



NOANK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Presents:

“Love and Marriage in Noank”

By Debbie Bates and Nancy Codeanne, with Special Guest Speakers



Ruth Jessen Boucher throws her bouquet on Wilbur Court in Noank, 1952.

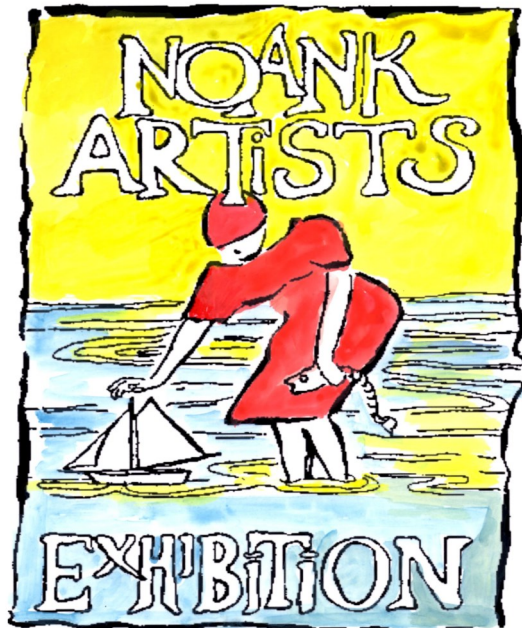
JOIN US: 7:30 PM - WEDNESDAY, June 15, 2022

The Latham/Chester Store, 108 Main Street, Noank

Love is in the air! Join us for a slice of wedding cake and reminisce on Noank brides, past and present, at our annual meeting on June 15. Enjoy stories of engagements and weddings in Noank from love matches in the 1820s to pandemic weddings in 2020, featuring local legends and celebrities (like Mary Virginia Goodman and Amelia Earhart) as well as Noank neighbors and friends. Don't miss this celebration of couples!

The public is cordially invited. Refreshments will be served.

<http://www.noankhistoricalsociety.org>



Gallery Hours:

July 1 - September 5
Wednesday - Sunday, 1 - 4 p.m.
108 Main Street, Noank, CT

“Meet-the-Artists” Reception:

Thursday, July 7, 4 - 7 p.m.

Noank Artist’s Exhibition

Mark your calendars! The 29th Annual Noank Art Show, sponsored by the Noank Historical Society, opens July 1 at the Latham-Chester Gallery. A showcase of over a hundred pieces representing more than forty artists, the exhibition features original paintings, photographs, sculptures, prints, and cards that celebrate life along the seashore as well as other captivating subjects.

The Gallery is free and open to the public 1 - 4 p.m. every Wednesday through Sunday from July 1 through September 5, and a “Meet the Artists” reception will be held July 7 from 4 - 7 p.m. Visitors are encouraged to return and view the “refreshed” exhibition throughout the summer, as artists replace sold pieces with new works as the weeks progress. A portion of all proceeds will benefit the Noank Historical Society.

The Latham-Chester Gallery is located at 108 Main Street in Noank, a lovely historic seaside village where visitors can stroll along the water, take in the fabulous views, and enjoy a leisurely lunch at one of several local restaurants.

For further information, please contact:

Carole Erdman (860) 536-3652 awecle420@gmail.com

Carol Connor (860) 536-7575 carolnoank@outlook.com

Gretchen Sutphen Federici (609) 915-1137 gretfed@gmail.com



Annual Meeting and Membership Supper—June 15

Members of the Noank Historical Society are welcome to join us for supper at the Latham-Chester Store, June 15 at 6:00 p.m. Our annual meeting and program “Love and Marriage in Noank” will follow at 7:30 p.m. In lieu of a potluck, we are inviting everyone to pack a picnic this year. Carson’s Store has agreed to prepare dinners for the occasion— your choice of a hot sandwich (see below), served with a side of potato salad, green salad and chips for \$18.00. Dessert is on us, served after the program.

