



The Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society
Vol. 15, No. 4, December 2008 / January 2009

The Lightkeeper



IN THIS ISSUE:

- TOM FORRESTALL
PAINTINGS
- FEATURE: A LIFE IN
LIGHTHOUSES
- NEWS AND VIEWS
- FAREWELL



The objectives of the Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society are: to promote and to support the 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, to initiate oral history research and to classify and monitor the status of historic lighthouse sites.

WEBSITE: <http://www.nslps.com>

LIGHTKEEPER EDITOR: Chris Mills

LAYOUT: Jessica Bucci, Graphic and Print Production program, NSCC

PATRONS: Barbara Allen, Evelyn C. Coates, Martin Rudy Haase, Rachel Hoogenbos, Edith Northfield, Betty Schloss

SUSTAINING MEMBERS: Bruce Blakemore, Denyse Contrasty, Cynthia Curtis, Barbara Joan Davis, Camilla Dunn, Michel Forand, John Freeman, Marni Gent, Alison Gilpin, Ian S. Griffin, Hugh Jones, Anne Ostrosser, Brenda Shannon, Mark Stewart, James L. Slechta, Jeanne Thomas, Michael Tilley, Alden & Roberta Wambolt

AFFILIATES: Burntcoat Head Park Association, Cape Sable Historical Society, Five Islands Lighthouse Preservation Society, Friends of the Yarmouth Light Society, Gilbert Cove & District Historical Society, Greville Bay Shipbuilding Museum Society, Hampton Lighthouse and Heritage Society, Henry Island Lighthouse Preservation Society, Island Historical Society, Louisbourg Lighthouse Society, Medway Head Communities Association, Northumberland Fisheries Museum & Heritage Association, Parrsboro & Area Harbour Commission, Port George District Lighthouse Society, Port Bickerton & Area Planning Association, Sandy Point Community Recreation Group, Shag Harbour Incident Society, Spencer's island Community Association, Terence Bay Lighthouse Committee, Tiverton and Central Grove Heritage Association, Village on the Canal Association, Wallace Area Development Association

NEW MEMBERS: Alex C. McLeod, Halifax, NS; Margaret Pheby, Sambro, NS; Bob & Ann-Marie Trapani, Rockland ME; Ron Stansfield, Sherbrooke, NS

NSLPS EXECUTIVE 2007/2008

President/Lighthouse Protection Act Committee:

Barry MacDonald 827-2027

e-mail: threefathom@eastlink.ca

Past President: Tony Thompson 477-7366

e-mail: tony@mscs.dal.ca

First Vice-President: Graham McBride

Second Vice President/Lightkeeper Editor:

Chris Mills 868-2313

e-mail: ketch1@eastlink.ca

Secretary: Joanne McCormick

Treasurer/Membership Secretary: Lew Perry 434-7208

e-mail: lewis001@ns.sympatico.ca

Member-at-Large: Denyse Contrasty

Member-at-Large: Janet Leigh Schaffner

Member-at-Large: Andrew Powder

COVER

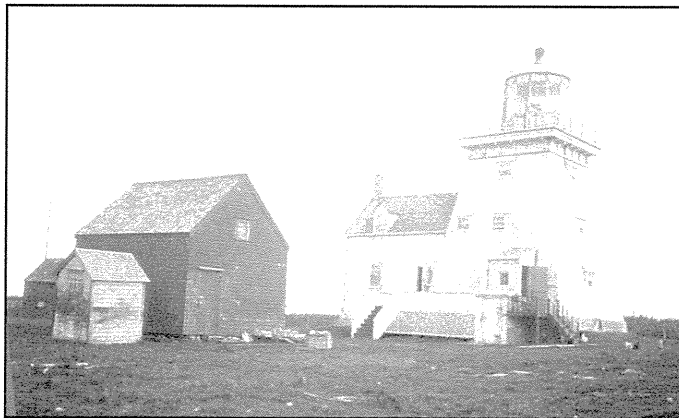
Betty June and Sid Smith with a scale model of the lighthouse that was part of their lives for decades. Carl Anderson (who is married to Sid's niece Roxanne Smith) built the model in three weeks. Carl says "The model was built at a scale of 1/4" to the foot, so it's about 22" high. It is made from 1/4" thick MDF board, wood, brass, plastic, and galvanized steel (the roof). The dimensions were scaled from an elevation drawing of the tower that was part of the application for the Historic Site evaluation years ago. I also referred to photographs and asked Sid about many details."

Carl and Roxanne presented the model to Sid and Betty June in early January. As a side note, Carl mentions that he may have coined a new word to describe the 12-sided lantern at Cape Sable: "A clocktagonal lantern is mounted atop an octagonal reinforced concrete tower."

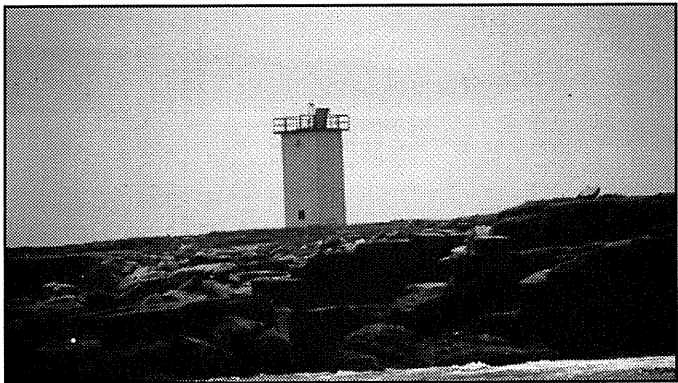
I like it. *Ed.*

Mystery Light

Our regular Mystery Light experts have come through again, with a positive ID for last issue's light. Both Jim Schlecta and Lew Perry identified the light correctly as Pearl Island, which sits off Chester, on Nova Scotia's south shore.



