

Long Island Traditions

NEWSLETTER

www.longislandtraditions.org
info@longislandtraditions.org

Vol. 22 No.2
Spring 2015

Boating With the Baymen: Working the Waters of Long Island

Focus on Freeport, May 31 at 2pm

Long Island Traditions is sponsoring another “Boating with the Baymen” tour on Sunday, May 31 at 2 pm aboard the Miss Freeport. The spring tour explores the traditions of fishermen and baymen, and bay house owners. Participants include the legendary Bob Doxsee of Doxsee Sea Clam in Point Lookout, bay house owners and boat builders John Remsen Sr. and John Remsen Jr., and Freeport baymen Joey Scavone, Collin Weyant and Lucas Krucher. Themes of the tour will include:

- “Looking Backwards”
- “Bay Houses”
- “The Next Generation”

The tour takes place on board the Miss Freeport, located at 85 Woodcleft Avenue, Freeport. Tickets are \$40/adult, \$20/children under 16, with discounts for LI Traditions’ members, families and groups. Space is limited and reservations are required! To reserve your spot



Photo by Nancy Solomon.

Collin Weyant (right), the son of Cory Weyant, will be on deck at Boating with the Baymen, sharing his stories of the bay. Also shown is Andre Nilov of Freeport.

www.longislandtraditions.org. The fall tour is scheduled for October 4 at 2pm.

Bay House Tour Update

Bay House tours are scheduled for July 19 and September 19. LI Traditions’ members will be able to register for the tours beginning on June 2nd until June 18th. After June 18th the general public can register for the tour. There is a 2-ticket limit per person/member. Please call (516) 767-8803 after June 1st for reservations. Thank you!

Indian Dance Performance

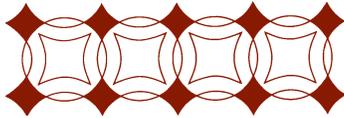
June 21

Satya Pradeep will be offering the production of “Stree” which interprets the mythology of women in Indian culture. The show will take place at the Hindu Temple Auditorium in Flushing on June 21 at 4 pm. The Temple is located at 45-57 Bowne Street in Flushing. Tickets are \$10 - \$30. For information call (516) 633-2897.

Project Updates

As a result of several grants awarded by the NY State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts and the Preserve American Program of NOAA, LI Traditions is continuing several programs including our Maritime School Program in Freeport elementary schools for 2016, and a new project: “Freeport Waters” with City Lore, an outdoor signage exhibition along the Nautical Mile in Freeport. The first phase will consist of 3 panels exploring Bay Houses, Boat Building and Commercial Fishing. The estimated completion date is Spring 2016. Stay tuned for more details.

Our next museum exhibit “In Harm’s Way” will be hosted by the LI Museum of Art, History and Carriages in Stony Brook in the fall of 2017. We have conducted several oral interviews, ranging from Fire Island residents, bay house owners, public policy makers and fishermen. If you have a story to share, do let us know! These recordings will become part of our permanent archives at Hofstra University, enabling future generations to learn about the changes in our coastal landscapes. For more information call us at (516) 767-8803.



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.

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

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From Shore to Shore Docks at Suffolk County Historical Society

April 30 program at 6 pm

Our travelling exhibit "From Shore to Shore: Boat Builders and Boatyards of Long Island and Westchester" will be opening at the Suffolk County Historical Society on Saturday, April 18 at 5pm. The exhibit will be on view from April 18 – September 19th at the main gallery, located at 300 West Main Street, Riverhead.

On *Thursday, April 30* at 6 pm there will be an evening program featuring master boat builders and restorers Donn Costanzo and Josh Herman, along with historic boat yard owner Kevin Weeks of Weeks Boatyard. Come join us for some stories and reflections, moderated by LI Traditions' director Nancy Solomon. The exhibit will be on display as well.

On *Saturday, June 13* at 1:00 PM visit the museum while Christopher Hale demonstrates the tradition of Half-Model-Making. Boat builder Christopher Hale will demonstrate a method of half-model making by utilizing specialized hand tools and line drawings of specific boats. He will craft working boats indigenous to the South Shore of Long Island, including a 1970s-era Garvey and a sail-powered tonging boat from the early 1900s.



Photo by Nancy Solomon.

Chris Hale will be demonstrating how to make half models of traditional Long Island boats on June 13 at the Suffolk County Historical Society.

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Passings: Ken Budny

Ken Budny was a resident of Bellport, where he grew up working for local fishermen, competitive sailboat racers, and others who spent time on the bay, beginning a lifelong journey centered on Great South Bay. Although he did not grow up in a fishing family, he spent most of his 64 years working on the bay, beginning as a youngster who helped Bellport bayman George Shelton as he clammed, harvested eels, and caught fish using traditional pound nets, once a common site in the bay. Unlike most "bay rats," Ken attended college, and later joined the Peace Corps and the Army, returning to the bay in the 1970s. While most South Shore baymen worked in Great South Bay, Ken explored and began clamming in Port Jefferson in the 1980s. He also harvested oysters, a time-consuming process because oysters would clump together. Ken also harvested blue claw crabs in the bay, relying on bunker and herring for bait. Ken was also a master decoy carver and collector. He was well known for his working decoys, using wood he found from friends in the home remodeling business. Like his parents, Ken was a natural born artist and his work is highly valued.

Ken worked for the Post Morrow Foundation from 2000 until his passing in 2015. He sat on the South Shore Estuary Reserve Council and was a trustee for the Village of Bellport. Lastly, he was an active member of the Brookhaven Baymen's Association. Ken passed away after a long battle with prostate cancer in March 2015.

Editor's note: As a result of Superstorm Sandy, the Koelbel and Carson families had to partially rebuild their historic bay house, along with relocating it back to its original site. Fortunately the house retains many of its original features.

