

Timeline of Algoma Pierhead Light and Piers

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Version 2

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Year	Activity	Details
1834	First record of settlers coming to Algoma	
1854	First record of significant ship entering Algoma Harbor and sailing upriver	Ship: Julie Ann from Racine Owned by Charles L Fellows
1856	First known pier built. Called Young's Pier. It was a private pier. Eliminated crossing the dangerous bar at the entrance to the river.	• Bridge-type pier built by a Mr. Parker for Mr. Young. • North side of the river mouth. • Abutted the shoreland owned by C.G. Boalt (who also owned the shoreland on the south side of the river).
1860	Young's Pier is sold by Mr. Young to C.G. Boalt.	
1860	Establishment of Ahnepee* Harbor Association Company (AHAC) President, David Young Directors - A.D. Eveland - M Simon - Simon Hall Clerk, G.W. Elliot Treasurer, J. L M. Parker	AHAC engaged in raising money to extend/improve/expand the pier South Side +360 Feet North Side +240 Feet Work started collecting piles
App. 1861	AHAC builds a new pier south of the river. New pier is called Citizens Pier (a.k.a. Farmers Pier)	Originally owned by AHAC, but over time, C.G. Boalt purchases shares from disgruntled AHAC shareholders and takes ownership of both piers, giving him a monopoly.
1866	Boalt & Young complete additions to pier	600 feet
1866	Edward Decker given ¼ interest in the pier	
1867	Citizen's Pier removed	
1870	Ahnepee* Harbor Survey done by the federal government and presented to Harbor commission.	Identifies need to remove rocky obstruction three blocks from mouth of the river. Cost is \$20,000 (\$2.6M in today's dollars). City sought federal government aid but ended up levying a town tax to raise the money.
1871	Federal funds were appropriated for the piers	
1872-1874	Construction of the two piers	See Figure 3 which shows the two piers built by the citizen's deemed necessary because of delay federal funding

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1875	Proposed outer harbor for a federally funded outer harbor.	In response to the 1870 survey. Progress had lagged due to a stipulation that there could be no dockage fee charged for goods shipped to or from a government pier. See Figure 3 which shows the proposed government piers
1878	Improvements to Harbor taking place	Several narrow escapes from wreck by ships was a catalyst to call for a pierhead light
1879	D. W. Stebbins is the proprietor of the north and south pier which were built by the citizens	
1879	\$8,000 (\$800,000 in 2025 dollars) designated for improvements to Ahnapee harbor, but not approved/appropriated	Report prepared by government subcommittee of completed and proposed work
1879	Residents build post lights at the outer ends of the existing piers	
1881	\$8,000 allocated to Ahnapee harbor	Major H. M. Robert of US Army Corps of Engineers was responsible for harbors north of Milwaukee. \$1000 available immediately for dredging of broken rock and repairs to the piers Remainder help until additional funds for larger effort of rock blasting, removal and filling of cribs
1886-1887	Work starts in 1886 on a government owned pier, which would create an outer harbor. Cribs were sunk in 1886 at the outer end of the pier. The balance of the cribs sunk in 1887.	Result of funding effort that had started in 1870.
1888	Work starts on the superstructure of the government piers	Constructed of wood North pier was split into two offset sections. Bridge connected the offset sections.
1890	Superstructure of the piers completed	A bridge with stairs at each end was built to link the main north pier and the detached outer pier.
1891	Residents build post lights at the outer ends of the new piers	
1891	Congress appropriated funds to build official range lights to mark entrance to the harbor	
1892	Light enclosures finished on the new piers, but lanterns were not illuminated.	There were two range lights (lanterns) – See Figure 1 (1) A lens lantern on a white wooden tower. The lower portion of the rear wooden tower was open framework, while the upper portion, below the hexagonal lantern room, was

