

Whaleboat 1776 Project

Celebrating The Village of Port Jefferson's and Our Nation's Heritage Together

**America's Semi Quincentennial Anniversary
1776 - 2026**



The Whaleboat 1776 Project

The Beginning

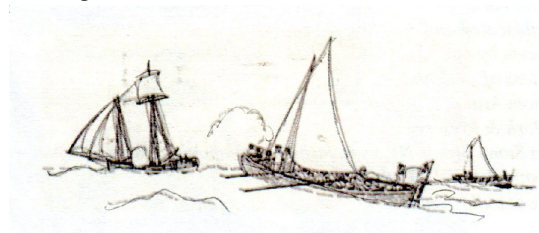
In the fall of 2022, the Village of Port Jefferson Town Historian approached Long Island Seaport & EcoCenter (LISEC) with a unique proposition in an effort to promote the story of Port Jefferson's role in the Culper Spy Ring. Would the LISEC Bayles Boat Shop undertake construction of a replica whaleboat to help tell that story. It was strongly felt

that the building of the whaleboat would be a unique way of not only embracing Port Jefferson's rich maritime history with the instrumental role it played in the Revolutionary War effort, but also telling a story of our Colonial forebears involved in that struggle and engaging the community in the process. The project dovetailed perfectly with a key element of LISEC's mission to help preserve and perpetuate the legacy and art of wooden boat building here in Port Jefferson. Working in partnership with the Village of Port Jefferson and The Port Jefferson Conservancy, the Whaleboat 1776 Project will also represent the village's early preparations for America's 250th anniversary celebrations in 2026. The project is expected to take about two years to complete and we are hoping for a launching day celebration sometime in Fall of 2025.

The History

During the American War for Independence Long Island Sound was the scene of many engagements involving whaleboats. The Loyalists (Tories) from Long Island raided the Connecticut shore and the rebels (Patriots) from Connecticut, many of whom fled Long Island during the British occupation, returned the compliment even going as far overland to the Great South Bay. In present day, mention of a whaleboat usually conjures up images of the hunt for the great white whale as portrayed in Herman Melville's classic novel Moby Dick. The term "Whaleboat," however, simply describes a useful type of double-ended boat whose ancestors very well may have been used in whale fishery.

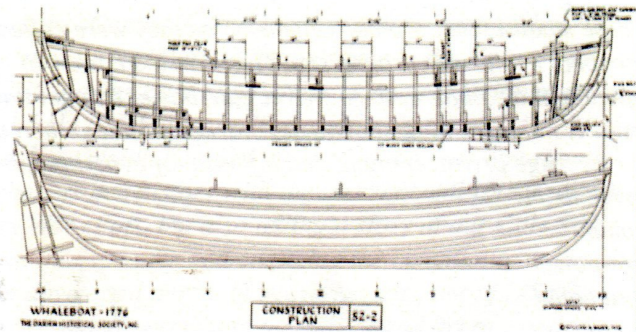
In 1776, the term whaleboat was used for exactly the same purpose, to designate a well-known and useful type of double-ended boat. It is true that some whaleboats of 1776 were very likely employed for catching whales but many more were used for privateering and other military and naval operations during the Revolutionary War. This fact is particularly very much true here in Long Island where the whaleboat served as the vessel of choice for Culper Spy Ring courier, Caleb Brewster, and his crews. Fast, quiet and easy for men to pick up and hide, these roughly 25 to 30 feet craft were fairly stealthy for their time. While these attributes benefitted Patriot spies, they also assisted Privateers; who were basically pirates with government commissions.



These small boats, “Spider Catchers” as they were called, grew in numbers as the war progressed. They carried a crew of eight or more and often held a sail as well. A swivel gun, basically a miniature cannon, was usually mounted on the bow. They worked well together, a bit unusual for the average privateersman, and a flotilla of two, three, or more of them presented a combined fire-power that could hit an enemy vessel from many sides at once. Many British merchantmen, transports and supply ships fell into their bag of prizes. Even full battles occurred on whaleboats. The most notable was the Whaleboat Fight of 1782 where Caleb Brewster, Valentine Ridge and others faced off against Loyalist Captains Stephen Hoyt and another named Johnson in hand-to-hand combat between their respective boats.

