

# NEW LONDON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2009

## *Inauguration Day Event*

**M**any of us can't get to Washington D.C., and so the New London County Historical Society is planning a party for Tuesday 20 January 2009 to celebrate the inauguration of President Obama. A 50 inch wide-screen TV may seem a bit incongruous in a room that welcomed George Washington in 1776, but thanks to the support of Metrocast Communications, that's what we'll have so that you'll miss none of the historic event.

Shaw Mansion doors will open at 10:30am, the new President is scheduled (actually, required by law) to take his oath of office prior to noon. Obama's inaugural address will be given, and then there will be lots of pundits analyzing it while lunch is served in the Capitol. We'll keep track of it all, including the

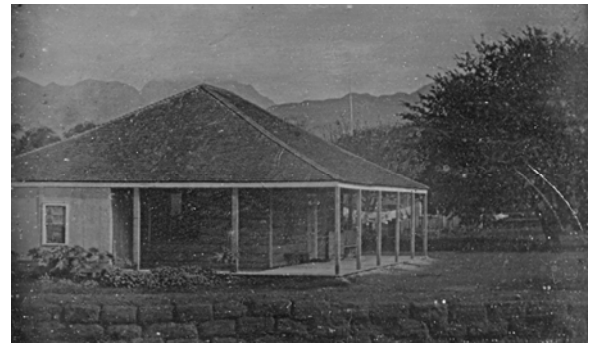
parade. A \$5 donation will cover light refreshments during the day.

In the evening Hawaiian snacks, cocktails and punch will be featured as we celebrate and watch the recorded oath of office and inaugural address again. A \$10 donation is requested for the evening celebration which will run from 6pm to 7:30pm.

An exhibit of some of the historical society's many Hawaiian artifacts will be displayed. Elias Perkins, who grew up in the Mansion, lived in Hawaii as a whaling agent through most of the 1850s. He was then appointed consul by President Lincoln

and served at Lahina, the main whaling port on Maui. He collected and returned with an amazing array of objects. If you believe in time travel, perhaps Elias Perkins will make an appearance at the party and share a few thoughts on the Lincoln inauguration.

Don't sit home alone on this historic day – share the event with your friends at the historical society. Call 443.1209 for reservations



Perkins' house in Lahina, 1865

## *Book Release and Volunteer Recognition*

**R**escheduled from our snowed-out 19 December Holiday event, Sunday 11 January — our Second Sunday — will have a dual purpose, to thank and celebrate our many volunteers, and to launch Pat Schaefer's long-awaited guidebook to the Joshua Hempstead Diary (for more on that see page 5).

Our volunteers number close to eighty and the

variety of tasks and programs they help us with are almost as varied. Board members, gardeners, mail team, membership and collections records keepers, researchers, special event hosts, base-ball team, docents, web site manager, interns, volunteer Perkins "family members," and book publishing teams all do their part to enliven and engage our members and visitors.

*fyrd 12 (Aug. 1720) Misty & Cloudy. I went to ye farm to See after ye fence & get ye Ry Reaped. I Lodgd yr.* Some variation of the phrase “I went to the farm” was repeated many times throughout Hempstead’s diary. This 200 acre piece of land (later increased to 500 acres by various purchases) is first mentioned on page one of the diary, and Hempstead’s last trip there came in September of 1758, about six weeks before he stopped writing.

Hempstead’s possession of the farm was the result of a long, legal, three way wrangle. Robert Hempstead, one of the town’s original settlers, had been granted the land as part of the original distribution in the 1650s. It was near the upper Mystic River, in what would now be called the Stonington side of Old Mystic. His son Joshua, father of the diarist, made a will in 1683 which says in part:

Item: I give unto my said son Joshua that 200 acres of land which lieth at Mistick: bounded as upon record which my father Robert Hempstead gave me [describes other lands]... all the lands given him shall accrue unto the heir male of my sd. son and not to be alienated....

The first Joshua Hempstead died in 1689. In 1691 his wife Elizabeth received permission from the General Assembly to sell “outlands,” presumably to raise money to bring up her children. She sold the 200 acres at Mystic and another 8 acre parcel to Samuel Fish of Groton in December of that year. In 1693 Elizabeth married John Edgecombe, who thereby assumed ownership of Fish’s payments. There are records of payment in the New

London Land Records:

Dec. 19, 1691 £22 NE mark of Eliz H [fancy capital E]

Dec. 22, 1693 £25 10s NE John Edgecombe

Feb. 26, 1695/6 £25 10s NE full balance John Edgecombe

“The severall sums of mony above mentioned & payed was to discharge a bill of £146 in provision pay or £73 mony [blank] by the sd Samuell Fish to Elizabeth Hempstead widow for a tract of land at the head of Mystic River.”

