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# THE Lightkeeper

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The Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society

Vol. 2, No. 2, April, 1995

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President - Rip Irwin

Secretary/Treasurer - Patsy MacDonald

Vice-President - Graham McBride

Editor, The Lightkeeper - Kathy Brown

2nd Vice-President - Mike Tilley

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**The Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society** is dedicated to the preservation of Nova Scotia's lighthouses. We aim to create an awareness of our province's lighthouses and our marine heritage, and to work with related groups to ensure the identification and preservation of coastal sites. We are committed, as well, to ongoing lighthouse and related marine research, including the collection of artifacts, lore, photographs and oral history. Our first project is the preservation of Sambre Island Lighthouse, at the entrance to Halifax Harbour.

## **Meetings: 7:30 pm Fourth Wednesday of the month**

Meeting Room, Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, 1675 Lower Water Street, Halifax.

**Annual General Meeting 7:30 pm Wed. April. 26. All members urged to attend!**

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## **Welcome!**

A hearty "Welcome aboard!" to the following people who have joined the Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society since 1 January, 1995: Brian Donovan, and Bud Kingsbury, Halifax; Bob Pietsak, Fall River; Yvonne Wanlin, Brampton, Ont.

**Patrons:** Dr. Ron Thomas

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## **News About Sambre**

Rip Irwin has discovered plans for the Gas House at the Coast Guard Base in Dartmouth! He sent copies to Ottawa to get them dated. This will firmly establish the date the building was erected. There is increasing evidence that the building dates back to the installation of new lighting apparatus when the extra height was added to the tower in 1906.

Rip also found out that Sambre Light was evaluated in 1983 by Parks Canada as part of a country-wide assessment of historic sites. He has written the National Historic Sites Directorate in Ottawa to request copies of the information and material accumulated by that survey. We hope that this can be used to speed up the process of designating Sambre Lighthouse as a Registered Federal Heritage Building. At present, the importance of the light is recognized only by an Historic Monuments Board plaque on a cairn in Ketch Harbour. This offers no protection to the building.

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THE NOVA SCOTIA LIGHTHOUSE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

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## Highlights From Recent Meetings

- Membership was 100 as of March 22, 1995.
- Coast Guard authorities have indicated that they are pleased with what we've accomplished so far on Sambro Island. They assure us continued access and their cooperation. NSLPS has requested a lease. We are currently negotiating terms.
- A design for a lapel pin featuring our logo is being refined at the producers.
- Possibilities for grants to help pay for work on the island are being explored.
- Charitable tax status is time consuming to obtain, and will not likely to be granted to a group renting property. Decision made not to apply.
- A fund raising committee under Chair Bill Mont has been set up.
- Mike Tilley canvassed members and there are 23 interested in work on Sambro Island.
- **Nova Lee Excursions was appointed NSLPS official carrier.** Rates for publicly advertised trips to Sambro will be \$10.00 for NSLPS members, and \$20.00 for the public. **The first trip for this year will be for members only.** (See notice.) NSLPS is to look after all arrangements for sponsored trips.
- Information about NSLPS will be included in the *Guide to McNabs Island* being published by the Friends of McNabs, and there will also be an article in Harrowsmith on the Sambro/Ketch Harbour area.

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## *Spirit of the Light*

**A Tribute to the Lighthouses of the Maritimes**

Eptek Centre, Summerside, Prince Edward Island

**Opening Sunday, June 18, 1995**

A folder about this exhibit, the result of years of planning and visits to lighthouses, is enclosed. It will be opened by our president Rip Irwin. Allan Savidant, one of the artists, is a member of NSLPS and has issued a cordial invitation to members to attend the opening. If you can't get to the opening, be sure to visit the exhibit if you are on P.E.I. this summer.

