



# THE Lightkeeper

The Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society

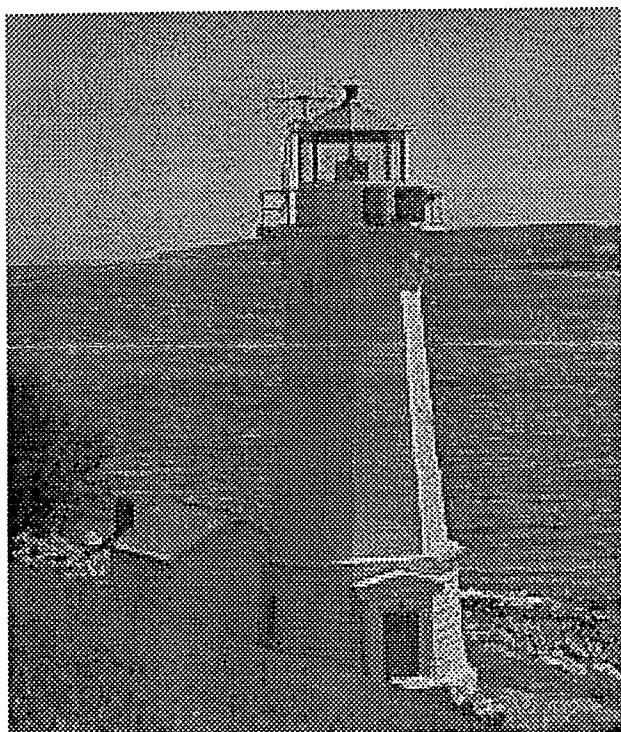
Vol. 5 , No. 4, Dec., 1998

The objectives of the Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society are: to promote and support preservation and awareness of Nova Scotian lighthouses; to assist community groups in leasing or taking ownership of lighthouse sites; to provide access to written research and photographic documentation and to initiate oral history research; and to classify and monitor the status of historic lighthouse sites.

**MEETINGS:** 7:00 pm Fourth Wednesday of the month, Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, 1675 Lower Water Street, Halifax.

**WEBSITE:** <http://www.EDnet.ns.ca/educ/heritage/nsllps>

**PATRONS:** Rip Irwin, Dexter and Susan Kenfield, **AFFILIATES:** Age of Sail Heritage Centre, Canadian Coast Guard, Cape Sable Historical Society, Five Islands Lighthouse Society, Friends of the Yarmouth Light Society, Henry Island Lighthouse Preservation Society, Mabou Harbour Authority, Margaretsville Community Hall Society, Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, Municipality of Queens Tourism & Development, Nova Scotia Lighthouse Interpretive Centre, Sandy Point Recreation Group, South Shore Tourism Association, Spencers Island Community Association, Tidal View Drive Association, Walton Lighthouse Committee, Yarmouth County Tourist Association



George's Island Lighthouse

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**MEMBERSHIP FEES DUE,  
1999.**

**See the slip inserted in this issue!**

**MEETINGS:** 4th Wednesday of each month at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, Halifax

**WEDNESDAY JANUARY 25:**

7:00 PM, General Meeting

**WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 25**

7:00 PM, General Meeting

7:45 PM, *Keeping the Yarmouth Lighthouse*

A red-striped lighthouse at Cape Forchu has lit the way into Yarmouth Harbour since 1839. The Friends of the Yarmouth Light now look after much of the property. Society members will give an illustrated talk about the "Old Yarmouth Light" and it's successor, "The Applecore Light."

**Build a Lighthouse**

**Saturday, March 13**

**10 AM - 12 noon**

A children's workshop to make a wooden model of one of Nova Scotia's lighthouses that will also double as a savings bank. There will be a small charge which will go towards the work of the Society. Call 424-7490 for details.

**Sambro -**

**North America's Oldest Working Lighthouse**

**Tues. March 30, 7:30 PM**

A repeat, sponsored by the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, of Kathy Brown's illustrated talk about Canada's most important lighthouse and the current restoration project.

## WELCOME ABOARD!

*The following new members recently joined NSLPS:*

Sandy Point Recreation Group, Kerry Lake, James Sletchta, James and Jane Kurfees, Kevin Turner, John Freeman, Rose Hargadon, Dr. Julian Gwyn, Tidal View Drive Association, Margaretsville Community Hall Society, Henry Island Lighthouse Preservation Society.

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## COMMUNITY LIGHTHOUSE NEWS

Tim Hall

### Burntcoat Head Replica Light

This lovely lighthouse site at Burntcoat Head, on the Minas Basin enjoyed its busiest season ever in 1998. Signed attendance to for the summer was 5,400, which is double that of the previous summer. The site was open from May to October, and students were employed to provide interpretation. New features to the site this year were the construction of a viewing deck and a reproduction of the oil shed.

The oil shed now houses new washroom facilities and storage, and was built from the original specifications. The new deck enhances what was already a spectacular view of the highest tides in the world. In addition there is a great view of today's island, which was the site of the original lighthouse. This is a terrific site to come and spend an afternoon, enjoy the view and bring a picnic.

Work will be getting underway shortly to improve the stairwell to the lantern. This will improve the accessibility for visitors. Plan to stop and visit Burntcoat Head on your next visit to the area.

### Five Islands

Across Minas Basin from Burntcoat Head, sits the traditional Nova Scotia lighthouse at Five Islands. No longer in operation (since 1993), this wooden tower has



Five Island Lighthouse.

Photo: courtesy Five Islands  
Lighthouse Preservation Society.

The Society is planning a meeting in mid January to discuss plans for the upcoming season. If you would like more information, please call Faye Currey at (902) 254-2060.

now been completely restored by the Five Islands Lighthouse Preservation Society.

A student "Lightkeeper" provided the many visitors to the site with historical and technical information this past summer. Plans are to have an interpreter again next summer. The lighthouse will be open again in May, but you can view the tower any time throughout the year, if the campsite owners are home.

### Sandy Point

One of the oldest operating lighthouses along the South Shore of Nova Scotia is Sandy Point. Built in 1873, this wooden tower has stood basically unchanged for over 125 years. The Sandy Point Recreation Group has been working hard over the past two years to improve the facilities overlooking the light. This is simply a wonderful spot to stop, have lunch, take a walk along the shore and view this unique lighthouse. While the tower is not open to the public, you can walk out to it at low tide, and view at first hand this special lighthouse.

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## WE WANT NEWS

We try to include the latest about what's happening at lighthouse sites in Nova Scotia in every issue of *The Lightkeeper*. We want to know what our Affiliates are doing. We want to know what's happening about the lighthouse in your community. It's interesting reading; it keeps the names of places to visit in the minds of our readers; it's free advertising! But, for Tim Hall who gathers the information, it's time consuming and can be frustrating when he can't get hold of people.

