



North Manitou Shoal

LAKE MICHIGAN 63

The Lake Michigan waterway between the Manitou Islands and Michigan's west coastline, known as the Manitou Passage, was a busy shipping lane in the early 20th century. In 1908, it was determined that a new aid to navigation was needed a mile southeast of North Manitou Island to mark a shoal. Congress responded by approving funding for a lightship, which was easier to place and less expensive than constructing a lighthouse. Three different lightships served at the North Manitou Shoal from 1910 to 1935.

Beginning in 1932, federal funding was requested for the construction of a permanent light to replace the lightship. After delayed approvals and seasonal construction restrictions, the lighthouse was first lit on

May 1, 1935. The North Manitou Shoal Light is a steel structure that sits on a foundation made of a wooden crib embedded in the lake floor that is filled with concrete and rock.

The lighthouse had a three-man crew serving on a three-week rotation with two weeks on and one week off. In 1980, the lighthouse became fully automated and the crew was permanently removed. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2005 and ownership was transferred to the North Manitou Light Keepers, a nonprofit organization, in 2016. The lighthouse is located about eight miles west of Leland, Michigan and can be clearly seen from the ferry that services the Manitou Islands.



Michigan borders four of the five Great Lakes and has over 3,280 miles of freshwater shoreline; the longest shoreline of any state except Alaska. To aid maritime navigation, about 140 lighthouses have been built in Michigan, more than any other state. A wide range of lighthouse styles and materials were used in constructing Michigan's lighthouses. The four lighthouses featured on this map are just a sampling of the variety that can be seen on Michigan's shoreline and lakes.

Information on the North Manitou Shoal Light Station is provided by the North Manitou Light Keepers and the Historic Structure Report completed by Sanders & Czapski Associates, PLLC and Smay Trombley Architecture with funding from a Michigan Lighthouse Assistance Program (MLAP) grant from the State Historic Preservation Office of the Michigan Strategic Fund. North Manitou Shoal light photographs were provided by David McWilliam, North Manitou Light Keepers. The historic North Manitou Shoal light photograph is from the National Archives. The historic photograph of visitors at the North Manitou Shoal Light is from the Leelanau Historical Society Museum Archives. All other photographs are provided by Bryan Lijewski, State Historic Preservation Office.

