

Chapter 7: Historical Resources

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The Dudley Memorial Shelter at historic College Hill Park.
Photo credit: Camelia Manring

Historic, cultural and recreational resources, like natural resources, are vital to the city's community and identity and are important to consider in land-use and development decision-making. Patterns of land use and development are often closely linked to the natural resources available to a community. For example the Hudson River and its tributaries have played an important role in the settlement and industrialization of the area. Open spaces in the City are also closely linked with Historic sites. Two of the largest green spaces in the city, Springside and College Hill Park are both designated historic landmarks. As the City moves forward with development and revitalization, it is important to understand why land use patterns exist, and how these patterns are impacting natural resources such as water resources and open spaces. Future development should take into account these past and potential future impacts.

The City of Poughkeepsie Historic Resources maps include a downtown map ([Map 7.1](#)), focused on the dense area of historic sites and districts in central Poughkeepsie, and a full city map that displays the widespread historic sites in the city ([Map 7.2](#)). Data for historic sites and districts was gathered from Dutchess County, New York State, and Historic District and Landmark Preservation Commissioner Holly Wahlberg. The map was presented to the Historic District and Landmark Preservation Commission for comment. Data was updated by Addison Tate at the Environmental Cooperative at the Vassar Barns with the consultation of Harvey Flad, Professor Emeritus of Geography at Vassar College. The following descriptions of historic locations identified in these maps were prepared by Harvey Flad, July 2018.

Historic Preservation and City of Poughkeepsie Natural Resource Inventory

By Harvey K. Flad, Professor Emeritus of Geography, Vassar College

The Introduction to the Dutchess County Natural Resource Inventory (2010) included a brief history of efforts over two centuries of compiling information about both natural and cultural resources for use in regional planning and local land use decision-making. Prior studies by members of the Dutchess County Historical Society and The Women's City and County Club of Dutchess County promoted concern for the preservation of the city's historic resources. In the *Dutchess County Guide*, published in the American Guide Series (1937), sites of particular historical, cultural and contemporary interest, including local industries, were mentioned. It remains a useful guide to places that remain resonant to the city's cultural identity. The volume was a product of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration.

Following the passage of the Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and the creation of the National Register of Historic Places, specific historic sites, buildings and landmarks in the county began to be listed and described. For example, in the late 1960s, the county began a cultural resources survey to update New York State's Hudson River Valley Commission report *Historic Sites and Buildings in the Hudson River Valley*. In the 1969 *Landmarks of Dutchess County, 1683-1867*, published in the Architecture Worth Saving in New York series by the New York State Council on the Arts, over 300 structures were researched and photographed as a tool to guide "growth and development" and "encourage preservation of this inheritance." Several sites in the City of Poughkeepsie were included in the *Landmarks* survey such as the pre-Revolutionary era Frear/Freer House; Springside; and a proposed historic district encompassing Victorian-era houses on Garfield, Academy, and South Hamilton streets. The Dutchess County Landmarks Association shortly thereafter surveyed structures in the area of Union Street that were impacted by the development of the E-W Arterial. In 1971, the Union Street Historic District, containing approximately eight blocks and 122 historic structures, was officially listed on the National Register, along with the Garfield Place Historic District of two-dozen properties. The Academy Street Historic District with over forty properties was listed five years later. Another four historic districts have been created that acknowledge the diversity of architecture and social history throughout the city.

Sites Included on the Historic Maps of the City of Poughkeepsie

Settlement

In 1664 the lands along the Hudson River, known as New Netherland and controlled by the Dutch, came under English rule. Subsequently, the Crown divided the land into patents. In 1686, Robert Sanders, an Englishman and Myndert Harmense of Dutch heritage, purchased the land where Poughkeepsie would be located from the Wappinger Indians. Poughkeepsie would be named after a local spring, variously spelled as U-puku-ipi-sing or Apokeepsing, meaning "the reed-covered lodge by the little water place." Early settlers included both Dutch and English families who built houses and a mill along the Fall Kill at Upper Landing in the early decades of the 18th C. Although much of the pre-Revolutionary footprint has been lost,

both the [Hoffman House](#) (1789) and [Reynolds Homestead](#) (1840) at Upper Landing remain as among the earliest existing structures in the city. In 2013 Upper Landing Park opened with extensive signage of the history of Poughkeepsie.

