



THE Lightkeeper

The Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society

Vol. 6, No. 2, June, 1999

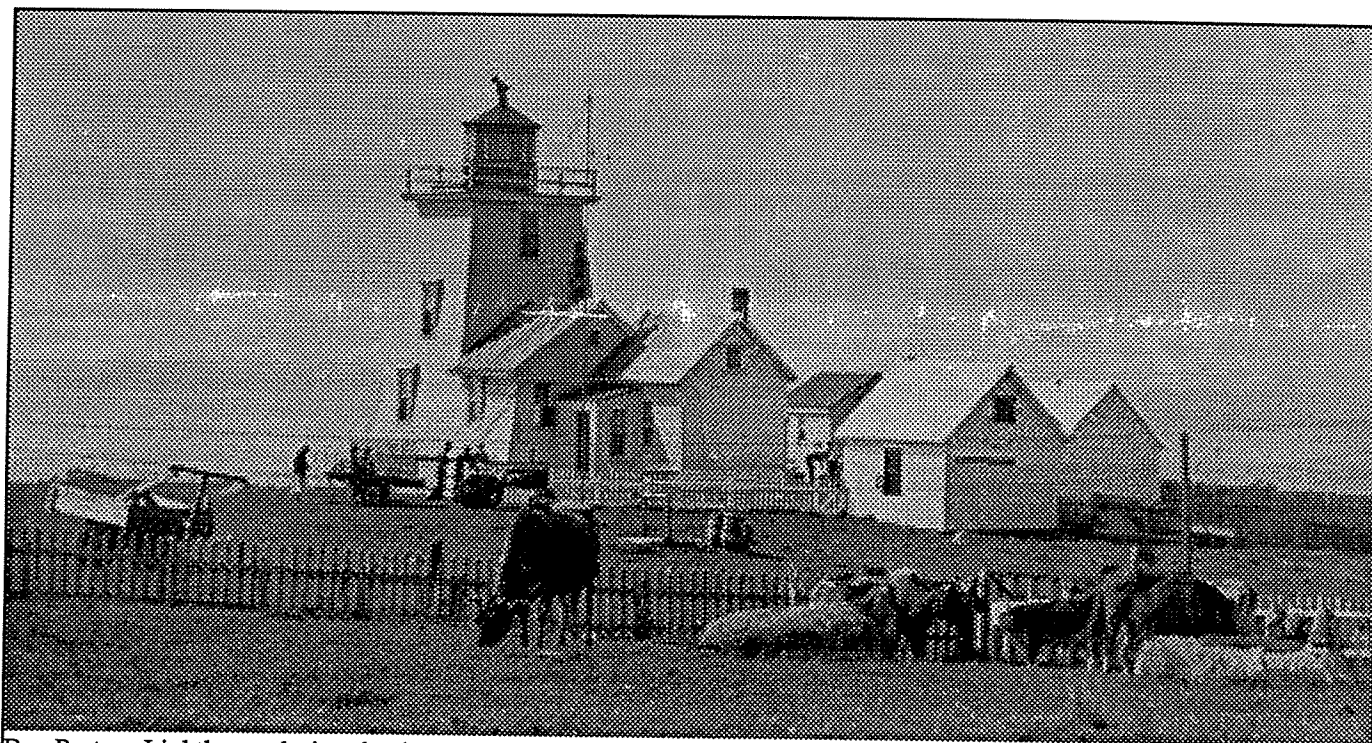
The objectives of the Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society are: to promote and support preservation and awareness of Nova Scotian lighthouses; to assist community groups in leasing or taking ownership of lighthouse sites; to provide access to written research and photographic documentation and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

LIGHTKEEPER EDITORS: Kathy Brown & Chris Mills

PATRONS: Carl Lautenslaugher, Roderick J. MacLennan, Jeanne Thomas, South Shore Tourism Association

AFFILIATES: Advocate District Development Association, Age of Sail Heritage Centre, Burntcoat Head Park, Cape Sable Historical Society, Central Nova Tourism Association, Chapel Hill Historical Society, Five Islands Lighthouse Society, Friends of the Yarmouth Light Society, Henry Island Lighthouse Preservation Society, Margaretsville Community Hall Society, Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, Medway Area Communities Association, Mosher Island Lighthouse Society, Municipality of Queens Tourism & Development, Nova Scotia Lighthouse Interpretive Centre, Sandy Point Recreation Group, Seal Island Tours, South Shore Tourism Association, Tidal View Drive Association, Walton Lighthouse Committee



Bon Portage Lighthouse during the time that Morrill Richardson was Keeper. *From a post card, courtesy Lew Perry.*

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Weames, Phyllis Hall, Alison Cude & Andru Lordly,
John Waterton, Courtney Thompson, Donald Munro,
Dave & Susan Irwin, Elaine & Jay. W Meeuwig, Gayle
& Craig Reiner, Dorine Lundbeck

NSLPS MEETINGS

7:00 PM, 4th Wednesday of each month

at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, Water St., Halifax

Wednesday June 23: 7:00 PM, General Meeting

Wednesday July 28: 7:00 PM, General Meeting

Wednesday Aug. 23: 7:00 PM, General Meeting

Trips & Tours - Page 2

WELCOME ABOARD!

The following new members recently joined NSLPS: Sharon

NSLPS GUIDED LIGHTHOUSE TRIPS

That season has arrived again! So, get out your walking boots and keep your life jacket handy, here we go!

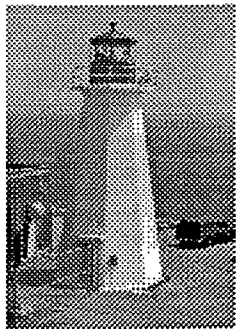
REGISTER EARLY! All these trips will be advertised to the public at least 2 weeks beforehand.

NOTE: Lighthouse islands are usually rough places for walking. Many trips require climbing high wharves and rocks, and are not suitable for children under 9 years or people with mobility difficulties. Inquire when registering.

Chebucto Head, Halifax Harbour

June 19: Lighthouse Tours 10 - 12 noon

In cooperation with the Halifax Field Naturalists



Join Jim Guptill the last keeper at Chebucto Head and President of NSLPS for tours of the tower and the facility as far as the engine room and Vessel Traffic Radar. Afterwards, join a hike along the coast sponsored by the Halifax Field Naturalists.

Meet at the lighthouse. Tours will be continuous.

Bring a bag lunch if you wish.

Cost: Donation to NSLPS

Coffin Island, near Liverpool

Sat. June 26

Weather date Sun. July 11

Co-sponsored by the Coffin Island Lighthouse Heritage Society

Visit the fifth oldest lighthouse site in Nova Scotia as its community fights to save it from erosion and abandonment. The trip includes a short boat ride, hike across the island and a visit inside the large 85 year old octagonal tower. Members of the Coffin Island Lighthouse Heritage Society will act as guides to the site which dates from 1812. All proceeds go to the

campaign to save the light.

