

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



**MYSTIC
SEAPORT
MUSEUM**



“You are the ones that brought the Museum back after the pandemic, helped the Museum retain its enviable reputation, and got results.”

**A MESSAGE FROM
THE PRESIDENT AND CEO**

As I look back on all that the Museum has achieved in 2023 and deliberate upon our approaching centenary, I am reminded of Winston Churchill’s quote: “This is not the end or the beginning of the end but is the end of the beginning.”

Inevitably as we look back we consider the physical changes to the campus, but Mystic Seaport Museum is undoubtedly more than bricks and mortar, more than wood and sail. It’s a feeling, an emotion, an experience. Indeed our mission is to “to inspire an enduring connection to the American maritime experience” and I hope all that we have done and all we are doing delivers that simple truth that the American maritime experience matters—to individuals, communities, the nation, adventurers embarking upon their 100th voyage, and the first-time Museum visitor alike. The Museum’s highest purpose is to captivate, entice, and engage our audience in that

essential truth. In a world that is finding it increasingly difficult to distinguish between truth and lies, museums like Mystic Seaport Museum have an essential role as keepers and purveyors of true facts.

To show the variety of maritime experiences, I want to highlight just two of the many activities in 2023 at both ends of the campus. In our curatorial department, the process of cataloging and digitizing our collections continued. Over the course of 2023, over 1,500 objects were cataloged and approximately 750 were digitized (either scanned or photographed). Meanwhile in our preservation shipyard, the estimated six-year restoration project on the 123-foot fishing schooner *L. A. Dunton* was begun after the complex process of hauling the vessel onto land at the end of 2022. This project is anticipated to culminate with the Museum taking the vessel out to sail in our centenary year. Two very different

projects undertaken by Mystic Seaport Museum showcasing the American maritime experience, its history, and its vital future.

So much has been put into place over the last few years and is starting to develop both on the campus and within the Museum family. Change is never easy, and as one of my Vice Presidents says, it is exciting but exhausting. So, I want to take this opportunity to thank all our Museum family—the staff, volunteers, Members, donors and trustees—for their continued commitment to this exceptional place.

Peter Armstrong





A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Mystic Seaport Museum is proud to be an integral part of the culture, economy, and community of Southeastern Connecticut. I am pleased to report that all of those areas of involvement are growing significantly. The Village of Mystic is on every “must visit” list in publications across the country, and as the leading maritime museum in the nation we work hard to do our part to maintain and increase the appeal of the Mystic River valley as a scenic, historic, cultural, entertainment, and educational resource for the local, regional, and national communities.

In 2023, the Museum commissioned a Community and Economic Impact Study to better understand our financial and social contributions locally. Economically, our impact was in excess of \$49 million in New London County. Equally important, the research showed that the Museum is a symbol of community enrichment—combining education, economic growth, and cultural depth. Notable benefits highlighted were access to a park-like setting by the Mystic River, hosted community activities, and educational offerings. Especially noted was the Henry b. du Pont Preservation Shipyard for representing artisanship, history, and innovation, and for boosting economic and cultural influence in the world of wooden boat restoration and repair.

“Engaging everyone in the story of America and the sea continues to be our mission, and we continue to deepen and broaden the storytelling and sharing of the relevance of maritime history with the contemporary community.”

The Museum provides programming, access, and opportunity through community-oriented events such as the Naturalization Ceremony which takes place on Flag Day in June every year. This event is always filled with emotion, gratitude, hope, and pride, and we are honored to be part of it. Additionally, the Museum featured What Lurks Beneath: A Halloween Experience, Lantern Light Village, and the Community Carol Sing—festive holiday experiences that create special memories for all who attend. The Museum participated in the CT Summer at the Museum program, hosting 14,267 children free of charge and an additional 2,911 individuals in the EBT/ SNAP free ticket program, enriching lives of those who might not have visited otherwise. The summer camps and educational programming provide unique opportunities for the thousands of people who participate each year, many of whom return year after year, growing from campers to counselors themselves.

