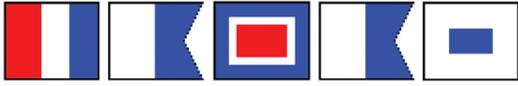


Michigan *TimeTraveler*

An educational supplement produced by Lansing Newspapers In Education, Inc. and the Michigan Historical Center

Sentinel on the Sand

Stormy Lake Huron has sunk many ships. Today's Time Traveler visits Tawas Point and the lighthouse established there to guide sailors safely into the harbor.



Sands Shift, Lighthouse Moves

During the 20 years following the building of the first lighthouse, wind and waves added sand to Tawas Point. In 1873 the Light-House Board reported, "The point has steadily made to the southward and westward, and the extremity of it is now more than a mile from the light." The light would soon be too far inland to be useful to ships.

The Lighthouse Service district engineer recommended building a new—taller and better—tower closer to the water. Congress provided the funding, and construction started in August 1876. The new lighthouse—with a 5th order Fresnel lens like the first, but about 22 feet taller—was ready when the sailing season began in spring 1877. In 1891 the lighthouse received a new, brighter, 4th order lens.

When built in 1876, water lapped at the base of the Tawas Point Lighthouse. The historic photograph shows the crib of wood—filled with stones and sand—that protected it from the water. Since then deposits of sand have continued to increase the size of Tawas Point. In 1899 a fog signal was built at the new tip of the point—then already a ten-minute walk from the lighthouse. Over a century later the lighthouse is even farther from its tip. It is part of Tawas Point State Park. The Michigan Departments of Natural Resources and of History, Arts and Libraries are working to restore it. Exhibits in the keeper's house will tell the story of life and work at the lighthouse.



TAWAS POINT

Neil Thornton



Students from Hiawatha Elementary School, Okemos, explore the Lakes and Land Gallery during a tour of the Michigan Historical Museum.

KID'S History



Tawas Point Lighthouse. State Historic Preservation Office

A Harbor of Refuge

After Michigan became a state in 1837, shipping boomed. On Lake Huron boats took settlers north and returned south with lumber, fish and other resources for Saginaw, Detroit and other cities. When storms rose on the lake many boats turned toward Tawas Point (then called Ottawa Point) north of Saginaw Bay to ride out the storm at anchor in Tawas Bay.

By 1850, so many ships passed Tawas Point that the federal government approved building a lighthouse there. The Lighthouse Service built a 45-foot-high tower with a separate keeper's house. The light tower can be seen in the background of the photo of the life saving crew taken during the 1870s.



Michigan Historical Museum

It opened for the 1853 shipping season. Sailors saw a white light with alternating white flashes from a system of lamps

and reflectors. In 1856 the Lighthouse Service replaced the lamps with a 5th order Fresnel lens with a flashing signal.

Cleaning, Painting, Running Signal

The Tawas Point Lighthouse tower is made of red brick. Why, then, is it white in most photographs? Whitewashing it was one of the keeper's many chores. He—and his assistants, if he had any—painted, cleaned and polished brass. He tended the light daily, cleaning the glass, filling the oil lamp and trimming the wick. At the steam-powered fog signal, he loaded wood, swept out ashes, cleaned the pipes and fired the boiler. He kept many structures in good repair: tower, house, barn, privy, oil house, boathouse, icehouse, docks and a boardwalk between the lighthouse and fog signal. He—or someone—went into town almost daily to fetch mail and supplies. (This view from the lantern room of the tower includes the oilhouse and storehouse.)

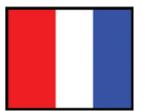
The Lighthouse Service required that lighthouse keepers record "important events at the station, bad weather, etc." in a daily journal. Samuel C. Palmer, who sailed on the Great Lakes before working for the Lighthouse Service, tended the Tawas Point Light from 1887 to 1910. He made these entries (punctuation added) in his journal 100 years ago this month.



