

# custom house MARITIMES SPRING 2024



Christian Fiedler's pinhole camera photos of lighthouses will be on view at the Custom House from May 12 through July 19, 2024. Photo, above: Harbor Light, detail. 2022-3.



## What matters time? from the director

Christian Fiedler captured six months of the sun's path across the sky in a single image. Using a small camouflaged pinhole camera stashed at Harbor Light, his long-exposure print, above, records the scene from 25 October 2022 – 8 May 2023; 195 days. Our visits giving tours inside the lantern room during those months did not signify; the camera registered only the long view. Christian Fiedler's *Beacons through Time*, will be on view at the Custom House from May 12 through July 19, 2024. His luminous pinhole prints will include Point Judith (RI), Avery Point (CT), and Montauk Light (NY), among others.

We are quickly shifting into the high season, with tours, talks, and visits out to the islands all being planned! Meanwhile, new at the museum is a small exhibition from local shipwreck diver Mark Munroe. It's on the *Volund*, a 239-foot Norwegian tramp steamer which sank 'somewhere in *the Race*' in 1908.

But before we move too far ahead, let's recognize Christina Corcoran and Ben Ellcome for the terrific job they did creating our splendid whale boat float for New London's St. Patrick's Day Parade! At the CH, we're taking the long view, too.