We have two big projects underway from 2023 that will significantly enhance the visitor experience. The Delamar Mystic Hotel will open at the north end on the former site of the Latitude 41 Restaurant in the fall of 2024, with 31 rooms and world class food and beverage service, available for walk in or planned events. Also, the Wells Boat Hall is underway, a

35,000 sq. ft. exhibition space with public access to the Museum’s small boat collection that has not previously been accessible by the public. This Boat Hall will take the display, presentation, and interpretation of the collection and other related marine equipment to a whole new level of showcasing to the public.

The Museum is forging ahead, improving on what is currently on display and available, and creating new areas of interest and convenience for Members and visitors. All this is made possible by your continued support for which we thank you, again.

Best regards,

Michael S. Hudner



2023 BY THE NUMBERS



MEMBERS, VISITORS, AND ACTIVITIES

11,343 households have Museum membership.

255,051 visitors attended the Museum.

14,267 children were admitted free of charge through the CT Summer at the Museum program.

2,911 people were admitted free of charge through the Museum's EBT/SNAP free ticket program.

10,286 visitors attended shows in the Treworgy Planetarium.

6,067 toy boats were made.

22,372 people toured the waterfront on the Museum's launch *Liberty*.

870 people attended What Lurks Beneath: A Halloween Experience.

1,108 people, including **435** children, attended the Community Trick or Treat.

6,478 visitors attended Lantern Light Village.

854 visitors attended the Annual Community Carol Sing.

50 boxes of goods and **\$900** were collected at the Community Carol Sing and donated to the Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center.

Visitors' reviews earn Mystic Seaport Museum the 2023 Tripadvisor Travelers' Choice Award!



EDUCATION

24,146 students and adults participated in education programs: summer camps, sailing programs, school field trips, and afterschool, in-school, homeschool, virtual, overnight, and Planetarium programs.

More than **45** different education programs were offered.

VOLUNTEERS

337 active volunteers supported the Museum with their time.

31,347 volunteer hours included greeting visitors, helping to maintain our fleet of watercraft, transcribing historic documents, interpreting our formal galleries, crafting exhibit components, planting seedlings in our gardens, and much more.

COLLECTIONS

More than **581** vessels are in the collection.

800 new acquisitions were accessioned into our collections.

MARINA AND CHARTERS

1369 vessels visited the Museum's marina for a total of **2170** nights.

The largest visiting boat was **157** feet long. The smallest was **14** feet.

6 Museum boats were chartered a total of **60** times.

SHIPYARD

12 major vessels were worked on in the Henry B. du Pont Shipyard.



2023 LOOKING BACK



JANUARY-MARCH

- Museum awarded a CT Cultural Fund Operating Support Grant from CT Humanities
- Adventure Series: Justin Fornal, The Great Arctic Swim and the Deadly Ice Maze
- *Sargent, Whistler, and Venetian Glass: American Artists and the Magic of Murano*, organized by the Smithsonian American Art Museum, closed February 27 in the Collins Gallery
- Wintertide
- Adventure Series: Captain Geoffrey Jones, Saving Schooner ALVEI

APRIL-JUNE

- Pirate Days
- Adventure Series: Dr. David Shiffman, Why Sharks Matter
- Mystic Seaport Express opens on the Mystic River for shuttle service between the Museum and downtown Mystic
- *Alexis Rockman: Oceanus* opened on May 27 in the Collins Gallery
- *Alexis Rockman: Oceanus* is covered in *Forbes* magazine
- Museum awarded grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Maritime Administration (MarAd) Small Shipyard Grant Program
- Riverfest
- Member Evening: Celebrate Summer
- Juneteenth Programming
- Naturalization Ceremony
- 31st Annual WoodenBoat Show hosted at Mystic Seaport Museum
- *Fish and Forrest* closed June 18 in the Meeting House
- *Alexis Rockman: Oceanus* featured in the international publication, *The Art Newspaper*
- Museum voted as "Best Historical Attraction" in Connecticut Magazine's Best of Connecticut reader's choice contest
- *The Boston Globe* published an article on Boston Whaler boats, noting that one of the original Boston Whalers is in the Museum's collection, and quoting the Museum's Curator for Watercraft, Quentin Snediker

