

# The Lightkeeper

# CANADA'S LIGHTS DECLARED SURPLUS



Sambro Island 1758

























he 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.

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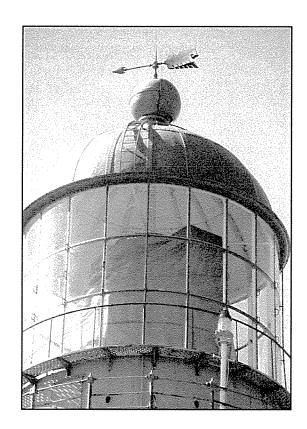
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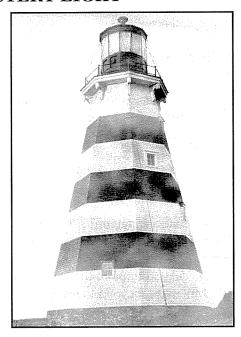
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**Cover:** All photos by Chris Mills except middle row second and fourth from left, by Josette d'Entremont



A TINY ACRYLIC LENS HAS REPLACED THE MASSIVE HYPER-RADIAL LENS AT CAPE RACE, NEWFOUNDLAND. I WAS NOT ABLE TO FIND OUT WHEN THE LENS WILL BE BACK IN SERVICE. THE KEEPER TOLD ME THE MAIN LIGHT WAS SHUT DOWN BECAUSE OF A MERCURY LEAK." CHRIS MILLS

#### **MYSTERY LIGHT**



NSLPS BOARD MEMBER LEW PERRY WRITES: "THE MYSTERY LIGHT IN THE LAST ISSUE OF *THE LIGHTKEEPER* WAS THE OLD BRIER ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE. BUILT IN 1809 AND DESTROYED BY FIRE IN 1944, IT WAS THE FOURTH LIGHTHOUSE BUILT IN NOVA SCOTIA. (LOUISBOURG IN 1734, SAMBRO IN 1758 AND CAPE ROSEWAY IN 1788.) IN 1857 IT WAS DESCRIBED AS A LARGE OCTAGON BUILDING, PAINTED WHITE. THERE WAS A DWELLING HOUSE FOR THE KEEPER CLOSE TO THE LIGHT, ALSO A SMALL STORE. THE KEEPER WAS JOHN SUTHERN, WHO HAD BEEN THE KEEPER SINCE 1820."



Where is this mystery light? 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

# 2010 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: A FOGGY WELCOME

Joanne MacCormack

The old familiar and haunting sound of a foghorn welcomed about 45 people to the AGM of the NS Lighthouse Preservation Society on April 28. This has become a tradition at the AGM and is a welcome sound to all those who love the sea.

During the meeting, mention was made of the success of the CD in Jim Duthie's memory, "Sambro Beside The Sea". Congratulations to the folks in Sambro who worked hard to make his music more widely known, and thanks also for the boost to our bottom line, in return for our initial small investment.

The coveted Craig Harding Award, which began in 2001, went to the Five Islands Lighthouse Preservation Society this year. Gloria Lewis accepted the award for the society and gave a heartfelt talk about the light, and the effort that it has taken to preserve it through the years. Gloria's daughter was married in the lighthouse, and it has had to be moved four times to preserve it. The Pugsley family moved it, and the land it is presently on was donated by Gertrude Jenkins. The municipality of Colchester paid for everything. Congratulations to all.

The evening's entertainment was a captivating talk on pirates, buccaneers and privateers of the Atlantic by Dan Conlin, a past president of the NSLPS, and currently curator of marine history at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic. Dan has written a book entitled Pirates of the Atlantic and he regaled everyone with true tales of robbery, murder and mayhem off the Canadian East Coast - far more extensive than anyone had realized. His account of fearless and ruthless Bart Roberts, Blackbeard, and the loathsome Ned Low, kept people keenly interested. Dan's book is available in local bookstores for anyone interested in this savage period of our maritime history.

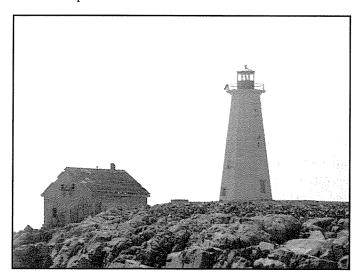
#### ON THE CHOPPING BLOCK

Chris Mills

The headline on the CBC News website said it all: "976 Lighthouses Declared Surplus." It was Wednesday, June 9th, shortly after the Canadian government had quietly announced that it was getting out of the lighthouse business.

