



NOANK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Presents:

The \$100.00 Super Yacht

By Captain Geoffrey Jones

The Alvei passing the Mystic Drawbridge on her journey home, June 2022

JOIN US: 7:30 PM - WEDNESDAY, November 16, 2022

The Latham/Chester Store, 108 Main Street, Noank

In May 2019, Captain Geoffrey Jones flew to Fiji to see about a ship that had been marked for sinking. Jones purchased the schooner Alvei for \$100.00, and in the 4 years that followed, restored her and sailed her around the world—stopping at destinations including New Zealand, Easter Island, the Galapagos, the Panama Canal and the Caribbean on the way back to Connecticut. Join us on Wednesday, November 16, to learn about the 102 year history of the Alvei and her incredible three year journey from Fiji to Mystic.

Captain Geoffrey Jones grew up on the Mystic River. He started on boats as a small child, he had his first paying job on a boat at age 16 doing the dishes on a windjammer schooner with no engine out of Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts. He never stopped working on boats and ships. Captain Jones holds a 1600 ton masters license from the United States Coast Guard and a bachelor's degree in nautical science from the Massachusetts Maritime Academy where he graduated fourth in his class. In his more than 40 years as a professional sailor he has served on many types of large commercial power and sailing ships, he has been captain of over a dozen schooners and sailing ships.

The public is cordially invited. Refreshments will be served.

<http://www.noankhistoricalsociety.org>

The Noank Masters—A Retrospective on the Mystic/Noank Art Colony



On Friday, October 21, the Noank Historical Society hosted an opening reception for a special exhibition of paintings by prominent members of the Mystic/Noank Art Colony, c. 1900-1950. All of the artwork on display was loaned to us from the private collection of Jon Sproul, some of which had previously been on display at the Lyman Allyn Art Museum in the exhibit “Picturing Mystic: Views of the Connecticut Shoreline, 1890-1950.” Over 60 paintings from dozens of artists were hung in the Latham/Chester Store. All of them featured familiar scenes of Noank and Mason’s Island, and offered a rare glimpse of early 20th century Noank in color. The paintings remained on exhibit for the public through Sunday, October 30.

This event would not have been possible without the generosity and expertise of Jon Sproul, who has been conducting extensive research on the Lyme and Mystic/Noank art colonies, and collecting paintings from local artists for over 20 years. We are also indebted to Nancy Codeanne, who first envisioned this event, and to all the hard-working members of the exhibition committee: Clare and Herm Cukier, Rose and Blake Powell, Sue and Gary Petzold, Marie Cox, Sloan Keck, Tristan McDonald and Pujah Sharma. Special thanks are owed to artist Terence Finch for donating an original work of art to our raffle, and to Tuck Jones of Maxwellton Art and Framing for providing a beautiful frame for Finch’s painting. We are grateful to the Lyman Allyn Art Museum for sharing several text panels and labels from their exhibit “Picturing Mystic.” Finally, we sincerely appreciate the support of the local businesses who sponsored this event:



Paul Bates presents Jon Sproul with a new painting for his collection.



The Noank art colony was made up of a loose collective of artists who painted in Noank during the first half of the 20th century. There was a mix of trained professionals and self-taught amateurs, some of whom were full time or summer residents and others who were just occasional visitors. Henry Ward Ranger was one of the first professionals to recognize the artistic potential of Noank's landscapes and shoreline scenes in the early 1900s. Many more would follow, attracted by Noank's natural beauty and indescribable "atmosphere." Of course it also helped that Noank was a convenient stop on the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad and provided a relatively inexpensive escape from the city.

The Palmer House (on Bayside Avenue) and the Ashbey Hotel (on Pearl Street) were both popular places to stay for visiting artists. The signatures of 35 well-known artists grace the pages of the Palmer House guestbook from 1900-1915. There were also a number of boarding houses in the village that offered affordable accommodations within walking distance of popular painting spots like the Old North Dock.

