

Port Washington Historical Society Keeper Program Handbook

The Port Washington Historical Society preserves and shares community history that connects the past to the present, with a view to the future.

INTRODUCTION:

In 1860, the current Light Station was completed as the replacement for a lighthouse that was built in 1849. In 1903, the light on the top of the 1860 Light Station was decommissioned and the electrified pier light at the entrance to the Port Washington harbor (built in 1889) became the city's only functioning navigational light. In 1934, the 1860 Light Station was converted to housing for U.S. Coast Guard personnel. At the same time, the tower and the light were removed. At this same time in history, the Wisconsin Electric Power Plant was built on the south side of the city, necessitating a redesign of our harbor to allow for coal boats to dock and unload fuel. A new "art deco" style light was built and is the one in use today. In 1998, the City of Port Washington acquired the 1860 Light Station from the Coast Guard.

In 2000, the Port Washington Historical Society started a major restoration project to return the 1860 Light Station to its original condition including the tower and light. The work was completed in 2003. Fortunately, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg offered to build an exact replica of the original tower in honor of the many Luxembourgers who immigrated to the Port Washington area and as a thank you to the many GIs who served in the area. The Luxembourg American Cultural Center, where many area residents apply for dual citizenship, is just up the road in Belgium, Wisconsin. A 4th order replica Fresnel lens was added to the tower in 2007 by the PWHS.

As a keeper, you are joining many other individuals whose commitment and dedication over the years has contributed to the upkeep and restoration of our Light Station. You make it possible for many others to visit this historical site. You represent the Light Station every minute of your stay here. We couldn't do it without you. Thank you for keeping the light shining.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE:

2026 PROGRAM:

Being a Keeper at the PWHS 1860 Light Station is your chance to live in a two bedroom – one full bath with a walk-in shower second floor fully equipped apartment (accessible only via stairs) above the first-floor museum in a lighthouse on the bluff overlooking Lake Michigan. The apartment is air-conditioned. This program is designed for two or more individuals who apply together. Singles are welcome if they sign up with another single. We do not pair singles up who are unknown to each other. The main bedroom has twin beds that are placed together to form a king. There is a second bedroom with a queen bed. **Applications for all individuals (a minimum of 2 – maximum of 4) must be presented at the same time.** Children and pets are not allowed to stay at the lighthouse. Keepers are welcome to have friends or family visit the lighthouse in the evenings (after 4 pm), but guests are not to overnight at the lighthouse.

The full program fee is \$200 for the week (per two individuals) and \$360 (per two individuals) for two consecutive weeks if qualified. There is room for up to four individuals if all in the same party. All keepers must be at least 18 years old.

Duration	Cost	Number of Keepers
1 week	\$100 per person	2 persons minimum – 4 maximum
2 weeks	\$180 per person	2 persons minimum – 4 maximum

The full program fee will be due when invoiced in January of 2026 and not with the application.

The lighthouse is open Wednesday through Sunday 11:30AM-3:30PM with the last tour beginning at 3:30PM, June 23, 2026- September 13, 2026. The normal weekly schedule is arrival on Tuesday afternoon at 2PM with a departure the following Tuesday at noon. Special arrangements will need to be made if you plan to arrive after 4pm. One day off (Monday) is given each week. Upon arrival, the keepers will be given a short tour of the house and grounds, so everything is clear and understood. Training on the Point-of-Sale system and gift store inventory is on Thursday morning before the lighthouse is open to the public.

If you are going to be late, please let us know (262) 268-9150. You may pull your vehicle into the parking area in front of the Light Station to unload. Once unloaded you may move your vehicle to the pad behind the garage which is to the back of the property. No vehicles may be left up by the lighthouse entry during the hours the Light Station is open to the public, but you may park in front of the lighthouse overnight if you choose.

Day	Keeper Agenda
Tuesday afternoon	Keepers arrive at 2PM, tour of house & grounds
Thursday morning	11:00AM Training on POS, gift store, tour details
Thursday	Open for tours 11:30am – 3:30pm
Friday	Open for tours 11:30am – 3:30pm
Saturday	Open for tours 11:30am – 3:30pm
Sunday	Open for tours 11:30am – 3:30pm
Monday	Day off to enjoy Port Washington/Milwaukee area
Tuesday	Clean up and depart by noon

Tuesday move out time is Noon. You may pull your vehicle in front of the Light Station for loading. Please remember that Johnson is one-way. You will need to go around the block if you are loading using the lighthouse front entry. Make sure you have removed all personal and food items. Also make sure your sheets, towels & dish towels have been washed and dried (the cycle for each is about an hour) and returned to the apartment. Sheets are to be folded and placed on the beds. Towels to be folded are placed in the hall closet.

LIVING QUARTERS:

You will find the second floor living quarters to be cozy and comfortable during your stay. The living quarters are comfortably furnished, and the kitchen is well equipped with a stove, refrigerator, microwave, toaster, coffee maker, dishes, utensils, pots, and pans. We provide

household items such as bathroom tissue and cleaning supplies. Let us know if you are running short of any item.

WHAT TO BRING

Keepers provide their own food and toiletries. We provide sheets, pillowcases and towels. But if you don't want to launder everything on Tuesday before you leave, you will need to bring your own. We provide pillows, mattress pads and comforters again unless you choose to bring your own. We provide laundry supplies for the washer and dryer in the basement.

