

Book Reviews

Kevin M. McCarthy, *Florida Lighthouses* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1990).

Reviewed by Robert B. Beachboard, Plantation, Florida.

This book is a collection of 31 historical sketches each of which is complemented by a color painting and a map with directions. It encourages first hand observation of 30 of the subjects. These are permanent structures, some of which are inactive, and others of which are under the Lighthouse Automation and Modernization Program of the United States Coast Guard (LAMP) and are unmanned for the most part. The St. Johns Lightship may be moved back to Jacksonville as a museum. Removed structures are discussed in the context of one of the 30.

The historical nature of the subjects is emphasized by noting that at present electronic navigation and sophisticated cartography have greatly reduced the importance of the lights for commercial shipping. Currently the tall lights are regarded as navigation aids along with lighted buoys, piles, and skeleton structures. On page 100 an industrial smokestack with strobe lights is mentioned. Almost all of the light stations were constructed in the nineteenth century. They harken back to a time of wilderness when darkness, winds, reefs, and shoals posed a constant threat to shipping and caused a vast number of boats to become wrecked. A lighthouse on Anastasia Island at the entrance to St. Augustine was commissioned by the United States in 1824. It collapsed in 1880. The United States lightship *Aurora Borealis* began serving Pensacola in 1823. In 1825, the first United States lighthouse on Florida's Gulf coast was lit at the entrance to Pensacola Bay. In 1851, an investigator found that the 40 foot structure, 40 feet above sea level, was little better than a harbor light, and a taller tower was subsequently constructed. The Cape Florida Lighthouse at 65 feet was first commissioned in 1825. At 95 feet it is

still active. A 65 foot lighthouse at Key West was also commissioned in 1825. The Hurricane of 1846 destroyed it.

Starting with these four locations in the mid-1820's, the system was expanded with the intention of creating a chain of beacons along the Atlantic traffic lanes and an encouragement to commercial navigation in general in both the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic. The St. Johns Light Station was commissioned in 1954.

Due to their strategic locations, the light stations also have a role in political uprisings. The Cape Florida Lighthouse was besieged by Seminoles in 1836. In 1837 Indians attacked a Carysfort Reef lightship party. Many lights were deactivated by supporters of the Confederacy. An exception was the Dry Tortugas Lighthouse near the United States Fort Jefferson which included the Garden Key Lighthouse. During World War II, some lights were diminished in intensity to deter attacks. The author notes on page 31 that during one period German submarines sank 24 Allied ships in waters off the Cape Canaveral Lighthouse. On page 63 use of an offshore shoal lighthouse is mentioned in connection with smuggling control, and a general problem with vandals is described.

The use of a bibliography or notes would improve the authority of the work. Also, the use of specific road directions, opening times, and telephone numbers are details that are perhaps more appropriate in a series of editions. Basically though Professor McCarthy's study is concise and readable.