



The Octagon

Newsletter of the Faulkner's Light Brigade

August, 2022 Issue 1

President's Note

It's back! After a five year hiatus, the new edition of "The Octagon" is here. This esteemed publication is now in a full color printed version and in a digital format on the Faulkner's Light Brigade webpage (faulknerslight.org). This recreated publication proceeds from the newly reactivated Faulkner's Light Brigade. The Board of the Brigade has reconvened with a blend of new and past members. We are starting at ground zero with the membership and are building an active and committed group. Welcome!

The Faulkner's Light Brigade had been quiescent for a few years after a 30 year history of important and critical accomplishments. In the fall of last year, after recognizing the ongoing need for its involvement in Faulkner's island, the former Board began its search for new members and a President. After a 6 month process, in February 2022 I was named the new Chairman and President of the Board of the Faulkner's Light Brigade. What a privilege it is to lead this important and very distinguished group. At my first meeting with the past board members, I was given an 800 page binder of archived meeting minutes, a folder with several past issues of "The Octagon", and a detailed history of the work and past accomplishments of the group. When the six inch binder of Minutes was handed to me, I thought I could skim through it in an evening and then put it away for future reference. I was mistaken, this was not going to be a "quick read". From page one, it was clear that this would be a comprehensive review and valuable history lesson of Faulkner's and the Brigade. I was impressed with the thoroughness, professionalism, and transparency of the previous Board of Directors. From its inception in 1991, it was very clear that

the work, dedication, and contributions of every member of the Faulkner's Light Brigade played an essential role in saving the Lighthouse and Island from imminent destruction. As in the past, and perhaps more so today Faulkner's Light Brigade continues to be a critically important group. Although the Faulkner's Light Brigade has been rediscovered, our mission has not changed...to preserve Faulkner's Island and it's Lighthouse. With much anticipation I met with the newly formed Board in April 2022. It was clear from the start that there is much to be done. Many ideas were discussed and put into motion as we reviewed our mission and set long and short term goals. Republishing "The Octagon" was high on our priority list, and we set an aggressive timeline to have it in circulation by mid summer. We discussed our necessary partnering with the Federal Agencies that keep the island and lighthouse. New life was being breathed into our group. It was exciting to be part of this new and vibrant organization.

Faulkner's island and lighthouse sit unassuming three and one half miles off the coast of Guilford. In the simplest of characterizations it defines the coastal waters of Guilford. To many of Guilford's visitors it is a great seascape and a background for the countless "selfies". Although it is an important landmark, it is much more. On an operational level it is a critical navigation aid, its light directing mariners for over two centuries. It is however, a vibrant and critically important ecosystem. It is a resting place for the many birds, seals, and other creatures that are passing through the Long Island Sound on their migratory paths. It is one of two nesting places in the northeast for the endangered Roseate Tern. The American Oystercatcher also shares Faulkner's rocky coast as a nesting place. Faulkner's Island is unfortunately the target of severe

storms and unpredictable weather conditions. It's shores are subject to the continuous damaging forces of the sea and wind. These conditions define it's fate, but also delineate the mission of the Faulkner's Light Brigade.

My sincere thanks and appreciation to all the authors and contributors that have made this issue of The Octagon a reality. Special thanks to Joel Helander for keeping the mission of the Brigade alive and pertinent. Thanks to Deanna Broderick for her ongoing work with the Tern project. Thanks to Bill and Elaine Lincoln for keeping the data base active and current. Thank you to our editor Dr. Kenneth J. Lee and Graphic Designer Jeanne Grenier for their outstanding work in putting this publication together.

I sincerely hope you enjoy this edition of The Octagon. I invite you to partner with me to "keep the light shining".