### YOU CAN HELP!

Send us information about what's happening at your lighthouse. If you belong to a group we'd like things such as what you did in the summer of '98, and what you plan for '99. Do you have special plans for 2000? What happened at your last meeting? If you are an individual, let us know the state of your community's lighthouse. Are plans afoot to save your light? How do people in your community feel about what's happening with the lighthouses?

This needs to be a journal for everyone! Blow your own horn! You don't have to be an award winning writer - just jot down your news on paper, send it, and we'll do the rest. If you want to send us an article, that's OK, too. Now we have thirteen affiliates running lighthouse sites, and 125 members, we should be running out of space! Send to Kathy Brown, Editor *The Lightkeeper*, 24 Armshore Drive, Halifax, NS, B3N 1M5, or E-Mail [krbrown@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:krbrown@ns.sympatico.ca). Next deadline is Feb. 1.

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## LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTS IN NOVA SCOTIA

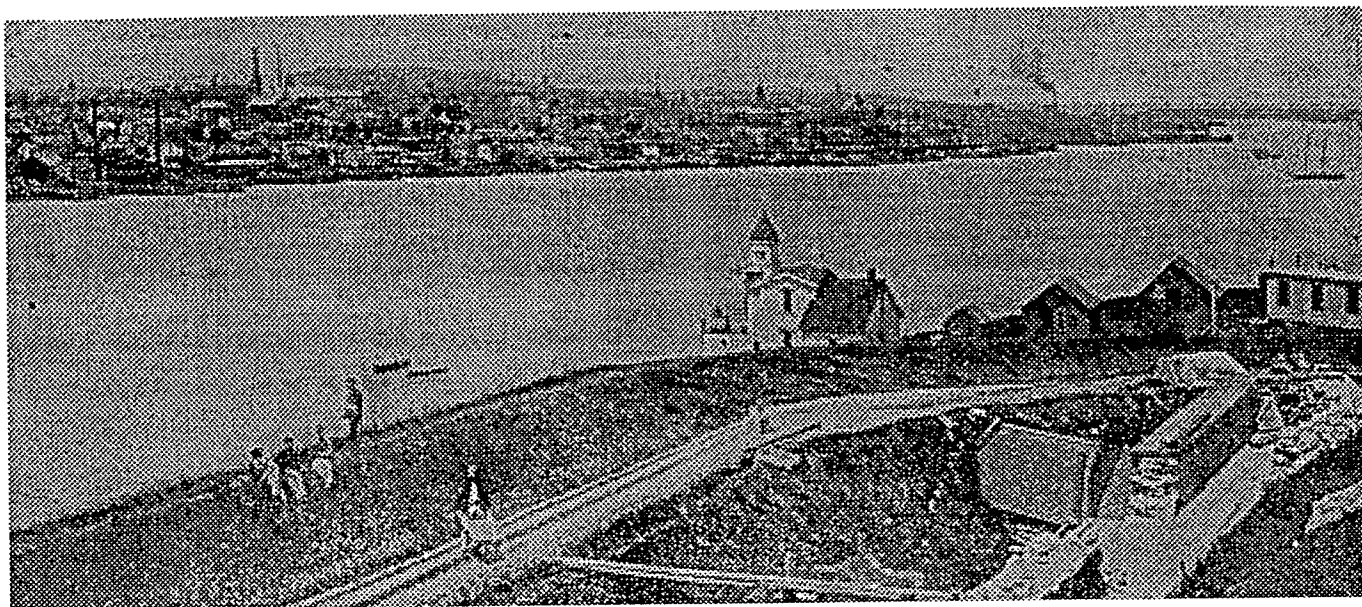
Here's a list of lighthouse sites that community groups are running. Are there others? Let us know!

### Around the coast, from Amherst:

Spencer's Island	Cape Forchu
Port Greville	Seal Island Lighthouse Museum
Five Islands	Sandy Point
Burntcoat Head	Fort Point, Liverpool
Walton	Port Bickerton
Gilbert Point	Mabou Harbou

## GEORGE'S ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE

Dale (Matthews) Veinot & Kathy Brown. All photographs courtesy Dale (Matthews) Veinot.



The first George's Island Lighthouse.

The island, located in Halifax Harbour, was called "Ile a la Raquette" by the French. It was briefly renamed "Ile d'Enville" when the unfortunate Duc D'Anville he was buried there in 1746, before his body was dug up and moved to Louisbourg. In 1749 when Halifax was founded by Colonel Edward Cornwallis, it was called George Island, after King George II. In 1963, the name was changed to George's Island.

The first lighthouse on George's Island was established in 1876. It was located on the western shore, behind the house. The light was two fixed white lights, 20 feet apart vertically. The apparatus of the light in that year was catoptric reflector oil lamps. The structure was a 35 foot white square wooden tower, with a black diamond daymark on the south side, and a red iron lantern. There were various changes over the years to the light. In 1899 the fog bell from the Maughers Beach Lighthouse on McNabs Island was transferred to George's Island. In 1903 the light was changed to one flashing red light 50 feet high.

In 1916 the lighthouse was destroyed by fire. A temporary red occulting light was established. Early in January, the light was lit in a new concrete lighthouse of the same design as that built at Louisbourg in 1923. This is the lighthouse that stands on the island today. It is about 200 feet from the lightkeeper's house, which is still standing.

The light was group occulting white until 1922 when a 4<sup>th</sup> order dioptric lens was installed. The light was flashing green until 1977. In 1973 a fluorescent red stripe was painted on the south side of the tower and in 1992 an electric lantern was installed. The lighthouse is now listed

as part of "Halifax Harbour Inner Range" and shows a flashing white light with increased intensity on the line of range. The other range light is on a skeleton tower and exhibits an occulting white light.

