

St. Catharines, Ontario  
**Former Lighthouse Keeper's Dwelling**  
**Former Fog Horn Building**  
Port Weller, West Pier

## **HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT**

The former lighthouse keeper's dwelling and the fog horn building were erected in 1931 by the Department of Marine. The 1953 residence, attached to the former lightkeeper's dwelling by a walkway, was erected by the Ministry of Transport. Both the former lighthouse keeper's dwelling and the 1953 residence are now occupied by members of the Search and Rescue Office, Canadian Coast Guard. The former fog horn building is used as a multipurpose structure to house the fog horn, the pierhead light, and the emergency generator. The buildings are owned by Transport Canada, Canadian Coast Guard. See FHBRO Building Report 88-95.

### **Reasons for Designation**

The former lighthouse keeper's dwelling and the fog horn building were designated Recognized because of their historical association, their architectural significance and their relationship with the setting.

The former lighthouse keeper's dwelling and the fog horn building illustrate the vital importance of navigational aids to the safe usage of the Welland Canal. The Port Weller lighthouse station, as a result of the interest of lighthouse keeper Cyril Williamson and his wife Ethel in ham radio, achieved international recognition as an important navigational aid on the Welland Canal, and later the St. Lawrence Seaway.

The former lighthouse keeper's dwelling and the fog horn building are representative of the classical and modern elements of art deco. This style of architecture blends a simplified and modernistic neoclassicism with a austere form of geometric and stylized relief sculpture and other ornament.

Port Weller, the location of the lightstation, consists of two pincer-shaped artificial breakwaters, constructed between 1913 and 1931 from bedrock excavated during the building of the fourth canal. These breakwaters serve to protect the entrance of the canal from wind, currents, and deposition.

### **Character Defining Elements**

The heritage character of the former lightkeeper's dwelling and the fog horn building resides in their massing, proportions, their building materials and their art deco elements.

The former lightkeeper's dwelling consists of a one-storey, flat roof, smooth wall concrete structure where openings are symmetrically arranged on all visible elevations.

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St. Catharine's, Ontario  
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**Former Fog Horn Building** (Continued)

The simple proportions and pattern of openings should be respected.

The boxy massing of the dwelling, combined with the raised plinth and entablature, and the parapet roof, emphasize the horizontal lines of the building, while the regularly placed pilasters with turrets accentuate the vertical lines. This balance of horizontal and vertical elements is characteristic of the art deco style and should be maintained.

The decorative elements such as the curved transom over the central doorway, sidelights, and stylized recessed flattened decorative detailing near the roofline are traditional neoclassical features which should be retained.

The dwelling was constructed to resist the climatic elements. Evidence of this design such as the one foot thick poured concrete structure, the steel-framed multi-pane windows, and the heavy solid oak doors should be retained.

Interior finishes and layout which reflect the original function should be identified and integrated into future interior planning. The original volume of the interior spaces (12' height ceiling) should be maintained.

The 1953 residence, a one-storey gable roof house, unfortunately does not complement either the building material or massing of the original dwelling.

The former fog horn building has been constructed to resemble the former lighthouse keeper's dwelling. The parapet roof, stylized recessed flattened neoclassical detailing along the roofline, the raised concrete entablature, the diamond detailing near the corners, and the concrete plinth, are characteristic of the art deco style and should therefore be preserved.

The sound quality of the original workmanship aided by the good maintenance standards of the Canadian Coast Guard is clearly evident in the good condition of the buildings. A continued maintenance program will ensure the longevity of these two heritage structures.

The stark appearance of the immediate area surrounding the buildings is reminiscent of the early years of the lighthouse station. This general character should be maintained. The man-made woods along the two piers, which were created to beautify the bank, secure the breakwaters, and act as a wind break for ships entering and leaving the canal, should also be preserved.

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