*Anthony J. Coppola, MD
President and Chairman*



Historic Portrait Gallery of Faulkner's Island Lightkeepers

by Joel Helander

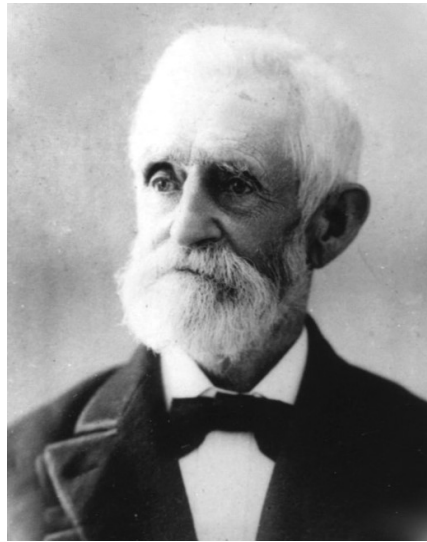
Since July of 1802, when President Thomas Jefferson commissioned Joseph Griffing of Guilford as the first lightkeeper for newly-built Faulkner's Lighthouse at an annual salary of \$200, a long succession of lighthouse keepers helped the American lighthouse earn its enduring symbolism of integrity and reliability.

Early keepers were civilians employed by the U.S. Lighthouse Service. Usually, they were accompanied by their families who displayed remarkable resourcefulness and resiliency in turning a life of isolation and hardship into opportunities for unusual hobbies and vocations. Here are a few of the colorful personalities who served under the USLHS and then (1939) under the U.S. Coast Guard.



Captain Eli Kimberly
(1818–1851)

The record shows that in his 33-year tenure, longer than any other keeper, Capt. Kimberly often risked his own personal safety to rescue many a sailor from a watery grave during an era when commercial marine traffic in Long Island Sound was significantly increasing. The gregarious Kimberly and his wife, Polly, renowned for their hospitality to mariners and pleasure boating parties, raised twelve children on their island home. They hired a live-in schoolmarm to teach the children their ABCs. It is a wonder how the Kimberlys managed living on an annual salary of \$350. Eventually, like many keepers, Kimberly retired to Guilford village where his house still stands at 173 Whitfield Street. "Kimberly's Reef" in the Sound is named after him.



Captain Oliver N. Brooks
(1851–1882)

Capt. Brooks was a man of strength and daring who distinguished himself by heroic rescues of shipwrecked sailors. His daring rescue of five people aboard the Schooner Moses F. Webb in 1858 brought him national acclaim as well as recognition from U.S. Congress, which boosted his annual salary from \$350. to \$500. Brooks was also a man of scientific and cultural interests who experimented with light and sound, studied ornithology and taxidermy, and played the violin. His equally accomplished wife, Mary, was named Second Assistant keeper of the light in 1879. Two daughters raised on the island declined to leave their parents until their 31-year lightkeeping commitment ended. The family's mainland home was at 49 Church Street in Guilford village.



Captain Ernest Hermann
(1890–1901)

Like his predecessors, German-born Capt. Hermann practiced subsistence farming, dividing his time between the relentless demands of lighthouse duty, cultivating a garden, and keeping livestock. His government logbook shows that he harvested potatoes, turnips, corn, lettuce, beans, and hay. His wife rebelled at their life of island isolation and chose to remain in Guilford village. This allowed their two sons, Frederick and Albert, an opportunity to attend school and enjoy a wider orbit of social life. The family's mainland home was at 44 South Fair Street.



Captain Howard Poe
(1901–1909)

English-born Capt. Poe was cited for bravery in the March 1906 Shore Line Times newspaper. He defied a raging blizzard to steer his small boat back to Faulkner’s island, with wife and daughter aboard, to start the oil engines for operating the light station’s fog signal. One foggy morning in 1906, while Poe was operating the fog signal, he was astonished to hear voices in a cloud above, querying, “where are we?” As it turned out, the voices belonged to two lost aeronauts who had left New York City in a big Nirvana balloon, bound for Saybrook. Keeper Poe told them to keep straight ahead and turn left!



Captain Arthur Jensen
(1911–1916)

A Norwegian immigrant, Jensen went to sea at age 14 and later served in the Navy during the Spanish-American War. He enjoyed music and kept a record player on the island, rejoicing in the freedom from social strictures that island life provided. When his two infants fell ill, however, Capt. Jensen was unable to get immediate medical attention for them and they died on the island. Devastated, he requested immediate transfer to Eaton’s Neck Light Station, New York. Mr. & Mrs. Arthur Jensen’s daughter, Vivian Chapin of Port Townsend, Washington, visited Guilford in 1993.



