



Raspberry Island Light



Preserving the Lighthouse and its Stories

More than a century of exposure to the harsh Lake Superior environment took its toll on the Raspberry Island Lighthouse. The roof leaked, the foundation was cracked, clapboards were rotting, and plaster was falling down. Other buildings near the lighthouse had similar problems. The light station known as the “showplace of the Apostles” needed substantial restoration to ensure sustainability. A major project began in 2002 to stabilize the shoreline and rehabilitate the property to preserve its historical, architectural and cultural significance. The historic keeper’s quarters now looks much as it did (inside and out) in the early 1920s. Maintaining the light station’s historic buildings and grounds is a continuous challenge for National Park Service staff.

Lighthouse History

The Raspberry Island light was first lit in July of 1863 to serve as a beacon to the many steamboats traveling through the west channel of the Apostle Islands. The original structure was a single family dwelling surmounted by a square tower. A brick fog signal building was added to the station in 1903, creating a need for additional staff. In 1906 the original lighthouse was rebuilt into a duplex at a cost of \$7500 to house the head lighthouse keeper and his two assistants! The duplex structure is the building we see at Raspberry Island today.

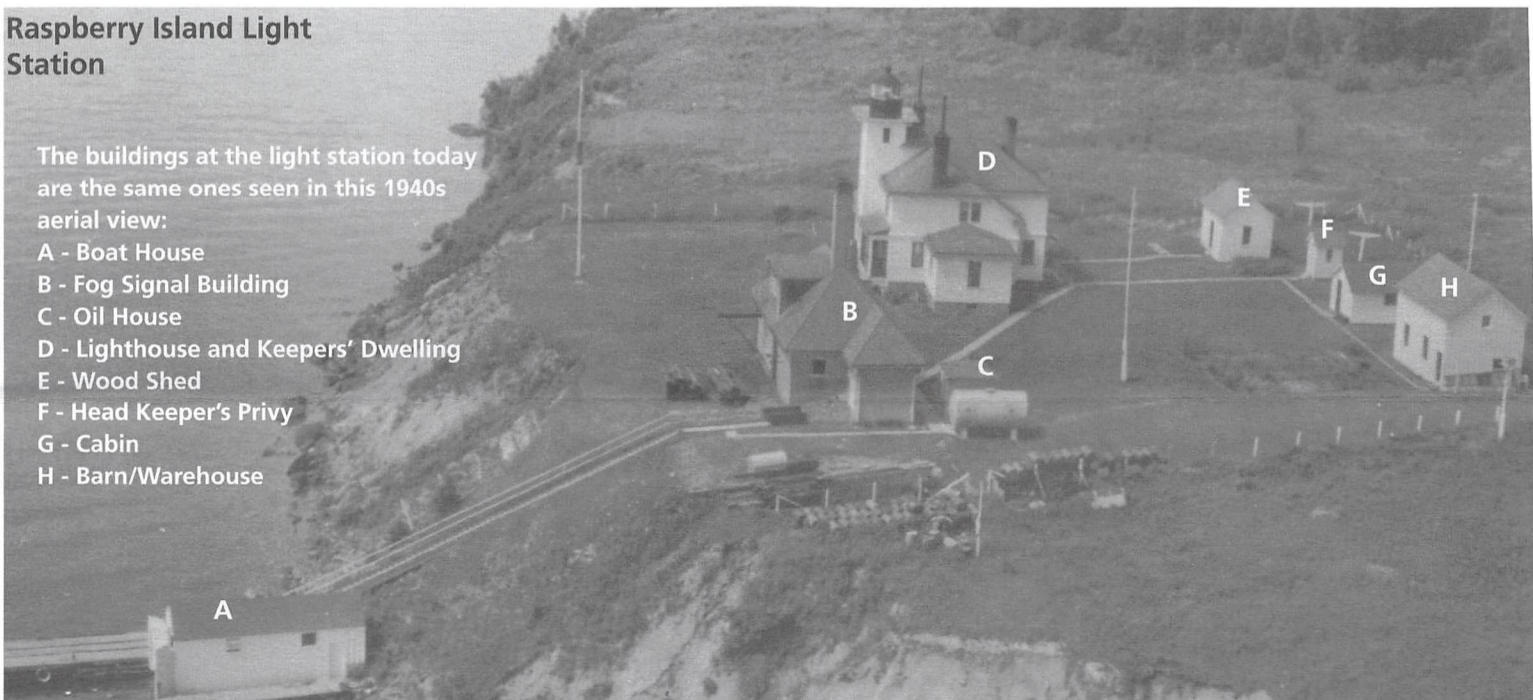


The original Raspberry Island Lighthouse.

Raspberry Island Light Station

The buildings at the light station today are the same ones seen in this 1940s aerial view:

- A - Boat House
- B - Fog Signal Building
- C - Oil House
- D - Lighthouse and Keepers’ Dwelling
- E - Wood Shed
- F - Head Keeper’s Privy
- G - Cabin
- H - Barn/Warehouse



Keeping the Lighthouse

When lighthouse keepers lived at the lighthouse, they regularly maintained the buildings and grounds. Note these entries from the lighthouse logbook in May 1915:

5/3 - Washing walls in tower and working in signal.

5/4 - Cleaning in signal & mowing the lawn.

5/5 - Painting on the dwelling this forenoon.

5/11 - Painting on dwelling & out houses.

5/12 - Painting boat house, trimmings on fog signal and other work.

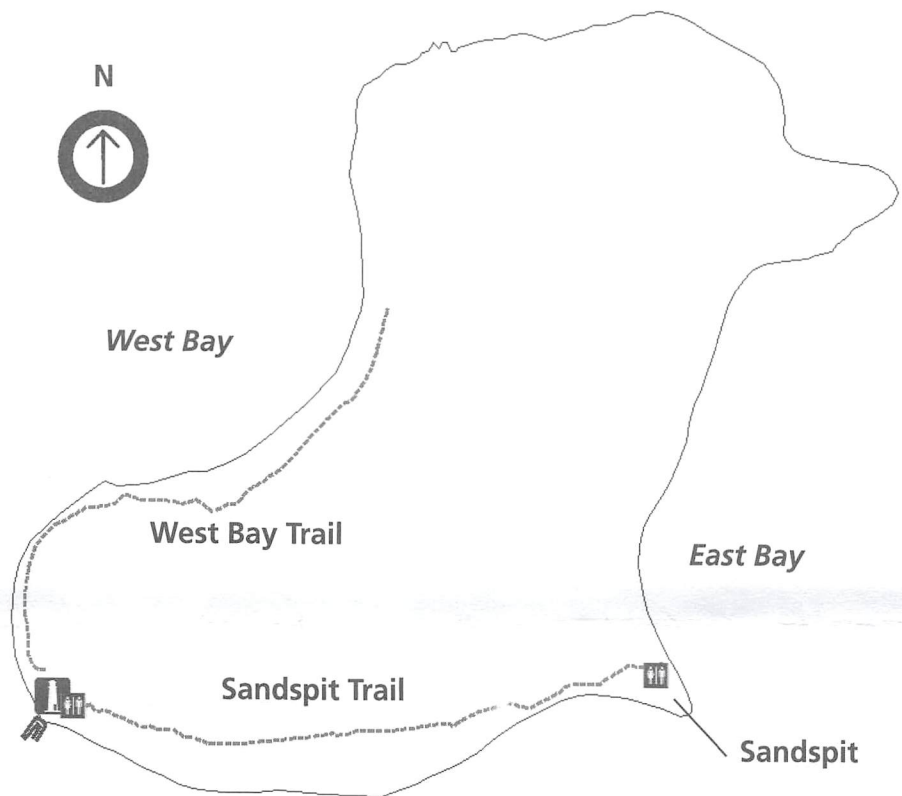
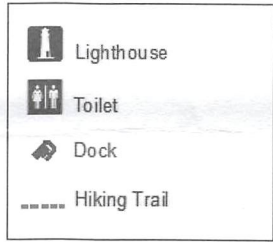
5/13 - Painting in signal and railing to dock.

