

Clermont State Historic Site | Columbia County Town of Clermont, NY



Clermont State Historic Site Draft Master Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement

April 26, 2023



New York State
Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation



New York State
Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation

Draft Environmental Impact Statement

for

Clermont State Historic Site

Town of Clermont, Columbia County

Prepared by:

The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

April 26, 2023

DRAFT

**SEQR
NOTICE OF COMPLETION OF A DRAFT EIS
NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETINGS**

Date of Notice: April 26, 2023

Lead Agency: New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP)

Title of Action: Adoption and Implementation of a Master Plan for Clermont State Historic Site

SEQR Status: Type I

Location of Action: Clermont State Historic Site is located at 1 Clermont Ave, Germantown, NY 12526 in Columbia and Dutchess Counties.

This Notice is issued pursuant to Part 617 of the implementing regulations pertaining to Article 8 (State Environmental Quality Review) of the Environmental Conservation Law.

OPRHP, as lead agency, has determined that the adoption and implementation of a Master Plan for Clermont State Historic Site may have a significant effect on the environment. As a result, a Draft Master Plan and a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) has been prepared. Copies of the Draft Plan and DEIS are available from the agency contacts.

The Draft Master Plan and DEIS describe the proposed action, the environmental setting, alternatives, and potential environmental impacts and mitigation of those that may be adverse. Areas or resources that have been evaluated with respect to impacts include land, water, air, biological/ecology, cultural/archaeological, scenic, open space and recreation, circulation, access, and traffic, public health and safety, energy, noise, odor and light.

Public Meetings: Public meetings will be held online on Wednesday May 3, 2023, at 6:00pm and on Thursday May 4, 2023, at 3:00pm. Persons may provide comments at the public meetings or in writing no later than the end of the public comment period, Wednesday, June 7, 2023. All comments should be forwarded to one of the agency contacts noted below:

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AVAILABILITY OF DEIS: The online version of the Draft Master Plan and DEIS are available at the following publicly accessible website: <https://parks.ny.gov/inside-our-agency/master-plans.aspx>. Copies of the Draft Master Plan and DEIS are available for review at the Clermont State Historic Site office and at the offices of the agency contacts, and at the Germantown and Tivoli branch public libraries.

Acknowledgements

The Clermont State Historic Site Master Plan is the result of a cooperative effort by many people and groups. The Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation wishes to acknowledge the time and resources provided by everyone who participated in the development of these documents.

The Agency worked with and coordinated input from the Friends of Clermont, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the New York Natural Heritage Program, and the many others who contributed to the development of this Master Plan.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
BEO	Buffered Element Occurrences
BHS	Bureau of Historic Sites
CRIS	NYS Cultural Resource Information System
CSC	Climate Smart Community
DEC	New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
DEIS	Draft Environmental Impact Statement
DHP	OPRHP Division for Historic Preservation
ESB	OPRHP Energy and Sustainability Bureau
LWCF	Land and Water Conservation Fund
NYNHP	New York Natural Heritage Program
NPS	National Park Service
NWI	National Wetlands Inventory
NYSEG	New York State Electric and Gas
NYS	New York State
OPRHP	New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
OWH	Our Whole History (OPRHP Initiative)
RIN	Relative Index of Needs
SEQR	State Environmental Quality Review Act
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office



Executive Summary

Clermont State Historic Site is characterized by important natural, cultural, and historic resources and offers unique glimpses into New York State's past. This Master Plan looks forward to the future, recommending actions that will ensure continued public enjoyment of the Site. The following Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) presents an analysis of potential impacts and — where relevant — mitigation of these impacts.

Development of Alternatives

The Master Plan compiles preferred actions that will protect and enhance Clermont's historical, cultural, and recreational resources and provide new environmental protections. Actions related to natural resource protection, education and interpretation, recreation enhancement, access, circulation, and Site maintenance are developed. The Final EIS will include public comments received on the Draft Master Plan and Draft EIS, with OPRHP responses. Execution of proposals in this master plan may require additional, project-specific review under both SEQR and Section 14.09.

Descriptions of existing elements, resources, and policies at the Clermont State Historic Site ("Clermont") are found in Chapter 1. This comprehensive inventory of existing conditions serves as a base for the planning team to formulate alternatives for development that will help meet the team's vision for Clermont's future. Considering feasible alternatives allows the planning team to explore the possible implications of different courses of action and to determine which will be the most beneficial to the facility, the environment, and the public.

Chapter 2 of the DEIS presents alternatives for actions to undertake at Clermont. Developed and evaluated during the planning process, proposed actions always consider the status quo (no change) alternative. This process allows the planning team to explore the pros and cons of potential operational, programming, and infrastructure options.

Identification of the Preferred Alternative

As the planning group analyzed alternatives, the focus was on selecting those actions that will best protect and enhance the Site's resources, that will enrich the visitor experience and help achieve the vision for the Site. Alternatives selected as "preferred" in Chapter 2 are presented in Priority Table shown on page 4 in the Draft Master Plan and page 3 in the DEIS, as well as represented graphically on the Draft Master Plan Map.

Environmental Impacts and Mitigation

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) focuses on the environmental impacts and mitigation of potential adverse impacts that may result from implementation of the preferred alternative, i.e., the proposed actions that comprise the Master Plan.

Sustainability

Climate change and resilience have become key issues in modern preservation. The OPRHP's Energy and Sustainability Bureau (ESB) is committed to making NYS Parks the most sustainable park system in the country. The Bureau provides individual parks and sites with training, funding, project management, and other resources to implement projects that positively impact the sustainability of parks operations. This includes projects related to energy efficiency, renewable energy, clean-fueled vehicles, waste, and water conservation. Among other support, the ESB works with regional staff to fund and implement energy efficiency improvements, such as upgrades to heating and cooling systems. The bureau works with fleet management to replace old or polluting equipment with clean fuel alternatives. It organizes the design and installation of solar arrays to power OPRHP facilities and works with park staff to identify and implement projects that reduce water usage and costs.

In the region, the Town of Germantown registered in January 2021 to become a NYS Climate Smart Community (CSC) and received a Bronze certification in 2022 for its sustainability efforts.¹ The CSC program is an interagency initiative that supports local governments in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, adapting to the effects of climate change, and developing a greener economy. Participating communities receive free technical assistance and access to grants for climate change mitigation and adaptation projects from DEC's CSC Grant program. Efforts in Germantown have included replacing 100% of its streetlights with high efficiency LED lights and completing the Germantown Community Greenhouse Gas Inventory. In 2019 Germantown received grants from National Grid and NYSERDA to install its first EV charging station, located in the municipal parking lot. Germantown has joined with the Towns of Livingston and Clermont in a Keep Farming project that helps sustain agriculture as a significant local activity.²

Implementation

A master plan establishes OPRHP's vision for capital improvements and operational enhancements at a facility over the next ten to fifteen years. The Master Plan proposes phased implementation of the Preferred Alternatives, prioritizing actions that stabilize, rehabilitate, and repurpose underutilized buildings, improve overall Site access, enhance natural resources, and create new or expanded

recreational opportunities (for a prioritized list of all actions proposed in the Master Plan, see the Master Plan, p. 7, *Implementation Priorities Table*).

Detailed cost estimates have not been developed for proposed components, but it is likely that improvements will cumulatively cost tens of millions of dollars to implement. The pace and sequencing of recommended actions will be determined by the availability of funding (a function of OPRHP's annual capital and operations budgets), the availability of staff, and the need to balance investments throughout OPRHP facilities statewide.

Once adopted, the Master Plan will be reviewed annually to select projects for implementation and inclusion in the Site's budget, and to assess implementation progress. Operational improvements that are already planned at the time of the Plan's adoption will go forward as scheduled. Implementation of the Master Plan is divided into priority phases.



Heirloom lilacs frame mansion views in spring.

Chapter 1 – Environmental Setting

Introduction

The Commissioner of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) is proposing the action of adoption and implementation of a Master Plan for Clermont State Historic Site. Developing a master plan is a major step in ensuring a Site's continued preservation and to enhance its historic, cultural, recreational, and natural resources for the best possible public experience in the future. This Draft Master Plan/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) also provides the opportunity for individuals, organizations, and other government agencies to participate in shaping the future operation of a New York State historic site.

Background

As the Hudson River base for generations of New York's Livingston family, Clermont State Historic Site provides a tangible reminder of this politically and socially prominent family's impact on the nation, state, and region, as well as that of the many others who lived, worked, or were enslaved in this place. Today, the Site includes 503 acres of lands once held by the Livingstons. Designated a National Historic Landmark (NHL) in 1973, Clermont is also a component of the Hudson River National Historic Landmark District, which was designated by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior in 1990. The largest such district on the contiguous U.S., this 35-square mile area, extending from the eastern bank of the Hudson River between Staatsburg and Germantown, represents some of the most significant historic sites and iconic landscapes in the nation.³ Clermont's object collections also include a significant number of original paintings, documents, furnishings, decorative items, and artwork that belonged to generations of the Livingston Family.

A NY State Historic Site since 1962, Clermont's mansion was opened to visitors for the first time in 1970. Arrival at the main parking lot brings visitors directly to the Site's most frequented activity area with westward views of the Hudson River and Catskill Mountains. Historic trees dot the open lawns in this area, where visitors can stroll along bluffs overlooking the Hudson. A well-developed trail system leads through woodlands and meadows, and past small streams and pools. Mown paths wind through former agricultural fields in less-traveled portions of the Site, which can be accessed on foot or by bicycle.



View west from Clermont across the Hudson River toward the Catskill Mountains.

Location and Access

Clermont State Historic Site (“Clermont”) is located at One Clermont Avenue in the Town of Clermont. The Site straddles Columbia and Dutchess Counties, with 33 acres in Dutchess. The historic site is located near the center of a four-county region which — in addition to Columbia and Dutchess — includes Ulster, and Greene Counties (the latter two on the west side of the Hudson River). Clermont township is comprised of 11,000 acres with two hamlets, farmlands, meadows, and wooded areas. The Town of Clermont is bordered by the towns of Gallatin to the east and Livingston to the northeast. On its east and north borders the Town is bounded by the Roeliff Jansen Kill, with Germantown along its northwest town line. The name “Clermont” is French for “Clear Mountain.”⁴

This section of Columbia County is characterized by rolling hills with steeper, wooded areas near the Hudson River. Much of the land is arable but there are wetlands and marshes, as well as smaller brooks and streams, threaded throughout the landscape. The region is known for its agricultural products, especially its fruits — pears, apples, peaches, plums, berries, and grapes.

Clermont is primarily accessed by vehicle from County Route 6 West, off Route 9G, one mile north of the Village of Tivoli. The closest railroad stop is at the Rhinecliff Amtrak Station in the Town of Rhinebeck, approximately 14 miles from the historic site. Public bus lines in the area do not service the Site.

New York’s Empire State Trail runs through the Site along Woods Road, and cyclists can use the Site’s paved entry road to access the Site directly from along the route.

Site Boundaries

A map showing the Site’s property boundary is available in the DEIS Appendices, Figure 1.

Adjacent Land Uses

Columbia County is characterized by its rural lanes, rolling terrain, and open space. The majority of land in the Town of Clermont is zoned two-acre residential/agricultural, with a strip along the Hudson River in low-density, five-acre zoning. Similarly, all the zoning in the Town of Livingston, on Germantown’s northeast border, is two-acre residential/agricultural, except for a small conservation area with seven-acre zoning along the Hudson River.

Open Space

In recent years, development pressures in Columbia County have increased significantly, particularly as home prices have risen in both the NYC metropolitan area and the second-home market. Conservation groups, including Scenic Hudson, the Open Space Institute, and the Columbia Land Conservancy, work to conserve the region’s farmland, forests, and wildlife and to protect ecologically significant habitats. Scenic Hudson holds conservation easements on 22 acres of land adjoining Clermont that has ecologically important woods, wetlands, and 1,600 feet of shoreline along the Clay Kill, as well as an easement on a nearby 230-acre horse farm.⁵ Conservation efforts such as these help to preserve the County’s rural character and ensure permanent protection from development.

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) offers conservation easements to private property owners with, easements totaling over 1,100 acres of land in Columbia County, including 590 acres along the Hudson River in the Town of Stockport, north of Clermont. The DEC's Hudson River Estuary Program also collaborates with state and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, academic and scientific institutions, businesses, local governments, and interested citizens to protect and restore open space in the region.⁶ The DEC's *2016 Open Space Conservation Plan* cites the Clermont property as a regional priority site for conservation, focusing on "...properties which protect the integrity of existing conservation lands or historic sites."⁷

Columbia County includes other important ecological lands, particularly on its western border, along approximately 30 miles of Hudson River waterfront. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program helps to protect critical habitat along the river by providing funding to purchase or obtain conservation easements for threatened coastal and estuarine lands.⁸ Properties selected for this program have been identified as ecologically important or possess other coastal conservation values, such as historic features, scenic views, or recreational opportunities. Tivoli Bays, a few miles south of Clermont, is a targeted watershed that has received support through this program.

Regional Parks

Several public parks are located within the vicinity of the Clermont Site. Palatine Park, in Germantown, has a playground, softball and soccer fields, a picnic beach, and a dog park. In the Town of Clermont, Hettling Park offers soccer fields, walking trails, an old apple orchard, and is developing an arboretum, and Clermont Park has a half-basketball court, little league baseball field, a vernal pool, and hiking trails. The latter two adjacent town parks are planned to be combined as part of Clermont's Future Park Complex, to create 26 acres of public outdoor space with universal design/accessibility, wildlife-friendly plantings, an all-abilities playground, and interpretive signage.⁹



Palatine Park, Germantown

Socioeconomic Characteristics

Population data helps recreation planners paint a picture of a region and helps to inform decisions about public needs and preferences. The Clermont State Historic Site is located at the southern border of Columbia County, and north border of Dutchess. Residents of these two counties comprise the majority of its visitorship. According to the 2020 U.S. Census, the median age in Columbia County is nearly 10 years older than New Yorkers overall (48 years old vs. 39 statewide) and its residents have slightly more education than the state overall (44% of residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher vs 40% statewide).¹⁰ While the median household income in Columbia County (\$68,750) is lower than statewide (\$74,314), Columbia County residents have a significantly higher rate of homeownership (74%) than the overall state (55%).

