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Preservation Long Island Selected as First Venue in New York State to Host Smithsonian Traveling Exhibition Examining Democracy in America

“Voices and Votes: Democracy in America” on View at the Preservation Long Island Exhibition Gallery in Cold Spring Harbor, New York

March 22, 2024 – May 3, 2024

Cold Spring Harbor, NY (February, 23, 2024) — “Voices and Votes: Democracy in America” presented by the Smithsonian’s Museum on Main Street, in cooperation with the Museum Association of New York (MANY), examines the nearly 250-year-old American experiment of a government “of, by and for the people,” and how each generation since continues to question how to form “a more perfect union.” Opening at the Preservation Long Island Exhibition Gallery in Cold Spring Harbor, New York on March 22, 2024, “Voices and Votes” will be on view through May 3, 2024.

Preservation Long Island, a regional not-for-profit organization headquartered in Cold Spring Harbor that maintains and interprets historic sites and collections pertaining to Long Island’s history, has been chosen by MANY to be the first venue in New York State to host the “Voices and Votes: Democracy in America” exhibition. This initiative is all part of the Museum on Main Street program—a national/state/local partnership to bring exhibitions to small town and rural cultural organizations across America. The exhibition will tour twelve communities across New York from March 22, 2024 through January 2026: <https://nysmuseums.org/Project-Participants-and-Host-Sites>

“Preservation Long Island is excited to serve as the inaugural site for “Voices and Votes: Democracy in America,” said Alexandra Wolfe, Preservation Long Island Executive Director. “The exhibition’s focus on freedom, civic participation, and political engagement resonates strongly with our commitment to making the past relevant to the present.”

“Voices and Votes” explores the action, reaction, vision, and revision democracy demands as Americans continue to question how to shape American values. From the revolution and suffrage to civil rights and casting ballots, all communities are part of the evolving story of democracy in America. Exhibition sections explore the origins of American democracy, the struggles to obtain and keep the vote, the machinery of democracy, the right to petition and protest beyond the ballot and the rights and responsibilities of citizens. “Voices and Votes” engages multimedia interactives with short games; and historical objects like campaign souvenirs, voter memorabilia, and protest material.

The exhibition will include a section that incorporates art and artifacts drawn from Preservation Long Island and other local collections. “The objects we chose connect the broader historical narratives of

Voices and Votes with Long Island people and stories—addressing themes such as the ways people make their voices heard, who is left out of the conversation, and the roles and responsibilities of citizens,” said Lauren Brincat, Preservation Long Island Curator.

Among the local highlights in the exhibition is an original essay by Jupiter Hammon (1711–ca. 1806), America’s first published African American poet, written while he was enslaved at Joseph Lloyd Manor in Lloyd Harbor shortly after the American Revolution, advocating for the citizenship of Black New Yorkers in the new nation. Other items include a bracelet and ring made from scrap sheet metal by women aircraft factory workers on Long Island as the United States fought to preserve democracy abroad during World War II, and the drawings and models for the national monument to African American civil rights leader and women’s rights activist, Mary MacLeod Bethune (1875–1855), created by Long Island artist, Robert Berks (1922–2011) in 1974.

“‘Voices and Votes’ allows us to reflect on Cold Spring Harbor and the surrounding community history and explore what it means to be an active participant in the governance of not only the country but also this community,” said Andrew Tharler, Preservation Long Island Education and Engagement Director.

The series of local exhibition-related programming and free events include a community quilt project, curator-led exhibition and walking tours, lectures, community conversations and an oral history series; preview the full schedule: <https://preservationlongisland.org/voices-and-votes/>

Designed for small-town museums, libraries, and cultural organizations, “Voices and Votes” will serve as a community meeting place for conversations about democracy, the freedoms, and responsibilities of citizens, participating in government, and more.

“Voices and Votes” is based on an exhibition currently on display at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History called *American Democracy: A Great Leap of Faith*. The exhibition is part of Museum on Main Street (MoMS), a unique collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES), state humanities councils across the nation, and local host institutions. To learn more about “Voices” and other Museum on Main Street exhibitions, visit museumonmainstreet.org.

Support

A New Agora for New York: Museums as Spaces for Democracy” has been made possible in part by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Voices and Votes is part of Museum on Main Street, a collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution and the Museum Association of New York. Additional support has been provided by the William G. Pomeroy Foundation.

Support for MoMS in New York State has been provided by the United States Congress, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the William G. Pomeroy Foundation. To learn more visit museumonmainstreet.org, sites.si.edu, or nysmuseums.org.

About Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

SITES has been sharing the wealth of Smithsonian collections and research programs with millions of people outside Washington, D.C., for more than 65 years. SITES connects Americans to their shared

cultural heritage through a wide range of exhibitions about art, science and history, which are shown wherever people live, work and play. For exhibition description and tour schedules, visit sites.si.edu.

About Preservation Long Island

Preservation Long Island is a not-for-profit organization that works with Long Islanders to raise awareness, appreciation, and support for the protection of our shared past through advocacy, education, and the stewardship of historic sites and collections. <http://preservationlongisland.org>

Preservation Long Island maintains and interprets historic sites and collections that embody various aspects of Long Island's history including:

Joseph Lloyd Manor, Lloyd Harbor <http://preservationlongisland.org/joseph-lloyd-manor/>

Custom House, Sag Harbor <http://preservationlongisland.org/custom-house/>

Sherwood-Jayne Farm, Setauket <http://preservationlongisland.org/sherwood-jayne-farm/>

Old Methodist Church and Exhibition Gallery <http://preservationlongisland.org/methodist-church/>

About the Museum Association of New York

The Museum Association of New York is the only statewide museum service organization with more than 750 member museums, historical societies, zoos, botanical gardens, and aquariums. MANY helps shape a better future for museums and museum professionals by uplifting best practices and building organizational capacity through advocacy, training, and networking opportunities. Visit www.nysmuseums.org and follow MANY on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn @nysmuseums

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