custom house MARITIMES

SUMMER 2013

Celebrating 30 years of the New London Maritime Society



New London Light from the Northeast, (ca. 1906), by William T. Gooding, Lyman Allyn Art Museum.

Be Part of Something BIG

2013 Sentinels on the Sound - 10 Summer Lighthouse Saturdays

All summer-long, join us as we celebrate New London's lighthouse heritage. Events take place on ten Saturdays , from July 6 through September 7, 2013. (Look inside for the *full schedule of activities.)* For the 3rd year, the New London Maritime Society - Custom House Maritime Museum, in partnership with the Henry L. Ferguson Museum and the Ledge Light Foundation, present a regional celebration of all things lighthouse. This year features lighthouse boat tours, a trip to Plum Island, a concert by pianist Martin Berkofsky, exhibitions, talks, one-time events and special offers. We are especially pleased that CT**rides** is bringing trains to New London on Saturdays all summer long: welcome!

Along with the fun, we are launching a major fund-raising campaign: *Be Part of Something BIG*, an effort to restore & repaint New London Harbor Light. We maintain that there *are* things worth saving, and New London's lighthouse -- the oldest and tallest on Long Island Sound -- is one of them. Our goal is to raise $150,000 from the public towards the total of near-$300,000 required for the task (tenting, scaffolding, scraping, re-pointing, painting). Already we have more than $60,000 from sponsors and foundations. Our goal is to raise $150,000 by October, 2013, to match a State of Connecticut Historic Restoration Fund grant to reach our ultimate goal of $300,000. Sponsors to date include The Chester Kitchings Family Foundation, The Frank Loomis Palmer Fund, and Hefel Masonry.

How can you help? I'm glad you asked!

Any donation is helpful. Send it to New London Maritime Society, 150 Bank St. New London, 06320
A $10 BIG pin gets you **discounts at participating shops in New London** on 10 summer Saturdays.
$35 gets you one ticket to the **Chowda' & Lighthouse Cake Gala** celebration at Port N' Starboard at Ocean Beach on Thursday evening, July 25, 6 to 8 PM.
$50 *also* gets you a large & lovely **New London Harbor Light Print**.
$75 *also* gets you a **souvenir brick** from the lighthouse wall destroyed by Superstorm Sandy.
$150 *also* gives you one ticket to the **whale tooth lottery** (yes, that's right!)
$300 *also* gets you **dinner for two in the lighthouse.**
$1,000 *also* gets you two invitations to an **elegant end-of-campaign dinner celebration.**

Bring a friend to visit the Custom House; take a boat trip, hear a concert: *Be a part of something BIG*. And *thank you* for your support.

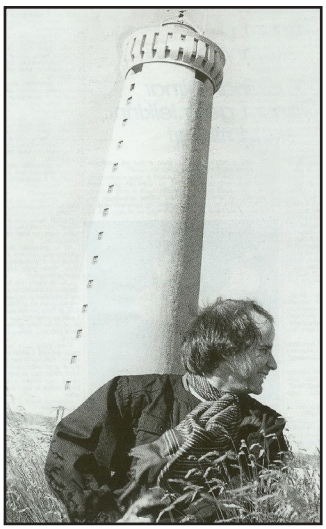
special events

JUNE
27 Conveyence of Race Rock to NLMS

JULY
6 Amistad in NL Berkofsky concert

13 USPS Lighthouse Stamp Launch at SailFest

25 Port N' Starboard Gala Celebration



Pianist **Martin Berkofsky** performs Beethoven and Liszt in a benefit concert on Saturday, July 6, at 7:00 PM. Tickets are $35, $25 for NLMS members. Call 860-447-2501.

From Our "Oval Office"

What…and Who…Is The Custom House Maritime Museum? And why should you care?

The Custom House Maritime Museum – New London Maritime Society (NLMS) is an organization of community volunteers – with one great Professional Director, housed in the oldest continually operating Custom Office in the nation. It is a historical society, presenting and offering context for the rich past of this country and of this region. It is also a forward-looking steward of our shores, its lighthouses and its activities.