SCOPE OF KEEPER DUTIES:

The 1860 Light Station keepers' primary duty is to lead tours. Other duties include taking admissions, selling gift shop items and building/grounds trash removal. Everyone reports to and works under the guidance of the Executive Director. Listed below is the scope of duties for each position. Keepers may rotate between positions throughout the week. You will oversee the gift shop and museum admissions during **all** open hours. Daily cleaning of all public areas is necessary, including sweeping, vacuuming, and insect removal.

Admissions Desk

Keepers provide an enjoyable, knowledgeable, and hospitable environment for visitors entering the lighthouse museum. Along with giving tours during the time the lighthouse is open, keepers will collect the admission fees, and provide daily cleaning procedures as necessary. As a guide, especially on the upper floors, you will need to emphasize safety precautions, especially how to safely climb the steps/ladders. Four people are allowed in the tower at one time.

The keepers will let every visitor entering know there is a suggested donation of \$5/adult \$2/child for a tour of the museum, as well as their signature of a liability waiver if climbing the tower. Keepers will emphasize safety precautions for the visitors when they proceed up into the tower. This is done by simply saying, "after you have viewed the 2nd floor keeper's office and the lighting station on the 3rd floor, you can then climb the tower steps. *The **three flights of steps are like going up a ladder and down like a ladder, you must face the steps whether going up or coming down. Guests must be at least 40 inches tall to climb to the tower. There are pictures of the ladders for guests to view before proceeding to the second floor.***

Gift Shop

Keepers will sell items from the gift shop during all open hours and will be trained to operate the point-of-sale system as well as help with restocking merchandise.

Daily Maintenance

One of your duties is to keep the interior and exterior of the light station clean and attractive. Keepers are asked to remove the trash from the site daily. Dispose of all trash in the GTLM trash cans behind the Generator Building. Keepers are also asked to keep the dirt swept from walks, porches, and steps. This is necessary to maintain the appearance of the facility and to ensure the safety of all.

Please do not leave personal items around the back patio area or in other outdoor areas of the lighthouse. We want to ensure that our visitors have a clean, uncluttered view of the lighthouse in their photographs.

LIGHTHOUSE PASSPORT PROGRAM:

We participate in the US Lighthouse Passport Program and have two official stamps for the passports.

LIGHTHOUSE SECURITY:

The back exterior door must always remain locked. The exterior doors of the lighthouse that are open during the hours the museum is open to the public, are the front door to the museum entrance and the accessible side door to the museum kitchen. You will be expected to work & be on site during hours the lighthouse and gift shop are open.

Even though the living quarters can be locked, we recommend that you do not bring any unnecessary valuable items. The PWS is not responsible for items that may be lost or stolen.

THE COLLECTIONS:

The collections of the PWS are defined as all accessioned historical materials. Through these collections the PWS preserves and interprets the 1860 Light Station property and its significance to the economic and social development of the Port Washington area. The collection documents home life, work life and community life since the lighthouse was built in 1860, with special attention given to “life of a lighthouse keeper and his family”. The Collections Committee is responsible for all aspects of the historical collections. **Please do not move or handle any artifacts without the permission of the Executive Director.**

IMAGE AND IDENTIFICATION:

Keepers should always strive to provide visitors to the lighthouse with a positive experience like what they would find at other historical sites open to the public. Clothing may be casual and comfortable, but suitable for greeting visitors. Shorts and t-shirts are appropriate. The following items are not: tank tops, any clothing with holes, bathing suits and bare feet. Keepers (and guests) who climb the ladders to the 3rd floor and the tower must wear appropriate footwear. Sandals are acceptable if they have a heel strap.

- Keepers are encouraged, but not required, to wear 1860 Lighthouse tee shirts provided for you.
- NO pets are permitted inside the historic buildings, except seeing eye dogs and therapy pets.

TELEPHONE USE:

Keepers are welcome to use the telephone for local calls. Those who need to make **long distance calls are asked to charge them to their personal phone cards** or reverse the charges. Please do not accept collect calls except in an emergency. The number at the **museum (includes offices) and keeper quarters** is **262-536-6909**. You may bring your cell phone, but the reception area is not always reliable.

PUBLIC RELATIONS:

Keepers who receive inquiries from the press or other media about the PWHS or its programs should refer the inquiries to the Executive Director.

STORM/EMERGENCY POLICY:

Responsibility for closing the facilities remains with the Executive Director. When the facilities are open to the public during storms or other community emergencies, Keepers will be expected to be at their positions.

GUESTS:

The Board of Directors understands that friends and relatives are very interested in this unique experience and may want to visit while you are here. Because Keepers are very busy during the hours the lighthouse is open, the Board has established some guidelines for guests.

- Keepers will be living in the second-floor apartment. Guests may not stay overnight.
- Friends and relatives are not permitted to help in the gift shop, at the admissions desk, or in the tower.
- Keepers are asked to entertain their guests after the lighthouse closes.

DAYS OFF:

Keepers are scheduled for one day off a week. Staff can direct you to local areas of interest, restaurants, shops, and activities. **Days off are scheduled for Monday. Everyone is required to be onsite on Tuesday to clean the keeper apartment before departure unless you notify us that you will be leaving early.**