

FHBRO HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

PIGEON ISLAND LIGHTTOWER

PIGEON ISLAND, ONTARIO

FHBRO number: **05-174**
DFRP number: **58220**
Resource Name: **Pigeon Island Lighttower**
Address: **Lake Ontario, Pigeon Island, Ontario**
FHBRO Status: **"Recognized" Federal Heritage Building**
Construction: **1909**
Designer: **Department of Marine and Fisheries**
Original Function: **Lighttower**
Current Function: **Lighttower**
Modifications: **Automation of the light (1957), removal of ancillary buildings (1963)**
Custodian: **Department of Fisheries and Oceans**

Description of Historic Place

The Pigeon Island Lighttower consists of a three-tiered, tapered steel frame surmounted by a square watchroom, standing 16.8 meters tall,. Within the white structure stands a red cylinder enclosing the access stair. A circular lantern and domed cupola, also painted red, cap the cylinder above the watchroom. The lighttower stands alone on a small flat island in Eastern Lake Ontario beyond sight of other land. The designation is confined to the footprint of the building.

Heritage Value

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

Historical value:

The Pigeon Island Lighttower is a good illustration of the theme of aids to navigation in Canada's Great Lakes, as a response to the development of trade between the US and Canada following the Treaty of Washington in 1871. Built to replace the 1870 lighthouse after its destruction by fire, the lighttower is associated with hazard marking at a time when Kingston, located at close proximity, was intent on preserving its commercial importance on the Great Lakes. The structure is also associated with a number of dedicated lighthouse keepers, prominent members of the local community.

Architectural value:

The Pigeon Island Lighttower is a good example of a sub-type of steel framed lighthouses, a clever adaptation of a technology developed for windmill construction. Built according to plans prepared by the Department of Marine and Fisheries, its frank expression of its function and well-resolved response to specific site requirements make it aesthetically distinctive. Well-built using durable materials, the structure has endured well despite the harsh climatic conditions to which it is exposed.

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Environmental value:

Prominent visually, and constituting the only structure on a small barren and isolated island, the tower reinforces the maritime character of its setting. Although far from main shipping lines, the structure is nevertheless a familiar landmark to the community of recreational boaters in this area of Lake Ontario.

Character-Defining Elements

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

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

- Its combination of innovative technologies of the early 20th century with the features of traditional lighthouses.

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

- The simple assembly of its functional constituents: steel frame, watchroom, enclosed stair and lantern, which clearly reflect the tower's function;
- Its slender, tapered prefabricated skeletal steel frame, purchased from windmill manufacturers, and providing a stable and durable base, effectiveness and easy assembly in a remote location;
- The steel cylinder, which encloses the access stair, an innovative way of protecting the user from the exposed island's high winds and driving precipitation, and which visually anchors the tower frame within which it is enclosed;
- The tapered square watchroom, on top of which sits a circular gallery, and the simple octagonal iron lantern with its cupola roof which terminates the steel cylinder, both of which constitute distinctive features of the tower;
- The use of contrasting white and red colors, which increase the structure's daytime visibility; and,
- The combination of basic durable materials, primarily steel, which have endured well.

The manner in which the building reinforces the maritime character of Pigeon Island as evidenced in:

- Its recognizable silhouette, simple form and colours.

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

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