Keepers of the Light

Lightkeepers and Lighthouses in northern Newfoundland

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Something new out of something old: Re-making a piece of history in his own back yard

Figure 1 Brad Johannessen of St. Anthony stands inside a lighthouse Brad and his father, Ron Slade, re-created.

If you've been out to Fishing Point and you're on your way back from the Fox Point Lighthouse, you might glance towards the St. Anthony harbour and see a lighthouse standing on the west side of the harbour a stone's throw from the American Wharf. That lighthouse is no longer owned and operated by the Coast Guard; it's owned and operated by Brad Johannessen, who makes a hobby of working with scrap metal.

It may sound peculiar, but Johannessen's back yard is a graveyard of sorts. It's a place where cars and trucks—as well as machinery—are dropped off, stripped down, and recycled or scrapped.

Brad enjoys working with scrap metal; it's something he picked up from his father Ron Slade, who worked at the St. Anthony airport as a heavy equipment operator until his death a few years ago. "He'd get up at five in the morning," remembers Brad, "and go out and pick at something in his small shed; tear apart a couple of alternators; something like that. Then the boys would come by and pick him up and he'd be off to work. In the evening he'd be right back out in the shed picking at something."

Brad and his father once scrapped a full-size fuel tanker in three days.

Brad's mother, Jane Johannessen, was born in Denmark and, when she was a child, moved with her family to Sweden. She obtained her nursing degree in England and, while in the midwifery program, happened to sit down in a library to read one of Grenfell's books. She was immediately captivated by Grenfell's vision and the work of the Mission. When she completed her midwifery program in 1975 she moved to St. Anthony where she worked in pediatrics; as head nurse in the ICU; and as Director of Allied Health.

As a pastime, she enjoyed skiing on the hills around St. Anthony.

Figure 2 Johannessen and his father salvaged the cap from a former lighthouse at Fishing Point and attached it to a shed on their property. The steps leading up to the second level of the shed were salvaged from the old hospital fire escape when it was torn down.

An old lighthouse remade

In 1936, a flat-roofed wooden building, with striping similar to the (former) iron lighthouse, was built on the point to house a fog alarm. The iron tower was replaced in 1960 by a combination fog alarm and lighthouse, consisting of a single-story structure with a square tower rising 2.7 metres (8.9 feet) above its northeast corner. This new lighthouse, which was also painted with red and white vertical stripes, had a focal plane of 26.8 metres (88 feet). At this time, the light was converted from acetylene gas to station-generated electricity. *http://www.lighthousefriends.com*

It's not just scrap metal or old relics that ornament Brad's back yard; there is a homemade lighthouse, too. A lot of people—generally tourists—are interested in the lighthouse, fitted with a cap from a former lighthouse at Fox Point, positioned along the shoreline facing the harbour. Ron Slade and Brad salvaged the cap of the lighthouse when the government contracted a man named Howell to dismantle the former lighthouse, sometime around 1992. At that time, recalls Brad, Howell planned to use the wood to build a cabin, and the glass for a greenhouse.

"We decided when we saw him tearing down the old tower, that we'd poke around and see what he was up to." Slade came away with the iron cap of the structure—windows intact—and rebuilt a lighthouse in his own back yard. "It's an historical structure," says Brad.

Many people have stopped to look at this lighthouse over the years? "I look out my window and see them on the road, stopping to take pictures, or they'll walk down here and take pictures. I've been down beside the lighthouse working on a vehicle, salvaging the scrap; they'll walk right by to take pictures."

Even in winter time, with three or four people sitting inside, and the sun beaming through the thick glass, it can be quite warm. There's a great view of the narrows from the top of the lighthouse.

Figure 3 Looking towards the narrows at St. Anthony Harbour from inside Johannessen's mock lighthouse.

When they first began working on the lighthouse, Brad remembers it took him and his father a long time to clean the glass; it had been painted white so that the light wouldn't come back through town and annoy people; they'd complained about it in the past. The sections facing the town—three of them—had been painted in 20 layers of white paint.

"Dad and I left the panes of glass in their frames, laid them flat, and poured every concoction we could think of over them to strip the paint off. We'd scrape two or three layers off; then repeat the procedure. It was hard work, and we were experimenting with a blow torch—a light pass—it would take one layer off and we'd just scrape it off. But when we got down around the edge of one of the panels, we held the torch a little too long and it cracked." Over the last 15 years the crack has spread across the glass.

