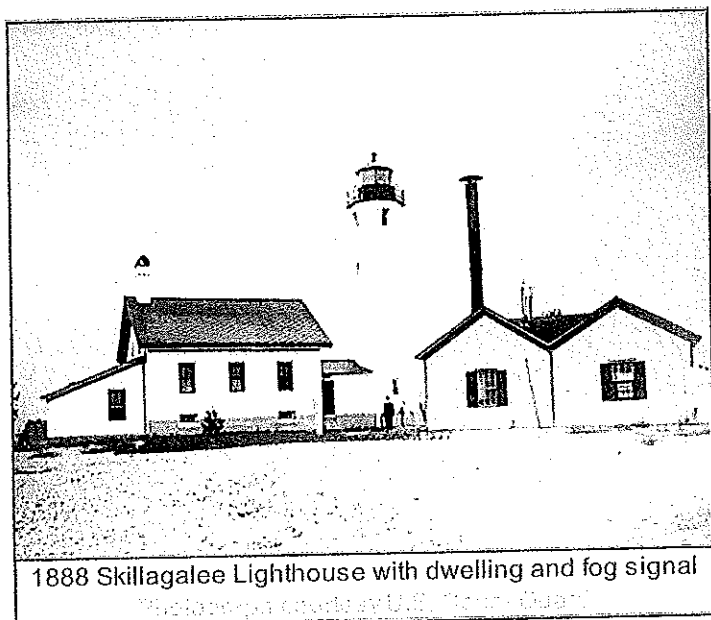


***SKILLAGALEE ISLAND {Ille Aux Galets} MI.***

# Skillagalee Island (Ile Aux Galets), MI



**Description:** Isle aux Galets, "Isle of Pebbles," is a gravelly, low-lying island situated in the northeast corner of Lake Michigan, between Beaver Island and the mainland. French explorers named the island Isle aux Galets, but subsequent English-speaking inhabitants of the area had a hard time pronouncing the name, and it eventually transformed into Skillagalee. Lighthouse Service records initially used both names when referring to the lighthouse, but by 1889 Skillagalee started to be used exclusively. Around 1910, Ile aux Galets started to be used again, and it is listed by that name on modern light lists published by the U.S. Coast Guard. Interestingly, Skillagalee is actually a word that means a thin broth or gruel.



1888 Skillagalee Lighthouse with dwelling and fog signal  
Illustration by U.S. Coast Guard

The first formal call for a light on Skillagalee Island was likely a petition from "certain ship-owners on the northern lakes" presented by C.M. Reed to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1844. On March 3, 1849, Congress set aside \$4,000 for a lighthouse on Skillagalee as part of an act with the lengthy title: "An act making appropriations for light-houses, light-boats, buoys, &c., and providing for the erection and establishment of the same, and for other purposes." On November 26, 1850, Henry B. Miller, Superintendent and Inspector of Lights on Northwest Lakes, sent a letter to Stephen Pleasonton, the Fifth Auditor of the Treasury who was in charge of the country's lighthouses, informing him that a lighthouse had been completed on Skillagalee. "It is a beautiful red light, distinguishable some fifteen

niles, and serves the mariner well as a beacon, to steer clear of the rocks and shoals in its immediate vicinity," wrote Miller.

The lighthouse consisted of a lantern room mounted atop a keeper's dwelling, and eight lamps and fourteen-inch reflectors were used to produce the fixed red light, which was exhibited at a height of twenty-five feet above the island. The stone, one-and-a-half-story dwelling measured twenty by thirty-six feet and had an attached fifteen-foot-square kitchen. The tiny island must not have been a very appealing place to live as the first five keepers of the lighthouse lasted only one season.

In 1866, the Lighthouse Board noted the following on Skillagalee Lighthouse:

The light at Skilligalee is of insufficient elevation and cannot be seen far enough to subserve the wants of navigation. It is recommended that this light be rebuilt to a height of seventy feet and a more powerful illuminating apparatus provided. An efficient fog-signal is also needed. To accomplish these desired improvements an appropriation of forty thousand dollars is asked.

