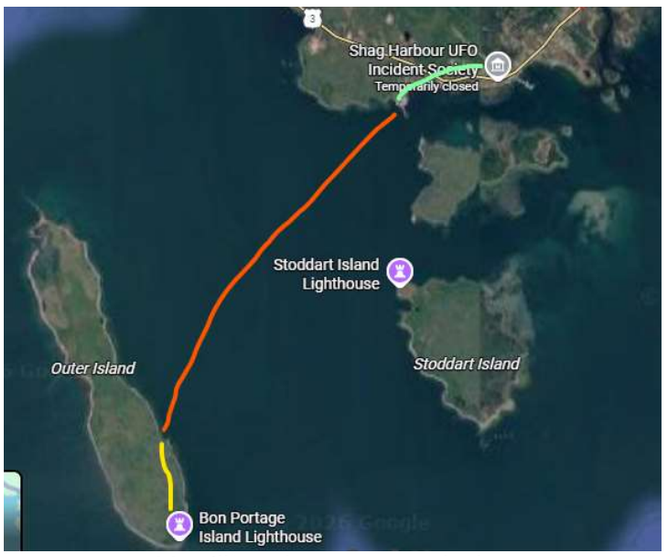


Bon Portage Lighthouse
Credit: The Richardson Family




Morrill's trek to nearest telephone
Credit: Google Maps & NSLPS

Evelyn and Morrill Richardson, lightkeepers at the Bon Portage Lighthouse, became part of Coastal Defence, an early warning system, during World War II. Every four hours six times daily, they listened for instructions broadcast by Radio Station CBA based in Sackville, NB and constantly scanned the sky and seas for enemy aircraft and warships.

The Richardsons used a wind-up alarm clock to remind them to listen to radio broadcasts and by the end of the war had gone through three clocks! Their radio ran on a 6-volt battery that Morrill attempted to recharge with a windmill purchased by mail order from the Eaton's catalogue. The winds on Bon Portage Island were too strong and the windmill was replaced with an old generator that was coupled to a "make and break" engine. The generator then charged the radio when Evelyn used the engine to run her washing machine.

They had high hopes of finally getting a telephone as any sighting of the enemy was to be reported ASAP. No such luck. Instead it was expected that they would run the half mile (0.8 km) to the boat shed. There with Evelyn's help, Morrill would push the boat down its slip to launch it. In good seas Morrill could reach the mainland in 20 minutes. The boat would then be tied to the dock west of the village of Shag Harbour and Morrill would have to run in that direction to the nearest telephone to report his observation.

Telephone calls in NS at that time had to go through a local switchboard and not all switchboards were monitored 24 hours a day. It actually might have been quicker to write a report to mail to the nearest telegraph post where it would have been transmitted using Morse code. Still the RIchardsons took their war responsibilities as seriously as their lightkeeping duties and they would have gone the distance to inform the appropriate authority as instructed.




1940s wind-up alarm clock
Credit: Okey Doke Vintage Home




1930s radio with 6-volt battery on left front
Credit: Getty Images