

# WELCOME TO THE WIND POINT LIGHTHOUSE

- Grounds Open Daily from 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.
- Permit Required for Alcoholic Beverages
- Permit Required for Commercial Photography
- Weapons Prohibited
- Walk Bikes Beyond this Point
- Go to [windpointlighthouse.org](http://windpointlighthouse.org) for Tour and Rental Information



# THE LIGHTHOUSE



Unpainted Lighthouse, Original Keeper's Quarters, and Steam Powered Horn Houses 1884

In 1878, the U.S. Congress appropriated \$40,000 to build the Wind Point Light Station for operation by the U.S. Lighthouse Service. At the time, Racine was the fifth busiest port in the Great Lakes region. Ships were the primary means of transporting goods and raw materials. The Lighthouse was built to save lives and warn sailors about the hazards of two shallow shoals just off Wind Point as well as the shallow limestone reef to the south. In 1880, construction was completed, and the light was put into service on November 15.

The lighthouse tower is 108 feet tall with 144 spiral cast iron steps leading to the watch room. Two closeable hatches provide access from the tower to the watch room and from the watch room to the lamp room at the top. This design prevented drafts from extinguishing the early kerosene fueled lamp.

The original construction included an attached house for the keeper, with two more added later for assistant keepers. Today, the keeper's residence is above the Wind Point Village Hall and adjacent to the Police Office. The keepers help maintain the property and serve as Wind Point's ambassadors to some 20,000 annual visitors every year.

In 1984, the Wind Point Light Station was added to the National Register of Historic Places. From 1964 to 1997, the Village leased the property from the Coast Guard. In 1997, ownership of the buildings and grounds were transferred to the Village.



# THE ARCHITECT

Orlando Metcalfe Poe (1832-1895) was the architect of the Wind Point Lighthouse. In 1865, Poe was named chief engineer of the U.S. Lighthouse Board. He designed and oversaw the construction of nine lighthouses on Lake Huron, Lake Michigan and Lake Superior.

The Italianate style of the Wind Point Lighthouse is an example of the "Poe style". His designs incorporate tall, sloping brick towers, graceful support corbels under the tower walk way, and arched windows.

Poe's greatest engineering accomplishment was the design and construction of the Soo Locks. This 800' x 100' lock in Sault St. Marie, Michigan links Lake Superior to the lower Great Lakes. Completed in 1896, it was, at the time, the largest lock system in the world. This lock was pivotal to the development of the shipping industry in the Great Lakes.

During the Civil War (1861-1865), Poe commanded the 2nd Michigan Infantry Regiment in the Peninsula Campaign and led brigades at Second Bull Run and Fredericksburg serving under General George McClellan. Later during the Civil War, Poe served as Chief Engineer under General William T. Sherman. By the war's end, Poe held a field commission rank of Brigadier General.

Poe died on October 2, 1895 in Detroit, from an infection following an on-duty accident at the Soo Locks. He is buried at Arlington National Cemetery.



