



# THE WESTHAMPTON BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## GUIDEBOOK FOR WALKING TOUR OF HISTORIC REMSENBURG



Drawn from a map in the Deer's 1877 Atlas showing South Country land and former locations. Note that the road does not continue toward the east across the mouth of the Speonk River. About 1930, wooden bridges were built and a dirt road made the access to Westhampton Beach more direct.

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## Introduction

Welcome to the lovely historic hamlet of Remsenburg (once part of Speonk)! This guidebook was developed by the Westhampton Beach Historical Society to provide information about historic homes that can be viewed while taking a short walk through the hamlet. The walk route starts at the Remsenburg Academy building and heads west for about one block on the north side of South Country Road. The route then crosses the road and heads east for about a half-mile before crossing back to the north side of the road and returning to the starting point. Total walk time is about an hour. Please note that all of the homes are private – please respect private property!

During the walk you will see some of the older homes in the hamlet, one of which dates back to the mid-1700s. You will also see mid to late-1800s homes that were built after the Long Island Rail Road tracks were extended through Speonk and eastward to Bridgehampton in 1869. Finally you will see a wide range of restorations, additions, renovations, and/or complete rebuilding that have occurred to each of our historic homes.

This guidebook was prepared by the Westhampton Beach Historical Society using information from two primary sources: *A History of Remsenburg*, 2003 published by The Remsenburg Association, Inc. and *Historical Profiles of Eastport, Speonk/Remsenburg, and Westhampton*, January 2004 by Ronald A. Michne and Ronald A. Michne, Jr. Further information about these sources is provided at the end of the guidebook. The Westhampton Beach Historical Society takes responsibility for any errors that may be present in the guidebook.

Please note that the guidebook is keyed to a number of historic photos in *A History of Remsenburg*, with the page number(s) of each photo indicated in the heading for each house. You can review the historic photos while taking the walking tour, which should enhance your appreciation of the development of each house.

### **Stop 1: The Remsenburg Academy 130 South Country Road Pages 75 and 78**

The Remsenburg Academy, located at 130 South Country Road, was constructed in the early 1860s as a select intermediate school for young gentlemen. Its initial term began on December 19, 1864. The students, who were from New York City, boarded with local farm families. The school was run by John W. Tuthill, Professor of Mathematics, who had attended the Quaker Locust Valley Academy. English grammar, Latin, and literature were taught by Maria Vanderpool Studley of Claverack, NY. John Tuthill closed the school in 1869.



Over the years the Academy has been used as a residence by several people and as the Remsenburg Post Office from 1958 to 1967. The last private owner of the Academy, Robert Burchette, and the subsequent life tenant, Joseph D. Ryle, bequeathed the Academy to the community with the intention that it be used as a library and repository for artifacts and records of the area. The Academy building is owned by the Town of Southampton and is now operated by The Remsenburg Academy Association, Inc. as a community resource for public meetings and events.

**Stop 2: The Ocean House**  
**132 South Country Road**  
**Page 59**

This house was constructed in the 1871 and was owned and operated by John W. Tuthill as a boarding house. An ad in the July 10, 1898 Brooklyn Eagle states “Ocean House, Speonk, L.I. Situated near Great South Bay: Fine sailing, surf, and still water bathing, driving and cycling, large shady grounds. Circulars, etc. John W. Tuthill”. In the summer season of 1908 room and board was \$8 to \$10 per week and a stage met guests upon arrival at the Speonk train station, which had been opened in 1869 when the LIRR tracks were extended eastward to Bridgehampton. Subsequent to its use as a boarding house it became the home of Mr. and Mrs. Algernon Jayne, who farmed the property up until the 1960s and ran a general store in the front of the house. A portion of the house was also used for a short time (1967 to 1969) as the Remsenburg Post Office.

