

Lesson Plan: Lighthouse Libraries

Lesson plan prepared and provided by the Education Committee of the
Sable Points Lighthouse Keepers Association (SPLKA)

Content Area: 4th grade Social Studies

Lesson Title: Lighthouse Libraries

“In 1876 portable libraries were first introduced in the Light-House Establishment and furnished to all light vessels and inaccessible offshore light stations with a selection of reading materials. These libraries were contained in a portable wooden case, each with a printed listing of the contents posted inside the door. Proper arrangements were made for the exchange of these libraries at intervals, and for revision of the contents as books became obsolete in accordance with suggestions obtained from public library authorities.” (Michigan Lighthouse Conservancy website) A lighthouse library cabinet could hold 40-50 books.

Lighthouse libraries were the bookmobiles for people who lived at a lighthouse. Lighthouse library cabinets were delivered by water with other items that would be needed, on what is called a lighthouse tender. Some of the supplies delivered at Big Sable Point Lighthouse between 1922 and 1942 included coal, oil, kerosene, a cook stove and three refrigerators. (Tag, p. 57)

Objective(s):

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- Articulate the importance of lighthouses to local communities and as an integral part of Michigan’s maritime history.
- Advocate for funding for lighthouse libraries, especially for children’s materials.
- Describe what it would have been like to be children living at one of SPLKA’s lighthouses during the late 1800s and early 1900s.
- Recommend books for a lighthouse library cabinet and provide a rationale for why these books should be included.
- List of the books that they would like to receive in a lighthouse library cabinet.
- Construct a lighthouse library cabinet, which could then be used to solicit books for donation to the school, a library or other nonprofit organization.

MI Content Standards:

History

Living and Working Together: Use historical thinking to understand the past in the local community. *Lighthouses were an essential part of community living and commerce, especially when they depended on the Lake Michigan.*

Michigan History: Use historical thinking to understand the past in Michigan. *Lighthouses were an integral part of Michigan's maritime history.*

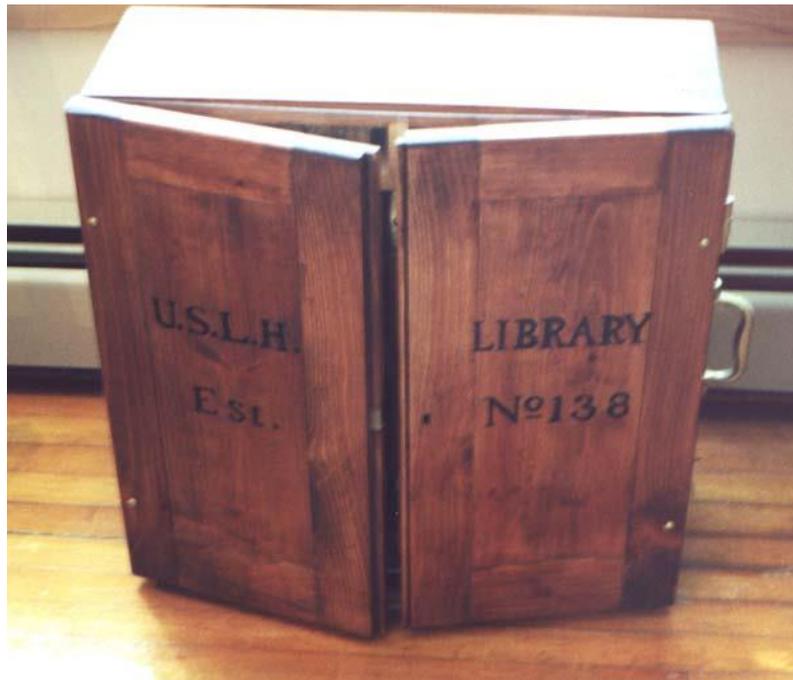
Public Discourse, Decision Making the Citizen Involvement

Persuasive Communication: Communicate a reasoned position on a public issue. *Why are lighthouse libraries needed for keepers and their families, especially children?*

Civic Participation: Act constructively to further the public good. *If we stepped back in time, what would students do to provide lighthouse libraries to keepers and their families, especially children?*

Materials:

