

Long Island Traditions

NEWSLETTER

www.longislandtraditions.org

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Long Island Children's Museum Folk Arts Programs

When you feel cold outdoors, warm-up inside and feast your eyes on a colorful array of music and dance programs. From January through March, The Long Island Children's Museum will host a series of traditional dance performances by several area dance ensembles documented by Long Island Traditions. For information call the museum at (516) 224-5800.

Featured performers include the Mulvihill-Lynch school of Irish Stepdance, the Portuguese ensemble Ranchos Juventude of Mineola and the Paraguayan ensemble Panambi Verá. All programs begin at 11am.

The Mulvihill-Lynch school of Irish stepdancing is directed by master dancer Debbie Lynch, a 1st-generation American who was inspired by the legendary Jerry Mulvihill, the schools' founder. Based in Centereach, the school teaches children traditional dance steps, the history of Irish Stepdancing, and costume designs. They will be performing on January 13.

Ranchos Juventude's extensive repertoire of traditional dances and costumes are from the northern region of Minho, Portugal. The dancers range in age from 4 to 65, accompanied by an in-house musical ensemble led by the father/son team of Aventino and Elvis Da Costa, who play the traditional *concertina* (Portuguese button accordion). The Da Costas are backed by a variety of traditional stringed and percussion instruments, as well as the dancers' *castanholas* (castanets) and *panderetas* (tambourines). The performance and workshop will take place on February 4.

Berta Gauto and her group Panambi Verá features Paraguayan teenagers living on Long Island and Queens. Berta moved to Mineola in 1993, where the Paraguayan community numbers around 2000. Soon thereafter she formed the dance group Panambi Verá, which means 'Golden Butterfly' in the Guaraní language spoken by many Paraguayans. She saw their dancing as a good way of introducing the American public to Paraguayan culture while at the same time educating the community's children about their heritage. Many of the beautiful costumes worn are sewn by Berta. Panambi Vera will demonstrate and perform on March 4. ■

Long Island Traditional English Architecture

From *Long Island Traditional Architecture: A Teacher Resource Guide*, available from Long Island Traditions.

English settlers moved to eastern Long Island in the 1620s from New England, settling in the communities of East Hampton, Southampton, Bridgehampton and various north fork hamlets. Unlike the Dutch settlers who sought economic opportunity in western Long Island, the English settlers came seeking freedom from religious persecution in their native homelands. Over time the English settlers moved westward, eventually reaching the western Dutch area that is now Queens in the mid-1600s, establishing communities in the north and south shore areas. The Dutch West Indies Corporation welcomed them, having failed to attract Dutch settlers to Long Island. There were cultural tensions that revealed themselves in the kinds of houses and buildings they constructed.

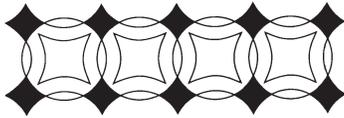
The English settlements included the Hamptons (the ending of "ton" is derived from English naming traditions), and various harbor ports including Port Jefferson (originally called Drowned Meadow, referring to the high tides), Stony Brook, Oyster Bay and Port Washington (originally named Cow Neck) on the north shore,

see **Traditional English Architecture** on page 3



Photo by Nancy Solomon

This is an excellent example of a traditional English style "classic cottage" located in Orient, NY.



Long Island Traditions Inc.

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

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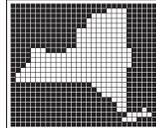
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For more information call: (516) 767-8803, fax: (516) 767-8805, write to us at: 382 Main St., Port Washington, NY 11050, E-mail: litrad@i-2000.com or visit us on the web at: www.longislandtraditions.org

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State of the Arts



NYSCA

Trinidadian Music and Stories

On Sunday, January 21 join us for our 2nd program in the series "Island Journeys" in partnership with the East Meadow Library. This program will feature the Adlib Steelband of Freeport and storyteller Ken Corsbie of Sound Beach. The program begins at 2 pm and is free to the general public.

The Adlib Steelband, formed in Freeport in 1987, consists of approximately 15 children and adults of Trinidadian background, where steelbands originally formed. Led by Trinidadian born Jean and Franklin Mayers, this community based group teaches young people ranging in age from 8 to 16 the traditional melodies of Trinidadian steelband music including calypso, show tunes from movies and plays, as well as popular songs. Students learn to play the steelband through traditional methods, without sheet music, relying on their ears to learn these complex melodies. They work with arrangers and tuners including Fitz Worrell, a traditional steelband tuner who lives in nearby Uniondale. In 1996 the group incorporated as the Adlib Steel Band Youth and Cultural Center, establishing an after-school and weekend program. They have performed at area concerts and festivals.

