

INVENTORY OF THE  
LIGHTHOUSE RECORDS COLLECTION  
IN THE OLD DARTMOUTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
WHALING MUSEUM LIBRARY

Content: Account books, journals, and other records of five  
Buzzards Bay lighthouses, 1828-1943.

Volume: 2 linear feet.

Provenance: Gifts and purchase, 1938-1966.

Restrictions: None.

Processed By: Judith Downey.

Funds for processing this collection were provided by the  
National Endowment for the Humanities.

## INTRODUCTION

The major portion of this collection was donated to the Old Dartmouth Historical Society by four individuals: Nathan B. Nye on 22 April 1938; Arthur G. Tuell on 30 August 1955; Mrs. Channing Frothingham in August 1960; and Amy Baker on 17 February 1966. Additional documents relating to Cuttyhunk Lighthouse were purchased by the Society on 10 May 1938.

## HISTORICAL NOTE

In 1789, the United States government began establishing a network of federally-controlled lighthouses along the nation's seacoasts. The earliest such structure to be constructed in Buzzards Bay off southern Massachusetts, Clark Point Light, was built in 1799 at the mouth of New Bedford Harbor and functioned until 1898, when nearby Butler Flats Lighthouse was established. A lighthouse on Cuttyhunk, one of the Elizabeth Islands at the entrance to Buzzards Bay, was constructed in 1823, to be followed by Dumpling Rock Light at the entrance to New Bedford's outer harbor in 1828. Another lighthouse in New Bedford Harbor on Palmer Island was established in 1849. All of these Buzzards Bay lighthouses continue to function with the exception of Clark Point Light, dismantled in 1907, and Palmer Island Light, currently out of federal control.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Records in this collection relate to the operations of five Buzzards Bay lighthouses between 1828-1943. A major portion of the collection focuses on Butler Flats Lighthouse. These records include account books, 1898-1918, correspondence, 1880-1943, and diaries, 1903-1908, of Amos Crowell Baker, Jr. (1839-1911), who first served as a lighthouse keeper at Clark Point from 1879-1898, then fulfilled that role at Butler Flats Light from 1898-1911. Other records relating to this lighthouse include a guest register, 1898-1911, which also lists names of guests at Fort Rodman; historical sketches and plans, ca. 1898-1966; and biographical sketches of the Baker family, lists, bulletins, and programs, ca. 1900-1929. Cuttyhunk Lighthouse records consist of journals, 1864-1888; bills and receipts, 1864-1888; reports on shipwrecks and disasters, 1866-1872; and correspondence, 1869. The journals of the keeper, Samuel Austin Smith (1817-1889), not only describe daily routine occurrences at the lighthouse, but also reflect his own activities. These materials are complemented by tax records, licenses, and memoranda, ca. 1870-1889, most of which concern Smith's life as a New Bedford, Mass., farmer after serving at Cuttyhunk from 1864-ca. 1885.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE (cont.)

Also represented by records in this collection are Clark Point, Dumpling Rock, and Palmer Island lighthouses. Clark Point records include journals, 1872-1898, account books, 1883-1898, and a guest register, 1894-1898, which also records guests at Fort Rodman. The account books feature notes by Amos Crowell Baker, Jr., concerning his activities and details about the construction of Butler Flats Light. Similiar journals and account books exist for Dumpling Rock Lighthouse, 1828-1900, and Palmer Island Light, 1856-1901.

Materials in the Lighthouse Records Collection have been organized into sub-groups representing journals, accounts, and other records for each lighthouse. The sub-groups have been listed in the inventory in alphabetical order. Records are organized into series by type of document and arranged in chronological order. Published works which may serve as a guide to the lighthouses represented in this collection include FAMOUS LIGHTHOUSES OF NEW ENGLAND by Edward Rowe Snow (1945) and LIGHTHOUSES OF NEW ENGLAND by Malcolm F. Willoughby (1929).

- Sub-group 1. Butler Flats Lighthouse Records, 1880-1943.  
Account books; correspondence; diaries of the keeper; guest register; historical sketches and plans; biographical sketches of the Baker family; lists, bulletins, and programs. 8 inches.
- Sub-group 2. Clark Point Lighthouse Records, 1872-1898.  
Journals, account books, guest register, and clippings. 4 inches.
- Sub-group 3. Cuttyhunk Lighthouse Records, 1864-1889.  
Journals; bills and receipts; reports on shipwrecks and disasters; correspondence; tax records, licenses, and memoranda. 6 inches.
- Sub-group 4. Dumpling Rock Lighthouse Records, 1828-1900.  
Journals and account books. 2 inches.
- Sub-group 5. Palmer Island Lighthouse Records, 1856-1901.  
Journals and account books. 4 inches.

