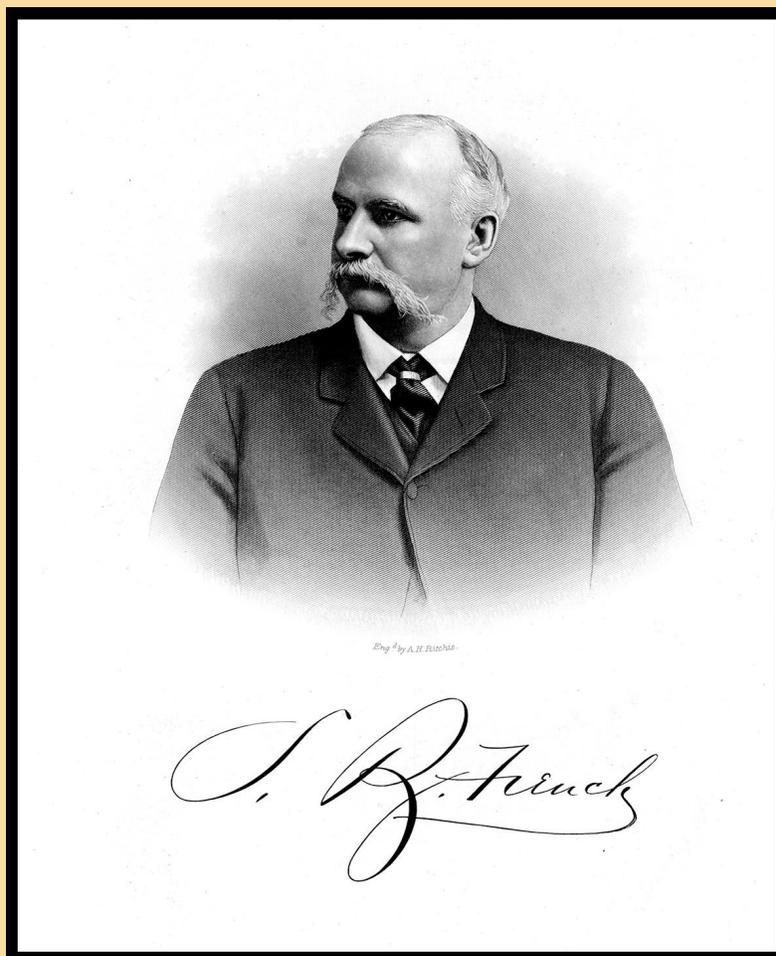




Item of the Week *from the* Long Island Collection

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



Portrait of Stephen B. French, 1882

This portrait of Stephen B. French appeared in *W. W. Munsell's History of Suffolk County, New York*. Stephen Bull French (1829-1896) and his brother Hannibal French owned the last whaling ship to leave the village of Sag Harbor, the Myra, which was condemned in 1874. Stephen may be best remembered as the purported host for President Chester A. Arthur.

Stephen's father Peter came to America as a French-speaking orphan, who was given the last name French. Like many local men, Stephen started out working in

the whaling industry, first for Captain John Budd, and later sailing for merchant Captain Thomas Brown. In 1849, he went to California in search of gold, operating a hotel with some success. After three years, Stephen sailed for Hawaii, returning to Sag Harbor in 1854, where he married Mary Ann Hand. During this period, Stephen and his brother invested heavily in many local enterprises and whaling vessels. The couple had three children before Mary Ann died in 1866.

After Mary Ann's death, Stephen remarried and threw himself into politics, dividing his time between Manhattan and Sag Harbor. In Sag Harbor, Stephen helped establish the Board of Education, the precursor to Mashashimuet Park, and he was instrumental in bringing in the Long Island Railroad. His political activities earned him several patronage positions in both Suffolk County and New York City. Stephen served as Collector of Customs in Sag Harbor, Suffolk County Treasurer, Appraiser of the Port of New York, and Police Commissioner in both Sag Harbor and New York City (1879-1889).

Stephen's close friendship with fellow machine politician Chester A. Arthur is well documented. Local lore holds Arthur stayed with French at [his home in Sag Harbor](#), but establishing when that visit took place has proven unsuccessful.

In 1896, Stephen B. French died at home from a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Obituaries described him as the embodiment of "progress" for Gilded Age New York.

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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