The Whaleboat

Based off plans drawn up by the late William A. Baker, naval architect and renowned naval historian, the whaleboat will be a fully seaworthy craft complete with sail, oars and a bow mounted swivel gun. Its dimensions, 24'5" long overall with a maximum breadth of 6', may seem a bit small when compared to the American whaling vessels of the mid to late 19th century but the length is very much in line with historical research concerning the size of the whaleboats in the 1780's.



Built as a classic double-ender she has a skeg and rudder which would have been more convenient than a steering oar for the long pulls across the sound. The whaleboat has one mast that carries a simple spritsail intended for use in fair winds to aid the oarsmen. The construction is clinker (lapped) style with Eastern White Cedar planking over sawn White Oak frames, standard for her day. Following a practice as old as the Viking ships, the planking is fitted around moulds, the ends secured at the stem and sternpost, and the laps riveted before the oak floors and frames are inserted. Using sawn versus steamed frames may seem out of place for such a relatively small craft, but the steam bending of frames (and planking too), common practice in today's boat building, was unknown in 1776. The six 16 foot oars, fabricated and hewn by our class of students from Avalon Park & Preserve in Stony Brook, NY, were fashioned from American White Ash which was plentiful and the hardwood of choice for our stock for the colonial boat builders of 1776.

Since the physical construction of the whaleboat is being undertaken entirely by LISEC through the efforts of our many dedicated Bayles Boat Shop volunteers, there are no direct labor costs involved. The Whaleboat 1776 Project does have many facets, however, and many of them will entail large expenditures. The Whaleboat timber and lumber expenses will likely exceed \$25,000 and just the timbers alone, for constructing the dedicated boat shed, is estimated at \$35,000. A listing of these large projected expenses is provided in our Donor Contribution Form found on the LISEC web site.

Through your tax-deductible contribution you can help us build this historic vessel and bring this exciting chapter of our local history to life for present and future generations alike while also supporting the many cultural and educational programs envisioned for our village. The form is on the LISEC web site www.LISEC.org under Boat Shop, Whaleboat 1776 Project. If you prefer to mail in your contribution, please address it to: LISEC, 101A East Broadway, Port Jefferson, NY 11777 or stop by the Boat Shop on Tuesday, Thursday, or Saturday mornings from 9:00 AM to noon. - John Janicek

DNA Study confirms Christopher Columbus's remains are entombed in Seville

Scientists have 'definitively' proven the identity of remains – with the navigator's precise origins to be revealed (Sam Jones in Madrid Fri 11 Oct 2024 06.31 EDT)

Scientists in Spain claim to have solved the two lingering mysteries that cling to Christopher Columbus more than five centuries after the explorer died: Are the much-traveled remains buried in a magnificent tomb in Seville Cathedral really his? And was the navigator who changed the course of world history really from Genoa – as history has long claimed – or was he actually Basque, Catalan, Galician, Greek, Jewish or Portuguese?

The answer to the first question is yes. The answer to the second will be announced.



Christopher Columbus (1451-1506): portrait by Jose Roldan, monastery of La Rabida, Andalusia.

The long-running and often competitive theorizing has not been helped by his corpse's posthumous voyages. Although Columbus died in the Spanish city of Valladolid in 1506, he wanted to be buried on the island of Hispaniola, which is today divided into Haiti and the Dominican Republic. His remains were taken there in 1542, moved to Cuba in 1795, and then brought to Seville in 1898 when Spain lost control of Cuba after the Spanish-American war.

After two decades of DNA testing and research, the forensic medical expert José Antonio Lorente said the incomplete set of remains in Seville Cathedral were indeed those of Columbus. DNA study sets out to establish true origins of Christopher Columbus

“Today, thanks to new technology, the previous partial theory that the remains in Seville are those of Christopher Columbus has been definitively confirmed,” said the expert who led the study at the University of Granada. The conclusion followed comparisons of DNA samples from the tomb with others taken from one of Columbus’s brothers, Diego, and his son Fernando.

The knottier question of the explorer’s precise origins will be revealed in Columbus DNA: His True Origin, a special TV program shown on Saturday 12 October, the date when Spain celebrates its national day and commemorates Columbus’s arrival in the New World.

While myriad claims have been made about where the navigator was from – the theories include Italy, Sweden, Norway, Portugal, France, Greece, Scotland and a handful of different Spanish regions – the programme-makers insist they now have the answer. “Twenty-five possible origins and eight finalists but there can be only one,” Spain’s state broadcaster, RTVE, said in a statement.

