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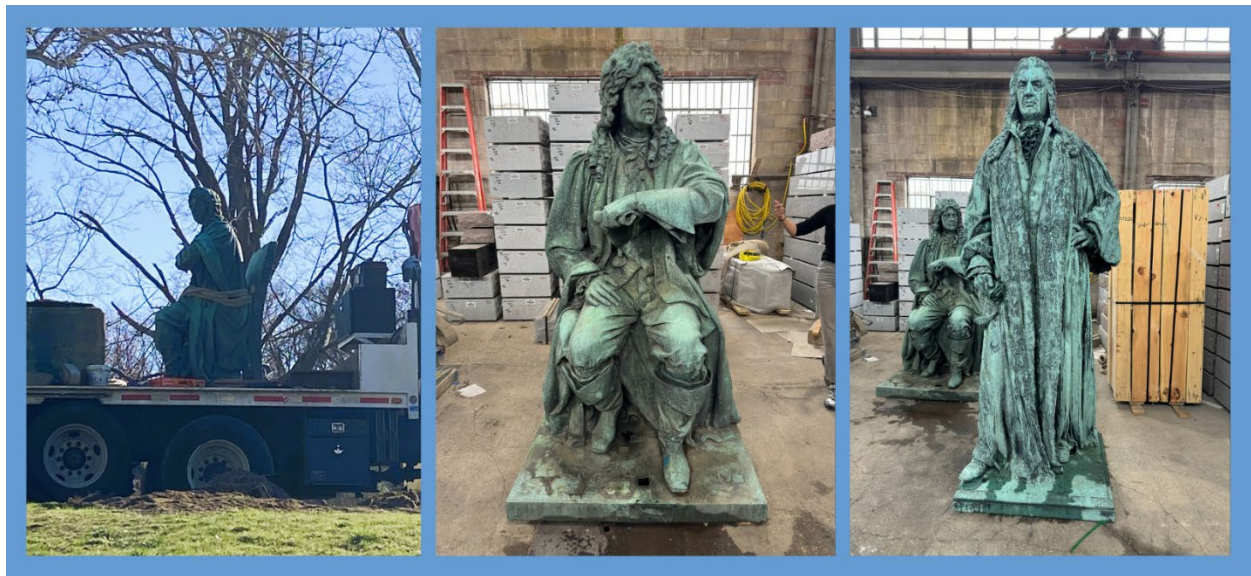
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Historic Statues to be Craned into 8th Floor of New Modern Midtown Offices of Major Non-Profit

**Bronze statues of Rising Ground founders John George Leake and Hon. John
Watts, Jr. weighing 1,800 pounds each, to be moved to new home on January 29**



The statues in transit and in storage, awaiting the move to Broadway.

(New York, New York—January 24, 2025) – Two bronze statues over 125 years old weighing 1,800 pounds each will make a dramatic transfer into the 8th floor of a Broadway office building on Wednesday, January 29. The statues of the **Honorable John Watts, Jr.** and **John George Leake** will be transported by crane through a space created by removing a window at 1333 Broadway, the administrative main office of Rising Ground.

Founded in 1831 as the Leake and Watts Orphan House by Westchester County Judge and former Congressman John Watts, Jr. (1749–1836), with the bequest of his friend

