

NEW LONDON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2011

Rick Spencer Sings the Hits of the '60s (that is, the 1860s)

I'm certain that you have sung a song by Connecticut-born composer Henry Clay Work, as it was he who wrote the song, "My Grandfather's Clock," in 1876. Work is just one of several professional composers who got their "big start" during the years of the Civil War.

On Wednesday evening 20 July, bring your lawn chairs and join us in the garden of the Shaw Mansion as Rick Spencer presents a program on the "Greatest Hits of the Civil War: America's Earliest Professional Songwriters." The garden gates will open at 6:30 pm and the show will start at 7:00, (we're expecting a lovely evening). Members will be asked to make a donation, for others, the concert will cost \$5. (We are also calling it the "Eve of Destruction" concert, as 21 July marks the 150th anniversary of the First Battle of Bull Run.)

Rick was a long-time member of the staff of Mystic Seaport working as a chanteyman and as a member of the quartet, *Mystic Seaport's Forebitter*. More recently he was site administrator at the Hempsted Houses and now serves as the executive director of the Dr. Ashbell Woodward House museum of the Franklin Historical Society. In addition

to being a recognized expert on the songs of the sailor, Rick has now done extensive research on popular music of 19th century America, creating programs such as, "Freemen for Fremont," and this presentation on composers Stephen Foster, Daniel Decatur Emmett, and George F. Root in addition to Henry Clay Work.

The performance will include many of their songs, and Rick will share insights on how this music reflected the American character of the day.

Tea with Miss Perkins and Family

Actually two of our programs this summer will add to the commemoration of the Civil War, as the popular teas with Miss Perkins harkens back to the Civil War years of 1861-1862 rather than our usual 1876. Miss Janey Perkins and her family will share their connections to wars past and present. Guests to tea will

find out how those left at home also contributed to the war effort, and will bear witness to the price of such loyalty in good times and in bad. Come and experience — through their eyes — one New London family's growing involvement in the war that tore a nation apart.

These presentations will be offered at 4pm during the last two weekends of August — 20, 21 and 27, 28. The performance will be followed by a "high tea" served by the people who portray Miss Perkins, her family, and staff, as they respond to questions "out-of-character" during the tea.

Tickets for this event are priced at \$15 for adults and \$12 for children. Reservations for these four performances will be limited and will sell quickly so, gather your friends together and call the Shaw Mansion, 860.443.1209, to hold your places soon.



Top hat of Ernest E. Rogers, 1866-1945, President of the NLCHS and Lieutenant Governor of Connecticut. President Rogers kept his hat in a special leather box, bearing his initials. See page 5 to learn more about hats in our collection.

"Ye Towne's Antientest Buriall Place" The Shaws of New London, Part II

In the last newsletter we looked at several members of the family that built and lived in the Shaw Mansion in New London, and who are buried in the Antientist Burial Ground. This time we'll cover the Shaws who were active in the American Revolution and the later Shaws and Perkinses.

The most noted of these was Nathaniel Shaw, Junior, who was the naval agent for both Connecticut and the Continental Congress during the Revolution. His brother, Thomas, was deputy commissioner of naval prisoners.

Nathaniel Shaw, Junior, was the oldest son and second child of Nathaniel and Temperance (Harris) Shaw. He was born in New London December 5, 1735, and lived there his whole life, although it is probable that he spent some time at sea, as his brothers did. He was involved in his father's merchant business at least by the early 1760s, and appears to have taken it over by late 1765. His "Mercantile Letterbook," containing copies of over 200 outgoing letters from the business, gives a lively picture of how business was conducted in the late eighteenth century. Cattle shipped out to the West Indies, requests for molasses in return, instructions for avoiding the Stamp Act, and assurances that "Mrs. Packwood and all Friends are well" are all in a 1766 letter to Joseph and William Packwood in Martinique.