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		enclosed. The tower was sixteen feet square at the base, tapered to ten-and-a-half feet at the lantern room, and was bolted to the wooden pier substructure. The tower measured thirty-five feet from base to ventilator ball, and its light had a focal plane of thirty-seven feet. (2) A tubular lantern on a post closer to the end of the pier. The post light had a focal plane of twenty-two feet.
1892	Ahnapee & Western Railroad constructed	Linked Casco to Algoma Built by Edward Decker
1892 (Dec)	A lens lantern for the tower and a tubular lantern for the post light were put in place and tested on December 23.	
1893	Range lights went into service on March 1, 1893, on the north pier head.	• Oil-operated light • Manually operated twice daily.
1893	Station established	
1893 (Feb)	Lighthouse Keeper hired – Ole Hansen	
1893	Rail service is having impact on travel to the west, causing decline in passenger travel by boat. Freight Travel is still popular, but not for transport west.	
1895	Rear Range light upgraded to fifth-order Fresnel lens. A red chimney was used on the lamp inside the Fresnel lens to produce a fixed red light.	Increased range from 9 to 11 miles
1896 (Nov)	New Lighthouse Keeper hired - Charles E. Young	
1897-1898	Catwalk installed	Easier access (did not extend to shore)
1899 (Nov)	New Lighthouse Keeper hired - Nelson Knudsen	
1900	Catwalk extended to shore The bridge was abandoned in 1900, after over 300 feet of elevated walkway were installed on the pier and detached pier to permit the keeper to access the lights in any weather conditions.	
1901 (Jul)	New Lighthouse Keeper hired - Gustavus Umberham	
1901	The Lighthouse Board makes annual request for \$3,500 (\$175,000 in 2025 dollars) for building a keeper's dwelling at Algoma,	The pier was on the opposite side of the river from any available dwelling. Wanted the keeper to "reside

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		sufficiently near the lights to give them proper care.”
1907	Congress provided initial funding for a keeper’s house in March 1907 . Plans made public.	- Presented by Mr. L.E. Lion, assistant to Major W. V. Judson US Army engineer in charge, at Perry Opera House in Algoma - Plans included removal of 500 feet of the present South Pier outer end. - New pier starts at foot of Fremont Street to include 204 feet of plank crib, then 652 feet of pile pier with a concrete superstructure, then 600 feet of concrete caisson breakwater to the extended crib at the south entrance to the harbor.
1908 (Feb)	Damage to the range light during storm	
1908 (May)	Congress provides additional funding for a keeper’s house in May 1908	
1908 (Jul)	The lot for the keeper’s dwelling was purchased on July 9, 1908.	
1909	A keeper’s house was constructed along the river during May and June of 1909.	Dwelling was a red brick, six-room dwelling with green shingles on its second story and gables
1908	Wooden base of prior lighthouse was removed. Diagonal lantern and Fresnel lens from the wooden base were placed on the top of a new curved cast iron base.	New base was riveted cast iron installed by US Army Corp of Engineers
1908	New steel trestle catwalk is to be added to replace the old wooden one that was torn down mid-year.	
1910 (Apr)	Foghorn added April 5 1910	- Manually operated - Small gasoline engine furnished power 3 blasts every 30 seconds. One sec on, one sec off; One sec on, one sec off; One Sec on; 25 sec silence
1910 (Apr)	Louis Braemer hired as first assistant to lighthouse keeper Umberham. Replaced Umberham upon his death - Apr 12, 1910	Umberham drowned when thrown off a boat south of Algoma in this year
1913 (Feb)	New Lighthouse Keeper - Eugene Kimball	
1915	Light house Service moved the range light on the South pier from its location within a hundred feet of the beacon to a station near the base of the pier near the oil house.	New position gives sailors a greater range to steer by and does not confuse the range light with the red beacon on the North pier.
1916	Metal range light tower is erected on the south pier	See Figure 5

