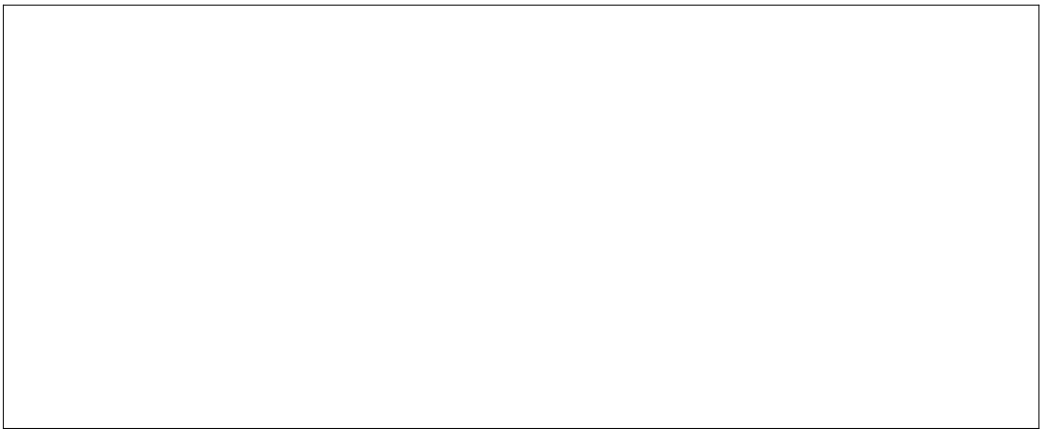
USA LIGHTHOUSE STAMPS

Since ancient times, light has been used as a navigational aid for ships. The Egyptian King Ptolemy I ordered the creation of what was probably the world?s first lighthouse, which was completed in 285 B.C. This structure was about four hundred feet tall, and had an open fire as its light source. It was located on the Island of Pharos, and survived for nearly 1,500 years.

Introduced in 1990, the Lighthouses stamp series commemorates the classic coastal sentinels that reflect our nation?s seafaring past.

1990 Lighthouses



2474a

This set of five booklet stamps was issued to celebrate the U.S. Lighthouse Service?s Bicentennial. The lighthouses pictured are Admiralty Head (WA), Cape Hatteras (NC), West Quoddy Head (ME), American Shoals (FL) and Sandy Hook (NJ)

