

Sambro Island 1758

The Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society
Vol. 17, No. 1, March 2010 www.nslps.com

The LightkeeperTM



IN THIS ISSUE:

- MYSTERY LIGHT
- 15TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
- NEWS AND VIEWS
- BRIER ISLAND RE-VISITED
- BOOK REVIEW: AN ILLUMINATING EXPERIENCE
- 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: Matt Leights, Graphic and Print Production program, NSCC

PATRONS: Martin Rudy Haase, Rachel Hoogenbos, Raye Myles, Dan Conlin.

SUSTAINING MEMBERS: Denyse Contrasty, Anne Ostrosser, John Freeman, Joan Davis, Lloyd Merrill, Eric & Anne Mills, James Slechta, Stanley Van Dyke, Joanne & Bill McCormick.

AFFILIATES: Burntcoat Head Park Association, Fieldwood Heritage Society, Five Islands Lighthouse Preservation Society, Friends of the Yarmouth Light Society, Gilbert Cove and District Historical Society, Greville Bay Shipbuilding Museum Society, Hampton Lighthouse & Historical Society, Islands Historical Society, Louisbourg Lighthouse Society, North Highlands Community Museum, Northumberland Fisheries Museum & Heritage Association, Port George District Lighthouse Society, Shag Harbour Incident Society, Terence Bay Lighthouse Committee, Tiverton & Central Grove Heritage Association, Village on the Canal Association, Walton & Area Development Association.

NEW MEMBERS: Mel Cutler, Port Mouton
George Mossman, Middle LeHave
Catlyn McLellan, Parrsboro
Vanessa Chiasson & Ryan Wright, Ottawa, ON
Rosalind Wright, Sydney, NS

NSLPS EXECUTIVE 2009/2010

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

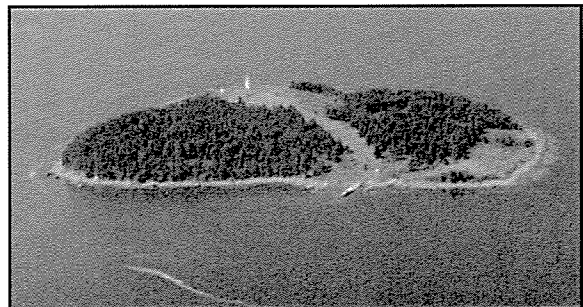
Member-at-Large: Andrew Powter

Cover: Jerseyman Island Lightkeeper Abel Leblanc with his wife Melvina, and the 7th order lens from Jerseyman Island. *Barry MacDonald*

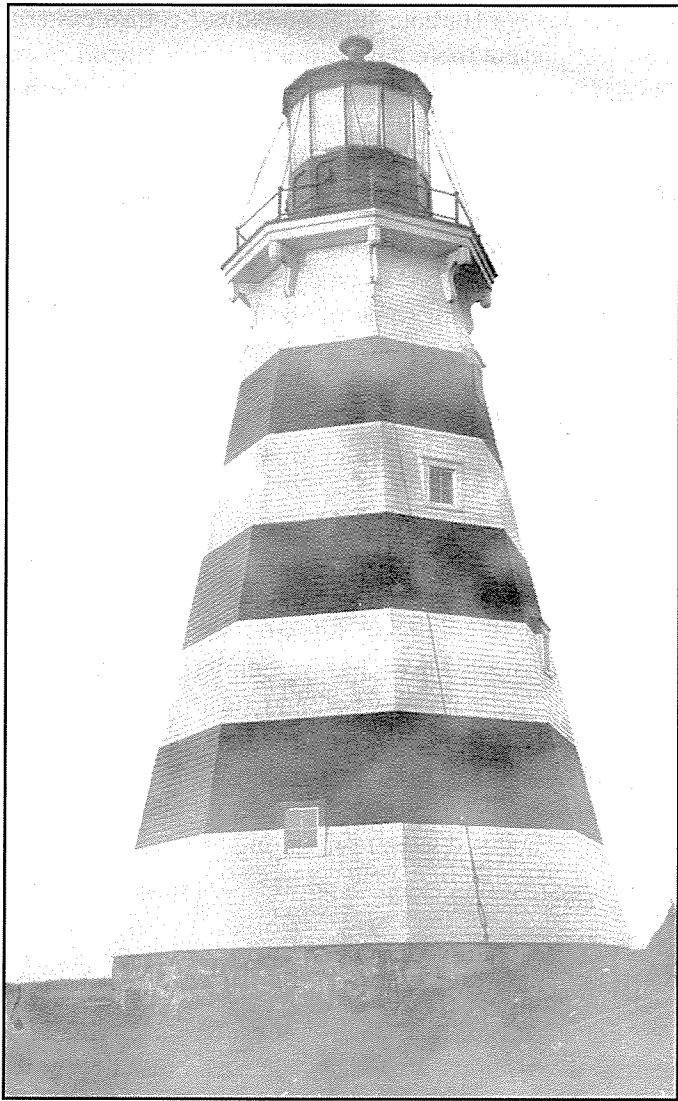
MYSTERY LIGHT



THE OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2009 MYSTERY LIGHT IS ABBOT'S HARBOUR IN YARMOUTH COUNTY. *JOSETTE D'ENTREMONT*



CONGRATULATIONS TO SIDNEY SMITH AND JOSETTE D'ENTREMONT FOR CORRECTLY IDENTIFYING THE DECEMBER 2009 MYSTERY LIGHT AS THE TUSKET RIVER LIGHTHOUSE ON BIG FISH ISLAND. THANKS ALSO TO JOSETTE, WHO NOTED THAT WE HAVE ALREADY USED TUSKET RIVER AS A MYSTERY LIGHT IN THE APRIL 2008 *LIGHTKEEPER* !



WHERE IS THIS MYSTERY LIGHT? HINT: IT BURNED TO THE GROUND IN 1944. SEND YOUR GUESSES TO: THE EDITOR, THE LIGHTKEEPER, NOVA SCOTIA LIGHTHOUSE PRESERVATION SOCIETY, C/O MARITIME MUSEUM OF THE ATLANTIC, 1675 LOWER WATER STREET, HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA B3J 1S3, OR E-MAIL [KETCH1@EASTLINK.CA](mailto:ketch1@eastlink.ca)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, April 28, 2010

Please join us for the Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society's 15th Annual General Meeting. The meeting begins at 7 PM in the Small Craft Gallery of the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, at 1675 Lower Water Street in Halifax. We'll feature reports covering exciting advancements in lighthouse preservation, the new and improved NSLPS website and we'll present the annual Craig Harding Award.

Our featured speaker for the 2010 AGM is Dan Conlin, Curator of Marine History at the Maritime Museum. Dan has just written a book on piracy in Nova Scotia entitled *Pirates of the Atlantic: Robbery, Murder and Mayhem on the Canadian East Coast*. Many light-

houses occupy sites associated with acts of piracy - real and imagined. Famous pirate raids, treasure legends and the nefarious activity of "wreckers" are part of the lore of several prominent Nova Scotia beacons. Dan will present a richly illustrated talk of piracy and its connection to lighthouse sites, sifting fact from legend.

We'll have light refreshments afterwards, and you'll have a chance to meet up with old friends. You can also renew your NSLPS membership, or join for the first time!

We look forward to seeing you on Wednesday, April 28!

NEWS AND VIEWS

Cape Forchu Needs The Cat

The recent announcement by the Nova Scotia government that it will no longer subsidize the high-speed ferry between Yarmouth, and Bar Harbour, Maine, has hit south west Nova hard. The lighthouse at Cape Forchu is the first glimpse of Nova Scotia many tourists have as they approach Yarmouth, and the loss of the ferry service will affect everyone from hotel workers in town, to the people who run the Cape Forchu lighthouse. For more information on support for the ferry service, contact Denise Nickerson, Operations Manager, Cape Forchu Lightstation at: yarlighthouse@eastlink.ca

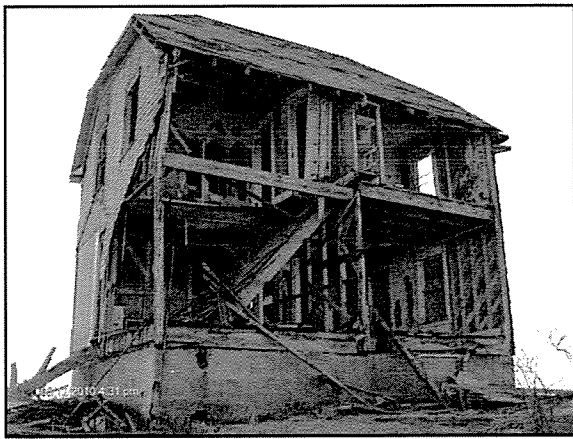
Chebucto Head Gate

The gate at the bottom of the hill leading to the Chebucto Head lighthouse has been closed since February 1. On that day, an unofficial agreement between DFO and local resident Perry Smith came to an end. Smith was appointed as gatekeeper several years ago, in an effort to reduce car-dumping and vandalism at the lighthouse site. Visitors could drive to the lighthouse during daylight hours, and Smith would close to gate at night.

