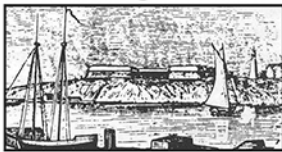


1

1822: Oswego's First Lighthouse



This drawing of Oswego Harbor looking east shows Oswego's first lighthouse (circled), near Fort Ontario.

On August 6, 1821 John M. Canfield signed a contract for the construction of Oswego's first lighthouse and its associated keepers dwelling in partnership with Danial Warren and William Cobb of Rochester, NY. The Oswego Lighthouse was octagonal and of stone construction and was topped with a glass and copper birdcage lantern. The keepers dwelling (still in existence on the grounds of Fort Ontario), was of similar stone construction and originally contained just two rooms. In 1837 Oswego's second lighthouse was constructed, and in 1841 the first Oswego lighthouse was sold and later dismantled in 1854. The keepers dwelling became the post hospital for newly re-garrisoned Fort Ontario.



While photography did not exist during the days of Oswego's first lighthouse, this 1870s photo of the Genesee Lighthouse in Rochester, NY was of the same style and also built in 1822.

The keepers dwelling of Oswego's first lighthouse. It is still in existence today on the grounds of Fort Ontario.

**2**

1837: Oswego Harbor Lighthouse

With the anticipated completion of the Oswego Canal in 1828, the US Army Corps of Engineers began to improve Oswego Harbor with new breakwaters on the west-side. In 1833, Lieutenant Col. of Engineers Joseph Totton recommended the 1822 lighthouse be replaced with a new light on the new breakwater. On June 30, 1834 Congress appropriated funding for construction of Oswego's second lighthouse which was first lit on July 15, 1837. Below, an image of the lighthouse between 1876 and 1906.



Between 1852 and 1855, the foundation of the Oswego Harbor Lighthouse was rebuilt, and a new 4th Order Fresnel Lens was installed. In 1869, the Lighthouse was rebuilt increasing its height from 45 ft. to 69 ft. and a larger 3rd Order Fresnel Lens was added. In 1906, a square cast iron oil storage house was erected at the lighthouse for safe storage of the kerosene fuel. The 1837 Oswego Harbor Lighthouse was decommissioned in 1917, and later dismantled in 1927. Seen below, a post-1906 postcard of the recently refurbished lighthouse.

**3**

1881: Oswego Breakwater Beacon



On July 11, 1870 congress approved a plan for the construction of a roughly 1 mile long outer breakwater for Oswego Harbor's west-side. An octagonal iron tower, manufactured by West Point Cold Springs Foundry, replaced the inner pier's mast light in 1877. That same iron beacon was relocated and placed on a crib adjacent to the new outer breakwater on October 17, 1881 giving Oswego its third lighthouse - the Oswego Breakwater Beacon. This lighthouse was equipped with a 4th Order Fresnel Lens, and the cast-iron tower was equipped with a locker, cupboard and bunk for the on-duty keeper. A fog bell was suspended from a bracket on the tower's north face. Above, the Oswego Breakwater Beacon in 1880s.



In 1882, a boathouse was added to the south side of the Beacon's crib and in 1900 the color of the iron tower changed from brown to white. In 1917, the Beacon was renamed the Oswego Light Station, and on October 12, 1920 the Light Station was changed from a fixed light to a double flash every twelve seconds, and electrified the following year. In 1931, Oswego Harbor was made into its modern configuration, the Light Station was discontinued. Above, a post 1900 view of the newly painted Station.

4

1931: Grain Elevator Light

The Oswego Elevator Light was established in 1931 when the Oswego Light Station was dismantled in preparation of Oswego Harbor's modern arrowhead breakwater configuration. Between 1931 and 1934, it was the primary beacon in Oswego, and the only period in Oswego Harbor between 1822 and present when there was no lighthouse. The light was located on top of the 146 foot West Pier grain elevator, and was in service as Oswego's primary light until 1967. Below, an image of the towering grain elevator that once occupied this pier.



The Elevator Light was maintained by the US Coast Guard, and the 300 mm diameter lens required periodic cleaning and bulb replacements. The Light was outfitted with a 6 bulb automatic changer that rotated a new bulb into service when one blew out. The grain elevator, which stood just north of this building, was dismantled in the late 1990s. Below, in 1949, BMC Kenneth Otten supervises the light keepers cleaning of the lantern.

**5**

1934: West Pierhead Lighthouse



In 1934, construction of Oswego's most modern lighthouse was completed and began service. Resting at the end of the west arrowhead breakwater, the Oswego West Pierhead Lighthouse is built of riveted steel plates, and rests atop a concrete caisson. The West Pierhead Lighthouse was staffed with keepers from USCG Station Oswego until its automation in 1969. The Oswego West Pierhead Lighthouse was upgraded in the 1950s, changing some of the interior features to accommodate a more modern USCG. Above, the newly constructed Oswego West Pierhead Lighthouse in 1934.



In 1995, the 4th Order Fresnel Lens was removed and loaned to this Museum. It was replaced by a solar powered beacon. In 2000, it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places, and in 2009 was acquired by the City of Oswego under the auspices of the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act of 2000. In 2014, the H. Lee White Maritime Museum leased the Lighthouse from the City to spearhead the restoration, and provide public access and historic interpretation of the site.