1995 Great Lakes Lighthouses

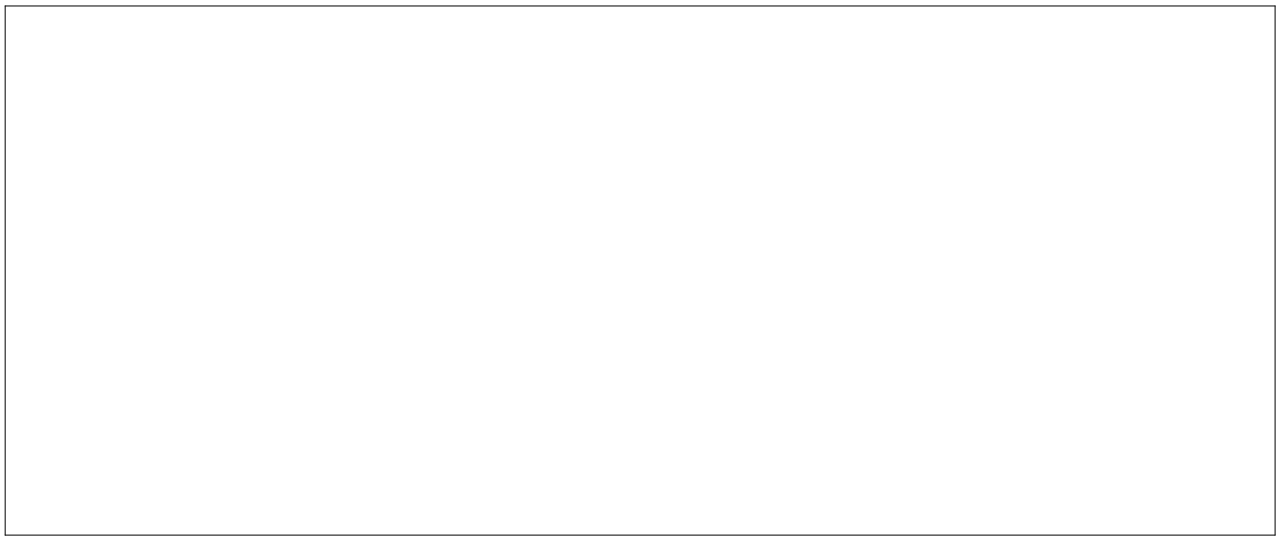


2973a

These five stamps depict five historical lighthouses, each from one of the Great Lakes: Spectacle Reef from Lake Huron, Thirty Mile Point on Lake Ontario, Split Rock from Lake Superior, Marblehead on Lake Erie, and St. Joseph on Lake Michigan.

USA LIGHTHOUSE STAMPS

2003 Southeastern Lighthouses



3791a

The original Cape Henry Light was abandoned as an active lighthouse in 1881. Despite several cracks in walls six-feet thick at the base, the tower still stands today. The Cape Lookout Lighthouse was painted in 1873 with the black-and-white, diagonally checkered pattern that still identifies it today. Threatened by erosion, the Morris Island Lighthouse was abandoned in 1962. Today, it stands surrounded by water, about 1,600 feet from the shore. The Tybee Island Lighthouse is still an important aid to ships navigating the mouth of the Savannah River. The 70,000-candlepower light can be seen for 18 miles. The Hillsboro Inlet Lighthouse is a cast-iron skeleton with a central stair cylinder. It was displayed at the 1904 St. Louis Exposition before being erected at Hillsboro Inlet to guard the Florida Reef at Pompano Beach.

