

# DOWN THE LANE TO WALLIE'S

by

DOROTHY CLARKE-SELANDER

A STORY ABOUT LIFE ON THE  
MAGDALEN ISLANDS



# DOWN THE LANE TO WALLIE'S

by

DOROTHY CLARKE-SELANDER

## PART I



OUR HOUSE AND PROPERTY ON THE RIGHT  
(IN FOREGROUND)

## MY MIXTURE OF MEMORIES OF THE MYSTICAL, MAGICAL MAGGIES

The following stores are not historical facts - simply what I can remember being told about my ancestors and their way of life as I was growing up.

I am writing about the beautiful little community of Old Harry in the Magdalen Islands. Their gentle rolling hills, with little valleys and scattered throughout with pretty and colourful wooden houses.

The cliffs overlook the sea, and are a gorgeous red shade, out of which the sea has carved many interesting formations over the years.

Natural beauty at it's best, though on a small scale. And Old Harry Beach is one of the most beautiful that you would see anywhere.

It was always a fishing and farming village, and lobster has been King there forever.

Our ancestors always lived off the sea and the land and did it very well. Their way of life was very old-fashioned by today's standards but, oh so much more rich and fulfilling, in my opinion.



OLD HARRY

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have to thank the following people who were responsible for my undertaking this little story.

My daughter-in law HEATHER CLARKE for her photo copy work  
My grand-daughter ANDREA ROSE for her valuable suggestions and pointers

My cousin, Dr. MARJORIE CHAPMAN who suggested it to me in the beginning

My cousin ERMA SHAVER for her encouragement to continue

My cousin JUDI ARCHIBALD for her enthusiasm and kind offer of help, in the final stages

I hope I haven't let you down girls.

All photos used in this booklet are from my own collection unless otherwise stated.

This story is not fictional, it is correct, to the best of my knowledge, taken from memory. The people mentioned are real people.

Also, last but not least, thanks to my husband MICHAEL, for lending me an ear, so I could read it to him

This story is in loving memory of my parents:  
STELLA AND WALLIE CLARKE

Written especially for my son, BRIAN, AND HIS FAMILY. so they will know more about the MYSTICAL, MAGICAL MAGGIES.

## Spring

A new spring would arrive, which would be welcomed by all. The whole village would be in a hustle and bustle, getting ready for the fishing and planting season. This would mean 'early to bed and early to rise', as there was much hard work to be done.

The men would be busy fishing herring in April, to have a supply on hand to use as bait for the upcoming lobster fishing season. They would also save a barrel for their own use the next winter.

The women would also be very busy, with their spring cleaning and maybe some redecorating, too. This would consist of mostly wallpapering and painting. When they were finished they had a sparkling, clean house, which must have been a joy to behold.

Those old houses must have been able to tell lots of stories, if only the walls could have spoken. They always seemed so comfortable and cosy!

Everything would have been cleaned, all bedclothes washed (if it was washable), or hung out to air - then any necessary mending would be done and they would be put away for next winter. If they were children's clothes, they might be handed down to the next in line for the next winter and so on until they were worn out, or maybe even passed on to another family who could reuse them.

And, this didn't mean their work was finished - a typical day would probably start at 5 a.m. or thereabouts, maybe even earlier if they got up to get the men's breakfast before they went out to start their day's work.

After getting breakfast for the family, which could be a large one, then it would be time to milk the cows, feed the animals, if the men hadn't had time to do it. Maybe there would be members of the family who were old enough to help with those chores, and baby sit the younger children in the house. Most families were very large and by the time the younger ones were born, the older one's were in their teens, and able to help their mother's or father's. The eggs had to be gathered, the hens and pigs fed, and any young cattle they might have.

After the outside work was finished and the after breakfast clean-up done, it was time to get down to the everyday housekeeping, this aside from the ordinary, could include anything from washing clothes, on a washboard in a tub of hot water heated on the stove - to making soap from animal fat and lye, to scrubbing floors on their hands and knees, sometimes using beach-sand to whiten the wood. They took great pride in their housekeeping and cooking.

