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Nat. Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Fitch Bluestone Company Office  
other names/site number Simeon and William Fitch Bluestone Company Office

### 2. Location

street & number 532-574 Abeel Street  not for publication  
city or town Kingston  vicinity  
state NY code NY county Ulster code 111 zip code 12401

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this X nomination     request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.  
In my opinion, the property X meets     does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:  
    national     statewide X local  
Ruth Pierpont DSHPO 3/24/16  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property     meets     does not meet the National Register criteria.  
Signature of commenting official Date  
Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register     determined eligible for the National Register  
    determined not eligible for the National Register     removed from the National Register  
    other (explain)      
Joe Edson H. Beall 5.16.16  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Fitch Bluestone Company Office  
 Name of Property

Ulster County, NY  
 County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
 (Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
 (Check only **one** box.)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE / Business  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC / Single Dwelling  
COMMERCE / Professional  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN / Second Empire  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Stone  
 walls: Bluestone  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 roof: Slate  
 other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Fitch Bluestone Company Office  
Name of Property

Ulster County, NY  
County and State

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### **Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

#### **Summary Paragraph**

The Fitch Brothers Bluestone Company Dispatch Office is located at 532-574 Abeel Street in the hamlet of Wilbur within the City of Kingston in Ulster County. The Fitch Building stands near the foot of present-day Wilbur Avenue along Abeel Street, the street that runs along the north side of the Rondout Creek in Kingston and is part of a small neighborhood known as Wilbur. Abeel Street, which runs along the west side of the Rondout Creek, connects Wilbur with the former Village of Rondout about a mile to the north. Wilbur is situated on a roughly rectangular piece of flat land framed by bluffs to the west. The intersection of Wilbur Avenue, which parallels Twaalfskill Creek's route to Rondout Creek, and Abeel Street forms the hamlet's core. Along with Wilbur and Davis Street, this forms a roughly triangular street pattern; historic brick and frame commercial buildings are nestled along the streets, offering a sense of the once-bustling community. A loop, which extends south from Wilbur Avenue, is the location of several historic residential buildings and the community's church. The land between Abeel Street and the Rondout Creek, much of which was historically used as the Fitch bluestone yard, is used for storage and light industrial operations. The Fitch office is located on a grassy, triangular parcel north of the former bluestone yard. The building faces away from the Rondout Creek toward Abeel Street. A parking lot lined by relatively young trees is located on the south end of the lot, and a concrete walkway leads to a door on the building's south elevation. The nominated parcel is the lot historically associated with the Fitch Office.

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### **Narrative Description**

The Fitch Company office, built in 1870, is a two-story, three-bay by two-bay masonry office building on a stone foundation. The masonry walls are made of solid, rusticated ashlar-cut bluestone in irregular sizes; each of the corners are marked by bluestone quoins and a bluestone water table and beltcourse run across each elevation. All of the windows appear to be later replacements consistent with the fenestration shown in historic images. A wide, molded cornice band projects from the base and the crest of the mansard roofline, and carved posts decorate each corner. The roof is covered by bands of polychrome slate shingles in rectangular and hexagonal shapes. Steeply pointed front-gabled dormers extend through the cornice and roofline of the polychrome slate mansard roof patterned with rectangular and hexagonal shingles on each elevation; stone brackets mark the transition between the roofline and dormer and the base of the dormer gable.

The façade (west elevation) features a prominent central tower with chamfered corners projecting from its central bay; the primary entrance, which is highlighted by a substantial archway and two buttresses, is located in the first floor of the tower. The three-panel door is capped by an arched window. Paired, narrow arched windows with voussoirs are located on the second floor; all of the windows on the elevation have stone lintels with two stepped stone brackets. The tower is capped by an octagonal cupola; each face of the cupola has arched screens with wooden lintels with small brackets and arched hoods with teardrops. A diamond-pattern decoration runs under the roofline of the tower, which is capped by a finial and weathervane. This impressive central tower is flanked by two, tall arched windows; the beltcourse intersects with the windows and forms the base of the stone arches capping the windows. Two dormers with arched windows with voussoirs contribute to the sense of height on the façade.

Fitch Bluestone Company Office

Name of Property

Ulster County, NY

County and State

The south elevation has a secondary central door capped by a semicircular window and voussoirs. Two arched windows flank the doorway, and a dormer lights the second story. The east elevation has three arched windows on the first story; dormers light the northern- and southernmost bays of the second story. The north elevation has two, central arched windows on the first floor; while they have their own lintels, their voussoirs intersect. A single dormer window lights the second story.

While the exterior of the Fitch Building served as testament to the Fitch Company's success as well as the importance of bluestone in the region, its interior was simply organized into office space. No historic interior photographs have been identified. When the long-vacant building was purchased in 1972, the interior was modified for use as a private residence. It is unclear whether any of the current room divisions correspond with the historic division of the space when it was used as an office; based on the fenestration pattern, it is likely that the staircase, though updated, remains in its historic location.

In its current configuration, the space has a relatively modern, open plan. The first floor is divided into a kitchen, central stairway, and parlor. The second floor has a living room, three bedrooms, and a bathroom. While the current finishes reference historically available materials, such as beadboard, molding, and picture rails, these are all contemporary.

Fitch Bluestone Company Office  
Name of Property

Ulster County, NY  
County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE

INDUSTRY

ARCHITECTURE

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1870 – ca. 1900

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1870

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

J.A. Wood

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance begins with the completion of the Fitch Company Office in 1870 and ends when the Fitch company closed ca. 1900.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

Fitch Bluestone Company Office  
Name of Property

Ulster County, NY  
County and State

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Fitch Bluestone Company Office, built in 1870, is significant under Criterion A in the areas of commerce and industry for its association with the Fitch family's substantial role in Ulster County's bluestone industry. Ezra Fitch began working for his brother-in-law's shipping company on the Twaalfskill Creek during the 1830s. Within a decade, he expanded and became head of the business, which exported products arriving on the Delaware and Hudson canal to New York City. After his brother, Simeon, and cousin, William, began working at Fitch and Reed, the company's focus turned to the nascent bluestone industry. By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Ezra Fitch and Company, which solely dealt in bluestone, was among the largest bluestone exporters in the world. The Fitch Company's bluestone quarrying, transportation, processing, and shipping business employed over a thousand men at its height and was a cornerstone of the economy of the Village of Wilbur (incorporated into the City of Kingston in 1872) through its closure ca. 1900. The Fitch Office is additionally significant under Criterion C for its remarkable bluestone design by J. A. Wood. Wood, a prolific architect based out of Poughkeepsie, worked throughout the region even after moving his practice to New York City in 1871. By blending romantic and picturesque architectural influences with the modern Second Empire style, Wood created a striking, but efficient, office building that balanced the monumentality of bluestone with a rhythm, lightness, and a touch of grandeur. The office was emblematic of their success and a visible expression of the worthiness of bluestone as a building material.

