

## Cape Bonavista Lighthouse—International Historic Civil Engineering Site

A major part of the CSCE History Program is the identification and commemoration of Historic Civil Engineering sites. At the 2009 Annual Conference in St. John's NL we added three more sites, bringing our overall total of Historic Civil Engineering Sites to fifty four. Of these, four are International Historic Civil Engineering Projects, which were commemorated jointly with the American Society of Civil Engineers.

At the ASCE/CSCE/ICE Triennial Conference on Coastal Management which followed the 2009 Annual Conference we added one more joint International Historic Civil Engineering Site, a Newfoundland icon, the Cape Bonavista Lighthouse. This time, however, our international partners were the Institution of Civil Engineers.

Not only is the Cape Bonavista Lighthouse an outstanding Newfoundland lighthouse in its own right, but its interna-

tional provenance is through its connection with England's Trinity House, the General Lighthouse Authority for England, Wales and other British Colonies, with Scotland's Northern Lighthouse Board and also with the famous Stevenson family of Lighthouse engineers.

Designed by the engineers of England's Trinity House and constructed between 1841 and 1843 by the Newfoundland Lighthouse Commissioners, Cape Bonavista lighthouse is a square two storey house-like wooden structure built around a masonry tower which rises through the centre of the building to support the light.

The first revolving lights at Cape Bonavista in 1843 came from the world-renowned Bell Rock Lighthouse, off Arbroath, Scotland, designed by John Rennie and Robert Stevenson where the lights had been in use since 1811. The Stevenson designed lighting mechanism was installed at Cape Bonavista by Lighthouse Keeper Robert Oke, who was later to become Chief Inspector of Lighthouses for the Commission.

In 1895, these lights were replaced by the lighting array from Harbour Grace Lighthouse; an array originally installed at the Isle of May Lighthouse in Scotland, yet another Stevenson design. Although decommissioned in 1962, these lights with their beautiful silvered-copper reflectors, an innovation in lighthouse illumination, can still be seen at Cape Bonavista Lighthouse.

The Stevenson family dynasty of lighthouse engineers extended over four generations and was responsible for the design and construction of over 100 lighthouses around the world. Possibly the best known member of the family, however, had a talent other than in engineering. Robert Stevenson's grandson was Robert Louis Stevenson, author of, "Treasure Island", "Kidnapped", "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" amongst his many other literary works.

A plaque commemorating the Cape Bonavista Lighthouse was unveiled on June 2 during the Triennial Conference by CSCE President Gordon Jin, ICE President Jean Venables and Manager of Historic Sites for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Gerry Osmond. ■



LEFT Jean Venables, Gerry Osmond, Gordon Jin  
BELOW Cape Bonavista Lighthouse. [wikipedia]

