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CONNECTICUT

NEW LONDON HARBOR LIGHTHOUSE

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The original New London Harbor Lighthouse was built on the west side of the entrance to New London harbor in 1760. The original lighthouse was probably of masonry. It apparently was completely removed when the stone tower which stands today was built in 1801. Following the Act of August 7, 1789, the lighthouse, built in 1760, was ceded to the United States, according to the following "Memoranda of Cessions" by Connecticut:

"1790, May. Lighthouse at New London and certain rocks and ledges off against the harbor of New London, called Race Rock, Black Ledge and Goshen Reef, together with buoys."

On May 7, 1800, Congress appropriated $15,700 "for rebuilding, altering and improving the lighthouse at New London, Connecticut" of which $15,547.90 was spent for the purpose in 1801, the balance being carried to the surplus fund.

On November 22, 1838, Lt. George M. Bache, USN, made a report on the light which he described as a stationary light, situated on a rocky point to the westward of the entrance to the river Thames, and two miles from the town of New London. "It is of great importance as a leading light for vessels going in and out of the harbor of New London, which, on account of its position and security, is much resorted to during the heavy gales of winter."

"The light is shown from an elevation of 111 feet, which, in clear weather, should render it visible 16½ miles. xxx The tower is a substantial building of freestone, smooth hammered, and laid in courses; it is 80 feet in height, and is ascended by an interior stairway of wood, having landings at convenient distances. xxxx"

"The lighting apparatus consists of eleven lamps, with parabolic reflectors, disposed around two horizontal tables so as to throw the lights from W.S.W. south about to E by N. The reflectors are 13 inches in diameter. xxx This apparatus was furnished in 1834."

In 1855 a fourth order lens to illuminate 315° was recommended. In 1863 new dwellings for keepers were provided. In 1868 a road was opened by the city of New London across the lighthouse grounds, the road being fenced on both sides.

In 1874 a second class fog signal with 2 eighteen inch engines and a Daboll trumpet was installed. It was in operation 553 hours during 1875. In 1883 a first class fog trumpet was substituted. On December 21, 1896, an improved fog-signal consisting of two 3½ horsepower Hornsby-Akroyd oil engines, air compressors etc. was installed operating the first class Daboll trumpet.

A fog signal house was built in 1903 and 13 horsepower oil engines, with trumpet, siren etc. were installed in the following year. The fog signal was discontinued on September 5, 1911. On July 20, 1912, the light was changed to acetylene, unattended.

In the 1949 Light List, the lighthouse is described as a white, octagonal pyramidal tower, 90 feet above ground and 89 feet above water, the light being visible for 15 miles, and located on the west side of the entrance to New London harbor. The light is a 7500 candlepower fourth order electric light flashing white every 4 seconds, with a red 1500 candlepower sector from 0° to 41°, covering Sarah Ledge and the shoals to the westward.

Historical Section
Public Information Division
U. S. Coast Guard

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NEW LONDON HARBOR LIGHT (1801)

On shore, at south edge of city of New London, this light is probably built on the site of the fourth lighthouse to be erected in the United States. The orginal lighthouse was first lighted in 1761. An act of the Colonial Legislature provided that funds for the building of the lighthouse were to be raised by means of a lottery. This lottery was held in 1761, and from the proceeds a stone tower 64 feet in height was built. Various other acts of the Colonial Legislature placed a tax on shipping for the support of the lighthouse and provided for necessary repairs. When the Federal government was formed and took over the colonial lighthouses, lighthouse work frequently came directly to the attention of the President, and in 1791 President George Washington personally signed a contract with Nathaniel Richards of New London for supplying oil to the lighthouse.

In 1801 a new and higher lighthouse was built to replace the original structure, and is the tower now standing. During the War of 1812, at the request of Commodore Stephen Decatur, the light was extinguished, but as there was a regiment of militia stationed nearby, no attempt was made by the enemy to injure anything. Today the New London Harbor Lighthouse is ~~one of those fitted with automatic apparatus, tanks of acetylene gas stored at its base operating the light without attention for several months at a time.~~ FULLY AUTOMATED, However, the tower itself remains substantially as when first built in 1801, and is one of the finest of the early masonry lighthouses still in existence.

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