Shaw married Lucretia Harris Rogers on July 20, 1758. She was the widow of Capt. Josiah Rogers, who had died September 10, 1757. Joshua Hempstead notes that Rogers had been privateering and taken a French ship, after which *he*

went up to Newyork & took the Small pox. was Sick one week. Lucretia had a son, also Josiah, whose gravestone says he "died March 20th A.D. 1764, aged 7 years & 8 Mo." The senior Josiah, according to a Caulkins manuscript reference, was "buried in a plot of graves near the Light House at Harbor's mouth," with a stone which gave his age as 26. The lighthouse was the usual place for confining smallpox victims. Where that lighthouse was in relation to the present one is not known. Nathaniel and Lucretia did not have any other children, but after the death of Nathaniel's sister Mary and her husband Ephraim Woodbridge their two surviving children came to live with their grandparents and uncles and aunt in the Shaw Mansion.

With the coming of the American Revolution Nathaniel Shaw found himself in the forefront of naval activities. He had been one of the original members of the Committee of Correspondence when it formed in 1774, and remained a member throughout the war. A year before his official appointment as naval agent in April of 1776 he was writing to Gov. Trumbull about obtaining gunpowder from the French in the West Indies. Gen. Washington was a guest at the Shaw Mansion April 9 and 10, 1776, apparently consulting with Shaw and with Esek Hopkins, commander-in-chief of the Continental fleet.

As Continental Naval Agent, Shaw "was in charge of Continental prizes, naval supplies for the colony, sick seamen sent on shore to his care, and . . . the oversight of all armed ships the property of the state." (Rogers, p. 16) He

also had his own business to run, and his own privateering vessels to manage. One of his privateers, the *General Putnam*, took fourteen prize vessels. The Shaw Mansion displays silver marked with a coat of arms and the initials W. R. D., and called by the family "the Dunmore silver," which was said to have been taken from one of the prizes of the Revolution.

We have much less direct information about Thomas Shaw, the fourth child of Nathaniel Senior and Temperance, who was born March 16, 1739. Presumably he also went to sea for a while, although there is no evidence one way or the other. Thomas was a less visible member of the family merchant business, answering letters directed to Nathaniel when the latter

(Continued on page 4)

New London County Historical Society Incorporated 1870

Officers

Deborah Donovan, President
Nancy Steenburg, Vice President
Frederick E. Burdick, Treasurer
Joe Selinger, Secretary

Board of Directors

2011
Marilyn Davis, Kevin Doyle, William Peterson
2012
Barun Basu, Richard Sigal, Denis O'Brien
2013
Pamela Adams, Benjamin Panciera, Fawn Walker

Staff

Edward Baker, Executive Director
Tricia Royston, Librarian

11 Blinman Street
New London, Connecticut 06320

860.443.1209
www.newlondonhistory.org
info@newlondonhistory.org

ISSN 1940-2074

Three Quarters Gone – One to Go

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

For those of you who may have wondered why our Annual Meeting is always in September, wonder no longer! The New London County Historical Society's year runs from September 1 to August 31, which always seems like an oddity to me too, but nevertheless, that's what we work with. Since we have now reached the beginning of our last quarter for 2011, I thought I would review some of our successes and some things yet to accomplish before September 1.

The great news is that this year we were able — through the wonderful support of our members, board and friends — to meet and even slightly surpass our Annual Fund goal! Thanks to everyone who contributes to this fund, which is used primarily for our day to day operations. (Of course we still welcome your gifts!)

We established a relationship with the Child and Family Agency of Southeastern CT, which runs a book auction ten times a year at the B.P. Learned Mission on Shaw Street in New London. The auction allows us to sell some of our "out of scope" books and to earn a bit of money to put into our on-going publishing efforts. Some of the books recently placed for auction are a series of records from Boston dating back to the 18th century. It seems that in our early years (dating to 1870), such publications were routinely exchanged between historical societies throughout New England. With the advent of the Digital Age, most if not all of these records are now available on-line, allowing us to de-accession these publications and still have access to the information for our members, staff and researchers. On our own publishing front, we are well along in the preparation of a volume by Clark van der Lyke, which tells the story of New London's City Council activities during WWII. This book will be available later this year. Former President, Pat Schaefer, is working on the editing of this book with Mr. van der Lyke. Next up, we hope, will be a history of State Pier in New London, for which we have wonderful pictures donated by former board member John Pendleton.

We continue our successful relationship with Flock Theatre, which recently presented Anton Chekhov's "The Cherry Orchard" in our Long Parlor (following an equally good production of "Little Women" last winter). We hope you were able to see these shows and to appreciate the talents displayed by the Flock cast in our unique theatrical setting. Two fundraisers, with dinner at Dev's and the show, were well attended.

