

From 1812 to 1950, the Cape Lookout Lighthouse was served by many “keepers of the light.” They held the position of Head Keeper, First Assistant Keeper or Second Assistant Keeper. There might have been several serving as “Third Assistant Keepers” or laborers for a short period of time as well.

Each of the names listed have been verified against archival documents. However, there are dates that are incomplete, and “gaps” between keepers suggesting names are missing. Research continues to locate and verify names and dates of service at Cape Lookout Lighthouse.



Charlotte Ann Mason was the only woman who officially served as a lighthouse keeper at Cape Lookout. Her service dates were 1872 to 1875.

Cape Lookout Lighthouse was initially overseen by the U.S. Lighthouse Service, the Lighthouse Board (both a part of either the Treasury or Commerce Department) and in 1939, integrated into the U.S. Coast Guard. Keepers were still able to remain as civilians or accept a USCG rating. In 1950, the tower was fully automated and the last in-resident keepers retired.



Above is the Assistant Keepers' Quarters built in 1873. This building originally housed all three keepers. When the 1907 Keeper's Quarters, shown below, was completed, the Primary Keeper moved into the new building and the Assistant Keepers and their families shared the 1873 house.

Today, the main floor of the Assistant Keepers' Quarters is a museum with exhibits on the U.S. Light House Service, U.S. Life-Saving Service, and barrier islands as well as a short film entitled “Ribbon of Sand.”

The Primary Keeper's Quarters was sold by the U.S. Coast Guard in 1957 and moved approximately a mile and a half south of the lighthouse in what is now the Cape Lookout Village Historic District.



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National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Cape Lookout National Seashore
North Carolina



Keepers of the Light



Lighthouse Keepers at the Cape Lookout Light



Primary Lighthouse Keepers

First Lighthouse – 1812

James Fulford 1812
William Fulford 1828
John Ross Royal 1854

Second Lighthouse – 1859

Gayer Chadwick 1863-1864
John R. Royal 1864-1869
Manaen W. Mason 1869-1876

Melvin Jennings Davis, Jr. 1877-1878
Davis was appointed Acting Keeper in 1876
William F. Hatsel 1878-1880
Denard Rumley 1881-1893
Rumley was appointed Acting Keeper in 1880

Thomas Clifford Davis, Jr. 1895-1900
Davis was appointed Acting Keeper in 1893
James Wilson Gillikin 1900-1903
Alfred B. Hooper 1903-1909

Charles W. Clifton 1909-1930
Benjamin Lloyd Harris 1933-1936
James Archie Newton 1939-1945
*It is unclear if Newton was a Keeper or a
U.S. Coast Guard Officer in charge of the light.*

The last in-resident lighthouse keepers retired when the lighthouse was automated in 1950. Research continues on dates of service for lighthouse keepers. Any information you might have regarding the lighthouse keepers serving at Cape Lookout between 1859 and 1950 would be welcomed.

First Assistant Keepers

Silas Blunt 1859-1860
Joseph Ross Guthrie 1864
William Henry Guthrie 1864-1865

Joseph Royal 1865-1869
Josephus Willis 1869-1870
Benjamin P. Davis 1870-1872

Wallace P. Fulcher 1874-1876
Martin T. Lewis 1876-1877
Joseph Willis 1877-1880

Martin Van Buren Davis 1881-1883
Davis was appointed Acting 1st Asst. in 1880
John Todd Brem Noe 1883-1886
Noe was appointed Acting 1st Asst. in 1883
Thomas Clifford Davis, Jr. 1886-1893

Otway Burns Davis 1893-1900/01
James L. Davis 1901-1903
Alpheus B. Willis 1903-1903/04

Arthur Midgett 1903-1905
W.S. Harrison 1905
James W. Gillikin 1905-1909

Alpheus B. Willis 1909-1912
Victor Lawson Watson 1909-1912
Joseph Merritt Burrus 1912

John E. English 1918-1920
Boyd Monroe Smith 1936
John D. Coble 1938-1941
James Milford Newcomb 1942-1944

Second Assistant Keepers

Abner Parker Guthrie 1859
Joseph Royal 1860
Wallace Guthrie 1863-1864

Abner Parker Guthrie 1864
Martin T. Royal 1864-1869
Thomas Clifford Davis II 1869-1874

Charlotte Ann Mason 1872-1875
John M. Lewis 1876
Lewis was appointed Acting 2nd Asst. in 1875
Fillmore Willis 1876

Josephus Willis 1877-1880
J.B. Whitehurst 1877-1878
Denard Rumley 1878-1880

John Todd Brem Noe 1881-1883
Noe was appointed Acting 2nd Asst. in 1880
Isaiah F. Wellis 1883
Thomas C. Davis, Jr. 1885-1886
Davis was appointed Acting 2nd Asst. in 1883

Otway B. Davis 1886-1893
Davis was appointed Acting 2nd Asst. in 1886
Franklin Pearce Lewis 1893-1894
James L. Davis 1895-1900

Charles N. Pugh 1901
Alpheus B. Willis 1901-1903
William G. Rollinson 1906

John Bunyon Quidley 1905
William G. Rollinson 1906
Charles O. Peel 1911-1912

J.L. Willis, Jr. 1912
Isaac Van Willis, Jr. 1918-1920
Thurston Hill 1942-1944