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1921	Sometime before 1921, the wooden lighthouse was painted red	Sourced from the <i>Great Lakes Pilot</i> published in 1921. See Figure 2
1923 (Nov)	New Lighthouse Keeper - C.J Graan	
1924-1925	Keeper Graan devises a curved, metal-lined device that, when placed around the fog trumpet, reflected most of the sound seaward	
1932	New 12-foot cylindrical base was added to elevate the lighthouse. Brought in from Muskegon, Michigan. The new tower was equipped with a diaphone fog signal, operated by remote control	Elevated the foghorn North & South piers are capped with concrete to height of six feet. See Figure 4
1938 (Nov)	New Lighthouse Keeper - E.C. Anderson	
1963	Foghorn blast changed to one blast every 10 seconds	
1964	New fog signal installed.	Directed more to the lake and less audible to the city. Range of blast 5 miles. Changed to one blast every 7 seconds.
1973	Lighthouse Operations were automated	
1978	Algoma Lighthouse Station to be sold	0.4 acres, 2-story brick and frame house, 2 frame storage buildings
1985	The elevated walkway in the shore segment of the North Pier (from shore to bridge) is removed.	
2014 (May)	Lighthouse deemed in excess by US Coast Guard and made available by the terms of the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act	
2014 (June)	Coast Guard contracts work to replace the tower's foundation and windows and paint the lighthouse and attached catwalk.	
2015	Only City of Algoma applies. City of Algoma is approved to take ownership.	
2019	The Coast Guard removed the historic Fresnel lens from the tower and replaced it with an LED beacon	