### ***In Search of the Spirit of the Light - Allan Savidant to speak in Halifax!***

**Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, Tues. May 16, 7:30 pm**

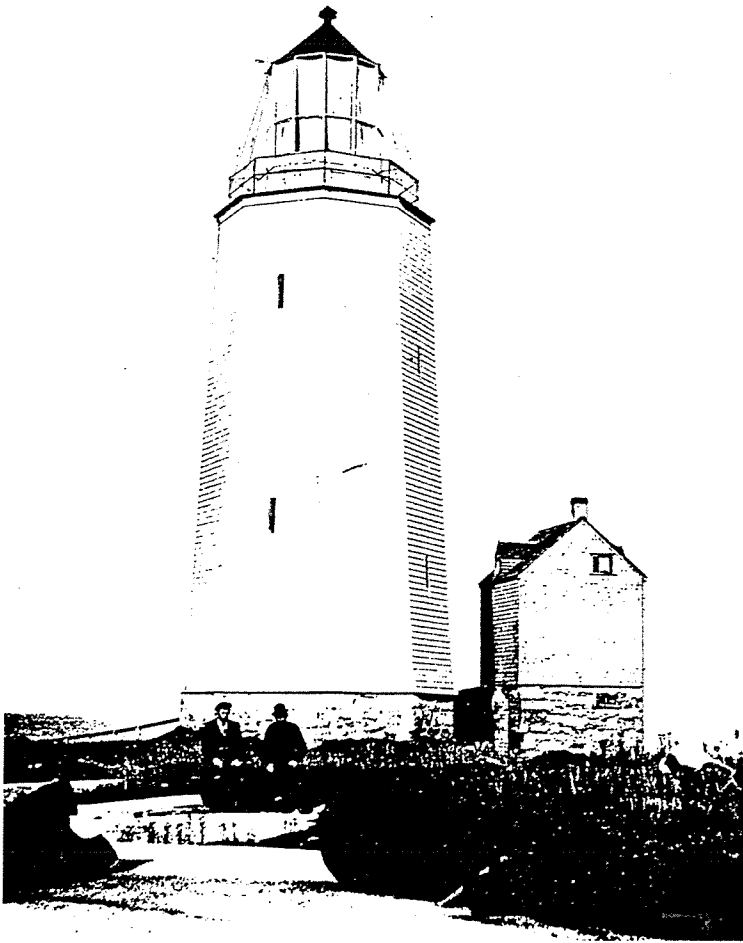
Allan Savidant demonstrated his extensive knowledge and love of lighthouses in a recent talk at the Eptek Centre on P.E. I. Over 90 people enjoyed slides taken from his extensive collection and his fascinating and sometimes humorous account of the adventures of the Denam Artists Group in visiting many Maritime lights as preparation for the *Spirit of the Light* exhibit. Don't miss his talk in Halifax!

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## **Sambro Light - the Early Years**

For the first nine years after the founding of Halifax, no signal marked the hazards surrounding Sambro Island. The massive lump of granite at the entrance to Halifax Harbour is the largest of at least thirty rocks and shoals! Imagine the fear of captains, crews and passengers approaching the harbour during storm or fog! The lookout would strain ears and eyes for signs of breakers. The leadsman would call out the soundings. Everyone aboard knew that by the time the breakers were detected or the depth shoaled it would be too late for the vessel and her crew and passengers. Precious hours and days were spent standing off, waiting for better weather.

The lack of a light was not for want of trying. As early as 1752, the Governor and Council organized a lottery to cover the cost of building a light on "Cape Sambrough," but had no success.



Sambro Light before 22 feet was added to the height of the tower in 1906. The building on the right houses the fog signal equipment.

Finally, on October 2, 1758, the General Assembly of Nova Scotia passed an act to establish a lighthouse on Sambro Outer Island. They appropriated L1,000 from the duties paid on spirituous liquors, and instituted a tax of 6d per ton to be paid by vessels entering the port, except for coasters, fishing vessels and ships of His Majesty's Navy. Freeholders paid a reduced rate of 4d per ton.

Commissioners were appointed and matters were put quickly in hand. The site was chosen, the money voted, and by early November, the shaft of the lighthouse was finished and the lantern was being built. The building was of stone, 60 feet high from the base to the weather vane crowning the lantern. The white fixed light was 115 feet above sea level. This building is, of course, the one we see today on Sambro Island.

The first keeper was Captain Joseph Rous, owner of the island. He was charged with keeping a signal lit on the island until the light was completed, and was keeper until his death in 1769. In 1765, when the Governor and Council decided to farm the lighthouse "to any sufficient person who in will undertake the expence for the Light Duties ," he was the preferred candidate. He

was paid L50 per annum for himself and L25 each for two assistants. Also, rewards were given for the detection of rum smugglers, so he may well have benefitted from this.

Within a few years, word of inefficiency in the operation of the light reached the floor of the Assembly. The wreck of the sloop *Granby*, of Boston, in 1771, with the loss of all hands, blew the situation of the light wide open. Apart from the loss of life, the *Granby* was carrying L3000 to pay the dockyard staff!

Commodore Gambier, Commander in Chief of the Naval Station reported that "the fatal accident happened for want of a light being properly kept in the lighthouse." He noted that H. M. Ships had, on occasion, to fire at the lighthouse in order to make the keepers show a light! Other vessels complained at being forced to pay for a light which "is a great annual expense to the Government and serves no other purpose than the shameful one of putting money in the pockets of a nominee of the Governor's"!