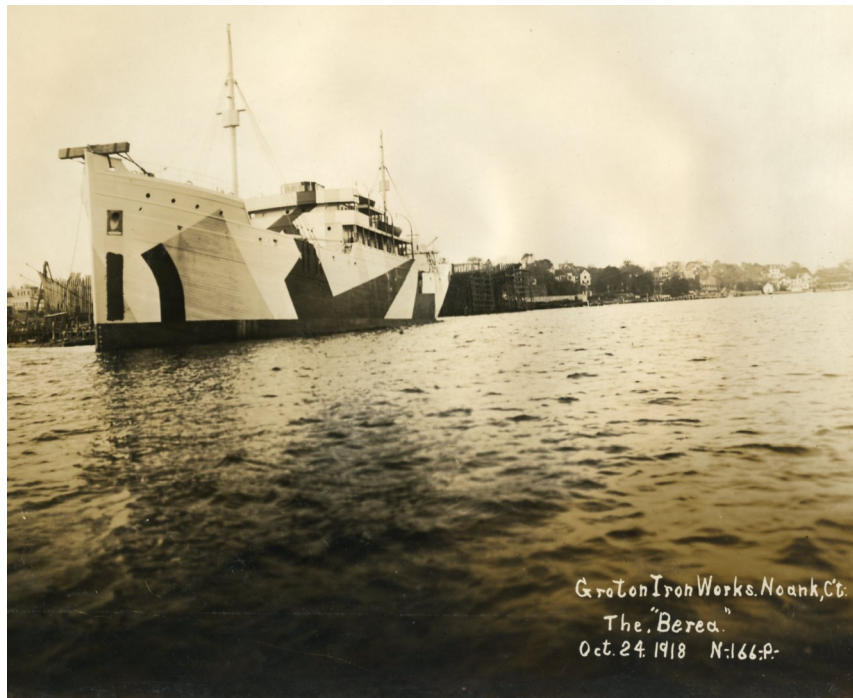
If you would like to pick up a dinner from Carson’s before the annual meeting, mail or drop-off your order to Carson’s Store (43 Main Street, Noank, CT 06340) by **June 8**.

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- Portabella Boursin** - Toasted ciabatta topped with boursin cheese, loaded with grilled portabella mushrooms, baby spinach and red peppers, served with balsamic reduction
 - Reuben** - Grilled rye bread, melted swiss cheese, store made corned beef brisket, grilled onions, sauerkraut, and creamy thousand island dressing.
 - Tomato Basil** - Toasted ciabatta roll, gooey melted provolone cheese, rich store made pesto (contains pine nuts), and sliced grilled tomatoes, served with balsamic reduction.
 - Turkey Club** - Toasted white bread, mayo, sliced turkey, crisp bacon, lettuce and tomato.

Selections from the NHS Photograph Collection

By John Wilbur, NHS Historian

It is 17 days before the end of World War I and the wooden steamship *Berea* lies in the river awaiting departure from Noank. She was launched on 7 September 1918 in humble, plain grey paint. Since that time she has been given her striking paint job, known as “Dazzle Paint.” This paint scheme was not so much camouflage, as an inhibitor to the visual rangefinders of



1971.004.138, gift of Florence Fitzpatrick Johnston

the day. It made it difficult to determine distance to the ship as well as its course and speed. The large timber lashed across the bullnose is a spreader for the towing bridle she will soon be receiving. The Noank-built steamers were contracted as “hull only.” Machinery (as well as the smokestack) was fitted elsewhere, (ships built before and after *Berea* were towed to Providence for their machinery.)

Berea was the third of a projected dozen steamships to be built at the Noank yard of Groton Iron Works (formerly the Robert Palmer Shipyard) for the Emergency Fleet Corporation. Plans called for hundreds of these vessels to be built by dozens of shipyards. The Noank ships were of the “Ferris type”, designed by Theodore Ferris, about 280 feet long, and approximately 2500 gross tons. Their coal-fired boilers generated steam for a 1,400HP triple-expansion engine with a design service speed of ten knots. They were expected to function for three years before requiring maintenance. *Berea* was the last one completed in Noank before the cessation of hostilities. Five Ferris steamers were completed by GIW: *Hokah*, *Balsto*, *Berea*, *Cuyos*, and *Gataska* (the last two were completed in 1919.) *Gataska*, finally completed in November, went directly into lay-up status. The plan to build so many large

wooden freighters was filled with difficulties, and many ships were cancelled even before the armistice. The last four “Noank” ships were cancelled before being laid down. The remaining three languished in various stages of construction before being broken up. As a boy growing up in Noank, Leonard C. Reid recalled when townsfolk were given permission to remove pieces from the incomplete vessels for fire-

wood. Living in the Ashbey House at the time (late 1920s/early 1930s, and now an apartment building), he and his brothers spent days sawing chunks of wood off and taking them home in a wheelbarrow.

