# HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY SUTTON MANOR

New Rochelle, Westchester County, New York









# **Final Report & Inventory Forms**

**September 28, 2009** 

Prepared by

**Larson Fisher Associates** 

PO Box 1394 Woodstock, NY 845-679-5054 www.larsonfisher.com

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Barbara Davis, historian and Outreach Coordinator at the New Rochelle Public Library deserves special recognition for her assistance, as well as other members of the library's reference staff. LFA also acknowledges the tedious and time-consuming microfilm research done by Richard Moody, who has combed the historic New Rochelle newspapers for information about the architects and builders that have—his research provided items and many clues to finding additional information about them contained in this report.

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Photographs of Sutton Manor properties included on the inventory forms and in this report were taken by Larson Fisher Associates unless otherwise attributed.

# HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY OF SUTTON MANOR

New Rochelle - Westchester County - New York

# FINAL REPORT

September 28, 2009

#### BACKGROUND

The City of New Rochelle issued a request for proposals for an "Intensive Level Survey of Historic Properties in the Sutton Manor Neighborhood" on or about October 8, 2008. The proposal submitted by Larson Fisher Associates (LFA) was accepted on October 28 and a contract was executed on January 5, 2009.

An initial neighborhood meeting to inform the Sutton Manor residents of about the survey project was held the evening of December 9, 2008 by the New Rochelle Historic Landmarks and Preservation Board (HLPB). During this meeting Jill Fisher of LFA explained the basic process of documenting the neighborhood and the products that would result. Residents had a chance to ask questions, which Fisher and the HLPB members and staff answered. A Phase I progress report was submitted on March 5, 2009, which included a sample Inventory Form and a list of properties to be surveyed. Phase II products consisted of providing an analysis of the architectural and historic significance of Sutton Manor along with recommendations as to the area's eligibility for official designation as a historic district—which affirmed that the area was eligible for both a local historic district and as a National Register Historic District. An overview of the survey findings was given in a public presentation on June 9, 2009, to the HLPB and property owners within the Sutton Manor survey area. Draft inventory forms were completed in June and July, which comprised Phase III. Submission of this report together with an annotated building list, and fifty finalized inventory forms (three archival copies of each and electronic copies on CD) represent Phase IV and the completion of the survey project. A special PowerPoint presentation of the completed survey findings was made to the Sutton Manor Association at its boathouse facility on September 13, 2009. A formal presentation by LFA to the New Rochelle City Council will be made in the fall of 2009 at the HLPB's request.

#### SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The goal of the intensive level survey of Sutton Manor was to compile information about properties within the development that pertains to its history, design characteristics, and existing conditions (historic integrity). This survey followed the methodology established by the National Park Service as administered by the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Historic maps and recorded plans were relied upon to show the course of development of the Sutton Manor neighborhood. Documentation involved photographing each property digitally (to SHPO standards); researching the events and individuals involved in creating the subdivision, examining the ownership history of each house, researching the background of those architects and builders known to be responsible for designs of house as well as the residents of Sutton Manor. All of the gathered information is conveyed in a set of fifty NYS Building

Inventory Forms, one for each property within the study area plus one for the Sutton Manor amenities.

The houses and structures in Sutton Manor were photographed on several occasions—principally in December 2008 at the outset of the survey project, with some follow-up photography in May and August of 2009. The City of New Rochelle Assessor's records provided the primary information on the ownership history of each lot in Sutton Manor. Individual deeds were referenced to clarify ownership information and covenants included as necessary. Directories for New Rochelle, available at the New Rochelle Public Library, were thoroughly referenced to confirm residency information for both owners and renters. With this information in hand, research into the people who resided in Sutton Manor over the years was undertaken. Historic newspapers were referenced as were the biography files at the public library, and online resources. The bibliography at the end of this report provides a complete listing of the sources utilized for this research.

