



NOANK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Presents:

“Lars Thorsen: From Norway to Noank”

By Amelia Onorato



JOIN US: Wednesday, June 18, 2025

6:00pm—Potluck Supper

7:30pm—Annual Meeting and Program

The Latham/Chester Store,

108 Main Street, Noank

Join us June 18 for a lecture on the art and life of artist Lars Thorsen (1876-1952), based on the exhibit “Lars Thorsen: From Norway to Noank,” curated by Amelia Onorato at the Mystic Museum of Art. Lars Thorsen was born and raised in Stavanger, Norway in 1876. He worked as a mess-boy, sailmaker and rigger, rounded Cape Horn five times by the age of 20, and raced in the America’s Cup before settling with his family in Noank in 1904 and becoming a member of the Mystic Art Association. Self-taught, his artwork tells the story of an identity forged in motion.

Amelia Onorato was born and raised in Noank and earned degrees in Museum Studies and History from Regis College. She is the Assistant Curator and the Exhibitions Manager at the Mystic Museum of Art.

The public is cordially invited. Refreshments will be served.

<http://www.noankhistoricalsociety.org>

AN EVENING IN NOANK

PLEASE JOIN US

Wednesday, June 18, 2025, at the Latham/Chester Store
Sponsored by the Noank Historical Society

Potluck Supper: 6:30 p.m.
Annual Meeting and Program: 7:30 p.m.

Don't miss this event.

Bring a favorite dish to share (suggestions below) and prepare to enjoy!
You will meet or renew friendships in a fun setting that annually attracts a capacity crowd.
Committee members provide a cheerful setting, paper plates and napkins, cups, plastic utensils, coffee, iced tea, soda and ice.

REMEMBER TO BRING:

Your food dish and utensils for serving that dish
Your personal silverware, if you prefer it to plastic
Hearty and appreciative appetites

A few **willing hands** are needed to help with clean-up details afterward and set up chairs for the annual meeting to begin at 7:30 p.m. A special program will follow.

If your last name begins with the indicated letters below, **please bring:**

A-H
Main Dish
Appetizers

I-P
Desserts

Q-Z
Salad
Veggies

The Noank Museum and Red Shed will be open for the season from June 28—September 1, Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays, 1-4pm . All are welcome to join us for an opening reception and refreshments at the museum (17 Sylvan Street) on Saturday, June 28, 1-4pm. This year we will feature a new exhibit on Captain Adrian Lane, one of the last deep-water sailing captains out of Noank.

Selections from the NHS Photograph Collection:

By John Wilbur, NHS Historian



This photograph is a new addition to the NHS collection — a gift of Susan Palmer DeRagon, from her late father Walter Palmer. It looks like Noank but, something is not quite right. It is Noank from just over 100 years ago — around the time of World War I, and is Pearl Street.

The photographer is standing on the east side of Pearl Street, just north of where Abbott's Lobsters stands today, looking north. The large three-story structure is actually two three-story structures. The one with three dormers is the old Caracausa Building, built in 1900. For so large a building, *The New London Day* barely mentioned its construction aside from "the frame for the new three-story building in Pearl Street is raised and nearly boarded in" on 21 September 1900. Salvatore Caracausa had the structure built with a store on the ground floor and tenements (the term 'apartment' was not in general use in those days) on the upper floors. Pete Shandeor's first store was located in this building, but he relocated the business to the former Palmer Store (Palmer's Provisions now) in 1919.

The Caracausa Building spent most of its years in obscurity, aside from a mattress fire on Thanksgiving

Day 1916. Presumably started by someone smoking in bed, the potential catastrophe was partially averted by heaving the burning mattress out a window. Despite the wet weather, the burning mattress landed on a roofed section of the building, setting fire to some shingles. The situation required a more aggressive approach to fire-fighting and once employed extinguished the blaze without involving the Noank Fire Department.

