of the lighthouse, especially the ironwork that needed constant attention in a saltwater environment. It was further noted that “attendance upon minor lights grouped under care of this keeper’s station is an important duty and requires skill and considerable risk in operating motor launch oftentimes under stormy conditions, and knowledge of the care and operation of acetylene gas apparatus.” In view of the extra duties required to service added minor lights assigned to this station’s care, he received a pay raise effective January 1, 1926, to \$1850.

Keeper Farrow continued to serve at Pamlico Point Light Station for another decade, maintaining

an excellent record for his service notwithstanding the isolation and strained family relations. A tender delivered some supplies twice a year and the superintendent of the fifth district visited for inspections once or twice a year. Save these two visits, keepers on sound lights saw few people on a regular basis. Fishermen would stop and share extra fish or oysters or crabs or clams they had, but it was indeed a lonely vigil on these water bound lights. Home was a two-story house on pilings about 30 feet square with Pamlico Sound for a front and back yard.

An incident occurred December 5, 1935, that did not help Keeper Farrow’s worsening heart problems. In a report in which he wrote of the event, he stated that he had been “gassed” from a cracked muffler in the motor boat that he used to travel between the light station and the nearest town to fetch mail

and supplies. On one of Farrow's trips to town, he experienced what must have been carbon monoxide poisoning from a defective muffler on his motor launch. Less than two weeks later, he was declared disabled and retired from his lighthouse keeper duties. His retirement was officially awarded at the end of December of that year with disability retirement pay at \$1,082.79 a year. Whereas he had achieved pay as high as \$1,800 each year, this must have come as a bitter pill to swallow. But his health had declined over the years with great physical demands on him in carrying out his keeper's duties.

Miss Arvella spoke about where her Papa lived in Trent, renamed Frisco. "But I love the name Trent. I just love it. When I turned ten-years-old until I was eighteen, I remember we moved to Trent and I rode the bus to school in Buxton. It was so beautiful with the sandy paths lined on both sides by trees. That area was so beautiful. I remember the dogwoods in bloom, wisteria, and one of our neighbors had a double swing on her porch. Another neighbor had a yard full of phlox. It was like a pretty place full of all those colors. Now the beauty is gone except for the sound and the ocean.

"Mine was a large family. I was the only girl in the family until I was thirteen and fifteen when two more girls came along. I became a babysitter! And during the Depression, there simply was no money in the villages then. If it hadn't been for fishing, oystering, crabbing, and clamming along with some help from a garden, we'd have had a much more difficult time. There was no welfare then, no help from anyone else. We had feather beds made from the fowl hunted in fall and winter; we were lucky, because some had to use just straw. And during the war, as a teenager, I remember all the guys were gone to fight. There were only older men in their 30s in the Coast Guard or Merchant Marines, it was so different then.

"The only time I remember being with Papa was after he had retired. He attended a meeting in Engelhard to help start funds to rebuild the Methodist-Episcopal Church that had been destroyed by a storm in 1933 or '34. It wasn't the first time he had helped others; he used to help my mother buy material or he gave another fellow a bit of money when needed. Mother appreciated and loved him more than just about anything in the world. And, as a Mason and respected citizen, Papa was a good man. He gave me a pair of white tennis shoes—they couldn't have cost more than fifty cents—but let me tell you I felt *dressed up* when I put them on!



*"This is our yard in Hatteras," Arvella (Willis) Peele commented about this picture. "We were the four oldest children born in Hatteras; two more sons would be born while we lived there and three more after we moved to Frisco. This is the only picture I have of me as a child. And, I'm the only one without shoes—maybe that's why I loved the white tennis shoes that Papa gave me so much. I was inside most of the time when boys were out."*

Photo courtesy of Arvella (Willis) Peele circa 1932

"That day, Papa and I walked from Hatteras Village towards Trent [Frisco], he must have been suffering (he had angina and arteriosclerosis) because he didn't talk the whole way. He had stopped and told Mama not to worry about him. He had come in on the freight boat to Hatteras. We walked inside the store (J.I. Willis' general store) and I walked to a counter a little ways from him. Behind me, I heard the most awful noise. Papa fell over the counter—I heard the death rattle. You heard of that? Well, I heard it as a young girl. I ran so fast that I flew home to get Mama—this was a traumatic thing for a nine-year-old girl. I think it affected my memories of him. He probably was going to buy candy and send it home with me. I carried that terrible moment with me for years. In fact, when I was in the first and second grades, I suddenly was afraid to go upstairs in our home alone."

That was June 4, 1936, only five months after Keeper Farrow had retired at age 60 with twenty-four years of work for the U.S. Lighthouse Service. His granddaughter keeps his memory alive and we can learn great detail about these long-gone but not forgotten keepers of our North Carolina lights.

*The author would like to thank Arvella Willis Peele for sharing memories of her grandfather.*

# HERBERT BAMBER: The Extraordinary Engineer of Highland, Michigan

By John M. Havel

## Acknowledgments

My sincere appreciation goes to **Diane Needham** and the **Highland Township Historical Society (HTHS)** of Oakland County, Michigan, for generously sharing the journals of Herbert Bamber. In 2005, the HTHS acquired 11 of Bamber's journals from a local collector. Two HTHS members, Dick Bohl and Roscoe Smith, transcribed the handwritten journals, which then were published in the society's newsletter from 2007-2010. As their society is quite small, few people outside the Highland community were aware that these documents existed. The journals have been invaluable in bringing the faintly outlined figure of Herbert Bamber into clearer focus.

Special thanks also goes to **Elizabeth (Betty) Buell Baldwin** of Garrett Park, Maryland (whose grandmother was Herbert's sister, Mary Elizabeth Bamber Buell) for entrusting numerous original photographs of Herbert and his family to me for scanning and publication—finally putting a face to his name.

THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXCERPT OF MY LARGER ARTICLE ON HERBERT BAMBER.

