

Throwback Thursday – Carl Fisher House

Carl Fisher Home, ca. 1927



Photograph of the Carl Fisher House under construction, Judy Sauers Collection, Montauk Library Archives.

The East Hampton Town Board will vote this week on whether to purchase the Carl Fisher House and grounds. If the Board vote passes, this house will become an historic property funded by the CPF, or Community Preservation Fund.

Carl Fisher's Montauk home, his private residence, was completed in 1928 and sits atop Foxboro Road. Originally, it commanded a 360-degree view of the Montauk landscape from every level. The house is now surrounded by shrubs and trees, but the same spectacular vistas can be seen through windows on the top floor.

The design aesthetic of Fisher's own home differs from the Tudor Revival style he employed in Shepherd's Neck house construction. The architecture of the Fisher House is considered Colonial, or Colonial Revival, but there may be another influence. In the very first collection

donated to the archives at the Montauk Library, a photograph reveals Carl Fisher, tourist, walking in front of Mount Vernon, George Washington's Virginia home. The visual similarities between Washington's respite and Fisher's Montauk house are worth noting, and without a doubt, the references to classical architecture and our first president would be meant to impress. The Carl Fisher home is where Fisher, Montauk's brilliant entrepreneur, could bring potential buyers and backers to "close the deal."

Fisher was a living legend long before he came to Montauk. Among many other achievements, he developed the Indianapolis Speedway and created Miami from a swamp. Montauk, with its "moors," as Carl called them, represented his last great project, and with typical, Fisher-style intensity, he conceived a gargantuan resort of oceanfront hotels and multiple golf courses to be enjoyed by wealthy members of society.

He began by altering Montauk's topography, dynamiting Lake Montauk's north perimeter and bulldozing roads through open bluffs. As a town planner, Fisher took the moors by storm. Between 1926 and 1929 his ambitious building program shook up the quietude of Fort Pond Bay. Banging hammers and roaring machinery defined everyday life in the Village, and ultimately, this period represented the dividing line between "old" and "new" Montauk. The rich and famous were photographed mounting horses at Montauk Manor foxhunts or sunbathing in cabanas at the Surf Club. A skyscraper became a permanent fixture on the horizon. However, a Florida hurricane and stock market woes brought Fisher's plans to a halt. He started to hemorrhage money. Unable to rally, his spirit broken, he turned to alcohol as his consolation. Carl Fisher died in 1939.

Elizabeth Job, who was the caretaker of Carl Fisher's House and grounds, participated in a 1995 oral history interview with the Montauk Library. She described a conversation with Fisher's widow, his second wife, Margaret Collier Fisher, who enjoyed the house but eventually decided to sell. Margaret confided to Job that "she had promised her late husband that none of his belongings would be used for monetary gain.... so when she left, she pretty much took everything out of the house with her." And, indeed, nothing was left of his presence in this building – no letters, no records or diaries, no Christmas greetings or party invitations, no photographs of people dancing at lavish balls in the timber-ceiling great room. All we have is the structure itself, and this may be one of the strongest reasons to preserve it as an historic entity, a truly direct link to the personal life of Carl Fisher.

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Throwback Thursday – Tumbleweed Tuesday



We're not sure this lady is standing in technically true tumbleweeds, but we're certain that today she'd be sending up a distress flare or texting Triple A to help peel her away from a cringe-worthy tick population.

She looks perfectly content, though, in this photograph from 1926. We can even imagine her waving to summer visitors of the future as she stakes out territory for them on what was then Long Island's far-eastern frontier. At about the time she was driving an "off-road" vehicle of the day, Carl Fisher – whose transformation of the Montauk landscape is documented in the Montauk Library's Montauk Beach Development Corporation Collection – was blasting and bulldozing his way toward a new luxury resort called Montauk.

Now that Fisher's dream has been at least partially realized, many year-round residents have traditionally looked forward to what is known as Tumbleweed Tuesday, the day after Labor Day. It used to be that life would quiet down when all the abundant, frenetic recreationists left town after their three-day weekend. In recent years, however, the trend has grown less distinct, with many staying into the fall, and some lingering even longer.

Most everyone is familiar with the prickly Russian thistle blowing across Western ghost towns, but tumbleweeds in general are simply plants whose upper portion dries up, breaks off and then rolls in the wind, dispersing seeds. Vicki Bustamante wrote about a surprise sighting of one such plant, a winged pigweed, in Wainscott, for the Long Island Botanical Organization, and also said that a pretty native “tumbleweed,” purple lovegrass, is presently growing on Sunrise Highway. Two horticultural consultants from Cornell Cooperative Extension, Sandra Vultaggio and Alice Raimondo, said some tumbleweeds would be likely to live in sandy, open areas hereabouts, or that debris from a fall landscape cleanup could conceivably escape and become “tumbleweed.”

In any case, we can be grateful not to have many tumbleweeds of the usual sort. In other environments they have been known to bury cars, seal off houses and trap occupants, block highways, spread wildfires and perhaps even radioactivity from nuclear power plants as they travel. “Entire town buried under bizarre ‘hairy panic’ weed that has baffled experts,” said a headline from 2016, referring to an Australian term for the plant; “Houses disappeared’ when tumbleweeds rolled into this California city,” was another.

Tumbleweeds are also highly invasive. Which raises the question: Maybe “Tumbleweed Tuesday” should be closer to Halloween?

<http://khkeeler.blogspot.com/2015/12/plant-ecology-tumbleweeds-lifestyle.html>

By Virginia Garrison

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Throwback Thursday – A Toast to the Ebbing Days of Summer!



Color photograph of Alan and Christopher Yudt with their wives Jacqueline and Lisa, on the beach near the Surf Club, 1995

Beth Biondo, Photographer, Beth Biondo Collection, Montauk Library Archives.

August, with its oppressive heat and humidity, has stepped aside for Indian summer. Mornings are chilly, but afternoons offer hot sand to hunker down on. A berth on the beach still requires an umbrella, blanket, and sunblock, but August air that was stuck and sultry now moves briskly. Coolers stay colder longer.

This week's image is a delightful glance back to a less complicated time, i.e., the summer of 1995. These happy beachgoers were photographed in August at the annual celebration of several birthdays in the Yudt family, an event that continues to bring this group back to Ditch Plains every year. Montauker Beth Biondo took this photograph 26 years ago of her two brothers, Alan and Christopher Yudt, and their spouses. That's Lisa, Christopher's wife, sitting closest to the picture frame, and Jacqueline, married to Alan, toasting the photographer, her sister-in-law

Beth. Beth, Alan and Christopher spent summers in Montauk as children. Beth, Alan and Christopher spent summers in Montauk as children. Eventually, Beth and her mother, Florence (the August birthday girl), became permanent Montauk residents.

In 1963 Robin Ward scored a hit on the music charts with “Wonderful Summer.” Her wistful soprano lilted over the radio waves, describing a summer love that ended with autumn’s beginning: “I want to thank you for giving me the most wonderful summer of my life...” Summer in Montauk 2021 was wonderful, too, a traveler’s oasis of beauty and relaxation. It was also gnarly and congested, with some holiday-makers determined to make up for the lost summer of 2020. In 100 years, Throwback Thursdays will address the photographs of 2020 and 2021 and ask, why are they wearing those masks?

In the meantime, the yearly festivities continue for the Yudts and Biondos. This is a fun, lively group, who jokingly offered to sign autographs when they learned of their inclusion in this week’s Throwback Thursday. In this picture they’re situated close to South Edison Street; the Surf Club serves as backdrop in the distance.

Robin Ward’s nostalgic melody, included on most summertime playlists, can be heard wafting from car radios throughout July and August. 1963 or 2021, mask or no mask, most of us end up singing along because we, too, remember the most wonderful summer of our lives.

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Throwback Thursday – The Pelican

The Pelican, photographed by Evangeline Pitts, 1951



Damaged open party boat Pelican sits behind clammer Ben Pitts, Pitts-Burke-Cullum Collection, Montauk Library Archives

The man clamming in the foreground of this photograph was known as Augustus Petitpas in his native Nova Scotia, and as Ben Pitts in the United States. The beached boat listing behind him in Lake Montauk was known as the *Pelican*, an open party boat that Long Island Rail Road passengers would eagerly jump aboard at Fort Pond Bay, hoping to return with gunny sacks filled with enough fish to eat for a week. The fare for a day on the water was just \$4.50.

On September 1, 1951, as a squall and engine trouble and then panic set in, the *Pelican* capsized within sight of Montauk Point, claiming 37 lives, including that of the captain, Eddie Carroll, well liked and respected by local Montauk skippers.

Many of the fishermen were regular customers and good friends of Captain Carroll; among them were war veterans, a taxi driver, a mason, a mailman, a jeweler, a husband and wife, and a father and son. Only one wore a life jacket; he was one of the fishermen who survived.

The *Pelican* had had 56 people on board in a time before the Coast Guard limited the number of passengers on boats of its size. Captain Carroll's brother, Howard Carroll, who ran the *Jigger*, said in an interview shortly after the incident that Montauk captains would welcome limits on the number of fishermen to be carried by party boats. "We often have to leave many people on the docks because we don't want to overload the boats and people take it as a personal insult," he told the *Nassau Review*. "At least 80 people were left on the docks Saturday afternoon."

Montaukers were profoundly affected by the disaster. Joan Lycke distinctly remembers standing at the water pump at her family's summer home in Ditch Plains when the fire whistle went off. "It just kept going on and on and on." Jean Ruggles remembers standing on the north side of Montauk Point, which was cordoned off, and watching police trying to right the boat to get the bodies out until she was shooed away. "Everybody pitched in and got things done," said Marshall Prado. "There was a lot of confusion in town – we barely had telephones." Two of his customers later told him they could hear cries from the water as they walked the beach that day.

Fishermen, police, and what emergency responders existed in Montauk at the time rescued survivors and searched for bodies both in the water and in the cabin of the *Pelican*, with temporary morgues set up at the town dock and Duryea's ice house.

Joan Lycke remembers relatives of those who were missing or dead walking around the harbor area wearing heavy rain jackets – "It was like they were in a daze," she said. "The newspapers were all out here ... It was an incredibly sad day."

"Montauk became known as the place where the boat rolled over," Marshall Prado said. "I remember the day that they put the boat on a truck and took it out of town."

Like Augustus Petitpas, the clammer in the photograph, Prado comes from Nova Scotian stock – whose pioneer spirit he credited with helping many in Montauk scratch out a living, often by fishing as much as possible in the summer and perhaps doing carpentry in winter.

“You lived a very real life,” he said of the era of the tragedy of the *Pelican*, adding that he didn’t know one person at the time who hadn’t lost at least one family member in some way or another.

“The next day you had to go to work,” he said. And so did Augustus Petitpas.

By Virginia Garrison

Photograph © Montauk Library and Dell Cullum

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Throwback Thursday – Two Pools



Postcard of the Wavecrest Motel. Printed by Color Photog. Assoc., Glen Cove, NY, ca. 1960s. Photographers, Olga Bedorf and Mona Shelley. Montauk Library Postcard Collection. Montauk Library Archives



Postcard of the Blue Haven Motel, 1960s. J. J. Heatley, Smithtown, N.Y. Montauk Library Postcard Collection. Montauk Library Archives

Knowledge about Montauk's "Golden Age," the period of sportfishing and vacationing that pushed our sleepy village into boomtown status during the 1950s and 60s, is enhanced by the number of postcards that survive from that era. Motels and cottages dotting Montauk's watery shores were captured in vivid color by photographers who found that lodging was a lucrative subject matter, especially when printed on 3.5 x 5.5 card stock.

The Wavecrest sat on the oceanfront, with a well-manicured pool area. Chaise longues under wide-striped umbrellas invited long afternoons of leisure. Run by Franklin and Lucille Jarman, the Wavecrest Motel offered "luxuriously furnished rooms with ceramic tile baths, free radios and T.V.," along with "electric heaters and maid service."

A more economical alternative was the Blue Haven Motel on West Lake Drive, owned by Teddy and Sherry Roth, who built the establishment in 1962. Located on "Beautiful Block Island Sound — adjacent to Montauk's Famous Fishing Fleet," the Blue Haven Motel had "country surroundings," yet it was "close to Montauk Village." It's easy to believe that the women sitting by the pool in this image are afternoon fishing widows, i.e., their husbands are out on the *Gannet* or *Rex*, catching swordfish or bass.

A comparison between the two postcards shows a marked difference in the photographers' approach to their subjects, and this affects the way we perceive the personality of each motel. Olga Bedorf and Mona Shelley were photographers, and perhaps colorists or film processors as well, who worked in "Ektachrome," Kodak film popular in the 1960s that allowed high-speed processing and rich, stable colors. This duo worked with a definite aesthetic. The Wavecrest diving board visually divides the almost vacant landscape, and is punctuated by the figure of the young man standing opposite. This reinforces the compositional structure of the image and speaks volumes about the artistry of the postcard's creators. We're aware of the architecture, the grounds, and the elegant décor. The visual message says "Cocktails at midnight under the stars."

