

Munising Range Lights

Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



In July 2002, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore acquired the front and rear Munising Range Lights in a transfer made possible by the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act. The Lakeshore was one of the first parks to acquire lighthouses under this act which identified almost 300 properties for transfer. The Act provided a mechanism for the disposal of historic lighthouses at no cost to the receiving entity. Prior to the transfer, the station was falling into a state of disrepair through non-use. Since receiving the property, the Lakeshore has invested nearly \$10,000 to bring the building into a useable condition.

The Station building is being used as office space for staff from Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore housing four permanent and five seasonal employees of the Science and Natural Resources Division. The building is open to visiting scientists, researchers and any others doing business with the National Park Service.

Future plans include wayside exhibits on the station's history and restoration of the station buildings (keeper's quarters, front tower, rear tower, garage, oil storage building) to the early 1900's appearance. To accomplish this an Historic Structure Report and a Cultural Landscape Plan are needed, as well as funds to restore historic siding, reroof, repoint masonry and upgrade utilities. Total planning, rehabilitation and restoration funds needed are approximately \$395,000. Without these funds, historic preservation of buildings is not possible.

Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore interprets the stories associated with the U.S. Lighthouse Service, U.S. Life Saving Service, and the U.S. Coast Guard. Current facilities within the park at Sand Point, Au Sable Point and Grand Marais are dedicated to this history. The Munising Range Lights are part of that history as well. These facilities date from 1874 at Au Sable through the 1960-1975 Coast Guard era. The National Park Service at Pictured Rocks is a logical caretaker for the Munising Range Lights given the mission of the park and its current operations.

Steamer Herman Hettler

The Munising Range Lights were built in 1908 to aid vessels navigating through the narrow passage east and south of Grand Island into the main harbor, often referred to as Munising Bay. It is an active aid to navigation denoted as LLNR 14575.

In 1907, Congress appropriated \$15,000 for construction of the station. Plans called for two steel towers, the front range light to be situated on low land close to the shore and the rear range on the hillside overlooking Munising Bay. Metal work for the towers was erected by the Champion Iron Company of Kenton, Ohio.

In addition to the towers, a 35 foot by 20 foot frame and brick keepers dwelling was constructed. This design was replicated at the Harbor of Refuge Keepers Quarters in Grand Marais (also managed by the Lakeshore).

The front range tower stands at 58 feet and the rear range light 33 feet, their locations providing focal planes of 79 feet and 107 feet respectively. Both lanterns were outfitted with 23 inch Adams and Westlake red reflector lights, powered by incandescent electric bulbs. The lights produced 35,000 candlepower, visible on the lake for 19 miles. The lights became operational for the first time on October 30, 1908. Today, 300 mm red acrylic lenses provide the lights shining out over Munising Bay.

Besides the one in Munising and the one in Grand Marais, the first location to use this design was built for the keeper of the Pilot Island Range lights in the St. Mary's River in 1904. The other was built as an assistant's dwelling at Pointe aux Barques on Lake Huron in 1908. While trim details vary, it is clear that the same plan was used in all four.

