

~WINTER 2020/21~

HOLD
SO NAMED FOR NOBLE'S HABIT

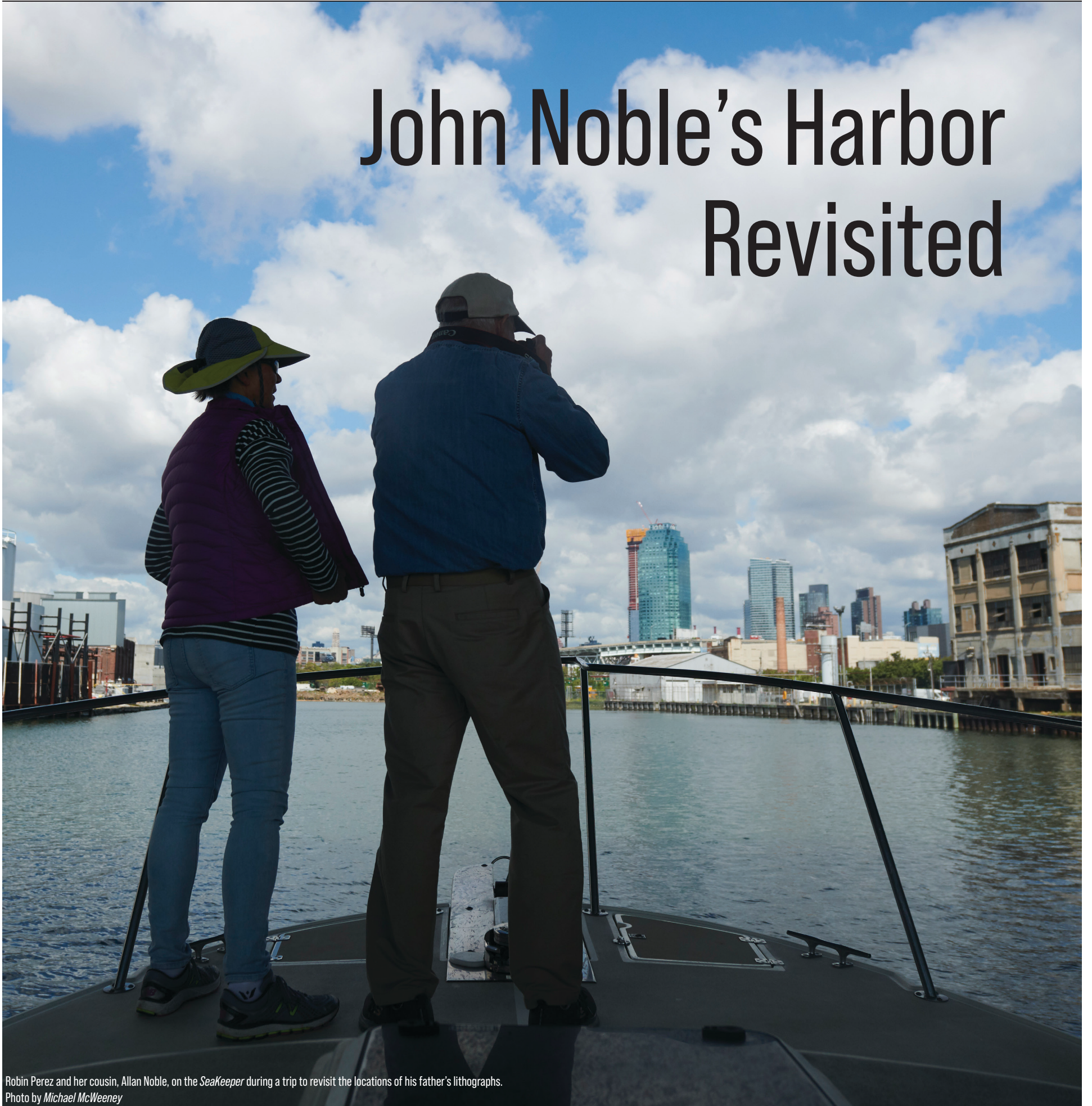


FAST!
OF SIGNING OFF HIS LETTERS WITH THIS PHRASE.

Volume IV, Number 1

The newsletter of the Noble Maritime Collection

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Robin Perez and her cousin, Allan Noble, on the *SeaKeeper* during a trip to revisit the locations of his father's lithographs.
Photo by *Michael McWeeney*

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John Noble's Harbor Revisited

By Allan Noble



Allan and Kathy Noble head up the East River in the *SeaKeeper* to revisit the locations of his father's lithographs.
Photo by Michael McWeeney

My father spent a lifetime sketching and photographing the maritime industry and its related components on the East Coast of the United States, but in his lithographs and paintings, he used great poetic license to depict with feeling the last days of the great commercial wooden sailing schooner. Because he gave each painting and lithograph a title so specific it seems that one could actually go to that named place and see that scene.

I have often heard people comment that his work is "realistic," however while his drawing style is realistic, it is his artistic vision that gives it the emotional impact it carries. It has long been my desire to go to those places that he drew 50 or 70 years ago, primarily in and around the New York and New Jersey waters, and see what they look like today. Last fall, my wife Kathy and I finally had an opportunity to do just that, traveling in our 31-foot Albin power boat *SeaKeeper* from its home berth on the Chesapeake Bay, up the New Jersey coast to New York.

