



Westchester County Guide to
African American
History & Heritage

Hudson Valley Region

visit
Westchester
County ny

VisitWestchesterNY.com

Enslaved Africans' Rain Garden¹

How to Get Around

Westchester County is easily accessible by major interstate highways and thoroughfares including I-87 (New York State Thruway), I-95 (New England Thruway), I-287 (Cross-Westchester Expressway) and I-684.

Westchester County Airport (HPN) is conveniently located in the center of the County.

Public Transport Provides Easy Access:



Rail Transit: For Metro-North information, schedules and fares call 800-METRO-INFO or go to mta.info. Plus, Zipcars are available at many rail stations for your convenience.



Bus Transit: The County's Bee-Line bus shuttles and BxM4C Westchester-Manhattan Express provide many options. Call (914) 813-7777 for route and schedule information | beelinebus.com

Additional bus service is available from surrounding counties into Westchester: Tappan Zee Express—Rockland County (845) 364-3333. Putnam Area Rapid Transit—Putnam County (845) 878-RIDE. I-Bus—CT Transit (203) 327-7433.

Hotels and Accommodations

For a complete look at our hotels and accommodations options, visit VisitWestchesterNY.com.

Westchester County Parks Department

450 Saw Mill River Rd., Ardsley
(914) 864-PARK | parks.westchestergov.com

Westchester County Tourism & Film

148 Martine Ave., White Plains
(914) 995-8500 or (800) 833-9282
info@visitwestchesterny.com | visitwestchesterny.com

Westchester County Tourism & Film is the official destination marketing organization for the County and can assist you plan your trip.

Annual Celebrations

January

- MLK Jr. Legacy Youth Awards luncheon and awards ceremony | aamw.org

February—Black History Month

- Trailblazer Awards at the Jay Heritage Center, Rye | africanamerican.westchestergov.com

March

- MLK Jr. Literary Celebration at the Jay Heritage Center, Rye. Author readings and reception | awah.org

May

- Pinkster, Philipsburg Manor, Sleepy Hollow | hudsonvalley.org
- Memorial Day Ceremony at the African American Cemetery, North Street, Rye | facebook.com/FOAAC

June

- Juneteenth Parades and Festivals, White Plains, Yonkers, Peekskill, Mount Vernon and Ossining
- African American Heritage Festival, Kensico Dam | parks.westchestergov.com

November

- Veterans' Day Observation at the African American Cemetery, North Street, Rye | facebook.com/FOAAC

December

- Kwanzaa celebration | jackandjillmhv.org

Acknowledgements

The members of the Westchester County African American Advisory Board are: Barbara Edwards, Esq., Chair; Ronald Abad; Rabab Abdalla; Camele Barrett; Odethe Bennett; Jill Bradshaw-Soto; Rev. Frank Coleman; Astara Crews; Kecia Gaither, M.D.; Christopher D. Grant; Khalia Jones; Phillip Morton; Michelle A. Nicholas; Dwayne Norris; Shane A. Osinloye; Marilyn Price; Tamika Rose; Monica A. Scantlebury, M.D.; Kisha D. Skipper; Barrett Stokes; David Thomas

Photos by Kim Crichlow.



A Message from the County Executive

African American history is deeply ingrained in the heart of Westchester County history. Our County, located in the scenic Hudson Valley, is home to 16 historical landmarks on our African American Heritage Trail, dating back to the 17th century. These landmarks enhance our appreciation for the significant legacies of a people whose struggles, aspirations and accomplishments have helped build the nation.

We encourage you to explore our County, learn more about our history through the numerous organizations that celebrate African American traditions and experience all Westchester has to offer.

To learn more about African American historical sites or to learn about the County's African American advisory board, visit africanamerican.westchestergov.com.

Westchester
gov.com

George Latimer
Westchester County Executive

You can also visit the African American History in Westchester Commemoration Committee Facebook page at facebook.com/AAHW400. For more information about Westchester County, see VisitWestchesterNY.com.



