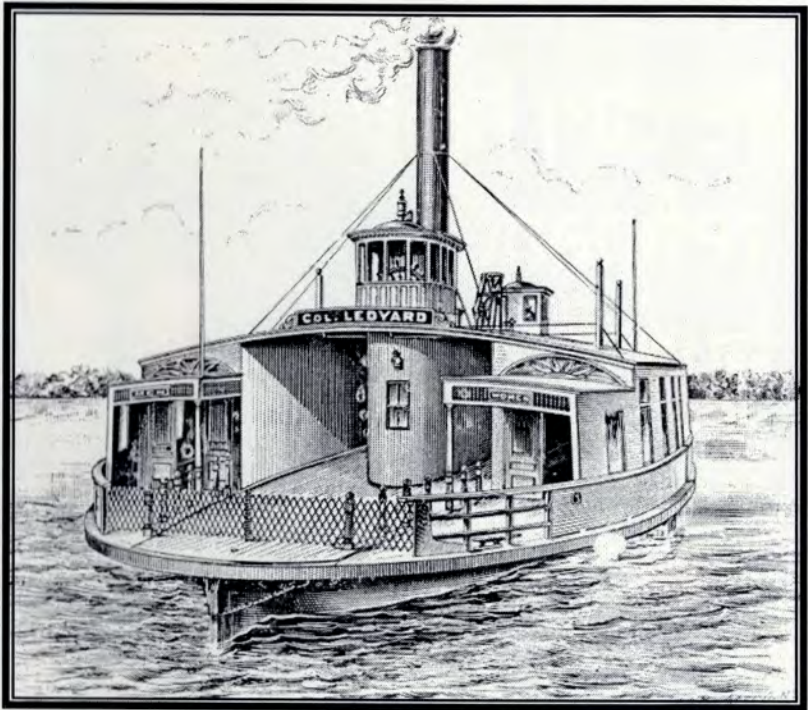




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Saturday, June 26, 2004



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Saturday, June 26, 2004



The Parade, 1896

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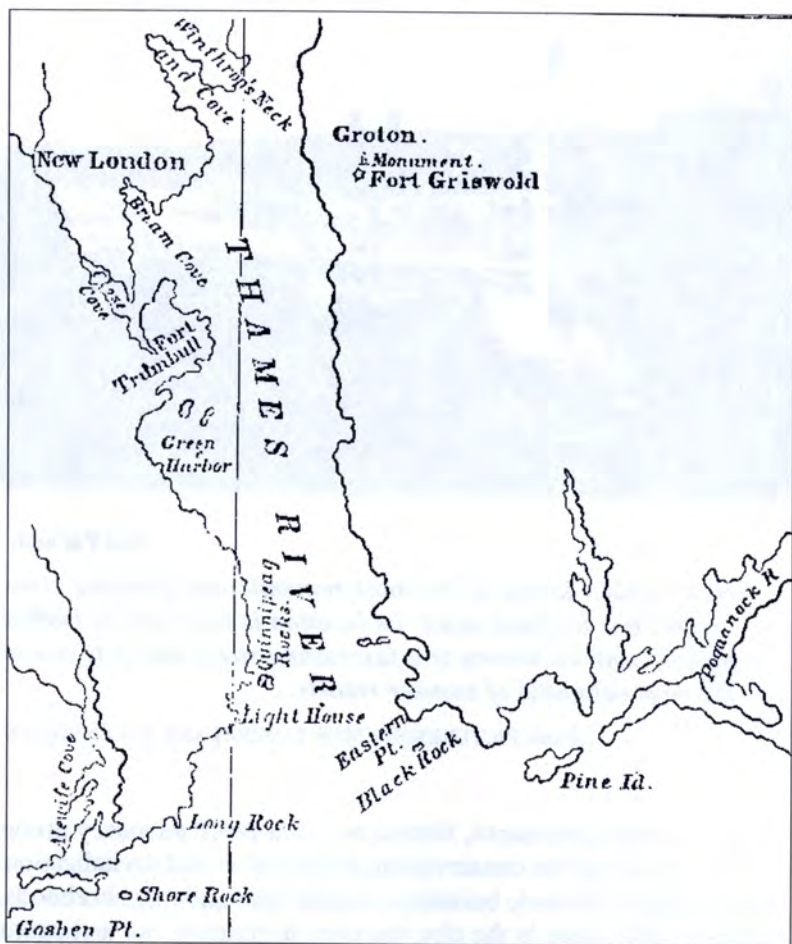
...from PICTURESQUE NEW LONDON AND ITS ENVIRONS 1901

New London Landmarks, formed as a non-profit advocacy group in 1976, works for the conservation, preservation and revitalization of New London's historic buildings, streetscapes and neighborhoods. As changes take place in the city, we work to promote our architectural heritage, preserving valuable historic landmarks while recognizing the needs of 21st century New London.

The Harbor at the Mouth of the Thames

From the earliest days of exploration, the deep water of Thames Harbor, its steeply sloping shoreline and ready access to the open sea, along with its location half-way between Boston and New York, was recognized as an unequalled advantage for settlement.

New London and Groton share one of the best natural harbors on the east coast of North America, and from the time of colonial settlement, getting from one side of the river to the other has been paramount. This, then, is our theme for New London Landmark's 2004 Harbor Tour.



Map from Frances Manwaring Caulkins HISTORY OF NEW LONDON 1895

By the mid-1700s, routes from eastern Connecticut's farm towns led to New London, where ships departed for the West Indies, the region's major trading partner. Forces driving the region's economy during the seafaring centuries included the high demand for sugar, molasses, and rum, and later, from the far reaches of the earth, whale oil and bone. The harbor rose to prosperity, as its founders, led by John Winthrop, Jr. in 1646, knew it would. But times of decline also shaped the harbors' history, leaving remnants from every period since the 1600s.