Early Settlers

Both the Dutch and English settlers built their own churches in the village's emerging downtown. The first English, or Anglican, church was located at the intersection of Church and Market Street, while a "glebe", or farm and rectory was purchased east on Filkintown Road (Main Street) for the rector Rev. John Beardsley. During the Revolution, Rev. Beardsley remained loyal to the King, and so was removed downriver to New York City, then under English command. [Glebe House](#) (1767) was sold by the church in 1792 and remained in private hands until 1929 when it was rescued from possible demolition by the Dutchess County Historical Society, the Junior League of Poughkeepsie, and the City of Poughkeepsie. As one of the earliest examples of efforts to preserve one of the city's historic resources, the city-owned property is currently enjoying a rebirth as a site to promote the city's 300-year history and managed by the Mid-Hudson Heritage Center. [Christ Episcopal Church](#) expanded as the village grew into a city after 1854 and eventually moved to the Old English Burying Ground on Academy Street and built an impressive "Early English" Gothic style church (1888). Two other Episcopal churches were also built during the 19th C. The Gothic Revival style [Church of the Holy Comforter](#) (1859-60) on Davies Place is a significant example of the work of the architect Richard Upjohn, while St. Paul's Church (1872) at Mansion Square repeated the Gothic Revival theme.

In the early 1700s the Van Kleeck family and other Dutch settlers built a Reformed Dutch Church in the center of downtown, but as its congregation grew, it rebuilt, and would eventually move from its property at the intersection of Market and Main Streets to the South Side. The [Reformed \(Dutch\) Church of Poughkeepsie](#) (1919-1923) now sits comfortably on Hooker Avenue next to Bartlett Park. The Art Deco architectural style [Church Building](#) (1920s) was built on its former site.

American Revolution (1775-1788)

Poughkeepsie had a significant role in the Revolution and its aftermath. During the early part of the war the British occupied New York City, so the Provincial capitol moved upriver to Kingston. However, after the British burned Kingston in 1777, Poughkeepsie became the temporary capitol. George Clinton, Governor of the State 1777-1783) lived in the [Clinton House](#) (1765, 1783) on Main Street, not far from the second courthouse at the intersection of Market and Main streets. However, as the war came to a close in 1785 the courthouse was destroyed by fire. A third courthouse was quickly constructed and in place for the New York State convention to ratify the Constitution. Clinton was an Anti-Federalist, but after debates with Federalists Alexander Hamilton and John Jay in the summer of 1788, agreed to a compromise that would become the amendments known as the Bill of Rights. Upon ratification, New York became the eleventh of the original thirteen colonies to form the United States of America. The third courthouse was burned in 1806, rebuilt in 1809, and replaced by the current [Dutchess County Courthouse](#) (1903-1904).

Churches

Religious institutions such as churches offer insight into the city's settlement and social history. The original locations of the Dutch and English churches on Market Street framed

political, economic and social power in the village core, while the Poughkeepsie Meeting House (1927) on Hooker Avenue follows the architectural features of the early Quakers. The oldest surviving church building in the city is a relatively small Greek revival style structure on the corner of Vassar and Mill Streets. Constructed in 1835 as a Presbyterian church, reorganized as a Congregational church two years later, and in 1869 as a Jewish synagogue; it became the Second Baptist Church later in the twentieth century. Organized in 1837, the Smith Metropolitan AME Zion Church (1910-11) indicates clusters of early African-American settlement on Main Street's lower slope and on the northern margins. In the mid-19th C immigration from Germany and Ireland filled out the tenements on the lower slope with Germans locating in the Second Ward and Irish in the First Ward; for example the German-American Nativity Church (1853) in the Union Street Historic District. By the late 19th C and early 20th C, Italian immigrants displace the Irish, holding Roman Catholic services in Italian in the original Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church (1910), then moving to the previously Irish church Old St. Peter's Church (Our Lady of Mount Carmel) whose first church and rectory were built in 1837. In the 20th C the Italian community would purchase the former Victorian style Reynolds mansion as the Italian Center. As the Irish households joined the professional workforce such as the police and fire departments, they moved upslope into the city center and established both St. Mary's and Holy Trinity Roman Catholic churches. Meanwhile, early 20th C immigration by German and East European Jews built synagogues in both the Second and First Wards, such as Congregation Schomre Hadath (1923-24) on South Bridge Street. They would move their synagogues along Hooker Avenue and neighboring streets as their emerging middle-class congregations moved to houses on the South Side and in the Town.

