

# Architectural Traditions in the Hudson River Valley



Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, New York  
hudsonrivervalley.com



Staatshoofdgebouw, Staatsburgh State Historic Site, photo by Andrew Halpern

The Hudson River Valley is known not only for its natural beauty but its architectural heritage. It was here that architects developed early residential styles, created mountain resorts, and designed spectacular riverside estates. America's first travel guides touted these architectural wonders 150 years ago. The invitation still holds: Visit the farmhouses of Dutch and French Huguenot settlers; tour the mansions and grounds along the river; and marvel at the creations of some of the country's greatest 19th-century architects.

## Dutch, Huguenot Influences

The houses built by Dutch colonists during the 17th and early 18th centuries are the only examples of Dutch architecture in North America. Farmhouses, such as Pieter Bronck's brick residence (1663) in Coxsackie, feature distinctive pitched roofs with gable ends, prominent roof beams, and open fireplaces.

After the English took charge of the colony in 1664, Dutch building traditions continued and can still be seen at the Madam Brett Homestead (1709) in Beacon and the Luykas Van Alen House (1737) in Kinderhook.

The French Huguenots who emigrated to the banks of the Wallkill Creek and founded the settlement of New Paltz built stone houses that combined Northern European and medieval building traditions with those of their Dutch



Madam Brett Homestead, Beacon  
Steve Turner, courtesy Charles Davey LLC



Bevier-Elting House, Huguenot Street, New Paltz

neighbors. Huguenot Street, arguably the oldest street in America with its original houses, includes three with portions that date back to the 1690s: the Bevier-Elting, Jean Hasbrouck, and Abraham Hasbrouck houses. The buildings are of local stone, with steeply pitched shingled roofs and Dutch jambless fireplaces.

Today, the legacy of the Dutch colonial vernacular is kept alive in more contemporary historic buildings, many of which were influenced by Franklin Roosevelt.

In the 1930s, FDR was involved in the design of six regional post offices, three schools, his own presidential library, and Top Cottage, his retreat at Hyde Park. By promoting native fieldstone construction and using historical models for new designs, FDR helped to preserve an important architectural tradition in the Hudson River Valley.

## Origins of the Great Estates

As second- and third-generation colonists became more prosperous, many early landholdings expanded. Frederick Philipse I, a Dutch carpenter who emigrated in the 1650s, successfully acquired a large amount of land and two mill sites, the Lower Mills in Yonkers and the Upper Mills on the Pocantico River in the village of Sleepy Hollow. The core of Philipse Manor dates back to the 1680s, but its transformation into a country estate began under Frederick Philipse III, who remodeled it into a Georgian-style mansion in the 1750s.

Farther up the river, Robert Livingston acquired a royal patent for a vast tract of land in Columbia County, and one of his sons built a Georgian-style country house he named Clermont.



Philipse Manor Hall, Yonkers  
Steve Turner, AerPhoto, courtesy Charles Davey design LLC

Clermont established a new standard for the country house and the prominence of the Livingston family. Federal-era mansions, such as Ten Broeck Mansion (1789) in Albany, Boscobel (1804-07) in Cold Spring, and Locust Lawn (1814) in New Paltz, demonstrated the increasing wealth of the Hudson River Valley.



Clermont, Germantown



Boscobel, Cold Spring



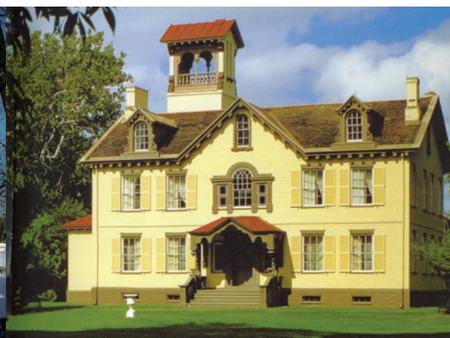
James Vanderpoel House, Kinderhook



Lyndhurst, Tarrytown  
Steve Turner, courtesy Charles Davey LLC



Dutch Reformed Church, Newburgh  
Tom Daley



Martin Van Buren Home, Kinderhook

## Residential Architecture: the Cottage and the Villa

During the first half of the 19th century, American architects experimented with a variety of styles, and it was during this period of eclecticism that the valley's most whimsical and exuberant houses were created. Sunnyside, a "cottage" in Tarrytown designed by writer Washington Irving in the 1830s, evokes this romantic spirit with its fanciful combination of Dutch, Scottish, and Spanish architecture.

