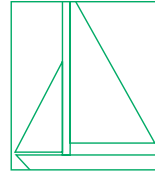


NEW LONDON MAIN STREET



A Connecticut Main Street Community

www.newlondonmainstreet.org

Volume 6, No. 2 ■ Spring 2004

Seaport Exhibit Comes to Union Station for Celebrate Regatta Festival

By Jonathan Shay

CELEBRATE REGATTA 2004

Saturday, June 12

Race Start Times: Freshmen 3:15 p.m.,
Second Varsity 4 p.m., Varsity 5 p.m.

Double Decker Bus Rides
1:30-5:30 p.m.

*Last run of the day will bring Race fans
to the start of the Varsity Race at
Riverside Park.*

Mystic Seaport Exhibit

"Rise of Intercollegiate Rowing"
Union Station Center, Saturday
June 5th to Monday June 14

Saturday Market

Season Opening
City Pier, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Restaurants will celebrate the races
by offering special "Harvard" and
"Yale" menu items.

Antique dealers and shops
will feature Race memorabilia.

To kick off New
London Main
Street's Cele-

brate Regatta festi-
val, Mystic Sea-
port will present
"The Rise of
Intercollegiate
Rowing," an
exhibit of early
rowing material,
at New London's
Union Station, 35

Water Street, opening Saturday, June 5.

Rowing was America's first great spectator sport. This exhibit demonstrates the craze for the new sport that swept the country 150 years ago. Eventually baseball and football eclipsed rowing as the premier American sport, but early intercollegiate rowing helped shape the role sports now play in our colleges and in our society as a whole.



1902 program cover for
Yale-Harvard regatta on the Thames

The show features the Harvard-Yale regatta, which should be of particular interest to New London residents. Students from Harvard and Yale had participated in rowing clubs for about eight years when the first race between the schools took place in 1852, giving birth

continued on page 5

New Thames River Wine & Spirits Showcased at Seventh Annual Meeting

By Tim Anderson

Come to New London Main Street's Seventh Annual Meeting & Awards Ceremony and find out what Charlotte Hennegan and Fred Argilagos have done to restore the commercial space at 84 Bank Street. The date is Thursday, May 27, 5:30 - 7 p.m. Take a tour of the new wine and cheese emporium, which includes a beautiful deck and fabulous wine cellar, and learn the history behind the restored equipment and fix-

tures, which came from several key New London businesses. Shop for a favorite wine or cheese, sample the wares and enjoy the rest of the festivities!

The Promotion Committee will be conducting another unveiling of a beautiful poster by local artist Judith Kuhn, who will be in attendance to sign posters. A brief business meeting will be held to elect new board members and approve the annual budget. Main Street Partners, Major Funders and volunteers who have

made outstanding contributions during the past year will also be recognized. A reception will follow.

The annual meeting is a chance to learn about Main Street's achievements and discover what exciting projects are in the works for the coming year. If you have not joined or renewed your membership, take advantage of a membership discount available only at the annual meeting. The public is welcome. Please RSVP to the office at 444-2489.

It takes a whole town to make our downtown work!

NEW LONDON MAIN STREET

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Organization

Promotion

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and Kerin Woods

President's Perspective

By Carolyn Johnson

For many of us, nice weather and longer days bring a burst of energy and the urge to do some spring cleaning. The board of directors of NLMS is no exception. We've been wanting to "clean up our act" a bit and spent some time revisiting our mission statement and our strategic goals. When the "dust" settled, it was apparent that there was one goal on our list that stood out from the rest: we need to strengthen the connection between Waterfront Park and the transportation center, and the rest of our downtown.

We all recognize what a gem of a facility we have in our Waterfront Park—a mag-

nificent venue for events and gatherings of all types. Our transportation center—and the trains, ferries and buses that deliver thousands of visitors to our City—is a huge asset. The challenge lies in getting all the festival-goers, cruise ship passengers, and harbor gazers to come to the "other side of the tracks." We are convinced that once all those visitors venture onto our streets, they will discover that the architecture, unique merchants and fabulous restaurants were worth the "trip."

