



Item of the Week *from the* Long Island Collection

LONG ISLAND COLLECTION | DIGITAL LONG ISLAND | EAST HAMPTON STAR ARCHIVE



Mrs. Morgan Topping

Sometimes deciphering old photographs can be challenging, especially when the viewer is given limited information. In the case of the above photograph labeled "Mrs. Morgan Topping," all we know is that it was taken from an old album found

in someone's attic. However, by looking at the printing method used and the fashions pictured, it's possible to date this image and identify who Mrs. Topping was.

Studying the subject's personal appearance, we see her hair is center-parted, crimped, and gathered low in a net at the nape of her neck. Her dress features a collar with a button front and decorative piping across the chest and shoulders. These elements were fashionable in the late 1850s and 1860s. However, by the 1870s, necklines became lower and hair more elaborate, with decorative twists and ribbons piled high atop the head.

While fashion provides an estimate, the process used to create this image further supports a date after the mid-1860s. In the 1840s and 1850s, photographers mainly used the daguerreotype process, which involved printing on metal. This image is a carte de viste, a paper photograph mounted on a thick paper card, invented in 1854. This photograph measures about 2.5 by 4 inches, distinguishing it from the larger cabinet cards (about 6.5 by 4.25 inches) of the 1870s and 1880s. Additionally, this image's relatively thin backing is generally associated with earlier prints, and the squared corners and light background were typical before the late 19th century.

Between 1840 and 1873, there was one Morgan in the Topping family; a (Henry) Morgan Topping (1841-1875) of Wainscott. In 1867, he married Caroline Halsey (1848-1925), the daughter of Noah and Caroline Halsey of Bridgehampton. Following Morgan's death, Caroline remarried, further suggesting this image pre-dates 1875. The content and production of this photo allows one to be fairly confident that Caroline Halsey Topping is the Mrs. Morgan Topping pictured here, and the image was probably taken between 1867 and 1875.

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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.

Researched and written by Andrea Meyer, Librarian/Archivist, Long Island Collection.

Andrea Meyer began working in the Long Island Collection in January 2015. Her responsibilities include updating Digital Long Island, scanning, processing new collections, and assisting patrons with research. She earned her M.L.I.S. through Long Island University, and completed her M.A. in Archives and Public History at New York University through the dual-degree program. Andrea started working in archives in 2005. Prior to working for the East Hampton Library, Andrea worked at the New Jersey State Archives, at NYU Libraries, and as a private research consultant. Her clients included the New-York Historical Society. She is also involved with the Sag Harbor Historical Society.

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