Figure 4 Ron Slade...two of eight panels removed.

Figure 5 Looking towards Fishing Point from inside Brad Johannessen's lighthouse.

The light in the lighthouse is circa 1960s. The Coast Guard removed the main light from the lighthouse when they had it dismantled, and took it to St. John's. But a fellow from the Coast Guard sent another light to Ron Slade a few weeks later to replace the one they'd taken. "Dad had connections everywhere," smiles Brad.

Keeping the light: A Family Tradition.
Belle Isle N.E., Belle Isle S.W., Cape Norman, and Fox Point Lightstations

Figure 6 Randy Campbell 2014

Randy Wallace Campbell is a fifth generation lightkeeper. He was born October 16, 1957 and spent his childhood growing up beside the Cape Norman light.

Randy's father, Alvin Campbell, married Jessie Laing from Boat Harbour and Randy was the second of four boys. His oldest brother Warren keeps the light at Cape Norman. Everett, the third son, works for the Department of Highways, and Craig, the fourth son, is a truck driver in Kitchener, Ontario.

Randy was interested in lightkeeping from an early age. "I followed Dad around when he was a keeper, and that's how I learned. A fisherman takes his young son out in the boat and his son watches him fish; eventually the son becomes a fisherman. I followed my dad around as he worked and that's how I learned to be a keeper."

When it came to working as a lightkeeper, Mr. Campbell says there was no lack of advice from his great grandfather Alexander, his grandfather Jacob, his father Alvin, or his uncles, Joe and Malcolm, all keepers of the light. There were two official residences at Cape Norman but five residences in total, and always plenty of children to play with: fifteen of them, and they were all cousins.

"When we were kids we played lighthouse keeper. We'd go up in the tower and walk around. I remember Grandfather said more than once, 'Now you fellas, you be careful and don't break your legs falling down at that light.' He'd keep the door locked for a while, but a few days later he'd have it opened up again and we'd be back at it again."

Campbells: five generations at the Cape Norman Light

[i]*The Cape Norman Light Station sits atop the cliffs near Cook's Harbour at the very tip of the Great Northern Peninsula. Approved by the Privy Council of Canada and opened in 1871, its first principal keeper was Henry Locke. When Mr. Locke retired in 1890, assistance light keeper, John William Campbell, formerly of Pictou, Nova Scotia, became the principal keeper. He hired his son Alexander as assistant keeper. They worked together for a few years until John died suddenly, when Alexander assumed the mantle of principal keeper.*

In 1907 the Department of Marine and Fisheries replaced the light with a cast-iron tower man than five metres higher than the existing one. That same year, a two-storey duplex residence for the keeper and his assistance was built just below the lighthouse.

When Alexander took over, he hired his son Jacob, who then hired his cousin, Jacob Seymour Campbell. When Alexander retired, his son Jacob assumed the role of principal keeper

and hired his two sons, Alvin and Malcolm, as assistants. Cousin Jacob Seymour was transferred to Cape Bauld on Quirpon Island.

By the time Jacob retired, the lighthouse was semi-automated, requiring only the two brothers as keepers; later, after additional equipment was added and only one keeper, Alvin, was employed. He remained until the final phase of automation was completed in 1992. Alvin's son Warren now mans the lighthouse at Cape Norman.

Figure 7 The Cape Norman Lighthouse. Aaron Beswick photo

Exploring the Cape

The limestone barrens at Cape Norman resemble nothing more than a lunar landscape with vast stretches of deeply convoluted and crevassed limestone rock as far as the eye can see. Fields of limestone are interspersed with species of rare flowers and plants that grow nowhere else in the world. Sheer cliffs, a sparkling sea and a limitless sky stretch into an apparent infinity and, standing sentinel, seemingly on the edge of the world, is the Cape Norman light.

Figure 8 The limestone barrens served as a playground for the Campbell children

This was the playground of the Campbell children.
There wasn't much at Cape Norman that the children didn't explore; they walked right on towards Boat Harbour, as far as what they called the highlands. "I've walked back and forth there time and time again," recalls Mr. Campbell.

When they weren't scampering over the barrens, they were playing at making their own roads, spending hours a day at it, just down from the station. "Mom would have to come out at meal time and say, 'Now boys, it's time to eat.'" There were ponds, so the boys made little fishing boats and floated them. They combed the beaches, finding colourful bottles or glass, and if they found a blow-buoy (bobber) that was a real treasure. Sometimes they even found aluminum blow-buoys too, which probably came off the draggers.