Departure: 1:00 pm from Brooklyn Marina (Across the Harbour from Liverpool, near the Bowater Mersey Mill). Boat returns at 5:00 pm

Cost: NSLPS members \$10.00. Non members \$15.00.

Registration required. Call Dan Conlin 424-6442.

Space is limited

Directions will be supplied for members who want to use

the morning to visit Queens County's rich selection of "drive-to" lighthouses such as the Fort Point Lighthouse Park & Museum, Port Medway and Western Head.

Sambro Lighthouse, near Ketch Harbour

Sat. July 10: Trips at 9:00 am, 11:30 am and 2:00 pm

Weather date: Sun July 11

This tour starts with a boat trip out through Sambro Ledges to the inlet on the outer side of Sambro island. Climb the newly restored oldest operating lighthouse in North America, and enjoy a great view of the coast. Learn more about this 240 year old lighthouse and explore the wild island near Halifax. (See p. 7 & 8)

Note: There are no facilities on the island.

What to Bring: Bring a snack including a drink, or lunch. Children must wear life jackets. Wear sturdy shoes.

Departure: from the Government Wharf at Ketch harbour. Please be at the wharf 10 minutes before the boat is scheduled to leave.

Cost: NSLPS members \$15.00. NSLPS family (2 children) \$30.00. Non members \$20.00.

Registration required. Call Chris Mills - 868-2313 or e-mail ketch@ns.sympatico.ca Limited to 54 persons.

Lighthouses of the Tusket Islands, South of Yarmouth

July 17, rain date July 18

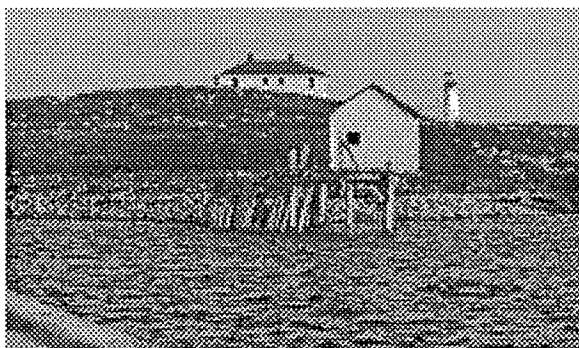
A unique opportunity to view the natural beauty of the Tusket Islands onboard the lovely "Miss Eden". You will view several lighthouses, and have lunch ashore on one of the islands. The lights we will see may include (weather dependent): Cape Forchu, Green Island, Candlebox Island and Pease Island.

Departure: 10:00 am from Government Wharf, Pinkney's Point, Yarmouth County

Cost: NSLPS members \$15, non members \$20

What to Bring: Lifejacket, plastic lawn chair, warm jacket, cold lunch

Registration required. Contact Tim Hall at 461-2495 (after 5 PM) or email halltj@mar.dfo-mpo.gc.ca Trip is limited to 25 persons.



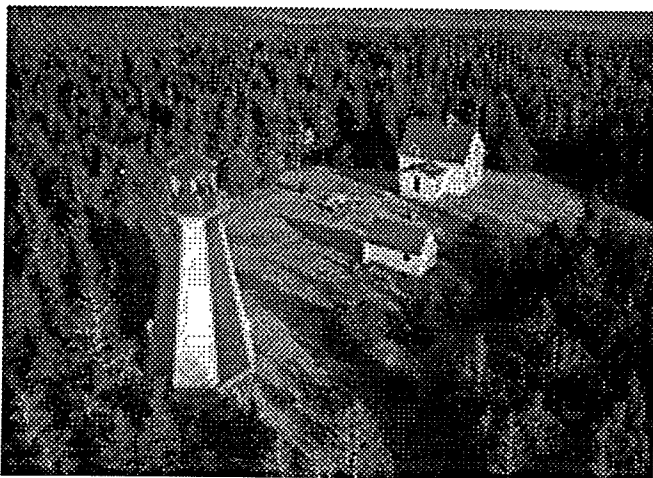
Pease's Island Light Station.

Mabou Harbour and Henry Island

Western Side of Cape Breton

Sun. August 29

In partnership with the Henry Island Lighthouse Preservation Society, and the Mabou Harbour Authority.



Henry Island Light Station

Visit two wonderful western Cape Breton lighthouses and explore diverse approaches to lighthouse preservation. Start with a guided visit to the Mabou Harbour light, an 1884 three-story wooden light in a very scenic harbour, now being looked after by a community group. This is followed by a boat ride to an offshore island and a very rare chance to visit inside a magnificent 53 foot high 1902 wooden tower plus the oldest surviving keeper's dwelling in Nova Scotia, beautifully restored by American lighthouse enthusiast Bill Baker.

Requires an overnight stay in the Port Hood Area. Affordable accommodation recommendations available. **Meet** at Mabou Lighthouse, 9:30 am. Return to Port Hood about 3:00 pm.

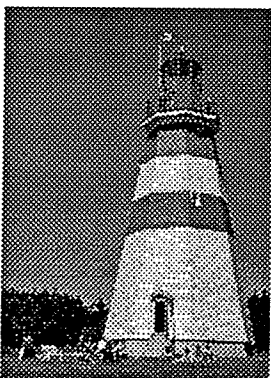
Cost: NSLPS members \$25.00. Non members \$35.00. Trip limited to 30 people.

Registration required. Call Dan Conlin 424-6442 Limited to 30 people.

Seal Island, 18 miles to sea off Cape Sable Island
Sat. and Sun. Sept. 11 & 12

Weather dates: Sat. and Sun. Sept. 18 & 19

This 2 day trip includes a 2 hour trip on a Cape Island boat to the remote island. Explore the rocky coastline, shipwrecks and sandy beaches, learn the romantic story of the establishment of the light station, climb the tower, Nova



Scotia's oldest timber lighthouse, and stay overnight in the fishermen's bunkhouse.

Departure: Sat. morning from Kenney's Wharf Clark's Harbour, Cape Sable Island. Return Sun. afternoon.

Cost: NSLPS Members \$60. Non-members \$70.

What to Bring: Food, drinking water, sleeping bags.

Details supplied before the trip.

Registration required. Call Kathy Brown 479-3115. Or e-mail krbrown@ns.sympatico.ca. Call early because this trip fills quickly. Limited to 15 persons.

Bon Portage, off Shag Harbour

Sat. and Sun. Sept. 18 & 19

Weather dates: Sat. and Sun. Sept. 25 & 26

Visit the island made famous by Evelyn Richardson in her classic book *We Keep a Light*. (See p. 4.) Travel the several miles to island in a Cape Island boat, sleep in the 1960's Lightkeeper's houses, visit the light, bird watch, observe bird banding and explore trails dating from the Richardson's time on the island. A high point is the return of the Leach's Petrels after sundown. Watch them in the beam of the light and hear their laughing cries fill the night.

