

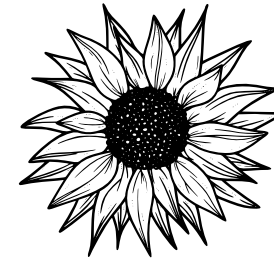
Important Locations in Early Spiritualism

In downtown Rochester, New York

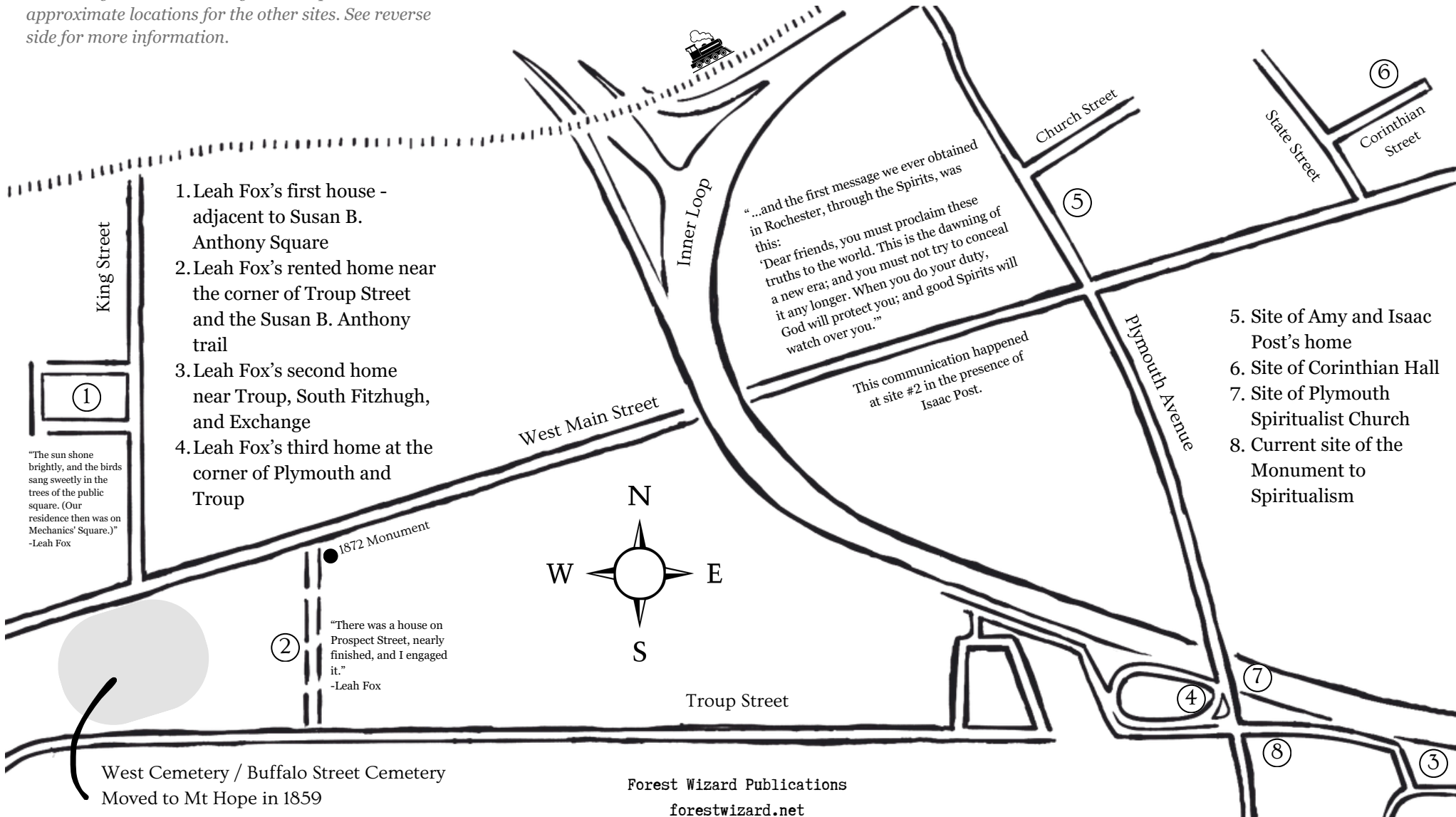


Note: Only site 8 exists today. This map shows approximate locations for the other sites. See reverse side for more information.