Foremost among professional architects was Alexander Jackson Davis, a young New Yorker who was a partner in the country's first architectural firm, Town and Davis. By the 1830s, Davis had completed the Custom House in New York City and the Greek Revival Dutch Reformed Church in Newburgh. He also received a commission for a Hudson River estate, the Knoll in Tarrytown.



Locust Grove, Poughkeepsie

Together, Davis and Downing were responsible for developing the two key building types that would define the nation's residential architecture: the cottage and the villa. The bracketed style was an answer to the quest for a native architectural style, particularly because it could be adapted to a range of incomes.

In 1837 Davis introduced this new, romantic style in his landmark book, *Rural Residences*, which included the Blithewood gatehouse, the first published example of a board-and-batten cottage in America. Over the next 15 years, Davis' picturesque ideals were interpreted for the public in Downing's widely distributed books, *Cottage Residences* and *The Architecture of Country Houses*. When Davis remodeled Montgomery Place, the Federal-style estate in Annandale-on-Hudson, Downing served as an adviser on the gardens and grounds.

The Knoll was considered the first picturesque villa in America, and in the 1860s it became the heart of Lyndhurst, a much larger, more spectacular residence.

It was through the commission for the Blithewood estate in Annandale-on-Hudson that Davis met landscape architect Andrew Jackson Downing.



Sunnyside, Tarrytown

As tastes changed during the 1840s, accomplished architects like Davis and Richard Upjohn were called upon to remodel outdated federal-style houses into more fashionable Italianate or Tuscan villas. Davis worked with Samuel F. B. Morse to create Locust Grove in Poughkeepsie, while Upjohn designed Lindenwald, a 36-room mansion in Kinderhook commissioned by President Martin Van Buren.

## Carpenter Gothic: an American Church Style

By mid-century, the romantic ideals of Downing and Davis were common knowledge, and the board-and-batten church had become the natural style for Gothic revival church architecture in America. The light and vertical wooden buildings stood in sharp contrast to the heavy stone Gothic structures of England.

The architect Richard Upjohn earned a reputation as the most talented designer of board-and-batten churches. Upjohn was so busy by the 1850s that he published *Upjohn's Rural Architecture*, which included "do-it-yourself" church plans. A typical example of his work, St. Luke's Chapel (1857) in Clermont, displays the bell cote and intricate woodwork characteristic of this style, an important contribution to the history of American architecture.



St. Luke's Chapel, Clermont  
Tom Daley



Montgomery Place, courtesy of Historic Hudson Valley



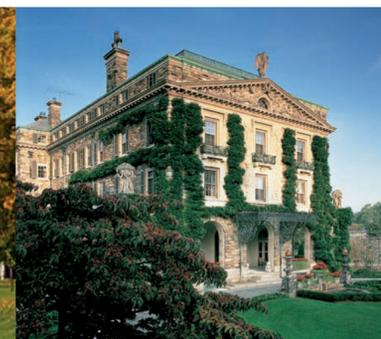
State Capitol, Albany



Wilderstein, Rhinebeck



Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site, courtesy of Bill Urbin



Kykuit, Sleepy Hollow

## A Tradition of Rural Leisure

The 1870s were an exciting time in the valley. The renowned New York architect Richard Morris Hunt designed the Stick Style Howland Library in Beacon, and his equally famous colleague, Henry Hobson Richardson, was working with a group of other designers on the New York State Capitol. A fire at the Albany City Hall nearby resulted in a new architectural commission, and Richardson created another impressive civic building. At Poughkeepsie James Renwick, Jr., designed the mansard-roofed main building for Matthew Vassar's new college for women.

As urban centers were growing, the Hudson River Valley remained an important resort destination, and, beginning in the 1870s, visitors could stay at the expansive Mohonk Mountain House in the Shawangunk Mountains.

At the same time, Frederick Clarke Withers began creating the monumental Hudson River State Hospital in Poughkeepsie, the country's first use of the High Victorian Gothic style for an institutional design. Calvert Vaux, Andrew Jackson Downing's successor, and Frederick Law Olmsted designed the innovative hospital grounds.

