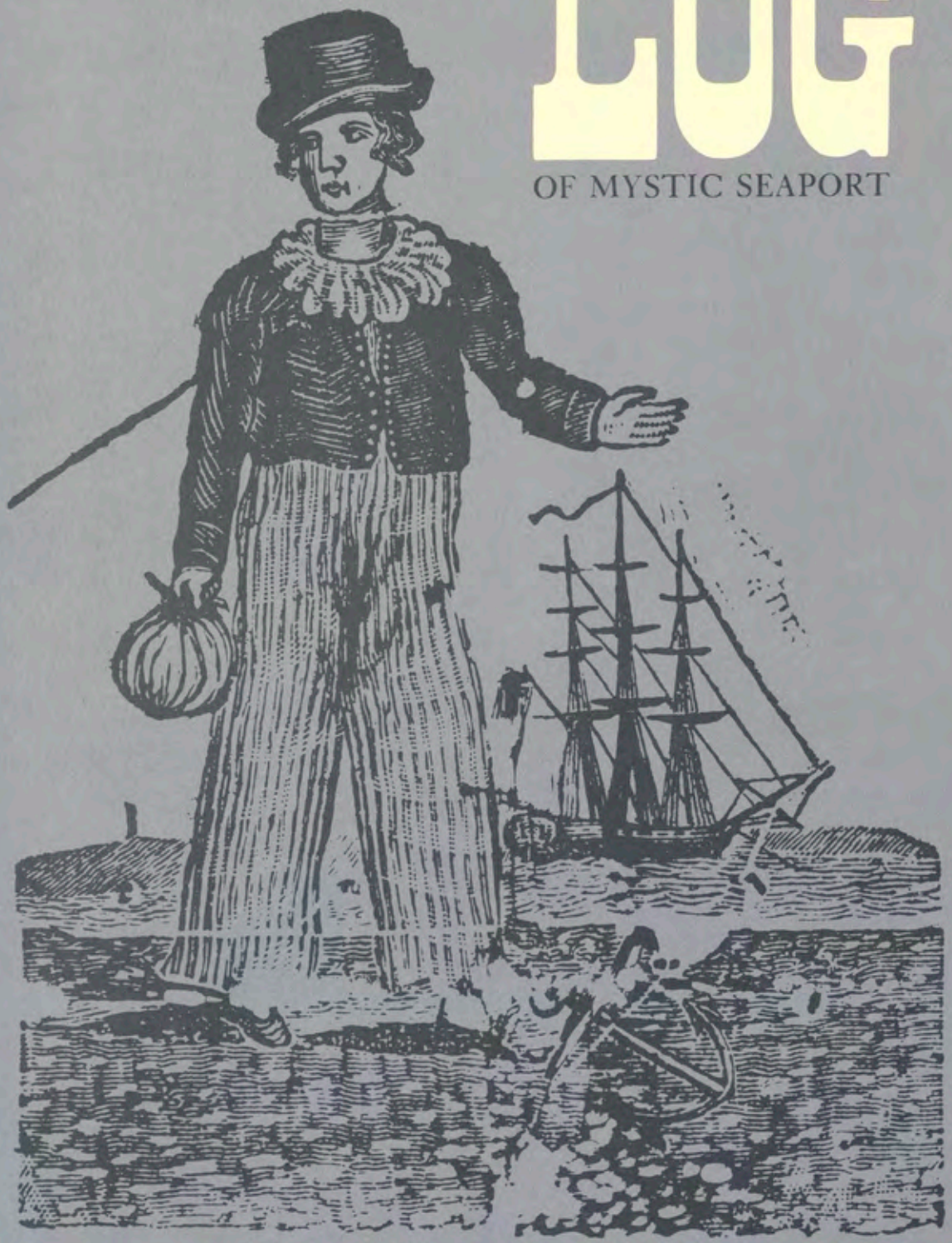
April 1978

THE LOG OF MYSTIC SEAPORT



Special Edition · *New England and the Sea* Exhibit

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COVER: *Illustration from the poem "The Female Sailor" a broadside published in Providence, R.I., in the mid-nineteenth century.*

FACING PAGE: *A nineteenth-century Ship Chandler's sign, the official symbol for the* New England and the Sea *exhibit.*

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Special Edition
New England and the Sea Exhibit

THE LOG
OF MYSTIC SEAPORT

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The south wing of Stillman, a smorgasbord of ship models, cased objects, and figureheads, as it appeared in 1975, 1965, 1955. . . .

The wait for a new building would be very long indeed since our existing buildings already contained exhibits that seemed to interest our visitors; so there was no clear path to follow.

About this time, a fascinating man, the late Gerald Fox, who had at one time developed a very significant collection of scrimshaw and other maritime artifacts, came to my office at the Seaport. He asked me to come to the Stillman Building with him. There he pointed out an item that appeared to be an ancient parchment document thumbtacked to the back wall of one of the exhibit cases. Far from ancient parchment, it was a greasy piece of brown butcher's paper, signed by Gerald Fox and dated 1941, upon which he had hastily described how he had come into possession of the pintel strap from HMS *Bounty*. This experience jolted me into an awareness of just how poor and neglected the exhibits were in this prime space. On the other hand it was apparent that people were enjoying themselves in the building and we could not arbitrarily change the entire exhibit. We needed to analyze which elements

appealed to our visitors and strive to incorporate these into any future redesign of the area.

There was no discernible order to the Stillman Building exhibits on the first floor, nor was there any relationship between individual exhibits. Visitor interest then was captured by the objects on display and by the elements of surprise and discovery since one never knew what would be found in the next case—Richard Henry Dana's long johns or a whale's eye ball. It was a comfortable display that certainly didn't intimidate any of the visitors but it challenged very few as well. If we were going to change these exhibits, we would have to install an exhibit that featured a great variety of interesting objects, an interesting variety of exhibit designs, and was divided into logical segments so that it would not seem overwhelming. It began to appear that our overview exhibit idea might indeed be appropriate for the first floor of the Stillman Building. Certainly the building's central location fulfilled the need for accessibility.

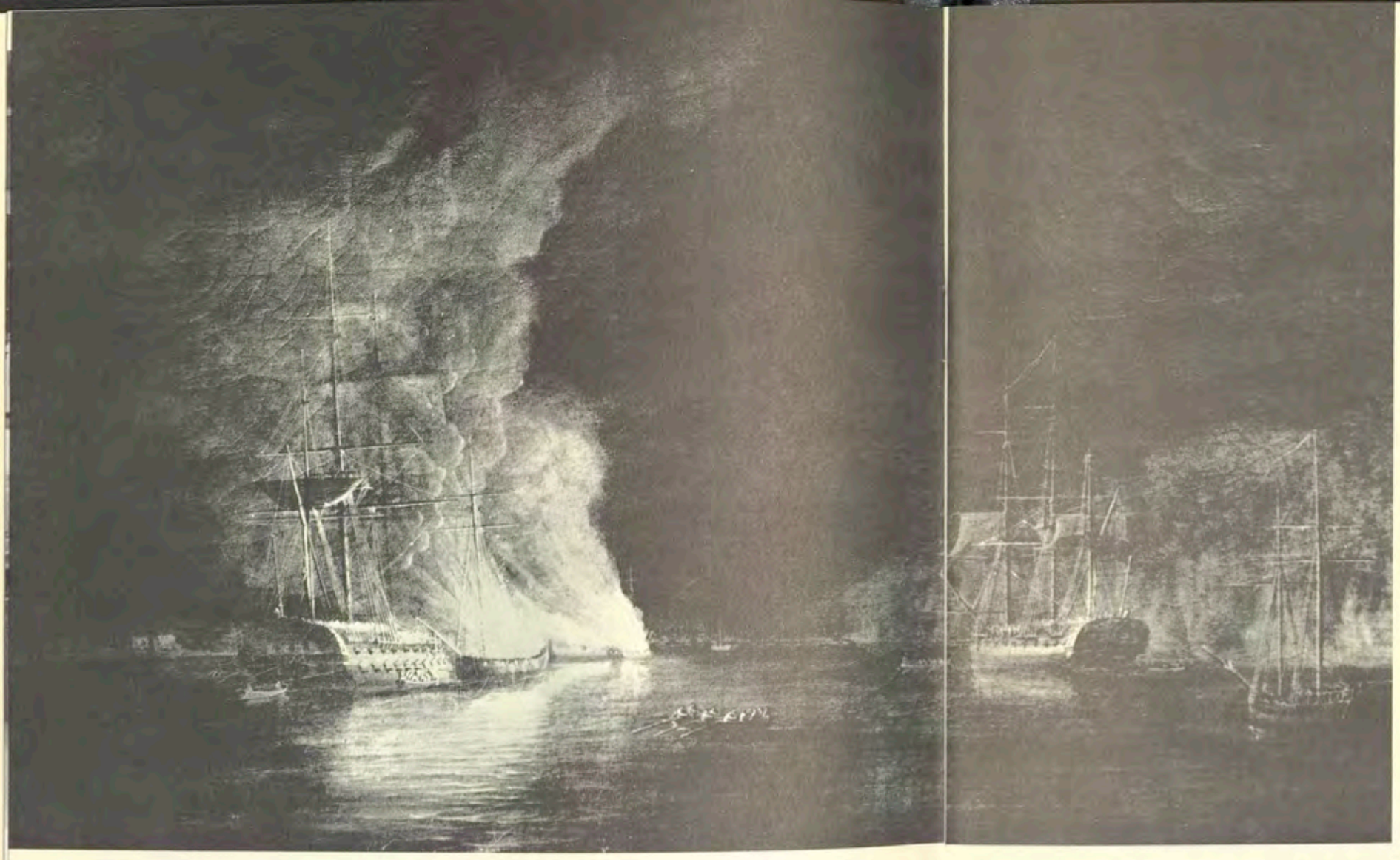
Late in 1974, Frank Kneedler, then Director of Development, Mike Sturges, then Director of Education, and I met to discuss the possibility of approaching a Federal agency such as The National Endowment for the Humanities, for assistance with a museum project. The overview exhibit seemed to be the logical choice. In our initial, informal talks with the Endowment staff members we outlined our intention to plan the exhibit and come to them with a proposal to assist with the actual design, fabrication, and installation. They reacted positively but suggested that we consider applying for a small grant to assist in the planning stage. We set to work on the proposal for the planning grant, working against a very tight deadline. Six months after submission of the application we were informed that we had been awarded the grant and work on the project began in earnest. We knew basically what we wanted to do and where we wanted to do it. The National Endowment grant enabled us to do an extremely thorough job of planning using a variety of resources that would have been unavailable without this support. We hoped that the end result would be an effective exhibit that would truly enhance a visitor's experience at Mystic Seaport.

