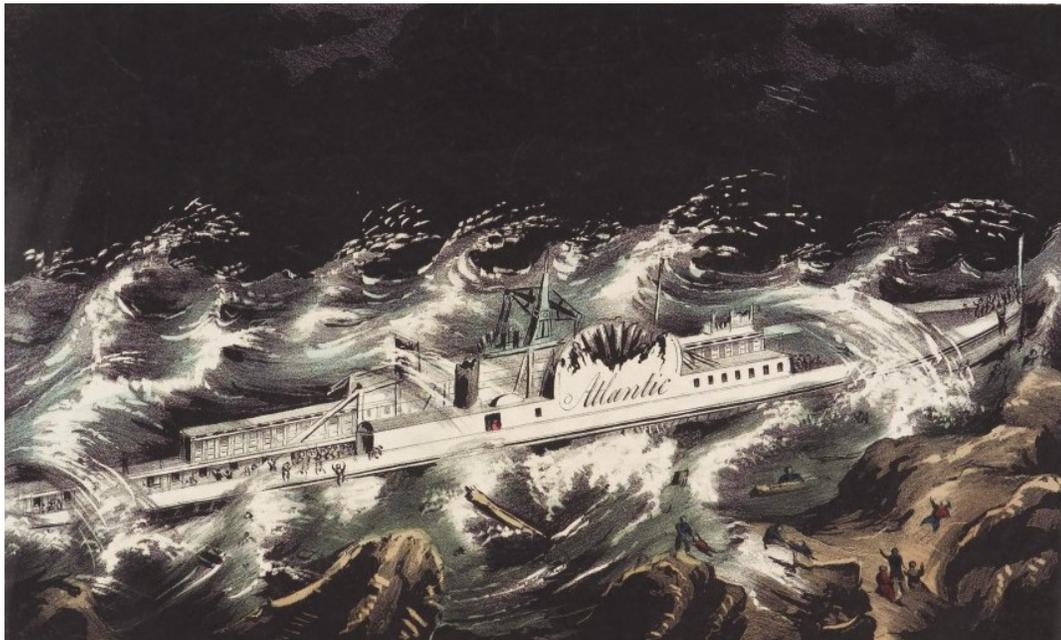




NOANK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Presents:

The Sinking of the Paddlewheel Steamship *Atlantic**By Captain Bill Palmer*

JOIN US: WEDNESDAY, 7:30 PM, September 18, 2024

*The Latham/Chester Store,
108 Main Street, Noank*

On the day after Thanksgiving, November 27, 1846, the paddlewheel steamship *Atlantic* sunk in Fishers Island Sound with a tremendous loss of life. This September, Captain Bill Palmer will share the story of terror, courage and sacrifice, as the steamer drifted, powerless, in hurricane force winds for two nights and a day as the Captain, crew and passengers did all they could to help. It's been over 175 years since the ship wrecked on the rocky shores of Fishers Island and nothing is left of the *Atlantic* now except monuments and tombstones, which dot the Cedar Grove Cemetery in New London.

Captain Bill has been diving since the late 1960s and has been running dive boat charters since 1974. He is the owner and operator of the *Thunderfish* and the new *Thunderfish Express*. Capt. Bill also operates Thunderfish Productions, which produces videos on east coast shipwrecks and marine subjects. He has written several books including "Night of Terror: The Sinking of the Paddlewheel Steamship *Atlantic*." Copies of this book will be available at the Latham/Chester Store.

The public is cordially invited. Refreshments will be served.
<http://www.noankhistoricalsociety.org>

The 2024 Noank Artists Exhibition is a Success



The Latham/Chester Store,
sketch by Carole Erdman

It was a banner year for the Noank art show. 56 artists exhibited their work at the Latham Chester Store. NHS introduced the use of a credit card reader for the first time in the show's 32-year history. Visitors purchased a record number of original works, prints and cards throughout the summer.

About one-third of the proceeds from the art show sales goes to benefit the historical society. The final numbers are still coming in, but we can safely say that the funds raised exceeded all expectations.

