

Lights of the Inside Passage

A History of British Columbia's Lighthouses and Their Keepers

by Donald Graham
1986

Well written by a historian and serving lightkeeper (Point Atkinson Lighthouse, B.C.), *Lights of the Inside Passage* peels away the romance of lighthouses and, without myth or mystique, paints a picture of the real lives of keepers and their families. Their stories are shared by "wickies" worldwide. (This is the sequel to *Keepers of the Light* reviewed in the Spring 1986 issue of *KEEPER'S LOG*.)

In *Lights of the Inside Passage*, the author continues the saga of the men and women who served in British Columbia lighthouses. Often ignored and sometimes ill-used by an unfeeling bureaucracy located thousands of miles away. Their story includes deprivation, near starvation, despair, and even madness. In spite of often intolerable working conditions, these men and women kept the lights burning and rescued many of the mariners who relied on them.

Keepers of the Light covered lighthouses along the rugged west coast and Juan de Fuca shore of Vancouver Island and those guarding the approaches to Vancouver. *Lights of the Inside Passage* contains four chapters.



Keeper Donald Graham in the lantern room of the Point Atkinson Lighthouse. Don is the keeper of this station and the author of *Keepers of the Light* and *Lights of the Inside Passage*. Photo by Jim Walker.

The first two cover the remaining British Columbia lighthouses; those of the Inside Passage between Vancouver Island and the mainland, and the lighthouses of the storm-drenched north coast and Queen Charlotte Islands.

The third chapter holds a short history of a century of labor relations between the keepers and their union, representing Canadian civil servants, and the government. Not until 1962, did Canada's lightkeepers get full union rights. This meant that they were no longer among the lowest paid workers in Canada, nor, among other things, did they have to pay their own assistants. As Donald Graham writes, "In terms of real wages and benefits, they had almost caught up—to the colony's keepers at Fisgard and Race Rocks in the 1860s."

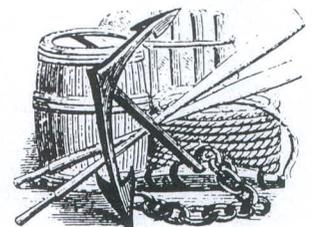
The fourth chapter is about a new battle being fought over Canadian lighthouses—automation and the efforts of keepers and people of the sea, particularly in British Columbia, to forestall it. The latest round came after *Lights of the Inside Passage* was published. Earlier this year, the minister of Transport Canada ordered a reevaluation of the automation program with emphasis on the search and rescue role and marine safety aspect of light stations.

Some lighthouse buffs will be disappointed by the absence of the nuts and

bolts in *Lights of the Inside Passage*. I confess that I was when I started Graham's first book. Before long, the human story, although an often grim one, had hooked me. In an interview with Donald Graham, it quickly became clear to me that this meticulous "wickies" real interest was the people who manned lighthouses. Their story demanded telling and he has done it well.

Lights of the Inside Passage is a hard cover book of more than 265 pages and is well illustrated with 114 photos, 20 drawings, and 22 maps. It is available through the Keeper's Library for \$19.95 plus \$2.00 shipping and handling.

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