

NEW LONDON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2011

Connecticut Goes to War, 1861 Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War

The 12th of April, 1861, South Carolina forces launched an attack on Ft. Sumter, situated on an island (actually a sand bar made into an island with 70 thousand tons of granite from New England) off the coast of Charleston. Thus began the bloodiest war of United States history. Connecticut citizens responded with whole heart to “saving the Union.”

Connecticut men answered the call to serve in the Union Army, including the first to volunteer from New London, Benjamin Perkins. Connecticut industry responded producing almost half of the revolvers and a third of the musket/rifles purchased by the government during the war. Connecticut shipbuilders responded, producing the vessels, steam boilers and engines needed to blockade and fight the war. Connecticut’s mariners responded helping to fill the ranks of the Navy.

The women of Connecticut responded as well from the home front. In the Shaw Mansion’s hallway exhibit case we currently feature the records of New London’s Ladies Soldiers’ Aid Society. Organized in January 1862, in the first six months alone, the Ladies Aid society

made twenty-one shipments to the Sanitary Commission including 860 bed ticks, 619 garments, 127 pairs of socks. The great majority of all these were hand-made by the members of the Society. A typical shipment would also include razors, soap, bandages and hospital supplies as well as food items such as marmalade, pickled onions and cider, reading materials and tobacco. One newspaper account reports:

“The Soldiers’ Aid Society of this city, since its organization, Jan. 7th, 1862 to Jan. 7th, 1863, has been in constant operation, holding meetings for work and consultation for the first few weeks semi-weekly, but the greater part of the time once a week, and has been very generously sustained by many handsome donations of the citizens, of material, ready made clothing, and money as well as by the diligent and energetic labors of the President and Managers and it is due to all who have been and it is hoped will continue to be interested in the cause, that a statement of the disposals should be given to the public which is most cheerfully done. No attempt is made to give in detail the donations or names of the donors, but equal justice can be done by saying they are too numerous to admit of detail, and the Society trust they are sufficiently grateful for them.

In *Women of the War*, published in 1866, Frank Moore writes: “We may safely say that there is scarcely a loyal woman in the North who did not do something in the aid of the cause—who did not contribute, of time, or labor, or money, to the comfort of our soldiers and the success of our arms.”

There will be many opportunities to commemorate and study the Civil War over the next several years as sesquicentennial events unfold. The meeting of the Association for the Study of Connecticut History, on 15 April at Central Connecticut State University is one of the first. At the Shaw Mansion we have several programs in the planning stage, but for now we hope you’ll come learn about efforts, “On the Home Front.”

“Ye Towne’s Antientest Buriall Place” *The Shaws of New London, Part I*

The Shaw Mansion, built in 1756, has been the home of the New London County Historical Society since 1907. Before that, it was home to first the Shaw and then (through a daughter’s marriage) the Perkins families. Most of the members of these families are buried in Cedar Grove Cemetery or in the towns where they lived. Members of the first couple of generations to live in New London, however, are buried in the Antientest Burial Ground. In this article we will look at the first Nathaniel Shaw and his wife Temperance, and cover most of their children. Next time we will focus on the Shaws that were most involved in the Revolution, and give a brief overview of some of the Shaw descendants.

Joshua Hempstead records several men with the last name of Shaw in his diary. There was a Richard Shaw, who Caulkins says was of Easthampton, who sailed back and forth across the Sound to Long Island. Benjamin Shaw had a daughter Sarah baptized in early 1731, and a Daniel Shaw died in 1738. None has a stone in the burial ground. It is quite possible that these men were related to the Nathaniel Shaw who moved to New London from Fairfield and eventually built the Shaw Mansion, but I have been unable to find any information one way or the other.

Nathaniel Shaw was born in Fairfield, Connecticut, son of Nathaniel and Margaret (Jackson) Shaw, who were married in Boston in 1698. They had six children: Margaret (b. 1699), Thomas (1700), Nathaniel (September 23, 1703), John (1705), Sarah (1708), and Thomas (1711). The first Thomas and John died

young. The widow Margaret Shaw was appointed administratrix of her husband’s estate October 2, 1712, and became guardian of Nathaniel, Sarah, Thomas, and Margaret.

