

**A Walking Tour**

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The

# RONDOUT

*National Historic District*

**of Kingston**



*The* Rondout Historic District of Kingston sweeps up from the waterfront, revealing the evolution of a maritime village as it climbs the hill. One of only three deep-water ports along the length of the Hudson River, Rondout became the scene of maritime activity shortly after Henry Hudson's 1609 voyage up the river. The port was pivotal to commerce carried on in colonial New Netherland with Dutch sloops routinely docking at Rondout Landing, loading up huge stores of locally grown grain, and leaving behind household and mercantile goods for the village of Kingston two miles north.

The watershed year in Rondout's history was 1828 when the Delaware and Hudson Canal



opened. It was built to haul coal 108 miles from the mountains of Pennsylvania to Rondout for transshipment to cities along the eastern sea-

board. Soon, canal boats crowded the narrow Rondout Creek cheek by jowl, and wharves to hold the huge coal piles lined the waterfront. The farmland just back of the waterfront sprouted into a village as a "melting pot" of immigrants, mostly Irish and German, poured in to work on the canal and allied businesses – boat building, brick-making and mining recently discovered Rosendale cement. A honeycomb of wooden huts creeping up the hillsides gave the village a gold rush atmosphere.

*In 1849*, Rondout incorporated as a village, and by 1855, with 6,000 residents, surpassed the uptown village of Kingston in population. Sensing opportunity in Rondout, entrepreneurs arrived. First and foremost was Thomas Cornell who arrived in 1837 and founded the Cornell Steamboat Company, which grew from a single sloop to the largest shipping business on the Hudson River. At his death in 1890, his son-in-law, Samuel Coykendall, took over the helm of the family's financial empire which expanded to include railroads, Kingston's trolley system, the



Rosendale Cement Company and several other enterprises. In 1897, Coykendall

created Kingston Point Park, which was known throughout the northeast for its beautiful landscaping and the amusements it offered visitors.

Rondout reached its peak of prosperity in 1870, the year 3,000,000 tons of coal were shipped on the canal. In 1871, Rondout petitioned Albany to designate it as a city, but Kingston, alarmed that the more populous waterfront village might upstage it, presented a counter-proposal. On May 29, 1872, the two villages were united and incorporated as the City of Kingston.

As Rondout's fortune rose with the D. & H. Canal, so it also sank as railroads



*East Strand*

eclipsed canals in the late 19th century. The D. & H. Canal closed in 1898, beginning a slow decline that seeped in over the next half century. In the 1960s, urban renewal cleared Rondout's east side of buildings, but stopped short of the west side which still retains a rich legacy of architecture that reflects the character of the thriving 19th century maritime village. In 1974, it was named to the New York State and National Registers of Historic Places.



*Sampson Opera House today*

Today, restaurants, shops and art galleries occupy many of the nineteenth century commercial buildings, brought to life again by a new generation of entrepreneurs and artists. In place of

canal boats and coal docks are yachts and sail boats, moored at the many marinas along the Rondout Creek. A vibrant new maritime "village" has emerged.

## 1 KINGSTON HERITAGE AREA VISITORS CENTER - ULSTER COUNTY TOURISM

20 Broadway Regional maps, brochures, information and exhibits relating to local history, architecture and industry. Open year round Mon.-Fri. 9- 5 p.m. Weekends May-Oct. 11-5 p.m. 800/342-5826; 845-340-3566.

**1A THOMAS CHAMBERS MARKER** The pear tree, planted by Friends of Rondout, marks the original burial site of Thomas Chambers, an English carpenter often called the “founding father of Kingston” because he led the first group of European settlers here in 1652. An earlier pear tree Chambers supposedly planted stood here until 1926. The carving on the small bluestone marker replicates the original stone now in the Senate House Museum in uptown Kingston. In 1850, Chambers was exhumed and removed to Montrepose Cemetery because the rapidly growing village was closing in on the gravesite.

**1B BLUESTONE BENCH** Erected in 2003 by the Friends of Rondout, the bench was built of early local bluestone, which was quarried northwest of Kingston and shipped in huge quantities from the docks at Rondout.

## 2 HUDSON RIVER MARITIME MUSEUM

50 Rondout Landing. Exhibits feature Hudson River steamboats, passenger boats, ice boats, vintage maritime photos and the 1898 steam tugboat *Mathilda*. Open May-Sept. 11-5p.m. 845-338-0071.