An inquiry found that, indeed, the keeper was appointed by the Governor. He was allowed the duties paid by ships entering the port and procured only the cheapest materials. Fish oil fuelled the light and if it went out and no ships were in sight, it was left out! It must be noted that at this time the lighting method for lighthouses was in its infancy. Burning fish oil was not unusual. Open oil lamps, without reflectors, produced a dim light. The glass in the lanterns smoked up constantly at all times of the year and the vapour from the flame caused misting and icing in cold weather. Keeping the lights lit and as bright as possible was a formidable job.

Finally, Commodore Gambier recommended that the government take over operation of the

Sambro Light. The Naval Store Officer in Halifax was to be in charge. Nothing was done about this, for in 1772, Matthew Pennell was in charge of the light. At that time, fountain lamps with flues to carry off the smoke were installed. After that, there was far less trouble with the darkening of the glass which obscured the light.

Sources: *The Sea Road to Halifax*, Hugh F. Pullen; *The Lighthouse*, Dudley Whitney; *Lighthouses and Lightships*, Lee Chadwick; Rip Irwin, in conversation.

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## Burntcoat Head Lighthouse



The first lighthouse at Burntcoat Head 1858 - 1910  
Photo courtesy Mrs. Grace Morehouse

Burntcoat Head lies on the south side of the entrance to Cobequid Bay. A seemingly minor incident is the source of the name: a farmer's coat caught fire after he left a pipe in his pocket! A lighthouse was built on the head in 1858, and lit in 1859. This first light at Burntcoat was a square wooden tower 50 feet high attached to the end of the wooden lightkeeper's dwelling. Flat wick-type kerosene lamps showed a white fixed light 75 feet above high-water, visible for 13 miles. The five oil lamps, with reflectors, had to be cleaned daily.

A narrow neck of land connected Burntcoat Head to the mainland. Over time, the tides of Fundy eroded this until the Head could only be reached with much difficulty involving a climb up the bank by ladder! Consequently, in 1913, the first light was torn down and some of the timbers used in the construction of a new lighthouse on the mainland.

This second light was a white, square, wooden dwelling, with a red octagonal iron lantern rising from the roof. The lighthouse was 39 feet high from base to vane and the white fixed light was visible from all points of approach for 14 miles. The light was a 4th order lens, i.e. 250mm in focal length. The lighting was a catoptric system: the lamp was backed by a parabolic reflector. The lightsource was a petroleum vapour Argand burner: oil was

vaporized at 37 pounds pressure and burned under an incandescent silk mantle. In 1950, the light was electrified.

This second lighthouse was replaced by a 22 foot skeleton mast, and the building burned by the Department of Transport in 1972. Later, the light on the skeleton mast was discontinued, so there is no navigation marker for the head.

## Lightkeepers, Burntcoat Head

<b>First Lighthouse,</b>	<b>1858 - 1910</b>
Nathan Smith	1859 - 1874
William Faulkner	1874 - 1883
Fed H. Faulkner	Jan-Mar 1884
John Prescott Mosher	1884 - 1898
William Y. Faulkner	1898 - 1913

<b>Second Lighthouse</b>	<b>1913-1972</b>
William Y. Faulkner	1913 - 1916
William Burton Faulkner	1916 (2 mos.)
David Webber	1917 & 1918
W. H. Faulkner	1919 (2 mos.)
William Burton Faulkner	1919 - 1949
Ervin Faulkner	1949 - 1960

The light was automated in 1960.

## Rebuilding the Light



The second Burntcoat Head Lighthouse.  
The replica is of this building.  
Photo courtesy Mrs. Grace Morehouse

Many citizens of Burntcoat Head wished to see the lighthouse standing once again, overlooking the highest tides in the world! In 1992, East Hants Tourism Association submitted a proposal to the Central Nova Tourist Association for development of the Fundy Shore thorough Ecotourism. This was seen as an opportunity to obtain core funding to rebuild the light, but the Still, the citizens of Burntcoat Head continued to urge the re-building of the light and in August, 1993, the ownership of the property was transferred from the Queen to the Municipality of the District of East Hants. On April 29, 1994, Robert Carruthers, MLA for East Hants announced that the Burntcoat Head Project would receive \$37,000.00 through the Co-operation Agreement for Tourism Development. Fundraising in this small community raised more than \$5000.00 to add to the grant!

