

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 23, 2009

USPS National Contact: Mark Saunders
(O) 202-268-6524
(C) 202-320-0782
mark.r.saunders@usps.gov

Biloxi: Beth Barnett
(O) 615-885-9394
(C) 615-202-4992
beth.b.barnett@usps.gov
usps.com/news
Release No. 09-062



Stamps Honor Lighthouses That Stood Defiant to Gulf Coast Hurricanes

Images Based on Photos Taken Year Following Wrath of Katrina, Rita and Wilma

High-resolution images of the stamps are available for media use only by emailing mark.r.saunders@usps.gov

WASHINGTON — Five lighthouses that withstood the fury of devastating hurricanes — in some cases while partially submerged — will stand tall on postage with the issuance of the *Gulf Coast Lighthouses* commemorative stamps. Available nationwide today, the 44-cent First-Class stamps, issued in sheets of 20, depict the Matagorda Island (TX), Sabine Pass (LA), Biloxi (MS), Sand Island (AL) and Fort Jefferson (FL) lighthouses.

The dedication ceremony took place at the Biloxi Lighthouse under conditions in stark contrast to 2005's Hurricane Katrina when a 26-ft. storm surge engulfed Biloxi's treasured landmark, placing nearly half of the 64-ft. tall structure underwater.

Katrina's surge in Mobile Bay rivaled to the size of a one-and-a-half story building near the Sand Island Lighthouse. That same year Hurricane Wilma's 134 m.p.h. winds pushed the storm surge at the Fort Jefferson Lighthouse to nearly 14 feet. The Matagorda Island lighthouse, located near Post O'Conner, TX, defied Hurricane Rita and withstood a similar storm surge when Hurricane Carla made landfall in 1961.

"Like all American lighthouses, the Gulf Coast lighthouses have a rich and colorful history," said U.S. Postal Service Governor Katherine C. Tobin, while dedicating the stamps. "They stood witness to the best and the worst times in our nation. They led the way to safe harbors as they warned of dangerous coastlines. They welcomed ships carrying precious cargo and new citizens to a growing country, and they have been

eyewitnesses to the ravages of the Civil War and withstood devastating storms. I hope communities near Biloxi, Matagorda Island, Sabine Pass, Sand Island and Fort Jefferson will experience the same sense of pride as the Postal Service when using these beautiful stamps to adorn their letters and packages."

Joining Tobin in dedicating the stamps were Biloxi Mayor A.J. Holloway, Biloxi Historian Emeritus Murella Powell, Alabama Lighthouse Association President Captain Hal Pierce (U.S. Navy, ret.) and U.S. Postal Service Southeast Area Vice President Terry Wilson.

"Our lighthouse was halfway submerged during Katrina," explained Mayor Holloway, "yet it still stands tall today as testament to the resilience of our community. She is our enduring landmark — our signature landmark. We are very proud the Postal Service chose the Biloxi lighthouse for this series."

"The Biloxi Lighthouse has been a symbol of maritime safety, hope and goodwill since it was constructed in 1848, and today stands proudly as an icon of Gulf Coast life," said Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour, who was unable to attend the event. "Since Hurricane Katrina struck in 2005 — the worst natural disaster in American history — the lighthouse has assumed an even greater role, symbolizing the indomitable spirit and determination of Gulf Coast residents to recover and rebuild bigger and better than ever. I want to thank the U.S. Postal Service for including the Biloxi Lighthouse in the new Gulf Coast Lighthouses stamp series, giving new recognition to an old friend."

Stamp Artist Howard Koslow of Toms River, NJ, worked under the direction of Art Director Howard E. Pane of Delaplane, VA. Koslow based his artwork on photographs taken by Frank Sedlar of St. Louis, MI. Sedlar, a photographer whose primary income entails farming 500 acres in Michigan, recorded his images the year following 2005's devastating hurricanes.

Koslow also painted the five *Pacific Lighthouses* stamps issued in 2007, as well as the five stamps in the 1990 *Lighthouses* booklet, the *Great Lakes Lighthouses* stamps issued in 1995, and the 2003 *Southeastern Lighthouses* stamps.

