

# Long Island Traditions

## NEWSLETTER

www.longislandtraditions.org

Vol. 16 No. 3 Summer 2009

### Sounds of Suburbia

Long Island Traditions has provided Arts-in Education programs for over 18 years. With the focus on giving a permanent place to tradition bearers of the many different ethnic peoples that come to make Long Island their home, one of the many programs that have become a feature of learning in the Long Island communities are the Peruvian sounds of Theo Torres, Long Island Traditions' long running program—*Sounds of Suburbia*.

As a long time artist-in-residence and folk arts educator, Theo Torres continues to inspire 4th-graders of the Freeport Elementary Schools. Theo visits the students in a 2-day program. On the first day he recounts the history of his family and life, the journey of his self-taught musical training and his struggles of immigrating to the US and the experiences thereafter. On the second day, the students learn one of the songs Theo wrote and how to compose a song.

In the past Theo would use a number of instruments as he sang one of his songs he composed in front of the attentive eyes of the young enthusiastic spectators.

Now the music teachers each receive a copy of his cd and lyrics to prepare the students before his second visit. On that second day Theo carries on what the music teacher started, and the students sing along with him. Not only do they learn about his life, family history and hear the



Theo Torres shows off the traditional zampona or pan pipe which he brought from Peru.

music of Peru, they also learn how to compose a song and learn one of his songs through this interactive approach and collaborative efforts of the teachers.

Recognized as a master composer and as a long time member of ASCAP Theo and Long Island Traditions have received support from The ASCAP Foundation Irving Caesar Fund for this unique program. ■

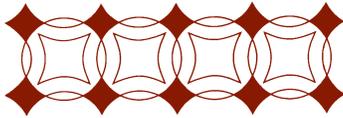
### Sea Cliff and its Methodist Origins

Long Island Traditions is working with the Village of Sea Cliff to preserve its earliest homes that were built as part of the Methodist Camp Meeting movement popular in the post Civil War period on Long Island. Examples of other camp meeting communities built during this period include Merrick, Shelter Island Heights and Lake Grove. If you have information to share on this fascinating period, please contact us!

The Sea Cliff and Metropolitan Camp Ground Association was founded in the early 1870s as part of a national religious movement that began in the 1840s, popularly known as “The Great Awakening.” The Methodists believed that their ministry could best be defined by worship *practices* rather than fixed locations with places of worship as their centerpiece. As a result the camp meeting movement was temporary and mobile. According to historian Steven Cooley, “Bishop Gilbert Haven defined the camp meeting in just this manner: as a temporary occupancy of the summer woods where the trees and hills are specially sanctified so that the church might retire to meet with her Lord and Lover and return to the world transformed.”

The Association sought to worship in a scenic area accessible to its members who resided in Brooklyn and Manhattan. They formed a corporation with \$150,000 in stock valued at \$100 per share. Although the Association is listed as a property owner on an 1873 Beers Map, legal records indicate that the Association purchased the “Carpenter’s Neck” property in Sea Cliff, originally referred to as “South Glen Cove”, owned by farmer James S. Carpenter on November 24, 1876 for \$78,200. The property, situated just south of

see **Sea Cliff** on page 2



## Long Island Traditions Inc.

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

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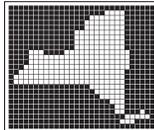
**Newsletter Designer:** Barbara Koelbel Bange

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

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State of the Arts



NYSCA

## Sea Cliff continued from page 1

Mosquito Creek, included the eastern shoreline of Hempstead Harbor, the hillsides leading to the Harbor and Glen Cove Creek, and the eastern boundary defined by DuBois Avenue.

The property was steeply sloped, leveling off at a plateau east of Main Avenue, enabling the congregants to view and enjoy the scenic harbors below. In 1880 surveyor Wm. E. Hauxhurst, under the auspices of the Association divided the land into approximately 1200-1300 lots measuring 20 feet wide and 50 feet long. The village combined both grid and radial plan designs so that each house provided easy visual access to the tabernacle and to the scenic parks and waterways, one of the key features valued by officials in the Camp Ground movement.

