



THE Lightkeeper

The Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society

Vol. 3, No. 2, June, 1996

Past President	Rip Irwin	Membership & Treasurer	E. Patricia MacDonald
President	Graham McBride	Recording Sec.	
Vice-President	Ron Thomas	Corresponding Sec.	
2nd Vice-President	E. Patricia MacDonald	Fund Raising	Brian Donovan
Patrons	Rip Irwin	Lightkeeper	E. Patricia MacDonald
	Dr. Ron Thomas		
	Chris Mills		

The **Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society** is dedicated to the preservation of Nova Scotia lighthouses. We aim to create an awareness of our province's lighthouses and of our marine heritage, and to work with related groups to ensure the identification and preservation of coastal sites. Our first project is the preservation of Sambro Island Lighthouse, at the entrance to Halifax Harbour. **Meetings: 7:00 pm Fourth Wednesday of every month**, September to June, Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, 1675 Lower Water Street, Halifax.

New Members

A welcome to the following people who have joined the NSLPS since March, 1996:
Helen Mountenoy, Paul MacDonald, Neils Neilson, Eric Jokinen, Anita Murphy, Alden Wambolt, Patricia Dobbins, C.A. Stromberg, Evelyn Powell, Donald Kohr, Lynn Giacomucci, Judy Swiencki.

Lighthouse News

Report from Abroad
Kathy Brown

It's Happening Everywhere!

A tourist leafing through a small French magazine hardly expects to come across an article about the de-staffing of lighthouses, but that's exactly what I found in late January. "Gardiens de phare" screamed at me in bright red, and "La fin des veilleurs de la mer," in bold black letters. I felt as if I was back in Canada, rather than a guest at the Mas de Vence, a small hotel in a hill town above the Mediterranean.

Roughly translated, the headline in Pâlerin Magazine' read "Lighthouse Keepers: The End of the Old Men of the Sea." It was about the de-staffing of the lighthouse at Pointe de Penmarc'h, south of Brest near the north entrance to the Bay of Biscay, where Yseult met Tristan to die in his arms. The drawing which accompanies this article will give you an idea of the magnitude of the light tower which stands atop a 65 m granite promontory.

The **Lightkeeper** is published quarterly by the *NOVA SCOTIA LIGHTHOUSE PRESERVATION SOCIETY* founded 20 July, 1993 Incorporated 31 August, 1994 c/o Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, 1675 Lower Water Street, Halifax, B3J 1S3 Tel (902) 424-6442, Fax (902) 424-0612. Send news and items for publication to: E. Patricia MacDonald, Editor, **The Lightkeeper**, 6085 Shirley Street, #6, Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3H 2M9.

Pälerin' reporter Violaine Gelly talked to Michel Malgorn, a lightkeeper for 33 years, and keeper at Penmarc'h for twelve. His father and his uncle were lightkeepers, his cousin and his son became keepers, but his grandson does not have the chance to follow in the family footsteps. Said Michel "We are a corporation on the road to disappearance. In a few years, there will no longer be lightkeepers." Until twelve years ago Michel was keeper on isolated offshore lights. He commented that "Computers can tell whether the light has broken down but they are unable to detect the degree of wear on the lighthouse. They don't see the stone disintegrating, or the glass shattered or covered with guano, or the wood which is rotting. When you automate a harbour light you can see these things and make repairs quickly. But on the open ocean the lighthouse keeper is truly useful."

The 260 lightkeepers in France are battling to keep their jobs, but it is a war not so much with people as with restricted budgets. (All too familiar to us in Canada). How are the French authorities managing to de-staff in a country of militant unions? Simply: they don't replace keepers who reach retirement. And they have closed the keepers' training school.



Lighthouse of Eckmühl at Penmarc'h

"First don your office wet suit"

(From an article, by Stephen Hoare, in The Times' of London, England, Wednesday April 24, 1996)

Sara Collins is what is known in England as a facilities manager. She works for a company called Chesterton's and her job is to coordinate inspection visits by surveyors, and plan repair and maintenance for a large group of complex and specialized properties. A visit to one of these recently involved a 20 minute trip out to a remote island off the Northern Irish coast in a rigid inflatable power boat. Fortunately, the sea was calm. Other properties are reached by plane or helicopter.

On behalf of Chesterton's, Collins manages the entire northern regional maintenance for Her Majesty's Coastguard. Although HM Coastguard does not look after the lighthouses, they have a network of operations centres around the coast which coordinate emergency services for the Coastguard and also for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and the Ministry of Defence air-sea rescue helicopters. Collins administers a budget of about ú500,000 (\$1,077,580).

