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**Nova Scotia's Lightkeeping Heritage:
An Assessment of the Life and Work of Evelyn Richardson**

**A thesis submitted by Fiona L. Marshall
to the Faculty of Arts at Saint Mary's University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Master of Arts Degree in Atlantic Canada Studies**

May 2002

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Nova Scotia's Lightkeeping Heritage:
An Assessment of the Life and Work of Evelyn Richardson

Fiona L. Marshall
May 2002

Abstract

Twentieth-century Nova Scotia witnessed the lighthouse service evolve towards the peak of its technical sophistication and human importance, and eventually decline to its lowest level of practical significance. The automation of lighthouses is arguably an accomplishment in efficiency and economy; but the new navigational aids and systems have meant the demise of the lightkeeping tradition. It is this way of life that was so accurately depicted in Evelyn Richardson's 1945 classic, We Keep a Light.

This thesis will contend that Evelyn Richardson played a pivotal role in the preservation of Nova Scotia's lightkeeping heritage. It will also argue that Richardson made lasting and valuable contributions to local history and conservation, and will analyze her role within a framework of gender analysis and briefly within the theories of modernism and folklorism. This study will also situate We Keep a Light within a survey of lighthouse literature, and demonstrate its historical, cultural and literary importance. Furthermore, this thesis will examine the social, economic and political effects of lightkeeping heritage on twentieth-century Nova Scotia in order to illustrate the necessity of preserving our lighthouses for historical, navigational, cultural, personal and psychological reasons.

Acknowledgements

The process of researching and writing a thesis can be an overwhelming task. The student inexorably spends a great deal of time and energy selecting a topic that will add his or her voice to an already established body of knowledge. Today's researchers have access to innumerable resources--both paper and electronic--and they must contend with naysayers, dead-ends, reluctant informants, incomplete or outdated information, and computer malfunctions. All of these obstacles necessitate a steadfast belief in the value of one's research. Yet this is not a solitary venture. Over the course of the past five years, numerous people have shed a light on my research, and I am indebted to them all for their guidance and assistance.

Firstly, I wish to thank Dr. Ken MacKinnon at Saint Mary's University. As my thesis advisor, Dr. MacKinnon spent countless hours reviewing drafts, providing reading materials and debating contentious lighthouse issues. Dr. MacKinnon had the daunting task of narrowing the focus of my research, which threatened to include tourism and recreation, lighthouse design and construction, and mass marketing to name a few. Without his

straightforward critique, this thesis would undoubtedly be more haphazardly written. His comments were much appreciated and greatly improved the overall effect of my argument. Moreover, I am indebted to Dr. MacKinnon for sharing my enthusiasm about this topic, and for believing that it I had undertaken a worthwhile cause.

At the Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society, several people provided me with insights and helpful information. Most especially, I thank Dan Conlin, Kathy Brown, Lew Perry and current NSLPS Board members. I am also thankful to all those members with whom I made various trips and adventures to remote island lightstations, through the densest fog and the clearest skies, especially to those who participated in that memorable trip to Bon Portage Island in September 1999.

To Mrs. Betty June (Richardson) Smith and Mrs. Anne (Richardson) Wickens, I bestow my tremendous admiration, envy and respect. They had first become a part of my life as characters in a novel, but after meeting them in March 1997 I became firmly convinced of the need to revisit their mother's life and works. It was that March 1997 encounter that drew my attention away from the iconography of lighthouses to focus on a real family

experience. I thank them both for their interest in my work, and hope they are pleased with the result.

To my colleagues in the Atlantic Canada Studies program: we each came from different backgrounds with varying interests, and yet we shared a common goal--to promote awareness of the unique culture and history of the Maritimes. May all our research be used to enlighten others about the valuable heritage of the region.

And lastly, heartfelt thanks are extended to my friends and family for understanding the frustration, satisfaction, and often unconventional study habits that this process requires. I thank you all for your patience, compassion, and even sympathy! In particular, I wish to acknowledge the constant support of my parents, John and Gloria. Had they not brought me to eastern Canada for the first time at the age of two, I might never have fallen in love with the coast, and come to regard its lighthouses as trusted friends. My parents instilled in me the belief in the importance of education--not simply through books, but through life experience--and this pursuit of learning shall continue long after I have received my Masters degree. I also wish to acknowledge the encouragement of my brother John,

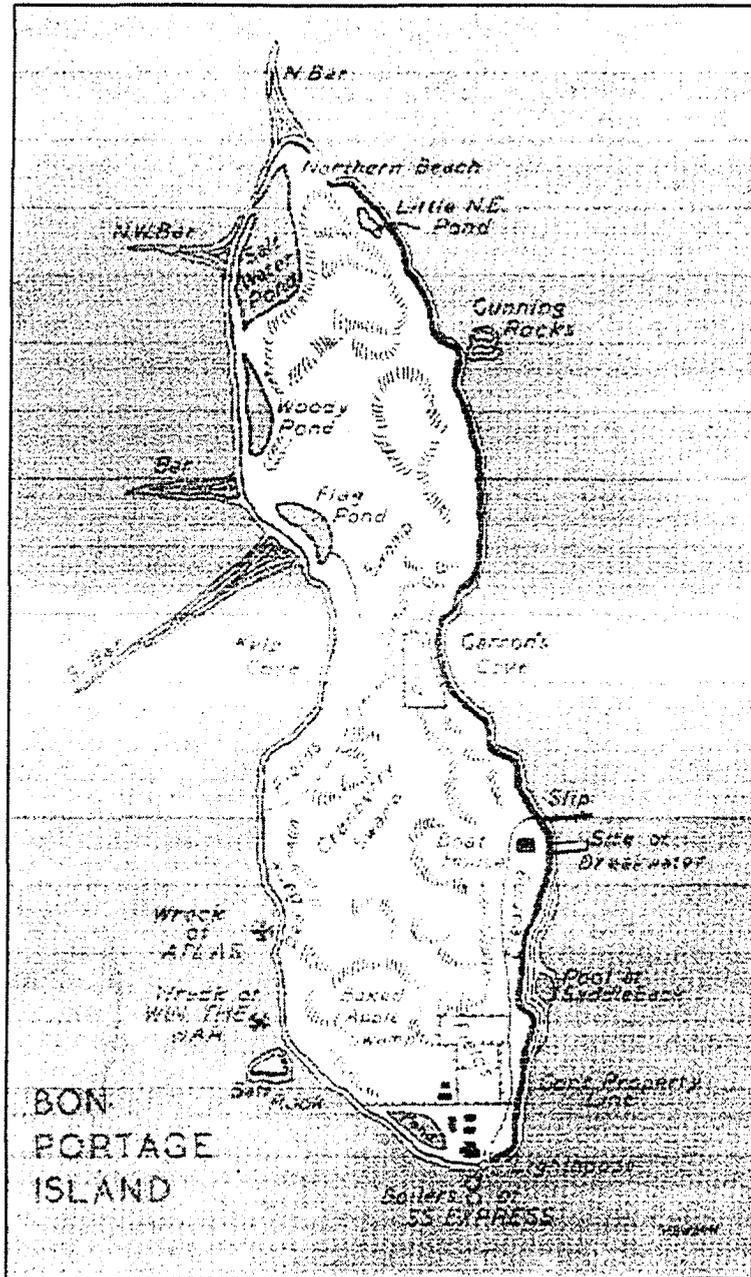
my cousin Ann Marie, and my grandmother Carmela. I greatly appreciate your curiosity in my research and concern about its progress.

To all the lightkeepers of Nova Scotia and the nation: thank you for risking your lives to rescue others; for your years of devoted, often unappreciated service; for working in isolated, primitive conditions that most of us could never tolerate; for believing your duty had purpose; and for making all of us--either on land or at sea--feel the relief and comfort of a safe journey home. You have left an indelible mark on maritime history.

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Bon Portage Island



Map from We Keep a Light.

Introduction

This thesis will contend that Evelyn Richardson (1902-1976) played a pivotal role in the preservation of Nova Scotia's lightkeeping heritage. It will also argue that Richardson made lasting and valuable contributions to local history and conservation, and will analyze her role within a framework of gender analysis and briefly within the theories of modernism and folklorism. Using her 1945 memoir We Keep a Light as a primary resource, this study will also situate that text within a survey of lighthouse literature, and demonstrate its historical, cultural and literary importance.

Furthermore, this thesis will examine the social, economic and political effects of lightkeeping heritage on twentieth-century Nova Scotia.

My purposes here are fivefold: first, I propose to highlight the merit of Evelyn Richardson's literary contributions, particularly We Keep a Light. Second, I want to illustrate that Evelyn Richardson was a key player in the protection of her natural and built environment, and that her life and works were--and are--contributing factors to the rise in lighthouse appreciation and in environmental conservation; and third, to demystify and bring down to earth the traditionally romantic notions of lightkeeping. Fourth, I wish to

raise awareness of the fact that the number of Nova Scotia's staffed and operating lighthouses have been reduced by nearly two hundred over the past century; and fifth, to motivate interest in the preservation of one's community and heritage among the general public.

Since the first lighthouse was established at Louisbourg in 1734, Nova Scotia's shoreline has been dotted with lighthouses. From their modest beginnings of stone and wood, to imposing concrete towers, lighthouses have guided local fishermen, naval and Coast Guard vessels, and ships carrying human cargo and provisions across the Atlantic Ocean. Most specifically, it has been the keepers inside these lighthouses that have performed their duty to the utmost in safeguarding our waters. And with very few exceptions, the occupation of lightkeeper was relegated to men only. It is for this reason that Evelyn Richardson first stands out: she was not merely a lightkeeper's wife, but a lightkeeper's assistant in the truest sense. She possessed intimate knowledge of the workings of the Bon Portage light, and witnessed its progression from a single fixed lamp to a highly mechanized system of reflectors.

Yet Evelyn Richardson is a remarkable individual for more than her lightkeeping abilities. This profession, as well as her prior training as a

teacher, provided her with ample skills and material for writing. In addition to her award-winning memoir We Keep a Light, this writer thrived on chronicling local history and incorporating regional lore into such works as My Other Islands and Living Island, as well as conducting private research for various historical societies. Since the Richardsons owned Bon Portage Island and became dependent upon it for food, clothing and shelter, Evelyn became particularly aware of her natural surroundings. By documenting the various bird and plant life, she began--without intent--a private conservation project, which later manifested itself in Acadia University's Biological Field Station on the island. Thus, while she might not have called herself one, she can accurately be described as an environmentalist.

As well, through her endeavours to comment on, and assess, government regulations concerning the Bon Portage light, she unwittingly served as a political activist. That is not to say that she participated in protests, but rather that she represented a vocal minority group within the population, and maintained her beliefs against all the inconveniences and disadvantages that the government could impart upon a solitary and isolated lightkeeping family. Her social concerns, liberal attitude, and exemplary lifestyle also reveal feminist characteristics. She was a model homemaker

and career woman at the same time. Evelyn Richardson was a wife, mother, teacher, author, lightkeeper's assistant, environmentalist, political activist and feminist--the female equivalent of a Renaissance man. There is as well a direct correlation between the success of her writings and the rise in lighthouse tourism, and an increase in local preservation action. The microcosm of Bon Portage Island is representative of the macrocosm of Nova Scotia, the nation itself, and the world, as we shift from a context where communities had been long isolated from each other to one where society has become "globalized" through modern technology and communications media. Evelyn Richardson's life and works divulge the universal theme of humanity at its best, but not without simultaneously revealing some of the more difficult problems we have in becoming truly human. This thesis will demonstrate the significance of Evelyn Richardson's contributions to literature and history through an analysis of her texts, philosophies and behaviour, and reveal why We Keep a Light can be considered a classic and why she herself is worthy of remembrance.

Chapter One

The Early Years at Bon Portage

"This lighthouse nourishes itself

*upon the pure matter which is the substance of the isle . . ."*¹

This first chapter will establish how the Richardsons became lightkeepers and how they adapted to the exigencies of the lightkeeping profession in challenging circumstances during the 1930s. In their secluded island setting, the Richardsons performed their duties under "primitive" conditions, often struggling against nature as vehemently as they fought the Department of Transport for assistance and cooperation. It is these hardships and triumphs of Nova Scotia's lightkeepers that are described in Richardson's autobiographical accounts, We Keep a Light and B was for Butter and Enemy Craft. These works downplayed the romantic ideal of the solitary lightkeeper, and instead revealed a series of paradoxical

¹Alfred Jarry, "Concerning the Squitty Sea, The Olfactory Lighthouse, and the Isle of Cack, Where We Drank Not," cited in Stephen Jones, Harbor of Refuge: Being the Recreation of Four Seasons on an Offshore Lighthouse from the Authentic Journal of S.P. Jones, S.N., 1981.

relationships between keepers and the government, keepers and their mainland contemporaries, and keepers with their own surroundings. The Richardsons epitomized the work ethic, and their legacy of authenticity includes struggling with the difficulties of communication, island living, and creating suitable living conditions within a lighthouse, as well as the satisfaction of performing an honourable service, raising a close-knit family, and keeping pace with the modern era of convenience.

In 1929, Evelyn and Morrill Richardson became lightkeepers at Bon Portage Island, Nova Scotia.² The young couple had poured their savings into acquiring the island with high hopes for a sustained income from lightkeeping, as well as for a wholesome environment to raise their family. Yet they quickly discovered that lightkeeping was more than a job; it was a way of life. Almost as soon as they had moved into their new home, Evelyn and Morrill recognized the advantages and disadvantages of lightkeeping and island living. Yet, they embraced these challenges wholeheartedly because

²Bon Portage is also referred to as Outer Island on most maps. According to Evelyn Richardson, Samuel de Champlain called the island Ile aux Cormorants in 1604. "Old English maps of 1850 have it marked as Hope Island, while in the old Proprietors' Records of 1785 at Barrington it is called merely Shag Harbour's Outermost Island" (*We Keep a Light*, 76). Bon Portage is located at 65.75° west longitude and 43.47° north latitude, about 4 km southwest of Shag Harbour, a fishing community situated at the extreme southwestern tip of Nova Scotia.

they were genuinely committed to the lighthouse service and to their role as lightkeepers.

With the exception of the three acres of government land immediately surrounding the lighthouse, which were administered by the Department of Transport at Saint John, New Brunswick, the Richardsons owned the nearly 700 acres which helped them supplement Morrill's meagre pay and better provide for their three children, Anne, Laurie and Elizabeth (Betty) June. In reading the account of how Morrill Richardson secured his position as lightkeeper, we must bear in mind that he had bought the island three years earlier. In 1926,

when interviews with applicants for the position of Bon Portage lightkeeper were scheduled, Morrill had been granted a few days off from work in Boston and gone to Shag Harbour to meet the Federal representative, Colonel Ralston. Ashford [Evelyn's oldest brother] was then an established fish and lobster buyer on Emerald Isle, a citizen whose word carried some weight, and I am sure that word had been spoken on Morrill's behalf to the local political leaders and to Colonel Ralston. But the latter told Morrill bluntly, "If there was a veteran who wanted this job and could fill it, I'd do all I could to see

he got it." Morrill knew this was the Colonel's policy and could understand it. "But," Ralston continued evenly, "the only veteran applying is out of jail on a suspended sentence." We took it for granted this was why Morrill got the job. (B was for Butter, 111-112)

After waiting in uncertainty for a long period of time in order to get established in the island, the couple's actual arrival there from Massachusetts was experienced as a culture shock.

In We Keep a Light, Evelyn Richardson provides extensive descriptions of her personal feelings and first impressions of her new home. Her first view of the lighthouse was quite pleasing from the exterior, but her first impression of the interior was not. She recalls stepping over the threshold into her new home like this:

My heart sank as I went from room to room, my feeling of disappointment deepened. The rooms were dark and gloomy, and what was worse, they looked unloved and un-lived in as a home. Plaster was loosening from the walls in patches and sifted continually to the floor from behind the wallpaper that had become unstuck and stood slightly away from the wall in several places. Some rooms and one chimney showed signs of leaks. The floors were of soft wood, and that of the

living-room disgracefully rough and uneven with wide cracks that had been filled in with rope, and worn spots that showed splinters through the poor grey paint that did nothing to hide its defects. (We Keep a Light, 26-27)³

Furthermore, "most of the inside painting was done in battleship grey," which was a common choice for lightkeepers (32). For a young homemaker, this is not "the most cheerful colour under any circumstances, and on foggy days and sombre winter afternoons it did little to dispel the gloom" (32).

As the Richardsons would discover, the height and shape of the light structure made an awkward arrangement for a family home. They eventually came to the conclusion that it would be

much better for both Light-tower and dwelling if the two were separated, as they are in some (but not all, I notice) of the newer lighthouses. The dwelling would then be more easily kept clean, and more cheaply heated, and in cold weather the Lantern would be spared the excess condensation on walls and windows that is caused by the warm moist air that rises from the rooms of the dwelling. (40)

³Throughout this thesis, all page references to We Keep a Light are to the original Ryerson Press edition of 1945.

The lighthouse stood four storeys in total. The ground floor consisted of a kitchen, living room, master bedroom, two small porches, a cloakroom and pantry. Of these, "the kitchen, though poorly built, has an advantage over the rest of the house--its walls are straight" (34). That the kitchen was the poorest room stems from the fact that it sat three steps below the rest of the house, and was exposed on three sides. Added to this was the inconvenience of a pantry three steps up and at the end of a small cloak room, where it was "practically useless as an adjunct to the kitchen" (33). Despite this poor layout, the kitchen was an important room in the house, second only to the Lantern room, not only because it was where preparations were made for cooking and feeding the family, but also because it served as the central location for social gatherings, school lessons and wartime preparations.

The second floor consisted of two small bedrooms, a hallway, and an unfinished attic. The third floor contained the light-room, "where Morrill keeps the cleansers, polishes and small supplies for servicing the light" (35). These supplies included a workbench, extra plate-glass windows, oil-carriers, extra lamps and a barrel of sand in case of fire. There was also a small bedroom on the third floor, which was not in use when the Richardsons

arrived, but which was cleaned and painted for the occasional hired man.

The fourth floor held the decagonal-shaped Lantern room itself:

In the centre of the roof, and above the metal plate, is an opening, and this is topped by the ventilator, very like an elbow of six-inch stove piping, with a vane on top of it, which causes the mouth of the ventilator to swing away from the wind and weather. In the northern side of the Lantern, set in the metal part, and only a few inches above the floor, is a small door, just large enough to allow a man to pass through and out on the Lantern deck . . . Along its southern part is a metal trap-door, two feet long and a foot and a half wide, through which we enter and leave the Lantern. (35-36)

The Lantern room is of course the most important room to the functioning of the lighthouse, and it is in instances such as this one, where Richardson describes the light so succinctly, that she reveals herself in one of her many roles; that of Assistant Keeper.

From the opening pages of We Keep a Light it is evident that the author is, as assistant lightkeeper, willingly and ably committed to the same duties as her husband and has the same knowledge of the workings and maintenance of the light. The performing of these duties brings both

professional and personal satisfaction to Richardson:

It often comes about that Morrill is not able to be home at sunset to "light up," and I act as substitute lightkeeper. After the lamps have been lit, and the mechanism that revolves the light set in motion, I must stay for some time in the lantern, as we call the glass-and-metal enclosure that contains the light apparatus and through which the beams of the lamp are visible from the sea. This is to make certain that all is operating smoothly, since any flaw in the performance is most apt to appear when the mechanism starts. This hour of "lighting up" is a time that I enjoy. I love to watch the beams of near-by lights take their places like friendly stars in the twilight. Though I know only one of the keepers, the lights themselves are old friends. Off there, about twelve miles to the west, is Seal Island's rather irregular beam; to the south-west is nothing but unbroken sea and sky, but eight miles to the south-east is Cape Sable's bright white flash; not so far away and almost due east glows West Head's warm red; while nearest to us, only two miles away, is the twinkling little harbour light of Emerald Isle. Then to the north, snug and protected by the outlying capes and islands, the small fixed light of Wood's Harbour

glows redly. (3)

This passage reveals three important points. First, it shows the writer as a trusted and capable partner in lighthouse service who operates the light whenever necessary. Second, her description conveys lightkeeping as an occupation that is pleasing to her. Third, it reveals her feeling for landscape and seascape; her understanding of the Bon Portage light in geographic relation to other lighthouses communicates a powerful sense of space and place.

At other points in We Keep a Light, Evelyn Richardson provides further evidence of her ability to hold the post of assistant lightkeeper:

I learned to clean and fill and care for the Light, in case Morrill should be detained or absent at lighting time. I learned when fog was about to be always listening for the sound of a boat's horn. And to run out-doors and give an answering blast on the hand-horn; to notice when the fog shut in and when it cleared, and to enter this information in our records; to notice the weather conditions at sunset (the state of the sky, and the direction and force of the wind) and record them; to help with the monthly and quarterly reports that are sent to the Department at Saint John. These are Morrill's duties, but

I learned to act as substitute, if and when necessary. (48)

When she refers to "keeping track of the weather," this entails noticing "when snow or fog lessens visibility to five-eighths of a mile or less . . . also the time when visibility increased beyond that limit" (101). Such data was recorded in the lighthouse logbook by whomever was closest to the clocks and books, and this tended to be Evelyn, as these items were kept in the kitchen (101).

Further evidence of her knowledge of the workings of the light is provided in her description of the apparatus itself. She considers the light apparatus to be

really a very unimposing piece of machinery, set on a small wooden stand. When we came to Bon Portage the Light was still one fixed lamp, set in a thick lens, and the flashes were produced by revolving bars of metal a few inches wide, that, passing around the lamp, shut out its beams at regular intervals. We had been here only a year or two when that Light was changed for the one now in use, which is said to throw a brighter beam and is a much cheaper apparatus. (36)

This passage also touches on the evolution of light technology and the Department of Transport's attempt to keep costs down.

Fog and foghorns are implicitly connected with the responsibilities of operating a lighthouse. In the days before automation, keepers like the Richardsons used a hand-horn to reply to the sound blasts of passing boats. This meant keeping "one ear cocked" at all times, even when there did not appear to be great amounts of fog immediately surrounding the lighthouse; fog could be rolling out across the waves (46). Although manning the horn is essential, it can be a tedious duty:

The ultimate exasperation is . . . to sit on the fog-horn beside the lighthouse and give the necessary answering "toots" to some sailing vessel tacking back and forth outside the Point, in an almost complete calm, while dinner gets cold or housework goes undone for hours. (46)

There are times, though, when the necessity of the horn is apparent:

when the fog presses down against a surf smashing angrily amongst the cruel rocks, I am glad to blow with all my might, or wait indefinitely in the numbing wet wind, thinking I may be of help in keeping some boat and its crew outside that greedy maw. Men have told me of their great relief when they have "picked up" our horn, or seen against the fog the faint reflection of the beam from our Light. That makes us feel good--as if we were serving a real purpose--and

repays us for much of the monotonous repetition from which we never see or hear results. (46)

The foghorn and the lighthouse have an interchangeable significance for helping those at sea, and during the Richardsons' time on Bon Portage, both of these required the utmost care and human involvement possible. The above quotation also reveals the pride that the couple took in performing their lightkeeping duties, and the satisfaction of knowing they were successfully providing a service to those at sea.

The Richardsons lived on Bon Portage just as electricity was becoming an option for families on the mainland. However, this was an amenity that they were not immediately supplied with, and as a result, creative means of communication had to be developed. For example, when the family required a doctor, they signaled the mainland with a flag that was attached to a small pole on a corner-post of the lantern (35). If poor weather reduced visibility and the chances of their flag being spotted, Morrill made an agreement with Shag Harbour men to use signal fires: one fire meant "assistance needed" and two fires meant "doctor needed" (136). These fires were simply burlap bags ignited with kerosene.

Only once in the Richardsons' history were these signal fires misinterpreted by men on the mainland. Morrill had lit one fire to request assistance for a small boat in danger of being shipwrecked. The Shag Harbour men were not sure how many fires were lit, so they called for the doctor *and* rowed out in their boats to provide assistance. The doctor arrived to learn he was not needed, and he sent the Richardsons a bill for his services. They, in turn, as was their custom, forwarded this bill to the Department of Transport for payment. Although Ottawa was at first reluctant to pick up the tab, the departmental inspector promised to call "attention to the fact that if a doctor were not paid under such circumstances, it might mean that medical care would not reach the Island in case of a real emergency requiring it" (137). Amiable relations were maintained between the Richardsons and doctors on the mainland, but communication continued to be a challenge.

It was not until early 1947 that a radio-phone was installed at the Bon Portage lighthouse, and even though this was the first phone given to a lightkeeper within the Yarmouth district, it is likely that the Richardsons received theirs "as a compliment to a 'literary lighthouse'" (Richardson, "Lighthouse Party Line," 6). This "lighthouse party line," as the family

affectionately called it, became the most important piece of "furniture" in their home ("Party Line," 1). Just as the light in the lantern room "serves the men at sea; the radio-phone is a convenience and safeguard for the family keeping the light" ("Party Line," 1). Through this radio-phone, the Richardsons would receive any news or instructions from VAU Yarmouth Radio, and likewise could request information or assistance, as they did during the illness and untimely death of their son Laurie.⁴ Evelyn explains that there were

two of these radio roll-calls daily, the one at eight in the morning and another at four in the afternoon. They end the stark isolation that had been the lot of many Canadian lightkeepers. Of course, even before the installation of the radio-phones, not all island lightstations were left without any means of communication. Some of the most important have had wireless for forty years or more. A few, near shore, had telephones. ("Party Line," 3)

The voices that were emitted from this "radio cabinet with the microphone on top" was undoubtedly a source of comfort and peace of mind for this

⁴Laurie died at the age of 18 in 1947 of cancer.

island family, even though they had made a network of friends at Shag Harbour, three miles away ("Party Line," 1).

Fishermen seldom step outdoors without scanning the harbour approaches. At night they glance automatically to see if each light beam within view is flashing properly. They're quick to detect signs of trouble and they'd risk their lives--as they've often done--to answer a call for help. ("Party Line," 3)

These modern conveniences, which eased some of the burdens of island living, would eventually precipitate the demise of lightkeeping service as these lightkeepers knew it.

The first years at Bon Portage were important for the Richardsons for several reasons. In terms of their profession, these years equipped them with the mental and physical fortitude necessary to perform their lightkeeping duties and intensive farm chores in a relatively inhospitable terrain against extremes of climate and temperature, often with antiquated resources. Their senses were keenly awakened by the requisite hard work for a sustainable--though not financially prosperous--income. These two lightkeepers were presented with many labour challenges--both in terms of maintaining their light apparatus and the lighthouse grounds--which caused

them to be wary and mindful of the federal government's association with the service.

With respect to their personal lives, these first years introduced the Richardsons to the dichotomy of being isolated on a remote island, yet developing an indispensable feeling of family togetherness. Evelyn and Morrill Richardson became equipped with the ability to incorporate a textbook education of their children with hands-on experience working the light and the sometimes harsh realities of island living. For Evelyn in particular, the island presented an opportunity to become a conscious devotee of the natural environment. And perhaps most importantly to the family, the lighthouse simply became their home--a place Laurie loved to call "homie homie" (24). For all of these reasons, the first years at Bon Portage were vital in establishing their routine and laying the foundations for years of devoted lightkeeping service.

Chapter Two

World War Two and the Peak of Lighthouse Service

" . . . in a war, when you feel behind you the vigilance, the judgement, the profound study of the Higher Command, you are as much moved by them as by the simple lamps of a lighthouse, which while only a material combustion, is nevertheless an emanation of the spirit, sweeping through space to warn ships of danger"⁵

While the first years at Bon Portage were essential for acquainting the Richardsons with their familial and occupational functions, the subsequent years proved especially challenging and added extra duties to an already overworked, underpaid and understaffed lightstation. As Canada entered World War Two, the Richardson family found themselves propelled into wartime service--not cut off from the action, as many might suppose. The location of the Bon Portage lighthouse made their involvement in the war inescapable. Exposed to sea and sky, the lighthouse could have been an

⁵Marcel Proust, "The Guermentes Way," cited in Stephen Jones, Harbor of Refuge.

easy target for enemy intruders.⁶ This chapter will examine the Richardsons' wartime contributions with highlights from B was for Butter and Enemy Craft,⁷ which provides examples of the practical importance of, and even the dangers associated with, lightkeeping during World War Two.

World War Two brought several new demands to lightkeepers, and this period arguably represents the height of importance for the lightkeeping service. Morrill, although prepared to enlist, "was not called to make what would have been a difficult decision, for on Canada's entry into the struggle, he was 'frozen' in his job as lightkeeper" (17). Although never having to engage an enemy directly, the dutiful couple played a vital role in protecting the shores of Nova Scotia against covert and overt intrusions.