Each lot was originally leased to members of the Association for use during the week-long meeting that took place each summer. The Association invested \$200,000 to improve the property including road development, waterworks construction and tree plantings. Lots were also sold during the spring and summer season to the public. One of the first to purchase property was John T. Pirie, whose family built several structures in Sea Cliff throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Eventually Pirie would be the primary owner of all the leases, as the Association needed assistance to complete its plans.

Leaseholders, including Pirie, pitched their modest size tents for members of their family, while the Association held communal meals and worship services in a large tent sited on the plateau. It was common for some families to lease more than one lot. Each tent stood on a wooden platform that ranged from 14 x 14 feet to 14 x 17 feet, to prevent flooding during rainstorms and to maintain the appearance of cleanliness, a desirable quality among Association members.



Courtesy of Sea Cliff Museum.

**19th century visitors to the Sea Cliff Grove and Metropolitan Camp Ground Association slept in tents like this one during the 2-week revival meeting.**

According to local newspaper accounts they were furnished with "carpets, chairs, tables, pianos and other household comforts and paterfamilias..." By 1873 the Long Island Improvement Company was responsible for leasing out lots and operating a general store. Apparently the Company did not provide needed supplies to the visitors, many of whom left before the meeting began.

Approximately two thousand people attended the 10-day event, living in 600 tents spread over "several hundred acres." The Sea Cliff Hotel, a large 4-story structure, was erected that could house 500 guests, containing a ladies parlor, a smoking room for gentlemen, heated by gas and served with portable reservoirs. A laundry room was attached connected to a waterworks along the shores of Hempstead Harbor. A dining hall that could seat 732 persons was also connected to the hotel, relying on a kitchen that could prepare 1500 meals with a staff of 150. Rooms rented for \$12 - \$18 depending on size. Other accommodations included a 3-story lodging house that could house

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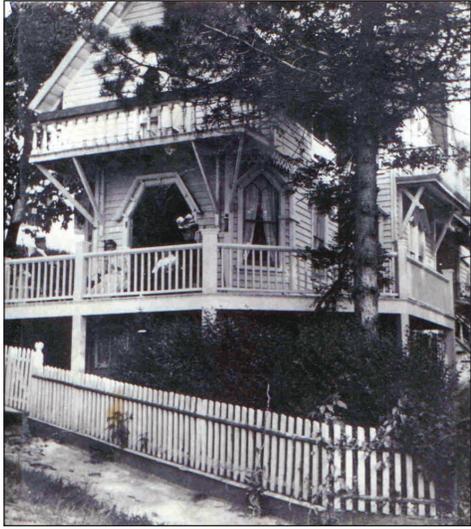
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800 people, a minister's house that could host 400, along with temporary lodging above the stores and post office. In order to travel to Sea Cliff attendees took one of the steamboat's operated by the Sea Cliff Steamboat Company and owned by the Association that traveled from lower Manhattan to the village in approximately 1-1½ hours.

When the steamboat landing was first constructed, passengers from the steamships could either walk up to the hotel on a series of wooden planks and staircases, or by stagecoach who charged 10¢ for the ride.

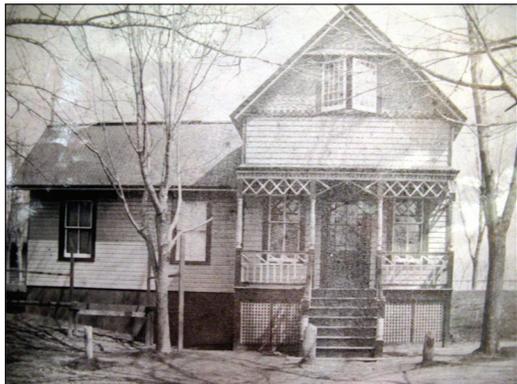
During the 1870s the Butcher and Truslow families, J. Anderson of Brooklyn and Reverend Henry Oliver Wardle, a Methodist preacher, among others erected handsome Victorian style houses, featuring multi-level cross gable tiers that could take advantage of the offshore breezes. Eventually there would be a year-round population of 5,000 residents.



