

ROEBLING CHAPTER

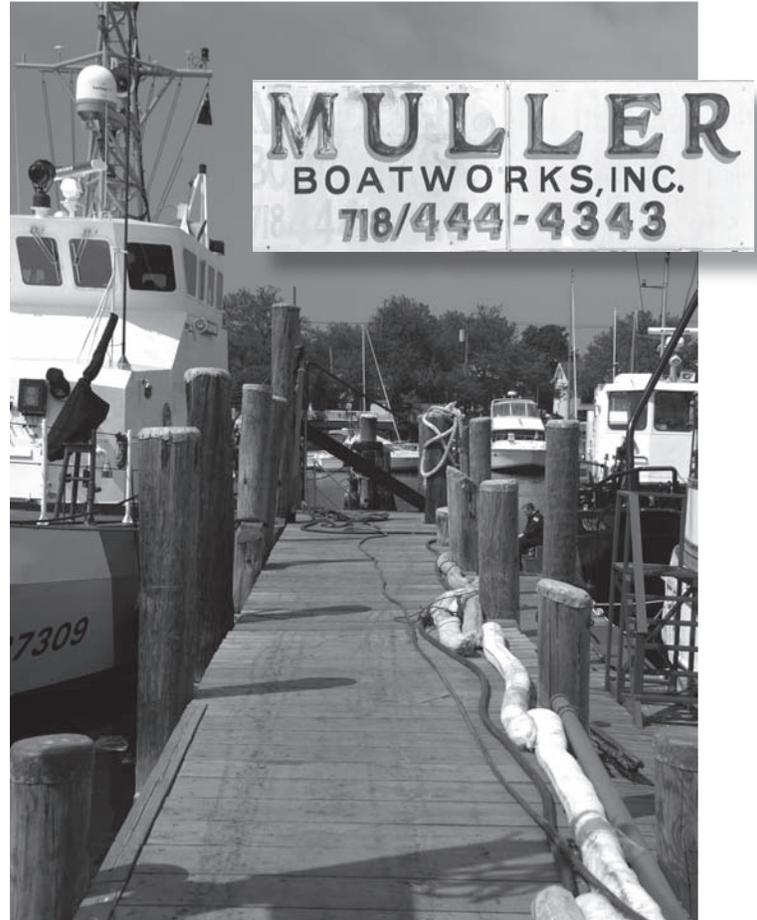
Society for Industrial Archeology

September 2011 – Vol. 20 No.2

MULLER BOAT WORKS VISIT

Thanks to Roebbling Chapter member Bob Kaplan, we visited the Muller Boat Works in the Bergen Beach section of Brooklyn on Saturday, June 25th. Jimmy Muller's father started building wooden hull boats in 1938 in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, in 1938. Shortly after he bought some land on the Mill Basin Channel and established his boatyard. He was fortunate to have met a senior executive from the W R Grace & Company who provided some funding for the expansion of his operation. The business prospered along with Muller's stellar reputation, and many boats were built and repaired over a long and illustrious history. Most work these days is repair work. That can include work on the ship frames and hulls or on their engines. Some work is commissioned out as appropriate. The vessels range from commercial boats to tugs to ferries to sailboats to yachts. Muller employs about 10 to 12 workers, but it has gone much higher with larger jobs.

We saw the two railways in the yard that draw boats out of the water and onto dry docks. Some 88-rail wheels attest to the size and so do the giant hoists and cranes that are employed. The daily 6-foot tide is no impediment to work, but hurricanes are always a challenge. Jimmy Muller's father told him of the famous hurricane of '38. Jimmy recounts an endless



array of stories covering 72 years of Muller's history. The yard has handled too many boats to mention or remember: except that Jimmy seems to remember them all. One was the "Virginia" that came to be

owned by the Todd Shipyards. Jimmy has built two sailboats for his own use. One was 35' and the other 48". In addition, Muller Boat Works built the lifeboats for Jones Beach and also the floating stage for the outdoor theater! They currently do work for various Fire Island ferries.

Much current work requires that Jimmy keep up with the

SAVE THE DATE FOR THE NEXT TOUR

WEBB INSTITUTE TOUR

Saturday, September 24, 2011

Tour at 1 p.m.

Multi-Media Presentation at 2:30 p.m.

The Webb Institute was founded in 1889 by the pre-eminent ship-builder William Henry Webb and is reknown for naval architecture and marine engineering. Our tour in 2009 was most memorable and included the famed ship model basin.

Continued on page 5.

