

New England Lighthouse Lovers - NELL

There we were in the middle of Long Island Sound searching for the fog shrouded Stratford Shoal / Middle Ground lighthouse. Rain was pelting the canopy and surrounding rolling seas as we hung out, literally, like a bunch of NY subway riders with up-stretched arms holding onto the canopy support pipes on the upper deck trying to avoid the spray. The lucky ones were cramped inside the main cabin, huddled in the aisles, anywhere to stay warm and dry as they sipped hot coffee and downed an endless supply of NY bagels, with butter. The heads and GPS had failed, again, and the microphone was dead so we were all cut off from the bridge, Captain Frank, and the comforting voice of our leader, Jeremy, 185 lost souls plowing on, no doubt, toward the edge

Welcome to the ADVENTURES OF NELL "X-TREME LIGHTHOUSING - PART II"

The day started out like any other day in June, overcast and threatening, but not actually "raining", yet. We were stretched out in a long line of 181 die-hard lighthouse chasers at the far end of Yacht Haven Marina, awaiting the arrival of the American Princess on its 3 hour trek up from the Brooklyn Navy Yard. The smart ones, 6 late cancellations, 6 member no-shows, and 6 non-member no-shows were safely elsewhere, I hoped not still on the road. I couldn't believe the numbers - 6 6 6, not a good "Omen".

When the boat pulled up to the dock and the stairs were lowered, we knew we were in for a difficult day. They didn't fit. They were too long and we all struggled aboard, especially the elders in our midst, teetering up the edges of the steps. Jim had the easiest access, the 4-man manual chair lift. It quickly became apparent that too many passengers were going aboard this 90 foot vessel. But before you could say "all ashore who is going ashore" we were off to our first lighthouse, on Chatham Rocks, at the entrance to Stamford Harbor.

NELL member, author, and historian, Jeremy D'Entremont was our tour leader

relaying the facts and history of each lighthouse, which many people followed closely in his book "Lighthouses of CT" which were for sale aboard the boat. At least 40 were purchased and Jeremy donated one to Captain Frank DeSantis in honor of his first lighthouse cruise and first time plying these waters of Long Island Sound. Sure hope the GPS stays in operation, or we will have to rely on the lighthouses, and will need the book to know where we are. Terry Webb was also selling her latest book, "Weathering the Storms". It was reminiscent of Mother's Day 2005 on Nantucket.

That Stamford Harbor spark-plug / coffee-pot caisson light was just outside the breakwater, and is privately owned. The red base and white tower (in need of paint) was shrouded in "scattered fog", but would be more visible on our return, seven and a half long hours later.

The seas tossed the boat a lot as we turned, then headed southwest on a 4 mile course toward Great Captain Island. This 1868 stone house and 8-sided badly rusted tower atop the structure is essentially a twin to Sheffield Island, Plum Island, and Morgan Point. Guess that makes it a quadruplet, huh? Anyway, the weather was the clearest here and good photos were taken by all of the old light and the adjacent skeleton tower with the currently operating modern optic.

We then turned with the wind and ran full steam ahead back past Stamford and on to the Norwalk islands, and the half-brown and half-white caisson tower of Green's Ledge Light. There were great monochromatic photo ops here too with a very scenic lobster boat and passing sailboat. What they were doing out on the sound on a day like today.....

Next on to Sheffield Island Light and the extensive shallows around that island. In fact, we had to circle back to Green's Ledge and approach from the inside channel to get near enough to the public landing to view the light, but the boat was too big. Those members that toured that light on Sunday afternoon were able to climb through the lighthouse. But that is another story that one of them could add to this log.

East of the Island lies Peck Ledge Light, also a caisson, with a wide brown band on a white tower. The weather actually looked like it was starting to clear up. Was that a spot of sun? But it was not to be this day. :(

Next stop Penfield Reef off Fairfield. This stone house with its mansard roof lies on, you guessed it, Penfield Reef. They say you can actually walk out to it at low tide if you are very quick. Hence we could not circum-navigate this light and we essentially got one view.

