



THE Lightkeeper

The Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society

Vol. 3, No. 3, September, 1996

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The Lightkeeper - Kathy Brown

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. Our first project is the preservation of Sambro Island Lighthouse, at the entrance to Halifax Harbour.
Meetings: 7:00 pm Fourth Wednesday of the month, September to June, Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, 1675 Lower Water Street, Halifax.

Welcome!

A hearty "welcome aboard" to the following people who have joined NSLPS since June, 1996: Beverly Ingraham, Jean Rushford, Michael Kowalewicz, Charlie Jackson, Rusty/Patti Nelson, Donald/Crystal Kent & family, Anne/Eric Mills, Mary Louise Conlin, Yarmouth County Tourist Association, Joan Abrams

Lighthouse Trips

Sambro Island

Saturday, October 12 (Weather permitting)

Weather date: Sunday, October 13

Trips from 12 noon to 4:00 pm

In conjunction with the annual Craft Crawl of the Sambro Light Craft Guild.

\$10.00 adults, \$6.00 children for a boat ride to and from the Island.

\$15.00 adults, \$10.00 children for a special trip to land on the Island.

(Sorry, at these rates we can give no reduction to NSLPS members.)

Purchase tickets from 11:30 am at the NSLPS table,

Dock & Dory Cafe, Highway 349, past Ketch Harbour.

Boats leave from the Government Wharf, Ketch Harbour.

Please remember to dress warmly because it is always colder on the water. If you plan to go onto the island wear strong boots or shoes, waterproof if possible. Landing on the island is at the discretion of the captain of the boat. The light tower will not be open because of its deteriorating condition.

McNabs Island

Sunday Oct. 20, 1996. 10:00 AM

Departure on the from the Cable Wharf near Ferry Terminal, Halifax.

\$6 - Society Members. \$8 - Non-Members. Bring your membership card!

Bring lunch, water and rain gear, and don't forget your camera.

Returning between 3:00 and 4:00.

In conjunction with the Friends of McNabs 'Island Fall Colours' Outing

Get a close-up view of the romantic yet familiar light you usually see from a distance, and a rare chance to peak inside the lighthouse! Learn something of the history of this Halifax Harbour seamark which began as a Martello Tower. Dan Conlin will lead a tour to the Maugher Beach Light and to the site of the not so well known McNabs Island Light. Before and after the walk there will be ample opportunity for independent exploration of the island.

Maritime Heritage Tours

If you are planning a trip to Britain, be sure to check out this tour operator. They offer specialized tours of maritime heritage and lighthouse history, which Great Britain has in abundance. They sent us an outline of a recent visit to the East Coast of Scotland; a week of behind the scenes visits to museums, including Scotland's Lighthouse Museum, and to lighthouses, including, (weather permitting) a boat trip out to the famous Bell Rock Lighthouse. All at a reasonable rate! Maritime Heritage Tours Limited, Corston House, 56 Spencer Road, Ryde, Isle of Wight, UK, PO33 3AD. Fax:: 44 1983 563105

Lighthouse News

Queensport Light

The municipality of Guysborough recently completed painting the exterior of the Queensport Lighthouse on Chedabucto Bay midway between Canso and Guysborough. The lighthouse is situated on Rook Island near the middle of the entrance to Queensport Harbour. The island is surrounded by rocks. The harbour is the only good one between Canso and Guysborough, so this has been an important light for mariners navigating the South coast of the Chedabucto Bay towards the Strait of Canso.

Years ago, after the light was automated, the exterior began to deteriorate and a committee was successful in gaining a grant to work on the building. Then, about five years ago, the municipality realized that work needed to be done again and they were successful in gaining a five year lease from the Department of Transport. They have re-shingled and painted the building, and it now looks wonderful. You can see it from the picnic park on Highway 16, and many people stop to take pictures and video. The lighthouse is important to the community because of its beauty and because of the many families with ancestors who were keepers there. There is strong concern for preserving the lighthouse for future generations. The lease has not been renewed, probably because of the Coast Guard plans to develop a policy for community use of lighthouse buildings (See elsewhere in this issue).

The history of the lighthouse dates back to 1882 when the first of two lighthouses was built. At that time the island was called Rock Island and Queensport was called Crow Harbour. Now, the Island is called Rook Island. The listing in the Sailing Directions, Gulf and River St. Lawrence reads as follows: "Queensport light is shown at an elevation of 54 feet (16 m) from a white square dwelling 10 feet (3 m) high, situated on Rook Island."

The following are names of Queensport Lighthouse Keepers dating from November 1882 to January 1967, the date the lighthouse became automatic. John Ehler III, Lawrence Hendsbee, Curtis Munro, Frank Carter, William Jamieson, Alphonse O'Leary, John Carter, Bill Matheson, Osborne O'Leary, Austin Creamer, Ainsley Munro.