As a historical society, the Custom House is actually a community resource which welcomes both stories and artifacts offered by our regional neighbors for display and safe-keeping, and which also welcomes art and interpretive works celebrating the deep maritime tradition of this nation.

As a steward of our shores, the organization works to keep our lighthouses in community non-profit hands and open to the public. This is, if you will, our "Brand". For lighthouses have been called the American counterpart of the cathedrals and castles of Europe.

Given this dual mission, this volunteer organization is constantly in need of funds and of committed volunteers. In fact our Head Docent, Bill LaRue, has developed a syllabus for the training of new docents. The work is fascinating…and the comraderie is heart-felt.

PLEASE CONSIDER CONTRIBUTING YOUR TIME AND YOUR FINANCIAL RESOURCES.

WE NEED YOU.

Thank you very much.
George A. Sprecace, M.D., J.D.
president – New London Maritime Society.



Artist **J.H. Torrance Downes, Eva & John Henry,** brought the original drawing for Connecticut's Preserve The Sound license plate to add to our new Lighthouse of Eastern Long Island Sound exhibition.

Headlines from History

This summer we are celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of the Frank L. McGuire Maritime Library with an exhibition focused on people and places from New London's storied history. The city's newspapers provide perhaps the most striking links with times past; the earliest on view is the full front page of the *Morning Telegraph* devoted to the opening of the first Thames River railroad bridge in 1889. Only from that time forward could one ride a train between New York and Boston without major interruption. Three decades later, selections from an astonishing 100-page special edition of *The Day,* commemorating its fiftieth anniversary in 1931, offer glimpses of the city as it was 82 years ago, a time of growing optimism despite the travails of the Great Depression. Books, prints and exquisitely detailed 19th-century charts of Long Island Sound round out the exhibit, which will be on view at the Custom House through July.

Brian Rogers
librarian, Frank L. McGuire Library, NLMS



Anthony Enders takes a magnifying glass to examine one spot on the twelve-foot long , 1835 chart of Long Island Sound that is a new acquisition of the Frank L. McGuire Maritime Research Library.

From the Ledge Lighthouse Foundation

104 years old, the New London Ledge Lighthouse has withstood more than a century of severe weather to shine brightly and guide mariners at sea safely home. The Ledge Lighthouse Foundation is hard at work at ongoing maintenance and restoration, repairing hurricane and winter storm damage, and creating gallery space for new maritime history exhibits. A corps of volunteers is continuing the work once done by keepers to ensure this beloved local landmark will stand strong for years to come. If you haven't ever visited Ledge Lighthouse, do so this season. You will enjoy spectacular views of the surrounding lands and seas, tour exhibits that will tell you the story of this unique place, and even meet "Ernie," the ghost, legend says haunts Ledge Light. You will roam a building in the middle of the ocean, a building which is part of the soul of this region and its rich maritime history.

Todd Gipstein
president, Ledge Light Foundation

Sign up for our weekly e-mail events blasts - write to nlmaritimedirector@gmail.com



Custom House Maritime Museum
Telling the stories of New London's waterfront.

April through December, the museum is open Tuesday through Sunday (closed Monday), 1 to 5 PM.
January through March, the museum is open Thursday, Friday, Saturday & Sunday,1 to 5 PM, or by appointment.
Call 860-447-2501.

www.nl**maritimes**society.org

Left: An 1877 print of New London's US custom house from the water, from the Frank L. McGuire Library Collection at NLMS.