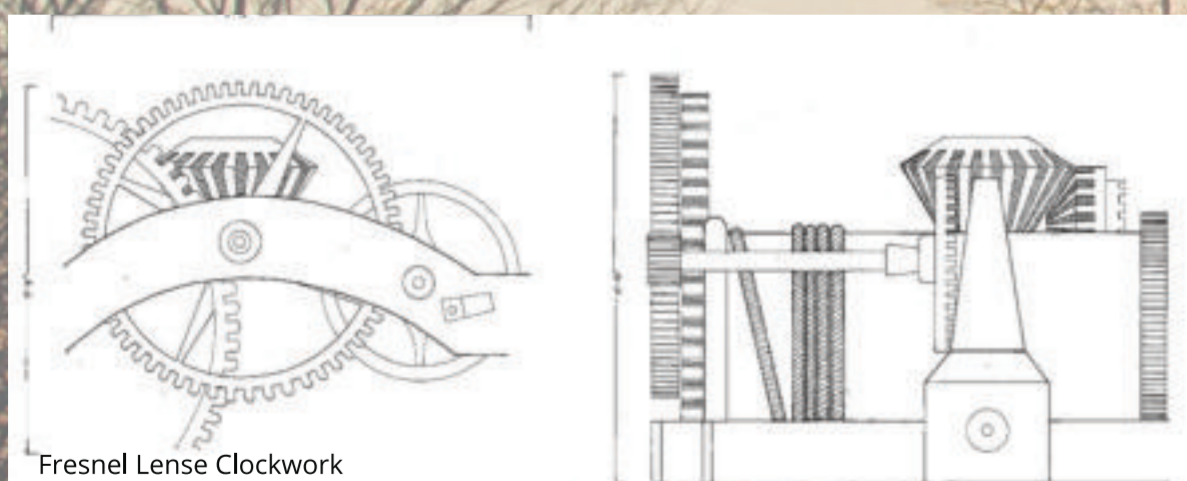
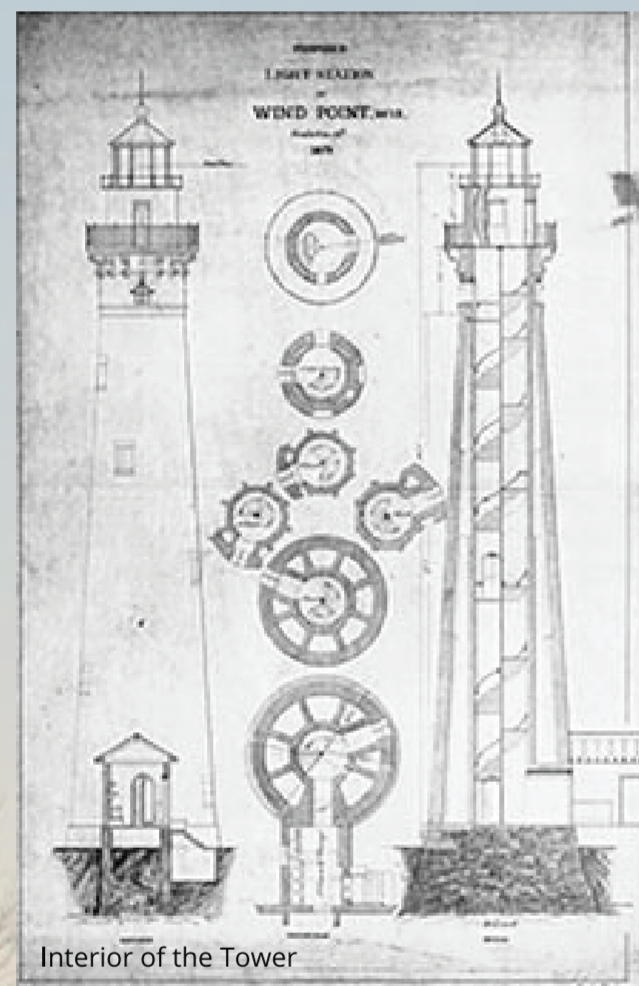
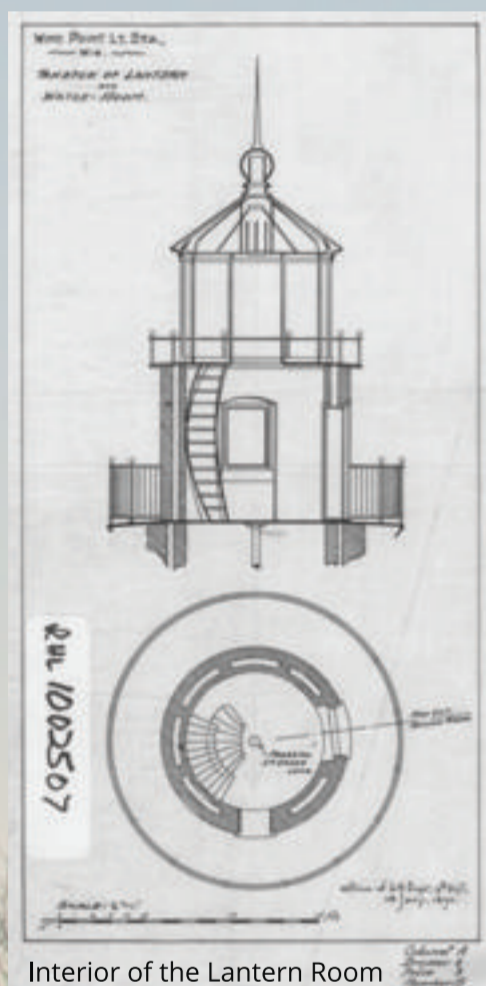
General Orland Metcalf Poe 1865



# THE LIGHT

The lighthouse was originally fitted with a one-ton, five-foot tall Fresnel lens manufactured in France. This 12-sided lens surrounded a kerosene lamp with multiple wicks. Three hundred hand ground optical glass prisms and 12 bullseyes concentrated and bent light from the lamp so it could be seen 19 miles out over the lake. The original cost was \$5000.

The Lighthouse has a tapered outer wall with a diameter of 22 feet at the base and 13 feet at the top. It also has a vertical inner wall. The space between the walls housed a special cable and weight system that, when wound, rotated the Fresnel lens so that a flash occurred every 30 seconds. The mechanism had to be wound by the lighthouse keepers up to five times per night.



Each year, the oil lamp consumed 270 gallons of oil that had to be carried to the top in fuel cans. An incandescent oil vapor system later replaced the original wicks and dramatically increased brightness. In 1924, this Lighthouse was the second on the Great Lakes to replace kerosene with electricity. This further increased brightness and eliminated the need for daily lens cleaning. In 1964, the U.S. Coast Guard removed the Fresnel lens and installed a fully automated, revolving, airport aero beacon. The Fresnel lens now is displayed in the Village Hall, courtesy of the Racine Historical Society.

Today the light is a specially designed aero beacon system with a six-station automatic bulb changer. The light itself is still maintained by the Coast Guard.

