



# PONCE DE LEON INLET LIGHT STATION

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www.ponceinlet.org • www.poncelighthousestore.org  
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- 2** FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
- 3** EVENTS CALENDAR
- FEATURE ARTICLE
- 4** CITY OF VERA CRUZ
- LIGHTHOUSES OF THE WORLD
- 8** CAPE FLORIDA LIGHTHOUSE

---

- OBJECT OF THE QUARTER
- 9** VOLUNTEER AND EDUCATION NEWS
- 10** THANK YOU & WISH LIST
- 12** GIFT SHOP FEATURES





Dear Friends and Members,

On behalf of the Lighthouse Board of Trustees, Advisory Board, and staff, I would like to convey the Association's heartfelt appreciation for your continued membership, support and trust. Your generous contributions during our most recent fundraiser reflect your confidence in the museum's ongoing efforts to restore, preserve, and interpret the historic Ponce de Leon Inlet Light Station.

The Association is proud to announce that Board members Earl and Gladys Davis were recipients of the Florida Association of Museums (FAM) most outstanding Trustee/Volunteer of the Year. Presented annually at the FAM conference, this award recognizes the state's most outstanding volunteer(s). As life-long members and supporters of the Lighthouse, it is fitting that Earl and Gladys were selected as recipients of this prestigious honor.

As educational institutions, museums strive to provide visitors with as enriching and informative an experience as possible. To achieve this goal, the exhibits and locations in which they are presented are designed to be relevant, appropriate, and physically accessible to all who view them.

Guided by its mission to preserve and disseminate the social and maritime history of the Ponce de Leon Inlet Light Station, the Association has striven to serve the local community, interpret the Lighthouse, and educate the public since its founding in 1972. For more than three decades it has worked towards this goal by providing Volusia County schools with free educational programming and tours of the Light Station. To better serve the local community, the Association is pleased to announce that effective January 1, 2011, all full and part-time Ponce Inlet residents will receive free year-round admission to the Lighthouse and museum. Proof of residency or property ownership within the Town of Ponce Inlet is

required. This offer does not extend to family and friends not residing within city limits.

Over the past two months, the Association has been engaged in the restoration of the tower's iron components including the lantern room, cupola, cornice, exterior decks, and windows. The Lighthouse and museum is pleased to announce that a portion of this project's cost will be funded with a \$10,000 grant awarded by the Florida Lighthouse Association (FLA) "Visit Our Lights" license plate fund. I would like to offer my sincere thanks to FLA for its kind consideration. With 100% off all proceeds going directly towards the preservation of Florida's remaining lighthouses, the Association encourages its members to consider purchasing a "Visit Our Lights" license plate when registering their vehicles.

On November 4, 2010, the museum welcomed more than 250 children to its annual Home School Day. As with past Home School programs, the day-long event was thematic, with a primary focus on day-to-day museum operations. Students were given the unique opportunity to meet with museum staff and volunteers and discover what it takes to run a modern museum and to preserve historic structures and artifacts. In addition to learning the responsibilities of museum administrators, curators, and restoration specialists, students were also shown just how important volunteers are to the ongoing efforts of non-profit organizations like the Ponce Inlet Lighthouse and Museum. Please refer to the Volunteer and Education News article in this issue to learn more about this exciting event.

Thank you once again for your continued support and Happy New Year.

Respectfully,

  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

THE PONCE DE LEON INLET LIGHTHOUSE PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION IS DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION AND DISSEMINATION OF THE MARITIME AND SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE PONCE DE LEON INLET LIGHT STATION.

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Subscription is a benefit of membership in the Association. The Light Station welcomes letters and comments from our readers.

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## UPCOMING MEETINGS:

Jan 12, 2011  
WEDNESDAY Budget Finance/Endowment Fund Committee Meeting

Jan 17, 2011  
MONDAY Board of Trustees and Quarterly Membership Meeting

Feb 21, 2011  
MONDAY Board of Trustees Meeting

Mar 21, 2011  
MONDAY Board of Trustees Meeting

ALL MEETINGS ARE HELD IN THE GIFT SHOP CONFERENCE ROOM.



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**LIGHTHOUSE EVENTS JANUARY–MARCH 2011**

**JAN 9 (SUN)**  
1:30 – 2:30 PM

**ECHO RANGERS PROGRAM**

Special educational program developed in cooperation with Volusia County. Free admission with pre-registration by ECHO Ranger program participants.

**JAN 15 (SAT)**  
10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

**GIRL SCOUT DAY**

Calling all Girl Scouts! Come and enjoy the lighthouse and museum while working on requirements for the Lighthouse Brownie Try-It, the Junior Lighthouse Badge, or the Lighthouse Interest Project. Reserve your place by logging on to [www.ponceinlet.org](http://www.ponceinlet.org), and selecting the link at the top of the home page.

**FEB 6 (SUN)**  
1:30 – 2:30 PM

**ECHO RANGERS PROGRAM**

Special educational program developed in cooperation with Volusia County. Free admission with pre-registration by ECHO Ranger program participants.

**FEB 11 (FRI)**  
10:00 AM – 3:00 PM

**BEACH RACING DAY**

Examine historic race cars that once thundered down the World's Most Famous Beach. Talk with former race car drivers, mechanics, and owners from the early days of NASCAR. Take photographs and get autographs from motor sports pioneers! All activities included with regular admission. No advance reservations required.

**FEB 25–27**

**BIKE WEEK**

Examine turn-of-the-century artifacts and learn about crystal radio sets at the top of the Ponce Inlet Lighthouse. All activities included with regular admission. No advance reservations required.

**MAR 4–6 (FRI–SUN)**  
12:00 NOON – 2:00 PM

**CANAVERAL LENS DEMONSTRATION**

Meet the old-time lighthouse keepers in the Lens Exhibit Building. Learn about the Cape Canaveral 1st Order Fresnel Lens and the routine maintenance procedures that ensured the historic lens would continue operating night after night. All activities included with regular admission. No advance reservations required.