Many visiting artists were so taken with the village that they purchased property and returned every summer or moved to Noank full time. Henry Ward Ranger purchased a house and built a large studio looking over the Mystic River at 28 Riverview Avenue in 1909. Katherine Forest first arrived in 1906 and by 1926 she had established a summer studio at 56 Church Street. Robert Brackman made his first visit to Noank in 1929 and later taught classes at his studio on Smith Court. Harve Stein began teaching summer art courses in Noank in the late 1930s and opened the Stone Ledge Studio Art Gallery at 59 High Street in 1939. He was living in Noank year-round by 1947.

Self-taught Noankers also made important contributions to the local art scene. Lars Thorsen maintained a studio at his home at 57 Front Street and achieved national recognition for his work. Charles Lewey was another prolific artist who lived at 87 Main Street. Several of his paintings can be found at the Groton Town Hall.

In the later years of the colony, members of the Noank Watercolorists and the Mystic Art Association would exhibit their work annually at the Noank School and Skipper's Dock. This tradition has carried into the present day, as local artists exhibit their work at the Latham/Chester Store every summer in the "Noank Artists Exhibition." You can discover more artwork from the Noank Art Colony at the Sylvan Street Museum.

Right: North Dock was one of the most popular locations in Noank for artists to paint. The exhibit featured 13 views of the Old North Dock all from different artists, in different styles, captured in different seasons and from different points of view. *Postcard view of North Dock, 2004.013.062, gift of Paul Stubing.*



Sketch in the guestbook of the Bayside Inn done by Henry Ward Ranger of himself with Reynolds and Gifford Beal, May 10, 1902. The train hints at a popular means of transportation to Noank for visiting artists. 1974.004, gift of Douglas Anderson.



Harve Stein leads an outdoor art class in Noank in the 1930s. Published in the *RISD Alumni Bulletin*, gift of Andrea Carlow.



Robert Brackman leads a summer art class in his studio at 27 Smith Court, late 1940s. 2011.044.002, gift of Mark Turner.



Selections from the NHS Photograph Collection

By John Wilbur, NHS Historian



2022.012.002.25, gift of Susan Fasano

Young Evelyn Colbeth takes to the waters in West Cove in the early to mid 1930s. The Colbeths were friends of the Langenbachers from the “Old Country” (Brooklyn, NY), and visitors when the photo was taken. A few years later they moved to the area.

Like the photo a few issues back of the pond yacht, a seemingly innocent family photo reveals a wealth of historical data in the background. The most noticeable feature is the four masts of the schooner *Alice L Pendleton*. When looked at under magnification, the *Pendleton* does not appear to be alone. Within that tangle of rigging almost certainly is the three-master *J. O. Webster*, which laid alongside the *Pendleton* for quite some time in that era.

Further to the right, and on the west side of the shipyard, above the swimming float, is a cluster of what appears to be menhaden steamers, and just above them is the tower of the Morgan Point lighthouse. The lantern was removed from the lighthouse in 1919, when the automatic light was established on the Crook’s Ledge beacon (now known as Noank No. 5). Other features in the shipyard are the brick buildings of the Blacksmith Shop and Sawmill. The first residence visible north of the shipyard is the Jerry Davis house

(most recently known as Vic and Kathleen Burdick’s residence). Above the rock in the water are the boat sheds of Web Eldridge’s boatyard. At far left is the western terminus of Spring Street and the Gill residence.

Blue Meadows, where this photograph was taken, was a vacation “resort” run by Carl D. Langenbacher, who lived on site in a magnificent farm house, that commanded views over a beautiful field that reached down to the waters of West Cove. Langenbacher was better known to the outside world by his *nom de plume* of Carl D. Lane, which he (and his family) legally adopted in 1943. As an author Lane wrote numerous books and articles about small boats and acquired an avid following. His writing style appealed to many for its nonsense, non “yachty” approach to the joys of small boats. He was also the Scoutmaster of the Noank Sea Scouts in the late 1930s.

Blue Meadows featured a handful of non-housekeeping cottages for rent ranging from \$17-\$22 per person per week. Special lower rates applied to children under 10, and seasonal guests. Each cottage was sited well apart from the others, had a porch, lavatory, four single beds (not cots), and ample closet

space. Professionally prepared meals, featuring local farm milk, eggs, and produce and artesian well water, were served in a large airy dining hall on the premises. Skiffs and small daysailers were available for \$3 per week. A seemingly idyllic place, but not for everyone, apparently, as a brochure from the 1930s advertises “Gentiles only.”

