



# THE Lightkeeper

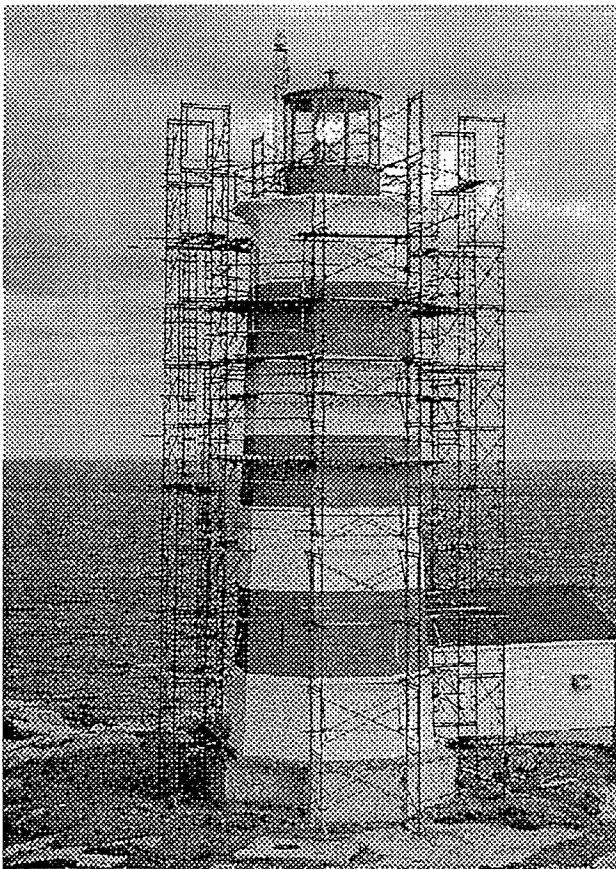
The Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society

Vol. 6 , No. 1, March/April, 1999

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.

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

**PATRONS:** Carl Lautenslaugher, Jeanne Thomas, South Shore Tourism Association **AFFILIATES:** Advocate District Development Association, 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, Mosher Island Lighthouse Society, Municipality of Queens Tourism & Development, Nova Scotia Lighthouse Interpretive Centre, Sandy Point Recreation Group, Seal Island Tours, Spencers Island Community Association, Tidal View Drive Association, Walton Lighthouse Committee, Yarmouth County Tourist Association



Sambro Lighthouse in her new dress. Photo: Chris Mills

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**WEDNESDAY APRIL 28:**  
**7:00 PM,**  
**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
Reports, Election of Officers and Directors  
Plans for 1999

**Illustrated Talk:**  
**LIGHTHOUSES AND SHIPWRECKS**  
**OF ANTICOSTI ISLAND**

Capt. Hubert Hall

A tour around the coastline of this island in the St. Lawrence, featuring the lights and shipwrecks, including a helicopter trip past the isolated lighthouses on the roadless south coast.

You can't see this by boat!

**MEETINGS: 7:00 PM, 4th Wednesday of each month**  
at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, Water St., Halifax  
**WEDNESDAY MAY 26: 7:00 PM, General Meeting**  
**SATURDAY JUNE 19:** guided visit to **Chebucto Head Lighthouse**, Halifax Harbour, 10:30 AM, by Jim Guptill the last keeper. In cooperation with the Halifax Field Naturalists.

## WELCOME ABOARD!

*The following new members recently joined NSLPS:*

Doug Barber, Krista Bennet & Doug Bamford, Patricia Bernier, Elizabeth Burke, Larry & Kathy Dowding, Sydney & Sandra Dumaresq, Dr. C. Edwin Kinley, James Legere & Susan Whitehouse, Barry & Anne Marie MacDonald, Karen McLeod, Tracy O'Brien, Stan & Pat Severi, Joseph & Marie Skerry

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## THE FUTURE OF THE SEAL ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE

*Kathy Brown & Charles Kenney*

Charles Kenney and Randy Goreham are fishermen/lobstermen whose families have lived and worked on Seal Island for over 100 years. Over the past few years they have restored the church at the East Side settlement and formed a non-profit organization that has taken over the West Side wharf from the government. They feel very strongly that Seal Island Light and the land around it should be owned locally by those with strong ties to the island. In January, they met with the Coast Guard: Joe Murphy, David Smith (Services), and Eric Topple (Lands). They were told that Seal Island light will be solarized and painted in 1999. The light will be the maximum that solar can provide, about a 15 mile range, which should be adequate. They also discussed where the solar panels & batteries should be placed. The panels should be to the west of light and batteries housed in a separate shed. So, the light will receive some more changes for the record books but will continue to shine.

Charles and Randy were informed that surplus property around the light still has to go through Treasury Board sale. They suggest that we start a letter writing campaign to David Anderson (DFO) to change their policy of getting big bucks for crown lands and let local community groups have the lands to benefit the area. As Charles noted, this endeavour could take some time.

Now that Coast Guard knows of the interest of the community in the light and the 160 acres of land which surrounds it, they have said that before they start removing or demolishing anything (generators, barns, etc.) Charles and Randy would be notified. If anything came out of this meeting it is the fact that the Coast Guard now knows that the community has sincere interest in the site. The letters of support from NSLPS officially and from members were greatly appreciated.

Keeping the lighthouse lands in Nova Scotian hands is important. Much of the rest of Seal Island has been purchased by German interests.

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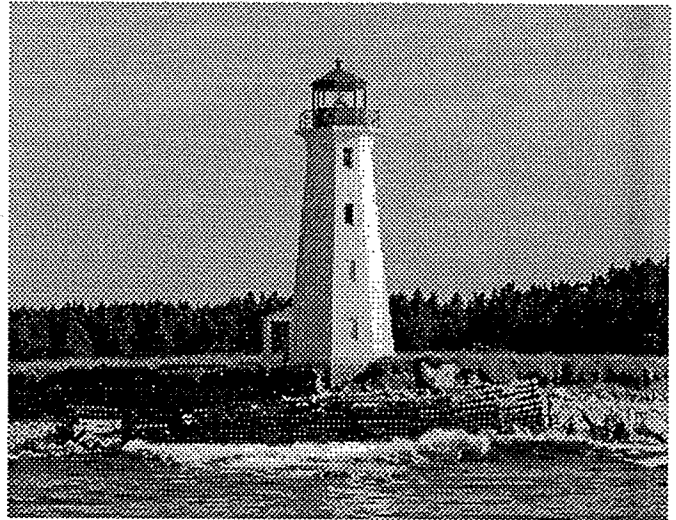
### Coffin Island Update

*Chris Mills*

The Coffin Island Lighthouse Heritage Society reports that progress has been made with efforts to save the island's lighthouse, which is in danger of succumbing to the sea as a result of erosion. Initially, three options were considered for the site:

- 1) Saving the existing tower with an armour rock wall
- 2) Sectioning the tower and moving it inland
- 3) Building a replica of the original wood tower

After a number of studies it became apparent that the cost



The precarious position of Coffin Island Lighthouse.

