

= Falkner Island Light =

Falkner Island Light , also known as the Faulkner Island Lighthouse , is a lighthouse in Connecticut , United States , on Falkner Island which is off Guilford Harbor on Long Island Sound . The lighthouse was constructed in 1802 and commissioned by President Thomas Jefferson . The lighthouse has had three keeper 's houses : the original house of 1802 was rebuilt in 1851 and then again in 1871 . The 1871 keeper 's house survived to 1976 , when it was destroyed by fire ; the Coast Guard repaired and automated the lighthouse two years later . A volunteer group , the Faulkner 's Light Brigade , has undertaken the restoration and preservation of the lighthouse since 1991 , completing the last major restoration work in March 2011 . Access to Falkner Island and the light is restricted during the nesting season of the roseate terns from May to August yearly . The Falkner Island Lighthouse , as the second oldest extant lighthouse in Connecticut , is listed on the National Register of Historic Places .

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Falkner Island is a crescent @-@ shaped island located three and a half miles offshore of Guilford , Connecticut . The island has had several owners including Andrew Leete in the 1600s . In 1715 , Caleb and Ebenezer Stone purchased the island , which remained in the Stone family until 1801 . In 1800 , Noah Stone sold it to a distant relative , Medad Stone , for \$ 158 @. @ 34 . On May 12 , 1801 , Medad Stone sold the island to the government for \$ 325 . Joel Henderson , a historian , notes that Medad Stone and the government were likely openly communicating about the island . The United States Congress had appropriated \$ 6000 in March 1801 for the lighthouse , prior to the government 's acquisition of the property .

= = Construction = =

The Falkner Island Lighthouse was commissioned by President Thomas Jefferson in 1802 . It was constructed and completed by Abisha Woodward in 1802 . Woodward also built New London Harbor Light in 1801 and the Black Rock Harbor Light in 1808 . Falkner Island Lighthouse cost \$ 5977 @. @ 62 to build , according to the United States government . The 46 ft (14 m) octagonal tower was made of brownstone lined with brick , and it originally had a spiral wooden staircase that led outside to the lantern room . This staircase was an unusual and distinguishing characteristic of the Falkner Island Light . The original fixed light used twelve lamps and reflectors on two stacked tables . It was replaced in 1840 , at a cost of \$ 2842 @. @ 00 , with a lantern that used nine lamps and sixteen @-@ inch reflectors . A 33 ft (10 m) cast iron spiral staircase was installed in a major renovation in 1871 .

Originally , the keeper 's house had eight rooms , but it deteriorated and was rebuilt in 1858 . When rebuilt it was one @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stories high and had three bedrooms , a kitchen , dining and sitting rooms . Construction quality was poor , allowing snow to enter the house during the winter through gaps in the walls and roof . In 1871 , it was rebuilt by the United States Coast Guard as a three @-@ story house , which remained until it was destroyed by fire on March 15 , 1976 . The fire also scorched the adjacent lighthouse . In the Spring 2002 edition of The Octagon , the keeper 's house was said to be a two @-@ story house with eleven rooms .

= = Service = =

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 1856 , the light was upgraded from the twelve lamps to a fourth @-@ order Fresnel lens . The light 's new characteristic was a fixed light with a flash every two seconds . Around 1976 , a GE

1000 @-@ watt bulb was used . When the lighthouse was repaired after the fire and automated in 1978 , a modern optic replaced the Fresnel lens . The lighthouse currently uses a VRB @-@ 25 lens . The lighthouse switched to solar power in 1988 . The light 's characteristic is a flash of white light every ten seconds . It continues to operate as a navigational aid to the nearby Intracoastal Waterway .

Falkner Island Light was chosen for fog @-@ signal experiments in 1865 and in 1902 . In 1865 , Joseph Henry of the Smithsonian Institution , the Chairman of the Lighthouse Board , set up bells and whistles and tested the distances they could be heard . In 1879 , a steam fog whistle was installed at the cost of \$ 5000 . In 1902 , a air siren was installed and powered by two 16 ½ horsepower engines and used in an experiment in sound penetration . In 1934 , a Leslie @-@ Tyfon trumpet was installed .

= = Restoration = =

After the fire in 1976 , vandals caused additional damage that resulted in the windows being bricked up and a steel door installed . Restoration and preservation of the light is done through the volunteer " Faulkner 's Light Brigade " , which formed in 1991 . In 1997 , Walter Sedovic was selected by a Lighthouse Restoration Committee to perform the restoration of the lighthouse . Completed in 1999 , the restorations included painting the interior and exterior , replacing the door and a new entry deck made of Pau Lope wood .

The lighthouse has been threatened by erosion for decades . In the 1930s , as a response to the erosion , a breakwater was constructed to protect the boat landing area . In 1996 , the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation and the National Trust for Historic Preservation assisted the task of obtaining funding for a \$ 4 @.@ 5 million erosion @-@ control project . The funds were approved in 1998 with the help of Connecticut Senators , Joseph Lieberman and Christopher Dodd and New Haven 's Congressional Representative Rosa DeLauro . In 2001 , the construction of a stone wall and creation of a buffer zone was completed . The second phase of the project calls for protective revetment on the south side of the island .

The 33 @-@ foot cast iron spiral staircase from 1871 was repaired and restored for the cost of \$ 15 @,@ 724 . The work was done by Conservation Services and they uncovered and preserved the numbering of the stairs . In October 2010 , a major restoration project repainted the tower and lantern , installed ventilated steel doors , restored the original weathervane and repaired the 12 @-@ pane casement window on the west wall of the lighthouse . The work was completed in March 2011 after it was suspended due to poor weather in December 2010 ; the total cost was \$ 121 @,@ 000 .

= = Importance = =

Falkner Island Light is the second oldest extant lighthouse in Connecticut and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on May 29 , 1990 . The Town of Guilford proclaimed that September 7 , 2002 , would be " Faulkner 's Island Light Day " to honor the 200th birthday of the lighthouse . Falkner Island Light is home to one of the world 's largest breeding colonies of the endangered roseate tern ; the nesting season is May through August . Access to Falkner Island and the light is restricted during the nesting season of the roseate terns .