

# Long Island Traditions

## NEWSLETTER

longislandtraditions.org  
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### Maritime Film Festival

After a long two years since our film festival came to an abrupt pause due to Covid, we are now back on track for our Maritime Film Festival. Beginning on Tuesday, April 26, join Long Island Traditions, the Cinema Arts Centre in Huntington and the Plaza Cinema and Arts Center in Patchogue for a film festival featuring documentaries and feature films that explore Long Island's maritime culture, from bay houses to bungalows, and boat builders to sailors. The festival will feature five films that explore the region's marine coastal heritage, with discussions featuring filmmakers, local baymen, boat builders and bay house owners. The festival is made possible with the support of the Robert L. Gardiner Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.

The highlight of the festival is the screening of *A World Within a World: Long Island Bay Houses* produced by filmmakers Barbara Weber and Greg Blank. The film will premiere at the Plaza Cinema and Arts Center in Patchogue on Tuesday, May 24<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 pm. There will be an additional showing on Tuesday, June 21 at 7:30 pm at the Cinema Arts Centre in Huntington.

The film festival will begin with a screening of *Charlotte*, a documentary about the historic boatyard, the Gannon & Benjamin Marine Railway, located on Martha's Vineyard. Q&A with special guest Kevin Weeks and Chris Hale of "Weeks Boat Yard" in Patchogue will follow the screening.

**Diggers:** This 2006 film starring Paul Rudd and Maura Tierney is a coming of age story about four working class friends growing up on the south shore of Long Island in 1976. This film will be followed by a Q & A with Long Island Traditions' Nancy Solomon and local Long Island fisherman Chuck Tekula.

**The Bungalows of Rockaway.** Produced by Jennifer Callahan & Elizabeth Harris in 2010, and narrated by Academy-Award winner Estelle Parsons, the film examines the historic bungalows of the Far Rockaways that were built by local

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### Historic Preservation in Far Rockaway

By Nancy Solomon

It's hard to believe that it will be 10 years this fall since Superstorm Sandy struck New York. I know that many of you have clear memories of that day and the following weeks, and we all hope that you have recovered, although we also know that "recovery" is never complete after such traumatic events. I thought I could share with you a little of my story as it relates to the bungalows of Rockaway, one of the featured films in our upcoming maritime film festival.

As I heard the rain pounding on our windows of our apartment in Roslyn Heights, I found myself thinking of bay houses and bungalows, among the most fragile structures on the south shore. When I was finally able to go out, I saw blocks and blocks of my neighborhood covered with tree branches, a visual scene that was replicated throughout Long Island. We were fortunate because we live on high ground in a brick building. When power was restored the following Friday, we were able to see the heartbreaking damage of thousands of homes along the south shore, and of course the destruction of much of Far Rockaway. Like many of you, we tried to help as best we could.

One week after Sandy I received an email and a phone call at my office from the New York State Historic Preservation Office (NYSHPO), based in upstate Waterford. A few months before we had submitted a National Register nomination for the bungalows of Far Rockaway,

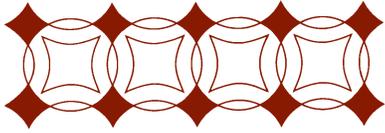
located on Beach 24-26 streets, bungalows originally built in the late 1920s with few changes in the following years. After much fine tuning of the application, it was scheduled for a formal vote for December 13, 2012. However, with Superstorm Sandy the



Photo by Nancy Solomon

**Far Rockaway Bungalows on Beach 25 St.**

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## 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

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## Boat Building and Boat Yards of Long Island Events

Executive director Nancy Solomon is the author of a new book published by The History Press. "Boat Building and Boat Yards of Long Island: A Tribute to Tradition" explores the contemporary traditional boat builders and boat yards of Long Island, through a series of interviews conducted as part of the 2013 exhibit From Shore to Shore: Boat Builders and Boat Yards of Long Island. In this book Solomon documents the traditions and places of Long Island's boat building industry from a contemporary perspective. Solomon focuses on the boat builders and boat yards of Long Island's south shore, north shore and the east end. Highlights include the Bayles Boat Shop, the Scopinich family, the Weeks Yacht Yard, the Steiger Craft boat shop among others. The book contains personal narratives along with historical and contemporary photographs.

