

custom house

MARITIMES

Winter 2016



ALL ABOARD

We talk about the Custom House as a *community museum*, and the other day someone asked me exactly what that meant. At the simplest level, we are an open membership group; we welcome everyone to take part in whatever way they feel comfortable. Some people give us money, some people give us things, some people bring us things. While the New London Maritime Society actively collects and owns most of the items on view at the Custom House, a surprising number of objects are on loan from people in the community. People come to us with ideas for exhibitions, too. The current USCG sail-training ship show by Norman Brouwer, and the US Customs Service 225th anniversary exhibition by the US Customs Museum Foundation are two such examples, not to mention the remarkable array of vintage deep-sea dive gear we've borrowed from two local collectors.

Our pods of volunteers -- the docents who keep the doors open, the teachers who create and give lessons for school groups, our Jibboom Club organizers, the maintenance team, the lighthouse tour givers, our stellar library crew (see page 2) -- are the workers who keep everything humming. (NLMS has just one paid employee.) And then, from each of these working groups we draw our trustees, each of whom is truly knowledgeable of the needs of the organization.

We seek out all manner of local mariners to participate with us. Last year we brought in shellfish farmers and local fishermen to speak at a series of Sea-to-Table cooking classes. We hire local captains for our lighthouse boat tours. We buy locally and support area businesses. When we really need something, we ask, and more often than not, local businesses give back. We love the Sea Scouts and the Coast Guard cadets who volunteer at the Custom House. And while all these people don't necessarily join the Maritime Society, we know they're there for us and they know we're here for them.

We collect and celebrate New London's maritime stories. We preserve our shared heritage in a major way, taking responsibility for four significant buildings--no mean feat. The Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation is doing a book on state's 100 significant buildings. We recently learned our three Connecticut properties (Race Rock Light is in New York) will be among the 100 in that book.

New London Maritime Society was founded with the preservation of the City's federal custom house. But our other *raison d'être* is education. We are very proud to sponsor a year-long local history series of field trips for New London Public School's 300 third graders. If you only know us through our lighthouses, you've missed 80% of what we do. Last year we feted the USCG and hosted the *Amistad* and *el Galeon*. This summer we'll help celebrate the Sub-tennial. What else? We're your museum. Maybe you've got an idea. We'd love to hear it. ■

—Susan Tamulevich, *executive director*



Above: NLMS Trustees Russ De-Marco and Rob Pittaway organize Jibboom Club #1 gatherings. middle & top: teacher Jody Barthel works with historic sites throughout New London to organize our third-grade local history program - here she is at Union Station and Nathan Hale School. bottom: Jean Murphy assists students heading below deck on the *Amistad* last summer.

Annual Report of the Frank L. McGuire Maritime Library - 2015

The book collection on our shelves has long been the most visible part of the library, but this year we have been laying the groundwork to extend that visibility beyond the Custom House. In the months and years ahead, we intend to create digital versions of our archival collections that will allow visitors to view images and documents on our website. Among these collections are the papers of New London's 19th century customs collectors; the *S.S. Tasco* photos and logbooks relating to the salvage ship of the T. A. Scott company; the Dwight and Lila Lyman Fort Trumbull papers; the U.S. Maritime Officers (Fort Trumbull) Training School archive; the Robert Bachman papers on the War of 1812 in Long Island Sound; the Harold Cone New London history papers; and the old post-card collection. Descriptive 'Finding Aids,' several of them prepared by Eugene MacMullan, will accompany each website presentation.

Due to the State's continuing budget crisis, on July 1 the State Library shut down 'iConn,' the online cataloging and research system that had served Connecticut libraries for more than 25 years. We joined the system in 2010, to use it as our only catalog and to publicize our holdings throughout the State and beyond. A replacement system was to be introduced in October, but was not yet available in mid-November. Despite this handicap, a number of email requests were answered, and several visitors did research in the library.