To the participating artists: We are very grateful for your support of the Noank Historical Society. You enrich the community and inspire visitors. We hope you will join us again next year!

The 2024 artists: Suzanne Dickson Albert - Robert A. Anderson - Tammy Blais - Rebecca Brown - Terri Butler - Justin Camerata - Jean Cassidy - Carol Connor - Chris Cunningham - Joyce Densmore - Deborah Downes - Pat Doyle - Carole Erdman - Paul Gaj - Kathleen Glew - Deborah Harris - Mary Kane Hendrickson - Toby Hohenstein - Jennifer Holmes - Doris Howie - Alison Ives - Sean Patrick Kane - Rita Krone Kramer - Isabel Lane - Robin Lawrie - Laura Loturco-Gorian - Brenda Lowe - Laurie MacKenzie - Brenda Manning - Joanna Masi - Karen McGee - Bruce McIntyre - Priscilla McIntyre - Gisella McSweeney - Janvier Miller - Gustaf Miller - Joan Mullins - Timothy Mockler - Carissa Mockler - Anna Nicholson - Karen Oakley - Ray O'Connell - Tish Edgar-Offen - Ronald Olansen - Dan Potter - Sloan Rankin - Nick Salerno - Liz Stanley - John Sutphen - Debora Toal - Peggy Traskos - Dick Traskos - Irene Trimble - Melissa Verdier - Janice Watts - Rosemary Webber...THANK YOU!!

Hearty thanks also go to the art show organizing team, including Carole Erdman, Carol Connor, Suzanne Erdman, Ray O'Connell, Sloan Rankin, Vivian Segall, Carissa Mockler, Deb Downes, Laura LoTurco-Gorian, Peggy Traskos, Diana Shugrue, EveAnne Stouch, Rebecca Brown, Anne Lawrie and Bill Loweth. The Historical Society appreciates each of you for the important roles you played in putting together the exhibition .

And thanks to all who patronized the exhibit and brought home a piece of art from Noank.

Overheard at the art show: "Noankers come in here to say hi and end up spending an hour chatting and meeting people from all over - it's like the town square of Noank!"

A Providential Meeting:

The 150th Anniversary of the Meeting of the *Dauntless* and the *Thomas Dana* off Cape Horn



This oil painting by Lars Thorsen depicts the *Dauntless* rounding Cape Horn on August 22, 1874. The *Thomas Dana* is just visible in the background. The ships were captained by brothers John Palmer Wilbur and Robert Palmer Wilbur of Noank.

1975.007, Gift of Robert E. Fitch Sr. High School.

150 years ago, on August 22, 1874, two brothers born in Noank had a chance meeting off Cape Horn. John Palmer Wilbur (1835—1878) and Robert Palmer Wilbur (1839—1913) were the sons of Lucy Palmer and

William Ashby Wilbur, and both followed their father in pursuing careers as ship's captains. Despite spending much of their adult lives apart at sea, the brothers remained remarkably close. They served in the same company of the Union Army during the Civil War, owned neighboring houses in Mystic and are buried in neighboring plots in Elm Grove Cemetery. Both men also took their families along on their voyages at sea. Captain Robert's daughter, Emmeline, had rounded Cape Horn six times before she was eight years old. Captain John's eight year old son, Roswell, was the first to hear the hail from *Dauntless*, as the ships passed rounding the horn.

In August 1874 Robert had command of the *Dauntless* (built by his father-in-law, Nathan G. Fish, at the Maxson, Fish & Co. shipyard in West Mystic) bound from New York to San Francisco. John had command of the *Thomas Dana* bound from San Francisco to Liverpool. The brothers knew there was a slim chance that their paths might cross as they sailed in opposite directions. The following extracts from the brother's log books express their shared amazement and gratitude that such a meeting came to pass.

