



# THE Lightkeeper

The Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society

Vol. 4, No. 2, June, 1997

The objectives of the Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society are: to promote and support preservation and awareness of Nova Scotian lighthouses; to assist community groups in leasing or taking ownership of lighthouse sites; to provide access to written research and photographic documentation and to initiate oral history research; and to classify and monitor the status of historic lighthouse sites. Meetings: 7:00 pm Fourth Wednesday of the month, September to June, Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, 1675 Lower Water Street, Halifax.

Patron: Rip Irwin

## Welcome Aboard!

The following new members have joined NSLPS since April 1, 1997:

Darlene Chisolm, John Garrett, Liz Grigg, Tom Hettinger, Helen Kaiser, Graham Long, Del Lowe, Dorothy MacLeod, Barbara Riley, Antonia Riedl, Pamela Setchell, Barbara Shea, Viewpoint Productions Limited, Keith Graham, Norma Cassidy, Hubert & Helen Hall, Daryl Thomas, Karen Corey, Edna & Irving Titus, Eric Boutilier-Brown, Five Islands Lighthouse Preservation Society, and Friends of Yarmouth Light Society.

## Lighthouses to Visit, Summer of '97

While 1997 may be the Year of Music in Nova Scotia, there are a great many sights and sounds to be enjoyed at our picturesque and historic lighthouses. With the rapidly increasing awareness of the value and beauty of lighthouses not only locally, but worldwide, what better way to spend a lovely Nova Scotia day than at a lighthouse by the sea. The following is a sampling of the many lighthouses and events that you can enjoy this summer here in Nova Scotia.

### *Five Islands Lighthouse Route 2, Minas Basin*

Located in Colchester County, on the north shore of the Minas Basin, this lighthouse, a fine example of a traditional Nova Scotia style wooden lighthouse, is under the care of the Five Islands Lighthouse Preservation Society. Plans include moving the lighthouse to a safer location, restoration of the tower and installation of interpretive signage and photographs. This lighthouse is part of the Fundy Shore EcoTour and it will be located in the Sand Point Campground. The site will be open to the public from May to October. Official opening on Sunday, July 27, 1997, open house from 1 PM until 3 PM.

### *Spencer's Island Route 2, Minas Basin*

Spencer's Island Lighthouse (featured in this issue),

is located on the north shore of the Minas Channel, near Parrsboro in Cumberland County. The light will be open to the public Tuesday to Sunday from 11 am until 5 pm. It is today a museum with photographs and memorabilia of the great days of sail and ship building on the Minas Basin.

### *Cape d'Or Route 209, near Advocate*

Once you have completed your visit to Spencer's Island Lighthouse, spectacular Cape d'Or Lighthouse is just down the road. Follow the golden solar wind to the Lightkeeper's Kitchen and Guesthouse in Advocate. You can experience the panoramic view, unique tidal patterns (dory rips), occasional whale and seal sightings, as well as peregrine falcons. Crafts, photography, hiking, birding and refreshments are all available at this site. The kitchen specializes in fine chili, chowder and deserts at reasonable prices. Group packages available. Telephone (902) 664-2108.

### *Walton Lighthouse Route 215, Minas Basin*

On the shores of Walton Harbour, in Hants County, sits a picturesque and historic lighthouse (featured in this issue). Built in 1873, this lighthouse has been maintained by the East-Hants Tourism Association since 1992. It is a popular site that includes a wonderful view of Cape Blomidon and the Minas Basin. Open to the public from late May until October 15, this site also includes a short walking trail to a scenic look-off. The tower is unattended, but photographs and a brief history are on display to the public. This is a wonderful place to stop and photograph the beauty and history of the Hants Shore.

### *Burntcoat Head Route 215, Cobequid Bay*

This is another lighthouse in a picnic park with a trail down to the beach (Watch out for the high tides!) This is a replica of the original light, one of those which was a keepers house with the light tower atop the roof. There is a panel display of the lighthouse history and geology of the area. Unattended, but open in July and August.

**Fort Point Lighthouse** *Route 103 & 3, Liverpool*  
Situating at the end of Main Street, in Liverpool, Queens County, this lighthouse is one of the oldest lighthouses remaining in Nova Scotia. It is in a lovely park setting, and is currently undergoing a major renovation project. When completed this summer, the site will include an interpretive museum, historic photographs, guided tours and a landscaped park. This is truly one of Nova Scotia's historic lighthouses, and well worth the visit. Unofficial opening in July, Grand Opening scheduled for September, 1997.