After the younger Joshua Hempstead turned 21, he sued to recover the land from Fish. Hempstead won the suit and was put in possession of the land in 1709. Fish then sued John Edgecombe to recover the money he had paid for land sold “fraudulently.” The entire matter went to the General Court (General Assembly), which first ordered arbitration. Hempstead notes at the end of September, 1712, mr Pitkin & Mr Christophers was hearing father Edgcumb & fish. When that did not work they went to court, with the result that on March 26, 1713, Capt fish Recovered of father Edgecombe a £200 judgmt & Cost.

Edgecombe then claimed that Hempstead had waited too long to bring his suit to recover the land. The legal requirement was fifteen years after the person’s death, or five years after the legatee’s attaining the age of 21. Hempstead argued that the will was not probated until after both those time limits, so he had at least five years after the will was probated. After much study, the

Assembly decided that the original law was the valid one, and voided everything that had been done in the case. A couple of years later, Hempstead and Fish were again in court about the land. In September of 1716 Hempstead withdrew my action agst Capt. Fish for 200 acres by Reason wee Could not hitt upon an Issue. He did, however, get another parcel of 8 acres in Mystic back that year from a Peter Creery. In September of 1718 Hempstead said I Lost my Case with Capt Fish. he hath gained ye Cost £3-18s-00d, but at the end of March 1719 the [Superior] Court Raised, but first gave Judgmt for me to Recover my 200 Acres at Stonington & Cost allowed to be £3 18s 10d. And on April 3<sup>rd</sup> he writes I went to Stonington to Receive my Land of Capt fish...I was burning it after dd till night.

*(Continued on page 4)*

**New London County Historical Society**  
Incorporated 1870

**Officers**

Deborah Donovan, President  
Nancy Steenburg, Vice President  
Denis O’Brien, Treasurer  
Kasey Goss, Secretary

**Board of Directors**

2009  
John Pendleton, McCoy Pope, Dean Macris  
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## *The Hope of History*

Many of you may be aware that C-Span has produced a weeklong series on the history of the White House. It was shown the week between Christmas and New Year's at several times during the day and evening. Last Monday night, whilst surfing channels, I stumbled upon it and was immediately enthralled. There in glorious black and white was a very young Jackie Kennedy touring journalist Charles Collingwood around the public rooms and some of the private rooms of the house, including the Lincoln Bedroom and the Treaty Room (which was Lincoln's cabinet room, and the room in which he signed the Emancipation Proclamation). At the end of the tour, Mrs. Kennedy and Collingwood were joined by the President who mused upon the house, its furnishings and its occupants and what they all mean, or should mean, to Americans in 1962. His comments were uncannily apropos as I had been musing myself about the meaning of the people and the artifacts of history to those of us living in 2008.

President Kennedy said that unhappily history tends to be seen as just lists of dates and wars and events by many people, especially the young, who are consequently bored and dismissive of the stories it holds. But living in the White House was a constant reminder to him that history is the story of our country in all its ups and downs, with all its problems and triumphs. Sitting in Lincoln's cabinet room, and at the same table used by first by Ulysses S. Grant during his presidency, reminded him that Lincoln and Grant both endured the horrors of Civil War but saw it come to a positive conclusion. Sleeping in the bedroom that was Franklin Roosevelt's reminded him of the pressures endured by the president and the citizens of the country during the Great Depression and WWII. The pictures, the furnishing, the White House itself, were constant reminders of the hope that characterized and still characterizes the American people and the American Republic. The stories and the hope are what we can build upon as the nation moves forward, step by step, sometimes frustrated, but always forward towards the future. He concluded that the work of Mrs. Kennedy and her Restoration Committee, and that of Presidents and First Ladies, past and future, was critical – to keep the history of “America's House” fresh and alive for the citizens who own it.

