

LIVING IN | TUXEDO PARK, N.Y.

A Time Warp Beyond the Stone Gates



By JULIE LASKY

In 1999, when Lili Neuhauser first set eyes on a converted carriage house with stone walls and old peony bushes in Tuxedo Park, N.Y., she said to her real estate broker, "If it's as good inside as it is outside, we're done."

Ms. Neuhauser and her husband bought the four-bedroom stucco house on Stable Road for \$525,000 and raised their son in the bucolic surroundings. They watched him scramble up the faces of neighborhood boulders and dangle from old-growth trees. Looking up, they saw neither pigeons nor news helicopters, but instead, bald eagles soaring over a trio of lakes.

"On 9/11, we were so thankful to live where we did," Ms. Neuhauser, 59, said recently. Manhattan was less than an hour's drive, but felt like another world. She became active in the Tuxedo Park Garden Club and St. Mary's-in-Tuxedo Episcopal Church and eventually served a term as mayor.

Founded in the 1880s by the tobacco baron Pierre Lorillard IV as a hunting and fishing playground for his fellow tycoons, Tuxedo Park now sits within the town of Tuxedo in Orange County. Best known for lending its name to men's formal wear, it is one of the oldest gated communities in the United States, with access restricted to its 300 or so families, about half of whom are part-time residents.

To pass its chunky stone portal, where a little jail is tucked into the base (the village has its own fire department and ambulance corps, too) is to enter a dreamy, time-warping realm. You might learn that the bulky hip-roofed house on Wee Wah Road is where Frederic Oakley Spedden's family lived after surviving the Titanic disaster. Or that the 17-bedroom hunk of gingerbread on Tower Hill Loop, currently on the market for \$4.475 million, remained in the same family, intact, for 118 years, down to the bells for summoning servants.

But though Tuxedo Park feels changeless, its boundaries fastened like a cummerbund, the world just beyond is pressing. The Related Companies is grading land in the town of Tuxedo for Phase 1 of Tuxedo Farms, a \$900 million housing development planned for 1,195 units, from apartments to large luxury homes. And Michael Bruno, the founder of 1stdibs, the online antiques marketplace, who has taken to amassing real estate in the area, is converting properties in Tuxedo and the neighboring village of Sloatsburg into a hotel, food market and restaurants.

What You'll Find

Walter L. Deane, a real estate broker in Tuxedo Park and Manhattan, said the village was open to all buyers and catered to a variety of budgets and architectural tastes. Though many houses are peaked and shingled in the style of Tuxedo Park's founding architect, Bruce Price, some contemporary buildings can be spotted, too. The local architecture review board, which approves renovations and new construction, prefers that houses "blend into the landscape," but is not dogmatic, Mr. Deane said. In fact, many Tuxedo Park homes are painted gray not because they blend into the surroundings but because surplus battleship paint was sold cheaply after World War II, he said.

The village has no commerce. A few businesses, including a sushi restaurant, convenience store and bank, are within walking distance of the main gate, as are a historic train station and post office. The nearest supermarket is about a 10-minute drive.

What You'll Pay

From March 2016 to February 2017, the median sales price of Tuxedo Park homes was \$945,200, based on 24 properties sold. This figure represents a 19.6 percent increase over the median sales price of the previous 12 months, based on 17 properties sold.

As of April 4, 33 single-family homes drawn from multiple listings were adver-

tised on Trulia. They ranged from a two-bedroom house at 20 Ridge Road, listed at \$420,000, to a six-bedroom chateau-style house with horse stables at 122 Turtle Point Road, priced at \$5.5 million.

Stijn van Nieuwerburgh, a professor of finance at New York University and a part-time Tuxedo Park resident, described the village as "very affordable as an alternative to the Hamptons or the commutable, nice suburbs of Westchester or Connecticut." The area is "under-retailed, for sure," he said, though that promises to change with new development. Referring to the abundance of black bears, deer and hawks in the surrounding area, which includes Harriman and Sterling Forest State Parks, he said, "Most people have to drive twice as far to encounter this much wildlife."

The Vibe

On a brisk weekday morning in March, the forested hills ringing the navy blue lakes were dappled with houses with lots of character but no visible human life. Traffic was sparse on the village's 26 miles of road. It was hard to imagine that the Woodbury Common outlet mall lay just 12 miles north.

The Schools

The George Grant Mason School, a public school in the town of Tuxedo, serves 140 students in kindergarten through sixth grade. On 2015-16 tests, 51 percent of students met standards in English versus 38 percent statewide; 41 percent met

standards in math versus 42 percent statewide.

The George F. Baker High School, also in Tuxedo, is a public school with a science, technology, engineering and math focus that serves 119 students in seventh through 12th grades. The mean SAT scores of its 2017 graduating class are 564 in math and 559 in reading/writing, versus 529 and 531 statewide.

The Tuxedo Park School, on Mountain Farm Road, is a private school in a 1915 English-style manor house designed by Carrère & Hastings, the architects of the New York Public Library. It serves 210 students, from prekindergarten through ninth grade. Annual tuition starts at \$13,325 for part-time preschool and runs to \$34,500.

The Commute

New Jersey Transit offers train service from Penn Station to Tuxedo, with a change in Secaucus, N.J. The trip takes about an hour and costs \$14 each way. Short Line buses run regularly from the Port Authority to the Route 17 and 17A park-and-ride in Tuxedo. The trip takes about an hour; a regular one-way fare is \$13.75.

The History

In the hills of Harriman State Park, overlooking Tuxedo Park, is the Claudius Smith Den, a cave system used by a loyalist guerrilla leader and bandit in the Revolutionary War, who was captured and hanged in 1779.



A view of the Tuxedo Park, N.Y., landscape from a house on Tower Hill Loop. Once the province of tycoons and Titanic survivors, the village is now home to about 300 families.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES PEARSON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

ON THE MARKET



35 West Lake Stable Road

A seven-bedroom, seven-and-a-half-bath house on 1.06 acres with more than 400 feet of lakefront, listed at \$6.6 million. 212-980-6285



115 Tower Hill Road

A seven-bedroom, six-bath house built by Richard Howland Hunt in 1890 on 3.3 acres, listed at \$2.85 million. 845-351-0001