**Seal Island Lighthouse Museum** *Route 3, Barrington*

This museum is a replica of the top half of the Seal Island lighthouse which is on an offshore island. The museum is crowned by the original iron tower from the lighthouse with the original Fresnel lens as well. You can climb up and get a close look after you view the memorabilia and display a bout the lighthouses of the area on the main floor. Open daily from June 1 to Labour Day from 9:30 to 5:30 pm and on Sundays from 1:30 - 5:30

**Cape Forchu** *Route 103, Yarmouth*

This is the "Yarmouth Light" which welcomes passengers on the Bluenose Ferry to Nova Scotia. The famous concrete "apple core" light tower is still in service. The lightkeeper's house, a typical duplex, is open to the public with a photo display. There is a tourist information centre and a snack bar here, too. It's a great place for a picnic and for photographing the Bay of Fundy, especially at sunset or on a stormy day.

**Port Bickerton** *Route 7 & 211, Eastern Shore*

Located on the rocky Eastern Shore in Guysborough County, this site is an example of the growing interest in Nova Scotia's lighthouses. A Lighthouse Interpretive Centre is situated in the former lightkeeper's dwelling here. Photo displays and information about many of the lighthouses in Nova Scotia will complement other local attractions. Initial phase official opening on June 28, 1997.

*The following is a list of other lighthouse locations that you will enjoy for either their scenic or historic value while travelling throughout Nova Scotia. These are all easily accessed from major routes.*

Halls Harbour Lighthouse, Kings County  
Margaretsville Lighthouse, Digby County  
Brier Island, Digby Neck  
Gilberts Cove Lighthouse Digby County  
Point Prim Lighthouse, Digby County  
Cape St. Mary's Lighthouse, Digby County  
Baccaro Point Lighthouse, Shelburne  
Port Medway Lighthouse, Queens County

Peggy's Cove Lighthouse, Halifax County  
Chebucto Head Lighthouse, Halifax County  
Queensport Lighthouse (view from shore), Guysborough County  
Jerome Point Lighthouse, Richmond County  
Louisbourg Lighthouse, Cape Breton County  
Sydney Range Lights, Cape Breton County  
Low Point Lighthouse, Cape Breton County  
Havre Boucher Range Lights, Antigonish County  
Cape George Lighthouse, Antigonish County  
Pictou Bar Lighthouse, Pictou County

*A Locator Map with the sites of 160 Nova Scotian Lighthouses, keyed to accessibility, is available from the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic in Halifax \$13.99 plus postage & tax.*

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## Boat Tours

*Nova Lee Excursions*

**Capt. Tony Gillis, 868-1212**

**Trips to Sambro Island on demand.**

See the oldest working Light in North America!

Call to arrange details.

\$15 per person, \$40 per family

*McNabs Island Ferry and Nature Tours*

**Capt. Mike Tilley, 465-4563**

**Halifax Harbour: the lights on McNabs, George's and Devil's Islands.**

Close to the city but isolated by the sea!

Cost varies according to the length of the trip. Call for details.

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## Lighthouse Trips - Volunteers Wanted

Trips to visit lighthouses are very popular with our members and the public but we need help in organizing them. The society is currently considering a number of possible trips and investigating the need for liability insurance but extra hands are needed. If you are interested in helping out with a trip, give Dan Conlin a call in Halifax at 492-9939.

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## Thanks!

To Rip Irwin for donating his share of royalties from the Lighthouse Locator Map and other projects to the Society, and to Lynn-Marie Richard, Maritime Museum of the Atlantic for her assistance.

Also many thanks to Dan Conlin and Tim Hall for help with this issue of *Lightkeeper*. Without their assistance it would not be in your mailbox until the end of June.

## Spencers Island Lighthouse

*Stanley Spicer & Kathy Brown*

This is a small light located on the Minas Channel, the link between the Minas Basin and the Bay of Fundy. The village of Spencers Island, where the light is located, is named after the nearby island which lies in the channel. In the days of sail this was an important ship building area. Many important vessels were built here and captains of Nova Scotian deep-sea sailing ships were born here.