During the second half of the 19th century, some of the country's greatest architects brought new residential styles to the valley and renovated the old-fashioned estates of their predecessors. Vaux updated the landscape plan for Wilderstein, the Queen Anne estate in Rhinebeck, and worked with Frederic E. Church on his elaborate Persian-style residence, Olana, in Hudson. The next generation of prominent



Trailside Museum, Bear Mountain State Park

Hudson River families called on the New York architectural firm McKim, Mead and White to remodel their estates—Vanderbilt in Hyde Park and Mills in Staatsburg—into more fashionable countryseats.

Two early 20th-century sites represent the extent to which the Hudson River Valley continued to attract some of the country's greatest estates and to foster the tradition of rural leisure. Kykuit, the Rockefeller estate, boasts stunning

gardens and impressive collections of art and sculpture. Bear Mountain Inn (NPS) was built in 1915 and is among the earliest examples of a monumental rustic park lodge. It was designed by Tooker and Marsh and has been completely restored and is now open as a restaurant, inn, and conference center. And in 1917, a little known architect named Herbert Maier designed the first rustic trailside museum at Bear Mountain State Park. The museum became a prototype for rustic buildings throughout the national parks.

Visit the Hudson River Valley today and immerse yourself in the area's fascinating architectural history.

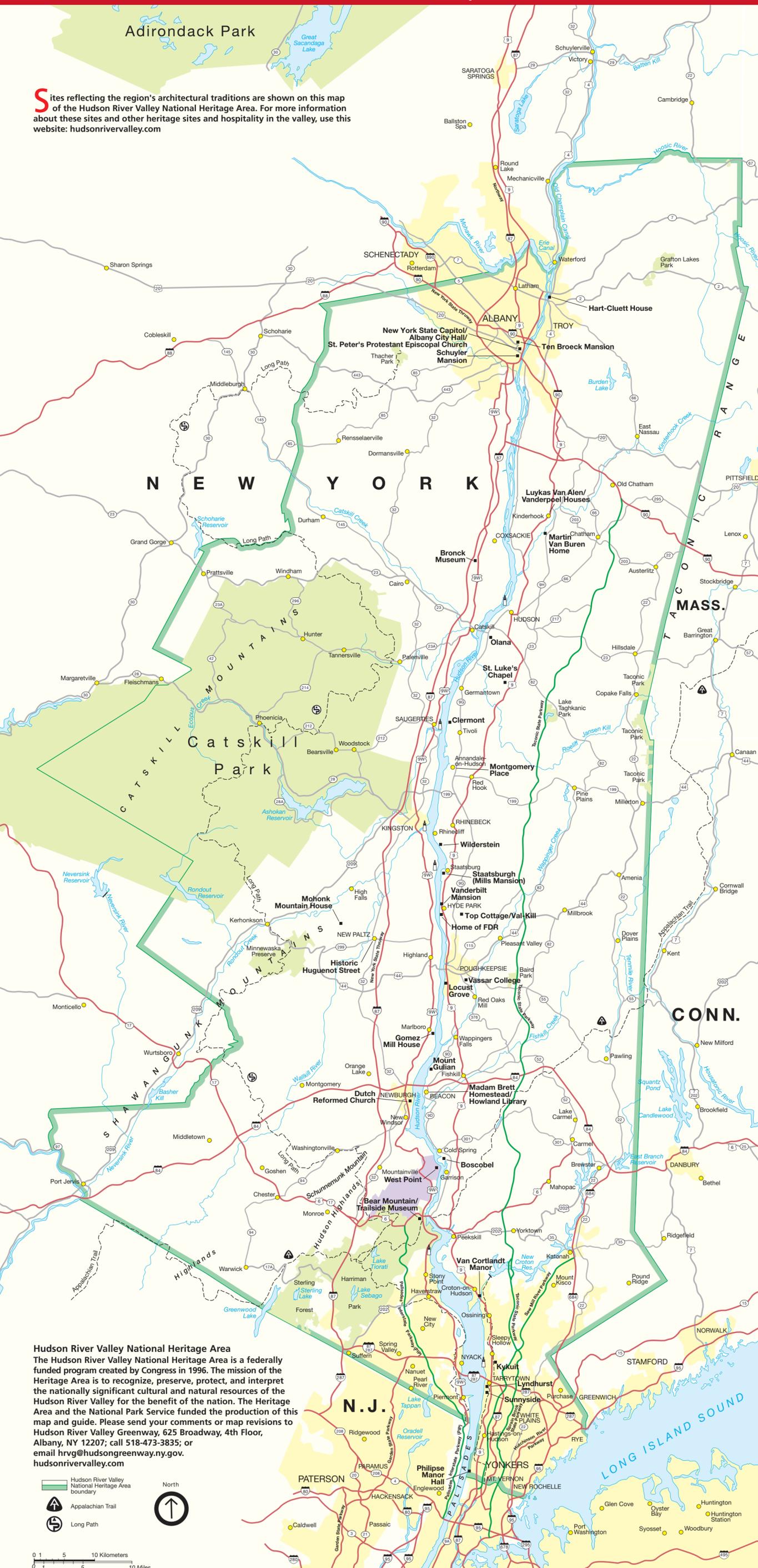
Olana, Hudson



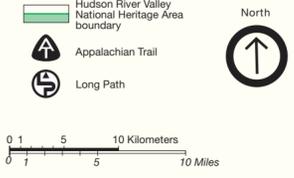


**Adirondack Park**

**S**ites reflecting the region's architectural traditions are shown on this map of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area. For more information about these sites and other heritage sites and hospitality in the valley, use this website: [hudsonrivervalley.com](http://hudsonrivervalley.com)



**Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area**  
 The Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area is a federally funded program created by Congress in 1996. The mission of the Heritage Area is to recognize, preserve, protect, and interpret the nationally significant cultural and natural resources of the Hudson River Valley for the benefit of the nation. The Heritage Area and the National Park Service funded the production of this map and guide. Please send your comments or map revisions to Hudson River Valley Greenway, 625 Broadway, 4th Floor, Albany, NY 12207; call 518-473-3835; or email [hrvg@gudsongreenway.ny.gov](mailto:hrv@gudsongreenway.ny.gov). [hudsonrivervalley.com](http://hudsonrivervalley.com)