Conversely, the Blue Haven Motel image, shot closer to the picture frame, is more informal and has a different expression. The pool is divided by a rope with floaters and there doesn't seem to be a diving board – but the lifeguard, draped casually over the pool ladder, is smiling. So are the guests. This image by J.J. Heatley of Smithtown concentrates on the people, and the message is clear: "Pool Party at 9 p.m.! BYOB."

The Wavecrest and the Blue Haven Motel are still going strong, although the Blue Haven changed hands, got an upgrade, and is now called Haven Montauk. Gone are the days when a T.V. with rabbit ears was considered an amenity, but a motel pool is a blessing forever.

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Tagged: [Blue Haven Motel](#), [Franklin Jarman](#), [Lucille Jarman](#), [Mona Shelley](#), [motels](#), [Olga Bedorf](#), [Sherry Roth](#), [tbt](#), [Teddy Roth](#), [throwback Thursday](#), [Wavecrest Motel](#)

Throwback Thursday – Buffalo Soldiers at Camp Wikoff



“Camp Wikoff, 24th Infantry (colored) coming to Detention Camp,” by photographer Dwight L. Elmendorf, 1898. African-American regiment arriving at Camp Wikoff in Montauk, N.Y. Montauk Historical Society Collection, digital image. Montauk Library Archives

It was August 1898 when Camp Wikoff opened to what quickly grew to be to be more than 20,000 sickened, injured, and weakened soldiers returning from the Spanish-American War. A hastily created patchwork of tents and infirmaries blanketed virtually all of Montauk, from Fort Pond Bay to Ditch Plains to Third House. It was intended to quarantine the soldiers and help them recover, although about 300 souls were buried before the camp closed only three months later.

Among the troops were Buffalo Soldiers, Black cavalymen less celebrated, then and now, than the White Rough Riders led by Teddy Roosevelt who also recuperated or died at the camp. Like the Rough Riders, the Buffalo Soldiers – the first African-American troops in the history of the Regular United States Army – had just weeks before seen casualties, but also victory at San Juan Hill in Cuba. The site of a heavily fought and decisive battle, San Juan Hill eventually helped the glory-seeking Colonel Roosevelt rise to the presidency.

Before they served in that war, the Buffalo Soldiers had fought in “the Indian Wars” – the quest to expel Native Americans from their land in the West, whether by brutal warfare under harsh conditions or by safeguarding the property of mostly White settlers: stagecoaches, the mail, cattle, and the like. Many Buffalo Soldiers were Civil War veterans who had not been welcomed in the East when their service to the Union, as well as slavery, came to an end.

Ironically, it may have been the Native Americans who gave the Buffalo Soldiers their name. Formidable opponents yet sadly, also de facto oppressors, the Black cavalymen who defeated the Native Americans nevertheless earned their respect. In battle they demonstrated the qualities of the buffalo, an animal revered for its bravery. Admired and valued by Native Americans, the buffalo, with its distinctive fur, may have contributed to the Buffalo Soldier appellation.

The Buffalo Soldiers were proud, as well. Before desegregation ended separate regiments for African-Americans (starting in 1948), Buffalo Soldiers went on to become the nation’s first park rangers and to serve in military conflicts. They are said to have had the lowest desertion and court-martial rates of their time, and many won Congressional Medals of Honor in recognition of their valor and sense of duty.

By Virginia Garrison

Buffalo Soldier, lyrics by Bob Marley and Noel Williams:

*I'm just a Buffalo Soldier
In the heart of America
Stolen from Africa, brought to America
Said he was fighting on arrival
Fighting for survival*

*Said he was a Buffalo Soldier
Win the war for America*

The digitized, original silver negatives by Dwight L. Elmendorf from the Harvard College Library's Theodore Roosevelt Collection can be accessed at <https://library.harvard.edu/collections/theodore-roosevelt-collection>

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Throwback Thursday – Hither Hills State Park, circa late 1940s

Hither Hills State Park, circa late 1940s.



Postcard from the Montauk Library's Postcard Collection.

The pensive girl in the kerchief and the stone walkway lend a kind of European flavor to this thoughtfully composed image. Andrew Wyeth's "Christina's World" also comes to mind. Could the photographer be paying homage to a famous painting?

The image, which is from the Montauk Library's Postcard Collection, is dated "circa late 1940s." Although it wasn't widely used, color photography was indeed available at the time — in fact it had been, in a rather labor-intensive form, since the late 19th century. In the 1930s, Kodak introduced Kodachrome, which made it possible for even amateur photographers to snap color shots, then send the film away to be developed. The hitch was that shooting in color was more

expensive than in black and white, and it yielded less reliable results. It really wasn't until the 1970s, when prices had come down and light sensitivity had improved, that most people preferred to load a roll of color film into their cameras.

The setting for this lovely shot is Hither Hills State Park, for which we have Robert Moses to thank. In the 1920s, Moses wanted to include this tract of wild beachfront property – including the Walking Dunes to the north — in his planned grand network of New York State parks and parkways. Moses and the land's owners reached an agreement, but then the property owners discovered that Carl Fisher wanted to transform Montauk into a luxury resort, which increased the value of their land. They backed away from a deal with Moses, then he did what any self-respecting power broker and political ringmaster would do: He condemned the land, or at least the choicest 1,700-plus acres of it.

On Long Island alone, Moses managed at the minimum to procure property for parks from Montauk Point and Hither Hills to Fire Island and Jones Beach and many more, impressively stretching a starting budget of only \$1 million. “By the end of 1926, the beaches of Long Island, once reserved for the rich, were dotted with wooden bathhouses open to all,” Robert Caro wrote in *The Power Broker*, his Moses biography.

In hindsight it seems like a very good thing. Hither Hills to this day is an immensely popular campground, often with many generations of visitors forging memories that last a lifetime. Most likely the girl in the kerchief was simply one of those happy campers.

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Throwback Thursday – Margaret Potts, Montauk Aviatrix, and her Powderpuff Derby Co-pilot, 1961



Margaret Potts and Viola Gentry (?) on their way to the Powderpuff Derby in California, 1961. Michael Potts Collection, Montauk Library Archives.

In early 2021, the Montauk Library Archives received a phone call from Patrick Hreachmark in Champaign, Ohio. Margaret Potts had taught him how to fly when he was a teenager living in Montauk (Hreachmark's father had been a commander at Camp Hero during the 1960s). Hreachmark remembered Potts' stories about WWII, and knew that she had been a member of the Ninety-Nines, an aviation group begun in 1929 by Amelia Earhart to support and advance licensed female pilots. The organization's name comes from the 99 women who responded to Earhart's invitation to join the group in 1929.

Hreachmark represents the Aviation Museum in Champaign, Ohio, an institution that concentrates its programs and exhibits on WWII. One section of the Ohio museum is dedicated to the history of women pilots. WASPs and WAFs, who already had long hours of civilian flying to their credit, were brought into the war effort and retrained as Army pilots, drilled relentlessly under military instruction. WASPs and WAFs then transported planes and supplies so airmen could concentrate on fighting battles over Europe.

Both Margaret and her husband George Potts were pilots. After the war, George became a fisherman, and the couple devised a brilliant strategy to enhance his catch: Margaret would scout for fish from her plane and radio back the location to her husband. Margaret also started a seaplane business, ferrying passengers to places within a few hours' flying distance of Montauk. Eventually switching gears, she became a teacher in the Montauk School. Her dedication to community affairs was revealed in her association with the Montauk Village Association, the Montauk Historical Society, and the Montauk Library. She was one of a core group to kick off the Library's oral history program in the late 1990s. She died in 2005, at the age of 90.

In 1961, Viola Gentry and Margaret Potts took off together for California, where they would compete in the Powderpuff Derby, sponsored annually by the 99ers. Potts had remained friends with many pilots who are now famous, like Viola Gentry, Potts' co-pilot during the Derby. Viola was called the "Flying Flapper of Freeport," but this gal was no powder-puff. With nerves of steel, Gentry had flown under both the Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridges in 1926.

The Powderpuff Derby was discontinued in 1977 because, as all the 99ers agreed, women had proven that they could fly. However, the Ninety-Nines are still going strong. Currently an international organization with 155 chapters, this support group provides networking and scholarship opportunities to women around the globe.

Women aviators played an essential role in World War II. Margaret Potts was one of them, and she will be inducted into the Aviation Museum in Champaign, Ohio in October 2021. This tribute honors her memory. By association, this tribute honors Montauk, as well.

<https://www.champaignaviationmuseum.org/>

<https://www.ninety-nines.org/>

Tagged: [Amelia Earhart](#), [aviation](#), [George Potts](#), [Marge Potts](#), [Michael Potts Collection](#), [Patrick Hreachmark](#), [Powderpuff Derby](#), [Viola Gentry](#)

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Throwback Thursday – Dog Days



“Marie and Chewy,” 2012. From the Mike Carlisi Collection, Montauk Library Archives.

We are in the thick of the “dog days” of summer. The reference comes to us from ancient Rome, when our brilliant forebears ascribed the excessive summer heat and humidity between July 3rd and August 11th to Sirius, the brightest star in the sky. Sirius is part of the constellation *Canis Major*, the “Greater Dog,” so this sun is also called the Dog Star. Sirius shines so brightly in the summer, in fact, that the “ancient Romans believed it actually gave off heat and added to the sun’s warmth, accounting for the long stretches of sultry weather,” according to the weather experts at the *Farmer’s Almanac*. Therefore, the ancient Romans (and Greeks, too, according to some sources) named these days the “dog days.”

This week’s TBT is a beautifully composed portrait of Marie Sluri and her dog, Chewy, a Tibetan terrier mix, but it’s also a portrait of a perfect summer day in Montauk. This is the quintessential “walk on the oceanfront” shot. Marie’s son, Mike Carlisi, took this image with his camera phone in 2012. We included it in our “Montauk Pets” exhibit in 2019 and at the time, cited the location as a beach at Ditch Plains. However, Mike now says he thinks he shot the

image in the Hither Hills area. No matter which beach, the photograph perfectly captures the qualities that compel summer tourists to Montauk. We can almost feel the cooling breezes as Chewy and his owner make tracks along the sand.

For archivists, this camera-phone image falls under a category called “born-digital.” A born-digital photograph is an image that was created using a camera phone or digital camera, not a regular camera loaded with Kodak or other film. When an original photograph that was developed in a darkroom is placed on a scanner to create a digital image, it’s called digital reformatting, but it’s not considered a born-digital image. Some archives refuse to collect born-digital materials because of preservation and other challenges, but the Archives at the Montauk Library has been collecting born-digital photographs for years.

Chewy was rescued on a busy thoroughfare in the South Bronx. The dog was a stray, wandering aimlessly, no doubt terrified. Marie picked him up and brought him home. Love and devotion ensued. Chewy enjoyed rides in the car and walks on the beach. Also, rather unusually, he adored cats!

What’s notable about the Mutt and Jeff relationship in this portrait is that even though Marie and Chewy are walking away from us, their bond is obvious, in spite of our not being able to see their faces. When they met, their connection was immediate, a recognition between twin flames or stars, like the binary star Sirius. Sirius, with a Sirius A and Sirius B star system — a Mutt and Jeff team of two inseparable suns — would shine much less brightly without the existence of the much smaller “Chewy,” or Sirius B.

<https://www.farmersalmanac.com/why-are-they-called-dog-days-of-summer-21705>

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Throwback Thursday – Leisurama



Much as they like to talk about real estate, most people in Montauk these days wouldn't be referencing a 750-or-more-square-foot house with no AC or winter insulation on a 7,500-square-foot piece of property. The product of a late 1950s collaboration, the 200 or so prefab summer residences were designed by Andrew Geller and Raymond Loewy and marketed by All-State Properties — which had a model home at the 1964 World's Fair — at Macy's Herald Square in Manhattan, and locally by the Montauk Beach Development Company at the Carl Fisher office building in downtown Montauk.

With its modern-day appliances — the homes included a dishwasher and washer and drier, among other at-the-time luxe amenities for the middle class, which a summer home would have been in the first place — a prototype inspired a 1959 argument at the American National Exhibition in Moscow, called “the Kitchen Debate,” between then-Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev. Khrushchev reportedly said, “There is no more truth in showing this as the typical home of the American worker than, say, in showing the Taj Mahal as the typical home of a Bombay textile worker.”

As for the Leisurama's “leisure” element — a similar architectural illustration from the era depicts a wife and children exuberantly rejoicing at the arrival of the family breadwinner in a tail-finned vehicle, most likely for the weekend from his job in the city. In the early 1960s it would have been reasonable to expect the children to have been biking, swimming, and playing board games

with other kids in the summer colony while Mom kept them fed and watered and socialized over coffee or cocktails with her own friends. Ah, for the good old days!

Full disclosure: The majority of Leisuramas, most of which were built in what is called the Culloden Shores development near Block Island Sound, were not directly on the waterfront, and they did not include docks, boats, and the like. It is also unlikely that the full-scale vegetation seen in this illustration would have survived the salty, wind-blown environment.