Twenty-two years ago, in May of 1997, we had the opportunity to retrace my parents' famous 550-mile honeymoon rowboat trip from Manhattan to Burlington, Vermont and back again, following their marriage in 1934. Ours was a fabulous trip and I wrote about it in the winter 1998 edition of *Hold Fast!* (Vol 1, Number 20). As a guide for our trip then, we used his sketchbook, as his sketches included descriptions and place names. Of course we had the luxury of being aboard a powerboat with all the comforts available to modern boats, so we did not suffer the same hardships that they did in their tiny rowboat with no roof, heat, or comfortable bed. Surprisingly, on that trip, we found that very little had changed from the 1930s. Of course, his sketchbook for the most part recorded what he actually saw, and the land forms along the Hudson River have changed little in those years. How different



The Long Canal, From the honeymoon journal, pencil on paper, 1934

from what we found in the New York and New Jersey waters in the fall of 2019! For this journey, you may want to refer to the lithograph numbering and descriptions in Erin Urban's book *Hulls and Hulks in the Tide of Time*, and to our reference map and table.



Print 41, John A. Noble (1913-1983), *Whale Creek*, Lithograph, Edition 50, 1954

"...the composition is drawn from many memories of many vessels and men. It is not a definite time, and the vessels are interpretations of types."

John Noble in his essay on the lithograph Whale Creek, ca. 1954

In some of the most glorious days of September last year we left the Chesapeake for a gorgeous run up the coast to New York. Steve Kalil graciously let us dock at Caddell Dry Dock on Staten Island for our base of operations. In our journey up the Arthur Kill and the Kill Van Kull, we passed the site of Linoleumville (*Ab, Linoleumville!* print 64) at the foot of Victory Boulevard, which now consists of overgrown weed trees and bears no sign of the industry of the past; refineries on the Arthur Kill (*Arthur Kill*, print 7); the former Bethlehem ship yard in Mariners Harbor (*Overhaul*, print 40); Bergen Point in Bayonne (*Bergen Point Iron Works*, print 44); the Moran Tug base in Port Richmond, a large and busy place with many tugboats going in and out on their business (*Doris and the Ile de France*, print 39); and Bush Terminal on the Brooklyn shore (*Export*, print 22, and *Pied et Paquebot*, print 65, where Bush Terminal can be seen in the distance).

Accompanied by Kathy's cousin Robin and photographer Michael McWeeney, we embarked upon our journey. By prior agreement Kathy was our pilot for the whole day, as

we both knew that I would be too emotionally engaged in what we were seeing to give proper attention to our own vessel. Almost directly across from Caddell's is the site of the Old Port Johnston coal docks, where several of the sailing ships my father knew well ended their careers. In the 1950s and 60s I spent many days at my father's studio houseboat, which was then tied up at the Atlas Yacht Club. He had built his studio on the docks, but added the barge when he realized the docks would soon be gone, and the Atlas Yacht Club grew up around him. Although there are some remnants of the wrecks still remaining, they are mostly gone, and those remnants definitely present a danger to navigation. Michael and I took our small dinghy in to see what was left of the wrecks and the Atlas Yacht Club. As we entered the area where the wrecks lie and approached the Atlas Yacht Club (an extremely generous designation, as anyone who ever visited it well knows; it consists of a series of rolling and leaning docks covered with shacks in various states of repair, many with small day boats tied alongside) we were looked on as obvious interlopers by every person we saw, particularly since

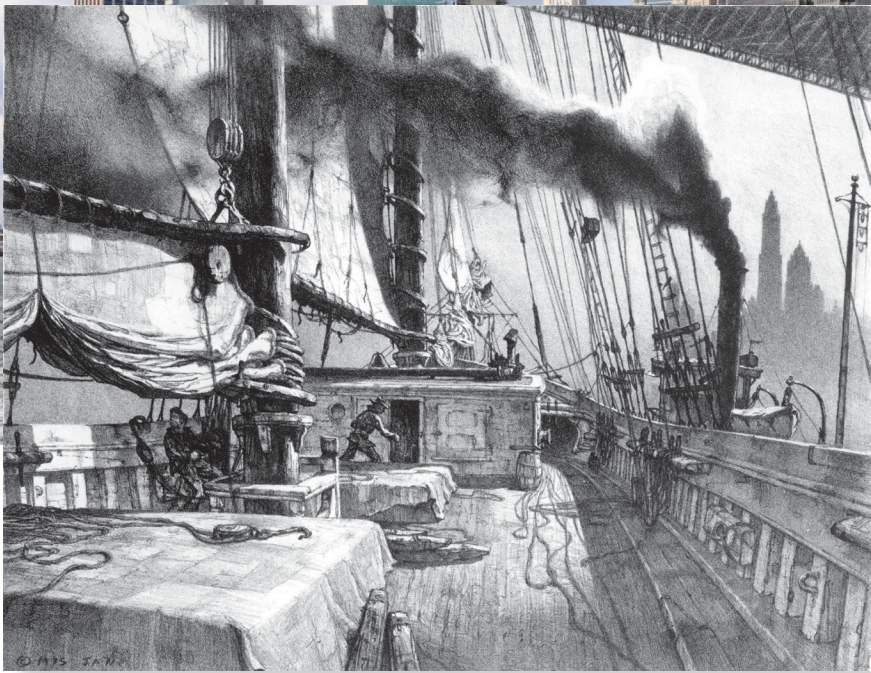


Photo by Michael McWeeney

Michael was wielding a large camera with an even larger lens attached. However, when we got to the shoreside end of the docks, there was a small group of old salts sitting around and enjoying the day. When I introduced myself as John Noble's son, their outlook immediately changed and



Under the Brooklyn Bridge. Photo by Michael McWeeney



Print 66, John A. Noble (1913-1983), *Towing Out—End of Sail in the East River*, *A Downtown Trilogy #3*, Lithograph, Edition 295, 1975

we were suddenly welcomed exuberantly and we were able to go on our way without hindrance.

