



Photo by Lucy Lang

St. Augustine's Newest Old Monument

The San Sebastian River is home to St. Augustine's newest old monument. On Saturday, May 1, 2021 a monument honoring St. Augustine's shrimpers, boat builders and marine artisans was dedicated. Attending the event were 250 descendants of shrimping and boat building families who were the donors for the project.

Northeast Florida was the birthplace of the commercial shrimping industry. The San Sebastian River is considered its cradle. Shrimping fleets moved to St. Augustine in the early 1920s. Pioneers were predominately Italian, Greek and Portuguese immigrants. Shrimp was sold in salted barrels for \$3.85 per 100 pounds in the 1920s. The advent of manufactured ice greatly expanded markets as demand grew.

Demand for shrimp boats spawned numerous boat yards on the San Sebastian. Over 125 trawlers per year were produced at its peak. Diesel Engine Sales Company (DESCO) was located on the San Sebastian River and grew to be the largest builder of fishing boats in the world. This river was also home to over 20 "fishhouses" which processed fresh shrimp for shipment to northern markets.

The monument is a bronze relief map on a coquina base depicting owners and operators on 16 sites: fishhouses, seafood markets, boat yards, marine supply, marine repair and ice plants (the first in Florida) from the 1920s to the 1970s.

The St. Augustine City Commission has enacted two resolutions recognizing the shrimping and boat building industry and has named wild-caught shrimp as St. Augustine's "official seafood".

The project was conceived by Grace Paaso and John Versaggi (grandchildren of Salvatore Versaggi and great niece and nephew of Sollicito "Mike" Salvador and Antonio Poli, all shrimping pioneers) and Captains Ed Long and Brendan Burke, co-authors of *Shrimp Boat City*.

The monument is located on the promenade in front of Culinary Outfitters restaurant in the Shipyard area of St. Augustine.



Monument Made Possible by Family & Private Contributors

Family of Cotton & Tina Ashton

A. J. & Gail McGuinness

Brendan Burke & Lillian Azevedo

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Family of Filippo & Francesca Daniele

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Lucy & Buzz Hart

Family of Salvatore "Sam" & Commie Fazio

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Family of Francesco & Carmela DiMare

Vincent & Eleanor DiMare

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In Memory of Nazzareno & Marietta Poli
Dominic & Norma Poli
Darrell & Joanna Poli
Jean Poli & Jesse DeMello
Carolyn Poli Gorga

Family of John & Jessie Pterudis
Anastasia "Tassie" Pterudis

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St. Augustine Lighthouse
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 Family of Salvador "Turri" Serra
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 Family of Felice & Mary Frances Golino



Family of Antonios & Steve Sarris
 The Sarris Family Descendants

David & Elaine Strickland

Family of Carmelo & Rosaria Tringali
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 Concetta "Connie" Tringali
 Carmelo Tringali, Jr.
 Salvatore "Sam" & Diana Tringali

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Rick Versaggi
Russ & Leigh Versaggi
Zina T. Versaggi



We are forever indebted to Ed Long for his institutional knowledge of the shrimping industry in St. Augustine
and to
Windward Marina Group for allowing the placement of the monument on their promenade in the St. Augustine Shipyard