

New London, Art & Life

Oh! The Gritty Poetics of the New London Harborcam

— Clare Byrne, 9.5.2026



A view of the Customs House Pier from the NLMS webcam

This 24-hour live **webcam**, mounted on the roof of the historic U.S. Customs House on Bank Street in New London, is a surprisingly hypnotizing view onto the Thames River's industrial waterfront, in moment-to-moment detail.

The hulking dry dock of General Dynamic Electric Boat, its entrance like a portal to the underworld, directly across the river. Pfizer's decommissioned red and white-striped smokestacks, rising near Groton's Avery Point. Giant offshore wind-power components stacked on piers to the north, like so many Lego links. High-speed trains crossing delicate trestles. Ledge Light sitting at the mouth of harbor as ferries and cargo ships plow across the horizon. Lights blinking on and off in color and rhythm.



A montage of recent views from the NLMS webcam in New London

The view is courtesy of the **New London Maritime Society**, which runs an equally detail-packed historical museum inside the Customs House. It has permanent and special exhibits, plus open mics, workshops, and tours of all three of the nearby lighthouses the society stewards.

As Director Susan Talmulevich notes on the organization's website, "The Custom House Maritime Museum has developed into a community museum, which is a very special kind of place. We work to illustrate the maritime connections among us by presenting the stories of our neighbors, and we do this in several ways: the museum has become something of a social center, where people of all walks of life meet to talk, tell stories, hold meetings, and play cribbage."



A view of the USCGC *Eagle* from the NLMS webcam

The Harborcam evokes stories, too; it's a bit like peering back through history. It's the view from which New London's whaling agents outfitted ships to lubricate the industrial revolution, with sperm whale oil. Bank Street was where the banks were. This "gem" of a Customs House, designed by famed 19th century architect **Robert Mills** — who created the Washington Monument — was built on Bank Street because New London was the 2nd biggest whaling port in the world.

It's also the view of *La Amistad* as it sat impounded at the U.S. Customs House pier for over a year between 1839-1840, while its African mutineers, held in a New Haven prison, fought for their judicial freedom up through the United States Supreme Court. The *Amistad* story is detailed one of NLMS's permanent **exhibitions**.

The **Harborcam** reads like art. Like American Realism — maybe a watercolor by Whistler, Homer or Sargent. Like those painters, it's worth watching just for shifting sky-and-water patterns of weather, to see the wind whip up as a storm rolls in on the horizon. To see dusk settle in. To catch a sunrise over Groton — or **fireworks**.



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