ANGLE FLY PRESERVE

- The Angle Fly Preserve is part of a historic corridor in Somers known as the Mt. Zion Historic Neighborhood, which runs much of the length of Rt. 139 and Plum Brook Roads, both pre-Revolutionary public roads.
- Originally the **Kitchawanks**, **part of the Mohegan Native American tribe**, lived in the area and called the land Amapaugh, meaning "fresh water fish." They likely used the area as a hunting ground, and archeological research has found several pre-historic sites along the Angle Fly Brook, north of the Preserve.
- This area was part of Cortland Manor granted to Stephanus Van Cortland by King William III in 1697. Primrose Street/Route 139 follows the dividing line between two divisions of Cortland Manor known as "Great Lots," and so has been a feature of the landscape for over 300 years.
- **During the Revolutionary War**, farms were plundered by British troops and also by groups of outlaws known as "skinners" or "cowboys." There is an account of one farmer who drove his cattle into a swamp in this area to save them from the cowboys.

REYNOLDS HOMESTEAD

- The Reynolds homestead was one of five original homesteads on the west side of Primrose Street/Rt. 139 at the beginning of the Revolution. The current building can be traced back to 1803 and may have replaced an earlier dwelling. An architectural historian has stated that the structure is "[a] late 18th or early 19th century farmhouse with later additions....[the] core structure could be circa 1776."
- In 1828, Minott Mitchell, a White Plains speculator, flipped the property, buying it in foreclosure for \$750 and selling it for \$2,900 to Silas Reynolds on the very same day! Silas Reynolds was the son of James Reynolds, who fought in the Revolution and is buried in nearby Mt. Zion Cemetery.
- Grain was grown in the lower lands of this area, while the hills were used for grazing. Cattle were purchased from counties to the north and west to be fattened up in Somers. They were then led to the Croton Turnpike (Route 100) that ran through the town and down to New York City.
- Although the railroad bypassed Somers in the 1840's, farmers shifted to dairy and orchards, as the speedy new transportation enabled the marketing of perishable commodities.

TATHAM HOUSE, POOL HOUSE AND GARDEN

- The Reynolds Homestead (about 72 acres of current day AFP) was sold to Samuel Woods in 1878 and then to Edwin Tatham in 1905.

- The Tatham House was built some time between 1908 and 1916 according to maps, aerial photographs, and a NYT article. The Spanish style architecture suggests post-WWI. The house, its formal, walled garden, and nautical-themed pool house reflect a time when a number of large farms were turned into "Gentlemen Estates." The land was orchards and open fields in the '20s and '30s.
- In 1916, Edwin Tatham brought his new bride, Sarah Linzee Potter, to live at "Somers Orchards" in Katonah (mailing address). **The Tathams were listed as residing at "Somers Orchards" in the 1918 social register.** In the early 1920's the couple enjoyed cruises to Guatemala, Nassau, Paris and Bermuda.
- Edwin Tatham was the son of Benjamin Tatham of Philadelphia,a Quaker who had started the family business who had helped Harriet Beecher Stowe start a school for former slaves in Washington, D. C. Edwin had a collection of letters and documents related to John Brown's raid
- Edwin Tatham had an interest in the United Lead Company of Brooklyn since the family business, Tatham Brothers was one of many smaller smelters taken over by the Standard Oil dominated lead trust by 1903. (Tatham Brother's Beekman Street site which in 1854 had boasted one of the earliest ornamental cast iron facades has been listed as an EPA superfund site).
- Edwin was noted briefly in the autobiography of Hollywood director Preston Sturges' (*The Great McGinty, The Lady Eve*) as having **served with Sturges in 1917 in the Ninth Coast Regiment**, although I found no record of him having seen action.
- Edwin was active in NYC society (e.g., The New York City Good Government Club "O" in 1894, NY Infirmary for Women and Children 1905) He founded the Northern Westchester Bank in Katonah in 1919 and was president until his death in 1933.
- Sarah was the daughter of Henry Codman Potter, Episcopal Bishop of New York who, among many accomplishments, was instrumental in securing initial funding for the construction of the Cathedral of St John the Divine. The Bishop died in 1908 and in 1916, Sarah and Edwin were married in his chapel at the cathedral. She also was involved in charitable causes, such as the TB division of Bellevue Hospital.
- Edwin died in New Year's day in 1933 and later that year Sarah Tatham sold the estate to Warner D. Orvis for cash. The house was described in the NYT as "Tudor" and having twelve rooms and five bathrooms.

