GASPE OF YESTERDAY

121

THE MAGDALEN ISLANDS

**************

BY

**

DR. JOHN M. CLARKE

**************

CHART OF THE MAGDALEN ISLANDS
THE MAGDALEN ISLANDS BY DR. JOHN M. CLARKE

FOREWORD

The generation of those Gaspéians who knew Dr. John M. Clarke personally and had the occasion to share with him their knowledge of Gaspé has passed away but his writings live on to be a part of the Gaspéian heritage. Gaspé of Yesterday has referred to the books of Dr. Clarke in previous issues for, beyond his field of expertise in geology, he acquired a profound knowledge of the history and values of the Gaspéians.

The work and writings of Dr. Clarke extended offshore to the Magdalen Islands, linked administratively to the County of Gaspé, and sharing its maritime traditions. In the following account Dr. Clarke recalls the history of these interesting islands in the Gulf.

KEN ANNETT

THE MAGDALEN ISLANDS

The archipelago of the Magdalen Islands (Îles de la Madeleine) is located in the Gulf of St. Lawrence about 180 miles from Gaspé, 70 miles from Prince Edward Island and 55 miles from Cape Breton. It is made up of some 12 islands, seven of which are inhabited. The main islands in the group are Havre-Aubert, Étang-du-Nord, Havre-aux-Maisons, Grande-Entrée, Grosse île, île d'Entrée, île Brion, île aux Cochons and Rocher aux Oiseaux.

From a distance, the coastline does not appear to be very irregular, but this impression changes when one draws near and discovers a whole world of curious quirks of nature, where rocks form pillars, overhanging ledges, large crevices, chasms and other odd forms that catch the eye. In general, this indented coastline has been carved in a soft grayish-red rock, but the sea has played a part in adding more colour to the sandstone, gypsum and other volcanic rocks of the islands.

This undulating countryside is criss-crossed in every direction by roads and paths dotted with a variety of buildings. The houses present a spectacle both unique and picturesque, built as they are without regard to direction and giving the impression of leaves scattered by the wind.

The total area of the archipelago is about 55,000 acres. The population, in large part of Acadian origin, is 13,000 inhabitants, including about 1,000 persons of Scottish descent.

Jacques Cartier, discoverer of Canada, reached the Magdalen Islands on June 25, 1534. He spent several days exploring them and was enthusiastic in his description of them in a report to the king of France.

Several of these islands' names go back to Cartier, especially that of île Brion, thus named in honour of Philippe Chabot, sieur de Brion, grand admiral of France. The archipelago itself bears the name of the wife of François Doublet (Madeleine Fontaine), first seigneur who attempted to colonize the islands. Chaminet had given the archipelago the name of Îles Ramées, because of the numerous horn-like protrusions found there. The founder of New France also gave Havre-Aubert its name.
THE MAGDALEN ISLANDS

Situation—Relation to Gaspé—Original settlement—Physical character and geology—The Demoiselles—Entry 1:3, its people; scenery—Anseboeuf 1: view center; its harbors and sand bars—Oleodamias 1: its gypsum cliffs—House Harbor—The Great Lagoon—Albatross L—Grand Etang—Grosse Isle—Gaspé L—Movements of occupation—Work in the Islands—Bishop Magdon’s experience in 1900—Magdalen Island port—Discovery of the islands by Cartier—First French and English visits in the 16th century—Great in Diverse—To D. in France—To Sir Louis—Land tenure established by Cartier—Recent advances in development—Kingdom of fish—The ancient times now—Gaspé L—Cartier’s account of it—The Bird Rocks—This wonderful bird haven is a thing of their human remains.

The Magdalen Islands are a chain of dissected and sea-wrecked remnants of continental land lying in the very heart of the Gulf, ninety miles from Newfoundland at the east, one hundred from Nova Scotia at the south and one hundred and fifty from Gaspé at the northwest. Their land is of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, their government of Quebec, whose commerce in the commodities of the sea, and their spirit that of the Acadian communities of the 18th century, the purest expression remaining in Canada of the days of Louisbourg and Grande-Pré. To the outer world, particularly to the navigator of the turbulent waters of the Gulf, they stand to-day as they have stood since the beginning of these waters, a fearful menace to the sailor and his craft.

Gaspé is a stepmother to the Magdales. By nature she has little in common with them, whether in history, origin, scenery or commercial association, but she, with the province of Quebec behind her, extends to them the protection of heregis in the administration of civil and criminal law. They are far away from Gaspé and it is a long and arduous stretch for the arm of Justice, it strains her a little. But Gaspé lets her wards go at that and leaves them to their more natural and intimate relations with Nova Scotia.

The Magdales are an island Arcady; they have not yet received from any pen the just and sympathetic portrayal which their fascinations of situation, their little romances of history, the tragedies of their simple living and the charms of their isolation invite. There are stories abroad about them, of late years sterile magazine articles not a few, mostly the work of the tripper whose soul is in his fountain pen but who has never yet caught the spirit of the islands or of their people.

One must know the physical aspect of every such small patches of land if he is to understand the reasons of their existence and the conditions that govern the life upon them. The chart of these islands shows them stretched out like a long key lying crosswise of the waters, with its axis northeast and southwest, the direction of all the fundamental folds of the rocks which govern the topography of the lands of the lower Gulf. If the eye will follow the 20-fathom line on the chart it will be seen what a tremendous rock platform has been carried away by the waves in the gradual washing of the land to this slight depth. An elevation of the sea bottom 20 fathoms would throw all the chain of islands into a single land mass which would have several hundred times the area of the land now remaining. Even the 20-fathom line sweeps out over all the islands, tying them into one and reaching out to take in Brion island at the north and the Great and Little Bird Rocks further to the north and east. Brion and the Bird Rocks are to-day distant and isolated platforms of sandstone with sheer sea cliffs. The Magdales themselves are really but mere specks of rock or land but they are fringed with sand dunes and spits and tied to one another by tremendous bars which the seas from east and west have piled up into a double chain, leaving between the great interior lagoons, Basque Harbor, House Harbor, the Great Lagoon and its branch at the extreme north behind the dunes of Grosse Isle and Old Harry. In these piles of sand the sea has tried to bury the bits of land its still unsated appetite has left behind, tossing back to them the feeble fragment of their own ruins.

The islands of this archipelago seem on the chart to be of considerable size but the most of them is sand, the actual area of rock land small and re-
solved into little insular units of soil and population. And when we speak of the Magdalenias as a geographic group we must include Brion and the Birds at the north, even though the broad ten mile channels that separate Brion from the others both north and south have been swept clean of the sand bars that may once have stretched across them. Geologically these northern islands are all of one piece with the interwoven chain of the Magdalenias. There is a fundamental and twofold difference of quality in all the members of this group: that of the sand with its broad reaches of undulated dunes here and there, its struggling growth of stunted spruce and dune grass, its arid, wasted, desert surfaces broken in twain now and again by the sea gullies which make an outlet for the interior waters and an inlet for the tides; and that of the rock land with its rounded and graceful demoiselle hills, its richly fertile soil, grassy treeless knolls and low-lying flat plateaus. On each of the habitable land patches, from Amherst, the largest, to Grosze Isle and Northeast Cape, the smallest, there is some of all of these distinguishing contours present.

