

Cove Island, Ontario
Cove Island Lightstation: Old Dwelling
Lake Huron

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Old Dwelling at the Cove Island Lightstation was built from 1855 to 1859 under the authority of the Board of Works, Canada West, by the contractor John Brown. Although not officially promoted as a museum, the building houses memorabilia and is occasionally open to the public upon request. Transport Canada is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 90-216.

Reasons for Designation

The Old Dwelling at the Cove Island Lightstation was designated Recognized because of its thematic association with the opening of navigation on Lake Huron and points west; because of the high quality of its craftsmanship and materials; because of its site which evokes the early importance of manned lighthouses in the area; and because of its picturesque setting.

Constructed as an adjunct to one of the so-called "Imperial Towers", this structure 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 (which opened Lake Superior to schooners) prompted the need for navigational aids and the subsequent establishment of these lightstations.

Matching the robust detailing of its associated tower, the materials and craftsmanship inherent in this stone structure are of a high order, typical of the work of the contractor, John Brown. Based on the prototype of the simple Scottish cottage and influenced in its proportions by British classicism, the building and related structures at this picturesque site form a cohesive cultural landscape.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Cove Island Lightstation dwelling resides in its modest architectural design, simple proportions and high quality materials and construction. Minimally detailed, the dwelling is built of rough-faced stone with parapeted end walls and handsome twin chimneys.

Architectural features which should be preserved include the heavily rusticated stone construction; the simple proportions; the general form of the frame additions which echo earlier additions; the whitewash finish (probably dating to c. 1871); and the interior layout, which remains close to the original design.

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Regular maintenance is recommended to ensure the building's continuing preservation.
Development of lands adjacent these structures would diminish the value of this landmark ensemble and should be discouraged.

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