The Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society
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www.nslps.com

The Lightkeeper

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Annual General Meeting
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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.

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Welcome New Members

Sandra Fisher
Samantha Holland
Keepers of Baccaro Light Association

Membership News!

We're excited to announce that community groups supporting their local lighthouses will now have their affiliate fees waived.

Contact ask.us@nslps.com for more information.

Dominion Lighthouse Depot: The Nova Scotia Connection

By: Denyse Contrasty

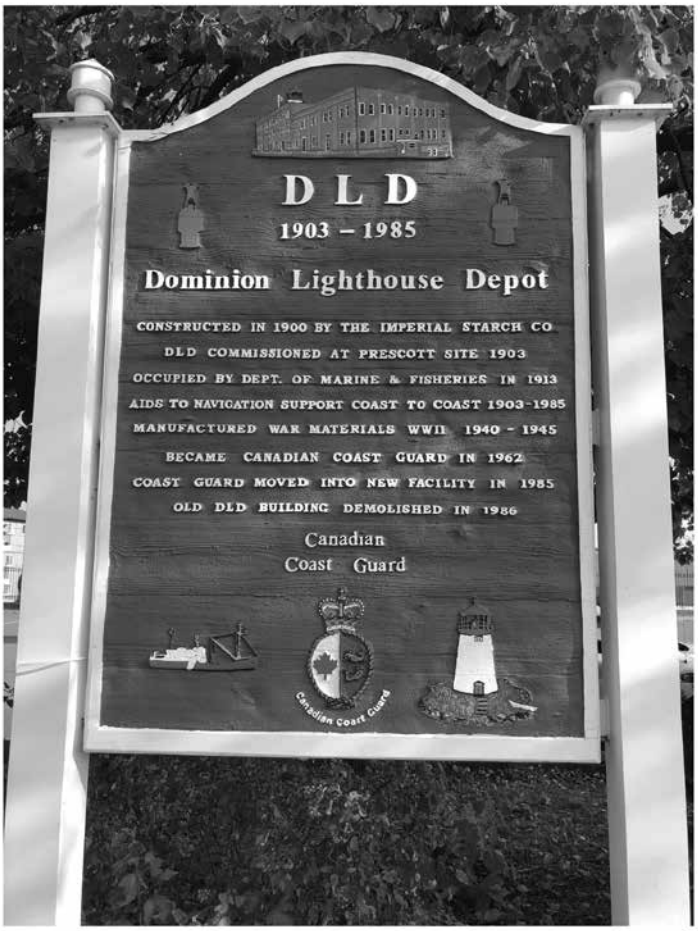
There is an eye-catching marine blue sign posted on the edge of the parking lot of the Canadian Coast Guard station in Prescott, Ontario. Decorated with colourful icons of the Coast Guard emblem: a ship, a lighthouse and two buoys, it commemorates the site and summarises the history of the Dominion Lighthouse Depot (DLD) that stood where the parking lot is today.

Prior to 1903, Canada was very dependent on foreign sources to supply marine related items for navigational aids. However, William P. Anderson, an energetic civil engineer who was appointed Superintendent of Lighthouses in 1900, was determined to change that situation. In 1903 the federal government bought the Imperial Starch Company building on the waterfront in Prescott to house workshops to build navigational aids such as buoys and foghorns and to install a new feature on the rooftop – a lighthouse lantern with a fifth order Fresnel lens. This lantern would be used to train future lightkeepers.

Fires being a common risk with wooden lighthouses, Anderson started a construction campaign to replace them with either a reinforced concrete or a prefabricated cast-iron tower. The St. Paul's Island South Point lighthouse was one of the latter, manufactured in Prescott, transported to the island by train and boat, and assembled on the island in December 1915. This lighthouse was replaced by a fibreglass tower in 1964 and the former lighthouse is standing beside the St Paul Island Museum in Dingwall, Cape Breton NS. Both museum and lighthouse are open for visitors from June to September.

Another Anderson initiative was to upgrade those coastal lighthouses using reflector-type lighting to state-of-the-art Fresnel lenses. Another NS connection is the lantern on top of the lighthouse in Louisbourg, Cape Breton NS. A fire destroyed the second lighthouse on this site in 1922 and it was decided to erect a reinforced concrete tower instead of a wooden one similar to the one that burnt down. DLD had in its inventory a lantern with an 4th order Fresnel lens and this lantern was installed on the new tower and lit in 1924. The lantern has since been replaced with a LED Beacon.

There are more DLD-NS connections and one of them is currently sitting in the Out of the Fog Museum located in Guysborough County, 5 minutes from the Queensport Lighthouse. There is a Dual Mirror beacon on display that was manufactured in Prescott, Ontario. The action of



rotating the mirror housing made the fixed light in the centre appear to "flash" when viewed from a distance and the speed of the rotation determined the frequency of the "flash". There are other DLD manufactured items at the museum that is open from June to September and the staff can print a list of these items for interested visitors.