**MAR 4 (FRI)**  
1:00 – 2:00 PM

**ECHO RANGERS PROGRAM**

Special educational program developed in cooperation with Volusia County. Free admission with pre-registration by ECHO Ranger program participants.

**MAR 6 (SUN)**  
1:30 – 2:30 PM

**STEPHEN CRANE WEEKEND (FLORIDA HERITAGE EVENTS)**

Enjoy educational activities exploring the life and accomplishments of Stephen Crane, author of The Red Badge of Courage and the famous short-story, The Open Boat. Learn why Stephen Crane credited the Mosquito Inlet Lighthouse with saving his life after the 1897 sinking of the SS Commodore, and discover the trials he and others were forced to overcome to stay alive on the open sea. Developed in cooperation with Lillian Place Museum, the historic 1884 Italianate mansion in Daytona Beach where Crane spent the night following his ordeal. All activities are included with the price of regular admission. No advanced reservations required.

**MAR 26–27 (SAT–SUN)**  
10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

**CLIMB TO THE MOON EVENT CALENDAR**

**JAN 19 (WED)**  
5:00 – 7:00 PM

Journey to the top of the Ponce Inlet Lighthouse and experience this National Historic Landmark in all its glory during this unique program. Join the Old Lighthouse Keeper on a personal tour of lighthouse and lantern room, and enjoy breathtaking views of the Atlantic Ocean, Ponce Inlet, and scenic inland waterways.

**FEB 18 (FRI)**  
5:30 – 7:30 PM

Toast the setting sun with a sparkling beverage and enjoy delicious hors d'oeuvres by the light of the full moon with your significant other and friends. Offered only on the eve of each full moon, this special event is limited to 25 participants. Tickets must be purchased in advance by calling Mary at (386) 761-1821 ext. 10. Prices are \$25 for non-members and \$20 for members.

**MAR 19 (SAT)**  
5:30 – 7:30 PM

**2011 WINTER & SPRING LIGHTHOUSE HOURS**

**NORMAL HOURS OF OPERATION**

SEPTEMBER 7, 2010– MAY 29, 2011 Open daily from 10:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. (last admission at 5:00 p.m.)

**SPECIAL HOURS OF OPERATION**

FEBRUARY 11–12, 18–19, 21–23, 2011 (FRI. & SAT.) Race Week Extended Hours of Operation Open 10:00 a.m.–7:00 p.m. (last adm. at 6:00 p.m.)

MARCH 10–12, 2011 (THU. – SAT.) Bike Week Extended Hours of Operation Open 10:00 a.m.–7:00 p.m. (last adm. at 6:00 p.m.)



# CITY OF VERA CRUZ

*Eternal Father, strong to save,  
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,  
Who bidd'st the mighty Ocean deep  
Its own appointed limits keep;  
Oh hear us when we cry to thee  
for those in peril on the sea.*

Written by Reverend William Whiting in 1860, after surviving a particularly fierce storm in the Mediterranean Sea, the opening verse of *Eternal Father, Strong to Save* embodies the hopes, fears, and sorrows of mariners, sea travelers, and their loved ones the world over. Adopted as the U.S. Navy Hymn in 1879, the song's poignant and soulful verses speak of the dangers of life at sea and the terrible tempests that often seized ships in their deadly embrace.

Although relatively uncommon in today's world of advanced technology, tragedy at sea was a frequent occurrence in the latter half of the nineteenth century when men still navigated the world's oceans in steam and sail driven vessels using little more than a compass, sextant, and chart to find their way. Cut off from the rest of world by miles of open sea, mariners had little time to prepare for approaching storms. Those unfortunate enough to find themselves facing gales of hurricane strength had little choice but to point the bow into the oncoming waves, hope the ship held together, and pray for God's deliverance. Although some weathered these tempests relatively unharmed, few escaped unscathed, and many were lost at a great cost of life.

Isolated from the world's industrialized nations by the vast Atlantic and lacking an adequate system of overland trade routes to transport goods between the former colonies, the United States relied heavily upon maritime commerce for its continued economic success. Recognizing the importance of this critical industry Congress created the



DAYTONA BEACH RESIDENTS GATHER AROUND THE WRECK OF THE SCHOONER *Nathan Cobb* IN 1896 WHICH CAME ASHORE DURING A VIOLENT NOR'EASTER.



CONSTRUCTED IN 1835, THE ORIGINAL MOSQUITO INLET LIGHTHOUSE WAS NEVER USED DUE TO ITS COLLAPSE LESS THAN ONE YEAR AFTER ITS COMPLETION

United States Light House Establishment (USLHE) as one of its first official acts on August 7, 1789. Charged with creating and maintaining a system of lighthouses, beacons, buoys, and public piers, the Light House Establishment was the agency directly responsible for making the nation's waterways safe for international commerce and coastal trade.

Beginning with only twelve colonial-era towers in 1789, the number of lighthouses along America's coastline, bays, and navigable waterways grew in the years following the creation of the Light House Establishment. By 1825, more than 70 lighthouses had been built by the U.S. government. By 1855, that number had increased to more than 331 towers and 40 lightships.

The placement of these important navigational aids was determined by a number of factors including public demand and the needs of the maritime industry, which grew as new territory was acquired and new markets were formed. As one would expect, the nation's earliest lighthouses were erected near established seaports and waterways along the mid-Atlantic and northeast coasts where maritime traffic was greatest. However, as time progressed and American maritime commerce grew, the need arose for additional navigational aids in the southeast.