Berea lasted in service until she was laid up on the west coast in September 1922, and broken up in 1924/25. Nevertheless, when this photograph was taken the shipyard counted over 1000 employees, was being guarded by a contingent of soldiers billeted at the Continental Hotel (Ashbey House), and the shipyard offices were staffed almost entirely by women. The armistice brought a welcome end to the conflict, but also change to the shipyard. The decline was steep and immediate. Noank would witness the launch of *Cuyos* in January 1919, but by then there was only about 200 men still employed in the yard. *The Day* reported that “most of the government work was wrapped up” by the end of the first week in April. A couple of weeks later the paper lamented that the boom days at GIW were indeed over. As was the case right after the death of Deacon Palmer, the fate of the shipyard and the town itself hung in the balance. Once again, rumors became the currency of the day. By early July, there were only six men working at the yard, and it was facing foreclosure. Boom to bust, indeed.

Noank News from Days Gone By

150 years ago:

"Noank is jubilant over the possession of a soda fountain."

-Stonington Mirror, July 4, 1872

125 years ago:

A Fly-paper Incident

It was a sticky piece of "Tanglefoot" fly-paper and the Noank housewife had placed in it the deep recesses of an arm chair where it might ensnare the pesky flies that were becoming so annoying. During the afternoon a young lady called, and after being ushered into the parlor sat down in the most inviting chair, which happened to be the one containing the Tanglefoot. Of course, while the conversation ran on, the exasperating qualities of flies in general were discussed, but not for one minute did that Noank lady think of the fly-paper that was all the time forming a stronger attachment for the skirt of the visitor. The call ended, the young lady wended her way to the station to take the train for her home in Mystic, all unconscious of the conspicuousness of the fly-paper adhering to her skirt. As an advertising scheme the merchants of Noank think it was a great success, as their sales of that article are increasing. At the depot the young lady was made aware of the unwelcome addition to her wardrobe and removed it. Hereafter she will be careful to notice, during fly time especially, the contents of any chair which she desires to seek repose.

-Stonington Mirror, August 17, 1897

100 years ago:

Local Boys in Sweden

The following copied from a Swedish newspaper regarding the movements of the American destroyer *Reuben James*, which has as members of her crew Ira Stark and Lloyd Fraser of this village and Charles Williams of Mystic who forwarded the clipping to his aunt, Mrs. Lena Genee, is of interest locally. The translation from Swedish to English was made by Mrs. Beret Jenssen of this place, as follows:

The harbor of Trelleborg has always has the reputation of being free from ice even in the coldest weather and for this reason harbors many foreign vessels. Several vessels came in yesterday bound for various ports. Among them was the German steamship *Harold* bound from West Hartlepool, via the Kiel canal, to Copenhagen with a load of coal. Later came the steamship *Vega* on its way from Stockholm to London, and the steamship *Resafred* from Hull to Odessa with coal. Three other steamers are mentioned as being ice bound in Falstergo.

Among the naval vessels that fled to this harbor was the American destroyer *Reuben James* and this boat and its crew caused quite a sensation. The destroyer's commander R.F. Zogbaum received the reporter of the Trelleborg paper, who found the vessel to be one of Americas most modern destroyers, built in 1919 in New York. The *Reuben James* is run by a 36,000 horse power machine and makes 35 knots, the highest rate of speed of any destroyer. It carries 12 torpedoes and has a crew of 125 men and eight officers.

For the past three months the destroyer has been in Danzig where it has officially represented the American Help station for the needy Russians. She was on her way to the French Review, via the English harbor of Portsmouth when the ice forced her to seek refuge at Trelleborg.