John P. Wilbur's log:

"Friday, August 22, 1874—Commences with light airs from the northwest. Cloudy weather at 4 P.M., barometer on 28.98, black-looking squall in the northwest, clewed up the light sails before it struck. At 9 P.M. Cape Horn bears about north five miles. Strong breeze from west, fine moon and clear weather, midnight moderate breeze.

About 5:30 this morning, just before daylight, lookout reported ship ahead. I was on deck just in time to answer his hail as he passed to leeward. Soon after passing, he rounded to and came after us on the port tack. I thought it might be my brother when he went by and this maneuver confirmed me in thinking it was my brother, the ship *Dauntless*. I wore ship and came to on the starboard tack, main and mizzen topsails aback, waiting for the coming of the waiting ship, which proved to be the DAUNTLESS, my only and very dear brother. We had hoped and prayed that we might come together on this voyage. But how strange that we should meet on this great and wide-sea, both steering

for each other and knowing nothing of it. Only one half-mile apart and neither of the ships would have been recognized. My companion and little son both on deck this morning to greet my brother.

My heart softens, the eye of faith looks upward. I see the guiding hand of a loving heavenly father—it is all clear now, nothing comes by chance. The same watchful eye that marks the sparrows when they fall, marks the progress of two ships and steers them together on this great ocean mid the darkness of night. The weather was such that it was not prudent to board the other, but they had time to see and pass a few kind words of greeting—found all well. Then we separate—he sails one way and we the other. So we meet on life's voyage, and so we part. I trust that by and by we shall safely reach that haven of rest from which there shall be no more going out, no more parting in the great home on high—for there shall be no more sea."

Robert P. Wilbur's log:

"August 22, 1874—This has been one of the days of my life in which I have plainly seen the workings of a kind of providence in answer to prayer. At 6 A.M. my first officer, Mr. Nelson, who had charge of the morning watch, saw a light on the starboard bow coming toward us. Then, in shorter time than it takes to tell it, he saw it was a large ship with a heavy press of canvas bearing down on us. We were by the wind on the port side. To avoid a collision, Mr. Nelson gave orders to starboard the wheel, lowered the spanker so our ship swung off quickly, giving the other ship the right of way that belonged to us. As she was passing by Mr. Nelson hailed her, 'What ship is that?' The answer came back '*Thomas Dana*.' Then a voice from the *Dana*, 'What ship is that?' We answered '*Dauntless*' and sung out 'Heave-to' and wore our ship around and put after her.

As it was getting light in the east, we could see they were shortening sail and they wore around, heaving-to on the starboard tack with the main yard aback. We ran down and around here, coming up under her lee. We backed the main yard, and thus slowed down and had a good chance to talk together. It was a pleasure indeed to talk with them and see my brother, his wife and little Rossie* face to face. At 8 A.M. we parted, they for

Liverpool, we for San Francisco. God only knows when and where we should meet again. We hope to meet again on earth, but if it is ordained otherwise, I pray we may all meet, an unbroken family in heaven.

One strange thing about this providential meeting: at 4 A.M. this morning I woke out of a sound sleep, notwithstanding I was up late last night passing through the straits of Le Maire. It seemed something was going to happen. I got up, dressed, put on my coat and boots, lay down on the outside of the bed, but not to sleep, waiting for something I knew not what: got up again, went to the companionway, told Mr. Nelson to look for Barnevelt Island although I did not think the ship was up to it yet; went back and lay down on the outside of the bed again. About 5:30 the steward brought me my coffee and I had just finished it when the meeting time came. My brother and I had both prayed for this meeting.”

*Unfortunately, Rossie Wilbur did not live to see his uncle Robert again. The boy died of cholera in Calcutta on March 13, 1875—five months before the *Dauntless* and *Thomas Dana* returned from their voyages.



The brothers, John Palmer Wilbur and Robert Palmer Wilbur. Photograph from the collections of the Mystic Seaport Museum.

