



Item of the Week from the Long Island Collection

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



Thomas Dongan Authorization for Debt Settlement of Thomas Squire Estate, East Hampton, 1686

The document above is interesting for a number of reasons, depending on what appeals to the viewer. Aside from appearing antiquated on the surface, the document itself seems to be very official with its red wax seal and curlicue handwriting. Certainly, the phrase "By the Governour" emblazoned across the top cannot be ignored. On deeper investigation, one realizes that this is a probate record. For those unfamiliar, probate records are essentially court records created after a person's death regarding a court's decision pertaining to the distribution of property to heirs or creditors and the care of dependents, which might include widows, children, etc.

However, this colonial era document is a little different (though certainly not out of the ordinary). As indicated, "...Thomas Squire, Late Inhabitant of Easthampton in the County of Suffolk upon Long Island Dyed Intestate, and left no visible heir to enjoy his Estate..." The term intestate means he passed away without having written a will and, as mentioned, had no evident family to subsequently bequeath his land to.

During the colonial period, the colonies adopted English inheritance law, which largely mirrored the way property and wealth were transmitted in England. Set forth by the English Statute of Wills in 1540, this allowed land to be distributed by a will. In the

absence of a will, the court was obligated to appoint someone to administer the estate. In this case, Governor of the Province of New York, Thomas Dongan, appointed Capt. Josiah Hobart, High Sheriff of Suffolk County, as administrator. His role would have been to inventory and assess the value of the estate in order to pay off outstanding debts and ultimately distribute to possible heirs. It is not known if an heir, in this case, was ever located. If not, Thomas Squire's estate would have become the property of the crown.

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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.

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 Gina Piastuck, Department Head, Long Island Collection.

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.