These differences are simple but they are dependent on the geology of the islands and this is the way of it. Broadly speaking, the rocks of the island units are of three kinds, first, blood red soft sandstones which give an extraordinary brilliancy to the coloring of the shore cliffs; these are horizontal, flat and lie low about the shores. Then, second, gray hard sandstones, which usually underlie the red and stand up in stouter, higher cliffs; while the third is the volcanic rocks which stand often in dark somber cliffs or low sheets but usually rise into the beautifully symmetrical domes that give the graceful skylines to the islands; the demoiselles, as we have called them, taking the name from the hill on Amherst long known to the people as La Demoiselle. Quite incidental or accessory to these varieties of rocks are the abundant masses of gypsum standing out here and there in glistening white or particolored cliffs, where the volcanic laves have come in contact with the sandstones which they have broken through. These are some plain facts about the islands as a whole, and to one who is interested in studying the ancient history of the Gulf, the geology of the Magdalenias is inviting and intensely instructive.

The traveler to the Magdalenias by the customary route will reach them by boat from Picton, Nova Scotia, and so come upon them from the south. This is the only established line of approach. Lucky souls independent of prescribed procedure may approach them from other directions, but usually one's acquaintance with the chain will begin at the South. The petite Lady Sibyl which makes this route twice a week, touches on every alternate trip first in the wee hours of early dawn at the busy fishing port of Etang-du-Nord on the west side of Grindstone Island; but the seeker after truth is usually asleep or seasick at this juncture and his first impressive glimpse of the islands is likely to be the blue, gently molded breasts of Entry Island at the east, rising starboard into the soft morning light. The way of the boat is through the narrow, risky channel which lies between the hills and meads of Entry and the long nine mile sand spit which reaches its arm out from Amherst toward the east as if to grasp the one island in all the group that has maintained its independence of the entangling bars.
navigators who came in from the southwest by way of Cape Ray and Cabot Strait. Isolated from the rest of the group it is unlike them in many ways though but a fragment of the same fabric. It is a traveler's paradise—that's all. From its row of rounded domesilles which girdle the eastern shore and barricade the lower western plateau against the eternal tooth of the sea, an unbroken carpet of green unrolls, furling itself in and out over the little knolls and fans down to the parterre of red sandstones which line the channel.

At the summits of its heights, if the day be calm and fair, one might fancy himself on some Eolian isle as the eye sweeps the blue domain of the sea to the east and south, just catching the smoky outline of the Cape Breton shore in the veil of haze. At the west and north stretch out the other islands of the chain, fading away into a low nimbus toward Atlantic, and the sand bars which stretch away to Old Harry. At one's feet are the graceful volcanic mounds which are like the paradigm cones on the sides of Etna; between them lie deep sink holes where the gypsum in the rocks has been dissolved away, a squishy mat of water weed growing over their tops; down on the lower land are pastures sprinkled with wild strawberries and little quagmires filled with fleurs-de-lis. It boots little that the island is shadeless for even the August sun is bridled by the breeze or tempered by the redintegrating sea fog. The island steamer passes but never touches Entry and the inspiring solitude of the place rests partly on the consciousness that once there, one can not get away save by an extraordinary effort.

The islanders themselves heighten the content of the visitor, for they have won from sea and soil reasonable comfort and with genuine solicitude for the comfort of another, do not obtrude themselves upon one's designs. They are not many, the Entry people, but they are select and silent. They may be perhaps 30 families in cottages scattered back of the plateau along the road which runs from the sandy West Point back to the light on the southeast hill. They are Scotch and
The fishermen live on themselves and enjoy no independence which cares little whether the boat runs or not.

To get out of Entry—if one must—some husky fellow will set you over to Amherst by sail or gasoline, and once there the traveler is in the largest of all the islands, and the center of their political and civic activity. The boat landing at Amherst is at a mere atom of land, hardly visible on the chart, but tied to the rest of the island by a broad sand bar. It is Mt. Gridley, bearing the name, it is said, of an American who a century ago, started a fish business here, but bearing too, what is much more to the point to-day, an historical name which for two generations has cordially met and hospitably satisfied the demands of the traveler—the only thing of the kind on the islands. Mt. Gridley is a pretty three-cornered grass plot wherein mushrooms scatter themselves; off toward the west it ends at the Inlet which leads into the Basin, a harbor for all the fishing craft, buried in the armpit of the great nine mile sand bar and protected at the east by the little bar of "Fishtown" which joins Mt. Gridley and the real island. On the "Fishtown" bar are the stores of the merchants and the shacks and cook houses of the fishermen. The bar leads toward the foot of Demoiselle hill, whose graceful summits rise into the sea wall and this hill whose name is a part of the history of the place, stands as the type of all the "demoiselles" of all the islands—a mass of outpoured lava.

Though by virtue of her ancient name she stands for all these rounded hills, she is not the highest. That little honor goes to Entry, where St. Lawrence hill rises to a height of 650 feet. Such a figure as that seems rather unimpressive, but in a region of lowland even such a height is a point of great vantage. Between the Demoiselle and Mt. Gridley lies the only outside harbor on all the island coast, Pleasant Bay, a pretty name for a summer day, but of all roadsteads the most treacherous, for it lies open to the northeast whence the storms blow up almost without warning in these uncertain waters. Scores of craft have broken their bows on the sand bar here, caught by a sudden shift in the wind before they could get out and around the Basin. From the Demoiselle westward the island runs for ten miles and its inland surface is crossed by irregular volcanic hills, less symmetrical than in the other islands. The fields are less inviting too than in some of the sister islands because the soft red sandstone which lends so much to the fertility of the soil is lacking here save as one gets way across the island to the Sou'west Point. Amherst (it is not Sir Jeffrey's but General William's name the island bears; the older French name is Havre Aubert, still the official post-office designation of this port) is dotted over with homes and its population is not less than 1500—a population that is almost pure Acadian extraction. After the fall of Louisburg, some of the scattered penontry and fishermen from the devastated French villages of Nova Scotia and Cape Breton found their way to the Magdalens. They constituted a population which soon became fixed and fixed with it became their language, so that nowhere in Canada is the ancient tongue of the Acadians so well retained as here.