THE ALEXANDRE & SONS COMPANY UTILIZED PIER 3 IN NEW YORK FOR MUCH OF ITS SHIPPING BUSINESS

This was especially true along the Florida coast, which together with the islands of Cuba and the Bahamas, formed the Florida Straits. Although navigated by northbound ships since the sixteenth century, traffic along the Florida coast did not reach epic proportions until the mid-eighteen hundreds, when the introduction of the steam age and the opening of Latin American ports to U.S. trade catapulted the industry into an age of unprecedented growth.

Devoid of the rocky outcroppings and coastal irregularities commonly found in the north, the relatively flat featureless coastline of Florida concealed numerous navigational hazards of its own including sandbars, shallow waters, and treacherous reefs. These unseen dangers, coupled with the region's frequent tropical storms, put coastal mariners and their ships at constant risk.



As traffic increased along the Florida coast, so too did the number of maritime disasters. Shipwrecks became such a common occurrence that local residents came to depend on them as a primary source of essential goods. Commonly referred to as *wreckers*, these individuals would descend upon grounded and beached vessels like locusts, stripping the wrecks of nearly everything of value including the ship timbers themselves. Claiming countless lives and costing millions of dollars in lost cargo and vessels each year, the U.S. Government determined a series of lighthouses were needed along Florida's dangerous coast. Proposed sites were selected based on regional need, geography, and proximity to offshore trade routes.



CARGO IS LOADED AND OFFLOADED FROM THE STEAMSHIP *City of Vera Cruz* IN HAVANA, CUBA

One of the locations chosen by the Light House Establishment was a little known inlet called Los Mosquitoes. Discovered by Ponce de Leon in 1513, Mosquito Inlet had developed such a sinister reputation due to its treacherous currents, shifting channels, and shallow sandbars, that many had come to refer to it as simply the "Killer Inlet".

Constructed in 1835, the Mosquito Inlet Lighthouse stood atop a twelve-foot sand dune on the south side of the inlet. Constructed of brick, the tower stood forty-five tall and was visible up to thirteen miles away. Undermined by violent storm in November, 1835, the tower's untimely collapse in April, 1836, prevented it from ever fulfilling its intended purpose. Unable to repair the damaged structure due to the onset of the Second Seminole War, the need for a beacon in the inlet remained unrealized until local commerce, the frequent shipwrecks, and the public's outcry over the fate of the steamship *City of Vera Cruz* convinced Congress to construct a new light station at Los Mosquitoes in 1883.

Built by the renowned New York shipwright John English in 1874, the *City of Vera Cruz* was a 296-foot-long, wooden-hulled, screw-driven, brigantine-rigged, mixed-cargo and passenger steamship of 1,874 tons. Widely regarded as one of the stoutest and most seaworthy steamers in the West Indies trade, the ship was owned and operated

a wide variety of goods including mailbags bound for the cities of Havana and Vera Cruz, crates of cutlery, firearms, toys, sewing machines, glassware, corsets, bicycles, clocks, pharmaceuticals, jewelry, and other common products of the time. The sturdy ship even carried a fully assembled railroad car bound for Mexico securely lashed upon her deck.

Sailing south with the aid of a strong northeasterly breeze, the *City of Vera Cruz* made respectable time until 11:30 Friday evening when the wind died off completely. Unaided by sail for the first time since leaving New York, the ship continued south for several hours before encountering a new breeze out of the southeast. Initially no more than a breath, the wind strengthened at an alarming rate through the early morning hours. Concerned by the worsening conditions, Captain Sice monitored the ship's barometer until the noon reading confirmed his fear. A terrible hurricane was fast approaching and the *City of Vera Cruz* was directly in its path.

by *Alexandre & Sons*, proprietors of the lucrative *New York, Havana, and Mexico City Steamship Line*.

Having plied the waters of the Atlantic coast, Caribbean, and Gulf of Mexico for more than six years, the *City of Vera Cruz* was a frequent visitor to Latin American waters when her captain ordered the crew to set sail from New York Harbor on August 25, 1880. Departing Pier 3 on the Hudson River, the *City of Vera Cruz* steamed past Sandy Hook Lighthouse, entered the open Atlantic, and steered a course for the Florida Straits.

Commanded by Captain Edward Van Sice, a twenty-year veteran of the West Indies trade route and one of the industry's most highly regarded mariners, the *City of Vera Cruz* weighed anchor with twenty-nine passengers and a crew of forty-eight aboard. The ship's cargo manifest listed

The fourth cyclone of the season, the category 3 hurricane swept across the Florida Straits and peninsula with a fury few had seen before. The *New York Times* reported that "*all that night the tempest howled frightfully and rolled up immense breakers which pounded the shore with a deafening roar. At daylight on Sunday morning the gale had not spent all its fury, and tremendous seas were sweeping over the reefs and far inland. The cyclone left a country scarred by uprooted trees, dismantled dwellings, and destroyed crops in its wake.*"



FEBRUARY 21, 1874 *Harper's Weekly* ILLUSTRATION DEPICTING "wreckers" AT WORK

Combing the beach on the morning of September 30th, *wreckers* soon realized the destructive might of the departing storm. From Daytona to Cape Canaveral, the normally pristine beaches lay littered with debris of every description including shattered timbers, barrels, and crates, and the broken hull of a vessel lying half-buried in the hard-packed sand. Just offshore, a derelict ship rolled back and forth with each rise and fall of the pounding surf, working its way inexorably towards the waiting

>> CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



## THE WRECKED STEAM-SHIP

### SINKING AFTER A VAIN STRUGGLE WITH THE HURRICANE.

A THRILLING STORY OF THE HORRORS OF  
THE FEW HOURS PRECEDING THE  
FOUNDING OF THE VERA CRUZ—SIX-  
TY-EIGHT OF THE SEVENTY-NINE PER-  
SONS ON BOARD LOST—DISTRESSING  
SCENES IN THIS CITY.

