

NEW BOOK

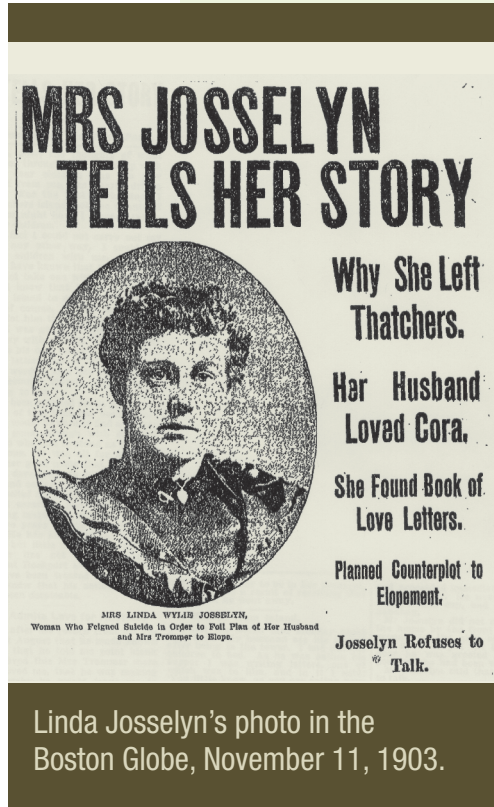
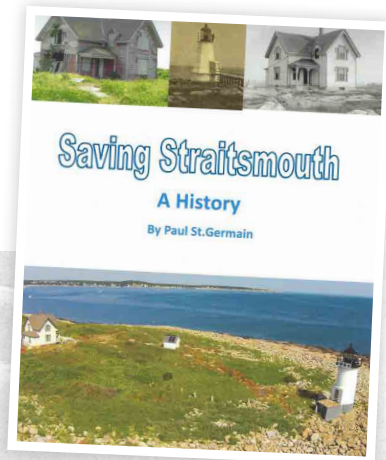
Saving Straitsmouth - A History

TO BE PUBLISHED NEXT MONTH

President Paul St. Germain has written his fifth book on historical sites of Cape Ann. This one is a comprehensive history of Straitsmouth Island in Rockport.

Just off the coast of Rockport, Massachusetts, Straitsmouth Island has enjoyed a noteworthy history that belies the island's small size. From the Pawtucket Indians who summered there over a thousand years ago to its discovery by famous explorers Samuel De Champlain and Captain John Smith in the seventeenth century, it has seen fishermen, shipwrecks and piracy. The island also played a key role in the development of the commercial fishing industry on Cape Ann. From 1835 to 1935, there were three lighthouses built there, each with its own fascinating story of the lighthouse keepers and their families. He recounts the lives of many of the fifteen keepers who lived on the island from 1835 until 1933. Thanks to tireless restoration efforts by the Thacher Island Association and Massachusetts Audubon Society, the island is now once again open to the public for the first time in 180 years. Local historian Paul St. Germain details the rich history of this unique New England treasure and the efforts to preserve both its structures and natural beauty.

This 150-page book includes over 70 photographs. Published by The History Press it will be available May 25 on the Thacher Island website, on Amazon and in local bookstores.



The Too Much Married Keeper

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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THACHER ISLAND VOLUNTEER WORK CREW

WORK CREW PROFILE

PHILIP GOLDSMITH

Intelligence, charm, and chutzpah

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 leap) 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



Phil and his son Willy along with his dog Alfie.

Rhodes Preparatory School in Manhattan and talked University High School into granting him a diploma with those credits.

Those same qualities led him, in 1959, to simultaneously run both the lab and pharmacy in a 1st Cavalry Division MASH unit near the DMZ in South Korea and talk his commanding officer into letting him fly back to the states rather than repeat the 23-day stomach-turning sea voyage that had brought him to Asia.

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 talking 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 1968 to 2019, all of them moored at the Sandy Bay Yacht Club, where he met Harbormaster Rosemary Lesch. 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 Manton Foundation, whose grants supported the restoration of the keepers' houses on Thacher and Straitsmouth, the islands' second launch, and the completion of the Straitsmouth 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 Nonsuch. 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 Phil Goldsmith's blend of intelligence, charm, and chutzpah.



Phil (in blue shirt) crews with Captain Tom Eldridge aboard Thacher I.



