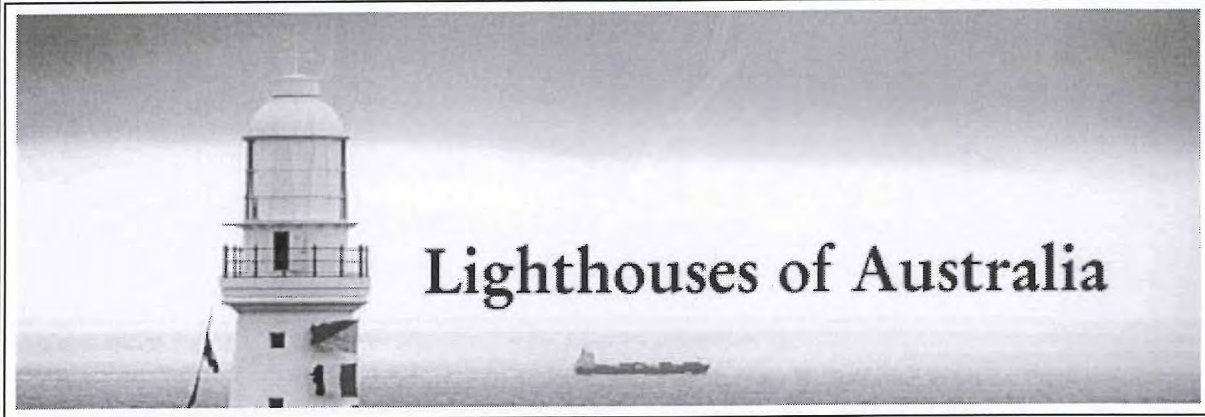
Despite an earthquake, a fire and constant erosion the Troubridge Island Lighthouse has up till now survived. As this erosion continues the tower it is very much under threat.



The Troubridge Island Lighthouse

The Sea Encrouches Upon The Troubridge Island

Despite an earthquake, a fire and constant erosion of an island that continually moves and reshapes itself, the Troubridge Island Lighthouse has up till now survived. As this erosion continues to eat towards the foundations of the tower it is very much under threat with no real action for a solution in sight

Operation
History
Preservation
Issues
Access
Surrounding Area

Lighthouse
Photograph Courtesy: Chris & Judy Johnson

Operation

LOCATION: Latitude 35° 07'S; Longitude 137° 50'E (Map)
OPERATOR: Australian Maritime Safety Authority
CHARACTER: Flash Every 10 Seconds; White With Red Sector
LIGHT SOURCE: 12 Volt Lamp
POWER SOURCE: Solar Power
INTENSITY: White 1800 cd; Red 360 cd
ELEVATION: 25 metres
RANGE: White 10 Nautical miles; Red 7 Nautical miles
HEIGHT: 24 metres

Looking Over Nesting Cormorants to Troubridge Island Lighthouse
Photograph Courtesy: Chris & Judy Johnson

History

The Troubridge Shoals, of which Troubridge Island is a part, are on the main route to Adelaide from the west known as the Investigator Strait. It is the passage of water between Kangaroo Island and the Yorke Peninsula. The shoal hugs the Yorke Peninsula and offically has been the cause of 33 wrecks and groundings, however, local knowledge says that the real figure is in the hundreds. In 1850 seven vessels ran aground in an eight month period.

The Troubridge Island Lighthouse was completed in 1855 was the second lighthouse to be built in South Australia, the first being Cape Willoughby on Kangaroo Island. It is constructed of cylindrical cast iron segments shipped out from Britian and bolted together on site. It is believed to be only one of two towers of this type constructed in Australia. The cottages were completed in 1856 and the light was lit.

In 1882 the light was upgraded to a holophotal reflector apparatus and lantern. At the same time the telegraph cable was laid from Edithburgh to the lighthouse to enhance

communications.

In 1899 a fixed red light was added to the platform of the Troubridge Island lighthouse.

The Troubridge Island Lighthouse Circa 1900
Photograph Courtesy: Chris & Judy Johnson

Between the years 1925 and 1931, a 2nd order Deville lamp and a 2.19 metres Chance Bros Lantern were installed and the operation electrified. The power was provided by a petrol generator.

In 1956 the light was again upgraded to a 1,000 watt, 120 volt tungsten halogen lamp and had an intensity of 480,000 candelas. This increased the range from the original 10 miles to 25 miles. Power from the 2 new diesel generators meant the cottages could electrified for the first time. Also the light tower was repainted from the original colours to bright red with a white horizontal band as a daymark.

