

## Why We Should Be Cautiously Thankful In 2017

By

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The Eastchester historical community in this New Year have much to be thankful for. Five years ago planning began for the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the town of Eastchester in 2014. Over that time we have learned more about the rich historical heritage of the community than in the preceding 370. Let us not forget that Anne Hutchinson in 1642 became our first resident 22 years before the founding of the town. Few communities in the United States can attest to so rich a history. In many ways the birth of the American nation took place in Westchester County.

Happily Eastchester and its two villages has been able to avoid a growing national trend that has even reached some Westchester communities to dismantle or sell historic sites along with consolidating collections that are not available to the general public. In 2016 the Scarsdale Historical Society was forced to sell one of its historic buildings on its grounds, the Cudner-Hyatt house.

The Eastchester Historical Society still maintains two building, a one-room school house that also serves as a museum and a research library and presentation center. Eastchester is blessed with not one but six historic agencies that document different aspects of our historic heritage. Collectively these organizations run excellent historical programs, maintain websites filled with photographs, illustrations, maps, power point slide presentations, U Tube videos, and interesting articles about our local history.

1. Eastchester Historical Society <http://www.eastchesterhistoricalsociety.org/>,
2. Saint Paul's National Historic Site <https://www.nps.gov/sapa/index.htm>,
3. The Bronxville Conservancy, <http://bronxvillehistoricalconservancy.org/>
4. The Tuckahoe History Committee, <http://www.tuckahoe.com/history-committee/pages/tuckahoes-history-photos>
5. The Italian Cultural Center at the Generoso Pope Foundation <http://wiccny.org/>
6. The Anne Hutchinson Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution <http://news.hrvh.org/ritage>

Taking into consideration the busy, hectic life of the twentieth century there is a concerted effort by these historical agencies to reach out in new ways to the larger community. One of the most exciting of initiatives, spearheaded by the Bronxville Village Historian Eloise Morgan, has been the digitization of ten local newspapers dating from the beginning of the twentieth into the twenty-first century. This massive project was financed by the profits from the sale of the first length book on Eastchester history, *Out of the Wilderness*, and a generous grant from the Bronxville Conservancy. <http://news.hrvh.org/>

Another national trend that important steps are being taken to avoid is moving away from the teaching of local history in the schools to focus on standardized testing. The three school districts of Eastchester, Bronxville, and Tuckahoe are working at embedding local history into the curriculum of the respective

school districts. Special emphasis will be placed on both the bonds that tie the three communities together and those qualities that make the town and its two villages unique.

But while the Eastchester historical community have much to be thankful for, we face serious challenges. If these challenges are not met, the recent gains that have been made will be lost. The gains in the last few years come at a price in both time and money. The maintenance of buildings, utilizing technology, developing and running websites, putting on interesting programs, training staff and teachers, and communicating with the public are constant problems that are require time and money.

All of our historic agencies need your help. It would be great if individuals would add some New Year's resolutions. Become a member of at least one of the historical societies in town. Come to the excellent programs that elucidate our rich history. Volunteer to help the organization that you decide to join.

Please contact us at [historian@eastchesterhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:historian@eastchesterhistoricalsociety.org) about any comments or questions you might have about this column. Any questions about sources of information will be answered.