Nathaniel, whom a Caulkins manuscript lists as a “mariner from Fairfield,” moved to New London in 1722. He continued as a mariner, and by at least 1732 had advanced to master. In November of that year Hempstead records that *Natt Shaw Master of the Norwich Schooner came in from Ireland & have had the Small Pox in their passage. absolom King Jonathan Douglass . . . & Shaws Brother & two Indians died 5 out of 15. . .* The brother must have been Thomas, as he was Nathaniel’s only remaining brother. Hempstead has a few other notes of Shaw’s maritime activities. In September of 1738 he was the master of *Samuel Allens Brigg. John Smith an Elderly man I Suppose about 50 an Irishman a Sailor* who was working on the brig drowned one night when he apparently tried to return on board via the cable which attached the stern of the brig to *Joseph Coits wharf*. Hempstead speculated that he was *p haps in drink. . . & Lost his hold and so because he could not Swim was drowned*. In September of 1742, *a Stranger died here yt came Lately over from Jamaica with Capt Shaw who brot over Several Sick Souldiers. . .* This was during the war with Spain which was popularly called the War of Jenkins Ear.

We know from family records that Shaw was a merchant as well as a sea captain. Hempstead notes several purchases from a “Mr. Shaw,” of a wide range of goods. One expensive one was in January of 1747 when Hempstead

went into Town & bot 3 yds & 1/2 of broad Cloth of Shaw & pd him in bills at 70s p yd L12 5s 0d. Other purchases (or items received to balance accounts) included a pistol, a silk handkerchief, *100. 6d nailes*, wire for a surveying chain, and barrels. It is possible that this “Mr. Shaw” was not the same as Capt. Nathaniel, since this Shaw had a shop in town and the Shaw Mansion is quite near Hempstead’s house. Shaw’s wharves, however, were on Water Street, on the far side of the Parade, and he may have had shops there.

Caulkins lists Nathaniel Shaw as first holding a town office in 1745, when he was one of the grand jurors. He served on grammar school committees, and by 1756 was voted one of the selectmen. In 1767 he was one of the com-

(Continued on page 4)

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A “New London Guy” Far From Home

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

As you recall from my message in our last newsletter, City Historian Sally Ryan and I traveled to New Zealand and Australia in November to see what life was like in the Antipodes. Two of my particular reasons for this trip were involved with a story of 19th Century New London that I have been very interested in for some years now.

I wanted to visit with Max Downes and his daughter Liz, both of whom have been to New London, and both of whom have studied and written on the elephant sealers who sailed on “oiling” voyages from our little city in the 1800’s to Heard Island, a sub-Antarctic volcano in the Southern Ocean. I call these “oiling” voyages because these New London “guys” were not just off a-whaling, but were also heavily engaged in the hunting of “elephants,” as they called them, whose oil was similar to, if not finer than, whale oil. The cargos they sent, or brought, home were a mix of whale and seal oil (mostly the latter) for many years. Max Downes, a Melbournian biologist, first traveled to Heard Island in 1951 and has made several working, and one pleasure, trip there since. He became fascinated by the (mostly) New London sealers/elephanters who worked the frigid beaches of the island from 1855 to 1882. Max has written extensively on this specifically New London industry. Liz Downes, who accompanied her father on a trip to Heard in 2002, recently completed a graduate thesis on the 1881 shipwreck of the whaler *Trinity*, owned by the Lawrence Brothers firm, and its crew. They were the last Americans to work the Heard beaches and after a 14 month ordeal were rescued by the US Navy. Coincidentally I met both Max and Liz through the internet when I was working on a graduate thesis on a journal written aboard the first ship to arrive for sealing at Heard, the *Laurens* owned by New London’s Perkins & Smith firm. So, our trip to Australia was planned to touch base with the Downes for more conversation and to learn more about a very interesting piece of New London history.

I also wanted to meet with some of the Australians who manage Heard Island today as a World Heritage Site, the staff of the Australian Antarctic Division of the Environment (ANARE), whose offices are in Kingston, Tasmania, a suburb of Hobart. These people were most helpful to me when I was learning about the elephant sealing of New London men on Heard and Kerguelen Islands (called familiarly the “Desolations” by our Connecticut folks). Bruce Hull, a Senior Environmental Officer at ANARE, welcomed us and showed us a fabulous assortment of artifacts from Heard Island including stoves, whaling/oiling implements, fragments of pipes, bottles, jars and clothing, all pieces of our New London history! He and the Downes both pointed us to the State Museum of Tasmania, which has a wonderful exhibit on Antarctica and in which Heard Island has a starring role. One reason for this is that Heard was the very first location that Australia claimed in the frozen south, back in 1947. Now of course, the Aussies are heavily involved in scientific work and protection of the world’s most remote, beautiful and strange continent.

