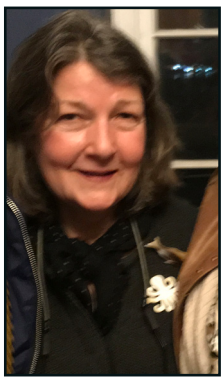
custom house MARITIMES

WINTER 2018

Above, detail of a 'woolie' showing an armada sailing out from a harbor, one of a collection of 22 artworks donated by Charles B. Moss, Jr.



Above from top: Marion Krepcio talks with guests following her presentation on Ellery Thompson at the Custom House. This ca. 1880 oil painting depicts a rescue at sea with a lightship and lifeboat. NLMS executive director Susan Tamulevich. Ben Moss, whose fater donated a collection of Victorian 'woolies' to the museum in February.

from our executive director

Susan Tamulevich

Two-thousand-eighteen marks the New London Maritime Society's 35th anniversary and the 20th year of the Frank L. McGuire Maritime Research Library. I arrived in March, 2008, just as the economic downturn was becoming a reality, and times were tough. But one could see that the Custom House was a true 'Sleeping Beauty' only needing some loving attention to warm back to life.

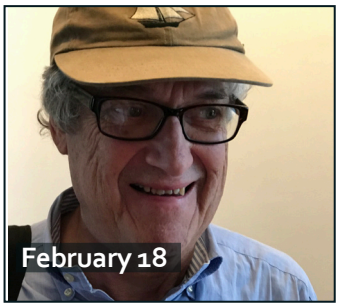
It was the late Ellery Thompson's loyal friend, Marion Krepcio, *left,* who recommended me to NLMS. Marion was back giving a talk at the Custom House in February when she surprised us all by donating a set of US Custom's papers which had been saved by Ellery back in the 1980s, when the NL custom house shut down. On his deathbed Marion promised to have them preserved. She now has.

As director, I've tried to make the Custom House a welcoming community center and it's heartening to see we've earned your trust. This year already has brought some important gifts. In this newsletter librarian Brian Rogers reports on a donation made in honor of charter trustee and super baker Vincentia Belbruno. The lifesaving painting at left and an 1845 Frances' Patent Metallic Surfboat ship model, given anonymously, now fill out our lifeboat display. In February, Charles B. Moss, Jr., did something truly transformative when he donated a collection of 22 Victorian 'woolies' -- embroidery 'paintings' stitched by sailors at sea. These charming pieces are a perfect complement to the museum collection. See for yourself in March, when the new 'woolies' go on view.

Across ten years, NLMS has taken ownership of three magnificent lighthouses and worked to popularize these historic sites, sparking a host of related waterfront activities. Eight years ago with teacher Jody Barthel we started *Lighthouse Kids* in the NL Public Schools which is still going strong as our year-long Third-Grade Local-History Program; seven years ago we pioneered lighthouse boat tours and public visits inside Harbor Light. In 2017 we held the first ever public tours inside Race Rock. With amazing community support, five years ago we all restored LIS's oldest and tallest lighthouse. NLMS organized two LIS lighthouse symposiums. With help from UCONN, the Custom House became the first NPS *Network to Freedom* site in CT; NLMS brought an Amistad exhibition to NYC's United Nations. We cleared the museum's flooded sub-basement following Super Storm Sandy, created both a kitchen and a terrific MUSEUM SHOP, and there's a new blue tent! Now we're working towards restoring the 1833 Custom House roof, which has leaked 'in buckets' since 1836. Thanks to trustee John Steffian and in honor of his mother, Sara, we will install a WWII-era periscope. Mark Shasha, Ruth Sussler, Denny Moers, *Day* photojournalists and Albert Sussler have all had exhibitions, while programs highlighted local seafood farmers and chefs, a *One Big Table* dinner of community recipies with Molly O'Neil, tugboats, music with Eileen Ivers and Peter Yarrow, Nimble Arts Circus, and in 2017 a new Maritime Market at SailFest -- it has been a very full ten years. All this activity is due to the support of a determined board of trustees and community of faithful volunteers, with an occasional boost by USCG cadets.

Watch for surprises to come in the anniversary year ahead. And thank you all. ▪

Fom top: Ed Cubanski inspects Ledge Lighthouse last fall. Trustee Nick Korstad polishes the original Ledge fresnel lens at the Custom House.



The Custom House Maritime Museum is open Thursday through Sunday, from 1 to 5 PM, or by appointment. Call 860-447-2501. Get details and register for most events online 24/7 at brownpapertickets.com. Search 'New London'.

from our board president

Ed Cubanski, III, CAPT, USCG (retired)

Warmest greetings to all of you.

