



Old West End Lighthouse toppled by shifting sand
Credit: Library and Archives Canada



Last West End Lighthouse
Credit: Rip Irwin

The sand dunes of Sable Island kept changing in size and shape so that in 1951 the West End lighthouse was moved 2.4km (1.25mi) towards the island's centre.

In 1958 the Life Saving Station was closed on Sable Island. With the departure of stevedores, career lightkeepers returned to tend the lighthouses. However they weren't there long as both lighthouses were automated in 1960.

Without lightkeepers, it was decided to "modernize" the lighthouses on Sable Island. The West End Lighthouse was downgraded to a simple mast tower in 1971 while in 1973 a square metal tower painted white with vertical red stripe down middle of all four sides became the new East End Lighthouse. Finally in 1980 it was necessary to replace the West End mast tower with a new square skeleton steel tower dressed with red and white horizontal bands acting as a day marker.

Lighting systems also changed during this period. A rotating airport beacon was used on the West End tower while a huge solar panel charged 92 batteries at the East End tower that powered a flashing electric light. No one knows where happened to the 2nd order Fresnel lens, but in 2005 shifting sand revealed not only an old lightkeeper's quarters but also twelve rusting barrels of diesel oil! To read about this very thorough and no doubt expensive cleanup, go to <https://bit.ly/4yqZdLY>.

In 2011 Sable Island was declared a National Park Reserve where now visitors must have permission to land. About 140 years after lighthouses were deemed essential to navigation, the East End Lighthouse was discontinued in 2012 and the West End Lighthouse in 2014.



Old lightkeeper house and barrels of diesel oil 2005
Credit: Zoe Lucas



3rd East End lighthouse
Credit: Rip Irwin