All of this brings me to the “New London Guy” of the title of this article. In 1989, an Australian expedition to Heard Island found a quite wonderful carving of a man’s face on a piece of basalt, near to the campsite of



(Continued on page 5)

The Shaws of New London Part 1 (continued)

(Continued from page 2)

mittee appointed to make recommendations on the Boston Stamp Act Resolutions.

Shaw married Temperance Harris, daughter of Joseph, on November 5, 1730. He purchased a lot on "the Bank" from George Denison, a Westerly shipwright, in 1734. Their growing family lived in a wooden house there for over twenty years, until the mansion house, or what is now called the Shaw Mansion, was built of granite blocks quarried from the site.

Nathaniel and Temperance had eight children, only one of whom had children who survived to adulthood. Three of the boys died at sea in their early 20s. Joseph, the second son, was baptized September 25, 1737, and died at age 20. John was baptized February 16, 1746, and died aged 21. William was baptized September 27, 1747, and was 22 when he died. None of these has a stone in the burying ground.

The eldest daughter and first child of Nathaniel and Temperance was Sarah, born March 29, 1734, and baptized two days later. (Hempstead's diary mistakenly lists her father as "Nath Starr.") She married David Allen on November 20, 1757, and had a son, also David. Sarah died September 11, 1759. Her son died November 17, 1762, "aged 3 years, 7 months." Both of them have stones in the area of the other Shaw family grave-stones. There is no stone for the senior David Allen.

Mary, the other daughter and youngest child in the family, was born September 6, 1751, and baptized a month later. She married the Rev. Mr. Ephraim Wood-

bridge on October 26, 1769, a couple of weeks after his ordination at New London. He had been born in Groton in 1746 and graduated from Yale in 1765. He was called to the New London church after the Rev. Mr. Mather Byles was dismissed for converting to the Church of England.

The young couple were given a house on Main Street by her father, which was still standing when Caulkins wrote her *History of New London*. They had two children, Nathaniel Shaw Woodbridge, born November 4, 1771, and Lucretia Shaw Woodbridge, born August 7, 1773. The children were named for Mary's brother, Nathaniel Junior, and his wife Lucretia. A third child, Sarah, was born January 7, 1775, and died September 5th of the same year. Mary herself died June 10, 1775, of consumption, and her husband September 6, 1776, of the same disease. They are buried next to each other in the Antientist Burial Ground. Both have verses on their gravestones. The young Nathaniel and Lucretia went to live with their grandparents and two uncles in the Shaw Mansion.

Nathaniel Shaw Senior died August 26, 1778. Temperance outlived almost her entire family, dying June 27, 1796 at the age of 87. Only her son Daniel, who had been baptized June 27, 1742, outlived her. He married Grace Coit in June of 1769 and died June 16, 1798. Daniel and Grace had no children, and are buried in Cedar Grove Cemetery among the graves moved from the Second Burial Ground.

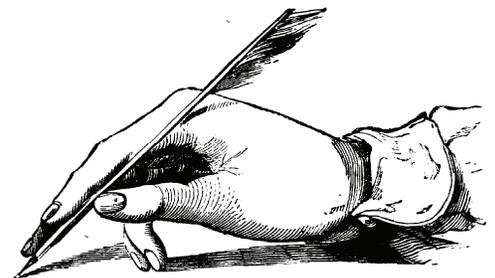
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Caulkins, Frances Manwaring, "Notes on Town Officers," manuscript in possession of the New London County Historical Society.

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.



Patricia M. Schaefer

Sally Ryan Honored with Lifetime Achievement Award

New London City Historian Sally Ryan was recently the guest of honor at a gala celebration hosted by the New London Kiwanis Club at the Alumni Center of the United States Coast Guard Academy. They presented her with a Lifetime Achievement Award for her work as a volunteer, educator and historian. With citations from the City of New London and the State of Connecticut in addition to the Kiwanians, many accolades and expressions of thanks were shared.

Currently Sally spends her summers as the Site Supervisor of the Hempsted Houses for Connecticut Landmarks; her winters she volunteers for the Lyman Allyn Art Museum and New London Landmarks. Between seasons, her New London history classes, offered at the Public Library of New London, are the most popular programs they present. At these history classes, Sally becomes one of the Historical Society's best book salesmen. Copies of *Life on a Whaler*, Caulkins's *History of New London, For Oil and Buggy Whips*, *Black Roots*, *Joshua Hempstead's Diary* and *A Useful Friend* all find new homes in New London and beyond.

