



The Octagon

Newsletter of the Faulkner's Light Brigade
Spring 2009



Photo by Don Zimmer Aug. 31,, 2008

Hurricane Hanna Foils '08 Open House

The 2008 open houses on Faulkner's Island were scheduled for four days on consecutive weekends: September 6–7 and September 13–14. This new scheduling stood in stark contrast to the original open houses designed for one day and was rooted in the Brigade's philosophy of increasing public access.

Alas, the tail winds of Hurricane Hannah prompted cancellation on the first weekend due to heavy rain and wind gusts up to 30 miles per hour. The second weekend brought more wind and uncertain Sound conditions, which prompted cancellation of the event for Sunday only. John and Elizabeth Delemarre, island keepers for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, are complimented for their patience and skill in managing the public during the disappointment of cancellation.

Saturday's event on the second weekend became a howling success. Joe Nugent, event chairman, reports an attendance of approximately 150 people, converging to the island in all modes of watercraft. Captain Barry Natale of Sound Navigation transported passengers for hire during the course of the day.

Captain Gary Lyon of the vessel *Sea Lyon* hosted special guests from Tennessee, Mr. &

Mrs. Charles L. Greene, who had a chance encounter with Joel Helander in Guilford Town Hall a few days earlier. Charles Greene was stationed at the U.S. Coast Guard station on Faulkner's Island during the period, 1961–1962. His wife, Lorraine Damutz, grew up on Halleck Street in Guilford and attended Guilford High School. As a teenager, Lorraine read a newspaper article about the auxiliary coast guard bringing food to the lonely keepers of Faulkner's Island Light. In fanciful flirtation, she and her girl friend wrote letters to the keepers, which sparked a friendship with Charles Greene, a dashing young coast guardsman with rank of Seaman E-3. Happily, Lorraine and Charles were soon after married (1964). Their return to Faulkner's Island in September 2008 brought smiles, memories, and tears.

2009 Open House Dates Announced

Mark your calendars now! Joe Nugent, chairman of the '09 open house event on Faulkner's Island, announces the official dates for this year:

Saturday, September 5 (Labor Day weekend)

Sunday, September 6 (Labor Day weekend)

No open house on Labor Day, September 7

Saturday, September 12

Sunday, September 13

The annual open houses are sponsored jointly by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the Faulkner's Light Brigade.

If you would like to experience the rare beauty of a wildlife refuge and historic light-house, don't miss this open house opportunity! Public transportation to the island may again be available. Watch for forthcoming details.

Faulkner's Light Brigade 2009 Calendar

Tuesday, January 13

U.S. Coast Guard In Action

Speaker: Captain Daniel Ronan,
Sector Commander of Long Island Sound

Tuesday, February 10

The Pirates Are Coming!

A pirate living history reenactment group, "Free Men of the Sea," brings the golden age of piracy to life

Tuesday, March 10

Annual Membership Meeting

Featuring: Chanties of the Sea

Presented by the Sound School Singers of The
Sound School, New Haven, CT

Tuesday, April 28

Speaker: Gordon ("Fox Running") Brainerd,
*Quinnipiac Tribe Algonquin Bear Clan
Medicine Man,*

on the subject of Native American culture as it
relates to our rivers and Long Island Sound

Saturday, September 5

Sunday, September 6

Saturday, September 12

Sunday, September 13

Open Houses on Faulkner's Island

*Note: No open house on Labor Day,
September 7*

All programs are held in
the Greene Community Center
32 Church Street, Guilford, Connecticut,
7:30 p.m.

Descendants of Faulkner's Island Lightkeepers: Their Stories

by Joel Helander

Descendants of lightkeepers who served at the government light station at Faulkner's Island are numerous and live in all quarters of the United States. Often, they have stories to tell that have never been heard: stories that are colored with great human interest; stories filled with thrills and curiosity—even tragedy; and stories that capture the romance of island lightkeeping long ago.