MEMBERSHIP FORM January 1, 1996 - December 31, 1996

I wish to join NOVA SCOTIA LIGHTHOUSE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

NAME _____ TELEPHONE _____

ADDRESS _____ POSTAL CODE _____

Family names for extra card(s):

Give details on how you wish to help _____

Single - \$10.00 Family - \$20.00 Institution/Group - \$30.00 Patron - \$100.00

Amount enclosed \$ _____

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, B3J 1S3

Cape Forchu Light, Yarmouth

Kathy Brown

Since 1839, ships entering and leaving Yarmouth Harbour on a passage across the Gulf of Maine, a fishing trip, or, in earlier times, a voyage to distant lands aboard a square rigger, have passed the light tower at Cape Forchu. For decades, the day mark has been a red lantern and alternating red and white faces on the octagonal tower. The original timber tower was lit on 15th January, 1840. The lens was a classic Fresnel, a circular central lens surrounded by concentric rings of glass which concentrated the light of the lamp into one powerful beam which shot out into the night. The Cape Forchu example had eight faces, each of which produced a white flash. It was turned by a clockwork mechanism which had to be wound every three hours. (This original lens, which was manufactured in France, can now be viewed in the Yarmouth County Museum, Yarmouth.) The first lighting apparatus was a kerosene lamp. This was later replaced by a pressurized vapour lamp, and finally by electricity generated on the station. The early lamps had to be watched carefully, for they could easily go out. One keeper estimated that during his 31 years on duty he climbed the tower at least 47,000 times!

The Cape Forchu light has always been a tourist attraction. The old timber tower was much photographed, so when the Coast Guard decided in 1961 that it must be replaced, town and tourist officials requested that the new light tower be built along the lines of the old. In October, they were assured by their MP that the new tower would be an outward replica of the old and



The original Cape Forchu Lighthouse that was lit in 1840

“there will be no change in the splendid harbour vista.” There was considerable controversy, therefore, when the community saw the concrete “apple core” tower rising at the head of the Cape! Many thought the vista was ruined. But, tourists continued to flock there and by 1980 the “apple core” itself was being called “the old Yarmouth light!”

The additional height of the 22.9 metre octagonal concrete tower and the added power of the new dioptric lens added 10 miles to visibility, so that the light can be seen for 22 miles to seaward. Electricity is provided by a cable run from the town of Yarmouth. In 1980, Cape Forchu became the monitoring station for automated lighthouses on the South Shore, using the Intrac 2000 system. In 1993, Cape Forchu was automated and destaffed. Monitoring was transferred to L’Etete, New Brunswick.

Sources: Lighthouses of Nova Scotia, David E. Stephens. Files, Maritime Museum of the Atlantic Research Library.

Both photographs of Cape Forchu Light courtesy of Tim Hall.

Yarmouth Lighthouse Shines As A Tourist Destination

Located near the extreme southwest portion of Nova Scotia, Cape Forchu is a forked tongue of land, discovered in the 17th century by Samuel de Champlain, at the west entrance point into the busy Yarmouth Harbour. The Canadian Coast Guard lighthouse continues to function as a vital aid to navigation. It is a light viewed by thousands annually as they enter Canada from the United States en route from two ferries that serve the Harbour. From the base of the light, there is a magnificent view of the Gulf of Maine to the west, which is enlightened even more by the setting



Cape Forchu Lighthouse

of the sun. A view to the south shows several off-lying islands, and during certain times, a body of water teeming with busy fishing boats and crashing waves.

Through a property lease with the Maritimes Region of Department of Fisheries and Ocean's Canadian Coast Guard, the Yarmouth County Tourist Association (YCTA) operates a tourist visitation site and an interpretive centre at the Cape Forchu lighthouse. This includes a small canteen, a picnic park and parking facilities for visitors. YCTA executive director Linda Deveau says that the light attracts 20,000 - 30,000 visitors annually. "We wanted to involve the community in a project to develop the lighthouse as a tourist attraction. We are aiming to maintain the property through volunteers and to increase the services and the experiences out there."

While the operation of the Yarmouth site seems impressive, YCTA is only in their second year of a 5 year lease, and the fundraising/volunteer group 'Friends of the Yarmouth Light' was only established earlier this year. The efforts of this community have encouraged other groups to approach the Canadian Coast Guard with their own proposals.

December Meeting with the Coast Guard

Thus, working with the Halifax based Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society, the Canadian Coast Guard, lead by Larry Wilson, Maritimes Region Director of Marine Programs, will hold an information session in early December to discuss the various issues on lighthouses throughout the region in the newly proposed 'Lighthouse Alternative Use Program'. Topics will include new technologies for marine navigation, budget reduction exercises, and future plans whereby community/municipal groups would wish to use lighthouse properties for other related activities, and become actively involved in the preservation of these sites for cultural, historical and tourism purposes. Based on the success of Linda Deveau's YCTA, a very important part of Canada's marine heritage will continue to shine!

How Do You Paint a Lighthouse?