On March 2, 1867, Congress appropriated the requested amount for "rebuilding and improving the lighthouse at Skillagalee," but for some reason a fog signal was not built with this money. Later that year, work began on a 100-foot tower and an attached dwelling, both built with yellow brick. Work was suspended at the close of the season and resumed the following spring. On July 19, 1868 a fixed white light produced by a third-order Fresnel was displayed from the tower at a focal plane of 106 feet above the lake.

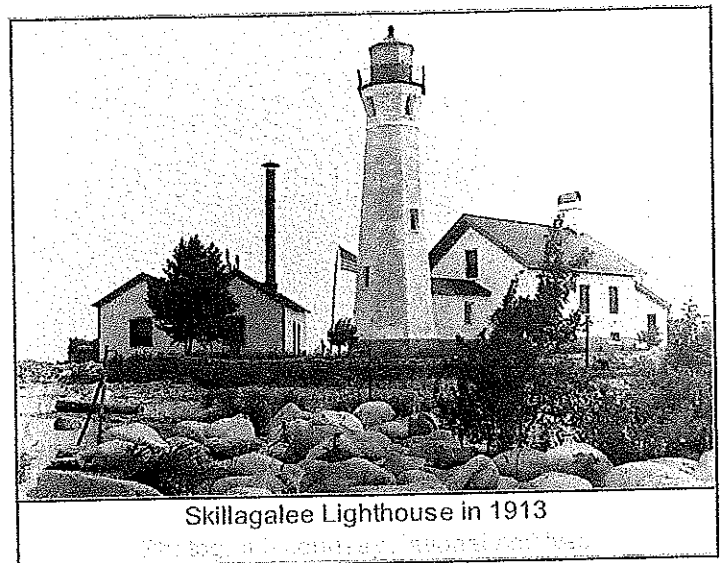
Just two years after the new lighthouse was completed, Keeper Patrick McCann noted the island had lost twenty feet on the northwest side and twelve feet on the southeast side. This loss was likely due to the lake level, which had risen fifteen inches from 1869 to 1870. A storm on December 4, 1873 washed away two-thirds of the island, and Congress provided \$5,000 in 1875 that was used to build a "substantial protection around the whole island."

On June 23, 1874, Congress appropriated funds for a first-class steam siren for Skillagalee Island. The fog signal commenced operation in the fall of 1875 and was joined by a duplicate siren in 1880. On November 1, 1890, ten-inch steam whistles, built by Thomas Manning, Jr. of Cleveland, Ohio, replaced

the sirens.

On March 7, 1888, a \$6,875 contract was made for tearing down and rebuilding the tower on Skillagalee Island. A temporary lens lantern was displayed on the island on May 10, 1888, and by the end of June, the 100-foot tower had been demolished and three courses of stonework for the new foundation had been laid. Bricks from the old tower were cleaned and used in the new tower along with 14,000 bricks delivered to the island. The old lantern room and third-order Fresnel lens were taken to the lighthouse depot in Detroit, and a new lantern room and fourth-order, Barbier & Fenestre Fresnel lens were provided.

The new Skillagalee Lighthouse was an octagonal brick tower, measuring fifty-two feet from base to ventilator ball, and was connected to the 1868 dwelling by a twelve-foot-long covered passage. The diameter of the tower tapered from fourteen feet at the base to nine feet at the octagonal lantern room. Keeper Vetal Bourissau placed the new light in operation on October 12, 1888. A brick oil house was added to the station in 1902.



Skillagalee Lighthouse in 1913

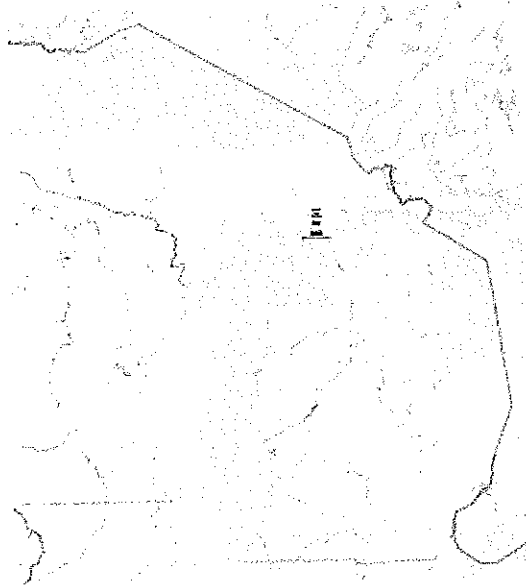
On October 19, 1901 Keeper Andrew G. Bourissau and Second Assistant Keeper Walter E. Grobden drowned in Lake Michigan while attempting to sail from the lighthouse to the mainland. During the year 1901, 132 lives were lost on the Great Lake.