The original Pearl Island lighthouse. *NSLPS Collection*

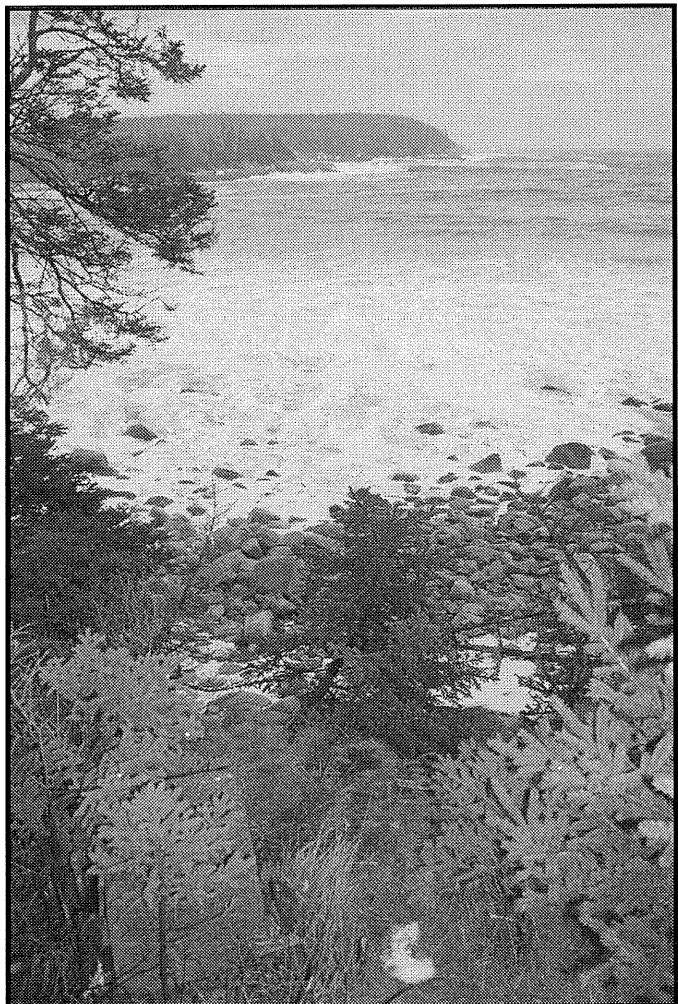


Pearl Island today. *Lew Perry*

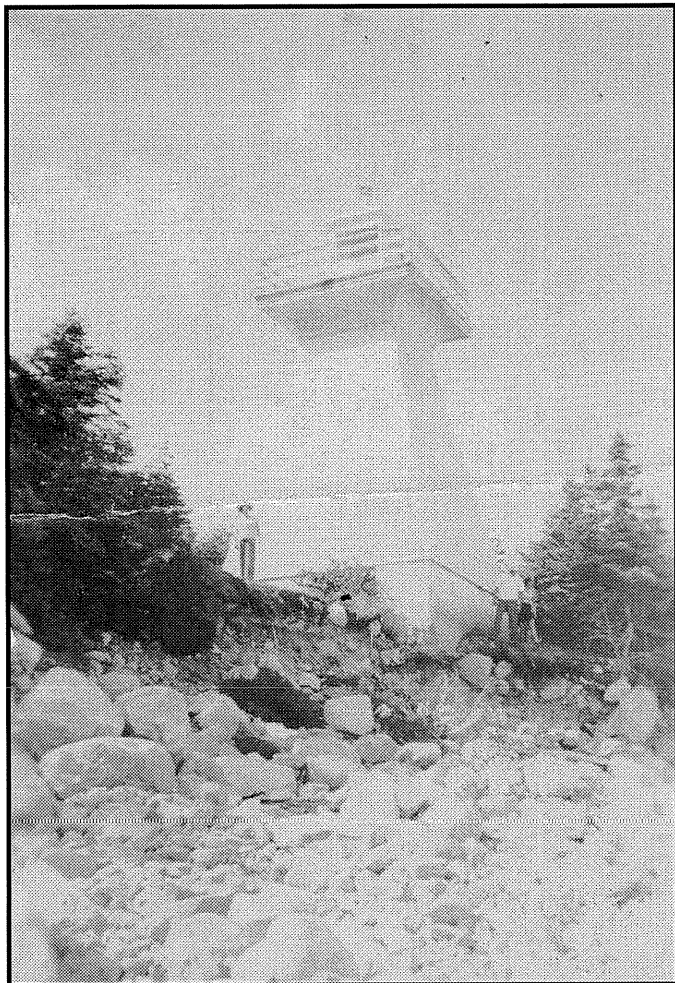
Lew Perry kindly sent this description of the island:

Originally called Green Island, the name of the island was changed to avoid confusion with other islands with the same name. Three generations of the Pearl family kept the light from its beginning in 1873 until 1962.

Situated approximately 13 kilometres east of Heckmans Island, it marks the eastern entrance to Lunenburg Bay. Because of their bad condition, the lighthouse (the second to be built on the site) and other buildings, along with a temporary second lighthouse, were torn down in 1973.



One of two concrete supports remains at the site of this issue's mystery light. *Chris Mills*



This issue's mystery light was likely moved at least once due to erosion. *Courtesy Jean Waldron*

The present and third lighthouse on the island is an eleven metre white square structure with a range of 10 nautical miles. Its focal height is 20 metres above the water. It is solar powered.

Pearl Island is now a Wildlife Management Area with restricted access.

Pearl Island is featured in Frank Parker Day's *Rockbound*, which won the Canada Reads contest on CBC radio a few years ago. Parker calls it Barren Island (an apt name) and writes of the ghosts that haunt the place. And there's a real life mystery as well. Rip Irwin's excellent *Lighthouses and Lights of Nova Scotia* (Nimbus, 2003) contains this description of events in early 1962:

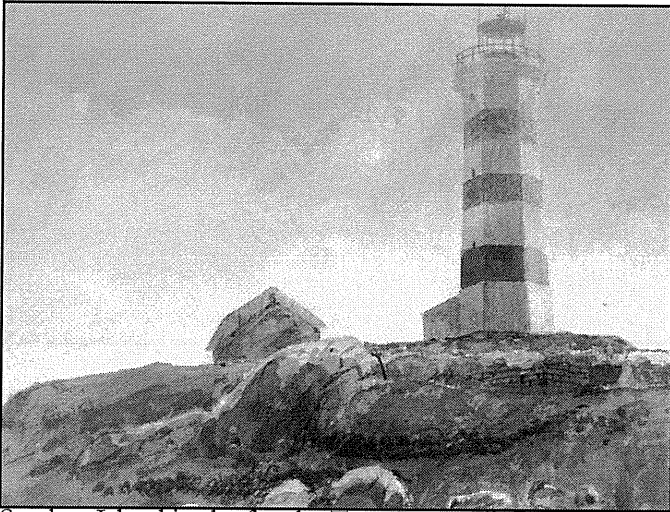
On January 21, 1962, Violet Finck, retired lightkeeper on East Ironbound Island, 6.9 kilometres to the north, told her son Charles, the current keeper, that she couldn't see a light on Pearl Island and that he should go see why it wasn't lit. Charles and a couple of others went to investigate. [Lightkeeper] Albert Pearl's partly eaten meal was still on the table, but Albert was gone without a trace. His body was never found and his disappearance remains a mystery to this day.

Send your guesses for this issue's Mystery Light to The Editor, *The Lightkeeper*, Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society c/o Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, 1675 Lower Water Street, Halifax, NS B1S 1L3, or e-mail Chris Mills at ketch1@eastlink.ca

Tom Forrestall's Art Show and Sale a Great Success

Joanne McCormick

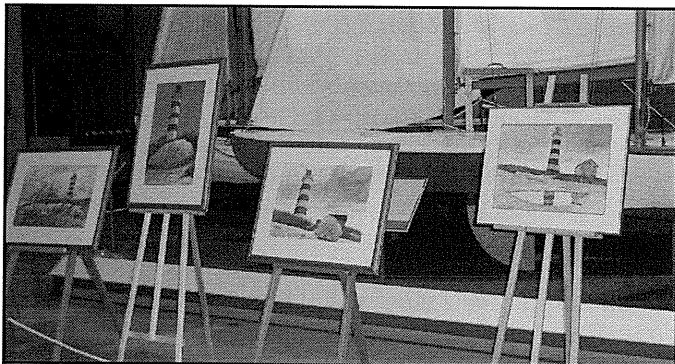
A large group of art lovers braved a mid-December storm to attend a showing of Tom Forrestall's series of eight watercolours of the historic Sambro Island Lighthouse, at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic in Halifax. Tom could be seen last summer on Sambro Island, painting this acclaimed light in memory of his brother Michael, who first introduced the Lighthouse Protection Act into the Senate of Canada. The Act was passed by Parliament last spring, a happy coincidence as 2008 was also the 250th anniversary of this beautiful and storied lighthouse.



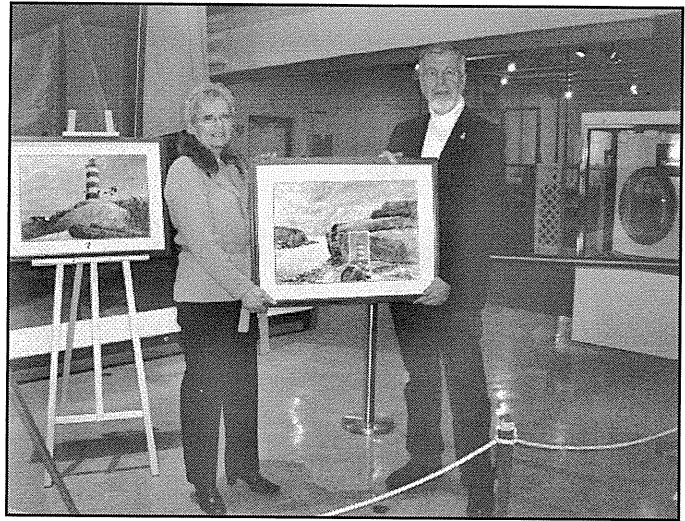
Sambro Island in the fog, by Tom Forrestall. *Ray Riddell*

Many of the guests were very interested to find a particular painting which had been enhanced by the Island's resident ghost, Double Alex. All agreed that Alex had, in fact, helped Tom out considerably in his quest for perfection. (See *The Lightkeeper*, Vol. 15, No. 3, September/October 2008).

A number of very high quality, high definition limited edition prints were produced of two of Mr. Forrestall's paintings. Sales of both originals



Tom's original Sambro Island paintings. *Ray Riddell*



Marilyn Forrestall (wife of the late Senator Mike Forrestall) with her brother-in-law Tom Forrestall. *Denyse Contrasty* and prints were brisk, considering the rainy, slushy weather which kept some folks away. This, however, might be an advantage to those who wished to attend, but couldn't, as even though half of the originals were sold, four are still available, as are a number of prints.

Many thanks to the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic for the use of the Small Crafts Gallery for this event, and to the many volunteers who made this event happen. A lovely table of wine, cheese and fruit was organized by NSLPS president Barry MacDonald's wife, Anne Marie. For those wishing to view the wonderful remaining watercolours and/or prints, please contact Joanne McCormick at 425-0350.

