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PRESIDENT WASHINGTON AND THE EARLY LIGHTHOUSE WORK IN THIS COUNTRY

The careful attention given by President Washington to economy and to efficient administration is well shown in early documents in the files of the Lighthouse Service. These include a number of papers which are of interest in this bicentennial year, even though they are papers of rather a routine character. The earliest of these signed by Washington is dated October 12, 1790, and is addressed to Alexander Hamilton, Secretary of the Treasury, and reads "I have received your letter of the 5th instant. The public service requiring the arrangements, which you have made, relative to the Light Houses of Newport and Portland, they are perfectly agreeable to me, and receive my approbation."

At its first session the year before, and only about three months after the inauguration of the first President, Congress had passed an act providing for the maintenance of the lighthouses, which act was the earliest provision made by the National Government for public works.

The last of these papers is an indorsement in Washington's handwriting, as follows: "United States, the 24 Jan'y 1797. For the reasons assigned within, the allowance of one hundred and fifty dollars is approved by Gº Washington"; this refers to an extra allowance to the keeper of the Seguin Lighthouse in Maine, for clearing the adjacent land. The period of these documents covers most of Washington's administration.

The most interesting of these papers is one which especially indicates the carefulness of President Washington; it is a contract for furnishing a mooring chain for a floating beacon in Delaware Bay, on which is the following indorsement, all in his own handwriting: "April 27th, 1793. Approved, so far as it respects the new chain; but is there an entire loss of the old one? Gº Washington."

A contract for sinking a well at Cape Henlopen Lighthouse bears the following indorsement: "Approved June 22, 1792, with this reservation; that if all the materials mentioned in the estimate B, hereunto annexed, are not used in the work, a proportional deduction shall be made from the sum stipulated. Gº Washington."

In approving on April 18, 1793, a contract for the superintendence of the building of a lighthouse at Bald Head, N. C., an indorsement in his own hand, says that the allowance "seems high, but as none have offered to execute the business so far, and a Superintendent of the building is necessary, the contract is approved by Gº Washington."

On March 10, 1796, at Philadelphia, President Washington signed as executive "Act concerning the compensations of the Superintendents and other Persons employed in the Light House Service." This document shows that at that time there were 16 light keepers in the United States, and it is stated that 4 more will be required for lighthouses under construction; the rates of compensation are fixed at from $120 to $333.33 annually.

There are also communications signed by the Secretary to the President. One of the earliest of these, addressed to the Secretary of the Treasury, is quoted in full, to illustrate the form then followed, and also because of its historical interest, as it refers to the lighthouse later built at Cape Henry, the first lighthouse constructed by the United States:

UNITED STATES, *January 24, 1790.*

SIR,

In obedience to the commands of the President of the United States, I have the honor to transmit to you a letter from His Excellency Beverley Randolph Governor of Virginia, dated January the 14th 1790, relating to the materials which were placed upon Cape Henry by the States of Virginia and Maryland for the purpose of building a Light House; and likewise the report of General Wood upon the same subjects,

which report was enclosed in Governor Randolph's letter to the President of the United States.

I have the honor to be, with perfect respect, Sir, Your most obedient servant,

TOBIAS LEAR,
Secretary to the President of the United States.

In a communication of July 18, 1793, it is stated that "The President thinks it proper that the Keeper of the Light House at Portsmouth be informed that he must reside on the spot where the Light House is, if he continues in that office, and that he will not be permitted to employ a deputy to take care of the Light House, unless upon some special occasion."

In passing upon the proposals for repairing the Tybee Lighthouse, in Georgia, the same year, the President thinks it proper that the proposal "for doing the work with the plain stair case, should be accepted," this being less expensive than "a hanging stair case," which had also been offered.

This interesting file shows a notable regard for economy and care on the part of President Washington; such attention to detail was possible, of course, only in the beginnings of the Government.

CONFERENCE OF SUPERINTENDENTS

A conference of the superintendents of the coast and lake lighthouse districts, and the bureau engineers, will be held at the headquarters of the service in the new Department of Commerce building in Washington, early in March. Geographically these districts cover a wide extent of coast and navigable waters, as shown by this list of the seaports where these superintendents are stationed: Portland (Me.), Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston, Key West, New Orleans, San Juan, Buffalo, Detroit, Milwaukee, Ketchikan (Alaska), Portland (Oreg.), San Francisco, and Honolulu.

The scope of the conference will cover nautical, engineering, scientific, and administrative problems which constantly arise in the work of this service. Among these problems are lightship design, distinctive lights for various buoy types, progress in electrification, radiobeacon improvements, sound fog signals, etc.

Airway engineers from Salt Lake City, Utah, and Fort Worth, Tex., will take part in the conference, particularly as to matters of administration common to both branches of the service.

COOPERATION WITH CANADA AS TO RADIOBEACON FREQUENCIES

The United States Lighthouse Service is establishing two additional radiobeacons on the coast of Maine, at Mount Desert Rock and at West Quoddy Head, the former being now in operation. The radio branch of the Canadian Department of Marine is rearranging part of the radiobeacon system of that country. After conference a joint plan has been arrived at which, it is believed, will avoid interference between the radiobeacons on the two sides of the border. This provides that the three United States stations, West Quoddy Head, Mount Desert, and Portland Lightship, will be synchronized, using the frequency 292 kilocycles instead of 305 as originally proposed for the two first named, and the two Canadian stations, Lurcher Lightship and Seal Island, will be synchronized on the frequency 310 kilocycles, instead of 295 used at the former.

This arrangement will take effect about May 1, and will afford a wide separation between the neighboring Canadian and American stations; the convenience of navigators will be advanced by this prompt and effective international cooperation.

RADIOTELEPHONE AT ST. GEORGE REEF LIGHT STATION, CALIF.

The radiotelephone for communication between St. George Reef and Crescent City Light Stations located in the extreme northern part of the eighteenth lighthouse district and approximately 11 miles apart, with St. George Reef about 9 miles offshore, is one of the pioneer radiotelephone installations of the Lighthouse Service.

The above two radiotelephone stations were placed in commission on October 25, 1923, and have been in continuous, practically uninterrupted service every day since first placed in service, with an average of approximately four separate calls each day throughout the eight and one-half years of service.

This radiotelephone installation was made necessary as a result of the impracticability of maintaining even a heavily armored submarine cable between the shore and St. George Reef Light Station on account of the heavy seas and sharp rocky bottom at and near Seal Rock. The last submarine cable to be laid cost approximately $50,000 in place, and was first broken within four months after laying.