*Photo: Chris Mills.*

of moving the tower or constructing a replica would be prohibitive, and so the society has decided on the plan to place armor rock around the lighthouse to stabilize the site. A local private marine contractor has bid \$70,000 to place 250 feet of armor rock along the shoreline.

The society has to date raised almost half of the necessary money for the work. Corporate funding is being sought, along with funds from the sale of T-shirts and pins. Time is of the essence, as the lighthouse officially becomes surplus to Coast Guard use on Sept 15, 1999. It is hoped that construction of the protective wall can begin by mid-July.

It is interesting to note that Coffin Island's 130 acres, originally deeded to the town of Liverpool through a Crown Grant, were expropriated by the federal government in 1894. Records indicate that *no* money changed hands at the time. In 1964, after the lighthouse was automated, 100 acres were sold to the province for \$750. Today, the federal government would like to sell off the remaining 30 acres at market value, - considerably more than \$750! And despite the Coffin Island Lighthouse Heritage Society's firm commitment to the preservation of the lighthouse and its land, there are no written guarantees from any government department that the tower and the site will not eventually be sold.

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### "KEEPING OUR LIGHTS"

#### A Workshop Report

*Tim Hall*

On the weekend of March 26, 1999, about 30 representatives of community groups, various government agencies, and interested individuals gathered to share information and experience in the acquisition, maintenance and promotion of lighthouses. Sponsored by the Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society (NSLPS), and

supported by the Oceans Act Coordination Office of DFO, this was the first of what will hopefully become a regular series of practical workshops aimed at strengthening the community organizations who have or wish to gain access to their local lighthouses.

The agenda was developed by the groups themselves, and featured discussion leaders from groups who have first hand experience in the various aspects of operating a lighthouse site. An informal atmosphere, the unique facilities of the Dalhousie School of Architecture (DalTech), coupled with plenty of time for unstructured discussions made for an excellent opportunity to share ideas and lessons learned.

Coast Guard representative, Nancy McNeil, presented a background of current CCG policy and initiatives. She outlined the difficulties surrounding the issue of leases of lighthouses to communities, and reiterated the fact that there will be no new leases issued at this time. She also explained the process of notification of any intent to discontinue or downgrade a light that CCG follows in its normal course of business. She confirmed CCG's desire to assist communities as best they could, based on their resource capabilities and mandate.

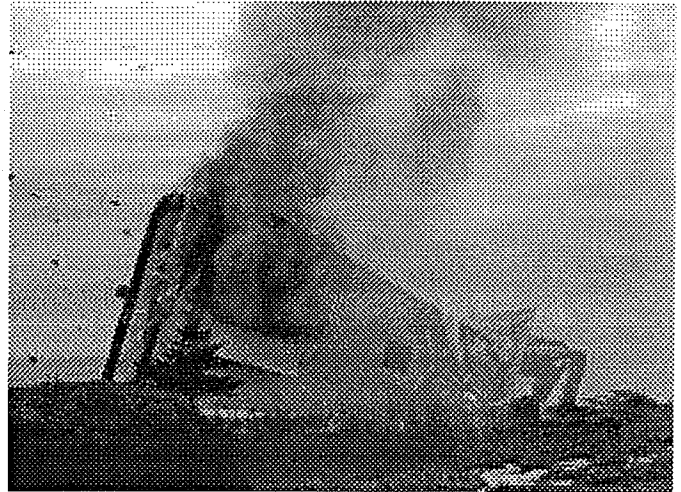
Topics of discussion over the weekend included Fund-raising and Grants, Insurance and Liability, Research Techniques and Sources, Role of NSLPS, Marketing, Signage, Motivating Volunteers and Maintenance of a Lighthouse Site. The input of the wide variety of participants and discussion leaders ensured that everyone was able to gain a wealth of information over the weekend. Displays were also set up featuring lighthouse crafts, promotional items, historical research and the latest on the proposed Lighthouse Protection Act.

The wrap up session on Sunday morning was especially interesting. Agreement was reached to look at establishing "districts" within the province, in which the local lighthouse sites would share information and ideas. The NSLPS will continue to support the affiliated groups in ways such as investigating group insurance, providing a "group" voice through "The Lightkeeper" and NSLPS website, coordinating projects such as the upcoming "Lighthouse Folder" and sponsoring events such as this workshop. Another agreement was to discuss with CCG the format and role of the upcoming and future BEACON conferences. Further details on these discussions will be featured in an upcoming special bulletin.

Based on the response of all participants, it was clear that this type of workshop is extremely beneficial and enjoyable. It provided a forum in which the participants were able to fully participate, learn and advance the issues that were important to them. Heartfelt thanks go out to everyone who contributed to the organization and ultimate success of the weekend.

## LIGHTHOUSE PROTECTION ACT

*Dan Conlin*



A Lighthouse Protection Act could have prevented the burning of the Moshier Island Lighthouse in 1990.

*Photo: Thom Drew*

The NSLPS sponsored Lighthouse Protection Committee has been hard at work since Christmas. They are seeking an act of Parliament to set up community trusteeship of lighthouses and set heritage standards. (For details, see their web page:

[www.ednet.ns.ca/educ/heritage.nslps/protectact.hm](http://www.ednet.ns.ca/educ/heritage.nslps/protectact.hm))

They have written and phoned every MP and Senator in Atlantic Canada and are in the process of writing MPs and Senators from the rest of the country. A remarkable number of supportive replies have been received and several meetings have been held with Nova Scotian politicians. Members have also met officials in Ottawa and connected with lighthouse activists in Newfoundland, Ontario and British Columbia. The campaign was officially launched at a press conference on March 11 which generated tremendous coverage in both national newspapers, regional newspapers across the Maritimes, and on Global television.

### **The committee can use your help.**

If you have some volunteer time, there is an opportunity to work on an exciting campaign at the heart of the lighthouse movement and fill an urgent need for more volunteers. Contact the co-chairs Chris Mills (868-2313) in Ketch Harbour or David Curry (798-2454) in Windsor.