Exile on Main Street

By John Wilbur, NHS Historian

Things are not always what they seem. For instance, a number of buildings in town were not built where they currently stand. Some were moved only a few feet, like the old train station, others a bit further, like Carson’s Store. It was built elsewhere on Main Street and moved into its current location sometime around the First World War. The house currently at 87 Main Street originally stood on Front Street near the train station. The red house at 88 Main Street migrated across the street, the L-shaped house at 16 Riverview Avenue originally stood on the property just south of the Ram Island Yacht Club, the white house at 1 Spring Street, was moved two lots east along the street, and the old trolley waiting room was moved to its current site next to the Noank Service Center. All pale in comparison, however, to when the old post office/drugstore was moved from the northeast corner of Front and Main Streets up the steep hill known as Store Hill, to the other end and side of Main Street.



View of O.E. Miner’s Drugstore in its original location at the bottom of Store Hill. The drugstore also housed the post office and Roger’s Hall. Note the steeple of the Noank Baptist Church visible just above the roofline. Photograph by E. A. Scholfield, from the collections of the Mystic Seaport Museum.

The exact moment and reason that the decision was made to move the former post office/drugstore, formerly belonging to O. E. Miner, across town is unknown. The building was purchased by Doctor William M. Hill and he engaged George Packer of Mystic to move it. No doubt the idea made sense at the time, but questions must have arisen as matters progressed.

Work began in late December 1906, and before long the project was briefly halted when Packer fell ill—the building at that time had been raised about one foot above its foundation. Moving the building required it to be jacked up, then supported on large timbers before loading it onto a carriage for transit. By the first weekend in 1907 *The Day* optimistically reported the structure to be “quite a distance” towards its destination. A few days later came the first inconvenience of the move—utility men shut off electricity in the lower village as the rather high structure needed to pass under power lines. A week later townsfolk were discussing the legal ramifications of such a move. Was the town liable for damages due to traffic? loss of business?

Extrapolating from published accounts, the building was heaved up the hill with blocks and tackles and possibly some form of winch. Oxen might be used on level ground, but not on a hill like Store Hill. Keeping the structure level during the ascent required near constant adjustment. It was an exacting process that could not be rushed, and needed good weather.

The middle of January 1907 featured boisterous weather that kept the fishing fleet in port, and brought work at the shipyard and house moving to a standstill for a week. On 22 January, as the town entered a brutal cold snap, ground was broken for the foundation at the future location of the building. The structure was at that time about two-thirds of the way up Store Hill. Elsewhere in town, chicken pox was making its way around Noank Grammar School. The air temperature recorded on 24 January was eight below zero, which brought just about everything to a halt again. Somewhere in this general timeframe it appears George Packer decided to wait for better weather.

The first significant snowfall came a few days later, and children either unafflicted by, or else recovered from, chickenpox took to the slopes with their sleds. Curiously, although it is popular legend that Noank children sledded under the building as it clung to the side of Store Hill, *The Day* specifically mentions that nobody was sledding down the hill due to the large building blocking the way.

As January gave way to February, stagnation on Store Hill continued. The cold weather deepened, and more snow fell. First Selectman A. E. Chapman was called in at the end of the first week of February to investigate the matter and see what could be done to ease congestion. Numerous business owners (the business district of Noank in 1907 was at the bottom of Store Hill) complained of hardship, and quite a few teams of horses suffered mishaps and damage trying to get around the impasse. Chapman stated that the town wasn't liable for any damages as no permit had been issued, and that all grievances should be addressed to the owner of the building — Dr. Wm. M. Hill.

Apparently, public good will gave out in the middle of March, and a grass-roots effort sought to get the obstruction deemed a public nuisance. Not only was the building in the middle of the street, but house-moving paraphernalia scattered about the road posed a hazard to foot traffic as well.

The next day Packer and his gang returned to the site and resumed efforts to move the structure along. Progress was understandably slow, and on the night of 22 March matters took a very dark turn when the falls of the block and tackle being used to haul the structure up the hill were cut by person or persons wishing harm to the building. Fortunately, damage was insignificant as the rollers upon which it all moved were chocked to prevent a runaway. That day saw a gain of a few more feet, and the structure finally crested Store Hill. It was but the work of a week to move the structure to a point just a few feet shy of the trolley tracks (which ran up what is now Ward Avenue). During the night of 5 April, after the last trolley departed, the power was shut off, the wire moved, and the structure crossed the tracks. Only one block now separated it from its destination.