Captain Herbert Greenwood
(1916–1919)

Herbert Greenwood was born in Westerly, Rhode Island and entered the U.S. Lifesaving Service in 1906. He passed a probationary stint as keeper of Fire Island, NY Light Station and from there was transferred to Faulkner’s Island as Assistant Keeper. Capt. Greenwood became head keeper during the middle of the tumultuous World War I period, when he was required to keep a sharp lookout for potential invaders. All visitors were barred from the island. When time permitted, he experimented with boat-building, lobstering, and gardening. Every day, he rowed around the island both for fun and exercise until his promotion to the coveted Coney Island, NY Light Station. “Greenie,” as his friends called him, was interviewed at his home (now gone) at 434 Old Whitfield Street by Joel Helander as a teenager.



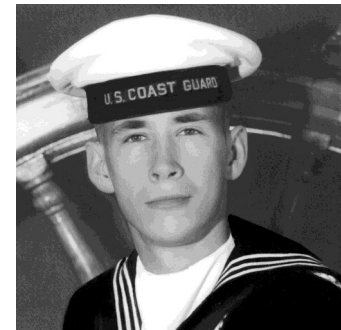
Captain Leonard Fuller
(1919–1924)

Capt. Fuller, a native of Florida, became controversial as keeper of the light. He served during Prohibition when rum runners carried on a lively illicit trade in Long Island Sound. A number of Guilford residents, including an Internal Revenue Service officer, were suspected of coordinating such activities. It is alleged that Faulkner’s Island was an important stopover for the smuggling boats and that Leonard and his brother, Samuel, who succeeded him as keeper, were in on the action. A former Guilford informant provided a reliable account that their liquor bottles—“a lot of it”—were slung into the water in burlap sacks. Samuel Fuller fell into trouble with the State Board of Fisheries and Game for tampering with the pots of other lobstermen.



Captain George Zuius
(1935–1941)

Capt. Zuius was the last civilian keeper in the old lighthouse establishment before it merged with the U.S. Coast Guard. He kept the light burning at Faulkner’s Light Station during the devastating New England Hurricane of 1938, which swept away the boat house. The following year, Zuius put away the kerosene oil lamps when electric generators were finally installed on the island. His daughter, Barbara (pictured above), who has been called the “quintessential child of Faulkner’s,” recalls taking baths in a galvanized tub and playing with her dog, “Rexie,” and also a pet chicken. Barbara Philipp is now an octogenarian living in Hernando, Florida.



Captain Mark C. Robinson
(1975–1976)

Capt. Robinson was actually a U.S. Coast Guard Boatswain Mate whose first assignment was with the Search and Rescue Division of Group Long Island Sound in New Haven. When transferred to Faulkner’s Island as keeper or officer in charge (OIC), his friends were shocked. They couldn’t believe that island life in Connecticut would hold any promise for a young Virginian. But Mark recognized an island utopia in the workplace. He loved the out-of-doors and the sea. He loved hunting and fishing. The island offered remoteness for quiet recreation and thinking. Every two weeks he could spring free for one week of compensatory leave. That’s where he was during the fateful day of March 15, 1976—on leave—when the light station was destroyed by fire. Mark can tell the inside story of what happened on that day. He returned to Guilford in 2002 to participate in the gala Bicentennial celebration of Faulkner’s Island Lighthouse.

