Hands-On Learning at the Jersey Shore Folklife Center

By: Pat Johnson

The Tuckerton Seaport, a recreated maritime village located on 40 acres along the Tuckerton Creek is in the process of expanding their offerings since the pandemic rules on gatherings have relaxed. School trips have resumed and a new exhibit is coming for the Tucker's Island Lighthouse. This fall and winter, the Seaport welcomed two new exciting professionals to their staff: Arlene Castro, who serves as the Director of the Jersey Shore Folklife Center, and Adrianna Martinez, who serves as the Seaport's Educational Director and Coordinator at the Folklife Center.



Adrianna Martinez and Arlene Castro in the newest exhibit. - "Tuckerton: The People."
Photo Credit: Pat Johnson

Castro joined the Seaport Museum team in January of this year. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Anthropology from Temple University with a minor in history and a focus on archaeology. Her master's degree in anthropology is from Monmouth University. She previously interned at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Anthropology and was part of archaeology digs at various locations including Oman and in lower Manhattan. Castro is also teaching classes in cultural anthropology and diversity in the United States at Rowan University and Rowan College of South Jersey.

For her independent study, she worked at the Temple University Archaeology Laboratory and Museum, creating digital and interactive exhibits and 3D scanning various artifacts and input into an archive. "It was to create a virtual museum for anthropology students and professors and traveling researchers who could not get to the museum. Also many of the artifacts were on private collections and this was a way to make them accessible." Castro also traveled to Puerto Rico and Oman with a team from Temple to look for Spanish and Taino artifacts on a historical plantation. Taino are the native peoples who were exploited during Colonialism along with Africans.

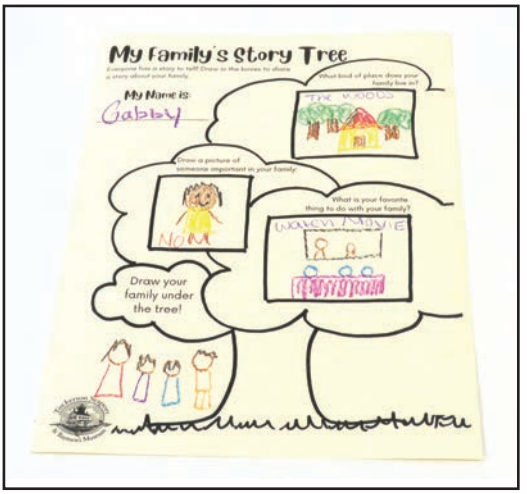
Oman is a country located next to Saudi Arabia and there she worked to excavate a prehistoric site, a necropolis or city of the dead where each mound was a gravesite. In the states, she worked on archeological surveys for historic sites that were slated for development. For instance, where 1800s' immigrants coming through Ellis Island who had yellow fever or were judged unsuitable for entrance into the country were housed, there was a mass grave where a parking lot was to be built. "We relocated them and gave them a respectful burial," said Castro.

Adrianna Martinez joined the Seaport team as Education Director in November 2021. She also works with Castro as the Folklife Coordinator and is advancing interpretation for the "Folk Art: 101" exhibit in the Tucker's Island Lighthouse. She is a lifelong Jersey shore and Pinelands resident and now lives in Mullica Township. Martinez has a BA in History from

Continued on page 7

Hands-On Learning from page 6

Stockton. Prior to her position as the Seaport's Education Director, Martinez taught art enrichment programs in Atlantic City and also ran community programs for the Atlantic City Free Public Library. Previously Martinez interned for the Education departments of both Philadelphia's Magic Gardens and Laurel Hill Cemetery. One of her other fun jobs was guiding tours at Lucy the Elephant in Margate. Her time with 'Lucy' was as instructive for her as it was for the visitors. "I got to meet lots of people from other countries and I learned so much doing research on Lucy—she is older than the Statue of Liberty or the Eiffel Tower. People would ask if she was a lighthouse and although she was not a lighthouse she served as a navigational guide during the daytime."



Family Tree By A Seaport Visitor.
Photo credit: Pat Johnson

At the Tuckerton Seaport, the two women enthusiastically collaborate to provide researched, hands-on educational experiences for children of all ages. This year the Seaport was able to welcome back numerous school trips that had paused during the pandemic years.

Martinez said she has counted 40 school and private group trips to facilitate in the upcoming months. "It's so great to be able to see these kids. A group from Brigantine said it was their first school trip in two years. And we were able to take them out in the boat—the Pohatcong II floating classroom."

"Many were not familiar with boats," said Castro. "Some had never been on one. And that was surprising since they live on the seashore."

During the slow trip down the creek and back on the Pohatcong II, the children hear about the early history of Tuckerton and its shipbuilding, clam, and oyster industries. They also hear of the native peoples, the Lenape who traveled from the mountains and woods along the Delaware River to the seashore in the summer—to fish and clam and dry these foodstuffs to take back with them.

Sightings of great blue herons, snowy egrets, and perhaps a nesting pair of ospreys give the educators teaching moments about the natural world.

Back on shore, there are hands-on teaching activities throughout the Seaport such as in Parsons Clamhouse where children see the types of marine creatures baymen were likely to encounter while doing their work.

"In Parsons Clamhouse we have a sand table and the kids use their hands to find clams. Real clammers use their feet, so I tell the kids we are not going to take our shoes off but we are going to use our hands like our feet and our fingers like our toes and they get a kick out of that," said Martinez.

