

Point Pelee, Ontario

Combined Lighthouse, Lightkeeper's Residence and Boathouse; Southeast Shoal

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Southeast Shoal Lighthouse was constructed in 1927 to designs prepared within the Department of the Marine by Mr. Longtin and erected on site under supervising engineer H.E. Poland. The lightstation is the property of Transport Canada, Canadian Coast Guard. See FHBRO Building Report 88-108.

Reason for Designation

The lighthouse was designated Classified by virtue of its intrinsic historic importance, its significance in engineering history and its environmental values.

Southeast Shoal is one of the earliest Canadian examples of a "wave-swept" lighthouse; it employs an innovative caisson-type foundation.

Its construction acknowledged the importance of the Point Pelee location, abreast all marine traffic routes passing to and from the Upper Lakes of Superior, Michigan, and Huron; like the Welland Canal, it was an integral part of major improvements being made in the early twentieth-century to the Great Lakes trade route.

Its environmental significance is considerable, given its dominating position above its shoal, little changed since construction and the familiarity of its ungainly but functional silhouette to almost all passing water traffic.

Character Defining Elements

The character of the lighthouse resides primarily in the excellence of its engineering design. That character reflects its extremely practical approach to the task of accommodating required site activities in an omnibus structure. The original compact disposition of lower-level boathouse, fog alarm and fuel stores; upper level dwelling; and roof deck with lantern and parapet (for safety's sake), is architecturally undistinguished, conveying a strictly functional and business-like character. The multi-partite nature of the original structure has been reinforced with the subsequent addition of a radio room to the building's roof in 1939, and in 1973, the addition of a heliport.

More fundamentally, its engineering importance lies in the innovative and technically sophisticated approach developed to stabilize the foundations in extremely demanding conditions. The uniqueness of this foundation system lies in the use of timber piles to reinforce the supporting caissons.

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Lake Erie

Southeast Shoal Lighthouse (Continued)

Every effort in subsequent management of the station should be made to understand, respect and maintain the integrity of the original engineering foundation system. Also, in the event of new developments in lighting, an effort should be made to retain as much of the lantern and apparatus as possible, since this station provides an early example of electrification in a Canadian lighthouse.

The lighthouse, set above its reinforced concrete caisson and surrounded by rip-rap, is isolated within its marine environment. Efforts should be made to preserve the integrity of its site, and the familiarity of its silhouette to passing mariners by maintaining its free-standing and isolated state.

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