In Dutchess County, a somewhat different picture emerges. Although characteristics for both counties are similar in the areas of education and homeownership, Dutchess has a median age of just over 42 years and a median household income of \$88,051, indicating a slightly younger, more affluent population.¹¹

Population Trends

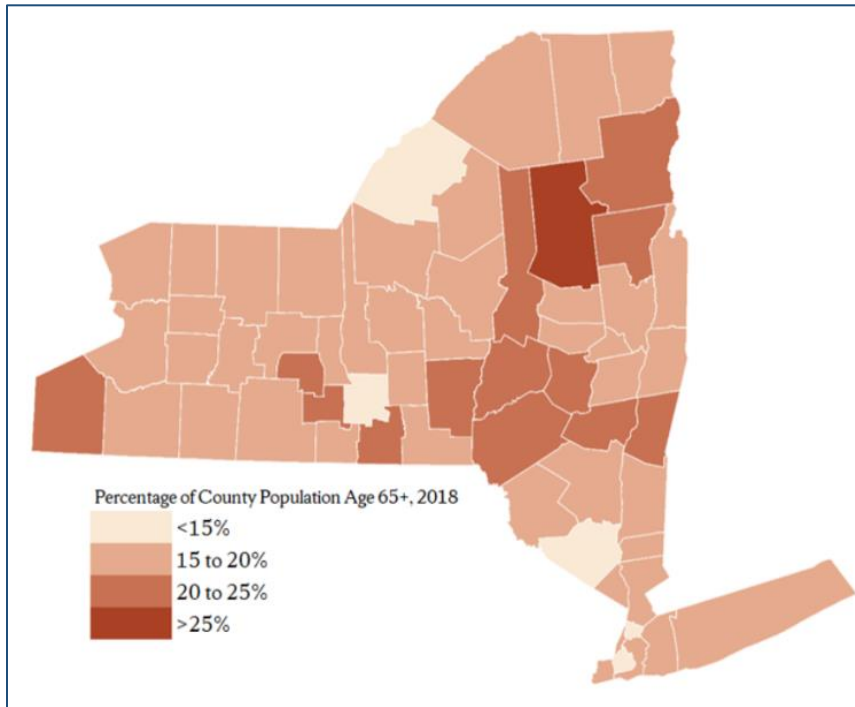
Several population shifts are anticipated in New York that may impact visitor use patterns at Clermont. Over the past decade the State's population has grown more slowly than the nation overall. Between 2010 and 2019, the State's population increased by just 0.4 percent, compared to a national rate of 6.3 percent.¹² Additionally, according to The Empire Center, an Albany-based think tank, NY State could be moving toward its first population decline since the 1970s.¹³ In fact, between July 2019 and July 2020, the state's population fell by 126,355 people, to 19.3 million, a decline of 0.65%, and the most of any state by total and by percentage. This period coincides with the start of the Coronavirus Pandemic.¹⁴

Beginning in 2020, during the Pandemic, the State saw marked changes in the use of public lands. As large numbers of urban residents dispersed to the suburbs, or further, people sought safe outdoor recreation opportunities, which drastically affected both park visitation and work patterns.¹⁵ The state may continue to see a work-from-home trend and, as residents find ways to provide their services remotely out of their rural homes, Hudson Valley counties may continue to see a rise in residents working from home-based offices and businesses.¹⁶

Second home and commuter home ownership may also continue to grow as more urban residents, primarily from the New York City metropolitan area but also from Albany, Kingston, and Poughkeepsie, take advantage of the accessibility of the region's relative affordability, safety, and appealing, rural quality of life.¹⁷ While it is not clear whether these changes may persist, all have potential to influence future recreation patterns and demand.

Another significant change in NYS is the increase in an older adult population – one that is growing faster than any other age group. Over the past decade, the number of people aged 65 and over in the state increased by 26 percent, making this a larger portion of the State's population than ever before, with nearly one in six, or 3.2 million, residents.¹⁸

Figure 1 – New York State counties with more than 20% of residents over 65 years old



Data source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey
(Map: Clare Pendergrast)

Economic Contribution

The nonprofit organization, Parks & Trails NY notes that NYS Parks contributes as much as \$5 billion in park and visitor spending and supports nearly 54,000 jobs in the state.¹⁹ Factors that determine the economic impact of a recreation facility on its region may include money spent locally for operations, staff salaries, and other costs required to maintain or improve the site. A facility's economic contribution is also determined by how many people from outside the immediate area visit the site and how much they spend while they are in the community. These visitors can have a significant economic impact on local economies, often bringing new money to the facility for special programs and events, entry fees, and gift shop items, as well as to the overall region as they shop, eat out, pay for transportation, and stay at local inns and hotels.²⁰

Dutchess County Tourism estimates that tourists generate \$632 million in spending in the region. Several significant tourist destinations are located within a 20-mile radius of Clermont, and both state and federal historic sites are found within a two-hour drive of the Site. State historic sites include Olana (City of Hudson), Mills-Norrie and Staatsburgh State Historic Site (Staatsburg), and Clinton House (City of Poughkeepsie). The City of Hudson in Columbia County, to the north, and the Village of Rhinebeck in Dutchess, to the south, are both focal points that attract visitors from near and far. These regional hubs are known for their historic charm, with antique stores, art galleries, and dining options along their picturesque Main Street corridors. The Dutchess County Fairgrounds holds its popular country fair each



fall, and an annual Sheep and Wool Showcase event, craft fairs, and special wine and food events. These bring thousands of visitors into the region every year.

Weddings bring groups into the region and, while visiting, guests may patronize local inns, beauty salons, restaurants, and other businesses. Clermont generally hosts 18 to 20 weddings annually, with an average of 125 guests per event, and they provide an important source of revenue for the Site.



Tourism related specifically to history continues to grow as a leisure time activity. Renewed interest in American history and its storied personalities has been generated through recent biographies, documentaries, and popular stage productions such as “Hamilton.” The 250th anniversary of the Revolutionary War, to be commemorated by New York State 2024 to 2033, is likely to bring in history buffs and renewed interest to the region.



The practice of traveling with the primary purpose of exploring the history of a place, or “heritage tourism,” can bring in outside dollars and provide employment across the region. The National Trust for Historic Preservation further defines this activity as “traveling to experience the places, artifacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present.”²¹

Heritage tourists visiting from outside a region may stay multiple days, visiting more than one site, contributing to the local economy with their expenditures. Both domestic and international travelers participate in heritage tourism and, according to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, “those that do stay longer, spend more, and travel more often.”²² Heritage tourism creates jobs and business opportunities, helps to protect historic resources and related open space, and can ultimately improve the quality of life for residents.

Top to bottom: Independence Day at Clermont (2021), Operation Unite Education (2022); Potential Fields Opening (2015)

Clermont is within a cluster of sites of interest to history buffs. National Park Service (NPS)-operated Historic Sites in the region include the Olana State Historic Site (City of Hudson), the Martin Van Buren National Historic Site (Village of Kinderhook), the Vanderbilt Mansion, the Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site, and Springwood National Historic Site, the home of Franklin D. Roosevelt (the latter three located in the Town of Hyde Park). Across the Hudson River are found the Senate House State Historic Site in the City of Kingston, and the Thomas Cole National Historic Site in the Town of Catskill.

Designations

Clermont's boundary corresponds with three distinct historic designations. The first is a National Historic Landmark nomination for Clermont, with the boundary consisting of the southern two-thirds of the Site. The second is the Clermont Estates Historic District; the northern third of the site is contained within this boundary, and it includes three historic/contributing features. Lastly, the entire Site is within the Hudson River Historic District National Historic Landmark. That nomination served to unite the Sixteen Mile and Clermont Estates districts, while also including land to the east, with its more typically vernacular buildings and landscapes associated with Palatine Germans and others.

The Hudson River Historic District is a National Register of Historic Places designation that includes several historic features along the Hudson River, including Clermont. The district encompasses a two-mile long group of seven estates that were developed from the mid- to late-nineteenth century, including a group of civic and community buildings along Route 9 that remain in use by town residents.²³

Clermont is also a designated site in the National Park Service's Maurice D. Hinchey Hudson River Valley Natural Heritage Area, with significance in the areas of Architecture, Corridor of Commerce, Landscapes & Gardens, and the Revolutionary War.²⁴

The Hudson River here is also a major shad spawning area, with concentrations unusual in the State. The area attracts anglers from throughout New York and neighboring states for recreational fishing.²⁵ The DOS rates each designated area's ability to be replaced with an equivalent for the same fish and wildlife value; the Germantown-Clermont Flats area is rated "irreplaceable."

Legal Considerations

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA), Section 106, requires federal agencies to consider the effects on historic properties on projects they carry out. If a federal or federally assisted project has the potential to affect historic properties, a Section 106 review will take place. Section 106 gives the ACHP, interested parties, and the public the chance to weigh in on these matters before a final decision is made. This process is an important tool for citizens to lend their voice in protecting and maintaining historic properties in their communities. New York State Section 14.09 of the State Historic Preservation Act (1980) places similar regulation of cultural assets on state agencies.

Partnerships at Clermont

*Hudson City Dept. of Youth
Edward J. Arthur Elementary
Hudson Bluehawk Nation
After School Program,
Montgomery C. Smith
Intermediate
Operation Unite NY (Hudson)
Catskill Wheelhouse School
Cornell Cooperative Extension
of Columbia and Greene
Counties
Germantown Community
Cupboard
Community Action of Greene
County
D.R. Evarts Library (Athens)
Hudson City School District
Bulkley Middle School
Germantown Central School
After-School
Starr Library
Hudson Department of Youth
Education Network for
Teachers and Artists (ENTA)
Camp Palatine
Perfect Ten
Hudson Area Library
Greene County YMCA
Columbia County Historical
Society
Crailo State Historic Site
1st Ulster County Militia
34th British Regiment
Hudson Hall
Stockbridge Munsee
Community
Hillsdale Summer Youth
Program
Hunter Elementary School
Columbia County Tourism
Dutchess County Tourism
Hudson Valley Greenway
Staatsburgh State Historic
Site
Red Hook and Tivoli Libraries
New York Historical Society
Great Estate Consortium
Hudson Valley Writers Project
National Trust for Historic*

Partnerships

Established as a 501c3, not-for-profit organization in 1978, The Friends of Clermont consists of 175 members with 2,000 individuals and organizations on their outreach mailing list. The group is very active in its support of the Site. The website includes event calendars and trail maps and offers contacts for planning weddings and volunteering at the Site.

The Friends have also worked to restore four formal gardens and the circa 1910 Children’s Playhouse, mounted two important art exhibitions, helped restore the exterior of the historic mansion, and created the new video shown at our Visitor’s Center. In addition, the Friends facilitated the donation of property on the north end of the site and nearly 8,000 historical objects to Clermont’s collections. The group also provides additional educational programming for local youth, including their largest and highly successful Harvesting History program.

Programs

Clermont offers programs and events for all age groups, and hosts live performances, bringing in musicians and speakers on special topics. Recent programs have included “Little Sprouts Day,” an informal playgroup in the Site’s Teaching Garden, Landscape Highlights: A Walking Tour of Clermont’s Grounds, and a cooking program, “Some Like it Hot: Making a Spicy Sauce.”

The average age of visitors to historic sites is around 50 years old and over the past decade, the National Park Service has reported a decline in park visitation among younger people, due to a lack of inclusive programming.²⁶ This decline in visitation also negatively affects the overall diversity of park visitors.²⁷

In an effort to shift these trends at Clermont, staff develop programming geared toward different age groups, including school-aged children and teens. Efforts to attract artists and develop special exhibits such as “Potential Fields” and “The Livingstons Get Inked!” have led to an increase in young adults visiting Clermont outside of school obligation.²⁸ Site educators also actively develop content that reflects the agency’s “Our Whole History” initiative, which looks to bring forward the under-told stories of all the people who lived at State Historic Sites.



School and adult tours are offered throughout the year by reservation, except on major holidays. Clermont welcomes groups from 10 to 60 people and offers garden, mansion, and specialized tours that run from 50 minutes to three hours. Group tours are available for a small per-person fee. Reservations must be made at least two weeks in advance of the proposed visit. Bus parking and lunch packages are also available.

Interpretive and Educational Programs

Clermont has resources from all periods of the Site's development worthy of preservation and interpretation. The Site is particularly well-documented for the early 20th century period, however, and therefore a restoration date of circa 1930 has been adopted to govern treatment of the main house, the landscape, as well as other historic structures on the property. This historical period is considered to provide the best opportunities for restoration and interpretation, as few modifications were made to the main house or landscape after the mid-1930s, when the estate was home to Alice Delafield Clarkson Livingston and her two daughters, Honoria Alice and Janet Cornelia.



In recent years, interpretive and educational content have been expanded and developed with the specific intent of conveying a wider range of content related to the Site's previous occupants. In addition to the story of the Livingston family, material developed for the Site has begun to convey the experiences of the servants, enslaved people, free black workers, tenant farmers, immigrants, women, and indigenous people who have lived, worked at, and helped to shape the site. Interpretive signs installed in various locations at the Site are mostly concentrated around its historic structures.



Summertime events are popular with all ages at

Clermont's educators have identified the expansion of research and interpretation of previously underrepresented groups as a priority, as part of the agency's "Our Whole History" initiative that seeks to provide multiple perspectives, and to better reflect evolving demographics and contemporary interests.²⁹

Current best practices and agency initiatives for interpretation include telling a more complete story, diversifying audiences, and inviting visitors to respond to content in new ways. To move toward these goals, education staff at Clermont have taken a mix of programming approaches, including hosting lectures or other events that target

these topics, and adding interpretive elements that highlight the Site’s under-told history. In 2022, the Bureau of Historic Sites installed a new exhibit in the Visitors Center to reflect this more inclusive perspective.

Interpretation at Clermont falls into several categories: general visitor and group tours, public events, exhibits, school programming, internet and social media, and interpretive signage. Each is detailed below.

Tours

Clermont offers mansion tours year-round. All tours are guided and typically last 45 minutes to an hour. Groups generally visit the mansion’s first and second floors; however, the second floor is not wheelchair accessible. Tour tickets are purchased at the Visitor Center before entering.

The mansion was closed from 2021 to 2022 for a capital project to restore the exterior. During this period a series of new programs and tours were created, highlighting the Site’s history and grounds, which continue to be offered. The mansion reopened for public tours in spring 2023.

Exhibits

The main exhibit spaces at Clermont are in two separate areas: in the Visitor Center (a former carriage barn and stables) and in the mansion, where a second-floor gallery offers changing displays of artifacts from the Site’s collections. Exhibitions are created in close collaboration with conservation and/or curatorial staff from OPRHP’s Bureau of Historic Sites (BHS) and are rotated periodically, depending on staff capacity.

The Visitor Center features a permanent exhibit which orients visitors to the Site’s history. In 2022, a new permanent exhibit was installed in the Visitor Center that reflects the Site’s more inclusive approach to telling its history. The Visitor Center also hosts changing panel exhibits in its stall spaces.



Free concerts and other programs take place on the lawn with Hudson River views as a backdrop.

Public Events

Special public events represent a significant portion of Clermont’s annual attendance. The Site’s calendar is anchored by two major festivals — the Chancellor’s Sheep & Wool Showcase and an Independence Day celebration. Seasonal performances or tour-oriented events, such as the Legends by Candlelight Halloween tours, A Child’s Christmas, and Candlelight Evening Tableaux, are also offered. These programs are supplemented by an annually changing series of specialty tours, lectures, children’s programs, workshops, and musical events that bring variety to the Site’s regular offerings.



Education

School Programs

Clermont offers field trips, a summer history club, and after-school programs, partnering with children's organizations that either come to the Site or host Clermont educators at their own location. Field trip programs are open to public and private schools, as well as home-schooled groups, and summer campers who visit the Site for organized educational programs, based on group needs. Primarily directed primarily at fourth grade students, the Site has also hosted third and seventh grade groups.



Top to bottom: A Visitor Center exhibit displays artwork from the History Comics program; Junior History Club members pose on the mansion steps.

