

custom house MARITIMES WINTER 2015



Above, Custom House Maritime Museum, January 2015, in the clear winter light.

Looking ahead: a new vision

This winter, our trustees have reformulated New London Maritime Society's Vision, Mission, and Strategy to align with developments in our programming and in the larger environment. In this winter-time newsletter, we'd like to bring you up-to-date with their current thinking on these matters.

New London Maritime Society's **vision** is for the public to fully appreciate New London and its maritime history, and accept their personal responsibilities as stewards of that history and of Long Island Sound -- a vital natural and cultural resource.

The **mission** of the New London Maritime Society (NLMS) is to protect and preserve New London's U.S. Custom House, three area lighthouses, and Long Island Sound, and to promote, preserve, and interpret the rich maritime life & history of the port of New London and the surrounding region through museum exhibitions, educational programs, and preservation initiatives.

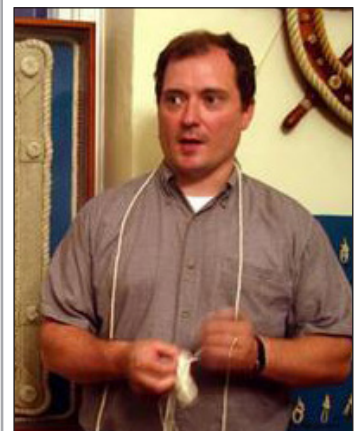
2015 & beyond: In addition to maintaining the Robert Mills 1833 US Custom House and running it as a maritime museum, over the past three years, New London Maritime Society has taken ownership of three historic lighthouses, which (under the auspices of the National Park Service) the Society actively preserves and makes accessible to the public through visitation, exhibitions and/or online resources. (In 2014, NLMS carried out a major restoration of New London Harbor Light.) The Custom House Maritime Museum remains a primary site and teller of the Amistad story, with a permanent Amistad exhibition and ongoing freedom-related programs, which include membership in the *CT Freedom Trail* and the *USPS Underground Railroad Network to Freedom*.

Over the next five years, New London Maritime Society, an independent, community-based organization, will continue to build its successful educational programs, library, collections, and preservation efforts to become a true 'safe harbor' and champion for the preservation of our local maritime history, while providing educational opportunities, and bringing attention to important issues relating to New London and its nearby waters.

NLMS has an excellent reputation: the organization has shown it keeps its promises, the effect of which is born out by excellent community support and consistently good press coverage. *cont... page 2*

New London Maritime Society - Custom House Maritime Museum, 150 Bank Street, New London, Connecticut 06320.

Coming up



Matt Beaudoin, above, of *Mystic Knotwork*, will give an artist talk at the Custom House, **Sunday, February 22 at 2 PM**. Matt's talk is free and open to the public.

This talk is presented in conjunction with the special exhibition: **Alton Beaudoin & Mystic Knotwork: A Family of Knotters**, on view through March 2015.

A new Vision, cont. from page 1

NLMS is an active organization with good team spirit, four first-rate historic maritime sites, a growing research library, and a museum housing an impressive array of artifacts. We produce a variety of exciting educational programs, such as our annual Sentinels on the Sound light-house celebration and boat tours, now in its fifth year.

NLMS has ongoing relationships with other organizations (the Ledge Light Foundation, Save the Sound, CT Freedom Trail, New London Landmarks, and the Henry L. Ferguson Museum, among them) to cooperate on larger events and projects, such as the 2014 Morgan celebration/Jibboom Parade, our 3rd-grade local-history initiative with the NL Public Schools, and the current preservation effort to prevent the sale of Plum Island.

While we now are successfully fulfilling our mission, not having any extra money is a constant pressure, so we remain event-driven. With no on-going paid development, administrative, or maintenance help, the director cannot use her time as well as she could. The threat of general fatigue and of the director/volunteers being over-extended could result in the loss of quality in programs and loss of opportunities. It is critical that we not lose momentum.

The organization either has to have reliable people volunteer for key duties or else it must hire more professional help. Without this, we cannot continue to fulfill our considerable responsibilities or grow.

Steps to be taken:

- 1.) Board members/key volunteers take on specific long-term responsibilities. These can be small or large tasks, but the important thing is that the person follows through.
- 2.) A fund-raising committee must be established to create and enact a development plan.
- 3.) Once the first two steps are in place and working well, additional duties can be addressed: responsibility for the individual light-houses, a new roof (capital campaign) for the custom house, etc.

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Getting these first two steps in hand should be the focus of the first half of 2015.

The complex *Sentinels on the Sound* program is our signature program. It is a community-wide effort that showcases what is authentic to New London's maritime story, past and present. June through October will need 'all hands on deck'. Following this *Sentinels* season, important issues to be addressed will include: new docks at Harbor Light and Race Rock, purchase of a tour boat, other partnerships.

By the end of 2016, we should be on more-solid footing, with smoother over-all operations and a more-secure financial plan in place.

By the end of 2017, with a solid year of secure finances and support, we should be able to address item # 3: assigning additional duties/responsibilities.

It will be self-evident if we have not achieved these goals; the result will be a contracting of our vision and mission, and overall fatigue within the organization.

If we do get ourselves organized and humming, there are great opportunities ahead: working towards the national LIS marine park, cooperating with the USCG Museum.

What we do over the next two years is critical in allowing us to meet both our responsibilities and these enticing opportunities.