## 3 TROLLEY MUSEUM OF NEW YORK

89 East Strand Offers a 1½-mile trolley ride on weekends/holidays on original tracks along the Rondout Creek waterfront to Kingston Point Park. Displays of trolley, subway and rapid transit cars from the United States and Europe. 845-331-3399.



*Cornell Steamboat Company Repair Shop*

## 4 CORNELL STEAMBOAT COMPANY REPAIR SHOP (1901)

*East Strand* The building, with large openings on the Rondout Creek, serviced tugs of the Cornell Steamboat Company, the largest towing service on the Hudson River. Noteworthy architectural elements are the great arched windows, decorative woodwork above doorways, oval iron panels and the raised monitor roof that enhanced light and air.

**5 T.R. GALLO MEMORIAL PARK** *Foot of Broadway and West Strand* The Cornell Steamboat Company Italianate-style office building (1881-83) occupied this site until it was demolished in 1966 during urban renewal. The park, created by the Urban Cultural Parks program in 1984, is named in honor of Mayor T.R. Gallo who died while in office in 2002.

**6 COMPANY HILL PATH** *West Strand* Delaware & Hudson Canal workers walked this path to collect their paychecks at the company's main office from where officials could monitor activity on the loading docks below. The three-story bluestone office building was demolished in 1938. The path and stone wall were restored by Friends of Historic Kingston in the mid-1980s.

**7 WEST STRAND ROW** *9-29 West Strand.* Reflecting the peak of Rondout's prosperity in the 1870s, these seven buildings are designed in the Italianate style with arched windows and heavily bracketed cornices. Storefronts have cast-iron columns manufactured by Rondout Iron Works whose name can be seen at their base. Some of the buildings also have cast-iron lintels and railings of a pattern found elsewhere in Rondout and adjacent Ponckhockie.



**8 MANSION HOUSE** *West Strand and Broadway.* (picture above from archival photo) Built in 1854 and originally crowned by a cupola, it was Rondout's luxury hotel for several decades and featured 100 elegantly furnished gas-lit "sleeping compartments" Steamboat passengers disembarking at Rondout could connect with stages that left for Kingston and the Catskill Mountains from the hotel door.



**9 SAMPSON OPERA HOUSE** *1 Broadway at West Strand* (picture above from archival photo) Designed in 1875 by noted New York City architect Henry Engelbert, the original building featured a fourth floor with a mansard roof and tower, both destroyed by fire in 1885. The third and fourth floors housed performance spaces, while the first floor housed the Sampson and Ellis clothing and shoe store, noted for its unique sales techniques such as having monkeys entertain children while their parents shopped. Noteworthy design elements are the ground floor's 31 cast-iron columns, made by Rondout Iron Works. From the turn of the twentieth century to 1974, it was occupied by the offices of the Kingston Daily Freeman.

**10 SAMPSON HOUSE** *16 Abeel Street*  
The family home of the owners of the Sampson Opera House, it was built in 1873-74 in the Second Empire Style with a mansard roof, bracketed cornice and symmetrical two-story bay windows.

**11 JACOB FORST HOUSE** *26 Abeel Street*  
Built c. 1887 in the Colonial Revival style by German immigrant Jacob Forst who founded the Forst Meat Packing Company in 1901. Formerly at 114 Abeel St., it was a major employer in Rondout up to the mid-20th century.



**12 TEMPLE EMANUEL** *50 Abeel Street* Built in 1892 for one of three Jewish congregations in Rondout, the Emanuel Congregation was incorporated in 1854 by German Jews, most of

whom came to the U.S. in 1848. It became a Reform congregation in the 1890s. In 1958, the congregation moved to a new synagogue on Albany Ave. In the mid-1990s, when the building became a restaurant and night club, a large circular stained glass window featuring a Star of David was moved to the new synagogue. Three metal Stars of David on the roofline and a large tower on the eastern end were removed earlier. Two tablets of the Law are still embedded in the brick wall.



*Steeple of former Methodist Church*

## 13 WURTS AND ABEEL STREETS

Wurts street takes its name from the founders of the D. & H. Canal, Philadelphia businessmen Maurice and William Wurts. A more apt name might be “Church Street” because houses of worship built by Rondout’s many immigrant groups and religious denominations line the street top to bottom. Several Rondout streets are named for the first directors of the D. & H

Canal of which Garret Abeel was one.

