



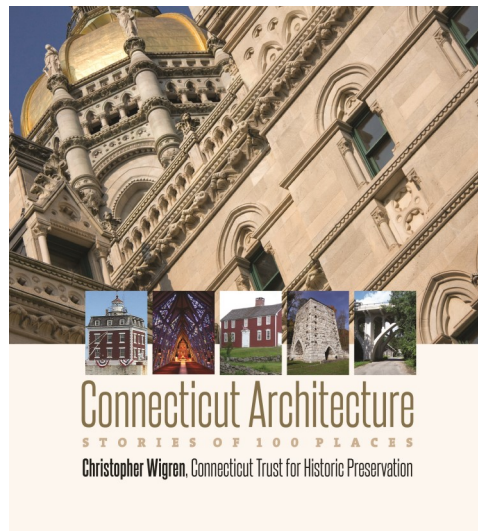
## NOANK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Presents:

## Connecticut Architecture: Stories of 100 Places

*By Christopher Wigren*

JOIN US: 7:30 PM  
 WEDNESDAY, November 17  
 The Latham/Chester Store,  
 108 Main Street, Noank



Connecticut boasts some of the oldest and most distinctive architecture in New England, from Colonial churches and Modernist houses to refurbished nineteenth-century factories. The state's history includes landscapes of small farmsteads, country churches, urban streets, tobacco sheds, quiet maritime villages, and town greens, as well as more recent suburbs and corporate headquarters. In his guide to this rich and diverse architectural heritage, Christopher Wigren introduces readers to 100 places across the state. Written for travelers and residents alike, the book features buildings visible from the road.

Featuring more than 200 illustrations, the book is organized thematically. Sections include concise entries that treat notable buildings, neighborhoods, and communities, emphasizing the importance of the built environment and its impact on our sense of place. The text highlights key architectural features and trends and relates buildings to the local and regional histories they represent. There are suggestions for further reading and a helpful glossary of architectural terms. A project of Preservation Connecticut, the book reflects more than 30 years of fieldwork and research in statewide architectural survey and National Register of Historic Places programs.

Christopher Wigren is an architectural historian and Deputy Director of Preservation Connecticut. His articles and essays have appeared in the *Hartford Courant*, the *New Haven Register*, and *Connecticut Explored* magazine. He lives in New Haven, Connecticut. Preservation Connecticut (formerly called the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation) was established in 1975 to protect and promote buildings, sites, structures, and landscapes that contribute to the heritage and vitality of Connecticut communities.

The public is cordially invited.

Refreshments will be served.

<http://www.noankhistoricalsociety.org>

## Points on a Curve

By John Wilbur, NHS Historian



Jack Wilbur (left) and Adrian Lane on the *Nern*. 2019.007.001, digital scan courtesy of Chris Lane.

A few issues back we learned of adventures in maritime piano delivery. This article tells the tale of a somewhat more conventional delivery in a series of photographs from the Adrain K. Lane collection. They tell a specific, maybe remarkable even, story about Noank, and two of her more renown citizens. Decades have now passed since the last of these men “crossed the bar” so an introduction is in order.

The gentleman on the left in the photograph is John Elisha Wilbur (more commonly known as Jack) born in Noank, Christmas Day, 1918. He was the second of four children, but spent most of his childhood palling around with his cousin, Adrian Kingsbury Lane (on right in photo, born 12 August 1919). The boys grew up on Pearl Street, a couple of blocks from each other.

The term cousin can be a loaded one in Noank. Jack and Adrian were related twice-over, their grandfathers were brothers on the Wilbur side of the family tree, and their great grandfathers were brothers on the Davis side. Most of their forebears were fishermen, or seafarers of one sort or another, and the boys began their sea careers early, much of which is well documented in *The Log of the Downit* (Adrian’s sailing skiff, Adrian the Captain, and Jack sailing as Mate). *Downit* ranged freely about the harbor, sound, and river, and Adrian was a diligent logbook keeper. He also

brooked no foolishness, and he “put the mate ashore” at least once when circumstances warranted.

As the years passed, both boys joined the recently reformed Sea Scouts, Adrian serving as Mate, and Jack as Bosun. The scouts cruised about in *Dauntless*, a lapstrake pulling/sailing boat gifted to the Sea Scouts by Captain Henry Langworthy. Again, Lane ran a tight ship and wielded the iron hand of discipline on occasion when high spirits got out of hand.

The boys further augmented their education aboard family craft. Adrian’s father George had a catboat named *Swan*, and Jack’s father, a motorboat named *MoHen*, which like its name was shared between Moses and his brother-in-law Henry Hoffman.