Another learning experience involves math principals in a fun way. At the 'Heave Ho' station, they learn the power of pulleys that were used on commercial docks to move barrels and crates. After learning about pound fisheries at the recreated Seafood Market, they can pretend they are the fish that got trapped in the ingenious net system Swedish and Norwegian fishermen on Long Beach Island used to catch fish just beyond the breaking waves of the Atlantic.

Continued on page 8

Hands-On Learning from page 7

No trip would be complete without a stop at the Folklife Center's crafting classroom where they get to make something to take home.

"For this week we have these wooden flatties," said Martinez. She explained that a flat decoy on a stick was pushed into the mud by hunters on the marsh to give ducks confidence that it was safe to land.

This particular week, the children would paint shorebirds called red knots. "First they talk with our decoy carver Fred Rietmeyer and then they get to paint," said Castro. Red knots are a fascinating conservation story –they fly from the North Pole to the south and back again each year. In the spring their migration is timed to stop at the Delaware River at the same time as horseshoe crabs are laying eggs in the sand. The birds fatten up on crab eggs before resuming their arduous migration north to the Artic tundra where they lay their own eggs.

"We tell the kids it's a really long road trip," Martinez quipped.

"I'm a really strong believer that you learn through experience rather than lectures," said Castro. "You take a child on a trip like this and they will remember what they saw and learned and we always try to have demonstrators available: decoy carvers or our blacksmith."

Another service the Folklife Center offers is the Folk Arts for Homebound program. Those who are homebound can call (609-296-8868) or email the Center **(arlenec@tuckertonseaport.org)** and enroll for a series of free at-home performances, demonstrations, or instructions. The sessions are good for the people who can't get to the Seaport for a cultural event and good for the artists who are paid for their time. Basket weaving, folk music, and fiber arts are the offerings.

Back at the Tucker's Island Lighthouse, the two women are engaged in reinterpreting the existing "Tuckerton Turn of the Century" exhibit to become "Tuckerton: the People." Castro explained, "We looked at the existing exhibit that was stuck in the early 1900s and we wanted to show how things change through time. So we picked five local families and using Ancestry plus census and military records we found out a lot about the families through time."

The family story starts with a family member such as E. Walter Parsons, W.C. Jones, David Mapps, Isadore Lipman, and Cinderella Cranmer.

"Each person had something special about them. Some family members were still in the area so we talked to them. Everyone knows about the Parsons—they have had the clamming business for over a hundred years; W.C. Jones, was a Tuckerton entrepreneur, he did everything! He made glasses, did small surgeries because he was a medical person in the Spanish American War, he filled prescriptions, he was a photographer, he was everything."

Castro was able to contact artist Cathleen Pearce Engelsen who still has her grandfather, W.C. Jones' negatives that she uses to paint historical pictures of the area.

"David Mapps was an African American Quaker in Tuckerton and he was extremely wealthy for the time," said Castro. "He had a way station for Quakers making the trip to the Little Egg Harbor yearly meeting," she continued. "His daughter was the first African American woman in the country to get her college degree and became a school principal. One of his sons is buried here in the Quaker churchyard.

"Isadora Lipman was a Russian Jew who came from Ellis Island and had a five and dime store in Tuckerton. All of his children worked –even the women. His son was a telegraph messenger so he knew Morse code. His daughter was a stenographer. The family settled in Tuckerton in 1900 for seven years and then relocated to Lakewood.

Continued on page 9

Hands-On Learning from page 8

"Cinderella Cranmer lived in Barnegat but she was the first woman to ride the Tuckerton Railroad," said Castro. "Her friend was the engineer and she got to work the throttle—can you imagine?"

The Barnegat Historical Society was kind to lend the Seaport some of Cinderella's original clothes for the exhibit.

Martinez, an artist herself, made a family tree coloring page for the children who visit the exhibit so they can learn more about their own family. "Parents can help with the prompts," she said. "The questions are easy such as, 'What kind of place do you live in, What do you like to do with your family?' and then 'Draw your family under the tree.' The children can draw up their family history and make a portrait."

Adults can get into the act of telling their family stories through the Public Typewriter Project. This is a project started by a typewriter enthusiast Ian McAndrew. He installed a 1947 Royal manual typewriter in the exhibit. "He wants to promote literacy and writing and wants to get the message out that if you don't have technology you can still write," said Castro. Using the typewriter, "We want people to share their own story and then take it home for their family or pin it on our storyboard as part in our exhibit—it will go hand-in-hand with our videos through StoryCorps."

Castro also heads up the Seaport's federal "StoryCorps" program, by making videos and archiving family oral histories to send to the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. Castro and Martinez are definite proponents of learning your roots. "I came from Puerto Rico and I am first generation to live in the United States," said Castro. "My family came to Puerto Rico in 1688 and refused to leave the island. Cultural history is so important because it can get lost. For instance a lot of Puerto Ricans don't know Spanish today–so that gets lost."

"For me, my family is partly Taino but my mother never talked about that so as a little girl I knew nothing about it," said Martinez. "I wish I could have connected with that to keep the traditions alive."

Martinez said the Tuckerton Seaport's mission to keep the Baymen's and Pinelands cultures alive is fantastic. "I deeply feel it here. They are happy to spread the information of the culture, the decoys makers, the baymen—it resonates."

"That's why it's so good to preserve family history through oral histories, artifacts, and folk art," Castro added. "There is a native American saying that we used in the exhibit, 'It takes a thousand voices to tell a single story' and I really believe that."

The opening for "Tuckerton: The People" is tentatively set for early June.



Tuckerton resident Cinderella Fox Cranmer is highlighted in the new Seaport Exhibit.
Photo Credit: Pat Johnson