

[Page 44 - The Martells of Flint Island Light](#)ISSUE : [Issue 45](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1987/6/1

The Martells of Flint Island Light Margaret Martell MacQueen, Port Morien: My mother came to Cape Breton. She was 8 years old. Amy Ethel Francis--that was her name. And then the Shepards adopted her. But that was her name. She got her birth certificate and everything from England-- Birmingham, England. (She was one of the Home Children.) Immigrant. I guess they didn't call them immigrants at that time, they called them orphans or something. But there were boatloads and boatloads came over at one time. Mum herself had a sister and brother. But in all the years, in all the while, growing up and everything, she never ever heard tell of her brother after that. I guess they enquired, both she and her sister, and they just--no idea where he went or anything. (But she did keep track of her sister.) Yes. (Where, was her sister placed?) Pictou.... One time I was looking through the Bible, and I found the write-up about it. About her being killed on her wedding night. They had a habit at that time, I guess, of shooting off guns--during a wedding ceremony, or after. The horse bolted, and knocked her out, and broke her back. And she died, I guess, instantly. . . . Dad's home was in Black Brook, (And how was he making his living before he went to the island?) Fishing, I guess. And working in the pit. And he also used to (run) silent movies. I just remember vaguely. Tom MacInnes, who is long past gone, he used to bring them in, and Dad used to run the projectors. And he had a sawmill. He was a jack-of-all-trades, my father, what you call a handyman. He was a carpenter, a mason, you know, chimneys--mechanic, you name it. I was 5 years old when he got the position of lightkeeper out on Flint Island. He was out there for 18 years. So in that 18 years, there were a lot of things happened. (How many children did they have at that time?) We'll start from the older one and work down. There were 14 in our family altogether. There was Billy, Raymond, Kenny, Loren, Ethel, myself, Audrey, and Murray-- 8--when we went out (to Flint Island). Johnny was born in 1933, and that's when my brother (Raymond) was drowned. He was the first one. We've had quite a few tragedies out there. (How was your brother drowned?) Just a freak accident, really. I wasn't very old, but I remember they used to talk about getting seals, seal pelts. I remember this night at the table, they were talking, and (years later) Mum often referred to it. Raymond said, "We'll have a seal pelt for your room. Mum." And they went out--it was still early evening--it wasn't dark or anything. Then, they weren't coming home, and we could remember all the things that were happening. All of a sudden we saw Dad running for the boat. CONTINUED NEXT PAGE (44)  
John James and Amy Ethel Francis Martell, with their son, Johnny