



The Lightkeeper

In this issue:

Bon Portage Light

Page 3

Lighthouse Activity Booklet

Page 5

Peter Island Restoration

Page 6

Schafner Point Sign Installation Project

Page 7

The Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society

Volume 32 Number 2

Fall / Winter 2025-26

www.nslps.com

NSLPS Executive 2025/2026

President/Website/Social Media

Denyse Contrasty

Past President

Joe Flemming

Treasurer/Social Media

Matthew Burke

Secretary

Shauna MacDonald

Membership

Cathy McKenzie

Newsletter

Colin O'Flynn

Members at Large

Jean Daigle
Golnaz Karimi

The Lightkeeper is published by the
NOVA SCOTIA LIGHTHOUSE
PRESERVATION SOCIETY
c/o Maritime Museum of the Atlantic
1675 Lower Water Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 1S3
askus@nslps.com

Welcome New Members

Grace Bortolin

Phillip d'Entremont

Michele McKenzie

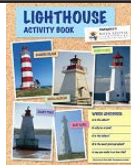
Medea Minnich

Cover Photo

Peter Island Lighthouse, September 2025 (before repairs). Credit: Colin O'Flynn

NSLPS Activity & News

Here are a few things we've been up to since our last newsletter. To read news more frequently, visit our NSLPS Facebook page and website.



Board Secretary Cathy MacKenzie presented the NSLPS Lighthouse Activity Booklet to children who were thrilled to learn about lighthouses on page 5.



NSLPS sponsored interpretative sign was installed at Schafner Point Lighthouse. Read about it on page 7.



Denyse (President) and board members Colin and Golnaz participated in the annual National Trust Conference held in Halifax Oct 23-25.



The NSLPS Board traveled to Pictou to hold an in-person Board meeting and visited the Lighthouse Centre holding the Rip Irwin Collection.



Board Member Colin O'Flynn spent a week working on Peter Island. Read about his experience on page 6.

Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society

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.

Membership 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.
For example: 2025 fees, donation.



Bon Portage Light

Article by Christopher TB Murphy

In 1938, my parents were married in Barrington, Nova Scotia. Both were American citizens and educators (my mother a teacher and my father a college English professor), but my mother had deep ties to Nova Scotia. In 1946, soon after I was born, they bought a beat-up old house on Bear Point and established friendships with their neighbors, one of whom was Anne Richardson Wickens, daughter of Morrill and Evelyn Richardson. Morrill was the lighthouse keeper on Bon Portage Island, and Evelyn was a writer (*We Bought An Island*, *We Keep A Light*, and others). It did not take long for the Richardsons and the Murphys to become friends and Anne's husband would frequently take our family out to visit the Richardsons. My father's birthday was in August, and we would often celebrate it on Bon Portage. Evelyn would bake a cake and decorate it with Sweet William flowers.



The lighthouse as seen in the 1950s. Photograph courtesy Nova Scotia Archives and Records, original photo by J.W. McKinley.

Morrill was the kind of person who could “make something from nothing.” The crew on the “government boat”

often gave him cast-off machinery parts and he crafted many time-saving machines and tools from them. He had a rig at the skids that allowed him to use the power takeoff on his small tractor to pull their custom-made boat up the skids and onto a Lazy Susan that then turned the boat around and readied it for the next launch. (The boat was built by Don Mahaney, son of Sidney Mahaney, Master Dory builder and builder of over 10,000 Shelburne style Dorys.)



Left to right: Laure (Dickie) Wickens, Susan Murphy, Christopher Murphy, David Murphy, Harriet D Murphy.
Photo Credit: Author

Morrill was wonderful with children. When I was 12, he allowed me to drive the tractor from the skids to the light with the trailer full of people and luggage attached. He put it in second gear, set the throttle low, and walked beside me to make sure I made no mistakes. The machine looked so large to my 12-year-old eyes, but when I saw it in later life it looked so

small. To be trusted by the light keeper to drive what, to me, was such a huge machine filled me with joy. And as I grew older, he gave me even more responsibility, including driving the tractor unsupervised.

