

Lights of Yesterday

Book of
Lighthouse Facts



Lighthouses of the Ancient Era

The Pharaoh's Lighthouse was built during the rule of the pharaoh Ptolemy I and his son Ptolemy II and completed the construction between 300–280 B.C.

The lighthouse was also known as the New Alexandria Lighthouse as it served in the city's harbor and helped ships come and go from their shores. The tower utilized a large open flame as the light source that could be seen from miles.

The tower itself was made from stone and stood at an estimated 450 feet (~137 meters) tall, and is the largest lighthouse ever built in recorded history. The current tallest lighthouse in the world is the Punta Penna lighthouse in Italy and only stands at 230 feet (~70 meters) tall at about just over half the height of its ancestral predecessor.

The Pharaoh's Lighthouse was considered one of the Wonders of the World during its time and even retained its status as a wonder of the ancient world as no other lighthouse had ever come close to the scale that the first lighthouse had set for the future lighthouses to come.

The Pharaoh's Lighthouse
New Alexandria, Egypt

300–280 B.C.

Estimated 450 feet in height



Colonial Expansion

Lighthouses began to spread vastly during the colonial era as more and more ports were built. Thousands were built all over Europe during European Colonialism.

Since ships were largely made of wood, the rocks along the coast could spell disaster if a ship were to crash into the shore. Storms and other weather conditions such as fog would be extremely dangerous with the poor visibility conditions. Lighthouses were one of the few measures that helped ships reach the safety of the harbors.

Little Brewster Island in the Boston Harbor was the first lighthouse constructed in the U.S. in 1716. The lighthouse was unfortunately destroyed in 1776 during the American Revolution. The replacement tower was completed in 1783, and is still standing and is even actively used today.



Modern Heroes

Lighthouses in recent years have fallen in prominence in their widespread use. GPS and navigation charts have since streamlined and simplified navigation. Lighthouses are still used today as waystations and can even house the transmitters used by the GPS systems.

One of the various devices that now compliment the lighthouse's role, are the GPS navigation bouys that line the coasts around the world, especially in the U.S. The U.S. and its territories host buoy complememnts for over 50,000 lighthouses and cover about 95,000 miles of shoreline today.

Today lighthouses that are not in active use are seen as tourist attractions and in certain cases, the station the caretakers used to reside in have been renovated and converted into a museum that teaches the public about their history in the region.