African American Cemetery



Chappaqua Friends Meeting House



Ella Fitzgerald Statue



Foster Memorial AME Zion Church



Jack Peterson Memorial



Jay Heritage Center

Immerse Yourself in the Culture

1 | African American Cemetery

The African American Cemetery was established in Rye when its site was deeded to the town on June 27, 1860, by Underhill and Elizabeth Halsted, "(to) be forever after kept and used for the purposes of a cemetery or burial place for the colored inhabitants of the said Town of Rye and its vicinity free and clear of any charge therefore." In the latter part of his life, Underhill Halsted became a fervent follower of the Methodist movement, which was profoundly opposed to slavery. However, being anti-slavery did not mean one was not prejudiced. Such bias led African Americans to separate from the Methodist church and form their own Methodist organization, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AME Zion). The presence of two AME Zion churches in nearby Mamaroneck and Port Chester could have also motivated Halsted to gift the cemetery to local free persons of color.

The cemetery includes carved and dressed tombstones, with 35 indicating the interment of a war veteran. African American veterans of each of America's armed conflicts from the Civil War through World War II are buried here. One such soldier was World War I veteran Francis M. Husted, who died in 1947. A former laborer, he was a member of the 370th Colored Regiment, the only unit in the U.S. Army with a full complement of African American officers from colonel to lieutenant. This unit was called the "Black Devils" by the Germans because of their courage and the "Partridges" by the French because of their proud bearing. In 1983, the African American Cemetery was listed as a Westchester County Tercentennial Historic Site, and in 2003 it was listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Accessed through Greenwood Union Cemetery, 215 North Street, Rye | Open to the public. [facebook.com/FOAAC/](https://www.facebook.com/FOAAC/)

2 | Chappaqua Friends Meeting House

The Chappaqua Friends Meeting House, circa 1753, is the oldest Quaker meeting house standing in Westchester County. In the early 1750s, members of the Society of Friends, or Quakers, began to challenge the morality of slavery in colonial New York. In 1767, the Purchase community of Friends decreed that it was forbidden for its members to own slaves, stating that "[It] is not consistent with Christianity to buy or sell our fellow men for slaves." The Society of Friends resolved that all of its members should release their slaves and seek to provide them with the means to support themselves and their families. The Quaker opposition to slavery served as a primary catalyst in its abolition in post-Revolutionary War New York.

420 Quaker Road, Chappaqua | (914) 238-3170 chappaquafriends.org | Open Sundays 10:30 am-noon or by appointment.

3 | Ella Fitzgerald Statue

Dubbed "The First Lady of Song," Ella Fitzgerald (1917-1996) was the most popular female jazz singer in the United States for more than half a century. As an African American woman, she experienced not only the adulation of this country, but also some of its most hideous and persistent moral defects.

Raised in Yonkers, Ella lived and worked at a time when, for her, entrance to most white-owned clubs was through the back door. She literally conquered the bigoted, the insensitive and the racist with love through song while serving as an ambassador for both music and our country.

African American artist Vinnie Bagwell created a bronze statue entitled "The First Lady of Jazz, Ella Fitzgerald" in her honor in 1996. It stands next to the Metro-North train station in Yonkers.

Yonkers Metro-North Railroad Station Plaza
5 Buena Vista Avenue, Yonkers

4 | Enslaved Africans' Rain Garden *(cover image)*

The Enslaved Africans' Rain Garden is an exhibition of five life-size bronze sculptures depicting freed slaves. The sculptures, named "Themba the Boatman," "I'Satta," "Bibi," "Sola" and "Olumide," reside in a half-acre rain garden along the Hudson River esplanade in Yonkers. The installation allows guests to view the art from 360 degrees and appreciate the landscaped greenery of the work. The exhibition is the vision of Yonkers Artist Vinnie Bagwell. It is focused on remembering the lives, feelings and the legacy of men, women and children who were stripped of their human rights and were among the first to be manumitted/freed by law 64 years before the Emancipation Proclamation.

20 Water Grant Street, along the Yonkers waterfront enslavedafricansraingarden.org

5 | Foster Memorial AME Zion Church

Amanda and Henry Foster, the Reverend Jacob Thomas and Hiram Jimerson founded Foster Memorial African Methodist Episcopal AME Zion Church, a stop on the Underground Railroad, in Tarrytown in 1860. Amanda Foster, born in Albany in 1807, is considered the "Mother of the Church." She was the driving force in the formation of the congregation, whose first meetings were held in her Tarrytown confectionery. In possession of her "free papers," documents that permitted African Americans prior to the abolishment of slavery to freely travel, Amanda obtained employment as a nurse to the children of the governor of Arkansas. While in Arkansas, she contributed to the Underground Railroad movement by using her "free papers" to help a young fugitive slave girl escape. Foster moved back to New York in 1837. During the Civil War, members of Foster AME Zion helped provide food and shelter to fugitive slaves escaping to Canada.

