

## *Granny Mag*

A heart breaking story of what life was like for women in harbour towns when their loved ones sailed away is the story of Maggie MacDonald.

When Maggie was 17, she married a sailor named Johnnie “Quick” MacDonald. Six weeks after the wedding, Johnnie died at sea, leaving Maggie a widow and unable to accept his sudden tragic death. Johnnie had also left behind a baby boy from another relationship, who Maggie raised as her own in a way to help cope with her loss.

The boy had a number of things in common with his father. He had the same name; Johnnie Quick, the same looks, and he also shared the same love for the sea. This frightened Maggie – she was worried that he would also sail away and never return, just as his father did. Maggie tried her best to discourage young Johnnie Quick from a future at sea.

When Johnnie grew older, he discovered that Maggie was not his biological mother, and was so distraught that he left in his own boat without a goodbye to the woman who had raised him as a son.

Maggie was heartbroken. She spent most of her time at the wharf, watching as the boats docked, searching the faces of all of the sailors. Years passed, and she continued to look for her son on the wharves in Pictou Harbour. She was a familiar sight amongst the townspeople, and was affectionately known as *Old Mag*, with the gray shawl and whining voice, wandering along the docks.

One day – Johnnie returned to Pictou. Everyone expected a long awaited happy reunion. But Old Mag’s mind was torn apart by grief and she hardly recognized the man that she was searching for. Johnnie Quick left Pictou for good after this visit, and Maggie was never seen at the wharves again.

Forty years to the day of when her young husband left her for his final trip to see, Maggie MacDonald passed away.