

## On Cape Cod Lighthouses

Jutting out over seventy miles into the Atlantic Ocean, Cape Cod has long been an obstacle to navigation. Over the past 300 years, there have been over 3,000 shipwrecks on the Cape, mainly along the outer shore between Provincetown and Chatham. Lighthouses have warned mariners away from the "ocean graveyard."

Cape Cod has had over twenty lighthouses operating along its shores over the past 200 years. Today seven lighthouses still operate and several other decommissioned lights stand along the coastline.

When the Cape Cod Canal opened in 1914, ships traveling from Europe and Boston toward New York and points south could now bypass the Cape's outer shore. The number of shipwrecks declined dramatically because of the Canal and the transition away from sail-powered wooden vessels.

During the 19<sup>th</sup>-century heyday of lighthouses, keepers were needed to tend the kerosene in the lamps. Adjacent to the lights were houses for the lighthouse keepers, many of whom led solitary existences with their families. As the 20<sup>th</sup> century progressed, technological improvements made many lighthouses obsolete and they were decommissioned. By the 1960's most of the remaining lights had become automated and full-time lighthouse keepers were no longer needed.

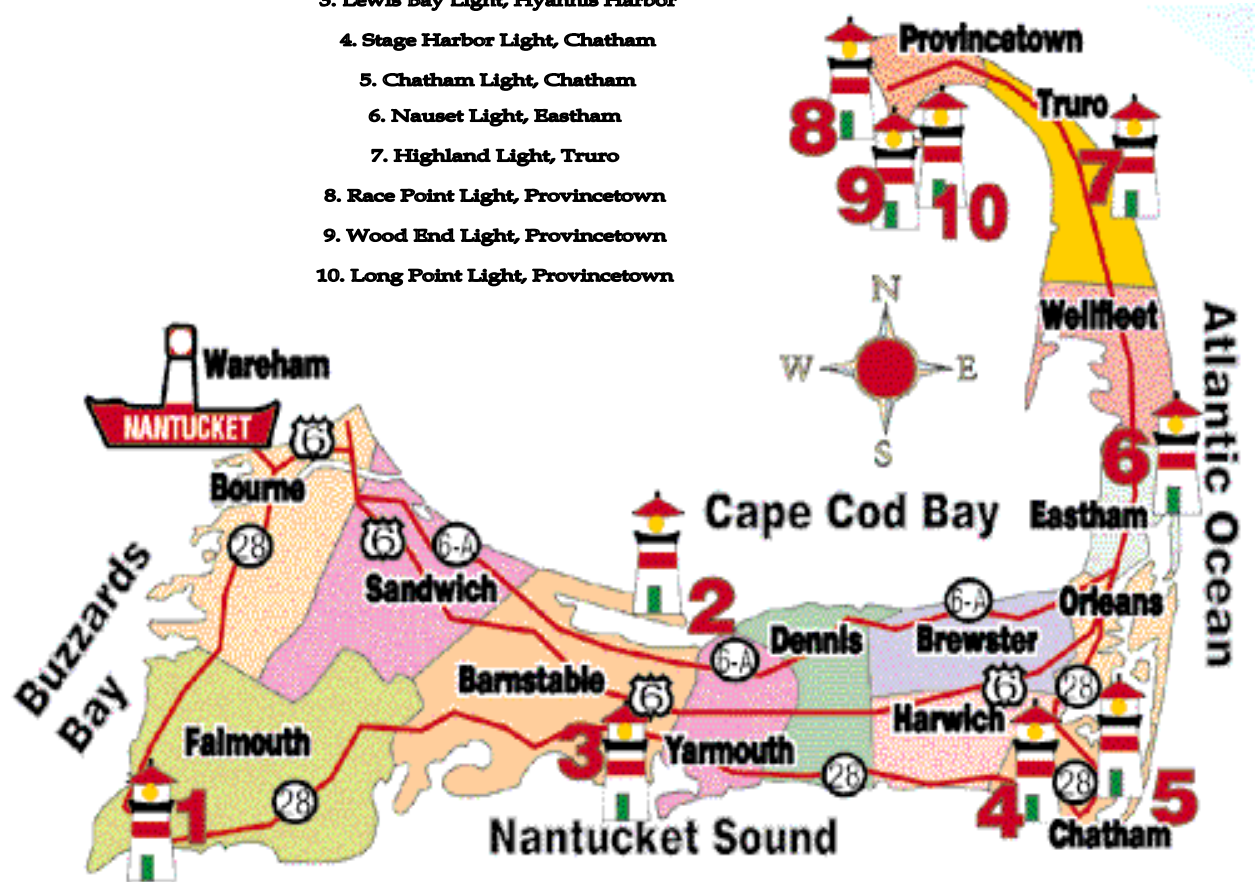
## Preserving Cape Cod Lighthouses

Among the highlights of Cape Cod Maritime Week are lighthouse tours. Of greatest interest are the Nauset and Highland Lights, which have been moved back from the eroding cliffs. The Truro Historical Society and The Nauset Light Preservation Society have spearheaded long-term efforts to save these lighthouses and will be opening these lighthouses to the public on an ongoing basis. Some decommissioned lighthouses have been preserved by private owners who occasionally open them to the public.

## Lighthouses Featured During Maritime Week

The following lighthouses are open to the public during Cape Cod Maritime week. Highland Light and Nauset Light are open to the public on an ongoing basis. Please check Maritime Week schedules and news listings for opening times.

1. Nobska Light, Woods Hole
2. Sandy Neck, Barnstable
3. Lewis Bay Light, Hyannis Harbor
4. Stage Harbor Light, Chatham
5. Chatham Light, Chatham
6. Nauset Light, Eastham
7. Highland Light, Truro
8. Race Point Light, Provincetown
9. Wood End Light, Provincetown
10. Long Point Light, Provincetown



### 1. Nobska Light, Woods Hole

The original lighthouse was built in 1828 and replaced in 1879. When seen straight from the sea, it appears white, but from the side it assumes a reddish color. This phenomenon helps orient sailors. Directors: From Falmouth, follow Route 28 to Woods Hole. Just before Woods Hole, turn left onto Church Street.