## PART II—FOLLOWING THE LIGHT

Part I—Herbert Bamber: The Making of an Engineer was published in the Summer 2012 issue of the *OBLHS Lighthouse News* and recounted Herbert Bamber's upbringing in Highland Township, Michigan, his education and graduation from the Agricultural College of Michigan (now Michigan State University) in Lansing, and his first professional job as a surveyor in Utah. Part I concluded with Herbert in New Cumberland, West Virginia, working as an inspector at the dam on Blacks Island on the Ohio River for Lieut. Col. William E. Merrill of the Army Corps of Engineers.

In 1885, just one month after his arrival in New Cumberland, Herbert wrote: *"Received a letter from Major Smith June 24th offering me an appointment as superintendent of construction on a Florida lighthouse. With Col. Merrill's permission, I accepted the appointment as it gave me a longer engagement than the one I have here with the same monthly salary averaging \$150 per month. Expect to leave here early in August."*

### A LIGHTHOUSE AT MOSQUITO INLET

The letter Herbert received a few weeks before his 27th birthday would begin his association with lighthouses—an association that would define the rest of his career. The letter offered him an appointment as Superintendent of Construction of the Mosquito Inlet Light Station on the eastern coast of Florida.

The offer to Herbert came about as the result of a tragic accident in June 1884 suffered by General Orville Babcock, Chief Engineer for the 5th and 6th Light-House Districts. Babcock had been in charge of the project at Mosquito Inlet since January 1883.

Within weeks of Babcock's death in June 1884, Major Jared A. Smith, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, received orders to take charge of the 5th and 6th Light-House Districts. Smith had been



**Mosquito Inlet Lighthouse.** 1923 photograph of the first lighthouse for which Herbert Bamber was chosen as Superintendent of Construction. Renamed the Ponce de Leon Inlet Lighthouse in 1927. Photo courtesy of the Florida State Archives.

Herbert's supervisor in Indianapolis and, appreciating Herbert's engineering aptitude, wrote to him in July 1885 offering him the appointment in Florida.

On August 1, 1885, Herbert completed his duties at the dam on Blacks Island and, two days later, on August 3rd, reported to Smith's office in Baltimore.

## CONSTRUCTION RESUMES

Three months later, in October 1885, Herbert arrived with Major Smith and two others in Florida. *"Ponce Park, Florida: Major [Jared A.] Smith, Mr. B.[B.] Smith, Asst. Engineer 6th, Mr. Wilder and myself arrived here October 30th. The Major and Mr. B.B. Smith left us on November 1st....We immediately made the acquaintance of Mrs. Pacetti, who entertains tourists and got some dinner of which we were somewhat in need, having been some time on the steamer whose accommodations were not palatial."*

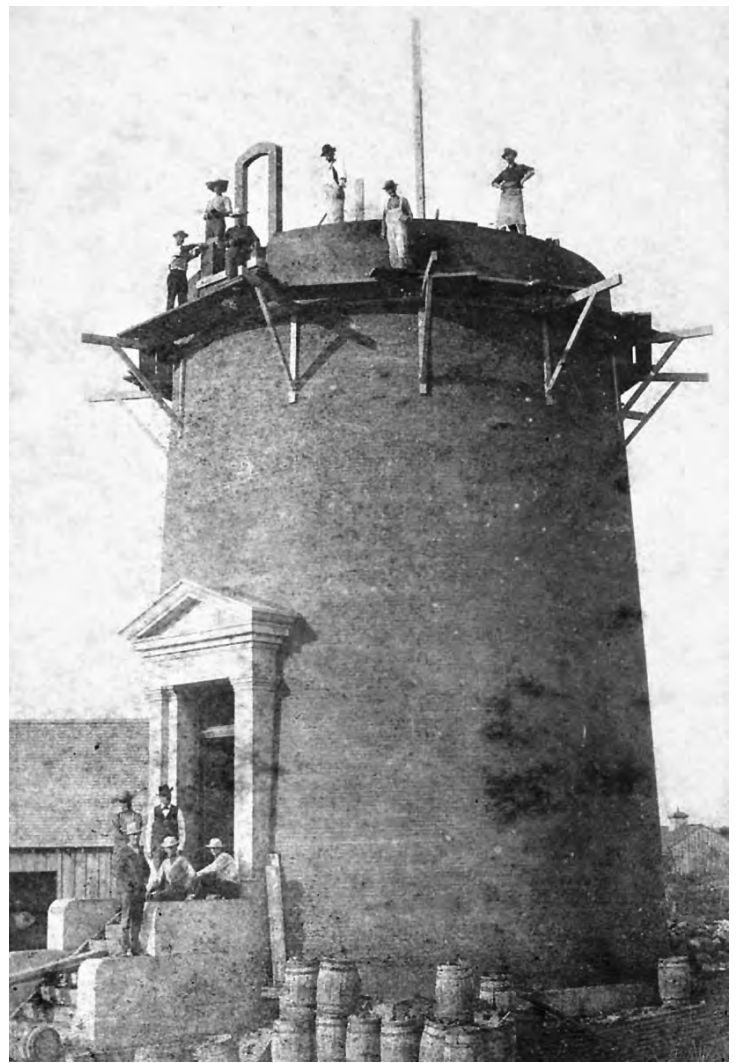
From this point on in his journal, Herbert's notes are sporadic. Late in 1885 he wrote that "[s]ince November 2nd have been working from 3 to 8 men grubbing, receiving brick, making shed, etc." On December 27th, he notes: *"Have not begun bricklaying yet. Are waiting for the Tracy Brown to bring a cargo of building sand from the Savannah River."* We learn from the journals that although his small work crew busied themselves with various projects at the site, work on the tower did not resume until January 1886, remaining just four feet high since the end of 1884.

However, a different source informs us that Herbert was not idle during this time. The 1887 Annual Report of the U.S. Light-House Board contained two appendices written by Herbert. The first was a *"Report upon the Test Made of the Cements Used in the Construction of the Mosquito Inlet Light-House, Florida."* The second piece, more relevant to the story, was a *"Report upon the Working Platform Used in the Construction of the Mosquito Inlet Light-Tower, Florida."* This innovation was likely designed and developed by Herbert during the extended lull in construction, as photographs show his working platform in use as the work progressed.

