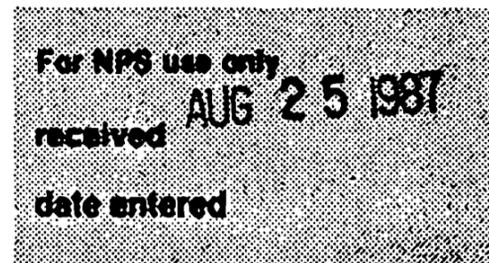


**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
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NAME: Historic - Ida Lewis Rock Lighthouse

LOCATION: On Lime Rock in Newport Harbor off Wellington Avenue  
Newport, Rhode Island 02840  
Newport County

**CLASSIFICATION**

Category - building(s)  
Ownership - private  
Status - occupied  
Accessible - yes, restricted  
Present Use - other: yacht club

**OWNER OF PROEPRTY**

Ida Lewis Yacht Club  
Wellington Avenue  
P.O. Box 479  
Newport, RI 02840

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

Recorder of Deeds  
Newport City Hall  
43 Broadway  
Newport, RI 02840

**REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

none

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DESCRIPTION

Condition - good / altered / original site

Ida Lewis Rock Light occupies Lime Rock, a small rock outcropping approximately 100 yards off shore at the southern entrance to Newport Harbor just west of Fort Adams. Established in 1854 but no longer active, the present tower and dwelling date from 1857. Also on the rock are three outbuildings of more recent construction. Although Lime Rock was separate from the mainland while the light was active, it is now connected by a 300-foot wooden pier with boat slips on the east side and a dock house toward the north end.

The two-story, Greek Revival dwelling closely resembled the keeper's quarters at Dutch island, also built in 1857. Topped with a hipped roof and an offset chimney, the two-bay-wide square building has six-over-six sash, plain stone lintels, and stone sills. A one-story, hipped-roof brick wing of the same period projects from the south wall and a recently added enclosed porch, with a green and white striped corrugated fiberglass roof, wraps around the west and north sides.

The brick light tower is attached to the northwest corner of the dwelling. Thirteen feet high and four feet square, and rising only to the height of the roof's eaves, the tower is the smallest of any light in Rhode Island. The unusual lantern consist only of three large sheets of glass on the west, north and east sides, topped with a hipped roof and round copper ventilator.

The light was discontinued in 1928, and the building was sold shortly thereafter for use as the headquarters of the Ida Lewis Yacht Club. The floor plan has not been altered, though the functions of some rooms have been changed. On the first floor is a bar, a lounge and a sitting room. A large meeting room is on the second floor. The original kerosene lamp used by keeper Ida Lewis still hangs in the lantern. It is now electrified and is operated by the yacht club as a privately maintained navigational aid.

Three small, one-story, wood frame outbuildings are located north of the dwelling. One of these, shingled and clapboarded with a gable roof, was built during the light's active period. It now has a recent addition on its east side and is used as a shower room. The other two buildings, another shower room and a storage shed, were both built by the yacht club. The club also

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built the boat slips and pier that connects the lighthouse to the mainland.

**SIGNIFICANCE**

Period: 1800-1899

Specific dates: 1854, 1857

Established in 1854 at the southern entrance to Newport Harbor, Ida Lewis Rock Light is significant for its association with a noted keeper, Ida Lewis. During much of the 54 years she lived at the light, Lewis received national publicity for her numerous rescues of people stranded in overturned boats in Newport Harbor. Now used as the headquarters of a yacht club, Ida Lewis Rock Light serves as a reminder of Newport's maritime heritage in a town whose economy has always been closely linked to the sea. Architecturally, it is significant as a relatively unaltered example of a mid-nineteenth century lighthouse consisting of a keeper's dwelling with an attached tower.

The lighthouse was originally named Lime Rock Light after the rock on which it sits. Between 1854 and the completion of the present dwelling in 1857 there were no accommodations on the rock for the keeper. Captain Hosea Lewis, the light's first keeper, took up residence with his family at Lime Rock on July 29, 1858. Six months later, Captain Lewis was paralyzed by a stroke which left him a complete invalid. Thereafter, his wife and fourteen-year-old daughter Ida, took over the duties of tending the light.

One of only a few women keepers in the Lighthouse Service, Ida Lewis became well-known for her numerous rescues off Lime Rock. The most famous occurred in 1869 when she saved two soldiers from nearby Fort Adams whose boat had overturned in a sudden gale. An account of the rescue appeared in many national publications including the July 31, 1869, issue of Harper's Weekly, which featured two engravings of Ida Lewis and her lighthouse. As her fame spread she received numerous honors and awards. She was made a member of the American Legion of Honor, presented with medals from the New York and Massachusetts Humane Societies, awarded a gold medal by Congress, given a \$30 a month pension by Andrew Carnegie. She was also visited at the light by prominent men and women, including President Grant, as well as numerous local residents and interested spectators.

During her tenure, few changes were made to the light. Most entries in the Lighthouse Board's annual reports mention only minor repairs to the structure.

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On October 14, 1911, Ida Lewis died at the age of 69 after having lived at Lime Rock for fifty-three years and serving as its keeper for thirty-four years. After her death the light was officially renamed Ida Lewis Rock Light.

In 1927, after seventy three years of service, the light and lens were removed from the light tower and replaced with an automatic beacon mounted on a steel skeletal tower directly in front of the lighthouse. The following year the lighthouse was sold to the Narragansett Bay Regatta Association which acquired the site for use as the headquarters of its newly formed Ida Lewis Yacht Club. The Coast Guard continued to maintain the automatic beacon until November 1, 1963, when it was discontinued and taken down. Through an arrangement with the Coast Guard, the yacht club, which occupies the site, still operates the original lamp kept by Ida Lewis as a privately maintained navigational aid.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage: less than 1 acre  
Quadrangle Name: Newport, RI

UTM References: 19 305760 4594190

Verbal Boundary Description: The nominated property is Newport Assessor's plat 42, lot 12, which encompasses the entire resource.

Level of Significance: State  
SHPO Certification

*Richard C. Williams*