No one has ever accused NLMS committees of being short on new ideas and projects! Our more narrow focus, for the coming year, of connecting the waterfront to the



downtown, will allow us to more carefully sort through all the opportunities, suggestions, and ideas that come our way. And, as always, we encourage you to bring your ideas, and your enthusiasm, and join us! Contact any NLMS committee chair, board member, or volunteer you see here in our newsletter—if you've got spring fever, and an urge to "get out and do something," we've got a job for you!

Executive Director's Update

By Penny Parsekian

The turn of the year saw a flurry of fundraising. The holiday gala and Valentine's events were sold out, and, in the first quarter, our corporate funders and foundations renewed their support. By the end of this fiscal year in June, Main Street will have leveraged the City's \$15,000 annual investment in our program to over \$200,000 worth of design improvements and promotion (our Web site is now getting 850 hits a day, for example), not counting the value of the over 5,000 hours of volunteer time. This year, with funding extra tight, we hope those of you who believe in what we're doing will express your thoughts to the

City Manager and City Council so that we will continue to receive the City's support, which is required by the national program.

The turn of the year also saw a flurry of projects finalized. Public Works raised the new Design Committee light pole banners, Greg Bowerman completed the Caruso's mural for Promotion and Gail Bartelli oversaw the installation of line lighting on State and Bank street buildings. Most rewarding was the selection by a jury at the state level of two of our programs in the Connecticut Main Street Center 2004 Awards for Excellence in Downtown Revitalization. Wet Paint Week and the annual poster series won the highest award in the state for a success-



ful image campaign. The holiday gala, "Going Places" won an Award of Merit. Promotion Committee Chair Kathy Diaz, subcommittee chair Sandy Chalk and gala chair Susan Gorra Heinemann will be accepting the awards at a ceremony in Hartford on June 7.

Finally, my last update lamented John Balian's parting as Organization Chair, a position that will soon be filled (see pg. 7). Here, I want to celebrate the arrival of Jerry Sinnamon as the new chair of Economic Restructuring. Jerry hit the deck running, as you will see from his report on pg. 4.

SPOTLIGHT ON SUPPORTERS

Get Away to Block Island! *In Half the Time*

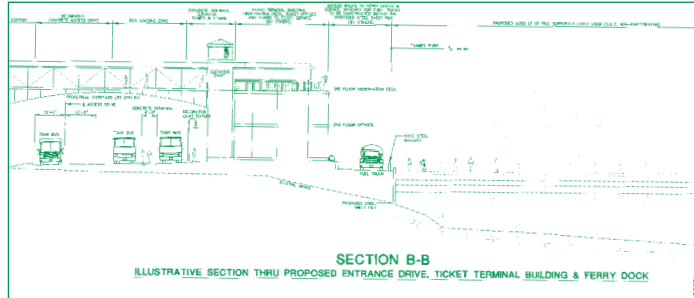
Get out your shorts and sandals and take a ferry ride. Stan Mickus, Marketing Director for Cross Sound Ferry, a Major Funder of New London Main Street since its inception, submitted this update on the new service, slated to begin operating in June, with four round-trips Sunday through Wednesday and an additional trip Thursday through Saturday. For a complete list of departures and rates, visit www.goblockisland.com or call (860) 444-4624.

Want to get away to the "Bermuda of the North?" This summer, Block Island Ferry Services will commence service between New London and Block Island with a 49-meter (approximately 160 feet), wave-piercing catamaran capable of making the trip in less than an hour. The new vessel, which will not carry vehicles, will travel at speeds of over 40 mph and will accommodate over 500 passengers, along with bicycles. It replaces the Anna C., which operated on this route since 1986 and customarily made the trip in a little over two hours.



The service will continue to depart from the New London ferry terminal and land in historic Old Harbor, Block Island, within walking distance of restaurants, shops, hotels and some of the best beaches in the Northeast.

"There has been a demand from the traveling public for more convenient and quicker access between Block Island and the mainland," explains Adam Wronowski, owner, along with his sister Jessica Wronowski, of the new service. "We feel that by improving the existing New London route with a high-speed



vessel capable of reducing the travel time to under one hour, there will be great benefits to island residents and visitors."

