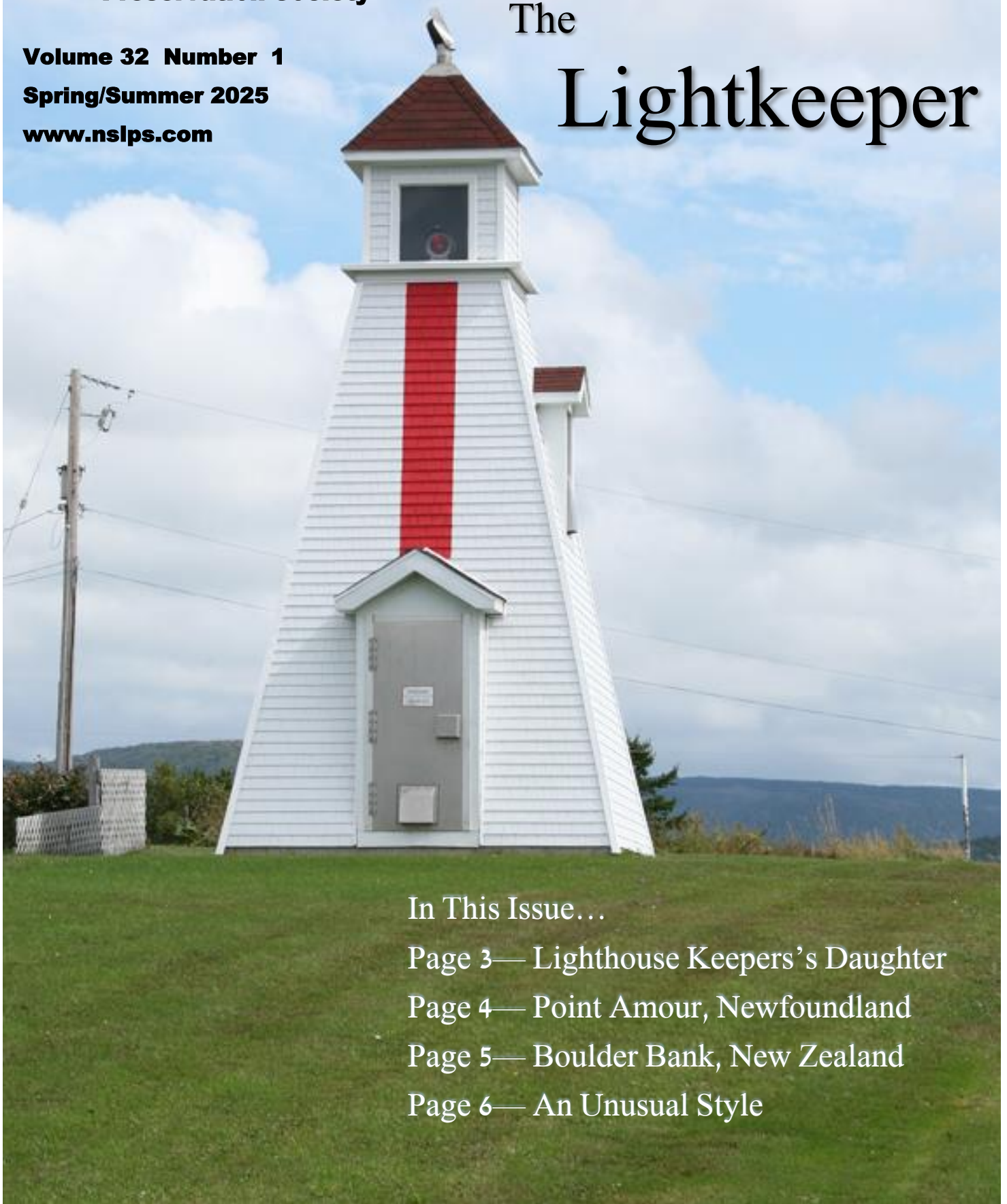


**The Nova Scotia Lighthouse
Preservation Society**

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The Lightkeeper



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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 the 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.