Blue Meadows survived until the 1970s. The farm house burned to the ground in the late 1970s, and the whole area, once stunningly beautiful was sacrificed to create a large marina. Other than the cottages, which survive today, lined up along the western border of the property, Blue Meadows exists only in photographs and memories.



Noank Veterans: Remembering Bruce Davis Palmer

By John Wilbur



Bruce Davis Palmer in his Navy uniform, pictured with his parents Percy and Bessie Palmer at their home in Groton Long Point, 1942. “A happy day with our sailor boy at home with us.” 2018.023.004, gift of Bruce Palmer Smith.

This year marks the passage of eighty years since the first full year of the United States’ involvement as a belligerent in World War II. Men young and old

responded to the call, flooding recruitment offices and training facilities in the hopes of getting into action as soon as possible. Throughout the war the US Navy had only one facility for Basic Training (Boot Camp), and that was NAVSTA (Naval Station) Great Lakes, in northern Illinois on the shore of Lake Michigan. Approximately 6,000 recruits were in training the day Pear Harbor was attacked. By May, 1942 that number had swelled to 68,000 and over 100,000 by that September. All told, by the end of the war in August, 1945 NAVSTA Great Lakes had trained over one million men and women.

On 13 January, 1942, Bruce Davis Palmer, Noank Grammar School Class of 1938, entered the NAVSTA Great Lakes, three months before his eighteenth birthday. He had not even graduated from high school. Training during wartime is always accelerated and compressed, and on 12 February, 1942, young Palmer, now Seaman, Second Class, reported aboard his first ship, *USS Juneau*. *USS Juneau* and her sister *USS Atlanta* were a new breed of ship within the USN. Although her pennant number was CL-52 (Cruiser, Light, number 52) she was known as an anti-aircraft (AA) cruiser. Most light cruisers had a main armament of 6-inch guns, but the AA cruisers had a main armament of 5-inch guns, but carried 16 of them in eight twin-mounts. The main battery was arranged with three mounts facing forward and three facing aft in “superfiring” positions (each mount fired over the mount ahead of it), with one additional mount on each side of the ship near the after smoke stack. These mounts had the then-standard 5-inch, .38 caliber rapid fire, dual purpose (for use against airborne and surface targets) gun. These guns were designed to fire a 50-pound shell at 15 rounds per minute, but some crews managed to increase that rate to over 20 per minute for short periods of time. When these ships were fending off an air attack they put a fearsome amount of steel into the air at a time.

The AA cruisers had a design speed of 32 knots to keep up with aircraft carriers as part of their screen. They were over 6000 tons standard displacement and up to 8000 tons in wartime conditions. At just over 540 feet long they were home to 673 officers

and men. They accomplished their designated tasks with deadly efficiency.

Bruce Palmer was what is known as a “Plank Owner” (member of the initial crew), and he reported aboard two days before the ship was commissioned. *Juneau’s* shakedown cruise took place off the east coast in the month following commissioning, and her first assignment took her to the Caribbean to prevent the escape of Vichy French forces from French islands. She returned to the New York area for repairs and alterations, common to all new designs and constructions, before spending the summer on patrol and escort duties. World War II in the Atlantic was a protracted war of attrition against the U-boat, in the Pacific it was shaping up to be a battle between aircraft carriers. In mid-August she departed for the Pacific where her AA capabilities were desperately needed.

Shortly after arriving in the South Pacific, specifically the area around the Solomon Islands, *Juneau* and her sister *Atlanta* were screening carriers in the Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands, and although the carrier *USS Hornet* was ultimately lost, the AA cruisers helped shoot down dozens of planes.