In a civic way, the islands as we have said constitute a sub-county of Gaspe, and of this sub-county Amherst is the shire island with its palais-de-justice, its gaol, its hall of records alongside the post-office of Havre Aubert and to all these on court days Joanna Shea's boarding house, now in its braver new dress dignified as Shea's Hotel, is an indispensable accessory; for county business brings judge and attorneys from the mainland on this deepwater circuit and Shea's Hotel affords most unexpected fullness of comfort.

At the time of my first visit to Amherst there stood on Mt. Gridley an Anglican church, its windows gone, its clapboards stripped away and its altar vestments frayed and discolored. Even this trace of Protestant worship is now gone, and of a population of 1526 "souls" on Amherst, 1525 are Catholics.

Two great sand bars run north from Amherst and inclose the Basque Harbor which finds its connection with the sea by tickles or gullies too narrow to make a passage except for the smallest craft at highwater, but the inhabitants drive along these bars from island to island finding the tickles
Reaching out northward with those long arms Amberat Island and Grindstone Island, an almost circular land platform five miles or so across, with rocky shore cliffs all the way around on east and west. Grindstone is a very inviting and fertile island. Its shores are more brilliantly decked out in the blood red cliffs of its lower rock shelves than any other island of the group and between these venture capped shelves lie here and there broad and beautiful beaches. This large area of red sandstone contributes to the richness of the soil in the southern part of the island while the northern part, with higher lava cliffs and banks of colored gypseum clays is diversified with a surface of knobs and pinches characteristic of the gypseum bearing rocks. The demouelle domes are not as conspicuous here as elsewhere but the lava beds are accompanied by vast deposits of gypseum which near the west shore stand out in brilliantly shining silvery towers. Where the boat lands at Pointe-au-Meule on the east side, the gray sandstones rise into a high, bare, wave-eaten bluff, and gathered about the wharf and the post-office is the English settlement with the prosperous fish establishment of William Leslie, one of the commercial monuments of the islands. Here are the headquarters and pretentious buildings of the new development companies and from this point south the road which circles the island leads over the fertile sandstone plateau around to the southwest corner where lies the settlement of Etang-du-Nord. This is the French end of the island and all is activity in the fishing; indeed it is the chief center of the real concentrated fishing industry of all the islands, typical in all the equipment of the business and the entire devotion of its people to it. Its little bay between its red cliffs harbors a larger fishing fleet than one will find anywhere else in the group, and its odors are eminently and intensely Gaspesian. There is a hotel at Etang-du-Nord, if you will; two indeed, one French, the other English—but what if they are black with flies? Was there ever a fishing station without them? At the north of the island lies the historic settlement from the east, entering the long south arm of the Great Lagoon stretching north from Grindstone for 26 miles, hemmed in by Alamint and for 26 miles, hemmed in by Alamint and
quite entirely by English settlers and they are picturesque indeed with their sparse acres of venture and their blazing expanse of sand dunes. Grosse Isle is just a half a demoiselle with a fishing cove at its base; joined by a bridge over a branch of the lagoon with another knoll which looks across over another lagoon to the steep slope of North East Cape, another half demoiselle and the highest point on the northern islands, its greensides showing a few white cottages.

Coffin Island was set aside by the proprietor as maintenance for the church and there is an English church here as well as at Grosse Isle. Old Harry Head and Oyster Basin are parts of Coffin Island and their southern sands lead down to the harbor of Grand Entry.

The Magdalen cluster offers to the traveler or student experience in wealth of variety. There is an especial charm in the richness of color of their low-lying shores. The greens are not the darker hues of the spruce forests, but the emerald of grass capped hills and plains. Under the green lie here and there the almost crimson platforms of the salt sandstones into whose fronts the waves have everywhere eaten gullies and coves, obelisks and towers standing feeble guard over the extremities of their little capes. The cliffs of gypseiferous clays rise to greater heights and there are places where they command the eye by their extraordinary play of pink, gray and dull green hues. The border points of gray sandstone and dark lavas seem to stand as warders of the island masses and to plead, as it were, for their salvation from the relentless sea. The Gulf is azure in the sunlight on the rare summer days when her waters are at peace, but the tawny sand heaps rolling along the skyline, knoll on knoll, add a tinge of melancholy, speaking of destruction past and destruction to come, of time-long struggle, surrender and of partial restitution.

It is quite in keeping with the history of the Magdalens that there should be such a minor chord in their harmony. The islands and their sands have wrought terrific ruin to skippers and their craft from the time the Europeans began to thrust the Gulf. The long, low, dark coast and treacherous bars and bays like a trap for the unwary navigator, and when beating out of his course for the channels at the north or the south, or in times of stress when nor-east or nor-west gales were driving against rocks and sands, hundreds of craft have been broken on these unlighted shores, hundreds of lives have been lost and the bleaching ribs of dead ships are always to be seen on the coasts. There are castaways on all the islands and tales of shipwreck make the history of yesterday and the news of today. Mr. Brassatte, the venerable postmaster at Havre Aubert, has told me that within his life on the island there have been, he thinks, not less than five hundred ships great and small cast away. The season of my first visit I learned of but one wreck in the summer weeks before my arrival. At the time of my second visit, in July of another year, there had already been three during the season with some loss of life.

The atmosphere is full of the tragedy of the sea and while by far the greater number of the wrecked craft have met their fate on the northern sands, yet the southern islands have had their full share. One still hears the tale of the wreck of the Gloucester fishing fleet in the "Lord's Day Gale" one summer day of 1873 when by sudden shift of the wind from west to nor'east forty and more vessels were driven ashore in Pleasant Bay. The "Miracle," an emigrant ship from Ireland with above 400 passengers, went ashore in 1847 at East Cape with terrific loss of life. And so the stories go. On my sideboard is a crest-marked silver tray, tossed up on the shores of Entry from the wreck of the good ship "Cameo" in 1861, and alongside my desk, a mahogany cabin chair washed ashore in Grosse Isle in 1884, from the Norwegian bark "Athene" when the captain, Jorgen Lorentzen and 18 of his crew were lost. The mournful tales are without end and not only do the burying grounds with their rows of nameless graves, as on Mt. Gridley, and in the Protestant churchyard at Grindstone, tell these sad stories, but the contents of the islanders' cottages bear witness of the wreckage. It is at the north along the treacherous sands of East Cape and Grosse Isle where the
And it is not with feelings of unmixed sorrow that the kind-hearted settlers of the north see a vessel laboring in distress on the offshore. The story told of many a rough coast is told too of these islands—of the little girl who nightly prayed that she might be a good little girl and "Please, God, send another wreck before morning." Why should it not be so? A provision ship went ashore on Grosse Isle some twenty years ago in early May. The islanders had had their hardest winter. Food had run very low and among the French all was gone, though the more provident English had saved a few potatoes. Those who had beasts killed them, but very few had them, and wild fowl were about all that was left for food. The poor begged from door to door for their sick families dying of starvation. The winter hung on and the ice showed no signs of breaking till May 19th came along the first vessel, by "good luck" a provision boat bound for some distant port. The "land of Providence" drove her ashore and the wants of the starving were met till the seal came down and the ice gave way to the fishing.