Cost: NSLPS Members \$35. Non-members \$45.

What to Bring: Food, drinking water, sleeping bags.

Details supplied before the trip. *We Keep a Light* is recommended reading.

Registration required. Call Kathy Brown 479-3115. Or e-mail krbrown@ns.sympatico.ca. Call early. We expect this new trip to fill quickly. Limited to 15 persons. Trip leader is Janet McGinity.

Ten lighthouses and keeper's houses are open to the public in Nova Scotia!

There's a Keeper's Bed & Breakfast,
a Post Office Light,
an Ice Cream Parlour in a lighthouse
and a Lighthouse Museum, too!

*Dozens of lighthouses can be reached
from the highway!*

Watch for the new
NSLPS/ Nova Scotia Tourism Brochure
VISIT OUR LIGHTHOUSES!
in your mailbox soon.

BON PORTAGE ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE

Chris Mills



Old Bon Portage Lighthouse from the East-Northeast.

Courtesy Anne Wickens.

Located two nautical miles southwest of Shag Harbour near the southern tip of Nova Scotia, the Bon Portage Island lighthouse was established in 1874. For 110 years, 16 principal lightkeepers and their families kept the light burning on this small, windswept island. The longest serving keeper was Morrill Richardson, who along with his wife Evelyn, bought the island (except for the lighthouse property) in 1929. The Richardsons lived on the island for 35 years, raising three children in the small, drafty wooden lighthouse on the island's southern point. They supplemented Morrill's modest government salary by farming the island's rocky soil. In 1945, Evelyn Richardson's classic book *We Keep A Light* was published and quickly became a best-seller in Canada. She described her family's life on the island with sensitivity and humour, noting both the disadvantages and joys of life on an isolated island. The Richardsons were greatly appreciative of the island's natural history; Evelyn's writings revealed her respect for the natural environment that shaped her family's life on Bon Portage.

During the 1950s the Richardsons moved into a new house from the lighthouse "that, standing alone and unsheltered" had defied the wind and sea for eight decades. In 1964, they retired and moved to the mainland. They sold their portion of the island to Acadia University and during the same year the Department of Transport demolished the old lighthouse and replaced it with a utilitarian concrete tower. A new dwelling was built to house the assistant keeper. Twenty years later the lighthouse was de-staffed and the last keepers moved to other lighthouses.

Today, the keepers' houses on Bon Portage are used to accommodate students attending Acadia University's Evelyn and Morrill Richardson Field Station in Biology, giving new life to the island after automation. In 1999, The

Bon Portage lightstation remains one of very few intact lightstations in Nova Scotia. The Richardson's legacy lives on through the field station on Bon Portage, and through the stories of Evelyn Richardson and her children.

Bon Portage Principal Lightkeepers

Arthur Wrayton	1874-1882
William Wrayton	1882-1897
Leslie Hopkins	1897-1906
Angus Greenwood	1907-1913
Maurice Nickerson	1914-1918
Etheron Wickens	1919-1920
Osborne Langthorne	1920-1921
Harry Greenwood	1922
Earle Greenwood	1923-1926
G. Greenwood	1927
Earle Greenwood	1928-1929
Morrill Richardson	1929- 1964
Carroll Crowell	1964-1978
Sidney R. Nickerson	1978-1980
William R. Goodwin	1980-1983
H. Sterling Wright	1983-1984

Bon Portage lightstation was de-staffed October 10, 1984



The concrete light built in 1964, Bon Portage Island

Courtesy Anne Wickens.

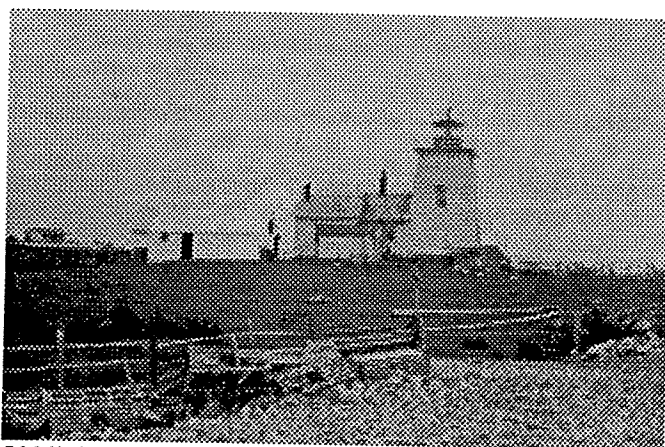
Anne (Richardson) Wickens, along with her sister Betty June and brother Laurie, grew up on Bon Portage Island in the 1930s and 40s. Here, she recounts some of her first memories of life at the lighthouse.

MY LIGHTHOUSE HOME, THEN

Anne Wickens

My earliest memory of Bon Portage lighthouse is hazy, and conditioned by my size. My brother Laurie is sitting on a mat, blond and beaming; I am aware that he cannot move, only sit. He must, therefore, be less than a year old, and I barely two. I am climbing the "woman killer" and making heavy weather of it. I am a small, pudgy child, and crawling or walking up these kitchen steps is beyond me. I place one hand, arm rigid, on the first step and stretch to

grip the flange of the next with my other hand. I set one foot on the first step, drag up the other, and straighten. It is hard going; perhaps I have never done it before. Laurie gurgles at me, perhaps admiring my prowess. I keep going...



Old lighthouse, Bon Portage, from the West.
Courtesy Anne Wickens.

The lighthouse, as erected by the Government consisted of a fine full-sized fieldstone cellar on which was built the tower, slanting inward all the way to the lantern on top. A northward-jutting ell was attached to the lighthouse, providing two fair-sized rooms and a porch the full width of the ground floor. The porch, alas, opened to the north with a wide door.

The chief problem with the house was that the first keeper, Will Wrayton, had seven small children. Another keeper, at least in winter, was a necessity who had to be fitted in *somewhere*. Will complained that they were "crawling all over each other like maggots." With or without official permission he added a kitchen ell on a stone foundation. The kitchen was complete with closet (the only closet in the house) and a door opening to the south to milder winds which were usually less violent than the northern ones. Since the new kitchen was built below the original structure, Will constructed steps to the level of the former porch. Such flights, especially in a kitchen, were known as "woman killers". Part of the former porch was then a passage to the original kitchen and the eastern part was a pantry. In winter, the pantry advanced to the status of a refrigerator. Our father, after wrestling with the results of Will's endeavours, always declared that no Irishman should ever be permitted to build *anything*. (He was partly of Irish descent himself.) Nothing Will built was straight, square or level. Nevertheless, I feel he had the right idea.