The Richardsons' involvement in the war began on November 13th, 1939, when Morrill returned to Bon Portage from a mail run to Shag Harbour with a letter that changed their lives for the next six years. The Department of Transport at Saint John provided three crucial instructions:

⁶Bon Portage Island was located at an important junction for coastal convoys as shipping lanes from Boston and New York joined traffic from Saint John, N.B., all headed towards Halifax. These routes came together off Seal Island and attracted U-boat attacks, as evidenced in the testimony of Evelyn Richardson, particularly in B was for Butter and Enemy Craft.

⁷B was for Butter and Enemy Craft was published posthumously in 1976 by Petheric Press. All references throughout the thesis are made to this edition.

A, B and C. Instruction A for Apples meant that "navigational lights are to be exhibited and fog signals and radio beacons operated normally" (18).

Instruction B for Butter stated the reverse: "Extinguish navigational lights and cease operating fog signals and radio beacons until further orders" (50).

Instruction C for Charlie was the welcome instruction to cancel instruction B. These instructions were broadcast over radio CBA at Sackville, New Brunswick, every four hours on the half-hour (51).

The dreaded Instruction B was assigned to Bon Portage on the afternoon of May 31st, 1940. Evelyn remembers that

the island was swathed in fog--a sullen spring fog driven by a cold sea wind. At 2.30 the bars of "Rule, Britannia" blared from the radio as they had done many afternoons. But instead of the expected "A for Apples" I was startled to hear, "Message for Lightkeepers in Area 2." (Our area.) "Carry out Instructions B, B for Butter." This meant at least one enemy craft was, or was feared to be, off our shore. I ran to find Morrill. Not until that jolting message, had I let myself think about how vulnerable and defenseless was our lighthouse, facing any seaborne enemy. "Just asking to be shot at!" I muttered. (32)

Although the next radio broadcast allayed their fears with Instruction C for Charlie, the Richardsons had faced the very real possibility of enemy craft invading their territory. Such fears were not groundless or irrational, since a British Columbia lighthouse had been shelled by a Japanese submarine, and the Fort Amherst lighthouse in St. John's, Newfoundland, narrowly missed being destroyed by a German torpedo.⁸ Although Instruction B was only implemented once during the Richardsons' tenure at Bon Portage, the necessity of listening to the radio broadcast every four hours impeded the regular maintenance of the lighthouse and the responsibilities of raising a family and working the farm. Inevitably, these wartime instructions took their toll on the couple's health, and Evelyn admits that after six years of performing this "special duty," they came to appreciate "that blessed time when we could both leave the lighthouse for four hours at a stretch; could go to bed and sleep through the night" (Richardson, "No Ivory in Light Towers," 7).

The Richardsons were constantly reminded that war was indeed being waged off their shore. Torpedo explosions and depth charges "transmitted

⁸In spite of Michael Hadley's suggestion in U-Boats Against Canada that lighthouses were too useful to the Germans to destroy, the Richardsons had justifiable grounds to fear enemy attack at the time.

through the water, shook the Point's bedrock while, indoors, the lighthouse walls trembled, floors wavered and windows rattled" (B was for Butter, 81).

Oil spills from sunken tankers killed hundreds of fish and fowl on and around Bon Portage, and debris from aircraft and ships became merged with the remnants of shipwrecks that already dotted the landscape (64). And as if this wasn't enough to contend with, Morrill was solicited by the army in November 1941 to carry out spy activities, "an unwelcome wartime task" (We Keep a Light, 62):

A letter from the Agent explained that a check was being made on all clubs and organizations which might be fronts for enemy agents, and asked Morrill to investigate the Ardnamurchan Club at Argyle. Just how the Department expected Morrill, on 24-hour duty, and with no car, to investigate a mainland club some thirty miles away, was not explained. (B was for Butter, 62-63)

It was not until the war was over, when members of the club were visiting Bon Portage, that the Richardsons learned the truth behind a long-running Ardnamurchan mystery. The Club had earlier come under suspicion during the First World War:

Some of the little boys had been permitted to tent overnight on a small nearby island, on condition that, before they turn in, one of them would signal "All's well" with his flashlight. A watching father had acknowledged the message with his flashlight. This innocent exchange had been all that was needed to start stories of coded signals between enemy craft offshore and spies at Ardnamurchan. "The Army" had been sent to investigate the rumours and had, of course, found them baseless. Now, with another war in progress, someone had revived the old spy scare, but Morrill's report apparently put an end to official concern regarding Ardnamurchan. (62-63)⁹

To further add to the stressful duties of the war, on October 8th, 1942, the Richardsons were designated Chief Observers in the Detection Corps of the Royal Canadian Air Force (85). Furnished with such information as "How to Rescue a Pilot from a Crashed Aircraft," the family was to report any aircraft sightings within the shores of Bon Portage, Emerald Isle and

⁹The Ardnamurchan club had been "founded in the first years of the century by heirs of a wealthy British-born American who left money for the establishment of a summer home on Commonwealth territory. Nova Scotia being easily accessible by the passenger ships between Boston and Yarmouth, a secluded point on lovely island-dotted Argyle Sound was chosen, purchased, named after Ardnamurchan in Scotland's Argyle, and a commodious clubhouse built there to accommodate the many branches of the family" (B was for Butter, 63).

Prospect Island to the Regional Director in Shelburne, via the Yarmouth Reporting District (87). The Richardsons' instructions "stated that a plane in difficulty would signify its need for help by circling" (90). Fortunately, they only witnessed one such occurrence, but they proved their readiness to comply as Chief Observers:

One Sunday morning a Catalina Flying Boat circled the lighthouse three times, then straightened away and flew, very low, out of sight behind the island's trees. The chances of Morrill getting word to Yarmouth in time to summon possible help were poor but, obeying orders, he set out to report. It took roughly fifteen minutes to walk to the slip, as much time to prepare and launch the boat, twenty minutes to reach Shag Harbour and--on Sunday--another ten minutes to find a phone. We never heard anything about the reported plane; it must have overcome the trouble if in real difficulty, but we suspected its S.O.S. had been a test of our alertness as Observers.

(90)

Evelyn Richardson proved her readiness to serve the war effort in another manner as well. Using fleece from their own flock of sheep, she made dozens of baby quilts for the Red Cross to send to Britain. This

became a joint project with her Shag Harbour neighbours, who provided her with flannelette cuttings, which she then incorporated with her own wool and linings. This diversion, too, gave Evelyn a sense of pride, as she admitted in We Keep a Light: "It is impossible for me to join in the usual Red Cross activities so I am glad our sheep provide the means for me to help in this way" (122).

The Second World War did provide the Richardsons with a few pleasant surprises. On numerous occasions, rations and supplies from downed planes and sunken vessels would float on the tides to Bon Portage. These items included flour, lard, oranges, lemons, nuts, and cartons of cigarettes (B was for Butter, 70, 76, 86). Evelyn modestly claims that although

never directly involved in the conflict (we were not among its victims, nor did we perform any daring rescues of those who were), we lived on the fringe of a battle area, and played a small part in the life and death struggle known as the Battle of the Atlantic. (9)

In fact, their role was no "small part." The responsibilities of studying, recording and reporting enemy aircraft, and awaiting and responding to radio broadcasts greatly increased the Richardsons' assigned duties. At an

obvious and exposed point of land, the lighthouse itself was an easy target for enemy prey. The anxiety and stress that Evelyn and Morrill shared must have been tremendous, particularly with three small children on an isolated and otherwise uninhabited island.

Evelyn Richardson's 1976 memoir of the war years seems to carry an underlying sense of impending doom and an unspoken and constant fear of threats from unknown forces. The war was not just an item in the news that occurred in far away lands; it generated a very real, very serious danger that presented risks and challenges to these oft-forgotten keepers of the lights. Both B was for Butter and We Keep a Light are valuable texts for their revelations about lightkeepers' duties during the war. More importantly, these works--especially We Keep a Light, with its publication at the end of the war--boosted the spirits and morale of a nation that had been plagued by feelings of disaster and discord for six long years. Readers were transported to a more idyllic locale, where a mosaic of family harmony, a peaceful coexistence with nature, and comparatively uncomplicated encounters with fellow humankind overrode the complexities and destruction of war. Evelyn Richardson's works helped restore a sense of nation-building that various levels of Canadian government could not themselves hope to

accomplish.

In addition to serving as witnesses to, and participants in, wartime activity on the coast, the Richardsons were privy to other noteworthy historical events prior to World War Two. The summer of 1936 was certainly an interesting time to be situated on the southwest shore of Nova Scotia. That year, the Hindenburg zeppelin made "ten successful round trips to North America" (10). On one such trip, it crossed Bon Portage from "east to west, low over the Savannah (the island's swampy mid-section), heading into the rich light of the lowering sun which her silver skin caught, intensified and reflected" (10):

Nothing from outer space could have looked more other-worldly, more beautifully unreal, than this great earth-made airship. No sound of her powerful engines reached us through the quiet air as she glided out over the western water, rose a little and disappeared into the heart of the sunset. Newspapers of the period mentioned her as "Swastika-emblazoned", but from the lighttower, where I watched enthralled, I detected none of these by then detested signs. (10-11)

That same year, Evelyn Richardson observed Franklin D. Roosevelt in the area as well:

I had recognized him as he steered the yacht past our Point, up the Sound and into Stoddart's Cove, the anchorage he had known as a young man in love with sailing . . . The Roosevelts had never seemed strangers to the people along our shore, because Herbert Kendrick, a Shag Harbour man, had for ten years captained the Roosevelt yacht HALF MOON, and had introduced young Franklin to these waters.

(93)

It seems that a certain kinship was felt between inhabitants along Nova Scotia's southern shore and the famous Roosevelt family.

These two examples confirm that the Bon Portage lighthouse was situated along a very well-traveled coast. By virtue of their geographic location, the Richardsons had a clear vantage point from which to view, document, and partake in some measure in prominent historical events. These citations also indicate that Evelyn Richardson was a very keen and knowledgeable observer. Undoubtedly, her memoirs profited by such tidbits of information, which share the pride of her peers and foster a sense of admiration and envy from her readers. For the decade of 1936 to 1946 in particular, her writings serve as witnesses of important historical events and influential people. During the war years especially, the Richardsons were not

mere spectators, but participants in events that shaped our nation and the world at large. As lightkeepers, they were inherently devoted to protecting others, and this service was never more valuable than during World War Two, when they not only defended their family, community, island, coastline and province, but their fellow Canadians as well.

Chapter Three

An Economic Perspective

"It is an employment in some respects best suited to the habits of the gulls which coast up and down here and circle over the sea."¹⁰

All things considered, the Richardsons coped reasonably well at Bon Portage through the Great Depression and Second World War. They were fortunate to survive the dirty thirties virtually unscathed by the economic gloom that befell the country. The words "virtually unscathed" reflect the fact that the meagre income the family received from lightkeeping was not adversely affected by a decade of economic upheaval. In addition to their steady income from the Department of Transport, the couple was able to subsidize their earnings from their small island farm. This chapter will highlight the economic status of the Richardsons in relation to both their mainland and lightkeeping contemporaries, and reveal their methods for

¹⁰Henry David Thoreau, "The Highland Light," cited in Stephen Jones, Harbor of Refuge.

supplementing their lightkeeping and island income.¹¹

As stated previously, the Department of Transport at Saint John, N.B., maintained jurisdiction over the Bon Portage lighthouse. In order to keep costs to a minimum, the Department had a habit of appointing married couples as lightkeepers. By implementing this "two-for-one" policy, the government ensured itself a greater workforce on a lesser payroll. When the Richardsons first moved to Bon Portage, they were already in financial debt to the sum of nearly one thousand dollars--six hundred of which was the mortgage taken against the island (We Keep a Light, 28). This was certainly a significant sum when compared to their income. In 1929, their annual income from lightkeeping was \$930--less than eighteen dollars a week. Evelyn admitted that while "other jobs might have meant more money for less hard work," they were lucky to have a steady income, so that slowly, over several years, their debts were paid in full (Richardson, "Letters from a Lighthouse," 1).

¹¹Although not backed by formal documentation, both Evelyn Richardson and Harry Thurston imply that lightkeepers at more "important" or remote sites were paid accordingly. In B was for Butter, Evelyn remarks that if Morrill were to replace the deceased keeper of Seal Island, the position "would bring an increased salary" (42). In Against Darkness and Storm, Thurston makes a similar comment about the keepers of Bird Rock, said to be the loneliest posting in Canada (26).

The fact that the Richardsons could purchase Bon Portage Island outright was itself a great feat. The Depression had begun in the Maritimes in the early 1920s, when the industrialization leading up to World War One began to exceed peacetime requirements (Reid 162). It was at that time that the newly-married Richardsons had relocated to the United States to find higher paying employment. It was also at this time, as John Reid argues, that "the foundations were laid for the Maritimes' status as a "have-not" region of Canada" (161). As Reid explains, in

the years immediately following the First World War, the Maritime economy suffered a series of heavy blows. In part the problems were worldwide. In the Maritimes, however, the effects of these wider trends were transformed into a major crisis by complicating factors that originated within Canada: outside control of the regional economy, and the inability of outnumbered political representatives to put up an effective defence of regional interests in such crucial areas as tariffs and freight rates. The results were disastrous. In the years between 1920 and 1926, some 42 percent of the manufacturing jobs in the region simply disappeared. Meanwhile, as deindustrialization proceeded, non-manufacturing sectors such as

fisheries, lumber, and agriculture had to deal with world trade disruption and severe competition in uncertain markets. (Reid 164-165)

The issues of freight rates and the shipment of goods became a focal point of the Maritime Rights movement. The objective of this movement was "to explain the Maritimes' grievances plainly to other Canadians. For that purpose, speakers were sent to centres throughout Canada" (171). The Maritimes' grievances were both economic and political in nature.

Economically, the region was plagued by such phenomena as industrial plant closures and wage strikes, both of which increased the trend of out-migration (172). And as the population decreased, so too did the number of parliamentary seats (163). "As a result, it became increasingly difficult for Maritime political leaders to sustain the region's interests effectively at the federal level" (163).

While the economic adversity of the 1920s was "not felt in the same ways by people of different social backgrounds or geographical locations . . . the struggle to cope with harsh economic realities was the struggle of all" (184). For this reason, it can be said that the Richardsons were fortunate to have a steady government job--despite any disadvantages--and the

opportunity to be self-sufficient and earn additional income. Small-scale farming and gardening enabled the family to produce goods for their own use, but their isolation prevented the opportunity for large-scale farming. Fishing did not prove to be a viable solution either. The couple found that, while "many lightkeepers eke out their none-too-munificent salary by fishing on the side," the difficulty of launching and landing boats on Bon Portage demanded "too much time and effort" (We Keep a Light, 232).

By contrast, the collecting of Irish moss was a very profitable venture. Evelyn Richardson described Irish moss as a sea-plant: "it reminds me of a large and yellowish head of cauliflower without its encircling green leaves" (234). The demand for this product increased dramatically after the onset of World War Two because the European suppliers had been cut off (234). Moss was used "commercially in bases for ice-cream, candies, cheeses, some medicines," and Evelyn used it herself as a substitute for gelatin (235). The Richardsons collected the moss by cutting it from the rocks at low tide using

sharpened knives, and buckets with holes bored in the bottoms to allow the water to drain out . . . rakes and large wire lobster-baskets . . . numerous feed-bags and ropes for tying them when filled. (236)

After the moss had been collected, it was dried by the sun by spreading it "thinly over all our flat roofs . . . on the roofs of the barn, manure pit, silo, hen-house, pig-house and back porch. When it has been properly dried and bagged, Morrill takes it in his boat to Shag Harbour and sells it" (239). Like much of island and lighthouse living, moss collecting was almost entirely dependent upon suitable weather conditions, so the family became adept at gathering the moss in an expedient and efficient manner.

Even during a decade of economic uncertainty, the Richardsons were able to hire Lem, a local youth, to help with the chores in their first winters on the island:

Looking back on the years 1929-35, I now recall most vividly their atmosphere of impending disaster, but at the same time, on our island and in our lighthouse, life went busily and pleasantly on. The Depression had the most immediate impingement.

With a steady job--admittedly not a well paid one--a home and opportunities to help ourselves by extra work, we were lucky. We could even lessen unemployment by providing one winter job! Not because we had money to spare, but because we recognized the possibilities of tragedy if Morrill, responsible for wife and small

children, had to cope with isolation and storms alone. (B was for Butter, 13)

In addition to collecting Irish moss, the family was active in haymaking, sheepshearing, duck hunting, woodcutting and canning. Of course, these were performed on top of the usual housecleaning, sewing, gardening, painting, schooling, and operating a lightstation. Each of these chores, though, became a concerted effort of every family member, emblematic of strong family values and a hard work ethic. By taking the initiative to improve their quality of life, the Richardsons were able to supplement their income, provide the family with their own sources of nourishment, and ease the strains of island living. Undoubtedly, with the success of We Keep a Light, the family was able to ease their financial burdens a little further.

While the Richardsons could sustain themselves with what the lighthouse and island afforded them, it is likely that they could have fared better if they were not so isolated from the mainland. In "No Ivory in Light Towers," Evelyn borrows the adage of Fraser Darling, the Scottish ecologist, who said

one family is too small a unit to live alone on a small island. Life is not economical when you have to turn your hand to every kind of job perforce; nor is one family big enough to create and maintain a proper social evolution. (Richardson, Where My Roots Go Deep, 4)

The existence of other farmers on Bon Portage would have enabled the Richardsons to exchange produce and divide their chores accordingly.

Similarly, there might have been a better chance either of supplementing salaried income, or saving on groceries, if more time could be spent at sea to harvest a welcome supply of fish. Having an increased workforce on the island could have enabled one or more fishermen to conduct a day's work at sea without hindering the work required on the island.

While there would have been a definite economic advantage to the Richardsons being part of a small island farming community, there are other ways in which the family could have profited from their neighbours.

Socially, the children would have been exposed to different playmates, and the task of being the sole educators, mentors, chaperones and role models would not fall exclusively to Evelyn and Morrill. Likewise, adult neighbours would have shared a mutual understanding about island concerns, thereby forming common objectives and the resultant peace of mind that solidarity

affords. Other inhabitants could also have helped to ameliorate periods of heavy lightkeeping duties, especially during wartime. This is not to idealize the role of neighbours, but their presence would also have enabled the parents or the children to leave the island more easily when needed, either for personal or professional reasons.

The absence of telephone or radio-telephone communication with the mainland must have been a hardship for a couple who were used to urban conveniences and had a healthy need for neighbourly contact. Less so was the absence of electrical power. Not only was there a meagre amount of rural electrification even on the mainland of Nova Scotia in the 1930s, very few gadgets--except perhaps a refrigerator--would have been practical and cheap enough to be really useful to them. The fact that the Richardsons sustained themselves on the island is highly commendable given the "primitive" conditions in which they lived.

Chapter Four

The Politics of Lightkeeping

Lighthouse, n. A tall building on the seashore in which the government maintains a lamp and the friend of a politician.¹²

The discussions of World War Two and the economy inevitably lead to an assessment of the government's role in legislating lightkeeping policies and classifying heritage sites. At the very least, it had to be proven why a lighthouse should be constructed at any particular site. But more often than not, the appropriate governing bodies had to be persuaded, badgered or even convinced that lightstations provided a valuable set of services. Perhaps some of the difficulties that befell our lightkeepers are a result of the government's lack of internal organization and reluctance for one body to take responsibility before another. This chapter of the thesis will argue that before 1945 the various agencies of government maintained a laissez-

¹²Ambrose Bierce, "The Devil's Dictionary," cited in Stephen Jones, Harbor of Refuge.

faire attitude towards lightkeepers in general, and developed a contentious relationship with the Richardsons in particular.

The Department of Transport, as it was known in Evelyn Richardson's time, can be traced back to two main government bodies: the Department of Public Works and the Department of Marine and Fisheries, both of which were officially formed in 1867 (Appleton 273). The Department of Public Works was responsible for constructing lighthouses according to the requirements of Marine and Fisheries, which dealt with the location of lighthouses, the appointment of lightkeepers and the provision of lightkeeping supplies. However, the Deputy Minister of Marine and Fisheries received lighthouse recommendations from a committee based at Trinity House, England (Appleton 107). In an 1872 report, says Thomas Appleton:

The committee was critical of the mode of appointment of lightkeepers, then largely a matter of patronage as was much of the public service for many years to come. "The office of lightkeeper is looked upon as an ordinary unskilled occupation, requiring no special knowledge or training, and the keeper has neither increase of pay, promotion, continuance of service, nor pension in the future, to look forward to as an incentive to good behaviour." Despite this, and as

always, the Department was well served by the loyal and dedicated care of their employees, afloat and ashore. In its final summation the Trinity House Committee concluded: "The Canadian system is one of simplicity and economy; there is no lighthouse Board nor any professional advisers save an engineer, whose time is very much taken up in other public employment; the administrative and executive duties rest entirely on the Minister of Marine and his officers, and they prefer to employ simple and easily managed apparatus rather than use scientific arrangements requiring careful adjustment or attention. Relying on their own natural products of mineral oil and wood, their buildings are easily and quickly erected at small cost. (109-110)

The patronage comment made by Appleton is not surprising. As Evelyn Richardson revealed earlier, Morrill might not have become lightkeeper if the federal representative in charge could have found a war veteran to fill the position. This revelation supports the theory of patronage that many attribute to government appointments. The opening quotation of this chapter further echoes this sentiment.

From the Trinity House report cited above came the establishment of the Lighthouse Board of Canada in February 1904 (114).¹³ Its objective was to research and report to the Minister of Marine and Fisheries on "all questions relating to the selection of lighthouse sites, the construction and maintenance of lighthouses, fog alarms and other matters" (114). A Dominion Lighthouse Depot was also established in 1903 "at Prescott, Ontario, to manufacture and experiment with illuminants, burners, lanterns, and lenses" (Passfield 133). These four branches--Public Works, Marine and Fisheries, the Lighthouse Board, and Lighthouse Depot--were responsible for the creation of 1460 lightstations across Canada by 1914, "triple the number at Confederation, and over 100 were equipped with fog alarms" (133). The establishment of the Department of Transport in 1936¹⁴ merged these bodies into one unit, which, as we shall see, did not necessarily merit more coherent or direct involvement with lightkeepers.

¹³The Lighthouse Board was comprised of the Deputy Minister, Colonel F. Gourdeau, as Chair; Chief Engineer of the Department, the Commander of the Canadian Marine Service, the Commissioner of Lights and a representative of shipping interests, the first being Mr. Hugh Allan of Montreal (Appleton, 114).

¹⁴Although the Richardsons became lightkeepers in 1929, Evelyn refers to their governing body as the Department of Transport, even though that department was not officially designated until seven years later.

While contact with the Department was limited, there is enough evidence from Evelyn Richardson's testimony to show that a love-hate relationship existed. Certainly their Inspector, Mr. Morrisey, was very obliging to them. Mr. Morrisey made annual visits to Bon Portage, usually in the month of May when the ice floes had cleared for the summer. He arrived on the government steamer, which was loaded with lighthouse supplies. We learn in We Keep a Light that:

many people think that we are supplied by the government with a great many of the necessities for living here, but such is not the case. The steamer lands kerosene oil for the dwelling as well as the Light, but this means of illumination is practically the only thing supplied us by the Department that would not be provided for any rented dwelling, and the rate of rent which is figured as part of our salary is extremely high for this section of the country. We may also purchase coal through the Department at cost price, but we do not take advantage of this opportunity. The box of cleansers and supplies for the Light and any lumber for repairs or new buildings are usually landed at this spring call, and we unpack them and stow them away for future use. The Inspector looks over the lighthouse and outside

buildings, notes our requirements for the coming year and discusses with Morrill any questions that may have arisen since his last visit.

(228)

Basically, as long as the light was properly maintained, the Richardsons were their own bosses (228). Other than receiving supplies, recording weather conditions, and forwarding any bills, the only direct dealings the family had with the Department was about "The Groaner." This was the name ascribed to the whistle-buoy that lay to the south of the lighthouse, and over which the Department had jurisdiction. This buoy marked "the out-lying reefs of the Island," and the keeper had to take note "if it shifts from its position, or fails to utter the dismal shrieks and moans that earn its local name" (4).

The love-hate relationship with the Department is symbolic of the problems all keepers faced when dealing with the government. In the Richardsons' case, the "love" sentiment stemmed from the fact that the Department had contributed a kitchen sink, a slip and breakwater near the boathouse, and enough cement to build a cistern (83). The "hate" sentiment arose from two particular issues: firstly in the Department's failure to provide adequate and ready means of communication with the mainland; and

secondly from the Department's lack of involvement in island road maintenance. In the case of the former, Richardson made the point that most the province's lightstations had received radio capabilities long before Bon Portage. This concern was especially present during times of illness, when adverse weather conditions made it impossible for anyone to leave the island to get assistance, or for their Shag Harbour neighbours to notice their flags or signal fires. Richardson admitted that they were

more likely to express our resentment towards a government that leaves an employee and his family in such an isolated spot with no means of getting in touch with medical assistance--in this day and age of radio and wireless!--than we are to blame the seas and weather.

(152)

In the case of the latter, it is necessary to remember that the Richardsons owned all of Bon Portage Island with the exception of the three acres immediately surrounding the lighthouse. The condition of the road is raised in We Keep a Light:

spruce and fir have crowded out much of the small bush, and now have to be trimmed back at some places to allow the cart to go through freely. Formerly the government maintained the upkeep of

this road, but since we have been here it has been left entirely to Morrill's care, and he finds it an impossible task for one man. (22)

However, it is not clear whether the Department was in fact negligible in this case, or if they waived this responsibility because the Richardsons owned the island. One would assume that the Department would be held accountable for any road leading directly to the lighthouse, especially since that was the only road on Bon Portage.

Evelyn Richardson sums it up best, however, when she questions Ottawa's knowledge and concern for the country's lightkeepers:

the final word as to any expenditure lay with Ottawa, and we sometimes wonder (as others have before us) just how clear a conception Ottawa may have as to the conditions prevailing at isolated Light-stations. Our dealings with the Inspectors and agents at Saint John have been most pleasant, and I am sure they do everything possible to improve living conditions here, but the lighthouse is old and worn now. Seventy years is a long time for a small wooden building to stand erect against the winds that sweep unhindered across miles of stormy water. (39-40)

These words were uttered fifty-seven years ago, yet their meaning is largely unchanged. As the government has since automated most of the country's lightstations and reduced human involvement to a bare minimum, animosity between keepers and government officials has remained constant, as Chris Mills reveals in his 1992 memoir, Vanishing Lights.

The automation of the country's lighthouses is a relatively recent phenomenon that began slowly in the 1960s, and it has been carried out by the Canada Coast Guard. The Coast Guard's roots can be traced back to early search-and-rescue operations that were based at lightstations. Nova Scotia can boast four such Humane Stations prior to Confederation: the islands of Sable, St. Paul's, Mud and Seal. These stations were equipped with additional foodstuffs and provisions for shipwrecked sailors, and were staffed with a superintendent and small crews of boatmen (Appleton 127). It is important to distinguish that these four stations were official lifesaving operations, in that they were funded by the Department of Marine and Fisheries. The fact that shipwrecks occur in proximity to the coast makes lighthouses a natural base for lifeboats, so such duties eventually went hand-in-hand with those performed by our lightkeepers, using their own boats and provisions when necessary.

The typical Canadian Humane Station consisted of the following:
a wood building which housed the boat and contained living quarters for the crew. There was usually a watch-tower at one corner and although the men did not live permanently in the house a continuous watch was kept and the accommodation was sufficient to house the whole crew under standby conditions. In most cases the lifeboat was housed in a cradle and was launched and recovered by marine railway and winch or tackle . . . Except for the Humane Stations of Nova Scotia, where the crews manned the boat as part of their normal duty to safeguard life and property, the men of the lifesaving stations were fishermen who volunteered each year. (Appleton 142-143)

By 1914, there were 40 lifesaving stations across Canada, 25 of which were situated in the Maritimes, and 16 of which were along the coast of Nova Scotia.¹⁵ Around this time, the lifesaving stations fell under the control of the Naval Service (144). The end of the First World War witnessed three main changes to lifesaving operations: the numbers of schooners began to decline, inshore fishing boats became equipped with motors, and the

¹⁵1914 statistics for lifesaving stations in Canada: Nova Scotia - 16, New Brunswick - 4, P.E.I. - 5, Great Lakes - 11, British Columbia - 4 (Appleton 144).

government devoted less money to the maintenance of lifesaving boats and slipways, which soon deteriorated so badly that they "had reached a point where they were no longer able to launch" craft when needed (144-145). The Second World War continued the decrease in lifesaving operations, as the men who volunteered to operate the boats volunteered their service in the war effort. As we witnessed with the role the Richardsons played during World War Two, it seems that, although the government was denying the importance of lifesaving operations, lightkeepers were nevertheless required to perform rescues, both of vessels and of downed aircraft.