Which brings us to these photographs. Most of the details of the events surrounding these photos are maybe best left unknown, but what is known is that the owner of the sloop *Nern* arranged (or hired) the two young sea dogs to deliver the boat from Portland, Maine to Mystic, Connecticut sometime in the mid to late 1930s. How they got to Maine is unknown and unimportant, but they got underway from Portland probably in the early afternoon bound “up to the Westward” (the opposite of “Down East” in the parlance of the old coastermen).

As darkness fell they made Biddeford Pool, where they anchored for the night. I clearly remember Adrian telling me that “we anchored in 50 feet of water with 51 feet of chain.” Any sailor knows this is not a recommended amount of scope, and that motion aboard *Nern* would be uncomfortable to say the very least. As expected, sleep was nigh impossible and abandoned. The vessel got underway in short order, and the anchor never touched bottom again for the rest of the voyage. It is against Canal regulations to sail through the Cape Cod Canal, and it speaks of their trust in other mariners that they kept *Nern* on course for the canal hoping for a town through, eschewing the long trip around the Cape and in via Nantucket Sound. Their trust was rewarded as an obliging schooner towed them through.



2019.007.002, View of the Cape Cod Canal.

They made sail in Buzzards Bay and drove the sloop, non-stop, all the way to the Mystic River as if they were their grandfathers driving their smacks to Fulton Market in hopes of securing a good price for their fish.

History does not record just how long it took for *Nern* to cover the miles from Wing’s Neck to Mystic. *Nern* does not look to be a very large sloop, so her top speed could only have been so fast. Nevertheless they kept her to it the whole way. Despite the hours at sea, and the constant motion, it appears to have been a rewarding experience, if the photo of Adrian at the helm is any indicator. The looks of smug satisfaction on their faces at having safely reached Mystic in fine style also speaks of an enjoyable passage.

But what did *Nern* think of all this driving? The exact condition of the boat prior to departing from Portland is unknown, as are the exact details of just why she needed to be delivered to Mystic. Maybe she was purchased in Maine, and had been in lay-up for the winter. Maybe her topsides had dried out a bit, or maybe she was just tired. For whatever the reason, she sank at the dock shortly after



2019.007.003, Adrian Lane.

arrival, and presumably after the two photos were taken. Neither Jack nor Adrian spoke of the incident frequently, but the most telling comment I remember Adrian making about it was “we sailed her pretty hard,” his gravelly voice intoning in classic dry New England understatement. ‘Nuff said.

This was probably their only delivery together; World War II intervened and would see Adrian join the Coast Guard after graduating from college, Jack having shipped out in the merchant marine in 1938. Both men pursued careers at sea and both attained unlimited tonnage ocean master’s licenses, Adrian in sail, Jack in steam and motor. Adrian passed away 1 October 1988, and Jack followed in early January 1990.



2019.007.004, “Portland to Mystic in 4 1/2 Days.”



“Halloween proved to be one of the most successful fetes in several years. A large parade took place, lead by a fire engine with search lights blazing, and a band to add to the gaiety. Prizes for outstanding costumes were awarded at the school and refreshments were served. Suddenly streets were filled with hoboes, demons, witches and many other assorted creatures, all with the largest paper bags available. The trickers and treaters were on the march in a big way and hardly a house was left unvisited. One home owner reported that she had fifty four children in for treats during the evening! Surprisingly enough no stomach aches were reported the next day.”

-Noank Notables, November 5, 1953

*Noank News 150 Years Ago: Groton Long Point for Sale and a New Lighthouse Keeper at Morgan Point*



1985.003.002, Thaddeus Pecor with his wife Ann on the steps of the Morgan Point Lighthouse.

**FOR SALE AT A BARGAIN!**  
**The Groton Long Point Farm**

*Containing 285 Acres.*

And lying about one mile from Noank Depot and village, directly upon the Sound, and unsurpassed for fertility and beauty of situation. It is conveniently divided into mowing and pasturage, and easily winters 50 head of cattle. A young orchard of choice varieties supplies an abundance of fruit. Woodland is sufficient for the use of the farm.

**SEA MANURE,**

is driven upon its shores, on three sides, contributing to its present high state of cultivation, and furnishing unlimited fertilizing resources. Its fences are substantial, of stone, in good condition. A spacious farm house, and barn, with ample conveniences for labor saving, are special features, the house being well supplied with cistern and good well water brought within doors, and other modern improvements. Sites for watering places, or elegant summer residences, commanding views of

**Ocean, Island and Landscape Scenery,**

are unsurpassed on either side of the Sound, and must be seen to be appreciated. The farm approaches to within a few hundred yards of the Shore Line Railroad.