Columbus’s remains were brought to Seville in 1898 and buried in a tomb in the city’s cathedral. (Photograph: Edwin Remsberg/Alamy, Spain)
DNA study confirms Christopher Columbus’s remains are entombed in Seville. Scientists have ‘definitively’ proved identity of remains – with navigator’s precise origins to be revealed.
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Archeologists in Williamsburg uncover what they believe to be site of Revolutionary War barracks



Recovered artifacts include chimney bricks and musket balls that were indented with soldiers’ teeth. Colonial Williamsburg announced the discovery this week.

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. — Archaeologists at Colonial Williamsburg have uncovered what is believed to be the remains of a military barracks from the Revolutionary War, including chimney bricks and musket balls indented with soldiers' teeth.

The site is on the property of Colonial Williamsburg, a living history museum that tells the story of the capital of Britain's Virginia colony in the 18th century. Maps and documents from the time reference a barracks built between 1776 and 1777 for the Continental Army as it fought the British, the museum said in a statement this week. The structure was designed to accommodate up to 2,000 soldiers and 100 horses.

The American Revolution began in 1775. The barracks are thought to have been destroyed in 1781 by troops in the army of British Gen. Lord Charles Cornwallis. His forces were on their way to the pivotal Battle of Yorktown, where the British suffered great losses and surrendered. The war officially ended in 1783. Archaeological evidence of continental barracks in Virginia is rare, according to Colonial Williamsburg. This site is particularly valuable because it was used only as a barracks. Plus, a significant portion of the land has been largely undisturbed.

The site was discovered during an archaeological dig required ahead of the construction of a proposed regional sports complex. Its planned footprint has since been shifted to preserve the roughly 3 to 4-acre (1.2 to 1.6-hectare) barracks site.

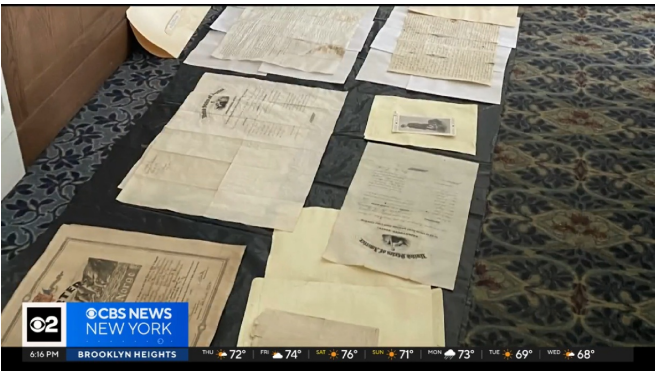
An initial excavation last summer revealed chimney bases and uncovered a military buckle and lead shot for muskets. Soldiers chewed on the balls because of their sweet taste.

Only a small percentage of the site has been excavated. The museum tells the story of Colonial Williamsburg through interpreters and more than 400 restored or reconstructed buildings. It plans to use the site to tell the story of Williamsburg's military involvement in the American Revolution and the daily lives of soldiers.
Author: Associated Press
Published: 8:59 AM EDT May 17, 2024
Updated: 10:26 AM EDT May 17, 2024

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Smithtown Library Flood

A Historic storm that brought with it torrential rains and flash floods to the Northeast last month caused catastrophic damages to areas on Long Island, New York and Connecticut. The Smithtown Library building was severely damaged in the storm that dumped nearly 11 inches of rain in Suffolk County, according to Reuters.



Video footage captured from Aug. 19 shows water gushing into the building, breaking down walls and windows, and completely inundating the library's lower level. Books, mud, and debris could be seen floating in the water, which was estimated to be around 10 feet.

Precious artifacts were damaged - Thousands of books and computers were destroyed in the process and the facility's "Richard H. Handley Collection of Long Island Americana," which housed priceless historical documents, including papers signed by Thomas Jefferson, were completely damaged. Efforts to restore the precious artifacts are underway and the library has engaged specialists from Detroit, who are working to preserve what they can through freezing and restoration processes.
(Saman Shafiq, USA TODAY, Published Sept 4, 2024)

Thanks to volunteers and donations, the Smithtown Library on Long Island is on a road to recovery after it was devastated by flooding in August.
(CBS News New York's Jennifer McLogan reports.)