Plans are proceeding apace for "The Rockets Red Glare," an exhibit exploring the War of 1812 – on the 200th anniversary of its beginning. Edward is working with other local museums (the Lyman Allyn, Stonington Historical Society, Custom House Maritime Museum and Mystic Seaport) to stage the exhibition at the Lyman Allyn. The centerpiece of the show will be the Stonington Battle Flag, a now seldom-seen and very special relic of the Battle of Stonington. Other events are planned around the 1812 commemoration, including a "Commodore Decatur's Ball," a lecture series on the issues of the war, and bus tours to other Northeast US and Canada sites involved in this oft forgotten and not quite understood conflict, in which Connecticut was nevertheless very engaged.

Coming up this summer will be our Garden Party on Connecticut Historic Gardens Day (June 26), Songs of the Civil War performed by Rick Spencer (July 20), a bus tour to New Bedford (August 19) and the return of Miss Jane Perkins' teas in August.

We hope to see you at these events and we welcome you any time to our historic home, for a tour, to do research, to enjoy a play, or just to stroll around our gardens.

~Deborah Donovan

The Shaws of New London Part II (continued)

(Continued from page 2)

was out of town. Nathaniel mentions being unable to fit out a vessel at New London “in the present Ill state of health of my Brother” (Rogers, p. 324). Perhaps Thomas was in charge of the day to day details of shipping for the business. He did not leave a letter book separate from Nathaniel’s, but after Nathaniel’s death Thomas continued to run the business.

Lucretia Shaw died December 11, 1781, and Nathaniel April 15, 1782, from the accidental firing of a supposedly unprimed musket when coming back from a hunting trip to Long Island. Thomas described their deaths to a friend in Boston:

You have doubtless heard the melancholy tidings of my brothers awful death. When this Town was destroyed & so many of my Dear friends reduced to extream poverty & Distress and others of them butchered in cool blood; it effected me deply; it wounded my very soul When my Dear Sister [Lucretia] died of a putrid fever which she took from some Destressed prisoners she took in; it allmost overwhelm’d me. . . But O! the Death of my Brother is unconsolable. . . [the musket] went off full Loaded with Goose Shott and Discharged all its fatal contents into his right side. . .

Nathaniel lived for three days, making his will and “retain[ing] his sences to the last.”(Rogers, p. 329-30)

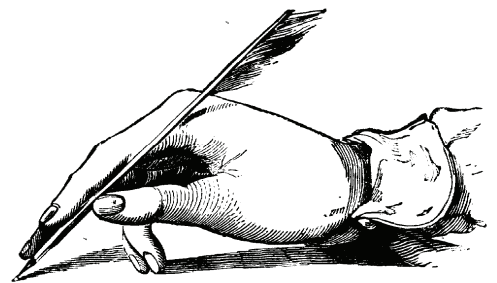
Most of Nathaniel’s property was left to his nephew and niece, Nathaniel Shaw Woodbridge and Lucretia Shaw Woodbridge. Thomas was in charge of the property until they came of age. Both married and had children. Nathaniel lived most of the time on the family farm in Salem, Connecticut. He married twice. He had three children with his first wife and one with the second, and died June 16, 1797, age 26.

Lucretia, who inherited the Shaw Mansion, married Elias Perkins and had seven children, three of whom died young. She died March 6, 1802, age 28. Elias lived until 1845. Their oldest son, Nathaniel Shaw Perkins, inherited the house from his father and raised his family there. He and his wife Ellen Richards had 14 children, nine of whom lived to adulthood. Only one of these had a child, who did not marry. The Shaw Mansion was sold to the New London County Historical Society in 1907 by Jane Richards Perkins, the youngest daughter of Nathaniel and Ellen, and her niece, Ellinor Shaw Griswold. None of the generations beyond Nathaniel and Thomas is buried in the Antientest Burial Ground.

Thomas lived until September 26, 1795. His portrait, painted by Ralph Earl in the early 1790s, hangs in the long parlor of the Shaw Mansion. There is no

portrait of Nathaniel, either Junior or Senior, but Lucretia Shaw and her sister-in-law Mary were painted by William Johnston in 1765 and their portraits are in the upstairs landing of the Mansion. Ralph Earl portraits of Temperance, Lucretia Woodbridge Perkins (and her son Nathaniel), and Elias Perkins also hang in the Mansion.

