

Eden Road
Rockport, MA 01966

July, 2026

Re: Thacher Island – South Tower

Dear neighbors and friends:

If you live on Cape Ann, you already know these lights. At dusk they still come on over the water — the Twin Lights of Thacher Island, standing off Rockport as they have — in one form or another — for more than 250 years. The gentle red glow of the South Tower has a magical, haunting quality to it. We are lucky enough to see it every day and to us it is a light that brings us home. We know many of you know this same feeling. These lights are so much a part of this place that it is hard to imagine the coast without them.

And yet that is exactly what we are facing. After 160 years of salt, storm, and freezing spray, the lantern room at the top of the South Tower has deteriorated so badly that it is now in danger of collapsing into the tower itself. One of the last operating twin lighthouses in America could go dark for good — and every winter that passes makes it worse.

We are writing to ask for your help before that happens.

Saving the South Tower will cost \$2 million. Thanks to a lot of generous people, the Thacher & Straitsmouth Islands Association already raised or has pledged more than \$800,000 — over 40% of the way. The Association expects grants and some town, state, and federal support over the next year to help further. But it won't be enough. A gap of several hundred thousand dollars remains, and the honest truth is that it will take gifts from people who love these lights to close it.

That's why this letter is going to neighbors like you — and to a few friends who are in a position to make a real difference. If you've ever been moved by the sight of those lights, this is the moment they need you.

It's worth remembering why they're there at all. The island got its name in 1635, when Anthony Thacher was shipwrecked on its rocks in the worst storm the young colony had ever seen. Twenty-one of the twenty-three people aboard the Watch & Wait drowned, including all four of Thacher's children. He and his wife alone survived. In his grief he called the place "Thacher's Woe."

More than a century later, in 1771, the merchant John Hancock — five years before he signed the Declaration — pushed to build the first two lighthouses so that all would know the peril of the rocks below. The first lights were lit that December, older than our country itself, and mariners came to call them “Anne’s Eyes.” Ever since, in every generation, people have found a way to keep the lights on this island burning. One snowy Christmas in 1864 — just a few years after the current lights were completed, a keeper’s wife named Maria Bray climbed the 156 steps of each tower again and again, alone, for two nights, so the lights would not fail — and they didn’t.

Now it's our turn. In the year America marks its 250th, we have a chance to be the generation that made sure Anne’s Eyes are still watching when the nation turns 300.

You can help in any way that fits you. A gift of any size goes straight to the work. A larger, leadership gift, like the one we are making, can close the gap decisively — and can unlock matching grants that multiply every dollar. We are also helping the Association build an endowment so we never face an emergency like this again. And if you want to roll up your sleeves in addition to making a donation, the Association always needs volunteers.

The easiest way to give is online at thacherisland.org/product/st-donation. Checks can be mailed to the address below, and if you have questions, I’m happy to talk about this effort — as is Bill Whiting, current president of the TSIA. Just reach out.

The lights on Thacher Island have weathered centuries of wind and water — for the whole of our country’s history — because people refused to let them go dark. We are asking you to be one of those people now. Thank you for reading this and thank you for making a difference.

With gratitude,

An Eden Road Neighbor

Lifetime Members, Thacher & Straitsmouth Islands Association

To give or learn more:

Thacher & Straitsmouth Islands Association · PO Box 73 · Rockport, MA 01966

info@thacherisland.org

Thacher & Straitsmouth Islands Association is a 501(c)(3), EIN 04-2790266

Make a tax-deductible gift at <https://thacherisland.org/product/st-donation/>