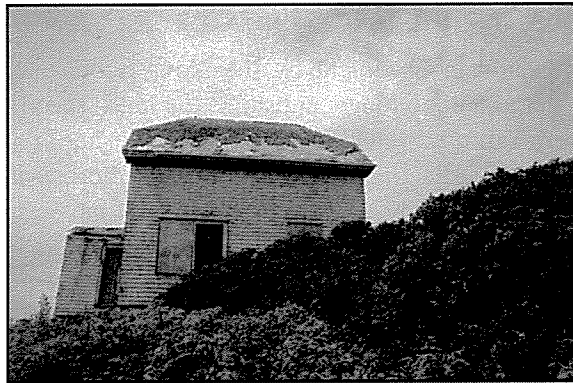
The NSLPS and the Chebucto Head Lighthouse Society (CHLS) have expressed their concerns to DFO Real Properties regarding the lack of access to the site, and in March, Andrew MacKinnon of Real Properties contacted Dominique Gusset of the CHLS to express interest in re-hiring Smith as gatekeeper. To date, there has been no formal agreement, but we understand the wheels are in motion.

Devil's Island Hit Hard

The situation has gone from bad to worse on the little treeless island at the approaches to Eastern Passage in Halifax Harbour. The deteriorating 133 year-old tower has been lightless for many months, as DFO decides its fate. Now, the elements have hit the abandoned keeper's house, tear-



RECENT EASTERLY GALES BLEW THE EAST-FACING SIDE RIGHT OFF THE OLD DEVIL'S ISLAND KEEPER'S HOUSE, LAST INHABITED BY A KEEPER IN 1967. *MIKE TILLEY*



THE EAST SIDE OF THE DEVIL'S ISLAND KEEPER'S HOUSE IN 2003. *CHRIS MILLS*



THE NEWLY-CONSTRUCTED DEVIL'S ISLAND KEEPER'S HOUSE IN THE 1930s.

ing out the entire eastern wall of the structure. The house is owned by businessman Bill Mont, but it has not been maintained for many years.

The next easterly storm will likely be the end of this house, one of the very few hip-gable keepers dwellings left in Nova Scotia. The Devil's Island Light Society is still discussing options for preservation of the lighthouse, but so far, there has been no resolution to the situation.

Fisherman's Harbour Lighthouse on the Way Out?

Recent storm surges have caused considerable damage to

the Fisherman's Harbour light on Nova Scotia's eastern shore. At present there has been no definitive word from DFO as to whether the small wooden lighthouse will be repaired, or replaced with a steel tower.

Havre Boucher Modular Range Light

DFO recently decided that each of the 1879 range lights at Havre Boucher were beyond repair, due to major rot. In an effort to retain some of the heritage character of the site, Coast Guard carpenters based in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island recently built a brand new "modular" lighthouse to replace the rear tower. It's the first of its kind in Nova Scotia. The front tower is now a galvanized steel structure.

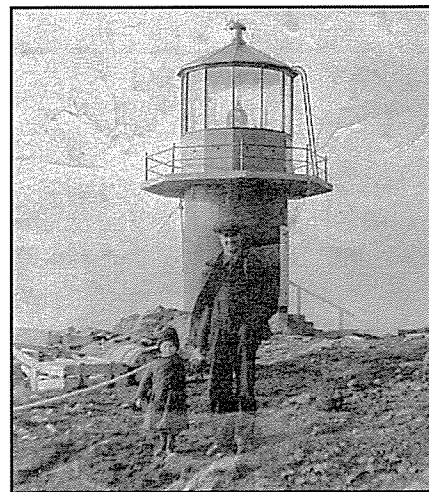
CBC television featured work on the rear tower in mid-March, and the CBC News website notes that "the Canadian Coast Guard has found a way to build a better beacon that will please both mariners and tourists."

The new tower has a lightweight aluminum frame, sheathed with plywood and sided with vinyl that looks like cedar shingles. The tower preserves the look of a traditional wooden light, while cutting down on maintenance such as painting and repairs to rotten wood. The light was scheduled to be re-lit during the week of March 22nd.

Port Bickerton Damage

There are reports that the low-lying access road to the Port Bickerton Lighthouse and Nova Scotia Lighthouse Interpretive Centre was badly damaged during recent rough weather. It's not known what it will cost to fix up the access way. Although heavy machinery has been able to clear a path to the site, the Interpretive Centre and the lightstation will not be open to the public this summer if

the road does not receive further attention.

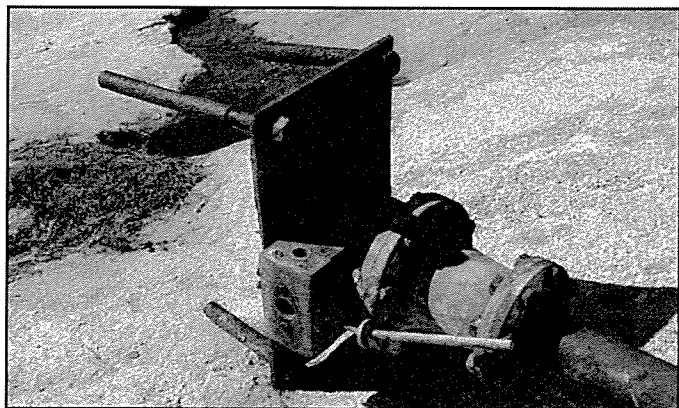


SAINT PAUL ISLAND SOUTHWEST LIGHT IN 1920, WITH KEEPER FRANK HUNTLEY AND HIS DAUGHTER KATHERINE. *COURTESY CLAUDE MACLEOD*

Saint Paul Island Southwest Light

Two groups from Cape Breton are continuing to try to bring the old Saint Paul Island southwest light back to the Dingwall area. The Coast Guard dismantled the cast

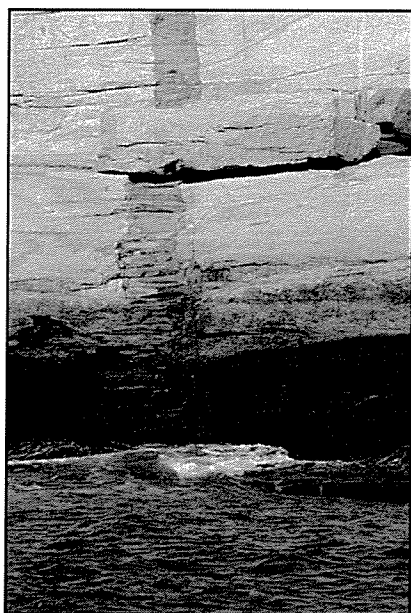
iron tower in the early 1980s, re-installing it at the Coast Guard Base on the Dartmouth waterfront. With plans well underway to relocate the remaining services at the Dartmouth Base to the Bedford Institute of Oceanography, it appears the lighthouse will also make that move. Both the North Highlands museum in Cape North, and a group in Dingwall have made their interest known to the Coast Guard, but it appears the tower will remain in the Halifax area.



REMNANT OF THE ACETYLENE FOG GUN APPARATUS ON SAMBRO ISLAND IN 2009. *CHRIS MILLS*

Sambro Island Acetylene Apparatus

Former Sambro Island keeper Gaza Soltesz has helped solve a mechanical mystery from this storied island.