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

Meals on Bon Portage were always special. The Richardsons had an extensive garden, and they had sheep and a cow. One wonderful supper included baby carrots, small potatoes, homemade brown bread, fresh churned butter, fresh local blueberries and fresh whipped cream. I doubt I have had a better meal since.

For me, the high point of the trip was sleeping in the light, which was attached to the Richardsons' residence. I slept in a small room halfway up the stairs to the light. If I had climbed just a bit higher, I would have been in the room with the light. If the foghorn was blowing, the sound came through the walls. For a kid, it was magical. As I slept, I was aware that someone was always on duty to make sure the light and the horn were functioning properly. (The lighthouse I slept in is no longer there. That building was pushed into the sea and a concrete structure replaced it. The light and horn are now automatic.)



Boilers of the SS Express. Photo Credit: Author

At the time, communication was primitive. Morrill connected with the mainland by radio at fixed times each day. He had a simple radio with vacuum tubes and had to be ready at precisely the right time to make contact. I still remember watching the whole process and listening to him file his requests for supplies.

The building that housed the foghorn machinery fascinated me. It was a concrete structure housing three small diesel engines that powered generators and compressors for the diaphone horn on the outside of the building. (I always thought the sound was impressive until I sat in front of the horn at the Cape Sable light). The building was spotless. Everything was neat and orderly, and Morrill kept the machines in perfect running order. An abiding memory is of fresh gray paint. To this day, when I smell fresh oil-based paint I remember that building.

I still have pictures of the steam boilers of the wreck of the SS Express (lost in 1898), which literally drove into the southern tip of the island near the light. As the years passed, storms pushed the boilers along the shore, and they are now almost rusted away.

It is fitting that the local elementary school is named in honor of Evelyn Richardson. Perhaps her husband's name should have been included. 🏫

Affiliate News: Walton Harbour Lighthouse Moved

Visitors enjoyed this year the new location of the *Walton Harbour Lighthouse* that was moved in Fall 2024 due to the eroding sandstone cliff. Not only does the lighthouse have a new solid foundation but a ramp to permit all visitors to go inside at ground floor level! You can see a timelapse of the move on the Walton Harbour Facebook page. Photo Credit:

Walton Lighthouse Facebook



Lighthouse Activity Booklet: A Big Hit with Children

Article by Alissa Morash

During one summer camp week at Prospect Road community Center, Cathy MacKenzie, who is Membership Officer for the Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society (NSLPS), came to give a brief overview of the 185 past and present lighthouses in Nova Scotia. The children really enjoyed talking about the lighthouses they had already visited such as the nearby and famous Peggy's Point (aka Peggy's Cove) Lighthouse. They were very interested in learning about the lightkeepers and their roles in taking care of the lighthouses. As part of the discussion, the children also learned about the fog horns and how the light in the tops of lighthouses were lit before electricity was used. The children were very engaged when they looked at the pictures of different lighthouses and they also learned how sailors would be able to tell their location based on the shape, colour and height of the lighthouse. They loved taking part in guessing which lighthouse was the oldest, the most photographed, the tallest etc and learning about each one. At the end of the talk with Cathy, the children still had many questions and were very excited that they got to carry out the activities in the handout of the Lighthouse Activity Booklet created by NSLPS. The children loved every minute of their conversations with Cathy, and could not wait to tell their parents at the end of the day. Children love learning the history of their home province, Nova Scotia, and lighthouses are a very key part that is often left out. Both the Prospect Road Community Centre and NSLPS hope that the children and their families will be able to get out to explore more lighthouses in Nova Scotia.



Cathy MacKenzie talks about lighthouses to future NSLPS members. Photo Credit: Author



Recent Social Media Posts

Don't forget to follow us on Facebook/Instagram for new posts on the 5th, 15th and 25th of each month. You can also read these as PDF files on our website without needing a Facebook account.

Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society
 ★ Favorites · 3d · 📌

In England there are "low" and "high" lighthouses and yet we don't describe Nova Scotia lighthouses that way. I suppose the Margaree Harbour Range Lights north of Inve... [See more](#)

66 5 comments 8 shares

Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society
 ★ Favorites · October 26 at 2:18 PM · 📌

What do you do when one lighthouse isn't enough? You build two! In 1853 a tall wooden octagonal lighthouse was built on the southwest end of Devil's Island in the out... [See more](#)

199 15 comments 33 shares

Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society
 ★ Favorites · September 5 · 📌

Boar's Head is the first lighthouse you see when waiting for the ferry to cross Petite Passage from Digby Neck to Long Island. Currently it is sporting a harlequin coa... [See more](#)

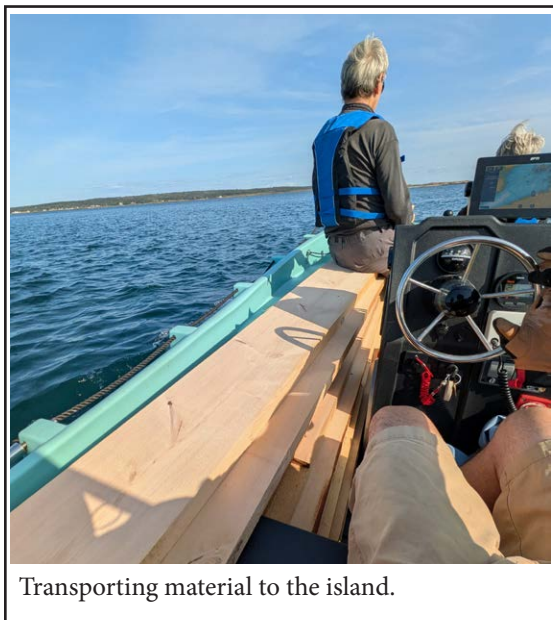
47 17 shares



Peter Island Lighthouse Repairs

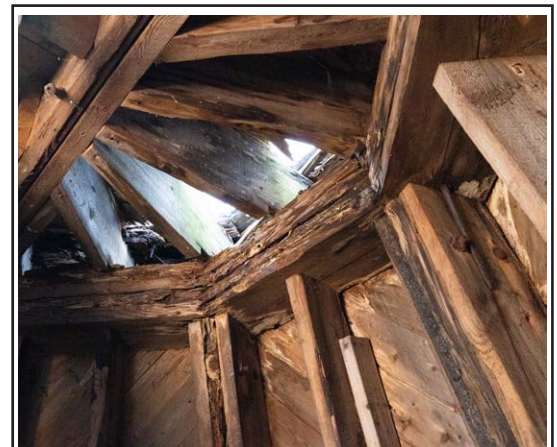
Article and photos by Colin O'Flynn

Peter Island (alternatively called *Peters Island* depending on the source) lighthouse, Located in Grand Passage between Brier and Long Islands, is in desperate need of repair. A community group called the *Save An Island Lighthouse 2* (SAIL2) banded together to build an ambitious plan, which relied on volunteers both local and from further



Transporting material to the island.

afar. Four weeks in September were set aside for actually performing the work, which was focused on structure repairs to stop further rot and shore up the structure itself. This was led by John Schwinghamer, who not only worked out many of these logistics, but also billeted volunteers in his artists' residence, provided his kitchen space to the volunteer chefs who fed everyone, and also spent many long hot hours in the upper portion of the lighthouse contorting himself (and wood beams) into place. I was fortunate enough to participate for the first week of the project, which also included the interesting challenge of piloting a small boat through the very large swings in tides and currents to safely land it on the island to haul the many large wood beams across the beach.



Extensive wood rot in the upper portion of the lighthouse required careful replacement.



Temporary shingle replacement was required for areas with extensive damage, and for areas where access to the wood below was required.

Next year a second round of the project will hopefully finish with the lighthouse looking like new. Keep an eye out on the NSLPS facebook or join the SAIL2 group on Facebook if you'd like an opportunity to join the project. 🏠



Schafner Point Sign Installation Project

Article by Denyse Contrasty, Photos by Crystal Welch



Members of the PRLA are photographed with the newly installed sign in the background.