A special dedication ceremony took place today honoring the Ft. Jefferson Lighthouse at the Key West, FL, Post Office. A 10:30 a.m. CT ceremony takes place July 24 at the Bauer Community Center in Port Lavaca, TX, to commemorate the Matagorda Island lighthouse.

#

Please Note: For broadcast quality video and audio, photo stills and other media resources, visit the USPS Newsroom at www.usps.com/news.

An independent federal agency, the U.S. Postal Service is the only delivery service that reaches every address in the nation, 149 million residences, businesses and Post Office Boxes, six days a week. It has 34,000 retail locations and relies on the sale of postage, products and services, not tax dollars, to pay for operating expenses. Named the Most Trusted Government Agency five consecutive years by the Ponemon Institute, the Postal Service has annual revenue of \$75 billion and delivers nearly half the world's mail. To learn about the history of the Postal Service visit the Smithsonian's National Postal Museum: www.postalmuseum.si.edu.

How to Order the First-Day-of-Issue Postmark

Customers have 60 days to obtain the first-day-of-issue postmark by mail. They may purchase new stamps at their local Post Office, at The Postal Store website at www.usps.com/shop, or by calling 800-STAMP-24. They should affix the stamps to envelopes of their choice, address the envelopes to themselves or others, and place them in a larger envelope addressed to:

Gulf Coast Lighthouses Stamps
Postmaster
135 Main Street
Biloxi, MS 39530-9998

After applying the first-day-of issue postmark, the Postal Service will return the envelopes through the mail. There is no charge for the postmark. All orders must be postmarked by Sept. 24, 2009.

How to Order First-Day Covers

Stamp Fulfillment Services also offers first-day covers for new stamp issues and Postal Service stationery items postmarked with the official first-day-of-issue cancellation. Each item has an individual catalog number and is offered in the quarterly *USA Philatelic* catalog. Customers may request a free catalog by calling 800-STAMP-24 or writing to:

Information Fulfillment
Dept. 6270
U.S. Postal Service
PO Box 219014
Kansas City, MO 64121-9014

Philatelic Products

Share the beauty and history of a few of these noble structures with this set of 20 ready-to-mail cards with pre-printed postage bearing the images of the stamps. (Gulf Coast Lighthouses Premium Stamped Postal Cards (5 designs) — Item No. 464566, \$14.95)

Set of 10 ready-to-mail prestamped stationery sheets (Gulf Coast Lighthouses Premium Stamped Stationery (5 designs), item **464580**, \$15.95). Included are all five lighthouse designs. Postage is preprinted on the premium stamped stationery.

There are also four other philatelic products available for this stamp issue:

- 464563, First-Day Cover, set of five, Black Cancellation, \$4.10.
- 464568, Digital Color Postmark, set of five, \$7.50.
- 464591, Ceremony Program, \$6.95.
- 464599, Cancellation Keepsake (5 Digital Color Postmarks w/Pane), \$16.30.

Visit this link to view and purchase the products:

<http://shop.usps.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/CatalogSearchResultView?storeId=10001&catalogId=10152&langId=-1&pageSize=8&beginIndex=0&sType=AdvancedSearch&resultType=2&searchTerm=gulf+coast+lighthosue&searchTermScope=4>

Gulf Coast Lighthouses Background

The U.S. Postal Service continues its popular series of lighthouse stamps by artist Howard Koslow with the 2009 issuance of five *Gulf Coast Lighthouses* stamps: Matagorda Island (TX), Sabine Pass (LA), Biloxi (MS), Sand Island (AL) and Fort Jefferson (FL).

The Gulf Coast extends about 1,000 miles from Key West, FL, to Corpus Christi, TX. For more than 150 years, lighthouses have guided ships and other sailing vessels through this picturesque but dangerous stretch of water. Known as “hurricane alley,” the Gulf Coast weathers many powerful storms each year, including Hurricane Katrina, which devastated the region in 2005. In addition, the land along the coast is swampy and marshy in many places and given to erosion, making it doubly difficult for lighthouses to withstand heavy rains and winds. The five lighthouses featured on the stamps are some of the few that remain standing.

Matagorda Island (TX)

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984, Matagorda Island Lighthouse has stood proudly for more than a century on the northeast end of Matagorda Island in what is today Matagorda Island State Park and Wildlife Management Area near Port O'Connor, TX. Automated in 1956, the conical tower features black exterior paint and a solar-powered light.