There were a number of aspects to this planning effort: investigation of effective exhibit techniques, development of preliminary designs, and a survey of our visitors which will be covered in some detail in an accompanying article by Stuart Parnes. At the core of the program, of course, were the contents for the exhibit, and this will be covered here.

It was easy to say that we needed an over-

The striking figurehead from the Mystic-built ship *Seminole* (see October 1977 *Log*) ushers the visitor back into New England's past. (58.632)





Left: The painting by Dominic Serres (1722–1793) of American fireboats attacking the British ships HMS *Rose* and *Phoenix* on the Hudson River in 1776 sets the tone for the exhibit's treatment of the Revolution. (49.804)

view exhibit – translating this into objects and design, however, was quite another matter. The task was a challenge for us all, and many talented people would participate in this phase of the planning. By this time we had selected the title, *New England and the Sea*, the name of the book published in 1972 for Mystic Seaport by Wesleyan University Press in the American Maritime Library series. Written by Munson Institute faculty members Robert G. Albion, William A. Baker, Benjamin W. Labaree, and Marion V. Brewington, as a survey of maritime history in New England, the book covered the same territory in verbal form which the exhibit would in museum format. However, it became apparent that the exhibit could not simply be a repeat of that book in three-dimensional representations.

There is a potential problem that can develop quite naturally in the planning of any thematic exhibit in a history museum when one must decide whether the themes and concepts of the story or the objects are going to take precedence. The unique role of the history museum is to put the visitor in actual contact with the physical evidence of our past, and one cannot lose sight of this. However, in an exhibit comprehensive as *New England and the Sea* it was vital that primary emphasis be given to factual content. If this were not done, a distorted view could easily develop by stressing those areas that were particularly strong in the museum's collections.

Undoubtedly, those involved in the project will consider the early weeks, when we struggled to organize our concepts, determine emphasis, and develop our approach, to be the most difficult. A room in the basement of the Membership Building was selected for our work area because we could leave our charts and other materials in place from meeting to meeting undisturbed. More important, it had no telephone! The group involved at this stage included the Director and representatives from the Curatorial and Education Departments and the Munson Institute. During these sessions, historical perspective was countered against exhibit approach. We debated the idea of dividing the material into sections covering ships, seaports, and sailors, but felt that the divisions would be artificial and awkward. We debated developing the exhibit around a comparison between a typical seaport and a typical inland farm community, but felt that this would consume too much of our precious space with information about the farm community when such a comparison would only be used to point out the unique cosmopolitan character of the major seaports. We discussed the possibility of using a constant element such as "the ship" to give the visitor a continuous, familiar device to follow through the evolution of our story, but felt that in an exhibit that had to cover such a broad period of time, such a device might become tiresome. We carefully examined as many approaches to the exhibit as we could to make certain that our ultimate choice would be one that stood up against others under careful scrutiny.

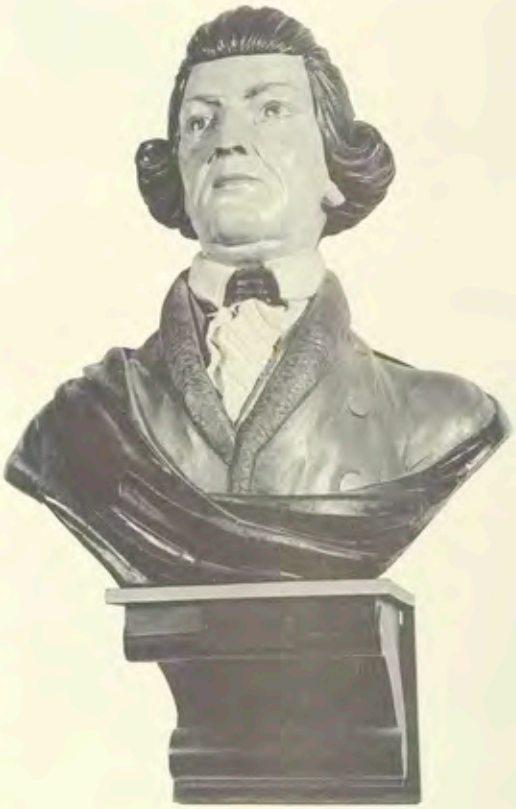
As time and ideas passed, several of our basic observations about our visitors' past experience with exhibits in the Stillman Building gained influence. Since the first floor of this building consists of two very large rooms, it seemed important that there be sufficient variety in the exhibit design to avoid a feeling of monotony. An element of discovery adds character to an exhibit and lets the viewer become more of a participant. Finally, the visitor must feel comfortable and

be able, almost instinctively, to follow the flow and the themes of the exhibit. From this base we focused on three main periods in New England's maritime history: from settlement through the end of the War of 1812; from 1815, when our maritime strength really began to grow, to the beginning of the twentieth century; and the period covering this century.

Within these three time periods we isolated major themes and assigned the research for these to various members of the staff in the Library, Curatorial and the Education Departments. Each researcher carefully analyzed the period or topic assigned and produced the basic information from which final selections on sections and content were based. It was determined that, in character with the museum, our primary responsibility was to cover the time prior to 1900; so this was emphasized and a clear division within the material began to evolve.

1815 became a pivotal date for the organization of materials. It appeared that the material and information on the time leading up to this date could be most logically and conveniently handled in an essentially chronological manner, whereas for the years after 1815, our maritime growth and expansion being so great, it would be staggering to try to cover this chronologically. This second period could be most easily comprehended as a series of separate topics. These divisions worked perfectly with the physical space in which the exhibit would be installed and we began to feel comfortable with our approach. As these ideas took form we brought in expert consultants from other museums and from universities, with funds provided by the N.E.H. for their criticism and advice. Their reactions were excellent and helpful as they spotted weaknesses and reenforced the program's strong points.

As content was agreed upon, the critical job of searching the collections for objects relating to this material was carried out by the Curatorial Department staff. During the nearly fifty years of its existence, Mystic Seaport has gathered a broad based collection of items relating to maritime history and every main theme of the exhibit could be supported by pieces from the collection. As piece after piece of the puzzle fit together, our satisfaction grew. The exhibit contains hundreds of items from our permanent collection, many of them on exhibit for the first time in many years. Many are of extraordinary quality.