The towering presence of the sailing ship *Occidental*, which lies in that graveyard, was the basis of the award-winning print *Cape Horner*, done in 1955 (print 47). The exaggerated sweeping form of the bow of that ship, and in the background, the church at Snug Harbor (which was actually up the Kill Van Kull a mile or so) we see the artistic expression of the story he was telling, and therein lies the power of his work. The image of the *Occidental* returns in *Heart of the Boneyard* (print 61) where she can be seen in the background, and then once again in *Tides of 100 Years* (print 67) her bones as they looked in 1974.



Kathy on the *Molfetta*, 1965.
Photo by Allan Noble

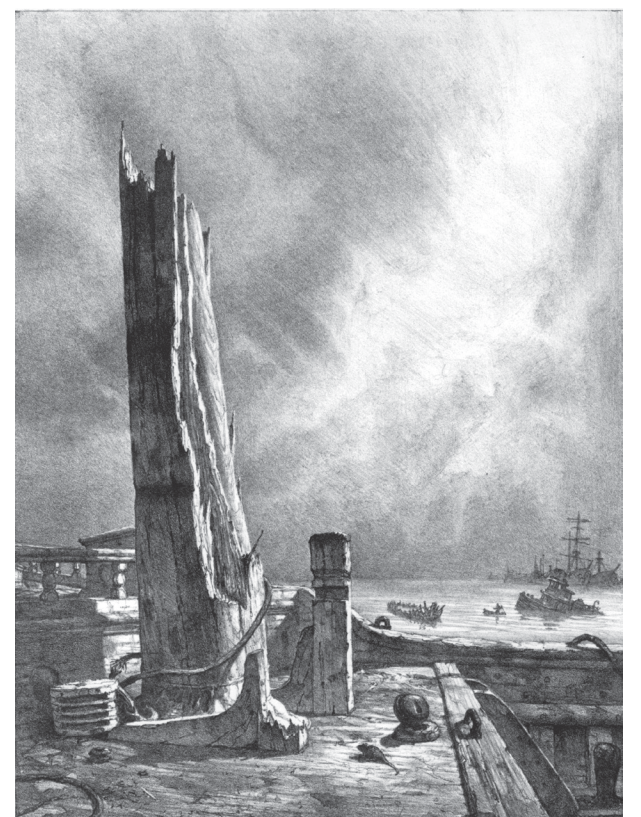
In 1965, when Kathy and I were engaged, I took her to see the wrecks one cold and blustery December day, and she documented them for a college photography class. We climbed all over the wrecks (we were all in far better condition then, wrecks and people) and in particular we visited the *Molfetta*, where we each posed for a photo next to the broken remnants of her aft mast, or “spanker.” The *Molfetta* is mostly gone now but it lives on in my father’s



Path of the *SeaKeeper* from the Kill Van Kull up past Hell Gate.

Self Portrait (print 24) and the *Splintered Spanker of the Molfetta* (print 78). I never fully appreciated how often my father used old Port Johnston as a basis for his works, including his *Pirate* prints (prints 20, 48, 70, 72 and 76)—my personal favorites being *Bayonne Arabian Nights* (print 20) and *River Pirate* (print 48, which was done in a square format specifically for the cover of the *American Artist Magazine’s* June-July-August issue in 1956).

When I look back on my childhood, I find it more than a little disturbing to realize that I actually swam in the waters of the Kill Van Kull, which were incredibly foul in the 1950s. However, we were delighted to see that now, thanks to improved environmental protections, the water has become far more clear and there are now sponges and other healthy marine growth there that I never saw as a child.



Print 78, John A. Noble (1913-1983), *Splintered Spanker of the Molfetta*, Lithograph, Edition 295, 1983

As we left the Kill Van Kull to proceed on our tour of New York Harbor and the East River, we were blessed with a spectacular early fall day, with dramatic billowing clouds and a brilliant blue sky. We passed Saint Peter’s Church (shown in the background of *Tug Procession—Four Generations of Tugs off Staten Island*, print 15) and my family’s old home at 270 Richmond Terrace. Then we continued past the Robbins Reef Lighthouse to our right and then the Statue of Liberty off to our left. My father always said that the back of the Statue of Liberty was more grand than the front, and his print *Pied et Paquebot* (print 65) captures this. On our return that day from our tour we took the opportunity to pass around the back of the

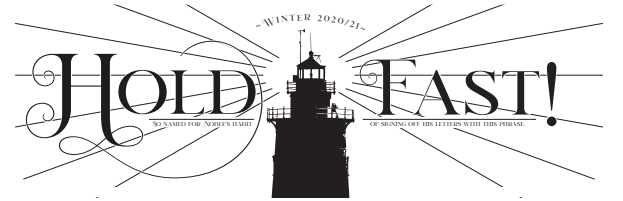


Hell Gate Bridge.
Photo by Michael McWeeney

Statue, and Michael captured a wonderful image of the back of the Lady, although from our small boat it could not be an aerial view as is seen in the print.

