



NEWS FROM
ULSTER COUNTY
County Executive Jen Metzger

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Ulster County Awarded \$558K Grant for Repairs to Historic Matthewis Persen House in Uptown Kingston

KINGSTON, NY - Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger today announced that the County has been awarded a \$558,232 grant from the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation for repairs to the historic Matthewis Persen House in Kingston that will preserve its historical integrity. Owned by the County, the historic stone building is located in the Stockade National Historic District at the Corner of Crown and John Streets — the only intersection in America where the buildings on all four corners were built before the Revolutionary War. The building serves as a museum and cultural heritage center, with staffing and support from the County Clerk's Office.

The grant will enable the County to replace the deteriorated wood shingle roof and other exterior repairs to preserve the building's historic character for years to come.

Named after its longest resident, Matthew Persen (1739-1819), the Persen House has witnessed many important moments in Ulster County's history — it was burned at least twice, saw wars and revolution and was home to doctors, tailors, grocers, druggists and innkeepers. The earliest portions of the building date back to 1661.

Today, the Persen House serves as a museum interpreting the complex colonial history of Ulster County and the Hudson Valley. Damaged twice in colonial conflicts, the house serves as a backdrop to interpret the diverse experiences of the native Esopus People, free and enslaved Africans, and Anglo-Dutch Colonists.

The County has owned the Matthewis Persen House since 1914, and in addition to once housing the Board of Elections, County Food Conservation Bureau, and many more offices, for many decades it was also used to house Cornell Cooperative Extension's (CCE's) agricultural

services. In 1999, CCE was relocated for emergency roof stabilization repairs, beginning a process of historic restoration and the conversion of the building to an interpretive space for the public benefit. The Persen House now welcomes more than 6,000 visitors annually and hosts re-enactments, presentations, tours, musical performances, and historical exhibits, Burning of Kingston activities, and area student field trips.

Currently, the building, which is unheated, is open from Memorial Day through the end of October. The repairs, once completed, will extend the season of operation.

“The Persen House is a historical treasure we intend to preserve for generations, and I want to thank the State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation for this significant grant to make needed repairs,” **said Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger.** “To be able to learn about our past in a building steeped in over 360 years of that history is a truly unique experience, and through the dedicated efforts of the County Clerk's Office, we are making the most of this asset to enrich public understanding of our shared history.”

"The Persen House has seen a fairly dramatic increase in attendance over the past five years, from roughly 3,000 guests per year to over 6,000 guests in 2024,” **said Taylor Bruck, Acting Ulster County Clerk.** “As one of the oldest structures in the County, it was imperative that we properly care for it by fixing the leaky roof. This grant will go a long way in realizing that goal, and I couldn't be more proud of our staff and everyone who helped us preserve our important history.”

“We are incredibly grateful for this crucial support toward the preservation of the Matthewis Persen House,” **said Eddie Moran, Ulster County Historian.** “With its earliest portion dating to 1661, the house played host to, and continues to reflect, the diverse cultural groups who have called this land home, including Esopus native people, Dutch and English colonists, and free and enslaved Africans. Support for historic preservation such as this is vital to ensuring this important historic site and innovative museum can continue to introduce visitors to the complex history of Kingston and the surrounding region for generations to come.”

More information on the Matthewis Persen House Museum and Cultural Heritage Center can be found at: <https://clerk.ulstercountyny.gov/archives/persen-house>

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