

custom house

MARITIMES

WINTER 2013



Debris Over Raging Dam (detail). 2012. photographic monoprint. Denny Moers.

FALLING TOWARDS 2013

Twenty-thirteen marks the 30th anniversary of the New London Maritime Society. NLMS was established by impassioned local citizens—volunteers, who fought to preserve New London's handsome 1833 U.S. Customs building when it was about to be shed by the federal government. Those citizens succeeded, establishing the Society and recycling the building as the Custom House Maritime Museum, with the mission to protect and preserve, collect and teach about New London's rich nautical past. They also succeeded by blazing the way for adaptive reuse of downtown buildings for other cultural pioneers, such as the Garde and Hygienic Arts, an idea still very much on the front burner in New London.

Today we are a nonprofit historic site, a growing community center, and the nation's oldest continuously-operating U.S. Customs House—scene to much of the City's maritime history. Best of all, thirty years on, we haven't lost our will to fight! Two years ago we adopted New London Harbor Light, and just this year we launched campaigns to take stewardship of two additional area lighthouses from the federal government. Our goal is not to 'own' the lights, but to maintain these as *publically-owned* sites for future generations: their historic structures preserved and the habitats conserved.

The past year posed some unforeseen challenges—everything from school budget cuts to falling façades to Superstorm Sandy, which flooded the museum's sub-basement and destabilized the sea wall and walkway at New London Harbor Light. This year we also lost of some of our dearest and most-dedicated members. All of these happenings took their toll. But we didn't turn into a pumpkin. We fell forward, pulling back to do our homework, while boldly planning for the future.

So what's up at the Custom House? This next year – quite a lot. We start with an exhibition of photographic monoprints by artist Denny Moers. Working with New London's public schools and New England Science and Sailing (NESS) in Stonington, we're adding educational programs. This winter, we redesign our Lighthouse exhibition and, in July and August, 2013, will be offering *Lighthouse Weekend* boat tours and special events *every Saturday*. We are looking out and we are looking in; we wish to further our partnerships with like-minded conservation and preservation organizations on eastern Long Island Sound, and, back at the Custom House, we are redesigning the full visitor experience at the museum.

It promises to be an exciting 2013 and we're going to need everyone's help. How do you celebrate a 30th anniversary? Join us, won't you, and we'll come up with something marvelous. ■

January through March, the Custom House Maritime Museum is open Thursday, Friday, Saturday & Sunday from 1--5 PM. April through December, the museum is open Tuesday through Sunday (closed Monday), from 1--5 PM. or by appointment, 860-447-2501. www.nlmaritimesociety.org



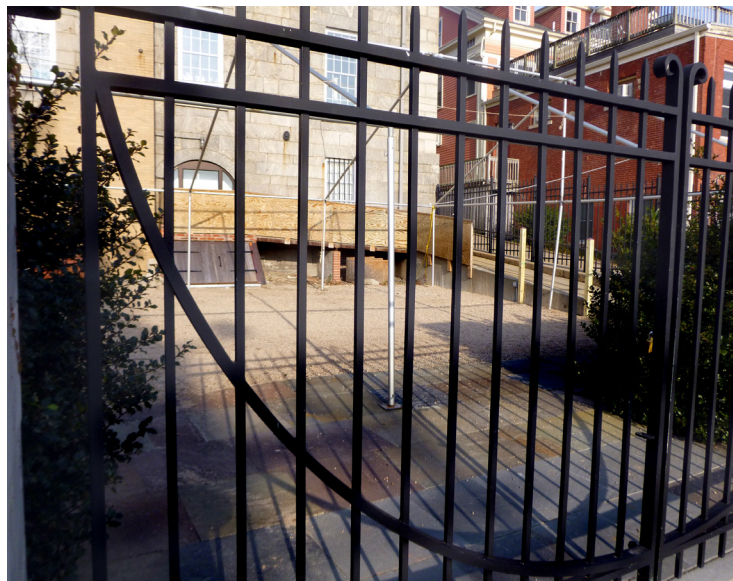
On view through December 22, 2012
**A Celebration of the Art & Life of
Robert Hauschild (1941-2012)**
- Artist, Teacher, Friend -

Paintings from the collection
of Margaret Palmer.

