



San Juan Island Lighthouses

By: Edrie and Terri Vinson

Since 1883 there have been lights to aid in navigation in the San Juan Islands. The first was requested by the captain of the SS Libby who navigated at night through the narrow channel between Crane Island and Pole Pass. He arranged for William Cadwell to hold a light for him as he passed through on his way to Deer Harbor.

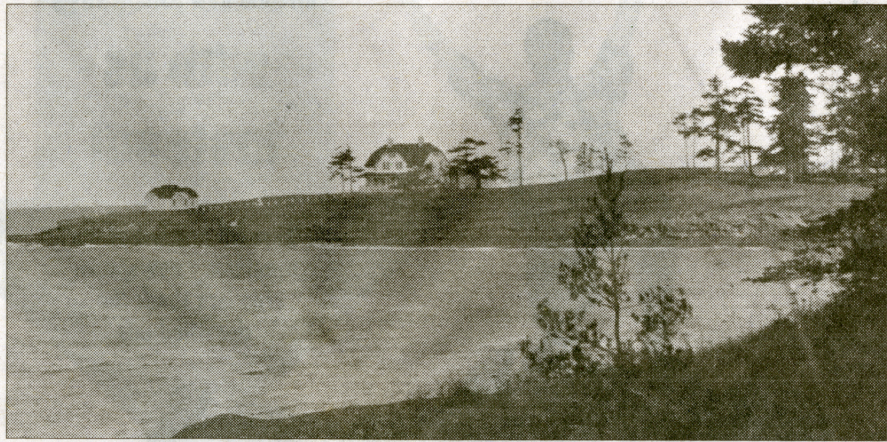
But greater attention to the risks of shipping through rock lined waters came on February 19, 1886, when the coal-carrying John Rosenfeld under tow by the tugboat Tacoma out of Nanaimo ran aground off East Point on Saturna Island, just 3 miles from Alden Point on Patos. The vessel was attempting to traverse Boundary Passage on its way to San Francisco.

Captain U. Seabree of the Thirteenth Lighthouse District in Portland placed a stake light at Pole Pass on Orcas Island in 1887. This was the first government funded light in the San Juan Islands. The following year another post light was placed at Cattle Point, the southern-most tip of San Juan Island where the Haro Straits meets the San Juan Channel.

Then Major T. H. Handbury, United States Engineer in the Portland District, announced in May 1890 that a number of lighthouses and fog signals would be built in the Pacific Northwest, and among them were a light and fog signal for Patos Island and a light at Turn Point. August 1892 the Seattle Post-Intelligencer announced that Handbury was soliciting bids for "materials and labor necessary for construction," the first major building projects of the USLHE in our county. The construction was completed the following year, and the light burned on Patos December 1, 1893.

The Obstruction Pass Lights began about 1910. According to Jane Barfoot-Hodde, her father, Cecil Willis, serviced the lights from his row boat. There were two post lights, a red one on the western end guiding boats to Peavine or Obstruction Pass, and a white light on the eastern tip of the island.

Lime Kiln Lighthouse first light was 1919, situated along a deep channel of Haro Strait on San Juan Island. The Coast Guard became responsible for these lights in 1939, and by 1974 they were an automated operation.



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