There were two reasons for establishing a light at Spencers Island. First, in the days of sail this area behind Cape d'Or, was a popular anchorage for vessels waiting for a favourable wind to go up or down the Bay of Fundy. Second, for years after the turn of the century old square riggers were cut down and converted to barges, and used to transport gypsum from near Windsor, N. S., to New York. The barges would be towed by a small tug to Spencers Island where they would wait for an ocean-going tug to pick them up and tow them on to New York. The procedure was reversed for the return passage.

The lighthouse was built in 1904 and first lit on July 15 of that year. The project, supervised by the first keeper, Baxter McLellan, cost \$645.87. The building, constructed of timber, was 33 feet high from the base to the ventilator on the lantern, with a main floor about 15 feet square and interior stairs leading up to the light. The light was fixed red, visible for about 7 miles from all points of approach, with a dioptric apparatus of the seventh order.

The photograph is of this original tower, which still stands. It shows the old fog bell apparatus that was used many years ago. There was a winding mechanism, and once wound, the bell would ring for about 12 hours before re-winding was necessary. The light was discontinued in the 1980's because commercial shipping no longer used the channel. It was acquired by the Spencers Island Community Association from the Federal Government after 2 years of negotiations. It opened to the public in 1991 as a small museum with pictures of the sailing vessels built in local shipyards, artifacts and the like. In 1995 and 1996 major renovations were made, funded by local fund raising projects. In 1995 the light was approved as a municipal heritage structure. It is open to the public in July and August.

### **Spencers Island Lightkeepers, in order of service:**

Baxter McLellan

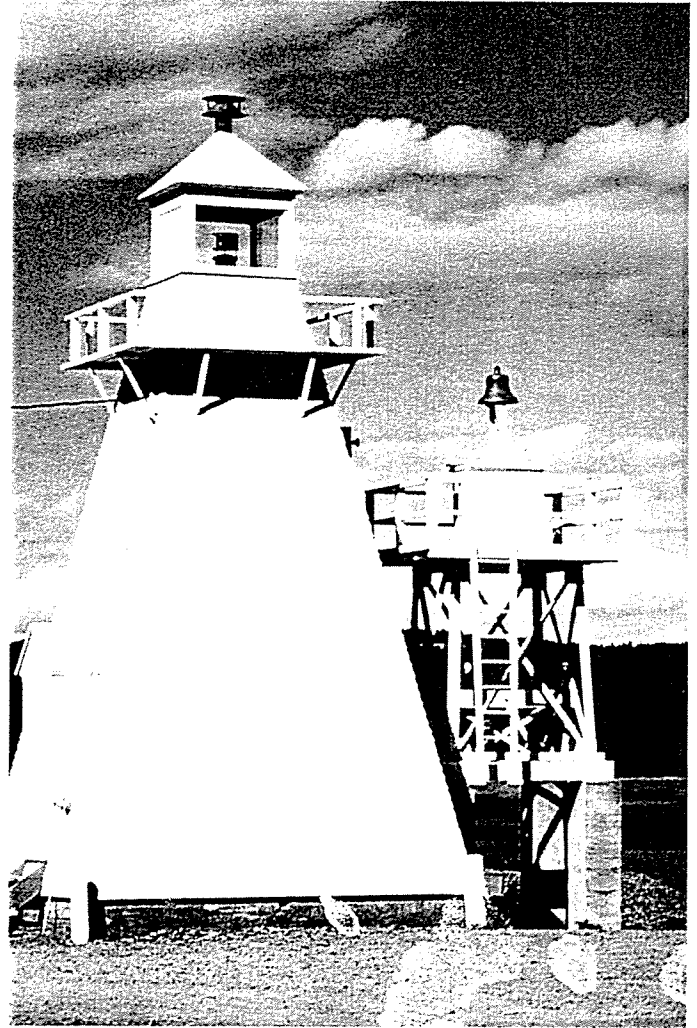
Ren Spicer

Steve McLellan

Leslie Spicer

Cecil Grant

The first lightkeeper, Baxter McLellan, was a shipwright who helped build some of the square-riggers at Spencers Island and supervised the building of the lighthouse. He also sailed on square-riggers as ship's carpenter and, as such, saw much of the world. After he left the sea, he had a small building near the lighthouse where he used to make canvas chairs and stools and most of all, entertain the tourists with tales of the sea..



