



Three long-time officers of the Thacher Island Association board have decided it's time to turn their positions over to the next generation. President Paul St. Germain, vice-president Peter Bergholtz, and secretary Judy Leach have all tendered their resignations.

Changing of the Guard

Paul St. Germain, president of the Thacher Island Association since 1999, has decided it's time to relinquish his duties to the next generation.

When St. Germain joined the board in 1997, he saw a need he was equipped to meet. The group had ambitious ideas about historical restoration of the island it was urging Rockport to acquire from the US Coast Guard, but the organization had few members and little money. A retired marketing executive with the soft drink manufacturer A&W Brands, St. Germain had ideas about increasing both.

Realizing that grant applications would be more effective if Thacher Island had a National Historic Landmark designation, he enlisted the help of historian and author Eleanor Parsons, whose copious records he inherited after her death. When the NHL designation was awarded in 2001, grant writing began in earnest. Over the course of St. Germain's involvement, \$3.2 million has been raised to support infrastructure improvements on Thacher and, more recently, Straitsmouth Island. Since 2004, he has teamed with vice president Peter Bergholtz and treasurer Bill Whiting to establish a more aggressive grant-writing strategy, resulting in a higher success rate. Membership has increased from fewer than 25 to 760, with 225 of those being lifetime members.

St. Germain became vice president in 1998 and was elected president the following year. He took over management of the association's website and newsletter and launched new merchandising and membership programs. He also introduced marketing events, such as the annual lighthouse cruise, art and photo days on the island, and art shows to raise additional funds.

In addition to the NHL designation for Thacher Island, St. Germain lists his proudest accomplishments as working with the Cape Ann Museum and the Coast Guard to bring the South Tower's first-order Fresnel lens back to Cape Ann, redesigning and upgrading the Thacher Island newsletter, and his role in renovation of the two keepers' houses on Thacher as well as the keeper's house on Straitsmouth. St. Germain wrote the applications to the Coast Guard, National Park Service, and General Services Administration to acquire the lighthouse and 1.8 acres of Straitsmouth Island on behalf of the Town in 2010.

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Rededication: Straitsmouth Island

In September, a crew from Mass. Audubon, which has leased the keeper house to the town of Rockport, joined (L to R) Tom Eldridge, Paul St. Germain, and Syd Wedmore; Gary Clayton, Audubon President; Andrea Lukens, Regional Director; Stu Weinreb, Director Capital Assets and Planning; Josh Rapp, Regional Scientist; Amy Weidensaul, Sanctuary Director; and Jeff Collins, Director Conservation Science for a rope-cutting to celebrate Straitsmouth Island's return to



Joe checks the light in the lantern room.

First Keeper

Joe Napolitano, whose NAPCO crew had renovated the dilapidated keeper's residence, served as the island's first civilian keeper with his wife, Peggy Flanagan.

Joe and Peggy head to the lighthouse.



THACHER ISLAND VOLUNTEER WORK CREW

Changing of the Guard Continued from Page 1

THIS OLD HOUSE COMES TO ROCKPORT

President Paul St. Germain was asked to participate in a special segment of the latest project in the This Old House (TOH) television series which runs on PBS nationally. The latest



project features the home of the Judge family at 24 Old Neck Road, Manchester-by-the-Sea. As part of the series TOH usually does a short travelogue about the area in which the project takes place. This time they opted to do a story about Cape Ann featuring the important industries of fishing, art and the granite quarry business. The host, Kevin O'Connor, was in Gloucester to interview Captain Tom Ellis aboard the schooner Thomas E. Lannon about fishing and ship building in the area. Later in the day O'Connor went to Rocky Neck to speak with Loren Doucette, Operations Manager of the Rocky Neck Cultural Center to get a sense of the many art galleries and famous artists of Cape Ann. He then came to Bearskin Neck to



to ask Paul St. Germain about local tourism, the granite quarries and Motif #1, finishing their stroll at the Motif. The segment was filmed in August and the 10-episode series is due to air in late March to late May of 2020 on Channel 2. This segment will run in the second episode.



Paul St. Germain pictured to the right of the newly installed "Welcome to Straitsmouth" sign with some of the Straitsmouth Savages crew.