Mariner's Savings Bank foreclosed on Caracausa in 1929, and the building was torn down in 1931 or early 1932. Salvatore Caracausa died in early 1932. George Hewitt, at the tender age of nine or ten, appropriated some boards from the demolition to build a boat. Having largely ignored the construction of the building, *The Day* spared little ink on its demise. Prior to the discovery of this photograph, there was almost no photographic record of it — just a roofline in the background. This is the first photograph in the NHS collection to show any detail of it. It's hard to believe so large a building lasted only just over thirty years.

Immediately behind the Caracausa building is the mansard-roofed Ashbey House. The Ashbey House was

much older — probably dating to the early to mid-1870s. A hotel run by Latham D. Ashbey (the same man who built Arthur Henry’s cottage on “Quirk” Island [see *An Island Cabin*]), the Ashbey House was Noank’s premier hotel until Captain Jimmie Sistare had the Palmer/Bayside Inn built in 1900. Both the Ashbey House and the Caracausa building housed shipyard workers during the war. The Ashbey House outlasted the Caracausa building, but not by much, and was torn down in the spring of 1939.

At far right, barely discernible through the trees is the home of Deacon Robert Palmer.

Dating this photograph precisely should be a relatively easy task, but it isn’t. Other photographs in the Walter Palmer collection show the Ferris-type steamships under construction, which suggests a three-year period centered on 1918. The significant snowfall should be another hint, but newspapers in early 1918 had a world war to cover, and so a mere two feet of snow barely warranted a mention, especially as the winter of 1917-1918 was unusually cold and stormy. The river froze enough so that people could walk across it to Mason’s or Gates’s Islands, and in early February the Sound froze over all the way to Fishers Island. However, there was a sizable fall of snow on 22 January of 1918, and then again a month later. The January storm stopped work at the freight yard and halted outside work in the shipyard, whereas the February storm, for all its severity did not stop a baseball game between officers of the First National District and the officers from Fort Adams in Newport, Rhode Island. Despite the “blinding snow-storm”, they got in a full nine inning game and managed a 12-5 win for the District Officers.

Compare that with a comment in *The Day* on 9 December 1918 “The coming of snow storms has reduced automobile traffic by more than half in this city (Putnam, Connecticut), as many owners have stored their machines until spring arrives.” But private automobiles were nowhere near as common then, neither were snowplows if this photo is any indication.



This is the same view in May 2025. Foliage obscures most detail, but cannot hide the absence of such a large building. The curve in Pearl Street at this location has been softened somewhat as well.



This photo shows a young George Hewitt rowing in what might be the seagoing remains of the Caracausa building.



Noank in the News, 125 Years Ago

Headlines from the summer of 1900 were dominated by two incidents of lawlessness in Noank. In the early hours of July 2, Captain Charles Christensen’s lobster sloop *Emblem* was brazenly stolen from her mooring. The following evening, celebrations for the Fourth of July escalated to anarchy, with “on or two [of the Noank constables] glad to escape with their lives.”

“River pirates played their nefarious business in the harbor last evening. The lobster sloop *Emblem*, owned by Charles Christensen, was stolen from her mooring and mysteriously hied away to parts unknown. The *Emblem* is a jib boat for the lobster business. She is a staunch little craft and was recently purchased by Capt. Christensen.

Her loss means a great deal to him as the busy season is approaching. The theory that the boat drifted away is dissipated by the fact that the hawser was clearly cut as by a knife showing that the culprits made haste in their work. The boat was moored at the edge of the channel and seemed to be singled out of many boats lying there by the thieves. Her disappearance is shrouded in mystery.”