Dan Conlin

The Society often gets questions, both the obvious and the obscure, about lighthouses. Recently we were asked for advice on painting a lighthouse by one of our members, the Seal Island Lighthouse Museum in Barrington Passage, Nova Scotia. As many of you may know, Barrington Passage is home to a beautiful replica of the top third of the Seal Island lighthouse, crowned by Seal Island's massive original lantern and Fresnel Lens. When you visit the museum, you can climb right up and touch the lens! The wood shingled sides were due for a coat of paint, but when the museum looked at normal scaffolding, they found that it couldn't cope with the diminishing width and inward slope of the lighthouse walls.

They asked us for advice, and we turned to Chris Mills, one of our founding members and one of Canada's few remaining lighthouse keepers. He served on Seal Island before it was automated. We reached him through radiotelephone from Ivory Island Light Station in British Columbia.

His answer: "with a bosun's chair!" Bosun's chairs are usually used to work on the masts and rigging of large sailing vessels. They are basically a simple chair, like a swing seat, suspended from rope next to the working area. It is a tricky job that calls for experience - and precautions. Chris remembers that keepers were not allowed to paint lighthouse towers. Instead, maintenance crews from the Coast Guard ships would do the work using a bosun's chair suspended by block and tackle, often attached to a tractor down below.

And the colour? The Seal Island Lighthouse Museum also wanted to know the exact brand of Coast Guard Red. Chris said it was Matchless "Signal Red" Marine High Gloss Enamel.

Lighthouse Society enters the Electronic Age!

So far, NSLPS use of the computer has been confined to correspondence and producing the Lightkeeper. This fall, we are taking that giant leap onto the Internet and into Databases. Read the following and check us out - in a month or so!

Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society Web Site:

Two high school students are working on a web site for the Society. Ryan Trudel and Shane Parrish are Grade Twelve students in Computer Related Studies at Cole Harbour High School. As part of an assignment they are designing a web site for the Society. They were sent our way by member Mike Whitehouse. Dan Conlin and Kathy Brown have provided text and illustrations. With luck, it will be operating within the month. In its modest beginning, the site will offer the information in the society's current leaflet, upcoming events, recommended reading and a brand-new list of light houses in Nova Scotia. Future hopes include lighthouse profiles, membership application and sales. In the meantime, members who cruise the net might want to check out this site: Lighthouse Links on the Web: <http://www.maine.com/lights/links.htm> It's maintained by Jim Walker, first Lighthouse keeper on the Internet!

Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society Database:

At our September Meeting, member Tim Hall introduced us to a model for a database for Nova Scotia Lighthouses. We were enthusiastic, realizing that this could be a ready source of accurate information for both members and the people who are beginning to query us about Nova Scotia Lights. Tim has his own database on lighthouses in general and is willing to help us set one up particularly for Nova Scotia lights and fitted to the needs of the Society. Right now, it appears that the information will reside in his machine, but there will be a printout available for members'

use. Dan Conlin and Kathy Brown will be meeting with Tim to discuss the fields (type of information). Watch for a follow up on this in the next issue of the Lightkeeper. This will be an opportunity for individuals and communities to provide information which can help us all in preserving this part of Nova Scotia's maritime heritage.

Lightshop

Great stuff for Christmas Gifts (or for yourself) and the profits go to support your society!

Order from: Kathy Brown, 24 Armshore Drive, Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3N 1M5
Please make cheques payable to the Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society.

Publications:

Stanley Spicer, NSLPS member and well known marine historian and writer has donated a limited number of autographed copies of the following books. Learn about the ships that sailed past the lights in fine weather and crept past in fog! Fine Christmas gifts. Order early to avoid disappointment!

Captain from Fundy. The life and times of George Spicer of Spencers Island who sailed square rigged windjammers to exotic ports. He crossed the Atlantic 107 times and commanded five sailing vessels over his 52 year career. \$7.00 plus \$2.00 shipping.

The Saga of the Mary Celeste, Ill Fated Mystery Ship. The Mary Celeste, built at Spencers Island Nova Scotia, was discovered at sea in 1872, all sails set and everything in order. One of the great sea mysteries of all time. Stanley Spicer explores Nova Scotia connections of this fascinating story and the many theories attempting to explain the catastrophe. \$6.00 plus \$2.00 shipping.

NSLPS Membership Pins:

A beautiful pin! NSLPS logo on a blue background with an eye-catching red and gold lighthouse, and Nova Scotia in bright gold.
\$5.00 + \$1.00 shipping



Keychains:

A striking Pegasus Pewter keychain showing Sambro, the oldest working lighthouse in North America!
Great stocking stuffer at \$11.00 plus \$2.00 shipping.



The Work Crew

From the exhibition *Spirit of the Light*, this print shows Tony Gillis' boat *Nova Lee*, some of the NSLPS work crew heading toward the Gas House, and Sambro Light. A masterful rendering in pastel by Maurice Bernard, full of colour and light. 7" x 10 1/2" image, double-matted to 12 x 15 1/2 & shrink wrapped. **\$29.00, including pack and post OR for NSLPS members this print plus NSLPS pin \$30.00.**

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