Cover Photo

Cheticamp Range east side Cabot Trail 1950's

Credit: Richard McGuiness

Welcome New Members

Anna Fiander

Taylor Heisler

Liam Raaflaub-Bencharsky

Dean Robertson



Membership News!

Community groups supporting their local light houses get a free Affiliate membership.

Contact member.info@nslps.com for more information.

The current membership year runs from April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026 and membership fees must be paid by November 1, 2025. The year you last paid is printed on the newsletter mailing label. For any membership inquiries, please email member.info@nslps.com.

*** Membership fees and donations can now be paid by automatic e-transfer to:

member.info@nslps.com

Please put a reason in the Message field: 2025 fees, donation.

Lighthouse Keeper's Daughter: A memoir from Marie Irma (Lefort) McGuinness

Article and Photos by Richard McGuinness

About a decade before Patsy Lefort became the Cheticamp Island Lighthouse keeper, he was working with [the federal Department of] Transportation to manually activate the Harbour guide lights. I was about 12 years old and we were living in our house on the Cabot Trail Highway. This was opposite the north end of the island.

On occasion, I would be given the task of walking up the field and throwing the switch to activate the guide light. I had nine siblings, so they would be there to handle that task when called if Dad was busy.

In 1968 I was married in Cheticamp. I then moved to the Boston area and resided there with my husband. Later that year, my father, Patsy Lefort competed for an opening to be Lighthouse Keeper [on Cheticamp Island] and he was successful. He moved to the house

on the island with his younger children and wife Yvonne. The family would remain there for two decades. He retired when the light went automatic, and he returned to his house on the mainland.

With our growing family in the States, Cheticamp Lighthouse would become our family annual vacation destination. With our three children growing up, this had become a great experience which they have never forgotten. Initially, we all had to get used to the fog horn, but it did become routine.

Since Cheticamp Island is connected to the mainland by a causeway, the house of Patsy and Yvonne Lefort was a wonderful welcoming visit for the many relatives and friends from Cheticamp and beyond. There were so many kitchen parties over the years that it surely touched hundreds of residents from town. Plenty of music and a whole lot of card games was the rule of life on the island. Also, we cannot forget the herds of cows and sheep that grazed all around the island as part of a farmer's co-op.

It is all gone today, but it will be remembered by the people with the help of your Society.



Patsy and Yvonne Lefort in 1968



The Lefort Kids

This picture was taken in 1967. The five youngest children of Patsy and Yvonne Lefort. They are (left to right) David; Eric; Albertine; Roland and Angus. They moved to the Lighthouse in 1968 and would grow up there.



Point Amour Lighthouse, Labrador

Article and Photo by Golnaz Karimi

The Point Amour Lighthouse, also called *Phare de Point Amour*, is located near L'Anse-Amour on the south coast of Labrador and stands as a monumental beacon in Canada's maritime history. Completed in 1857 and first illuminated in 1858, this towering structure reaches a height of 33 meters (109 feet), making it the tallest lighthouse in Atlantic Canada and the second tallest in the nation.

Constructed from local limestone, it features a tapered limestone and brick shaft capped by a stepped and flared cornice, upon which rests the gallery and lantern. Its design reflects the architectural style of the mid-19th century "Imperial Towers," a series of lighthouses built to enhance navigation safety for the growing number of transatlantic vessels. Its exceptionally fine workmanship makes it an outstanding example of its type.

By the mid-1800s, the Strait of Belle Isle had become an increasingly important transatlantic shipping route. However, due to its narrow shape, ice floes, and strong currents, it remained a dangerous passage. To ensure safer navigation, this major coastal light was constructed in 1857. It also served local fishermen and supported communities from L'Anse au Clair to Red Bay. Today, the Point Amour Lighthouse serves not only as a functional aid to navigation, but also as a designated historic site, which it was federally designated under the Heritage Lighthouse Protection Act in 2013.

The lighthouse has an unusually tall, tapered cylindrical form, narrowing from 7.5 metres (24.6 feet) at the base to 2.7 metres (8.9 feet) at the cornice. This traditional design not only adds visual elegance but also enhances structural stability. The tapered shape reduces wind resistance and supports the massive weight of the lantern room at the top. Inside, a spiral staircase of 132 steps winds its way upward, offering both access and a symbolic journey through maritime history. For added stability, the stairs are anchored into the thick stone walls.

