

# custom house MARITIMES

WINTER 2014

Above: The view out the Custom House window on New London harbor, the Thames River, the USCG *Eagle*, and Groton on the far shore.

## More than lighthouses...

With Pequot Light's restoration, 16 weekends of *Sentinels on the Sound* events, & 3 new lighthouse exhibition installations coming right up, New London's local beacons weigh heavily on our minds. But there's more going on at the Custom House than just lighthouses.

February—Black History Month—is when NLMS runs our annual **Reid MacCluggage Black Maritime History** essay competition for high-school juniors and seniors. As this article is being written, with one week yet to go before the deadline, we have received *zero* entries; but that's always the way. They all turn up on-or-about the last day of February. And if the past is any predictor, several of the essays will be most-impressive. The winning student receives a \$1000 scholarship. In fact at the Custom House we teach about freedom issues year-round. We are discussing new program ideas with **Amistad Voyages**, under the leadership of **Hanifa Washington**, for when the ship is in New London this summer. This year, we also received a grant from the **Gilder Lehrman Institute/National Institute for the Humanities** to run a series of discussions around the PBS *Created Equal* video series. NLMS trustee **Lonnie Braston** will lead these discussions in upcoming months. Watch for the dates and times on our Website: [nlmaritimesociety.org](http://nlmaritimesociety.org).

Local history inspired two new books and we will have the authors at the museum. By now, you probably have read **For Adam's Sake**, which is based, in part, on the Hempsted diaries. On Sunday, April 6, you'll have an opportunity to finally ask your questions as historian **Allegra Di Bonaventura** leads a discussion about the work. On Sunday, May 4, author **Michael J. Tougias** gives a presentation based on soon-to-be-released **Rescue of the Bounty: Disaster and Survival in Superstorm Sandy**. Several of us have fond memories of the *Bounty's* last visit to New London, then recollect the awful scene of the USCG's helicopter-rescue of the ship's crew in the midst of Hurricane Sandy. Coincidentally, Michael wrote about perhaps the most-famous USCG rescue in **The Finest Hours: The True Story of the U.S. Coast Guard's Most Daring Sea Rescue**. The rescue of the oil tanker *Pedelton* is the subject of a new exhibition at the museum to open mid March: **Vision. Process. Finished Painting: the Creative Process of Tony Falcone**. A second new exhibition features our own ship models newly repaired by our friends at the **Connecticut Marine Model Society**. We're touting their work in advance of the group's annual expo: Saturday, April 26, at Ocean Beach's Port 'n Starboard.

And finally, don't miss folk duo **Mustards Retreat** on Wednesday evening, March 12! And look to the back page for information about **Jin Hi Kim's** upcoming **Cross-Cultural Music Meditation Workshops**.

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

All NLMS Spring events are posted online at [nlmaritimesociety.org](http://nlmaritimesociety.org) click on 'Calendar.'



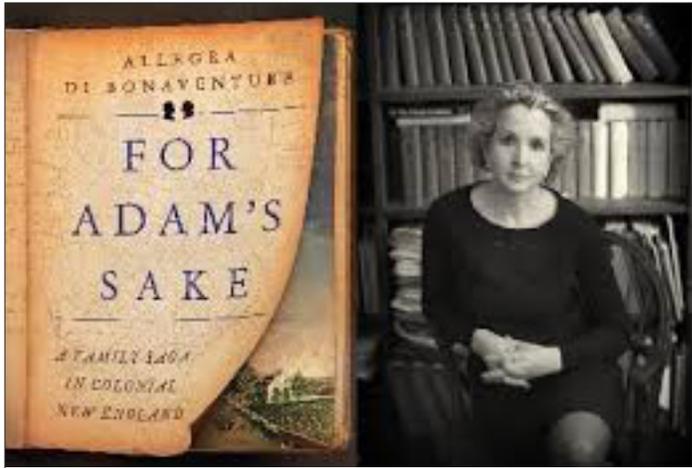
NLMS's annual **Founders Day Celebration** is coming right up **Wednesday, March 12, at 7 PM**.

A special feature of the evening is a concert by Ann Arbor-based folk duo, **Mustards Retreat**.