DANIEL D. KARR
(1926-2019)

Launch Driver, Thacher Island Town Committee Member

Dan Karr, one of the first wave of Thacher Island launch drivers in the late 1980s, died on October 18, 2019, at the Den-Mar Nursing Home in Rockport. He was 93. Thacher Island Town Committee chairman Syd Wedmore remembers Dan as the captain who discovered that the launch could not negotiate the Gap with its motor down at low tide. Dan vowed to stick to sailboats after that, sailing every fair-weather day at the Sandy Bay Yacht Club for forty years and winning races well into his 80s. He remained a member of the Thacher Island Town Committee for more than a decade and an advocate for the Rockport islands for the remainder of his life.



RAYMOND PSZENNY
(1940-2019)

Launch Bowman, Work Crew, Thacher Island Keeper

Ray Pszeny died on December 3, 2019, surrounded by the family he credited for his reputation as the happiest man on the Thacher Island work crew. He was 79. After a 45-year career at Gloucester Engineering and a brief retirement interlude as a part-time handyman, Ray volunteered his services as a carpenter in the reconstruction of a tramway rail bed on Thacher Island. His technical skills led him to work with the island mechanics and his boating experience led to his being drafted for launch crew. Ray and his wife, Liz, also served several turns as keepers.

On days when launch landings seemed interminable, Ray took to calling out "Groundhog Day!" as he threw the bow rope to waiting keepers. It was the kind of witticism that made Ray Pszeny part of the camaraderie he prized among his fellow Thacher volunteers.



DONALD DAWSON
(1926-2019)

Thacher Island Association Board Member

Don Dawson, 93, died on November 25, 2019, in the home from which he kept watch over Thacher Island for nearly thirty years. An internationally respected surgeon and medical researcher whose career included working with Dr. Michael DeBakey in Texas as well as the Nobel Committee in Stockholm, "Doc" Dawson had a talent for pulling people together into high-level collaborations. He brought that skill to the early days of the Thacher Island Association, where he served on the board and his wife Pat, as secretary, was in charge of membership.

Don hosted work crew evenings at which he showed movies about lighthouses, organized end-of-season volunteer parties, and offered his home for celebrations of life for association members. Through the years he kept watch over the island through a telescope in his dining room, reporting whenever the North Tower light winked out or there was a boat moored near the island in the months when it was closed to the public.



PHILIP LAWRENCE GOLDSMITH
(1940-2019)

Thacher Island Association Board Member, Launch Crew, Work Crew

Phil Goldsmith, 79, died on December 13, 2019, three months after being interviewed for the work crew profile that appears elsewhere in this newsletter.

Paul St. Germain, president of the Thacher Island Association, described Phil as "no shrinking violet when it came to issues on our board. He actively participated and was not afraid to express his opinions." He also "concerned himself with people, not only on the Thacher crew but their spouses and family, and he was not afraid to offer advice about their health issues."



Portrait of John Rowe (1796-1833) painted by his son, Thacher keeper Launcelot Rowe, oil on canvas c. 1859.

Thacher Keeper's Talent Revealed

The donation of an 1859 portrait to the Cape Ann Museum has thrown new light on the life of Thacher Island keeper Launcelot Rowe.

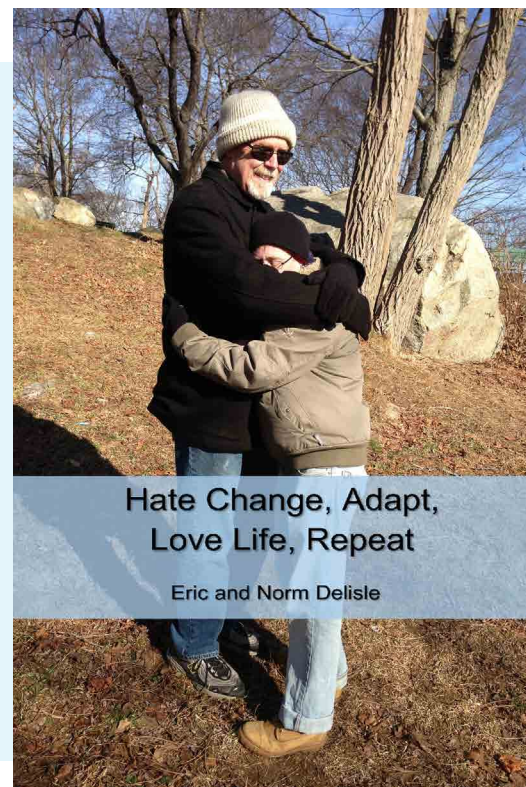
The last keeper to serve without an assistant, Launcelot Rowe spent 1853-1855 on the island in the company of his wife and four young daughters. A fifth daughter was born on the island just before they left.

