

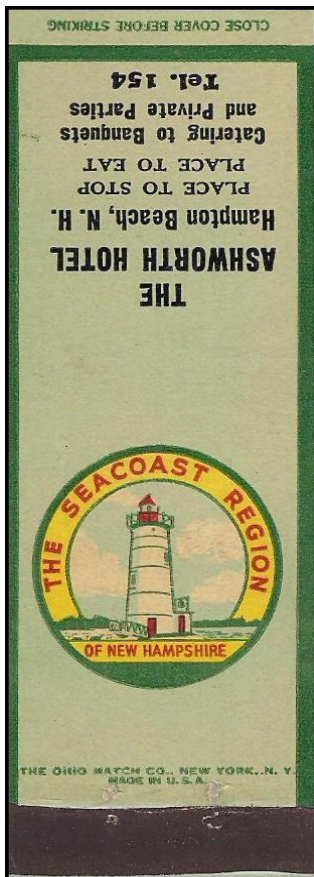


Before the development of clearly defined ports, mariners were guided by fires built on hilltops. Since raising the fire would improve the visibility, placing the fire on a platform became a practice that led to the development of the lighthouse. In antiquity, the lighthouse functioned more as an entrance marker to ports than as a warning signal for reefs and promontories, unlike many modern lighthouses.

Lighthouse keepers may have added combustible liquids to reduce the expenditure on fuel and keep the light steady during gales, but little information exists from the time. Eventually, the light was protected from the wind by glass windows, and large mirrors assisted in projecting the light beam as far as possible. It is likely that lighthouses would have required considerable labor for transporting the fuel and maintaining the flame.

During the Middle Ages, Roman lighthouses fell into disuse, but some remained functional, such as the Farum Brigantium, now known as the Tower of Hercules, in Spain. As navigation improved, lighthouses gradually expanded into Western and Northern Europe. One of the oldest working lighthouses there is Hook Lighthouse at Hook Head in Ireland.

A century later, in the Late Middle Ages, a 40-foot tower was built by Edward the Black Prince at Cordouan near the Gironde estuary. One hundred years later, in 1581, a new one was built, finally completed in 1611. It



symbolized French maritime power and prestige. The interior had sumptuous king's apartments, decorated pillars and murals. Its upper level was rebuilt in 1788, and the lighthouse has remained active since.

Lighthouses have always had a special place Americana. The first lighthouse in what is now the US goes back to 1715, so the story of American lighthouses spans the entire history of the United States. Used as the setting in countless novels and films, lighthouses have come to represent romance, independence, and hardiness, although, because of their isolated locations, they have become a favorite setting for monster stories, as well.

The United States has had some 1,000 lighthouses. Michigan has the most of any state, with over 150 past and present. Since 1939, most lighthouses have been built and maintained by the Coast Guard. As their importance has declined (with the use of radar, etc.), and public interest declining as a result, the Coast Guard has been handing over ownership, and in some cases responsibility for running them, to other parties, mainly the National Park Service under the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act of 2000. [en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/lighthouse]

Kathie Williman's, MD, collection numbered 807 as of October 2014.