The Port Royal Lighthouse Association (PRLA) is pleased to announce the installation of an interpretative sign sponsored by our Society at the Schafner Point Lighthouse in October. Using the same template we developed with the Friends of the Margaretsville Lighthouse for their lighthouse in 2023, this sign includes the story of PRLA saving the lighthouse from certain collapse along with its history, list of lightkeepers and light characteristics. Standing to one side of the lighthouse, it can be clearly seen from the road and will encourage the public to stop and learn about the Schafner Point

Lighthouse. Providing interpretative signage at lighthouses where there is currently none, was our Society’s 2nd post Covid initiative. As we do not receive funding from any government level (we have tried!) and must rely on memberships and donations for our initiatives, our Society will not be sponsoring a third sign until 2027. 🏠

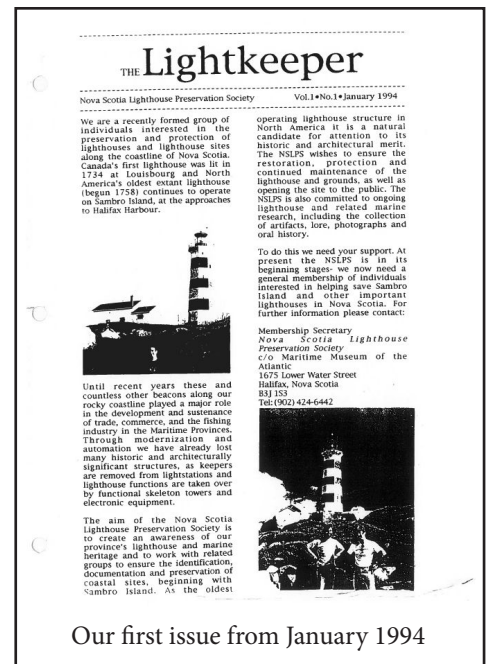


Visitors can now read about the recent and distant history of Schafner Point Lighthouse.

E-Newsletters Starting April 1, 2026

This is the last printed edition of our newsletter, “The Lightkeeper”. Starting in 2026, we will email members a PDF copy. Given the rapid increase in the cost of printing and postage, our Society will use the money we save to invest in initiatives that we believe will direct people to communities supporting their Nova Scotia lighthouses. For members wishing to continue with a printed copy in 2026, you will need to pay an extra \$10 for Canada, \$15 for the USA, \$20 overseas to cover the cost of printing and mailing you a printed copy. See this new option on the enclosed membership form for 2026.

You can always access PDF copies of back issues of our newsletters on our website (<http://nslps.com>), including even our very first issue, shown in it’s entirety in the insert to the the right. 🏠



A Sampling of Lighthouses Seen this Summer



Pointe-au-Père Lighthouse, QC
Photo Credit: Denyse Contrasty



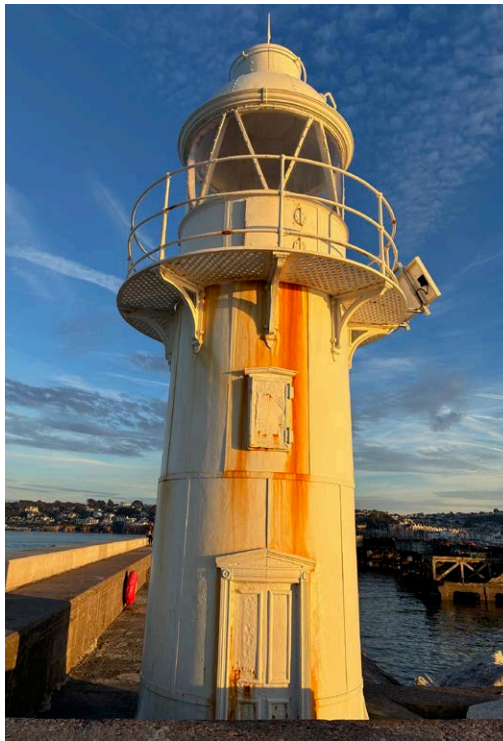
Brier Island Lighthouse, NS
Photo Credit: Colin O'Flynn



Point Prim Lighthouse, PEI
Photo Credit: Colin O'Flynn



Sambro Lighthouse, NS
Photo Credit: Colin O'Flynn



Brixham Harbour Lighthouse, UK
Photo Credit: Denyse Contrasty



Oakville Yacht Squadron, ON
Photo Credit: Denyse Contrasty

Do you have a photo of a lighthouse taken in winter? We would love to put it in our next newsletter! Please send your photo in (medium or large size) to member.info@nslps.com.