Little Fort/Waukegan Lighthouse Research

The Porcupine announced March 23, 1847, that four thousand dollars had been appropriated for a lighthouse at Little Fort and that Captain McClellan had located it south of the river on the edge of the bluff. The lighthouse was built in 1849. It was a brick structure and stood three rods south of the site of the house built in 1870.
Source: Halsey, John J., *A History of Lake Co., Ill*, (Chicago, Illinois: Roy S. Bates Publisher,1912) p 97

1849 -Little Fort Lighthouse was built on the bluff overlooking Lake Michigan. The station consisted of a brick tower and detached wood-frame keepers dwelling,

ca. 1850 – About the year 1850, an appropriation was made by Congress of $15,000 to commence the construction of a harbor at Little Fort. The work was commenced in 1853, under the charge of Capt. Gamble. The sum was soon exhausted, and as no further appropriation could be obtained, nothing more was done, and the work performed went to waste.
Source: *The Past & Present of Lake Co., Illinois*, (Chicago, Illinois: William LeBaron & Co., 1877) p 323

1871 -A new lighthouse was built this year on the site at the northwest corner of Lake and State Streets, but three rods further north. It was a white fixed light, thirty-five feet from base to plane, and seventy-five feet above the water. "Gazette 1871, Jan 14.
Source: Halsey, John J., *A History of Lake Co., Ill*, (Chicago, Illinois: Roy S. Bates Publisher,1912) p 146

The Waukegan Gazette, Saturday, February 14, 1871
The Waukegan Light House

There are many things with which people, otherwise well-educated, are unacquainted. For an example of what we mean, let us take the Waukegan Light-House for an example. Every body who goes to and fro on State Street has remarked the building that looks so like a country church; but when you get close enough to it, you see it is nothing of the kind.

If you will rap at the door, and speak tolerably civil, and tell Mr. John Williams, the Light House keeper, you desire to go up to the tower, doubtless he will gratify your wish if you are a decent man or woman. You will ascend four flights of stairs, and if it is a sunshiny day, such as we have had during our prolonged autumn, the whiteness of the white paint and the cleanliness of the blue stairs will make your eyes ache, if accustomed to dirty rooms and no thrifty house-wife. You could eat your dinner from any one of each floors, for they are as clean as a painted board can be made.

In the corridor, previous to the ascent of the tower, where kindly, easy and much abused Uncle Sam warns vessels on Lake Michigan, who approach too closely to this coast of their whereabouts, that are notices printed. One of these suggests to the visitor that it is the duty of the light-house keeper to answer questions from civilly disposed people, -a duty that the present occupant of the position faithfully performs. Another

placard informs rascals that the United States punishes *arson* with *death*, when public buildings are, in part or in whole, occupied as dwellings. Still another informs you, that it you are scoundrel enough to burn or attempt to burn a bit of the property of the Federal Government, and said property is not a dwelling in whole or part, you will have to pay for your vicious propensities $5,000 of take ten years imprisonment unless a lenient U.S. Judge lets you off with less. In fact, offences, on the high seas, or against Federal property are felonies that are justly punished more severely that a crime against a State – or an individual, for the Republic rein is so light that it must protect itself. A felony – a theft – committed on the high the high seas or in American waters, entails $1,000 fine and five years of imprisonment. To raise a false light on any shore or coast, where the United States has jurisdiction over navigable waters, is punishable with $5,000 fine and ten years imprisonment.

The Waukegan light-house is situated on the south-side of Little Fort river, 15 miles South of South Port (Kenosha) in latitude 49 degrees 21 minutes and 29 seconds. The longitude from west from Washington, is 97 degrees 30 minutes, 1 second.

The Waukegan light is white and is a fixed light. The tower is 35 feet from the base of the focal plane and 75 feet above the sea level.

The lens is of the fifth-order. On arriving at the tower light and standing on the platform, where a portion of the South part of Waukegan lies before you, as in a bird's eye view, gaze where the elevation of the soil shuts out a portion in the ____ distance, one sees the city stretched out in a magnificent panorama. As we saw it on a recent December day, with a golden sheen of morning sun, and an atmosphere more like May than December, we thought that here was a point of view, even a professional newspaper reporter might appreciate – for here was the place where one might possibly get a measurably correct idea of a portion of Waukegan.

Looking at the glass in the tower which by the way, is itself, a curiosity, to a scientific man and from the establishment of Henri Lepaute, Paris, France, just as the copper frame work comes from the United States Light House Establishment, and remembering Uncle Sam's warning, "not to touch the glass of illuminating apparatus" Our only marvel was that any citizen of this republic could be depraved as to render a caution of that kind of necessary. Yet it is no needless caution. People who know a great deal better, perpetually *will* put their fingers upon property which is not their own. There seems to be a vast sort of innocent but ignoble blackguardism, especially peculiar to our civilization. If you doubt this assertion – why does Central Park, N.Y. say "keep off the grass", "do not feed the swans", why does Uncle Sam warn people to not do that which is no right-minded man or woman would do, and where Europe would scorn to insult its subject by like warnings, and why does one of our city churches have a standing motion to the effect "gentleman will please not use tobacco in the church," –as if a gentleman could ever think of such a thing.

The first lighthouse in Waukegan was erected in 1849. It was of brick, and located some three rods South of the present structure. The present Light house was built in 1860 and is a much more substantial structure, so far as the tower is concerned, than a great many thoughtless people perchance imagine.

For the benefit of the order of intellect