Thomas Appleton indicates that the year 1946 "marked a low point in our search and rescue organization" (128). He notes that while "the number of government ships available for such work was on the increase," lifeboat stations had been "reduced to three, one in Nova Scotia and two on the coast of Vancouver island" (128). This "low point" refers to government involvement, not to the stations' level of importance. It is likely that the number of stations was reduced because of the

demise of the sailing ship and schooner [so] there were considerably fewer casualties in merchant shipping, but a rising awareness of the age-old risks of the fishing industry gave increasing cause for

concern. (128)

It is also noteworthy that the "low point" to which Appleton refers took place in 1946, just one year after the success of We Keep a Light, which subtly revealed that lifesaving services were still expected to be performed, although secondarily to operating the light. In fact, since the 1960s, the growing rates of pleasure boaters have increased the need for the availability of lifesaving or search-and-rescue techniques, but saving lives was already coming with a government pricetag.

Since 1951, lifesaving operations have fallen under the jurisdiction of the Department of National Defence (269). The Canada Coast Guard was officially formed in 1963, and its lifesaving boats consisted primarily of a fleet of former United States Coast Guard cutters. The objective of the Canada Coast Guard is as follows:

to ensure the provision of operational policies and programs for the use of water transportation interests in order to contribute to the safe, efficient and economical conduct of marine activities and to contribute to the protection of the quality of the marine environment in waters under the jurisdiction of the Government of Canada; and, where appropriate, to develop, operate and maintain specific elements

of the marine transportation system. (Cancilla 7)

As mentioned however, saving lives comes with a pricetag, and when it is deemed "inappropriate" to have staffed lighthouses, the Coast Guard traditionally uses one of three options: it demolishes the existing building to replace it with a cheaper metal or fibreglass structure; it lets them rot from neglect; or it takes the liberty of burning them to the ground. Until very recently, the Coast Guard did "not have a mandate with respect to the cultural and heritage significance of lighthouses, and must dispose of inactive lights and abandoned dwellings."¹⁶ The need for protection, preservation, and cooperation from the Coast Guard will be discussed in a later chapter; however, it is clear at this point that the Coast Guard is of the opinion that today's technologically-advanced commercial and military vessels, as well as those of the general public, do not actively require the services of a lighthouse.

Like the Coast Guard, the Treasury Board of Canada is another paradox. While supporting--and even defining--the role of the lightkeeper, and upholding the prestige of the lighthouse, the criteria established by the

¹⁶Taken from the Lighthouse Protection Act press conference, March 11, 1999, hereafter cited as PC 1999.

Board were still being publicized at a time when most of Nova Scotia's lights were already automated. We would like to believe this happened because the Board actually recognized the importance of the lights, and wanted to issue a statement in support of keepers, even though it was too late. A more skeptical interpretation would consider the Board's gesture as merely an attempt to save face in light of all the controversy surrounding the Coast Guard and the rise of preservation groups. The likely scenario is the latter.

The criteria set forth by the Board include rating scales to assess the degrees of skill and knowledge of the lightkeepers. As recently as 1986, there were three known categories, or group levels, of lightkeepers. Firstly, the Head Lightkeeper is responsible for "the over-all operation of a light-station, including the supervision of the light-station staff, either directly or through subordinate supervisors" (Treasury Board of Canada 6). Secondly, the Assistant Head Lightkeeper has the responsibility for the "operation of the light-station, including the supervision of the light-station staff, in the absence of the Head Lightkeeper for the period of duty" (TBC 6), which includes rotational service.¹⁷ Thirdly, the position of Lightkeeper,

¹⁷Rotational service occurs at a "light-station where the staff is relieved at specified intervals by other employees" (TBC, Lighthouses, 6). This service became more prevalent after the 1960s. As the lights became automated and cost-efficient, families were being replaced by appointed temporary keepers.

under the general supervision of a Head Lightkeeper or Assistant Head Lightkeeper, has responsibility for watchkeeping and other non-supervisory duties pertaining to the maintenance of the lightstation and the maintenance and operation of its equipment. (TBC 6)

These three levels are then rated against degrees of skill, knowledge and variety, based on whether the lightstation has complex or simple equipment.¹⁸

Instead of being used as criteria for determining whether or not a lighthouse should remain staffed, the Treasury Board published these rating scales when most of Nova Scotia's lighthouses were already de-staffed. In reality, the Board considers lighthouses as "surplus" goods,

like a used car or a vcr. Current Treasury Board mandates would require that a lightstation declared surplus be offered first to other federal government departments, secondly, to the provinces, thirdly to municipalities and fourthly, to the free market according to their assessed "fair market value." (PC 1999)

The bottom line is that most communities cannot financially afford to purchase and maintain their own lighthouses, and hence the need for

¹⁸See Appendix 2-A for a sample of the Lightkeeper Classification tables.

protection and preservation becomes an even greater social concern.

While it is unfortunate that the original wooden lighthouse on Bon Portage Island was demolished in 1964, it is just as lamentable to know that the current concrete tower is also on the endangered list. The eroding cliffs upon which the tower now stands are symbolic of the passing of the sands of time. It is possible, therefore, that the only things that will survive from the Bon Portage lightstation are Evelyn Richardson's memoir and conservation legacy.

Chapter Five

A Textual Analysis of We Keep a Light

*"We were miraculously saved by civilization itself
(of which a lighthouse is perhaps always the highest symbol)."¹⁹*

The preceding chapters of this thesis have dealt in large part with Evelyn Richardson's personal achievements and circumstances, and the content of We Keep a Light, specifically its commentary on lightkeeping and island living. This chapter will provide an analysis of the author's style and technique, as well as of the formal construction of the work itself, in order to illustrate why We Keep a Light can be considered a classic. This chapter will measure Richardson's success and contribution to literary heritage by providing a synopsis of contemporary opinion and by close analysis of selected aspects of her narrative. In sum, this chapter will reveal the value of We Keep a Light as a text, rather than merely report what the text says.

¹⁹Malcolm Lowry, "Hear Us Lord from Heaven Thy Dwelling Place," cited in Stephen Jones, Harbour of Refuge.

In assessing the merit of the work, a distinction should be made between Evelyn Richardson the author and Evelyn Richardson the character. Although it is difficult to differentiate between the two, especially considering the autobiographical nature of We Keep a Light, the two persona can be distinguished: Richardson the author is also a storyteller and historian, thereby performing a professional function; Richardson the character reveals herself personally in the roles of wife, mother and lightkeeper. The memoir begins with a dedication to Evelyn Richardson's immediate family. The inscription reads "To my favourite lightkeeper Morrill and his assistants Anne, Laurie and Betty June, this book is lovingly dedicated." Indeed, these are the central characters of the narrator's life, so it is only natural that they be a focus of the book as well.

The book is divided into seventeen chapters. Each chapter begins with a black and white illustration, all of which were created by Evelyn's cousin Winifred Fox. These relatively simple drawings, or "decorations" as she called them, are roughly half the size of a page, and considerably enhance the overall feeling of the book. The seventeen chapters can be loosely grouped together according to several common themes. For example, the first three chapters provide background information on Bon Portage and

the lighthouse; there are chapters that provide historical information about the southwestern coast of Nova Scotia, the island, and the seafaring life along the eastern seaboard; there are chapters that deal with seasons and weather; and of course there are chapters devoted to their family life and experiences. It should be noted, however, that none of the chapters deals exclusively with any one theme, as the stories and descriptions are entwined within the book as they are in the cycles of everyday life.

Evelyn Richardson does not depend upon our familiarity with island living or the layout of Nova Scotia, so she begins her book with a physical description of each. This is enhanced by a hand-drawn aerial map of the island, which serves as a useful reference tool for the reader.²⁰ Richardson not only situates the island within Nova Scotia, but also the lighthouse within the island and the family within the lighthouse. Inherent in the location of the island is the cyclical nature of the seasons and the tides. Since many of the chapters deal with these elements, their constant presence throughout the book facilitates a lyrical pattern of storytelling. In chapter six, entitled "A Walk Around The Island," the author remarks that this walk is one which

²⁰The map of Bon Portage Island is found on page viii of this thesis.

never ceases to provide interest and unexpected beauties as the changing seasons, the varying weather conditions, and above all the restless winds and beneath them the never-constant sea with the added diversities that different phases of the tides emphasize, all lend infinite variety. (62-63)²¹

The Richardsons lives, like the chapters of We Keep a Light, are complemented by, if not dependent upon, the recurrence of these natural phenomena. The changing seasons inevitably mark the passage of time. In fact, four chapter titles reflect this occurrence: Chapter 5, "The First Summer and Fall;" Chapter 8, "The Second Summer and Incidentals;" Chapter 10, "A Ten Year Plan," and Chapter 16, "The Seasons Come and Go--Spring and Summer." Interwoven throughout all the chapters of the book, however, are evidences of time passing, which are particularly noticeable through autobiographical details of the family and the description of past events.

We Keep a Light is similar to a diary in form in the sense that it flows freely, often overlaps stories or reverts back in time, and does not conform

²¹In this chapter, all stand-alone references to We Keep a Light are to the original Ryerson Press edition of 1945.

to the standard literary convention of building to a climax and coming to an ultimate conclusion. As in a good diary, the narrator provides innumerable vivid images and possesses keen powers of description, whether of the island, the lighthouse, the home, their natural surroundings, plant and wild life, or people. Helen Pauline Johnston, whose M.A. thesis was published as Light on Evelyn Richardson in 1975, wrote "Evelyn Richardson overwhelms the reader with her word "paintings," expertly describing the beauty of the Island in terms of geometrical patterns and "still" photographs" (29). Likewise, Will R. Bird wrote in This is Nova Scotia, that "Richardson's book is filled with such realistic description that the reader can smell the salt air and hear the crash of surf on the rocks" (133). Such candid and detailed descriptions are not only for the benefit of the reader, but they reveal Evelyn's own deeper understanding and appreciation for life. Nothing goes unnoticed!

We Keep a Light is chock full of dramatic elements. One unforgettable incident occurs in chapter nine, entitled "A Trying Experience." Indeed the event plays out like a movie, with suspense, danger, intrigue, drama, and fortunately a happy ending. Here, Richardson says that she "put in the most worried hours of our years on Bon Portage" (100). As

Lem, the hired man, went to Shag Harbour for mail and groceries, Morrill made his way across the island in a winter storm to fetch firewood. The hours passed and neither Morrill nor Lem had returned. Evelyn served supper to the children, prepared them for bed, and illuminated the light. Although it was "not hard to imagine any number of things that could have happened," Evelyn calmly prepared to look for Morrill in the darkness and storm (102). She remembers that

getting ready to set out was like the preparations in a nightmare; my dread of leaving the children and my sense of urgency towards finding Morrill also had a nightmarish quality, and seemed to be pulling me in opposite directions . . . The last thing I heard as I closed the door behind me was Laurie's heart-rending cries; so pitiful in the dark, cold house. (102-103)

The suspense continues to build and, like the narrator, the reader worries about Morrill's whereabouts and conjures up all kinds of mishaps. The reader admires Evelyn's fortitude in braving the storm and can understand her anguish about leaving the children and the light unattended. We are glad when both men return safely home, and are pleased that an ensuing flood brings the Richardsons' boat ashore days later. Obviously this event could

have been a complete disaster for all involved. This story serves as a reminder of the perils of the sea and wakens the reader from a sense of comfort they have acquired from reading the preceding eight chapters of relative tranquility. Even in this time of trial, Evelyn kept her wits about her and we cannot help but be relieved with the outcome.

Although there are many humorous instances throughout the book, comedy is always provided in the anthropomorphic behaviour of Amaryllis the cow, who manages to dumbfound the Richardsons and the reader with her mischief and seeming ability to play tricks. Evelyn marvels at how

Amaryllis resented being led or driven and on the homeward journey would suddenly decide to take a jaunt into the swamps or thick brush that bordered the way. Another trick she had and which she taught the other cows (or is it a trait inherent to the cross-grained nature of the animals) was to go on foggy nights into the densest of woods just off the path, and stand perfectly still so that no faintest tinkle of her bell betrayed her. (30)

Here the reader can visualize Amaryllis standing stock-still in mock defiance, and it is this mixture of Richardson's writing with our own imaginativeness that makes such tales so amusing.

Amaryllis provides further entertainment on the day of Laurie's birth, which occurred in the lighthouse rather than a hospital on the mainland:

Dr. Wilson, out for a breath of fresh air, came rushing into the kitchen exclaiming that the cow had somehow got tangled in her rope, was flat on her back and choking to death. Whereupon the nurse, a local woman and familiar with cows and their ways, snatched a carving knife and ran to the rescue. Between her and the doctor they managed to cut the rope that was choking her and so saved Amaryllis from an untimely death. Morrill had to be away for a time, and knowing that if Amaryllis were left at liberty she would immediately hike to the farther end of the Island and necessitate his following her there, he had tied her in a corner of the mowing field, hoping the excellent grass would keep her contented until his return. Not Amaryllis! Though she couldn't have known there would be a doctor and nurse in attendance if she got into difficulties. (49-50)

Tales such as these show that there was never a dull moment on Bon Portage and they provide an aspect of comic relief for the reader.

In addition to drama and comedy, Richardson also uses irony to engage the reader. Women especially can identify with her when she receives

unexpected houseguests. She voices a universal truth widely felt by housekeepers, that being that "the chances of unexpected visitors are in inverse ratio to the preparedness of home and hostess to receive them" (51). Richardson expresses other universal truths that solicit compassion and empathy from the reader, such as the creation and realization of personal goals and dreams, which are part of the human condition. Here is a case in point: although happily married, the Richardsons longed to escape their newlywed home in Worcester, Massachusetts to establish their own home on Bon Portage. They would often sit by a small lake in the local park and admire the little island that lay in its middle. Evelyn recalls that as

we sat beside it we would compare it in size and shape with what we knew of our Island and its surrounding waters, and I would describe to Morrill the crisp salt breezes that swept across Emerald Isle and doubtless across Bon Portage too; and every little detail I could remember of life on an island. We tried to imagine ourselves on a cool island shore instead of in the sweltering city, and busy in our garden and fields . . .

When the evenings became longer and cooler we spent many of them poring over the deed, and a blue-print of the government property and

lighthouse that Cousin Winnie had sent us: trying to visualize from these scant details every aspect of the Island we had bought and hoped to use. (12)

Even without the dream of Bon Portage and lightkeeping, Evelyn and Morrill were not meant for city living, and Richardson admits that "from the first our minds and hearts were fixed on returning to Nova Scotia" (13). This is a sentiment that can no doubt be shared by all transplanted Nova Scotians and Maritimers--the feeling that one can never truly leave home, for it is always in one's heart and mind.

Richardson also employs the tactic of inclusion. Rather than being didactic, she overtly welcomes the reader into the book and into her life. Not only does she share descriptions of the island, but she literally invites the reader to join her: "The way is long and rough, the uneven beach rocks punish unaccustomed feet, but if you like wild seascapes or spots of sheltered beauty, won't you come for a walk around our Island?" (63). She cautions the reader that the walk may not be physically easy, but that it is certainly worth the trip. This invitation leaves the reader wanting more. As well, this passage shows the author's use of familiar speech. In particular,

she often addresses the reader as "you," such as when she says, "I am as much surprised as you would be to find yourself in a similar situation" (4).

Likewise, Evelyn Richardson shares her private hiding space with the readers. Along the western shore is the Red Bank, a place where she could seek solitude and solace. Here, "a long smooth out-cropping of rock lies exposed by the receding tide and looks invitingly dry and warm" (65), and she becomes

silent and relaxed, lulled by the soft whisper of the rockweed around the base of the ledge as it washes gently in and out to the almost imperceptible swell that murmurs and gurgles among the crevices gutted and smoothed by the innumerable tides that have risen and fallen along this portion of the rocky spine of the Island. I leave many petty cares and small irritations there in the sun-warmed crannies of the patient rock for the incoming tide to dissolve and obliterate, before the pressing memory of duties waiting at home force me to my feet and the return walk. (65)

Most readers can identify with having a place of their own for personal reflection, and if they cannot, they must surely wish that they too had a place to meditate and be alone in the world with nothing but their thoughts.

This unsolicited invitation into the narrator's private space further involves us in her life, and we are appreciative of this glimpse into what she liked to do in those rare moments of free time.

Richardson further reveals herself to be wonderful storyteller through her use of digression. This approach is candid and intimate and is a useful method through which she can provide her audience with more background information. For example, in chapter eight, "The Second Summer and Incidentals," the reader expects to find out what improvements were made on the island and how the Richardsons had adapted to their lightkeeping and island routine after one year. The narrator begins by describing how well-worn, and in some cases worn out, their clothing had become and how she learned to use a sewing machine to make outfits out of whatever material was on hand, even cotton feed bags. However, her description of summer clothing invariably leads to the outfits that are worn throughout the year on Bon Portage, as well as for special occasions like gunning or travelling to the mainland. This digression is natural in everyday conversation, and so it is not surprising that the author too lapses into this pattern, as she gets carried away with her own attention to detail.

As one may expect in any story dealing with lightkeeping and old, isolated lighthouses, tales of haunted happenings are also included, thus adding elements of fear, the supernatural, and local lore all at the same time. Just as the reader was caught up in the suspense of Morrill's endeavours to rescue Lem, the reader becomes engrossed in the behaviour of two mainlanders who neither ate nor drank while guarding the light in the Richardsons' absence. We can almost sense the panic of the two twelve year-old boys who were convinced the lighthouse was haunted because the porch door opened and closed by itself. Evelyn, a practical woman by any definition, discounted the theory of ghosts and explained the incident in rational terms:

A south-west wind blows into our back porch, even when the outer door is closed, so strongly and in such a way that it opens the back door to the kitchen, which is fastened merely by a latch that drops into a slot and fits none too snugly. The two youngsters had spent a terror-stricken afternoon closing that back door and watching it open, each time to reveal a complete absence of any human opener. (56)

Although she admits to having "seen no supernatural manifestations," during her tenure at Bon Portage, Evelyn wishes she had "a ghost or two to boast of

to visitors," who often inquired about old rumours and local tales about strange occurrences at the lighthouse (56).

In addition to the literary devices mentioned above--drama, comedy and irony among them--Richardson also varies the language of the text itself, incorporating both regional dialect and familial slang. For example, their hired man Lem tells a story that demonstrates local attitude and dialect, as well as the flavour of traditional oral narration:

Once me'n Manus was standing by the rail talkin' when the buson come along an' told us to go over to the other side o' the boat. The owner was aboard, and coming out of his cabin for a walk. Jest as if . . . we wasn't as good as him. We wasn't goin' to stop him takin' a walk. They was lotsa room. (53)

This was just one of the many incidents in his life that Lem "never could fathom out" (53). The narrator also comments on the colourful language used by sailors when telling their "yarns," and she appreciates "the vivid word tricks of description that so many sailors possess" (139). This regional quality is also evident in the accounts of shipwrecks, phantom vessels and descriptions of local boats. In particular, Richardson is keenly aware of the types of boats used along the southwestern coast of Nova Scotia:

The Cape Sable Island boats are now known in the harbours of Nova Scotia and along the New England coast; it is claimed they can outlive anything their size in a storm, and I have never seen more strikingly graceful lines. This is the type of boat used by the fishermen of Shag Harbour and all the surrounding districts, and are now built in many places along the shore: Shag Harbour's own boatshop turns out many beautiful craft in the course of a year. (215)

Such descriptions stem more from first-hand observation than actual practical experience, as the Richardsons were only equipped with a dory provided by the government.

Evelyn Richardson also makes the reader privy to family sayings. Morrill, for example, was always trying to "figger" things out. As well, hay-making was a family affair which warranted the implementation of "pic-pics," which Anne called any family meal eaten outdoors (97). Likewise, just as every family has nicknames for their loved ones, Laurie was always affectionately referred to as Lo. In addition to family lingo, the narrator also shares "inside stories" with her readers. For example, Betty June overheard Evelyn and Lem blaming an unaccountable incident on the Wrayton

ghost--a ghost that some locals believed haunted the Bon Portage light and was named after a former keeper. Evelyn recounts that

when I went to get a chocolate-frosted cake for supper, and found the marks of two little fingers drawn through the frosting, I had only to glance at Betty June to hear, "Mummy, it must have been Wrayton goat." So Wrayton goat did all the mischief, mislaid all the tools, and was accountable for all the annoying incidents that took place from that time forward. (56)

These intimate moments further endear the author to the reader, and such stories are easy to relate to because every family has some "inside joke" or story that is remembered for years to come.

Just as the seasons and tides are constant throughout We Keep a Light, so too is the narrative voice. Evelyn Richardson's is the voice of reason and knowledge, and she is extremely diplomatic. She could always see both sides of a situation, even if her heart was swayed in one particular direction. This is evident in the debate between the Richardsons and their Shag Harbour neighbours about gunning rights on the island.

For thirty years or more before we bought Bon Portage, no owner had lived on the Island to enforce his rights, and the lightkeepers had

control over the government property only. Consequently a certain element in the district had been accustomed to having their own way about coming and going over the Island, making use of wood for pot-bows, gathering the berries and shooting the ducks, without so much as by-your-leave; and they were reluctant to admit our rights as owners. (182)

Although Richardson concedes that the Shag Harbour men were habitual visitors to Bon Portage during gunning season, she also felt the need to enforce the family's claim on the island and would certainly "never have dreamt of objecting to anyone" who wanted to join them during the lawful gunning season (184). It was a great relief when a compromise was reached, as she "never dreamed of 'quarrels with our neighbours'--way off here in the ocean, but so it was!" (185).

In addition to distinctly humorous anecdotes, Evelyn Richardson's warm spirit may divert us from a crisp dry wit that can rise on occasion. Her description of Morrill's technique to rouse his hunting guests on the first day of gunning season is one such instance:

At five o'clock the alarm goes off and Morrill springs up. He makes the fires and starts breakfast, then rouses the others. This he does

by going to the stairdoor and squawking loudly on the small horn-like instrument made to entice ducks within range, and called a "Quanker."

I wonder it wakes them, since they are doubtless all dreaming of

ducks quacking and it should blend right in with their dreams. (173)

Not only does this particular example reveal her charming wit, but the final comments reveal a tendency toward subdued sarcasm. Such remarks can be found throughout the book, but because of her casual tone, they can easily be overlooked. However, there are occasions in which the narrator's criticism is more overt. For instance, when first arriving at Bon Portage, Richardson noted that "although the resigning keeper had cut his wood free from our woodland for three years, he left us not a single stick at the woodpile, so that Morrill was hard put to it that first summer to find fuel" (31). Similarly, she subtly expresses her displeasure for Lem's habit of staying on the mainland for extended periods of time when common sense dictated that he should collect the mail and groceries in a timely fashion and return to his lightkeeping duties promptly. She simply states that they had been somewhat annoyed at Lem because he had been seizing opportunity to stop with Mike for meals and even overnight. This, we felt, and believed Ashford and Jean felt, was imposing on their

hospitality, so we had asked Lem not to stop there long, unless forced to do so by an unexpected storm. (100)

It is safe to assume that both Evelyn and Morrill were more than "somewhat annoyed" at this inconvenience, but tactfulness always prevailed.

Throughout We Keep a Light, Richardson's tone of voice is steadfastly upbeat and optimistic, even in the face of difficulties encountered on the island, illness, and responsibility. She is matter-of-fact about lightkeeping business and does not embellish historical data. She craftily weaves local lore with personal experience and historical information so smoothly that the reader becomes deeply engaged in the story. This is a talent that can be missed because of the casual, familiar tone employed, which is not a mere literary construct, but an element of Evelyn Richardson's personality.

It can be said that the success of We Keep a Light owed much to the timing of its release at the end of World War Two. In 1970, when asked to reflect on the success of the book, Evelyn told an audience of the Canadian Authors Association that

by the time the book was published the war was over, and changes had accelerated. But nobody cried that We K. a L. was irrelevant! Indeed I was lucky. After every war there is a revulsion against its horrors,

its bitteresses, its regimentations, with a desire to return to peaceful scenes and to recapture old values. Through the ages islands and lighthouses have symbolized these goals.²²

While it is true that We Keep a Light enabled readers to recall a "simpler" time before guns and bombs became the important news of the day, the book is also an authentic inside account of life along the eastern Canadian seacoast, a much under-reported part of the national consciousness that had arisen to people's awareness because of the war. As well, being from the South Shore, Evelyn Richardson was "one of us," a "common," "everyday" person who wrote about her environment and people with whom she lived. Therefore, both the style *and* substance of the book contribute to its success.

We Keep a Light engages readers through Richardson's honest, subtle and casual tone, which allows us to feel as if she is a close personal friend of our family. She writes in a straightforward unembellished style, using a first-person diary-like narrative. She introduces the audience to her lighthouse's visitors, the assistant keepers and hired men, relatives, and

²²Evelyn Richardson fonds, Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management, MG 1, Vol. 1421.

animals, just as if giving an oral history. She makes these individuals and creatures seem real to us because she neither exaggerates nor diminishes them. She makes them live in our minds because her word pictures are informed by her own lively response to them.

While this autobiographical account relates specifically to the years 1929-1945, and describes the activities of the entire family, this work is extraordinary because the lighthouse itself appears as one of the characters. The Bon Portage light seemed to take on a life and behaviour of its own--beckoning travellers homeward, safeguarding the shore, standing over shipwrecks, providing hospitality and shelter, and reacting to the weather. It seems equally appropriate to say that the light kept the Richardsons as well as that the Richardsons kept the light. This is a point that can be overlooked in the British and American printing of the book, which was labelled We Bought an Island. Again, an homage to a "simpler" life, but a definite omission of the significance of the light.²³ The importance of the light can also be found in the author's capitalization of the

²³Without knowing the exact reasons why the American and British publishers wanted to appeal to a different audience, one suspects that their choice of title relates to a contrasting cultural perspective; that is, the Atlantic Canadian perspective of a lightkeeper's duty and community responsibility versus the American and European idea of an island as a private preserve.

words "Light" and "Island" throughout the text, which stresses Richardson's affinity with her landscape, home and profession.

The success of We Keep a Light manifested itself in many ways.

Most noticeably of course is that Evelyn Richardson was awarded the Governor-General's award for creative non-fiction for 1945. The Richardsons became local celebrities, although without the attitude that some may expect. One story that illustrates this point is as follows. After returning from the award ceremony in Toronto,²⁴ Evelyn and the family undertook silage making as usual. A neighbour--no doubt curious to see how Evelyn had made out in the big city--came over, and when he discovered that she and the children were in the bottom of the silo stomping grass, he exclaimed, "Morrill, you ain't get *her* down there tramping sileage!" "Why not," replied Morrill, as he pitched more grass into the silo, "She's still the heaviest one in the family!" (NSARM 1/1421). Such examples only further our fondness for Evelyn Richardson and her book, and are testaments to her enduring and endearing legacy.

²⁴Richardson received her award at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto from the Governor-General Viscount Alexander.

Furthermore, lighthouse "tourism" transformed a relatively quiet existence on Bon Portage into a hectic schedule of more than 200 visitors each summer. Earnings from the memoir provided the family with some "fun money." Evelyn became a respected Canadian author, producing several works of fiction and non-fiction and introducing her to the company of such contemporaries as Helen Creighton.²⁵ In addition to several reprints and an edition in Braille, an extra chapter called "Ten Years Later" was added to the Ryerson Press publication in 1955 in an attempt to quench the public's insatiable desire to know what became of the Richardsons. This chapter, although similar in its descriptive style to the original work, has a decidedly different tone. It is a chapter that recounts the tragic and untimely death of their son Laurie, which evokes feelings of both sadness and outrage on the part of the reader. And rather than ending on an uplifting note like the original version does, the edition that includes "Ten Years Later" is comparatively downbeat and the reader is disappointed and disheartened by the image of Morrill and Evelyn alone on the island. Nevertheless, the addition of this chapter provided Richardson with an outlet to express herself further and is certainly indicative of the popularity and lasting

²⁵See Appendix 2-L for a list of Evelyn Richardson's major publications.

quality of the book.

The accolades continued after Richardson's death in 1976: a Shag Harbour elementary school was named in her honour; the Writer's Federation of Nova Scotia established the Evelyn Richardson Memorial Literary Award in 1977, which awards a \$1,000 prize each year to an Atlantic Canadian author in the genre of non-fiction. These are obvious examples of the success of We Keep a Light, but this writer achieved success in other, less obvious ways as well, which will be explored in the following chapter.

Through her linguistic and technical style, Evelyn Richardson presents her family's ordeals and successes, and readers are predisposed to both celebrate and lament with her. We are amused and captivated by the charming and playful stories of her children. We become more aware of our natural surroundings and appreciative of those around us. The Richardsons appear to be everyday, "ordinary" people, who eat, work and play together. Through their personal and professional endeavours, we can identify the weak or neglected facets of our own lives, and strive for the same sense of gratification that the Richardsons clearly achieved in their lives. We Keep a

Light makes the reader think and *feel*; it did so in 1945 and it does so in the year 2002. That is why this work is a classic.