"The men would take an aluminum blow-buoy, saw it in two and make a couple of funnels out of it," he recalls. "They'd drill a hole in it, put a pipe on it, and they had a funnel. They even had a handle, because there were two holes in the buoys to tie a rope through."

There was no electricity, so clothes were washed in a galvanized washtub and hung on a clothesline to dry. "I can remember more than once my mother would be hanging laundry on the line and her hands would almost freeze. Sometimes a good westerly wind would come up and some of the laundry might fly off the line, never to be seen again," he laughs.

Life at the Cape presented plenty of opportunities for accidents. Sheer cliffs plunged to a foaming sea below. The children were warned many times to stay away from the edge of the

cliffs, but sometimes the lure of adventure prevailed over common sense. One of Randy's cousins fell 40 or 50 feet and broke his leg. "My brother Craig was with him; he said they were trying to go down the cliff at the lowest part, and he slipped and fell and broke his leg. His father and my father had to get him and bring him back up," recalls Randy, adding that there were probably a few choice words spoken to the boy during his rescue about staying clear of the cliffs.

School

Randy attended the Wild Bight School, a one-classroom school from primer to grade 11. Later he attended the all-grade school in Cook's Harbour and, finally, he attended Harriot Curtis Collegiate at St. Anthony.

For a teenager, attending Harriot Curtis Collegiate was a challenge. "I'd get out of bed and get ready for school at 6 o'clock in the morning, and in the fall and winter, by the time we got home from school, it was already dark. We'd leave in the dark and we'd get home in the dark. Add the time we spent on homework and it made for a long day."

Figure 9 Randy at age 17

The headless runaways from Boat Harbour

Randy recalls that the boys from Boat Harbour used to tell scary stories, "but I didn't believe them," he says. He thinks the boys from Boat Harbour more than half-believed their own tales, because there were no streetlights and everything was as black as pitch at night time. People were bound to be nervous about walking along the road at the Cape. "They used to say there were runaways up here in the fog with no heads," he laughs. "But I never saw anything."

Transportation, weather and power supplies at Cape Norman

Summers were beautiful at the Cape but winter was another story; they had to batten down the hatches then. When the wind was from the northeast and the Straits were full of ice, there would be snow drifting and it'd be bitterly cold. There were days the young boys would be in the house and wouldn't get outside; it was too stormy. Sometimes, looking out the window, it'd be so white it was like looking at a blank wall.

In later years, a road was put through to Cape Norman, but Randy can remember when there was only a footpath. "Dad used a snowmobile in the winter to go back and forth. We had a dog team, too; we were burning firewood and coal at the time, so the dogs were used for hauling heavy loads." Eventually the dog team was retired and the big Bombardier snowmobiles—tracked passenger vehicles which could tow a big sleigh behind—took their place. A snowmobile could haul a significant load of wood in one trip.

Everything at Cape Norman was powered by generators and fuel. "It's too bad they never learned to harness the wind," remarks Randy. "There was plenty of that!"

There was also plenty of traffic, not on the road, but on the sea. The Campbell clan could look out to sea and watch ships passing by. "Container ships, iron ore carriers…you name it," says Randy.

There was no way to communicate with the ships, however, because Cape Norman had no radio with which to communicate. "Perhaps Cape Norman wasn't as isolated as Cape Bauld and Belle Isle," he says. "There, they had radios so you could talk back and forth to sea traffic."

Launching out

Because Mr. Campbell knew from a young age that he wanted to be a lightkeeper, so after graduation from high school he applied for the Diesel Mechanic's course at the Trade School, which was nine months in duration. "Dad always said it would be good to have a course if I wanted to be a keeper." When he completed the course in June there was an immediate opening so he went right to work with the Coast Guard when he was 20 years old, starting on September 28, 1978.

Figure 10 Light keepers houses at NE Belle Isle station. The principal keeper's house was a 1 ½ story house, and the assistance keeper's house was a two-story duplex.

"Some of the keepers were getting up in age and getting ready to retire," he says, "so it was an opportune time." There were a number of applications for the position, but young Mr. Campbell got the job, and was sent to the station at the northeast end of Belle Isle to train under the principal lightkeeper, Jacob Campbell.