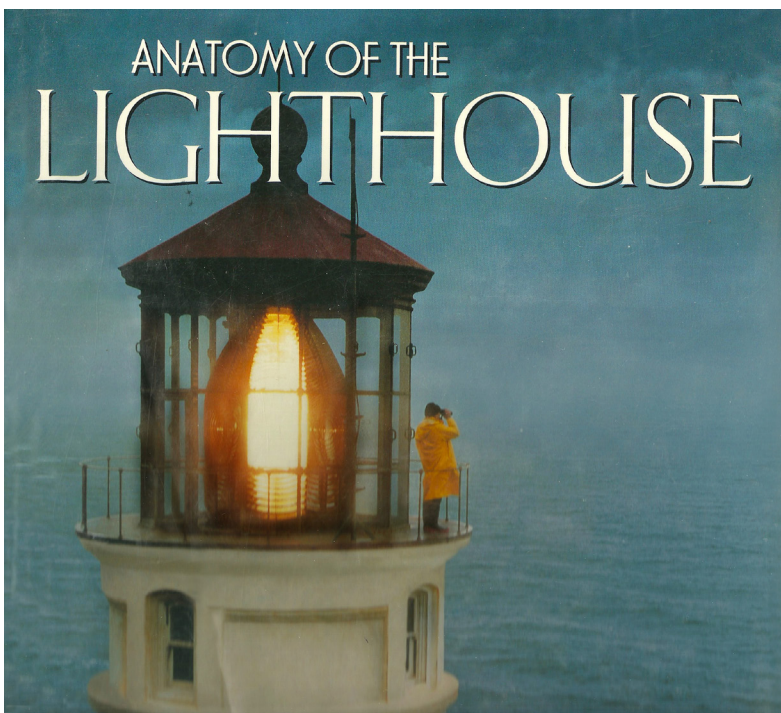
McGuire Library's Growing Collection of Lighthouse Books

We have always wanted to build strong holdings on the ever-appealing topic of lighthouses and lightships. Spurred by the Society's role as custodian of New London's historic lighthouse on Pequot Avenue, we have redoubled our efforts to acquire books that describe in text and illustration the chain of coastal beacons of which New London Light is among the oldest. The collection now numbers over one hundred volumes. Many are directories for a particular state, while the just-published third edition of *American Lighthouses: A Comprehensive Guide to Exploring Our National Treasures*, by Roberts and Jones, spans the entire country. Over the past year or so we have been given a number of books about lighthouses in other parts of the country and Canada as well, broadening the scope of our collection beyond what we would normally purchase. The largest of these gifts, by far, is Margaret Palmer's donation in August of Robert Hauschild's maritime books, most of them about lighthouses. Among them is Michael J. Rhein's uniquely informative *Anatomy of a Lighthouse* (2000), describing various types of lighthouse engineering with some of the finest photography to be found in lighthouse literature. We are very grateful indeed to Margaret for her generosity.

The Library has also acquired by purchase or gift three rare volumes on lighthouse history. The oldest of these is Thornton Jenkins' and Robert Bache's *A Report Relative to the Light-House System of the United States*, published for Congress in 1846 as "House of Representatives Document No. 222" (nomenclature for an official report informing legislators on pending issues.) It presents the results of a visit by the authors to Britain and France to study "improved" lighthouses there, with the intention of making similar improvements here. One of our two copies was the gift of board member Jennifer Hillhouse. Complementing this study is M. L. Reynaud's *Memoir Upon the Illuminations and Beaconage of the Coast of France*, 1876, translated from the French for the U.S. Light-House Board



New door, new railing, new bulkhead, new blue-stone handicap-accessible entryway (above) -- it's transformative! This fall, we installed an all-glass fire-safe door on the museum's lower-level and finished up the handicap-access ramp, railing and bulkhead to the sub-basement. Thank you **New London Community Development Block Grants & Frank Loomis Palmer Fund!** The **Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation** helped to fund an architectural study of the Custom House in terms of fire, handicap-access, code, & life-safety issues. We used the findings to guide the work seen here. Thanks, too, to **G. Roger Clements**, who designed the bulkhead and ramp and to **Tom Bombria**, of the City of New London, who guided us through the construction process. (Left) **Mike Duzant** speaks at a Jibboom Club GAM.



