

The Personal Possessions of David Talmage, Deceased, October 15, 1808

Two hundred and eleven years ago, on October 15, 1808, Jonathan King and Timothy Miller, Jr. supervised the creation of [the above inventory](#) of the estate of their recently deceased neighbor David Talmage on October 15, 1808. This inventory identified the monetary value of Talmage's personal possessions, itemizing exactly what he owned when he died, which reveals a lot about David's life. I find inventories -- and the act of listing every material possession a person owned, down to the tea cup -- fascinating. Most inventories reveal a great deal about both the property owner's daily life and what the community valued.

So who was David Talmage, and what was the most valuable thing he owned? This David Talmage was the son of Ann Wheeler and John Talmage of Wainscott. He was born in 1731 and lived in Springs. He married Lydia Pike in 1759, and they had five children. Like many other East Hampton residents, David Talmage appears to have invested in cattle farming, and owned significant local lands, [based on deeds in the Long Island Collection](#). In these deeds, David Talmage is described as a "yeoman," a phrase typically used for farmers who owned their own land. David's most valuable possessions were all livestock. His ox was by far his most valuable possession. It was valued at \$1,800, and his cow was \$1,500. He had another \$2,750 of cattle, and a mare worth \$1,000.

According to Jonathan King and Timothy Miller, David Talmage's home held few furnishings of comparable value to his livestock. His most valuable household goods were two featherbeds, bolsters, and feather pillows worth \$800. Compared to the \$49 of "bedsteads" and \$150 "case of drawers" in this inventory, David's feather mattresses were far more valuable than his furniture. These values suggest his home furnishings were rather ordinary.

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:

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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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