### Lightkeepers

1876 - 1920	Mr. Robert Ross
1915 -	Mr. Stewart Ross (Temporary)
1915 - 1920	Mr. Lovell Ross (Temporary)
1920 - 1946	Mr. Wallace H. Nolan (Paddy)
1946	Mr. Earl Edwards (Temporary)
1946	Mr. Joseph Bedgood (Temporary)
1946 - 1964	Mr. Victor Matthews (Dale's father)
1964 - 1972	Mr. David Barkhouse
1972	De-staffed

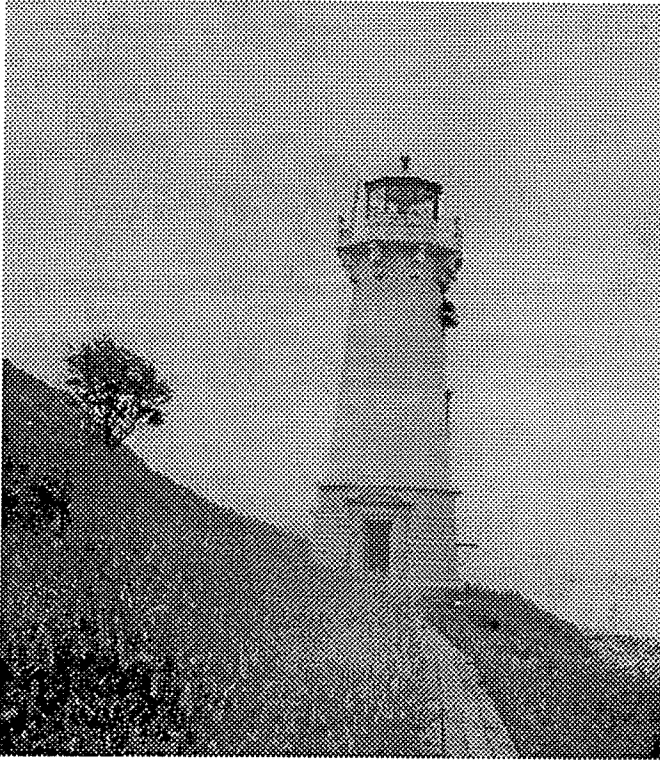
Assistant keepers during the time of Victor Matthews: Leonard Matthews, Albert Arnold, Clifford Swansburg, Leon Harding, Stanley Matthews, and perhaps others.



Ethel and Victor Matthews.

## MEMORIES OF LIFE AT GEORGE'S ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE

*Dale (Matthews) Veinot*



George's Island Lighthouse, 1954.

The light itself was in a little glassed chamber and you had to climb three ladders in order to reach it. The light was shining brass and copper, with a green cover and polished magnifying glass over the whole thing. It revolved by a spring which had to be hand wound everyday. The light had a mantle which operated on kerosene vapor, and burned from sunset to sunrise. In the fall and winter, when the nights are longer, the light had to be wound in the middle of the night or it would not run all night. In case of break down an emergency kerosene lamp was put up.

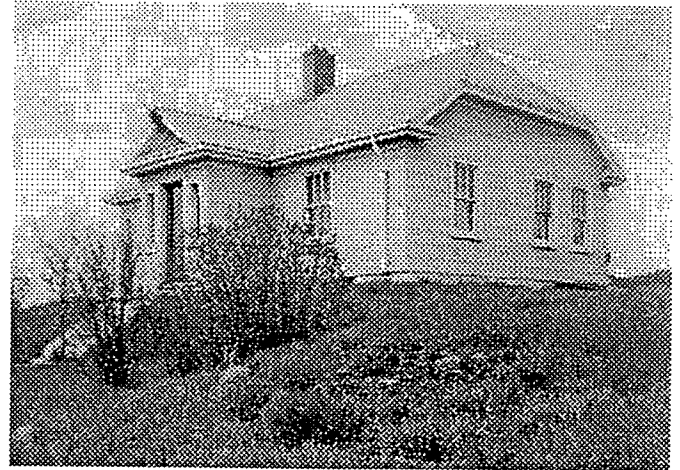
On foggy days the fog alarm had to be set in motion. The characteristics of this "Tyfon" was 2 blasts of 2 seconds duration every minute thus: blast 2 seconds--silent 28 seconds--blast 2 seconds--silent 28 seconds. The fog alarms were moved in the late 1950's from inside the bottom level of the lighthouse to a small house behind the lighthouse. They are still to be seen on the west side of the island.

Four of the lighthouse keepers who were the longest on George's Island were Mr. Robert Ross, Paddy Nolan, Victor Matthews, who was my father, and Mr. David Barkhouse.

Paddy Nolan and his wife were sole inhabitants from 1929 to 1942. After that the army moved in with an anti-aircraft battery in 1943. Paddy had to row to Pier 20, National Harbours Board to get his mail and other

supplies. They did not have any electricity on the island when they were there. At a meeting one time Paddy said that "I wouldn't have wanted a better place to work and live.

My father, Victor Matthews, worked there for 18 years. He moved there in November, 1946 with his wife Ethel Matthews, two sons, Leonard and Sherman and 2 daughters, Victoria and myself, baby Dale; the other daughter Alfredia was married to Art Hines and lived in Woodside.



Keeper's house, George's Island.

Our house was a small bungalow with only two bedrooms. We had an assistant lighthouse keeper who had his own bedroom. Don't ask me where we slept! Some of us had to sleep with each other. We did not have any electricity on the island so we had a wood/coal stove in the kitchen and a floor furnace in the hallway. My mother, Ethel, had to use a battery operated washing machine, and a battery was used in the radio, too. The irons had to be heated on the stove when we were ironing. We had ship to shore phone with the radio station, and had to call them every night. There were two wells on the island for our use. The well by the house was used for the bathroom. The other well, out further, was used for drinking water. The water for the bathroom had to be pumped through a pipe in the kitchen to a holder up in the attic. What a nuisance!

We had a little bit of luxury, and that was my father Victor's boats. He had the second fastest boat in Halifax



Ethel in Victor's boat.

Harbour. Ethel was known as the best Captain (showoff) of that boat. Dad had two other boats, a punt, and my brother, Leonard had a small outboard boat. We also had a big dory.



I did have problems going to school. Sometimes Dad would drop me off at pier 20, National Harbours Board; or Kings Wharf. One day in the winter he went down to get the boat and a log in the Harbour hit the stern of the boat



Dale drives the only car on George's Island

and holed it. The stern of the boat sank and the bow was pointing upward. That was the first time that ever happened to us.

From Grade 6 on I had to board in Halifax. I lived at the South end,

the North end, and in-between. In 1960 I lived with my sister, Alfredia in South Woodside. In my new home, I now own the bunks that I slept in at her home in Woodside.

When we lived on George's Island, we had hens, chickens, and beautiful white rabbits. One time my father, Victor, had a visitor up in the island's citadel. It was a deer that swam to the island and he fed it. Victor was the deer's friend, but it left in a few days. Another deer that swam to the island fell into the moat and could not get out. We had to call the police through our radio station and get permission to take it's life. My brother, Sherman shot the deer and we had to get it out of there. We were not allowed to eat it.

While I was writing this information up, I had an interesting phone call from Patti Young who is Mr. David Barkhouse's daughter. Patti's father was lighthouse keeper after my father, Victor Matthews, left. Patti, her mother and other members of the family visited the island when the children were not in school, or a weekend. They had to turn the living room into a bedroom and the children all slept in the one room. Patti called this her "Summer Home." Actually, she liked it better out there than at her home in Mahone Bay.