- The Day, July 2, 1900

The matter was taken seriously by law enforcement and followed closely by residents of all the local seaport towns. Telegrams were sent as far as Block Island alerting constables and police to the theft and people all along the coast kept a sharp eye out for the craft. *Emblem* was first spotted by a New London sea captain on the south side of Long Island on July 4. The thieves—Thomas Ashely and TJ Gray of Maine—were apprehended in Riverhead, NY on July 6, but not before they had wrecked *Emblem* on the shores of Shinnecock Bay. To make matters worse, they had stolen and disposed of all the boat's fittings, including two expensive winches, which were apparently thrown overboard, before striking the shore. Public sentiment regarding the incident is reflected in a notice that appeared in the paper several days later:

“It is to be hoped that the thieves who stole and wrecked Capt. Chistensen's sloop *Emblem* will receive their just desserts. To plunder a hard working fisherman in this way deserves a summary and severe punishment, especially when lobstermen, of which the captain is one, were never making less money than now. The captain deserves the sympathy of all true sailors.”

- The Day, July 12

Public opinion regarding the Fourth of July “celebrations” were more divided. Some villagers “described the affair as a riot, while others said it was a boyish prank.” Accounts of property damage, physical assaults and criminal investigations dominated the Noank news for the month of July:

“Vandalism to be Punished: Noank people will remember the night before the Fourth for some time to

come. The crowd of hoodlums, in their attempt to celebrate, assaulted persons, stripped the clothes off one constable, broke into the schoolhouse and damaged the interior, shot rockets and candles into houses, stoned the Chinese laundry man, and performed other acts of vandalism. The ringleaders are known and will be prosecuted.”

- Stonington Mirror, July 6, 1900

Fourth of July mischief was a well documented occurrence in Noank and the surrounding villages around the turn of the century. Ringing the church bells at midnight was a rite of passage for Noank boys. Bonfires, tipping outhouses, shifting private property and depositing dories on front lawns were also popular traditions. The NHS oral history collection includes many fond reminiscences about these pranks.

It's clear however, that a line was crossed in 1900. Upwards of 75 young men gathered at the Noank schoolhouse and reportedly “destroyed maps, charts, books and other school paraphernalia” located inside. The crowd was rowdy enough that several residents attempted to disperse the young men with revolvers and clubs. Fire crackers were shot directly at constable George Carpenter when he attempted to intervene, striking him in the face and chest.

The attack on the Noank constables (including Messrs. Rathbun and Sawyer) was the most grievous offense in the eyes of the law. Attorney F.M.W. Rogers of New London was observed gathering evidence in Noank for several weeks following the incident. Ed Searles was arrested on July 19th and tried in court on the 25th for his role as a “ringleader” of the event.

Ultimately Ed was acquitted—a decision that came down to the leniency of George Carpenter and the obvious unfairness of holding a single man responsible for the actions of a mob of more than 70 men. Still, Fourth of July celebrations the following year were noticeably subdued:

“The national holiday was duly observed in this village by the suspension of all work, the closing of all places of business and a participation by the residents in family reunions, picnics and the various amuse-

ments offered in other places. The evening before the fourth was quiet in comparison to other years and there was a caution in the disturbance of portable property which was greatly appreciated.”

- The Day, July 5, 1901

Of course it must be noted the Ed Searles kept his Elm Street store well stocked with fire crackers for years following his arrest..

Membership Report

By Anne Lawrie

Our 2024-2025 fiscal year is quickly closing, and as of May 15, 2025 we have a total of 487 members. It is now renewal time for the year 2025-2026. Membership dues are \$20.00 for individuals, \$30.00 for a families, and \$50.00 for a contributing membership.

Membership renewal envelopes will be sent out separately. Checks should be made payable to the Noank Historical Society and sent to P.O. Box 9454, Noank, CT 06340. You can also renew online through the [membership page](#) of our new website.

If you would prefer to receive a digital copy of the newsletter you can join our mailing list by emailing us at noankhist@gmail.com. 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.

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. We appreciate your continued support!

Nominating Committee Report

By Shirley McFadden

At the Annual Meeting on June 18, 2025, the Nominating Committee will present the following nominees to serve a four-year term on the Board of Directors, 2025-2029:

Debbie Bates

Carol Oviatt

Tim Pratt

John Wilbur

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: Nancy Codeanne, Shirley McFadden, Joan Butler and Judith Hesp.