In Canada, this would ring alarm bells - a private company managing GOVERNMENT PROPERTY! Formerly, maintenance and building work was handled through the government Property Services Agency (now dismantled) and the individual Coastguard managers. The budget

was divided between the managers and was not always wisely spent. When discussing the new arrangement, Bob Driver, HM Coastguard's controller for the north east of Scotland commented, "Any time we ask them to do something we get a response immediately which is something we never used to get in the past."

Sometimes "outsourcing" works!

An Epic Lighthouse Event

By Rip Irwin

Have you ever heard the expression "Thought I died and gone to heaven"? Well this is about the best way I can express my sentiments and the pleasure of sharing a common interest with hundreds of other lighthouse enthusiasts at the New England Lighthouse Foundation spring convention in Hyannis, Massachusetts.

This was basically a two day event, May 11 and 12, although many like myself arrived a day or so early and stayed for a few days afterward to take in some of the sights of beautiful Cape Cod and visit more lighthouses, naturally. On both days of the main event, several lighthouses were open to the public: Nauset, Nobska, Three Sisters and the Chatham Light. On the 12th only, the tower and keeper's house at Race Point were open to the public for the first time in 25 years. Restoration of this light station is about to begin and all proceeds of this convention have gone directly for this purpose. Also, although not open to the public, we were able to view the work in progress to move Cape Cod Highland Lighthouse back from the eroding cliff. Nauset Lighthouse, on the doomsday list and now about 15 feet off the eroding cliff edge, is also the subject of a concentrated and frantic effort to save it. The goal of raising half a million dollars needed to accomplish this is near, and I am told that those of us visiting from away have seen this lighthouse in its present location for the last time, whether it is moved in time, or not.

The Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society was one of over 30 exhibitors. It would be somewhat presumptuous to say that we attracted more than our share of interest, however, it is suffice to say that we did receive a great deal of attention and I was extremely happy to be there to represent our Society.

A wonderful and entertaining evening followed. During the course of an excellent dinner, Master of Ceremonies Timothy Harrison, ably assisted by Kathleen Finnegan and others, kept things going at a lively pace with stories, presentations, and almost continuous drawing for thousands of dollars of prizes generously donated to the cause by individuals and companies dealing in lighthouse items too numerous to mention. Featured dinner speaker was author Elinor DeWire with a rousing slide show "I Brake for Lighthouses!"

Regardless of a most enjoyable and memorable experience at Cape Cod, I have to say that the highlight of the whole trip was on my way home. I stopped at Wells, Maine, to visit the Lighthouse Depot and had the pleasure of a guided tour by co-owners Timothy Harrison and Kathleen Finnegan. Tim and Kathy are also co-authors of a couple of lighthouse books and the monthly Lighthouse Digest. Their unbounded energy and enthusiasm is a bit overwhelming, but I can't imagine how they could have otherwise accomplished so much. They have done more to raise public awareness in lighthouses than anyone I know. There is no doubt in my mind that the Lighthouse Depot is the world's largest lighthouse gift store, as advertised, and if you don't believe me, stop in and see for yourself!

Leading Lights: The Journal of Pharology, Pilotage and Seamanship

For those of you who want to know about lighthouse and lightships around the world, lighthouse history, preservation, research and a myriad of other topics, this is the publication you have been waiting for! Leading Lights is published bi-monthly aboard the Haven Lightship at Milford Haven in Wales. Thanks to the modern technology of computers and speedy printing, Peter Williamson is able to put out a fascinating Journal with articles from all over the world. Canadian content in recent issues included the log of a voyage of the M.Y. Kormoran (Formerly Lightship No 3 Catarqui, No. 4 Lurcher and CCGS Mikula), from Bridgeport, Newfoundland to Port Everglades, Florida, by Captain Hubert Hall of Yarmouth, and an article about the Green Island, BC light by Chris Mills, one of the founders of NSLPS.

Other items range from a History of England's Trinity House (the brotherhood that looks after England's lights), the conservation of British Lighthouses (lots of details of what happens when towers are de-staffed), Fresnel, the inventor of the lighthouse lens, discoveries at the site of the Pharos of Alexandria, Mexican lighthouses, US lighthouses, Australian lighthouses and on and on! There's a Research Forum too, where you can ask for help with information about lighthouses, lenses, lightships - really anything to do with traditional seamarks and pilotage.

And if you're planning to visit the U.K. here's where you find out about B&B aboard lightships and in lighthouses.

