

II -Records of a family of engineers

From the beginning of the century until 1807, Robert Stevenson partnered with Thomas Smith in serving the Board of Northern Lights, thereafter continuing alone. Stevenson, dedicated both to his profession and the well-being of his lightkeepers, dealt with the isolation and challenges lightkeepers faced, from quarrels in isolated sea towers to the temptations of sloth in maintaining the stations. With rigorous personal standards and a keen eye for detail, Stevenson's correspondence reveals a man of intensity, committed to excellence in every facet of the lighthouse service.

Lightkeepers, positioned in desolate and remote locations, faced unique challenges. Stevenson, noting the difficulties and occasional slothfulness of his keepers, emphasized the importance of diligence. An anecdote illustrates the challenge of surprise inspections, revealing ingenious ways keepers received advance warnings. Despite the strictness, Stevenson's care for his employees extended beyond their professional lives, involving himself in their personal well-being and their families' futures.

His approach was methodical, expecting high standards in cleanliness, maintenance, and personal conduct, evidenced by various correspondences urging keepers to uphold these values or face consequences. Special attention was given to social harmony within the lighthouse stations, revealing Stevenson's understanding of the human element crucial for smooth operation.

Stevenson acted as a patriarch, balancing discipline with genuine concern for his employees' welfare, engaging in their lives, extending hospitality, and offering assistance in times of need. His investment in their professional and personal development fostered a deep respect within the service.

An account of young foreman builder George Peebles, who tragically died in a shipwreck, glimpses Stevenson's personal connections and the losses endured during his tenure. This balance of strict professionalism and personal engagement defined Stevenson's legacy in the Northern Lights service, highlighting his multifaceted approach to leadership and care for his people.