NEW YORK TIMES HEADLINE ANNOUNCING THE POSSIBLE LOSS  
OF THE STEAMSHIP *City of Vera Cruz*

mob. It was a chilling and sobering sight to behold.

Flocking to the beach fifty miles to the north, St. Augustine residents picked through crates, barrels, and parcels that had washed up along their coastline as well. Like participants in a scavenger hunt they searched for any items of value, happy in their good fortune. Little thought was given to the circumstances that had delivered such bounty to their shores until mailbags addressed to the cities of Havana and Vera Cruz were discovered amongst the scattered debris.

Realizing the mail bags could represent a vessel lost at sea, the beach combers notified St. Augustine's Post Master who requested that the parcels be delivered to his office. Searching the waterlogged and mostly ruined contents of each bag, the Post Master examined the enclosed letters for clues that would help identify the name of the ship from which they came. Solving the riddle took little time. Printed clearly on the front of several envelopes were the words "Care of the SS *City of Vera Cruz*".

Learning of the possible loss of the steamer in the *New York Times* on September 3rd, friends and family of the passengers and crew congregated outside of the office of *Alexandre & Sons*. Among those in attendance was the son of Captain Edward Van Sice, who bravely told the crowd that "I fear it is too true. The storm was a terrible one, that we all know, and the steamer was right in its path. If she did go down, I firmly believe her officers and crew did everything that brave and well-disciplined men could do to avert disaster. They may be yet saved, or a portion of them, at any rate."

Inside the office of Messrs. Alexandre, the *New York Times* reported that several of the crewmen's wives sat in a violently

agitated state "frequently bursting into tears, pressing handkerchiefs to bloodshot eyes, and rocking themselves to and fro. The scene was a most distressing one that few could witness without emotion".

With the fate of the *City of Vera Cruz* still uncertain, officials waited in strained silence for word of the ship's arrival in Havana Harbor. Believing the ship too stout and its captain too seasoned to have not survived the storm, the ship's owners refused to concede its loss until receiving a sobering dispatch from St. Augustine on the afternoon of September 4th. "Steamship *City of Vera Cruz* foundered at sea Sunday morning at 6 A.M. Captain lost. All hands went down with vessel. Only three passengers and eight of the crew saved."

As news of the telegram circulated through the offices of *Alexandre and Sons* the distressing scene of the previous day was reenacted with ten-fold force. Friends and relatives roamed the halls weeping uncontrollably and in near-hysterics. For those who belonged to families with a long sea-faring tradition, the events of the day were all too familiar. One woman who had lost her son off the coast of Cape Hatteras only three years earlier cried out in a choked and sobbing voice, "Oh God! It is too hard to lose my boy and Frank too. Oh! The sea, the sea; why did they ever go on it at all!" Most would return to their homes with heavy

hearts, knowing their loved ones would never return.

But how had it happened? Only six years old and recently overhauled, the *City of Vera Cruz* was in pristine condition when she set sail from New York. The crew was well-seasoned and the captain, with more than twenty years experience in the West Indies trade, possessed detailed knowledge of the waters off the Florida coast. Nor was the ship overladen, drawing only eighteen of her usual twenty-one feet. Other far less capable ships had weathered the storm with only minor damage. Why not the *City of Vera Cruz*?

A.K. Owen, one of only two passengers to survive the ordeal, provided the public with a detailed description of his experience aboard the *City of Vera Cruz*. Published in the *New York Times* on September 11, 1880, the chilling narrative omitted little and revealed much about the events leading up to and following the sinking.

#### Saturday, August 28, 1880

1:00 PM: Orders are given to take in sail and to cut up and cast overboard the railroad car. When these orders are complied with, barrels of oil, cases of acid, and crates of vegetables stowed on the upper deck are thrown overboard to clear the deck.



SHIPWRECKS CLAIMED THOUSANDS OF LIVES AND COST THE MARITIME INDUSTRY MILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN DAMAGED AND DESTROYED VESSELS AND LOST CARGO





THE BODIES OF MORE THAN SIXTY VICTIMS FROM THE *City of Vera Cruz* LIE BURIED IN A MASS GRAVE SOMEWHERE ALONG THE SHORES OF ORMOND BEACH.

**1:35 PM:** *The first real blast of the cyclone strikes the port bow of the ship, listing her on her beam ends until the hurricane deck kisses the water. From that time on it is not possible to traverse the deck safely without clinging to ropes, doors, and other things for support.*

**11:00 PM** *The skylights over the saloon were carried away as a mighty wave crashes down over the ship. A considerable volume of water pours down, floating the carpets and furniture, and driving the passengers into their staterooms.*

**Sunday, August 29, 1880**

**1:00 AM:** *There is not, as far as can be ascertained, any water in the hold, nor any leaks in the hull.*

**2:00 AM:** *A great wave plunges over the port bow, sending sufficient water down into the engine room to put out the fires and stop the working of the main engine. The Captain sends down word that the passengers must help the crew; else the ship will surely go to the bottom of the sea.*

**2:30 AM:** *The captain deploys a sea anchor in hopes of keeping the bow pointed into the oncoming waves. It is largely ineffective and the ship broaches on numerous occasions.*

**4:12 AM:** *Another mighty wave crashes over the port bow, crushing in the engine room and port main saloon with a report as loud as artillery fire, washing chairs, tables, and other articles of furniture to the after part of the ship.*

**4:30 AM:** *Thoroughly alive to the danger of the situation, all the passengers have donned life preservers. No one entertains the slightest ray of hope that the vessel might ride safely through the cyclone.*

**5:00 AM:** *Yet another wave crashes over the ship, its waters pass through the saloon carrying everything before it and sending myself and all others tumbling in confusion.*

