

Friends of Historic KINGSTON

The Friends of Historic Kingston is a volunteer membership organization founded in 1965 to preserve the city's exceptional collection of historically and architecturally significant buildings and properties. Through the efforts of FHK, four areas of Kingston have been placed on the National Register of Historic Places: the Stockade District, the Rondout-West Strand District; and two residential areas, the Chestnut Street District and Fair Street District.

The Fred J. Johnston Museum (pictured at left) is maintained and administered by the Friends of Historic Kingston. The Federal style mansion at 63 Main St. in the Stockade Area, showcases the collection of Fred J. Johnston, a noted antiques dealer and advocate for historic preservation. Eight rooms feature 18th and early 19th century furnishings and decorative arts, mostly American. The museum is open May-October. Call for hours, or to make arrangements for a group tour: 845-339-0720.

Through its Buildings Preservation Fund, FHK also buys, rehabilitates and resells threatened historic buildings. They include three in the Stockade Area: the Dr. Luke Kiersted House at 95 John St., the Federal-style frame house at 20 John St. and the Amelia Westbrook House at 292 Clinton Ave.

The Friends of Historic Kingston maintains several local history collections, and presents lectures and programs pertaining to the area's heritage.

We welcome new members. For information, call 845-339-0720.



A Walking Tour

THE A National STOCKADE Historic District AREA of KINGSTON

GETTING HERE:

Kingston may be reached from Exit 19 of the New York State Thruway; from the east side of the Hudson River via the Kingston-Rhinecliff Bridge and from NYS Routes 9W, 209 and 32.

FRIENDS OF HISTORIC KINGSTON

Corner of Wall and Main Streets
PO Box 3763, Kingston NY 12402
845-339-0720
www.fohk.org
www.ci.kingston.ny.us

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COVER PHOTO COURTESY OF THE WILLIAM O'REILLY COLLECTION

First Capital
of
New York State

a group of 60-70 European settlers living along the Esopus Creek

In 1658



The Dr. James Elmendorf House (9).

moved from the lowlands to the bluff above. Board by board, they took their barns and houses down, carted them

uphill and rebuilt them behind a 14-foot high wall. They were ordered to move for their safety by the Colonial Governor, Peter Stuyvesant, who selected the site because its height on three sides afforded natural protection. Land disputes between the settlers and the Esopus Indians, farming side by side for about five years, had brought both sides to the brink of war.

The settlers built the 1,200' x 1,300' wall in three weeks from tree trunks pounded into the ground. By day, the men left their walled village, called Wiltwyck, to go out to farm their fields in the lowlands, but the women and children were confined to life within the stockade. The villagers

lived this way until 1664 when a peace treaty was signed ending the Second Esopus War.

Though no longer needed, the stockade was left standing until the late 17th century. Remnants of the wall on East Front St., now Clinton Ave., were found during an archaeological dig in 1971. The streets of the original village, however, remain laid out just as they were in 1658, and today, they are a State and National Historic District, and the heart of uptown Kingston.

The rough wood houses and barns of the original village of Wiltwyck are long gone, but 21 Pre-Revolutionary War houses still stand within the Stockade Area. These stone houses are unique to Kingston and the surrounding area and are found nowhere else in North America. Today, they are still used as homes and offices, a testament to their sturdiness and timeless design. Many began as a single room with a loft above and were gradually expanded vertically and horizontally. Some were given "facelifts" by 19th century owners who added Victorian adornments such as raised Gothic gables and ginger-bread trim. But the simple limestone and mortar houses built with materials hauled right from the fields, are still very visible.

If these stones could talk, they would tell you how they watched the government of New York State

born within their walls in 1777 when Kingston was declared the first state capital and hosted the Senate, Assembly and Constitutional Convention. You can stand in the room in the 1676 Abraham Van Gaasbeek House where the Senate met, and in front of the Ulster County Courthouse where the townspeople gathered on April 22, 1777 to hear the newly adopted State Constitution read from the front steps. Here too, Chief Justice John Jay administered the oath of office to New York State's first governor, George Clinton, an Ulster County native. You can visit his gravesite just down the street in the Old Dutch Church cemetery.

