

custom house MARITIMES

AUTUMN 2014



Above, a Nathan Hale third-grader descends from the lantern at Harbor Light; below right, a passel of Plum Island lighthouse-keeper's descendants search for remnants of their past in September, 2014; bottom right, the current navigational aid--a metal tower with light-- replaced the decaying granite lighthouse in 1994.

Wondering why?

To some, taking responsibility for a *third* lighthouse this autumn (New London Ledge Light Station) may appear foolhardy. Well, somebody needed to do it! The photos on this page provide a cautionary tale of what can happen when a lighthouse is left to deteriorate; the simple metal tower, *below right*, is the modern replacement for the lovely old 1869 granite Plum Island Light. Efficient it may be, but what a loss to our sense of place! Today, the federal government needs local non-profit partners, like us, to help preserve our significant, evocative historic structures. NLMS was, in fact, the *only* non-profit applicant for Ledge Lighthouse. Without our intervention, that beloved local landmark either would have been 1.) auctioned off to a private individual or 2.) left to decay and eventually perhaps be replaced by said metal tower. As the new owners of Ledge Lighthouse, with ongoing stewardship of Ledge Light Foundation, we now work to preserve it for you and for future generations!

There are historic precedents that also commended our decision to jump in. You may recollect that, from its inception, New London Maritime Society was a preservation force. Thirty-one years ago, citizens rallied to save the City's 1833 US Custom House. Those founders managed to both save the building *for all* and also create within it a community museum that tells the stories of our waterfront. Our lighthouse connection stems from that same impulse.

New London was one of the very first US Customs ports established by George Washington, who then created the US Revenue Service as Customs's maritime arm and took control of all existing lighthouses (Harbor Light was number 4 on that early list). As the federal presence in New London, US Customs officials oversaw operation of all area lights - appointing the lighthouse keepers, and ordering the oil, wicks and other supplies on a quarterly basis. New London customs officials managed the rebuilding of Harbor Light in 1799, and, in the mid-1800s, Collector Ingoldsby Work Crawford directed construction of Old Saybrook light, placed spindles out at the Race, and allowed a deceased-keeper's wife to take over her late husband's lighthouse duties in Noank--all out of our customs house!

Customs oversaw the lighthouses until 1911. In 1939, five federal agencies, including the Revenue Cutter & Lighthouse Services (est. 1911), were rolled into the new United States Coast Guard, (now all part of Homeland Security). Today, the Coast Guard still services the lights and fog horns, but they cannot deal with large maintenance issues such as deteriorating lighthouse structures. That is where we come back in. Our mission is both education, and the preservation of our maritime heritage. Our heritage includes the protection of area lighthouses for future generations. That is who we are and that is why we do what we do.

The good news is, by working together, we all benefit!

Susan Tamulevich, director

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



Alton Beaudoin & Mystic Knotwork A Family of Knotters

This fall, we present the extravagant rope work of two generations of local maritime knotters: the Beaudoins of Mystic.

Alton Beaudoin could tie 400 knots from memory. He learned his fancy rope work as a seaman in the 1930-40s, including eight years spent aboard the square-rigged *Joseph Conrad* when it was a training ship for merchant seamen. Decades later, having retired as an Inside Machinist at Electric Boat, he indulged his hobby creating such wonders as the elegant sennit frame shown below out of approximately 100 miles of white twine. He passed his knotting skills to his family. Today, a grandson, Mat Beaudoin, carries on the tradition at Mystic Knotwork in Stonington's Velvet Mill. We have Matt's work on display, too and Mystic Knotwork's napkin rings, sailor bracelets, and doormats are for sale in the MUSEUM SHOP.



Something BIG - the Restoration of New London Harbor Light

We kindly thank everyone who supported our restoration campaign for New London Harbor Light: *Be Part of Something BIG*. The response was so positive that the entire project was funded, without debt, in just over one year! A special thanks goes to Scott Loring and family, generous donors to the effort and the masons, general contractor and guiding hand for the restoration.

Below: Scott Loring at Harbor Light.