Clermont's after-school programming is robust, including a comic-themed program delivered at various local schools, as well as "Harvesting History," a program held in a recreated nineteenth-century kitchen garden at the Site. Harvesting History provides a unique opportunity to use the site's natural and historic assets as a working tool for students to gain a better understanding of — and appreciation for — the open space and agricultural traditions of Clermont and the Hudson Valley. This successful program was designed based on the journals kept by Clermont Livingston from 1854-1880, as well as on a gardening book, *The Young Gardeners Assistant*, by Thomas Bridgeman, from Clermont Livingston's collection. Located behind Sylvan Cottage, the teaching garden is planted and maintained by students and staff. The program is free of charge.

"Connect Kids," a NYS field trip grant program, has been vital to supporting regional school groups visits at Clermont, providing funds for transportation. The Friends of Clermont are instrumental in helping schools apply for grants and bringing students the Site. Site educators are continually developing new materials and content that will reflect previously untold stories as Clermont seeks to create content that is more reflective of our multicultural past and welcoming to all.

Clermont's History Comics Club brings in students from local elementary and high schools to learn about comic books as an art form in the context of Clermont's many stories. The Junior History Club offers children 7- to 12-years-old a chance to explore the Site's grounds, play popular games of other eras, and make crafts that help them learn about the lives of the Livingston family. At the end of the week-long program, the children put on a costumed performance for their parents.

Special workshops and events are offered throughout the year, some focused on the Site's history and traditions of farming, such as jam-making, fermentation, or bookmaking, as well as on contemporary topics related to farming, food, and nutrition. A teacher orientation program is being developed that will bring teachers to Clermont to review the new Visitor Center exhibit.

Internet and Social Media

Clermont maintains an active social media presence. Using Facebook, Instagram, and Wordpress blog entries. The Site also posts interpretative content, ranging from easily digestible facts to higher-level academic content. Social media postings keep an active userbase up to date on the Site's events and happenings and helps to maintain a relationship with fans and history enthusiasts across the globe.

Cultural Resources

Visitors to Clermont encounter a range of historically and culturally significant elements within the built environment, including the Livingston residence (mansion), historic barns, cottages, and a playhouse. Among the surrounding landscape are found ruins of earlier structures, including those of the Arryl and Englekirk houses, with their aura of mystery, but also remains of a stone root cellar and underground icehouse, cemeteries, early farmhouses, and a Livingston family burial vault.



Remnant walls of the Arryl House



Interior views of mansion

Historic Buildings

Mansion

The 8,050 square foot mansion seen today at Clermont represents the culmination of occupation by seven generations of the Livingston family. The structure saw significant changes over time according to the needs of the Livingston Family. Its evolution is as follows:

1740s – The first mansion at the Site was constructed, a two-story, brick Georgian structure.

1777 – Mansion burned down by the British army and successively rebuilt on the same foundation by a combination of enslaved and free laborers. Reusing the still-standing chimney walls, the replacement structure employed a thin veneer of stucco, painted white and scored to look like cut stone.

1813-14 – A one-story brick kitchen wing added on the mansion's north side.

1827 – A one-story bedroom wing added on the mansion's south side.

1874 – A mansard roof with dormers is added, giving the mansion its third floor.

1894 – A second story with matching mansard roof constructed on the south wing and a large porch added to the building's west side (removed in the 1920s).

The mansion's interior is presently furnished to its 1931 appearance, based largely on photographic evidence and oral history interviews with Honoria Livingston McVitty. The first and second floors are used for public tours, while the basement and third floors are reserved for staff offices, equipment storage, and collections spaces, in the south wing. The fourth floor or attic largely houses air handling ductwork.

Visitor Center (Carriage Barn)

Located on a rise southeast of the mansion, the Carriage Barn is functionally associated with the Livingston's late 19th to early 20th century use of the

property. The 2640 square foot, wood frame building was first constructed as a working barn (circa 1860). An attached shed was added around 1876, and horse stalls installed in the 1880s or early 1890s. When the Historic Site was established in 1962, the structure was used as a facility maintenance building, and that use continued until 1985. Between 1985-1987 the carriage barn was converted into a public visitor center with educational exhibits, a bookstore/gift-shop, and restrooms. A loft area is used for storage, and the former stable is used for activities and exhibit space.



***From top to bottom:
Visitor Center (Carriage Barn),
Clermont Cottage,
the Red Barn***

Clermont Cottage

A simple, vernacular structure with mid-20th century additions, Clermont Cottage is an important building, still in active use. The cottage's historic core dates to between 1790-1830, when it likely housed farm employees and, in the later 19th century, possibly a head gardener.³⁰ An addition was constructed in the mid-1940s, and the cottage was expanded again in the early 1950s, to a total of 2500 square feet. The cottage's main section is one-and-a-half stories, and the one-story addition includes a full basement. The building now houses offices for the Friends of Clermont groups and is used as an event space that can accommodate up to 65 people.

Red Barn (McVitty or Cow Barn)

The NYS Cultural Resource Information System (CRIS) lists this structure as the John Henry Livingston Barn, c. 1875.³¹ However, physical evidence suggests that the barn was built no earlier than the mid-1880s, most likely in the 1890s or slightly later.³² Although it was known by Honoria Livingston as the Cow Barn, the interior does not appear to be configured to house cows. The two-story, 5000 square foot barn has gable end doors and a rubble stone foundation. Its modest but distinctive architecture and interior finishes are evidence of its function as an estate outbuilding.³³ The barn is mostly unrestored, though structural stabilization was completed in 1994, and the roof was replaced in 2019. The barn's exterior has significant deterioration, especially to the wood siding and decorative trim. The interior is largely intact and relatively free from water damage.

The Red Barn is not served with electrical or water service, although there is a water supply system, with wells, pumps, and underground piping of undetermined age. Outbuildings associated with the Red Barn include a pump house north of the barn, and a separate building site, about 20 feet to the east. A structure is visible still standing on a 1962 survey map, labeled “garage;” however, this is possibly also the site of an earlier cow barn that may have housed John Henry Livingston’s dairy operations, which he began at Clermont about 1879. In a 1956 aerial, a second structure of frame construction with a metal roof is visible to the west of the Red Barn and is considered likely to have housed livestock.³⁴



Sylvan Cottage

Constructed in the late 18th or early 19th century, Sylvan Cottage was the last portion of the estate to be occupied by a Livingston family member.³⁵ Sometimes referred to as the Gatekeeper’s Cottage, the Cottage contributes to Clermont’s historic significance. The 2500 square foot, five-room residence is sited along the northern carriage road loop not far from the original entrance. During the 19th century and early 20th century, the Cottage was used as an employee residence. Reginald and Honoria McVitty lived there seasonally from around 1935, and Mrs. McVitty continued to use the cottage until her death in 2000. Associated outbuildings include a garage, tool/work shed, and a foundation of what possibly was a barn. While some stabilization work has been done on the cottage, the structure is in a highly deteriorated condition.



Children’s Playhouse

Built around 1911 as a utility building (historically used as a garden shed), this 18-foot by 10-foot structure was remodeled in 1913 as a children’s playhouse by Alice Livingston, who also created a nearby “children’s garden.” The structure was restored in 2022 and has interpretive potential.



Greenhouse

A circa 1912 greenhouse (likely an expansion of an earlier structure) has a metal framework and concrete pad connected to a small adjacent brick and wood frame building. All are in unstable condition.

*From top to bottom:
Sylvan Cottage,
the Playhouse,
greenhouse structure*



Remnant structures include an Icehouse (top) and a root cellar

Icehouse and Root Cellar

Remnant historic structures at Clermont include relics of the use of the estate as a functional country residence. These include stone foundations of an icehouse and root cellar, both located south of the mansion and likely dating from the late 18th or early 19th century.³⁶ An 1880 photo shows the icehouse as a small wood frame building with a gable roof, but this structure is no longer extant.³⁷ Remnants of another icehouse foundation are found at the base of a hill west of the main parking lot. The root cellar is a simple stone structure, typical of those used in this era, that used the earth's insulating properties to store vegetables, typically carrots, turnips, beets, and potatoes.

House Sites

The remains of several houses are found today at Clermont. Most appear to have housed staff employed by the Livingstons, or tenant farmers. These structures are no longer standing, and their foundations are mostly filled with rubble and vegetation. Known house sites include:

Martin Rifenburg House – A cellar cavity with evidence of nearby outbuildings remain. Livingston Family members recount that this may have been the home of an estate employee in the 1920s.³⁸ A building in this approximate location also appears in 1873 and 1888 county documents.³⁹

Adam Donely House – Remains include a cellar and a stone cistern, along with brick debris comparable in size and characteristics to what was used in the Arryl House. Nineteenth century census data show several individuals with the name Donely (or variants) residing on or near Clermont around the mid-1800s, and some residents of that name (or similar) are indicated as employed at the estate as gardeners, coachmen, laborers, and domestic workers.⁴⁰

M. Lasher House – Likely a tenant farmer house; M. Lasher is indicated as the resident on an 1873 map. This parcel was identified as held by C. Livingston and as part of the Livingston family's leased agricultural lands. A 1956 aerial photo also shows a large barn at the end of a driveway at this location.

Miscellaneous Site Infrastructure (Non-Historic)

Other buildings at the Site are part of the day-to-day function or have been determined to have no historic significance (see also Appendix A). Non-Historic structures at the Site include:

- Maintenance Building (1985), Storage Sheds
- HVAC Bunker (1982)
- Sylvan Garage (added in 20th century)
- Sylvan Pump House
- Pump (Chlorinator) House
- Entrance Contact Booth
- Public Restroom (1969)

Historic Landscape

Over the generations Clermont's landscape was consciously designed by individual members of the Livingston family and their staff. Some portions are associated with a single person, and all reflect trends and aesthetic values of their era. Landscape elements associated with the Livingstons include:

- Arryl House (ruins and associated elements, e.g., horse track to the east)
- Historic North Road (the Avenue)/various carriage roads
- Underwater acreage/dock
- Gardens and Lilac Walk
- Stone walls and piers
- Ice Pond and dam
- Family burial vault mound
- Pet cemetery
- Northeast and northwest dumps, Pine Avenue Ravine Dump

Arryl House Ruins

The Arryl House was the Chancellor Livingston's home. Constructed circa 1790 by Robert R. Livingston, the house was well-known in its time, and its "H"-shaped design was likely influenced by European sources. This house burned to the ground in 1909 from a fire started by workmen who were burning leaves.⁴¹ The fire left the brick walls with cracks and holes, making them structurally unstable.

Additional damage occurred when the Livingston Family planted vines to grow up the walls, in order to create a picturesque ruin.⁴² The roots broke the mortar apart, and years of heavy plant growth kept the walls damp. With no roof to protect them, the remains of Arryl house have been subject to continued damage from weather and vegetation. The ruins are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and represent an important chapter in U.S. history.



Ruins of the Arryl House is one of the more prominent elements of the Site's cultural landscape.



Historic Gardens

The gardens at Clermont were created in the 1920s and 1930s. Influenced by Alice Livingston’s European travels, the gardens include an Italian staircase, a walled garden, and Arts and Crafts-style plantings. Historic gardens maintained at the Site are:

- *Walled Garden* – Symmetrical paths and planting beds, influenced by gardens in Florence, Italy
- *Wilderness Garden* – Informal design associated with English gardens; centerpiece is a fishpond.
- *Upper Cutting Garden* – Provided cut flowers for the mansion; accompanied by a circa 1926 greenhouse that replaced an earlier and larger greenhouse dating from the late 19th century.⁴³
- *The Children’s Garden* – adjacent to the Upper Cutting Garden



Carriage Roads

Carriage roads were central features of large Hudson Valley estates, allowing for strategic contemplation of nature at various outlooks and scenic points. The Clermont Site is interlaced with carriage drives and trails, some with names associated with the Livingston Family’s use. The “Garden Road” leads south from Clermont Cottage toward the greenhouse and cutting garden, and “Pine Road” leads north from the mansion through a stand of mature pines. The original surface of Pine Road was a rough cobblestone that is still visible in some spots under more recent applications of gravel. A carriage road on the hill above the Arryl house site is still in use as part of the Site’s active trail system.



Clermont Dock and Boathouse Site

Remains of a stone and timber dock are found on the Hudson River shoreline. No firm date is documented regarding when a permanent dock was established at Clermont, but some sort of boating access was likely built when the estate was developed in the 1740s.⁴⁴ The dock likely went through several forms as needs evolved over the years and the adjacent rail corridor expanded. Family lore suggests that the landing was used for coal deliveries as well as for recreational craft. An undated photo shows a small building on the dock, possibly a boathouse.⁴⁵ Traces of a road leading from the mansion down to the waterfront are still visible in aerial photos.

***From top to bottom:
The Wilderness Garden
(2022), Janet Livingston at
work;
Historic dock site***

Viewshed

Catskill Mountain views from Clermont are important to the Site’s history, having been the inspiration for the name that Robert Livingston gave to his estate (Clare Mount or “clear mountain”). The designed landscape at Clermont includes plantings that were carefully placed to accentuate views. The family traditionally maintained a clear view to the Saugerties lighthouse from the patio at the west entry, and Alice Livingston created what is still called the “Long View” when she cleared the tree line to the south so the Shawangunk Ridge could be seen from the mansion patio.⁴⁶

Ice Pond

In the very late nineteenth or twentieth century, John Henry Livingston had a small spring-fed pond dug. It was later used for ice harvesting and skating. Today it is a key part of the cultural landscape, contributing to the pastoral character of this part of the Site as well as providing wildlife habitat.



The Ice Pond and its bucolic setting are important elements of Clermont’s cultural landscape.

Archaeological Resources

Early Inhabitants

The Hudson Valley has been a home for Indigenous peoples since time immemorial. The Haudenosaunee, Mohican, Munsee-Lenape, and Schaghticoke Nations included all or parts of today's Columbia County in their traditional lands. Carbon tests dating back to 3000 BC found cooking fires containing remnants of meals, with mussel shells and animal bones. The Munsee and the Mohican peoples' homelands centered around the Hudson River and used similar words, Muhheakantuk and Mahicannituck respectively, meaning "Waters that are Never Still."

In the early 1600s, European settlers entered into economic and military agreements with Native peoples to create alliances, increase trade opportunities, or engage in land "deals." Participation (or attempts to remain neutral) by indigenous groups in the war between Patriots and Loyalists had affected the Native communities and their livelihoods. With populations diminished and lands taken over, some Indigenous groups, such as the Munsee-Lenape and the Stockbridge Mohicans, joined together on new land provided by the Oneidas in New Stockbridge, in central New York, near Oneida Lake.⁴⁷ While some smaller Mohican groups moved in and out of the area, by 1736 most larger communities were pushed out of the region. During the gradual removal of the Stockbridge, Massachusetts community in the late 18th century, at least some of these people established a community in a marshy area near the Clermont estate. Some were employed intermittently on the farm at Clermont, but their freedom to leave when they found conditions unfavorable frustrated their employers. By 1793, this group had relocated farther west.



Historic Lenape territory and languages spoken

In 1830, former president Andrew Jackson signed into law the Indian Removal Act which forcibly moved Native communities from east of the Mississippi to the west. While some Indigenous nations resisted, and remain, to this day, in their homelands, not all were able to persevere. Eventually the Stockbridge-Munsee Community Band of Mohican Indians resettled and now live on a reservation in Wisconsin.

