

# Green Point Lighthouse (WC)

Green Point Lighthouse is often mistakenly referred to as the Mouille Point Lighthouse, but that name belongs to a different structure which was built near Granger Bay a few years later. Confusingly, there is also another lighthouse in South Africa named Green Point; it is located near Umkomaas, in KwaZulu-Natal.

When the British took over the Cape Colony in 1806, they had little appreciation and a rather apathetic attitude to the numerous shipwrecks that continued to occur in Table Bay. When Sir Jahleel Brenton from the British Admiralty arrived at the colony in 1815, he was appalled at the indifference of the government towards the provision of lighthouses. He, together with the shipping companies, merchants and citizens of the colony, were incensed, but their cries for assistance fell on deaf ears.

Sir Rufane Donkin, the Acting Governor between 1820 and 1821, had other ideas, and pushed ahead with plans for a lighthouse at Green Point. He called for tenders without proper authority, and awarded a building contract to Herman Schutte, a German stonemason and architect. When the appointed Governor, Lord Charles Somerset, returned from leave, he was reportedly furious that the project had commenced without his approval and so he held up the paperwork, causing a delay of nearly 3 years before the build could continue. The lighthouse was eventually completed towards the end of 1823 and officially opened on the 12th of April 1824, making it the first formal lighthouse to be commissioned in South Africa.

Somerset was not inclined to spend any money on the upkeep of a facility which he had not authorized, and within 10 years the building had fallen into disrepair and the light was barely visible. The administration of lighthouses became part of the duties of the Director of Public Works, and when Charles Michell assumed this office in 1828, he pursued the improvement of the service with a vigor that marked all of his operations. He campaigned relentlessly for permission to build new lighthouses at Mouille Point, Cape Agulhas, Cape Point, and Cape Recife, and applied for funds for the proper maintenance and operation of the Green Point Lighthouse.

His efforts eventually prevailed, and the lighthouse was restored and upgraded in 1842. The tower was raised to its present height in 1865, and the original lighting apparatus, a single wick Argand lamp which burned Sperm Whale oil, replaced with a Chance Brothers third-order optic and a two-wick Trinity House burner which produced 8,500 candelas. It was updated again in 1922 to the current mechanism, which consists of 3 equally-spaced dioptric panels mounted on a table floating in a mercury bath, using a 400-watt metal-halide lamp with an output of 850,000 candelas.

When a plan to install a foghorn was first proposed in 1923, outraged local residents met at a local tearoom and compiled a letter of complaint to the mayor of Cape Town. Despite their protests, the foghorn was installed in 1926, and set to emit a bass note for 3 seconds every 30 seconds during heavy mists. This earned it the nickname "Moaning Minnie", and the mournful sound continued to elicit complaints from neighbors right up until 1986, when it was replaced with a nautophone.

The square tower, which was originally painted white, was repainted in 1950 with a daymark consisting of two horizontal black bands separated by a broad yellow band, to make it more easily distinguishable from other buildings on the foreshore. This color scheme still proved to be ineffective, and so it was changed to its present daymark, white with red diagonal stripes, in 1956.

Green Point Lighthouse was declared a National Monument on the 12th of January 1973. It is currently the home base of LNS (Lighthouse and Navigational Systems), a division of Transnet National Ports Authority which operates and maintains all of South Africa's lighthouses. There is a small conference facility and gift shop on the premises, as well as a visitor center to cater for the many tourists which are drawn to this eye-catching and historic building.

## Green Point Lighthouse (WC) Fact File

LSA Number	14
Name	Green Point
Province	Western Cape
Location	Cape Town
GPS Coordinates	S33.901405 E18.399921 33°54'05.1"S 18°23'59.7"E
ARLHS Number	SAF-047
Admiralty Number	D5900
NGA Number	25980
Active	Yes
First Established	1824
Commission Date	12 April 1824
Decommission Date	Not applicable
Construction Type	Square masonry tower
Daymark	Tower painted white with bold red and white diagonal bands; lantern painted white.
Tower Height	16 meters (52 feet)
Focal Plane	19 meters (62 feet)
Luminous Intensity	850,000 candelas
Nominal Range	25 nautical miles
Characteristic	Fl.W.
Period	10 seconds
Pattern	TBC
Pattern Description	1 white flash every 10 seconds.
Manned	TBC
Site Open	Yes
Fenced	No
Tower Open	Yes
Accommodation	No
Access Method	Car
Access Notes	All access roads are tarred.