#### **FINDINGS**

An Overview of the Historic Resources of Sutton Manor

Sutton Manor contains a total of 49 dwellings, 46 of which would be considered contributing to a historic district. In addition there are several amenities that constitute historic features within the development (a boathouse, four stone entrance piers, and Echo Park) and contribute to the historic character of the neighborhood. Together all these resources form a unified whole physically set apart from the surrounding urban environment. Attachment A provides a map of the survey area, along with the original Sutton Manor Plan and subsequent official amendments upon which the survey boundary was based. These maps and plans define the lots original to the subdivision and those which should be considered for inclusion in a historic district.

Attachment B is print-out of an annotated list of properties in the Sutton Manor survey. As noted above, a total of 50 forms were produced to document all the resources within the surveyed area. Forty-nine of the forms document 80 residential structures, both primary and accessory. The fiftieth form documents six shared amenities that are owned by the Sutton Manor Association or are within public rights-of way. Sutton Manor houses were categorized as follows:

<u>(</u>	Contributing Residential Buildings	Non-contributing Residential Buildings
Primary	46	3
Accesso	ry: 30	1

The architectural styles of the 46 houses were categorized as follows:

		_	
Colonial Revival	14	Art Moderne	1
Craftsman	10	Eclectic	1
Classical Revival	3	Gothic Revival	1
Tudor Revival	3	Italianate	1
Bungalow	3	Mediterranean	1
Shingle	3	Undetermined	1
<b>Dutch Colonial Revival</b>	2	Contemporary (Ranch	
Queen Anne	2	Raised Ranch, Split	
		Level)	3

The Sutton Manor Boathouse was also categorized as Craftsman in style. Of the 49 dwellings, 40 are intact, nine are altered. The boathouse remains intact to its c. 1920 appearance, while the park and two of the four entry monuments have been altered.

# The Significance of Sutton Manor

Sutton Manor is a distinctive early 20<sup>th</sup> century suburban development located on the north shore of Echo Bay of the Long Island Sound, primarily consisting of single family residences. Frank Sanchez in his architectural treatise on Westchester County wrote that developments in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century established "the popular image of Westchester County as an exclusive suburban community...[with] buildings constructed for...affluent upper-middle-class people." Sutton Manor was clearly one of these. The development appears to have been modeled on the 1872 development of Larchmont Manor in the Town of Mamaroneck, albeit on a smaller scale. That subdivision was conceived originally as an exclusive and convenient seasonal playground for New York's wealthy upper classes, with its 6-acre waterfront park. However, the homes of Larchmont Manor were soon converted to year-round homes for commuters.<sup>2</sup> Shoe-horned in between industrial uses, Sutton Manor foreshadowed the changes in the highest and best use of waterfront property that would reach fruition in the latter decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as the national economy shifted from a manufacturing base to service and information. A Chronology of the development of Sutton Manor is included as Attachment C.

First and foremost, Sutton Manor is historically significant for its association with a great number of persons important to the economic and physical development of New Rochelle and the region. With its proximity to New York City, many of the residents of Sutton Manor were involved in activities of statewide and national significance. Beginning with Thaddeus Davids, an important ink manufacturer from before the Civil War and for whom Davids Island is named, the property has been home to important financiers, bankers, attorneys, industrialists, inventors, engineers, politicians, public servants, artists of every ilk, actors, and other notable figures. Well known yachtsmen, boat designers and enthusiasts made Sutton Manor home as well. The socioeconomic status of the Sutton Manor residents is evidenced by the live-in servants commonly employed. Attachment D provides a list of property owners and residents with their occupations, along with the domestic servants who lived in their households. But even before these movers and shakers resided here, several notable people were key in the creation of Sutton Manor. George William Sutton I, for whom the development is named, acquired the property at auction in 1884:

Echo. Place, containing about 20 acres of land, with large mansion, three cottages, carriage house, billiard room, grapery, boat house, and valuable dock property was sold by Wm. Le Count, auctioneer under direction of James W. Todd, assignee, on Tuesday, the 22d inst, to George W. Sutton.<sup>3</sup>