Adam is Vice President of Cross Sound Ferry Services, which is owned by his father, John P. Wronowski. For more than 60 years, the Wronowski family has operated ferry service from New London to Block Island, and the new service

marks a watershed in its evolution. Cross Sound operates vehicle and passenger service on conventional vessels and the Sea Jet, a high-speed catamaran similar in design to the new boat, between New London and Orient Point on Long Island.

The new service will present a marketing opportunity for downtown New London merchants, as passengers will be encouraged to park in the Water Street parking garage and reach the ferry through the south entrance of the Cross Sound property.

The City of New London plans to build a pedestrian overpass connecting the garage to the transportation center and a proposed high-speed ferry terminal that Cross Sound Ferry plans to build. A key element of the new terminal will be a public observation deck on the third level that will offer scenic vistas of New London Harbor, the Thames River and Long Island Sound. Once all the improvements are complete, New London will have a true intermodal transportation center, the first in the country to incorporate ground transportation, including high-speed rail, with high-speed ferry service.

NEW LONDON MAIN STREET

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Frank Loomis Palmer Fund

City Center District Becomes Main Street Partner

City Center District, the downtown special services taxing district, provided increased support to New London Main Street to accomplish an ambitious project of outlining the district's historic buildings on Bank and State streets in lights for the winter holiday season. In return, Main Street provided the manpower and secured a grant from the Frank Loomis Palmer Fund to expand the project. The success of the collaboration has led to a second project, the Historic Waterfront District Heritage Trail. (See Design Committee report, pg. 4.)

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Pick a project from the committee reports below and call the Main Street office at 444-2489 to learn how to get involved

Promotion

Kathy Diaz-Saavedra, Chair

The Promotion committee is proud to be unveiling the 2004 poster at Annual Meeting on the 27th of May. Project chair Gretchen Higgins, 2003 committee Volunteer of the Year, promises that this year's poster will be a great addition to your art collection.

Right around the corner come the rowing shells of Harvard and Yale, and with them, Celebrate Regatta. (See story and schedule on pg. 1.)

There are lots of events in downtown this spring and summer. Find out what's happening by picking up one of the bright green Event Calendar cards, designed by committee member Deirdre Cavanagh, at local retailers, restaurants, or at the Trolley Visitor Information Station.

The planning for December's Celebration of Lights & Song by the Sea has begun. New happenings include 'New London Through Time and Place', a living history play and a collaboration with the Shaw Mansion, Custom House Maritime Museum, and Hempsted Houses during which visitors will catch glimpses of New London's past, from the 17th Century to the present, via a horse and carriage ride. The Ice Sculpture displays will be expanded to include a carving competition, and again Santa will be greeted by singers from Harbor School. The Gingerbread Village will be on display and the People's Choice Holiday Decorating Contest will spur the creativity of the merchants. The planning committee is meeting the second Wednesday of every month at 5:30 p.m. at the Main Street office. Join us!

The full committee meets monthly on the Third Tues., 5:30 p.m. at the Main Street office.

Design

Ronnie Hodge, Chair

Due to Ronnie's unplanned double by-pass operation, from which she is recovering at good speed, a ghostwriter has contributed the following:

Committee member Heather Grigsby and New London Landmarks archivist Sylvia Malizia have begun the heritage trail project mentioned in the last newsletter. Picking up where City Center District, who initiated the project, left off, Heather and Sylvia have contacted the plaque manufacturer,



Thanks to Martha Schwarzkopf and her husband Eric, Promotion and ER to published a new map and guide in time for the visit of the Maasdam.

Lefevre Projects of New York City, and begun identifying the buildings that will be on the trail. They recently met with a contractor to get estimates for installing the plaques in the sidewalks in front of the properties. Congratulations are in order for getting off to such a fast start.