There is no better story of strenuous experiences in these islands and no such lively picture of the life there sixty and more years ago as that told by the Rev'd Dr. George Jehoshaphat Mountain, Third Lord Bishop of Quebec—the first Protestant prelate to visit them. This intrepid man was sixty-one years old when he felt it in the line of his duty to go to the Magdaelen and look after the Protestant communities on Grosse Isle and Entry whose existence had been reported to him. So in 1850 "he determined to see those few sheep in the wilderness with his own eyes" and took passage in a small brigantine bound for Halifax and whose captain undertook to put him off, on the islands. As it chanced, the skipper approached the islands in the night and knowing nothing of their coasts was about to lay to, but as a fishing schooner lay near by, the Bishop had himself and his baggage transferred to this vessel, "an unpainted, roughly finished craft of thirty tons abundantly redolent of cod and manned by six
At half past four they ran inshore off South Point on Amherst Island, in a downpour of rain and nothing in sight but a black pig and two fish houses on a beach strewn with cod heads. Slowing the Bixa's baggage under an overturned flat, the sailors started off to find a horse and some sort of conveyance, for where they had come ashore was twelve miles from Amherst village and sixteen miles from Grindstone which he wished to reach. We can imagine the distinguished and devoted man on the sands of South Point as

"I took my post under my umbrella against one of the boats but presently copying a little cavity which would just sit me sitting, in a low brown cliff of red sandstone. I proceeded to occupy it, and when at half past five returned illumined with these two or three people and a low cart of the newest possible construction, drawn by a wretched looking little rat of a horse; whose harness, home-made, was formed of strips of seal skin with the fur left upon it, the saddle however being worked into a sort of parchment and supported by a parcel of rags. The headstall was a piece of old rope and the reins were of the same

* The Bishop thus had a chance, which no longer exists, to ride behind a Magdalen island pony. This breed of tough little beast is now practically extinct, being too-dainty for one known to me and that is at Biscan-du-Nord. The history of this horse set and how it got to the islands is not known now to any of the islanders, and, so far as I can find, is not a matter of record; at all events fifty years ago this "rat of a horse" was the only kind on the island and at that time had not been crossed with outside stock. There is pony blood still in many of the Acadian horses of the islands. There are good reasons for stating that the ponies were brought over from Sable Island, whose herd dates back to an uncertain shipwreck of a French or Spanish vessel in the 16th or 1700's, from which a cargo of horses swam ashore and have ever since multiplied and flourished, now under government control. The Magdalen pony was in many ways unlike the Sable Island ponies one sees to-day in the Halifax market, the government auctions off the increase of the herd every four years, but it would not be safe to say that such differences as now exist between them are not too great to have been developed in the course of a century, under the different physical conditions in Sable Island and the Magda-

material. Such a cart, it may be understood, had no springs, but there was a board across the middle of it for a seat. My baggage however quite filled it up. The cart was driven by a French lad."

And so the Bishop walked over the sands of Amherst Island in the early morning, umbrella spread against the pouring rain, without a house in sight, nine miles to the tidal mill, which sepa-

rated him from Biscan-du-Nord, and then at last to a house where he could dry his clothes and get a breakfast, "of which, having walked about nine miles after being up in the schooner all night, I was thankful to partake." And the bishop adds "with all gratitude" that he would have been much more exhausted by these exertions forty years before than he was then.

The bishop carried out his strenuous plans, reconnoitred House Harbor, then procured a boat which took him through the channel to his ships in the wilderness of Grosse Isle of which he found about fifty, most of whom had never seen a Protestant minister or heard a religious service. The settlement, he says, "in this rude, sequestered isolated corner," as twenty-two years old, that is, was begun in 1828, and the bishop was deeply impressed by the extreme poverty of the people."

The visit to Grosse Isle was followed by one to Entry Island, attended by lively experiences. Over on Entry "there was a little question about lights," for his evening service. A canvas of the island, however, produced three candles; "one was set in a candlestick, one forced into a lamp and one stuck in the neck of a bottle." The people heard him gladly and on his departure showed evidence of their better condition in life by loading the vessel bountifully with the products of their island.

Distant as these islands are and must always be from the whirl of human interests, they have

* I can imagine the reverend gentleman's experiences at Grosse Isle. Once, in passing a night there, I was routed out of bed by aborigines who evidently believed me an intruder. I bear such bed fellows no ill will for I know their distinguished pedigree and that their ancestors found homes in the Algonquin beds before the human race was conceived. But as I had other nights to stay I demurred to the partnership. My host expressed regret without surprise, but casually remarked that the last person who had slept in the bed was the Rev. J. P., the English minister.

had their share in the earlier events on the coast. Indeed Cartier visited them before he ever saw and laid claim to New France and so their recorded history runs back a little further than that of the greater country of which they now form such a slender appanage. In his first voyage of 1534 his course into the Golfo Quadrato lay south from the Straits of Belle Isle and he made land falls in suc-
cession from the north: first the Bird Rocks which he named the Isles aux Marguerites, then Brion Island, which has carried from his day the name of the first admiral of France, Philippe Chevret, Sieur de Brion. Here he went ashore and of the island he wrote such a glorious description as to make the reader feel he had found the Garden of Eden. Some of the later voyagers applied this name, Brion, to the entire group of islands. But Cartier, passing this way the next year, spoke of crossing over from Brion Island, which he revisited, to Les Araynes—the sands of Grosse Isle and East Point. By this name and its variants the group was set down on many of the early charts. The maps of the Gulf which date from 1603 to 1620 are not altogether reliable records of position but are of interest as showing the growth of observations concerning the form of the islands and their changes in name, the years of confusion with the Isle St.-Jean (Prince Edward Island) and their gradual distinction from it. Indeed few, if any, of the charts to Champlain’s time and later made out the isle St.-Jean, fifty miles to the west of the Magdalen.

We do not know how soon after Cartier’s discovery the men of Normandy and Breton got in among these islands, but by the latter part of the 16th century the stories they brought home of the tremendous number of seals and walruses to be had, reached England and started English expeditions into this quarter. There was a voyage in 1591 by a skipper unknown, on behalf of M. de la Court, Pré-Ravillon and Grand Pré, for the purpose of killing “Morses” for “trayne oyl”, which of itself indicates previous attempts by the French for the same purpose. Then of the English, George Drake made a passage in 1593, finding the harbors already occupied by “Britons of S. Malo and Basques of S. John de Luz.” Drake found that “by coming a day after the Fayre” his efforts were naught; just as Charles Leigh and Sylvester Wyet, who with Drake were the first Englishmen to sail so far within the Gulf, are said on their arrival, to have been confronted by two hundred French, who had planted three pieces of ordnance on the beach, and three hundred savages—an opposition which led to a sharp sea fight and seems to have effectively dissuaded further attempts on the part of the English to fasten their hold on this business.