Patricia M. Schaefer



References:

Caulkins, Frances Manwaring, *The History of New London, Connecticut to 1860*. New London, CT: New London County Historical Society, 2007.

Hempstead, Joshua, *The Diary of Joshua Hempstead, 1711-1758*. New London, CT: New London County Historical Society, 1999.

Roger, Ernest E. *Connecticut’s Naval Office at New London During the War of the American Revolution*. New London, CT: New London County Historical Society, 1933.



Hat, leghorn straw, lined with white sateen.
ca 1804-1815

Karlee Keyser, a May graduate of Connecticut College and student of Japanese language and culture, was our spring intern. Her interest in clothes and fashion led her to spend last summer at the Kyoto Costume Institute in Japan where she learned first-hand about sewing conservation techniques for period costumes. Her experience there and desire to pursue a career in museum work, in turn, led her to us at the Shaw Mansion where we quickly put her to work looking at our own fashion collection.

Though only able to work her way through one second-floor closet full of hats, dresses, and military uniforms, Karlee's work has uncovered hats ranging from the 1700s to the early 1900s, and most excitedly, a bonnet to 1785-90. This mustard color calash bonnet is made of silk and bears the label, "Louisa A. Canbee, Oxford", written on a paper tag sewn to the lining.



The calash was worn mainly in pre-Revolutionary France, to protect the tall and elaborate hairstyles that noblewomen sported. With supporting hoops of cane reed, the bonnet folds down flat, like a convertible car top or

accordion, and features two ties that fasten at the wearer's neck. The calash was the topic of contemporary caricatures and fashion illustrations alike, but both depictions tend to exaggerate its height—the NLCHS example is roughly 14" tall, as opposed to those in the picture that appear to be almost two feet high. As both men and women's dress became more extravagant in the pre-Revolution social climate, so did women's hair



become higher and higher, until some styles even had a model sailing ship perched on top, or a birdcage incorporated into the wig! When considering that such elaborate wigs went hand-in-hand with dresses consisting of such high quality material and labor as to cost upwards of \$100,000 if sewn in the present day, the connection between the French Revolution and clothing becomes quite apparent. In fact, women's styles changed to reflect the new material modesty of the post-Revolution atmosphere, and were often constructed of plain, white cotton with less restrictive corsets than the earlier years of Lyon silks.

Explore New Bedford's Whaling History with NLCHS Staff and Fellow Members

New Bedford MA, although a much larger city, has many things in common with New London: its whaling history, its 19th century prominence, its beautiful historic homes, its ethnic diversity and its active waterfront. Plan to join us on Friday 19 August, for a tour to New Bedford to explore this interesting and lively city and two of its great museums. A special point of interest will be the recently opened exhibit at the Whaling Museum on the Cape Verdean connections to New England through the whaling trade.

Included in the tour is motorcoach transportation from New London (or Stonington — we'll pick you up), with commentary provided by our own whaling authorities; admission to the New Bedford Whaling Museum with a special guided tour by Senior Curator Michael Dyer; lunch at a waterfront restaurant; and a tour of the historic Rotch-Jones-Duff House and Gardens. Refreshments will also be served on the bus. For complete information and reservations please contact us at 860.443.1209. Reservations should be made before August 5 in order to ensure a successful trip!

ALL INCLUSIVE PRICE is \$89 for members, \$95 for non-members. Make reservations by calling the Shaw Mansion — don't miss the bus.

Congratulations

Congratulations to our 2010-2011 intern, Ms. Karlee Keyser. I had the pleasure of meeting Karlee just as she was ending her engagement with us and just before her graduation from Connecticut College. (An historic event as this is the 100th year since Conn's founding in New London) I happened to be at the commencement as my own

niece was also graduating, and I was able to add my cheer when Karlee accepted her degree *cum laude* from President Higdon. She also received an International Studies Certificate from the Toor Cummings Center for International Studies and the Liberal Arts AND Honors in her major field of Japanese Language and Literature.



Karlee was a great asset to the New London County Historical Society and was clearly a hard worker up at the college on the hill. Good luck Karlee!

