

TIDES AND SUN
 Sun Rise 6:18 A. M.
 Sun Sets 7:27 P. M.
 High Water 9:21 A. M.
 Low Water 2:53 P. M.

BRIDGEPORT HERALD

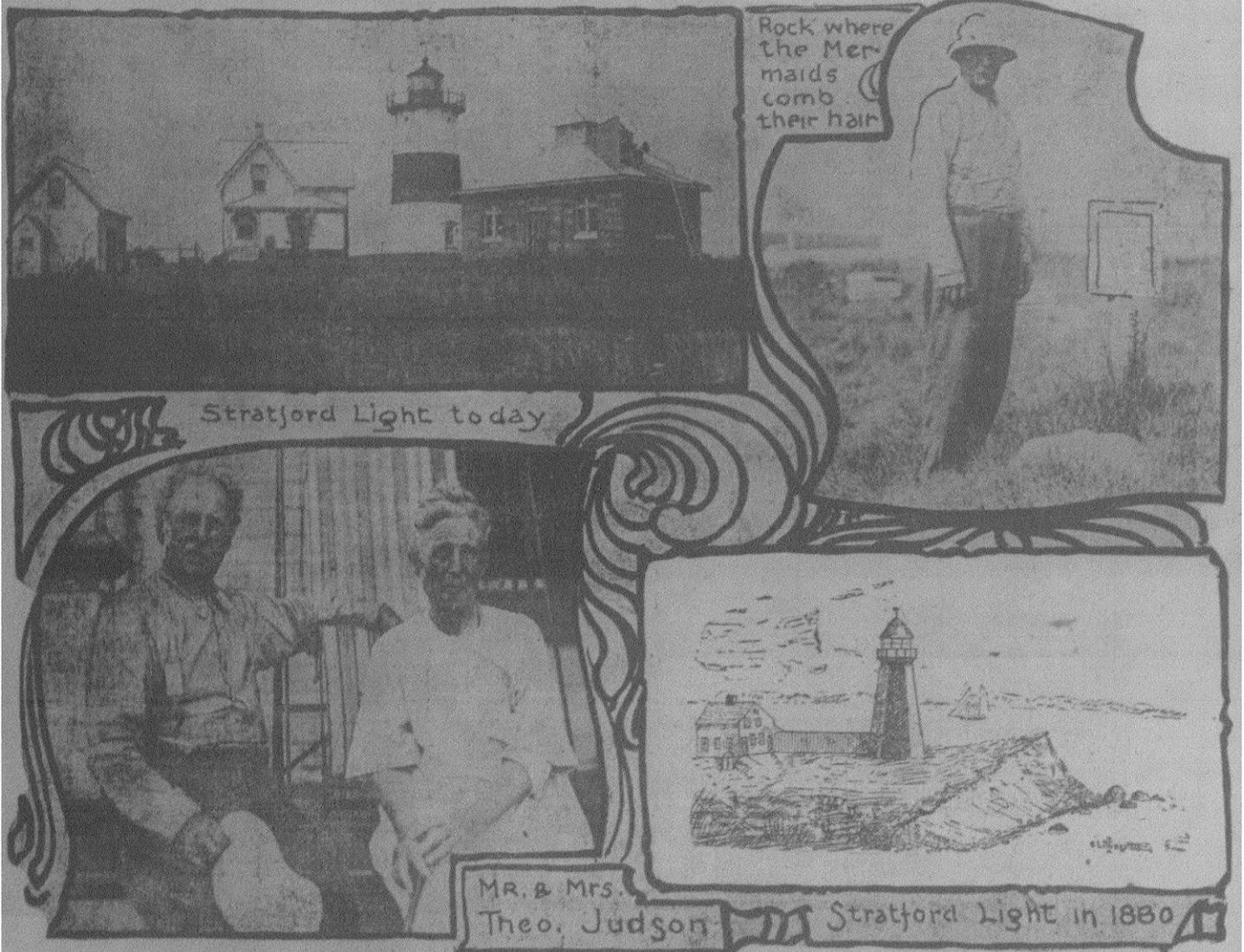
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"Uncle Calamity" Thene Judson, After Tending The Stratford Point Lighthouse for Thirty-eight Years, Is Going to Retire



Thirty-eight years ago there had been no Spanish war; thirty-eight years ago Bryan had not started to run for president; thirty-eight years ago there were no submarines, and the Huns were still civilized Germans; and thirty-eight years ago, Theodore Judson, better known as "Uncle Calamity" Thene Judson, came to the Stratford Point Lighthouse. April, it was, of the year 1880. And now after a lifetime service, "Uncle" Thene is to be pensioned and retired, just as soon as he hears from the government. He will still be a citizen of Stratford, however, "for a hundred years or so more," he says.

