

Mouille Point Lighthouse

Many people confuse the Mouille Point Lighthouse with the Green Point Lighthouse, and assume that the names are interchangeable. This is not the case, and these are two different lighthouses. Green Point was the first lighthouse to be built in South Africa (in 1824), and Mouille Point was the second (in 1842). To add to the confusion, there is another lighthouse located near Umkomaas in KwaZulu-Natal which is also named Green Point; it was erected in 1905.

Following catastrophic losses from massive storms, the V.O.C. (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie, or in English "Dutch East India Company") in 1741 shifted their winter anchorage to Simon's Town, and at the same time started building a breakwater at Granger Bay. Rough seas persistently swept the structure away, and the project was eventually abandoned in 1746. The French constructed a battery on the remnants of the breakwater in 1781 and named it Mouille Point, after the French word for an anchorage.

Despite the operation of the Green Point lighthouse, many vessels continued to be wrecked at the entrance to Table Bay harbor. The then Port Captain, Mr. Bance, recommended that an additional light be placed at Mouille Point to provide extra guidance to the ships. A site was chosen adjacent to the Mouille Point Battery, and a pyramidal lighthouse, designed by Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Collier Michell, the Surveyor-General of the Cape, was constructed. It was commissioned on the 1st of July 1842, and consisted of a single white light as opposed to the twin lights of the Green Point Lighthouse.

But the light output was judged to be too weak, and easily confused with other lights on the shore. It was decided to erect a completely new structure, a cylindrical brick tower about 11 meters (36 feet) tall, with a gallery and an octagonal lantern imported from Paris. It was plastered and painted with red and white bands, utilizing a dioptric lamp which consumed about 730 gallons of sheep-tail oil per annum. A hollow foundation in the bedrock, about 4 meters (13 feet) deep, was provided for oil storage. It was commissioned in January 1865.

The new lighthouse also proved to be ineffective, and so the Lighthouse Commission of 1890 recommended that it be switched off upon completion of the Granger Bay Breakwater, which had its own navigational beacon. It was decommissioned on the 15th of April 1906, and then partially demolished a few years later.

Today, all that remains of the structure is the circular hollow stone base topped off with a concrete slab, which was used as a searchlight platform during World War II. It is located on the grounds of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (Granger Bay Campus), in a beautiful setting which is extremely well maintained. It is currently used to store gardening equipment. Although the structure is on private property, it is usually not difficult to gain access with a polite request to the security personnel.

Mouille Point Lighthouse Fact File

LSA Number	13
Name	Mouille Point
Province	Western Cape
Location	Cape Town
GPS Coordinates	S33.899181 E18.411677 33°53'57.1"S 18°24'42.0"E
ARLHS Number	SAF-067
Admiralty Number	Not applicable
NGA Number	Not applicable
Active	No
First Established	1842
Commission Date	January 1865
Decommission Date	15 April 1906
Construction Type	Round masonry tower
Daymark	Tower painted white.
Tower Height	Not applicable
Focal Plane	Not applicable
Luminous Intensity	Not applicable
Nominal Range	Not applicable
Characteristic	Not applicable
Period	Not applicable
Pattern	Not applicable
Pattern Description	Not applicable
Manned	No
Site Open	Yes
Fenced	No
Tower Open	No
Accommodation	No
Access Method	Car
Access Notes	The base of the lighthouse is located within the grounds of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (Granger Bay Campus). Access is usually not a problem.