**Upper Hudson**

**New York State Capitol**, Albany, [ogs.ny.gov](http://ogs.ny.gov)—This palatial building is a combination of popular architectural styles of the day, including Romanesque and French Renaissance. Three prominent designers—Leopold Eidlitz, Henry Hobson Richardson, and Isaac Perry—replaced the original architect, Thomas Fuller. Over three decades of construction, the building suffered from financial and political difficulties and the struggles of architectural collaboration. Richardson, with his assistant Stanford White, designed the restored Senate Chamber. The result was a magnificent interior that Richardson described as representing “simplicity and quietness.” (NHL)

**Albany City Hall**, 24 Eagle St., Albany, [albany.org](http://albany.org)—designed in the early 1880s by renowned architect H.H. Richardson

**St. Peter's Protestant Episcopal Church**, 107 State St., Albany, [steterschurhalbany.org](http://steterschurhalbany.org)—Gothic revival church designed by Richard Upjohn in 1859 (NHL)

**Schuyler Mansion**, 32 Catherine St., Albany, [schuylerfriends.org](http://schuylerfriends.org)—18th-century Georgian-style mansion, home of Maj. Gen. Philip Schuyler (NHL)

**Ten Broeck Mansion**, 9 Ten Broeck Place, Albany, [tenbroeckmansion.org](http://tenbroeckmansion.org)—18th-19th-century Federal-style estate of General Abraham Ten Broeck

**Hart-Cluett House**, 57 Second St., Troy, [rchsonline.org](http://rchsonline.org)—19th-century Federal-style townhouse with distinctive white marble facade

**James Vanderpoel House**, Route 9, Kinderhook, [cchsny.org](http://cchsny.org)—19th-century Federal-style mansion with elliptical staircase

**Luykas Van Alen House**, Route 9H, Kinderhook, [cchsny.org](http://cchsny.org)—This rare example of a Dutch 18th-century brick farmhouse has been carefully restored to its original condition. The two-room 1737 house and its 1750 additions include many features characteristic of the Dutch building tradition. (NHL)

