Searsport’s V-Alt program had an amazing chance to do some hands-on history work with the Penobscot Marine Museum this school year! Ms. Jeana Ganskop, education director with the museum, reached out to V-Alt teachers Colette Jadis and Melora Norman with an opportunity to select some paintings of sailing vessels from the museum’s collection and create an exhibit to bring some of Searsport’s maritime history to life in a unique way. Some of the students who worked on it shared what it was like.

Aubree Henderson writes: “I chose the CLARISSA B. CARVER because I was interested in how life at sea used to be for a family living aboard a vessel and living on one for months on end. I liked how this painting was the only one that looked like it was in rough water. What interested me the most was how it looks so dull but behind a dull painting is a very interesting and colorful story.” She also notes that the research process was unexpected—so many of the newspaper sources seemed to focus on the wreck! However, she shares, “Once I found how to find more sources it got better and less painful to complete. The end result was rewarding to see how lovely it turned out when everything was said and done.”
Lauren Damon worked on the introductory panel. She writes: “The research for PMM included a lot of reading. There were many old books and journals to go through. I expected the writing to be a little hard to read but I did not expect it to include so many old words. Some parts had to be read over a few times to be sure about what they meant. Eventually, the information was so stuck in my head that I didn’t need to do any further research.”

How did the group arrive at the Maritime Monkey concept? The class had been talking about having a mascot, and someone remembered Curious George. Then Symon Belile drew a picture of a monkey face on the board, and Lucus Webber ran with it. Lucus Webber shares, “I got to design the monkey mascot with a bunch of different designs and I love drawing so I was hyped to have that opportunity. The monkey design is completely original!” According to Lucus: “It didn’t take that long to get the design down. The hardest part was probably finding the iPad with the exact colors I used.” Lucus also found the setup part enjoyable, especially the vinyl cutouts. This kind of work isn’t easy! As Lucus points out, “It was slow and horrible some days, but I’m happy with the finished product.”

Faith Tozier really enjoyed the kickoff party. “We had lots of food and drinks for our guests and everyone really enjoyed everything.” Many students from both the elementary and middle/high schools came to the kickoff event, along with members of the public. Says Faith: “It definitely brought our community closer together. I definitely think we should do more things like this so people can enjoy our Searsport community.”

You Should Give a Ship will be viewable this season through October 15th, and was funded in part through the generosity of the Maine Humanities Council.