### **The lighthouse protection act also needs letters of support directed to Sheila Copps, the federal Heritage Minister.**

**(No stamp needed!).**

Your letters do not have to be long or polished. Just tell her you think Canada needs a Lighthouse Protection Act to set heritage standards for all lighthouses and allow communities to maintain and restore them.

### **Protection Act *cont'd***

You can send a letter free of charge to this address:  
House of Commons  
Parliament Buildings  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A6

Letters to your Member of Parliament and the Prime Minister are also important. If you want to double check on the name of your MP for your letter call up this site:  
[www.parl.gc.ca/36/senmemb/house/membcon-e.htm](http://www.parl.gc.ca/36/senmemb/house/membcon-e.htm)

### **Point Abino Light -**

#### **The Shape of Things to Come?**

In Ontario, the Point Abino Lighthouse Preservation Society is fighting a desperate battle to save a beautiful and historic lightstation on Lake Erie. The Point Abino lighthouse, decommissioned in 1996, is well down in the disposal process. The society got the light designated a National Historic Site in 1998 and tried to arrange community ownership, but the Coast Guard is poised to sell the lighthouse, valued at almost \$400,000. The most likely purchasers are a group of wealthy Americans whose summer homes adjoin the lighthouse. They have already sealed off the property with a gate and guard, refusing to allow Canadians access to one of their lighthouses! Preservationists are mounting a last ditch lobby to stop the sale. If lighthouse disposals accelerate and no Lighthouse Protection Act is passed, we can expect similar situations to arise in Nova Scotia.

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### **RACLAU REPORT**

*Dan Conlin*

There are signs that the Coast Guard's Regional Advisory Committee on Lighthouse Alternate Use (RACLAU) is running out of steam. The Coast Guard in the Maritimes Region, while still very committed to the idea of communities looking after lighthouses, has run out of money to spend on the program and continues to be blocked by Ottawa from working with community groups. The full-time staff person, Joe Murphy, who has been working with community groups, will end his work April 1, although Nancy McNeil at Coast Guard will continue to work part-time for another three months. Thanks to Treasury Board orders, the coast guard is not making any more leases or renewing old ones, but is giving "humane" pledges to honour commitments to community groups who have already invested time and money. A proposal to Treasury Board to give Coast Guard some modest flexibility to make arrangements with community groups was finally submitted in early March. (Many think that the Lighthouse Protection Act lobby has helped trigger this long-delayed submission.) However, the Coast Guard has

lifted its moratorium on disposals and demolitions. Seventeen lighthouses in the Maritimes Region have been designated surplus. Ten of them will soon be disposed of, fortunately in almost every case to municipalities and community groups. The other seven await action in the near future.

RACLAU, a committee formed three years ago, has worked with Coast Guard to develop an application system and criteria to permit community groups to look after lighthouses. While its efforts may be stalled, it is worth noting that the latest initiatives in preservation - the Lighthouse Protection Act campaign and the Atlantic Lighthouse Council both have grown out of the efforts of RACLAU members such as David Curry and Vicki Redden.

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### **HORTON LIGHT - Information Wanted!**

NSLPS members Dexter and Susan Kenfield have been gathering information about this light. Susan is a descendant of lightkeeper Charles Edwin Rathbun. They are looking for lightkeeper's names, dates, stories about the light. They are especially interested in the fact that Charles Rathbun's second wife, Susan Munro Rathbun followed her husband as keeper after he died in 1879. NSLPS is interested in this, too. Female keepers were unusual at that time. If you have any information, you can send it to NSLPS at the Maritime Museum, or to Dexter Kenfield,  
1775 York Avenue, Apt. 3B,  
New York, NY 10128,  
USA

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### **FEDERATION OF NOVA SCOTIA HERITAGE EVENTS**

*NSLPS members, including Affiliates, are eligible to receive the discount rate on workshops and courses.*

Friday May 28, in Halifax

**Introduction to Archives Workshop**

Federation and NSLPS members \$35, Others \$65

May 14 to May 16, Yarmouth Rodd Grand Hotel

**Spring Heritage Conference.**

Museums, archives and heritage groups gather from across Nova Scotia. Theme is Marketing Heritage. Sites. The Friends of the Yarmouth Light will represent NSLPS with a small display at the conference.

**Museum Studies Certificate Course**

Starts in September.

Seven sessions, one per month covering artifacts, records, and conservation.

**For information on all:** call Trina Whitehurst

Outside Halifax: 1 800 355 6873 or Halifax: 423-4677.

## JERSEYMAN ISLAND

### Boyhood Memories of a Nova Scotia Lighthouse

Russ Latimer



Jerseyman Light c. 1987. Photo: NSLPS Database

*Russ Latimer grew up on Jerseyman Island, at the entrance to Arichat Harbour, Cape Breton, where his father was lightkeeper for 25 years. The lighthouse was established in 1872, on Beach Point. In 1950 the original lighthouse was demolished and replaced with a new wooden light tower and separate dwelling. The lightstation was de-staffed in 1978 and in 1980 the keeper's dwelling was removed from the island*

It was springtime in the year 1930 when as a boy of ten years I was introduced to the rigors of isolation and life at a lighthouse on a remote one-family island; at a time when at school I would attain the new and inspiring title: the lightkeeper's son at Jerseyman Island.

On that first of April morning in 1930, Arichat Harbour was peaceful; a gentle breeze wafted across the harbour with hardly a ripple on the water. In a large borrowed boat with several helping hands we set sail for our new home. A few seagulls hovered as we landed on Jerseyman Island and walked up the sloping beach to the lighthouse. Adjacent to the lightstation was a slipway on which was mounted an ancient windlass fitted with a crank and a length of frayed, rusted cable. Perched on a rotted wooden stand was an 'over the hill' hand operated fog horn that could well have been rated as a piece of high tech apparatus left over from the Ark. And sitting in its chocks was the grand daddy of immobility- a battered, derelict dory that was equipped with a pair of worn, bent oars. Fortunately some compassionate soul had remembered to leave the plug and dustpan-type bailer in the dory.

At the lighthouse, what we saw was what we got - a couple of worthless fixed assets combined with a dwelling, an outdoor two-holer called "dunkin", a boathouse, and an oil/coal storage shed to which was attached a lean-to. Blistered paint and a general state of disrepair and neglect abounded. Indeed, it was not an idyllic setting in which to begin a new life.