The naval battle around Guadalcanal consumed men and ships at a fearsome rate, indeed so many ships, both Allied and Japanese, had been sunk in the waters to the north of that island that it became known as “Ironbottom Sound.” Guadalcanal was so prized because of the airfield that the Japanese had started to build there. The US Marines invaded Guadalcanal, and took over the field in early August of 1942, and named it Henderson Field. Ever since then there had been savage fighting for control of the airfield, and thus the air, and consequently the war. Its importance could not be overstated. A number of times the Japanese Navy tried to knock it out by naval bombardment. One such attempt took place in mid-November, 1942. To counter this threat, the US Navy cobbled together a force of assorted cruisers and destroyers, *Juneau* and *Atlanta* included. The hours just after midnight on 13 November saw the American column of ships consisting of two heavy cruisers (with 8” guns), one light cruiser (6” guns) the two AA cruisers,

and eight destroyers steaming to meet a Japanese force of unknown strength. The Japanese bombardment group consisted of two battlecruisers, one light cruiser, and 11 destroyers.

The two forces met in poor visibility in the restricted waters of Ironbottom Sound in what has widely been described as the most confused and savage naval battle of the entire war. Most of the battle was conducted at point blank range, a “shoot first, identify, and ask questions later” type of donnybrook. At that point in the war, the US torpedo was notoriously unreliable, whereas the Japanese “Long Lance” torpedo was the very best in the Pacific. In the short, bloody battle, four US destroyers were sunk, both heavy cruisers, and two of the destroyers were heavily damaged. *Atlanta* and *Juneau*, designed to fight aircraft, were suddenly in a surface brawl for which they were ill-equipped. In theory, they should give a good account of themselves. They certainly could handle a destroyer or two with ease, but it was not to be. Both received heavy punishment early in the melee, *Atlanta* taking multiple heavy caliber hits from both friend and foe alike, and *Juneau* was hit by a Long Lance torpedo which probably broke her back. Both ships were out of the battle before they really were in it. Action was broken off nearly 40 minutes after it began, the sea a phantasmagorical wasteland of floating debris, bodies, and burning and exploding ships. *Atlanta* would sink the next morning. One of the Japanese battlecruisers was so badly damaged that aircraft from Henderson Field bombed and torpedoed her repeatedly once day broke, forcing the Japanese to scuttle her. Two Japanese destroyers went down in the battle.

The next morning, *Juneau*, down 12-feet by the head, but making 13 knots, the cruisers *USS San Francisco* and *Helena*, the destroyers *USS Fletcher* and *Sterrett* were limping back to Espiritu Santo when the Japanese submarine *I-26* fired two torpedoes at *San Francisco*. These missed, but one hit *Juneau* in the same general area of the torpedo hit from the night before. The resultant explosion was cataclysmic, and within 20 seconds the ship was gone. Captain Gilbert Hoover, in *Helena*, and senior officer of the group, was faced with an impossible decision. Should he stop to

search for, and pick up survivors, thus risking his remaining ships and men (more Japanese submarines were reportedly in the area), or continue on. *Sterrett* was in no condition to fight, and Hoover decided he could not spare *Fletcher*, he had to save what was left of the group.

It has been estimated that 100 men survived the explosion, and actual sinking of *Juneau*. Captain Hoover signaled a B-17 flying overhead that witnessed the explosion to radio ComSoPac (Commander, South Pacific) to arrange rescue. There is doubt that ComSoPac ever received that message, and by the time help did arrive eight days later, only 10 men out of the original crew of nearly 700 were found alive. Among the missing were the five Sullivan brothers, none of whom survived.

Admiral William Halsey (ComSoPac) relieved Captain Hoover of command upon arrival, but later in the war admitted that, terrible as it was, Hoover had probably made the correct decision.

It is not possible to know just which event in *Juneau's* last days claimed the life of Bruce Palmer, but he was awarded the Purple Heart posthumously, and his name is inscribed on the War Memorial at the foot of Brook Street.

There are a couple of postscripts to this story:

In Bruce Palmer's honor, his mother, Mrs. Percy Palmer was invited to sponsor the frigate *USS Groton* (PF-29) at her launching from the Walter Butler Shipbuilding Company, Superior, Wisconsin on 14 September 1943.