Spencers Island Light about 1930.

Photo courtesy Stanley Spicer.

## Walton Harbour Lighthouse

*Reginald Clark and Bob Pietrzak*

The present lighthouse was built in 1873 by Timothy Parker, at a cost of \$620.00. It is the only surviving lighthouse in Hants County. It was once the brightest lighthouse on the upper Bay of Fundy, guiding seagoing ships into the port of Walton.

Here they loaded cargoes of pulpwood, gypsum and barite before setting out for ports along the eastern seaboard for the United States.

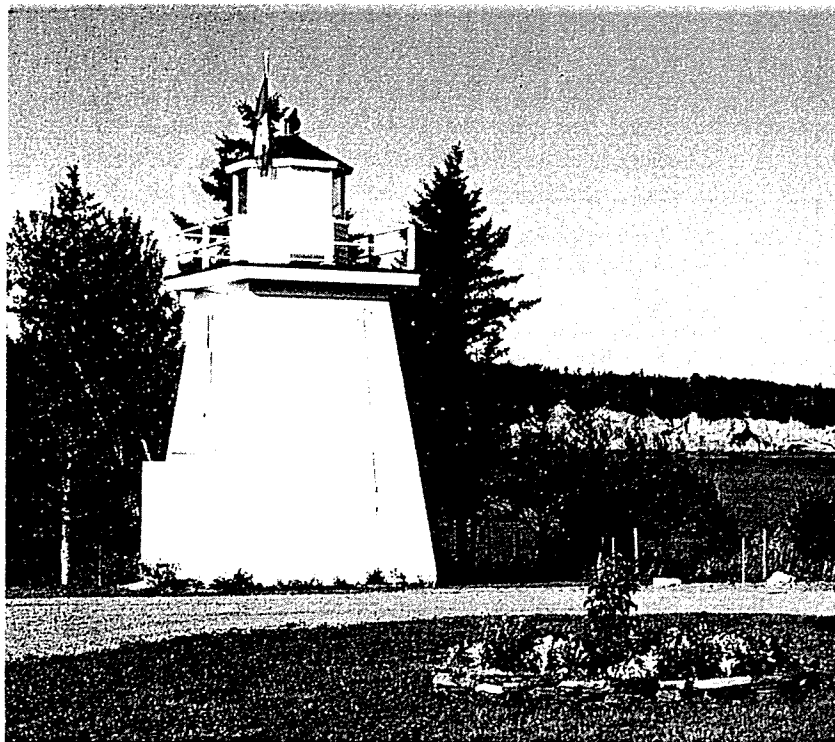
The lighthouse is a wooden structure, 15 square feet at the base and 20 feet in height to the floor on the top deck, upon which the lantern sits. The lantern is 8 feet in height, containing the light, elevated 60 feet above high water. The walls of the interior on the lower floor are finished with plaster, on the second floor the walls are sheathed with wood.

The light apparatus consisted of two large flat wick lamps with a brass base, using kerosene oil. The light was magnified by a Fresnel lens with a 16" reflector. A black screen revolved around the outside of the lamp so that the light was visible 10 seconds; dark 3 seconds; visible 4 seconds; dark 3 seconds (occluding), through a repeating cycle. The screen was operated by a clock mechanism, that had to be hand wound each night by cranking a handle for about 60 turns.

Kerosene oil for the lighthouse came in 45 gallon drums, and were lightered ashore by the ship's launch to the breakwater, from the Coast Guard ship, S.S. *Dollard*, which anchored a few miles offshore. In later years the SS *Dollard* was replaced by the CCGS *Thomas Carleton*, to serve the Bay of Fundy and the Minas Basin.

In later years the lighthouse was converted to an automatic system, with an electronic flasher installed giving light 3 seconds; dark 4 seconds; light 7 seconds, then repeating itself.

After the decline of shipping in the late 1970's from the port of Walton, the lighthouse was decommissioned. The lighthouse was declared surplus by the Department of Transport, and was put up for sale by tender. The Municipality of East Hants bought the lighthouse in 1991 for its heritage property. The lighthouse was designated as heritage status on August 12, 1992. Today, the lighthouse is maintained by the East-Hants Tourism Association. It has become an important tourist attraction along the Hants Shore with over 3,000 visitors annually.