This is the first time we have ever harbored an American naval vessel, therefore the American sailors caused quite a stir while on shore.

-The Day, April 11, 1922

Native of India Will Give Talk

Dr. Y. Namdama, a native woman of Nellore, India, will deliver an address at the Baptist church on Friday evening under the auspices of the World Wide Guild. This woman came to America to act as a representative of her country at the Golden Jubilee of the missionary societies, and since then she has been making a tour of the eastern states. The public is invited to hear this talk.

-The Day, April 18, 1922

A Man, a Boat, a Tragedy, and a Legend

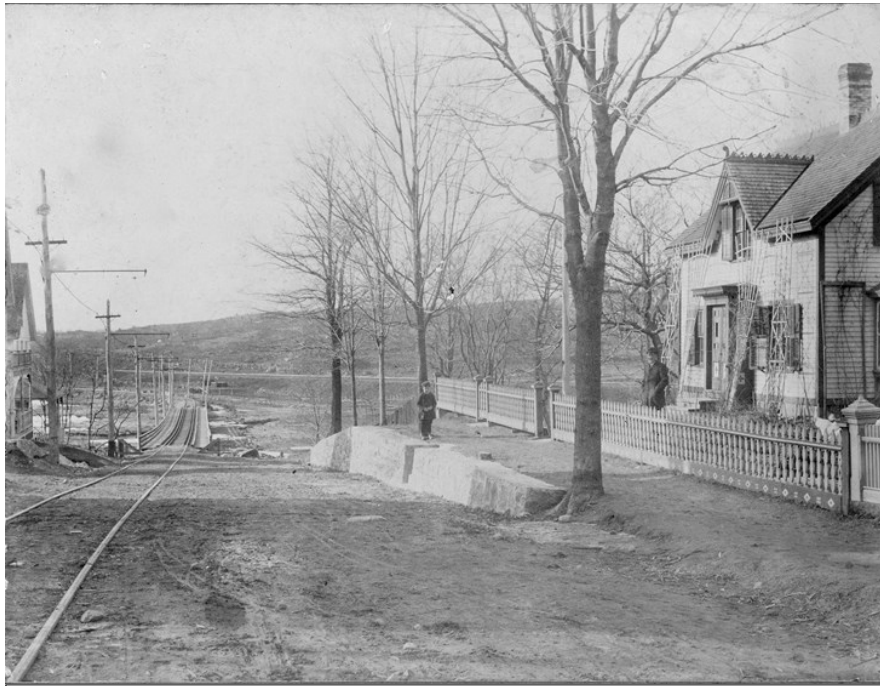
By John Wilbur, NHS Historian

Fate is fickle. It can elevate the mundane from obscurity to glory or infamy on a whim, and just as easily do the reverse — the ultimate equal opportunity practitioner. Consider the saga of the smack *Manhattan*. Built in 1850 by James A. Latham, she was typical for her time — a gaff-rigged sloop and her registered length of 44'05" yielded a boat roughly 50 feet overall. Like many vessels she was owned by a consortium of villagers (fisherman and otherwise.)

An account book, commencing on 8 April 1850 lists some of the expenses in outfitting a smack. The first entry is the fee to enroll and license the vessel in the fishery for the sum of \$2.90. Other entries include "4 knives at 75cents, 2 tablecloths at 80cents, and jaws on gaff at \$1.00." A frequent operational expenditure was fixing the compass. An 1854 deed for the smack lists James R. Davis as master and principal owner, with his brothers Peter and Henry, and Emerson Bibber, John D Latham, Franklin Saunders, and Perez Chipman all equal owners of the remaining shares. This spread out cost of outfitting and financial liability in event of a poor trip. In 1855 Peter sold his share of the smack to his brother Charles.

By 1859 Charles W. Davis was the principal owner and master with a 1/4 share, having bought 1/8 share from his brother James. James Davis probably sold half his interest in *Manhattan* to raise capital to finance his new schooner *Red Wing*, also built by James A. Latham & Co in 1860.

