



The Octagon

Newsletter of the Faulkner's Light Brigade
July 2012

Lighthouse Restoration Completed in 2011

In the middle of December 2010, the seas were so rough that it was next to impossible to land a watercraft on Faulkner Island. Even though the International Chimney Corporation had a very sturdy 35 foot work boat, they had to suspend operations on the restoration of the



lighthouse. The workboat was placed on its trailer and the US Fish and Wildlife Service very generously allowed the boat to be stored on their property in Westbrook, CT for the snow filled winter of 2011.

The International Chimney crew returned in late March 2011 and completed the final

work on the lighthouse. The crew was true professionals under the leadership of Foreman Steve Scyoc and did outstanding work. The total cost of the project was \$121,000 and was completely supported by member contributions.

The island and lighthouse will be open on Saturday September 8th and Sunday September 9th as part of the Faulkner's Light Brigade 2012 Open House. Details will be posted on the Faulkner's Light Brigade Website at <http://faulknerslight.org>

An Overview of the History of the Faulkner's Light Brigade

The Faulkner Island Lighthouse has been waging a war with nature for a number of decades. Erosion has been eating away at the east bluff where the lighthouse stands at a rate of at least six inches per year. The tower stood about 35 feet from the brink of disaster in 1991. In an attempt to try to save the venerable structure, the Faulkner's Light Brigade (FLB) was established to rescue this local treasure. The east bluff has been shored up. In addition, FLB has completed two major restoration projects on the lighthouse in the first 20 years of the organization. The efforts of FLB are primarily supported by members and the Brigade still very much needs the support from the membership.

1976 Light Keepers House Fire

In March 1976, a fire broke out in the light keeper's house while two Coast Guardsmen were on duty. Fire fighters couldn't get out to island quick enough so the 1871 light keeper's quarters was completely destroyed and the adjacent lighthouse was scorched.



The light & lightkeepers house before the fire.

1978 The Light

Two years later the light was repaired and automated, with the fourth order Fresnel lens being replaced by a modern optic. Vandals had done further damage after the fire, so the windows were bricked up and a new steel door installed. In 1988 the light was converted to solar power.



Fish and Wildlife Service crew

1984 The US Fish and Wildlife Service

The light station on Faulkner Island became a research station soon after the fire. The research focused on the endangered

Roseate Tern which nests there in the summer months. An Act of Congress in 1984 established the Connecticut Coastal McKinney National Wildlife Refuge, of which Faulkner Island became an important component. Since Faulkner's was already owned by the U.S. Government, its acquisition proved to be the least complicated of the island components of this refuge. It did not have to be purchased, but transferred in jurisdiction, from the U.S. Coast Guard to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service within the U.S. Department of Interior. Now the island's custody is relegated back to the wilds of Mother Nature, although the Coast Guard reserves an easement to maintain its aid to navigation.

1988 The Beginning of the Preservation

In 1990 the state of the Faulkner Island Lighthouse looked bleak. The accelerated erosion on the east bluff of the island was threatening the foundation of the lighthouse. As a result of the 1976 fire, the Coast Guard abandoned its manned station and vandals had broken windows and the main doorway of the tower.

Years earlier, Joel Helander, a Guilford historian with a life-long affinity for Faulkner Island, acquired an acute sense that the neglect and erosion were threatening the lighthouse, revered by mainlanders and mariners. He realized that an action campaign was needed to halt the runaway erosion that was endangering this historic landmark. Believing that such a campaign must begin with awareness and appreciation, he published a definitive account of the island's history in 1988. It sounded the alarm. In August 1989, he followed up by coordinating an "open house" on the island.



Common Tern nest

This had never been done before, and is now a celebrated annual event.