Address the subscriber at the Noank P O, or inquire of me on the premises.

SAMUEL MORGAN

Groton, Long Point, Ct., Dec 9, 1871

-The Stonington Mirror, December 9, 1871

“The family of Alick McDonald have just left this village to join him in Florida, where he has received an appointment as lighthouse keeper, as reported in the *Mirror* some weeks ago. Upon the retirement of Mr. McDonald. The government has again shown its preference for a patriotic soldier, by appointing Thaddeus Pecor of Noank as lighthouse keeper. Tad served his country faithfully during the late war being a member of Company C, 21st Regiment. There were other aspirants, but, on the whole, Mr. Pecor’s appointment seems judicious, and, we are happy to say, gives general satisfaction.”

-The Stonington Mirror, December 21, 1871

## Selections from the NHS Photograph Collection

By John Wilbur

We hope to introduce a new regular feature in this series of *The Ledger* where an historical photograph from the collection will be featured with a detailed caption. This portrait of Noank is from a stereograph attributed to Everett A. Scholfield. Many details of the town are visible, which provides data for es-



2004.014.034, gift of Paul Stubing

establishing a date for the photograph. There are a number of ranges (sight lines) which, when plotted on a map or aerial photograph shows that Scholfield took this from about one-third the way up what is now Williams Street.

The first thing one notices is the scarcity of large trees. This photograph could not be replicated today without the aid of a chainsaw or two, and a fair bit of physical exercise. Another feature of interest is the large tract of stone-filled open land between Elm Street and the railroad, which even by New England standards stretches the definition of arable. Yet in 1900 Arthur Henry (in *An Island Cabin* published in 1902) mentioned filling the mattresses for his cabin with ticking from a farm just down the road from the depot. The Noank Valley Cemetery is just this side of a white fence in the center of the image.

As to dating this photo: Starting with the obvious, from this location, the Deacon Palmer house (built 1884) would be visible, but is absent, so this was taken prior to construction. The large white two-family home on the corner of Spicer Avenue and Elm Street, (prominent in middle distance) was built circa 1871, so

that narrows things down to a thirteen year period. However, what is also absent in this view is the large square structure on the corner of Main and Sylvan Streets (Main Street House today), built in 1879. So this photo can be accurately dated to an eight year period between 1871 and 1879.

Noank of the mid-1870s was a very

different village from what it is today. The fishing fleet during the 1870s numbered in the multiple dozens of sloops and schooners, and the Latham and Palmer shipyards together launched no fewer than 67 vessels. Both industries were attended by an array of noises and odors, as well as prosperity. Main Street had as much grass growing in it as it had areas of dirt. Most traffic in and out of town went either by sea or by rail. A trip to New London could be a rare and major event for a non-seafarer. When my great grandmother went to New London as a girl, she did so on her father's smack Manhattan.

Noank was a significant port in the 19th Century, and numerous vessels are visible. There are two 3-masted schooners, one at the "North Yard" (the foot of Latham Lane), and the other just at the "Middle Yard" (between the Town Dock and Ford's), as well as a large 2-masted schooner at either Spicer's Wharf or the Town Dock. The old school, located on the site of the park, is best seen with magnification. Numerous houses in this photograph are still standing, but most everything else has changed beyond recognition.

The Noank Historical Society is encouraged by the continued support and generosity of our members. Contributions allow the organization to preserve Noank's history and artifacts. Sincere appreciation is extended to those who donated generously by answering our annual appeal or adding a contribution when renewing their memberships this year:

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New Acquisition for the Sylvan Street Museum

By Debbie Bates

I found this interesting evidence of a Noank Men’s Bowling League at Lisa Knobloch’s tag sale at her mother’s house on High Street. The trophy plaque reads “69 Noank Men’s League 70, W. Holt 101.3,” and belonged to Walter Holt who lived at 22 Front Street. He was the husband of Guerrina Bracci Holt, father of Maureen Holt Block, and grandfather of Janine Holt and Lisa Block Knobloch. I believe the Noank League bowled in Mystic, but by 1969-1970 the Mystic bowling alley may have been gone and the bowling alley was possibly in Groton.

*In Memoriam*

Art Hotchkiss, 1937-2021

Bert Kelly, 1928—2021

Frank Socha, 1952—2021



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**Noank Ledger Editor:** Elizabeth Boucher

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*If you have any questions, concerns, and/or articles to share in the Noank Ledger, please contact us at [Noankhist@sbcglobal.net](mailto: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*