We continued our tour across the Harbor, dodging multiple ferry boats, tour boats, tug boats, and barges in a bracing three-foot chop, and past the skyline of lower Manhattan. I am so glad that my parents never lived to see the destruction of the twin towers in Manhattan. My family watched in fascination from our home on Richmond Terrace as those towers went up. They are shown under construction in *Ghost of a Bygone Ferry* (print 63). Heading up the East River, the Manhattan skyline is even more impressive now than it was more than 80 years ago when it was depicted in *Towing Out—End of Sail in the East River* (print 66), but the beautiful and iconic

Brooklyn Bridge remains as a reminder of times past. Gone are most of the lumberyards on Newtown Creek and Whale Creek, which feed into the East River. All of this area, which in combination is known as the English Kills (print 1 and *Ancient in the English Kills*, print 10), was chronicled extensively by my father in his work, as that was where the schooners bringing their loads of timber up from the south off-loaded, and he was very much a part of that scene as a crew member on the *Annie C. Ross*. We found Whale Creek, off of Newtown Creek, to be unrecognizably changed from what is seen in the print, *Whale Creek* (print 41) since now it is lined completely with docks, newer buildings, and large storage tanks, perhaps the beginning of which is shown in *Dockbuilders, Whale Creek* (print 46). I always found the Empire State Building as depicted in the backgrounds of both *Whale*



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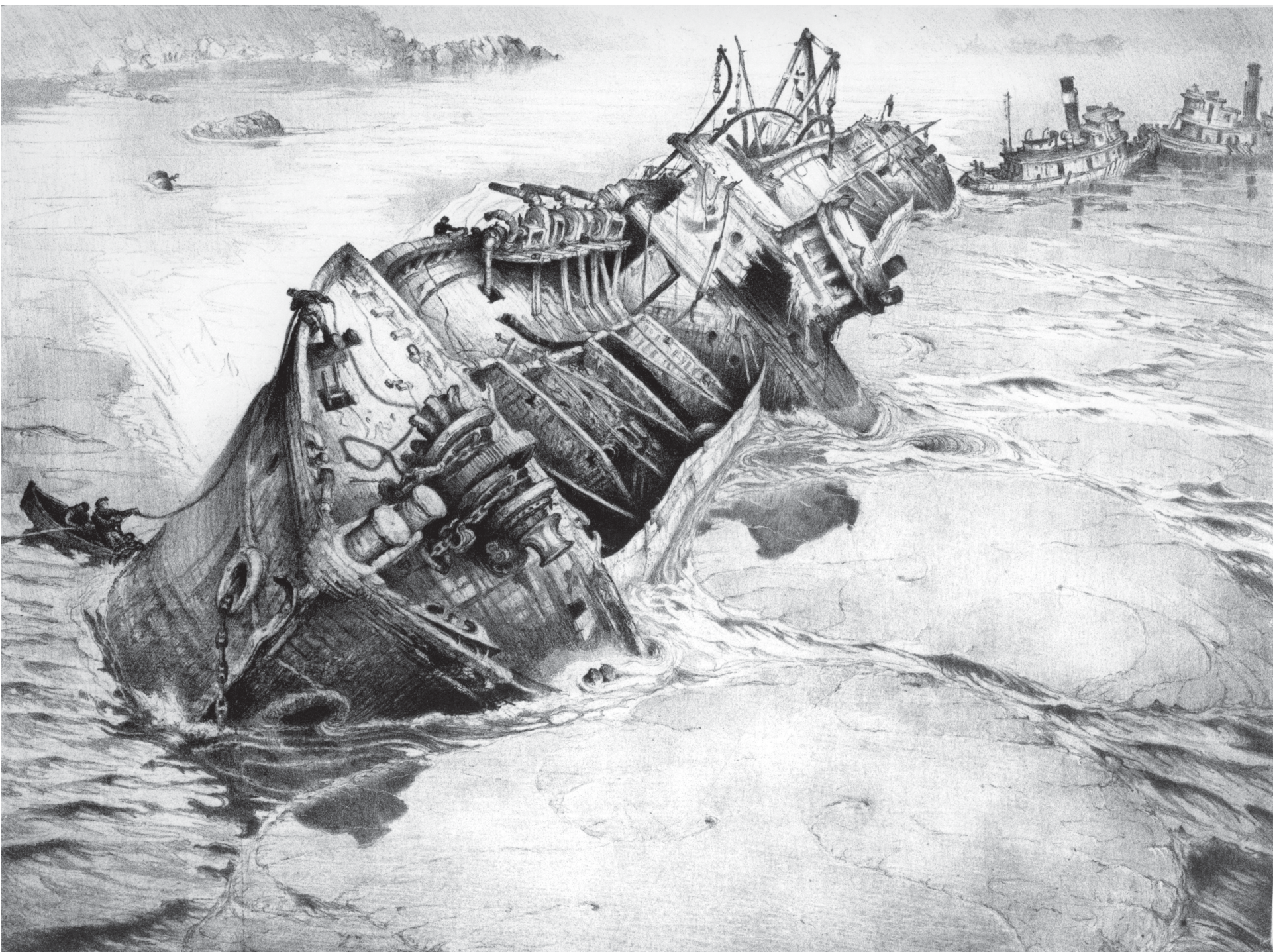
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Gallery hours: Thursday through Sunday, 12–5 PM