### **Early History of Wilbur**

Extending from the west side of the Hudson River, the navigable Rondout Creek created a natural, protected harbor that attracted early settlers in the region. By the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, a settlement surrounded by a stockade was established on a bluff northwest of the river; well-protected and situated, Kingston attracted settlement in and around its walls. In 1777, it briefly served as New York State's first capital; it was burned by the British later that year. This upheaval, followed by political and economic stabilization by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, led to the establishment of smaller communities in the region. The Rondout community was established along the creek as a small port serving Kingston; a smaller community developed a mile upstream around Thomas De Witt's gristmill and landing on Twaalfskill Brook. Sloops from Rondout shipped flour from the Twaalfskill mill for sale in New York City.<sup>1</sup>

Upstream from Twaalfskill Landing, a larger development was occurring closer to the mouth of the Rondout Creek at Eddyville. In 1825, laborers began building the Delaware and Hudson Canal, which was designed to carry coal from eastern Pennsylvania out to the Hudson River for transport down to New York City. The canal terminated at the nearby hamlet of Eddyville; from there, canal boats continued along the Rondout Creek, stopping at Eddyville, Twaalfskill Landing, or Rondout to move goods to larger sloops and barges better able to travel the Hudson River to New York City. The D&H built a coal transfer depot and docks and its headquarters at Rondout and also laid out lots for a new village.<sup>2</sup> By the mid-nineteenth century, the Village of Rondout's population had outstripped that of the Village of Kingston. The increased economic activity and traffic brought by the canal also inspired growth on the Twaalfskill Creek. In 1829, Theron Skeel began operating the region's first regular steamboat passenger service to New York City from Twaalfskill Landing; he

<sup>1</sup> Nathan Bartlett Sylvester, *History of Ulster County, New York* (Philadelphia: Everts and Peck, 1880), 179.

<sup>2</sup> Bob Steuding, *Rondout – A Hudson River Port* (Fleischmanns, NY: Purple Mountain Press, 1995), 55-59.

Fitch Bluestone Company Office  
Name of Property

Ulster County, NY  
County and State

also expanded the docks at to better accommodate the increased traffic.<sup>3</sup> Eventually, Rondout and Twaalfskill were connected by a road along the Rondout Creek. As Twaalfskill Landing grew in importance, it became known as Wilbur.

Ezra Fitch was born in 1805 to a prominent family. His ancestors included a governor of Connecticut as well as John Fitch, who built steamboats and launched them on the Delaware River beginning in 1787, well before Robert Fulton's famous *Clermont*. Ezra Fitch grew up in Kingston and became acquainted with shipping and commerce by working with his brother-in-law, Theron Skeel, the owner of the steamboat *Congress* and the docks at Twaalfskill Landing. After establishing himself, Fitch married Margaret Reed, of Coxsackie, in 1831.<sup>4</sup>

### **Bluestone and the Quarrying Industry**

Bluestone, a type of fine-grained sandstone, often bluish-grey in color, exists in a large vein roughly paralleling and several miles west of the Hudson River south of Albany into Pennsylvania. Ulster County bluestone was known as "North River bluestone" to distinguish it from other stones elsewhere in the world that were described as bluestone (North River being the early name for the Hudson River). It was a hard enough to resist wear, not slippery when wet (thus good for sidewalks) and capable of being tooled and/or polished flat. Because of its highly stratified layering, it could also sometimes be lifted from a quarry in large flat sections easily made into sidewalk stones of various sizes. Ulster County bluestone was superior to other stone within the vein as its bluestone beds were generally horizontal, which made it easier and more efficient to work. The region's close proximity to Hudson River ports, generally only 10 to 15 miles, also facilitated its transportation and sale in distant, urban markets.<sup>5</sup>

Bluestone had long been known by settlers in Ulster County as useful for stepping stones, carved-out birdbaths, cemetery markers, and other objects, but it was not commercially quarried on a substantial scale until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Accounts of who opened the earliest quarries vary. Some state that Mr. Moray commercialized it for the first time locally in the village of Kingston in 1826, selling it for use as lintels and window sills. Others give credit to Silas Brainerd's Saugerties quarry, opened in 1832, or Phillip Lockwood's quarry in 1836. By any account, bluestone had become a major local industry in a matter of decades. Quarriers brought it to the Hudson or Rondout Creek for shipping to outside markets, cut mainly in various sized slabs for use as sidewalks and curbstones.<sup>6</sup>

The two major bluestone shipping points were at Malden, north of Saugerties, and at Wilbur, on the Rondout Creek. Good roads were necessary to move the stone to these ports efficiently. In 1831-32, a turnpike was built through the Shandaken Valley; it was succeeded 20 years later by a plank road. In 1850, a plank road was laid from the turnpike to Wilbur to provide direct access to the port. The road to Wilbur from a major quarry area to the west (now largely covered by the Ashokan Reservoir) roughly paralleled what is today's Route 28A and a short part of Route 28 on into and through the main streets of Kingston (including North

<sup>3</sup> Donald C. Ringwald, *Steamboats for Rondout* (Providence, RI: Steamship Historical Society of America, 1981), 13-17.

<sup>4</sup> *New-York Spectator*, October 18, 1831; Alphonso T. Clearwater, *The History of Ulster County, New York* (Kingston, NY: W.J. Van Deusen, 1907), 218.

<sup>5</sup> Clearwater, *Ulster County*, 541

<sup>6</sup> Henry Balch Ingram, "The Great Bluestone Industry," *Popular Science Monthly* 45, July 1894; Clearwater, *Ulster County*, 541; Sylvester, *History of Ulster County*, 150.