Now on to Bridgeport's Seaside Park and the small white tower of the light at Fayerweather Island, Black Rock Harbor. NELL walked out the breakwater to this light when we were "Connecting in Connecticut" in May 2003. Today you had to put it in front of the trees to see it against the background gray sky.

In contrast, the Black tower of Tongue Point stood out better, and afforded some nice photos of the lighthouse with the tugboat, UI Power plant terminal, and its lighted wharf. This light is safely inside the calm waters of Bridgeport Harbor on the UI property and is not accessible except for this water view.

Our last shoreline light at Stratford Point was one of our greatest adventures of the day, other than the one noted at the top of this story. Again we had to circle and retreat from the shallows along the recognizable Lordship

waterfront, and creep through the fog in search of the elusive Stratford Point Light. Alas the only lighted tower of the day flashed out its signal and we truly experienced finding our way by the lighthouse beacon. The white tower with distinctive red band was a welcome sight indeed. Now I know how the seafarer of old, or one without working GPS today, felt in seeking home port.

Finally, out to sea for our last light of the day. There we were in the middle of Long Island Sound searching for the fog shrouded Stratford Shoal
(sound familiar?)

Was that actually Middle Ground we circled before the straight shot back to Stamford, or had we gone beyond to Race Rock. One loses perspective of time and distance and the horizon in the gray mist of L I Sound. It was actually worth the trek to this light. The rain stopped, and we did OK in the photo dept. here. YES !!!

After returning to the dock and taking about an hour to descend those crooked stairs on our sea legs, 60 of us still felt the floors sway Saturday evening as we dined at the Brewhouse in the SONO section of Norwalk, and enjoyed great meals and grog --- a fitting finale.

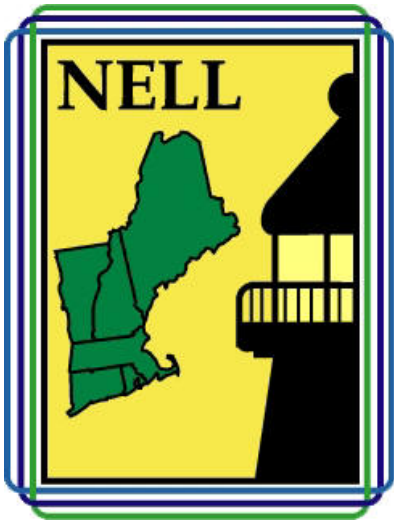
Sunday brought the NELL breakfast meeting at our alternate Chatham Manor wedding hall paid for by the Doubletree Hotel for messing up our meeting room contract. Turned out to be much in our favor. The weekend was a great success in raising just a tad under \$4,900 for preservation from the cruise profit, opportunity drawings, and silent and live auctions. We also spent it all in the same day awarding 3 grants to Prospect Harbor and Pomham Rocks Lights and toward a research library at the Maine Lighthouse Museum, all totaling \$10,000. But that is another story for another day..... You will have to wait for the secretary's report of the meeting.

Congratulations NELL members for a job well done !!!! THAT WAS EASY :)

Stay tuned for the next NELL X-TREME lighthouse adventure October 14-15, 2006 for the "actual" relighting of Avery Point Lighthouse, Groton, CT.

See you there,
Tom

PS For those of you who were not actually on this cruise, the lead paragraph atop this story is the honest truth as the members aboard the American Princess on June 3, 2006 can surely attest. Those conditions persisted on and off except for the heavy rain which only hit us on that last leg. Stuff happens. We had fun anyway. Be there next time. :)



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Thanks to Ron Foster for these wonderful photos