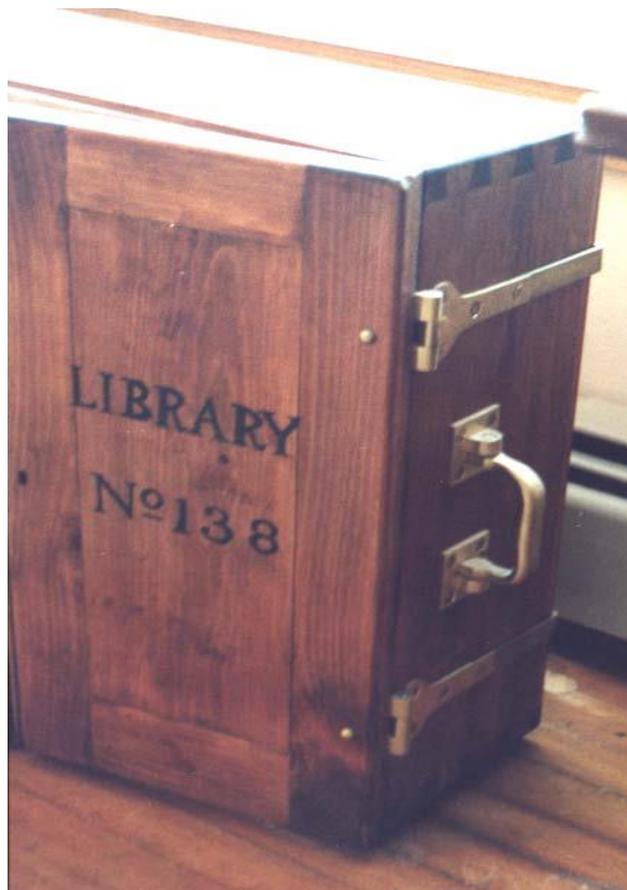
- Books and websites per the Resources section below.
- Images of lighthouse library cabinets and their features from the websites in the Resources section below.



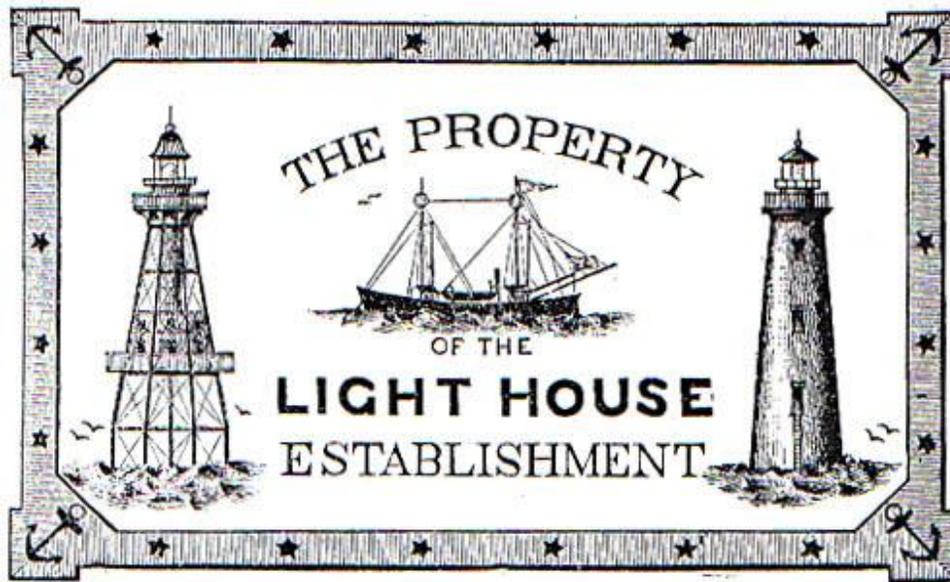
Lighthouse traveling libraries were used to supply light stations with reading material. All boxes were numbered as this one was, #138. (Michigan Lighthouse Conservancy website)



Library box looking at the interior where books were stored. (Michigan Lighthouse Conservancy website)



Lighthouse traveling libraries were constructed for rugged use. Note all the heavy brass fittings and dove-tail box construction. (Michigan Lighthouse Conservancy website)



The beautiful 3" x 4 ½" bookplate label bears a wonderful image of an iron pile lighthouse and Minot's Ledge Light, and a lightship and bears the words "The Property of the Light House Establishment." (Michigan Lighthouse Conservancy website)



Another beautiful lighthouse library cabinet – see the list of items included in the library pasted on the inside of the cabinet doors. (Milwaukee County Historical Society)

- Materials included in library lighthouse cabinets.