The news caught the nation off-guard. Media coverage went on for days – and included interviews with preservationists, fishermen, heritage advocates, the federal fisheries minister, and many others.

The announcement came as a kick in the guts to the individuals, local groups and politicians who have worked for a decade to bring a national lighthouse protection act into being. That act received senate approval in 2009, and came into full force on May 29th this year. Now, as NSLPS president Barry MacDonald says, it seems the Lighthouse Protection Act has just become a "dressed-up divestiture document".



Cape Roseway has been abandoned since 1986. *Josette* D'Entremont

Of the 976 lights declared surplus, almost 500 are active lights. (The 51 lights in Newfoundland, New Brunswick and British Columbia still staffed by resident lightkeepers, are not surplus). According to the DFO website, these towers "could be replaced with simpler structures whose operation and maintenance would be more cost-effective."

Fair enough. But how does a country all-of-a-sudden turn its back on the very foundation of safe navigation? Since 1733, and for more than two centuries, lighthouses were part of the front-line defence against tempest and darkness. As our nation grew to become more than just a British Colony, hundreds of lighthouses provided a chain of light and a network of safety for vessels on our east and west coasts, and across the Canadian Great Lakes.

By the 1960s, the use of radar had begun to erode reliance on basic light and sound signals once so essential to marine navigation. But lighthouses and their keepers continued to provide a safety service, through weather observations, search and rescue, and by just being there.

De-staffing in the 1970s and 80s reduced the number of sites with keepers to just a few dozen. The issue of maintenance of historically significant towers and lightstation buildings then came to the fore. Who would repair and paint these far-flung structures?

Fortunately, some accessible lights have been taken over by community groups. A handful are operated by Parks Canada. But for every lighthouse that has a fresh

coat of paint and a smiling summer student to act as interpreter, there are a dozen that sit mouldering and neglected on remote islands and headlands.

#### Lights on the line

Under the government's new plan, it is now up to individuals, community-based groups and municipalities to take over surplus lighthouses. The procedure involves petitioning Parks Canada. Any group which petitions successfully will then have to assume maintenance costs for "their" lighthouse.

It's problematic enough to maintain a small wooden harbour light. What about the 72'-high Sambro Island light, with its massive wood-sheathed stone walls? It reportedly cost \$50,000 to paint the structure in 2008. That cost would likely be beyond the means of a grassroots group.

What of Gannet Rock, New Brunswick? This massive black and white-striped tower south of New Brunswick is one of the only wooden, wave-washed lighthouses in the world. It has weathered time and tide since 1831, but now sits rotting and abandoned, except for its solar-powered light and fog horn.

What of Cape Sable, Nova Scotia? This is one of only two lighthouses across Nova Scotia with full FHBRO classification. The 101' concrete tower is crumbling and hasn't been painted in years.

In these times of fiscal restraint, it's probably not fair to expect the federal government to pay for the restoration and maintenance of every lighthouse across this country. At the same time, dumping these historic lights on the public, and expecting local groups to be able to keep them painted and repaired, is not realistic.

The provinces also have a role to play in this unfolding story. So far, Nova Scotia has had no involvement with lighthouses, other than to capitalize on their romance and beauty as part of its tourism marketing campaign. It's time to put some money behind the use of our coastal icons as a way of reeling people in to experience our sea-girt province. Provinces, municipalities and local groups must work in tandem with the federal government to protect, promote and preserve our lighthouses.

## People speak out

Public reaction to the recent federal announcement, and its subsequent media coverage, has been varied. Comments on the CBC website included those of support:

"I feel it's a disgrace to our country in having these lighthouse declared surplus...I'm sure if the gov-

ernment can spend \$1 billion on security for the G8-G20 summit being held in Ottawa...surely we can afford the upkeep of these beautiful lighthouses through our land."

And lack of support:

"Lighthouses are like film cameras. They served us well in their day but new technology had made them cumbersome, expensive, and pretty much useless."

On-line readers of the Halifax *Chronicle Herald* had similar comments:

"Historical icons are nice, but there comes a time when prudence must dominate. Would you rather spend those millions of dollars on obsolete lighthouses, now replaced with radar and GPS, or have those millions spent on medical research or the like."