The first page of this appendix opens with:

*Highland, Mich., October 15, 1887.*

*Colonel: I have the honor, in response to your request through Captain Mallery, to inclose a brief description of the outside working platform used*



**Mosquito Inlet Lighthouse under construction.** Photograph taken in 1886 by S. Shear. Workmen at the top are standing on the working platform designed by Herbert Bamber. Photo courtesy of the Ponce de Leon Inlet Lighthouse Preservation Association.

*in the construction of the tower at Mosquito Inlet, with a description of the process of raising, etc.*

*Very respectfully, your obedient servant,*

*H. Bamber,*

*Superintendent of Construction Mosquito Inlet Light-Station.*

*Col. James F. Gregory,*

*Engineer Secretary, Light-House Washington, D. C.*

Herbert's description of this new scaffolding system is just a page and a half long, and includes a fold-out drawing of the platform in use, with details and notes.

In Herbert's design, individual bricks were left out of the exterior tower wall every ten feet vertically and horizontally so that support brackets for the platform could be set into these holes. Once the tower

was completed the platform was lowered level by level and the gaps filled with bricks. According to the National Historic Landmark Study (Eshelman, 1997) Herbert's invention increased the efficiency and ease of constructing masonry towers. The study goes on to say that this new technique, first used at Mosquito Inlet, was so successful that the U.S. Light-House Establishment adopted Herbert's method as standard practice for future brick masonry tower construction.

One year later, in 1886, Herbert wrote of tragedy and illness: *"November 28th, Ponce Park: Have been alone in the office since the latter part of September. Mr. Smith, foreman, was drowned near Port Orange in February. Mr. Strachan was sent to take his place early in May. During July and August Mr. Wilder and myself were troubled with a dysentery and Mr. Wilder was obliged to go north. I was about, with the exception of about two weeks in July when first attacked."*

His entry continues, telling of the progress made since work resumed early in 1886. *"Work on the tower was begun last January and continued until the 8th of September when the supply of brick suitable for the tower being exhausted, work was suspended and begun on the foundations of the dwellings. Work was continued with a small force until November 17th when more brick, having arrived, work upon the tower was resumed."*

Progress reports to the Light-House Board reveal that by the end of the year *"470,000 bricks had been used and the tower stood at 51 feet."* In March 1887, Congress authorized an additional \$20,000, the oil house was completed, and the three keeper's dwellings and their outbuildings were ready for plastering. The tower's first-order Fresnel lens was installed late in 1887.

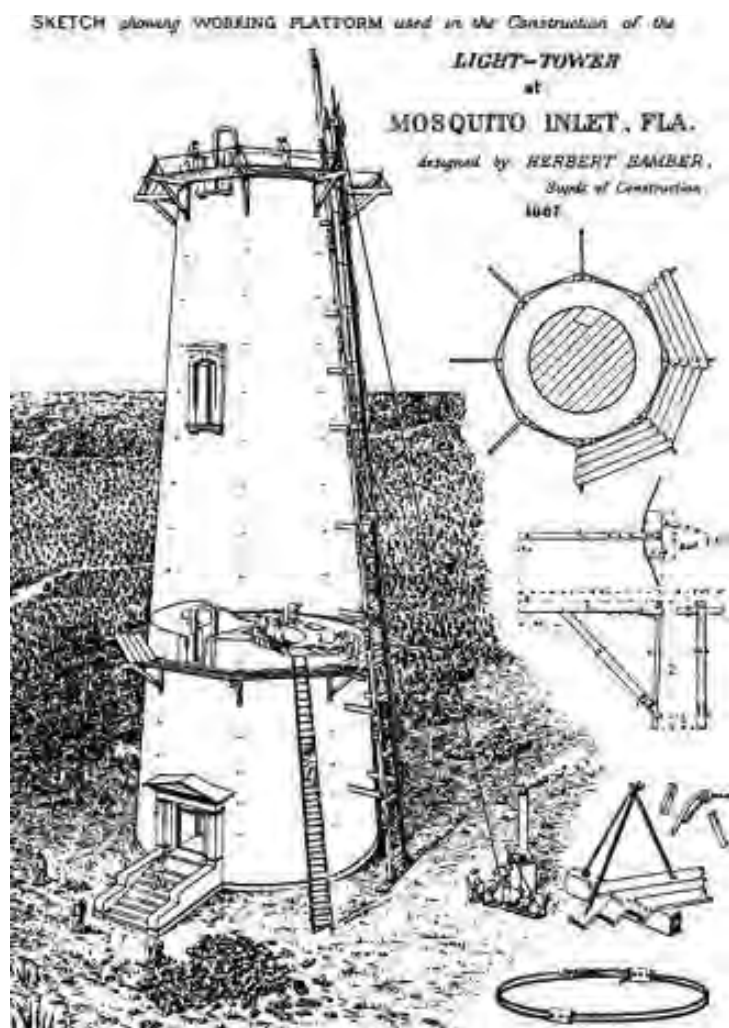
In the last weeks of 1886, Herbert wrote: *"December 5th, Ponce Park: Pleasant weather the past week. Work on the tower going forward satisfactorily. Fifteen in the party besides myself—4 bricklayers. Lumber and other material for dwellings to be delivered January 15th, after which date it will have to be freighted to the station."*

This is the last entry regarding construction at Mosquito Inlet in Herbert's journals. By the time he wrote again, a full year had passed and construction at the light station had been completed.

*"December 31st [1887]: Was not able to leave the M.I.L.S. Ponce Park, Florida until the first Sunday in October [this was October 6]. Left Walter Crook in charge and proceeded to Baltimore..."* Having completed his assignment, Herbert left Mosquito Inlet and began the trip north, stopping in St. Augustine and Jacksonville. Upon arriving in Baltimore he wrote: *"...completed my report, etc., so that I left Baltimore for a visit home on the second Sunday of October"*.

In his last journal entry we learn of Herbert's next assignment, the position he will remain in until he retires. *"Having been transferred to or given the appointment of Superintendent of Construction in the 4th Light-House District, I reported at the office [in Philadelphia] November 1st. Was at home again Thanksgiving week to be present at the marriage of Mary on November 23rd."*

On November 1, 1887, the same day Herbert reported to his new position in Philadelphia, Principal Keeper William Rowlinson climbed the tower of the Mosquito Inlet Light Station and lighted the lamp for the first time.



