

Lighthouses in Upper Canada, 1803 - 1840

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Au cours des trente-sept ans qui se sont écoulés entre 1803 et l'union du Haut- et du Bas-Canada, la province du Haut-Canada a vu l'établissement de seize dispositifs d'éclairage publics essentiels à la sécurité des « navires, bateaux, radeaux et autres embarcations », ainsi qu'à leurs passagers, équipages et cargaisons. Les phares du Haut-Canada permettent d'examiner comment une assemblée législative coloniale relativement nouvelle a traité de questions de politique gouvernementale et d'administration. À quel point les législateurs du Haut-Canada ont-ils été réceptifs aux demandes d'éclairage public? Dans quelle mesure leurs commissions ont-elles dirigé efficacement leur construction et le gouvernement a-t-il supervisé leur exploitation ultérieure?

Introduction

In the thirty-seven years between 1803 and the union of Upper and Lower Canada, the upper province saw sixteen public lights established as essential to the safety of “vessels, boats, rafts and other craft,” their passengers, crews and cargoes. The lighthouses in Upper Canada provide an opportunity to examine how a comparatively new colonial legislative assembly dealt with issues of public policy and administration. Just how responsive were Upper Canada’s legislators to the requests for public lights? How effective were their commissions in directing their construction and the government in overseeing their subsequent operation? What problems did they leave to their successors in the united Province of Canada?

Much of the literature on North American lights is focused on a succession of heritage buildings, the technology deployed in them, the people who cared for the lights, and ongoing efforts to preserve them and present them as tourist destinations. Most of this is written for the visitor and not the scholar.¹

¹ These range from general guidebooks like Larry and Patricia Wright, *Great Lakes Lighthouses Encyclopedia* (Erin, ON: Boston Mills Press, 2006) and Wes Oleszewski, *Great Lakes Lighthouses: American & Canadian: A Comprehensive Directory/Guide to over 300 Great Lakes Lighthouses* (Gwinn, MI: Avery Color Studios, Inc., 2nd ed. 2012) to regional guides like Andrea Gutsche, Barbara Chisholm, Russell Floren, *Alone In The Night: Lighthouses of Georgian Bay, Manitoulin Island and the North Channel* (Toronto, ON: Lynx Images, 2003) to individual studies like Mary Weeks-Mifflin & Ray Mifflin, *Harbour Lights: Burlington Bay* (Erin, ON: Boston Mills Press, 1989) and Ronald Tiessen and Irena Knezevic, *A Brief History of the Pelee Island Lighthouse* (Pelee Island, ON: Pelee Island heritage Centre, 1999). Among the few on the scholarly