To date there are no records of NS lightkeepers training inside the lantern on top of the DLD building in Prescott. This may have been restricted to lightkeepers stationed around the Great Lakes and up the St Lawrence River to Montréal as the logistics and expense of bringing their Maritime counterparts to Prescott might have been seen as prohibitive.

In spite of DLD making money during WWII ($2 million in 1945) with the manufacturing of depth charges, casings

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The Kingsport Lighthouse

By: Howard Eaton

Kingsport is a quiet little village located on the shores of the Minas Basin in Kings County Nova Scotia. By road, one can make the short drive of 5 kilometres from Canning to Kingsport on highway 221.

As you enter the village you can see the Basin and a number of quaint homes and some historical residences. The pier allows visitors to see a good portion of the Minas Basin and in the summer, enjoy an ice cream or fried foods.

A number of items are displayed around the canteen which explain some of the rich history of Kingsport and are well worth the read.

Kingsport was settled by New England Planters in 176, shortly after the expulsion of the Acadian people from the area. It did not take long to realize that the lands around Kingsport was well suited to the growing of produce and with its proximity to deep water, to the shipping of these goods to lands far away.

Kingsport also became a ship building and repair centre. The fact that the average tide rise and fall 40 feet made it a perfect spot to “dry dock” a ship for repairs. As business grew both in shipbuilding and shipping, a large wharf was constructed.

The importance of Kingsport in the province’s transportation system was further increased with the opening of the Cornwallis Valley Railway late in 1890. Freight then was brought from St. John by boat, unloaded at Kingsport and carried by the railway to Kentville. Local farmers also shipped apples and potatoes by train. It was a busy line, and Kingsport, with a Wye for turning the locomotives, was its terminus. There was passenger service between Kingsport and Kentville twice each day. Monday through Friday, and three times on Saturdays.

By the end of the 19th century, Kingsport had become a busy place. For a while it was the point of departure for the Parrsboro packets. It was a regular stop for ships in the Minus Basin service. At one time Kingsport had three hotels, a mill and a shipyard and a flourishing shipping trade. In those days, Kingsport was popular as a holiday resort. People came during the summer months to spend time at their cottages along the bank and at the "bluff".

From 1869 to 1893, 15 ships were built in Kingsport. They include:

- Barteau 1022 tons
- Kentigen 728 tons
- Katadin 1160 tons
- Kedron 1160 tons
- Karoo 1930 tons
- Kings County 2061 tons
- Canada 2137 tons
- Harvest Queen 2044 tons; and
- the last ship to be built in Kingsport, the Skoda of 658 tons in 1893.

The Kings County was the second largest ship built in Canada, being eclipsed only by the W.D. Lawrence which was built in Maitland NS -2495 tons.

With all this activity in the area - Canning was also a player in the shipping and ship building business, navigation aids were needed in the area to safely guide ships to and from the somewhat unique ports (water levels went from 40 feet to 0 with the rise and fall of the tides)

Subsequently in the early 1900’s a lighthouse was

built on the end of the freight shed of Kingsport wharf. The light guided ships into the port and also assisted in the navigation of shipping to the mouth of the Habitant River which serviced Canning.

By this period in time, the port saw diminished use, ship building and repair stopped and the port was used mostly by the packet service and fishing boats. In the autumn of 1947 a fire destroyed the lighthouse. It was not replaced. In 1954 Hurricane Edna severally damaged the wharf and another in the early 70's completed the work.

Today a new rock pier stands where the wooden wharf once stood. Remains of the old wharf can be seen at low tide on the west side of the pier. A light bacon stands sentinel at the end of the pier to guide fisher folk back to Kingsport after dark.

Dominion Lighthouse Depot: The Nova Scotia Connection continued...

and firing targets, within 30 years the DLD building was judged obsolete and not worth saving. A new Coast Guard facility was built in 1985 and the old DLD building was demolished in 1986 to become a parking lot!