5/18 - Painting outside and inside of lantern, also verandah floors.

This attention to regular maintenance ended when the Coast Guard automated the station in 1947.

Raspberry Island

Size - 295 acres



Trails

SANDSPIT TRAIL, 0.75 mi. long

This trail connects the light station with the beach on the southeast shore of the island. The trail was built in the early years of the light to link the station with a boathouse that was once located at the sandspit. Much of the trail passes through old growth forest where sugar maple, yellow birch, and balsam fir are the dominant tree species. Dense stands of Canada yew cover much of the forest understory.

WEST BAY TRAIL, 1.0 mi. long

This trail was probably established in 1921, when the Raspberry Island light keepers began maintaining the automated light on Sand Island. The trail allowed the keepers to hike to a point where they could see the Sand Island Light. The trail begins at the west edge of the light station grounds. It follows the shoreline and skirts the island's West Bay in route to a steep, clay bluff overlooking the island's rocky north shore.

Lighthouse Rehabilitation

Raspberry Island Light is the national lakeshore's most visited lighthouse, hosting thousands of people each year. In order to preserve the station, a \$1.4 million shoreline stabilization project in 2002 and 2003 provided rock walls, better drainage, and a revegetated slope to keep the fog signal building and lighthouse from sliding into the lake. A \$1.3 million

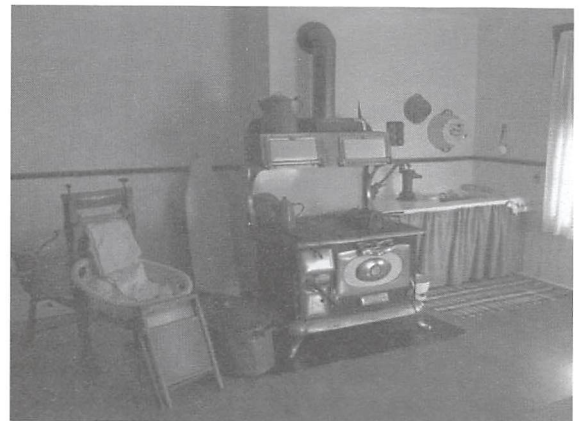
project to rehabilitate the lighthouse and keepers' quarters followed from 2005 to 2007. This work included foundation repairs, a new roof, restored windows and doors, and repairs to interior and exterior walls. The National Park Service fights a never-ending battle with the harsh environment to maintain all these historic buildings.

Recycling the Past

How can we keep alive the stories of the keepers and explain their connections to the broader community that they served? Once the lighthouse was rehabilitated, the National Park Service refurbished the lighthouse keeper's quarters as it may have been in the early 1920s. This helps park rangers tell the keepers' stories so visitors can better understand what life was like for the keepers and their families. A fee is charged for ranger-guided tours of the lighthouse that are available daily from 9 am to 4:30 pm, mid-June through mid-September.

Ongoing station rehabilitation efforts include the grounds and the other buildings and associated structures like the flagpole, swing, and birdhouses. Dedicated volunteers and park staff help plant and maintain the flower and vegetable gardens that, historically, were such an important part of the light station's landscape. The Friends of the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore assisted restoration efforts and spearheaded the rehabilitation of the Raspberry Island boat house. Please contact them at P.O. Box 1574, Bayfield, WI, 54814 if you wish to contribute to this effort.

Saving a lighthouse is recycling the past. It connects us to the past and helps form a bridge to the future. Anthropologist Mary Catherine Bateson wrote: "The past empowers the present..." Recycling our past is reviving it to the present...bringing history back to life! Rehabilitation of Raspberry Island Light Station is an ultimate recycling project.



The keeper's kitchen served not only as a center for cooking, but also washing and bathing.



The dining room may also have been used as a sewing room, home office, or place for Sunday worship.



Park staff and volunteers plant gardens in spring.

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