Linda Josselyn was gone.

When assistant keeper Asa Josselyn ended his shift in the North Tower at 4 a.m. on November 1, 1903, he found his two children asleep and a note from his wife, strongly implying that she intended to throw herself into the sea. He roused the other keepers, a search was made, but no body was found. Nonetheless, Asa went to the mainland the following day, left a “died” notice at the local paper, took a train to Boston, and returned with a woman he described as his housekeeper. The other keepers’ wives took a dim view of the new woman, and in Rockport the following day, eyebrows rose when Asa applied for a marriage license. Few thought Linda Josselyn was dead, and even fewer considered the possibility of suicide.

Cora Trommer, the new housekeeper, was told to leave the island immediately. Though Asa gave two weeks’ notice pending transfer to a place “where the conditions will be more agreeable,” U.S. Lighthouse Board Inspector C. W. Bartlett arrived on a tender to remove the keeper and his belongings.

Asa and Cora retreated to his mother’s house in Boston and married, a week after his wife’s disappearance, with a haste that was to be his undoing. The day after their wedding was reported, a front-page headline in The Boston Globe shouted: “SHE IS ALIVE.” Linda Josselyn had contacted a reporter, saying she was compelled to come forward to speak the truth for the sake of her baby girl’s future reputation, though she claimed she bore no vengeance or anger toward her husband. She still loved him, she said, even though he had been brutal and unkind, withheld money to clothe their children, threatened to leave her and the children to shift for themselves, and had been carrying on a relationship with Cora, which she had the love letters to prove.

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More than half a century ago Philip Goldsmith bought a boat he admitted he had no business owning. The Star-class racing craft was well above his nearly zero skill level, but his ability to eventually master the sailboat opened a world that linked him to Cape Ann and, eventually, Thacher Island. That leap-before-you-look (then learn from the fluttering of a sail) mixture of intelligence, charm, and chutzpah was a hallmark of the bagel maker's son from the time he left his South Bronx home at the age of 15. Moving in with his brother Teddy, a 19-year-old student at the University of Michigan, he managed to get enrolled in an on-campus school for children of faculty members. He left Ann Arbor before completing his required coursework (at Teddy's suggestion, Goldsmith admitted, adding that a joyride to Chicago and damage to Teddy's car may have been involved), but he made up the work at the intelligence, charm, and chutzpah worked for Goldsmith again when he talked Cornell University into granting him a degree in Continental Renaissance History even though he had left a year early to attend Harvard Medical School. His Cornell professors agreed to grant the degree if he fulfilled one prerequisite for his minor in Attic Greek, which Goldsmith did by taking Harvard into granting a waiver of its prerequisite (three years of Greek). "All I had to do was read three Greek plays," Goldsmith remembered. "In Greek. And I did okay. Surprisingly!"

While an intern at Peter Bent Brigham Hospital, Goldsmith and seven other doctors and nurses rented a weekend house in "this sweet little town I discovered when I was driving around one day." That was Rockport. Though he opened a private medical practice in Brookline and lived in a number of places "all over Brookline and Boston, as my situations changed," he continued his connection to Cape Ann.

By his own reckoning he had a boat in the water every summer from 1966 to 1989, all of them moored at the Sandy Bay Yacht Club, where he met Harbormaster Rosemary Leich. Through that friendship, he became a charter member of the Thacher Island Association when it formed in 1981. His medical practice kept him too busy to volunteer for work crew, but over the next 20 years he made financial contributions and served as a liaison between the association and the Martin Foundation, whose grants supported the restoration of the keepers' houses on Thacher and Straightsmouth, the islands’ second launch, and the completion of the Straightsmouth ramp. "That's my legacy," Goldsmith said.