The generators were again upgraded in 1976 and the telegraph link was upgraded to a radio link.

In the late 1970's it was decided to build a new lighthouse on Troubridge Hill. The new light was completed in 1980 and in 1981 the Troubridge Island light was downgraded in power, automated and demanned. In 1982 the island and lighthouse was sold to the South Australian Government who wished to create a bird sanctuary.

The Troubridge Island Lighthouse Circa 1900
Photograph Courtesy: Chris & Judy Johnson

The future of this light seemed doomed from it's inception. When Matthew Flinders, who named the shoal, reached the area in 1802 it was just a sandbar on a limestone reef. By 1838 it had developed into a small islet, 600 metres long by 300 metres wide. This was further stabilised between 1856 and 1885 by vegetation brought with the lighthouse keepers to plant for their gardens and also to protect the cottages from the elements.

Within 20 years of establishment of the lighthouse massive erosion had reached the base of the lighthouse. A breakwater that had been built in 1858 was found to be ineffective and after an 1868 winter storms work had to be undertaken to underpin the foundation of the lighthouse.

An earthquake in 1902 shook the lighthouse, causing a fire to start in and destroy the lantern room, and damaged the foundations. The lantern room was immediately repaired and refurbished and brought back into service. The foundations of the tower and cottages were not repaired till 1904.

Despite the fact the the size of the island is now 800 metres long and 400 metres wide the lighthouse is still threatened with continuing erosion as the island moves and reshapes itself. It is interesting to note in comparing the first of the prints taken in the early 1900's with the photograph from a similar angle below that the first was taken on land and the current one was taken from a boat!

Preservation Issues

This lighthouse is very much under threat. The erosion has now reached the base of the lighthouse and in the winter high seas the foundations are threatened. No clear plan has been resolved on how to deal with this situation.

The Troubridge Island Lighthouse From the Sea
Photograph Courtesy: Chris & Judy Johnson

Access

Troubridge Island lies almost 6 kilometres east south east off Edithburgh on the Yorke Peninsula.

Tours are provided on public and school holidays by Chris and Judy Johnson of "Troubridge Island Hideaway" in Edithburgh, subject to weather conditions.

Accommodation is available.

The Surrounding Area

The Troubridge Hill Lighthouse, on the mainland, several kilometres to the west.

HOME TOP SA INDEX FEEDBACK ABOUT

The Troubridge Island Lighthouse page created: 8/7/98

Last Updated: 20/2/99

Web Site First Published: 3/12/97

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Sources:

AMSA
Brian Lord
Department of Environment and Land Management, SA

Lighthouses of South Australia by R Parsons
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LIGHTHOUSE PEOPLE HOW YOU CAN HELP

EUROPEAN HERITAGE ASSESSMENT OF TROUBRIDGE ISLAND

Introduction

This report was prepared in response to a request made by the National Parks and Wildlife Service to assess the historical and architectural value of buildings on Troubridge Island and to make recommendations for their future management. It is intended that this report is read in conjunction with the Biological and Management of Troubridge Island made by that Department.

The site was visited on September 25, 1981, and an inspection of the keepers' cottages, sheds and other structures was carried out by me - an internal inspection of the lighthouse was not made.

Brief Historical Background and Context

Troubridge Shoal lies about 7 kilometres east south-east off Edithburgh at the heel of Yorke Peninsula. The Shoal and Peninsula were surveyed and named [1] by Matthew Flinders in 1802 who likened the peninsula to an "ill shaped leg and foot". [2]

About ten years after the first colonists arrived in South Australia a handful of pastoralists settled on Yorke Peninsula and it was not until surveyed in 1868 that Agricultural settlements emerged. Edithburgh had its beginnings in 1871 and in 1882 became a corporate town with a population just over 200. It became a major centre for exporting salt when the Castle Salt Co-op. opened its refinery there in 1898. [3]

The Shoal is dangerously located along the major shipping route to Port Adelaide which passes through Investigator Strait and in March 1838 it claimed its first ship, the "Dart". Many other followed [4] and although the Marine Courts of Enquiry often laid the blame on the respective Masters, a new survey of the Shoal under Captain Lipson's command in 1851 recommended that "a lighthouse and not even a buoy" be erected. [5] The sum of 9000 pounds was included for the 1852 estimates to provide for a lighthouse, two lighthouse-keepers' cottages and requisite water tanks. [6]

