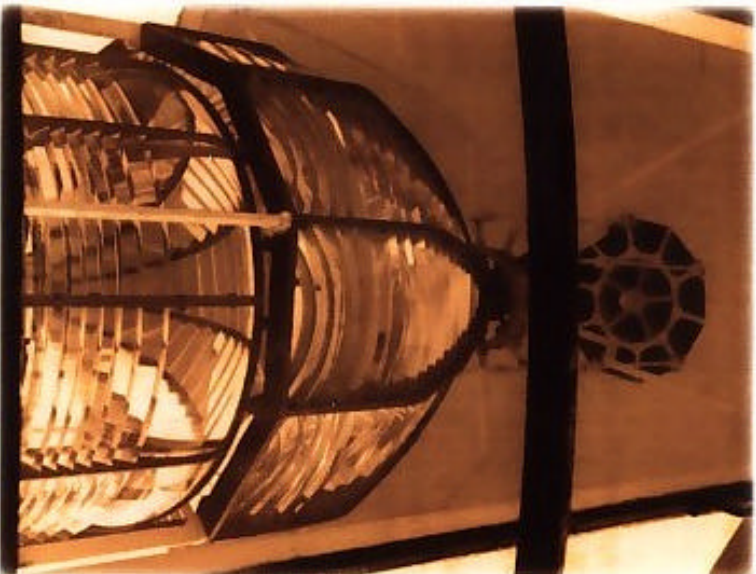


Little Known Facts

The 3rd order Fresnel lens at Little Sable emitted a constant white light, but at fixed intervals would flash a brighter light. The flash was produced by the rotation of the top part of the lens, powered by a weight driven clockwork mechanism. This type of lens is very rare.



(Marilyn Knight photo)

James Davenport, the first lighthouse keeper at Little Sable Point, was the grandson of a Native American chief, Chief Wanbojeeg.

J. Arthur Hunter was the longest serving lighthouse keeper. He started in 1890 as assistant keeper and was promoted to head keeper in 1899. In 1905 he put glass insulators on a stool he used while on watch in the tower, to prevent being struck by lightning. He retired in 1922.

From February 15 to March 17, 1906, the light shone steadily instead of flashing, because the clockwork mechanism was being repaired.

The original name of the lighthouse was Petite Pointe au Sable, French for Little Point of Sand. In 1910 the official name was changed to Little Sable Point Light Station.

Also in 1910, Little Sable Point had a woman, Mrs. H.G. Hunter, as the lighthouse keeper for one month, while the regular lighthouse keeper was on temporary leave.

Between 1985 and 1989, while D.M. Martin was the keeper, a defective chimney caused a fire in the lighthouse dwelling.

There were 15 keepers at Little Sable. The last keeper was Henry "Hank" Vavrina, who transferred to Big Sable Point Lighthouse when Little Sable was automated.

a brief history



(Jenny Kozecki photo)

LITTLE SABLE POINT LIGHTHOUSE

Sable Points Lighthouse Keepers' Association

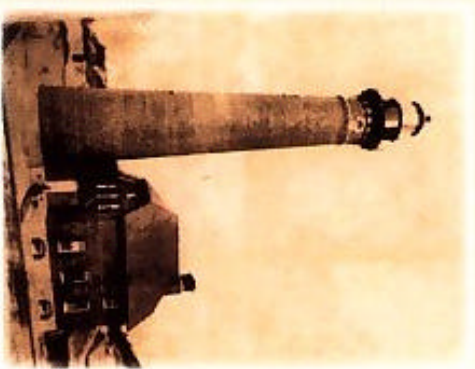


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In 1867 lumbering was the main business in Golden Township, where Little Sable Point Lighthouse is located. Since there were few roads, most of the lumber was shipped by boat. Shipwrecks in the area led to calls for a lighthouse. Ships had very limited navigational equipment, so lighthouses were an important contribution to safety, by enabling mariners to determine their position.

The need for a lighthouse at this location was first mentioned by the Lighthouse Board in their 1870 annual report. Congress approved funding for construction of the lighthouse in 1872 and land was reserved. Plans were drawn by Major of Engineers, O.M. Poe, and building began in April of 1873. The crew and supplies were brought in by boat. Construction of the 115' tower and 2 1/2 story brick dwelling was completed in the spring of 1874. The light shone for the first time at the opening of navigation that year.

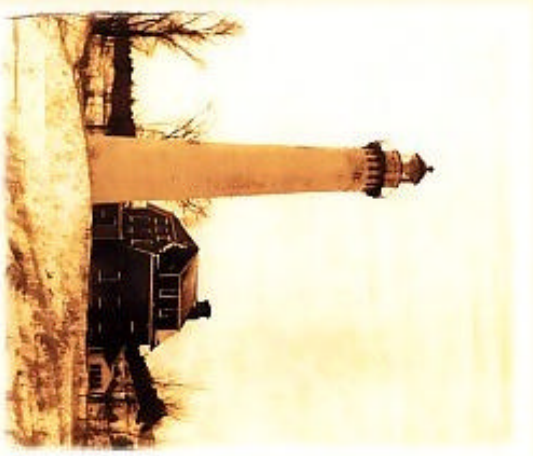


(Photo courtesy: Oceana County Historical and Genealogical Society)
Oldest known picture of the
Little Sable Point Light Station, ca.1890

The light was produced by a lamp with three concentric wicks which initially burned lard oil, but later burned kerosene. A lens made of hand-ground glass prisms intensified the light so it could be seen for 19 miles out into the lake.

In order to make the tower more visible as a day-mark, the tower was painted white in May, 1899.

In 1911 the house was enlarged to better accommodate the keepers' growing families. Dormers on the north and south sides and windows in the attic were added.

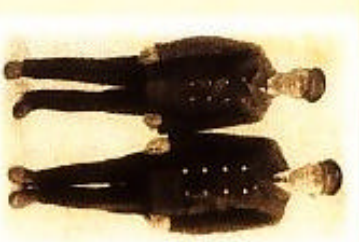


(Photo courtesy SPLKA archives)
© 1938

In 1915 the light was changed to an incandescent oil vapor lamp, similar to the kerosene-burning Coleman lanterns which use a mantle. This produced a brighter light.



(Photo courtesy: Oceana County Historical and Genealogical Society)
Lighthouse keeper, J. Arthur Hunter & wife, Gertrude, with Arthur's sister, Mary, ca. 1900



(Photo courtesy: Oceana County Historical and Genealogical Society)
Keeper, Wallace Hall,
& 1st Assistant, Henrik Olsen, ca. 1923

President Franklin D. Roosevelt abolished the U.S. Lighthouse Service in 1939 and jurisdiction for lighthouses was transferred to the U.S. Coast Guard.

Electricity became available to the lighthouse in 1954. The Coast Guard then electrified and automated the light, eliminating the need for a keeper.



(Photo courtesy:
Vavrina Family)

Keeper Henry Vavrina left on December 31, 1954, and the following spring the Coast Guard demolished the keepers' dwelling and outbuildings.

A land exchange between the U.S. Federal Government and the State of Michigan was approved in 1973. Michigan received the deed to the lighthouse and land in 1974.

To reduce maintenance, the Coast Guard removed the white paint from the tower in 1977.

The Sable Points Lighthouse Keepers' Association received a lease from the State of Michigan in 2005 and restoration began. In 2006 the tower was opened to the public.