To supplement the Museum's current exhibition honoring the 225th anniversary of the Customs Service, the library is displaying albums made by Gene MacMullan to accommodate the papers of early New London collectors, together with books about the history of the service. ■

Brian Rogers, Librarian
Laurie Deredita, Associate Librarian
Eugene MacMullan, Conservator
November 16, 2015



Doug Allen's Nautical Books

Thanks to Lorraine Allen, the Frank L. McGuire Library has received a number of books from her late husband's collection. Among them are 'Arctic Grail,' by Pierre Berton, which narrates the perilous quest for the Northwest Passage and the North Pole from 1818 to 1909; 'Longitude,' Dava Sobel's bestseller about an older quest that gripped the maritime world, complementing our December Book of the Month, 'Ships, Clocks and Stars;' David Boeri's 'The People of the Ice Whale' about the contest between environmentalists trying to protect bowhead whales and the Eskimos who depended upon them for their livelihood; and 'Yankees Under Sail,' a selection of folksy articles from Yankee Magazine including one on the Stonington whalers and several on 'Moby Dick.' (One of the latter mentions a 1951 Melville Centennial play 'by Tyrus Hillway of The Melville Society, New London.' Has any reader of the Maritimes heard of Hillway or this society?) These titles and others are welcome additions to a library that since its origins has been enriched time and again by the generosity of friends. Doug Allen was a valued volunteer at the Custom House and each of these books will carry a bookplate honoring and perpetuating his memory. ■

Not Just Shelves of Books: Who's Behind the Frank L. McGuire Maritime Library?

Laurie Deredita, Associate Librarian, retired from Shain Library at Connecticut College where she worked for 25 years, first as catalogue librarian and later as director of special collections and archives. As a five-year volunteer at the Custom House she has worked mostly on cataloging the large backlog of donated books that had accumulated in recent years, as well as recent purchases. Now she is turning her attention to creating the first digital exhibitions of two archival collections: David Allen's gift of photographs and documents of the salvage and rescue operations of the *SS Tasco*, built in 1907 for the T.A. Scott Company of New London, and the library's large collection of early New London postcards.

Gene MacMullan, Conservator, is a retired Chemical Engineer. Since retirement in 1986 he has studied and practiced document conservation, and has worked as volunteer conservator at the New Haven Colony Historical Society since 1995. After his move to Niantic, he offered his services to the Custom House Maritime Museum and has worked in the library for the past three years. One of his most important projects was to preserve the correspondence of early customs collectors in transparent sleeves held in custom-made albums. Lately he has been preparing a Finding Aid for the Robert Bachman Archive on the War of 1812, which among other things contains over 100 copies of correspondence between the British Admiralty and the officers commanding the squadrons blockading New London. Among them is the Admiralty order that frigates not engage singlehandedly the more powerful US frigates. This correspondence tells a fascinating story of the war from the British point of view.

Brian Rogers, Librarian, came aboard in 2009. For a short time in the 1990s he was a member of the Maritime Society's library planning committee, chaired by Pam McNulty of the Coast Guard Academy Library. The year before his 1999 retirement from Connecticut College he spoke at the dedication of the Frank L. McGuire Maritime Library, describing the various subjects it might collect in the years ahead. Eighteen years later New London's maritime history is well documented on the shelves and in its archives. These organized, accessible collections, supplemented on occasion by specialized websites, enable Brian to respond to information requests from the public and the museum staff, the ultimate purpose of this or any library. ■

WINTER! Here's what's coming up...

January through March, the Custom House Maritime Museum is open Thursday through Sunday, from 1 to 5 PM, or by appointment. Call 860-447-2501. April through December, we're open every day except Monday, 1-5 PM.

Go to nlmaritimesociety.org for details. Register for all events online 24/7 at brownpapertickets.com.

Saturday, February 13, 10 AM, Time in a Bottle - a Valentine Workshop, with poet Kate Rushin.

Explore your creativity to make a one-of-a-kind gift for a friend, family member, your valentine, or yourself. In this hands-on workshop, poet and teaching artist Kate Rushin guides participants as they write their own 'message in a bottle.'

Come and be inspired by songs, poems and accounts of love messages tossed into the sea. Feel free to bring special objects (a photo, a key, a shell, a feather, a marble) to place in the bottle along with your wishes, dreams, and declarations. Choose from bottles and materials provided to create your designs, or bring your own. Honor a loved-one. Commemorate a special occasion. Make someone laugh. Create your own unique Valentine. 10 AM to 12:30 PM. \$30 general admission, \$25 NLMS members and students. Call 860-447-8700 with questions. Space is limited. (But we may open a 2nd afternoon session.)

