

# The

# Octagon

Newsletter of the Faulkner's Light Brigade

June, 2025

Issue 4

# Faulkner's Island and Lighthouse Restoration Project Update

In the President's note in last year's edition of Octagon, I outlined our assessment and planning for the two critical restoration projects on Faulkner's Island. The projects included the restoration of Faulkner's Lighthouse, and the Erosion Abatement Project- Phase 2. These projects are at the heart of the mission of the Faulkner's Light Brigade. We are committed to moving both projects to completion. After our identification of the critical need for these restorations, we are now in the process of securing the necessary funding for their completion. Moving forward, we are taking two parallel approaches to securing the necessary funds.

We first approached the funding for the Erosion Abatement Project. Members of the Faulkner's Light Brigade Board and of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service met

with Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro in December 2023 to discuss this critical need. Congresswoman DeLauro has remained supportive and committed to the preservation of Faulkner's Island and the Faulkner's Lighthouse since her involvement in the 1999-2001 Phase 1 Erosion Project. After presenting the proposed project's estimated cost, without hesitation Congresswoman DeLauro submitted the funding request (\$8,000,000) for the Phase 2 project in the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) Bill. The Bill was authorized by the U.S. House of Representatives in December 2024. The next step is for the Congressional appropriation of the funding. This appropriation will be presented in the FY2026 Federal Budget process. We remain hopeful that the project's funding will be appropriated in 2026.

The Light Brigade next looked at

the potential sources for funding of the Lighthouse Restoration Project. We hope to apply for two grants through the State Historic Preserve Office (SHPO). The first is for a Survey and Planning grant. This grant, if awarded, would be used for the full assessment of scope of the lighthouse restoration, a work plan, and for the permits needed for the project. The second grant would be for the actual restoration of the lighthouse. This grant is a matching grant of up to \$200,000 from the Historic Restoration Fund (HRF). Finding the necessary matching funds will be a challenge for the Faulkner's Light Brigade. Fund raising in the next 12-24 month's will be critical towards the moving of this project to completion.

Anthony J. Coppola, MD President and Chairman







**Top left:** Figure 1 – Faulkner's Southern coast, completed Phase 1 Revetment (2001) can be seen on the right (southeast).

**Bottom left:** Figure 2 – Southern tip Erosion Close-up, Proposed Phase 2 Erosion Abatement Project

**Above:** Figure 3 — Faulkner's Light tower- status of corrosion and Brownstone coating.

### **President's Note:**

Welcome to the 2025 edition of The Octagon. Thank you for your interest in the mission of the Faulkner's Light Brigade. Your support and words of encouragement have been invaluable. Thank you!

This past year was somewhat challenging, and as we look ahead into 2025 and beyond, we are facing some headwinds. Despite the challenges, we have not strayed from the course. We are committed to the growing needs of Faulkner's Island and Lighthouse.

Even though we are facing an uncertain economy and increased costs for just about everything, our members have been extraordinarily generous. Your generosity has not gone unnoticed, and I am extremely thankful to the entire membership.

We are still in the planning stages for the complete restoration of the Lighthouse, and Phase 2 of the Faulkner's Erosion Control Project. These projects are both critical. The effects of the relentless marine environment, and weather conditions continue to challenge the fragile southern tip of the island and the structure of the lighthouse. The erosion of the southern tip is ongoing, while the structure of the lighthouse sustains continuous damaging forces. We are however, seeing progress in our federal grant

application for the Phase 2 Erosion Project, and we are also making progress on our grant application for the lighthouse restoration (see lead article- pg. 1).

In early April we met with Walter Sedovic, architect of the 1999 Faulkner's lighthouse restoration. He and his firm have been the lead group in the restorations of 24 lighthouses nationwide, including Faulkner's Lighthouse in 1999. As we navigate into this next restoration we are hopeful that we can use his extensive knowledge to shepherd us through the process.

We remain committed to public providing access Faulkner's Island. The island's offshore location make public visits particularly challenging. This is compounded by the additional restrictions during the Roseate Tern migration and nesting season. In 2024 and 2025 we unfortunately had to cancel the planned Open Houses. I apologize for this and realize it is a great disappointment. We are beginning to plan for 2026. Part of that plan is to look at alternatives to large group events on the island. Please refer to the webpage for updates.

I recently ran into a person who has visited over 100 lighthouses in the US over several years. I asked

him what the reason for his interest in these structures was. While I expected the usual answers, of them being critical aids to navigation, or of their history, or of the majestic nature of their structures, he gave me a totally different reason. He referred me to an old gospel hymn called "The Lighthouse" as his reason for his great interest. While lyrics of "The Lighthouse" compelling, I extremely reminded the diverse and of these personal meaning that structures have to each of us. It is a privilege to serve you all in this extremely important organization.

My sincere thanks to the authors and contributors to this edition of The Octagon. Special thanks to our editor Dr. K.J. Lee and to our Graphic Designer Jeannie Grenier for her outstanding work, and for their ongoing commitment towards the creating of each edition. Thank you to the Board, Members, and Volunteers for your time and commitment to our mission.

I hope you enjoy this edition of The Octagon. I invite you to partner with us and "keep the light shining". Please visit our webpage and feel free to contact me, via the webpage.

Anthony J. Coppola, MD President and Chairman

# Faulkner's Island and Jimmy Carter

Shortly before his passing, Guilford native William Robert ("Bob") Linskey (1928–2021) reminisced about his 5-year stint in the U.S. Navy Submarine Service. That's when he met former President James ("Jimmy") E. Carter, Jr.

As a Guilford High School graduate (class of 1946), Bob's marriage to a GHS class mate, Evelyn Morse, coincided with his military service, which bracketed the Korean War. He enlisted in the U.S. Navy

after high school with boot camp training at the Great Lakes, followed by engineman school for diesel training. At the start of the war, Bob was transferred to submarine school in Groton, CT with assignment to the USS K-1 diesel submarine, built at Electric Boat (General Dynamics). Bob was a Petty Officer 2nd Class and his commanding officer was Jimmy Carter, a Lieutenant Junior Grade on the same sub.

The USS K-1 spent the majority of its service in the Caribbean Sea, although excursions through Long Island Sound were not uncommon. In 1951, one stand-out incident occurred

in Long Island Sound that Bob Linskey could never forget. His sub surfaced off Faulkner's Island and anchored for the evening. Jimmy Carter knew about Bob's beloved hometown Guilford and the island's proximity to Guilford. Carter issued a general announcement that blasted over the loudspeaker system, "Keep an eye on Linskey, he might jump ship!"

Former President Carter's autobiography illustrates clearly that his strong lifelong ties to Connecticut began as a young submarine officer living in New London. When he left New London with wife, Rosalynn, he

joined a team overseeing the development of the first nuclear-powered submarines—to be built in Groton. Decades later, Carter's ties to Connecticut resurfaced when there was a plan to shutter the naval base in New London and relocate the submarines to bases in the South. He vehemently opposed the plan and is credited with helping to reverse the military's decision. The Connecticut sub base was saved!

Down through the years, Bob Linskey longed to have a reunification with his commanding sub officer, retired U.S. President Carter. On the occasion of the release of Carter's new book, A Call To

Action, Women, Religion, Violence, and Power (2014), Carter was scheduled to speak at the New Haven Lawn Club. Ticketed customers only were invited. The Linskey family attended, but were discouraged to join a surging crowd waiting in line. When they advised the Secret Service that Bob had served on the USS K-1 with Jimmy Carter, they were escorted to the head of the line. Carter recognized Bob instantly and greeted him warmly. The two Korean War comrades laughed and chatted for a short while, bringing their friendships full circle after 60+ years.

Joel Helander



### Guilford's Lighthouse Tree

Long-time Faulkner's Light Brigade members Debbie and Charlie Peluse had an inspiration: before they cut down a dying 100+ year old sugar maple tree standing perilously close to their garage, they wondered if its straight trunk could be sculpted into a replica of Faulkner's Lighthouse.

The Peluses found two gifted artisans who made it happen. Sergio Atanasoff's one-man company in Bethel, CT, In the Spirit of Wood, sculpts wood with an ordinary chainsaw. Rob Bunting's one-man company in Guilford, CT, Connecticut Coppersmiths, transforms copper sheet metal into a variety of figures, such as garden sculpture and home furnishings.

Striving for accuracy, the Peluses first obtained some of Architect Walter Sedovic's design plans for the restoration of Faulkner's Light. This 1998–'99 preservation project was spearheaded by the Faulkner's Light Brigade, accomplished in partnership with the Town of Guilford, using \$250,000. in ISTEA grant funds provided by the Connecticut Department of Transportation.

Sergio Atanasoff topped the old tree to a 10-foot height to preserve an even ratio against the 40-foot height of the brownstone (aka chatham) lighttower walls on Faulkner's Island. This 10:40 ratio determined the ½ scale of the replica lighthouse

tree. The sides of the tree trunk (5' diameter) were sculpted to a tapered octagon shape, including well-defined seams in the base to further replicate the brownstone blocks. The towering trunk was brushed with a transparent, natural oil-based preservative stain named "Pro-Luxe."