Nonetheless, as father's appointment as lightkeeper was confirmed by the Department of Marine and Fisheries (DMF), words were inadequate to describe the elation and the outburst of eagerness and appreciation at having secured a job that would present a monthly income and an opportunity to provide for the family. Father had been wounded in the mud and blood of Flanders at the Battle of

Vimy Ridge in 1917. Now, in 1930, he was one of a handful of WWI veterans to be awarded a government posting; a position that rated a monthly income of \$68, a princely sum at a time when Canadians struggled with economic depression.

Jerseyman Island is a crescent-shaped strip of land sitting athwart the entrance to Arichat Harbour. The island was named by members of the Robin family who migrated to Isle Madame some two hundred or more years ago from the island of Jersey to establish a fish processing plant. Extending in a NW/SE direction, it consists of three hump-like mounds of scrubby land connected by two rough, stone beaches. Approaching from seaward, the island forms part of the northern coastline of Chedabucto Bay at the entrance to the Strait of Canso - starboard hand all the way. The island is densely covered with stunted spruce and alder bushes. The seaward side is ringed with constantly breaking seas and fringed with treacherous reefs, ledges and shoals.



To describe Jerseyman Island lighthouse would be to generalize on the standard design of the era, when the keeper and his family lived in an attached dwelling, as opposed to the abundance of inner harbour stations that were attended by nearby residents. The duties of a lightkeeper were various and required constant vigilance. In addition to routine duties, keepers kept an eye on the



### Jerseyman Lighthouse *cont'd*

shoreline for beached or floating objects, and monitored lights within visual range for continuity and brightness.

Our first entry into the dwelling, attached to the south side of the tower, revealed a hardly habitable shack. Rough, bare wooden floors, windows with cracked panes and frames sealed with multi-coats of paint and wall paper that hung loosely from the slanted walls greeted us, while steep, narrow ladder like stairs serviced the four storey lantern tower. By summer's end though we had made at least a small impression toward transforming a house into a home. Through the marvel of Eaton's catalogue and their Home Lover's Club mother was able to procure necessities like floor linoleum, curtains, bedding, blankets and winter clothing. But, in the beginning, the only practical feature I remember seeing in the lighthouse dwelling was a hand operated water pump that drew rain water from a cistern that was located in the basement. There was no electricity, telephone, plumbing or radio and neither was there a procedure in place for signalling an emergency communication to the mainland.

The light tower itself was supported by four steel shrouds which we would later learn served the useful purpose of preventing the structure from toppling in winter gales! The lantern at the top of the tower was an octagonal iron structure which was surrounded by a railed deck. Mounted on top of the lantern was a swivel-type wind direction vane. Seven sides of the octagon contained heavy plate glass windows through which the light was beamed via the lens to all seaward directions. Seven curtains were fitted to the lantern windows during daylight hours. Humidity changes would often require ventilation of the lantern to remove condensation from the windows. Of a riskier nature was the removal of snow or sleet from the lantern windows during winter nights.

One storey below the lantern was the lightroom, where daily servicing was done, including fuel replenishment, wick trimming, cleaning and polishing. Records were kept of times of lighting and extinguishing the light, times of sunrise and sunset, temperature and barometric readings, wind direction and force, state of sea and sky as well as notations of any unusual or important observations.

It was during the first winter that the real facts of life became evident as we huddled around the kitchen stove each evening while endless gales drove horizontal blizzards across Chedabucto Bay; shrieking gales that funnelled into Crid Pass as we discovered the heat-keeping aspect of our island home was much like that of a woven basket. There was no need for air conditioning.

But before the winter, as that first spring season advanced into warm, pleasant summer, when family, relatives and friends would visit, happiness prevailed while

we fashioned our own lifestyle- the joy of outdoor picnics, building castles on the nearby sand beach and exploring the newness of the shoreline during a time when children created their own entertainment. Father taught us the art of splitting, salting and drying codfish and building wooden lobster traps. We did considerable sailing under a sprit-rig and sails that mother stitched from used flour bags. Loneliness and boredom were also obviated by an endless routine of daily chores which required attention in order to eke out a mere existence.

And at the end of a long, tiring day, if one felt inclined to indulge in leisurely amusement, there was always the yellow glow of the kerosene lamp at hand and reading material like Simpson's catalogue, the Family Herald and Belcher's Almanac. All was well read material before its final consignment for further use in the outdoor "dunkin".

On regular occasions father and I would row to the mainland and walk two miles to the nearest general store, where we would gather provisions. In those day, provisions consisted of beef by the quarter, pork by the side or barrel, flour in 100 pound bags, barrels of salted herring, mackerel and a supply of dried codfish. There were certain days in winter that father was able to make a crossing, either by walking on risky-thin ice or manhandling the boat through the drifting pack ice. Movement of provisions was by means of a large hand drawn sled. On such occasions, our larder would be supplemented with fresh food and the ever-welcome mail, received, read and re-read. We adored the Postmaster.

The abiding wisdom and generosity of the DMF decreed that since this was an island station, the dory should remain on site, listed in inventory as "mobile equipment". With father's prompt carpentry repairs, caulking and painting completed, this asset eventually slid down the ways, newly christened "DMF Yacht". During the winter of 1931 my father mastered the art of wooden boat building in the cold boathouse. By spring, he had fashioned a seaworthy 16 footer that we named *Sea Breeze*. It was this sturdy little ship that my sister and I rowed across the one mile strip of exposed water and walked two miles to attend school. Meanwhile, there were many days due to inclement weather that we could not make the crossing. Mother would patiently teach us the three R's and in winter was our full time teacher. In later years I came to realize that my Alma Mater was in fact, a lighthouse.

Along with my mother's many other tasks and responsibilities were chores like laundry, which was done by hand in a round galvanized steel tub on which was mounted a hand operated wringer. The washing commenced only after water had been pumped from the cistern and heated on the stove-top, providing that the hand

pump supply didn't run dry. In this event, it was a matter of praying for rain, lots of it, or transporting water in "that dory". Weekend baths were negotiated in the same galvanized tub.

Summer brought its own delights, including the arrival of visiting yachts that would anchor in the quiet cove adjacent to the lighthouse. We admired their smooth, sparking hulls and pondered on the apparent affluence of the people on board. Still more exciting were the regular visits of the fast patrol boat *Whirl*, whose eagle-eyed skipper would ask the routine question: "Have you seen the *Reo II* or the *Josephine K*", two well known rum runners that plied between St. Pierre and Nova Scotia.