**5:30 AM:** *Attempting to launch lifeboats, the Captain and several crewmen are swept overboard when a towering wave crashes upon the deck. Several men are crushed when the lifeboats break free and are dashed to pieces by the surf.*

**6:00 AM:** *Stove in fore and aft, the ship is struck by one last tremendous wave before breaking suddenly in two. Thrown overboard, I see the bow and stern slip beneath the waves.*

Clinging desperately to shattered timbers and other debris, the survivors could only stare in horror as the mountainous waves soared fifty feet above their heads. James Kelly, one of the few who made it safely to shore, painted a gruesome picture of what happened after the loss of the *City of Vera Cruz*. "I wasn't 15 minutes in the water before all the women were dead" stated Kelly, "the bodies of the poor things came floating up on the waves around me, mixed up with the bodies of the dead men." Many of the corpses, were beaten beyond recognition by wave-tossed debris which continued to kill and maim throughout the following day. Although more than fifty entered the water, only ten would survive the ship's sinking.

Staggering ashore the following day, news of the first ten survivors brought relief for a few and raised the hopes of many. Although faced with mounting evidence that suggested most of the passengers and crew were lost, newspapers continued to speculate that additional survivors might



COMPLETED IN 1887, THE 175 FOOT TALL MOSQUITO INLET LIGHTHOUSE WAS BUILT TO AID MARINERS NAVIGATING THE TREACHEROUS COAST OF FLORIDA.



LOCATED ON JOHN ANDERSON DRIVE IN ORMOND BEACH, THE HISTORIC "NUMBER NINE PLANTATION HOUSE" WAS CONSTRUCTED FROM MAHOGANY LOGS SALVAGED FROM THE WRECKAGE OF THE *City of Vera Cruz*.

yet be found. The days and weeks that followed would soon prove otherwise.

Back in Florida, gruesome discoveries along the beach revealed the lethality of the *City of Vera Cruz* disaster as bodies began to wash ashore from St. Augustine to Mosquito Inlet. Stripped bare by the violent sea and lying bruised and beaten upon the sands, the number of corpses steadily grew from only a few to more than thirty. By September 6th, the number had grown to include over sixty men, women and children. With only ten of the ship's original seventy-eight souls surviving, the sinking of the *City of Vera Cruz* represented one of the deadliest maritime disasters of the nineteenth century.

Interred by local residents out of respect for the dead, more than sixty bodies were laid to rest on a lonely stretch of beach just north of Daytona. Included within the mass grave were the bodies of a young lady and an infant child who remained clutched to the woman's chest in a deadly embrace. Unable to move the corpses due to their advanced state of deterioration, the bodies were buried not far from the very water that had claimed their lives. Like the ship that had foundered just thirteen miles offshore, the sea claimed their bones as the relentless waves erased all signs of their final resting place.

Alarmed by the growing number of shipwrecks off the Florida coast and shocked by the loss of life aboard the *City of Vera Cruz*, authorities realized that a new coastal light was needed between St. Augustine and Cape Canaveral. Located fifty miles south of St. Augustine and fifty miles north of Canaveral, Mosquito Inlet was the obvious choice. Approved in 1883, construction of the tower took three years to complete. Lit for the first time on November 1, 1887, the beacon atop the 175 foot Mosquito Inlet Lighthouse was visible from the very spot where the SS *City of Vera Cruz* had slipped beneath the waves seven years earlier.



# CAPE FLORIDA LIGHTHOUSE

The Cape Florida Lighthouse is located at the southern tip of Key Biscayne south of Miami Beach. The light station, one of Florida's oldest, was established in 1825. Approved by Congress in 1822, construction of the tower took three years to complete at a cost of \$24,000. Originally contracted to Samuel B. Lincoln of Boston, MA, construction of the light station was delayed when Lincoln's ship disappeared at sea while en route to the building site. A new contract was awarded in 1824, and by the end of 1825, a 65-foot brick tower with wooden staircase stood at the entrance of Biscayne Bay. The tower's beacon was lit for the first time on December 17, 1825.

On July 23, 1836, a band of Seminoles attacked the light station. Forced to take refuge from the hostile Indians at the top of the tower, Assistant Keeper John Dubose and his African-American assistant fired down at their attackers from the Gallery Deck. Setting fire to the wooden staircase, the Seminoles watched as the intense heat shattered the lantern room's windows and the billowing smoke forced Dubose and his assistant onto the Gallery Deck.

Fully exposed to the enemy below, Dubose was shot in the foot and his assistant killed. Unable to stand the heat and smoke any longer, the desperate keeper threw a cask of gunpowder down the center of the tower in hopes that it would end his misery. The resulting explosion destroyed the burning staircase and convinced the Indians below that the keeper had been killed. Although burned, shot, and suffering from smoke inhalation, Dubose survived and was rescued by a passing Navy ship the following day. Unable to repair the damaged tower due to ongoing Indian attacks, the Cape Florida Lighthouse would not be returned to service until 1847, when it was rebuilt - this time - with iron stairs.

Florida's secession from the Union in January, 1861, resulted in a second period of darkness for the Cape Florida Lighthouse. Concerned that

the Union would use the beacon to patrol the surrounding waters, Confederates removed the tower's lamps and burners and destroyed the center prism to prevent it from falling into enemy hands. The beacon would remain in this condition until after the Civil War when it was repaired and returned to full operational condition. In 1878, the light atop the Cape Florida Lighthouse was extinguished for a third and final time when it was replaced by Fowey Rocks Reef Light six miles offshore.

In 1966 the State of Florida purchased the Cape Florida Lighthouse along with the southern tip of Key Biscayne. Together they form the Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park, dedicated to the memory of The Miami News editor who spearheaded the campaign to save the lighthouse and surrounding area from future development. The lighthouse was reactivated in 1997 and currently exhibits a flashing white light from a 300mm lens.

