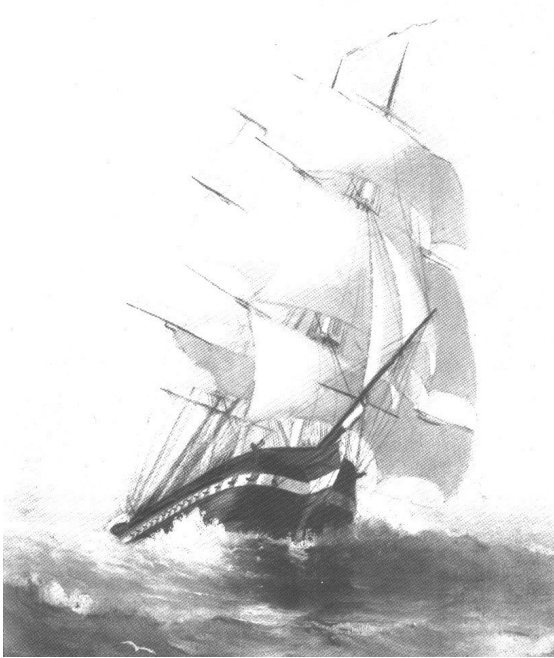


# Island Tragedies



at Sea

# *Island Tragedies at Sea*

The Magdalen Islands is considered a small community, where people know one another and share their joys and sorrows. When the fishing and hunting are plentiful everyone benefits. If the fishing and hunting seasons are poor, or if there is a tragedy on land or at sea, everyone is affected.

Although most Magdalen Islanders make their living from the sea by fishing its harvest, the sea can be a cruel and unforgiving mistress. Over the last 100 years tragedy has struck family after family taking the lives of loved ones, young and old.

Seal hunting, once an important part of Island History, has also taken more than its share of lives of Magdalen Island men.

This book is dedicated to those who lost their lives so suddenly to the unknown and the unexpected. May they rest forever in peace and love!

A special thanks to all those in the community who gave so generously of their time and memories to help us gather this information. We have found several versions of the same story and have recorded the one most mentioned. Hopefully, this will cause no offence.

Thank You,

Compiled through special projects sponsored by C.A.M.I. and created in part by Katherine McCartney and Rodrick Pealey 1998-1999, Jennifer Dickson and Robina Goodwin – 2000.

# Sealing Tragedies

In 1864 from April 27<sup>th</sup> to April 29<sup>th</sup>, two vessels were lost in the ice. Both crews were lost. The Magdalen Island tragedy resulted in leaving 13 widows and 45 orphans.

## Grosse Ile

In the year 1923 a tragic sealing accident happened in the community of Grosse Ile. Jack Dickson, Jack Clark and Will Clark went out on the ice hunting for seal. A storm from the southeast hit the Islands and the ice began to move. Jack Dickson got into the bow of the boat trying to protect himself. Despite his efforts to survive he only made it half way back to shore. Jack Clark and Will Clark took their rifles and began to walk. They ended up a half mile off where the salt mine is currently located. They could see the telephone poles and tried to follow them. The storm was more than they could handle and as a result, both men perished. The next day people from the community formed a search team and found the three men. Due to the heavy frost in the ground, the three men are buried side by side in one grave.

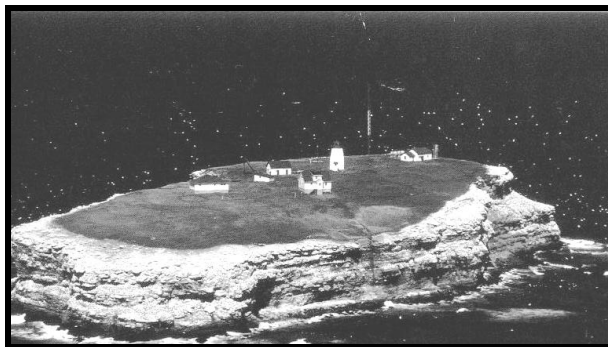
# Tragedies at Bird Rock

One March of the early 1900's, the Bird Rock lighthouse keeper, Mr Whalen, his son, and his assistant, J. Pigeon, went out onto the ice to hunt seals. During the night the wind came up pushing the ice offshore and they were unable to return. Before morning, Mr Whalen and his son had frozen to death. J. Pigeon survived and was able to make his way back to Bird Rock.

Several years later, about 1910, lighthouse keeper Telesphore Turbide, his son, and helper Damien Deveau, went out on the ice floes hunting seal. The lighthouse keepers soon froze to death, but young Turbide somehow reached Cape Breton Island alive. As he was taken to the hospital he revived long enough to tell his tragic story. Then young Turbide said, "Annie Deveaux is alone on the rock. Will you save her?" Within an hour he died.