My world, in those days consisted of these ground floor rooms, two porches on either side of the kitchen, the doorsteps of the porches, and the cleared lighthouse field.

The field enclosed a barn, oil shed, Dad's truly admirable woodpile, and a *long* way off, stood a henhouse and outside toilet. Shortly, the field also contained a pighouse.

We had a cow named Amaryllis who was mainly Jersey and who was mainly cross and unapproachable. There was a dog, Rags, who snapped at everyone and wore a muzzle. I was not afraid of Amaryllis, but so afraid of Rags I was fearful of all dogs for years. Dad didn't like cats, or thought he didn't. Mum preferred them to mice, which kept coming in uninvited. When a nearby uncle moved to Bedford, our little cousin Kenny was heartbroken when told he must leave his cat behind. When asked to give it to a younger cousin, Kenny cried harder and said that "Jackie would pull poor Teddy's tail". (He was right too; Jackie's dog led a miserable life). Kenny agreed however to give Teddy to me. Dad came home with a cat and a very sour face, but Mum was pleased and I overjoyed. Teddy really was a very nice cat, though not a mouser. His mere presence kept mice out, and the game of "The Paw" entranced Laurie and me.

Teddy lay under the black, cast iron kitchen stove, out of the way of men's feet, while Laurie and I lay on our tummies on the braided mat, peering in at our now inaccessible cat. Teddy would extend a paw, and we would try to touch it before he could withdraw it. Sometimes we took turns; sometimes we both tried at once. Teddy usually tired of this before we did. I discovered that if I offered a paw, Teddy would bat at it- lightly, with never a claw. I became adept enough to sometimes beat Teddy at both forms of play, but the score was always something like Teddy 93; Anne 7; Laurie 0.



Laurie Richardson.
Courtesy Anne Wickens.

Close to the advent of Teddy, Laurie and I approached Broad the ox, not having been warned against him. For a Jersey he was extremely large, with an enormous spread of horns. Because of this, the adults must have considered a caution unnecessary. At first, we merely played around him as he lay chewing his

cud. Then we scratched his nose. He didn't mind, so we scratched his ears. Somehow we were climbing up one side- I had to help chubby, clumsy Laurie- and sliding down the other. Eventually we climbed over his horns and slid down his nose. We soon realized there were things we could do for our wonderful, huge playmate, which we

Bon Portage cont'd

thought of as the delightful games of Swat the Flies, Tidbits for Broad, and Tickle the Ox's Nose.

Broad was seldom in the lighthouse field (*we* were not allowed out of it) except for those noons during which he was required for an afternoon shift. Mother most unreasonably insisted on a full hour for dinnertime. Dad would have leaped to his feet and gone to work at the last swallow. It would have done no good to tell him he *must* take a break, but Mother argued that it wasn't fair to the hired man. Dad fidgeted and grumbled, but finally adjusted to a few minutes' relaxation after his meal. That was when we revelled with Broad, for apparently no adult ever learned of it.



The Richardson children, 1927.
Courtesy Anne Wickens.

A lengthy stay on the mainland resulted in the birth of Betty June, five years younger than I. Everyone had a dreadful time, very little of it her fault. That fall I began lessons, with Mother as my teacher. A decidedly squiffy Laurie was sent to play by himself – he was not good at it. Teddy disappeared, Pinknose arrived. Rags went, Peggy, a cross black Labrador, came. Grandpa Fox acquired a new radio and donated the old one to us; nothing was ever the same again.

MONEY FROM 3-D MUSEUM FILM GOES TO RACE ROCK LIGHTHOUSE

This summer, proceeds from a new 3-D Titanic film at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic will help maintain and staff the historic Race Rocks Lighthouse in British Columbia. The 15 minute film shows a 1991 dive to the wreck with spectacular 3-D effects that make fish seem to swim out of the screen. It was produced by noted Canadian diver Dr. Joe MacInnis. He arranged for a share of the proceeds to go to Pearson College. Students from Pearson manage the lighthouse and marine protected area at Race Rocks at a cost to the college of about \$100,000 a year. Showings, at an extra \$2.50 on top of museum admission,

started on May. Now, if someone could only come up with a similar arrangement for a Nova Scotian lighthouse!

EXPEDITION TO ST. PAUL ISLAND, THE "GRAVEYARD OF THE GULF."

August 15th to August 21.

NSLPS member Terry Dwyer, runs dive trips to the wrecks off St. Paul Island, in the Gulf of St. Lawrence off the tip of Cape Breton. There is room for non-divers on this year's trips. Terry would be very pleased to have lighthouse enthusiasts participate. The lighthouse will not be open, but it is a chance to visit a very remote lighthouse and island. The engineer's house at the light station is used as a base of operations.

Terry supplies:

- All transportation from Halifax to Dingwall.
- All food, snacks, and beverages, plus a full time cook
- Generators, 2-way radio's, dishes, and utensils
- Not included is anything of a personal nature: i.e. tents, toiletries, sleeping bags, or clothing.

Cost for non-divers is about \$600.00.

There will also be two 3 day weekend expeditions to St. Paul Island in August.

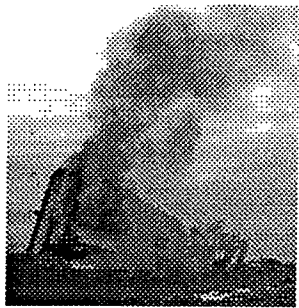
If you are interested contact Terry Dwyer directly via e-mail <shipwrecked@ns.sympatico.ca> or telephone 902-455-0031

LIGHTHOUSE PROTECTION ACT UPDATE

Chris Mills

The Lighthouse Protection Act Committee has completed the second stage of the mail-out of protection act information to all Canadian MP's and senators. During April a committee representative met with the secretary to Federal Fisheries Minister David Anderson to raise concerns about the state of Canada's lighthouses. Many politicians have responded positively to the need for lighthouse protection, including Senator Pat Carney, who was deeply involved in the recent British Columbia lighthouse de-staffing issue.

The protection act initiative has also received media coverage on CBC Radio's national morning show *This Morning*, and a television station from Ste. Pierre and Miquelon will be covering the issue of endangered Nova Scotia lighthouses in June. During the summer, the Heritage Canada Foundation journal will publish a feature article by committee members, dealing with the present state and the fate of Canada's lighthouses, and the need for federal protection for these threatened icons of our coastal history.



HELP PROTECT CANADA'S LIGHTHOUSES!

