



Pointe aux Barques Maritime Museum

Assistant Keeper Program Handbook





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2026 Program Year Handbook

PROGRAM HISTORY

Since 2002, the Pointe aux Barques Lighthouse in Lighthouse County Park has been operated as a museum by the Pointe aux Barques Maritime Museum (PABMM). The museum is open five days per week in the summer and the lighthouse tower is open to climb on specified dates. A nearby gift shop is open five days per week. In 1908, a second residence was built near the lighthouse that served as the assistant keeper's house. PABMM is now using the assistant keeper's house for its "Assistant Keeper Program".

ACCOMMODATIONS

From late May through September, your group of two to four adults 18 years of age or older can spend a week at the assistant keeper's house acting as "Assistant Keepers." In return for payment of the enrollment fee and agreement to provide volunteer services, Assistant Keepers are provided lodging in the assistant keeper's dwelling overlooking the scenic shores of Lake Huron. Assistant Keepers will also be entered into our rolls as members of PABMM for 2026.

Accommodations include two bedrooms, each with a queen-sized bed, thus sleeping up to four adults. The assistant keeper's house has a large living/dining room, a fully-equipped kitchen, and one second-floor full bathroom with a walk-in shower. The quarters are heated, but not air conditioned. Wi-Fi is available, and a TV is located in the living room for personal streaming subscriptions. Bring your own linens (including pillows and blankets); a washer and dryer are available in the basement. Household items such as bathroom tissue, paper towels, laundry soap and cleaning supplies are provided. Bring your own food and toiletries. A charcoal grill is available for your use.

Please note that the house's original dining room, which is just to the left of the front door, is used by PABMM as an office. Officers may use the office occasionally, but will always announce their presence before entering and, except in emergencies, will only use the office between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

Maximum occupancy of the living quarters is four people. We are not able to accommodate children, pets or overnight guests. Parking for two vehicles is provided.

The enrollment fee is \$150 per person per week. If the assistant keeper's house is not left in the same condition as it was found, a \$250 cleaning fee will be assessed.



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REQUIREMENTS AND ELIGIBILITY

The Assistant Keeper Program is available from late May through September. Minimum stay is one week. Assistant Keepers serve in teams of two to four adults that can be made up of family members and friends. Due to the significant obligations Assistant Keepers are undertaking, we are unable to accommodate children. No pets are allowed. Smoking is not allowed in the assistant keeper's house, lighthouse, life-saving station or gift shop.

All Assistant Keepers will report to and work under the guidance of a designated PABMM Board member. The primary responsibilities of Assistant Keepers include greeting visitors and acting as docents by giving tours and providing information about the lighthouse, the life-saving station, and the local Thumb area. Duties may include keeping the gift shop neat and restocked as well as receiving and pricing merchandise. In addition, Assistant Keepers will be asked to perform facility maintenance such as sweeping floors, vacuuming, dusting and taking out the trash. Assistant Keepers may also be asked to assist with exterior building and grounds maintenance. Assistant Keepers' presence at the lighthouse also helps with on-site security for this historic location.

Assistant Keepers will rotate duties throughout the week. You will be instructed on safety precautions during orientation; please emphasize these precautions to our guests, especially when the tower is open, paying particular attention to limits on numbers of persons allowed in the tower at one time. At least two Assistant Keepers will be responsible for being on duty Wednesday through Sunday, at a minimum between the hours of 10:00 a.m. through 5:00 p.m. The total commitment per person will not exceed 35 hours per week, but the total time commitment may be less if your group includes three or four persons. Participants must be comfortable speaking to the public and in good health.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Assistant Keepers are generally scheduled for one week. Check-in is on Tuesday and check-out is on Monday. Assistant Keepers are asked to arrive no later than 4:00 p.m. on the first Tuesday of their stay and to check out no later than 11:00 a.m. on the last Monday of their stay. In the event of any delays, please let us know at (989) 297-2549.

An orientation session will be held after you have moved in. You will be issued a lanyard with keys, a name tag and PABMM shirt which should be worn at all times you are on duty. Keep your keys with you at all times. When your stay is over, please turn in your name tag, lanyard and key (\$100.00 fee for non-returned keys).



