

THE HOME OF SIMEON CLARKE

(SITE OF THE FIRST TELEGRAPH OFFICE AT GROSSE ISLE)

SIMEON CLARKE, eldest son of William Clarke and Caroline Goodwin was born at Grosse Isle on June 26, 1843 and baptized July 9, 1850 by Bishop George Jehoshaphat Mountain on his first visit to the Magdalen Islands.

A fisherman by occupation, SIMEON married ELLEN TURNBULL on November 13, 1870 and raised a family of eight children, namely, *Ada Caroline, Melissa, Philip Roy, Simeon (Jr.), John Lewis, Eugenia, Peter and William.*

In the latter part of the summer, 1880, a submarine telegraph cable was laid, connecting the Magdalen Islands with Meat Cove, Cape Breton. The cable landed on the beach approximately two miles east of Old Harry. A land line connected the main cable to the electro telegraph office at Grosse Isle which was situated in the home of Simeon Clarke. Another cable connected the light station on Bird Rocks with the Grosse Isle office.

On August 17, 1880, Mr. J. Augustin Lebourdais was appointed Inspector of Telegraph Lines and operator of the Grosse Isle telegraph office. His assistant was Simeon Clarke's sister Margaret. Lebourdais, a ship wrecked mariner, was the sole survivor of the brig WASP wrecked on the north beach of the Magdalen Islands on the night of November 28, 1871. Mr. Lebourdais and his wife resided with the family of Simeon Clarke for approximately eight years. Some of their children were born there.

Shortly after the telegraph station opened, the following telegram was dispatched from the Grosse Isle office in Morse code:

FROM MAGDALEN ISLANDS, VIA SOUTH WEST POINT, ANTICOSTI,
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 1880,

TO: J.U. GREGORY, AGENT,
DEPARTMENT OF MARINE & FISHERIES, QUEBEC,

AS ORDERED BY YOU I HAVE DISPATCHED A MAN FROM HERE WHO WILL GET FULL PARTICULARS ABOUT THE VESSEL. HE HAS FORTY SEVEN MILES TO WALK AND WILL NOT GET BACK BEFORE SUNDAY NIGHT.

J.A. LEBOURDAIS,
INSPECTOR OF TELEGRAPH LINES

In 1888, J.A. Lebourdais was transferred to Cap aux Meules as telegraph operator and District Superintendent. A new operator was appointed at Grosse Isle and the office was moved to a new location.

Simeon Clarke died on April 3, 1933 and his wife, Ellen, died on July 9, 1941. Their son, Peter, continued living in the house until 1957.

Then in 1960 their grandson Peter B Clarke, son of Simeon (J R) put some repair on the house, and stayed until he moved to a Foster home in July 1995. He later died in May 2000.

Simeon Clarke great Grandfather of Ivan Clarke