The island has a lot of attractions in connection with the history of the fort, Fort Charlotte. The old buildings are being restored by Parks Canada. The tunnels are lovely to go through, and the history is very interesting.

Sources: James Pritchard, *Anatomy of a Naval Disaster*; Hugh F. Pullen, *The Sea Road to Halifax*, NSLPS Database, Dale Venoit, personal records.

## BEACON CONFERENCE

Moncton, New Brunswick, November 12 & 13, 1998

Kathy Brown



Photo: Kathy Brown

Seventy people from across the Maritimes, representatives of Community Groups, Coast Guard, and individuals interested in lighthouses, spent two days in Moncton in

November learning of the latest issues in the Coast Guard's continuing efforts to reduce its property holdings. Serious discussion and debate greeted the Coast Guard's proposals.

The budget for Navigation Aids has been cut 6.3 million since 1994 and Coast Guard can no longer sustain its current level of assets and real property. A national strategy for reduction of property has to be in place by April 1999.

The Coast Guard recognizes that lighthouses are special, but the Treasury Board must be convinced that lighthouses should be treated differently than other surplus property. Leases are being abandoned as they are too time consuming because each has to be individual.

### In Short:

1. The moratorium on sales of surplus lighthouse properties has been lifted. The Coast Guard also said demolitions will soon have to start taking place of lighthouses that cannot be maintained and pose a safety risk.
2. Lighthouses will no longer be leased to groups. They will be sold. Current leases will be honoured until the national strategy regarding lighthouses is established.
3. Coast Guard will evaluate their property holdings and sell what they don't need in the long term. They are doing a Level of Service Review of Navigation Aids, related to National Standards set by the Department. If a lighthouse is deemed necessary for the next 5 - 10 years the Coast Guard will maintain it, but not the other buildings or the surrounding property. The light tower will be "severed" from these.
4. Coast Guard continues to try to get flexibility from the Treasury Board regarding divestiture of lighthouse properties.
5. Coast Guard will use existing legislation to fast track divestiture of surplus properties.
6. There is strong support across the Maritimes for Federal Lighthouse Preservation Legislation.

## BEACON Conference Cont'd

### Real Property Directive 96-1

The Coast Guard has been looking for a fast way to dispose of surplus property and plans to use legislation 96-1 which was used to dispose of Federal Fish Hatcheries. Coast Guard is trying to get further flexibility from the Treasury Board.

Two processes:

1. Fast Track for property appraised at less than \$500,000 and declared surplus. Limited advertising. Offered first to a province, then to municipality, if not taken, disposed of at best value for the Crown.
  2. Property goes to a Third Party at a nominal sum. Value of property has to be below \$500,000 and Coast Guard will not be using it in five years. Value covers almost all lighthouse sites. No Coast Guard money can be put into running the site. The 3<sup>rd</sup> party has to be a province, municipality, not-for-profit or community association, or a native group. The Coast Guard promises to include environmental and heritage protection criteria to this process.
- Market value applies.
  - Assessment is by Public Works, but it may be contracted out. It costs \$6,000-8,000 per property! Assessed value indicates worth to the Government. Real value is "what you can get for it."
  - The contributions of non-profit groups that have been running lighthouse projects will be taken into account in deciding who should receive a lighthouse site and the price to be paid.
  - Assessed value is currently used for the leases.
  - 96-1 is most suitable for properties the Coast Guard will need for five years or less.
  - An important factor is that it is left to the Department to determine the appropriate way to deal with a property. Determination of Market Value is also left to the Department.

### Regular Disposal Through Crown Assets

- Surplus properties.
- Advertised. Market value applies.
- Sold at best value for Crown.

### Alternate Use

- For properties Coast Guard needs for more than 5 years.
- There has to be significant community interest. Coast Guard will give support to a community group if costs to them are removed.
- Alternate Service Delivery - others may be expected to run the light.

### Umbrella Group

Little enthusiasm was shown by most delegates for an umbrella-type group to take over the lights. With some exceptions, most regard it as unpractical and an additional

layer of bureaucracy. The idea was also rejected at the previous two conferences in 1996 and 1997.

The Coast Guard will start the divestiture process by dealing with the 70 lighthouse locations in the Maritime Provinces for which they have a proposal or an expression of interest. In cases where the property is found to be no



Photo: Kathy Brown

longer needed it will be disposed of. If needed for up to 5 years, divestiture under 96-1 will be used. If a lighthouse is needed in the longer term, Alternate Use and Alternative Service Delivery will be looked at.

### Action Plan

1. The Coast Guard will identify and decide a course of action on the lights where interest has been expressed. Time: April/May 199.
2. NSLPS and PEI Lighthouse Societies will draft a ranking for heritage evaluation of lighthouse. Time: By 1999 BEACON Conference.
3. NSLPS to post report on BEACON Conference on their Website and e-mail participants that it is there. RACLAU to send newsletter. TIME: December 31, 1998
4. Coast Guard to be open in response to inquiries regarding lighthouses and streamline their reaction time.
5. Steering Committee set up for a Lighthouse Club of the Atlantic. Vicki Reddin-Gauthier, Sara Napier, Pam Harrison, Don Wheeler and others.
6. Sign up sheet to help with Lighthouse Preservation Legislation. Time: Campaign to start very soon. Report to 1999 BEACON Conference.
7. Status sheet re activities from RACALU. Time: after meetings, twice a year.
8. Coast Guard options re lighthouses to be publicized. Time: next RACLAU newsletter.
9. Cuts to Coast Guard to be protested to other government agencies and to MP's. Allan Savidant to drive project, Ken Wilkinson, Jean Melanson, Lynne Perry to assist.
10. Letters to be sent when US lighthouses appear in Canadian advertisements. Action by all.

### Assistance to groups re information about their site:

11. The Coast Guard database available to groups. Contact Nancy McNeil (902) 426-8412 <mcneiln@mar.dfo-mpo.gc.ca>.

12. Information on past maintenance costs. Contact Nancy McNeil or Joe Murphy (902) 426-2920 or Joe LeClair (902) 426-8412

13. Public Works Canada has the assessed value of all lighthouses. Often available from the municipality. Technical Services of the Coast Guard has it too.

Contact Nancy McNeil or Joe Murphy or Joe LeClair  
Groups should remember that the Federal Heritage Building Review Office offers some protection for buildings over 40 years old. They cannot be torn down without first contacting FHBRO.

The Action Plan is a hopeful outcome of the conference. Time will tell if the Coast Guard can deliver on their commitments.

More detailed information is available on the NSLPS Website.