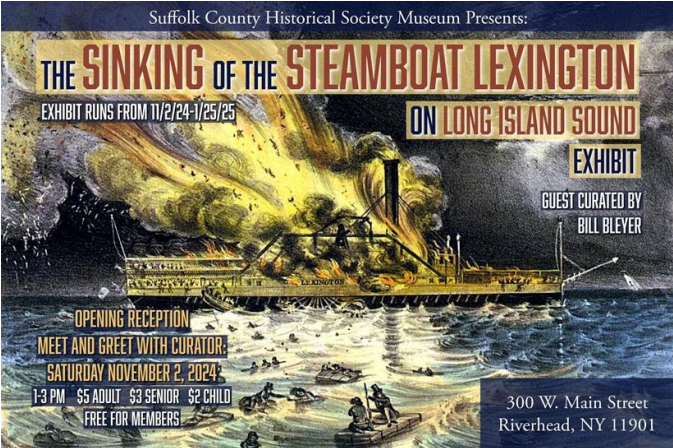
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SCAA wishes to thank all the people who responded to the Newsday article "Bucket List" to join an archaeological dig on Long Island. Although at this time we are not conducting excavations, we will keep everyone informed when help is needed to discover our history through archaeology.

We do have paid docent positions available in our Colonial Life Program at Blydenburgh Park, Smithtown and our Native Life In-school programs. These programs, for school-aged children, are hands-on and very popular. The Colonial Life program teaches blacksmithing, woodworking, cooking and weaving and the Native Life program teaches stone tool technology and cooking. These are seasonal, part time paid positions that run 2-3 months in the spring and fall. If you are interested email us at SCArchaeology@gmail.com.

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Suffolk County Historical Society Exhibit 11/2/2024-1/25/2025. "The Sinking of the Steamboat Lexington"



The exhibit curated by Bill Bleyer
Suffolk County Historical Society, 300 Main St. Riverhead

Publications of the Suffolk Cty Archaeological Association

Readings in Long Island Archaeology & Ethnohistory
All volumes are \$30. + \$5. Shipping, except Vol. III, 2d ed., which is \$50. + \$8. Shipping, both plus sales tax in N.Y. State for individuals. Vol. I is out of print. Bulk pricing is available.

- I *Early Paper in Long Island Archaeology*
- II *The Coastal Archaeology Reader*
- III *History & Archaeology of the Montauk, 2d ed.*
- IV *Languages & Lore of the Long Island Indians, 2d ed.*
- V *The Second Coastal Archaeology Reader*
- VI *The Shinnecock Indians: A Culture History*
- VII *The Historical Archaeology of L.I.: Part 1 - The Sites*
- VIII *The Native Forts of L.I. Sound*
- DVD - *The Sugar Connection: Sylvester Manor, Gardiners Island Manor, Fishers Island Manor, Manor of St. George, Smithtown Manor, Lloyd Manor, Manors of Islip Town* - \$50. Per set, incl. tax and shipping.

- Student Series** (Including shipping)
- Booklet: *A Way of Life: Prehistoric Natives of L.I.* \$10.
 - Study Pictures: *Coastal Native Americans* \$10.
 - Wall Chart: *Native Technology* (26x39"-3 colors) \$14.
 - Map: *Native Long Island* (11x17"-2 colors) \$ 5.

Past newsletters available on our web site

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Membership in SCAA includes 3 Newsletters per year and a 10% reduction in workshop and publication costs. All contributions are tax deductible.

Student (to 18)	\$15.	Individual	\$25.
Family	35.	Sustaining	50.
Contributing	100.	Patron	100.
Life Member	400.		

Date:.....

Name:.....

Address:.....

City/State/Zip:.....

Phone No.

Willing to volunteer?

Occupation:

Send check to: Suffolk County Archaeological Association,
P.O. Box 532, Wading River, NY 11792

Programs of the S.C. Archaeological Association have been funded in part by public monies from the New York State Council of the Arts - Decentralization, the Suffolk County Office of Cultural Affairs, The Phillips Foundation, The Gerry Charitable Trust, JP Morgan Chase, RDL Gardnier Foundation, Margaret and Stanley Wisniewski,, Virginia Barath, Dr. Gaynell Stone, Harriet Gamper, County and State Legislators, Steve Englebright.
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