These islands were granted in 1633 by the Company of New France to Nicolas Denys as a part of the vast region stretching from Cape Cenczo at the south to Cap-des-Rosiers at the north, and the next year Denys received from the King letters patent as governor and lieutenant-general to all this great territory.

The early days land patents in the world of New France were given easily and conflicting claims to the same territory issued from the same source often resulted. So it happened that in 1663

The confident Drake, having made a passage into the “Iles de Brion” for the seal and seal islands, Doubiet was also given permission to change the name of the island from Brion to Madelene, which was the name of his wife. So this name has come down to the present as a memorial of conjugal devotion, though Doubiet’s attempts at a settlement failed totally and have been almost forgotten.

* Professor Ganong assures me that the name Madelene is attached to these islands on Champlain’s map of 1632, which is not now accessible to me. This is a rather singular coincidence in view of the statement made above. Probably the whole history of Doubiet’s attempts at settlement would have passed with little notice if it were not for a short sharp passage in Denys’s Description Géographique et Historique des Costes de l’Amérique Septentrionale, 1672, and had not the departmental archives at Rouen afforded in recent years the manuscript journal of Doubiet’s son, which was edited and printed in 1883 by Breau, under the title Journal du Corsaire Jean Doublet de Honfleur. This is a remarkable story of a freebooter’s life in every quarter of the watery globe, beginning with his successful attempt, at the age of seven, to stow himself away aboard his father’s ship which came out to the Madeleines in 1683: the experience of the attempted colony there; the return next year to find the colony demoralized, the place abandoned and the venture wholly lost. The younger Doublet declares the islands were named for his mother, by consent of the proprietors.
Like Dight, Denys failed in his efforts to induce colonization and in 1720 the Magdalenas, with S. Jean and Miscou, were ceded by letters patent to the Count of St.-Pierre, Equerry to the Duchess of Orleans. He was commissioned not only to carry on the fisheries but to cultivate the soil and cut the timber. So far as we know, the attempted colonization under this patent elicited little and the islands were lost sight of till after the fall of New France, when the English government annexed the islands to Newfoundland. By the Quebec Act they were soon after attached to that province where they now belong.

A new era in their history, however, began in 1758 when they were granted by royal patent to Sir (afterwards Admiral) Isaac Coffin. Captain Coffin, the bright particular star of the proxim New England Coffins, of which the Boston branch were all Loyalists, had fought well in His Majesty's navy during the American war, and in 1783 while transporting to Quebec, his chief and friend, Lord Dorchester, then for the second time governor-general, passed the Madeleines on their course and in jovial mood and haphazard way suggested that he would like to be made proprietor of these islands. The governor-general assented, but it was not till the time of his successor that the royal warrant was issued.*

The new proprietor established at once a feudal system of land tenure which has remained close to the present day as a last flickering expression of mediævalism in the English lands of the western world. Sir Isaac Coffin required the occupants of the islands to take titles in the nature of emphyteutic leases or perpetual leases at an irredeemable rent. The islands cover nearly 100,000 acres and at the usual annual return of 20 cents an acre would have produced a considerable ground rent, but this land never was fully leased, the rents never proved collectible and the system resulted in continual contentions between agent and tenant which at times culminated in considerable migrations from the islands. A very int-

* Admiral Coffin's first naval service on these northern waters was in the frigate Guadeloupe; his next, in the Sybil: admirable among his later proprietary.
compelling need for more money to help them keep pace with the outside world. In their natural philosophy it is best to keep life simple—it always has been so. These are the Isles of Rest—nobody cares whether the venturers from outside pay dividends or not.

To talk so much of these islands and to say so little of the wealth of their waters would be to pass by what has seemed to the simpler philosophy of islanders and visitors alike the reason for their existence. At any rate it is nature’s compensation for those whom choice or fortune compels to live here. The life hereupon is not to be estimated in terms of the summer sea. Blue skies and southerly breezes are but for a day at a time. For nearly half the year the islanders are icebound with no communication with the outside world, save by cable and now in these last days by wireless from the hilltop on Grindstone. The turbulence of the autumn begins as early as September in these uneasy waters and with the breaking of the ice fields in March and April begins the turbulence of the spring. Full half the year is given over to the winter—time in which the islanders stretch the season. Yet if nature seems to have been stingy in her other gifts to the islands, she stinted nothing when it came to fish. The broad rock platforms which surround the islands at slender depths are the natural gathering places of the fish and in spite of the millions taken out, more millions remain. With the disappearance of the ice comes the spring run of cod. The herring still abound in limitless shoals, the mackerel have never yet deserted the islands as they have the Gaspé Coast and with the coming down of the fall the cod return fat and fine for the late fishing. On most of Gaspé only the cod remains, the herring are too few for anything but bait and the mackerel migrated long years ago, only now coming back here and there to their historic grounds. The islanders have only to reach out and take—but reaching out to take means the roughest and most hazardous work so it is little wonder that the fisherman prefers to venture just so far into this struggle as the nece-

...
and teeth. I have even dug out a great leden slug from the skull of one of these creatures. There's a Sea-cow point on Coffin Island, another on the south shore of Amherst, both of which record these activities of the past. And indeed the bone heaps distributed over rock surfaces and beneath 6–10 inches of soil are indications of a slaughter which helps one to understand how the waters have become extinct in these waters.

There are a few other little dots of rock about this island group. Wolf Island lies buried in the long western bar; Shag, a bare platform, is off the sands of White, and Gull is near Blanque-au-Point. Deadman's Island—Aleazy, it was called by Cartier—is a seraphic ten miles southwest of Amherst. Off it, Thomas Moore, on his way home from Canada, sang dolorously a lament song of shipwreck, though he misnamed the island by putting it off the coast of Newfoundland. What tales of sea and seamen these ragged little rocks enshrine, no one can ever know, nor tell of the bones of skipper and craft buried on the shools of the White Horse, the Pierre-du-Cros-Cap, or the other islands of the Point-au-Port.

Ten miles off to the north of Grose Isle, with a ten fathom channel between is Brion Island, seven miles long, but stretched out thin, with 200 foot cliffs on the west and all a platform of horizontal gray sandstones, grass-topped and inviting. This is the island that its discoverer, Cartier, went into ecstasies over on that June day of 1554, when he anchored and went ashore; and when he expressed his enthusiasm by giving the spot the name of his patron. English charts, with dull insistence, assume that Cartier was mistaken in its name and so they call it Byron. The attractions that Cartier found here on that long ago summer day are not so many now. Its timber is gone, the "morses" which lined its shore departed a century ago, its grapes, its gooseberries are hard to find and its roses are blasted, but its verdure and fertility remain, its sheep produce a wool of extraordinary worth and a mutton of purest flavor. Brion has for two generations been the property of the Dingwall family and its new inhabitants are for the most part in some relation of dependence upon the descendants. Doubtless, the island has its fascinations to one who will search them out. I have sailed about it and gazed upon it wistfully, but have not yet been ashore.

