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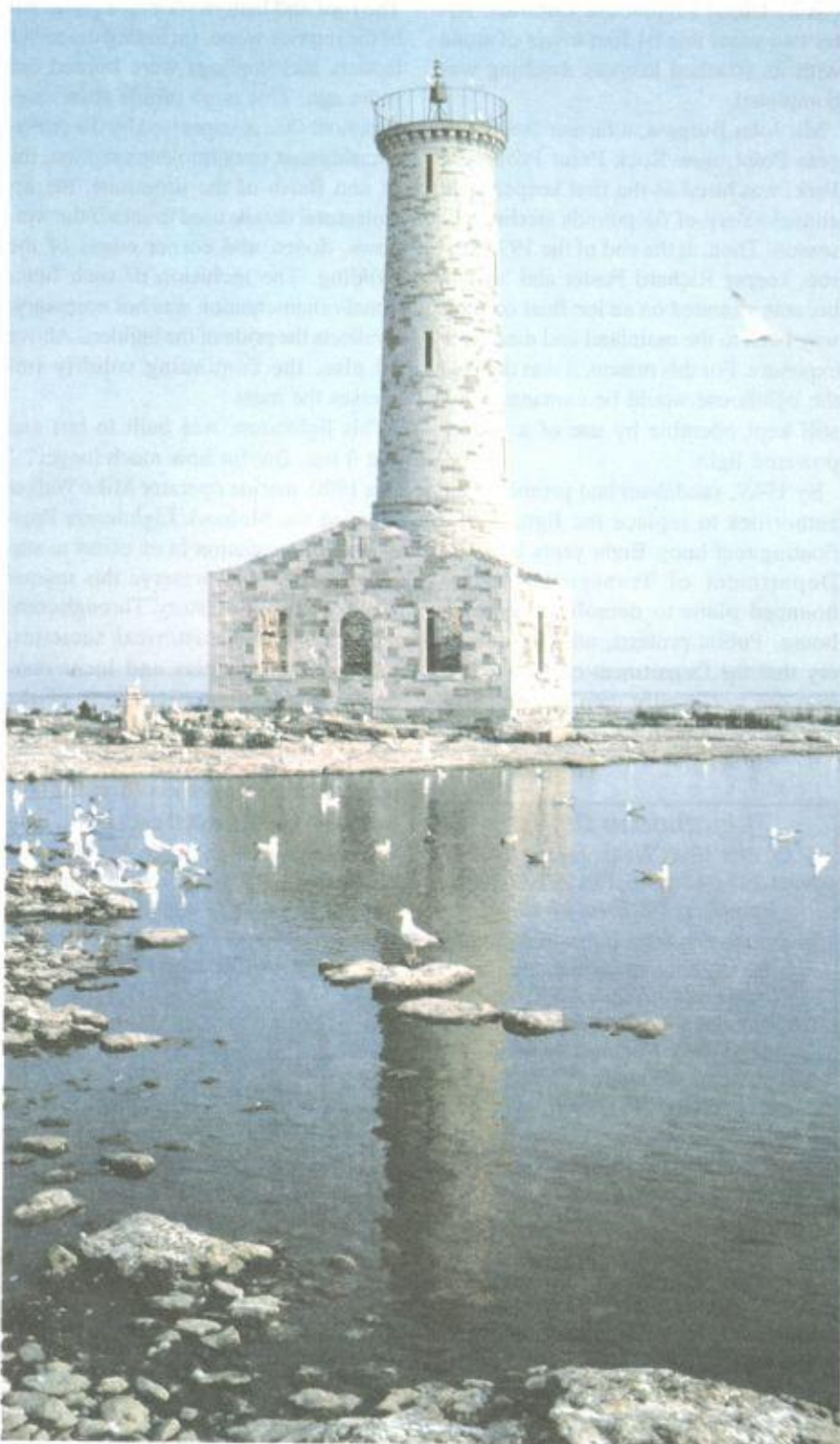


MOHAWK ISLAND LIGHT

Doomsday List Lighthouse

Edited by Wayne Sapulski

After only a little exploration of the Great Lakes, an enthusiast soon comes to realize that there are many treasures to be discovered and savored tucked away in remote corners of the lakes. Such a place is the Mohawk (formerly Gull) Island which lies in the Canadian waters of Lake Erie a little less than two miles east of Port Maitland, Ontario. In and of itself, there is not much to recommend this island. It is small, barely two acres in size, rocky, almost flat, and generally bare of vegetation. With a good sea running, much of the place probably goes awash. During the mild seasons of the year, there is barely enough land high and dry for the island to serve as a bird sanctuary overseen by the Canadian Wildlife Service and off limits to visitors during nesting period, April 1 to August 1. Visitors to the island will feel as if they stepped onto the set from Alfred Hitchcock's movie 'The Birds'. Anywhere one cares to walk, birds will have to move and they usually go up. Caution is well advised. However, a visit *continued on next page*



In this issue . . .

Lighthouse Digest photo contest winners announced!

Our front cover is the First Prize winner in our Second Annual Photo Contest. The complete photo, shown here, was taken by Mr. Wayne Sapulski of Allen Park, Michigan.

Congratulations on winning our contest and thank you for the information for the story about this deteriorating lighthouse.

continued from previous page
is well worth the effort in order to see first hand one of the most unique lighthouses found anywhere.

In 1846 a contractor, John L. Brown of Thorold was awarded the Mohawk (Gull) Island Lighthouse Contract. After two years this 64 foot tower of stone with its attached keepers dwelling was completed.

Mr. John Burgess, a farmer from Burgess Point, now Rock Point Provincial Park, was hired as the first keeper at an annual salary of 65 pounds sterling per season. Then, at the end of the 1932 season, keeper Richard Foster and his son became stranded on an ice float on their way back to the mainland and died from exposure. For this reason, it was decided the lighthouse would be unmanned, but still kept operable by use of a battery powered light.

By 1969, vandalism had promoted the authorities to replace the light with a floating reef buoy. Eight years later, the Department of Transportation announced plans to demolish the lighthouse. Public protests, and the discovery that the Department of Transportation did not legally own the property, saved the lighthouse.

Looking at the Mohawk Island Lighthouse, it immediately becomes apparent that 146 years of exposure to Lake Erie has done less damage than more recent human vandalism. Today, it is a ruin, a hollow, free standing masonry structure. The roof and lantern room are gone. All of the interior wood, including the tower ladders and landings were burned out years ago. This is no rubble stone construction. One is impressed by the craftsmanship that went into construction, the fit and finish of the limestone, the architectural details used to set off the windows, doors, and corner edges of the building. The inclusion of such functional ornamentation was not necessary; it reflects the pride of the builders. Above all else, the continuing solidity impresses the most.

This lighthouse was built to last and last it has. But for how much longer?

In 1990, marina operator Mike Walker founded the Mohawk Lighthouse Preservation Association in an effort to stabilize, repair and preserve this unique piece of maritime history. Through communication with historical societies, government agencies and local residents, many interesting facts of the island's maritime history have been uncovered. For more information on the progress of the restoration effort and how to donate badly needed assistance, contact: Mohawk Lighthouse Preservation Association, RR #2, Lowbanks Ontario, Canada NOA 1KO 905-774-1229

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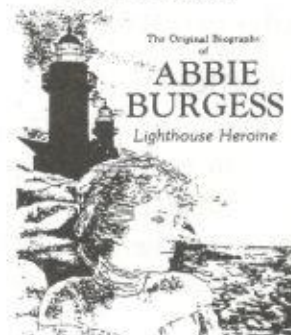
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