Chapter Six

A Critical Framework and Survey of Lighthouse Literature

*"The poet, retired to his tower of Ivory . . .
resembles, whether he so wishes or not,
another solitary figure,
the watcher enclosed . . . in a lighthouse."²⁶*

Lighthouses feature prominently in literary works around the world. This chapter will provide an overview of such material in order to assess the accomplishments and gaps within the lighthouse genre. It will then place the works of Evelyn Richardson, particularly We Keep a Light, within this literary framework. This chapter will also apply the theories of modernism, regionalism, folklorism and feminism to Richardson's life and works to further emphasize her contributions and provide an alternative way of looking at Evelyn than society has viewed her in the past.

²⁶French poet DeGautier, cited in Evelyn Richardson, "No Ivory in Light Towers," 1.

With the exception of marine records and historical accounts, there is little scholarly work in English on lighthouses in general, and on Nova Scotian lighthouses in particular. The majority of scholarly texts about North American lights was written between 1840 and 1927, and is principally American in content. While David E. Stephens's 1973 work, Lighthouses of Nova Scotia, was once a landmark contribution, it is now out of date because of the changes related to de-staffing and automation since the 1970s.²⁷ His information about architectural and engineering aspects was somewhat erroneous, but nevertheless his was the first work to attempt to describe the functional aspects of the province's lighthouses. However, our interest today seems to lie in the symbolism and mystique associated with the lighthouse, rather than in its construction. We now see a tendency toward the metaphysical instead of the physical. Likewise, the 1975 work of Dudley Witney, simply entitled The Lighthouse, is a valiant attempt to explain lighthouse design patterns within North America, and includes an entire chapter on Nova Scotia. As well, Edward F. Bush's 1975 work, The Canadian Lighthouse, breaks down the components of various light apparatuses, and

²⁷David E. Stephens's 1998 book, Discover Nova Scotia Lighthouses, can be considered an update of his earlier text, although it also provides directions to the lighthouses and indicates the facilities available at each location.

traces their evolution from whale-oil lamps to gas mantles to electrification.

Recent research has tended to focus on the demise of the importance of lighthouse service as a whole, without reference to its cultural, social, personal and psychological ramifications. In addition, there is even less lighthouse information documented *by or about* women, since lightkeeping, and in fact, marine experience, is predominantly male-oriented. We Keep a Light is therefore unique, for it not only recounts the experience of being a lightkeeper's wife, but it is told from a female perspective. Although the life of Mary Hichens, "heroine of Seal Island," is depicted in Light in the Darkness, written by her great-great-grandson Walter Hichens, Mary did not receive due recognition in her time. It was left to Walter to give his ancestor a voice. While Mary Hichens's responsibility for the erection of the Seal Island Lighthouse in 1830 cannot be denied, Walter's book is both factual and fictional, and is therefore not necessarily an accurate depiction of life and lightkeeping on Seal Island. By the same token, Alistair MacLeod's 1988 short story entitled "Island" describes the life of a female lightkeeper in an island setting, but the narrative is not told from her perspective as it is in We Keep a Light. Such a perspective is invaluable to Nova Scotian history and is necessary to preserve, especially in light of the

fact that the role of women in Newfoundland lighthouses has been documented by Jim Wellman in his 1999 book, Lighthouse People: Stories of Men, Women and Children Who Worked and Lived in Lightstations in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Another invaluable personal account is provided by Chris Mills in his 1992 memoir, Vanishing Lights. Mills manned four lighthouses in his lifetime at four different island locations in Nova Scotia: Cross, Machias Seal, Gannet Rock and Seal. Mills describes lightkeeping as a "dream job" which is nonetheless accompanied by "psychological adjustments" (Mills, back cover). This work differs greatly from that of David Stephens because Mills includes folklore and ghost stories, as well as accounts of shipwrecks and their survivors, and personal photographs. This approach humanizes the work and makes lightkeeping relevant to present-day society, rather than being just a reflection of the past.

Works such as Admiral Hugh F. Pullen's The Sea Road to Halifax: Being an Account of the Lights and Buoys of Halifax Harbour (1980), and David Baird's Northern Lights: Lighthouses of Canada (1999), are examples of historical documentation about lighthouses. Yet perhaps the most useful work of recent years, in addition to that of Chris Mills, is Harry Thurston's

Against Darkness and Storm. In this work, Thurston describes the paradoxical relationship between the idyllic and tumultuous life of lightkeepers. Published in 1993, it touches on the federal government's decision to dispose of so-called "obsolete" lighthouses, replace them with steel skeleton towers, or simply sell the land to the highest bidder.

Thurston's book is enhanced by stunning colour photographs, which were taken by his collaborator, Wayne Barrett. Together they have produced the most extensive work on lighthouses in the Maritimes to date and brought lighthouse photography into the arena of art. The works of Hichens, Mills and Thurston stand out against the technical, somewhat text-book style information provided by scholars and the government alike. Examples of these include the Marine Sciences Directorate, which contributed Sailing Directions: Nova Scotia (S.E. Coast) and Bay of Fundy (1974), and the Canadian Coast Guard's list of lights, buoys and fog signals.

Lighthouses are becoming an increasingly common topic for children's books as well. As traditional lightkeeping passes out of existence, its history is being passed down to future generations through vivid, colourful pictures, catchy rhymes and entertaining tales. Three such books are The Harbor and the Sea by Lucille Wood (1971), The Lighthouse Dog by Betty

Waterton (1997), and Birdie's Lighthouse by Deborah Hopkinson (1997). The latter is especially interesting because Birdie, the young female protagonist, shares her father's lightkeeping duties, and records them in a diary format, similar in form and content to the logbooks kept for the light. Books such as these are successful in educating children about lightkeeping because they truthfully and accurately portray family solidarity, the harshness of the weather, daily lightkeeping tasks and procedures, and perhaps most importantly, the responsibility to self, mariners and humankind.

In fictional works, lighthouses act as spiritual or historical symbols as well as subjects. Examples include Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse (1927), Stephen Marlowe's Lighthouse at the End of the World (1996), and closer to home, Frank Parker Day's Rockbound (1928) and the numerous works of Thomas Raddall. These works are so compelling that it is often hard to draw the line between fact and fiction. Yet pictorials are the most common lighthouse materials available. These mostly take the form of calendars, postcards and tourist handbooks and are intended for mass consumption. While these may have limited research value, some of these collections, especially those of Sherman Hines, cannot be overlooked or dismissed as unworthy documentation. Surely it can be argued that such

works function as advertising that fuels the public's desire to visit the lighthouses so beautifully portrayed in the photographs. Likewise, books such as Courtney Thompson's Lighthouses of Atlantic Canada: New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland & Labrador: A Pictorial Guide serve the same purpose. Further to this, Nova Scotia travel writers like Will R. Bird and Clara Dennis, who were contemporaries of Evelyn Richardson, did not overlook the lighthouses encountered en route, and must, at the very least, have stimulated curiosity among their readers.

As we have seen, lighthouse literature runs the gamut from children's stories to in-depth technical handbooks. It is the contention of this thesis that We Keep a Light is the most influential and lasting text written about lightkeeping in Nova Scotia and Canada. First published by Ryerson Press in 1945 "when their output was limited by war restrictions," Evelyn Richardson was then "a completely unknown author" (Richardson, "No Ivory in Light Towers," 9). She admitted in a 1955 speech entitled "No Ivory In Light Towers" that she wrote the book partly because she was "stirred by a desire to vindicate my choice of life" (9-10). The popularity of We Keep a Light has merited a re-print as recently as 1997, and it is also available in

Braille.²⁸ Indeed, the demise of traditional lightkeeping over the fifty-seven years since its original publication makes We Keep a Light all the more worthwhile, and certainly its author "could have had no conscious presentiment of nearing and tragic change" when she wrote her memoir (9-10). As for the opening quotation to this chapter, in which deGaultier likens the poet to a lightkeeper, Richardson declares:

I find many people connecting, or confusing, the two towers. I can assure you that at least one lighthouse, that on Bon Portage, contains no ivory. And island life is, of necessity, too strenuous; too self-dependent to allow much time for wooing inspiration and seeking hidden lessons in seashells. ("No Ivory" 3-4)

However, wooing inspiration is but one of the results that stemmed from the success of We Keep a Light.

Now that Evelyn Richardson's memoir has been placed within a framework of lighthouse literature, both at home and abroad, the relevance of her narrative will now be expanded upon by applying literary and

²⁸It was said in the 1960s that sales of 3,000 copies in the year after a book's release made it a best seller in Canada. While exact sales figures are not available, it seems We Keep a Light began its publication history as just this kind of low-key best seller and has proven its durability as a title because it has remained in print ever since.

philosophical theories. In particular, it is necessary to assess gender roles in lightkeeping service, as well as argue that Evelyn can be considered an early feminist. We Keep a Light will also be analyzed as a text in relation to the phenomena of regionalist writing, folklorism and antimodernism. It will be demonstrated that these frameworks heighten the significance of the work, as well as the personal appeal of the author herself.

Although for centuries lightkeeping in Nova Scotia has been predominantly a male profession, the role of women like Evelyn Richardson cannot be ignored. In fact, women's contributions to lightkeeping service were being recognized as early as 1847. In a report submitted to the Commissioners of Lighthouses by W.F.W. Owen²⁹ that year, it was stated that

Keepers of lighthouses should all be married men, and the wives be instructed in the duties as well as the husbands for the whole work within the buildings is capable of being performed by women.

(Thurston 26)

²⁹In Against Darkness and Storm, Harry Thurston describes W.F.W. Owen as "surveyor of the Bay of Fundy and erstwhile heriot of Campobello" (26).

Owen also believed that women should be paid for their services, an argument that persisted until the last lights were automated in this province.

As Owen suggested, many keepers *were* married men, but they were hired so that the government would get two workers for the price of one, particularly in the days before electric lights. Traditionally, the men attended to their oil, kerosene or vapour lamps, polished the lantern room floor and windows, and maintained the general outward appearance of the lighthouse, such as grass cutting and painting; while the women ensured the overall cleanliness of the light dwelling, and provided the home comforts of cooking and rearing the family. But during emergencies, such as illnesses or mechanical breakdowns of the lamps, the women had to be familiar with the function of the light apparatus out of necessity to ensure the beacon never failed. After all, lives were depending on it. And in the case of smaller and possibly more remote lightstations, a woman needed to be prepared to perform duties that were otherwise ascribed to hired men at more "desirable" locations.

As Richardson pointed out, many families needed to supplement their income through farming, thereby adding to the tasks of the woman's

domestic sphere. The greater the workforce, the more work that could be achieved; and in the government's eyes, it seemed the cheaper the workforce the better. As stated previously, the Richardsons' annual income from lightkeeping was \$930 in 1929. No doubt, with three young children to raise, any additional revenue gleaned from their island habitat was a welcome but hard-earned reward.

Evelyn Richardson and Mary Hichens are arguably the best-known women keepers of Nova Scotian history, although neither of them were officially classified or paid as such. Although Evelyn's fame can be attributed to the success of We Keep a Light, it was Mary Hichens who was the unknowing catalyst in forwarding the role of women in lighthouses. Mary's belief in Christian charity led her to provide rescue services to stranded and shipwrecked travellers and sailors on Seal Island. Her insistence that a lighthouse would prevent any further tragedies led to the construction of the island's first light in 1830. But as previously mentioned, any due recognition for this achievement was not received during Mary Hichens's lifetime.

However, when travel writer Clara Dennis toured Nova Scotian lights in 1939, the Gillis Point Light in Lake Bras d'Or was the only lighthouse in the

province with a designated and government-appointed female keeper. A decade later,

women watched over two of Nova Scotia's most important shipping lanes, at Scaterie Island off Cape Breton and at LaHave on Nova Scotia's South Shore. Eliza Campbell kept the light on isolated Scaterie Island for 21 years, taking over duties from her husband when he drowned off the Island. (Thurston 26-27)³⁰

But Campbell's case is unique, because in the absence of a male heir, lightkeeping positions were either appointed or posted for competition, regardless of how involved the wife had been in keeping the light.³¹

Nevertheless, Evelyn Richardson performed the duties of wife, mother, teacher, author, farmer and lightkeeper, to name just a few occupations. The latter is made obvious by "the emphasis on the plural, 'we,'"

³⁰Eliza Campbell retired in 1963 when the light was automated.

³¹In B was for Butter, Evelyn infers that a man had to be 21 years of age to become a lightkeeper. Her only reference to the passing of lights from one generation to the next is recounted in a conversation with Morrill, in which he intends to apply for the position of keeper on Seal Island during World War II after its keeper dies. "Laurie will be only the second generation at Bon Portage, but would you like some outsider to push him aside?' How could I guess that neither Max Hamilton nor Laurie Richardson would live to keep the light on the island he loved?" (61). The suggestion here is that, had the two young boys lived to be 21, they would have been able to fill their fathers' shoes if they so desired.

in the title We Keep A Light (Thurston 26). This implication of equality can be linked to the feminist movement that was already forming in the Canadian consciousness before Evelyn's time but accelerated from the 1920s onward. But a distinction must be made between what is feminine and what is feminist.

Evidence of Evelyn's femininity can be seen clearly throughout We Keep A Light. For instance: her initial reaction to the amount of repairs required to make their home comfortable, and the regular decorating that ensued; her feeling of alarm, slight embarrassment and supposed unreadiness upon receiving unexpected visitors; the almost imperceptible tone of disgust at the hired man, Lem, who would not "shave oftener than twice a week for any woman" (We Keep a Light, 54); the decision to transport a piano from Bedford to Bon Portage; a common female need to be surrounded by keepsakes, personal treasures and family heirlooms; and her annoyance with the swallows that "nearly drive us frantic at times with their persistence in setting up their mud houses wherever the fancy suits them" (222). These examples, albeit somewhat stereotypically, reveal Evelyn's feminine tendencies.

Evelyn Richardson's role as a feminist is perhaps not as prominent in the book as her femininity. Her innate personal attributes of self-confidence, security, integrity and respect are exuded in a quiet manner and delicately revealed throughout her narrative. However, Richardson's outward physical behaviour can be seen more openly as feminist. For example: she insists that she is capable of travelling the three-mile sea-crossing to Shag Harbour by herself; she often makes the arduous three-mile trek across the island and back to fetch cattle or gather foodstuffs and supplies; she exercises her right to vote (even though on her first attempt in 1929, she had not been a resident long enough to be registered); and of course, she ably operates the light without assistance when required. Rarely, with the exception of government correspondence, was Evelyn referred to as "Mrs. Morrill Richardson," and this deliberate identification as "Mrs. Evelyn Richardson" is a tribute to her accomplishments as an individual and as an author.

One issue which reveals Evelyn Richardson's femininity *and* feminist attitude is duck hunting. Her femininity is revealed in her disdain for hunting on Sundays, which caused the "first radical difference of opinion after three and a half years of marriage" (58). Sundays were meant to be a

quiet day of rest (excluding lightkeeping duties of course)--regardless of "being so far from church and public opinion." Her Sundays went "from being the happiest days of the week" to the most "miserable and lonesome." Even after the government imposed gunning laws forbidding hunting on Sundays, the family could never recapture the initial "special, happy-family, Sunday feeling" they once shared (58). This issue too, is evidence of the strong religious background that Evelyn received in her youth and wished to emulate in her island home.

Nevertheless, Evelyn Richardson's stance on the gunning issue also reveals a feminist inclination. This is manifested primarily in the fact that she partook in gunning trips with Morrill on as many "lovely clear days or evenings" as possible (181). Her credo of "them as shoots, picks," caused male visitors to clean their own game (175). Even the family dog, Peggy, disapproved and seemed to think that a "woman's place is in the home and not tagging along when a dog and its master want to go for a little sport" (180). Yet Evelyn was able to appreciate the thrill of the hunt, even if she was opposed to cleaning and catching the game. These feminist actions may seem mild by today's standards, but certainly reveal that she believed in the equal ability of women and men.

Feminism can be considered "the single most important social, economic, and aesthetic revolution of modern times" (Guerin 183). Feminist critics tend to agree that

the oppression of women is a fact of life, that gender leaves its traces in literary texts and on literary history, and that feminist criticism plays a worthwhile part in the struggle to end oppression in the world outside of texts.³²

Feminist literary criticism is therefore "concerned with the difference and marginalization of women," and consequently, feminist literary criticism focuses on the "absence of women from discourse as well as meaningful spaces opened by women's discourse" (Guerin 182). Unbeknownst to Evelyn Richardson, she was occupying three radical spaces. Firstly, her physical domestic sphere was not a standard, "normal" square house, but a lighthouse. Further to this, living in a lighthouse also meant *working* in a lighthouse. And lastly, her voice--her feminine perspective--successfully filled a void in Maritime, regionalist, and lightkeeping literature.

³²Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl cited in Keith Green and Jill LeBihan, Critical Theory & Practice: A Coursebook, 229.

Feminist literary critics from the 1960s onward have endeavoured to focus on four main issues:

1. The continued exclusion of writing by women from publication and mainstream academic study;
2. Representations of women in (usually canonical) texts by writers of either gender;
3. The representation of women's unique experience in their own writing, and
4. The development of appropriate modes of language and form to represent these unique experiences (Green and LeBihan 231-232).

We Keep A Light is an ideal example of these latter two points. The fact that she was a lightkeeper's wife is not unique in itself, but the Bon Portage environment, and the ability to write about the experience, *is* unique. The appropriate mode of language and form chosen to portray these experiences--that of an autobiographical diary--was likely not contrived on Richardson's part, for the work flows easily in a stream of consciousness style.

As stated, We Keep A Light is comparable to a diary in its content and style. Diaries have long been regarded as a form of "woman's writing." Along with journals, letters, travelogues and autobiographies, diaries were deemed an "inferior" style of writing to that of a man, and were therefore largely ignored and overlooked by critical theorists (G&L 232). These genres were considered less valuable because they were

not designed for public performance or recital; they require no formal scholarship and training beyond literacy; they are much less ambitious, and are therefore seen as appropriate amusements for women, rather than ambitious career moves. (241)

For this reason, diaries and autobiographies of Maritime women became the focus of a collection entitled No Place Like Home: Diaries and Letters of Nova Scotia, 1771-1938. While Richardson's tenancy at Bon Portage extends four decades beyond the inclusion dates of this compilation, she is both part of, and separate from, a pattern revealed through these female discourses. Margaret Conrad, Toni Laidlaw and Donna Smyth assert that through diary writing, women "talk to themselves, describe the detail of daily life, with all its repetition, disorder and incompleteness" (2). This holds true for Richardson, who portrays the minutiae of family life, island living and

lightkeeping with an equal degree of candour and humility. While she claims to have written We Keep A Light partially to validate her choice of existence, one can argue that she also wrote it to preserve the memories for herself. And while her need to be validated stems primarily from the stigma attached to lightkeeping (such as being hermit-like or "odd"), it also reeks of being a woman whose voice was longing to be thrust in the public domain and recognized as her own.

Conrad, Laidlaw and Smyth selected works for their compilation that were "the most original and the most revealing about a certain time, place, class or culture" (2-3). Again, this criterion applies to Richardson. Her work is original because it is a feminine perspective on what has been perceived as a male-oriented profession; it reveals what lightkeeping entailed between 1929 and 1944 on a remote island; it provides insight into the civil service, working class and fishing communities; and it is representative of the Maritime culture, specifically, being dependent on the sea for one's livelihood and struggling to be identified as a distinct voice from the rest of Canada.

Richardson's voice is that of a well-educated, English-speaking, married, mother of three. While life is normal to those who live it and know

no other existence, the Richardsons actually lived an extraordinary life, which history has proven to be true. As a family of lightkeepers, they are representatives of a bygone Maritime tradition, which even at the time must have been recognized as an important contribution within their community. But We Keep A Light differs from No Place Like Home because "so-called 'important events'" are not "reduced to rumours and abstractions" (Conrad et al 3). Margaret Conrad and her colleagues state that "wars, revolutions, depressions and elections are sometimes mentioned but are rarely described as directly related to the lives of our chroniclers" (3-4). The Richardsons were directly involved in important social and political events, particularly during World War Two, which once again is emblematic of the void that was filled by Evelyn's voice. She does conform to the habits of other diarists who "paid attention to what happened inside the house," especially when it comes to "details of food preparation, housecleaning and family relationships" (4); yet it is her direct involvement in lightkeeping, farm work, and the sea, as well as her ability to blatantly and subtly describe her existence that takes her out of the domestic sphere.

The concept of separate spheres is the focus of another book detailing the experience of nineteenth-century Nova Scotia women. In

Separate Spheres: Women's Worlds in the 19th-Century Maritimes, editors

Janet Guildford and Suzanne Morton contend that the separate spheres ideology could be both "empowering and constraining, bonding and fragmenting at the same time. Furthermore, separate spheres ideology not only described but also distorted the complexity of men's and women's relations" (12). Certainly there were women whose pride and sense of achievement lay in their capacity as homemakers; but for those women who wanted recognition for something outside this private domain, there were-- and still are--stereotypes to overcome. As Guildford and Morton point out, "Maritime women had strong loyalties and identities other than those based on sex" (12), and in the case of Evelyn Richardson, these identities include not only wife, mother and teacher, but also Maritimer, lightkeeper, author, career-woman and award winner.

When discussing the nineteenth century, Margaret Conrad and her collaborators maintain that the "sea was a difficult reality for Nova Scotia women. It carried their men away from home for long periods of time and sometimes forever. Areas dependent upon the sea often had a surplus of women" (17). This statement can be applied to twentieth century Nova Scotia women in general, and Evelyn Richardson in particular. Although she

did not suffer the long absences caused by sea voyages, she definitely felt responsible for ensuring the safety of those who were at sea, and by extension, for preserving the family unit and economic security of womankind. Indeed the sea is inherent in the Maritime identity, and while she did not lose her son or husband to the sea, Richardson certainly feared that it could happen at any time. Examples of this can be found repeatedly when she describes the treacherous launching and landing of their small boat, trips to the mainland impeded by inclement weather and stormy seas, and the strength of the tides which nearly caused an accident for her son Laurie. Nova Scotia is a place where the sea and land, and life and death play a perpetual game of give-and-take. Evelyn Richardson, the author, is successful at describing these life forces because Richardson, the Maritimer, has had first-hand experience, which is recounted through the voice of Richardson, the woman.

Women's place, it was argued and many Nova Scotia women agreed, was in the home; only men should earn a 'family wage.' As a result of such views, Nova Scotia women, like women in all industrial societies, experienced discrimination in the workplace. (G&M 18)

Evelyn Richardson would not have agreed that women's place is solely in the home, or that men should be the only wage earners. Her work did not require her to leave the home; rather, it caused her to be particularly confined to it. And as we have already seen, the role of women and wives in lightkeeping may have been informally acknowledged, but was neither officially recognized nor given financial compensation. This is a form of discrimination. Evelyn Richardson had earned her own income as a teacher prior to her marriage. She was not like the majority of Nova Scotia women of her generation--one who "lived in rural villages and followed the seasons in their productive labour" (G&M 22). Instead, although her family background lay in the Shag Harbour-Barrington region, she lived an urban existence in Bedford, Halifax and Massachusetts before settling on Bon Portage.

The professions of teaching and nursing, along with secretarial and domestic services, were the most common and readily available female occupations of the day (G&M 16). Evelyn's decision to earn a living was a modernist and practical philosophy and she became a woman who,

unlike those who had hitherto gone from their father's home to that of their husband, stretched the time between leaving school and marrying to include a few years of paid labour in a school, shop or

office, or in someone else's home. This experience enabled a woman to bring a stronger sense of personal accomplishment as well as a financial contribution to her marriage. (G&M 22)

As Conrad, Laidlaw and Smyth illustrate, even if men and women "shared geographical space, their interpretation of what happened in that space differed" (299). Evelyn Richardson was certainly treated as an equal by her husband, but not necessarily by the mariners, other mainlanders, or even other women. She was a paradox herself: respected, admired and cherished by all who knew her, but nevertheless, distinct and separate from them. By this token, Richardson herself can therefore be considered a feminist as surely as her writings fill a gap in feminist literary analysis.

Just as Evelyn Richardson's career supplements feminist literary theory, she can also be usefully considered within a regionalist literary framework. As mentioned earlier, the likening of Evelyn Richardson to a "common" local person can be linked with the growing trend in regionalist writings in the first half of the twentieth century. Regionalists were not simply writers who were identified as coming from a particular place, but who wrote about their locales out of a deep affection and respect for them

--a genuine interest in their immediate surroundings, rather than a penchant for profit or popular appeal. Desmond Pacey proposes that regionalists are one of three predominant groups or schools of poets within Canada, the other two being mythopoeic and social realists. The mythopoeic poets, "whose work draws much of its inspiration from the creative criticism of Professor Northrop Frye"³³ was begun in Toronto; the social realist group was begun in Montreal in the 1940s, and its chief advocates were Irving Layton³⁴, Louis Dudek³⁵, Al Purdy³⁶ and Raymond Souster³⁷; and the

³³Northrop Frye is arguably one of the greatest social critics of the 20th century. His Anatomy of Criticism (1957) transformed literary theory with its explanations of the relations between myth and ideology, and narrative and imagination.

³⁴Irving Layton: Born in Roumania in 1912, but lived in Montreal since age one. Layton published 12 volumes of poetry between 1945-1960, and won the Governor-General's award for A Red Carpet for the Sun in 1959. His poetry expounds dichotomies such as life-death, good-evil, love-sex and suffering-joy.

³⁵Louis Dudek (1918-2001): Born in Montreal. Although known as a poet and editor of his own magazine, *Delta*, Dudek is perhaps best known as one of Canada's leading literary critics.

³⁶Al Purdy (1918-2000): Born in Wooler, Ontario. He has been called "the world's most Canadian poet" by George Bowering (Studies in Canadian Literature, 1970, 1). A prolific poet who began writing at age 13, Purdy also wrote radio and television plays, short stories and magazine articles.

³⁷Raymond Souster: Born January 15, 1921 in Toronto, he became the founding member and first chairman of the League of Canadian Poets. Souster published his own magazine, *Contact*, and edited anthologies and school texts in addition to writing poetry.

regionalist group, under the influence of Fred Cogswell³⁸, Elizabeth Brewster³⁹ and Alden Nowlan⁴⁰, began in Fredericton (Pacey 235).

Pacey contends that the regionalist group has received less national recognition than the other two groups, but that this is the group with which "the real future of Canadian poetry lies" (Pacey 206). The regionalist group "resembles the Montreal school in its determination to make poetry out of immediate experience but substitutes a rural or small-town environment for that of the metropolis" (236). The chief characteristic of those in the regionalist group, according to Pacey, is their tendency for straightforwardness (248). The reason that the regionalist group sprung up in Fredericton is evident, for in the 1930s,

Fredericton itself, though a tiny city of six thousand, was a place of considerable natural beauty and one with a high proportion of

³⁸Fred Cogswell: Born in Carleton County, N.B. in 1917. Joined the Fiddlehead Group in 1945, and acted as editor of The Fiddlehead from 1952-1967.

³⁹Elizabeth Brewster: Born in Chipman, N.B. in 1922. Won The Bliss Carman Prize for Poetry in 1942 (her first year at the University of New Brunswick), and joined The Bliss Carman Society the following year.

⁴⁰Alden Nowlan: Born in Windsor, N.S. in 1933 and settled in Hartland, N.B. in 1952. Armed only with a grade 5 education, Nowlan published 11 collections of poetry, as well as a series of plays, articles and novels. Was the writer-in-residence at U.N.B. from 1968 until his death on June 13, 1983.

cultivated professional people who expressed their tastes in well-stocked private libraries, the university itself, the urbane and cultivated air.⁴¹

It should be noted that, while the regionalist school was begun in Fredericton, it is not exclusively limited to Maritime writers. Nor is regionalist writing limited to poetry, which is evidenced by Evelyn Richardson's We Keep A Light.

The regionalist poets found their voice through a literary magazine called The Fiddlehead,⁴² which was published at the University of New Brunswick. The precursor to The Fiddlehead was the establishment of The Bliss Carman Society, which was begun in February of 1945 "to foster the writing of poetry in the Fredericton area" (Ploude and Taylor 5). That same year, We Keep A Light won the Governor-General's award for creative non-

⁴¹Barrie Davies, "English Poetry in New Brunswick, 1880-1940," cited in Reavley Gair (Ed.) A Literary and Linguistic History of New Brunswick, 117.