Print 4, John A. Noble (1913-1983), *Wreck in Hell Gate*, Also known as *William A. Van Frank Raising the Garrett* and as *Van Frank Raising the Garrett*, Lithograph, Edition 30, 1946



Print 65, John A. Noble (1913-1983), *Pied et Paquebot, A Downtown Trilogy #2*, Lithograph, Edition 295, 1974

Creek and Dockbuilders, *Whale Creek* to be fascinating; you cannot see the Empire State Building when you are in the creek because of the creek's north-south orientation, yet there it is in both prints, another reminder of my father's artistic intent in contrasting these wooden vessels with the grandeur of the towers of modern Manhattan. As much as it all has changed, however, we did find the prominent smokestack of *Dying in the English Kills* (print 56) along Newtown Creek, where again there is an image of the Empire State Building which actually can be seen from that spot.

The Wreck in Hell Gate print (print 4) has always held a special place in my heart. The *Garrett* was the wreck depicted, and the museum now has the name board and the steering wheel from the wheelhouse, which my father removed before they sunk her off of Eaton's Neck, Long Island. My father worked 24/7 during the several years that it took to raise the *Garrett* (she was raised twice; a long story, and you will have to read *Hulls and Hulks in the Tide of Time* to get it) although he must have taken some time off nine months before I was born (and apparently he did also take off the day I was born). The roaring tides of Hell Gate are famous and I understand that there have been some changes to the channel since then, but the railroad bridge shown in the photograph of Hell Gate on page 39 in *Hulls and Hulks in the Tide of Time* is still there. Because they raised the *Garrett* twice, the photographs and the depiction of the wreck in the print are a bit confusing, as it's not always easy to tell which raising is being shown.



Rear view of the Statue of Liberty.
Photo by Michael McWeeney

The trip back down the East River from Hell Gate with the tide was a fast and spectacular run, past the United Nations Building and the many new and fabulous buildings along with the old familiar ones and the historic bridges, and we passed numerous slower moving tugs and their tows which had timed their passage, as we had, to get a boost from the tide as it ran out and into the Harbor. Our journey on that day put together in brilliant fashion many small puzzle pieces of my father's work. It demonstrated and reinforced to us vividly how clever he was, how knowledgeable about that area and that era, which he then gave to us with his inimitable artistic expression. It had been a glorious day, and I like to think my father would have enjoyed this trip as much as we did.

Note: As a retired lawyer I first prepared this article as if it were a legal brief. Fortunately, my wife Kathy was willing and able to help revise it into a story that we hope is more readable. Many thanks to photographer Michael McWeeney, whose photographs he has shared here and whose knowledge of the intricacies of the New York Harbor area enhanced our journey.

Tremendous thanks also to cousin Robin Perez, whose expert seamanship, enthusiastic appreciation, and support of every aspect of our journey served to increase our own enjoyment. ⚓



Allan Noble on the *SeaKeeper* tied up at Caddell Dry Dock and Repair Co.
Photo by Michael McWeeney

Allan Noble

A native of Staten Island, Allan is the second son of John and Susan Noble. He grew up on Richmond Terrace, with a view of New York Harbor and of ships passing on the Kill Van Kull from the front windows of their home. His father taught him to sail as they plied the waters of New York as he grew up. He attended Staten Island Academy and graduated from Curtis High School, after which he went to Alfred University, where he met Kathy Muller, who would later become his wife—now of 53 years!

After serving in ROTC at Alfred, Allan went into active service with the Army, and was Company Commander of the 98th Transportation Company in Inchon, Korea, rising to the rank of Captain, USAR. Upon returning home, he and Kathy married and moved to Washington, DC, where he attended law school at American University. He became managing partner of the Budow and Noble law firm and had an active trial practice in Maryland and the District of Columbia until his retirement in 2019.

Allan is an avid horseback rider (endurance and competitive trail), sailor (he and his brother John restored their father's historic 1932 Chesapeake Bay racing log canoe, *Flying Cloud*, which he skippered for many years before donating it to a non-profit organization which will help with the continuing restoration and campaigning of it on the racing circuit), and skier, and has "dabbled" in many other "active" sports. He and Kathy live on a small farm in the Agriculture Preservation Zone of Montgomery County, Maryland, north of Washington, DC, with two horses, two dogs, and two cats. He can often be found out on his tractor, building fences, or splitting wood, unless he and Kathy are on their boat *SeaKeeper*, which they brought up from the Chesapeake Bay last year when they made the New York Harbor tour on their way north to the Erie Canal and the Great Lakes.

Letter from the Executive Director

I worked at the Gap for several years starting in my teens, and the company always cited a study that said that men shop to replace what they already have. Young me never quite believed this until I got older and I realized that I would hunt down the same exact brown boots I had worn out, and if I could not do that, I would try to find ones that were sufficiently similar. I would like to think this is me being steady and consistent, but the truth is that I have never been one to run towards change, nor elect for it unnecessarily. Rather, I often find myself seeking to slow down its inevitability. However, I have noticed that the pandemic we all are enduring has accelerated an unprecedented amount of change in our community, and in turn, how the Noble Maritime Collection operates. Figuring out how to serve the public when we could not physically be together required reactive and proactive decisions, and ironically being steadfast in the museum's mission helped me and the very talented staff in navigating these changes.