1989 Faulker Island Research Project

In October 1989, Helander visited the island with George Gdovin, Guilford's building inspector, whose association with Faulkner Island began with his service with the Search and Rescue Division of the U.S. Coast Guard's Group Long Island Sound. Gdovin's coast guard duties had frequently brought him to the island to deliver provisions. Seeing the extent of the erosion on his visit with Helander, Gdovin organized the Faulkner Island Research Project in February 1990, to develop a topographic survey map of the island. The Project was affiliated with the Little Harbor Laboratory in Guilford, a non-profit marine research organization owned by Sally Richards. An intensive geomorphic study of the island in transition became the subject of his Master's Thesis at Antioch University. The project, completed over five years in Gdovin's spare time, provided critical scientific data that would support the cause of the island preservation.

1990 National Register of Historical Places

While Gdovin acquired the data needed to prove the need for erosion control, Helander sought to gain recognition of the island by the National Register of Historic Places. With aid and advice from AI Hollingsworth, then president of the Guilford Preservation Alliance, and from the Connecticut Historical Commission, this effort was successful and Faulkner Island was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on May 29, 1990. This listing provided recognition of Faulkner's as a cultural resource worthy of preservation at the national level.



Mom and newly hatched chick.

1991 A New Organization

The early minutes of a new organization, soon to be known as the **Faulkner's Light Brigade**, best tell the story of FLB's founding and early endeavors. The first



Mom returning to nest with food for her chicks.

organizational meeting was held in Guilford Free Library on January 24, 1991. The following individuals were present: Rick Maltby, Carolyn Schulz, Gerald Clapp, George Gdovin, Jason Marchi, Eleanor Epler, Sally Richards and Joel Helander

Items discussed at the first meeting included (1) qualifications of committee members, (2) lighthouse revival efforts across the United States, (3) George Gdovin's topographic map project on Faulkner Island, (4) erosion control as a priority for Faulkner Island to protect the lighthouse, (5) the effectiveness of the Block Island Preservation Committee in raising \$2 million to safeguard their island, and lastly, (6) contacting the Island Institute in Rockland, Maine to seek advice. Initially, high priorities included developing a name for the organization and developing a logo. The organization's first publicist was Jason Marchi and the first recording secretary was Sally Richards.

1991 Faulkner's Light Brigade and the First Chairman

It was decided that the name of the organization would be Faulkner's Light Brigade. Joel Helander was elected the first chairman of the FLB. His name is synonymous with the FLB, having guided it through eleven years of extraordinary accomplishments. The foremost of these was the fundraising for the erosion control project on the east side of the island.

1991 Faulkner's Light Brigade Slogan and Logo

The slogan for the FLB came from a logo design contest for middle and high school students in Guilford and Madison. The slogan, "Don't Let the Light Go Out" received the highest score from the judges of the contest. It was submitted by Bryan Ledyard of Guilford High School. A total of 15 entries were received.

The design elements of the logo came from the second place contest winner, Matthew Wygant from Guilford High School, and the third place contest winner Jason Corsi from Daniel Hand High School. These design ele-

ments were then incorporated into a logo designed by local artist and illustrator, Suzanne Kriger.

1991 Guilford Preservation Alliance

The Brigade was formed as a Commission of the Guilford Preservation Alliance (GPA). Its fundamental mission was to investigate the ways and means of saving the historic Faulkner Island Lighthouse, and the island itself, from threatening erosion, especially on the east embankment.

As a Commission of GPA, FLB was authorized to establish its own operating rules, a separate budget and fund raising procedures, as well as its own membership. As a Commission, FLB was included in the GPA's non-profit status with the federal government.

1995 WRDA S650

The "Rescue Campaign" for Faulkner Island was led by FLB and the CT Congressional Delegation who were shepherding the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). WRDA contained a line item for erosion control on Faulkner Island. The line item was for 4.5 million dollars.

1996 Stairway Project

In 1996 the FLB received grants totaling \$10,000 from The Women's Seamen's Friend Society of Connecticut and the Norcross Wildlife Foundation to be used for the replacement of the dilapidated concrete stairway from the island's dock to the top of the island. Russ Santora was the pro bono architect who designed the stairway. A weather resistant tropical hardwood stairway was built by Jonathan Wuerth, a local restoration contractor.