A visitor to the lighthouse, Kraig Anderson, has commented that the spiral staircase inside the lighthouse is quite unique. Unlike the staircases found in most other lighthouses, this one is not attached to the exterior walls for a good portion of the climb. This makes for an interesting trek as the staircase tends to move a little. However, the fresh breeze and beautiful view that await you at the tower's top are well worth any queasy feelings you might experience during the ascent.



Many shipwrecks litter the ocean floor near the Daytona Beach area, and one of the most famous and closely related to the history of the Ponce Inlet Lighthouse is that of the *Commodore*.

This steamer was on her way to Cuba, carrying guns, ammunition, and supplies for the continuing struggles of the Cuban people to throw off the rule of Spain. The *Commodore* sank in rough weather about 12 miles off the Daytona shore, and eight lives were lost in the sinking. The boat had departed from Jacksonville on the last day of December, 1896, and before the morning of January 2, 1897, she lay at the bottom of the Atlantic.



On board the *Commodore*, traveling as an undercover correspondent was Stephen Crane, the young author known for his novel *The Red Badge of Courage*. Crane survived the sinking by joining with three other men in a 10-foot dinghy where they spent a harrowing 30 hours rowing towards the only thing visible on the horizon, the light from the Mosquito (Ponce) Inlet Lighthouse, which, according to Crane's later newspaper account of the sinking, "stuck up above the horizon like the point of a pin."

When the *Commodore* went to the bottom, her contents were scattered, and several identical dishes from the wreck have made their way into the museum's collection. The soup bowl pictured here was made in England by the Alfred Meakin pottery.

Ironstone was first developed by Staffordshire area potters who needed a durable substitute for porcelain that could be mass produced. Ironstone is more opaque than porcelain and was first successfully patented by and manufactured at the pottery of William Turner in about 1800.

The Meakin pottery origins were in 1845, when James Meakin manufactured pottery at Newton Works, Uttoxeter Road, Longton. James Meakin's sons founded their own pottery companies, with James and George founding J & G Meakin in Hanley and Alfred Meakin founding a company at Tunstall. Alfred eventually had three potteries, naming them Royal Albert, Victoria, and Highgate. The Alfred Meakin pottery produced and exported its ironstone china to the United States, and the plain white ironstone was in common use in hotels and homes.

The ironstone plates in our collection can be dated to 1891-1897 by the maker's mark. The word 'England' appeared on the mark in 1891, and 'LTD' was added to the mark after 1897.



We start out this issue of the Ponce Inlet Light Station Newsletter with some very exciting news. In September, Gladys and Earl Davis were selected to receive the 2010 Florida Association of Museums (FAM) Outstanding Trustee/Volunteer Award. They received their award at FAM's annual meeting and awards luncheon held in West Palm Beach on September 24th. In attendance were their proud daughters, Julie and Ellie.

Gladys is the last child born on the lighthouse grounds, and has spent most of her life living in the shadow of the Ponce Inlet Lighthouse. She was an original member of the first Board of Trustees for the Lighthouse. Earl, her husband of 55 years, has been a loyal Lighthouse volunteer for over 35 years, as well as serving on the Board of Trustees.

This award is particularly significant because it is a state-wide award. Given annually by FAM, the Outstanding Trustee/Volunteer Award recognizes not only outstanding volunteer efforts of Earl and Gladys, but their lifetime of selfless work on behalf of the Ponce Inlet Light Station. The Association would like to offer its sincere congratulations to both Gladys and Earl for their wonderful work and years of friendship.

The Lighthouse hosted its annual Home School Day on November 4, 2010. Attracting homeschoolers and parents from around the state, this unique event seeks to immerse students in worthwhile educational activities related to the history

and current operations of the Ponce de Leon Inlet Lighthouse and Museum. Past topics have included wireless communication systems including signal flags, wigwag, and semaphore flags; Morse Code and crystal radio sets; Lighthouse Keeper and domestic chores; children's games at the lighthouse; and educational workshops addressing a wide range of topics including The Science of Light, archaeology at the lighthouse, early navigation, and historic female keepers.

This year the Lighthouse museum staff gave students a behind-the-scenes look into what it takes to run a historic site and museum. Addressing the major aspects of museum operations, available sessions included presentations by both museum staff and volunteers. Ponce Inlet Lighthouse Curator Ellen Henry described her duties to participating students and challenged them to develop a system of classification for their own personal collections. Restoration Technician Rick Crosby demonstrated common techniques and tools used in the restoration of historic structures and discussed how the Museum preserves the Light Station's buildings for future generations. Tour Guide John Mann addressed volunteerism at the Lighthouse by explaining how First Person Interpreters research their characters and prepared students to lead their own "mini-tours". Finally, Director of Operations Mike Bennett took students through the day-to-day world of museum administration and then helped them design and develop a museum brochure of their own.

In addition to these activities, a separate set of workshops were designed for younger home school participants. Presented by a cadre of lighthouse volunteers, these age-appropriate activities were well received by parents and students alike. The Preservation Association extends its thanks to each the twenty volunteers who made this past Home School Day such a success.

Following a four year tradition, the Preservation Association hosted its annual day-after-Thanksgiving program on November 26, 2010. Called "Thanksgiving Gifts at the Lighthouse", this unique event provided visitors with the opportunity to participate in numerous family-oriented activities and escape the typical mayhem normally associated with Black Friday. On-site activities included turn-of-the-century artifacts, handmade holiday decorations, and much more.

The Lighthouse participated in the Ponce Inlet Town Christmas Parade for a second time on December 11, 2010. Unlike the previous year, the Association contributed two floats to this year's holiday procession. Designed by Association staff and volunteers, the floats highlighted the historic significance of the Ponce Inlet Light Station and the Preservation Association's mission to preserve and disseminate the maritime and social history of the National Historic Landmark.

