

Long Island Traditions

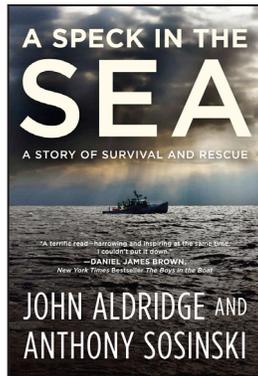
NEWSLETTER

www.longislandtraditions.org
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Vol. 25 No.2
Spring/Summer 2018

Cold Spring Harbor Whaling Museum Program

LI Traditions is partnering with the Cold Spring Harbor Whaling Museum on a series of programs exploring our maritime culture “At Work and At Play.” On May 17 at 6:30 pm our final program will feature fishermen who have come close to death. John Aldridge and Anthony Sosinski are the authors of [A Speck in the Sea](#) which describes how Aldridge survived in the ocean after falling overboard during one of their fishing trips. Copies of the book will be available for purchase. Also joining in this evening program will be commercial fisherman Captain Tony Sougstad of Freeport, who once survived a powerful Nor’easter near George’s Banks.



The authors will be part of a special program on May 17 at the Cold Spring Harbor Whaling and Education Center.

Grants News

LI Traditions has been recognized for several new projects and other ongoing projects. The National Endowment for the Arts awarded LI Traditions a multi-year grant from the Folk and Traditional Arts program to support our maritime programs, including several partnerships with City Lore, the Oyster Bay Historical Society, and Staten Island Arts. The grant will support a boat ride program on board the Staten Island Ferry, a traveling exhibit “Waterfront Heroes” and our participation in the Tobay Boat Show this fall. ■

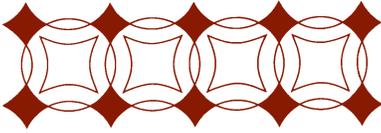
Bay House Tours 2018

July 1 and 15th

On Sundays, July 1 and 15, Long Island Traditions will sponsor its annual Bay House Tours in the Town of Hempstead. Departure times are 10 a.m. and 12 p.m. Don’t miss this opportunity to visit the last reminders of Long Island’s nautical past that are still used today by the area’s baymen. Many bay houses were destroyed by Superstorm Sandy but some do remain. The owners of the houses are working to repair the houses.

Participants must be able to climb ladders and feel comfortable in a work environment. The July 1 tour will leave from Freeport, and the July 15 tour will depart from Long Beach. Due to safety concerns, space is limited to 12 people per trip, ages 10 and up. **Long Island Traditions members can register beginning May 7.** To join Long Island Traditions, visit our web site. **All others can register after May 29.** The ticket limit is 2/per person. For reservations, call LI Traditions at (516) 767-8803 to confirm availability. No children under 10 permitted. Rain and construction problems may cancel the event. Tickets for the bay house tours are \$50 for adults, \$90/couple with a \$5 discount for LI Traditions members.

The tour will be led by LI Traditions Director Nancy Solomon. Those on board will be treated to a brief history of the bay houses, the first of which were built in the 1700s. Bay houses were traditionally used by fishermen who harvested clams, oysters, crabs, and other species from local waters. The surviving houses date from the period between 1870 and 1950. Each tour will visit two bay houses. Telephone reservations are required! The tour is not suitable for those who have difficulty walking or climbing into small boats or climbing ladders. For more information, call Long Island Traditions at 516-767-8803. Please call or e-mail first to confirm availability. ■



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
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E-mail: info@longislandtraditions.org or visit us
on the web at: www.longislandtraditions.org



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Boating with the Baymen: Maritime History and Architecture of Meadow Island

Saturday June 23, 2018

2:00– 5:00 pm

All on board the Miss Freeport

Departure from 85 Woodcleft Avenue, Freeport

In the western bays of Long Island's south shore stands Meadow Island, one of the only privately owned marshland islands where owners' deeds date back to the 1600s. On this guided tour led by folklorist Nancy Solomon, we will learn firsthand how the island has changed through its history, with current and former bay house owners. Meet and talk with baymen and fishermen Bob Doxide, Jack Combs, bay house owners Frank Passalacqua, Don Vandewater, Dennis Carr, Fred and Christina Deppert.

Reservations are required! Space is limited so reserve early. Cost is \$45/person, \$20 for children under 16. \$5 discount for Long Island Traditions members.

To reserve your seat call us at (516) 767-8803 to confirm that space is available, and send a check payable to Long Island Traditions, 382 Main Street, Port Washington, NY 11050 or visit www.longislandtraditions.org.

Recent Interviews

As many of you know, the core of our work is based on personal interviews with those carrying on the traditions of their culture, defined as occupational, regional, ethnic, community or other ways of identifying yourself. Over the last two years we've conducted many interviews relating to storms and hurricanes, ethnic traditions and among bay house owners.

