



Item of the Week *from the* Long Island Collection

LONG ISLAND COLLECTION

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EAST HAMPTON STAR ARCHIVE



Scene on the beach, Easthampton, L.I.



The Breeches Buoy in Action *At East Hampton, L. I.*

The Breeches Buoy in Action at East Hampton, L.I.

The [Long Island Collection](#) has a beautiful assortment of [postcards](#) that are quite popular with our patrons. I personally have been enjoying all the postcards depicting the beach because they remind me that summer is right around the corner. The wonderful thing about antique postcards, however, is that they sometimes contain things we don't normally see anymore. The top postcard, for example, features swimsuit styles and dress that would be considered outdated today. It has also become uncommon to see leafy canopies built for shade on the sand. What really caught my eye, however, was the presence of the two crossed pieces of wood (which, as it turns out, appear in many of the postcards). What could those be? Was it a frame for something? What was

the rope intended for? The beach bathers above appear unbothered sitting beneath it, like it's a natural part of the landscape. There appeared to be no explanation for their use until I stumbled across the bottom postcard of the breeches buoy, giving it context. The breeches buoy, or beach apparatus, was essentially a type of rescue device used by the U.S. Life-Saving Service (1878-1915) to transfer people from nearby wrecked ships to the beach under hazardous conditions, such as rain, snow, fog, etc. Effectively using the breeches buoy took a lot of practice, so members of the Life-Saving Service (also known as "surfmens") trained with the equipment on the beach regularly. Performing a rescue using the breeches buoy involved sending a line, called a shot line, out to a shipwreck, using a line-throwing gun, known as a lyle gun (which is pictured to the left in the bottom postcard, next to the beach cart). Next, the line would be secured by passengers on board the wrecked ship, the breeches buoy (a type of seat that you could insert your legs into) would be sent out and passengers, one by one, would be transported to shore. So the bottom postcard, essentially, depicts a training exercise on the beach where a shot line is supported by the crossed pieces of wood, mimicking a breeches buoy rescue. In 1915, under President Woodrow Wilson, the U.S Life-Saving Service merged with the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service (an armed customs enforcement service created in 1790) to create the U.S. Coast Guard. The Coast Guard continued to use the breeches buoy as a rescue method until the 1950's, when helicopters replaced it.

If you enjoy vintage East Hampton postcards, make sure to pick up a copy of our annual postcard calendar. Produced and sold by the East Hampton Library every holiday season for the last 18 years, each page of the calendar features an historic local postcard image, chosen from the [Long Island Collection](#). The East Hampton Library annual calendar is available at the Library, and on our [online bookstore](#).

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, new papers, 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.

Our public hours are Mon.-Tues. and Thurs.-Sat. 1:00-4:30 p.m.

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