Another reader wrote:

"The conservatives once again are showing their disdain for Atlantic Canada. They can waste money on themselves...but one of this regions greatest attractions (is) mere surplus..."

#### The feds must remain engaged

Although the Department of Fisheries and Oceans say it is not in the business of heritage, there is a place for heritage in the federal mandate. How else would the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa receive costly renovations to maintain their historic exteriors? How else would Parks Canada maintain lighthouses at Point-au-Pere, Fisgard, and Cape Spear? How else would our country maintain and develop iconic sites such as Signal Hill, the Fortress of Louisbourg, and Fort Anne, as well as Province House in Charlottetown? These sites are all crucial to an understanding of our collective history.

Canada needs its lighthouses on a number of levels – for the safety of those vessels which still look for a light or listen for a horn; for history, as part of the network of navigational aids that helped the commerce of this massive country grow; for tourism – many provinces are destinations for people who come either specifically or incidentally to see lighthouses. To offload our nation's lighthouses is to turn our collective back on our safety and our heritage. We as Canadians cannot allow this to happen.

Ed's Note: If you are concerned about the plight of Nova Scotia's lighthouses, and those across the country, the NSLPS urges you to contact your local member of parliament to express your concerns.



# Submitted to the *Chronicle Herald* and Nova Scotia Premier Darrell Dexter

Jim Lovett, Gilbert Cove and District Historical Society

Dear Editor:

The recent uproar over the Feds' latest attempt at divestiture of lighthouses is another sad commentary on the Maritime dependence on government largesse. Perhaps Stephen Harper was right with his pronouncement on our "culture of defeat". Come on people, this is a golden opportunity for the citizens who care about our heritage lighthouses to seize them from an uncaring government, declare them heritage sites, and take the initiative to restore and preserve these maritime icons for future generations.

Surely the business community of the Peggy's Cove area, which has profited handsomely from their lighthouse, can scrape up \$650 per year for adequate liability insurance, and the cost of a paint job every five years. Rent from the Post Office (which until recently operated from the bttom floor of the lighthouse *-Ed.*) would cover those costs. There is no grass to mow, no soil to remediate, and no taxes to pay. Why should tax-payers be responsible for funding?

Back in 1982, people of our tiny rural community led by one concerned citizen, Ernie Morrissey, who recently died at age 95, signed up 50 people at \$3 each to form the Gilbert Cove & District Historical Society with one goal in mind - to take control and preserve our last remaining symbol of a great legacy of shipbuilding and seafaring, the Gilbert's Cove Lighthouse. First lit in 1904, it had been abandoned by the federal government and nearly destroyed by vandals.

Today it stands proud on Gilbert Point having been lovingly restored to the original blueprint and in pristine condition, receiving more than 10,000 visitors per year. In the early years, government grants helped finance student guides but in recent years the Lighthouse has become completely self financed with a small surplus on hand. We now have 300 paid memberships at \$5 per year, and receive donations, but the primary source of income is from the sale of unique crafts supplied by 35 local artisans.

The lighthouse once housed a light keeper, William "Willie Jane" Melanson, his wife and five children. Today there are a Gift Shop and Tea Room, museum displays, and you can climb to the tower and touch the original 7th order fixed red light with Fresnel lens. The Annual Lighthouse Family Picnic in July and the Haunted Halloween Night for more than 100 little visitors gives to the community, which in turn instills more local pride and

ownership in the property. It was designated a Provincial Heritage Property in 1991 and today we call it the "Greatest Little Lighthouse in Canada"!

Any other community can do the same with their lighthouses. It takes dedication from a few individuals to instill pride in the effort and when the community buys into the project, success has been achieved. Title to the Gilbert's Cove Lighthouse was simply passed from the Federal to the Provincial Government. A year to year lease was drawn up for which the society pays \$1 per year plus tax - which will increase to 15 cents this year - which is a win-win situation for Provincial taxpayers!

The Province has to be nagged on occasion to send an annual invoice but we now know that this light-house belongs to the community and will remain a public property, not only as a treasured piece of our heritage but also ensuring continued public access to the shores of Saint Mary's Bay.

