

February 2024



*on the Move*

*Local maritime news, events and history from the Chicago Maritime Museum*

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## CMM to Host Volunteer Event



Chicago Maritime Museum will host the museum's first ever Volunteer Appreciation Event to thank volunteers and members who support the museum throughout the year on Monday, February 12, 12:00pm-3:00pm at CMM.

Guests may look forward to fun hands-on docent training with Loyola history professor Ted Karamanski, an awards ceremony, museums announcements and refreshments.

“The museum will celebrate the hard work and passion that CMM volunteers bring to the museum,” says Ariana Rubin, CMM’s Museum Manager and Volunteer Coordinator. “We invite members and volunteers to join us in for this special occasion.”

RSVP using the button below. If you have any questions or need more information, feel free to reach out to us at [cmm@chicagomaritimemuseum.org](mailto:cmm@chicagomaritimemuseum.org).

[Register Here!](#)

[Become a Volunteer Here!](#)

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## Friends of the Chicago River Hosts Volunteer Event at CMM



Friends of the Chicago River celebrated their year of improving and protecting the Chicago-Calumet River system with fellow Friends members, volunteers, and partners at the Member and Volunteer Celebration, on January 25 at CMM. During the event, Commitment Awards were presented to three worthy supporters for their exceptional efforts on behalf of Friends' mission.

"The Chicago Maritime Museum was an ideal location for our annual Member and Volunteer Celebration," said Margaret Frisbie, executive director of Friends of the Chicago River. "The museum is unique and inviting. Our guests enjoyed networking together amongst the informative exhibits about Chicago's maritime history and the important role of our waterways to the city's, and the entire regions, past, present, and future."

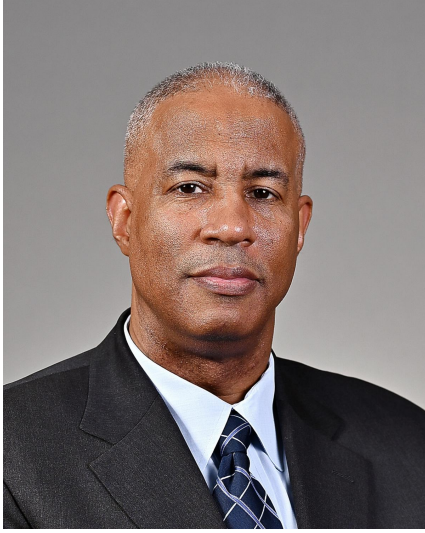
Private gatherings can be arranged by members, partner organizations or anyone interested in a truly unique venue at the Chicago Maritime Museum. Contact Kath Thomas for more information: [events@chicagomaritimemuseum.org](mailto:events@chicagomaritimemuseum.org).



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## Join us for Third Friday on February 16 Commander Jeff Gray presents *The Navy in Chicago: An Unlikely Story*

Despite being 800 miles from the Atlantic Ocean Chicago has been a Navy town for more than 130 years. The modern history of the Navy has been influenced by Chicago and Chicagoans



to an extent most people are unaware. The Chicago Navy Memorial Foundation is committed to educating the public about the importance of maintaining a strong Navy for the security and prosperity of the nation and telling the story of Chicago's outsized impact on today's—and tomorrow's—Navy.

Jeff Gray is the director of public affairs for the Union League Club of Chicago and a Commander in the U.S. Navy Reserve and is the senior project director of the Chicago Navy Memorial Foundation and a member of the Illinois Secretary of State's Veteran's Advisory Council.

Gray's background includes over 25 years of experience as a public affairs officer in the Navy Reserve where he currently holds the rank of Commander. He has deployed as a public affairs officer to Afghanistan, as a member of NATO's International Security Assistance Force, in Kabul, Working for Chicago Public Schools, he was a special projects manager and the director of admissions for Chicago's eight Selective Enrollment High Schools and six Military Academies.

In conjunction with the Bridgeport Art Center's Third Friday Open House, the Chicago Maritime Museum opens its doors for lively presentations on maritime history and current events each month. Come early and explore the Bridgeport Art Center's many art galleries. Join us on Friday, February 16 at 7:00 p.m. either in person or virtually.

The presentation is \$5.00 for members and \$10.00 for non-members. However, you might just consider joining the CMM for an annual membership of just \$35, which provides unlimited visits, access to our monthly newsletter and special events such as the Third Friday maritime lecture series.

Join us at [chicagomaritimemuseum.org](http://chicagomaritimemuseum.org) or call us (773) 376-1982. We are located on the lower level of the Bridgeport Art Center at 1200 W 35th Street. Parking is free in the north lot.

[Register For In Person Presentation Here](#)

[Register for Virtual Presentation Here](#)

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## CMM to Debut Two Temporary Exhibits

The Chicago Maritime Museum will debut two new temporary exhibits -- one on the history and design of the canoe, and one showcasing art and artifacts



previously in a private collection, including five paintings with a fascinating possible tie to Chicago history.

