



Keep the Light Shining

December 2023



Letter from the President

2023 has been a very busy and productive year for the Port Austin Reef Light Association, and 2024 is shaping up to be just as busy.

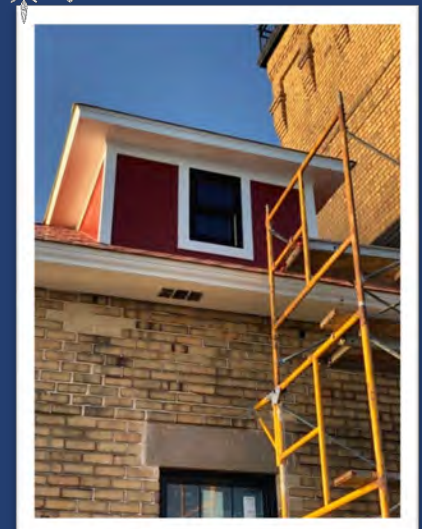
So, why have things been busy this year? We were fortunate to receive a large MDOT grant at the end of 2022 which gave us the opportunity to finally begin the final phase of our group's ultimate goal and plan: the historical preservation of our facility to its former glory, and to eventually create a "lightkeeper's program" to allow the general public to stay overnight at the lighthouse and get a taste of what the original light keepers experienced over the years.

ICC Commonwealth, a company that specializes in historic preservation and is based in New York, was awarded the grant bid and began work on the exterior of the building in the spring of this year.

The extensive list of projects that the ICC crew completed includes the exterior masonry repair, installation of all new windows, repair of west facing steam room door including a new lintel, installation of fog horn dormer per original design, concrete base patching, repair of stairs, chimney stack repair and the watch room door fabrication & installation. This exterior work was all accomplished by September 1st.

Since the grant only included exterior projects, PARLA hired ICC to oversee all of the interior work that also needed to be done. This was a huge undertaking on our part, because all of the funding needed to come from US. We decided that the time was right, and we proceeded with the plans. So as soon as the exterior was completed, the interior projects began. With less than two months of decent weather remaining, the crew tackled as many projects as they could. By mid-October, the wind and waves put an end to work for the season, and ICC made plans to return in the spring of 2024 to finish up.

An extraordinary amount of work was achieved over the summer – yet there is still a great deal of work remaining. This includes painting and totally refurbishing floors, walls and ceilings in a multitude of rooms: the lamp room, the watch room, three bedrooms/office, the galley, the steam room, bathroom, and shower room. Lamp house panes need to be replaced, new lighting fixtures need to be installed, green energy, plumbing and electrical need to be completed, wooden staircases need



replacement, and the east crane needs repair. A brand-new Fresnel lens (replica) is being created.

On top of all of the construction and restoration going on, PARLA will be working on gathering furnishings for all of these rooms (1930s era). If you, or someone you know, has anything that might be appropriate for that time period, please contact us! Members will also be planning and building an historical display area with information boards and artifacts.

A special thank you to: the ICC crew who worked hard on all of the projects they did so far at the lighthouse, and for those who provided much needed support; for those who provided financial assistance, especially The Glancy Foundation and the Smith Family; and the PARLA Board members, who assisted in the transportation of crew, supplies, tools and equipment, and other miscellaneous tasks. Zimmerman Electric and Thumb Cooling and Heating will be working on the installation of electricity and plumbing in the spring.

Okay, this is a lot of information to take in. It has been overwhelming or us also. For PARLA to take on such a major project was (and still is) a big risk. The cost of the combined exterior and interior projects totals nearly \$1.5 million dollars.

The exterior projects covered by the MDOT grant came to \$405,000 with PARLA paying a match of \$102,000 from funds we had raised through donations.

The interior project budget is \$885,000, and to date PARLA has completed and paid for \$485,000. BUT... We still need to raise \$300,000 by next summer to complete the project.

HOW CAN YOU HELP????

Any amount will help us reach our goal. The Port Austin Reef Light Association is a recognized 501(c) (3) organization. All donations are tax deductible.

Thank you in advance for your help on this decades-long "work in progress."

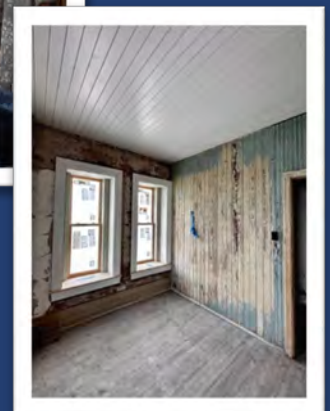
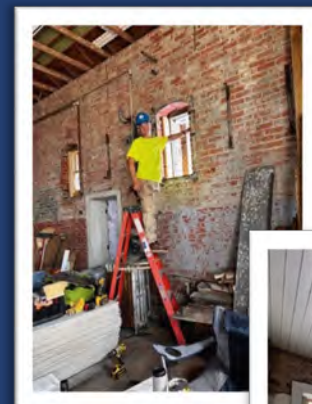
Help "KEEP THE LIGHT SHINING"



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A Brief History of the Port Austin Reef Light

The Port Austin Reef Lighthouse – that familiar structure a few miles off the shore of Port Austin – sits quietly on the reef to warn off boaters from the shallow waters and rocky bottom. The lighthouse has been, and continues to be, an important aid to navigation in Lake Huron ever since the light first shone over 150 years ago.

After a fire destroyed the original wooden structure, a new structure was erected of bricks in 1899. The base was re-configured in the 1930s, leaving the lighthouse looking similar to how it looks now. The light was automated in the 1950s. Once the lighthouse was no longer under the watchful care of lightkeepers, a series of events happened over the next three decades to compromise the facility. Many people (including both curious visitors and careless intruders) explored the building – often leaving doors and windows open and sometimes vandalizing or stealing items. Between vandals and thieves, and thousands of birds nesting, extensive deterioration ensued.

By the early 1980s, the Coast Guard declared the lighthouse a health and safety hazard and ordered the structure to be decommissioned and eventually scheduled for demolition. A “light pole” would be its replacement.

By the mid-1980s a small group of volunteers made an effort to save the lighthouse by cleaning up, making it safe, and securing it from the elements, through the creation of the Port Austin Reef Light Association. The group obtained a 30-year lease from the federal government to maintain the building and, eventually, in 2013 they were awarded the deed to the lighthouse.

PARLA has worked hard to keep the building maintained and preserved in good condition for the past 35 years.

Donate today to
Keep the Light Shining!

[Donate via Website](#)

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