#### **NEWS AND VIEWS**

### **Cape Forchu Welcomes Summer Season**

Denise Nickerson, Operations Manager, Cape Forchu

The Cape Forchu Lightstation opened for the season on Sunday, May 30<sup>th</sup> at 11:00am. This season we will be adding a few more items to our menu, including whole steamed lobster, steamed clams and mussels, all served with drawn butter. Also new this year, a garden salad, creamed lobster and a menu for the kids. Got a sweet tooth? Momma G is going to prepare the best "homemade" cheesecake daily! We will also be serving breakfast every Sunday from 8:30am to 9:00am, starting Sunday, June 6<sup>th</sup>.

Come see us this summer and try our new items along with our signature cold lobster sandwich and bread pudding topped with warm caramel sauce and more. Picnic baskets & boxed lunches are available if you prefer to sit outside on the picnic tables and listen to the surf. We also have wireless internet available on site!!! For the second year, the Cape Forchu Light will be a C@P site.

#### **Chebucto Head Gate Remains Closed**

Dominique Gusset of the Chebucto Head Lighthouse Society reports that the proposed opening of the gate blocking vehicle access to Chebucto Head, has been delayed indefinitely. Dominique says DFO will require a formal agreement with the CHLS, instead of dealing directly with Perry Smith, the former gate-keeper.

Dominique says DFO has stressed that "it is not part of their mandate to provide public access to their sites, and in order for them to assist us in providing that access, we would have to enter into a formal license agreement for the property (as we had in the past), and carry the liability insurance, regardless of whether the property has a building on it or not."

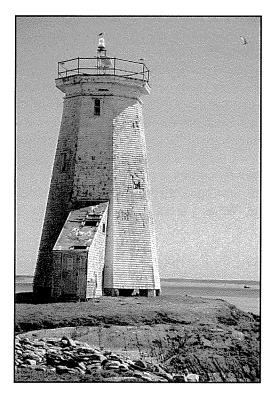
The CHLS no longer carries liability insurance for the site, and has no plans to develop the site, following the loss of the old keepers house to a suspicious fire in 2004. The society simply wants the site protected, with continued public access.

That's where the issue stands at the moment. Now that the federal Lighthouse Protection Act has come into effect (along with the concurrent "dumping" of all Canadian lighthouses on the public sector), it could be some time before the issue of public access to Chebucto Head is resolved.

Ed's Note: In mid-June, someone cut the lock off the gate. As of June 23rd, the gate was still open.

#### **Devil's Island**

The outlook appears grim for the stalwart Devil's Island lighthouse and keeper's house. The light has been dark for more than a year, "temporarily discontinued" until repairs are made to its reportedly unstable lan-



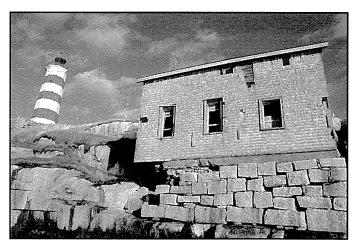
DEVIL'S ISLAND IN MAY, 2010. CHRIS MILLS

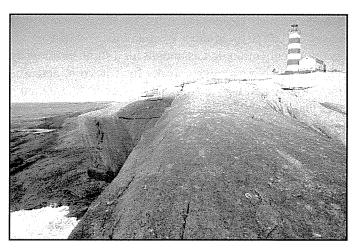
tern deck. Coast Guard has suggested the 133-year-old wooden tower be replaced with a steel structure, but so far, this has not been done.

The privately owned keeper's house is on its last legs. Strong easterly winds earlier this year stripped the entire eastern side of the structure, leaving rooms exposed like those in a doll's house. Only immediate and very expensive intervention can save this dwelling. Unfortunately, years of neglect, and hammering by the elements will soon result on a pile of broken timbers at the site.



The old keeper's house on Devil's Island probably won't last another winter season. *Chris Mills* 



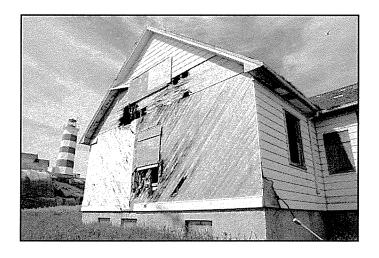


#### Sambro Beside The Sea

The folks at "From The Heart", whose CD "Sambro Beside The Sea" continues to sell well, have now donated a total of \$5,975 to the NSLPS. Proceeds from this excellent CD, in memory of artist and performer Jim Duthie, have now reached \$18,000. From the Heart has split the remaining two thirds of the proceeds between Saint James United Church in Sambro, and the Canadian Cancer Society. The NSLPS would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to "From The Heart" for their continued support of our efforts to preserve and protect Nova Scotia's lighthouses.

