



A Lighthouse Keeper's Duty

Being a Lighthouse Keeper was one of the hardest jobs around a hundred years ago. Keepers worked long grueling hours and had to be willing to put their own lives in danger in order to keep others safe. They had to work in all kinds of weather, especially during hurricanes, blizzards, and gales when passing ships were in the greatest danger. Being a Lighthouse Keeper was not a job for the faint of heart.

Keepers lived at the lighthouse and were at work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They could not call in sick and rarely took a day off. Lighthouse Keepers had to light the tower's lamp every night and make sure that the lamp stayed lit until the sun rose the next day. Although most light stations had more than one keeper, those that didn't required the lighthouse keeper to work all through the night and into the day.

Keepers were responsible for taking care of the entire light station. If something broke they fixed it. If the tower needed to be painted they painted it. If a window was shattered they replaced it. Lighthouse Keepers were mechanics, construction workers, and sailors all rolled into one. They were highly skilled and dedicated men and women who had put others before themselves.

A Lighthouse Keeper had many duties assigned to him. Some of these duties had to be done every day. Others were scheduled to be completed on a weekly, monthly, or yearly basis. No matter the date or time of day, a keeper always had something else to do. He was always busy.

The following table lists some of the more common duties performed by keepers at the Ponce Inlet Light Station on a day to day basis. Wow, a Lighthouse Keeper really had to be a "*Jack of All Trades*"!

Common Lighthouse Keeper Duties and Tasks

Light the lamp at sunset and put it out at sunrise.
Fill the lamp with kerosene before every evening.
Trim the wicks of the lamp so they don't smoke when lit.
Clean and polish the Fresnel lens every morning.
Clean the windows of the lantern room every day.
Shine all the brass in the lighthouse.
Sweep the floors and stairs of the lighthouse every day.
Clean tower windows and sills as needed.
Clean, paint, and repair all buildings on the light station when needed.
Maintain all mechanical equipment at the light station.
Maintain lighthouse log book and record all daily light station activities.
Take weather readings every day and record in log book.
Weed the walkways and maintain the light station grounds.
Take soundings of river and inlet channels. Move channel markers as needed.
Lend assistance to ships and sailors in distress as needed.
Keep an accurate inventory of all light station equipment and fuel.
Maintain light station launch (boat) and keep in good working order.
Keep boathouse clean, organized, and in good repair at all times.
Provide visitors with tour of light station as needed.
Clean keeper dwelling chimneys as needed to prevent fire.
Do not leave light station at any time without permission.
Clean house on a regular basis and make repairs as needed.
Keep privy (outhouse/bathroom) clean. Apply lime as needed.
Stack wood properly in woodsheds.
Maintain a clean uniform at all times.
Plant and tend personal garden as needed.