

RACE POINT LIGHT

This light is located on the northwest point of Cape Cod. Mariners set their course to Boston harbor by Race Point, after rounding Highland Light at North Truro.

Race Point Light was established in 1816 and was rebuilt in 1878. It displays a white flashing light of 37,000 candlepower strength. Its light period is 15 seconds and its flash of 1.3 seconds duration. Its range of visibility is 12 miles.

Excerpts from The Provincetown Advocate

July 26, 1871:

"There was an excursion of some dozen individuals to the Race Monday, who were handsomely entertained by Mr. and Mrs. Cashman!"

March 11, 1874:

"The fog horn at Race Point blew during December, 144 hours; in January, 180 hours; in February, 120 hours, making an aggregate of 444 hours, or 18½ days. Twenty tons of coal were consumed by the engine during this period."

May 20, 1874:

Improvements at Race Point

Another fog whistle has been constructed at the Race, together with another dwelling house for an additional keeper. The extra whistle is in case of accident to the old one. It will require three keepers to run the light and whistles. We are glad to see this important point on our coast so well looked after. It has been suggested that, if the fog bell, which is useless in its present location at the Race, could be removed to Long Point, it would facilitate the passage of vessels to our port in thick weather."

January 31, 1845

Four men perished when the schooner Saluda of Barnstable struck on the bar at Race Point this day in 1845. Captain Benjamin F. Ames of Osterville, the 22-year-old master of the schooner, mistook Race Light for Cape Cod (Highland) Light, and shaped his course accordingly. She struck on the outer bar, at low water. As the tide rose she beat over the bar and on the beach. The crew remained until 4 A.M., when in the intense cold and high surf, the schooner began to break up. Three of the crew were swept overboard to their death as she rolled in the surf. Then Captain Ames and the mate took to the rigging, and they, too, dropped into the surf. The mate, Peter Peterson of Hyannis, made shore, the only survivor of the Saluda's five man crew. A marine observer at Provincetown said that the light at the Race, supposed to be revolving, does not completely disappear and consequently is often taken for Highland, and that this night the extreme cold caused a vapor which made it impossible for Captain Ames to see land.

April 12, 1871

About 2 o'clock last Sunday morning as the Wrecking Crew was hauling off the Schooner Nellie Staples from Race Point, word was sent to the Lighthouse for help in handing down the whaleboat. The lighthouse keeper together with his wife and son came down to offer assistance. After many uneventful tries to start the boat the men became discouraged and were about to give up when the Light-keeper's wife offered her services, saying she was as good as one man, and immediately her daring bolstered the spirit of the rest of the men and the whaleboat went into water. . . .

(Note) Some of the laborers on the Schooner Nellie Staples had rather a serious time last Sunday morning after the vessel was got off. One man was on the road from the Race six hours hunting about in the fog for the road to town. When it lighted up he was in the vicinity of Highland. . . .

MARINE RECORD

Schooner Chas. C. Warren of Gloucester bound to the West Indies, mistook Wood End Light for Race Point Light and ran ashore at high water, March 26, 1873. . . .

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LOSS OF THE SCH. NELLIE STAPLES AND CAPT. SAMUEL STAPLES MAY 3 1871

After removing the Nellie Staples from Race Point, where she had been lying all winter, it was found that she was leaking some 1500 strokes an hour, was bent and twisted out of shape, her planks started off and in a very unsafe condition. Yet Mr. Staples her owner and agent considered her safe enough to make the trip back to her home port at Lubec, Maine, and in spite of the advice given him by local seafarers, she sailed out of Provincetown Harbor on a Sunday morning. Soon after leaving, the wind became ahead. She filled with water and turned over about 20 or 30 miles from Highland Light. The crew were rescued but Mr. Staples was unable to get from the hold of cabin and sank with the schooner.



Race Point Light, Provincetown, Mass.