Excitement abounded during the month of August 1931 and each summer thereafter with the arrival of the *CGS Lady Laurier*, the DMF supply ship. Our one year supply of landed inventory consisted of three drums of kerosene, a broom, mop, large bundle of cleaning rags, cans of Bon Ton brass polish, a stick of jeweller's rouge, six bars of Surprise soap, a few gallons of paint, paint brushes, lamp chimneys, wicks, matches and a log book. Quickly, the delivery slip was signed and with a cheery "see you next year", the busy men departed.

The visiting inspector expressed delight at the gleaming brass in the lantern and the general state of tidiness of the station. Officialdom seemed to have a thing about polished brass - hence the abundance of Bon Ton and rags. The all important Fresnel lens, prisms and reflectors were maintained with jeweller's rouge and a soft chamois.

Beginning in 1939, with the advent of World War II, an added responsibility was handed to lightkeepers by way of an alert that governed the operation of lighthouses. CBC Radio routinely aired instructions under the code names "Apple, Butter" and "Charlie" that contained a secret message advising that keepers should either exhibit or extinguish their lights at certain times. The "A, B, C" message was indeed a well kept secret, known only by the lightkeeper.

Soon, I would leave my island home and go to sea in a British cable ship based in Halifax. Later, while studying marine radio communications, I would operate a delivery boat that serviced the early convoy assemblies in Bedford Basin. So, my first two mile sea voyage to my island home in 1930 would be followed in war and peace by additional thousands of miles of sea travel to major seaports of the world, as I served as a radio officer in Canada's Merchant Navy.

Today, as we stand on the threshold of a new century we think of the lighthouse and its services as the subject of a vanishing era, an era that has already witnessed the elimination of lightkeepers. The final chapter may well be total obsolescence with the removal of the lighted towers

themselves, extinguished forever; a return to a darkened coast in favour of new technology like Satnav and new services offered within the Inmarsat system.

My family's days on Jerseyman Island, together with the lighthouse dwelling, part of a vanishing era, have long passed. Yet the unimposing, unattended white tower still stands on Beach Point. More alone than ever its fixed red lens still welcomes mariners to the harbour entrance, still beckoning "come in, this way please".

Additional source: *Rip Irwin*

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## Do Our Daffodils Still Bloom?

(Dedicated to John and the late Elizabeth Kavanagh)

*By Rosalie Smith. This poem was written by a woman who with her husband kept lighthouses in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. After their last lighthouse was de-staffed, she returned to see if her daffodils still bloomed.*

There's an eight foot high chain link fence.  
Three strands of tight barbed wire on top;  
Clanking lock, sure defense,  
Formidable deterrent, demanning should stop!

And a non-descript building, small, white, polished  
Where once our neighbours' home stood  
The lighthouse and foghorn both were demolished  
The garage and our house are all gone for good.

The horn and the light on a cold steel tower  
Instead of the wooden one, history taken away;  
The lightkeepers replaced by mechanical power  
Monitored forty miles across the bay.

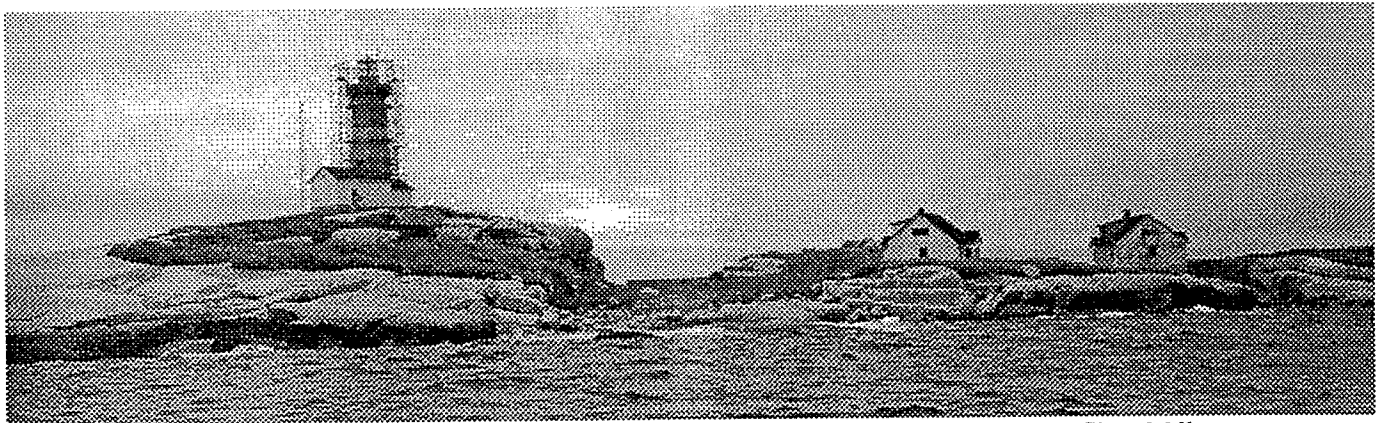
So many tourists would come for a visit,  
Enjoy a chat, have a cup of tea;  
Who would come now to look at a fortress  
Marring the view of the beautiful sea?

Our coastal culture is eroded without reason  
Now we must wonder each and every June:  
Wrongly sentenced, within their permanent prison  
Do our daffodils still bloom?

Never again will we trek the formation  
Down to Tides' Point where we spent many years,  
Romantic it was 'til the forced automation  
Tried and succeeded to move us to tears

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Did you grow up on a lightstation? Was a relative or friend a lightkeeper? We are interested in memories of lighthouse life. Send to Editor, *The Lightkeeper*, address on page 12.