JULY-SEPTEMBER

- Museum featured in "The 25 Most Beautiful Landmarks in America" on *Trips to Discover*, a digital travel magazine with a monthly readership of over 1.6 million people
- Museum awarded \$1,500,000 from Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development's Office of the Arts and Connecticut Humanities for the Connecticut Summer at the Museum program providing free admission for Connecticut youth 18 years of age and younger, along with one accompanying adult
- Historic vessel *Sabino* returned to the water with new electric drive propulsion
- Member Weekends
- Antique and Classic Boat Rendezvous
- Coast Guard Academy Flag Ceremony
- Sea Glass Festival
- *Alexis Rockman: Oceanus* was featured in *The Boston Globe*
- Mystic Outdoor Arts Festival on Museum Grounds
- Member Appreciation Month

OCTOBER-DECEMBER

- The *America and the Sea Award* Gala honored Admiral James Stavridis, USN (Ret.)
- *Voyaging in the Wake of the Whalers* closed after eight years in the Stillman Building
- Mystic Folkways, a gathering of local and international musicians curated by Sean W. Spellman of Westerly Sound
- Fireworks on the waterfront sponsored by the Greater Mystic Chamber of Commerce
- *Spineless: A Glass Menagerie of Blaschka Marine Invertebrates* opened October 21 in the C. D. Mallory Building
- What Lurks Beneath: A Halloween Experience
- Community Trick-or-Treat Event
- *Spineless: A Glass Menagerie of Blaschka Marine Invertebrates* was featured in the Arts section of *The New York Times*
- Native American Heritage Indigenous Craft Fair
- Lantern Light Village
- Community Carol Sing



*“Here we have the freedom of religion,
freedom of speech. That is huge
because where I come from we
lack all of that.”*



CARING FOR THE COMMUNITY

Mystic Seaport Museum is proud to host an annual Naturalization Ceremony each year on Flag Day. The 2023 naturalization event took place on a sunny Wednesday morning with federal officials from the US Citizenship and Immigration Services Department. Fifty new citizens from twenty-nine countries proudly took the Oath of Allegiance while family, friends, Museum visitors, and staff looked on. Museum President and CEO Peter Armstrong welcomed candidates and congratulated them on their citizenship, and Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz shared congratulatory remarks. The air was thick with pride and emotion as the ceremony concluded. New citizens responded to NBC Connecticut. Sara Sendra, who moved to the US from Spain in 2018, expressed her gratitude for this step saying, “keep believing in your dreams and they will come eventually.” Arnulfo Chino, who has been dreaming of this moment for years, exclaimed, “this means everything!” Fathima Mahamoon, originally from Sri Lanka, said “here we have the freedom of religion, freedom of speech. That is huge because where I come from we lack all of that.”

Peter Armstrong described the day as a favorite for the Museum: “It is really important to us. We are a historical site as well and, as a historical site, we think it is important for the new people who come to the country to understand the history that exists and to bring their own histories with them, mix those things together, and create a much better nation for everyone.”