THE DEVIL'S STAIRCASE FROM THE WATER. UNTIL EARLY THIS YEAR, YOU COULD WALK FROM THE TOP OF THE ISLAND TO THE WATER'S EDGE ON THE "STEPS." NOW, YOU HAVE TO DETOUR AROUND THE NEWLY-MOVED ROCK. *CHRIS MILLS*

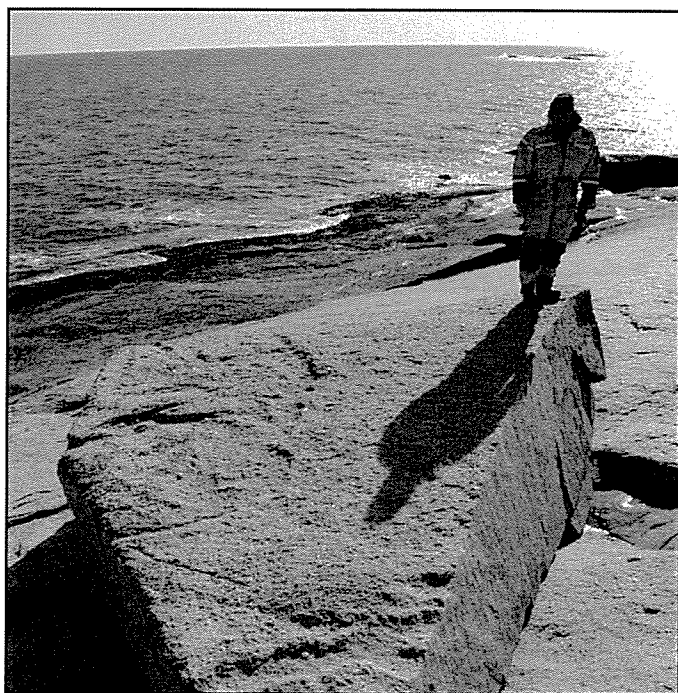
During the summer of 2009, visitors to the island discovered part of a strange-looking contraption sitting on the bedrock along the island's eastern shore. According to Gaza Soltesz, it's part of the acetylene fog signal used on Sambro Island from 1935 to 1963. These devices were used at a number of lightstations in Nova Scotia during the 1930s and 40s.

Sambro Island Rock and Roll!

During a recent voyage past Sambro



LIFEBOATMAN MIKE PETTIPAS GIVES SCALE TO THE MASSIVE CHUNK OF ROCK MOVED AT LEAST 20 FEET BY RECENT STORM SURGES ON SAMBRO ISLAND. *CHRIS MILLS*



THIS MASSIVE GRANITE WEDGE NOW SITS ACROSS THE DEVIL'S STAIRCASE ON SAMBRO ISLAND. *CHRIS MILLS*

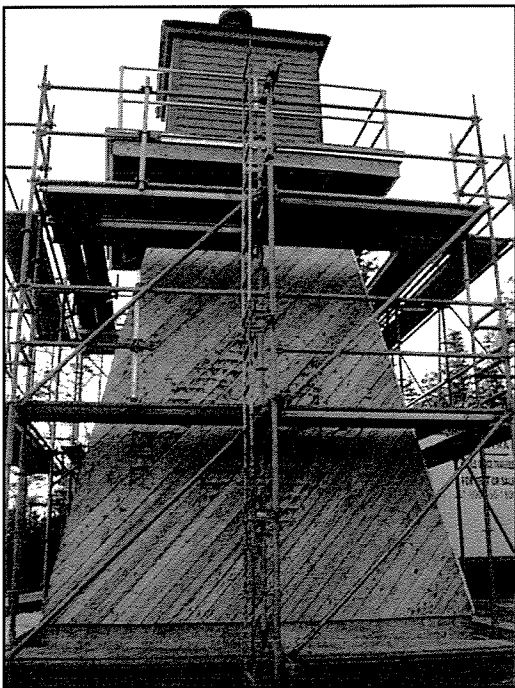
Island, the crew of the lifeboat *CCGS Sambro* was surprised to see a large chunk of granite sitting across the lower portion of the Devil's Staircase. This geological phenomenon runs through Sambro Island, taking on the appearance of a set of steps leading from the top of the island on the southern exposure, down to the water's edge. Recent storm surges move a huge piece of granite about 20 feet to lie in its current location, lying across the "steps". The triangular "chip" is about 18 feet long and close to four feet thick at its largest end. Conservative estimates put the weight at dozens of tons. The power of the sea is not to be underestimated!

Sheet Harbour Passage Range Restoration

Work continues on the Sheet Harbour Passage Range lights, established in 1915. The front tower appears to have been completed (see *The Lightkeeper*, Vol.16, No. 4, December 2009) and remedial work continues on the rear tower.



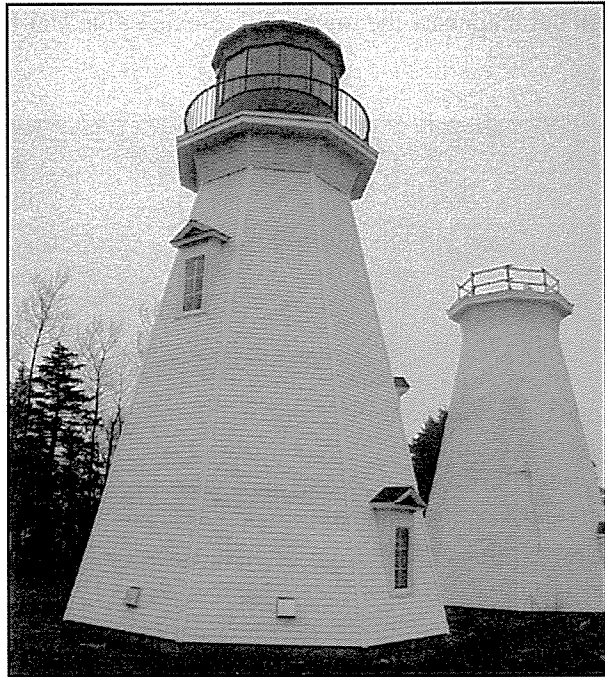
THE SHEET HARBOUR PASSAGE REAR RANGE LIGHT UNDERGOING REFURBISHMENT. *KAREN CORBIN*



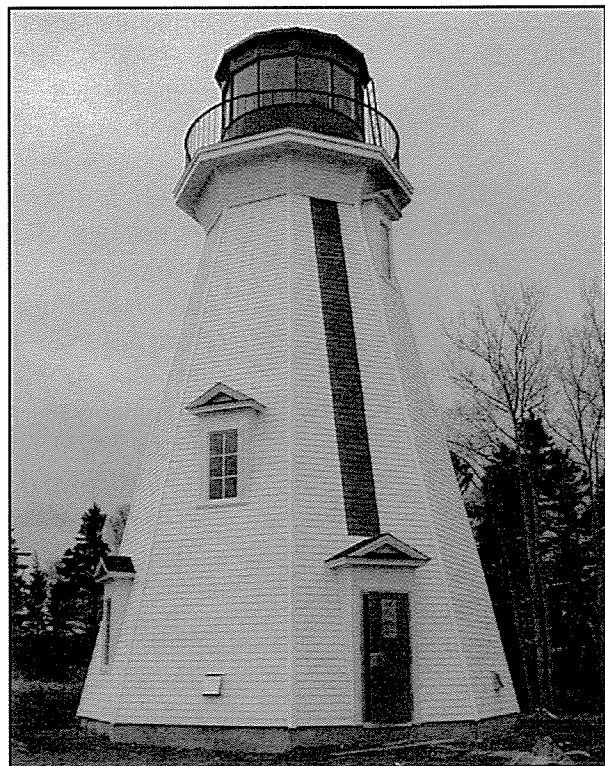
SHEET HARBOUR PASSAGE REAR RANGE. *KAREN CORBIN*

Sydney Range Renewed

DFO has reincarnated the historic Sydney front range light. After replacing the rear tower last year with a metal structure, officials found the front tower to be badly rotten. In order to maintain the site's heritage character, DFO



THE NEW SYDNEY FRONT RANGE TOWER STANDS NEXT TO ITS HEADLESS PREDECESSOR. *DFO/CANADIAN COAST GUARD*



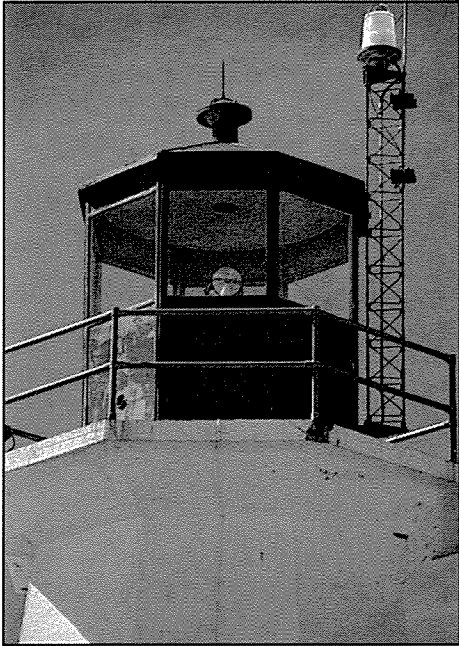
THE IRON LANTERN FROM THE 1905 SYDNEY RANGE FRONT TOWER HAS BEEN RESTORED AND PLACED ON THE NEW TOWER. *DFO/CANADIAN COAST GUARD*

decided to build a replica of the 1905 structure (a twin to the Henry Island lighthouse in Cape Breton). The tower's iron lantern is being refurbished and will be placed on the new tower, which will continue as an active aid to navigation.