### Lighthouse Legislation Session

*"The conversion of lightstations to solar power allows major economic and environmental benefits by allowing removal of fuel tanks and diesel generators. Although this eliminates the need for many structures, the Coast Guard will protect all heritage lightstations through continued operation or transfer to provincial, municipal or other authorities for local use."* Eastern Edition of Notices to Mariners, July 31, 1998, p.vii. There is no Coast Guard definition of "heritage lightstation."

David Curry of NSLPS spoke of the need for lighthouse protection legislation, which is crucial to preserving this significant part of our maritime heritage. Legislation would define just what constitutes a "heritage lightstation." There was strong support. Names of people from all three provinces who would help with the project filled a full sheet of paper. Most delegates felt that legislation is the only way to make sure we don't lose our lighthouse heritage. Just having a campaign will arise public awareness of this issue.

#### Lighthouse Protection Act

##### Committee Meeting:

##### Maritime Museum of the

**Atlantic, 7:00 PM, Wed., Jan. 13**

The twelve enthusiastic and willing workers on this committee have ambitious plans for a private members bill lobby.

### Report About NSLPS

Dan Conlin talked about all we do - a list long enough to make the hardiest enthusiast weak: advocacy, awareness, trips, lectures and programmes, newsletter and website,

research and database, 3 - 4 inquiries per week, helping our Affiliates and other groups, donations of maintenance materials, lobbying for FHBRO listing and repairs for lighthouses like the Sambro Light, and helping save lighthouses such as Coffin Island. He emphasized that all this is done by volunteers.

Our current directions, he said, are to do more work with the Affiliates, to sharpen and share historical knowledge, to hold a Nova Scotia workshop session, to help with a folder about Nova Scotia's Lighthouses, to gain Charitable Tax Status, and to work towards the Lighthouse Preservation Act.

### ***KEEPING OUR LIGHTS***

*What your Community Should Know*

**2 days of workshops for everyone involved  
in lighthouse projects in Nova Scotia - and  
those who want to get involved.**

**Watch for details in the New Year**

### FUNDING POSSIBILITIES

#### Nova Scotia Museum Research Grant Marine History

This Nova Scotia Museum Research Grant is intended to promote research on Marine History in Nova Scotia. The annual grant will be awarded to the proposal that promises the greatest contribution to our knowledge of Marine History in Nova Scotia. It has a maximum value of \$4000. The successful proposal will be: original research relating to the marine history of Nova Scotia including shipbuilding, ship-owning, vessel design, construction and use, naval and merchant shipping, fishing, seafarers and seafaring, and community activities relating to the sea.

**The deadline for applications is January 31, 1999.**

Consult the Terms of Reference and Project Submission Format before submitting an application on the web site <museum.ednet.ns.ca/grants>, or contact

Corporate Services Division, Nova Scotia Museum,  
1747 Summer Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3H 3A6.  
Phone: (902) 424-7344. Fax: (902) 424-0560.

#### The Canada Millennium Partnership Program

The objective of the Program is to encourage Canadians to create initiatives that explore our heritage; celebrate our achievements; build our future; and leave a lasting legacy. The Government of Canada will provide funding for community-oriented activities as well as for national and international activities until March 31, 2001. The main

## Funding Possibilities cont'd

activities funded under the Canada Millennium Partnership Program should take place during the year 2000 and must be completed by March 31, 2001. Funds will be allocated during the three years of the program. Five distinct deadlines for receipt of applications have been established.

Phase 1 : June 19, 1998 (past)

Phase 2 : October 31, 1998 (past)

Phase 3 : May 31, 1999

Phase 4 : October 31, 1999

Phase 5 : March 1, 2000

For details and application forms, try their website:

<[http://www.millennium.gc.ca/partner\\_e.html](http://www.millennium.gc.ca/partner_e.html)>

or tollfree number: 1-888-774-9999

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## RESEARCH NOTES: The Lists of Lights

Dan Conlin

One of the most authoritative sources of lighthouse information is the *List of Lights*, published by the Canadian government almost every year since Confederation. An important navigation tool for mariners, it provides accurate descriptions of lighthouses and buoys giving position, type and character of light, a brief description of the structure as well as the year it was founded and last changed. In more recent years, the list has been less detailed. A new *List of Lights* has been published in 1998, the first since 1995. An electronic version updated to September 1998, can be downloaded from the internet:

<<http://www.notmar.com/eng/services/list/index.html>>

Unfortunately, this electronic version does not include dates of foundation and last change.

A good collection of Lists of Lights (with an unfortunate gap in the 1950s & 60s) can be found at the library of the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic in Halifax which is open from 10:00 to 2:00, Monday to Friday. (Call (902) 424-7890 for appointment or information). Acadia University Library in Wolfville, (902) 585-1170, has a good selection of *Lists of Lights* for the 1950s and 60s.

*NSLPS has created a historic lighthouse database, drawn largely from the List of Lights, which is maintained by Tim Hall. It is available at the Maritime Museum Library. You can also find a lot of information on our Website* <<http://www.EDnet.ns.ca/educ/heritage/nslps>>

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## THE SWISSAIR PLANE CRASH

Dan Conlin

The powerful spiritual value of lighthouses has been re-enforced in recent months in the wake of the crash of Swissair Flight 111 off Saint Margaret's Bay on September. 2. The familiar lighthouse at Peggy's Cove became a gathering and mourning spot for the families of

the 229 victims, as well as an indispensable backdrop for news media coverage. An enormous collection of flowers and offerings at the lighthouse was eventually deposited at sea at the crash site on Sept. 29, but flowers and notes continue to be left and a committee has been formed led by retired Nova Scotia Chief Justice Lorne Clarke to explore a permanent memorial.

Several NSLPS members were called in different capacities to assist in the large search and investigation operation mounted after the crash. The society also answered requests for information about the Peggy's Cove lighthouse and visits to the society's website doubled as people consulted our historic profile of the Peggy's light, about the only place anywhere offering historical information to this familiar image.

An odd footnote to the crash was the fate of one of the bell buoys off Saint Margaret's Bay. The upper portion of the buoy nearest the crash site was found to be sheared away, apparently by the doomed aircraft or by flying debris, although this has not been conclusively established as the investigation of the crash is not yet complete.

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## INDEX TO THE LIGHTKEEPER, 1998

### LIGHTHOUSE ARTICLES

#### Featured Lighthouses:

Coffin Island. Vol. 5, No. 3, Sept. 1998.

George's Island Lighthouse. Vol. 5, No. 4, Dec. 1998.

Port Greville Lighthouse. Vol. 5, No. 2, June. 1998.

Seal Island Lighthouse. Vol. 5, No. 2, June. 1998.

#### Sambro:

*Battles off Sambro Island*. Vol. 5, No. 4, Dec. 1998.

