

Tom had one yearly chore. In the spring he had to paint the white picket fence around a small cemetery. He pointed to a photograph. "It was up by that big pine tree, just past the barn. Most of the graves were there when we arrived." He remembered one burial. A local man by the name of Pete Babbitt was carrying the mail up to Crisp Point from the Vermilion station.

"He was on his way back and had just passed the fog signal when he saw an overshoe sticking out of the sand. He kicked it and the foot came off. He returned to the house, walked into the kitchen and said, 'There's a dead man down there.'" They laid the remains on a canvas and buried it in the cemetery. Tom figured, "He probably fell overboard in the fall, froze in the ice and floated in." Who was he? Tom shook his head. "They never found out."

The isolation of the lighthouse, described by a visitor as "a wild looking place with tall, somber fir and pine trees in gloomy ranks," provided an ideal setting for story telling on a stormy night. Tom recalled, "The old man used to tell visitors, 'Watch it when you're on the beach. Old Reilly's runnin' up and down the beach looking for his fingers.'"

According to Singleton, William Reilly was buried behind the white picket fence of the Crisp Point Cemetery. Reilly was lost when the *John Owen* sank in the November storm of 1919. His body was found on the beach by a mail carrier west of Crisp Point in the spring of 1920. In his dad's story, "They cut Reilly's fingers off when they chopped him out of ice."

Tom would often stand watch with his father. "The old man was 'Skipper,' so he always took the first watch. Every night he'd go up to the tower and light the lamp. We'd stand watch in the house and look out of the window. If it got foggy we'd stay in the fog signal and blow air horns. The old man would shovel coal to keep the steam up."

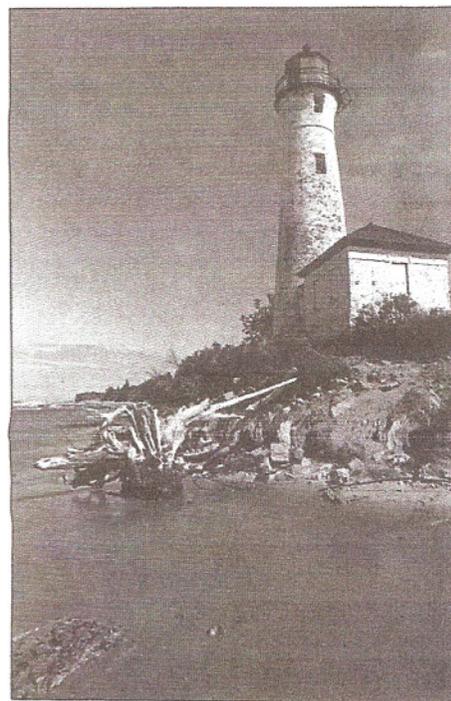
Tom was standing watch with his father on November 5, 1925 when a gale sank the wooden barge *Crane*. Tom had returned to the station for the deer season and to help lay-up the house for the winter. The barge was being towed by the steamer *Herman H. Hettler*.



Overview of the Crisp Point station. Tom's sled-dogs, duplex in back of shed, two out-houses and a big pine near the cemetery where William J. Reilly, "Old Reilly," in the story is buried.



John Noah Singleton, right, born October 15, 1879. He joined the U. S. Lighthouse Service in 1909. He retired from the U. S. Coast Guard in 1939 as the last keeper at the Crisp Point Station and died on September 8, 1964. Shown here with assistant keeper, Al Brown, in front of the oil house.



The Crisp Point tower and work room in recent years, note the proximity of the beach to the tower. After Singleton retired this light continued as an automated aid until November 8, 1992.