The Ferry

During colonial times the harbor developed as a crossroad of trade and commerce with the coastal centers of Boston, Newport, and New York. In the 19th century there was whaling, and this industry transformed everything that had come before. During the same period the harbor became a transportation hub thanks to the rise of steamer service and in spite of the fact that this was the last port on Long Island Sound to get the railroad.

By land and sea, travelers came this way en route to Boston, New York, and points west, and until 1889, everyone took the ferry. Presidents George Washington, Andrew Jackson, and Abraham Lincoln had to come this way, but so too did Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, and countless others. Ferry service between New London and Groton operated from 1651 to 1929. The first ferryman, Edward Messenger, operated a dugout canoe, charging six pence per head, human or animal, paddling from Winthrop's Neck to Groton Bank as the weather and tides permitted. Vehicles had to be towed behind the boat, as described by Joshua Hempstead in his famous diary:

In the morning Joshua & Little Josh & Peter Sett out for home with Cart & oxen & my 2 old Cows, Brown & Speckled. they Towed a Cart at the Stern of the ferry boat. I Rid down to See them over.

[1 June 1756]

Cary Latham and his family became Groton's first permanent residents in 1654, winning the privilege of running the ferry for 50 years. Where the banks of the river were least steep on the Groton side, Latham built a boat landing and a ferry tavern. Nearby was a fresh water spring that supplied passengers, beasts, and later steamboats. The "Ferry Spring" is still visible across Thames Street, next door to a home built by Cary Latham's descendants, the Avery-Copp House, today a museum. The ferry landing and the spring technically belonged to New London, even after Groton officially hived off from New London in 1705.

In the 1600s, most colonists resided in the town center on the west bank of the river, but they owned farms and pastures up and down the coast so getting back and forth was a vital part of their livelihoods. During the second and third generations, more people built homes in the outlying districts, though some, like third-generation Joshua Hempstead, continued the old pattern of living at the center and commuting to oversee his properties. As is clear from the following passage from Joshua's diary, taking the ferry didn't always mean sitting back and enjoying the scenery:

Saturday Nov. 10 1722: fair. Peter Manwaring arived 3 weeks passage all well from Mertineco [Martinique]. I came home att night & [son] Thomas got to ye ferry 9 or 10 Clock & wee were coming over in ye ferry boat. I was Rowing in ye Bow of ye Boat & ye oar Slipt over ye Thoal & I pitched heels over head in to the River 20 or 30 Rod from ye East Shoar, but through gods goodness I got well into ye Boat with ye help of Thomas who only was wth me & I Rowed over & got well home. I got a Cold.

Joshua crossed the river regularly and had friends and family on the Groton side. He was on hand in September of 1731 to help oversee the building of Groton's new ferry wharf – "90 feet out & 12 Wide . . . £61."

Travel on Sundays was restricted, unless one was headed to worship.

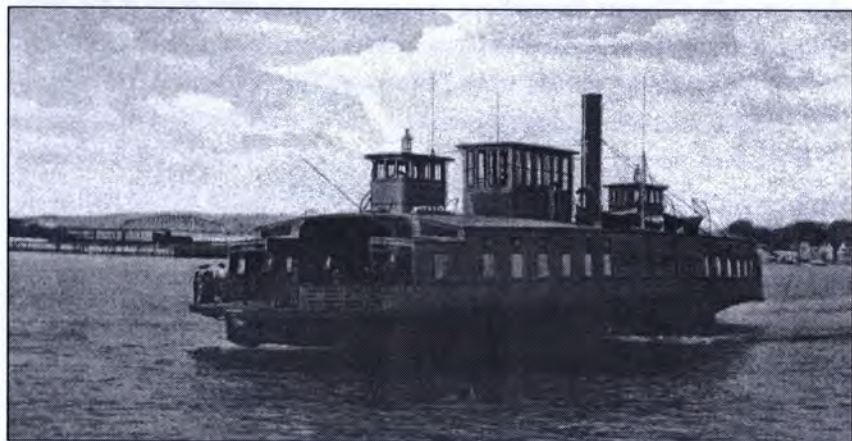
A Town Meeting in 1701 decided that

...on Lords days, thanksgiving days, days of humiliation and town meeting days, shall be ferriage free, that is, such as shall cross the ferry to attend publique worship or town meetings on such days....

Profits on other days went towards the support of schools in New London.

In 1702 New London became Connecticut's official port of entry, and ferry traffic grew apace. In 1705, after much wrangling, Groton was granted the right to become a separate town, but only on condition that New London continue to own the ferry and collect rents from the ferry's operator.

Groton Bank developed into a wealthy residential suburb during the 1800s and people became increasingly dependent on the ferry to get to work and do business in New London. Poor and sloppy service might mean financial loss and considerable inconvenience. By the early 20th century, when an annual ferry ticket cost \$13.50 (equivalent to about \$250), the ferry service was so poor that Grotonians lobbied the state for permission to start a second ferry. The action forced New London into making improvements. The *Governor Winthrop* commenced service 5 August 1905.



Ferryboat Gov. Winthrop, New London & Groton CT

In the early 1800s, the ferry was powered by four horses on a treadmill. It was during this period that Peter Williams ran the service, a man noted for having two sets of natural teeth and for throwing unruly kids overboard. There was also Captain Coggshall, whose two horses, Tom and Jerry, furnished the motive power for a boat that was 65 feet long and 45 feet wide. In 1849 Captain Comstock's steam ferry, *The Mohegan*, began service. It was 75 feet long and 35 feet wide and had a horse power of 25.

Bad weather also plagued the ferry, and there were, of course, occasional accidents as when the Ferryboat *Col. Ledyard* collided with freight steamer *Mohegan* in heavy fog on New Year's Day, 1905. Miraculously, no one was injured.

There was also informal ferriage from an early date across Long Island Sound for New Londoners. In November of 1754, at age 76, Joshua traveled on board Mr Griffings' boat from Southold. Not being able to sail up the harbor that night, they came in close by "the white beach" [near New London Light] where Joshua "swimmed my horse a Shore & paid 9s N. Y. Mony for my passage & brot Mr Griffing behind me on my horse. Got home about 9 & found my family all well."

