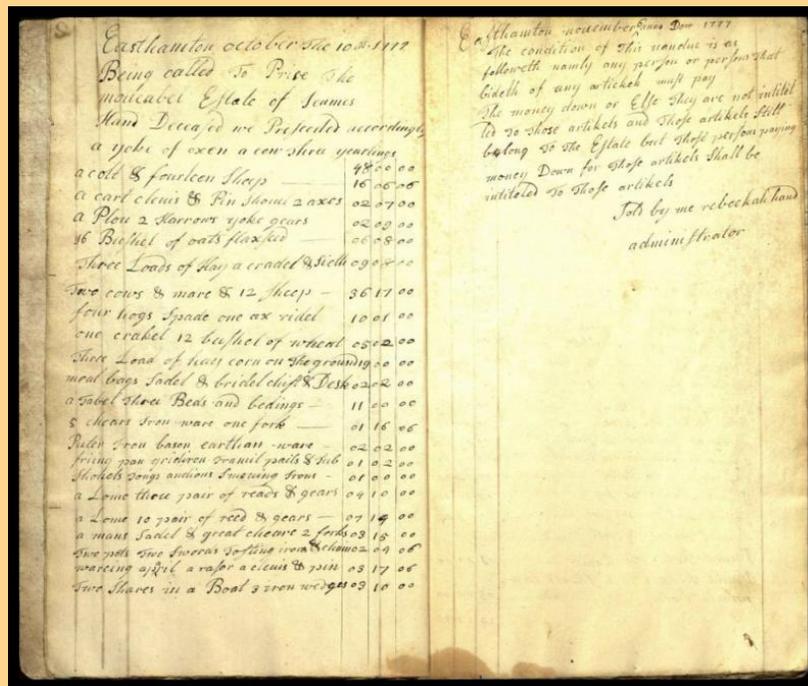




Item of the Week from the Long Island Collection

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



Account Book of the Estate of James Hand, East Hampton, NY 1777-1778, page 04

Imagine the army took over your neighborhood, your neighbors joined a rebellion against the government, and your husband just died. It's hard enough losing a loved one, but as a woman living in New York in 1777, you had minimal legal standing. While some of her husband's creditors and debtors fled to Connecticut when Long Island fell to the British the year before, Rebeckah Hand tried to settle her husband's estate to determine what, if any, resources she still had the right to use, without risking debtor's prison.

According to East Hampton Town Records, Rebeckah's husband died Sept. 21, 1777. As his widow and acting executor, she was responsible for itemizing everything she and her husband owned prior to his death (as married women had no separate legal existence from their husbands). Unfortunately, all moveable items in Rebeckah's home had to be sold at auction to settle the estate. The details of this inventory show that Rebeckah even had to auction her food, itemizing "16 bushels of oat and flaxseed" and "4 gallons of rum and drink."

We're lucky enough to have a [transcription](#) of Rebeckah's detailed records completed by Frank Sorrentino, a dedicated volunteer with a specialty in historical monetary systems. Reading through Frank's transcription, we get a true sense of what

was in Rebeckah's home, along with the many metal items and tools her husband owned. To settle her husband's estate, Rebeckah was also responsible for tracking down every person her husband owed money to, every bit of money to him, and settling those debts. In her accounts, she records letters relating to this.

Rebeckah Hand's meticulous accounts offer an impressive inventory of daily life, with a glimpse of resilience in the face of grief, loss, war, occupation, and conditions that caused many of her neighbors to flee as refugees.

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 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.