On October 16, 1777, these houses were burned when British troops invaded Kingston, torching over 300 homes, barns and other buildings. The state government was forced to move from Kingston, but the resilient residents, stone by stone, rebuilt their village, still a vibrant neighborhood two centuries later.

Enjoy your walk through it today.

The Stockade Area Walking Tour ▲

"the streets of the original village remain laid out just as they were in 1658..."



The Cornelius Tappen House (11).

WILL FALLER

JAMES BLECKER

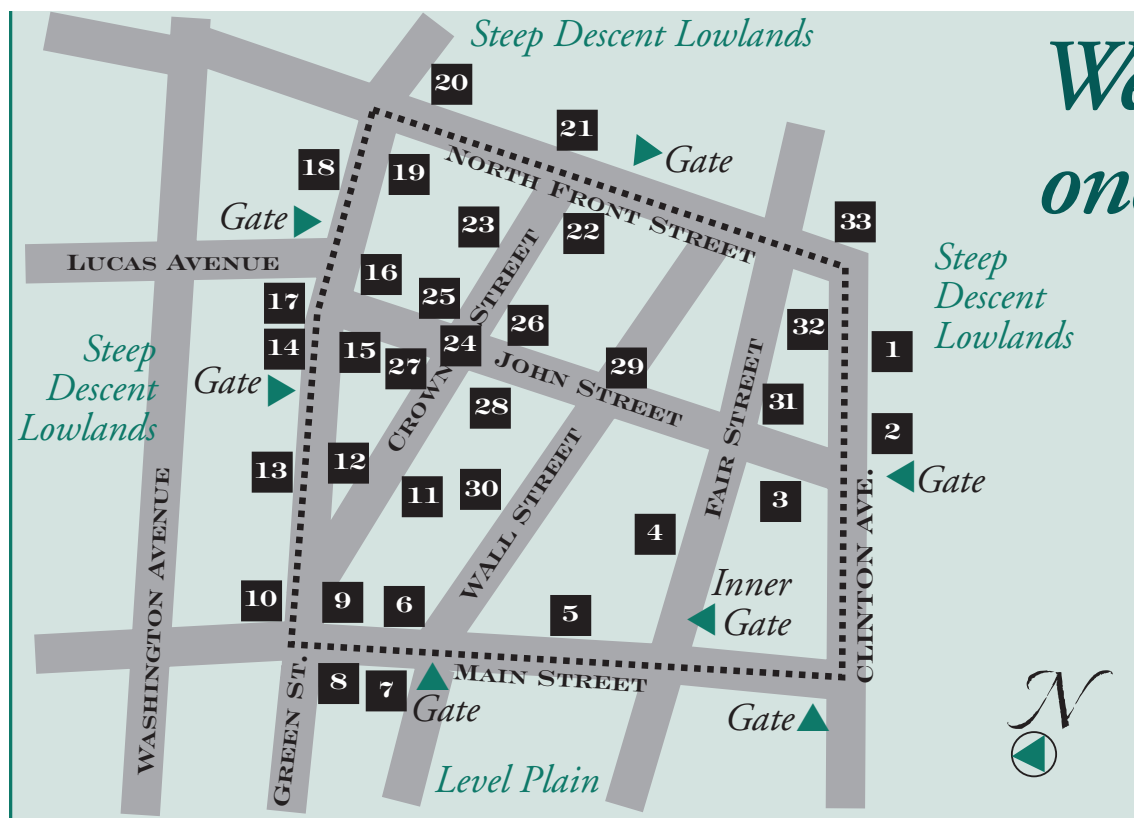
WILL FALLER

Begin your walk anywhere, but a good place to start is at the Visitor Center in the north-east corner of the Stockade Area. Walk south on Clinton Ave., originally East Front St., along which the east wall of the stockade ran. Note the height of the land, which offered natural protection on this side as well as on the west (Green St.) and north (N. Front St.). Only the south side was not on elevated land. There were six gates in the wall which allowed the men to leave the Stockade Area to farm their fields in the lowlands.