Bamber's 1887 sketch of his working platform first used in the construction of the Mosquito Inlet Lighthouse. His superb draftsman and artistic skills are clearly demonstrated in this rendering, which appeared in the appendices of the 1887 Annual Report of the U.S. Light-House Board.

That light station, renamed Ponce de Leon Inlet Lighthouse in 1927, was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1998. After decades of restoration by the Ponce de Leon Inlet Lighthouse Preservation Association, the lighthouse stands today as one of the best preserved, most complete Light Stations in the nation, and a private aid to navigation that after 120 years still guides maritime traffic along the Florida coast.

The eleven journals of Herbert Bamber acquired by the Highland Township Historical Society (HTHS) end here in December of 1887 with Bamber's new assignment in Philadelphia and just a brief note on the passing of his maternal grandfather, Noah Pomeroy Morse.

## WORKING FOR THE LIGHT-HOUSE ESTABLISHMENT

Records regarding Herbert's activities serving the 4th Light-House District over the next few years are sketchy, but provide some information to help paint a picture of his work during this period.

In 1852 the U.S. Light-House Board divided the country into twelve districts as part of their modernization and restructuring of the administration of lighthouses. The 4th District, where Herbert would serve, was defined as follows: *"This district extends from a point on the coast of New Jersey opposite Shrewsbury Rocks but does not include the rocks to and includes Metomkin Inlet, Virginia. It embraces all aids to navigation on the seacoast of New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia, and the tidal waters tributary to the sea between the rocks and the inlet."*

At the time Herbert began his service, the Annual Report for the U.S. Light-House Board listed the following navigational aids for the 4th district: 49 light-houses and lighted beacons including: 5 first-order lights, 3 third-order lights, 12 fourth-order lights, 9 fifth order lights, 3 sixth-order lights; 1 lens-lantern, 8 range-lenses, 8 reflectors, 3 light-ships in position, 2 day or unlighted beacons, and 179 buoys and fog signals.

Herbert began his service with the Light-House Establishment in November of 1887. *The Official Register of the U.S., Containing a List of the Officers and Employés in the Civil, Military, and Naval Service* continues to list him in this position until at least 1892, and in both census records and passport applications through 1912, he is listed as a "civil



**Photograph of Mosquito Inlet tower construction nearly complete.** Photograph by E.G. Harris of Daytona, Florida, most likely in 1887. This is a cropped and enhanced image of the original photograph, in the collection at Ponce Inlet and which is in very poor condition. Photo courtesy of the Ponce de Leon Inlet Lighthouse Preservation Association.

engineer" for the U.S. government residing in Philadelphia. Without journals or other personal accounts, one of the few other resources from which to discover Herbert's activities in these years is the National Archives.

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in Washington, D.C., contains a collection of records designated "Correspondence of the Light-House Board, 1776-1900," under Record Group 26, the main collection for holdings of the U.S. Coast Guard through the years. These records were collected into bound volumes when the Archives was established in 1935 from records stored by a variety of agencies. Some were found in basements and

attics, many were subjected to fires and flooding over the years, and many therefore are damaged, fragile, or incomplete. According to Susan Abbott, archivist for NARA, *"In many cases page numbers located on the outside corner of the page were burned off, and some of the pages are so brittle that they crumble when touched. When records can be located, they can be pulled for researchers as long as they are not too damaged."* Therefore, it is important to remember that these records can contain many gaps and those that can be accessed may be only a small representation of the original correspondence of the Board. The Archives also has created "reference slips" for every document acquired, forming an index for the entire collection. These are handwritten or typewritten slips that contain the name, subject, and date of the original document, as well as a one sentence description of its subject.

In a recent search, 43 reference slips associated with Herbert Bamber were located, representing 43 different letters sent by, or pertaining to, Herbert and his activities between 1885 and 1895.

Looking first at Herbert's activities at the Light-House Establishment until 1892, eleven references dated from October 7, 1887 to June 14, 1889, were found. Of these, only two complete letters could be retrieved—for the others we have only the information found on the reference slips.

The first complete letter that could be retrieved is dated October 7, 1887 and is written by the Secretary of the U.S. Treasury, under which the U.S.



**A cyanotype print of the Point Pinos Light Station in California.** Photograph taken by Herbert Bamber in 1894. One of the hundreds of cyanotype prints found in a barn on the property known as "The Ark Farm." The water damage and staining on the left side of this fragile paper print is typical. The original is of a bright blue hue. Photo from the author's collection.

Light-House Board served at this time. *"As requested in your letter of the 3rd instant you are hereby authorized to transfer and employ Herbert Bamber as Superintendent of Construction in the Fourth Light-house District, with compensation at the rate of one hundred and fifty dollars per month from date of entering on duty, vice E.A. Gieseler, resigned. Respectfully yours, C.S. Fairchild, Secretary"*

## THE LIGHTHOUSE PHOTOGRAPHS

The summer of 1892 marked a major change in Herbert's professional career. To understand more, we need to return to the subject of Herbert's well-known photographs of American lighthouses mentioned in the introduction to Part I of this article. As the primary focus of my research is the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse in Buxton, North Carolina, I knew that the seven photographs Herbert took in 1893 were also the earliest known images of this light, completed and lit in December 1870.

The foremost dealer in nautical and lighthouse-related antiques, *Kenrick A. Claflin & Son Nautical Antiques* of Worcester, Massachusetts, occasionally listed original photographs and other Bamber items for sale. It was through the Claflin's website that I first learned the term "cyanotype," a different kind of photographic print—quick, inexpensive copies, with a distinctive blue-green hue—that Herbert produced on-site and retained for his own records.