However, they did provide easy living, access to a private beach, and came fully furnished from Macy's-issue sofas and beds, linens, cookware, and flatware all the way down to a toothbrush for each and every family member. The starting price for the basic model was less than \$14,000, with financing and as little as \$490 down. Today they go for close to \$1 million.

Talk about non-buyer's remorse!

By Virginia Garrison

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Throwback Thursday – National Pet Fire Safety Day



Trusty Dalmatian Guards Crates of Budweiser Beer during 1992 St. Patrick's Day Parade. Color photograph from the Herb Herbert Collection, Montauk Library Archives.

A favorite website is National Today, or nationaltoday.com. It's a day-by-day calendar, listing an event or activity that is celebrated on a particular day in a specific month, every year. According to National Today, "We keep track of fun holidays and special moments on the cultural calendar." One of the best things about National Today is the history that accompanies each holiday.

Some of the event days are no surprise, such as National Poinsettia Day, taking place on December 12th. However, there is also "Pretend to Be a Time Traveler" day on December 8th. Not only will you learn the earliest mention of time travel; you can read a short discussion about particle acceleration.

For today, July 15th, a number of cultural phenomena are being recognized, but for our TBT we are choosing National Pet Fire Safety Day. According to nationaltoday.com, "National Pet Fire Safety Day takes place every year on July 15, and it's a day to learn how to keep your pet safe in a fire. ... It was started by the Kennel Club and ADT Security in 2009 to help pet owners learn safety measures to protect their beloved pets and homes from fire, and it's a great opportunity to learn how to keep your fur baby safe."

Have you ever wondered why Dalmatians are associated with firehouses? Here's what National Today has to say: "A few hundred years ago, dogs were trained to trot alongside horse-drawn wagons and protect their occupants (and horses) from harm. Dalmatians quickly became the ideal carriage dog for their strength, vitality, fortitude, and size. They also had a reputation for getting along well with horses and were known to have a calming effect while firefighters were battling a blaze. Over time, as motorized fire trucks replaced carriages, Dalmatians and other fire pups were seen less aboard fire trucks and more as on-site firehouse residents and mascots."

And now, finally, here's the human kindness factor described: "Today, many firehouses around the country still have Dalmatians as station dogs. However, Dalmatians aren't the only dog in the firehouse. It's become common for firefighters (and sometimes entire fire teams) to adopt dogs rescued from fires. These lucky pups, whatever their breed, become symbols of the resiliency, bravery, and fortitude of firefighters and the individuals they help. They also take important steps into education and helping firefighters demonstrate fire safety and emergency preparedness for schools and community groups across the country."

The Montauk Fire Department is known for its beautiful relationship with animals. Rescuing cats, dogs, and deer from the sea, burning buildings, and trees, our firemen have put their lives on the line to save our beloved pets.

Firemen, and the pets who have been known to warn their owners of a house fire (including the pet snake who saved a family's life!), deserve our thanks.

You can learn more about Pet Fire Safety Day, and other holidays, on this wonderful website: nationaltoday.com.

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Tagged: [animals](#), [Dalmatian](#), [Dalmatians](#), [dogs](#), [Montauk Fire Department](#), [National Pet Fire Safety Day](#), [pet fire safety](#), [pets](#), [tbt](#), [throwback Thursday](#)

Throwback Thursday – Cattle Drives



No, these cowpokes aren't headed to the Surf Lodge. They're hot to trot to Deep Hollow Ranch instead—after meeting up with some livestock about to arrive on the Long Island Rail Road.

Cattle drives were an enduring part of Montauk's history starting in the 17th century. Its grazing pastures were used to bulk up cattle, sheep, and horses owned by East Hampton's early proprietors, and the first, second, and third houses in town were built for livestock keepers and their families. First House burned down in 1909 (train sparks from the railroad were blamed), but Second House and Third House (or versions thereof) today stand as museums. Second House is run by the Montauk Historical Society, while Third House, now a part of Montauk County Park, is operated by the Suffolk County Parks system.

Montauk's cattle drives drew to a close more than 300 years later in 1925, but Frank Dickinson revived them in 1936 and they were re-revived after World War II. Toward the end they involved transporting about 160 head of cattle some 2,500 miles, from Texas to Montauk, then on to what must have been the exhilarating sport of herding them about four miles from the Montauk train station to the ranch.

Many noteworthy Montauk residents took part in these dramatic expeditions. Among them was Craig Tuthill, whose family donated the photo collection that includes this snapshot from the 1950s. Mr. Tuthill was a dedicated volunteer with the Montauk Fire Department and other organizations, and his ancestors included Capt. Edwin Baker Tuthill, who developed a fishing operation on Fort Pond Bay sold in 1931 to Perry B. Duryea Sr.

Pictured in this photo, in addition to Craig Tuthill, are Phin Dickinson, Judy Smith King, Dick White, John Lycke, Al Holden, Arthur Wiggins, Nancy Dickinson, Jimmy Hewitt, Frank Tillinghast, Robbie Wilson, Judy Schellinger, Frank Dickinson, Barbara Dickinson, Bettie Duryea, Stanley Mort, Barbara Borth, and Bill Nichols.

Can you spot them?

By Virginia Garrison

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Throwback Thursday – Friends of the Montauk Library Book Fair



Photo collage of Book Fair volunteers, ca. 1996-1998: Starting in the top left-hand corner: Mary (last name unknown), Angela Lambriola, Robert Schorr, Christine Langerfeld, Judith Rade, Bob Mautschke, June (last name unknown), Charlotte Schorr, Eileen Mautschke, Doris and Frank Donahue, Suzanne Gosman, and Elaine Kahn



Photograph of Bob-e Metzger, Chairperson of the Friends' Book Fair, looking over boxes in the storage area maintained by the organization, ca. 1990s



Photograph of Christine Langerfeld, President of the Friends of the Montauk Library in 2011, and Bob-E Metzger, smiling for the camera on the Montauk Green, ca. 2000s

As much as American flags and fireworks, the Friends of the Montauk Library Book Fair has long been a staple of the Fourth of July weekend. These photographs recall the event in its heyday, when an army of volunteers would commandeer the Village Green to sell books by the pound, as well as baked goods, plants, white elephant items, toys and children's games, crafts and jewelry, refreshments, and much more.

The fair was started by community members to raise money to create a library — back when Montaukers still had to rely on visits from the Suffolk County bookmobile. Running for 35 years, the fair expanded to a point where it involved finding hundreds of volunteers, a pursuit led with determination by Bob-E Metzger, according to Sally Krusch, the current president of the Friends of the Montauk Library. The presence of about 90 volunteers was required at the cordoned-off fair premises alone, while others — in some years, they included U.S. Coast Guard officers — had to lug tons of books from the library to the Green.

The event attracted throngs of visitors during Montauk's busiest holiday weekend and raised thousands of dollars each year, peaking around 2010. By 2016, however, it had grown more difficult to find volunteers, parking had become problematic, and the fair seemed to have lost a bit of its community flavor. Now scaled back, it has been relocated to the Montauk Library, where parking is easier and there is far less book-moving to be done.

Thanks to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Friends did not stage a book fair in 2020. Nor will there be one this Fourth of July, as the Montauk Library building is in the process of being renovated and expanded.

Ms. Krusch said the organization hopes to do “something particularly nice” in terms of a book fair next year, and that plans are also in the works for several events to celebrate the library’s reopening this fall.

Still, she said of the Fourth of July tradition on the Green, “I think it was a fabulous community event.”

By Virginia Garrison

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Throwback Thursday – Children of Fort Pond Bay Village



This week's Throwback Thursday is a tribute to the children of Fort Pond Bay Village. The Bay was their frontage and the train tracks their backyard boundary. Nothing, however, could restrict these kids from exploring the larger world around them.

This image from around 1938 comes from the Pitts-Burke-Cullum collection, a large group of photographic material that happens to be filled with many pictures of children. The collection was donated by Dell Cullum; his mother, Emily Cullum, who passed away last week at age 93, inherited these photographs from her mother, Vangy Pitts Burke.

Vangy won a camera at a very early age. As a result, she and her brother Vitus began shooting friends, family, cousins, favorite pets and toys, so that well before 1920 they had created a photographic portfolio documenting every-day life in Montauk. It's remarkable that this mini-archive sitting within the Pitts-Burke-Cullum collection was photographed by *children*.

Emily Cullum recognized the value of this visual inheritance and painstakingly identified all or most of the sitters in literally hundreds of photographs. (Her mother, Vangy, had continued to take pictures of her own children and passed on a passion for photography to future generations.)

In today's TBT photograph, Emily is the young girl sticking out her tongue. Next to her, making the face, is Fran McDonald Ecker, her cousin and lifelong friend who died a few years ago. For some reason, this image of the two besties recalls the photo booth picture-snapping that was so moving in the film *Beaches*.

Here are the identities of the whole gang, starting from the upper left: Marie Pitts, Margaret Rawson, Pat McDonald, Eva McDonald, Buddy Burke, Celina McDonald, Frances McDonald, Emily Burke, Vincent McDonald, Marian Sayre.

Rest in peace, Emily Cullum. Thanks for treasuring these photographs. Your hard work added great value, and gave them life.

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Throwback Thursday – School Trip



As the school year draws to a close, everyone looks forward to passing their exams and moving up another grade level. Especially seniors! (Or in the case of Montauk School graduates, 8th-graders.) Graduation ceremonies bring celebration and a sense of freedom. Before graduation, however, there's the school trip. Its itinerary is usually structured around an educational premise, but the promise of fun and escape from the every-day is perhaps its biggest draw.

This photograph donated to the Montauk Library by Carol McDonald Nye revisits one of those field trips, a 1965 excursion to Albany, N.Y., where Perry Duryea, member of the New York State Assembly, greeted the entourage from Montauk. After distinguishing himself as a transport pilot in WW II, Perry Duryea returned to Montauk to work in his father's wholesale seafood business. Like his father, also named Perry, who had been a state senator, Perry Jr. entered politics, too, and soon both the seafood business and Perry Jr.'s political career were in ascendance.

In December 1965, the year this photo was taken, Duryea became Minority Leader of the New York State Assembly; four years later he was designated its Speaker. Duryea's keen political acumen eventually landed him on the ballot in 1978, running against incumbent Hugh Carey for governor. Unsuccessful but undeterred, this "regular, hometown guy" returned to his still-thriving seafood business in Montauk. Valued as a man of character and integrity, Duryea continued to display a civic pride and sense of responsibility toward the community he loved.

The Montauk School group is standing in a stairwell of what is probably the New York State Capitol building. Hank Zebrowski, a teacher in the Montauk School who became Athletic Director and Bob Fisher, Principal, later promoted to Superintendent of Schools, are also featured in this photo. We can't identify the other adults or students, but we think we just might see Debbie Tuma standing in the center?

Carol MacDonald Nye was one of the founders, along with her husband, Joe Nye, of the well-known publication *On Montauk*. You can read about Nye's life here: written, in fact, by Debbie Tuma, for the new *On Montauk* publishers, Kay and Carter Tyler.

<https://onmontauk.com/2019/05/01/tribute-to-carol-macdonald-nye/>

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Throwback Thursday – Blessing of the Fleet



The annual Blessing of the Fleet became part of Montauk culture after Vinny Grimes witnessed a similar ceremony during his tenure with the U.S. Navy. In 1955, the Montauk community supported Grimes' idea of creating a blessing ceremony for fishermen's vessels.

On June 7, 1956, the *East Hampton Star* ran a notice alerting the public to a new event, the “First Solemn Blessing of the Boats,” scheduled for 6 pm on June 10th. “About 50 boats will take part in the process and will receive blessings as they pass the dock.... Any fishing boat that has not been listed may contact Captains Ralph Pitts, Gus Pitts, or Wilfred Paon for details... It is hoped to make this an annual affair.”

A week later, two paragraphs in the *Star* reported on the success of the Blessing, assuring its place on the calendar every June. “The first solemn boat blessing was held at Montauk on June 10th, at 6:00 pm. The ceremony was conducted by the Rev. Father Jeremiah McLaughlin, who was assisted by the Rev. Martin Wenzell and four altar boys. Hymns were sung by the Saint Teresa's Choir, led by Mrs. Pauline Craft; the organ was played by Miss Phyllis Wells. A regatta of 62 fishing boats, yachts, and other small craft received the blessing as they paraded past the Town Dock at Lake Montauk, led by three U.S. Coast Guard vessels. At the closing of the ceremony the “Star Spangled Banner” was sung by John Craft while a wreath of flowers was blessed and thrown overboard in memory of the sailors lost at sea from this port.”

This week's image of the Blessing of the Fleet comes from the Peg Joyce collection, taken in the early- to mid-1960s, we think. Joyce was a teacher in the Montauk School and a President of the Montauk Historical Society. In 1993, Montauk's Friends of Erin "crowned" Peg Joyce as Grand Marshal in recognition of all she had done for Montauk. Vinny Grimes had received the same honor seven years earlier, in 1986.