Fitch Bluestone Company Office

Name of Property

Ulster County, NY

County and State

Front and Wall Streets) and down the long slope of present-day Wilbur Avenue to the bluestone yards and docks at Wilbur on the Rondout Creek.<sup>7</sup>

### **Ezra Fitch & Co**

By the late 1830s, Fitch began collaborating with Skeel to expand his business. With the assistance of Rosewell Reed, Fitch's newest brother-in-law, by 1838 Fitch and Skeel had five sloops and had established an office in New York City in addition to their Kingston store. By 1840, Fitch and Reed had taken over the business and added a sixth sloop. Fitch and Reed primarily exported farm products, such as milk, butter and grains, from Ulster and Delaware Counties to New York City via the Delaware and Hudson Canal. Later in the decade, Fitch and Reed purchased a new steamboat that they called the *Santa Claus* and built a hotel of the same name on Abeel Street (no longer extant) to house passengers and crew members. The steamboat was decorated in a style to match its name. In 1854, Ezra Fitch sold his boats to Thomas Cornell, who was then building his Hudson River towing and passenger business.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, by 1839 Ezra's brother, Simeon, and cousin, William, came to the area to assist with the family business. Aware of the opportunity presented by Ulster County's nascent bluestone quarrying industry, they worked with Ezra to begin selling quarried bluestone on a small scale. Fitch and Reed's half-mile-long property by its landing on the Rondout Creek, once filled with a variety of canal goods, gradually became dominated by bluestone. Within a decade, they built what would become the largest bluestone business in Kingston; by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, they reorganized as Ezra Fitch and Company. By 1850, the company was recognized as "largest exporter of bluestone in the world... handling \$2,000 worth of stone a day, with between 150 and 200 huge stone wagons trundling out of the hills of Hurley and Sawkill and down Wall Street to its yard on the Rondout Creek." After Ezra retired in 1854 to operate a farm in Coxsackie, near his wife's family, the operation was renamed the Simeon and William Fitch Bluestone Company.<sup>9</sup>

The Fitch Company quarried bluestone in Hurley, Marletown, Woodstock, and other communities within about 15 miles from the Rondout Creek and transported it to its large stone yard in Wilbur.<sup>10</sup> The company owned some quarries, though the number remains unknown, and likely purchased stone from others. While the 1850 plank road helped facilitate travel to Wilbur, the material was no match for heavy wagons carrying bluestone. In 1860, grooved bluestone tracks were laid down on the road to bear the heavy weight of wagon loads of bluestone that sometimes required large teams of horses. This effort was, in part, funded and led by the Fitch company; William Fitch is identified as president of the Wilbur and Kingston Stone Road Company in 1871. A toll gate and house sat at the terminus of the stone road in Wilbur, on Wilbur Avenue.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Sylvester, *History of Ulster County*, 150.

<sup>8</sup> *Ulster County Whig*, 1838; *Ulster County Whig*, 1840; The Ezra Fitch who helped to build a bluestone business is not to be confused with his namesake grandson who in the latter part of the century after a brief career as a lawyer in Kingston joined David Abercrombie in the latter's sporting goods store in Manhattan. The subsequent firm of Abercrombie and Fitch – which Fitch soon bought out from Abercrombie - became well-known as a men's clothier and as the outfitters of big game hunters and safari adventurers.

<sup>9</sup> Steuding, *Rondout – A Hudson River Port*; Federal Census, New York, 1860.

<sup>10</sup> Sylvester, *History of Ulster County*, 278.



Fitch Bluestone Company Office

Name of Property

Ulster County, NY

County and State

While the Fitch Company originally focused on the purchase and sale of bluestone direct from the quarries, they gradually built up manufacturing facilities to prepare and work the stone for specific uses. The half-mile-long stone yard was the site of the company's factories, where bluestone was sawn, planed, and rubbed, as well as its storage and shipping facilities. Historic photographs and postcards show a densely packed, organized array of bluestone slabs arranged by size and stone type. At least two, small wood-framed offices, two dwellings, and various covered workspaces were located on the property. The Fitches owned at least one rubbing mill in which large slabs of bluestone were smoothed down (using pressure grinding with sharp grains of sand) as well as shops where workers could fashion the stone for purposes other than sidewalks such as lintels, window sills, wall capstones, and stair treads.<sup>12</sup>

Due to the need for skilled workers to process bluestone, Wilbur grew into a small, thriving village. Houses and tenements were packed along the Rondout and Twaalfskill Creek, and a post office was established in 1856. While bluestone dominated the village economy, other enterprises were also attracted to the port, including a large flour mill built on the Twaalfskill in 1863. Historic maps also show a large lime mill, blacksmiths, a cobbler, a cooper, and a number of stores.<sup>13</sup>

### **Fitch Office**

By the late 1860s, the Simeon and William Fitch Bluestone Company was at the height of its operation. While the cousins had wood frame offices at the stone yard, they decided to build an impressive new central office that better suited and illustrated the success of their mature business after a fire destroyed their primary office building. In 1870, they commissioned well-known architect J.A. Wood to design a building that was intended to be a showpiece for the company and a celebration of bluestone as a building material. The completed building served as the company's dispatch and billing office as well as an advertisement for the company's product.

J. A. Wood, considered the leading architect in the mid-Hudson region in the 1860s and 1870s, was born in 1837 in Sullivan County, New York. He opened an office in Poughkeepsie in 1863 and quickly established a reputation within the region. By the end of the decade, Wood was in great local demand; he received commissions for the First Baptist Church in Kingston (1868) and the renovation of the former Old Dutch Church on Main Street for a new St. Joseph's Catholic Church (1869). He also designed the Kingston Music Hall (later Opera House) on Fair Street (1867-69) and the Ulster County Savings Bank on Wall Street (1868-69). Although he moved his practice to New York City, he remained active in the Hudson Valley.<sup>14</sup>

While bluestone was a common building material, it was most frequently used for lintels, windowsills, water tables, and other desirable accents. Constructing most or all of a building of the material, as the Fitch cousins requested, was rare but not unprecedented. Bluestone had been used as the primary material for Kingston's newest (1850-52) Old Dutch Church, designed by Minard Lafever, as well as in the Henry Samson house

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<sup>11</sup> Hamilton Child, *Gazetteer and Business Directory of Ulster County New York* (Syracuse, NY: Hamilton Child, 1871), 184; An unoccupied, deteriorated bluestone building about a hundred yards up Wilbur Avenue is said to be the former toll gate house.

<sup>12</sup> Sylvester, *History of Ulster County*, 279; "Kingston" [map], 1887, "Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – New York."

<sup>13</sup> "Kingston" [map], 1887, "Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – New York."; Clearwater, *The History of Ulster County*, 447.

<sup>14</sup> William B. Rhoads, *Kingston New York – The Architectural Guide* (Hensonville, NY: Black Dome Press, 2003), 179.

Fitch Bluestone Company Office

Name of Property

Ulster County, NY

County and State

(circa 1858) on West Chestnut Street. Although these were not office buildings and were in architectural styles of an earlier day, they demonstrated the viability of bluestone as an impressive and aesthetically pleasing material.

Tasked with using bluestone, J. A. Wood looked toward the romantic styles favored by the picturesque movement as well as the latest fashions to balance the monumental material. The building's buttressed tower, steeply pointed dormers, polychrome slate in a variety of shapes, and the building's octagonal spire reflect Gothic Revival influences, while the stone arches with pronounced voussoirs around the windows and doors romantically reference the grandeur and stability of medieval castles. Wood melded and contrasted these historic, European styles with the latest in French fashion – the Second Empire style. The style's boxy form and mansard roof offered the practical benefit of an easily organized interior and a usable second floor, and its distinctive tower and arched windows established a sense of refinement. Wood competently blended the forward- and backward-looking styles into a visually compelling unity. The result was a two-story bluestone building with a front tower rising above a Second Empire style slate roof with cresting and peaked dormers, the total effect giving the relatively small building an impressive verticality and the stone giving it a monumentality. A testament to its success, the Fitch Office appears in numerous photographs and local publications in the decade after its completion. Notably, the building is included in Beers' *Ulster County Atlas of 1875*. A flag waving from a pole atop its octagonal tower, the Fitch Office dominates a panoramic scene of the bluestone yard with stacks of stone in the foreground and sloops and steamboats sailing by in the background

J. A. Wood went on to design a number of other prominent Kingston buildings, including the Children's Church in nearby Ponckhockie, an early experiment in building with large cement blocks (1870-71); the Kingston City Alms House on Flatbush Avenue (1872-74); the Thomas Cornell Carriage House (1873); the Dr. Robert Loughran house on Fair Street (1873); the First Presbyterian Church on Elemendorf Street (1878); the New York State Armory on Broadway (1878); and the Stuyvesant Hotel at John and Fair Street (1910). In later years, Wood was in great demand as a hotel architect. He designed the second Overlook Mountain House in Woodstock (1878); the Tremper House in Phoenicia (1879); and the Grand Hotel at Highmount (1881). He also designed hotels in Georgia and Florida, the most famous of which was the Tampa Bay Hotel (1891), now preserved as part of the University of Tampa. He died in Middletown in 1910 and he is buried there in the Evergreen Cemetery.<sup>15</sup>

### **Later history of the Fitch Office**

The completed office building served as the crowning jewel for the Fitch Company, a widely-recognized industry leader, and a mark of distinction for the Wilbur. Three other bluestone companies were based out of Wilbur by 1870; Between the Fitch Company and Daniel E. Donovan, Michael Hallahan, and the Messrs. Sweeney, bluestone sales reached highs of \$1,500,000 a year and over twenty ships carried the stone from the port, typically in 150-200 ton loads. The Fitch Company alone employed 1,500 men and a hundred teams of horses for transporting the bluestone along the grooved stone road to the Wilbur yard. The local importance

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<sup>15</sup> Rhoads, *Kingston New York*.

Fitch Bluestone Company Office

Name of Property

Ulster County, NY

County and State

and value of Wilbur's port could not be overlooked. When the City of Kingston was chartered in 1872, it combined the Villages of Kingston, Rondout, and Wilbur.<sup>16</sup>

Although the panic of 1873 and subsequent economic downturn dulled the frenetic pace in Wilbur, the bluestone companies remained successful. The Fitch Company remained in business for over 60 years. Simeon died in 1877; William lived on until 1890. In 1894, Henry Balch Ingram cited an estimate that in New York State and Pennsylvania at least twenty thousand people worked in the bluestone industry, not counting stone workers in the cities to which the bluestone was headed.<sup>17</sup> However, by that time, the invention of Portland cement and its popularity for new concrete sidewalks was rapidly bringing the great Ulster County bluestone era to an end. The Fitch Company went out of business by 1900, along with much of what remained of the Wilbur bluestone industry.<sup>18</sup>

The Fitch building itself remained in the hands of Simeon Fitch's descendants until 1936 when it was sold to a succession of local boatyard owners who, in general, let it fall into such a condition that it was sometimes known as "The Ghost of the Rondout." Because its historic importance was recognized by the City of Kingston's Landmarks Commission in 1971, the building was designated a local landmark.<sup>19</sup> In 1972, James Berardi, the owner of a construction company, and his wife, Alice, restored the exterior and adapted the interior into a small home.<sup>20</sup> The Berardis sold the building to a succession of new owners.

In 2005, the building was acquired by its present owner, Robert Ianucci, a retired lawyer and historic building revivalist. He has made considerable real estate investments along the Rondout Creek including the 20-acre, man-made Island Dock property and the historic Cornell Steamboat Company building. He stitched together multiple Kingston waterfront parcels encompassing over 16 acres with approximately 3,500 feet of Rondout Creek harbor frontage; his historic WWII PT boats are a fixture of the waterfront. He currently uses the Fitch Bluestone Building as an office for Historic Kingston Waterfront Revival and a residence.

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<sup>16</sup> F.W. Beers, *Atlas of Ulster County New York* (New York: Walker & Jewett, 1875); *Daily Graphic*, August 27, 1878; Sylvester, *History of Ulster County*, 279.

<sup>17</sup> Ingram, "The Great Bluestone Industry."

<sup>18</sup> *Daily Graphic*, August 27, 1878; Ingram, "The Great Bluestone Industry.,"; Edwin Ford, *Street Whys – Anecdotes and Lore about the Streets of Kingston, New York* (Round Top, NY: Ford Printing, 2010), 3.