From the [lighthouseantiques.net](http://lighthouseantiques.net) web site: *"Mr. Bamber made an extra print of each photograph for his own files and these photographs were found in his barn in the Midwest a few years ago. These were original photographs, hand printed at the lighthouse location in 1892-93....These rare early views were from a process known as cyanotype."*

As mentioned earlier and recently verified with James Claflin (Kenrick's son), a trunk full of Herbert's materials, including the cyanotypes, was found in a barn on the Bamber family property in Highland Township. It is known that this trunk, and possibly other possessions, was sold at auction sometime prior to 1978 when the present owners purchased the property. Mr. Claflin indicated that an elderly couple brought the trunk of materials to him to sell on consignment in the mid-1990s. Herbert's photographs and documents were then sold through Claflin's website and catalog to their extensive clientele of lighthouse collectors and aficionados.

In the spring of 2011, an Illinois man offered for sale on eBay a collection of Bamber materials that he had purchased from Claflin in 1997. The collection included seven original cyanotypes, three of which were of Cape Hatteras. I purchased the collection immediately. What I did not realize at the time was just how valuable, in terms of my research, the other materials in this collection would be. In addition to the seven cyanotypes, the collection included:

- Two carbon copies of Herbert's photographic supply order, as well two carbon copy pages of typewritten price quotes received from Williams, Brown, & Earle, importers and manufacturers of Mathematical, Optical, Microscopical, Photographic Instruments and Supplies in Philadelphia. Each of these sheets is dated and contains Herbert's original pencil notes he made in preparation for his journey.
- A photocopy of Herbert's first logbook detailing each lighthouse location and every photograph he took, with notes on weather conditions, exposure settings, and other comments, including the notation "To L. H. B." to the right of each entry, which he sometimes spelled out as "To L. H. Board," to confirm that each finished print was mailed back to Light-House Board headquarters. Unfortunately this logbook only includes photographs through number 261, taken at Point Loma, San Diego, California, on December 13, 1893, so we do not have a detailed record of the rest of his journey.
- A second photocopied book of all the cyanotype prints found in the trunk. In this volume, which was printed in March 1996, Claflin added his own printed labels on each page. These labels include Herbert's numbers and the light station's name and are ordered numerically within the album. The volume begins with photograph number 2, taken at the Isles of Shoals Light Station, in New Hampshire, and ends with number 371, taken at Willapa Bay, in Washington. Some prints are missing, and many of them, including the seven I purchased, show some water damage to one side of the print.

These new-found documents provide a wealth of information concerning Herbert's photographic expedition, enabling me, 120 years later, to create a reasonably complete record of his journey. Using the dates from the quote for photographic supplies and



**Bamber's first photograph of the Isles of Shoals Light Station.** Taken on July 14, 1892 off the coast of New Hampshire. This is a cropped image from a damaged print held at the National Archives. Photograph courtesy of the National Archives.

from his logbook, the album of his cyanotypes from Kenrick Claflin, the 17 intact letters obtained from the National Archives, as well as information from the 43 reference slips, I was able to determine which light station Herbert was at on a particular day, how long he stayed (or at least when he arrived at the next location), the totals for the number of photos he took and stations visited, and how many months this protracted assignment demanded of him.

## BAMBER'S "SPECIAL DUTY"

One reference slip found refers to a letter dated March 15, 1892. It was written by the Secretary of the Treasury and states, "*Bamber, H. Engineer Asst. L.H. Service employment. authorized.*" As we know Herbert was already employed with the Light-House Service, but evidently, at this time, Herbert had been assigned to a new position.

Although the complete letters could not be retrieved, two reference slips dated June 14 and June 25 reveal that Herbert had been re-assigned to perform a "Special Duty"—described in several subsequent records as a "Survey of Lighthouse Reservations." As these new records came to light, it finally became clear that Herbert's enduring and well-recognized photographs were just one part of a larger scheme within the Light-House Establishment. The letters reveal that much of the time traveling Herbert wore the hat of surveyor, with his transit

(a surveyor's instrument of measure), level, and notebook, methodically calculating corners and measuring angles and distances, to determine and record the precise boundaries of each lighthouse reservation. Subsequently he put on the hat of a photographer to create his renowned images.

On June 20, 1892 Herbert received a quote from Williams, Brown & Earle, importers and manufacturers of Mathematical, Optical, Microscopical, Photographic Instruments and Supplies in Philadelphia, for equipment and supplies required for a photographic field and developing outfit. The camera he

every nook and cranny of America's coastline. Upon arrival at each station, Herbert surveyed the station's site, carefully composed and shot his photographs, noting the camera's station for each exposure on his survey, developed his negatives, printed his final prints and copies, carefully labeling each one, and finally, packed up his equipment for the next leg of his journey to another remote guardian of the shores.

## PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE 1890s

For some readers, film photography may be an unfamiliar concept—especially in this digital age with a camera phone in every pocket. For those who do remember film photography—using negatives, paper, and chemicals processing—we may have a somewhat better understanding of what photography was to Herbert and his contemporaries.

At the time Herbert took his first photograph in 1892, photography had become a popular pastime, profession, and tool, and innovations were rapidly being made. Most 19th century photographs were “albumen” prints. Invented in 1850, the albumen print was the first commercially usable method of producing a photographic print on paper from a negative. It used the albumen found in egg whites to bind the chemicals to the paper and became the primary form of photographs through the turn of the century.

Another photographic process, invented in 1842, was the cyanotype. Unlike albumen prints, these vivid blue images had a matte surface, but also showed considerable detail. The process became commonplace because of its relative ease compared to other processes. By simply pressing a sensitized sheet of paper against the glass negative and exposing it to direct sunlight, a “negative-of-a-negative” could be made—the cyanotype.

## HERBERT'S JOURNEY

Understanding Herbert's new assignment—his “special duty”—and the process he used for his impressive images, we turn our attention to his travels across America. From the records we see that the Light-House Establishment was not unlike a military operation. As an Assistant Engineer, Herbert was required to report to the Chief Engineer within each district he visited. That engineer, in turn, would write to the Light-House Board to verify his arrival and clarify Herbert's specific assignment.



*A Scovill Albion 8" x 10" folding camera, such as the one used by Bamber to create his lighthouse photographs.*

chose was a folding Scovill Albion 8" x 10" camera, a state-of-the-art camera for a photographer working in the field. Twenty-four days later, on July 14, Herbert recorded his first photograph in his logbook at the Isles of Shoals Light, on present day White Island, six miles off the coast of New Hampshire.

