



Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

The following FAQ is designed to offer insight to the current NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation planning for the capital investment and new exhibits being proposed at Philipse Manor Hall State Historic Site. Public meetings will be held 1pm April 27 & 6pm April 28 to gain additional feedback from the community. Please note that agency proposals will not be finalized until feedback has been incorporated into the plan. To register for the virtual events, please visit:

<https://parks.ny.gov/historic-sites/philipsemanorhall/details.aspx>

Philipse Manor Hall: Our Whole History - Frequently Asked Questions

What is Our Whole History? The Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) has undertaken the Our Whole History initiative to ensure that our historic sites embrace stories that reflect the diversity of our state and nation's history. This commitment to new exhibits, interpretation, and programming across our historic site system will better depict the diversity, humanity, and influence of our state's peoples and further highlight the role that traditionally under-represented communities have played in shaping our history.

Why Philipse Manor Hall? The story of the Philipse family had a tremendous impact on the shaping of the lower-Hudson Valley. The site provides a unique window into Colonial-era life in New York and lends itself to telling the story of the nation's path to independence. While past temporary exhibits and lectures have documented the role that African Americans and Indigenous people contributed in these events, expanded permanent exhibits are needed to fully depict and share this complex history with visitors and to advance its incorporation into local school curriculum.

Will the story of the Philipse family still be a part of the site's interpretation? Yes. The Philipse family story is integral to ongoing interpretation of the site's history. New exhibits will incorporate the journeys of the family, the Indigenous people from whom the Philipse lands derive, and enslaved Africans, from whose work and trade the Philipse family prospered.

How will the site tell the story of Yonkers? New York State's ownership of the site was established through benefactor Eva Smith Cochran, who entrusted the state to preserve the site in perpetuity for the benefit and education of New Yorkers. Prior to this, the site served as

the Village of Yonkers and subsequently, City of Yonkers City Hall. New exhibits will explore this era of transitions and the gift from Cochran and the City.

Will the site still display and interpret the Cochran art collection and furnishings? Yes.

When proposed construction begins at the site, all paintings and furnishings on site will be transferred to OPRHP's Peebles Island Resource Center in Waterford, NY for conservation assessments and recordation. Digital photography and scanning at current museum standards are required to expand the interpretive value of these materials. A rotation of paintings and furnishings will return to the site after conservation treatments by OPRHP's collection's team.

What are the construction plans for the building and grounds? Philipse Manor Hall is a National Historic Landmark, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and a Yonkers City Landmark; this status fully informs OPRHP's approach to design of the capital project on site. To bring the building current with ADA requirements and provide greater access and services for all visitors, the site requires upgrades which will include an elevator and bathrooms. The historic building requires both interior and exterior restoration. The proposed addition and restoration work will adhere to the National Park Service's Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Restoration. Proposed site work will include ADA-compatible bluestone pathways, refreshed landscaping, benches, bike racks, increased greenspace for programming, and improvements to the parking area. The wrought iron fencing will remain and be rehabilitated.

Beyond the building, what additional accommodations will be made for people with disabilities? Proposed new exhibits will be designed to meet the needs of multilingual speakers, the hearing and visually impaired, visitors with wheelchairs and walkers, and sensitive to visitors of all ages, abilities, and cultural experiences. Exhibits will be offered virtually for those who are not able to visit the site in person and give the site a national reach.

Will there continue to be space for community programming? Yes. OPRHP recognizes the site has an enduring community role as a forum for public meetings, programs, lectures, and special events, and proposed enhancements will further support this role. For example, the proposed elevator will provide greater access to the 2nd floor Gothic Chamber and the expanded restroom facilities will offer significantly greater accommodations for programming at the site. The caretaker's cottage is being rehabilitated into a warming kitchen to increase the site's capabilities to host events.

How will the book, *Dear George, Dear Mary*, factor into the programming at the site? This recently published book has generated excitement and increased visitation at Philipse Manor Hall. Its publication has had an impact on the site like that of *Hamilton: An American Musical* at the Schuyler Mansion State Historic Site in Albany. The book will continue to be a focal point for tours and programming at the site.

What will happen with the Civil War and Spanish American War cannons at the site? As an important tribute to those that fought and to the veterans and active servicepeople who

continue to serve our nation, the Civil War monument and its companion cannons are of the utmost importance in their preservation and interpretation on site. To assure ADA-required access to the monument, the cannons will shift closer to the monument to accommodate new walkways. The cannons will retain their current orientation facing Warburton Street.

The Spanish American cannon will be moved to Peebles Island Resource Center for conservation treatments. OPRHP looks to the community and stakeholders to inform the preferred future location, whether within the site, or elsewhere in Yonkers.

How can school educators get involved? A primary goal of these proposed investments at Philipse Manor Hall is the restoration of teaching its history in classrooms and bringing young people to the site. OPRHP staff will be enhancing our outreach and collaboration with educators to incorporate the best practices for curriculum development and linking the program with OPRHP's *Connect Kids* transportation program to provide site access to school districts throughout the lower Hudson Valley.

When will the site be closing and when will it be reopening? The Manor Hall will be closing on May 8 to begin transferring collections and other items in preparation for the proposed construction of the elevator addition and interior restoration; grounds will remain open during this period. To assure public safety at the site, the grounds will also be closed when the construction contract is awarded. Designs will be finalized only after public input has been solicited and reviewed by the State Historic Preservation Office.

Who do we contact with questions about the proposal? You can contact Daniel McEneny at daniel.mceneny@parks.ny.gov