

OIL ROOM SCRIPT

Welcome all visitors. Share the history of the lighthouse and the job of the lighthouse keeper using the pictures posted. The visitors will then climb to the top when the tower is clear.

Each of the rooms on the first floor is identified with a description placed on the wall for your review as you visit the house. Encourage visitors to visit the Lake Room to see the Fourth Order Fresnel lens before the climb if there is time.

Begin the Script for the OIL ROOM. This lighthouse opened July 12, 1873, 144 years ago. You are in the OIL ROOM, so named because this is where the oil/kerosene was brought each night to fill the lamps, before they were carried to the top of the tower every three to four hours.

Picture #1- Keeper Waldo

The picture is of Charles Waldo, the first of 9 lighthouse keepers at the Presque Isle Lighthouse. In 1873, he wrote in his journal “This is a new station and a light will be exhibited for the first time tonight. There was one visitor.”

Waldo served as the keeper for 7 years. He earned \$520 a year. He was very isolated here because there was no road until 1927. He lived with his wife and two daughters, the second daughter was born, at the PILH. All of the ships on the waters of Lake Erie relied on the keeper to have the light shining every night to provide the signal alerting them that they were near the shores of Presque Isle.

The jetty was added to stabilize the shore line in 1886. It was extended out into lake 400 feet to allow for boats to deliver supplies, like the kerosene needed to fuel the light.

Picture #2 - Short Tower

The height of the tower in the first picture was only 40 feet high. The light from the tower did NOT shine far enough out over the water.

Picture #3 - Tall Tower

After 23 years, in 1896, the tower was raised 17 feet, 4 inches, for a total of 57 feet, 4 inches, as seen in the bottom picture. Then the beacon shined over 13.5 nautical miles out onto Lake Erie. (Look for the sign at the third landing, when you climb to see where the addition to the tower started.)

Notice the brick tower is square on the outside. You will see circular brick formation on the inside as you climb the 78 iron steps. The open iron stairs were made in Pittsburgh, PA and shipped via the Erie Canal.

As you climb the 78 steps there are six landings to let you catch your breath and see the view. Notice how the perspective of the Oil Shed changes as you climb higher.

Picture #4 - White Tower

Notice the bricks were painted white in 1899. Travelers, on the Lake Erie waters during the daytime, could easily identify the location. This feature is referred to as a “daymark.” The

design and the color of the tower are different for every lighthouse, whether it is on the Great Lakes or the oceans.

Picture #5 – Andrew and Mary Shaw.

As the longest serving keeper at the lighthouse from 1901 to 1927. Andrew Shaw worked from sunset to sunrise (the night shift). He made three to four trips, up the 78 steps in the tower, during the night, carrying a lamp full oil (a pint-plus of kerosene) to the top of the tower to replace the previous one that had been burning in order to keep the light shining all night.

In the tower he would set the oil lamp inside the Fresnel lens. (You will learn about the power of the lens at the *top* of the tower.) An actual 4th order Fresnel lens is in the Lake Room. It is similar to the one that was in the top of the Presque Isle Lighthouse. (Ask visitors if they have seen the lens in the Lake Room.)

At sunrise, the keeper would clean all of the oil lamps and trim the wicks to get them ready for the next night. He would repeat the routine every day and night during the shipping season from April through November.

Picture #6 - Fog Signal House and # 7 the Old Foundation

If a storm moved in and brought heavy fog, travelers could not see the beacon from the tower shining out over the water at night nor the white tower's daymark during the day. It was then the time to sound the *fog signal*, warning all mariners that they were near the arm of the peninsula, and should use caution to avoid running into shallower waters near the shoreline.

The life-saving service required boiled water to fill the steam engines. The steam was released through a 10-inch steam whistle, giving a 5 second blast, followed by 25 seconds of silence. That sound let mariners know they were near the peninsula, even though visibility prevented them from seeing the light or the tower's daymark.

The fog signal house was located southeast of the lighthouse. Only the foundation remains today as shown in the picture. There is room to pull off of the road to visit the site.

Repeat: Light keepers provided a very important service to the people traveling on the Great Lakes. Keepers were required to keep a daily journal of the weather and their activities at the lighthouse. On Oct. 3, 1910, Andrew Shaw wrote: "wind south, light and clear. Absent from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m." That information meant it was a clear day on Presque Isle. Andrew went to bed and slept during the day, so he could work all night. More entries from Shaw's journal can be found in the Lake Room.

Picture # 8 - Pictures of Board Walk and # 9 Sidewalk Trail

When keepers and their families had to go to the doctors, shopping, school, or to church, they walked 1.5 miles on the "old plank walk" of 14,400 feet of white pine to the boat house. They would lower the boat into the water and row across the bay. Remember no road at lighthouse till 1927!

In 1925 the wooden planks were removed and replaced with concrete that is still there today and called the "Sidewalk Trail. You can walk the trail to Misery Bay today, but the boathouse is gone.

The keeper's job at Presque Isle Lighthouse ended when electricity replaced the Fresnel kerosene lamp by a automated light. At the top, you will learn about the electric light used in the tower today. The PI Lighthouse is still a working aid to navigation.

Picture #10 - Picture of the cars

In 1927, a big change came when the road was built along the north lakeside to the lighthouse. As you can see, the road brought many visitors to the beach. One day might have brought more visitors than were received in over a year before the road. Over 4 million visitors that come to Presque Isle State Park every year!

Close the presentation with a short explanation of the three local lights if there is time. If no time, show them the brochure they can get in the Lake Rm. Please watch the time of 5 to 8 minutes for the oil room presentation.

Picture #11 – Presque Isle Lighthouse will be restored to the mid-late 1920s in the next 3-5 years. Notice all of the changes that occurred to the grounds in Spring 2017: lawn, tight board fence, sidewalks, flag pole.

*Picture # 12 -Erie Land Lighthouse, built in 1818, was the **first** lighthouse on the Great Lakes. The beacon from the Land Lighthouse could not be seen by many of the mariners on Lake Erie, because the eastward profile of the peninsula obstructed the light. The Land Lighthouse was built 3 times, and was decommissioned in 1899.*

The Presque Isle Lighthouse was constructed on the arm of the peninsula to provide the needed signal. The Land Lighthouse is only open for special events, a couple times a year, but you can visit the grounds and read the history boards. The keeper's house is privately owned.

Picture #13 - The North Pier Light, was built in 1830 as a wooden structure that was destroyed when hit by a schooner. It was rebuilt in 1858, with steel plates shipped from France. It is a metal 34-foot high tower and is still a working aid to navigation, designating where the lake and PI Bay are connected by the channel. The light once used a 4th-order Fresnel similar to the one at PILH. The Fresnel lens was removed in 1995 and resides at the Erie Maritime Museum on the second floor.

It is not open to the public, but you can walk along the North Pier to the visit the light. Looking across the lake diagonally, the Land Lighthouse's top third can be seen in the tree tops on the east side of Erie. *Refer to the park map.*

Take Questions, if there is time, while you wait for the tower to clear, or share some of the dates on the TIMELINE found in the desk

Remind visitors: *“Be careful on the steps and enjoy the view”.* Ask to be advised by the last visitor to descend so the next group can begin its climb.

5/27/17