When the principal keeper, Clifford Flynn, retired at the southwest end of Belle Isle, Randy was transferred to the Southwest Lightstation and stayed there for the remainder of his time on Belle Isle. "I had a total of 23 years on the island, including both ends."

As a novice at the southwest station, the young man set about learning how to maintain the equipment. Although he was new at the job he figured he was up to the challenge. If they had trouble on the island it might be days before they'd get a mechanic or a technician in to do the work. "As long as we had the parts there, we were alright. We'd fix whatever we could to keep everything going."

Figure 11 Wearing standard-issue white coveralls provided by the CCG while painting the lighthouse. L-R: Randy Campbell, assistant, and principal light keeper Abner Budgell from Lewisporte

On the island there was always work to do. "In the summer we'd be scraping and painting, topping the tanks up with fuel, and pumping water. We filled our day with duties; whatever there was to do, we did it. We had a schedule of daily duties; if the weather was fit, we'd work outdoors; if it wasn't fit, we'd work indoors."

Once a year a Coast Guard ship would arrive at the lighthouse to deliver supplies, and a helicopter would drop by once a month, bringing supplies if needed. Although the lightkeeper's work was, of necessity, solitary, they were never alone in the sense that they were in constant communication with the Coast Guard by radio and telephone.

The coastguard ship Ann Harvey has just dropped off supplies on the SW station and is heading to the NE station

The Length and Breadth of Belle Isle

Belle Isle was nine miles long and five miles wide, with 365 ponds, "a pond for every day of the year," quotes Campbell. It was 1000' at its highest point.


Northeast Lightstation
Site of Air Force plane crash
Elevation. 1000 ft.
Southwest Lightstation
XH
BELLE
ISLE

Mr. Campbell walked the length of the island every now and then, saying it would take him four or five hours, although there wasn't really any necessity for walking; they had a four-wheeler for traveling over the land and a speedboat for traveling by water if they wanted to visit the lighthouse on the northeast end of Belle Isle.

At the southwest end of the island there was no landing and no beach, but they had a rig for hoisting the boat out of the water; a spar and boom. Anyone landing at the southwest end could go in, hook on, and get hoisted up, and walk a mile up to the lighthouse from there. If supplies were brought in the farm tractor was available to haul them from the landing to the station.

Figure 12 Using a bos'n's (boatswain's) chair to paint the tower, which was provided by the Coast Guard. There was a safety rope around the tower in case the cables let go. There was always something to do at the lighthouse.

Mr. Campbell remembers one incident in particular, when a fisherman couldn't get into the landing to hoist his boat, owing to rough seas.

"We had fishermen, out on the southwest end of Belle Isle, and a sea came up, and one of the guys got out in his speedboat, and couldn't get back to shore; a big swell would come up and move the boat off from the land. And he couldn't hook on to the hoist.

"We had to call the radio station in St. Anthony, and they got the Coast Guard Ship *Harp* on the go to get him out, but before the *Harp* arrived, the fisherman got back into shore, and they called off the rescue.

"After everything had settled down, we went down and hauled the boat from Lighthouse Cove, where he had it moored. The fishermen had a summer cabin there; it was a small cove, just off from the landing. We went over with the government speedboat, towed the boat over to the landing and hoisted it up out of the water. They repaired the boat; got the water out of the outboard motor, and were back in business.

<u>From single to married life</u>

Every winter, when he was still a single man, as soon as the Belle Isle lighthouse would close down he'd go home to his family, who lived year-round at Cape Norman.

Then he met Emily Green from Raleigh, and in 1985, when he was 28 years old, they were married. Although Emily was leaving family and friends behind to live at the light, she didn't mind; she enjoyed bakeapple and partridgeberry picking, and bottling the berries each fall. Together, Emily and Randy kept a small garden, although he remembers the soil wasn't good for growing vegetables.

Emily bringing in the laundry

In their residence, he and Emily had a TV and used an old-fashioned TV antenna for reception. "Just before we left Belle Isle they put in a satellite dish for us, and eventually a cell telephone, which worked perfectly on the west end because everything was open to St. Anthony, but on the northeast end there was no reception and they used a satellite phone out there."

The principal keeper's residence where Randy lived. Also, the old Coast Guard Radio Operator's house, which was eventually moved from the SW corner of Belle Isle to a station on Goose Cove Road.

There were no shops or stores on Belle Isle, so lightkeepers and their families had to anticipate their needs and stock up accordingly. "We had to compile a list of everything we needed during our stay on the island. If we forgot to bring something we did without it. However, for fresh produce such as eggs, milk, fruit and vegetables; if we knew the helicopter was coming—and it did once a month—we could ask them to bring those items along.

