

The Thacher Island News

LANDING AND LAUNCH FEES TO BE INSTITUTED.

On Non-Members and Non-Rockport Residents only.

Approved by the Rockport board of Selectmen at its March 5th meeting starting this May, there will be a \$5.00 landing fee for adults visiting Thacher Island, and a \$20.00 charge (\$10.00 for children under 14) for the Thacher Island launch that brings many people to the island.

The island landing fees give visitors full access to all public areas of the island: Three miles of groomed paths from which they can see birds, migrating butterflies, and a variety of vistas; a lighthouse, which can be climbed; picnic tables; a small museum dedicated to Thacher Island history; historical restorations, like a whistle house and elevated tramway trestle; and use of the island's outdoor compost toilet. (Indoor toilets are not for public use.)

The decision to charge launch and landing fees was not made lightly. In a recent letter to selectmen, Sydney Wedmore, Chairman of the Thacher Island Town Committee, said that enhanced trails, increased amenities, and other improvements to

Thacher have broadened its popularity as a destination. "However," he wrote, "the costs of these improvements and maintenance of the infrastructure have been inequitably borne."

Since 1982, Wedmore said, Rockport residents have provided support, both as budgeted monies and through the use of the town's Community Preservation Act funds. In that same period, the Thacher Island Association has raised more than \$2.1 million for upkeep and preservation. Yet 65 percent of Thacher visitors, Wedmore said, are neither residents of Rockport nor members of the island association. Although a donations-welcome box greets visitors to the island, Wedmore said the average individual donation is only 80 cents.

Both the association and the Thacher Island Town Committee agreed that this source of funds falls far short of providing a reasonable balance between those who use and those who bear the costs of the island. *Continued on page 6*



Boats near the ramp.



Membership card.

Time to Renew Your Memberships for 2013.

MEMBERSHIP FEES AND PRIVILEGES:

For the first time since the Association was started in 1980 we will be instituting a launch ride fee and a landing fee to the island. (See Landing and Launch fee story above) It is more important than ever for you to renew your memberships this year.

But, as a paid up 2013 member, these fees will be waived for you. So renew today!

In addition to allowing the Association member free access to the island, memberships are tax deductible, entitle members to two newsletters a year, a car/boat member sticker and is an important way of supporting a unique National Historic Landmark.

An individual membership, which costs \$30/year, allows that individual access to Thacher Island and waived user fee and one free trip on the Thacher Island launch (subject to availability.)

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Donna on her commute to Thachers.

No one travels as far as Donna Cusick to join the weekly Thacher Island work crew, nor does anyone employ as wide a variety of vehicles for the commute. When the weather is unsettled, she arrives on T-Wharf in her truck and joins other work crew volunteers aboard the Thacher Island launch. When the weather is pleasant, she covers the distance from her New Hampshire home on her Kawasaki Vulcan 900 motorcycle or loads her kayak onto the truck and completes the trip by paddling from Loblolly Cove.

Raised in East Gloucester, Donna spent much of her childhood on Good Harbor Beach, looking at the twin-towered island and wondering how to get there. But other adventures intervened: She earned an RN degree from Salem State College, joined the Navy, and spent three years on active duty. After her marriage to a member of the Coast Guard, she went into the Reserves in order to follow her husband to duty stations in, among other places, Alaska, Guam, Washington, D.C., Utah, Washington state, and California. In addition to raising two children, Donna worked as an emergency room nurse in every place they lived. She was recalled to active duty during Operation Desert Storm, serving at Bethesda Naval Hospital; nine months later she returned to the Reserves, retiring in 2002 after 20 years of service.

When her children were on their own -- her son is an Air Force pilot stationed in New Mexico, her daughter a college student in Oregon -- Donna returned to New England because "this was home." In 2006, she bought a house in Hudson, New Hampshire, commuting to her full-time job as a registered nurse for Elliot Urgent Care at River's Edge in Manchester and to her part-time job in the emergency room at Parkland Hospital in Derry.

Still, she had not set foot on the island that had captured her imagination as a child. Checking the Thacher Island Association website in the summer of 2010, she saw a notice for volunteer

workers, arranged a meeting with Syd Wedmore and Paul St. Germain, and showed them a photo album of her carpentry projects. "They asked if I could start on Wednesday. So here I am. I love to work with tools, and I love the island. It's a perfect fit."



Donna on her Kawasaki.

In her first two summers on the island, Donna worked on the restoration of the railway trestle. Then she joined the crews that tore the old ceiling out of the whistle house and built a new one in its place, re-sided the boat house, built a bench and walkway, and replaced the punky wood on the landing ramp. In 2012 she worked with a crew doing carpentry on Straitsmouth Island. The trestle project was her favorite, though she says that anything she does on Thacher "keeps me sane . . . I just like to play with tools."

"I also love my toys," Donna confesses, counting her kayak among them. A proficient paddler who can execute an Eskimo roll, Donna has circumnavigated Cape Ann and thinks nothing of heading to the Salvages to see the seals after putting in a full day on the island. She also owns a road bicycle with which she has ridden many "centuries" (100-mile treks) throughout New England and in California.

Hearing that much of last summer's work on the boathouse had been undone by the February blizzard, her response was -- "OK. I like working on the boathouse" -- was characteristically pragmatic. With her tools and her toys, Donna Cusick is ready for another work crew summer.



Gloucester lobsterman, boat builder, and photographer Geno Mondello. Dominic Nesta 16, Fionn McWilliam 15, and Julian Murray-Brown 15, Gloucester High School students who attend Mondello's boatbuilding class at the Gloucester Maritime Heritage Center.

Thacher Skiff Repaired by Maritime Gloucester Students.

Thacher Island's battered Amesbury skiff was repaired over the winter by a group of young volunteer boat builders under the direction of Gloucester lobsterman, boat builder, and photographer Geno Mondello. Dominic Nesta 16, Fionn McWilliam 15, and Julian Murray-Brown 15, Gloucester High School students who attend Mondello's boatbuilding class at the Gloucester Maritime Heritage Center, tore the skiff down piece by piece, replaced and fiber glassed the transom, rebuilt the gunwale rails with white oak planking, and replaced oak corner blocks aft as well as the breasthook on the bow. They also replaced the copper chaff edging on the starboard side and replaced the oar locks. The seats were refinished and varnished, and the boat was repainted inside and out.



The skiff was not the teenagers' first project. They had previously built a 14-foot wooden skiff now owned by Fionn. He keeps it at the Nesta family's dock, beside the Tide Skipper, a 22-foot vessel that looks like an Eastern-rigged dragger with a cabin that Dominic and his father modified from an open work boat. Julian's family owns a 14-foot skiff designed by the late Gloucester boat builder Phil Bolger. The three classmates are so often on the water together -- lobstering, salvaging, or just exploring -- that they are affectionately referred to as "the harbor pirates" by the older hands with whom they spend almost every Saturday at Mondello's dory-building workshop.

The Association thanks Geno and these young men who put their heart and soul into this project. We have invited them out to Thacher this summer so they can see firsthand how the newly restored skiff operates in the water and let them do some lobstering with it.

Continued from page 1 Time to Renew Your Memberships for 2013

A family membership, which costs \$60/year, entitles the holder to six free launch trips and waived landing fees for up to six passages of first degree relatives-children, grandchildren, brothers or sisters. A family membership would allow a Rockport resident, who is individually exempt from user fees, to visit the island free of charge with up to six family members at the time of each visit.

A \$500 lifetime membership carries all the benefits of a family membership.

To find out if you are paid up for 2013 look at the address label on this newsletter. If it says 2013 then you are paid up. If not then you should send your renewal in the enclosed envelope. Please note for the first time you will be able to use your credit card for renewals. You can also use the enclosed envelope to send your check.

Thank you for your on-going support.

Paul St.Germain

NEW COMPOSTING TOILET OPEN FOR BUSINESS

When Thacher Island was less popular, its two marine-toilet privies were adequate, but the island's increasing attraction to kayakers and boaters created a need for an improved restroom facility. Planning for the installation of a Clivus Multrum composting toilet began three years ago and was the Thacher Island work crew's main building project in the summer of 2012. The first component of the toilet arrived at the Rockport Department of Public Works last spring as a roughly 9-foot-by-5-foot-by-4-foot plastic container that resembled a green jacuzzi. The Rockport DPW's Don Greel got it to the Sandy Bay Yacht Club on T-Wharf where Club manager Ron Petoff harnessed it to the club winch and lowered it into Captain Bill Lee's Ocean Reporter. Bill floated it as far as the island's mooring.

The Thacher Island launch nudged it toward the ramp while work crew members used ropes to haul it ashore. The island's Kubota tractor and volunteers muscled it through the boathouse to the rail track. There it remained while test holes were drilled in countless locations near the campground in an attempt to find soil deep enough to sink the tank the island being mostly ledge. Volunteers Lee Marr and David Delaney finally found an area at the back of the campground and used the tractor's backhoe to create a hole that accommodated most of the chamber's depth.

Through July and August, Dick Morris and Peter Bergholz, assisted by a crew of Wednesday carpenters that included Bill Whiting, Peter Craig, Ben Zorfas, Donna

Cusick, Dean Stairs, and Jeff Taylor, built an imposing edifice on top of the toilet's base. The new restroom includes a solar panel, installed by Dick McPherson that powers both the fan that evaporates liquids and a 12-volt light that works on a sensor. After 10 minutes of inactivity inside the stall, the light goes out but can be reactivated by the wave of a hand. The building's crowning detail is a cedar door with beaded fir panels crafted by Dick Morris and varnished by Dick Whittaker.

When the composting toilet opens to visitors this season, the more dilapidated of the two old privies will go out in a blaze of glory -- literally. It has been promised to the Rockport Fire Department for the top of the July 4th bonfire.

NEW COMPOSTING TOILET INSTALLATION: WORK CREW PHOTOS



Lee and Dave dig.



Setting into hole.



Framework.



Framing up.



Trim work.



Dick and Dean framework.



Sheathing and trim.



New door.



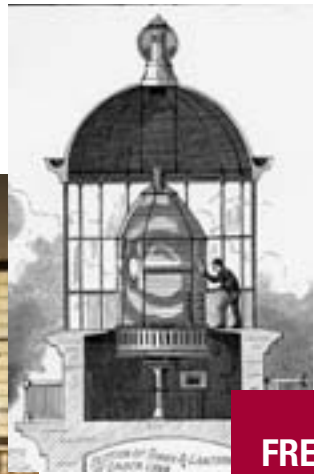
Final door.



Solar panel and siding.

In the first flush of planning for Thacher Island's 2013 summer season, with an end finally in sight for one last big movement toward completion of the composting toilet, Peter Bergholz has one thing to say:

"Enough with the toilet jokes. I've heard them all already."



The Lens Is Coming Home.

An important part of Thacher Island's history is returning to Cape Ann.

The Fresnel lens that occupied the South Tower from its installation in 1861 until its removal by the Coast Guard in 1980 was offered to the Thacher Island Association, with a few conditions: Although it has spent its post-island life on exhibit at the Coast Guard Academy museum in New London, Connecticut, the lens now requires restoration, and, to prevent future deterioration, needs to be housed in a temperature- and humidity-controlled environment. The association has found an enthusiastic partner in Gloucester's Cape Ann Museum, which not only agreed to exhibit the 3,000-pound, million-dollar artifact of marine history but has proposed a renovation that will turn an exterior balcony into a glass-walled Fresnel lens room. Flanked by an interpretive display of Thacher history, the lens will once again be visible to all who visit the Cape Ann Museum.

Working together, the two groups developed a fund-raising campaign. Two charitable organizations -- the Manton Foundation and the Belinda Fund -- have

provided almost a third of the amount necessary for lens conservation and reassembly and the museum's construction of an exhibition room. In addition, individual members of the Thacher Island Association and Cape Ann Museum have donated amounts ranging from \$25 to \$10,000. To date, more than \$120,000 of the \$200,000 goal has been met.

While the lens room will not be ready until 2014, restoration of the lens will start this spring in the Museum's Maritime Gallery. That work itself will be an exhibit: Three lampists (experts in Fresnel lens restoration and repair) will spend approximately two weeks unpacking 27 crates of prisms and bronze and reassembling the lens in public view. Work will begin on May 7th and the public is invited to watch the restoration work live. The Museum will host a series of lighthouse related programs throughout the lens installation period. The first will be an illustrated lecture on the history of the Thacher Island Fresnel lens given by Paul St.Germain, President of the Association, on Saturday, May 11, at 3:00 p.m. Cape Ann Museum is located at 27 Pleasant Street in Gloucester. The Thacher island Association and the Cape Ann Museum are proud of their collaborative effort. The Fresnel Lens Project continues the mission of each organization; to preserve historically significant artifacts and to celebrate Cape Ann's maritime heritage.

