

Long Island Traditions

NEWSLETTER

www.longislandtraditions.org

Vol. 14 No. 3 Summer 2007

Boating with the Baymen: The Peconics

On June 30, 2007 join Long Island Traditions for our 3rd annual "Boating with the Baymen" tour, this year exploring the Peconics, where fishermen and baymen whose family histories date to the 1600s continue to work on the water, despite increasing obstacles. Our tour will take place aboard the Peconic Star, departing from Greenport at 4 pm. Meet and talk with baymen Peter Wenzel and Howard Pickerell, along with lighthouse historian Merle Wiggins and environmental planner Jeff Kassner. The tour will be led by Long Island Traditions' executive director Nancy Solomon.

Since 1985, when a mysterious brown tide devastated the scallops and clams that have been harvested by local baymen for generations, commercial fishermen have faced an uphill battle to survive. Baymen have adopted numerous strategies in order to maintain their traditions that have been passed down within their families. While there have been numerous studies and pilot projects to address this environmental disaster, no plans have been developed that provide major support and protection for local fishermen and baymen.

During the tour there will be a facilitated discussion on the issues facing commercial fishermen, moderated by folklorist Nancy Solomon, who has been studying commercial fishermen on Long Island since the late 1980s. Visitors will have the opportunity to learn directly from these fishermen how the East End baymen are faring, and understand the issues they face. Local baymen will discuss their family traditions and how fish and shellfish are harvested. Howard Pickerell is a traditional boat builder and bayman from Watermill. Pickerell has worked the bay his entire life, and is one of the few remaining traditional boat builders on the south fork. Peter Wenzel is a working fisherman and bayman who resides in Southold. He has been active in the Southold Baymen's Association. Wenzel and Pickerell harvest finfish and shellfish in the Peconics, using a variety of methods. In addition lighthouse historian Merle Wiggins will educate passengers on the history of East End lighthouses. Completing the panel will be environmental planner Jeff Kassner of the Town of Brookhaven's Division of Environmental Protection, who has conducted

extensive research on the ecological and environmental history of Great South Bay and the Peconics.

Space is limited and reservations are required! The cost is \$40/person, \$20 for children under 16. The tour will take place from 4 to 7 pm. To reserve call Long Island Traditions at (516) 767-8803 or visit www.longislandtraditions.org. Deadline for registration is June 29. This program is sponsored in part by the New York State Council on the Arts and Suffolk County Office of Cultural Affairs. ■

Freeport Bay House Tours

On July 7th and August 18, 2007 Long Island Traditions will sponsor its annual bay house tour in Freeport. The tour will include conversations with local bay house owners and will be hosted by folklorist Nancy Solomon, director of LI Traditions. The trip will visit area bay houses on the 1½ hour tour.

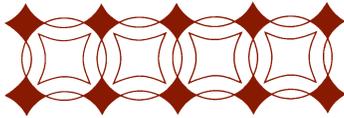
The bay houses have a long history, dating from the mid-19th century when baymen harvested salt hay for the farmers during the winter. The bay houses provided shelter, along with storage for fishermen's traps and duck decoys. They have been used by duck hunters and commercial fishermen, and have been passed down from generation to generation within many families. In the Town of

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The Sheehan - Van Wicklen bay house.

Photo by Nancy Solomon, 2005.



Long Island Traditions Inc.

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

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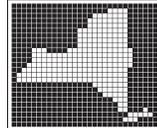
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For more information call: (516) 767-8803, fax: (516) 767-8805, write to us at: 382 Main St., Port Washington, NY 11050, E-mail: litrad@i-2000.com or visit us on the web at: www.longislandtraditions.org

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State of the Arts



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Long Island Sounds Concert

Long Island Traditions is presenting Long Island Sounds, a free concert on Saturday, June 16th from 2 – 5 pm on Freeport's Nautical Mile at the esplanade. The afternoon concert focusing on traditional music of Long Island, will feature four outstanding ensembles: Luis Cordero y Los Amigos del Amargue, a Dominican bachata and merengue ensemble, Steel Sensation, a Trinidadian steelband led by Ian Japsi, The Elder Statesmen, an African American gospel ensemble, and Theo Torres and Vientos del Sur, a Peruvian ensemble. Each of the musicians participates in Long Island Traditions' partnership with the Freeport School District's arts-in-education programs. Many of these groups have lived or worked in Freeport, reflecting the area's rich ethnic diversity and cultural heritage.

Luis Cordero is a composer and a musician from the Dominican Republic. He formed Los Amigos del Amargue to preserve traditional merengue and bachata. Cordero has performed at area festivals, concerts and family celebrations. Steel Sensation is a Trinidadian steelband led by Ian Japsi. Japsi learned to play steelpans from his uncle Jit Samaroo. Their repertoire includes calypsos, jazz melodies, classical music and show tunes. They also perform at area festivals. The Elder Statesmen are a traditional gospel group whose families emigrated from the south during the Great Migration. Their repertoire includes hymns and spirituals, gospel and jubilee acapella-style singing with traditional instruments. They have performed at parks and festivals including Carnegie Hall's Arts-in Ed program. Theo Torres and Vientos del Sur, a Peruvian ensemble, play traditional Andean melodies using indigenous instruments including the pan pipes. Torres uses songs that have been passed down within his family. He is a recipient of an apprenticeship grant from the New York State Council on the Arts.

