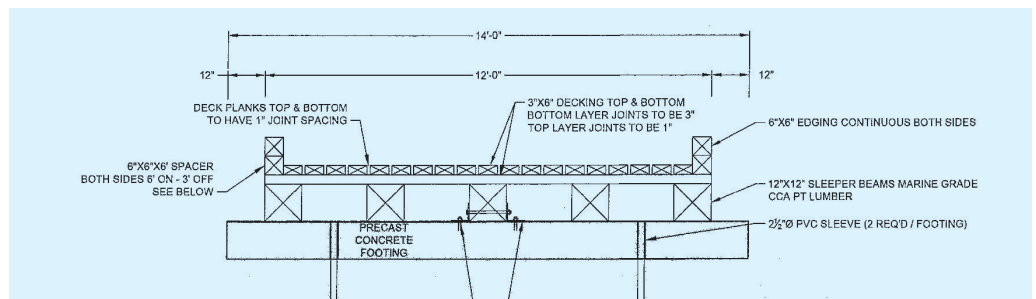


## STRAITSMOUTH RAMP TAKES SHAPE

In early July, Great Eastern Marine Service Inc., the winning bid contractor for the Straitsmouth ramp construction, poured the first of eleven concrete footings to be used as the base for the new 105-foot timber boat ramp. Each footing weighs approximately 10,000 pounds and measures 2 feet high, 2 feet across and 13 feet long. They have rebar-cage reinforcement inside along with rebar loops to enable them to be lifted by Great Eastern's 50-foot crane. Each has a 3-inch PVC pipe sleeve at either end to allow 2-inch rebar to be driven through the footing to secure it to the sub-surface ledge.

On August 6, Great Eastern's crew arrived at Gap Cove on the western end of Straitsmouth with two barges, one for their crane and one for their Caterpillar excavator; a small tug boat; and two auxiliary boats to land the excavator on the island for clearing the large boulders. Two "spuds" or pilings were dropped into the water for anchoring the barges into position and preventing their movement during the construction work. The excavator was driven off its barge onto the beach using two 3-foot-wide steel I-beams as a ramp. Once the massive boulders are cleared, crushed stone will be spread to provide an even base for the footings. **Continued on Page 3**



Eleven pre-cast concrete footings cured for a month. Barges arrive to drop-off the excavator.

Eleven footings were placed by the excavator ten feet apart. Drawing of the timber ramp deck



Joe Scarfone hangs one of the temporary scaffold supports on the South Tower.

Roy Fischer and Kim Keat drilled holes through the fallen parapet block.

Roy Fischer monitored the block's ascent (on right) from his scaffold position.

Kim Keat controlled the 400-pound block as it was "flown" (hoisted) to the gallery deck.



## Towering Repairs

A three-man crew from International Chimney Corporation spent close to a month repairing both lighthouses on Thacher Island. The most extensive work was done on the North Tower, where a stone that had fallen from the parapet two years earlier was epoxied into place. Both towers were fitted with stainless steel corset bands at the base of both lantern and gallery deck parapets to stabilize the structures and ensure that the granite decking does not shift. The North Tower's repairs were funded by its owner, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, while repairs to the South Tower, owned by the Town of Rockport, were funded by the Thacher Island Association and a grant from the United States Lighthouse Society. **Continued on Page 3**





Bill and Debbie on their front porch.

## Work Crew Profile BILL AND DEBBIE WHITING

To say that Bill and Debbie Whiting are active in the community is an understatement. In addition to the multiple roles they fill in the Thacher Island Association, they row an average of five times a week with the Gloucester Gig Rowers.

After the April to January season ends, they lend their hands to the winter maintenance of the group's three boats. Bill credits his past eight years of working with Habitat for Humanity for honing many of the carpentry skills he uses on both Thacher and Straitsmouth Island, and both Whitings spend one morning a week at Wellspring House, where Bill teaches English as a Second Language and Debbie teaches math to those studying for the High School Equivalency Test.

In their spare time, they travel — most often to Europe, with Italy a favorite destination — and sometimes with the gig rowers. Debbie has raced in Bermuda; Bill participated in the 2015 World Pilot Gig Championship in Scilly, Cornwall. In September they both rowed 22 miles of the Thames in England's Great River Race.