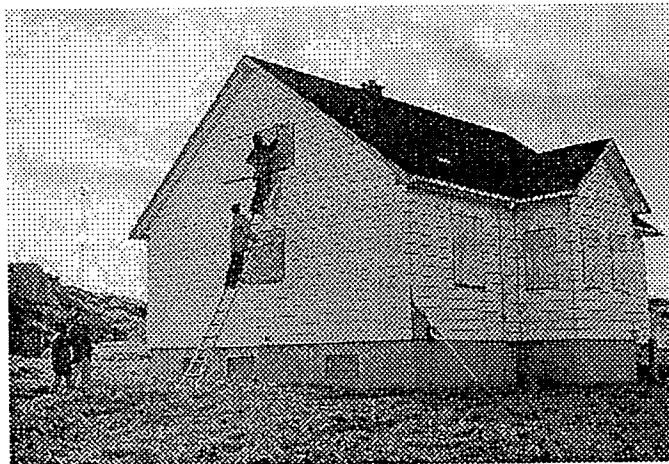
Sambro Island Complex: light tower, shed and keeper's houses, all of great heritage value. *Photo: Chris Mills*

## SAMBRO LIGHTHOUSE RESTORATION COMPLETED

*Chris Mills*

On December 21, 1998 the last of the scaffolding was removed from the lighthouse on Sambro Island, fully exposing the beautifully restored exterior of this historic tower. Work had begun at the end of August, when scaffolding was set up and the wood shingles and sheathing stripped from the tower. The concrete flare of the lantern deck was removed and the lantern lifted so that a new flare and slab could be poured. The 1906 iron railings were cut apart, lowered to the ground, refurbished and then reinstalled and painted in brilliant red.

Other major work included rebuilding the tower's wood entryway and entryway steps, new wood steps at the top of the tower, and the injection of epoxy to strengthen the 1906 concrete addition which had developed cracks over the years. The new shingles were given a coat of red and white primer, once more giving the tower its distinctive daymark pattern.



*Photo: Chris Mills*

One week before completion of work on the lighthouse, a work party of six volunteers and members of NSLPS traveled to the island to install plywood over the

windows of the abandoned keepers houses. Verbal permission was granted by the Coast Guard for this project, and NSLPS provided funding for the plywood and nails. It is hoped that covering the windows will protect the structures from severe winter weather and deter vandals from entering during the summer. Though they appear to be structurally sound, a decade of neglect has reduced the two storey buildings to little more than wooden shells. The interiors have been stripped of hardwood floors and stairs, and all walls and ceilings have been badly vandalized.

The 1960's Sambro Island keepers' houses, though not as historically significant as the lighthouse, are an integral part of the lightstation. Current federal regulations make it difficult for groups or communities to acquire, restore and maintain surplus lightstation structures, but efforts must be made to stabilize the Sambro dwellings, and to work towards a way of saving these important components of the lighthouse site.

A very big thank you is extended to the people who volunteered their time and talent on that blustery December day: Tom Taylor, Fotis Lambros, Rip and David Irwin, Alan Marriott, and *Jag II* skipper Andre Jezequel. Thanks also the Coast Guard's Wayne Dedrick, and to the workmen at the lighthouse who allowed us to view work on the tower, and to warm up in the fog alarm building!

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## SAMBRO ISLAND RESEARCH TRIP

*Dan Conlin*

NSLPS took advantage of a unique opportunity last fall to study the structure of Sambro Lighthouse, the oldest operating lighthouse in North America. For a brief time in October, major repairs completely removed the old rotten shingle cladding, exposing for the first time in many years the original 1758 stonework. This gave a chance to document and study the Sambro stonework, an opportunity for some unusual insights, as stone lighthouse are very rare



in the Maritimes and this chance will not come again for a long time. A volunteer team of historians and natural scientists were recruited to have a look at the stonework and tower. Heavy winds forced three postponements but finally on November 6, a successful visit was made.

Team members included:

- Alan Ruffinan, Geomarine Associates, marine geologist.
- Karen Casselman, research associate, Nova Scotia Museum who specializes in lichens.
- Allen Penney, architect. and research associate, Nova Scotia Museum could not attend but has studied the research gathered on the trip.
- Julian Gwyn, historian, University of Ottawa, who is studying the Royal Naval Yard, built in the same period as Sambro.
- Rip Irwin, longtime Sambro researcher.

The trip also permitted NSLPS some networking with two members of the Greater Chebucto Community Development Association, who came along to examine Sambro, hopefully as partners with NSLPS in its eventual restoration. CBC Radio and the Daily News were also attracted to check out some of Sambro's mysteries - media attention for Sambro is always welcome to overcome the sad fact that far too many people in Nova Scotia remain unaware that they have North America's oldest lighthouse on their doorstep.

I was the trip coordinator and took documentary photographs. Extremely fine grain slides and colour prints were taken of the stonework on every exposed level of the tower. These are now available for researchers to scrutinize in future years.

Some interesting details to ponder emerged in the photography:

1. The stones were covered with an old layer of whitewash, but it had worn away in large patches revealing mostly gray granite blocks, except for a single round pink granite stone found on an upper level.
2. Between the massive granite blocks, in many locations, narrow slabs of what looked to be Halifax slate (ironstone) appear to have been inserted as spacers.
3. Very rusty angular iron pieces and wooden blocks were found protruding from many of the mortar joints, probably old anchors for the framework holding the wooden shingles.

Beyond those observations, I will leave the interpretation of the stonework for the invited experts.

## THE EXPERTS REPORT

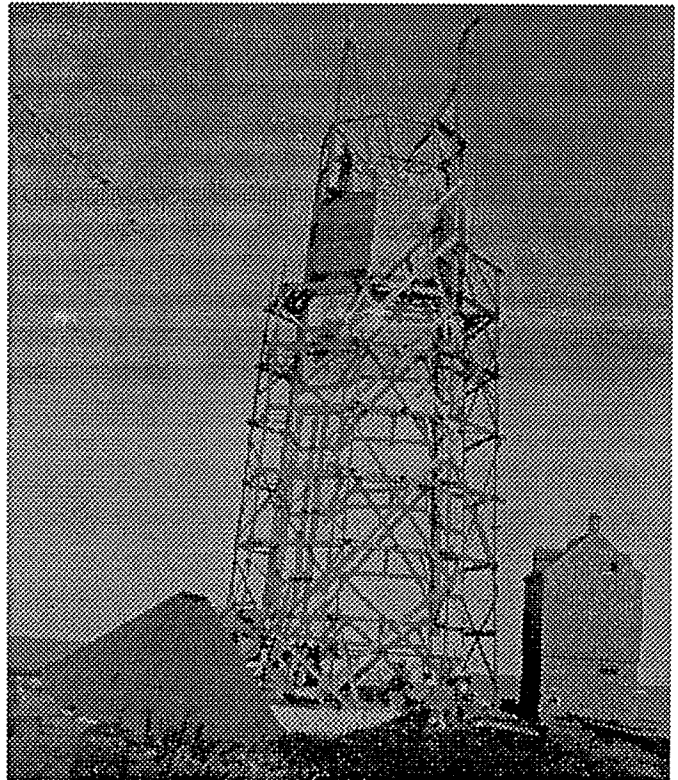
### Sambro Light Tower

*Alan Penney*

Mid-eighteenth century lighthouses tested the boundaries of technological development and knowledge. For centuries towers had adorned churches, but for a real test of

materials and construction, build a tower on an island in the sea! For over two centuries the light at Sambro has been repeatedly upgraded or replaced with the latest technology. Not so the structure, which due to poor maintenance lost its foundation strength many years ago. It still stands, strengthened and repaired, 240 years later, but not unchanged.