CMM members and local media are invited to a special event celebrating the debut of the exhibits scheduled for **Thursday, February 22 at 11:00 a.m.** Participants will enjoy a free curator-led tour of the two new

exhibits by CMM Curator Madeline Crispell.

[Register Here!](#)

One exhibit, **The Trail that Leaves no Trace**, reinterprets CMM's significant canoe collection through the lens of history and design. The exhibit's title is taken from a quote by canoe builder and conservationist Ralph Frese, who donated nearly every canoe in CMM's collection.

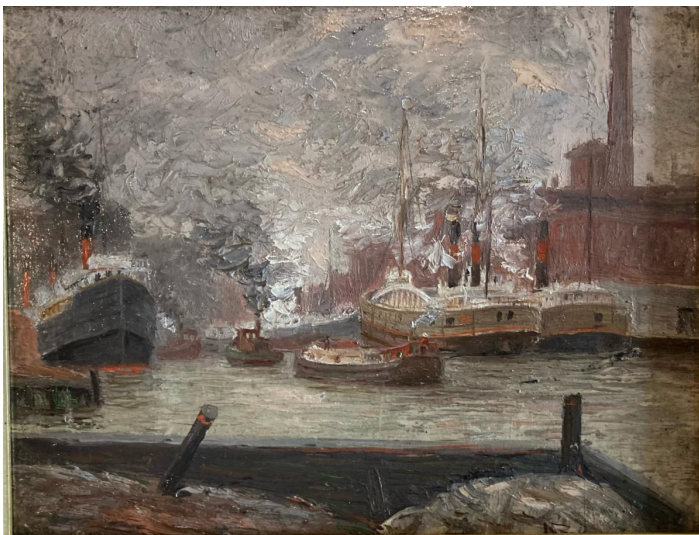


**The Philip R. May Collection** highlights a recent acquisition of more than a dozen maritime artifacts and pieces of art. Particularly exciting are five unsigned paintings of the Chicago River possibly by James Bolivar Needham, a local artist active in the late 19th and early 20th century with interesting links in his own history to the waterways of our region.

19th.

Both exhibitions will be on view through April

## *Curator's Corner by Madeline Crispell* A Chicago Impressionist at CMM



Five unattributed, unsigned paintings from one artist came to the museum as part of a donation made by Anne May on the behalf of her husband, Philip R. May, a lifelong Chicagoan, a Great Lakes sailor and a passionate collector of maritime art and artifacts. Having researched the paintings' attribution, Phillip identified an artist in the historical record with a

similar style, who had worked as a house painter in late 19th century Chicago. In fact, Philip may have come very close to finding the artist who likely did these paintings – James Bolivar Needham.

James Bolivar Needham was born in Chatham, a town in the region of Ontario that served as one of the most popular destinations for people escaping slavery on the Underground Railroad. Needham was Black and although it's not known whether his parents traveled the Underground Railroad, his middle name honoring Simón Bolívar, who led six South American countries to independence, is suggestive. As a teenager, Needham became a deckhand on Great Lakes vessels and after a few years he moved permanently to Chicago. In 1893, Needham was part of the team that decorated and painted buildings at the World's Columbian Exposition.

He began painting views of the Chicago River at some point in the late nineteenth century and continued to paint them throughout his life. He painted dockside, capturing colorful scenes of maritime industry and their watery reflections. Needham often used segments of the shipping crates that must have been plentiful on Chicago's docks as the wood panels for his paintings. At the edges of the painting reproduced here, you can see small nails and the planks that made up the original crate.

Needham rarely signed his paintings. He only exhibited his work once in his life, despite suggestions of acclaim in an 1895 article appearing in the (publication) and the admiration of well-known artists like Lorado Taft. Instead, possibly for his own record, he carved information into the backs of the wood panels he painted. After our temporary exhibit, , we'll dismantle the frames to view the panels and learn more about our five paintings. To follow along and learn more about the paintings with us, keep an eye on future issues of On the Move!

To watch my Third Friday lecture on the five Needham paintings, visit the Chicago Maritime Museum's YouTube channel or the Third Friday Lectures page of our website.

[Watch the Lecture Here!](#)

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## Maritime Event Calendar

Check out local maritime events at the Chicago Maritime Museum [website calendar page](#).

Submit maritime events in the Chicagoland area or story ideas to Mary Ann O'Rourke at [communications@chicagomaritimemuseum.org](mailto:communications@chicagomaritimemuseum.org).

## Ready to join or renew your membership?

Information about our membership offers can be found [here](#). If you need further membership support please email us at [cmm@chicagomaritimemuseum.org](mailto:cmm@chicagomaritimemuseum.org)

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*We hope you've enjoyed our monthly e-newsletter, On the Move.*

