

# custom house MARITIMES Spring 2016



## Ellery Steals the Show

Things are stirring at 150 Bank, with winter's mere notions fledging out into bold new programs, while old partnerships resurface with a palpable – and welcome – spirit of generosity. Well, it is the first day of Spring, so optimism goes with the territory. But it all feels very positive right now.

We're excited about **Ellery Thompson's** 117th birthday. Raw oysters, mojitos, birthday cake – what's wrong with that?! It's promising to be a swell party on April 9, with all proceeds going to restore *Racing to Market*, (detail at left), a fantastic painting in serious need of repair. We'll have an Ellery display, too, with local historian **Steve Jones**, (also at left), holding forth. **Andrew Blacker**, above with Kerri at Carson's in Noank, is responsible; Andrew bought two large collections of Ellery Thompson paintings and these will be on display (with several for sale) at the Custom House in early April.



Installed today in the museum's upstairs gallery are **David Zapatka's** revelatory, nighttime images of lighthouses out under a starry sky. The exhibition *Lights and Stars* is here as part of our Wednesday, April 20 lighthouse events. It will be a three-part day beginning with a *Long Island Sound Lighthouse Symposium* from NOON - 5 PM. The symposium is for lighthouse stakeholders with the goal to build a cooperative regional network and also share technical assistance. A fund-raiser dinner with **Eric Jay Dolin** follows at 5 PM. An *Evening with Eric Jay Dolin* book talk starts after that at 7.



Meanwhile, friends old and new are showing up. Kids' book illustrator, cartoonist **Jon Buller** presents *How to be a Cartoonist* beginning Saturday, April 24. **Brooks Kuhn**, the woman who lived at Race Rock for one month, will reveal all about her experience with National Geographic TV on Sunday, May 1. Pianist **Aymeric Dupré la Tour** gives a first recital at the Custom House on Saturday, May 21.

Of course, not a day goes by that we do not worry about **Harbor Lighthouse**; the neighbor's federal lawsuit continues to sap our energy and our resources. But, to quote former NYC Planner **Amanda Burden**: *public spaces always need vigilant champions, not only to claim them at the outset for public use, but to design them for the people that use them, then to maintain them to ensure that they are for everyone. If there is any one lesson that I have learned in my life as a city planner, it is that public spaces have power. It's not just the number of people using them, it's the even greater number of people who feel better about their city just knowing that they are there. Public space can change how you live in a city, how you feel about a city, whether you choose one city over another, and public space is one of the most important reasons why you stay in a city.* Public spaces – historic sites like Harbor Light– matter. ■

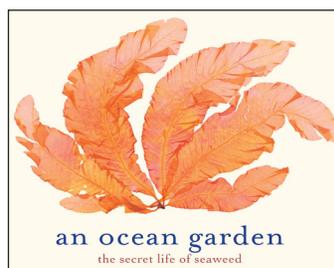
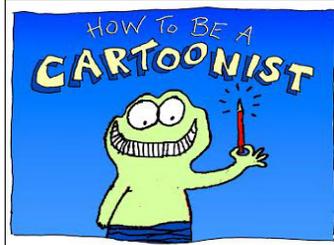
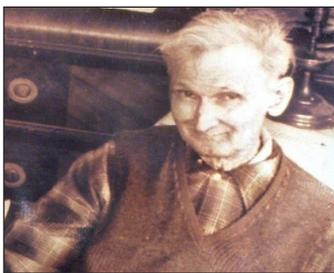


We're vigilant for our community, and we appreciate your support.

—Susan Tamulevich, executive director

## BRILLIANT BEACONS

A HISTORY  
of the  
AMERICAN  
LIGHTHOUSE



From top: *Brilliant Beacons*, Eric Jay Dolin; Ellery Thompson; Cartooning - Jon Buller; Brooks Kuhn on Race Rock, pianist Aymeric Dupré la Tour; Iselin's *An Ocean Garden*.

## SPRING has SPRUNG! Here's what's coming up next.

April through December, the Custom House Maritime Museum is open Tuesday through Sunday, from 1 to 5 PM (closed Monday), or by appointment. Call 860-447-2501. Admission is FREE for current members, individuals with current military, or USCG cadet ID and children under age 14 (with adult), \$7 suggested donation all others. Go to [nlmaritimesociety.org](http://nlmaritimesociety.org) for more details. Register for events online 24/7 at [brownpapertickets.com](http://brownpapertickets.com).

**April 9, Saturday, 7 PM -- Celebrate Ellery Thompson's 117th Birthday**, a fund-raiser party to restore *Racing to Market*. See details page 1, and register at [brownpapertickets.com/event/2516392](http://brownpapertickets.com/event/2516392)

**April 19 Tuesday, 1 - 4 PM -- JIBBOOM CLUB # 1**- speaker **Rob Groves**, who helped to build the NR-1. Join Rob & Russ for good conversation, coffee and treats. The Jibboom Club meets monthly, April through November, on the third Tuesday of the month for a speaker's program, coffee, cupcakes, and good conversation. Donation for refreshments, only. 860-447-2501.