By their nature, lighthouses are often remote, lonely places and, especially in the nineteenth century, difficult to access. From the solitary rocks of White Island, New Hampshire, to the mosquito-infested sands of Hatteras, North Carolina, to the craggy cliffs of the Pacific Northwest, Herbert steadfastly trekked onward. We can only imagine the difficulties Herbert had transporting camera, chemicals, glassware, and other delicate equipment from trains, to boats, to horse and wagon, to 68 light stations in



**Herbert Bamber in 1893** at the age of 34. On the back of this card, in Herbert's handwriting, it states, "H. Bamber, 1893, Morris Island, S.C." Photo courtesy of Betty Buell Baldwin.

Once Herbert completed all the surveys and photographs within each district, the Chief Engineer, in a letter to the Board, would release and terminate Herbert's assignment there, to be turned over to another district's Chief Engineer. And so, in July 1892, reporting to Chief Engineer Livermore in the 1st and 2nd Districts, Herbert arrived at the Isles of Shoals Light Station off the coast of New Hampshire and, over the next seventeen days, surveyed and photographed eight light stations on the coast of New Hampshire and north along the Maine coastline.

On October 10th, Herbert completed his work at Petit Manon Light Station, near Bar Harbor, Maine, and by October 26th, 16 days later, he had reported to Chief Engineer Quinn with the 7th and 8th Districts to survey the light station at Biloxi, Mississippi. From Biloxi, Herbert travelled west to Pascagoula, surveying and photographing four more lights before moving on to Pensacola, on the western tip of the Florida panhandle. On December 21, 1892, Herbert recorded four photographs at the Cape San Blas Light Station in Saint Joseph's Bay and then, after the turn of the new year, proceeded down the

west coast of Florida to St. Mark's Light, then Cedar Keys, and on down to the tip of Key West, arriving there February 6, 1893. One letter dated February 1, 1893 written by Engineer Quinn gives us an excellent insight as to how decisions regarding Herbert's assignment were being made. Addressing the Board, Quinn wrote: "*After Mr. Bamber finishes the topographical survey of Key West, Fla. light-house reservation I do not think there are any other light-house reservations in either the 7th or 8th Districts which possess any topographical features which are not already given with sufficient detail in the surveys already existing. The survey of Point Isabel Light, Texas, could not be made very well at present since the property does not belong to the United States, and a survey will have to be made after its acquisition to establish the boundary lines, etc. The remaining light-house reservations are either swamp, marsh, or level land, as to be devoid of topographical features worthy of consideration other than those already indicated in the existing surveys. In view of the fact that there are other localities which may be in more urgent need of Mr. Bamber's services than I can lay claim to, I take this opportunity of advising the Board that I do not believe that I have further need of Mr. Bamber's services after he completes the survey of the Key-West light-house reservation. I have informed him to await instructions at Key West, Fla*"

Upon receiving new instructions from Washington, Herbert left Key West and travelled 700 miles north to Morris Island, off the coast of Charleston, South Carolina. For unknown reasons, Herbert remained here for 31 days from February 20th until March 22nd. Finally taking leave of Morris Island, Herbert moved northward up the coast to stations at Sullivan's Island, Fort Sumpter, Bull's Bay, and Cape Romain.

After leaving Cape Romain, Herbert arrived at Oak Island, North Carolina to photograph a set of wooden tower range lights, then hopped over to Bald Head Island to record the old stone tower there on May 4, 1893. In Herbert's day this light was known as the Cape Fear Light Station—we know it today as the Bald Head Island Lighthouse or "Old Baldy." Herbert continued up the coast to Cape Lookout, then on to Ocracoke, Hatteras, Bodys Island (now spelled Bodie), Currituck Beach Lighthouse, finally reaching Long Point Lighthouse Depot, a transfer terminal and manufacturing facility for lantern gas, located west of Currituck on Coinjock Bay, on June 19th, 1893.



**Bamber's photograph #370 of the Willapa Bay Light Station in Washington.** One of the last photographs he took late in 1894. The striking light, shadows, and composition make this beautiful photograph appear very much like a well-composed landscape painting. Photograph courtesy of the National Archives.

Days later, as he left North Carolina and the 5th District behind, Herbert boarded a train and headed homeward toward Michigan and the Great Lakes, arriving on the coast of Lake Superior on the Upper Peninsula on July 22. Herbert likely stopped in Philadelphia at his office and residence, or possibly at his Highland homestead, accounting for the extended trip.

From a visit to the Superior Pierhead Lights, Herbert crossed over to photograph the Duluth Range lights and the brand new light station at Two Harbors completed in 1892, and then across to the Apostle Islands to photograph Devil's Island, also brand new, although this beacon was just a short wooden skeletal light. He remained on Devil's Island for twelve days, then sailed over to the stately tower at the Outer Island Light Station in mid-September. Crossing back again to the Upper Peninsula, Herbert visited the Portage River Pierhead Light, also newly erected. One month later, on November 13th, Herbert was in Port Washington, 300 miles south, on the western shore of Lake Michigan. Having completed his survey of these seven lights on the Great Lakes, Herbert apparently received new orders, as one month later, on December 13, 1893, he arrived in the Port of San Diego at Point Loma Light Station in California. This is his last entry in the only logbook we have.

## THE LAST LEG

Without a second logbook for reference, we have thirteen letters, seventeen reference slips, and the cyanotypes themselves to construct a reasonably clear story of how Herbert spent the final year of his "special duty" in 1894, surveying reservations on the West Coast.