A big meal was prepared at noon, after which the afternoon would find them busy baking, sewing, knitting, spinning wool or any one of a myriad of tasks.

And, the men would be just as busy with their work. After getting up in the wee hours of the morning - they would check the weather and this was not by today's methods - they would go outside to check the direction of the wind and look at the sky to determine what was in store for the day, weather-wise.

Because this was such a busy and important time of year for them, as they were getting ready for lobster fishing season, upon which the greatest part of their livelihood depended. The lobster season would normally start on the tenth of May.



Old Harry was a very important fishing port in those days. Men from East Cape and Grosse Isle would come to Old Harry to fish lobster, and since the only mode of transportation in those days was by boat or horse, it meant too long a day for them to drive back and forth. Neither was it convenient for them, as they would have to go back to "The Head" in the evening to prepare their boats for the next day of fishing. So they would build camps (called cook-houses) at Old Harry and spend the summer months there until the fishing season was over. They would hire one or two women to cook for them, depending on how many men were in each camp.

These camps were usually located at The Head, which was the fishing port.

The fields had to be prepared for spring planting, which they usually tried to do before lobster fishing started, if they were having an 'early spring'. Potatoes were a must to be planted, and everyone had a large garden ploughed, as the women made big gardens where they grew huge amounts of vegetables, which had to help feed the family until the next spring.

Later, in the spring, for past time, (if you can imagine them having any spare time) they would plant large flower gardens, which according to what I have heard, would rival anything in today's "How To" magazines.

As lobster fishing had not actually started yet, we are still in the spring season.

Finally, all the traps have had their ballast put in (this was large flat stones, put on the bottom of the traps with lathes, to make them heavier, so they would sink to the bottom, where they would

trap the lobster), baited, tied into trawls (of about 12 to 14 traps), and hauled to the capes and wharves for The Big Day!

Everyone goes to bed early the night before fishing starts, as the next morning means that all will be up bright and early, hoping for good weather to put the traps out.

Of course, the men would have scanned the sky with their experienced eyes the night before and would generally know what to expect when they got up.

Heaven Forbid if there should be drift ice in the area then that would mean postponement of the fishing season until the wind was in the right direction to take it away from Island waters.

Another dread would be strong winds, especially from the east or northeast, which would mean they had to wait until the winds calmed or changed to a more favourable direction.

Fog would be another detrimental condition. And, at all times Mother Nature was a force to be reckoned with, and could create great consternation among the fishermen's families waiting at home for their loved one's at sea. Because everyone knew the perils involved.

Going back to the wind, it was what people lived by, as a big northeast windstorm could last for two to three days, still creating heavy swells, running for some days after the winds calmed and interfering with the fishermen's operations.

This type of storm could wreak havoc with the fishing gear, causing much destruction and great losses for some.



On days that the weather prevented fishing, the men would be able to finish the spring planting, and any other chores around home.

One the month of May was over, good weather usually prevailed for the remainder of the fishing season.

The lobster factories would be running, those employed any women who wanted to work and the young people who were out of school (which used to close at the end of April then, for this reason I presume.

My grandfather, Edward (Ad) Clarke had a lobster factory at The Head around 1900. The area where he had his factory is still known as Ad's Cove. Apparently there used to be a wharf there, when he operated his factory.



GRANDFATHER AD CLARKE  
AT THE HEAD  
CIRCA 1900

(KINDNESS OF BYRON CLARKE)



GRANDMOTHER LIZ CLARKE  
(A.K.A. MAS. AD)  
CIRCA LATE 1800'S

(KINDNESS OF BYRON CLARKE)

## Summer

Now that summer was here, people were able to travel around the Island's more freely. Travelling to Grindstone (the main business district of the Islands) was always done by boat in the summer, as there were no roads built in those days.

