

Landmarks Preservation Commission
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STATEN ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE, Lighthouse Hill, Edinboro Road, Staten Island.
Completed 1912.

Landmark Site: Borough of Richmond Tax Map Block 2287, Lot 37.

On September 13, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Staten Island Lighthouse and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 56). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. In a letter to the Commission, a representative of the Federal Government questioned the proposal to designate the building, saying that Federally-owned property is not subject to regulation by local law.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Standing on Lighthouse Hill and overlooking historic Richmondtown, this imposing Staten Island Lighthouse throws its rays from a point two hundred and thirty-one feet above sea level. The tall, octagonal shaped brick tower with a rusticated limestone base is an unusually impressive structure. One would sooner expect to come upon this picturesque lighthouse on the rocky coast of New England than within the boundaries of New York City.

Rising above its solid base this handsome shaft of yellow brick is crowned by a cornice with delicate moldings. Rectangular stair windows set in the alternate planes of the eight-sided shaft are enframed in smooth-faced stone and finished with stepped lintels, providing an interesting design and creating a pleasing texture in contrast with the smooth brick. Huge, ornately detailed brackets resting on the cornice support an octagonal captain's walk enclosed with a simple wrought iron railing. At this level, the planar surface of the enclosed area is broken by the introduction of bulls eye windows. The topmost section of the tower, faced with glass, contains the powerful light and has a small cantilevered balcony echoing the design of the Captain's walk directly below. The low-pitched roof covering the light is topped by a substantial and handsome ball with lightning rod above it.

The Staten Island Light, or Richmond Light as it is commonly known, was commissioned in 1912. It has 350,000 candlelight power. Visible on range only, it lines up with the West Bank Light 5.1 miles away. It is a light attendant station and works in conjunction with the Ambrose Light Tower, which replaced the famous Ambrose Light Ship. Operated under the jurisdiction of the United States Coast Guard, it is one of the range lights which helps to guide ships into the channels of New York Harbor.

The history of lighthouses in America dates as far back as 1715, when the first lighthouse was constructed at the entrance of Boston harbor by the Province of Massachusetts. On August 7, 1789, an Act of Congress authorized the maintenance of lighthouses by the United States Government.

The question has been raised by the Federal Government as to whether this building should be designated by New York City as a Landmark. The Commission wishes to honor a building of which New Yorkers are proud. The Commission is cognizant of the jurisdictional question. Nevertheless, it is very important for the Government of New York City to state officially its deep concern that this building be preserved. There should be no uncertainty about this in anyone's mind.

The Commission would be negligent if it failed to act in this situation. At some time in the future this building may be in jeopardy. Our designation will be especially helpful in alerting New York City's elected representatives in Washington of the importance of saving this building. At present the Commission's specialists can be of service in providing advice so that the architectural integrity of this building is maintained. Indeed a fine relationship already exists with many local representatives of the Federal Government.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Staten Island Lighthouse has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Staten Island Light is a distinguished example of lighthouse architecture, that this utilitarian structure has graceful proportions and handsome features, that it has served for over fifty years guiding ships into one of the world's busiest harbors and that it stands as a reminder of the men and women in the lighthouse service who have devoted their lives to the safe entry and departure of ships in and out of this great American port.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 8-A of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the Staten Island Lighthouse, Lighthouse Hill, Edinboro Road, Staten Island and designates Tax Map Block 2287, Lot 37, Borough of Richmond, as its Landmark Site.