

# custom house MARITIMES SUMMER 2022



Above, we're encouraging New London school children and their families to get to know our local lighthouses.

## It's Lighthouse Summer!

Trips for NL youth & parents to Ledge and Harbor Lighthouses are just \$5. *Sign up now!*



There's a lot to celebrate this summer. *Photo top:* neighbors visit in the lantern room of Pequot Light in June -- it's spectacular; *middle:* NLMS president **Christina Corcoran**, who taught our 3rd-grade local history in NL public schools, wants all her students to take advantage of the \$5 tickets to visit *inside* the lighthouses; *bottom:* intern **Sebastien Jean Michel** is running our lighthouse programs this summer.

*from the president* You have heard a lot about Lighthouse Summer. But what does that mean to you? When you think of Lighthouse tours you may think that is something for tourists, or for people who visit lighthouses on their vacations. Well, of course tourists love our lighthouses.

But *Lighthouse Summer* is for the entire community this year. Our goal at the Custom House Maritime Museum is to get as many people from the community out into the lighthouses, which by the way, belong to all of us.

New London Maritime Society had custodianship of three local lighthouses, Race Rock, Harbor, and Ledge Light. It is our obligation to educate, preserve, and give public access. We educate the public about our local lights everyday in our museum and our Local History & Landmarks Program for the Third Grade. We continue to work on preserving all three lighthouses, working with the Ledge Light Foundation at that lighthouse. And this summer we are offering tours *INSIDE* our lighthouses throughout the summer.

Here is why this is important and why we are so excited to be able to do this:

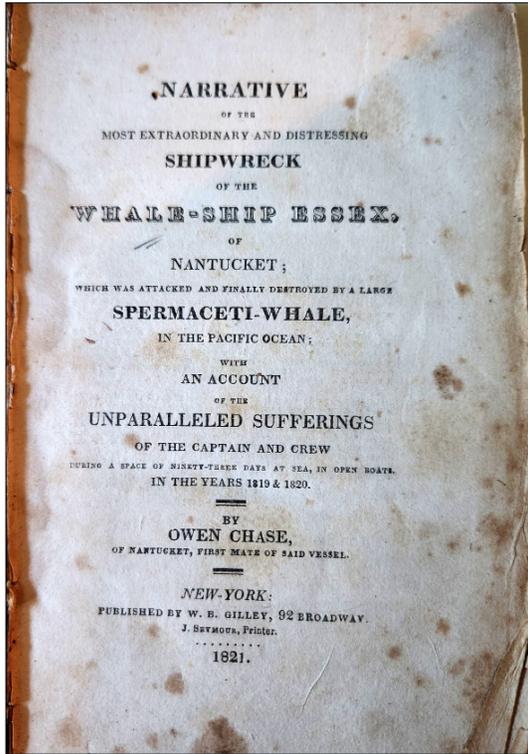
New London is rich in Maritime history and historic landmarks. But New London is also very much alive and making history. The lighthouses are not just old historic structures, they are important aids to navigation and central to the success of the maritime industry of the area. People come from all over the country to visit our lighthouses but this summer we are going to get as many kids from New London out into Ledge Light and Harbor lights. The children are the ones who will be charged with preserving these beautiful gems that will represent our maritime heritage for years to come. And if you have ever seen the excitement in a child's eyes when they climb up into the Lantern Room of Ledge or Harbor Lighthouse you will know why New London Maritime Museum volunteers and our director Susan Tamulevich are committed to fulfilling our goal of getting as many local families as possible to love the lighthouses as much as we do. Hopefully this is just the first of many more Lighthouse Summers!

--Christina Corcoran, NLMS president

the New London HarborCam is back!  
Watch it 24/7 at <https://nlmaritimesociety.org/NLHarborcam.html>.



*Photo:* We wish to thank all of you who donated to restore the NL HarborCam. The new camera was installed in June and we're still learning what it is capable of. Our original camera was lost in mid February, when the 189-year-old flagpole it was attached to fell off the Custom House roof in a storm. Unlike that camera, this one zooms and pans. One night we caught fireworks across the river in Groto. Another day we tracked a submarine coming up the Thames into New London harbor. We are looking forward to SailFest's FIREWORKS EXTRAVAGANZA, which we will broadcast live on July 9. Maybe you'll be in downtown New London that evening seeing it live. No worry -- we'll post a tape within a couple of days so you can watch it all again.