A bust carving believed to represent Thomas Jefferson, but twice life size, symbolizes America's pride in her newly won independence. (48.910)

To complete this story of the genesis of an exhibit, I should take you on a quick walk through, so that you can sense how things finally came together. When you enter the main door of the Stillman Building, a wall bearing the exhibit title guides you to the right, and you are faced with the lone figure of an American Indian, the figurehead of the Mystic ship *Seminole*, standing as a symbol

of the native population before settlement. The first theme, Early Exploration, examines the motivations for the first explorers who crossed the Atlantic and touched in this region. A section on the first settlements follows showing the reasons for establishing settlements on good harbors and navigable rivers, and the way of life in these early New England seaports. Once the coastal towns have been established, we turn our attention to the trade routes, commodities and the maritime industries that developed during the colonial period. Industries such as coopering, ropemaking and shipbuilding, that took advantage of the abundance of natural materials, are examined. The Revolution, which brought total disruption to the maritime commerce of New England, is covered in the next section. The necessity for a change in our patterns of trade after independence is illustrated by the beginnings of the China trade and the prosperity which resulted when an aggressive group of maritime entrepreneurs traded with Europe during the Napoleonic wars. A bust figure of Thomas Jefferson closes this section as Jefferson's embargo ended the prosperity of New England's maritime traders. The visitor, who has been following the path through the exhibit is now confronted by a huge carronade which marks the beginning of the section on the War of 1812, with its many models and other artifacts.

With this war over, the United States was truly an independent nation and was on the eve of a period of growth, industrialization, and expansion. Visitors will sense this as they now move into the expansive space of the south wing. A ropemaking machine symbolizes the trend toward a mechanized era as opposed to the hand operated ropemaker seen earlier in the exhibit. Throughout the area the visitor will find exhibits covering the major themes of the nineteenth century, presented in a manner differing considerably from that used in the earlier period. The first subject is the fisheries where the variety of regional fishing boat types is shown in models. The life of the fisherman is illustrated by paintings, prints, and photographs. The brutal sealing trade is given brief coverage as a prelude to the section on the whal-

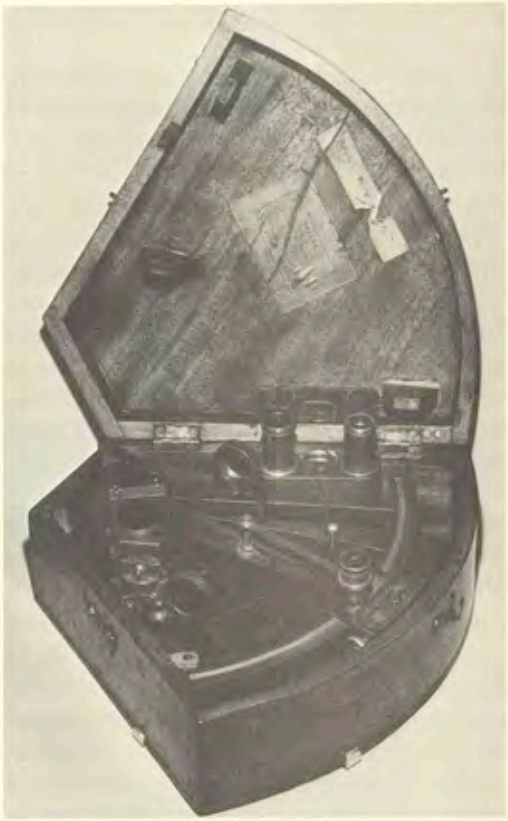
A moment of calm in the life of New England's fishermen is captured in this oil painting by M. J. Burns (1853–1933). (75.291)



ing industry in which New England's ships dominated a world industry. In a section on the Coasting trade the difference between elegant coasting steamers and the rugged coasting schooners is shown. A small exhibit on safety at sea touches on developments during the nineteenth century. Portraits of American ships in ports around the world and material on one of their captains, George Blunt Wendell, illustrate the importance of our foreign trade. At this point the visitor comes upon the large bow window in the south end of the wing which looks out on the Seaport's waterfront and docks. A seating area is provided here where the visitor may rest awhile and listen to a recorded program of sea chanties and narrative passages from some of the finest maritime literature describing life at sea. After this pause, the exhibit continues, looking first at the industries ashore. The large section on shipbuilding dominated by the original figurehead from the *Great Republic* looks at five New England yards that built clipper ships, fishing schooners, Down Easters, early steamers, and yachts. Another large section deals with life ashore in a seaport and is filled with all the exotic items that found their way home aboard these ships. The final section of this nineteenth-century area touches on the aspect of the story which directly touches many of our lives, immigration.

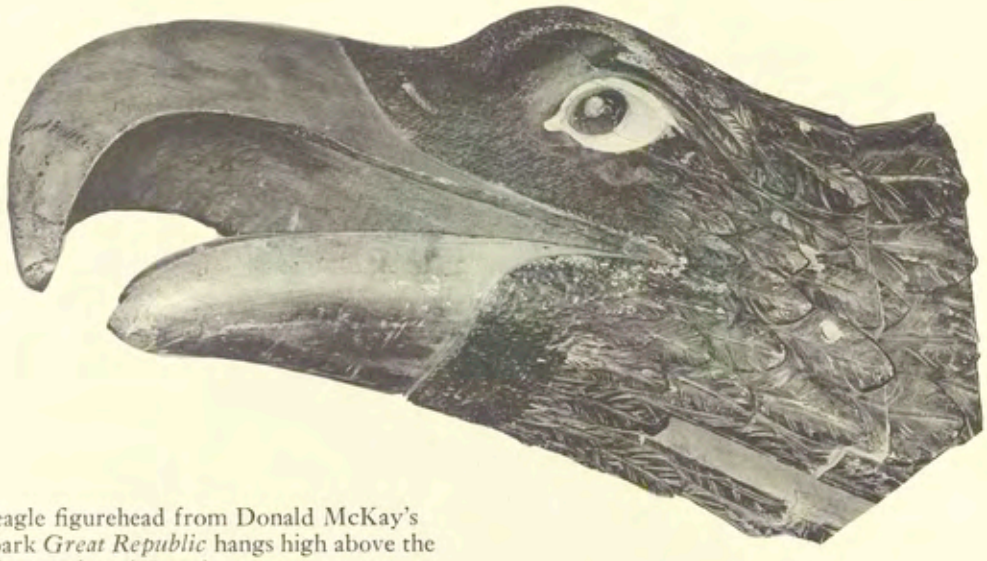
An unusual, but decidedly nautical, frame holds this photograph of Capt. John Spicer of Groton. (55.951)





With the help of this cased sextant, made by Spencer, Browning & Co. of London, Captain George B. Wendell sailed from Mystic to ports around the world during the mid-nineteenth century. (43.1267)

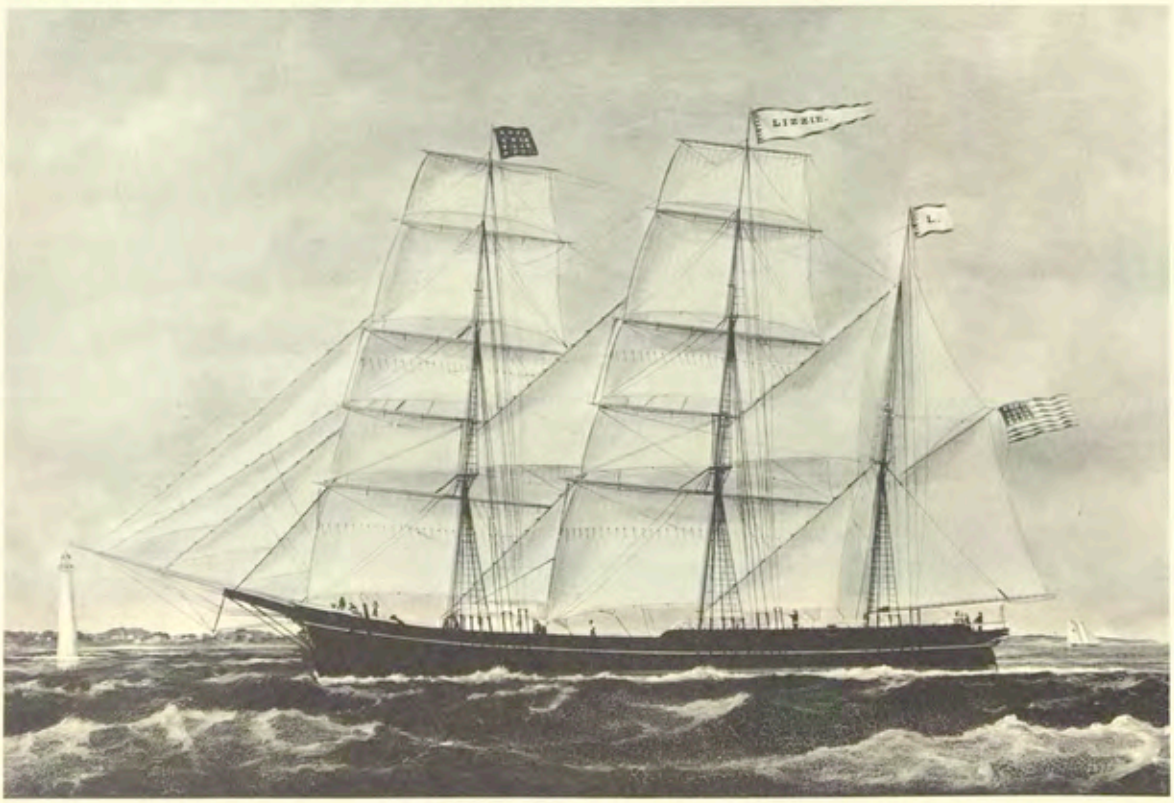
Our path has now taken us back to the main room where we move into the twentieth century. In this small section of the exhibit we do not try to encompass all of the many changes in recent maritime history, rather, we try to stimulate the visitor to think about New England's continued involvement with the sea. Among the exhibits is a scale model of the *Charles W. Morgan*, an oil carrier of the last century, dwarfed by a model of a Very Large Crude Carrier tanker of today. At the end of the exhibit, a brochure will be available providing information for further reading, listing other museums and seaport towns to visit, and encouraging visitors to continue learning about New England and the sea long after they have left the exhibit and the museum.