The wreck of *USS Juneau* was located on St Patrick's Day, 2018 by the *RV Petrel*. She was found to be in several large pieces, lying in 13,800 feet of water.

The Sylvan Street Museum will be open to visitors and researchers by appointment throughout the winter. Please call us at 860-536-3021 or email us at noankhist@sbcglobal.net with any questions, or to set up a date and time.



Plaque from the launching of the *USS Groton*, sponsored by Bessie Palmer, September 1943. 2014.037.001, gift of Bruce Palmer Smith

Noank in the News 150 Years Ago

Excerpts from the Stonington Mirror, November 1872

- The democrats and liberals of this vicinity accept the result of the election with a grace characteristic of the men.
- J.L Weaver, M.D., has been appointed notary public by Gov. Jewell. We trust the appointment will not have a tendency to increase the profanity of the village.
- C. Fowler, after returning home from a few days absence, found \$150 had been stolen from his room. This isn't the first depredation these sneak thieves have made in this village - prowling into rooms and always displaying a good knowledge of the premises.
- An unusually large fleet of vessels have gone south this fall. The chances of success there are not flattering, and most of them delayed as long as prospects were good here. The DAUNTLESS, Capt. Douglas, sailed Saturday. The HILLI has just returned from New York and is being dressed over with paint, etc., for her southern tour. She will bring up the rear guard of the fleet for that "land of flowers."

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.

-Andrea Lithgow, Membership Secretary

Don & Sharon Allan	Maarten C. DeJong	Valerie King
Louis & Cindy Allyn	Joyce Densmore	Charles & Judith Kraeger
Charles & Maureen Anderson	Mark Densmore	Peter Landolt
Frederick & Anita Anderson	Alfred & Linda Dion	Chris & Jennifer Lane
Lynn & David Anderson	Robert & Marilyn Douglass	Kevin & Ann Lawrie
Robert Anderson	Susan Dowling	Lynne Lawrie
Robert P. Anderson, Jr.	David & Deborah Downes	Thomas & Catherine Leary
Joanna Masi & James Arnold	Mike & Pat Doyle	Patricia Leuthner
Bruce Avery	Mary Drake	Peter & Prescott Littlefield
Raymond & Marthe Ayers	Sarah Strong Drake	Elizabeth Maltby
Glenn & Laura Baller	Michael Dwyer	George Mandell
Keith & Sue Barker	Barbara Eckelmeyer	John & Debra Matthews
David & Allyn Barth	Carole Erdman	James & Elizabeth Maxson
Jeffrey Bartholet	Jody Farrington	Mary McFadden
Debbie & Tim Bates	Gretchen & Antonio Federici	Peter & Shirley McFadden
Paul Bates	BJ & Diane Ferguson	Megan McKain
John Bennett	H.L. Ferguson Museum	Sharon McKain
Katrina Bercaw	Chris & Vicki Field	Robert & Tamara McKenna
Ann & Woody Bergendahl	Frederic Fischer	Carolyn Menzies
Ronald & Rebecca Bizick	Roland Foster	John & Joyce Millar
Gilbert & Meredith Bliss	Russell & Gloria Fowler	John Miscione
Sandra & James Bohary	Bill & Nancy Gilmore	Dr. & Mrs. Peter Molloy
Albert & Harriet Botters	John & Betsy Goetsch	Mary Moriarty
Ruth Boucher	Tony Gorman	Lee Morris
Lucinda Brandt	Melanie Greenhouse	Nancy Muller
Carol Brown	Royden & Valerie Grimm	Joe & Jean Murdoch
Darthea Brown	David & Patricia Hadlow	Nancy Nazro
Garrett & Carolyn Brown	Charles Haines	Penny Newbury
Marlice Brown	Arnold Hall	Carolyn Norton
Nelson & Rebecca Brown	Elizabeth & Tom Halsey	Susan O'Keefe
Dwight Burdick	Patricia Hardy	Bill & Fran Oat
Victoria Burdick	Frank & Karen Hartman	Thomas & Marie Olson
Wayne Burdick	Gretchen Hatfield	Leanne Ouimette
David Butler	Robert Heivly	Willis & Carol Overton
Joan Butler	Kevin Blacker & Karli Hendrickson	Dana & Carol Oviatt
Dennis & Dana Buttermore	Judith & Barrie Hesp	Dave & Andrea Pascal
Dave & Judy Campbell	George Hewitt	Steven & Elizabeth Pendery
Gail Cleere	Diane Hitchcock	Gary & Susan Petzold
Laurence & Jerilynn Comstock	Floyd & Francis Hohenstein	Jason Pilalas
Anne Conlin	George & Toby Hohenstein	Catherine Pratt
Paul & Carol Connor	Maryanne Holaday	James & Nancy Pratt
Lois Constantine	Barbara Jankowski	Tim & Adrienne Pratt
Ann & Fred Conti	Edward Johnson	Jim & Thalia Pryor
Ed & Theresa Cosden	Lacy Johnson	John & Georgette Quilter
Arnold & Janet Crossman	Hansina Wright & Stephen Jones	Christine Race
Guy Herman & JoAnn Crystoff	Joseph & Cindy Kane	Elizabeth Raisbeck
Marianne DeAngelis	Sean Kane	Linda & William Rambow
Steven DeBiasi	Eileen Kenny	George Rathbun

