

# L.I. Ports of Call

## Cruising to Greenport

by Capt. Gary P. Joyce

### Greenport

At one time the entire east side of the town of Southold was referred to as Hashamonuk, but that all-encompassing word doesn't do justice to the several different towns and burghs that populate the east end of the North Fork. Principal among them is Greenport, which has throughout its existence been known by several names, but always has been connected to the harbor and waters it fronts upon. A group of the Young family, one of the original settlers of Southold, which (vociferous debates with Southampton historians aside) is the oldest settlement on Long Island, moved down to what is the present-day Greenport area in the 1640s. The first recorded deed transaction appears in 1648 when the land the Youngs' owned was transferred to the Booth family.



*The carousel, located between Front Street and the marina, is a kid pleaser.*

The area originally was called Winter Harbor; about the time of the Revolution it became known as Stirling, which faced the Sound, and Green Hill, which was the harbor area that eventually became Green Port (two words) when the two towns merged in 1831. Seven years later the village incorporated and the town became the Greenport we know today. The main village actually was situated on the west side of Stirling Creek, and it wasn't until the village incorporated that the area of present-day downtown started to build.

Greenport has always been known as a true seaport. Boat building, whaling, shellfisheries and fin fisheries always played a major part in this town's culture and existence, and although prior predominance has been replaced by tourism, as has been the case in virtually every coastal city in the Northeast, these basic marine activities are still in existence in Greenport.

While locals all subsisted on what could be harvested from both the sea and land, one of the earliest major nautical occupations of Greenport was whaling which, in turn, begat ship building. Scores of whaling ships were built and sailed out of Greenport and some made notorious and/or famous journeys. The *Washington* cruised 363 days on a whale voyage never touching land. Although the shipbuilding tradition continued through WW I (the Greenport Basin and Construction Company built boats for the Russian

and American navies), Prohibition (which kept *everybody* in Greenport *very* busy), WW II (minesweepers, landing craft and tugboats for the US Navy) and continues to be part of Greenport with the likes of the Legendals (father and sons), Essex Boat Works, Seth Persson, CH Marine and Stidd Systems (manufacturer of the ultimate in boat seats for recreational and military craft), its halcyon days ended with the demise of whaling and culminated at its peak in 1880 with the biggest ship ever built in Greenport: the *Wandering Jew*, a 165-foot, three-masted barkentine built by the Smith and Terry Shipyard. The menhaden industry was gone by the end of the Civil War; oystering saw its peak in 1901, but by 1964 was all but gone, and the famed Peconic Bay scallop fishery never returned to its pre-brown tide volume of the 1970s.

Well-to-do vacationers "discovered" Greenport (and just-across-the-water Shelter Island) after the Civil War, and it was still the sea that provided the economic impetus for Greenport. Vanderbilt sailed his beautiful J-boats, *Enterprise*, *Rainbow* and the Stephens and Burgess-designed *Ranger* on Greenport's waters, and several Greenport seamen became well-known in America's Cup circles, including Captain George H. Monsell, who was master of the aforementioned

J-boats. With the outbreak of World War II, these same gentlemen yachtsmen volunteered their boats and service in what became known as the Hooligan Navy, using their offshore sail craft to patrol for the German submarines that were so active off Long Island in the early days of the war.

### Greenport Today

The commercial maritime hubbub of yesteryear in Greenport has largely been replaced by tourists today. Fronting a deepwater channel, Greenport still sports commercial craft, but the majority of the boats are recreational sail and powerboats, whose captains can avail themselves of fine dining and ship's services. Preston's, the most noted chandlery in town — if not on eastern Long Island — fronts on the harbor and has been in existence there since 1882. Claudio's restaurant is across the street from Preston's and has been owned by the same family since 1870 (prior to that it was a ship's chandlery as well, owned by the Corwin brothers). Claudio's owns several waterfront shops and eateries, as well as a marina. New restaurants and shops pop up annually in Greenport along the main drag, Front Street,



*Mitchell Park Marina looking north to the carousel (center). Weekdays have been a good time to visit Greenport this summer vis-a-vis docking space.*

the main section of which extends from the Greenport Movie Theater east to Main Street, where more shops are located both to the north and south.