Charles W. Davis, one of five brothers, was born 30 January 1835, and like many Noankers, became a seafarer. According to *Burrows Genealogy*, he was "self-educated, a great reader, and wrote poetry." Transcriptions of a few of his journals/logs are in the NHS collection and, although models of brevity, provide some



The Charles Davis house (built 1869) on Sylvan Street. The man standing behind the fence may very well be Captain Davis himself. Just to the left of the tree in foreground is a flagpole which was the main boom of the *Manhattan*. Note trolley track which continues westward across the marsh.

insight into his character. His journal for 1857 opens with Davis at Fulton Market in New York City, sailing as crew in *Manhattan*, returning to Noank on 4 January. The next day Charles Davis left the vessel and mused "calculate to restorate a little. Attended the Noank Singing School in the evening...had a glorious time." He took the next two months off from fishing, before signing on the Mystic-built smack *Eliza* on 5 March.

Over the next three years he sailed on a number of different smacks before assuming command of *Manhattan*.

In the late 1850s he married Adelia Ashbey of Noank, and their first child was born 26 August 1860, a daughter, Annie. Over the next decade they would have four more children: Genevieve, George, Everett, and Charles Jr.

In August of 1863 *Manhattan* met with tragedy. Mid-morning of the 22nd, while fishing on Nantucket Shoals, a large sea boarded the smack, sweeping three men overboard to their deaths. The vessel was intact but Captain Davis was left the only man aboard. The three men lost were James Lamphere and Osmus Bates of Westerly, RI, and Jonathon Burrows of Noank. In a

cruel twist of fate, Burrows, 23, had just recently been exempted from the draft into the Union Army.

As can be imagined, Captain Davis was distraught to lose his entire crew, but his immediate concern was to get his vessel under control. *Manhattan* was one of the larger sloops in the Noank fleet, and her main boom was nearly fifty feet long. She must have been a real handful with a full crew under the best of circumstances. Fortunately, the smack *Ripple* of Noank was nearby and as soon as was practicable put a man aboard to help Davis sail the *Manhattan* home, arriving on the 25th of August.

The legend “Lost at sea” is on more than one gravestone in the Noank Cemetery, but those were usually isolated casualties. A loss on this scale, however, had not happened here since the schooner *D W Manwarren* went missing with all hands circa 1849. In a classic understatement the *Mystic Pioneer* stated “As may be supposed, this news created considerable excitement.” Not to deflect from, or make light of the tragedy, it is what was said to have happened next that granted *Manhattan* immortality in Noank, and caused quite a stir at the time.

Manhattan was hauled out to refit for another fishing trip. Prior to being “put overboard” (local-speak for launched) the bottom needed to be painted. The first man assigned that task reportedly put down his brush shortly after beginning and went home without a word, as did the second man. It wasn’t until a third man did the same that a reason was given. That man claimed the faces of the three drowned men were visible in the planking, and no amount of paint would cover them. It is easy for us to dismiss this claim as a flight of fancy. But three men walking off the same job, one after the other with no evidence of collusion is certainly noteworthy. The men apparently saw something. But what? In the nearly 160 years since the original event the story has not changed, been embellished, or lost any of its impact. Jack Wilbur heard it from his grandmother, Annie Ashby Davis Wilbur (who was three years old when these events took place), exactly as it has been reported. Whether she believed it to be true or not, is unknown. Maybe she did, or maybe she just enjoyed telling her grandson a family ghost story.

Whatever the truth, Manhattan’s bottom ultimately got painted and she re-entered service. J. D. Latham, whether he subscribed to the ghost story or not, sold his share in the vessel to Charles Davis the next year.



Annie Ashby Davis Wilbur later in life. Matriarch of the Wilbur clan, Annie had a reputation for being a plain-spoken, feisty woman who brooked no foolishness from anyone.

