THOSE WHO SEND

GREETINGS

Geo. E. Eaton
SUPT., U.S. LIGHTHOUSE DEPT

George P. Dilton
BOSTON PORT AUTHORITY

Charles W. Gammons
TOWN OF COHASSET

Channing Howard
BAY STATE HISTORICAL LEAGUE

Thomas Johnson
SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND HISTORIAN

Edward Rowe Snow
BOSTONIAN SOCIETY

Capt Bill Wincapaw
PILOT

Mrs. Edward R. Snow

2005.046.003

JAMES M. CURLEY
GOVERNOR

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON

November 14, 1935

Mr. Per S. Tornberg
Keeper, Minot's Light
Boston Harbor
Boston, Massachusetts

Dear Keeper Tornberg:

On the occasion of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the lighting of the new Minot's Light, I wish to extend my hearty congratulations and felicitations to those in charge.

This beacon which now guards the entrance to Boston Harbor is a monument to expert workmanship and commendable ability. I trust that in the days to come the same success which it has enjoyed in the past will follow throughout the future.

Allow me to personally extend my sincere wishes for health and happiness to you.

Sincerely,

James M. Curley

CITY OF BOSTON
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY HALL

FREDERICK W. MANSFIELD
Mayor

November 15, 1935.

Per S. Tomberg,
Keeper of Minot's Lighthouse,
Outer Boston Harbor,
Boston, Massachusetts.

Dear Keeper Tornberg:

I wish to congratulate you as keeper of the famous Minot's Lighthouse, on the 75th anniversary of the lighting of the new Light, November 15, 1860.

Yours sincerely,

John I. Fitzgerald
Acting Mayor.

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THE STORY OF MINOT'S LIGHT

For many score years the lonely rocks guarding the southern approach to Boston Harbor have seen many terrible shipwrecks and tragedies. Early in the history of the colony the rocks of Connyhasset, as the ledges off Cohasset were once called, saw many ships go to their doom.

The first wreck here of which there is an actual record took place over two hundred and fifty years ago, when a small vessel, heavily laden with supplies, crashed on the ledges. All on board were lost, but the record of the merchandise saved from the disaster can still be seen in the Massachusetts Archives at the State House in Boston.

Another wreck which occurred in 1793 was that of the Gertrude Maria, from Copenhagen. Late one night the ship of 400 tons, under Captain Clein, bumped over the outer rocks where Minot's Light now stands. It was a blinding snowstorm, and the ship finally hit Brush Island, which is covered with jagged, pointed rocks. Here the vessel was battered and pounded. When it was seen that she could not stay together much longer the crew launched a boat into the raging surf, and two men tried to gain the shore. When the boat was crushed against the ship, one man was drowned, but the other succeeded in regaining the ship. A spar was now dropped across the water from the ship to the shore, and one by one, the members of the crew successfully reached the land.

Hunting in vain for shelter, they finally all huddled together, wet and freezing, and waited for morning.

With the coming of dawn the people of the village saw the wreckage and brought a boat down to the beach. The craft was launched into the breakers, and finally reached Brush Island, returning safely with three of the crew. When launched again, the small boat overturned and smashed to pieces. Two other boats were brought down to the shore, and the rest of the crew of twenty-one eventually were taken off the Island. When Captain Clein returned to Denmark he told the king of his rescue, and the grateful ruler sent 14 medals to America to be presented to the lifesavers of Cohasset.

Fifty-two known wrecks,with a total loss of life amounting to around sixty-six, occurred between earliest times and 1847 off Cohasset. It is a strange irony of fate that allowed a disaster greater than all the others put together to occur less than seventy days before Minots Light was lighted for the first time. The structure has been completed except for the light itself, and Captain Dunham was helpless to aid the ship in peril.

It was the worst shipwreck of the century. Of the passengers and crew of one-hundred and twenty-one, only twenty-two were saved. The disaster took place Sunday, October 7, 1849, when the British brig Saint John, crowded with Irish immigrants from Galway, Ireland, crashed on Grampus Ledge near Minot. The masts had been cut away, but she dragged anchor until it was too late. Another vessel, the Kathleen had safely made harbor just ahead of the ill-fated Saint John. The scenes of confusion and horror which were witnessed on the shores that day were terrible. The ship was old and rotten, and within an hour had broken up completely, those who were saved

came ashore in the long boat or on parts of the ship's wreckage.

An unusual aftermath of the tragedy took place October 29, when Miss Lucy Maria Long of Boston Light, discovered the battered body of a man who had been lost three weeks before in the Minots Ledge disaster. The body was found on Brewster Spit in Boston Harbor. A description follows from the pen of Thoreau:

When we arrived at Cohasset, it appeared that nearly all the passengers were bound for the beach, which was about a mile distant, and many other persons were flocking in from the neighboring country. There were several hundreds of them streaming off over Cohasset common in that direction, some on foot and some in wagons, and among them were some sportsmen in their hunting-jackets, with their guns, and game bags, and dogs.

