



custom house MARITIMES

FALL 2020

We give tours inside New London Harbor *Pequot* Lighthouse year-round, *above*.



From top, Sea Scout Ethan Kerr; piano technician Kenneth Huebner III & musician Aymeric Dupré la Tour deliver the fortepiano from Mary G. and Frederick W. Keith, Jr.; Latimer Reef Light with Robert Wadsworth, i.e. Capt. Bob of the Sunbeam Fleet.

A Season like no other

You couldn't necessarily tell, but behind the scenes - & on the screen - this joint is jumpin'. While Covid-19 effectively closed down the Custom House Maritime Museum for seven months (the museum & shop open by appointment, only), the lull provided a perfect opportunity to get some serious maintenance done both inside and out: plastering, painting, repairs to the roof, re-pointing the exterior masonry. New London's custom house reputedly has leaked since 1835, the year after it opened. At this point, the building interior probably has never been so dry. Hooray!

Throughout the season, our industrious librarians have posted a series of eclectic online exhibitions (read about these on page 3). Topics range from an explanation of half-hull design to photos of *New London's Plucky Salvage Ship*. Take a look at www.nlmartimesociety.org.

Friends and strangers have made some remarkable donations of late: a keeper-made model of Latimer Reef Light, a New London whaling ship's journal, an 1812 fortepiano (for which we have great period-music programming plans) among them. Each of these unique treasures adds depth and nuance to our ability to tell the stories of our local waterfront. We appreciate your trust in us.

And throughout this extraordinary period, public visits to Harbor Light have never stopped. In fact, tours inside the lighthouse continue year-round. Last month, Sea Scout Ethan Kerr made the job of restoring Harbor Light's lantern and watch rooms his Quartermaster project (like the Boy Scout's Eagle Scout award). What good fortune for us! Harbor Light also received a state grant for landscaping; plans are being drawn for spring.

Like for so many nonprofits and businesses, Covid-19 has delivered us quite a punch. Please visit our MUSEUM SHOP this holiday season. Become a member, give the gift of membership, support the Annual Fund. Thank you.

~ Our best wishes for safe and happy holidays ~

Custom House MUSEUM SHOP

We're now open by appointment – email: nlmaritimedirector@gmail.com, or call: 203-444-2884



This year more than ever let's celebrate and decorate our homes! Let's festoon walls, ceilings and hallways with paper garlands! Let's take time to make something to keep forever or give a gift that will be cherished for years to come. This season our MUSEUM SHOP gifts embody these ideas. *Clockwise from top left:* hand-printed paper garlands from Scotland: choose from evergreens, ornaments, birds, fish, insects; hand-painted silk & bamboo fish lanterns and kites; two different Lottie dolls -- a lighthouse keeper and a wildlife photographer; seaweed books, scarves, tea, and note cards; striped candles and tin trays from the UK; French-designed sardine trays, placemats, and tea towels. The MUSEUM SHOP offers all kinds of unique gifts. 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. This fall, in addition to being open by appointment, the SHOP will be open



in conjunction with several downtown NL holiday events. Watch for dates & times.

Nov. 28th – Small Business Saturday

Dec. 5th – Elf on the Shelf

Dec. 12th - Festival of Lights

Dec. 19th – Santa

The SHOP also will be open from noon to 8 PM on Thursdays in December.

If you're not checking in with the **NL HarborCam**, you're missing it all! We've recently seen lightening bolts, full moons, the *Mayflower*, and a very exclusive yacht. Keep watch the harbor 24/7 at nlmaritime-society.org/NLHarborcam.html.

Want to know What's Up?

Sign up to receive our weekly emails - write: nlmaritimedirector@gmail.com.

from the Frank L. McGuire Library

It will not surprise anyone to learn that the past seven months have been a very quiet time for the Frank McGuire Library at the Custom House. Under normal circumstances the winter months bring few visitors and researchers, but with the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Custom House and the library have been closed to visitors and staff except by appointment. Under these new conditions, the value of having "virtual" collections and exhibitions becomes more apparent than ever before. Online Exhibit Librarian Brian Rogers has been working from home to bring some of our collections to a wider audience by creating online exhibitions. If you have not seen them already, I recommend his most recent creations, *Remembering Ellery Thompson and Rob Pittaway's Half-Hulls*, and my contribution, *S. S. Tasco: New London's Plucky Salvage Ship*, all accessible from the library home page <https://nlmaritimesociety.org/Library.html>

