Land Light House,
Erie, Pennsylvania

HABS No. Pa.-517

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PHOTOGRAPHS,
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District No. 5-Pennsylvania

Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings

Historic American Buildings Survey,
Karl E. Morrison, District Officer
319 Marine Bank Bldg., Erie, Pennsylvania

LAND LIGHTHOUSE
Erie, Erie County, Pennsylvania

Owner.
City of Erie, Pennsylvania.

Date of Erection
1867.

Architect
Unknown.

Builder
United States Government.

Present Condition
Fair.

Number of Stories
48' 10" from ground.

Materials of Construction:
Berea sandstone, brick, sheet steel, cast iron, tile and wood.

Other Existing Records:
Erie County Histories as below, some state histories (Pennsylvania) newspapers of contemporary date and within the memory of the oldest residents.

Additional Data-Bibliography:
History of Erie County, Pennsylvania, Chicago, Warner Beers and Co. 1884.

A Twentieth Century History of Erie County, Pennsylvania-Chicago-1909, The Lewis Publishing Co.-John Miller, historian.

History of Erie County, Pennsylvania, 2 Vols. Historical Publishing Company 1925. Topeka--Indianapolis, by J. E. Reed (John Elmer).

History of Erie County, Pennsylvania. Philadelphia, Lippincott Co. 1861 by L. G. Sanford (Laura G.). Published by author and copyrighted by her in 1894.

Nelson's biographical dictionary and historical reference book of Erie County, Pennsylvania, Erie, 1896. Two-thirds of this book by Benjamin Whitman. From the press of Wilson, Humphryes and Co. Fourth St., Logansport, Indiana.

LAND LIGHTHOUSE
Erie, Erie County, Pennsylvania

The Land Lighthouse, as it is called to distinguish it from the lighthouses which once occupied the piers of the harbor entrance, is located on the mainland within the eastern limits of the city of Erie, Pennsylvania, in what is now known as Land Lighthouse Park. This lighthouse, with the residence, which stands about one hundred feet to the west of the light, has been a sentinel to those who sail Lake Erie and Presque Isle Bay, and a landmark to the residents of Erie, Pennsylvania since 1818.

It was the first light to be built on the Great Lakes by the government, and is located on a level spot of ground on a high bluff ceded by General John Kelso in 1818, opposite the entrance to the harbor of Erie, Pennsylvania. By an act passed April 2, 1811, "the occupancy and use of certain lands near Presqu'ile, not less than two or more than four acres, are ceded to the United States, for the purpose of erecting a lighthouse". (Sanford.)

There have been three structures, one succeeding the other. The first lighthouse built in 1818 was found to be sinking, so a new tower was built in 1858 of Milwaukee brick, but the foundation of this one also proved defective. On investigation the discovery was made that a stratum of quicksand below the foundation was causing the trouble, and in 1866 the second tower was replaced by the present tower made of Berea stone. The builders took no chances on this tower and to secure a solid foundation an excavation twenty feet deep was made. This took the line below the layer of quicksand. This excavation was filled with eight courses of solid oak timber twenty feet in length, twelve inches square. On top of the timber six feet of finely broken limestone was laid in Portland cement. On this bed solid courses of stone aggregating eight feet in thickness were laid in cement. A sum of nearly $40,000 was expended on this property before it was safe. Up to 1885, when the light was finally discontinued, the tower was surmounted by a lantern, the lens of which had been manufactured by L. Sauter and Son of Paris and cost $7,000 delivered in New York City. When the light was discontinued, the lantern was dismounted and tradition says that it was shipped to the eastern coast to be used in some other lighthouse. This light in Erie was in operation from 1818 until 1880, when, in spite of protests, it was discontinued and the property sold for $1,800 at a public sale to Myron Sanford, upon the recommendation of commander G. W. Howard, U. S. N. inspector of the tenth Lighthouse District.