With the exception of an 1855 state census that labeled him as a lightkeeper, Launcelot was consistently identified as an artist, from his military enlistment papers to the death certificate that listed him as "artist —retired." But no one in the contemporary art community had ever seen an example of his work.

That changed last year when Kenneth and Susan Rowe drove from Nashville with the portrait of Launcelot's father, John Rowe, because, Kenneth said, "I felt it was time for him to return home." The painting of the East Gloucester housewright had been passed down to Kenneth through his ancestor John Lewis Rowe, Launcelot's brother, a hair stylist who may have been responsible for John Rowe's stylish hairdo in the painting.

Cape Ann Museum curator Martha Oaks describes the folk art-style portrait as a "strong painting" and "a wonderful addition to the museum's collection," adding that "during the first half of the 19th century, most of the painters on Cape Ann were portraitists. We thought that we knew all of them, but Launcelot was news to us."

Thanks to Martha Oaks of the Cape Ann Museum for allowing the use of this photo.



**Hate Change, Adapt,
Love Life, Repeat**

Eric and Norm Delisle

Keeper's Book Focuses on Son's Life

Thacher Island keeper and work crew member Norm Delisle has published a memoir written jointly with his son, Eric. Born Emily, Eric came out as a lesbian in high school, transitioned to male after college, and was married to his husband, Evan, for ten years before succumbing to cystic fibrosis at the age of 36. Along the way, he founded groups to support other young people who were coming to terms with their gender identities and worked for racial and social justice. Eric made a conscious decision not to let his illness overshadow the privilege of being alive, and Norm has presented Eric and his family's life in the same way. The book is less about cystic fibrosis than about a thoughtful young man and the family who loved him.

"Hate Change, Adapt, Love Life, Repeat" (taken from Eric's own six-word autobiographical summary) is available in paperback or kindle from amazon.com.

(Order from [amazonsmile.com](https://www.amazon.com) and send a piece of the proceeds to the Thacher Island Association.)

Linda Josselyn was gone.

Continued from Page 1

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 had given over to the care of the City Mission Society of Boston.

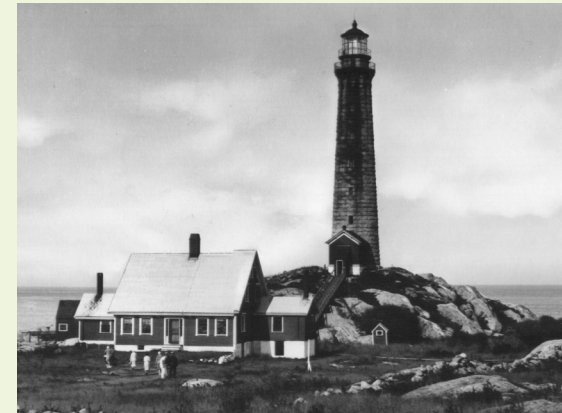
Still, there were no hard feelings, Linda said, even when she and her brother-in-law, a Boston policeman, had Asa arrested on a charge of bigamy, which morphed into polygamy when Asa's

lawyer employed an interesting defense: Asa, who was supposed to wait two years after divorce from his first wife, 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.



The Josselyn family shared the North Tower house with the second assistant keeper's family.



STRAITSMOUTH ISLAND OFFICIALLY OPENS TO PUBLIC

Straitsmouth Island will be fully open to the public this summer, which means a public composting toilet by mid-season (an outhouse will be available until then), access to the lighthouse and island museum at the discretion of the keepers, Tuesday launch trips, and a \$5 landing fee, which will apply to all visitors except residents of the Town of Rockport or active members of the Thacher Island Association or the Mass Audubon Society. The landing fee will be bundled into the fee for launch visitors and otherwise collected by island keepers.

Although reservations for Straitsmouth launch trips will be more limited in dates and variable in time than those to Thacher due to tidal accessibility to the Straitsmouth ramp, launch reservations for both islands will be made through Eventbrite. Links to the Eventbrite reservation system for both islands, which will go live May 13, 2020, can be found on the Thacher Island website thacherisland.org/visit-us/. Instructions on the website will provide guidance in making reservations to either of the islands.



HOW TO HELP THE ISLANDS

BECOME A MEMBER of the Thacher Island Association or renew your membership by mail or through the Thacher Island website. (Check the mailing label on this newsletter for your renewal month.)