Since the beginning of his tenure he has formed a close working and personal relationship with Syd Wedmore, chairman of the Thacher/Straitsmouth Island Town Committee. Wedmore manages the islands' volunteers and coordinates the many work projects. "We have a unique partnership," St. Germain said. "The Thacher Island Association raises the money, and Syd's Town Committee spends it. That's worked well for over 22 years." Working together, they have built a special relationship with Mass. Audubon, which owns the remaining 29 acres of Straitsmouth, culminating in the negotiation of a long-term lease for the keeper house and, allowing public access for the first time in 180 years.

St. Germain has been equally involved with the down-and-dirty aspects of the island, working alongside weekly carpentry crews on both islands and creating needed elements in his home workshop during the winter months. Recently, he and Wedmore drove a truck to Boston and carried a donated display cabinet out of a North End home. The cabinet will be used in the keeper's house on Straitsmouth.

Paul St. Germain has long been the public face of the association's restoration efforts, not just in meetings with a broad range of officials and grant committees but in presentations about the work being done on the islands. Research for those activities led to publication of his four books about Cape Ann, with one about the history of Straitsmouth Island forthcoming in the spring.

Work Crew Profile LARRY LIBERT *Man With a Checkered Past*

"If you looked at my resume, you'd think I couldn't hold a job for long," says launch captain Larry Libert. "But I was given a series of opportunities, and I acted on them."

Born and raised in Beverly, Libert came to Cape Ann to teach math at Central Grammar in Gloucester. During the summer he worked as a seasonal patrolman for the Rockport Police Department. After nine years of teaching middle schoolers he accepted the police department's offer of a full-time job, starting the year the Blizzard of '78 hit Cape Ann.



Larry Libert with remote-controlled model tugboat he built from scratch.

Libert took courses in public safety and emergency medical training and earned a master's degree in criminal justice while working with the Police Department. He was diving recreationally anyway, so he took further training to become a search and rescue diver. It was in that capacity in February 1982 that he dove into Rockport Harbor in an attempt to rescue a man who had driven his car off the end of T-Wharf. He was in the same ambulance while EMTs struggled to save the man's life, and in

an adjacent emergency room cubicle, being treated for hypothermia, when he realized the man had died. He received his first official letter of commendation for that effort.

In 1997, he received a second commendation letter as well as President's Award from the Massachusetts Coalition of Police for another rescue. Arriving before the Fire Department at a locked condominium, Libert saw a woman who appeared to be confused on the second floor and asked a neighbor to boost him up to her balcony. He got her off her phone and outside just before the heat blew out the sliding-doors he'd closed behind them. When firefighters arrived, the woman was too panicked to climb down their ladder, so Libert assisted them in getting her into a rescue basket and attached to emergency breathing apparatus. Because the basket was too heavy to lift over the railing, he kicked out the balusters. Libert remembers what he thought as he stood on the balcony of a burning building watching the firefighters slide the basket down the ladder: "Firefighting could be an interesting job."

After 27 years with the Rockport Police Department and a brief sojourn as assistant harbormaster in Rockport and Gloucester, Libert joined the Rockport Fire Department, where he spent twelve years assigned to an aerial ladder truck. The oldest member of his class at the firefighting academy, 61-year-old Libert was one of the first members of the Rockport Fire Department to earn certification. He went on to take a class in advanced firefighting skills.

Libert found firefighting remarkably similar to search and rescue diving. "It's just a matter of swapping water for smoke," he says, pointing out that both are

done in conditions of murky visibility while carrying heavy equipment, wearing a face mask, and breathing through an apparatus. He put all of his previous experience to good use, earning Rockport's Firefighter of the Year Award in 2008 and the Town of Rockport's Excellence Award in 2013.

Even his second post-retirement job —Thacher Island launch captain — has been built on a combination of previous experience and new training. Libert had crewed for Ned Cameron and John Bennett in the 1980s, when Rockport leased Thacher Island from the Coast Guard. After a season of crewing on the current island launches, Libert studied for his captain's license. He now lands work crews and visitors on ramps that, he says, don't look much bigger than the boats.



Larry Libert with crewman Ed Hand aboard Thacher I.

Straitsmouth Doings

After ten years of planning, fundraising, trail clearing, and barn building, Straitsmouth Island welcomed public visitors for the first time in 180 years. With keepers housed in the renovated residence and a newly constructed ramp, the work crews looked forward to a busy season.