After learning that plans for the Bank Street Roadhouse building would not be ready in time to meet the deadline for the Palmer Fund design assistance grant, committee member Scott Ross met with Executive Director Penny Parsekian to begin the process of selecting another property. The current plan is to develop a design for the façade of One Union Plaza, where our office is housed, both on the O'Neill Drive and State Street sides. Part of the design might include the installation of vertical banners to identify the Main Street office. The committee feels this would be one small way to repay Suisman Shapiro for their generosity in allowing Main Street to use this space over the last year.

The committee meets monthly on the fourth Wed. at 6 p.m. in the Main Street office.

Economic Restructuring

Jerry Sinnamon, Chair

The promise of New London's revitalized waterfront as a stimulus for the city's economic growth will have a fair test during the next six months. By the end of October, an extraordinary series of events will have occurred on the waterfront, attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors to our Historic Waterfront District. While many of these will be repeat visitors, thousands more will be newcomers. The Economic Restructuring Committee is working to make all these guests sufficiently pleased and excited about their visit that they will return and/or be the vanguard for millions more. The impression of New London's hospitality and value as a place to visit will be passed along by our visitors through word-of-mouth and informal satisfaction surveys. These views and assessments will affect the community's long-term economic development.

In other words, during the next six months, the Historic Waterfront District has the opportunity to market its distinctive mix of historic, artistic, cultural, and commercial attractions to a large and varied audience, be it the 1,200 passengers arriving on the mss Maasdam in May and October; the thousands who embark on American Cruise Lines tours every weekend throughout the summer, those arriving on the mss Orion in May and June, the world-wide visitors during the International Children's Conference in July, or the landlubbers who come to participate in SailFest, the Tall Ship Challenge, or Boats, Books & Brushes. Being prepared means a lot of work by a lot of people. The benefit will be well worth the effort. Upcoming projects include continuing the workshops to provide merchants with information and opportunities to shape the events to serve their businesses. We are also exploring the possibility of making attractive mobile carts available to merchants who might be able to use the carts in Waterfront Park as advertisements for their shops.

The committee meets monthly on the third Thurs., 5:30 p.m. in the Main Street office.

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Regatta

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to intercollegiate sports in America.

James Whiton (Yale 1853) and James Elkins, a railroad agent for the Boston, Concord, & Montreal Railroad, hatched the idea for an intercollegiate race. Elkins was fascinated by the prospect of excursion trains and publicity and promised to pay the bills if Whiton arranged the race. The first race took place on New Hampshire's Lake Winnepesaukee, with the guests arriving by train. The Democratic candidate for president, Franklin Pierce, presented a pair of silver-tipped, black walnut oars to the victorious Harvard crew. In 1878, the race moved to the Thames River, which is about half way between Harvard and Yale, where it has been held ever since.

In addition to the early stories of competition between colleges, the exhibit traces the international efforts of college crews against the best rowers in the world including regattas at Henley and the Olympics. The show also highlights the efforts of women rowers from the early years up to the present. The exhibit draws from the extensive collection of Thomas E. Weil Jr., as well as from the Falk/Stearn collection now on deposit at the G. W. Blunt White Library at Mystic Seaport.

The show will be on exhibit from Saturday June 5th until Monday June 14.

W H A T ' S N E W

Flowers & Showers

By Kerin M. Woods

After a long winter, everyone is looking forward to spring. Downtown will be welcoming the warmer weather with flower-lined streets and a bathhouse for boaters to our shores.

Thanks to City Center District and the special effort of CCD Commissioner and Thames River Greenery owner Charlotte Hennegan, 100 hanging baskets are gracing fifty light poles along Bank Street, State Street and South Water Street.

The project is a result of a sistering with the city of Saratoga Springs, New York, which Hennegan describes as being in the forefront of city streetscaping. On a visit to Saratoga Springs last summer, Hennegan was struck by its beautiful flowers. Upon returning home, she contacted Saratoga Springs' public works department. A member of the department subsequently came to New London and met with Hennegan, Penny Parsekian and Ronnie Hodge and offered suggestions for New London to incorporate some of his streetscape concepts. As a result, the week of May 10, baskets of flowers grown in Saratoga Springs' greenhouses were delivered to New London.

