



Newsletter of the Faulkner's Light Brigade

March 2000

Below are some articles from our newsletter for March 2000. The name "The Octagon" refers to the shape of the historic lighthouse on Faulkner's Island.

If you [become a member](#) of the Faulkner's Light Brigade you will receive The Octagon each month. Each issue has current news, a calendar of events and features about the island's fascinating history.

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Restoration Complete

Faulkner's Light, resplendent again after years of neglect, proudly stands as sentinel of the Sound

Guilford's Faulkner's Lighthouse Restoration Committee, after inspecting recent work at the lighthouse, voted on December 2 to approve the final completion. The work was done by the International Chimney Corporation, the same firm that recently completed the move of the Cape Hatteras Light.

The project includes a ventilation system that allows the 40-foot tall stone masonry tower to breathe, remortaring and the application of an all-white breathable coating to make the tower weathertight, painting of the lantern gallery inside and out, a new lightning protection system and installation of a three-panel stainless steel door.

A decorative brownstone lintel now stands above the service room door near the top of the tower. The three-foot lintel, weighing some 150 pounds, is cut from native Connecticut brownstone from a quarry in Portland. Also included are 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.

A major feature of this most recent phase of the project is the addition of a 75-square foot entry deck. The deck, with its posts encased in concrete extending to a depth of 2'6", is sturdily constructed from pau lope and finished with teak trim. Pau lope, a dense tropical wood highly resistant to insects and decay, was chosen to match the new staircase, completed in 1995, that now rises 31 feet from the wharf along the west embankment to the crest of the island.

Committee Chair Sally Richards thanks Architect Walter Sedovic for his devotion to what became for him a labor of love. She also thanks ICC's John Stevens and his crew who lived on the island under very crude conditions while performing work of the highest quality, Phil Bohannon, who transported the crew, committee

members, and materials on many trips to the island, and George Gdovin, Guilford Building Inspector and Clerk of the Works for the project. Richards says Mark St. Germain of the Connecticut Department of Transportation, the agency in charge of Intermodal Surface Transportation Enhancement Act (ISTEA) funding, deserves special recognition for his devotion to the project. St. Germain told Richards that the result of the restoration is one of the best he has seen. St. Germain and Gdovin often encountered harsh weather conditions on many of their numerous inspection trips to the island. As a result, Richards says that especially windy days have become known as "Mark St. Germain Days."

The entire project cost \$202,400 for which the federal share was \$161,920. The committee will hold a final inspection in December 2000 to determine if there are any problems that should be addressed under the warranty.

Also serving on the committee: Ted Creighton, vice-chair; Terry Holland-Buckley; Pat Widlitz; Rick Maltby; Joel Helander; Herman Spiegel; Herb Noyes and Fred Vogt.

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Mark Your Calendars!

Due to the exceptionally strong attendance at the 1999 Open House, this year two consecutive days are being set aside. It is hoped that this will minimize the impact on the island of such a large influx of people on a single day. The dates chosen for the 2000 Open House are Saturday, September 16 and Sunday, September 17. These dates are subject to change depending on construction activity by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Watch for updated information in the August issue of Octagon.

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Erosion Control Project Pending

Faulkner's lighthouse is now restored, but it has not yet been saved. The light, the roseate tern, an endangered species, and the island refuge itself continue to be threatened by runaway erosion. We can only celebrate a save when the erosion control project is complete, for that will represent the culmination of the master plan of preservation on Faulkner's.

Only 34 feet of lawn space now remain between the edge of the steep, unvegetated bluff and the tower's foundation stones. In 1991, when Faulkner's Light Brigade began its rescue mission, there were 37 feet. Continuing erosion in the open bluff face beneath the tower threaten its structural integrity.

Mandated by the U.S. Congress with a \$4.5 million appropriation (1998), the construction project to halt erosion will be administered by the New England Division of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. It involves

the construction of a stone revetment designed to break wave attack. The revetment will extend some 1350 feet along the base of the island's east embankment. Current plans also call for the planting of hardy vegetation on the upper bluff face in a new 1:2 slope to prevent rain and wind erosion.

The project is not a simple one. The start date has been deferred from September 1998 to September 1999 and, now, to September 2000. Moreover, there are narrow window periods for construction because of the tern nesting season (May - August). The Army Corps' design plans call for the work to be onw in two or more phases over a period of two or more years.

The Corps has been working closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (owner of the island) and the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to resolve issues regarding permits under the Federal Coastal Zone Management Act and Federal Clean Water act. The Corps also spent much time in 1999 modifying the plans to allow barge access off the southwest quadrant of the island. Thi requires a second DEP permit for dredging and/or filling for a narrow channel.

Meanwhile, time and tide wait for no one. The clock continues to tick and nature continues to exact its toll on the island. Friends of Faulkner's everywhere eagerly anticipate the start of the erosion control project later this year.

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Name that Island

The first name given to Faulkner's Island for which any record exists is the name used by the native American people who lived along the south central Connecticut shoreline. They called the island Massancummock meaning the place of the great fish hawks.

The first European to find the island was probably the Dutch explorer Adren Block who sailed through the waters of Long Island Sound as early as 1614. The island appears on early Dutch maps as "Valcken Eylandt." This name is very likely borrowed from the English translation of the native American name. The early English settlers called it Falcon Island. Andrew Leete, the son of Connecticut Governor William Leete, became the first owner of Falcon Island in 1677.

The name evolved from Falcon to Faulkner. The Faulkner gamily of Leete's Island in Guilford provides an illustration of how the spelling may have evolved. Charles Faulkner (1731-1803) was a lifelong resident of Leete's Island. He served in Captain Vaill's Coast Guard during the American Revolution and was wounded when a marauding party of British raided Guilford in 1781. Charles' grandfather used the spelling "Falconer."

President John Adams signed an Act authorizing the purchase of Faulkner's Island for the construction of a lighthouse on March 3, 1801. The deed transferring title to the island from Meded Stone to the U.S. Government identifies the isalnd as "Faulknrs." This should have settled the issue of the spelling of the island's name, but it did not.

The U.S. Board on Geographic Names, a board established by President Benjamin Harrison composed of various Federal agencies, determined that the name should be Falkner Island in 1891. That is why the U.S.

Geological Survey and other government agencies insist on the Falkner spelling and that explains why readers of this publication will notice two different spellings of the island's name in this issue. Popular usage and the Faulkner's Light Brigade continue to embrace the spelling which appears in the 1801 Act of Congress.

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