“The books were carefully selected from books of a good standard appropriate to the families who would use them. While largely fiction, other classes of literature were included in reasonable proportions including technical books when requested. The books and periodicals contained in the libraries remained the property of the Light-House

Establishment and each was marked in the front with the official Light-House Establishment bookplate.” (Michigan Lighthouse Conservancy website) As stated by Holland, “Each library contained a mixture of novels, histories, biographies, adventures, religious works and magazines” (Holland, p. 50) The lighthouse library cabinets would be picked up at regular intervals and exchanged for a new set of reading materials.

Among the titles suitable for children reported to be in lighthouse libraries were *The Five Little Peppers and How They Grew*, *Robinson Crusoe* and *Treasure Island*, along with books of poetry.

Resources:

Gaylord, Susan. *Lighthouse Libraries*, <http://blog.susangaylord.com/2010/10/lighthouse-libraries.html>, Oct. 8, 2010, accessed 6/25/22.

Holland, Jr., Francis Ross. *America’s Lighthouses: An Illustrated History*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1972, p. 50.

House, Katherine L. *Lighthouses for Kids: History, Science, and Lore with 21 Activities*. Chicago, IL: Chicago Review Press, 2008, p. 15.

Michigan Lighthouse Conservancy. *USLHE Traveling Library*, <http://www.michiganlights.com/lhlibrary.htm>, Sept. 22, 2003, accessed 6/25/22.

Milwaukee County Historical Society. *Lighthouse Library*, <https://milwaukeehistory.net/unlocking-the-vault/lighthouse-library-text/>, accessed 6/26/22.

Nix, Larry T. *Lighthouse Libraries*, <https://libraryhistorybuff.blogspot.com/2011/09/lighthouse-libraries.html>, Sept. 4, 2011, accessed 6/25/22.

Sable Points Lighthouse Keepers Association, <http://splka.org>, accessed 6/25/22.

Tag, Thomas A. *Big Sable Point Lighthouse*. Ludington, MI: The Big Sable Point Lighthouse Keeper’s Association, 1997, pp. 56-57.

Vincent, M. The traveling lighthouse library. *My Eclectic Café*, <https://myeclecticcafe.wordpress.com/2019/04/11/the-traveling-lighthouse-library/>, Apr. 11, 2019, accessed 6/26/22.

Zarrelli, Natalie. *The Most Precious Cargo for Lighthouses Across America Was a Traveling Library*, <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/the-most-precious-cargo-for-lighthouses-across-america-was-a-traveling-library>, Feb. 18, 2016, accessed 6/25/22.

Activities:

1. Students will discuss the importance of lighthouses to local communities and as an integral part of Michigan's maritime history.
2. Students will advocate for funding for lighthouse libraries, especially for children's materials.
3. Describe what it would have been like to be children living at one of SPLKA's lighthouses during the late 1800s and early 1900s. How would they have spent their time (before modern communication technologies)?
4. Students will each recommend a book for a lighthouse library cabinet and provide a rationale for why that book should be included.
5. Students will make a list of the books that they would like to receive in a lighthouse library cabinet.
6. Students, with the teacher's assistance, will use cardboard and other materials to construct a lighthouse library cabinet.
7. Optional: The library lighthouse cabinet could be used to solicit books for donation to the school, a library or other nonprofit organization.

Assessment:

- Students will be able to discuss the importance of lighthouses to local communities and as an integral part of Michigan's maritime history.
- Students will make a compelling argument for the lighthouse library program and funding for it, especially for children's materials.
- Students will describe what it would have been like if they had lived at a lighthouse during the late 1800s and early 1900s and how they would have spent their time (without communication technologies).
- Students will each recommend a book to include in a lighthouse library and support their choices. (Teachers: You could provide a budget and then have students decide by discussion and voted, based on the recommendations, which books should be selected.)
- Students will make a list of the books that they would like to receive in a lighthouse library cabinet. (Teachers: You could compare the lists to see which books are the most popular or surprising choices. The list could be shared with the local public or school libraries.)
- Students will use cardboard and other materials to construct a lighthouse library cabinet. (Teachers: The library lighthouse cabinet could be used to solicit books for donation to the school, a library or other nonprofit organization. Or students could donate their own books.)

Notes:

Note to teachers: SPLKA welcomes your feedback on this lesson plan. Please send any comments and suggestions to Cherie Hockenberger at the following address: SPLKAOfficemanager@gmail.com. Thank you!