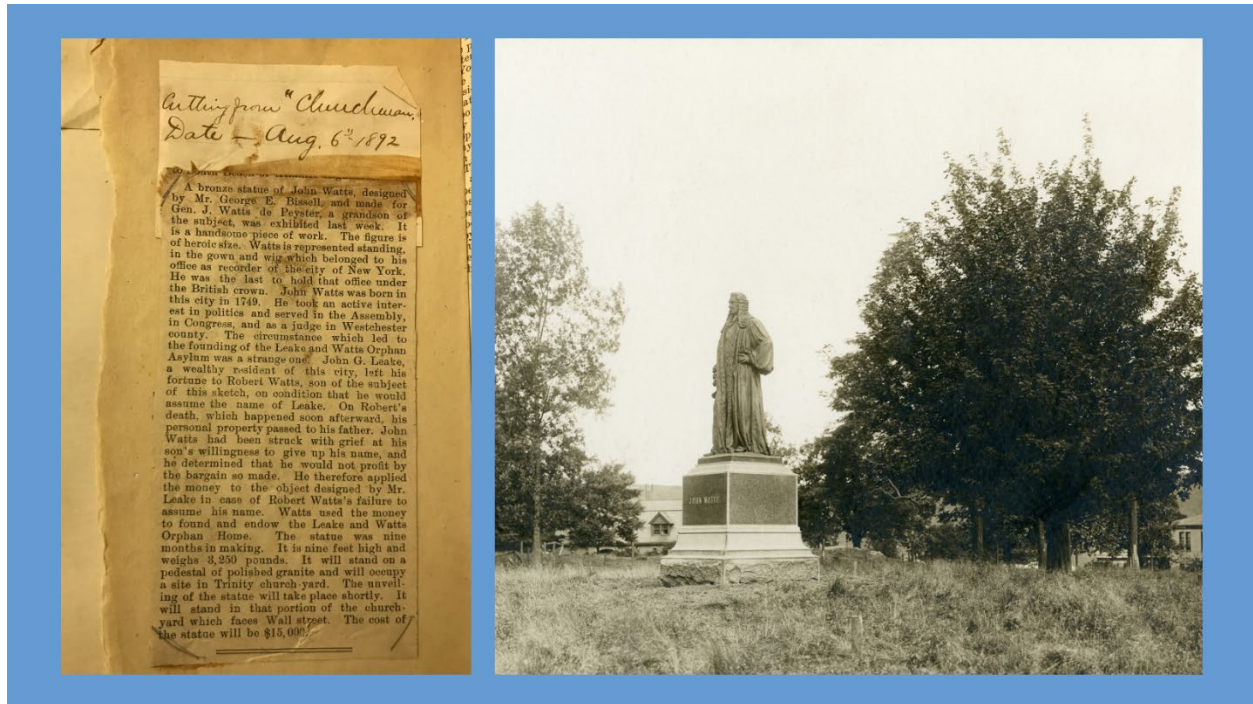
John George Leake (1752–1827), a wealthy New York lawyer who passed away without any heirs, Rising Ground is a trusted and longstanding human services nonprofit at the forefront of meeting the critical needs of New Yorkers. It directly supports over 30,000 program participants each year, impacting over 72,000 children, adults, and families.

Originally located in lower Manhattan, the Leake and Watts Orphan House moved to the current site of Cathedral of St. John the Divine at 112th Street and Amsterdam in 1843 and then to its 40-acre Yonkers site in 1891. At the end of 2022, the organization sold the Yonkers property and moved its administrative staff to 1333 Broadway where it leases the 8th floor. **Rising Ground CEO, Alan Mucatel**, said retaining physical elements of the organization's rich 194-year history including the statues alongside historical marble plaques had been a priority during the sale and the relocation. When the architects engaged to outfit the new space, **Method Design**, noted that the thick concrete floors could sustain the weight of the statues, it was decided to bring them *into* the building.

"It was an idea immediately embraced," says Mr. Mucatel. "These imposing figures provide a tangible connection to Rising Ground's long legacy of service, a legacy we are extremely proud of and strive to honor through our mission-driven work to help New Yorkers rise above adversity and find positive paths forward."

Owing to their size, weight, and age, moving the statues has proved logistically challenging. **Sprung Monuments** was engaged to remove the statues and other historic markers from Yonkers and to clean them. Specialists in memorial monuments, one of the main tasks was assessing the structural integrity of the pieces. An initial idea to cut the statues in half and transport them via the building's freight elevator was rejected following 3D mapping that determined that the risk of damage was too high. That led to the option of removing a window on the Broadway side of the building and to move the statues into the building by crane. This has required various city permits

including permission from the Department of Buildings and the MTA to close Broadway to traffic. To this end, the operation will be carried out by **L&M Crane Company** late at night on **Wednesday, January 29 from 10 pm and into the early hours of Thursday, January 30.**



A [news article](#) from 1892 about the John Watts, Jr. statue and the replica on location in Yonkers.

