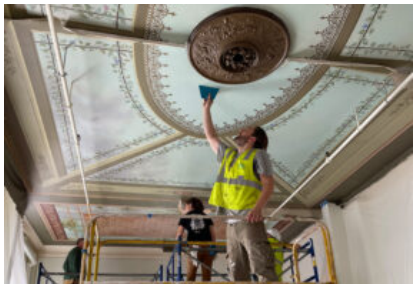

Noble Maritime Collection Writing Room

STATEN ISLAND, NY

The Noble Maritime Collection is known for the grassroots adaptive reuse project led by the volunteer Noble Crew during the 1990s, which rehabilitated the National Historic Landmark Building D, a former Sailors' Snug Harbor dormitory from 1844, and turned it into the museum's new home. The Writing Room is an original feature of the building—a large, sunlit common area on the first floor, just next to the front entrance, where sailors once gathered to write correspondence. While restoring the room, the Noble Crew discovered, under decades of paint layers and plaster patches, a Victorian trompe l'oeil ceiling mural, and its restoration was a crowning achievement of the rehabilitation of Building D.

The mural was originally commissioned by Sailors' Snug Harbor around 1883 in celebration of the retirement home's 50th anniversary. It depicted a glasshouse roof suggesting the South Seas, where many of the resident mariners had sailed.

Phase I: Conservation Conditions Assessment, Survey, & Documentation
Unfortunately, in July 2020 during a thunderstorm, a portion of the ceiling collapsed. With a generous emergency grant from the New York Landmarks Conservancy, the museum engaged EverGreene Architectural Arts to assess the condition of the ceiling. Our conservators determined that deterioration of the plaster and failure of plaster keys among other factors lead to the collapse of the ceiling that was built in the 1840s. The existing ceiling framing was no longer sound and also needed to be replaced.
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MORE INFORMATION:
https://evergreene.com/projects/writing-room/

SERVICES PERFORMED

Investigation, Testing & Analysis
Mural Conservation
Plasterwork

PROJECT DETAILS

Client
Noble Maritime Collection

Underwriter
Versailles-Giverny Foundation

Preservation Services
The New York Landmarks Conservancy