**Houses like this, located at 307 8th Avenue, were sited to take advantage of the bucolic views of Hempstead Harbor.**

### Architectural Design Elements

The earliest homes were sited to take advantage of the parks, waterfront views and westerly shore breezes. These were spacious structures constructed in the fashionable Victorian and French Second Empire style, accompanied by detached carriage houses. The houses had large full length doors and windows, high ceilings and elaborate wraparound porches, sheathed in clapboards and wood shingles, topped by slate roofs.



**Other members of the Camp Ground Association built modest homes like this one at 182 14th Street.**

with decorative plantings and trees selected by the owners and the Association. In the early 1900s owners installed driveways, porte c'ocheres and garages in order to accommodate automobiles.

Common features were hardwood floors, staircases with decorative balustrades, transom windows in the interior doorways,

paneled wooden doors and pocket doors. Originally there were ceiling plaster moldings which are no longer standing in most homes. Other original features were locust post or brick foundations; the post foundations have been replaced primarily with brick, and cisterns for well water connected to the water works built by the Association. Stone retaining walls separated hillside houses on the western side of the village, so that each house was elevated just above their neighbor's home, providing a view of the natural scenery for every property owner. In later years these views would become obstructed as more people come to Sea Cliff for vacation. However there are still powerful reminders of this architectural philosophy. ■

## JPMorganChase supports LI Traditions

Under the auspices of the Huntington Arts Council, LI Traditions has received a technology grant from the JP MorganChase Foundation in support of our documentation and research on local traditional culture. The \$1500 received enabled us to purchase a state of the art digital camera and professional recording microphone, two items that we rely on for our documentation programs. Already they are hard at work. We thank the Huntington Arts Council and the Foundation for their support. ■

## See us on Facebook!

You can now join and support our cause on Facebook, one of the premier networking sites now used to support non-profit organizations. You can also contribute online either through Facebook or directly through our web site. Join us in our virtual world! ■

## Traditional Argentine Tango Music and Dance

For authentic Argentine tango dancing on Long Island, one can find it in Hicksville, every first Saturday of the month at Milonga Las Gardenias, located in the Ella Maria Dance Studio, 376 West Old Country Road. The milonga, an Argentine tango dance social, offers the traditional music of the great orchestras of Buenos Aires spanning 40 years of tango music from the 1920s through the 1950s. "Tangeros" also enjoy dancing to mixed Latin music between sets. Guest teachers from Argentina are sometimes brought in to teach the group classes. Open dancing immediately follows the lesson. The classes take place 7:30-10:30pm. For more information about the program contact Nicole Clarke at (516) 521-9201 or nsp\_clarke@yahoo.com. ■

## 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.

- July 26:** Dave Sear and Richie Havens. Open to Great Neck residents only. 8 pm. Steppingstone Park, Great Neck. Free admission.
- August 1:** Argentine Tango Dancing. Ella Marie Dance Studio, 376 W. Old Country Road, Hicksville. Traditional tango music, dancing & group lesson every 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of the month. \$15 p/p. 7:30-10:30pm. For information call (516) 521-9201 or [nsp\\_clarke@yahoo.com](mailto:nsp_clarke@yahoo.com)
- August 9:** Bay House Tours. 9:30 and 11:30 am departing from Freeport. \$40/person and \$75/couple, \$5 discount for LI Traditions members. For reservations call (516) 767-8803.
- August 16:** Traditional Irish Music Session. 5 pm. Irish American Arts Centre. 297 Willis Avenue, Mineola, New York. For information call (516) 746-9392.
- August 22:** 49th Long Island Scottish Games. Old Westbury Gardens. Featuring traditional Scottish music, food, crafts, competitions and children's activities. 8am – 5pm. For information call (516) 333-0048 or visit [www.oldwestburygardens.org](http://www.oldwestburygardens.org)
- September 19:** Ceili (Traditional Irish Dance) 8:30 PM. Music by "Pete Kelly's Premier Ceili Band". Irish American Arts Centre. 297 Willis Avenue, Mineola, New York. For information call (516) 746-9392.

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