State Historic Preservation Office

1904 MONTH.	DAY.	RECORD OF IMPORTANT EVENTS AT THE STATION, BAD WEATHER, &c.
May	12th	Keeper cleaned tools in Oil Room and Shop Assistant painted Oil House roof and fore platform. Quite a fleet of boats mooring. Schooner McBride sailed into flatt about 200 ft. south of spar buoy. Life savers at work at her. Bar. 29.45. Ther. 48°. Thunder w/ lightning.
"	13th	Keeper to town from 8 Am to 3 PM for suppls and lime also to see about wood for signal. Assistant around station. To wet to do any fitting out. The Schooner McBride floated off Bar at 11 Am. Life Saving crew out to her. Bar. 29.30. Ther. 60 all day.
"	14th	Keeper Cleaned brass in Oil Room and Lantern Room. Shop and Hen Coop painted. Storm steady outside. Assistant to town from 2 to 6 PM. Inspected light and fog signal. Found them OK. Four boats mooring. Bar. 29.25. Ther. 50.
"	Sunday 15th	Both of us around the Station all day. Four visitors here from Tawas this PM. Quite a fleet of boats mooring around this Station. Heavy rain this PM and quite cool. Bar. 29.10. Ther. 50. Wind fresh and variable. A very nasty day.
"	16th	Keeper cleaning house. Assistant filled oil [] and cleaning at Signal. Quite a fleet of boats mooring at this Station. Very quiet and not a person near this station. Bar. 29.20 Ther. 42 7 Am 60 noon 54 sundown [].
"	17th	Keeper cleaning house and raking up grounds. Assistant cutting brush and raking up grounds. Man delivered lime this PM. Men sawing wood for signal. Bar. 28.35. Ther. 48 Wind fresh NE. Weather clear and cool.
"	18th	Keeper cleaning house. Helped pile lumber in shop. Assistant cleaned Shop. Away from station from 6:30 PM to 12:30. Three men leave from L.S. Station. One boat came in the Harbor this PM. Two men cutting wood. Bar. 29.33. Ther. 48. Gale NW.

(Bar.: barometer; Ther.: thermometer)



Aerial view of Tawas Point. State Historic Preservation Office

Things to do

- Take an online tour of Michigan lighthouses at Michigan's Historic Sites Online (www.michiganhistory.org). Find more Web sites by typing "Michigan lighthouse" into a Web search engine.
- Plan a family visit this summer to the Tawas Point Lighthouse or another Michigan lighthouse that is open to the public. Check with the site about open days and hours before you go.
- Find newspaper articles about Great Lakes' shipping (business pages) and sailing and fishing (sports pages).
- Comments or suggestions? Write to TimeTraveler@michigan.gov.

Michigan Week 2004
Celebrate Michigan's lighthouses and other wonders during Michigan Week, May 15-21. This year's theme is "This is YOUR Michigan." This year marks the 50th anniversary of Michigan Week.

Lansing Newspapers In Education (NIE) provides *Lansing State Journal* newspapers and supplemental teaching materials for area classrooms at little or no cost to the schools. The newspaper becomes a "living textbook," providing students with timely and relevant topics for discussion in class and at home.

If you are interested in sponsoring classroom papers or using the newspaper in your classroom, please contact Patricia O'Hearn, NIE Manager at (517) 377-1242.

More Tawas Point Lighthouse Facts

The Light-House Service built many lighthouses from the same plans. The lighthouse at Tawas Point is similar to the Au Sable Point Light and the St. Helena Island Light. In these lighthouses an enclosed passageway connects the tower and keeper's house. It is such a typical Michigan lighthouse that a 58-foot-tall model of it was built to decorate Detroit's Tricentennial Park in 2003.

Tower

- Height: 67 feet • Diameter at base: 16 feet • Diameter at parapet: 9 feet 6 inches
 - Brick outer wall/inner wall: 24 inches/8 inches • Air space between walls: 24 inches • Sides on lantern: 10
 - Miles light can be seen: 16 • Lens focal plane: 70 feet above Lake Huron's average water level
- Keeper's House: Length: 43 feet; Width: 26 feet

At the Michigan Historical Museum

- See a third order lighthouse lens up close in the 1930s Great Depression mezzanine gallery.
- Go to the Lakes and Land gallery to see the lens at the top of its "tower" and learn more about the preservation of Michigan's lighthouses.

The Michigan Historical Museum, 702 W. Kalamazoo Street, is located two blocks west of the Capitol in downtown Lansing. Museum admission is free. Hours: Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.; Sunday, 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. The museum telephone hotline: (517) 373-3559. The museum is part of the Michigan Historical Center, Department of History, Arts and Libraries. Visit us on the Web at www.michiganhistory.org.