Accommodations are dotted throughout town (and the immediate area). Just off 25A (follow signs to Route 114) is probably the oldest ferry station in New York (there are references to a rowboat taking passengers rowed by a man named Bousseau, but the first formal establishment of a ferry service was in 1859). The ferry terminus is also home to the Long Island Railroad terminus, which arrived in 1844 as part of a failed scheme to make Greenport a New York City-like-seaport. The railroad museum is definitely worth a visit. The crowning glory of Greenport is the Mitchell Park area, which contains an old-fashioned, all-weather carousel, built in 1920 in North Tonawanda, New York and restored in Greenport. South of the carousel are the new town docks, which crowd up on weekends. A boardwalk extends from there to Claudio's,



*Mitchell Park Marina on the left, the ferry terminal on the right and some commercial boats in the far foreground. Shelter Island is in the background.*

there's the Chowder Pot Pub right at the head of the docks, and Front Street offers eateries for every taste.

Long Island's poet laureate, Walt Whitman, often visited Greenport and stayed with his sister, who lived on the corner of South and Third streets. Of Greenport's inhabitants he

*Continued on page 8*

# Cruising to Greenport

by Capt. Gary P. Joyce

Continued from page 3

wrote, “[there are] interesting specimens of humanity to be scared up in all quarters of this diggins.” And there’s no need to expand any further on that when speaking of Greenport today.

### If You Plan to go

NOAA Chart 12358

Greenport offers easy access and deep water; you never know what kind of ship will be visiting. From old world-cruising Tall Ships to US Navy frigates, Greenport always has been

able to handle them. The harbor is open to the south, which can make for some bumpy conditions (wind prevails from the south-west most afternoons), though the Mitchell Park docks have a breakwater ameliorating the affects.

From the north, round Orient Point and head generally west-southwest to the red 2 buoy off Long Beach, a spit of beach heading in the same direction you should be. Steer north with Shelter Island on your port (check out the lighthouse at the end of Long Beach). Once you round the green 4 buoy,

you’ll see a long pier to your starboard. That marks the entrance to Stirling Basin. Greenport is just west of that — look for the large sculpture of a heron; you can’t miss it.

From the south, it’s round Montauk and head west or enter Peconic Bay via the Shinnecock Canal. From there head west-northwest, south of Robins Island, through the race between Great Hog Neck and Jessup’s Head and then follow the obvious channel between Shelter Island and the North Fork to your north and then east. When you



Looking north along the docks for Claudio’s Clam Bar.

see the ferries, you’ve reached Greenport.

Marinas, other than the Mitchell Park town docks (631-477-2200; 60 slips, all transient), mainly are located in Stirling Basin, which is entered just east of Greenport proper. These include Brewer Stirling Harbor Marina (10 transient docks; 631-477-0828; [www.byy.com/greenport](http://www.byy.com/greenport)) at the head of the basin and the Brewer Yacht Yard (10 transient docks; 631-477-9594; [www.byy.com/greenport](http://www.byy.com/greenport)). Both are on the east side of the basin. On the west side is Townsend Manor Marina (35 docks; 631-477-2000;

Continued on page 10



Claudio’s Restaurant, looking north from the docks.

## Your Discount Winterizing Source!

# MOELLER

### Oil Change Pump

- 6.5 liter (1.72 Gal.) extractor
- Ideal for most forms of fluid extractions
- Removes stagnant bilge water in those hard-to-reach places.
- Not for use with gasoline
- Auto overflow shut off
- Mess free and easy to use
- Easy transport and storage

Item 300003

**Sale \$78.99**



Most orders ship the same day!

THE BRANDS YOU WANT AND TRUST IN STOCK FOR LESS

# Defender®

[www.defender.com](http://www.defender.com)

FREE 324 page Catalog!



42 Great Neck Road • Waterford, CT • 800-628-8225 • [info@defender.com](mailto:info@defender.com)

## Come Join The

# Morris Yacht & Beach Club



### The Best Year Round Cost Solution To Boating

“Membership Special - sign up now for 2009, and we’ll haul your boat for free this fall. Call for details.”

- 5 ½ Acre premier facility located on City Island
- Huge shaded lawn with unparalleled view of NYC skyline
- Private sandy beach with lifeguard and swim float
- Parking for 100+ cars
- Deep water mooring area with 24 hr. boat access to dock and floats
- New 25 ton travel lift boat hauling system for vessels up to 17’ wide and 9’ draft
- Established weekday night racing series
- Members allowed to work on their boats or hire outside contractors (must carry insurance)
- Indoor workshop and equipment for DIY
- Already belong to a club or marina, but need a place to haul & store for the winter? Check out our Off-Season Member rates
- Established weekday night race series in Eastchester Bay



Call 914-582-5009

or visit us online at [www.morrisybc.com](http://www.morrisybc.com) and click on membership