A Few Problems

Members of the work crew, eager to begin construction of a winch engine house and a public restroom on the bluff, were stymied by the presence of an excavator that remained on the ramp until early July. Everything that was landed on the ramp had to be lifted over the timbers on which the excavator's bucket rested, then carried up the stairs.



Incessant June rains turned the island's main trail into a ribbon of muck. Wheelbarrows and handcarts were used to transport supplies from the ramp to the house until the trail was made passable to the island's vehicles via the use of a "Plywood Highway".



Green Technologies

An ambitious range of green technologies have been planned to lessen the impact of keepers and visitors on the island. Dick MacPherson oversaw the installation of solar panels and batteries to meet the electrical needs of the house, barn, and security cameras.



A Sunmar composting toilet was installed in the keeper's house. Jeannette Haynes prepared to add enzymes to the toilet's rotating drum.



Visitor Access

Ray Moss cleared rocks and granite pilings from the path to the lighthouse with the help of Peter Chick, Bill Whiting, and Rich Calnan. The pilings will be used to support a wooden footbridge to the lighthouse entrance.

Straitsmouth quickly became a popular destination for kayakers, 966 of whom visited the island from June 8 to August 31.



Construction

The outdoor composting toilet, which is being built for visitor convenience on the bluff above the landing ramp, ran into early problems. Ray Moss encountered rocks as well as a high-water table while digging a foundation.



Ray Moss and Peter Chick added gravel around French drains, which were constructed to counteract the high-water table.



Composting toilet base was pulled up the ramp that covered the main staircase.



Composting toilet base was lowered into place.



Rich Calnan, Nathan Ives, Steve Kowalski, Bill Whiting, John Doue and Randy Saville raised the back wall.



During the same time, a shed to house the winch engine took shape. Bill Whiting, Steve Kowalski and Nathan Ives.



When the excavator was removed from the ramp in early July, construction began in earnest. The composting toilet base was floated from Granite Pier.



Randy Saville, Steve Kowalski, and Nathan Ives constructed the composting toilet floor.



Bill Sclafani, Nathan Ives, and Randy Saville packed up after closing in the shed with plywood and waterproofing roof.



Kayakers visited the lighthouse,



saw photographs of the keeper's house renovation,



and got an early look at the visitor center, which is being restored as a Victorian parlor.



THACHER ISLAND CARRIES ON

Despite Thacher Island's reputation as "the spa island" among those who spent time on both it and Straitsmouth this summer, there was no lack of work to be done.



A willing crew of maintenance and trail crew volunteers showed up to prepare the island for the season's visitors.



A cool, wet spring gave vegetation a chance to get ahead of keepers and trail crew.



Their efforts were aided by Roger Perkins' donation of a new tractor mower.



Tom Mikus, Norm Delisle, George Langer, and Sloan Craven removed a solar panel before reshingling the boathouse roof.



Dick Morris, Norm Delisle, and Tom Mikus repaired the assistant keeper's house porch roof.



Roger Perkins supervised the placement of a new winch engine in the boathouse.



Intern keeper Scott Bisgaard watched as Lee Marr and Roger Perkins filled the new winch engine with hydraulic fluid.

The US Fish & Wildlife Service personnel replaced their sign on the north end of the island.



As always, Thacher Island's buildings were in need of repair. Donna Cusick repaired a storage area underneath the principal keeper's house porch.



Joe Napolitano is replaced the rotted cornices, soffit and fascia boards on the assistant keeper's house.

Thacher Island remained an active attraction for visitors and campers. Launches brought visitors to the island from mid-June to Labor Day weekend.



Others came by private boat and kayak.



Wearing the blue T-shirts of the newly formed docent group, Joanne Sullivan and Linda Berard waited to board the launch to Thacher Island. Docents greet visitors, answer questions in the lighthouse, and assist in the gift shop.

A KEEPER'S GLASS

Jeannette Haynes has kept an eye peeled for sea glass every summer of her 13 years as a keeper on Thacher Island. Early this season she found a piece from a German-manufactured net float. Its distinctive cloverleaf pattern marked it as a product of Heyes Glass of Oberkirchen, which began production of glass floats in 1910. Over the winter Haynes used her sea glass collection to create a tableau of the island's twin towers on an old window salvaged from the principal keeper's house. Her artwork is displayed in the Thacher Island visitor center.