They include:

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Michael Combs | Ken Maltz |
| Ted Degarmo | Chip Maran |
| Paul Ferguson | Kevin McDermott |
| Bill Fetzer | John Melfi |
| Friends of Freeport | Fred Menges |
| Vera Gallagher | Jen & Steven Meschkow |
| Wendy Jankoski | Bill Painter |
| Sally & Peter Kopher | Mike Sartoretti |
| Don Law | Chuck Tekula |
| Scott Lechmanski | |

Rum Runners

Over the years we've done many interviews that occasionally lead us to the topic of rum running. Some of you may be familiar with these stories, many of which center on Long Island's south shore. Unlike historians, we do not claim that these stories are accurate, but since we hear them from different people who are not familiar with each other, we accept them as a piece of history.

In 1919 the United States passed the Prohibition Reform Act banning alcoholic beverages. This legislation set great changes in motion. Large cargo ships carrying wine and other alcoholic beverages anchored offshore while baymen and other "rum runners" transferred the illegal merchandise to shore. Freeport was home to many rum runners and their hiding places. The Scopinich family built rum runners and coast guard boats, while bay house owners provided hiding spots. Law enforcement was scarce, except for a few Coast Guard officials, who sometimes remained silent if a bribe was offered. After a growing public outcry the law was repealed in 1933.



Courtesy Library of Congress.

Off shore boats like this one transported rum from the Caribbean to Long Island during Prohibition.

"Jack Combs, a burly bayman, and his partner, "One arm Charlie," shared a bay house in the Haunts Creek area. One day he and his friend converted their booze into cash and deposited it for safe-keeping in a cigar box hid under a cot. By the time they returned the next day, the extra high tide had soaked their "deposit box," the \$5s, \$10s and \$20s were now soggy with salt water. Jack hastily went to town and returned with a box of thumb tacks. The two had just finished tacking the money on the walls to dry when federal marshals, guns in hand, kicked the door open and, gazing at the money hanging on the wall, shouted "You are under arrest!" Jack stuttered and gasped, "What for?" "Possession of alcoholic beverages" came the answer. "Wa, wa, wa, we only got money; no booze," Jack protested. "Ain't against the law to have money." All the while One Arm Charlie nodded in approval. "You have a point," admitted the officer. "We will be watching you," he cautioned as he left. "

--Carminé Marinaccio, September 1989

"Well I remember one good story about the boat Maureen. That was the 52 footer. The first night that boat went out of the inlet, it took five crew members. They were all Freeporters. And they got out to the coast guard boat that was patrolling the inlet. And the coast guard stopped them and said 'where are you going?' and they said 'mackerel fishing' but as the coast

guard boat stopped them and asked them this, two fellas from the boat jumped off with pistols. They held up the coast guards. The boat went out, got its load of rum and liquor, came back through, went in and unloaded. Now that they sent a skiff out to pick up the two guys, when they sent the skiff out, they took 2-3 hundred dollars and they hid it in the coast guard boat and they told the coast guards if you report us, we're reporting you that you took a bribe. And the old guy that told me this, he was about 90 years old, said 'Ha!' he said 'What could they do now?'

Another fellow gave my father two houses for a boat. He was a house builder and houses weren't selling that easy and he had built the houses and I guess he had to pay the lumber yard and all the suppliers. And nothing was happening, and he wasn't a boatman or a waterman. He said 'Freddie' said 'look I'm in trouble'. He says 'I'll give you these two houses, if you'll give me a boat.' And my father gave him a boat and he went out and got his couple of trips, and he paid everybody. "

-- Fred Scopinich November 1988

"They would run off shore, and they would pick up



Courtesy Lillian Chapin.

Hotels like this one on Meadow Island frequently served alcohol to patrons during Prohibition.

stuff from McCoy at the twelve mile line and they'd run it back in. This was my great grandfather. Him and "shorty" would catch some rum and they'd bring it back into Woodcleft Canal. One time he was traded diamonds for rum. McCoy would go down to the Bahamas and the Caribbean and bring all the rum up and they'd sail to the twelve mile line. One day a guy went out 'fishing' and they had the boat loaded down with water. They'd get off and pump it out, load it with booze and come back in. All the hotels had rum in secret compartments under the floor boards. One of the guys who was a bartender, who wasn't supposed to be serving alcohol, he could go down and take a drink and come right back up. He'd say 'nothing's going on, I never had a drink.' Because the big hotels were out in the bay, they could have alcohol. "

--George Combs 2015

If you have a story to share, let us know! ■

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.

- May 17:** Close Calls on the Water with John Aldridge, Anthony Sosinski and Tony Sougstad. 6:30 pm. See accompanying article for information. Cold Spring Harbor Whaling and Education Center. 301 Main St, Cold Spring Harbor. (631) 367-3418.
- June 23:** Boating with the Baymen. 2-5 pm. Miss Freeport, 85 Woodcleft Avenue, Freeport. See accompanying article for information. Call (516) 767-8803 for reservations.
- July 1 and 15:** Bay House Tours. See accompanying article. LI Traditions members registration begins May 7. General registration begins May 29. Call (516) 767-8803 for reservations.

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