

## **Intro to our second heritage interview series.**

### **Vic Douse talking about the Point Prim Lighthouse and the people important to the preservation of the lighthouse.**

Vic: Welcome back everyone. This is series two of our historical lecture series where we are capturing the interviews of people that were important to the preservation of the Point Prim Lighthouse Society and the lighthouse. As you can see I am not David Weale. David Weale is unavailable this series so you're stuck with me, Vic Douse. I'm the current co-chair of the lighthouse society. And so what we're getting everyone to do is to tell their stories of how they became involved in the lighthouse and their current role in the lighthouse and in the lighthouse and the lighthouse society, I'll use them back and forth. We're all members of the lighthouse society, it's all about supporting the lighthouse and grounds for the public.

So how did I get involved in the Point Prim Lighthouse Society? Well, I think we have got to go all the way back. So, like I said before, my name is Vic Douse. My progenitor is William Douse and he was the land agent for Lord Selkirk, and that would be the sixth Lord Selkirk, James Dunbar. He's not the Lord Selkirk that settled all the people here in Belfast, he's his son. The fifth Earl of Selkirk who settled the Belfast area, he died quite young, and his son took over the estate in 1830 I believe and then William Douse became his agent in 1833. Until William's death in 1864. So a lot of the goings on in the Belfast area went through William Douse. So William Douse has always had lots to do with the Belfast area and then there's the famous Belfast Riots, the political riot that William Douse was involved in, he was actually the person they were trying to kill. So I have a last name that is in Island history books, and if you put in Point Prim Lighthouse at all in the internet it's going to come up about the story about William Douse bringing the government officials out here for picnics and looking at the area and that he donated the land for the Point Prim Lighthouse from the Lord Selkirk estate to the governments. He was also an MPP, it was called at the time, Member of Provincial Parliament, so he was also the member for the area, he's in charge of the land in the area. He was also a member of the Prince Edward Island Steam Company, so it's in

his own shipping interest too to get a lighthouse built here too. So that's how my interest in the Point Prim Lighthouse came to be, through my family name.

So, I'll go back to David Weale was a, I have a history degree from the University of Prince Edward Island and David Weale, Professor Weale was a mentor of mine along with Father Bulger. So when you're in Father Bulger's class he gets you to do a paper on an Island topic, so I did William Douse to help to put the picture back together of my family history like a genealogy project. So during that project and during two semesters of Father Bulger for that, I outlined a lot of William Douse's history. So then after that when you have the relatives come home Point Prim is on the Douse historical family trail. We would take everybody down here and talk about it, but also it's a beautiful site and always has been a beautiful site, so we're happy to do that.

So I became involved in the Point Prim Lighthouse Society in 2013 when it came to my attention that they were preparing for the 150th Confederation celebrations and I wanted to kind of look at their history. I have a history degree and I know quite a bit about the lighthouse through my studies of William Douse and his involvement in the site, so I thought I might have something to offer. So I got in contact with Doreen Huestis and we corresponded by email a little bit and then she invited me to come to a couple of the Point Prim Lighthouse Society meetings. And then I was starting to get to the point, they had hired a young man to do a pamphlet and some historical stuff as well, and I was kind of tweaking and reviewing that stuff as well. It was they, and now it's we, we did some lively poster boards down on the shore, and I reviewed some of those and fact checked some of that stuff. So that is how I became involved in the society. So I would have become a member in 2014 and I think I quickly became the Vice Chair of the society. Peter Southward, being the Chair at the time, and I became Vice Chair at the time because most of the other roles were already filled, Secretary, Treasurer and stuff like that, but I became Vice Chair because I had just come out of being the President of the Autism Society of Prince Edward Island for a decade or so, I was also Vice President of Autism Society of Canada for many years as well. So I had administrative skills and used to running boards and doing stuff like that, so the people were happy that I could come along and bring some of that skill set to the board. Plus my historical knowledge

and familiar knowledge of the site. But it's a wonderful board and everybody has such a wonderful skillset and we're very fortunate.

So my current role on Point Prim Lighthouse Society is I'm actually the co-chair now. We updated, I think in 2019 I became the Chairman and Cathy Krolkowski became the Co-Chair, but we modernized in 2019, I believe it was 2019, it's had with the Covid stuff to remember the years anymore, but I believe it was 2019 Annual General Meeting, we modernized our governance instead of having a Chair and a Vice Chair, we went to having two Co-Chairs and that's kind of a modern governance. We both have the same powers to assign stuff and do stuff, so we're equals instead of someone being President or Vice President or Co or Vice Chair. So that's been done. The big part of these were very active years, and I've come in at the boom years of when we were finishing up the divestiture we got ownership of the property in 2016, Doreen Huestis our Treasurer, she's a wonderful lady at finding government funding, so we were able to increase the sea wall down there, get proper parking for the bus tours, get a modernized restoration of the Keeper's Cottage to be our administrative centre and bathrooms and a gift shop, and it's an artisan gift shop. So we've come a long way in the last, oh it's getting to be close to 10 years now, it's wonderful. The site now is so well maintained that it's, it must be a beautiful as it ever was, even in the original state. It's so well maintained. We've replaced the windows, we fixed the shingling, oh and a couple years ago we even replaced all the metal stanchions around the light at the top of it. So they were all about 175 years old, all that metal, so we got that done last year during a Covid project. So it was wonderful to have all that done, all that metal was replaced and repainted, Again, the goal of the Point Prim Lighthouse Society as a historical preservation society is to maintain the lighthouse and the grounds for the public in perpetuity and most of the people on the society are, have a family connection. Most of the people, they're descendants of keepers, me I'm a descendant of William Dounce, the land agent, the MLA, the MPP for the area, so we all have a strong family tie to why we're working to provide this.

We're also, we're a modern group too, we want the tourism, we want the traffic in the neighborhood, for Prince Edward Island, for Eastern Prince Edward Island, but we also have to temper that with preservation we make

sure, and I believe we do a much better job of that than was done for many many years, we keep the property up, it's beautiful the building has been wonderfully maintained. I wouldn't say modernized, but it's maintained and restored to it's former greatness, if not greeted. It's stunning down there, and I've very proud of what gets done down there on a daily basis. And then the historical lectures and tours that people take, people enjoy that kind of stuff. It's been such a great experience in the board. Everyone is committed, again because they're bringing their own historical perspective and family ties to it. The people care and they're invested in it. So it's just been a wonderful experience.

So now we'll continue interviewing some other people for today and thank you so much for your time.