<sup>19</sup> City of Kingston Historic Preservation Landmarks Commission, "Fitch Brothers Bluestone Company Dispatch Office," May 3, 1971.

<sup>20</sup> Lowell Thing, "Wanted: New Owner for Rondout 'Castle,'" *The Sunday Kingston Freeman*, March 16, 1980.

Fitch Bluestone Company Office  
Name of Property

Ulster County, NY  
County and State

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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### **Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Beers, F. W. *Atlas of Ulster County, New York*. New York: Walker and Jewett, 1875.

This book includes a large lithograph showing the Fitch building next to its bluestone depot, workers, wagons, and boats on the Rondout Creek. The Atlas also mentions the number of workers and horse teams employed by the Fitches.

"Bluestone Sidewalks." *The Manufacturer and Builder* (April 1891).

A general survey of the bluestone industry as seen in 1891.

"Bluestone Sidewalks." *Scientific American* 63, no. 21 (1890): 328.

See the Stone Quarries and Beyond web site (<http://quarriesandbeyond.org>). Includes a lengthy description of bluestone mining and the industry ("The slabs are sent from the quarries to tide water at various points along the Hudson River, Wilbur, in the city of Kingston, being the principal shipping point.") William B. Fitch is mentioned as among "men who made fortunes in the bluestone business."

Child, Hamilton. *Gazetteer and Business Directory of Ulster County, N.Y.* Syracuse, N.Y.: Hamilton Child, 1871.

Half-page advertisement on page 184 for "S. & W. B. Fitch, dealers... in North River Blue Stone." On page 174, William B. Fitch is identified as president of the Wilbur and Kingston Stone Road Company.

City of Kingston. *Placemaking in Stone: A Geo-Coded Sidewalk Survey for a Livable City*. March 21, 2014.

A Powerpoint presentation that describes a survey that was conducted of Kingston's bluestone sidewalks within historic districts and the Kingston Heritage Area, identifying bluestone as a major Kingston industry in the 1830-1900 period. Fitch Bluestone is cited as the leading example of this industry.

City of Kingston Historic Preservation Landmarks Commission. *Fitch Brothers Bluestone Co. Dispatch Office*. 1971.

A description of the Fitch building's history and architecture written as the formal application for local landmark designation, accompanied by a letter from the Commission chairman, Fred Johnston, advising the owner, Mrs. Alice Berardi, of the designation as of May 3, 1871..

Clearwater, Alphonso T. *The History of Ulster County, New York*. Kingston, NY: W.J. Van Deusen, 1907.

*Daily Graphic*, August 27, 1878.

Evers, Alf. *The Catskills – From Wilderness to Woodstock*. Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 1992.

The author emphasizes the early use of bluestone prior to its commercialization and mentions the Fitch brothers as among the industry leaders.

Evers, Alf. *Kingston – City on the Hudson*. Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 2005.

The author devotes a chapter to the bluestone and other industries that built Rondout. In Chapter 14, The Supreme Court Frees the Steamboat, William Fitch's son Ezra is mentioned on page 267 as having commissioned the steamboat *Santa Claus*.

Evers, Alf, Robert Titus and Tim Weldner. *Catskill Mountain Bluestone*. Fleischmanns, N.Y.: Purple Mountain Press, 2008.

An article by each of the three authors reprinted respectively from the New York Folklore Quarterly and Kaatskill Life. The article by Titus is especially helpful in understanding the qualities and geological history and characteristics of bluestone.

Federal Census, New York, 1860.

Ford, Edwin. *Street Whys – Anecdotes and Lore about the Streets of Kingston, New York*. Round Top, N.Y.: Ford Printing, 2010.

P. 3" "At #545, William B. and Simeon Fitch operated the largest bluestone business in the area. Their stone office building, built in 1870, was considered the finest office structure in Ulster County. Across the street was the Santa

Fitch Bluestone Company Office

Ulster County, NY

Name of Property

County and State

Claus Hotel, where Fitch's crew of the boat *Santa Claus* stayed while in port." The author, for many years Kingston's official City Historian, also describes Wilbur Avenue and the early history of Wilbur.

Friends of Historic Kingston. "A Valuable Piece of Kingston Heritage." 2015

<<http://www.fohk.org/welcome/preservation/bluestone/>>

Includes links to a bluestone industry glossary, a timeline, a guide for bluestone sidewalk upkeep, and a self-guided driving tour of bluestone structures, former quarries, and other related places within Kingston and Ulster County.

Haines, Robert. "Three Notes from the Kingston Daily Freeman." Manuscript, on file at the Friends of Historic Kingston.

Haines, a volunteer for the Friends of Historic Kingston, cites stories in the newspaper from March 8, 1867 about a frame building owned by the Fitch company that burned in a fire; from July 20, 1870, about a safe that the Fitches purchased from a local bank that they planned to put in their soon-to-be-built office building; and from July 26, 1871, describing the new building as well as the state of the local bluestone industry.

Haring, H. A. *Our Catskill Mountains*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1931.

No mention of the Fitches but one of the best background descriptions of the historic bluestone industry.

Historic American Building Survey HABS NY-5558. *S. and W. B. Fitch Depot and Office Building, Abeel Street, Kingston, Ulster County, NY*. Summer 1972. Available online at the Library of Congress.

"Hudson River Bluestone." *The Manufacturer and Builder* (June 1889).

An update on the article of 1879. Mentions West Hurley as having the largest quarries.

Ingram, Henry Balch. "The Great Bluestone Industry." *Popular Science Monthly* 45 (July 1894).

A survey of the industry in 1894 which includes a discussion of the dressing of the stone and includes a photograph of a bluestone sawing and planing mill at Kingston.

"Kingston" [map] 1887, "Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1867-1970 – New York."

*New-York Spectator*, October 18, 1931.

"Our Bluestone Sidewalks." *The Manufacturer and Builder* (October 1879).

Describes some of the geology of bluestone, its introduction into the New York City market for flagging and other uses, and mentions the large shipping depot at Malden.

Reimann-Buechner Partnership. *Kingston Local Waterfront Revitalization Program, Section II, Historic Resources Map*. October 16, 1985.