Turn right at John St., the southern boundary of the original stockade, then left on Fair St. to Main St.. This became the southern boundary when the Stockade Area was enlarged for the last time in 1676, bringing its perimeter to just under one mile.

Turn right on Main St. and as you walk by the churchyard, take time to look at the inscriptions, many in Dutch, on the tombstones of the early settlers. Cross Wall St. and continue westward to Green St., turning right again. Then, follow the arrows on the brochure map, or walk whichever way your eye is drawn. Historic houses are everywhere along Main, Green and Crown Streets.

1 VISITOR CENTER 308 Clinton Ave. Built in 1837 by Thomas Van Gasbeek, the Federal style house serves as the uptown Kingston Heritage Area Visitors Center. Open May - October. Restroom facilities available.



2 AMELIA WESTBROOK HOUSE 292 Clinton Ave. A Greek Revival cottage built cir. 1831 and restored by Friends of Historic Kingston. Its longest occupant was Amelia Westbrook (1880-1938).

3 20 JOHN ST. Cir. 1836 Federal style house restored by the Friends of Historic Kingston. John St. features fine architecture along its length, including several Italianate town houses (1850-60), a Queen Anne style apartment building, cir. 1890, and an 18th century Dutch style stone house hidden behind an Italianate brick front.

4 VOLUNTEER FIREMAN'S MUSEUM 265 Fair St. The former 1857 home of the Wiltwyck Hose Company, featuring antique firefighting artifacts and apparatus including an 1898 steamer.

5 OLD DUTCH CHURCH 272 Wall St. The city's oldest institution, the congregation was organized in 1659. The 1852 Renaissance Revival style church, designed by Minard LaFever is its fourth home. Noted 19th century designer Calvert Vaux called the architecture "ideally perfect." The churchyard contains tombstones dating back to 1710, and the grave of New York's first governor, George Clinton, an Ulster County native. The steeple bell, tradition says, was cast in Amsterdam in 1794 from molten copper and silver items given by families at baptismal rites.

6 FRED J. JOHNSTON MUSEUM / FRIENDS OF HISTORIC KINGSTON MUSEUM 63 Main St. The c. 1812 Federal style house, built by John Sudam, a New York State Senator, is a museum featuring the Fred J. Johnston Collection of 18th and early 19th century furnishings and decorative arts, mostly American in eight elegant room settings. Mr. Johnston (1911-93) saved the house from demolition in 1937. The gallery of the adjacent FHK Museum features local history and art exhibits.

7 DR. CORNELIUS ELMENDORF HOUSE 255 Wall St. The original house facing Main St., was built in 1725, but the first floor was later much altered for commercial use. The addition facing Wall St. is a modern but faithful reproduction done by using stone taken from the back of the original house. The building has housed a variety of businesses from a bakery to law offices.

8 TOBIAS SWART HOUSE 74 Main St. The original stone front has been covered with a brick facade, but the limestone walls are still visible on the side. Next door, 78 Main St. is a good example of the stepped gable as it was used on an early 19th century brick house.

9 DR. JAMES ELMENDORF HOUSE 77 Main St. An example of an early 18th century stone house that has undergone a "facelift" and enlargement. The roof, second-story windows and doorway are in the Gothic Revival style of 1830-40, and the stone has been covered with a veneer.

10 JACOB TREMPER HOUSE Green and Main Sts. An early 18th century mansion-scale building boasting 35 rooms and 10 fireplaces. The original hip roof was replaced with a mansard roof cir. 1860-70 when the French Empire style became fashionable. The porches are also post-Civil War additions.

11 CORNELIUS TAPPEN HOUSE 10 Crown St. Reputed to be one of the oldest houses still extant in the Stockade Area, the "salt-box" style house with its uncut and uncoursed stones is an example of a "rubble" house. Burned by the British in 1777, it retains some of its original windows. Kingston's first post office was located here. Slated for demolition in the 1970's as part of uptown

"urban renewal," the house was rescued by Heritage Savings Bank who bought and restored the building as a banking facility.