Nine slips dated from May 14 to June 27, 1894, are Bamber's weekly reports of survey activities within the 12th District along California's 800-mile coastline. Cross-checking these with the cyanotypes in Claflin's album, we see that after leaving Point Loma, Herbert continued skipping up the West Coast to Point Ballast, Fermin, Hueneme, and on to Santa Barbara. From Santa Barbara he continued north to Point Conception, stopping at five other lights, and finally arriving at the Cape Mendocino Light Station, approximately 150 miles south of the Oregon border. We know Herbert ended up here in the summer of 1894 because a reference slip dated August 6 states, "*Bamber, H.---reporting to 13th Engineer for duty, (Surveys of L.H. reservations) has been directed.*" The 13th District encompassed Oregon and Washington, and though we have a record of him reporting to Chief Engineer Post in the Portland office on August 11, there are no records of him surveying or photographing a single lighthouse in the state of Oregon. Instead, Herbert went directly north to the Cape Flattery Light Station at the farthest northwest tip of Washington, beyond Neah Bay, a literal stone's throw from the British Columbia border. Throughout September and October, Herbert continued his survey, visiting nine light stations on the northern coast of Washington along the Strait of Juan de Fuca, on the isles of Puget Sound, the San Juan Islands, then south to Vashon Island, just below Seattle, and lastly, the Willapa Bay Light on the western coast of Washington at Cape Shoalwater. The two photographs that Herbert took here, numbered 370 and 371, were the last photographs of his two-and-a-half-year undertaking, documenting 65 light stations scattered across America's shores. On January 5, 1895, Engineer Post, in charge of the 13th District wrote the Light-House Board: "*Referring to my letter of November 27, 1894, stating that the services of Assistant Engineer Bamber would probably be required in this district until January 1, 1895, I beg to state that owing to continued bad weather during last month which has greatly delayed his work, Mr. Bamber will be needed until February 1, 1895, to complete the required surveys.*"

Exactly one month later, Engineer Post wrote one last time, stating, *"In compliance with Board's letter of December, 1894, I have this day directed Mr. H. Bamber, Assistant Engineer, to proceed to Philadelphia, Pa., and report to Major C. W. Raymond, U.S.A., Engineer 4th Light-House District, for duty.* Post goes on to list the surveying and photographic equipment that Herbert will return to the 4th District with.

The last reference slip found in the National Archives is dated March 11, 1895. It was written by Engineer Raymond of the 4th Light-House District in Philadelphia. The one line summary states, *"Bamber Asst. Engineer. Date of reporting for duty 20 - Feby 1895 -- reported."* We can use this date as the end of Herbert's "Special Duty," and the beginning of the rest of his service in the 4th Light-House District, where he remained until retirement.

The Archives' letters also verify for us that at each, or certainly most, of the 65 reservations that Herbert visited, he surveyed and created detailed drawings for each, in addition to his memorable photographs. A letter he wrote in September of 1894 reads, *"I have the honor to transmit herewith three sheets showing the results of my survey at Cape Flattery Light Sta. Wash.,"* and in October of the same year, *"I have the honor to forward herewith seven sheets showing the results of my survey at the Ediz Hook Lt. Sta. Wash.,"* both letters signed, "Very respectfully yours, H. Bamber, Asst. Engr."

## A NOTE ON MAJOR SMITH

In researching Major Jared A. Smith, one of the more influential men in Herbert's life, I was surprised to discover that Herbert was not the first individual to take photographs for the Light-House Board. An online search for Jared A. Smith, and specifically a search for images, retrieved at least 10 verified photographs taken by Smith in June and August 1885, in Maryland, Virginia, and South Carolina. We know from Herbert's journals that Smith received his orders to report to the 5th and 6th Lighthouse districts in June 1884. This tells us that one year after beginning his work at the Light-House Establishment, and at least seven years before Herbert set out on his journey, the photographing of lights for the files of the Light-House Board already was being practiced by Major Smith.

These photographs are also 8" x 10" albumen prints and similar to Herbert's, were labeled with the station's name and date—but unlike Herbert's, these labels were handwritten in a neat script, and further, Smith included his name as the photographer (Herbert's photographs never included his own name).

## BACK AT THE BOARD

Once Herbert returned to the 4th District in March of 1895, we have a variety of scattered reports, articles, and records that shed light on Herbert's activities over the next 20-odd years. Annotated blueprints for 41 lighthouses—18 in Delaware, 11 in New Jersey, 4 in Pennsylvania, 5 in Virginia, and one each in Maryland, New York, and Washington State—are among his papers in the Burton Collection at the Detroit Public Library, as well as some of his official correspondence with the Light-House Board. Only a careful analysis of these prints and notes, along with a systematic survey of the records at each of these lighthouses would enable us to understand what Herbert's work entailed with each project—whether it be advisory, administrative, on-site supervision, or possibly in some other capacity. With exception of Washington State, these blueprints are all of lights within Herbert's own 4th District and are not associated with his travels surveying light stations across the country.



**Greenbury Point Lightstation, Annapolis Harbor, Maryland.** Photograph taken in August of 1885 by Major Jared A. Smith, Chief Engineer, 5th & 6th Light-House Districts, two years before Herbert Bamber worked for Smith, and seven years before Bamber began his survey of lighthouse reservations. Photo courtesy of USCG Historian's Office.



**Photograph of Herbert Bamber in 1908 at the age of 50.** *Bamber had this photograph made into a postcard and written on the back of the card in his handwriting it said, "Herbert Bamber, about 1908-11 (Beard from Europe)." Photo courtesy of Betty Buell Baldwin.*

More evidence of Herbert's work during these later years came to light with the discovery of three lighthouse inspection reports. In January and November of 1907, Herbert wrote inspection reports for the Killick Shoal Light Station and the Fishing Point Beacon Light Station, both located in the 5th District in Virginia. In December, Herbert's report was on the Schooner Ledge Range Front Light Station, located in the 4th District in Pennsylvania. Further research likely would reveal many more reports as part of Herbert's routine work over the years.

Additionally, a recent article written in the Sun by-the-Sea newspaper from Wildwood, New Jersey on the "Great Northeaster of 1913" recounts the story of the Hereford Inlet Lighthouse on a fragile barrier island, three miles from the mainland. Within the story is this note: "*A lighthouse board engineer, H. Bamber, conducted a thorough survey of the entire property in 1907. He reported to Washington that the 'site*

*is threatened by the encroachment of the south channel of the Hereford Inlet.'*" This additional piece of evidence shows that Herbert continued to survey light stations for the 4th District.

