

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: New York
COUNTY: Oneida
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:
Miller-Conkling-Kernan House

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Roscoe Conkling House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
3 Rutger Park

CITY OR TOWN:
Utica

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:
31

STATE:
New York

CODE:
36

COUNTY:
Oneida

CODE:
065

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure 	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Mr. and Mrs. James Dowling

STREET AND NUMBER:
3 Rutger Park

CITY OR TOWN:
Utica

STATE:
New York

CODE:
36

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
County Clerk's Office

STREET AND NUMBER:
800 Park Avenue

CITY OR TOWN:
Utica

STATE:
New York

CODE:
36

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
New York State Historic Trust Survey; National Register

DATE OF SURVEY: **1973; 1973** Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
New York State Historic Trust; National Register of Historic Places

STREET AND NUMBER:
Office of Parks and Recreation; 1100 L Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN:
Albany; Washington

STATE:
New York; D.C.

CODE:
36:11

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248.

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

From about 1863 until 1888, Roscoe Conkling's Utica home was a hip-roofed gray house. The exterior walls appear to be stone but are really red brick covered over with gray stucco that has been scored to resemble stone blocks. Apparently, the dwelling was begun by Judge Morris Miller, who laid the house foundation, planted trees, and built a wall at the north end of present-day Rutger Park sometime between 1820 and his death in 1824. His son Rutger B. Miller completed the residence in 1829-30. Because at that time it stood quite a distance from Utica's outer limits, the house was nicknamed "Miller's Folly."

Albany architect Philip Hooker designed the building in the Greek Revival style. Originally, on either side of a three-bay-wide, two-story center section, an upper level piazza extended to a detached one-story wing. One detached wing held an office, while the other contained housing for the coachman and gardener, a woodhouse, and a stable. Also, the dwelling had a balustrade above the roof cornice and another above the deck. The balustrades and detached wings were removed later, and it is not known whether they were part of the house during Conkling's occupancy. After Nicholas E. Kernan purchased the residence from Conkling's daughter in 1894, he added a two-story east wing, which is two bays wide and three bays deep. The present porch, dormers, and chimney tops are additions, too. About 1928 new floors and heating and plumbing systems were installed.

Unusual three-part windows decorate the exterior of the 2 1/2-story house. They consist of a large center six-over-six window flanked by two narrower two-over-two windows. Stone lintels with corner blocks and stone sills trim the windows. Two round, smooth columns support the present wooden one-story, one-bay front entrance porch, which has a low, turned-post railing. A similar, one-story, two-bay porch stands at the rear of the main section, and another porch is at the rear of the east wing. The paneled front door has a three-pane rectangular transom and is recessed between two four-panel walls. Two narrow four-over-four windows flank the entranceway. Four dormers with small gables and four interior red brick chimneys top the main section of the house.

The AASLH representative was not permitted to view the interior of the residence due to illness in the owners' family. Apparently, though, the plan of the main section

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

(continued)

3. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **circa 1863-1888**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Dominant during the Grant administration, defiant in the Hayes and Garfield years, Senator Roscoe Conkling led one of the more colorful and stormy political careers of American history. An infamous political boss, "he was," as biographer David M. Jordan states, "one of the major issues of the day."¹ Conkling was tall, handsome, aloof, and arrogant. Some knew him as "Lord Roscoe"; others called him "Turkey Gobbler Conkling." A dandy, he dressed colorfully and trained a single, blond Hyperion curl to dangle over his broad forehead. Though he was an excellent campaigner and orator, he often indulged in personal hatred with cruel sarcasm and invective. "He played the game for power and publicity," writes historian H. Wayne Morgan. "The idea of being subordinate simply did not fit his personality."²

In 1870 Conkling gained control of his State's Republican machine and the New York Custom House, a center of patronage and party politics. Seven years later, President Rutherford B. Hayes inaugurated a civil service reform program that centered on the custom house, and Conkling answered with a 4-year public struggle against his party's own Chief Executive. Almost singlehandedly the Senator forced a deep Republican split. In 1880 James A. Garfield won the Presidency, and he clashed with Conkling over the custom house, too. Eventually the New York boss's spoilsmanship and bitter public posturings contributed directly to the highly charged political atmosphere that helped provoke insane gunman Charles J. Guiteau's assassination of Garfield. That assault mobilized popular outrage and brought Conkling's already endangered political life to an abrupt end.

(continued)

¹ David M. Jordan, Roscoe Conkling of New York; Voice in the Senate (Ithaca, 1971), 409.

² H. Wayne Morgan, From Hayes to McKinley; National Party Politics, 1877-1896 (Syracuse, 1969), 34, 125.