Rob Bunting next tackled the intricate job of fabricating a ½ scale all-copper lantern gallery. Architect Sedovic's drawings became the basis for an astoundingly accurate replica of the actual lantern gallery atop Faulkner's Lighthouse. All of Rob's painstaking craftsmanship was done by hand using shears and hammer, solder and torch—no machinery. Strong copper joints were formed by high temperature soldering with an alloy using a method called brazing.

The base of the lantern gallery is bolted to the top of the tree trunk stainless lag bolts. octagonal lantern gallery enclosure is surrounded by a circular railing around a narrow catwalk. Fourteen window panes are made of plexiglass. The dome of the gallery is topped with its true-to-form spherical ball vent, functioning weathervane, and lightning rod. Minute detail is also captured in the exterior spiral stairway extending from an upper tower door to the gallery catwalk. This is a unique feature among American lighthouses distinguishes Faulkner's Lighthouse.

The beacon light in the center of the gallery is cleverly fabricated as a round copper ball coated with gold leaf. The reflecting sun causes it to gleam brightly. The Peluses have found their own source of lighthouse inspiration and blessing from their adaptive reuse of a venerable tree.

Joel Helander



The Faulkner's Lighthouse tree commissioned by Deborah and Charles Peluse

# Preparing for the return of the terns during an eclipse and other adventures on Faulkner's Island, 2024



Common tern chick and unhatched egg



Kris banding a roseate tern chick



Census takers counting common tern nests



Kris surrounded by Mugwort and common terns



North spit set up for roseate terns



Volunteers enjoying the solar eclipse

Let's start with the very good news, the 2024 breeding season was a successful one for the roseate terns. With plentiful prey fish and no known predation there were 31 roseate nests, which is up from 13 last year. The island fledged 37 roseate terns; some nests had both first and second chick survive. This is the highest fledge survival per nesting pair since the 1990's!

On June 4th a common tern census was performed and census takers located 1,359 nesting pairs of common terns. Refuge biologist Kris led a team that consisted of volunteers, summer interns and partners of U.S. Fish and Wildlife to count every common tern nest on the top of the island and along the bottom shoreline.

A total of 1,359 common tern nests were found. What did we learn?

The common terns prefer the lower part of the island. 996 common tern nests were found on the lower part of the island which is natural habitat comprised of beaches and shelves that offer shells and rocks for nesting.

Compared to 363 nests on the top of the island on the man-made weed mats. Due to climate change the available habitat on the natural beaches has been decreasing specifically due to rising sea levels and more frequent and intense storms.

Unfortunately, the roseate terns favorite nesting spot, the north spit, has eroded away leaving the habitat there subject to flooding. Hoping to attract the roseates to safer nesting areas, the northern shelf was set up with nest boxes. On April 8, while preparing the island for the terns, we enjoyed watching the total solar eclipse.

In 2015 the refuge began creating large weed mat areas on the top of the island hoping to create nesting opportunities for the common tern. The top of the island is mowed twice a year with a walk-behind brush mower and is a challenge to accomplish. Just bringing equipment out and up to the top of the island is labor intensive. The habitat has changed on the top of the island with an abundance of invasive species, one being Mugwort. Mugwort grows quickly and can be over 6' tall, it is dense and the terns do not nest in it. The weed mat area is about 30% of the total usable open habitat for common terns to



Preparing the top of the island - mowing Mugwort





Common tern viewed through a scope with fish

nest. The refuge strives to provide quality open nesting habitats for the common terns because without the common tern the roseate tern will be lost as well.

The Faulkner colony participated in a flyway study called Project Poop (yes, this is real!). It is a study to examine the diets of priority bird species. DNA is taken out of the samples and scientists can identify which fish were eaten. A total of 80 samples of tern poop were collected, 40 from adults in both the incubation and chick rearing stages and 40 from chicks. The sombrero type hat worn protects the volunteers from the diving terns and is also a great place to collect poop samples. The hat is covered in plastic and can be easily wiped down after each foray out into the field. The terns view us as predators and they use two of their best defenses to drive us away. The first defense is to dive bomb the highest part of the body (the head),



Interns obtaining poop samples from chicks

the sombrero has a flag so the tern aims for that. Another defense they use is to poop on you, so collection of samples was easy.