What are the Holidays without music? Thanks to seven Volusia County and Orange County Schools, visitors to the Ponce Inlet Lighthouse grounds were provided a little holiday cheer in weeks prior to Christmas. On separate days during the yuletide season, student choirs from Campbell Middle, Creekside Middle, Silver Sands Middle, Cypress Creek Middle, Edgewater Public Elementary, Indian River Elementary, and Orange County's St. Margaret Mary Catholic School serenaded lighthouse guests with songs of the season. Families and friends of the carolers were invited to join them at the Lighthouse on the day of their performance and great fun was had by all.

The Association wrapped up the holiday season on December 28th by hosting its Early New Year's Day celebration. Held every year at that time, the event included family-oriented activities, kid's crafts, and other historically relevant workshops.

With school back in session, the Ponce Inlet Lighthouse finds itself in the middle of the "busy season." As requests for onsite





tours, educational outreach presentations, and in-house workshops pour in, the Educational Department turns to its dedicated volunteers to meet the demands of local educators. Since the needs of local educators often exceed our limited resources the Association is always on the lookout for qualified individuals interested in volunteering their time towards this worthy cause.

Behind the scenes, a long-planned effort to bring more meaning to our elementary school tours has resulted in the filming of short "pre-visit" video. Posted on our website, this introductory video was designed to not only introduce and highlight our major historic and social themes, but also prepare students for their upcoming visit to the Lighthouse. Filmed, edited, and produced by Ponce Inlet resident and high school volunteer Blake Derr, this interesting and fact-filled video will serve the Lighthouse and local educators for years to come.

The Lighthouse is pleased to announce the unveiling of its newest educational program during the weekend of March 26, 2011. Developed in cooperation with the Lilian Place Museum, the **Stephen Crane Weekend** will explore the trials and tribulations of Stephen Crane, author of *The Red Badge of Courage*. Participants will learn about Crane's life and his experience as shipwreck survivor off the coast of the Mosquito Inlet (Ponce Inlet) Lighthouse as told through his renowned short story "*The Open Boat*." Presentations by noted Crane essayists and professors of American Literature from the National Stephen Crane Society along with historic reenactments by lighthouse volunteer John Mann and biographer Elizabeth Friedman, will provide a rare look into the life of one of America's most renowned and often misunderstood authors. The historic home of the Thompson Family, Lilian Place is where Stephen Crane spent the evening following his deliverance from the sea.

As with most of the Association's educational offerings, the workshops and events described above would not



have been possible without the generous support of Lighthouse volunteers. Readers who are interested in assisting the Lighthouse in its many endeavors are encouraged to pick up a "Volunteer Opportunities" brochure in the Gift Shop kiosk. Information regarding volunteerism

at the Lighthouse can also be found online at [www.ponceinlet.org](http://www.ponceinlet.org), or by contacting Programs Manager, Bob Callister, by phone at 761-1821, extension 18, or via email at [bobcallister@ponceinlet.org](mailto:bobcallister@ponceinlet.org).

## THANK YOU & WISH LIST

Thanks go out to donors Jacques and Marion Jacobsen for nineteenth century prints depicting the St. Johns River Lighthouse and the lighthouse at Anastasia Island. Earl Davis donated a brass burner from a 1911 coffee percolator, and docent John Mann added his grandfather's metal folding rule to

our collection.

Our current wish list includes a working player piano and early 20th century parlor furniture. We are also in need of women's and children's clothing from the early 20th century, including bathing costumes.





# JOIN THE PONCE DE LEON INLET LIGHTHOUSE PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION

## A GENERAL ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP INCLUDES:

- Free admission to the museum and lighthouse during regular hours of operation
- 10 percent discount in the museum gift shop and online store
- One subscription to The Light Station quarterly newsletter
- Invitations to special events
- Volunteer opportunities

## MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES:

**General** ..... \$20

- The benefits listed above for one individual

**Senior** ..... \$10

- All privileges of General Membership for one individual 62 years or older

**Student** ..... \$10

- All privileges of General Membership for one individual 12 years or older with a valid student identification

**Family** ..... \$40

- All privileges of General Membership for the immediate family
- Immediate family is limited to one or two adults and your children under age 18. Grandchildren are not eligible.
- You will be issued one membership card for each parent, and each card will list the names of your children.
- Child under 12 must be accompanied by an adult

**2nd Assistant Keeper** ..... \$100

- All privileges of General or Family Membership
- Recognition of your membership in the quarterly newsletters' 2nd Assistant Keeper List

**1st Assistant Keeper** ..... \$200

- All privileges of 2nd Assistant Membership
- Two gift General Memberships
- Recognition of your support in the quarterly newsletters' 1st Assistant Keeper List

**Principal Keeper** ..... \$500

- All privileges of 1st Assistant Membership
- A personalized guided tour of the Light Station
- Recognition of your support in the quarterly newsletters' Principal Keeper List

**Corporate Lampist** ..... \$500

- All privileges of General or Family Membership for up to five company principals
- A personalized guided tour of the Light Station
- Use of the Light Station's conference room for one meeting.
- Recognition of your companies support in the quarterly newsletters' Corporate Lampist List

## FLORIDA DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION NUMBER AND DISCLAIMER:

Registration #: CH137

A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE (800-435-7352) WITHIN THE STATE. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE.



Please complete the entire form to enroll, or join online at [www.poncelighthousestore.org](http://www.poncelighthousestore.org).

## Select type of membership:

General ..... \$20

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2nd Assistant Keeper ..... \$100

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(List any additional names on a separate sheet.)

We will contact 1st Assistant Keeper, Principal Keeper or Corporate Lampist members to obtain gift membership and company principal information.