Ken Corsbie, like the adults around him, was always telling stories and jokes as a child. Since both his parents had emigrated from Trinidad, he traces his sense of humor and language to that country. His repertoire includes both folktales he heard growing up in Guyana and his own stories relating to his childhood in the Caribbean and the immigration experience. Ken is a world renowned storyteller and comedian, who calls Long Island home. Call (516) 794-2570 for information. The library is located at 1886 Front St. in East Meadow. ■

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The Adhib Steelband will be performing on January 21st at the East Meadow Library.

South Shore Estuary Web Site

Long Island Traditions has received a grant from the NY State Council on the Arts to expand its South Shore Estuary web site, focusing on the maritime culture and architecture of this region. Since 1987 folklorist and director Nancy Solomon has been documenting the maritime occupational and recreational traditions of the south shore, alongside its maritime architecture, including bay houses, bungalows and boatyards. This research has spanned from Long Beach to Fire Island, including numerous oral histories with working
see **Estuary Web Site** on page 4

Traditional English Architecture continued from page 1

along with Freeport and Hewlett on the south shore of Nassau County. In 1644 the King of England granted a land patent to Governor Richard Nicolls for all of Long Island. The “Nicolls Patent” was then divided as settlers moved westward. The English divided their lands according to traditional community practices, including the use of fences to contain wandering livestock; in the 1700s they used fences and maps to mark their property holdings. They would eventually create legal codes that would lead to the establishment of the new nation’s legal system.

While some people erected their own houses, wealthier families hired carpenters and joiners to build their homes, developing contracts with specific details such as building dimensions, number and type of rooms, and a payment and construction timetable. On Long Island builders used oak, pine, cedar, walnut and locust trees which had heavy timbers that could support a large house frame. The most commonly used timbers were locust and oak.

Most people lived in 2-story frame dwellings. They used available materials from their surroundings. Some settlers built their farmhouses facing south in order to take advantage of the warm sun and to avoid the cold north winds. However other factors affected site placement including the location of glacial deposits and wooded areas which had to be cleared. Like most traditional house forms, the shelters reflected practices and room arrangement that had been common in the settlers’ native homelands. Sadly there are few remaining common houses from the Colonial period.

The English homes that remain generally reflect the architecture of the upper classes. The families included the Lloyds of Huntington, the Cornwalls of Port Washington, the Martins and Hewletts of Lawrence, the Hallocks in Riverhead, and numerous others throughout Long Island. Some of the families had slaves, including the Martins and Lloyd families, although most families did not. Slaves generally lived in the same house as their owners. In the cases where slave houses were documented, none remain standing on Long Island. Some historians speculate that the English were pressured into freeing their slaves by the earlier Dutch settlers, although there is evidence that Dutch families also had slaves. This subject is addressed in greater detail in a later chapter on African Americans.

Most early houses, constructed in the 1600s and early 1700s were extremely modest. By the mid 1700s more families were able to construct two-room homes, with a higher roof able to accommodate an upstairs sleeping area, reached by a ladder or simple staircase. A large “summer” beam spanned the width of the house.¹ The floor plan of English houses were usually simple geometric patterns with two rooms of approximately equal sizes on the first floor, underneath roughly equal size rooms on the 2nd floor where one existed. A first-floor parlor later appeared in well-to-do homes.

In the early 1800s, the plan changed to a four-room “center hall” plan where an entry way separated the rooms. The kitchen area was moved towards the back of the house, where it remained for decades to come. Around the same time the fireplace was moved from the center to the two gable ends of the house. On the 2nd floor were bedrooms, heated by the gable end fireplaces.²

As more saw mills were built, builders started using clapboard sheathing which was easier to make than wood shingles. Clapboards became the standard sheathing material by the mid-1800s on Long Island.

English Barns

There are several prominent features in English style barns that include:

- A gable roof wood shingle or clapboard structure
- Eave-front entrances
- Interior plans with 3 equal-sized bays containing a central threshing floor flanked by storage & work areas, along with a cellar to house cows or livestock
- Upper loft space used to store tools and hay

English barns closely resembled New England barns built during the same period. Barns constructed in the early 1700s until the late 1800s typically used mortise and tenon framing, wood shingle sheathing and gable roofs. In some cases these timbers came from other barns or houses.