⁴²The Fiddlehead: Founded by Alfred Bailey in January 1945, Fredericton, NB. Bailey, a native of Quebec, attended the University of New Brunswick from 1923-1927. The idea for The Fiddlehead arose in 1923, but was abandoned due to lack of funds. Bailey established a poetry-writing club in 1940 as an alternative, which became The Bliss Carman Society. The name, The Fiddlehead, is taken from the Maliseet symbol for the sun's creative power and not the green fiddlehead-shaped vegetable commonly accredited as a New Brunswick delicacy.

fiction, perhaps providing the impetus, and certainly the validation, that regionalist writers were seeking. What this may also suggest is that regionalist writers can have an unconscious tendency to incorporate social realism in their writing. Specifically, while Richardson may have sensed changes within the technology of lightkeeping, her work did not deliberately serve as a social commentary on the fate or demise of the occupation.

Regionalist writers portray the people and scenery of their immediate surroundings with accuracy and honesty, expressing the paradoxes and dualities of their environment with equal fervour. They believe that their locality is important enough, beautiful enough, and worthy enough, to be revealed to the whole world. The microcosm of the region thereby becomes symbolic of the macrocosm of both Canadian and world society. Although regionalism has been "accepted," in that it has formed the basis of a literary school, it is the subject of an ongoing critical debate within Canada. This controversy shall be explored briefly in order to reveal the advantages and disadvantages of being labelled a regionalist writer.

In classifying a writer as regionalist, a clarification should be made between regionalism and provincialism. Regionalism is the illumination of one's immediate surroundings. Such a writer may also be considered a writer

of locality, since the scope of the work is limited to one's local and familiar territory. As Don Precosky states in "Seven Myths About Canadian Literature," regionalism is not a bad thing. In actuality,

regionalism is at the core of the Canadian identity. Screech, tortière, sugaring off, fiddleheads, hoodoos, Social Credit: each of these is recognizable to the average informed Canadian, yet each is associated with a region of Canada. (89)

Precosky asserts that, while each region within Canada has its own distinguishing features, these features are essential components of the make-up of the country. The implication is that regionalist writing contains subject-matter with a universal appeal, despite, or rather, because of, its regional limitation. Certainly, lighthouses can be added to the above list and made immediately synonymous with the province of Nova Scotia.⁴³ Similarly, Peter Pacey is of the opinion that the "Maritimer as metaphor represents

⁴³Lighthouses are of course found along major bodies and arteries of water across Canada, but their association with the province of Nova Scotia in particular is likely due to the commodification of the Peggy's Cove light, and possibly the Forchu Light at Yarmouth. For instance, Beachcomber Enterprises Ltd., which operates out of Tantallon, N.S., claims that postcards and other likenesses of the Peggy's Light only rivals artifacts of Niagara Falls for highest sales of any Canadian tourist destination.

basic humanity."⁴⁴ For example, the Maritimer's struggle for survival-- against weather, economic hardship, psychological and political detachment from the rest of Canada--represents a facet of the human condition.

Provincialism, on the other hand, assumes that a writer is good simply because s/he comes from a particular province (Precosky 89). This judgment ignores the actual quality of the work itself. It also implies that certain writers are "better" than others because they come from a "better" province. John Sutherland concurs with Precosky's viewpoint, and adds that provincial writers narrow their views to what only concerns their province.⁴⁵ Their poetry lacks subject-matter capable of attaining universal appeal, since it deals with issues that are province-specific. For this reason, Sutherland believes that provincial writers can be justifiably disregarded, and consequently, the writer's success becomes just as limited as its scope (89). One who is inclined to agree with Precosky and Sutherland would therefore argue that We Keep a Light was successful simply because it was produced in Nova Scotia. But the contention of this thesis is that, although it identifies strongly with Nova Scotian culture, the appeal of We Keep a

⁴⁴Peter Pacey cited in Michael Oliver, "Alden Nowlan (1933-83)," in Robert Lecker (Ed.) et al, Canadian Writers and Their Works Poetry Series, Vol. 7, 93.

⁴⁵John Sutherland, cited in Precosky, "Seven Myths About Canadian Literature."

Light extends worldwide because it deals with universal human emotions and experiences, and the time-honoured and nostalgic profession of lightkeeping.

Evelyn Richardson's We Keep A Light can be said to have universal appeal because we can recognize ourselves in what she says about her landscape, her people, and consequently, about herself. Furthermore, her work has particular appeal to Maritimers because of its precise and candid portrayal of their own lives. While not all the people she portrays are lightkeepers or from a lightkeeping tradition, their lives are nonetheless affected by the sea. Just as there is a debate about regionalism, a similar controversy centres around the issue of what can be called "Maritivism." In Richardson's case, this encompasses the following: her status as one who comes from the Maritimes; her act of describing the Maritimes, and the significance of being a Maritimer. Reflecting on the nature of writing about one's own landscape, E.K. Brown writes:

Canadians were impelled to write descriptions either of the landscape round about them or of the peculiar circumstance in which they lived . . . Preoccupation with landscape and with local history has been strong up to the present time: the mark of regionalism is upon almost all our best writing. (143)

We Keep a Light abounds with descriptions of the sea and sky, and also the island itself. And while the lighthouse seemed "normal" to the Richardsons, Evelyn certainly had occasion to reflect on the uniqueness of their home, or as Brown puts it, "the peculiar circumstances" in which they lived:

So here I am, a lightkeeper's wife on a small island three miles away from the mainland, isolated much of the year, and living under conditions that most of the country outgrew fifty years or more ago.

(We Keep a Light, 4)

The feeling of isolation inherent in this quotation is a common element of regionalist writing, but isolation from what exactly? It can certainly be argued that the Maritime region is isolated geographically; it is marked as distinct from the rest of Canada by its physical boundaries--mountains to the north and northwest, and the vast Atlantic to the east. In the Richardsons' case, their immediate isolation was from their very own neighbours, separated by three miles of ocean. Climatic and seasonal variances also distinguish the Maritimes from the rest of Canada, and again, the Richardsons faced exceptional weather conditions on the island, which seemed to be a small world unto itself.

Coupled with this physical isolation is mental and psychological isolation: the feeling of being personally alone against the world, and of the Maritimes as a community being alone or forgotten within the nation, or more succinctly, misunderstood. Michael Oliver contends that "anyone who is not a Maritimer needs to be educated about what that means" (95). So what does it mean to be a Maritimer, and why is it significant in order to understand Evelyn Richardson? What it means is that Richardson, as a Maritimer, managed to find her own voice amid the social, cultural, economic, political, and physical isolation of Bon Portage Island in particular, and of the Maritimes at large. An awareness of one's landscape is implicit in being a Maritimer. As Oliver points out, one aspect of being a Maritimer is the constant feeling that

one can never leave home for good, not without a terrible sense of guilt and longing to return; and the feelings that you really don't give a damn if you stay poor forever, as long as there is someone to love, some good old-time fiddle tunes to dance to and hymns to sing along with, some "demmie" or Screech or Moosehead you can lay your hands on; and the feeling that these things have always been and should always be. (98-99)

Each of these elements, which may seem trivial or frivolous to an outsider, contributes to the traits of a Maritimer, and Evelyn Richardson is no exception. This is the landscape from which regionalist writers feel marginalized and outcast, but at the same time, intimately connected to and familiar with. For Richardson, themes of poverty and exile and connection with place are developed, as they are with Maritime writers like Ernest Buckler, Charles Bruce and Alistair MacLeod, through the lyrical power of narrative. In We Keep a Light, however, the Richardsons are returning from, not going into, exile. And, while they are poor and the process of raising a family on marginal resources in an isolated location is not without its pain and loss, their life gradually becomes more fulfilling. Situated though they may be liminally--that is, on the threshold between light and dark, the sea and the land, and life and death--their marginal world takes its toll from them, but also lends them simultaneously its tangible and intangible rewards.

The hypothesis in this thesis that one of the factors behind the success of We Keep a Light is the appeal of its reminiscence of a "simpler" time before World War Two can be linked to Ian McKay's Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism And Cultural Selection In Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia.

McKay labels this simplicity as "innocence," a "local variant of antimodernism" (30). His book sets out to define a stereotype that came to be constructed about Nova Scotia's culture in the period after 1920:

Nova Scotia's heart, its true essence, resided in the primitive, the rustic, the unspoiled, the picturesque, the quaint, the unchanging; in all those pre-modern things and traditions that seemed outside the rapid flow of change in the twentieth century. (30)

While Evelyn Richardson's life was anything but simple or easy, it is representative of the "heart" to which McKay makes reference. The image of a lighthouse standing betwixt sea and sky on a foundation of solid rock is certainly "picturesque;" the Bon Portage lighthouse as a dwelling was "primitive," "rustic" and "pre-modern," with its lack of electricity and conveniences; and the light itself pre-dates the modern trend toward automation. The same modern technology that later gave the Richardsons an extra sense of comfort and security also hastened the ruination of their family empire on the island, and the demise of traditional lightkeeping.

Ian McKay makes direct reference to Evelyn Richardson in his discussion of female cultural producers. "Innocence" supports the stereotype that women belonged strictly in the domestic sphere, and that

"in the imagined Nova Scotia of the Folk women were assigned only the supporting roles of waiting for their hardy men and uncomplainingly attending to their needs" (260). He cites Richardson as one

of the most prominent women cultural producers of interwar Nova Scotia [who] did not raise gender questions overtly. Women such as . . . Evelyn Richardson . . . had created a new sense of the career possibilities open to women, sometimes against male opposition. (261)

As McKay admits, and as mentioned previously, Evelyn's feminine and feminist tendencies were not explicit, and her conduct stands out as such more glaringly in hindsight. By performing both traditionally female and male duties within the home and workforce, Evelyn can be deemed a modern woman. Likewise, through their efforts to improve conditions at the lighthouse and the island, and thereby ameliorate their quality of life, the Richardson family can be judged to be far more modernist than the Canadian government. The government--as well as many Canadians themselves--assumed that lightkeepers were comfortable in, and satisfied with, their rather primitive conditions. It was these outsiders who had an antimodernist outlook, not the Richardsons.

This chapter has related the life and works of Evelyn Richardson to popular literary theories and social constructions. As we have seen, Richardson fills a vacancy in feminist theory and criticism. Any opposition in this case would likely stem from the variety of men who worked and controlled the maritime community, including fishermen, mariners, lightkeepers, the Canada Coast Guard, the Department of Transport and its derivations. Richardson lived and worked in an environment that for generations had been oriented toward men, dominated by men, and regulated by men. Some would argue that the very shape of the lighthouse is a mere representation of the power of the phallus; a symbol of man in his attempt to conquer nature. But the lighthouse itself, as a folk image and cultural icon, is, in the instance of We Keep a Light, deconstructed by the powerful career and voice of the woman who lived within its walls.

Chapter Seven

Cultural Production and the Preservation Movement

*"A wise nation preserves its records, gathers up its monuments,
decorates the tombs of its illustrious dead,
repairs its great public structures
and fosters national pride and love of country
by perpetual references to the sacrifices and glories of the
past." -Joseph Howe⁴⁶*

It has been said that the modern developed world is a "throw away" society. This is a contentious statement; for while it has been made apparent in this thesis that Canada's government has decommissioned most of Nova Scotia's lighthouses, community groups and activists have succeeded in preserving at least the knowledge and memory of our heritage, if not all the actual sites themselves. This chapter will argue that preservation is a cross-cultural movement that is achieved at local, regional and national

⁴⁶Joseph Howe, Poems and Essays, 277.

levels. It will define what preservation is, and briefly outline its origins in Canada in general and specifically in Nova Scotia as it pertains to lighthouses. Because the chapter must also examine the motivating factors behind preservation, it will be necessary to discuss some recent interpreters of Atlantic Canada's culture and their hypotheses about antimodernist tendencies persisting in the culture. Therefore this chapter will promptly identify the characteristics of the so-called Folk image of rural Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada and explore how this image affects the choices that Nova Scotians are now making in upholding their lighthouse heritage.

Preservation can be defined as

the act or process of applying measures to sustain the existing form, integrity, and material of a building or structure, and the existing form and vegetable cover of a site. It may include initial stabilization work, where necessary, as well as ongoing maintenance of the historic building materials. (Murtagh 19)

In other words, preservation refers to the methods used to sustain both the built and natural environments. This type of work involves activism on behalf of public and private interests, and in Nova Scotia community involvement has proven to be essential.

In his 1994 book The Quest of the Folk, Ian McKay articulated the need to examine the assumptions and concepts of culture and community in Atlantic Canadian society, and their expression in the lived experience of individuals and groups. His analysis of the "Simple Life of the Folk" can be useful in considering the origins of preservationist sensibilities in this province. The Folk

lived, generally, in fishing and farming communities, supposedly far removed from capitalist social relations and the stresses of modernity. The Folk did not work in factories, coal mines, lobster canneries, or domestic service: they were rooted to the soil and to the rockbound coast, and lived lives of self-sufficiency close to nature. The Folk and their lore were special and rare. Only in certain areas could one find the dying embers of an old organic Folk culture: Folk superstitions, Folk songs, Folk games, Folk handicrafts--they all survived, but only in rare pockets. (26)

The Folk embodied simple truth, hard work and virtue, and were "the antitheses of all that was overcivilized, tired, conventional, and insincere" in society (12). They were believed to be one-dimensional people whose lives were not complicated with issues of "politics, histories, sexualities, despairs,

and futures" (109). They represented the unchanging traditional people bound to the soil and the coast; the last authentic cultural producers; remnants of a golden age before class division (52). McKay attributes the preservation of the Folk image to liberal antimodernism, which he defines as a "thirst for an existence released from the iron cage of modernity into a world re-encharmed by history, nature, and the mysterious" (xvi). In other words, the Folk were a romantic response to the harsh effects of the modern world.

McKay cites urban cultural producers like Helen Creighton as proponents of the Folk ideal after the 1920s. Such producers, or folklife collectors, acted as "a kind of recording angel, rescuing the cultural treasures of the international Anglo-American Folk from the uncomprehending local people who accidentally harboured them" (22). Marketing the Folk became a boon to the tourist industry, especially after World War Two, when improved roads and transportation enabled more urban travellers to scope out the "quaint" local terrain and remind themselves of an "innocent" time. This idea of innocence relates to antimodernism because Nova Scotians became divided either "into essentially peasant Folk on the one hand and modern, sophisticated city-

dwellers on the other" (39). McKay asserts that innocence "found the steadfast heart of Nova Scotian culture in exactly those backward, isolated villages that an earlier Victorian generation had viewed as embarrassing deviations from the ideal of improvement" (137).

The Folk were a hypothetical construct whose reality was as much in the eye of the urban beholder as in the life lived in the countryside or the coastal village. The Folk, who had once been regarded as an embarrassment, therefore became an asset to the province's tourism image. McKay contends that the stereotype of the slow-talking, unimaginative, placid and contented Nova Scotia Folk was not something invented only by contemptuous outsiders. It answered local needs. The rural Folk, with their unreflecting sense of belonging, their unproblematic family lives, and their comfortable settled state, existed mainly in the imaginations of the urban cultural producers (222).

Folklorism is a phenomenon related to the concept of the Folk. Elke Dettmer, a folklorist of German background and training and a resident of Newfoundland, defines folklorism as "an analytical construct indicating the conscious use and misuse of folklore" (169). As in Nova Scotia, in the

gradual process of urbanization, rural and seacoast identity came to be the badge of Newfoundland:

a stereotype of the "hardy, happy" Newfoundland fisherman emerged in the nineteenth century. He was romanticized, much like the European peasant, by a new class of merchants and assorted professionals in St. John's. (Dettmer 171)

This construct was especially useful politically, as Dettmer notes, both before and after confederation with Canada: "The essential Newfoundland identity was, and is, based on the traditional lifestyle of the fisherman" (171). What McKay is skeptical of in his analysis is the romantic view of "distilled essences." Essentialist thinking in the Newfoundland instance involves glorifying an occupational group--its past, its customs, its dialects--in order to create a new nationalist identity. What is now "presented and preserved," says Dettmer, "never quite existed like this in the past" (170). She adds that some of these phenomena--like "the popular 'screech in' ceremony" and other tourism trappings--are "invented, folk-like elements, outside any known tradition" (170, 173).

The result is not only seen as good for tourism, but it provides a much-needed psychological boost for a province hit hard by profound and sustained economic challenges:

Glorifying one's past in collective narcissism can reduce the threat to self-confidence and offers a symbolic redressing of economic disadvantage. The desolate situation of some marginal rural areas thus can be turned into a positively accepted lifestyle embedded in cultural lag when elaborated and aestheticized "inner riches" in the form of language, poetry, customs and folk art are substituted for modernization. (Dettmer 172)

Perhaps the question we need to ask at this point in the thesis is whether there is a difference between the antimodernist-driven impulses defined by McKay and Dettmer and other motivations that may be detected in the complex reasons why there is a current lighthouse preservation movement in Nova Scotia.

If Atlantic Canadians themselves are responsible for relying heavily on folklorism and the regional stereotype of the Folk, then it is safe to say that they are equally capable of and accountable for preserving other aspects of their culture, particularly the built environment. Although

preservation movements in Nova Scotia are relatively recent compared to their British and American counterparts, they can be--and are--just as successful in protecting the province's resources. As Ian McKay argues, the construction of the Folk has been used as a method of cultural preservation that has facilitated the pursuit of things authentic and original. This theory will serve as the backdrop for an investigation into the Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society (NSLPS).

The Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society is an example of structural and functional preservation, and is influential in safeguarding the memory of lightkeeping service in this province. Founded in 1994 by a small ensemble of lighthouse enthusiasts and former keepers, the objectives of the NSLPS are

to promote and support preservation and awareness of Nova Scotian lighthouses; to assist community groups in leasing or taking ownership of lighthouse sites; to provide access to written research and photographic documentation and to initiate oral history research; and to classify and monitor the status of historic lighthouse sites.

(Frontispiece to The Lightkeeper)

The society was begun out of concern for the alarming number of lighthouses being destroyed or automated by the Canada Coast Guard. For example, in 1929, there were 265 lighthouses standing, compared with 165 in 1997.⁴⁷ Since 1966, the Coast Guard has been replacing wooden and concrete light structures with fibreglass and steel skeleton towers. This decision was apparently made to reduce the costs of maintaining the lights, such as those incurred by painting, repairing and cleaning. Unfortunately, cutting costs also means cutting labour. As Chris Mills, one of the society's founders believes, lightkeepers had been reduced to janitors, and lightkeeping was no longer a career or way of life, but a part-time job. For Mills and other lightkeepers, the NSLPS has been a forum through which they can reminisce about their experiences, share stories, and hopefully prevent other lighthouses from suffering a similar fate as the ones they once occupied.

In 1995, the NSLPS was invited by the Coast Guard to be a key player in the Regional Advisory Committee on Lighthouse Alternative Use (RACLAU). The mission statement of RACLAU is to "advise the Canadian Coast Guard on future lighthouse alternative uses for the Maritime

⁴⁷"Standing" does not denote operating numbers.

region."⁴⁸ It seeks an abiding respect for the cultural and historical significance of lighthouses and for the environmental sensitivities of their natural settings. Alternative uses that have already been incorporated for lighthouses in Nova Scotia include museums, gift shops, bed-and-breakfasts, and parklands. These are the most common substitute usages, although many other possibilities can be gleaned from around the world, such as the repository for human ashes in Portland, Oregon.

However, it is not an inexpensive venture for a community to embark on. While the structure itself may be handed over for a nominal fee, maintenance costs can run as high as \$800,000.⁴⁹ Therefore, most alternative use suggestions are those that have the potential to reap economic returns, such as tourism. These economic tourism issues have become even more pressing as RACLAU was replaced by the Atlantic Lighthouse Council (ALC) in 1998, a body funded by the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) and the Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC) to make lighthouses successful tourist attractions. Moreover, as income from tourism is generated, real estate prices increase. This presents a

⁴⁸Cited in the Nova Scotia Lighthouse Society's, The Lightkeeper, Vol. 4, No. 4, 2.

⁴⁹Maintenance costs include painting, landscaping and testing for contaminants, such as mercury or lead, which were used to operate early light apparatuses.

dilemma to the preservationist: heritage sites need to receive support, attention and appreciation from the general public, but higher property costs have the potential to attract corporate interests, thereby making the sites unavailable to the community for which they were originally preserved.

The Coast Guard, however, is "waiting for Treasury Board approval for its proposal to receive more flexibility in leasing or selling lighthouses to community groups instead of the normal disposal route to the highest bidder" (Lightkeeper 4/4/2). The proposal is also being delayed by a merger between the Coast Guard and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. In the meantime though, the Coast Guard has prepared a "Disposal" list of more than one hundred lighthouses which will be available for community interests if and when the deal is approved. The current Bon Portage lighthouse is included in this list.

Today, the NSLPS has 190 members. Membership fees range from \$15 per annum for students to \$20 per annum for institutions, a sensible sum in all respects. The society publishes a quarterly newsletter called The Lightkeeper, which provides a list of excursions and programs through its home base, the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic. It also features stories about keepers and their experiences, and updates on the status of existing

lights. The society also has a website, with hits breaking the 19,000 mark in 2001 with no real publicity or marketing.⁵⁰ The NSLPS Board convenes on a monthly basis, and in addition to exposing the general public to various lighthouses through day-trips and overnight excursions, the society also organizes a lecture series. The intent of these lectures is two-fold: to provide a forum for speakers (including lighthouse enthusiasts, former keepers and their relatives, and historians), and to promote the need for heritage preservation and awareness.

The Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society has increased community awareness and involvement in preserving the province's heritage. This assertion can be supported by the fact that membership numbers continue to increase, and the society has formed relationships with various community groups with whom they collaborate and correspond regularly. The society is not just sustaining lighthouses, but the memory of the keepers and part of Maritime history as well. Since its inception, similar societies have been established in the other Atlantic provinces and the Atlantic

⁵⁰It is likely that the Swiss Air crash of September 2, 1998 has attributed to the number of website hits, which has increased from 10,000 in 1998. The lighthouse icon used for the NSLPS masthead is an obvious and natural connection for those surfing the internet for news of the Peggy's Cove disaster.

Lighthouse Council continues to collaborate on preservation activities. With the NSLPS serving as a model for other community-based groups, and with lighthouse preservation on the rise, it is likely that any further changes to the status of existing lighthouses and extant buildings in Nova Scotia will no longer go unnoticed by the public.

To further encourage the preservation movement in Nova Scotia, the campaign for a national Lighthouse Protection Act was officially launched on March 11, 1999 at the Chebucto Head Lightstation in Halifax Harbour. The press conference was conducted by Chris Mills and Reverend David Curry, both active members in the NSLPS. The press conference began with the following declaration:

The Lighthouse Protection Act Committee is a group of citizens here in the Maritimes and beyond who are committed to preserving the lights and keeping them in public domain as belonging to all of us as Canadian citizens. We are calling for a national Lighthouse Protection Act. Lighthouses are significant icons of our maritime and national culture and heritage. They are part of who we are as Canadians. They are especially important to the identity and life of the coastal communities of Canada. Why do we need a Lighthouse Protection Act

... Because of the twin dangers of neglect and disposal.

The campaign seeks to promote the necessity of heritage protection, not only for Nova Scotian lights, but for those across the country that are facing similar threats. It was stated blatantly at the press conference that today's "federal heritage legislation for the protection of lighthouses is entirely inadequate." The statistics are staggering: only 3% of Canada's 580 lighthouses "are classified as heritage structures and receive full protection. In the United States, 70% of lighthouses over 50 years old have heritage protection" (PC 1999).

The belief that a federal Lighthouse Protection Act can be passed is not a far-fetched notion on behalf of lighthouse enthusiasts and preservationists. Rather, it is based on the knowledge that a similar act was passed in 1988 for the protection of the nation's abandoned railway stations (PC 1999). The Heritage Railway Stations Protection Act ensures that the legacy of the trans-Canada railway will not solely be a topic that is discussed in history books, but a tangible relic and link to a monumental achievement of our nation. However, since this thesis research was begun, the Lighthouse Protection Act has reached a point of stasis. The recent Cabinet shuffle within Canadian government has impeded the Act's chance of being passed

into legislation on the basis that it seeks too much financial assistance.⁵¹

The steadily growing membership in societies like the Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society is proof that grassroots movements can-- and do--effect change. Such "groups are crucial in the initiative to save and maintain threatened lighthouses," and there is evidence that their solidarity does work (PC 1999). For example, in 1996, after intense lobbying from concerned individuals and the NSLPS, the Sambro Island lighthouse received heritage classification.

This classification was long overdue, given that Sambro Island is the oldest operating lighthouse in North America, begun in 1758, less than a decade after the founding of Halifax. As a result of this heritage classification, the exterior of the tower, which was literally falling to pieces after a decade of neglect, was restored in late 1998. The fact that such an historically significant lighthouse could suffer from severe neglect illustrates the need for a national Lighthouse Protection Act. (PC 1999)

A Lighthouse Protection Act "will enable community groups and communities

⁵¹The NSLPS is currently determining whether the Act has a better chance of being passed if it is incorporated with other, non-specific heritage legislation.

of interest to protect and maintain lighthouses, in a manner which respects their cultural and heritage significance," as well as provide them with access to funding. And as we can see in the current use of Bon Portage as a bird-banding and biological field station, there are many alternative uses for abandoned lights, dwellings and stations. Simply granting communities and community groups control of their lighthouses may serve as a "catalyst for the revitalization of struggling coastal communities" (PC 1999).

It is hoped that the Lighthouse Protection Act would include six objectives:

1. It would recognize that lighthouses are fundamental landmarks to coastal communities and must remain in the public domain.
2. It would allow for long-term leases and/or other arrangements that allow community groups and communities of interest to become trustees of the lights.
3. It would give heritage classification for all pre-1950s lightstations.
4. It would set heritage standards for the protection and maintenance of all lighthouses.

5. It would provide for the retention of all public property surrounding a lightstation to ensure public access to our coastline.
6. It would recognize that lighthouses are a special kind of property.

If the government affixes what it considers a "fair market value" on the lighthouses, community groups will likely not be able to attain control. This is why a protection act is so vital: it will allow Canadian citizens, acting in the public interest, to determine the fate of their lighthouses. As the Lighthouse Protection Act Press Conference reminds us: lighthouses are "an inalienable part of our Canadian heritage," and saving them means saving a part of ourselves.

An important question to consider when examining the trends in preservation is, for whom are these sites being preserved, and by whom? Who belongs to these organizations and what are the agendas of its members? Setha M. Low states that

there are significant differences between professional and popular control of conservation and design in that the professional community of planners, designers, historians, and social scientists who provide

the knowledge base for design do not necessarily value the same places that the local community does.⁵²

In the case of the NSLPS, it can be legitimately asserted that the members of the society do in fact represent the local community. For example, the NSLPS is comprised of former lightkeepers and lightkeeping families, historians, students, lighthouse enthusiasts, and community lighthouse groups from around the province.⁵³ The agenda is a collective one: to preserve monuments that testify to the region's way of life and that are architecturally relevant to the history of engineering and technology in the province. However, not everyone believes that lighthouses are culturally significant, but this is an important facet of the Nova Scotian movement: that a certain group of people can preserve what is important to them. Generally, when a community wishes to preserve its local lighthouse from demolition, it turns to the NSLPS for support and guidance. Thus, the NSLPS does represent the needs of the province's communities.

⁵²Setha Low cited in Mary Hufford, Conserving Culture: A New Discourse on Heritage, 70.

⁵³There are currently 25 community lighthouse groups which have membership in the NSLPS, including the Cape Sable Historical Society to which Evelyn Richardson belonged.

There are in society numerous general motives for preservation. Among the factors that commentators have noted are antimodernism, patriotism, legitimation, romanticism, aestheticism and tourism. Clarence Mondale believes that the preservation of the past involves a political agenda (Hufford 70); but having an agenda is not a detriment. Through Ian McKay, we have seen that skepticism about the value of modern conveniences can lead to the protection and production of all things folkish, "simple" or "innocent." Patriotism or nationalism, defined as "devoted love, support, and defence of one's country" (Webster's Dictionary 991), can include admiration and appreciation of artifacts that are symbolic of a country's achievements, inventions and people. This is a valid motive, as long as it is used to preserve artifacts that are symbolic of failures *and* successes.

Legitimation also plays a role in preservation: by protecting what we (as a community, region, country etc.) deem valuable, we are given a sense of our place within the world order. Romanticism coincides with antimodernism because its inherent nostalgia for the past can be equated with the longing for simplicity. Aestheticism cannot be overlooked as a vital force for preservation. Having an esteem for, and acceptance of, natural and crafted

objects based on their physical appearance allows diverse groups of people to preserve what they feel is important to them. And lastly, tourism plays a key role because, through promoting preserved sites for commercial advantage, it creates interest in the further acquisition of historically-relevant places or things. All of these motives are viable because they enable the past to have relevance in the present and in the future. As Mary Hufford believes, by learning about the past, we are learning to understand ourselves:

When we conserve a past, we make history. We make history because we must, to understand ourselves and our present circumstances.