**Stop 3: Capt. Jeremiah Rogers House**  
**136 South Country Road**  
**Pages 31 and 32, barn on page 127**

This house was constructed in the 1860s for Capt. (hon) Jeremiah Rogers who picked up summer visitors at the Speonk train station and delivered them to “The Ocean House” next door. He would also take visitors across the bay to the beach in a sailboat. Later, he sold and delivered coal and was also a dairy farmer. This house remained in the Rogers family until sometime in the mid-1900s.

**Stop 4: 140 South Country Road**  
**Page 21, barn on page 127, Post Office building page 81**

This house was constructed circa 1807, most likely for a Rogers family, and was once located closer to Main Street. It is a good example of a Long Island “half house” which had a side hall with connected rooms rather than a center hall. Recent owners have included the Thursby and Garcia families.

This property is also the site of the first schoolhouse constructed in Remsenburg. In 1832, following the formation of School District #1, a group of local residents decided to build a schoolhouse so that the local children would not have to travel to Eastport to attend school. A parcel of land at this property was purchased for \$25 from Cliff Rogers, the presumed owner at the time, and a 28-foot by 17-foot schoolhouse was erected. This building was also used as a house of worship until 1854 when the Chapel was constructed. About 1886 a new schoolhouse was constructed on the Ocean House property and the old schoolhouse became the home of Ben and Cinda Tuthill until their deaths. The building remained until 1898 when it burned.

A small Post Office building was constructed in Remsenburg in the early 1900s by Jeremiah N. Rogers and was initially operated by his son, Eugene F Rogers. Gilbert Tuthill became postmaster in this building in 1917 when Eugene enlisted in the Coast Guard. Herbert Tuthill bought the post office building after the death of Gilbert and moved it to a small plot of ground at 140 South Country Road that he had purchased from the heirs of Ellen Rogers. This was the site of the old schoolhouse and the post office building stood on the property until 1922, when it was moved to the east. This building was moved back to the property a few years later and was moved to the east again circa 1928. The building was moved several additional times and now a pool house on Holly Lane overlooking Fish Creek.

**We are now at Remsen Lane, which is the western extent of the walking tour. You should cross South County Road at this point and start eastwards.**

**Stop 5: Willis B. Tuthill House  
149 South Country Road  
Page 23, barn on page 122**

This house was constructed circa 1820 for a Tuthill family and remained within the Tuthill family until recently. The Tuthills were a prominent local family from the very earliest days of Remsenburg and there are many of them in the cemetery behind the Chapel as well as in two private cemeteries on Club Lane and Remsen Lane. Willis B. Tuthill was the last family member to live in the house. His mother, who was blind, lived in a house just to the west and used to walk back and forth to Willis's house with the aid of a wire strung between the two houses. Willis wrote for several newspapers, including the Brooklyn Eagle and the New York Tribune, and was deeply interested in local and regional history. His columns for the Long Island Forum are well known, as are his "Reminiscences" editorials in the local newspapers.

**Stop 6: Ethan Alyea House  
145 South Country Road  
Page 21, barn on page 128, icehouse on page 56**

The western end of this house is the oldest part and is reported to have been constructed on the site, although the date of construction is not known. The middle section is believed to be early 19<sup>th</sup> century and the eastern end is reported to be from a dismantled Pennsylvania Dutch home that was moved here in the early 1930s. Both the western and central portions of the house were present in 1916, when the house was owned by the H. Rogers family. This house was also once owned by Viola Hamilton Rothwell, a descendent of Alexander Hamilton.



The remains of an icehouse may be seen on the east side of the property near Rogers Lane. Ice was once harvested from local ponds in winter and packed in hay into the icehouse, which is made of brick and constructed into the ground. The ice could then be used in the summer to chill food and keep it from spoiling. Many local residents had their own icehouses, with some neighbors sharing icehouses, until the advent of refrigeration.

**Stop 7: Hulse/Phillipson House**  
**139 South Country Road**  
**Page 28**

This house was constructed circa 1810 and was once owned by Edward W. Hulse, a native of Speonk. He was also a senior LI Rail Road engineer. Mrs. Ida Rogers owned the home in 1916 and the Phillipson family used it as a summer home later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Most recently it has been used as a B&B. During a renovation in the 1990s a horse harness, leather shoes and other artifacts were discovered in the walls and an excavation for a new kitchen foundation revealed red ware pottery shards and pieces of old glass bottles. Locust posts with their bark intact still support portions of this house.