Figure 1 Algoma Pierhead Range Lights circa 1900

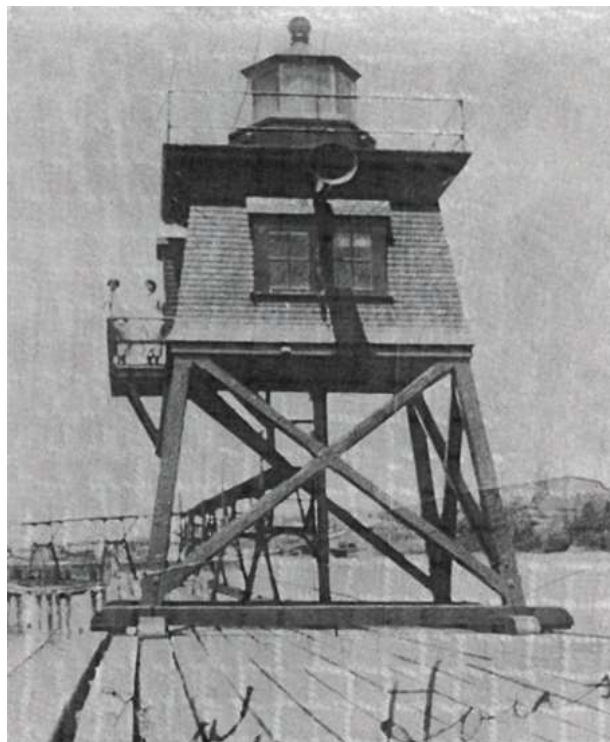


Figure 2 Algoma Pierhead Rear Range Light by 1921

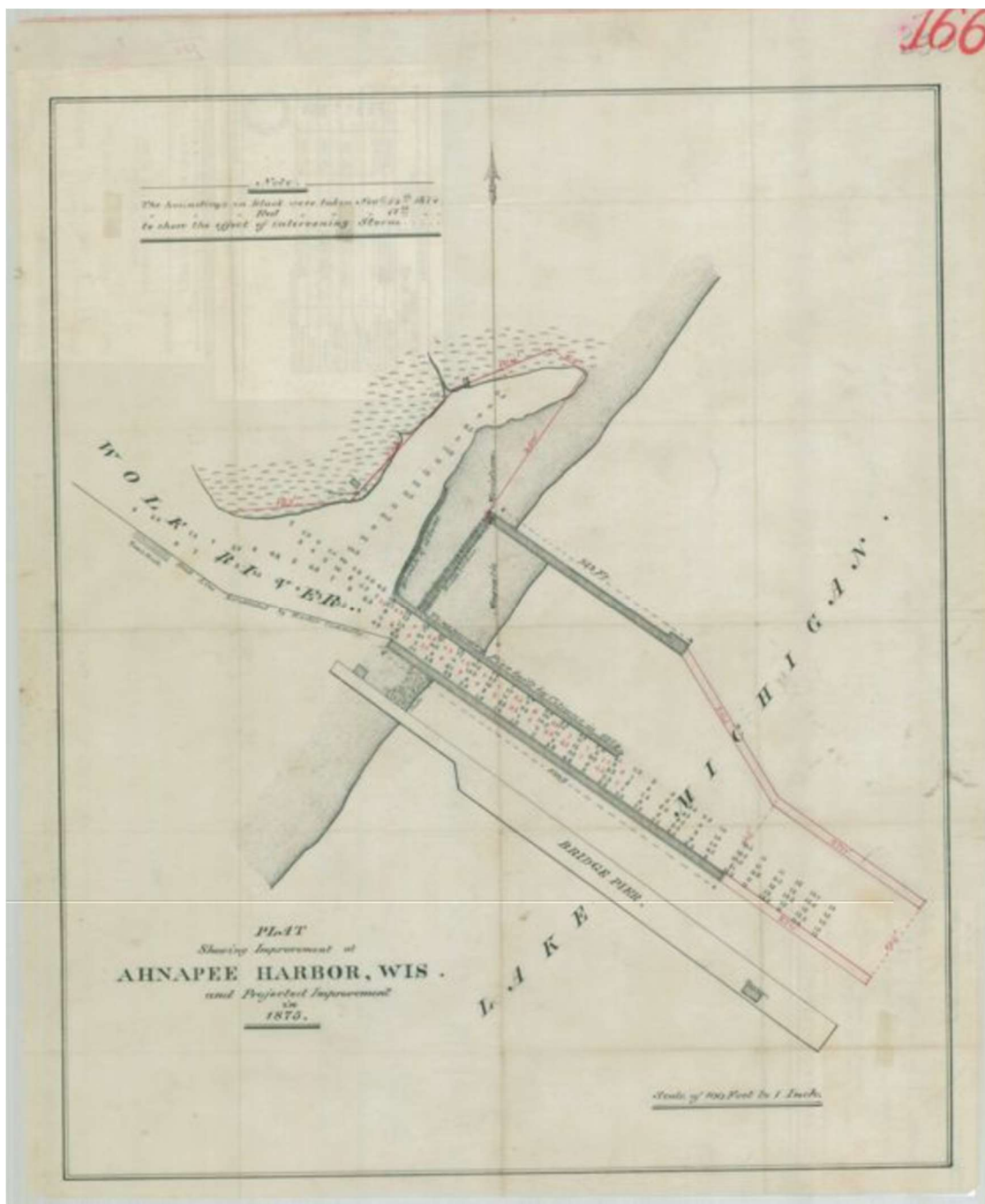


Figure 3 Plat Showing Improvement at Ahnapee Harbor, Wisconsin circa 1875



Figure 4 Algoma Pierhead Lighthouse circa 1932

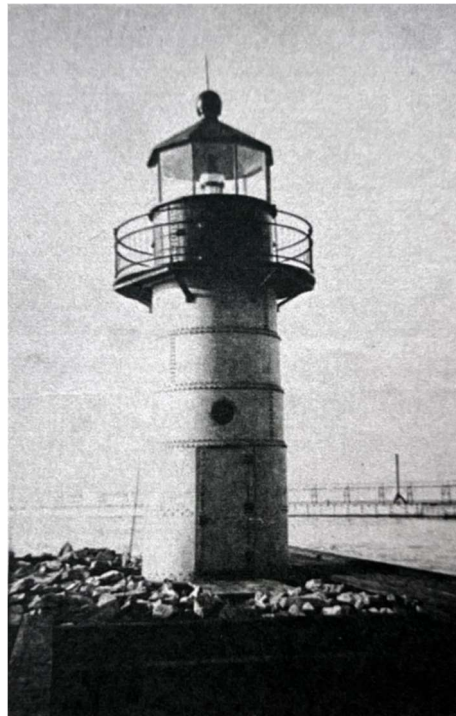


Figure 5 South Pier Range Light circa 1913

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