

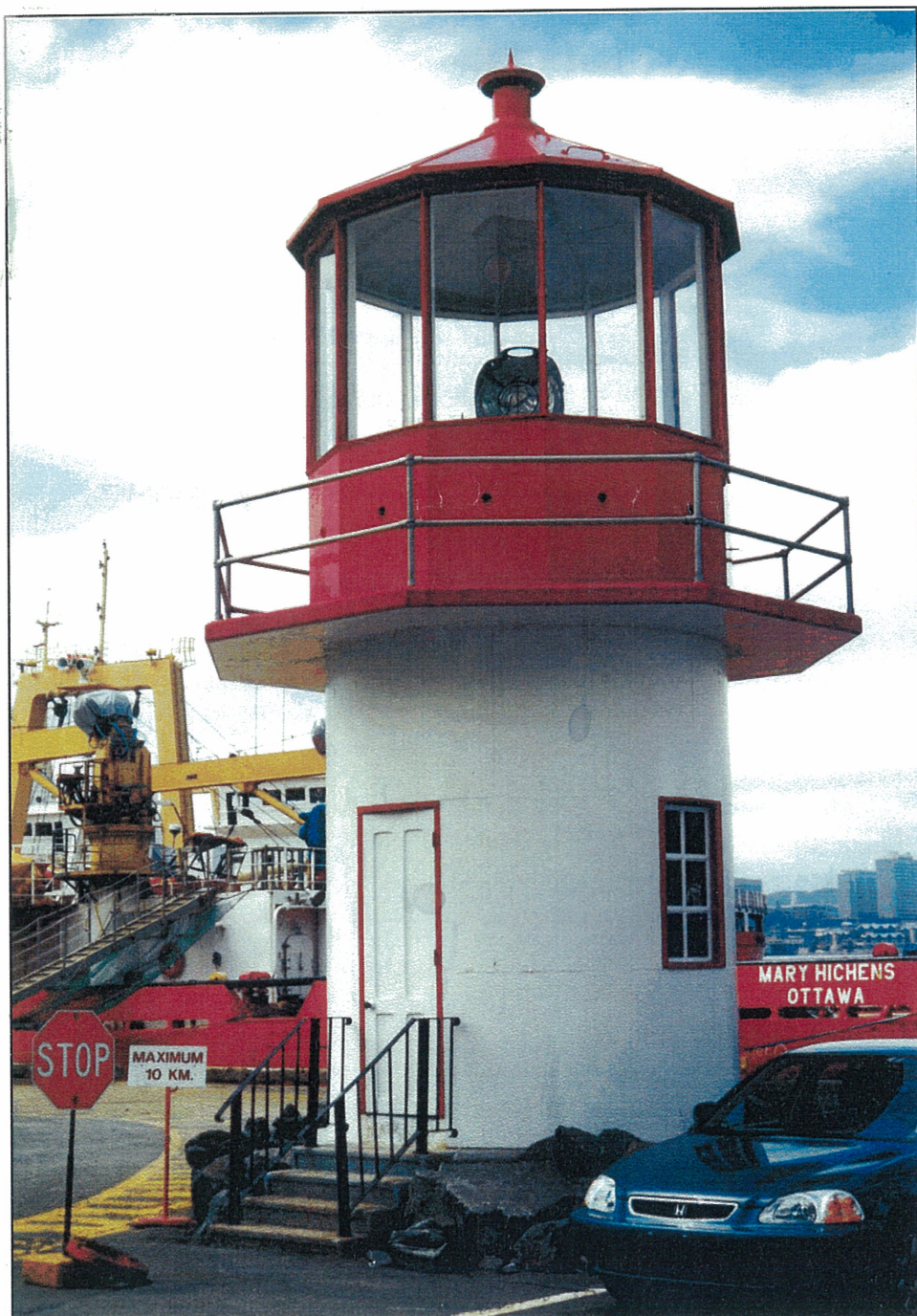


NSLPS 10<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY!

# THE Lightkeeper

The Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society

Vol. 11, No. 4, December 2004



## SEASON'S GREETINGS!

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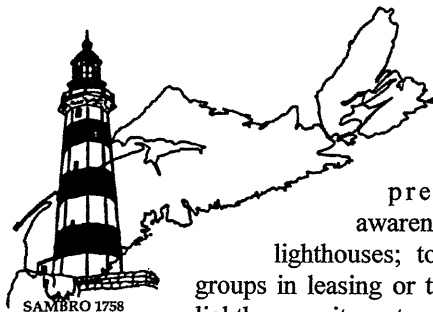
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**DON'T FORGET – IT'S  
TIME TO RENEW FOR  
2005!! RENEWAL FORM  
ENCLOSED**



The objectives of the Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society are: To promote and support preservation and awareness of Nova Scotia 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.nslps.com>

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**PATRONS:** Carl R. Lautenslager, Anne and Eric Mills, Raye Miles, Betty Schloss, C.A. Straughn, Peter Westaway.

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## NSLPS EXECUTIVE 2004/2005

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## WELCOME ABOARD

*The following new members recently joined the NSLPS:*

Dale Ann Elder, Helen Marsh, Irvin Misener

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## PROGRAMS

Wednesday, February 23

7:00 PM - Reports of NSLPS Activities

7:30 PM - Programme

### Sir Samuel Cunard and Nova Scotia Lighthouses

Who knew! Samuel Cunard not only founded the famous steamship line, but he was also Commissioner of Lighthouses for Nova Scotia! John Langley, President of the Cunard Steamship Society and a board member of the NSLPS will talk about Cunard's role in establishing lighthouses here, especially the huge timber tower on Seal Island - Canada's second oldest wooden lighthouse.

### March Break Workshop

Build a Model Lighthouse (Children's Workshop)

Saturday, March 19: 10 AM - 12 NOON

How can you fit a lighthouse in your room? If you make a miniature at this workshop, of course! Have fun building a little lighthouse and learning its history. For children aged 6 - 12 years. Younger children should bring a helper. Presented by the Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society. Fee \$4.00. Call 423-8034 to register.