Walton Lighthouse  
Photo courtesy Reginald Clark

### List of Walton lighthouse keepers (local residents).

1873 - 1883	Timothy Parker
1883 - 1891	Archibald McNeil Parker
1891 - 1901	Burton Wheadon
1901 - 1903	Charles W. O'Brien
1903 - 1911	Lewis E. Burgess

1911 - 1921	Stephen Brown
1921 - 1937	Lewis E. Burgess
1937 - 1962	Harry Lake *
1962 - 1970	Arthur Sanford

\* Harry Lake received a certificate for 25 years of service as a lighthouse keeper.

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### Highlights of the AGM

Executive, 1997

Past-President - Graham McBride

President - Dan Conlin

1st Vice-President - Kathy Brown

2nd Vice-President - Bill Mont

Treasurer and Membership - Ron Thomas

Secretary - Barry Macleod

**President's Report** - Highlights of the year were the Heritage Review Board listing of Sambro Island Lighthouse and the NSLPS submission to the Coast Guard regarding their initiative for new uses for the

lights. Rip Irwin was complimented for all his hard work in getting Sambro on the heritage buildings list. **Financial Report** - The bank balance April 23 was \$745.27.

**Newsletter Report** - The Lightkeeper is very successful but printing and mailing will eat up 65 - 70% of \$10 individual membership in 1997 because we have more news to print.

#### **Action Plan for 1997 Passed**

The goals of the society are: to promote awareness and support community preservation of Nova Scotian lighthouses; to assist community groups in leasing or taking ownership of lighthouse sites; to provide access to written research and photographs and to initiate oral history research and to monitor the status of historic lighthouse sites.

#### **Programs**

- a) Wednesday Night Activities such as slides and talks following the business meeting .
- b) Trips to lighthouses including trips co-organized with other groups.
- c) A gathering of Nova Scotia lighthouse groups to share ideas and experiences in the fall.
- d) Lighthouse weekend activities at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic.

#### **Membership**

Increase membership through active programs, the Website and target groups.

Goals: Increase membership from just above 100 to 200 by next year. Increase the number of Nova Scotian members.

#### **Developing and Monitoring Lighthouse Sites**

Develop a priority list of important and threatened lights. Liaison with the Coast Guard to communicate preservation priorities.

#### **Research**

Develop the database, Website and publish research articles in the newsletter. Assist in gathering oral history from lightkeepers.

#### **Motions Passed**

- Modify the fees, for 1998, as follows: Individual - \$15; Foreign - \$15 (US funds); Family - \$20 (no change); Group - \$30 (no change); Sustaining - \$50 (new); Patron - \$100. (no change).
- Attempt to obtain Charitable Tax Status so donors get some benefit and we can go to business for support.
- Obtain Liability Insurance so we can't safely do trips.
- The Port Bickerton and Area Planning Association wrote to NSLPS asking for support for a Lighthouse Preservation Act. A motion was passed supporting this in principle.

#### **Programme**

Members enjoyed refreshments, and watched slides of early photographs of Nova Scotian lighthouses shown by Kathy Brown, and of a winter sailing trip to Sambro Island taken by Ron Thomas and his crew. As well, the Website, the Database for Nova Scotian lights developed by Tim Hall, the book table, periodicals, and a working model of the Kingsport Light, made by Dan Conlin, were popular.

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## **A Documentary Glimpse of Women and Lighthousekeeping in the 19th Century**

*Dan Conlin*

Halifax 29th May 1855

Mrs. Howard

Dear Madam,

I sincerely sympathize with you in the great loss and affliction to which you are subjected by the death of your husband, and most willingly would I accede to your request to continue you in this situation were it in my power, but I have to inform you that however desirous I might be to aid you in this respect it cannot be done - there is no Lighthouse in charge of a female and the Board of Works and the Government have appointed a person to take charge of the place. But in order to help you to some extent you may continue in charge til the end of the year [?] and receive the pay to that period the 30th June ensuing.