In July 1994, plans for the 1913 light were obtained from the Coast Guard, and by November the replica of the second Burntcoat Head light was nearly complete! The Nova Scotia Youth

Conservation Corps built footbridges and developed nature trails, trees have been planted, picnic tables installed.. The lighthouse will contain an interpretive centre about the Fundy tides, old lighthouses, and the history of the area. There is a magnificent panoramic view of the Minas Basin from site of the replica lighthouse. You can watch the ebb and flow of the tides, and see the island where the first light as built, and dozens of rock formations. Visitors will have access to the shoreline, but will be warned about the tides! The completion of this project is a magnificent achievement by a small community!

## Grand Opening Celebration

July 1, 1995

Burntcoat Head Park

1:30 pm

Games, supper, variety concert, and dance follow in the village!

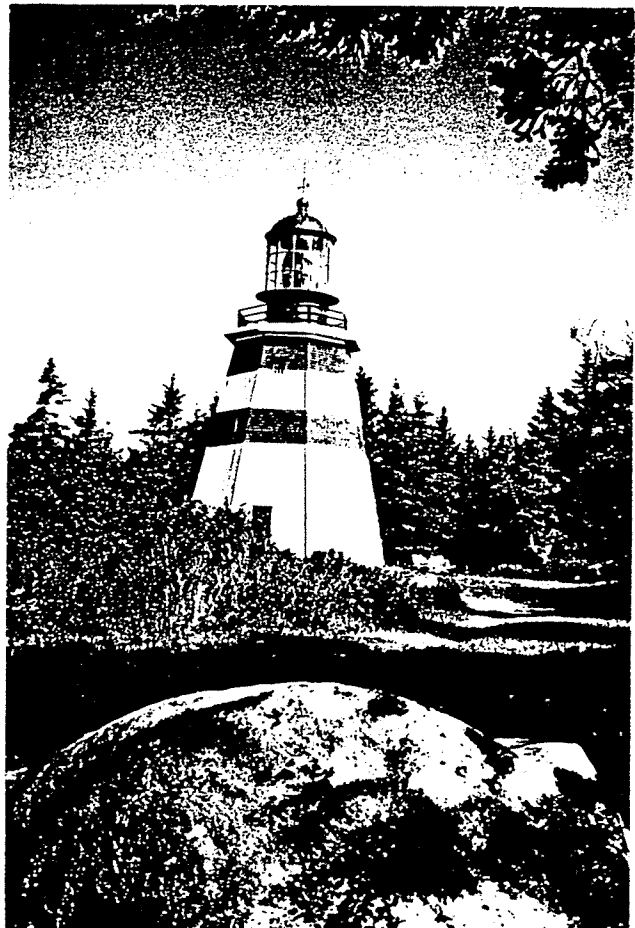
**All members of NSLPS and their friends are cordially invited to come and share the celebration!**

If you can't attend, remember that Burntcoat Head Lighthouse will be open throughout the summer!

## Seal Island Light & Lighthouse Museum



The 67 foot lighthouse on Seal Island showing the new lantern. The tower is the original, built 1830-31.  
Photo courtesy Chris Mills



The Seal Island Lighthouse Museum is a 35 foot high replica of the tower, crowned by the original cast-iron lantern.  
Photo courtesy Kathy Brown

Seal Island lies off the Atlantic coast of Nova Scotia about 20 miles offshore from the village of Clark's Harbour. In 1823, Richard Hichens and his wife Mary, moved from Barrington to Seal Island and established a lifesaving station. Later, they were joined by Edmund Crowell, his wife Jerusha, and John Nickerson. After this lifesaving station was set up, no one perished on the dangerous shoals which surround the island. Prior to this, sailors who survived shipwreck and reached the island faced almost certain death in the harsh environment.

Mary Hichens worked tirelessly to establish a lighthouse on the island. Finally, in 1831 her greatest wish was fulfilled when the light was lit. She and her husband were the first keepers. For most of its history the light was served by members or descendants of the Hichens and Crowell families.

In 1978, a modern beacon was installed. In 1979, the original light and lantern were moved to Barrington through the efforts of the citizens of southwest Nova Scotia. The Cape Sable Historical Society raised funds to build the replica light and on July 1, 1985, the Seal Island Light Museum opened to the public.

The museum displays lighthouse memorabilia, the mechanical system that turned the lens, and especially, the fascinating history of the Cape Sable Light. **The museum will open to the public on June 15.**

Information from the folder about the museum. The light will be covered in detail in a later issue.