The well-matched couple suspects that they were deliberately matched by friends and family. When Debbie's college roommate married Bill's brother, they were paired, usher with bridesmaid, down the

aisle. "I'd never met him, but we clicked right away," Debbie said. They married a year later.

After Debbie graduated from the University of Connecticut and Bill emerged from Providence College with a B.A. in Humanities, the couple lived in Simsbury, CT, where Debbie spent 20 years as a teaching assistant in a K-grade 6 public school. Bill spent thirty years with Cigna Healthcare, his last fifteen years as Vice-President of National Accounts, with responsibility for clients like IBM and UPS. They raised three children who reflect their parents' variety of interests: Brian teaches fourth grade in Newton, MA; Laura, now a swim instructor, worked in education until she became the mother of four of the Whitings' five grandchildren; and Annie, mother to the fifth grandchild, is a Physical Therapist who spent two years working with the Catholic Medical Mission Board outside Durban, South Africa.

The Whitings' choice of Rockport as a retirement destination was natural: Debbie summered on Marmion Way, and her parents still do. When a house became available diagonally across the street from her parents, Bill and Debbie bought it, dividing their time between Connecticut and Massachusetts for several years. In 2009, when they completed their move to Rockport, Bill almost immediately joined the Thacher Island



Bill works on the new barn on Straitsmouth.



Bill waits for the returning launch on Straitsmouth.

## Towering Repairs Continued on Page 1

Both towers require additional repairs, most notably stainless-steel railing posts to replace the current rusted posts, for which the Thacher Island Association will begin a fundraising campaign next year. Until the repairs have been made, visitors will still be allowed to climb the South Tower and look through the lantern room windows, but they will not be allowed on the parapet.



The crew finessed the block into place after inserting stainless steel pins and applying epoxy.



Fischer unloaded stainless steel corset bands at the base of the North Tower. The lantern deck required five eleven-foot-long pieces and the gallery deck required six to circumscribe the tower.



The fallen fitted block has been pinned and epoxied back in place (white pie-shaped piece upper center of photo). The ICC crew repaired other loose stones on the parapet and coated all metal surfaces to prevent further rusting.



Corset bands were fitted into place and pulled tight around both lantern room and gallery platforms with a "come-along" ratchet before being bolted and welded into place.



The South Tower required the same construction of a scaffold and the use of a crane "gin pole" for lifting materials to the parapets. Minor cracks were sealed to prevent further ice and water incursion.



Twenty holes are drilled in each footing for the L brackets.

## STRAITSMOUTH RAMP TAKES SHAPE Continued on Page 1

Each day the barges left from their facilities in Gloucester and traveled north on the Annisquam River into Ipswich Bay and along the north side of the Cape and passed Halibut Point to the island. The trips took from three to four hours one way. Ken Taliadoros, President of Great Eastern, told us that prevailing winds and tide currents at this time of year make this a better route than going south through the Blynman Canal draw bridge. The excavator was left on the island each evening while the barges, tug, and boats returned to the Great Eastern facilities next to the Cape Ann Marina on Essex Ave in Gloucester.

The eleven footings were delivered in mid-August at high tide along with massive bags of crushed stone.

Once the crushed stone base was spread the footings were carefully placed on the stone bedding and positioned parallel to each other at ten-foot intervals by the excavator. These footings provide the proper grade angle upon which the timber ramp is built.

The timber framework, marine-grade southern yellow pine lumber, consists of five rows of 12"x12"x12' beams used for the sleepers and 3"x6" cross decking installed in two layers horizontal to each other. The bottom layer is spaced at 3 inches and the top layer at 1-inch joint spacing to allow water to flow through and prevent the ramp from lifting from storm surge pressure underneath. Timbers of doubled 6"x6" edging will keep the launch from skidding off the ramp. The sleeper beams are bolted to the footings with six-inch galvanized L brackets. Overall the ramp has a 13.5-degree slope allowing gravity to roll the launch down the ramp and into the water.

The contract called for completion of the ramp by October 1st. The keeper house restoration has been completed and furniture has been delivered ready for summer volunteer keepers. The hope is to open the island to the public by next summer 2019.

