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Story By: LINDA LEUZZI,
26 June 2014

They sat on white chairs, makeshift chairs, and courtyard corners on a windswept afternoon as TRITEC's festivities packed them in. Six hundred people signed up for the grand opening; at least half were at the ceremony listening to the speakers who had an important part in the making of Patchogue Village's new \$110 million apartment complex at the former Swezey's site. ...

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Photo By Daniel Brennan photo: Photographer Xiomáro inside Old Mastic House.

Battle ready

Story By: PEGGY SPELLMAN HOEY ,

25 June 2014

When Xiomáro was commissioned with retelling the revolutionary history of Old Mastic House, the former estate of Declaration of Independence signer William Floyd, he had no problem mapping out his plan of attack. Drawing from the 613-acre property's rich past — including its days under British occupation during the American Revolution — the fine arts photographer cut a path beyond the velvet rope that normally restricts visitors to share a glimpse of its history in an up-close-and-personal pictorial set for show at the Patchogue Ferry Terminal starting next week.

“People can take the ferry and while they are waiting, they will see the project,” said Xiomáro, a Roslyn Heights resident, in an interview Monday. “The project will give them something to do, but it will also make them aware that there is another part of Fire Island National Seashore in Mastic Beach Village that they can actually see. There’s free admission to the park and they give free tours; it’s a pretty good deal.”

Xiomáro, a pseudonym that means ‘ready for battle’ in Spanish, was commissioned earlier this year by the National Parks Service, which oversees Fire Island National Seashore, to photograph Floyd’s estate as a way to attract more visitors to their lesser-known attraction. His previous work includes documenting the Connecticut farmhouse of Impressionist painter Julian Alden Weir, Sagamore Hill in Oyster Bay, the studio of Ashcan School sculptor Mahonri Young, and Boston Harbor Islands.

Xiomáro said he was drawn to the project because of the home’s varied history, which covers from the Revolutionary and Civil wars on up to the ‘70s, when the Floyd family last lived on the property. The house itself tells its own story through many of the personal objects left behind by the family and you can see how the family transitioned over time, he said.

“I think that the interests in William Floyd can reach a very wide divide of people who might want to check it out,” he said.

The whole project — about 200 photographs — took about six months to complete and made its debut at Fraunces Tavern Museum in Manhattan earlier this year. But only 10 photographs were handpicked to appear as part of the July 4 to Aug. 17 exhibit in Patchogue. Some of the photos include Floyd’s ceremonial sword and hunting rifle, the 25-room house’s main room where guests were entertained, as well as a magnified image of the patriot’s now-famous signature on the Declaration of Independence.

“There is also a lot of interesting history about William Floyd that people don’t know,” said Xiomáro.

Floyd was a slave owner, and family lore has it that some of the slaves are now buried on the grounds in a small plot with seven white crosses, an area also featured in the exhibit, according to Xiomáro. Just two generations later, Floyd’s grandson, John Gelston Floyd, joined the union army to fight in the Civil War.

“Over history this is how the family changed, just as the country changed and developed,” said Xiomáro. “The house dates back to early 1700s and goes all the way into the ‘70s.”

Because the house was ransacked by the British during the occupation, not a lot is left from that time, but the photographer said he was able to focus on very personal items like the sword, medicine box, which he described as an elegantly designed traveling case with about six flasks, and a snuff box for tobacco — all items used by Floyd — to bring viewers closer to the man and who he was, ultimately making him less of a mystery.

“His DNA is on it; he used these things,” Xiomáro said. “That brings you about as close to the man as you can get.”

William Floyd’s House of Revolution

This free exhibit sponsored by Fire Island National Seashore can be viewed at the Patchogue Ferry Terminal from July 4 to Aug. 17. The Patchogue Ferry Terminal is located at 150 West Ave., Patchogue. For more information, call 687-4750. To view a free photo eBook, go to www.xiomaro.com.