Archaeology at Clermont

Because of its location in the Hudson Valley region, it is likely that evidence of Indigenous communities occurs at the Clermont Site. However, archaeological items found at the Site have primarily been related to the Livingston Family's occupation. In the 1970s and 1980s, archaeologists from the OPRHP Division of Historic Preservation (DHP) conducted extensive excavations at Clermont. Excavations along a utility trench that extends from the northwest corner of the mansion west, to an existing HVAC bunker, revealed a significant archaeological deposit of household debris which had been dumped downslope from the mansion. The stratified deposit included construction and kitchen debris related to the original ca.1730-1777 occupation of Clermont, as well as subsequent construction rubble associated with the ca.1777 burning and destruction of the Site. Overall, the deposit within the existing utility line represents a significant archaeological feature at Clermont.



A number of archaeological excavations and scans were completed at Clermont in the 1970s and 1980s.

In 1967, a foundation or ruin was discovered during construction of the main parking lot. The structure, near the lot's central eastern edge, was believed to be a viewing house for looking out towards the Hudson River, which was burned down by the British in 1777 along with the Clermont and Belvedere houses. When the ruin was discovered, the site was partially uncovered, measured, and mapped, then paved over to protect the material from disturbance. The excavation revealed rubble stone foundations (approximately 40 feet by 40 feet) estimated to date from around 1774-76, and a circular stone path (48 feet in diameter). The ruin, which appears to have been only marginally impacted when it was uncovered, is likely to provide important information related to the Chancellor's period of occupation, as well as help clarify facts related to the Livingston's early development and use of the estate.

The 1982 *Clermont State Historic Park Master Plan Update* indicated that test excavations were completed for sitewide utility work, archaeological studies, and to improve visitor usage/engagement (e.g., signage and grills). These excavations included Arryl House (1978), the east porch of the mansion (1977), and the northwest wing of the mansion (1976). Less detailed reports were prepared by the OPRHP Archaeology Unit on the following:

- Mansion North Porch Wall (1971)
- West Foundation (1975)
- Radio Line (1975)

- Braziers (1975 and 1976)
- Monument Location (1976)
- Fence Line (1977)
- Security Lighting (1979)
- Walled Garden (1979)
- East Lawn Sidewalk (1980)
- Handicapped Access and Sign (1981)

Clermont’s 1982 Master Plan Update noted a backlog of materials salvaged during past excavations that were indicated as requiring cataloguing and additional analysis. The document also noted that there are possibly many unknown sites scattered throughout the property and recommended that a park-wide archaeological survey be completed, to include “a controlled and mapped surface collecting project.”⁴⁸ A map developed during the production of the current plan contains excavations and known archaeological resources at the Site.

Since 1982, excavations in and around the various site structures (e.g., Clermont Cottage (2003, 2012), Visitor Center/Carriage Barn (1986-1989, 2009-2010), and the Playhouse (1994-1995)) and site utilities (2010 septic system, 2019 boiler replacement) have continued to be carried out as needed.



Natural Resources

The terrain is a dominant natural feature at Clermont. As it steps dramatically down to the Hudson River, the upland portion is level or gently rolling; to the south, in less developed sections, rock outcroppings emerge, and on the Site’s western border steep slopes drop down to the riverfront. The landscape includes woodlands, wetlands, meadows, streams, and a variety of landforms.

While OPRHP classifies more than 70 percent of Clermont’s total acreage as undeveloped, or “natural,” Clermont’s landscape is largely a human-modified environment. As a former agricultural and residential property, its lands have been fully cleared in the past and, aside from a few beautiful old-growth trees, the woodlands are predominantly second-growth forest. Mowing has been reduced in some open areas, which now provide grassland habitat for wildlife.



Flora

Field visits to compile a biodiversity inventory were conducted during plan development, and a listing of known and potential plants at the Site is found in Appendix B. Cultivated plants in the Site's historic core, around the mansion and gardens, include ornamental species such as Japanese wisteria (*Wisteria floribunda*), sweet mock orange (*Philadelphus coronarius*), and many varieties of lilac (*Syringa spp.*). Trees planted by former occupants include mature black walnut (*Juglans nigra*) and Eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*), as well as honey locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*), many of which are aging and in decline.

Clermont has an abundance of native nut trees, including white oak (*Quercus alba*), chestnut oak (*Quercus montana*), and shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata*). Successional old fields within the Site are dominated by native and non-native forbs, goldenrods, aster, rubus (rose family), multiflora rose, grasses, and other plant species.

Ecologically Significant Communities

While its long history of human use has greatly altered its ecology, Clermont's natural landscape is characterized by its diversity. Fields and forests, tidal flats and wetlands, rocky areas and meadows, all provide different habitat for an abundance of wildlife. Plant communities at the Site are in varying states of maturity, and include Appalachian oak-pine forest, calcareous talus slope woodland, successional northern hardwoods, successional red cedar woodland, successional old field, and a red maple swamp-white oak swamp area in the northeastern part of the Site that has been confirmed as a state-rare type of wetland and mapped as significant in NY Natural Heritage Program's (NYNHP) database (Conservation Rank G3G4 S2 – imperiled in NYS). According to historic topographic maps and orthoimages, the wetland has been forested at least since the 1940s and 50's, but the surrounding area was likely cleared, and farming into the edge of the wetland may have slightly reduced its size. There is another occurrence of that wetland type in the south-central part of the Site that has not been mapped in the NYNHP database. This plant community is not a large enough area or of high enough quality to be significant statewide but is of local significance for its native flora.

The Appalachian oak-hickory forest community is found on a lower slope of the Site, facing the Hudson River. The area has very flat terrain, with shallow standing water and mossy hummocks. Ash trees (both live and in decline) are present in the canopy at its periphery and may be a good candidate to propose as a living ash monitoring plot or as a biocontrol release site.

A Calcareous Talus Slope Woodland documented at the Site is locally significant with potential for rare or uncommon flora. Marked by a large old-growth white oak, this open woodland is found on a very rocky and narrow north-south running ridge, dominated by shale talus (rock debris that accumulates at the base of a slope) with some small outcrops. Although invasive plants, including Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) and Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*) are present, this is a priority area for



Top: Data collection during “Bioblitz” event at Clermont (2022 summer); Spotted knapweed in flower

conservation due to the richness of native flora it exhibits. Two discoveries of note during the BioBlitz in June 2022 were a healthy population of wild ginger and a few specimens of walking fern.

Old-growth trees can be found within Clermont’s woodlands. Areas of successional northern hardwood forest with a subcanopy of red cedar, ash, red maple, white pine, and oak have a weedy understory, which includes invasive Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*), and there are many downed trees. Aerial images and 1938 topographic data show that these areas were formerly open and cropland.

The Hudson River is a designated Significant Natural Community (tidal river) In the NYNHP Biodiversity Databases.

Threats

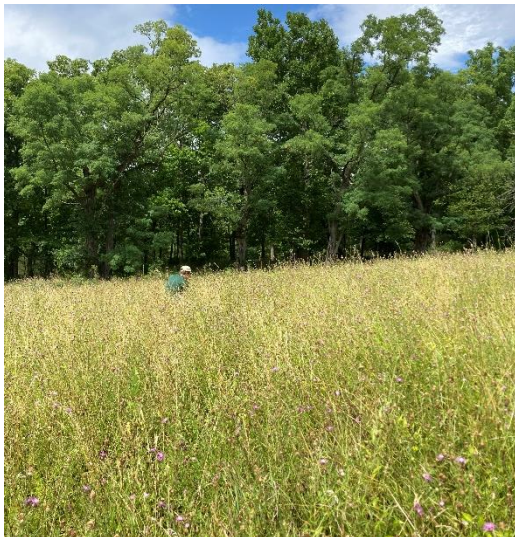
The greatest threat to natural resources at Clermont is the invasion and spread of exotic species. Invasive plant species are locally abundant, at Clermont found particularly at woodland edges and along trails.⁴⁹ Invasive plants are also increasingly impacting the region’s native ecological communities. Invasive species noted at the Site include Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*), Oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*), common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*), Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*), various shrub honeysuckles (*Lonicera spp.*), Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*), Common mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*) and garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*). Other species confirmed at the site (via IMap Invasives) are Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*), Summer Snowflake (*Leucojum aestivum*), Wineberry (*Rubus phoenicolasius*), and Porcelain Berry (*Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*), and Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*). Other species of concern at Clermont include black swallowwort (*Vincetoxicum nigrum*) and tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), which is present within the Arryl House ruins.

The plant species water chestnut (*Trapa natans*) has been documented in the Hudson River portion of the Site as well as in Clermont’s historic Ice Pond. An invasive species that can spread very rapidly, it forms dense mats that shade out other submerged aquatic plants, contributing to low dissolved oxygen levels. In summer 2022, a project to remove the water chestnut infestation in the Ice Pond was implemented by stewardship staff, who hand-pulled the plants. Water chestnut seeds can remain viable for up to 12 years, so their removal will be an annual project.

Field visits have confirmed the presence of invasive vines at Clermont, including Oriental bittersweet (*C. orbiculatus*) and aggressive natives such as poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*) and Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), which are growing into the woodland canopy in some areas and killing some trees. Oriental bittersweet grows densely along Pine Road, a former gravel and cobblestone carriage road leading from the mansion to the northern portion of the Site. The vines are especially in areas where pines (*Pinus spp.*) have been replanted.

Woody vines such as bittersweet can also destroy masonry, damaging foundations or walls of significant historic buildings. A 2021 project targeted Oriental bittersweet removal from areas with historical significance and high visibility areas, including walkways, trails, and historic gardens. An estimated 30 acres impacted by bittersweet and vines were targeted for manual treatment via cutting and hand-digging the roots.

A control project is being planned to address a patch of Japanese knotweed identified in the northeastern part of the site along a section of the Bridle Trail. Common reed (*Phragmites australis*) was also found in the wet meadow, and a small patch of black jetbead (*Rhodotypos scandens*) was discovered in spring 2022 and removed by digging that summer. Any invasive species treatments will require multiple years of follow-up treatment and monitoring.



Root boring weevils were released in one of the Clermont’s meadow areas for a targeted “biocontrol” project to address invasive Spotted knapweed

Other efforts to address invasive include a biocontrol project targeted for Spotted knapweed (*Centaurea stoebe ssp. micranthos*). A biocontrol project was implemented in the field adjacent to the Ice Pond, where a root boring weevil (*Cyphocleonus Achates*), which are known to weaken or kill existing knapweed plants, was released. Animals identified by the DEC as invasive and that have already or may impact Clermont include the Emerald Ash Borer, the Spongy Moth, Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, and the Southern Pine Beetle. The Emerald Ash Borer was first detected in the region in 2013-2014. More recently, the invasive Spotted lanternfly can damage crops and other plants, including grapevines, maples, black walnut, birch, willow, and other trees. This rapidly spreading pest has the potential to impact the state's forests as well as agricultural and tourist industries.⁵⁰

Diseases affecting some of the state's trees include Beech leaf disease, which can kill a mature beech tree in six to ten years. Beeches are an important woodland species in northeastern forests, and mature trees with historic significance are being affected at many OPRHP sites (e.g., the Beech Allée at John Jay Homestead State Historic Site). This disease has not yet been identified in Columbia County, but occurrences have been documented in Dutchess (as far north as Rhinebeck), Putnam, and Westchester Counties.⁵¹



Fauna

Clermont is home to a varied assemblage of fauna, generally characteristic of western Dutchess County. Wildlife regularly seen include coyotes, foxes, woodchucks, rabbits, chipmunks, deer, snakes, frogs, turtles, eagles, owls, red-tailed hawks, and wild turkeys. The Site supports a wide range of mammals, but additional species are undoubtedly present. Fauna lists developed for the Master Plan are based on information from the OPRHP Regional Biologist, Clermont Staff, NYNHP, Hudsonia, Ltd., and biological surveys of the facility. (For a list of fauna identified at the site, see Appendix C.)



Clermont is a popular location for birding groups, as its varied habitats attract a wide variety of species.

The Hudson River offshore from Clermont is identified by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) as both a waterfowl conservation area and an anadromous fish concentration area. The generally undeveloped nature of the shoreline in this stretch likely provides an important buffer, which contributes to the quality of wildlife habitat in these areas.

The NY Natural Heritage Program database indicates there are seven Buffered Element Occurrences (BEO) that intersect with the project site. Three of those occurrences are fish, found within the Hudson River. Two additional BEOs are fish concentration areas within the Hudson River. The sixth occurrence is bald eagle. An eagle nest site has been documented more than 4,500 feet from the project site, and the area in between the site and the nest site is heavily vegetated. The seventh occurrence is a Red Maple-Swamp White Oak Swamp significant natural community.

Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitats

On November 15, 1987, the NYS Department of State (DOS) designated a five-mile stretch of the eastern half of the Hudson River, from Clermont to North Germantown, as a Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitat. The Germantown-Clermont Flats area includes approximately 1,000 acres of fish and wildlife habitat in an area described as “shallow, freshwater, tidal flats and submerged aquatic vegetation beds; rare in New York State.”⁵² Bird species such as osprey and large concentrations of migrant waterfowl are found in this ecological region.

Waterfowl Winter Concentration Area

Significant concentrations of waterfowl occur in the Germantown-Clermont Flats area. Diving ducks, such as the common goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*), and hooded merganser (*Lophodytes cucullatus*), are found regularly here during fall migration periods. Open river areas on the Hudson are also heavily used by dabbling ducks, including the American black duck (*Anas rubripes*) and blue-winged teal (*Anas discors*), during calm weather. Waterfowl are occasionally found overwintering here, and rafts of over 1,000 birds have been observed during fall migrations. Other bird species, such as common loons, grebes, gulls, wading birds, and shorebirds have been known to use the area. A comprehensive list of birds observed at the Site is available in Appendix C.

Reptiles and Amphibians

Germantown-Clermont Flats contains habitat used by species such as painted turtle (*Chrysemys picta*), red-spotted newt (*Notophthalmus v. viridescens*), and redback salamander (*Plethodon cinereus*), as well as gray treefrog (*Hyla versicolor*), spring peeper (*Pseudacris crucifer*), and wood frog (*Rana sylvatica*). There are likely other amphibian and reptile species at the Site that have not been confirmed. A list of reptiles and amphibians observed at the Site is available in Appendix C.

Fish

This part of the Hudson River is a major spawning area for American shad (*Alosa sapidissima*); concentrations found here are unusual in New York State. These flats also serve as important nursery and feeding areas for striped bass (*Morone saxatilis*), white perch (*Morone americana*), and other freshwater species.

Nuisance Wildlife

Groundhogs are found throughout the Site, often inhabiting dens underneath buildings. Squirrels, raccoons, and other small animals inhabit some of the Site’s vacant buildings (causing significant amounts of structural damage), including the Red Barn and Sylvan Cottage. Deer are prevalent at the site and protecting the historic gardens from browsing is an ongoing challenge. Mice can be troublesome in some of the buildings.

Physical Resources

Despite its long history as a residence and farm, just five of Clermont’s 592 acres are currently classified as “developed.” 140 acres are classified “managed” land – which includes lawns, gardens, and trails.