Stamford Harbor Light



Great Captain's Island



Stamford Harbor Light



Stamford Harbor Light



Great Captain's Island with Skeletal Tower



Great Captain's Island Lighthouse



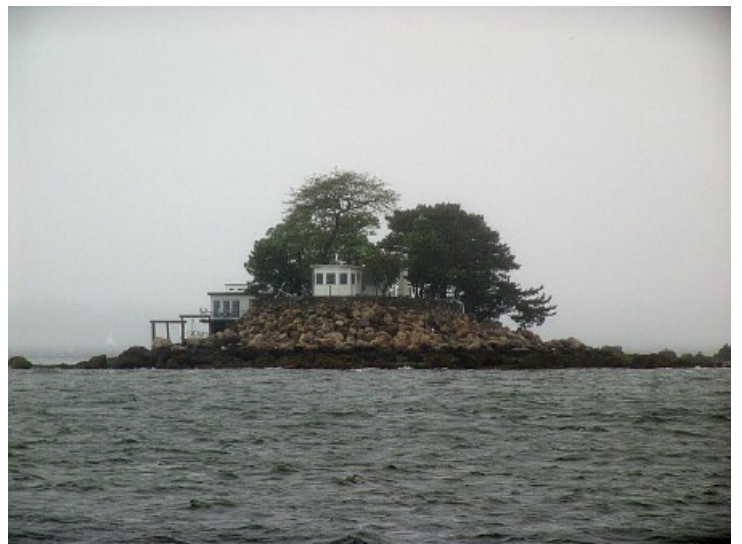
Great Island Lighthouse Gull



Sailing past Green's Ledge Light



Great Captain's island Light Station



Private island home with a little lighthouse



Sailing near Green Ledge Light



Green's Ledge Light



Green's Ledge Light



Peck's Ledge Light & Green Buoy No-5



Peck's Ledge Light



Peck's Ledge Light



Sails in the fog



Passing Tug Francis E Roehrig



Tug Francis E. Roehrig towing barges



Penfield Reef Light



Penfield Reef Light



Fayerweather (Black Rock) Light



Penfield Reef Light



Fayerweather (Black Rock) Light



Henry marine tug passes pulling barges



Black Rock Light



Fayerweather Light



Black Rock Harbor



Fayerweather Light



Black Rock Harbor



Car Ferry



Grand Republic Car Ferry out of Bridgeport passes



Cormorants drying wings at 13A



Tongue Point Lighthouse



Approaching Tongue Point Light



Tongue Point



Tongue Point Lighthouse



Love Mary Beth's Green boots



Searching for Stratford Point Light in the fog



Hanging on in the fog & rain



Stratford Point shines through the fog



Stratford Point Light



Stratford Point



Stratford Point



John, Noreen, Bob & Lynne



Henry & Stephanie



Stephanie & Al



Mary Beth, Arlene, Mike &



Joe, MJ, Henry & Arlene



Joe, MJ, Stephanie, Henry & Arlene



Hanging On



Is Mike sleeping while hanging on?



Augie, Reg & Lisa share a laugh



Stratford Shoal (Middle Ground) Light



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Stratford Shoal (Middle Ground) Light appears in a distant fog



