

Bird Rock

This lighthouse was established in 1870. It is located on the summit of Great Bird Rock in the Magdalen Islands with latitude N. 47 50 20 and longitude W. 61 08 43. It has a sheer cliff rising thirty metres out of the sea. It was first lit in 1870 to help illuminate the route of a new mail service sponsored by the federal government. Two houses, three outbuildings, and a lighthouse occupy this tiny island along with 40,000 birds which are mostly gannets.

Many of the lightkeepers and their families who have lived on this island have had a rough time surviving. In fact, many of the lightkeepers, their friends and relatives have died during the fierce storms that have done considerable damage during the winter and summer months.

The first lightkeeper hired asked to be relieved as he could not stand the isolation. The second keeper stayed only for eighteen months. From 1873 to 1880, Patrick Whalen had worked as lightkeeper. Then next to him was Charles Chiasson. In 1885, Angus Ross was keeper. Then in 1886, Angus Campbell was keeper. Jean Turbide then succeeded Campbell in 1887. He operated for several years then his cousin kept the light. Pierre Bourque manned the light from 1897 until 1905. Bourque's cousin, Wilfred, then

took over in 1911. In 1912, Elphege Bourque took his place for several years. In 1938, J. Marc Richard was temporary keeper. He was then replaced by Alfred A. Arseneau. In 1955, Elxear Arseneau operated as lightkeeper. From 1960 to 1961, Leo Elonquin was assistant lightkeeper. Then from April to September of that year, Mark Cyr was assistant lightkeeper. In 1961, Stanislas Lapierre took over with Azade Boudreau who was the third assistant. On August 18, 1962 the position was then filled in by Donat Devost. He left that position on February 1, 1990. Later on in 1962, Archibald McLean was the second keeper, then in 1964 he resigned. Leon Patton then kept the light from 1964 to 1966. After Patton, it was Phillip Quinn. He looked after the light from November 14, 1966 until he retired on January 5, 1988. J. Laureat LeBlanc was the other lightkeeper. He started on December 15, 1967. He then resigned on October 15, 1987.

More buildings started to occupy Bird Rock Island.

In 1907, a new fog alarm building consisting of thirty square feet was completed. In that same year, the cannon was replaced by a modern fog whistle.

In 1908, they decided to raise the tower twelve feet as the fog building blocked a part of the horizon and the lighthouse could not be seen from all

points around the Rock. Improvements were made to the cistern and repairs to platform and boathouse. An oil shed was put up to store oil used for fog alarm. Three building used as blacksmith shop, stable, shed, etc., were converted into one good building.

In 1921, Bird Rock was established as a Bird Sanctuary under the Migratory Birds Convention Act. Also, major repairs to lighthouse, fog alarm, trestle, and dock were completed.

In 1923, an electric light was placed in fog alarm. More repairs were done as a destruction had occurred.

Rebuilding of the trestle and track from the wharf up to the station was done in 1940.

The dwelling house was completely destroyed by lightning in 1955.

In 1961, there were evidences of much damage done to trestle of stairway. In that year, the fog alarm and Radio Beacon building were created.

The last changed were made in 1980. It is presently operated by electric.