The contract to design and build the lighthouse was won by a British firm headed by Alexander Gordon, a world-renowned exponent of prefabricated cast iron lighthouses, who built his first light at Morant Point, Jamaica in 1842. [7]

L. Named after Naval Commander Sir Thomas Troubridge.
2. Ern Carmichael The Ill-Shaped Leg 1973, pp.1.
3. Ern Carmichael & Jeanette McLeod Yorke Peninsula Sketchbook pp.22.
4. List of some Wrecks and grounded ships on or near Troubridge Shoal - Dart (1838) Porsee (1838), Yare (1845), Sultana (1849), Young Hebe (1849) Marion (1851) Washington (1852) Charles Carter (1854) Iron King (1873) Chimvorazo (1881) Partonian (1924). According to Department of Transport Historical Note K-2022, until 1911, seventeen vessels grounded either on the Shoal or nearby Marion Reef.
5. Department of Transport Historical Notes Troubridge Shoal K-2022, pp.1.
6. ibid, pp.1.
7. D.B. Hague & R. Christie Lighthouses: their architecture, history and archaeology, 1975.

Future Use and Management

The Edithburgh Progress Association has expressed interest in controlling the island and the following suggestions to future use have been made.

(a) That the complex become an extension to the Edithburgh Museum (related to Maritime history)

(b) Conduct daily supervised trips in season

(c) Issue permits for private entry to the Island on a daily basis.

I have discussed the above proposals with members of the Heritage Conservation Branch and would therefore recommend that the Minister be approached with the following proposals:

1. That the Department purchase the island.

2. That the island be leased to an interested association for the purposes of establishing, maintaining and controlling it as a tourist attraction (such as a navigational or marine archaeological museum). Any proposed work must, however, comply with Commonwealth encumbrances as well as Heritage Unit and National Parks requirements.

3. That the Department utilise a portion of the buildings to establish a marine archaeological base. Such a base would gain in importance once the Historic Shipwrecks Act 1981 comes into effect.

Lothar

Lothar Brasse

LB:SK

Attachments:
1. Aerial photograph of Troubridge Island.
2. Archival photographs
3. Extract from Commonwealth Department of Transport requirements - from plan AS-693.

DEPARTMENT FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, HERITAGE UNIT
COPIES OF HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHS AND DOCUMENTS

FILM NO.

NEG NO. 54 27 01

SOURCE SAA B6479

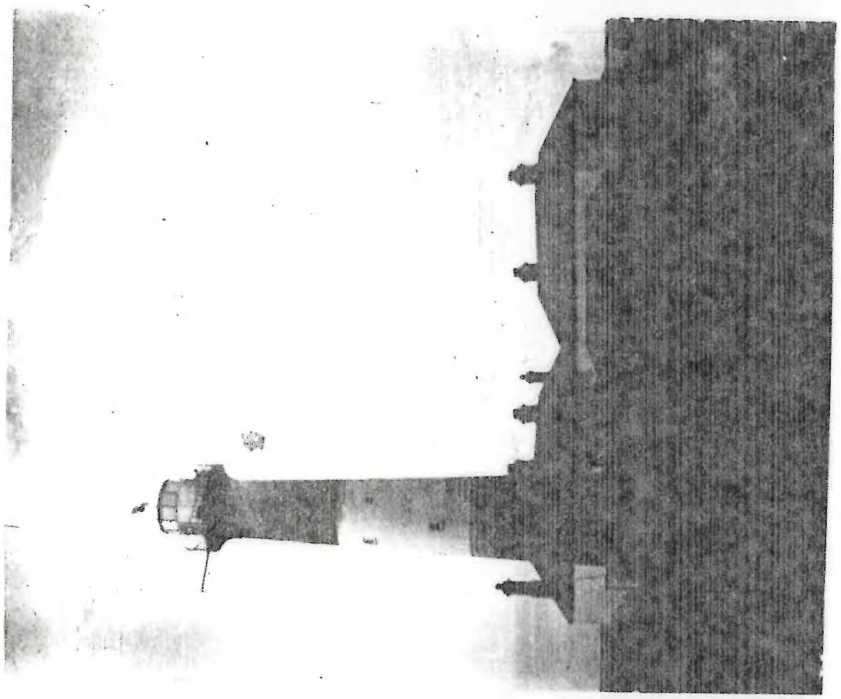
HISTORIC REGION

DESCRIPTION

Troubridge Shoal Lighthouse

"17.11.1902"

