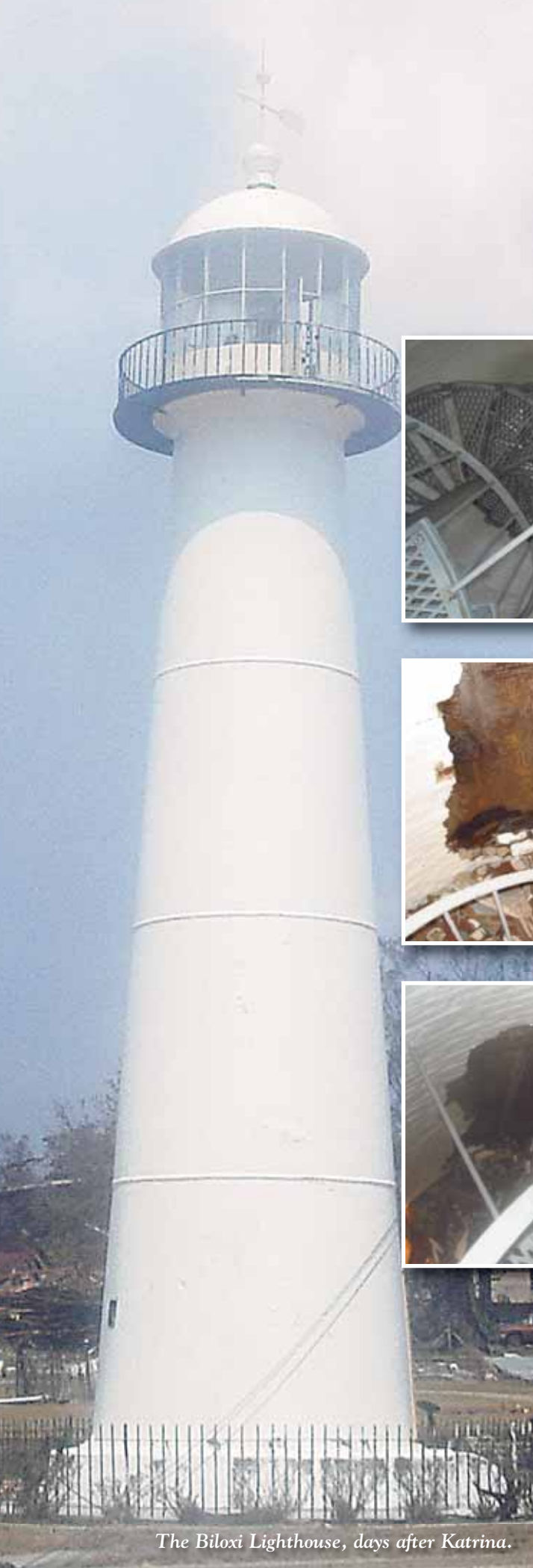


City to begin restoration of Biloxi Lighthouse



The Biloxi Lighthouse, days after Katrina.



The City of Biloxi, with federal and state approvals now in hand, expects to begin restoration of its signature landmark, Biloxi Lighthouse, which was ravaged by Hurricane Katrina.

Bill Raymond, the city's Historic Administrator and planner, said construction on the project – which has a FEMA-estimated budget of \$72,000 – could begin as soon as May and is expected to take 180 days once construction begins.

Raymond received verbal approval from the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency on March 13, and had previously received approvals from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History and FEMA.

The project is significant because the storm-ravaged Biloxi Lighthouse, which was erected in 1848, has come to symbolize the city's resilience, standing tall amid the debris in the days after Katrina. Today, the flag-draped lighthouse remains one of the most-photographed icons in the city.

The Biloxi lighthouse, which stands in the center median of Beach Boulevard, is reportedly the first cast iron lighthouse to be erected in the South. The light was civilian-operated from 1848 to 1939, and is notable for its several female lightkeepers, including Maria Youngmans, who tended the light for 53 years. In 1939, the U.S. Coast Guard assumed responsibility for the light's operation. After being declared surplus property in 1968, the Biloxi Lighthouse was deeded to the city.

Katrina's storm surge toppled many bricks that lined the interior of the cast iron tower. The storm's winds broke many of the windows in the light cupola, but the city, realizing the significance of the Lighthouse, was able to restore temporary power to illuminate the structure's light within days after the storm. An American flag has hung from the cupola railing since the storm, but will be removed once the restoration is complete.

It was the very history of the Lighthouse that has added time to the restoration project.

"Anytime you're undertaking a restoration project on an historic landmark – and we're working on several of them besides the Lighthouse – you have a detailed process to go through, with FEMA, MEMA and the Mississippi Department of Archives and History," said Mayor A.J. Holloway. "I don't like the amount of time it takes, but we're making sure to do it right, not right now."

Besides the Biloxi Lighthouse, the city is working its way through necessary federal and state approvals on the restoration of such historic sites as the Visitors Center north of the lighthouse; the Magnolia Hotel, which had formerly housed the Mardi Gras Museum; the Old Brick House on Back Bay, believed to be one of the oldest structures in the city; and the

White House fountain, a 1920s-era fountain that the city hopes to restore to its original grandeur in the center median of Beach Boulevard near White Avenue.

"The approval for these historic projects requires extra layers of time-consuming and costly approvals," Holloway said, "but in an historic city like Biloxi it's important to restore these landmarks and to do it accurately. These landmarks speak to our sense of place. They are some of the things that make Biloxi different from any other city in the country. They say who we were and who we are."

More online: You can see photos of the Biloxi Lighthouse through the years – including images of the lighthouse in 1909, after the storm of 1919, in the 1930s, and as it appeared pre- and post-Katrina – in the online Photo Gallery at biloxi.ms.us

Status of other city landmarks, historic properties



The Old Brick House, days after Katrina.

Here, from Historical Administrator Bill Raymond, is a status report on other city historic properties:

- **Old Brick House:** Bids open on April 22, 2009. Architects estimates \$750,000 in costs to restore. Construction to begin in May 2009 and be completed in 12 months to complete.
- **Saenger Theater:** In design phase. FEMA estimates \$183,000 in restoration costs. Exterior construction should begin in July 2009 and take four months to complete. Interior work will follow.
- **Magnolia Hotel:** In review at FEMA. FEMA

estimates \$295,000 in restoration costs.

Construction to begin in July 2009 and take nine months to complete.

- **Swetman House:** Exterior work in review at FEMA. FEMA estimates \$225,000 in restoration costs. Construction to begin in June 2009 and take four months to complete. Interior work on hold until Ohr-O'Keefe Museum of Art relocates to its new facility, which is expected to be in two years.
- **White House Fountain:** In design phase. FEMA estimates \$89,000 in restoration cost. No estimated

start date. Work expected to take three months to complete.

- **City Hall:** Still in design phase. Construction specifications finished in March 2009 for review by FEMA/MEMA. Architects estimate \$350,000 in restoration costs. Construction to begin in July or August 2009 and to take 12 months to complete.
- **Fire House Museum:** In review at FEMA. FEMA estimates \$107,000. in restoration costs. Construction to begin in June 2009 and take six months to complete.