

THE RETURN OF 'HISTORICALLY SPEAKING'

The importance of the local history of the Town of Eastchester, that also includes the villages of Bronxville and Tuckahoe, is that it highlights important aspects about who we are, what we must preserve, and most importantly, what makes us unique. For that specific reason, I began writing a series of articles for the Town Report on the long and fascinating history of the Eastchester community in 2008. Four years and more than 90 articles later, I decided to take a sabbatical from the series titled "Historically Speaking." Why?

I stated in my last article in late August 2011 the reason for the leave: "The Town of Eastchester, including the villages of Tuckahoe and Bronxville, starting in 2014 will be celebrating its 350th anniversary. There are...unanswered questions that need to be explored so that the community will have a clearer vision of our unique past." More time was needed to do more research, look at different perspectives, and collaborate with other historians and people knowledgeable about our special heritage. The validity of sources had to be checked, census records analyzed, new insights discovered and a variety of activities planned.

In 2011, I did not know that the sabbatical would last more than four years. During that time, I had the wondrous experience of working with Bronxville historian Eloise Morgan and an accomplished group of volunteers—teachers, lawyers, published authors, a professional genealogist and a retired policeman—to produce the first full-length book on the history of the Town of Eastchester titled "Out of the Wilderness: The Emergence of Eastchester, Tuckahoe, and Bronxville: 1664-2014." The book, brilliantly edited by Eloise, shows how life in a land almost uninhabited by other Europeans evolved into the suburban world of Eastchester and its two villages.

The book "Out of the Wilderness" grew to 340 pages with more than 300 images including illustrations, maps and charts. Integrating the history of Tuckahoe and Bronxville with that of the town was a priority. New insights into the bonds that link our communities together were uncovered, along with the qualities that make Eastchester, Tuckahoe and Bronxville unique. Unfortunately, space prohibited us from covering the totality of our community's past. There is still much more to be told. And that is the reason why the column "Historically Speaking" is being revived.

The mission of this column will be to reveal more about our collective identity. An earnest effort will be made to continue unearthing information from a variety of sources. Articles will be written based on the most up-to-date research. Hopefully, as time passes, new information will be added to the narrative connecting the people, places and happenings that made the town and the two villages what they are today.

There are other important reasons for reviving the column. People who grew up in the town and live elsewhere, families who have never left the town, and new arrivals want to continue to know more about the communities' cultural heritage. Thanks to the efforts of so many people in celebrating the 350th anniversary of the Town of Eastchester in 2014, there has been a revival of appreciation for our local history. It is imperative that we continue to work together to highlight our shared traditions and qualities that make us unique.

Fortunately the Town of Eastchester and the villages of Bronxville and Tuckahoe are blessed with a number of organizations involved in gathering information and informing the public about fascinating aspects of our storied past. These organizations are the Eastchester Historical Society, the Bronxville Conservancy, the Tuckahoe History Committee and St. Paul's National Historic Site. In addition, these historical agencies are

supported by a number of cultural, service and civic groups whose participation was instrumental to the success of the 350th celebration last year.

Copies of "Out of the Wilderness: The Emergence of Eastchester, Tuckahoe and Bronxville, 1664-2014" may be purchased at Womrath Bookshop at 76 Pondfield Road in Bronxville and in the Eastchester Town Clerk's office located at 40 Mill Road.

Please contact us at historian@eastchesterhistoricalsociety.org about any comments or questions you might have about the content of our columns. Type your paragraph here.