Wintertime Travel

A bitter cold day. The Post lead his horse over ye ferry on ye ice. They slead wood over into town from Groaton [sic].

Diary of Joshua Hempstead, 10 Jan. 1712

In many ways, travel during snowy New England winter was easier than at

other times. The Thames River above Winthrop's Neck often froze in the early days, but sometimes ice reached as far as Fishers Island Sound. It was especially cold in the winter of 1741 when Joshua noted that his sons and slave Adam Jackson were able to drive 4 oxen and 2 cows from the "fort" straight over to the ferry wharf [18 Feb. 1741]. The week before, Joshua rode his horse over the ice into the middle of the river with his grandson Nat behind him in the saddle to see "a tent on the River about 10 or 12 Rod below the Island of rocks" where people had gathered for a barbecue.

Well-known Patriot privateer, Thomas Mumford, had a house on Groton Bank in colonial times. He threw a large wedding party on 6 Feb. 1780 for his daughter, and the river being frozen solid on that date, many came from New London to celebrate. During the night there was a terrible southeastern storm and the ice broke up. The Mumfords had company for days.

The year 1905 brought a winter cold enough to freeze every harbor on the Sound, including New London's, which was kept open only by the action of tug boats, ferries, and other traffic. On 20 February The Day reported that George Avery and Fred Henry skated from Groton Bank to Norwich and back in 2 hours 5 minutes. Though it rarely happened in the lower reaches of the Thames, giant cakes of ice came floating down after particularly cold winters, causing no end of trouble. On 25 January 1905, The Day's headline read, "Huge cakes of ice on River channel. Ferryboat hindered in making landing."

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View of New London from the Shore Road

Shipbuilding

The first shipwright in New London was John Coit, who established a yard in the mid-1660s on a cove that reached nearly as far as the Hempsted Houses. It was a shallow waterway, but deep enough for the pinnaces and shallops then in demand. Through the years the cove was filled in and built over by the 1800s.

In 1699, the Coit family opened a new shipyard at Point of Rocks where vessels of large draft were built. Iron rings were linked into the rock and vessels could tie up right along side. The ferry boat often touched here to land passengers for the lower end of town and in 1729, when Mr. Coit built a wharf by the Point of Rocks, the ferry right was reserved.

A fascinating footnote to this description of Point of Rocks is in Caulkins:

The day New London was burnt, Sept. 6th, 1781, the *Lady Spencer*, a successful privateer, lay fastened to this rock. All the projecting points have since been leveled and the site is now [1860] covered by the wharves and buildings of the Brown brothers. The mansion of the family standing near, was constructed from the stone blasted from the ancient Point of Rocks.

HISTORY OF NEW LONDON, F.M. Caulkins

[Note: The house is still there, at the foot of Tilley Street:
the stone A&T Technology building]

Ship building and West Indian trade

With a wealth of surrounding timber, New London shipbuilders won a market for their industry. By 1660 there were three master shipbuilders along the river and New London vessels opened trade with Barbados and Virginia. Captain Samuel Chester, master of the *Endeavor*, is believed responsible for beginning the West Indian trade in 1661. He transported beef, cooper's stock and ponies to the area and returned with sugar, molasses and one cask of rum.

In 1702 the Connecticut Assemble selected New London as one of the eight legal ports for the colony.

West Indian trade created new growth along the Thames, providing many of the goods and bills of credit needed to pay for necessary imports. Coastal trade became a major industry for people surrounding the Thames River harbor. New London products— including livestock — were carried to the West Indies and exchanged for goods sold in Boston or New York. With profits English manufactured goods were purchased. By 1774 New London became one of the leading colonial ports with shops offering goods from all over the world. This maritime industry flourished until the Revolution brought it to an end.

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Much other shipbuilding went on in New London, but Groton Bank was most significant in this pursuit. In 1725 a 700-ton vessel, the largest ship in America up to that time, was built near the ferry landing on the east side of the Thames, a record not broken until 1774. Joshua Hempstead noted in his diary, 12 Oct. 1725:

A fair pleasant morn till about 11 Clock & yn began to Rain & held till Sundown. I & all the family went to See the great Ship at ye ferry Launched. She went off as upright as possible. a great Course of People. She is above 700 Tun Built by Jno Jeffery for Capt Sterling.

In colonial times, William and Thomas Latham had a shipyard on the present site of Electric Boat. At least 60 vessels were built on the Groton side of the river between the Revolutionary War and the Embargo of 1807.

During the Revolutionary War New London became a center for coastal privateering and a supply center for the Continental forces.



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The Revolutionary War & Military Matters

New London's role as a strategic naval port goes back to her founding. Through the colonial period frigates and ships of the line frequented the port. After the French and Indian War in 1763, the harbor was continually visited by British revenue cutters bent on stopping the colonists from smuggling.