FRESNEL FACTS

The former South Tower lens is a first-order Fresnel lens, the largest and most powerful of six commercially available sizes. Its diameter is 6 feet 1 inch with a height of 7 feet 10 inches resting on a 2-foot base. It is made up of over 1,000 crystal glass prisms mounted in a bronze frame.

The lens was manufactured in Paris by L. Sautter & Sons in 1859 and installed in the South Tower in 1861. The lens cost the federal government \$6,800. Today it is valued at over 1 million dollars. It was lighted with a five-wick whale-oil lamp from 1861 to 1898, then by a vapor-oil lamp (similar to today's Coleman lamp). By 1932, the Fresnel was electrified with a 1,000-watt halide bulb unit, creating a 70,000-candlepower light that could be seen 44 miles at sea. In 1980 the Coast Guard automated the light station, installing a more modern South Tower optic and a new fog signal, both solar-powered.

Today there are only 39 first-order lenses still in operation in the nation and only three in New England: Gay Head Light on Martha's Vineyard, Sequin Light in Maine, and Block Island Southeast Light in Rhode Island.



Boathouse damaged by February Blizzard.

The February blizzard that caused extensive mainland damage also struck Thacher Island with a hard fist of wind and water. A group of volunteers who made their way ashore four days after the storm found a great deal of damage to the recently refurbished boathouse.

A new garage door had been blown off its track, sills were washed out, the walls on the northeast corner were stripped away, and a bench had been yanked off the front. The gift shop shelving was knocked to the floor where it mingled with other debris that had been caught up in the storm surge. Boulders littered the trail to the North Light. Debris between the boathouse and the generator house included a cement mixer that had long stood beside the boathouse because it was too heavy to

be loaded onto the Thacher Island launch for removal to the mainland. Thacher Island Association president Paul St. Germain noted two bright spots among the damage: "Except for a few sacrificial planks that can be easily replaced," the ramp was unscathed. And, neatly folded on a table that had been lifted and repositioned by the waves, "Our flag was still there."

Continued from page 1

LANDING FEE:

Adults coming ashore in any way (kayak, dinghy, swimming from boats) will be assessed a \$5 island landing fee. There will be no fee for children under 14. Fees apply to those arriving with commercial or recreational groups as well as those arriving individually. Island landing fees will be payable in the form of cash, check or credit card to the keeper on duty in the boat house.

Fees will be waived for those who can show proof they are Rockport residents, current paid up Thacher Island Association members, holders of the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands America the Beautiful passes, or a valid Federal Duck Stamp, or arriving aboard the Thacher Island launch.

LAUNCH FEE:

Seats aboard the Thacher Island launch will cost \$20 per adult and \$10 per child under 14. Launch fees will be paid by credit card (or check) at the time that phone reservations are made. (Call the Thacher Island launch reservation number: 617--599-2590). The reservation fee will be reimbursed if the launch trip is cancelled due to weather or rough seas. Any cancellations made less than one week before the time of departure will result in forfeiture of payment.

CAMPING FEE:

Camping fees continue to be \$5 a person per night, in addition everyone over the age of 14 will be required to pay the island landing fee, unless they qualify for a waiver of the landing fees.



THACHER ISLAND GEAR

150th Anniversary Poster Available.

Due to the very high interest in the 150th Anniversary logo recently shown at our annual art show, we have reproduced it in 2 sizes suitable for framing. Each is printed on heavy 48 pound acid free stock. Sent in a mailing tube ready for framing.

