

Telling LI's history at war in photographs

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Xiomáro

Posted: Thursday, May 22, 2014 1:29 pm
By Anthony O'Reilly

The work of a Roslyn Heights photographer will help to tell the tale of Long Island's contributions to America's wars at the "Long Island at War" exhibit at the Long Island Museum in Stony Brook beginning May 23.

"There hasn't been any major museum that examines this," photographer Xiomaro [pronounced See-oh-mar-oh] said.

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A Xiomáro photograph of William Floyd's sword. Save and close

The exhibit, which will run from May 23 to Dec. 31, consists of more than 200 artifacts ranging from the Revolutionary War to World War II, using six of Xiomaro's photos to tie the exhibit together.

"They're using my photos as a unifier," he said.

The photos taken by Xiomaro, a resident of Roslyn Heights since 1998, were chosen by the museum from two previous exhibits by the photographer: "Theodore Roosevelt: How I Love Sagamore Hill," and "William Floyd's House of Revolution."

Joshua Ruff, curator for the Long Island Museum, said he had only seen Xiomaro's photos online before, but was impressed with what he had seen.

"I thought that including selections of his work would be an interesting contribution to the exhibit," Ruff said. "I think his work is terrific and is a great way of having one thread that works its way through the exhibit."

In his previous exhibits, Xiomaro was commissioned by the National Park Service to photograph the estates of Theodore Roosevelt and William Floyd, both of whom had lived on Long Island.

William Floyd, who signed the Declaration of Independence and served in the Revolutionary War under George Washington, lived on Fire Island. Several of Floyd's descendants, who served in other American wars, also lived on Long Island.

Roosevelt, the 26th U.S. president and a general during the Spanish-American War, lived in Oyster Bay.

Roosevelt's and Floyd's homes contained memorabilia spanning from the Revolutionary War, the American Civil War, the Spanish-American War and World War II, which will be on display at the exhibit.

Some of Xiomaro's photos to be included in the exhibit, he said, include a close-up shot of Roosevelt, a recruitment poster from the Civil War that hangs in Floyd's house and a picture of a World War II military jacket hanging on the back of a chair. Next to the chair is a telegram from Western Union saying that one of Floyd's descendants had been injured in battle.

Plans to photograph a gun emplacement in Montauk fell through after state officials did not get back to Xiomaro in time for the exhibit.

"I think they're pretty lame for not doing that," he said.

Xiomaro said he hopes the photographs can make Long Islanders realize that the region has contributed more to America's history than it's given credit for.

"I want people to feel a sense of pride that when our country was at battle, people can pull together to make these contributions," he said. "It's a part of our history and tradition."

He said he also wants to let Long Islanders know that even though they, or their family, may not have directly participated in a war, they could have indirectly participated.

“Maybe they or someone they knew worked for the Grumman corporation,” Xiomaro said. “Or maybe they worked for a company that provided pencils or a certain kind of chemical to Grumman.

He said he also hopes that it will attract people to visit museums on Long Island, rather than travelling to Manhattan to see an art show.

“Sometimes people don’t think of Long Island as a place of art,” Xiomaro said.

But Xiomaro said if people can’t make it out to the exhibit, his photos are available on his website, Xiomaro.com.

“My photos can travel to them,” he said. “They’re like little ambassadors.”

Xiomaro also offers a free e-book on his website, chronicling his photos and some of his previous exhibits.

Ruff said that the museum is offering free admission to veterans and active duty military members of the community for the exhibit.

The Long Island Museum is located at 1200 New York 25A in Stony Brook.