Like most AME Zion churches, Foster AME Zion was and still is a religious and social crossroads for the African American community, providing a meeting place for worship and a place for public interaction and service. In 1982, the church was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. It was recognized as a Westchester County Tricentennial Historic Site in 1983.

90 Wildey Street, Tarrytown [nps.gov/nr/travel/underground/ny5.htm](https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/underground/ny5.htm) | Open to the public. Call (914) 909-4618 for additional information.

6 | Jack Peterson Memorial

The Jack Peterson Memorial acknowledges a militiaman of African descent who, in 1780, fired on a boat of British soldiers attempting to come ashore. Peterson alerted officers at Fort Lafayette, who mobilized forces. A cannon greatly damaged the British ship, which was then unable to retrieve one of its commanders who had snuck ashore. The capture of this Major Andre led to the uncovering of the Benedict Arnold plot.

Croton Point Park, 1A Croton Point Ave., Croton-on-Hudson

7 | Jay Heritage Center at the Jay Estate

The Jay Heritage Center occupies the site of the home of Founding Father, peacemaker and jurist John Jay. Archaeology shows it was also the home and burial site of several generations of people, both free and enslaved, who worked for the Jay family. We know many of their names—Mary, Clarinda, Plato and Peet. One man, Caesar Valentine, inspired the very first significant African American character in an American novel—James Fenimore Cooper's book, "The Spy."

Jay was a founder and president of the Manumission Society of New York, which advocated abolition of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade; he also helped established the first African Free Schools to educate children of emancipated men and women. As governor of New York, Jay signed the Gradual Emancipation Act into law in 1799.

Jay's son, Peter Augustus, was profoundly anti-slavery and also served as president of the Manumission Society. As a delegate to the New York Constitutional Convention of 1821, he called for the extension of suffrage to African Americans in one of the most eloquent speeches of the convention.

The Jay Estate hosts a full calendar of programs related to African American History. The Trailblazers Awards Ceremony is held at the site annually. The venue is also the home of the acclaimed interactive play "Striving for Freedom," which is offered for free to all middle schools in Westchester County; bus transportation for this cultural field trip is also free through New York State Parks.

210 Boston Post Road, Rye | (914) 698-9275 jayheritagecenter.org

1838 Jay Mansion | April 1-October 31, Sun. 2-5 pm; other times by appointment. | Free admission.

1907 Carriage House Visitor Center | Jun. 1-Sept. 30, Wed.-Fri. 10 am-4 pm; Oct. 1-May 31, Wed.-Thurs. 10 am-4 pm. Free admission.

8 | John Jay Homestead State Historic Site

After growing up in the Westchester community of Rye, Founding Father John Jay helped to establish a homestead for himself and his family in the northern Westchester community of Bedford. Enslaved and free Africans lived and worked at Jay properties in Bedford, New York City, Albany, Fishkill and Rye throughout the 18th and early 19th centuries.

John Jay Homestead is a National Historic Landmark and is operated by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The Education and Visitor Center includes a main exhibit gallery with a welcome desk and gift shop, a map-model of the property, computer kiosks with exhibit content and period news magazines featuring articles relevant to John Jay's life. A 2011 addition to the building features a video viewing area, an activity center with a replica governess's cart similar to one the Jay children rode in, and discovery boxes full of interesting items. Around the corner in the horse stalls, visitors can see realistic models of horses and experience a sound and light show emphasizing the importance of horses to the Jay family and Bedford Farm.

400 Jay Street/Route 22, Katonah | (914) 232-8119 or (914) 232-5651 | www.johnjayhomestead.org

Grounds open year-round, sunrise to sunset.
Free admission | Tours Wed. through Sun., May to Oct.: Thurs. through Sat., Nov. to Apr. | Adults \$10, seniors and students \$7, members and children under 12 free.