Louis Belougea, an Odawa Indian who had been serving as an assistant keeper at Waugoshance Lighthouse for eight years, was transferred to Skillagalee and promoted to head keeper to replace Bourissau. Keeper Belougea was succeeded by his son, also named Louis, who had been serving as his first assistant for several years. In 1919, Keeper Belougea and Second Assistant Keeper August Keeler rendered assistance to the occupant of a

## Ile Aux Galets



Skillagalee Island Light Station circa 1920.

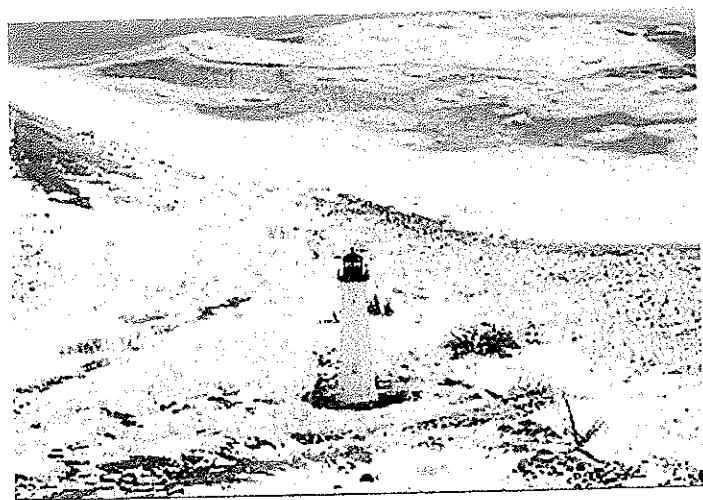


<b>Location</b>	SW OF WAUGOSHANCE ISLAND/LAKE MICHIGAN
<b>Coordinates</b>	 45°40'35"N85°10'23"W
<b>Year first constructed</b>	1888
<b>Year first lit</b>	1888
<b>Automated</b>	1969
<b>Foundation</b>	Stone
<b>Construction</b>	Brick
<b>Tower shape</b>	Octagonal hourglass
<b>Markings / pattern</b>	white w/black lantern
<b>Height</b>	58 feet (18 m) <sup>[1][2]</sup>
<b>Focal height</b>	58 feet (18 m) <sup>[3]</sup>
<b>Original lens</b>	Fourth order Fresnel lens
<b>Current lens</b>	12-inch (300 mm)Tideland Signal ML-300acrylic plastic lens
<b>Range</b>	11 nautical miles (20 km;

motor boat attached to Squaw Island Lighthouse and provided a sail so he could make his way back home. Keeper Belounea was awarded an efficiency flag for having the model station in the district during 1923.

The fog signal at Skillagalee was changed from a steam whistle to an air diaphone in 1933, and in 1951, the station's light was electrified. In 1959, the station was converted to unattended operation, and a 175mm automatic lens was installed in the tower in place of the Fresnel lens. The crew of the Coast Guard cutter *Sundew*, under the command of Lieutenant Commander Leonard Garrett, was sent to the island in 1969 to demolish all the structures on the island save the 1888 brick tower. The keeper's dwelling was dynamited, and all of the debris was heaped up and set on fire.

In June 2011, Ile Aux Galets Lighthouse was declared excess to the needs of the United States Coast Guard and made available to eligible organizations under the provisions of the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act of 2000. Qualified entities were given sixty days to submit a letter of interest and were required to obtain a conveyance from the State of Michigan for the bottomlands on which the lighthouse stands. If no suitable organization is found, the lighthouse will be sold at auction. When a qualified owner was not found, an online auction for the lighthouse was initiated on July 1, 2015. Only two bidders participated in the auction, which ended on September 11, 2015 with a high bid of \$23,250.