The next session of Congress ordered the re-purchase of the property and re-establishment of the light. However, in 1885 it was finally discontinued but for many years care-takers were appointed to supervise the property, generally being Civil War Veterans and their families. The property is now owned by the city of Erie, Pennsylvania.

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The early light keepers were: Capt. John Bone 1818, Robert Kincaide 1833, Griffith Henton 1841, Eli Webster 1841, James W. Miles 1849, John Graham 1854, General James Fleming 1858, A. C. Landon 1856, John Goalding 1861, George Demond 1864, A. J. Fargo 1871, George W. Miller 1885 who served until the light was discontinued. It had a fixed white light which could be seen for seventeen nautical miles. Mineral oils were used in the lamp which was last exhibited December 26, 1899. Descendants of George Demond, a Civil War Veteran still reside in the city.

The Land Lighthouse is a squatty gray tower standing on a level piece of land elevated above the surrounding properties. Its height is 48' 10" from the ground, or 45' 4" from the water table. It is built of Berea sand stone lined with brick. It tapers from approximately 19' at the base to 14' at the top. The water table is 3' 6" above the ground and extends 2½" from the tower. Six feet from the top surrounding the tower is a sand-stone moulding projecting approximately 6".

The tower is pierced by six windows, one in the base, one at the first platform, one at the second platform and three at the top. The one at the second platform faces directly north, and is walled in the platform. All windows are double windows, the lower ones being 22" apart, the next higher being about 15" apart, the third highest being 8" apart. The window openings taper slightly downward and outward, the tops are level. The upper three are arched, topped by keystones and semi-circular mouldings, and are 40" high by 36" wide.

The balcony extends outward and has a diameter of 16'.

Inside of the tower 69 cast iron steps rise in a graceful curve, with two cast iron platforms artistically spaced, the first one 19' above the water table, the second one 16½' above the first one. A cast iron guide rail is in keeping with the other iron furnishings. The stairway is mortised into the wall 2½' in both tread and riser. The riser bolted to the step with five 3/8" bolts.

One foot above the floor in the tower itself three air vents are placed which continue on up to the top. The brick in the tower are keyed into the sandstone. There are 29 steps to the first platform, 25 steps to the second, and 10 more to the roof. The inside diameter of the tower is 8' for the entire height. There is a temporary roof on the tower with trap door openings. The floor of the tower has 10" x 10" tile laid on it.

To the south of the tower, as part of it, is a small building also made of Berea stone, which has a 10" x 10" cut gray stone 3/4" thick floor also. There is one window which faces the east commanding a wide range of vision along Lake Erie. This building is 8' 3" wide, outside, 5' wide

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inside measurement. Length 16' 3" and is 16' 5" high above the ground. It is separated from the tower by steel doors 7' high. A brick arched way 5' 8" long and 4' wide connects the building with the tower.

The steel doors into the tower are double doors, each one hanging on three hand-forged steel hinges, which are bolted to doors with six bolts on each hinge. The panels, style and rails consist of 1/8" thick sheet metal which is riveted on two 11/16" thick iron fillers, one under each style and rail. The sliding bolts holding the doors shut in the masonry are hand-forged 1" square steel, 27" long in the top bolt and the bottom one 12" long, vertical bolting. Two doors are hung in the steel frame mortised in the brick work. A steel arch 18" in height closes the opening at the top. The arch is about 110 degrees.

To the west is the entrance doorway reached by a flight of three stone steps. On each side of these steps are stone stoops of the native Berea stone. This doorway is of exceptional beauty. The door frame is of Berea stone in three parts. The parts to right and left of the door are banded stone 7' 1" in height 10' 3/4" wide and 10 3/4" deep containing three mouldings all tooled and stippled. The top is also Berea stone moulded and tooled with scroll work on both sides of the date carved in large size 1867. Chisel marks on all of the door frame work. A wooden roof covers this annex. The doors are double doors of wood, two panels in each part opened by a knob and accompanying hardware.

Annie Scott Baxter

Approved

Karl E. Morrison Dist. Off.
Oct 5, 1936.

TW 4/14/37