

= Falkner Island =

Falkner Island ( also called Faulkner 's Island ) is a 2 @. @ 87 @- @ acre ( 1 @. @ 16 ha ) crescent @- @ shaped island located in Long Island Sound 3 miles ( 5 km ) off the coast of Guilford , Connecticut , United States . The island has been visited by the Native Americans for thousands of years . Its Quinnipiac name is " Massancummock " , meaning " the place of the great fish hawks " . In 1641 , Henry Whitfield and the founders of Guilford purchased the island from the Mohegan tribe 's sachem , Uncas , as part of a transaction for the land east of East River . Purchased by the Stone family in 1715 , it remained in the family until it was sold to the government in 1801 .

The Falkner Island Light was constructed in 1802 and commissioned by President Thomas Jefferson . The light is the second oldest in Connecticut and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places . The lighthouse was automated in 1978 , and continues to operate as a navigational aid to the nearby Intracoastal Waterway . The island is part of the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge and has the fifth @- @ largest colony of nesting roseate terns in the northeastern United States . Much of the island 's land mass has been lost to erosion , down to about 2 @. @ 87 acres ( 11 @, @ 600 m2 ) from its original 4 @. @ 5 acres ( 18 @, @ 000 m2 ) . The United States Army Corps of Engineers reinforced the eastern boundary to slow the advancing deterioration .

= = Name origins = =

The first recorded name of the Falkner Island was coined by the Native Americans . The island name in Quinnipiac was " Massancummock " meaning " the place of the great fish hawks " . The Quinnipiac name did not refer to possession , but instead the usage or resources of the island .

The identity of the first European explorer is unknown , but it was likely the Dutch explorer Adrian Block who sailed through Long Island Sound around 1614 . The United States government credits Block as the discoverer . Early English settlers called it " Falcon Island " , likely stemming from the Native American name . Helander writes that the island was probably named for the osprey , but the English translation to " Falcon " suggesting the presence of the peregrine falcon was one of " simple ignorance " . The island 's name on Dutch maps was " Valcken Eylandt " . The name later evolved to Faulkner Island , perhaps as a result of the Faulkner family who lived on the island in the 1700s . When the island was transferred to the U.S. government in 1801 , the deed states the name as " Faulkners " . The U.S. Board on Geographic Names changed and established " Falkner Island " as its name in 1891 . However , the name change is not universally recognized and " popular usage " and the Faulkner 's Light Brigade that conserves the island 's lighthouse use " Faulkner " ; including publications .

= = History = =

Falkner Island has been the site of human activity for thousands of years . An archaeological survey performed on the island from 1997 @- @ 1998 found a quartz projectile point of the Squibnocket triangle variety which dates to 1000 @- @ 3000 B.C. The study was conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as part of the erosion control project ; it was required by law under the National Historic Preservation Act because the island is on the National Register of Historic Places . The findings were published in the Bulletin of the Archaeological Society of Connecticut in 2001 . In 1994 , John P. Menta 's The History of the Quinnipiac Indians identifies Falker Island as the site of ceremonial and religious practices , but that these practices are still unknown . According to Bruchac 's Thirteen Moons on Turtle 's Back the island was not a permanent settlement , but was likely used for fishing and hunting trips in the summer .

European contact occurred in the first half of the 1600s . A map in the possession of Reverend Henry Whitfield from a 1639 deed shows the island and the Quinnipiac name of " Massancummock " . In 1641 , Whitfield and the founders of Guilford purchased the island from the Mohegan tribe 's sachem , Uncas , as part of a transaction for the land east of East River . Uncas acquired the land

when he married the daughter of the Hammonasset sachem , Sebequanash . At some point in the 1600s , Andrew Leete was an owner of the island . In 1715 , Caleb and Ebenezer Stone purchased the island and it remained in the Stone family until 1801 . In 1800 , Noah Stone sold it to a distant relative named Medad Stone for \$ 158 @. @ 34 ( equivalent to \$ 2 @, @ 208 in 2015 ) . On May 12 , 1801 , Medad Stone sold the island to the government for \$ 325 ( equivalent to \$ 4 @, @ 622 in 2015 ) . Joel Henderson , a historian , notes that Medad Stone and the government were likely openly communicating about the island . The United States Congress appropriated \$ 6000 in March 1801 for the lighthouse , prior to the government 's acquisition of the property .

It was inhabited throughout the 1700s through 1976 , with the Faulkner family and various lightkeepers of the Falkner Island Light . During the War of 1812 , the British forces landed on the island and told the keeper 's wife , Thankful Stone , that they had nothing to fear as long as they kept the light burning . Later , the keeper , Solomon Stone , had to put the light out per order of the New London customs inspector . The British threatened to blow up the lighthouse and Stone got an order to relight the lighthouse . In 2008 , the generator house for the light was renovated to be a summer house for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service interns who study the endangered roseate terns . The erosion control project was completed , but Hurricane Irene and Hurricane Sandy greatly reduced the breeding habitat of the terns to just 50 square metres ( 540 sq ft ) .

Erosion threatens the island 's very existence , it is believed that it was around eight acres in 1639 before being reduced to 5 @. @ 70 acres by 1818 . By 1987 , the total area has fallen to 2 @. @ 87 acres and it was projected that it could lose another 12 inches each year until it disappears into the sea around 2026 .

= = Falkner Island Light = =

The Falkner Island Lighthouse was constructed in 1802 and commissioned by President Thomas Jefferson . The lighthouse has had three keeper 's houses throughout its service life , the first erected in 1802 and rebuilt in 1851 and again in 1871 . In 1976 , the keeper 's house burned in 1976 and the lighthouse was repaired and automated in 1978 . The Faulkner 's Light Brigade has undertaken the restoration and preservation of the lighthouse since 1991 , with the last major restoration work being completed in March 2011 . Access to Falkner Island and the light is restricted during the nesting season of the roseate terns , from May to August . The Falkner Island Lighthouse is the second oldest extant lighthouse in Connecticut and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places .

= = Wildlife = =

In 1985 , the island became part of the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge after it was acquired from the U.S. Coast Guard . According to the Connecticut Audubon Society , " it currently supports over 95 % of the nesting Common Terns in Connecticut . It is the site of one of the ten largest Roseate Tern ( ~ 45 pairs ) colonies in Northeastern North America , and is the only regular nesting location for this federally endangered species in the state . " Also living on the island is the American oystercatcher , with one to two breeding pairs noted each year . Although the erosion control project was completed , Hurricane Irene and Hurricane Sandy greatly reduced the breeding habitat of the terns to just 50 square metres ( 540 sq ft ) . In spring 2014 , the dock damaged by Hurricane Sandy is scheduled to be rebuilt .