

## **HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT**

The Seal Island Lighthouse was built in 1830 as a joint venture of the colonies of New Brunswick (under the direction of Tidmarch and Sangent) and Nova Scotia (under the direction of Ward and Barlow). It continues in its original function. See FHBRO Building Report 89-175.

### **Reasons for Designation**

The Seal Island Lighthouse was designated Classified because of its thematic association with coastal navigation and shipping in and past the Bay of Fundy; because of its association with the Hichen and Crowell families, founders of the first life-saving station in Canada at this site; and because of its functional design which marked a distinctively Canadian departure from typical British designs. It was also designated for its importance as the fourth oldest lighthouse in Canada, and for its landmark qualities.

Constructed in response to the many ship-wrecks which occurred in this area during the primacy of the Maritimes as a world shipping power, this lighthouse is associated with the thematic development of lighthouses in Atlantic Canada during the colonial period. The reliance on shipping by the colonies resulted in heavy traffic off the south-west coast of Nova Scotia and into the Bay of Fundy. The loss of significant amounts of cargo and many lives in shipping mishaps necessitated the development of navigational aids. This lighthouse was the first, most powerful, in a chain of lighthouses built in this area. The importance of this lighthouse can be seen in the unusual collaboration between Nova Scotia and New Brunswick in its construction and maintenance.

The association with the Crowell and Hichen families, whose lives have been commemorated in folklore and publications, is a key element in the importance of this site. The designation recognizes their work in saving lives, their establishment of the first life-saving station in Canada, and indeed the very establishment of this lighthouse, which owed a considerable debt to the lobbying of Mary Crowell. Its construction further led to the development of several small communities on the island.

Of a simple functional design which combines strength and beauty, the lighthouse employs materials and craftsmanship typical of its period of construction. Unlike British navigational aids because of its wood (rather than stone) construction, the design was suited to the climate and benefited from local skills and materials. This lighthouse and its contemporaries set the pattern for similar inexpensive wooden navigational aids which became the hallmark of the Canadian navigational system from this point well into the 20th century.

As a landmark, the site continues to serve recreational, fishing and commercial navigational traffic off the coast of Nova Scotia.

## **Character Defining Elements**

The heritage character of the Seal Island Lighthouse resides in its tapered octagonal form and its simple construction in heavy timber. Architectural features of this structure which are of note and which should be preserved include the materials and details of its construction; its shingle sheathing; its doorway and two small windows; and its masonry foundation.

Structure-related features such as trenails, braces and knees, and workman's marks in the form of adze and saw marks should be respected. Regular examination and timely conservation work should be undertaken to ensure the continued integrity of the wood members, especially where they meet the foundation. The masonry foundation also merits the attention of a masonry conservation expert when repairs are planned.

The wooden stairs are an important feature of the interior and should be retained. Investigation should be carried out to identify and preserve other early material and finishes. Modifications required for the continuing usefulness of the building should be designed to have minimal impact on early building fabric.

The associated barn contributes to the character of the setting, and should be retained. Development of adjacent land would reduce this heritage character of the site and should be discouraged.

1994.05.24 / Revised 2024.03-20