The magnificent eagle figurehead from Donald McKay's 4-masted clipper bark *Great Republic* hangs high above the exhibit's shipbuilding section. (48.942)

We are sure there will be some visitors who will return to the museum and be disappointed at not finding the old and the familiar in the Stillman Building. We are confident however, that through the efforts of many people and with the support of the National Endowment for the Humanities which funded the exhibit itself, we have created an extraordinary museum presentation to which visitors can return time and again to absorb the innumerable details. We hope all of you will have a chance to enjoy this exhibit on your next visit, and that millions of other visitors in the years ahead will benefit by finding new insights into New England's role in America's maritime heritage.

This spirited portrait of the American bark *Lizzie* by W. P. Stubbs (1842–1909) shows her off Boston Harbor in 1871.





The life blood of Mystic Seaport—the steady stream of interested visitors.

Creating the Exhibit

By STUART PARNES*

A Look Around

In the last decade museums in America, including Mystic Seaport, have found themselves on the horns of a new dilemma. On one side, the staggering proliferation of "theme parks" and pseudo-museums like Disney World and Busch Gardens have ushered in a glittering age of pseudo-scholarship. These attractions offer budget-defying exhibits that razzle-dazzle with technology and excite with sensory overload. They are a phenomenal public success; yet they are, lest we forget, entertaining rather than educational. On the other side, the foremost museums in America have staged a series of dramatic productions starring, among others, King Tut and the bronzes of ancient China. Money seems to be no object. The masterpieces are devoured (intellectually) by art scholars of the world, paid homage by endless lines of jostling devotees, reproduced as cuff links and paperweights for would-be collectors, pressed between the glossy pages of mammoth catalogs, and distributed around the world as full-color advertisements in *Time* and *Newsweek*. And we mere mortals of the museum world are left quivering in the rip tide of dollars and sense.

The Starting Point

The primary intention of any exhibit is to teach something; to communicate some message aimed at changing the viewer's knowledge, attitudes, or sensitivities. A museum offers an informal learning situation; it is not a classroom, and this presents basic problems that must be recognized and remedied.

The visitor population of a museum like Mystic Seaport varies widely in age, background, and interest. Trooping through the grounds and exhibits, nearly 500,000 visitors per year over the past decade have nevertheless remained almost entirely unknown to us. Where did they come from? How old are they? How well can they read? How well do they listen? Have they been here before?

These questions were fundamental to the planning of an effective exhibit; yet we did not know the answers. Our first task, therefore, was to find out who our audience is.

As an integral part of the N.E.H. grant, a thorough, professional visitor survey was designed and undertaken. For a twelve month period during 1975 and 1976, a one percent random sample of our daily visitors was interviewed by Eleanor Hilsman and her staff. Their data was correlated, fed into a computer at Yale University, and returned to us as reams of statistics, cross-tabulations, graphs and charts. For instance: 68 percent of our visitors were at Mystic Seaport for the first time; 62 percent visited the Stillman Building exhibits; 63 percent of all visitors had a high-school education; and 35 percent held college or post-graduate degrees. The information provided us with a solid foundation for the planning of *New England and the Sea*, and will undoubtedly be the basis for research and planning in years to come.

Next, we faced an even more basic problem. Our visitors, whoever they are, are a

*An alumnus of The Hotchkiss School, Stuart Parnes graduated from Middlebury College in 1970 with a B.A. in Art History. The author, who was a Thomas J. Watson Foundation Fellow in 1970-71, joined the Seaport staff in 1974. He is presently Supervisor of Formal Exhibits.

"noncaptive" audience. This means that if they don't like what they see, they will turn around and leave. What's more, they come to Mystic Seaport primarily to enjoy themselves, and are not particularly motivated to "learn" from our exhibits. Yet, if we are to exist as a viable educational institution, this is precisely what we are asking them to do. So how do we present an exhibit like NEATS? How do we make it so attractive and captivating that it will arouse serious interest in the casual visitor? This is where considerations of design begins.

To the Drawing Board

It was admitted at the outset of the project that the Seaport Curatorial staff was too small and too involved in other exhibit work to take on an effort of this magnitude without help. Since the regulations governing N.E.H. grants prohibit the use of those funds to pay the salaries of present or new staff members, it was clear that we would need to bring on independent design specialists.

The trick was to find designers who would be sensitive to museum methods in general and Mystic Seaport's wishes in particular. Since original artifacts are the heart of a museum exhibit, all efforts should be directed at focusing the visitor's attention on them. The attendant casework, artwork, lighting, etc., that inevitably surround the objects must not compete or conflict with them. This sounds perfectly obvious, I am sure, but to an overzealous designer it may be a severe creative obstacle.

In November of 1975, after many interviews and presentations by exhibit companies large and small, the firm of Design and Production Inc. of Alexandria, Virginia, was chosen to prepare the final designs for the exhibit under our supervision and direction. They were by far the most experienced museum designers and the most sympathetic to our point of view. They began at once to work up a preliminary design scheme for NEATS based on our tentative ideas of the exhibit's content and the projected use of the Stillman Building.

Meanwhile, we decided to prepare an in-house pilot exhibit, a test of some of our ideas and thoughts on both a reduced scale and a much reduced budget. With America's Bicentennial bearing down upon us, we organized an exhibit called *The Challenge of Independence* and installed it in about one half of the Stillman Building south wing. The thrust of the exhibit was decidedly historical, as NEATS would be. The design featured a series of ten glass-fronted display cases placed around the perimeter of the room beneath the existing figurehead collection. Each case contained a variety of artifacts – ship models, paintings, prints. The cases were organized chronologically to represent successive chapters of American maritime history from the outbreak of war in 1775 to the delivery of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823. In the center of the room were two more glass cases filled with models of naval vessels from the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. The chronicle of events for the period was supplied in a series of rather lengthly typewritten labels.

Lessons of the Road

As *The Challenge of Independence* opened in the spring of 1976, staff members departed in all directions to visit relevant museum exhibits throughout the country taking advantage of their own vacation time. Others traveled abroad observing foreign successes and failures. Our undisguised intention was to pick up any clever ideas that we might be able to incorporate into NEATS. From Paris to San Francisco, exhibit techniques were studied with eager anticipation. The results were quite different from what we all expected. Much to our surprise, we found no perfect exhibits for us to use as examples. There were newer ones, and fancier ones, and larger ones, and many awful ones; but there were no perfect ones. Even the great museums of the world had not solved all



The first hint of changes to come, as the *Challenge of Independence* exhibit opens in the Stillman south wing.

their exhibit problems—let alone ours. It was a comforting realization, but not a very helpful one. Or so we thought.

Upon our return to Mystic, we compiled all our travel notes, pamphlets, and photographs. It was then that the real value of our travels began to materialize. Although "terrific ideas" were few, we found ourselves composing a long litany of "big mistakes."

TOO MUCH GLASS. It became immediately obvious that large, glass-fronted cases were to be avoided whenever possible. Not only did they raise obvious problems with light reflection (not to mention nose prints) but they also seemed to be a major deterrent to visitor interest and appreciation of the objects on view. Glass display cases symbolize to the public the stuffy formality of traditional museum exhibits. When security for the artifacts can be provided by other means, it should be. Walls of glass are barriers to learning as well as touching.

Poor traffic flow. Let thirty people into an open rectangular gallery and they will trace thirty different patterns of movement, like so many rounds of a pin-ball machine. Whether an exhibit is organized chronologically or topically, there is always, by definition, some order of presentation. Exhibits that succeed in interesting a visitor in the material have accomplished little if they do not direct the viewer's attention and order of seeing in a controlled way.

Poor labeling. This is one of the real bugaboos of museum exhibits. Either there are too few labels, or too many. Commonly, the ones that are there are too small to be read by a large portion of the visiting audience, frequently have been written by one "expert" or another, and they are often too dull or technical to be of much interest. The museum public is a viewing public, not a reading one. They will be quickly "turned off" by poorly written labels, hard-to-read type styles, or labels that are too small or too low to read comfortably.

