

# **Ambrose C. Kingsland**

**1804– 1878**

Ambrose Kingsland was a powerful man who wielded great influence from New York City, on the global stage, all the way to Sleepy Hollow, on a local stage. Kingsland used his desire to initiate positive change and great work ethic to establish successful enterprises and later to be elected as the mayor of New York City.

**Commemorative Essay by Daniel Livingston, Sleepy Hollow**

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## **Ambrose C. Kingsland**

Ambrose C. Kingsland was born on the 24th of May, 1804 in New York City. Although Kingsland was born into a family of great fortune, his life started off on a major rough patch. When he was barely one year old, his father, Cornelius Kingsland, passed away. While he was cared for by his mother, Abigail Cock, it was up to him to assume the patriarchal role in his family. From these years as the patriarch it is likely that he learned honesty, integrity, and wit: traits that later became synonymous with the Kingsland name. He was soon sent to a private academy for boys until he reached the age of 16.

Kingsland began his professional life as a merchant. He founded a widely successful Sperm Whale oil business with his brother, Daniel, in 1820. The business was based in New York City on Broad Street. From this enterprise, Kingsland gained great respect as a businessman. He was regarded with integrity and honesty from all his clients and coworkers

Unsatisfied with his one-dimensional life, Kingsland longed for something more: to make a difference in the world he lived in. Once he had accumulated a mass fortune in the merchant industry, he entered the political sphere as a member of the Whig party. With his goal to make positive changes in mind and his love of the great City of New York, Kingsland ran for the Mayor's office. He gained ethos as a candidate by flaunting his experience and success in the shipping and merchant industry, as well as highlighting his integrity and honesty. In 1851, Kingsland was elected as the 71st Mayor of New York city by a wide margin of 5,000 votes. From day one, he sought to use his power to create a better city. Perhaps his most significant act in office was the recommendation to

purchase what was then known as Jones Woods park to create a new, beautiful city park. The recommendation was approved and this park would soon become one of the most recognizable urban parks in the world, none other than Central Park.

One day, Kingsland and his family traveled down to a small village, and they were immediately mesmerized by its quaint features and beautiful scenery. This village was Sleepy Hollow, where else? He purchased a plot of land that is now Kingsland Point Park, and built a cottage on Merlin Avenue. He spent most of his summers with his wife in Sleepy Hollow, and eventually his seven children joined him. All of his children went to school in Tarrytown. He came to view the village as his home as he spent more and more time there. He was fortunate enough to live here until his death, on the 18th of October, 1878. Kingsland was 78 years old.

Now, why should another rich politician have the privilege to be memorialized in Sleepy Hollow's Hall of Fame? The answer comes from putting his life and accomplishments in perspective. Kingsland saw a value in living a life past the typical goal of accumulating wealth, retiring early and withering the rest of your days until you have no more. Kingsland's ability to look past the status quo and actively desire a fulfilling life was idiosyncratic for the age he lived in. This desire is what led him to run for office, enabling him to write meaningful legislation, changing the way New Yorkers lived. This is why we should memorialize Mr. Kingsland in the Sleepy Hollow Hall of Fame. He is a great example and role model for kids in our town to look up to. Imagine the children of Sleepy Hollow absorbing Kingsland's desire to

make change and his sense to make life as meaningful and fulfilling as possible; they would all gain better chances at becoming successful.

Kingsland fought to achieve all of his life goals. He worked to become important and influential, then using his influence to pave the way to success for the next generation of New Yorkers. Kingsland would be a great addition to the Sleepy Hollow/Tarrytown Hall of Fame, inspiring our next generation with his story and work ethic, so one day they too can be memorialized for their contributions made to Sleepy Hollow, and the world.

#### Works Cited

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