

grove of woods on the other. I didn't mind going to the light, but it was coming back. I just thought if an old boat came ashore.... I got in the house and locked the door. I thought, Well, it will go four hours. I fell asleep anyway. And I woke up just in time I was supposed to go out. But it was real dark. I said, No. I didn't go out. And the light kept a-going for over five hours. It was bright when I went out. Otherwise, I wasn't scared. I've come from the wireless station home in pitch-dark. The only thing I was scared of was some kind of bird--Mother Carey's Chickens. They fly right up in your face almost. You only see them at night. If you put your hand near them the smell was something awful. They'd bore down in a hole in the ground. (The bird Mrs. Gwinn refers to is Leach's Petrel, a bird noted as a problem for keepers of island lighthouses. It lives most of its life at sea but comes ashore to breed in colonies, burrowing up to three feet in the ground. There is a 1930 record of a breeding colony on Ciboux Island, Victoria County, and a 1954 report of a small colony on a peninsula near Louisbourg. John Erskine wrote: "The boys at the Southwest Light found the nests by their smell, and the chicks defended themselves by spitting a reddish fluid...These curious seabirds hatch out their eggs in seven weeks. They then feed the chicks on oil, one feed at midnight so that the chicks may take three months to grow to flying size." Because of this quite a few are often frozen in their burrows.)

Wilson Gwinn: Oh, St. Paul's is a nice spot. But when you spend as much time as we did--a year and a half at the lifesaving station, a year and a half at the wireless, and then ten years at the Southwest Light--when you come off of it, it's just that much time of your life you might as well not have lived. There was nothing. No excitement, no nothing. Just a blank. I figured once, I think I got 13 cents an hour for the time I put in with the light and like of that. 24 hours a day. 80 dollars a month at first. Then 95 was the highest. And you paid for everything but the kerosene you burned in the lamp. You'd send in a monthly report--oil consumed, weather report--and if you put an extra gallon they came back quick where was it. I went out with nothing and I came back with nothing. But it wasn't awful lonesome out there. I never found it lonesome. And the time just flies by.



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