## Sou'wester Days

Leslie Harnish reports plans are now underway for another fun-packed edition of Sambro Sou'wester Days. The proposed dates are August 13-15. Excursions to Sambro Island are planned as part of the celebration.



SAMBRO ISLAND IN LATE SPRING, 2010. CHRIS MILLS

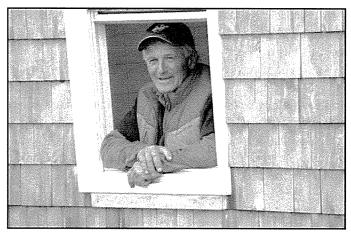
## No Light Job: Arnold d'Eon Moves Lightkeepers' Homes

Josette d'Entremont and Chris Mills

Arnold' d'Eon is a man who doesn't let a little sea water get in the way of moving a house off an island or two. Since the late 1980s, this lobster fisherman, plumber, farmer and general renaissance man from Pubnico Head has moved two surplus keepers' houses ashore from light-stations in south west Nova Scotia. When NSLPS member Josette d'Entremont asked Arnold why he liked to move lightkeeper's houses, he replied simply "I like preserving and doing different things!"

Josette says Arnold's latest house "came from Cape St. Mary's (Arnold lives in the one from Ile Rouge, also known as Whitehead Island – that house is now in Pubnico Head). The Cape St. Mary's house was moved in 2003 to Middle West Pubnico, where it sat awaiting renovation. It was bought for a summer home by a man from Norway, who works for Chevron, and was finally ready and was moved on October 10th 2009, on a huge barge in the water along with another small house (moved twice before!) to be used for a shed.

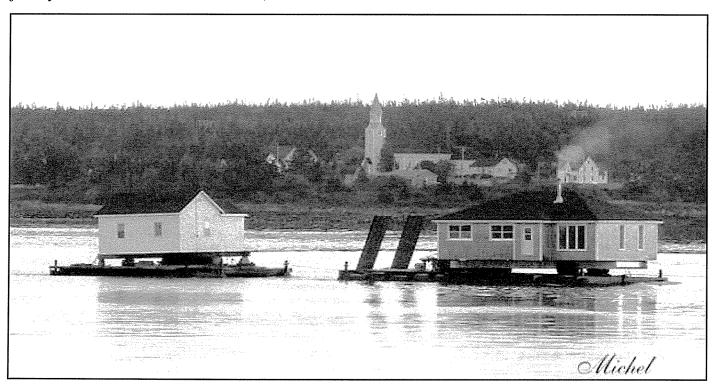
"The journey of these two houses took a few weeks before they reached their final destination on Canoe Island, just off Abbott's Harbour. The day of arrival on Canoe Island was November 3rd, 2009. The journey started from Middle West Pubnico, crossed Pub-



Arnold d'Eon: House-mover extraordinaire! *Michel and Mary Ella d'Entremont* 



Whitehead Island when it was still staffed, in the 1980s. Courtesy Josette d'Entremont



The former keeper's house from Cape Saint Mary's on the move in 2009. Note smoke coming from the chimney! *Michel and Mary Ella d'Entremont* 

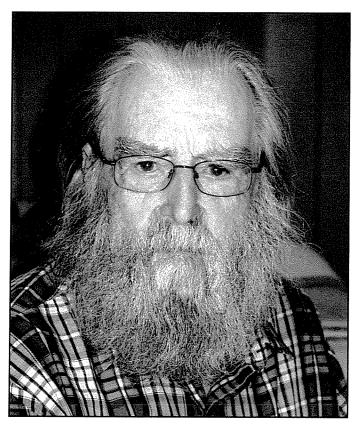
nico Harbour between East and West Pubnico, around St. Ann Point (the tip of the West Pubnico peninsula where the wind farm is now located), to Lobster Bay, passing Ile Rouge Lighthouse, between Abbott's Harbor and White Head Island. Then it ran into a bit of weather trouble, and sat at Abbott's Harbor on the barge for about 3 weeks for repair. Canoe Island is slightly more than 1 km north/west from Abbott's Harbour, where the houses are now resting at their new location.

