

A Look Back in Time

The Kenosha Lighthouse and Keeper's House, at 5117 Fourth Avenue, was built in 1866 and 1867, respectively. Its historic name is the Kenosha Light Station. (42° 35' 24" north latitude and 87° 48' 56" west longitude, Kenosha, WI)

Section 15.04 of the City's Zoning Ordinance establishes standards for designating structures and sites as historic and the site or structure must meet at least one of these standards. It was determined that The Kenosha Light Station is architecturally significant under Standards 1: "exemplifies or reflects the City's cultural... history." And 6., "Historic structure or site which is on the National or State Register of Historic Places." The light tower and keeper's dwelling are associated with Kenosha's harbor history as well as the country's maritime history.



The Kenosha Southport Lighthouse, built in 1866, is the third government lighthouse built on Simmons Island, formerly Washington Island, in Kenosha, Wisconsin. The tower is constructed of Milwaukee Cream City brick and is conical in shape. The height of the tower from the base to the lens focal plane is 55 feet, with an added 19 feet from the base to the water level, making the focal plane of the light 74 feet above the lake level. The original light was a fixed white light, varied by flashes, from the fourth order Fresnel lens. Originally designated as a coast and harbor light, the light station was the first navigational light a mariner would see upon entering Wisconsin from Chicago. It was functional until 1906 at which time it was replaced by taller light stations built to the north and south. A new pierhead lighthouse located on the north harbor pier identifies the harbor entrance. The lantern room was removed around 1913 and replaced with a 25-foot tripod mast for the display of storm warning flags and lights. The weather signal tower was removed in the 1960's, at which time the Southport tower was boarded up. A 1989 restoration feasibility study by the Kenosha County Historical Society led to the preservation of the tower. A replica of the lantern room was positioned on the tower on May 7, 1994, completing the first phase of restoration. The 1866 Kenosha (Southport) Light Station is listed on the Wisconsin and National Register of Historic Places.

The lighthouse tower, former lightkeeper's residence and surrounding grounds represent the fourth gallery space of the Kenosha History Center. The Kenosha History Center undertook restoration of the Keeper's residence in order to preserve the history of local light keepers and Kenosha's fishing and shipping heritage. The Southport Light Station is open from mid-May through October.