Below: NLMS trustees clockwise from lower left: James Reyburn, Jim Fleishell, Carolyn Leuze, Jennifer Hillhouse, Lea Jewett, Ken Halloway, Bill LaRoue, Alan Lyons, Robert Pittaway, Vinnie Belbruno, Tommy Soulignavong, Josephine Gangitano, Roger Clements, Morgan McGinley, Margaret Palmer, Jean Murphy, Alma Peterson. *Missing* are Doug Allen, John Desjardins, Josie Esposito, Robert Groves, Peggy Peters, George Sprecace, Susan Tamulevich, and *honorary trustees* Lonnie Braxton, Russ DeMarco, Elizabeth Enders, Nick Hanke, Alice Houston, Kathleen Jacey, James McGuire, Richard Salews, Sarah Steffian, Greg Stone, and George White.



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As in prior years, the work of the library staff consisted of responding to requests for information, acquiring and cataloging books and other materials, conserving items requiring protective housing or repair, and carrying out miscellaneous special projects.

Two important accomplishments this year were the work of conservator Eugene MacMullan: (a) arranging our 19th century customs manuscripts, including the Crawford letters, in polypropylene sleeves arranged in five albums made for the purpose, and (b) completing conservation of the Lucille Showalter Ocean Beach Park scrapbooks, a documentary record of the creation of the park after the Hurricane of 1938 and its first five years of operation, as reported in *The Day* and elsewhere.

Eugene MacMullan has also prepared Finding Aids for three special collections: The S.S. Tasco Papers (a vessel owned by the T.A. Scott Diving and Salvage Co.), the Herman Pederson Papers (a merchant mariner active in the 1940s); and the Custom House Renovation Papers (Lucille Showalter's files on the renovations of the 1980s and 90s.) An earlier Finding Aid for the Dwight and Lila Lyman Papers (Fort Trumbull) was prepared by Brian Rogers. More Finding Aids will be prepared in the coming year by the staff.

Gifts were received from Iva Arpin (photographs), Alan Bentz (philatelic covers), Keith Christianson (items relating to Admiral Billard Academy), Russell DeMarco (books), Anthony Enders (books), Joseph Geraci (*Sea History* magazine), Mary Ellen Hanrahan (books and 19th c. magazine pages), Lea Jewett (books), Gordon Napier (books), Noank Historical Society (books), Margaret Palmer (books), and Rob Pittaway (books).

Service Statistics

- 61 books or other items used or displayed
- 51 requests for information
- 34 research visits
- 34 interactions with guided tour visitors (tour visitors at other times are not recorded)

Conservation Statistics

- 12 custom albums made for rare materials (partially described above)
- 34 dust jacket protectors applied
- 9 special boxes made for fragile items
- 7 book repairs

Other activities

- Three short articles were written by the librarian for the Custom House Maritimes newsletter
- The librarian appeared on the Custom House TV show in June
- The "Book of the Month" series continues on the website

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- Books relating to Black history were displayed in Feb. for MacCluggage essay contestants
- The librarian copy-edited photo captions for *The Day's* forthcoming *Looking Back, Vol. II*
- To ease our space problem, several books have been relocated to the Chester Room where the main part of our sailing collection is kept with the *Grandma Sue* display.
- Dirk Langeveld's transcriptions of the Ingoldsby Crawford letters have been arranged in a custom-made binder alongside the originals.

Brian Rogers, librarian
Laurie Deredita, catalog librarian
Eugene C. MacMullan, conservator

We need YOU at the New London Maritime Society.
Call Susan at 860-447-2501 to volunteer.

I'M JOINING THE NEW LONDON MARITIME SOCIETY!

Name _____ phone _____ e-mail _____

Street _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Individual \$35__ Family \$50__ Contributor \$100__ Sponsor \$250__ Patron \$1,500__ (This entitles you to Life Membership)

Cash__ Check__ ~ please make payment to New London Maritime Society Visa__ Master Card__ AmEx__

Number _____ Exp. date _____ Security code _____

I want to support the Ben Martin LIGHTHOUSE FUND ____ Please accept this donation of \$ _____
Benefits of membership include free admission, invitations to special events, discounts, and a newsletter.

150 Bank Street, New London, Connecticut 06320, 860-447-2501





Visit the
MUSEUM SHOP
 New items arrive, weekly.
At right: Submarino, a way to organize lotions & other toiletries, \$60; *left:* Japanese indigo-dyed, and Indian hand-stitched pillows \$28-\$56.

Through March, the MUSEUM SHOP is open 1 to 5 PM Tuesday through Sunday.



Go to nlmaritimesociety.org for our events calendar

Get the latest updates for the Maritime Society & museum news at facebook **Custom House Maritime Museum**

Learn about developments at 'Pequot' Light & lighthouse preservation at facebook **New London Harbor Light**

Read new about Race Rock light and lighthouses, world-wide, at facebook **Race Rock Lighthouse**

facebook **Custom House MUSEUM SHOP** shows you what's new in the MUSEUM SHOP

facebook **Sentinels on the Sound** previews our 2015 summer lighthouse celebration

and facebook **Lighthouse Inn New London** helps the community keep tabs on an important historic property

We have three Seal Watch excursions coming right up!

Seal Watch trips feature **hot chocolate & cookies** and leave from New London's City Pier.

- Sunday, February 15, 10 AM-12:30 PM

- Sunday, March 1, 10 AM-12:30 PM

- Saturday, March 21, 2-4:30 PM

Sign up today at brownpapertickets.com, search 'Seal watch'

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www.nlmaritimesociety.org

photo: Scott Loring