Hosting the bilingual concert will be ethnomusicologist Dr. Cathy Ragland, who has documented traditional music throughout Long Island and New York City. This free event will take place from 2 – 5 pm. Families and children are especially encouraged to come. Funding for this event is made possible by the New York State Music Fund. Additional funding comes from the New York State Council on the Arts. For more information about the concert call (516) 767-8803 or visit www.longislandtraditions.org. ■

Mangala Update

Mangala: The Arts of India concert, originally scheduled for March 17th, cancelled due to the winter ice storm has been rescheduled for November 4th at the Long Island Children's Museum. A children's workshop will take place at 11am followed by a family concert at 1 pm. Stay tuned for details in the fall. For more information call Long Island Traditions at (516) 767-8803. ■

Bay House Tours continued from page 1

Hempstead stand approximately 30 bay houses on island marshlands, originally built by fishermen and baymen that have been passed down from generation to generation. Take a tour on a comfortable passenger boat for the 1½ hour trip to these historic houses. Each tour will visit two bay houses including the Sheehan/Van Wicklen bay house and the Braunlich bay house. The boat will also visit other bay houses. Come join us for this unique event. Tickets for the bay house tours are \$30 for adults and children over 10 years old. No children under 10 are allowed. Space is limited. For tickets call LI Traditions at (516) 767-8803. The program is funded in part by the New York State Council on the Arts. ■

Mills of Long Island

By Nancy Solomon

From *Long Island Traditional Architecture: A Teacher Resource Guide*, available from *Long Island Traditions*.

There are many different kinds of mills that are generally classified by their power source, function and generating systems. On Long Island mills were used to saw trees into lumber (lumber mills), grind corn (grist mills), and generate wind (windmills). Early mills were usually powered by either water or wind. Examples of water-powered tide mills include the Stony Brook, Lefferts, Saddle Rock, East Rockaway or Roslyn grist mills located on streams and harbors. Tide mills were the least efficient, because their waterwheels depended on tide flow for movement. The most efficient water powered mills were those located adjacent to dammed rivers and streams, such as the Stony Brook grist mill.

Windmills were located inland on hill tops. Long Island had an abundance of windmills due to its proximity near two major bodies of water, Long Island Sound and the Atlantic Ocean, which generated sufficient winds and breezes to power the mills. There are approximately twelve windmills standing today that were constructed in the 1700 - early 1800s. Their heavy timber framing closely followed the building traditions of English and Dutch settlers, who both had long histories of building windmills. The windmills were popular because they did not depend on incoming and outgoing tides in order to generate power. According to some historians, Long Island has the highest number of surviving windmills in the United States. These include English designed windmills in Southampton, Watermill, Bridgehampton and East Hampton, including the Beebe Windmill in Bridgehampton. In addition there is a Dutch designed windmill at the Queens Farm Museum in Bellerose. In general, all windmills had one of two framing systems: "post mills" had one single massive timber that rotated according to the wind; "cap mills" were topped by a rotating roof with a fixed structure underneath.



Gear wheel

The earliest mills were grist mills. They ground corn or wheat into flour that was used for baking. Until the mid-1800s grist mills used large mill stones to grind the raw product into flour. In the mid-1800s the stones were replaced by rollers that closely resembled cylinders found in player pianos, lying side by side. The rollers were lighter, easier to maintain and more efficient than the heavy mill stones. Surviving grist mills can be found in Stony Brook, Saddle Rock in Great Neck, Roslyn, Lefferts Mill in Lloyd Harbor, Watermill, Oakdale at Connetquot State Park and East Rockaway.

Lumber and saw mills cut trees into large timbers used for house and barn building, and for making tools. They were the second most common mill type found in the region. Like the grist mills they were usually found near water and powered by water wheels. Timbers cut by early saw mills usually have straight saw tooth marks. By the mid 1800s the pit saw blades were replaced with circular saw blades, leaving concentric or half circle marks on the timbers. Architectural historians and others studying historic buildings examine the saw marks to determine the age of the timbers used. It is important to remember that old timbers are frequently used in newer buildings.

Mills met many needs. They supplied carpenters, who needed cut lumber in order to build houses and furniture, paper for printers in the 1800s, and farmers who needed their corn and wheat ground into flour. Stone dressers sharpened the grinding mill stones. The mills often became the center of social and economic activity in most towns. Prior to the rise of general stores, local residents would frequently gather at the mill, exchanging the latest news and gossip. In many Long Island communities the mills were found near blacksmith shops, stores, tanneries, coal yards and boat yards. As factories replaced mills in the late 1800s, these traditional occupations and operations declined.