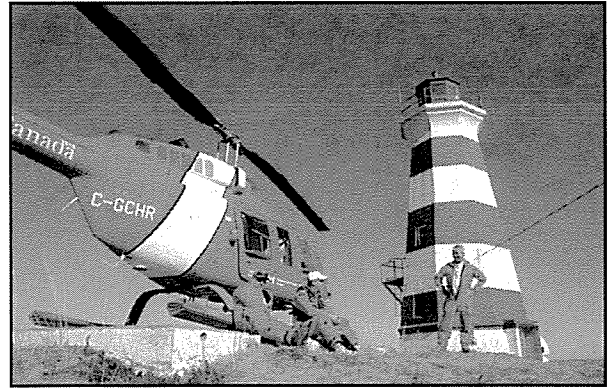
Western Head Modernization

The concrete lighthouse at Western Head, near Liverpool, has recently lost its DCB 10 lens. These workhorse lenses replaced many traditional lenses during the 1950s and

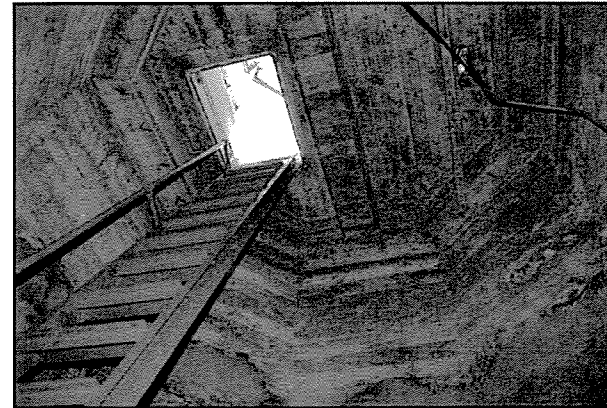
60s. In recent years they have become antiques themselves, replaced with acrylic fixed or rotating lenses. Coast Guard technicians have replaced the Western Head DCB with a modern lens.



THE DCB 10 IN OPERATION AT WESTERN HEAD IN 2008. *CHRIS MILLS*



CG 129, WITH COAST GUARD TECHS AND PILOT DALE CALDWELL, AT WESTERN LIGHT, BRIER ISLAND IN MARCH 2010. *CHRIS MILLS*

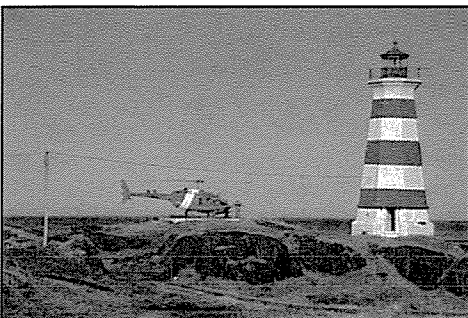


THE FINAL IRON LADDER LEADING TO THE LANTERN OF THE BRIER ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE. *CHRIS MILLS*

Brier Island Re-visited

Chris Mills

Brier Island sticks out into the Bay of Fundy like the end of a long claw, ready to grab at unwary vessels straying into its waters. The light at the island's western side was one of the first to be established in Nova Scotia, in 1809. Since then, a light has shone out over the powerful tides off the island. But for a few days in March, the



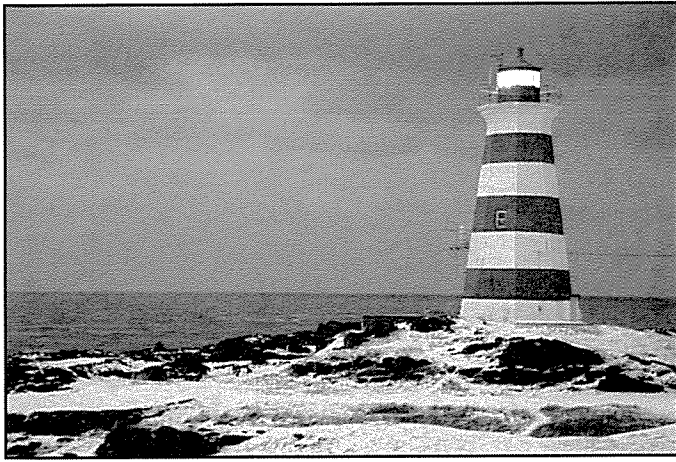
COAST GUARD HELICOPTER CG 129 PARKED AT BRIER ISLAND, WHILE TECHS LOOK AT THE TOWER'S MAIN LIGHT, IN MARCH, 2010. *CHRIS MILLS*



COAST GUARD NAVAIDS TECHNICIAN DAVE BAILEY CHECKS OUT THE APRB 252 LENS IN THE BRIER ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE. *CHRIS MILLS*

light was out. On the 17th day of the month, a Coast Guard helicopter landed next to the tower, with a pilot and two techs to check things out.

I happened to be visiting the island, and drove down to talk with the technicians, who I knew from my lightkeeping days. They allowed me to climb the tower. It was my first trip up since 1979, when keeper Gilbert



BRIER ISLAND'S WESTERN LIGHT BEAMS INTO THE WINTER DARK IN 2009. *CHRIS MILLS*

Ingersoll gave me, my sister, my mother, and a cousin a tour of the station. The old 4th order lens is gone now, and the paint is peeling in the iron lantern, but the view from the top remains the same.

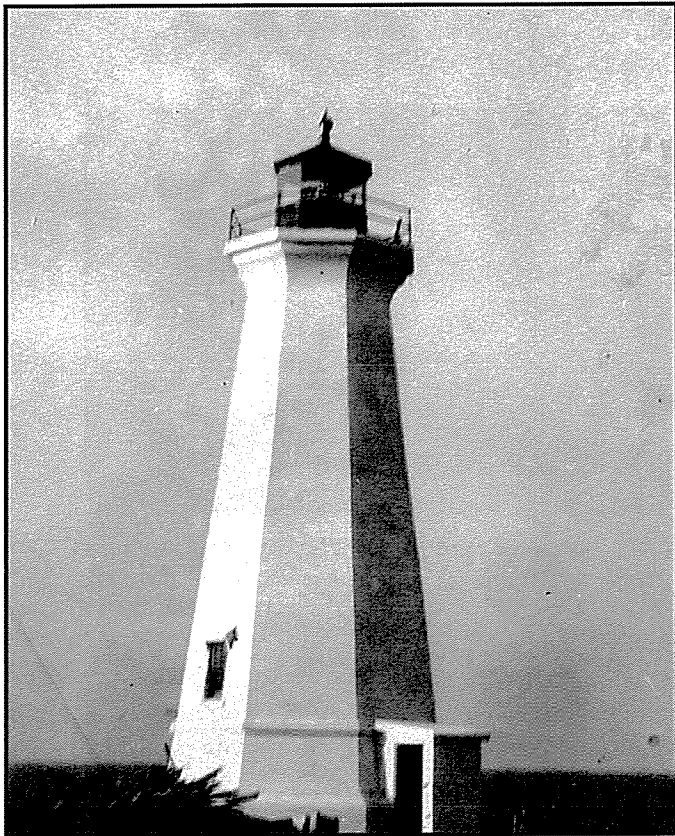
This short photo essay shows the Brier Island light today, and in the past when it was staffed by on-site keepers.