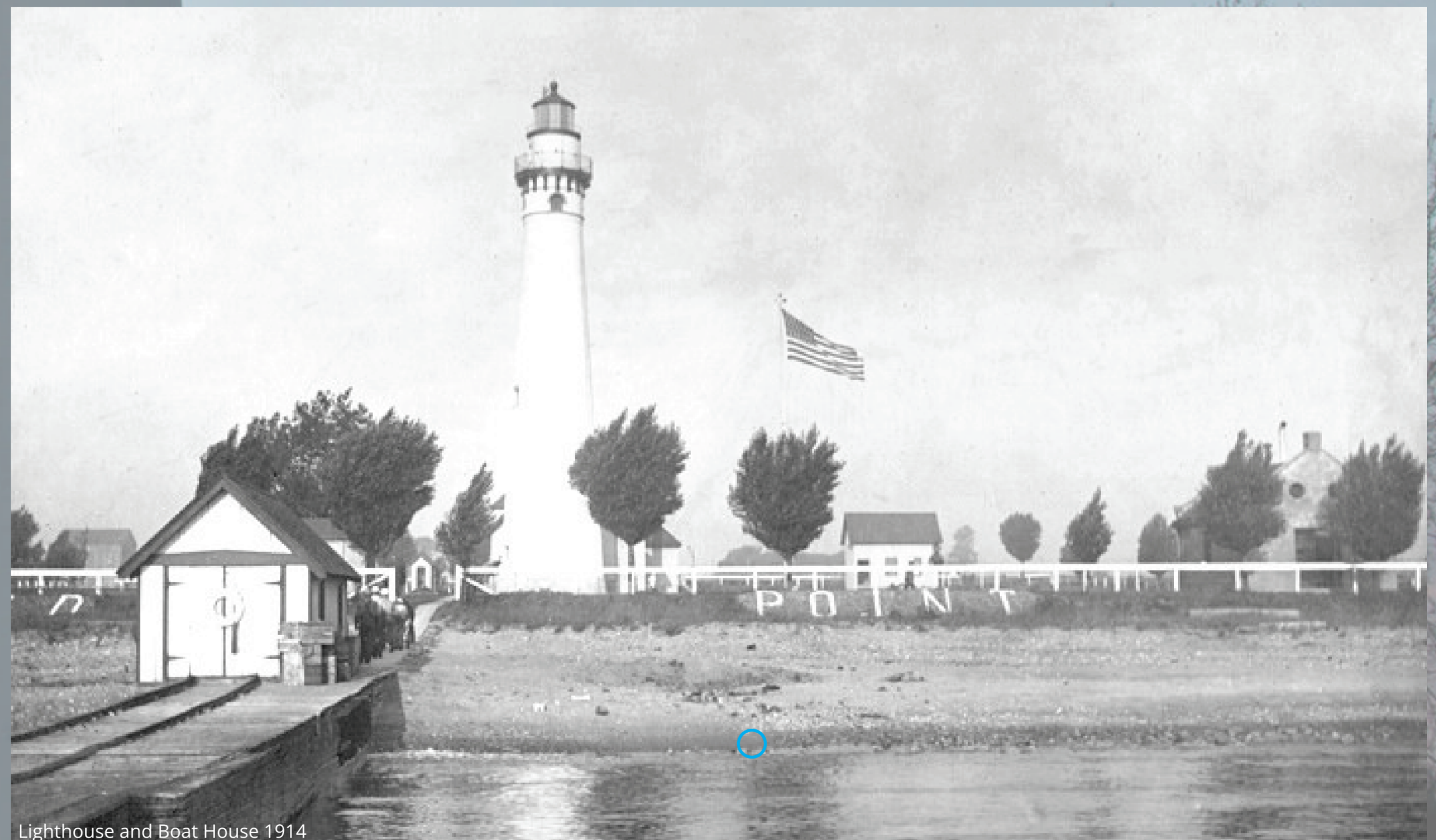


# THE FUEL HOUSE AND FORMER BOAT HOUSE SITE

In 1893 a fuel house was erected to house the kerosene fuel for the light. The U.S. Lighthouse Service had mandated separate storage of the highly flammable fuel. In 1910, the current concrete fuel house replaced the original. There are two circular air vents on the south side that allow air to circulate in the building and reduce flammable vapors.

This is also the approximate site of a former boat house with a large pier that ran out into the Lake. A boat and the pier were used by the keepers to obtain supplies.

Severe waves and weather ultimately destroyed both the boat house and the pier. The pier pilings remain but are under water.



Lighthouse and Boat House 1914



# THE FOGHORN BUILDING

The Wind Point Light Station has had fog signals from the very first days. The horns used a steam engine to force compressed air through the horn to make the sound. In 1880, two separate wooden structures housed the two fog horns.

Lighthouse Grounds 1947  
Foghorn Building Lower Left



In 1900, these buildings were replaced with the current brick foghorn building with twin compressed air horns. The distinguishing low frequency two-tone sound (whoo-ahhh) was derived from an organ stop used on some Wurlitzer organs. Originally powered by steam engines, the horns were later driven by hot bulb engines. Electricity drove the horns from 1924 until decommissioning in 1964. The signal could be heard 10 miles out on Lake Michigan.

Although not in use now, the foghorn resonators remain and can be seen on the eastern face of this building. A foghorn still operates on the Racine Reef Light two miles east of the Racine Harbor entrance.

