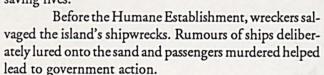
## The Humane Establishment— 150 Years of Lifesaving

the fate of shipwreck victims on Sable Island led to the first lifesaving station in 1801. This "Humane Establishment" was active on the island until 1958. Many shipwreck victims owed their lives to the skill and courage of the lifesaving crew. They were ordinary folk, doing a tough job on an island that was sometimes very beautiful, but more often cold, damp and uncomfortable. They were remarkably successful at saving lives.



#### The Humane Establishment brought help in many ways

Lighthouses: The East and West Lights were first built in 1873. As the island eroded, the West Light was moved in 1883, 1888, 1917, and 1951. Keeping the light shining meant having a lighthouse keeper awake to watch it during all the hours of darkness. The light, the lens and the rest of the mechanism all needed tending.



The aptly named trawler Gale is swallowed by sand after running aground in 1945.

wet survivor found firewood, food (suspended beyond the reach of rats) and directions to the nearest lifesaving station. Lifesaving Stations: The

Houses of Refuge: These

shelters for shipwreck sur-

vivors were scattered along

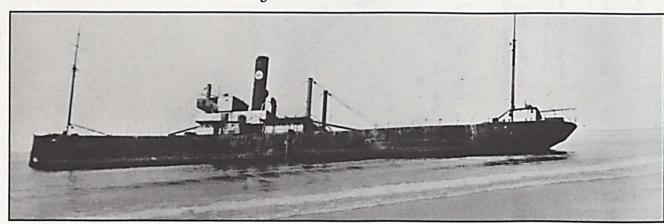
the island. Inside, the cold.

lifesaving communities were Sable's first permanant settlements. A steamer brought supplies a few times each year, but mostly the men and their families made do with what the island

provided. The entire coast could not be patrolled from a single station, so by 1895 there were 5 stations along the island's 44 km length. The Main Station had a Sailor's Home where shipwreck survivors could wait for the next steamer to Halifax.

The lifesaving crew's work included maintaining buildings and equipment, picking cranberries to help finance the operation and hunting ducks and seals for fresh meat, as well as drill and practice and actual rescues.

The Humane Establishment ended in 1958, after 11 years without a shipwreck. Now, the lighthouses are automatic, the Main Station in ruins. Sable's only yearround residents are half a dozen weather observers, sometimes with their families.



British steamer Skidby, wrecked in 1905, is still visible. Her crew walked ashore at low tide.



1. Watching for wrecks: On clear days the crew looked for ships in distress from the tower at each station. In fog or

3. Shooting a line out

had to pull on this rope

to haul out a heavy

hawser which actually

to the wreck:

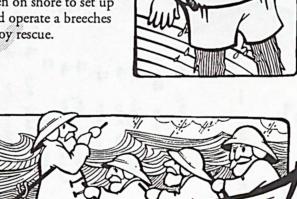
coast on horseback. Horse patrol was no picnic. Damp and cold cut through you like a knife. Wind blew sand in your face. You couldn't see because the fog was often as thick as soup and it was nearly impossible to hear anything but the roar of the surf.

storms, they patrolled the

If the wreck was close to shore, a line was shot across the rigging with a special gun. The linethrowing gun, or Lyle Gun, could shoot a light-weight rope up to 200 meters. Survivors

carried the breeches buoy and multilingual instructions.







#### 5. Rescue by clothesline:

The breeches buoy hung from the hawser on a travelling block. Lifesaving crews on shore could move the block either way with a second line, the whip -line. The survivor was often dragged through the surf as the hawser sagged. This sag limited the breeches buoy's useful range to about 70 m, but it was safer than rowing to the wreck in lifeboats.

6. Rescued sailors were taken to the Sailor's Home to recuperate.





2. It's a long island: The lifesaving crew might have to pull their heavy equipment 20 km through soft sand to get to a wreck site. The lifeboats were hauled close to the wreck site in horse-drawn wagons.