Waterfront

From the beginning of settlement the waterfront from the Fall Kill to Kaal Rock was busy. Farms in the hinterland supplied grain, beef and other agricultural products for shipment downriver by sloops in the 18th C and steamboats in the 19th C. The Clearwater Sloop dock at Waryas Park promotes the role of Poughkeepsie in the early shipping and fishing industries as well as the role of the Clearwater Sloop Restoration, Inc. as a non-profit environmental educational and advocacy organization. The organization's office occupied the Fite House (1810) during the 1970s and 80s. The ferry dock at Upper Landing and steamboat dock at the foot of Main Street offered river access while the railroad became the main transportation mode for passenger and freight traffic. In 1888 the Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge across the Hudson River was constructed to transport freight between New England and Pennsylvania. After a fire in the 1970s it was abandoned, but has been restored as the Walkway Over the Hudson (2009), "the longest pedestrian bridge in the world." The Hudson River has also been a recreational resource, with the Apokeeping Boat Club established in 1879 and the famous Inter-collegiate Regatta begun in 1895.

Waterfront industries over the course of the 18th and 19th centuries included:

Matthew Vassar's Brewery (1891); the Poughkeepsie Glass Works (1880); a cigar factory; a tannery that used hemlock bark from the nearby Catskill Mountains; an iron foundry (1801); ship building and ships' stores such as cooperage, rope, and black-smithing; and soap and candle making, including the Poughkeepsie Whaling Co. (1832). On the southern waterfront Adriance-Platt Buckeye Mower and Reaper Works was a major manufacturer of agricultural machinery in the 1890s and early 20th C, along with the city's largest employer De Laval Separator Co., maker of pumps for the dairy industry. All of these factories were abandoned and removed from the waterfront by Urban Renewal projects in the mid-20th C to make room for Waryas Park in 1975.

Industrial Age Economic Growth

In 1854 the city received its charter. The Industrial Age gained speed with numerous industries along the waterfront and the Fall Kill and the arrival of the Railroad in 1850-51; the impressive Poughkeepsie Railroad Station was built in 1918, modeled after New York City's Grand Central Station (1903-1913). Adjacent to the station on Water Street is the former Reynolds Warehouse (1872). Mill ponds along the Fall Kill served as water power for grain and grist mills, saw mills, and the fulling and carding of wool for cloth and rugs, for example carpets at Pelton Mill (1803-1892), as well as pins and nails. The Pelton family built Pelton Mansion (ca. 1859) on a small rock outcrop overlooking the mill and the Fall Kill. Innis Dye Works (1825) manufactured dyes from dyewoods at the mouth of the Fall Kill; it ceased operation in 1913 and reopened as Schmidt Piano Hammer Factory until 1934. The main building next to the waterfall on the Fall Kill has been renovated into apartments and a smaller structure on the waterfront is now occupied by the Children's Museum (2007). Also located nearby was the Arnold Chair Factory (1870s-80s). Further east along the Fall Kill were cotton mills and clothing factories, such as the Poughkeepsie Underwear Factory (1874; renovated 2017 as apartments, artist studios and a coffee brewer), and the J.O.Whitehouse Boot & Shoe Factory (1879) on Main and Cherry.

19th C Residential Expansion

As the population increased after the Civil War, residential housing included areas of high density tenements, rooming houses and workmen's dwelling on the lower slope, such as Union Street Historic District, and on the city's northern edges along the Fall Kill of one- and two-story homes, as well as mansions up into the Mill Street-North Clover Street Historic District, Upper Mill Street Historic District, and Balding Avenue Historic District. South of Main Street's retail establishments and apartments, single-family homes on large lots for the city's elite emerged, including the Victorian-era properties of Academy Street Historic District, Garfield Place Historic District, and South Hamilton Street Row, and later development of lots in the Dwight Street-Hooker Avenue Historic District, including many individually listed historic homes such as the Brinkerhoff (1860) house designed in the shape of a steamboat. Other individually listed houses are listed outside historic districts, such as Barrett House (ca. 1835) home of the artist Tom Barrett in the 1920s and 30s and now of the Barrett Art Center. Matthew Vassar established his summer estate Springside (1850-52) south along Academy Street, east of the Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery (1852). Horticulturist Andrew Jackson Downing and architect Calvert Vaux designed the estate's landscape and buildings, such as the Springside Porter's Lodge. Many other historic residential properties from the 17th – 19th centuries are scattered south and east throughout the formerly agricultural lands.

