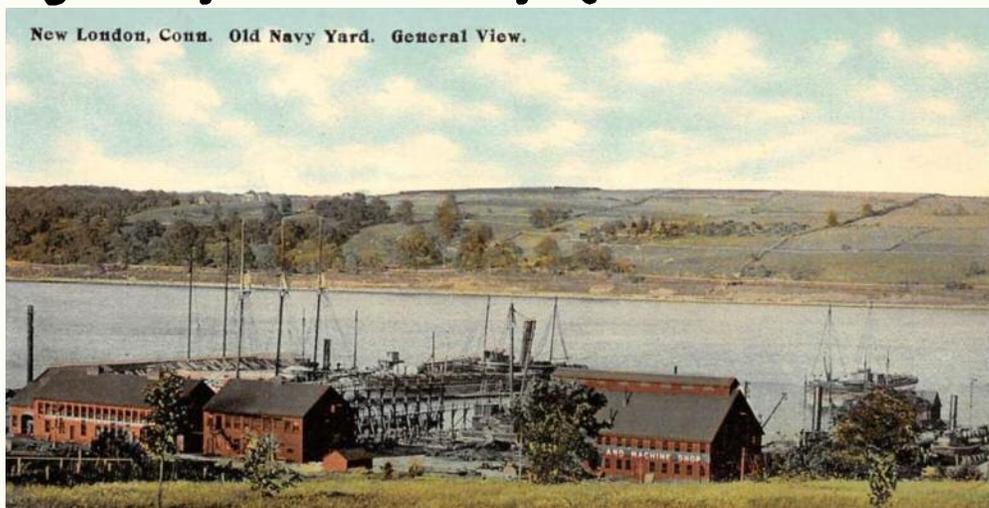


In January: The History of the New London Submarine Base



New London, Conn. Old Navy Yard. General View.

The New London Old Navy Yard view from an early 1900s post card.

the Cold War to what the base has become today – a campus occupying over 680 acres that straddle two towns, and home to more than 70 tenant commands and 15 attack submarines.

Captain Carl A. Lahti is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, and the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California and Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island where he earned Masters degrees in Electrical Engineering and National Security & Strategic Studies. He conducted sea tours aboard USS Stonewall Jackson, USS Miami, and USS Dallas and then commanded the USS Nebraska and served as interim Commanding Officer aboard the USS Memphis. Captain Lahti has also served as Submarine Squadron Operations Officer and Deputy Commander at Groton, as well as Chief of the Strategic Effects Division in the Directorate for Strategic Plans and Policy (J5) on the Joint Staff in the Pentagon. Captain Lahti is the fiftieth Commanding Officer of the Naval Submarine Base New London.



Please join us at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, **January 28th**, 2015 at the **Mystic Congregational Church** Fellowship Hall for “The History of the Submarine Base, New London” by Captain Carl Lahti, the Submarine Base Commanding Officer. Captain Lahti will offer a historical overview of the base from the state & local efforts that helped its establishment following the Civil War to the “New London Navy Yard & Coaling Station” days and its designation as the country’s first submarine base and growth through the two World Wars and

February: Cape Horn Widows - Whaling Wives Holding Down the Homefront



Jennifer Emerson in costume from the Denison Homestead May 2014 program.

Whaling voyages were very long, sometimes lasting two to five years! We know what their husbands did, but how did the women spend their time back home? The answers may surprise you! Join Jennifer M. Emerson, author and First-Person Interpreter, on Wednesday, **February 25th** as she discusses the trials and the joys of being a Cape Horn Widow.