FOR THE LATEST ON UPCOMING EVENTS

WATCH THE ROEBLING CHAPTER WEB SITE FOR DETAILS

roebblingsia.org



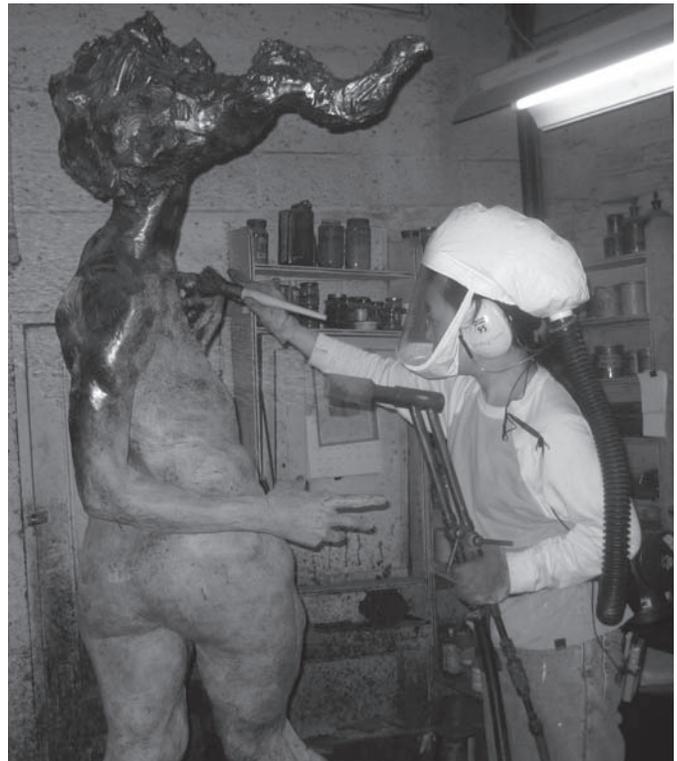
trend towards more environmental regulation, which he does by attending numerous seminars on DEC and related issues. It's not difficult to imagine Muller working on a few jobs at the same time while employing their valuable dock space and handling the inevitable deadlines. We were fortunate to see and hear it first hand from Jimmy Muller who continues the renowned legacy of Muller Boat Works. ■

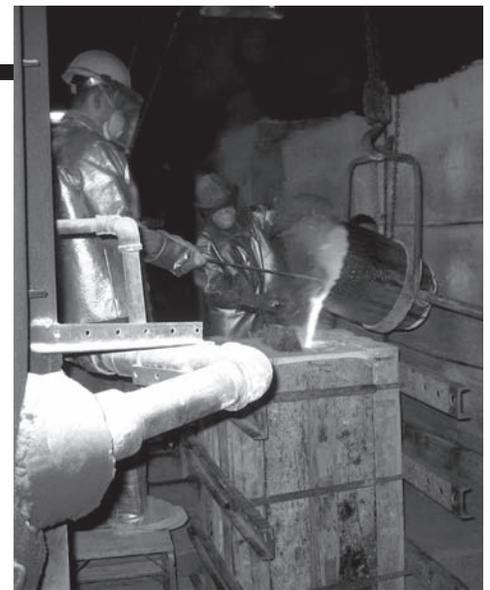
MODERN ART FOUNDRY TOUR REAL TREAT

On Friday, May 20th some 20 Roebing Chapter members visited the MODERN ART FOUNDRY in Astoria, Queens. The tour was suggested by our esteemed chapter member, Mary Lee Baranger, after she and fellow member, Pierre Tonachel, raved about their visit there. How fortunate for us. Jeffrey Spring, the current President and grandson of the founder, conducted a very comprehensive tour. The Modern Art Foundry is a full-service sculpture casting operation that handles all non-ferrous materials and includes a full range of maintenance and conservation

services. It began in 1932 and has been at its current location since the 1940s. Curiously, it occupies part of William Steinway's stables. Since the 1970s, Jeffrey Spring and his sister, Mary Jo, have safeguarded the success and legacy of this incredible operation.

We learned that the process that starts from a sculptor's model to producing the final cast sculpture is more complex than one might think. Various negative and positive molds are necessary to carefully render a durable and accurate final sculpture. The pouring of the molds, including bronze for many sculptures, is done with years of experience and care. Mr. Spring arranged for us to see an actual bronze pouring. Many of us who have seen similar pouring of iron or steel, know the thrill of seeing the orange glowing molten metal in action. We also saw a woman applying a new patina to a large sculptured piece. Our cameras were flashing all the while except in one part of the foundry where a well-known modern sculpture had proprietary protection. Modern Art Foundry is so unique in many respects: equipment, measuring techniques, and the sense of historic sculptures and artists. Some of our questions about process led to stories about noted sculptors.





The “Alice in Wonderland” in Central Park is prominent in Modern Art Foundry’s literature, but their restoration work in Green-Wood Cemetery, especially on the Soldiers and Sailors (Civil War) Monument is especially important.