4. Just like the name says: A breeches buoy was simply a pair of canvas pants sewed to a life preserver. Survivors were hauled ashore one by one. It took about 7 men on shore to set up and operate a breeches buoy rescue.

Special boats for a special job:

Halifax.

In 1892 Beebe McLellan self-bailing lifeboats

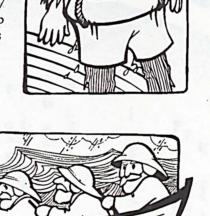
replaced metal lifeboats donated by American

humanitarian Dorothea Dix. They were filled

with cork and had hinged flaps along the side let

water out, but not in. You can see one from Sable

Island at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic in



It's a very stormy place: Sable lies right in the path of most storms that track up the Atlantic coast of North America. Storms were extremely treacherous for sailing ships. Vessels were simply blown onto Sable.

Fog shrouds the island: in summer, warm air from the Gulf Stream produces dense banks of fog when it hits air cooled by the Labrador Current around Sable. Sable has 125 days of fog a year. Toronto has 35.



# Sable Island: Shipwrecks and Lifesaving

"Dark Isle of mourning! — aptly art thou named, For thou hast been the cause of many a tear..." Joseph Howe

able Island, a 44 km long sand bar about 160 km east of Nova Scotia, is renowned for its wild horses. For sailors, it was the Gravevard of the Atlantic an island hidden by waves, storms and fog that meant only death and destruction. Since 1583 there have been over 250 recorded shipwrecks on Sable Island. Very little now remains of the ships that wrecked on the island - a shoe buckle, a few coins, ship name boards, timbers buried in the sand.

### Why So Many Wrecks?

Location: Sable is on one of the world's richest fishing grounds. It is also near one of the major shipping routes between Europe and North America. Hundreds of vessels sailed past each year.



The British barque Crofton Hall stranded 3 miles from the east spit in thick fog. All were saved, some with the breeches buoy.

ments used to figure out a ship's position. Sextants are accurate. but they worked by taking a sighting from the sun or the stars. They were useless in dense fog or cloudy skies. In bad weather, the Captain

The currents around Sable

are tricky: Sable lies near the

junction of three major ocean

currents — the Gulf Stream.

Labrador Current and Belle Isle

There have been no ship-

wrecks on Sable since 1947. Until

recently, sextants were the instru-

navigated by "dead reckoning" using ship speed and direction to estimate his position. But even in good conditions this was educated guessing. Currents and storms confused the calculations

of the best skippers. Many accounts of shipwrecks report that the Captain simply lost his way - he misjudged his ship's position and bumped into Sable Island by mistake.

Current.

After World War II, radar and other advanced navigation equipment became widely used on commercial vessels. Sable ceased to be a major threat to shipping.

Produced by the Nova Scotia Museum with the assistance of the Museums Assistance Program of Communications Canada.

H.C. Worchester 1899 4

Valkyrie 1893

Gale 1945

Stella Maris 1901

S.S. Lemberg 1937 Zone 1862 Marshall Wellington 1823 Jranklyn 1820

Hannah & Eliza 1803

Amazon

Malakoff 1865

Arcadia 1854 Asia 1819

Hersey 1841

Legant 1847

IL Farto 1875

# 7da york 1866

Jaerder 1889 Echo 1827

Henry 1892 Fronsides 1876

Amsterdam 1884

Olympia 1904 : 1 Traveller 1825 II Basil M. Geldert 1906 1 Granville 1838 M.P. Connolly 1918. Wisibis 1855 Ruby 1852 Dash 1864 Labrador 1926 Nassau 1826 Mariner 1898

Estrella 1854 Euzabeth 1826 Australia 1840 Undaunted 1841

Gondolier 1880 Britannia 1883 Brothers 1849 Alfios 1946 Demoscota 1815 Sylvia Masher 1926

Senator 1840 Barbara 1840 Jour Sons 1827

The August Gales:

In August of 1926 and 1927 the Lunenburg fishing fleet was caught in ferocious storms off Sable Island. 138 fishermen died Most were from the same small Nova Scotia fishing villages. These stories of the fishing schooner Columbia, lost with all hands, are typical of Sable Island's tragedies:

Allister Firth, 17, didn't want to go on this trip and had tried several times to escape. Just before the Columbia was to sail he hid at a friend's house, but his father found him and forced him on board. Both father and son died.