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Chidsey, Donald Barr, The Gentleman from New York: A Life of Roscoe Conkling (New Haven, 1935).
 Jordan, David M., Roscoe Conkling of New York; Voice in the Senate (Ithaca, 1971).
 Josephson, Matthew, The Politicos, 1865-1896 (New York, 1938).
 Morgan, H. Wayne, From Hayes to McKinley; National Party Politics, 1877-1896 (Syracuse, 1969).

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	° ' "	° ' "		43°	05'	46"
NE	° ' "	° ' "		75°	13'	47"
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **circa 1 acre**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Cathy A. Alexander, Assistant Editor

ORGANIZATION: **American Association for State and Local History** DATE: **Sept. 1, 1974**

STREET AND NUMBER:
1315 Eighth Avenue South

CITY OR TOWN: **Nashville** STATE: **Tennessee** CODE: **47**

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

 Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

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Roscoe Conkling House

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7. Description (cont'd.)

is unaltered. It is two rooms deep and has a central hall. The owner stated that front and back parlors lie to the right of the hall, and a library and dining room lie to the left. The east wing includes a pantry and kitchen. Reached by either front or back stairs, the second floor comprises bedrooms, baths, and a small sitting room.

Today, the gardens and orchard that once stood to the rear of the house have vanished. The grassy yard and the front walk and drive remain, however. Situated on a hill overlooking old Utica, the ivy-covered dwelling is the central and oldest of five houses in Rutger Park. The park and houses are a component of the Rutger-Steuben Park Historic District, which is listed on The National Register of Historic Places.

Conkling's Rutger Park residence is believed to be the only extant structure associated prominently with his life.

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Roscoe Conkling House (Continuation Sheet)

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8. Significance (cont'd.)

From about 1863 until 1888, Conkling's Utica home was a hip-roofed, Greek Revival-style residence. Covered with gray stucco that has been scored to resemble blocks, the brick house appears to be stone. With two compatible dwellings to its either side, the Conkling residence stands in the middle of Rutger Park, a portion of the Rutger-Steuben Park Historic District that is listed on The National Register of Historic Places.

Biography

Born at Albany in 1829, Roscoe Conkling was the youngest son of Judge Alfred Conkling, one of New York's leading Whigs. In 1839 the Conkling family moved to Auburn, where such political figures as John Quincy Adams and William H. Seward called on the judge and fascinated young Roscoe. After preparation at Mt. Washington Collegiate Institute and Auburn Academy, his father hoped that Roscoe would attend college. In 1846, however, the teenager decided to read law. Underscoring his independence, he chose a law firm in Utica, almost 80 miles from home. Four years later he began practicing in Utica, and in 1855 he married Julia Catherine Seymour, sister of Horatio Seymour, former Democratic Governor of New York and later a Presidential aspirant.

A Seward Whig, Conkling engaged in local politics even before he turned 21. He joined the Republican Party in 1854, and in 1858 he became mayor of Utica. Later that year he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. After two terms, Conkling lost a third bid, so late in 1863 he returned to his Utica law practice and about that same time bought a house in then-fashionable Rutger Park. In 1864 he won reelection to the House of Representatives.

A member of the Committee on Reconstruction, Congressman Conkling usually espoused the Conservative rather than the Radical Republican view. In addition he favored sound money throughout his legislative career. Perhaps more important than his views on legislation, though, was his growing personal antagonism toward Maine Republican Congressman James G. Blaine. In later years, the quarrel flawed the career of each man and helped split their party. Conkling earned a reputation for vanity too. In 1866 on the House floor, Blaine inspired his archrival's sobriquet by commenting on "his majestic,

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8. Significance (cont'd.)

supereminent, overpowering, turkey-gobbler strut."³

In 1867 the New York Legislature elected Conkling to the U.S. Senate, and in 1868 he voted guilty in Andrew Johnson's impeachment trial and campaigned for Ulysses S. Grant for President. The following year Gov. Reuben E. Fenton, temporary boss of New York's historic Whig-Republican machine, became the State's junior Senator. Both Conkling and Fenton sought Federal patronage for New York, but when President Grant appointed his crony Thomas Murphy, an anti-Fenton man, collector of the Port of New York, Fenton rebelled. The New York Custom House controlled most of the Nation's commerce and import revenue, so the collector possessed one of the country's most important nonelective posts. Seeing a way to gain power and enter Grant's inner circle, Conkling gave his full support to Murphy. After the latter's confirmation, Conkling defeated Fenton's slate at the 1870 State Republican convention and emerged as the unchallenged boss of New York's Republican organization.

After 1870 Conkling enjoyed 6 uninterrupted years as one of Grant's favorite advisors. He became a leading administration "Stalwart" and spoilsman. In 1871, when Murphy resigned, Conkling tightened his grip on the State machine by having his lieutenant Chester A. Arthur appointed collector of the port. Subsequently, Alonzo B. Cornell, another Conkling lieutenant, received a subordinate post. Conkling led the campaign for Grant's reelection in 1872, and the following year he won his own reelection to the Senate. Later that year Grant offered him the Chief Justiceship, but Conkling declined. He preferred politics, and he had Presidential aspirations.