About a mile south we could see, rising above the rocks, the masts of the British brig which the St. John had endeavored to follow, which had slipped her cables, and, by good luck, run into the mouth of Cohasset Harbor. A little further along the shore we saw a man's clothes on a rock; further, a woman's scarf, a gown, a straw bonnet, the brig's caboose, and one of her masts high and dry, broken into several pieces. In another rocky cove, lay a part of one side of the vessel, still hanging together. It was, perhaps, forty feet long, by fourteen wide. I was even more surprised at the power of the waves, exhibited on this shattered fragment, than I had been at the sight of the smaller fragments before. The largest timbers and iron braces were broken superfluously, and I saw that no material could withstand the power of the waves; that iron must go th pieces in such a case, and an iron vessel would be cracked up like an eggshell on the rocks. Some of

Because of the many wrecks in the vicinity, Captain W. H. Swift of the U. S. Engineers, suggested to the Government that an iron lighthouse could be built on stilts at Minot's Ledge, similar to the beacon he had successfully erected at the entrance of Black Rock Harbor in Connecticut. Captain Daniel T. Lothrop now compiled a list of wrecks in the vicinity over a period of thirty years. Captain Lothrop listed forty vessels to the value of a third of a million dollars. ($364,000) which had been wrecked in the vicinity.

When the actual arrangements for the erection of a light was made it was estimated that even the neap tides would not expose over six-hundred square feet of rock at the Ledge, so the original plans had to be somewhat altered. Nine holes were dug in the rock five feet deep, and having a circumference of about 32 inches. One hole in the middle was surrounded by eight others on the outside, in the shape of a circle, twenty-four feet in diameter.

The drilling began in 1847, and was not completed for many months. Finally in 1849, the iron piling was set into the holes. The outer piling was tapered to slightly more than four inches at the top, and the center piling was reduced to six inches. The top of the frame, forty feet high, had an area of two-hundred and fifty square feet. On the top of this platform a lighter frame was erected to a height of sixty feet where the lantern room, fifteen feet high, was placed. Every corner was braced diagonally and laterally, and a small room for the keeper and his assistant was placed beneath the lantern.

Keeper Isaac A. Dunham lighted the light for the first time on the 13th of December, 1849. The light burned faithfully for over a year, until April 15, 1851, when a terrible storm began.

John W. Bennett was then the keeper, and had gone ashore for supplies, leaving the lighthouse to his two assistants, Joseph Wilson and Joseph Antione.

By midnight April 16, the storm had become a hurricane, and fears were felt on shore for the safety of the light. The bell was last heard to ring shortly before one o'clock on the morning of April 17, 1851, and when morning came the watchers on the shore saw only a twisted mass of piling where once the light had stood. Both keepers were drowned, but it will never be known if they attempted to reach the shore or perished when the edifice collapsed.

Although it had been claimed that no part of the tower was ever found, the Marine Room of the Old State House in Boston holds a window frame of the original light house.

A lightship was placed near the ledge, and plans were finally completed for the erection of a more substantial edifice. The actual work began July 1, 1855, and Captain Barton S. Alexander was chosen to superintend the construction. A model was constructed, one inch to the foot, and was such a work of art it was later taken to the Chicago Exposition of 1893.

The first step was to remove the ruins of the old lighthouse from the Ledge, and a fearless Scandinavian sailor, named Peter Fox, dived into the water and attached grappling irons to the iron piling. Day after day the labor was continued, until at last the ledge was cleared for the new lighthouse. It is not generally known that a new iron structure was built, before the present stone edifice was planned. In another great gale of January, 1856, the second iron lighthouse was swept into the sea, and Captain Alexander admitted his discouragement. It was later found that a vessel, the New Empire later went ashore at White Head.

The work again went ahead. The rock at the ledge was found to be safe enough to allow a diameter of thirty feet, so a circular base of that size was planned. Two boats, the Deucalion and the Pyrrha, took the workmen out to the Ledge, and in all the time of construction, not one life was lost. Dowels were carried to a height of 25 feet, where the twelfth course of masonry began. Quincy granite was used throughout, as it proved to be tougher than that from either Rockport or Cohasset.