1997 Town Partnership

In 1997 the FLB joined forces with the Town of Guilford as a municipal partner. This partnership was a necessary move since federal funding required a public entity to supervise the distribution of funds.

1998 Lighthouse Restoration

Under First Selectman Edward Lynch, the town applied through the Connecticut Department of Transportation for Intermodal Surface Transportation Enhancement Act (ISTEA) funding. This won \$250,000 for the first FLB lighthouse restoration. The Town commissioned Sally Richards as chair of its Lighthouse Restoration Committee and she was responsible for the administration of the funds. The ISTEA grant was a match grant for which the Faulkner's Light Brigade "matched" \$50,000 to make it possible.

Walter Sedovic Architects of Irvington, New York were chosen to oversee the restoration project. Sedovic has said, "Historic buildings have a layering of time and events that's irreplaceable ... I think it's remarkable to be working on a lighthouse that Jefferson commissioned and represents that period so well." Sedovic chose to restore the tower to the 1871 period.

International Chimney Corporation of Buffalo, New York, the same company that moved two Cape Cod lighthouses, among others, was chosen to complete the restoration of the lighthouse. The restoration included a new ventilation system, the application of an all white breathable coating to make the tower weather tight, painting of the lantern gallery inside and out, a new lightning protection system, installation of a stainless steel door, new 12-pane casement windows in the face of the west wall, restoration of the original weathervane and the scraping and painting of the interior handrail. Another major addition was a 75-square foot entry deck. The project was completed in 1999.

1999 and the Erosion Project

The erosion project began with enlisting the cooperation of our congressional representatives, Senators Joseph Lieberman and Christopher Dodd and Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro. They would be instrumental in obtaining the needed funding for this project. Budget battles in Washington were joined, waged, won, lost and waged again. Congresswoman DeLauro championed the Faulkner Island Appropriation Bill when it stalled in the House of Representatives. She came to the rescue of the appropriation, and at a critical last minute, with the Bill nearly dead, she saved it.

With help from the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Congress, in September 1996, appropriated part of the WRDA erosion control funds. The balance of the \$4.5 million was appropriated in 1998 securing a future for Faulkner's Island.

Then in 1999, when language technicalities in the Connecticut environmental permitting process again delayed the erosion control project, State Representative Patricia Widlitz stepped in and lent a guiding hand.

The U.S. Army Corps plan for preservation, designed to withstand a 50 year storm, became reality in September 2000 with an armada of heavy construction equipment arriving on the island under the direction of Zenone, Inc., low bidder for the project.

The erosion project was a unique engineering accomplishment with major problems and disasters. A floating wharf was built of heavy barges, held in position by giant mechanically driven steel posts. Heavy equipment, trucks, bulldozers, cranes were brought in. A temporary road was built across the island to the eastern bluff, the site of the erosion. A ramp was made for trucks that brought the stone and other materials used to shore up the eroding bluff.



New stone revetment and resloped eastern bluff completed in 2001

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), which inherited the control of the island in 1985, from the departed Coast Guard, required that work be limited to the months of September through April. This limitation was imposed to protect endangered species of terns during the May through August breeding season.

Storms twice hurled the barges against the shore, sinking some and delaying the project for many weeks. The work was completed in 2001.

2001 Making it all Work

All of these projects required a prodigious amount of negotiation. The many federal agencies, including Congress, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Coast Guard that still maintained responsibility for operating the light in the tower, and the Army Corps of Engineers which supervised the erosion project, all had a voice in the projects. In addition, state agencies were involved including the Department of Transportation and the Department of Environmental Protection. And finally, there were several Town agencies with which to contend in all these activities. Each of these governmental units had their own agenda and, as to be expected, they were often in contention. It is not too unrealistic to recognize that without the patient but persistent negotiating of our FLB Chairman, and Board Members assigned to these projects, some of the projects would not have been realized.