City Downtown: Market Street

For 300 years, the financial, political, commercial, retail and cultural life of the city centered on the area of Market Street and Main Street. The location of the first courthouse established the village center and city with the Old City Hall (1831). Hotels were established near the courthouse, such as the Nelson House (1876), famous as the campaign headquarters for President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the 1930s was demolished in 1965 to make way for the Dutchess County Office Building during urban renewal. Banks also clustered along the Market Street corridor, such as the Farmers & Manufactures Trust (1834-1835), Poughkeepsie Trust Company (1906-1907) and Poughkeepsie Savings Bank (1911-1912) with its stained glass panel of Henry Hudson's *Half Moon* above the vault. Lawyers chose offices close-by in

Market Street Row and the Church Building and often met others of the elite at the Amrita Club (1912). Civic and cultural institutions similarly located along Market Street, including the Bardavon (Collingwood Opera House, 1869), State Armory (1891) and Adriance Memorial Library (1898), south to Soldiers Fountain and Park (1870) and the Old YMCA (1909) at Eastman Park and Eastman Terrace (1872-1873).

City Downtown: Main Street

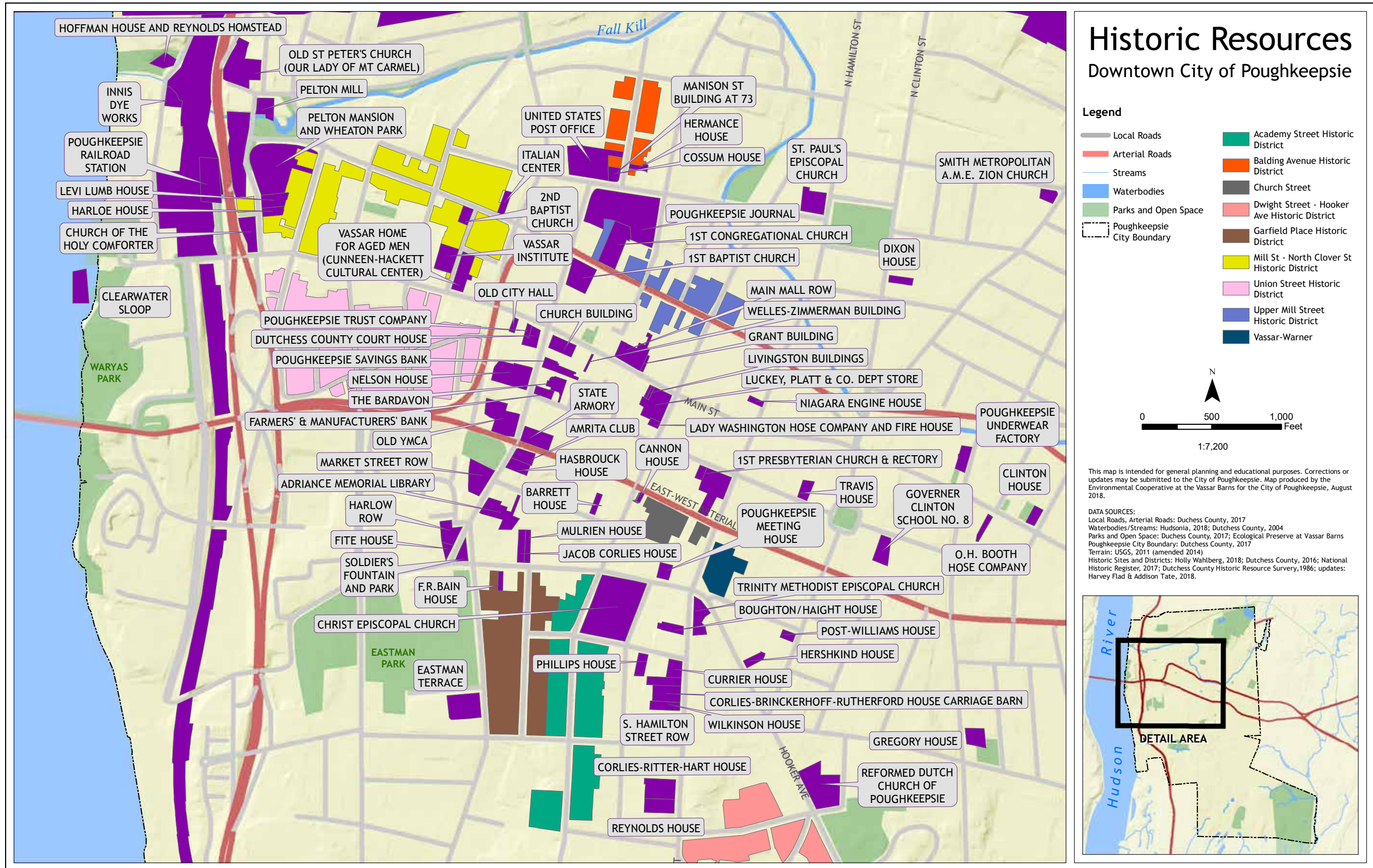
Main Street has been the commercial and retail hub for three centuries. Fires and remodeling of storefronts have altered many 19th C facades, but the streetscape retains its historic character. Main Mall Row is named after the pedestrian mall developed during urban renewal in the 1970s and 80s, and re-opened as Main Street in 2001. Individual buildings that offer a window into the city's retail history on the historic register include: the Grant Building, Welles-Zimmerman Building and Livingston Buildings. The Luckey, Platt & Co. Dept. Store (1901) advertised itself as the mid-Hudson Valley's department store with signs stretching eastward to the Connecticut border. Lady Washington Hose Company and Fire House, Niagara Fire House and O. H. Booth Hose Company are three of Poughkeepsie's early firehouses (1908-1909) located in the Main Street corridor.