"We had a pantry with plenty of shelves, and we had to stock it and pay for it. When we first got there, opening the door to the pantry was like walking into Gersh Elliott's store."

The young couple had occasional visitors, usually fishermen, because there was a little fishing station on the northeast end of Belle Isle, and in the summer there was always someone at the fishing station. Campbell remembers there were as many as seven or eight shacks at what they called 'Black Joe'.

Sometimes, family came to stay. "Mom was out for a few trips. She'd come out on a helicopter and spend one or two nights. They'd pick her up at Cape Norman and fly her to the southwest end of Belle Isle. They'd be around for a few days doing some work, and she'd stay as long as there was work for them to do on Belle Isle. She wasn't at all nervous about flying in the helicopter.

Coast Guard helicopter landing at the SW Belle Isle Station

"Sometimes when cruise ships would go by, they'd come in right close and blow their horn, and you'd see them in their white uniforms waving to us. We'd blow the horn back at them."

Although keepers weren't issued weapons, they kept a rifle for safety, usually in case of predators such as polar bears. Mr. Campbell never saw any polar bears on Belle Isle, but he and Emily saw plenty of Canada geese and Arctic foxes. One year they had ten young Arctic foxes roaming around the residence.

Too expensive to keep a keeper

In 2001, owing to cutbacks, the Coast Guard moved the keepers off Belle Isle and Mr. Campbell was transferred to Cape Norman, where he worked as a keeper until 2008. "They told us it was too expensive to keep a keeper on Belle Isle; the cost of fuel was too high," says Mr. Campbell.

Figure 13 The Campbell graveyard is within view of the Cape Norman light.

"Going back to Cape Norman was like going home," he recalls. The family cemetery was there, a reminder of his ancestors and their work at the light. The cemetery also reminded him of where he had spent his childhood and where he would one day be buried. "Every day on the way to the lighthouse I passed by the cemetery, and every day I was reminded of my family. There were so many memories."

In 2008, when lightkeeper David Taylor retired, Mr. Campbell transferred from Cape Norman to the Fox Point light house at St. Anthony. On the plus side, working at the Fox Point Lighthouse at St. Anthony was a shorter commute from Mr. Campbell's home in Raleigh, thus cutting down on the expense of traveling back and forth to work.

It was after his transfer to the Fox Point Lighthouse in 2008 that Mr. Campbell traded in his coveralls and donned a Coast Guard uniform for the first time, because now he was in the public eye. But eventually there were more cutbacks and the requirement for wearing uniforms terminated in 2011. Now, Mr. Campbell wears his civilian clothes to work.

At Fox Point lighthouse, he works a standard 8-4 shift. "The work I am doing now is not comparable to what I did on Belle Isle. In St. Anthony, you can go home every night. On the island you were there eight months out of the year, and you worked longer hours." At the Fox Point lighthouse the keepers don't scrape or paint the lighthouse or operate the generators. The lightkeeper is there to reset the foghorn if it trips. Power surges have been known to trip the light, and it is the keeper's job to reset it. As well, keepers have a hand-held VHS and if anyone calls in for a weather report, such as tour boats, they give them a weather report. All entries are recorded in a log book: the weather at the beginning of the day and the weather at the end of the day, as well as any incidents worthy of recording.

Figure 14 Fox Point lighthouse, St. Anthony

"But that way of life, the life of a keeper, is coming to an end," remarks Mr. Campbell. "It's over with. It's all automated now."

Because of its location, the Fox Point lighthouse sees a great many tourists and lightkeepers are available to answer any questions they might have. "In the summer there are a lot of tourists coming through and asking questions, and answering them is part of our job; and we get a lot of questions," smiles Mr. Campbell. Some of those questions have nothing to do with lighthouses. "One of the most commonly-asked questions is about the sod-covered hut adjacent to the lighthouse; they find it hard to believe it is a Viking dinner theatre and restaurant."

A keeper is a keeper until he goes to his grave

"After I came off Belle Isle, they had a power outage in the winter, and I was on 28 days off. My father, who was retired, called one morning from his home in Wild Bight and said, 'Do you know the light and horn are not operating at Cape Norman? I thought I'd let you know.'

"I said, Okay, I'll get hold of them right away. So I phoned St. John's and passed it onto them."