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ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

This Handbook and a Docent Manual will be provided to all Assistant Keepers prior to check-in and it is expected that this information will be reviewed thoroughly prior to arrival. All Assistant Keepers will be expected to attend an orientation session upon arrival.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Interested individuals must complete the PABMM Assistant Keeper Program Application form and mail it and the other required documents and enrollment fee to:

PABMM Assistant Keeper Program
P.O. Box 97
Port Austin, MI 48468

or scan the form and required documents and email them as pdf files to Maggy Thompson at maggy@pabmm.org. For further information, including a list of available weeks, email or call Maggy at (989) 297-2549.

ADDITIONAL RULES

General

Assistant Keepers are expected to be neat, well-groomed and appropriately attired with their Assistant Keeper shirt (provided upon arrival) when on duty. All Assistant Keepers must present themselves in the professional manner befitting hosts at an historic site.

Exterior Appearance

One of your duties is to keep the exterior of the lighthouse and surrounding area clean and attractive. Dispose of all trash in the trash cans provided. The use of campers and tents is permitted in the campground only. Assistant Keepers' vehicles must be parked in spaces designated for this purpose. Do not leave personal items such as beach towels, chairs, shoes, and rafts on the porches and sidewalks or in other outdoor areas at the lighthouse.

Lighthouse Security

Please lock the door to the assistant keeper's house when none of the Assistant Keepers is "at home". All exterior doors to the lighthouse and gift shop are locked by the Lighthouse Park manager or PABMM Board members when not open to the public. Generally, you will be expected to work and



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be on site only during hours the lighthouse and gift shop are open. We recommend that you do not keep any unnecessary valuable items in the Assistant Keeper's house or on the Lighthouse Park grounds. PABMM is not responsible for items that may be lost or stolen.

The Collections

The collections on display in the lighthouse are valuable historical materials used for interpreting the lighthouse, the life-saving station, and their significance to the economic and social development of the Thumb of Michigan and the State generally. Please do not move any artifacts without the permission of the PABMM President.

Image and Identification

Assistant Keepers should always strive to provide visitors to Lighthouse Park with a positive experience similar to what they would find at other historical sites open to the public. Clothing should be casual and comfortable, but suitable for greeting visitors. Shorts and t-shirts are appropriate, but the following items are not: tank tops; bathing suits; excessively worn clothing; and bare feet. Everyone will be given polo shirts and name tags to wear that identify them as Assistant Keepers. Please wear your polo shirt and name tag at all times when you are on duty.

General Conduct of Assistant Keepers

No smoking is permitted inside the buildings. Smoking outside must be done well away from all buildings, and all waste materials must be picked up and disposed of properly. No open flames of any kind are allowed inside the historic buildings. No alcoholic beverages are allowed in the lighthouse, life-saving station or gift shop. No pets are permitted inside the historic buildings including the assistant keeper's house, except seeing-eye dogs or similar service animals.

Lighthouse County Park Regulations

You must comply with the Lighthouse County Park regulations, a copy of which you will be provided upon check-in.

Public Relations

Assistant Keepers who receive inquiries from the press or other media regarding the Pointe aux Barques lighthouse, life-saving station or Lighthouse County Park should refer them to a PABMM Board member.



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Gift Shop Discounts

Assistant Keepers are entitled to a 20% discount on purchases made in the gift shop. The discount applies to purchases made for your personal use and may not be extended to friends or relatives who may visit during your stay.

Storm/Emergency Policy

Responsibility for closing the facilities lies with the Park Manager. When the facilities are open to the public during storms or other community emergencies, Assistant Keepers will be expected to be at their positions.

Guests

PABMM understands that friends and relatives are very interested in this unique experience and may want to visit while you are here. However, please observe the following rules:

- No overnight guests are permitted in the assistant keeper's house.
- Guests are required to park their vehicles in the lighthouse parking area.
- Guests are not permitted to help in the gift shop, lighthouse or life-saving station and are asked not to visit with the Assistant Keepers while on duty.

Important Telephone Numbers

Fire/Police (emergency) -- 911

Larry Becker, PABMM Board Member -- (586) 243-1838

Lighthouse Park Manager (May 1 – October 15) -- (888) 265-2583. Press 3 at the prompt for the "Lighthouse" park manager.

Working as an Assistant Keeper is a rewarding and educational experience -- not a vacation. Assistant Keepers can and do, however, thoroughly enjoy the time they spend here making new friends and learning new history.