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SIASCONSET, NANTUCKET

Sankaty Head Light as it looked circa 1850s to 1870s (lower right), with lighthouse keeper’s cottage. It opened on February 1, 1850, the first lighthouse in the U.S. equipped with a Fresnel lens. Historians and the general press of the period reported that fishermen called the light “a blazing star.”

In its 169-year history it has had numerous renovations and upgrades, and was automated in 1965. Now on the National Register of Historic Places, it was acquired by The ‘Sconset Trust in 2007. During that year it was moved back from its original site due to severe bluff erosion.

William Binder, MD, Co-Editor-in-Chief of the Rhode Island Medical Journal (RIMJ), checks the latest issue on Nantucket. In the background is the historic Sankaty Head Light (1850) on the easternmost portion of the island in the village of Siasconset.

Congress appropriated funds for the Sankaty and other U.S. lighthouses and harbor equipment on August 14, 1848. The Sankaty lighthouse was funded for $12,000. The name of the lighthouse is reported to be a Wampanoag term for high land or cold hill.

[BACKGROUND PHOTO: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS]