

# The Thacher Island News

VOLUME 10, ISSUE 2 · OCTOBER 2010

## S.O.S. we need your help!

### The Association has kicked-off a fund raising campaign to buy a new boat launch.

Although the term S.O.S. does not really mean "Save Our Ship" we in fact are sending out a distress call asking for your help. The launch that we have been using for the past 30 years to transport visitors and volunteers has seen better days. We are concerned for the safety of our passengers on the 3 mile trip from Rockport Harbor to the island. The cost for a custom built, handicap accessible, U.S. Coast Guard certified, slightly longer and better handling craft is \$158,000.

We typically see between 3000 and 4000 visitors on the island annually. The island now has a museum and visitor center, newly restored keeper's houses, lighthouse towers and whistle house as well as several walking trails and camping facilities that the public can enjoy. Because of the public's renewed interest we expect even larger numbers of visitors in the future. It would be unfortunate to be unable to continue our work because we lack a suitable and safe boat.

We have raised approximately \$100,000 to date. We are contacting our members, friends and the general community for help to finish the job. As part of that effort we were wondering if you can help us.

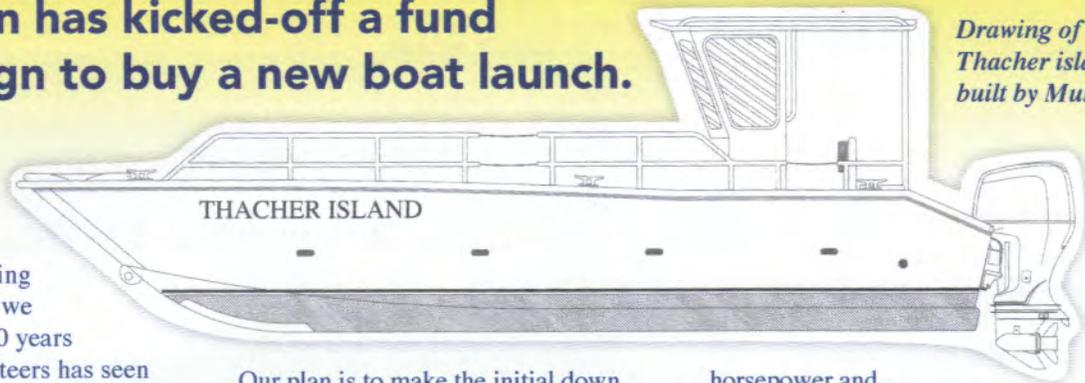
We have two donors who

**Your Donation will be Matched!**

have agreed to match dollar for dollar whatever we raise from this appeal. Please try to contribute because every dollar you donate will be doubled!

All donations are tax deductible as allowed by law.

Please use the form on page 2 to make your contributions.



*Drawing of proposed Thacher island Boat built by Munson Boats.*

Our plan is to make the initial down payment on the boat (\$50,000) this fall so the manufacturer will start final design plans and begin construction. We hope to have the new boat delivered by next summer if we can raise the balance of the \$158,000.

Some have wondered why the boat costs \$158,000. There are a number of reasons why we think this is a fair price.

**FIRST**, it is custom built for our needs including special rollers to roll it up on the boat ramp. An aluminum boat, although more expensive, is much more durable than fiberglass and is especially needed to land on a wooden boat ramp which is surrounded by rocks. It will take the pounding and abuse of a work boat.

**SECOND**, it will be USCG certified for maximum safety. The USCG certification process is costly and time consuming. Certain things must be built into the boat to get a COI (Certificate of Inspection) like emergency fuel shutoff, fuel plumbing hard piped etc. Submit structural, electrical, plumbing, fuel system drawings and wait for them to be signed off. Call for structural inspection. Call for fuel tank open top inspection. Call for fuel tank test inspection. Call for electrical and plumbing inspection. After the boat is launched it will have a stability inspection which includes loading boat with simulated passenger load weight/weight shifting/load line certification. Cost \$20,000.

**THIRD**, it includes two engines and stainless steel props and rigging kits. The boat will not perform efficiently with a single engine. It is all about props, not horsepower. Two props are much better than one. We could lower the twin engine

horsepower and use a single bigger engine like a 300HP but we want to build a boat that handles its loads well without strain, burns fuel efficiently, gets many more hours of engine life due to ease of engine operations. This is the way a boat should be built but rarely is. Cost \$16,000 each.

**FOURTH**, the price includes the 4 wheel trailer (\$8450), all safety gear, all testing, sea trials and driver training and shipping (\$6000).



*Current 30 year old boat has seen better days.*

As a comparison, the Rockport Harbormaster boat purchased in 2001 cost \$135,000. Their boat is 24 feet with two Honda engines and is made of fiberglass and is a stock hull. Ours is 30 feet and made of more durable aluminum and is custom designed for our needs.

Used boats have been researched. There are very few flat bottom boats around and are in worse shape than ours. We also checked government military surplus lists and have found nothing that meets our needs.

# THACHER ISLAND NEW BOAT LAUNCH

\$25    
  \$50    
  \$100    
  \$500    
  \$1000    
  \$5000

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ AMOUNT ENCLOSED \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

**CONTINUED FROM THE COVER**

Munson Boats has 40 years experience building welded aluminum boats, 16 years of 100% landing craft production, produces approximately \$9 million per year of landing craft, ships worldwide, has a 10 year track record of less than \$4000 per year in warranty work, has carried a full factory backlog of orders since 1999 and continues to do so, and is recognized as the very best at what they do.

## Island Receives a Visitor from the Past.

In late August, Alice Orne Bickerton was taken out to the island for a visit. Alice, if you recall from the last newsletter, was the daughter of keeper Simeon Orne in 1927. She was taken to the island when she was only 2 weeks old and lived there until she was five. This is the first time she has been back since 1932 over 78 years ago. Alice was chauffeured around the Island aboard the electric cart which enabled her to see just about everything she wanted too. Born in 1927 she related stories of her time living there. She recalled helping her father polish the brass in the lights in the lantern rooms of each tower and machinery around the fog signal house. When we showed her the kitchen she remembered that there was a hand pump for water and no electricity only kerosene lamps. Also the bathroom was in an outhouse in the back yard. Alice insisted in trying to climb the south tower and made it to the first level, pretty good for an 83 year old!



Alice was escorted by her daughter in law Frances Sonia who lives here in Rockport. Alice said she had a great time was particularly thrilled and said "it was one of the best days of my life!"

She hopes to visit us again next summer.



Alice is shown here climbing the steps to the South Tower.

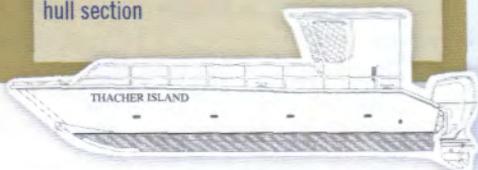
Alice sitting on a reproduction of the tramway cart. She once broke her arm riding this cart down to the boat house with her brothers.

Alice poses with our "Keeper" in the museum.



**MORE ABOUT THE BOAT**  
SPECIFICATIONS

Hull length	28' 5"
Length Overall	30' approx.
Beam	8.5'
Person and Cargo Capacity	3000 lbs.
Propulsion 225HP	Honda duals
Fuel Capacity	80 gallons
Bow Door Width	64"
Bottom Plating	1/4"
Side Plating	1/4"
Deck Plating	3/16"
Transom Deadrise each hull section	24 degrees



# FIRST ANNUAL KAYAK-A-THON HELD IN AUGUST.

It was August 14, 1635, when a small boat out of Ipswich, bound for Marblehead, was caught in the Great Storm and dashed to pieces on the rocks of a small island off Rockport's coast.

Only Anthony Thacher and his wife Elizabeth survived, while their four children and 17 other friends were lost.

On the 375th anniversary of Anthony Thacher's of their loss and in an effort to raise funds to purchase a new vessel to bring visitors to the island-the Association hosted the inaugural Thacher Island Kayak-a-thon. Participants paddled from Back Beach in Rockport four miles to Thacher and back.

Seventeen paddlers joined the group each of whom was sponsored by other individuals for varying amounts of money. Over \$700 was raised but more importantly we plan to make this an annual event that will only grow over time.



Michele DeSoto of Desoto Adventures, an outdoor events planning company, organized the event. We had many local businesses and individuals sponsor this event. Novelty bags, T-shirts and prizes were given to all participants. There were fourteen corporate sponsors as well.

Winners were determined by who raised the most money in sponsorships.

First place went to J.T. Skeen who received a \$100 gift certificate to Kittery Trading Post, second was Heather Cowen who won \$50 from the Kaihlanen Gallery, third place went to Dan Herrick with a prize from Captain Steve and fourth place to Michele DeSoto and a prize from New England Small Craft.

Next year we hope to have greater participation and more corporate and individual sponsors.

Our August keepers John and Darlene Fulton put on a hot dog barbecue for all the participants. John set up a "grill station" near the boat house. He cooked the dogs in beer then grilled them. Hot dogs were contributed by Top



Kayakers set out for the 4 mile paddle from Back Beach in Rockport.

John Fulton grills up beer basted hot dogs for the contestants.

Dog Restaurant on Bear Skin Neck. Fudge came from the Fudgery and strudel was donated by Helmut's Strudel Shop as well as soda from Twin Lights Beverages of Rockport.

## Association Summer Events Attract Large Crowds.

The annual lighthouse cruise around Cape Ann on July 30 attracted over 190 people. One of the largest crowds we have had for this annual event. This was the ninth annual cruise held by the Association with all funds raised going toward the purchase of a new boat. A special guest was aboard, Dolly Snow Bicknell, daughter of famed maritime author Edward Rowe Snow. She came with her son who celebrated his birthday on the cruise. Also celebrating his birthday was Jeremy D'Entremont our narrator. As we traveled by Thacher on the way to Annisquam Light we called the keepers

John and Darlene Fulton and told them to stand on new whistle house porch so all the

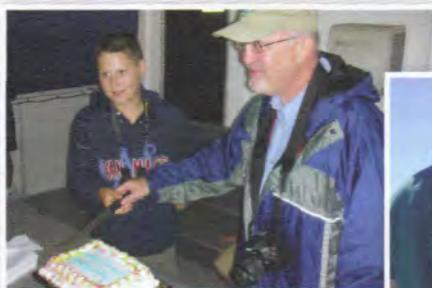
passengers could wave to them. The Captain particularly enjoyed blowing his horn as we passed by.

On August 7 and 11 a total of 83 Artists and photographers joined us aboard the Thacher Island launch to spend the day. We had a special 4am trip for 15 photographers who wanted to catch the spectacular sunrise. One of the photographers was a videographer who did a special 3 minute video that captured the beautiful sunrise in all its various aspects and published it on You Tube. We have put it up on our web site for all to enjoy. Look under the "Events" page to view it.

The July 4th Firemens' Parade in Rockport also attracted huge crowds this

year. The Association participated when Dick Morris, a member of the Thacher Island Town Committee, volunteered his truck to carry many of the Association member's grand children who passed out over 800 membership brochures and over 200 pounds of candy to eager kids on the parade route. This effort resulted in many new members joining the Association.

Six members of the Cape Ann Amateur Radio Association (CAARA) spent a weekend in August competing in an international lighthouse ham radio contest. They contacted over 50 foreign countries including Japan, China and hundreds of other locations across the U.S. and Canada and Europe.



Light house Cruise narrator Jeremy D'Entremont and John Bicknell celebrated their birthdays on board the "Hurricane II".

David Gibbons paints on the island during Art & Photo Day. Thacher Island volunteer grandchildren pass out candy and membership materials during the annual Rockport Firemans July 4th Parade. A Cape Ann Amateur Radio member camps out on the lawn of the principal keeper house talking to the world.

## Progress Continues on the Tramway.

Volunteers broke into teams to start the task of clearing brush, removing the old rotted trestles and railway track to begin restoring the old road bed of the tram way used to haul coal and supplies up to the whistle house and keeper houses. This tramway system was first built around 1880 and included a turntable which allowed the small carts to be shuttled in four directions across the island.

Hundreds of feet of heavy timbers and pressure treated lumber were brought to the island each Wednesday morning and construction began in July. Two lines were constructed; one from the boat house up to the turntable in the middle of the island and a second from the keeper's houses to the turntable. Each run was over 130 feet long. Teams were broken into a trestle builders, stringer hangers, tie layers and track crews.

Members of the Thacher Volunteer Railway Gang get ready to drive the "Golden Spike" signifying the completion of the southern and western tramway track bed.



Crews were able to salvage much of the old track which was still useable. The two tramway carts were restored using original plans and photographs from our archives. The goal is to put these carts into service to demonstrate to visitors how they were used by the keepers years ago.

Members of the Railway Gang included Peter Bergholtz, Dick Morris, Dick Goehlerts, Donna Cusick, Jeff Taylor, Tom Eldridge, Dave Arnold, Dan Herrick, David Delany, Peter Craig, Charlie Allen, Chris Perry, and Paul St.Germain.

Plans for next summer include constructing two more tracks running to the oil house and partially toward the whistle house to demonstrate how the turntable was used to re-direct the tramway carts.



The 130 foot trestle way running north south from the turntable toward the keepers houses.

## Whistle House Restoration is on Schedule.

Volunteers have removed the debris and some of the rotted matchstick ceiling of the building. Most of the old electrical wiring was removed and replaced with new wiring that meets code restrictions. New windows were installed and the entire exterior of the building was pressure washed and repainted. A new entry porch was built by the "deck crew". This is the sixth porch built on the island by the team of Peter Bergholtz and Dick Morris.

Plans for next summer include pressure washing the interior, adding new lighting, repainting all the existing machinery, ceilings, floors and walls. We hope someday to activate the original double Super Typhon fog horn which was re-hung last year when the ocean side brick wall was replaced.

We were fortunate to have a group of volunteers from General Electric plant in Lynn, MA who came up and helped to repaint the exterior of the building. We thank them for their efforts.



Photo taken from the South tower showing the newly painted Whistle house and porch.

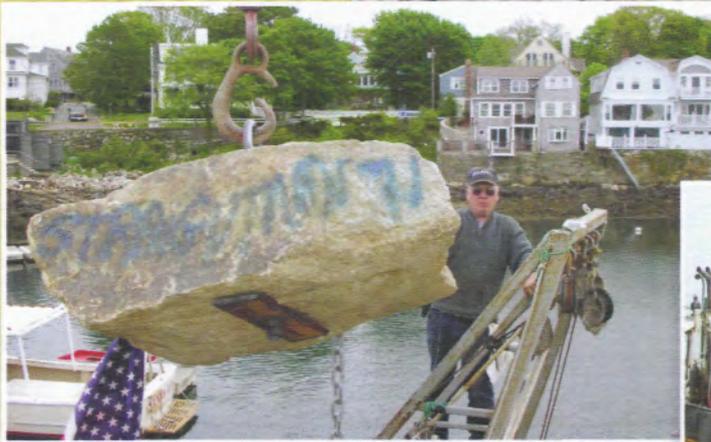


Volunteers from General Electric in Lynn came out for a day of community service to paint the Whistle House.



Daring G.E. volunteer paints the flag pole on the island.

# Straitsmouth Island Official Transfer and Mooring Set.



3400 pound mooring stone is lifted onto Bill Lee's boat.



Ocean Reporter is accompanied by Rockport Harbormasters Rosemary Lesch and Scott Story to place the mooring just off the northern shore of Straitsmouth Island.

The official handover ceremony of the keys to the Straitsmouth Island lighthouse was made by Chief Warrant Officer Chris Sparkman of the U.S.Coast Guard to Rockport Selectman Andrew Heinze on July 21, 2010 on the Town dock.

Selectman Heinze in turn handed the keys to Dr. Sydney Wedmore, Chairman of the Thacher Island Town Committee. His committee will take responsibility for managing the island light and approximately 2 acres of land while the Thacher Island Association will be engaged to procure funding for its upkeep and maintenance. "The transfer of ownership to the Town will insure that the Straitsmouth Light will be cared for and restored for the enjoyment of visitors and its townspeople. It will save an important historical icon for the Town just as we did for Thacher Island in 2001" said Paul St.Germain, President of the Thacher Island Association.

Earlier in May a group of volunteers rounded up a 3400 pound granite mooring stone to be used as haul-out mooring for the Thacher Island launch when it makes trips to Straitsmouth. "Because we have no ramp or dock to use to land we must have a mooring to use to drop workers off and then

moor the boat away from the islands rocky shore", said Paul St.Germain. "This was a fine example of a diverse group of town's people rallying to help a wonderful cause", said Syd Wedmore. The stone was donated by Scott Story, Rockport Harbormaster. It was brought to the Sandy Bay Yacht Club dock by the Town's by DPW department and lowered onto Bill Lee's fishing boat Ocean Reporter using the yacht club winch operated by SBYC manager Ron Petoff. Bill Lee's brother drilled the hole to attach the eye and chain which will be used to attach the mooring ball. Bill then ferried the stone out to Straitsmouth assisted by Harbormasters Rosemary Lesch and Scott Story and dropped it into 22 feet of water where it will be used by the Thacher Island volunteers who will begin maintenance work sometime next year.

# 150th Anniversary of the Twin Lights of Thacher to be Celebrated in 2011.

*October 1, 1861 was the day the lights on the newly built twin towers were illuminated. The current granite 124 foot tall towers were started in 1859 and completed in July of 1861. These towers replaced the original 45 foot tall rubble stone and wood towers built by the British in 1771. We will celebrate the 150th anniversary all year and hope to have a few special events to commemorate their construction.*



## TOWER FACTS:

These lighthouses were the first in America to be used to mark a dangerous spot in the sea, all prior lights were used to simply mark harbor entrances.