After the comparative gallop across the level section of Main Street one might think that last final block might be dealt with swiftly and without incident. Alas, that proved to not be the case. On 15 April hooligans lobbed stones at the building, shattering windows. The next day trees had to be removed from the intended new location. One month later, on 15 May,

and a full four and a half months after setting out on a journey across town, the Miner drugstore was being lowered onto its new foundation at what is now 10 Main Street. All that remained was to get the second structure over the same route.



The house at 10 Terrace Ave., formerly O. E. Miner's Drugstore, pictured in 2024.

Phase Two of this epic move was awarded far less ink by *The Day*. Workers started jacking up the second building on 23 April, and began the assault on Store Hill on 6 May. Trolley traffic was inconvenienced on the 25th, and Terrace Street (sic) was blocked on 6 June. Finally, on 15 June, *The Day* reported that George Packer had loaded his tools onto a flatcar and sent them on to Stonington where he would perform a similar service. The seemingly interminable ordeal was over. The second structure stands today at 9 Terrace Avenue. Looking at the two buildings in the comfort of 2024, one would think they had been built on location. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Doctor William Hill, the man behind this endeavor was generally well thought of by the villagers, however, that Fourth of July he sustained injuries to the head and possibly the back as he argued with a crowd over destruction of private property. Whether the injuries sustained were related to public frustration experienced over the past winter is unknown.

The last significant structures known to be moved about the village—the previously mentioned house on the

corner of Potter and Riverview, and a summer house moved from Sylvan Street to Zell Steever's property just east of Noank Baptist Church, were moved in the mid 1970s. Those moves were accomplished with the aid of hydraulics and the internal combustion engine, and each took less than a day. For sheer grit, determination, and physical effort, though, the Miner drugstore move stands alone.



The original sign for O. E. Miner's Drugstore was revealed during renovations to the house at 10 Terrace Ave. by George and Paula Marcus in 1993. 1994.007, gift of the Marcus family.



THE NOANK HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS, 2024-2025

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Selections from the NHS Photograph Collection: A Mirror View

By John Wilbur, NHS Historian



It is always interesting to see opposing views in historic photographs. The first photograph is the view from the porch (or piazza as it was called by the Andersons) of the house currently standing at 28 Riverview Avenue. The large white vessel facing shore is the steam yacht (called a houseboat at the time) *Rosalie*. The houseboat belonged to Edward W. Hooker of Hartford, and was built by Robert Palmer in 1903. This was the second *Rosalie*, the first was a large auxiliary schooner built in 1900 by Palmer, and was renamed *Monimia* when sold to George Brown of New York. Both boats were named after Hooker's daughter. Hooker was the former commodore of the Hartford Yacht Club, summered on Eastern Point, but kept his vessels in Noank.

During the season, *Rosalie* frequently moored near the Palmer Inn on Bayside Avenue, as Hooker was a great friend of Captain Jimmie Sistare, proprietor of the hotel. The yacht was sumptuously fitted out with steam heat, electricity, pressurized water—all the modern conveniences. During the off-season, she was moored

in her usual winter quarters at Smith's Wharf, as seen in this photograph. Hooker served as mayor of Hartford from April 1908 until April 1910, and during that time had little time to spare for yachting. He sold the yacht in 1910 to McAllister in New York, who stripped her of finery and converted her into a lighter.

Note the open boat just off the beach is swamped. Whether this was intentional or not is unknown.