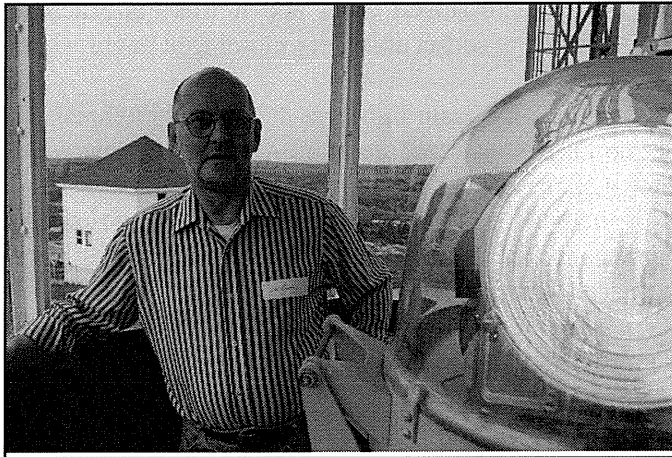


NSLPS board members Joanne McCormick, Denyse Contrasty, Barry MacDonald, with Anne Marie MacDonald, Tom Forrestall and board member Lew Perry. *Ray Riddell*

JIM GUPTILL: A LIFE IN LIGHT-HOUSES

Jim Guptill's connection with lighthouses spans much of his working life. Born on Grand Manan, New Brunswick in 1945, Jim came into lighthouses early, when his father Keith was posted to Country Island on Nova Scotia's eastern shore. Jim carried on the tradition when he moved to Gull Rock and then to the Salvages, on the province's south shore. He finished up in 1987, when automation and de-staffing forced him to find work elsewhere within the Canadian Coast Guard. More than two decades after leaving the lights, Jim's memories remain crystal clear, and he speaks with great warmth about his lightkeeping experience, warts and all.

The Beginnings – Country Island



Jim Guptill. *Chris Mills*

Dad was a dragger fisherman out of Canso in the 50s. He fished up until 1959 and decided with the downturn in the fishery - even then it was starting - that it was time for something different to do. He had a large family (six children) and he wanted a consistent and regular income. On September 15, 1960 we moved to Country Island as a family. I was 15 years old, and it's been a lifetime thing since then.

The move from a mainland town to an offshore island meant Jim had a little adjusting to do.

We were just startin' to get really interested in girls and doin' some dating and that sort of thing, and all of sudden, you're left on an isolated island. What in the devil...what are we gonna do, right? The first view of the island was around Flying Point off Goose Island on our way out, and there about four miles to the south'ard I could see this little tiny bit of land.

As we got closer I said "Oh, there's trees and everything on there, man!" The fisherman who took us out

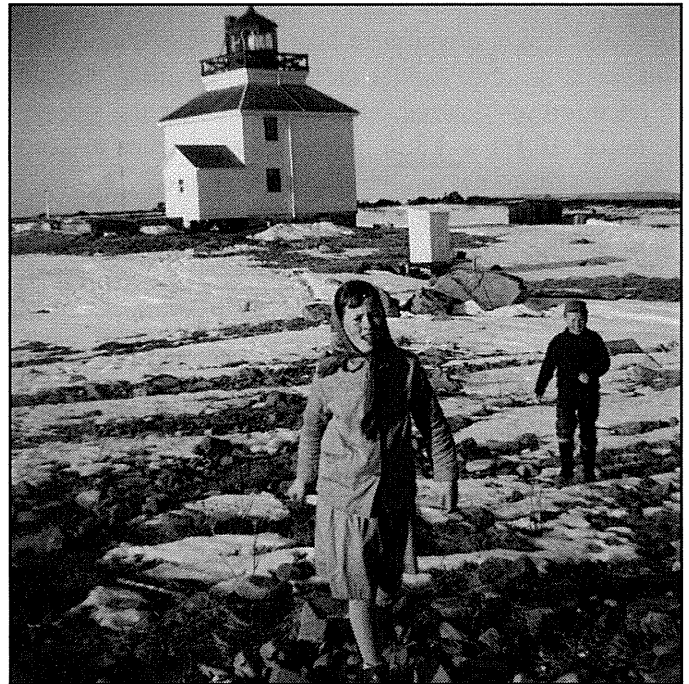


"...the crows could fly right straight through this place and not bother them a bit." *Jim Guptill*

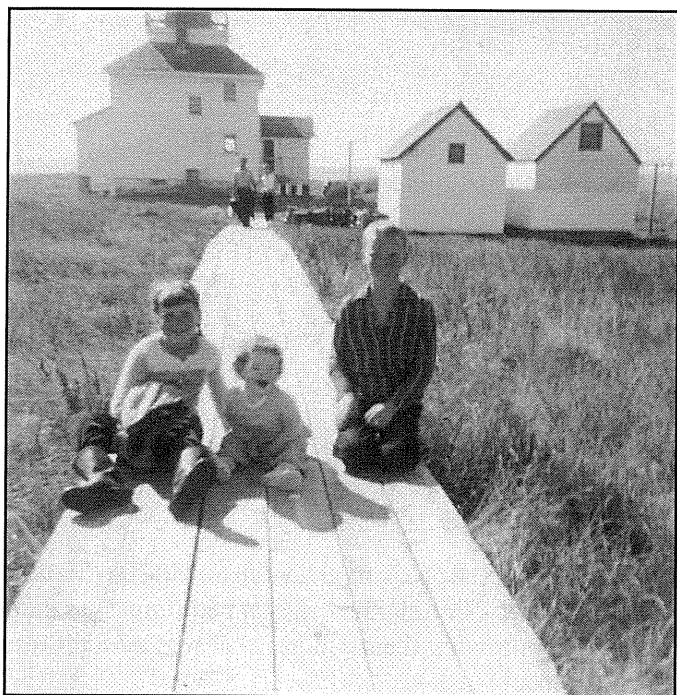
and our furniture...he took us ashore in an old Newfoundland fishing dory. Putting the old iron bed frames on that dory and then rowing them ashore...that was an interesting experience!

That was my first real go at what a lighthouse was. Growing up as a fisherman's son, lighthouses were important, but I never really thought much about them, or the people that were on them. But that day I started to think, "This is something that I've missed." It was an eye-opener!

The eye-opening included living in a draughty wooden house with the light mounted on top, set on a barren, windswept patch of tundra along Country Island's southern side.



Guptill children at Country Island. *Jim Guptill*



Guptill kids ready for a trip to the mainland from Country Island. *Jim Guptill*

When we went there it was heated by a combination of coal and wood. It was cold! One of Dad's favourite expressions was "Man, the crows could fly right straight through this place and not bother them a bit," and until we had a chance to winterize it, it was pretty bad. We had a heavy iron lantern that would shake the house when it was blowin' hard. It would just vigorously shake the place as though it were in the teeth of something. It was weird, noisy and it was dreadful to heat. But we winterized it. Dad was a bit of a stickler on that sort of thing. He had no intention of blowing hot air out through the side of the house. But it was still a dreadful experience to keep warm. We dressed warmly in the winter-time!

Along with the challenges of keeping warm, the Guptills came to know a new social dynamic, with the eventual introduction of two more lightkeepers and their families to the station.

It was community affair. That was the basic dynamic. You're dealing with a small community, and the government and politics and everything that happens with that. You have sort of a governor in the fact that the head lightkeeper is the head political guy and the boss, the chief executive officer, but the fact remains that you're dealing with this cabin fever thing and that's a very serious issue with people that live in remote isolated areas....there's personality things that happen and have to be adjusted and regulated and looked after.

There were one or two personality conflicts that the Coast Guard was very quick to step in and resolve. There were a lot of 'barking dog' issues, such as "You're

doing things that are interfering with my sleep over here, c'mon, eh?" If you've got somebody that's going on duty at midnight tonight until seven tomorrow morning, he's gonna want to sleep in the evening even if you want to be hauling gravel rocks with the tractor by his bedroom window! So there's a lot of adjustments that have to be made. It's very common in any community.

Occasional disagreements aside, the common goal of the community was to maintain the light and fog signal, for the service of local mariners.

The reflectors rotated around a fixed Coleman-type light. It had a mantle and we became very adroit in the tapping of that and making it come together, 'cause it was just a fragile piece of silk that was literally burned. The whole thing (reflector assembly) was rotated by a clockwork mechanism that we would crank to the top every evening, and then as this weight fell it would turn the reflectors. There was adjusting screws to make sure the characteristic stayed exact and it was quite a feat every evening at sunset and every morning at daybreak to fix this up.

Once the main light was shut out at daybreak in the morning, you were free to go – as long as you were close by in case anything happened. The usual day, as far as the actual Coast Guard part of it went, was running maintenance all the time, fixing things and making sure the place looked good and was sound.

But there was more to lightkeeping than just lighting the lamp, tending generators and painting buildings. The Guptills raised cattle and grew hay. They fished. And they kept a close eye on local fishermen.

I think the thing that got us accepted in the community was our interaction with the fishermen. We were always there to oblige them, to bring them a can of gas if they needed it, or if they had a leak or something, and just providing them with weather reports and our presence.



Guptills skating on a frozen pond near the lighthouse on Country Island. *Jim Guptill*

When they were out fishing around our island, we were always out where they could wave to us and talk to us. Those were the days then these small boats had no radios. They hung a flag up on their mast if they were broke down: a sock or a pair of underwear or something that indicated "We're broke down!" There was Citizens Band radio as time went by, and now of course, cell phones look after a lot of that. But back then it was shouting. If it were really foggy and bad, we'd build a big fire on the beach so that they could smell the smoke and know that we were there.