Mr. Campbell smiles and adds, "A keeper is a keeper until he goes to his grave."

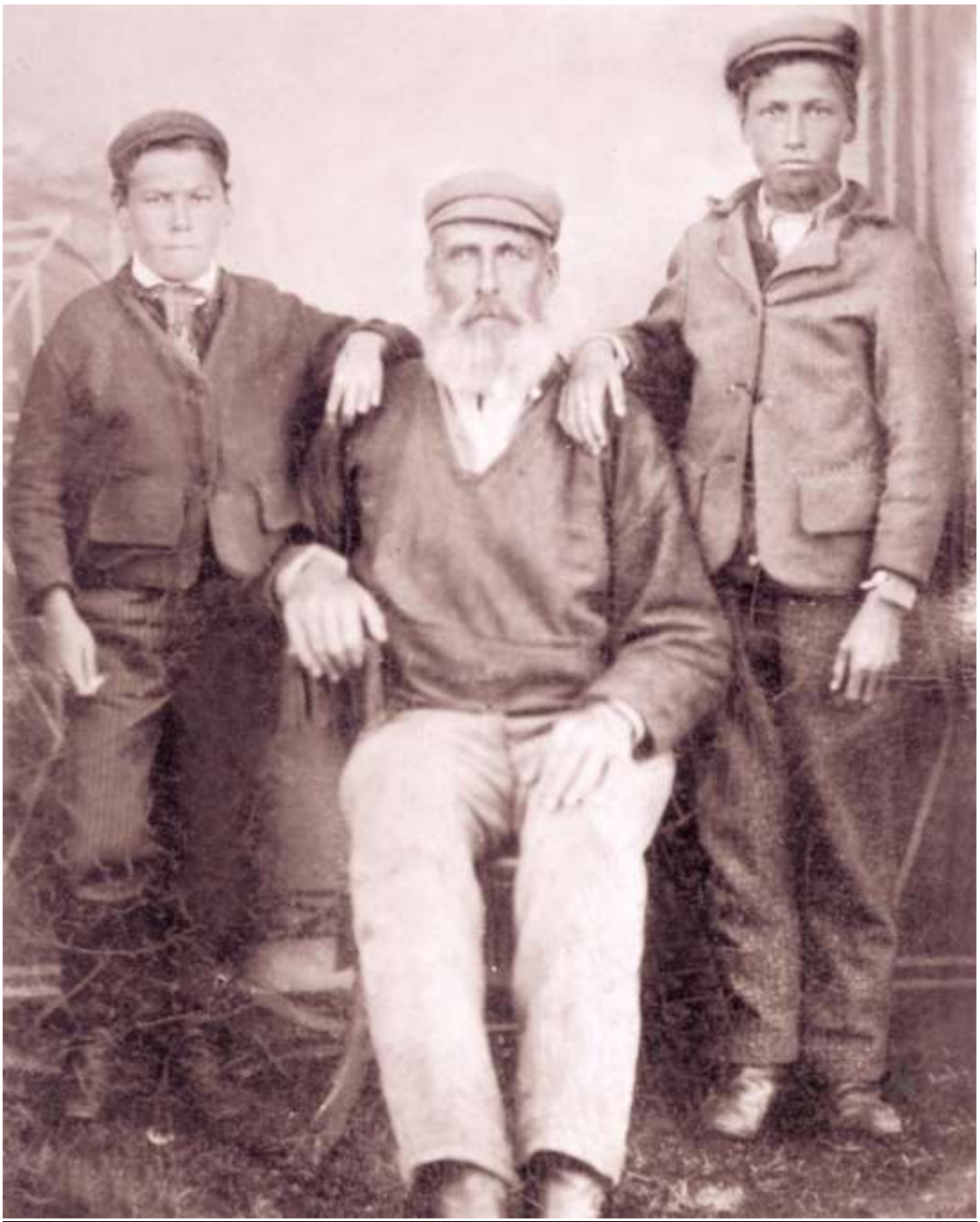
Figure 15 The lighthouse at Cape Norman

Recommended Reading:

- *Facing the Sea: Lightkeepers and Their Families, Cape Norman: Life and Death with the Campbell Clan, pages 74-75. Southwest Belle Isle Light Station: Various stories, pages 80-87. Northeast Belle Isle Light Station: Finding Courage in the Night, pages 89-95. Written by Harold Chubbs and Wade Kearley;* Flanker Press, 2013.
- *LighthouseFriends.*com. Belle Isle
- *Sentinels Stand Tall in History*, by Juris Graney, August 10, 2010. http://ccgnlalumni.com/educationstory.html
- http://www.sabrinl.com Oral History, Belle Isle, 2009