Alas—the descendants of lightkeepers are not easily traced. Renewed interest in Faulkner's Island Light Station, fueled by the 2002 Bicentennial celebration, annual open houses, and other media attention has prompted a number of such descendants to come forward. More often than not, they find us rather than we find them.

It has been a twenty year work in progress to compile a directory of lightkeeper descendants and maintain contact with them. Before 1939, the lightkeepers at Faulkner's were civilians employed by the U.S. Lighthouse Service. They were usually accompanied by their families, who displayed remarkable resourcefulness and resiliency in turning a life of isolation and hardship into opportunity and happiness. Invariably, the descendants of lightkeepers who experienced island living in the early 20th century seem to regard their experiences as among the highest—and happiest—moments of their lives. Here are some of their stories.

Vivian Jensen Chapin of Port Townsend, Washington is the daughter of **Arthur Jensen**, who served as Head Keeper, April 1911–July 1916. Mrs. Chapin never lived at Faulkner's, having been born in 1923 during her father's next duty assignment at Eaton's Neck Light Station. Jensen was a Norwegian immigrant who went to sea at age 14 and later served in the U.S. Navy during the Spanish American War. According to Mrs. Chapin (in 1992), her father worked at Faulkner's on an annual salary of \$624. paid by the U.S. Lighthouse Service.

The only modern instrument in her parents island home was a Victrola (phonograph), which played recordings by Enrico Caruso. The presence of an Assistant Keeper, James Gregory (and family) upstairs helped combat their loneliness. The three Gregory children were “lively”, according to Mrs. Chapin. Edith, who was the youngest, “liked to follow my mother around the island—especially when it was time to collect eggs in the chicken house.” One day, as Mrs. Chapin's told it, Edith decided to make a mud pie using eggs, but that particular week decoys had been placed in the nests. As tears rolled down her cheeks, Edith told Mrs. Jensen that there was “nossing' in them today, Mrs. Jensen.” Mrs. Chapin's parents went ashore

once a week for supplies and other errands. They had a spare bedroom in the home of their good friends, Harry F. and Mary H. Griswold, who lived on Whitfield Street. The bedroom was called the “Jensen Bedroom” because it was available for sleepover in the event of bad weather.

Rosemond A. Martin of Green Cove Springs, Florida was the daughter of **Leonard C. Fuller**, who served as Assistant

Keeper, April–November, 1919 and then as Head Keeper, November 1919–October 1924. Bessie Fuller Cravey of Tallahassee, Florida was the sister of Fuller. According to Mrs. Martin and Mrs. Cravey, Leonard hung out as a young man on the docks in Port Saint Joe, Florida. He became acquainted with a Captain Ellis (from New York City) who invited Len to join him on a sea voyage aboard a 5-masted schooner. On Len's first trip, carrying a cargo of yellow pine lumber to Italy, they were shipwrecked. Miraculously, after four days and nights clinging to debris in the water, Len was one of only three survivors. Even the Captain went to his watery grave, but the Captain's son, who was an official in the U.S. Lighthouse Service, secured Len a job at Faulkner's. In the pre-Coast Guard era of lightkeeping, lighthouse appointments were often political plums. Leonard Fuller's brother, **Samuel Fuller**,

continued next page



The Minzners photographed their island home showing the three-story dwelling, the light tower, and paint supply shed, circa, 1930.



Captain Arthur Minzner (standing with derby) poses in front of the “power house” with relatives and his son, William (lower left), circa 1930.

niece, stated that her Uncle Sam and Aunt Margaret never had children. They took Catherine in as one of their own for summer vacations on the island, which created indelible memories. Mrs. Applebaum said that Margaret Fuller worked at Griswold’s Department Store in Guilford Center and that Sam would “run her in every morning by boat.” In bad weather, when Margaret could not return to the island, she would stay with her parents (Mr. & Mrs. William F. Cordts) at 406 Long Hill Road.