I think we were a vital link, I really do. I think that they depended entirely on us. I feel that station was viewed as a lifeline, the same as the police are for the city of Halifax. The same as the firefighters are for your home community. The lightkeepers then, were a vital link to your well-being.

That vital link continued through the 1960s. During 1964-65 the Coast Guard installed a powerful diaphone fog signal at the station, along with a radio beacon. Country Island became a big, busy lightstation.

But within just a few years, there were ominous changes in the wind. After a brief swelling of the ranks (during a period in which the Coast Guard built new houses and placed three keepers on many of the more remote stations to fill the mandate of one man per eight hour shift), automation came into the picture. It had been discussed and implemented to some extent in the 1950s, when the Department of Transport replaced dozens of kerosene-fueled harbour lights with battery-powered automatic systems. By the early 1970s, the use of fog detectors and automatic generators spelled the beginning of the end of major staffed lightstations. Jim certainly noticed the change.



The new tower at Country Island, showing the fog alarm building at right, and guy wires from the radiobeacon. *Jim Guptill*



Jim Guptill's first view of Gull Rock in 1974. *Jim Guptill*

When we started lightkeeping in 1960, it'd probably been a hundred years at the very least that there hadn't been any change. Probably two hundred years. In 1972 they dropped it back to two men again, because they put in the fog detector (to automatically turn the fog horn on and off) and decided that three keepers to do the work wasn't essential.

And a radio beacon was installed - it was a navigational aid. 'Course satellites have come along and made that obsolete not too long after that, as a matter of fact. And that changed lightkeeping forever as far as the way we started it.

Moving On – Gull Rock

But Jim Guptill was still a long way from getting out of the lightkeeping business. Satellites and better navigational aids notwithstanding, many fishermen still depended on staffed lighthouses. And Jim's new family depended on his job, which was soon to take him to a bare hunk of rock more than 300 kilometres south west of Country Island.

I was Dad's assistant lightkeeper from 1964 until 1974 when I moved to Gull Rock. I married in 1966 and took my wife to a new home the Coast Guard had built on Country Island. The whole thing was a very wonderful – we look back on it favourably. But in 1974 we needed to start making arrangements to educate our children. So, we departed Country Island when I won the competition for junior head keeper on Gull Rock.

It was a big transition for Jim, who had lived with his parents, and his wife on Country Island for 14 years. Now, he was headed to what amounted to little more than

a tide-washed jagged reef off Lockeport Harbour. Jim's first day on Gull Rock didn't give him much cause for optimism.

I'll never be able to do this! That was my thought, standing at the water's edge, with the boat alongside of us, the bow of it just touching on the skidway. Beautiful day. I could picture what it would be like when it was rough and miserable, because of the other island. I really felt at that moment, that I couldn't do it. I didn't want to be away from my family. I was 29 years old in 1974, with a young wife, a young family and here I am cast away in the middle of this island. I knew exactly how Robinson Crusoe felt! It was a devastating experience.

The awful part of it was that I hadn't considered that part of it. I knew I was looking after my family. I had made arrangements for them church-wise, school-wise, community-wise, family-wise. I knew all of that stuff, but nevertheless, here I am now. I'm standing at the water's edge on Gull Rock in the middle of August 1974 and I hadn't thought about Jim.

As it turned out I did okay, and I had some good help. I had a good guy there with me for the first month - John Gwynn - and then Earl Flemming came along the next shift and Earl is a genuine person.

But I had a dreadful time the first month trying to establish a routine. Our best effort is often established by routine. And I had had a wonderful routine on Country Island. The whole thing had progressed very well there, and now suddenly here I am with no outside activity at all. Thankfully, the first month that I was on Gull Rock the house needed painting. So every daylight hour we used in



Gull Rock: not much space between lighthouse and the deep blue sea. *Jim Guptill*

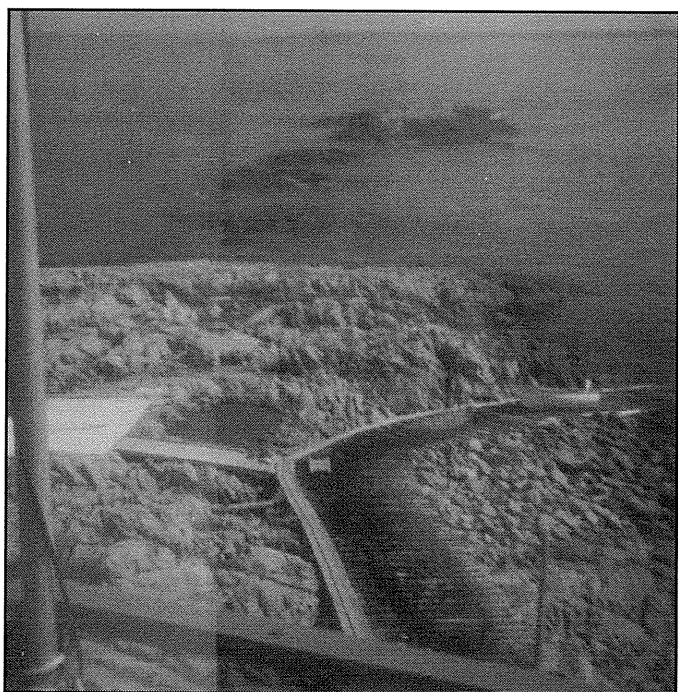
painting. It was very difficult to paint because all of it had to be done off an extension ladder or a bosun's chair. I was at that time timid of heights, so it was a slow laborious process...but it saved my sanity!

Like Jim's original home on Country Island, Gull Rock had a combined keepers' house/lighthouse, with an attached engine room and a boathouse. Other than that, there wasn't much room to move around, especially during heavy weather.

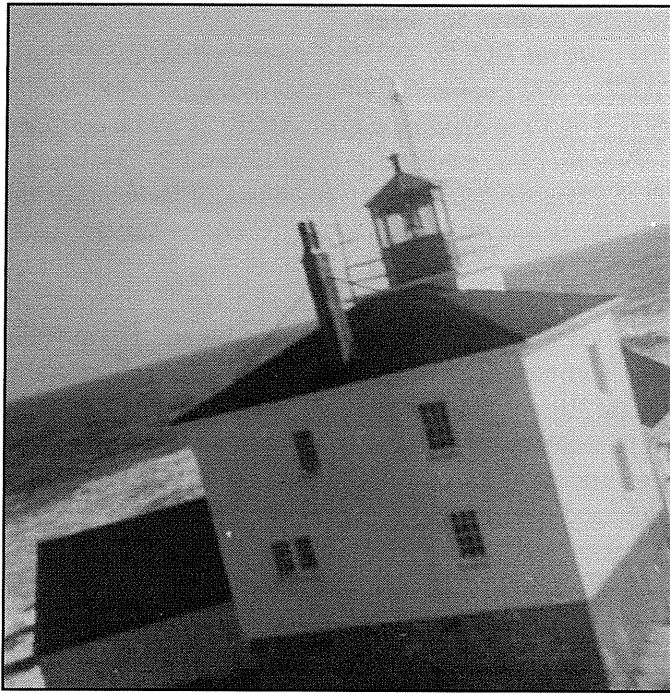
We weren't more than 25 or 30 feet above the high tide mark. We lay in sort of a wedge shape north and south, with the southern exposure being the seaward side of us. It kind of broke the sea as it came up by, but if the waves weren't at a certain angle, it was pretty hairy there at times.

The Ground Hog Day storm in early 1975 was a bad 24 hours. If I remember correctly, the whole storm had south west hurricane force winds. It wasn't classified a hurricane, but there was winds in excess of a hundred miles an hour, sustained for hours and at one point during that evening, the wind literally sucked the fire out of the stove in the kitchen, and it went out. Of course it was just a gravity-feed oil burner, and the oil kept right on running in. That went on for about 35 minutes before I recognized that it was a problem. When I took the cover off of the stove to check, it was like an out-gushing of hot oil fumes. It gave me quite a fright.

There were times that the sea actually blew calm. There was a raging sea on and it was running in long, slow seas from the south up towards us, and watching out my bedroom window near the light tower, I wondered



Gull Rock landing on a calm summer day. *Jim Guptill*



A helicopter view of Gull Rock in the 1970s. *Jim Guptill*
that some of them coming along might be "it". So I didn't spend a lot of time looking. But there were times that the wind would actually blow that sea calm. It was a most remarkable thing.

It was so loud that we couldn't hear the horn at times. And you know what those old air horns were like. If you were close by one, it took over your life while it was blowing. This storm was loud enough so that you would have to stop and make sure "Is that horn going?"

