

Ludington, Michigan

Lighthouses

Big Sable Point Light

Originally called Grande Pointe au Sable, the Big Sable Point Lighthouse was the first light station constructed in this area. Completed in 1867, the keeper illuminated the tower for the first time on the first of November of that year.

The tower, which is 112 feet tall, was built 500 feet from the shore of the lake. One of the tallest towers on Lake Michigan, its light was visible up to 20 miles out on the water. Until a road was constructed in the 1930s, the light station was accessible only by boat or via the beach.

The brick tower was partially encased in steel cladding in 1900. At this time, the wide black band was painted on the tower, making it a distinctive day mark. In 1905, the remainder of the tower was clad in steel, and in 1916, the lantern room was also painted black.

The light tower, which houses a 130-step winding stairway, is connected by a covered passage to the keeper's dwelling, a rectangular frame building with a cabled roof, measuring 229 feet by 63 feet, built to house two keepers and their families. From 1867 until 1968, keepers and their families lived and worked at the lighthouse. In 1968, the light was fully automated and keepers were no longer needed.

In 1987, the Big Sable Point Lighthouse Keepers Association was formed and the first of many restoration projects began. Under the stewardship of the Association, the lighthouse has been completely restored and stands as an important example of the role that lighthouses played in Michigan's maritime history. Volunteer keepers now maintain the lighthouse giving daily tours from May through October. Six volunteers live for two weeks at a time in the keepers quarters and work daily—leading tours, running a video or helping at the gift shop. More than 100 people volunteer each season.

Big Sable Point Lighthouse dwells inside Ludington State Park and is listed on both the state and national registers of historic places.

Ludington North Breakwater Light

Situated three miles south of the Big Sable Point and 19 miles north of the Little Sable Point, it became increasingly clear during the mid 1800's that the Ludington shoreline needed to be lit. In 1870, Congress appropriated \$6,000 to build a lighthouse on the south side of the Ludington Harbor Channel. It was first lit in 1871. In 1914, with the Million Dollar Harbor improvements, it was moved to the north breakwater on a newly constructed crib. In 1924, the present structure was built on the same crib. It is a square pyramidal building, steel framed and encased in riveted steel plates. The tower is 57 feet high with a focal plane of 55 feet.

The North Breakwater Light flashes its beam that is visible for 19 miles over the water guiding watercraft of all sizes safely into the harbor.

Contact Information

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