



# Historically Speaking

With Eastchester Historian  
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## THE HORSE AND THE CHICKEN: 1890 - 1912

### FIRST IN A SERIES OF ARTICLES ON THE SPORTING LEGACY OF THE TOWN

A century ago, the Town of Eastchester was very different from what it is today. By 1910 the villages of Bronxville and Tuckahoe had been formed. According to the census of that year only a little over 800 people lived in the small neighborhoods, estates, and farms of the town outside of the two villages. On the other hand, the population of both the villages of Tuckahoe and Bronxville was equally divided between almost between 6,000 men, women and children.

Toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the residents of Bronxville joined other upper middle class people in Westchester like Scarsdale, New Rochelle, Rye, Mount Vernon and Pelham (among others) to develop the first true railway suburbs in America. People moved their dwellings away from New York City to escape the pollution, crime, overcrowding, poor sanitation, and a myriad of other social problems to enjoy the bucolic charm of what

later would be called suburban life. Within a decade the population of the village increased by almost tenfold.

The Village of Tuckahoe was much different. The people of Tuckahoe consisted mainly of employees at the Hodgman Rubber plant, the Tuckahoe quarries, independent contractors, small businessmen running businesses in the village, and even a small segment of people who worked at the homes of their richer neighbors in Bronxville.

In the late 1800s, what, besides boxing, was the most popular spectator sport? Harness racing was the sport favored by well-off men who wanted to test their favorite horses against their rivals. And the town had its own racetrack for trotters, Allendale. The racecourse itself was just about where Tuckahoe High School is now. The Allendale Course was located on an estate called Fairview, today known as Bronxville Manor. The ma-



jestic, original estate house built in the 1850s still stands on the corner of Ridge and Rose. Bob Creamer, former senior editor of *Sports Illustrated* and Tuckahoe Village Historian describes what racing was like:

“In the late 1800s on spring and summer Sundays, all the country dirt roads in southern Westchester seemed to lead to the Allendale Trotting Course in Eastchester...the Allendale track was surrounded by a stone wall. On Sundays families took baskets of food with them to the races and sat by the stone wall and had a picnic as they enjoyed the fun.”

More affluent horse people could be found hunting foxes or shooting pheasant on the Iselin Estate that stretched from Webster Avenue in New Rochelle, through Twin Lakes, now a park maintained by Westchester County.

But some of the less affluent had a more

savage way of being entertained. Just about every home had a chicken coop in the back of their yard. One pen was for hens to lay eggs, another was for roosters for dinner, and there was a third pen that was different and more sinister than the others. In this pen was a big aggressive bird, angry and nervous, that would pace around its cage. This bird did not like its home or anything about it. It was never allowed to go near the hens.

On Saturday nights people came to the saloons at Waverly Square and watch the primitive and illegal sport of cockfighting. In the saloon was a dome-like cage into which the two birds would be placed - only one would emerge. The fight must have been a gory thing, not fit to write about. Also on these night bare-knuckled boxing matches took place, with wages being placed on men as they had been placed on birds.