Timbers ready to go from Granite Pier.





# Summer Work: Straitsmouth Island

Straitsmouth Island volunteers are nearing the completion of an eight-year effort to make the island accessible to visitors. Trails have been cleared, the keeper house made habitable, a barn erected to protect work equipment, and a landing ramp constructed. Rockport's closest island should be open to the public in the summer of 2019.



Straitsmouth's work crew unloaded building materials from the launch. This is one of 30 6"x6" timbers used for the barn floor.

Work continued in and around the new equipment storage barn.



Straitsmouth's work crew unloaded building materials from the launch.



Ray Moss and John Doue were among those who laid the barn floor.



Bill Whiting and Peter Chick helped Ray Moss remove a boulder.



Randy Saville prepared the cistern for the addition of a watertight vinyl liner.



Syd Wedmore, Bill Whiting and George Grimes secure the liner to the cistern.

Christine Lovgren and Dan Southard cleaned windows in the keeper's house in preparation for storm windows installation.



Bill Whiting, Rich Calnan, and Gail Zeman cleared a trail to the shoreline revealing a magnificent vista to the twin lights of Thacher.



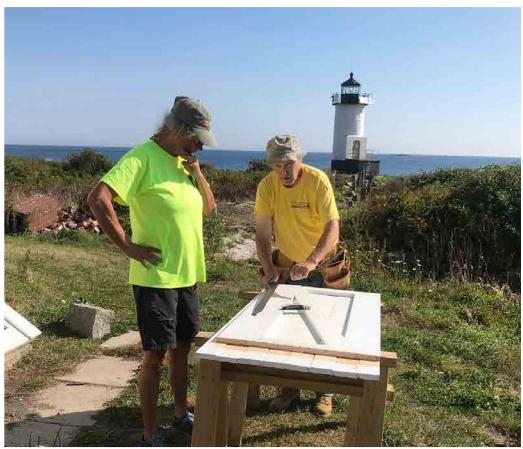
Volunteers from Cell Signaling Technology came to paint the oil house on Straitsmouth, shown here top row, Suzanne Martin, Tim Quinn, Zach Bruce, bottom row Yuichi Nishi and Keith Anderson.



Rich Calnan, Nathan Ives and Peter Bergholtz built a rope handrail on the granite stairs at the Gap end of the island as the ramp construction continued in the background.



Paul St Germain and Peter Bergholtz attached a mantelpiece Paul created in his home workshop.



Alice Twombly and Bruce Perkins work on final details of the bulkhead doors that Bruce built in his home workshop.



NAPCO contractors Jamie Erwin and Nate Gabriel install the storm and screen windows.

Straitsmouth's trail crew cleared brush and poison ivy from the original walkway. A replica of the original 1860's keeper's footbridge will be built on the old granite posts providing safe access to the lighthouse to visitors.



# Summer Work: Thacher Island



Thacher Island maintenance is like housework — it is never permanently done. Winter weather and lush vegetation create a continual need for infrastructure repair and trail maintenance.

George Langer, Dick Morris, and Tom Mikus repaired the storm-damaged boathouse wall.  
Jamie Erwin and Joe Napolitano, contractors with NAPCO, repaired the assistant keeper house roof.

Ray Moss cleared winter storm thrown boulders from Wedmore Walk.  
Tom Mikus and Norm Delisle stabilized the walkway to the Whistle House.  
Dick MacPherson replaced the security camera on the South Tower.



Early-season keepers Christine Lovgren, Jeannette Haynes, and Donna Cusick repaired the safety rope line along Bennett's Trace at the cliff on the south bluff.  
The Thacher Island work crew repaired and re-stepped the flagpole on the keeper house lawn.  
Alice Twombly patched a hole in the island skiff.

Harry Newell, Christa Clark, Ray Moss, Syd Wedmore and Larry Haynes took advantage of an exceptionally low spring tide to extend the length of the launch landing ramp.  
Dick Morris' and Tom Mikus relaxed in front of the new doors they installed on the stone generator house.  
The Thacher Privy Art Gallery added the work crew creation "Drop-cloth Madonna" to its collection.





