

I Remember When"

DECEMBER 1916 as told by Ethel Paulina Furst Stormer

It was early December in 1916 and like children everywhere I was excited about the approaching holiday season. It was to be our second Christmas in our new home our father, Martin Furst, had built for us on the island.

I knew our parents had been mailing out orders to Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward & Company for the gifts my brothers and I were to receive on Christmas morning. I also knew that my parents had given Mrs. Burdick, the lady who had the grocery store down near the big dock, a list of all the candies and nuts they would be purchasing for the holidays. Some of our neighbors had given Mrs. Burdick their orders also. This was done so she would know about how much of these items to order from the wholesale supplier she dealt with in Chicago.

And so it was that on December 10, 1916, Mr. Jim Burdick, the lighthouse keeper, stopped to tell my mother that they had received their supplies from Chicago and that my parents could pick up the things they had ordered at any time. My mother told my father when he came home that evening and he said that he would be making the north patrol from eight to ten o'clock p.m and he would stop by Burdick's store to pick up the order. He told me that he would have to use my sled on which to haul it so I knew that I wouldn't be going out sledding with my friends that evening. I watched as my father tied a big box on my sled and then I asked him if I could go with him as far as Burdick's store. He hesitated at first because he knew that I had been in school that day and I suppose he felt another long slippery walk along the beach might be too tiring for a ten year old girl; besides I had to go to school the next day. Perhaps I coaxed a little more too, so he agreed I could go.

My father had long legs and was a fast walker, but by taking two steps to his one I was able to keep up with him and soon we were at Burdick's store where I was to wait for him to go on to the north patrol post about a mile farther northeast. At the store I watched Mrs. Burdick weighing out all those good things my parents had ordered for our Christmas---hard candies, chocolates, mixed nuts and peanuts with the shells on them. I was so excited and happy, however the store was heated by a large "Round Oak" heating stove and it was quite warm and very comfortable sitting there. I found that I was getting very sleepy and it was hard for me to stay awake as I waited. At last my father returned and we loaded up the box on my sled with all those big brown paper bags of goodies. It did seem like a much longer walk from the store to the station than it was coming down, but we finally arrived home. My mother was quite uneasy about me being up so late so I was hurried off to bed. My mother told later of how my father sat and shelled peanuts to eat before returning to the station

I know I must have slept soundly and the next morning I was hurrying to get ready for school when my mother said that it was such a nice morning she was sure the mail boat would be going over to Glen Haven that day. She said she was nearly out of kerosene and that before leaving to go to school I must take our five gallon kerosene can down to the Coast Guard Station and give it to my father so he could take it down to the mail boat which was tied up at the dock near the station. I was very upset that I had to do this extra errand before going to meet my school mates and walking to school with them. **It might mean that I'd be late and would have to walk that mile and a half alone so I ran down to the station as fast as I could with that kerosene can and I went to the men's loafing room where I found my father sitting straddled of the back of a chair with his head bowed and resting on his arms. As I rushed in and spoke to him he raised his head and as I gave him the message he sort of moaned. I thought he looked different than when I saw him the night before, but I was in such a hurry to go meet my friends I rushed out of the station and went on to school. It makes me very sad to say that I never saw my father alive again.**

That afternoon as my brother Norman (who was two years younger than I) and I came home from school we had to pass Aunt Hattie Barnhart's house which is now the National Park's Visitor Center, and it was just across the boardwalk from our house. When Aunt Hattie saw us she stepped outside her door to call to us that we were supposed to come stay with them as my mother was not at home. When we were inside her warm kitchen she explained that my father was very sick and that he and my mother had been taken across the lake to Glen Haven