### 2.. Sandy Neck Light, Barnstable

The original light was erected in 1826 and rebuilt in 1857. Although the lantern room has been removed, the beautiful structure is worth seeing. Your best view is from Barnstable Harbor. Take Route 6A to Mill Way (at the stop light), continue past the Hyannis Whale Watcher to the beach parking lot.

### **3. Lewis Bay Light, Hyannis Harbor**

This private light is at the inner entrance to Hyannis inner harbor- you can get a view by walking along North Street and Lewis Bay Road.

### **4.& 5. Hardings & Chatham Light, Chatham**

Built in 1881, Chatham Light was moved to its present location near the Coast Guard Station in the early 1920s. Nearby telescopes enhance the spectacular view of the North Beach breakthrough. Directions: Follow Main Street, Chatham to its end bearing right. There is yet another private light at the end of Hardings Beach in Chatham which can be viewed from Champlain Road.

### **6. Nauset Light, Eastham**

This lighthouse was moved to its current location in 1996. Before 1923 it was three towers called the Three Sisters which are on display a hundred yards from the present light. Directions: Follow Route 6 to Eastham. Turn right onto Nauset Road (next to the Salt Pond Visitor Center) and follow to Ocean View Drive to Nauset Light Beach.

### **7. Cape Cod Light, Truro**

In 1797, the Cape's first lighthouse was ordered built by George Washington to warn sailor of the area known as the "Graveyard of Ships." The current beacon, with over 620,000 candlepower is the most powerful light in New England and ships from 30 miles away can identify this landmark. In July 1996, the lighthouse, then only 100-feet away from an ever-eroding cliff, was moved west 450-feet to its current location. Directions: Take Route 6 to Truro. Follow signs to Cape Cod (or Highland) Light off Highland Road near the Truro School.



### **8. Race Point, Provincetown**

This 40-foot beacon, built in 1816, helped guide ships around the tricky shoals for centuries before our canal was built. Directions: From Herring Cove Beach, the light is about a mile hike north across the sands.

### **9. & 10. Wood End Light & Long Point Light, Provincetown**

Wood End light, built in 1872, is an exact replica of Long Point Light, erected in 1822. You can see the latter from McMillian Wharf and the former at the end of Commercial St. Wood end is about a half mile walk across the breakwater; Long Point light is an hour's trek beyond.

# Cape Cod Lighthouse Trail



## Landmarks from the Cape's Seafaring History