*Music to cure what ails you.*

-- The Michigan Times

Tickets are \$20, \$15 for NLMS, WCNI, & Friday Folk members, seniors, and students. Call **860-447-2501** for reservations. One hundred percent of your ticket price goes towards lighthouse restoration!



A work of astonishing ingenuity, intellectual and emotional depth, and (most of all) brilliant writing.

—John Demos, author of *The Unredeemed Captive*

Historian **Allegra Di Bonaventura** will lead a discussion on ***For Adam's Sake*** at the Custom House **Sunday, April 6 at 2pm**. Call 860-447-2501 for reservations. Admission: \$8 NLMS members, \$12 all others.

## Developing a Sound Library Collection

We couldn't resist this play on words to introduce a review of our effort to expand the Frank L. McGuire Maritime Library's resources on Long Island Sound, the theme of this year's programming. We've owned Roger Williams McAdam's *Salts of the Sound* for years, a history of famous steamboat skippers, and have now added, among other steamboat titles, George Foster's *Splendor Sailed the Sound*, superb pictures and text describing the great passenger vessels that once traversed the Sound. Stan Gaby's interesting booklet, *The Orient Point Passage*, suggests that a detailed history of the Orient Point ferries is waiting to be written. Marilyn Weigold's *Long Island Sound, A History of its People, Places and Environment* grew out of an earlier work, *The American Mediterranean*. Richard Radune's *Sound Rising* describes the effect of the Sound on events in the American Revolution, while Tom Andersen's *This Fine Piece of Water* begins with early history but focuses on the environmental crises of the 20th century. (Both authors have spoken at the Custom House.) We have but a sampling of the dozens of pamphlets, reports, and studies on the biological features and health of the Sound that have appeared over the years, but an interested reader can visit our Internet research tool, iConn, to see how much has been written, and to read some of it online. Our most recent acquisition on the subject, *Long Island Sound: Prospects for the Urban Sea* (2014), is a handsomely designed 558-page synthesis (some of it highly technical) of the estuarine science of the Sound, and is a worthy successor to Lee Koppelman's *The Urban Sea*, which sounded the alarm in 1976 and helped lay the foundation for today's coastal management programs.

Brian Rogers  
librarian, Frank L. McGuire Library, NLMS



In February, we had a full house for essayist Elisabeth Petry and editor Elizabeth Normen's book talk and signing for a new book published by Wesleyan University Press, ***African American Connecticut Explored***. The event was sponsored in part by Connecticut Humanities.

from the President

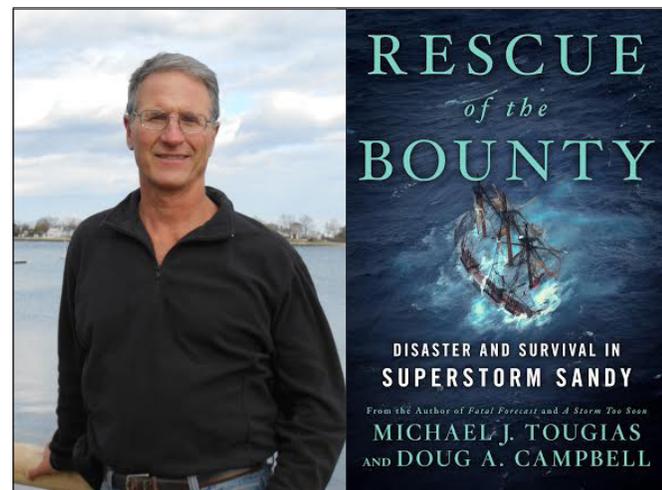
Thanks to our volunteers, friends and Board members, 2013 was a banner year for us - as it was also the 30th anniversary of New London Maritime Society. Of our many activities, our stewardship of New London Harbor Lighthouse and of Race Rock - with a pending application for ownership of Ledge Lighthouse - are uppermost in our efforts for 2014. This is especially true for me, serving my 6th and final year as President of the Society.

Our efforts regarding the lighthouses are not based on acquisitiveness or on hubris. We work with the realization that these landmarks - our family jewels - will be sold and are being sold privately if organizations such as ours do not step forward.