Leading Lights is available worldwide direct from the publishers at the rate of £24.50 (\$40.00 US) for six issues or £12.25 for three issues, from Peter Williams Associates, Haven Lightship, Milford Marina, Milford Have, Pembrokeshire, SA73 3AF, United Kingdom.

Huronia Museum's Alone in the Night: A History of Lighthouses on Georgian Bay A Museum Exhibit, Documentary Video and Picture Book

NSLPS is pleased to report on this very interesting project by our sister organization in Midland, Ontario:

Alone in the Night is the most spectacular exhibit Huronia Museum has ever produced. Each visitor will be able to explore the history, architecture and unique Canadian technology which provided safe passage for ships through the moody waters of Georgian Bay.

Alone in the Night explores the lore and legend of the lighthouses which were welcome beacons to mariners on the dark and lonely storm-tossed waters of Georgian Bay. Through the exhibit, the visitor is introduced to the unique individuals and families who made it their mission to keep the lights burning. It chronicles shipwrecks and valiant acts of heroism in the face of adversity and tragedy.

The exhibit touches on the upkeep and maintenance of the lights, and the role of the Canadian Coast Guard and the ships that tended them over the years. It leads us to the future with a discussion of new technologies: the use of radar and GIS systems as aids to navigation. And finally, the exhibit promotes the beginning of a national Lighthouse Heritage Preservation Society to raise public awareness of the imminent loss of this part of our heritage.

The book and video are \$49.95. The video is 72 minutes long. Place orders to:

Huronia Museum
P.O. Box 638
Midland, Ontario
L4R 4P4

NSLPS Annual General Meeting:

The AGM was held at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic on April 24, 1996. The agenda for the evening included the reports from the interim President, the Treasurer, the Membership Secretary, and the Fund Raising Chair.

Financial Report:	\$3868.54 deposits \$3732.57 disbursements
Membership:	37 new members from May 1 to Dec. 31, 1995 70 members since Jan. 1, 1996 (31 new, 39 renewals)
Election of officers:	
President	Graham McBride
Vice-President	Ron Thomas
Corresponding Sec.	
Recording Secretary	
Membership & Treasurer	E. Patricia MacDonald
Fund Raising	Brian Donovan
Lightkeeper Editor	Kathy Brown

We are still looking for volunteers to fill the positions of Recording Secretary and Corresponding Secretary.

Digby Light: A Profile

Known as The Fundy Light, this lighthouse was first established in 1817 at the west entrance point to Digby Gut, now called Prim Point. It was established at the northern end of the road, now known as the "Lighthouse Road" and by 1820 it was believed to be one of 10 lighthouses in all of Nova Scotia.

Fire had destroyed the original lighthouse on the night of March 16, 1873. A second tower, built on the same site, was a white square tower with a red stripe on each side and had a dwelling attached to it. It was completed at a total cost of \$3,410. This tower was struck by lightning in 1876, however no damage resulted.

Shipwrecks: Several shipwrecks had occurred at Prim Point. Initially, the point was named Rogers Point, after a certain General Rogers, however a shipwreck on the point many years ago claimed the lives of all hands, except one, a negro named "Prim". All others are buried on the point. On the night of December 3, 1883, SS Newfield was towing the government steamship Princess Louise from Canning where she had been recently launched. The line parted and the Princess was driven onto the rocks at a location almost 2 miles west of the light. Of the 10 crew, all were drowned except for two survivors who were rescued by the lightkeeper's son, Leander Ellis. Sometime later, believed to have been in 1901, the SS Newfield wrecked very close to that same site. Another vessel, the Donahoe, wrecked at Prim Point. No lives were lost, but the ship was loaded with bricks - and some still can be found along the beach at the point at very low tides!

In July 1887, lightkeeper Captain William Ellis discovered a comet which is now known to astronomers as the Ellis Comet. But Captain Ellis is best known for his patented fog horn - the diaphone, which replaced the steam fog whistle.

The diaphone is essentially a fog horn operated by compressed air. Air storage tanks were filled to capacity by air pumps driven by kerosene motors. The Ellis patent became the universal method of sounding fog alarms throughout Canada and the United States. Captain Ellis passed away on December 4, 1912, only a short time before his retirement. He was succeeded by his son, Leandor.