Built by Thomas Roberts and Edwin Adams of Boston.

Granite came from New Hampshire not Rockport.

45 courses of granite with 9 blocks on the base and 12 blocks at the top.

Height- 112 ½ feet to the focal plane of the light, 124 feet tall and 160 feet above mean tide.

Diameter- 30 feet at base and 18 feet at top.

Number of steps -156.

Granite walls are 4-5 feet thick and are lined with brick inside.

Towers stand 298 yards apart.

Cost to build in 1861 was \$81,417.60.

Construction started in July of 1859 and finished in July of 1861. Abraham Lincoln was elected in 1860.

The First Order Fresnel lens could be seen 22 miles at sea.

The lens weighed 3 tons and stood 12 feet high and 6 feet in diameter.

Both lenses were made in Paris, France by L. Sautter & Cie, for the south tower and Henri -Lepaute for the north tower.

Each lens consisted of 1000 crystal glass prisms used to magnify the light to 22,000 candlepower.

The south tower Fresnel lens is now on display in the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, Ct.

Lamp inside the lens initially used whale (sperm) oil and later by lard oil and then kerosene (mineral oil).

Lamp used 2282 gallons of oil a year.

In 1932 the light was electrified with four 250 watt bulbs providing 70,000 candlepower and could be seen 44 miles away.

1978 a DCB-224 aero-beacon using 1000 watt metal halide bulbs was installed in the south tower.

1990 a Vega VRB-25 optic light with a red flashing beacon was installed in the south tower.

2003 a solar powered 120 L.E.D. light beacon replaced the old 6 light unit in the north tower.

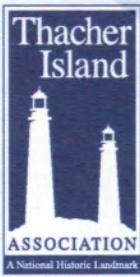


## New 150th Anniversary Commemorative Ornament For Sale.

A special commemorative Christmas ornament has been created and will be offered for sale in time for this Christmas gift giving. Sale proceeds of the ornament will go toward the new boat. This beautiful 3 ¼ by 2 ½ inch 3 dimensional gold engraved

ornament is packaged in its own navy blue velvet lined box ready for gift giving. Get your orders in by December 10 in order to have them by Christmas.

**\$20.00 including shipping.**



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ON THE WEB: [www.thacherisland.org](http://www.thacherisland.org)  
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## State of Massachusetts Lists Thacher Island.

A special commission formed by the State of Massachusetts has added Cape Ann Light Station on Thacher Island to its 1000 Great Places to Visit list. This honor was announced on July 12 by the Massachusetts State Mass Vacations unit. The State's 341 towns and cities were represented. Also included were other Rockport sites, Bearskin Neck, Halibut Point, Headlands, Rockport Harbor, Motif #1, Rockport Art Association and Shalin Liu Performance Center.

State of Massachusetts 1000 Great Places to Visit

# Cape Ann Light Station

Thacher Island

## NEW THACHER ISLAND GEAR

### Half Hull Schooner Onato

Beautiful handmade half hull of the schooner Onato. Each half hull is 8 ½ inches long and is mounted on a cherry wood back plate that measures 4 by 10 ½ inches. Taken from the original drawings and handmade by local Rockport craftsman Ed Locke, this is a special model just right for your home or study. The Onato was a typical fishing schooner used near Thacher Island around 1904. It was a medium-large "Indian Header" designed by Tom McManus and built by Oxner and Story at Essex. She was 106 feet long, one of several of an advanced, round-bowed type all given Indian names.

*Price \$75.00 includes shipping.*



Half Hull Schooner Onato



Bell buoy being dragged off the beach by the lighthouse tender Lotus and coast guardsmen, note the counter-balancing weight at the bottom of the buoy.

### Harbor Bell Buoy lost in 1930 storm.

This classic photo taken by Charles Cleaves, a local photographer in Rockport, just after a major northeaster in 1930. It shows coast guardsmen trying to move the 3000 pound bell buoy from the beach with the aid of a lighthouse tender in Rockport Harbor. Based on keeper's logs this is probably the USLHS Tender Lotus which operated out of Boston in the second coast guard district from 1922 to 1946 and regularly serviced Thacher Island during that time. This buoy was located at the entrance to Rockport Harbor near the Dry Salvages rocks just to the northeast of Thacher and Straitsmouth Islands.