2002 Anniversary Celebration

Then there were special events of which the 200th anniversary of the lighthouse is a prime example and was described as follows: “With much thanks to the benevolent weather gods and a determined planning committee, under the stern direction of Chairpersons Ginny and Charlie Baltay, the 200th anniversary of Faulkner Island was celebrated in grand fashion on Saturday and Sunday, September 7th and 8th, 2002.”

Overall an estimated 2,500 attendees participated in an array of activities including five round trips around the island on the schooner Quinipiack, an informational program by the US Fish and Wildlife Service for those fortunate enough to visit the island and a fascinating program at Guilford’s Jacob’s Beach. All in all, it was a fitting culmination of the eleven-year effort by the Faulkner’s Light Brigade to restore the lighthouse and control the erosion that was threatening the island’s survival.

This was truly a community celebration and the planners for the event were up to the challenge. The program on Saturday evening at Jacob’s Beach included songs of the sea by the Guilford High School Voices followed by the locally renowned ‘Chantymen of the Ancient Mariners’. A particularly poignant moment was a recollection of life on the island by former light keepers and their families recruited by Joel Helander from all over the country.

First Selectman Carl Ballestracci, a lifelong resident of Guilford, spoke eloquently about the significance of the lighthouse to Guilford Life and Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro commended the Bicentennial Celebration as an event that strengthened community bonds. And what better way to end the historic event than a dramatic 23 minutes of fireworks shot over the town harbor



Visitors arriving for Open House visit

from Grass Island illuminating spectators at Jacob’s Beach and the town marina and those aboard the schooner moored at the state dock.”

2003 American Lighthouse Foundation

Tim Harrison, founder of the American Lighthouse Foundation (ALF) and editor of Lighthouse Digest, captivated a sizeable audience that turned out to hear him speak on August 9, 2003 at the Greene Community Center. Founded in 1994, the ALF has grown from its New England roots into the foremost nonprofit, all-volunteer organization in the U.S. dedicated to preserving lighthouses.

2004 Henry Whitfield Museum Exhibit

An exhibit at the Henry Whitfield State Museum in Guilford, CT was an opportunity to get a close and refreshing look at the exhibit “Bicentennial Beacon: Faulkner’s Island Lighthouse, 1801-2002”. The exhibit remained open through 2004. The first interpretive center devoted to the refuge and light station, it was a collaborative effort by the museum, Faulkner’s Light Brigade, and the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge. Museum Curator Michael A. McBride’s early vision of the exhibit resulted in a planning meeting with John Kirby, Fred Farnsworth, and Joel Helander in 2001. The exhibit premiered in time for the Bicentennial celebration of the lighthouse in September, 2002. **The exhibit will be on display again September 1-30, 2012.**

2006 Norman Hall Gift

The largest private gift, in the history of the Faulkner’s Light Brigade, was received in May 2006. The Brigade received \$30,000 from a charitable trust established by the late Norman Hall. He spent summers with his family on Vineyard Point in Guilford where he had a clear view of Faulkner Island and Lighthouse. Norman was a remarkable person who was challenged his entire life by a serious congenital defect, spina bifida. A lack of motor control in his lower extremities meant that he needed to use crutches. Despite his handicap, Norman showed everyone that he could beat the odds. Until the day of his sudden death, he worked as an accountant at the Choate Rosemary Hall School.

2007 Basin and Light House Repairs

A major project was completed in 2007. The work included removal of the existing wooden dock with its pilings, installation of a steel bulkhead around a concrete pier, dredging the boat basin and construction of a floating dock with four pilings. The project cost \$322,637 and was paid for with federal funds.

The staircase and ladder inside the lighthouse were also restored. Since the staircase and ladder are metal, they were stripped, welded and painted.

2008 Renovation of the Generator Building

What used to be a one room building, the Generator Building was expanded to house the USFWS interns who study the terns throughout the summer. The expanded facility provides better space for working, cooking and lodging.



