

Long Island Traditions

NEWSLETTER

www.longislandtraditions.org

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Irish Storytelling & Music Program

November 12th

On November 12 at 2 pm Long Island Traditions and the East Meadow Public Library will be presenting a program featuring storyteller Reggie Jones and Irish fiddler Pete Kelly. The program is free and open to the public.

Lifeguard Reggie Jones

Sometimes your career chooses you. In 1944 at the age of 17 Reggie Jones' mother urged him to apply for a job, in order to escape working at his father's gas station "*as an indentured servant...*" This begins the true story of a living legend as the longest working lifeguard at Jones Beach. The romantic notion of a lifeguard's tour of duty frequently includes the misconception that all lifeguards "do" is sit in the sun and watch beautiful people saunter by. However, while this may be one of the job's perks, since that fateful day Reggie has kept watch over thousands of swimmers, a tradition that he has passed on to his children. Reggie along with other lifeguards faces danger on a daily basis, and has come close to death many times. Reggie offers his narrative in the tradition of an Irish storyteller. His stories about his career as a lifeguard span over 60 years and are often amusing and sometime inspire awe. He draws on actual events experienced while working at Jones Beach.



Pete Kelly

Irish Fiddler Pete Kelly

Pete Kelly is a master fiddle player and was born in Ballymoe, Ireland, the home of Father Flannagan and Irish revolutionary leaders. Pete's first teacher was Leo Byrne, who taught at the school every Saturday and performed with showbands during the weekend. "*By the time I was a teenager I wasn't playing just Irish music, I was also playing American music.*" In 1953 Pete moved to England to study classical music working in a foundry

and singing in a local choir. Eventually he found his way to New York, where he has lived since the 1960s. Pete has a long career teaching students the traditions of Irish fiddling, working with master musicians, and playing at area ceili's and other traditional Irish celebrations. ■

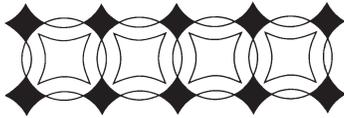
Native American Program

November 15th at Suffolk Community College

Ina McNeil will be featured at Suffolk County Community College's Ammerman campus in Selden in a 1-hour lecture demonstration program. She will be displaying her traditional quilts and dolls, demonstrating how they are made according to the Lakota Sioux tradition that has been passed down in her family. Ina is a direct descendant of Chief Sitting Bull, residing in Hempstead since the 1970s. The free program will take place at 11am - 12:30 pm. For more information call (631) 451-4816. ■

Suffolk County Peconic Estuary Project

Long Island Traditions will be conducting research as part of an oyster mariculture project in partnership with Cashin Associates, in order to expand Suffolk County's efforts in planting and harvesting oysters. Director Nancy Solomon will be interviewing East End baymen about their harvesting methods, history and occupational traditions during 2006-07. If you know any East End commercial fishermen please contact us at (516) 767-8803. The project's goal is to provide a sustainable industry for baymen and fishermen, and to support this historic industry. ■



Long Island Traditions Inc.

Dedicated to the documentation and preservation of Long Island's living cultural heritage.

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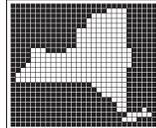
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For more information call: (516) 767-8803, fax: (516) 767-8805, write to us at: 382 Main St., Port Washington, NY 11050, E-mail: litrad@i-2000.com or visit us on the web at: www.longislandtraditions.org

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Long Island Dutch Architecture

By Nancy Solomon

From Long Island Traditional Architecture: A Teacher Resource Guide, 2006. Available from Long Island Traditions.

The Dutch were the first major group of European settlers in New York and Long Island. One of the earliest Dutch explorers was Henry Hudson, who came on the ship the Half Moon in 1609. Other early explorers included Adriaen Block, for whom Block Island is named. They came to New York, originally called New Amsterdam, in the early 1600s as representatives of the Dutch West India Company, a government sponsored corporation that held a monopoly on trade in the area until the English arrived in the 1640s. The Dutch were later joined by residents of Sweden, Germany and Finland in New Amsterdam.

