



Seabrook Educational & Cultural Center Bulletin

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Hours: Monday - Thursday 9:00 am - 12:00 noon
Additional visiting hours by appointment



Vol. 3, No. 37 Spring

Expanding The Scope of Seabrook History

The following article and invitation in this newsletter are shared by our Grant Steering Committee for our New Jersey Council for the Humanities (NJCH) 2019 Incubation Grant Project Award (\$5,000.) which was matched by the SECC Award from the New Jersey Historic Commission (NJHC) via the 2019 Cumberland County Historic Commission (\$2,800.) and SECC donations.

Project Title: Planning Process, Step One
Rewrite the Seabrook Farms Narrative

The Seabrook family were mid-nineteenth century British immigrants who found their way to South Jersey and settled in Cumberland County, lured by Charles Landis's promotion of the city of Vineland. Their modest vegetable and berry farm grew to become one of the largest agricultural enterprises in New Jersey history.

Beginning with Arthur P. Seabrook's introduction of irrigation to Cumberland County in 1907 and continuing with his son Charles F. Seabrook's application of Henry Ford's factory methods to vegetable production, the company brought science and mechanization to the raising of premium fresh produce for markets in Philadelphia and New York, known as "truck farming," long an important part of the Garden State's historical identity.

In the 1930s and 40s, a third generation of Seabrooks extended Clarence Birdseye's quick-freezing process, originally developed for fish, to frozen fruits and vegetables, pioneering a whole new category of food, and creating the Seabrook Farms brand. The farm was called "the greatest vegetable factory on earth" by *Life Magazine* in 1955.

Less well known is how Seabrook workers were at the forefront of struggles to win agricultural laborers' fair wages, job benefits and security, and racial and gender equality for farmworkers.

For years, black Seabrook workers were let go before white workers and women, considered more dexterous on assembly lines than male counterparts, received lower pay for their labors.

In 1934, workers at Seabrook formed one of the first farmworkers' unions in the country and elected Jerry Brown, a black member, president. That same year the union organized the largest, at the time, farm-worker walkout in U.S. history and the company responded by hiring local KKK members to attack picket lines. During the 1940s and 1950s, organizers viewed Seabrook Farms as a key target for reforms aimed at providing black and Puerto Rican seasonal laborers and their families with access to schools and healthcare.

The history of how Seabrook Farms recruited its workforce also warrants greater research. Workers came from twenty-three different foreign nations, as well as from the U.S. South, Appalachia, and Puerto Rico. The workforce included at different points southern Italian immigrants, Jamaican and Barbadian guest-workers, twenty-five hundred Japanese Americans paroled from incarceration camps they were forced into after the passage of Executive Order 9066 in 1942, and nine hundred Displaced Persons from Estonia, Poland, and East Germany whom the company sponsored as refugees. For some families, the company's promise of jobs and housing represented a new start. For others, Seabrook was a place of lost rights and freedoms, and of economic exploitation.

Almost twenty years after the company closed in 1975, a group of former workers created the Seabrook Educational and Cultural Center, a museum and archive located near the site of the Seabrooks' original truck farm, that preserves personal stories and artifacts from the Japanese American and Estonian workers. With limited resources, the SECC founders ensured that Seabrook Farms' history would not disappear.

Continued from page 1

The SECC is now ready to further the founders' vision by expanding its narrative footprint. We believe that the struggles Seabrook Farms workers contended with – lack of access to social services, anti-union pressure, violations of civil liberties, the threat of deportation – are no less relevant today. Through partnerships, education, and restorative justice initiatives, the SECC can be a leader in exposing historical injustices committed against Seabrook workers, and the ongoing struggles for fair wages that farmworkers face, and a leader in celebrating rather than degrading the ongoing role immigrants play in American society. As a first step toward this expanded role, the SECC seeks input on how to reposition its museum, archives, and programming to realize this vision. On March 11 and April 23, we will host public meetings where all interested stakeholders will be invited to help shape the SECC's future. (Details can be found at: <http://seabrookeducation.org/>.) With your involvement, we hope that the SECC will become an essential stop for everyone whose lives and family histories are intertwined with farm work in New Jersey and beyond, and a resource and ally to these communities. We hope to see you soon.