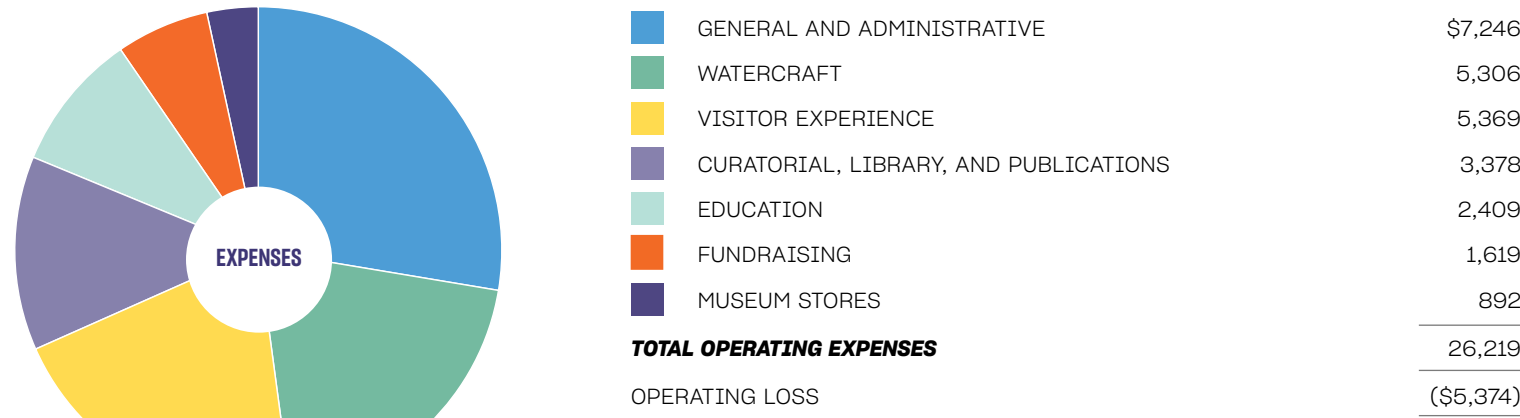
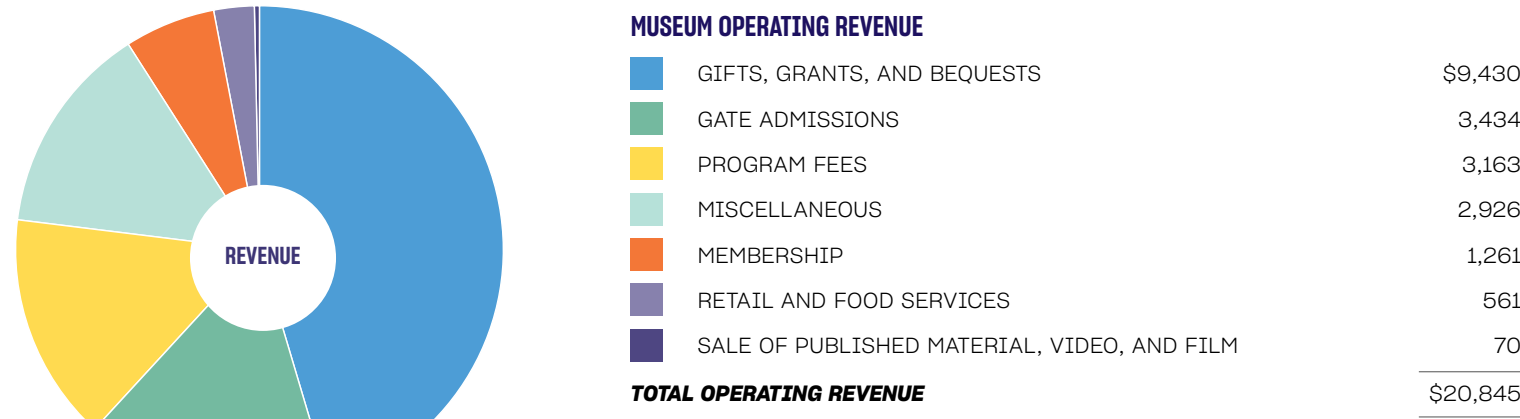
The League of Women Voters of Southeastern Connecticut was on hand to register new citizens to vote, one of the most important rights of American citizenship. The Immigration Advocacy Support Center of New London was present and provided helpful information. And, the Museum’s Membership team offered complimentary memberships to new citizens.