The New London Custom House's Long Forgotten Link to a Race Rock Light Tragedy

While doing research in clipping files this spring in the Frank McGuire Library at the Custom House Maritime Museum, I came across a news account of a tragic accident that revealed a long-forgotten role played by New London's Custom House during the construction of Race Rock Light. The story unfolded thusly: On the morning of June 24, 1872, at 6:15 a.m., Captain T.A. Scott's steam-lighter *Wallace* headed out from the government wharf, located at the back of the Custom House, bound for Race Rock with a load of stone for the light's foundation. "When about twenty rods from the dock she exploded her boilers with a tremendous concussion, scattering the fragments in all directions, and dealing death and fearful injuries upon the unfortunate crew." (*New -York Herald*, June 25, 1872) While Captain Scott was able to jump overboard and escape injury, most of the thirteen men aboard were not so lucky. Ultimately, three men died from the explosion, including two crew members killed by the initial blast, and the engineer, William Whitler, of Jersey City, who died after being taken ashore. Many other crew suffered from burns and wounds that were described as "frightful, the hot steam and fragments of the exploded boiler making dreadful work."

The *Wallace*—a $10,000 boom-derrick lighter owned by Capt. Scott—sank immediately, the force of the blast being so strong that fragments were found 100-yards from the explosion site. After the blast, the Captain of the cutter *James Campbell* launched a boat to render assistance and the injured were quickly taken back to shore into the Custom House. The Collector on duty, George H. Marshal, converted the building into a make-shift hospital and summoned medical assistance. Later that morning all but the engineer were moved out of the building "to quieter quarters." Engineer Whitler, too wounded to move, subsequently died of his wounds. The cause of the accident was attributed in some accounts to dynamite carried on board, and in others to a faulty boiler.

Remarkably, these three deaths were the only fatalities during the arduous seven-year construction of Race Rock Light.

By Pierce Rafferty
director, Henry L. Ferguson Museum, Fishers Island, NY

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 $1,500___ (This entitles you to Life Membership)

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.

150 Bank Street, New London, Connecticut 06320, 860-447-2501

Official Guide

2013 Sentinels on the Sound - Lighthouse Saturdays

Ten Saturdays of Lighthouse Boat Tours & Special Events

every Saturday, July 6 – September 7, 2013

Sentinel on the Sound Events List

please check www.nl**maritime**society.org *for updates*

Boat tours, special events, lighthouse talks every Saturday for 10 weeks - July 6 through September 7, 2013. These events are sponsored by a grant from Veolia - New London Water Authority.

Five Boat trips every Saturday (except July 13 - SailFest) Six passengers, *only,* per trip. **Tickets are $35 for adults, $25 children age 14 and younger.** All proceeds, beyond boat costs, go to the Lighthouse Restoration Fund.

Saturdays at 11 AM, 1, and 3 PM.
Boat trips to New London Harbor Light . Cruise to the lighthouse and climb 119 steps up to the lantern.

Saturdays at 12 noon, and 2 PM.
'Three Sisters' Lighthouse tours. Sit back and cruise by New London's three harbor lighthouses: New London Harbor, Ledge and Avery Point Lights.

To make boat tour reservations, please call 860-912-6814, or or email nlharborlight@gmail.com. Payment will be accepted over the phone or through Paypal. (Please be sure to specify which tour you would like to book.)

A new *Race Rock Light* Exhibition opens at the **Henry L. Ferguson Museum,** Fishers Island, on Sunday, June 30, 2013. The exhibition will remain on view through May 2014. For hours: http://fergusonmuseum.org/



Buy an ***I'm Part of Something BIG*** button for $10 at the Custom House and receive discounts on services and purchases at participating establishments in downtown New London. Offers are good for Lighthouse Saturdays, *only.* A listing of special offers comes with your pin. Participants include the following businesses: Caruso Piano Gallery, Copperwood Grill, Daniel's Dairy Downtown, Dickson's Tavern, The Exchange Bar & Grill, Flavours of Life, Greenlight Boutique, Hot Rod Cafe, Mambo Bar & Restaurant, Monte Cristo Bookshop, New London Ink, Northern Light Gems, Pinc!, Stone Fleet Tavern, and Sweetie's Bakery & Café.

Weekly special events

in addition to boat trips (listed at left)

July 6 - Week 1 (boat trips)

10 AM
Excursion to Fishers Island to view Race Rock Light exhibition with lunch at the Pequot Inn. Taking the Fishers Island Ferry from New London. **$60,** limited to 15.
Call 860-912-6814 or 860-447-2501 to make reservations.

