

Community Spotlight: Village of Montgomery

Invisible History and Adaptive Reuse

By Zachary Coleman, Planner

Situated along the banks of the Wallkill River, between rolling farmland and the confluence of major transportation corridors, the historic Village of Montgomery boasts a unique small-town character that is representative of the past while managing to be very much in tune with the present.

Montgomery was originally called Wardsbridge after James Ward, a grist mill operator who built the first bridge over the river to allow goods to flow into and out of the Village. The current bridge still bears his name; however, the Village of Montgomery was renamed in honor of the Revolutionary War General Richard Montgomery and officially incorporated in 1810. Building on the success of a farming and industrial economy of

yesteryear, Montgomery is now home to a bustling small business and restaurant scene and plays host to a multitude of events each year that bring people together from across the community, County and beyond. What is interesting, though, is that although business may be different in the Village these days, much of the building stock downtown has remained intact. It is part of what makes it so charming. It is also a perfect example of how adaptive reuse can keep the fabric of a community complete, while allowing new business and economic development to occur.

Adaptive reuse involves renovating and reusing an existing structure for a purpose different

than what it was originally intended. It seems that everywhere you look around the Village there are stories of the past behind the current building facades. There is something about old buildings that just draws you in. The often-overused adage, "They just don't make them like they used to," certainly applies when you see the lines of shops and restaurants along Clinton St. and Union St. There is an inherent invisible history surrounding historic buildings that evokes a sense of wonder. Who was it that walked through those doors before

us? What kind of discoveries and innovations happened here? What conversations happened in this seat? What was life like here so many years ago? The longer you spend in these places



Early image of Ward's Bridge in the Village of Montgomery

the more questions arise, the more details come through in the craftsmanship from a different era, and the more you want to make sure they keep standing. Preserving this hidden history and allowing more stories to be made is possible by adapting the buildings' uses to suit the current economic climate.

A few notable examples of adaptive reuse across the Village stand out. The former Lindy Dress Factory, a three-story masonry and wood building on Railroad Avenue, was recently renovated and converted into a salon on the lower floors with apartments above. This type of mixed-use redevelopment is a valuable tool in combating the waning availability of apartments in the area



while encouraging continued economic development through the expansion of small business. Similarly, just up the street at the corner of Wallkill Ave. and Charles St., a former blacksmith's shop has been converted into apartments. On the adjacent corner, the long vacant former Montgomery Grange building has been converted into offices for a growing architectural firm. The firm designed the offices to retain the charm of the landmarked building, maintaining the original signage and exterior character to fit in with the neighborhood while overhauling the interior to suit their needs. In a former iteration, the farm market on the corner of Charles St. and Union St. was also a blacksmith's shop. Horseshoes have been replaced with artisanal cheeses, specialty pies and salads. The original post office and general store on the corner of Clinton St. and Bridge St. now serves up quiche and lattes instead of parcels as the Iron Café. The list goes on and on, and it's continuing to grow.

The proposed conversion of the historic 50,000 square foot Montgomery Worsted Mill at the end of Factory St. into City Winery Hudson Valley is just another example of how the Village is encouraging adaptive reuse to usher in a new age of tourism and economic development. City Winery already has locations in cities across the country. So why pick a small village in Upstate New York to invest, by some estimates, over \$5 million on their first venture outside of a bustling metropolis? The character, history and opportunity to preserve them were too much to pass up. The charm factor came into play again. The

Mill overlooks a waterfall on the Wallkill that also provides hydroelectric power to the building and back to the electrical grid. The often-photographed scenery creates a perfect ambiance for the proposed future wedding/concert venue. The hydroelectric power, ample space, and fertile soil near the River make it a perfect spot to produce the projected 30,000-40,000 cases of wine annually. The major draw, though, could be the rich history behind the 126-year old brick and wood structure. It retains the kind of character that only time can produce and evokes a sense of wonder and curiosity that only the stories within the walls of an old building can.