The book will be available for purchase through the History Press and at Long Island Traditions public programs. The current program schedule is:

**March 20:** 1:30 pm - East Rockaway Public Library

**May 14:** 5 pm - Bellport - Brookhaven Historical Society

**May 21:** 10-11:30 am - Visit the Weeks Yacht Yard with the Patchogue-Medford library and LIT Executive Director Nancy Solomon

**May 26:** 7 pm - Sayville Library

## Bay House Tours 2022 June 18 and July 17

On Saturday, June 18 and Sunday, July 17 Long Island Traditions will sponsor its annual Bay House Tours in the Town of Hempstead. 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 many have also been rebuilt.

Participants should be able to climb ladders and feel comfortable in a work environment. The June 18 tour will leave from Long Beach at 11 am and 1 pm, and the July 17 tour will depart from Freeport at 10:30 am and 12:30 pm. Due to safety concerns, space is limited to 12 people per trip, ages 10 and up. **Long Island Traditions members can register beginning May 5 at 11 am.** To join Long Island Traditions, visit our web site. **All others can register starting May 26.** 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 \$60 for adults, \$110/couple, with a \$10 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.

## Far Rockaway Bungalows continued from page 1

nomination was in limbo, as most of us suspected that the bungalows were severely damaged. I was asked to go there and report back with photos and observations.

One of the immediate effects of Superstorm Sandy was the isolation of the Rockaway Peninsula, including Far Rockaway. Residents fled if they could, but many could not. At the same time, outsiders were not permitted to go without a direct connection to someone who lived there. I was able to obtain a letter from the NYSHPO asking the authorities to allow me in. Then there was the problem of gas for my car. As you may remember gas supplies were also cut off for most of Long Island. Fortunately, I was given some gas from bayman Bill Hamilton, who was using his boat's gas to help people. I was very fortunate.

I knew that there were several bungalow owners who stayed through the storm, and most likely needed supplies and food. I called Richard George, the founder of the Beachside Bungalow Preservation Association and resident of the bungalow district, to ask him what I could bring. He shared that he had set up an outdoor bar-b-q so that he and his neighbors could cook and eat. Off I went to Fairway where I found chicken, burgers and other perishables that could be cooked and served.

When I arrived I fully expected to see water in the streets, bungalows that had been pushed off their foundations, and a dangerous situation overall. Taking Nassau Route 878 I was one of the few vehicles on the road, no doubt in part due to the gas shortage. In addition, most of the traffic signals were out, which made for some interesting driving. Finally, I arrived, just in time to provide food for lunch for the neighborhood. It was a heart-warming scene. For those who have not met Richard George, he is truly a pioneer and largely responsible for saving the bungalows. He had set up enough grills to feed over 100 people at a time. He also knew something that is extremely important: sand dunes can work.

As I parked my car on Beach 24<sup>th</sup> street, I was struck by how everything looked the same. No water in the streets, no bungalows off of their foundations, no windows missing. Sure, there was some visual remnants of how high the water had risen, and some debris here and there. But overall it was an amazing sight. Why were the bungalows spared I asked? The answers can vary, but here's what I think happened.

In the early 1990s the local residents began planting beach grass at the end of the street near the boardwalk, so that eventually a dune would emerge. When I first started the historic survey in 2005, the dune was about 4 feet, just enough to prevent water from flooding into the street. By the time Superstorm Sandy struck, that dune was higher than the boardwalk. As a result, perhaps, the water veered west. Another factor could be the location of the bungalows. The east end of Far Rockaway is just a short distance to the Rockaway Inlet. Through my research into storms and hurricanes, I have learned that the closer one is to an inlet, the less likely there will be a storm surge. As water hits an inlet, so I've been told, it will be pushed to the west on the west side, and east on the east side.