The other photograph [next page] shows the house from which the first photo was taken. The spheres so prominent atop the porch railing in the first photograph can just be discerned in the second. It seems this photo was taken from a higher vantage point than a dock or small boat—possibly the bridge deck of the *Rosalie*. The house was built in 1906 for Arthur P. Anderson, Judge of Probate, and his wife Jessie. Presiding over the front yard is a tall windmill, used to pump water to the house. In the foreground, on the seaward side of Water Street, as Riverview Avenue was sometimes called back then, lies a great mess of lobstering

gear, including a couple of bottomsides-up skiffs (known locally as sharpies). In amidst the lobster pots, buoys, and warps are two planked boxes. They are lobster cars that would float nearly submerged, and were used to store live lobsters until the catch could go to market.

Further north, laundry is drying on the clothesline for the house that used to stand just out of frame at right.

This scene is clearly recognizable today, but not without significant change. The windmill has gone, the lobstering gear as well, and the parking area for Ford's/Haring's has fundamentally changed the to-

pography of the area. Also, the stonewall and steps from the yard down to the street and from the street down to the dock have yet to be built.

The Andersons kept the house for only a few years. Jessie "didn't like living near the water," and in late summer of 1909 the house was sold to the artist Henry Ward Ranger. A working waterfront in those days was a noisy place, and lobstermen were known to be rather vocal early in the morning, early internal combustion engines were unmuffled, and then there was the matter of the bait barrels, which on a hot summer's day could exert a powerful influence on the local atmosphere.



Photographs from the private collection of Robert "Chip" Anderson, Jr.

In Memoriam

Gerald Thompson—1928-2024



The Noank Museum, at the Mary C. Anderson Building on Sylvan Street, will be open to visitors and researchers by appointment throughout the fall and winter. Please email us at noankhist@gmail.com or call us at (860) 536-3021 with any questions, or to set up a date and time.

Opening Day at the Noank Museum



The Noank Museum's Opening Day took place on July 6th this year in the Mary C. Anderson building on Sylvan Street. We had a large turnout of over 45 guests. The museum looked its very best. Folks pored over the exhibits, checked out files about their houses, and chatted with Noank neighbors over iced tea on the lawn. Some said it was the first time they had ever been in the museum. Others signed up to be museum docents over the summer.

NHS Volunteers Welcome Museum Visitors

This summer we had well over 100 visitors to the Sylvan St. museum, some from as far away as Hawaii and Denmark. Dozens also stopped in at the Red Shed to learn more about Jack Wilbur and to see his Noank smack replica, the *Jeff Brown*. Many thanks go to the following people who volunteered to sit as docents to welcome our visitors at both locations:

Susan Petzold, Mary Kay Long, Susan Palmer, EveAnne Stouch, Bob Occhialini, Patty Oat, Shirley McFadden, Carol and Dana Oviatt, Anne Lawrie, Dave Downes, Barb and Stan White, Lynda and Mike Hewitt, Deb Thompson, Lacy and Ed Johnson, Nancy Codeanne, Chris Lane, Rick Waters, and Janet Berggren.

Volunteers Make NHS Look Good

The Noank Historical Society would like to gratefully acknowledge several members and volunteers who have recently contributed their time and talents to make the Noank Historical Society shine.

Before the opening of the summer art show, volunteers pitched in to spiff up the Latham/Chester Store gallery. Floors were scrubbed, windows washed, corners dusted, cabinets cleaned, rugs vacuumed, repairs made, and flowers potted. A big thank you goes to Therese Burdick, Tom Clark, Nancy Codeanne, Carissa Mockler, Joe Murdoch, Brenda Rizzo, Rick Waters and Barb White.

Recently, our museum has seen several upgrades both inside (new lighting, safety railing, increased storage capacity, new exhibits, a new guided tour pamphlet) and out (new stair railing, painting, and front garden bed). Many thanks go to all who were instrumental in making changes happen to improve the visitor experience and safety: Paul Bates, Michael Boucher, Chris Lane, Jonathan Lane and John Wilbur. Special thanks go to Lynn Marshall for the gift of the front flower bed. Finally, we would like to thank Robin Lawrie for the artwork and layout design of our new Main Street walking tour guide, available at both the museum and the Latham/Chester Store.



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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

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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