Noank in the News, 150 Years Ago

“Capt. Walter Chesebro, of the schooner *Shearer*, left last Tuesday to be gone on a two year sealing voyage. His brother Ira accompanies him with an additional brother Elihu. Ludlow Spicer also goes from here with them. They expect to sail directly to the vicinity of Cape Horn.”

- The Stonington Mirror, June 17, 1875

“An excited bevy of people collected at the wharf opposite Charlie Potter's to witness the hauling ashore of a shark last Sunday evening. The animal was hooked by Samuel Rathbun, who with Capt. Thomas Potter's assistance got him ashore. He measured seven feet from top of mouth to tip of tail.”

- The Stonington Mirror, August 19, 1875

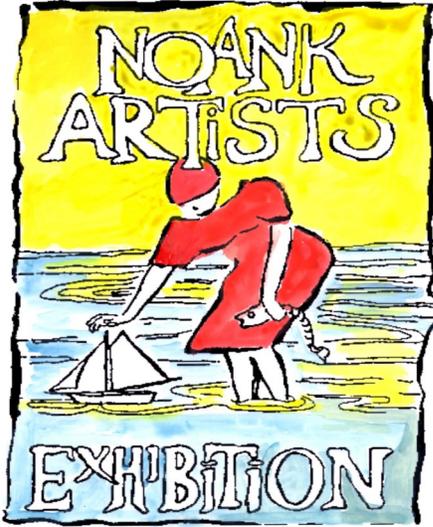
In Memoriam

Paul Deschenes—1946-2025

Peter Littlefield—1937—2025

Laura Palmer—1934-2025





The annual Noank Artists Exhibition will feature works by artists from around the region when it opens for the season on Friday, June 27. A village tradition going back more than 30 years, the show will present a diverse range of media, including original paintings, photographs, sculpture and prints.

The show, which is held at the Latham/Chester Gallery at the foot of Main Street, kicks off with a Meet the Artists reception on Friday, June 27, 5-7 p.m.

More than 50 artists are expected to participate. All works are for sale, with part of the proceeds benefiting the Noank Historical Society, the show's sponsor. Artists install new works when pieces are sold, so the show updates constantly.

Gallery hours are 1 to 4 p.m., Wednesdays through Sundays until August 31.

Entry forms and guidelines for participating artists are available at <https://noankhistoricalsociety.org/noank-artists-exhibition/>. For questions or additional information, please call Carol Connor (860) 912-7691 or Carole Erdman (860) 536-3652.



Noank Artist Profile: Isabel Lane

A Marine Painter with a Love of all Things Water

Isabel Lane is a local artist who has enjoyed being a member of the Stonington Plein air Painter's group

since 2016. She also is a member of The Noank Historical Society, successfully participating annually in the Artist's Summer Exhibition & Sale.

Her oil paintings of all things shoreline are done mostly plein air. The work displays the vibrancy of location through assured draftsmanship, brushwork and striking composition.

She has received local and national recognition through juried exhibition, gallery representation, awards and publication. Her work is prized in collections across the country.