Sutton was a successful silk merchant who left each of his five children an independent income, as well as the 20-acre site that would be redeveloped as Sutton Manor. It was his son, George W. Sutton Jr., however, who was the entrepreneurial spirit behind the development, the first of his numerous subdivisions and real estate transactions in New Rochelle. Sutton's 1934 obituary provides a summation of his achievements and contributions to the City of New Rochelle:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Frank E. Sanchis, *American Architecture: Westchester County, New York – Colonial To Contemporary* (Harrison, NY: Harbor Hill Books, 1977) p. 140.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Ibid. pp.88-89.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> New Rochelle Pioneer, 4-26-1884.

G.W. SUTTON DEAD; REALTY DEVELOPER – New Rochelle Tax Assessor, 71, Organized Telephone and Silk Companies – On Stock Exchange Here – Spent Two Years in Search of \$70,000,000 Spanish Treasure in the South Seas. Special to the New York Times. New Rochelle, N. Y., Aug. 25. – George W. Sutton, tax assessor of New Rochelle since 1916 and former treasure hunter, telephone company president, Stock Exchange executive, silk company organizer and realty developer, died today. He was 71 years old...Death occurred at his home in Sutton Manor, one of the many residential districts he developed. Mr. Sutton was a New Rochelle councilman from 1899 through 1901. In 1904 he was the unsuccessful candidate of the Searchlight party for Mayor, running with the Democratic endorsement. The present city charter in New Rochelle was adopted three years ago in spite of active campaigning against it by Mr. Sutton. Mr. Sutton was born in New York City, the son of the late George W. and Josephine Devoe [sic] Sutton. He attended Charles Institute and St. Paul's School at Concord, N. H...<sup>4</sup>

Another important person associated with the Sutton Manor development was Lawrence E. Van Etten the civil engineer who laid out the subdivision plan and its subsequent amendments. He was said to have convinced George Sutton Jr. to abandon the idea of developing a hotel on the property's shoreline and instead fashion the development as an exclusive residential enclave only. His plan for Sutton Manor was developed at the beginning of his long career—Van Etten was responsible for well over 100 subdivisions in Westchester County (alone) between 1890 and 1950. He clearly had absorbed the lessons of earlier successful developments, such as Rochelle Park, creating a layout with curved roadways, a park, and adding a boathouse amenity. At the same time, he reduced the lot sizes (most are in the quarter of an acre range) so as to maximize the number and profit to be made. Van Etten was known also for his golfing abilities, which led to him designing several golf courses, among which is the well-known Knollwood Golf Course in Greenburgh. Van Etten's 1951 obituary provides additional background on his education, career and achievements and thus his significance:

LAWRENCE E. VAN ETTEN. Special to The New York Times. NEW ROCHELLE, N. Y., Jan. 28—Lawrence E. Van Etten o 67 Montgomery Circle, a retired civil engineer and golf-course construction authority, died today in New Rochelle Hospital. He was 85 years old. born in Kingston, N. Y., he was graduated in 1886 from Princeton University, where he obtained engineering and law degrees. Mr. Van Etten did not practice law but, as a civil engineer with offices here for many years, planned many of the residential subdivisions in New Rochelle and in near-by communities. He designed the Wykagyl Country Club here, the Pelham Country Club and the Knollwood Country Club in Elmsford. He retired professionally ten years ago. A member of the American Society of Civil Engineers, Mr. Van Etten was the senior member of the Wykagyl Club. There are no immediate survivors.<sup>6</sup>

Sutton Manor is also architecturally significant. The neighborhood exemplifies an upper middle class enclave that was (and continues to be) attractive to professionals desirous of tasteful surroundings. The vast majority of houses that comprise the neighborhood are essentially intact to their initial construction dates. Sutton Manor retains its original plan and amenities, while the architecture of the homes exhibit the array of stylistic choices available during the 1904 – 1927 timeframe—Colonial Revival, Craftsman, Tudor Revival, Mediterranean, Bungalow, and Art Moderne. Many of them are early examples of styles that were just being introduced, yet despite