For students of New England whaling history the name of the *Essex* has a special resonance that conjures up the disaster that occurred in 1820 when the unfortunate Nantucket whaling ship was attacked and destroyed by a sperm whale in the Pacific Ocean. The shocking story of shipwreck, cannibalism and survival was chronicled by first mate Owen Chase, one of the eight survivors of the wreck and its aftermath, in his *Narrative of the most extraordinary and distressing shipwreck of the whale-ship Essex, of Nantucket: which was attacked and finally destroyed by a large spermaceti-whale, in the Pacific Ocean: with an account of the unparalleled sufferings of the captain and crew, published in 1821 by G.B. Gilley in New York. Several decades later the story inspired Herman Melville's novel Moby Dick. In recent years the story attracted new attention after the publication of Nathaniel Philbrick's account of the incident in his book *In the Heart of the Sea* and from the 2015 film with the same title.*

The Maritime Society is pleased to announce that the library has acquired a copy of the first edition of the *Narrative*, one of many books given to us by **Caroline Boutard** from the library of her late father **Peter Black**. The copy now in the McGuire Library is imperfect. The paper is foxed and the book is nearly disbound. It also shows evidence of a misguided attempt in the past to hold it together with tape. But it is a thrill to add such an iconic maritime title to our growing whaling collection. ■

– Laurie M. Deredita, Librarian



OpenMic at the Museum



July 19 JIBBOOM



Sept. 11 Arm-of-the-Sea Theater

## SUMMER 2022 highlights - for full listings, go to [nlmaritimesociety.org](http://nlmaritimesociety.org)

- Tours to climb **HARBOR LIGHTHOUSE** run all year. 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. A 4th-order Fresnel lens, installed in 1857, remains in the lantern today. NL schoolchildren & families may get \$5 or fully-sponsored tickets, thanks to Veolia/NL Water Authority and Edw. Chale. [brownpapertickets.com/event/5127942](http://brownpapertickets.com/event/5127942). customs: 860-447-2501.
- Tours to explore *inside* **LEDGE LIGHTHOUSE** run in July & August. This summer, we've chartered the Water Taxi on New London Waterfront Park. Special this year, only, NL schoolchildren & families may get \$5 or fully-sponsored tickets, thanks to Veolia/NL Water Authority and Edw. Chalé. [brownpapertickets.com/event/5127942](http://brownpapertickets.com/event/5127942).
- August's two tours to **RACE ROCK LIGHTHOUSE SOLD OUT** immediately. We'll offer them again next summer. [brownpapertickets.com/event/5127942](http://brownpapertickets.com/event/5127942).
- **JIBBOOM CLUB #1**, meets the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 1:30 PM. Upcoming dates are **July 19, August 16, Sept. 20**. Join us for a talk, good company, coffee & cookies. Sponsored by the Maco Family Fund, the gatherings are FREE and open to all. On July 19, diver **Jay Kane** will discuss the dive display at the Customs House. Much of that collection is on loan to the museum from Jay. Jay Kane is a commercial diver and diving supervisor with forty years experience with underwater construction, ships husbandry and salvage operations.
- Benefit Premier, July 26, 4 PM: *The History of Race Rock Light* (see page opposite)
- **OpenMic at the Museum**, meets from 6-9 PM the last Sunday of the month: **July 31, August 28, Sept. 25**. Share your original music, poetry, prose, stand-up, or just say what is on your mind. OpenMic welcomes performers of all kinds. Bring your bongos. Perform, or just enjoy. By donation.
- On Sept 11 we hope to present **Arm-of-the-Sea Theater's** production **KEEP THAT LAMP TRIMMED & 'N BURNING**, which employs live music together with large-scale mask & puppet figures to tell a lighthouse keeper's story. Learn more at [nlmaritimesociety.org](http://nlmaritimesociety.org).

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

# Museum Movie Premiere: The History of Race Rock Lighthouse

On Tuesday, July 26 at 4 PM, Fishers Island's Ferguson Museum will host a Benefit Premier: *The History of Race Rock Light*

This 45-minute video directed by **Pierce Rafferty** and **Marisela La Grave** chronicles the remarkable story of how a lighthouse came to be erected in 1878 on a dangerous submerged ledge amidst some of the most unpredictable and swiftest moving tides on the East Coast.

This event will be held at the Fishers Island Movie Theater with a reception immediately following and is a benefit to launch the New London Maritime Society's restoration campaign for Race Rock Light.

Race Rock lighthouse is a two and a half story, Gothic Revival style, granite masonry keeper's dwelling with a three and a half story tower. The 67-foot high tower has an octagonal cast iron lantern and gallery surrounded by a wrought iron railing. There are brick-lined rooms in the basement and dwelling.

Building Race Rock Light was a feat of engineering bravery directed over seven years by New London's own Captain T. A. Scott. For 144 years, Race Rock's red lantern light and foghorn have guided mariners through the roiling currents at the Race.

In 2013 Race Rock Light Station was entrusted to the New London Maritime Society (NLMS) by the federal government through the National Lighthouse Preservation Act. Immediately upon receiving the lighthouse, NLMS went to work sealing all broken windows, cleaning the interior, and carefully removing the peeling paint from the walls. Two simple brick fireplaces were discovered beneath the wallboard. The first public visits to the lighthouse were held in 2017.

In 2018, the Maritime Society launched an initiative to raise \$11,000 for an architectural assessment and restoration plan for the lighthouse. **Walter Sedovic & Jill H. Gotthelf** of Walter Sedovic Architects, were selected. Previously the firm did the restoration assessments for both Block Island lighthouses and for Faulkner's Light off Guilford, CT. They noted that Race Rock Light remains in extraordinary condition, in large part due to its construction technology which was decades ahead of its time.

