

THE OCTAGON

Newsletter of the
Faulkner's Light Brigade
Spring 2004

A Commission of the
Guilford Preservation Alliance



Foul weather kept visitors off Faulkner's Island until the last day of the 2003 Open House. Those who came enjoyed a bracing Fall day. Skipper Nick Chieppo and Mate Tonya Anderson take anchored guests ashore aboard *Sachem*.

Photo by Rob Beecher

Faulkner's Island Exhibit Remains Open Through 2004

To the millions of people who envision drama, romance, and tragedy when they see a lighthouse, Faulkner's Island is no disappointment. For 201 years she has been to Long Island Sound what Lady Liberty is to New York Harbor—a revered landmark and welcoming beacon to mariners and mainlanders alike. As a protected wildlife refuge owned by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the island is open to the public only on a very limited basis. The exhibit at the Henry Whitfield State Museum in Guilford, CT is your opportunity to get a close and refreshing look at this monument to the American nautical soul.

Thanks to the Connecticut Commission on Arts, Tourism, Culture, History and Film, the new state agency that operates the museum, the exhibit "Bicentennial Beacon: Faulkner's Island Lighthouse, 1801-2002" will remain open through 2004. The first interpretive center devoted to the refuge and light station, it is 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.

Although implemented on a shoestring budget, the exhibit has all the qualities of a first-class museum exhibition

thanks to its major benefactors: Mr. Guido Petra of Petra Construction Corp. who supplied labor and materials for the display, and Joel Helander who lent photographs and artifacts from his personal collection. Mr. McBride and Assistant Curator Michelle Parrish have ingeniously redecorated two rooms with a maritime theme that recalls a Victorian lightkeeper's dwelling, replete with a Franklin stove. They have also organized the exhibit on a timeline based on Helander's book on island history. Visitors travel through time to witness early Native American use of the island, its farming by colonial residents, its purchase by the U.S. Government, and the lighthouse's construction. The colorful lives of the lightkeepers and their families are recounted, as is the devastating fire of 1976, the transfer of island jurisdiction from the U.S. Coast Guard to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and Dr. Jeffrey Spendelow's dedicated tern project.

The centerpiece for the exhibit is decidedly the 4th order Fresnel lens on loan from the U.S. Coast Guard's Office of Aids to Navigation in Boston. The lens was manufactured in France and is identical to the one used as a beacon at Faulkner's. It accompanies an original GE 1000 watt bulb, the last source of illumination before the fire of '76, which dwarfs the 9.25 watt bulb and replica plastic lens used on the island today (see p. 2). One of the curious Leslie-Tyfon trumpet

Continues on page 3

Open House 2003



Cynthia Coughenour, USFWS Assistant Refuge Manager, assists guests during the 2003 Open House. *Photo by Rob Beecher*



Dane Natto of the US Coast Guard takes in the spectacular view from the top. *Photo by Rob Beecher*



Schooner *Quinnipiak* prepares to make sail for a cruise around Faulkner's. *Photo by Rob Beecher*



Bat's-eye view of the new Fresnel lens. *Photo by Rob Beecher*



FLB Chairman Fred Farnsworth ► descends the beacon room via the restored wrought-iron stairway. *Photo by Rob Beecher*

◀ Bully! President "Teddy" Roosevelt returns in the person of actor Jim Foote to remind posterity of its duty to preserve wildlife. *Photo by Joel Helander*

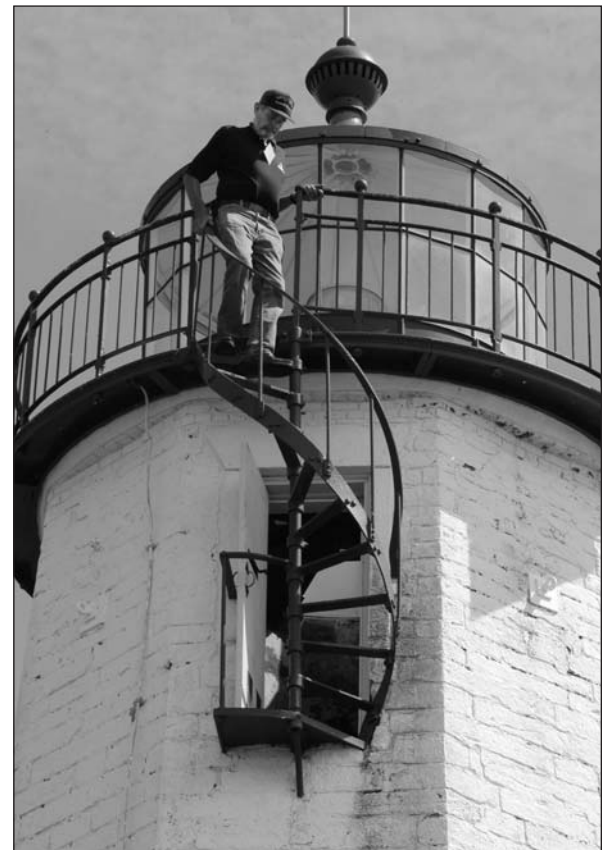


Exhibit Remains Open

Continues from page 1



foghorns introduced to Faulkner's after 1934 is also on display.

If you have ever wondered what the tern scientists do on Faulkner's Island but have never attended the annual Open House (see p. 5), this is your opportunity to find out. One section of the exhibit is devoted to the "Faulkner Island Tern Project." Another spotlights the island's erosion emergency, the pioneering survey work of George Gdovin and Little Harbor Laboratory, and the U.S. Army Corps' of Engineers' erosion control project. Phase One of the project was completed in the year 2001, incorporating a

stone revetment to break waves and support the embankment. This massive bulwark is nearly 20 feet high and 50 feet wide at the base. The upper embankment or bluff on the eastern side of the island has been re-contoured to a gentler 45 degree slope and revegetated.

The Bicentennial Beacon Exhibit has received national coverage in *Lighthouse Digest* and has helped to raise museum attendance to 20,000 per year. With an activity workshop area specifically designed for children, the exhibit is geared to persons of all ages. A television monitor also features a WTNH videotape of the sights and sounds of beautiful Faulkner's. If you would like to experience this romantic island in a way that will stir your senses, visit the Whitfield Museum in Guilford in 2004!



Overcast, blustery conditions did not deter these hardy visitors. *Photo by Rob Beecher*

The Henry Whitfield State Museum at 248 Old Whitfield Street in Guilford, CT is open April 1 to Dec. 14, Wed.-Sun., 10 am to 4:30 pm. For more information call (203) 453-2457 or e-mail whitfieldmuseum@snet.net

Limited Edition Figurine of Faulkner's Lighthouse Available



The design has been discontinued, but with the help of Hilltop Orchards in Branford, CT Faulkner's Light Brigade is offering for sale a limited number of these individually signed Harbour Lights® figurines. As all profits benefit FLB, your purchase is exempt from all sales tax. Each figurine is hand-numbered, with its own signed certificate of authenticity and pocket history of the lighthouse.

\$50.00 each
+ \$10.00 FLB membership*
\$60.00 Total

Please send your check or money order to:
FAULKNER'S LIGHT BRIGADE
P.O. Box 199
Guilford, CT 06437

*current members may deduct this charge.
photo courtesy of Harbour Lights



At the Top of the Lighthouse

Steep stone steps, winding back and forth. Bending, turning, reaching the top. Fingertips seek cool moisture on quarystone.

At this height winds talk, whispering to sailors long ago gone. Ghosts of old keepers glitter in fogs of early dawn.

Terns soar to the clouds. Windows gleam, magnify blue sky, coastal hills, white New England steeples pointing to heaven.

Watch for glimpses of the old house, its wrecked cellar yawning open, faint fire-smell clinging still to foundation stones.

The steel door at bottom clangs sharply. Magic lives mostly at the top.

Margaret Iacobellis (2003)

Photo by Rob Beecher

National Lighthouse Museum Underway

The National Lighthouse Museum taking shape on Staten Island, NY occupies the original site of the US Lighthouse Service Depot. Years of investigations into the wretched conditions of American lighthouses led in 1852 to the creation of the Lighthouse Board which mandated that drastic reforms be undertaken in the training of keepers, the soundness of lighthouse construction and placement, and the quality of equipment. Supply depots were scattered across the country in 12 lighthouse districts, but a central facility was needed. In 1863 the wartime Lincoln Administration authorized use of the former site at St. George on Staten Island of the Revenue Cutter Service, the oldest armed maritime service in the US. This became the "Super Depot," from which the US Lighthouse Service could test and fabricate equipment, and supply all U.S. light stations.



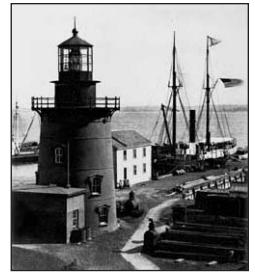
The 1869 administration building as it stands today.
Photo by Ernest Busch

By the 1930s most lighthouses had been electrified, which eliminated many of the lightkeepers' duties. Wicks no longer needed constant tending, glass chimneys, lenses, and lantern windows no longer needed to be wiped free of soot all night. The clock mechanisms driving the revolving lenses no longer had to be wound. Gradually, three-keeper stations dwindled to two, and then one-keeper stations.

The Coast Guard took over the duties of the Lighthouse Service in 1939. As keepers, lampists, and metal smiths retired, much of the expertise of the service was lost, and lighthouse support became a low-priority mission. When the Coast Guard acquired Governors Island off the tip of Manhattan in 1968, it abandoned the old depot on Staten Island. By the 1980s a dozen of its buildings had been razed to make way for a ferry maintenance facility, and the rest fell into disrepair. Fearful of more demolition, residents and elected officials clamored to preserve this historic site in the 1990s.

Many of the surviving structures are now on the National Register of Historic Places and eligible for government support. In 1998 a site selection committee chose the old depot as the future home of the National Lighthouse Museum. It lies directly adjacent to the Staten Island Ferry Terminal with panoramic views of New York harbor. A pier will be home berth for museum vessels like the *Lightship Nantucket-112*, and for tour boats. With over two million tourists riding the ferry every year, the museum promises to become a major visitor center in the city.

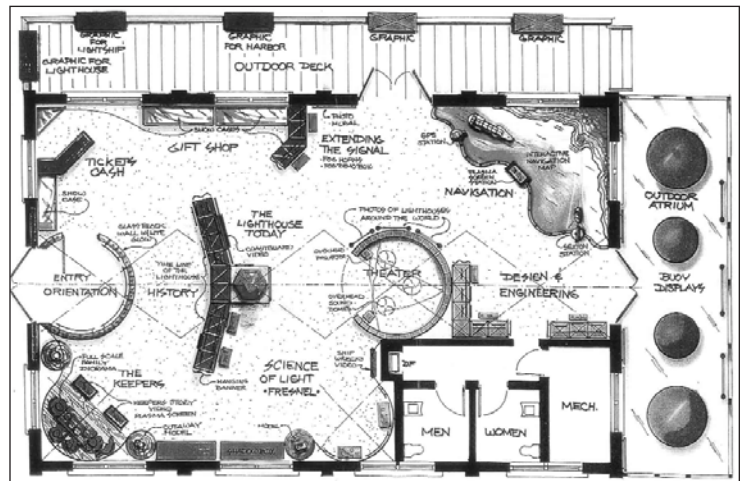
Source: Dean Curry, Deputy Director, and staff of the National Lighthouse Museum. For information call (718) 556-1681 or see www.lighthousemuseum.org



US Lighthouse Depot c. 1885. This cast-iron lighthouse replica tested lamps, fuels and lenses under realistic conditions.
Photo: National Archives, courtesy of National Lighthouse Museum



These granite masonry vaults were built in the 1870s to store kerosene and other volatile lamp fuels that replaced costly whale oil.
Photo by Ernest Busch



The future museum. Drawing by the National Lighthouse Museum.



