

Eastchester's Identity Crisis: 1929

By

Richard Forliano

Eastchester Town Historian

Today the town of Eastchester outside of the villages of Bronxville and Tuckahoe has its own identity with a high school, separate government functions, post office, and its name all maps of the area. But in 1927 government offices, the post office, the library, the high school, and even the newspaper were all identified with the village of Tuckahoe. Even the name of Eastchester did not appear on maps of the area. The north east corner of the town was referred to as upper Tuckahoe.

Up until 1929 Waverly located in Tuckahoe was the high school for the village of Tuckahoe and the children in the Eastchester school district today. Children in the public schools attended K-8 schools in the north end of the town referred to as Upper Tuckahoe and children in the village attended the Main Street School (now Tuckahoe Village Hall). The government for the town was located at village hall in Tuckahoe. Today's weekly newspaper, the Eastchester Record, was known as the Tuckahoe Record.

What most people do not realize is that in 1920 the town outside of Eastchester consisted of an affluent group of scattered neighborhood including four major golf courses, farm and forest land. Houses had been built along Highland and Tuckahoe Avenues, Orchard Street, Mill Road, and Old Wilmot Road dating before the Civil War. Houses in Chester Heights in the south end of the town had been built at the turn of the century with the completion of the turn of the now defunct Boston and Westchester Railroad starting in 1912. At the north end of the town summer bungalows along with beautiful turn of the century homes had been built for people using the New York and Harlem River line stopping in Scarsdale.

The working class neighborhood of Tuckahoe had the most people, followed by Bronxville, and the town outside of the two villages was the smallest. By 1930 the town outside of Eastchester always the largest in size would also have the most people. By 1930 the population of Eastchester due to the completion of the Bronx and Hutchinson River of Eastchester had almost tripled to 7654.

The nineteen twenties witnessed a major real estate boom throughout the town. New housing developments created neighborhoods like Green Knowles, California Ridge, Bronxville Manor, and Parkway Circle among others. Older neighborhoods throughout the town outside witnessed new construction. The populations of Tuckahoe and Bronxville had also increased dramatically but due to a lack of available real estate, not at the same pace as Eastchester. In 1930 Tuckahoe once the largest of the three communities had 6203 and Bronxville had 6256. The cornerstone to Eastchester High School was laid in 1927. The town outside of Eastchester had become a group of separate neighborhoods with government offices still down in Tuckahoe.

The village of Bronxville was an entity unto itself. Bronxville, an enclave of the rich and famous, was only 39 years old, having been founded by William Van Duzer Lawrence as an elegant

artists' colony aimed at attracting established and successful creative types. The population of the village was white, protestant, and Anglo-Saxon. Twenty one years before, well meaning women had set up the Relief Association of Eastchester and their concern for people not as fortunate as themselves continued in their support of the Eastchester Neighborhood Association. In 1924 the present Bronxville School was built.

The village of Tuckahoe once the center of the community during the nineteenth century was beginning to experience serious challenges. In 1925 the Hodgman Rubber Company, the major employer in the town , closed its doors. At one time over 1700 workers had been employed in the plant. The Tuckahoe marble quarries had been worked out a fire destroyed the last working quarry in 1930. Despite these problems the cornerstone for a one million dollar high school for Tuckahoe was built erected in 1929.

Tensions existed between the three communities. Eastchester was the more affluent appendage of Tuckahoe. Serious socio-economic and later racial tensions existed between the Tuckahoe and Eastchester. Bronxville had developed its own separate identity.