Because the past we conserve is necessarily problematic, we need to be self-critical and self-reflective in coming to collective decisions about what to remember and what to forget. Selecting particular pasts to conserve is necessarily a matter of continuous negotiations among all interested parties. (Hufford 15)

And as it has been determined, lighthouse preservation is high on the agenda of public debate about how we construct heritage in Nova Scotia, and one that will continue to remain in the forefront of Nova Scotian news.

Since the late nineteenth century, historic preservation has been a means of protecting the built and natural environments. Voluntarism is a key component to any movement's success, and in Nova Scotia, grassroots community involvement has facilitated the protection of culturally and regionally valuable artifacts and sites. As Setha Low writes, the "loss of place is not just an architectural loss but also a cultural and personal loss" (Hufford 67). By determining what we, as a collective, deem to be important relics of the past, we are selecting what future generations should also revere.

Our task, therefore, is a large one: we have not only to assert the relevance of the past but, at the same time, to ensure that its tangible relics survive as the materials of historical study and as guarantors of historical identity for our descendants. (Lowenthal and Binney 31).

Saving historic sites and objects has become a widely popular cause.

Although pollution, neglect and the bulldozer still take a heavy toll, more and more sites are now being rescued. The growth of preservation movements in Canada in general, and in Nova Scotia in particular, is one of the major social phenomena of our time. It has brought together all manner of people in a

common purpose--the recording and saving of their heritage (L&B 9). Just as Ian McKay said of Helen Creighton, we each have the opportunity to be recording angels of our culture. Canada is in the fortunate position to learn from established preservation movements in the United States and abroad. Likewise, Nova Scotians have the opportunity to preserve what is significant to them as a cultural and social group. Ultimately, for preservation to prosper, various ethnic and minority groups will have to preserve what is special to them, or else tangible evidence of our collective histories will vanish.

The preservation movement in Nova Scotia and elsewhere is a recent trend in voluntarism. It proves that twentieth century societies are not inherently throw-away societies; they are not clock-stoppers, but instead time keepers. How we, as a collective society, conceptualize or conceive of the past directly relates to what is deemed valuable, important and necessary to preserve. By preserving our built and natural environments, we are preserving what constitutes the sacrifices and glories of this "wise nation."

Evelyn Richardson was intimately connected with the heritage movement herself. As a local writer and history enthusiast, she was an

active member and volunteer president of the Cape Sable Historical Society,⁵⁴ which was instrumental in the preservation of the Old Meeting House in Barrington. Her interest in history is apparent in her works, particularly throughout We Keep a Light, as she recounts the fate of wrecks at Bon Portage, and provides the background details of her neighbouring islands. This fascination with local lore drew her naturally towards conservation and preservationism. Perhaps without truly knowing the depths of their contribution, the Richardsons created a safe haven for their dwelling and the natural environment by bequeathing Bon Portage Island to Acadia University. Evelyn's one concerted effort to preserve the island as a Wild Bird Sanctuary early in their tenancy had failed outright. The Richardsons attempted to save the black-duck population, which was "becoming scarce along the Atlantic seaboard," but "local political pressure was brought to bear against this and we were forced to abandon our idea" (We Keep a Light, 183).

⁵⁴The Cape Sable Historical Society (CSHS) was the first historical society established in western Nova Scotia, covering Yarmouth and Shelburne counties. As noted, the CSHS played a pivotal role in preserving the Old Meeting House in Barrington Township, the oldest non-conformist church in Canada, which served as the centre of civic and religious life of Barrington until the 1930s. Evelyn Richardson became an honorary society member in 1960, president in 1970 and secretary in 1973.

Even though the original light-dwelling was replaced forty-seven years ago, the tower that stands today is fixed at the same location as its ancestor, and is very well maintained. Moreover, there are numerous reminders on the island of the original structure, including newspaper articles and photographs that hang in the assistant keeper's house. This is an amicable compromise to lighthouse enthusiasts like myself, who--although preferring to protect all the original buildings--recognize that preserving the memory of the lights is also valuable. Yet, if ever a lighthouse should have been preserved in its original form and place, the Bon Portage light is one. The success of We Keep a Light made the island an instant tourist attraction, and Evelyn a local heroine. Although the original lighthouse was not entirely suitable as a dwelling, it could--and should--have been spared. The loss of the original buildings may also have inadvertently prevented a new generation of lighthouse and island enthusiasts from discovering the book itself. Unlike the Anne of Green Gables sites on Prince Edward Island, the Bon Portage structures would have been more truthful and less contrived. True, we are fortunate that the 1955 dwellings have been maintained, but they are more modern than the home readers fell in love

with in We Keep a Light, and they certainly cannot reproduce the experience of living inside a lighthouse.

Perhaps a resurgence of interest in Evelyn Richardson's life and works, and an awareness of Acadia University's advancements on the island, may result in a reproduction of the original Bon Portage site. It is quite feasible for a replica to be built by referring to old photographs, first-hand testimonies of visitors and relatives, and similar extant structures from the period. By the time the Department of Transport destroyed the original Bon Portage lighthouse in 1964, heritage strategies were already being formed in Nova Scotia.⁵⁵ This reveals the Department's blatant disregard for heritage, as well as for the obvious success of We Keep a Light and the intensification of lighthouse tourism that generated as a result.

Evelyn Richardson herself was an advocate for preservation and extolled the virtues of implementing historical societies. In a speech given to the Shelburne Historical Society, she said,

⁵⁵The demolition of the Gorsebrook Mansion in 1959 for the development of the Saint Mary's University campus in Halifax incited a controversial debate about the need and criteria for preserving heritage sites. The Mansion had been owned by Enos Collins, a Halifax merchant, who was reputed to be the wealthiest man in British North America in the 1860s. The group of citizens who attempted to stop the demolition process later formed the Heritage Trust of Nova Scotia (Saint Mary's University, Santamarian 1977, 180).

I'm all for Historical Societies in general, and particularly wish there had been more and earlier ones in this part of the province, for much knowledge has already been lost to future generations, knowledge which might have been preserved by the aroused interest and organized effort of an Historical Society. Many people decry such societies' concern about days and modes of living which are gone. Certainly, I don't believe that we should dwell in the past to the neglect of the present and the future. But I've noticed that although the wheelman of an outbound boat keeps a sharp lookout ahead, he also casts a frequent backward glance to get the range of his landmarks astern.⁵⁶

Although lighthouse preservation is on the rise--both in terms of public awareness and the physical acquisition of lights--much work still needs to be done. It is imperative that the provincial and federal governments, in conjunction with the Coast Guard, assist communities in developing strategic plans for the ownership and maintenance of existing lighthouses. Although We Keep a Light was successful in preserving the legacy of the Bon Portage light directly and the significance of the province's lights indirectly, the

⁵⁶Speech given in 1956 or 1957.

majority of lightstations cannot boast the same good fortune as having been the topic of an award-winning book. Had it not been for Evelyn Richardson's contribution--both to literature and lightkeeping--the Bon Portage light might have passed into obscurity. Evelyn Richardson's legacy exemplifies the need for continued efforts in the preservation of lighthouses in Nova Scotia and their oral histories.

Conclusion

Evelyn Richardson: A Mirror and a Window

The twentieth century witnessed lighthouse service both at the peak of its importance, and at its lowest level of practical significance. As a new century and new millennium begins, it is only natural to reflect on the aspects of our nation that made us what we are today. Although it is true that as navigational aids, lighthouses have been superseded by technologically advanced radar and sonar equipment and global positioning systems, their cultural and historical significance must be preserved, along with the structures themselves. The last hundred years has seen the destruction of dozens of Nova Scotian lighthouses and the unemployment of hundreds of lightkeepers and their families for the sake of cost-efficiency and automation. The end of lighthouse service as it was known in Evelyn Richardson's time means that human involvement in protecting humanity itself has been drastically reduced on our shores.

The automation of lighthouses has precipitated the loss of valuable cultural icons, as well as a maritime occupational existence. It is obvious that lighthouses are synonymous with maritime identity, whether that term

is interpreted with a large or small "m." David Curry argues that it is not just a maritime mentality, but

a Canadian thing, eh! It is about our Canadian identity. Lighthouses are one of the icons our Canadian identity. In a vast and uncertain land shaped by the three-sided sea, where the struggle for survival is constant and relentless, we have need of these icons. Icons are images of the understanding, images through which we understand something of ourselves, our identity and our purpose. They dignify and ennoble our struggle for survival. Lighthouses are powerful icons of our maritime and national identity, at once a mirror and a window. . . For our maritime culture in particular, the lights signify a whole way of life, a life by the sea, a life on the sea, a life from the sea, a life that respects the sea. Always the sea . . . Against these icons stand, in our day, the idols of economic determinism and technocratic exuberance. When we allow these to rule our imaginations, then we so easily and so quickly become, whether wittingly or unwittingly, iconoclasts--the breakers or destroyers of icons. Whether through neglect or privatization, we lose something of what belongs to us all

collectively, to the commonality of the country, to our identity as Canadians.⁵⁷

Lighthouses have had an effect on us, collectively, in many significant arenas: navigationally, culturally, historically, educationally, spiritually, environmentally, architecturally, politically, socially, economically, and in matters of sovereignty. To allow a symbol that represents so much to be destroyed and forgotten is unforgivable. We are intrinsically connected to the sea and the lights that gird the shore. The very least we can do, after all they have done for us, is protect and preserve our lighthouses.

The argument that lighthouses are superfluous because of advanced marine aids available to sailors is irrelevant because

no instrument, however reliable or well maintained, is infallible. If the microchips fail or the battery runs down (and about a third of all incidents reported to the Coastguard do involve mechanical failure of one form or another) all sailors have to fall back on the skills of using the compasses, stars, paper charts. (Bathurst 261)

Likewise, it is possible for automated lighthouses to suffer electrical and

⁵⁷David Curry, "Keeping the Lights" report for the Lighthouse Protection Act PC 1999.

generator failure. This was the case at Souris, P.E.I in 1997, and the Coast Guard failed to notice it for five days until a local resident notified the Charlottetown branch. While it is not likely that more lighthouses will be staffed in Nova Scotia, the least we can do is ensure that the existing automated lights have some type of human support system.

The career of Evelyn Richardson helps illustrate why lighthouse preservation is a necessity. Through We Keep a Light, Nova Scotians, Maritimers, Canadians and the world at large became familiar with, and intrigued by, the life of our nation's lightkeepers. To many, it seems an idyllic way to live, and to others, it may seem abnormal, but the fact remains that without our keepers, thousands more people might have lost their lives at sea. Our keepers were community servants, and the pride with which they commanded their posts is admirable and worthy of respect and remembrance.

Evelyn Richardson was both ahead of, and part of, her time. Clearly, she was an exponent of better conditions for keepers and verbalized the need for improvements in the service; she was a pioneer in conserving her island habitat for future study; and an author whose celebrity brought attention to an ultimately dying way of life. Yet she was a product of her

time too, in her admission of government frustration; her loyalty to her country, both in peacetime and wartime; and in meeting the challenges of a coastal and island economy. Like the lighthouse itself, Evelyn was both a mirror and a window. She reflected strong family values, a hard-work ethic, familial ties to the sea, and love and devotion to her career, just like her Maritime literary contemporaries. Through the lantern room atop the Bon Portage lighthouse, Evelyn could see her island, her mainland neighbours, and hundreds of vessels, while each of these in turn was seeking a glimpse of the light and the ensuing feeling of security. She worked hard to provide us with a window on her world. Evelyn wrote succinctly that

the chain of human life unrolls as limitless as the waves in the sea that laps all shores; it is good to know of those who went this way before and to think of those who will come after. The spots of earth we call our own, as we take our place in the life continuity, never actually belong to any of us; what are really ours are the eyes and the ears to see and hear, and the soul to love and understand the beauties around us. Though Morrill holds a title to the Island of Bon Portage, who could sell or buy the sea among the rocks, the winds rippling the fields of grass, the moon's lustrous path across the surging water, or the

star-studded bowl of the night sky? They are without price, and priceless, and will be here for those who follow us. Then the work of our hands, those insignificant scratches on the face of the earth, may serve to remind others of our passing, as the tiny heaps of stones, laboriously gathered a hundred years ago, bring to our minds those who preceded us at this tiny speck in time and place. (We Keep a Light, 80-81)

Evelyn Richardson's fame was not fleeting. Today, her works are still readily available. Her lasting popularity becomes apparent by conducting a search on the Internet, which yields dozens of sites related to her writings, Bon Portage, the lighthouse, and various bird and ecological sites. As preservation movements gain momentum, Bon Portage Island will be referred to increasingly as a benchmark, for although its protection is assured through Acadia University, it is nevertheless representative of a successful alternative use for a lighthouse site, even though the lighthouse itself is currently slated for decommissioning. Hopefully, increased community awareness about lighthouse preservation and the life and works of Evelyn Richardson will prevent the current lighthouse from being demolished.

The Bon Portage lighthouse, as argued earlier, should not simply be preserved because it is a literary lighthouse, but because of its significant role in safeguarding the shores of southern Nova Scotia, both in wartime and peacetime. It should be preserved because, as with all of Nova Scotia's lighthouses, losing the structure is symbolic of the loss of our own identity. As Bella Bathurst stated in The Lighthouse Stevensons, the "world has come full circle--from darkness to light and back again" (263). Let us keep the memory and contribution of lightkeepers like Evelyn Richardson alive through the preservation of our province's--and country's--lighthouses, and keep our society enlightened.

Appendix One

"That God-forsaken strip of swamp and rock"

On the morning of Saturday, September 25th, 1999, I stood on Prospect Point Wharf at Shag Harbour looking across the sound for my first glimpse of Bon Portage Island. I was ecstatic to be visiting the island and lighthouse I had heard and read so much about over the previous two years; the place and lifestyle that Evelyn Richardson immortalized in her writings; the island which had become a world-renowned conservation site for ornithologists and biologists; the site of the lighthouse that to me, epitomized lightkeeping in twentieth century Nova Scotia. Even now, I am not sure which aspect appealed to me most: the idea of visiting another lighthouse--particularly one in such a distant and inaccessible location⁵⁸ -- and adding photos to an already impressive personal collection of lighthouse memorabilia; or the idea of exploring the home of a famous author and landmark, much in the same way one feels when visiting *Green Gables*.

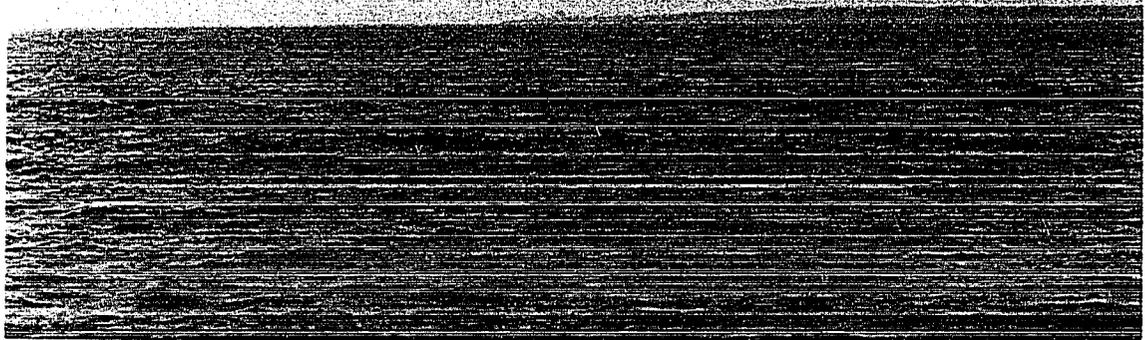
⁵⁸ Although readily accessible by boat, access to Bon Portage is controlled by Acadia University, which operates a biological field station on the island. Access to the lighthouse itself is controlled by the Canada Coast Guard.

Bon Portage was half hidden in the early morning fog, but even as the sun began to burn away the mist, the island lay so low upon the horizon that it was barely discernible. Both its length and its height surprised me; the island appeared to be a drowned summit: it

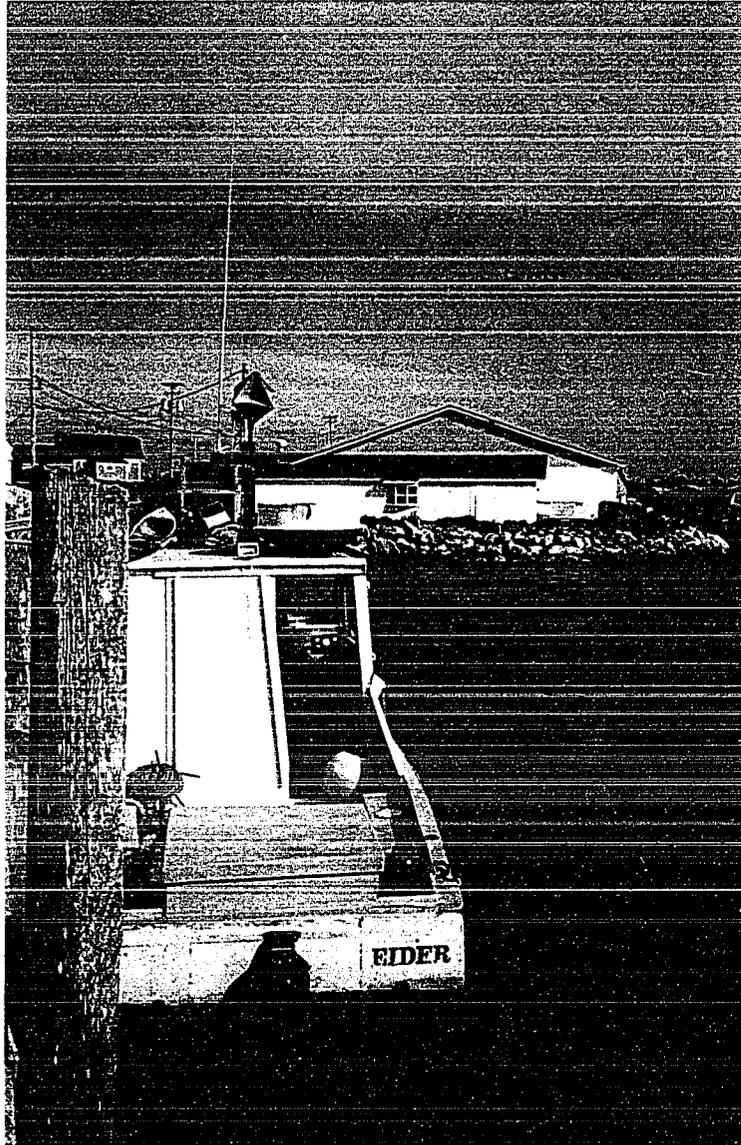
is about three miles long and very narrow, its width varying from approximately three-quarters of a mile at both ends to less than one-quarter of a mile in the centre. Its area is between six and seven hundred acres. The whole Island is low-lying, at no place does it rise more than twenty feet above sea level, and the highest land is found on the southern and northern ends. (We Keep a Light, 1-2)

I perched myself against the concrete wall of the wharf to take a picture, but even with my camera's zoom and panoramic lenses, the island was hardly visible over the distance of three miles. The lighthouse beam could be seen intermittently, and soon various white buildings--the two keepers' houses and a boathouse--gleamed under touches of the sun. Admittedly, "the appearance of the Island from the mainland, or from the nearer vantage point of a boat's deck, leads no one into lyrics of rapture concerning its beauty" (2), but nevertheless I was anxious to make the crossing to what one Richardson friend described as "that God-forsaken strip of swamp and

Rock" (2).



I felt both nervous and excited as I prepared to climb aboard the tiny 24-foot Cape Islander boat, "The Eider," that would take us through the choppy crossing. This was to be my final weekend in Nova Scotia. Having made the decision to return to my Toronto home, I had spent the previous weeks trying to pack up six years worth of precious maritime memories, scrambling to write as much as possible on my thesis before I left, and praying that the trip to Bon Portage would not be rained out.



I put the image of piled-up furniture and boxes out of my mind and turned my attention to the five other lighthouse enthusiasts and members of the Nova Scotia Lighthouse Preservation Society (NSLPS) who had now assembled on the wharf: Janet McGinity, NSLPS trip organizer, Kathy Brown, NSLPS website and newsletter editor, Dr. Linda Christiansen-Ruffman of Saint Mary's University and her husband Alan Ruffman, and Lew

Perry, my personal chauffeur and tour guide! One by one, we slowly made our way down the ladder onto the boat, donned in our raingear, with eyes peeled and cameras fastened around our necks. Evelyn's words from her first voyage to Bon Portage echoed in my mind:

The sea was blue, that deep bright blue that is the ocean's most beautiful vesture, and a crisp breeze had whipped up a small white-tipped chop that slapped merrily at the sides of the boat and sent showers of spray across us. Days like this are our most exhilarating. Sea and sky, clouds and rocks, grass and trees all sparkle and dance. Though you gulp it down in great lungfuls, you can never get enough of the salt-tanged, sun-sweetened air and the old trite comparison of air and wine seems fresh and inevitable. To me, after years in the city, it all seemed clear and heady beyond words. (17)

As Bon Portage grew larger in sight, various birds circled overhead, and near the breakwater, a great blue heron took flight. The sound of the foghorn whispered faintly in the distance. The tide was low, but high enough for the Eider to tie up alongside the pier. I had feared having to drop anchor and deposit myself into a dory. I love the sea, but not enough to be plunged headfirst into her depths. I recalled that Evelyn attributed this

transferring of boats as one of the chief reasons why women visitors to the Island were "few and far between. The small dory bounces and bobs alongside the larger boat, and it seems it must pound itself to pieces or fling into the sea anyone foolhardy enough to attempt to step into it from the big boat" (18).



At the top of the landing stood a sign of welcome and warning--the first evidence of Acadia University's presence on the island. Stepping back to take a picture, I stumbled on a small contraption so foreign to me that I knelt down to figure out what it was: a series of large silvery hooks and a piece of frayed rope. My gaze followed the rope down the slip until it melted into the sea. Looking up, I saw the rooftops of Shag Harbour shining in the distance--it seemed so far away--and I realized the device I had stepped on was Evelyn's iron winch, "a drum-like round of wood, with an iron crank" to hoist small boats to safety (20).





With my feet firmly on Bon Portage ground, I breathed in the fresh air and took my bearings: to the south was the breakwater; to the north, a seemingly endless rocky beach; behind me, to the east, the choppy surf; and ahead of me, to the west, acres of dense forest cover.

With our gear piled in a cart that was hitched to an all-terrain vehicle, we made our way southward down the path leading to the lighthouse. I had visions of Morrill Richardson driving his ox-cart, and believed I could smell faint traces of hay.



The path is mostly comprised of small round pebbles, made smooth by the constant tumbling of the sea before they washed ashore. On my left was the breakwater, and further south, a few trees stood out along an otherwise barren beach. On my right, to the north, giant spruce and fir trees stood as far as the eye could see. In many places along the path, I stood level with the sea, and felt I could run my hand across the waves without any effort.

Gradually the path curved westward and began to rise, the treeline suddenly ended, and over fields of wild raspberry bushes, I could see the top of the lighthouse. I felt as though I were Evelyn in 1929 seeing her island home for the first time:

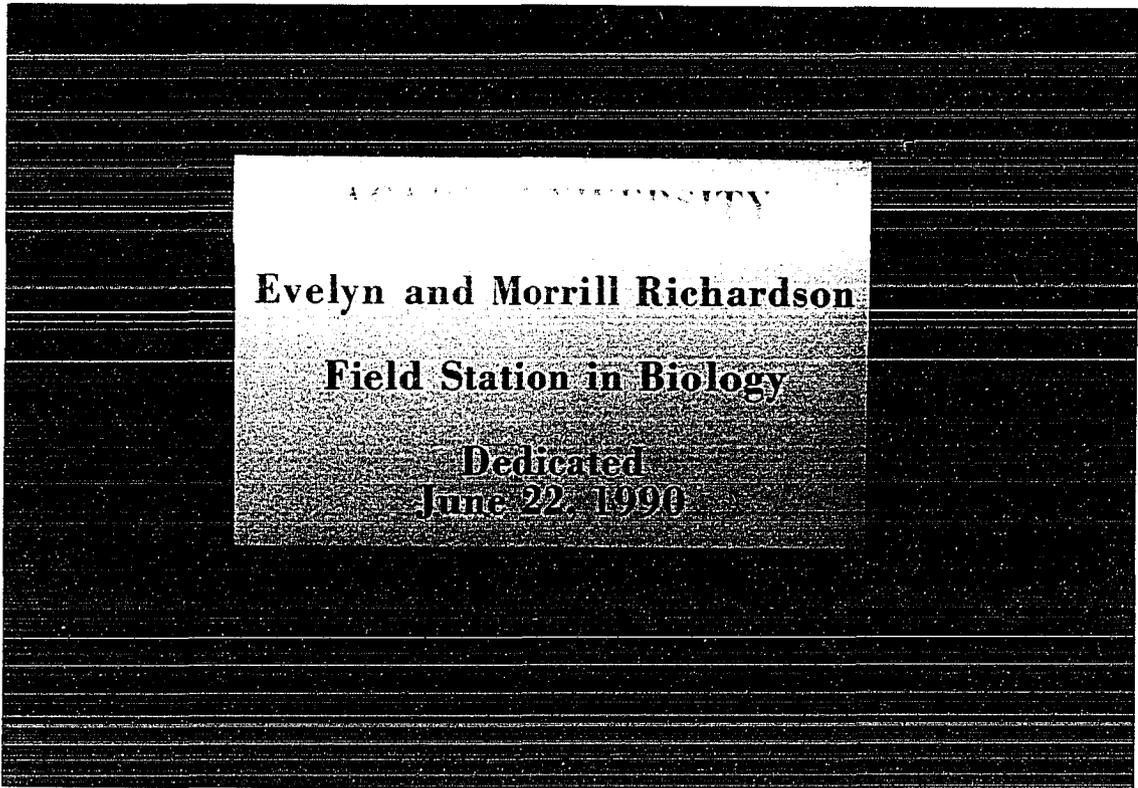
Soon we reached the top of the slight rise (which we flatter by calling it the Hill) that lies just back of the lighthouse field, where the trees end and the lighthouse comes into full view. From this point, I could see all our new home and its surroundings, and I thought the view one of the loveliest I had ever seen; on a fine day I still catch my breath as I come upon sight of it. (22)



I stood transfixed at the top of the hill. So many sights and sounds greeted me that I didn't know where to turn first. My eyes were naturally drawn toward the tall lighthouse, a three-storey concrete tower instead of the combination lighthouse-dwelling in which the Richardsons originally resided. Beside me, Morrill Richardson's old fence was overrun with acres of raspberries, and I could imagine cattle grazing on this gentle slope in days gone by. Oddly enough, in this tranquil environment that once epitomized the pre-modern era, I had the urge to pick up my cellular phone to call everyone I knew to tell them how surreal it felt to be almost living the pages of a book--and an award-winning literary classic at that!

Acadia University students--a combined group of ornithologists and biologists--had made themselves at home in the Richardsons' house for the weekend, so the NSLPS made its home in the assistant keeper's house. The outsides of both houses were quite worn down and weather-beaten. I had not expected either house to be in perfect condition, considering their proximity and exposure to the sea, but to be truthful, I had thought Acadia would perform some measure of upkeep. At least both houses felt lived in and used, and certainly I did not feel uncomfortable in either.





Inside the assistant keeper's house, there were two large rooms set up with long tables used by Acadia for teaching and experiments. These had originally been the kitchen and living areas, and both rooms offered spectacular views: from the front, facing east, lay Emerald Isle, also known as Stoddart's Island; and to the southeast, Cable Sable Island; to the north, behind the house, lay Lighthouse Pond and the edge of the forest. And being the closest of the two keepers' houses to the lighthouse itself, the southern windows were filled with the view of the sentinel tower and its radiant beams.

The assistant keeper's house had two bedrooms, each with three sets of bunkbeds. Equipped with electricity, running water, and a small bathroom, one could live very comfortably in this house for an indefinite period of time. What was most noticeable at this time, however--and not solely by me--was the absence of the foghorn, which had been silenced by the midday sun.

But I was more anxious to see where Evelyn and Morrill Richardson had lived. The house that stands today is their second Bon Portage home, built in 1955. On the lawn sits a giant whale's rib, perfectly positioned at the edge of the beach. Beside the house is a whale's skull, guarding the entrance to the fragrant berries I longed for.



The inside of the house is undoubtedly much more spacious than the original light-dwelling. Upon entering the doorway, one finds oneself standing in a great kitchen and immediately notices the giant front window and its view of the sound, with Shag Harbour and Cape Sable in the distance. Underneath the window is a small well-worn sofa, beside which is an old bookcase, a shrine containing the works of Evelyn Richardson and other local writers. A large round table separates this nook from the kitchen proper. The highlight of the kitchen is its enormous old stove, which houses equally enormous lobster cooking pots. What would likely have been a well-kept and organized kitchen in Evelyn's day was disappointingly covered with garbage, piles of dishes and foodstuffs--further evidence of Acadia's presence on the island! But even the mess could not detract from my enthusiasm of setting foot in the Richardsons' home.