**As we pass by the Remsenburg Post Office, which was constructed in the 1960s, you may wish to turn to page 53 for a picture of the former Tuthill and Jayne family cow pasture that once existed where the post office building now stands. There is a large copper beech tree in this picture. This tree died several years ago and the stump of the tree may still be seen to the left and behind the post office building.**

**Stop 8: Daniel W. Ruland House**  
**133 South Country Road**  
**Page 27**

Daniel W. Ruland built this house for his family circa 1865. He also built a home on Moriches Bay around 1880 for the Remsen family, for which Remsenburg is named.

**Stop 9: Braidey House**  
**129 South Country Road**  
**Page 34**

This house was constructed prior to the early 1900s, at which time the Molineux family owned it.

**Stop 10: William Strong House**  
**125 South Country Road**  
**Page 33**

This house was constructed in 1884 and is a mirror image on a house now located at 186 South Country Road. The west wing was added later. This property was farmed in the 1800s and a large barn was located behind the house. This house was used in the late 1940s and 1950s by a local dentist, Dr. Sherman Crawford.

**Stop 11: Tuthill/Griffin House**  
**121 South Country Road**  
**Page 24**

This house was constructed circa 1820 for John Joel Tuthill and has recently been extensively remodeled. The only portions of the house that bear any resemblance to the older structure are the two eastern areas. However, very little of the original structure or materials remain. Maude Griffin (John Joel Tuthill's daughter) resided in this house in the early to late 1900s.

**As we cross Tuthill Lane, on the southeast corner, behind a large fence, is the former site of a house that is the mirror image of the house we just saw at Stop 10. This “mirror image” house (photo on page 35) was moved to 186 South Country Road in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century and restored.**

**You should now cross to the north side of South Country Road. We will take a quick look at the Haggerty House to the east and then begin to walk westward back to the Academy building.**

**Stop 12: Joseph J. Haggerty House**  
**104 South Country Road**  
**Pages 47 through 49**

This estate-sized house was built in 1941 by Joseph C. (Happ) Fitzpatrick of East Moriches for J. J. Haggerty, at one time a part-owner of the New York Giants baseball team. The house was designed by Aymar Embury, AIA and the one-page contract with Mr. Fitzpatrick set the cost at \$22,800. The house appears unchanged from its appearance in 1941. Pictures showing the house under construction and after completion are on page 47. Joe Haggerty can be seen clearing trees for the house in the picture on page 48, and outbuildings formerly associated with the house and now used as separate dwellings are on pages 48 and 49.

**Stop 13: Barnard House**  
**112 South Country Road**  
**Page 23**

This home was built in the early 1800s and was owned by Mrs. A. Barnard in 1916. It is nearly identical in appearance to the George Chappell Halstead House at 86 South Country Road to the east (not on the tour). In fact, it is so close in appearance that two photos on page 15 in *A History of Remsenburg* were attributed to the George Chappell Halstead House but are actually pictures of this house! Can you identify the one feature of the house in the photos on page 15 that clearly shows it is actually this house? This house has passed through several families and was restored fairly recently.



**Stop 14: Phillips House**  
**116 South Country Road**  
**Page 25, converted barn page 124**

The original section of this house was built circa 1820 by Joseph Fitzpatrick and Charles Thompson. The architect was Walter Ashcroft. The Phillips family is one of the four founding families of Remsenburg. The other founding families include the Tuthills, the Halseys, and the Rogers. You can find local streets named after all of these families. The house was owned by Mrs. V. Halsey in 1916. An addition was made to the west end of the house in 1923 and the barn was converted to a residence in 1968. A