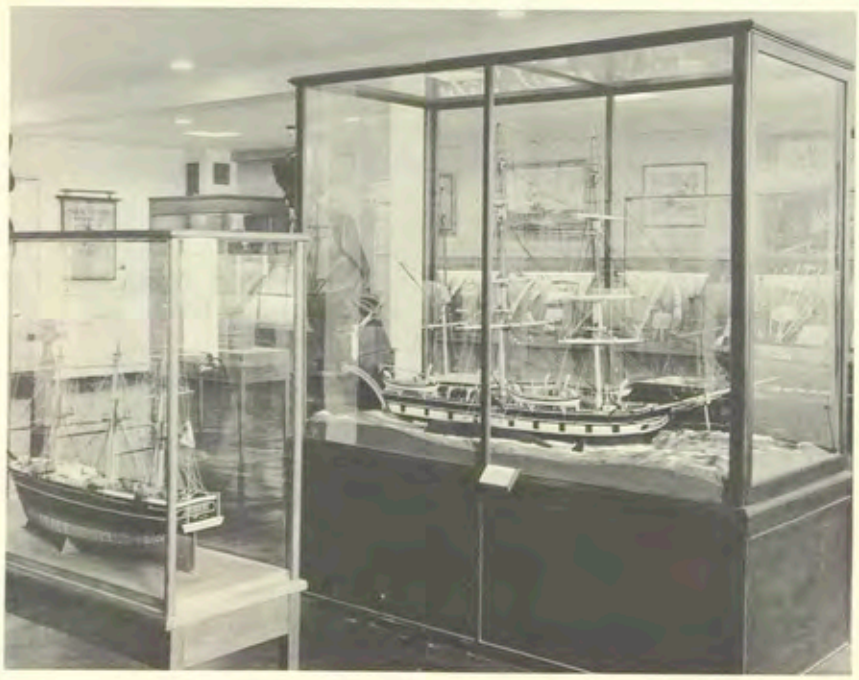
The list of mistakes went on and on—covering everything from lighting to carpeting to catalogs to electronic gadgets to paint colors to screw heads. We had really learned a great deal.

Encouraged by our newly sharpened critical eye, we took a close look at how our *Challenge of Independence* exhibit was faring. I personally spent many hours in the south wing, lurking around the exhibit watching our visitors' movements and reactions until I couldn't bear it any longer. Then we monitored the area with a video-tape camera.

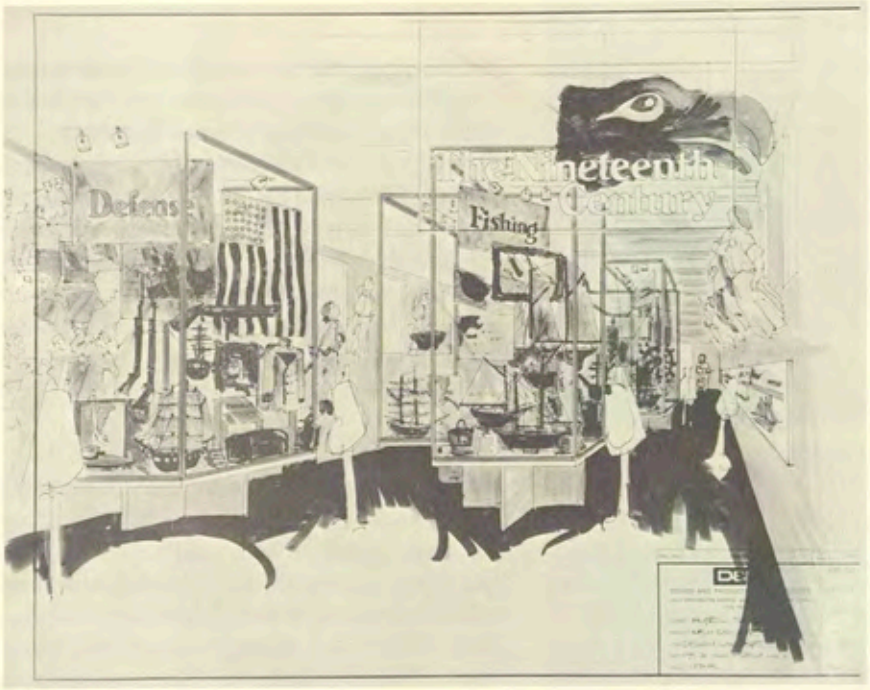
The problems were obvious from the first half hour of watching. The "big mistakes" we had found elsewhere were alive and well in Mystic: too much glass, no directed traffic flow, and unreadable labels. And if these were not enough, we had created more trouble for ourselves by juxtaposing the new exhibit with the collection of figureheads already on view. The visitors were being forced to choose between the carvings above and the material encased below. As a testing ground for our thoughts and techniques, this exhibit was a huge success. It showed us how far we had come in a few short months. We were ready to move on.

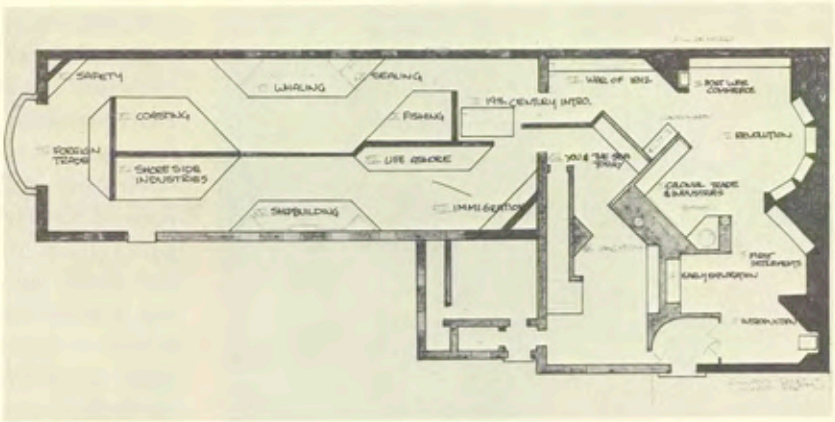
Back to the Drawing Board

The preliminary design for NEATS had arrived from Design and Production. We



Stillman main room has long been Mystic Seaport's showroom of glass cases, reflection, and tiny labels.





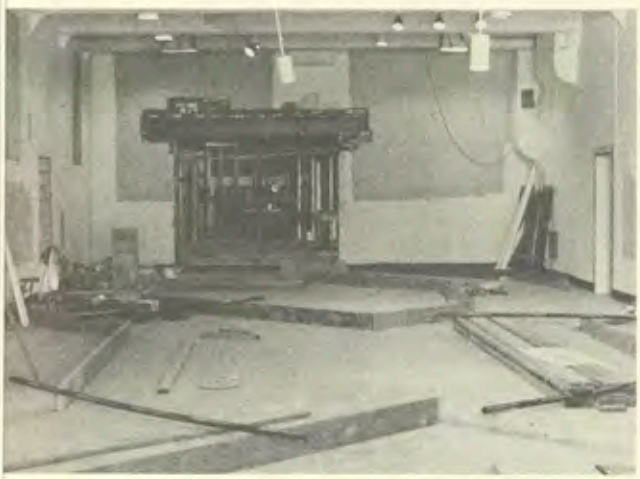
Above: The preliminary concept for the new south wing exhibits was monumental and striking, yet rigid and uninviting. *Right:* The reworked layout for *New England and the Sea* features a smooth but carefully directed pedestrian pathway and successive, separate display areas.

excitedly pored over it, finding much that we liked and much that we wanted to change. The approach to the first half of the exhibit, which dealt chronologically with the period from the early exploration of New England through the War of 1812, was very effective. The material would be displayed one section at a time along a directed one-way path through the main room of the Stillman Building. Glass-fronted cases would be unavoidable here because of space limitations, but they would be built flush into newly constructed walls and interspersed with uncased "touchable" objects and large scale photomurals.

Their plan for the south wing area, in which the critical nineteenth-century segments of the exhibit were to be presented topically, demanded several changes in approach. We had originally stipulated to De-

sign and Production that our figureheads were to remain. They had developed their design around carvings, using only the center of the room for the new exhibit. They proposed several enormous free standing glass cases around which the visitor would be free to wander at will. It was a striking design, making clever use of the hall's monumental height. But now it ran counter to several of our thoughts: the figureheads should be moved to a new location, and the large glass cases replaced by an alternate type of "protected" area, with a clearly defined pathway for the visitors to follow.