**13A RONDOUT CREEK BRIDGE** *Foot of Wurts Street at Abeel Street* Opened to traffic in 1922, it replaced the chain ferry “Skillipot.” The cornerstone, furnished by the Hudson River Bluestone Company, was laid in 1920 by Gov. Alfred E. Smith. Near the end of construction, cracks appeared in the bands binding the main cables. To people’s amazement, the repairs were done by a woman, Mrs. Catherine Nelson, an expert electrical welder from New Jersey. The bridge overlooks Island Dock, formerly the yard where huge piles of coal transported from Pennsylvania on the D.& H. Canal were unloaded to await reshipment to ports along the eastern U.S. seaboard.

## 14 CORNELL FIREHOUSE - VILLAGE HALL

*90 Abeel Street.* A great fire swept through the area in 1849 prompting the incorporation of the village of Rondout and organization of a fire department. Constructed in 1851, the building served a dual purpose as firehouse and village hall. When the villages of Rondout and Kingston merged in 1872 to form the City of Kingston, the hall continued to host neighborhood events. The firehouse, called the Cornell Hose, No. 2, Rescue Hook and Ladder Company in honor of Rondout entrepreneur Thomas Cornell, closed in 1972. The restored building now serves as a unique private residence and commercial space.



## 15 D. & H. CANAL WORKERS' HOMES

*76, 85 and, 107 Abeel Street* Built on lots bought from the D. & H. Canal Co. during the early urbanization of Rondout, the owners incorporated Federal and Greek Revival details into the design of their homes to show their refined taste.

## 16 THOMAS BURGESS HOUSE *15 Hone Street*

The Federal-style house was built c.1837 on a lot bought by Thomas Burgess from the D. & H. Canal Co. for \$150 in 1833. The brick façade features classical details such as Ionic columns and an elliptical-arched fanlight. The exterior was restored by the Friends of Historic Kingston in 1981.

## 17 TUBBY ROW *Spring Street at Hone Street*

*(pictured below)* Built in 1870 by Rondout painter Joseph Tubby and his father, a building contractor, the row houses were made distinctive by the patterned mansard slate roof, decorated cast-iron lintels, and tall French windows opening on to the porch, a later addition. Interiors featured white marble fireplaces and wood parquet floors. Intended for employees of the Jacob Hoffman Brewery just below, the row houses rented for \$350 a year, but were a



financial failure. Originally a house and sign painter, Joseph Tubby (1821-96) became a self-taught landscape painter known for his views of Kingston and the vicinity. He was a friend of noted Hudson River School artist and Rondout resident Jervis McEntee.

## 18 CONRAD HILTEBRANT HOUSE

*101 Spring Street* Built c.1890 for ship builder Hildebrant who reportedly had the largest boat yard on the Rondout Creek by 1896. Designed by Rondout native Albert Mauterstock, a carpenter specializing in moldings and fancy woodwork, it was built in the current vogue, Queen Anne style, with multiple gables, patterned shingles and sunburst motifs in the gable peaks.

## 19 TRINITY GERMAN EVANGELICAL

**LUTHERAN CHURCH** *72 Spring Street at Hone Street* Designed by German-American New York City architect Henry Engelbert (See #9 & #22.), the church features Germanic medieval Romanesque round-arched doors and windows, but with a Gothic spire, pinnacles and wall buttresses. In the 1870s, services were still conducted in German and the German name of the congregation is inscribed in a panel on the façade.

**20 PRESIDENT'S PLACE** *Off Spring and Hone Streets* Originally the home of the president of the Delaware and Hudson Canal Co. was located here.

**21 FORMER FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF RONDOUT AND PARSONAGE**

*Corner Spring and Wurts Streets* The Romanesque Revival style church (1861) and Italianate style parsonage (1863) were built on land donated by Rondout entrepreneur and church deacon Thomas Cornell. The church closed its doors in 1957. Both buildings are now private residences.

**22 ST. PETER'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH**

*91 Wurts Street.* Built 1871-73 for Rondout's German-speaking Catholics who hired German-American architect Henry Engelbert (See #9 & #19.). He designed the church in the German medieval style with the typical Romanesque small arches beneath the cornices and triple openings in the tower which once had a spire. Both church and the adjacent rectory are built of local North River brick.