#### **FAREWELL**

Harvey Leonce Huskins

We are sad to report the passing of retired light-keeper Leonce Huskins. Beginning in the early 1940s, Harvey kept the lights at Little Hope Island, Spectacle Island, and Battery Point. Leonce was a man happy in his element, and along with his wife Marion, he raised a family on the lights. (See *The Lightkeeper*, Vol.16, No. 3, Oct/Nov 2009.) His experiences with rogue waves, lightning, acetylene fog guns and vessels aground were all part of the life of the lightkeeper in an era when there were no satellites to comfortably guide mariners to safe harbour.

Leonce passed away in Lunenburg on May 12. Our sincere condolences to his wife Marion, daughter Rebecca, and son Robin.



LEONCE HUSKINS IN 2009. CHRIS MILLS

# LIGHTHOUSES OF THE IRISH LOOP

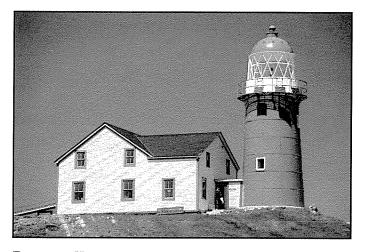
Chris Mills

In June, I travelled with my family to St. John's, Newfoundland. We explored the eastern half of the Avalon Peninsula, stopping in at several lighthouses along the way. Although the bulk of Newfoundland's lights have been de-staffed, about 20 still have keepers. Other sites have been turned into tourist destinations, as at Ferryland Head, where you can enjoy a gourmet picnic on the barrens below the lighthouse. Further south, the massive landfall light at Cape Race, near Trepassey, has been temporarily shut down due to a mercury leak, according to the lightkeeper I spoke with.

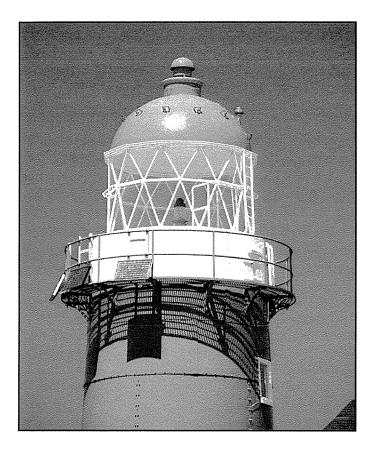
Newfoundland has some of the most dramatic and dangerous coastline in Canada, and its lights are enduring symbols of safety and security.



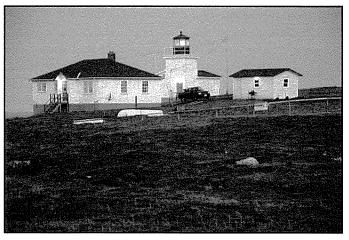
The Imperial government built Cape Pine in 1851. The 50-foot cast iron tower stands more than 300 feet above sea level at the southern end of the Avalon Peninsula. Although de-staffed today, the station is in tip-top condition. Chris Mills



FERRYLAND HEAD IS A CAST-IRON TOWER WITH AN ATTACHED KEEP-ERS HOUSE. DE-STAFFED IN 1970, THE STATION SAT ABANDONED UNTIL A LOCAL GROUP RESTORED THE HOUSE. IT IS NOW A POPULAR DESTINA-TION FOR TOURISTS, WHO PURCHASE PICNIC LUNCHES PREPARED IN THE HOUSE. CHRIS MILLS