Part of the responsibilities of the Faulkner interns is to observe what types of fish the parent brings to feed the young (Observational diet surveys). The sand lance was identified as the species brought back most often to feed the young of both the common and roseate terns. Also noted were mackerel and bay anchovy. The study will reveal what the parents and chicks were eating. Having the right fish available at the right time is key to the success of the breeding season.

The poop samples were delivered to Cornell Lab of Ornithology for processing and analysis. It will be interesting to see what our terns are finding in Long Island Sound.

Deanna Broderick Secretary FLB



Biologist Kris taking poop samples from a rock recently decorated by a tern

Special thanks to Kris Vagos, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Biologist, Stewart B. McKinney NWR for tern data and information.

#### What can you do to help the terns on Faulkner's Island?

- □ Spread the word that the island is closed to the public except during the FLB's Open House in September; this will help the reduce disturbance to the terns while they are raising their young
- ☐ Let people know that drones cannot be flown over the island. The terns are very afraid of drones, as they look like a predator. Drones disturb nesting and may cause terns to leave the island to look for a safer place to nest.
- □ Look for and report any band numbers that you see. You can see some of the terns from the mainland when they are looking for food and after they leave the island in August. The band information can be used to note where birds are foraging, where they move, and how long they live.

Report the band to the Bird Banding Laboratory (https://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbl/bblretrv/)

□ Volunteer to help create habitat for the terns in the spring or to assist with maintaining living space for the Faulkner's Island crew (spring and fall).

Do your part to limit climate change: https://www.un.org/en/actnow/ten-actions.

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# 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 Faulkner's 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 to 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.faulknerslightbrigade.com).

Thank you for your support.

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

THE LIGHT GOTTE	Contributions to the Brigade are tax deductible Checks should be made payable to: <b>The Faulkner's Light Brigade</b> And mailed to: P.O. Box 444, Guilford, CT 06437			
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Name	Telephone			
Address	Email			
□New membership	☐Membership renewal			
☐I am interested in volunteering		☐Enclosed is my company's matching gift form		

# **Help Us Improve Our Communication...**

Please help us shore up our contact list.

We recently sent an announcement for our Annual Meeting by ground (snail) mail and by email. Unfortunately, the ground mail did not reach the membership until the meeting had already taken place. I apologize for this mishap and any confusion it may have caused. Fortunately, we had the email addresses of

about 50% of the Membership and we were able to be contact them by email prior to the meeting. Others were able to see the announcement on social media.

We need your help updating our records. Please include your preferred email address in the designated space on the donation envelope. You can also donate electronically by way of the webpage which will automatically give us your email. Or you can simply send us a brief email message

(<u>faulknerslight@gmail.com</u> or <u>coppolamd@gmail.com</u>). Please note that your contact information is safe and will not be shared or sold.

Our Web address: faulknerslightbrigade.com

Thank you for your help and support!

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# The Octagon

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### Faulkner's Lighthouse History at the Guilford Fair Parade



The 2024 Guilford Fair Parade stepped off at 10am on September 21<sup>st</sup>. The theme of the parade was "Once Upon a Time in Guilford". The Faulkner's Light Brigade proudly took part in this highly anticipated event. The parade route began on historic Whitfield Street, continued around the Guilford Green and ended at Lovers Lane. The weather was perfect, and this parade drew one of

its largest crowds.

In keeping with the theme of event, we the paraded with the two vintage Leslie-Typhon Foghorns were originally from the Faulkner's Island Light Station. The horns were manufactured by

the Leslie Company in Lyndhurst, New Jersey, and were installed on Faulkner's Island in 1934. Each of the horns weigh approximately 200 pounds, they are constructed of bronze and cast aluminum, and they contain an adjustable stainless-steel diaphragm to perfectly tune them. To sound the horns, two kerosene powered internal combustion engines were used to drive the large air

compressors. Although the exact date of their decommissioning is not known, it is estimated to be in the 1950's. The horns were replaced and eventually removed from the island and placed in storage.

The Light Brigade drove the red "Horn Mobile". Displaying the horns in the back of the truck was a "labor of love" as special stands had to be built to support each of them. A winch also had to be constructed to lift the prepared horns onto the truck and position them. Unfortunately, it was not possible to set up an appropriate apparatus to blow the horns during the parade. However, several of those that attended the parade recalled the distinctive sounds of the horns that could be heard for miles both on land and sea.

After all the details were completed on parade day, we stepped off, displaying a piece of Faulkner's Lighthouse history.

Anthony J. Coppola