**23 ENGLISH EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER**

*104 Wurts Street.* Built 1911-13 by former members of the Trinity German Lutheran Church (#19) who wished to have services conducted in English, the church is constructed of St. Lawrence marble with Indiana limestone trim. The choice of the Gothic Revival style may be a bold statement of the members' independence from the German-speaking congregation. Before the new church was built, the congregation met in Liscomb's Opera House, now the site of the Rondout Neighborhood Center, 103 Broadway.

**24 ADAMS STREET** Built during the 1850s, the brick row houses and private homes are distinguished by simple Greek Revival entrances. Porches and piazzas are later additions.

**25 ST. MARK'S AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

*72 Wurts Street* Erected in 1861 as the Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit, it was built of squared and coursed rubble and native limestone in the Early English Gothic style. In 1924 the church vestry voted to dissolve the congregation and close the church due to declining membership. It was occupied by the Ahavath Israel Synagogue from 1926-1966, and sold to St. Mark's A.M.E. Church in 1966.

**26 JAMES J. SWEENEY HOUSE**

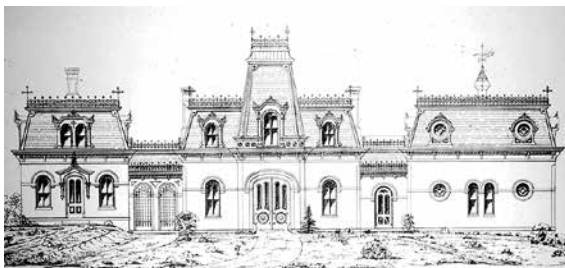
*67 Wurts Street* The c.1896 Colonial Revival home of James J. Sweeney, son of one of the area's largest bluestone dealers, the house served as a good advertisement for the family business. In 1890, the firm's output of bluestone was

50,000-70,000 tons quarried from 1,000 acres in the towns of Kingston, Hurley, Woodstock and Ulster. Sweeny bluestone was used in building the Washington Monument, the State, War and Navy buildings in Washington, D.C. and the Tiffany Mansion in New York City.

**27 THOMAS CORNELL HOUSE SITE** *Wurts and Spring Streets* The front entrance walk and wall of local limestone define the site where the mansion of Rondout entrepreneur Thomas Cornell (1813-90) stood. Later owned by State Senator Jacob Rice, who married one of Cornell's daughters, the mansion was demolished c.1942.

**28 CORNELL PARK** *Wurts-Hunter-Post Streets.* Originally part of the Cornell estate, the grounds contained a garden, hot houses and an underground storage place for vegetables. When Thomas Cornell's daughter Mary Augusta Coykendall died, her children gave the land to the City of Kingston for \$1 in 1925. Mary was married to Samuel Coykendall, who took over the helm of the Cornell Steamboat Company after his father-in-law Thomas Cornell's death in 1890. At the park's south end, the Veterans Monument, erected in 1943, features an eagle from a Cornell Steamboat Company tug on top. In front of the monument, the cast iron urn, manufactured by J.W. Fiske of New York, once graced the front of the mansion and was donated to the park by the Rice family.

**29 THOMAS CORNELL CARRIAGE HOUSE** *50 Post Street* J.A. Wood (1837-1910), leading architect in the Mid-Hudson Valley in the latter 19th century, designed the carriage house in the Second Empire style with a mansard roof and round-arched windows. The original three-part structure had a three-bedroom house in



the left wing, a stable in a no-longer-extant right wing, and a carriage house with a very high mansard in the center. Iron cresting crowning all of the mansards is now missing. Wood designed other prominent Kingston buildings including the New York State Armory, 1878-1879 (Midtown Neighborhood Center), 467 Broadway; former Stuyvesant Hotel, Fair and John St., 1910; the office of prominent bluestone dealers Simeon and William B. Fitch, Wilbur, 1870; and several churches.

### 30 WEST UNION STREET ROW HOUSES

*Between Post Street and Broadway.* The row of Greek Revival brick houses predates the Civil War.



### 31 LOWER BROADWAY COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS 101, 65, 63, 61 Broadway

Flanking the west side of Broadway, these Italianate style commercial buildings with bracketed eaves are representative of the late 19th century architecture that populated Rondout prior to urban renewal in the 1960s. They feature cast-iron piers, bluestone sills and cast-iron lintels on the upper stories. Of particular importance is #101, the former Reher Bakery, (*pictured above*), being converted to the Reher Center for Immigrant Culture and History.