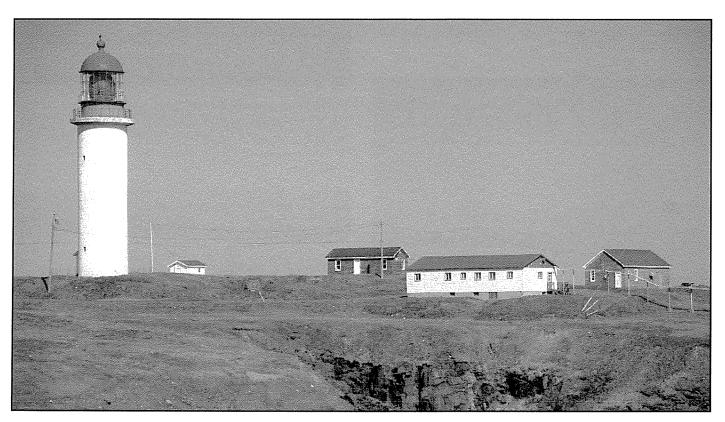


The immaculate cast iron lighthouse at Ferryland Head. Chris Mills



Powles Head guards the entrance to the harbour at Trepassey. According to the server in the hotel where we stayed, lightkeeper Tom Corrigan still lives at the site, where he and his wife raised a large family. *Chris Mills* 

\* \* \*



The Cape Race lighthouse is one of Canada's premier lighstations. In 1912 it played an important role during the Titanic disaster, when radio operator's at the station received the distress call and alerted other vessels of the sinking. Today, there is a small museum at the site, along the with the current keeper's house, fog horn, and three abandoned buildings. *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.

\*Please note that as of the end of May, 2010, ALL Canadian lighthouses, aside from those staffed by resident keepers, or those maintained by Parks Canada, municipalities, or community groups, are now on the Doomsday List.

Bear River, NS Decommissioned wooden lighthouse Cape North, NS 1981 wooden lighthouse (demolished in May 2010)

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

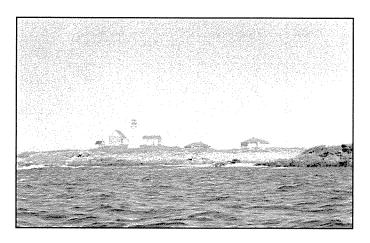
**Queensport**(Rook Island),NS Combined dwelling/light-house

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

Seal Island, NS Radio operator's house, barn

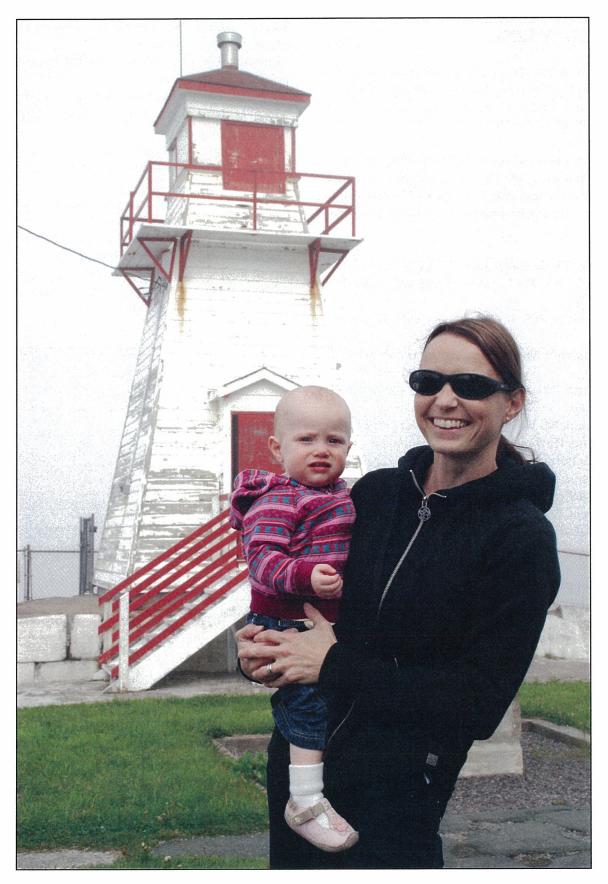
Southwest Point, Anticosti Island, QC

Saint Paul's Island, NS Southwest lightkeeper's house, wireless operator's house at Atlantic Cove. Fog Alarm building at North East light.



CAPE BRETON'S GUYON ISLAND IN 2002. THE STATION HAS BEEN ABANDONED SINCE THE COAST GUARD DE-STAFFED IT IN 1986. CLAUDE MACLEOD

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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	



Lighthouse people: Nicole Power and her daughter at Fort Amherst, Saint John's, Newfoundland. Nicole and her husband live in one of the two keeper's houses at Fort Amherst, where her husband's family kept the light until it was de-staffed in 1982. The station has recently been re-staffed, but its keepers do not live on site. *Chris Mills*