Fox Point, St. Anthony
Uriah Patey, First Lighthouse Keeper

By Ephraim Patey, St. Anthony



Uriah Patey of Pateyville, the first light keeper at Fox Point, St. Anthony. This was the era before the fog horn, so when it became foggy on Fishing Point Uriah would blast his powder gun instead. Resting on his left shoulder is young Joseph Patey. On his right shoulder rests young William Patey.

Fox Point Lighthouse at Fishing Point

Fox Point defines the eastern side of the entrance to St. Anthony Harbour, and a harbour light was established on it 1906. This light was exhibited from a lens lantern hoisted atop an open framework painted white and was kept in operation during the navigation season, which typically ran from June to the end of December.

In 1912, a lighthouse in the form of a circular iron tower painted with red and white vertical stripes was placed on Fox Point. The tower displayed an occulting white light, showing equal alternate periods of 2.5 seconds light and 2.5 seconds dark, at a height of 20.5 metres (67 feet) above the surrounding water. The first keeper of the light was Uriah Patey.

Figure 16 This lighthouse was erected in 1912 and its first keeper was Uriah Patey (photo courtesy www.lighthousefriends.com)

In 1936, a flat-roofed wooden building, with striping similar to the iron lighthouse, was built on the point to house a fog alarm. The iron tower was replaced in 1960 by a combination fog alarm and lighthouse, consisting of a single-story structure with a square tower rising 2.7 metres (8.9 feet) above its northeast corner. This new lighthouse, which was also painted with red and white vertical stripes, had a focal plane of 26.8 metres (88 feet). At this time, the light was converted from acetylene gas to station-generated electricity.

The old iron tower, no longer needed, was lowered down over the cliff face, where it jammed in a crevice. One of the keepers at the time thought it would be lodged there forever, but the sea eventually washed it away, and divers have since found it in about 40 fathoms of water.

Two dwellings, one constructed in 1955 and the other in the early 1960s, were situated near the lighthouse. As the lighthouse was only a twenty-minute walk from St. Anthony, the keepers' children could attend public school, and their families could participate in social functions in town.

www.lighthousefriends.com
Canadian Coast Guard

From Carbonear to the Northern Peninsula

The first light keeper at Fox Point was Uriah Patey, great grandfather of Ephraim Patey of St. Anthony. Uriah's parents were John Patey and Sarah Pilgrim who came from the Carbonear area. Ephraim, who enjoys delving into the history of his family tree, surmises that John Patey may have been married twice because his first child was born in 1824 and the last

was born in February 1852. There were possibly a dozen children in that family. Uriah Patey was born February 1852—he was John and Sarah's youngest child—and he died April 17, 1920.

Ephraim says, "They say people didn't move much in those days, but I have a record of a Captain John Patey going into Barbados to get his boat repaired, where he hit an iceberg on the way down. The following year John was in court in Carbonear. During that period of time, and also later, John was up here fishing and trapping. I suspect this John Patey is my great, great grandfather because there were only three Pateys during this period of time in Newfoundland: John, Edward, and Thomas, and they were brothers."

Figure 17 Headstone of Uriah and Jessie Patey

Although his father came from Carbonear, it seems that Uriah, and some of his older brothers and sisters, may have been born in Little Brehat. Uriah met and married Jessie Clarke, who had also grown up in that community. Uriah and Jessie had eight children: Joseph, Jane, Elihu, Uriah Jr., William Henry, Zacharias, Ephraim, and John. Their mother Jessie died in 1893.

Uriah is buried with his first wife Jessie in a small cemetery on the east side of the harbour. There is a single headstone indicating that Uriah Patey died in 1893, but those dates reflect Jessie's death date, not Uriah's, and thus the dates on the headstone are wrong.

Ephraim laughs and says, "I always tell people he was so contrary he was buried 27 years before he died." The story goes that when Jessie died, the family ordered a headstone from St. John's, but when it arrived it was a single headstone with Uriah's name on it and Jessie's death date. So the family put it up anyway and, in the end, both Uriah and Jessie were buried next to each other.