David Curry & Chris Mills

In memoriam:

*Mosher Island Lighthouse,
burned, 1990. [Photo Thom Drew]*

FACTS ABOUT CANADIAN LIGHTHOUSES:

- Canada has 583 surviving lighthouses.
Newfoundland: 72
Nova Scotia: 160
Prince Edward Island: 56
New Brunswick: 78
Québec: 59
Ontario: 104
Manitoba: 2
British Columbia: 52
Only Saskatchewan and Alberta don't have any.
- Lighthouses are icons of our maritime history and offer public access to coastlines.
- Only 19 of our lighthouses have full heritage protection. More lighthouses are rejected than protected.
- In the USA nearly 70% of lighthouses over 50 years old are protected.
- Surplus lighthouses are subject to the Real Properties Act making it difficult for communities to take over the site and virtually guaranteeing their sale for private

Honourable Sheila Copps
Minister of Canadian Heritage
15 Eddy Street
Jules Leger Building
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0M5

Dear Minister Copps:

I am asking for your support for a Lighthouse Protection Act for Canadian Lighthouses for the following reasons:

Lighthouses are icons of our maritime and national culture and heritage that must remain in the public domain as fundamental to the identity of Canadian coastal communities;

Lighthouses are a special kind of property needing heritage protection;

Lighthouses are currently threatened by neglect and disposal - the Canadian Coast Guard has no mandate for culture and heritage, only navigation and safety;

Lighthouses are critical to tourism and as catalysts to economic growth and development.

I strongly urge your support for a Canadian Lighthouse Protection Act.

Sincerely,

development.

- Automation of lights and cuts to Canadian Coast Guard budgets mean that existing lightstations receive minimal maintenance. Historically significant structures are literally falling apart.

What can you do to protect the Lighthouses of Canada from the dangers of neglect and disposal?

You can support a federal Lighthouse Protection Act for Canadian Lighthouses by writing letters advocating the need for a Lighthouse Protection Act. No postage required.

WRITE:

- Honourable Sheila Copps, Minister of Canadian Heritage. Her address is on the letter below.
- Honourable David Anderson, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans
House of Commons, Parliament Buildings
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6
- your Member of Parliament, Senator, MLA and local municipal authorities
MP's address is
----- MP,
House of Commons, Parliament Buildings
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6

*Here is a sample letter with the address of the
Hon. Sheila Copps.*

RESEARCH NOTES -

Belcher's Farmers Almanac:

An Unexpected Lighthouse Source

When most of us think Farmer's Almanacs, we think weather predictions and strange home remedies, but the Belcher's Farmer's Almanac, published in Nova Scotia from 1820 to 1930 is an unexpectedly helpful source for lighthouse research, especially for older Pre-Confederation lights. That's because Belcher's published a list of all the lighthouses in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick right up to its last year of publication. While the official Canadian government List of Lights is usually the first and most authoritative source for charting the history of a light, there are many years when a copy of the List of Lights cannot be found. In addition, the official List of Lights did not start until the 1870s which leaves many questions about Pre-Confederation lights. This makes the Almanac a handy gap-filler. While it did not list the year a lightstation was established, it does give brief description of the building, light, height, and foghorn as well as location and sometimes directions for use by mariners. Many years make note of new lights that are under construction but not yet operational. Plenty of businesses across Nova Scotia used to subscribe to the Almanac so there are good collections throughout the province. Here are some you can consult

Public Archives of Nova Scotia (424 6080)

has 1824 - 1930, with some gaps.

Maritime Museum of the Atlantic (424 6442)

has 1854 - 1930.

Dalhousie University, Killam Library

(494 3611) has 1840 - 1899

on microfiche with gaps.

Acadia University (585-1170)

has 1826-1899 with gaps.

University College of Cape Breton, Beaton

Institute (563-1329) has 1849-1929.

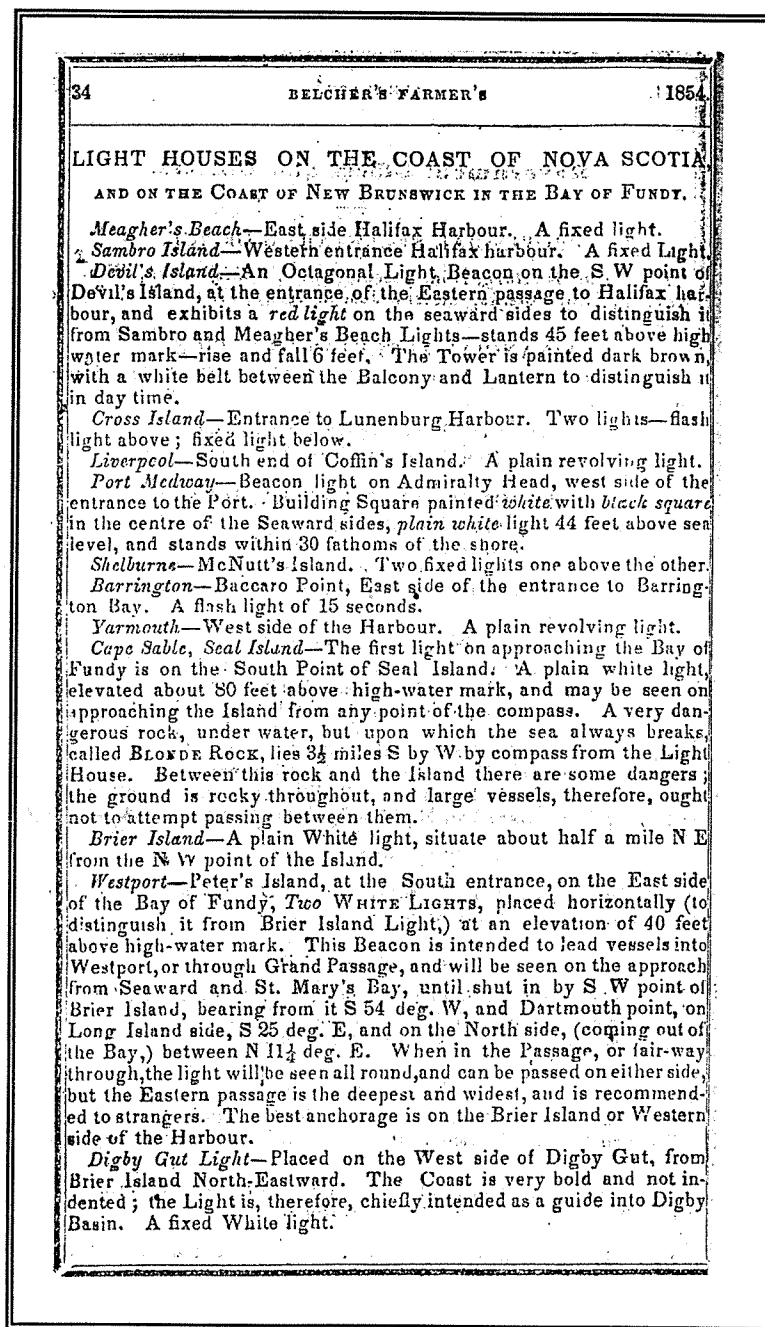
Yarmouth County Museum (742-5539) has 1835 - 1928 with gaps.