There would be a freight and passenger steamer travelling once a week, from Pictou, Nova Scotia to the Magdalen Islands, stopping at Amherst, Grindstone and Grand Entry - this also brought the mail and people would travel to and from the mainland on it. And, those who "were away" would be coming home to visit relatives or perhaps returning home to stay.

These happenings were always looked forward to and created much excitement.

Grand Entry was always a tiny business district too, where there would be a handful of stores, carrying general merchandise and groceries.

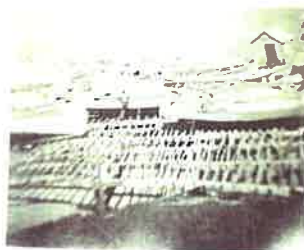
Each Friday when the steamer arrived it would bring fresh supplies to the merchants.

When the mail was taken off the boat, the mailman would be at the wharf, ready to pick it up for all communities on the East End and start on his long trip back, by horse and wagon, dropping off his mail at each post office on his way, until he reached Grosse Isle Post Office which would be his final destination and this would probably be late in the evening.

Lobster fishing ended on the tenth of July or maybe even on the

twentieth back in the late 1800's and early 1900's.

After this the men would carry on with their work around home until August when they would begin fishing mackerel - to sell and also to salt for winter. Cod would also be fished in late summer, and salted and/or dried for winter food. These fish were also eaten fresh, when first caught. They made great meals.



OUT AT "THE HEAD"  
(CIRCA 1948)

But before the mackerel fishing started they would have to start cutting hay and grain (usually oats) to feed the animals in the winter. A lot of this work could be done by hand with scythes or maybe some would have mowing machines which would be pulled by horses. The fishing was done in sailboats in the 1800's and maybe still in the early 1900's before they had marine engines to put in their boats, at first they had small sharp sterned boats powered by single cylinder engines (putt-puts). Nothing was easy for these people, but it was their way of life and they just took it for granted this is what had to be done for survival and to feed and house their families and it was done.

But here we are in July and I am forgetting the strawberries, which grew wild and mostly picked by the older children, usually

from ten years old and up. They were used fresh with fresh cream for dessert and also made into jam for winter - delicious!

In early Old Harry, most of the community was woodland and people would clear pieces of land as they needed it for building and farming. In the early 1900's the community was only built up as far as my Great Grandfather Ned Dunn's house and "out the road and up the road towards The Head".

Late July also brought raspberries, which grew wild and were also picked and used the same as strawberries, another delicious delicacy!

After fishing was usually the time when couples would get married and in those days there was no church on Old Harry and if people didn't go away to get married they would have to get married at Grosse Isle. These occasions were always celebrated with a large reception and a dance.

And next, would be blueberry picking time, they would grow wild in the barrens (down on the edge of the beach). This could be quite a lengthy walk to go down, but people would usually go in groups and would not think of returning home until they had at least picked a bucketful. No wonder those people were so strong and in most cases quite healthy as they were getting the best of exercise naturally in their daily work and had lots of good home cooked food to eat!

Blueberries were lovely eaten raw with fresh cream or nice jam made, not to mention the blueberry pies! To die for!! Another boiled dish could be made by cooking the blueberries as a jam and dropping dumplings in it, this was called a "blueberry grunt", or you could have a baked blueberry grunt by making pie crust and using



a deep pan with a layer of berries, a layer of crust, etc.

Another activity taking place around this time would be cutting beach hay. I think that is what is called marram grass today. They would be doing this with antiquated machinery or by hand with a scythe. Sometimes the women would be helping with the raking and stacking. Then it would have to be hauled home by horse and cart or wagon.

Usually one of the last jobs to be done was cutting wood for the winter. This was done with an axe, one tree at a time!! Some people also gathered driftwood off the beach, this would wash ashore after storms and during storms. This helped supplement the fuel for winter. Everyone had a wood pile in their back yard.



OLD HARRY BEACH

## Fall

Here we are into fall - still lots of activity going on, more intensively now for winter.