20" x 36" - \$55.00
14" x 24" - \$30.00



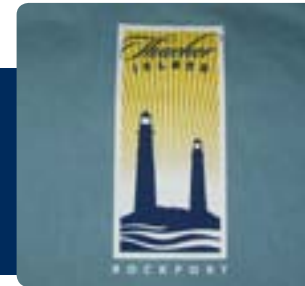
Denim Keeper Shirt. This 100% cotton soft denim shirt is a key item to own. It proudly shows off the new Thacher Island twin lights logo embroidered in dark blue. Comes in S,M,L,XL,2XL was \$40.00 now \$35.00



NEW

Twin Lights of Thacher Island-Navy Hooded Sweatshirt, Rugged full metal zipper, heavy weight 9oz., 50/50 Cotton/Poly Lycra elastic sleeves and waist band. Twin hand warmer front pocket and draw string neck. Sizes S, M, L, XL \$45.00

T-shirts now available in Youth's sizes S=6-8, M=10-12, L=14-16



"Sunburst" on Sea Foam Blue 100% cotton. Sizes S,M,L,XL. \$22.00



"Kayak Paddle" on Putty 100% cotton. Sizes S,M,L,XL. \$22.00



Red, White and Blue Flag on White 100% cotton. Sizes S,M,L,XL. \$22.00

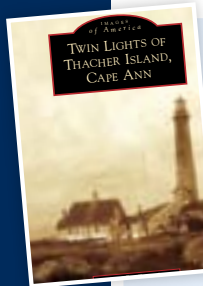
Use your credit card on line to buy Thacher merchandise at our web site www.thacherisland.org or mail checks to Thacher Island Association Box 73, Rockport, Ma 01966. All prices include postage and handling.



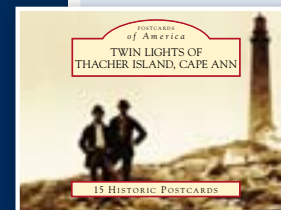
Thacher Pins Left.-Logo 1" Right -Towers 1 1/4" \$5.00



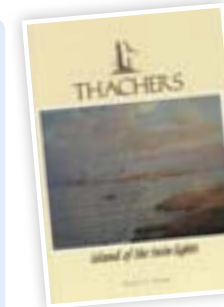
Colorful Hats. Shows off the Thacher Island Twin Lights logo. Yellow, Faded Blue, Khaki, Nautical Red, Charcoal, Navy. Adjustable, 100% cotton, washable. \$22.00



New book by Paul St. Germain, President of the Thacher Island Association, tracing the pictorial history of the "Twin Lights of Thacher Island, Cape Ann" with over 200 vintage photos many never before published. \$24.00



Thacher Island Vintage Postcards, 15 different scenes per pack. \$9.00

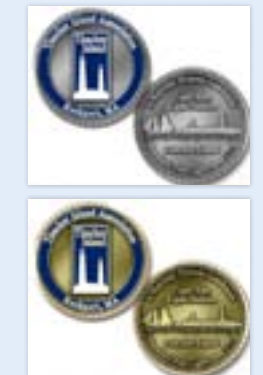


Book by Eleanor Parsons. The definitive book on the history of Thacher Island. \$24.00



150th Anniversary Commemorative Ornament
This beautiful 3 1/4 by 2 1/2 inch three dimensional gold engraved ornament is packaged in its own navy blue velvet lined box ready for gift giving. \$22.00

Thacher Island Challenge Coins



These 2 inch Challenge Coins are available in silver or gold color. \$12.00 each



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How to get to Thacher Island

The Thacher Island Visitor's launch will begin operations on June 1 and run through August 31, 2013 making four trips a week. Check the Thacher Island web site at www.thacherisland.org under the "Visiting" tab for complete information.



New Improved Web Site Designed.

We are excited to announce a newly designed and more user friendly web site. From the new site you will be able to buy Thacher merchandise, renew your membership, donate, check for up-coming events, find details on how you can visit the island and view recent photos that our guests, visitors and professional photographers have submitted. We have made it easier to surf through the various pages to find exactly what you want faster. Simple drop down menus are available on each menu button at the top of the opening page. Just click on the link www.thacherisland.org and let us know how you like it.

Credit cards now accepted at our new store page on the web site.

Now you can use major credit cards like Visa, Master Card, American Express, Discover and Diner's Club on our site. You can purchase

Thacher merchandise, renew memberships or make donations easily and simply. The site is secured and is certified safe to use with your credit card. There is a new automatic store front and ordering page on which you can select items for sale and the system takes you through the entire processes seamlessly and even figures out the shipping costs. A receipt is automatically sent to your e-mail address upon completion of your transaction. **Call 617-599-2590 for reservations.**

Contributors to this issue were Sharron Cohen, Paul St.Germain, writing and photography, David Cohen, editing, Percolator Design Inc., design and layout.