

Long Island Traditions

NEWSLETTER

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Vol. 23 No.3
Fall 2016

Freeport Waters Exhibit

Long Island Traditions, in association with the Village of Freeport, is mounting a permanent outdoor exhibition on the maritime traditions of Freeport, along the Nautical Mile. The dedication will take place on Saturday, September 24 at 11 am. This permanent exhibit features historic and contemporary photographs, web links and an artistic design along the famed “Nautical Mile.” Topics examined include Bay Houses, Rum Runners, Boat Building, and Freeport Legends.

The exhibit is designed to engage visitors through video links, historic and contemporary images culled from LI Traditions’ archives, the Freeport Historical Society collections, and artifacts donated by families of those interviewed for the exhibit. The architecture of the installations evokes motifs connected with each theme, designed by architect Paul Bentel and fabricated by Forest Iron Works of Locust Valley.

The Bay House installation examines the history of bay houses, their design and construction, and traditional uses of the houses, and their fate after Superstorm Sandy. Accompanying videos include interviews with Brian Warasila, Laura Smith, Wendy Jankoski and other bay house owners. Historic photos were donated by bay house owners, and contemporary photographs were shot by documentary photographer Martha Cooper, and LI Traditions’ director Nancy Solomon. The installation will be located at Sea Breeze Park, at the south end of Woodcleft Avenue.

The Rum Runners installation, examines the storied history of booze smuggling during the Prohibition era of 1918– 30s. Freeport was a major center due to its proximity to the offshore rum running ships and its active boat building industry. Accompanying videos include stories about the infamous Bill McCoy, and bay house owner Captain Jack Combs, as told by George Combs and the late Captain Carmine Marinaccio. It will be located on 28 Woodcleft Avenue near the Captain Lou fleet docks. The wood barrels were provided by East Coast Wood Barrel Works of Medford.

See **Freeport Waters** on page 2

Tobay Boat Show “Working the Waters” Program October 1 & 2

Long Island Traditions will present its 4th annual “Working the Waters: Maritime Culture of Long Island” program in collaboration with the NY Marine Trades Association “Tobay Boat Show” on Saturday – Sunday, October 1-2 at Tobay Beach on the Ocean Parkway, east of Jones Beach in Massapequa, New York. “Working the Waters: Maritime Culture of Long Island” will present to the public first-hand accounts about the contemporary and historic traditions of commercial and recreational fishermen, the factors affecting these traditions and their future on Long Island in the wake of Superstorm Sandy and the decline of the bays.

Highlights of the event include decoy carver Jack Combs of Southold, fishermen Tony Sougstad, Michael Combs, Fred Menges, Bill Fetzer, Chuck Tekula, boat model builder Chris Hale and maritime driftwood painter Herb Jurist, among many others. There will also be family and children fishing lessons taught by master recreational fisherman Reed Riemer.

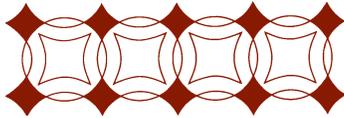
Boat Show and Festival admission is \$10 (seniors \$8, children 12 and under are free) and will take place at Tobay Beach on Ocean Parkway in Massapequa. The event hours are Friday, September 30 at 12 p.m.-6 p.m.,

Saturday & Sunday, October 1 & 2 at 10 a.m.-6 p.m. For more information, call Long Island Traditions at (516) 767-8803 or the NY Marine Trades Association at (631) 691-7050 or visit www.nyboatshows.com/Tobay.



Photo by Chloe Accadi 2015.

Bay House owner and carver Michael Combs will be demonstrating at the Tobay Boat Show October 1 & 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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Council on the Arts

Freeport Waters continued from page 1

“Freeport Legends” examines legendary figures associated with the village’s maritime heritage. The panel features orchestra leader Guy Lombardo, charter boat captain Carmine Marinaccio, bayman Cory Weyant and lifeguard Reggie Jones. The installation will feature hat types known to be worn by those featured in the exhibit. The exhibit will be adjacent to the Two Cousins Fish Market at 255 Woodcleft Avenue.

The Boat Builders installation examines the history of boat building in Freeport. Featured are Al Grover, the Scopinich



Courtesy Bill Marinaccio

“Captain Carm” with his catch c. 1938. Carmine Marinaccio is one of those featured in the Freeport Waters exhibit.

family, the Maresca Boatyard and garvey builder John Remsen. Connected to the exhibit is an original bow sprint crafted by Chris Hale and Weeks Boatyard in Patchogue. Accompanying videos include interviews with Fred Scopinich, John Remsen and Jerry Maresca, and historic footage from Al Grover’s transatlantic voyage of 1985. A propeller donated by SPLASH is also part of the

installation. The exhibit will be located in front of Rachel’s Waterside Restaurant at 281 Woodcleft Avenue.

Project funding was provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Park Service, the NY State Council on the Arts and the NY Council for the Humanities. The exhibit was curated by LI Traditions’ director Nancy Solomon in association with City Lore. The multi-media pieces were curated by Anna Mule and Emily Charlaff. The graphic designer was Paul Orselli of Paul Orselli Workshop. Fossil Graphics of Deer Park produced the panels. Installation is made possible by the Village of Freeport. ■

Decoy Carving at LI Museum

On Sunday, November 13 from 1-5 pm join traditional shore bird and decoy carvers at the LI Museum of Art, History and Carriages. New to the program this year will be carvers Jack Combs, George Rigby, Don Michne and Fred Reaver, all veteran carvers and hunters. Come and learn how baymen made decoys for both hunting and decorative use, providing income to baymen for generations. There will be hands on activities for young and old alike, and a moderated storytelling session led by folklorist Nancy Solomon. The event is free with museum admission. The museum is located at 1200 Route 25A in Stony Brook, NY. For more information call (631) 751-0066. ■



Photo by Nancy Solomon.