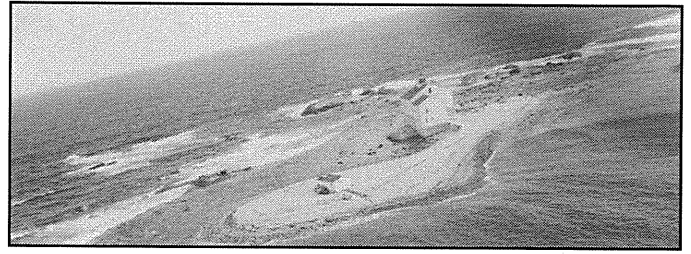
As well as being captive to bad weather, Gull Rock's keepers had no choice but to endure the fog horn. With only a few feet separating the powerful diaphone from the keepers' quarters, there was nowhere they could run to escape the horn's deafening blasts.

Lightkeepers did a lot of.....waiting for a few moments before they.....finished a conversation. One of the Coast Guard mechanics pointed out to me it was very interesting coming to these places because he said even on clear days you'll have a lightkeeper..... rest a moment and he'll pick up his.....story and finish it off. So it's almost like a brain thing.

The fog horn filled the whole thing. The house, the windows shook, the dishes rattled a bit and it, it was a very large, audible sound. It was huge! So you stopped *whatever* you were doing and waited until that went away and then you continued on.

It literally was like somebody had come in to the house. A very large noisy, plump somebody had taken over your life for just that five seconds. I never thought of it as being traumatic, but it was. It was an assault on your senses, twice every minute for five seconds.

The Last Stretch - Salvages

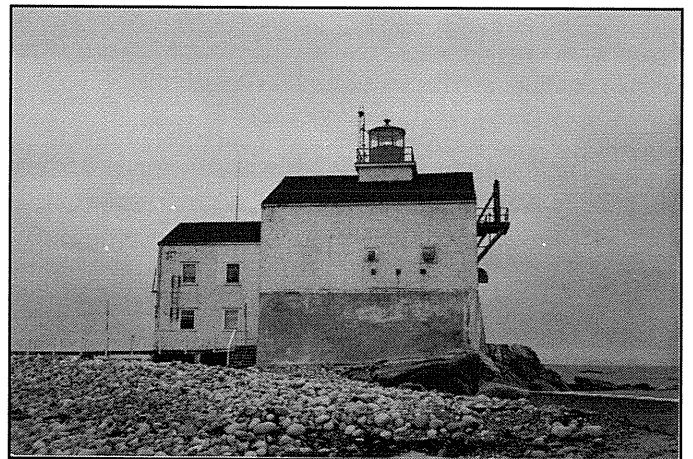


The Salvages. *Jim Guptill*

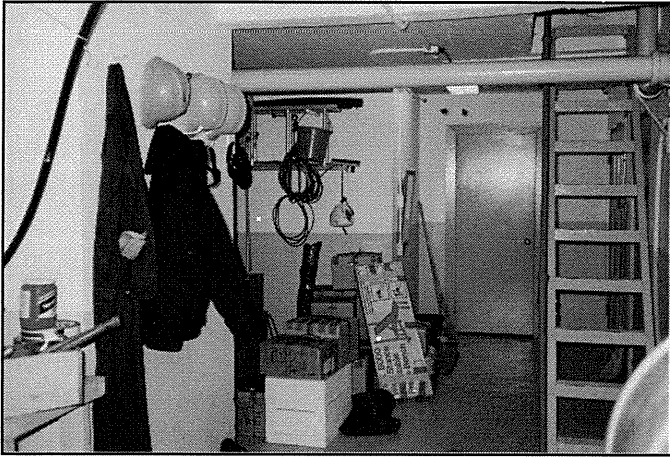
After three years of enduring Gull Rock's fog horn, Jim had a chance to transfer to the Salvages lighthouse as senior Head Keeper. Just 30 kilometres to the south west, the station sits on the largest of the Half Moon Ledges, near Port LaTour. As he stood looking up at the massive bunker that was to be his home every second month for the next decade, Jim had a bad case of déjà vu.

Oh dear, I've done it again! Salvages was even more remote from a town than Gull Rock. It's made up of heavy gravel rock, heavy beach rocks, and finer gravel and granite ledge. It's just a ledge with a cement building on it – a bunker, literally. The dwelling house and the engine room and the lighthouse all combined were setting on the southern extremity of that. At full high tide, it might have been 300 feet long, from one end to the other. It was far more exposed and far closer to the water than Gull Rock, and heavens knows that was close enough!

When you left the dwelling and entered the basement of the structure wherein all of the mechanics was housed, it put you in mind of a ship. When we first went there, in the ground floor level they had glass portholes, and the glass on the things was an inch and a half or two inches thick, it seemed to me. They were brass and they were beautiful, and you could look out almost any area out of this basement in bad weather and be looking right



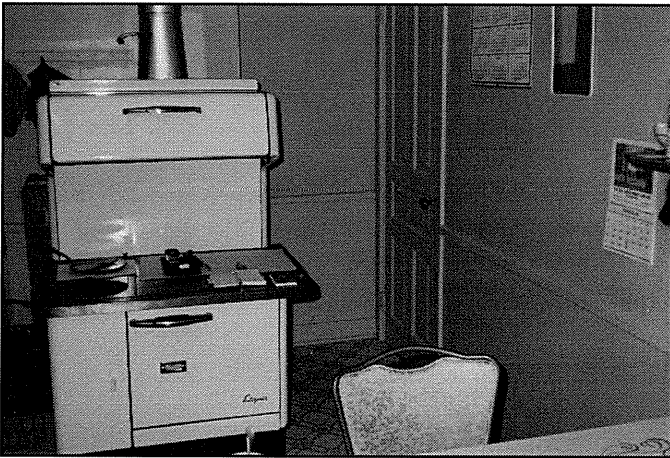
The Salvages in the 1980s. The keepers lived in the addition at left. The fog horn is on the right. *Jim Guptill*



Utilitarian space at The Salvages. *Jim Guptill*

into the sea, literally. It was fascinating. Scare the living daylights out of me, but I couldn't help looking, right? It was like watching somebody get hit on the highway. I'd get in one of these portholes and set there and go "Holy crap, this one's gonna be it," right? And it would SMACK! against the side of the house.

The routine was much the same as on Gull Rock, with regular watches, maintenance work, and various hobbies. There was also a taste of the future, when the Coast Guard installed a computer system to monitor nearby automated lighthouses.



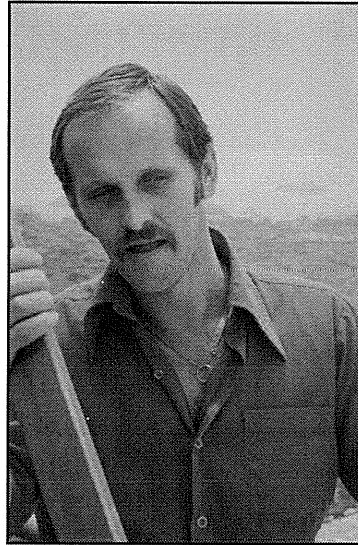
Kitchen facilities at The Salvages. *Jim Guptill*

There was an INTRAC. It was developed during the Six Day War (in 1967, when Israel captured the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt). It was an early warning system. We bought it. Not Jim Guptill at Salvages, but the Coast Guard bought it and modified it so that you could start and stop the generators and turn the light and horn on and off from a central monitoring point. Baccaro Point lighthouse was probably about ten miles (16 km) away to the west'ard and Cape Negro was probably four or five miles (about 8 km) to the east'ard, and we watched both of those stations from a little console in

the living room at Salvages.

In the end, the INTRAC system allowed the Coast Guard to replace Jim Guptill, and dozens of other light-keepers on Nova Scotia's staffed stations. It was a morale-sucking process, made even more difficult by the uncertainty about your future as you waited for the hammer to fall. This is how the scenario played out on the Salvages in late 1986.

The Coast Guard arrived with the Bell 212 helicopter - it was just before Christmas. We stopped at Gull Rock and took both of those keepers. Then we stopped at Cape Roseway and took them. Then they flew us all to Bridgewater to a hotel and announced that they were shutting us down within the year and then took us back and let us out and flew away.



Jim Guptill at The Salvages. *Jim Guptill*

I was really pissed off about that. Looking back, it was a violent reaction to a totally crass move. The Coast Guard never thought that my family is at home and Christmas is looming ahead of me. I'm going to be away from my family and now "You're out of work."

I don't mind telling you, I was really, really annoyed by that. I think it could have been done in, much, much better in a more humane way. Now, as it turned

out, they looked after us and they looked after us very well. But back then, the Coast Guard didn't recognize that when they set us back on Salvages and flew away, we had *nothing*! No job, no future, no security. It affected us badly, very badly.

