

First in the Gulf of Mexico

A wrong number

It was just after World War II when the rigs first started to venture out into the Gulf of Mexico. One of the early pioneers was Exxon, then known as Humble Oil and Refining. In 1947, the company struck oil offshore Sabine, Texas, and began to put offshore platforms in place. Informed by the US Coast Guard that these platforms must be clearly marked as obstructions to navigation, Humble Oil personnel called around in search of a source. One of the firms they called was The Lighthouse, Inc., owned by Nathan "Available" Jones. Despite its name, this small Houston-based shop had nothing to do with lighthouses, but specialized in ambulance emergency lights.

Opportunity calls

When Humble Oil contacted him, Jones had no idea what was needed, but sensing opportunity, he assured the caller that these platform obstruction lights were indeed "available" from his company. Jones then contacted local Coast Guard officials, who directed him to their primary supplier, Wallace & Tiernan, Inc. Jones flew to Belleville, New Jersey to meet with Wallace & Tiernan, and was appointed that company's Gulf Coast distributor. The Lighthouse was now officially in the aids to navigation business.

Rapid worldwide expansion

Over the next few years, drilling and production took off in the Gulf of Mexico. As exploration expanded into deeper waters, longer range lights and fog signals became increasingly necessary, and in 1949 Lighthouse, Inc., patented the first two-mile fog signal. The company grew with the booming activity in the Gulf. Over the next decade hundreds of platforms were placed offshore and marked with thousands of lights and foghorns. By 1966, the Lighthouse, Inc. incorporated five different companies providing navigational aids to a worldwide customer base. They were: Lighthouse, Inc.; Lighthouse of Louisiana, Inc.; Automatic Power, Inc.; Automatic Power of Louisiana, Inc.; and Buoys, Inc. Two years later they became part of the Pennwalt Corporation and were consolidated under the name of Automatic Power, Inc., (API).

API and Pennwalt

As the 60's drew to a close, Automatic Power's offshore platform aids to navigation business had grown larger than Wallace & Tiernan's US Coast Guard and ports and harbors sector. "Available" Jones approached Wallace & Tiernan to purchase their aids to navigation division. Typically, by the time negotiations were concluded, Jones had turned the tables, and Wallace & Tiernan bought API. Shortly thereafter, Wallace & Tiernan merged with the Pennsylvania Salt Corporation. Automatic Power operated as an independent company within the newly created Pennwalt equipment division for more than two decades.

Pharos Marine

In 1988, the French chemical conglomerate, ELF-ATOCHEM, bought out the Pennwalt Corporation. As part of the purchase, Pennwalt divested Automatic Power, Inc., to a management group that included Guy Priestley and Ed Lanoux. In 1989, Automatic Power was merged with A.B. Pharos Marine, Ltd., the largest aids to navigation company in Europe. Today, the combined Automatic Power/Pharos Marine Group is the world leader in marine aids to navigation with a track record that is more than a century old.



Class A single lift system



Houston Oil and Mineral, Galveston Bay, Texas. This system has been operating trouble free for fifteen years.



From the first electric lampchanger

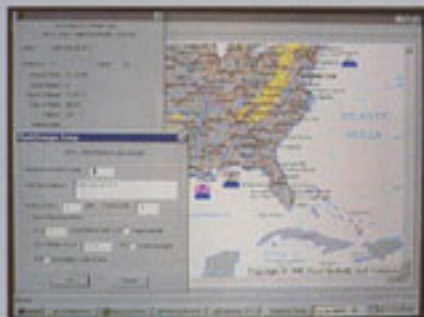
Automatic Power traces its roots to Charles Wallace's original 1928 lampchanger patent. Wallace's lampchanger consisted of a rotating drum holding a Model T headlight lamp at the focal point of an optic. When the operating lamp failed, a new lamp automatically rotated into the operating position. Wallace's lampchanger found an immediate welcome in navigational aids applications, particularly in critical, costly-to-maintain buoy lights. By the 1930's, the United States Lighthouse Service had embraced Wallace's patent and was rapidly converting the largest aids to navigation system in the world to electricity.

To remote control and monitoring

From the electrification of aids to navigation to the development of sophisticated, GPS-based remote control and monitoring, API has continued to pioneer industry technology. As compact, dependable solar power replaced bulky, hazardous primary batteries, API engineers achieved ever-higher levels of system reliability and independence. The evolution of the lampchanger from Wallace's simple, mechanical device to advanced, microprocessor-based, satellite-synchronized circuitry vividly illustrates the changes half a century can bring. API's UNIFLASH-II® combination flasher/lampchanger utilizes the signal from the worldwide Global Positioning System for signal synchronization. Our new Remote Monitor Platform Software allows the user to track buoy positions and remotely access, monitor and document critical platform system parameters.



API's GPS-based MAPS (Mapping and Positioning System) technology provides position and nav aids status via spread spectrum radio. The buoy, located in 200 ft. waters in the Gulf of Mexico will be removed when the producing platform is set.

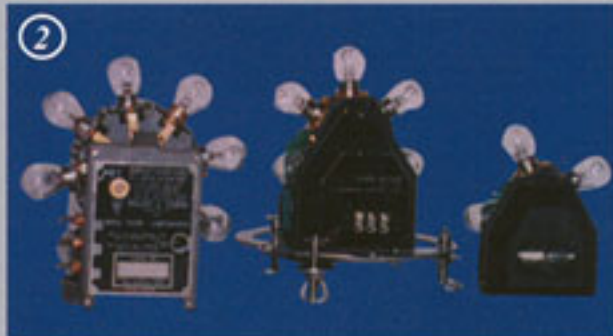


Revolutionary new monitoring software provides detailed status reports and interactive control of navigational aids systems.



The changing designs of flashers and lampchangers clearly illustrate the evolution of marine technology.

①
FU-1297
lampchangers
(1940's vintage)



②
Eight-place
FU-1297
Six-place APL-1297,
and four-place
APL-1297



③
Motorized
mechanical flasher

④
Buoy lantern with
GPS-based
UNIFLASH-II
system.

⑤
APL-1297A
Lamp changer
(current model)