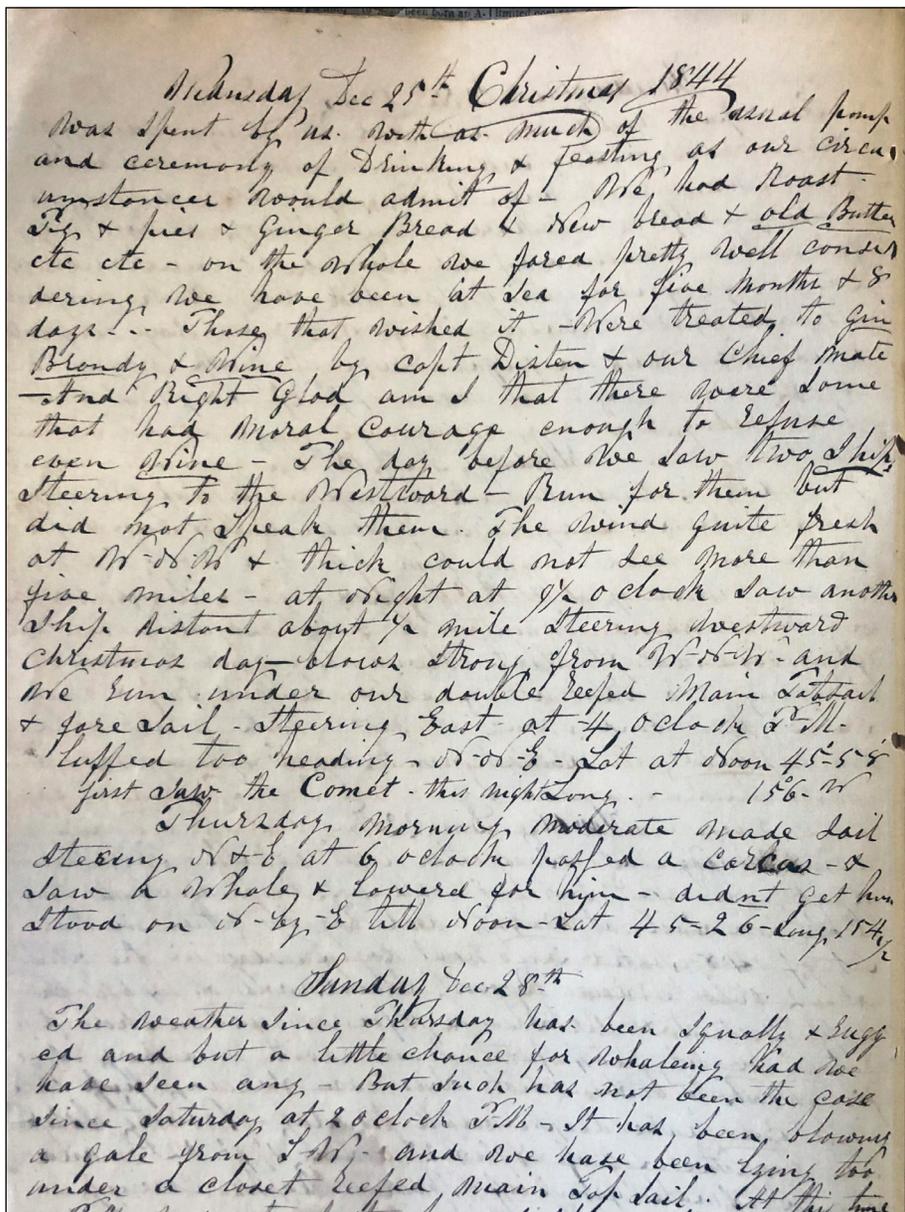
Although the pandemic has restricted in-person access to archives and libraries, dedicated researchers will still find a way to do their work from home. We have continued to receive questions by email on wide ranging topics, from biographical information about an early Customs inspector, to Alfred Mitchell and to ropemaking and knots. And when we do not have the answers, we can usually refer the researcher to another library that can help.

We were saddened by the recent death of Eugene MacMullan, who had done so much to conserve the archival collections and books in the library. A new online exhibition highlights some of his projects for the library, *A Conservator's Legacy: Gene MacMullan at the McGuire Library*. Eugene's beautiful work will preserve the collections for generations to come, and he will be greatly missed by his friends and colleagues at the Custom House.

After writing the above words several weeks ago, the library was awakened from its COVID-induced hibernation by the unexpected gift from Mrs. Edwina Owens Badger of the anonymous journal of the voyage of the whaler *Merrimac*, which sailed from New London on July 17, 1844 under Captain George Destin Jr. This unique acquisition presents exciting opportunities for research, and perhaps a future online exhibition.

— Laurie M. Deredita, Librarian

Right, detail from the *Merrimac* journal, Wednesday Dec. 25th Christmas 1844, a gift to New London Maritime Society from Mrs. Edwina Badger of Martha's Vineyard, MA.



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

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, & 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.

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

N.L.M.S.

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

Join Us at the Custom House



THE MARINE & COASTAL LIFE OF LONG ISLAND SOUND

New London Maritime Society • Illustrations by Patrick J. Lynch

37th ANNUAL MEETING of the New London Maritime Society

Saturday, November 28, 2020, at 4 PM.

Due to Covid-19, we will hold our 37th annual meeting via conference call. Current members please contact: nlmartimedirector@gmail.com before November 28 for conference-call number and passcode.

become an NLMS member

Join us! ~ New Individual (\$35) or Family memberships (\$50) receive a 12" x 18" poster by Patrick Lynch, at left.

~ New Contributor (\$100) or Sponsor (\$250) memberships also receive a copy of Patrick Lynch's *A Field Guide to Long Island Sound: Coastal Habitats, Plant Life, Fish, Seabirds, Marine Mammals, and Other Wildlife* (a \$24 value). (Please pick up all premiums at the Custom House.)

Members always receive free admission to the Custom House and invitations to special events, as well as a 10% discount on all SHOP purchases. (Application in on page 3)

nlmaritimesociety.org

Below: Master plasterer John Marshall and crew were at the Custom House this fall re-plastering and painting two areas damaged last year by water infiltration. Here they repair the ceiling above the stairs to the 2nd floor.

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

nlmaritimesociety.org
local friendly authentic