The following morning a government icebreaker was on its way through the ice. Three days later, Annie Deveaux, a solitary prisoner at Bird Rock for four long weeks, was rescued.

In 1912 the tragedy happened again. The lighthouse keeper was lost leaving an anguished spouse to tend the light. She tried to signal but due to heavy fog banks the signals were not seen. The widow, with a baby in her lap, steered her shallop through the ice fields to Brion Island where she received help.



# Grand Entry

On April 17<sup>th</sup>, 1936 the ice was beginning to break up in Grand Entry bay. Foster Clarke left for Grand Entry in his boat with a crew of six men from Old Harry on board. In those days they had a fashion of racing their boats to see who could make it from Seacow Path to Grand Entry in the fastest time. The boat turned over in the ice. Henry Clark was the only survivor.

*We remember ...*

Oran Dingwell – Age 28      Ray Dunn – Age 37  
Baxter Turnbull – Age 22      John Dunn – Age 19  
Aubrey Dunn – Age 16      Foster Clark – Age 28

# Entry Island

Allan Dickson, son of Bill and Jane Dickson, took his dog, Sailor, duck hunting alone off Clover Hill on February 8, 1903. Allan was seventeen years old at the time. Later that day, some of the Island men noticed Sailor running around a hole in the ice. It was then that they realized that Allan had fallen through the ice.

Although he had perished, they were able to recover his body.

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Jane Morrison had a cow in Old Harry that she wanted to bring home to Entry Island. Her son, Wilfred Morrison, notified Ernest Dickson to come to Grindstone to pick up the animal. It was a beautiful Sunday, July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1923. The wind was starting to blow from the northwest. They got as far as North Point, when the strong tides capsized the boat.

That day, Jane Dickson and Agnus Welsh were taking a Sunday walk down by the factory near the shore. They happened to hear a cow bawling and looked down over the bank and saw a cow on the beach with a rope still around her neck. When the wind calmed down the bodies of the Wilfred and Ernest were found. The bow of the boat could be seen bobbing out in the water by North Point.

# Marie Judith

A tragic accident occurred on Thursday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1996 at the western end of Brion Island. Captain Bernard Poirier and his helper, Stephan Samson, boarded a make shift raft and left the *Marie Judith* late in the evening to go ashore.

On the way back the raft proved unseaworthy and started to break up. Alain Poirier (brother to Bernard) onboard the *Marie Judith* witnessed this, and called the Coast Guard for help. When notified by the Coast Guard two boats left Grosse Ile on a rescue mission. Captained by Ricky Burke and Blair Goodwin, they set off for Brion Island, one going around the eastern end, the other the west. Fortunately Blair discovered Stephan Samson, barely alive after two hours in the water, clinging to the make shift raft. On boarding the *Marie Judith*, Alain was found in shock. The body of Captain Bernard Poirier was never found, despite intensive searching.

A monument in the shape of a boat was erected on Brion Island in his memory by a close group of friends. His sisters planted flowers around the monument.



# Entry Island Tragedy

## The Sinking of the "Tammy Anne"

November 21<sup>st</sup> 1987

Five lives were lost on November 21<sup>st</sup>, 1987, when high winds, poor visibility and rough seas were believed to have driven the *Tammy Anne* off course and into the shallow waters around Sandy Hook. The *Tammy Anne* was a fishing boat from Entry Island that was transporting gasoline from Grindstone to Entry Island.

Searchers worked late into the night, but it was not until early Sunday morning that the wreckage was sighted and the bodies of Kimberly Patton and Lorne McLean were retrieved. The bodies of the other three victims have not been found to date.

The loss of these five young lives is still being felt in all parts of the Island today. A memorial plaque and a stained glass window has been placed in the Entry Island Church and reads in memory of:

