

THATCHER ISLAND NEWSLETTER

This Fall 1990 newsletter is long overdue. Somewhat due to unexpected happenings concerning Thatcher Island and some slow-moving by me.

It doesn't seem possible that ten years have gone by since the Town of Rockport took over from the Coast Guard back in 1980. There have been many changes. The trails which did not exist in 1980 have been created and continue to be improved by our keepers. We are not planning to create any new trails, but if someone would like to have a trail named for whoever we will be glad to accommodate them. The cottage painting has just been completed by Mr. and Mrs. Dee. Looks great! In general the dwellings and outbuildings are in pretty good shape with the exception of the Whistle House. The roof and chimney need some attention. The condition of the water cistern roof is giving us serious concerns, the steel framework is rusting to a point where some of the supporting beams are becoming detached. This repair will be necessary as water is surely essential for people living on the island.

The North Tower project has been completed by the Fish and Wildlife. What an improvement, especially for those of us that remember what it was like in the early 70's. The work was performed in various stages, the first being the repainting of the entire exterior from top to bottom. The catwalk handrails (Swedish wrought iron) were removed, sandblasted, painted and reinstalled. The entry building had the new floors, windows, and doors also the roof had new slate shingles. Another stage was the sandblasting and epoxy painting of the circular iron stairs. The repainting and painting of the interior brick walls was completed in that stage also. Work to be completed will be labor to install the ceramic floor at the base of the tower. In time we hope to improve the approaches to the tower.

Going back to the beginning of the newsletter. The unexpected happening was the loss of electric power to the island which has since been repaired, also the loss of the telephone cable during a recent storm. We have re-activated the cellular phone so the keepers can have a more private source of communication other than the VHF marine radio. It is absolutely essential to have a telephone if we are going to maintain "Island Keepers". The marine radio is fine in an emergency, but not for normal everyday use. The cellular is very expensive to maintain and even local calls to the island are charged to the island. We therefore are looking at other means. A disc type will probably be out of our reach, cost wise. The Coast Guard has stated that a cable repair similar to what we did in 1989 would most likely be short of duration again. The cable the Coast Guard will supply is of World War II vintage and will not survive many storms. The New England Telephone Co. is investigating the possibility of a new cable and there may be other sources to explore. The electric power proved the worth of a well maintained emergency generator. We were anticipating a longer outage, but Mr. Dee found a major fuse blown and was able to replace it.