Like the assistant keeper's house, the Richardsons' house had a large front room used by Acadia for studying and teaching, as well as two bedrooms filled with bunkbeds. No matter where one stood, the rooms were filled with various degrees of colour, and it must have been as enjoyable for Evelyn to see the sun set over the forest through her kitchen window as it

was for me to see the pink and orange shadows creep across her floor that night of the harvest moon.

After settling in and inspecting the two keepers' houses, I set out with some fellow NSLPS members northward toward the slip and breakwater, feasting on wild raspberries, blackberries, bayberries and horseradish along the way. Nearby were two shacks used by Acadia students for ornithological experiments, and nets could be found throughout the surrounding area. The nets are rolled down for a couple of hours at a time, and as soon as a bird is caught, it is carefully untangled, placed in a sack and brought to the shacks for weighing, identifying and banding. It is not uncommon for the same bird to be caught more than once, as Bon Portage is home to several species of nesting and migratory birds.

Cutting through the dense coniferous forest, we slowly made our way across Cranberry Swamp to the western side of the island. Part of this trek is made easier by makeshift planks that form a narrow path over marshy and muddy ground. The swamp struck me as both a relaxing and eerie place; relaxing because of its relative silence, and eerie because the trees themselves seem almost out of place. Many of the trees were dead, and consequently, they could be found upright, slanted or flat on the ground.

Often it seemed to us as though the ground were "breathing," as mounds of earth would rise and fall slightly from the weight of a teetering tree. But it was the colours that most intrigued me. At first it looked to me like all the trees were faintly dusted with snow, but this appearance was caused by thick layers of moss growing on the eastern side of the trees.



As one would expect, it was quite warm in the swamp, but this was replaced by a strong west wind as soon as we emerged from the forest near the Red Bank. Walking carefully and slowly along the rocky beach, we continued our journey northward toward the centre of the island, to what the Richardsons referred to as the Savannah. However, as the wind grew

stronger and the light began to fade, we collectively agreed to sit on various tree stumps or logs, gather our energy and return to the house. Opting not to try a new route and return via the western beach, I retraced my steps eastward through the forest and south through the clearing.

Back at the Richardsons' home, the NSLPS had made arrangements with Acadia to take turns using the existing kitchen facilities. Our potluck supper turned out to be quite a feast, complete with vegetable stir-fry, Swedish meatballs on rice, pasta salad and apple crumble. The meal was further enhanced by the setting sun, crash of the surf, and the bright flashes from the lighthouse. As the harvest moon rose, we gathered near the whale's rib and stared out across the sound. There was little cloud cover, and flares of light could be seen from the Stoddart's Island and Cape Sable lighthouses. As the sky grew darker, we wondered at the rays of the Bon Portage light, revolving like a disco bulb.

The Bon Portage lighthouse is in a blatantly valuable location, situated as it is on slightly elevated ground near the beach, and "where it stands is more remote from the mainland and more exposed to sea and wind than any other portion" (1). Perched perilously on rocks of all dimensions on the western side of the lighthouse, we marveled at the clarity of the Seal Island

light, roughly fourteen miles (22.5km) from Bon Portage. Unfortunately, the key to the Bon Portage light had been left behind on our journey, but I cannot imagine that the reassuring beacons surrounding us could have appeared more brightly from three storeys higher. I contemplated the comfort that Evelyn must have felt at seeing these neighbouring lights, and how she loved "to watch the beams of near-by lights take their places like friendly stars in the twilight" (3). Evelyn would have been able to see five lights in addition to her own; that of Seal Island, Cape Sable, West Head (Cape Sable Island), Emerald Isle (Stoddart's Island), and Wood's Harbour.

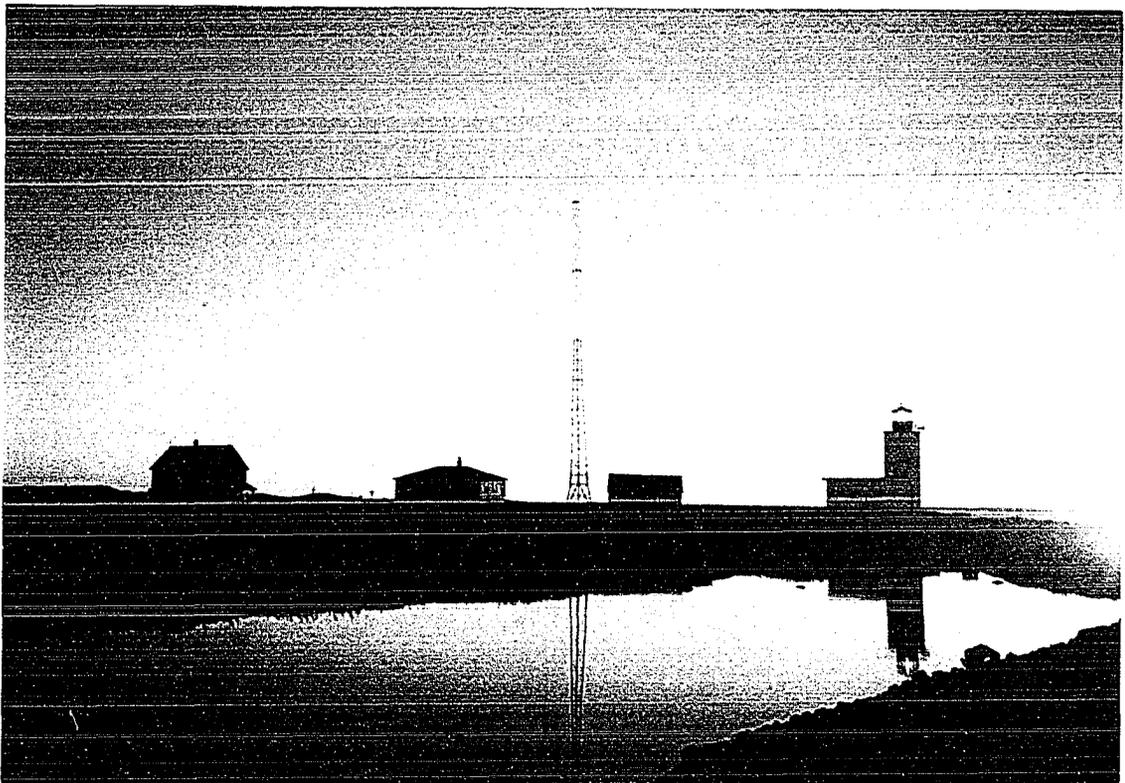
As the air grew colder, and mist settled upon our faces, we were all nearly thrust into the sea when the Bon Portage fog horn blared overhead. It is quite a deafening sound when one is sitting underneath it as we were that night, but as the blasts subsided, our senses were filled with a peculiar and unique sight. The Acadia ornithologists had foretold to us what the Bon Portage sky holds at night, but no words seemed to prepare us for the mystical flight of the storm petrel. As each lighthouse beam scanned the treetops, hundreds of petrels could be seen diving toward their nests. Their quick bat-like movements seemed magnified by the rotating light, and their shrill cries could be heard echoing through the forest.

The presence of these birds on the island is extraordinary. Bon Portage is home to the largest known colony of petrels in the Maritimes, estimated at 50,000 pairs in 1980.⁵⁹ Believed to be named after Saint Peter, who walked on water, these webbed-footed birds are fitted with a tube above their beaks to filter salt from the Atlantic Ocean. The adults travel hundreds of kilometres each day to find food for their babies, and return each night under the glow of the lighthouse. The baby petrels burrow as far as three feet underground, yet the parents can literally plummet to the earth in complete darkness within two feet of the burrow. Even more incredible is that the same family will use the same burrow year after year, or at least remain within the same general location. Having seen the adults in their perpetual servitude, I was glad I had accepted the invitation to join the Acadians on their "petrel grubbing" expedition the following day.

Before bedtime, I was relieved to see the mountain of trash accumulated by the Acadia students burned on the eastern beach--a much more efficient and expedient method of disposal than transporting it across the sound. Presuming that the night would be a cold one, I layered my

⁵⁹From <http://www.bsc-eoc.org/Iba/ibasites/Ns015.html>

clothing accordingly and crawled into my makeshift sleeping bag on the bottom bunk nearest to the window in the "girls'" room. While many gathered in the large front room for a late-night conversation, I snuggled up with a copy of Betty June (Richardson) Smith's "An Abbreviated Paradise," which I had procured from the "library" in the keeper's house. No doubt the salt sea air, the long walks, hearty meal and excitement were enough to induce me to a deep sleep, and the last thing I recall that evening was the lighthouse rays passing through the lace curtains above my head.



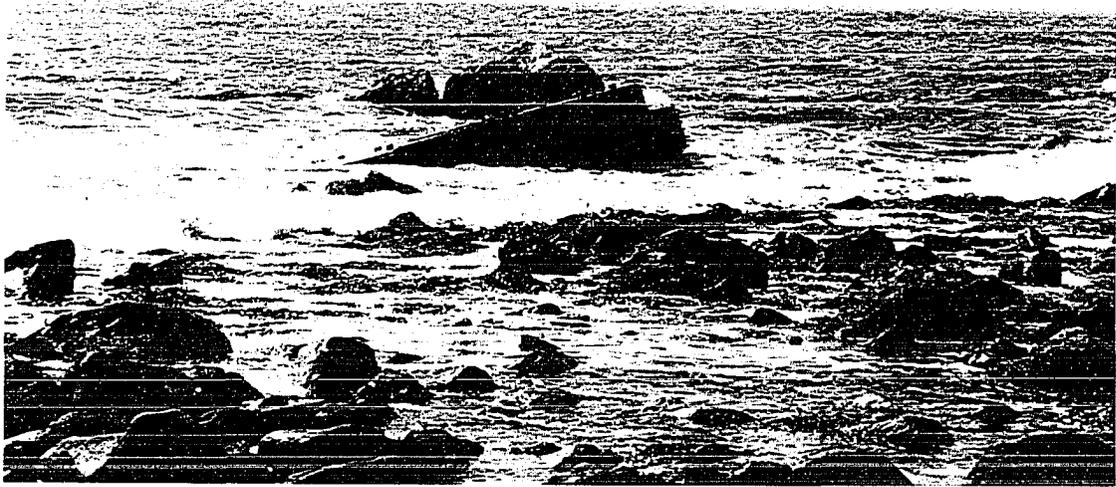
I awoke with the dawn on Sunday morning, anxious to do and see as much as possible in my last few hours on the island. In the large front room, where Acadia students had captured several species for observation, snails and sea creatures had escaped from their glass houses and were crawling in various directions. I headed outside onto the small front porch. The air was still cold, and the grass twinkled with dew. I walked toward the lighthouse and the western beach.

The tide was out, revealing two wrecked boilers from the *SS Express* in their entirety. The boilers have stood on the Bon Portage beach since September 1898, remnants of a voyage bringing cargo and passengers from Halifax to Toronto. *The Express*

found herself in a very dense fog and with an unusually strong ebb tide running. The captain hoped to locate the Point of Bon Portage and then shape his course for the Tusquets. It was dead calm and there was no warning roar of the surf, so his first perception of how much in error his reckoning proved to be, was when his steamer trembled and lurched as she took ground and was held fast by the rocky ledge that makes the outer end of Bon Portage. The passengers were easily and safely put ashore and from the Island taken to the mainland; later

most of her cargo was salvaged. A wrecking company from New York sent a boat, but it was found impossible to refloat the steamer: she soon broke in two and later was completely demolished by the surf . . . her two boilers still stand where they settled as the cruel rocks tore the bottom from their unhappy ship. They lie on the shore in front of the lighthouse, and the waves breaking over and around them is a familiar part of the view to seaward in that direction. The seas have battered them, washed over and through them, pounded them with stones torn from the rocky bottom and tons of crashing water, yet as the ocean recedes each ebbing tide, the boilers emerge, steadfast and undaunted. (132-133)





The most westerly boiler had been almost completed hidden at high tide, so I took advantage of the situation and moved in for a close-up photo. It was a very treacherous walk to be sure, as I slipped and slid across mossy rocks and clumps of seaweed. By the time I could get near enough, the tide was already creeping back in, and fearing that I might get hurt and be towed out to sea, I scampered back to the beach for safety.

Seeing the boilers, I was reminded of the drawings made by Evelyn's mother at the time of the wreck. Her series of illustrations depicts the destruction of the *Express* by the wind and seas over a period of three months.

Little did Mrs. Fox know that her daughter would spend most of her life at the lighthouse in those images!⁶⁰



⁶⁰These illustrations can be found in Evelyn Richardson's The Wreckwood Chair: Saga of the Sea Told in Wood.

After a breakfast of homemade jam and toast at the Richardsons' home, I set out northward toward the slip. Instead of crossing westward through Cranberry Swamp, I decided to walk the full length of the island. The beach was a veritable treasure chest: old, partially destroyed floats mixed with new brightly coloured ones; pieces of rope; the occasional pop can or piece of garbage washed ashore; and hundreds of lobster traps--enough to start a small business--some so old and entombed in the earth that they had transformed into flower pots. When I reached the Savannah, I could see clear across to the western shore. The island was so low in the middle that I could envision it as two separate islands if the savannah were washed out.



Evelyn, too, had acknowledged the possibility of the island's separation "in the course of a few more years' encroachment by an ever-greedy sea" (2). In fact, she remembered when that was once the case "during one exceptionally high tide, when the sea covered all the low centre and waves swept across from either side to meet in the middle of the savannah" (2). I momentarily contemplated venturing through the brown, bushy, prickly savannah (as I later learned Lew Perry had done, much to his chagrin), but chose instead to walk the entire length of the island.

As I continued walking toward the northern end of the island, the ground became softer, and seemed to melt away into the ocean with no warning. Twice I believed I had stepped in quicksand, and promptly manoeuvred myself closer to the edge of Little Northeast Pond. It was there that I saw two ducks, and remembered that the remains of Morrill's gunning shack were still standing deep within the forest. Another object also stood out to me--a hydro pole, without any wires, although these were likely buried underground. I stood beside the pole and looked across the sound, trying to envision little boats stringing coils of wire and the advantages of electricity to Bon Portage. The pole seemed quite out of place, and yet there was no other place for it; three feet in one direction

would have placed it on the eroding shore, and three feet in another would have buried it in dense forest. It was surprising to me how close the forest came to the water, and how varied the firmness of the earth from one step to the next.



Beyond Little Northeast Pond, the beach became more solid and rocky leading toward Saltwater Pond. From this location, I could see Seal Island in the distance. I was struck by the serenity of this particular spot on the northern beach. Comprised mostly of small white pebbles and rocks, the beach contained a bright blue saltwater pond on its left side, and the vast Atlantic on its right side. This barrier struck me as both artificial and

natural at the same time; artificial because the whiteness of the beach seemed to confine the waters on either side so perfectly, and natural because all the elements, colours and scents seemed to blend together.

The western shore of Bon Portage had decidedly different terrain than the eastern shore. The eastern shore appeared flatter, more covered with prickly bushes, wild flowers and berries, and, with the exception of the northeast beach, was very dry. The western shore, particularly around Saltwater Pond, seemed slightly higher in elevation, and was dangerously rocky. When Evelyn had made her first complete tour of the island, she remarked that it was

an interesting walk, though the six miles over beach rocks and through swampy stretches make hard going. We [Morrill and herself] went up the western shore and home along the eastern side, perhaps on the principle of getting the harder part over first, as the western shore is much the rougher and seems considerably longer. (62)

Had I remembered these words at the time, I may have followed the same procedure, as there were places along the western beach that were quite hazardous, and therefore made it a more difficult and longer trek in order to be cautious with one's footing.

Beyond Saltwater Pond is Woody Pond. Evelyn described this place as: the prettiest and most sheltered of our ponds, the beach rises steeply before it and the trees come directly down to it on the opposite side. It is not large, and stumps of trees projecting from its waters and lining its shores no doubt provide its name. The seaward tide of the beach here has the most beautiful pebbles found anywhere on the Island; they are round and smooth as eggs and slightly smaller. They form a symmetrically rounded shelf between the sand of low tide and the heavier rocks that form the high-water line. (67)

Lying between Woody Pond and the savannah is Flag Pond. This pond originally took its name from the Blue Flag, an iris that had grown in abundance at the time of the island's first settlers (67). During the Richardsons' time on Bon Portage, Flag Pond was home to a large population of black-ducks. Evelyn remembers watching

hundreds of ducks lazily swimming and preening themselves, or dozing with head tucked cosily under a wing, while the shores of the pond and much of its surface are white with cast-off feathers. The pond is small and it would seem it could not accommodate another duck, yet those in possession obligingly "move over" for new-comers as they

scale down to join their comrades already enjoying the calm warm waters. (67)

The southern end of Flag Pond leads to Kelp Cove. It is almost indescribable, and I have certainly never seen anything else like it. It reminded me of a giant comb, and each individual tooth was covered with layers of kelp. Some of these teeth were at least six feet high and easily five feet across, and although I could walk along the beach slightly above them, my ability to walk was impeded by both dry crunchy kelp, wet slippery kelp, and a lot of pesky insects. The colours were brown, yellow earthy tones, which were in stark contrast to the azure blue of the ponds and the green forest behind them. I tried several times to take a picture of these kelp teeth, but had no vantage point from which to do so. Taking a step back in order to fit one mound within the frame meant going several feet further upon the beach, but then the cove was partially hidden by low, dense bushes, and the height of the mounds could not be appreciated; if I tried to take a picture from a side angle, the mounds were so big that you couldn't see where one ended and another began, nor the contrast to the tide that slapped against them. I even tried to sit down, but found the kelp beneath me was a rather unstable surface. Suffice it to say that Kelp Cove was a

highlight of the island, and even though Evelyn had described it many times, it was far more interesting and unique than I could have imagined.

South of Kelp Cove is a clearing, although it is largely beset by dense shrubbery. This was once the site of the island's early settlers, whose modest dwellings were situated on the western side of the island because of the proximity to the Atlantic Ocean. Evelyn mentioned "pathetic little piles of loose stones, collected from the rocky surface of their fields, tiny partly caved-in cellars, and an occasional rock-lined well" as evidence of these homesteads; but either they had become overgrown by the island's wild vegetation, or I simply had not ventured far enough inland to notice them.

At this clearing, the western beach becomes rocky again, a mix of small pebbles and giant boulders. Also, the beach becomes wider, and eventually I had the choice of either walking along the beach, or climbing several feet higher to a grassy footpath. I tried both, but chose the more difficult route of the beach, often stopping to wonder at the number of floats and lobster traps. I was finally able to visualize why Evelyn had referred to this strip of the coast as "The Graveyard," for

battered and twisted skeletons lie scattered atop the beach and inland to the fringe of the trees. Many lobsters have been caught off

this strip of shore, but looking at the cluttered fragments of traps, I would say they had been dearly bought. (64)

Another curious feature of the western coast is the effect of the harsh easterly winds blowing off the Atlantic Ocean. The forest's edge is not vertical, but rather slants greatly to the east, as the trees bend, and eventually fall, under the force of high winds. Betty June Smith used to climb these trees as a child, as she recounted in "An Abbreviated Paradise:"

We climbed the trees on the western side of the island where the strong sea wind forced them to grow slowly, thickly, and slanted, so that one walked up the outer ends of the branches, rather like the side of a haystack. (75)



As I rounded the Red Bank--so-named for its appearance of red clay-- I was delighted to see the red lantern room and its faint white light above the trees. Although it had been enjoyable and worthwhile, the hike had proven to be more arduous, and even unnerving, than I had anticipated, and I was relieved to have made it back unscathed! Passing the two boilers I had investigated earlier that morning, I spotted Kathy Brown sitting on the western bank of Lighthouse Pond, painting the Bon Portage skyline--the lighthouse, the shed, the old radio tower, the assistant keeper's house, and the Richardsons' house--all shining in a row under the noontime sun.

After a brief lunch, the Acadia ornithologists volunteered to take the NSLPS members "grubbing" for petrels. We headed north toward the slip and then west toward Cranberry Swamp again. The students could recognize if a petrel was holed up in a burrow by the particular emission of a musky, somewhat stale, odour. After only two or three failed attempts, one proud young man, up to his armpit under a tree stump, carefully wriggled a petrel out of its nest. It had been facing inward, so it was necessary to turn it around, mindful of its beak, before drawing it outward. Instead of the bat-like creature that had circled the lighthouse the night before, I was able to stroke this tiny black bird with its tubed-nose and slightly hooked beak. Her

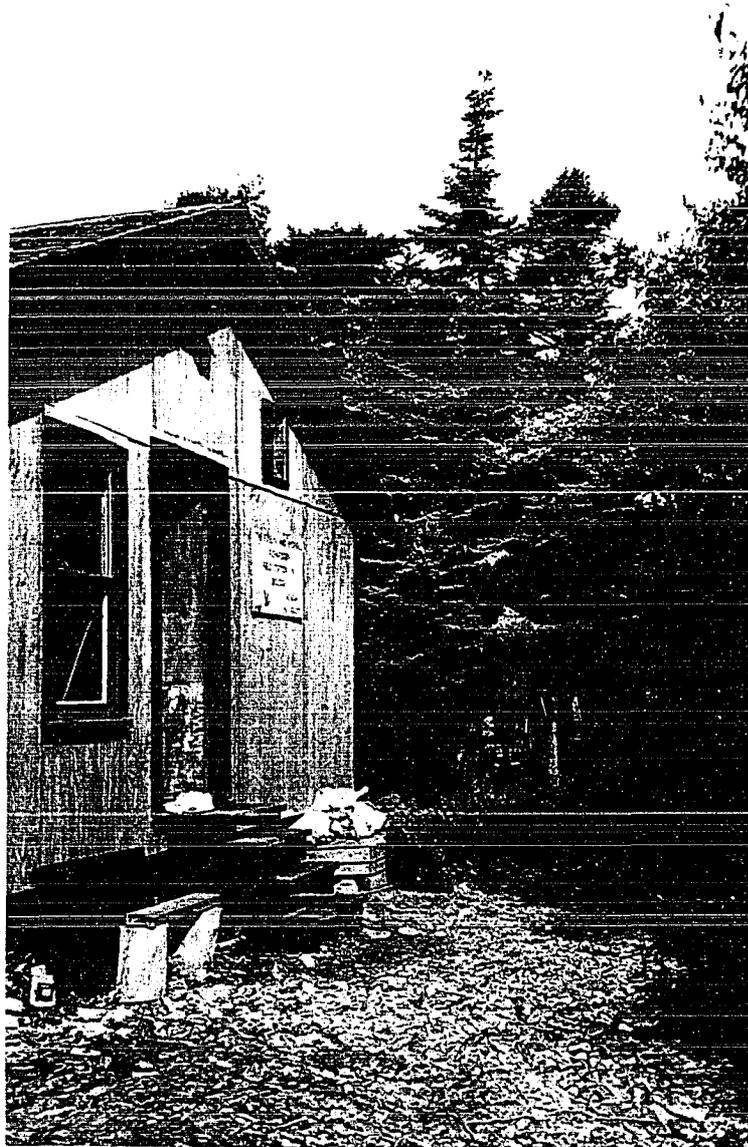
heart was beating furiously, but she was very tame and never struggled to be set free. I was amazed that this tiny bird could burrow so far underground, and even more so that her parents could find her so precisely at feeding time. The experience of grubbing enabled me to further relate to Evelyn's respect for, and interest in, her "living island;" and it also left me feeling reassured by Acadia's ornithological presence, as well as with a very oily smell on my hands!



Visiting Bon Portage left me with many feelings. As a lighthouse enthusiast, it was enjoyable to see the present Bon Portage light as its own entity. Its attraction was undoubtedly romanticized by having read We Keep a Light, and certainly I will admit that it was difficult not to be influenced by or reminded of Evelyn's own experiences. The opportunity to compare the current light with the light-dwelling the Richardsons lived and worked in both saddened and pleased me. I was saddened by the fact that the old structure had been replaced. Yes, it had its flaws, as Evelyn unabashedly pointed out, particularly as a family home, with its slanted walls, small rooms, uneven levels, and lack of modern conveniences; but it was architecturally and historically valuable as a testament to the many maritime lightkeeping families of the twentieth century. Clearly, from its location on the southern tip of the island, the Bon Portage lighthouse was a necessary navigational aid for those fishermen entering Shag Harbour, or traveling up the coast to Yarmouth. Along with its neighbouring lights, Bon Portage helped to create a safe passageway through surprisingly quick and rough seas.

The island itself presented an eye-opening experience. Until visiting Bon Portage, I assumed that Evelyn wrote about island living because it was a topic readily at hand. Now however, I can understand that the ecological

and biological environment of Bon Portage is unique and noteworthy. Walking on the island was like traveling through time to a place unmarred by industrialization and capitalism. Even Acadia University's presence is discreet, as their field station is built within the forest, with 'primitive' wooden shacks and 'natural' colours.

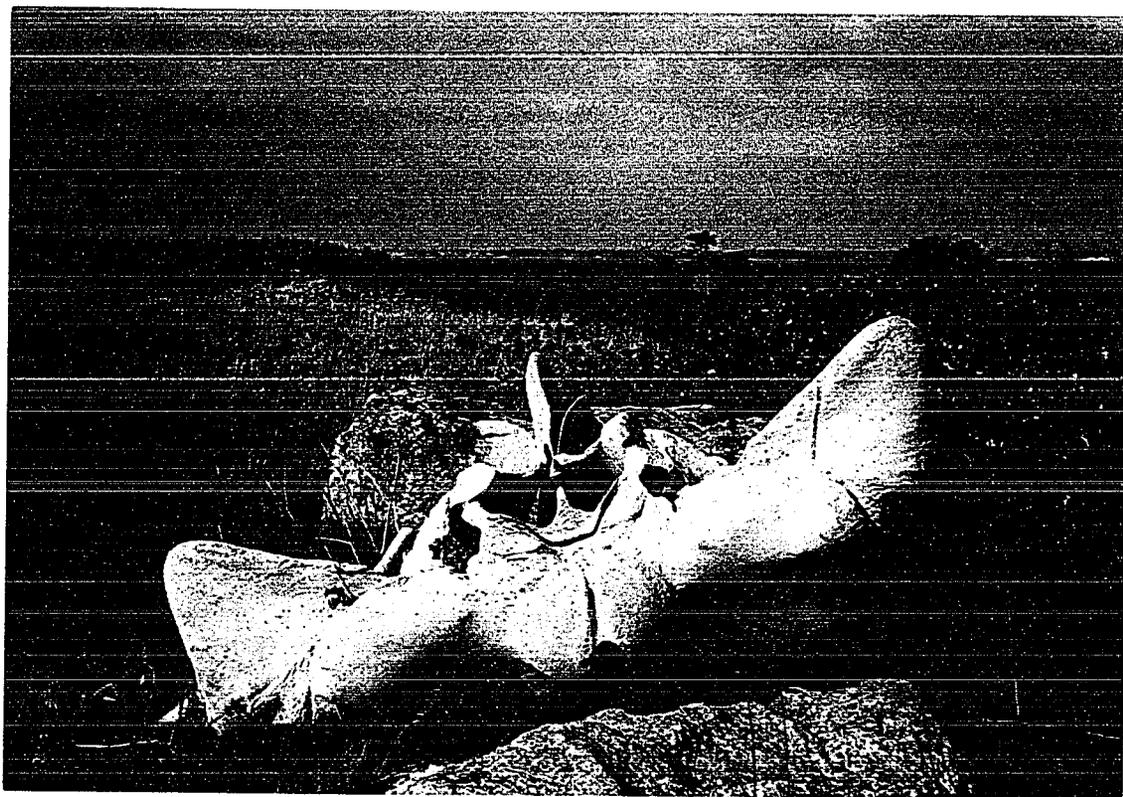


In addition to the myriad species of bird life, including the famous petrels, Bon Portage is also the "desired haven" for a family of deer. Although I only encountered one lone doe, the trails of hoof prints in the forest and along the Savannah clearly announced the presence of others. And I was struck at the lack of timidity of this doe, which let me sit within five feet of her while she grazed, periodically raising her head to look at me. I had been informed that the deer swam over in past years to escape being hunted on Stoddart's Island. This endeared the doe to me even more, as I had trouble enough crossing the sound by boat, let alone imagining swimming across! I could not help feeling momentarily that I was the one trespassing on her territory, but this doe was decidedly unafraid, sensing no harm from myself or any others who crossed her path, and she therefore melded into the environment. Similarly, I cannot recall the last time I saw something so elementary as a monarch butterfly. True, their presence is uncommon in the city, but when did I grow so accustomed to never seeing them at all? Even this tiny creature became a source of fascination for me.

