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Meetings Monarchs

New York City, Westchester and Long Island reign supreme for Empire State get-togethers

by JEFF HEILMAN

THIS IS A LANDMARK YEAR FOR NEW YORK CITY, ITS ENVIRONS AND THE ENTIRE Empire State, marking the 400th anniversary of English explorer Henry Hudson's discovery of untamed, narrow-tipped Mannahatta Island and his subsequent voyage up the river that today bears his name.

The quadricentennial's signature celebration is River Day, a legacy project destined to be a new annual tradition. On June 6, seven historic tall ships, including a replica of Henry Hudson's *Half Moon*, departed New

York Harbor for a week-long voyage up Albany—leading a giant flotilla of rafts by successive waves of river-raft up the Hudson River corridor.

Upon Hudson's reports of an abundant beaver population in the area, his Dutch employers established a post in Amsterdam on lower Mannahatta in 1625, infamously purchasing the island for a song one year later. The Dutch renamed the island New York in 1674, and the rest, as they say, is history.

As Gotham became a commercial juggernaut, wealthy industrialists and financiers sought retreat, refuge and respite away from the demands of the boardroom. Heading east, they fled Long Island their Gold Coast; north of the city, they transformed the banks of the Hudson River into the sprawling, Gilded Age country estates of Westchester County.

Few of these estates remain today, but in this anniversary year, New York City, Westchester and Long Island, ever true to form, are making

new from old and raising their meetings appeal to new heights.

New York City

Complementing the quadricentennial, this is a year of Big Apple birthdays, additions and makeovers.

As Gotham continues to broaden its appeal, NYC & Company, the city's marketing and tourism agency, has introduced new tools to assist meeting planners and visitors. There's a new state-of-the-art information center in Midtown on Seventh Avenue and a new website, www.nycgo.com, with a dedicated section for planners.

"New York City is an iconic destination for meetings and conventions, and this will be a year of great value and opportunity for meeting planners," says George Ferritola, CEO of NYC & Company. "With plans for a refreshed Javits Center, outstanding meeting space at our many hotels city-wide and a wealth of creative venues, all five boroughs are an attractive choice."

The Jacob K. Javits Convention Center upgrade now finally appears set, following the recent announcement of a \$463 million plan to add 40,000 new square feet of exhibition space as part of a 100,000-square-foot expansion. The expansion is expected to be completed in 2010, and the accompanying renovation is slated to be finished in 2013.

Signifying Gotham's continuing expansion into a true five-borough destination, the city's 2009 hotel outlook, with some 39 hotels adding more than 7,700 rooms to the mix, includes 12 newly built properties in Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx.

NYC & Company projects a city-wide hotel inventory of over 90,000 rooms by 2011, including a proposed 1,000-room convention center hotel across from the Jacob K. Javits Center.

From Harlem to the Financial District, Manhattan's crop of new and renovated hotels includes the reopening of The Pierre this June, the Cen-

tral Park Hotel this fall, and a new brand after a multimillion-dollar upgrade.

Following its 2008 soft opening, the glass-enclosed, concrete-stilted, 330-room Standard in the Meatpacking District is nearing completion, with its final elements, including a rooftop deck, poised to open through the fall.

New boutique entrants include the Smyth Tribeca, Six Columbus on Columbus Circle and Thompson Lower East Side. Future openings, all slated for mid-2009 to early 2010 debuts, include the Hyatt Andaz Wall Street, the Crosby Street Hotel in SoHo and the W Downtown.

One of the first skyscraper hotels to redefine the modern Times Square, the 46-story, 770-room Crowne Plaza Times Square is fresh off an \$85 million reinvention. Boasting the city's largest indoor pool, a bustling bar and dining scene, and spectacular views from all 144 Concierge Level rooms, the hotel has 23,500 square feet of meeting space across 23 rooms, the largest accommodating 700 people.

Aside from hotels, the city's attractions lineup is improving, and several standbys are celebrating anniversaries this year, including Harlem landmark the Apollo Theater (75 years), the Metropolitan Opera (125 years), the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (50 years) and the world's leading performing arts complex, Lin-

More Info:

Westchester Tourism Council
718.590.3518
www.lovethewestchester.com

Westchester Tourism and Visitors Center
718.822.3846
www.visitbrooklyn.org

Long Island CVB and Sports Commission
631.951.3900
www.discoverlongisland.com

Westchester & Company
212.484.1200
www.nycco.com

Office of the Staten Island Borough President
718.816.2000
www.statenislandusa.com

Westchester Economic Development Corp.
718.263.0546
www.discoverwestchester.info

Westchester County Office of Tourism
914.995.8500
www.westchestertourism.com

For more information, visit Meetings & Events 2011

Hall, the restored Ferry Building's Custom Room is ideal for private meetings, and evening events outside offer dramatic Manhattan views. Stimulus dollars will reportedly help fund an educational conference center on the island's southern side.