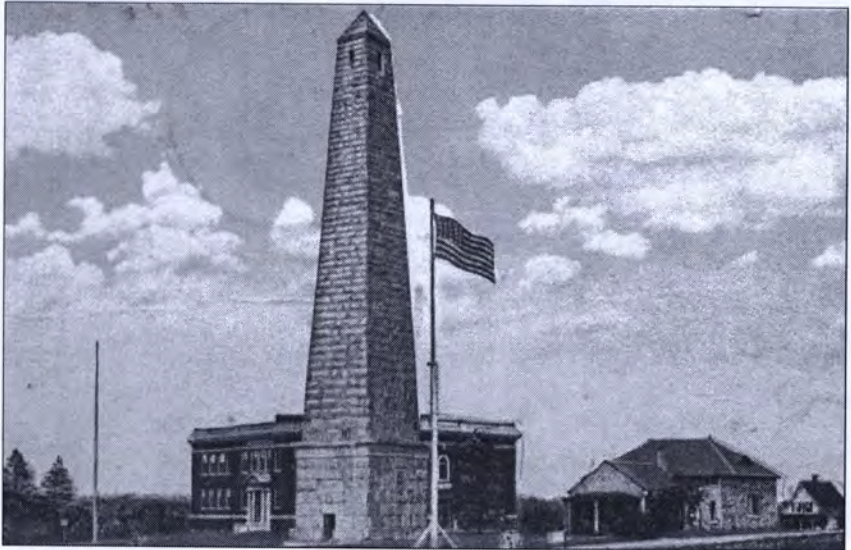
The first naval expedition under authority of Congress was commissioned in Thames Harbor in January 1776. The fleet consisted of four vessels, with a mostly local crew, and upon its return, brought 70 prisoners, 88 cannons, and considerable military and naval stores. But most of the activity of this sort was carried on during the Revolution by privateers, and those out of this harbor were among the most successful in America, capturing more than 500 British ships and bloating the warehouses of the Thames with their booty. It thus became a target of British reprisal.

On September 6, 1781, Benedict Arnold led a British invasion of the harbor, using largely loyalist troops from Long Island and Connecticut. A Norwich native who had recently changed sides in a failed effort to sell West Point to the British, Arnold ordered about 1,600 men on a sneak, two-pronged attack on Fort Griswold in Groton and Fort Trumbull in New London. When the British were spotted from Fort Griswold by a young militiaman, Rufus Avery, two cannon shots were fired to sound the alarm. Arnold confused the warning by firing a third shot, which signaled to the locals the arrival of yet another privateer bringing in British loot.

The assault began in New London when Arnold marched his troops to the garrison at Fort Trumbull. Unprepared to defend the fort from a land invasion, the men fled across the river to Fort Griswold to make a last stand. Arnold stayed in New London, where the King's men set fire to wharves, stores, houses filled with English goods, homes and barns as well as public buildings, including the Episcopal Church – 143 buildings in all, spreading “desolation and woe throughout the region,” as one observer noted.

On the Groton side, over half the patriots who fought at Fort Griswold perished, and many others were injured or taken prisoner. Much of the village was also set on fire there. It was a story of valor, sacrifice, and massacre, and ultimately survival. It was the last British victory in the colonies.

Fifty years later, the Groton Monument became the first patriotic obelisk of its kind in America, commemorating one of the bloodiest and most dramatic battles of the Revolution. It became an immediate tourist attraction.

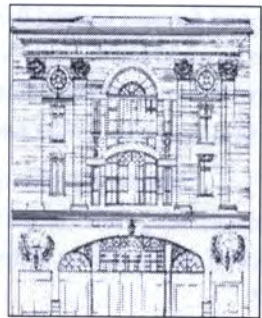


Groton Monument, Fort Griswold, Groton, Conn.

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WHALING DAYS

Colonial farmers learned from Native Americans how to harvest whale oil from beached leviathans. As demand grew and whales moved further off shore, fully rigged ships were needed to follow the whales onto the high seas and eventually, to the far ends of the earth.

After the Revolution, the port went into decline, and the War of 1812, the devastating Gale (hurricane) of 1815, and economic depression compounded the problems. Ships' tonnage dropped in half between the 1790s and 1819.

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As the 1800s progressed, many residents headed West for fresh farmland or to California for gold and new chances. Or, they went to sea after whales. The latter is what saved the harbor.

The West Indian trade was never reestablished although local merchants were reluctant to give up old endeavors and continued to hope for those prosperous days to return.

Dr. Nathaniel H. Lee established a whaling company in New London in 1805, and though the venture wasn't a financial success, this marked the beginning of whaling.

The major period of New London whaling really began in 1819 when Major Thomas W. Williams sent out the brig *Mary* and in the same year Daniel Deshon outfitted two vessels, the *Carrier* and the brig *Mary Ann*. These two men became the first of over sixty agents who would direct the operations of the whaling industry between 1819 and 1909. A whaling agent was responsible for all aspects of a voyage from the necessary capital to outfit the vessel, to signing on captain and crew, arranging for insurance, equipment and cargo. They handled all paperwork, provided funds to pay for repairs and supplies in foreign areas and collected funds owed by the investors for expenses incurred by the venture. Upon return of the ship they disposed and distributed the profits to investors and lays to the crews.