Rhoads, William B. *Kingston New York – The Architectural Guide*. Hensonville, N.Y.: Black Dome Press, 2003. The author, a professor of art history at SUNY New Paltz who specializes in historic architecture, identifies the architect as J. A. Wood. The architect, writes Dr. Rhoads, "added such modish touches as the polychrome arches and mansard roof with iron crest. The cupola, with finial and flag pole, was certainly meant to be eye-catching. The *Kingston Journal* (1870) called it the finest office in the county. In 1972 the long-abandoned building was restored (without the original window frames and iron shutters)...."

Ringwald, Donald C. *Steamboats for Rondout*. Providence, R.I.: Steamship Historical Society of America, 1981.

The author describes Twaalfskill (Wilbur) as the site of the landing of Theron Skeel from which the *Congress* was in 1829 first to provide regular steamboat passenger service along the Hudson to New York City. He also describes Ezra Fitch's relation to Skeel and Fitch's ownership of the steamboat *Santa Claus* which also docked at Wilbur before being sold to Thomas Cornell.

Stueding, Bob. *Rondout – A Hudson River Port*. Fleischmanns, N.Y.: Purple Mountain Press, 1995.

Page 81: The Fitches entered the stone business in 1839 two years after Philip Lockwood made the first shipment to New York. It was "...the largest exporter of bluestone in the world in 1850, handing \$2,000 worth of stone a day, with between 150 and 200 huge stone wagons trundling out of the hills of Hurley and Sawkill and down Wall Street to its yard on the Rondout Creek..."

Fitch Bluestone Company Office  
Name of Property

Ulster County, NY  
County and State

Sylvester, Nathaniel Bartlett. *History of Ulster County, New York*. Philadelphia, Everts and Peck. 1880.

Thing, Lowell. "Wanted: new owner for Rondout 'castle'." *The Sunday [Kingston] Freeman*, March 16, 1980.  
Includes a brief description of the Fitch building's restoration by the Berardis in 1972. Combines "a mixture of Second Empire features with high Victorian Gothic," according to Dr. William B. Rhoads, art history professor at SUNY New Paltz. Includes several pictures of the interior after its refitting as a residence.

"To Erect Filling Station at Fitch Dock in Wilbur." *Kingston Daily Freeman*, August 7, 1931.  
This story describes the purchase of Fitch property at the "Fitch dock in Wilbur" by a William H. Lynch who reportedly planned to build "a large modern filling station" on the property. The story does not make clear whether the transaction included the Fitch building.

*Ulster County Whig*, advertisements, 1838, 1840.

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

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Fitch Bluestone Company Office  
Name of Property

Ulster County, NY  
County and State

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**10. Geographical Data**

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**Acreage of Property** .61  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>16</u> Zone	<u>582715</u> Easting	<u>4640219</u> Northing	3	<u>          </u> Zone	<u>          </u> Easting	<u>          </u> Northing
2	<u>          </u> Zone	<u>          </u> Easting	<u>          </u> Northing	4	<u>          </u> Zone	<u>          </u> Easting	<u>          </u> Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed map with scale.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

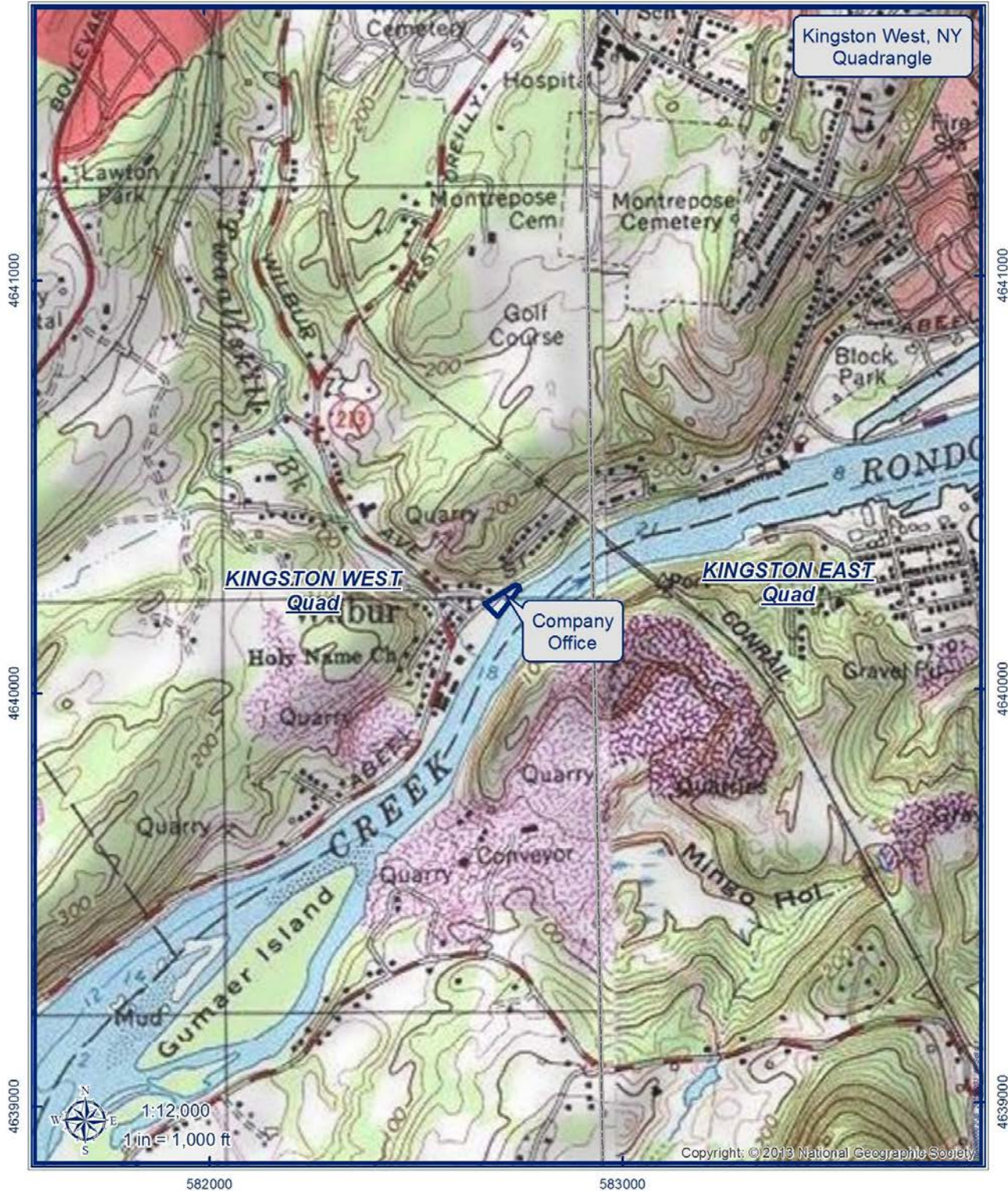
The boundary incorporates the entire lot of which the Fitch Bluestone Company Office has historically been located.