2007 Pacific Lighthoues

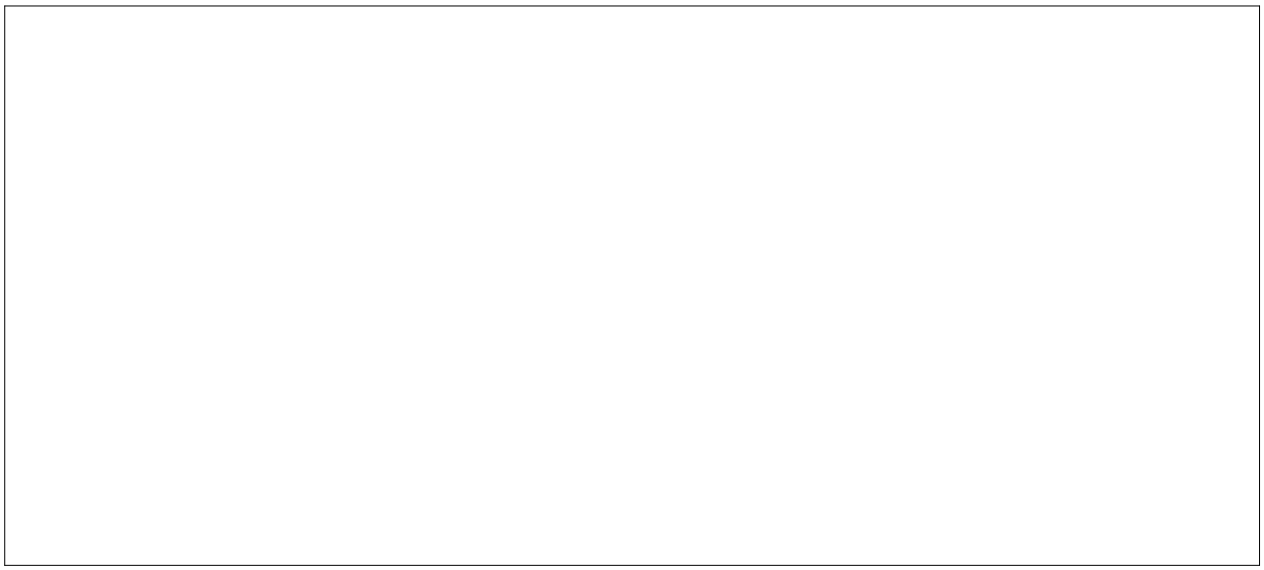


4150a

Located off California?s northern coast, St. George Reef Lighthouse marks a hazardous reef six miles from California?s shore, near Crescent City. Winchester Bay, Oregon, is the site of the Umpqua River Lighthouse. It was originally lit in 1857 to mark dangerous shifting sandbars that had caused many shipwrecks. Washington?s Gray?s Harbor lighthouse was first lit in 1898 to mark the channel into one of America?s most important lumber ports. Located in fog-prone northern Washington state, the light was also equipped with a windmill that powered two trumpet foghorns. Discovery of gold in the Yukon created a need for the Five Finger Islands Lighthouse in Frederick Sound, Alaska. The island of Oahu, Hawaii, is the site of the Diamond Head Lighthouse, built on the side of an extinct volcano. The lighthouse, which stands 147 feet above sea level, was first lit in 1918.

USA LIGHTHOUSE STAMPS

2009 Gulf Coast Lighthouses



4413a

Lighthouses built along the Gulf Coast of the United States faced two remarkable forces ? Mother Nature?s fury plus the devastation of America?s tragic Civil War. The few that survive bear witness to decades of hurricanes, erosion, and man?s attempts to save these towering sentinels. Depicted are Matagorda Island (TX), Sabine Pass (LA), Biloxi (MS), Sand Island (AL), and Fort Jefferson (FL).