Stratford Shoal (Middle Ground) Light



Stratford Shoal (Middle Ground) Light



Stratford Shoal (Middle Ground) Light



Stratford Shoal (Middle Ground) Light



Stratford Shoal (Middle Ground) Light



Stratford Shoal (Middle Ground) Light



Stratford Shoal (Middle Ground) Light



Stratford Shoal (Middle Ground) Light



Tom and Arlene



On deck smiles



Passing sails



Sailing past Sheffield Island Light



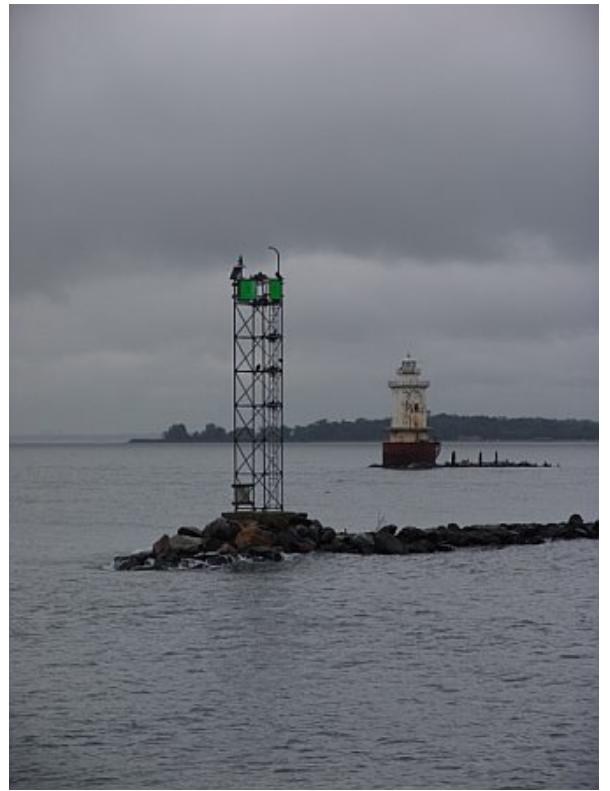
Stamford Harbor Light



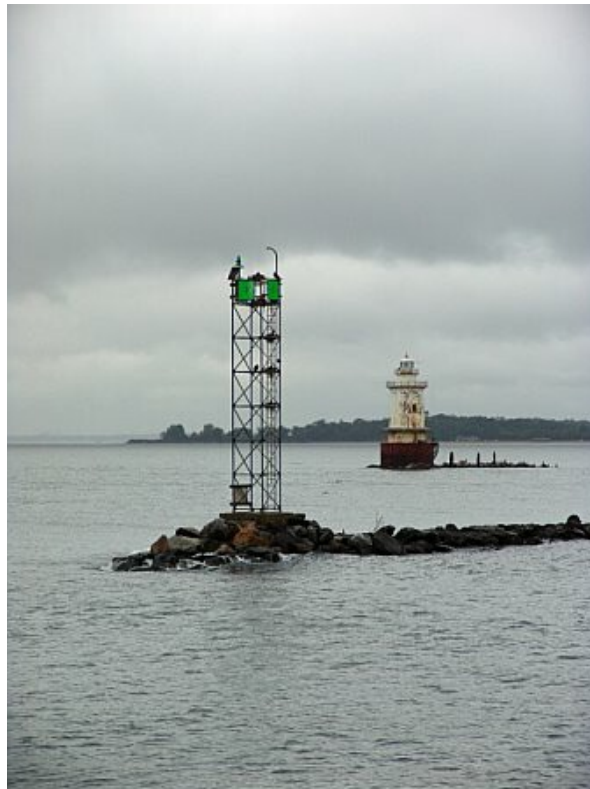
Stamford Harbor Lighthouse



Green's Ledge on the return trip



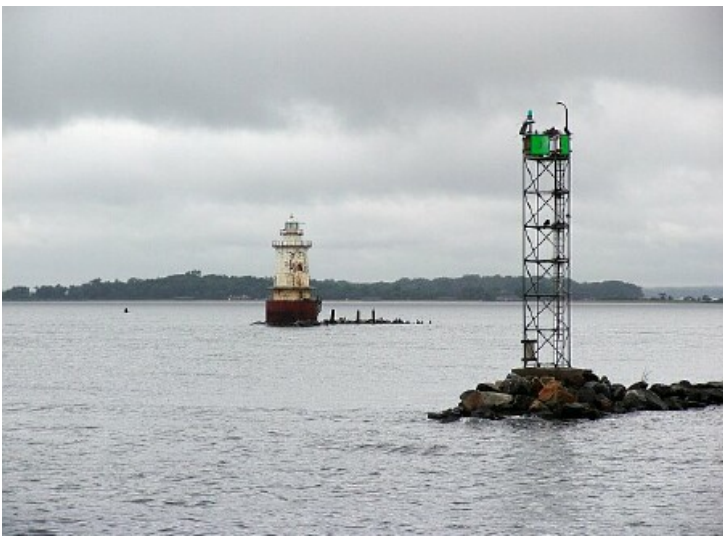
Passing No. 3 with Stamford Harbor Light



Passing No. 3 with Stamford Harbor Light



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Stamford Harbor Lighthouse



Back at the dock



Sunday morning meeting place



Sunday morning scene



Sunday morning scene



Sunday morning scene



Sunday morning scene



Sunday morning scene



Roseann and Mike

Thanks Ron Foster for the GREAT MEMORIES!!



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