INJURED SEAL ON THACHER ISLAND

Early in July, keeper Ian Deweese-Boyd photographed an injured harbor seal resting on Thacher Island. Queries to NOAA, the Seacoast Science Center, and the Atlantic White Shark Conservancy led to a consensus that the wound was more likely caused by an encounter with a shark than a propeller. Though that seal was not observed on the island again, several marine mammal experts said they'd seen animals with worse wounds survive.

NOAA urges anyone who sees a stranded, wounded, or dead seal to call its marine mammal hotline (866-755-6622).

THANK YOU ALL

The work depicted in this newsletter cannot be done without the open-hearted support of many benefactors. Thacher Island Association has been blessed with generous donors and a community of hardworking volunteers.

Newly installed plaques on Thacher and Straitsmouth Island recognize years of invaluable financial assistance from the Manton Foundation.



OYSTERCATCHERS RETURN
Oystercatchers nested on Thacher Island for a second year.

Victorian Style Glass China Cabinet Donated

Member Joyce Cannon of Rockport saw our plea for a Victorian style settee and glass display cabinet in the April 2019 issue. Joyce mentioned it to her friend Mary Tavilla, who lives in the North End of Boston's "Little Italy" section. Mary had an oak and glass china cabinet shown here.

Paul St. Germain and Syd Wedmore drove into the back streets of the North End to pick it up. Having owned it for over 70 years, Mary was very attached to this piece. She said she needed the room so thought Straitsmouth would be a good home for it. "You are right, Mary. We will take good

care of it for years to come," Paul St. Germain told her. "It will make a great display case for nautical artifacts in the parlor (New Visitor Center) of the newly restored keeper's house on Straitsmouth Island." Thanks, Mary.



This plaque marks the beginning of the new Manton Trail on Straitsmouth Island.



Signage was posted on both islands recognizing the financial contributions made by the residents of Rockport through the Community Preservation Act and the Rockport Community Preservation Committee.



FALCON IN TOWER
A peregrine falcon kept watch from its perch on the North Tower.



FEEDING THE YOUNG
A duckling fell prey to a gull's need to feed its chicks.

LAST MAN OFF

Marty Smith claims to have been the last Coast Guardsman to leave Thacher Island, and he has a frayed Gloucester Daily Times clipping to prove it. In the December 1980 photo, Smith can be seen behind Thacher Island Association president Ned Cameron and Thacher's first civilian keeper, Russell Grubb, as Coast Guard captain David Flanagan bids them goodbye and good luck.

Nearly 40 years later, after retirement from a career in pharmaceutical sales and marketing, Smith returned to Thacher Island as a member of the boat crew. He has a volunteer work crew doughnut to prove it.



Capt. David Flanagan shakes on the deal with 1980 lighthouse keeper Russell Grubb; Rockport Thacher's Island Committee Chairman Ned Cameron and Coast



Thank you to our volunteer workers, keepers, boat crews and docents who put in over 3000 person hours this summer.



RITUAL AND REMEMBRANCE



The annual volunteer barbecue, held on Thacher Island in August, celebrated the 90th birthday of long-time island mechanic Roger Perkins.



Also remembered was Frederick (Ted) Tarr, who died at the end of the 2018 season. His cousin Sharon Chace attended the gathering, walked the trail that has been named in Tarr's honor, and shared the following tribute with his fellow work crew members:

TED'S STORY: Connecting the Stepping Stones of My Life

(TED TARR'S WORDS, SHAPED BY SHARON CHACE)

I am all the ages and stages of my life.

I am a boy of nine, reading books on natural history, interacting with nature, active in the Boy Scouts.

I am a boy of eleven, racing to the Post Office to pick up my hatchling alligator, legal at the time. He will not bite me or so I think. Ouch! In the McCarthy era I name him Alger Hiss! The Audubon lady who visits classes wants us to care for pets. Bunnies, hamsters ... I am the only kid with a gator!

I am a teen in Gloucester High School, hiking home through Dog Town. Sports, wrestling, soccer, and golf are my games! I transfer to Governor Dummer. Putting live lobsters into a teacher's desk drawer is my kind of fun.

I am a young man at Washington and Lee, enjoying my biology major and being politically active. Being house manager of Phi Kappa Psi keeps the adrenaline flowing.