Fitch Bluestone Company Office  
Name of Property

Ulster County, NY  
County and State

Fitch Bluestone Company Office  
City of Kingston, Ulster County, New York

532-574 Abeel Street  
Kingston, NY 12401



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N  
Projection: Transverse Mercator  
Datum: North American 1983  
Units: Meter

0 312.5 625 1,250 Feet



Fitch Bluestone Co.



Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation



Fitch Bluestone Company Office  
Name of Property

Ulster County, NY  
County and State

Fitch Bluestone Company Office  
City of Kingston, Ulster County, New York

532-574 Abeel Street  
Kingston, NY 12401



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N  
Projection: Transverse Mercator  
Datum: North American 1983  
Units: Meter



Fitch Bluestone Co.



Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation

Fitch Bluestone Company Office  
Name of Property

Ulster County, NY  
County and State

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### 11. Form Prepared By

---

name/title Lowell Thing, edited by Jennifer Betsworth (NY SHPO)  
organization \_\_\_\_\_ date January 2016  
street & number 55 West Chestnut Street telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town Kingston state NY zip code 12401  
e-mail twothings@hvc.rr.com

---

### Additional Documentation

---

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

---

### Photographs:

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Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Fitch Bluestone Company Office

City or Vicinity: Kingston

County: Ulster State: NY

Photographer: Jennifer Betsworth

Date Photographed: August 6, 2015

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

NY\_Ulster County\_Fitch Office\_0001  
Façade, facing east

NY\_Ulster County\_Fitch Office\_0002  
Façade, detail of entrance, facing east

NY\_Ulster County\_Fitch Office\_0003  
South elevation, facing north

Fitch Bluestone Company Office  
Name of Property

Ulster County, NY  
County and State

NY\_Ulster County\_Fitch Office\_0004  
East elevation, facing northwest

NY\_Ulster County\_Fitch Office\_0005  
North elevation, facing south

NY\_Ulster County\_Fitch Office\_0006  
Interior, first floor, kitchen, facing southeast

NY\_Ulster County\_Fitch Office\_0007  
Interior, first floor, stair and parlor, facing east

NY\_Ulster County\_Fitch Office\_0008  
Interior, second floor, living room, facing northeast

---

**Property Owner:**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

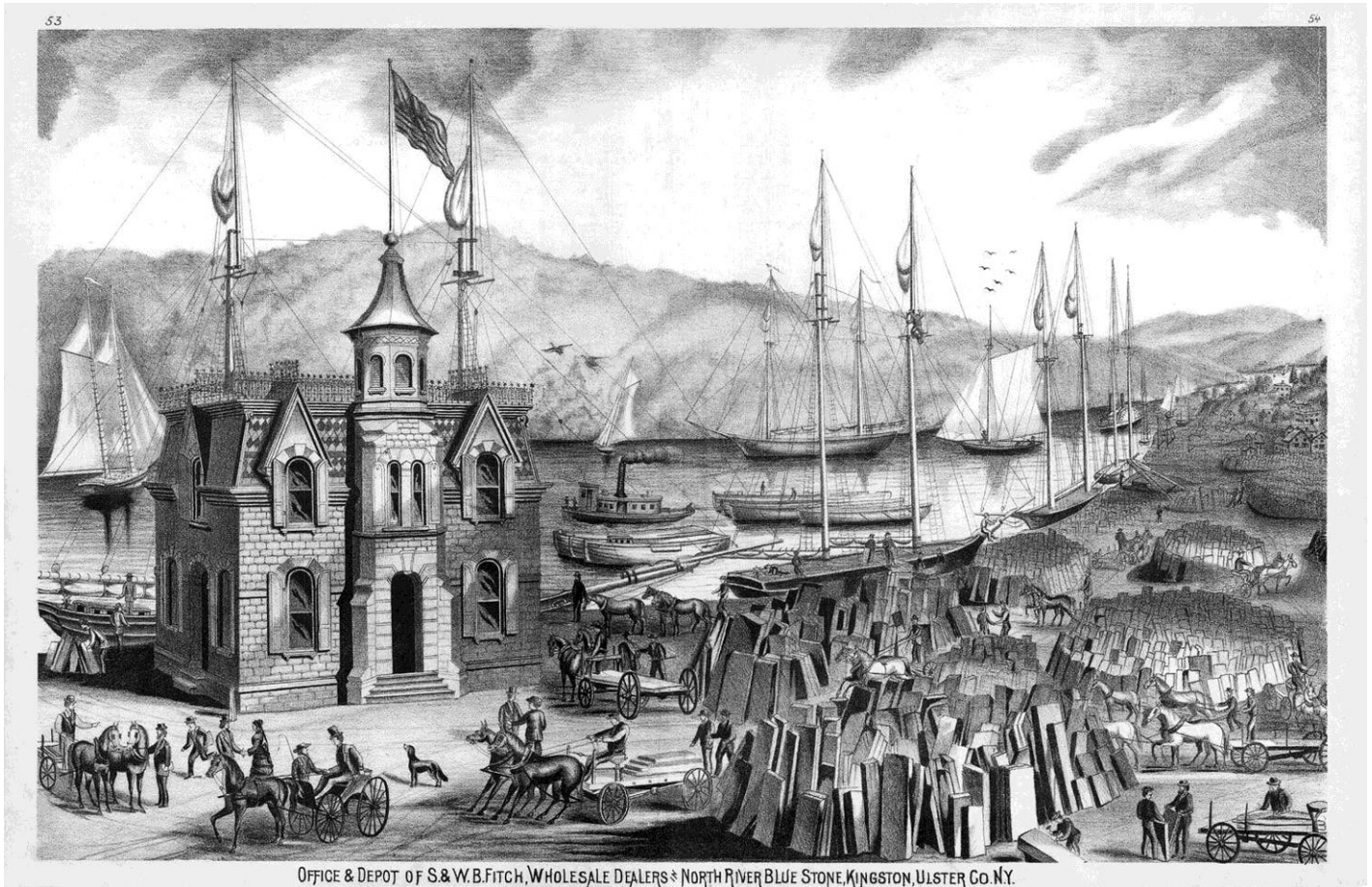
name Robert Iannucci  
street & number 325 Gold Street, Suite 4 telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town Brooklyn state NY zip code 11201