**Wednesday, April 20, noon-5 PM - LIS Lighthouse Symposium** [brownpapertickets.com/event/2510284](http://brownpapertickets.com/event/2510284)

**Wednesday, April 20, 5 PM - Dinner with Eric Jay Dolin - a Lighthouse fund-raiser. 860-447-8700.**

**Wednesday, April 20, 7 PM - Brilliant Beacons: A History of the American Lighthouse, Eric Jay Dolin.**

In *'Brilliant Beacons'*, Eric Jay Dolin traces the evolution of America's lighthouse system, highlighting the political, military, and technological battles fought to illuminate the nation's hardscrabble coastlines. NLMS member \$20, student \$25, general admission \$30. Sponsors: Chelsea Groton Bank, TCORS.

**Eric Jay Dolin** is the award-winning author of *'When America First Met China: An Exotic History of Tea, Drugs, and Money in the Age of Sail'*; *'Fur, Fortune, and Empire: The Epic History of the Fur Trade in America'*; and *'Leviathan: The History of Whaling In America.'* Register at [brownpapertickets.com/event/2492544](http://brownpapertickets.com/event/2492544)

**April 23, Saturday, 10:45 AM to noon. How to be a Cartoonist - cartooning classes for kids age 8 and up.** Taught by kids' book illustrator / cartoonist **Jon Buller**. Adults are welcome, too. Four Saturdays: April 23, 30 and May 7 and 14. Fee: \$40. Sign up at [brownpapertickets.com/event/2530377](http://brownpapertickets.com/event/2530377)

**May 1 Sunday, 2 PM -- Brooks Kuhn lived on Race Rock Light (& National Geographic filmed it)!** In 2014, North Stonington Jack-of-all-trades **Brooks Kuhn** was chosen for an unusual reality TV program, *The Watch* from National Geographic. *The Watch* put Brooks to live out on Race Rock Light Station, off Fishers Island, for one month. Her stay was documented with cameras in every room of the lighthouse. For the first time, Brooks Kuhn will tell us what it was like to live at what National Geographic Television called: *A lone anchor of heroic stone at the edge of Long Island Sound, just peering into the North Atlantic. Welcome to Race Rock Lighthouse.* Donation \$14, NLMS members \$10. Register 24/7 at [www.brownpapertickets.com/event/2524863](http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/2524863)

**May 17 Tuesday, 1 - 4 PM -- JIBBOOM CLUB # 1**- Speaker to be announced. Join Rob & Russ for good conversation, coffee and treats. The Jibboom Club meets monthly, April through November, on the third Tuesday of the month for a speaker's program, coffee, cupcakes, and good conversation. Donation for refreshments, only. 860-447-2501.

**May 21 Saturday, 7 PM -- Piano recital with Aymeric Dupré la Tour** performing works by Franck and Ravel, along with American composers Edward MacDowell (*Sea Pieces*), and William Mason. Admission \$15, \$10 NLMS members and students. Space is limited. Call 860-447-2501.

**June 21, Tuesday, 1 - 4 PM -- JIBBOOM CLUB # 1- Speaker to be announced** Join Rob & Russ for good conversation, coffee and treats. The Jibboom Club meets monthly, April through November, on the third Tuesday of the month for a speaker's program, coffee, cupcakes, and good conversation. Donation for refreshments, only. Drop-ins welcome. 860-447-2501.

**June 24 Friday, 7 PM, 'An Ocean Garden: The Secret Life of Seaweed' - with artist Josie Iselin** Please join Josie Iselin as she reads from her book, *'An Ocean Garden: The Secret Life of Seaweed'*. Josie will present her stunning imagery of ocean botanica and explain her unique process of using her flatbed scanner to capture the seaweed's underwater essence. Josie will continue with the fascinating biology of seaweed to explain its important place in our near-shore ocean environment. 860-447-2601.

Our 2016 *Sentinels on the Sound* Lighthouse Boat Tour season starts in mid-June. Watch our website for details: [nlmaritimesociety.org](http://nlmaritimesociety.org).