But now, we need help...a lot of help...to provide the financial and in-kind resources to re-furbish and to maintain these structures, and to make them even more available to the public.

Please embrace our common cause and respond generously when we reach out to you for help. Please.

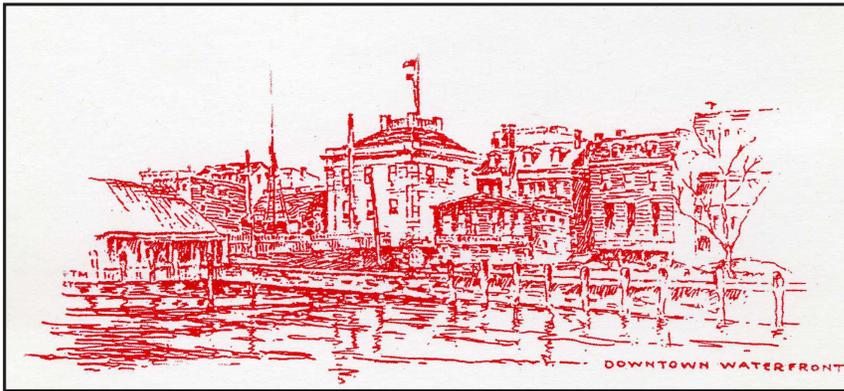
George A. Sprecace, M.D., J.D.  
president NLMS



On **Sunday, May 4 at 2 PM**, bestselling author **Michael J. Tougias** will give a dramatic presentation based on his new book ***Rescue of the Bounty: Disaster and Survival in Superstorm Sandy*** (Simon & Schuster, May 2014). Using slides of the storm, the survivors, and the rescue, Mr. Tougias will make this 'an edge-your seat' visual program.

The story begins on October 23, 2012 when Captain Robin Walbridge made the fateful decision to sail the *HMS Bounty* from New London, Connecticut to St. Petersburg, Florida. Four days into the voyage Superstorm Sandy made an almost direct hit on the *Bounty*. A few hours later, in the dark of night, the vessel suddenly heeled over, sending the crew tumbling into the ocean filled with crashing thirty foot waves. A dramatic USCG helicopter-rescue ensued.

Admission: \$15 NLMS members, \$20 all others. The program will be held at the Custom House. Space is limited. Call 860-447-2501 for reservations.



Above: a sketch by Ben Martin imagines the time back before the railroad was built along Water Street, when the Custom House still had its railing and four chimneys on the roof, and there still were trees in downtown New London.

Please join us for **Founders Day - Wednesday evening, March 12, 2014, at 7 PM**, when New London Maritime Society pays tribute to the Society's past-president **Ben Martin**, the visionary leader of the Society's lighthouse activities. A special feature of the evening is a full concert by Ann Arbor-based folk duo David Tamulevich and Michael Hough, **Mustards Retreat**. Tickets are \$20, \$15 for NLMS, WCNI, & Friday Folk members, seniors, and students. Please call 860-447-2501 to make your reservations. Dessert and coffee will be served. *One hundred percent of your ticket price/donation goes towards lighthouse restoration!*

**We've been planning** for summer 2014 for months! Last June we launched our fundraising effort: *Be Part of Something BIG*, to raise money for Phase I restoration of New London Harbor 'Pequot' Light. That restoration commences in May.

We're partnering with, Blissworks Yoga, New London Landmarks, and other downtown groups to welcome the Seaport's magnificent whaling vessel, the *Morgan*, when it sojourns in New London in May & early June. It looks like we will have two different events: a pro marine-mammal/conservation afternoon on Sunday, June 18, and a rousing Jibboom Club Chowda' Fest and historic happening the following weekend. There's even rumor of a special evening aboard the ship for museum members. Watch for your invitation in the mail!

*Sentinels on the Sound*, our summer smorgasbord of lighthouse activities, is back this year with 16 weekends of boat tours and special events on both Saturdays & Sundays, July through October. Scheduled so far are three trips to visit Plum Island; train/boat trips to Sheffield Island Light (see article page 3); and visits to the Ferguson Museum on Fishers Island, in addition to our own season of lighthouse boat tours and special events. We're developing special 'packages' for out-of-towners, to include boat trips, restaurant and other discounts, and overnight accommodations. Keep an eye on the museum Website: [nlmaritimesociety.org](http://nlmaritimesociety.org). We'll post details of additional events—and there will be *LOTS* of these—as they develop.