Things did come together for Jim though. He worked at the Coast Guard's Regional Operations Centre in Dartmouth for a few years, before moving to the Atlantic Pilotage Authority. He and his family also lived at the old Chebucto Head lighthouse near Halifax for a time. Today, as Jim looks back on his 27 year career on the lights, the good memories outweigh the bad.

I think I'm the most fortunate of men. I went through a period in history that had never happened before. They say history repeats itself. That part of it has never done. Nor will it, I don't think. I was privileged to be a part of that transition between an old century and the new one, because when we went on Country Island in September of 1960, there was nothing modern there.

Nothing! We had to carry our water from the well. We had to go to the old outhouse. I won't go into that too far! Everything was the same as it had been for 200 years.

With modernization, suddenly we had televisions in our home and hot and cold running water. We're still isolated, but the bite has been taken off it and it left us with mostly the good part of isolation, which is the control over your circumstances and surroundings. And then to go complete cycle to the place where there was no lightkeeping responsibilities at all. 1960 to 1987 is a work life for most people. It was a marvellous experience. I can't think of anything that I would have done to change it. I think even if I was 15 years old again right now and had the choice knowing what I know, I'd still do it.



The view from the lantern at The Salvages. *Jim Guptill*

Postscript

It's now been more than two decades since the last keepers departed Jim's stations. Out on Country Island, a tiny solar-powered light is all that remains as an active aid to navigation, and only one keeper's house still stands, barely. The Coast Guard stripped Gull Rock of its engine room and boathouse after removing the keepers in 1987, and eventually installed a solar-powered light and horn. Farther along the coast at the Salvages, the fortress-like "bunker" remains, although the attached house is long demolished.

The lights shine on, but the heart is gone.

*

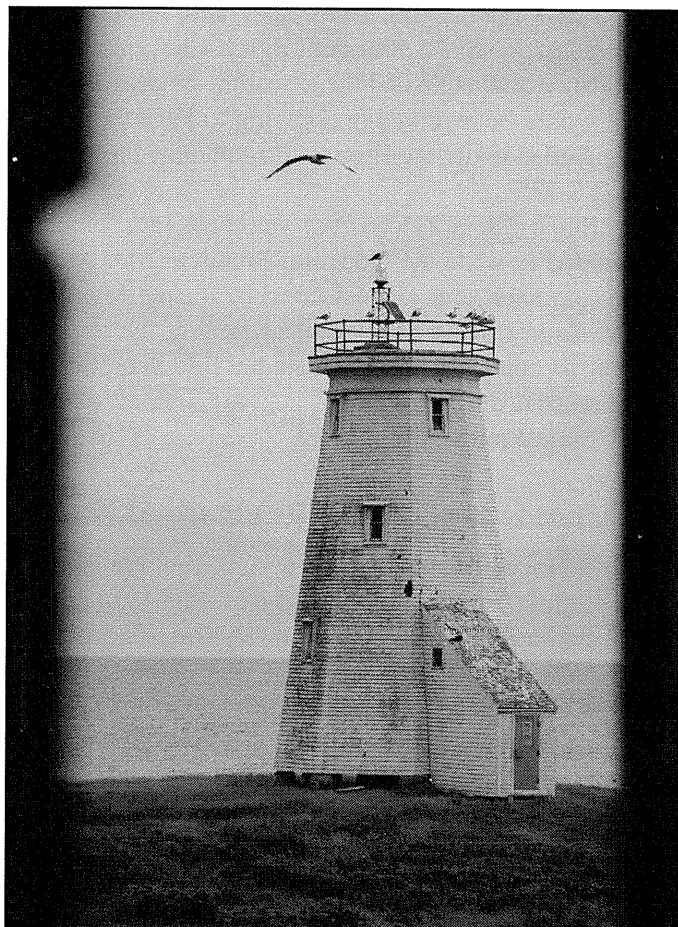
*

*

NEWS AND VIEWS

New Interest in Devil's Island Lighthouse

Barry MacDonald



The 1977 Devil's Island lighthouse shows wear and tear as viewed through a gaping window in the nearby abandoned keeper's house. *Chris Mills*

A new group has been formed in the Eastern Passage area to look at options aimed at preserving the 1877 octagonal wooden lighthouse located on Devil's Island. The island is located on the eastern side of Halifax Harbour and was once home to 60 families, a post office and two lighthouses.

Today, the island is in private hands except for a small parcel owned by DFO. The only surviving structure on the island (besides the lighthouse) is the lightkeeper's residence, also the property of the majority landowner.

The wooden structure is in a deteriorating state, with the last serious maintenance carried out by DFO in the late 1980s. Some years previous to that, the classic iron lantern was unceremoniously removed from atop the structure and a solar lantern and panels added in its place.

At present, the light is extinguished and word is that maintenance forces cannot carry out repairs due to

the deteriorating condition of the deck. The future of the light (as an aid to navigation) is currently under review by Coast Guard.

The newly-formed Devil's Island Light Society last met on January 6th this year. The meeting was well-attended and options for restoration and preservation were discussed. NSLPS President Barry MacDonald was in attendance and explained the divestiture process as well as what would be involved in applying to have the lighthouse included under the Heritage Lighthouse Protection Act: Bill S-215.

Since Bill S-215 has not yet come into force, it was decided to write the Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment) and express concern for the future of Devil's Island lighthouse as well as tabling the group's intention to apply for inclusion under Bill S-215 when that process becomes available.

Stayed tuned for updates!

Five Islands Lighthouse Finds Final Home

On November 6, 2008 the peripatetic Five Islands lighthouse made its final move. The 1914 tower had already been moved three times because of erosion, when the campground that was its most recent home, closed down. That meant another move for the tower, which now sits on municipally-owned property about seven kilometres away. The *Halifax Herald* noted "Curious onlookers, many with cameras and some wearing lighthouse T-shirts, turned out to watch its journey from the end of the Wharf Road onto Highway 2 and down Broderick Lane, where it will remain."

Phil Leil Enterprises (house movers) performed the tricky task, lifting the entire 13 metre-tall tower onto the back of a huge flatbed trailer. Gloria Lewis of the Five Islands Lighthouse Preservation Society is thrilled with the move, and says the movers "never even broke a shingle" while transporting the light to its new foundation.

Gloria says there's work to be done yet, including installation of power and construction of a doorstep for access to the light, which will be open to the public in season if the society can secure funding for a summer student. There are also plans to develop a park around the lighthouse, which will include walking trails and benches, along with a parking lot.

The society has sweatshirts, T-shirts and reprinted copies of a book detailing the history of Five Islands for sale. Contact Gloria at (902) 254-2968 for ordering information.

Congratulations to the Five Islands Lighthouse Preservation Society and the Municipality of Colchester for ensuring that their lighthouse will remain an important part of Five Islands.

It Was Fun While It Lasted Going Strong

Regular readers of *The Lightkeeper* will be familiar with Arthur Lane's name, and some may own a copy of his excellent *It Was Fun While It Lasted*. Arthur's account of lightkeeping on a number of Trinity House lighthouses, including the (in)famous Eddystone off Plymouth, runs the gamut from tower-shaking storms to various hi-jinks involving electricity, motor horns and cranky principal keepers. First published in 1998 by Whittles (Caithness, Scotland), *It Was Fun While It Lasted* was reprinted in 2004 and 2008.

To whet your appetite, or least your curiosity, some review extracts:

"a very readable and entertaining book..." *The Nautical Magazine*

"...some interesting insights into [lighthouse] operation... before modernization." *Seaways*

"Entertaining and idiosyncratic" *Flash* (Journal of the Irish Lighthouse service)

"A highly personal account of a keeper's life in the 1950s which no pharologist should neglect to read... This is what it was like." *Journal of the Association of Lightkeepers*

"Deplorable" *Cruising*

"Not enough sex." *Nigel Milo, Daventry***

"...a sidesplitting account of some creative electrical re-wiring..." *The Northern Mariner*

"Thanks for publishing *It Was Fun While It Lasted*. If he'd been a 27 year-old coke-head from Camden it would have made the Booker Prize shortlist. This is the best book I've read in ages. Is A.J. Lane still alive? I can't find anything about him anywhere." *A London ambulance man in an e-mail to the publisher*

"...this superb book..." *Leading Lights*

**** a nephew – since disinherited**

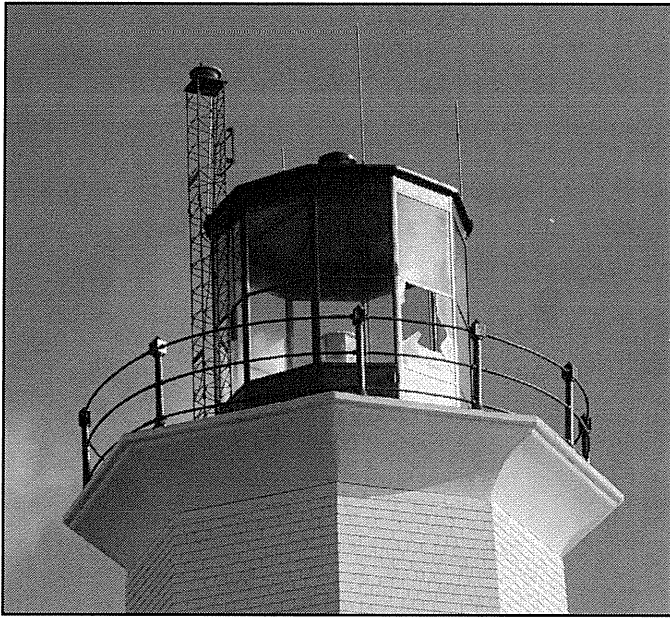
For more information, and to order *It Was Fun While It Lasted*, see <http://www.whittlespublishing.com/>

Sambro Vandalism Again

In the last issue of *The Lightkeeper* we told you about the burning of the old principal keeper's house by vandals on Sambro Island. That senseless destruction in mid-September was soon followed by another disturbing incident.