I am middle-aged, passionately committed to conservation. It is an honor to serve as a selectman and member of the planning

board. I fight for the Twin Lights and cut trails on Thacher Island. I am part of the efforts to establish Halibut Point and the Kieran Preserve. I lead Sunday walks to Dog Town, other historic sites, and vistas of natural beauty.

I am aging but still interested in conservation. I welcome visits from the members of Greenbelt and the Mill Pond Committee. I still read the Boston Globe and the Gloucester Daily Times.

I am still me in your memories.

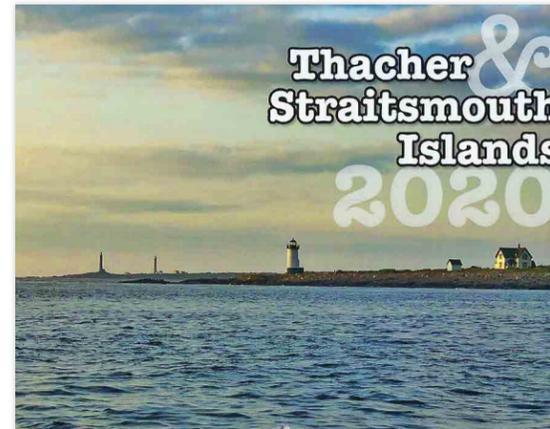
Thacher & Straitsmouth Merchandise



Go to www.thacherisland.org to order on-line for additional merchandise. Or send checks to Thacher Island Association, Box 73, Rockport, MA 01966.

The 2020 Thacher & Straitsmouth calendar is now available.

It features spectacular photography by local artists Kim Smith and Skip Montello. Get yours today by going to our web site. All proceeds go to the association for island maintenance. *Price of \$23.00 includes shipping.*



Thacher & Straitsmouth Islands

The Association thanks the kind cooperation of Kim Smith and Skip Montello who generously donated their fantastic photographic work for this calendar. They can be reached via their web pages at kimsmithdesigns.com or skipmontellophotos.com where you can view hundreds of additional works by the artists.



All proceeds go to the Thacher Island Association for its restoration efforts on both islands.

Membership

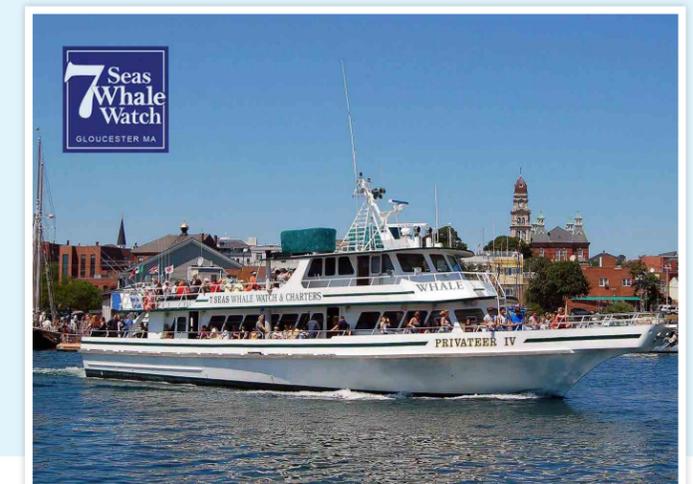
Give the gift of membership for next season. Go online to order your individual or family memberships at \$30 or \$60 each. A thoughtful gift for your friends and relatives, membership comes with two issues of this newsletter, car/boat sticker, free rides on the Thacher launch and the knowledge that you are helping to preserve two great and historic islands. **See the web site for details.**

www.thacherisland.org



Lighthouse Cruise Tickets

How is this for an unusual gift – tickets on our annual lighthouse cruise around Cape Ann and up the Annisquam River? We leave aboard the 150-foot Privateer II on Wednesday evening July 15, 2020. Checkout our web site to purchase tickets. We will send you a receipt to wrap and put under the tree. **Only \$30 per person.**





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WE WANT YOU!

The Association is looking for a few good men and women. We need boat crews and volunteer workers

To inquire about boat crew assignments (assisting on the launches on Wednesdays and Saturdays) contact Tom Eldridge at cteldridge@comcast.net or 978-546-6895.

For volunteer workers, contact Syd Wedmore at sydneywedmore@comcast.net or 617-335-1799.

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"Sea Smoke Across Thacher"
by Paul St. Germain

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