As well, there are probably other community museums which have runs of Belcher's.

Update From Fort Point Lighthouse, Liverpool.

Hours of Operation this summer: 10am to 6pm until June 26, then 10am to 8pm

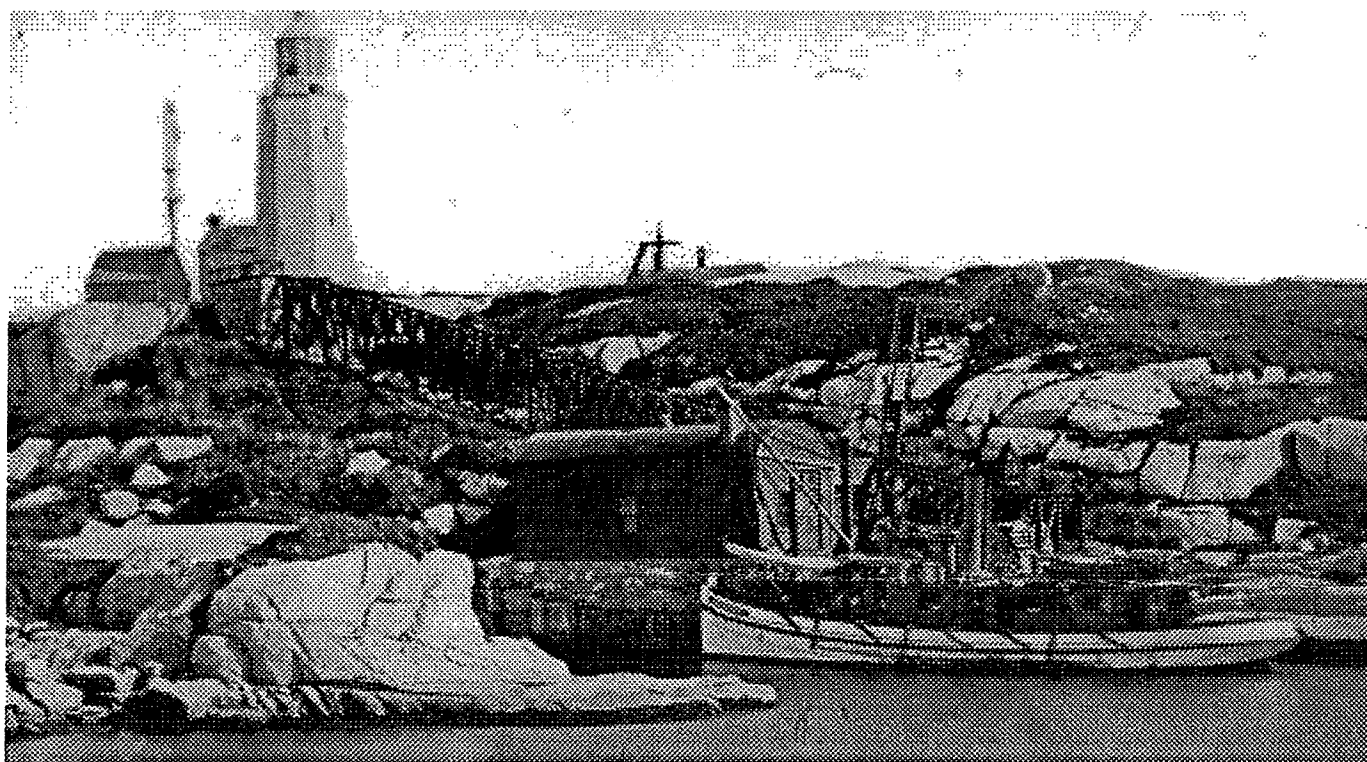
Special events will be held throughout the summer, especially during Privateer Days, July 1-4, and The South Shore Festival of the Arts Gala Days in September.



SAMBRO ISLAND LEGENDS: THE GHOST OF DOUBLE ALEX

Chris Mills

Minnie Smith grew up on Inner Sambro Island, one nautical mile NW of Sambro Island. One of 14 children, Minnie lived on this barren, windswept island until the mid 1920s. Hers was the last family to live on Inner Sambro, along with Ephram Smith, who tended the small beacon on the west point of the island. Minnie's grandfather William Gilkie was a lightkeeper on nearby Sambro Island, as was William's son Alfred, and Alfred's son Arthur. At 87, Minnie has many fond memories of her years on Inner Sambro and her visits to the Sambro Island lighthouse. Here, she recounts the tale of Alex Alexander, a soldier whose ghost is said to haunt the granite-bound island of Sambro.



Sambro Lighthouse, before 1906. It probably looked like this in the time of Alex Alexander. The roof of the whistle house peeks over the hill at the centre of this photo. The pointed contraption is on top of it.

Department of Transport Collection, Public Archives of Canada.

There was a militia of soldiers from England on Sambro Island, and they had the big cannon guns out there. Alec went ashore with some of the other soldiers, to Ketch Harbour or Duncan's Cove and they got drunk. He was gone for a week. When he came back he was in pretty hard shape. He wanted the captain, the head fellow of the army, to give him a drink of rum to straighten him out. The captain wouldn't do it. So then Alec went and hung himself. He hung himself in the whistle house. I don't know who it was saw him, but whoever it was, they came running down and said to my grandfather, "Grandfather come quick, Alec hung himself". So the head fellow went up and they cut him down and he still was warm and he still had a heartbeat. So my grandfather said to him, he said, "do you have a penknife on you?" to draw out a little bit of blood on him. "The veins will start going and his

heart will come back" The captain said "no, it's not allowed in the British Army". So they let Alec die. He could have been saved, but they let him go. That's why I guess he haunted them. This was in my grandfather's time.