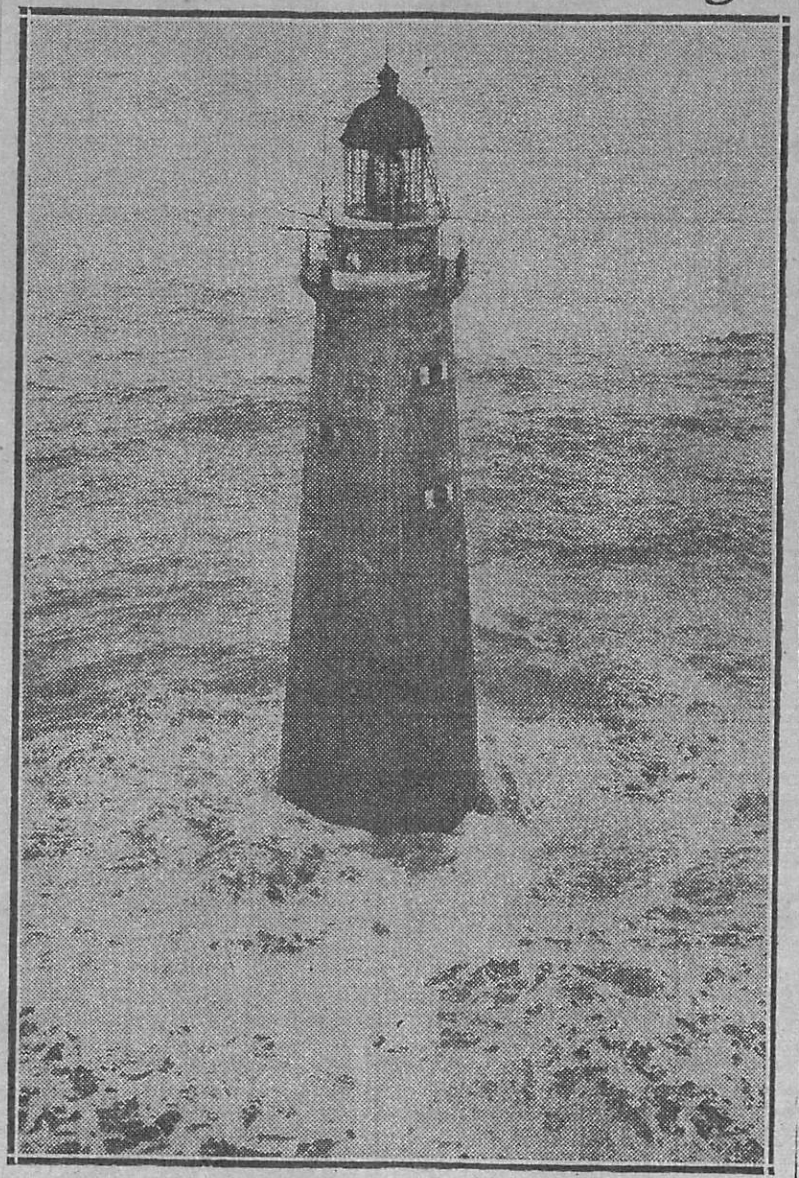
The work was done on Government Island, in back of the present light keeper's residence, and the bases where the edifice was constructed are still to be seen. The total cost was $300,000 and there were 1,079 separate blocks used in the construction. The first cut stone was laid July 9, 1857, and the lowest block was set July 11, 1858. From the lowest stone to the top of the lighthouse it is exactly 114 feet one inch.

Although the light with its romantic flash, 1-4-3, or I-love-you has not entirely prevented shipwrecks on the adjoining coast, there has been hundreds of lives saved by its welcome beams. Other ships, including the Lawlor, the Allentown, and the H. C. Higginson have gone to their doom in spite of Minot's Light. In the wintertime weeks pass before the landing can be made, and sometime the keepers risk their lives in their attempts to relieve their mates.

Today, November 15, 1935, under Keeper Tormberg, Minot's Lighthouse passes another milestone as it celebrates its diamond anniversary of the first lighting of the new beacon. Thus it stands for the successful accomplishment of a feat claimed by many to be impossible. Radio and the telephone make the vigil at the lonely ledge a more pleasant one then when the first keeper,

Isaac A. Dunham, lighted the beacon. The light, with its 75,000 candlepower beam flashing over an area of 200 square miles, stands as a living memorial to a great engineer---Colonel Barton S. Alexander.

Mark Anniversary of Wreck of Minot's Light



MINOT'S LIGHT

Where exercises are to be held in commemoration of the 85th anniversary of the destruction of the first beacon to be erected on Minot's Ledge.

Although Mother Nature did her best to prevent a delegation of shore folk from visiting that most treacherous of beacons, Minot's Light, yesterday morning, she was defeated by man's latest invention, the airplane, and the memorial visit commemorating the 85th anniversary of the destruction of the first beacon ever at the lonely ledge was successfully carried out.

The Boston Post photographer, accompanied by Edward Rowe Snow, harbor historian, flew down from the Boston airport yesterday morning when plans for a visit to the lighthouse itself had to be cancelled because of the severe westerly gale which blew all day. The two keepers, Captain Per S. Tornberg, and his assistant, Otis E. Walsh, waved a recognition to the plane as it dipped and rose while circling the lonely guardian of Minot's Ledge.

The first lighthouse, destroyed in the great gale of 1851, still known to mariners up and down the Atlantic coast as the Minot's Light storm of 1851, was erected in 1847 because of the shipwreck of the St. John, a vessel loaded with Irish immigrants on their way to Boston. This ship struck the ledge and went to pieces almost immediately. Ninety-nine passengers were drowned.

It was this tragic shipwreck which started the agitation resulting in the building of the first Minot's Light.

At the time of the destruction of the light in 1851, an investigating board determined that a platform constructed too close to the water by the first keeper, Isaac F. Dunham, on which he stored his supplies, had caused the tragedy. The great force of the seas surging upward against the platform toppled the beacon into the sea.