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Fitch Bluestone Company Office  
Name of Property

Ulster County, NY  
County and State

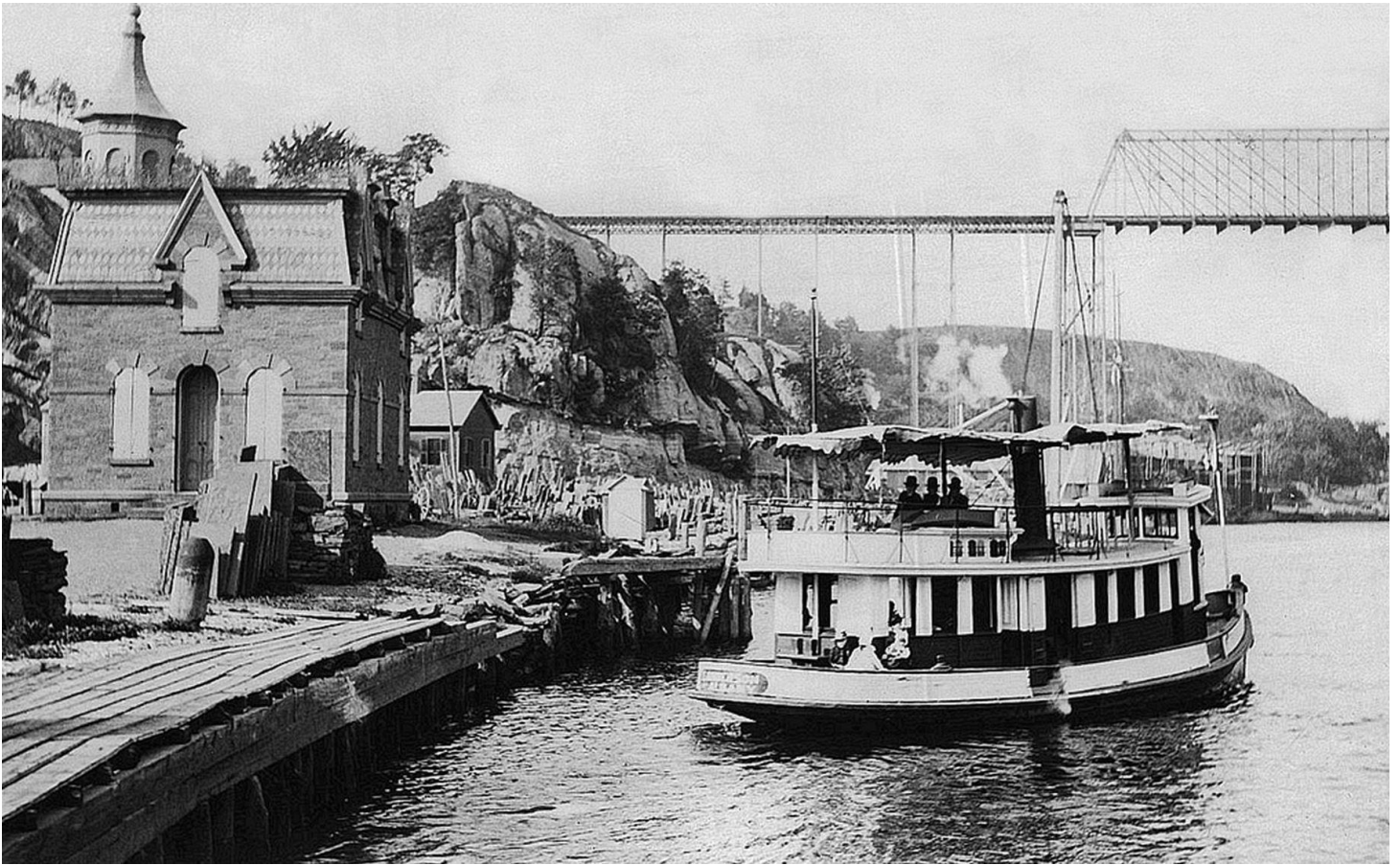


OFFICE & DEPOT OF S. & W. B. FITCH, WHOLESALE DEALERS IN NORTH RIVER BLUE STONE, KINGSTON, ULSTER CO. N.Y.

1875 Beers Atlas of Ulster County

Fitch Bluestone Company Office  
Name of Property

Ulster County, NY  
County and State



Fitch Office and Stoneyard, Courtesy Dennis Connors Collection

Fitch Bluestone Company Office  
Name of Property

Ulster County, NY  
County and State



Workers at the Fitch Stone Yard, Courtesy Dennis Connors Collection



















&a20CUNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
&a30CNATIONAL PARK SERVICE

&a22CNATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
&a29CEVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Fitch Bluestone Company Office  
NAME:

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW YORK, Ulster

DATE RECEIVED: 4/01/16 &pW DATE OF PENDING LIST: 4/21/16  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 5/06/16 &pW DATE OF 45TH DAY: 5/17/16  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 16000256

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 5-16-16 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

**Entered in  
The National Register  
of  
Historic Places**

&a4L

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



**Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation**

ANDREW M. CUOMO  
Governor

ROSE HARVEY  
Commissioner

RECEIVED 2280

APR 01 2016

Nat. Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service

24 March 2016

Alexis Abernathy  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
1201 Eye St. NW, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Washington, D.C. 20005

Re: National Register Nominations

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to submit the following four nominations, all on disc, to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register:

Beth Olam Cemetery, Brooklyn and Queens Counties  
Attlebury Schoolhouse, Dutchess County  
Calvary Methodist Episcopal Church, New York County  
Fitch Bluestone Company, Ulster County

Please feel free to call me at 518.268.2165 if you have any questions.

Sincerely:

Kathleen LaFrank  
National Register Coordinator  
New York State Historic Preservation Office