It wasn't the present lighthouse that Mr. Judson made the home of his wife and children, his goods

and chattels, however. The old wooden structure was still in evidence, and it was not until ten years later that the new iron and steel house was built. There were only two other houses on the Point - one belonging to Merl Cowles and the other to Peter Goncart. In Stratford, including West Stratford, there were six hundred voters, so Mr. Judson has seen the town grow out of infancy.

"It as certainly lonesome in those days with the nearest house a mile away," said Mrs. Judson. "And I had to teach the children myself; regular school term they had, from fall to spring, so that they would be behind other children."

"It wasn't so bad," Uncle Thene protested. "I had my wife and children. We would have been all right if it hadn't been for the mosquitoes. They were so thick that I've seen them about ten inches deep on the side of the barn, hanging on like so many bats."

(I was slapping and fighting them at that very minute - mosquitoes the size of flies.)

"Were?" I asked. "You don't mean to put that in the past tense, do you?"

"Oh, they ain't at all bad now," he said easily. "You see we had a Saint Patrick of the Point, William R. Hobson, he was, and he ditched and dyked the meadows and got rid of most of the varmints. These we have now we don't mind much. You see they have already bit us as full of holes as we can be, and they can't do anything but bite in the same old holes any more. It's a little hard on strangers, though."

"When I first came here," he went on, "they had an old light that burned lard oil and took a long time to get started, I can tell you. And the old fog bell machines used us fifteen minutes to get started and then ran three hours. I wore out three of these old contraptions before they got me a real engine to run the thing."

"And that old siren was certainly a noise maker," remarked Mrs. Judson.

"It was that," he chuckled. "The people of Stratford used to ring me up and ask if I found that noise amusing and why I wanted to ruin their nerves and every sort of thing. I recollect Mrs. Dunbar was especially nervous over it."

"Seems like you think that old fog horn is the most important thing in the world," she said.

"Well," I said, "Mrs. Dunbar, if that old siren was a noted singer in New York you would be the first one to go hear him and say it was fine. Anyway, I can't stop it. Maybe if you ring up President Roosevelt, he might do something for you; you see he's got more power than I have."

"I never did get word from the President about it, but they did put up a sounding board and reflector to make the sound stay on the water where it belongs, instead of on ... people's nerves."

The point is edged by dangerous looking rocks. I inquired if there had ever been any wrecks.

"Not anybody had been killed," he explained, "but there have been wrecks. One time McWilliams tow was pulling five barges, and four of them were

wrecked. They managed to save the fifth one. But we got enough wreckage on the Point to build about half the shacks you see around here. Did somebody see a good one, you see."

"These rocks are not to wreck ships so much. They are mostly for mermaids to play on. And speaking of mermaids, I did a charitable act several years ago. You see, I watched them trying to hold their comb and brush and mirror with only two hands, so I put up that mirror you see there with the rock just under it for them to sit on. If you don't believe it, go look at the print in the rock - they have sat there so often. They can't walk, but they flap up the path."

I wanted to stay around till I saw one and talked to her, but Uncle Thene explained:

"I'm afraid I hurt their feelings. You see I had five girls over from New Jersey last week and the mermaids all got jealous. Anyway, you couldn't talk to them. They just have sign language, and you have to understand it. And there [sic] are shy just like all girls. They are a little afraid of strangers."

"The strangest thing that ever happened to me on this point was the lightning striking the place," he continued. And he showed me where the house had been seared and the lighthouse doorsill torn away in one place.

"The lightning struck three times, but I saw it coming and dodged it," he explained simply. "It hit the corner of the house and skipped three telephone poles and struck the fourth, split it in two, and left the forked points sticking up. Even the lightning experts could not follow the path of that lightning. It had them all guessing. I suppose the steel in the lighthouse attracts it - it's luck I'm a good dodger."

As we strolled around the house, he showed me a great stone slab by the back door.

"That's my tombstone," he said; "it weighs about a ton, and I am going to have it put flat on my grave because I don't want to scratch out again when I'm once buried. And I've written my epitaph. Want to hear it?"

Of course I did, and here it is:
 Here lies Calamity Thene,
 Who for 38 years ran a fog machine,
 At Stratford Point Light both day and night,
 But now he's only a dream,
 Ting-a-ling.