# Keepers of the Skillagalee Light

[Home](#) [Back](#)

**Year Station Established** 1850 **Year Station Discontinued** \_\_\_\_\_

Also known as: Ile Aux Galets Light Rebuilt: 1886 Auto: 1969

Position	Last Name	First Name	I	Born		Start			End			Comment
				Died	D	M	Year	D	M	Year		
Kpr.	Pressey	Elijah	B.			5	10	1850	13	11	1851	Rsgd.
Kpr.	Burk	Jacob				13	11	1851	8	8	1852	Rsgd.
Kpr.	Tucker	Henry	J.			8	8	1852	27	7	1853	Rsgd.
1st Asst.	Pond	Augustus				27	10	1852	27	7	1853	Rsgd.
Kpr.	Davenport	Ambrose		1802		27	7	1853	15	6	1854	Rsgd.
1st Asst.	Davenport	John		1838		27	7	1853	15	6	1854	Rsgd.
Kpr.	Hale	Alden				15	6	1854	30	5	1855	Rsgd.
1st Asst.	Hale	Charles				15	6	1854	30	5	1855	Rsgd.
Kpr.	Davenport	Ambrose		1802		30	5	1855	11	7	1861	Rsgd.
1st Asst.	Davenport	John		1838		30	5	1855	11	7	1861	Rsgd.
1st Asst.	Pratt	Jerome Jr.	M.			11	7	1861	8	11	1869	Rsgd.
Kpr.	Pratt	Jerome Sr.	M.			11	7	1861	30	9	1868	Rsgd.
Kpr.	Hume	Robert				30	9	1868	29	10	1869	Rsgd.
Kpr.	Mc Cann	Patrick	J.			29	10	1869	4	9	1874	Trsf.
1st Asst.	Hume	Mrs. Nancy				8	11	1869	20	11	1869	Declined
1st Asst.	Lasley	George	E.		1896	20	11	1869	28	4	1870	Rsgd.
1st Asst.	Marshall	William				28	4	1870	13	5	1871	Deserted
1st Asst.	Mulcroone	Michael				23	6	1871	13	5	1872	Rsgd.
1st Asst.	Chapman	Levi		1838		13	5	1872	4	9	1874	Trsf.
Kpr.	Bourissau	Vetal				4	9	1874	12	10	1898	Rsgd.
Act. 1st Asst.	Bourissau	Gabriel			1885	3	2	1875	28	9	1875	Perm. Appt.
Act. 2nd Asst.	Bourissau	Frank				20	4	1875	28	9	1875	Perm. Appt.
2nd Asst.	Bourissau	Frank				28	9	1875	1	4	1879	Prmtd.
1st Asst.	Bourissau	Gabriel			1885	28	9	1875	25	2	1879	Trsf.
Act. 1st Asst.	Bourissau	Frank				1	4	1879	20	6	1879	Perm. Appt.
Act. 2nd Asst.	Louisignau	Charles	J.	1859		1	4	1879	20	6	1879	Perm. Appt.
1st Asst.	Bourissau	Frank				20	6	1879	25	3	1882	Trsf.
2nd Asst.	Louisignau	Charles	J.	1859		20	6	1879	1	4	1882	Prmtd.
Act. 1st Asst.	Louisignau	Charles	J.	1859		1	4	1882	13	10	1882	Perm. Appt.
Act. 2nd Asst.	Cardy	Louis Sr.		1829	1913	25	4	1882	26	6	1882	Trsf.
2nd Asst.	Fountain	Capt. Joseph		1843	1919	13	10	1882	9	4	1883	Prmtd.
1st Asst.	Louisignau	Charles	J.	1859		13	10	1882	9	4	1883	Trsf.
Act. 1st Asst.	Fountain	Capt. Joseph		1843	1919	9	4	1883	19	6	1883	Perm. Appt.
Act. 2nd Asst.	Fountain	William				18	4	1883	19	6	1883	Perm. Appt.
1st Asst.	Fountain	Capt. Joseph		1843	1919	19	6	1883	10	7	1885	Trsf.
Act. 2nd Asst.	Fountain	William				19	6	1883	25	7	1885	Prmtd.
1st Asst.	Fountain	William				25	7	1885	18	8	1888	Trsf.
Act. 2nd Asst.	Bourissau	Andrew	G.		1901	1	9	1885	8	9	1886	Perm. Appt.
2nd Asst.	Bourissau	Andrew	G.		1901	8	9	1886	18	8	1888	Prmtd.
1st Asst.	Bourissau	Andrew	G.		1901	18	8	1888	22	8	1896	Trsf.
Act. 2nd Asst.	Astra	Minder				11	9	1888	9	1	1889	Appt. Cancelled
Act. 2nd Asst.	Langland	John Jr.				19	3	1889	25	6	1889	Perm. Appt.
2nd Asst.	Langland	John Jr.				25	6	1889	15	1	1890	Trsf.
2.1	Shields	Capt. William	H.		1925	10	3	1890	20	9	1890	Perm. Appt.