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> The New York Times, 8-26-1934.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Ruth Sutton Reynolds, *The Sutton Manor Story In Historic New Rochelle* (The Little Print, New Rochelle, NY: 1963) p. 20.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> The New York Times, 1-29-1951.

their diversity the vast majority of the dwellings are of the same scale and sited so as to create a cohesive group. Three of the dwellings predate the development of the subdivision and are associated with the Thaddeus Davids property, "Echo Place," thus physically linking the subdivision to an even earlier period. The three older extant houses—one dating to c. 1820, one to c.1870 and the third to c.1883—although altered, are compatible in scale and massing with the more recent dwellings, such that they appear to have set the physical parameters for those that followed. And along with Rochelle Park and Rochelle Heights, it was a subdivision that served as a model for the ideal suburban setting—harmonious architecture and exclusive amenities. In short, all but three much more recent houses (which are located on the periphery of the neighborhood) contribute to a definable historic resource that would logically comprise a historic district.

Adding to the significance of this collection of early 20<sup>th</sup> century houses is that many represent the work of several locally and regionally significant architects and builders, as well as one nationally prominent architect, John Russell Pope. Chester A. Patterson was an active architect working throughout Westchester County and the New York metropolitan region; regular reports of his work appeared in *The New York Times*. He designed eight of the houses in Sutton Manor. Architect Charles Lupprian, who designed three houses in Sutton Manor, was a pioneer in the design of fireproof buildings, and his work was written up in professional journals and included in national publications. Barnard and Wilder, another local architectural firm that designed at least one Sutton Manor home, was well represented by both residential and commercial projects throughout the city. New Rochelle builder, Peter Doern, of long tenure and many significant constructions in New Rochelle was responsible for constructing several Sutton Manor residences. Similarly, Patrick and Peter Bartnett, principals of Bartnett Bros. Co. (later P. W. Bartnett & Son) and prominent contractors in New Rochelle, built several dwellings in Sutton Manor. Attachment D is a monograph entitled "Sutton Manor Architects & Builders" that provides additional information on these designers and craftsmen.

#### COMPATIBILITY WITH CITY OF NEW ROCHELLE PLANS

There are two official City of New Rochelle documents that prescribe plans and actions relevant to Sutton Manor, the 1996 Comprehensive Plan and the 1999 Local Waterfront Revitalization Program. The following cites goals and objectives contained within these documents and how they are met by the survey and proposed designation.

#### COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Page I-1 of the Comprehensive Plan defines six areas as foci for development and redevelopment, one of which is the East Main Street/Echo Avenue area and includes Sutton Manor. The Comp Plan states that detailed analysis and action plans would be developed for these area. Thus the intensive historic resource survey and proposed local designation of the neighborhood as a historic district fulfills this goal. Further, the Plan states that: "outside these areas, the plans for the city will emphasize neighborhood preservation of existing residential, commercial, open space and recreational uses."

Page II-40 contains a specific reference to the Historic Landmarks and Preservation Board and the 1985 ordinance enacted by the City which "...establishes the framework within which existing landmarks can be preserved and in which other areas of buildings of merit can be identified." Part I of this report provides the findings necessary within this cited framework.

Page III-1, A.1 Community Based Future Visions enumerates seven fundamental ideas that emerged from a Future Visions process conducted by the City in the mid-1990s that "...reflect the values and priorities of the community." One of these seven ideas was that there would be "Design controls, clean-ups, beautification improvements and community policing efforts...throughout the city." And Objective 2 in Section A-2, Plan Development Goals and Objectives, reads: "Preserve and enhance the lakes, streams, waterfront, open space, historic sites and other physical and cultural amenities which make New Rochelle an attractive community, while eliminating conditions which detract from the quality of life." Local designation of Sutton Manor would serve to preserve the neighborhood and to provide a basic level of design control to ensure its continued attractiveness and value under the provisions of the City's Historic Preservation ordinance.