In the fall there would be cranberries to be picked, first little ones, and then the big ones - these would be picked by the bag full - taken home and more jam and jelly made for winter.

By now, it would be time to dig potatoes, by the barrel and then reap the harvest from the huge gardens - pickles of every kind would be made. The potatoes and vegetables would be stored in the cellar for winter.

The next step would probably be butchering the animals that they had raised for winter meat. But before they did this, they would have to make sure the weather was cold enough to keep the meat frozen in outside sheds for the entire winter.

All parts of the animals were used, nothing was wasted. They saved the fat to render for soap, the heads would be saved to use for potted head (now named head cheese), hearts, livers and probably many more parts that I don't know about, or remember.

Pigs, cows, sheep, hens, turkeys, ducks, and geese were among the livestock raised for winter food.

The men also went duck hunting. These people were very resourceful and certainly knew how to make the most of whatever they had. Meanwhile, there were always families of young children

to look after. The women brought all of their children into the world without medical assistance!

I believe the first schoolhouse on Old Harry was built in the early 1900's and it was just below my grandmother's house where a small restaurant sits now.

The church was also built around 1916, I believe, and that same church still stands there today. Lumber from a shipwreck was used to build the church. It is such a beautiful little church, sitting on a little hill overlooking the community, both east and west! Like a pretty little sentinel.



ST. PETER'S BY-THE-SEA  
ANGLICAN CHURCH



## Winter

Now that all the fall work had been done, it was time to start preparing for Christmas.

Relatives and friends who were on the mainland would be sending home parcels of gifts and goodies. Mothers would have knitted mittens, gloves, scarves, hats, socks and maybe even sweaters for their children.

And, as Christmas was special, home made candy (fudge and molasses candy), would be made. Gingerbreads and gingerbread men would be made, and lots of other "good stuff", too numerous to mention.

After they had a schoolhouse built, the teacher would have the children prepare for a concert. The Christmas concert would be held during Christmas week, with the whole program being put on by the children.

And, of course, Santa himself would appear at the end to distribute presents to the children. This was always a much looked forward to event. The concert was always attended by the children's families, and people from other communities would arrive by horse and sleigh for the concert. Just imagine, how lovely this must have been! The stuff Christmas fairy tales were made of; "crisp, clear winter night, with a bright moon shining, and fresh white snow all over, with bells on the horse's harness! And,

there was always snow at Christmas in those days, or so it seems.

The older people, back then, didn't like to see a green Christmas, they say it meant a "rich graveyard".

On Christmas Day, there would always be the traditional Christmas dinner at home, and the children playing around their Christmas trees with whatever gifts they had received for Christmas.

There would usually be church service held on Christmas Day, (if the minister had not gone to Entry Island), and people would dress up in their best to go to church (which, before the church was built, would be held in the school or someone's house). After the service was over there would be socializing amongst the people and often someone would be invited home to share dinner or supper with their family.

People from other communities would come visiting, by horse and sleigh - and there was always a spare stall or two kept in everyone's barn for visitor's horses.

Though winter started well before Christmas, if we are talking about the weather, the serious part did not really start until after the Holiday Season, and then everyone would bet back to normal living again.

The women would have all sorts of work to keep them busy, over and above their regular daily housekeeping.

They would be carding wool taken from the sheep the previous summer, and then spinning it into wool (yarn), to do their family knitting. They also had to knit lots of "fishing mitts" for the men when they started lobster fishing. Some women would also knit

extra pairs and sell them.

Some of the people had looms and would weave their own cloth for making the families clothes. This was very necessary as they had to make just about everything they wore.

Talk about recycling, reducing and reusing - those people had it down to a science, when "it wasn't cool".

The men were also very busy in the winter, looking after the animals in the barn, keeping the barn clean, water had to be carried to them (they were lucky if they had their own well or pump then or, if not, it would have to be carried or hauled by horse from someone who did), they had to be fed regularly. Another daily job would be cutting firewood, from the woodpile, and carrying it in the house, making sure there was dry kindling on hand, too for starting the fire in the morning. There would be no heat in the house and everyone would be snuggled in warm beds, with lots of flannelette blankets and quilts to keep them warm.