Springtime on Faulkner's Island

By Deanna Broderick

Spring time means Spring cleaning on Faulkner's Island. Getting the island set up for the reTERN of the terns is the main focus of the spring volunteer work parties. Nesting season usually begins in late April or early May. Spring cleaning of the island is a unique experience, starting with the attire. The water temperature is quite cold and the air temperature is also cool so in order to make the trek out to the island safely volunteers have to wear survival suits. What is a survival suit? These are super cozy full body suits, bright orange in color, festooned with long zippers, Velcro closures and to complete the ensemble a bright orange whistle. They make you look like an Oompah Loompa! I am more than happy to don one of these fashionable suits. If I were to fall overboard it would keep me afloat and prevent hyperthermia, win, win.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Stewart B. McKinney



National Wildlife Refuge provides transport for the volunteers out to Faulkner's Island via a boat. After a pleasant boat ride with scenic views of the island and the light house we arrive at Faulkner's Island. The volunteers immediately get to work unloading tools and supplies. The tools and

supplies are carried through the boat house and up the steep stairs to the top of Faulkner's island. It is always a special sight to see the light house appear as you reach the top of the stairs. The group gathers at the research station, one of the three structures on the island. This is where the seasonal interns live and work. The research station has an open floor plan with a space for tools and supplies, a dining area, a kitchen with a microwave and refrigerator. Another large room houses the bunk area. Each bunk has a closet for the interns to store their personal gear. Around one of the outer walls is desk space for the interns to use. After the quick tour of the station the volunteers are broken up into groups of three and given their work assignments.

The focus for this trip is to get the tern nesting habitat set up. Due to erosion and habitat loss establishing clear areas for the almost six thousand terns to nest is a priority.

Clearing the vegetation is task one. Some of the vegetation can be cleared by mowing (bush whacking) with power equipment, but the rocky areas where the mower can't operate need to be cleared using hand tools. Due to the restoration project in the early-2000s which stabilized the slopes of the island for lighthouse protection, there are now "shelves" that surround the island made from man-made materials (rip-rap rocks and gravel) located at the bottom



slopes of the island. These areas need to be cleared by hand and getting to them can be a challenge. The volunteers need to be part billy-goat to get down the steep slopes of the island, this volunteer slides down on her bottom! Using loppers, rakes and our hands we clear the dead vegetation from last season. Once the shelf is clear tern nesting boxes and pallets are set out, arranged and finished off with pea gravel. Terns do not gather material to make a "nest". They create a "scape" in the pea gravel and lay their eggs on the ground.

On the top of the island and on some of the shelves, special areas called productivity plots are set up. Each season a sort of temporary pen is set up and taken down so mowing can occur.

A productivity plot is a low fence that is installed using rebar and short metal fencing. The fence is zip tied to the bars of rebar and the bottom of the fence is buried so the chicks cannot escape before they fledge. The Common Terns voluntarily nest in these areas and raise their young. Chick shelters (wooden boxes) are placed inside the plots so the little chicks have a place to get out of

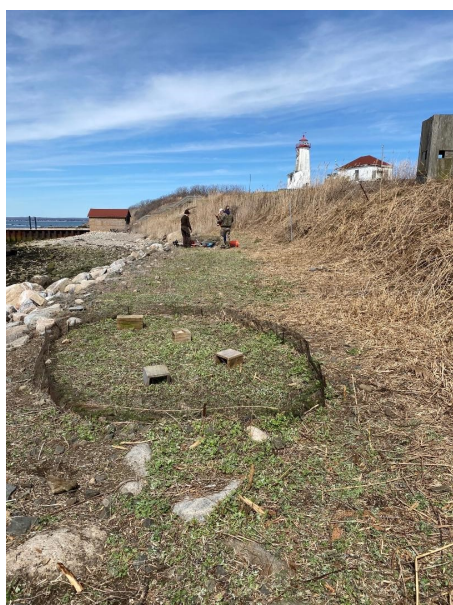




from the research station to the lighthouse help the interns move around the island during the summer as the grasses grow quickly in the warm weather. During nesting season, the interns need to carefully watch every foot step as the terns “nest” everywhere, even on the walkways and staircase.



A special Thank you to Rick Potvin, Kris Vagos, Shaun Roche and Sean Healy from U.S. Fish and Wildlife for arranging the volunteer opportunities on Faulkner’s Island. The “Mission” of the US Fish and Wildlife Service is, “Working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance, fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.” I look forward to continuing to work with them on this important mission on Faulkner Island.



the weather and away from predators. The summer interns monitor the chick’s growth, monitor what type of fish they are fed and place bands on their legs. When full grown the chicks are able to fly out of the temporary enclosure.