9 | Monument to First Rhode Island Regiment

Erected in 1982 as a result of the pioneering research and activism of John H. Harmon, this monument is dedicated to the valiant and courageous soldiers of the First Rhode Island Regiment, which was composed predominantly of enslaved African American soldiers who had enlisted in the American Continental Army to earn their freedom. During the American Revolution, these men fought courageously to defend American liberty against the aggressions of British tyranny. Several dozen soldiers of the regiment were killed and wounded at the Battle of Pines Bridge in Yorktown on May 14, 1781.

First Presbyterian Church (Burial Grounds)
2880 Crompond Road, Yorktown Heights
(914) 245-2186 | Open to the public. | Parking available.

10 | The Neuberger Museum of Art, the African Art Collection

African art has been an integral part of the Neuberger Museum of Art since it opened in 1974. In 1999, the collection almost doubled in size with the major gift of 153 works from the collection of the late Lawrence Gussman, a notable collector and a resident of Scarsdale, New York. Gussman's interest in Africa began in 1957 when he met Dr. Albert Schweitzer at his hospital in Labaréné (Gabon).

The collection is strongest in the arts of central Africa. However, major objects offer artistic insights into more than 30 cultures and span a geographic area from Mali to Mozambique.

735 Anderson Hill Road, Purchase
(914) 251-6100 | neuberger.org

Wed. noon-8 pm (fall and spring semesters).
Thurs.-Sun. noon-5 pm. Adults \$5, seniors \$3, members, children under 12 and active-duty | military personnel free.

11 | Philipsburg Manor

Philipsburg Manor, a property of Historic Hudson Valley, is a nationally significant late 17th and early 18th-century milling and trading complex that was part of a vast 52,000-acre estate owned by the Anglo-Dutch Philipse family. Enslaved individuals of African descent operated the commercial center of the estate in what is now the village of Sleepy Hollow.

Today, costumed interpreters demonstrate and talk about various aspects of colonial life that affected the culture and economy of those who lived and labored at Philipsburg Manor. The interpreters offer regular performances of vignettes dramatizing aspects of African slavery. In addition, the site offers popular school programs and a lively calendar of special events. Visitors experience hands-on tours of the water-powered gristmill, manor house, barn, activity center and slave garden. The visitor center includes a shop and cafe.

Route 9, Sleepy Hollow | (914) 366-6900 Mon.-Fri.; (914) 631-3992 weekends | hudsonvalley.org

Early May-mid-Nov. Wed.-Sun. Timed tours only 10:30 am-3 pm (3:30 pm Sat.-Sun. and holidays). Adults \$12, seniors (65+) \$10, students (18-25) \$10, children 3-17 \$6, members and children under 3 free; add \$2 surcharge if tickets are purchased onsite or by phone.

12 | Philipse Manor Hall State Historic Site

Philipse Manor Hall, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, was a major component of the original Philipsburg Manor and served as its Lower Mill complex. As master of Philipsburg Manor, Frederick Philipse, along with his wife, Margaret Hardenbroeck, were Westchester's premier examples of 17th-century large-scale New York slaveholders. They were deeply involved in both slave trading and slaveholding.

Prior to the Revolutionary War, several generations of the Philipse family were leading merchants in New York's commercial life. The records of their businesses and lives indicate that enslaved Africans were vital to their success and the development of Westchester.

The Philipses' global commercial activities placed Westchester at the center of the "Golden Circuit," better known as the transatlantic and Indian Ocean slave trade to the West Indies, America and Europe.

29 Warburton Avenue at Dock Street, Yonkers
(914) 965-4027 | nysparks.com/historic-sites/37/details.aspx
Tues.-Sat. from Apr. to Oct., noon-4:30 pm; Tues.-Sat. from Nov. to Mar., noon-3:30 pm. Adults \$5, seniors and students \$3, children under 12 free.

13 | St. Frances AME Zion Church

St. Frances African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Zion Church is the oldest African American church and one of the oldest of all denominations in Port Chester. It was founded in 1849 by a group of residents of Port Chester, Mamaroneck and New Rochelle who met for prayer at the home of the Banks family on South Main Street. Services were guided by a circuit preacher, Father Tappan. As their congregation grew, they moved to King Street, and in 1856 Rev. Jephthah Barcroft became their first full-time pastor. Two iterations of the church were destroyed by fire before the current building was erected in 1889 on the site of a former schoolhouse. Named for its largest benefactor, Mrs. Frances Quintard, the church continues to be a vibrant community center and will celebrate its 175th anniversary in 2024.