More new traps had to be made every winter to add to their fleet and old traps would sometimes need lots of repair.

Work was an ongoing thing, to make sure everything necessary was taken care of for their livelihood.

The children grew up fast in those days, so that they could help their parents. It wasn't unusual for boys to be fishing with their fathers at the age of ten or eleven.

The girls would start working in the lobster factories at around the same age. Or, they might be housekeeping for new mothers or maybe someone was sick and needed help. Everyone grew up

knowing how to work and just taking it for granted. I remember hearing about one girl who had to stand on a chair at the kitchen table to make bread when she was only nine or ten years old and her mother was sick.

There was always a few women in the community who were always ready, willing and able to help in case of sickness, deliver babies or to administer to the dying.

In those days when someone died, they were taken care of at home. A carpenter in the community would make a casket, the women would cover it with black broadcloth - saving enough to make black armbands for the pall bearers on the day of the funeral. The remains were always kept at home and usually someone sat up with them at nights so the families could go to bed and get their rest. This would usually be done by a couple of neighbours. On the day of the burial, a service would be held before they left the house (and then to church, if there was one at the time). And then to the grave site as usual. These were always largely attended and if any relatives who were on the mainland could get home, they did. Sometimes this would delay the funeral, pending their arrival.

Some of the talented ladies of the community would make paper flowers and wreaths if it was in the winter; if in summer, they would use garden flowers when available. Everything was carried out with great dignity.

A death in the community was always a very solemn period, most work was stopped and certainly on the day of the funeral. It left a very solemn pall over the whole community for probably weeks before everything got back to normal again.

Generally the winters passed uneventfully, unless there happened to be a bad flu on the go. Then a lot of people could be sick at the same time.

I remember my father telling about one really bad flu on the go, in late fall, in the 1920's, and everyone on Old Harry was sick at the same time, except him and my Uncle Russell. So they went around to all the houses, helping where they could and looking after everyone's animals.

He said when he was in to my Great Grandfather Dunn's with Russell, Grandpa gave him a glass of rum and told him "to drink that and he wouldn't catch the flu". Can you imagine? A whole glass of rum. And when he went home, he went to the barn to look after their own animals, then went in the house and when grandmother saw him, she said "I guess you had better go to bed". Anyhow, he never caught the flu so I guess Grandpa's treatment worked.

In the winter they would make their own entertainment. The women would get together and have quilting parties, after which lunch would be served. Or, it could be a meeting of a church organization raising money for church purposes, by having card parties or playing bingo. Lunch would be served and maybe there would be a dance at the end.

Another excuse for a party would be having a "knitting frolic", this would be a gathering at someone's house to knit heads (mini nets) for the men's lobster traps. There would be three kinds of heads: blanks, these had no openings in them, used in each end of the trap; little heads, these would have an opening in them and were used in the small windows on either side of the trap, they would have 'rings' in them, this was where the lobster crawled in; then the

'Big Heads' were used inside, with an opening in them, which was held open with a ring, and the spindle would be behind this head with bait on, to lure the lobster in to these back parts of the trap, where they couldn't get out.

It was just that simple! or was it?

I do believe that they would replace all the heads in the older traps every winter, as well as doing any other necessary repairs.

Today I find it interesting to hear the current generation talk about "kitchen parties", those were the days of 'kitchen parties' both great and small!

I do believe that I am now scraping the bottom of my "memory bank" for this look back - but, I do believe that we should keep "the thread running" for future generations, who might be interested in how these remarkable people survived and started all the traditions of the Magdalen Islands that we know and love today.

So, for now I'll leave this "blowing in the wind" and go on to part two - my very own memories.