*Nearby by Car...*

### 32 CHESTNUT STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

*West Chestnut, East Chestnut and Livingston Streets*

The more affluent members of the Rondout business community built homes in this neighborhood. Hudson River School artist Jervis McEntee and business magnate Samuel D. Coykendall both lived on West Chestnut Street.



*The Coykendall Mansion, designed by Calvert Vaux, under construction on West Chestnut Street c. 1895.*

### 33 ST. MARY'S ROMAN CATHOLIC

**CHURCH** 162 Broadway The Gothic Revival church was built in 1848 mainly for Irish immigrant D. & H. Canal workers who had formed a parish in 1835. Designed by Brooklyn architect Patrick C. Keely, responsible for more than 500 other Catholic churches throughout New York State, the original church had pinnacles and an ornamented steeple. They were removed when the church underwent alterations c.1924, the same time the Gothic Revival rectory and convent were built. The school was built in 1913.



**34 KINGSTON POINT PARK** *Foot of Delaware Avenue (pictured above)* Originally called Columbus Point, on October 16, 1777, it was the landing site for the British troops who burned the village of Kingston. In 1897, transportation mogul Samuel D. Coykendall opened Kingston Point Park to promote ridership on his trains and trolleys. The park's Romantic-style landscaping by Downing Vaux, and carousel, ferris wheel, dance pavilion, boating lagoons and other amusements drew thousands of people daily in its glory days. Hudson River Day Line passengers disembarked here to later board Coykendall's Ulster and Delaware trains for the Catskills, while locals arrived via his trolley line. Closed in 1931, the park's landscaping has been restored in recent years by the Kingston Rotary Club.

### 35 SIMEON AND WILLIAM B. FITCH

**BUILDING** 540 Abeel Street

The office of the Simeon and William B. Fitch Bluestone Company, the 1870 bluestone building served as a striking advertisement for the business. Noted architect J. A. Wood added design elements such as polychrome arches and an iron-crested mansard roof that lend the building a non-industrial appearance. An adjacent yard was once filled with slabs of bluestone waiting shipment by boat from Rondout.

# KINGSTON

## *First Capital of New York State*

The first European settlers arrived in 1652, giving Kingston the status of third oldest city in New York State. In 1658 they built a village behind a 14-foot high wall on the bluff where uptown Kingston sits today. The wall is gone but the streets of the village remain laid out as they were originally. Known as the Stockade Area, it is a National Historic District.

Kingston is also the first capital of New York State. In 1777, a fledgling state government fled here to escape the British and the State of New York was born that year in the Stockade Area. The county courthouse was the site of the writing and adoption of the New York State Constitution, the inauguration of New York's first elected governor George Clinton, and the first New York State court session presided over by John Jay. Both the Senate and Assembly convened here also.

