

# Long Island Traditions

## NEWSLETTER

www.longislandtraditions.org

Vol. 12 No. 1 Spring 2005

*Editor's note: In the coming months Long Island Traditions will present several folk arts programs at the Freeport and East Meadow Library. The goal of these programs is to provide residents an opportunity to learn about the diverse cultural traditions that continue to play an important role in everyday life in many ethnic and occupational groups. Admission to these programs is free.*

### Jewish Folk Arts Program

Alice Melzer

On April 7th the East Meadow Public Library will bring together three distinct faces of Jewish tradition: Klezmer clarinetist Ken Maltz, Shanghai Ghetto survivor Evelyn Pike Rubin, and Indian Jewish singer and storyteller Rahel Musleah. The program is at 12:30 pm. The three will compare and contrast the individual traditions of the Ashkenazi and Sephardic communities. After their performances and stories the artists will examine how their traditions are similar and different.

Born in Calcutta, Rahel Musleah can trace her family tree to India and Iraq. Historically, by the late 1940s many of Calcutta's 5,000 Jews left India and migrated to Israel or to other English-speaking countries. Rahel was six when her family left India and landed in Philadelphia, PA. Her parents passed down the rich and distinctive Baghdadi-



Rahel Musleah

Indian Jewish heritage and emphasized the importance of keeping it alive. They did this in part through stories and songs. With such a distinctive heritage it is no surprise that

See **Jewish Folk Arts Program** on page 3

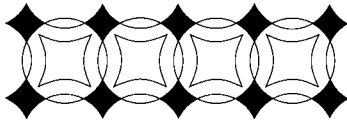
### African American Folk Arts Program

On Saturday, April 30th African American quilter and doll maker Joan Hodges of Hempstead will discuss her lifelong work as a civil rights activist and her talents as a quilter and dollmaker. The program will take place at the Freeport Memorial Library at 11am. Joan was born in Brooklyn in the 1940s and traces her family roots from the days of American slavery through the northern migration of share croppers in the south to New York and the northern states. As a child growing up, materials some take for granted were unavailable to her. Being a resourceful child she fashioned dolls from newspaper and painted them with her father's shoe polish. Joan's family moved further east on Long Island and later she attended Fashion Institute of Technology in NYC.

It takes grit and quiet determination to translate the unpleasant experiences of youth. While visiting close relatives in the south she experienced firsthand the "whites only" signs then prevalent throughout the south. Joan participated in the civil rights movement. This personal history shaped her creativity until it took form in her dolls and quilts. These dolls represent both her African-American heritage and family traditions. For example, one of Joan's dolls with graying dreadlocks represents the *griot*. In African tradition this individual is keeper of the history. Many of her quilt patterns are based on ones used by slave communities to communicate. Joan's art works are exhibited at museums and community centers. She is also a presenter in Long Island Traditions' arts-in-education programs.

The Freeport Memorial Library is located on 144 W. Merrick Road and Ocean Avenue in Freeport. The phone number is: (516) 379-3274.

Please join us for these dates. We will look forward to seeing you there and at future scheduled programs. ■



## Long Island Traditions Inc.

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

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**Program Coordinator:** Alice Melzer

**Board of Directors:** Dorothy Jacobs, Mirna Cortez-Obers, Ken Maltz, Ken Robinson, Linda Scholl, Michael Scully & Wayne Wink

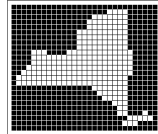
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For more information call: (516) 767-8803, fax: (516) 767-8805, write to us at: 382 Main St., Port Washington, NY 11050, E-mail: litrad@i-2000.com or visit us on the web at: [www.longislandtraditions.org](http://www.longislandtraditions.org)

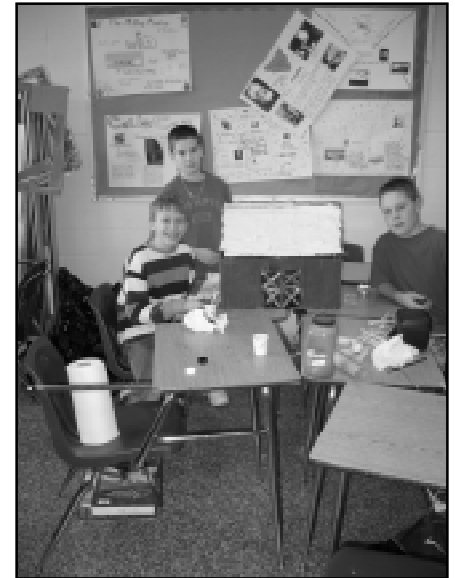
State of the Arts



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## JFK Middle School Architecture Project

The students of JFK Middle School in Port Jefferson Station have been very busy these past few months making models from scratch of Dutch and English farmhouses and barns, as well as doing research with primary sources on the traditional building practices of Dutch and English settlers, under the guidance of their teacher Maureen Coppola. 8th grade teacher Mallack Walsh's students are comparing similarities and differences between east-coast and western general stores, focusing on the St. James General Store and the Oneta Brothers Store in Carson Hill, California. Using Historic American Building Survey drawings and photographs, students have constructed detailed models complete with framing of the English - based Walt Whitman Birthplace, the Dutch-based Suydam house of Centerport, and the St. James General Store, the oldest continuing operating general store on Long Island. In just a few weeks teacher Justin Seifert will begin teaching about the design of places of worship in Setauket, examining the Caroline Church and the Bethel AME church. The project will culminate in a teacher resource guide with model lessons, document based questions, primary source materials and curriculum resources. The project is expected to be completed in 2006.