We salute our generous Lighthouse Sponsors: The Chester Kitchings Family Foundation, Frank Loomis Palmer Fund, Veolia Water / New London Water Authority, Loring & Son Masonry, Family & Friends of Ben Martin, Surveyor Jim Bernardo, Hefel Masonry LLC, Captain Scott's Lobster Dock, Ocean Beach Park, The Big House B&B, Cristifori Foundation, CTrides/Shore Line East, New England Regional Council of Carpenters, John Mock, Dave Fallon, David Lersch, Fishers Island Ferry, Cross Sound Ferry, Dominion Foundation, A. W. Marina. Manafort Bros. Inc, BRAND Energy & Infrastructure Services, Poor Morgan, Captain's Pizza. Dept of Eco. Dev. State Dept. of Tourism, Kenseal Building Prodcnts, H.Carr & Son, Chelsea Groton Bank, Barun Basu, Associated Lightning Rod Company, Rogovin Moving and Storage, Shennecossett Yacht Club, IUPAT - The International Union Of Painters And Allied Trades Home, Local 1122, Central and Eastern Connecticut Carpenters Local 24, LLL Foundation, & the Eschenfelder Family. Thank you, all.

from the President, New London Maritime Society

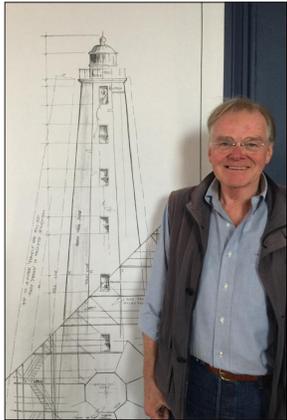
"WOW". What a run. In two weeks I'll be completing six years as your President. We recently celebrated 4 years of weekly TV "Custom House Maritime Matters" by presenting on the Oct. 2 show a review of the many fine and fascinating guests we have presented for you information and interest. Two weeks ago we received ownership of our THIRD regional lighthouse, all in our effort to keep jewels of our heritage in the public domain instead of in private hands. Recently, we completed a six month intensive rehabilitation of New London Harbor Lighthouse, many thanks to many donors and volunteers, something that we will be celebrating at our coming Annual Meeting on November 9. And all of this while blessed with the privilege of working with Susan, our great Director and with a Board of Trustees and other volunteers who keep surprising me - and probably themselves - with their commitment and their hands-on activities. Thank you all. And now, with a classic Italian statement: "AVANTI IN SU". "ONWARD AND UPWARD".

George A. Spreccace., M.D., J.D.

Find out first! Sign up for weekly e-mail blasts - write to: nlmaritime@gmail.com

from the Frank L. McGuire Library

Most libraries contain more than books, and ours is no exception. Some of the most interesting information about local maritime history is found in our archival collections of papers, manuscripts, photographs and other non-book materials. These things do not show up in a library's catalog; rather, they are described in a Finding Aid. We have embarked on a project to create a Finding Aid for each of our archival collections. Two have been completed: Eugene MacMullan has prepared one for the Steamship Tasco Papers -- documents, photographs and a logbook concerning a vessel once owned by Captain Scott's diving and salvage company, and this writer has prepared one for the Dwight and Lila Lyman Collection, a small group of papers relating to the history of Fort Trumbull, and the Herman Pederson merchant mariner papers. Finding Aids will be created for the glass-plate negatives of 19th c. New London scenes; the Bachman War of 1812 Papers; and Lucille Showalter's files documenting the restoration of the Custom House in the 1980s and 90s. Brian Rogers, Librarian



New London Maritime Society ANNUAL MEETING Come & Celebrate 2014 - our BIG 31st Year

Sunday, November 9, 2014, 2 PM at Ocean Beach's *Port 'N Starboard*

Join us for chantys, chowda' & cake, after a short annual meeting!
Reserve your tickets today at brownpapertickets.com, search 'New London lighthouse', or call **860-447-8700** and leave your name and phone number - we'll get back to you. Help us thank the many craftsmen without whom we could never have restored Harbor Light.

Suggested donation is \$35 adults, \$15 children age 12 and younger.

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



from the President, New London Ledge Light Foundation

Ledge Lighthouse: A New Chapter

The New London Ledge Light Foundation was thrilled to hear the news that the New London Maritime Society has been awarded the deed to Ledge Lighthouse. The Foundation spent the last year and a half working with NLMS to make this happen. When the GSA announced that Ledge Light would be offered to a non-profit, the Foundation quickly realized that the Maritime Society was the most logical entity to take on the light. They already have the New London Harbor Light and Race Rock, and adding Ledge Light would complete their holdings of the three lighthouses that form a pathway into New London Harbor. It was as if the Harbor Light was first base and Race Rock third: it only made sense they should own 2nd base — Ledge Light!