Enormous crowds, lots of boats (many of them decorated), and benedictional encouragement from chaplains, reverends, and rabbis now define the ceremony. The *Montauk Sun* wrote a nice article recently (May 25, 2021) about the upcoming Blessing, happening this Sunday, June 13th. Read it here, and enjoy:

<https://www.montauksun.com/about-our-cover-montauks-annual-blessing-of-the-fleet>.

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Throwback Thursday – Richard T. Gilmartin shares the Fishing Stand experience



If Montauk ever produced a Renaissance man, it was Richard T. Gilmartin. An insurance businessman who entered politics and fought for people with disabilities, he loved history and surfcasting and shared his passion for both. Richard Gilmartin had started writing a history of Montauk when he died suddenly in 1964. The loss of Gilmartin's knowledge base was like a mega-computer crashing. That's why it was a joy to discover that the 30 pages titled "Montauk through the Ages" in the 1959 *Chamber of Commerce Montauk Guide and Cook Book* were authored by the surfcaster and historian himself.

Under “Sportfishing — New Horizons,” Gilmartin described the evolution of the fishing stand in the 1920s. “Surfcasting had its rugged aspects in those days. Such items as chest-high rubber waders were unknown in that era; boots were of no help if you were going to attempt to march out in water up to your armpits. The old-timers solved their particular problems by building what they called fishing stands, which extended out over the surf. These stands were usually erected in the spring, and with a modicum of luck might last the entire fishing season before the breakers stole them.

They were precarious things at best. Standing 10 or 15 feet above the waves, they consisted of slender oak spiles, wedged tightly in among the rocks by way of foundation, which were held together by wire and good fortune. Between these spiles extended a catwalk about two feet wide; the length of this catwalk was such that the angler would be 75 feet or more out over the surf, giving him a certain advantage in that [it] was just so much distance he didn’t have to bridge with a cast.”

However, Gilmartin cautioned, “as you can imagine, these fishing stands were not without a certain amount of peril. At best they were rickety, and their rather uncertain foundation gave them a bit of temperament. Walking out on a narrow, swaying — or at least shaking — catwalk, encumbered with fishing gear, was not unlike feeling one’s way along a tightrope. Then, too, with a particularly rough surf, it was not beyond the realm of possibility that the fishing stand could depart before the fisherman did — a very embarrassing state of affairs to say the least.”

Fishing stands caught on, though, and “several of them stretched skinny fingers over the breakers in the vicinity of the lighthouse and along the southern beach,” just like the one that appears in this image from the collection donated to the Montauk Library by Carleton Kelsey. Carleton Kelsey, another Renaissance man — this time, from Amagansett.

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Throwback Thursday – Memorial Day Weekend



The Memorial Day weekend is upon us, which means the unofficial start of the summer season has begun. This picture radiates positive energy, and seems a good omen for summer 2021. Will the era of social distancing finally come to an end?

This week's Throwback Thursday photograph was donated to the archives by Herb Herbert when Joan Lycke conducted his oral history interview at the Montauk Library in 2005. He had run Herb's Market since 1963, and had recently retired. Herb's Market is still going strong, in exactly the same location, in a building completed by Carl Fisher and the Pearson Construction Company in 1927.

George Sears was the first tenant and the original owner of that market, a "satellite" of his successful Fort Pond Bay butcher shop and grocery.

Herb lived with his family in the apartment above the grocery for 20 years. "We all loved it," Herb said. "We could look out the window and always see something going on in the street." He and his wife Chrissie worked long hours, especially during tourist season, preparing deli salads, brewing coffee, and making fried chicken. Every day began at 5 a.m. Closing was always more

than 12 hours later. “If we’d lived anywhere else, I never would have seen my kids. But this way, they were always running through the store with their friends. Hey, we had ice cream!”

Two of the men standing with Herb in this photo were Budweiser representatives (Herb is wearing the white apron). The fourth gentleman, at the right in the brown shirt, may have known more about Budweiser than the representatives themselves: Jimmy Hewitt. Hewitt owned the Shagwong Tavern, and became synonymous with the iconic watering hole and restaurant during his tenure. The Shagwong Tavern and Herb’s Market occupy the same building, so this is a photograph of two neighbors who were also fellow businessmen.

Montauk’s Friends of Erin chose Herb Herbert as their Grand Marshal in 1992. Jimmy Hewitt, “the Mayor of Montauk,” became a Grand Marshal in 1998. We know that a Budweiser truck with Clydesdales and Dalmatians “marched” in more than one St. Patrick’s Day parade, so we can’t accurately date this photograph, however, it was probably taken in the 1990s.

We wish everyone a fun-filled holiday weekend. Happy Memorial Day!

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Throwback Thursday – Fishing at Fort Pond Bay Village



There are quite a few postcard views of this Fort Pond Bay scene that date from the early 1900s, but this one is a little different because it looks more closely cropped, as if a camera were positioned high, maybe on the mast of a boat. The close angle offers a sense of intimacy, reminding us that the fishermen and families who lived here formed a tightly knit community.

Fish boxes appeared everywhere this time of year in Fort Pond Bay Village. An April 5, 1929 story in the *East Hampton Star* provides a visual, as well as an “audio” description: “Montauk village is active with the coming of moderate weather. The steady tap, tap of the hammers tells the story that once again hundreds of boxes are being made for the shipment of fish by the Montauk Fish and Supply Company. The E.B. Tuthill Co. has opened for the season, Capt. Tuthill having arrived last week, and the men having reached Montauk on Sunday.” Perry Duryea would buy the Montauk Fish and Supply Co. from E.B. Tuthill only two years later, in 1931. His company name can be seen on one of the buildings in this postcard.

It wasn’t just fishermen who made these fish boxes, however. We know from Emily Cullum that her mother, Vangy Pitts Burke, as well as other children who lived on the Bay, could earn extra cash by building fish boxes for fishermen. These boxes also functioned as a playground. Vangy’s brother, Vitus Pitts, wrote a letter to Ellen Berg when they were still children, well before 1920, asking her, “Do you remember the fun we all had playing hide-and-

seek among the fish boxes last summer?” On Fort Pond Bay, it seemed to stay light out until 10:00 at night.

Fish boxes were sturdier than they look in photographs. A LIRR boxcar could hold 150 fish boxes, each containing 200 pounds of fish. They had to be reliably stackable, without collapsing. When a 5- or 6-layered stack of fish boxes, 10 feet tall, appeared on the docks of Fort Pond Bay, it took on a structural appearance, akin to modern sculpture.

That may be why this photograph is so visually compelling. It’s not just a picture of a village. It’s a beautiful, mathematical portrait of a dock area laden with right angles. The architectonic framework is repeated in the crisscrossing elements of the wooden walkways, and duplicated in the straight angles of the houses behind them. This “Cubist” imagery is accidental, but somehow, the composition looks put together by an artist and makes the view pleasing to the eye.

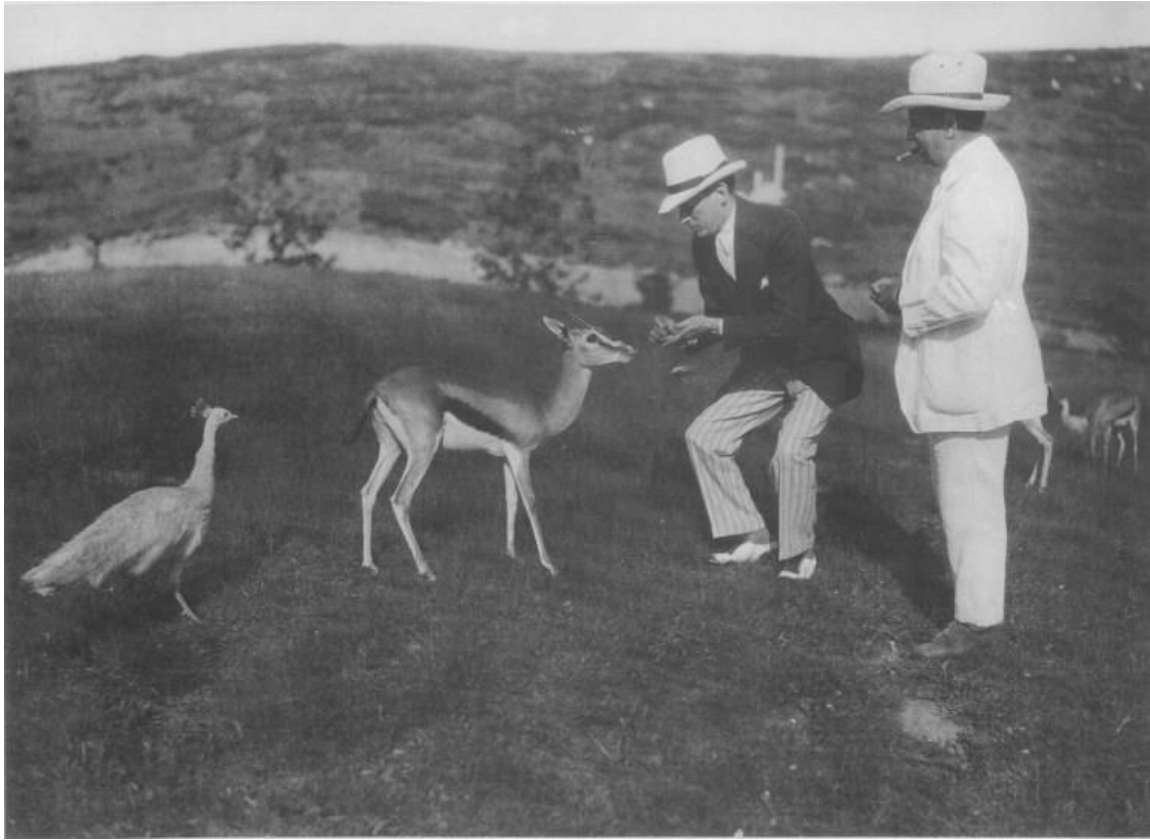
Celina McDonald Seitz, who grew up in Montauk, donated this image of Duryea’s Pier to the Montauk Library. Celina, like Emily, her cousin, and Vitus, her uncle, knew a thing or two about fish boxes.

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Throwback Thursday- Pet Month



May is National Pet Month. An early Montauk resident, architect Andrew J. Thomas, was an animal lover known for the “personal zoo” he kept on his Spanish-style estate overlooking Fort Pond Bay. On August 9, 1929, the *East Hampton Star* published this report about the exotic menagerie residing on the estate grounds after visiting with the congenial Mr. Thomas. Here is part of the story:

Mr. Thomas has a passion for pets, and all of his pets love him. There is a positively human parrot indoors, then, in little tree-houses are odd varieties of squirrel. Springer spaniels are a specialty on the Thomas estate; they are raised and cared for in the most scientific manner. Then the riding horses; they are tended like babies, in stables with white porcelain grain-bins, not a wisp of hay out of place; rubber rugs on the polished wood floor outside the stalls, every bit of harness shining until you could see your face in it. Mr. Thomas has a passion for neatness.

There is even an animal hospital on the [premises]; a gazelle, which had dislocated her shoulder and had to be tended by Dr. Bennett, was ensconced in a private room all bandaged up, but looking quite comfortable... The gazelles are cunning things. One of them is really so friendly that it will eat from your hand, and even walk playfully along beside you on its hind legs.

Many readers must have seen pictures of Mayor Walker feeding that same gazelle, several weeks ago when he visited Montauk. The Mayor forgot his City Hall cares (if any) and became ‘just a big boy’ again, at Montauk.” (NYC Mayor Jimmy Walker, a larger-than-life figure of questionable integrity who was eventually removed from office in 1932, appears here alongside A.J. Thomas in this week’s Throwback Thursday photograph, donated by Nancy Beaulieu).

Montauk brought out the “pet lover” in Walker. Stay tuned for an update on some of the beautiful creatures who appeared in our “Montauk Pets” exhibit in 2019.

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Tagged: [AJ Thomas](#), [Andrew J Thomas](#), [Mayor Jimmy Walker](#), [Mayor Walker](#), [Montauk pets](#), [national pet month](#), [pet month](#), [tbt](#), [throwback Thursday](#)

Throwback Thursday – Celebrating the Long Island Potato!





In 1937 the first annual Long Island Potato Festival took place in Riverhead, on the grounds of the Suffolk County Agricultural Society. It was advertised nationally as “the Long Island potato growers answer to the thousands of dollars being spent for publicity by other potato-producing states,” and was called the “first, constructive campaign to be conducted on behalf of the Long Island potato” (*Chicago Packer*, August 14, 1937). One of the attractions was a pile of spuds created from more than 1,000 bushels of potatoes. A potato mountain! Visitors were given a sample bag from Potato Mountain to take home.

With the disappearance of so many potato farms on Long Island’s East End, it’s easy to forget that the “Long Island potato” used to be in evidence for miles along the roadways of the north and south forks. Our area’s sandy soil and temperate climate have always been beautifully compatible with the growing requirements of this hearty stem vegetable. (Our first TBT image shows Jack Stella on the grounds of his West Lake farm, his arms embracing a bountiful harvest, ca. 1940s, from the Josephine Crasky Collection.)