Our pan-Long Island Sound planning continues with groups along the shoreline: conservationists, historians, boaters, commercial fishermen, residents, with the hope of creating a larger mutually-supportive entity. The Maritime Society's goal now is to preserve not just the stories but the whole of our maritime resources within the framework of a national maritime heritage park. We've already begun!

Within the Custom House Maritime Museum, we're working to install our lighthouse display with three new exhibitions. Last year, we repainted the gallery, 'adopted' a second lighthouse, both received and purchased additional items for the collection, and was awarded a Bowdenwein grant for a children's section: *Kids Ahoy!*—there are so many variables to consider. Bob Landry, whose remarkable large-scale lighthouses are on view at Fort Trumbull, is making us a spectacular Race Rock Light model. This July, the terrific Race Rock exhibition from the Ferguson Museum will move to the Custom House, too. Another USCG lens in on its way from Oregon.

**Be part of Something BIG!** See you soon at the Custom House.

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*



*Over the winter, New London Maritime Society met with a number of lighthouse organizations from around Long Island Sound. There's a lot we can share in terms of lighthouse history, maintenance and marketing expertise.*

*One of the most-inspiring was the group from Sheffield Island Light in Norwalk. They are 10 years ahead of us in terms of their development—they have a dock & a boat—and they agreed to share their story, which follows below.*

*Meanwhile, watch our e-mail blasts for information about a trip we'll be scheduling to visit Sheffield Island Light later this spring.*

## History of Sheffield Island Lighthouse

Sheffield Island consists of 52.8 acres and was first documented in a deed dated December 2, 1690, in which the Norwalk Indian chief named Winnipauk deeded the property as a gift to Reverend Thomas Hanford, who was Norwalk's first minister. Sheffield Island has had many names over the years Winnipauk, Little Longe, Longe, White's, Smith's, Norwalk and Home. The names usually coincided with the owner. For a while after Hanford's death in 1693 it remained in his family.

In January of 1702, the town documents indicate that the island became community property. Records then show in 1793 10 acres of the land were sold by Noah Smith to Joseph Franklin White.

On January 24, 1804, Captain Robert Sheffield purchased the island. His daughter Temperance, married Gersham Burr Smith and Sheffield Island became their home where they maintained a farm and raised 12 children.

In 1826 Gersham Burr Smith sold a small piece of land to the government, which built a tower 30 feet high that served as a lighthouse. Smith lived in the adjacent keepers cottage built in 1827 and maintained the light until his retirement in 1845.

In 1868 the light tower was replaced by the current lighthouse that stands on the island. Also around 1868 five sister lighthouses were built. Great Captains in Greenwich, Ct. Morgan Point in Noank CT, Old Field Point in Long Island NY, Plum Island in Long Island NY, and Block Island in Rhode Island.

In 1902 the government decommissioned the lighthouse and builds Greens Ledge Light. The keepers of that light used Sheffield as a shore station.

In 1914 the government decided to sell the lighthouse and it was purchased by Thorsten O. Stabell who along with his sons Thorsten and Anton Stabell maintained the lighthouse as a private residence, his family currently still owns a small cottage on the island.

In 1986 the Norwalk Seaport Association purchased the lighthouse and keepers cottage along with the two and half acres of property it stands on from the Stabell family.



The lighthouse is placed on the National Historical Register in 1989. The rest of the island makes up the Stewart B. McKinney wildlife refuge. In 1988-89 the Norwalk Seaport Association did an extensive restoration project to the lighthouse and keepers cottage.

In 1997 a group of volunteers working with a local contractor reinforced the south side seawall on the island in order to protect the property and lighthouse. A group of dedicated volunteers continue to maintain the grounds and buildings.

In 2011 the NRG Corporation provided solar power to the lighthouse by installing solar panels on one of our 20th century storage sheds.

