

Griffith Island, Ontario  
**Griffith Island Lightstation Tower**  
Lake Huron

## **HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT**

The Griffith Island Lightstation Tower was built from 1855 to 1859 under the authority of the Board of Works, Canada West, by the contractor John Brown. The tower still functions as a navigational aid. Transport Canada is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 90-204.

### **Reasons for Designation**

The Griffith Island Lightstation Tower was designated Classified because of its thematic association with the opening of navigation on Lake Huron and points west; because of its aesthetic and functional design and high quality craftsmanship and materials; because of its designers (the pre-confederation Canadian Board of Works and John Brown, the contractor) who created here one of the best examples of the work of the Canadian Board of Works; and because of its picturesque setting and landmark qualities.

Constructed as one of the so-called "Imperial Towers", this tower is associated with the installation of lighthouses on the Great Lakes beginning in 1804. The opening of the Bruce Peninsula for settlement in the mid-1850's, a free-trade agreement with the United States in 1854, and the Sault Ste. Marie Canal in 1855 prompted the need for navigational aids and the establishment of these towers. Among the most attractive lighthouses in Canada, these towers count among the few constructed of stone; wood, iron and concrete are more typical. Of an excellent functional design, which is as strong and stable as it is aesthetically pleasing, the tower employs materials of the highest standard. The craftsmanship inherent in this structure is of a high order, typical of the work of the contractor, John Brown.

A tall, handsome structure on a picturesque site, the tower adds greatly to the interest of boating within its scenic immediate area.

### **Character Defining Elements**

The heritage character of the Griffith Island Lightstation Tower resides in its elegant proportions and simple construction of rusticated stone. Architectural features of this structure which are of note and which should be preserved include its masonry work; its whitewash finish (probably dating to c. 1871); its tall, round, slightly tapered form corbelled at the top to form a gallery and base for the lantern; its round-headed doorway and small, narrow windows with stone sills staggered around the tower; and its plain eight-sided lantern manufactured by the Louis Saulter Company of Paris. The

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**Griffith Island Lightstation Tower** (Continued)

lantern provides an important component of the appearance of the structure. Restoration of this feature is encouraged; at the very least, missing glazing should be reinstated to protect the lantern from the elements.

The tower's structural system employs heavy timber to provide lateral stability, while inner and outer wythes of cut masonry with rubble infill provide compressive strength. Regular examination and timely conservation work should be undertaken to ensure the continued integrity of wood members, especially where they are set into the masonry.

Interior components which merit preservation include the first storey wooden stairwell; the wood-and-cast-iron curved stairs to the second and upper levels; the straight, steep wooden stairs to intermediate levels; zinc fuel stands; metal flooring; floor brackets; the pedestal for the optic; and ventilation devices. Modifications related to the ongoing use of the building should be designed with minimal impact on historic fabric.

Although the adjacent keeper's dwelling is in poor condition, the composition of these two structures presents an image of the site which is close to its original appearance. Development of adjacent lands would reduce this historic appearance and should be discouraged.

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