Saratoga Springs has a very successful recycling program, and the public works department says it's the resulting compost that makes the flowers so beautiful. The hanging baskets featured in New London are planted in the famed medium. Guided by Saratoga Springs, CCD has also made investments to improve the watering technology, including the purchase of a golf cart and a watering pump, to help keep the baskets blooming all summer long.

Among those who will be admiring the improved streetscapes of New London will be boaters stopping at the harborfront moorings. In addition to the flowers, the boaters can admire the boat basin building located in Waterfront Park at the head of Custom House Pier. The building is 1400 square feet and includes public bathrooms and showers, washers and dryers, available to boaters who moor at the City's moorings. The building also contains storage for equipment used by the Public Works Departments to maintain the park, office space for use by emergency services during special events, and a police sub-station.

Presently, there are 14 moorings available just off of the park. The City of New London is in the process of obtaining federal authority for an additional 25 moorings, which it hopes to have in place by next summer. Director of Development and Planning Bruce Hyde said that although the boat basin building opened last summer, this year the facilities were written up in the Map-Tech Boating Guide, which provides information for boaters in the Long Island Sound area. Information on the facilities has also been provided to various boating magazines in an effort to advertise the new amenities. Hyde explained that the building was part of the original Waterfront Park plan to attract boaters. The pier also has hook ups to water and electric. Hyde likes to recall an instance last summer when one of the tall ships came into port with a crew of 13 that had lived without a hot shower for a week. They were delighted with the new facility he said.



Living Downtown

By *Tambria Moore*

At 6:00 a.m. a cup of tea awakens me to the sound of the Acela train winding down at the station to swallow commuters headed to "the big city". The Fishers Island ferry traffic line forms. The sea gulls circle and cry. I walk. It is one block from my apartment to my job, three to fill my soul, and four to fill my fridge. I don't have, nor desire, a car or phone interrupting my experience. All who I need and all that I may want is found downtown.



Many freedoms are bestowed and celebrated in downtown. I can leave here daily by train, taxi, bus, automobile, boat, ferry, ship or bike. The door to this bird's cage is open, but I choose to roost here. I indulge in fantasy at Sarge's. I study New London history at Star of New London Antiques. Parade News will open her doors at 6:55 a.m. for my Java fix. My social activist habits are fed in coffeehouses. I stroll through galleries, restaurants and our Waterfront Park, reading books from the library.

On \$5.00 a night I eat well. At the Y-Knot, Herb serves me the juiciest burgers I've ever had. At the Galley, Dorinda lets me know when she will be making soup. I am served smiles at Zavala. The Dutch crowd and a small Thumper define living these "jazz of life" experiences.

New London is full of big dreamers and unpaid ambassadors who introduce and indoctrinate me into its culture. Neighbor nurtures neighbor. They forgive my newcomers' ways. With me, they tease, mourn and celebrate. They ask my name and offer me theirs. I am invited to write, scribble, politic or sing through my day without hesitancy. Our blue-collar workers, authors, artists and musicians set the bar of achievement rather high. They achieve both great and little wonders here. They entice me to believe I will achieve here, too. The people are the development of this downtown.

VIVA VOLUNTEERS!

Ronnie Hodge: Beauty Is as Beauty Does

By *Mary Beth Baker*

One of New London's loveliest ladies, Myrona Hodge, knows where to find other beautiful people – with those who work to make inviting vistas and pretty corners all around town look even better. A founding member of New London Main Street, "Ronnie" has been chair of the Design Committee since it started six years ago. When asked how she's managed so many successful projects from Waterfront Park to the light pole banners as well as the streetscape on upper State Street, she dismisses the question: "I've had a great committee!" Quite a number of her associates have stuck with her from the beginning, and no wonder. She is both beautiful and humble. The group has attracted other pretty people as well, and these are sure to carry on when Ronnie steps down to become a member of the class of 2007 of Main Street's Board of Directors later this spring.