Three years after it was completed, oak planks were added to the exterior firebrick walls to serve as a nailing surface for cedar shingles, which completely covered the tower to help protect it from the harsh climate. The exterior is painted white, with a single bold black horizontal band used as a daytime visual aid for sailors, helping the structure stand out against fog, snow, and ice.

The top is crowned with a red lantern dome, a traditional colour chosen for visibility and

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identification. Inside is the original Fresnel lens, a revolutionary 19th-century invention that focused light into a powerful beam visible for miles. This significantly improved the reach and reliability of the beacon, essential for ships navigating the ice-filled straits. Before automation, the lighthouse was also equipped with manual fog signals and various mechanical devices to alert mariners during poor visibility.

Attached to the lighthouse is a one-and-a-half-story building that housed the keepers and their families. This dwelling, also built of stone, features traditional pitched roofing and wood-framed windows. Other heritage structures on site contribute to the historic character of the station, including former assistant keepers' dwellings, the former fog alarm/radio beacon building, the current fog horn equipment building, and various storage sheds.

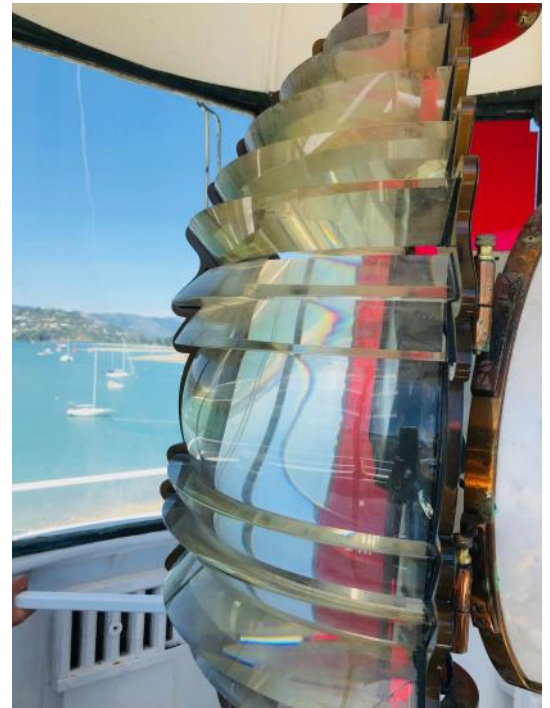
Set on gently sloping, open terrain near steep limestone cliffs, the tower is highly prominent due to its height. Its overall scale, design, and materials harmonize with the remote coastal landscape and define the visual character of the area. The lighthouse continues to play a significant role in the lives of Southern Labrador residents, attracting approximately 6,000 visitors each summer.

Sources: <https://www.historicplaces.ca/> <http://www.pointamourlighthouse.ca/>

Boulder Bank Lighthouse, Nelson, New Zealand

Article and Photos by Denyse Contrasty

Do you want to climb to the top?" asked the skipper of the Nelson Ferry holding up the key to the Boulder Bank Lighthouse. He didn't have to ask twice as my daughter, grandson and I headed down the boat ramp onto a shingle beach. A short walk brought us to a tall, white, cast-iron, octagonal tower with a red lantern standing 18.3 metre (60 ft) high.



Boulder Bank Fresnel's lens



Boulder Bank cast-iron interior

Boulder Bank Lighthouse was erected in 1862 and was the second lighthouse to shine in New Zealand, the first being Pencarrow Head Lighthouse at the entrance of Wellington Harbour in 1859. Its cast-iron panels were fired in England and then shipped in sections to New Zealand (NZ) in a journey that took 151 days.

The first lightkeeper stayed only a few months and John Kidson became the second lightkeeper. He would tend the light for the next 30 years and in spite of having a wife and 12 children, a bigger and more suitable house for the family wasn't built until 1875! Like many Canadian lightkeepers, the Boulder Bank lightkeeper had extra duties that included the signaling of tides using a system of flags run up a pole called a flagstaff in NZ.

