

The Scotch Cap Light in its new Streamline Moderne structure.



Anthony Petit in his USCG uniform, whose rocks could rip the bottom from a ship in a matter of seconds.

One of those vital lights was the Scotch Cap Light located on the harsh southwest corner of Unimak Island. Today, the general population of America knows little about Unimak but it is the easternmost island in the Aleutians and comprises an area of some 1571-square miles. This makes it the ninth largest island in the USA while globally it is the 134th largest. The desolate landscape is home to Mount Shishaldin, one of the ten most active volcanoes.

During 1980, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act was passed and this saw some 910,000 acres of the island designated as a wilderness area. This massive area is managed by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service as part of the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge. The last census recorded 64 hardy individuals living on Unimak and all are in the town of False Pass at the eastern end of the island. The island has an interesting selection of mammals including the Alaska Peninsula brown bear, porcupine caribou, and red fox. All in all, Unimak is not an inviting place.

Plans and specifications for the construction of the Scotch Cap structures were made and proposals for bid were opened on 22 March 1902. All bids received were so excessive that the station was built with hired labor, while material was bought by contract. The steamer *Homer* of 665-tons, which was chartered on 23 June 1902, left Seattle on 30 June with necessary men and material.



The Scotch Cap Light was an impressive concrete, steel-reinforced building but no match for the tsunami that would destroy the area.



The Scotch Cap Light was similar in design to the Sand Hills Light in Michigan.



Covered in snow, this view of Scotch Cap Light gives no hint at the disaster to come.

*Homer* arrived on site on 13 July and safely discharged its cargo. The steamer made two other trips during the season carrying more construction material. Construction work was discontinued for the year on 27 November. The fog-signal and tower were completed, with the exception of the last two coats of paint. The barn was completed with exception of painting. *Homer* return on 10 May 1903 with men and material to complete the work. The lens was set up and the light put in operation on 19 June 1903.

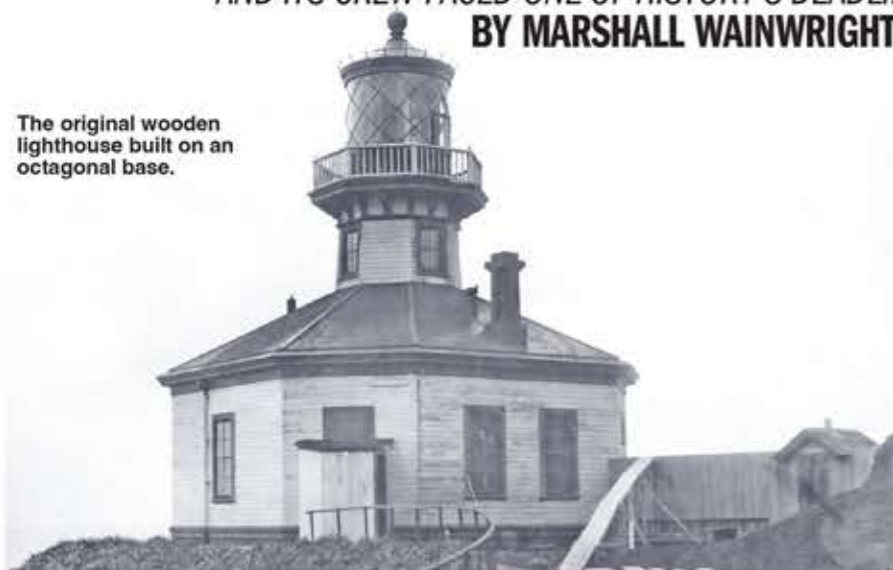
The Scotch Cap Light was a wooden tower some 45-feet high that was constructed atop an octagonal building also built of wood. It was the first

station established on the outside coast of Alaska. Prior to the introduction of the helicopter, access to stations such as Scotch Cap was so difficult that it was impractical to arrange for leave of absence in the ordinary way. Instead, each keeper got one full year off for each four years of service. Manned by US Coast Guard personnel, Scotch Cap was not a desirable location at which to be stationed. Scotch Cap was initially equipped with a third-order fixed white light. Some 425 miles southwest of Anchorage, the light marked the entrance to Unimak Pass. The only contact with the outside world was — every three months or so — a visit

# SCOTCH CAP LIGHT VS. THE TSUNAMI

LOCATED IN ONE OF THE BLEAKEST PARTS OF THE WORLD, THIS LIGHTHOUSE AND ITS CREW FACED ONE OF HISTORY'S DEADLIEST KILLER WAVES  
BY MARSHALL WAINWRIGHT

The original wooden lighthouse built on an octagonal base.



It was the spring of 1946. The long slog of WWII was over and the world was getting back to some sort of normalcy. However, a new war was just beginning and that was the Cold War. The Free World and the repressive communist regime of the Soviet Union were almost physically touching each other at the top of the world. This meant that the American military was fortifying Alaska and the harsh Aleutian Chain with new bases and new technology. The US Coast Guard was doing its part with cutters plowing through seas that could turn violent at a moment's notice along with building and maintaining a string of vital lighthouses that would aid both civilian and military mariners by warning them that they were approaching the harsh coastal areas

The first Scotch Cap Light with barracks to the right.