*Sambro Lighthouse Restoration*. Vol. 5, No. 1, March. 1998. Vol. 5, No. 3, Sept. 1998. Vol. 5, No. 4, Dec. 1998.

*Port Bickerton Lighthouse*. Vol. 5, No. 2, June. 1998.

### RESEARCH NOTES

*Historic Photographs*. Vol. 5, No. 2, June. 1998.

*Lists of Lights*. Vol. 5, No. 4, Dec. 1998.

*National Archives Photo Collections*. Vol. 5, No. 3, Sept. 1998

### OTHER MAJOR ARTICLES

*Alternative Use Alternatives*. Vol. 5, No. 3, Sept. 1998.

*BEACON Conference Report*. Vol. 5, No. 4, Dec. 1998.

*Lighthouse Alternative Use at the Crossroads*. Vol. 5, No. 2, June 1998.

*Lighthouse Protection Act*. Vol. 5, No. 1, March. 1998 and all issues following.

*Lighthouses to Visit*. Vol. 5, No. 2, June 1998.

"*Out of the Mist*" - *A trip to the Tusket Islands*. Vol. 5, No. 3, Sept. 1998

"*A Visit With a Friend*" *Seal Island '98*. Vol. 5, No. 4, Dec. 1998.

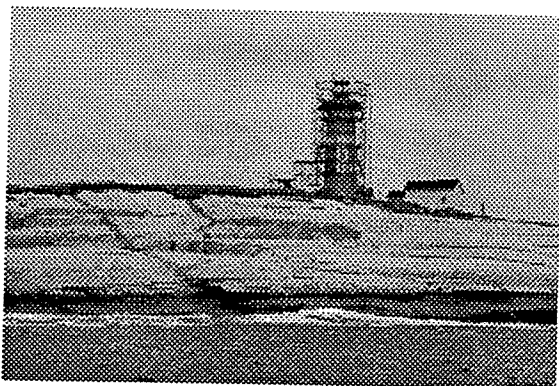
*Winter on the Lights*. Vol. 5, No. 1, March 1998.



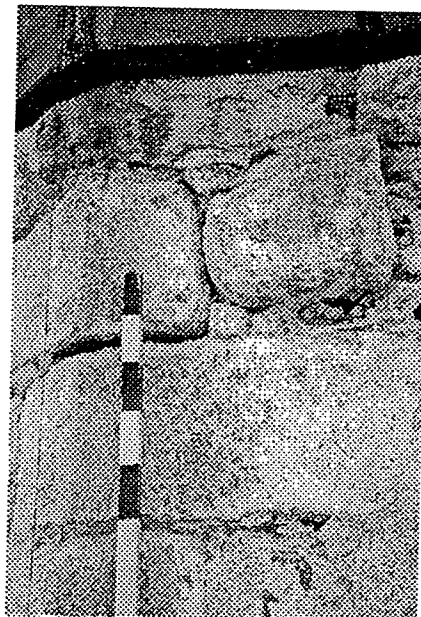
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## THE LADY UNDRESSED !

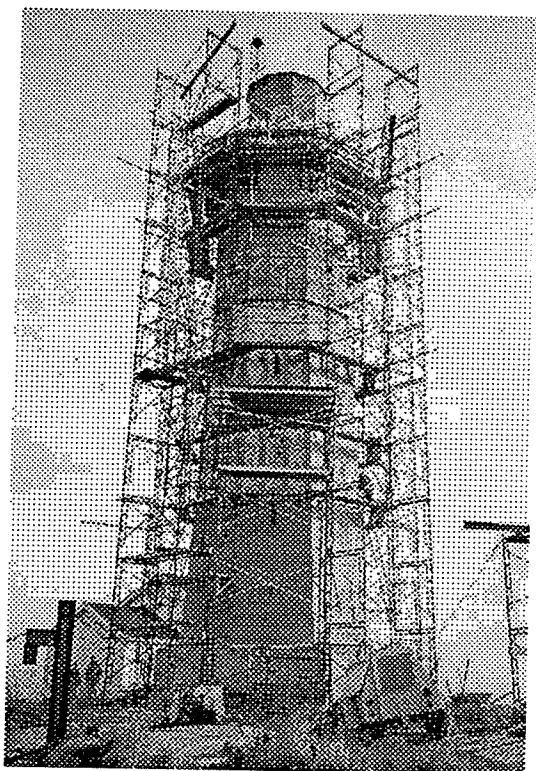
Dan Conlin



Sambro from seaward. Since September she has not been wearing her 90 year old red striped petticoat!



This corner of the tower is at the join between the concrete (above) and the stone, showing the granite with rubblestone inserted in the mortar. The tower was originally whitewashed, which can be seen on the lower right. By 1858 it had been encased and shingled.



Here, from the 1950 concrete foundation upward: plywood base for the new shingles, exposed 1759/60 granite tower, 1906 concrete (above the dark line), forms for new 1998 concrete gallery platform replacing 1906 work, 1968 aluminum lantern.



The windows are slits, as in a medieval fortress.

October, the old rotten shingles were ripped away, exposing for the first time in many years, the original 1758 stonework of the oldest operating lighthouse in North America. NSLPS took advantage of this rare opportunity to document and study the stonework which has been the subject of some debate. (Where did the stone come from - the island? Nova Scotia? Boston? Louisbourg? Europe?) A volunteer team of historians and natural scientists were recruited. Heavy winds forced the team to postpone, reschedule and reassemble three times. Finally on Oct. 30, a successful visit was made. There was strong consensus among the team members that the stone did not come from the island. Detailed results will be published in the next issue of the *Lightkeeper*. Special thanks to Wayne Dedrick at the Coast Guard and skipper of the *Jag II*, Andre Jezza for their assistance.

## SAMBRO ISLAND REPAIRS AND RESEARCH TRIP

Work has continued into late fall on the repairs to the Sambro Island Lighthouse. The concrete platform for the lantern has been rebuilt and re-shingling is underway. For a brief time in

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## UPDATE, December 17

### THE LADY'S GOT HER CLOTHES ON!

The restoration is complete. The Tower is primed white and red and will be top-coated in the spring. Volunteers have boarded in the houses. Watch for a feature in March *Lightkeeper*!