At the new 45,000-seat Citic Field in Queens, the Mets and Aramark have launched Metropolitan Hospitality, a year-round hospitality venture servicing non-game-day events at the ballpark. Offering more than 60,000 square feet of space for groups of up to 1,500, this entertainment destination also comes with close proximity to LaGuardia and JFK airports.

Set to be outdone, the new Yankee Stadium in the Bronx claims 1.3 million square feet of event space.

Soho is home to the new 25,000-square-foot Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Annex, the museum's first location outside Cleveland.

On Columbus Circle, the event-ready Museum of Arts and Design is a stunning makeover of the 1964 Gallery of Modern Art.

On the Lower East Side, the New Museum is an architectural adventure of asymmetrical stacked boxes. Its event spaces include the sleek Sky Room, offering Manhattan panoramas and space for 200.

Westchester County

Settled by the Dutch in the 17th century and prominent in the Revolutionary War, historic Westchester County, bordered by the Hudson River and Long Island Sound, is steeped in lore, such as the infamous Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow. New York's Gilded Age crowd built here, too,

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Westchester - New York's "Golden Apple"

The Foundation For Successful Meetings & Events

Westchester County, New York's "Golden Apple" is the all-season destination for your next meeting or event! With over thirty meeting facilities located minutes north of New York City, Westchester offers accommodations, sites and attractions for all meeting needs. Team-building activities include open wheel racing at Mt. Vesuvio's Grand Prix New York and wine making at NYO Wine in Elmsford.

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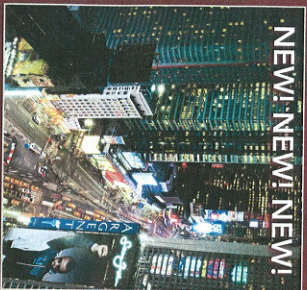
Three

Anthony Napoli
President, Briggs NYC, New York

What are three great off-site venues you would recommend for groups in New York City?

A short private boat ride to the Ellis Island Immigration Museum, which pays tribute to all those who fled oppression to start over in the New World. Cocktails are in the Reg and Registration Hall, followed by dinner in the Main Hall, where millions of immigrants once awaited entry into the New World. Gourmet ethnic foods are served by staff members, while table centerpieces highlight the cultural diversity of the guests. After dinner, the lights dim and an immigrant character reads Emma Lazarus' poem "The New Colossus" as the band plays America the Beautiful.

of the Rock is a dramatic space located 67 stories above Midtown Manhattan. The



MEET ON BROADWAY

[yet still meet spending limits!]

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NYC/Manhattan/Long Island continued from page 13

planting magnificent mansions along the Hudson.

Today, this 457-square-mile expanse of rolling hills, leafy suburbs and overnight towns is a distinctive choice for meetings and events.

"We are ideally positioned for meetings because of our convenient location, great hotels and conference centers and specialized services for planners and for attendees," says Kim Sainscote, director of the Westchester County Office of Tourism. With easy access by plane, train and automobile and with great attractions and activities, we are truly New York's Golden Apple."

Westchester's impressive conference center collection includes the IBM Learning Center in Armonk; the 574-room Dorland Arrowwood Conference Resort, set on 114 rolling acres in Rye Brook; the 52-room Edith Macy Conference Center, set on 400 wooded acres in Briarcliff Manor; and the newly restored, 26-acre Tarrytown House Estate & Conference Center, featuring two completed century-old mansions.

A diverse hotel portfolio ranges from Tarrytown's historic 31-room Castle-on-the-Hudson, dating to 1897, to the modern 146-room Ritz-Carlton, Westchester, unveiled last year in White Plains. Other top options include Marriott Westchester and Doubletree Hotel Tarrytown.

Popular activities in Westchester County include tours of Lyndhurst, Kikkuit and other mansions. Halloween is a great time to visit, with pumpkin blazes and headless horseman rides.