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We went up the outside five stairs, unlocked the door and entered the lighthouse. On the wall opposite the door was a stand of three acetylene gas cylinders that was the reason for the lighthouse being demanned and automated in 1915. That's very early compared to Canadian lighthouses! After reading the information panels on the ground level, we climbed up a circular staircase of 65 steps to the top where my daughter who always had a head for heights went outside onto the gallery deck for a better view.

Today you can see the original 4th order Fresnel lens with an electrical lamp in its centre. Some of the lantern windows are fitted with translucent red panels that make the lighthouse a sector light. In the past ship captains were to anchor and wait for a harbour pilot as soon as they could see a red light shining from the top of the lighthouse. The light was actually extinguished from February 1942 to May 1943 in fear of a Japanese invasion.

Finally in 1982 the lighthouse was decommissioned as the growing city of Nelson in the background generated such light pollution that the light in the lantern was hardly visible and was replaced by a modern aid to navigation powered by electricity. Still it was to act as a backup to its successor in case an earthquake disrupted the power grid around Nelson and extinguished the modern aid.

So why was the key so freely given to three strangers on the ferry? You cannot sue in New Zealand and therefore there is no need to carry high-priced liability insurance as there is in Canada. Just think of all the lighthouses we could visit in Canada if this were the case!



Stokes Bay Rear Range top section

An Unusual Style - Stokes Bay Rear Range, Ontario

Article and photos by Denyse Contrasty

Behind the Bruce County Museum and Cultural Centre in Southampton, Ontario, there is a white, wooden, pepper-shaker style lighthouse mounted on short steel L-beams. This lighthouse once acted as the rear beacon of the Stokes Bay Range located on the western side of Bruce Peninsula facing Lake Huron and was fastened on top of a tall, skeletal, steel tower strengthened with steel cross ties. While an unusual style of lighthouse, there were several built in the early 1900s and each province with lighthouses had at least one example. In Nova Scotia that was the Pugwash Lighthouse on the Northumberland Strait that was built in 1960 and demolished in 2023.

Being higher than the trees and buildings in the vicinity meant the light from the lantern room could be seen at a great distance. The Stokes Bay Lighthouse stood 18.6 m (61 ft) tall and in ideal conditions, mariners as far away as 20.9 km (13 miles) could steer their way home. However there was a downside to being the tallest object around – lightning strikes! No doubt the lighthouse had a lightning rod to deal with these in order to prevent its destruction by fire.

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Given the fact that a lightkeeper had to climb the equivalent of two or three stories up a series of steel ladders to a hatch in the bottom of the lighthouse, these types of lighthouses tended to be seasonal lights lit in May and extinguished in December. Still it must have been challenging to climb up the exposed ladders to light the lamp when high winds blew or rain pelted down. That didn't stop Norman McDonald, a World War I veteran who had lost his left leg fighting overseas, from becoming the longest employed keeper of the range lights, looking after them from 1920 to 1956.

In 2009 Bruce Country decided to save the lighthouse component of the Stokes Bay Rear Range after the Canadian Coast Guard stated they were replacing the entire structure with a modern aid. The lighthouse was lowered to the ground by helicopter and from there trucked to its current site behind the Bruce County Museum and Cultural Centre where it can be viewed close up from Victoria Day in May to Thanksgiving in October.



Stokes Bay Rear Range tie cross bracing brackets



E-newsletters starting April 1 2026!

Our members have spoken! Starting April 1 2026, our newsletter, "The Lightkeeper", will be switched from a printed format to a PDF file to permit delivery by email. Canadian members who pay \$10CA in addition to their 2026 membership fee will continue receiving printed copies by mail. Similarly for American members, it will be necessary to pay \$15CA in addition to their 2026 membership fee to have printed copies mailed to the US.

Thank you to all who promptly replied and a second thanks to those who asked us to start sending them e-newsletters starting with the 2025 Spring-Summer edition.

(Graphics in this issue provided by Vecteezy.com)



Boulder Bank Lighthouse, New Zealand
Credit: Carly St-Laurent