Block described Long Island as "an unbroken forest containing all kinds of wild animals such as elks, deer and small game, and water birds....and more varieties and abundance of swimming fish and shell fish than any other place on the coast."

The first settlers included doctors, farmers and fishermen, mariners and teachers, and craftsmen of various kinds. They founded communities in New Amsterdam, upstate New York and the Hudson River Valley, and Long Island. In addition the DWIC sent soldiers to protect their holdings. Settlers worked as traders, exporting fur, whale meat and oil, beer, and potash (an important ingredient for making soap) and importing European manufactured goods brought from the Dutch West Indies.

The New World Dutch settlers grew cotton for home use, along with "great fields of tobacco."¹ There were also shoemakers, tanners and millers, supplying basic needs for local families, along with skilled carpenters and cabinetmakers. According to one 1898 account, "the earliest manufacturing establishments on the island were the grist mills. The miller was given a grant of land and usually assisted [by local residents] in the erection of his mill and building the dam, upon the condition that he should grind all the grain that was brought to him."² The saw mills were also lucrative, supplying Long Island lumber for homes in New York City.

To help run their businesses the Dutch brought captured slaves from Africa to the West Indies and the Northern and Southern colonies. According to varied accounts, some families freed their slaves after payment was received, while others held slaves and their children for longer periods. While some families had slaves and indentured servants, the majority did not and ultimately pressured their neighbors to free their slaves, a movement that increased after the Revolution.³

Long Island Settlements

The earliest Dutch settlements in Nassau & Suffolk County included Brookville, originally called Wolver Hollow, Syosset, Manhasset and Greenvale. There are many place names that originated with the Dutch settlements including Nassau County, named after the Dutch Prince of Orange-Nassau; Hempstead after the Dutch city Heemstede, and Onderdonk Avenue in Manhasset, after a prominent Dutch family. Other Dutch place names include Wolver Hollow Road in Brookville (Wolver means wolves in Dutch).

They began clearing land in order to establish farms and communities, primarily in western Nassau County. The most desirable places for settling were near the shore, lakes, ponds and rivers. Settlers grew crops and harvested shellfish from local bay waters, while also buying imported foodstuffs from various merchants and shopkeepers. At the same time they fought and defeated local Native tribes, confiscating their lands through seizure, treaties and legal agreements.

In 1650 the Treaty of Hartford was signed, dividing Long Island into two distinct districts. The western area was established as a Dutch settlement. Eastern Long Island was reserved for the English. Dutch families included the Van Nostrands who settled in Roslyn, and the Schenck family in New Hyde Park, whose house and barn are located at Old Bethpage Village Restoration. The English eventually migrated to western Long Island in the early 1700s, joining the original Dutch settlers in Hewlett, Flushing, Hempstead and Jamaica.

Building Traditions

Although the Dutch settled throughout the region, there were major differences within their building traditions, due to the topography, labor and available materials. While residents in New York City and Brooklyn built large frame houses, their counterparts on Long Island constructed smaller frame structures, a trend also found in New England.⁴ In upstate areas such as New Paltz and Rensselaer County near Albany, Dutch Huguenots constructed large impressive stone houses and fortresses.

Dutch frame houses had several distinctive architectural features. Key characteristics included:

- Overhanging roofs that flared at the ends.
- Centrally placed stone fireplaces and chimneys with large “Dutch” ovens. According to an historian “the openings of the huge fireplaces were often large enough to seat the family on both sides of the fire without jambs.”
- Asymmetrical floor plans with rooms of unequal sizes and no center hall.

Like the English settlers, they used local trees, mortise- and -tenon framing, multi-paned windows and brick chimneys. They had round and square white cedar shingles for their sheathing. The fireplaces were much larger than their English counterparts and joined in the attic. They also had doors that were divided horizontally with an upper and lower part.

In the early 1600s the Long Island Dutch settlers constructed frame houses with thatch roofs, in an attempt to recreate their homeland’s stone houses. They were typically 1-story homes with a “garret” or loft for storage. In the late 1700s and 1800s wealthy Dutch landowners began building houses with large bell-shaped gambrel roofs with flared eaves, a shape that would become very popular in the early 1900s during the Colonial Revival period. However most ordinary Dutch homes built in the 1700s had traditional flared gable roof lines.

