

Merrit and LaVon Guerne
Grant, MI 49327



Merrit and LaVon had visited Big Sable Point several times and sent a letter to the lighthouse, on October 13, 2001 and expressed an interest to become volunteers of the Lighthouse Association. Merrit's great-great grandfather, Newton Bird, was the third keeper at Big Sable Point from March 22, 1871–October 28, 1873 and his son, Frank H. Bird (Merrit's great uncle), was the first assistant from March 22, 1873-April 7-1874.



Frank H Bird 1st Assistant Keeper March 22, 1873-April 7 1874

I telephoned the Merrits in the summer of 2003 and 2004 to encourage them to apply for the volunteer program and sent them an application but they were not able to attend the personal Interview date.

Merrit and LaVon greeted us at the door during our Spring Training in 2011 at the lighthouse. They finally became volunteers for SPLKA!



Newton L Bird 3rd Keeper Big Sable Point Light
March 22, 1871 – October 28 1873

Merrit was reading the Interview Book at BSPL and called to tell me when he gets back home he will update the information on his great- great- grandfather and also add some photos.

Merrit and LaVon so graciously took the time to compile 14 pages of the Bird family history research with documentations dated from 1778 to 2011. The history stretched back to his 3rd great grandfather, Ebenezer John Bird, and several new photographs were added.



Newton Bird lived in a Big Stone House North of Stony Lake, once known as the “Pierce Place” owned by Burl Loew in 1960. It has since been torn down. It was located behind the Bird Schoolhouse. Merrit has been told that it was a very large and lovely home with a stone porch, spiral stairs, and beautiful hanging chandelier in the dining room.

The Bird School is still standing, remodeled into a beautiful occupied home by Babs Burmeister who runs a little business called “Stone Road Market and Greenhouse”. She sells plants, fresh produce, flowers, and antiques.

Through recent research, Merrit believes that Newton was the chairman of the building committee when Burr Caswell’s home was built which is located at White Pine Village in Mason County.

We have unfolded a large amount of History about the third keeper of Big Sable Point Lighthouse and thank you Merrit and LaVon for your labors of love to preserve history. It is greatly appreciated. Welcome aboard with SPLKA!

Gerry Thornton
Historian for SPLKA