BUY THACHER/STRAITSMOUTH GOODS from the island gift shops or from the Thacher Island website.

Consider doing your online ordering through amazonsmile.com and designate Thacher Island Association as your receiving charity.

VOLUNTEER. Four new people, male or female, are needed for launch crew for the 2020 season. For details, contact Tom Eldridge at cteldridge@comcast.net, 978-546-6895, or 508-254-0472 (cell).

SUMMER PROJECT PLANS



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 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.



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 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.



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.



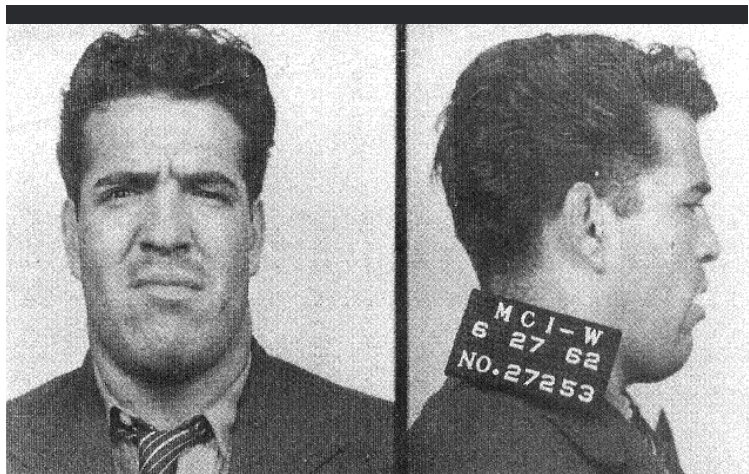
Bruce Perkins working this winter in his home woodshop on a new sales cart to display Thacher merchandise outside the boat house. The design was adapted from a sidewalk street cart from the early 1900's.

✓ MARK YOUR

Calendar

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.



SANDY BAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
PRESENTS

The Mobster, The Mafia and Thacher Island

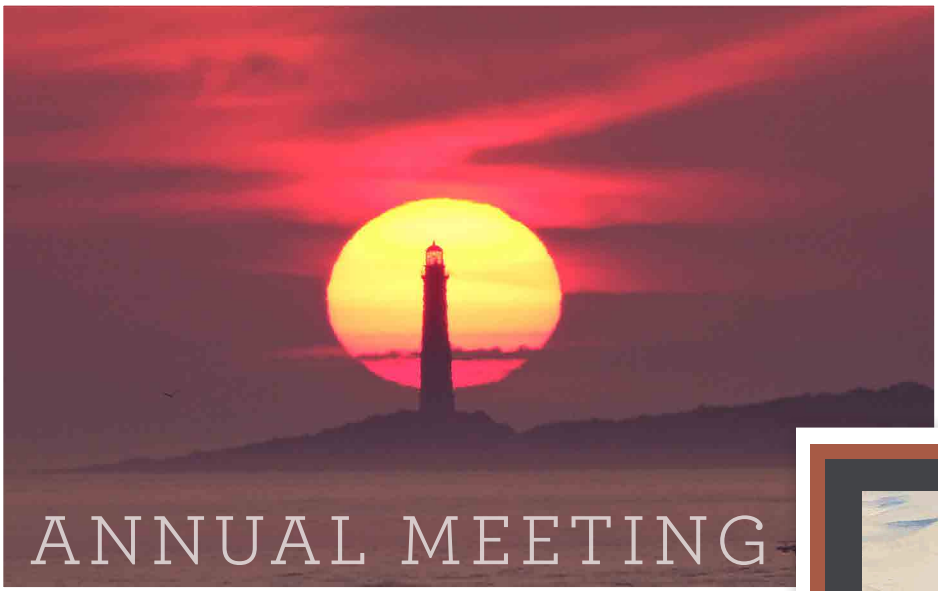
Thursday, April 21 at 7:00 pm

Rockport Public Library
17 School Street



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.

ADMISSION IS FREE



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.



LAUNCH RESERVATIONS

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

Lighthouses of Cape Ann Cruise Wednesday July 15, 2020 6:30 - 9:30 pm

- ▶ Leaves from Seven Seas Whale Watch
63 ROGERS STREET, GLOUCESTER, MA
- ▶ Cash bar and sandwiches available
(NO LIQUOR ALLOWED TO BE BROUGHT ABOARD)
- ▶ Proceeds to benefit Thacher Island Preservation
FOR RAIN DATE EMAIL: info@thacherisland.org

TICKET # 0001



PRICE \$30

PRICE \$30

Wednesday, July 15

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

TALK & BOOK SIGNING



SANDY BAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
PRESENTS

SAVING STRAITSMOUTH

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.

