



ROEBLING CHAPTER

Society for Industrial Archeology

October 2009

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CHAPTER EVENTS

EXPLORING THE KILL VAN KULL, NEWARK BAY & SHOOTERS ISLAND

Three-Hour NY-NJ Harbor Cruise

November 14, 2009, 11AM – 2PM

Meet at the Water Taxi Dock, Pier 17 at the South Street Seaport, Manhattan. Price \$50.00 per person.

PLEASE REGISTER by 3 November. The trip will be cancelled if we do not fill the boat and your money will be refunded.

Join us for a 3-hour narrated cruise along the Kill Van Kull, Newark Bay and Shooters Island. See the working port up close! See also the ghosts of the harbor's past life in the form of long-abandoned vessels, dry docks, piers and factories that line much of the shoreline. We will be aboard a large water taxi which allows for outdoor viewing and photography but has indoor spots for getting warm should the day be chilly. The tour is sponsored by the Working Harbor Committee and hosted by the RCSIA. Our narrators will be RCSIA chapter history and harbor experts George Bulow and Tom Flagg. For further information contact Bernard Ente at [Bernard@working-](mailto:Bernard@working-harbor.org)



Photographer: Bernie Ente

The Working Port.

[harbor.org](http://www.nycharities.org). Bring lunch or snacks with you as there is no food available on the boat.

Purchase tickets at:

<http://www.nycharities.org/beta/EventLevels.aspx?ETID=608>

Please register by 3 November.

WEBB INSTITUTE OF NAVAL ARCHITECTURE AND MARINE ENGINEERING

Saturday, December 12, 2009 – 12 - 2PM

**Meet in the courtyard between the parking lot and main building (Stevenson Taylor Hall).
Glen Cove, NY.**

The Webb Institute prepares students to work in the ship building industry of today but their history in the maritime world goes back well into the 19th century. The Webb Institute was founded in 1887 by William Henry Webb, then a leading industrialist and shipbuilder of renown. [Those who took the recent RCSIA tour of Green-Wood Cemetery might recall seeing Webb's grave]. William Webb Shipbuilding was one of the largest producers of ocean going vessels in the world during the 19th Century. The company also built an iron clad battleship that was originally commissioned by the Union Army. That order was cancelled when the Civil War ended but Wm. Webb completed the vessel on his own and sold it to Napoleon. In other engineering and construction endeavors, Washington Roebling commissioned Webb to build the caissons for the Brooklyn Bridge.



Photographer: Bernie Ente

Container ship and tug under the Bayonne Bridge.



Webb Institute's Stevenson Taylor Hall.

The institute was located originally in the Bronx and it moved to the present location after WW II. The estate that it occupies today is one of seven mansions that were built on the Glen Cove peninsula by the children of Charles Pratt, founder of Standard Oil and Pratt Institute. The grounds themselves are impressive and worth a visit.

We will see the 100-foot long towing tank where ship models and propellers are tested. We will also visit several other laboratories including the marine engineering lab containing a small steam plant and several diesel engines, a small machine shop, and the metallurgical lab. The main campus building houses dozens of ship models and half models from Webb Shipbuilding as well as more contemporary work by Webb graduates. For the less engineering inclined the Institute has a collection of oil paintings and other documents as well as industrial artifacts that help document their history. Our tour will be led by James Swan, SIA member and Webb Institute Engineering Laboratory Technician and Machinist.

Directions can be obtained from the Webb Institute website at: <http://www.webb-institute.edu>. Park in the front parking lot. The tour is scheduled to start after the arrival of the LIRR train to Glen Cove leaving Penn Station, NYC at 10:25. If you plan to take the train please let Lynn know by December 9th so a pick-up can be arranged.

Annual Chapter Meeting

Our annual Roebling Chapter SIA meeting will be held at the end of January 2010 in Paterson, NJ. Details are being worked out. A mailing will be sent in December with pertinent information.

CHAPTER BUSINESS

Call for Nominations – Chapter Officers

Electio**n** of the chapter officers will be held at the Annual Business Meeting in January (Notice of the meeting will be sent in December). Nominations for all four elected offices – President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary – are sought as all officers serve one-year terms. As per RCSIA by-laws, four of the five members of the board are elected by the membership. The fifth member is appointed by the elected members. All current officers are eligible to run again however our current President, Lynn Rakos, has opted to not run for office. Jim Makin, current Vice President, has agreed to run for President. We are in need of a good candidate for VP to help carry on good work of the Roebling Chapter! Please consider running.

All chapter officers must be members in good standing of the national Society for Industrial Archeology and well as of the chapter. Please nominate candidates by sending names of worthy chapter members to the Nominating Committee Chair, Tom Flagg, no later than January 10, 2010. Tom may be reached at tflagg@sunyopt.edu or (212) 938-5778. Bierce Riley and Beryl Goldberg are committee members who may also be contacted with nominations.

Historic Preservation Committee Report

By Mary Habstritt, Committee Chair

IRT Powerhouse Update

A hearing on whether to landmark the 1904 IRT Powerhouse was held before the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) on July 14, 2009 (See RCSIA Newsletter of June 2009 for background). Led by Landmark West! and the Powerhouse Group, many preservation organizations, historians, and politicians testified in favor of designating the IRT Powerhouse a New York City Landmark. Featured was the report completed by students in the graduate historic preservation program at Columbia University which provided a statement of historic significance and looked at re-use possibilities (see <http://www.arch.columbia.edu/school/section/programs/projects-2009-studios> for a pdf of the report). Mary Habstritt testified on behalf of the Roebling Chapter, stipulating that although RCSIA supports landmarking, we also support continued use of the facility for steam generation and other uses similar to its original purpose.