Mrs. Myrtle B. Gulick of Gladstone, New Jersey was the daughter of Adelard Bussiere, who served as Assistant Keeper, October 1922–May 1926. Mrs. Gulick stated (1997) that she was six years old when her parents left the island. Her mother, she said, had a copper boiler to put on the coal stove in which she boiled all their dirty clothing. When her mother used the clothes line to dry clothes in wintertime, the winds would often blow the clothes “straight out—frozen stiff.” “We drank KLIM,” she explained, which was an early form of powdered milk. All their food had to be transported from the Guilford mainland, excepting homegrown items or eggs from their chickens and ducks. Mr. & Mrs. Bussiere’s closest friends were the Raymond Gays and the Clarence Markhams, both of whom opened their homes when inclement weather prevented the Gulicks from safely returning to their island home. Mrs. Gulick sent two brass buttons from her father’s uniform shirt, inscribed “U.S.L.H.S.,” which were on display during the light-

succeeded him as Head Keeper, serving until November 1926. The Fuller brothers’ careers on Faulkner’s turned controversial because of their involvement with illicit rum-running during the Prohibition. The island allegedly became an important stopover in the booze trade, where burlap sacks of bottles were suspended over the side of the wharf—into the waters of Long Island Sound! The late Catherine Jenkins Applebaum of Guilford, who was Mrs. Samuel Fuller’s

house exhibit staged by the Henry Whitfield Historical Museum, 2002–2003.

Lawrence W. Munzner of Miami, Florida was the son of **Arthur J. Munzner (a/k/a Minzner)**, who served as Assistant Keeper, May 1928–June 1929 and then as Head Keeper until 1935. Through the courtesy of Tracy Thompson Tomaselli of Guilford, a photo album from Lawrence’s Estate (1981) recently made its way back to Guilford for safe-keeping. The black and white snapshots contain generous captions that serve to document life at the light station in the 1930s. In 1930, Lawrence was 10 years old, living on the island as an only child with his parents, Mary and Arthur Minzner, who lived on the first floor of the big, 14-room dwelling house. Two chicken coops with small enclosures were located north of the house and beyond was a long row of experimental racks erected by the American Brass Company to experiment with the effects of climate on paints applied to masonry. A flower and vegetable garden were located southeast of the house, with one caption referring to the “fertile land” found there. The boat basin, quaintly called the “bathing cove,” featured an elementary wharf with timber cribbing filled with stones, leading up to the boat house that washed away in the Hurricane of 1938. A lighter and barge, used for constructing the rip rap protection that still exists in the curving jetty, are shown after they were wrecked in a storm (1933). Animal pets for the Minzner family included two dogs named Sport and Nellie, a litter of puppies, and a prized goat named Minnie. Not too unlike their lightkeeper predecessors, the Minznors entertained family and friends including Betty Jane and Al Kennedy, Dr. Martin, Cousin Alyce and Cousin June,



Captain and Mrs. Arthur Minzner (top step, middle) and Assistant Keeper, Dan Burt, (lower step, left) entertain government mechanics and a government inspector, circa 1930.

Aunt Estelle and Uncle Pete, the Nilson family, the Roode family, and a young boy named George Gallows. Government officials visited often, too, including an “inspector,” a “tinsmith,” and a “mechanic”.

Robert J. Lawrence of Dunedin, Florida was the stepson of **George W. Pendrell**, who served as Assistant Keeper, February 1930–October 1930. Mr. Lawrence reminisced (in 1997) about the short year that he lived on the island with Frances and George Pendrell. He described his “bad habit” of playing on the dock with a rope line attached to a floating metal can. His stepfather “snuck up behind him”, grabbed him, and threw him



William Minzner invited his friend, George Gallows, for an island adventure, circa 1930.

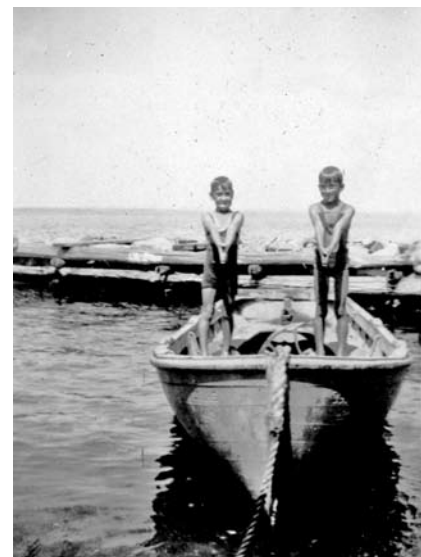
into the water with scolding about the boy’s disobedience. “That’s how I learned to swim—and quickly, too!” quipped Mr. Lawrence. Bob Lawrence visited Faulkner’s Island at the time of the annual open house in 1999. It was a joyful return visit after 69 years! When asked why the island was so important to him, Mr. Lawrence turned sentimentally quiet and said that it was “the happiest times that I can remember with my mother because we were captive on the island and were always together.”

Barbara Zuius Philipp of Preston, Connecticut is the daughter of **George Zuius**, who served as the last civilian Head Keeper, 1936–1943. Barbara lived at the island light station, year ‘round, with her parents for the first five years of her life. Soon after the Hurricane of 1938, Captain Zuius retired the old-fashioned oil lamps when electric generators were finally installed on the island. Barbara recalls taking baths in a galvanized tub and



Young William Minzner hugs his island pet, Nellie, and her puppies, circa 1930.

playing with her dog, “Rexie” and a pet chicken. The chicken was unusually domesticated, frequently waiting at the back door for Barbara to come outside. One day, little Barbara decided to “run away.” Mrs. Zuius accommodated her daughter’s whim by packing her a lunch, which she fastened to the end of a stick, like a hobo’s stick. Barbara wandered around the beach, grew tired, and holed up in the chicken coop, where her mother found her—fast asleep next to her pet chicken. Another incident that Barbara holds dear to memory is the time she returned to the island with her father after a shopping trip to the Guilford A&P Store. She cried and cried because she lost a little lavender bandana in the wind, but Captain Zuius went in wide circles with the boat until he found it! Barbara Zuius believes that her father “took the job to heart.” She recalls that “every night I went up the light tower steps with him. He uncovered the lens and constantly polished it. He wouldn’t allow a speck of dust to get on it. It was almost sacred.”



William Minzner and his cousin Alyce, circa 1930.

Faulkner's Light Brigade Membership

New Members and Renewals during 2007 and 2008

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Salice Family Char. Trust
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**Falkner Light Brigade & United States
 Fish & Wildlife Service Partnership to
 Save an Endangered Species**

**By Richard Potvin, Refuge Manager,
 Stuart B. McKinney Wildlife Refuge**

Roseate terns are found throughout many of the oceans around the world, including the North Atlantic. The North Atlantic temperate zone populations have declined since the 1950's to the point where, in 1987, the Northeastern U.S. breeding population was declared endangered. Currently, the Northeastern U.S. breeding population is estimated at approximately 8,000-9,000 individuals. The Northeastern U.S. population migrates from their breeding grounds, on the south shore of Long Island, extending north to Canada, including Nova Scotia and Quebec, to wintering grounds off the coast of South America.

Falkner Island (a.k.a Faulkner's) was once the third largest roseate tern nesting colony of the Northeastern U.S. population. However, beginning in 1970s, the number of roseate terns nesting at Falkner Island began declining. The culprit for this decline was the black-crown night heron that began to visit the island and feed on the young chicks and eggs. The US Fish & Wildlife Service and US Geological Survey took a number of steps to protect the birds; however, raids by the herons continue to affect the population. In 2006, the Refuge fledged 30% only of the tern chicks that hatched. On July 3, 2006, a heron entered the roseate tern colony and destroyed or took over 50 eggs and chicks. During the last two nesting seasons, 2007 & 2008, the Refuge has increased its fledgling rate in the main colony to 81%.