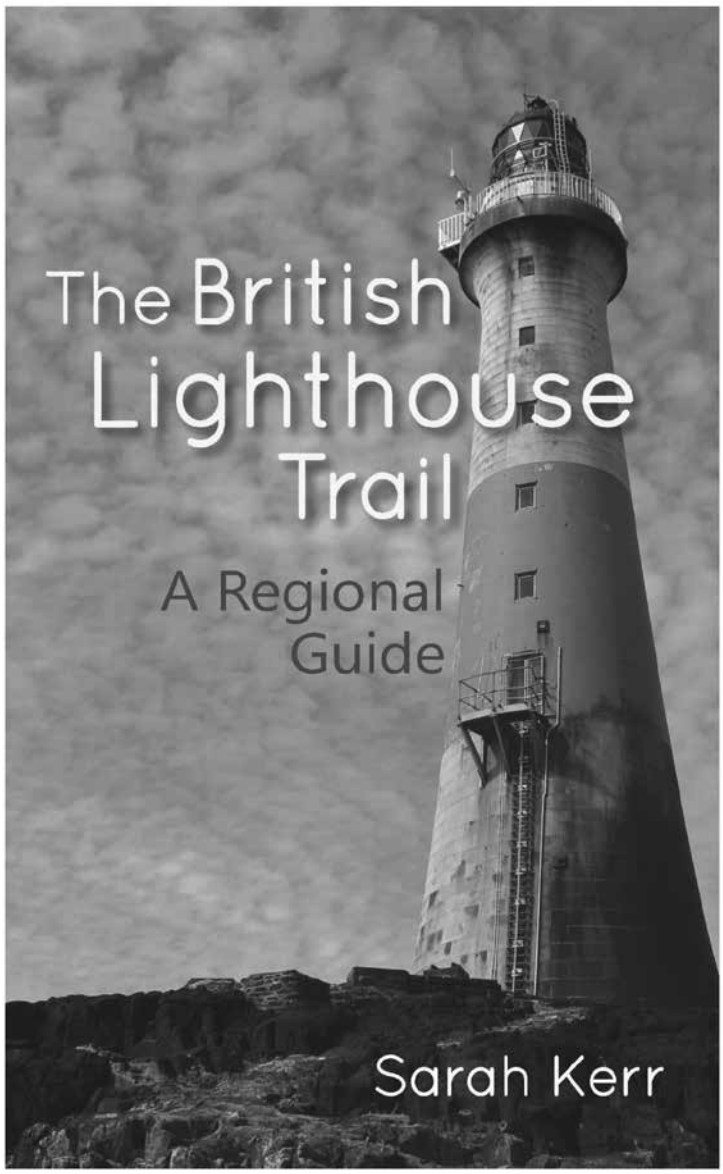
Thankfully the Rotary Club in Prescott obtained the lantern on top of the DLD building to cap the lighthouse tower they had built further east on the Prescott waterfront in 1989. For many years, you could climb the tower to view the waterfront and across St Lawrence River to Ogdensburg, New York US. It is now owned by the town of Prescott and is open June to August as a visitors' centre and ice cream parlour on the ground floor.

Do any of our readers have DLD items in their possession? Please share them by posting a photo of the item and brief history on our Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/pg/NSLPS1993/posts/. Don't have a Facebook page? Just send an email with photo and history to social.media@nslps.com and we will post for you.

Light Reading: A Book Review

By Chris Mills

The British Lighthouse Trail: A Regional Guide. Sarah Kerr. Whittles Publishing. Dunbeath. Scotland. 302 pp. Photographs. Maps. 2019



As lighthouses reach the end of their mandated lives as aids to navigation, many are now receiving new purpose as historical monuments and tourist attractions. This shift in use has led to lighthouses becoming a much sough-after commodity by everyone from amateur pharologists, to coastal day-trippers looking to capture a bit of the romance of the sea.

A few years ago, author Sarah Kerr decided she'd like to tour mainland lighthouses in Scotland and England. Kerr set out with what she thought was a comprehensive list of lighthouses. It didn't take long for her to realize that there were many off-the-beaten path sites she'd missed. It was time to fill in the blanks, and thus was born The British Lighthouse Trail.

Across the pond in North America, dedicated lighthouse guide books have provided how-to-get-to and historical information on hundreds of lighthouses for more than a decade. However, it's only now that a comprehensive guide to British lights is available to folk wishing to explore the stunning variety of guiding lights located on the rugged shores of Scotland, England, Wales, The Isle of Man, and Northern Ireland.

The task was undoubtedly an eye-opener for Kerr, and reading what she has assembled will likely open eyes for those who think they might have a decent working knowledge of the variety and locations of lighthouses around the British Isles. A quick flip through the book reveals a staggering number - more than 600 - and seemingly infinite variations in design and location.

Before jumping head-first into the lists, Kerr lays some useful groundwork, beginning with: "What Is A Lighthouse"? On the surface, it may seem an odd question. However, given the broad variety of structures used to support lights used for navigation, it's actually quite a reasonable query. Kerr's criteria is simple: The structure must have been built to "exhibit a light for the purpose of aiding marine navigation," and it must allow at least one person inside the structure.

With that established, Kerr provides directions to using the guide; she explains abbreviations, light characteristics (i.e. the flash pattern of each light), map grid references for people using detailed maps and GPS devices, and salient information about tower and site access.