Geology, Soils, and Topography

Geology

The bedrock foundation of the Hudson River Valley was established in three mountain-building episodes beginning over a billion years ago. Beginning around 300,000 years ago, Columbia County was experiencing an ice age, during which it was covered and uncovered by several advances and retreats of glacial ice.⁵³ The entire region has been glaciated, and the Hudson River flows through ancient beds of glacial lakes and deposits of glacial sediment. Estuarine conditions were established in the Hudson River beginning about 12,000 years ago, after the glaciers receded.⁵⁴

The mineral composition and structure of the shale and clay-rich sandstones change in the northwest part of Dutchess County near Clermont, where quartz and mica are found. Sandstone and shale of the “Austin Glen formation,” found throughout the County, were originally formed in relatively deep water, as muds derived from land settled in ocean water. A ridge running north-south through the park has bedrock geology mapped as graywacke and shale.

Soils

Of the 57 soil types found locally, 30 or so tend to be poorly drained, largely due to the preponderance of clay.⁵⁵ Soils with the highest infiltration capacities are generally found along the Hudson River. Unconsolidated (loose) materials overlie the bedrock in most of the region. Some are deposits of glacial till — accumulations of fine material, sand, and larger cobble-sized rocks from the last Ice Age — others, more recent deposits from streams.⁵⁶ More than one-quarter of Germantown, for instance, has all hydric (wet) soils, one of the conditions used to define wetlands (see Appendices, Figure 8, Soils Map).

The Clermont site slopes down to the edge of the Hudson River, with a maximum elevation of 177 feet and a minimum of 13 feet. The land contains a mix of soil types (see Soils Map, Figure 8). Among the most predominant of these are somewhat level and poorly drained types (e.g., Rhinebeck series); rolling and very rocky soils found on slopes (Nassau channery silt loam); and Kingsbury and Knickerbocker, very deep, somewhat poorly drained soils, which formed in ancient lakebeds or from marine sediments.⁵⁷

The area is generally underlain with glacial till and shale bedrock. Bedrock is near the surface along the edge of the Hudson River (see the DEIS Appendices for maps of surficial geology, soils, and topography of the Site). The soil varies from a sandy loam to a mixture of clay and sand. Within the Site’s oak hickory forested areas are found Canandaigua silt loam, surrounded by Kingsbury and Rhinebeck soils (see Lundgren, flora surveys). In rocky outcrop areas soils have been mapped as Nassau channery silt loam, which are very rocky, with rolling or hilly topography.

Topography

Much of the area surrounding Clermont is characterized by gently rolling topography. The western portion lies mostly from 100 to 200 feet above sea level, while to the east, elevations are generally above 200 feet with some significant slopes. There are also large, fairly level areas to the northeast and southeast, where some regulated wetlands are found. The lowest elevations, near sea level, are along the Hudson River (see Appendices, Figure 4, Surficial Geology Map).



Clermont's wetlands provide important wildlife habitat for a range of species.

Water

The Hudson River is a key feature and focal point of the landscape at Clermont. Inland, the Site's wetlands, seasonal streams, and vernal pools provide habitat for a wide range of species. Waterbodies at Clermont contribute significantly to its biodiversity by providing essential habitat for many species and are important scenic resources as well. The Site's primary water resources are the Hudson River, the Ice Pond, and a NYS mapped wetland in the north section of the property. There are no NWI mapped wetlands within the project site, although there are several unmapped wetlands throughout the Site. A small unmapped stream traverses the southern section (See Figure 7, Water Resources).

Clermont falls within the Rhinecliff to Wappinger Creek sub-watershed area of the Lower Hudson watershed. A central elevated spine bisects Columbia County, defining two major watersheds: water to the spine's west flows via streams and creeks to the Hudson River. To the east, water flows to the Roeliff-Jansen Kill. The watershed divide passes Germantown's high point at 332 feet above sea level. Steep slopes (exceeding 15%) are mostly associated with the major waterways – the Hudson River, Roeliff-Jansen Kill, and Camp Kill — but are found along the watershed divide as well.⁵⁸

Clermont's property includes approximately one mile of Hudson River shoreline and 88 acres of underwater land. The river at this point is approximately one-half mile across. To the west the vista is very scenic—and relatively undeveloped—of the Hudson River and the Catskill Mountains beyond. The Site has a number of streams and small tributaries that flow into the Hudson River.

A NYS- regulated wetland is located within the northeast section of the property. Any activities proposed that may impact wetlands and their buffer area will require environmental review and, if necessary, permitting. Numerous unmapped wetlands are also found throughout the site that, while not state-designated, still require environmental review for any proposed development that might impact them, and potentially permitting, if they are considered federal wetlands.

Recreational Resources

When Clermont was first developed, it was planned as a park to be used for recreation, with picnic tables, roads, parking lot, and a public restroom. It was not until 1974 that the first Historic Site Manager was hired for Clermont, and the Site has continued to serve a somewhat hybrid function; some visitors



Visitors regularly come in late afternoon to watch the sun set across the Hudson River.

come specifically to tour the mansion and historic setting while others come to enjoy the views, walk their dogs, and relax in a tranquil setting. More recently, programs have been developed aimed at integrating these two elements, with activities for people of all ages that are fun, active, and educational. At Clermont, the most common recreation activities include passive recreation such as enjoying Hudson River/Catskill views, picnicking, kite flying, watching a sunset, dog walking, birding, walking the grounds and trails, foraging (although not organized/sanctioned), and viewing the gardens. These are generally unorganized and noncompetitive activities, which take place in undeveloped or environmentally sensitive areas that require minimal development.

Active recreation generally refers to more structured leisure time activities, often requiring equipment and taking place at prescribed places such as playgrounds or ballfields. Although Clermont does not offer active recreational infrastructure, visitors regularly engage in fitness or exercise activities including walking, jogging, bicycling, equestrian use (bridle/driving w/ buggy) and geocaching, as well as seasonal activities such as snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, sledding, and hunting (deer/archery only).

Programs

Clermont offers a wide range of public programs. Accounting for a significant part of recreational offerings at Clermont, these programs include seasonal events, such as the Sheep and Wool Showcase in the spring and festive winter events in December, as well as large holiday celebrations for Independence Day and Halloween. Throughout the year, the site offers a variety of seasonal workshops for children, families, and adults focusing on arts, crafts, cooking, nature, performing arts, and literacy. Ongoing programs at Clermont include tours of the mansion and specialty tours of the grounds, trails, and gardens.

Visitation

Yearly attendance has grown steadily at Clermont over the years. Between 2019-2021, however, visitor numbers rose significantly (see Figure 3, below). This jump in visitation occurred during the Covid-19 Pandemic when schools, restaurants, gyms, museums, sports venues, and other indoor activities were closed, and people sought safe access to public open space. This period also saw more people moving upstate from the greater NYC metropolitan area.

Table 2 - Clermont Attendance 2019-2022

NYS Fiscal Year				# of Visitors
2019-20				107,458
2020-21				171,262
2021-22				117,818
2022-23				194,816

Recreational Need

Determining demand for recreation in the state occurs when OPRHP develops the **NY Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan** (SCORP) every five years. The Relative Index of Need (RIN) is a method for comparing the demand for a particular recreation activity within a service area to the actual supply of that activity. The RIN is expressed on a numerical scale, with 10 being the highest level of need and 1 being the least. 5 is considered the statewide average. The RIN for each NYS county was determined using a statewide survey.⁵⁹ The service area for the Clermont State Historic Site has been identified as Columbia, Dutchess, Putnam, and Ulster Counties. The availability of outdoor recreation types available at Clermont (e.g., walking, relaxing in the park) was largely indicated as adequate in the most recent RIN study.

Operations and Infrastructure

Seasons and Hours

Clermont's grounds are open year-round from 8:30 a.m. to sunset. The Visitor Center is open Thursday-Sunday year-round 10:30am-4:00pm. Mansion tours will be offered year-round, from Thursday-Sunday spring 2023, with tickets purchased at the Visitor Center.

Clermont's Visitor Center, operated by OPRHP staff, offers permanent and rotating educational exhibits, restrooms, an orientation video, and is used for lectures and family programming.

There is a \$5 vehicle use fee in effect Saturday, Sunday and Monday holidays between April 1 to October 31, using two on-site pay stations.

Maintenance Area

Maintenance tasks includes mowing, weeding, snow plowing and hazardous tree monitoring and removal. Staff is also responsible for upkeep and repair of Site infrastructure, including fences, as well as maintenance and service of all Site equipment.

The Site's maintenance facility is situated about a one-half mile from the mansion and Visitor's Center, accessed by a short gravel drive east of Woods Rd. The maintenance area includes two buildings – one main structure with a two-bay garage on the east side and a small office, and a staff kitchen area and bathroom on the west side – and an outbuilding used for storage. The maintenance building houses the Site's trucks, tractors, utility vehicles and riding mowers. The maintenance area also includes a shop for

repairs and other Site projects. Tools and equipment are stored in the garage in tool benches, a storage/utility room, and closets. There is a loft used for storage above the west side space and accessed by stairs.

The maintenance building has water supplied by a well. Electric service and communications lines comes to the area by overhead power lines from County Route 6 to the east. While there is basic phone service through Germantown Telephone at this location, there is no internet access at this time. Heat for the maintenance center is provided by an oil-fired furnace.

The maintenance facility has above-ground gas pumps that supply regular gasoline.

Emergency Plans and Services

Clermont has an All-Hazard Emergency Action Plan (AHEAP) in place which establishes procedures for emergency preparedness, response, and recovery for severe weather, building evacuation, and medical emergencies. The AHEAP describes staff roles and responsibilities, protocols, and responses to emergencies. A copy is on file at the Clermont Fire Department, U.S. 9, Germantown, NY 12526. Clermont has been assessed for the potential of emergency situations related to all hazards.

Medical Emergencies

If there is a medical emergency, a call is placed to 9-1-1 or local emergency number. While waiting for EMS, contact Park Police, park office and/or park manager, and, if applicable, alert contact stations of incoming emergency vehicles.

Fire

The Clermont Fire Dept. will respond to and assume command of any reports of fire at the Site. Park maintenance and administration staff, along with Park Police, will ensure the building and/or area of the fire is evacuated and assist in directing the Fire Department to the location of the fire.

Severe Weather and Natural Disasters

Severe weather events include thunderstorms, tornados, floods, hurricanes, and blizzards. Emergencies that occur during a severe weather event should be reported to 9-1-1 and Park Police.

Loss of power is a potential impact of severe weather and occurs periodically at Clermont. If the entire facility is impacted, the Facility Manager is notified, and Regional Maintenance, the Regional Office, and/or electric provider (National Grid) are contacted to report the outage.

Evacuation

All OPRHP facilities have written evacuation procedures for each occupied building. In an emergency the evacuation of part of or an entire facility may be necessary. In an evacuation, Site staff must immediately notify Park Police and Regional Administration. If assistance is needed from the local Fire Department, EMS and/or local police, Park staff will contact 9-1-1 or the local emergency number.

Emergency shelter areas within the park:

1. Clermont Cottage (87 Clermont Ave, Germantown NY, 12526)
2. Clermont Visitors Center (416 Woods Road, Germantown NY, 12526)
3. Clermont Mansion (1 Clermont Ave, Germantown NY, 12526)
4. Clermont Maintenance Shop (431 Woods Road, Germantown, NY 12526)
5. Sylvan Cottage/Educational Gardens (172 Clermont Avenue, Germantown, NY 12526)

Evacuation routes:

1. Leave main parking lot, turn left to go north onto County Route 6 and follow to intersection with Route 9G (north or south).
2. Leave main parking lot, turn right to go south on County Route 6 into the town of Tivoli. Turn left onto Main St. and follow to Route 9G (north or south)

Animal Encounters

Any direct physical contact with an unknown animal, especially if it results in a bite or scratch, may have serious health consequences. Wild animals, alive or dead, can spread disease and pose potential physical health hazards. In the event of direct physical contact:

1. If necessary, provide first aid care and seek medical treatment immediately by calling 9-1-1.
2. If encounter includes a wild animal, contact Park Police and animal control.
3. If encounter includes any species known to carry rabies (typically bats, skunks, raccoons, and foxes), the local health department may need to be notified.

Operations

Clermont's buildings, landscape, and infrastructure are maintained by Site staff and regional maintenance crews. In addition to grounds maintenance, staff perform day-to-day activities related to ensuring safe public access. The front gate is opened daily, and the entry booth is staffed during major special events. The flagpole near the entrance is adjusted according to agency directives; otherwise, the flag remains up and is lighted at night.

Utilities

There is no available municipal water system at Clermont, and the facility's water supply comes from five on-site wells. One provides potable water to the mansion, Visitor Center, and the public restroom. This well and a water treatment building (pump house) were installed in 2006. A separate well provides potable water to Clermont Cottage and a water treatment system was installed in the cottage's basement in 2012. Water from the maintenance area well is unchlorinated and not suitable for drinking. Additional wells at Sylvan Cottage and near the gardens provide water for irrigation.

The facility is serviced for electric by National Grid. There are two separate utility feeds entering the Site: one from the north, which feeds the majority of buildings, and a separate connection to the maintenance area coming in from the east.

Upgrades to the HVAC Bunker (climate control systems), adjacent to the mansion, are planned.

Circulation

Vehicular

A paved entrance road leads to the Site's main parking area, which visitors may use to access the Visitor Center, the mansion, Arryl House Ruins, walking trails and picnic areas. A separate road enters the Site to the north of the main entrance, primarily for use by staff and authorized vehicles.

Parking

The main parking lot at Clermont is approximately one-quarter acre paved area near the Site's western border, adjacent to the picnic area and Visitor Center. Smaller parking areas, primarily for accessible parking, staff parking or visitor drop-offs, are located adjacent to the mansion, Visitor Center, and Clermont Cottage.

The main parking lot is generally sufficient for the typical volume of visitors. Overflow parking is not often necessary but, if needed during large events, it may be allowed on the lawns north or south of the main parking area. There are also several areas at the facility to park smaller groups of cars and an open lawn east of the Red Barn that can be used for program parking.

A vehicle counting device at the main entrance helps document the quantity of vehicles/visitors.

Pedestrian Facilities

Surfaces are quite variable throughout the Site and many lack the firm and stable surfaces required for accessibility. Defined pedestrian paths at Clermont are largely limited to areas around the mansion and Visitor Center. Paved asphalt paths lead from the parking lot to the Visitor Center, and along the Lilac Walk to the mansion. There is a short, paved path from the parking lot to the public restroom. Not all routes are accessible. Compacted gravel paths are found adjacent to and, in some cases, within the gardens, and flagstone paths are found at the mansion's east entrance. In front of the mansion's west façade is a large flagstone patio intermixed with areas of lawn and gravel.



To reach elements in the outside of the Site's historic core, visitors use the carriage roads (primarily gravel), the natural-surface trail system, or walk across mowed lawn areas. Paths leading from the parking area to the Arryl House ruins are a combination of gravel and mowed lawn. The lawn area to the south of the parking lot is important for events and overflow parking. The path leading to this area is often wet and/or eroded.

Chapter 2 – Development of Alternatives

A master plan provides a blueprint for realizing a facility's fullest potential. This chapter describes and analyzes a range of potential actions for improvements that will help Clermont to attain that goal. It discusses the pros and cons of proposed actions and identifies possible consequences of their implementation. The planners develop and evaluate alternatives for Site development to identify their potential benefit, and compare each with taking no action, or the "status quo." Options in all subject areas are evaluated by considering what will address the facility's needs, as well as anticipated shifts in visitor preferences and current recreation trends.