Also in 2011 -2012 and because of the continued harsh weather conditions on Sheffield Island, the Norwalk Seaport Association did another extensive exterior restoration project on the lighthouse and keepers cottage consisting of needed wood repair and paint, cast iron repair, repointing, stabilization and roof flashing. This project considered phase 1 was funded by a \$250,000 grant from the Department of Economic and Community Development and by working side by side with Faesy-Smith architects and the Cenaxo Company this project has been completed. Phase 2 was funded through generous donations and completed in early 2013 and consisted of interior plaster repair and paint.

October 2012 Hurricane Sandy destroyed the north seawall and damaged the south seawall. Working through 2013 and in conjunction with FEMA, NSA was able to completely reconstruct the north wall and repair the south.

The Norwalk Seaport Association maintains the lighthouse and property for special events, a maritime educational facility and house museum for the public, ferrying them out to the island in our 49 passenger boat (CJ Toth) from our Sheffield Island Dock located just outside the Maritime Aquarium IMAX Theater.

Last November, New London Maritime Society, in partnership with Ledge Light Foundation, applied for permanent stewardship of New London Ledge Light. We submit requested revisions to the application in mid March. Then we wait for the decision...

## Ledge Light Update

February, 2014

With our world blanketed in snow, it's hard to imagine a sunny, sultry summer day out at Ledge Lighthouse. But those days will come, and the New London Ledge Lighthouse Foundation will soon be gearing up to make them special. We have some neat new exhibits planned for our Interpretive Center. We'll be adding two final benches outside the building so that visitors will have even more space to relax and enjoy the best view in town.

Funded by a matching grant from the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, we have 15 new windows ready to replace the failing ones installed in the 1980s. We will have more windows to replace in the future, but this will be a big step forward in getting historically accurate, functioning windows at the lighthouse. We'll also be re-hanging the historic doors on the 1909 side of the building, which will provide outside access and lots of light and fresh air during tours. Other restoration projects are in the works, all designed to help preserve the lighthouse and enhance visitors' enjoyment of this treasured local landmark.

We're talking to the Mystic Whaler about adding a stop at Ledge Lighthouse on some of their tours, and hope this will begin the expansion of public access to the lighthouse in the years to come.

Most importantly, we will be collaborating with the NLMS on all sorts of lighthouse events, tours and activities this coming summer. We are still working with them to acquire local ownership of Ledge Light, adding to their local portfolio of New London Harbor Light and Race Rock. The process is slow, but, with luck, we will have something to celebrate this coming season. Building on the successful programs of the last few years, the NLLLF and the NLMS will be offering a lot to do at and around our beautiful, unique local lighthouses. Please plan to join us as we help these magnificent edifices live on as vital parts of our local culture.

-- Todd & Marcia Gipstein, Ledge Light Foundation



## New London Harbor 'Pequot' Light

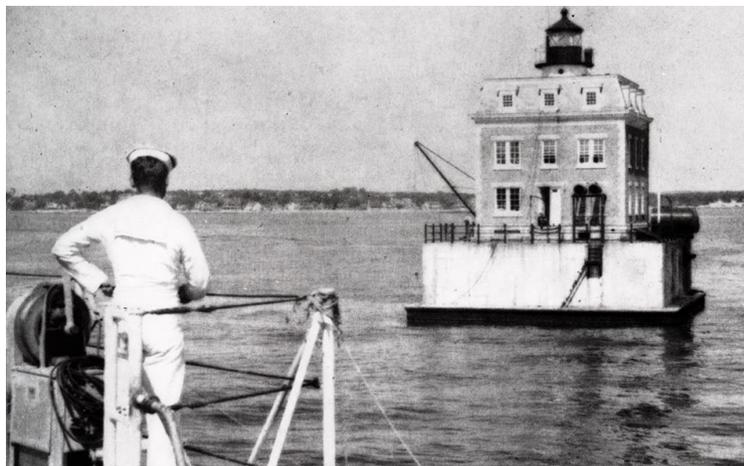
Restoration of New London Harbor 'Pequot' Light is set to begin in May, 2014. It is estimated the process of scaffolding the 89-foot lighthouse, removing the paint, investigating and repairing the mortar, restoring the seven bronze windows, repainting the tower, and removing the scaffolding will take from six to eight weeks. New London Maritime Society began fund-raising for Phase I of the restoration in June, 2013. So far that campaign *Be Part of Something BIG*, has raised nearly \$90,000 in donations and lighthouse program revenues, and an estimated \$300,000+ in in-kind donations. Brand Energy and Infrastructure Services will donate full scaffolding for the project; The New England Regional Council of Carpenters has volunteered to erect and dismantle the scaffolding; members of the the Painters Union have volunteered to do the actual painting of the lighthouse.

