

SEPTEMBER 10, 2020

AM Meeting: Thursdays at 7 AM — Muddy Waters, New London
Lunch Meeting: Thursdays at 12:15 PM — La Luna/Holiday Inn, New London

IN-PERSON MEETING TODAY

Rotary Pavilion @ Ocean Beach Park
MASKS REQUIRED

September 17 Prof. Anna Vallye,
Connecticut College
Review of Redevelopment
Projects in New London

**PLEASE NOTE:
NEW ZOOM INFO**

Weekly Zoom Meeting

Please join us today at noon for our weekly Rotary meeting via Zoom. It's very convenient and all you need is a decent shirt/top/blouse/sweater (pants optional).

Go to [ZOOM.COM](https://zoom.us) and click "JOIN A MEETING" and enter the info below.

**ID=811 3794 8673
PW=593894**

BIRTHDAYS:

None

ANNIVERSARIES

September 11 Sarah Rogovin
& Mark E. Twiss

*"Don't find fault.
Find a remedy."*

— Henry Ford

Report for Program of September 3, 2020

by Bruce MacDonald

Nathaniel Shaw Jr. played an important, if not always heralded, role in securing our nation's independence from England. And he did it from New London.

Shaw, a wealthy merchant with a fleet of vessels at his command, operated out of the only port on Long Island Sound not under English control. It gave him a unique advantage. That's a key part of the message **Steve Manuel**, executive director of the New London County Historical Society delivered at last week's meeting.

With Shaw as the Connecticut colony's naval agent and New London serving as headquarters of the Connecticut Navy, the city became a center of privateering. A lot of money was made by virtually everyone involved in the practice, and Washington's troops were supplied with goods forcibly taken from English merchant ships.

Not surprisingly, the practice would ultimately provoke the English.

New London was put to the torch by troops under the command of Benedict Arnold, consuming many buildings, including warehouses, interestingly, containing goods taken from English ships. As local history buffs will tell you, he sent others across the river to Groton Bank, where they overran colonial troops defending Fort Griswold and massacred those who surrendered.

In his presentation, Manuel brought that period alive as he reviewed Shaw's role in the war effort and described some of the artifacts in the collection at his home.

- Between 500-700 captured English merchant vessels were brought here for processing, an operation overseen by Shaw as the naval agent.
- He shipped gun powder for use in the battle of Bunker Hill in the opening days of the war.
- George Washington stopped by to share intelligence on English ship movements with Shaw.
- At one point in the war, Shaw shipped much needed blankets to Washington
- When he died in 1782, his will freed his slaves and provided them with a \$10-a-year pension for life.

From his imposing stone home overlooking the New London waterfront, the wealthy merchant operated the Connecticut Navy. And busy it was. Shaw ran the Connecticut Navy out of his home, where Shaw's legacy is kept alive by the New London County Historical Society.

The historical society is headquartered there, and operates a museum dedicated to Shaw and other aspects of local history. At 150 this year, the society Manuel heads is also one of the oldest in Connecticut. The NLCHS collection includes documents bearing the signatures of George Washington and Alexander Hamilton as well as one from none other than Benedict Arnold whose troops nearly succeeded in burning down the mansion.




Arnold had written from Philadelphia to inquire about jumping aboard the privateering gravy train. It never went anywhere, but it is understandable why the debt-ridden Arnold wanted to grab some of the riches. If ruled by a court to be a legal seizure, "everybody got money," Manuel pointed out. By way of example, he said, the basic seaman received an amount equal to 150 percent of his basic pay.

The wide range of exhibits there relate Shaw and his wife Lucritia but to others, including others that Manuel calls "the forgotten patriots" of New London. The collection includes one of Benedict Arnold's 17 swords and a number of period muskets.

"We've been collecting for 150 years," Manuel said. "We have Nathaniel Shaw's diary, the best record of Colonial America." As if to underscore the size of the collection, Manuel said the museum has 3,000 linear feet of documents, as well as material on other periods in time.

At the end of the presentation, club member Bill Schmidt recalled that the Thames Club rented a bus and drove its members around to various historic sites in the city, with a stop, of course, at the Shaw Mansion.

Sounds like an idea worth considering.

The
ROTARY


ANCHOR


A Bulletin of the Rotary Club of New London

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