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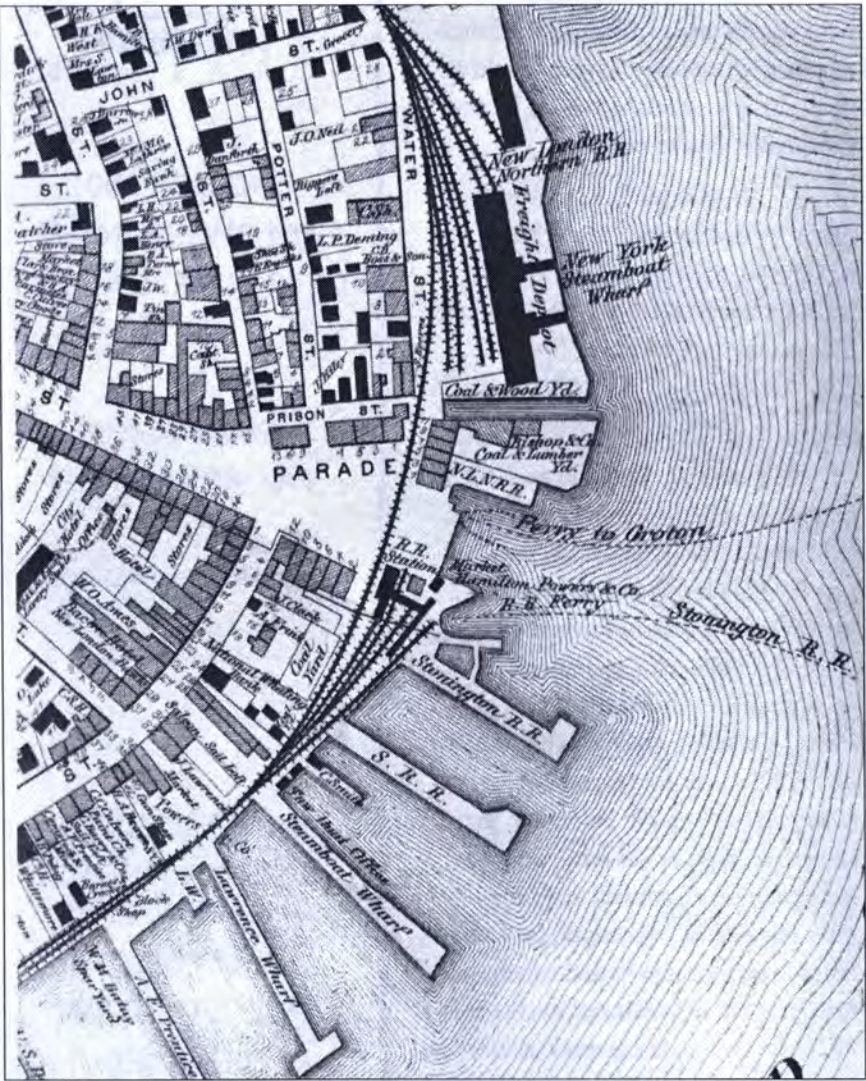
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In the 1840s there were dozens of wharves along the Thames, with all their supporting activities: warehouses, chandleries, spermaceti candle factories, spar yards, sail lofts, rope walks, fish markets, taverns, brothels. The headquarters of shipwrights, coopers, riggers, grocers, painters, blacksmiths and bankers were among the mass of businesses accumulated along the river.



From Atlas of New London County, 1868

In 1845 seven new ships were added to the fleet of seventy-one vessels, and by 1850 the import value of oil was \$618,055 – equivalent in today's terms to \$12 million. The local fleet climbed to 81 vessels. In 1847 for a brief time, New London passed Nantucket to become the nation's second whaling city after New Bedford. At its height, there were 15 whaling companies and 2,500 men at sea. New London's population doubled in size between 1840 and 1860. Streets were still unpaved.

During whaling days there was not a sidewalk, lamppost or policeman in New London, and good rum was only three or four cents a glass.

THE MERCHANTS ON NEW LONDON'S WATER FRONT IN 1844-45

...at that time the entire harbor seemed as one resonant click of the cooper's mallet, and every dock was covered by a merry, hustling, shipping throng: beginning from just back of Chappell's coal office and extending clear up and around to East New London. Most of the city then lay down near the water, and everybody had money to burn

George Marshall in the New London Telegraph, February 24, 1896

...and that's the way it was on up to East New London where all the rope walks were. The Starr street ropewalk was before my time...

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The Civil War and the discovery of petroleum put an end to whaling. "Most every one of the ships was sold to the government, filled with stone and taken down to Charleston and sunk to blockade and fill up the harbor. Many of their old bones are sticking up there now," Marshal recalled.

In 1871, 33 whalers, including Groton's Captain Horace M. Newbury and Captain Charles E. Allen, got caught in the arctic ice in what is considered the greatest loss in whaling history.

The last whaling voyage out of New London took place in 1908.

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The waterfront and Parade, New London, CT.

THE AGE OF STEAM

Wind. Too strong. Too weak. Too unpredictable. Yet, all commerce depended upon this fickle, invisible force - until steam. In 1809 Robert Fulton revolutionized transportation when his steamboat made a successful trip on the Hudson River. By 1815, the Fulton's invention was making two trips a week from New York to New London.

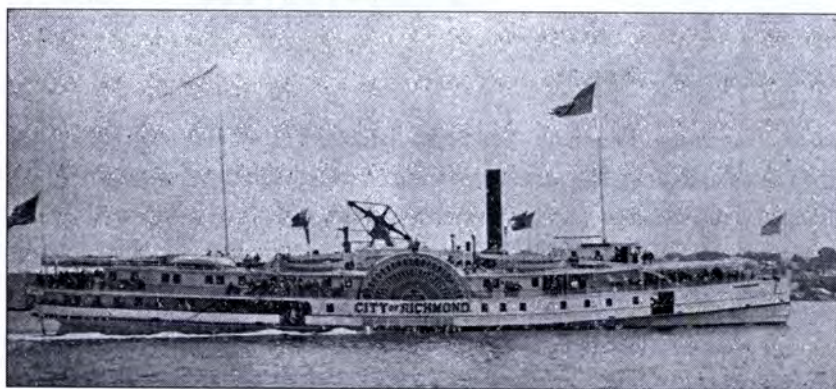
The development of the steamboat and the daring of its early captains who pioneered voyages on rivers, the sound and then the far reaches of the ocean, is largely a story of Long Island Sound and of its tributaries, the Connecticut and the Thames rivers according to Roger Williams McAdam in his book "Salts of the Sound":

...the railroads of New England were built to nurture and be nurtured by the Long Island Sound steamboats. . . Connecticut's sons contributed more to the development of steam vessels than those of any other state.

...the Sound steamers, as a class, were known as one of the wonders of America. They rivaled the ocean liners in bulk and magnificence...[they] are unsurpassed for comfort, safety or speed on any similar route in the world.