Presented by Royal Geographic Soc. of Australasia



NEG NO. 54 27 01

SOURCE SAA B10954

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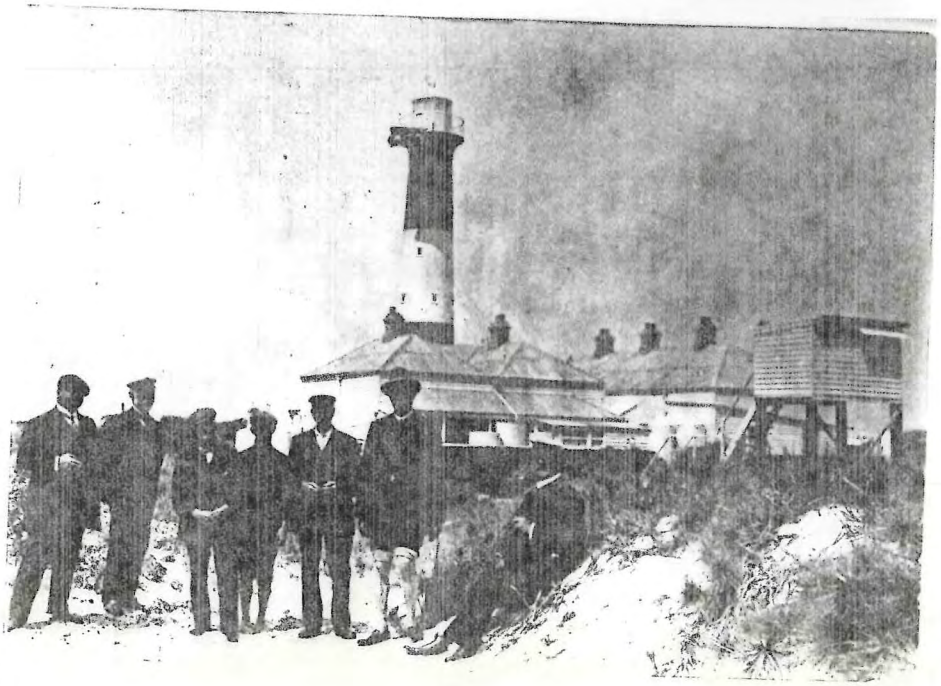
"1902"



NEG NO.