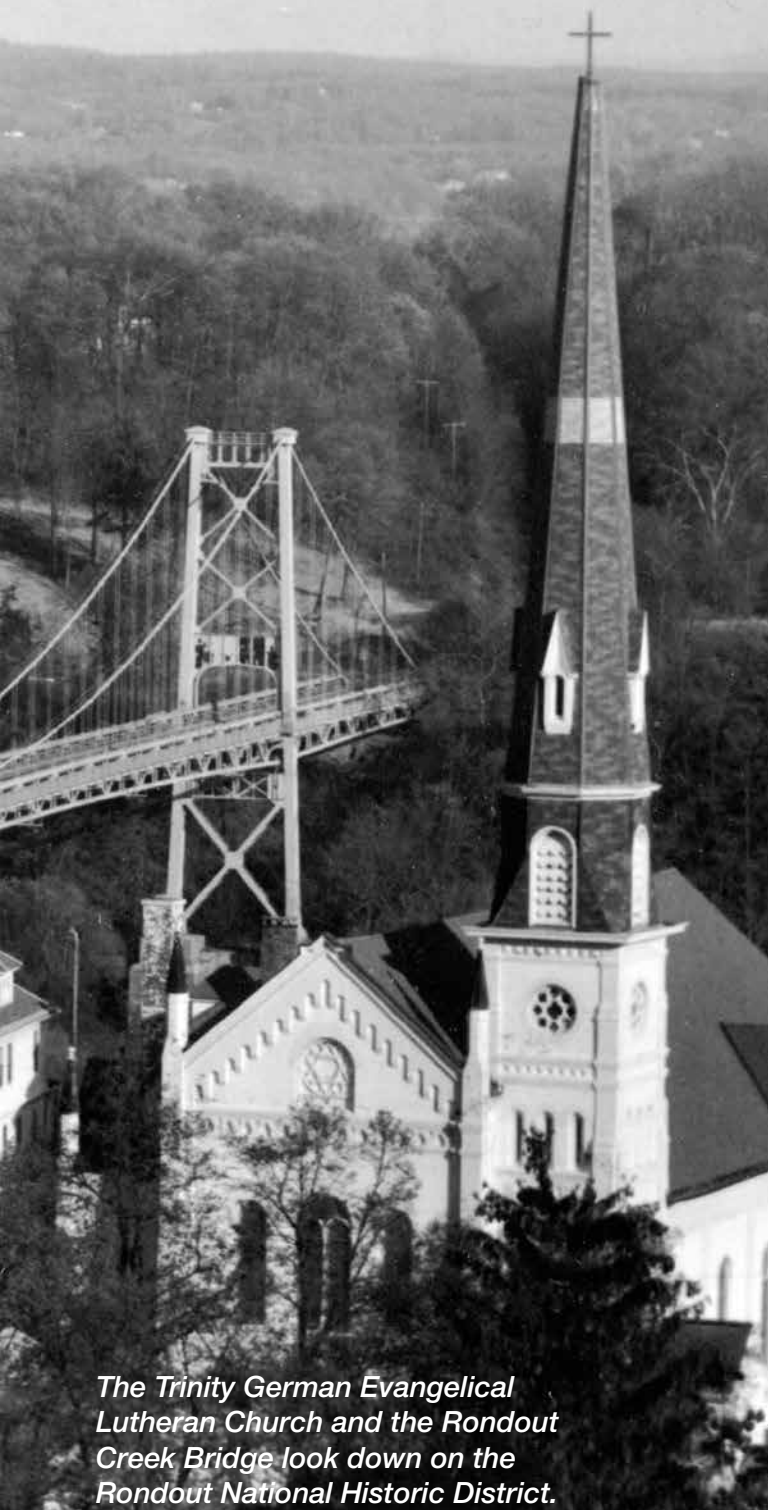


*The Senate House State Historic Site on the corner of Clinton Avenue and North Front Streets in the Stockade Historic District.*

A walking tour guide is available to lead you through the streets of the Stockade National Historic District, still populated today with stone houses that witnessed this illustrious chapter in Kingston's history.

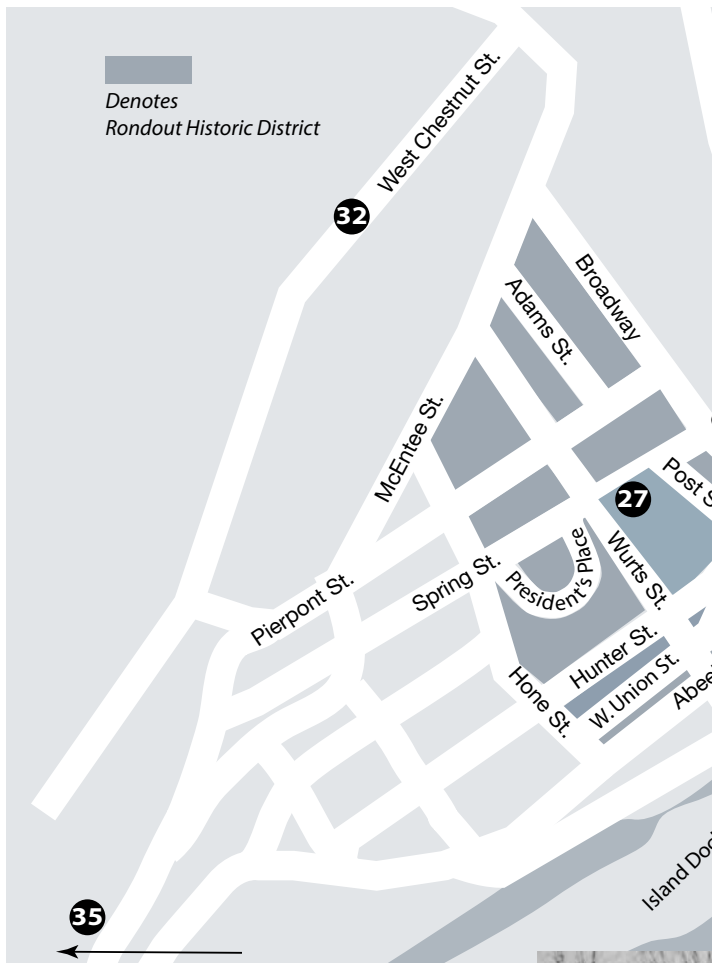
*The Friends of Historic Kingston is a volunteer membership organization dedicated to preserving and promoting the city's significant store of history and architecture. The organization maintains the c.1812 Fred J. Johnston House at 63 Main Street and the adjacent Friends of Historic Kingston Gallery on Wall Street in the Stockade Area.*