Page III-3, Section A – Housing, states the Goal, "Ensure the provision of adequate, safe, and attractive housing within all neighborhoods with a variety of housing types and a broad range of costs to meet the needs of the existing and future population of New Rochelle." Further, Objective 3 in this section states: "Maintain existing housing stock through conservation and rehabilitation and, where appropriate, expand housing stock through adaptive reuse." Protections provided by local designation of Sutton Manor as a historic district will serve to conserve the housing stock and would not limit appropriate provisions for accessory housing units if allowed by the City in cooperation with the Sutton Manor Association.

Page III-4 further defines goals and objectives for neighborhoods; under Section III-B: "Preserve existing stable neighborhoods...by conserving existing structurally-sound housing stock...and maintaining neighborhood institutions, parks, and open space" and Objective 2, "Protect residential quality of life in areas mixed with light industrial and commercial use where housing is still an appropriate and viable use." Designation of Sutton Manor as a historic district would help in meeting both the goal and the specific objective by protecting against inappropriate alterations to individual homes and to neighborhood features, such as Echo park, the roadways, and vegetation.

Page III-5, Section E – Open Space, Natural and Historic Resources, Parks and Recreation Facilities, provides the most direct Goal that supports designation of Sutton Manor as a historic district: "Preserve and maintain existing open space, natural and historic resources, parks, and recreation facilities to serve residents of all ages in all neighborhoods."

Page III-47 deals with "Redevelopment and Other Proposals" and "...Planned Waterfront Development..." It provides maps that show areas where improvements and redevelopment are encouraged. Sutton Manor is not among these—implying that it is a positive attribute to the waterfront. Thus it is one of the areas to be preserved and protected in compliance with the previously cited sections.

Page IV-6, "Waterfront Districts," provides that such a district should be created and mapped on the Echo Avenue waterfront area "...to promote and guide the development of water-related and water-dependent uses identified in this Comprehensive Plan." Designation of a Sutton Manor Historic District would provide key guidance as to the character and quality of the surrounding waterfront areas that are slated for redevelopment.

# LOCAL WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

Page II-10 contains an inventory and analysis of the conditions of the local waterfront and states:

"Continuing from Pelham Road along Echo Avenue, on finds Sutton Manor, a handsome enclave of stately, older, single family homes, that are well maintained." Although ten years old, this finding supports the fact that this is a viable neighborhood with housing worthy of preservation.

Section III, "Policies," Policy 1A: "Redevelop the Main-Echo Urban Renewal Area to allow mixed residential, commercial and water-related recreational uses." Preserving and protecting Sutton Manor neighborhood will help fulfill this policy. Under "Key Goals" of this policy section is "The preservation of the integrity of residential neighborhoods by assuring that any new adjacent development will conform with and respect the character, scale and other existing and desirable neighborhood qualities." The intensive survey of Sutton Manor provides the detailed description of the architectural qualities in the neighborhood that should be taken into account by surrounding redevelopment projects.

Page IV-17 of the Waterfront Revitalization document enumerates nine standards, one of which states that "Development of the Echo/Main Urban Renewal Area provide noise and visual screens to buffer them from Sutton Manor and from other nearby residential areas." Although the language here implies that the new development should be protected *from* Sutton Manor, the intent was surely to state that new development should incorporate appropriate noise and visual screens that would protect Sutton Manor from such impacts.

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# RECOMMENDATIONS

As noted in a previous report, the historical and architectural significance of Sutton Manor is such that it is worth of preservation via historic district designation by the City of New Rochelle. It also appears to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, and thus its nomination for that designation is also recommended.

# **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A	Maps of Sutton Manor
Attachment B	Annotated List of Properties Within Sutton Manor Survey Area
Attachment C	Chronology of Sutton Manor Development
Attachment D	Occupations Heads of Households & Residents of Sutton Manor
Attachment E	The Architects & Builders of Sutton Manor