

By George Worthylake
and C. D. McCambridge

Ediz Hook, WA



Ediz Hook Lighthouse in 1890. Note the keeper by the fence. The pyramidal structure at left is the fog bell house. Photo courtesy Bert Kellogg Collection, North Olympic Library System.

In 1863 President Abraham Lincoln authorized the establishment of a new lighthouse for the west coast on the Straits of Juan de Fuca in Washington.

Ten acres were reserved at the end of a peninsula known as Ediz Hook The following year Congress appropriated $5,000 to construct the station. Today's value would be over $100,000, which was a lot of money to spend during a costly war.

The station was finished and placed in service on April 2, 1865. The structure was a combination dwelling and tower. A lard oil lamp in a 5th order Fresnel lens produced a fixed white light visible for 11 miles.

In 1885 a pyramid-shaped weight tower was constructed toward the end of the spit and a 3,165 lb. bell was installed near the top. An automated bell striker in the pyramid caused a sledgehammer to strike the bell every 15 seconds during foggy weather. The bell proved disappointing because of limited range. It was eventually replaced by a siren signal powered by compressed air.

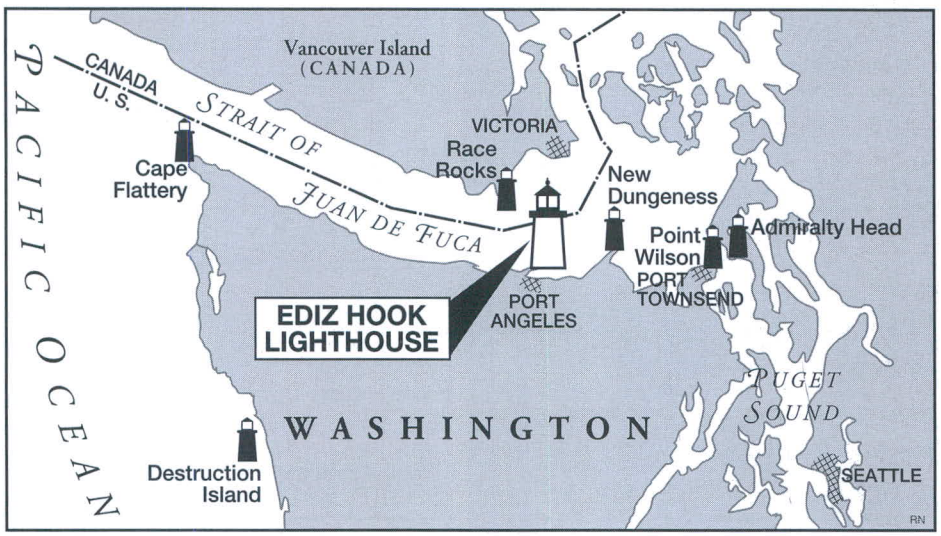
By 1908 the original lighthouse was deteriorating and funds were appropriated to construct a new lighthouse on the spit. The new lighthouse was a wooden, hip roof structure with a 35-foot-tall octagonal tower at one end. The original lens was transferred to the new lantern room, but the lens was now powered by an I.O.V. (incandescent oil vapor lamp). The building also housed the fog signal equipment, a 1st class air siren. The siren's two horns protruded through the roof of the structure.

In 1935 the Coast Guard established their first west coast air station on Ediz Hook. The station was commissioned on June 1, 1935. Now the spit, in addition to the light station, had a runway, hanger, control tower and several other dwellings.

In 1939 the Lighthouse Service was combined with the Coast Guard and the two entities came under one jurisdiction. In 1946 the station went out of service when an aero-beacon was placed on the control tower of the air station.



The 1885 fog signal building in 1907. A descending weight inside the tower powered an automatic fog bell striking mechanism that periodically struck the bell with a hammer. The 1890 Light List states, " . . . struck by machinery every 15 seconds. At times this bell cannot be heard over one-quarter mile." Photo courtesy Bert Kellogg Collection, North Olympic Library System.



On May 12, 1939 an article appeared in the local paper lamenting the planned destruction of the original lighthouse building that, apparently, had been used as a dwelling for the assistant keeper. The article stated,

"Progress this summer will remove a building that is undoubtedly the oldest standing structure in Port Angeles and one of the oldest on the north Olympic Peninsula.

"Chris Waters, keeper of the Ediz Hook Lighthouse said today the 82-year-old dwelling now occupied by the assistant keeper . . . will be razed by the Lighthouse Service to make way for a new one.