But before we sent this section of the design back to the drawing board, we called in a consulting group of maritime historians and museum professionals to help us check our methods and objectives. They reviewed the content and design of the exhibit in detail and made their recommendations with



Through a haze of plaster and sawdust, forms for the "pits" are laid down in the south wing and a wide new entryway is opened to the main room.

candor and insight. To our delight, they voiced strong approval of our concept of the exhibit and the way in which our plans had evolved, and agreed with the changes we were proposing. They urged only continued restraint, both in the amount of material to be presented and the means of presentation. They also made a special plea for a few blank walls, a truly rare sight in any museum.

At this point most of the pieces of the puzzle were identified, and it was now merely a question of putting them all together. We got in touch with Design and Production at once, discussed the changes, and over the next several months worked together to complete the final design.

Out with the Old, in with the New

That was almost a year ago. Since then the entire first floor of the Stillman Building has been closed to the public. The figureheads have been removed, cleaned, and reinstalled in a dramatic new exhibit of their own in the Wendell Building (see October 1977 *Log*). The scrimshaw collection has been moved up to second floor Stillman where it will remain on permanent exhibit, and the other artifacts, cases, and furniture (much of which has been on continous exhibit for nearly twenty years) have been removed to storage.

Next, a small army of outside contractors arrived. The wall that once divided the main room from the south wing was knocked down and replaced with a steel beam, opening a wide entryway. An eight-inch high walkway was constructed within the south wing to provide a uniform floor height throughout the exhibit areas. We wanted no ramps, steps, or barriers of any kind for handicapped visitors. This elevated path also served to block out the large sunken display areas (affectionately called "pits") that had been designed as our alternative to glass cases. A forest of 2 x 4's was erected and covered with dry-wall to become the new exhibit cases and partitions. The ancient, oil-guzzling furnace was decommissioned and a new heating-cooling-humidifying plant was installed. Carpeting was laid throughout the exhibit area, and a new security alarm system was installed.

Pre-fabrication of many sophisticated and

time-consuming elements of the new exhibit, including silk screening of graphics and label text, construction of plexiglass exhibit cases, and preparation and installation of large scale photomurals, was also let out on contract. This package was awarded to Admore Inc. of Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, experienced museum exhibit designers and builders of the highest standards, who worked very closely with us throughout this phase to assure that every item was produced to our complete satisfaction.

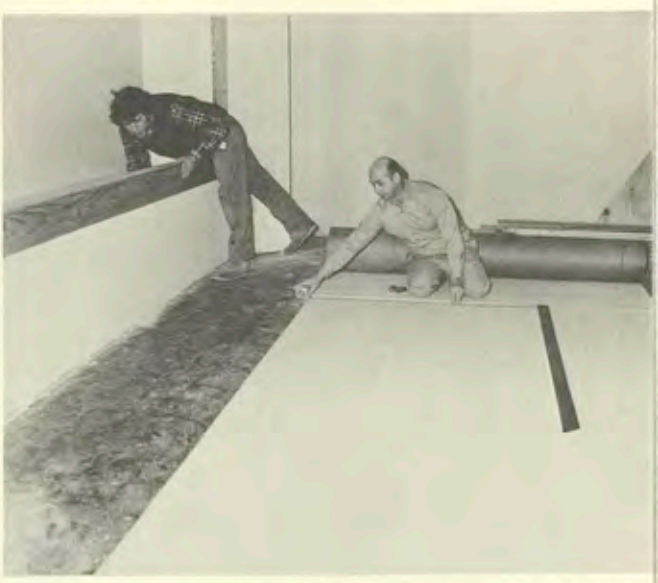
Our own staff, meanwhile, had written and edited over ten thousand words of label text; cleaned and prepared the more than 450 objects to be put on exhibit; fabricated and installed all of the built-in cases, barriers and woodwork; printed and mounted over 100 exhibit photographs; removed the old lighting fixtures and installed a new track-mounted low voltage system; and dressed the entire exhibit area in several fresh coats of paint. We also incorporated an audio program into the exhibit that gives an exciting introduction to maritime literature and music, and we developed a narrated slide program based on the exhibit which will travel to schools as an introduction to NEATS and Mystic Seaport.

Postscript: A Sticky Issue

The museum exhibit, like literature, film, or television, is a medium of communication. Unlike the other media, however, an exhibit deals with the real thing, artifacts. These are the museum's unique resource and responsibility. They demand special consideration above and beyond being attractively and clearly displayed. They must be protected from damage and theft while on exhibit.

Unfortunately, what is best for the objects is not necessarily best for the public, and herein the controversy arises. The security of the artifact is always the ultimate test of any exhibit scheme; yet the protective measures must not be so blatant as to preclude reasonable interaction between viewer and object.





Above: Once the on-site carpentry work is completed for the built-in cases and display areas, carpeting is installed both in the cases and on the floor, and (*below*) the wide variety of artifacts are moved into place.





The story of New England and the Sea is above all a story of the people who shaped the history of the region, like the successful and dapper Capt. Lorenzo Dow Baker. (36.5)

Particular artifacts require proper levels of light, heat, and humidity, and these should be maintained in the exhibit area. But sometimes this is just not possible. A watercolor painting, for example, should be kept in total darkness to preserve its pigmentation. This is basic, indisputable conservation practice, but would make for a very dull and rather dangerous exhibit.

The need for scrupulous conservation must be understood and supported by all museum personnel. And here is one of the truly eternal arguments within any museum community:

Port:

"The museum's role is to collect and preserve for posterity the physical artifacts of our past and present culture. Research, preservation, conservation—that is our sacred duty. The integrity and security of the artifact must be our prime concern and must not be jeopardized for any exhibit . . ."

Starboard:

"Of what use is a museum collection if it is buried away in sealed vaults? We must open museums to the public, provide a unique educational experience and break down the barriers to learning. The collections belong to the people, and it is our role to bring the objects back to life through preservation and interpretation. We must provide a bridge between yesterday and today by using our artifacts to teach, to instruct . . ."

In this disputed area the exhibit designer struggles to bring curator, educator, and the public into alliance. Exhibits like *New England and the Sea* stand as happy monuments to cooperation and good fortune. The ultimate success of this endeavor depends upon winning the interest of our visitors. We hope you will come and judge for yourself.

BOOK REVIEWS

Sailor Historian: The Best of Samuel Eliot Morison edited by Emily Morison Beck. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1977. xl + 431 pp. $15.00)

This volume is just what its title suggests, the best essays of a remarkable sailor historian, Samuel Eliot Morison. Born in 1887 of established New England roots, Morison lived in Boston, taught at Harvard, summered in Maine, and served in both army (as a private in World War I) and the navy (retiring as an admiral after World War II). At his death in 1976 shortly before his eighty-ninth birthday, Morison was America's most distinguished historian. This collection of essays was selected by his daughter, and each is introduced by the author himself. A splendid foreword by Walter Muir Whitehill sketches Morison's life, and David McCord discusses his literary style, but the essays themselves best demonstrate why Samuel Eliot Morison stood for so many years at the head of his profession.

The quantity of his writing is remarkable enough—nearly fifty volumes comprising thirty separate titles, but it is the extraordinary breadth through time, region, and subject matter of his works which sets Morison so far above his fellow historians. In *Sailor Historian* are over thirty selections from books and several articles. They range in time from the Age of Pericles to the Age of Churchill, in region from the Aegean Sea to the Philippines; in subject matter from clerical Harvard graduates to mutineers on board a naval brig; from the nature of the American Revolution to the nature of springtides along the New England coast.

The quantity and range of his historical writing, yes, but most of all it is the quality of his writing that made Morison the most widely read academic historian of his time. In explaining Churchill's success (as an historian) Morison might well have been writing about himself: background, innate capacity, experience, and self-teaching. Both absorbed history "through the skin," Churchill by his descent from Marlborough and his upbringing in Blenheim Castle. For Morison it was his Otis and Eliot forebears, and his Beacon Hill youth. Both historians had the advantage of a classical education, Churchill at Harrow (which he hated) Morison at St. Paul's and Harvard. More important, they both wrote on subjects of which they had first-hand knowledge, and their works thereby have the ring of authenticity. Before writing his definitive biography of Christopher Columbus, for instance, Morison organized an expedition to retrace the famous explorer's route. His most successful application of this on-site research technique was undoubtedly in his fifteen-volume history of the United States Navy in World War II. From the bridge of various flagships engaged in the Mediterranean and the North Atlantic, off the Normandy beachhead and in the South Pacific, Sam Morison had a ringside seat to key naval engagements—and a first-hand acquaintanceship with the fleet commanders whose actions he was later to chronicle.