I hope all of you are surviving this typical New England winter where you never know if it will snow, rain, have freezing rain fall from the sky, or find the robins arrive early. One constant in the changing New England weather is that your board has been as busy as mother nature having meetings throughout the winter. We are always thinking of ways to improve our offerings in the museum, create new revenue streams to improve our balance sheet, and become a more vibrant presence along the New England historic tourism trail.

We have lighthouses and artifacts from the 18th Century that are both local, regional, and national historic treasures. We are embarking on correcting roof and gutter projects on the Customs House to keep the water outside the building. We received a generous gift that will soon bring a working periscope to the Customs House for all to use and view scenic Long Island Sound area – maybe you'll be able to see all three of our lighthouses through those optics! Additionally, we are moving various items around inside the museum to provide better access and display of our wonderful archive of treasures

How do we do all of the above amazing things? Four ways: volunteer hours, NLMS memberships, gifts to our annual fund, and application for grants. Each are in great need for the NLMS Society to further our past successes into the future. So please renew your membership, donate to our annual fund, volunteer your time, and spread the great word about the wealth of treasures we have for your friends, family, and coworkers to enjoy! We hope to see you at the Custom House soon! ▪

NLMS is very proud to receive Charles Moss, Jr.'s, collection of Victorian woolies. Mr. Moss is the grandson of the legendary vaudeville impresario, B.S. Moss, and the son of Charles B. Moss, Sr., a radio and television producer and movie theater owner, who together built a family enterprise that made the Moss name synonymous with show business in New York. The 'woolie' collection was assembled by Mr. Moss's parents, who purchased the pictures on visits to London in the early 1900s.

WINTER 2018 – Here's what's up next! - for full listings, go to nl**maritime**society.org

▪ **Illustrated Talk: *Discovering Venture & the Voyage of the Sloop Venture 2018-2019*, with Chandler Saint, Sunday, February 18 at 2 PM** Historian Chandler Saint presents his latest research on Venture Smith and brings us up-to-date on his plans to visit New London this summer to launch the Voyage of the *Sloop Venture* 2018-2019, an effort to memorialize the 400th anniversary (in 2019) of the first American slave landing. $16, $12 NLMS members, $8 youth. Space is limited. Learn more & register online at brownpapertickets.com/event/3234415 or call 860-447-2501.

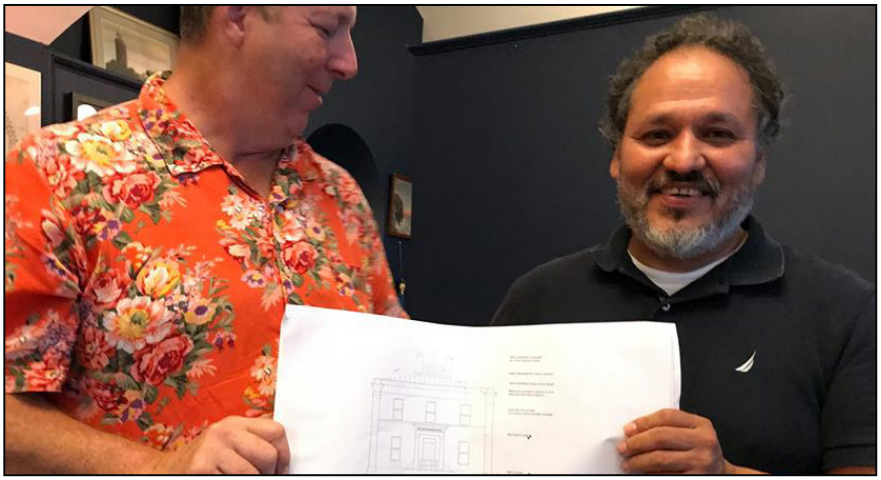
▪ **Boat Trip: *Come on, Let's Take a SEAL WATCH*, Saturday, February 24, 10 AM.** The *Black Hawk* is donating an exciting trip to view the many seals who winter off New London. It's a 2 1/2 -3 hours round-trip and a fund raiser for NLMS. Bring your camera and binoculars. We'll bring the hot chocolate and cookies! The cabin on the boat is heated, but we suggest you wear deck shoes or boots and very warm clothing for the trip. Bring your camera and binoculars. We'll bring the hot chocolate and cookies! Tickets are $35 for adults, $30 for NLMS members and children ages 18 and younger. Call 860-447-2501 with your questions or sign up online today at brownpapertickets.com/event/3330202.