John Seabrook, President, SECC

Andrew Urban, Rutgers University, New Brunswick (Project Consultant)

Also serving on the committee:

Beverly Carr, SECC Executive Director/Project Director

Masaru Nakawatase, SECC Trustee

Janet Sheridan, Down Jersey Heritage Research, LLC

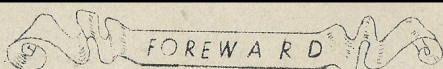
Penelope S. Watson, AIA

Steve Wilchensky, Principal, C. F. Seabrook School



COLLECTION SPOTLIGHT

These images are from our reference copy of the
7th Anniversary Address Book of the Seabrook
Buddhist Church, 1952



"Prelude to the future is based on the past"--the publication of this directory has become a reality in commemoration of the Seventh Anniversary of the Seabrook Buddhist Church. It is our fervent hope that this publication will prove helpful not only to those who live here today, but for those who may choose to reside elsewhere tomorrow, may it be a lasting reminder of the many pleasant hours shared together at Seabrook Farms.

To our heroic sons who made their supreme contribution to America with her principles they so dearly loved, we solemnly pledge ourselves to carry on their great work so that their actions will not have been in vain.

To the many Issei who have found ultimate peace and serenity in these trying years, we wish to place a portion of this publication in their honor; their contribution to the community and their endeavor to encourage good citizenship towards their adopted country have indeed made lasting impression.

Thus, with these simple words, but with greatest of humility and admiration, we dedicate this book to those who have served so well. May the symbolic torch of freedom and love be eternally ours to carry on as we unite in brotherhood for a better world.

With Gassho,

Ray Bano

Ray Bano
General Chairman

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ACQUISITIONS

Beverly Carr, Hancocks Bridge, NJ: Publications: Brown, Lester R., *Plan B 4.0, Mobilizing to Save Civilization*. Earth Policy Institute 2009. Kitano, Harry H. L., *Japanese Americans, The Evolution of a Sub-culture*, Prentice-Hall, NJ 1969. Holmes, Richard, *World War II In Photographs*, Seven Oaks, London 2000.

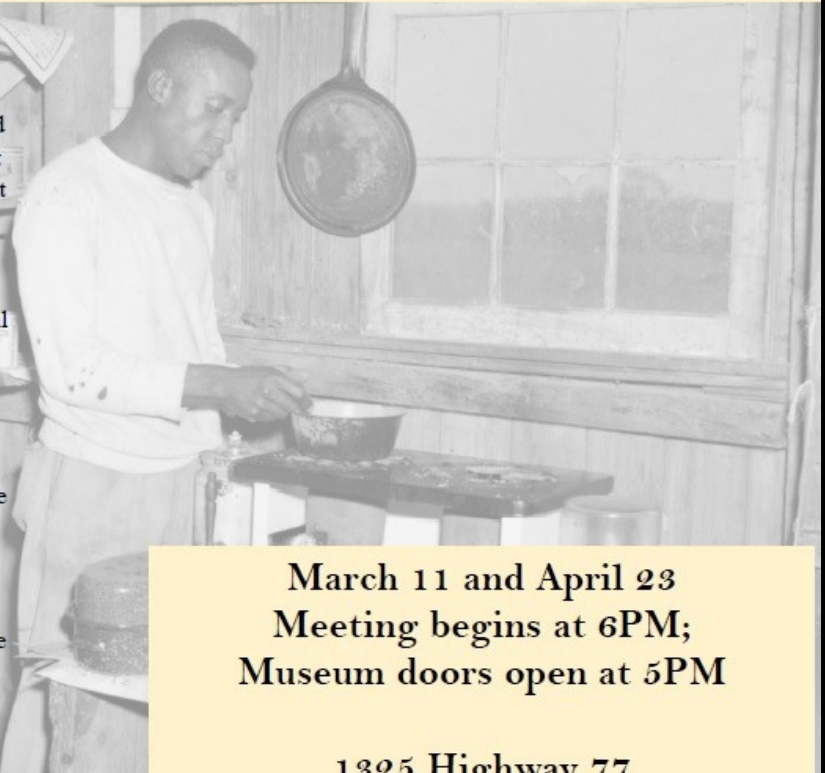
Joyce McLeod, Bridgeton, NJ: Publication: Pamphlet/Seabrook Farms – *Private Treaty Sale, Top Group of Aberdeen Angus Cattle Specially Selected by Russ West. Sale of Belford L. Seabrook, Alloway, NJ 1954*

Pam Ossiboff, Seabrook School, NJ: Seabrook Farms lighter by Rosen-nesor (American Company contracted with Japanese Manufacturer) “Seabrook Miracle Pack Farms”

Tootsov, Koidula, Lakewood, NJ: Album belonging to Martin Tootsov containing 22 items related to Seabrook Farms sales.