### Wednesday, March 23

7:00 PM: Reports of NSLPS Activities:

7:30 PM: Programme

### Hands On! Demonstrations of Lighthouse Equipment from the Golden Age of Lightkeeping

See how lightkeepers lit their lamps and sounded their foghorns in the era when Nova Scotia had more than 200 staffed lightstations. In this joint program between the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic and the Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society, museum curator Dan Conlin and society volunteers will explain and demonstrate the secrets of lighthouse lamps, lenses, and foghorns. You'll be able to help us bring light to a lens and crank up a foghorn. Please arrive by 7:00 or earlier for programmes. Seating is limited.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, April 27, 2005

Maritime Museum of the Atlantic

7:00 PM Annual Meeting with Reports and Presentation of the Craig Harding Memorial Award

8:15 PM Programme: Resurrecting Borden Wharf Lighthouse

Canning's Borden Wharf Lighthouse was abandoned more than eighty years ago. For many years it was used as a pigsty and later as an information bureau! It's hard to believe it could be restored and re-lit, but that's exactly what happened last September. Meet members of the Fieldwood Heritage Society who brought about this miracle and learn how Kevin Woods' students at East Kings Vocational School built the new gallery and lantern. This is one of the most amazing projects to receive a grant from the JM Kaplan Fund. Don't miss this fascinating story!

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## NEWS AND VIEWS

2004 has been a year of ups and downs for Nova Scotia lighthouses. In late May we lost the keepers house at Chebucto Head to fire and in July the Pictou Bar lighthouse burned to the ground. The loss of these structures highlights the need for a strong community interest in preserving our lighthouses and the continued support of DFO/Canadian Coast Guard.

2004 has been a busy year for the NSLPS. We have continued to strengthen our ties with community groups and the Coast Guard. These working relationships will be crucial in the coming months and years as the federal government moves to get out of the traditional aids to navigation business.

As editor of *The Lightkeeper*, I'd like to thank the board and general members who help with each issue of our journal. *The Lightkeeper* is an important element of our society's work, and your continued involvement is essential to its success.

I am happy to announce that members **Nancy Eisener** and **Ashley Lohnes** are now members of the elite *Lightkeeper* production team – they will be actively involved in proofing, lay-out and photo-editing. Welcome aboard, and thank you for your help with this issue!!!

As a result of increased costs for production of the *Lightkeeper* and to help offset our efforts on the lighthouse preservation front, we are raising individual and family fees by \$5 per year. This is our first fee increase in six years.

Finally, on behalf of the NSLPS board, I wish all our members a safe and happy holiday season!

*Chris Mills*

## McDonough Support for Sambro Gas House

On November 22<sup>nd</sup> New Democrat MP Alexa McDonough wrote to Canadian Heritage Minister Liza Frulla, urging her to come up with funding to repair the ailing Sambro Island gas house. The century-old structure was damaged by Hurricane Juan in 2003. To date, DFO, Parks Canada and FHBRO have been tossing the ball as to who is responsible for the FHBRO-recognized structure.

McDonough requested an outline of a restoration plan for "this national treasure" and a timeline for its completion.

In the meantime, the NSLPS has put aside funds for emergency repairs to the gas house. Volunteer schedules and fall weather have so far kept members from securing the structure for the winter.

Aside from the 1998 restoration of the exterior of the Sambro tower, the lack of federal and provincial interest in North America's oldest operating lighthouse has been nothing short of spectacular.

## Lighthouse Protection Act

*Barry MacDonald*

The Lighthouse Protection Act (now Bill S-14, Heritage Lighthouse Protection Act) has once again passed the Senate and is now under study by the Social Affairs Committee. After committee approval, South Shore MP Gerald Keddy will introduce it in the House of Commons. In order to have this bill passed into law the support of many MPs is necessary, most notably Liberal and Bloc Québécois.

I have already had assurance from the PC and NDP Parties that their members will support us. We have also made contact with preservation groups in Newfoundland, New Brunswick, PEI, Québec and Ontario, encouraging them to rally their respective MPs for support.

With the minority government situation, the support of Liberals and Bloc Québécois will make the difference this time. I would encourage **ALL** NSLPS members to contact their MP and ask for their support. It should be noted here that Halifax MP and Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Geoff Regan, told us early this year that he could NOT support the act because his department did not have the funds. This is a MAJOR disappointment as Mr. Regan supported our efforts in the past (until he became Fisheries Minister!).

## Canadian Lighthouse Society

*Barry MacDonald*

NSLPS is debating the merits of helping to create a preservation society that will be national in scope as well as in membership. With the "Heritage Lighthouse Act" still far from a sure thing, we see a strong need for a



national voice in dealing with Ottawa on important matters such as long-term ownership, heritage and environmental issues.

The idea has been shared with Newfoundland, Quebec and Ontario so far with letters going out to the other provinces (with lighthouses) in the near future. Watch for updates.

## **DIVESTITURE**

*Barry MacDonald*

Some major changes to divestiture have occurred in recent days. Firstly, the file at DFO is now being handled by Mr. Glen Fry, succeeding David Cooke who headed up divestiture for the past several years. Mr. Fry has worked in the Real Properties department of DFO for several years and has much experience in the field. NSLPS has set up a committee to deal specifically with this issue and plans to work closely with Glen and his colleague Ed Gibney.

As part of our proactive plan NSLPS has taken the show "on the road," giving presentations to several communities in the province. These presentations comprise a brief history of the lights in the area, tourism value and potential, as well as an explanation of the divestiture process.

Ed Gibney has accompanied us on these presentations and they have proved very worthwhile. It is our hope that this cooperative effort will do much to enhance as well as speed up the divestiture process. If your community would profit from such a presentation, please feel free to contact NSLPS.