12 HENRY SLEIGHT HOUSE At the pie-shaped junction of Green and Crown Sts. The original house was built in the late 1600's but enlarged shortly afterward. The rear of the house is the older portion and retains a bee hive oven seen in the right exterior wall. The house has a fine Federal style cornice and front entrance way with leaded glass sidelights and transom. The Dutch doors and hardware are original. Since 1909, it has been the headquarters of the Wiltwyck Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution.

13 JUDGE LUCAS ELMENDORF HOUSE 111 Green St. The best remaining example in the Stockade Area of an 18th century hip roofed house of mansion scale, built cir. 1790 by Ulster County's first judge (1815-21). Also a three-term Congressman (1797-1803), he was an associate of Thomas Jefferson's. The 21-room mansion has three cellars, possibly used as living quarters for slaves who reputedly built the house. Its most notable feature is the baroque stone entrance way.

14 COLONEL ABRAHAM HASBROUCK HOUSE 135 Green St. The Lt. Colonel, who served with the Northern Militia of Ulster County during the American Revolution, lived here from 1735-1776 when the house, along with many of its neighbors, was badly damaged by a fire which started in the attic. Later rebuilt, the early duplex, retains its original entrance canopies, Dutch doors and flat-panel shutters. Dormers are later additions.

15 GERRETT VAN KEUREN HOUSE 138 Green St. Built cir. 1725, it was damaged by the Hasbrouck fire in 1776 and again in 1777 when the British burned Kingston. It was completely and authentically restored in the early 1920's, and is considered the purest example in the Stockade Area of an early Dutch style house (long, low, 1 1/2 stories).

16 DR. LUKE KIERSTED HOUSE 95 John St. Restored by the Friends of Historic Kingston, this is the only pre-1800 clapboard house remaining in the Stockade Area, and one of the few examples of beaded siding west of Connecticut. The cornice with modillions is also notable. Much of the house is brick-lined. Dr. Kiersted practiced locally from 1767-1820.

17 EGBERT DUMOND HOUSE 147 Green St. Though built cir. 1690, the house is Federal in style, due perhaps to adaptations made after the 1777 fire when features such as the fine small-scaled cornice may have been added. The walls are 2' thick with no two rooms on the same level. A chest for concealing silver was built into the step going down into the living room. The house, named for Ulster County's first sheriff (1771-73) who lived here, was noted for having Kingston's first piano and people gathered at the window to watch Dumond's daughter Rachel play. When she married, he built the attached frame house for her.



Welcome to our neighborhood, one of the oldest in America.



18 DR. JACOBUS C. ELMENDORF HOUSE 175 Green St. The addition on the right once served as the Methodist Church at a time when the Dutch only allowed other religious denominations to hold services in private. A settler would add a meeting room to his home for that purpose.

19 ANTHONY HOFFMAN HOUSE 96 North Front St. Built in the northwest corner of the 1658 Stockade Area prior to 1679, the original house was much smaller and only 1 1/2 stories. Seams indicate east and west additions. It was possibly an early fort or lookout evidenced by musket holes formerly in the upper floor and steps in the attic leading to the roof. Nine generations of Hoffmans lived here from 1707-1908. The most notable was Anthony Hoffman, a member of the Provincial Congress in 1774 and signer of the Articles of Confederation in 1775. The house, badly deteriorated, was completely restored and opened as a restaurant in 1977.

20 FROG ALLEY HOUSE RUINS Just outside the northwest corner of the Stockade Area, the stabilized ruins of the cir. 1665 Pieter Cornelissen Louw House illustrate the simplicity and small room size of the earliest stone houses. The ruins and adjoining park are owned and maintained by Friends of Historic Kingston.

21 ANTHONY FREER HOUSE 61 North Front St. The structure of the original house, which backed up to the north stockade wall, is still visible despite adaptations for commercial use.