The Bird Rocks, lying out beyond Brion, to the northeast some ten miles, have another sort of story—one of birds and of human tragedy. "Set by God the Lord in the midst of the waters," said Father Juenens, in the 1600's, they seemed to him like a great dovecoot, so covered were they with birds from top to bottom. And since his day and that earlier year when Cartier called them the Isles-aux-margaux, this great colony of water fowl has been the wonder of navigators. In later years the theme of much writing by the bird men. But of the human tragedies on these remote bits of bare rocks, little has been recorded. The Bird Rocks are three in number now. In the early days, the two little fragments now known as the Little Birds, were evidently one, but the sea has broken them apart. The Great or Northern Bird is a flat rock table, not as large as some ice floes.
and that is the inroads made by the fishermen
and "eggers" upon the egg supply—the potential
future of the settlement. In the days when the
Gloucester fishing fleet had free access to these
waters, the Bird Rock was their resort when pro-
visions ran low, and the "eggers" who now res-
sults the Newfoundland-Labrador colonies in un-
restrained license was not checked in his attacks on
this island until it was made a bird reserve by the
government and put under the care of the light-
keeper. And now it is the bird "hero," the egg
collector, with commercial seductive who is car-
rying the work along. I have encountered one of
these "heroes," who had in his possession little
clutches of eggs of each of the seven known species
of birds. This avid murderer had, in one week,
thus put an end to not less than 2,000 members of
his community, an offense for which in his own
state, he would have been well fined or imprisoned.
But let no one visit on the head of the lonely light-
keeper reproach for such performances. His soli-
tude, his delight in a visitor from the big world
outside are their own justifications for seeking
a solace in solitude. The real romance of Bird
Rock has been depicted in extraordinary
portraiture by the marvelous photographs taken
by Mr. Herbert K. Job from perilous points of
view on the narrow ledges where a foothold is
only tenable when one is tied to security by a rope
from above. The decrease in the number of the
bird population here is a cause of some just solici-
tude to the conservation of our native fauna, but
the remedy is, as we have indicated, not far to
seek. The gannet is not to be found elsewhere in
the Gulf, except at Bonaventure Island near Perce,
and at Perroquet Island off Anticosti, and there
is little doubt that, of these settlements, the one
at Bonaventure is the largest.

It was not until 1870 that any light was placed
on the Bird Rock. Up to that time, being square
in the path of navigation through the southern
passage, these rocks were a fearful menace to
skippers and craft. For many years after the
erection of the light, the only means of ascending
the rock face was in a crate hauled up the cliff
by a windlass and a life. Some of the early light-
keepers dug out a rough stairway on the cliff face
and up these, one and the other, all supplies and all
construction material were taken. Ten years ago
the government made a more reliable stairway in
the rocks with an iron hand rail. It is a precarious
passage enough, amid crumbling rock and scream-
ing birds, and even so, the hoist must still serve
for heavier loads.

I doubt if the world holds a more isolated light
station. Here, during the unfrozen months, the
lightkeeper and his little family, usually his wife,
a few children and his assistant, have only their
daily routine of duties. Once or twice perhaps,
in the year, the light inspection steamer with
supplies, then the occasional bird student or fisher-
man. The shipping which the lighthouse serves
passes the rock on one side and another and the
news of the day is only the passing of another
vessel. Perhaps the casual visitor brings in a
newspaper or a little talk of the world outside,
but for the rest, the eternal sea, the omnipresent
screams of the birds, the monotonous round of
daily work at the light, the fog horn, the beating
of time all serve to make life here so remote and
peaceful that the noise of the world, if every
word on every book and paper has been burned
into the brain and every thought thought over a
score of times, is it any wonder that more than
once, the keeper, mad with his awful solitude, has
been taken from the island in a straightjacket?

Once there was a cable stretched from here by
way of the Magdalen's on to Cape Breton but now
that is broken and abandoned, a set of Inter-
national Code flags being the only means the
keeper has to make known his distress to his neigh-
bors, if perchance any should be passing, or the
lightkeeper at Brion should see them. Some
years ago at the down coming of the seal, the
keeper and his assistant were floated off on sepa-
rated ice cakes—the keeper to his death, the as-
sistant to be washed ashore frozen and famished
on the distant sands of Cape Breton. In 1912, the
tragedy repeated itself and again the keeper was
lost in the seal hunt, leaving the anguished wife
to tend the light and to signal for succor with the
International Code flags a kind-hearted ministry had placed at their disposal. But so heavy hung the fog banks day upon day that the signals were
unavailing and so the stout-hearted widow with babe at breast, steered her shallop through the
ice fields to her nearest neighbor on Brion Island.
They will tell you on the Madelens of the time the bomb exploded prematurely, blowing the
keeper to fragments and fearfully naming the assistant, who still lives upon the islands.

And yet, with all its atmosphere of solitude and
tragedy, the Bard Rock is a charming spot for a
brief stay. Its isolation is sublime, its attractions
novel, its mode incomparable. If only one stay
through at least one storm and then do not out-
stay his welcome.
Convincing clues to the history of a country are embalmed in its place names. I have here given the principal names on these islands with suggestions as to their origin.

Madeleine
Magdalen (English)
Magdalene
Mauclin — broad French and vulgar English.

Brion
Bryon
Byron

This name, applied by Cartier, 1534, to the island now bearing it, was often used by early explorers for the whole group. It was given in honor of Philippe Chabot, Sieur de Brion.

Amherst I.
I. Aubert
Haître Aubert

Gen. William Amherst — a name given by the Coffin patentees. The old French name is Haître Aubert and this is the post office name today. Aubert was commissioner for the islands at an early day and the “Haître” has reference to the interior lagoon which has been at various times open for small vessels.

Pleasant bay
Baie au Plaisance

The broad bay on the east coast of Amherst, a deadly anchorage in an easterly gale.

Cabin cove
L’anse aux Cabanes

On the south shore of Amherst. Has reference to Micmac lodges there at an early day.

West point
Sou’west point
Sou’west cape

On Amherst.

Mt Gridley

The little triangle of land at Amherst wharf. Gridley was an American who established the first lobster fishing here about 1793.

Demoiselle hill

On Amherst. Takes its name from its symmetrical shape which the French thought resembled a maiden’s breast, in which respect it is like all the volcanic-gypsum hills on Grindstone, Alright and Entry.

Basque harbor
Harbor Basque
Hâvre aux Basques

A name dating to the 1600’s when the Basques were in possession.