## **NSLPS Board Activities**

We're still spreading the good word! In October, the NSLPS and the Chebucto Head Lighthouse Society presented a well-attended joint program on the history of and future plans for the Chebucto Head lighthouse site.

In November Chris Mills spoke to members of the Dartmouth Yacht Club about the looming cuts to aids to navigation. Many pleasure boaters are not aware of the Coast Guard's plans to downgrade and decommission lights and fog horns in the province.

Tony Thompson attended a "Boards as Leaders" conference in November, hosted by the Federation of Nova Scotia Heritage. Tony came away with some useful ideas to help us streamline and focus our operations, including planning, governing policies and accountability.

The smooth and effective operation of the board is crucial to our efforts to lobby for lighthouse preservation and assist community groups in saving their lighthouses.

## **Donation**

Thanks to our American friend and patron Betty Schloss, who recently made a generous donation to the NSLPS. Betty has been very supportive of the society and its efforts over the years.

## **Machias Seal Island's Barna Norton Dies**

Barna Beal Norton, staunch defender of his family's claim to Machias Seal Island, has died at his home in Jonesport Maine. Norton was found dead on November 22<sup>nd</sup> by his housekeeper. He was 89.

The crusty and outspoken Downeaster ran tours to Machias Seal Island for many years, allowing legions of curious tourists a close look at the island's nesting terns and puffins.

Machias Seal Island is located midway between Grand Manan, New Brunswick and Cutler, Maine. It is home to the only staffed lighthouse in the Maritimes, solely because of the controversy around Canadian and American claims of ownership.

Norton had a good working relationship with the keepers, and often expressed his appreciation for their presence on the island. (The light was established in 1832).

Norton claimed that his great-grandfather, Barna "Tall Barney" Norton laid claim to the island in 1865. Norton himself made a point of raising the stars and stripes next to the maple leaf at least once a year on the island.

Barna Norton is survived by his son John, who continues to run tours to the island.

## **Money for Machias Seal**

Reports indicate that the Coast Guard is involved in a major solarization project on Machias Seal Island – said to be worth more than \$300,000.

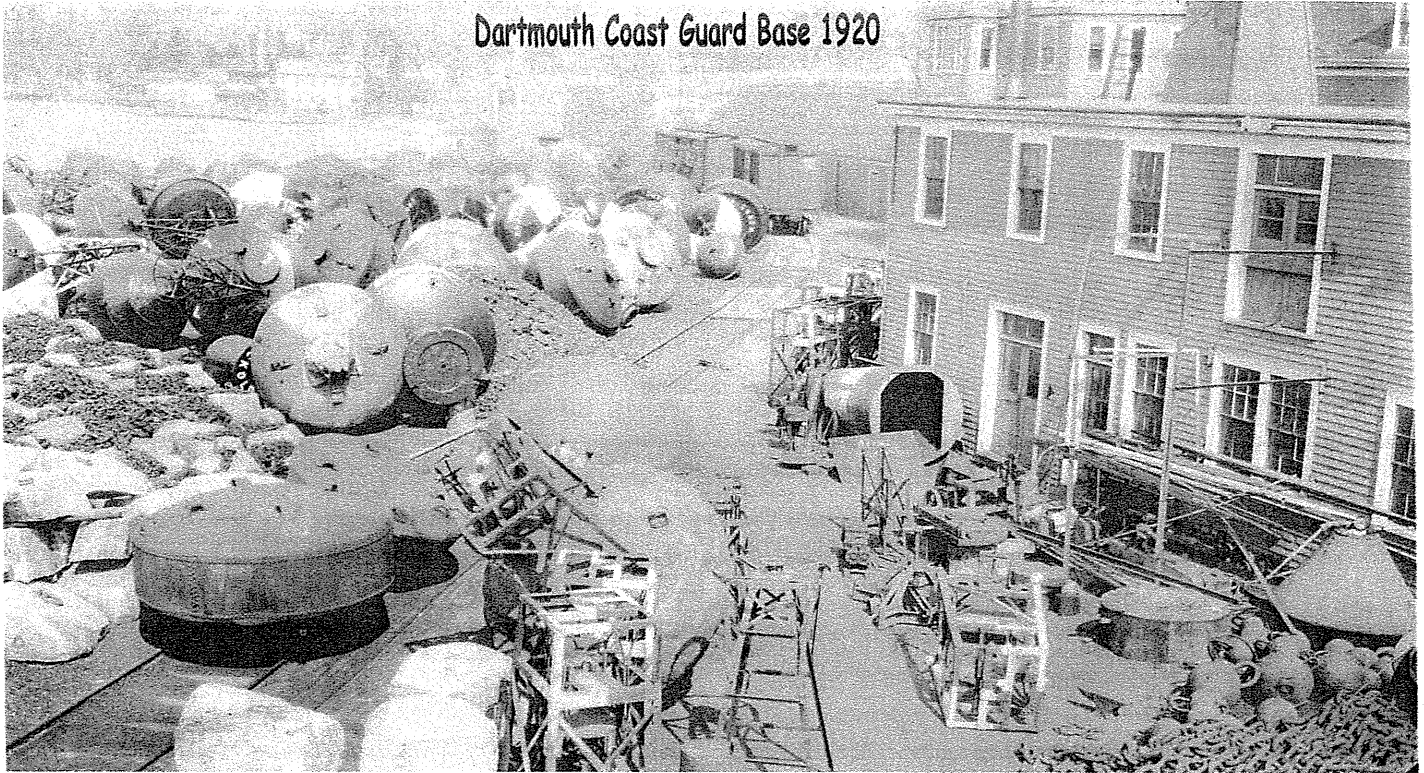
The station is presently powered by diesel generators.