116 South Country Road

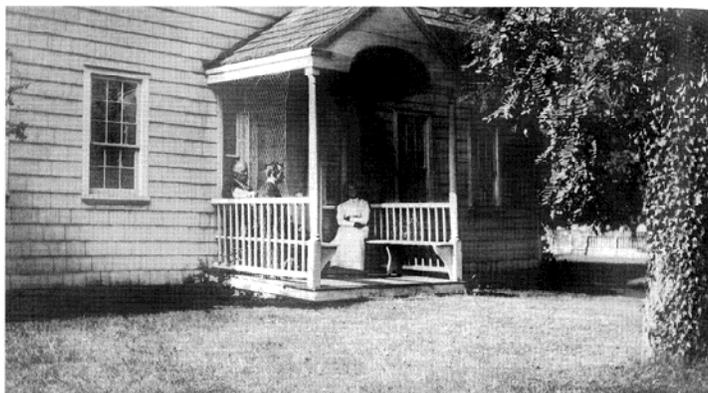
former caretaker's residence is located just to the east and is set well back from the road. A greenhouse was formerly present behind the caretaker's house.

**Stop 15: Tuttle House**  
**118 South Country Road**  
**Page 36**

This mid-Victorian home was constructed about 1865 and was owned by Mrs. C Tuttle in 1916. In the mid-1900s it was owned by Rose Halsey. Additions have recently been made to the east side of the structure and the exterior is now clad in vinyl siding.

**Stop 16: Fordham House**  
**122 South Country Road**  
**Pages 26 and 27**

This house was constructed in the early 1800s and originally served as an inn for boarding and feeding stagecoach travelers in the 1820s prior to the advent of the LIRR in this area. A large addition was constructed on the rear of the structure in the 1920s; at that time the property was owned by G. R. Tuttle. Previous owners have found horseshoes, hitching rings, and many pieces of earthenware, blue-and-white pottery, and green-and-white pottery. The current owner is planning to remove the 1920s addition and construct a modernized wing. It is reported that the original portion of the structure (front of the dwelling) will remain. The interior has been extensively remodeled and very few older details are apparent.



122 South Country Road, early 19th century photo

**Stop 17: Frank Jackson House**  
**124 South Country Road**  
**Page 37**

This house was originally constructed in the late 1800s with a graceful screen porch that was later enclosed. In the early 1900s it was owned by W. M. Tuttle; subsequent owners included the Jackson family. It was recently extensively remodeled and the porch was restored, although not in its original configuration. The recent construction included a large addition to the rear, which appears to have at least tripled the size of the home. Some of the outbuildings, including a windmill, were also replaced during this construction.

**Stop 18: Tuthill Family House**  
**126 South Country Road**  
**Pages 18 and 19**

The original portion of this house, also known as the Harold Tuthill house, was constructed in 1768 and is a classic saltbox-shaped Long Island half-house. The larger western section was added nearly 100 years later in the mid-1800s. It underwent extensive renovation in the early 1900s, including the addition of the dormer windows on the east end, relocation of both fireplaces, and removal of the front porch. More recent additions are in the back. A picture of the home before this renovation is shown on page 18.

**You have now come full circle – the Academy is the next building to the west! We hope you have enjoyed this tour of some of Remsenburg’s historic homes. They are a significant part of this wonderful community and should be appreciated and cherished as the valuable resources that they are.**

**For more information on the history of Remsenburg or some of our other wonderful historic homes, please check out the following resources:**

- *A History of Remsenburg*, 2003. The Remsenburg Association, Inc. – on sale at The Open Book on Main Street, Westhampton Beach, NY
- *A History of Remsenburg*. 1976. Charles J. McDermott, sponsored by The Remsenburg Association (out of print, available in reference sections of local libraries)
- *Historical Profiles of Eastport, Speonk/Remsenburg, and Westhampton*. January 2004. Ronald A. Michne and Ronald A. Michne, Jr. Available in pdf at: <http://www.town.southampton.ny.us/areastudy-hiselect1.pdf>
- Resources at The Westhampton Beach Historical Society, 101 Mill Road, Westhampton Beach, NY.