Up until recently, most arable land in Montauk was devoted to sheep- and cattle-grazing, yet we know that the keepers of the First, Second and Third Houses tended gardens that could produce prolifically. Crops sustained the families living on the premises, and fed the growing number of tourists descending on Montauk as the 19th century progressed. In fact, at Second House, deemed the “coziest” of the three stations by travelers, delicious meals were noted to arrive on the table with ingredients plucked fresh from the garden. (Our second Throwback photo for this week shows a group visiting Second House in 1900, from the James Schwartz Collection.) According to Robert Hefner’s Second House Historic Structure Report of March 2016, in 1880 Second Housekeepers George and Florence Osborne “harvested 60 bushels of potatoes from a half-acre planting.”

The potato has an inherent genius for easily morphing into new and different forms (the boutique Long Island distilleries that have incorporated the spud into their vodka and gin recipes come to mind). Even at a Potato Day dinner in Amagansett described by the *EH Star* on May 7, 1915, participants were inspired to come up with new potato recipes. “Two novelties introduced by Mrs. E.B. Leek and Mrs. H.L. Leek were the attractions of the evening –“potato candy,” which might well have been named “ambrosia,” and “potato cake,” which looked and tasted like a delicious spice fruit cake. Many were the requests for the recipes of the above-named dainties.” In closing, the *Star* proclaimed, “Potato Day is a fine way to observe the first of May!”

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Throwback Thursday – Camp Wikoff



In 1899, almost a year after the Rough Riders left Montauk's Camp Wikoff, the government decided to sell its property sitting unused at the vacant camp. "The site of Camp Wikoff is to be sold at auction," reported the *Ogdensburg Journal*. "The property consists of one quartermaster's warehouse, one commissary storehouse, four detention camp buildings, 22 hospital buildings, one laundry building, printing office building, electric lighthouse, bake shop, three pumphouses, three boarding houses, 250,000 feet of lumber, 50 cords of oakwood, and two cylindrical wrought iron filters with pipe and valves."

The account of the auction given afterward in the *East Hampton Star* is amusing, but also fascinating. Interest in the artifacts to be sold at the auction was intense, and in fact, extra trains from the Long Island Railroad brought "excursionists" from all parts of the Island to Montauk. On April 21, 1899, builders, railroad executives, and curiosity seekers converged on Montauk. Locals were also in attendance, like T.H. Conklin and Captain William D. Parsons, as well as some "lifesavers" from Ditch Plains and Hither Hills. Pound fishermen, who knew a thing or two about supplies, also showed up.

We don't have a photograph of the auction, but this 1898 image of Camp Wikoff from the Carleton Kelsey collection gives a sense of the excitement that must have prevailed on auction day. We know from contemporary reports that once up and running, Camp Wikoff was a bustling scene of soldiers intermingling with visitors who came east on a regular basis. In fact, the buildings you see in this photo were sold at the 1899 auction a year later.

“When the excursionists reached Montauk depot at 12:30, they were shown to one end of the big commissary warehouse, where Auctioneer T.F. Archer's Red Flag had been hoisted. A bountiful luncheon had been prepared by Montauk women, and had been laid out in the empty storehouse.” The auction that followed was an on-site, out-of-doors traveling event, as a caravan of carriages and wagons followed the auctioneer up and down Montauk's hilly landscape. Bidders on foot made “shortcuts through the ravines and over precipices,” while carriages made the detour of winding roads polished smooth by soldier traffic only months earlier.

The auctioneer stood in his carriage, rattling off the lots. Incredible bargains were easily had, especially when the merchandise for sale might have had an association with typhoid or malaria. “Now, how much am I offered for this hospital building?” the auctioneer asked. After painstakingly getting his bidders to commit to a measly thirteen dollars, someone in the crowd yelled, “Any contagious diseases in that building?” “Yes,” was the response. Silence prevailed. The auctioneer had no choice. “Sold! For thirteen dollars.” Money was exchanged, recorded in a blotter, and the quartermaster's agent, W.A. Benson, would paint the name and number of the building sold in black letters on the side.

A list of successful bidders and their lots of merchandise appeared in the *Star* article from April 28, 1899. The phrase “everything but the kitchen sink” comes to mind. The only difference here would be “everything AND the kitchen sink, and all the pots and pans, too.”

ORIGINALLY POSTED APRIL 29TH 2021

Filed under: [Local History](#)

Tagged: [auction](#), [auctions](#), [Camp Wikoff](#), [Captain William D. Parsons](#), [Carleton Kelsey](#), [Rough Riders](#), [T.H. Conklin](#), [tbt](#), [throwback Thursday](#), [W.A. Benson](#)

Throwback Thursday- Earth Day



Giorgina Reid fights erosion on the Lighthouse bluffs, from the Al Holden collection.

Today is Earth Day, its 51st birthday. Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson kick-started the event on April 22, 1970, after observing the sickening results of a California oil spill the year before. “Twenty million Americans were inspired by Earth Day— at the time, 10% of the total population of the United States — to take to the streets, parks and auditoriums to demonstrate against the impacts of 150 years of industrial development which had left a growing legacy of serious human health impacts” (earthday.org/history). April 22, 1970 also signals the starting point for two environmental undertakings that profoundly affected Montauk.

The Concerned Citizens of Montauk initially banded together to protect Big Reed Pond from developers intent on encircling its perimeter with 1,400 houses. CCOM’s efforts resulted in the creation of Montauk County Park (the former Theodore Roosevelt County Park). Over the last 50 years this impactful environmental group has played a major role in preserving land in Montauk. In fact, more than 70 % of Montauk’s protected land can be traced back to CCOM’s dedication to environmental principles (www.preservemontauk.org).

Earth Day 1970 also brought the indomitable Giorgina Reid to Montauk, who believed she could save the doomed Montauk Lighthouse from its eroding bluffs through a method she had learned called reed-trench terracing. It involved a system of wooden planks made of cedar climbing up toward the Lighthouse in rows. Behind the planks were simple holes filled with reeds whose growing roots would dig into the soil and drink the rain, preventing disastrous gullies that caused erosion. When she finished in 1985, Reid’s project was deemed successful. Since then, however, fierce Nor’easters have shown that erosion at the Lighthouse is an ongoing battle. Committed organizations and individuals have plans to keep the tower upright into the future.

One of the hallmarks of the first Earth Day was the alignment of purpose shared with Senator Nelson by both Republicans and Democrats. Schools, civic organizations, and finally, the government, got behind the philosophy of Earth Day to enact laws that would create a healthier planet, such as the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts. Earth Day is now an international movement, spurred on by the actions of local, every-day people who have proven that better behaviors and environmental practices do make a difference. Happy Earth Day, everyone!

ORIGINALLY POSTED APRIL 22ND2021

Filed under: [Local History](#)

Tagged: [Al Holden collection](#), [Big Reed Pond](#), [earth day](#), [Gaylord Nelson](#), [Giorgina Reid](#), [Montauk Country Park](#), [tbt](#), [Theodore Roosevelt Country Park](#), [throwback Thursday](#)

Throwback Thursday- Bicycle Race



Although cyclists ride year-round, springtime is the season associated with outdoor athletics. This photograph from the collection of Al Holden was donated with the information, "Bike race start at Gosman's." Although undated, most likely this photograph was taken in the late 1970s. George Watson, owner of the Dock, began launching annual athletic events from his iconic bar in 1976. For example, running to the Lighthouse and back to the Dock for free beer was one challenge. Watson conducted rowing and running races, as well, at which he and his brothers excelled. The Holden collection contains photographs of these races, which leads us to believe that this photograph may represent a Watson race.

Bicycle history is a fascinating one. Although the original model with one huge wheel was invented in 1817, its modern descendant was presented to the world by John Kemp Starley in 1885. From "Bicycle's Bumpy History" on history.com we learn that Starley "perfected a 'safety bicycle' design that featured equal-sized wheels and a chain drive. New developments in brakes and tires followed shortly, establishing a basic template for what would become the modern bicycle." By the 1890s a bicycle craze was at fever pitch in America, and in 1893 the Montauk Wheelmen, consisting of "American wheelmen and wheel ladies" from East Hampton and Amagansett, was born.

What's surprising to learn is the bicycle's powerful impact on society. Cyclists' demands for better roads positively affected rural areas whose country byways were in deplorable condition. Filled with potholes and "canyons," these roads were an agony not only for "peddlers," but also for farmers and their horses hitched to wagons. Wheelmen worked in

concert with the “Good Roads Association” to create flat, hard surfaces in support of wheel and animal traffic. In addition, railroad companies made every effort to meet the demands of wheelmen, whose requests for paved paths running alongside train tracks could sometimes be accommodated. In fact, railroad cars and outdoor sheds dedicated to bike storage started in the 19th century, when wheelers used the LIRR to reach biking destinations (interestingly, Greenport was known to have excellent roads for biking).

Visually, a mile-long “snake” of cyclists was a stunning sight for onlookers, especially in the evening, when illumination was required. This June 5, 1896 *Star* account of a parade from Patchogue to Sayville that included East End wheelmen captures something of the magic of the event, a still-new sport for many who came out to see: “The moonlight run under the auspices of the Patchogue wheelmen to Sayville Wednesday was far more of a success than had been anticipated. At 6:45 the run left, reaching Sayville at 7:40. The wheelmen made a beautiful show as the 125 lamps twinkled and danced like giant fireflies.” Forty of those participants were women, some wearing the newly reinvented “bicycle bloomer.” People had driven to Sayville in carriages and witnessed the parade there; afterward, ice cream saloons were flooded with business.

Thankfully, “wheeling” in 2021 matches the fervor that accompanied the sport in 1893 and again, in the late 1970s. Free beer or no beer, nothing will keep a dedicated cyclist off his or her “winged steed of steel.”

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Filed under: [Local History](#)

Tagged: [Al Holden](#), [bicycles](#), [bike race](#), [cyclists](#), [George Watson](#), [John Kemp Starley](#), [Montauk Wheelmen](#), [tbt](#), [throwback Thursday](#)

Throwback Thursday- Stranded yachtsmen overnight in Fort Pond Bay, 1875



What did Fort Pond Bay look like before a village was established at the harbor's center? Even the earliest photographs we have of Rough Riders arriving in ships show buildings and houses already established in the area. This Kodachrome slide of Fort Pond Bay looking north toward Culloden Point was taken by Harry Bruno in 1945. It offers an approximation of the raw, desolate scenery that a group of yachtsmen who sought shelter here encountered in 1875. Their description of a "bleak and barren" landscape was underscored by descriptions of Montauk's notorious wind, which seemed to increase in severity as their stay in Fort Pond Bay continued.

The *Mount Vernon Chronicle* ran three articles in July and August 1875 about this "band of 12 gentlemen, a jolly party [who] expect to have a jolly time" on a weeklong cruise sailing the Long Island Sound. With an eye and ear for detail, the author (probably Joseph Wood, the *Chronicle's* editor) wrote engagingly about the expedition, allowing readers to experience every accomplishment and setback employed by Mother Nature. It was smooth sailing until a storm raged into Gardiner's Bay. The crew fought for their lives, barely maneuvering the *Corinne* into the natural harbor on Montauk's north side.

“At three o’clock we entered Fort Pond Bay, and there heaved anchor. Shortly after anchoring the rain ceased, and the clouds broke, but the wind blew straight into our harbor, and as fiercely as ever.” The *Corinne* pitched and tossed wildly, forcing the decision to stay overnight. The shoreline was desolate, with no fishing lean-tos or shacks. However, a chance to explore on foot was taken by most of the 12. As they crawled out of their yacht they encountered their welcoming committee, the sheep. “It was amusing to see the old rams come forward as a corps of observation, the rest of the flock standing still, and intently staring at us.” Passing muster, the explorers were allowed to walk by Second House and soon arrived on the Atlantic shore.

After viewing the ocean in wonderment, they returned to the *Corinne* at sunset, where “dismay filled our breasts. The wind blew more fiercely than ever, and that too straight into our harbor.” The crew had a terrible time righting the *Corinne*. “The way in which our yacht pitched and tossed is too powerfully photographed on our mind ever to be effaced.” They fought to get the yawl off-shore, but the *Corinne* took on so much water that she had to be beached and turned over. Finally crawling into their bunks, this formerly “jolly crew” was rocked and pitched all night. Even worse, the next day upon departure the *Corinne* smashed into poles that had been set by early-morning fishermen, breaking her jib-stay.

In New London it was repaired, as were the crew’s spirits, buoyed high after an evening of singing and partying “in a harbor which is all life and animation.” By the end of the week, the bad memories of Fort Pond Bay had morphed into the group’s own version of a Greek odyssey. No longer were they “the 12 gentlemen.” Per Joseph Wood, they were now called “the 12 Argonauts.”