Sambro light tower is a living laboratory subjected to high wind speeds. It has succumbed and is now 8" out of plumb. Bending resistance depends on gravity and traditionally from iron cramps buried on the stonework to prevent uplift from the windward side. Vortex shedding from the lee of the tower creates buffeting, reduced by the octagonal plan shape. Excessive vibration or sway is tamed. A squat tower reduces potential wind damage, and locating the base well back from the water limits prevents solid water hitting it, which might displace or too easily penetrate its skin.



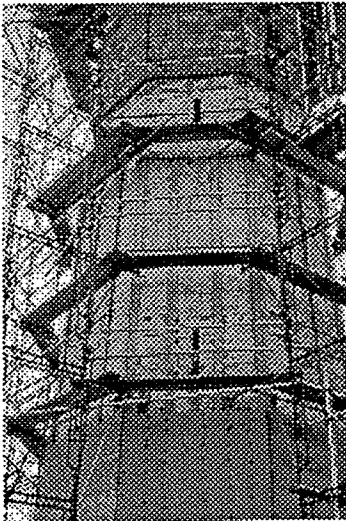
Concrete being added to Sambro Tower, 1906. The dark cone in the foreground is the roof of the previous lantern. *Public Archives of Nova Scotia, DOT Lighthouse Collection.*

Increasing the height in 1906 by adding 22' of concrete meant the extra mass improved stability, but also increased vulnerability from wind forces. Compared with early church towers, no attempt seems to have been made to weight the top, unless the original central hardwood stair column hung from the top platform as a stabilizer.

Deterioration of the foundation masonry recorded after World War II suggests maintenance was perennially inadequate and at best intermittent. A reinforced concrete

## Sambro cont'd

collar, infill and grout added girth to the base which is now ungainly.



Tower with plywood sheathing being attached. Photo: NSLPS

Illustrations showing previous wooden shingle claddings suggest a long history of second skins has been used to protect the structure. Like oilskins, they have their own problems with internal condensation. While it preserves the original stone structure, a raincoat will also alter its shape. Earlier photographs show a variety of details are now missing. Especially sad is the loss of the pom-pommed lantern hat.

Exposure on Sambro Island to salt-laden water is a good test of masonry walls. Stone blocks mortar made from cement, sand and water,



Open joints in masonry suggest exposure and possibly poor maintenance over time. Photo: NSLPS

and any metal connections, will be well tested over time. Ultimately, life expectancy of the tower structure depends on how many storms it lives through, how good its initial construction, and how clever the masons who built it. Perhaps the age of construction

also gives a clue to these values, for its longevity is now proven.

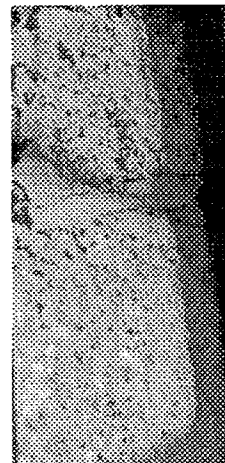
Sadly, recognition of the significance of the other buildings on the island is understated, but is crucial to the historical value of the whole site, including the tower. The heritage status evaluation should give the support buildings more credit, where the whole development depends on boat sheds, ramps, bridges, keepers' cottages and other buildings like gas and equipment stores.

More questions remain. Who designed and built the tower? Where did stone come from? The stone source depends on a geologist, with local stone likely due to construction funding coming from Halifax rather than London. A local designer, possibly from Boston is therefore likely. More scholarship should be directed this way. In the meantime, conservation of the tower is vital to its continued life. Long may it live!

## Caution! Forensic Petrologists at Work: The Origin of the Sambro Island 'Lighthouse Granite'

*Alan Ruffman and Michael A. MacDonald*

The first 44 feet (13.1 metres) of the Sambro Island lighthouse, built in 1758-60, is of quarried blocks of a grey granite. The blocks are of modest size such that two workers could probably have managed to move them about with a minimum of levers and blocks and tackles. The origin of the stone was not an issue until recent years. One member of the Society recalls reading a suggestion that they came as ballast in a vessel from Massachusetts. Another visiting historian working on the Dockyard has seen a reference suggesting that the first buildings built in the Dockyard were of granite from a quarry near Chebucto Head. These buildings were built at about the same time as the first lighthouse, and it is not illogical to assume that the same quarry might have been used for the lighthouse - perhaps even close to Chebucto Head within the reasonable shelter of Duncan's Cove where loading onto a vessel could occur. It has even been speculated that the stone for the lighthouse was salvaged from Fortress Louisbourg after the defeat of the French. The latter suggestion is easy to address - Louisbourg was constructed of sedimentary sandstone, not igneous granite! But where did the granite of the lighthouse come from in 1758-60?



The granite stone of Sambro Lighthouse. Photo: Canadian Coast Guard

The granite could be exotic to Nova Scotia and have come from Boston. However much of Nova Scotia is built of the 'South Mountain Batholith' — a huge granite intrusion that stretches in an arc from East Kemptville toward Windsor, then down to Sambro Island and offshore for some distance. Clearly the granite might have come from this Nova Scotia source. Within the South Mountain Batholith are different phases of intrusion which form several smaller 'plutons'. The 'Halifax Pluton' takes in the whole of the

Chebucto Peninsula starting at the Queen Quarry in the granite at Purcell's Cove, south to Chebucto Head, on to Sambro Island, and west to Peggy's Cove, up to the head of St. Margaret's Bay and over to almost Bedford Basin, the Suzie Lake area, and back through Spryfield. In this pluton there were at least five granite quarries shown on E.R. Faribault's geology maps of 1907-08. On Terence Bay two quarries shipped by water (the 'Brookside Quarry' and the 'Old Granite Quarry' of Grover Cove on the southeast shore of Terence Basin). The Queen Quarry at Purcell's Cove is known to have supplied much of Halifax's building stone, and there is of course the mooted early quarry supposedly near Chebucto Head. But can one tell where in the Halifax Pluton a piece of granite comes from?