In 1847, Congress authorized funds to build a lighthouse on Matagorda Island so that vessels could sail safely through the bay to the port city of Indianola. Construction on the original iron lighthouse was completed in 1852 and a third-order Fresnel lens installed six years later. Damaged during the Civil War and threatened by erosion, the tower was soon dismantled. The new cast-iron lighthouse was built farther inland in 1873.

Sabine Pass (LA)

Construction on the lighthouse at Sabine (pronounced suh-BEEN) Pass, LA, was completed in 1856. Erected on soft, marshy ground, the octagonal tower features eight buttresses that stabilize the heavy brick structure and give it a distinct missile-like shape. Deactivated by the U.S. Coast Guard in 1952, the lighthouse is currently closed to the public and its original third-order Fresnel lens has been removed. Since 2001, the Cameron Preservation Alliance, a nonprofit organization, has worked to preserve and restore the tower.

Sabine Pass Lighthouse stands in southwest Louisiana at the point where the Sabine and Neches rivers meet and flow into the Gulf of Mexico. With one brief exception, its light shone for nearly a century. It was extinguished during the Civil War from 1861 to 1865. Now faded, bands of black paint were added to the white exterior in the 1930s. Forty years later, fire destroyed most of the outbuildings, including the original keeper's house. The lighthouse was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1981.

Biloxi (MS)

Of all the lighthouses that once stood along the Mississippi coast, Biloxi Lighthouse is the only one still standing. The white, cast-iron tower sits on a brick foundation in the middle of U.S. Route 90, a scenic highway that runs through Biloxi along the Gulf Coast. Hit hard by Hurricane Katrina, the conical tower suffered damage to its interior brick lining. The City of Biloxi — which maintains the lighthouse — plans to repair the lining and replace the door, which wind and water shook loose during the storm.

Portions of Biloxi Lighthouse were made in Baltimore, MD, and then transported to Biloxi. The tower was assembled and erected in 1848, making it one of the first cast-iron lighthouses erected in the South. The U.S. Coast Guard operated the lighthouse from 1939 to 1968, when it deeded the tower to the City of Biloxi. The following year, Hurricane Camille destroyed the keeper's house. The lighthouse was named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1973.

Sand Island (AL)

Sand Island Lighthouse is located in the Gulf of Mexico, about three miles south of the entrance to Mobile Bay. Once the central attraction on a 400-acre island, the lighthouse now stands alone, its stone foundation completely surrounded by water. Pounding waves and erosion have reduced the island's mass to less than one acre. Today the town of Dauphin Island manages the lighthouse and, in cooperation with the Alabama Lighthouse Association, oversees its daily operation as well as restoration efforts.

A 55-foot-high lighthouse was established on Sand Island in 1838, but a much taller tower replaced it in 1859. Confederate forces destroyed the second lighthouse during the Civil War. First lit in 1873, the current 131-foot-tall conical tower is made of local brick and was an active aid to navigation for 60 years. Automated in 1921, the lighthouse was deactivated in 1933. Its original second-order Fresnel lens is currently housed in the museum at the Fort Morgan State Historic Site in Gulf Shores, AL.

Fort Jefferson (FL)

Also known as Garden Key Lighthouse, the Fort Jefferson Lighthouse stands on top of the brick parapet in Fort Jefferson, which encloses most of Garden Key, FL. Located about 70 miles west of Key West, the 19th-century fort and lighthouse are part of Dry Tortugas National Park. The lighthouse — which is made of iron and painted black — was erected in 1876 and automated in 1912. For more than 40 years, the light from this hexagonal tower helped warn sea traffic away from dangerous shoals and reefs. The light was deactivated in 1921 but currently acts as a harbor light, guiding vessels safely into the anchorage outside Fort Jefferson.

Fort Jefferson Lighthouse was not the first of its kind to be built on Garden Key. Twenty years before construction began on the fort in 1846, a brick lighthouse had been built on the small island. Badly damaged by a hurricane in 1873, the original tower was replaced three years later with a new lighthouse erected about 90 feet away. The foundation of the original tower is still visible inside the fort.

###