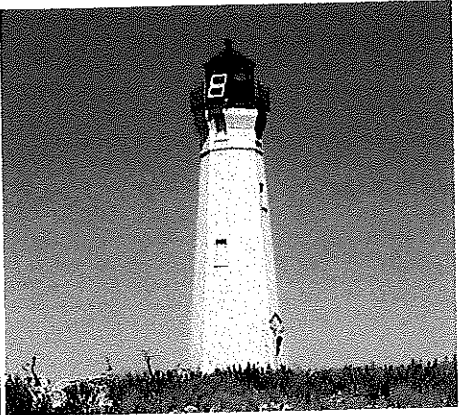

2	Shields	Capt. William	H.		1925	20	9	1890	5	3	1891	Trsf.
2.1	Crosby	Edgar	E.			23	5	1891	14	9	1891	Rsgd.
2.1	Martin	Joseph	A.			22	4	1892	5	7	1892	Perm. Appt.
2	Martin	Joseph	A.			5	7	1892	3	10	1892	Trsf.
2.1	Townshend	Joseph	W.			19	4	1893	10	8	1893	Trsf.
2.1	Winter	Ernst	E.			14	3	1894	22	8	1894	Perm. Appt.
2	Winter	Ernst	E.			22	8	1894	1	4	1897	Prmtd.
1	Wilson	Leon	D.			17	10	1896	9	3	1897	Rsgd.
1	Winter	Ernst	E.			1	4	1897	15	11	1899	Trsf.
2	Chapman	James	R.			17	5	1897	3	9	1897	Rsgd.
2	Mallette	Edward				15	3	1898	15	9	1898	Trsf.
2.1	King	Sheridan	J.		1902	26	9	1898	25	8	1899	Trsf. , Prmtd.
0	Bourissau	Andrew	G.		1901	12	10	1898	19	10	1901	Drowned
2	Grobber	Walter	E.		1901	25	8	1899	19	10	1901	Drowned
1	La Croix	Isadore				15	11	1899	16	8	1902	Rsgd.
2	Swartout	Arthur	E.			19	10	1901	19	10	1901	Declined
2	Plaut	John	E.			20	10	1901	17	11	1901	Rsgd.
0	Beloungia	Louis				1	11	1901			1919	End date unsure
2	Arentsen	Ludwig				18	11	1901	16	8	1902	Prmtd.
2	Gallagher	Owen				16	8	1902	31	3	1904	Trsf.
1	Arentsen	Ludwig				17	8	1902	30	4	1904	Rsgd.
2	Perault	James	N.			1	4	1904	3	5	1904	Prmtd.
1	Perault	James	N.			4	5	1904	31	12	1905	Rsgd.
2.1	Beloungia	Louis Jr.	P.			20	5	1904	20	5	1904	Declined
2	Robinson	Hans	A.	1879		20	5	1904	13	3	1907	Trsf. , Prmtd.
1	Barnum	William	N.			1	4	1906	30	6	1910	Trsf.
2	Corran	William	A.			1	4	1907	31	5	1907	Rsgd.
2.1	Beloungia	Wilbert	H.	1892		2	6	1907	1	7	1907	Rsgd.
2.1	Lauer	Frank		1881		2	7	1907			1919	End date unsure
1	Beloungia	Louis Jr.	P.			1	7	1910			1919	Prmtd. End date unsure
0	Beloungia	Louis Jr.	P.					1919	21	4	1924	Dates unsure
2	Keller	August						1919	21	4	1924	Prmtd. Dates unsure
1	Lauer	Frank		1881				1919	21	4	1924	Dates unsure
1	Keller	August				21	4	1924			1928	Dates unsure
0	Lauer	Frank		1881		21	4	1924			1940	Dates unsure
2	Wehner	James	H.	1895		1	6	1928			1929	Trsf. Dates unsure
2	Meverden	Homer	R.	1908	1988		3	1938			1941	Trsf. Dates unsure
1	Backus	Daniel	A.	1884				1939			1940	Dates unsure