During the 19th and 20th centuries, the church often hosted gatherings of the AME Zion Church's New York Conference. Generations of trustees of St. Frances were also longtime stewards of the historic Rye African Cemetery. Many members have been dynamic leaders in the Port Chester/Rye branch of the NAACP.

18 Smith Street, Port Chester
Open to the public.

(914) 939-1056 for additional information.

14 | St. Paul's Church National Historic Site

St. Paul's Church, completed in 1787, is located in a portion of Mount Vernon that was once part of the town of Eastchester. Built along the old Boston Post Road, it rested in the midst of farmhouses and taverns.

The earliest reference to African Americans in Eastchester appears in the town records dated April 23, 1672. The entry records the sale of a "Negro woman" to Samuel Adams of Fairfield, Connecticut, by Moses Hoitte.

The church and taverns were the center of community life. Many of the 8,000 interred in the cemetery are persons of African descent, buried here in the 19th and 20th centuries. The church records include the sexton's book and burial records denoting the race of those interred in the historic graveyard. A particular program focus is the journey from slavery to freedom of Rebecca Turner, an African American woman who became an independent landowner of property abutting the church; she is interred in the cemetery.

897 South Columbus Avenue, Mount Vernon
(914) 667-4116 | nps.gov/sapa

Grounds open to the public. | Mon.-Fri. from Jan. to Jun., 9 am-5 pm; Tues.-Sat. from Jul. to Dec., 9 am-5 pm plus the second Sat. of each month noon-4 pm.

15 | Stony Hill Cemetery

Post-Revolutionary War emancipated slaves settled in the rough and stony hills where Harrison, North Castle and White Plains meet near Silver Lake. Their community, also known as "The Hills," was evidence of an emerging free African American class in early Westchester County.

The community's presence and involvement in County life is recorded in various documents, as many of its residents were literate and left records of their world view in the form of letters and poems to family members.

Stony Hill Cemetery is the last remaining identifiable element of "The Hills." The property on which the 6.5-acre cemetery sits was part of a land grant given by the Purchase Friends (Quakers) to slaves they voluntarily freed in the 18th century. Approximately 200 of "The Hills" residents, including 12 African American Civil War veterans, are buried in the cemetery.

Today, the area is surrounded by residential development. Mt. Hope AME Zion Church in White Plains and the Stony Hill Cemetery Committee serve as the stewards of this historic site and represent the voice for one of the first free black communities in this country. The committee honors fallen heroes through beautification efforts and ongoing research of the site's history.

Buckout Road, Harrison | Open to the public. Parking limited. harrisonpl.org/harrison-remembers/collections/show/1

16 | Villa Lewaro

Madam C.J. Walker, born Sarah Breedlove in Louisiana, was the daughter of enslaved parents. She invented, patented and brilliantly marketed hair and cosmetics for women of color. Walker's success made her one of the first African American millionaires. In 1916, Madam Walker commissioned the design and construction of Villa Lewaro.

The mansion is an astounding testimony to the genius of Vertner W. Tandy, New York's first certified black architect. The 32-room mansion includes exquisite stained-glass windows, vaulted ceilings, marble staircases and intricate ceiling moldings.

Villa Lewaro was placed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1976. In the 1990s, the mansion was to be demolished to redevelop the property, but lobbying by preservationists saved it. An African American entrepreneur later purchased the mansion and restored it to its former splendor. In 2018 Villa Lewaro was purchased by Richelieu Dennis, who immigrated to the U.S. from Liberia and is the founder of Sundial Brands, which manufactures Madam C.J. Walker Beauty Culture products.