THE BRIER ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE WAS EXTINGUISHED FOR A FEW DAYS IN MARCH. *CHRIS MILLS*



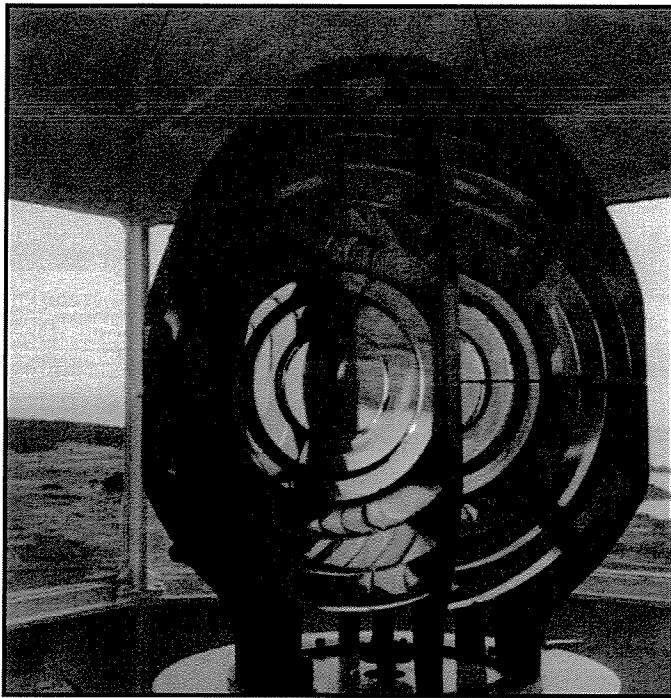
THE BOTTOM FLOOR OF THE BRIER ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE HOLDS THE CONTROL PANELS FOR THE MAIN LIGHT. THE STANDBY GENERATORS HAVE BEEN REMOVED. EQUIPMENT FOR THE FOG SIGNAL IS LOCATED ON AN UPPER FLOOR. *CHRIS MILLS*



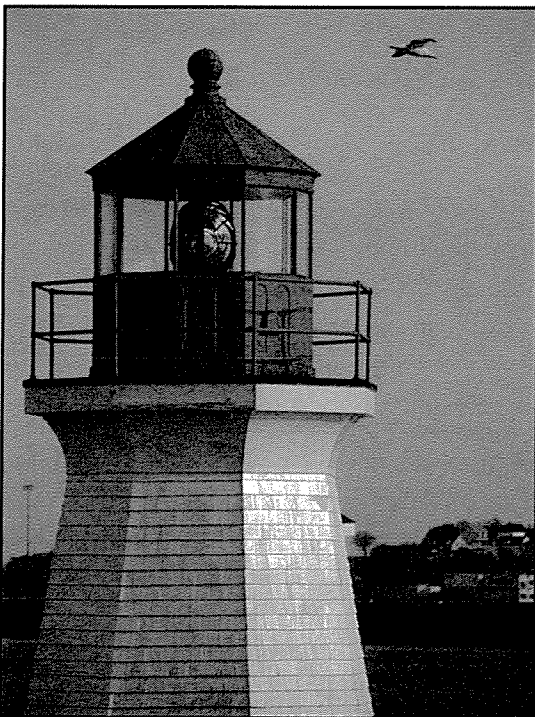
THE NEWLY CONSTRUCTED BRIER ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE REPLACED THE 1809 TOWER IN 1944. *COURTESY KELLY ANNE LOUGHERY/CANADIAN COAST GUARD*



THE BRIER ISLAND LIGHTSTATION IN 1984, THREE YEARS BEFORE DE-STAFFING. *COURTESY KELLY ANNE LOUGHERY/CANADIAN COAST GUARD*



THE FOURTH ORDER TRIPLE-FLASHING LENS AT THE BRIER ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE IN 1979. IT WAS REMOVED AROUND 1984 AND NOW GRACES A FAUX LIGHTHOUSE AT THE CANADIAN COAST GUARD BASE IN SAINT JOHN NEW BRUNSWICK. *CHRIS MILLS*



THE 4TH ORDER BRIER ISLAND FRESNEL LENS NOW CONTAINS A LOW-POWER LIGHT THAT FLASHES FROM THE CORNER OF THE COAST GUARD BASE IN SAINT JOHN, NEW BRUNSWICK. THE LANTERN COMES FROM GRINDSTONE ISLAND, NEW BRUNSWICK. *CHRIS MILLS*

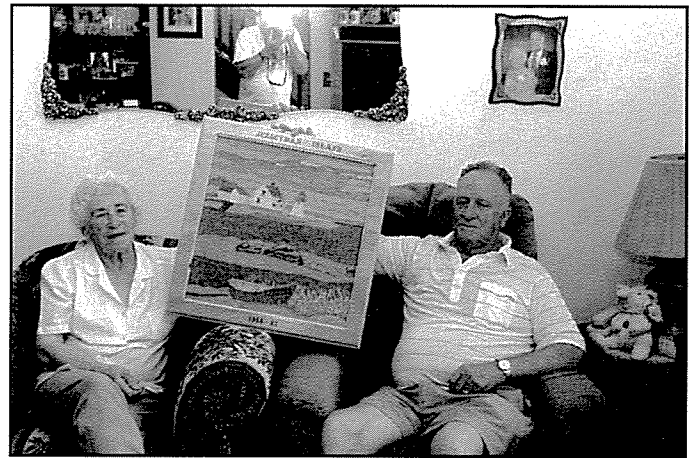
FAREWELL

Daniel K. MacLean

A member of a lightkeeping "dynasty" in the Magdalen Islands has passed away at the age of 79. Daniel K. (D.K.) MacLean died on January 3 in Charlottetown. Born on Entry Island (Ile d'Entrée) in the Madgalen Islands, D.K. grew up at the island's lightstation. He later spent many years as keeper on remote Bird Rocks, in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Abel LeBlanc

The last keeper of the Jerseyman Island lighthouse in Arichat Harbour has died. Abel LeBlanc passed away on

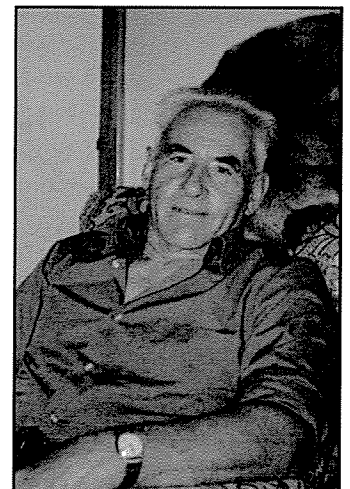


MELVINA AND ABEL LeBLANC IN 2003. *BARRY MACDONALD*

January 8 at the age of 88. After serving overseas in the Second World War, Abel returned to his home in Petit-de-Grat on Isle Madame, later taking on the position of lightkeeper on Jerseyman Island. He witnessed the transition from oil lamps to electricity, and finally automation, in 1980. Abel is survived by Melvina, his wife of 64 years, and their two daughters.

Charles Finck

The name Finck is interwoven with the history of the south shore of Nova Scotia. Beginning in 1930, three generations of the family kept the East Iron-bound light off Chester. Charles was keeper for 25 years, beginning in 1955. He'd taken over the position from his mother Violet, who assumed responsibility as keeper in 1943 from her husband Edward, who was



CHARLES FINCK IN 1990. *E.H. RIP IRWIN*

appointed in 1930. In 1980, Charles' son Paul became keeper, serving for a decade until the light was de-staffed in 1990. Charles retired to Blandford, where he died at home on January 25th, at the age of 95. Charles' mother Violet died in 2002, just three weeks before her 109th birthday.



THREE GENERATION OF EAST IRONBOUND LIGHTKEEPERS: CHARLES FINCK, WITH HIS MOTHER VIOLET, AND HIS SON PAUL, IN 1999. *E.H. RIP IRWIN*

John McEvoy

John McEvoy served on the Saint Paul Island Northeast Light for several years until his retirement. He died on January 27 in Sydney.

Gordon Bayne

The late 1950s and early 1960s were exiting times on many Maritime lightstations. It was a period of growth, with new keepers houses and towers being built, along with the installation of updated generating systems for isolated sites.

It was also the beginning of a concerted plan to automate and de-staff lighthouses. As Superintendant of Lights at the Department of Transport's Saint John Base, Gordon Bayne was able to see much of this change from "the other side of the light". His job overseeing lights and fog signals from the Maine/New Brunswick border, up the Bay of Fundy, around Minas Basin, to Digby Neck and as far as Cape Sable, gave Gordon a rare overview of the complexity of the nav aids system. He described the state of the 35 staffed stations as "All the way from excellent to poor! We had one station [where the keeper] used to shovel the ashes out of his kitchen stove onto the floor. During the winter, the storm door fell off the dwelling. He

just walked over it. Never moved it. That was the worst station that we had."