President Kennedy's words reinforced for me the work of the New London County Historical Society and my own words in our last newsletter: *We know that by understanding our past we have the tools to plan our future and to cope with our present, no matter how difficult either may be.* When present times become difficult and stressful, whether because of economic issues, wars, political upheavals or changes, (or all of the above) we should always remember that these problems are not unique to us, nor are they unique in our country's story. Problems can be solved if we remain hopeful, as President Kennedy reminded me last night. We can use our past and the stories that people and things of the past tell us or illustrate for us, to get a grip on the present and to look forward with creativity and hope to the future. As in the White House, our house, the Shaw Mansion, and in all the many historic buildings in New London County, the stories of our towns, our region and our country are preserved in the documents, artifacts, the walls, and the auras of the people who have come before us, building the foundation of our nation and trusting that we will improve upon what they leave us, and will do so with hope.

~Deborah Donovan

### ***New and Renewed Members***

Daneen & Gregory Roth	New London
Ms. Marion McNiece	New London
Bonnie Raymo	Lisbon, MD
Angela Williams	New London
Edward Sawicki	East Lyme
Helen Roche	Quaker Hill
Bessie Irene Hume	Waterford
Elizabeth Whitley	Old Lyme
Vickie V. Videll	New London
Louise W. Fabrykiewicz	New London
Rose C. Longo	Niantic
Dr. & Mrs. Frederic P. Anderson	Noank
Jonathan G. Lincoln	Niantic
Carol & Wilson Veal	Quaker Hill
George & Olga Manos	East Lyme
Helen Rush	Groton
Marilyn Davis	Waterford
Christopher Collier	Orange
Ned Hammond	New London
Ruth Rogers	Newington
Edward C. Murphy & Doris N. Edmond	New London
James D. Wherry	Gales Ferry
Merrill Perkins	Old Saybrook
Richard & Heather Grigsby	Uncasville
Horace Newbury	Groton
Mrs. Flora Storrs	Niantic
Robert P. Hobron	Perris, CA
Michele Pedro	Waterford
Karen & Jonathan Howard	Westbrook
Kathryn C. Clarke	Waterford
Joseph Morneault	Old Saybrook
Mr. & Mrs. William W. Miner	Mystic
Marian Shilstone	New London
<b>Contributing</b>	
Gerald J. & Linda J. Stefon	Baltic
Trix Bodde	New London
Mr. & Mrs. Robert P. Anderson, Jr.	Noank
<b>Sustaining</b>	
Pat & Tod Schaefer	Mystic
<b>Business</b>	
University of Conn., Avery Point	Groton

*The Farm at Stonington (cont.)*

(Continued from page 2)

The court's turnaround is a mystery to me, but there was no further appeal, and relations between Fish and Hempstead appeared to be amicable from that time on. The same could not be said of some of Hempstead's new neighbors, the Denisons and Holdridges. At a guess, they were displeased with the results of Hempstead's survey of his property lines, for on March 3, 1722, Hempstead says he entered

*a Complaint agst Wm Denison Gershom Holdridge & 5 Indians for pulling down the partition fence between Sd Holdridge & I. they began on ye Easterly Side ye pond by ye house & went Westwd almost to ye Grt Swamp & they Sett Sd fence up from ye S. Side ye grtt Swamp to ye fence about 30 or 40 Rod Southward of where itt Stood before & he Took possession of my old house & keeps Gershom Holdridge in Sd house.*

That was the beginning of a series of complaints about horses being turned into Hempstead's pasture, the old house on the property being taken down, and apples being gathered from his trees. In September Hempstead won damages from the Superior Court, and despite appealing the conviction for house destruction, Denison paid the trespass actions and life settled down. Hempstead next mentions mending Gershom Holdridge's cart wheel a couple of times, and sharing various farm tasks such as mowing or shearing sheep. The Holdridges eventually moved to Hebron, where Hempstead had further dealings with them about sheep.

Besides the rye and apples mentioned above, the farm's crops included wheat,

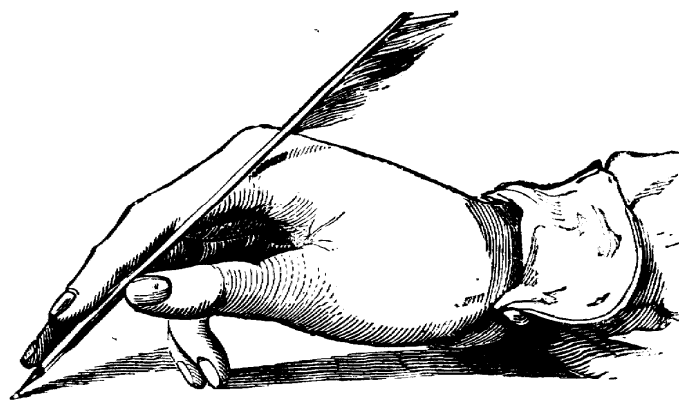
oats, corn, and hay. Hempstead kept sheep, horses, and cattle there. The busy seasons of farming must have resembled a game of chess, as various members of the family worked on both the New London (which then included Waterford and Montville) and Stonington pieces of property.