Moreover, the Foundation felt very strongly that Ledge Light should be owned by a local group. This is a sentiment powerfully reinforced by the communities of New London and Groton. Nobody wanted to see Ledge Light fall into the hands of a distant owner with tenuous connections to the local maritime heritage and future.

Some may worry that in acquiring Ledge Light the Maritime Society may become overextended. But nothing could be farther from the truth. The 300-page application for ownership to Ledge Light, submitted to the National Park Service and approved by the Secretary of the Interior, makes it very clear that the New London Ledge Light Foundation will continue on as the principal group responsible for the restoration, maintenance, development and use of the lighthouse — just as we have been since the Coast Guard left in 1987. The Foundation has for years leased the lighthouse from the Coast Guard and taken care of it. We will lease the building from the Maritime Society and continue our role as the primary steward of the light. The Management Plan and Lease submitted in the application for ownership contain detailed and binding conditions that clearly state that the New London Ledge Light Foundation will continue its work autonomously at Ledge Light. Both our groups have agreed the Maritime Society has plenty to do without adding a lot of work at Ledge Light to its activities. Yet we will partner on events, publicity, fund raising, and tours when it makes sense to do so.



photo: Todd Gipstein

We believe that the synergy of our two groups will enhance the possibilities for preservation and use of Ledge Light. This treasured, venerable piece of local maritime history will begin a new chapter, one built on the success of the previous 25 years of stewardship by the Ledge Light Foundation and the impressive work of the Maritime Society with Race Rock and the New London Harbor Light. Both groups have proven their effectiveness, durability, and local support.

Together, the Ledge Light Foundation and the Maritime Society have the will, the resources, and the commitment to ensure that our local lighthouses will shine for generations to come. And we must not lose sight of the fact that the work on these lighthouses is only one piece of an overall plan to create an area maritime park under the guidance of the Maritime Society. We invite you to join us on this exciting journey that will connect the area's nautical past with a future where new stories will be written on the waters of New London Harbor and Long Island Sound.

Todd Gipstein



Visit the MUSEUM SHOP for terrific gifts for all ages sailing ship kites, deep-sea dive children's lunch sets, nautical clocks, elegant scarves, submarine toys, rubber stamps, rubber duckies, cookie cutters, old-time gifts, maritime books, and sea creature ornaments. We have Lighthouse Keepers caps, *Moby Dick* - the card game, balloon-powered toy boats, whales of every sort, books for the very young and the very sophisticated. Enjoy the season. NLMS members receive 10% off their purchase.

Open from 1 to 5 PM Tuesday through Sunday!



Did you take a boat tour this summer? in 2014, we gave approximately 120 hour-long lighthouse tours, 18 sunset & full-moon harbor tours, 8 Plum Island day trips, 7 Ledge Light trips, 2 Fishers Island excursions, and 1 BIG five-hour tour of area lighthouses -- in all, approximately 1,300 guests learned about New London's lighthouses and our local maritime history. We hired local watermen and boats and utilized NL ferries. NLMS presented boat tours and special programs across seventeen weekends -- July through October. All tour guides were NLMS volunteers. *We did it all without grants or subsidies* -- and made a profit! And all money raised (over boat costs) went to the New London Lighthouse Restoration Fund! Thanks to all our volunteers & boatmen, and thank you to everyone who took a lighthouse tour.



2014 anniversaries - it was a BIG year!

November 10, 1909 - New London Ledge Lighthouse was completed 105 years ago.

November 7, 1761 - the day, 253 years ago, New London Harbor Light was first lit.

August 25, 1839 - this summer we celebrated the 175 anniversary of the Amistad coming to New London.

July 31, 1789- 225 years ago, congress established the US Customs Service on this day.

Januray 1, 1879 - 2014 marked the 135 anniversary of the Race Rock Lighthouse being lit.



THANK YOU, ALL!

Without Lisa Gorman's call to action, scaffolding donated from BRAND Energy & Infrastructure Services, Chris Bachant, Larry Hardesty, Mike Verity and volunteers from IUPAT - The International Union of Painters And Allied Trades Home, and Local 1122, Central and Eastern Connecticut Carpenters Local 24, Phase One restoration of Harbor Light might never have happened!

