

## Are you a Lighthouse?

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Brethren as many of you know I was born and raised in Eastern Canada “down home” as it is often been referred to. Growing up in Atlantic Canada I have always had a fascination with Light Houses and how they work. I am not sure if it was the strength I seen in them or the solitary duty that they performed, but as a young person and to this day I find them interesting and so enjoy reading of them and seeing and photographing them.

Our first lighthouses were actually given to us by Nature. Sailors sometimes used landmarks such as glowing volcanoes to guide them. In the Ancient World, trading ships were eventually built enabling navigators to sail long distances to buy and sell goods. In the days of wooden ships with sails, the wind and waves could easily push them against the rocks and wreck them. And so, the need for lighthouses as warning signals arose.

One of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World was a lighthouse—the famous Pharos of Alexandria, Egypt. It is the first one that is recorded in history and was built about 280 BC. Those records tell us that it was the tallest one ever built—450 ft. (comparable to a 45-story skyscraper) and used an open fire at the top as a source of light. This fantastic structure survived for 1500 years until it was completely destroyed by an earthquake in the 14th century. Today we call people who study (or are interested in) lighthouses pharologists. The name comes from that first famous lighthouse.

The Lighthouse is a tower with a bright light at the top, located at an important or dangerous place regarding navigation (travel over water). The two main purposes of a lighthouse are to serve as a navigational aid and to warn boats of dangerous areas. It is like a traffic sign on the sea. Although we often think of a lighthouse as a tall, white conical tower, there are many, many variations of design. Depending on its location, it might be tall (where the land was very flat) or short and squat (where there was a high cliff or rocky coast). It could be square, octagonal (with eight sides), conical (like an ice cream cone upside down), or cylindrical (like a very fat pipe). When the lighthouses were built, they were constructed with whatever materials were most readily available. They were designed to fit the local geographic and climatic conditions. Some are made of stone; others brick, concrete, wood, steel, cast iron, and even tabby (a mixture of shells, lime, sand and water).

The first lighthouse in what was to become Canada, (the second on the entire coast of North America after Little Brewster Island in Boston Harbour which was built in 1713), went into service at the French fortress of Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island in 1734. Louisbourg Lighthouse is one of the most famous light houses in Canada. Patterned after the Phare des Baleines built off La Rochelle in 1682, the Louisbourg Light was destroyed by British troops during the siege of 1758, and not rebuilt until 1842; the rubble of the original tower is still visible at the base of the current lighthouse, which dates from 1923. Next came the Sambro Island Light in 1760. Located at the entrance to Halifax harbor, it has been upgraded over the years but remains the oldest continuously operating lighthouse in North America, predating New Jersey's Sandy Hook Light by 4 years, and such venerable lighthouses as Virginia's Cape Henry Light, Maine's photogenic Portland Head Light, and Long Island's Montauk Point Light by three decades.

The historical role of lighthouses was to guide and protect sailors as they approached the shore. The beacon led them away from rocky and dangerous cliffs towards safer waters. The light warned ships that land was near when the skies were too dark and stormy to see the coast. Today, lighthouses are no longer needed for the safety of sea travellers, but their past roles as guides and protectors still reassure those who are navigating difficult times. Lighthouses are stable structures that have weathered many storms, and this has made them a symbol of stability and steadfastness. Their immovability inspires perseverance and dedication. The men and women that kept the lights burning for sailors also provoke deep feelings of determination, because they would work tirelessly to ensure that the light shone for those at sea. Their continued diligence saved lives and guided many sailors safely home. After a long and often difficult trip at sea, sailors felt joy and hope at the first sight of a lighthouse. The lighthouse meant that they would soon set foot on shore, and for some travellers, they would be home. A lighthouse might have been the only light in a violent storm, granting optimism to those who saw it. Many times when I was assigned to one of our Canadian Naval ships, as we returned to Halifax, our home port, the Lighthouse at Chebucto Head and George's Island welcomed us home.

Christianity often uses lighthouses to represent various aspects of the religion. Lighthouses are frequently used in the Christian faith due to the many references to light in the Bible. The lighthouse is used to reflect God's guidance and words, and it represents God's power to protect and comfort. The beacon symbolizes the light that Christians use as a guide for life. The light also represents hope for those who are spiritually lost.

When we were first initiated into this ancient and gentle craft as we were on our knees at the altar each of us was asked what we most desired. Our answer “Light” and that is why each of us and our lodges should be beacons of light, a lighthouse, in a world so often filled with darkness as recent events in Europe and the Middle East indicate.

By being good men and true, walking upright with honesty and integrity for all the world to see – you, my Brethren can be that lighthouse. You can be a beacon for your life and your lodge. As that old Sunday school song we use to sing says “this little light of mine, I am going to let it shine”. Let your light shine my Brothers be a beacon of good. Remember be proud of who you are, be proud of what we represent, and be proud of our Gentle Craft.