Manhattan, despite her large sloop rig, was never converted to a schooner rig, which would have reduced the size of her immense mainsail and made her easier to handle. There are reports of what it was like to sail on *Manhattan*. Annie sailed to New London with her father on occasion and she told her grandson, who was a keen student of such things, that the old smack could “roll some,” although Jack said the language she used was a bit more salty than that. Annie

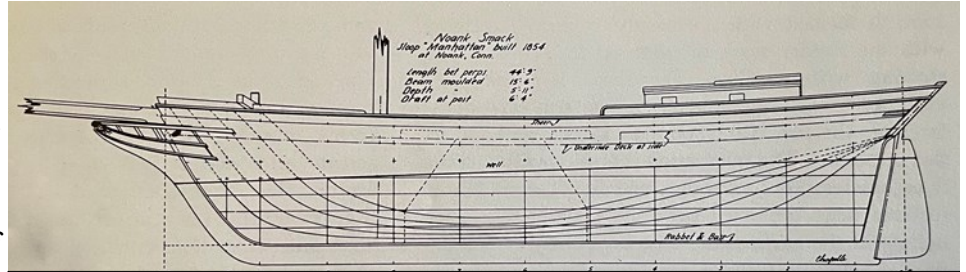
also said that when being driven hard under sail it was “possible to throw a cat out through her side.” These comments reveal as much about Annie as they do about the smack. Although probably only around twenty at the time, *Manhattan* could hardly be considered old, she was probably showing the wear and tear of a hard-driven life.

After 1863, matters become indistinct. *Manhattan* was last documented in the Stonington Customs House in 1871. Charles Davis had by that time sold a 1/8 share to Sarah Owen of Groton, all other owners remained the same. The vessel was last listed in the Register of Merchant Vessels in 1883. At some point, she was laid-up on a mooring in the river, where she ultimately sank. She was never raised, and Captain Davis quit fishing. Whether Davis tried to sell the vessel is unknown, but there her life ended. What her other owners thought of all that is also unknown. Old Mr. Bibber, however, a man who Claude Chester described as

a “strange character, and as a consequence cordially disliked”, complained “there are all my hard-earned ducats going to pieces out there’.

With Manhattan gone, Captain Davis used her main boom as a flagpole at his house on Sylvan Street. Once on shore, Davis became a carpenter, and apparently specialized in decorative trim work, a feature on many Noank homes (certainly his own). Captain Davis died 14 May 1915 and is buried in Noank Cemetery. Manhattan made a final appearance in January, 1903 when a spell of strong westerlies produced very low tides revealing her bones once again.

Remarkably, Manhattan’s half-model survives in the National Watercraft Collection of the Smithsonian Institution, a gift of Latham D. Ashbey. That alone might have granted a sense of immortality, but a good ghost story beats it any day.



Plan view of *Manhattan*. Lines taken from half-model in Smithsonian Institution. Contrary to notation on drawing, the smack was built in 1850.

Nominating Committee Report

By Shirley McFadden

The Board of Directors wishes to thank Paul Connor and Kim Meister Willis for their service on the Board.

At the annual meeting, the Nominating Committee will present the following nominees to serve a four year term on the Board of Directors, 2022-2026:

Steven Anderson
Shirley McFadden
Lynne Marshall
Rick Waters

We continue to hold a vacancy for a new curator. A vote will be taken on all names and any others that may be proposed by the membership.

Nominating Committee members are: Joan Butler, Nancy Codeanne, Shirley McFadden and Judith Hesp.

Membership Report

By Andrea Lithgow

Our 2021-2022 fiscal year is quickly closing, and as of May 10, 2022 we have a total of 503 members. It is now renewal time for the year 2022-2023. Membership dues are \$20.00 for individuals, \$30.00 for a families, and \$50.00 for a contributing membership. Your dues directly support the preservation of our diverse historical collections, the development of museum and virtual exhibits, and the publication of our quarterly newsletter.

The Noank Ledger is sent via bulk mail. For members who live outside the 06340 zip code and want their ledger delivered faster than bulk mail service, we offer first class mailing for an additional \$5.00 annually. Members who are moving to a different address in the winter, or are moving to a new residence permanently should notify us so that we can update our records. If you would prefer to receive a digital copy of the newsletter you can join our mailing list by emailing us at noankhist@sbcglobal.net.

The membership renewal envelopes are being sent separately. Checks should be made payable to the Noank Historical Society and to P.O. Box 9454, Noank, CT 06340.

We appreciate your continued support!