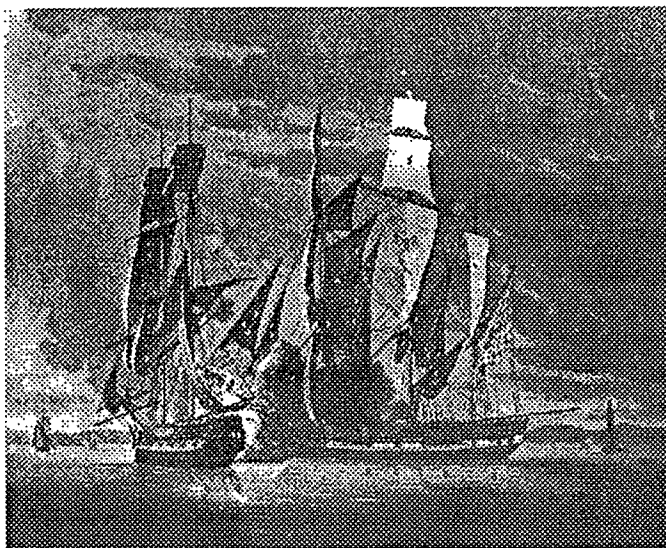
## SEA BATTLES AT SAMBRO ISLAND

Dan Conlin

The Sambro Island Lighthouse, the oldest operating lighthouse in North America, has witnessed many grim acts of war over its two and a half centuries at the mouth of one of North America's most strategic ports. In the Days of Sail, Sambro was the setting of four dramatic battles within sight, earshot and cannon shot of its stone walls.

During the American Revolution and the War of 1812, American privateers (privately owned warships) often infested the waters around Sambro. Taking advantage of the often absent Royal Navy, they boldly captured merchant ships at the harbour mouth. Countless such captures were made near Sambro, usually bloodlessly, as the lightly armed merchant ships rarely resisted. Fortunately the lighthouse, as useful to the enemy as it was to the British, was never attacked and at the first sight of a Royal Navy warship or a Nova Scotian privateer the Americans would flee - unless cornered or encountered accidentally.

In one such battle, on July 10, 1780, the Nova Scotian privateer brig *Resolution* confronted the American privateer *Viper* near Sambro Light. The Nova Scotians fought hard and inflicted heavy losses on the Americans, killing 33 of their crew, while losing eight of their own, but in the battle *Resolution*, badly damaged and sinking, was forced to surrender.



HM Brig *Observer* Engaging the American Privateer *Jack* off the Harbour of Halifax. Sambro Lighthouse is on the right. *National Archives of Canada.*

The tables were turned two years later on May 29, 1782, when a large American privateer, the *Jack*, a ship of 16 guns, spied a smaller British brig at sunset near Sambro and closed to fight. The crew of the *Jack* soon discovered that their intended victim was actually the Royal Navy brig *Observer*. Although considerably smaller

with only 12 guns, *Observer* was in fact very well manned, having just picked up the crew of the shipwrecked frigate HMS *Blonde* from Seal Island. The battle raged until almost midnight with gunnery duels and several attempted boardings. In fierce hand to hand combat, that saw one man pinned to a gun carriage with a bayonet, the *Jack* was captured and brought to Halifax. Twelve of her crew were killed for the loss of three men aboard *Observer*.

In the next conflict, the War of 1812, another Nova Scotian privateer, the *Sir John Sherbrooke*, helped end the career of an American raider, the schooner *Young Teazer*. This American privateer took a Nova Scotian brig and schooner close by Sambro Island in June 1813, but was soon herself hunted by the much larger *Sherbrooke*, mounting 18 guns and one of the largest privateers ever commissioned in Nova Scotia. *Sherbrooke* chased *Teazer* for two days, around Sambro Island and reputedly as far into the harbour as Maughers Beach on McNabs Island. By skill and trickery *Teazer* eluded *Sherbrooke* until she was chased past Sambro to flee into the islands of Mahone Bay. There, two Royal Navy ships took up the chase, cornering the American privateer. As darkness fell on June 26 and the Royal Navy closed in for the kill, the Lieutenant of *Teazer* deliberately ignited his own powder magazine blowing up his vessel and his crew, only seven of whom survived. *Teazer* lives on in folklore with stories of ghostly sightings of her explosion up to recent times.

A year after *Teazer's* demise, a British transport ship, *Lord Somers* was making a stormy passage from Saint John, New Brunswick to Halifax with 62 sick and wounded soldiers and over a hundred of their wives and children. Nearing Halifax, she had just sighted Sambro Lighthouse when a fast and heavily armed American privateer schooner appeared. She was the schooner *York* mounting fourteen guns and 100 men. The crew and sick soldiers of *Lord Somers*, with only six cannons, made ready to resist. The seas were too heavy for accurate cannon fire and the two vessels soon closed for close combat. The men aboard *Lord Somers* fought desperately as their families sheltered below. Twice they drove American boarders from their decks. Six aboard *Lord Somers* were killed and eight wounded but they forced the privateers to break off the battle and flee. Ten Americans, including their captain were killed and *York* was forced to give up its cruise and limp back to Baltimore. A year after the victory by *Lord Somers*, the War of 1812 ended and it would be a century before the sounds of war returned to Sambro when the Twentieth Century brought German submarines into the range of Sambro's light.

*Sources:* Collections of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society Vol XIII and XX; *Under the Red Jack*, CHJ Snider; *Sagas of the Sea*, Archibald MacMechan.

## "A Visit With a Friend" SEAL ISLAND '98

Tim Hall

Twenty one members and friends of the Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society set out from Clarke's Harbour early on a calm September morning to renew acquaintance with a vital link with Nova Scotia's marine history - Seal Island. Charles Kenney, a local fisherman, whose family has deep ties with the island, and has been instrumental in trying to preserve the way of life that is Seal Island, cheerfully loads the unending stream of food, water, sleeping bags and cameras aboard his "Cape Islander." One wonders at the volume of supplies we would be taking if this were more than just an overnight trip.

For some, this is their first visit to Seal Island, for others it has become an annual outing. For everyone however, it is a refreshing break from the day to day bustle of the twentieth century, and a trip back to a simpler but harsher time.

Leaving the friendly waters of Clarke's Harbour, we first head south along the deserted beaches of Cape Sable for a closer view of its lighthouse. This low, sandy islet had its first light in 1861. The wooden octagonal tower stood until 1924, when the present 101' concrete tower was completed. (See "The Lightkeeper" Vol 2, No 3.) This is the tallest lighthouse in Nova Scotia, and presents an imposing sight, rising as it does from the low sand dunes and grasses of Cape Sable.