# National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act

## FACT SHEET

### Ile Aux Galets Light (Skillagalee Island Light)

April 5, 2013

GSA Control No.	I-X-MI-808
Property Identification	Ile Aux Galets Light (aka Skillagalee Island Light)
Property Address	Southerly end of Gray's Reef passage from straight of Mackinaw, Lake Michigan, MI N 45° 40' 34.936", W085° 10' 19.653"
<p>Property Description</p>  <p>Photo by: Bernie Hellstrom, lighthouseboatnerd.com</p>	<p>Octagonal brick tower, 58 feet in height, white with black lantern.</p> <p>The lighthouse occupies Great Lakes Public Trust bottomlands owned by the State of Michigan. Authorization in the form of a conveyance (Private Use Agreement) is required by the State of Michigan for the occupied bottomlands. For access to and utilization of the light station, the selected steward must obtain the required authorization from the State of Michigan by contacting Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.</p>
Condition of Property	The light station is offered "AS IS" and "WHERE IS" without representation, warranty, or guarantee as to quality, quantity, title, character, condition, size or kind.
Range of Possible Uses	Historic Lights and Light Stations may be used for educational, park, recreational, cultural, or historic preservation purposes.
Commercial Activities	Commercial activities are prohibited unless approved by the Secretary of the Interior.
<p>Historical Information</p>  <p>Photo Courtesy of: Michiganlights.com (Historic photo: only the tower remains)</p>	<p>The light station is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. It must be maintained according to the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Historic preservation covenants will be incorporated into the Quitclaim Deed. No lakebeds will be conveyed under the Quitclaim Deed.</p>
Utilities	Unknown

Tenant	None
Aids to Navigation (ATON)	The ATON will remain the personal property of the United States Coast Guard (USCG). The United States reserves an unrestricted right for ingress and egress to maintain, operate, repair, replace or relocate the Federal aid to navigation and any associated equipment, and an Arc of Visibility for said aid. The ATON on the light station consists of a light signal flashing a white light every six (6) seconds.
Easements to be retained by United States Coast Guard	<p>(1) The unrestricted right of the USCG to keep, locate, service, maintain, operate, repair and replace the ATON and any and all associated equipment, on the light station.</p> <p>(2) The unrestricted right of the USCG to relocate or add any ATON and any and all associated equipment, or make changes on any portion of the light station as may be necessary for navigational purposes.</p> <p>(3) A right of access in favor of the USCG for the purpose of servicing, maintaining, locating, operating, repairing and replacing navigational aids and any and all associated equipment on the light station. The USCG shall have the right to enter the light station at any time, with reasonable notice, for the purpose of maintaining the ATON and performing the other functions contemplated herein. Access shall be across any portion of the light station as necessary. Upon completion of the servicing, maintaining, operating and replacing the ATON and any associated equipment, the light station shall at the sole cost of the USCG, subject to the availability of appropriated funds, be left as nearly as reasonably possible in the same condition before any such work began.</p> <p>(4) A reservation to the USCG for the purpose of preserving an Arc of Visibility from the light station to the shoreline within the radial arc of 360 degrees true and the stipulation that nothing will be constructed, maintained or permitted of a height sufficient to interfere with or obstruct the Arc of Visibility.</p>
Environmental Information	<p>Lead-based paint asbestos-containing material may be present.</p> <p>Inspection/Access: The U.S. General Services Administration will provide an opportunity for eligible entities to inspect the light station after the 60-day Notice has closed. A completed Waiver of Liability form will be required to inspect the light. Contact GSA at (617)565-5700 with questions.</p>