

Nottawasaga Island, Ontario
Lighthouse
Collingwood

FINAL DRAFT

The Nottawasaga Lighthouse was constructed between 1857 and 1858. It was built by prominent local contractor John Brown. The original designer of the structure is not known. The building has not been significantly altered and continues to serve as a lighthouse. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 98-19.

Reasons for Designation

The Nottawasaga Island Lighthouse has been designated Classified because of its architectural character, its historical associations and its environmental significance.

The lighthouse's architectural character carefully balances the rugged and massive impression of the masonry construction with an elegant tapered form, terminating with a slightly projecting corbelled gallery and handsome lantern. The rough textured limestone walls contribute to the massive and stable appearance of the lighthouse. The twelve-sided cast iron lantern is capped by a domed copper roof with a ball-pinnacle ventilator at its apex.

As one of the six "Imperial Towers" built in the 1850s, the Nottawasaga Lighthouse testifies to the establishment of safe navigation routes along the coastal waters of Lake Huron and Georgian Bay following the opening of the Bruce Peninsula for settlement. Its construction marked the beginning of Collingwood's formative years as a major Georgian Bay port. The lighthouse is also associated with a number of dramatic rescue efforts by its lightkeepers, most notably George Collins' role in saving passengers after the sinking of the supply steamer the Mary Ward in 1872. During his tenure Collins was also responsible for creating gardens and several outbuildings on the island, creating a favourite picnic location for the townspeople of nearby Collingwood.

The lighthouse remains as the sole intact structure on Nottawasaga Island and testifies to the history of settlement and inhabitation of the island. With the automation of the light in 1959 and subsequent abandonment of the island as a residence, the remaining buildings fell victim to vandalism, and in 1971 the lightkeeper's residence was partially demolished. All other outbuildings, stone retaining walls and garden walls and a small wharf are either in a state of ruin or have been completely dismantled. The lighthouse remains as a landmark to mariners and the townspeople of Collingwood by virtue of its still-operating light and its distinctive profile.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Nottawasaga Island Lighthouse resides in the materials

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and design details of its exterior form and in its relationship to its setting.

The lighthouse's elegantly tapered form is crowned by the projecting corbelled gallery and handsome lantern, creating an immediately identifiable profile. The rusticated limestone exterior walls have been covered with a white coating since approximately the 1870s, yet the regular coursing and rough texture of the large masonry units are still prominent features of the tower. These massive stone walls display a very high level of craftsmanship, and have withstood years of severe conditions. The cut-stone window sills located at the stair landing on each level of the interior and the cut-stone entry door surrounds display this same high level of craftsmanship. The distinctive profile of the lighthouse, the even coursing and rusticated surface of its masonry walls, and the regular position and shape of its window and door openings are character defining features that should not be compromised or obscured. The on-going maintenance of the masonry walls should be ensured.

The cast iron lantern has also maintained its characteristic profile, although a small photo-voltaic panel has been installed on the gallery handrail to supply power for the current light. While relatively unobtrusive, future consideration should be given to the relocation of the panel to a less prominent position, and in a manner which does not have an impact on the historic fabric. The retention and the ongoing maintenance of the lantern elements should be ensured.

The replacement of the existing heavy metal entry door and the existing modern window units with units more sympathetic to the heritage character should be considered when the risks of vandalism have been sufficiently abated.

The character of the lighthouse's setting has been significantly altered with the loss of the outbuildings and the ruined state of the lightkeeper's residence. The lighthouse is therefore the most critical element in retaining the character of the lightkeeping station. Any development on the island which would diminish the prominence of the lighthouse or its relationship to the former residence should be avoided. Any consideration of the lightkeeping station grounds for public interpretation should respect the setting's character.

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