Readers of *The Log* will find enough historical narrative, nautical adventure, and common sense judgments to enrich many a winter's eve. And all of us will learn much from the mind and pen of a master historian. My favorite pieces are too numerous to describe in full. To note but a few (while coincidentally demonstrating anew Morison's vast reach) I commend the following: "The Mysterious Ocean," on the ancient's view of the sea, and "Who Really Discovered America?" "The Clipper Ship," from his best single book, *The Maritime History of Massachusetts*, and "Conclusion to the War in the Pacific," his considered judgment of the men who fought and won history's greatest naval struggle; the lively sketches of several fellow Bostonians, the historian William H. Prescott, the Federalist lawyer Harrison Gray Otis, the scholar Charles Eliot Norton; and his incomparable essay, "History as Literary Art," which should be required reading for every writer. Lastly, as they are so positioned in this volume, are three delightful essays on Morison's experiences as a sailor. In "An August Day's Sail," he characteristically does not tell us precisely where on Bakers Island his favorite mussel-cove is located, but does leave hints enough for us to follow. The author's life ended, as did that afternoon excursion, with work done, destination reached, and vessel made shipshape. "The mooring rode is secured. . . . , and the yacht's white wings are folded for the night."

Benjamin W. Labaree

The Oxford Companion to Ships & the Sea edited by Peter Kemp. (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1976. 971 pp., illustrated. $35.00)

In this new addition to the famous *Oxford Companion* series, editor Peter Kemp, with the aid of twenty-six contributors, claims to have covered the seafaring history of the world from earliest times to the present—in 3,700 brief dictionary type articles. Were this not sufficiently mind boggling, this *Companion* also attempts a dictionary of nautical and technical terms, past and present. However, don't throw out your René de Kerchove just yet.

Obviously, such a comprehensive scheme requires an endless series of delicate editorial compromises regarding inclusion and entry length. In this most difficult task, Peter Kemp appears to have done a superb job for his side of the Atlantic, if not for ours.

Perhaps the most attractive, certainly a most useful feature of this book is an abundance of biographies of men "who have left their mark upon the sea—the navigators and explorers, naval and merchant seamen, marine designers, writers and artists, pirates and inventors." Among Americans, naval heroes receive the most extensive treatment, as indeed they do in our own *Dictionary of American Biography;* a myopic maritime custom probably never to be broken. Although one may accept the editor's decision to omit both Edmund March and George William Blunt, most American readers will blanch at seeing Nathaniel Bowditch's illustrious career dispatched in four lines. (Even Neptune gets eleven lines—but then, I note that mermaids receive fifty-six lines plus two pictures.) Although American ship designers William H. Webb and John W. Griffiths are not mentioned, Donald McKay is there with surname misspelled. American yacht designers fare very well indeed with lengthy entries for William P. Stephens and Olin J. Stephens. No fewer than seventy-three lines are devoted to Nathaneal G. Herreshoff, albeit his christian and surname are misspelled consistently.

The editor has not ignored contemporary maritime writers, and has included such American giants as Samuel Eliot Morison and Howard I. Chapelle. Although another half-dozen modern authors from this side of the Atlantic might easily be mentioned, we should probably let nominations cease. However, ignoring the profound influence of Robert G. Albion on American maritime studies, both as a teacher at Harvard and Princeton, and as a prolific author and bibliographer must stand as an impeachable oversight.

Brief entries for many notable vessels are included such as the *Cutty Sark*, the *Constitution*, the *Clermont*, *Potemkin*, *Deutschland*, *Queen Mary*. However, one does not find entries for the *Normandie*, *Flying Cloud*, *Joseph Conrad* (or *Georg Stag*) *Olympic*, but then those decisions are a bit like Russian roulette. What has been included is very useful indeed. On page 569 there is an interesting list of museum ships throughout the world. Of the forty-one vessels included over half, twenty-four, are located in the United States. There still is no telling what the true picture might be, since the large museum vessels here at Mystic Seaport, the *Joseph Conrad*, *Charles W. Morgan*, and the *L. A. Dunton* have not been listed.

Perhaps the reviewer will be forgiven for a brief burst of paranoia upon discovering that the largest maritime museum in the United States, Mystic Seaport, was not among the mentioned maritime museums of the world, although thirteen are listed from the United States, including the Penobscot Marine Museum—no offence, Searsport.

As one would expect in a work of this kind, the survey articles vary widely in quality. Those on Marine Literature (two pages) and Marine Painting (four pages) are unbelievably weak; whereas the survey under Yachting (eleven pages) is excellent indeed. If one wishes to gain some inkling of the history of world trade and commerce, save for the Hanseatic League, look elsewhere.

The pictures are fine, the line drawings by Peter Milne are superb, printing and paper sumptuous, the bulk impressive. With dust jacket removed, this volume looks just like all the rest of the scholarly *Oxford Companions* on my shelf. But, as we all know by now, one dare not judge a book by its buckram.

Gerald E. Morris

Land's End, Water's Edge—Long Island Sound by Joseph Howard Cooper. (Brooklyn: Theo Gaus, Ltd; 1977. 315 pp. No index. $12.95

This anecdotal history of the development

and present status of yachting in western Long Island Sound is by a New Yorker, for New Yorkers, and yet not exclusively for New Yorkers. Right away every one senses that boat loads of nice people told the truth as they see it to a very nice guy. More than that it is immediately apparent that adequate research was done before the first typewriter key was struck, but there is no insistence that scholarship be admired. The format is a sequence of visits to eight major yacht clubs, all within clear day distance of the Empire State Building.

The author listened to more nautical nonsense and distilled from it a selection "part history and part up-date, part reminiscences and part travelogue, part story telling, part editorial. There are interviews and profiles loaded with recollections and anecdotes, and lots of lore and legend." Thus the facts about and the foibles of western Long Island sailing folk are pleasantly set forth in amusing profusion.

Joseph Cooper gets in a smattering of details and dimensions of the boats used by the clubs' members but he takes no position regarding individual craft sailed by his genial characters. Becoming as this attitude is, and convenient as it is to agree to absurd claims to perfection made by owners, there is danger in this method. Unlike other sports, the equipment is the all important ingredient; and what amounts to an avoidance of the actual yacht as an entity is, in this book, a fact which has to be noticed in a review.

Anyone who might doubt his ability to read in full sympathy about the doings of eight yacht clubs in a row can be promised that the framework chosen by the author succeeds without committing him to the antique system itself. He knows well that while there are more yacht clubs than ever, the enormous spread of sailing, in this country and elsewhere, has leapfrogged the club system. All kinds of organizations national, regional, and most importantly, the boat-class groupings make it wholly unnecessary for the majority of racing and cruising yachtsmen to belong to an old line club or latter day extension.

It should be mentioned that the author's figures are well drawn, and that the elder yachtsmen of Sound sailing are handsomely treated.

John W. Streeter

Early American Almanacs: The Colonial Weekday Bible by Marion Barber Stowell. (New York: Artemis Books, Burt Franklin & Co., Inc., 1977. xviii + 331 pp. Illustrations, black and white texts, sources, bibliography, appendices and index. $7.95. Paperback.)

The history of the American almanac is also the history of printing in this country. Reading for the colonists consisted of the Bible, psalms, psalters, etc. Brought from abroad, this literature (much too expensive for the general public) was kept in private libraries by the owners.

In 1639 when the first printing press was imported to Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University started publication of an almanac. Between then and 1700 eighty almanacs were published, and by the 1750s they numbered in the thousands throughout the colonies.

They became the poor man's bible—a book to be consulted, read and reread for yearly weather prognostications, astrological tables, information on planting and harvesting crops, animal husbandry, political essays, recipes for the cook in the kitchen, cures for every disease known to man, jokes and anecdotes, often bawdy, sometimes in rhyme.

Strange events also had their share of space—freaks of nature, giants of Patagonia, predictions of wars, floods, earthquakes. Illustrations and wood cuts always included the signs of the Zodiac and, changing little, are still used today. There was competition among authors and much pirating of material until the copyright law was passed in 1790.

This book is a prime source for research. The changing world of the early settlers is faithfully reflected: their political beliefs, their knowledge, and their dependence on the printed word. As people became more sophisticated, almanacs went along with the change; yet it is thought provoking to learn how many people still depend on this yearly publication for their ordinary living.

Dorothy Brewington

From Viking Ship to Victory by Ole Crumlin-Pedersen and Roger Pinch. (Palo Alto: Pendragon House, 1977. 50 pp. Illustrations, glossary, bibliography. $3.00)

Roughly a thousand years ago the Viking dragon ships, pulled by upwards of sixty oars, dominated naval warfare of that day, terrorizing

and exacting tribute throughout Western Europe. In time these open, lightly constructed, shell-built rowing craft gave way to massive floating fortresses moved by sail. Certainly the most famous of these is Admiral Nelson's flagship *Victory*, launched in 1765 and now preserved at Portsmouth, England, a monster 100-gun ship-of-the-line, 150 feet on the keel, 240 feet from keelson to mainmast truck, and once manned by 1,000 officers, marines, and crew.