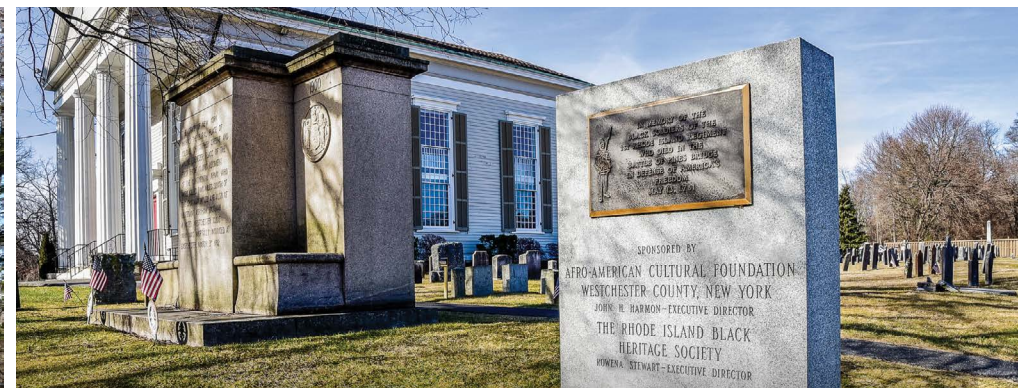
67 North Broadway, Irvington | Private residence.
Not open to the public; historic marker on Broadway.
savingplaces.org/places/villa-lewaro-madam-c-j-walker-estate

© 2022 Vinnie Bagwell, sculptor; photo by Donna Davis/Ms. Davis Photography

*Nigeria, Yoruba peoples, Bamgboye and his workshop Dance Headdress (epa) ca. 1940; Wood and pigment 47.5 x 18 x 18 inches; Collection of the Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase College, State University of New York; Gift of Eliot Hirschberg from the Aimee W. Hirschberg Collection of African Art; photo by Jim Frank