Case Study: Stony Brook Grist Mill

The Stony Brook Grist mill is a rare example of a traditional Dutch water-powered grist mill in Suffolk County. The mill operated from c. 1750 well into the 1900s. Under an agreement with the town trustees, the owner, Adam Smith, was required to build a dam, creating the pond we see today. The agreement also provided that if Smith did not



Photo by Jayme Breschard, 2005.

Stony Brook grist mill.

provide the necessary services to the community, the Town had the legal right to take control of the waterways. Smith agreed to pay the town with a portion of milled corn, wheat and rye. This agreement was recognized for over 170 years.

The mill is the only Dutch framed gristmill in Suffolk County, replacing an earlier structure built c. 1699. Characteristic Dutch features include its H-bent frame and parallel beams spaced at regular intervals. At the same time there are English style half-dovetail joints that are characteristic of English framing techniques, demonstrating the interaction between Dutch and English framing traditions. A grain elevator and "dresser" were added in the mid-1800s. Steel and iron machinery replaced the original wood machinery in the mid-1800s. The building was expanded in c. 1885 for a new wine pressing business and again in c. 1925 to add more storage space. The porch was added in the early 1900s. In 1947 a major restoration project by architect Richard Smythe replaced the mill's water wheel, added new wood shingle siding, new windows and interior flooring. Smythe also remodeled the nearby Caroline Church in East Setauket. An upstairs apartment was introduced in c. 1925 and remodeled in the 1980s. The water wheel was restored in 1977. The interior framing is mostly original.

The mill was used primarily to grind corn grown by local farmers. By 1841 legal records indicate that there was a woolen factory, grist mill, and a house on the site, buildings that are shown in paintings by local painter William Sydney Mount. A saw mill was later added to its functions in c.1846. In 1885 owner Edward Kane introduced a wine making operation that failed in the early 1900s. By the early 1900s local farmers were also bringing oats in order to feed their cows. The mill ceased operating in 1952.

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Owners and Workers

Like many factories in the 19th and 20th century, the people who owned the mill and who worked were generally not the same person. Owners were somewhat wealthy and could hire trades people, called millers, to run the mill. There is also evidence that enslaved laborers also worked at the mill during the 1700s. There were many owners during its history that included several

generations of the Smith family (c. 1699 – 1826), the Williamson family (1826 – 1846), William Davis (1846 – c. 1850), the Taylor family (c. 1850 – 1868), and Edward Kane (1885 – 1897). The millers included Theodore Brush (1872 – c. 1885) who also owned a general store in Stony Brook and Frank Schaefer (1922 – 1947).

The Stony Brook grist mill, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is open to the public. For information on visiting the mill telephone (631)751-2244 or go to www.wmho.org. ■

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.

- May 19:** Mulvihill-Lynch School of Irish Dancing, 8th Annual Feis. 9am. SUNY Stony Brook, Student Activities Center. \$10. For information call 631-738-1242 or visit www.mulvihill-lynchschoo.com.
- May 20:** Luis Cordero y Los Amigos del Amargue. 2 PM. East Meadow Public Library. 1886 Front Street, East Meadow. Free admission. Call (516) 794-2570 for information.
- June 15 - Sept. 4:** Long Island Postcard Exhibit. Westhampton Beach Historical Society. Mill Rd, Westhampton Beach. Call (631) 288-1139 for information.
- June 12:** Rahel Musleah "*Eshet Hayil: Jewish India through Women's Lives.*" 1 pm. Bryant Library, 2 Paper Mill Rd., Roslyn. For more information call (516) 621-2240.
- June 16:** Long Island Sounds concert. Freeport esplanade, Woodcleft Avenue. 2-5 pm. Free admission. See accompanying article. For information call (516) 767-8803.
- June 30:** Boating with the Baymen tour. Depart from Greenport Ferry Dock and tour aboard the Peconic Star, 4- 7pm. See accompanying article. Tickets are \$40/person, \$20 for children under 16, \$5 discount for Long Island Traditions members. For information call (516) 767-8803.
- July 7 & Aug. 18:** Bay House tours. Depart from Freeport. See accompanying article. Tickets are \$50/couple, \$30 person, \$5 discount for Long Island Traditions members. Call for reservations at (516) 767-8803. Telephone reservations only.
- July 14:** Shinnecock Museum Summer Festival. 11 am to 6 pm. Featuring crafts, dancing, music, lobster bake and other activities. Montauk Highway (Route 27A) and West Gate Road in Southampton. Call (631) 287-4923 for more information.
- July 17:** Dave Sear & Tom Paxton concert. 7 pm. Clark Botanic Garden. 93 I.U. Willets Road, Albertson. Free admission. For information call (516) 484-8600.
- August 25:** Long Island Scottish Games. 8am to 5pm. Old Westbury Gardens. 71 Old Westbury Road. \$12/adults, \$8/seniors, \$7/children. For information call (516) 333-0048.

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