Soon after that, the hauntings started. My grandfather, he had one of those big Newfoundland dogs. It was comin' up a storm one night and he said to my grandmother, "Mary, I'll go down and check the boats, for it's going to be a storm". And so he went, this was in the back cove and this guy came along, and he brought his dog along with him, and the dog wouldn't go ahead of him- he stopped, stopped right still. He called the dog and the dog wouldn't go. When he looked, there was Alec. He never spoke to him. He was just there for a minute or so and then he just disappeared. That was the only time my grandfather saw him. But they had heard noises and different things out

Sambro Island Legends: Double Alex cont'd

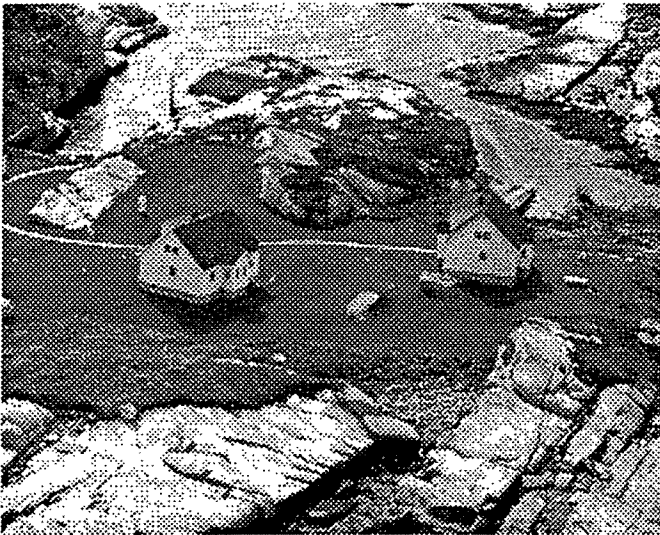
there. Different people was supposed to have seen Alec on the island. My cousin Roy Gilkie never saw anybody out there though. If he did he never said anything about it.

Everybody tells the yarn, they tell it over different, so you get so many different sides to it.

Double Alex made his presence known many times over the years. John Fairservice, who was a lightkeeper on Sambro Island from 1964 to 1988, reported strange occurrences on many occasions. A toilet mysteriously flushed by itself, a figure walked along the beach when the only other resident of the island, the assistant keeper, was asleep in his house, and someone (something?) climbed into bed with one of daughter Kelly Fairservice's visiting friends. Fisherman Stevie Gray was a friend of the Fairservices - he remembers his own experience of Double Alex.

Alec hung himself. He was a soldier. A soldier stationed on Sambro light. He went to a whorehouse in Ketch Harbour, spent the other fellers money. And I guess back then, that was quite the thing. So, he hung himself. Guess he'd have ended up being shot anyways. He hung himself down in that shack down on the shore.

I got me a good scare from him one night I'm tellin' you it was something. They were all tormenting me sayin' I was drinkin'. You ever been out there in the house that John and Marg lived in? You see how that walk goes up

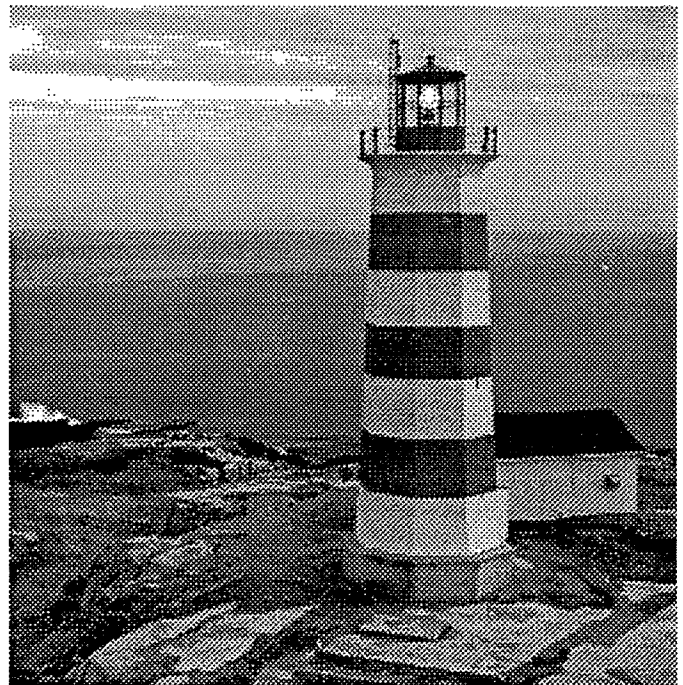


Houses on Sambro Island, when John Fairservice was Principle Keeper. His house is on the right. You can see the path leading to it and the porch sticking out on the left side of the house. *Department of Fisheries and Oceans.*

onto the porch? The clothesline runs over to the head. Well, we were out there carrying on and they fired me overboard. So I had me clothes, my pair of pants, pair of blue jeans was hangin' on the clothesline. And I got up

about two o'clock in the night to get a drink of water. It was black thick 'a fog and blowin' about 40. And I just put the glass under the tap, you know I tried to be quiet, every body's sleepin' and somethin' hit the window. I dropped the glass and it was just like somebody blew it up, a million pieces. It was all over the sink, all over the counter, all over the floor. You know sometimes how you got a pressure build-up in your pump, like there's air, and she'll give that big shot and if you ain't used to it, it'll blow the glass out of your hand? Well that what it was like, but they had gravity fed water out there! So they all laughed and went on and said that "it was the clothes on the line blowin' up against the window scared the stuffing out of you." I went out next morning and I grabbed a hold of them pair of pants and I come at the house with 'em. And I stretched that line all it would stretch and it never came anywhere near that window. I know it give me some scare. It'd be between 23 and 25 years ago that was.

Today the houses on Sambro Island are abandoned. If Double Alex still roams the island, there is no one there to see or feel his presence. A few weeks before the last keepers left in March 1988, visitors staying overnight in the assistant keeper's house were awakened in the early hours of a stormy morning by the rustle of nautical charts being slid across the livingroom floor. No one was in the room at the time. Perhaps Alex was getting a last fix on his position, just before the last keepers left Sambro Island to the gulls, the wind and the sea.



Sambro Lighthouse, May, 1999. The restoration of the exterior of the tower is completed. The building is in the best shape it has been since 1906. *Photo: Chris Mills*

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

28 April 1999

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT

Jim Guptill

The Society

The Society is in good shape. Things continue to run smoothly. Membership and funds steadily increase. The monthly talks are very popular. The Society receives 6-7 e-mail messages per day via the website. Requests range from general information to historical details. Over the past 16 months there have been 7760 hits on the site. The website has done a lot for the Society's image.

The Society had a booth at the Halifax Boat Show in February. The lighthouse situation was brought into the public eye and more people have become aware of what the Society is trying to do.

NSLPS organized six trips last year, to McNabs Island, Georges Island, Tusket Islands, Seal Island, Chebucto Head and Henry Island. Unfortunately, Henry Island was cancelled due to weather, but a tour of Mabou Harbour Lighthouse was done instead. Trips were well attended and people indicated they enjoyed them greatly.

There was a desire last year to start an "oral history" project. Unfortunately, there has been no movement on this. Jim wishes to put a push on this year. As time goes by, chances of losing "oral history" forever increase.. Anyone interested in working on this project is encouraged to step forward.

Jim thanked the executive members for all their hard work over the past year indicating it made his job easier.