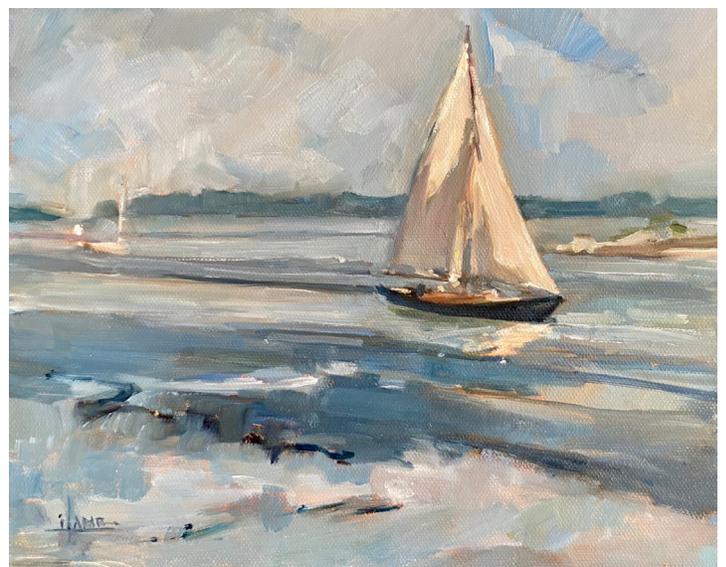
Beginning her professional career as an Art Educator, later venturing into Textile Design and Illustration as a student at SVA. With the last 12 years her focus on her fine art painting. Education in Fine Arts include an M.F.A., B.F.A., Illustration, The School of Visual Arts, NYC, 1992. B.S., Art Education SCSU, New Haven, CT. Additional study at the Art Students League of New York and Lyme Academy of Fine Art add to her qualifications.

"My favorite places to paint are here in Noank and the surrounding area, such peaceful beauty and kindness is a soul soothing inspiration."

To learn more about Isabel Lane visit:

www.isabelsharlottelane.com

Instagram @ isabelsharky



"Noank Sail," oil on canvas by Isabel S. Lane

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

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Noank

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Noank

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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@gmail.com. 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

Noank Historical Society's "Noank Artists Exhibition" 2025

On view June 27 - August 31, 2025, Weds - Sun 1- 4pm
"Meet the Artists" reception is Friday, June 27, 5-7pm
At the Latham Chester Store Gallery (foot of Main St., Noank)

The annual Noank summer art show has been a community tradition for over 30 years, celebrating our area through the work of local artists. The Noank Historical Society is grateful to the participating artists, who donate 30% of their sales to support our mission.

INFORMATION FOR THE ARTISTS :

Receiving dates for artwork: Monday, June 23 (10am-2pm) and Tuesday, June 24 (2pm-6pm)

Pick up date: Tuesday, September 2, 10am - 1pm

The exhibition is open to current members of the Noank Historical Society.

Checklist for artists' requirements:

- ◆ Renew NHS annual membership: Either go online to noankhistoricalsociety.org, or send a check to Noank Historical Society, P.O. Box 9454, Noank CT 06340. Membership dues are \$20 per individual or \$30 per family.
- ◆ Along with your 1-3 pieces of original artwork (*see guidelines below*) bring with you: your calendar to schedule required gallery sitting (at least one 3-hour session), and your updated artist's bio
- ◆ On receiving day, fill out and sign a form acknowledging that 30% of the sale price of work sold will be retained by NHS, and that NHS shall not be held responsible for loss or damage of work
- ◆ Fill out a gallery entry form for each piece of artwork
- ◆ Make time on receiving day for a 10-minute training session on new sales procedures
- ◆ Bring a plate of finger food to the opening, June 27 at 5-7pm

Guidelines for original artwork to exhibit (no digital reproductions or prints):

- ◆ All fine arts media (painting, drawing, sculpture, photography) are welcome
- ◆ All artwork must be for sale
- ◆ Art which is indicative of our area and/or maritime character
- ◆ For paintings, drawings and sculpture: 1 - 3 pieces may be exhibited, with size not to exceed 40" on longest side (including frame)
- ◆ For photography: 1 or 2 photographs (of local scenes only) per artist, not to exceed 11" x 14"
- ◆ All work must be identified, framed and wired for hanging (no brackets please). Sculptors must supply pedestals.
- ◆ A piece that is sold during the show may be replaced by another one of your pieces
- ◆ *The receiving committee reserves the right to decide if an artist's work can be hung*

Guidelines for artist's sale of prints and cards:

- ◆ 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 original art may be sold
- ◆ Artists must supply their own rack (not too large) for unframed artwork to be sold

Questions? Call Carol Connor (860)912-7691 or Carole Erdman (860)536-3652

*The entry forms are available on receiving day and at www.noankhistoricalsociety.org