

Gull Island Lighthouse

The name "Gull Light" or the full original name of "Gull Island Lighthouse" may not be familiar today to most people. In times past, that was the local and the correct name for the Lake Ontario lighthouse that stood on Peter Rock, a mile from shore and a little more than half way from Cobourg to Port Hope.

The earliest record of the area (1791) shows a peninsula sweeping from the shore in front of township lot numbers 26 and 27, curving in a south-westerly direction and ending at what is known today as "Peter Rock". A second peninsula reached out south-easterly from Gages Creek. The two enclosed a big bay at the western end of Hamilton Township.

Next is recorded an island a mile out from shore, containing three trees. Finally there is a limestone rock, just submerged below the surface of the lake. With a long narrow rocky shoal extending easterly some 100 yards. This shoal was a menace to shipping.

The Cobourg Star of April 22, 1835, announced that £1000 had been passed by the Legislative Council and sanctioned by His Excellency, for the purpose of erecting a lighthouse between Cobourg and Port Hope. The Cobourg Star of June 21st,

1837, gives a lengthy story about the details for the construction of Gull Island Lighthouse. The commissioners appointed to superintend the work were Messrs. W. Souden, J.T. William and Wm. Owston. Proposals for the construction of the lighthouse were being called for, in order to start the work.

The commissioners were to receive tenders until noon of July 1st, 1837 and they were to be opened at the Exchange Coffee House in Port Hope.

The contract was to be completed by October 31st, 1837. Some of the specifications are of interest: The lighthouse tower was to be circular, 28 feet in diameter at the base, with slight concave walls rising upward 50 feet. The foundation was to be excavated 18 inches into the solid limestone rock. The base consisted of solid stone work 8 feet in height. The external surface required hard and durable quality cut stone with the walls two feet thick. The final top of the structure would rise 70 feet above the foundation. The contractors were required to supply, at their own expense, all boats, scows, wharfs, and necessary machinery for the completion of the work.

The Cobourg Star of May 25th, 1842, carried another interesting item: "To Experienced Contrac-

tors. - Tenders will be received at this office, until the 6th day of June next, for the repairs of Gull Island Lighthouse, on Lake Ontario, according to plans and specifications to be seen at this office, or with N.H. Baird, Esq., Cobourg, prior to that date."

"Tenders to be addressed.



"Tenders, Gull Island Light House," and directed to the Secretary of the Board of Works Office, Kingston," 14th of May, 1842.

An extract by Mr. Killaly, from the report of the Board of Works and published in the Cobourg Star of March 5th, 1845, reads: "Between the ports of Cobourg and Port Hope, a distance of about seven miles the reef called Gull Island is situated, on which a light house is erected. It is about a mile and a half from

shore, distant from the former four miles, and from Port Hope three miles. The reef is of great extent, but with little water upon it, not exceeding two or three feet for a considerable length. It is crescent shaped, with its horns towards the shore, between which and the reef, there is, I am informed, good an-

and enlargements are being made at Gull Lighthouse by a force of workmen in charge of Mr. P.T. Brewel, of Ottawa. (The lighthouse is being practically re-built and will be re-painted. Additional accommodation for the lighthouse keeper is also being provided. In future, on account of the ferry entering Cobourg harbour, the light will burn all winter, as well as during the summer.

Another note in the Cobourg World of Friday November 15, 1907 tells of Mr. Robert Roddick, who for many years was caretaker of Gull Lighthouse, and who was superannuated by the Dominion Government and received a superannuation fund of \$400 per year. Mr. James Roddick, a brother of the former keeper, received the appointment at \$500 per year.

A few years later the lighthouse was equipped with an automatic light and the resident keeper was no longer required. In the early 1920's this writer visited the lighthouse a few times.

In more recent years, with the termination of commercial shipping to the Cobourg harbour, the stone lighthouse was removed, and the platform on Peter Rock is now equipped with an automatic light at a much lower level than the former lighthouse.

chorage. If this description is a true one, the construction of a breakwater on it would be simple and attend with little expense; and if effective, would create a valuable harbour of refuge, about midway up the lake, and would serve as an outer harbour, or a safe offing for the ports of Cobourg and Port Hope."

Coming in to this century an item appearing in the Cobourg World of Friday July 26th, 1907 is of interest: "Extensive repairs