I am Madam yours truly,

H. Bell

chairman

(From the Public Archives of Nova Scotia RG 35-106 Vol.10 file 1855 #3)

This letter was written to the acting keeper of the Parrsboro light following the death of her husband. The refusal to allow her to continue at the light, despite and obvious ability to tend it, is an interesting social commentary. Married keepers were sought after since they effectively came with the service of an unpaid assistant keepers. However should the husband die, the wife was not only deprived of spouse and income but home as well. This situation was not unusual. When the keeper of Coffin Light at Liverpool was killed in a boating accident in 1873, his wife kept the light for several months until she was also replaced. These barriers took a long time to change. When travel writer Claire Dennis toured Nova Scotian lights in 1939, the Gillis Point Light in Lake Bras d'Or was the only station in the province with a female keeper.

### Oral History Suggestion

NSLPS member Alan Ruffman suggests adding this questions to the oral history interview question list published last month: "Do you mind if I place this tape or these notes in the archives so that I can share your recollections with others?"

*Let us know if you have done some interviews with former keepers and how it went.*

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### Coast Guard Update

*Dan Conlin*

Along with several other community groups, a representative of NSLPS attended the meeting of the Coast Guard's Advisory Committee on Lighthouse Alternate use on May 20. The Coast Guard's operational people are looking at decommissioning about a dozen lights in the next five years, most of them skeleton towers or lights on poles - not as drastic as many feared but the ten year outlook could be more dire.

At the moment the Coast Guard is legally required to dispose of decommissioned light stations by selling them to the highest bidder through Crown Assets Disposal. The committee has explored alternatives through which lights would be transferred to responsible community groups. However Treasury Board has been hostile, refusing to allow long term leases and insisting on sale at market value. (That means no "sold for a dollar" arrangements but a crippling cost to a community group - around \$10,000 before they even begin to maintain and restore a light).

The Advisory Committee strongly felt the lights should remain public and not be lost to real estate speculation. Many community organisations have expressed interest in taking over light stations. The most favoured option was something called "Alternate

Service Delivery," where the Coast Guard lets a community group take over operation of a low cost solar light to restore the lighthouse and develop the heritage potential of the land which remains publicly owned. The much needed long term solution is a moratorium on lighthouse sales and protection through a Lighthouse Protection Act.

In the short term, a variety of solutions for decommissioned lights are possible: short five year leases and lease-to-own arrangements. The committee has drawn up criteria requiring groups to preserve the historic and natural value of lights and these criteria will be used to examine proposals from community groups to take over light stations. There are hopes for a gathering of community groups in the fall to share advice on how to organise and take over a light station.

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### Lightshop

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.

**NSLPS Membership Pins:**

\$5.00 + \$1.00 shipping.

**Pewter Keychain, Sambro Lighthouse:**

\$11.00 plus \$2.00 shipping.

**Publications:**

by Stanley Spicer, NSLPS member and well known marine historian.

*Captain From Fundy: The Life and Times of George Spicer of Spencers Island.* \$7.00 plus \$2.00 shipping.

*The Saga of the Mary Celeste, Ill Fated Mystery Ship.* \$6.00 plus \$2.00 shipping.

**The Work Crew:**

7 x 10 1/2 print by Maurice Bernard showing Tony Gillis' boat *Nova Lee*, some of the NSLPS work crew, the Gas House, and Sambro Light. Double-matted, ready to frame **\$29.00, including pack and post.**

**Lightkeeper:**

Back issues From January, 1995, \$2.00 per copy |

*Lightkeeper* is published quarterly by THE NOVA SCOTIA LIGHTHOUSE PRESERVATION SOCIETY, 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 Kathy Brown, Editor, *The Lightkeeper*, 24 Armshore Drive, Halifax, NS, B3N 1M5, or E-mail [kreb@ra.isisnet.com](mailto:krb@ra.isisnet.com)

**NEXT DEADLINE SEPT. 1. News and articles happily accepted!**

**MEMBERSHIP FORM** January 1, 1997 - December 31, 1997

**NOVA SCOTIA LIGHTHOUSE PRESERVATION SOCIETY**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ POSTAL CODE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

Family names for extra card(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Give details on how you can help \_\_\_\_\_

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

Amount enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Make cheques payable to Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society

New  Renewal

Mail to: THE NOVA SCOTIA LIGHTHOUSE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

c/o Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, 1675 Lower Water Street, Halifax, B3J 1S3

Visit NSLPS on the Worldwide Web!  
<http://www.geocities.com/Yosemite/Trails/2507>