--Susan Tamulevich

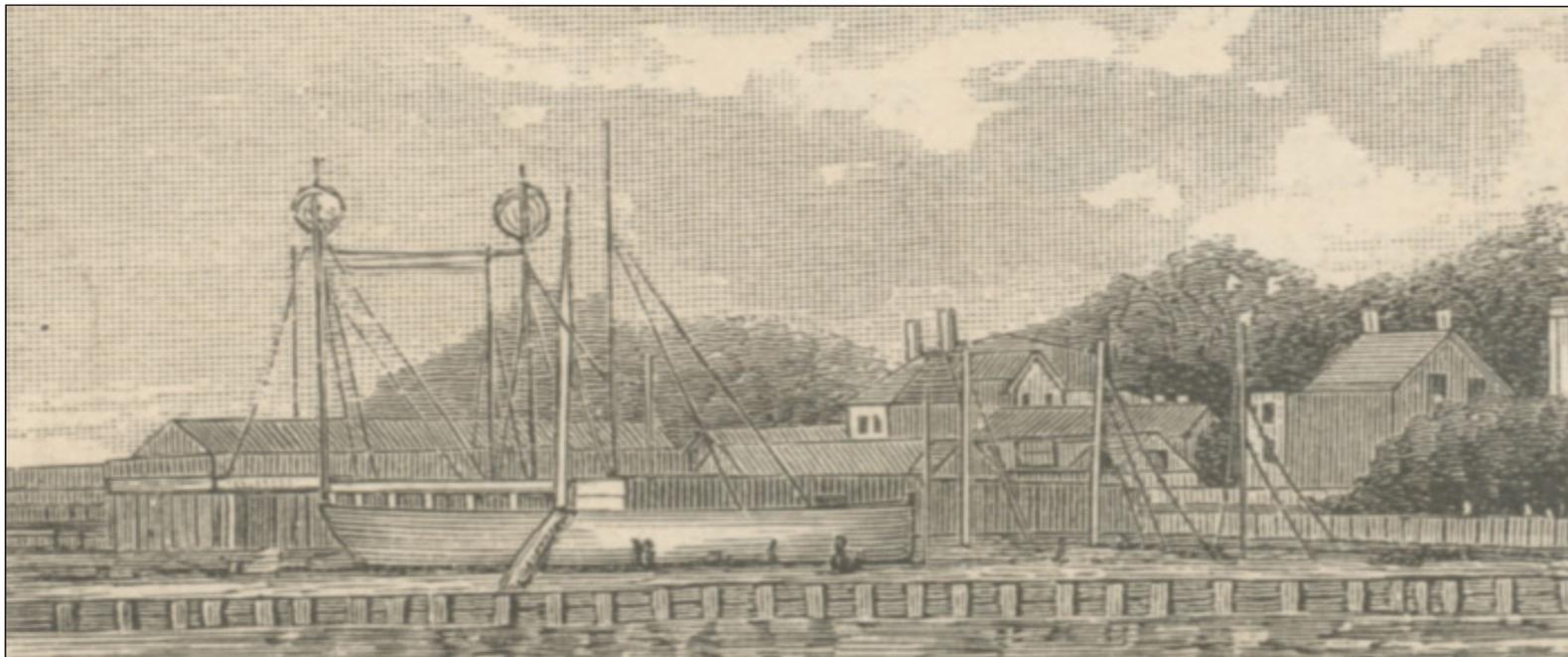


Photo top: Christian Fiedler hid his pinhole camera on the sill in the Harbor Light lantern room; above: we were happy to receive two large whale vertebrae in April, which formerly had been in a New London schoolyard. The city DPW delivered the bones and a crew of USCG cadets cleaned them up.



Photo, above: Christina & crew aboard the New London Maritime Society float in New London's St. Patrick's Day parade.

*Local Friendly Authentic*  
Open Thursday, Friday & Sunday, 1-5 PM, & Saturdays from 10 AM to 5 PM.



spring highlights - for full listings, go to [nlmaritimesociety.org](http://nlmaritimesociety.org)



5.21, 6.18, 7.16 Jibboom Club #1

- Tours to climb **HARBOR LIGHTHOUSE** run *year-round*. The views at the top are spectacular! We meet at the lighthouse, then climb 116 steps to the lantern room – all the while learning about the 261-year history of Harbor Light, the oldest and the tallest lighthouse on Long Island Sound. Sign up online at <https://bpt.me/6299893> or send an email to schedule your tour: [nlmaritimedirector@gmail.com](mailto:nlmaritimedirector@gmail.com)

- **Open Mic at the Museum**, meets from 6-9 PM the last Sunday of the month: Share your original music, poetry, prose, stand-up, or just say what is on your mind. Open Mic welcomes performers of all kinds. Perform, or just enjoy. By donation. **April 28, May 26, June 30, July 28.**

- **Sunset Seal Watch, Saturday May 4 6 PM**, The Black Hawk is donating an exciting trip to view the seals who live off New London. View these animals in their natural environment. It's a fundraiser for NLMS. (See back page for details.)

- **JIBBOOM CLUB #1**, meets the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 1:30 PM. Join us for a talk, good company, coffee & cookies. Sponsored by the Maco Family Fund, the gatherings are FREE and open to all. **May 21- Patrick Lynch, June 18 - Liz Wood, July 16.**

- **MAKE MUSIC DAY June 21, 11AM -- 7PM**. It's the best day of the year-- and not just because it's the first day of Summer. Plan on coming down to the Custom House. We have performers & cookies all day. It's FREE!

- **Excursions** to LEDGE LIGHT, RACE ROCK LIGHTHOUSE, LITTLE GULL ISLAND, & FISHERS ISLAND will be listed very soon. Please watch [nlmaritimesociety.org](http://nlmaritimesociety.org) for updates on all summer lighthouse tours & special programs.



5.26, 6.30, 7.28 Open Mic at the Museum



6.21 Make Music Day



Be the first to know - sign up for weekly email new blasts: [nlmaritimedirector@gmail.com](mailto:nlmaritimedirector@gmail.com)

The Custom House Maritime Museum - your local, independent, community museum - open year-round - telling the stories of New London's waterfront!



## See that roof?!

New London's Custom House is 188 years old. That first year, everything was alright. But for the next 187, the roof has spelled trouble! Water leaked inside 'in buckets' starting in 1836.

You might remember, the roof failed dramatically in December 2022. With help from the Frank Loomis Palmer Foundation, we managed to stem the flow last summer. That repair should gain us about three years.

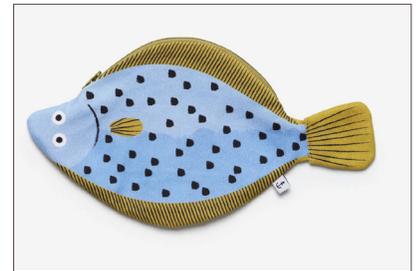
New London Maritime Society is resolved to replace the roof. As John F. Kennedy said, *The time to repair the roof is when the sun is shining.* We commissioned a new roof plan from Crosskey Architects. You can bet we'll let you know once the New Roof campaign commences. *Image:* 1881 Lippincott's engraving of the NL waterfront.

