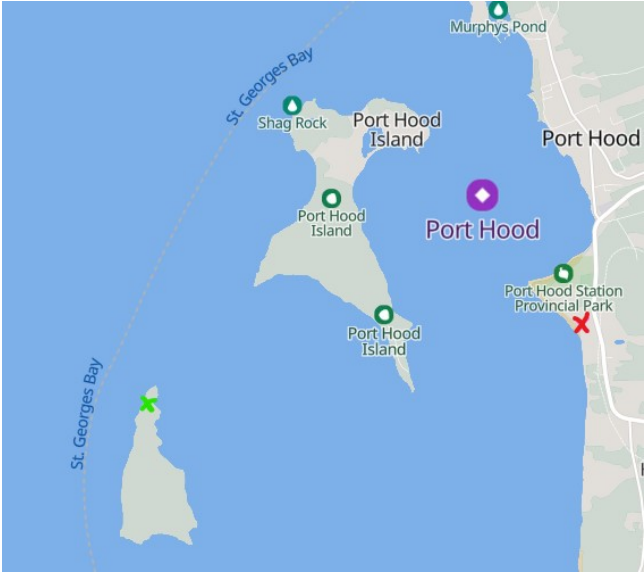




Port Hood Lighthouse 1930s
Credit: Nova Scotia Archives



Red X is where Port Hood Lighthouse stood
Green X site of Henry Island Lighthouse
Credit: Mapcarta

Port Hood is known today as the Beach Capital of Cape Breton Island. Yet it was not the sandy beaches that made the Government of Nova Scotia decide in 1853 to build there a square white lighthouse with a tiny attached dwelling. The area then had abundant fishing and coal seams to mine with cargo ships arriving on a frequent basis.

The lighthouse shone a red fixed light from its side facing north and a white fixed light from the side facing south. In spite of there being many sandbars to the north of Port Hood, there is no indication in any documents from that time that ships were advised to avoid the north entrance to Port Hood.

It was not an easy posting for the first lightkeeper and family as the kitchen was in the cellar of the dwelling and described as cold and damp. On top of that, barrels of oil for the lighthouse were stored in the cellar too. In 1862 an addition to the dwelling was built and in 1878 a water cistern to remedy a lack of ground water as coal seams ran under the lighthouse and no well could be dug.

It was the second lightkeeper that profited from the rebuilding of the dwelling in 1900 when 20th century technology now made it possible to make lights flash in a specific pattern. Therefore the red fixed light facing north was discontinued in 1910.

In 1938 the lighthouse burned down. It was not replaced as the Inverness and Richmond Railway now carried goods to markets and there was another lighthouse on nearby Henry Island. Instead a pole light was installed at the end of the wharf and later in 1950 it became the front light of a range pair with a small white tower acting as the rear light. The pole lamp was replaced with a skeleton tower in 1963 and this range pair was still guiding fishermen home in 1981 but was gone by 2001.



2nd Front light of Port Hood Range
Credit: Canadian Coast Guard 1964



Original and only rear light of Port Hood Range
Credit: Canadian Coast Guard 1963