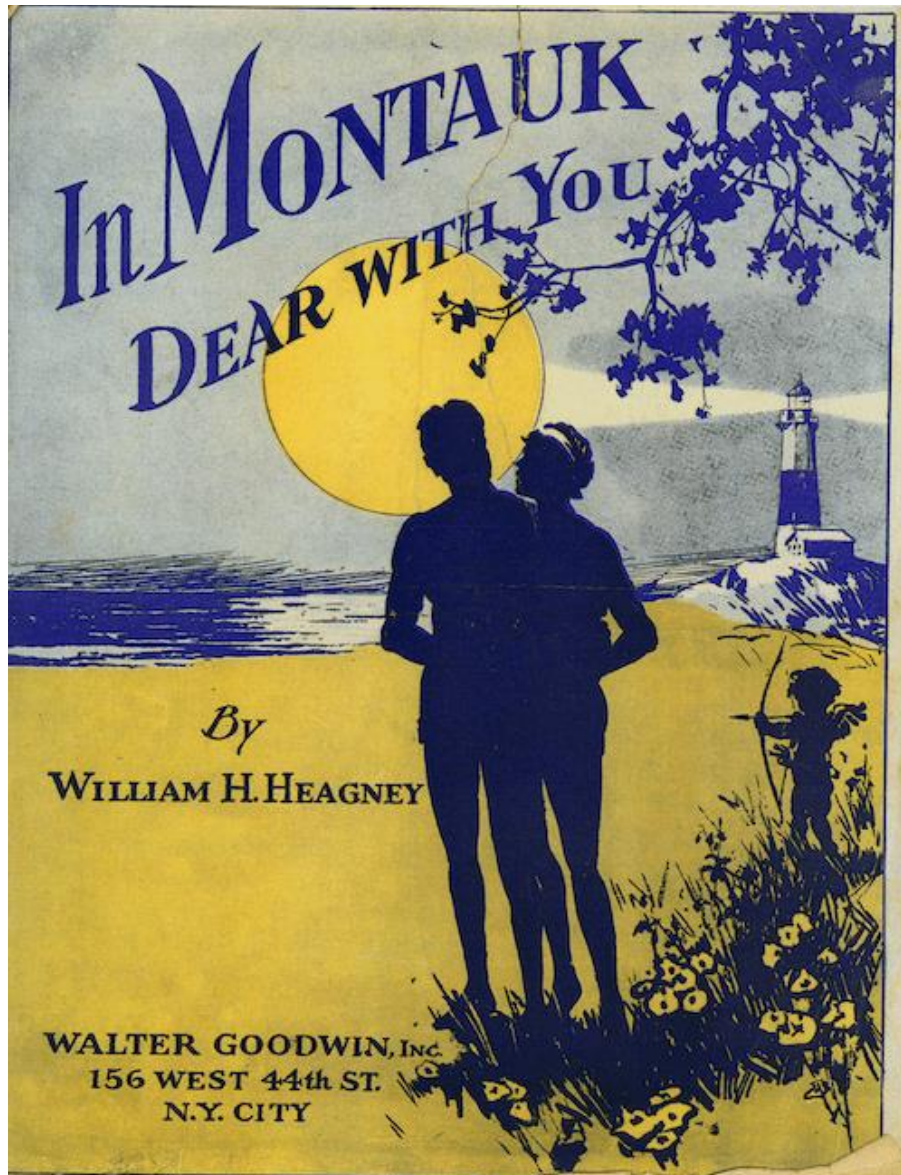
ORIGINALLY POSTED APRIL 08TH 2021

Filed under: [Local History](#)

Tagged: [Culloden Point](#), [Fort Pond Bay](#), [Harry Bruno](#), [Kodachrome](#), [Mount Vernon Chronicle](#), [sheep](#), [tbt](#), [throwback Thursday](#)

Throwback Thursday- In Montauk

Dear with You



Both Easter and Passover are being celebrated this weekend: Easter lands on Sunday, April 4th. Passover began on March 27th and will end on Saturday evening, April 3rd. In celebration of friends and family members arriving in Montauk to spend the holidays with “dear ones,” we are posting this sheet music song cover, “In Montauk Dear with You,” donated to the Montauk Library by Jo DeStefano.

This relic from the past was written in 1928 by William H. Headley (1882-1955), a composer who created music that also accompanied silent films. Silent movies depended on music; in fact, sometimes scores were even written for them. A live theater piano or organ could drown out the loud whirring noise of a motion picture camera, but perhaps more importantly, it guaranteed a heightened response from the audience to the emotions conveyed by the film, a medium that was running without sound.

The recent digitization of many of our oral histories included this song, done to the accompaniment of a piano played by Miloš Repický. His rendition is wonderfully evocative of the era in which the song was written. “In Montauk Dear with You” was sung on this particular recording by Lilah Gosman in the early 1990s, according to the label on the original tape cassette. It was performed in the Montauk Library. We include it here for your listening enjoyment.

Happy Easter and Happy Passover, everyone!

Originally posted April 1st 2021

For original post which includes an audio clip visit it on our [website, click or tap here](#):

<https://montauklibrary.org/?p=6156>

Filed under: [Local History](#)

Tagged: [Easter](#), [In Montauk Dear with You](#), [Jo DeStefano](#), [Lilah Gosman](#), [Passover](#), [silent films](#), [silent movies](#), [tbt](#), [throwback Thursday](#), [William H. Headley](#)

Throwback Thursday- Jazz at Gosman's Dock



We first learned about Toots Thielmans from Pat DeRosa, the 99-year-old Montauk jazz saxophonist who was recently inducted into the Long Island Music Hall of Fame. DeRosa recalled with delight the summer that Thielmans played jazz at Gosman's Dock. Thielmans had been catapulted to fame in 1969 after the release of *Midnight Cowboy*. The movie's melancholic theme music was distinguished by the haunting notes of Thielmans' harmonica.

John Gosman earned a degree in business administration from St. Bonaventure University near Buffalo, but the time he spent in Greenwich Village before returning to Montauk and the family restaurant reinforced his love of jazz and concerts. His mother, Mary Gosman, had this to say in a 1991 oral history interview conducted by Amagansett's History Project: "He always had in mind that he was gonna do something. Because John is a frustrated architect. He's got to have a project. He's got to be building up or tearing down." What John did was to build a Dockside Stage and launch his "Jazz at Gosman's Dock" series.

In 1973, the highlight of the first jazz concert of the season was Toots Thielmans. The reviewer, Ted Strongin, in his column "Previews and Postscripts" (EH Star, July 12, 1973), was critical of the sound system, which was filled with distortion. "However," Strongin continued, "all was not lost. The salt air setting on the deck, with the pleasing arrangement of boutiques and the nearby beer and soft drinks, the new bandstand, the boats gliding by, is so perfect for outdoor music that it was possible to get a kick out of the mere occasion."

This week's Throwback Thursday photograph was shot during that concert from July 3, 1973. "The idea of late Sunday afternoon outdoor jazz concerts on the dock, the brainchild of John Gosman, is a natural, as attested to by the large and enthusiastic audience..." Strongin concluded.

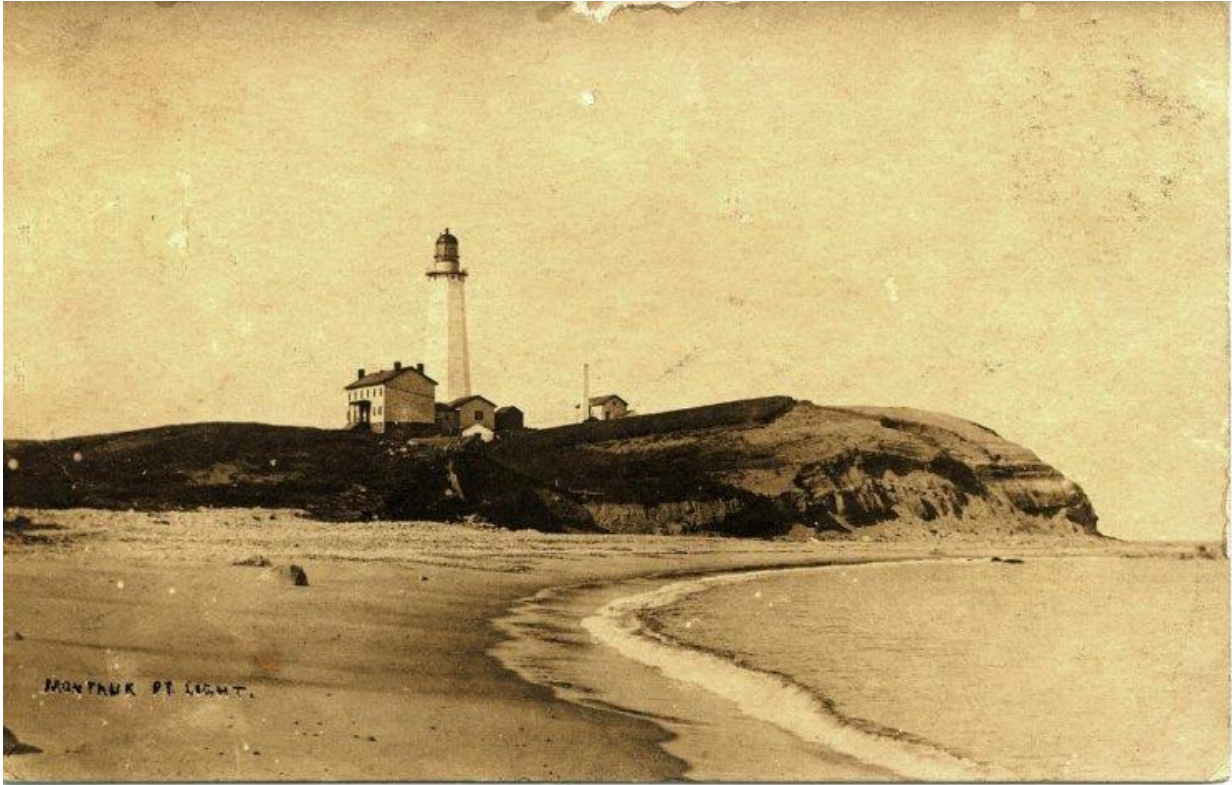
John Gosman died a few days ago at the age of 88. Toots Thielmans died at 94, making his departure in 2016. "Bluesette," an instantly recognizable, wistful harmonica classic performed by Thielmans, somehow seems a good musical accompaniment for bidding these two giants farewell.

ORIGINALLY POSTED MARCH 25TH 2021

Filed under: [Local History](#)

Tagged: [Gosman's Dock](#), [John Gosman](#), [Mary Gosman](#), [Pat DeRosa](#), [tbt](#), [throwback Thursday](#), [Toots Thielmans](#)

Throwback Thursday- The Lighthouse



The Montauk Lighthouse structure as we know it today received its daymark, or dark red horizontal band, in 1899. It was done to help sea captains distinguish which lighthouse they were looking at during daylight. A lighthouse at night, with its steady or blinking flash, dispersed location information to the sea traveler, but during the day it was often hard for a captain to determine which lighthouse he was viewing from his vessel sitting four or five miles out to sea.

This view of the lighthouse, therefore, dates from before 1899, and was donated to the Montauk Library through the Carleton Kelsey collection. Carlton Kelsey (1913-2005), East Hampton Town Historian and Director of the Amagansett Library, amassed thousands of postcards and historic photographs. A few years before he died, he distributed them to institutions according to subject matter, i.e., by event and particular location. The archives at the Montauk Library received a prized group of early images relating to Montauk history.

Reaching the Lighthouse and climbing its stairs has been on the bucket list for explorers and wanderers since the structure was completed in 1796. In New York State, a curiosity about Montauk Point and the Lighthouse has instilled wanderlust in travelers from the Catskills to Buffalo. It is a delightful surprise, therefore, to be able to read online 19th-century accounts of these journeys, accessible through the NYS Historic Newspapers site. Many of these articles from across the Empire State go back well over 150 years. For example, two teachers from Port Jervis, New York, wrote a 5-piece series for the *Evening Gazette* of Port Jervis in the summer of 1869. They were exploring the South Shore of Long Island, and reporting back to *Gazette* editors with accounts of their “summer gambol.”

After arriving in East Hampton, the teachers fell in love with its ancient charm, especially its windmills, which were grinding grain upon their arrival. The two, among a group of five on horseback, left for Montauk in the evening and arrived 24 hours later at the Lighthouse. “Montauk Point with its light house, of which I have heard, and read in school boy days, is now a full reality to me, and what geography has told me I now know by actual observation. Although a long ride and a hard ride, it is a most peculiar one and most interesting, and one which may well be endured, at least once in a lifetime.”

He continued: “We reached the Point, the very end of the Island, just as the lamp was lit in the lighthouse and, although wearied by the ride, we could not resist the opportunity of ascending the iron circular stairway of 137 steps – 150 feet above the ocean. It was well worth the effort, the lamp and its apparatus... it is the celebrated Fresnel light, the prisms so arranged that by the revolving prisms a flash is sent out two minutes in every direction.” The teacher was fascinated with the light and gave a detailed description of its operation in the September 2, 1869 issue of the *Evening Gazette*. He and his companions were impressed, as well, by the lighthouse keeper’s all-night vigil. When asked if his light ever went out, the keeper responded, “My light go out? My light go out! Never! Never!” While they slept soundly, the wind roaring in their ears, “the light was flashing out over dark waters, telling a true story to the mariner, the place of danger and the track of safety.”