## It Takes a Village to Run an Island

From the day it passed from Coast Guard to local oversight in 1980, Thacher Island has attracted committed volunteers willing to do everything necessary to keep the island accessible to visitors. The addition of Straitsmouth Island to the organization's mission in 2010 has required even more carpenters and trail workers, additional boat crew to shuttle people and supplies to both the islands, and a newly-formed docent group to answer visitors' questions. As the organization has grown so have the tasks of the Thacher Island Association board, leading to the formation of Shore Crew for marketing, publicity, events, and merchandising. To everyone who has contributed time and expertise, thank you! For those who would like to volunteer, please contact the Thacher Island Association at [info@thacherisland.org](mailto:info@thacherisland.org) or [tiashorecrew@gmail.com](mailto:tiashorecrew@gmail.com).

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

Preservation efforts on Thacher and Straitsmouth islands are both labor and capital intensive. We are extremely fortunate that our members respond with both many volunteer hours and generous contributions. In the next few years the association will be installing a composting toilet and elevated walkway on Straitsmouth, contracting with International Chimney Corporation to make several stone and metal repairs to the South Tower on Thacher, and purchasing a skiff to replace the very old one nearing its end on Thacher.

**For members wondering how they can continue to support the efforts of the TIA, we offer the following ideas:**

- Volunteer on the islands' work crews (every Wednesday from May-September) or for Shore Crew (year-round opportunities).
- If you haven't already done so, remit your annual dues, \$30 for an individual and \$60 for a family.
- Consider becoming a life member for \$500.
- Make a year-end tax-deductible donation to TIA.
- As part of your estate planning consider adding TIA as a beneficiary.
- Purchase TIA merchandise at Katie's Gift Shop in Rockport or on our website ([www.thacherisland.org](http://www.thacherisland.org)). Christmas is near.
- Use the Amazon Smile program when purchasing merchandise from Amazon. With no additional cost to you, Thacher Island Association will receive .05% of all money spent if you select the association as your designated charity.

### Keepers to Sleep Well next Season

Once again Gardner Mattress of Salem has donated two complete double bed sets for the keeper's house on Straitsmouth. Keepers have slept well on Thacher for many years on Gardner mattresses and the tradition continues on Straitsmouth thanks to the generosity of owner Gardner Sisk.



## VISITORS TO THACHER ISLAND



### Rockport Council on Aging

Thacher Island launch reservationist Paula Eldridge organized a trip for members of the Rockport Council on Aging. Seniors were treated to coffee and doughnuts.

Launch captain Seth Cutter prepared to take the happy visitors back to T-wharf.

### Coast Guard Checkup

Seaman Kieran Casey and electrician's mate Otis O'Neal checked electrical connections in the South Tower during a Coast Guard maintenance visit.

Electrician's mate Otis O'Neal worked on the foghorn.

### U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Parker River Refuge biologist Nancy Pau brought a crew to Thacher Island as part of U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's on-going attempts to diversify bird life on the island.

Parker River Refuge manager Bill Peterson brought Friends of Parker River board members to view the American Oystercatchers.

### Lobstering From the Launch

The Kawakami family from Hawaii learned how lobsters are caught.

Boat crew-woman Chris Riley showed Kaci and Chelsea Kawakami how to hypnotize a lobster.

Tyson and Charlotte Ober showed off lobsters they helped catch.

Singer/songwriter Chelsea Berry arrived on Thacher Island with a bouquet of flowers for keeper Darlene Fulton.

Syd Wedmore, chairman of the Thacher Town Committee, bids adieu to a short lobster.

Syd Wedmore, chairman of the Thacher Town Committee, displayed his weekly cigar transport system.



# New Birds on the Rock

American Oystercatchers have found a home on Thacher Island. Two mating pairs were observed in June, and, although the chicks are hard to spot, sharp-eyed keepers believe at least three were born on the island in July. Once thought to

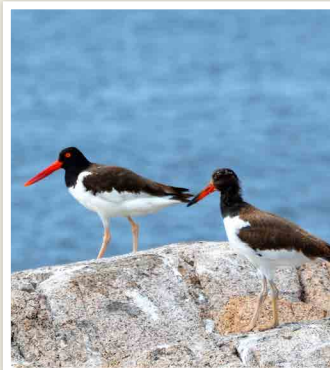
be rare north of Virginia, American Oystercatchers have been sighted intermittently along the Massachusetts coast over the past four decades. The fact that two pair successfully fledged chicks on Thacher bodes well for future nesting on the island.