Program Director Dawn Daniels and photographer Michael McWeeney, along with Curator Megan Beck, came up with The Noble at Home webpage (noblemaritime.org/the-noble-at-home), which we debuted within two weeks of temporarily closing the museum on March 14. I was so impressed with their ability to capture the experience



Noble staff monitoring this year's annual auction.
Photo by Michael McWeeney

of being at the museum in videos, online exhibitions, and virtual tours, and I hope you were as well. Even though we reopened the museum on September 10, with new safety protocols, The Noble at Home will remain online for the benefit of people who cannot come to the museum, either out of concern due to the virus or because of proximity—the latter which is a barrier that existed before the pandemic and will exist after. However, that is one of the

great, unexpected changes that came out of this experience: we learned that we could have a museum that is not confined by its four walls. In fact, when we moved the popular Sea Shanty Sessions online in July, we had about 50 participants while it was live (which is about how many people attend when it is in session at the museum), but in the subsequent days and weeks, nearly 1,000 people viewed the program, which is dedicated to preserving an age-old maritime tradition. Even more remarkable, thanks, in part, to online education programs, last school year we served over 3,000 students of all ages and abilities, nearly as much as the year prior to the pandemic. We value access

to the arts for all, and now with this knowledge that virtual technology can increase access exponentially, we will move forward with more online programming while the pandemic dictates that we must, and add virtual options to in-person museum programs when they begin again.

The pandemic also forced us to make changes to our annual fundraiser. These changes took some getting used to, but it turned out to be a successful and exciting event, thanks in large part to generous community support and new ways to reach a wider audience. The 32nd Annual John A. Noble Art Auction took place entirely online on Saturday, November 14 at noblegivesmart.com. For the first time ever, bidding was available to anyone from around the world, which is something we always hoped to do, but I cannot say we would have done so this year without being compelled to. This change is something that we will look to retain, in part, once we celebrate again in person at the 33rd auction in 2021, and will only serve to broaden our support.

And, of course, you are holding one of our major changes in your hand. I hope you like the new look of *Hold Fast!* as much as I do. I have been doing all of the museum's design work for 15 years, but when Michael approached me this summer about his vision for revamping our newsletter, I thought this was the perfect time for this change. A printed newsletter in the digital age may seem like a quaint throwback, but we like communicating with you this way (and many of you have indicated that you like it as well), and Michael's new approach has given this publication a fresh aesthetic with retro-chic flair. I think it is rather fitting that for its relaunch, the main article is about Allan Noble's revisiting places in New York Harbor that were important to his father to see how they have changed.

I am grateful to have been fortunate during these challenging times that have seen so much loss and illness experienced by so many. A major lesson I learned is that embracing change that we cannot control is far more rewarding than the futile effort of trying to control the tides and time. And so I hope this new newsletter finds you well, entertains you a bit, educates you some, and inspires you to look ahead to better days. Please do visit us soon.

Warmly,

Ciro Galeno, Jr., Executive Director

Neilson at Noble

By Megan Beck

In early 2021 we will present an exhibition of maritime paintings by E.F. Neilson (1865-1909) from the Collection of the Trustees of the Sailors' Snug Harbor in the City of New York. The majority of these paintings have not been displayed since they decorated the halls of historic Sailors' Snug Harbor. Ernest Fiedler Neilson was born to William Neilson (1830-1882) and Louisa Fiedler (1843-1906) on August 4, 1865 in Hong Kong, then a colony of the British Empire. His father traveled the world as a tea merchant, but by the time he was 10 years old, his family settled into his mother's family home on the corner of St. Peter's Place and Richmond Terrace in New Brighton, Staten Island. This area of New Brighton is now considered part of St. George.

The Fiedler mansion, like many of the Sailors' Snug Harbor buildings, was a grand Greek Revival building, with tall white columns on three sides of the front portico. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, large mansions like this were a common sight along Richmond Terrace. By 1917, the Fiedler mansion was the headquarters for the Democratic Club of Richmond County before it was razed in the 1930s. That plot of land is now the parking lot for PS 59 The Harbor View School, the old St. Peter's Girls High School.

E.F. Neilson was an early member of the Staten Island Museum, then called the Natural Science Association, and was a scientist, naturalist, and author of *Reptiles of Staten Island and Northern New Jersey*, published in 1881 when he was only 16 years old.



E.F. Neilson (1865-1909), *Stapleton Anchorage, Staten Island*, Oil on canvas, 1895, The Collection of the Trustees of the Sailors' Snug Harbor in the City of New York

In 1894, under the leadership of Sailors' Snug Harbor Governor Gustavus Trask, the Trustees of the retirement home started collecting maritime art for the benefit of the residents. It was resolved at the September 18, 1894 meeting of the Board "that two members of the Board from the Marine Society have power to accept such works of art as they may deem likely to adorn the Institution; and that the Comptroller be authorized to pay over whatever moderate sums may be required for the purchase of the pictures and for putting them in good order."