Barna Norton's umbrella sports a tiny stars and stripes, 1993. *Chris Mills*



## Dartmouth Coast Guard Base 1920



Buoys, stones and chains litter the waterfront at the Dartmouth Marine Depot in 1920. *Canadian Coast Guard*

## CANADIAN COAST GUARD BASE DARTMOUTH: A CENTURY OF SERVICE TO MARINERS

*Chris Mills*

2004 has been an important year for the NSLPS, but it marks an ever bigger milestone for the Canadian Coast Guard's Dartmouth base. The facility at the foot of Parker Street has been in operation for 100 years, providing support services for all manner of aids to navigation in Nova Scotia.

Prior to Confederation in 1867, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and the Upper and Lower Provinces had each maintained their own lighthouses. On July 1<sup>st</sup> 1867, the newly-formed Department of Marine and Fisheries became Dominion authority responsible for shipping and aids to navigation.

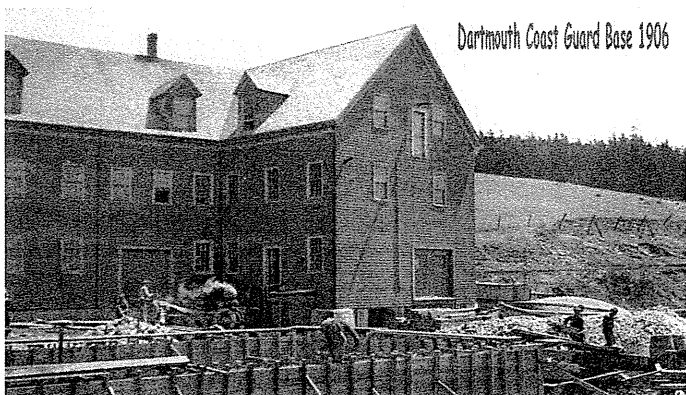
Interestingly, Nova Scotia remained largely on its own, even after Confederation, because of its distance from Ottawa. The title "Marine Agent" was bestowed upon H.W. Johnson, who set up shop on Bedford Row in downtown Halifax in December of 1867. Johnson's responsibilities included care of 53 lightstations, the administration of Sable Island and the placement and maintenance of buoys around the province. Despite being part of the new "Canadian" lighthouse administration based in Ottawa, Johnson operated almost independently in his capacity as head of policy for navigational aids in the province.

Expedient communications with the nation's capital were possibly of a lesser importance to Johnson than keeping in touch with Sable Island - known for its shipwrecks and wild horses. The island lay some 280 kilometres ESE of Halifax and traditionally, Sable's superintendent had relied on vessels stopping at the island to relay news of shipwrecks to the mainland - often delaying news of shipwrecks by many months.

In 1890 Johnson decided that carrier pigeons would speed things up and after building a loft at the Agency wharf, Johnson spent the next five years trying to keep the pigeons and their trainers on track. The birds kept disappearing though, and by 1895, the agent dropped the program, blaming fog, wind and seagulls for its failure.

Meanwhile, the business of making the coast safer for mariners continued. By 1875 the number of lighthouses around the province had almost doubled, and by 1901 Marine Agent Jonathon Parsons listed 191 lighthouses, 1 lightship, 49 fog signals (including 30 hand horns!), 38 whistle and bell buoys, 919 iron, steel and spar buoys, 16 lifesaving stations, three humane establishments, four signal stations and one steamship, in his annual report to the Minister of Marine and Fisheries.

Departmental vessels carried out most of the buoy work, although contractors took care of 800 small buoys and spars by 1903. Buoy work was labour intensive and often dangerous - carried out originally by schooner and later by steam-powered vessels.



Part of the Dartmouth Marine Depot as it appeared in 1906.  
*Canadian Coast Guard*

In 1903 the Department of Marine and Fisheries took over part of the Maplehurst estate on Dartmouth Cove and in 1904 began construction of a wooden jetty and service buildings. The department transferred buoy operations to the new depot, marking the beginning of the Coast Guard base that continues to operate in 2004.

Although the buildings were completed by 1906, the Nova Scotia Agency continued to operate mostly from the Halifax side until 1915, when they finally consolidated operations in Dartmouth Cove. Later, the Agency's jurisdiction was reduced to the area between Cape Sable and Cape North, and Sable Island. Agencies in Saint John and Charlottetown administered the rest of the Nova Scotia coastline along with their own provincial territory.

The Dartmouth Marine Depot became the heart and soul of the whole aids to navigation business on the Atlantic Coast of Nova Scotia. Coal-burning buoy tenders loaded and dropped off bells and "groaners", blacksmiths repaired and forged anchor chain links (in 1916, along with the blacksmith, there was a boilermaker at the depot, and two men who worked as "fog alarm erectors"!), ships' crews loaded supplies for dozens of far-flung lighthouses along the Atlantic Coast.

Vessels based in Dartmouth also broke ice when they weren't tending buoys and dropping off coal and pianos and cows and mail to lightstations.

Life aboard these vessels was rarely dull and often quite dangerous. Dave Munn wrote in his short

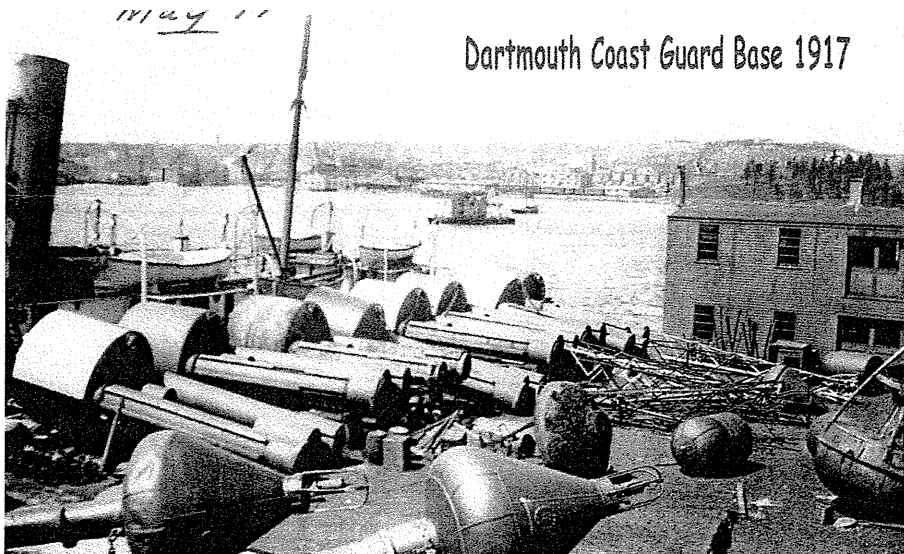
1987 history of the Dartmouth base that, "As with all mariners, those in the government marine service have to contend with fog, gales, fire, ice, etc., but unlike the average mariner, the government seaman is often required to operate under conditions that any sensible sailor would avoid."