for the same purposes as the 1846 work and including a section on Augustin Fresnel's "new system of light-house illumination." Our third rare item, discovered by Director Susan Tamulevich at a dealer display at the Ocean Beach ship modelers show, was published in 1930 by the Pan-American Union and contains architectural renderings of over one hundred proposals for a monumental lighthouse commemorating the "discovery" of America by Christopher Columbus. It now stands on the coast of the Dominican Republic, although the winning design, by Scottish architect J. L. Gleave, was not built for more than sixty years after the competition ended in 1929. At long last it was dedicated in 1992 on the 500th anniversary of Columbus's first voyage. ■

Brian Rogers, Librarian

From the Director

It takes a village, as somebody once put it. I wish you all could see the variety of callers we have each day at the museum, many of them here not as tourists, but to contribute a unique artifact, a story, sage advice, a book, an idea, or simple moral support. We have museum trustees, members, docents and volunteers—without whom we could not keep the museum open. There are the artists, craftsmen and mariners, who allow us to visit and teach about their work through educational programs and museum exhibitions. Visiting teachers, students, *tourists* bring the museum to life. Helpful colleagues and community partners support our causes and amplify our efforts. Please stop by, anytime. We love to hear what you have to say. And *thank you* for thinking of the Custom House ■

Susan Tamulevich



SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS

A Celebration of the Art & Life of Robert (Bob) Hauschild - 1941-2012 - Artist, Teacher, Friend. through December 22, 2012.
Near Water's Edge, Photographic Monoprints by Denny Moers. January 26 through March, 23, 2013.

SPECIAL EVENTS

December 13 - *Coastal Erosion on Long Island Sound*, Kristen Przyborski, assistant professor of environmental studies at Mitchell College, discusses changes along our coast in the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy. *FREE* to members, \$7 all others. Space is limited, *RSVP* to 860-447-2501. 6:30 reception, 7 PM program.
January 26 - Opening, *Near Water's Edge*, Photographic Monoprints by Denny Moers. Saturday, January 26, 2013, 6 to 8 PM.
February 9 - Valentines & Silhouettes, Make a Valentine and have artist Deborah O'Connor create a silhouette of you, your child, or your pet! Visit the website: nlmaritimesociety.org to get additional details closer to the event and to schedule your session with Deborah.

EVERY MONTH

Third Tuesdays - Jibboom Club #1 Gams - Reviving Jibboom Club #1 with maritime talk, good friends & cookies. 1-4 PM.
Wednesdays - Custom House Maritime Matters, on Metrocast with host George Sprecece, from 5-6 PM.
Third Thursdays - Lecture, Special presentations, and Jibboom Roundtables. *FREE* members, \$8 all others.

Near Water's Edge - opening January 26

Denny Moers creates imaginative, technically innovative monoprints by controlling the action of light on the chemical-sensitized photographic paper during the print developing process, giving his black and white photographs an extraordinary range of tonalities. His exhibition, *Near Water's Edge*, opening January 26, 2013, includes a selection of monoprints investigating concepts of water's various manifestations in landscape from dams, rivers, lakes and flooded fields.

Denny Moers received his MFA from the Visual Studies Workshop. During the 1980's he worked as Aaron Siskind's first assistant and printer. He received a RI Pell Award for Excellence in the Arts in 2003 and the RI Council on the Arts Fellowship in Photography for 2012.

His photographic monoprints are included in over 30 public and private collections throughout the world including the the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Baltimore Museum of Art, the Huston Museum of Art, the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Brooklyn Museum of Art, the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, and the Museo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico City. Mr. Moers is on the art faculty of Roger Williams University in Bristol, Rhode Island. ■

Help **Save Little Gull Island** for future generations by keeping it publicly--*not privately*--owned. Please submit your comments via email to Gabrielle Sigel at gabrielle.sigel@gsa.gov. Tell her Little Gull should remain a public property, that you want its lighthouse preserved and its habitat conserved. Thank you!

We are happy to report that **Kennedy Marine** (*below*), will provide lighthouse and harbor boat tours for us every Saturday this summer.