Not far away from WASH POND, on the south side of Entry Island is a place called KITTY'S BROOK. Legend has it that there was a vessel sailing b the island supposedly going into port somewhere on the islands. Aboard this vessel, a little girl about the age of eleven, became very ill, shortly after they left port. As the days went on, the little girl progressively worsened, and around seven o'clock one morning she died!

The little girl was the Captain's daughter. They brought her ashore at Entry Island and buried her in a beautiful little spot, close to a brook that ran down to the sea.

This little girl's name was Kitty. Her name marks the place known today as KITTY'S BROOK.

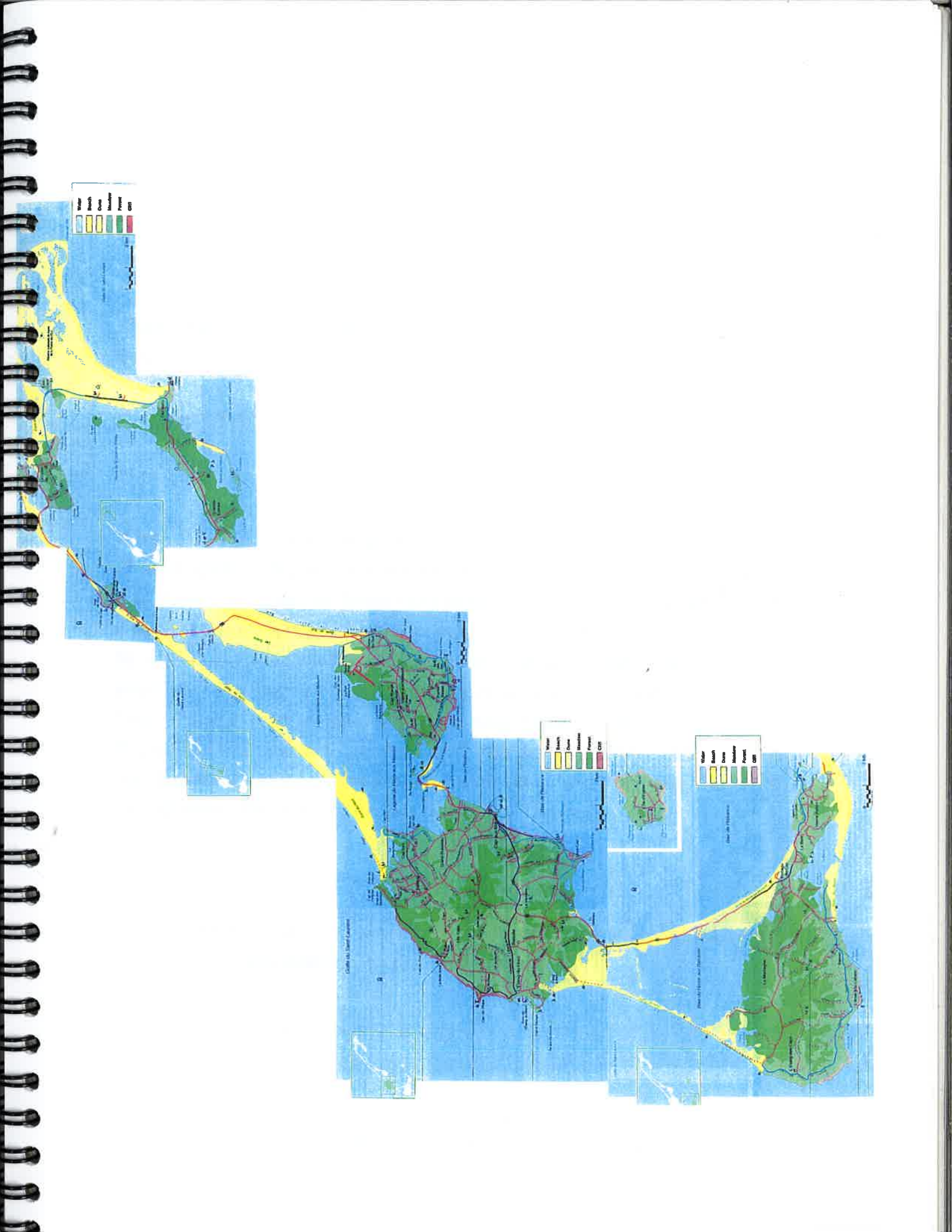
---

Since my maternal Grandmother, May (Aitkens) Dunn, was born and brought up on Entry Island, this page will be in her memory.