The life of a superintendent of lights encompassed a number of challenges, from overseeing the transfer of acetylene bottles up tortuously steep road to the automated light on Ile Haute, to experiencing the quirks and foibles of lightkeepers and their spouses.

In a 2007 interview, Gordon remembered "Down on Grand Manan, [the keeper's wives] were great at having three-way conversations on the telephone. One reason was they always wanted to know who's coming down on the ferry. The purser on the ferry was the father of the head keeper at Gannet Rock. They lived in North Head. The old purser would come home in the evening – first question, his daughter would ask 'Who came down on the steamer today?'"

[Her father replied] 'Oh, there was a young fellow there, a tall young fellow from the Department.'

"So, Mrs. Ingersoll got on the phone and she was talking with Mrs. Denton (I think her name was) down on Sou'west Head. They were trying to figure out who it was who had come down on the steamer. I think Mrs. Denton said 'Do his ears stick out?'"

"The next day I went down to Southern Head, went up to the house and banged on the door. The keeper was out somewhere – nice sunny day – within hollering distance, which was normal. Mrs. Denton came to the door.

"I said 'Oh, Mrs. Denton. I hear you think my ears stick out!'"

"If there'd been a big knothole in the floor, she would have disappeared down through it!"

Gordon Bayne was born in Chengdu, China in 1920. He died in Wolfville on January 30, 2010, at the age of 90. *Ed's Note: I had the privilege of interviewing Gordon Bayne in 2007. We will feature some of his memories in an upcoming issue of The Lightkeeper.*

Deidre Fairservice

Deidre Fairservice grew up as the youngest child of the last keepers on Sambro Island. Deidre hadn't even been born when her parents John and Marjorie, and her siblings Philip and Kelly moved out to the island in 1964. Deidre came along a couple of years later, and the three children lived on the tiny island, "in the most awesome playground anybody could ever have."

In a 2001 interview, Kelly remembered that her sister had a fearless approach to life. On one occasion, Deidre decided to make Kelly "sweat a bit" by climbing the lighthouse, going out onto the lantern deck, and then hanging off the outside of the lantern railing, some 70 feet above the hard granite at the base of the tower.

As Kelly recalled, she "just kicked her legs out

and she hung and she went hand over hand on that railing. She's at the top of the tower doing this and I'm holding on to the side where the [lantern] glass is, not wanting to let go of that, but trying to coax her to come in because I was deathly afraid that she would fall. She was just doing it to bug me!"

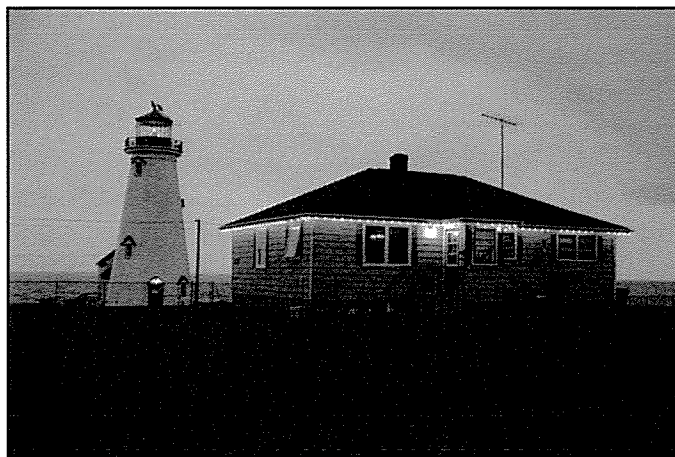
Deidre later moved to British Columbia, where she raised three children. On February 25, Deidre passed away at the age of 43 following a long battle with cancer. Deidre Fairservice is survived by her sister Kelly, brother Philip, and mother Marjorie, and by her children Ashley, Hope and Falon.

Harry Harris

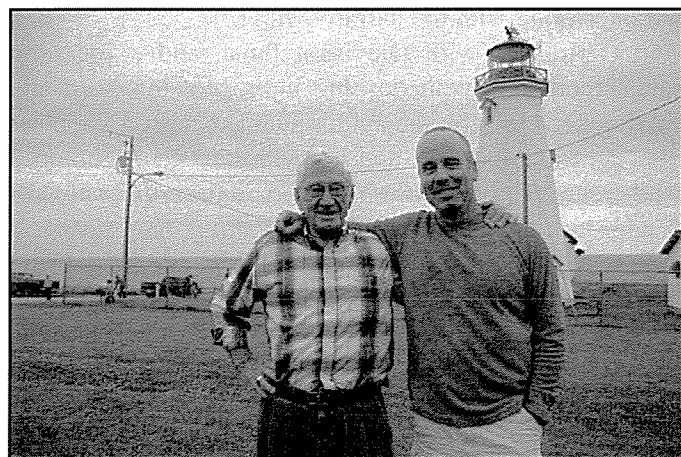
Harry Harris was a fixture at the East Point lighthouse in Prince Edward Island. As well as serving as the light's keeper from 1961 to 1989, Harry spent time as a helper at the station during the Second World War. He later served in the 17th Reconnaissance, and then returned to PEI after he was wounded.

Harry kept the East Point light in top-notch shape, but he was always willing to talk with visitors. I had the pleasure of meeting Harry in 1988, a year before the Coast Guard officially de-staffed East point, ending 122 years of lightkeeping at the site. At the time of my visit, Harry had the lawns mowed and fences painted, but he was reluctant to take me into the old diaphone build-

behind his wife Mary, seven children, 19 grandchildren, and 7 great-grandchildren.



HARRY HARRIS CONTINUED TO LIVE IN THE FORMER HEAD KEEPER'S HOUSE AT EAST POINT AFTER RETIRING IN 1989. *CHRIS MILLS*

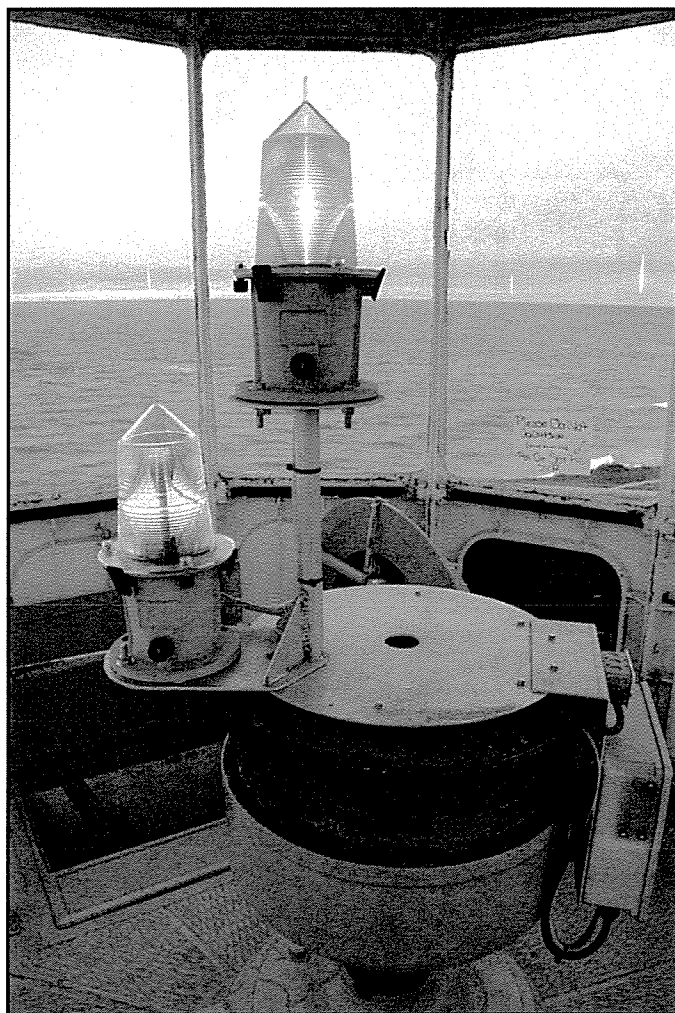


LONG-TIME EAST POINT LIGHTKEEPER HARRY HARRIS WITH CHRIS MILLS DURING THE SUMMER OF 2008. *MARIS MILLS*

ing. "Too much mess," he said.