Beginning her teaching career in Alaska, Sally was there in 1959 when it became our 49th State. Returning to New London, Sally taught first at St. Mary's School and then 27 years for the

public school system, working in three different elementary schools. After her retirement, she became the Municipal Historian for the City of New London. Although it is an unpaid position, Sally has worked tirelessly to celebrate the history of the city with lectures, bus tours, walking tours, cemetery tours, and house tours.

Her knowledge, and experience of the Hurricane of 1938 has given her the opportunity to become a television personality on the History Channel.

Sally's travels have taken her to all the corners of the world, and wherever she goes she is always looking for the New

London connection. Just returned from a recent trip to Australia, and new Zealand, she and our NLCHS President, Deborah Donovan, were particularly interested in learning more about New London elephant sealers on Heard Island. They returned with a copy of a Master's thesis, written by Elizabeth Downs, of an account of the crew of the New London whaler *Trinity*, marooned on Heard's Island from 1880 to 1881.

Close to 150 people celebrated Sally's work that evening. And in honoring that work they were also celebrating the rich heritage that we share in this corner of Connecticut.

President's Message (Continued)

some of the *Trinity* crew. It is more than likely that this face is of a New London "guy," and was carved by another, who found themselves in a desperate situation, far from home, on a volcanic beach in the middle of a wild and frozen ocean, not knowing if they would ever see New London again. And now, this face is still far from home, in an honored place in a museum in the farthest southern city of the Antipodes.

It strikes me frequently that the story of our "Desolation" elephanters needs to be more well known in New London. There was a plan, during the rebuilding of the Parade in New London, to place a statue of a roaring (they don't bark, they roar), elephant seal in a conspicuous place to commemorate this industry – an industry that contributed to the wealth of New London in a very big way. The plan was widely ridiculed locally by people who do not know, or want to know, the story of New London's involvement in the Antarctic region. The statue never came to pass. Interestingly, there is a life-size statue of TWO elephant seals at the University of Tasmania!

Bruce Hull of ANARE suggested that we create a Heard Island Historical Society, with members from Australia and the United States, to tell and to interpret the story of this special place and the fact that it was first visited by mariners from New London. 19th Century New London "Guys." What do you think?

~ Deborah Donovan

The Shaw Mansion gets a New Kitchen

A full year after we began, renovations to the 1845 Wing of the Shaw Mansion are just about complete. Thanks to the generous donation of cabinets and appliances from members Edmund and Ann Leete, and thanks to the labor of Pat and Tod Schaefer, and Mike Richardson (for their painting and in-

stallation skills), we now have a new kitchen adjacent to our classroom.

We are now much more able to accommodate groups and we have much more program flexibility.

Tod was also responsible for installing the art storage rack for our paint-

ing collection on the second floor. Fred Shakir is now adding insulated panels to windows in the collections storage rooms so that much of the work we visualized to improve the environment for our members, visitors, and our collection is nearing completion.

Upcoming Programs Scheduled For Spring

Saturday 7 May — Vintage Base Ball Home Opening Match — 11:00am to 4:00pm
Thames Base Ball Club begins its season at home with a two game match versus the Sandy Hooks from Newtown.

Wednesday 10 May — “The Cherry Orchard” — 7:00pm
Opening of the Flock Theatre production of the Anton Chekhov play in the Long Parlor of the Shaw Mansion. Continues through Sunday 22 May. For ticket information go to www.flocktheatre.org

Saturday 21 May — Jibboom Club Honors National Maritime Day — Hope Week parade begins at 10am — Jibboom Club marches with the Ancient Mariners and the Ladies of the American Seamen’s Friend Society

Sunday 22 May — National Maritime Day — Noon
Memorial service at the Maritime Green next to Fort Trumbull honors the US Merchant Marine

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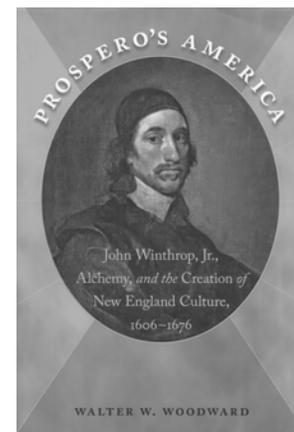
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| <i>The History of the Amistad Captives.</i> (NLCHS) A reproduction of a pamphlet by JW Barber, 1840. | \$10 |
| <i>Black Roots in Southeastern Connecticut, 1650-1900</i> by Barbara Brown and Dr. James Rose (NLCHS) This republished book is a milestone 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 |
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| <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 |

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