2013 New England Lighthoues

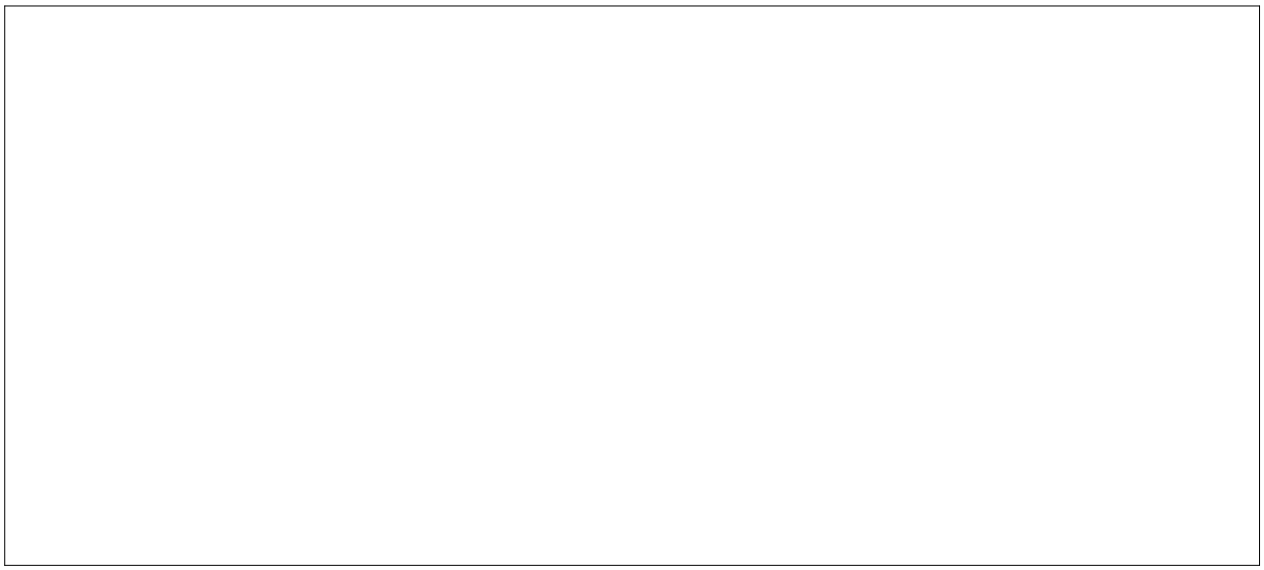


4795a

Many of New England?s lighthouses guarded the Eastern shorelines before the U.S. became a country. Since then, they have become beloved landmarks to seafarers and ?landlubbers? alike. In Colonial times, the British established beacons at the busy ports of Boston and New London. During the American Revolution, the lighthouses were destroyed, then rebuilt by opposing forces. When the nation gained independence, President George Washington understood the significance of the New England lighthouses and commissioned the first keepers, contracts for oil, and completion of a new station in Portland Head, Maine. The lamps from Rhode Island?s Point Judith station were stolen by the British, and later found in Bermuda, returned, and reinstalled. If the lighthouses could speak, they would recall over 200 years of history?of shining their lanterns across the seas during storms and battles, faithfully guiding thousands of ships that passed their way.

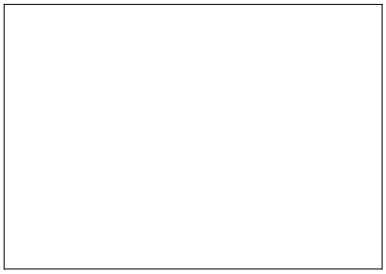
USA LIGHTHOUSE STAMPS

2021 Mid-Atlantic Lighthouses



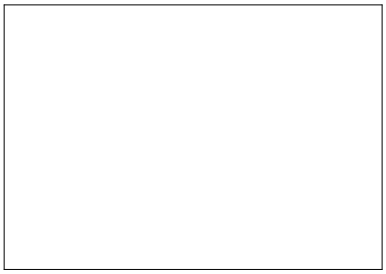
The lighthouses featured in this issuance are: Thomas Point Shoal, MD; Montauk Point, NY; Harbor of Refuge, DE; Navesink, NJ; and Erie Harbor Pierhead, PA.

The United States has issued many other stamps that show lighthouses, although those lighthouses were not the reason for which the stamps were issued. It should be noted that the Statue of Liberty was once a lighthouse, from its dedication on Nov 22, 1886 until March 01, 1901. Nineteen stamps depicting the Statue of Liberty have been issued to date, but they all represent it as a monument, not as lighthouse. For that reason, those stamps are excluded from these pages.



773

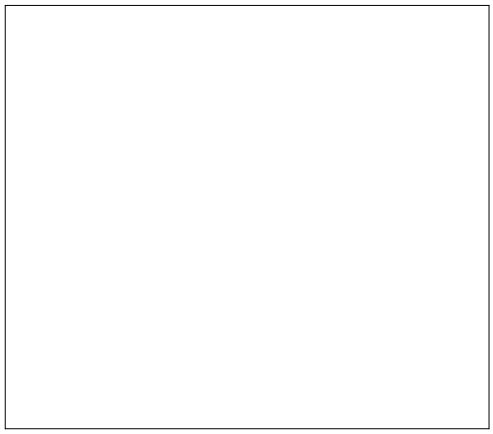
In 1935 the U.S. issued a stamp showing the California-Pacific International Exposition in San Diego. The international fair was held during 1935-36 in San Diego?s Balboa Park. Several San Diegans decided to organize the fair to boost the city?s economy during the Great Depression. In the background of the stamp can be seen the old Point Loma lighthouse. Although a mere speck on the stamp, under a magnifying lens the lighthouse is clearly recognizable, demonstrating the attention to detail that the engraver took in making the stamp.



1391

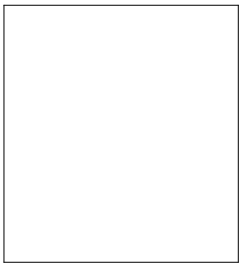
Artist Edward Hopper made several paintings of the Cape Elizabeth Light Station in the 1920?s, one of which is reproduced on a 1970 stamp celebrating 150 years of statehood for Maine.

USA LIGHTHOUSE STAMPS



1451s

The centennial of the national parks was the theme of a se-tenant set of stamps issued in 1972. The four stamps show the Cape Hatteras National Seashore, with the Cape Hatteras lighthouse in the upper right of the seashore scene.