Photo by Historic American Building Survey.

The Walt Whitman birthplace originally had a barn built by his father Walter Whitman in the early 1800s. It was removed in the early 1950s.

Barns were typically sited several hundred feet from the house. The barns were usually set into small banks so that the entrance was on the 2nd floor with a cellar beneath. If there was no available bank a small gradual dirt ramp with grass was created by the farmers. Over time barns were built closer to the house, as farming became cleaner due to improvements in livestock raising and sanitation. In rare cases the barn was situated a few feet from the house, a trend borrowed from New England where barns were directly connected to the farmhouse in the mid-1800s.³

The inside of the typical English barn was divided into three bays. However there are examples of barns built in the 1600s with 4 or 5 bays, which may have started as three bays and expanded for various functions.⁴ Some farmers later added smaller side doors for easier access. The higher reaches were used to store tools and hay. Windows generally indicate that the barn was built after the late-1800s. They provided light and ventilation. After the mid-1800s gable end hay doors allowed farmers to easily load and unload their feed and crops. ■

1 Norman Morrison Isham & Albert F. Brown, “Early Rhode Island Houses” in Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach eds. *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1986), pgs. 149-158.

2 Ibid.

3 Thomas Hubka, *The Connected Farm Buildings of New England*. (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 1984).

4 Robert Blair St. George, “The Stanley-Lake Barn in Topsfield, Massachusetts” *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* (Annapolis, MD: Vernacular Architecture Forum, 1982) pgs. 7-20.

Upcoming Indian Programs

With each wave of immigrants the pressure to assimilate is present. While this process may at times unify there is a danger of losing cultural roots and national identity.

In March Long Island Traditions and the Young Indian Culture Group will present two public programs where participants and audience members can learn about the rich heritage of this complex ethnic group.

On Sunday, March 11, Long Island Traditions and Hofstra University will present an all-day workshop featuring classes in traditional art forms ranging from Bharanatyam dancing to tabla playing that is open to students and adults of all ages and abilities, from novices to experts, led by master traditional artists.

On Saturday evening, March 17th join us for a performance and concert at Landmark on Main Street in Port Washington, featuring many well-known and emerging dancers, singers and musicians. To purchase tickets contact Landmark at (516) 767-6444. ■

Estuary Web Site continued from page 2

and retired baymen, bay house owners, fishing rod makers, duck hunters and decoy carvers and other tradition bearers. In addition Long Island Traditions has been photographing architectural and cultural resources that are part of the region's maritime traditions. As a result of the NYSCA grant, visitors to LI Traditions' web site will learn about the various communities that comprise the estuary, listen to audio interviews with master tradition bearers, view photographs and videos of the maritime resources, and nominate sites for documentation. The site upgrade is anticipated for January 2008. ■

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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.

- January 13:** Irish Stepdance Program. Workshop 11AM. Long Island Children's Museum, 11 Davis Avenue, Garden City. Admission \$8. Call (516) 224-5800 for details. (See accompanying article).
- January 20:** Mulvihill-Lynch Annual Winter Dance Recital, 1- 4PM. Smithtown West High School, 100 Central Road, Smithtown. Admission \$20. For information call (631)738-1242
- January 21:** Ken Corsbie & Adlib steelband. 2PM. East Meadow Public Library. 1886 Front Street, East Meadow. No admission. Call (516) 794-2570 for information. (See accompanying article).
- February 4:** Ranchos Juventude, Portuguese dance group. Hands-on workshop starts 11AM. Long Island Children's Museum. 11 Davis Avenue, Garden City. Admission \$8. Call (516) 224-5800 for details. (See accompanying article).
- March 4:** Berta Gauto Paraguayan dance program. Workshop begins at 11AM. Long Island Children's Museum, 11 Davis Avenue, Garden City. General Admission \$8. Call (516) 224-5800 for details. (See accompanying article).
- March 11:** Indian Workshops program. 10AM-3PM. Hofstra University, Hempstead Turnpike (Route 24), Hempstead. Call (516) 767-8803 for information. (See accompanying article)
- March 17:** Indian Concert. 7:30-10PM. Landmark on Main Street, Main Street, Port Washington. Tickets \$25-35. For information and tickets call (516) 767-6444 (See accompanying article).

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