Earlier this year, NLMS applied for a sizable grant to replace the railing on the perimeter of the foundation. The grant, if received, should also allow for re-pointing the masonry on the foundation drum to begin in summer 2023.

A great deal remains to be done. Once the property has been safely prepared as a construction site, it must be stabilized before final restoration work can begin. Initially, a floating dock facility of sufficient size to offload construction materials will be installed. Necessary stabilization projects include sealing the perimeter from rainwater that is intruding through open masonry joints; replacing the gutters and flashing systems associated with the roof, walls, towers, and chimneys; weatherproofing the lantern and lantern tower; and either restoring an electric power cable to Race Rock Light from Fishers Island or increasing the solar array to prevent the structure from freezing during winter months.

The Maritime Society is dedicated to lighthouse preservation. In addition to Race Rock (1878), the Maritime Society also owns New London Harbor Lighthouse (1760) and New London Ledge Light (1909)—all active aids to navigation. Together these are the three historic beacons leading from the ocean to New London harbor.

The July event will launch the preservation effort for Race Rock Light. ■

 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

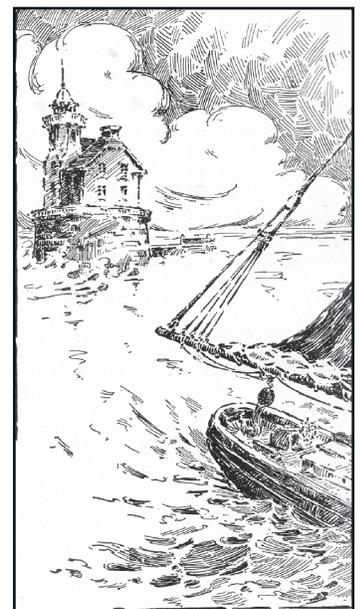


Illustration detail, Race Rock Light by Helen Clark Perry, 'The Romance of Labor: Scenes from Good Novels Depicting Joy in Work', 1916.

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



The MUSEUM SHOP offers all kinds of unique gifts. You don't need a museum ticket to come in. Our goods have an extra feel-good factor: when you shop with us, your purchases help keep the Custom House afloat, and support our exhibitions and programs.



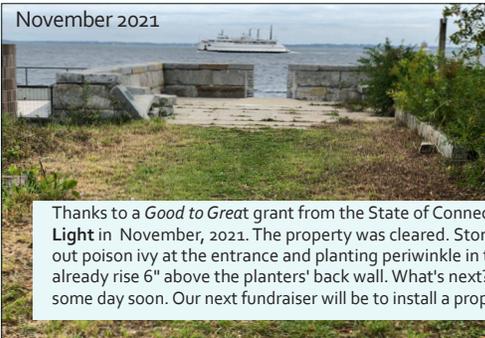
## Summer at the Custom House Maritime Museum!

- The Custom House always is FREE for NL youth and their families! We're OPEN Wednesday through Sunday, 1-5 PM, and Saturday from 10 AM to 5 PM. Admission for adults is \$7.
- A CT Summer at the Museum grant provides *free admission* for all CT children aged 18 and under, and one adult caregiver, until September 5, 2022, with the support of Connecticut Humanities and the Department of Economic and Community Development, Office of the Arts, which also receives support from the federal ARPA.
- NL Maritime Society has joined Museums for All to encourage people of all backgrounds to visit museums regularly and build lifelong museum-going habits. The program encourages those receiving food assistance (SNAP) benefits to visit the Museum for free. There is no limit to how many times a person can visit, and the *free admission* is good for up to four people per visit with the presentation of a SNAP Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card.
- This Summer newsletter was produced with the sponsorship of Connecticut Humanities.
- Go to [nlmaritimesociety.org](http://nlmaritimesociety.org) to keep up with what's up!

We thank our sponsors - ARPA - Bodenwein Foundation - Chelsea Groton Foundation - Community Foundation of Eastern CT - CT Humanities - CT Department of Economic and Community Development, Office of the Arts - Eleven+ - John Michael Corcoran Museum Day Fund - Frank Loomis Palmer Fund - Maco Family Fund - Robinson+Cole - State of CT - SVOG U.S. Small Business Administration - Veolia / NL Water Authority.



CT humanities  
Robinson+Cole



Thanks to a *Good to Great* grant from the State of Connecticut, we commenced landscaping at **New London Harbor Light** in November, 2021. The property was cleared. Stone planters were built. Fences installed. We ended June cleaning out poison ivy at the entrance and planting periwinkle in the shaded front section of the property. Ornamental grasses already rise 6" above the planters' back wall. What's next? A *Go Fund Me* campaign will allow us to *Wash the Lighthouse* some day soon. Our next fundraiser will be to install a proper gate rather than a chain across the front, and put up our sign.

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

BENEFIT PREMIERE  
The History of Race Rock Light

July 26, 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm  
photo: Mark Bigelow

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