

LIGHTHOUSE HISTORY (CONT FROM WEBSITE)

At the beginning of the Civil War, Confederate soldiers destroyed the lighthouse to prevent the Union Navy, that was blockading the coast, from using it for navigation. A new Hunting Island lighthouse, constructed between 1873 and 1875 with its distinctive black and white coloring, was designed to be moved in case of barrier island erosion. It had a segmented, bolted-together, cast iron shell lined with brick. Eight cast iron landings joined by curved staircases provide access to the lantern at the top. With the brick lining, landings and staircases removed, the tower could be disassembled and moved.

Within a few years, the sea had cut away the northern end of the island and was endangering the lighthouse and associated buildings. Between 1888 and 1889, it was moved one and one quarter miles southwest of the old site, where it stands today. The following year, the keeper's dwelling, oil house, and other buildings were relocated to the new light station site. A road and rails for a tram were also constructed to transport supplies and cases of oil for the light from a pier on Johnson Creek.

The lighthouse was equipped with a Second Order Fresnel lens, the light from which could be seen 18 miles at sea. The light station was staffed by a Principal Keeper and two Assistant Keepers of the US Lighthouse Service who lived at the remote station with their families.

The lighthouse was active until June 16, 1933, when it was decommissioned and replaced by an offshore lighted whistle buoy. Subsequently, the light station was acquired by Beaufort County, as was the remainder of Hunting Island in 1935. In 1938, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) began development of Hunting Island into a park. Sadly, in May 1938, the keeper's house was accidentally destroyed by fire. Later that year, Beaufort County transferred Hunting Island to

the South Carolina Forest Service. A bridge to Hunting Island was completed in 1939 and the new park opened to the public in June 1941.

Hunting Island and the lighthouse was to play a role in WWII. In April 1942, the lighthouse became a US Army Air Corps radio tower. By November of that year the US Coast Guard assumed control of the island as part of the Coastal Beach Patrol system and 22 personnel were stationed on the island. The next month the park was closed to the public for the duration of WWII.

Postwar development of the park continued. It was desegregated in 1966 and transferred to the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (SCPRT) in 1967. As an iconic feature of the park, the lighthouse and remaining light station structures have undergone periodic restoration over the years.

Organized in 1993, the Friends of Hunting Island volunteers have assisted in the renovation of outbuildings and have collected lighthouse artifacts for exhibits. The Friends also completed archaeological digs at the station cistern and the keeper's house.

In 1995, with approval from the Coast Guard, SCPRT installed a light in the lighthouse as a Private Aid to Navigation to represent the historical use of the lighthouse to park visitors. Its present identifying flash pattern (one flash every 30 seconds) duplicates the historic pattern the lighthouse displayed from 1875 to 1933.

A team of park staff and volunteers carry out the interpretation of this historic landmark lighthouse through docent support and regular guided tours.

Lighthouse Facts

- 1859 - First lighthouse, built of brick, begins operation on Hunting Island.

- 1861 - Brick lighthouse destroyed by Confederate forces at start of Civil War.
- 1875 - Rebuilt lighthouse begins operation. Built of 1200 lb. cast iron plates lined with brick so it can be dismantled and moved if necessary.
- 1875 - Lighthouse is equipped with a second order Fresnel lens which displays the light 133 ft. above mean high water for a visibility of 18 miles.
- 1888-1889 - Lighthouse is dismantled and moved 1 1/4 miles south due to rapidly eroding northern end of Hunting Island.
- 1933 - Lighthouse Service decommissions the lighthouse which is replaced by an offshore buoy.
- 1935-1938 - Hunting Island and light station property transferred to Beaufort County then to State of South Carolina Comm. of Forestry to become a State Park. Civilian Conservation Corps(CCC) operating on Hunting Island to construct a State Park.
- 1938 - Lighthouse keeper's house is destroyed by fire.
- 1940-1941 - State Park begins operation, has more than 5000 visitors.
- 1942-1945 - Park is closed to the public due to WW II. Army Air Corps uses the lighthouse as a radio station. Coast Guard uses Hunting Island as part of their beach patrol system.
- 1961-1962 - First order Fresnel lens from the Charleston lighthouse (now the Morris Island lighthouse) transferred to Hunting Island for display in the

base of the lighthouse.

- 1966-1967 - Hunting Island State Park transferred to SCPRT.
- 1972 - Hunting Island Lighthouse is placed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- 1974 & 1983 - Exterior of the lighthouse is painted.
- 1992 - Interior of the lighthouse is painted and the outbuildings are renovated.
- 1993 - Exterior repainted and interior masonry repainted.
- 1995 - Lighthouse is designated as a Private Aid to Navigation with a flashing light visible 5 miles.
- 1995 - Archeological excavation of keeper's house foundation.
- 2005 - Lighthouse is reopened to visitors after 22 months of restoration of the interior steps.
- 2009 - Exterior repainted.
- 2012 - Interior repainted.