In December, 2014, the Maritime Society received a \$10,000 grant from the state's Historic Preservation Office with which they have retained architect Rick Wies and project manager Dennis Daniels, of Gregg, Wies & Gardner Architects LLC to oversee the project. 'We love New London with its remarkable architectural heritage,' said Rick Wies adding, 'I personally have added attachments to New London through my aunt and uncle Alma and Carl Wies MD, who resided just a stone's throw away from the Harbor Light. Together they established New London's Tale of the Whale Museum and devoted themselves to New London's history and community for over 50 years.'

Sponsors of the lighthouse include The Chester Kitchings Family Foundation, Brand Energy and Infrastructure Services, Frank Loomis Palmer Fund, Dominion Foundation, Veolia Water / New London Water Authority, Cross Sound Ferry, Surveyor Jim Bernando, the Eschenfelder Family, CT Office of Historic Preservation, New England Regional Council of Carpenters, Hefel Masonry LLC, Captain Scott's Lobster Dock, Ocean Beach Park, The Big House B&B, Cristifori Foundation, CTrides, musician John Mock, Dave Fallon, Fishers Island Ferry, and Jay Bandler / Underground Surveying. Thank you.

It is the mission of the New London Maritime Society to protect and preserve New London's maritime heritage. And so we do. We are committed to preserving our important heritage sites for future generations.

And if you're wondering, we're still taking donations...



Composer Jin Hi Kim presents  
Cross-Cultural Music Meditation Workshops  
at the Custom House Maritime Museum  
March 24-28, April 7-11, & May 5-9

Cross-Cultural Music Meditation is a bi-cultural exposure to the basic aesthetics and concepts of Asian Jin Hi Kim philosophy, music, and instruments enabling contrasts to Western music and creative thought. Through the sessions, participants gain first-hand experience of the role music plays in meditation and the benefits it offers to develop a calm, focused group experience. Individuals and groups (up to 10) are encouraged to sign up for the music meditation workshops, which will be offered again in April and May.



Music meditation, directed by Jin Hi Kim (*above*), includes a group chant (sonic text) and a creative music ensemble through listening and playing various Asian percussion instruments. These instruments (singing bowls, finger cymbals, temple block, harmonium and clappers) have an historic role in various Asian meditation practices.

Each workshop session involves 10 participants and takes place over five consecutive days. At the conclusion of the residency there will be a culminating performance with participants and Kim's komungo (6 string Korean zither) performance. The ancient komungo will be an anchor to the daily sessions with all group members. Ms. Kim has been a pioneer of bringing this instrument into Western music in addition to being a leading international practitioner on the instrument ranging from symphonic performances to small group meditation practices. Jin Hi Kim has performed as a soloist in her own compositions around the world including at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Kennedy Center (Washington, DC), Smithsonian Freer Gallery of Art (Washington, DC), Royal Festival Hall (London), and Haus der Kulturen der Welt (Berlin). Currently Jin Hi Kim is composing two major new works which will premier in spring, 2014. *These workshops are presented with support from the Department of Economic and Community Development, Connecticut Office of the Arts which also receives support from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.*

Workshops takes place Monday through Friday, March 24-28; with additional workshops taking place April 7 to 11, and May 5 to 9, 2014. Two different sessions are offered: from 9 to 10 AM, and 6 to 7 PM. Fee per participant is \$50. Renew yourself. Call 860-447-2501 to reserve your place.

New London Maritime Society  
Custom House Maritime Museum

150 Bank Street  
New London, Connecticut 06320

[www.nlmaritimesociety.org](http://www.nlmaritimesociety.org)



Whale vertebrae, NLMS collection. photo Rob Bowman.