"The house, Waters said, was built in 1857 – before there was a town of Port Angeles – the original served a both a lighthouse and keeper's quarters . . . In later years a separate lighthouse was constructed and another keeper's house was built, but the old structure has remained in use as assistant keeper's quarters.

"Waters doesn't know whether the building will be torn down or sold to the highest bidder. It would be virtually impossible to move the house intact, he believes, as 'it would probably fall apart.'

Another change to be made shortly at Ediz Hook light is the removal of the water tower that has stood for years just west of the keeper's quarters. Since the piping of the city water into the lighthouse property a few years ago the tower has not been needed . . . "

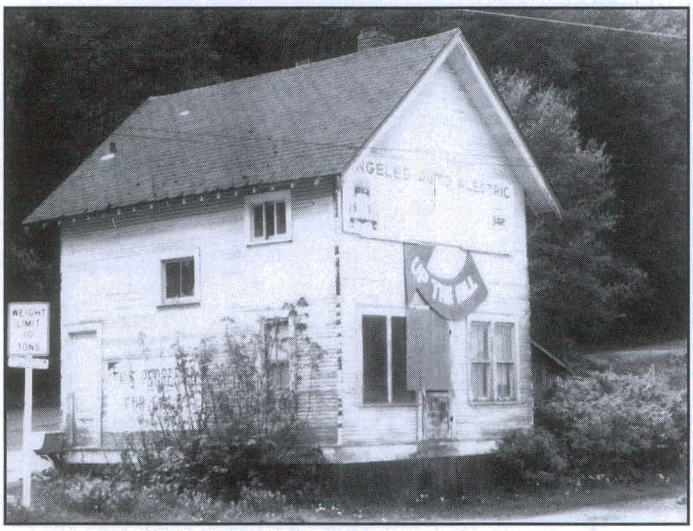
Port Angeles resident, and Society member, Jon Didrickson, and others have speculated that the original lighthouse was sold and moved to 323 South Albert St. in Port Angeles. However, several old-timers disagree and say the building isn't the old lighthouse. Didrickson points out the building's similarity – looking almost identical in size and shape – sans the tower. He says that areas of the attic appear to have been constructed to support a lantern on the roof.

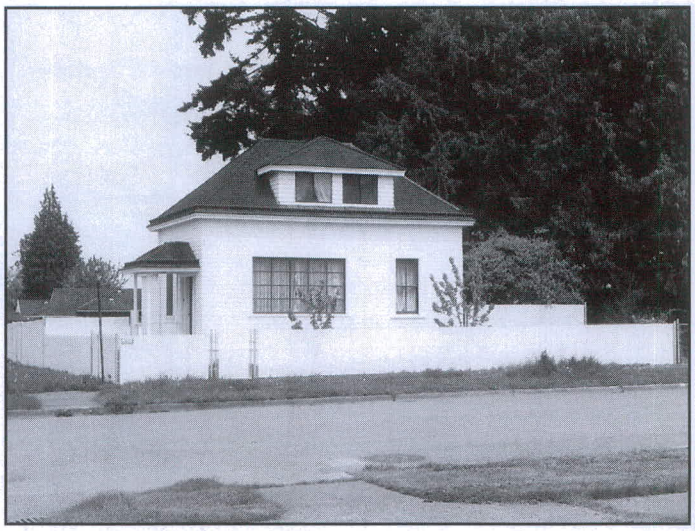
One thing is known, and that is that after the Ediz Hook Light Station went out of service, the second lighthouse, without the tower, was relocated to East 4th and Albert Streets in Port Angeles and today serves as a dwelling.

For eighty-one years Canadian and American vessels plying the waters of the Straits of Juan de Fuca counted on a steady white light and a fog signal to assist them clear the tip of Ediz Hook and it seems like . . . Only Yesterday.



The Ediz Hook Light Station in transition. From left are the Leick-designed new keeper's dwelling, water tower, original lighthouse, storage sheds, new lighthouse and oil house. The old lighthouse is thought to have been moved to Port Angeles, without the lantern room, and used for various things. It is speculated that the building, below left, is the original lighthouse.





Right – The new Ediz Hook station, which was constructed in 1908. From left are the oil house, keeper's dwelling, water tower (which has been reduced in height) and combination lighthouse-fog signal building. The fog signal horns can be seen protruding from the roof. This second Ediz Hook lighthouse was sold and moved to Port Angles, above right.

C.D. McCambridge supplied all the photos for this page. Top and bottom photos from the Bert Kellogg Collection, North Olympic Library System. Middle photo, left, by McCambridge (1993), middle photo, right, by Ray Grice.

