

# Rapid Hutch

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**D**id you know that the Hutchinson River Parkway was built between 1936 and 1938 and that the Hutchinson River, which flows through northeastern Bronx and Westchester was named after Anne Hutchinson? Well, if you didn't, you are not alone; plenty of street names and their histories in the Bronx are not well known.

The Hutchinson River is a 5 mile long body of fresh water that flows generally south through the Bronx to Pelham Bay

Park to just east of Scarsdale. The Parkway parallels the river through the Bronx and Westchester. It was completed in 1938 to coincide with the opening of the Whitestone Bridge and the 1939 World's Fair.

Anne Marbury Hutchinson was one of the pioneers who helped to establish the right of freedom of religion here in America

"I thought they just made up that stuff up," said Anthony Best, a 40 year old account executive at a brokerage house in Manhattan about the street names. He said he didn't really care about street names, but he did seem surprised and amused to learn that it was named after a woman.

And who was Anne Hutchinson, anyway? Well, she was a very forward thinking woman whose views on religion and theology did not sit well with her Puritan neighbors in Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1637. Anne Marbury Hutchinson was one of the pioneers who helped to establish the right of freedom of religion here in America.

Mrs. Hutchinson, despite raising fifteen children, was very involved in church affairs and held weekly prayer meetings in her home. An eloquent speaker and well versed in the scriptures, Mrs. Hutchinson's views and behavior challenged established gender roles. At the meetings, she maintained that nothing a person could do, including obey the church, could win God's favor and that God communicated directly to individuals, not through church officials. This was in conflict with Puritan beliefs: that God's will can only be discovered through the Bible.

Puritan church leaders banished her from the colony and she moved to Rhode Island until the death of her husband, William Hutchinson, a merchant, in 1642. Later that year, Mrs. Hutchinson and 14 of her 15 children arrived in the northeast section of the Bronx now known as Pelham Bay, and all were murdered shortly after their arrival by Native Americans. The river, and the parkway that runs along it, were both named after her.

"That's sad. I never knew that," said Darrell Wilson, a 39 year-old printer from the Throggs Neck section. Wilson thought it was important to know the names of streets and landmarks in the area. He said that since someone took time enough to give it a name, people can at least know where its from.

In fact, some of the better known spots, such as Gun Hill Road, have plaques along its length that explain the name and the history of the street. It's a good idea because people don't always have time to look things up even if they are interested.

According to the World Book Encyclopedia and Encyclopedia Americana, Mrs. Hutchinson had a descendant, a Thomas Hutchinson, who was one of the last royal governors of Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1771. He refused to let tea ships leave Boston Harbor in 1773 which led to the infamous Boston Tea Party. As royal influence in the colonies ended, he fled to England in exile.

"Well I think it's good that they name some of these things after women," Helen Markojawic, a 52 year old lady who runs a laundromat off East Tremont Avenue said. She said she thought Mrs. Hutchinson must have been a very important woman in her time for her to be honored in that way.

Today, we have the beautiful Hutchinson River and the scenic parkway that runs along it, to remind us of the bold and outspoken spirit that belonged to Anne Hutchinson. As busy Bronx residents, few of us take time to appreciate the rich history so firmly rooted in our everyday surroundings. We should try to remember why the streets and landmarks are named and the people they are meant to honor.

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