Over time the Dutch farmhouse plans came to resemble the popular English style houses, a process that began in the 1700s and reached its conclusion by the mid-1800s. The asymmetrical floor plan was gradually replaced with a center hall plan. Other features continued, often becoming more pronounced; the traditional overhanging roof grew into a large ornamental gambrel roof, one that would reappear in the early 1900s as part of the Colonial Revival style. The traditional Dutch door was divided vertically into a top and bottom part that swung in and out. This was done to allow fresh air in and to keep the

animals out. Dutch doors were frequently placed inside or on the side or rear of the house, and on barns and grist mills.

Eventually the dutch door was later found in many kinds of homes by the mid-1800s, not just those built by Dutch carpenters. Other changes during the 1700 and 1800s included the addition of an attached side kitchen wing, new inside wood trim and new windows.



Schenck Barn

Dutch Barns

Dutch barns have certain traditional design elements that were carried over to New Amsterdam. They include:

- Steeply pitched thatched roofs that were replaced with clapboard shingles in the late 1700 and early 1800s
- Gable front entrances
- “H” frames, so named because intersecting timbers form a partial H, creating each bay. The “H” frame was also used in many Dutch houses.
- Square floor plans with pens used for different purposes.

Dutch barns, like English designed barns, had a central aisle which allowed carts and wagons to enter the barn. The entrance also served as a threshing floor and a work area during the winter months. In Dutch barns the floor was surrounded by pens which housed animals including horses, cows and other livestock. Other pens provided storage room for tools, grain and other items. Over time most of the few Dutch barns that existed have disappeared, due to natural deterioration. To help preserve remaining Dutch barns in New York State, the Dutch Barn Preservation Society was formed in 1986. They can be reached at <http://www.schist.org/dbps.htm>. Examples of historic Dutch architecture can be seen at the Wyckoff House in Brooklyn, the Huntington Arsenal and Old Bethpage Village Restoration. ■

¹ “Brooklyn’s Origin Under the Dutch” Brooklyn Daily Eagle, January 30, 1899.

² “Ancient Long Island” Brooklyn Daily Eagle, January 2, 1898.

³ Richard Moss, *Slavery on Long Island* (St. John’s Univ. 1985).

⁴ Jack Larkin “Big House, Middling House, Small House” *Old Sturbridge Village*. March 2004. <http://www.osv.org/learning/DocumentViewer.php?DocID=2126>

EVENTS OF INTEREST

PLEASE NOTE: If you have a Long Island concert or program that focuses on some aspect of traditional culture, drop us a line and we'll put it in our "Events of Interest" column. The deadline is the 1st of June, September, December and March.

- September 24:** IndiaFest organized by the India Association of Long Island. Noon- 9 pm. Free admission. Hempstead Harbor Beach Park, West Shore Drive, Port Washington. Call (516) 571-7930 or (516) 328-3135.
- September 30:** Nritya Saagaram Dance Academy and Young Indian Culture Group (YIGC) Present dancer Priyadarsini Govind. 4 pm. Landmark on Main Street. 232 Main Street, Port Washington. \$15/person. Call (516) 681-2048.
- October 2:** Quilt Workshop for Children. 1 & 3 pm. Long Island Children's Museum. 11 Davis Avenue, Garden City. Call (516) 224-5800.
- October 15:** The Ink Spots. 7pm concert. Boulton Center for the Performing Arts. 37 West Main Street, Bay Shore. Call (631) 969-1101.
- November 12:** Irish Music and Storytelling program (see feature article) highlighting Reggie Jones and Pete Kelly. 2 pm. Free Admission. East Meadow Public Library. Call (516) 794-2570.
- November 15:** Ina McNeil: Artist Presentation and Discussion. 11am-12:15pm. Suffolk Community College Ammerman Campus, Meeting room 111, Huntington Library. Free admission. Call (631) 451-4816.

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