George Mayo died along with his brother Ab and his father Joseph. Another brother, Bert, survived aboard an engine-powered trawler. The story is told that at the height of the storm, Bert was startled by an apparition of George in the wheelhouse. George said "Bert, we're all gone", and vanished.

James McLeod, 65, had retired from the sea but decided to make this one last trip. co



H.M.S. Barbados 1812 th Wils 1930 Mary Ann 1852 Detroit 1846 William Bennet 1864 Topaze 1903 James 1824 Hargrave 1851 Inglewoode 1893 Milo 1846 Louisa 1842 Skidby 1905 Meridian 1831 Adamant 1818 Industry 1819 Lizzie M. Stanwood 1904 1 Flatea 1919 Lady Echo 1816 1 Fast Boston 1854 Fila 1811 Matta 1868 Elisa 1840 Hope 1823 Blonde 1849

Trafalgar 1819 Arno 1846

Lark 1858 Primrose 1855 Maskonomet 1854 Wavara 1852 Glasgow 1840

Black Duck 1871 Spring 1807 Dolphin 1805 Fulton 1848 A.S.H. 1855

Afghanistan 1846

Puritan 1922 1

Prince Edward 1809 1

Orion 1811 Cora May 1885 J.H. Albany 1834

Metrose 1828 Norma 1876 Laban 1835

Peastey 1876 .1 Abigail 1835 1 Ann 1835

Reeves 1876

- Georgia 1863 # Sun 1836 # Bob Logic 1837

# Margaret Walker 1850

1 Science 1851

Sable Island

Sable Island is a 44 km long sand bar about 160 km east of Nova Scotia

Agamemnon 1827

I Hannah 1829

Moravia 1899

Mighlander 1874

Highlander 1874

Marold Casper 1926

1823

1841

Malta 1868

Harold Casper 1926

1847

Margarita 1833

Margaret Dewar 1851

Margarita 1833

Margaret Dewar 1856

Margarita 1833

Margaret Neptune 1876

Stark Odder 1804

S.H. Cameron 1868 . Star of Hope 1851

> Oriental 1879 Isabella 1841

> > Triumph 1865 Zemphyr 1873 Mary Porter 1831

Zagle 1845

# Zagle 1835 Juno 1819 Boys 1872

Orpheus 1831 Sylvia 1802 William 1882

Washwauk 1874 Rhea Sylvia 1867 Courser 1830

Blooming Youth 1840 Stella Maria 1873 Gerda 1890 Kasuna 1892 Princess Amelia 1797

Robert J. Edwards 1894 Heimdal 1910 Marmora 1841 Growler 1849 Wicosia 1894 Myrtle 1840

Eric 1912 Wappan 1825 Langdon Ĝilmore 1864 Alma 1856 Raphaele D. 1896 Orlinda 1886 Euza Ross 1856 M.E-E. Robbins 1870 1 Lancaster 1835 S. Eric 1912 1 Margo 1860 # Chas. H. Taylor 1897

H. Harriot 1803 H. Gord Bury 1861 H. Adelphi 1828 H. # Bridget Anne 1892 Gordon 1863 Guide 1853 Jane Lovitt 1862

L'Africaine 1822 Gustave 1851 Maria 1839 Hard Times 1811 Weather Gange Vampire 1861 Maury 1858 Esperanto 1921

- State of Virginia 1879

## Hope 1850
## Packet 1802 - Silverwing 1915

Ephesus 1866 Geo A. Wood 1929 Sadie Knickle 1926

4 Johanna 1836 # Jamaica 1829

W Udahlorkum 1927 Independence Hall 1942 Laura R. Burnham 1873

Jalmonth 1925

Key Légende

Barque Barque

Schooner

Brigantine Brigantin

> Steamer Vapeur