

Long Island Traditions

NEWSLETTER

www.longislandtraditions.org

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Maritime Film Festival

Tradition at the Crossroads

On November 9 join Long Island Traditions and New York Sea Grant for its first “Maritime Film Festival: Tradition at the Crossroads” at Stony Brook University. The festival will feature 15 documentary films that explore the region’s marine ecosystem, fishing traditions and coastal heritage, with discussions featuring filmmakers, local baymen, decoy carvers, clamshell artists and other tradition bearers.

Are fishermen and baymen endangered? Is our coastal ecology threatened? What is our waterfront history? Filmmakers have long been captivated with maritime heritage, ecology and history, weaving stories of stoic baymen, endangered marine species, and personal experiences into compelling films. Yet many filmgoers do not fully understand the myths and perceptions of those who work on the water, fish recreationally or enjoy the natural coastal environment. We will view and discuss over 15 films with the filmmakers, local tradition bearers and environmental experts. Audience participation will be encouraged!

Featured films will include:

- “Baymen,” which examines baymen in Great South Bay
- “Jones Beach: An American Riviera”
- “Crash: A Tale of Two Species” which describes the future of horseshoe crabs and red knots
- “Pound Trap Fishing” by Bob Doxsee Sr.
- “Gotham Fish Tales” which profiles recreational fishermen in New York City
- “In the Barnegat Bay Tradition” which focuses on duck boat and decoy carvers
- “The Deadliest Catch” pilot episode
- “Fisher Poets” and
- “Let’s Go Lobstering”

Guest presenters will include filmmakers Glenn Gebhard, George Pozderez, Tom Garber, environmental scientists Larissa Graham and Bill Wise, traditional fishers Flo Sharkey, Chuck Tekula, Ken Swaine, Bob Doxsee, Jim King, and poets George Wallace and Max Wheat.

The cost is \$15/person for a full day pass, and discounts for students with ID. Those who order before October 31 can purchase a discounted \$12 day pass. The programs will take place at Stony Brook University in the

Student Activities Center. To reserve your spot, call Long Island Traditions at (516) 767-8803 or visit www.longislandtraditions.org. This program is sponsored in part by the New York Council for the Humanities, the New York State Council on the Arts and Suffolk County Office of Film and Cultural Affairs. ■



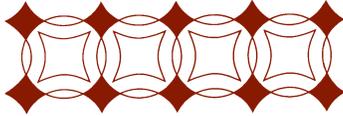
“Pound Trap Fishing” will be among the films shown and narrated by Bob Doxsee Jr. Pictured is Bob Doxsee Sr.

South Shore Portal

Over 20 years ago, director Nancy Solomon began documenting the maritime traditions of Long Island’s south shore. Since that time she has interviewed baymen, bay house owners, boat builders, clamshell artists, offshore fishers and other tradition bearers, recording their memories and photographing their activities, in the process creating an extensive archive with thousands of images and hundreds of recordings.

In addition we have been documenting the maritime architecture of numerous communities along the south shore, ranging from bay houses and bungalows to hotels

See **South Shore Portal** on page 2



Long Island Traditions Inc.

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

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LI Traditions is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization registered with the NY State Board of Charities.

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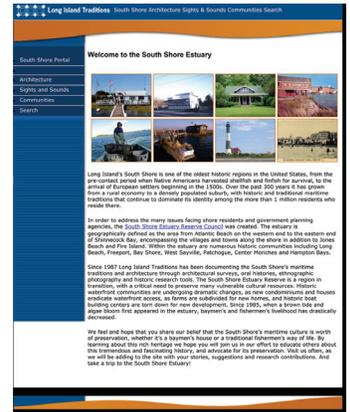
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and mansions, from Long Beach to Hampton Bays, a mission that continues to drive our organization.

Recognizing the importance of sharing this treasure trove with the public, Long Island Traditions is proud to announce the launch of the South Shore Portal, part of our web site, so that you can see and listen how maritime traditions continue to play an important role in our life today. The site is divided into 3 sections: Architecture, which examines the various kinds of buildings found in waterfront communities, Sights and Sounds, which explores the numerous traditions of Long Islanders today, and Communities which shows you the sites we have documented, its history, and a survey tool kit so that you can help us document your community.