The Trust ultimately collected over 100 paintings that hung in the halls of the dormitories and in administrative

offices. By this time Neilson was also an amateur artist and 15 of his maritime paintings were accessioned by the Trustees and remain part of their collection. He often depicted maritime scenes from a local vantage point and would note his New Brighton location adjacent to his signature in the lower right corner of his canvases. He studied theology at Columbia College, the oldest undergraduate college at Columbia University, and by 1900 was the pastor of the First Congregational Church in Newburgh, New York, where he lived with his wife Frances and daughter Helen. He died on December 24, 1909 at the age of 44. ⚓

A conversation with Bob Wright

Educator, musician, and former commercial diver, Bob Wright talks about his career and influences in this interview with Program Director Dawn Daniels.

Dawn Daniels ~ How did you become a diver, and what were your responsibilities under water?

Bob Wright ~ When I was about 6 years old I sat watching TV with my grandfather at his house. A film came on of a group of men draped with odd tanks and hoses. They jumped into the water and swam off unfettered under the sea. I had never seen such a thing and was transfixed by it. It was, of course, Jacques Cousteau, the inventor of the Aqualung (as it was called then), a revolutionary way to dive that was only about ten years old at the time and most people were unaware of it. I wanted badly to swim with them and to dive under the sea. I pestered my father about it for the next ten years or so until I went away to college. He knew the dangers, and was willing to let me dive, but not until I was older and could afford the proper equipment and be properly trained. At the time there were no certifying agencies like NAUI (National Association of Underwater Instructors) and PADI (Professional Association of Dive Instructors), both of whom eventually certified me as an instructor. It was either join the Navy or buy the equipment and teach yourself, which is what most people did back then.

And then I started at St. Bonaventure University where a monk named Reverend Joe Fleming, OFM had just started what would be the first college SCUBA club in the country. He offered a rigorous diving course as he had been trained by Navy divers and the club issued certification cards of their own. I ate it up and, yes, I learned to dive from a monk.

Ten years on I attended the now defunct Coastal Diving Academy in Bayshore, Long Island to become certified as a commercial diver. Commercial divers do pretty much the same thing any construction worker or contractor does they just do it under the water: a lot of tunnel inspections, piling inspections, cutting and welding, body searches, photography, etc. I was hooked on the photography and that became my main mission in diving. Initially I was lured in by shipwrecks and treasure and spear fishing, but the photography was the most rewarding.

D.D. ~ Where were you stationed, and what did your aquatic surroundings look like?

B.W. ~ I wasn't really stationed anywhere in the sense of being in the military. I ended up teaching at Coastal Diving Academy after I graduated. So for a lot of the commercial work, I worked from Bayshore, Long Island, and on the dive boat the *Black Coral*. The underwater environment can change drastically from place to place, and I dove all over the world. Around New York Harbor, especially at that time, we did pretty much everything by feel because there was no visibility in the water column on most days. Go out into the Atlantic from there just a few miles and the visibility could be 50 or 60 feet; head to the Caribbean and it seems limitless.

D.D. ~ What did you enjoy about diving, and what was most challenging?

B.W. ~ I love the absolute detachment you get from the world as we know it; that sensation of flying when you drop over the edge of a reef that falls straight down into the blue for many hundreds of feet, drifting down in a slow motion roll on to your back to watch the surface fade into the distance. Incredible.

The most challenging parts are the pressure of the water,



Photo by Joyce Ann Wright

“The ocean has as much a rhythm, energy, and harmony as any song.”

the currents and the surge, and the very short time you can safely stay down because of the impact the pressure has on your body.

D.D. ~ John Noble was an artist and a mariner. Are there any correlations between your careers as a diver and a musician?

B.W. ~ Cousteau's first film was made the year I was born and Bill Monroe, the father of bluegrass music, recorded for the last time with the classic and legendary lineup that came to define the genre (including Lester Flat and Earl Scruggs) on the actual day that I was born. The impact that both men would have on my life is beyond measure and the two things that deeply define and inspire me were both put in place just as I entered the world. I don't believe in coincidence and I don't believe that art has limitations. If you are an artist you respond to the things that touch you deeply and then everything you do and learn informs that art, especially if the impulse to do them is as strong and undeniable as my desire to follow both those muses. The ocean has as much a rhythm, energy, and harmony as any song. Our bodies are mostly water and moves as effortlessly to music as the tides move to the spinning of the earth and the vagaries of the moon, about which many songs have been written, including by me. So, yes, there is a very deep connection between my diving and my music.

D.D. ~ What is your favorite memory as a diver, and what is your scariest?

B.W. ~ I have a lot of great memories from diving: swimming with the sea lions at a sea lion rookery in the middle of the Sea of Cortez at Los Islotes; lying on my back on the bottom of Shark River Inlet at night and watching the stars from 30 feet down on a rare night when the water was crystal clear; cupping a squid in my hand on a night dive in the Caymans while its body flashed iridescent, constantly changing colors under the glow of my light; swimming with manatees in Florida; spending a couple of days diving in Turks and Caicos with a dolphin named Jojo who decided to hang out with our boat;

watching giant manta rays doing loop-de-loops in the deep water of a reef off Little Cayman; surfacing in Passamaquoddy Bay in Canada near the second largest whirlpool in the world and having our dog swim out to meet us as we swam to shore; hugging curious groupers that swim up to you looking to get cleaned; muscular schools of big jacks; swimming inside enormous schools of small fish totally surrounded and wheeling and spinning with them. The list is endless. As far as scary, you always have to stay a little afraid because that is what keeps you safe in a very dangerous environment. The one time I do remember being really frightened was during a body search in Great South Bay. It was in the winter and a diver, whom I knew, was swept under the ice and never got out. I was not with him when it happened but he didn't follow safety rules and even though they weren't diving under the ice he got swept under by the strong currents in those channels back there. He should have had a harness on. Anyway, I was on a Coast Guard cutter behind some homes in a channel at the edge of the ice and had been under the ice searching for over an hour and I was pretty tired as we were using surface supplied air, not SCUBA, and I had a heavy