SOURCE SAA B11029

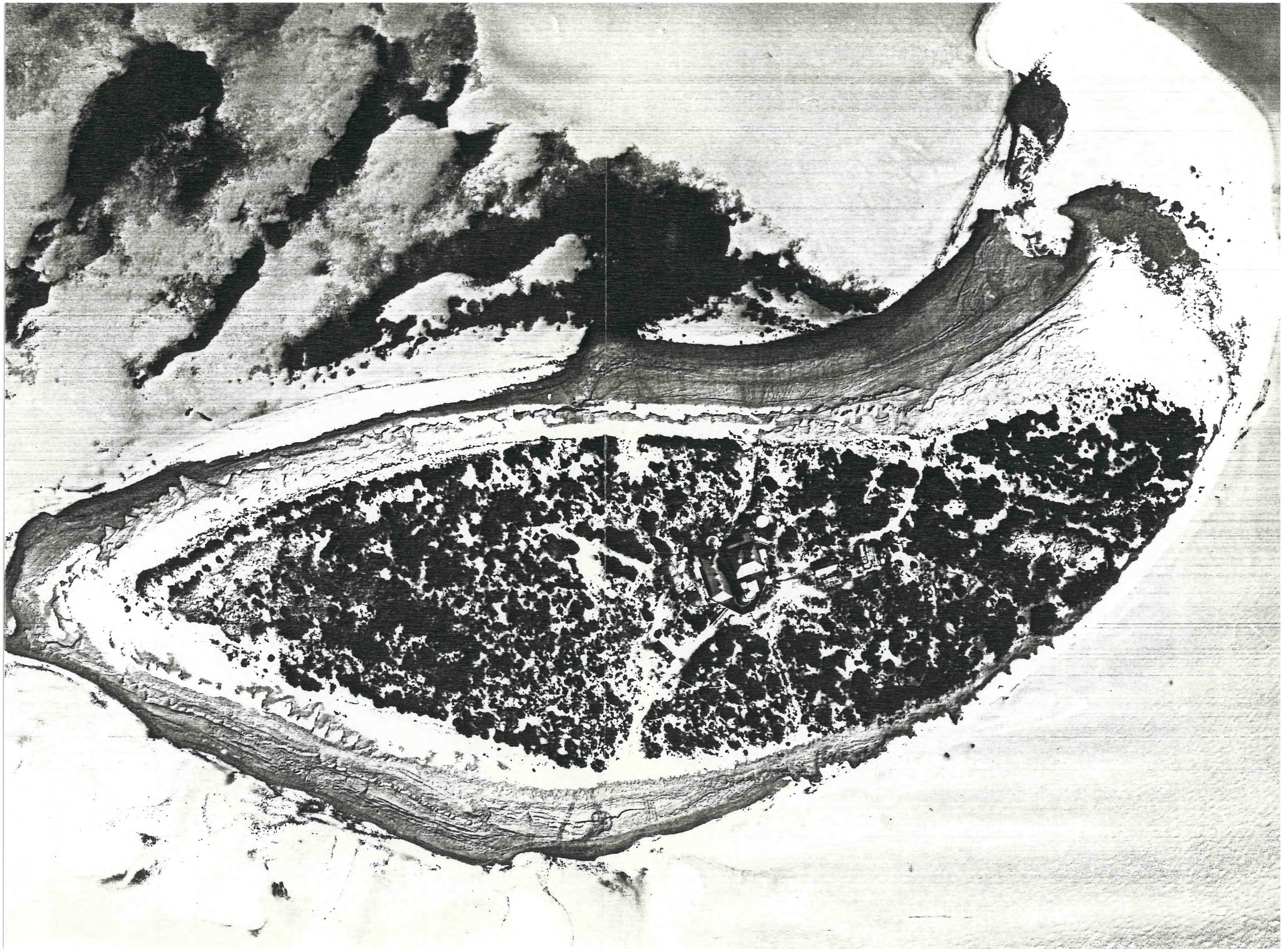
HISTORIC REGION

DESCRIPTION

"1907-12"

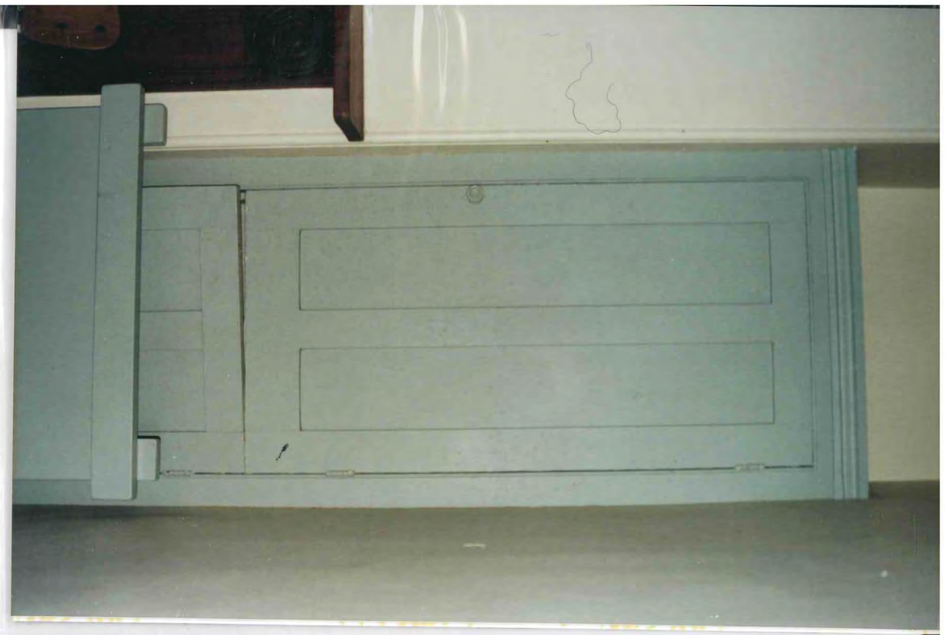
PROJECT

DATE



FILM 349
Neg 14

TROUBRIDGE SHOAL LIGHTHOUSE & KEEPERS' COTTAGES

Lothar Sept 1981

-CAUTION-
BATTERY ROOM
• Authorized Personnel only
• No Smoking
• No Open flames
• Wear protective clothing
• Wear safety goggles
BATTERY NOMINAL VOLTAGE 48V
SHORT CIRCUIT CURRENT 6620A