Digby Lightkeepers:

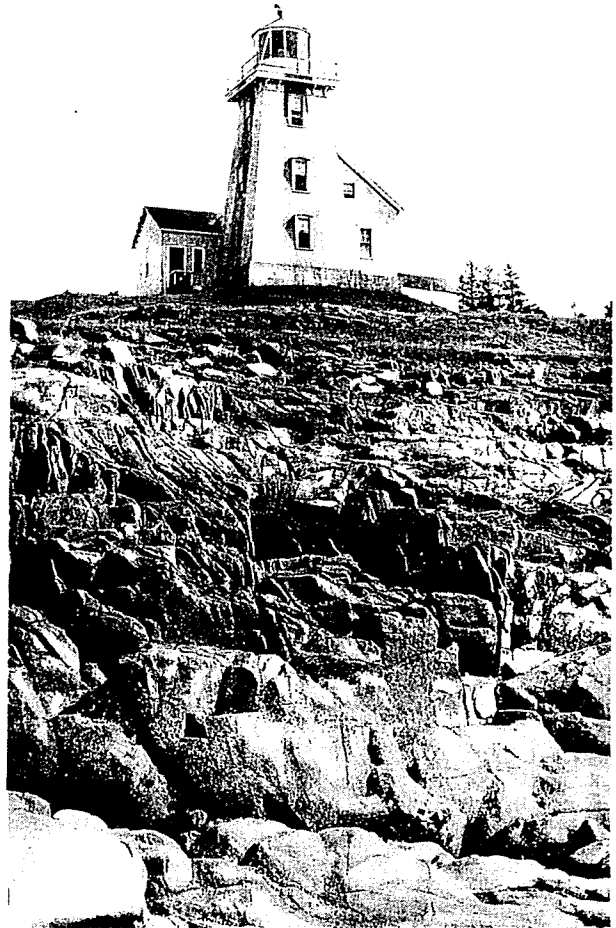
first recorded keeper: Mr. F. Bragg (until 1873)
second recorded keeper: Mr. Sheppard J. Frost 1873-1876
Captain William E. Ellis 1876-1912
Leandor Montgomery Ellis 1912- 1934
Mr. Frank V. Wilson 1935- 1963
Mr. Carman Frankland 1963- to destaffing

The present lighthouse at Digby was erected in the spring 1964. The light from the old light tower had been removed and now stands well preserved as a testament to the past on the Coast Guard property at Saint John, New Brunswick for all to see in the business district of that city. The building itself was destroyed on May 13, 1964, pushed over the cliff by a bulldozer. Mr. Reginald Bremner, assistant lightkeeper, was the last occupant of that home.

The new structure was built further from the Fundy cliff. It has a light 6.8 m (about 22 feet) off the ground, and at an elevation of 24.8 m (about 81 feet) above higher high water, large tides. It is a white square building with a white tower having a red stripe. Unlike the lighthouse it replaced, there was not an attached dwelling to the building as separate homes were constructed for the head keeper and his assistant. The lighthouse has been destaffed for many years. An emergency light has been added, and the fog signal is still one blast every 15 seconds.

“Lighthouse Road” is now paved and provides easy access to the site overlooking the cold Bay of Fundy waters. Fog is common in June and July with south and southwest winds. Even in August, with northerly winds, the air is chilled by the cold waters - if visiting - be prepared.

The Fundy waters claimed the life of one of the assistant lightkeepers, a Mr. Edward Murphy. Tending his lobster traps from a small wooden boat on October 22, 1976, the waves, estimated to be 10 to 12 feet in height, overcame his 12 foot boat. An extensive search found only the smashed remains of the boat the next day.



Point Prim Light, Digby, Nova Scotia. - 26.

photo credit: Maritime Museum of the Atlantic

Lightshop

Great stuff for gifts and the profits go to support your society!

Order from:

NSLPS
c/o Maritime Museum
6278 Cole Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3L 1Y9
Please make cheques payable in Canadian funds to:
1675 Lower Water Street
Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society
Halifax, N.S. Canada B3J 1R3

Publications:

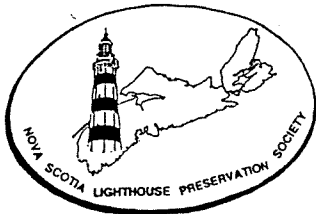
Vanishing Lights, donated by the author, Chris Mills. Chris is a founding member of the NSLPS, and one of Canada's last lightkeepers. This book is about four unique islands: Seal, Cross, Machias Seal, and Gannet Rock. It is a personal account of his passion for lighthouses, fogs, storms, and of the last days of staffed lights in Atlantic Canada. There's lots of history here too, plus mysteries, shipwrecks and ghosts.