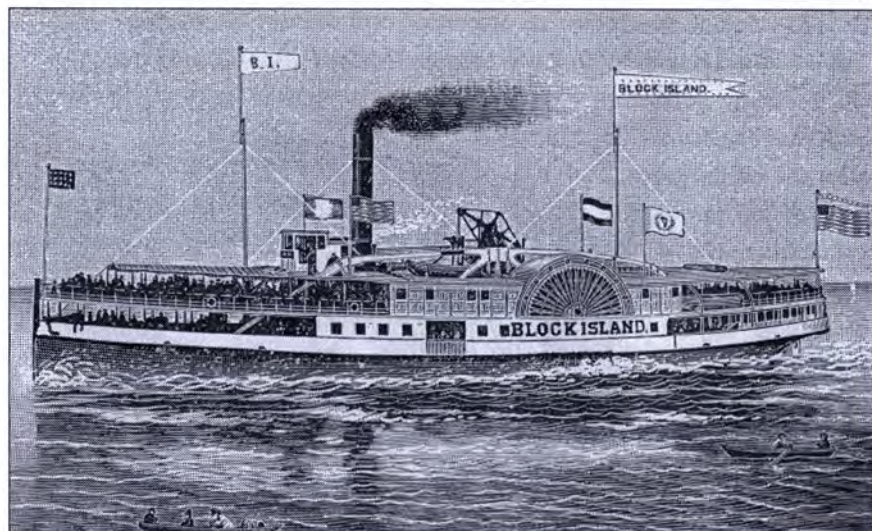
Through the 1800s the magnificent sailing vessels were gradually replaced by the more dependable and far more luxurious steamships. The *City of Richmond* was a fine example of one of these. The following story appeared in The Day's New London Souvenir Edition, December 1893.

The *City of Richmond* is a handsome side wheel boat and is licensed to carry 1,500 passengers. The [New London] company refitted the boat throughout, and it is now one of the most perfectly equipped boats on the coast. It is commodious, speedy and safe, and is provided with seventy comfortable staterooms. A general excursion business from any of the points between New York Boston is done. During the season the boat has been let to charter parties from all the principal cities on the Sound, and the Saturday night excursions run by the company from different places on the coast to New York and Coney Island have proved a most attractive feature and have been largely attended. . . .



Steamer City of Richmond

From July to September the 1,500-passenger steamer, the *Block Island* of the New London Steamboat Co. (formed in 1882), regularly sailed to the new summer resort at Block Island, from a pier close to Union Station. Railroad passengers and baggage easily transferred to the waiting steamship. The schedule on a typical Sunday left Norwich at 9 am and New London an hour later, touching at Mystic Island and Watch Hill. After a sail of about forty miles the passengers arrived at Old Harbor, B.I. The company also ran the *Sarah Thorpe* from Shelter Island, Greenport, and Sag Harbor to New London.



Steamer Block Island

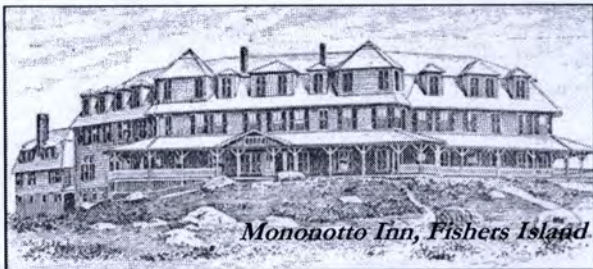
In the fall of 1892 a “handsome and serviceable steel boat” called the *Long Island* started plying the Sound out of New London with up to 400 passengers. As described in a contemporary report;

She has an upper and lower deck and is provided with state rooms and saloons forward and aft as well as a lunch counter. The furnishings of the ladies’ cabin and other departments of the boat are of the best and for the complete comfort of passengers. Every turn on board is suggestive of perfect ease, comfort and convenience. Few indeed are the ocean steamers which are as well fitted or capable of making their passengers more comfortable. As well as being one of the handsomest and fastest on the Sound, she is built upon the most modern plans for safety. She measures 140 feet over all with a 28-foot beam.



The Long Island

In 1884 a regular steamboat line was established between New London and Fishers Island, and in 1890, it was absorbed by the Fishers Island Navigation Co. When the steamer *Skip Jack* became inadequate for the growing business, they built the *Munnatawket*, a “comfortable, staunch screw boat” chartered to carry 300 passen-



gers along with the mail and other goods. During the summer months, three round trips were made daily with two on Sunday. The distance, some eight miles from dock to dock, was easily made in three quarters of an hour.

The harbor also made steam history when the first Atlantic crossing by steam was undertaken by two New Londoners: Moses and Stevens Rogers on the *Savannah*, a fully rigged sailing ship of 350 tons with a steam engine of 89 horsepower. It took 22 days to reach England in 1819. Alas, most of the New England lines were taken over by railroad companies and what was left of them finally shut down during the Great Depression. But today ferry passenger service from New London still includes Orient Point, Montauk Point, Fishers Island, and Block Island.

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RAILROADS

In 1846, rail passengers entering New London came via steamers from the North Fork of Long Island, from Norwich, or from Stonington. It wasn't until 1850 that rail service opened to New London, linking the city up the west side of the Thames to Willimantic and beyond. In 1852 service to New Haven opened. This was long after trains crisscrossed the entire nation.



Steamboat Dock

Until the end of the 19th century, the train and all other traffic took the ferry between Groton and New London. Starting in 1858 trains entering New London were loaded onto special ferries and taken across to Groton in a bone-jangling voyage, and from there to Stonington, Providence, and Boston. A 357-ton wooden vessel, built at Mystic's George Greenman Company shipyard (now the site of Mystic Seaport), was designed to ferry the railroad cars. While this was considered a breakthrough for the convenience of passengers, not everyone enjoyed the voyage across the Thames. Charles Dickens was touring America in 1867 and wrote home:

... the whole train is banged aboard a big steamer. The steamer rises and falls with the river which the railroad don't do and the train is banged uphill or banged downhill. In coming off the steamer we were banged up at such a height that the rope broke and the carriage rushed back with a run downhill again. I whisked out in a moment and two or three others with me, but nobody else seemed to care about it.

Many people said that bridging the Thames so as not to interfere with shipping was impossible. The owners of shipping lines and ferryboats had no interest in allowing railroad owners to bypass their lucrative lines. More than 40 years after the railroad reached New London everyone agreed that a bridge was necessary, everyone that is except Norwich, which had been an important rail terminus since 1832, and therefore vetoed efforts on the state level.