It is not the first time relocating the statue of John Watts, Jr. has caused logistical challenges. The Rising Ground statue is a replica. The original statue was commissioned by General John Watts de Peyster— John Watts, Jr.'s grandson—from noted sculptor George Edwin Bissell in 1892. It was placed in the Trinity churchyard in lower Manhattan. Trinity Church was the original location of the Leake & Watts Orphan House. Although the Trinity churchyard is the final resting place of several renowned dignitaries, including Alexander and Eliza Hamilton and Robert Fulton, [Watts is the only statue.](#)

Bissell was so proud of his work he requested permission from de Peyster to make a replica to be displayed at the World's Columbian Exposition (World's Fair) in Chicago in 1893 as part of a showcase by the Henry-Bonnard Bronze Company. De Peyster gave his permission and paid for the replica. [He wrote to the Leake & Watts Orphan House rector in September 1893](#) proposing the statue be placed on the Yonkers grounds upon its return. Of the statue's presence at the Fair [he wrote](#): "I have been told by various friends it occupies a most prominent position, at the main entrance of the building, opposite that of the Emperor William [Wilhelm]; and one suggested that my Grandfather was thus placed as a foil to the Emperor, he representing force, my Grandfather justice." Lamenting that the onus on returning the statue had been placed on Bissel, he opined: "It went to Chicago in perfect order as a specimen piece of work but I suppose that it will be terribly mishandled and carelessly packed when sending it back."

It is believed that de Peyster commissioned the statue of John George Leake from Bissell around this time to join the Watts statue in Yonkers. However Rising Ground and the New York Historical Society, that holds Leake and Watts records, have not been able to confirm this. A third, smaller, statue of de Peyster himself also stood on the grounds and has been relocated to a sculpture garden on a small pocket of land Rising Ground has retained in Yonkers along with other pieces not moved to Broadway. On Broadway, the nine-foot statue of John Watts, Jr. will be placed in the foyer on the 8th floor, welcoming guests. The equally imposing Leake statue will sit within the organization's office space. A historical timeline detailing the various locations of Leake & Watts and the expansion and evolution of the organization into the Rising Ground of today, along with foundation stones from 1843 and 1890, have been installed in the contemporary office space. Poster board replicas of Leake and Watts, created from the 3D mapping, have been keeping the statue spaces occupied.

"The history of Rising Ground, from how and why it was founded, its physical movements over the past two centuries, and the evolution of the services and supports we provide mirror the history of New York City in so many ways," says Mr. Mucatel.

"Highlighting milestones and bringing these monuments with us into the new space reflects our deep appreciation for where we came from, our commitment to the work, and an acknowledgement that the past is prologue—that who we are today and who we will be in the future is rooted in care, opportunity, and hope."



Rising Ground staff at 1333 Broadway with the 1890 marble plaque that was removed and transported to Manhattan from Yonkers by Sprung Monuments.

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About Rising Ground

Rising Ground is a leading nonprofit human services organization, currently operating more than 101 programs at 143 sites across all five New York City boroughs and Westchester County, employing a workforce of 2000+ people. Driven by the belief that each of us can thrive when life has hope and opportunity, Rising Ground provides caring support and proven paths to positive change, directly helping 30,000 program participants, reaching over 72,000 children, adults, and family members each year. Founded in 1831 as Leake & Watts Orphan House, Rising Ground has been at the forefront of supporting evolving community needs and is a leader in utilizing result-driven, evidence-based practices. Today, Rising Ground delivers:

- Caring supports promoting independence and engagement for children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

- Dedicated services to survivors of intimate partner violence as well as creative preventive programs that foster healthy relationships.
- High quality and effective community based mental health and health services that foster physical and emotional well-being.
- Trusted and targeted assistance and resources to elevate children and families, building on their strengths to overcome challenges.
- Concrete non-judgmental services and results-focused interventions that lay out a constructive path forward for runaway and homeless youth, as well as juvenile justice involved young people.
- Nurturing and compassionate care for unaccompanied minors making a new home in this country.
- Educationally rich and developmentally appropriate programs that build a foundation for the future growth of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

For more information, visit [RisingGround.org](https://www.risingground.org).

