



Heritage Lighthouse Protection Act: Statement of Significance

Point Amour Lighthouse, L'Anse Amour, Newfoundland and Labrador

1857 (*year of construction*)

(Ref. 2013-LR-151, "Point Amour Lighthouse")

1 - Description of Historic Place

Built in 1857, the Point Amour Lighthouse is located on the southeast side of Forteau Bay in the Strait of Belle Isle. At 33.2 metres (109 feet), it is the tallest lighthouse in Newfoundland and Labrador and the second tallest in Canada. The lighthouse has a tapered limestone and brick shaft, capped by a stepped and flared cornice, upon which rests the gallery and the lantern. A two-storey, gable-roofed duplex dwelling, also constructed of limestone, is attached to the lighthouse by its rear wing. Both the lighthouse and the dwelling are distinguished by their smooth stone wall surfaces and classically inspired symmetry and details. There are five related buildings on the site that contribute to the heritage character of the lighthouse: (1) the c. 1954 former assistant keeper's dwelling, (2) the c. 1967 former keeper's dwelling, (3) the former fog alarm/radio beacon building, (4) the former shed building, and (5) the active fog horn equipment building.

2 - Heritage Value

The Point Amour Lighthouse is a heritage lighthouse because of its historical, architectural, and community values.

a - Historical values

The Point Amour Lighthouse's prime function was to assist trans-Atlantic navigation once vessels had made landfall. By the mid-1800s, the Strait of Belle Isle had become part of an increasingly important trans-Atlantic shipping route. However, due to its narrow form, ice flows and strong currents, it was a dangerous passageway. To allow for safer navigation along this route, the Province of Canada built this excellent example of a major coastal light in 1857. The *HMS Raleigh*, a 12,000 ton British warship, was grounded near the lighthouse on 8 August 1922 after it was damaged on the rocks of Forteau Bay in avoiding a collision with an iceberg. Eleven men died and it became the most famous marine disaster in the history of the Strait of Belle Isle.

Built as one of four coastal lighthouses erected during the 1850s in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the Strait of Belle Isle regions to serve trans-Atlantic shipping, it is an excellent example of a major coastal lighthouse that was also important to the fishermen of the area, serving the communities in the region from L'Anse au Clair to Red Bay.

b - Architectural values

Reputed to be the second tallest ever built in Canada, the lighthouse at Point Amour is a strikingly handsome, circular, limestone tower of unusual height; it tapers gracefully from 7.5 metres (24.6 feet) in diameter at base to 2.7 m (8.9 feet) at cornice. It is an excellent example of its design type.

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The Point Amour Lighthouse embodies state of the art techniques in lighthouse construction and technology for its time, including the installation of dioptric lens and prism technology developed in France by Augustin Fresnel, which still remains in situ at Point Amour. Built of locally quarried limestone, well dressed and closely cut, the walls at the base are 6 feet thick, with foundations carried down to solid rock. Three years after it was completed, oak planks were attached to the exterior firebrick, serving as a nailing surface for cedar shingles to completely cover the tower and help protect the structure from the harsh climate. Its outstandingly fine workmanship contributes to it being an excellent example of its type.

c - Community values

Located on gently sloping, open land near the edge of steep limestone cliffs, the tower is extremely prominent due to its height. The overall scale, massing, design and materials harmonize with its isolated coastal surroundings and establish the character of the area.

The lighthouse figures prominently in the lives of the people of Southern Labrador, and each summer approximately 6,000 visitors now visit the lightstation. It has been partially restored to its original period and is designated a Provincial Historic Site. Today, the lighthouse stands as a tribute to its eventful past and is also a symbol of maritime heritage and a history that has always been linked with the sea.

d - Related buildings

Five related buildings, as listed in section 1, contribute to the heritage character of the lighthouse.

*The character-defining elements
related to this designation are listed
at the end of this document.*

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3 - Character-Defining Elements

a - The following character-defining elements of the Point Amour Lighthouse should be respected:

- its intact, as-built structural form, height, and proportions;
- its masonry structure of well dressed and closely cut limestone, covered in firebrick;
- its cladding with cedar shingles, affixed to oak planks attached to its firebrick;
- its cast iron and copper lantern, including its respective designed form and proportions;
- its gallery railing, including its respective designed form and proportions;
- its entrance, with its respective designed form and gabled-roof;
- its arrangement of window openings;
- its colour scheme of black and white, with red accenting used on the lantern and gallery railing;
- its original Fresnel dioptric lens;
- its attached duplex dwelling, with its own respective built form, proportions, cladding, doorways, fenestration, materials, and colour scheme of white and red, as connected to the tower by a rear wing.
- its visual prominence in relation to the water, cliffs, and landscape.

b - The following character-defining elements of the related buildings should be respected:

- their respective built forms and proportions;
- their traditional red and white exterior colour schemes;
- their contextual relationships to the lighthouse within a lightstation setting.

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

Date: September 2013