Students at JFK Middle School display their English barn.

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## West Meadow Beach

As most of you know, the cottages at West Meadow Beach have been demolished, despite their listing on the National Register of Historic Places on October 28, 2004. Although a number of lawsuits challenged the state law based on their historic significance, these efforts failed. We sympathize with all the owners who have lost their cottages, and hope that other municipalities will take better care in preserving their historic sites.

To remember this special place, you can still buy West Meadow Beach through our web site at [www.longislandtraditions.org](http://www.longislandtraditions.org), at the LI Museum in Stony Brook, and the Good Times book shop in Port Jefferson (150 E. Main Street). Our special thanks go to all those who have supported this struggle, and the appreciation we have received for our efforts.

# Jewish Folk Arts Program

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Rahel began writing, and continued developing into an award-winning journalist whose articles appear in The New York Times, Hadassah magazine and other publications.

Her books include *Why On This Night? A Passover Haggadah for Family Celebration* (Simon & Schuster) and *Sharing Blessings: Children's Stories for Exploring the Spirit of the Jewish Holidays* (Jewish Lights). *Apples and Pomegranates: A Rosh Hashanah Seder* (Lerner/Kar-Ben). She is also preparing to record a new CD of traditional Baghdadi-Indian Jewish songs.

Evelyn Pike Rubin was raised by a strict Orthodox Jewish family whose ancestors lived in Germany for generations. Evelyn's grandfather was a Talmudic scholar who died in 1911. As a young girl she clearly remembers being restricted from all public establishments under Nazi-run Germany. On the "Night of Broken Glass" (November 9 - 10, 1938) Germans burnt their own synagogues and shops; Jewish men were transported and locked up for three weeks. Her father was among those interred in the Buchenwald concentration camp. At the age of eight, in 1939 the family fled Germany for the only refuge camp available to them-Shanghai, China. Evelyn attended the British-run Shanghai Jewish School. Students studied along side those flung from Europe including, Hungry, Russia, Poland and Germany. Together they learned English and it became their common language.



Shanghai

In post War Shanghai the Japanese forced all Jewish refugees to live in the extreme poverty of the Hongkew slum. Evelyn felt lucky and grateful to be spared the brutal treatment that many in her family experienced in Nazi Germany. In 1947, after the end of the war, Evelyn moved to Long Island. Her memoir *Ghetto Shanghai* is filled with hope and inspiration. It reflects growing up in Germany, her survival in Shanghai, and her immigration to America. Additionally, Evelyn is featured in the award-winning documentary film *Shanghai Ghetto*.

Hearing Klezmer music for the first time sounds both familiar and exotic. Maybe this is why the audience responds to Ken Maltz

and Kapelye with laughter, tears, singing and sometimes even dancing. The word Klezmer, describes both the specific genre of East European Yiddish folk music and the players themselves. In the 19th century the clarinet was introduced into the kapelye (band) and it joined the comfortable sounds of the string family, percussion (including the hammered dulcimer) and other woodwinds

Old World descendants might notice phrases found in polkas, peasantry music, Viennese waltzes, and even light classical music. When these musicians played for nobility they repeated refrains from overtures; when performing for the Hasidim, bits from popular songs were added. By 1880, this musical tradition journeyed overseas with Jewish Europeans to North America. Infused with jazz, the syncopated rhythm of ragtime and fired up by vaudeville, Klezmer evolved further in America.

Ken Maltz is a master clarinetist who has been with Kapelye for many years.

The East Meadow Library is located on East Meadow Avenue and 1886 Front Street in East Meadow. For information call (516) 794-2570. ■

## Funding News

Long Island Traditions has recently received several substantial grants for its programs and research. The NY State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) has provided funding for its architectural resource guide for Social Studies teachers, along with the National Endowment for the Arts and the Gilder Foundation. In addition several apprenticeships will be supported by NYSCA including a fishing rod apprenticeship between Pete Ames and his son Pete, and one on Peruvian traditional music between Theo Torres and his son Charlie.

Assemblywoman Ginny Fields has helped support our south shore estuary maritime survey, along with the South Shore Estuary Council, the Preservation League of New York, the Village of Patchogue and Suffolk County Legislator Brian Foley.

The National Endowment for the Arts is supporting a series of folk arts programs at the Freeport Memorial Library during 2005-06. These programs include lecture-demonstrations by African American quilter and dollmaker Joan Hodges, Native American quilter and dollmaker Ina McNeil, performances by Trinidadian steelband Steel Sensation, performance by Peruvian ensemble Vientos del Sur and a roundtable discussion on maritime traditions by baymen and fishermen Tony Sougstad, Cory Weyant and lifeguard Reggie Jones. ■

## 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 October, January and April.

- March 6** Paraguyan dancers Berta Gauto and Panambi Vera. LI Museum at Stony Brook. 2pm. \$7/adults, \$5/children. Call (631) 751-0066 for more information.
- April 7** Faces of Jewish Tradition (see accompanying article). East Meadow Library. Front Street & East Meadow Avenue. 12:30 pm. Free admission. For information call (516) 794-2570.
- April 30** Lecture demonstration by Joan Hodges (see accompanying article). Freeport Memorial Library. 11am. Free admission. (516) 379-3274.

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382 Main Street  
Port Washington, NY 11050