Dating to 1680, Philips Manor Hall in Yorkers is a stellar group choice, as is the Hudson River Museum, with its famed planetarium. On the resurgent Yorkers waterfront, an exciting new venue is XCO Xytara on

and locations, we are an accessible, affordable destination for gateway events," says Joan Larissa, site director for the Long Island CTR. Even with New York close by, Long Island is a true escape.

An exception is the Glen Cove Mansion Hotel and Conference Center, a 55-acre Georgian estate dating to 1910 and appearing in both versions of the classic *Sabrina*. Easily reached from Manhattan, the 187-room center, featuring 25,000 square feet of meeting space and a full menu of recreational amenities, is every inch a retreat. Ongoing upgrades have reinvigorated the property, sharpening the group appeal while drawing locals who routinely mix with conferees in the festive Pub 1910.

There are other havens besides. Set on 25 private acres at the North Fork's gateway, the 59-room Inn and Spa at East Wind is an elegant choice for conferences and events.

Facing Long Island Sound in historic Port Jefferson, the authentically nautical, 86-room Danforth Hotel & Marina, with 12,000 square feet of meeting space, is fresh off an \$8 million transformation.

Ophelia Castle Hotel & Estate remains the second-largest private home ever built in the U.S. A natural favorite for weddings and film shoots, this 32-room, French-style chateau looks aiffied from Versailles and is ideal for exclusive retreats.

The Ziegfeld Folkers estate summered at the famed Montauk Yacht Club. Celebrating its 80th birthday this year, the newly renovated, 35-acre hickory enclave offers 107 guest rooms—almost half of which face the water—plus 23 rooms in five private villas and 10 indoor and outdoor spaces, including the Great Lawn, with room for up to 1,000 at tented events.

Other heritage properties include

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*Based on the number of room nights booked, capped with a maximum amount of \$25,000 in total rebates. May 15 and December 31, 2009. Excludes regular room revenue being allocated and occurs before March 31, 2010.

Westchester, unspooled last year in White Plains. Other top options include Marriott Westchester and Doubletree Hotel Tarrytown.

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Dating to 1680, Philippe Manor Hall in Yonkers is a stellar group choice, as is the Hudson River Museum, with its famed planetarium. On the resurgent Yonkers waterfront, an exciting new venue is X200 Xavians on the Hudson. Occupying the Hudson River's sole surviving Victorian pier, this spacious eatery can accommodate events for up to 350 people.

In Adaleys, the newly opened life, with catering from Abigail Kirsch, is a sleek, futuristic events and entertainment venue accommodating up to 1,000 people.

Long Island

Stretching away from the city, Long Island heads verdantly eastward, eventually forking at Riverhead. The South Fork leads to the famed Hamptons and Normale Point, home to some of the world's finest beaches; the North Fork opens into a bucolic expanse of farms and wineries. It's little wonder that families like the Vanderbilts and the Roosevelts made Long Island their summertime playground, gilding in particular Nassau County's North Shore in the late 19th and early 20th centuries into a Gold Coast of opulent estates.

That same retreat formula works for planners and conferees today. With a great diversity of venues

favorite for weddings and film shoots, this 32-room, French-style chateau looks artful from Versailles and is ideal for executive retreats.

The Ziegfeld Towers once surmised at the famed Seagram Yacht Club. Celebrating its 80th birthday this year, the newly renovated, 35-acre lakefront enclave offers 107 guest rooms—almost half of which face the water—plus 23 rooms in five private villas and 10 indoor and outdoor spaces, including the Great Lawn, with room for up to 1,000 at rented events.

Other meetings properties include the 358-room Hyatt Regency Long Island, the 369-room Melville Marriott, and the 600-room Long Island Marriott Hotel and Conference Center, which is adjacent to the 18,000-seat, exhibition-ready Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum.

The Allegria Hotel & Spa will open in Long Beach this summer with 112 guest rooms and 31 suites, along with meeting space.

For off-site events or excursions, top choices include Adams Maritime World in Riverhead; Cradle of Aviation Museum in Garden City; Deep Hollow Ranch in Montauk, which was founded in 1658 and is America's oldest ranch; and the Suffolk County Vandalia Museum in Centerville. Planners can also utilize wineries such as Martha Clara and Duck Walk North, as well as restored mansions such as Old Westbury Gardens.

Jeff Goldstein, based in Buffalo, N.Y., is a frequent contributor to Meetings East.