In this attractive, tightly packed, and copiously illustrated booklet of fifty pages lately issued by the British National Maritime Museum, comparative accounts of these two types of fighting ships have been printed side by side on alternate pages. The authority who prepared the section on Viking ships is Ole Crumlin-Pedersen, Keeper of the Roskilde Viking Ship Museum which contains some of the most important surviving examples of Viking vessels. Previously he had written the section of Viking ships in the similar Danish publications on which this booklet was patterned and from which it is in part derived. The illustrations and the text treating HMS *Victory* were done by Roger Pinch, and the translation from the Danish by Sean McGrail of the National Maritime Museum.

The completeness of coverage and the extent of factual detail herein included for both types of vessels is surprising. Literally, the pages are packed with interesting information: historical background, design, construction, materials, timber, tools, rigs, sails, ground tackle, and much, much more. The fighting forces and crews who manned these ships are also considered, who they were, and how they lived, worked, shipped, and fought. Altogether it makes fascinating reading.

The illustrations are numerous, excellent, and skillfully drawn, adding greatly to the impact of the text. A reference dimension is added by a useful glossary and a select bibliography.

John Gardner

BOOK ANNOTATIONS

The Battle of Trafalgar by Geoffrey Bennett. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1977. 256 pp. Illustrations, maps and index. $9.95)

Between biographies of Lord Nelson and formal naval histories, there is no shortage of Trafalgar narratives. Nevertheless, Geoffrey Bennett's stands as one of the very best. The author enriches his account by allowing the participants to speak for themselves with extensive quotations from original sources. Not only does he set the complicated historical scene before launching into the battle narrative, but Bennett takes much of the mystery and confusion out of sea warfare in Nelson's day by providing a primer on Royal Navy practice, vessels, armaments, and tactics, which even the most uninitiated layman will have no difficulty understanding. For these reasons, Bennett's book on Trafalgar is probably the best of all introductions to this glorious epoch in British naval history.

No Need of Glory: the British Navy in American Waters, 1860–1864 by Regis A. Courtemanche. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1977. xvi + 204 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, and index. $13.95)

Because of the numbing number of rewrites generated by the recent Civil War Centennial, it is still impossible to examine new titles about this period in history without an unfair measure of skepticism. Although Great Britain's neutral stance throughout the Civil War has been told many times, author Courtemanche enlivens the story by focussing his research efforts on the operations of the North American and West Indian Station through the documents of its remarkably able commander, Vice Admiral Sir Alexander Milne. Milne's cool-headed handling of this front line diplomatic post throughout the Union blockade, the *Trent* affair, and in the face of yellow fever and desertion among his own men, is the substance of this terse, fast-moving account. As all Civil War buffs and Alfred T. Mahan fans know, it was also a period of rapid changes in naval hardware and strategy, which make the challenges narrated here and Admiral Milne's responses doubly interesting.

The Whale—Going . . . Going . . . Gone? by Marion Phillips. (Hicksville: Exposition Press, 1978. 94 pp. Illustrations, and brief bibliography. $6.50)

The title of Marion Phillips' final chapter, "Slaughter or Survival—The Twentieth Century," explains the thrust of this well-illustrated little book. Unlike most books on this subject,

the author's exegesis does not get in the way of her subject. She is passionate but never shrill. Scientific information about the species appears to be up-to-date, and the author's brief history of the whale's encounter with man is a model of compression without glaring distortion. At a time when many, many "save the whale" pamphlets are pouring from the presses, this is certainly one of the most informative and appealing.

America's Maritime Heritage by Eloise Engle and Arnold S. Lott. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1977. xii + 372 pp. Illustrations, photographs, list of maritime museums, index. $12.00)

As a source of instant reference for data concerning our maritime activities from colonial times to the present, this book is excellent. It is fact-filled, comprehensive, and well illustrated. What makes it doubly rewarding is its crisp, succinct, fast-moving style.

Passage East by Carleton Mitchell. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co. Inc., 1977. 246 pp. Illustrations, photographs, charts, maps. $10.95)

It is pleasant indeed to have Carleton Mitchell's 1953 classic back in a brand-new edition. The story of *Caribee*'s voyage on a post-Bermuda trans-Atlantic race to Plymouth is as fresh as the day it was written, a quarter-century ago, and is as instructive and enjoyable for the modern ocean racer as it was for his father long ago.

ACQUISITIONS

Although the major emphasis at Mystic Seaport is nineteenth-century New England martime history, it is sometimes appropriate that we acquire an object which does not at first appear to fit this theme. Such is the case with the recently donated model of the 1971 tanker S. S. Overseas Arctic (77.114). This 1:150 scale model, made in Japan by Kasai Model Shipyard, was given to the museum by the vessel's owners, Overseas Shipholding Group, Inc. and will be on exhibit in the Stillman Building exhibit *New England and the Sea* scheduled to open in the spring. For us, the significance of this modern model of a modern vessel is that it represents a dramatic comparison between ships and maritime activities past and present.

PHOTO CREDITS: P. 3, Claire White; p. 4, Les Olin; p. 12, S. A. DeVean; p. 15, Claire White; p. 16, R. Fowler; p. 18, Rich Malley; p. 19, Mary Anne Stets; inside back cover, Claire White.

CORRECTIONS:

On pages 66 and 67 of the October 1977 *Log*, the title of the article by William N. Peterson should have read "Campbell & Colby: Shipcarvers at Mystic, Connecticut."

Sylvester Gookin, author of "Silver Lake and '78," has informed us of some errors that occurred in his article appearing in the January 1978 *Log*. Ned Hamlin was from Toronto, not Montreal as stated on page 100. Also, in that same paragraph, it should have read that Courtney rowed with Yates not Robinson. The illustration on page 104 was of a lapstrake boat; Patsy Reagan's boat was a smooth planked shell. Capen's Bridge is in Braintree, Mass., not Quincy, as stated on page 105.





AN INVITATION TO JOIN MYSTIC SEAPORT

We should like to extend a cordial invitation to like-minded individuals to join with us in programs dedicated to the preservation of our national maritime heritage. Annual dues materially strengthen Mystic Seaport. At the same time, a member receives tangible benefits and privileges:

Unlimited Free Admission to Mystic Seaport during museum hours. (In all classifications above Individual, this applies to the immediate family: husband, wife and their children through the age of eighteen).

Receipt of THE LOG *of Mystic Seaport*, a quarterly magazine devoted to articles on maritime subjects.

Receipt of the WIND ROSE, the Seaport's newsletter, reporting on current museum activities and personnel.

A 10 Percent Discount on purchases at the Mystic Seaport Stores, Inc.

Purchase of Guest Ticket Books at substantial savings.

Eligibility for Subscriptions to the Adventure Series, illustrated lectures for armchair travelers.

Memberships are available in the following categories:

Individual	$15.00	Sustaining	$ 100.00
*Resident Family	20.00	Associate	250.00
Family	25.00	Life	1000.00
Participating	50.00	Benefactor	5000.00

Contributions to Mystic Seaport are deductible within legal limits for U.S. income tax purposes. Please make your check payable to Mystic Seaport, Inc. and send to: Membership Office, Mystic Seaport, Mystic, Connecticut 06355

*Available to year-round residents of Groton, Ledyard, North Stonington and Stonington.



GIFTS AND BEQUESTS

The physical development of the museum—the buildings, ships and wharves, the exhibits, books and manuscripts—give eloquent testimony to the generosity of members and friends of Mystic Seaport. There is a continuing need for gifts and bequests which will help assure its future strength and development through endowment.

Members of the Seaport who have not already done so are urged to perpetuate their interest in the work of the museum through a bequest. Some members will want to make a specific bequest while others may want to designate Mystic Seaport as a residuary or contingent beneficiary of all or a portion of their estate.

Mystic Seaport, Inc. is a publicly supported nonprofit institution and contributions are deductible within legal limits for Federal income tax purposes. Inquiries regarding gifts and bequests are encouraged and may be directed to the Director of Development.

SUGGESTED FORMS FOR BEQUESTS

General

I give and bequeath to Mystic Seaport, Inc., a corporation existing under and by virtue of a charter granted by the State of Connecticut, and located in Mystic (Town of Stonington) in said State, $ ....., to be used (or the net income to be used) at the discretion of the Trustees of said Corporation.

Residuary

All the rest, residue, and remainder of my real and personal estate I devise and bequeath to Mystic Seaport, Inc., a corporation existing under and by virtue of a charter granted by the State of Connecticut, and located in Mystic (Town of Stonington) in said State, said estate to be used (or the net income to be used) at the discretion of the Trustees of said Corporation.



As the long and brutal winter of 1978 slowly warms into spring, the lantern marking the entrance to the Stillman Building hangs ready to light the opening of *New England and the Sea*.



THE LOG
OF MYSTIC SEAPORT

Mystic, Connecticut 06355

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