Cultural and Civic History

Historic sites offer insight into a city's civic duties and pride. Poughkeepsie was often called "the city of schools" after the number of collegiate schools located throughout in the 19th C. The Guilford Dudley Memorial (1931) on the crest of College Hill includes a 1937 "Parthenon" as a historical monument to the Collegiate Hill School and Riverview Military Academy that occupied the site during the late 19th C. William W. Smith purchased the site and offered it to the city as College Hill Park; the park includes a golf course and the historic Clarence Lown Memorial Rock Garden (1931). Ragged Lane was renamed Academy Street after a collegiate school; public schools included the 19th C Governor Clinton School No. 8, a number of elementary schools and the former Poughkeepsie High School (1911-14) on South Hamilton Street that became Our Lady of Lourdes parochial high school in the 1950s and subsequently the Family Partnership Center when Lourdes moved to the Town. In 1861 Vassar Female College opened its historic landmark Main Building at the east end of College Avenue. Matthew Vassar's nephews built the Vassar Home for Aged Men (Cunneen Hackett Cultural Center), including the Vassar Institute, on the site of Matthew Vassar's former city home, in 1880. Also, the Alms House & City Infirmary (1869) was located north and east of Main Street and the downtown; it now houses Maplewood senior apartments.

The Franklin Delano Roosevelt Mid-Hudson Bridge opened in 1930. As a federal project during the Depression, President Roosevelt had the United States Post Office (1937) built at the north end of Market Street. Its design resembles that of the third Dutchess County Courthouse where, in 1788, New York State legislators ratified the Constitution. Murals by local artist Olin Dows depicting the event, as well as the mythic spring of Poughkeepsie's name, adorn the second-floor balcony. The Old Dutch-inspired architecture of the Poughkeepsie Journal (1941-1943) building continues the historic theme of Poughkeepsie's origins. Other twentieth century historic, cultural and civic buildings have yet to be added to the official list of resources. Cultural venues such as The Chance, Mid-Hudson Heritage Center and the Trolley Barn inhabit 19th C buildings that reflect the city's growth into the 21st C.