My island trek left me feeling exhilarated and contemplative: I enjoyed having the beaches and ocean to myself, toying with various shells in my hand, inspecting the differences between traditional and modern lobster

traps, climbing up boulders larger than myself, eating wild berries, regretting that I did not know the names of more plant and bird life, and wishing my life in general were more "simple" and peaceful. I was proud to have accomplished the trek on my own, although admittedly there were moments of anxiety when I thought I might injure myself and be forced to wait for hours until being found. I could easily imagine the dangers that Evelyn feared her children and Morrill could suffer when venturing alone on the island.





It was often hard to walk and take in the surroundings at the same time, since I was unsure of my footing, so surveying the landscape while at a full stop was most beneficial, much like Kathy and her painting. And I confess that I was relieved to see the top of the lighthouse upon my return, even though it was broad daylight, because it meant that I had returned safely home. Imagine, then, the comfort the light must have given others in the darkness, both on land and at sea. Did the island appear idyllic to me because it was a contrast to city living and my own personal chaos created by leaving the Maritimes for Ontario? Were my emotions overly affected by reading and romanticizing Evelyn's works? I concede that I had high expectations of visiting Bon Portage, but they were more than satisfied.

Standing on Prospect Point Wharf looking back at Bon Portage, I concluded that the island is a world unto itself; a place where plentiful food grows, and the terrain and weather vary as indeterminately as the diverse species of animals and birds. To experience Bon Portage Island is not only to appreciate the location and value of its lighthouse, but to have a glimpse into island and lighthouse living, and explore unspoiled natural surroundings. Of course, the Richardsons' experience was more profound, having lived there for 35 years, much of that time without modern conveniences; yet for me, it

was like visiting a living museum, and with the help of Evelyn's writings, my own imagination and sensitivities, and the reality of being there, the importance of preserving Evelyn's legacy and the lightkeeping way of life seems not only a worthwhile cause, but a necessary one.

The Richardsons were avid naturalists, which is proven not only in Evelyn's writings (We Keep a Light, My Other Islands, and Living Island in particular), but also in the bequest of Bon Portage Island to Acadia University for biological research. While the ecological significance of Bon Portage and the Richardsons' contribution to conservation was discussed briefly, my thesis is primarily concerned with preserving the Richardsons' lightkeeping legacy. Not only did Evelyn immortalize herself, her family, and Bon Portage Island in We Keep a Light, but she immortalized and epitomized the life of other lightkeepers in twentieth-century Nova Scotia. As lighthouse service in Nova Scotia comes to an end, it seems fitting at the turn of a new century and a new, higher-tech millennium, to reflect upon, and attempt to preserve the traditions of the past. As a published author and celebrity, Evelyn Richardson was able to bring attention to the plight and privileges of lightkeeping, and her life and works stand as testimony to the vital connections Maritimers have with the sea.



The Bon Portage Island Lighthouse in September 1999.

Appendix Two

- A. Lightkeeper Classification tables from the Treasury Board of Canada
- B. Two examples of correspondence between Bon Portage and the Department of Transport
- C. Observation Post Code Name and Number poster
- D. Aircraft Detection Corps poster
- E. Aircraft Flash Message Record
- F. Radiophone illustration
- G. Sample illustration by Winifred Fox in We Keep a Light
- H. Letter of condolence from Will Bird on the death of Laurie Richardson
- I. Two letters of condolence on the death of Evelyn Richardson
- J. Newspaper article on the death of Evelyn Richardson
- K. The Bon Portage Island lighthouse
- L. Biography of Evelyn Richardson
- M. List of Evelyn Richardson's publications

Items B-F and H-J are from the Evelyn Richardson fonds at NSARM (Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management), MG 1, Vols. 1423 and 1430.

Lightkeepers

VARIETY

Sets of Duties

1. Operation and routine maintenance of navigation lights and radiophones and the maintenance of buildings, grounds, and equipment, including walkways, skidways, lawnmowers, dories and rowboats, heating, plumbing and electrical distribution systems, batteries and aerial tramways.
2. Operation and routine maintenance of electronic equipment such as radio beacons, remote control units.
3. Operation and routine maintenance or emergency minor repair of engines and associated power generators and control panels.
4. Routine maintenance or emergency minor repair of department-owned power pole line 500 feet/152.4 metres or more in length.
5. Operation, routine maintenance and emergency minor repair of air compressors and associated fog alarm systems, or of electronic fog alarms.
6. Operation, routine maintenance and emergency minor repair of equipment such as electric motors, battery-charging generators, firefighting equipment, haul-up engines, winches, outboard motors and snowmobiles.
7. Operation, routine maintenance and emergency minor repairs of mobile equipment such as motorized boats 16 feet/4.87 metres or longer (other than dories and rowboats), farm tractors, trailers and motor vehicles.

Degree Definitions

- | | |
|----------|------------------------------|
| Degree A | Up to three sets of duties. |
| Degree B | Four or five sets of duties. |
| Degree C | Six or seven sets of duties. |

SKILL & KNOWLEDGE

- | | |
|----------|--|
| Degree 1 | The work requires the performance of watchkeeping duties, the routine maintenance of simple equipment and the provision of assistance to technicians who perform major repairs or overhauls to simple equipment. |
| Degree 2 | The work requires the performance of duties described at degree 1 and also emergency minor repairs to simple equipment. |
| Degree 3 | The work requires the performance of watchkeeping duties, routine maintenance to complex equipment, and the provision of assistance to technicians who perform major repairs of complex equipment. |
| Degree 4 | The work requires the performance of duties described at degree 3 and also emergency minor repairs to complex equipment. |

SIMPLE EQUIPMENT

Batteries
 Charging generators
 Dories and rowboats
 Electric motors
 Firefighting equipment
 Furnaces and stoves
 Hand tools
 Haul-up engines and winches
 Navigation lights
 Outboard and other two-stroke
 motors
 Plumbing, piping
 Pumps
 Radiophones

COMPLEX EQUIPMENT

Compressors and fog alarm systems
 Electronic remote control equipment
 and fog detectors
 Motorized boats 16 feet/4.87 metres
 and larger
 Power lines and power distribution
 lines
 Radio beacons
 Lightstation power generators
 Tractors and motor vehicles
 Electronic fog alarms
 Internal combustion engines other
 than those listed under simple
 equipment

RATING SCALE - WORK COMPLEXITY

Degree of Skill and Knowledge	Degree of Variety		
	A	B	C
1	90	162	235
2	161	234	307
3	233	306	378
4	305	377	450



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT

INTRA-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

2
10-56

Saint John, N.B. March 26, 1959

PLACE

DATE

YOUR LETTER DATED

YOUR FILE

OUR FILE

SUBJECT

Mr. L.C.M. Richardson
Keeper, Bon Portage Light
Shag Harbour, Shel. Co., N.S.

There will be proceeding to your Station some time next week, two U.S. Hydrographic Service men in connection with some test work of theirs.

We have advised them that no doubt would be pleased to come ashore for them, and that any boat hire, etc. involved will be borne by them.

The day before they plan to proceed to your Station they will contact me from Yarmouth, and I will relay a message to you by radio telephone as to what time to meet them.

Your co-operation in this matter will be appreciated.


F.A. McKinnon
District Marine Agent.



CANADA

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT

OTTAWA, February 25, 1954.

Dear Mr. Richardson:

I acknowledge receipt of your letter dated February 15th, addressed to the Minister of Transport, in which you enclose a petition submitted by the fishermen in the locality for a light to be established on the Bon Portage whistle buoy.

This matter is now receiving the attention of the Department.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "W. J. Manning".

W. J. Manning
Chief of Aids to Navigation

L.C.M. Richardson, Esq.,
Lightkeeper,
Department of Transport,
Bon Portage Lightstation,
Shag Harbour, N. S.

OBSERVATION POST CODE NAME AND NUMBER

**THIS IS THE AIR DEFENCE FORCE OFFICIAL
CODE NAME AND NUMBER FOR THIS OBSERVATION
POST, PLEASE USE IT ON "AIRCRAFT FLASH MESSAGES,"
ALL FORMS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

KILO

NAME

PAPA

NAME

ONE - TWO

NUMBER

BLACK

BON PORTAGE ISLAND

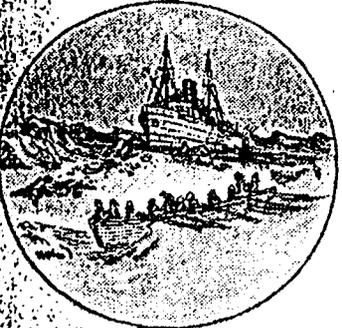
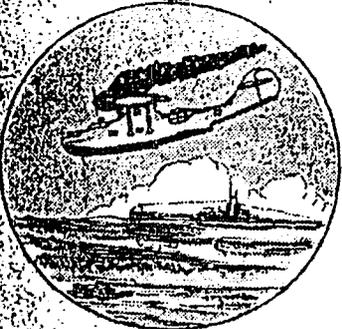
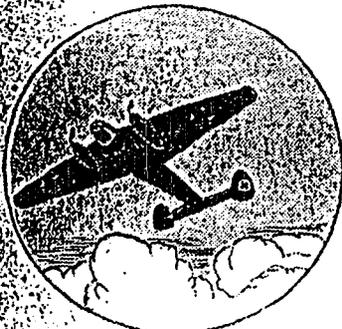
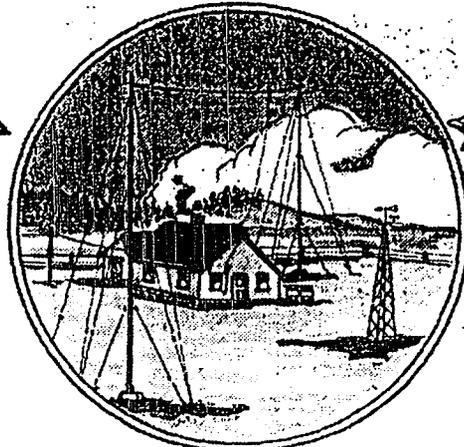
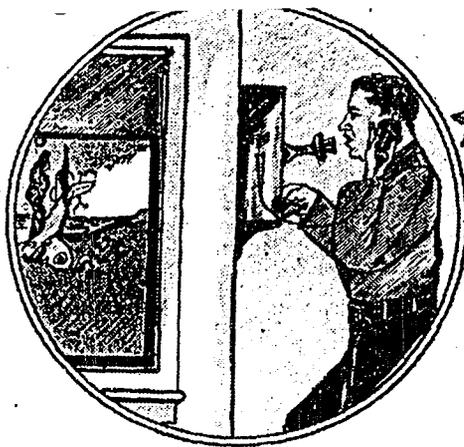
(VILLAGE, TOWN OR CITY)

N. S.

PROV.

**THIS CARD SHOULD BE PERMANENTLY MOUNTED
ON WALL OF OBSERVATION POST**

THIS POST IS LOCATED IN AVON QUADRANT



Aircraft Detection Corps

Instructions to Official Observers - - January 1, 1942

1.—AEROPLANES TO BE REPORTED

Two or more aircraft except within a fifteen mile radius of an airport.

- (a) ~~Enemy or strange planes. Our own planes need not be reported.~~
- (b) Planes forced to land; or planes that are lost or in trouble while still in the air. Trouble may be shown as follows:
 - (i) Engine misfiring or not sounding right.
 - (ii) Plane circling.
 - (iii) Rockets being fired or flares dropped.
- (c) Planes flying below 500-ft. over towns, villages or houses. Report exact position, time, height, and color, together with number or other markings on plane.
- (d) Planes that you have been told to watch for in practice and to report.

2.—VESSELS TO BE REPORTED

- (a) All submarines or strange trawlers, coasters, and other craft (large or small) off the coast or in out-of-the-way anchorages. **NEVER MENTION THE NAME OF AN ALLIED SHIP.**
- (b) All marine craft in trouble; also ship-wrecked crews and wreckage.

3.—OTHER THINGS TO BE REPORTED

- (a) Soldiers or sailors other than Canadian or American.
- (b) Strangers that you think may be about to do damage to planes, Navy boat barracks, railways, power plants, telephone or telegraph lines, wireless stations, water supplies, factories making war materials, etc., (note the license number if a car or truck is used); report this information direct to the R. C. M. Police or other police in your district.
- (c) Any strange signalling or flashing lights.
- (d) Transfers of persons or supplies between ship and ship or between ship and shore.
- (e) Persons attempting to report small...

3.—OTHER THINGS TO BE REPORTED

- (a) Soldiers or sailors other than Canadian or American.
- (b) Strangers that you think may be about to do damage to planes, Navy boats, barracks, railways, power plants, telephone or telegraph lines, wireless stations, water supplies, factories making war materials, etc., (note the license number if a car or truck is used); report this information direct to the R. C. M. Police or other police in your district.
- (c) Any strange signalling or flashing lights.
- (d) Transfers of persons or supplies between ship and ship or between ship and shore.
- (e) Persons attempting to rent small boats to go off to sea; this applies not only to strangers but to persons who may have visited your district before.
- (f) Things thrown from vessels, such as drums or anything bulky.
- (g) Caches of supplies (gasoline or food).
- (h) Any unusual camping ground on or near the coast.

4.—REPORT EXACTLY AS FOLLOWS:

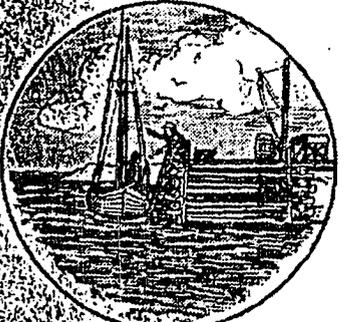
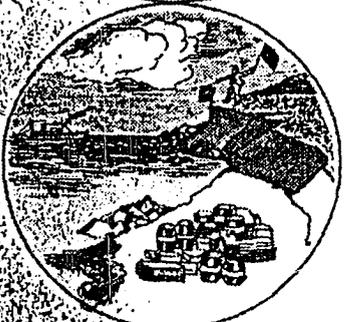
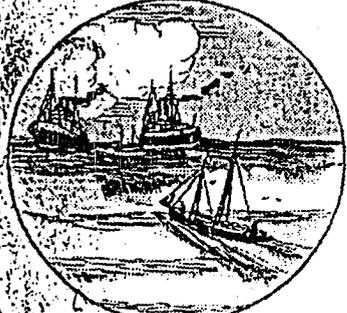
- (a) By TELEPHONE, TELEGRAPH or WIRELESS—AND DO IT FAST.
- (b) Tell the operator you have a report for the "AIRCRAFT DETECTION CORPS". The operator will know HOW and WHERE to send your report. YOU PAY NO MONEY FOR THESE CALLS OR TELEGRAMS.
- (c) Report as shown on papers marked "R.112—Official Observer Report".
- (d) Speak slowly and clearly; ask your operator to repeat for you if the line is bad.

5.—OTHER THINGS TO DO OR NOTE

- (a) Look over carefully the silhouettes of planes and ships.
- (b) Visit an airport or R.C.A.F. Station. Do not discuss things you have seen or heard there except with other Observers or with the R.C.M. Police or Defence Forces (Air Force, Navy and Army).
- (c) Do not talk about matters reported since this might hinder action taken by our Defence Forces or the R. C. M. Police.



(A. A. L. Cuffe) Air Vice Marshal
Air Officer Commanding
Eastern Air Command, R. C. A. F.



Johnson 44

AIRCRAFT FLASH MESSAGE RECORD

DATE (Day, month, year)

2-1-23 Oct. 1958

OBSERVATION POST CODE (Name) (Name) (Number) (Color)

King Hill 5 0100

PHONE EXCHANGE AND NO.

INSTRUCTIONS

Call your telephone operator and say, "AIRCRAFT FLASH." (Give telephone operator your quadrant, telephone exchange and number.) Operator will connect you with your Air Defense Filter Center. When the air defense operator answers and says, "Air Defense, go ahead," you say, "AIRCRAFT FLASH," and continue message completed below, in order indicated.

LINE NUMBER	NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT	TYPE OF AIRCRAFT	FUNCTION OF AIRCRAFT	ALTITUDE OF AIRCRAFT	TIME DELAY IN REPORTING	CODE NAME OF O. P.	DIRECTION OF AIRCRAFT FROM O. P.	DISTANCE AIRCRAFT FROM O. P.	DIRECTION AIRCRAFT ARE FLYING	SPECIAL REMARKS
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	1	unk	unk	low	3 min	K.P. 12-B	unknown		north east	
2	1	unk	unk	low	2 "	K.P. 12-B	south	3 mi	north	
3	1	"	"	low	2 "	K.P. 12-B	west	2 mi	south	3.5 mi x 10 } Cont
4	1	"	"	low	2 "	K.P. 12-B	S.E.	5 mi	north	9.5 mi } Cont
5	2	"	"	low	2 "	K.P. 12-B	N.W.	4 mi	west	Vid.
6										
7	Also have information from operations room									
8	to 4:15 p.m. 21 Oct 58 terminate									
9										
10										
11										
12										
13										
14										
15										
16										
17										
18										
19										
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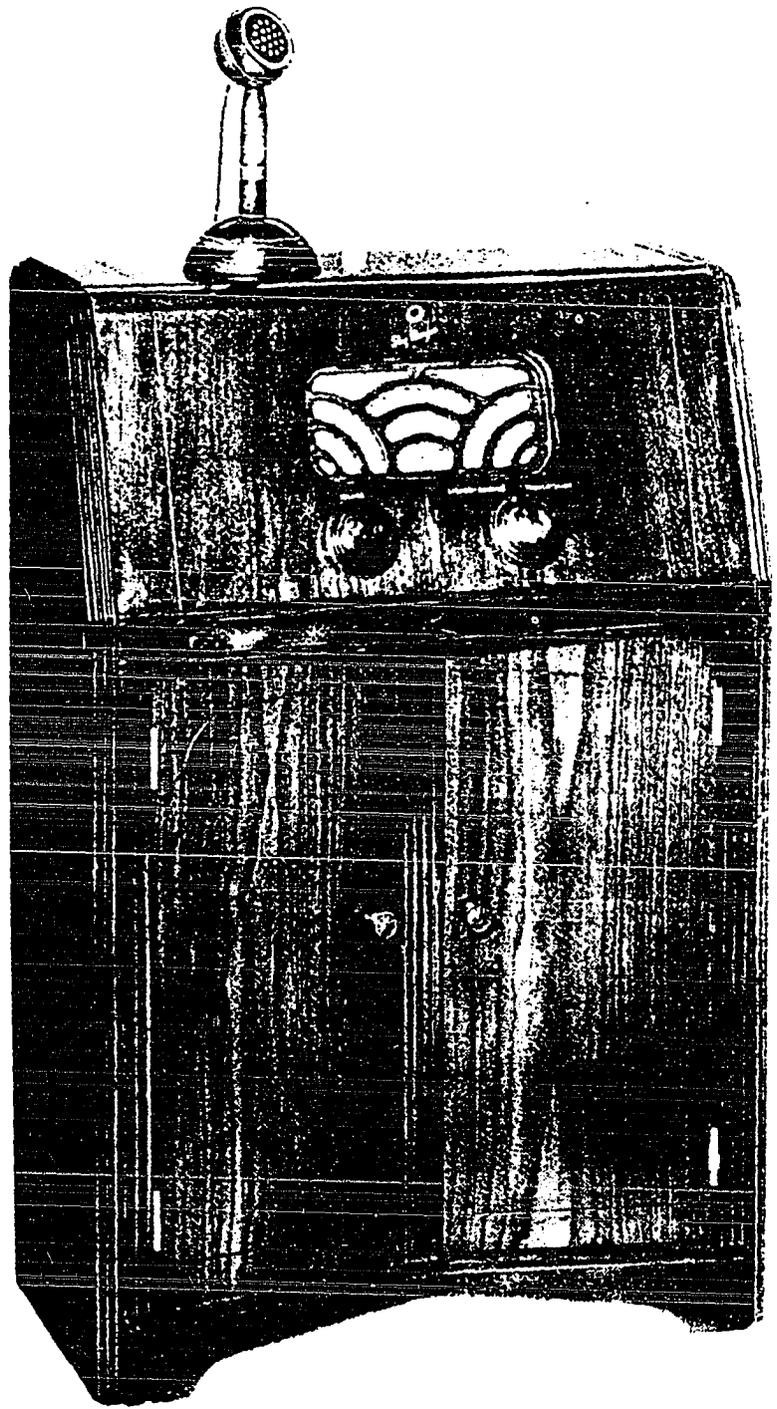


Figure 1

Appendix 2-6

Sample illustration by Winifred Fox, which appears at the beginning of chapter three, "Arrival," in We Keep a Light.



35 Marlborough Ave., Halifax. N.S.
October 28, 1947

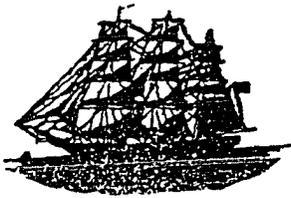
Dear Mrs. Richardson:

The news of the death of your son was a real shock to all of us in the Halifax Branch of the Authors' Ass'n. To me it was almost personal. I have read and re-read WE KEEP A LIGHT until I have felt I was a friend of the family. Meeting you at Toronto but added to my idea of your personality, and I can sympathize with you in your great loss with real sincerity. We lost our only boy in 1944, killed in the attack on Caen. He went to camp on his graduation day - from Mt. Allison where he had made such a brilliant record in study and sport. In your island home you were probably closer to your boy than most parents are, and would therefor know more fully the real worth of his character, and have more of his love.

My hope is that in years to come you will find solace in remembering that you had him for so long, that he had never left you, that his young love for his parents was never weakened by contact with an older and rougher world. Words are poor comfort. Please be assured that your loss has probably caused more more heart stirrings than any similar loss in a decade. Every Nova Scotian has a peculiar interest in the author of WE KEEP A LIGHT. You have the love and respect of thousands you will never know or meet. Their hearts ache for you.

Sincerely,

W. R. Bird



Yarmouth County Historical Society

(ESTABLISHED 1935 - INCORPORATED 1958)

MUSEUM 22 COLLINS STREET

YARMOUTH, N. S. B5A 3C8

Nov. 1, 1976

Dear Daughters of Evelyn Richardson,

As secretary of our Society, I'd like to express our appreciation of your mother for the work she has done in her old Society, and the help she has given us with ours. Twice when she came to speak to us we had "Standing Room Only" and everyone listened with evident enjoyment to a woman who lived so brave and was able to contribute so much to others in spite of her comparative isolation.

I saw her in Hospital the week before she died and I am so sorry I wasn't able to tell her things I had in my mind to say. I had just finished reading the book about her and her works written by someone at Acadia, for her thesis? It reviewed briefly all of the books and I wish I could remember the name of the author. To leave behind such worth while pictures of happy family life, nature and philosophy will make her books read and remembered. A true contribution to our Maritime literature. She said she hoped to see "B-for Butter" in print. Too bad! I sorrow with you in her loss.

Sincerely yours

Frances Condey



PUBLIC ARCHIVES
NOVA SCOTIA

COBURG ROAD
HALIFAX, N. S.
B3H 1Z9

October 19th, 1976

Mrs. Arthur Wickens,
Bear Point,
Shelburne County,
Nova Scotia.

Dear Mrs. Wickens:-

I am very sorry indeed to hear about the recent death of your mother Mrs. Evelyn May Richardson who won distinction as a Canadian author, and whose works are being widely read. To you and your sister I extend my sincere sympathy in your bereavement.

Although it may be rather untimely to do so, I can hardly help saying that I trust that suitable arrangements are being made to preserve your mother's papers and notes, and I trust that you will give favourable consideration to the suggestion that they might be preserved in the Public Archives of Nova Scotia. If they were preserved here they would in a sense constitute a permanent memorial, and at the same time they would be available for researchers who are interested in her and her works.

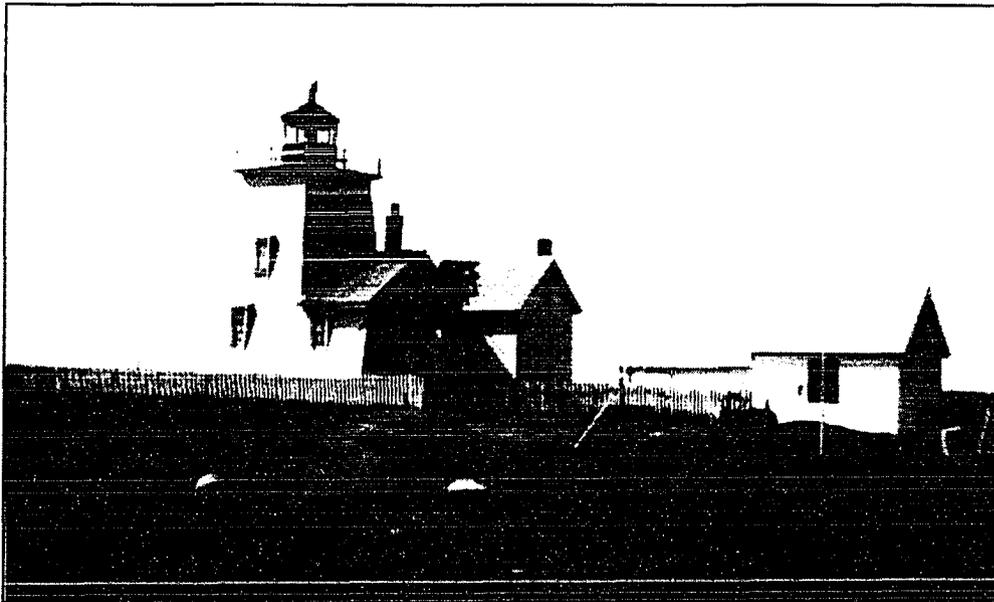
Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "C. Bruce Fergusson".

C. Bruce Fergusson
Provincial Archivist

APPENDIX 2-K

The original lighthouse on Bon Portage Island was established in 1874. Over the years, many lightkeepers had attempted to improve and renovate the dwelling, so that by the time the Richardsons arrived in 1929, their four-storey home consisted of a kitchen, pantry, living room, three bedrooms and the light-room, all of which were capped off by the decagonal-shaped lantern room. The Richardsons resided in the lighthouse until 1955, when a new free-standing house was erected by the Department of Transport. The assistant lightkeeper continued to live in the lighthouse until 1964, when the structure was replaced by a concrete tower and a separate home was built next door to the lightkeeper's house. The lighthouse was staffed until 1983, when it became automated.



The Seal Island Light Museum in Barrington is a reconstruction of the top half of the Seal Island lighthouse. The museum displays lighthouse equipment and historical information about the lighthouses on Cape Sable, and the islands of Bon Portage and Seal. Information about Evelyn Richardson can also be found in this collection.

Appendix 2-L

Photograph of Evelyn Richardson, which appears in the 1995 Nimbus Publishing edition of We Keep a Light.



- Born:** Evelyn May Fox was born May 16, 1902 at Emerald Isle.
- Married:** Morrill Richardson on August 14, 1926 at Emerald Isle.
- Children:** Anne Gordon (1928-); Laurie (1929-1947), Elizabeth (Betty) June (1933-)
- Deceased:** October 14, 1976
- Awards:** Governor-General's Award for Creative Non-Fiction, We Keep a Light, 1945. Ryerson Press All-Canada Fiction Award, Desired Haven, 1953.
- Lightkeeping:** Her father's great-grandfather was keeper of Cape Forchu, a position gained as "reward for his services as captain in the Royal Navy" (We Keep a Light, 7). Her maternal grandfather was keeper of the lighthouse at Emerald Isle. Her daughter Betty June married Sid Smith, lightkeeper at Cape Sable.

Appendix 2-M

The following is a list of Evelyn Richardson's major publications in chronological order. This list does not include incidental works, such as magazine articles, research papers or speeches for historical societies.

1945	<i>We Keep a Light</i>
1953	<i>Desired Haven</i>
1957	<i>No Small Tempest</i>
1960	<i>My Other Islands</i>
1965	<i>Living Island</i>

As well, the following major works were published posthumously:

1976	<i>B was for Butter and Enemy Craft</i>
1991	<i>Ben Peach and the Pirates</i>
1996	<i>Where My Roots Go Deep</i>

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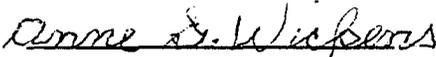
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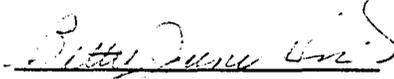
May 2002

To Whom It May Concern;

We, Anne (Richardson) Wickens and Elizabeth (Betty) June (Richardson) Smith, as direct descendants of Evelyn Richardson, do hereby grant permission to Fiona Marshall to use and reproduce information on and from Evelyn Richardson, both from her published works and from information currently housed at Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management (NSARM), which was donated by the family.

Sincerely,


Anne Wickens


Betty June Smith