**Martin Van Buren Home** (Lindenwald), 1013 Old Post Rd., Kinderhook, [nps.gov/mava](http://nps.gov/mava)—Retirement home of President Van Buren; 1849 addition by Richard Upjohn (NHS)

**Bronck Museum**, U.S. 9W, Coxsackie, [gchistory.org](http://gchistory.org)—includes several significant 17th- and 18th-century structures (NHL)

**Olana State Historic Site**, 5720 Route 9G, Hudson, [olana.org](http://olana.org)—Frederic E. Church and the architect Calvert Vaux collaborated on the design for the Persian-style castle at Olana, Church's estate overlooking the Hudson River. Church's artistic vision shaped Olana, which he referred to as his finest landscape. Together, Church and Vaux created a storybook retreat with views Church loved to paint. (NHL)

**Mid-Hudson**

**St. Luke's Chapel**, U.S. 9 (Old Post Rd.), Clermont—19th-century board-and-batten church designed by Richard Upjohn

**Clermont**, One Clermont Ave., Germantown, [friendsofclermont.org](http://friendsofclermont.org)—18th-century home, with 1893 additions by Michael O'Connor, of seven successive generations of the Livingston family (NHL)

**Montgomery Place**, Annandale-on-Hudson, —A Federal-style mansion dating back to 1805, Montgomery Place was transformed by Alexander Jackson Davis in the 1840s and further altered in 1863 in the neo-classical style. The house features an exterior coating of richly detailed ornament. Davis also designed outbuildings in the neo-classical, gothic revival, and “Swiss” styles. The landscape design was influenced by Andrew Jackson Downing, who contributed extensive advice on the gardens as well as plants from his Newburgh nursery. (NHL)

**Wilderstein**, 330 Morton Rd., Rhinebeck, [wilderstein.org](http://wilderstein.org)—Thomas Suckley commissioned John Warren Ritch to design this house as an Italianate villa in the 1850s. Three decades later, Suckley's son Robert hired Arnout Cannon to remodel it into a contemporary Queen Anne estate. The result is a whimsical house with an additional floor, veranda, five-story circular tower, and elaborate interiors by Joseph Burr Tiffany as well as landscaping by Calvert Vaux. Wilderstein was the home of Margaret “Daisy” Suckley, close friend of Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

**Staatsburgh** (Mills Mansion), Old Post Rd., Staatsburg, [nysparks.com](http://nysparks.com)—19th-century mansion redesigned by Stanford White for Ogden Mills

**Vanderbilt Mansion** Albany Post Road (U.S. 9), north of the village of Hyde Park, 1-800-FDR-VISIT, [nps.gov/vama](http://nps.gov/vama)—This country house was one of the finest residential projects of McKim, Mead and White's mature period. Constructed for Frederick and Louise Vanderbilt in 1895-99, the house

exhibits the Beaux Arts style in its symmetry, heavy ornamentation, and severe classicism. Most of the original furnishings and designed interiors remain intact. (NHS)

**Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt** (Springwood), Albany Post Road (U.S. 9), south of Hyde Park, 1-800-FDR-VISIT, [nps.gov/hofr](http://nps.gov/hofr)—In 1915 FDR renovated the Italianate house in which he had been born into a Georgian or Colonial Revival style mansion befitting his presidential aspirations. He also expressed his love of architecture and the local Dutch colonial style through the design of two cottages on his estate and through his work on numerous public buildings in Dutchess County. (NHS)

**Vassar College**, Main Building, Poughkeepsie, [vassar.edu](http://vassar.edu)—Designed by architect James Renwick, Jr., in 1860, the college's main building is an early example of the Mansard style in America. (NHL)

**Locust Grove**, 2683 South Rd. (U.S. 9), Poughkeepsie, [lgn.org](http://lgn.org)—Samuel F. B. Morse, founder of the National Academy of Design, had achieved a reputation as an artist by the 1840s, but it was his invention of the electromagnetic telegraph and Morse code that allowed him to purchase property for a new residence. He chose an old friend, architect Alexander Jackson Davis, to assist him in turning an existing Federal-style house into a “Tuscan” villa with dramatic views of the river. (NHL)