I returned to East Point in 2008, and lo! and behold, Harry was still living in his old home. Although he didn't recall my visit two decades before, he'd just been reading my book *Vanishing Lights*, and we passed an enjoyable hour talking about his lighthouse days, as the automated light above us winked out its warning.

Harry Harris died suddenly at his lighthouse home, on Saturday, March 13, 2010. He was 82. He leaves

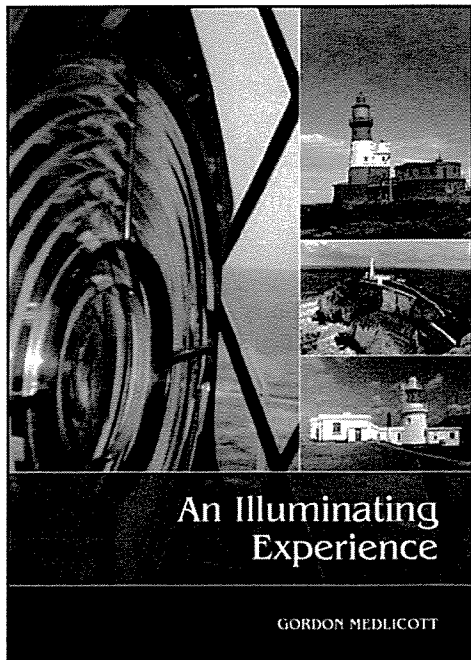


EAST POINT'S DIMINUTIVE ML-155 REPLACED A LARGE LONG-FOCUS REFLECTOR SYSTEM FLOATING IN A MERCURY BATH. *CHRIS MILLS*

BOOK REVIEW

***An Illuminating Experience.* Gordon Medlicott. Whittles Publishing. Dunbeath, Scotland, 2009. 131 pp. Photographs.**

In Canada, close to 100 lighthouse keepers still keep a vigil at several dozen lightstations on the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts. The situation here stands in stark contrast to the



United Kingdom, where it has been more than a decade since the last keepers were sent home, as automated systems took over their once vital profession.

Gordon Medlicott saw the whole process over the span of his 32 year career on 22 English and Welsh Lighthouses.

As a keeper employed by the venerable Trinity House (the General Lighthouse Authority for England, Wales and various British territorial waters. It was established by Royal Charter in 1514 and is based in London), Medlicott witnessed the transformation from oil lamps and explosive fog signals, to electricity, and then to fully automated lights in the age of satellite navigation.

The author began his career as a lightkeeper in 1966, after serving in the Merchant Navy. As a supernumerary assistant keeper, Medlicott filled in at various sites as required, learning the ropes as he went. Although Trinity House offered a basic training course for neophyte keepers, it was more concerned with maintenance of oil vapour apparatus, the teaching of semaphore, and instruction in bread-making. Medlicott notes with some surprise that keepers received no formal training in the dangerous procedure of loading and discharging explosive fog signals. Keepers learned that task, and many others, on the job.

While assigned to various stations, Medlicott encountered a variety of living conditions, ranging from comfortable and well-appointed, to decidedly basic. At Bull Point in Devon, he found to his "astonishment...that

my accommodation here was a dilapidated little caravan parked in the lighthouse yard; with no bathroom and only a chemical toilet in an outhouse some way away, I was not best pleased."

Fortunately, Medlicott was able to live with his wife and two daughters at a number of land-based lightstations, which made family life better. There were other remote island and rock stations, such as The Needles, off the Isle of Wight, which had no accommodations for families, and where crews of three men worked two month shifts, with one month's leave ashore.

Throughout the ten chapters in *An Illuminating Experience*, the author takes the reader on an informative journey through his postings, describing notable incidents ranging from landslides, to cliff rescues, to the occasional flare-up between characters thrown together in isolation for the common goal of keeping the light. Intriguing section headings within the chapters draw the reader in. How could you not want to learn more about "Bombs, Water-spouts and Radiation", "A Lighthouse on Legs," or "Shattered Peace – Promotion and Obsolescence"?

A healthy selection of photographs reveals the stunning and varied architecture of many Trinity House lights, as well as some of the equipment used at the stations, including the massive fog trumpets at Flatholm (a full seven feet high at the mouth!), and a majestic and gigantic bi-form lens. Insets throughout the book contain technical and historical bullets that add to the book, without interfering with the narrative flow.

Brushes with television fame, and a touching salute (complete with flashing light, blowing horn and waving keepers!) by the author's colleagues on the Needles light as Medlicott and his wife pass the lighthouse while returning from New York aboard the cruise ship QE 2, add spice and variety to *An Illuminating Experience*.

By the early 1990s, automation and de-staffing had already thinned the ranks of Trinity House keepers. The author was fortunate enough to witness the last phase of lightkeeping, following his transfer to the lighthouse monitoring centre in Holyhead. Medlicott became a long-distance lightkeeper, keeping electronic tabs on a dozen automatic lights. But computers and centralization meant further consolidation, and within a few months, Trinity House closed the Holyhead Centre.

Medlicott returned to the lights, as one of the very few keepers left to staff the remaining handful of "manned" lights in England and Wales. He retired in September 1998, just two months before the destaffing of North Foreland, the final Trinity House lightstation to lose its keepers to automation.

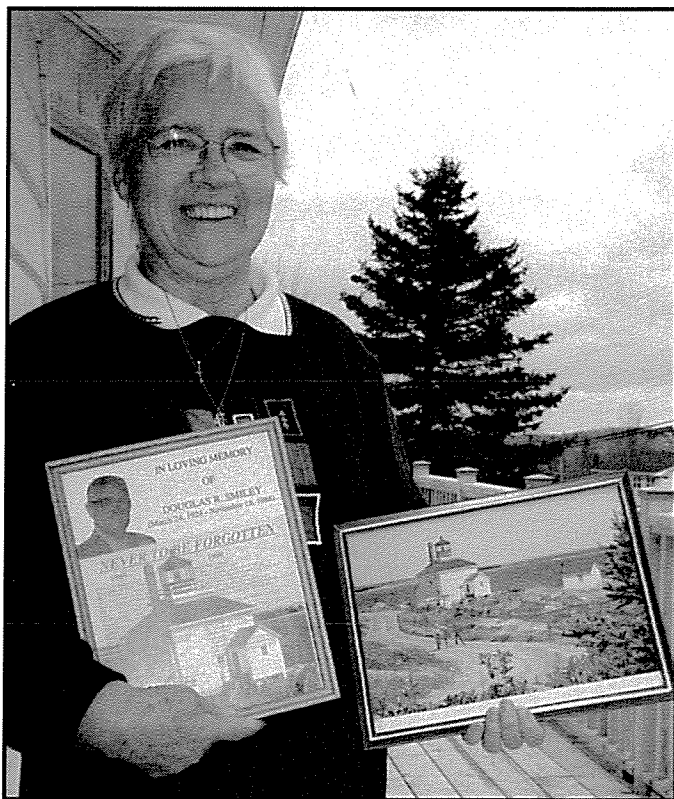
Gordon Medlicott's account of his lightkeeping years is an important record of a way of life and a service never to be seen again. More photos of Medlicott's family

and colleagues would have added an extra dimension to the book, but overall, *An Illuminating Experience* is a pleasure to read, and an important addition to the slowly growing number of books written by the people who actually lived the life of the lightkeeper.