Grindstone I.
Pierre Meulière
Isle aux Meules
Isle Blanche

The English name translates the French: all are due to the coarse white sandstone which forms the principal headland, Cape Meule.

Leslie cove

Named for William Leslie, early pioneer of the lobster business, and still there after 40 years’ residence. This is the post office name of the eastern part of Grindstone I.

Red cape, Grindstone I. Its blood-red sandstones.

Cape le Trou

Grindstone I. Stands on the hydrographic chart but does not seem to be known to the residents.

Hospital cape
Cap au hospital

Grindstone I. The origin is lost both to the French and English, but the name naturally suggests a wreck and rescue.

Etang du Nord

Grindstone I. Pronounced by the English, Tampanour. The pond is the north pond of Basque Harbor.

Sailor’s term. Not older than the Coffin patent. Either this or Grindstone I. was called Saunders I. by Bayfield or the Coffins.

Alright I.

House harbor
Harbor Maison
Hâvre aux Maisons

The harbor between Grindstone and Alright. An ancient term referring to early settlement, probably the first on the islands.
MAGDALEN ISLANDS

The beach at Grosse Isle; in the distance the long sand dunes stretching around North cape
Life of islanders depicted in stained glass windows

By Bruce H. Nutter

For centuries and even into our own times, the Church has been a patron of the arts, especially those that express the values and ideals of the faith. In the Middle Ages in Europe, stained glass has been used to tell the stories of the saints and the deeds of the saints, and to inspire the faithful. In the 19th century, the Church was again the patron of the arts, especially in the context of the Gothic Revival, which saw a revival of the use of stained glass in church architecture. Today, stained glass is still used in church construction and renovation, and has become a form of artistic expression in its own right.

The most characteristic expression of religious art is stained glass. Ever since the Middle Ages in Europe, stained glass has been used to help the faithful in their knowledge of the great events of the Christian Religion. As an example, until comparatively recent years, most people were unable to read or write. Recognizing this, the Church undertook to depict in stained glass the teachings and life of Jesus. This was a fantastic aid to the devotional life of Christians who could visit their parish churches, and make pilgrimages to the great shrines of the saints. At last, they would see by means of vividly colored glass the images of Jesus, his mother, the saints and martyrs of the centuries.

As human beings made of flesh and blood we need to be able to see, hear, touch, smell, and taste the elements of the created order, and use them to bring us closer to a loving God. We are not disembodied spirits.

On the Magdalen Islands our churches have a minimum of religious art, and what there is falls far short of giving expression to ourselves as people struggling to understand and live the Christian faith on these islands. Some time ago, it was decided to place three stained glass windows in the East wall behind the altar of Holy Trinity Church. These windows were installed in mid-July 1986.

The windows were created by a young company in Prince Edward Island (Burden/Hrab). They are already making a name for themselves, and have been given a major commission to do the Great West Window for the Anglican Cathedral in Halifax, N.S.

When I approached them last fall about the Grosse Isle window, we came to a very quick understanding about the sort of presentation that was required. One of the two partners in the company had visited the islands on a number of occasions, and in fact had published a children's colouring book telling the story about a horse on Entry Island who had been separated from its owner. With this kind of background, the two artists were keen to have a commission from the Magdalen Islands.

The windows are unusual for a number of reasons: first, there are three windows, but it is also possible to forget this, because there is only one scene. The light coming through the windows further emphasizes the unity of the scene because the brightness of the East window completely. There is an unusual effect of dimension which a number of people have noticed. If one stops, and quietly gazes at the windows for a short time, it is seemingly possible to move into the scene....to put yourself in the window. It is then that the new windows seem to be alive.

There is a lot to these windows. Of course, the first thing one notices is the bright colour, and the way the light intensifies coming through it. They are modern, contemporary windows, expressing in concrete, ordinary images, the people and the islands they live on. The background shows the interaction of the land and the sea. A blue heron flies overhead, and in the distance, two gulls. On a small hill there is a wooden house representing the traditional domestic architecture of the islands. A fishing boat is at the bottom of the hill, and in the foreground the familiar hay barge which has become a symbol of the Magdalen Islands. In the center window, the Gibraltar-like slope of East Cape is easily recognized.

At the bottom of the windows you read the words: "Come with me and I will make you fishers of men." Our Lord is portrayed speaking these words not to the Galilean fishermen of 2,000 years ago, but to the people of the Magdalen Islands in our time. He is dressed in a heavy woolen sweater, jeans and rubber boots! The sun is directly over his head, and two strands of light coming from the sun compass run on both sides to the exquisite representations of the scene. A cross may be discerned which extends at an angle to the right window.

Around our Lord are the people of the Magdalen Islands on the right, the women and children dressed in windbreakers and exhibiting the red hair characteristic of Scots ancestry. In the background on the shore, a mysterious figure dressed in blue stares out to us. It is the Blessed Virgin Mary, and she holds in her arms a bouquet of fleur-de-lis. The Quebec.

In the left window are the two fishermen representing St. Peter and his brother Andrew. Our Lord has spoken the words to them, and from their expressions one senses that the message has been spoken through their heads into their hearts. Once again, if you stop and move into this scene, something begins to happen. You begin to feel the scene.

The tension becomes almost incalculable. Study the look in Peter's eyes. Here is a man on the edge of faith. Jesus, the having man has captured his heart and his imagination. What will happen to Peter if he leaves his nets and follows? The tension is so well expressed that it is as if Peter's eyes are on the edge of stepping off into a new dimension.

I am extremely impressed by the craftsmanship of the artists in the stained glass studio. They have created a work of art that is both beautiful and thought-provoking. It is a testament to the skill and dedication of the artists and to the devotion of the people of the Magdalen Islands.
Dear Sir:

In the February 14th issue of SPEC, I was amazed at certain references to church property on the Magdalen Islands, in an article by Erica Pomerance which appeared on page 8. The writer states that Coffin Island was given to the Anglican church by “Coffin” who later traded it for property at Grindstone.

Since there were three Coffins involved in the Magdalen Islands, it is not clear from this article which one of the three supposedly made this generous contribution. Obviously it could not have been Admiral Isaac Coffin himself, since he died 12 years before the church was established on the Islands.

Since available space in the publication will only permit a cropped version of the actual facts, I will be as brief as possible:
1. None of the Coffins, including Admiral Sir Isaac Coffin ever owned Coffin Island

2. The Anglican church never owned any part of Coffin Island with the exception of the present cemetery at Old Harry (1 acre) which was purchased from Daniel Dunn on October 21, 1915 for the amount of $10.00 (Deed registered at the Registry office for the Magdalen Islands on October 23, 1915, under the number 1777.)

Although undoubtedly written in good faith, what is disturbing about this statement is that no documentary evidence is mentioned to support the theory that such a transaction ever took place, and many people would accept this statement as historical fact because it appeared in print.

