



Item of the Week from the Long Island Collection

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

Know all Men by these presents that I Betsy Reed
of Easthampton in the County of Suffolk and State
of New York one of the Heirs of Joseph Reed of Say-
brook and State Connecticut deceased being above
the Age of Twelve years have elected and Chosen and
by these presents do elect and Chose John Huntting
and Anna Huntting of the Town of Easthampton and
State of New York and County of Suffolk to be Guar-
dian of my Person and Estate untill I shall attain
to the Age of Twenty one year and I do hereby promise
to be ruled by the said John Huntting and Anna
Huntting in all things touching my welfare and I
do Authorize and empower the said John Huntting
and Anna Huntting to Enter and take possession of
of all my Messuages Lands tenements, hereditaments and
premises whatever situated lying and being in the Town
Ship of Saybrook aforesaid or elsewhere whereunto I have
any right or title and to let and rent the same and receive
and take the rents issues & Profits thereof for my use
and benefit During the Term aforesaid giving and
hereby granting unto the said John Huntting &
Anna Huntting full power in the said Premises
and whatsoever they shall lawfully do or cause to be
done in the premises by Virtue hereof I do hereby Promise
to ratify and confirm In witness whereof I have here-
unto set my hand and seal this thirtieth Day of May
in the year of our Lord one thousand seven Hundred
& Ninety Nine signed & sealed in presence of
David Miller
Phebe Stratton Betsy Reed

**Betsy Reed, Contract Naming John Huntting
and Anna Huntting her Guardians, 1799**

Whenever I see an early American legal document with a single woman's name unattached to a husband, I tend to get a little excited because it's unusual and there's usually a story involved. Until the late 19th century, married women were considered to be the same legal entity as their husbands, so when I stumbled across a contract with Betsy Reed's name on it, I immediately wanted to know more about her.

Betsy Reed was born in 1787 to Joseph and Abigail "Nabby" Huntting Reed (the daughter of Nathaniel Huntting (1730-1801); grandson of East Hampton's second minister with the same name). By age twelve, Betsy was orphaned with land bequeathed to her in Saybrook, CT from her father's estate. Given her youth, Betsy needed a guardian appointed to her to oversee her finances, inheritance, and general well-being. As such, the above document designated her Huntting relatives as her guardians.

It's apparent that Betsy participated in these proceedings, coming before a court and signing her own name. Her "contract" appointed John and Anna Huntting as "guardian[s] of my person and estate until I attain the age of 21 years." John and Anna Huntting (elsewhere Anne) are identified as Abigail Huntting Reed's brother and sister in records from Betsy's grandmother's estate. Betsy's guardianship papers were witnessed by her uncle, David Miller of "Fire Place," and Phebe Stratton. The papers were acknowledged by Judge Jonathan Rogers of the Suffolk County Court of Common Pleas.

As an adult at age twenty-one, Betsy did not need a male relative to take ownership of her land as the law recognized single women in rare circumstances like hers. If she remained unmarried, she could hold property in her own name. However, when she married, her property became her husband's.

EXPLORE MORE

[The Digital Long Island Collection](#) is part of New York Heritage Digital Collections. Included are searchable scans of deeds, drawings, etchings, inventories, letters, maps, paintings, pardons, patents, photographs, plans, postcards, prints, sculptures, sketches, textiles, tiles, yearbooks and more to come.

[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.

[The Local Artist Research Archive](#) is a collection of over 19,000 items digitized from Guild Hall, containing materials including personal letters, photographs, news clippings, and art catalogs concerning artists of the East End. Patrons are capable of searching this archive by collection, title, or keyword search.



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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