

# Munising Range Lights

Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



*"This is the most imposing residence in the town of Munising"*  
*Ralph Tinkham, U.S. Lighthouse Inspector, 1912*



The Munising Range Lights were built in 1908 to aid vessels navigating through the narrow channel east of Grand Island into the main harbor of South Bay, often referred to as Munising Bay. The lights are an active aid to navigation denoted as LLNR 14575. Two red beacons are directed toward the East Channel where they appear to line up one above the other.

In 1907, Congress appropriated \$15,000 for construction of the station. Plans called for two steel towers, the front range light to be situated on low land close to the shore and the rear range on the hillside overlooking Munising Bay. Metal work for the towers was erected by the Champion Iron Company of Kenton, Ohio. In addition to the towers, a 35 foot by 20 foot frame and brick light keeper's dwelling was constructed by a local builder.

The first location to use the same design of the light keeper's quarters was built at the Pilot Island Range Lights in the St. Mary's River in 1904. An-

other was built as an assistant keeper's dwelling at Pointe aux Barques on Lake Huron in 1908. This design was replicated at the Harbor of Refuge Keepers Quarters in Grand Marais, also now managed by Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore. While trim details vary, it is clear that the same plan was used in all four structures.

The front range tower stands at 58 feet and the rear range light 33 feet, their locations providing focal planes of 79 feet and 107 feet above the lake respectively. Both lanterns were outfitted with 23 inch Adams and Westlake red reflector lights, powered by incandescent electric bulbs. The lights produced 35,000 candlepower, visible on the lake for 19 miles. The lights became operational for the first time on October 30, 1908. Today, 300 mm red acrylic lenses provide the lights shining out over Munising Bay.

For reference, ship traffic on the lake in 1908 consisted of 12,550 steamers and 1,355 sailboats. They carried 53,287 passengers, 9,902,460 tons of

coal, 106,041,873 bushels of wheat, 24,650,340 tons iron ore, and 453,761 million board feet of lumber. When storms arose on the lake ships often used Munising Bay as a harbor of refuge.

In July 2002, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore acquired the front and rear Munising Range Lights through the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act. The Lakeshore was one of the first parks to acquire lighthouses under this act that identified almost 300 properties for transfer.



Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore will prepare a Historic Structure Report and a Cultural Landscape Plan before other work on the station can be accomplished. Future plans include wayside exhibits about the station's history.

Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore interprets the stories associated with the U.S. Lighthouse Service, U.S. Life Saving Service, and the U.S. Coast Guard. Historic facilities within the park at Sand Point, Au Sable Point and Grand Marais are dedicated to this history. These facilities date from 1874 at Au Sable through the 1937-1975 Coast Guard era. For more information, see:

[www.nps.gov/piro/historyculture](http://www.nps.gov/piro/historyculture)

[www.nps.gov/history](http://www.nps.gov/history)

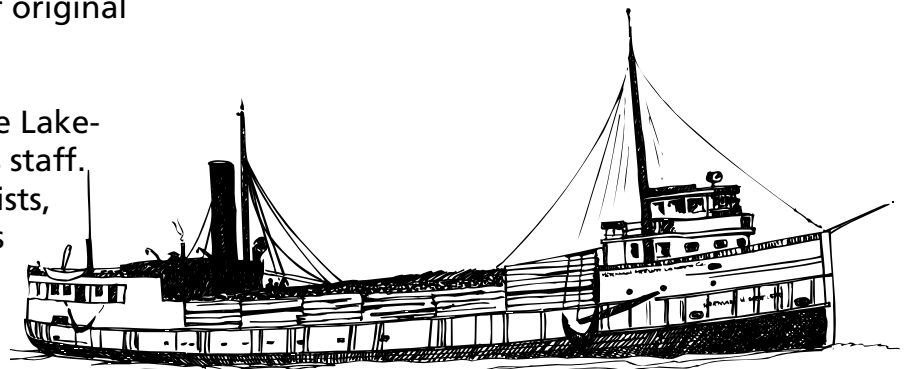
[www.nps.gov/maritime](http://www.nps.gov/maritime)

[www.terrypepper.com](http://www.terrypepper.com)



The Act provided a mechanism for the transfer of historic lighthouses at no cost to the receiver. Since receiving the property, the Lakeshore has invested in renovations to bring the exterior of the towers and building to their original appearance.

The Station is used as an office for the Lakeshore's Science and Natural Resources staff. The building is open to visiting scientists, researchers and others doing business with the National Park Service. The station is not open to the public.



*Steamer Herman Hettler - wrecked at Grand Island, November 23, 1926*