Membership enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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**Thank You for Your Generous Support!**





**USCGC EAGLE**

CELEBRATE THE RICH HERITAGE OF THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD WITH THIS WONDERFUL MODEL OF THE HISTORIC TALL SHIP USCGC EAGLE. ORIGINALLY COMMISSIONED IN 1936 BY NAZI GERMANY AS THE SEGELSCHULSCHIFF HORST WESSEL, THE PROUD SHIP BEGAN HER LIFE AS THE USCGC EAGLE FOLLOWING GERMANY'S SURRENDER IN 1945. SHE NOW SERVES AS AN AMBASSADOR SHIP OF THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD AND AS A CADET TRAINING VESSEL FOR THE U.S. COAST GUARD ACADEMY. MODEL MEASURES 9" HIGH AND 9.5" LONG.

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PRICE: \$16.99

**BLOWN GLASS LIGHTHOUSE WITH DOLPHINS**

A GREAT GIFT FOR LOVERS OF LIGHTHOUSES AND DOLPHINS, THIS WONDERFUL 6.5" TALL BLOWN GLASS LIGHTHOUSE FEATURES TWO DANCING DOLPHINS DANCING TO THE TUNE OF "BY THE BEAUTIFUL SEA" ON A WIDE-UP ROTATING BASE.

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PRICE: \$16.99



**CUSTOM PONCE INLET LIGHTHOUSE TAPESTRY THROW AND PILLOW**

MADE IN THE U.S.A., THIS BEAUTIFUL MATCHING LIGHTHOUSE TAPESTRY THROW AND PILLOW FEATURES THE PONCE INLET LIGHT STATION. PERFECT FOR LIGHTHOUSE LOVERS, THESE CUSTOM PIECES WILL SERVE AS A WONDERFUL ACCENT FOR YOUR HOME DÉCOR AND KEEP YOU WARM AND TOASTY ON CHILLY EVENINGS. THROW BLANKET MEASURES 50" X 60", PILLOW 17" X 17".

ITEM #: 0118 (THROW) PRICE: \$42.99  
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**CHILD'S T-SHIRT**

KIDS WILL LOVE THIS COLORFUL PONCE INLET LIGHTHOUSE T-SHIRT. MADE OF 100% COTTON, THIS ONE-OF-A-KIND SHIRT IS AVAILABLE IN EITHER GOLD OR AQUA; SIZES 2-4, 6-8, 10-12, AND 14-16. PLEASE SPECIFY SIZE AND COLOR WHEN ORDERING.

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PRICE: \$9.99



**HAND-MADE GLASS SHARK SCULPTURE**

THE PERFECT GIFT FOR SHARK AFICIONADOS AND LOVERS OF THE DEEP, THIS UNIQUE HAND-CRAFTED SHARK MEASURES 8" LONG AND IS MADE OF SOLID GLASS WITH MILKY SWIRLS.

ITEM #: 1734  
PRICE: \$14.99



**LONG-SLEEVE TWILL SHIRT**

FEATURING THE PONCE INLET LIGHTHOUSE LOGO OVER THE LEFT BREAST POCKET, THIS 100% COTTON SHIRT WILL PROVIDE YEARS OF COMFORT FOR LIGHTHOUSE LOVERS EVERYWHERE. AVAILABLE IN WHEAT, CLAY, AND SPRUCE; SIZES S, M, L, XL, AND XXL. PLEASE SPECIFY DESIRED SIZE WHEN ORDERING.

ITEM #: 3671 (WHEAT); 3651 (SPRUCE); 3634 (CLAY)  
PRICE: \$22.99 (S - XL); \$24.99 (XXL)

The Ponce de Leon Inlet Lighthouse Gift Shop specializes in unique lighthouse and nautical themed gifts for people of all ages. Our wide selection includes clothing, house wares, toys, and collectibles including a wide selection of Harbour Lights and other miniatures. Customers may also shop online at [www.PonceInletLighthouseStore.org](http://www.PonceInletLighthouseStore.org), and place orders by phone at (386) 761-1821 ext. 21.

Please contact the Gift Shop at (386) 761-1821 or via email at [cmaroney@ponceinlet.org](mailto:cmaroney@ponceinlet.org) for more information. Usual UPS shipping charges and a \$4.00 handling fee apply to all orders.

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**NELLY THE PONCE INLET LIGHTHOUSE CAT**

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY NATHAN AND STEPHANIE SNERZY AND DEVELOPED BY ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER JUDY DiCARLO, CHILDREN LOVE READING ABOUT NELLY, THE PONCE INLET LIGHTHOUSE CAT AS SHE EXPLORES THE PONCE INLET LIGHT STATION MEETS WITH HER FOREST FRIENDS, AND TALKS ABOUT THE UNIQUE HISTORY OF THIS MAGNIFICENT NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK.

ITEM #: 2233  
PRICE: \$9.95

**LIGHTHOUSE WAFFLE T-SHIRT**

PROCLAIM YOUR LOVE FOR THE PONCE INLET LIGHTHOUSE WITH THIS HOODED, LONG-SLEEVE, WAFFLE T-SHIRT FEATURING THE NAME OF THE PONCE INLET LIGHTHOUSE WITHIN A WINGED EMBLEM SURROUNDED BY GOLD FILIGREE. MADE OF 100% COTTON, THIS LIGHT-WEIGHT SHIRT IS AVAILABLE IN EITHER MOCHA OR PLUM; SIZES S, M, L, XL, AND XXL. PLEASE SPECIFY DESIRED SIZE WHEN ORDERING.

ITEM #: 4908 (PLUM)  
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PRICE: \$18.99 (S-XL)  
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**PONCE INLET LIGHTHOUSE MEMBERSHIP COUPON**

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Limit one coupon per member. Coupon may not be used in conjunction with any other discount. Proof of membership must be shown at time of purchase. Not valid for purchase of Memorial Bricks.  
Good from January 1, 2010, through March 31, 2011.