WANTED**New Historic Preservation
Committee Chair**

Due to the press of other responsibilities, Mary Habstritt will be stepping down as the Roebling Chapter's Preservation Chair. Do you have the passion to save an industrial heritage site or two? To discuss what it takes, contact Mary at 917-709-5291 or Lynn Rakos at 917-515-4154.

Only ConEd testified against landmarking. Company representatives contended that much of the facility thought to be unused had been emptied in preparation for a water treatment system currently being installed and that they had no intention of closing the facility, now used for generation of steam for district heating and cooling. In addition, the company felt that landmarking would prevent them from opening the building in case of equipment replacement and repairs.

LPC has not yet made a decision. In the meantime, a postcard campaign has been launched by Landmark West! to sway LPC toward landmarking. Hard copy postcards will be available at the Drew Symposium and were handed out at the recent Corn Roast and SIA Mid-Hudson Valley Fall Tour. If you don't have the chance to sign one of these postcards, e-postcards are available online at http://www.landmarkwest.org/IRT_email.html

Dumbo Tower Approved

In January, a proposal to build a tower on a site in Brooklyn's Dumbo neighborhood reached the step in the approval process where a hearing was held before Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz. The project, known as Dock Street Dumbo, was a renewal of an effort previously defeated in 2004 (see RCSIA newsletter of Dec. 2004 for details) to build a tower on the site adjacent to the Brooklyn Bridge.

Mary Habstritt testified against the project, expressing concern over the 18-story tower's impact upon the Brooklyn Bridge, a National Historic Landmark, as well as on the Tobacco Warehouse, Empire Stores, and other industrial buildings within the Dumbo Historic District and Fulton Ferry Historic District.

She subsequently testified in March before the City Planning Commission, but spoke as president of the national SIA. In April, she also joined representatives of the Dumbo Neighborhood Association, Municipal Art Society, Historic Districts Council, National Trust for Historic Preservation, and many other organizations on

the steps of City Hall for a rally protesting the project. The rally's highlight was an appearance by David McCullough, author of *The Great Bridge*.

In her comments, Habstritt said, "The Brooklyn Bridge is a symbol not only of New York City, but of American ingenuity. It was the longest, strongest and tallest bridge ever when it was built and the first suspension bridge to use steel cables. Yet the Roebling family who designed and built it also made it beautiful, a truly outstanding achievement. Dumbo was an incubator of industry, a manufacturing center that gave rise to some of the earliest reinforced concrete buildings in the country. It deserves buildings that are more reflective of this past and which better suit the scale of one of New York City's prime industrial heritage areas. Although this bridge is admired by people from around the world, it is up to us as New Yorkers to protect it. We are its stewards. In a city of skyscrapers, some places, like the setting of this magnificent jewel should remain uncrowded and inviolate." (For the full SIA press release on the protest, see <http://www.siahq.org/news/pressreleases/2009pressreleases/BrooklynBridgePR.pdf>)

Sadly, all these voices raised in protest were not enough to stop the tower from being approved by the New York City Council in June. In an unusual move, the council approved it over the opposition of David Yassky, the councilman who represents the district.

Pier 15

Also in March, RCSIA rang in on plans being considered by LPC for a reconstructed Pier 15 at Maiden Lane on the East River in the South Street Seaport Historic District. It is to replace a pier demolished in 2001. The modern two-level design by SHoP Architects provides for passive recreation including a café, seating, restrooms, and touchdowns where visitors can step down to the water. It is also intended for berthing historic ships of the South Street Seaport Museum and includes a small amount of space in a glass-walled building for museum programs. The latter use was the focus of Roebling Chapter comments. The pier layout with various cutouts makes actual mooring of ships impractical. According to a marine engineer we consulted, the plan as drawn provides inadequate information to determine whether the new pier structure could withstand the loads placed on it by vessels tied up to it.

LPC approved the pier design. It is part of an overall plan by New York City Economic Development Corporation to build an East River Esplanade from the Battery Maritime Building to East River Park stretching up to E. 12th St. According to the blog *Curbed*, the makeover of the East River Waterfront will transform an inaccessible area of the waterfront into a "home for yachts, happy children, and bikinis."

WANTED Chapter VP Candidate

The Roebling Chapter is seeking a motivated individual to run for Vice President. This is a perfect role for someone who wants to be more active in the chapter. We are looking for someone who is committed to seeing the chapter remain not only the largest of all SIA chapters, but also the most active of them. This is a good position for a candidate who is organized, reliable and of course, has a strong interest in IA! While the VP position is not very onerous, the person in that position usually, though not always, runs for President. The office of President brings with it more tasks and responsibilities.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- November 14** Exploring the Kill Van Kull, Newark Bay and Shooters Island
- December 12** Webb Institute of Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering
- Late January** RCSIA Annual Meeting (look for December mailing w/ details)

While VP, you can be as active as you want in aiding the President with running the chapter. If you think you have what it takes and want to lend a hand to Roebling please consider contacting the Nominating Committee (contact info inside newsletter).

Roebing Chapter SIA Officers

President	Lynn Rakos
Vice President	Jim Mackin
Treasurer	Kevin Pegram
Secretary	Aron Eisenpress

The Roebling Chapter official telephone number is the cell phone of the President: (917) 515-4154, or contact the Roebling Chapter by E-mail: RCSIAprez@aol.com.

Membership is \$20.00 per year, payable to RCSIA, c/o Aron Eisenpress, 235 West End Avenue, Apt. 14-C, New York, NY 10023.

A downloadable chapter membership form and general information about the SIA are available at www.siahq.org.

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AN OFFICIAL CHAPTER OF THE
SOCIETY FOR INDUSTRIAL
ARCHEOLOGY