Ronnie is also chair of New London's Historic District Commission and its Design Review Board, an important municipal group charged with overseeing the preservation of New London's historic built environment. But that's not all. Ronnie is also on the city's Beautification Committee, a 13-member panel of which she is, once again, chair. Working with a limited budget, this group fills planters at the waterfront, post office and police station, as well as other sites like Ocean Beach. Ronnie is also involved with Save Ocean Beach, formed in 1996 to raise money for improvements to the city's public strand. The progress includes a new playground, a nature walk, and this year's project, a gateway garden.

Why does she do it? During her high school years, Ronnie lived in New London, being in a Navy family, and then she fell in love with a hand-



Ronnie gets a kiss from one of her many fans, Rita Dawley.

some Navy man. She met Wesley Hodge at her first job at Loring Photographic Studios on upper State Street. Years later, the couple returned to New London for retirement, but things went terribly wrong. When her beloved died before his time, something had to be done. First there was the beautification of her own backyard garden near Ocean Beach; then there was the rest of the city.

For those working to make things lovely, there is both instant and long-term gratification, Ronnie insists. Reclaiming bits and pieces of nature and helping to make them more visible and accessible is rewarding in itself. But there is another bonus as well. Working with Main Street, Ronnie says she has come in contact with like-minded people who really care about beauty. "These are not the folks who sit around and complain," she says, "but positive people with good hearts and sincerity, who don't mind getting a bit dirty."

Recent heart surgery means that Ronnie may not be able to get down in the dirt quite as much as usual for a few months, but in the meantime she's collected a cadre of like-minded New Londoners to carry on. More help is needed. If you really care, call Ronnie at 442-8755.

Winter in Downtown New London

WINTER WONDERLAND

The Celebration of Lights & Song by the Sea sparkled and sang this year, with lights on the buildings, fantasy windows in the shops, Gingerbread Village looking good enough to eat and the Harbor School Chorus singing Santa into town. Joan Sullivan Cooper, Italia McKinley, Karen Ward and Mary Ann Root helped bring it all together.



The opening of Union Station's Grand Lobby was celebrated in a holiday gala "Going Places," to benefit New London Landmarks and New London Main Street and hosted by Union Station Center. An Eastern CT Symphony Orchestra string quartet set an elegant tone, and the silent art auction and live auction of travel fare provided excitement.



LOVE DOWNTOWN

"Your Valentine Is Downtown" a Main Street benefit, also at Union Station, saw its share of romance, fueled by Pfred Mileski and Kit Johnson's cabaret act. Downtown restaurants pitched in fabulous deserts, and Melodie Foster and friends helped at the coffee bar, contributed by Mugz.



EARLY SPRING INTO ACTION



Jerry Sinnamon's Economic Restructuring partnered with the Radisson to present a series of "Don't Miss the Boat" workshops covering events coming up this summer. Merchants Gwen Basilica, Pam Walsh and John Martin learn from Cruise Ship Task Force Executive Director George Cassidy and John Ostrout what is being planned for the Maasdam's arrival.



IT TAKES A WHOLE TOWN TO MAKE OUR DOWNTOWN WORK!

Please complete and return form with membership fee to: New London Main Street Corporation
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Are you interested in serving on a Main Street committee?

If so, please check one or more of the four committees, and a member will contact you:

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WELCOME TO MEMBERS WHO JOINED OR RENEWED THIS WINTER

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Catherine Woods
Brown
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Committee Reports

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Organization

Good news is that a very able candidate has stepped forward to chair the committee. The election will be held at the July meeting.

The committee has been busy with preparations for the Seventh Annual Meeting & Awards Ceremony (see pg. 1) under the able leadership of board member Tim Anderson. Thanks go to board member Liz Suson for designing the invitations, Anne Schmidt for her terrific work on the Annual Report, Heather Grigsby and the Design Committee for set up and decorations, and all those who have volunteered to help at the event.

A final membership drive is underway, for those who have not yet paid their dues for this fiscal year. Membership Chair Deena Gordon crafted another wonderful appeal, supplemented by a great insert outlining Main Street's accomplishments and designed by Ralph Thayer, the caretaker of the Nathan Hale Schoolhouse. Our gratitude to the United Cerebral Palsy folks who did the mailing.

The committee meets monthly on the fourth Mon., 5 p.m. in the Main Street office.



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