Juliana Ratliff
 Charmaine Rawsthorne
 Carl & Karen Reichard
 Pieter Reichgelt
 Dick & Judy Robertson
 Angie Robinson
 Bob Rogers
 Jim & Carolyn Rymash
 Nick & Judith Salerno
 Robert & Susan Scala
 Francis & Gail Scalley
 William & Patricia Scheer
 Russell Sergeant
 Tim & Sue Shepard
 Robert & Ruby Silva
 Robert Smalley
 Bruce P. Smith
 David & Kathleen Smith
 Joel & Liz Smith

Marshall Smith
 Shau-Wen Sokol
 David Spira
 Carol & Vince Spunar
 William & Donna Stamm
 Ed Stebbins
 Karen Steever
 Duncan & Lolly Stoddard
 William & Bette Stuart
 John & Eunice Sutphen
 Sue & Thomas Sypher
 Betty & Gerland Thompson
 Joan Thorp
 Ilario & Estelle Timpano
 Richard & Margaret Traskos
 Steve Trehub
 Susan Troy
 Mark Turner
 Nancy Turner

Jim & Cindy Turse
 Betty Tylaska
 Arnold Jordan & Marianna Urbanski
 Sandy & Sidney Van Zandt
 Daphne Vayos
 Daniel & Melissa Verdier
 Victor & Eugenia Villagra
 Scott & Joan Warren
 John & Judith Warn
 Robert & Jyl Warn
 Mary Cuthbert & Richard Waters
 Walt & Louisa Watrous
 Ruth Webster
 Nancy & Stan Wells
 Barbara & Dave Williams
 Adrian Wolverton
 Elissa Wright
 Nancy Yerkes
 John Zuccardy

THE NOANK HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS
 2021-2022

Term: 2022-2026:

Steven A. Anderson Treasurer
 Shirley McFadden Recording Secretary
 Anne Lawrie
 Vacancy

Term: 2020-2024:

Debby Thompson
 Paul Bates Building Maintenance
 Stephen Johnson
 Rick Waters

Term: 2021-2025:

Debbie Bates President
 John Wilbur Historian
 Tim Pratt Vice President
 Carol Oviatt

Term: 2019-2023:

Nancy Codeanne Nominating Committee
 Christopher Lane Corresponding Secretary
 Andrea Lithgow Membership Secretary
 Oliver Porter Program Committee
 Vacancy

Director Emeritus:

Arnold Crossman, Barbara Eckelmeyer, Ollie Porter, Patricia Ann White

In Memoriam

Gerard "Dick" Laffargue (1926-2022)
 Sandra Lee Mandell (1951-2022)
 Arlene Stamm
 Judy McDonald Warn



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

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
New London, CT 06320
Permit #465

Noank Ledger is published quarterly by **Noank Historical Society, Inc.**

Latham/Chester Store
108 Main Street
Noank

NHS Museum
17 Sylvan Street
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