

Story #7 Goldie Gillis speaks about Irish Moss and the Lighthouse

Story #7 in our heritage interview series. David Weale interviewed Goldie Gillis at her home Point Prim PEI on Dec 14, 2019.

David Weale: I'm David Weale, and I'm speaking with Goldie Gillis who lives in Point Prim and has a story about an episode where the integrity of the light was being compromised. Anyway, you tell the story Goldie, how does it go.

Goldie Gillis: Ok, well, when our lighthouse was built in 1845 it was a fixed light.

David: No flashing you mean.

Goldie: No flash, it was fixed. However, through the years, with the Irish moss fisherman going to the shore, and actually when Gilbert and I were first married we actually worked at it ourselves, and there was a period of time when there was truckloads of Irish moss that came in and we harvested it and we worked at it. And the people before us, especially Gilbert's dad Chester, and the kids all worked at it when they were growing up and it was a good supplement to the income, the farm income, selling the Irish moss. So anyway, often they'd have to go down at night and work at it, because depending on the tide and the winds it would come in at night if there was enough wind on. So they'd come down at night, and they'd park their trucks along the shore and they had their headlights on pointing out over the water to help them see to harvest the moss. However, that interfered with mariners coming up the Strait at night in to Charlottetown harbour, because when they'd be coming around the Point, they would not only see one fixed light but many fixed lights along the shore. So it created great confusion and complaints were sent in to the government about it. It actually caused, with time, it caused the government officials to make a change in our light. And they came out, the Canadian Coast Guard came out to our lighthouse and made a big change and they changed our light from a fixed to a flashing light. And then that prevented, no more confusion in the future.

David: So you've got a fixed light, then in... When would that have been, with the Irish moss? What time are we talking? Sixties, or fifties.

Goldie: I'm not sure what year it was changed. (Off camera: Sixties)

David: Somewhere in the sixties. Then it goes to a flashing light which would be identifiable, and then eventually it goes to an automatic.

Goldie: In 1969. And that's when our very last keeper, of course, lost his job as keeper there. No more need for keepers.