A must for every lighthouse enthusiast! \$10.00 or by post, \$13.00 (\$3.00 shipping)

Captain from Fundy, donated by the author, Stanley Spicer. The life and times of George D. Spicer, Master of Square-Rigged Windjammers.
\$7.00 plus \$2.00 shipping

The Saga of Mary Celeste, donated by the author, Stanley Spicer. The story of the famous ill-fated mystery ship.
6.00 plus \$2.00 shipping

NSLPS Membership Pins:



A beautiful pin! NSPLS logo on a blue background with an eye-catching red and gold lighthouse, and Nova Scotia in bright gold.
\$6.00 (\$5.00 + \$1.00 pack and post)

Keychains:



The Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society has this beautifully detailed Pegasus Pewter keychain for sale for a cost of \$11.00 plus \$2.00 postage and handling.

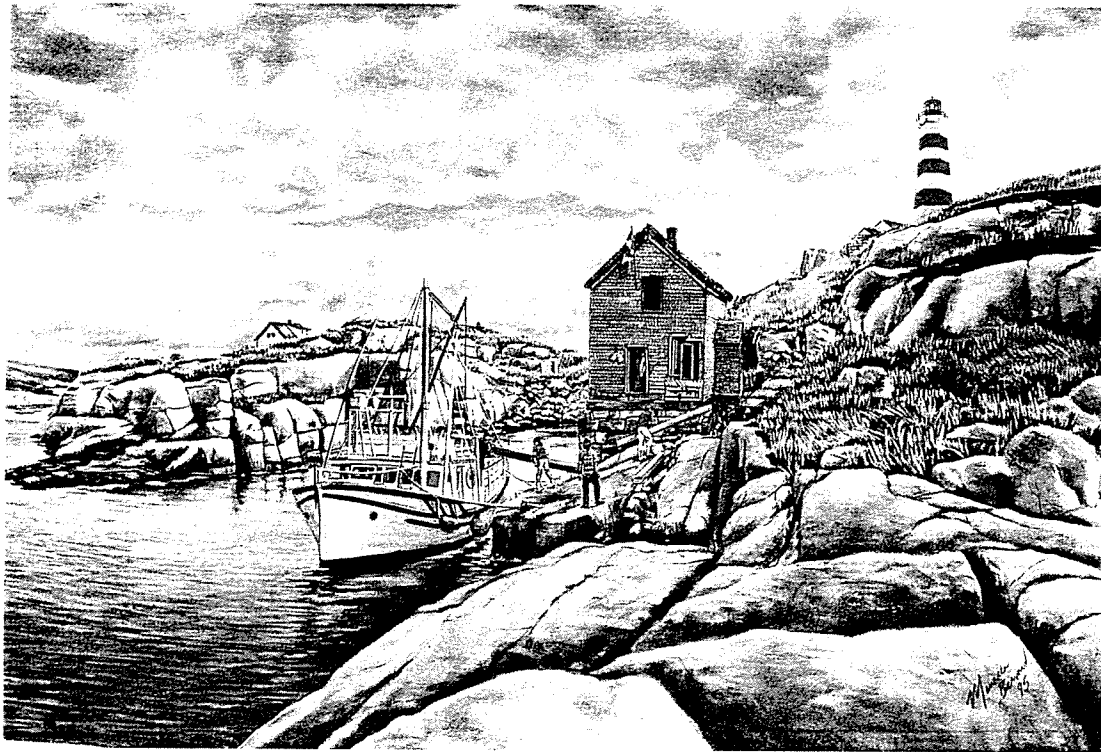
Lightkeeper: Back issues of the Lightkeeper, from January, 1995, are available at \$2.00 per copy.

Prints:

The Work Crew:

From the exhibition Spirit of the Light, this print shows Tony Gillis' boat, the Nova Lee, some of the NSLPS work crew heading towards the gas house and Sambro Light. A masterful rendering in pastel by Maurice Bernard. 7" x 10 1/2" image, double-matted to 12" x 15 1/2" and shrink wrapped.

\$29.00 including pack and post, OR for NSLPS members, this print plus NSLPS pin for \$30.



MEMBERSHIP FORM

I wish to join the Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society

NAME _____ TELEPHONE _____

ADDRESS _____ POSTAL CODE _____

Give Details On How You Wish to Help _____

Membership (Jan. 1 to Dec. 31)
Individual \$10 Family \$20 Group/Institution \$30 Patron \$100

Please make cheque payable in Canadian Funds 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, Canada, B3J 1S3