Visit the **Museum Shop** for nautical cookie cutters, special ribbons, new & vintage maritime books, toys, old-time gifts, and ornaments. We have Lighthouse Keepers caps, Old Town Mill corn meal for Johnny Cakes, balloon-powered toy boats, Mark Shasha books & prints; USCG video about the *Eagle*; whale bottle openers , photographic prints by Bonita Waesche, John Mock CDs, New London cards, & coffee mugs.

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 ___ (this entitles you 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.

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

April - December, we are open Tuesday through Sunday, 1 to 5pm
Call us at 860-447-2501 for information or to make an appointment.



January - March, we are open Thursday through Sunday from 1 to 5pm
Facebook Custom House Maritime Museum , www.nlmaritimesociety.org

Building a Stewardship of our Local Lighthouses

Massive and solid, a feat of engineering bravery, for 135 years its light has guided mariners into and out of Long Island Sound. Race Rock, along with the New London Harbor Light and Ledge Light at the mouth of the Thames River, create a pathway of beacons leading to New London. They are a part of the strong, maritime heritage of this New England port.

The New London Custom House's ties to Race Rock go back over 200 years, when federal customs agents, posted in New London, directed efforts to erect a warning spindle at the Race prior to construction of the lighthouse; we have their original letters in our archives. The ultimate triumph of New London builder Captain T. A. Scott, working with engineer F. Hopkinson Smith, to erect the Race Rock Lighthouse still resounds. But Race Rock has fallen on hard times; Since being automated in 1979, the lighthouse has deteriorated. The New London Maritime Society wants to help. Our goal is to preserve and restore this significant lighthouse under our stewardship.

Our desire is to preserve and maintain *three* lighthouses: New London Harbor, Race Rock, & Ledge Light (working with the Ledge Light Foundation), and restore them to the consciousness of the public, to their support, and to their access wherever feasible. As one of our foreign visitors noted: 'Lighthouses are to maritime America what cathedrals and castles are to Europe' –they live in our imagination and are part of the living fabric of this nation. New London Harbor Lighthouse, Ledge Light, and Race Rock Light Station share a geography, a history, and a need for preservation. Each enjoys a place of prominence among the wider family of lighthouses that populate the entrance to New London Harbor.

Over the past two years, and working at a regional level, our larger effort has been to develop New London's authentic claim as Long Island Sound's 'lighthouse hub.' This designation will help to 1.) preserve the area's lighthouses, 2.) educate about local maritime heritage and stewardship, 3.) support the work of the Custom House and other area marine and heritage organizations, and 4.) boost local tourism. Annual *Sentinels on the Sound* Lighthouse Weekends, lighthouse boat tours, the successful *Lighthouse Kids* enrichment program in the public schools, the new *Lighthouses of New London Harbor* exhibition at New London's Union Station, and the permanent lighthouse exhibition at the Custom House Maritime Museum are all parts of this larger effort. We also work across state boundaries; Last year, Fishers Island School, New York, took part in our Lighthouse Kids program. The Island's Ferguson Museum works with us to teach about Race Rock and in 2013 will be sharing an exhibition about the builder of Race Rock: New London's Captain T.A. Scott.

Acquiring Race Rock Light would represent a major step in preserving a significant piece of New London's seafaring history just as saving New London Harbor Light did two years ago and saving the Custom House did 27 years before that. The Board of the Society feels it is important that the Race Rock Lighthouse remain in the public domain, under the direction of the New London Community, and that it always be considered part of the nautical fabric of the Port of New London. ■

Watch Todd Gipstein's video in support of this effort at www.nlmaritimesociety.org.



In October, 2012 the New London Maritime Society applied to the US National Park Service to take on stewardship of Race Rock Light Station. The decision should be made before the end of the year.

(Above right) Hassan Cigarette Tobacco Card, Race RockLight, 1912. (Below) Metal buoys plate, *A Report Relative to the Light-House System of the United States*, published for the U.S. Congress in 1846 as House of Representatives Document No. 222 (an official designation for reports generated to inform lawmakers on pending legislation.) Both items are in the NLMS Frank L. McGuire Library collection.