Down the street is the well-known Steinway Mansion. William Steinway bought it from Benjamin in 1870 when he contemplated relocating the Stein-

way Piano operation from Manhattan to Astoria. The Steinway Piano factory is two blocks away. Before the Modern Art Foundry tour, I stopped by Steinway to plan for a Roebling Chapter re-visit (we visited a few years ago). Our intention to walk the neighborhood and take-in the Steinway factory, the Mansion and worker housing was thwarted by rain. No problem – we had our fill with Modern Art Foundry. ■

PRESERVATION

DOMINO SUGAR PLANT – UPDATE

On Monday, June 20th, the Skyscraper Museum hosted a panel discussion entitled “Domino: Old & New, Reinventing the Industrial Waterfront”. The discussion was held across the street from the Skyscraper Museum in the auditorium of the Museum of Jewish Heritage to accommodate the large group of attendees and enable the high-quality audio-visual presentations. Carol Willis, the Founder and Director of the Skyscraper Museum introduced the presenters that included the architects & planners, the developer, the construction engineer, and the preservation consultant. The Executive Editor of “The Architect’s Newspaper, Julie V. Iovine, moderated the panel discussion.

After seven years, the Domino Sugar Plant is approved to be adaptively re-used and developed into

a waterfront residential project. As can be well imagined, only the prominent large and old part of the historic plant will survive into the new development. The plant had many later-day “add-ons” that will be replaced in large part by four apartment towers. The two tallest towers were scaled back from 40 to 34 stories. All of the four towers are taller than the Domino building itself, and yet the Domino structure retains an incredible stature. This is accomplished in a number of ways. First and foremost is the plant’s intricate redbrick detail that contrasts with the surrounding modern glass towers. Second is the prominent use of the Domino sign (which was not landmarked, but acquired by the developer). Third is how the towers “frame” the Domino building with a green park in front to give visual depth to the site.

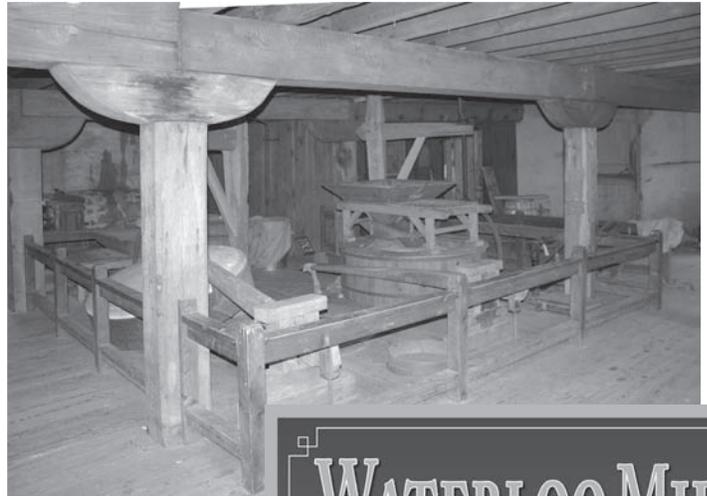
The architects showed the difference between the top building “line” of 1892 and that of today. The

Continued on page 5.

WATERLOO MILL BACK IN OPERATION

For the past five years the Canal Society of New Jersey (CSNJ) in partnership with New Jersey State Park Service has been keeping Waterloo Village, New Jersey's most complete 19th century canal town, open to the public. The village was restored in the 1960s and operated for many years by the Waterloo Foundation for the Arts. After years of decline and deferred maintenance, the Foundation went out of business in 2006. Since then, the CSNJ has worked hard to bring the village back to life and to present a more accurate interpretation.

Unlike many restored villages that are made up of relocated or reconstructed building, Waterloo is a real place with building and a history dating back to the 1760s. When the Morris Canal was built through the village in 1831, the canal company constructed *The mill is powered by this massive wooden waterwheel.*



In the 1970s the mill was rebuilt as an 18th century demonstration gristmill with two run of stone. The machinery was beautifully built and is now in working order.



a lock, dam and inclined plane. The Smith family, owners of the property, built a store, a mill and eventually fine home. Waterloo became a busy inland port on an interstate waterway.

In the 1860s, Samuel T. Smith and his brothers, Peter and Seymour, operated the Waterloo mill, grinding grain, sawing logs, and making plaster. This years the CSNJ's major projects has been to reopen the Smith Brothers Mill. Hours of volunteer labor went into cleaning the building, getting the machinery into working order and developing an all new interpretive program to present the mills history and technology to visitors.