Working in the Dartmouth buoy yard was fraught with danger as well. Until the 1970s, most buoys were lit with acetylene, a highly volatile gas. The compressed acetylene system introduced in Nova Scotia in 1903 was later replaced by the safer carbide system. (Carbide combined with sea water produces acetylene gas). Still, yard regulations stated that buoy chambers must be vented for 24 hours before they could be serviced

For ten years after the first acetylene buoys flashed along the Nova Scotia coast, all went well. Then, in January 1913, a yard worker struck a match to get a better look at an unpainted buoy chamber. The resulting explosion killed him and injured two other workers.

The last of the acetylene buoys were finally replaced by battery-operated systems in the 1970s.

### Dartmouth Coast Guard Base 1917

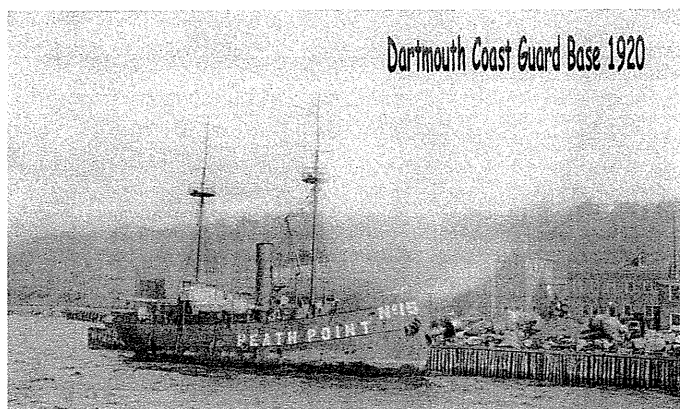


Along with buoys, lighthouse and fog horns, Sable Island formed an important part of the operation of the Dartmouth Base. In 1867 the Dominion Government took over the island's human establishments, which had been in operation since 1801. Over the next 150 years staff on the island saved more than 5,000 lives. The lifesaving

facilities closed in 1959 and the island's east and west lighthouses were destaffed in 1960, but the Canadian Coast Guard (formed in 1962 when Prime Minister John Diefenbaker announced the Department of Transport's fleet of ships would be known as such) continues to supply the island's weather station each year, and the Dartmouth Base still administers the island.

By the 1950s it was clear that marine operations in Dartmouth had outgrown the base, and starting in 1952 workmen built new concrete jetties to replace the old wooden wharves.

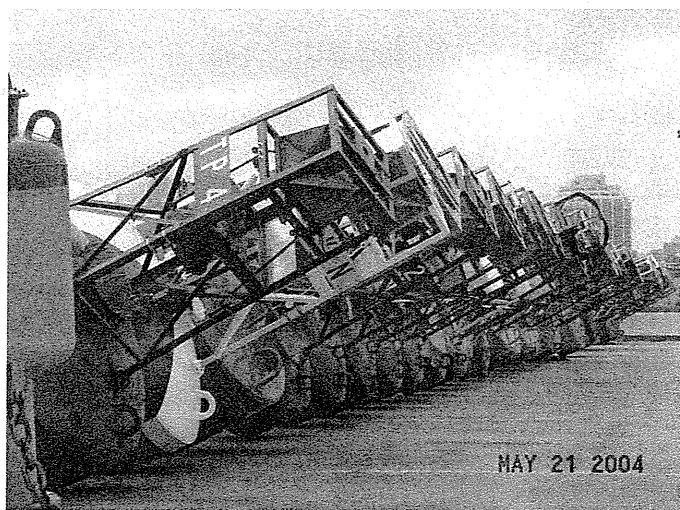
By 1961 only the old coal shed remained from the original depot – all wooden buildings were replaced by new offices, stores and a shops building. In 1962 the



The Heath Point (Anticosti) Lightship in Dartmouth, 1920.  
*Canadian Coast Guard*

depot adopted a new name: Canadian Coast Guard Base Dartmouth.

As late as 1987, the Dartmouth Base was still a going concern, taking care of 342 fixed aids to navigation (including 19 staffed lighthouses), 1,593 floating aids and 53 fog signals. Dave Munn noted "The cornerstone of Marine Aids to navigation are buoys, shore lights and fog signals. This is as true today as it was 250 years ago when the first Canadian lighthouse was built by the French at Louisbourg."



Buoys ready for their stations, May 2004 *Chris Mills*

But in the mid-late 1980s, the Federal Liberals' fiscal slash and burn tactics badly undermined this cornerstone, and by 1991, the lightkeepers were history, and there were big plans afoot for rationalization of the marine aids program.

Flash forward to 2004. There are fewer ships servicing buoys now, and some of the functions formerly performed at Dartmouth Cove have been moved to the Bedford Institute of Oceanography (BIO). The mid-1990s amalgamation of Coast Guard and the Department of Fisheries likely had much to do with this, as the feds got caught up in a whirlwind of consolidation and fiscal responsibility.