In October, a fisherman working just south of the island called the Coast Guard Cutter *Sambro* to say that he'd seen a smashed pane in the tower's lantern. Closer inspection revealed that two panes were broken; likely shot out by someone in a boat. The scenario seems likely, since a number of LED buoy lights in the area were also destroyed by gun-fire.

Coast Guard was slow to respond to the damage, leaving the expensive and newly-installed TRB 400 lens



Someone shot out two lantern panes in the Sambro Island lighthouse last fall. *Chris Mills* at the mercy of wind, salt spray and rain for a number of weeks before crews installed new glass.

Ed's note: *These incidents (and my comments) are starting the sound like a broken record. But it's hard not to get riled when government sits on its collective thumbs and does nothing to help save North America's oldest operating lighthouse structure, and its outbuildings.*

The Other Coast: Point Atkinson Woes

The group fighting to save Vancouver's iconic Point Atkinson lighthouse says the lightstation will "descend into ruins" unless the site can be saved from "administrative limbo." The station, which crowns Lighthouse Park in West Vancouver, has been a designated National Historic Site since 1994. It was also added to the West Vancouver Heritage Register in June, 2008. But Elaine Graham of the West Vancouver Historical Society says her group is concerned the lightstation buildings will eventually fall apart without care and funding.

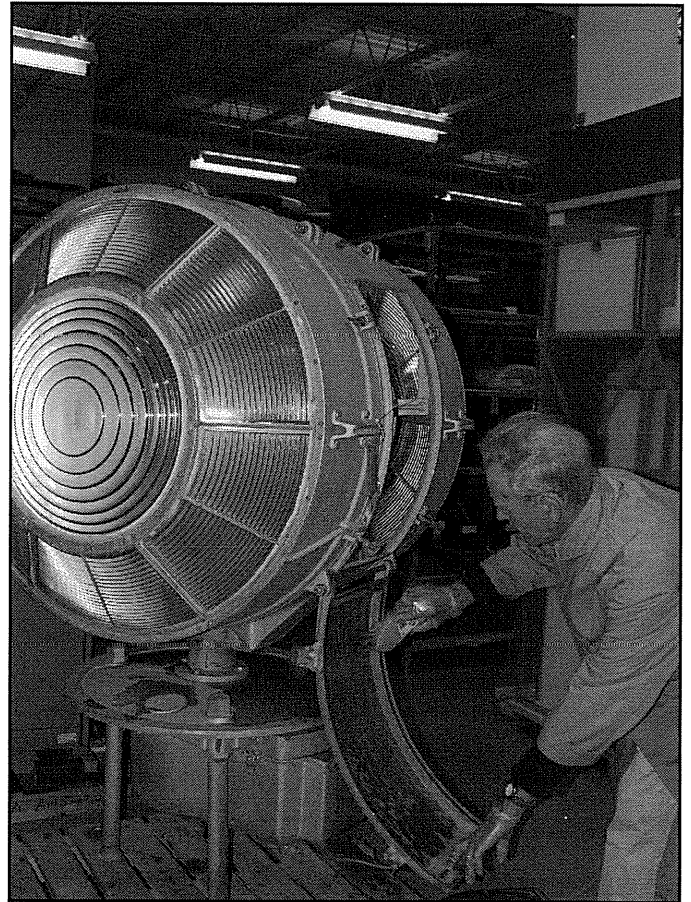
Elaine is well-positioned to communicate this view, having lived at the site for more than 20 years. Her late husband Don (author of *Keepers of the Light* and *Lights of the Inside Passage*, Harbour Publishing) was assistant keeper at the station until the Coast Guard de-staffed it in 1996. In a recent interview published online at canada.com, Graham says the station needs major work. Although the lighthouse remains in operation, the walkways, two keepers houses, helicopter pad, wharf and old fog alarm building need attention.

Graham wants to entire station to be restored so that it can serve as a functioning heritage site. "It's part of (the community's) history," she says. "It's part of the whole coast of B.C.'s marine history."

In November, the West Vancouver Historical Society applied for a grant from the province to have a consultant review the facility and report on just what has to happen to turn the site into a working tourist attraction.

Note: NSLPS President Barry MacDonald visited the Point Atkinson lighthouse in February 2007, when he attended Heritage Canada Foundation meetings held in Victoria. See *The Lightkeeper* Vol. 14, No. 1, March/April 2007.

Sambro Lens To Be Displayed



Museum Volunteer Andrew Green cleans the DCB 36 light from the Sambro Island lighthouse which was recently donated to the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic by the Canadian Coast Guard. The museum is preparing the DCB for display beside Sambro's famous First order Fresnel lens later in January to mark the 250th anniversary of Sambro's first year in operation. NSLPS volunteers Chris Mills and Barry Macdonald provided valuable assistance to the Museum in landing the donation and assisting with interpretation and the Coast Guard's Tom Roberts helped the museum move and assemble the beacon. *Dan Conlin*

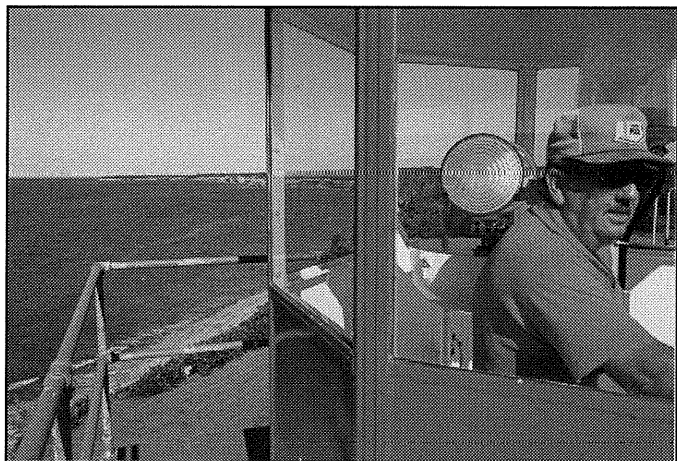
Website Additions

Kathy Brown

First, we welcome Denyse Contrasty as a member of the 'website group.' Currently, Denyse is adding images to lighthouse pages. She's added pictures of Borden's Wharf, Peter Island, Point Aconi, Stoddart's Island and Westhaver Island lighthouses. Thanks, Denyse!

Also, look for 2008 aerial views of Cape Negro, Gull Rock, Flint Island, Maugher Beach and Mosher Island on those pages.

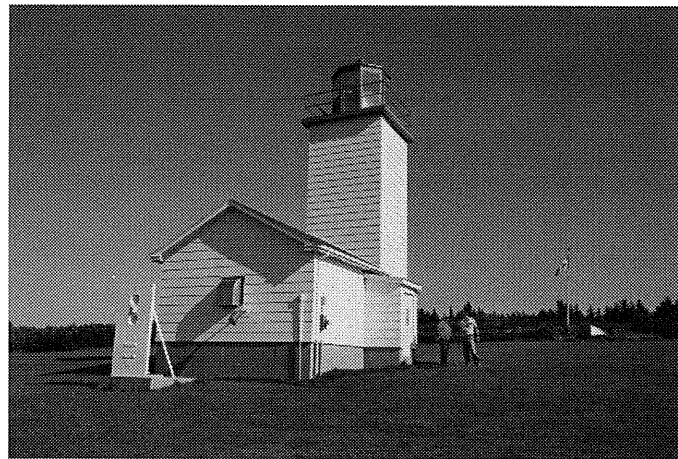
We are working on a proposal to upgrade the website to bring it into the 21st century. We hope to expand the size of the pages to take advantage of the larger monitors that most people now use, to make the website even easier to navigate, and to make it easier to update and add information. More about this soon!