10 AM (also)
Amistad America Press Event on the Custom House Pier. Hear about the new direction & leadership for the *Amistad.*

3-4:30 PM
USCG Dixieland Jazz Band - concert on New London Waterfront Park. *FREE.*

7:00 PM
Lighthouses as Beacons of Light and Hope - Benefit Concert
Pianist Martin Berkofsky
LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN: Sonata Op. 10, No. 2 in F Major, Sonata Op. 27 No. 2 in C# minor.
FRANZ LISZT: Pater Noster; Miserere d'aprés Palestrina; Légende: St. François d'Assise: La Prédication aux oiseaux; Légende: St. St. François de Paule marchant sur les flots.
Donation $35, members $25. Space limited: call 860-447-2501. Proceeds benefit both Amistad and the Lighthouse Fund thanks to the Cristofori Foundation. (Cristifori invented the piano!)

July 13 - Week 2 (*NO* boat trips)

10 AM
Unveiling of the new **US Postal Service Lighthouse stamp** featuring New London Harbor Light. *FREE* & open to the public under the Custom House tent. First day of issue cachets will be for sale following the ceremony. It's SailFest weekend in New London so plan to arrive early and stay on for the fireworks!

July 20 - Week 3 (boat trips)

1 PM
Todd Gipstein signs his new book *Magician's Choice* at the Custom House Maritime Museum. FREE.

4 PM
Two-hour **boat trips to visit Ledge Light.** Meet at the Custom House; boats leave from the Custom House Pier. Reservations are necessary, call: 860-445-9007 or 800-364-8472 for tickets.

Special event - **Thursday, July 25, 6-8 PM**

Be Part of Something BIG
Lighthouse Gala

Help us Repaint the Lighthouse! Enjoy **Chowda' & Lighthouse Cakes** created by area bakers at our first Lighthouse Gala Fundraiser. There will be live music and a lighthouse-themed mixed drink contest at this celebration at Port N' Starboard at Ocean Beach. **Admission is a $35 donation** to the Lighthouse Fund. Call 860-447-2501 to get your ticket!

July 27 - Week 4 (boat trips)

10 AM

Excursion to Fishers Island to view Race Rock Light exhibition with lunch at the Pequot Inn. Taking the Fishers Island Ferry from New London. **$60,** limited to 15.
Call 860-912-6814 or 860-447-2501 to make reservations.

4 PM

Lighthouse Lecture - President of the Ledge Light Foundation **Todd Gipstein** talks about the history and restoration of New London Ledge Light. **Donation of $8** benefits both Ledge Light and the Lighthouse Restoration Fund. Space limited, call 860-447-2501 to make a reservation.

August 3 - Week 5 (boat trips)

3-4:30 PM

USCG Dixieland Jazz Band - concert on New London Waterfront Park. *FREE.*

5 PM

John Mock Concert *From the Shoreline.* John Mock is an artist and the sea and its coasts are his muse. From New England to Chincoteague to Ireland, the Atlantic's beautiful coastlines, its wooden boats and whitewashed lighthouses continue to inspire him. John Mock returns for the third year to the Custom House. **Donation $25, NLMS members $20.** Seating limited. Call 860-447-2501 to reserve your place.

August 10 - Week 6 (boat trips)

2 PM

Juggling Workshop with Nimble Arts Circus performers. Learn basic juggling skills & tricks from the pros. **$15.** Please register in advance at 860-447-2501.

4 and 6:30 PM

Nimble Arts Circus - Back for the 4th year, presented on Waterfront Park in partnership with the City of New London, Nimble Arts was founded by award winning aerialists Elsie Smith & Serenity Smith Forchion, identical twins who specialize in aerial acrobatics. Elsie & Serenity's performing resumes include *Cirque du Soleil's Saltimbanco, Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey, New Pickle Circus,* and *Cirque Le Masque*. A family-friendly show - no animals. 'Prepare to be amazed!' *This event is sponsored in part by a grant from Veolia - New London Water Authority. FREE*

August 17 - Week 7 (boat trips)

4 PM

Two-hour **boat trips to visit Ledge Light.** Meet at the Custom House; boats leave from the Custom House Pier. Reservations are necessary, call: 860-445-9007 or 800-364-8472 for tickets.