It seems fitting that a major economic development venture within the Village would occur within an old mill. One of the first major ventures, the bridge over the Wallkill River, was due to the efforts of a mill owner seeking to make transporting goods and services easier. This bridge became an important asset benefitting the entire community and represented a shift in the economy of the Village. The conversion of the Worsted Mill into a winery is indicative of a new shift in the economy to attract people into the village for entertainment. It is an opportunity for existing businesses to leverage increased tourism and share in the benefits of more people coming into town. It is also an opportunity

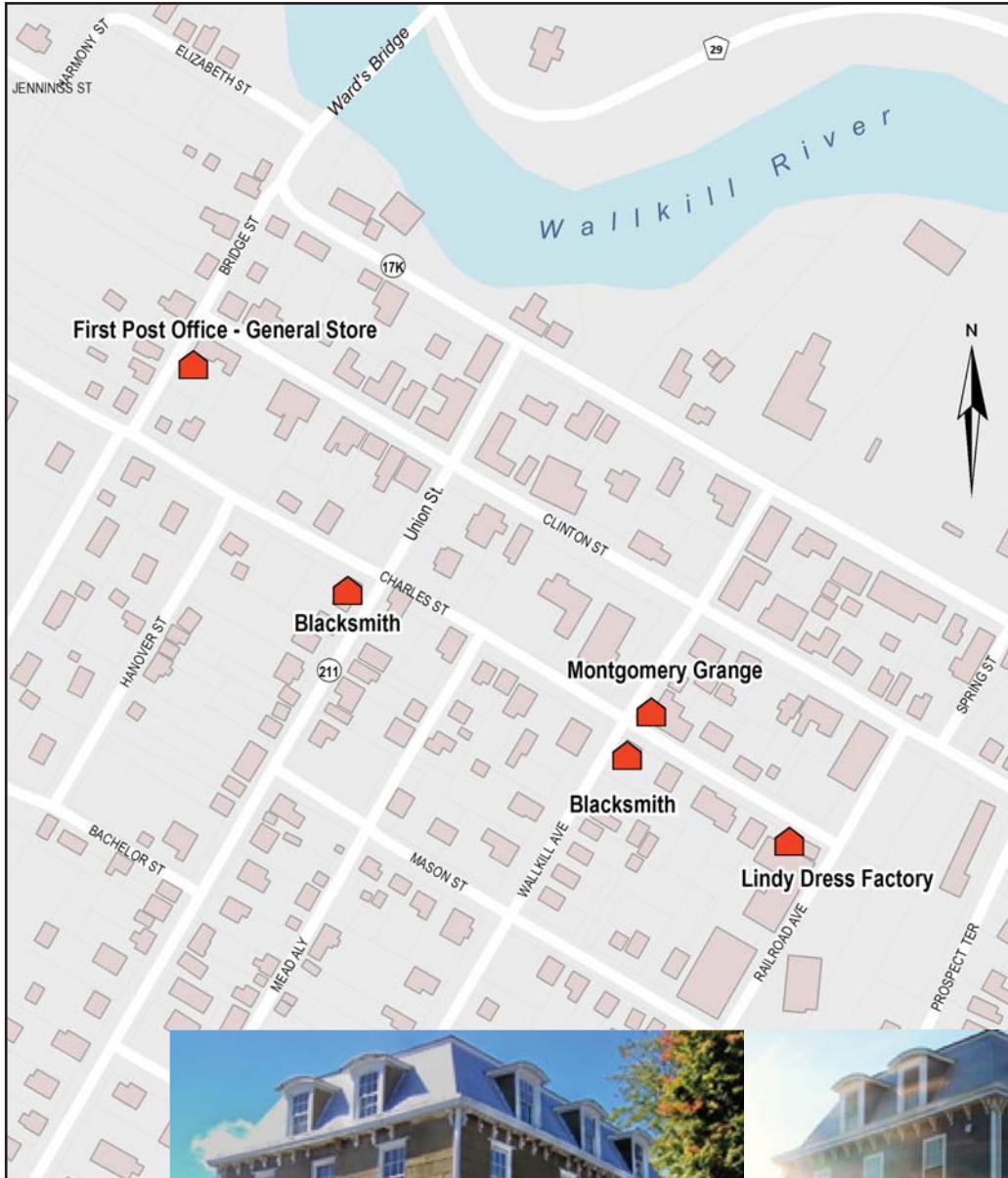
for the fresh faces coming into the Village to experience what everyone who lives there already knows; that the Village of Montgomery can draw you in with its historic charm and surprise you with all of the shops, restaurants and unique entertainment opportunities that it has to offer.








Rendering of the City Winery in Hudson Valley project; this project proposes to reuse the Montgomery Worsted Mill as a wedding and concert venue.

Map of Adaptive Reuse Projects in the Village of Montgomery

Old vs New



-  First Post Office - General Store is now the Iron Cafe
-  The Blacksmith on Charles and Union Streets is now site of the Farm Market
-  Montgomery Grange is now used as offices for an architectural firm
-  Blacksmith on Walkill Ave and Charles Street is now apartments
-  Lindy Dress Factory (see below)

The former Lindy Dress Factory Before (left) was recently converted into a mixed use building (right) featuring a salon on the first floor and apartments above.