~Deborah Donovan



Connecticut's Historic Gardens Day ~ 26 June

Sunday 26 June join us at the Shaw Mansion for Connecticut's Historic Gardens Day. Your \$5 admission to the gardens will provide opportunities for learning and enjoying the garden in the current, or the 19th century. In the morning Susan Munger will host garden tours and there will be a presentation on the surprising connection between the Shaw Mansion gardens and one of the earliest proponents of "modernist" landscape design, Christopher Tunnard, born in Canada, trained in England, and teaching at Yale after the Second World War.

In the afternoon, "Miss Perkins and friends" will entertain with period music, a "Language of Flowers" tour and perhaps a game of croquet. There will be plants available for sale, and strawberry shortcake for everyone! Open 11am to 3:30 pm.

New and Renewed Members

Sustaining

Nancy H. Steenburg Mystic

Contributing

Ms. Betty A. Pinson Waterford
Mr. & Mrs. Donald McLellan Berkeley Hgts, NJ
Candy & Frank McNally North Kingston, RI

Friend

Carl & Carol Sommer Waterford
Mary Jane Moore Annapolis, MD
Douglas Bjorn Stonington
Mr. & Mrs. William Miner Mystic
Mac Turner N. Stonington
Edward L. Hobron La Mesa, CA
Dorothy Leib Mystic
Barbara Brockhurst & Robert Lavoie New London
Edward Janusz Stonington
Mary E. Baker New London
Marian Shilstone New London

Family & Individual

Mr. & Mrs. Samuel Green III Southbury
Kelly & Gary Milton Groton
Douglas & Kathleen Conroy Madison
Richard & Barbara Callan Hamden
Martina Dinale Niantic
Nancy Savin New York, NY
Elizabeth Kading Pawcatuck
David & Torrey Fenton Oakdale
Mr. & Mrs. Donald Watson Rocky Hill
Katherine Davis N. Stonington
Thomas Hare Chester
Armand Lambert New London
A.J.A. Chester, Jr. Groton

Mr. G. F. Lane Stonington
Peggy O'Neill Houston, TX
Barbara Thompson Needles, CA
Ronald B. Meade Pensacola, FL
Christine G. Regan New London
Mrs. Alma Peterson New London
Robert L. Kaylor Chevy Chase, MD
Barry & Cecile Feldman East Lyme
Daneen & Gregory Roth New London
Carla & Paul Henschel Mystic
Abigail Van Slyck & Mitchell Favreau Pawcatuck
Robert Suppich Wethersfield
Penny Parsekian & Geoff Kaufman New London
Judith A. Hicks Mystic
George S. Gadbois Lancaster, PA
Helen Roche Quaker Hill
Mr. & Mrs. Frank Laycock New London
John & June Hoye East Lyme
Stewart Turner Cape Neddick, ME
Mr. & Mrs. Brian Rogers Mystic
Ralph & Judy Wadleigh Falmouth, MA
Jaymie Nickerson Old Lyme
Helen Sandalls New London
Sara Munro New London
Mrs. Marcia Robinson Mystic
David Cruthers Groton

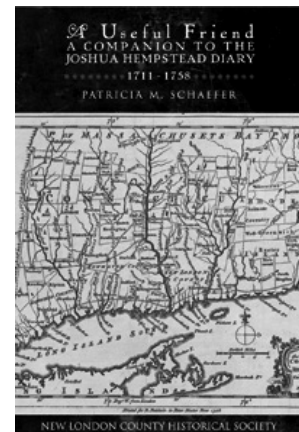
Ronald Loomis New London
Gay Myers & Lance Mayer New London
Karl P. Stofko East Haddam
Mr. & Mrs. Jack Ashcraft Sarasota, FL
Joan Schneider Niantic
Bethany & Gordon Angell New London
Dr. George A. Spreccace New London
Robert W. Smith Marshfield, MA
Clark van der Lyke New London
Lon D. Outen Kershaw, SC
Frances Pan Mystic
Brian Nance Ledyard
Tim Driscoll Waterford
Robert Hine East Haddam
Michelle Green Melton Paris, TN
John Hempstead La Cross, WI
Alice Dickenson East Lyme
Helen Rozwadowski & Dan Hornstein New London
Kathryn C. Clarke Waterford
Naomi Kilgore New Britain
Elizabeth H. Murphy Niantic
Steven Standridge Westerly, RI
Sylvia Malizia & Fred Paxton New London
Trix Bodde New London
Bernice Joseph Goletta, CA
Ashley Bissonette Brooklyn
Laurie Pasteryak Glastonbury

