

Eagle Bluff Lighthouse

...a tribute to the keepers
who kept the lamp lit.



Life at Eagle Bluff was far from isolated, and the light-station was socially active throughout the three keepers' tenures. Located close to the villages of Ephraim and Fish Creek - and accessible by road, as well as by water - Eagle Bluff's keepers wintered in the lighthouse for the most part. Extinguishing the lamp when ice closed the bay to maritime traffic, the keepers devoted themselves to interior improvements, painting walls and completing repairs.

Henry Stanley (1868 - 1883)

A native of Norway, Henry Stanley immigrated to the United States in 1844. Settling in the Midwest, Stanley put his knowledge of the sea to good purpose as a sailor and ship owner. He was appointed Eagle Bluff's first keeper in October, 1868.

The specifics of the first four years of Stanley's assignment at Eagle Bluff have been lost in time; his first surviving log is for the year 1872. Scant records recount the delivery of supplies, the district inspector's visit, or an overhaul of the lamps. After 1876, however, Stanley's log-keeping improves and details of daily life at Eagle Bluff emerge.



Stanley and his wife remained at Eagle Bluff Lighthouse until September 30, 1883, when he was appointed keeper at Sherwood Point Lighthouse, south of Sturgeon Bay. His sudden passing on October 13, 1895 cut short his service as a keeper.

William Duclon (1883 - 1918)

A veteran of the Civil War, New York native William Duclon moved to Mackinaw, Michigan where he met and married Julia Davenport, the local keeper's daughter. By September, 1873, Duclon was appointed 2nd assistant keeper at Waugoshance Light, Michigan, most likely through the recommendation of his father-in-law, a principal keeper in the region.

Over the next ten years, Duclon steadily advanced in the ranks, gaining knowledge and experience with each posting. In October, 1883 he was appointed Eagle Bluff Lighthouse's second keeper. During his 35-year tenure at Eagle Bluff, "Captain" Duclon received several citations for his commendable job performance.

In 1910, William and Julia Duclon built a home in Fish Creek, where they began wintering. Returning to the lighthouse each spring, the elderly couple resumed their duties. The Duclons retired to their cottage in 1918, following a 45-year career in the U.S. Lighthouse Service.



Peter Coughlin (1918 - 1926)

Eagle Bluff Lighthouse's third and final keeper, Peter Coughlin, officially assumed his duties March 1, 1919. He had previously served on Green Island, five miles off the coast of Marinette, Wisconsin, an assignment Coughlin thoroughly enjoyed.

Unlike his predecessors, both of whom exhibited a dislike for log-keeping, Coughlin was meticulous. Recording weather and water conditions, as well as general information and observations, he provides a detailed description of life at Eagle Bluff Lighthouse. Coughlin rarely failed to pen an entry in the log.

On December 19, 1925, the keeper and his wife Margaret closed the lighthouse for the winter. Sadly, Margaret passed several months later and Coughlin returned alone the following spring. With a pension awarded by the Federal government, Coughlin, then 70 years of age, retired the following September. His final log entry log noted, "Green Is light not vis. rain and fog N wind."



Living Door County Maritime History



Walk in the footsteps
of the keepers who
served at Eagle Bluff
Lighthouse from 1868 - 1926

Listed on the
National Register
and State Register of
Historic Places.

Eagle Bluff Lighthouse



...a Historical Timeline

1789, August 7 - President George Washington signs the ninth act of the United States Congress which transfers all lighthouses and navigational aids to the Federal government.

1865 - U.S. Lighthouse-Board authorizes a review of the navigational needs of the western Great Lakes. A recommendation is made for the construction of a coastal lighthouse on Eagle Bluff to assist ships passing through the Strawberry Channel.

1866, July 28 - Congress appropriates \$12,000 for the construction of a lighthouse on Eagle Bluff.

1866, October 19 - President Andrew Johnson issues an executive order reserving 12 acres from the public domain as the Eagle Bluff Lighthouse site.

1868, spring - Following the completion of Chambers Island Lighthouse, construction at Eagle Bluff commences.

1868, October 15 - Keeper Henry Stanley exhibits the light for the first time. The third and a half Fresnel lens, built by the Henry Lepaute Company of Paris, France, is illuminated by a Funck's two-wick burner. In clear weather the fixed white light is visible for 16 miles.



1882 - Eagle Bluff Lighthouse's lard-oil lamp is replaced with a new kerosene-burning lamp.

1883, September 20 - Keeper Stanley, following 15 years of dedicated service, is officially transferred to Sherwood Point Lighthouse. His replacement is William Duclon, who has served as an assistant keeper for ten years.

1909 - Peninsula State Park is established where the village of Blossomburg was formerly located. The lighthouse is now included within the precincts of the park.

1917, May 1 - District lampist installs a new incandescent oil-vapor lamp (IOV) and the third and a half order lens is replaced with a fifth order lens.

1918 - Keeper Duclon retires at the end of the season. His replacement, Peter Coughlin, arrives on February 5, 1919.

1926, September 20 - The Eagle Bluff light is converted to an unmanned acetylene gas light and the living quarters are vacated.

1936, May 9 - Transfer of the lighthouse title to the State of Wisconsin is complete, providing the Lighthouse Service access to the tower and lantern at any time.



1960 - The U.S. Coast Guard converts Eagle Bluff's lamp to a solar-powered beacon. Visible for six miles, the light's character is a sequence of one second on, and six seconds. Under an agreement with the State of Wisconsin, the Door County History Society is granted access to Eagle Bluff Lighthouse.

1961 - The Door County Historical begins restoration of Eagle Bluff Lighthouse.

1963, September 1 - Eagle Bluff Lighthouse Museum opens to the public.

1980s - Eagle Bluff Lighthouse's lamp is powered by solar energy. Visible for six miles, the light's character is a sequence of one second on, and six seconds.

2013, September 1 - Eagle Bluff Lighthouse Museum celebrates its 50th year providing guided tours for visitors around the world. According to a Milwaukee Sentinel September 4, 1963 article penned by Marion McBride, "The lighthouse is believed to be the only one being restored in the country."