After Jessie's death, Uriah married Elizabeth Skiffington, who was living in Crémaillère. She was a widow, formerly married to a Bussey from St. Lunaire. There were no children from this union. Elizabeth is buried at the cemetery at Fishing Point.

Keeping the Light

The lighthouse at St. Anthony—known as the Fox Point lighthouse—was opened in 1906, and Uriah Patey manned the Fox Point lighthouse until his retirement in 1916, in his 65th year.

According to Ephraim Patey, a lighthouse keeper didn't require a lot of technical knowledge to man the Fox Point lighthouse in those times. The lighthouse was a metal frame

structure, open, with a kerosene lantern on top. Uriah would winch down the lantern, light it, and winch it up again.

Figure 18 Uriah Patey's matchbox, handed down through the generations

Figure 19 Uriah Patey's pocket watch, still in good working order.

In lieu of a foghorn, Uriah fired his muzzleloader on foggy days or during inclement weather. He operated the lighthouse seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Traffic at that time would have involved either schooners or boats in the inshore fishery, and water travel would have been during daylight hours only; it wasn't normal practice to travel during the night. However, if there was someone caught out overnight, Uriah Patey would be manning the light and firing the muzzleloader as required.

Uriah's son Joseph replaced him as lighthouse keeper for a number of years, but he had a heart condition and was forced into early retirement, and died in 1936 at the age of 50.

Figure 20 Joseph Patey succeeded his father as light keeper, but died early. His inscription reads: In memory of Joseph Patey, beloved husband of Julia Patey. Died August 11, 1936, aged 50 years.

From May or June until December, Uriah and his family most likely lived at Fox Point; an assumption based on the fact that most lighthouse keepers and their families lived right by the lighthouse. Uriah also had the original family home in Pateyville, and a winter house at Frenchman's Pond, where the family stayed from January to March. The house in the woods offered shelter, a good supply of wood for the winter, and was a good place for trapping. By April the family was back in Pateyville to set their gardens, mend their nets, and make ready for the upcoming fishing season.

Figure 21 Mamie, Julia, Jessie, and Ephraim Sr. holding son Joseph.

Stories passed down to Ephraim

Ephraim recalls a story that was passed down to him. "My grandfather Joseph moved his house across the cove once; he put it on skids and probably used a block and tackle system, supplemented by dog teams, horses, manpower; whatever was available at the time. My father, Ephraim Sr., told me there is a good reason why the house was moved. Three men married three Powell sisters from Goose Cove. Grandfather Joseph Patey married Julia, Uncle Hebert Penney married Leah, and Uncle George Patey married Rachel. The houses were that close together that if the sisters stood on their own [ii]bridge, they were in shouting distance of each other. The story goes that the three of them fought and bickered so much the men moved their houses farther apart to get some peace."

"My grandfather Joseph was in possession of the muzzleloader which had been passed down to him by his father, Uriah. My dad Ephraim Sr. and his brother Charles occasionally went to Goose Cove and Crémaillère, birding. One day, he and Charles, who were about 16 or 17 years old, decided to go birding, so they snuck the gun and took off out in the boat. What Charles didn't know was that the gun had already been loaded by Ephraim Sr. He reloaded it—both barrels. A good company of birds came, and he shot off both barrels. The force of the gunshot took him from one side of the boat to the other, and his shoulder was quite sore for quite some time afterwards."

Another story Ephraim relates is about his father's childhood involves a sister who fell over a cliff.

"When my father and his siblings lived out at the light—they were small children then—a sister fell over a cliff, and he had to go down and rescue her on the rock ledge below. Dad said she was that contrary that he was half-tempted to leave her there."

Recommended Reading:

- *Facing the Sea: Lightkeepers and Their Families, Baxter Pynn* by Harold Chubbs and Wade Kearley, page 97-99, Flanker Press Limited, St. John's.
- *Saved by the Sea, Baxter Pynn* Downhome Traveler, Hometown Heroes, Downhome Magazine, February 2009, page 84.
- *Wes Pynn Recalls 33 years at Fox Point Lighthouse*, Northern Pen newspaper, page 8, published October 8, 1985.
- *www.lighthousefriends.com* Fox Point (Fishing Point), Newfoundland.

[i] Facing the Sea: lightkeepers and their families by Harold Chubbs and Wade Kearley, page 74-75

[ii] A small, uncovered platform at the door of a house to which the steps lead; a similar structure at the entrance to other types of building, sometimes at more than one level.