On E.R. Faribault's first geology maps of Nova Scotia, all the granite was coloured pink and left at that. In the mid-1980s new maps of the Nova Scotia granite began to appear separating the different phases of intrusion and mapping the plutons in detail. To one's eye the granite may look similar, but to the newer tool of the electron probe or to whole rock geochemistry, subtle differences emerge reflecting where you are in the pluton and whether one is dealing with outermost or core minerals.

Alan Ruffman went out on the November 6, 1998 field trip to Sambro Island with this knowledge in mind. Three large chips of the 'lighthouse granite' were taken from the edges of the windows and brought back for thin section analysis. One large 20 kg sample of the granite of Sambro Island itself was taken to allow us to fit the previously unsampled island into the Halifax Pluton zoning scheme.

There is no need to invoke an exotic source for the 'lighthouse granite'; it does appear that it could come from Nova Scotia's South Mountain Batholith. The 'lighthouse granite' does not come from the Purcell's Cove 'Queen Quarry' and does not come from the 'Brookside Quarry' on the narrowest part of Terence Bay.

Thus we tentatively conclude that if the 'lighthouse granite' came from the Halifax Pluton of the South Mountain Batholith, then it came from either the 'Old Granite Quarry' on the shore of Grover Cove in Terence Basin, or from the mooted quarry near Chebucto Head (Duncan's Cove?). Both offer a sheltered loading point for vessels, with the Terence Basin quarry being totally isolated from the sea, and Duncan's Cove vulnerable to certain winds and to all ocean swell conditions. So far no Duncan's Cove or Chebucto Head quarry has been found. However the basement of one of the two oldest houses of Duncan's Cove, built circa 1850, has several sills of linear quarried granite showing the traditional 'plug and feathers' signature of a pre-dynamite quarry. That granite has not been subject to forensic petrology as yet, but it is logical

that it was derived from the local granite- hence a local quarry.

More detailed work is planned in an effort to pin down these conclusions better. It is to be hoped that the various historical references can be relocated to either back up, or dismiss, the idea of an exotic source for the granite and to perhaps confirm at least a small early quarry in the Chebucto Head area.

## **Lichens of Sambro Island**

*Karen Diadick Casselman*

Lichens on rocks and wood at Sambro Island appear to be fairly typical northeast, coastal species. Small pieces of driftwood picked up randomly on the island were lichenized with species identical to those found, for example, on Sable Island and Brier Island.

The long reach of granite sloping from the northeast corner of the lighthouse toward the sea is rather sparsely colonized by various lichens that inhabit the inter-tidal zone and high water line.

The shingle cladding and the cement-like covering on top of the original granite portion of the tower, has lessened significantly the likelihood of lichen colonization in the past. This means that at this site, lichenometry (using lichens as a dating mechanism) is not a particularly useful tool.

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## **LOBSTERFEST**

### **Sandy Point Lighthouse & Recreation Centre**

**Fri. June 4, 4:30 - 6:30:** lobster dinner and display of lobster trap building and knitting heads, and more.

**Sat. June 5, 10 - 12 midnight:** bake sale, lobsterburgers, fishing contest, chowder supper, dance

**Sun. June 6:** paddlewheel races, lobster shelling contest, children's games, auction, and more.

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**AFFILIATES:** Send us information about your special summer activities by May 15 and we will list them in the June *Lightkeeper*! If you have a photo from last year, we might include that, too. We'll also post the info to the NSLPS website.

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## **WEBSITE UPDATE**

**URL:** <http://www.EDnet.ns.ca/educ/heritage/nslps>

**Sambro Lighthouse Restoration:** Lots more pictures and information.

**New Lights:** Georges Island, Beaver Island, Henry Island, Horton Bluff. More to come.

**Lighthouse Legislation:** Additions to information.

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## INTERESTING FACTS

### Federal Heritage Building Review Office (FHBRO)

evaluates and classifies government buildings.

### Heritage Lighthouses

Here are the total Canadian numbers:

19 lighthouses are classified (full protection)

101 lighthouses are recognized (partial protection)

157 lighthouses have been rejected as not heritage according to existing federal regulations

Source: FHBRO office, Ottawa

In Nova Scotia, Sambro and Cape Sable lighthouses are classified heritage buildings.

Only twenty percent of Canada's 583 surviving lighthouses have any heritage protection.

Under current federal regulations, more lighthouses are being rejected than protected.

### Parks Canada and Lighthouses

#### Lighthouse National Historic Sites:

British Columbia: Fisgard Light, established 1860

Ontario: Point Clark, established 1859. Bois Blanc Island established 1837.

Quebec: Point-au-Père, established 1859.

Newfoundland: Cape Spear, established 1836.

Parks Canada has 132 operating National Historic Sites.

### Canadian Coast Guard

CCG plans to preserve the following lighthouses:

Sambro Island, NS, Point Amour, NF, Ile Verte PQ, Cove Island, ON, Estevan Point BC.

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## ERRATUM

Our apologies! The photograph "Lunch in the cookhouse" on page 11 of the last *Lightkeeper* was taken by Bill Mont, not Kathy Brown.

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## NOVA SCOTIA LIGHTHOUSE PRESERVATION SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FORM - 1999

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## LIGHTHOUSE TOURS

NSLPS is planning tours to the following lighthouses during the summer and autumn:

Sambro Island, near Halifax

George's Island, Halifax harbour

Devil's Island, Halifax harbour

Tusket Islands boat trip, from Cape Sable Island

Bon Portage Island, off Barrington

Henry Island, Cape Breton

Seal Island, SW of Cape Sable Island

Details will be printed in the June *The Lightkeeper*

This is a lot of work for a small group! Trips are lots of fun, including the planning as long as there are enough people involved. Trip coordinators travel free!

If you have some time to help out, call Jim Guptill, President, NSLPS, 876-0724.

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## LIGHTSHOP

Order from: Jeanne Thomas, 262 Purcell's Cove Road, Halifax, NS, B3P 1C3. Telephone 479-1626

Please make cheques payable to the Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society.

NSLPS MEMBERSHIP PINS: \$5.00 + \$1.00 shipping.

*Back by popular demand:*

**VANISHING LIGHTS** Chris Mills fascinating book about his experiences as a lightkeeper during the last days of staffed lights in the Maritimes. \$13.00 + \$3.00 shipping

**ART PRINT: *The Work Crew on Sambro Island*:**

7 x 10 ½ print by Maurice Bernard, ready to frame.

**SPECIAL \$20.00**, including postage.