After much legal and legislative wrangling, a railroad bridge across the Thames opened on October 14, 1889 at cost of \$1,400,000, the longest double-track drawbridge in the world. This steel bridge was supported on brownstone piers, designed by Alfred Boller and built by the Union Bridge Company of Buffalo. The bridge immediately became a symbol of new economic hope for New London, and *The Day* took on its image in its masthead.

From Winthrop Neck to Groton stretches the Thames River Bridge, one of the greatest engineering feats of the century, 1,423 feet long with a 503-foot draw, and the longest double track drawbridge in the world. It is proportioned for a moving load of two 86-ton locomotives followed by a trainload of 3,000 pounds per foot.

The Day, New London Souvenir Edition, Dec. 1893



After the completion of the bridge, the New London rail route became the most popular for passengers and freight. But bridging the Thames did prove to be an engineering challenge. By 1905 the bridge began to move due to increasingly heavy locomotives. Work on a new bridge began in 1916 and when it opened in 1919, the old one was converted for auto and trolley traffic.

The mile-long Gold Star Memorial Bridge was completed in 1943 for \$6 million. By 1970 the ever-growing needs of highway transportation and requirements of the Groton Navy Base called for a wider, cantilevered road bed and a second bridge. The Twin Bridges have a navigational clearance of about 35 feet above mean sea level and reach 180 feet above the water surface at their highest point. Construction was completed in 1975 providing five lanes of traffic in each direction, carrying 7,800 cars per hour at "a normal highway speed".



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Summer Colony

The 1825 commemoration of the Battle of Fort Griswold drew over 10,000 spectators, including 18 survivors of the battle. During the 1830s Thames Harbor became a summer resort, with Fort Griswold and its new patriotic monument a popular place of pilgrimage.

With the supposedly health-giving properties of sea air and the new rage, sea bathing, the area was poised for development. The white sandy beaches both north and south of the harbor and nearby Fishers Island helped the region compete with summer resorts like Newport and Cape May. Antebellum Groton, New London, Niantic, Mystic and Fishers Island soon had hotels and guest houses, theater (early productions taking place at the 1785 Court House), lovely churches, fishing and boating, and fresh wholesome food from local farms drawing many from the South and industrialized northern cities.

Fishing on the river was always popular, and old-timers always claimed that the fish were in a sad state of decline. This was countered by one report in 1903: "That eels are not becoming scarce in the Thames River is proven by the fact that Ray Parke, night watchman on the ferryboat *Midland* has made several good-sized catches recently" [The Day, 30 June]. An unusual eel was reported in The Day on 29 August 1905, when Captain M. Elmer Holloway found a monster eel in one of his lobster traps. "Capt. Holloway endeavored to kill the eel with a gaff hook, but the more he tried to inflict a mortal wound, the fiercer grew the eel." The creature was purportedly thicker around than his leg, "And the Captain is not a small man by any means. In length it would measure over four feet . . . With a mouth like an alligator's."

The development of the Pequot House, a luxury hotel with a cottage colony near the harbor's mouth on the New London side, brought many newcomers. The New York yachting crowd came and so too did industrialists from the Midwest. The Yale-Harvard Regatta in June brought many upscale visitors, and some of these, from places like Pittsburgh and Cleveland, came back for vacation. For some, the New London social scene was no doubt less taxing than Newport or Bar Harbor, and it was certainly more convenient. Meanwhile, a summer colony of cottages was developing on the Groton side, and by the early 1870s there were more than 40 cottages along with a successful seaside hotel -- rivaling New London's Pequot House. There was even direct steam-

boat service to Eastern Point for a time. In 1886 the hotel was enlarged and renamed the Fort Griswold Hotel, taking advantage of the famous tourist destination nearby.

By the turn of the century, Eastern Point was one of the best-known seaside resorts in New England. As *The Day* reported on Memorial Day, 1903, “Business on the ferry has been good... Every boat has brought over teams loaded with new arrivals at Eastern Point and picnic parties on pleasure bent.” Many of the early cottages were replaced by large Shingle Style homes in the early 1900s, and Morton Plant built there in 1906, before he built his stone pile further south at Avery Point. Plant bought the old hotel, knocked it down and built a lavish, upscale resort, calling it simply, *The Griswold*. With its golf course, tennis and yachting amenities, “*The Gris*” was one of the most popular resorts on the East Coast. It was demolished in 1969 to make way for Pfizer, which began operations next door in 1946.



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Today Pfizer Pharmaceuticals dominates both sides of the River with their new global headquarters on the New London bank, matching their first location on the Groton shore.



John Winthrop, Jr.

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Boat building continues along Groton Bank on the site of Latham's original shipyard. Electric Boat - General Dynamics, christened its latest sub, the *Jimmy Carter*, on June 5, 2004. It is the last of the Seawolf-class with technological capabilities not found in the previous ships of its class. SSN-23, the *Jimmy Carter*, is a sleek and stealthy ship over 450 feet long and weighing more than 12,000 tons. A crew of 166 officers and enlisted men is larger than those of the previous subs in its class.



The latest – and absolutely the most up-to-date – arrival on the River is Cross Sound Ferry's new *Jessica W*. She is a "49-meter (approximately 160 feet) wave-piercing catamaran capable of making the crossing in less than an hour" according to the company. A passenger-only ferry, the *Jessica W* accommodates 530 passengers – along with bicycles – and departs from the New London ferry terminal, landing in Block Island's historic Old Harbor within walking distance of the island's famous restaurants, shops, hotels and some of the best beaches in the Northeast. She will be making up to five trips daily during the summer season. The Wronowski's have operated ferries in New London since the 1940s. The *Sea Jet*, another high-speed catamaran, provides service to Orient Point, Long Island as much as twice as fast as the conventional ferries carrying vehicles.

