

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

Fisgard Lighthouse NHS and Keeper's Dwelling

Fisgard Island
Colwood, British Columbia

The Fisgard Lighthouse and Dwelling were constructed in 1860. The design has been attributed to Joseph Pemberton and John Wright. Alterations occurred in the early 1960s to restore the dwelling exterior to its appearance around 1862 and to enhance the interior of the house for public accessibility. The dwelling is used for interpretation displays, while the lighttower maintains its original function. Parks Canada is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 96-96.

Reasons for Designation

The Fisgard Lighthouse and Keeper's Dwelling complex is designated Classified for its environmental significance and architectural importance and also for its historical associations.

The tower and dwelling are the defining feature of the entrance to Esquimalt Harbour. The tower is the most prominent navigational landmark for vessels passing in the adjacent Strait of Juan de Fuca. The lightstation is very well known in the region and is widely promoted in tourist literature.

The round, smoothly tapered brick tower has an elegant profile with fine proportions, and it retains its original lantern and weathervane. It is integrated with a dwelling which complements the tower and creates a well-scaled design. Gothic Revival influences are seen in the pointed-arch windows and brick corbeling below the lantern platform. The high quality craftsmanship is reflected in these details and in the custom design of the cast iron stairs.

The tower and dwelling are associated with the theme of providing aids to coastal navigation. The tower is the oldest and first pre-Confederation lighthouse on the west coast. It is associated with the theme of safe shipping in the Strait of Juan de Fuca during the early developmental stages of Vancouver Island and British Columbia.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Fisgard Lighthouse and Keeper's Dwelling resides in the overall massing, profile, proportions, construction materials and details, and site relationships.

The tower is a tall, tapered round shaft supporting a multi-faceted lantern which is built into a rectangular two-storey gable-roofed dwelling. The simple massing and footprint, and the clear delineation of two separate forms, reflect the dual functional purpose of the structure, and the clarity of this expression should be maintained. The tower profile with the projecting platform and striking brick corbeling below are also integral to the character of the structure, as are the proportions and scale of the lantern. The dwelling's chimney with its distinctive rounded cap is a unique feature to be maintained.

Both the tower and dwelling are of simply detailed brick construction, painted at the dwelling, while the tower was painted and stucco clad at an early date for ease of maintenance and operational reasons. Granite is used for the lighttower base and the upper cap supporting the lantern, reflecting the high quality construction. The use of brick and granite reflects the initial concern for fireproofing and durability. Visual interest is created by the shapes of the windows and doors, the shutters and projecting sills, the metal and glass lantern and the metal weathervane. These features are character-defining and should be maintained.

The 1960s restoration included windows, doors, roofing and shutters, with all designs and materials based on the evidence of early photographs. The renovations simplified the interior layouts to meet interpretation requirements. The original entry and stairwell were maintained but a new stair adjacent to the entrance was added to meet interpretation and functional access requirements. The tower layout includes a noteworthy cast iron staircase which should be maintained.

The prominence of the lighttower derives from its setting on a rock outcrop. The simple, direct relationship of the lighttower and dwelling to the site should be maintained. Any addition to the setting should respect the timber vocabulary of the existing network of boardwalks and railings.

For further guidance, please refer to the *FHBRO Code of Practice*.

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