Lights are broken down into regions within each country, and each region section begins with a map showing the general location of the lights listed. From Shetland, in the far north of Scotland, to the Channel Islands in the south, Kerr lists 25 regions and a whopping 612 lighthouses. From the impossibly precarious Muckle Flugga, perched atop a wave-pounded

wedge of rock north of Unst, to tiny Sorel Point (barely taller than a human being) on the north coast of Jersey, the variety of lighthouses is mind-boggling.

There are soaring stone towers, open skeletal structures, wave-washed rock lights, ugly slab-sided beacons, dumpy concrete cones, graceful gothic sentries, boxy blinkers, and castle-like guardians.

At Scotland's Isle of May, the lighthouse resembles a stately home. At Great Orme's Head in Wales, the lighthouse is a massive lantern, firmly anchored not at the top, but at the base, of a brooding limestone castle. At Ferris Point in Northern Ireland, the lighthouse looks more like an airport control tower, topped with a spinning radar scanner.

Along with hundreds of colour photographs throughout the book, Kerr includes a short written description of each lighthouse, including its designer, date established, height and other features. There's a spot where you can tick off that you've visited the light on such-and-such a date. Kerr also sets down written instruction for access to each site and notes of interest such as for Fair Island South (the final lighthouse to be de-staffed in Scotland, in 1998) and that the old lens from the Coquet Island lighthouse, near Amble, can now be viewed on display at the Souter Lighthouse, near Whitburn.

It's important to add that it's not possible to safely and easily access every lighthouse in Britain, but every lighthouse is visible, whether up close and personally, or through binoculars from the comfort of a hired car.

The British Lighthouse Trail represents a mammoth task, and it is a credit to Kerr's adventurous spirit and tenacity that the book is now available to anyone who might wish to explore Britain's guiding lights. A brief history of each lighthouse would have been the icing on the cake, but it also would have added to Kerr's workload, and to the size and affordability of the book. A coil-bound edition might be easier to use in the car and in the field, as well. However, The British Lighthouse Trail is overall an invaluable guide to those wishing to locate and explore the plethora of guiding lights of all shapes and sizes around the British Isles.

NOVA SCOTIA
LIGHTHOUSE
PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Mark Your Calendar!

Our
Annual General Meeting
will be held on
Wednesday, April 22, 2020, 7:00 pm
at the
Maritime Museum of the Atlantic.

Coffin Island Lighthouse

By: Maggie Jane Spray

History of a Light – Coffin Island Lighthouse
Located off the shore of Liverpool in Liverpool Bay, the Coffin Island was the fifth lighthouse built in Nova Scotia. The first stone of the foundation was laid in 1811 by Simeon Perkins, a prominent town official.

Looking back at the 1998 Vol. 5, No. 3 edition of the Lightkeeper, Dan Conlin shares a quote from Perkins' diary, written one month before the laying of the foundation; "… they have dug for the foundation… there is a kind of moss and turf on the surface then about two feet deep comes to a hard pan… which I think will be good to build the foundation upon – it is about 90 feet from the sea wall… at present the distance is very well but there may be some danger (as the wood is cut away) of the sea wearing away the land in time."

At the time of original construction until 1913, the lighthouse stood on the south-tip of the mile-long island.

When the lighthouse was first constructed, the island was called Bear Island. However, it was later renamed to Coffin Island in honour of Peleg Coffin, one of the founders of the town.
When it was constructed, it had the latest in lighthouse technology. The Coffin Island Lighthouse had the first revolving or catoptric light in Nova Scotia. The light revolved every two minutes and could be seen up to 15 miles away.

It's unclear who the first lightkeeper was, until 1817 where James McLeod's name appears in written records for unpaid wages. McLeod was a fisherman and carpenter by trade, and later joined the navy. However, while aboard the Wentworth in 1800, a British frigate the HMS La Unity forcibly recruited 8 members of the Wentworth, including McLeod. Judging that he would likely perish aboard the ship, McLeod jumped overboard off the coast of Venezuela. He evaded the Royal Navy, eventually making his return to Liverpool.

Tragically, in 1913 the original tower was struck by lightning, and the subsequent fire destroyed the original structure. One year later, a new 54' white octagonal structure was erected. James Edward Wentzell went on to man the light for 47 years.

In our Vol. 11, No. 3 newsletter in 2004, the situation for the lighthouse was dire. Ken Wilkinson and other supporters of the lighthouse said "…A couple more storms, and we're going to have a real mess on our hands." The concrete at the base of the tower was beginning to deteriorate and the wall was starting to deteriorate.

By 2006 the lighthouse was becoming dangerously close to being lost. Thanks to the work of the Coffin Island Society, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans opted to replace the tower with a fiberglass structure as opposed to a skeleton tower.

This light can be viewed today from Moose Harbour, Fort Point Lighthouse Park and less visibly from the Beach Meadows lookoff on Brooklyn Shore Road.