The base continues to administer a large number of nav aids in its traditional jurisdiction (from Cape Sable to Cape North, and Sable Island), including 327 fixed aids, 1,689 floating aids and 47 fog signals.

But bell and whistle buoys are on the way out, and even the battery-operated (and later solar-powered) lights that followed acetylene have been replaced with tiny L-E-D lights. Low maintenance plastic spars and can buoys are now the norm, reducing the need for regular



Icebreaker CCGS Louis S. St. Laurent. *Chris Mills*

painting and service.

Many lights have been downgraded to short-range "hazard avoidance" status and each year a dwindling number of fog horns leave the coast a little quieter. As one Coast Guard administrator recently said, "there is little doubt that many 'lighthouses' will eventually go the way of the horse and buggy as regards their use as aids to navigation."



Saint Paul Island Southwest light with CCGS Terry Fox. *Chris Mills*





Canadian Coast Guard Base Dartmouth as it appears today. *Canadian Coast Guard*

Sable Island is hanging on by a shoestring, operated now by a conglomeration of federal departments, offshore oil companies and a preservation trust. Earlier this year the Coast Guard turned off the west lighthouse, and there's talk of ending annual supply runs to the island.

All of this has impacted the Dartmouth Base. The concrete jetties are showing their age. Some days there is a eerie quiet in the yard, as massive bell and whistle buoys lie in wait for what could be their final placement at sea.

The lamp room was recently moved to BIO. It will soon return to the base, but only until new quarters for the technicians and their L-E-D lights are built at BIO.

There is *some* new life at the base though, with the recent move of the Rescue Training Centre (for fast rescue craft) from Sambro. Buoy work is still done in the yard, and the marine pollution response unit still operates from a hangar near the water.

DFO's Real Properties Safety and Security office works from the base, as do the Coast Guard's technical (electronic and I-T) services. The Coast Guard ships *Sir William Alexander*, *Edward Cornwallis*, *Louis S. St-Laurent* and the *Terry Fox* continue to operate from the

base as well. Northern ice-breaking is still an important operation for the *Louis* and the *Terry Fox*.

The southern section of the base property was sold earlier this year for use as part of the proposed Halifax regional sewage treatment plan. The base itself faces an uncertain future, as its operations are slowly transferred to BIO and other locations.

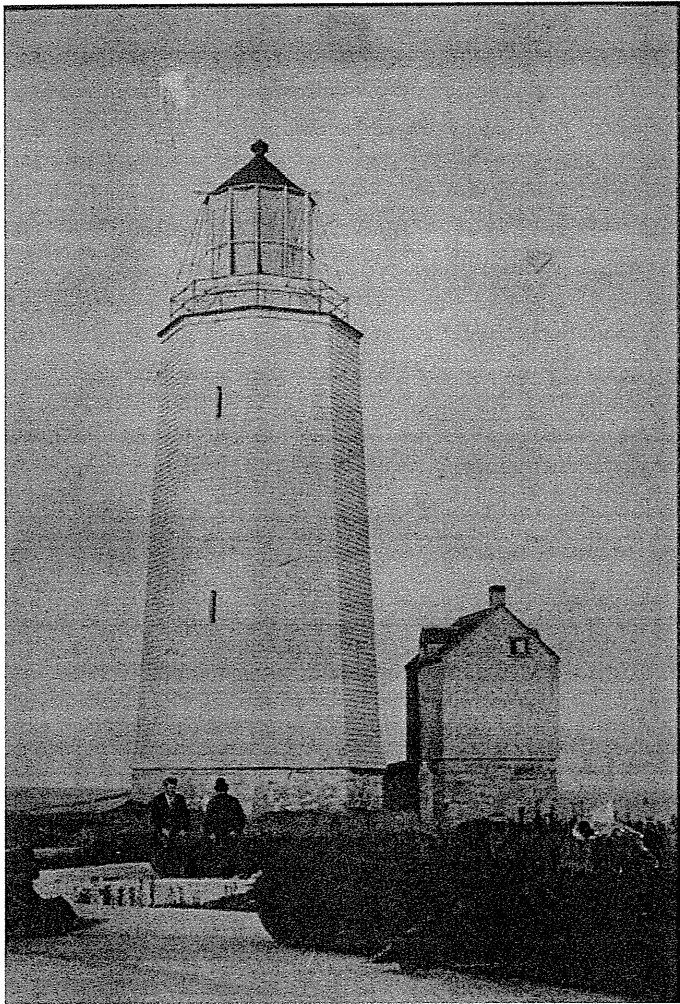
Canadian Coast Guard Base Dartmouth enters its second century of operation in a time of dramatic technological change. For now, it continues to adapt in an environment defined as much by government policy as by the basic need to provide safety for all who travel Nova Scotia's dangerous coast.

*Much of the material in this article is drawn from Dave Munn's 1987 history of Canadian Coast Guard Base Dartmouth.*

*Special thanks to the Coast Guard's Dan MacNeil for providing information and photographs, and to Carl Goodwin and Darren Gaudet for their assistance.*

*The NSLPS has had a good working relationship with base employees over the past decade, and we look forward to continuing our combined efforts to secure our lighthouses for future generations.*

\* \* \*



*Courtesy Canadian Coast Guard*

## **SAMBRO ISLAND, THE ROCK OF LAMENTATIONS**

*Mark Wilson*

One by one they fell. The original lighthouse towers at Tybee Island, Louisbourg and Boston are no more. They were victims of war, neglect and encroaching seas. Had they survived, some of these structures would now be approaching 300 years of age. And though these lights have been rebuilt, they are not the same buildings of almost three centuries ago. The current Louisbourg light, for instance, bears no resemblance to its predecessor. It stands there today as a functional resident of the lightstation, not as a re-incarnation of the old French light.

But what of the originals that still stand? Several North American lights, situated between Virginia and Nova Scotia, date from the 18th century. Among them is Sambro light, the oldest surviving lighthouse on the continent. Unlike those noted above, it has somehow managed to avoid the ravages that normally proved so cruel and disastrous.