Your Invitation

Planning for the Future: Public Workshops on the Seabrook Educational and Cultural Center's Programming



The Seabrook Educational and Cultural Center (SECC) is dedicated to telling the history of Seabrook Farms, a modest nineteenth century New Jersey truck farm based in Upper Deerfield Township, Cumberland County, that became, by the mid-twentieth century, one of the largest industrialized agricultural businesses in the Garden State's history. With the support of a grant from the New Jersey Council for the Humanities, the SECC has begun the process of updating and rethinking the critical focus of its museum, online presence, and cultural and educational programming.

On March 11 and again on April 23, at the SECC will holding public workshops where the public will have the chance to explain how the SECC can better meet the needs of educators, researchers, and the community. Your input is crucial.

Food and refreshments will be provided. Participants are invited to arrive at the SECC beforehand to view the current exhibits. We look forward to hearing from you.

To learn more about Seabrook Farms' history, visit:

https://njdigitalhighway.org/exhibits/seabrook_farms

Photo: The interior of a migrant laborer's home, Big Oaks Camp, Bridgeton, NJ, 1943. Migrant workers at Seabrook Farms were assigned to temporary housing often lacking electricity, running water, and sewage connections. Courtesy of Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Photograph Collection, Library of Congress.

March 11 and April 23
Meeting begins at 6PM;
Museum doors open at 5PM

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Executive Director: Beverly Carr



Funding has been made possible in part by the New Jersey Historical Commission/Department of State and the Cumberland and Salem County Board of Chosen Freeholders through the Cumberland and Salem County Cultural and Heritage Commission.

GRANT AWARD: PAID INTERNSHIPS

SECC has been awarded funding for (2) \$1000.

Paid Internships
for 2020 from the New Jersey Historic Commission via the
Cumberland County Historic Commission.

Preference will be given to Cumberland County students

Send letter of interest to:
seabrookhistory@gmail.com
Deadline April 1, 2020

Our organization: We are both a museum and archive.
<http://seabrookeducation.org/>

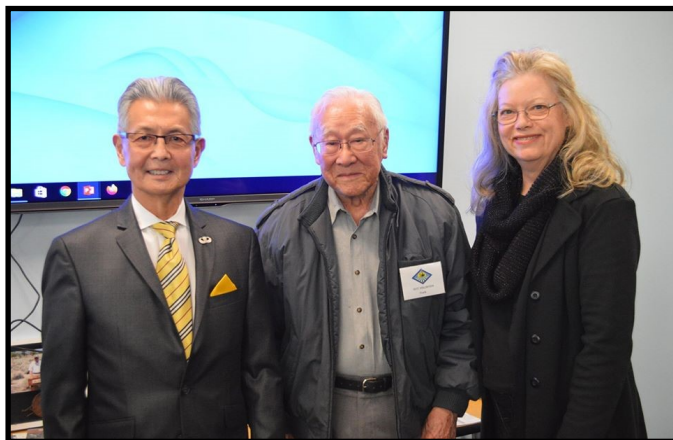
Intern/job duties and responsibilities: May include cataloging the collection in finer detail, scanning documents/photographs, creating membership/donation/acquisition records, general office tasks or performing as a museum docent.

Requirements and qualifications: High school, college bound or college students willing to do repetitive computer based work and willing to learn the Seabrook story in order to engage the public during visitation. Ability to lift 30 lbs.

Thank you to our website sponsors!



Your philanthropy helps to insure our future!
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L-R Michael Asada, Frank Ono and Beverly Carr presented to the South Jersey Holocaust Coalition on February 19.

Upcoming Events

March 7 History Program by John M. Seabrook, Jr.,
The Golden Age of Seabrook Farms 1912-1924, 1PM

March 11 Public Meeting 1 of 2, 6PM

April 23 Public Meeting 2 of 2, 6PM

April 25 Community Day, open 10AM-4PM.
History Program by John M. Seabrook, Jr.
Topic: Frozen Food, 1PM

July 8 Annual General Meeting 4:30PM

July 18 Obon Festival, Seabrook Buddhist Temple, 4-8PM. History Program @ SECC (Open 1-4PM) 1PM, by John M. Seabrook, Jr.
Topic: WWII Years

September 9 Annual SECC/JACL Joint Boards Volunteer Appreciation Dinner