## you'll hear soon enough

Our online ticketing service since 2014 ran into some difficulties due to COVID and for more than a year we were owed a considerable amount of money. Everything is straightened out now, but it took some doing as well as the assistance of the CT Attorney General and the NBC consumer investigators. We thank them all! We wanted you to know, as the story will be on the NBC news some time in early May.

During COVID we lost the rental income we'd received from Homeland Security for use of a US Customs office (they'd had an office in this building since 1835). This latest debt mentioned above, with the loss of our Homeland Security rent, just re-emphasizes how important it is for us to have several sources of income in addition to program fees. One of the most-consistent revenue producers for the museum is our wonderful gift shop.

Our MUSEUM SHOP offers all kinds of unique gifts. We have an extensive selection of books on maritime, local history, Freedom, and lighthouse topics. We have gifts from housewares to clothing to maritime blocks. Our gifts have an extra feel good factor: when you shop with us, your purchases support the museum exhibitions & educational programs.



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

I'm donating \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to the Custom House. \_\_\_\_\_ Contact me about leaving a legacy.



**The Ellery F. Thompson Archive in the McGuire Library at the Custom House**

The collection of Ellery Thompson's paintings at the Custom House is the largest on permanent, public display. Thompson, who died in 1986, would be surprised to learn that the building which he often visited on business as a fishing boat owner - and to which he was once summoned to explain his involvement with rum-running - now houses a striking collection of his work. He would be even more surprised to learn that a collection of his papers is now preserved upstairs in the McGuire Library.

A Finding Aid for researchers has now been created listing its contents: thirteen letters, thirty published articles about him, papers of all kinds related to events in his life, and several photographs. The largest part of the collection is 370 typed pages of memoirs produced during his retirement years in Mystic. Much of their content appears in similar form in his books, Draggerman's Haul and Come Aboard the Dragers, but a great deal does not. Plans for a third book, Draggerman's Loot, never materialized, but much of it may be read here. Ellery spent hours with his typewriter revisiting New York's Fulton Fish Market, the Hurricane of 1938, the golden age of passenger steamboats, his relations with women, his painting, and much else. Donated by the late Marion Krepcio, the typescripts served as the inspiration for the Library's two online exhibitions about Thompson. The pages of the Finding Aid will be added to the exhibitions in coming weeks.

-- Brian Rogers, online exhibitions librarian



**A Sunset Seal Watch**

**Saturday, May 4, 6 PM**

The Black Hawk is donating an exciting trip to view the many seals who live off New London. View these animals in their natural environment. It's a fundraiser for NLMS.

The seals are actually Maine natives who make Long Island Sound their winter/spring and sometimes permanent home. On this trip, we'll leave from Niantic and head out to Little Gull and Plum Islands. Beginning in the 1800s, hunters harvesting seals for fur and oil virtually eliminated seals in Long Island Sound. Fishermen continued to kill seals believing they were competing with them for fish. In fact, up into the 1950s Connecticut offered seal hunters a bounty. From NOAA: The Marine Mammal Protection Act was enacted in 1972 and established a national policy to prevent marine mammal species and population stocks from declining beyond the point where they ceased to be significant functioning elements of the ecosystems of which they are a part. Following new federal regulations, seals began returning to LIS in the 1970s. Today five species can be found, many now making the Sound their permanent home. They've been reported as far west as Greenwich!

Bring your camera and binoculars. We'll bring a drink and snack! It's a 2 hour+ round-trip. Sunset's at 8:15. Tickets are \$35 for adults, \$30 for NLMS members, and \$25 for children ages 6 to 18 (the same prices as in 2020!). Call 860-447-2501 with your questions or sign up online today: <https://bpt.me/6299886>. Photo: Donna Whitehouse (from our last seal watch!)



We thank our partners & sponsors - Charter Oak Credit Union - Chelsea Groton Foundation - Community Foundation of Eastern CT - CT Department of Economic and Community Development, CT Office of the Arts - Eleven+ - Louise Novitch - John Michael Corcoran Museum Day Fund - Ludwick Family Foundation - Maco Family Fund - Frank Loomis Palmer Fund - Robinson+Cole - State of CT - Veolia / NL Water Authority.

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

[nlmaritimesociety.org](http://nlmaritimesociety.org)  
*local friendly authentic*

photo: Christina Corcoran