It is true that Coffin Island was known as the “Clergy Reserves” prior to 1854, in fact, one-seventh of all Lower Canada was reserved for this purpose under the Constitutional Act of 1791 but I would point out that these properties did not belong to the church or clergy as some might think, but to the Crown and rents received from the allotment of these reserves were given for the support and maintenance of the Protestant clergy of Lower Canada (Church and State in Canada 1627-1867, John S. Moir, McClelland & Stewart, Toronto).

The Magdalen Islands were granted to Isaac Coffin (later Sir Isaac Coffin) by Letters Patent on April 24, 1798. Pages 4 and 5 of this document express the extreme eastern Island - “comprising the Northeast point and the Old Harry’s point”, estimated to be the one-seventh part of the Islands would not be a part of the grant, and that this portion would remain property of the crown or Province for the support and maintenance of a Protestant clergy. This was to fulfill article 36 of the Constitutional Act.

The first Anglican clergyman who came to the Magdalen Islands, (Rev. Felix Boyle) took up residence first at House Harbour later moving to Grindstone, therefore it became necessary for the church to obtain property in this area for the purpose of building a rectory, obtaining firewood and farming. A tract of land (100 acres) was acquired by an Emphyteusic Lease, dated June 11, 1858, from John Fontana (agent for John Townsend Coffin) to the Rev. Felix Boyle, resident Anglican clergyman for the use of the Magdalen Islands Mission. The lease was for a period of 99 years with an option to renew at its expiry date and with an annual rent of one shilling sterling payable each year in the month of June. (See lease from John Fontana to Felix Boyle, Registered at the Registry office for the Magdalen Islands on the 2nd day of September, 1863, No. 24, Register B, Volume 1, page 4) John Townsend Coffin died in England on April 29, 1882 and Isaac Tristram Coffin became proprietor in trust of the Islands. Unrest, discontentment and constant quarrelling over the land tenure system on the Islands prompted the Quebec government to intervene and in 1895 an act was passed to replace the system of tenure by lease by one of free tenure, whereby all occupants could become owners of their property by paying any arrears in rent plus rent for the current year at the office of the clerk of the Circuit Court for the Magdalen Islands at Amherst.

On June 14, 1897, a Deed of Commutation, between Isaac Tristram Coffin, (represented by E.A. Brasset, trustee) the Government of Quebec and the Lord Bishop of Quebec, gave the Diocese title to all church properties held from the-Coffins under the lease system, namely at Grindstone, Entry Island, Amherst and Grosse Isle.

In 1959, following a threat of expropriation by the Duplessis government, the Diocese sold the 100 acre tract of land to the Province of Quebec.

In conclusion I would like to say that John Townsend Coffin was considered a valuable friend and supporter of the Anglican church on the Islands during his incumbency as proprietor and made many generous gifts and contributions for its upkeep and maintenance. Whether out of the generosity of his heart or by constant reminders from the clergy and bishops of their needs, we will never know.

Byron Clark, Magdalen Islands, Quebec.
Mr. Kenneth E. Annett,
1225 Lavigerie Ave.,
St. Hy, Quebec,
J1W 3J8.

Dear Mr. Annett:-

Thank you for your letter of April 4th, and your interest in my response to an article which had appeared in a February issue of SPEC. Unfortunately they only printed about half of the original article, possibly for the want of space, and to me it made the whole thing rather meaningless.

It is strange that you should inquire about Judge Edward Bowen, as I have been trying to find out some information about him, also, as I have reasons to believe that he may have performed several civil marriages on the Islands in 1847 or 1848.

It was he who was responsible for making the Church of England aware of the fact that there were several English speaking Protestants on the Islands, and during his last visit here in 1848 was accompanied by the Rev. R. Short, the clergyman from Percé. It was during this particular visit that he took ill or had an accident whatever happened.

Unfortunately, the only information that I have concerning this incident is an article which appeared in The Canadian Ecclesiastical Gazette, September 12, 1850, Vol. 1, No. 4. Mine is a Xerox copy and is not legible enough to recopy. You could obtain a copy of this by contacting the Librarian, Bishop's University, Lennoxville. Tell him you want pages 30 - 31 and 32 of this issue, and specify that it concerns Bishop Mountain's first visit to Magdalen Islands.

All that the article mentions is that the Judge took seriously ill while on the Islands, (resulting in his death, later) and it appears that they were of the impression that it was some type of sickness or disease that he had contracted on the Islands. Apparently, this sickness had broke-out on the Islands at the time. It states that he was forced to curtail his visit, which allowed the Rev. Short to visit Entry Island only where he only performed about 10 baptisms.
As I mentioned, I was trying to obtain records which may have been kept by Judge Bowen during some of his visits to the Islands to see if he had performed any civil marriages.

In the entry in the church register concerning my great-grandfather's marriage it states that he had previously been married by a Justice of the Peace due to the lack of a Protestant clergyman on the Islands. The marriage was consolidated by the church in January 1851 by the Rev. Felix Boyle, the first resident clergyman on the Islands. I might mention that he was also a native of the Gaspe.

My great-grandfather's name was Henry Clarke, and he married a Flora Driscoll.

So far I have been unable to find any of these records. I wrote the clerk of the court at Perce as I thought that they might be there but he didn't even look and wrote back to say that I should contact the clerk of the court here at Amherst.

I contacted the chap here and he promised to look and let me know but have had no word from him. I doubt if there is any records here as it would be doubtful if the records office or courthouse was established here at that time. Most likely the annual Circuit Court was held in a schoolhouse or some such building and the records taken back to Perce.

I would place the marriage in 1848 or 1849, and it may have been in 1850 by Judge DeBlois (Judge Bowen's successor) yet it could have been as early as 1847, byt doubtful.

If you should uncover any more information concerning the Judge's accident or illness, I would be pleased to hear about it, and if I can come up with something more from here will certainly pass it along to you. Possibly you might have a suggestion as to where I might look for this marriage record.

Good luck with your research!

Yours sincerely,

BYRON CLARK

P.S: Was a bit curious, if someone gave you my name, or if it was just from the article in Spec.
Excuse the mistakes as I'm using an electric typewriter which I am not used to.
Leisure and Communications
Project
Box 33, Leslie P.O.
Grossetale Mactalen Islands
Tel., CGB 110
April 30, 1984

Dear Mr. Annette:

We recently wrote to C.A.S.A. asking for information about
Loyalists who came to the Maguire Islands. We were given your name
as the best person to contact.

Some of the family names here are: Burke, Rankin, McLean, Chennell,
Welsh(Walsh), Cassioly, Turnbull, Craig, Richards, Dunn, Clark, Hickson,
Lisson), Keating(Keaton), Driscoll, Taker(Tager).

Any information you could send to us would be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Nina Clark