



Item of the Week *from the* Long Island Collection

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Red Cross Train Carrying Nurses to Camp Wikoff, 1898

This photograph, from the C. Frank Dayton Photo Collection, shows a Red Cross train carrying nurses to Camp Wikoff in 1898. The camp, located in Montauk (now part of Camp Hero and Montauk Point State Parks), housed quarantined troops returning from the Spanish-American War for three months.

Hastily established and named in memory of San Juan Hill casualty Colonel Charles Wikoff, the camp was intended to prevent returning troops from spreading diseases like malaria and yellow fever. The camp's location allowed for deep water port access with rail connections in an isolated area.

However, the camp was nowhere near ready when troops began arriving on August 14, 1898 only twelve days after the government leased the land from the Long Island Railroad for \$15,000. Over 22,000 troops were housed at Camp Wikoff, with 21,000 there at once. Of those men, an estimated 3,250 troops

arrived severely sick, and many of the troops were too ill to set up camp. Accusations of mismanagement caused a public relations crisis, with the press reporting the wretched state of the soldiers. The Red Cross, and local women, rushed to fill the gaps in nursing support. East Hampton's own patron saint, [Mrs. Woodhouse, fetched water](#) for hundreds of feverish troops allegedly left without water for two days. The Red Cross played a vital role in resolving the crisis. They transported the sickest soldiers to proper hospitals in New York and New Haven. Some 449 soldiers traveled by yacht, and many more by rail. Typically, two nurses and a doctor would accompany soldiers traveling by boat to a hospital. The Red Cross streamlined logistics, arranging for ambulances to await incoming boats and trains. Additionally, the Red Cross also provided cots for hundreds of sick soldiers at Camp Wikoff after bureaucratic paperwork delayed the delivery of Army cots.

On October 9, 1898, orders came for the last unit of troops at Camp Wikoff (the Seventh United States Infantry-to leave Camp Wikoff), marking the end of the crisis.

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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:

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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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