In Memoriam

Susan O'Keefe—1941-2022



Noank Historical Society
P.O. Box 9454
Noank, CT 06340
Address Service Requested

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
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Noank

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Noank

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 9454, Noank, Connecticut 06340

Noank Ledger Editor: Elizabeth Boucher

All photos in the Noank Ledger belong to the NHS Photograph Collections unless otherwise noted.

If you have any questions, concerns, and/or articles to share in the Noank Ledger, please contact us at Noankhist@sbcglobal.net. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the mailing of the ledger, or address changes, please contact Elizabeth Boucher at P.O. Box 9454, Noank, CT 06340

Entry Form
Noank Historical Society Artists Exhibition 2022
Noank Historical Society's Latham/Chester Store
Foot of Main Street, Noank, Connecticut

Exhibit on View July 1 – September 5 (1-4p.m. Wednesday – Sunday)
The “Meet the Artists” Reception will be held July 7, 4-7p.m.

The Noank Historical Society, Inc. (NHS) acknowledges receipt of the art described below for the purpose of exhibition and sale on its premises. We are very careful, but NHS will not be held accountable for lost or damaged works. The exhibition is open to current members of the Noank Historical Society. Membership may be paid upon entry. Artists may exhibit 1 to 3 pieces of original artwork (all artwork must be for sale). One copy each of priced and matted prints may be left for sale in artist's own rack (no prints or digital artwork on wall, no framed prints in bins). Cards made from your original art may be sold in this exhibit. Artists must supply their own rack (not too large) for unframed artwork to be sold. Sculptors must supply pedestals.

Receiving Dates: Monday, June 27 (10a.m. - 2p.m.) and Tuesday, July 28 (10a.m.– 2p.m.)
Sorry, but we no longer have room for children's art

All work must be identified (as specified below on entry form), framed and wired for hanging (no brackets please). All fine arts media (painting, drawing, sculpture, photography) are welcome – paintings are not to exceed 40” on longest side including frame, and photographs (of local scenes only) are not to exceed 11”x14” and are limited to 2 per artist. Works that are sold may be replaced by a similar piece. **BRING YOUR CALENDAR** and sign up for at least three hours of selling. This commitment is required **before your work is hung. There is no entry fee but artists must donate a minimum of three hours of gallery sitting time and 30% of the sale price to NHS.**

Pick-Up Date: Tuesday, September 7 (10a.m. – 1p.m.)

Complete the form below for each original entry and submit this form or copy with your 1 to 3 pieces at the L/C Store Museum. **Exhibit Contacts: Carole Erdman (860-536-3652) and Carol Connor (860-912-7691). Bring your CALENDAR for gallery sitting dates.**

CLIP AND COPY ENTRY FORM AND LABEL INFORMATION BELOW. KEEP ABOVE INFORMATION AND NOTE PICK-UP AND SITTING DATES ON YOUR CALENDAR. SUBMIT ONE COMPLETED FORM FOR LABEL INFO. TAPE ONE COMPLETED FORM TO EACH PIECE OF ARTWORK (THAT'S TWO FORMS FOR EACH ARTWORK).

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ Email _____

Title of Art for Label- _____

Medium _____ Price _____ (30% to NHS)

_____ I agree to sit for at least one 3-hour period this summer. My date to do this is _____

_____ I have up-to-date information about key pick-up

_____ I understand that 30% of the sale price of any work sold will be retained by NHS

_____ I am a **NOANK HISTORICAL SOCIETY** artist

_____ My NHS membership is current

_____ I have an updated artist's bio with photo of my artwork for an “Artist's Portfolio” at the exhibit

_____ I will bring a plate of finger food to the opening

THE ARTIST HEREBY ACKNOWLEDGES THAT THE NOANK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. IS NOT PROVIDING ANY INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR THE ART BEING DISPLAYED AT THE LATHAM/CHESTER STORE DURING THE SUMMER OF 2018. THE ARTIST AGREES TO HOLD THE NOANK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. HARMLESS FOR ANY AND ALL LOSS OR DAMAGE TO THE DISPLAYED ART.

Artist's Signature _____ Date _____