“The Shack” a.k.a Lease #760

By Barbara Koelbel Bange

During the early 1900's spending the afternoon fishing on the bay was not as luxurious as it is today. My grandfather, Joseph G. Koelbel, was one of the rare people who made the two to three hour trip out of Freeport, and in later years out of Baldwin, to fish on the bay. In his early teens, he would take the trolley car from Valley Stream to Freeport where he kept his rowboat at his great-uncle Tom Raynor's house. He would leave from Freeport just before dawn rowing, fish for a few hours, and row back home. In 1916, he moved to Baldwin with his family. His father bought a plot of land in Baldwin, now known as Koelbel Court. At that time he purchased a single cylinder engine boat. It was not faster than rowing, but it *Beats Rowing*, which is what he named the boat. Then in 1918, he bought the *Vivian*, presently owned by the Nassau County Museum. It was a one cylinder lathrop engine, a little faster than rowing, but at least he could save his energy for fishing.

In March 1922, my grandfather entered into lease agreement #522 with the Town of Hempstead for a parcel of land on Trumps Hole - on the east side of Swift Creek, south of Charlie Johnson's old hotel near what is now the Swift Creek bridge. In April 1922 with the help of his father, Joseph J. Koelbel and his brother, William Koelbel, my grandfather began to build a bay house on this parcel of land. My grandfather's great-uncle, Tom Raynor, who had one of the earliest bay houses on Breakfast Creek off Broad Creek, not far from the old “Green House” and Brant Point Hotel, helped build the bay house too. Having built his own bay house and knowing the right way and the wrong way, he advised them on better ways to build a bay house that would survive the elements. The bay house was built on mud sills, which are beams that are laid directly on the marsh, to keep it from sinking into the meadows, and on pilings two feet over the meadows to keep the water out during high tides. Wood that was found during beachcombing trips along the shores of the Great South Bay was used to build the house, walkway and dock.

The bay house was not built according to the building codes of today. The length of boards that were on hand from the wood that was gathered determined the frame construction for the wall and the placement of studs. Some materials, such as, windows and wood shingles for the roof and siding were brought out by boat from the main land. The layout was simple, two interior rooms, a living room and bedroom, and a porch. The house took a little over a month to complete. A kitchen was added off the back of the house two years later.

In June 1922, the bay house was completed. Now instead of a one-day fishing trip, my grandfather would head out to the bay house Friday night just before dark; stay at the bay house Friday night; get up early Saturday and fish all day; stay at the bay house Saturday night, and go back home Sunday afternoon. There was also time to swim and trap shoot too. The Town of Hempstead issued a lease at a yearly sum of \$10.00 to be paid annually in advance to the Supervisor of the Town on the first day of June in each and every year till 1928. In 1929 the lease was renewed for one year.

Then the depression hit and lease renewals were not continued. In 1933, my grandfather had to move the bay house because the land that he leased from the town was sold to the state to widen Swift Creek and to build the Jones Beach Causeway. Moving the house was not an easy task. It was moved on a barge to its present location on Middle Crow Island on the Horserace. The house was skidded by manual labor on and off the barge. At the new location the house had to be turned 90 degrees so it would face the south. To accomplish this, it was skidded on greased boards. Then it was jacked up and the foundation of mudsills and pilings were constructed underneath it.



The Koelbel-Carson bay house was moved in 1933.

In April of 1939 when the worst of the depression had passed, the Town contacted my grandfather regarding the lease. My grandfather had to work out with the Town the problems of issuing a new lease and collecting back lease money. Because the land the bay house was originally on was sold to the State, the Town could not collect money on it from the time it was sold to the time the house was moved. A deal was worked out between my grandfather and the Town. For the years 1935 to 1939 he paid \$15.00 a year and starting in 1940 he would pay \$25.00. Prior to 1935, all uncollected lease money was cancelled. At this time because the house was moved, a new lease, #760, was issued in my grandfather's name. He continued to renew the lease yearly up to 1943. For 1944 and 1945 the Town did not send out leases due to World War II. In 1946, leases were sent out again, but no deals were made for back lease money that was due. Either you paid the money or your lease was cancelled. My grandfather paid the money in installments, even though due to gas restrictions he could not get out to the house to use it.

In 1948, my grandfather had the *Gray Dawn*, a 28 foot Verity skiff, made. Nippy Jackson, Sam Verity's son-in-law, built it in Sam's old shop in Baldwin. It is still in the family and has its original registration number of NY5AB. In the years to follow my grandfather renewed his lease annually, used and maintained the bay house along with his four children and his twenty-six grandchildren. During that time he passed on his appreciation and knowledge of the wetlands, not only to his children, but to anyone who was interested and wanted to learn more. He instilled in all of us the importance of the wetlands, and how to enjoy them and not abuse them. Now, although he is not alive to see his grandchildren and great grandchildren are carrying on the same traditions he started so many years ago. The love that they have for “The Shack” draws them back from all over the United States at least once a year. It is hard to describe this love, but once you have had a taste of it, you can never forget it.

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.

- April 18:** From Shore to Shore exhibit opening reception. 5 pm. Suffolk County Historical Society, 300 West Main Street, Riverhead.
- April 30:** Boat Builders and Boatyards of Long Island program. 6 pm. Suffolk County Historical Society, 300 West Main Street, Riverhead.
- May 31:** Boating with the Baymen tour. 2 pm. Miss Freeport. 85 Woodcleft Avenue, Freeport. Call (516) 767-8803 for information and reservations.
- June 21:** Indian Dance Program. 4 pm. Hindu Temple, 45-57 Bowne Street in Flushing. Call (516) 633-2897.
- July 19:** Bay House Tour. Call (516) 767-8803 for information and reservations.

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Port Washington, NY 11050