There were tenants on the farm, especially a Stephen Bennet, for a number of years, then in April of 1751 *fyrd 5 fair. In the morning I went over to Groton with Joshua Nattee Ben Want & adam Natts boy in Capt Hurlbutts Scow. Josh Carried his oxen & Cart & Plow & Sundrys in order to Live att my farm in the House Stephen Bennet built. Moving the farm stock was not easy: fyrd 12 (April) I was all day assisting Joshua with adam & Natts Boy getting a Cross the ferry in a Large Cannoo 34 Sheep & 15 Lambs. mine & Joshuas.* This was

apparently a gradual transition, as Stephen Bennet did not move out of the house until May 23, but on May 29 *in the foren Joshua & family Removed to Stonington. Ebe Howard Carried them Round by water & I went over in the aftern by Land & got Christopher to go down with a Cart & Carry up Some Beds & other things....*

This Joshua was the diarist's grandson (son of Hempstead's deceased eldest son Nathanael) who would, by the 1683 will of the first Joshua, inherit the farm. In Hempstead's will, dated November 27, 1758, the farm is described as being 500 acres. Joshua also inherited the house and surrounding land in New London. In colonial times it definitely paid to be the eldest son.

Pat Schaefer



**Annual Fund Report**

Our Annual Fund appeal was send just prior to Thanksgiving, and by the end of December we had reached one-third of our \$35,000 goal. We thank each of your for your support during somewhat challenging times.

We hope that **you** who recognize the value of preserving our collection and sharing our history will also do your part in helping us to fulfill our mission.

## Chicago Connection — Another NLCHS Treasure

Although you might not think to look for the earliest depiction of Chicago in the collection of the New London County Historical Society that would be a mistake.

Henry Burbeck, an artillery officer throughout the Revolutionary War, was placed in command of West Point under President Washington. It was Burbeck who suggested that West Point be made into a training base for the Army. He was appointed Commandant of the Corps of Artillerists and Engineers in 1798, continuing in that position for the War Department till 1802 when the Corps of Engineers was made a separate division. Burbeck continued as chief of the Artillery division through 1815. During the War of 1812 he was ordered to New London to command the State Militia to defend the port

from the British who were blockading and hoping to catch Stephen Decatur.

After the war Burbeck retired to New London which is how some of his papers came to be part of the collection of the historical society.

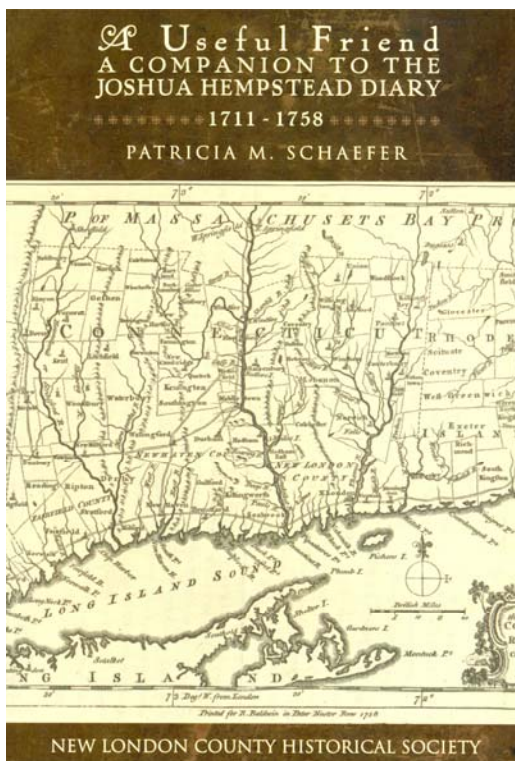
Burbeck designed forts and cannons and his hand-drawn illustrations are some of the items of major interest that we hold.