Future actions developed in this chapter are the product of the efforts of a diverse group. The planning group included regional staff – Clermont's Site Manager, maintenance and operations staff, historian – as well as NYS park planners, environmental analysts, and historic preservation specialists. Plan actions are also based on visitor surveys and multiple meetings to get input from nearby residents, regional elected officials, the Friends of Clermont, and other stakeholders.

Alternatives discussed in this chapter were evaluated for their potential impacts – both positive and negative. Those found to be reasonable, beneficial, and that will best accommodate short- and long-term goals and facility needs are identified, and preferred alternative(s) selected.



The final master plan is comprised of the selected preferred alternatives. Recommendations for future actions at Clermont are organized within the following broad resource categories:

Natural Resource Protection – Alternatives that focus on strategies for environmental stewardship, study, and interpretation of the Site's natural resources.

Cultural Resource Protection – Alternatives that will protect and expand archeological, architectural, and other cultural resources of the Site.

Interpretation and Education – Alternatives that concentrate on expanding interpretation and public education of resources at the Site.

Recreational Resource Development – Alternatives that focus primarily on the areas of the Site that support recreational activities. Included in this category are the use of built facilities and consideration of new types of recreation activities appropriate to a historic site.

Operations, Infrastructure, and Facilities – Alternatives to improve park function with management practices that provide support the operation and maintenance of the Site.

Natural Resources at Clermont

While Clermont is perhaps best-known for its historic mansion and pastoral Hudson River Valley setting, nearly two-thirds of the Site is classified by the state as “natural.” The meadows, woodlands, and wetlands at Clermont support a wide variety of wildlife, including aquatic habitats such as vernal pools important for amphibian and reptile development. The Site’s riverfront location also makes it an important natural resource for the state. The property includes a significant section of Hudson River shoreline, and more than 80 acres of land under its waters and is therefore a part of larger efforts to protect and improve the river.



***Top: Vernal pools at Clermont (spring 2022);
Ice Pond (2022)***

A thriving Hudson River estuary requires a healthy contributing watershed, with intact riparian corridors, floodplains, wetland complexes, and forests. The Hudson’s tributaries contribute essential freshwater and nutrients to the estuary. Many stressors can affect the watershed – pollutants carried by runoff from roads and other impervious surfaces, discharges from farms and residential fertilizer use, outdated wastewater systems, and a loss of vegetative cover to absorb rainfall. As the region sees more intense weather from climate change, stream health may be impacted. Periods of intense flooding increase sediment loads to waterbodies, and extended heat or drought can reduce aquifer recharge, impacting fresh water supplies.⁶⁰

Actions proposed at Clermont related to natural resources, therefore, have the potential to impact a valuable and unique ecosystem. Planning appropriate action to protect and improve the Site’s natural elements will help protect the region’s water quality, wildlife habitats and sensitive plant and animal species.

The alternatives considered in this plan will be implemented with full consideration of and commitment to following these following natural resource protection strategies:

- Minimizing future development in natural areas and establishing buffer zones for special habitat types
- Increasing public knowledge of how to protect natural elements

- Utilizing site elements and conditions to illustrate real-world impacts of climate change
- Limiting public access to sensitive ecological communities and known habitats for rare, threatened, and endangered plant and animal species
- Effectively managing the spread of harmful species
- Partnering with external groups and adjacent landowners to enhance habitat and provide a variety of environmental education activities

Natural Resource Stewardship

As stewards of the state's natural environment, OPRHP is tasked with preserving existing resources at its facilities as well as enhancing biodiversity, an important factor in ecosystem health. Historic sites present the additional challenge of balancing the sometimes-competing needs of the natural, historic, and recreational elements. Identifying priorities for protections in all three categories helps determine where multiple benefits can be realized and where compromises — if needed — are best made.

Much of Clermont is characterized by former agricultural lands that have reverted to successional woodlands or (if mowed) meadow. Wooded areas and grasslands provide habitat and food sources for native flora and fauna, as do planted mature trees and shrubs. The Site's natural areas also include some significant features. Among the Site's water resources are a NYS Dept. Of Environmental Conservation (DEC) mapped wetland, a significant rare wetland community type, and important plant communities have been identified. Seasonal (vernal) pools, wet meadows, unnamed streams, and the Hudson River, all provide habitat for a variety of species. A few old-growth trees — important for some species — can also still be found, both in the woods and planted specimens.

Addressing Invasive and Nuisance Species

Seasonal shifts that are occurring as a result of climate change may favor some invasive plants and threaten beneficial native species. As spring arrives earlier, and the region sees shorter, drier winters, some southern species may move north. If native understory plants decline, aggressive shrubs like Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*) can move in to take their place. Changes to the composition of native plant communities and microhabitats with specific temperature, light, and moisture requirements may seriously affect birds, mammals, and water-dependent species.

Invasive vines can damage significant buildings (e.g., by damaging foundations/walls), or compete with cultivated plants. Climbing species can girdle trees, threatening mature specimens which may have historic significance. Historic sites may have the additional challenge of managing introduced plants that are part of historic gardens, but which may be destructive if not contained.

Early detection and active management of invasive species is important for protecting the Site's natural and historic features for the future. Due to the extent of invasive species at Clermont, management strategies will first target impacted areas around high-quality habitats, such as wetlands, and those threatening historic infrastructure or views.

Alternatives for Natural Resources

Background

Development of a master plan for Clermont resulted in the first-ever comprehensive assessment of the Site's natural resources. In June 2022, a group of biologists, invasive species program staff, and other natural resource specialists came to Clermont to participate in a one-day survey (known as a "BioBlitz"), with the goal of identifying as many plant and animal species as possible within an eight-hour window. Participants' field notes, photographs, and postings on iNaturalist, a citizen science-based website, resulted in a wealth of data that was available to inform development of future actions that will help protect Clermont's natural elements. Surveys by staff from the NYS Natural Heritage Program also identified a previously unknown significant natural community that is now listed in the NHP database.

Invasive species staff and NHP have conducted IS surveys at the Site, and Clermont's Friends group has implemented projects to address some areas with IS that have gained a foothold. Woodland management at Clermont has largely been limited to trails maintenance.

All OPRHP facilities are required to maintain an approved plan that documents, addresses, and sustains the reduction of mowing, and Clermont has reduced regular mowing in areas where lawn is not a historic feature. Allowing previously mowed areas to develop into managed grasslands improves habitat for wildlife and pollinators, as well as reducing carbon emissions from fuel consumption. Fewer hours spent mowing also significantly lowers the labor hours needed to maintain lawns and allows maintenance staff to focus on other priority needs. At Clermont, meadows are mowed minimally, and large open fields near the Red Barn and Clermont Cottage are brush-hogged annually in the fall to limit the growth of woody plants.

Alternatives Considered

Alternative 1 – Status quo – No change to Clermont's natural resource stewardship or management.

Considerations:

- Without planned strategies for protection, the Site may lose important habitats, historic trees, and the ecological integrity of some specialized natural communities
- The condition of the Site's woodlands, fields, waterbodies, and historic elements in the landscape will continue to be impacted by stressors (e.g., climate change, visitor use, invasive species)
- There will be no plan to manage or prevent the introduction of new invasive species and invasive plants and pests may expand to impact larger areas
- A healthy natural environment contributes to a positive visitor experience
- Current staffing and funding levels are insufficient to address some issues identified in the Site's natural areas

Alternative 2 – Using current climate change data and modeling techniques, develop long-range planning recommendations to protect the Site's natural elements from future impacts.

Considerations:

- Clermont is already seeing impacts from climate change (e.g., damage from more intense storms, flooding, erosion)

- Creating a plan now based on projected climate change impacts will build resiliency into future natural resource management
- Planning now will identify the native plants and animals most likely to be impacted, as well as new harmful species that may become more predominant
- Will inform decisions regarding any new plantings (e.g., using native plant species identified as resilient to climatic shifts)
- Will anticipate impacts to water resources (e.g., potential effects of longer droughts or more sustained periods with standing water)
- Will make recommendations based on agency policies, directives, and priorities
- Flooding may intensify at the Site, increasing impacts to natural areas
- Developing a comprehensive plan and approach based on current climate change data and tools may require contracting with a consultant

Alternative 3 – Define and prioritize regular invasive species (IS) management tasks Site-wide.

Considerations:

- Determining priority actions will indicate where management efforts should be focused (e.g., at the Site's DEC-regulated wetland)
- Provides an actionable approach to IS management specific to historic sites
- IS are found in many parts of the Site and strategies are needed for targeting management in sensitive natural communities and for protecting historic infrastructure
- Volunteers can be trained to assist an IS crew
- Staff will be better informed on IS management strategies
- Improved management of IS in woodlands will increase the presence of native flora/fauna, enhancing forest health and wildlife habitat
- Will include consideration of exotic species in historic gardens that may need to be contained
- Implementing proactive IS management strategies will make the Site more resilient to climate change impacts
- Successful management of some IS requires outreach/coordination with landowners beyond the Site's boundaries

Alternative 4 – Identify and implement protections for old-growth native trees (150-year-old range) within Clermont's woodlands and historical/cultural landscape.

Considerations:

- Without identification and protection, the Site may lose important trees
- Important to maintain a diversified landscape (e.g., different species use different stages of trees) for wildlife species that use old-growth trees as habitat
- Identifies significant trees to ensure they are protected from impacts (e.g., from development, mowing, new plantings, or overflow parking)
- Some planted mature trees are an important part of cultural landscape (black walnuts, black locusts)
- The historic significance of old growth/heritage trees adds to a meaningful visitor experience
- Trees have interpretive and educational value as living witnesses to the history that happened here
- Core samples can be taken from significant tree trunks to establish their age, providing information that can be used in signage content
- There can be an emotional component of experiencing old trees
- Trees have a lifespan and Site managers need to balance safety against historical significance

Alternative 5 – Identify and evaluate mapped and unmapped water resources at the Site and determine priority actions for their protection.

Considerations:

- Protecting vernal pools, unclassified streams, and unmapped wetlands contributes to the overall health of the ecosystem
- Protective actions such as riparian stabilization and right-sizing culverts will protect water quality and reduce erosion
- The Site has an abundance of unmapped water resources (wetlands, streams, vernal pools).
- A comprehensive assessment of the Site's waterbodies may require a consultant
- Offers the opportunity for new partnerships (e.g., with colleges, nonprofit organizations)
- Important to know location of water resources and wet areas with diverse plants to prevent damage when developing trails, installing signage, or any new development

Alternative 6 – Protect the Hudson River and other waterbodies from Site runoff by incorporating green infrastructure (GI), where feasible, in retrofits and new infrastructure.

Considerations:

- Replacing pavements and other impervious areas with permeable surfaces reduces runoff, filters sediments and pollutants, and infiltrates stormwater back into the water table, keeping it out of local waterbodies
- Using green stormwater practices will capture and slow stormwater and help reduce erosion
- Using GI in public areas offers educational opportunities to increase knowledge and understanding of the benefits of these practices

Alternative 7 – Implement pollinator support strategies including mowing reductions, invasive species management, and strategic planting of important food species.

Considerations:

- Open fields and meadows provide important habitat for pollinators
- Various stages of plant succession are beneficial (e.g., meadows, shrublands, forests)
- Must conform with OPRHP's native plant policy
- Approach will comply with OPRHP Directive NR-SOP-022, Reduced Mowing in State Parks and Historic Sites
- Invasive species management supports biodiversity
- Will provide improved management guidelines specific to the Site's fields
- Fields must be mowed at least every other year to prevent establishment of woody vegetation (shrubs and tree saplings)
- Include protocols for mowing outside of peak bird nesting periods for species that depend on field/meadow habitat (e.g., after August 15, or if spring mowing is necessary, prior to May 1).
- If not historically significant, more areas can be allowed to revert to shrubland or forest

Alternative 8 – Improve habitat connectivity at adjacent properties by fostering relationships and increasing outreach to adjacent landowners.

Considerations:

- Educating neighboring homeowners about how to appropriately protect and enhance adjoining woodlands will help promote habitat connectivity
- Encourage adjacent property owners not to cut down native trees by providing information on the impacts of forest fragmentation
- Encourage reduced use of pesticides/herbicides with outreach that informs neighbors about their impacts (e.g., decline of pollinators, water quality impacts)
- Identify potential barriers to wildlife movement along property lines and mitigate obstructions where feasible (e.g., right-sizing culverts, etc.)

- Educate homeowners on the value of using locally native plants and curtailing the spread of invasives on their properties
- Identify opportunities to reduce mowing on adjacent properties and implement outreach to improve connectivity and increase field habitat
- Look for opportunities for conservation easements

Alternative 9 – Identify and implement best management strategies for addressing nuisance animal species at the Site.

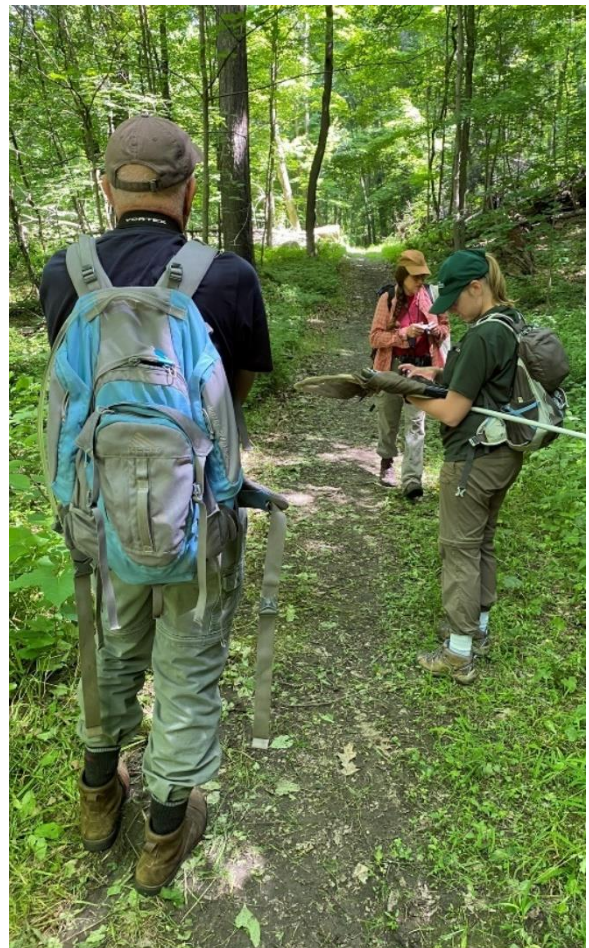
Considerations:

- Strategies will align with the OPRHP Directive NR-PRO-006, Wildlife Management in State Parks and Historic Sites
- Coyotes are moving closer to human activity areas at Clermont
- Education may be the best option for some species
- Some management may require contracting with a wildlife control operator (e.g., groundhog activity is damaging historic structures)
- Animals are entering and damaging some historic buildings (e.g., Sylvan Cottage)
- With current staff and funding levels ongoing issues are difficult to address
- An expanded hunting program can be considered as part of a deer management program (e.g., consider educational opportunities related to deer hunting as a historical practice)

Preferred Alternatives: 2-9

The Site's natural elements are integral to the visitor experience. The woodlands, meadows and terrain are characteristic of the region and provide an important context for the Site's historic and cultural elements. Natural areas also offer a glimpse into the Site's pre-development condition. As some portions of the property evolve from cropland and pasture into wooded areas and grasslands, they have been left largely unmanaged. This has protected some areas from impacts and resulted in the deterioration of others.