Since 1759 it has witnessed several wars and been subject to numerous natural barrages, but its original 1758 stone core stands straight and keeps watch. This is no mean feat. The most recent assault was 2003's Hurricane Juan, which took a direct shot at Sambro Island and the Halifax area. Over time, one shudders to think of the total number of near misses that have occurred over the course of two and a half centuries. If you need further proof on the meager chances for lighthouse survival, you can refer to Russ Rowlett's Lighthouse Directory on the Internet. He notes that of 15 American lights built at the time of the First American Congress (1789), "only two of these early lighthouses stand today, plus a third tower that was under construction in 1789." Clearly, Sambro has beaten overwhelming odds.

Its survival has served it well, especially in a hemispheric context. It is quite possible, based on recent research, that Sambro may be the oldest surviving light in all the Americas. If an older light exists in this geographical area I would be thrilled to hear of it. Until that time, perhaps a new proposition should be adopted that recognizes Sambro as the oldest working lighthouse in the Western hemisphere.

As noted above, numerous places have had older lights that did not survive. One such lighthouse is Farol da Barra in Salvador, Brazil. It claims to have been the first lightstation in the Western hemisphere. The first light from 1698 "consisted of a large quadrangular tower of medium height topped by a sort of glass-sided structure." This building was replaced in 1837-1839. A museum at the site gives a more detailed description of this rebuilding:

In 1837, because of the bad state of conservation, and because of its importance for navigational security, the tower was reconstructed of brick and/or stone, and there was installed a more modern lens. It was illuminated with kerosene. From the remnants that were there, we were able to determine that the tower was completely destroyed and replaced by the current round-shaped tower.

Unlike early North American lights that had seen their demise in war, storms or other precipitating events, the circa 1698 lighthouse died a slow painful death from neglect. According to the museum, it was falling apart, almost to the point of being a hazard. The 1839 tower that took its place now represents one of the older lighthouses on the South American continent. Apparently, no lighthouses on that continent, date from the eighteenth century.

The Sambro Island lighthouse then, stands alone. It has stood the test of time and won an unwitting war of attrition. That the lighthouse survived by luck, as well as by design, does not make its longevity and continued



Postcard

existence any less remarkable. That it stands today as probably the oldest lighthouse in the New World is something about which Canadians should be very proud.

Sambro should be celebrated in its own right. It has survived countless storms and hurricanes, and served as a beacon for shipping for nearly 250 years. Over the years privateers and battleships have passed it, along with ships returning from a ruinous Louisbourg. The tower has silently saluted two world war convoys, welcomed the Cunard liners, and stood there as the *Titanic*'s dead were brought into Halifax.

In the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries Sambro Island also served as a signal station, sending messages to Halifax to notify the town of ship movements and any impending dangers. Captain Cook made reference to the light in his sailing directions: "In coming from the westward give the light a wide birth until it is brought well on with Cape Sambro."

In *Sailing Alone Around the World*, the noted Nova Scotia mariner Joshua Slocum wrote, "I watched light after light sink astern as I sailed into the unbounded sea, 'till Sambro, the last of them all, was below the horizon." Slocum sailed on to become the first person to circle the earth by boat.

Sambro Lighthouse has a history worth saving and honouring. Clearly put, this is a property of national and international significance. But the Sambro Island lighthouse has been sorely neglected. It has been a National Historic Site since 1937, but apart from a commemorative plaque in the nearby village of Sambro, Parks Canada has done nothing about this important site.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans restored the lighthouse in 1998, but the rest of the station buildings have been left to rot away. The "gas house," a building recognized by the Federal Historic Building Review Office for its historic value was severely damaged by Hurricane Juan and is in danger of collapse. The lighthouse will need painting soon, and once again it appears that the concrete of the gallery needs attention.

To be satisfied with the status-quo is to ignore the full historical value of this light station. In that vein, I turn once again to Russ Rowlett's Lighthouse Directory. While describing a few of the earliest colonial lighthouses of the United States, he says "all three are revered local landmarks, preserved today with the greatest care." Upon reading this I wondered if the same could be said about Sambro light, and whether Nova Scotians and other Canadians truly revere it and appreciate its full historical value.

If the response is "no," then perhaps we should learn to give it our respect. It has certainly earned it.

*Mark Wilson is a self-described "casual historian," originally from Nova Scotia and now living in Oshawa, Ontario.*

## NOTTAWASAGA LIGHTHOUSE IN PERIL

Collingwood's Nottawasaga Island lighthouse on Georgian Bay could soon join the ranks of lights such as Pictou Bar and Little Hope Island. On December 1<sup>st</sup>, a huge portion of the tower's limestone exterior crashed to the ground, leaving the tower's inner stone layer exposed.

The 1858 tower has sat empty for close to half a century. In 2003 the Coast Guard announced it would decommission the light and replace it with a buoy.



Nottawasaga Island Lighthouse, showing results of the dramatic collapse of its outer limestone wall. *Canadian Coast Guard, Parry Sound, Ontario*

In the August 2003 issue of *Lighthouse Digest*, Jeremy D'Entremont wrote that Collingwood Council had asked a local MP to support protection of the tower, which would reportedly cost \$600,000 to restore.

Nottawasaga is one of several "Imperial" stone towers built in Ontario in the 1850s.

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## COMMUNITY UPDATES

### Chebucto Head Light – Past, Present & Future

*Lise Chapman*

Half a year after the devastating destruction of the keeper's house at Chebucto Head, discussions are ongoing about the future of the site.

Chebucto Head is scheduled to be divested by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, at which point ownership of the land will revert to the province. Glen Fry, head of this programme at DFO Dartmouth attended the meeting and explained that negotiations with the provincial government are ongoing.

