
COASTAL PHOTOGRAPH BY NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



PHOTO 22. Montauk Point Lighthouse, Long Island, New York. This sentinel of the coast on the far eastern shore of Long Island, in the early 20th Century offered one of the first glimpses of the United States for many migrants from Europe. The structure stands on a glacial headland that is part of a Wisconsin terminal moraine. Usually referred to as the Montauk Till, the moraine is actually a succession of compacted push moraines. Fine-grained materials are winnowed out of the till by wave action, leaving a boulder beach.

Montauk Point light, built on the orders of George Washington in 1797, was originally sited about 135 m from the sea so that it might survive for 200 years; it is now threatened by erosion. Some coastal engineers predict that less than 15 m will remain between the lighthouse and the sea at its bicentennial.