State of Lighthouses

Unfortunately, the lighthouses are not doing as well as the Society. Treasury Board still wants to sell the lighthouses at market value. There is a lot of dedication by members to saving the lighthouses. The work of the Lighthouse Protection Act Committee, has made the plight of the lighthouses is more prominent in the public arena.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

President - Jim Guptill

Past President (automatic) - Dan Conlin

1st Vice President - T. Thompson

2nd Vice President, Newsletter Co-editor - Kathy Brown

Secretary - Valerie Myra

Treasurer - Lew Perry

Director, Communications and Civic Networking - Bill Mont

Director, Website - Peter MacCulloch

Director, Newsletter Co-editor - Chris Mills

Director, Sales and Meeting Logistics - Jeanne Thomas

Director, Trip Coordinator - Jim Trites

REPORTS

Lighthouse Protection Act *Chris Mills*

The committee has grown to 10-12 people. A package including a statement of principles, a request for a letter of support for a federal Lighthouse Protection Act, and a fact sheet. was sent to Maritimes MP's and Senators. The response has been positive. This package is now being sent to the remaining MP's and Senators across Canada.

On 11 March 1999 a press conference was conducted at Chebucto Head Lighthouse. It was a great success with coverage in the newspapers and on radio and TV. The spin-offs are starting to appear with lots of good coverage.

Help is always welcome Anyone interested should contact him or D. Conlin. Any suggestions are welcome.

Sambro Lighthouse *Chris Mills*

The following maintenance work was done last year: remove old shingles and strapping; new deck and flair built; original 1906 railing refinished and reinstalled; tower re-shingled and primed; lantern deck painted; new entrance porch built; wood steps inside replaced; cement cracks filled. Final coat of stain will be put on this June.

Last fall volunteers put plywood on the windows and doors of the keepers' houses. They are still owned by the Coast Guard and could still be restored.

Charitable Tax Status *Dan Conlin*

Dorothy MacLeod has submitted the final paperwork for Charitable Status to Revenue Canada. Revenue Canada cautioned there could be a long wait before final approval given. [In May we learned that the application was being reviewed. *Ed.*]

Community Groups *Tim. Hall*

NSLPS Affiliates were very pleased with the recent "Keeping our Lights" Workshops and gave positive feedback about the Society. Four Affiliate Members agreed to help with networking with nearby lighthouse projects. The Affiliates asked that the Society assume a bigger role in this. A motion was passed that "NSLPS prepare and distribute a "special bulletin" to all community-based NSLPS Affiliates in Nova Scotia. The bulletin would outline a draft communications strategy for our Affiliate's consideration.

Nova Scotia Lighthouse Brochure *Kathy Brown*

This is now a joint project between NS. Tourism and NSLPS. It will be printed this spring. It will feature lighthouse/keeper's houses open to the public, picnic lights and lights near the highway. It will be distributed by NS Tourism across Nova Scotia. As part of this project NSLPS will receive 20,000 full colour membership folders.

The meeting was followed by a presentation by Capt. Hubert Hall about Lighthouses and Shipwrecks of Anticosti Island.

Newsflash

LIGHTHOUSE DAY SATURDAY OCTOBER 2.

On June 1, the Province of Nova Scotia, meeting with community and tourism groups, decided to celebrate October 2 as a day to promote community preservation of lighthouses. A variety of community activities will be held promoting individual lighthouses and the lighthouse movement as a whole. A large-scale fax will be set to Heritage Minister Sheila Copps supporting the Lighthouse Protection Act. Details are still being worked out. *If you would like to participate, contact Dan Conlin 424 6442.* Stay tuned to the website and September *Lightkeeper* to find out what is going on.. October 2, 1758 is the day that the Nova Scotia legislature passed funding to build Sambro Island Lighthouse, the oldest surviving lighthouse in North America.

EXECUTIVE ACTIVITIES

There are lots of things the executive does outside of those monthly meetings. Here are a few:

Jim Guptill

spoke to the Greater Chebucto Development Association at a meeting in Sambro about Sambro Lighthouse and NSLPS; will be on David Suzuki's new TV show for children, about weather and lighthouses; was interviewed by French TV from Miquelon about Canadian Lighthouses and NSLPS

Chris Mills

press Conference to launch LPA initiative which generated press coverage from Global TV, Halifax Herald, National Post, Globe and Mail, Daily News, and a number of small papers and radio stations in the Maritimes; interviewed on CBC's *This Morning* about the state of Canada's lighthouses, and our Lighthouse Protection Act initiative; also was interviewed by French TV from Miquelon about Lighthouses and NSLPS; articles in Atlantic Boating News, and Shunpikeing.

NSLPS also had articles in the US magazine *Lighthouse Digest*

Chris Mills/Tim Hall

Meeting with author Courtney Thompson re NS Lighthouses book.

Dan Conlin/Tim Hall

Assorted lighthouse research.

Kathy Brown

gave two illustrated talks about Sambro Light, to the Wolfville Historical Society on Heritage Day and at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic; co-ordinated production of the NS Lighthouse Brochure.

UPCOMING EVENTS

SAMBRO LIGHTHOUSE TALK, *Kathy Brown*, at the Avon Spirit Museum, Newport Landing, June 20. Call the Avon River Heritage Society for further information. 757-1718.

NOVA SCOTIA LIGHTHOUSES, *Jim Guptill*, Coffin Island Lighthouse Heritage Society, Liverpool, June 29.

LIGHTHOUSE CONCERT

Cape George Lighthouse Day Park

Route 337, Antigonish County

July 18 - 4 - 8 pm

Local talent 4 - 6, John Allan Cameron - 6 - 8, Barbeque

LIGHTSHOP

Order from: Kathy Brown, 24 Armshore Drive, Halifax, NS, B3N 1M5. Telephone 479-3115.

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 1/2 print by Maurice Bernard, ready to frame.

SPECIAL \$20.00, including postage.

Lightkeeper is published quarterly by THE NOVA SCOTIA LIGHTHOUSE PRESERVATION SOCIETY, c/o Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, 1675 Lower Water Street, Halifax., B3J 1S3 Editors: Kathy Brown and Chris Mills. Send items for publication to Editors *The Lightkeeper*, c/o 24 Armshore Drive, Halifax, NS, B3N 1M5, or E-Mail to krbrown@ns.sympatico.ca. **Deadline for Sept. issue: Sept. 10.**

NSLPS MEMBERSHIP FORM - 1999

NAME _____ TELEPHONE _____
ADDRESS _____ POSTAL CODE _____
E-MAIL _____ New ☐ Renewal ☐ Membership Number: _____

Family/Group names for extra card(s): _____

Single - \$15.00	Institution/Group - \$30.00 (4 cards)	Patron - \$100.00
Family - \$20.00	Sustaining - \$50.00	Foreign - \$15.00 U.S. Funds, or equivalent.
Amount enclosed \$ _____ Please make cheques payable to Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society		

Mail to: THE NOVA SCOTIA LIGHTHOUSE PRESERVATION SOCIETY
c/o Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, 1675 Lower Water Street, Halifax, B3J 1S3