Developing a master plan has provided an opportunity to identify significant natural elements at the Site, and to provide strategies to address issues and ensure appropriate protections are put in place. Implementing these actions will provide Clermont staff with an informed and forward-thinking approach to natural resources management.



Cultural Resources Protection and Preservation

Cultural resources are what has been left behind at a site from past human activity. These may include buildings; structures; prehistoric sites; historic or prehistoric objects or collection; earthworks, or landscapes. Cultural resources provide the basis for understanding the human past. They are irreplaceable and nonrenewable, and often provide unique information about the past and provide ideas for modern day issues.⁶¹

The planning team identified the following issues as essential to protecting and interpreting the Site's cultural resources:

- Staffing – sufficient workforce is paramount to making any changes or implementing ideas for the Site's cultural elements.
- Interpretation – Clermont is committed to creating a comprehensive picture of the site's history by telling a more complete story of all its of former occupants.
- Funding – The region will need to explore alternative sources and identify priority projects for use of existing funds.
- Partnerships – Developing new partnerships and collaborations to further explore, identify and understand the Site's historic and cultural resources.
- Sustainability – All proposed actions must include a clear plan for management and maintenance needs to ensure success once implemented.

Cultural Resource Alternatives

Background

As previously noted, Clermont's past is deeply embedded in its physical landscape. While the importance of preserving and protecting a historic site's cultural elements cannot be overstated, these facilities must also be appropriately maintained for safe public use. A plan goal is to balance the Site's multiple uses in the context of a contemporary public space. The planning group also noted that any proposed improvements must consider future maintenance and staffing needs.

The Site's long history can be chronicled by way of a range of remnant structures found throughout the facility. Many are unprotected and subject to further deterioration. The most pressing issues identified related to historic structures included stabilizing the Arryl House ruins, and Sylvan Cottage, and addressing deterioration of the Red Barn. Clermont Cottage is functional and actively used but needs additional interior work.



Mansion

In addition to functioning as a museum, the mansion houses staff offices, is an events venue, and stores a large portion of Clermont's object and archival collection. The building's adaptation for these variable uses has been implemented piecemeal over the years, and there is a need to assess its overall condition and how well it functions for these different purposes.

In 2022, an important capital project to renovate the exterior of the mansion was completed. The work included repairs and restoration of the stucco and masonry walls, windows, and architectural wood components. Nearby elements, including a stone terrace and wall on the west side of the mansion, were also restored. Hazardous building materials were identified and remediated as part of the project.

Issues related to the mansion's interior identified during plan development included outdated HVAC, plumbing and electric systems, insufficient insulation, and damage from animals. Deteriorated finishes, potential structural issues, and repair work beyond day-to-day maintenance were also noted.

Another significant issue that emerged during plan development was accessibility. The mansion's main entrance is reached via steep steps, and visitors and staff with mobility constraints must use a separate entrance with a wheelchair lift which provides access to the first floor. The lift was installed on the building's north side in 1978. Alternatives for accessibility at the mansion are found later in this chapter.

Alternatives Considered

Alternative 1: Status Quo – Basic maintenance of the mansion's interior continues unchanged.

Considerations:

- The mansion is the Site's most significant historic element and important to NYS history
- A stop-gap approach to maintenance and repairs will eventually threaten the building's historic integrity
- 2022 improvements on the mansion's exterior addressed stormwater infiltration damage caused by faulty roof drains
- If not addressed, deterioration of some historic interior finishes and materials will continue and may lead to the loss of irreplaceable, original elements housed in the mansion
- The visitor experience will not be improved and may instead decline
- Safety issues may emerge as the mansion continues to deteriorate
- Staff offices in the mansion will continue to need renovation (e.g., painting, new carpets, etc.)
- If not addressed, needed repairs and renovation will become more intensive and costly

Alternative 2: Develop and implement a comprehensive Historic Structures Report and Conditions Study to appropriately protect and preserve the mansion.

Considerations::

- A significant element of New York's history will be preserved
- Meets the agency's mission to be responsible stewards of our state's cultural resources
- A comprehensive restoration plan will be costly to develop and implement
- The visitor experience will be improved and enhanced in a thoughtful and planned way
- Conditions for staff working in the mansion will be improved
- A consultant will be needed to develop the study
- Will prioritize repairs and restoration work needed to appropriately preserve the mansion
- Plan will include an assessment and recommendations for HVAC, code issues, fire suppression, security system
- Without meeting the environmental qualifications of potential lending institutions, Clermont will not be able to obtain loans for special exhibits

Preferred Alternative: 2

The mansion is Clermont's most significant historic structure and the Site's predominant visitor destination. As an irreplaceable element of New York's history, the state is tasked with protecting and preserving the house and its contents. The mansion's protected status also requires that appropriate materials be used for repairs and restoration. Any work must be reviewed from a preservation perspective and approved by Division for Historic Preservation staff. The extent and type of work needed in the mansion's interior requires knowledge and expertise beyond the scope of the Site's maintenance staff. This action will ensure that the mansion will have a comprehensive assessment and an appropriate plan for work and preservation will be developed.



Sylvan Cottage

In December 2000, the state acquired Sylvan Cottage and its associated 10 acres, and in 2001 began preliminary documentation and inventory of its contents. At that time the cottage was clean, livable, and in apparently stable condition. A proposal to rehabilitate it as a seasonal rental at that time was never advanced, primarily due to a lack of funding.⁶²

In 2010, leaking roofs on the cottage's north side were replaced, and in 2014 plans were initiated to rehabilitate the cottage as on-site housing for the Site Manager. Soon after, Regional Maintenance Crew began interior demolition work on a portion of the north wing and installed temporary shoring to support the second-floor porch and its roof. A lack of funding for full rehabilitation halted improvements, and since then, the Cottage has deteriorated significantly. A 2020 report on the structure's condition cites concerns about the cottage's stability and the integrity of the overall building envelope. The Cottage's poor overall condition has been exacerbated by animal activity, which has accelerated deterioration. Stabilizing the cottage has been identified as a high priority for the Site.

Alternatives Considered

Alternative 1: Status Quo – Do not stabilize, restore, or retrofit Sylvan Cottage.

Considerations:

- Sylvan Cottage is a historically significant building at Clermont and tells an important piece of the Livingston family story
- The Cottage will remain vacant and subject to continued deterioration
- Deteriorated buildings are damaging to public perceptions
- The Cottage's rapid deterioration will result in the loss of the structure
- Rehabilitation costs will continue to increase as long as the Cottage's condition is not addressed
- Safety issues will not be addressed
- Will not meet a key master plan goal of activating the Site's north section
- A missed opportunity to provide the Site with a valuable resource that can help meet multiple identified needs (e.g., program support, housing, storage, office space)

Alternative 2: Stabilize Sylvan Cottage and make repairs necessary to prevent further deterioration.

Considerations:

- Addressing the deterioration of this key historic building is a priority for the Site
- Improves aesthetics and safety for this part of the Site
- Helps to protect and preserve an important historic resource
- Will not address infrastructure needs for active programming at this location
- Does not meet the plan goal to activate this part of the Site
- Costs will be moderate; however, expenditures will not result in new programming opportunities or support the Site's functionality
- The Cottage will continue to be vacant and will need to be maintained

Alternative 3: Rehabilitate and retrofit Sylvan Cottage as an accessible, multi-use education center with classrooms, a kitchen, restrooms, and defined parking area.

Considerations:

- Resolves safety, security, and public perception issues caused by the Cottage's deteriorated condition
- An important historic structure will be protected
- Supports current and future/expanded programming
- Provides an indoor space for feeding and teaching children participating in Harvesting History program during cold or wet weather
- Kitchen facilities that meet county codes/requirements at this location will offer program participants an opportunity to try cooking
- A restroom is needed for students and staff working in the nearby garden
- Helps widen the focus for visitors beyond the mansion and realize a plan goal to activate the north section of the Site
- Parking has been identified as a need for this part of the Site
- Accessibility will need to be addressed (for building access and parking)
- Costs will be significant but justifiable given added programmatic opportunities, preservation concerns, public safety, and visual considerations
- Can be evaluated as a potential location for installing a heat pump system

Alternative 4: Renovate Sylvan Cottage as staff housing.

Considerations:

- There is currently no on-site staff housing, and the Cottage is in a convenient location with potential to provide staff with a comfortable residence
- Cottage will be stabilized, rehabilitated, and appropriately maintained
- Provides an amenity that can be offered to future staff, or used for staff office space or for storage when vacant
- Will not activate the cottage and Site as a public asset
- Does not address need for program support at this location
- Aesthetics, safety, and security at the Site will improve
- Maintains the original function of the structure (i.e., housing)
- Significant rehabilitation is needed, including upgrades for electric/plumbing/internet
- Cost will be significant but will result in multiple benefits
- Accessibility issues will need to be addressed

Preferred Alternative: 3

Sylvan Cottage is a historically significant building at Clermont and its location and charming design offer potential for adaptive reuse. Currently, it is vacant and deteriorated. Located along a popular walking route, it does not currently convey a positive image for the Site. If the Cottage becomes irreparable, the state will lose an important historical element, and the Site would no longer have an opportunity to utilize it as a usable much-needed workspace that supports public programs. Rehabilitation and reuse of Sylvan Cottage will address its condition while providing a welcome resource for nearby programs and activities. This action will also build on other proposed improvements as part of a comprehensive strategy to activate the northern portion of the Site.



Red Barn

As noted in Chapter 1, the “Red” or “McVitty” Barn represents an important era in the Site’s agricultural history. The barn is in good overall condition. It is structurally sound and, in 2019, a new roof was installed. Openings in walls and windows make it vulnerable to the elements and animal activity, however, and to prevent further damage the building envelope needs to be sealed and the need for other preservation actions evaluated.

Along with other historic elements in Clermont’s north section, addressing the Red Barn’s condition and repurposing the structure for public use is an important component of realizing plan goals for re-activating this part of the Site. The rustic barn is a natural draw, with potential to raise visitor awareness of broader aspects of the Site’s history. Alongside improvements to other proposed elements in this part of the Site, repurposing the Red Barn would allow the Site to expand its offerings and activities while help to meet multiple Site needs.

Alternatives Considered

Alternative 1: Status Quo – No modifications to or new use of the Red Barn.

Considerations:

- The structure is an important component of Clermont’s historic and cultural landscape
- Damage from animals and water will continue and the barn will deteriorate
- Vacant and/or un-utilized buildings are damaging to public perceptions of parks
- The barn’s interior is in generally good condition, but without needed repairs it will continue to deteriorate
- Barn will continue to be underutilized with lost potential for a new revenue source and alternative program space
- The barn’s architecture is appealing and a visual marker of the Site’s agricultural history
- Does not help realize a master plan goal of activating the north section of the Site
- Rehabilitation costs will only increase over time

Alternative 2: Improve weather-tightness of the barn and implement necessary repairs to ensure its long-term protection (e.g., repair broken windowpanes, close gaps in exterior walls).

Considerations:

- The barn is structurally sound and has potential to be useful to Site operations
- Once closed in, the barn's upper levels can be used for storage (e.g., Christmas decorations, etc.)
- Will prevent continued damage from weather and animals
- Building is not currently serviced with electric, sewer or water
- Interpretation can highlight the barn as an extant element of the Site's agrarian past
- The barn will be protected, but does not contribute to goal of activating the Site's north section

Alternative 3: Adapt the interior of the barn as a seasonal indoor venue for group events (e.g., weddings, reunions, parties, group programs, etc.).

Considerations:

- Will allow the Site to offer a protected, indoor option for smaller group events
- The barn is not large enough to accommodate all necessary supporting functions (e.g., food/beverage preparation areas, dressing rooms, restrooms, storage)
- Electric, sewer, and water service would need to be provided
- The interior layout will not accommodate group seating without extensive modifications that would compromise its historic character
- The barn could be used by staff for programming, lectures, and children's crafts
- Most wedding parties prefer Hudson River views
- Site can offer the option for wedding ceremonies to be held near the River and the Barn for receptions
- Will help to activate the north portion of the Site, a master plan goal

Alternative 4: Develop an area adjacent to the barn to serve as a seasonal outdoor events venue.

Considerations:

- The barn and its environs offer a picturesque backdrop for outdoor events
- Exterior area to the east offers a dry, level area for a tent, seating, etc. and has been previously disturbed (site of former farm structures)
- Archaeological elements, including remnants of agricultural structures located near the barn, would need to be evaluated for potential impacts
- Any proposed elements must be evaluated to ensure they do not impact wetlands or other natural resources
- Avoids significant alterations to the barn's interior while retaining the structure's character-defining elements (e.g., wood framing, finishes, exterior cladding)
- Provides shelter and dry space for vendors at outdoor programs (e.g., Sheep & Wool Festival)
- Must be done in conjunction with Alternatives 2 and 5

Alternative 5: Build a small addition at rear of the barn to house a public restroom, changing area, storage, and a warming kitchen.

Considerations:

- Building an adjacent addition to house restrooms, electric service, kitchen with running water, and/or changing rooms for events will avoid the need to install them in the Barn
- Will need to provide a new septic system, water, and electric service
- Provides a new venue to support visitor events and programming (e.g., school programs, kids' crafts, lectures, smaller gatherings)
- An addition is more cost effective than retrofitting the Barn for these services
- Will offer shelter for vulnerable materials during programs (e.g., for Sheep and Wool Festival)
- Addition will need to be sensitive to context (SHPO review under 14.09 will be required)
- Must be done in conjunction with Alternatives 2 and 4

Alternative 6 — Rehabilitate the interior of the Red Barn to accommodate three-season use, such as exhibits, while preserving character-defining elements.

Considerations:

- Must be done in conjunction with alternatives 2,4,5
- Expands the Site's seasonal events capacity (e.g., can be used as shelter for outdoor events during inclement weather)
- Upstairs space can be used for storage without extensive layout changes
- Design will need to be sensitive to context and use appropriate architectural materials; SHPO review under 14.09 will be required

Preferred Alternatives: 2, 4, 5, 6

The Red Barn has been identified as an underutilized Site element. Its history, craftsmanship, pastoral setting, and location all contribute to its potentially valuable resource that can support programming and events. Repairing and weatherizing the structure were identified as crucial to protect the building from further deterioration. The building has potential to accommodate various uses. Because of its historic status and layout limitations, adapting the Barn for four-season use (insulating, etc.) was not considered a viable option. The interior is not large enough or appropriately configured to serve as an indoor venue for weddings and larger group events. Adding required elements such as restrooms and kitchen to the interior would further limit space. Adding a structure to house these elements will allow a range of uses without the cost and impact of a full renovation or retrofit. Some relatively minor layout alterations will allow its use for some programs. Adding functionality for the Red Barn will build upon other Master Plan improvements to help activate this portion of the Site.



Clermont Cottage

The oldest section of Clermont Cottage was built in the 1790s to provide housing for the Livingston Family service community. Today, the Cottage houses the Friends' Group offices, is used for program and event space, and for Site staff meetings. In addition to work areas, there is a kitchen, restrooms, meeting/conference room and office spaces.