Groton native Jennifer Emerson has an MFA in Creative Writing from Fairfield University and over twelve years' experience in Historic & First Person Interpretation. Author of “Dickens and the Whore”, as well as a Living History playwright and performer, Ms. Emerson’s work has been seen at London’s Charles Dickens House, the Mystic Seaport, the Shaw Mansion, Fort Griswold, and the Denison Homestead Museum, where she serves as a Collections Specialist. Her historic resumé includes open-hearth cooking, hal-yard hauling, forge work, and “sighting” a whale from the Charles W. Morgan. Ms. Emerson’s passion is telling history from the guise of the unsung, unheard, unremembered women of the past, and she enjoys the challenge & excitement of bringing history & literature alive for a modern audience in fun, fresh and believable ways.



from the CONTRIBUTOR'S DESK

Jim Kimenker

I decided to reread Barbara Tuchman's "The Guns of August" in honor of the 100th anniversary of the beginning of World War I. Tuchman describes how the British in particular rose to the challenge—some with a clear sense of the issues (like H.G. Wells, for instance), some with only the vaguest notions of them (like a British reservist explaining he was off to "fight the bloody Belgians"), and some with none at all. It was that last group which seemed most interesting. Tuchman quotes Major Sir Tom Bridges, commander of a cavalry squadron, as denying any particular hatred of Germans: "We were quite ready to fight anybody . . . and would equally readily have fought the French. Our motto was, 'We'll do it. What is it?'" Perhaps we should just credit him with allowing embedded, national memories of an ancient foe to rise to equality with the current one?

Pair that with an article regarding memory in the New York Times last month referencing Neil Degrasse Tyson, the astrophysicist and popular host of the TV series "Cosmos", speaking about the deplorable state of science literacy in the United States. He remembered a speech by President George W. Bush after 9/11, in which Bush, distinguishing us from fundamentalist Muslims, said "Our God is the God who named the stars." Beyond prejudice, to Tyson this was also evidence of scientific ignorance—as Tyson noted, early Muslim astronomers were responsible for naming two-thirds of the named stars. But, as the article notes, Tyson's memory was playing tricks. Bush never mentioned stars in his post-9/11 speech, in which he did say our enemy is not to be found in our many Muslim friends. Instead, the reference to stars came in his tribute to the astronauts lost in the Columbia space shuttle explosion, that "the same creator who names the stars also knows the names of the seven souls we mourn today."

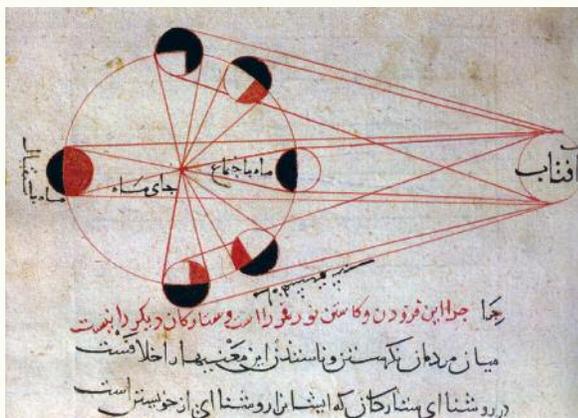
When this was first pointed out to Tyson, he insisted that he distinctly remembered the quote as he described it, a perfectly common reaction to a "challenged" memory. Our confidence in a memory signals to us its accuracy—emotion overwhelms common sense. Tyson, being the scientist he is, conceded his mistake upon presentation of the facts. But, it seems noteworthy that a person of his education and training misremembered the facts so badly.

So, what's the point? Well, actually, there are two: first, our memories are not to be entrusted with infallibility; and second, that fallibility is the *raison d'être* for the existence of organizations like the Mystic River Historical Society.

Regarding the first point, those of you who were questioning the need to reread any book, let alone a historical one, now understand, I hope. It had been more than 40 years since I first read Tuchman's masterpiece and thought this was as good a time as any to test my memory of those events. And, sure enough, there were any number of items that surprised me (a simple for instance: that even as the Germans were preparing to cross into Belgium, the English cabinet was still arguing whether to participate at all, a fact that had somehow eluded me over time). So, it's good to remember Tyson's embarrassment in relying on a misinformed memory—there's nothing wrong with repeating a good book, especially to burish the "right" memories.

What about the second point? Let's return to the anecdote regarding the British army officer who basically didn't know or care about the reasons he was being sent to war. Some may argue that's actually a good thing in a military figure—do or die and don't get confused by asking "why". But there's no denying that those who send men and women to war better have access to accurate facts and data, making organizations devoted to "remembering" critically important. We must remember events correctly and be able to confirm the accuracy of our collective memories, as we are ultimately responsible for the actions we take both personally and as a country.