Sleeping facilities for interns



New kitchen facilities

2009 Tax Exempt Status and the Junior Brigade

FLB became a freestanding organization with the approval of their Tax Exempt Status by the Internal Revenue Service in November 2009. FLB was extremely grateful to the Guilford Preservation Alliance for allowing them to be a commission for 18 years.



The Junior Brigade at an open house

The Junior Brigade was formed to encourage the involvement of high school students. The earliest members were from the Sound School in New Haven. The Junior Brigade is involved with work parties in April and the Open House in September

2010 Lighthouse Restoration

Russ Santoro, a local architect and FLB Board Member, agreed to draw up a plan to restore the lighthouse in 2009. Once FLB received the approval of the State Historic Preservation Officer a Request for Proposal was sent out to potential candidates. Four proposals were submitted to the Restoration Committee.



Before renovation

The International Chimney Corporation of Buffalo, New



Russ Santoro, left, and Steve Scyoc, ICC, on lighthouse renovation project

York, the same company that moved two Cape Cod lighthouses and completed the 1999 FLB lighthouse restoration, was chosen to complete the restoration of the lighthouse.

The restoration started in October 2010 and included power washing with fresh water transported to the island, repointing the interior and exterior, the application of an all-white breathable coating to make the tower weather tight, painting of the lantern gallery, installation of ventilated stainless steel doors, repair of the 12-pane casement windows in the face of the west wall and restoration of the original weathervane. The restoration work was suspended in December 2010 due to foul weather and was finished at the end of March 2011. Total cost was \$121,000 and it was completely supported by the generous contributions of our members.



Russ Santoro and Steve Scyoc take one last look at the completed restoration, March 2011



ICC reinstalled the remodeled front door, March 2011

The Future

The FLB's future is dependent on maintaining an active membership. To promote a continuing interest, FLB publishes the *OCTAGON*, an annual publication which describes present and future projects. In addition, every winter the Brigade offers a lecture series at the Guilford Free Library. In the spring there are important work parties to prepare the island for the arrival of the birds. The terns arrive in early May and depart the later part of August. As a result, only the summer research interns are allowed on the island. In the fall, generally the second weekend in September, FLB, together with the USF&WS and the USCG, offers an "Open House" on the island for the general public. Increased public access is definitely a future possibility. For example, opening the island for the entire month of September may be possible. There would be Island Keepers living on the island for the month.

FLB will continue to assist the US Coast Guard with the maintenance of the lighthouse. In 2016, the lighthouse will need to be painted and a complete restoration will likely be needed again in 2021. Building a new house on the island is a possibility in the future. Creating a Faulkner Island Interpretive Center on the mainland is another possibility.

The Brigade's future looks bright. "We won't let the light go out."

(Editor's Note: *The vast majority of the text in the historical overview was reprinted from earlier editions of the FLB Octagon*)



<http://faulknerslight.org>

New FLB Website

The Faulkner Light Brigades Board of Director's is proud to announce the establishment of our new website that was designed by Cathi Bosco of C&D Studios in Madison, CT. The FLB Webmaster is Susan Weady.

The website has the early history of the Brigade, a weather station, an island quiz and lots more. Everyone has the ability to subscribe to the website using your email address. When new articles are posted on the site, an email will be sent to everyone who has subscribed to the site.



A webcam on the island will be activated soon. The webcam will be focused on the lighthouse or the boat basin which will allow everyone the opportunity to see the conditions on the island in real time. Please visit the site and subscribe at <http://faulknerslight.org>

Silent Auction

Keith Mueller, from Killingworth, CT, does award winning avian art and wood sculpturing. He generously carved a Tern for the Faulkner's Light Brigade. The carved tern will be placed in a silent auction. Please check the Brigade Website for the details concerning the auction <http://faulknerslight.org>.