An American Oystercatcher on Thacher Island.



The chicks were hard to spot against the stony beach.



By the end of August the chicks were the size of their parents, but their black-tipped bills marked them as juveniles.



An adult American Oystercatcher in flight.



## Gulls Would Like to Rule the Island

The presence of American Oystercatchers has been made possible by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service's efforts to reduce the population of Herring Gulls and Great Black-backed Gulls on Thacher Island. The remaining gulls can be aggressive, especially when their chicks are young.

Keeper Donna Cusick warded off a Black-backed Gull attack.

Gulls are equally aggressive toward one another.

## But Chickens Rule the Roost

Craig and two other identically named hens purchased from Craig's list terrorized any gull that ventured near the keepers' houses



## Shop at Katies Gift Shop for Thacher merchandise for Christmas.

Cathy Cahill has added a Thacher Island section in her store featuring Thacher/Straitsmouth merchandise. Her shop is in Dock Square, at 3 Mt. Pleasant St., Rockport and open daily before Christmas.

# Thacher Merchandise



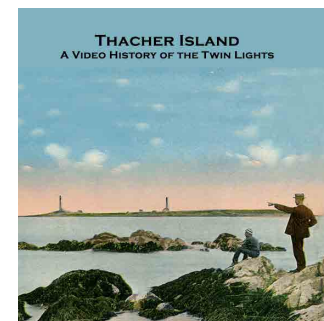
Go to [www.thacherisland.org](http://www.thacherisland.org) to order on-line for additional merchandise. Or send checks to Thacher Island Association, Box73, Rockport,MA 01966.



**New Thacher Island Panorama T-Shirt**  
100% cotton. Sizes S,M,L,XL, 2XL. \$22.00

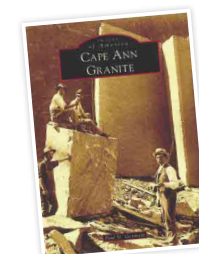


**New Straitsmouth Panorama T-shirt**  
100% cotton. Sizes S,M,L,XL,2XL. \$22.00

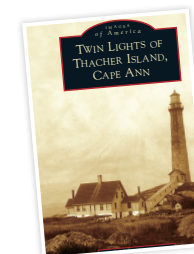


## "Thacher Island-A Video History of the Twin Lights" DVD video.

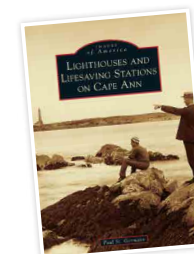
This 20 minute video is divided into five parts. \$15.00 plus shipping and handling. (\$2.50) V-101



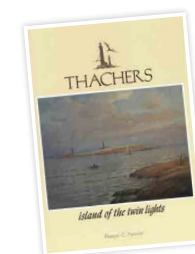
**Cape Ann Granite Book by Paul St.Germain**  
\$20.00 plus shipping and handling (\$3.00)



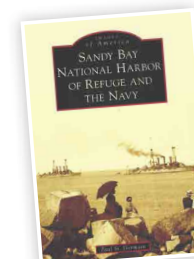
**"Twin Lights of Thacher Island, Cape Ann"**  
\$20.00 plus shipping and handling. (\$3.00)



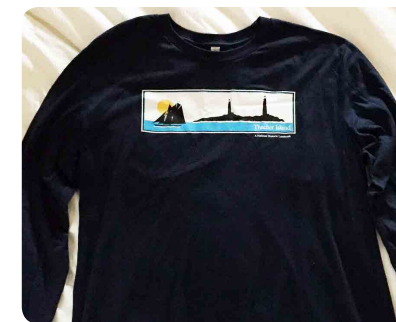
**"Lighthouses and Lifesaving Stations on Cape Ann"**  
\$20.00 plus shipping and handling. (\$3.00)