helmet on. The cutter needed to leave so they transferred the compressor to a dock and the plan was for me to walk over there and climb up a ladder to get out. What I did not know was that the diver had a twin brother and he was on that dock waiting to hear if I found anything. I hadn't; his brother's body was found in the spring when it floated to the surface. As I started up the ladder though, he, in his great anguish, rushed to the top of the ladder. I was so startled when I looked up and saw what I thought was a dead man inches from my helmet that I fell right back into the water in shock.

D.D. ~ Who else in your family had a maritime career?

B.W. ~ My grandfather William Henry Wright, with whom I watched Cousteau that day, was a pilot and a tugboat captain and a riverboat man. He and his father, George, are both listed as watermen on the 1892 New York State census of Watervliet, New York. My uncle Bill also was licensed for steamships, several uncles were in the Navy, as was I, and my other grandfather, James Joseph Hafey, worked in the shipyards on Staten Island as a pipe fitter. ⚓

Bob Wright is one of the coordinators of the William Main Doerflinger Memorial Sea Shanty Sessions, hosted by the museum and led by members of the Folk Music Society of New York. For more information, contact Dawn Daniels at dawndaniels@noblemaritime.org.

Noble on Watch



The Noble Maritime Collection

The Noble Maritime Collection is proud to introduce the Noble on Watch (NOW) lecture and concert series. It will be presented virtually on the museum's Facebook page and website, and is appropriately timed to help combat the winter and pandemic doldrums. Each program in the series is informative, fun, and pairs perfectly with a blanket and hot beverage. Each show is based on maritime history and culture, interpreted through storytelling and music with a sprinkling of intrigue and humor. Plan a watch party, put on something comfy, and curl up with NOW this winter.

noblemaritime.org/now

Haunted Tales of Old Staten Island

with Patricia Salmon

Recount the mystery of the sailing yacht *Mohawk*, the folklore of historic houses, and the sinister characters who shaped Staten Island's spooky past.

View now on the museum's website

Made on the Kill Van Kull

with Patricia Salmon

The Kill Van Kull is an important waterway going back to the 1700s. Nineteenth century industrial inventions brought economic changes to the waterfront around 1818, when a dye house and printing works was established, followed by manufacturers of flour, paint, soap, gypsum board, ships, ferries, and more.

View now on the museum's website

The Tempest

with Staten Island OutLOUD and Professor Jill Levenberg

The opening scene of Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* is brought to life through discussion and dramatic reading. Follow Miranda as she discovers the magic and betrayal surrounding a shipwreck in this festive, Elizabethan-inspired event.

Wednesday, December 30 at 7 PM

Mariners Family Asylum

with Patricia Salmon

This presentation looks at an institution that was officially opened in Stapleton in 1853. Over the years it was home to thousands of women who were unable to care for themselves after the mariners who supported them retired, were lost at sea, or were permanently injured. The history of the facility, who the "inmates" were, and why Staten Island was chosen to house these women is featured.

Friday, January 15 at 7 PM

Mabel Normand & Sailors' Snug Harbor

with Gerard Thornton

Historian Gerard Thornton will speak about the life of silent film actress Mabel Normand (1892-1930), famous for her roles alongside Charlie Chaplin and Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle. A Staten Islander, her father was a master carpenter at Sailors' Snug Harbor, and their family lived in a house on Tysen Street just outside the retirement home's gates.

Friday, January 29 at 7 PM

Larry Kirwan

World Premiere Concert and Lecture

Join Irish musician/songwriter and playwright Larry Kirwan for an evening of music, storytelling, and the exciting premiere of new work.

February 2021

Untold Stories of the Titanic: The Black Passenger

with Dr. Kellie Carter Jackson, a nineteenth century historian in the Department of Africana Studies at Wellesley College.

The sinking of the *Titanic* in April 1912 generated a plethora of books, films, and exhibitions. But the tragic story of a Haitian engineer in second class has been largely excluded from history. Tune in for the telling of his fascinating story.

Saturday, March 6 at 6 PM

Untold Stories of the Titanic: Last Port of Call

with Niall O'Leary and the Titanic Experience Cobh

Photographs tell stories without words. After disembarking the *Titanic* and boarding the *America*, the tender that would bring them ashore to Queenstown, Ireland, Kate and Jack Odell took the last ever photographs of the *Titanic* as it sailed away. Hear the stories of those last seen waving farewell from the deck on the 109th anniversary of that day, April 10, 1912.

Saturday, April 10 at 5 PM

The Oysterman of Captains' Row

with Patricia Salmon

One stretch of Richmond Terrace, historically known as the Shore Road, was referred to as "Captain's Row" owing to the ship captains who purchased fine homes along the thoroughfare. This program analyzes their livelihoods, as well as the oyster industry which provided their income.

May 2021

Get notified about NOW premieres
Sign up for the museum's email list at

noblemaritime.org/mailing-list