The Verrazano Bridge seen from the museum site.
Photo by Ernest Busch

CALENDAR OF EVENTS SPRING, 2004

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 24 7:30 pm ANNUAL MEETING

In these dangerous times, you will not want to miss the FLB Annual Meeting (free and open to the public), at the Guilford Community Center. Our



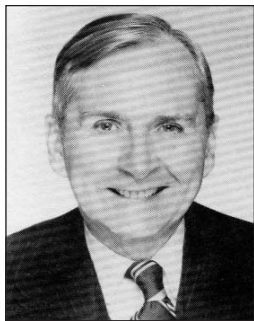
LCDR Michael Edgerton

featured speaker will be Lieutenant Commander **Michael A. Edgerton**, USCG Chief of Ports, Waterways, and Coastal Security for Long Island Sound. Based in New Haven,

LCDR Edgerton holds a Master's degree in Strategic Intelligence and has served as Chief, Weapons of Mass Destruction Branch, USCG headquarters. His expertise includes WMDs, piracy, and the vulnerability of ports, cruise ships, and merchant vessels to terrorist attack. Refreshments served.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 21 7:30 pm

Our lecture series continues at the Guilford Community Center with **Harlan Hamilton**, Associate Professor of English at Jersey City State College, and



Harlan Hamilton

author of *Lights and Legends* (1987). From his home port in New York City, "Hal" enjoys an enthusiastic following as an expert on the lighthouses of Long Island Sound. With a

series of narrated slides, Dr. Hamilton will host a colorful, informative evening on the history and folklore of these local treasures.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 19 7:30 pm

William Kolodnicki, Manager of the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge will speak at the Guilford Community Center. The McKinney Refuge consists of

National Wildlife Refuge System 1903-2003



Faulkner's Island and seven other natural sites along the Connecticut coast. It is one of 530 national refuges that recently celebrated the centennial of the US Fish and Wildlife Service founded by Theodore Roosevelt. Today it protects over 875 acres of coastal Connecticut and 93 million acres nationwide. Bill served with the USFWS's Long Island National Wildlife Refuge before coming to Connecticut in 1997. His duties include habitat restoration, monitoring oil spills and the protection of migratory birds.



Bill Kolodnicki (bottom left) with USFWS staffers Sarah, Jennifer, and Sean.

**SATURDAY AND SUNDAY
SEPTEMBER 18-19
10:00am – 3:00pm**

ANNUAL OPEN HOUSE ON FAULKNER'S ISLAND

Free and open to the public, but guests must provide own their transportation to the island. Private vessels should anchor outside (west of) the wharf basin and take their own dinghies to shore or hail the water taxi provided for a nominal fee.



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Chairman Fred Farnsworth and Director Sally Richards lead the FLB contingent at the annual Guilford Citizen's Day Parade in September. Photo by Joel Helander

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Faulkner's Fashions



You can now make a fashion statement as well as showing the world your commitment to preserving Faulkner's Light by wearing a distinctive Faulkner's Light Brigade tee shirt or classic polo shirt.

The tee shirt is available in ash light blue, light green or sand and is priced at \$16.

Sizes are M,L, XL and XXL.

The polo shirt comes in navy or hunter green and is priced at \$29. Sizes are S,M, L, XL and XXL.

Both are available at Fleishman's Department Store in Guilford or you can order by sending a check payable to "FLB" to

Faulkner's Light Brigade
c/o Dan Coraluzzi,
303 Schoolside Lane,
Guilford, CT. 06437.

Add \$3.50 for postage and handling. If you have any questions call Dan at 203-453-1991.

All proceeds benefit FLB.

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FAULKNER'S LIGHT BRIGADE

A Commission of the Guilford Preservation Alliance

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The Faulkner's Island Open House will take place Sept. 18th and 19th. Free and open to the public (see page 5) Photo by Rob Beecher

For information, please call (203) 453-8400 and leave a message.

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Published by Faulkner's Light Brigade
P.O. Box 199, Guilford, CT 06437

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Contributions to the Brigade are tax deductible

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