Bird Life on Thacher

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, 1456 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.



Red-winged Blackbird



Common Eider



Gray Catbird



Mallard



Baltimore Oriole



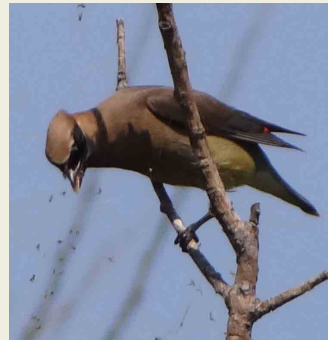
Barn Swallow



Tree Swallow



Yellow Warbler



Cedar Waxwing



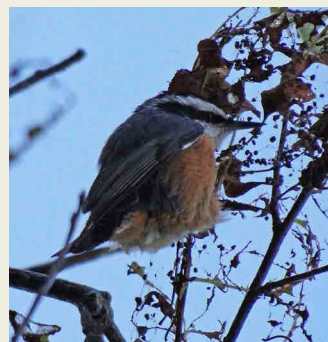
Downy Woodpecker



Curlew



Flicker



Wren



Oystercatcher

Blackbird, Red-winged
Cardinal
Cormorant, Double-crested
Curlew
Dove, Mourning
Dove, Rock
Dove, White-winged
Eider, Common
European Starling
Flicker
Goldfinch, American
Goose, Canada
Grackle, Common
Gray Catbird

Gull, Great Black-backed
Gull, Herring
Hawk, Cooper's
Heron, Great Blue
Kingbird, Eastern
Mallard
Merganser, Common
Mockingbird, Northern
Nuthatch, Red-breasted
Oriole, Baltimore
Oystercatcher
Robin, American
Sandpiper, Least
Sparrow, Song

Swallow, Barn
Swallow, Tree
Turnstone, Ruddy
Warbler, Black-and-white
Warbler, Prairie
Warbler, Yellow
Waxwing, Cedar
Woodpecker, Downy
Woodpecker, Hairy
Wren
Yellowthroat, Common

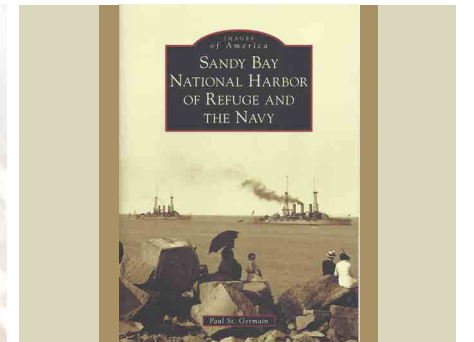


Commemorative Straitsmouth Coin Now Available

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.

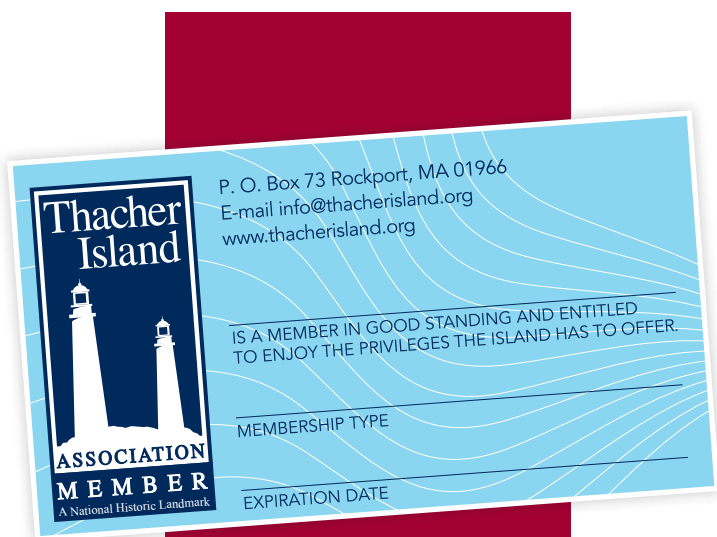




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Rockport, MA 01966

ON THE WEB: www.thacherisland.org
EMAIL: info@thacherisland.org

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MEMBERSHIP Renewal Reminder

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

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