Sunday, February 14, at 2 PM - A Valentine's Day concert: *Change of Heart*, with Treble Play.

Members are Allyn Donath - harp; Anne Megan-oboe; and Irene Rissi-violin/viola.

Change of Heart is a collection of love/romance linked pieces (some familiar, some not) - which have been arranged for this unique combination of instruments. The program will have 3 segments: American tunes (American hearts); classics (tug those heart-strings!); waltzes and jigs (kick up your heels).

\$12 NLMS members, \$15 for non-members. Space is limited. 860-447-8700.

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

In conjunction with New London Maritime Society's 1st '*Long Island Sound Lighthouse Symposium*', we present an evening with **Eric Jay Dolin**, author of '*Brilliant Beacons: A History of the American Lighthouse*', (published by Liveright Publishing Corporation, April 2016).

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. The talk incorporates more than 100 photographs and illustrations. Mr. Dolin presents a memorable cast of characters including the penny-pinching Treasury official Stephen Pleasonton, who hamstrung the country's efforts to adopt the revolutionary 'Fresnel Lens,' and tells tales both humorous and harrowing of soldiers, saboteurs, ruthless egg collectors, and most importantly, the light-keepers themselves.

NLMS member \$20, student \$25, general admission \$30. Space is limited. Call 860-447-8700.

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*.'

Go to nlmaritimesociety.org to find out more about **Dinner with Eric Jay Dolin & Lighthouse Symposium**.



Top: poet Kate Rushin; middle: Treble Play members Irene Rissi, Anne Megan, Allyn Donath; bottom, author Eric Jay Dolin

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



AND NOW...A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR
FOR 'CUSTOM HOUSE MARITIME MATTERS'

We're Baaaaaak.

In our 6th year of public TV offerings, and after a year of mainly re-runs to catch our breath, Susan and I are back to offering live shows, on Atlantic Cable (Channel 25), Thursdays at 5PM. These shows continue to be interesting, informative and timely, with guests who present personal experience and expertise. The offerings showcase the Custom House Maritime Museum, Long Island Sound, the Whaling City, the Submarine Capitol of the World and our neighbors. The shows are re-broadcast on Southeastern Ct. TV (SECTV, Groton), Channel 12, Fridays, 6PM, and at other times. The following is a list of topics planned for the coming weeks, each with a committed guest or guests.

JOIN THE ADVENTURE!

ELECTRIC BOAT COMPANY: A STERLING FUTURE

NEW LONDON, CT...ALWAYS A "BRIDESMAID"?

THE NATIONAL USCG MUSEUM, NEW LONDON, CT.

CUSTOM HOUSE MARITIME MUSEUM: PRESERVING & PROMOTING FOR THE PUBLIC.

A NATIONAL MARITIME HERITAGE PARK & THE THAMES RIVER HERITAGE PARK.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN: WHAT WAS HE THINKING?

HISTORY OF THE PEQUOT AND OTHER LOCAL INDIAN TRIBES.

THE FUTURE OF THE AMISTAD.

OUR REGIONAL FISHERIES: ALWAYS CHALLENGES.

THE URBAN LIFE: GENTRIFICATION IN THIS REGION.

And much more. --George A. Sprecaze, NLMS president

NLMS 2016 Reid MacCluggage Black Maritime History Scholarship for High School Juniors & Seniors

Applications will be accepted for the 2016 Reid MacCluggage Black Maritime History Scholarship through February 29, 2016.

Write an essay, short story, poem, play, movie script or Novella about the African-American experience in the maritime world for the chance to win a \$1000 or \$500 scholarship!

Go to nlmaritimesociety.org for details.



Submarine Century? Submarine bath organizer!
Find it at the Custom House MUSEUM SHOP.
Open Thursday - Sunday - from 1 to 5 PM.

Below: reflected image of head docent Bill LaRoue explaining the Fresnel Lens to a visitor to the Custom House Maritime Museum. photo: George Sprecaze



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