MISCELLANY



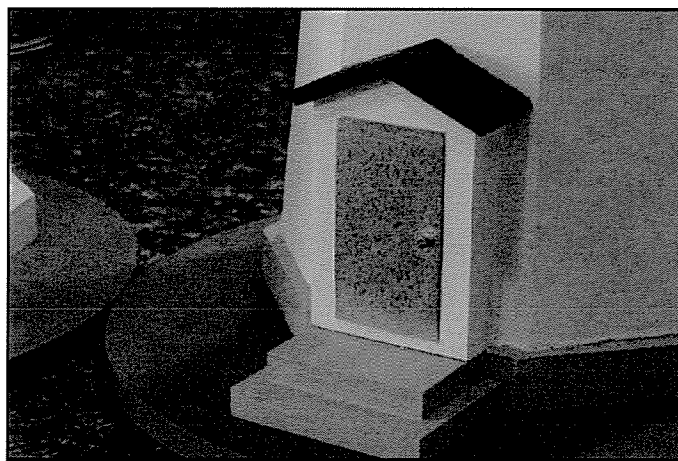
THE NEW SYDNEY RANGE TOWER STANDS NEXT TO THE 1905 LIGHTHOUSE IT REPLACED IN MARCH. DFO/CANADIAN COAST GUARD



THANKS TO MURIEL SMILEY FOR HER RECENT GENEROUS DONATION TO THE NSLPS, AND FOR HER ONGOING SUPPORT OF THE SOCIETY. MURIEL LIVED FOR DECADES ON THREE NOVA SCOTIA LIGHTSTATIONS WITH HER HUSBAND DOUG: BEAVER ISLAND, BEAVER HARBOUR HEAD AND MEDWAY HEAD. SHE NOW LIVES IN BRIDGEWATER. *CHRIS MILLS*



TWO "HARBOUR LIGHT" MODELS CARL ANDERSON MADE FOR HIS WIFE ROXANNE'S SISTERS FOR CHRISTMAS - ONE IN OTTAWA AND ONE IN SASKATOON. CARL SAYS "THEY AREN'T REPLICAS OF ANYTHING IN PARTICULAR. JUST CUTE NIGHT LIGHTS." AFTER COMPLETING SEVERAL SCALE MODELS, INCLUDING CAPE SABLE AND SAMBRO ISLAND (SEE *THE LIGHTKEEPER*, VOL. 16, NO. 3, OCTOBER/NOVEMBER, 2009 AND VOL. 15, NO. 4, DECEMBER 2008/JANUARY 2009. CARL IS NOW WORKING A SECOND SAMBRO MODEL, AND HE HAS "PLANS FOR A 1/2" TO THE FOOT REPLICA [OF CAPE SABLE] FOR MYSELF (ABOUT 50" TALL). I'M WORKING ON THE LANTERN AND ROTATING BEACON FIRST. THE LANTERN WILL BE 5" IN DIAMETER AND THE DCB-36 BEACON 1-1/2" IN DIAMETER." *CARL ANDERSON*



"LITTLE LIGHTS" DETAIL. CARL ANDERSON

* * *



THE CAPE JOURIMAIN LIGHTHOUSE IN NEW BRUNSWICK SITS ON A SANDSTONE POINT JUTTING INTO THE NORTHUMBERLAND STRAIT. ESTABLISHED IN 1870, THE LIGHT WAS DE-STAFFED IN THE 1960S AND DECOMMISSIONED IN 1997 WHEN THE NEARBY CONFEDERATION BRIDGE, WHICH LINKS PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND TO NEW BRUNSWICK, WENT INTO OPERATION. THE LIGHTHOUSE IS NOW PART OF THE CAPE JOURIMAIN NATIONAL WILDLIFE AREA. IT IS THREATENED BY NEGLECT AND EROSION. FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE [HTTP://WWW.CAPEJOURIMAIN.CA/ENGLISH/SEE/LIGHTHOUSE/](http://www.capejourimain.ca/english/see/lighthouse/). *CHRIS MILLS*

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 North, NS 1981 wooden lighthouse

Cape Roseway, NS Two dwellings and old fog alarm building

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

Cross Island, NS Keepers houses, fog alarm building, garage, shed

Devils Island, NS Wooden lighthouse and keeper's house

Fisherman's Harbour, NS Wooden lighthouse

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/light-house

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 lightkeeper's house, wireless operator's house at Atlantic Cove. Fog Alarm building at North East light.



Special thanks to Lindsay Hunter, Kathryn Fortin, Nick Lange, Nick Bungay, Matthew Lights, Adam Robinson, Holly White-way, Nicole Greene, Jodie Fitzgerald, Michael Cecchetto and Instructor Doug Lewis & Shawn Connors from the Graphic and Print Production program at NSCC Waterfront Campus for the making of past issues of *The Lightkeeper*

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 June 2010 issue: May 20, 2010.

NSLPS MEMBERSHIP FORM: January 1 - December 31, 2010

___ 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

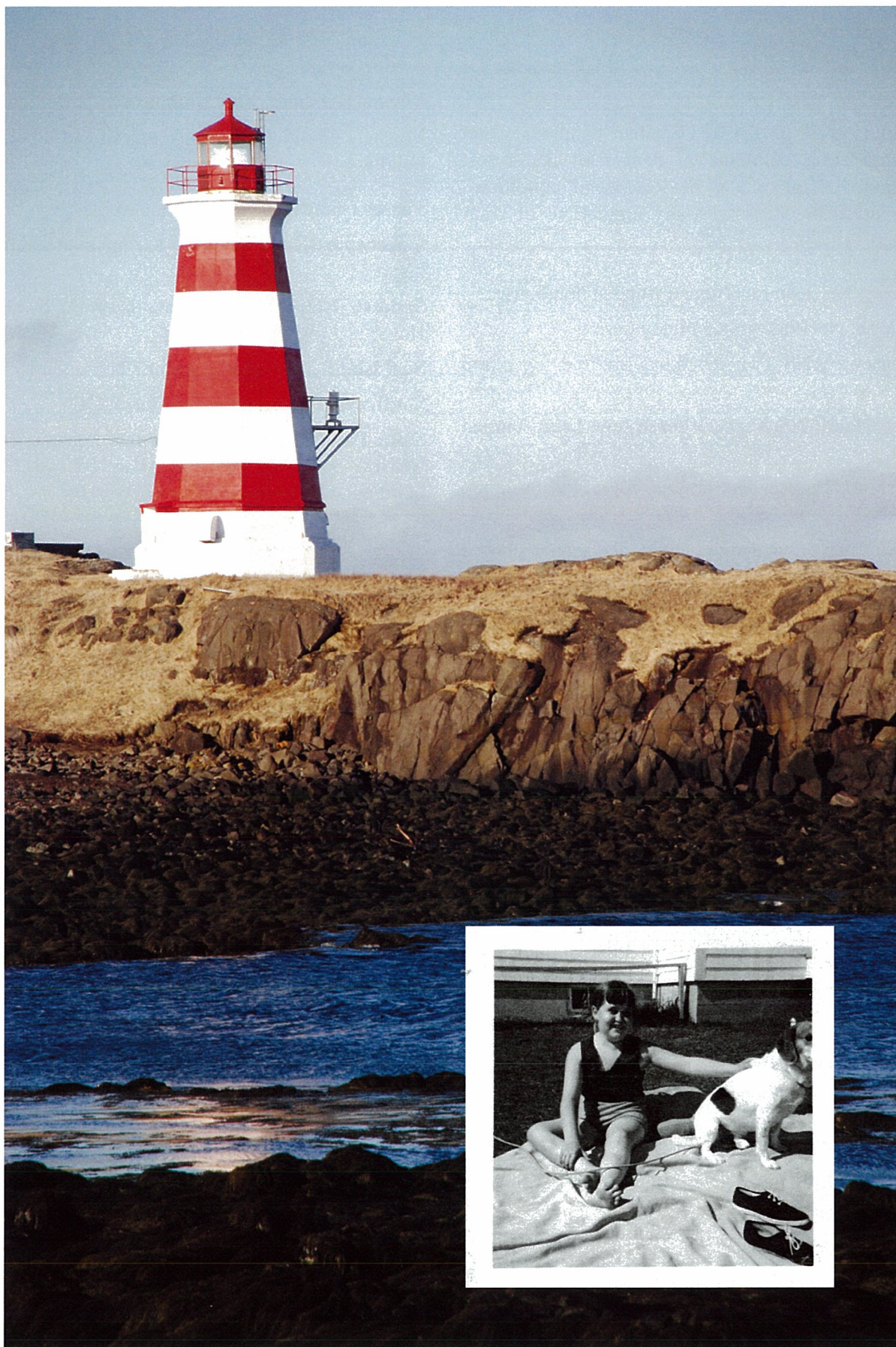
Family - \$25.00 Sustaining - \$50.00

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 BRIER ISLAND LIGHT IN MARCH, 2010. *CHRIS MILLS*

INSET: FAYE LENT AND HER DOG SPOTTY AT WESTERN LIGHT ON BRIER ISLAND IN THE EARLY 1970'S. FAYE'S FATHER DONALD WICKERSON "WICK" LENT HELPED KEEP THE LIGHT IN THE 1960'S AND 70'S. *ANNE MILLS*