Books available from the New London County Historical Society

<i>The Amistad Incident as Reported in the New London Gazette & General Advertiser.</i> (NLCHS)	\$5
<i>The History of the Amistad Captives.</i> (NLCHS) A reproduction of a pamphlet by JW Barber, 1840.	\$10
<i>Black Roots in Southeastern Connecticut, 1650-1900</i> by Barbara Brown and Dr. James Rose (NLCHS) This republished book is a milestone in genealogical research of African Americans and Native Americans in New London County.	\$35
<i>The Diary of Joshua Hempstead 1711-1758.</i> (NLCHS) Revised 1999. Personal journal serves as fascinating and invaluable account of Connecticut life in early 18 th century.	\$75
<i>For Oil and Buggy Whips: Whaling Captains of New London County, Connecticut</i> by Barnard Colby Biographical sketches of local whaling captains document New London's role in this industry.	\$18
<i>Greetings from New London</i> (NLCHS) Collection of early 20 th -century postcards from our archives.	\$10
<i>Life on a Whaler</i> by Nathaniel W. Taylor (NLCHS) Story of Taylor's two-year Antarctic voyage as physician aboard New London's <i>Julius Caesar</i> (1851-53).	\$25
<i>A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Venture.</i> (NLCHS) Autobiography of former slave Venture Smith, originally published in 1798. NLCHS facsimile of 1897 edition.	\$5
<i>Tapestry: A Living History of the Black Family in Southern Connecticut</i> by Dr. J.M. Rose and B.W. Brown An introduction to the role of African Americans in early New England history. Contains genealogies. (NLCHS)	\$5
<i>The Colonial Burying Grounds of Eastern Connecticut</i> by James A. Slater. Fully illustrated with photographs, this book provides a description of and maps the burial grounds of eastern Connecticut.	\$40
<i>Common to this Country: Botanical Discoveries of Lewis & Clark</i> by Susan Munger. Illustrated volume exploring plants discovered by Lewis and Clark on their westward expedition.	\$23
<i>The Day Paper</i> by Gregory N. Stone. History of New London's award-winning daily newspaper.	\$30
<i>In the Footsteps of George Washington</i> by William G. Clotworthy. A guidebook to Washington sites along the East Coast, including the Shaw Mansion.	\$25
<i>Murder of Mayhem? – Benedict Arnold's New London, Connecticut Raid, 1781</i> by Dr. Walter L. Powell. Excellent research in a small readable format.	\$10
<i>History of New London, Connecticut: from the first survey of the coast in 1612 to 1860</i> by Frances Caulkins With a new introduction and a revised index 2007 (NLCHS).	\$60
<i>Prospero's America: John Winthrop, Jr., Alchemy, and the Creation of New England Culture, 1606-1676</i> Excellent new history from Walter Woodward, the Connecticut State Historian.	\$45
<i>Leviathan The History of Whaling in America</i> by Eric Jay Dolin A good one-volume history of an important local maritime enterprise.	\$28
<i>A USEFUL FRIEND—A Companion to the Joshua Hempstead Diary 1711-1758</i> by Patricia Schaefer (NLCHS) A truly useful resource guide, if you have the Diary, you should have this book; includes a subject index to the Diary.	\$25
<i>History of Norwich, Connecticut: from its possession by the Indians to the year 1866</i> by Frances Caulkins With a new introduction and a new index 2009 (NLCHS).	\$60

These *Images of America* titles available from NLCHS

<i>New London</i>	\$20
<i>New London Firefighting</i>	\$20
<i>Reinventing New London</i>	\$20
<i>Naval Submarine Base New London</i>	\$20
<i>Lighthouses and Life Saving along the Connecticut and Rhode Island Coast</i>	\$20
<i>Groton</i>	\$20
<i>Groton Revisited</i>	\$20
<i>Mystic</i>	\$20



Members Receive a 10% Discount.

If ordering by mail, please add \$5 shipping and handling for the first four books and \$1 for each additional book.