Intelligence, charm, and chutzpah were on tap again when Goldsmith retired from private practice in 2013. He jumped into a long list of volunteer commitments, among them a pre-school assistant teaching position at Horizons for Homeless Children in Jamaica Plain, which he had to give up after two years of contracting more colds than he had ever caught from his patients. He also manned the front desk for the Boston chapter of the ACLU, ushered and served on the board of directors of the Shalin Liu Performance Center, and participated in peer teaching at the Harvard Institute for Learning in Retirement. Despite his lack of handyman skills, Goldsmith also signed on for the Lane's Cove fish shack renovation and Thacher Island work crew, where he learned how to pound nails on a variety of construction projects.

Goldsmith's deepest ties to Cape Ann were always with the water. After the Star boat, he owned a Flying Scot and even had a dalliance with a Boston Whaler before returning to the silence of a Nonius. He took his brothers, children, wives, and a multitude of friends sailing and fishing around the Rockport islands and beyond. But he also loved being alone, "away from the damn phones," hearing only his favorite sound, the fluttering of a sail.

Perhaps inevitably, he found himself working on both the bow and stern of the Thacher Island launch — ideal places for Philip Goldsmith’s blend of intelligence, charm, and chutzpah.
Linda Josselyn was gone.

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It was only after he proposed bringing Cora to Thacher Island that Linda felt the need to flee, she told the Globe. She waited until just before sunset, when Asa was on duty and the other keepers were at supper with their families, rendezvoused with a man she’d asked to row her to the mainland, walked to Gloucester, and took an early-morning train to Boston, where she’d been staying with a friend ever since. It grieved her to leave her children, she insisted, weeping as she spoke of them, but it was necessary in order to make her escape. Asa, whom she claimed had never wanted them, now denied her visitation, even with the one-year-old son he’d had given over to the care of the City Mission Society of Boston.

Still, there were no hard feelings, Linda said, even when she and her brother-in-law, a Boston policeman, had Asa arrested on a charge of bigamy, which morphed into polygamy when Asa’s lawyer employed an interesting defense: Asa, who was supposed to wait two years after divorce from his first wife, had jumped the gun by a few months to marry Linda. That meant he wasn’t legally married to her, the defense contended, so there could be no bigamy. While witnesses, including Asa’s first wife, were testifying, Linda sat in the reception room for women and, according to the Globe, “sobbed as though her heart would break.”

Cora might have waited for Asa to serve his up-to-four-year sentence in state prison, but she couldn’t outwait Linda. Facing Linda’s refusal to grant Asa a divorce, Cora, a widow with four young children suffering from “decidedly destitute circumstances,” married someone else. Asa eventually remarried, this time waiting more than the legally mandated two-year period after Linda finally divorced him. Sometime after 1930, the man the Globe had described as “bronzed by exposure to the sun and sea breezes which sweep across Thatchers island,” died a widowed boarder in the East Boston home that formerly belonged to his mother.
SUMMER PROJECT PLANS

The raised walkway from the keeper’s house to the lighthouse will be replicated as shown in this 1898 photograph. Its completion will make the lighthouse more easily accessible to visitors.

The new compost toilet base was installed last summer on Straitsmouth. It is located at the top of the bluff at the Gap end of the island. Volunteers will build the actual cabin shed similar to the one on Thacher as shown.

Timber stairs will be constructed from the boat ramp on Straitsmouth to the top of the bluff on the western end at the Gap. They will be built over the existing granite steps which are too steep and many have shifted, making their use dangerous.

The new winch engine will be installed in the new winch engine shed, and the windlass winch will have its own cement platform at the top of the bluff above the boat ramp.

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Thacher volunteers will establish a new location for the solar panel array. The current array needs to be supplemented due to the shadow of the south tower, which blocks the sun on the panels for about two hours a day. By establishing a second solar array we will increase the effectiveness and longevity of the solar power system. Next year new solar panels will be installed that will be twice as efficient as the current panels, and a new supply of deep cell storage batteries will double the power use period.

