

Story #1 Elinor Murchison Gillis talks about her father Angus Murchison keeper from 1920 – 1955

Story #1 in our heritage interview series. David Weale interviewed Elinor Murchison Gillis at her son Gilbert Gillis's home in Point Prim PEI on Dec 14, 2019.

David Weale: I'm talking to Elinor Murchison Gillis who was the daughter of Angus Murchison and she is the last remaining sibling of that family and in that way the last really direct contact with the Point Prim Lighthouse because Angus was the last lighthouse keeper. I think that's right, is it Elinor?

Elinor Murchison Gillis: Not quite the last, but he's one of the later ones.

David: That's right, there was another keeper after that. And he was there for thirty-five years?

Elinor: Yes.

David: Yeah. So you actually grew up like in the shadow of the lighthouse, it was a part of your everyday?

Elinor: That's right.

David: So you have, I'll talk and ask some questions but you have written out a little story here about it, so why don't you read us that first.

Elinor: Just part of it.

David: You just read a part of it, and then I'll take over.

Elinor: My father, Angus A. Murchison was the lighthouse keeper at Point Prim Lighthouse for thirty-five years, the longest keeper on record. He was given the job after he came home after the World War One. Before that he worked on the ship the Earl Grey. It was a, lighthouse keeping was a fair paying job and much sought after by other veterans. My parents had eight children. When I was quite young, it was my lot to go to the lighthouse with him for company. In the summer we would walk down which was nice. Sometimes my father would go ahead of me for he had to have the light on before sunset. He had to have it lit before sunset. I often took a shortcut through the woods on the same side as the lighthouse, that's down here, nice way to go going over the big rocks. Singing "oh those big rock 'andy mountains" (laughter) and then I'd go into the keeper's cottage. When it was getting dark we would have a cold lunch of white homemade bread spread with butter and molasses and a bottle of cold milk which tasted good. Then, while my father was lying on an old-fashioned couch, a fainting couch I guess it was called, he would want me to manicure his nails. Then he read for awhile before going to bed in a hand-made spool bed, it was as old as the lighthouse, 1845. I still have that bed at my home. After a good night's sleep my dad would call me to get up. "It's time to get up Nelly" he would say. He would then go up the top of the light and put out the light before the sun would rise in the sky. We would walk two or three miles to our house. My mother would be sitting in the rocking chair knitting if it was winter time. She would have the porridge and eggs and so forth cooked for us. After that I would get ready for school which was one and a half mile walk, never got a drive. It was a one room school house, a dozen pupils and one teacher. I was wondering if by doing so much walking and doing farm work that I have

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arthritis today, but I'm glad I can paint and still paint pictures of the Point Prim Lighthouse, the oldest one on the Island.

Then I have a PS here. I remember the winter dad bought me a green snowsuit. I was proud of that snowsuit. In the cold, windy weather I would walk behind him close as I could to get shelter. The boat called the Brant would come once a year with supplies for the lighthouse, kerosene, oil, cleaning supplies, and so forth. The Brant would anchor off and send a small boat in with the supplies to the old oil house. And that is all.

David: You did good, you didn't need me at all. That's great!

Elinor : I forgot!

David: No, that's good!