DFO supports a local community group (CHLS) to maintain and develop the site – including possible reconstruction of the cupola lighthouse to original 1940 plans – with administration by the province or by the municipality. This is the general model proposed by NSLPS for divestiture of lights across the province, with public ownership and access to lighthouses as fundamental components of our Canadian heritage.

The issue of continuing vandalism at Chebucto Head must be addressed before any future development scenarios can be entertained. It is likely that only continual human presence will deter further destruction.

The CHLS has come up with four scenarios for Chebucto Head's future, all of which are centred on long-term preservation of a light, environmental sustainability and public access. The scenarios range from simply maintaining the present light and including the property in the surrounding designated Duncan's Cove Nature Reserve, to reconstruction of the lighthouse as a model building for alternative energy technologies and development of an educational centre.

At the recent Chebucto Head programme (at the Maritime Museum in Halifax) the audience encouraged the CHLS to take a lead role in developing Chebucto Head to preserve its history, beauty and ecology. Although there were wide-ranging views as to what kind of development would be desirable (e.g. tourist attraction, community centre, environmental education facility), there was consensus that the site had so much potential in terms of its intrinsic attraction that funding should not be a major obstacle. Once again, it became clear that many people have personal connections to the site and favour its preservation into the future.

The CHLS is currently considering proposals for a reconstruction of the 1940 cupola lighthouse as a model building for alternative energy technologies. The society is working towards developing partnerships with the 'green technology' sector and is planning a workshop early next year on alternative technologies, with a specific focus regarding their potential relevance to the Chebucto Head site. Interested organizations and

individuals from this sector, as well as politicians and community members will be welcome to participate.

We are rising to the challenge of rebuilding a light at Chebucto Head that will shine into the future in more than one way.

\*\*\*UPDATE!!\*\*\*

369 hectares (911 acres) of land surrounding Chebucto Head have just been declared a protected area. In a press release dated December 8, the provincial Department of Environment and Labour announced that the Duncan's Cove Nature Reserve is now a reality.

The area is a prime example of coastal, barren and bog land and the only known mainland area where the rare Arctic Blueberry grows.

Now more than ever it is important that the Chebucto Head lighthouse site become the focal point of this spectacular piece of Nova Scotia coastline.

### Coffin Island – Still Waiting

*Nancy Eisner*

Ken Wilkinson learned recently that there is still no decision on which of the three environmental studies conducted over the past two years will be used in the disposition process.

The community is nervously watching the ongoing deterioration of the concrete tower's base while they wait to hear from Public Works on news about repairs.

### Mosher Island

*Nancy Eisner*

Thom Drew spent some of his time this summer repairing damage done to the Mosher's Island lightkeeper's house by vandals. This is the first time in a few years the former assistant keeper has been inside the house and he is pleased to report it is in "good shape."

The same cannot be said for the assistant keeper's house that he left in 1990. Thom says "the place is a mess." His old house is badly damaged by water, mould and weather. Gone too is the "lovely" fog alarm building which lost its south wall this year.

During another visit, Thom was on the island when the power went out. He listened, waiting for the generators to kick in but nothing happened. When he went to investigate he was surprised to discover the generators had been removed.

"It is too bad," he says. "It would have been so easy to fix the buildings back then to a level where they could be sustained." Thom says nobody wanted a "tourist trap." The community just wants to maintain the lightstation. Thom says he thinks there is little interest in saving lighthouses that are relatively inaccessible and not located on the mainland.

## LIGHTSHOP

**Help support the NSLPS!** Profits from these items go to the society to help save our historic lights.

*Please note: NSLPS now has Charitable Tax Status and an HST number. Because of this we must add tax to our prices.*

***Lighthouses and Lights of Nova Scotia: A Complete Guide***, by E.H Rip Irwin. Nimbus Publishing, 2003. The definitive book on all existing Nova Scotia lighthouses.  
\$32.00 including tax.

**Book + packing and postage:** Nova Scotia: \$40.00. For mailing in Canada outside Nova Scotia: \$43.00. For mailing to USA: \$45.00. Air mail to USA please add \$3.00

### ***NSLPS Membership Pin:***

Enhance your prestige with this oval pin, showing the NSLPS logo in red and gold on a dark blue background.  
\$7.50 including packing and postage.

### ***Lighthouse Locator Map:***

Correlates with the book *Lighthouses and Lights of Nova Scotia*.

\$18.00 including packing and postage

**Order from: Cyndi MacPhee, 81 Radcliffe Drive,  
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3M 4P2**

**e-mail: [cyndi.macphee@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:cyndi.macphee@ns.sympatico.ca)**

**ORDERS MUST BE PRE-PAID. PLEASE MAKE  
CHEQUES PAYABLE TO THE NSLPS.**

COVER PHOTO: Saint Paul Island Southwest Light, moved to Canadian Coast Guard Base Dartmouth in the early 1980s. *Chris Mills* BACK COVER: Seal Island, NS *Chris Mills*

## LIGHTHOUSE LUMINARIES FROM CHESTER CANDLES



These are carved-in-relief replicas of lighthouses which have been lovingly painted by local artists. They each have a history on the back of the luminary.

The outer shell with the design and information is everlasting. Included with each is a candle and holder, a certificate of authenticity with the limited edition number and a guarantee.

Nova Scotia lighthouses available are: Peggy's Point Light; Sambro Island Light; Henry Island Light; Cape Forchu (1962) and Cape Forchu (circa 1839); Louisbourg Light (circa 1734).

**25** per cent of each sale is contributed to the work of the NSLPS.

Luminaries depicting other lighthouse are available from our website [www.chestercandles.com](http://www.chestercandles.com).

They can be ordered through Lightshop for the same benefit of **25** per cent to the NSLPS. If ordering directly from us, tell us you would like the donation to go to NSLPS.

Cost \$49.95 plus \$8.00 shipping

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NSLPS MEMBERSHIP FORM - January 1 - December 31, 2004

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