

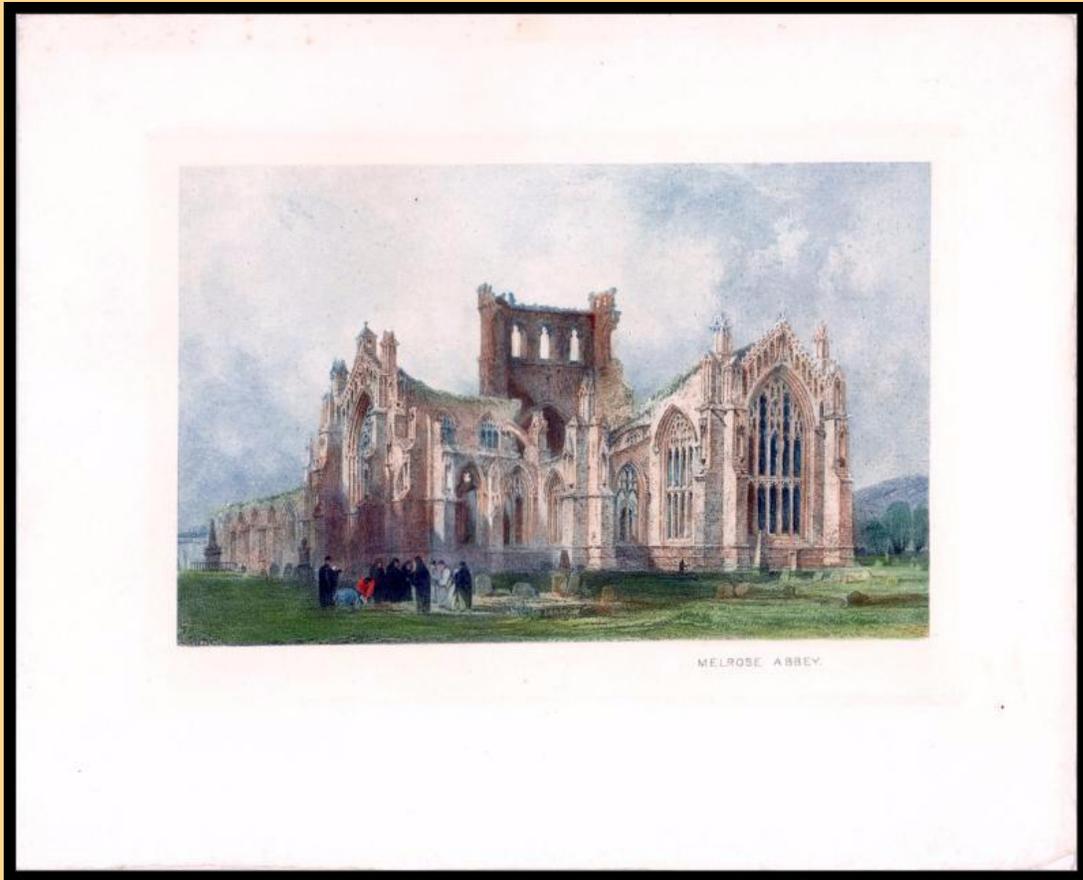


## Item of the Week *from the* Long Island Collection

LONG ISLAND COLLECTION

DIGITAL LONG ISLAND

EAST HAMPTON STAR ARCHIVE



### **Melrose Abbey, Christmas card, Mr. & Mrs. John J. Astor to Mr. & Mrs. Robert A. Gardiner**

The Christmas card was actually invented to skip writing holiday newsletters. In 1843, Henry Cole wanted to avoid writing all his friends personal messages, so he commissioned artwork to print the first Christmas card. In 1874, Louis Prang brought Cole's creation to Boston, selling lithograph Christmas cards. Some of the earliest Christmas cards in the Long Island Collection are in the papers of Robert A. Gardiner (1863-1919) and his wife, Nora Loftus Gardiner. The Gardiner family's introduction requires at least one reference to ancestor Lion Gardiner, the first English settler of East Hampton, who purchased the family's namesake island in 1639. Robert A. Gardiner is best identified as the father of Robert D.L. Gardiner, the last Proprietor of Gardiner's Island to carry the Gardiner surname. The Christmas cards received by Nora and Robert A. Gardiner look nothing like the glittery Shutterfly equivalents of today, but two cards stand out due to their senders. These Christmas cards display prints of churches, reminiscent of modern cards featuring vacation photos. One card, above, shows St. Mary's Abbey in Melrose, Scotland. The other card shows [Rouen Abbey in Normandy, France](#). Mr. & Mrs. John Jacob Astor IV (1864-1912) sent these cards. This John Jacob Astor, or Colonel Astor, is the same man who died in the sinking of the Titanic, after putting his pregnant second wife,

Madeline Talmage Force, into a lifeboat. Answering which Mrs. Astor sent these cards is a puzzle. There's only two years when Colonel Astor and the card's recipients, the Gardiners, were both married. Robert A. and Nora Gardiner married in February 1909. That means the Gardiners were only married for three Christmases before Colonel Astor died. Colonel Astor's first wife, the former Ava Willing, filed for divorce in November 1909, which was finalized in March 1910. Colonel Astor married Madeline Force in September 1911. In December 1910, there was no Mrs. Astor to send a Christmas card.

## 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 6,500+ item collection by collection name, year, title, or keyword search.

**The Local Artist Research Archive** is a collection of over 10,000 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. Our 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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