Rochester is in the heart of the Burned Over District, a portion of New York State that saw the birth of many radical religious and social movements in the early 19th century, including Spiritualism, the Church of Latter Day Saints, the Millerites, the Oneida Society, and the Woman Suffrage Movement.



The sunflower became the symbol of both Woman Suffrage and Spiritualism



Important Locations in Early Spiritualism



Spiritualists today celebrate the founding of their religion on March 31, 1848 when two young sisters, Maggie and Katie Fox, communicated with the spirit of a murdered peddler in their home in Hydesville, NY (part of Newark today). The event caused a great deal of drama for the Fox family, so the eldest Fox sister, Leah, agreed to take her younger sister Katie back to Rochester with her, in the hopes that separating the young sisters would stop the rapping, apparently caused by the disembodied spirit.

Site #1: Leah lived in a home at 11 Mechanic’s Square. The park would later be rededicated as Susan B. Anthony Square Park. Leah’s home was adjacent to this park, though its exact location is unknown. Despite separating the girls, the rapping continued, making this the first home in the city to host the Rochester Rappings.

Site #2: Thinking the home itself was an issue, Leah rented a home on Prospect street, between Main and Troup. The north end of Prospect is a pedestrian path today. Leah felt ill at ease in this home, since it backed up to Buffalo Street cemetery. She wondered if the cemetery had an impact on the continuing spirit activity. It’s at this house that the Posts get involved, and the first mandate from Spirit is given (the quote can be found between the inner loop and Plymouth Ave on the map).

Site #3: After being evicted for causing too much spirit noise, the family moved into a home at 31 Troup Street around September 1, 1849. This may have been located near the intersection of Troup, South Fitzhugh, and Exchange Streets. It was in this house that the spirits compelled the sisters to demonstrate their mediumship in public, saying: “If you do not go forth and do your duty you will soon be laid in your coffins.”

Site #4: 59 South Sophia Street (today Plymouth Avenue) would be the last home owned by the Fox family before they moved to NYC in 1852. In the 1851 Rochester City Directory, Leah Fox is given the occupation of “Mysterious Knocker.”

Fish, Anna L. Mrs. mysterious knocker, h. 59 S. Sophia

Note: Leah’s name is actually Anna Leah Fox. She went by Leah, and her first husband had the surname Fish. She later married Calvin Brown (who is buried in an unmarked grave in Mt Hope Cemetery; Section: D Lot: 28), and finally Daniel Underhill.

Site #5: Site of the Post house. Amy and Isaac Post played a critical role in the development of Spiritualism. The younger sisters stayed in the Post home for a time, holding seances for the likes of Frederick and Anna Douglass (who were decidedly not impressed. In 1877 Frederick wrote to Amy saying, "I am always so happy to agree with you generally that I almost regret that I am not a spiritualist and the same feeling makes me regret that you are one.").

Site #6: The Posts organized the first public demonstration of the sisters’ otherworldly powers in Corinthian Hall, the largest public hall in the city. It was this demonstration, held on November 14, 1849, that many academics cite as the beginning of the religion. The spirits, too, compelled this: “Hire Corinthian Hall.” Corinthian Hall held many notable speakers and events, but succumbed to fire in 1898.

Site #7: Site of a Protestant church that, in 1906, became Plymouth Spiritualist Church, the first organized church of Spiritualism.

Site #8: The Spiritualist Obelisk, the only remaining monument in this guide. This monument originally stood on the south side of the Plymouth Spiritualist Church property, and was dedicated in 1927. A great portion of the cost was paid by Arthur Conan Doyle, an ardent Spiritualist.

In 1954 the original church was demolished to make way for I-490 and the Inner Loop. The obelisk was moved roughly 100 feet south, and stands today in a pocket park near the southeast corner of Troup Street and Plymouth Avenue.



The Fox sisters. From left to right: Maggie, Kate, and Leah

Other nearby sites:

Hydesville Memorial Park
1510 Hydesville Rd, Newark, NY 14513
Original location of the Fox cottage where the rapping began

Graves of Amy and Isaac Post
1133 Mount Hope Avenue, Range 2, Lot 121,
Rochester, New York



The locations of sites #1-4 are approximate, and have been determined with the help of the Local History & Genealogy Division of the Rochester Central Library.

Most of these sites are on private property today. Please stay on public sidewalks and don’t trespass!

Quotes taken from The Missing Link in Modern Spiritualism by Leah Fox Underhill (1885).

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