Faulkner Island's Recovery from Tropical Storm Irene

by Rick Potvin from USFWS



Aerial views of Faulkner's Island post Hurricane Irene courtesy of the CG Auxiliary

At first glance, Faulkner Island seemed to have weathered the autumn storm well, but closer examination revealed substantial damage to the island's boat basin, shoreline, and some areas of the revetment, undermining the protection it offers. The force of the waves also toppled a section of the breakwater which protects the boat basin. Four and five ton stones were overturned and rolled into the boat basin. This decreased the size and area where it is safe to navigate watercraft. This damage particularly effects the safe operations of large boats entering the basin on low tides. Also, the concrete portion of the pier was severely undermined which created a void completely through the pier measuring approximately 8ft wide and 5ft tall.

Along the east side of the island there is evidence that the waves overtopped the protective revetment causing erosion of the hillside. Toward the north end of the island, one can see a number of slides caused by this undermining. On the south end of the island between five and six

feet of the island was eroded. This area will continue to erode through a natural process until the incline reaches its natural repose. Along the west side, much of the unprotected hillside was eroded and it would be logical to



expect future slides because of this undermining. Further the equipment road that assisted the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in bringing supplies to the top of the island was completely washed out, which creates very significant logistical challenges that we are only beginning to overcome.

USFWS engineers visited the site within two weeks of the storm's passing and estimated the damage to the island to be over \$1million. USFWS engineers documented the damage and the refuge quickly submitted their reports and the appropriate work orders to facilitate repair. At this time though, the refuge has not received funding for repairs and the damaged facilities have been placed on the USFWS maintenance backlog.



Also damaged were some of the USFWS research facilities and wildlife management supplies. The north spit of the island lost all of its tern nesting boxes and completely lost its observation blind which is critical to the observa-



Shaun Roche and members of the Junior Brigade prepare the island for the terns in April 2012

tion and management of the endangered roseate terns nesting there. Also, the observation blinds on the south side were overturned and heavily damaged. Replacing and repairing these assets was truly a community effort. Cadets from the United States Coast Guard Academy built



Sean Healey mows the grass on the island April 2012

and replaced all the lost tern boxes with assistance from students at Connecticut College, the New London Science and Technology Magnet High School and staff from the National Audubon Society. The blinds were repaired



Scouts place new walkway between the stairs and the bunk house

by the boy scouts and scout leaders from Hebron, and help in preparing the island for the terns was provided by students from the Sound School (Junior Brigade) and Westbrook High School. Additionally, an Eagle Scout project was launched to construct new boardwalks to facilitate the movement of staff and volunteers around the island during nesting season. Finally a generous contribution from Faulkner's Island Light Brigade allowed the



New pilings were placed in the basin in April 2012

repair of the docking facility which was heavily damaged during an earlier storm. This dock has been in place for three weeks now.

The refuge appreciates help from all of its partners as it pursues its conservation mission at Faulkner Island. Special thanks to Faulkner's Light Brigade who have been fantastic supporters of the USFWS mission as well as strong advocates for the public to visit the island and learn about its natural and cultural history.



Rick Potvin greets visitors at an Open House

2012 Faulkner Island and Lighthouse Open House

The Faulkner's Light Brigade, together with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the US Coast Guard, will be sponsoring an Open House on Saturday Sept 8th and Sunday Sept 9th. Details of the Open House will be posted on the FLB Website at <http://faulknerslight.org>

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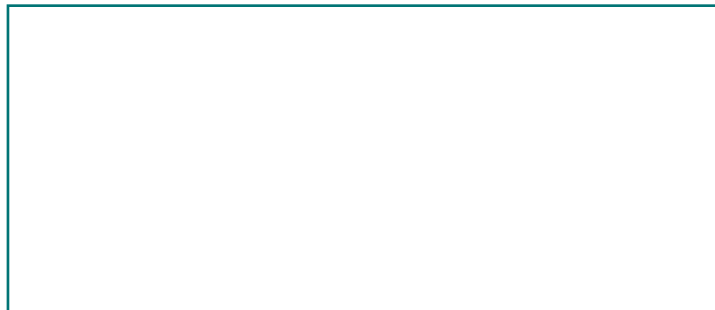
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Published by Faulkner's Light Brigade
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