

# FHBRO HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

## SHOAL ISLAND LIGHTTOWER

### SHOAL ISLAND, ONTARIO

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FHBRO number: **05-170**  
DFRP number: **83477**  
Resource name: **Shoal Island Lighttower**  
Address: **St-Joseph Channel, Lake Huron, Shoal Island, Ontario**  
FHBRO status: **"Recognized" Federal Heritage Building**  
Construction: **1910**  
Designer: **Department of Marine and Fisheries**  
Original Function: **Lighthouse**  
Current Function: **Lighthouse**  
Modifications: **Windows replaced and boarded up (date unknown)**  
Custodian: **Department of Fisheries and Oceans**

#### **Description of Historic Place**

The Shoal Island Lighttower consists of a compact, two-storey square dwelling painted white and crowned with a red truncated pyramidal roof, which extends towards the rear side to cover a one-storey extension. A short square tower housing the lantern sits on a gallery at the roof's apex, and is itself crowned with a pyramidal roof and vent stack. The lighthouse stands directly on the rock, at the edge of the water on the northern point of Shoal Island. The designation is confined to the footprint of the building.

#### **Heritage Value**

The Shoal Island Lighttower is a "Recognized" Federal Heritage Building because of its historical associations, and its architectural and environmental values.

#### Historical value:

The Shoal Island Lighttower is a good illustration of the theme of aids to navigation in Canada's Great Lakes, as a response to the evolution of navigation patterns and the economic development of the shores of the Georgian Bay region, first with timber and mining industries and later with recreation. Built in 1910 to replace an 1890 structure, the lighthouse is associated with the community's peak period of development linked to resource extraction, and to its transition to a recreation-based economy – the community having remained entirely reliant on water transportation until 1973. The structure is also associated with a number of dedicated lighthouse keepers, prominent members of the local community.

#### Architectural value:

The Shoal Island Lighttower is a good example of the more compact type of combined lighttower and dwelling, used most frequently for minor coastal lights in remote locations. Built according to plans prepared by the Department of Marine and Fisheries, its simple elegant design offers a very good response to the specific functional requirements of both uses. Well-built using durable

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materials and carefully maintained over time, the structure has endured well despite the harsh climatic conditions to which it is exposed.

## Environmental value:

Being the central feature of the island, the Shoal Island Lighttower reinforces the maritime character of the area, where man-made structures punctuate the predominantly wild environment of forested lakeshores. Built at a particularly narrow and rocky point in the channel, standing low on the rock and on the very edge of the water, the relationship between the lighthouse and its surrounding landscape has changed slightly but has retained its character. The structure is the only lighthouse in the township and is well known to the mostly recreational boaters who navigate in the St-Joseph Channel. It is a valued landmark for the region.

## **Character-Defining Elements**

The following character-defining elements of the Shoal Island Lighttower should be respected:

Features that illustrate the historical theme of aids to navigations in Canada's Great Lakes, notably:

- The combination of both dwelling and lighttower in a single compact building, a type used most frequently in minor coast lights placed in remote locations.

Its good aesthetic design, very good functional design and good quality materials and craftsmanship as manifested in:

- The pleasing proportions of the compact two-storey structure, with its rectangular plan, and truncated pyramidal roof which extends in a continuous slope over the entrance and kitchen;
- The quasi-square elevations punctuated by regularly disposed window openings;
- The short and squared lighttower, rising directly above the center of the dwelling, its flared cornice supporting a gallery, and its pyramidal roof and vent stack;
- The complete separation of comfortable living and light-keeping spaces on the interior, which could be accessed separately, yet allowed for easy access to the light independently of weather conditions;
- The use of contrasting white and red colours, which increase the structure's daytime visibility; and,
- The use of basic robust materials such as a stone foundation set directly onto the rock at the water's edge, heavy timber framing, and painted cedar shingle cladding on the exterior, all of which have endured well; and,
- The simple but durable interior finishes such as the vertical tongue and groove boards on the walls.

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The manner in which the building reinforces the maritime character of its rural shoreline area as evidenced in:

- Its prominent location on the edge of the water;
- The clean division between the building's foundation and the rock on which it sits, which further anchors the building to its rocky and isolated setting.

For guidance on interventions, please refer to the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*. For further information contact FHBRO.

April 2007