# News from the Frank L. McGuire Maritime Library

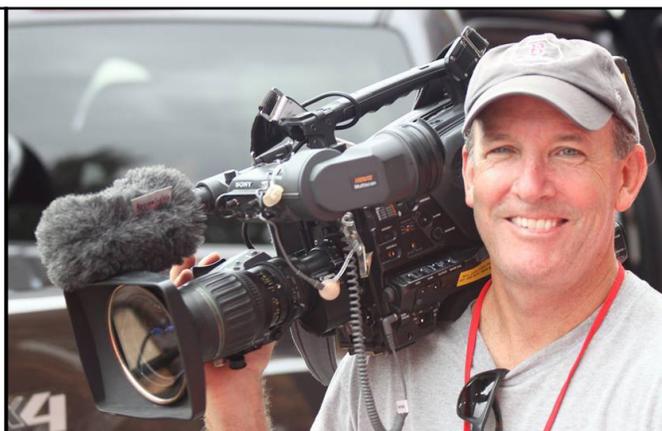
## A CENTURY OF SERVICE: Commemorating the Centennial of Our Submarine Base

Submarines first came to New London and Groton on a regular basis in 1916, the year the federal government officially turned its Thames River Navy Yard into a homeport for the growing fleet of undersea vessels. The Navy's presence here goes much further back, however: as early as 1862 Congress was debating the location of a new Navy Yard suitable for the construction and maintenance of iron warships — as opposed to wooden ones — and in 1868 the State of Connecticut gave over 100 acres of Thames riverfront to the federal government for this purpose. A Yard was established a few years later, but even then the focus of planners was shifting from the construction of warships to their maintenance and refueling, and the Thames facility did not assume a major role in Naval operations until after 1898, by which time it had been repurposed as a coaling station. The evolution of the forerunners of today's Sub Base was prolonged by Connecticut's own Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy during the Civil War, who much preferred the Philadelphia Navy Yard (in existence since 1801) as the location of a new "iron-working" installation to speed the Navy's transition from sail to steam. We are indebted to an account of the vigorous competition between advocates for Philadelphia and for New London as related by Arthur Menzies Johnson in "The Genesis of a Navy Yard," an article in the 1995 Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute.

As we look forward to this year's centennial celebration of the Sub Base, we celebrate as well the support of friends who have provided the Frank L. McGuire Maritime Library with the majority of its holdings in submarine history, technology, construction and deployment. The late Harold Cone, a civilian employee of the Base from 1922 to 1963, amassed a large archive of photographs and documents pertaining to its origins and four decades of its growth. Highlights from his collection will be exhibited at the Custom House in July and August, while submarine books given by Gordon Napier of Westerly, the late John Merrill of Waterford, and the late Archie Chester of Groton, or purchased with our Acquisitions Fund, will be concurrently displayed in the Library. ■

Brian Rogers, Librarian

In October 2013, news cameraman David Zapatka took the first of what has become a series of sixty-five New England lighthouse photographs captured under clear, dark skies during the monthly new-moon phase. Through extensive research, and with cooperation from Coast Guard authorities, local harbor masters, and private landowners, his series called *Stars and Lights* has expanded from Rhode Island lighthouses to those throughout New England and New York. *Stars and Lights* is on exhibition at the Custom House Maritime Museum now through June 2016. David Zapatka is president of the *Friends of Plum Beach Lighthouse* in North Kingstown and was responsible for the creation of the Rhode Island lighthouse license plate that has sold over 9000 sets and raised over \$180,000 for the preservation of the local icon. ■



## 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 \$1,000\_\_\_ Sign-up date \_\_\_\_\_

Cash\_\_\_ Check\_\_\_ ~ please make payment to New London Maritime Society Visa\_\_\_ Master Card\_\_\_ AmEx\_\_\_

Number \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. date \_\_\_\_\_ Security code \_\_\_\_\_

Benefits of membership include *free* admission, invitations to special events, discounts, and a newsletter.

*New London Maritime Society's mission is to protect, preserve, & and celebrate New London's U.S. Custom House, three area lighthouses, and Long Island Sound, and to interpret the rich maritime life & history of the port of New London and the surrounding region through museum exhibitions, educational programs, and preservation initiatives. Learn more about us at [nlmaritimesociety.org](http://nlmaritimesociety.org).*

New London Maritime Society - Custom House Maritime Museum, 150 Bank Street, New London, Connecticut 06320 860.447.2501

**N.L.M.S.**



Visit the Custom House MUSEUM SHOP  
Our museum shop offers all kinds of unique gifts. We have a special section full of fun things for kids. Everybody is welcome in the shop, you don't need a museum ticket. ■  
*Below, New London Harbor Light's 4th order Fresnel lens.*



Sponsored by the Community Foundation and Enders Fund, our 3rd-grade local history program brought 300 New London students to the Custom House and Shaw Mansion in February and March. *Above, students learn about deep-sea dive gear.*



**An Ocean Garden: The Secret Life of Seaweed**  
with artist **Josie Iselin**. **Friday, June 24, 7 PM.**  
'A joyful comingling of art and science.'  
\$15, NLMS members \$12. Books will be available.



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

[nlmaritimesociety.org](http://nlmaritimesociety.org)