Hopefuls at the 1876 Republican National Convention included Conkling; Blaine; Oliver Morton, a "Stalwart" who took some Conkling votes; and Benjamin Bristow, a reform candidate. After several deadlocked ballots, Conkling's supporters moved to block Blaine by backing the darkhorse Rutherford B. Hayes, who became the nominee. Belatedly, Conkling learned that Hayes favored civil service reform.

Without consulting the Senate bosses, Hayes appointed a largely reform-oriented Cabinet, and it included as Secretary of State New Yorker William M. Evarts, an enemy of the Conkling organization. Then in June 1877 Hayes took aim at

³ Quoted in Jordan, Roscoe Conkling of New York, p. 80.

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Roscoe Conkling House

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8. Significance (cont'd.)

the custom house and issued an Executive order barring Federal officials from political activity. Arthur and Cornell, did not obey, however, and in September the latter, as chairman of the New York Republican Party, convened the annual State convention in Rochester. Conkling and his men dominated, and the Senator himself delivered a brutal antireform, antiadministration speech. In lieu of an answer, the next month Hayes sent the names of Arthur's and Cornell's replacements to the Senate. Conkling depicted the President's action as an affront to time-honored senatorial courtesy on Federal appointments in the States, however, and won sufficient votes to defeat Hayes' nominees. Though now in violent opposition to the Republican President, Conkling continued to be one of the party's congressional leaders.

Hayes did not give up, though. The next summer, after Congress adjourned, he suspended Arthur and Cornell and named their successors pending confirmation. Early in 1879, despite Conkling's continued lobbying, the Senate approved Hayes' fait accompli. Though Conkling's machine lost control of the custom house, New York returned him to the Senate that year and elected Cornell Governor.

Hoping to regain their former places of power, Conkling and others encouraged ex-President Grant to seek a third term in 1880. Thus, when that year's Republican National Convention opened, it divided into a "Stalwart" faction that supported Grant and Conkling and a "Half-Breed" group that favored the old rival Blaine. Conkling placed Grant's name in nomination, and during the protracted balloting that followed, the Senator spurned all compromise proposals. On the 36th ballot, James A. Garfield, candidate of an improvised anti-Grant coalition, won. Still, led by Conkling, 306 delegates cast diehard votes for Grant. Unwilling to heal the deep, obvious party split, Conkling became enraged when his own lieutenant Arthur accepted the Vice-Presidential nomination.

Conkling sulked until August, but ultimately he consented to campaign and raise money for the ticket. When Garfield won, the "Stalwarts" believed that their support made him President. As a reward Conkling wanted a machine New Yorker named Secretary of the Treasury. Garfield was unwilling to name a representative of an eastern creditor State to head the Treasury Department, though. Moreover, he designated Blaine his Secretary of State. Still, the President-elect

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Roscoe Conkling House (Continuation Sheet)

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8. Significance (cont'd.)

wanted a New York "Stalwart" in his Cabinet, but Conkling demanded the Treasury and blocked Garfield's efforts at reconciliation. Finally, Garfield persuaded Thomas James, a Conkling "Stalwart" and postmaster of New York, to become the U.S. Postmaster General.

Apparently Conkling sensed slippage among his followers. Shortly after the Presidential inauguration, he met with Garfield, and they concurred on nine Federal appointments for New York. Only a few days later, however, Garfield nominated a "Half-Breed" New Yorker, Judge William A. Robertson, to be collector of the Port of New York. Conkling was infuriated, but Cornell and some other members of the Conkling machine accepted the appointment because they saw clearly that their careers could not survive 4 more years of opposition to their party's own President.

On May 16, 1881, Conkling and Thomas C. Platt, Conkling's lieutenant and New York's junior Senator, resigned from the Senate in protest. They expected immediate reelection and vindication, but it was not forthcoming. Thus, they had to return to New York, and with the help of Vice President Arthur, campaign humbly for reelection. In early July the State legislature was still deadlocked. It was in this political setting that on July 2 the crazed "Stalwart" officeseeker Charles J. Guiteau fatally wounded President Garfield. While Garfield lingered, public outrage spurred the New York Legislature to choose successors to Platt and Conkling. Garfield's death silenced Conkling's public voice forever.

Arthur became President of the United States in September, but he kept Conkling at a careful distance. The President did offer the ex-Senator a place on the Supreme Court in 1882, but he declined it. During his last years, Conkling became a successful and wealthy corporation lawyer. In April 1888 he died from overexposure and overexertion sustained during a crippling March blizzard.