And so I conclude this first column of the new year with an exhortation I repeat only occasionally: Organizations devoted to preserving memories, like the Mystic River Historical Society, are worth our active support. That support may come in many forms, including monetary contributions, volunteerism, and attendance at events (did I mention monetary contributions?). I hope you'll all make a particular effort to support us this year in our efforts to remember accurately!



An illustration & description of moon phases by Abu al-Rayhan Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Biruni (973 - 1048AD). Al Biruni was a Persian Muslim scholar & polymath. 95 of his 146 books were on the subjects of astronomy, maths & mathematical geography. See Wiki for more.

Mystic River Historical Society Mission Statement

The Society exists to collect, arrange, exhibit and preserve records, papers, photographs, artifacts, relics and related archival materials that document the history of the people who lived in the area around the Mystic River from the first settlement in 1654 to the present.

Officers: President - Lou Allyn • Vice President - Bill Everett
Treasurer - Barry Thorp • Corresponding Secretary - Lois Glazer • Recording Secretary - Cindy Allyn

The Newsletter of the Mystic River Historical Society is published six times annually: September, October, November-December, January-February, March-April and May • Box 245 Mystic, CT 06355

Issues of the newsletter are available for online viewing at www.mystichistory.org





New Dirt on an Old Cemetery

- Lou Allyn

Drive west out of Mystic on Route 1 and past the fire station, at the bottom of the hill, and you'll find a lovely mid-19th century cemetery with a sturdy granite wall along the road.

To me, it has always been the Fishtown Cemetery but officially it is the Lower Mystic Cemetery. Even though my great-great-grand father, Gurdon Spicer Allyn is buried there, I had never paid much attention to it, until last spring when I joined the Board of Directors as Treasurer. Since then, I have learned something about its history, and thought that a series of articles for the Portersville Press would interest our readers. The topics I plan to cover in upcoming issues include:

- Physical description with a plot plan and Town of Groton GIS and Google Earth views
- Early history, founding families and By-Laws
- Current organization and other volunteer groups
- The flying automobile accident of Labor Day 2014
- Battling yucca
- An inventory of gravestones and their locations within the cemetery plots.
- Future plans



Friends of MRHS on Facebook

- Sally Halsey

With 1.35 billion Facebook users around the world in 2014, the MRHS is happy to have over 700 of them as Fans of our Facebook page! The demographics of our fan base isn't too surprising: the largest percentage is women between 55-64 years old (17%), followed by women 45-54 (15%). Women make up 66% of our Fans.

What is surprising is that the Fans who are the most engaged (meaning they Like or Comment on something we post) are Women 65 or more years old and men 25 to 34 years old (tied at 19% each). That means that our relatively few women and men in those age ranges are very active on our page! Thank you!

We welcome Fans from all over the region, country and world. Liking us on Facebook is a great way to keep in touch and give us support from far away.

Look for us at www.facebook.com/mystichistory/

Our MRHS facebook holiday cover photos (top) and sample of a recent post (above.)



Mystery Photo #1

Kindly send your stories to:
Lou Allyn at lallyn@snet.net

Mystery Photo #2



Where in the World...?

Just for the fun of it: Can you identify these two photographs taken locally and tell me a story about when and where they were taken? (Our next newsletter will reveal the answers.)

Newsletter/Print Patrons

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Calendar of Events

Wed., Jan., 28th 2015, 7:30p
Mystic Congregational Church Hall
at Broadway and E. Main St., Mystic
Captain Lahti and The History of the Naval Submarine Base

Wed., Feb. 25th, 2015, 7:30p
Jennifer Emerson discusses Whaling Wives

Wed., March 25th, 2015, 7:30p
Anne Farrow presents The Logbooks: Slavery in New London County

Renew or become a Member of MRHS and receive email updates about all our meetings & events. Contact us at: info@mystichistory.org or 860-536-4779.

Membership Updates



We have two new memberships. They are Lou Esposito at the Individual level, and Sarah Ingle at the Benefactor level. We also have one new renewal membership-- Mara Beckwith at the Individual level. Membership renewal letters for 2015 will go out in late January/early February.

~ Cindy Allyn, Membership

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