In the morning, “with one more journey up the iron stairway of the lighthouse... we started homeward, arriving safely, ready to tell the wonderful things we had seen and heard, the practical thought of which was, by all means make the overland journey from East Hampton to Montauk.”

ORIGINALLY POSTED MARCH 18TH 2021

Filed under: [Local History](#)

Tagged: [Carleton Kelsey](#), [lighthouse](#), [Montauk Lighthouse](#), [Montauk Point](#), [tbt](#), [throwback Thursday](#)

Throwback Thursday- St. Patrick's Day Parade



For the second year in a row, St. Patrick's Day festivities in Montauk have been cancelled because of COVID. As we approach one of the most important days on the Montauk calendar, a photograph from the "Before Times" makes looking backwards a thoughtful journey.

Herb Herbert donated this picture of the St. Patrick's Day Parade from 1992, the year he was declared Montauk's 30th Grand Marshal. During the first official parade in 1963, it was Mike Egan who was honored as Grand Marshal. A top-hatted Egan strutting down Main Street appears in Al Holden's *Pictorial History of Montauk*, first published in 1976.

Al Holden's publications were fun to read. They arrived chock-a-block with information. Events and people from the past, as well as people in the present – individuals you might encounter at the post office or at the bank, five minutes later – made an appearance in Holden's books and pamphlets. His eight *Montauk Almanacs*, published in alternate years and already 30 to 40 years old, have become an excellent source for research on Montauk during the 1970s and 80s.

Herb Herbert and the Montauk St. Patrick's Day parade were the focus of Al Holden's last *Montauk Almanac*, No. VIII, from 1992. Holden was a huge fan of Herb's Market, and described its history as a butcher shop begun by George Sears in 1923. Its continued success was based on the efforts of owners Herb Herbert and his wife Chris, who had made a name for themselves in Montauk: "There isn't a morning every day of the week when you can't see a steady stream of workers walking out with their coffee and heros."

Herb Herbert was "completely taken by surprise when told he would be the 30th Grand Marshal for the Friends of Erin St. Patrick's Day Parade. [He] accepted this honor with the modesty he always displays. His remarks at the Grand Marshal's Luncheon held at Gurney's Inn were classical and portrayed the person he is... Once again, the Friends of Erin picked a winner!"

Happy St. Patrick's Day, everyone. We look forward to celebrating in 2022, masks off with no social distancing, just like parade-goers did in this photograph from 1992.

ORIGINALLY POSTED MARCH 11TH 2021

Filed under: [Local History](#)

Tagged: [Al Holden](#), [Chris Herbert](#), [Friends of Erin St. Patrick's Day Parade](#), [Herb Herbert](#), [Herb's Market](#), [Mike Egan](#), [parades](#), [Saint Patrick's Day](#), [st. patrick's day](#), [St. Patrick's Day parade](#), [tbt](#), [throwback Thursday](#)

Throwback Thursday- Women's History Month



Here's to Montauk Women! In celebration of Women's History Month, we recognize the hard work and contributions made by the women who have lived and worked in Montauk. A second installment of this history examining the legacy of Montaukett women will appear before the end of the month.

Montauk women drove ambulances during wartime, opened restaurants, got real estate licenses, ran motels, relentlessly pushed for quality education, and spearheaded a brand-new Library for Montauk. Countless women have put their stamp on businesses, schools, government, and the environment to shape the cultural landscape of our community.

This is a picture of Teresa Harrington Sarno, who worked at Gosman's for 50 years. Her sister Mary Harrington married Robert Gosman of Amagansett; the couple eventually established Gosman's, which became a Montauk institution. James Sarno was a boat captain who frequently took fishing parties out on the *Shel-lew*. This photograph was part of a collection of *Shel-lew* images donated to the Montauk Library by Teresa, who reverted to her maiden name Harrington after her husband died.

Comb the pages of the *East Hampton Star* for the last 100+ years and you will read the names and stories of women who stepped out, took risks, and pioneered new roles for their gender. An impressive number of women opened restaurants and motels in the 1940s and 50s, coinciding with the boom in Montauk tourism that fostered the resort industry.

Jeannette Bimson was granted a liquor license in 1949 to operate the Blue Marlin; on April 2, 1959, Mrs. Harry Wahlberg reported to the *Star* that she was in Montauk, preparing to open the Umbrella Inn for the season. And Audrey McMullan, proprietor of Aznac House, caught a 63-pound white marlin that was brought back to shore by Joe Miller's boat and deposited on the Town Dock (*EH Star*, 8.29.1946). No doubt Audrey drove to the Dock, placed the fish in her truck, and then returned to Aznac House, where she served her guests cocktails.

Some people become synonymous with an epoch, or with a place or event. A person's name can immediately evoke a different time, a former era, a specific slice of life. Teresa, a positive force of nature, died only a few weeks ago. An excellent obituary in the *EH Star* offers more details about her life. Other Montaukers whose obituaries are currently accessible on the *Star's* Internet site also defined their times: Rose Rutkowski, John Behan, and Eugene Beckwith, just to name a few. We salute them all. Or, as the Harrington Women would say, "Slainte!"

<https://www.easthamptonstar.com/obituaries>

ORIGINALLY POSTED MARCH 04TH 2021

Filed under: [Local History](#)

Tagged: [Audrey McMullan](#), [Aznac House](#), [Blue Marlin](#), [Eugene Beckwith](#), [Harrington](#), [James Sarno](#), [Jeannette Bimson](#), [Joe Miller](#), [John Behan](#), [John Gosman](#), [Mary Harrington](#), [Mrs. Harry Wahlberg](#), [Rose Rutkowski](#), [Shel-lew](#), [tbt](#), [Teresa Harrington Sarno](#), [throwback Thursday](#), [Umbrella Inn](#), [Women's History Month](#)

Throwback Thursday- St. Therese of Lisieux Church



A few reference questions directed to the archives recently have centered around religious practice in Montauk before the construction of the two main church buildings in the village: the Montauk Community Church (Presbyterian), dedicated in 1929, and St. Therese of Lisieux Church (Roman Catholic), which held its first public mass on August 31, 1931. Both were constructed on land donated by entrepreneur Carl Fisher. Before these churches were built, though, where did people go to observe their respective religions?

The Episcopalian faith predominated in Montauk in the early 1900s, perhaps because Miss Mary Benson, daughter of early Montauk landowner Arthur W. Benson, was such a strong supporter. Parishioners traveled to the tiny Hither Plain School for Sunday services. Then, in 1915, Miss Benson donated funds for the construction of the Silver Dolphin, located near the Depot in Fort Pond Bay Village where most parishioners lived. Attending services became much easier. The Silver Dolphin functioned like a community center as well as a church: it included a library (Montauk's first! Later called a "reading room"), a social center, and a playground. Dances, fairs, Christmas parties and Easter egg-rolling contests took place there. After a number of years, the Silver Dolphin was moved up near the Tower office building and taken over by the Fire Department. Eventually, it burned down.

The large contingent of French-Canadians in Montauk no doubt increased the demand for a Roman Catholic Church. In addition, the Montauk Manor, which was up and running by the late 1920s, entertained guests who wished to attend mass. Beginning in the mid-1920s, Catholic

mass was offered in the Montauk Theater Building, located on Main Street (where Naturally Good and White's Liquor Store sit now). By Labor Day, 1931, Montauk Catholics had their own church.

This postcard interior was photographed in the 1950s or 60s. Today, in 2021, St. Therese, like other churches, practices pandemic-reducing social distancing: only 50 percent of its 500-person church-seating maximum can be filled with communicants desiring to attend mass. Not as empty as this photographed interior, but not filled to capacity, either.

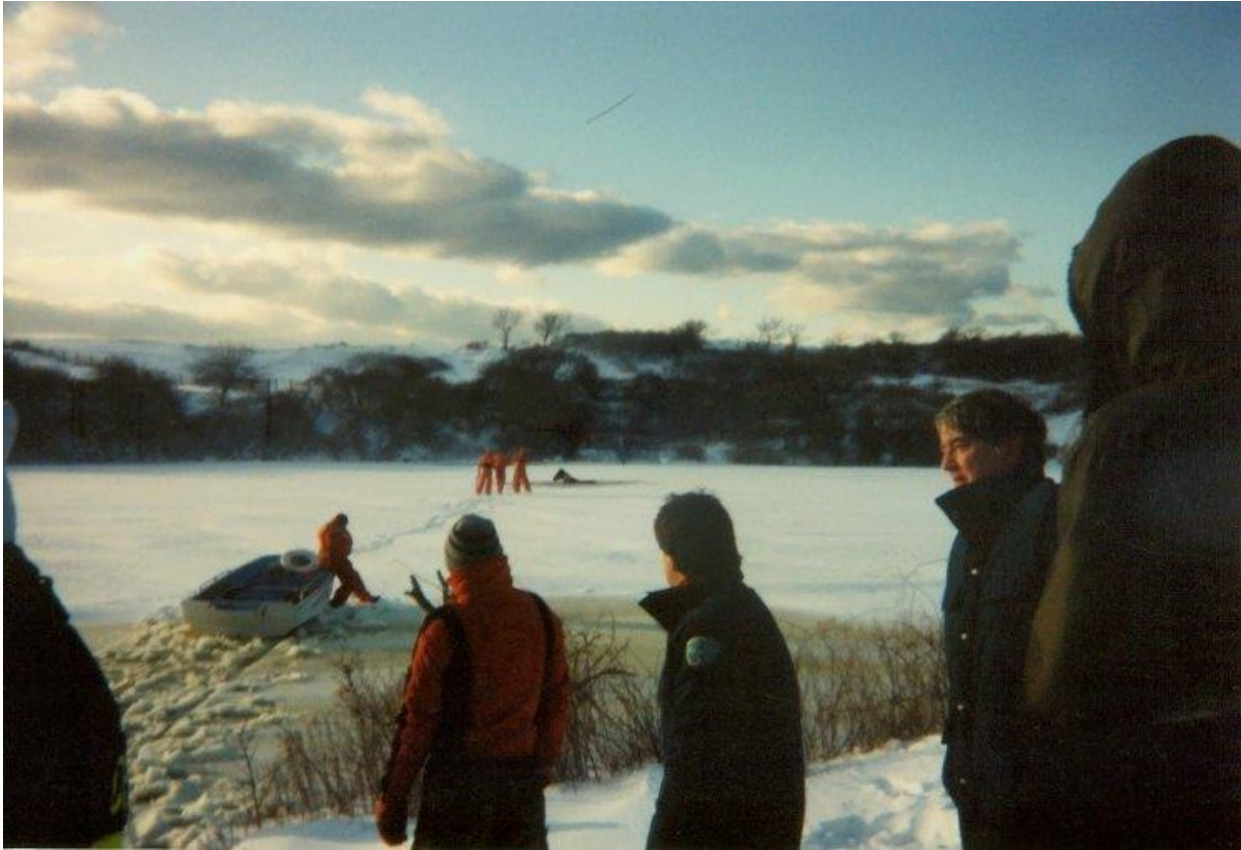
In the *Power of Myth*, published in 1988, author Joseph Campbell emphasized the importance of ritual in our public and private lives. Special events like marriages and funerals, baptisms and confirmations, and graduations and inductions are rituals that satisfy our deep social need for acknowledging change and transition. Churches offer the venue and script for these rituals, a way to try and make sense out of life, death – and pandemics.

ORIGINALLY POSTED FEBRUARY 25TH 2021

Filed under: [Local History](#)

Tagged: [Arthur W. Benson](#), [Carl Fisher](#), [Hither Plain](#), [Mary Benson](#), [Montauk Community Church](#), [Montauk Theater Building](#), [Silver Dolphin](#), [St. Therese of Lisieux Church](#), [tbt](#), [throwback Thursday](#)

Throwback Thursday- Horse Rescue



Herb Herbert donated this photograph of the Montauk Fire Department rescuing a horse trapped in the ice near Deep Hollow Ranch. Fireman Tom Greci reports that the rescue was successful, and that the horse survived after walking out onto the frozen surface of the lake and falling in.

Most Montaukers are pet-passionate and care deeply about the surrounding wildlife. In 2003, photographer Kathryn Abbe recorded an oral history with the Montauk Library. She described looking out the window of her home in the Montauk bluffs, observing a deer swimming in the ocean waves. Its nose was pointed in the air. The deer was fine, but a crowd had gathered around the ocean's edge, taking pictures. The deer, fearful of people, retreated. It would swim further, and try to come in. The people followed. The deer, retreating again, was becoming exhausted in the pounding surf.

