

## Southampton Society (and The Blue Book) Revealed in Photographs

May 10, 2014  
by Pat Rogers

“The Blue Book”, as it’s known in the Hamptons, is shrouded in mystery for all except a chosen few. Who compiles the names of those included? Who publishes the long-established social registry? And, for some, how do I get included? Even locating the blue covered book, issued annually, seems to be insider information.

While none of these questions will be answered, the curtain gets pulled back a bit in a photography show opening at the Southampton Historical Museum. “Southampton Blue Book, 1930 to 1960: Photographs by Bert Morgan” opens May 10 and features historic photographs of some Blue Book members, their Southampton playgrounds and their activities captured by the entrenched society photographer. The exhibition continues through Oct. 18, 2014.



Jacqueline Bouvier Leading a Pony, August 1934, Southampton  
Riding & Hunt Club by Bert Morgan.

Bert Morgan (1904-1986) began his career syndicating photographs for the *Chicago Tribune* and the *New York Daily News*, according to [The Bert Morgan Archive](#). By 1930, he became a prominent high society photographer with photographs published in *The Social Spectator*, *Vogue*, *Vanity Fair* and *Town and Country*.

Morgan covered the “Social Set” from the 1930’s through the 1980’s in places including New York City, Palm Beach, Southampton, Newport, Saratoga, Key West, Nassau, Jamaica and other locales, according to the [website](#).

The black and white images that make up exhibition are courtesy of Patrick Montgomery and The Bert Morgan Archives. They represent a sample from the over 5,000 photographs Morgan made featuring Southampton’s rich and famous at their exclusive clubs or as guests at private parties, weddings and galas.

Photographs of the young Jacqueline (Bouvier) Kennedy competing in a local horse show in the show were selected from the more than 500 photographs Morgan took of Jacqueline Kennedy and her family, according to the museum. Also appearing in the exhibition are images of Jackie Cooper, Henry Ford II and others.



Jacqueline Bouvier Jumping, July 29, 1939 at the Southampton Riding & Hunt Club by Bert Morgan.

Morgan's career spanned over 50 years and established him as "the dean of society photographers," according to the exhibition release. Morgan spent many of those weekends photographing Southampton's wealthy summer residents.

Born in 1904, Morgan came to America with his British parents when he was seven. After starting his career with a \$7 camera bought in a pawn shop, he eventually struck out on his own in 1930 as a freelance photographer, according to the museum.



Henry Ford II wedding (to Southampton Socialite Anne McDonnell Ford), July 13, 1940 by Bert Morgan

According to the museum, Morgan once told an interviewer that he had worked his way into the social field by using common sense. "I got to know the Southampton group, the Newport group, the group that went every day to the races, the group that regularly went to Jamaica and Bermuda. Shortly, no matter where I went, I found plenty of people I knew I could make pictures of."

Morgan also said that in 50-plus years, he had followed society through three phases: the Four Hundred; Café Society, "which haunted the Stork Club and El Morocco; and the Jet Set, according to the Southampton Historical Museum, according to the museum.



Mrs. Winston Guest with Dog, Southampton Bathing Corporation, ca 1953 by Bert Morgan

Morgan's success in opening doors to high society was attributed to his ability to impress his subjects with his gentle professionalism and discretion, according to exhibition information. Trust was gained by never submitting photos for publication that portrayed his subjects in an unkind way, the museum explained. Besides this, people were charmed by his geniality and Morgan was invited him to parties and people were happy to oblige when he asked them to pause for a moment or two on their way to the beach, according to the museum.



Diana Vreeland posing outside of the Southampton Bathing Corporation, ca. 1953 by Bert Morgan

Ticket-holders for the museum's "Insiders View of Southampton Homes" fundraiser will be guests at a special preview of "Southampton Blue Book, 1930 to 1960: Photographs by Bert Morgan" on Saturday, May 31, from 4:30 to 6 p.m. The public is invited to an opening reception at the museum on Saturday, June 7, from 4 to 6 p.m.

**BASIC FACTS: "Southampton Blue Book, 1930 to 1960: Photographs by Bert Morgan"** opens May 10 and continues through Oct. 18, 2014 at the Southampton Historical Museums and Research Center's Rogers Mansion, 17 Meeting House Lane in Southampton, NY 11968.

The Mansion is open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information please call (631) 283-2494 or visit [www.southamptonhistoricalmuseum.org](http://www.southamptonhistoricalmuseum.org).

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The Bert Morgan Archive: [www.morganarchive.com](http://www.morganarchive.com).