AUNT LES' HOUSE - ENTRY ISLAND  
(CIRCA 1930'S)





These two little articles are taken from "THE JEWELS OF THE GULF", printed in 1993.

### WASH POND

This little story of Wash Pond sums it all up well:

Wash Pond is under a high hill, on the south side of Entry Island. It was used in the early days as a place where people did washing. The main use of water from this pond was to wash. The wool from the sheep was valuable to the people, because it was spun into yarn to make knitted clothing, for each family. There were other sources of water on the island from which water was carried to their homes. But, it was easier to take their clothing and wool to the pond than it was to go and carry the water home. The clothing and the wool were laid on the rocks to dry. Not only was the pond called Wash Pond, but the hill was given the name, also.

---

Entry Island is the first piece of land to welcome you, as you enter Magdalen Island waters, hence the name.

---

### KITTY'S BROOK

This little story also tells a lot about life back then:

A man travels the  
world over  
in search  
of what he needs  
and returns  
**HOME**  
to find it!



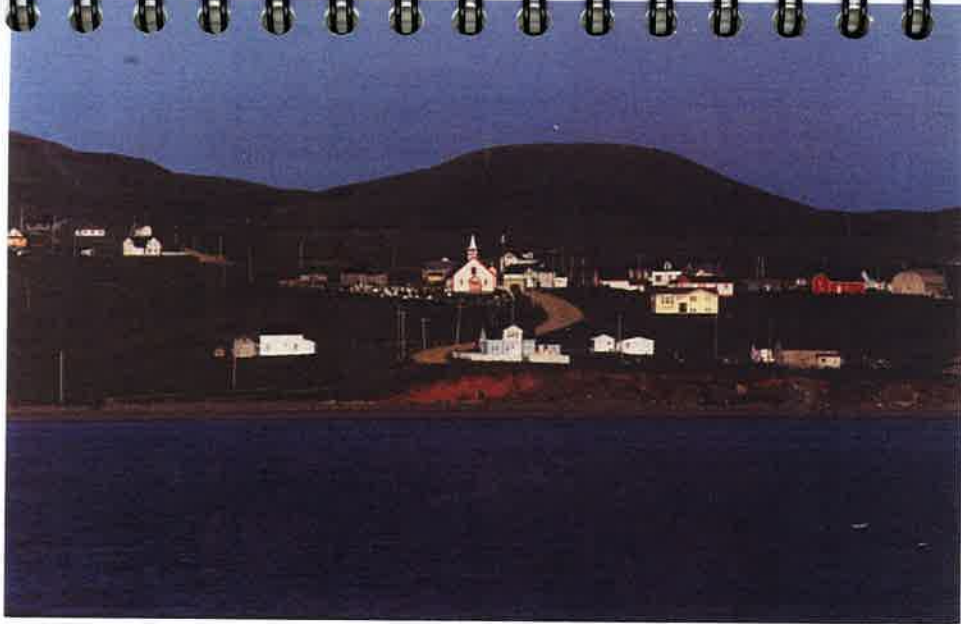
## STORAGE OF HAY

The **baraque** is a little square barn with a sliding roof controlled by a pulley system and is used to protect hay from bad weather. Many farmers still use them, especially in Havre-Aubert.



PILE OF FIREWOOD  
SEEN IN YARDS ON  
MAGDALEN ISLAND  
HOMES





ENTRY ISLAND





Ms. Dorothy Selander  
26 Keillor St  
Moncton NB E1C 7K7