Tuesday, August 20, 11:30 AM

2 1/2-Hour Lighthouse Cruise

Join us aboard the reknowned Sunbeam Fleet for a 2 1/2-hour narrated tour of the area's lighthouses, with lunch. The boat leaves from New London's Custom House Pier and we see at least seven area lights. We made this memorable trip two years ago and are eager to go again. Space is limited.
Tickets are $75. Call 860-447-2501 to reserve your place.

August 24 - Week 8 (boat trips)

4 PM

Lighthouse Lecture - Retired from the USCG, **Doug Allen** reminisces about his experiences as a lighthouse keeper on Long Island Sound. **Donation of $8** benefits both Ledge Light and the Lighthouse Restoration Fund. Space limited, call 860-447-2501 to make a reservation.

Friday, August 30, 7 AM

Plum Island Trip

This is a chance to visit a naturally beautiful and historically secretive location. The tour will encompass the entire 840 acre island, including visiting Fort Terry (est. 1897). Lunch is included. Meet at the Old Saybrook One Harbor at 7 AM for the ferry.
A federal background check must be completed, *please sign up 30 days in advance.* Contact for required information is Rachel: nlharborlight@gmail.com. The tour is vigorous, including riding a bumpy school bus ride, and walking on dirt and gravel paths through woods. Please make sure you are sure footed and wear appropriate shoes (no open toed shoes or sandals). Cameras and cell phones are not permitted on the island, so leave those items behind. Pictures will be taken by tour guides at appropriate locations! **Tour price is $25.**

August 31 - Week 9 (boat trips)

Spetember 7 - Week 10 (boat trips)

4 PM

Two-hour **boat trip to visit Ledge Light.** Meet at the Custom House; boats leave from the Custom House Pier. Reservations are necessary. **$25**. Call: 860-445-9007 or 800-364-8472.

4 PM

Lighthouse Lecture - Henry L. Ferguson Museum director and curator of the Race Rock Light exhibition, **Pierce Rafferty,** discusses the awesome history of Race Rock Light. **Your donation of $8** benefits both Ledge Light and the Lighthouse Restoration Fund. Space limited, call 860-447-2501.

That's Right

RACE ROCK!

Even after a couple of weeks, it's difficult to grasp. Receiving New London Harbor Light from the federal government, in October, 2010, was the end of a nine-year process. With Race Rock Light, the entire event, from site-visit to receipt of the key, took just over one year, start to finish.

So, you might ask, why would the New London Maritime Society want another lighthouse -- even one so legendary as Race Rock Light? Let's be clear: we don't. But it is our mission to protect and preserve New London's maritime heritage. And so we do -- even when it means taking a rather breath-taking leap of faith, like this. We are committed to preserving our important heritage sites for future generations. Ultimately, a national maritime heritage park of the historic and natural sites on eastern Long Island Sound might be the outcome. There is no more thrilling site nor compelling story than that of this lighthouse. The *only* question here should be: how could we have let the opportunity pass?!

The historic Race Rock Light Station was conveyed to the New London Maritime Society on June 27, 2013.



We're pleased to announce that New London's Harbor Light is the featured lighthouse for Connecticut in the 2013 United States Postal Service's New England Coastal Lighthouses series. That's us, far right! The lighthouse stamps will be issued July 13, 2013, at 10 AM, in a special US Postal Service ceremony beneath the Custom House tent - and you're invited to attend. That weekend is SailFest in New London, so plan to be there early. Philatelist Alan Bentz has created a special *first day of issue* cachet, which will be for sale at the Museum following the ceremony and at the New London post office. It sells for $5.



2013 stamp of New London Harbor Light United States Postal Service. Howard Koslow.

NEW LONDON HARBOR, CONNECTICUT

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

www.nlmaritimesociety.org