



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

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### **Lee Hayes, 1998 Oral History with History Project, Inc.**

Lee A. Hayes was born on June 20th, 1922, to Girlie Lee and Jennie B. Hayes of Mannboro, Virginia. When the lumber mill his father worked at closed in 1930, Lee's family moved north with the promise of work at the Griffing family dairy farm on Hand Lane in Amagansett; a position found by Girlie's brother Junius, who lived in Sagaponack. Lee attended the Amagansett School, as well as East Hampton High School, before leaving to support his family.

In 1943, he was drafted into the military and sent to an airbase in Florida, where he became a camouflage instructor. Lee, who admitted to wanting to be a pilot since he was a child, later scored high on an Air Force exam and went to Texas for bombardier training on the Mitchell B-25 bomber. As the U.S. military was segregated during World War II, Lee was not deployed overseas upon completion of training. After receiving commission as a second lieutenant, he went to Tuskegee, Alabama for training with the 477th Bombardment Group of the Tuskegee Airmen, which was comprised of the first African American military aviators in the U.S. Armed Forces. The war ended just as Lee finished his training and he never saw active duty.

Upon returning home after the war, Lee was awarded his high school diploma and enrolled at Farmingdale State College to study airplane maintenance and operations. Like many other Tuskegee Airmen returning to civilian life, Lee found it difficult to find employment as a pilot, due to racial discrimination. He would later work for Global Aircraft in Montauk, start his own contracting business (he built his home on Town Lane in Amagansett), sell life insurance, and become an active member in his community. In 1997, he conducted the first of two oral history interviews with the History Project, Inc. According to his family, Lee appreciated the recognition he received as a Tuskegee Airman, realized its

importance, and loved sharing it with others until his death in 2013.

## 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](https://www.digitallongisland.org) 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.*

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