In the file there is a letter dated March 1803, a hand-written “Extract from a letter from the Secretary of War” ordering that “a suitable officer with six men and one or two guides” should be sent “across Country to the mouth of the St Joseph’s at the south end of Lake Michigan and from thence to Chikago on the opposite side of the Lake to examine the situation with a view to the

establishment of a Post.” Captain Whistler, with a detachment was sent from Detroit. His report back, addressed to, “Major Zebulon Pike, commanding Detroit,” was obviously forwarded on to the War Department and to Colonel Henry Burbeck, in charge of establishing frontier forts.

The report includes a hand-drawn map of southern Lake Michigan with distances computed between rivers and soundings taken of the rivers and lake with the location of a fort designated on a high point on the south side of the Chicago River and three houses drawn-in located on the opposite side of the River. Fort Dearborn was established there in 1803.

The map will be on display for the Inauguration Day event.



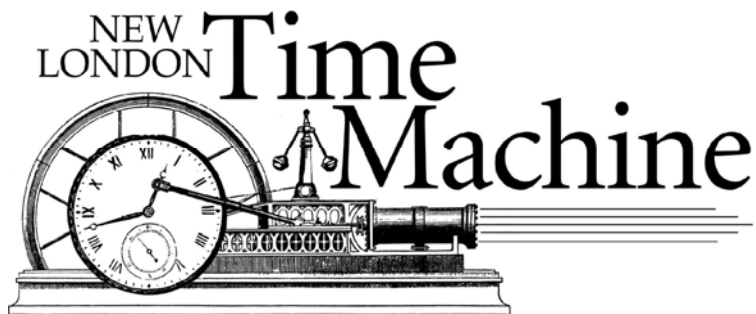
## Finally — A Useful Friend

In 1999, *Joshua Hempstead's Diary* was republished in an updated, format with corrections and a new index of names. The index of names was (and is) impressive at 70 pages long, but the absence of a subject index—partially because there was no room, and partially because no one had taken on that task—was sorely felt. Pat Schaefer, who was part of the NLCHS committee responsible for that publication, took on the “subject index challenge” and has been working on it ever since. We finally get to benefit from the fruits of that labor with the publication of *A Useful Friend*, published by the historical society with the assistance of a grant from the Connecticut Humanities Council, and now available at the

Shaw Mansion for \$25 (plus \$5 shipping, if mailed).

Much more than only a subject index, the articles Pat has written for the *NLCHS Newsletter* are gathered together and make up the first third of the 296 page book. A glossary is another very useful section; a fourth section is a series of maps—some from the time period—depicting locations referred to by Hempstead.

The words, “A useful friend,” were taken from Hempstead’s obituary, and of course described him. But anyone who has delved into the rich resource of the Diary will consider this work a useful (quoting Walter Woodward: “indispensible is not too strong a word”) friend as well.



## History Program for February School Vacation Week

The New London Time Machine is celebrating Black History Month in February. The NLCHS is teaming up with the New London Maritime Society, Connecticut Landmarks' Hempstead Houses, and Kente Cultural Center to present a new version of our Time Machine history program for kids. "African-Americans in New London: From the 18th Century to the 21st Century" will provide middle school aged children with a broad range of activities and history programs about Black history here in New London.

The four day program will run from Tues., Feb. 17 through Fri., Feb. 20, 2009, every afternoon from 12:30 to 3 p.m. Each day participants will visit a different site and a different century: the 18th century at the Hempstead Houses;

19th century at the Custom House; 20th century at the Shaw Mansion; and the 21st century at Kente. This program is for middle-school aged children only (grades 5-8) and is \$40. Pre-registration is required as spaces are limited. Please call 443.1209 for more information or to register.

**Tuesday** — Adam Jackson: Joshua Hempstead's right-hand man (and his slave)

**Wednesday** — African Americans in the Atlantic World

**Thursday** — From Civil War to Civil Rights

**Friday** — A New World: African Americans Today

A special fund allows us to waive registration fees for children from New London. Participants who attend all four sessions will receive an award.