Unfortunately for the terns there are predators that try to eat their eggs and chicks. Having summer interns on the island is a great deterrent but the



peregrine falcon, crows, gulls and black-crowned night herons are determined. This year U.S. Fish and Wildlife Biologist, Kris Vagos is testing out 3 different style nest box designs to help deter the predators. A group of volunteers assembled the new style boxes and set them up on the area known as the north spit. The north spit is the area of Faulkner’s that is home to the federally endangered Roseate tern. The north spit is one of the areas of the island that is being adversely affected by erosion. Much of the spit has been washed away by storms and normal tide cycles. Volunteers worked to increase the usable area of the north spit by stacking rocks to create a higher area to place the nest boxes. The new style boxes were set up in groups of three and carefully leveled so the eggs would not roll out. Pea gravel was added to the inside of the boxes to attract the terns. Lastly, a rock is placed on top of each box to add weight so the box will not blow away in strong winds.

The last task for the volunteers is to replace the wooden walkways that were moved for mowing. The wooden walkway extending from the staircase to the research station and the brick walkway extending



Faulkner's Island Light Station: Pre-Fire (1976)



Drawing by Bud Gaudio, graphic design artist



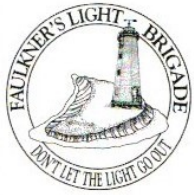
“I have always been inspired by the unwavering commitment of the members of the Faulkner’s Light Brigade to ensuring the preservation of Faulkner’s Island, its lighthouse and of the nesting grounds of the common terns as well as our endangered roseate terns. This unique treasure of the Long Island Sound, once threatened by erosion and neglect, is here today because of the Faulkner’s Light Brigade, the tenacity of its members, and the generosity of those who want to protect and preserve the Sound and its many facets. I have been so proud to work with all of you over my tenure in Congress and always find myself in awe of your dedication to your continuing mission: coordinating annual “open houses for the public, assisting the U.S. Coast Guard with lighthouse maintenance, and providing education about maritime history in Long Island Sound. It is truly a beloved landmark. I am delighted to see the release of the Octagon newsletter once again and I want to extend my deepest thanks to you, members past and present, for your outstanding work and I look forward to continuing our work together.”

*Rosa DeLauro
(U.S. Representative, Third District, Connecticut)*

Invitation to Join Faulkner's Light Brigade

It is our privilege to invite you to become a member of the Faulkner's Light Brigade. We are a growing group of diverse people with a bold and important vision. Faulkner's Island and Light, although modest in size, is vast in its environmental significance and beauty. Each member of the Faulkners Light Brigade plays a pivotal role in preserving the beauty and function of this great landmark and ecosystem. You are invited to renew your membership or become a new member the Faulkner's Light Brigade. Please consider partnering with us as we continue to outwork our mission. Every tax-deductible donation, regardless of amount will be used for the furtherance of preserving this vital landmark. Please join us. Donations can be made by mail using the attached mailer or electronically through our website (www.faulknerslight.org). Thank you for your support.

Anthony J. Coppola, M.D.
President and Chairman



Contributions to the Brigade are tax deductible

Checks should be made payable to: **The Faulkner's Light Brigade**
and mailed to: P.O. Box 444, Guilford, CT 06437

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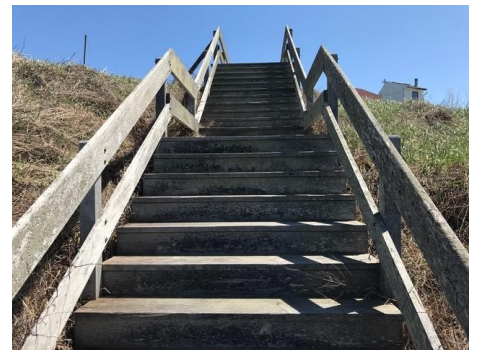
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Non-Profit Org.
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The name Octagon refers to the shape of the historic lighthouse on Faulkner's Island, a beacon to mariners since 1802