The other reason for the lack of damage could be the design of the bungalows themselves. Most are 1-story with a low attic, so that windows are low to the ground and the structure is on firmer footing. Sometimes less is more, when it comes to storm damage. Over the following weeks I received calls from FEMA and the National Park Service, who wanted to see the bungalows and the bay houses that survived. The staff of these large agencies were as curious as I was why

the bungalows showed such little damage. From that point on they recommended that residents begin planting beach grass to create dunes, a scene we saw happening throughout coastal communities in the following months.

And so, on December 13, 2021 the bungalows were recommended for listing on the NY State and National Register of Historic Places. We were very happy to see this. As some of you might recall, a similar community at West Meadow Beach was also listed, only to be demolished in 2004. We were glad to see that the NY SHPO came to recognize that bungalows are important and worthy of preservation. To learn more about these bungalows please join us on June 14 at the Cinema Arts Centre in Huntington for a screening of *The Bungalows of Rockaway* with filmmaker Elizabeth Harris. ■

## In Memoriam: Daniel Pollera

By Nancy Solomon

It is with a heavy heart that we share with you the sad news that artist Dan Pollera has passed. I first met Dan in the 1990s when I saw his paintings of the bay houses nearby at the Sea Horse Gift Shop in Freeport. Over time I shared with him the history of some of the houses he was painting at his request, since he wanted to know more about the history of the homes. By the early 2000s his work was well known, and he gained quite a bit of notoriety. Before becoming a painter, Dan was a charter boat captain, a passionate fisherman, and a clam digger. He spent years working and playing on the south shore from his canal home in Baldwin, and later at his summer house in East Quogue. His wife Nancy was also a passionate fisherman, and they shared many of their "trophies" on Facebook.

Dan's work is now part of the collections of the Parrish Museum, Guild Hall and the LI Museum at Stony Brook. Often times, when we would post a photo of one of his paintings, people would say what an amazing photograph it was. When I told them it was a painting and not a photograph, they were astonished. Each year Dan donated

one of his prints that we could raffle, in support of our work. Dan was also a board member of Long Island Traditions, and was always available for us. He helped transport

filmmakers Barbara Weber and Greg Blank while they filmed *A World Within a World: Bay Houses of Long Island*. Dan was very generous to people in the community, and often fed area wildlife including swans and other visiting wildfowl. We shall miss him dearly. ■



Pollera painting of the Stenzel bay house.

## Film Festival continued from page 1

architects including Henry Hohausser. The film will be followed by a discussion with Elizabeth Harris.

The film festival closes with the screening of *Maiden*, which tells the story of Tracy Edwards, a 24-year old who in 1989 headed the first all-female sailing crew in the Whitbread Round the World, a grueling yachting competition that covered 33,000 miles and lasted nine months. This film will be followed by a Q & A with Edwards and Dawn Riley, executive director of the Oakcliff Sailing School and one of the sailors on Maiden in 1989.

For ticket information, contact the Cinema Arts Centre and the Plaza Cinema and Arts Center.

The full schedule for the Maritime Film Festival is as follows:

- April 26** *Charlotte*. Plaza Cinema and Arts Center, Patchogue.
- May 10** *Diggers*. Plaza Cinema and Arts Center, Patchogue
- May 24** *A World Within A World*. Plaza Cinema and Arts Center, Patchogue
- June 14** *The Bungalows of Rockaway*. Cinema Arts Centre, Huntington.
- June 21** *A World Within A World*. Cinema Arts Centre, Huntington.
- July 12** *Maiden*. Cinema Arts Centre, Huntington.

*All screenings are at 7:30 pm.*

The Cinema Arts Centre in Huntington is located at 423 Park Ave, Huntington.

The Plaza Cinema and Arts Center in Patchogue is located at 20 Terry St, Patchogue. ■

## 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.***

***Stay tuned on our web site and our Facebook feed for more events!***

- March 24:** Nancy Solomon on My Hometown radio show at 3:30 pm. Listen live at [www.NCCradio.org](http://www.NCCradio.org)
- March 27:** Fisherman flea market in Babylon – 10 am to 4 pm. 27 Locust Ave, Babylon. Tickets - \$5.
- April 24:** Kenahora Jewish klezmer ensemble. 2 pm. East Meadow Library. 1886 Front Street, East Meadow. Virtual and in person program. Free admission. To register visit <https://eastmeadow.info/>.

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