During the 2008 nesting period at Falkner Island, 32 roseate tern nests were monitored. This was the first year since the 1970s that there was not one documented incident of a roseate tern egg or chick being taken by herons. We contribute this to our increase predator monitoring, which is performed over the nesting terns. The Refuge was able to maintain staff on the island 24 hours, 7 days a week to conduct these monitoring activities. This was the first year that we had staff members live on the island 8 consecutive days at a time. This longer stay allowed the Refuge to lower its operational costs and increase the productivity of the roseate tern colony. This would not have been possible without the generous support of the Faulkner Light Brigade (FLB), who provided funding, materials and labor to build the addition to the generator building. The FLB is also assisting the Refuge with other facility projects on the island to support the Refuge and the annual open house. Without the FLB partnership, we could not move our conservation mission forward. Furthermore, the roseate terns of Falkner Island are most appreciative of FLB's efforts.

In Memoriam

Edward D. Macchietto
*from Calaway Family and Moorel
 Ericson Family \$100*

Ned Cosgrove
*from Jayne Welsh and Lawrence
 DelPonte \$50*

In Honor

**Richard DiNardo graduation
 from Law School**
from Thomas and Barbara Puffer \$25

**The 50th wedding anniversary
 of Randy and Marilyn Janeway**
from Harry and Margery Cordts \$50

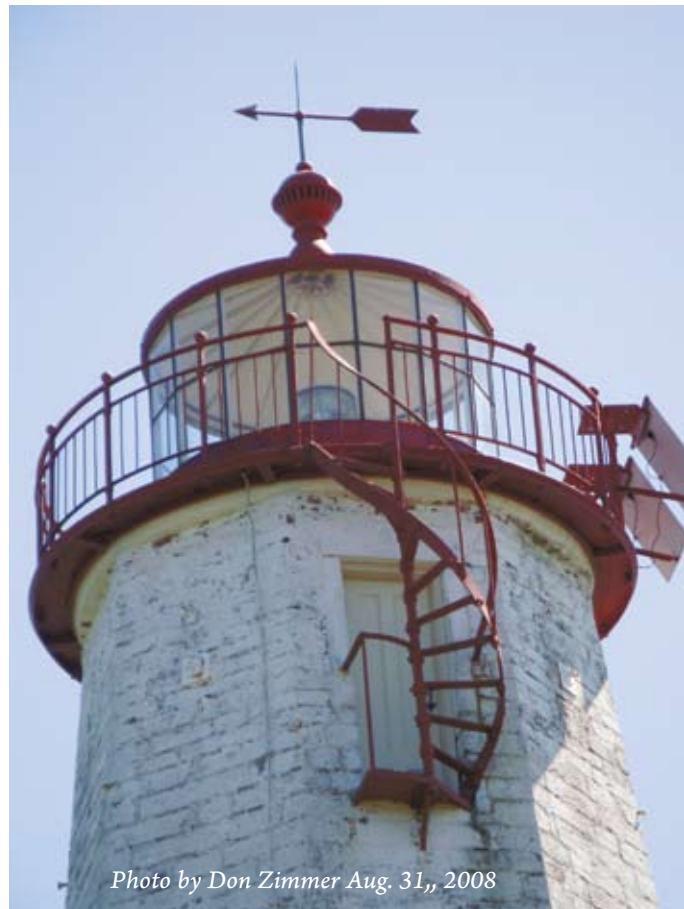


Photo by Don Zimmer Aug. 31,, 2008

Faulkner's Light Brigade

Commission of the Guilford Preservation Alliance

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The Octagon

Published by Faulkner's Light Brigade
P.O. Box 444
Guilford, Connecticut 06437

Joel Helander, Editor
Royal Printing Service, Printing

Contributions to the Brigade are tax deductible

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and mailed to: P.O. Box 444, Guilford, CT 06437



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