Bruce Perkins working this winter in his home woodshop on a new sales cart to display Thacher merchandise outside the boat house. The design was adapted from a sidewalk street cart from the early 1900’s.
Tuesday, April 21
“The Mobster and the Mafia on Thacher Island,” the story of hit-man Joe Barboza. Due to the sold-out Barboza talk last October, historian Paul St. Germain will reprise his lecture at the Rockport Public Library on Tuesday, April 21.

Paul St. Germain, President of the Thacher Island Association, will present a behind the scenes look at the life and times of hitman Joe “The Animal” Barboza and his month long stay on Thacher Island in 1967 while he was in the witness protection program as he testified against the Mafia.

SANDY BAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESENTS
The Mobster, The Mafia and Thacher Island
Thursday, April 21 at 7:00 pm
Rockport Public Library
17 School Street
ADMISSION IS FREE

Wednesday, May 13
Boat Launch reservations open. Launches run on Wednesdays and Saturdays to Thacher and Tuesdays to Straitsmouth from June 10 to August 26 (not on July 4). Make sure your 2020 membership is up-to-date to allow you to make the trip for free. Look on the mailing label of this newsletter to see your membership expiration date. Use our website to make reservations.
www.thacherisland.org

Wednesday, July 15
Annual Lighthouse Cruise around Cape Ann aboard the Seven Seas Whale Watch Privateer IV, which leaves from 63 Rogers St., Gloucester, MA. $30 per person. Purchase tickets on our website www.thacherisland.org

Monday, June 22
Annual Meeting. Public is invited to the Rockport Community House, Broadway, Rockport at 7:00 p.m. to see and hear what has been accomplished on both islands in 2019 and to hear plans for 2020. A new slate of officers and directors will be elected.

SANDY BAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESENTS
Talk & Book Signing
SAVING STRATSMOUTH
Monday, July 20 at 7:00 pm
Rockport Public Library
17 School Street
ADMISSION IS FREE

Paul St. Germain, President of the Thacher Island Association, will discuss his new book on the history of Straitsmouth Island and conduct a book signing afterward. Books will be available for sale.

Monday, July 20
Paul St. Germain will have a book signing and presentation on his new book “Saving Straitsmouth - A History” at the Rockport Public Library at 7:00 p.m. Books will be for sale.
Since 2001 the US Fish & Wildlife Service has been attempting to reintroduce terns and other sea birds to Thacher Island. From 1980 until 1999, when the island was closed because the boat landing ramp was out of commission, the gull population exploded, driving out the smaller terns and many other species of sea birds, such as Oystercatchers, Eiders, Mergansers and Sandpipers. Both Black-backed and Herring gulls were dominating the island.

In 2001, 1,456 Herring gull nests and 402 Black-backed gull nests were recorded. Each nest usually contains 3 eggs. Each spring for the past 18 years members of the US Fish & Wildlife Service have visited the island to punch holes in the gull eggs. This past summer Nancy Pau, the head biologist from Parker River National Wildlife Refuge on Plum Island (which owns the north end of the island), reported that gull nests have been reduced by 79% since 2001 to 300 Herring gull and only 70 Black-backed nests. This bodes well for terns to make a comeback with the help of the folks from the US Fish & Wildlife Service. Already two sets of Oystercatchers and a number of Eider ducks have made their homes back on Thacher this past summer.

Below we have listed all the birds sighted on Thacher in recent years by our resident keepers as well as a few photos taken by them.

Commemorative Straitsmouth Coin Now Available

To commemorate the 2019 rededication of Straitsmouth Island and its reopening to the public for the first time in 180 years we have designed and minted a limited quantity of these gold-embossed coins.

Check our website to purchase while supplies last.

$12.00 each.

Go to our website to purchase Thacher and Straitsmouth Island merchandise and support the islands. www.thacherisland.org

See the website for details or use the enclosed envelope.
Do you know when your membership expires? We do! Check the mailing label on this page above to find out. Use the enclosed envelope to forward your payment soon. Individual and Family and Life membership costs are listed on the envelope.

www.thacherisland.org