22 PEACE PARK Site of Jacobus S. Bryn House. During the American Revolution, the Princeton graduate commanded a company he personally outfitted. Captured in 1777, he was held as a prisoner until the end of the war.

23 ABRAHAM LOUW HOUSE 53 Crown St. A popular coffee house from 1780-1820. The large center gable is a 19th century addition.

24 *THE FOUR CORNERS At John and Crown Streets. This is the only intersection in the U.S. where 18th century stone houses stand on all four corners.

25 DR. MATTHEW JANSEN HOUSE 43 Crown St. Federal style hip roofed house built after the 1777 fire on the site of a cir. 1700 house and retains one room and the front door from the original structure. It became known as the "Ghost House" when Dr. Jansen's fiancée disappeared and he was spied one night looking at a skeleton propped in a closet. Despite the fact he used the skeleton to study anatomy, word spread that he'd murdered her. Even after she reappeared from a hastily taken trip abroad, his professional reputation was ruined. The annex on the right was built in the early 1800's.

26 FRANZ ROGGEN HOUSE 42 Crown St. Built by a Swiss immigrant cir. 1752 and lived in by his descendants until the mid-20th century. The front door contains the original etched glass. A long narrow closet just above the entrance is said to have been a hiding place for slaves, and a large beam, once part of the local hanging scaffold.

27 KINGSTON ACADEMY 35 Crown St. Founded in 1774, it was New York State's first two-year college and drew students statewide. Noted alumni include Gov. De Witt Clinton and artist John Vanderlyn. Twice-yearly oral exams, which took place in front of a large audience, began with

a parade and were followed by festive dinners and balls. The original Federal style hip roofed building has been compromised by commercial adaptations.

28 MATTHEW PERSEN HOUSE 74 John St. Built by a former sergeant in the Dutch West Indies Company, it was a public house for many years and sometimes boarded the prisoner overflow from the nearby jail. The restoration carried out by Ulster County using the latest preservation technology, revealed five structures built at different times. An archaeological dig turned up prehistoric and Dutch artifacts, and evidence of the stockade wall and the 1777 burning of Kingston by the British.

29 WALL STREET Prior to 1828, Wall St. ended at John St. There stood the mansion of Nicholas Vanderlyn, father of John Vanderlyn (1775-1852) who became an internationally known artist. When Wall St. was extended to N. Front, it developed into a commercial center of 19th century Italianate style buildings. An outstanding example is the Clermont on the SW corner. In the 1970's, the late John Pike, a noted Woodstock artist, designed the arcade on Wall and N. Front.

30 ULSTER COUNTY COURTHOUSE 285 Wall St. Built in 1818 to replace the original burned by the British in 1777. The New York State Constitution was drafted inside the original courthouse, and the first state court convened here. On its front steps, John Jay took the oath of office as New York's first Chief Justice and swore in George Clinton as the first governor. In the present courthouse, Sojourner Truth, a local slave who became a nationally known Abolitionist, sued and won her son's freedom from slavery in Alabama.

31 LOUGHRAN HOUSE 296 Fair St. An Italianate style mansion now part of the Senate House State Historic site.

32 THE 1676 SENATE HOUSE 331 Clinton Ave. The first New York State Senate met here in September and October of 1777 when the building was the home of Abraham Van Gasbeek. Built in 1676, it is the oldest public building in America. Descendants of the original builder, Wessel Ten Broeck, occupied the residence until they decided it to New York State in 1888. The adjacent museum, built in 1927, contains the largest collection of John Vanderlyn paintings, drawings and papers in the country.

33 JOHN TREMPER HOUSE 1 North Front St. Built in 1802 in the former northeast corner of the Stockade Area. The original hip roof was later changed to a mansard style.

PHOTOS ON THIS PAGE:
(Top): 1676 Senate House (32), photo by James Bleecker
(Middle): Gerrett Van Keuren House (15), photo by James Bleecker
(Bottom): Henry Sleight House (12), photo by James Bleecker