

## FHBRO HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT CAPE SPEAR LIGHTHOUSE, NEWFOUNDLAND

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FHBRO number : 00-198  
DFRP number : 00345  
Resource name : Cape Spear Lighthouse  
Address : Cape Spear, Newfoundland  
FHBRO status : AClassified@ Federal Heritage Building  
Construction : 1835  
Designer : No designer identified  
Original function : Coastal Lighthouse  
Current function : National Historic Site of Canada  
Modifications : Extensively restored  
Custodian : Parks Canada

### Reasons for Designation

Cape Spear lighthouse is a AClassified@ Federal Heritage Building because of its historical associations, and its architectural and environmental values :

#### Historical value :

The Cape Spear lighthouse is associated with the provision of aid to navigation for the settlement of Newfoundland. Constructed in 1835, it was the first purpose-built lighthouse on the east coast of Newfoundland. The Cape Spear lighthouse signalled the entry to St. John=s harbour for commercial shipping and navigation, and was the first Public Works project by the colonial legislature as well as the first project initiated by the commissioners of lighthouses. From the outset, shipping duties were levied on commercial ships to pay for the cost of maintaining the lighthouse. Members of the Cantwell family were the light-keepers of the lighthouse for over a century and throughout much of its functional life.

#### Architectural value :

The Cape Spear lighthouse is an excellent interpretation of Neoclassicism applied to a lighthouse program. Characterized by a well proportioned composition and simple building forms, the building consists of a simply articulated, two storey cubic volume with clapboard siding, and a low hipped roof crowned with a solid stone circular tower and polygonal lantern with a domed roof. Well built and functionally well conceived, the Cape Spear lighthouse is a skilful integration of two building types, a residence and a lighthouse, and is an elegant solution to a challenging functional program. The building=s solid construction also demonstrates the use of quality craftsmanship and materials some of which, such as the structural framing and interior masonry tower and lantern, have survived the harsh weather conditions for over a century.

#### Environmental value :

Located on the most eastern point of Newfoundland, the Cape Spear lighthouse reinforces the dominant maritime setting of the rugged headland and natural coastline. The site is defined by the borders of the Cape Spear Lighthouse National Historic Site, and has retained its rugged character and its relationship to the surrounding landscape. The Cape Spear Lighthouse is one of the best known symbols of the Avalon Peninsula, a distinction it shares with Cabot Tower.

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## Character-Defining Elements

The following character-defining elements of Cape Spear lighthouse should be respected :

Its role as an illustration of provision of aids to navigation for the settlement of Newfoundland, and as the first coastal light to signal entry to St. John=s harbour is reflected in :

- \$ its strategic coastal location and its dominant view; and,
- \$ the skilful integration of two building types, a residence and a lighthouse, which permitted the continuous and efficient performance of this coastal lighthouse despite the rugged landscape and harsh weather conditions.

Its excellent interpretation of early 19<sup>th</sup> century Neoclassicism, its quality craftsmanship and its good quality materials as manifested in :

- \$ the well proportioned and symmetrical composition of the building which consists of simple forms such as the cubic volume of the residence, the pyramidal shape of the low hipped roof, the circular stone tower and the polygonal lantern with domed roof;
- \$ the simple articulation of the building=s facades which are sharply defined and framed by the overhanging cornice, the wide horizontal planks at the base and cornice of the building, and the wide vertical wood planks evocative of pilasters at the corners of the building and between the windows, dividing the elevations into three bays;
- \$ the rhythm established by the symmetrical placement and proportions of the ground floor=s double-hung windows, and the upper level=s smaller, rectangular windows, the centre window only on each elevation being real;
- \$ the elegant scheme of exterior paint colours which consists of the square white residence and the red and white striped dome of the lantern;
- \$ the functional interior layout of the residential spaces which are wrapped around the masonry tower; and,
- \$ the well-crafted construction of the stone light tower and foundation and the wood structure and clapboard siding of the residence.

The manner in which this coastal lighthouse reinforces the maritime character of the setting as evidenced in:

- \$ its relationship with the site, in particular its prominent location on a ridge at the end of a climbing path, isolated from the other buildings belonging to this National Historic Site;
- \$ the contrast of the lighthouse=s bright white residence and distinctive red and white lantern with the rugged landscape of the rocky peninsula and expansive ocean which establish the maritime character of the setting;
- \$ the building=s landmark value as the centerpiece of Cape Spear National Historic Site, and one of the best known symbols of the Avalon Peninsula.

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