The Museum has hosted the Naturalization Ceremony for over a decade (except two years during the COVID-19 pandemic), witnessing nearly one thousand individuals from all over the world gain their US citizenship. Adults of all ages from Albania, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, France, Greece, Haiti, India, Iraq, Italy, Jamaica, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Senegal, Spain, Sri Lanka, St. Lucia, Togo, and Vietnam have participated in the Museum’s Naturalization Ceremony, and we are honored to have shared in this special moment for each one.

This year was particularly special as the Museum’s own president, Peter Armstrong, was among those taking the Oath of Allegiance.



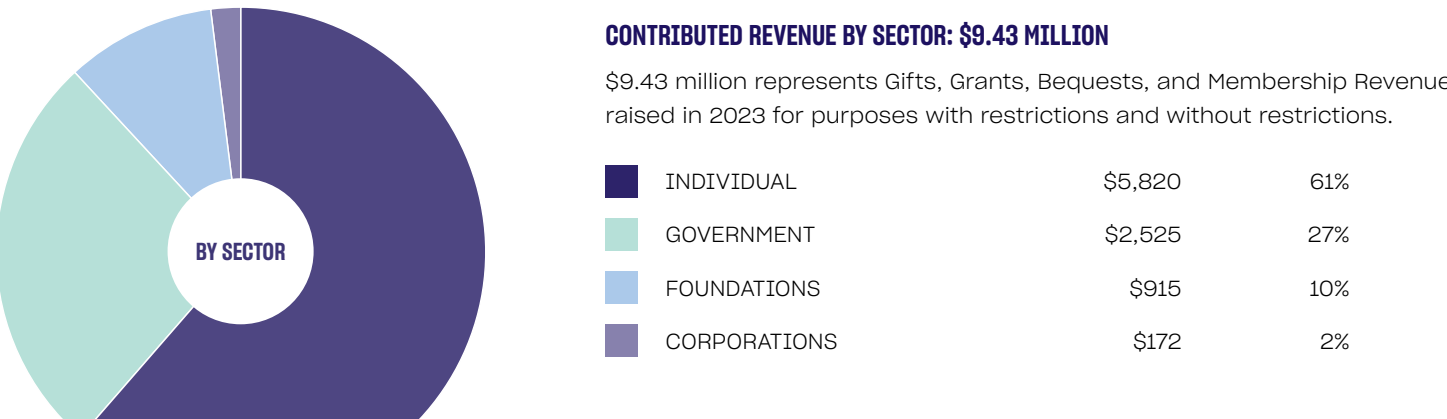
FINANCIALS FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2023 (amounts in '000s)



INVESTMENT INCOME*	\$1,114
ENDOWMENT BALANCE AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2023	\$65,536

*Unrealized gains on investments were \$8.1 million.

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As of December 31, 2023



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Gifts at the *America and the Sea Society* level have a tremendous philanthropic impact on every program Museum-wide. Support to this leadership gift society reflects deep commitment to the vitality of Mystic Seaport Museum and is an affirmation of our mission to preserve our maritime heritage for the benefit of future generations. (Gifts received from January 1–December 31, 2023)

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Mystic Seaport Museum has grown since 1929 from a small historical association on the banks of the Mystic River to become the preeminent American maritime museum of the 21st century. The Museum’s founders, Carl Cutler, Charles Stillman and Edward Bradley understood the fundamental significance of our country’s maritime heritage when they founded this institution. It has been through the dedicated leadership, vision, commitment and generosity of our greatest donors that the Museum has continued to grow and evolve. The Carl C. Cutler Society was created to recognize and celebrate those donors who have given over a million dollars in cumulative giving. (List as of December 31, 2023)

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Mystic Seaport Museum is pleased to recognize these special donors during their lifetimes, not only to acknowledge their generosity personally, but to celebrate the role the Stillman Society plays in the growth and development of the Museum. If you believe that you qualify for membership in the Stillman Society and would like to add your name to the list, please contact the Advancement Department at 860-572-5365 or advancement@mysticseaport.org.