Listening highlights include:

- 1938 hurricane stories from bay house owners
- Harvesting horseshoe crabs
- Survival on the ocean by offshore dragger boats
- Why baymen work on the water
- Jokes and funny stories by bay house owners
- Boat building in Patchogue

You can also see slide shows about bay houses, summer bungalows, boatyards, hotels and other maritime artifacts.

Like all other web sites, we see this site as a beginning, continuously evolving. We invite you to submit your own stories and articles, photographs, recorded interviews and of course your suggestions. Please contact us, and check back often, as it will change frequently! And spread the word. We also want to thank our partners at the South Shore Estuary Reserve Council, and our funders from the New York State Council on the Arts for all their support. And most importantly, we thank you for sharing your memories, stories and photographs! ■

Mangala: Landmark on Main Street, November 2

Join the Young Indian Culture Group for an afternoon of music and dance at Landmark on Main Street in Port Washington. The program will feature master artists who are recognized within the South Asian community on Long Island. Featuring Odissi Dance, Bharatanatyam Dance Carnatic Music, Bhajan Music, Bollywood Folk Dance as performed by Mala Desai, Lalitha Badrinath, Meena Mani, Shobana Ram, and Sunita Sadhni & Dance Ensemble. This event will take place on Sunday, November 2, 2008 from 3 – 5 pm at The Jeanne Rimsky Theater at Landmark on Main Street, located at 232 Main Street in Port Washington.

Long Island Traditions has received 20 free tickets to our members. If you would like one of these tickets call the Young Indian Culture Group at (516) 739-1575 or email them at yicgroup@aol.com. Indicate that you are a member of Long Island Traditions when calling. ■

Become a Member Subscribe to the Newsletter!

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Long Island Fisheries Profiles

By Nancy Solomon

Pete Wenczel: Conch Fisherman

Born in New York City, and raised in suburban New Jersey, Pete spent his childhood summers in Southold, where he first learned to swim, sail, fish and clam. By the time he was a young man, he knew that he wanted to make his living off the water. As he recalled, “I just wanted to be near the water.” When he turned 20 Pete was working as a commercial fisherman, harvesting scallops which he sold to Mike Morris at the Southold Fishing Station. “That was my first love” Pete remembers today.

In the 1970s and 80s scallops were plentiful, and most baymen did well, often catching the legal limit in a matter of hours during the season’s traditional opening the third Monday of September. Pete also set gil nets, catching bluefish and other finfish species. Yet Pete and other baymen knew that it was dangerous to depend on one species for their living. So when an elderly baymen, Wes Bednosky asked Pete to participate in his welk business, with the stipulation that he receive 25% of the gross harvest as payment, Pete jumped at the opportunity, a decision he has never regretted. As a result, when the brown tide struck in 1985, Pete was able to survive as a bayman, a decision that has helped him to this day. He makes his own pots, originally made from oak and wood, and today from plastic and composite lumber.

Like most trap fishermen Pete uses horseshoe crabs for bait. The crabs were traditionally harvested on the May and June full moon at high tide, when the crabs moved onto the wetlands and beaches in order to mate. Fishermen would capture the female crabs and place them in underwater pens set near the shoreline. They would cut the crabs in half as needed and place it in the trap’s “bait compartment.”

Beginning in 1998 the federal agencies began restricting harvesting horseshoe crabs, a trend that continued in the early part of this decade. However in 2005 New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland and Virginia prohibited the harvesting of any crabs during the spawning season, which brought new pressures to harvest in New York State. As a result the state began limiting the season, prohibiting harvesting during the spawning season.

According to Pete, “Regulations are killing us.” The horseshoe management plan is “one of the worst I’ve ever seen” – driven by the clout of the Audubon society. All of the fishing has left Delaware Bay and now the pressure is on New York State’s horseshoe crab. I used to pay 30 cents a crab. Today I pay \$1 a crab and I got a bargain. I need 8-9000 crabs per year. The management plan has shifted the pressure into small areas and now it’s a nightmare for anyone who depends on horseshoe crabs. Yet there is no shortage of horseshoe crabs.”