Abbe's husband James and about 8 to 10 other strong swimmers swam out behind the deer, encircling the skittish animal like a human net, and slowly brought it to shore. Abbe's twin sister Frances kept the crowd with cameras at bay, telling them, "No, you can't come closer." A beach towel was placed under the deer, who collapsed on top of it, panting. Then, Kathryn said, "Several people dragged the beach towel into the beach grass and left it there. The deer lay there for a while and then got up and ran off into the underbrush. So that was a happy story."

Another happy story resulted from the Montauk Fire Department's icy heroics. As Montauker Dick White recalls, "only a few minutes after it was pulled from the ice, the horse walked off as if nothing happened. That was a great result."

ORIGINALLY POSTED FEBRUARY 18TH 2021

Filed under: [Local History](#)

Tagged: [Deep Hollow Ranch](#), [Herb Herbert](#), [Kathryn Abbe](#), [Montauk Fire Department](#), [tbt](#), [throwback Thursday](#), [Tom Grenci](#)

Throwback Thursday- Fashion Week



It's Fashion Week in New York! In honor of this twice-yearly event, now called American Collections Week, we're posting a photograph from the 1950s to show off Montauk's own version of ingenuity and high design.

We believe Bill's Inn is the venue where this annual Montauk Fire Department dinner was photographed. To provide entertainment at these dinners, a musical skit was devised every year by Vinnie Grimes, who also masterminded Montauk's Blessing of the Fleet and the Montauk Horse Shows. The idea was to dress up like women and sing popular songs whose lyrics had been altered. Piano accompaniment was provided by Doc Robin, Montauk's general practitioner. Volunteer fireman Joe Jaccarina played accordion.

We don't yet have an identity for the gentleman wearing the wig in the extreme left margin of this picture, but moving from his left, the line-up includes Vinnie Grimes, Craig Tuthill, Ed Ecker, Sr., Dick White, Sr., and Gil Keller. "The firemen's wives helped their husbands prepare for these performances by applying makeup and choosing the jewelry," says Dick White. "I remember my mother working on my father's chest." She was in charge of manipulating the brassiere until everything was lined up perfectly.

Of course, as the evening progressed, things could get a little out of hand. The lyrics might become racy. Then there was the annual throwing of the custard pies, baked by Vinnie Grimes' wife and topped by mountains of whipped cream. Pie plates went sailing through the air as the men sang, "When the moon hits your eye like a big pizza pie, that's ..." slam! "One year the fire department had to pay a large dry cleaning bill because the curtains were covered with custard and whip cream," Dick White remembers.

"One doesn't want fashion to look ridiculous, silly, or out of step with the times," says *Vogue* editor and fashion icon Anna Wintour, "but you do want designers that make you think, that make you look at fashion differently. That's how fashion changes. If it doesn't change, it's not looking forward." The annual fire department dinner was an opportunity to have some fun and show a creative side. We suspect Ms. Wintour would find something to inspire in the Montauk firemen's innovative attire. (awakenthegreatnesswithin.com/40-inspirational-anna-wintour-quotes-on-success).

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Throwback Thursday- The Card Room



Montauk lost cable television during the recent snowstorm. Before television, however, and long before cable, people played board games and cards to pass the time. In fact, an entire room at the Montauk Manor was dedicated to card-playing, with tables set up for guests and members of the community who booked bridge clubs and card tournaments at the hotel. Additionally, card-party fundraisers scheduled at the Manor were a way to bring money into organizations that depended on the generosity of the public. Even in the early years of World War II, card parties took place at this elegant hotel.

A professional photograph from 1943 shows the Card Room at the Montauk Manor. We don't know the month in which this photograph was taken, but by May 1943, everything had changed. The military would take over the Manor.

“The Manor has now joined that notable company of resort hotels serving our armed forces,” wrote Elliott F. Bishop, manager of operations at the Montauk Manor, in a letter that was published in the May 6, 1943 edition of the *East Hampton Star*. “You will, I know, share the pride I feel in our beloved Manor, with its fine accommodations, climate, and setting, as it is proving in this time of national stress to be of real usefulness to our country.” The Manor would be closed to vacationers during wartime.

Elliott Bishop left for another job in a Florida hotel, and military personnel moved in. Their subsequent departure in 1945 left no doubt that a major Manor facelift was needed. (The slightly worn tables in the Card Room support this makeover plan.) Bishop had promised, “When the war is over and peace returns to mankind, Montauk Manor with renewed sprit and determination to serve its guests better than ever before, will hope to welcome you again.” New management took that promise to heart. The Montauk Manor reopened its doors in 1946.

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Throwback Thursday: Anna Viola Olson



Algot Olson was a carpenter. He moved from Sweden with his family to Montauk in the 1920s, presumably to work for Carl Fisher. His wife was born Anna Johanssen (Americanized to Johanson). The Olson family had a strong presence in the community, and were stalwart members of the Montauk Community Church.

This beautifully printed baptismal record of Anna Viola Olson, who went by her middle name of Viola, testifies to her birth on February 3, 1927. She was baptized exactly two years later, on February 3, 1929. An elaborately printed piece with text in gold ink, this tiny church publication is decorated with lithographed cherubs holding garlands of roses. Adding aesthetic value to buildings and objects – even to baptismal programs – is a hallmark of this period in which Carl Fisher spared no expense to elevate the merely “middle ground” to elegant high-end.

The Olson family solidly represents the Scandinavian influx of immigrants into Montauk, although we normally associate the Swedes and Norwegians who came to this area with the fishing industry. The four Olson children, sons Bertil and Rune, and daughters Kerstin and Viola, appeared often in the *East Hampton Star*. Viola loved to perform in musicals and operas, frequently singing the lead. Her sister Kerstin was the seamstress, getting credit from various costume departments. Both girls were involved in the Montauk USO Junior Hostesses during World War II.

While still teenagers, the brothers were sent to fight in World War II. It was a shock when Bertil, a gunner in the Air Force, was shot down over Germany. On October 28, 1943, his handsome MIA photo appeared on the front page of the *Star*, directly above a caption bearing the tragic news of his disappearance.

“Life goes on, I forget just why...” poet Edna St. Vincent Millay trenchantly observed. With the grim years of the war behind them, Rune, Kerstin, and Viola Olson did go on, and with gusto. They got married and gave their parents grandchildren. They became involved with their communities, and pursued hobbies and passions. In fact, Viola was a terrific bowler. On March 29, 1973, the *Star* reported that Viola had saved the day with a high score of 180/453, enabling “a shut-out win over the third-place Four Roses” in the Hampton’s Ladies League bowling teams. Viola appeared again in 2003, in the September 25th edition, hale and healthy in a high school reunion color photograph that included some of her 1946 East Hampton High School classmates. Smiling and rosy-cheeked, she was 75 years old, an older version of the cherubs on her baptismal certificate. “Count the roses, not the thorns,” Canadian philosopher Matshona Dhliwayo has said. Agreed.

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Throwback Thursday- Eel Harvest



That's fisherman Harry Clemenz spearing eels off of Star Island. The year is 1979 and the month is February. During the 1970s, the winters were still cold enough to freeze the lakes and ponds around Montauk.

In warmer months, fishermen dredged for eel, or set eel traps and pots to catch their quarry. Fishermen understood the seasonal behavior of these snakelike fish. Traps were set on the mud in mid-March when eels rose from their protective homes after a long winter. In the fall, the traps did their job as eels returned to the mud. Once the waters froze, however, the only way an eel could be caught was through a hole cut in the ice.

On February 23, 1978, fisherman Thomas Lester was interviewed by Susan Pollack of the *East Hampton Star*. A photograph of Lester hacking away at the ice with an axe accompanied Pollack's description of this arduous work: "come the hard winter, he spears through the ice for eels." Lester explained that "you usually get only ten or 20 pounds a day that way. On a rare day you can get 100 pounds. With dredging, by contrast, if you hit it right, you can get up to 500 pounds a day."

Thomas Lester "chipped away at the snow-covered ice, letting the axe rise and fall until he had carved out a hole a foot in diameter and a foot deep. The work was exhausting; four hours of it was about all anybody could stand, he told Pollack. "Mr. Lester's face and ears were reddened from the work and cold, and the curly red hair that stuck out from beneath his cap appeared bathed in sweat." He stood, "looking out over the ice after cutting nearly a dozen holes that afternoon to harvest only about five or six pounds of eel." Lester didn't realize it then, and neither did Harry Clemenz, but the heyday of eel harvesting on the East End was coming to a close. Not even ten years later, algae would greatly reduce the numbers of eel in Three Mile Harbor.

Eel was selling for about \$1.00 a pound in 1978, most of it in demand overseas. Lester sold "skun" eels (skinned) for \$2.00 a pound, as skinning reduced the weight of an eel by a third. Lester's skun eels were bought by a very appreciative local audience, although reactions to eating eel are never neutral. Many people recoil from the thought of these squirmy wrigglers, believing that "only an eel can like another eel." Shark hunter Frank Mundus, on the other hand, was a huge fan of fried and smoked eel. Beauty, as usual, will forever be in the eye — or in the taste buds — of the beholder.

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Throwback Thursday- 1950s Businesses



The Montauk Library's archival collection includes stellar examples of aerial photography. This overview from the Al Holden Collection is undated, but if we research the motels and businesses that appear in the picture it seems certain it was photographed in the 1950s.

In fact, this aerial view beautifully documents the early years of Montauk's booming resort industry. The Sea Breeze Motel is easy to spot. Others surrounding it take a little more discernment, but there in front of Marshall and Sons (known in 1952 as Marshall Prado's Esso Gas Station), we can make out the pre-Rolling Stones-era Montauk Memory Motel.

At that time, Montauk Memory's "Sea Glamor Lounge" had a decidedly different vibe. When Elizabeth Ann Pfund got married to Donald Roys in 1954, the April 8th edition of the *East Hampton Star* reported, "The wedding supper was served for the family and friends by the groom's mother at her Montauk Memory Motel." In the 1960s owner Sally Klein brought Teddy Roland in to play the piano during cocktail hour. By 1966, the owner / manager team of Sara and Esther was established. It was these two who would have greeted Mick Jagger and Keith Richards in the Memory Cocktail Lounge and bar.

The Yankee Trader sold antique furniture, glassware, “bric a brac, and objets d’art.” A large *Star* ad taken out on August 7, 1952 invited readers to browse around this store located in “the Heart of Montauk” on South Elmwood Ave. Open from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., these hours of operation were justified by the record numbers of visitors who poured into Montauk during the 1950s and 60s, bringing the laid-back, sleepy Village into the modern era.

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Throwback Thursday- Lathrop Brown Windmill House Postcard



Hand-coloring was often employed on vintage postcards, done by the manufacturer during production. Like most early postcards, this particular view was originally transferred from a B & W photograph. However, since postcard buyers would almost always purchase the brighter image, as early as 1902 collotype-printed postcards in B & W would gain a painterly flourish. In this example, the application of the inks is poor. The resolution is off-kilter. Yet, the colors are still luminescent; the image speaks volumes about lazy summer days spent beachcombing rocks and shells.

A fascination with the Montauk Lighthouse was the impetus for Bob Lamparter's interest in collecting postcards. Most of the 173 scanned views in this collection were donated to the archives by his daughter Keri. In this postcard the Montauk Lighthouse is out of view but in fact, is located directly above the figures below. The Lathrop Brown Windmill House is in the distance.

From the Arcadia book, *Images of America: Montauk*, page 71, we learn that Congressman Lathrop Brown (1883-1959) bought the windmill that had been functioning as the Wainscott Library from 1912 to 1922 and moved it to his property on the cliffs near Montauk Point. He hired architects to incorporate the windmill into a summer cottage that would also use the unique structure as a design inspiration. It stood on the cliffs until 1942, when the army removed it as a wartime precaution.

Lighthouse Keeper Thomas Buckridge (keeper from 1930 to 1943) had a daughter, Margaret Buckridge Bock. She provided an amusing anecdote about the family's summer neighbors, the Lathrop Browns, in a piece she wrote as a preface to the Keeper's Log maintained by her father: "Our other summer neighbors, the Lathrop Browns, lived in the windmill cottage, which was moved to make way for Camp Hero. Mr. Brown was a classmate of President Franklin Roosevelt. Every summer, the Browns entertained disabled war veterans for two weeks. We used to visit at the windmill occasionally. I remember one time that my father had a hard time to find a chair to sit on. Several times as he went to sit down, Mr. Brown said, 'Not that one, Tom. That's a fragile antique.'"

Congressman Brown donated the windmill to the Georgica Association. In 1978, it was entered in the National Historic Register. Margaret Buckridge Bock turned 100 years old in September 2019. A resident of Connecticut living in the old family homestead, her inquiring and history-loving mind was still going strong in October 2019, when she was interviewed by *27East*. Bock's research has benefited several historical societies in Connecticut, as well as the Montauk Historical Society. In fact, for more than 80 years she has maintained a beautiful relationship with the Lighthouse staff. She left in 1938 to pursue a degree in nursing, but she never forgot her beloved Montauk home.

<https://www.27east.com/east-hampton-press/centenarian-recalls-living-at-the-montauk-lighthouse-as-a-girl-1544255/>

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