Lightkeeper Frank Kozera at Black Rock Point in 1988.
Chris Mills

Frank at Black Rock Point in September 1988. He was a gracious host, giving Rip and Chris a tour of the immaculate tower and well-kept grounds. (Frank also graces the cover of the June, 2003 *Lightkeeper* (Volume 10, Number 2)).

Our sincere condolences to Frank's wife of 55 years, Yvonne (Fleet), and their three children



Black Rock Point in 1988. *Chris Mills*

LIGHTSHOP

Order from:

Kathy Brown,
5 Whimsical lake Crescent
Halifax, NS, B3P 2P9.

Telephone: 479-3115

e-mail: kathy@fromthesea.ca

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

NSLPS MEMBERSHIP PINS:

NSLPS Lighthouse Logo on a blue background. \$7.50 including shipping.

PEWTER ORNAMENT, of Sambro Lighthouse:

\$12.00 including shipping.

LIGHTHOUSE LOCATOR MAP

Two copies of a map showing the location of lighthouses in Nova Scotia and their accessibility. One is suitable for framing and the other can be folded and take along with you on lighthouse trips.

\$18.00 including shipping.

LIGHTHOUSES AND LIGHTS OF NOVA SCOTIA

by Rip Irwin, founding president of NSLPS. Softcover. History and pictures of every lighthouse in the province! The definitive guide to Nova Scotia's lighthouses. \$25.00 including shipping

FAREWELL

Fred Albert Covey of Dublin Shore, died October 25, 1985, at the Dawson Memorial Hospital in Bridgewater. He was 85. Born in Covey's Island, Fred was a lighthouse keeper at West Ironbound Island for 14 years. He later worked as an inshore fisherman and piloted ships on the LaHave River.

The last keeper of the Black Rock Point lighthouse in Cape Breton has passed away at the age of 76. **Frank Kozera** died on November 1st at Cape Breton Regional Hospital in Sydney. According to his obituary in the *Halifax Herald*, "Frank was a proud lighthouse keeper in Louisbourg for 21 years, and then the lighthouse keeper for 14 years at Black Rock in Big Bras d'Or until his retirement in 1990."

Frank kept a good light. Chris Mills and Rip Irwin experienced that fact firsthand, when they visited with

DOOMSDAY LIST

This is a partial list of Canadian lighthouses and lightstation buildings in danger of being lost through neglect and environmental conditions. Please contact the editor with any suggestions or comments.

Bear River, NS Decommissioned wooden lighthouse

Cape Roseway, NS Dwellings and old fog alarm building

Country Island, NS Keepers house (one house burned in 2005)

Cross Island, NS Keepers houses

Devils Island, NS Wooden lighthouse and keeper's house

Fish Fluke Point, NB Combined light and dwelling

French Point, NS Wooden lighthouse

Gannet Rock, NB 1831 wooden tower and attached concrete keepers' house

Georges Island, NS Keeper's house

Green Island, Richmond Co., NS Keeper's house and old lighthouse (one house burned in 2005)

Guyon Island, NS Keepers' houses

Ingonish Island, NS Concrete lighthouse and keeper's house

Isaac's Harbour, NS Combined dwelling/lighthouse

Keppel Island, NF Lighthouse, keepers' houses, fog alarm building, boat house

***Liscomb Island** removed from list because keepers' houses are now gone.

Margaree Island, NS Lighthouse and dwelling

Moshers Island, NS Keepers' houses and small fog alarm building

Peases Island, NS Keepers' duplex

Queensport(Rook Island),NS Combined dwelling/lighthouse

Sambro Island, NS Assistant keeper's dwelling, Gas House and fog alarm building

Seal Island, NS Radio operator's house, barn

Southwest Point, Anticosti Island, QC

Saint Paul's Island,NS Southwest lightkeepers house, wireless operator's house at Atlantic Cove



The Cross Island lighthouse sits between two keepers' houses abandoned in 1989. Photo taken in 2004. *Chris Mills*

The Lightkeeper is published by the NOVA SCOTIA LIGHTHOUSE PRESERVATION SOCIETY, c/o Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, 1675 Lower Water Street, Halifax, B3J 1S3. Editor: Send items for publication to *The Lightkeeper*, c/o Chris Mills, 1121 Ketch Harbour Road, Ketch Harbour, Nova Scotia, B3V 1K7, or e-mail ketch1@eastlink.ca. Deadline for March 2009 issue: February 20, 2009.

NSLPS MEMBERSHIP FORM: January 1 - December 31, 2009

___ New ___ Renewal: Membership # _____

NAME: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

POSTAL CODE: _____

E-MAIL: _____

CELL PHONE: _____

Family/Group names for extra cards: _____

Single - \$20.00 Institutional/Group - \$30.00

Patron - \$100.00

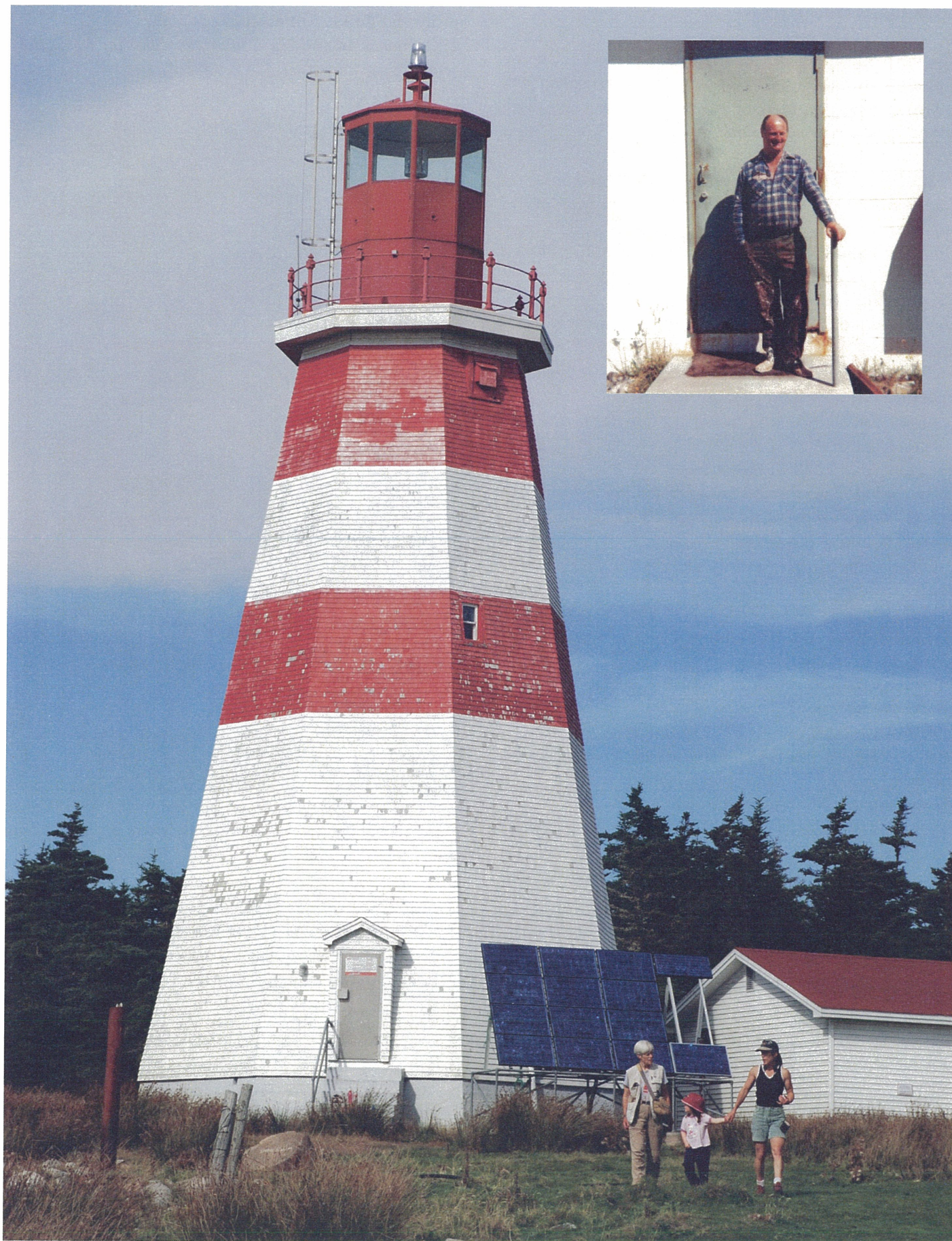
Family - \$25.00 Sustaining - \$50.00

Foreign - \$15.00 U.S. Funds, or equivalent.

Amount enclosed \$ _____ Please make cheques payable to the 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, Nova Scotia, B3J 1S3



The 1831 Seal Island lighthouse in 2007. The last keepers departed the station on October 17, 1990. *Chris Mills*
INSET: Lightkeeper Ray Tiner at Seal Island in 1983. *Chris Mills*