## Second Sundays

*Scheduled for January through June  
(Please NOTE LOCATIONS as they vary  
with each program.)*

**January 11** — Volunteer Recognition reception and book launch for *A USEFUL FRIEND—A Companion to Joshua Hempstead's Diary 1711-1758* — Shaw Mansion at 2pm

**February 8** — Author Elaine Weiss shares her new book with a local connection, *Fruits of Victory: The Women's Land Army in the Great War* — Custom House at 2pm

**March 8** — Irving Moy shares a family history — a Chinese immigrant serving in the Union forces during the Civil War. — Custom House at 2pm

**April 5** — Book Launch for Caulkins' *History of Norwich*, Nancy Steenburg presents; Otis Library, Norwich, At 2pm

**May 10** — *Mothers' Day* — No program

**June 14** — Flag Day — Special program on flags in the NLCHS collection, Speaker TBA; Shaw Mansion at 2pm



## *Books available from the New London County Historical Society*

<i>The Amistad Incident as Reported in the New London Gazette &amp; General Advertiser.</i> (NLCHS)	\$5
<i>The History of the Amistad Captives.</i> (NLCHS) A reproduction of a pamphlet by JW Barber, 1840.	\$10
<i>Black Roots in Southeastern Connecticut, 1650-1900</i> by Barbara Brown and Dr. James Rose (NLCHS) This republished book is a milestone in genealogical research of African Americans and Native Americans in New London County.	\$35
<i>The Diary of Joshua Hempstead 1711-1758.</i> (NLCHS) Revised 1999. Personal journal serves as fascinating and invaluable account of Connecticut life in early 18 <sup>th</sup> century.	\$75
<i>For Oil and Buggy Whips: Whaling Captains of New London County, Connecticut</i> by Barnard Colby Biographical sketches of local whaling captains document New London's role in this industry.	\$18
<i>Greetings from New London</i> (NLCHS) Collection of early 20 <sup>th</sup> -century postcards from our archives.	\$10
<i>Life on a Whaler</i> by Nathaniel W. Taylor (NLCHS) Story of Taylor's two-year Antarctic voyage as physician aboard New London's <i>Julius Caesar</i> (1851-53).	\$25
<i>A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Venture.</i> (NLCHS) Autobiography of former slave Venture Smith, originally published in 1798. NLCHS facsimile of 1897 edition.	\$5
<i>Tapestry: A Living History of the Black Family in Southern Connecticut</i> by Dr. J.M. Rose and B.W. Brown An introduction to the role of African Americans in early New England history. Contains genealogies. (NLCHS)	\$5
<i>The Colonial Burying Grounds of Eastern Connecticut</i> by James A. Slater. Fully illustrated with photographs, this book provides a description of and maps the burial grounds of eastern Connecticut.	\$40
<i>Common to this Country: Botanical Discoveries of Lewis &amp; Clark</i> by Susan Munger. Illustrated volume exploring plants discovered by Lewis and Clark on their westward expedition.	\$23
<i>The Day Paper</i> by Gregory N. Stone. History of New London's award-winning daily newspaper.	\$30
<i>In the Footsteps of George Washington</i> by William G. Clotworthy. A guidebook to Washington sites along the East Coast, including the Shaw Mansion.	\$25
<i>Murder of Mayhem? – Benedict Arnold's New London, Connecticut Raid, 1781</i> by Dr. Walter L. Powell. Excellent research in a small readable format.	\$10
<i>History of New London, Connecticut: from the first survey of the coast in 1612 to 1860</i> by Frances Caulkins With a new introduction and a revised index 2007 (NLCHS).	\$60
<i>Peter Strickland: New London Shipmaster, Boston Merchant, First Consul to Senegal</i> by Stephen Grant A New London connection to maritime trade with Africa at the end of the 19 <sup>th</sup> century.	\$18
<i>Leviathan The History of Whaling in America</i> by Eric Jay Dolin A good one-volume history of an important local maritime enterprise.	\$28
<i>A USEFUL FRIEND—A Companion to the Joshua Hempstead Diary 1711-1758</i> by Patricia Schaefer (NLCHS)	\$25

These Images of America titles available from NLCHS

<i>New London</i>	\$20
<i>New London Firefighting</i>	\$20
<i>Reinventing New London</i>	\$20
<i>Naval Submarine Base New London</i>	\$20
<i>Lighthouses and Life Saving along the Connecticut and Rhode Island Coast</i>	\$20
<i>Groton</i>	\$20
<i>Groton Revisited</i>	\$20
<i>Mystic</i>	\$20
<i>Lebanon</i>	\$20
<i>Ledyard and Gales Ferry</i>	\$20

**Members Receive a 10% Discount.**

If ordering by mail, please add \$5 shipping and handling for the first four books  
and \$1 for each additional book.

