



Item of the Week *from the* Long Island Collection

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Aerial View of Fort Michie on Great Gull Island, c. March 1958

If you were to take one guess as to how Great Gull Island got its name, you wouldn't be wrong. In fact, one can cheekily, but fairly, say the island has "gone to the birds." While birds do figure largely into its history and current state, the aerial view of the island above forces the viewer to ponder some additional questions.

Located at the eastern end of Long Island Sound, Great Gull Island is a 17-acre piece of rocky land that lies roughly between Plum Island and Fishers Island. It's positioned along the Atlantic Flyway, a bird migration route that follows the East Coast of North America and the Appalachian Mountains. As such, the island was a major stopping point for large colonies of nesting terns until the late 1800s, when many of the birds were killed for their plumage for decorating hats. The building of Fort Michie on the island in 1897 further complicated the birds'

survival.

Fort Michie was a U.S. Army coastal defense site that was constructed (in addition to Fort H.G. Wright on Fishers Island, Fort Terry on Plum Island, Fort Tyler on Gardiner's Island, and Camp Hero in Montauk) as part of the Harbor Defenses of Long Island Sound, which defended Long Island's north shore and Connecticut's ports from possible attack or invasion. It was built as part of the Endicott Program, which recommended a comprehensive replacement of existing coast defenses, and was active during World War I and World War II.

After the war, the fort was deactivated, its guns scrapped, and ultimately abandoned. In 1949, Great Gull Island was acquired by the American Museum of Natural History, which assigned the Linnaean Society of New York, a group composed of birders, naturalists, and ornithologists, the task of returning the island to a habitat suitable for birds. Since then, Great Gull Island has become home to the largest nesting colony of common and roseate terns in the Western Hemisphere.

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The East Hampton Star Archive is a fully searchable, online digital archive of our local weekly newspaper, that features each complete issue of the paper from 1918-1968, exactly as it appeared in print. Visit the archive online, for a tour of our Town's history that will fascinate both the amateur and professional historian!

The Karl Grossman Research Archive is an extensive collection of materials digitized from the personal archive of Karl Grossman, an investigative reporter, columnist, author, and current professor of journalism at SUNY Old Westbury. The archive brings together a decades long career in reporting and journalism with topics ranging from the economy and pollution to fishing and East Hampton Town. Patrons are capable of searching this 9,500+ item collection by collection name, year, title, or keyword search.

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Welcome to the Long Island Collection's "Item of the Week."

We are an archive dedicated to the history and people of Long Island, with a special interest in all things East Hampton and East End. Unlike some small local history rooms in other public libraries, we have over 100,000 items including, but not limited to, rare books, maps, photographs, deeds, postcards, letters, newspapers, and whaling logs. We also have a dedicated and hardworking staff ready to help you with any questions you may have. Unable to make it to the library? No problem! We upload images from the collection to [Digital Long Island](#) on a weekly basis, so there's always something new and interesting to behold.

Please visit us at the Library, make use of our extensive online digital resources, or contact us for assistance. Public hours are: Mon. - Tues. and Thurs. - Sat., 1:00-4:30 p.m.

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Gina Piastuck joined the East Hampton Library in 2007 as a librarian and archivist and has served as the Head of the Long Island Collection since 2009. She's a graduate of LIU Post's Palmer School of Library and Information Science and holds both an M.L.I.S. degree and a Certificate in Archives and Records Management. Her responsibilities managing the Long Island Collection include providing reference and research assistance to patrons on and off site, as well as the acquisition, arrangement, description and conservation of rare and new materials pertaining to the history and people of Long Island.

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