*Kimberly Patton – Entry Island – Age 18*

*Tracy Clarke – Entry Island – Age 18*

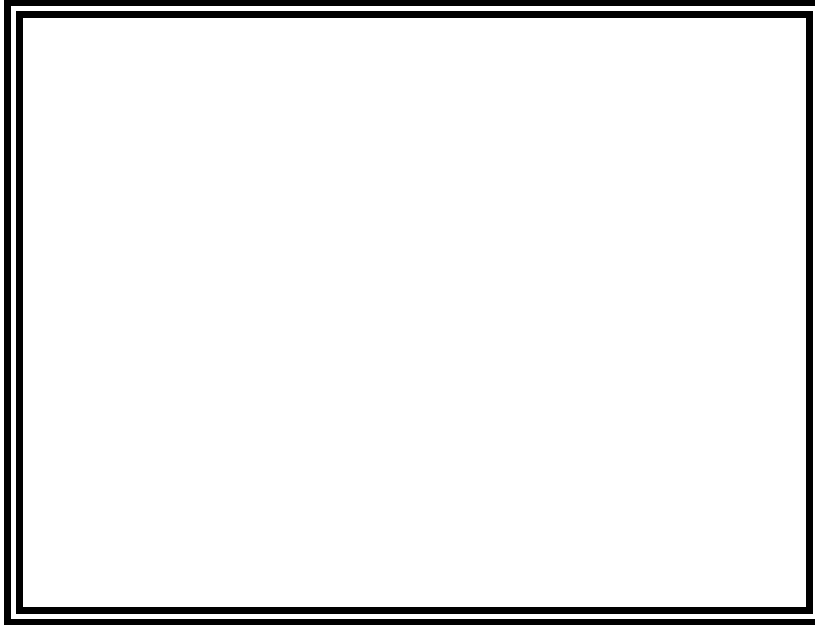
*Delbert McLean – Entry Island – Age 24*

*Lorne McLean – Entry Island – Age 27*

*Darla Hickey – Joliette, Quebec*



*The east window is our offering to God in love for the Grace of their lives with us and a reminder that we are all one in Jesus Christ.*



## Nadine

Another heartbreaking loss felt across the Islands from Grand Entry to Amherst was the tragic sinking of the *Nadine* on December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1990. Eight lives were lost during this tragic event

The *Nadine* was a steel stern trawler of Canadian design with a displacement of 785 tons. It sank 19.3 kilometres from Boudreau Island off Grand Entry during a severe windstorm.

### **Lost during the sinking of the *Nadine* were:**

Pierre Cyr- Amherst - Age 31  
Laureat Deveau-Millerand- Age 47  
Estelle La Berge (Biologist)- Rimouski- Age 40  
Mario Leblanc- Gros Cap- Age 36  
Emile Poirier- House Harbour- Age 23  
Augustin Vigneau- Etang-du-Caps- Age 31  
Gerard Vigneau- Portage-du-Caps- Age 30

The *Nadine* was refloated on November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1991. Two bodies have never been recovered. Two men were rescued alive from the icy waters.





## S.S. Lunenburg

The *S.S. Lunenburg* was involved in a dramatic shipwreck on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1905. The proprietor of this ship, R.J. Leslie, was the Magdalen Island member of the Provincial Government.

The ship sailed regularly between the Magdalen Islands and Pictou, Nova Scotia. It carried mail, passengers and general merchandise. After it left Souris, P.E.I., on December 4<sup>th</sup>, the weather deteriorated. The weather was bad, but the ship had often sailed in storms like that. As the ship neared the Magdalen Islands, the storm intensified until it was almost a hurricane. Driven off-course by the current and wind, visibility minimal due to snow, the coast was struck. It was supposed to have been ten miles away.

The storm was so bad no one could go on deck for fear of being washed off by the waves. The inhabitants of the place could offer no help. They were powerless against the waves that were pounding violently on the shore.

At dawn, volunteers including the first and second mate, offered to take a lifeboat to shore. The waves were dangerous: five people risked the trip. In the violent wind it took three minutes to reach the shore, where they were welcomed by the rescuers.

The ship was breaking up from the assault of the waves. The men left behind waited for help from land, but after several unsuccessful tries were made to launch a boat, they resigned themselves to waiting until it calmed down. In despair, the last dozen men went in a small boat to make the perilous trip.

The people on shore watched the manoeuver nervously, because it was a matter of life and death. The last man to get into the boat was the proprietor, Robert J. Leslie, who stood to make room for everyone. When they left the wreckage, they swerved to avoid it, but a wave hit the fragile craft and all the passengers were caught by the waves.

They tried to hold onto the capsized boat but the furious sea pulled at them. The only survivor, Captain Solomon Pride, succeeded in climbing on the submerged boat and fought the sea for several more hours. He was unconscious and freezing at the mercy of the waves. A brave man, Joseph Renaud, risked his life to bring the captain ashore. Renaud received the Governor General of Canada's Award for the heroic rescue.

The *Lunenburg*, so familiar to Madelinots going to the mainland, was no more. Eleven people went with her. Two of the 11 lost included Samuel Vigneau of the Basin and a Mr. Boucet of Amherst. R.J. Leslie, owner of the ship, also lost his life on that horrible day.