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New London Harbor Lighthouse was built in 1801 to upgrade navigational beacons on that site since the mid-1700s.

Technology has since replaced the light and in November of 2003 the New London Maritime Society submitted an application to acquire New London Harbor Light with a goal of preserving the historic structure and opening the tower to the public. The lighthouse fits perfectly with the Society's mission to preserve and promote the maritime history of New London, and is an ideal way to expand the Society's ongoing work with another waterfront treasure, the Custom House, where it operates the Custom House Maritime Museum. As of June, 2004, the application is pending.



Fort Trumbull is a new State Park showcasing the beautifully restored 1849 fort and a visitors center featuring exhibits detailing the history of the fort from the 1700s to the closing of the Naval Underwater Systems Center in 1995. It is surrounded by landscaped grounds and piers running out into the Thames. In 1915 the U.S. Coast Guard was created by President Wilson and the Coast Guard Academy was opened in 1910. The site became the present Coast Guard Station when the academy moved to its present location further up the river.



New London's new Waterfront Park covers much of the area that hosted the West Indian trade and the whaling industry. Today the area hosts a variety of activities including celebrations of the Harvard & Yale Regatta in June, Sail Fest celebrations in July, The Amistad Festival in August and the Boats Books Brushes festival in September. Other arts and music activities are scattered through the spring, summer and fall. A Saturday Market brings in regional and international artists and artisans each Saturday during the summer.

The harbor is host to a whole new level of excursions and holiday activities. The recent arrival of the *Maarsdam* heralds a revival of the port as a destination for the 21st century cruise industry. The American Cruise Lines already make the Waterfront Park their homeport for summertime cruises around New England. Cross Sound Ferry continues the traditions of ferry service on the River with their fleet of boats connecting to Long Island and the newest...

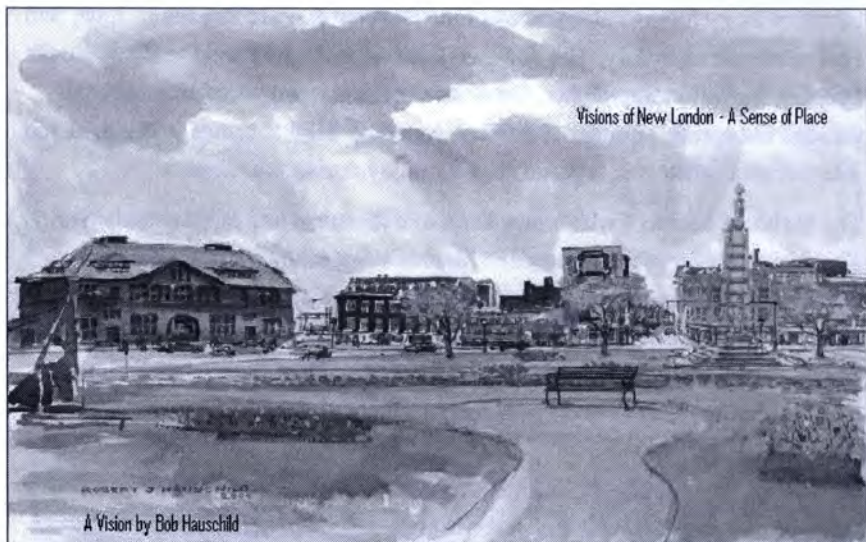


The *Maarsdam* arriving in New London May 14, 2004

Photo by Vincent Scarano

This cruise of the Thames River is part of the Thames River Heritage 2004 celebration, a coalition of eighteen local museums, historical associations and arts organizations, has planned a whole series of events this summer and fall celebrating many aspects of our heritage. Be sure to pick up a brochure and plan to participate in this recognition of the gifts of the past that influence and enhance our present.

MEMBERSHIP INVITATION



Funds raised from this cruise of the historic Thames River, Landmarks walking tours, house tours, and other programs including membership dues in Landmarks, all go to further our preservation efforts in New London. These efforts include educational programs focused on the history of New London, our architectural heritage, and fascinating stories passed down from generations of citizens whose contributions have created the quality and character of our City today.

The Mission of New London Landmarks is: *...to promote the preservation and development of the entire urban environment of New London, Connecticut, including significant individual structures, streetscapes, neighborhoods and open space.*

A project of special interest to us today is a re-design of Union Plaza, opening up a connection between the waterfront and downtown, the historic waterfront district. The historic Parade was an open public space linking busy waterfront activities with the City. Reviving this historic concept of urban life will revitalize our multi-modal transportation area and create a welcoming presence to 21st century travelers arriving by train, ferry and automobile.

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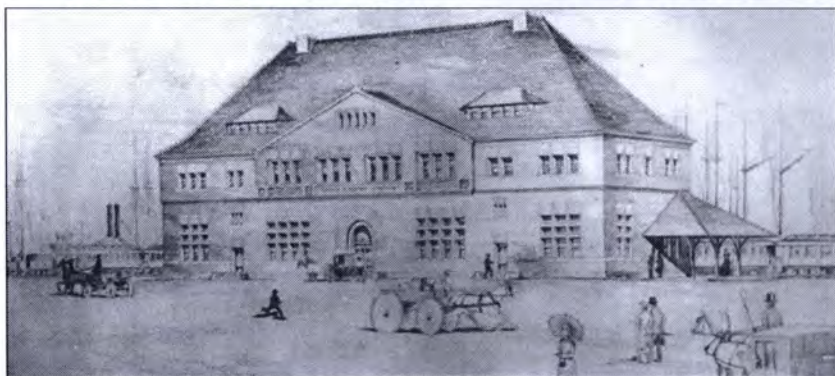
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*And now behold from shore to shore
Majestic glides the horse boat o'er,
Like music the sweet bell is rung
Swift from the wheel the spray is flung.
The Market wharf's left far behind,
Yonder's the shore! "Geeup old Blind."*

By John G. Brainard

First published in 1824, *New London Gazette*

(from a long poem about the old horse ferry)

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