

93-84

Point Clark, Ontario
Lighthouse

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Point Clark lighthouse was built between 1855 and 1859 as part of a 6-tower lighting campaign along the shores of Lake Huron. It was commissioned by the Department of Public Works, Province of Canada, and built by contractor John Brown. Although acquired by Parks Canada in 1967, the lighthouse still serves its primary function. Point Clark has been operated as a National Historic Site since 1977. Parks Canada is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 93-84.

Reasons for Designation

The Point Clark lighthouse was designated Classified largely for the aesthetic quality of its design. Its elegant proportions and rock-faced stone exterior are typical of the six "Imperial" Towers built in the region, a lighthouse treatment rarely seen elsewhere in Canada.

The Point Clark lighthouse also has environmental and contextual significance because it retains its original function and character as a beacon. Its history is closely linked to the rise of navigational activity in the area following the opening of the Bruce peninsula for settlement, the inauguration of the Sault Ste. Marie canal and a 1854 trade agreement with the United States.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage value of the Point Clark lighthouse resides in all aspects of its elegant design and proportions, in its minimal but refined detailing, and in the quality of its materials and construction.

This 87-foot tower is round with a slight taper, and corbelled at the top to form a gallery and base for the lantern. The hammer-dressed local limestone of the exterior creates an attractive rustic appearance that should not be compromised. The spare detailing is also character defining: the small, staggered windows with plain stone sills, and the round-headed doorway are intrinsic elements of this design. The 12-sided lantern adds greatly to the aesthetic quality of the tower, both in its general shape and in its detail. Of cast iron, it has a domed roof surmounted by a ventilator in the shape of a ball pinnacle, with 12 bronze lion heads at each angle of the eaves line. The lantern, by virtue of its design and function, is essential to the heritage character of this lighthouse, and its shape, proportions, detailing and materials should be respected in all future interventions.

A vaulted passage through the thick stone masonry (5 feet at the bottom, 3 feet at the top) leads to the interior of the lighthouse which has a uniform diameter of 10 ft. 6 in.

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Lighthouse (continued)

The stairs leading up through the tower are wooden and curved at the bottom, then set in steep dogleg segments, and a final iron flight curves upward to the lantern base. The lantern is secured on top of a ring of granite set in about 3 feet from the edge of the corbelling. A doorway through the granite ring gives access to the outside gallery with its stone floor and iron railing. All these original elements are essential to the operation and heritage character of the lighthouse and should be maintained.

The structural system is important and merits respect. It depends on a heavy timber frame for lateral stability, while the inner and outer rows of cut stone, with rubble infill between, support the compressive forces. Further stability is achieved through the exterior slope of the walls. Long vertical cracks, which have been patched with concrete in some places, have appeared on the exterior facing. The tower would benefit from regular inspections and appropriate maintenance to ensure its continuing preservation. All interventions to the structure should be reviewed by conservation engineers or masonry experts with heritage expertise.

The immediate environment of the lighthouse has been modified somewhat due to changes by the Township, the local boat club, and Parks Canada. Three historic buildings remain, including the keeper's dwelling and an oil shed that has not yet been evaluated by the FHBRO. The lighthouse is the defining feature on this point of land and stands in contrast to the surrounding summer cottages. Its prominence should not be compromised.

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For further guidance, please refer to the *FHBRO Code of Practice*.