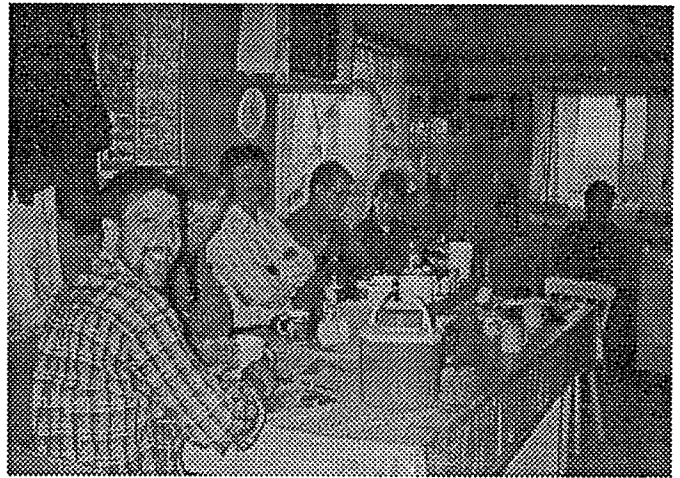
The trip to Seal Island takes about two hours from Cape Sable Island. Upon first sighting, the island is unremarkable. As we approach however, its distinctive features become more apparent. The small church at the East Side settlement, the barrier beach separating the north and south ends of the island and finally the lighthouse itself all serve to welcome us back. As we round Mother Owens point, on the south end of the island, the calls of the cormorants and barking of seals reach us above the sound of the surf.

As we pass the lighthouse, its steadily worsening condition is apparent even from a distance. This light, one of the oldest operating in Nova Scotia, was once the pride of the keepers who lived here. Today, the white tower, with it's faded red stripes serves as a reminder of the need to protect these guardians of the past. The lighthouse on Seal Island dates from 1831. (See "The Lightkeeper" Vol 5, No 2.) Modern settlement of the island began in 1823, when the families of Richard Hichens and Edmund Crowell established a lifesaving station. This was in response to the ever-increasing number of shipwrecks on the reefs and ledges surrounding Seal Island.

Most visitors today, use the wharf and landing at the West Side settlement. The wharf, built when the community was in its heyday, has seen better times. Thanks to the efforts of several concerned fishermen from Cape Sable, a local Harbour Authority has been

established, and work has begun to rejuvenate the rapidly deteriorating wharf. The tiny settlement has also been set aside as a Fishermen's Reserve, offering it some protection from future development, which is a concern on many of Nova Scotia's offshore islands.

After a cheery lunch at the "Cookhouse", everyone is eager to stretch their legs and explore the island. A rare (for this area) yellow headed blackbird has recently been spotted at one of the cottages, and several of us search the area in vain. The ever present sheep bleat out a welcome, and a warning to watch where you step on the well-fertilized grass of the settlement.



Lunch in the cookhouse. Photo: Kathy Brown

The first noticeable change in the island is the condition of the wreck of the *Fermont*. Winter storms had separated the bow, which now rests a hundred feet up the beach. As well, shifting sands have exposed the keel and ribs from the 1918 wreck *Lewis Cottingham*. If anyone ever doubted the ruthless power of the sea, it was apparent in the breakwater at the East Side settlement. Huge boulders had been swept away and deposited along the beach. As well, boulders protecting the roadway along this shore had been tossed, aside necessitating repairs.

The walk to the lighthouse provides many glimpses into the past, when this community was thriving. The peaceful church, Winifred Hamilton's home, an old lifeboat and the few remaining shanties all serve to remind us of a way of life rapidly being lost. If we need further reminders, they are apparent when we approach the lightstation itself. Apart from the tower, only a few decaying fragments of history remain. An old Bren gun carrier, used by former keepers as a tractor rusts in the trees. The old fog whistle boiler, foundations and rubble, and another rotting lifeboat remind us of the families who lived and toiled here for well over a century.

For those of us who made the trip to the island last year, the next few seconds were anxious. A year ago, due



to a mix-up in the keys we were unable to gain access to the tower. Fortunately, we got in. Bud Myra, in particular was most pleased. I shudder to think of the ribbing I would have had to endure if the key did not fit. The interior of the tower is in remarkably good condition. The massive frames and beams, brought to the island nearly 170 years ago, especially for the construction of the tower, look as if they could stand another century.

Ascending the five landings to the top of the tower, is worth every step. Although the original lantern now sits on top of a museum in Barrington Passage, the panoramic view of the island from the gallery remains as breathtaking

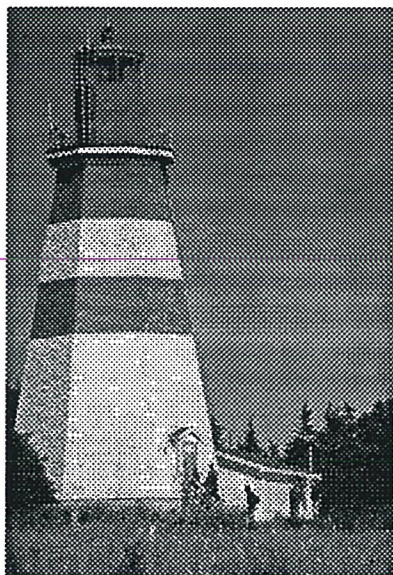


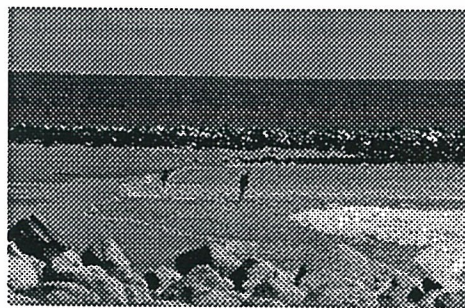
Photo: Peter MacCulloch

as ever. The entire island is opened before your eyes to the north, and to the south lies the broad vista of the Atlantic.

Another memorable part of overnight trips to the island are the evenings spent in the cookhouse. Today a generator provides light, and propane fuels the stoves, but the stories of yesteryear provide an ideal setting in which to relax. The house has upstairs

bunks for 19, and a small bedroom on the first floor, so sleeping 21 is cozy. Almost everyone, however, manages to get a good night's rest.

Our second day was left for exploring, birdwatching or just relaxing. Seal Island is an ideal setting for any of these activities. September is an excellent time for birding,



The beach near the lighthouse. Photo: Peter MacCulloch.

with the fall migration well in hand. We were fortunate enough to spot the yellow headed blackbird! A hike well worth the effort is around the north

end of the island. The open grassland along the tops of the bluffs makes for relatively easy walking, and a brisk two hour hike will see you back at the West Side settlement. The wrecks on the barrier beach are worth a visit as well. Another pleasant excursion is along the east side of the island from the lighthouse to the church. A pause at the grave sites from the shipwrecks "Triumph" (1861) and "SS Ottawa" (1891) will remind you of the reason for the first permanent habitation on the island.

Our trip back to Clarke's Harbour was pleasant. A solitary whale, a good view of Bon Portage Island and lighthouse (made famous by Evelyn Richardson in her wonderful books) and our memories of another wonderful weekend on Seal Island passed the time quickly. If you want to join us next year, mark the weekend after Labour Day on your calendar.

## LIGHTSHOP

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