



Mission:

To discover, preserve, present and keep alive the story of the nation's oldest port, as symbolized by the working St. Augustine Lighthouse.

Vision:

To be the finest light station and maritime museum.

History:

A Spanish watchtower, built in the late 1500's was the predecessor of the present St. Augustine Lighthouse. St Augustine is the site of the oldest aid to navigation in North America. The original watchtower became Florida's first lighthouse in 1824. However, by 1870, the tower was threatened by shoreline erosion and construction began on the current lighthouse. The new tower was completed in 1874. The old tower succumbed to the sea during a storm in 1880.

Constructed of Alabama brick and Philadelphia iron, the lighthouse is St. Augustine's oldest surviving brick structure. In 1876, a brick light keeper's house was added to the site. Light keepers' and their assistants lived and worked there until the tower was automated in 1955.

The St. Augustine Lighthouse rises 165 feet above sea level and contains 219 steps. At the top, a first order Fresnel lens serves the beacon. The St. Augustine lens consists of 370 hand-cut glass prisms arranged in a beehive shape towering twelve feet tall and six feet in diameter.

In 1980, the Junior Service League of St. Augustine, Inc. began a fifteen-year campaign to restore the keeper's house that was destroyed by fire in 1970 and the tower. The house was opened to the public as a museum in 1988. In 1993, the tower was also opened to visitors on a daily basis.

In July 2002 the U.S. Coast Guard, through the General Services Administration, transferred the deed for the tower to the St. Augustine Lighthouse and Museum, Inc. through the pilot program of the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act of 2000. In addition, the Coast Guard turned over the first order Fresnel lens to the museum.



Timeline of the St. Augustine Lighthouse & Museum (1970-present)

1970 Keepers' house is gutted by a suspicious fire.

1980 The Junior Service League of St. Augustine, Inc. adopts the keepers' house as a restoration project.

1988 The Junior Service League opens the Lighthouse Museum of St. Augustine.

1993 Tower is opened to the public on a daily basis.

1993 On May 21st, a community-wide celebration is held on the lighthouse grounds for the official re-lighting of the lens.

1998 The St. Augustine Lighthouse & Museum, Inc. separately incorporates from the Junior Service League of St. Augustine.

1999 Lighthouse Archaeological Maritime Program (LAMP) is formed to research shipwrecks off St. Augustine's coast.

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Lighthouse Archaeological Maritime Program (LAMP)

The St. Augustine Lighthouse and Museum's Lighthouse Archaeological Maritime Program (LAMP) is poised on the threshold of the most significant archaeological discoveries in decades. Dedicated to the study, investigation, preservation and interpretation of the submerged cultural resources of St. Augustine and Northeast Florida, LAMP is the only maritime research institution permitted in what is known as the St. Augustine Reserve Area (a state-designated area running from 4-1/2 miles south of Matanzas Inlet to 10-1/2 miles north of the St. Augustine Inlet).

The St. Augustine Reserve Area stretches for miles along the Northeast Florida coast. The area is the site of more than 270 known shipwrecks, some dating back as far as the 16th century. The sites contain artifacts from every seafaring culture that plied the east coast of North America. **The international scope and the number of sites will result in discoveries of international significance.**

Of the sites already investigated, that of *Industry*, a 1764 British supply vessel sent to transport supplies to English troops, is the most significant. A cannon (one of eight), axe heads, a brass tea pot, sealed wooden boxes with the 18th century script intact, and a rare swivel gun have been recovered. Everything recovered and documented gives us a glimpse into history and a look at the lives of those who paved the way for future generations.

What the Future Holds.....

Our challenge is to continue the research that has begun with due diligence in order to preserve this maritime heritage. Included in our vision is a dedicated maritime archaeological museum to provide exhibits, educational and interactive programs and opportunities for everyone to learn and share in this exciting adventure.

For more information about LAMP, call the St. Augustine Lighthouse and Museum (904) 829-0745. For information on how you can become a LAMP maritime partner, call Mollie Malloy, Development Director, at (904) 829-0745.



Exhibits

"Settling America" (coming soon)

This is an interactive introductory exhibition that focuses on the maritime history, culture and archaeology of St. Augustine. The CD-ROM program includes games, stories, timelines, and a glossary of terms. This exhibit is open to the public free of charge.

"Living and Working a Lighthouse"

"Living and Working a Lighthouse" is the exhibit that encompasses the tower exhibit panels and the time line and keeper's materials.

"Storing Memories"

This exhibit focuses on the untold stories of women, children and the great ethnic variety of workers at the lighthouse. Research for this exhibit was compiled from the museum's oral history program. A knot-tying board features knots used by mariners and allows children (and adults) to try their hand at this dying art.

"Underwater Archaeology"

This exhibit Introduces visitors to archaeological methods and shows underwater footage of artifact recovery.

"Guardians of the Coast"

Opened in April 2002, this exhibit tells the local (and national) story of conflict during WWII when armed guards were atop the tower and the USCG trained men and women (SPARs) in St. Augustine for posts around the world. As a supplement to the permanent exhibit, in winter 2002/2003 the museum featured the traveling exhibit "Florida in WWII: An Intimate Portrait."

"From Beans to Bullets"

Based on artifacts recovered from the 1764 wreck of the sloop "Industry" that was bringing supplies to the recently occupied British settlement of St. Augustine. The Spanish colonists not only abandoned the town but took everything of value with them, including iron nails from boards. The "Industry" wreck is the first time maritime archaeologists have been able to study the wreck of a vessel bringing supplies to an extant colony in the new world.



Fact Sheet

- The St. Augustine Lighthouse and Museum is a 501c3 non-profit agency.
- The St. Augustine Lighthouse is a working Lighthouse
- The St. Augustine Light Station's first order Fresnel lens is one of 14 currently in operation.
- The St. Augustine Lighthouse and Museum welcomes on average 200,000 visitors a year, 54,000 of which are school-aged children.
- The St. Augustine Lighthouse was the First Lighthouse in Florida. (1824)
- In 1871 after the original coquina lighthouse, built by the Spanish in 1737, was deemed unsafe the U.S. began to build the lighthouse that currently stands in St. Augustine, it was completed in 1874.
- The new Light tower was designed in 1871 by Paul Pelz is famous for designing the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C. and St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City.
- 1878 the Keepers' house at the abandoned Spanish tower collapsed into the Atlantic Ocean.
- 1880 the abandoned Spanish Coquina Lighthouse Collapsed into the Atlantic.
- 1885 The lamp fuel is changed from Lard to Kerosene.
- 1936 Electricity is installed in the Lighthouse.
- 1955 The tower becomes completely automated and a keeper is no longer necessary instead lamplighters visit daily.
- 1970 Keepers' house is gutted by suspicious fire.
- 1980 Junior Service League adopts Keepers' house restoration project.
- 1986 towers first order Fresnel lens is damaged by vandal's bullet.
- 1988 JSL opens the Lighthouse Museum of St. Augustine.
- 1990 Keepers' house restoration complete.
- 1990 JSL negotiates 30-year lease of tower from USCG.
- 1991 Tower is opened to public.
- 1993 lens is repaired and relit.
- 1994 Tower is restored.
- 1995 Name of the site is changed to St. Augustine Lighthouse and Museum.
- 1998 St. Augustine Lighthouse and Museum separately incorporates from JSL.
- 2002 St. Augustine Lighthouse and Museum becomes first to gain ownership of Lighthouse from USCG under National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act.

Contact Information

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