Horseshoe Crab Status

Region	Sub-region	Time series duration of longest dataset	Conclusion about population change
Southeast		1995-2003	Stable
Delaware Bay		1988-2003	Declined
New York	W. Long Island Sound, various bays	1987-2003	Stable or increased
	E. Long Island Sound, Peconic Bay	1980-2003	Declined from peak levels in early to mid 1990s, but consistent with mid 1980s levels
New England	Cape Cod	1978-2002	Declined or stable
	Narragansett Bay	1975-2002	Declined

Source: National Marine Fisheries Service

“I used to have a modest freezer – held 1800 crabs – and I could catch crabs when I needed them. Now I pay \$3000 per year for a freezer that holds 3500 crabs which I now have to catch before the season starts. I have another freezer – spend \$2500 for that space.” In addition to the cost Pete also is faced with dueling harvest seasons; one of the prime conch harvest months is June when the horseshoe crab harvests now take place. As a result Pete now pays another baymen to catch the crabs.



Pete Wenczel c. 2007 Photo by Nancy Solomon

Recent efforts by the NY Department of State and the South Shore estuary to examine the population status of horseshoe crabs have begun, under the guidance of the New York State Ecosystem Management Plan. Their primary contractor is The Nature Conservancy. In a recent draft management strategy the Conservancy states:

“While there is limited information on horseshoe crab population trends in Great South Bay, a trawl survey in Peconic Bay indicates decline in abundance throughout the 1990s extending to the present. On the other hand, preliminary analyses of beach seine data suggest that nesting populations in other areas of New York State have varied without trend since the late 1980s.” Their objective, stated in a 2007 report is “Establish and maintain a nesting population of horseshoe crabs in Great South Bay at a level that provides adequate availability of eggs as forage for fish and shorebirds by 2015.”

Contrasting the Conservancy’s survey the National Marine Fisheries Service shows that the population has either stabilized or increased, as seen in the accompanying chart. Yet the regulations are forcing fishermen to restrict their harvesting activities. Like the fluke regulatory reports, the horseshoe crab surveys indicate that stocks are rebounding, yet fishermen are losing their ability to make a living.

When asked why he is not interested in aquaculture, Pete responds

“I’m not a farmer, I’m a fisherman. I don’t want to look at the same scenery all the time. It doesn’t hold the same excitement as stalking and catching the wily conchs. Just when you think you have it figured out – the weather patterns change, or the conch pot in a unexpected area- it still surprises you. It amazes me that we still have a fishery, after all, the conch fishery is the only unregulated fishery I can think of in New York State: What does that tell you? There’s always some twist that makes it interesting.”

Pete is committed to preserving the traditional fisherman’s way of life. “I’ve always loved working on the water and I’d hate to leave it. I have no intention of giving it up. I’ve always said that I will be the last bayman standing and they will have to drag me away kicking and screaming.”

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.

October 16: "Rahel Musleah's Facing West: The True Story of One Family's Journey from India to Israel, 1945-1955". 1 pm, Bryant Library, 2 Paper Mill Rd., Roslyn. For information call (516) 621-2240.

November 2: Mangala: The Arts of India. The Young Indian Culture Group. 2 pm at Landmark on Main Street, 232 Main Street, Port Washington. For reservations call (516) 739-1575. See accompanying article for more details.

November 9: Maritime Film Festival. Stony Brook University, Student Activities Center. 10:30 am – 7 pm. Admission is \$12/day pass for orders received prior to October 31, \$15 afterwards. See accompanying article. For reservations call Long Island Traditions at (516) 767-8803.

November 18: Sacred Music of the Punjab II. Hofstra University. Weekly class continues through December 9. This free class will examine music traditions in a broad South Asian context and will include an historical overview of Sikh gurus and their musical contributions, musical theory and techniques. For information call (516) 463-7600.

December 17: "Rahel Musleah's Facing West (see Oct. 16 event). 2 pm. Long Beach Public Library, 111 W. Park Ave. Call (516) 432-7200 for information.

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