DESCRIPTION

Sub-group 1. Butler Flats Lighthouse Records, 1880-1943

Series A. Account Books, 1898-1918

Volume 1. 1898-1918 SEE Sub-group 2, Series B, Volume 2

Series B. Correspondence, 1880-1943

Folder 1. 1880, 1898, 1908  
" 2. 1908, 1919-1925  
" 3. 1929, 1941, 1943

Series C. Diaries of Keeper, 1903-1908

Volume 1. 1903  
" 2. 1904  
" 3. 1905  
" 4. 1906  
" 5. 1907  
" 6. 1908

Series D. Guest Register, 1898-1911

Volume 1. Register of guests at Fort Rodman and Butler  
Flats Lighthouse, 1898-1911

Series E. Historical Sketches and Plans, ca. 1898-1966

Folder 1. "Butler Flats Light and Its Predecessor,"  
by Amy Baker, 1905, with 1966 addenda. Includes  
photographs.  
" 2. Plan for the lighthouse, ca. 1898

Series F. Biographical Sketches, Lists, Bulletins, and  
Programs, ca. 1900-1929

Folder 1. Biographical sketch of Isaiah Baker, Jr., ca. 1920  
" 2. Lighthouse Service Bulletin, 1929; list of  
distances of places from Butler Flats, ca. 1900;  
radio program concerning "The Romance of the  
Lighthouse Service," 1929

Sub-group 2. Clark Point Lighthouse Records, 1872-1898

Series A. Journals, 1872-1898

- Volume 1. "Journal of vessels which passed by . . .," 1872-1876
- " 2. "Record of important events . . .," 1872-1890
- " 3. " " " " " " 1890-1898

Series B. Account Books, 1883-1898

- Volume 1. 1883-1891 Also includes notes concerning keeper's activities
- " 2. 1892-1898 " " " " "

Series C. Guest Register, 1894-1898

- Volume 1. Register of guests at Fort Rodman and Clark Point Lighthouse, 1894-1898 SEE Sub-group 1, Series D, Volume 1

Series D. Clippings, ca. 1898

- Folder 1. ca. 1898

Sub-group 3. Cuttyhunk Lighthouse Records, 1864-1889

Series A. Journals, 1864-1888

- Volume 1. 1864-1867
- " 2. 1867-1870
- " 3. 1870-1872
- " 4. 1872-1874
- " 5. 1877-1878
- " 6. 1878-1879
- " 7. 1881-1885
- " 8. 1885-1888

Series B. Bills and Receipts, 1864-1888

- Folder 1. 1864-1866
- " 2. 1870-1874, 1878
- " 3. 1883-1884
- " 4. 1885-1888

Series C. Reports on Shipwrecks and Disasters, 1866-1872

- Folder 1. 1866-1872

Sub-group 2 (cont.)

Series D. Correspondence, 1869

Folder 1. Form letter to keeper from Massachusetts Humane Society, 1869

Series E. Tax Records, Licenses, and Memoranda, ca. 1870-1889

Folder 1. State, county, city tax receipts, 1884-1887  
" 2. New Bedford licenses to sell milk, 1885-1889  
" 3. Memoranda, ca. 1870

Sub-group 4. Dumpling Rock Lighthouse Records, 1828-1900

Series A. Journals, 1828-1852

Volume 1. 1828-1842  
Folder 1. 1848-1852

Series B. Account Books, 1896-1900

Volume 1. Accounts for oil, wicks, chimneys, etc., 1896-1900

Sub-group 5. Palmer Island Lighthouse Records, 1856-1901

Series A. Journals, 1860-1901

Volume 1. "Journal of vessels which passed by . . .," 1860-1861  
" 2. "Record of important events . . .," 1882-1890  
" 3. " " " " " " 1890-1901

Series B. Account Books, 1856-1861

Volume 1. Accounts of stores, etc., 1856-1859  
" 2. " " " " " 1860-1861

ADDED ENTRIES

Account books--New Bedford, Mass.--1883-1898  
 Baker, Amos Crowell, Jr., 1839-1911  
 Baker, Charles A , 1877-1963  
 Baker family  
 Butler Flats Lighthouse, Mass.  
 Clark Point Lighthouse, Mass.  
 Cuttyhunk Lighthouse, Mass.  
 Diaries--New Bedford, Mass.--1903-1908  
 Dumpling Rock Lighthouse, Mass.  
 Guest registers--Mass.--New Bedford  
 Fort Rodman, New Bedford, Mass.  
 Fort Taber, New Bedford, Mass. SEE Fort Rodman, New Bedford, Mass.  
 Fortification--Mass.--New Bedford  
 Forts SEE Fortification  
 Lighthouse keepers--Mass.--Butler Flats  
 Lighthouse keepers--Mass.--Clark Point  
 Lighthouse keepers--Mass.--Cuttyhunk  
 Lighthouses--Mass.--Butler Flats  
 Lighthouses--Mass.--Clark Point  
 Lighthouses--Mass.--Cuttyhunk  
 Lighthouses--Mass.--Dumpling Rock  
 Lighthouses--Mass.--Palmer Island  
 New Bedford, Mass.--Fortifications, military installations, etc.  
 Palmer Island Lighthouse, Mass.  
 Registers, Guests SEE Guest registers  
 Registers of guests SEE Guest register  
 Smith, Samuel Austin, 1817-1889

SEPARATIONS LIST

Removed to photographs collection:

Photographs of interior of Butler Flats Lighthouse, 1908. 4 items.  
Photograph of two oil lamps, ca. 1920.  
Photographs of Amos Crowell Baker, Jr., ca. 1900, 1911. 2 items.  
Photographs of Charles A. Baker, 1906, ca. 1930. 2 items.  
Photograph of men aboard United States light vessel, ca. 1905.

Removed to printed collection:

Dutton, George. "Is the Harbor of New Bedford of Any Importance to Its Inhabitants?," ca. 1865.

Removed to objects collection:

*Verbal  
file* Calling cards for American House, Portland, Me., and Bugbee & Hatch,  
North Attleboro, Mass. 7 items.