



Heritage Lighthouse Statement of Significance

St. Paul Island Southwest Lighthouse | Cape Breton, Nova Scotia

Heritage Lighthouse Report Number	2011-LR-043
Lighthouse Name	St. Paul Island Southwest Lighthouse
Location	Dingwall, Nova Scotia
Year of Construction	1915
Designer	Department of Marine and Fisheries
Function	Lighthouse (Decommissioned)
Alterations	Minor Alterations; exterior colour scheme

Description of Historic Place

The St. Paul Island Southwest Lighthouse is a prefabricated, cast-iron, cylindrical tower, painted the traditional white and red of the Canadian Coast Guard and surmounted by a 12-sided iron lantern. It was built to warn vessels away from the dangerous St. Paul Island in the Cabot Strait with a flashing light that was visible to a distance of 18 nautical miles. Designed to be easily moved, the lighthouse has been well travelled over the past century. Fabricated at the Dominion Lighthouse Depot in Prescott, Ontario, it was shipped by train and boat to St. Paul Island, Nova Scotia for installation in 1915. Its location has since been roughly split between the southwest corner of St. Paul Island (1915-1964) and the Canadian Coast Guard base at Dartmouth, Nova Scotia (1964-2011). In 2011, it will be relocated to the village of Dingwall, Nova Scotia (Cape Breton).

Heritage Value

St. Paul Island Southwest Lighthouse is a heritage lighthouse because of its historical, architectural and community values.

Historical values

The St. Paul Island Southwest Lighthouse reflects three themes in Canadian maritime history. It was an important marine aid to navigation in the busy Cabot Strait; it helped to reduce the number of shipwrecks in nearby waters; and it illustrates the importance and ingenuity of the Dominion Lighthouse Depot and the Canadian Coast Guard in providing a marine aids to navigation program in Canadian waters.

Known as the “Graveyard of the Gulf”, St. Paul Island has been the site of numerous shipwrecks. The first lighthouses built on the island – one in the northeast and one in the southwest – were completed in 1839 to guide ships through these dangerous waters. After the original lighthouse was destroyed by fire in December 1914, the Dominion Lighthouse Depot staff designed the 1915 lighthouse for installation within the year. Completed in December 1915, it was first lit early in 1916.

Architectural values

The St. Paul Island Lighthouse possesses exceptional architectural value related to its functionality. It reflects the urgent need to build a lighthouse that was fireproof, lightweight, easy to transport and easily erected on its site. These requirements are evident in the material used for the tower (cast-iron), its

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construction technique (36 panels bolted together), and its comparatively short stature. Other functional details that speak to the urgent need for the lighthouse include the simple and small openings for door and window, the original colour scheme, which consisted of red only (the tower is presently painted in the traditional white and red of the Canadian Coast Guard), and an ingenious exterior mounting solution for the weights mechanism that powered the light's rotational device.

Notwithstanding the strong emphasis on functionality, the St. Paul Island Southwest Lighthouse possesses a good aesthetic quality derived from several traditional lighthouse elements, such as the cylindrical shaft and the polygonal gallery with guardrails that support a glazed 12-sided iron lantern with faceted roof and finial vent.

Community values

The St. Paul Island Southwest Lighthouse is valued by the residents of Dingwall, Nova Scotia for its historical associations with the region, in particular St. Paul Island. Beginning in 2011, the lighthouse will be located in front of a small 19th century frame house that serves as a museum for St. Paul Island.

Related buildings

No related buildings are included in the designation.

Sources

Laurie Smith, "St. Paul Island Southwest Lighthouse, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia", Lighthouse Report 2011-LR-043, Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada.

The character-defining elements of the St. Paul Island Southwest Lighthouse are listed on the last page of this document.

Heritage Lighthouse Statement of Significance

St. Paul Island Southwest Lighthouse | Cape Breton, Nova Scotia

Character-Defining Elements

The following character-defining elements of the St. Paul Island Southwest Lighthouse should be respected:

- the cylindrical cast-iron tower (fabricated of 36 curved panels bolted together) with polygonal (12-sided) lantern, extending 27 feet from base to vane;
- the traditional red and white colour scheme of the Canadian Coast Guard (white shaft and red trim/lantern) or the original all-red paint scheme;
- the internal cast-iron stairs;
- wood door and window frame set within the cylindrical tower;
- the original cast-iron gallery railing;
- the original Fourth Order Fresnel dioptric lens, surviving parts of the rotating mechanism and the lantern vent;
- a location in the harbour area of Dingwall, Nova Scotia.

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

Date: August 2012