**Mohonk Mountain House**, 1000 Mountain Rest Rd., New Paltz, [mohonk.com](http://mohonk.com)—Mountain resort established in the 1870s on Lake Mohonk in the Shawangunks (NHL)

**Historic Huguenot Street** Huguenot Street, New Paltz, [huguenotstreet.org](http://huguenotstreet.org)—Arguably the oldest continually inhabited street in America (NHL)

**Lower Hudson**

**Gomez Mill House**, 11 Mill House Rd., Marlboro, [gomez.org](http://gomez.org)—Oldest Jewish residence in United States; 18th-century trading post

**Mount Gulian**, 145 Sterling St., Beacon, [mountgulian.org](http://mountgulian.org)—Built by a Dutch merchant in the 1730s; 18th-century barn noted for its cantilevered gables

**Howland Cultural Center**, 477 Main St., Beacon, 845-831-4988—The Howland Library, designed by Richard Morris Hunt in 1872, is a distinctive example of stick style architecture.

**Madam Brett Homestead**, 50 Van Nydeck Ave., Beacon, 845-831-6533—Dutch-style house built in 1709 and 1715

**Dutch Reformed Church**, 125 Grand St., Newburgh, —Greek Revival church designed by Alexander Jackson Davis (NHL) Interior closed.

**Boscobel**, 1601 Route 9D, Garrison, [boscobel.org](http://boscobel.org)—This neo-classical mansion features one of the country's best collections of Federal-era furniture. Designed in 1804 by States Morris Dyckman, a loyalist during the American Revolution, Boscobel reflects the style and detail of impressive London residences. The house, which originally stood about 15 miles to the south, was saved by preservationists.

**United States Military Academy**, West Point [usma.edu](http://usma.edu)—The nation's oldest military school with buildings by Richard Morris Hunt, McKim, Mead and White, and Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson (NHL)

**Bear Mountain Inn & Trailside Museum**, Bear Mountain, [nysparks.com](http://nysparks.com)—At Bear Mountain State Park, architect Herbert Maier created the nation's first trailside museum, a low, single-story building with a veneer of natural boulders set in a battered, sloping fashion. Visitors follow a path up the hill from the boathouse and through the building. The idea of diminishing the barrier between the park and the museum set a precedent for rustic buildings throughout the National Park Service.

**Van Cortlandt Manor**, South Riverside Dr., Croton-on-Hudson, [hudsonvalley.org](http://hudsonvalley.org), 18th-century stone house and tavern (NHL)

**Kykuit**, U.S. 9, Sleepy Hollow, [hudsonvalley.org](http://hudsonvalley.org)—Neo-classical home of four generations of Rockefellers (NHL)

**Lyndhurst**, 635 South Broadway, Tarrytown, [lyndhurst.org](http://lyndhurst.org)—Alexander Jackson Davis' most famous early work in the valley was the Knoll, a Gothic Revival estate. Completed in 1842, the Knoll introduced a new kind of picturesque architecture to the region. In the 1860s Davis expanded the mansion with an asymmetrically balanced scheme including a five-story tower. Today, Lyndhurst is considered the most significant extant Gothic Revival house in America. (NHL)

**Washington Irving's Sunnyside**, West Sunnyside Lane, off U.S. 9, Tarrytown, [hudsonvalley.org](http://hudsonvalley.org)—In the 1830s, the author of “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” created a romantic landscape and eclectic cottage combining many architectural styles. Sunnyside exudes the charming qualities of Irving's tales and brings to life his literary legacy. (NHL)

**Philippe Manor Hall**, 29 Warburton Ave. (at Dock St.), Yonkers, [nysparks.com](http://nysparks.com)—This Anglo-Dutch Baroque house, constructed in three phases between the 1680s and 1740s, boasts the earliest known east coast example of an in situ papier-mâché Rococo ceiling from the 1750s, wood carvings by Henry Hardcastle, and a Gothic Revival chamber designed in 1869. The Manor Hall was frequented by George Washington and was an inspiration for his Mount Vernon.

NHL = National Historic Landmark  
 NHS = National Historic Site

*This brochure was produced by historian-writer Sarah Allaback; editor Bruce Hopkins; Kirilloff Design; and Mapping Specialists. 2006 Updated in 2016*