In March 1908 Herbert applied in Philadelphia for what is believed to be his first passport "*for traveling the countries of Europe and northern Africa,*" and said that he intended to return within one year. Although we do not know when Herbert embarked on his overseas voyage, the November 11, 1908, passenger list for the S. S. *Haverford*, sailing from Liverpool to Philadelphia, listed "H. Bamber" among the 98 passengers onboard.

On September 21, 1912 Bamber again applied for a passport in Philadelphia to go abroad "temporarily," and stated that he would return within one year. Herbert was 54 years old at this time and still listed himself as a "civil engineer" for the Lighthouse Service, so we may assume that this travel, as with his 1908 trip, concerned work for the Lighthouse Establishment.

## CIVIL ENGINEER—RETIRED

By 1920, Herbert was retired and living near his Highland, Michigan, birthplace. He was 61 years old and that year's census showed a house owned free and clear, with his profession listed as farmer "at home," and "self-employed." The Ark Farm, where Herbert, his two brothers, and sister grew up was his apparent retirement residence for perhaps 10 years or more. According to his obituary that appeared in *The Milford Times*, "*...His work took him on extensive travels, both in America and abroad .... After retiring from federal service he returned to West Highland to make his home on the Bamber farm, which he acquired, and after its sale made his home at West Highland village, looking after extended business interests.*" Also, according to an article in *The Milford Times*, Herbert's father Joseph sold the farm to Herbert in 1896. In 1908 his name appears on the plat map of Highland Township as the owner as well.

Records at the courthouse in Pontiac show that in 1928, Herbert sold the land to Theodore and Epsie Cowley, and moved about a mile east to his last residence, a home on the corner of Hickory Ridge Road and West Highland Road, known locally as M-29. In 1930, the Cowley's property was foreclosed on by the Union Joint Stock Land Bank. Nine years later, in 1939, the bank sold the land to

a farmer, Leslie H. Fordyce. The property is now the home of the School Bell Daycare Center, who purchased it in 1977.

Herbert's 1920 passport application tells an interesting story. For the first time, he states the object of his trip as "Recreation," and says that he plans to travel to Cuba, Jamaica, the Bahamas, Bermuda, Panama, and Costa Rica, leaving from the ports of New Orleans, Tampa, and Key West *"as soon as practicable."* A photograph of Bamber at age 61 is attached to the application and, beside his picture is the typewritten note: *"Applicant wishes to state that he is a resident of Michigan and is in Philadelphia en route to the South; he will remain in Philadelphia awaiting the granting of his passport and will appreciate any consideration the Department may give to the early disposition of his application."* He lists his occupation as "civil engineer, retired."

The closer we come to the present, the less we see of Herbert. His name appears in the 1930 census, then 71 years old, and is listed as having "no occupation." His house listed as "R" for rented at \$15 per month.

Then in 1937, as reported in the December 17 issue of *The Milford Times*, *"Stricken with apoplexy, Herbert Bamber expired very unexpectedly Tuesday afternoon [December 14] at his home at West Highland. Having some business to transact at Pontiac, he had made arrangements to be driven over by his neighbor, Mrs. Perry Hewitt, who stopped for him at the appointed time of 1:30 p.m. He came out on the porch, put up a little card telling the probable time of return, as he was in the habit of doing when leaving home, and saying he would be ready presently, went inside. Mrs. Hewitt waited for nearly half an hour for him to emerge, before deciding to investigate, and found his lifeless body just inside the door, apparently having expired just after re-entering the house. He was in his 79th year and unmarried."*

## HERBERT BAMBER'S LEGACY

For years, lighthouse historians have known little of Herbert Bamber other than that he traveled around the country photographing lighthouses for the Light-House Board in the early 1890s. His crisp, clean, and composed images from that journey are remarkable gifts to us more than a century later. But as we now know, he was also a farmer, a teacher, a surveyor, a civil engineer, a resourceful problem solver, a dedicated public servant, a world traveler, a businessman, and a kind and devoted relative to his siblings, nephews, nieces, and cousins. Our picture of him may not be as clear as his exceptional lighthouse prints, but we now know significantly more of the story of a rural Michigan farm boy who left us an impressive legacy of lighthouses and their keepers at the end of the 19th century. Herbert might be surprised to find he is still remembered, but part of him, no doubt, would see the remembrance as a fitting complement to his photographs.

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*John Havel is a graphic designer with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in Research Triangle Park, N.C. He has been fascinated by the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse for many years, and this study of Herbert Bamber is an offshoot of a larger research effort to create an accurate photographic history and chronology of this interesting and beautiful lighthouse. John lives in Raleigh with his wife, Aida, who helps with his lighthouse research.*



**Herbert with family members (c. 1889).** Herbert standing far right, with sister Mary Elizabeth Buell seated with young Herbert Joseph Buell in her lap. Herbert's father, Joseph, is fifth from left, and his mother, Sarah Morse Bamber is on his right. The other family members are not known at this time. Photo courtesy Betty Buell Baldwin.

# The Outer Banks Lighthouse Society is pleased to announce its Fresnel Prism Awards for 2012



Each year the Outer Banks Lighthouse Society sponsors awards to individuals within the lighthouse community who have contributed significantly to the preservation of lighthouses and their history. These awards were presented at the Annual Keeper's Dinner October 2012.

**PRESIDENT'S AWARD:**

Rebecca Taylor

**CAPE HATTERAS AWARD:**

John Havel

**CURRITUCK BEACH LIGHTHOUSE AWARD:**

Tracy Norris

**OAK ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE AWARD:**

Bob Ahlers

## LIGHTHOUSE NEWS OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE OUTER BANKS LIGHTHOUSE SOCIETY

### PURPOSE OF THE OUTER BANKS LIGHTHOUSE SOCIETY

The purpose of the Outer Banks Lighthouse Society is to aid in the preservation of the lighthouses of the area and to work with the National Park Service and other agencies, both government and non-profit groups, to achieve the safe keeping of the buildings, artifacts and records of the U.S. Lighthouse Service.

**The Lighthouse News is the official publication of the Outer Banks Lighthouse Society.**

Editor – Cheryl Shelton-Roberts, Design-Bruce Roberts

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