ORVIS AND LATER

- Warner Dayton Orvis was a broker and in 1942 was chairman of civilian mobilization of the Civil Defense Council in Somers. He died in 1967.
- Around 1970, the Reynolds/Tatham/Orvis property was sold to Primrose Associates who combined it into the larger tract of land that is now Angle Fly Preserve. About 1976 they built

and furnished the ill-fated condominium models known as Primrose Farms that still stand on the property.

- After an open space acquisition bond was passed in Somers in 2000, the town Open Space Committee was formed to survey the town's open spaces to determine the most important parcel to protect. At that point, the parcel was now in the hands of new developers who were proposing a 108-home development and four miles of roads, naming it Eagle River. (See plan below.)
- In 2004, the Town Board made acquiring the parcel a priority and **in August of 2005**, **Governor Pataki announced the acquisition of the property** in the meadows on site. In 2006, the deal was officially closed and the Somers and Westchester Land Trusts, the Town of Somers, Westchester County, the State of New York and NYC DEP celebrated the acquisition of the Angle Fly Preserve.
- The Somers Land Trust was given responsibility by the Town of Somers to develop and maintain the newly created Angle Fly Preserve. After many hours of work by SLT members, the Friends of Angle Fly Preserve volunteers, and with assistance from the Somers Parks and Recreation Department, the Preserve was officially opened to the public on October 3, 2009.
- The Somers Land Trust is currently leading the creation of a 10-mile trail system and has many other plans under way such as a restoration of the Reynolds House and pond area.



Ownership of the Reynolds part of Angle Fly Preserve over the years, as noted in maps and articles:

- Pre-1803- John Teed (speculation in Town of Somers Newsletter, January 2006)
- 1803- Caleb Nichols (")
- 1828- Minott Mitchell (", purchased in foreclosure for \$750)
- 1828- Silas Reynolds (", purchased on same day from Mitchell for \$2,900)
- 1851– Silas Reynolds (map)
- 1868- S. Reynolds(map)
- 1872- S. Reynolds 72 acres(map)
- 1878- Samuel H. Woods (", purchased for \$6,500)
- 1881- S. Wood (?)(map)
- 1901- S. Wood (map)
- 1905- Edwin Tatham (")
- 1908- Edwin Latham [sic?](map)
- 1916– NYT wedding announcement for Edwin Tatham and Sarah Linzee Potter, "Mr. And Mrs. Tatham will make their home...at Mr. Tatham's country home at Katonah, N. Y."
- 1918- Edwin and Sarah Tatham "Somers Orchards" (Social Register)
- 1926- Edwin Tatham 80 acres
- 1933– Sarah Tatham sells estate to Warner D. Orvis for cash. It is listed as having twelve rooms and five baths and of "Tudor" style. (NYT)
- 1953- W. Orvis 71.7 acres
- c 1970- Primrose Associates
- c 2000- Eagle River
- 2006- Country of Westchester, Town of Somers and New York City

This information is compiled from a "Mt. Zion Historic Neighborhood, Cultural Landscape Report & Preservation Recommendations," prepared in 2002 for the Town of Somers by LANDSCAPES Landscape Architecture-Planning-Historic Preservation and funded by the Hudson River Valley Greenway Communities Council; "Historical Snapshot: The Houses on Angle Fly Preserve," in Town of Somers Newsletter of January 2006; and additional research by Lauretta Jones, Somers Land Trust and Somers Open Space Committee.

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