**"Thachers.... island of the twin lights."**  
\$20.00 plus shipping and handling. (\$3.00)



**Sandy Bay National Harbor Of Refuge and The Navy**  
New Book recounts history of the Sandy Bay Breakwater and the Navy visits in the 1900s. \$20.00 plus shipping and handling. (\$3.00)



## New Long Sleeve Thacher Island Panorama T-Shirt.

Midnight Navy, 100% cotton. Comes in S,M,L,XL,2XL. \$25.00 plus shipping and handling. (\$3.50)



## Denim Keeper Shirt.

This 100% cotton soft denim shirt is a key item to own .It proudly shows off the Thacher Island twin lights embriodered. Comes in S,M,L,XL,2XL. \$35.00 plus shipping and handling. (\$3.50)

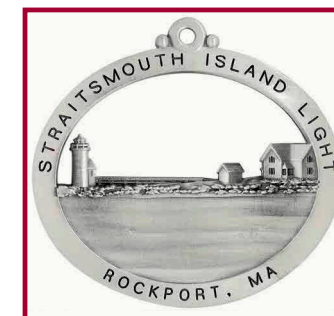


**Colorful Hats.** Shows off the Thacher Island Twin Lights logo. Yellow, Faded Blue, Khaki, Nautical Red. Adjustable, 100% cotton, washable. \$22.00



## Lucite Magnets of Thacher and Straitsmouth Island Lights under the Milky Way by photographer David Zapatkas.

Measures 2"X3"X1/4" \$6.00 each plus shipping and handling. (\$1.00)



## Thacher Island and NEW Straitsmouth Island Pewter Ornaments

Each comes with a red ribbon and is highly detailed on both sides. Measures 2 3/4"high by 2 1/2", packaged in a gift box. Made by Hampshire Pewter. \$15.95 plus shipping and handling (\$3.50). Item #'s P-2015 Thacher or P-2017 Straitsmouth.



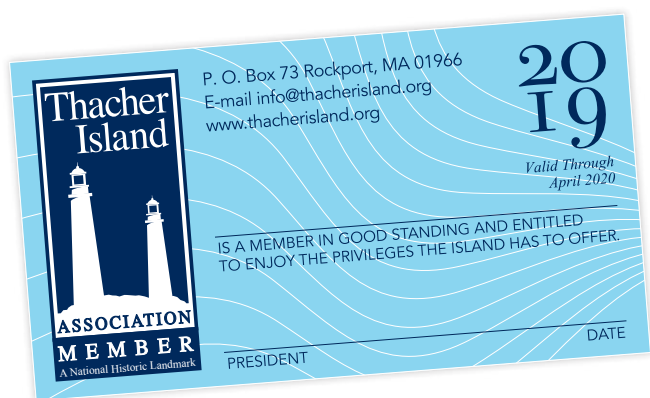


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## 2018 Membership Renewals Due Now!

Check the address label on this newsletter above to see if you are paid up for 2018!

If the number next to your name is 2018 then you are paid through May 1, 2019! If not, now is the time to renew. Use the envelope stitched into this newsletter or go on-line to our web site to pay by credit card at [www.thacherisland.org](http://www.thacherisland.org)

Membership is one of the islands' most important funding elements for everything from maintenance to preservation projects. For example, Thacher's South Tower needs more than \$250,000 in stone and brick work repairs on the gallery and lantern decks. Renew today.

[www.thacherisland.org](http://www.thacherisland.org)

## Thacher Island Association Board of Directors

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#### EDITING:

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#### COVER ART:

Mast head photo by Kim Smith.

#### PHOTOS:

Sharron Cohen; Donna Cusick; Camille Glick; Ed Hand; Jeannette Haynes; Nipper Jewett; Christine Lovgren; Skip Montello; Bob Morin; Harry Newell; Paul St Germain, Mike Springer.

#### COVER MASTHEAD PHOTO:

"Two Islands, Three Lights, One Sunset" Courtesy of TIA member Skip Montello. [www.skipmontellophotos.com](http://www.skipmontellophotos.com)

#### GRAPHIC DESIGN:

Mark Drury, Percolator Design