

## Backgrounder

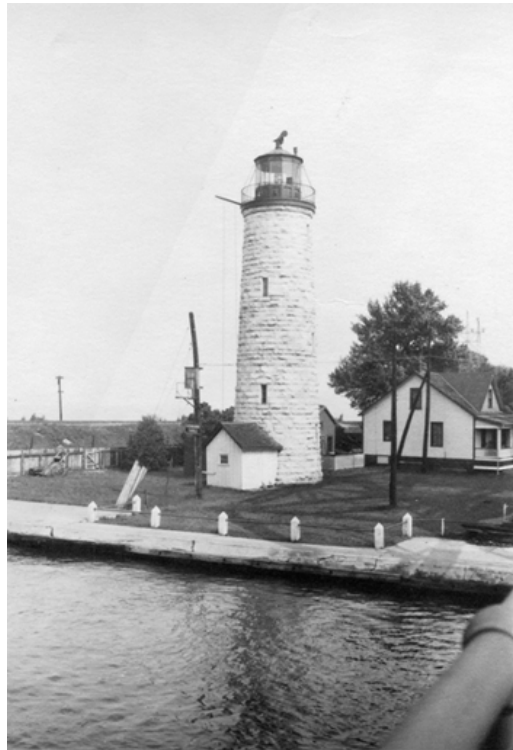
### Beach Canal Lighthouse & Keeper's Cottage

The light stands near the mid-point of a sandbar, commonly known as the Beach Strip, which runs across the entrance to Hamilton Harbour. For 170 years there has been a beacon here at the intersection of land and water routes linking South Central Ontario to upper New York State at Niagara, and the city of Hamilton, via the St. Lawrence Seaway, with the Atlantic.

The "Beach" is a low-lying baymouth barrier, formed as the glaciers retreated at the end of the last ice age, which separates Burlington Bay from Lake Ontario. A shallow and narrow natural outlet emptied into the lake at the north shore of the bay, but it was not navigable.

In 1823, the Burlington Bay Canal was proposed as one of a series of waterways which would open Lake Erie to sea traffic from the Atlantic. Local residents supported this proposal as a way of making Burlington Bay into a usable harbour by linking it to nearby Lake Ontario.

Work on the canal began in 1826, but was not completed until 1832. A wooden lighthouse was constructed on the canal in 1838 to guide ships to and from the harbour. On its completion, a lighthouse keeper was hired to maintain the light and building. The keeper worked in conjunction with the ferryman; their homes were built nearby. The wooden lighthouse, along with the light keeper's and ferryman's dwellings, burned to the ground in 1856, when the wooden piers were ignited by sparks from a passing steamer. The two dwellings were quickly replaced with new brick structures in 1857; the builder may have been L. or A. McCallum, possibly sub-contracted by John Brown.



A new stone tower was completed in 1858. The new 55-foot tower and brick keeper's dwelling served until 1961, when the light was deactivated. The lights at the ends of the piers have been modified over time. The present Burlington Canal Range Light, built in 1909, is a white concrete structure set on the eastern end of the south pier. The other three pierheads are currently marked by round steel towers (two red and white, one green and white) similar to the one at Oakville.

The 1858 lighthouse (officially identified as the Burlington Canal Main light) consists of a slightly tapered 55-foot high circular tower with an iron lantern. Constructed of white dolomite limestone laid in regular courses with a round-arched doorway, it was built by the Scottish mason, John Brown, who was responsible for a series of six Imperial Towers on Lake Huron and Georgian Bay, all still standing. Chantry Island Light, off Southampton in Lake Huron, has recently been restored.

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The lighthouse was maintained without major repairs until 1958. The remarkably good condition of the stonework today, after close to 150 years, bears testimony to the exceptionally high standard of workmanship.

*Source: Beach Canal Lighthouse Group*