Fish and decoy carver Don Michne will be demonstrating and displaying his decoys at the LI Museum decoy day on November 13th.

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Editor's Note: Michael Combs, decoy carver and bay house owner, will be participating in the Tobay Boat Show program "Working the Waters" on October 1-2nd. Come join us for this weekend event where you can learn about the maritime traditions of Long Island's shores.

The BAYathelon

A true story about youth, impulsiveness, and luck on the south shore of Long Island.

By Jeff Keene II

Jeff Keene and his cousins, Mike and John Combs, had been planning to do this thing they jokingly referred to as the BAYathelon for several weeks. Finally, they got together one day and decided to do it. The BAYathelon, as defined by the three, was trying to get to their family's bay house without a boat. Swimming and "marsh-hopping" was the only other way. The bay house, like many other of its kind, was a shack-like house built on stilts on the bank of the saltwater marsh and quite some distance from their mainland town of Freeport. Freeport was a town that historically was involved in sea-fearing activities. It is still known today for its fishing and boating. The boys were born and raised in this town. The bay was in their blood and this BAYathelon seemed like one more way to get some more of that bay into their blood.

It wasn't a short journey to swim to the bay house. It was a little over a mile of treacherous land and sea scape. At times one would have to swim for 15-minutes straight to get to the marsh or to a sandbar and then hike across the marshy muddy ground littered with sharp clam shells and deep holes to where the water began again.

It was about 10 o'clock in the morning and the boys were ready to jump off of the bulkhead at the foot of Lester Avenue. They looked out over the bay at the sun glistening off of the windswept water. The big decision was, who goes first? They finally decided that they should hold hands and all jump in together.

The water was calm and cool. After getting their bearings the swimming began. Heading south, the three boys swam for about 10-minutes and reached the first sandbar. The tide was low now and it was relatively easy to traverse the structure. These long, usually narrow ridges often spell disaster for unwary boaters who run aground upon them. But for our three adventurers, it was a welcome change to the swimming they has just endured. Not being trained swimmers, they were relying on these sandbars to walk towards their destination. As they exited the water, they looked off into the distance and could see the bay house, but it was still quite far. The tide had been inching higher and higher and the wind began to pick up ever so gently.

It was another 45-minutes before the boys reached the house on stilts. It was painted white with green trim. Bits of paint were peeling off due to the extreme weather conditions that exist out there throughout the year. The house was two stories and had lots of beds. The first floor was essentially a great room with a kitchen and living room. They started a fire in the wood-burning stove to warm themselves and heat up some canned food that their family stored out there for hunting trips and family outings. They allowed three hours to go by while talking and playing card games at the table.

After two o'clock rolled by they decided it was time to clean up and start heading back while there was still plenty of daylight left. The wind was now blowing stronger. To make matters worse, they were awfully tired and quickly realized that the daunting swim and trudging hike ahead of them were no longer enticing activities.

As with all bay-raised children, improvisation was an acquired and necessary skill so the three boys decided to fashion a sailboat from a large piece of Styrofoam that was stored outside, in back of the bay house. They used a bed sheet for the sail and some lumber for the mast.

The tide was coming in strong now, so they had that at their advantage. But the wind was blowing from the northwest, the very direction they needed to head. Tacking a sailboat was not their strong point. Motor boats were their forte. A sudden gust of wind toppled the unstable craft when they were only a quarter of the way back to their starting point. Jeff and Mike were able to maintain a grip upon the water-soaked craft, but John was being swept away by the current, as he had hit and injured his foot on the boat and lost his strength for a moment. Jeff and Mike tried to right the sail boat, but the bed sheet sail was too wet. They had to abandon the craft and do their best to make for land.

Just as things seemed darkest, a small boat began to approach from the very direction they were headed. It was John and Mike's father, Jack Combs. He was headed out to the bay house to drop off supplies for an upcoming gun club picnic and just happened to notice the boys out of sheer luck. The boys climbed on board and were very thankful. They were also extremely grateful for the wisdom they had gained while attempting this dangerous stunt.

The BAYathelon is not a feat for the faint of heart or the weak in body. Although the bays of the south shore of Long Island offer many leisurely activities and opportunities for fun, without the proper experience and wisdom, things can turn deadly. Fog banks, lightning storms, rip currents, mud holes, injuries, lack of fresh water, sun stroke, and many other hazards await the foolish. Luckily, the boys learned their lesson and can now share their adventure with others. ■

Rangoli Workshops at East Meadow Library

In LI Traditions' continuing ethnic folk arts class series, we're delighted to present a class series of the traditional Indian art *Rangoli*, floor and entrance decorations that are made using traditional designs during Diwali. The colorful patterns are based on designs that are passed down from generation to generation.

The classes will be taught by Sonia Arora, a master Indian teaching artist. The classes will take place on Saturdays November 12 & 19, and December 10 & 17, from 10 am – 12 pm at the East Meadow Library, located at 1886 Front Street in East Meadow. Admission is free but registration is suggested. These classes are designed for families and adults. To register call (516) 794-2570. ■

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.

Don't forget to visit our web site and our Facebook page for timely information.



September 24: Dedication of Freeport Waters. 11am at Sea Breeze Park, foot of Woodcleft Avenue, Freeport.

September 29: Fishermen and baymen presentation by Nancy Solomon. Smithtown Library. 7 pm.
One North Country Road, Smithtown. For information call (631) 360-2480.

October 1 & 2: Working the Waters at the Tobay Boat Show. Ocean Parkway.

November 13: Decoy Heritage Day. 1-5 pm. LI Museum at Stony Brook. 1200 Rt 25A, Stony Brook. For information call (631) 751-0066.

 Printed on recycled paper

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