

Theodore Thomas Gaillard and his wife Ellen E.

The first lighthouse keeper in our series is the last Principal Keeper that served at Hunting Island Lighthouse before it was decommissioned June 15, 1933. His wife Ellen is included, and although she was not an official Lighthouse Service employee, she was, as were all lighthouse keepers' wives, very much an assistant keeper. However, there were keepers' wives that were official salaried Lighthouse Service employees, although none served at Hunting Island Lighthouse.

Theodore T. Gaillard began his Lighthouse Service career in the 6th Lighthouse District (Keepers were hired at the District level) and was appointed as the 2nd Assistant Keeper, July 1, 1911, at the Jupiter Inlet Light Station, FL. Since 1900, he had been working as a mariner in Savannah, GA where he met and married his wife Ellen in 1907. The position as a 2nd Assistant Keeper was usually the entry level position to learn on the job. On February 10th, 1916, he was transferred to Mosquito Inlet Light Station, FL as 2nd Assistant Keeper and in May of 1916 his annual salary was raised from \$456. to \$516.

His service at Mosquito Inlet was significant because it qualified him for the WW I Victory Medal. This was because the Mosquito Inlet Light Station was transferred (as were over 20 others) to the US Navy from April 1917 to June 1919. The Keepers at those stations were inducted into the US Naval Reserve Force therefore they were considered military personnel and so were eligible for the medal. At the end of October 1917, Theodore was transferred and promoted to Assistant Keeper at the Georgetown Light Station, SC with an increase in annual salary to \$600.

On December 21, 1923, he was again transferred and promoted to 1st Assistant Keeper at the Cape Romain Light Station, SC with his annual salary now \$780. After serving there for about 3 years he was transferred and promoted on January 1, 1927 to Principal Keeper at Hunting Island Light Station with an annual salary of \$1300.00. He was here for over 6 years until the lighthouse was decommissioned June 15, 1933. At that time he accepted a position as Keeper at the Lower Flats Range Lights on the Savannah River although it was at a cut in salary from \$1620 to \$1500 per year.

On October 5, 1925, while 1st Assistant Keeper at Cape Romain Light, he was officially commended for rendering assistance to a motor boat with 7 passengers drifting in heavy seas and high wind near the light station. Such commendations were not unusual in lighthouse keepers' service records. A subsequent commendation however, was very unusual, received while at Hunting Island Light. It was for rendering assistance on December 23 & 24, 1929 to a pilot in distress who landed his aircraft on the beach at Hunting Island.

After serving at the Lower Flats Range Lights Light Station in GA until August 31, 1942, Theodor Gaillard retired from the US Coast Guard in which he had served as a civilian employee since July 1, 1939. This was when the US Coast Guard assumed responsibility for the nations lighthouses. After retirement, he and his wife Ellen came to Beaufort where they owned a small farm in the Seabrook area. His wife Ellen passed away in Beaufort in Nov. 1958. Theodore Gaillard passed away in June 1972 at the age of 95. Theodore and Ellen had no children of their own however Ellen had a son earlier and further descendents reside in South Carolina and elsewhere. He and Ellen are buried in the St. Helena Parish Church Cemetery in Beaufort and in August 2018 they were honored with the placement of Lighthouse Service and Coast Guard grave markers on their graves.