[WWW.FOHK.ORG](http://WWW.FOHK.ORG)



*The Trinity German Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Rondout Creek Bridge look down on the Rondout National Historic District.*

**#32** Chestnut Street  
Historic District



**#35** The Fitch Building

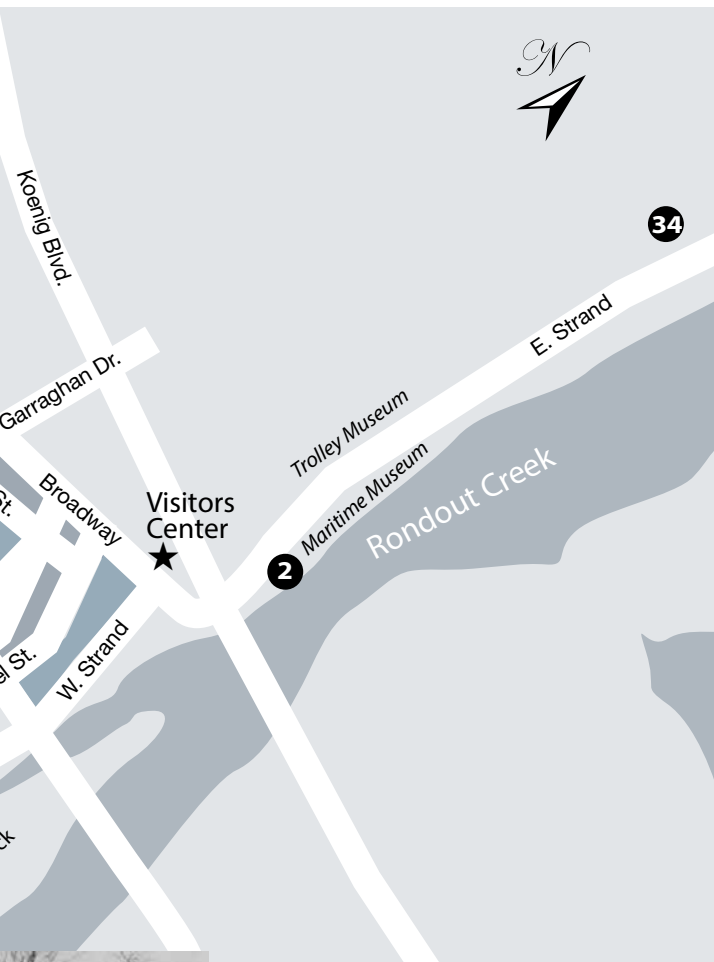


**#27** The former  
Cornell House





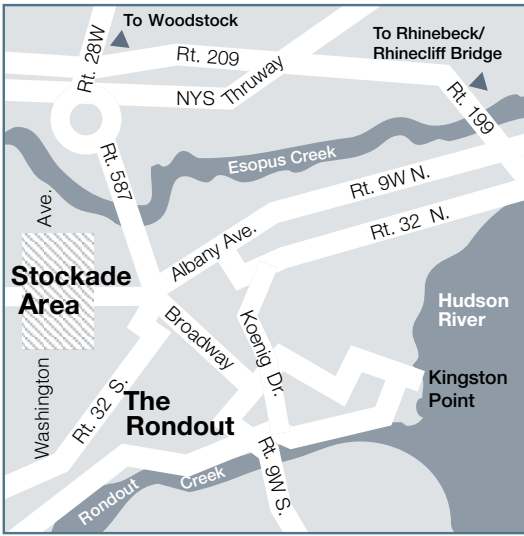
**#34**  
Kingston Point  
Park



Thomas  
House



**#2** Maritime Museum



### *Acknowledgements*

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## **Friends of Historic Kingston**

Corner of Wall and  
Main Streets  
PO Box 3763  
Kingston NY 12402

845-339-0720

[www.fohk.org](http://www.fohk.org)  
[www.ulsteralive.com](http://www.ulsteralive.com)