▪ **Illustrated Talk: Patrick Lynch talk & book signing - Connecticut Coast & Long Island Sound: *20,000 Years of Change on Connecticut's Shores*, Sunday, March 11 at 2 PM.** Connecticut has some of New England's most beautiful coastal environments, but our shores and marine environments also face increasing challenges from urbanization, pollution, and climate change. This talk will look at the geology and biology of our coast, and try to place our current challenges within the context of 20,000 years of major changes in our shoreline since it was formed at the end of the Ice Age. Patrick Lynch, illustrator, photographer, and author of *A Field Guide to Long Island Sound,* Yale University Press,2017, will speak about LIS and sign copies of his new LIS field guide. $12, $10 NLMS members, $8 youth ages 10 to 18. Please register online at brownpapertickets.com/event/3319869.

▪ **Jibboom Club - Tuesday, March 20, 2 PM, Sandy and Sidney Van Zandt** will give a talk, and show pictures, about the inspiration, design, construction and sailing of their 39 foot steel cutter *Sequel* from 1982 — 2005. They did four transatlantic crossings and a Circumnavigation and quite a few "side" voyages while sailing 95,000 nm. FREE.

▪ **Jibboom Club - Tuesday, April 17, 2 PM,** Join Rob and Russ for a speaker's program, good conversation and coffee. Program TBD. FREE.

Check our website for additional program details: nl**maritime**society.org



Nine years ago, we hired architect Jose Guzman to do a water-penetration study of the Custom House, whose roof has leaked since 1836. Jose Guzman suggested a 10-year fix -- a rubberized coating -- which we made. But now it's time to do the real repair. We secured three grants -- two CDBG and one from the CT Trust -- and in December, 2017, president Ed Cubanski and Jose Guzman, *above left*, signed a contract for Jose to create the plan to restore the Custom House roof and bring its design back to the Robert Mills 1833 original. In October, masons Harold and Thailer Hefel, *above right,* completed a wall opening to create safe access to Harbor Lighthouse.

from the Frank L McGuire Library

Brian Rogers, librarian

Important Gift for McGuire Library. The largest gift on a single subject ever to come our way are 67 whaling books recently donated by John Belbruno in honor of his aunt, Vincentia (Vinnie) Belbruno, a loyal member of the Society from its earliest days. Our modest holdings on whaling are much enriched, as befits a library in the Custom House that was built in the bustling center of the city's whaling industry. A little gem is Joseph Faulkner's "Eighteen Months on a Greenland Whaler" (1878), while the eight large volumes of "American Activities in the Central Pacific 1790-1870" (1966) fill a single shelf. No sooner were these books on the premises than Mr. Belbruno brought 53 more volumes on a range of topics from lightships to the merchant marine, all welcome additions to our collection.

Online Exhibits: A New Kind of Outreach. We invite readers to visit the digital exhibits and documentaries drawn from our collections and now available in the "Library" section of the NLMS website. The first one presents 285 historic postcards arranged in categories (Lighthouses, Steamboats and Wharves, Ocean Beach, etc.) In late December a documentary on the maritime life of William D. Alexander went public. The career of this Groton native began as fireman aboard the steam ferries linking New London and Groton before there was a road bridge. The photos and documents were provided by Iva Alexander Arpin of Norwich, and the exhibit is dedicated to all who, like Mr. Alexander, served in the merchant marine or navy in the First World War. Next to come are exhibits on the Maritime Service Officers School at Fort Trumbull (1939-1946) and the *S.S.Tasco* salvage vessel of the T. A. Scott Co., with several more to follow. ▪

Attention: High school juniors & seniors, NLMS 2018 **Reid MacCluggage Black Maritime History Scholarship** entries are due February 28. nlmaritimesociety.org

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, & 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 nl**maritime**society.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.

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We congratulate former NLMS trustee Gwendolyn Bosco and honorary trustee Lonnie Braxton on their recent marriage. Their wedding took place at the Custom House!

Come on, let's take a Seal Watch! Saturday, February 24

This photo was taken by a guest on last year's seal trip with the Black Hawk.

The *Black Hawk i*s donating an exciting trip to view the many seals who winter off New London. It's a 2 1/2 -3 hours round-trip and a fund raiser for NLMS. On this trip, we'll leave from Niantic and head out to Little Gull and Plum Islands.

New London Maritime Society

Saving our local maritime heritage sites through education, advocacy, and restoration

A small gem in downtown New London, NLMS's Custom House is New London's local maritime history museum & preservation organization.
With your support we see clear sailing ahead for our work preserving and celebrating New London's maritime heritage. *Your* support matters!
Please help with a donation to our ANNUAL FUND.
Please make your donation online at nlmaritimesociety.org.
Thank you.

Below, an illustration by Patrick Lynch for *A Field Guide to Long Island Sound,* Yale University Press,2017