John Jay Homestead State Historic Site



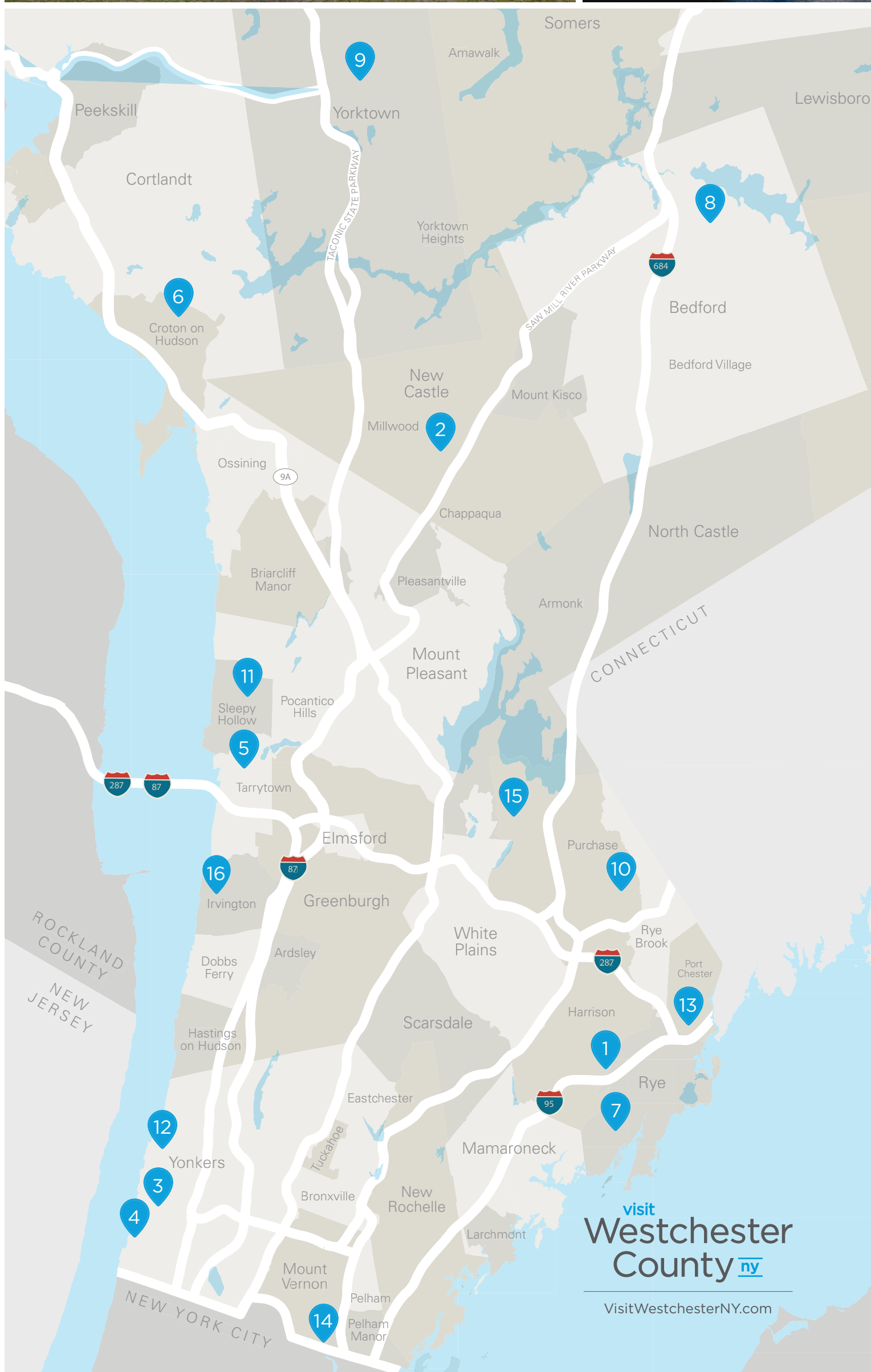
Monument to First Rhode Island Regiment



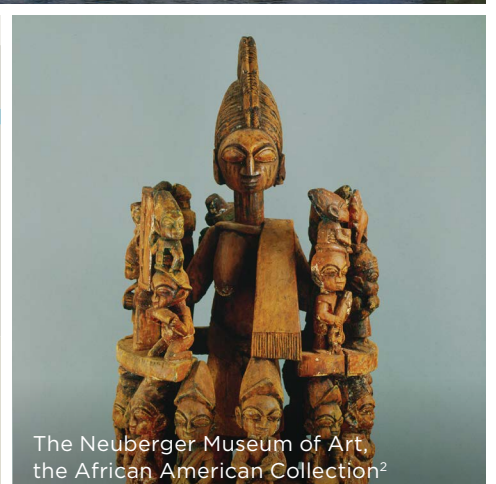
Philipse Manor Hall State Historic Site



Philipsburg Manor



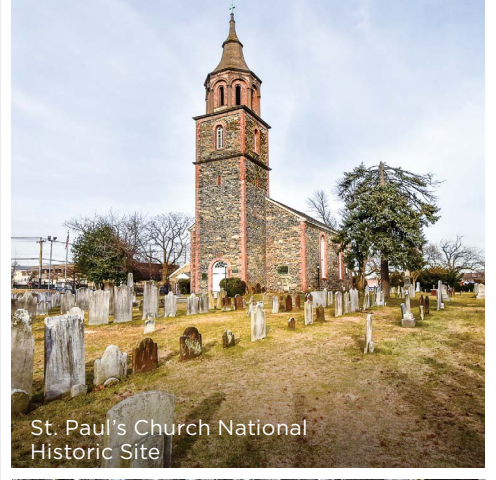
This trail map is for promotional purposes and is not to scale of Westchester County.



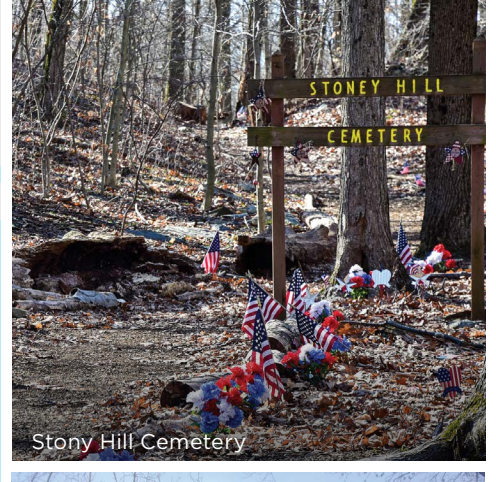
The Neuberger Museum of Art, the African American Collection²



St. Frances AME Zion Church



St. Paul's Church National Historic Site



Stony Hill Cemetery



Villa Lewaro, Madam C.J. Walker Mansion