

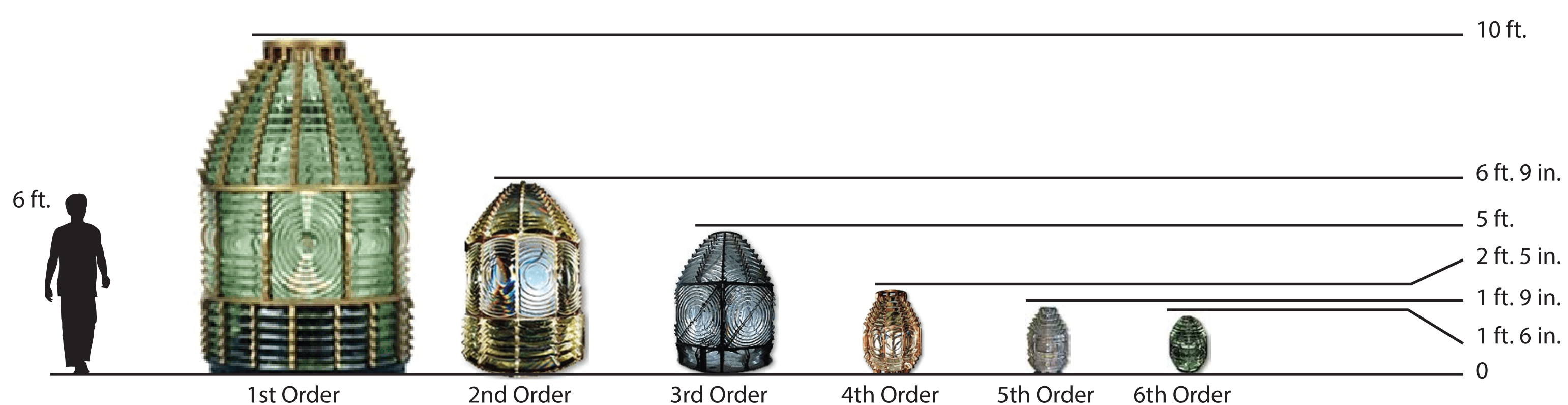
1851 - 1861

Bigger and Brighter

Cape Canaveral's Light Problems Were Not Unique

Lighthouses all up and down the east coast were having similar problems of not being seen. In 1851, Congress ordered an investigation. The report pointed out problems with height, but mostly the issues were with the Winslow Lewis lamps, which had been installed everywhere.

In 1852, Congress established a nine-member Lighthouse Board of engineers, scientists and naval officers to fix the problems correctly. These specialists immediately ordered that all lighthouses were to be refitted with Fresnel lenses (pronounced fre-NEL). *Please visit our display in the other room to see how a Fresnel lens works.*



Different sizes of Fresnel lenses were used for specific purposes. Large ocean lighthouses, like Cape Canaveral, received the largest of the Fresnel lenses, a 1st Order.

Fixing the Height and Light Problems at the Same Time

No Fresnel lens was put in this Lighthouse, though. The Board decided height was also a problem at Cape Canaveral, so a new, taller Lighthouse was authorized, circa 1859. They would hold off putting in a Fresnel lens until the new Lighthouse was ready. Requests for proposals were issued in early 1860 to build a new iron Lighthouse at Cape Canaveral. A site was selected about 90 feet north of the old 65-foot Lighthouse.

Whoa! The Civil War Delays the New Lighthouse by Nearly a Decade

Bids for constructing the new Lighthouse were opened on December 3, 1860. The winner (and lowest bidder) was the West Point Foundry, in Cold Spring, NY. But the government suspended the contract on February 5, 1861, because of the impending Civil War, which lasted until April 9, 1865. Work would not start again until several years after the war, so it was nearly 10 years from the time the new Lighthouse was authorized until it was built in 1868.