Besides the challenges of learning to operate a water powered gristmill, society members have been delving in the mills mechanical history. In the 1970s when the mill was restored most of this remaining old equipment was removed. Fortunately, we have discovered some of the forgotten iron gears and shafting in back cor-



The
**GREAT FALLS
SYMPOSIUM**

SATURDAY
NOVEMBER 5TH, 2011
9:30 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

International High School
200 Grand Avenue
Paterson, NJ

The Roebling Chapter of the Society for Industrial Archeology

WEBB INSTITUTE TOUR

Continued from page 1.

The presentation after the tour will feature historian John Laurence Busch, author of the book *STEAM COFFIN: Captain Moses Rogers and The Steamship Savannah Break the Barrier*. He will attempt to recalibrate your mind before showing why the proposition of making the first crossing of the Atlantic Ocean on a “steamship” was met with a mixture of skepticism and fear.

The Webb Institute is located at 298 Crescent Beach Road, Glen Cove, NY. If coming by car, meet in the Webb’s courtyard between the parking lot and the main building (Stevenson Taylor Hall). Click for directions and a map. For public transportation, take the Long Island Rail Road to Glen Street station. We will arrange for volunteers with cars to pick up arriving train passengers. ■

DOMINO SUGAR PLANT – UPDATE

Continued from page 3.

center chimney dominates (no pun intended) the visual. But more problematic is the addition of a few floors above the original plant building. These were necessary to retain the economic density that was lost with the creation of atrium space in the plant building. The additional floors (of saleable apartments) needed a “story line” justification to gain approval for addition to the development. That story began with the nature of the interior space. The images of the interior space were of much interest to Roebing Chapter attendees. Although the Domino facility was 14 stories high, it had no floors per se. Machinery was “hung” from an infrastructure of girders, beams and walls. Curiously, the engineer’s evaluation found the structure to be inadequate in carrying its load.

Past President of the National SIA and the Roebing Chapter, Mary Habstritt, has been involved with preserving the Domino facility since before we visited it in conjunction with the National SIA conference in 2002. Appropriately then, she questioned the panel about how the Domino story will be told in the development? The sentiment of the answer sounded promising and the developer tossed the word “museum” into the discussion. If only! ■

NEW JERSEY EVENTS

INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE WALK

Boonton Historic District

Saturday, July 16

Stahope

Sunday, August 14

Long Pond Ironworks

Saturday, September 17

Waterloo Canal Walk

Saturday, October 8

Chester Furnace

Sunday, November 6

For Information or to sign up for a walk please e-mail: macgraphics1@verizon.net

WATERLOO HERITAGE DAYS

July 9 & 23 Aug 13 & 27

Sept 10 & 24 Oct 8 & 22

Waterloo is a preserved Morris Canal town with a long industrial and transportation history, located just off I-80 in Sussex County New Jersey.

Heritage Days offer a wide range of activities including:

- Operating Gristmill (**New this Year**)
- Boat Rides on the Canal
- Canal Walking Tours
- Canal Museum
- Smith Canal Store
- Blacksmith Shop
- Rutan Cabin
- Exhibits
 - Canal History & Technology
 - Canals of New Jersey
- Lenape Indian Village

– FREE ADMISSION –

For more information and directions please e-mail:

macgraphics1@verizon.net

ners of the village. Some of the pieces fit together offering an interesting opportunity to hypothetically reconstruct some of the mills historic power system.

Please join us this season. Explore the village's canal history and technology. But, remember to visit the gristmill and help us investigate its secrets. There will also be a canal walking tour on Saturday, October 8.

See the schedule on page 5 for dates, visits our web site at canalsocietynj.org for directions or contact Joe Macasek at macgraphics1@verizon.net for additional information. ■

UPCOMING EVENTS – 2011

- September 10** Annuall Corn Roast
September 24 Webb Institute Tour
October 13 – 16 National SIA Fall Tour
Quinebaug-Shetucket Rivers
Valley in Mass. & Conn.
November 5 The Great Falls Symposium
November 12 Splitrock Furnace Tour

Roebing Chapter SIA Officers

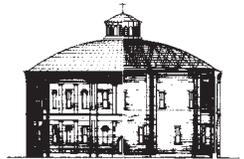
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Treasurer Kevin Pegram
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You can contact the Roebing Chapter by E-mail at:
RCSIAprez@aol.com

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 OFFICAL CHAPTER OF THE
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ARCHEOLOGY



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FOR THE LATEST ON UPCOMING EVENTS

WATCH THE ROEBLONG CHAPTER WEB SITE FOR DETAILS

roblingsia.org

ROEBLING CHAPTER
SOCIETY FOR INDUSTRIAL ARCHEOLOGY
c/o Aron Eisenpress, RCSIA Secretary
235 West End Avenue, Apt. 14-C
New York, NY 10023
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED