

# Grand Manan Archives

## Finding Aid - Machias Seal Island Lightstation (MG93)

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Language of description: English

Grand Manan Archives

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[http://www.grandmananmuseum.ca/MUSEUM\\_Archives\\_Collections.html](http://www.grandmananmuseum.ca/MUSEUM_Archives_Collections.html)

<http://search.canbarchives.ca/index.php/machias-seal-island-lightstation-2>

# Machias Seal Island Lightstation

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## Summary information

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<b>Repository:</b>	Grand Manan Archives
<b>Title:</b>	Machias Seal Island Lightstation
<b>ID:</b>	MG93
<b>Date:</b>	1971-2002 (date of creation)
<b>Physical description:</b>	5 cm of textual records
<b>Language:</b>	English
<b>Dates of creation, revision and deletion:</b>	
<b>Note [generalNote]:</b>	Formerly held as MG12 Lighthouses / Fog Alarms MS6 Machias Seal Island.

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## Administrative history / Biographical sketch

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### Note

The light on Machias Seal Island, about 13 miles southwest of Grand Manan Island, New Brunswick, was lit for the first time in 1832. At one time there were twin lighthouses on Machias Seal, one tower near the western shore and a second, eastern tower about 30 feet from the present one. The first was pulled down in 1905 and the lumber used to build a small barn. After the present concrete tower was built in 1915, Don Daggett reduced the height of the eastern tower to keep the Island from being mistaken for a station with two towers. The keepers and their children referred to it as "the castle". It was used for a paint shed and, sometimes, for picking ducks.

A building on the northern point, used as living quarters by fishermen when they came ashore, was torn down in the early 1930s. During the 1940s, when Harvey Benson was principal keeper, with Lawrence Benson as his second keeper, there were eleven buildings on the Island.

John Conley was the first lightkeeper at Machias Seal Island, where he lived with his wife Elizabeth and their family. He died there ca. 1844 and his body was later removed to St. Andrews for burial. He and his son Obadiah were credited with saving the lives of the crews of at least seven shipwrecks.

The United States has long disputed Canadian ownership of Grand Manan Island even though the Passamaquoddy Islands Commissioners confirmed Canadian ownership in 1817 and Canada has exercised sovereignty over the island for 170 years. Because of this dispute, the light station is still manned, even though it has been automated for some time. The Department of Foreign Affairs pays the cost of maintaining keepers so that Canada can maintain its claim of sovereignty over the island. This makes it the only manned lighthouse remaining in the Maritime Provinces. Today there are four keepers, two taking rotating twenty-eight day shifts. There is also a Canadian Wildlife Service field station and bird sanctuary on the island, attracting tourists every summer.

Source: <http://www.geocities.com/grandmanan.geo/sealisland.html> - (web page of Deborah Daggett, widow of Douglas Daggett)

## Custodial history

Information about the custody of these records prior to acquisition is incomplete.

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## Scope and content

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This collection consists of newspaper articles, magazine articles, letters, stories, and histories relating to Machias Seal Island lightstation and bird sanctuary. There are articles concerning the boundary dispute between the Canadian and United States governments over ownership of the Island and a computer printout of the International Court of Justice Case Summaries Judgement of 12 October 1984 concerning ownership.

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## Notes

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### Title notes

- **Source of title proper:** Title based on contents.

### Immediate source of acquisition

Gleneta Hettrick, Archivist, collected this material to preserve the history of the Island for researchers.

### Location of originals

MMC McLaughlin is also available on microfilm at the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, F-230 and F-231

### Restrictions on access

No restrictions

### Related material

Records of other lighthouses in the Grand Manan area are also available in the Archives.

### Other notes

- **Publication status:** Published

## Access points

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- Textual record (documentary form)
- Buildings and structures (subject)
- Charlotte County (place)