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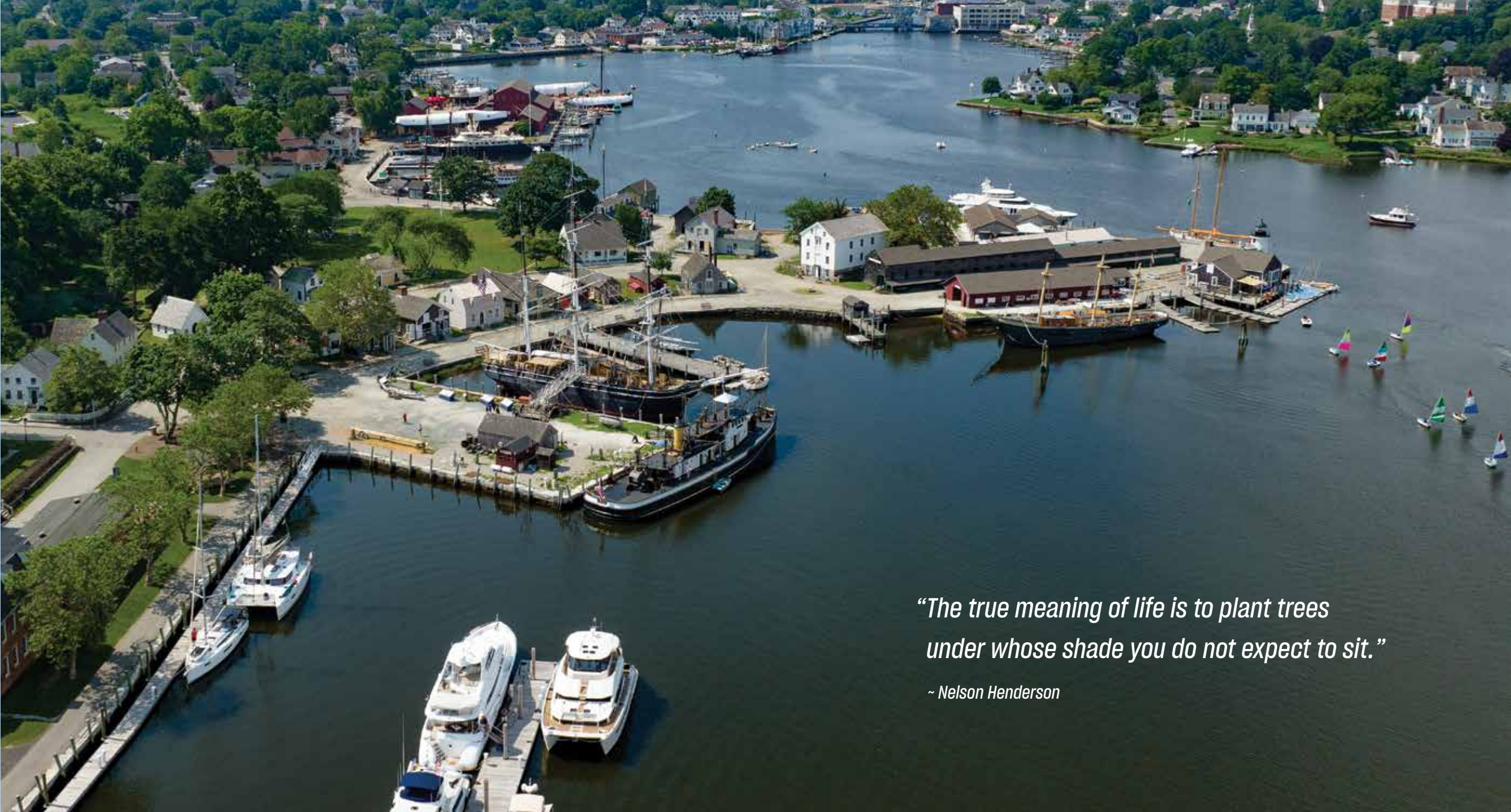
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*“The true meaning of life is to plant trees
under whose shade you do not expect to sit.”*

~ Nelson Henderson