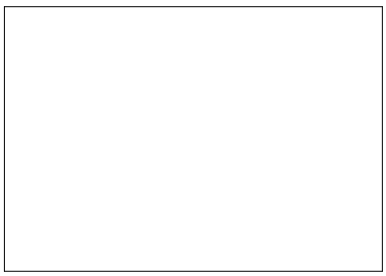


1605

The Sandy Hook lighthouse in New Jersey was pictured on a 1978 stamp in the ?Americana? series reflecting American values and history.

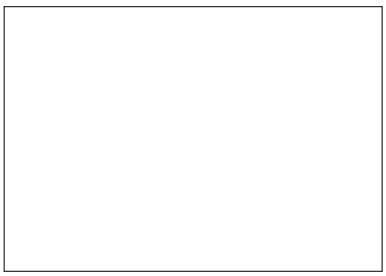
In 2002, the Postal Service issued a pane of 50 statehood stamps called 'Greetings from America'. Three states considered lighthouses as important parts of their heritage.

Maine
Portland Head



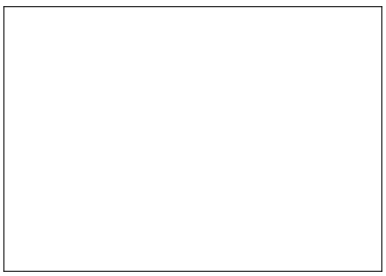
3579

North Carolina
Cape Hatteras



3593

Rhode Island
Block Island Southeast



3599

USA LIGHTHOUSE STAMPS

Lighthouses on the Panama Canal

August 15th 2020, marked 106 years since the opening of the Panama Canal, one of the greatest marine engineering projects in modern history. Great fanfare marked opening day, August 15, 1914, with dignitaries in attendance to give speeches and praise those who designed and built the canal.

Construction of the canal began in 1904. Cost for the project was approximately $387 million. Much of the budget was used for digging the canal and building locks, but there was also money spent on navigational aids.

Forty-six lighthouses were built at the Caribbean and Pacific entrances of the canal and its inland lakes. These lights were intended to assist pilots in entering and exiting the canal and negotiating the inner parts of the waterway that were open or contained locks.

Most of the light towers were range lights -- beacons built close together so that when lined up one atop the other, they kept a ship in the channel. Huge Gatun Lake is home to most of the 46 lighthouses.

Concrete was the primary building material, since wood and steel easily deteriorate in tropical climates. Even the spiral stairways usually were concrete. Three basic designs were used, and most of the lighthouses had ornate embellishments, adding to the beauty of the canal. The original lighthouses ranged in height from 28 to 88 feet tall. A heavy foundation and base design protected against hurricanes and earthquakes.

In the first years after the canal opened, remote lighthouses were fueled by acetylene gas lamps inside Fresnel lenses. The remainder were electric. Of course, today, all of the canal's lights are either electric or solar-powered and operate automatically.

The lighthouses, like the canal itself, are divided into five sections. The Caribbean section extends from the Caribbean entrance to Lake Gatun. From there, the Lake Gatun section travels through the lake to Gamboa. Next is the Culebra Cut section from Gamboa to Pedro Miguel Locks. Then follows the Miraflores Lake section from the Pedro Miguel Locks to Miraflores Lake. Last is the Pacific section from Miraflores Lake to the Pacific Ocean.

The Lighthouse Division of the Panama Canal was established on April 14, 1914, four months before the canal opened. The division experienced several reorganizations during its career. It was transferred to the canal's Dredging Division in the late 1900s. In the 1990s the Coast Guard assigned officers to advise the Panama Canal Commission regarding navigational aids as plans were finalized for returning the canal to the Republic of Panama. On December 31, 1999, the canal was officially returned to the government of Panama, which now administers its lighthouses.

One of the best ways to see the lighthouses of the Panama Canal is to take a cruise through the canal. Surprisingly, none of the Canal Zone stamps depict the lighthouses.