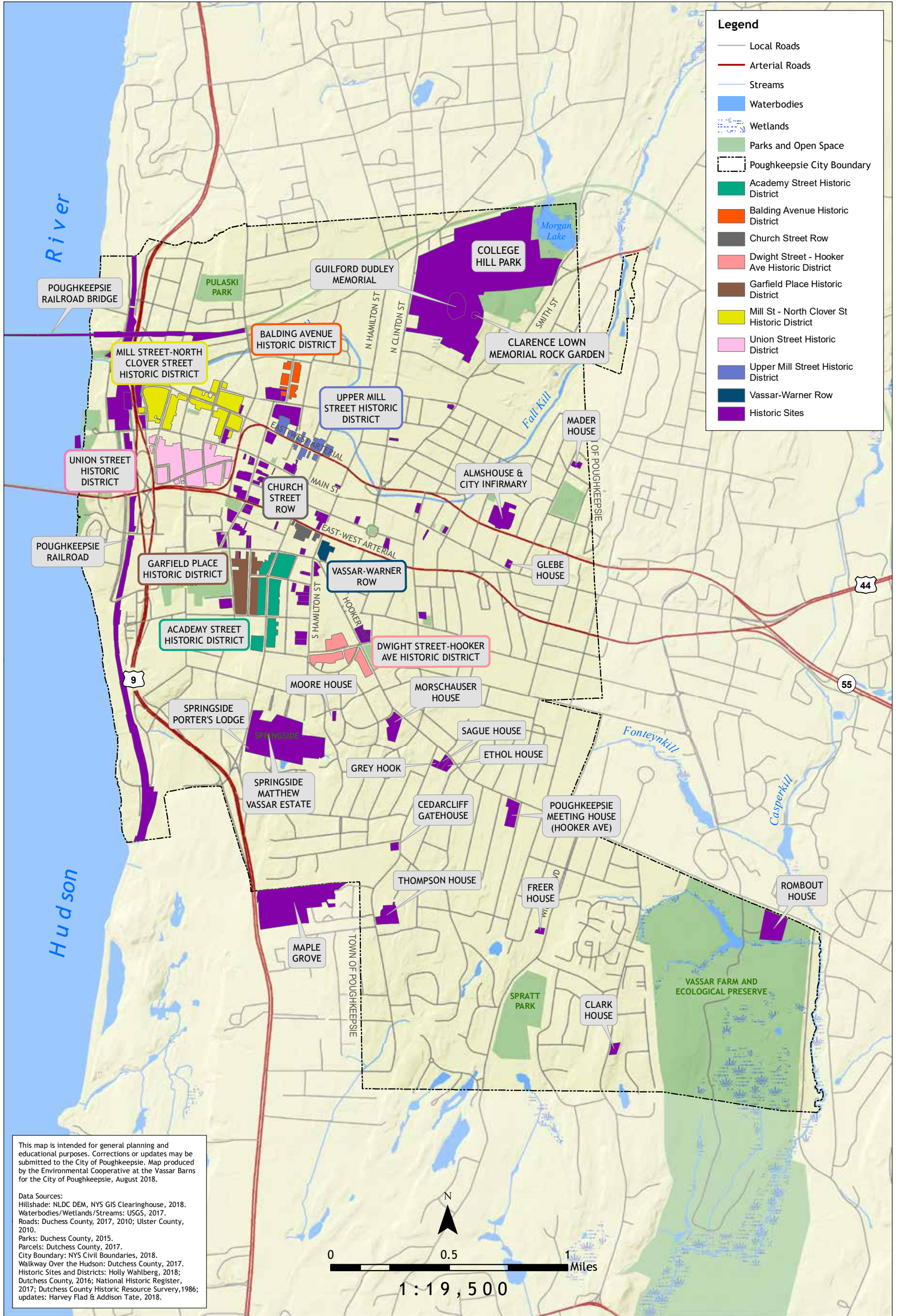
Map 7.1 Historic Resources in the downtown area of the City of Poughkeepsie



Map 7.2 Historic sites and districts throughout the entire City of Poughkeepsie

Historic Resources

City of Poughkeepsie, New York



Additional Resources for the Historical Map include:

National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, U.S. Department of Interior

Bennett, James, *Poughkeepsie's Amazing Extraordinary History: A Year-by-Year Outline* (Poughkeepsie, NY: Riverflow Publications, 2017)

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Platt, Edmund, *History of Poughkeepsie*, 1905 (reprint ed., Dutchess County Historical Society, 1987)

Puretz, Susan L., *Garfield Place: A Victorian Street in an Urban Setting*, 1971 and *Stages in the Life Cycle of a Street: Evolution of Academy Street, Poughkeepsie, New York*, 1983 (personal publications)

Rhoads, William, "Poughkeepsie's Architectural Styles, 1835-1940," *New Perspectives on Poughkeepsie's Past*, ed. Clyde Griffen (Poughkeepsie, NY: Dutchess County Historical Society Yearbook vol 72, 1987), pp. 18-35.

Wahlberg, Holly, Local National Historic Places List, 2018.

Public Historians: William P. Tatum III, County Historian; George Lucas, City Historian; Bill Jeffway, Dutchess County Historical Society executive director