Much of the Cottage's first floor level interior has been renovated and is in active use. Historic wood plank floors and a fireplace in the older section on the east side of the first floor need to be evaluated for condition and need for improvements. Any required repairs or modifications will preserve historic fabric while ensuring it can accommodate current use of the space.

Clermont Cottage's second floor is accessed by a narrow staircase, which limits its function. This area is not properly insulated, and mildew and mold has developed. If remediated for mold/mildew and properly insulated, this space could be used for much-needed storage. Widening or otherwise improving the existing staircase to improve access would require significant alterations that would impact the Cottage's historic character. Therefore, using the second level for staff offices or workspace for volunteers is not a viable option.

The Cottage's basement has two sections: one part has been modernized and houses utilities; the other space, on the Cottage's south side, has the original dirt floor. This unfinished section needs to be evaluated for condition and to recommend strategies for addressing its long-term maintenance. Additionally, an exterior access door to the basement is not weathertight and needs updating. This bulkhead door is no longer used for access and is to be replaced with a non-functional door of appropriate appearance.

Visitors attending programs and events at Clermont Cottage usually park at the main visitor parking lot and walk the significant distance up the road to the Cottage. Although the parking area and gravel walks at Clermont Cottage were originally designed as accessible, parking spaces are no longer clearly defined. The Cottage has parking for about three cars, and visitors and staff need to walk on lawn and deteriorated gravel paths to access the entrance. Consequently, Clermont Cottage is generally not used for larger group events, despite having space to accommodate groups up to 45.

Alternatives Considered

Alternative 1: Status Quo – Continue existing maintenance at Clermont Cottage with no actions to address identified issues.

Considerations:

- The building is in active use as office space and for public programming, and accessibility needs to be addressed
- Mildew and mold present health issues and the Cottage's condition will worsen if not remediated and appropriately insulated
- This significant historic building will not be preserved and protected
- The Site needs climate-controlled storage space and none is currently available at the Cottage
- Parking area and walkway will continue to deteriorate, and the Cottage will not provide universal accessibility
- The Cottage will not be able to meet its potential to accommodate larger group programs

Alternative 2: Provide accessible parking, walkways, and entrance at Clermont Cottage.

Considerations:

- The Cottage is in active use and needs to be fully functional for both staff and visitors, with accessible offices, accessible parking, and event space
- Facilities that serve the public are required to be accessible
- The Cottage's functional needs have evolved, and additional parking capacity is required
- Cost for modifications will not be significant
- The Cottage's immediate surroundings will be improved with upgraded pavement and clearly delineated parking
- Addressing accessibility at the existing parking area will require regrading and paving

Alternative 3: Remediate Clermont Cottage for mold and mildew and install appropriate insulation in needed areas.

Considerations:

- Clermont Cottage is in active use by the Friends' Group and for public events and mold/mildew may present health risks

- The building is not properly insulated, and conditions will worsen if not addressed
- Will create usable storage space on the upper floor/half story area
- Protects and preserves one of the Site's significant historic structures
- Relatively minor cost to implement
- Some roof repair may be required as part of a remediation project

Preferred Alternatives: 2 and 3

An important component of the Site's functional infrastructure, the Cottage houses office space for the Site's very active Friends Group and hosts public workshops, lectures, and other events. As part of the building complex in the north section of the Site, maintaining and updating the Cottage is important to the larger goal of activating this part of the facility.

Work on the pathways, entrance and mold/mildew remediation was initiated in 2023.



Icehouse & Root Cellar

Icehouses were a common feature of 18th and 19th century households, used to keep food cool during the warmer months. At Clermont, the remains of an icehouse used by the Livingston household is found near the mansion within Clermont's central historic core. The frame superstructure is now gone, and an excavated opening lined with stone masonry is all that remains. Surrounded by a wood safety railing, vegetation has grown up around the perimeter, largely obscuring the view down into the structure.



Remains of the root cellar's stone masonry walls are also found within the mansion complex. As with the icehouse, its walls were originally covered with a roof structure. Both structures have interpretive signs that describe their function and history, but are not easily found, due to their locations and overgrown condition.

Alternatives Considered

Alternative 1: Status Quo – No repairs or modifications to the icehouse and root cellar structures and maintenance continues with no changes.

Considerations:

- Remnants of the icehouse and root cellar are deteriorating from continued exposure to the elements and damage from vegetation
- Both structures have historic value and represent a window into early lifestyles, to commercial ice harvesting on the Hudson River, and provide a link to similar structures in the region
- The icehouse structure is deep, and the safety railing is damaged and overgrown, presenting a potential safety hazard
- Staff report that maintaining the area around both structures is an ongoing challenge

- Both structures are difficult to identify in the landscape and interpretive signs are partially blocked by vegetation
- Both offer an opportunity to tell a more complete story about people who lived and worked at Clermont

Alternative 2: Stabilize the icehouse and root cellar; remove vegetation, replace safety railing, and add gravel with weed barrier around the perimeter.

Considerations:

- Protects and preserves historically significant outbuildings
- Reduces time required for staff to maintain the structures
- Improves Site aesthetics
- Expands interpretive opportunities, in keeping with the education staff's goals to tell a more complete story of the Site's history
- Low cost to implement
- Will make these structures more visible and provide safe access to interpretive signs

Preferred Alternative: 2

As representative of a bygone era, the icehouse and root cellar have potential to offer visitors a more vivid understanding of what life was like for families and workers living in previous centuries. Implementing this action will help protect these small but significant pieces of the Site's history. This action will raise the visibility of these structures, address safety hazards, and ease maintenance tasks for staff.

Other Site Structures

Foundations of earlier structures are found around various parts of the Site, among them a greenhouse foundation, stone walls, and foundations of farmhouses, barns, and other vestiges of the Site's agricultural past. Many of these elements are in poor condition, overgrown with vegetation and damaged from fallen trees or exposure to weather. Staffing at the Site is currently insufficient to ensure active maintenance of these elements, and if more active protection or restoration is deemed appropriate, these will require extensive repairs and/or specialized stabilization techniques.

The planning team worked with Division for Historic Preservation staff to complete an informal site assessment of these items, and some were designated for specific actions that are included in this Plan. For the remainder, this section was created to address a need for general cleaning and maintenance.

Alternatives Considered

Alternative 1: Status Quo – Continue current approach to management of remnant historic structures identified at the Site.

Considerations:

- Many structures are subject to deterioration from weather, animal activity, and inadvertent damage by visitors
- Some structures may present safety hazards (e.g., cellars, rubble, uneven ground)
- Some represent a lost opportunity for interpretive/educational content that will help convey a more complete picture of the Site's history
- Does not meet Agency mission to protect and preserve the state's historic resources

- Aesthetics at the Site are negatively impacted by visible deteriorating elements, as is public perception
- Cost may be high to stabilize and/or clean up some elements
- Some structures may require specialized assessments and/or treatments

Alternative 2: Work with Division for Historic Preservation staff to stabilize selected remnant historic structures identified at the facility.

Considerations:

- Many elements found at the Site are part of the Livingston Family's, or earlier occupants' history and may have potential for portraying a more complete story of the Site through new interpretation and/or programming
- OPRHP Division for Historic Preservation staff can help to identify Best Management Practices for protecting and preserving these elements and/or appropriate methods of stabilization
- Maintenance staff levels will need to be expanded to effectively address more of these elements
- Deterioration from exposure to weather and plants will be assessed and, in some cases, remediated
- Addressing more visible elements will improve Site aesthetics
- Once a course of action is determined and issues are addressed, ongoing maintenance may be reduced

Preferred Alternative: 2

The landscape at Clermont has retained the vestiges of many centuries of human occupation. Some remaining elements have significance for expanding interpretation of the Livingston Family, and some for providing a broader understanding of the larger, regional history. Some of these elements, such as old cellars or collapsed walls, present safety issues. Addressing the entirety of a large facility like Clermont, with its many layers of history, is beyond the capability of the operational staff. To implement a methodical assessment of these elements requires input from specialized staff.

[Archaeological Resources](#)

Background

There are always unknown elements at historic sites, and Clermont is no exception. OPRHP's archaeological staff have identified a need for a more comprehensive investigation of all the agency's sites. During master plan development, staff worked with the Division of Historic Preservation to develop a map that identifies known archaeological elements and excavation sites at Clermont. Many known resources at Clermont have incomplete data or require further research to fill in gaps in the Site's knowledge of these elements. Some of interest include:

- The remnant of a building foundation is known to exist under the pavement of the main visitor parking lot. While the agency has accurate location data and has examined archaeological deposits from the periphery of this feature, its identity and function are not known. A more in-depth analysis of overall site associated with the building (e.g., Phase II investigation) would be beneficial. In the meantime, it may be possible to obtain imaging when the parking lot is redeveloped.
- The remains of an earthen dock on the Site's Hudson River shoreline offers exciting potential for interpretation. Archaeological sampling has been done at the dock, and some limited data is available. More comprehensive information would be useful for developing interpretative material. The history of dock is integral to the Livingston Family's story, and a closer look at how it was used has potential to shed light on the Livingston staff and others who worked on the river when the dock was in active use. A faint track can still be seen upland of the dock, traces of

a former access road leading down to the waterfront, and an existing stone wall or rubble exists along the dock's exterior border. This structure is vulnerable to erosion, flooding, and sea level rise.

- A Dutch-era structure has been identified underneath the southwestern corner of the mansion. The structure pre-dated the Livingstons' arrival in 1730 and may no longer be intact.

The Clermont Site and overall region are sensitive for pre-contact (i.e., pre-historic) elements, and there is a high likelihood there is an intact pre-contact site here. Clermont's collections include pre-contact material, including details of projectile points from the Late Archaic period (3000-1000 BC) that were found onsite. A Site-wide Phase 1 archaeological survey would investigate the existence of additional material. An archaeologically sensitive area is found on the hillside west of mansion, where the Livingston family discarded its rubbish. Further investigation may be of interest here.

Actions described below consider options for the Site's archaeological resources – both known and unknown.

Alternatives Considered

Alternative 1: Status Quo – No further investigation of the Site's archaeological resources.

Considerations:

- Clermont's archaeological resources have never been fully assessed
- An earlier Master Plan recommended additional investigation/documentation
- Documentation of known archaeological elements and previous investigations was completed for this plan
- The agency is working toward developing more complete archaeological data for its historic sites
- Protections are already in place and archaeological resources will continue to be preserved and protected under current project review guidelines and procedures
- A comprehensive review may reveal a more complete story of the Site's inhabitants

Alternative 2 – Implement a Phase I archaeological survey at Clermont and develop a comprehensive archaeological report and sensitivity analysis of the entire Site.

Considerations:

- Will provide a comprehensive informational resource to inform future development
- Can potentially expand interpretation opportunities for underrepresented themes regarding the site's previous inhabitants, including enslaved and indigenous people
- Implementing a Phase I Survey will require considerable time
- Will need to contract a consultant
- Field work may temporarily take areas of the Site out of operation during survey
- Will identify unknown archaeological elements at the Site
- Will identify areas without resources, helping to inform future development
- The 88 underwater acres at the facility have not been investigated and will be included in the survey
- Compiling and mapping existing archaeological documentation was completed for this plan but more work is needed to fully assess the Site

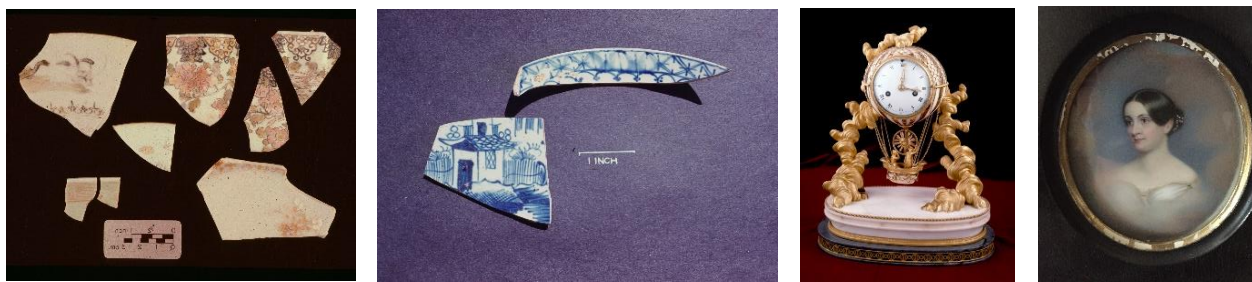
Alternative 3 – Develop an archaeological research program with goals for the Site that can be used to bring in researchers to examine existing archaeological data.

Considerations:

- A wide variety of data available from previous digs has been catalogued, but not researched
- Will expand understanding of the Site's history and help inform interpretation development
- Agency staff does not have the capacity to undertake research
- Provides a program with specific goals to provide to potential partners (e.g., volunteers, graduate students, funding sources)
- Will require staff time to coordinate

Preferred Alternative: 2

As is generally the case with historic properties, at Clermont, the entire facility is considered sensitive unless demonstrated otherwise. A Phase I (Reconnaissance) survey determines the presence or absence of cultural resources within a defined area. This investigation will determine the presence or absence of additional historic and cultural resources. Completing this action for the Site will facilitate project planning and help to inform future investigations and interpretation. While much progress was made on an up-to-date sensitivity map during Master Plan development, a full site-wide Phase I archaeological survey has not been completed at Clermont, and a comprehensive understanding of the Site's archaeological resources requires further investigation.



Collections

Background

Clermont's collections are mostly original items and are housed at multiple locations: the mansion, Olana, John Jay State Historic Site, and at OPRHP's Peebles Island Collections Care Center. The collection includes a research library, 184,864 archaeological collections, and 19,541 historic collection objects.

Objects in the mansion are mostly original and, when not displayed, are placed in archival boxes, and kept in storage spaces on the mansion's second and third floors, and at basement level. The improper storage spaces leave many objects and materials in Clermont's collections vulnerable to damage from climatic conditions and other possible sources of deterioration. The planning team identified a need to evaluate storage practices for the Site's collection and for recommendations for actions that will ensure their appropriate protection and preservation, as well as to improve access and better realize their educational potential.

Alternatives Considered

Alternative 1: Status Quo – Do not make any changes in management, scope, or policy for the Site’s Collections.

Considerations:

- Collections are irreplaceable and current storage practices may not sufficiently protect them
- Overcrowding leads to management challenges – pulling them out is hazardous, can’t check easily on conditions,
- Lack of storage space available for incoming acquisitions limits collections capability
- Peebles Island is investigating options for accommodating overflow storage
- Climate control for collection items stored at the Site is not consistent and may result in damage to sensitive resources
- No curatorial position at site - hampers management [recommendation in for curatorial track]
- Current scope/collections policy limits interpretation content and adding materials related to the servants and other underrepresented stories

Alternative 2: Work with the Bureau of Historic Sites, develop a furnishing plan to research and document objects at the Site as they existed historically and how best to interpret them.

Considerations:

- Collections on the mansion’s tour floor are subject to movement without historical basis, which can dilute interpretive message or accuracy
- Formerly kept binders in rooms to describe how materials were placed, but these have not been updated
- Important for interpretive consistency and institutional memory when staff changes
- Developing a furnishing plan is a large-scale and time-consuming process which requires curation staff
- Today’s exhibits should reflect the 1931 conditions (some may currently be from later years, e.g., from 1944)
- A furnishing plan will enable staff to provide accurate interpretation and to make conscious, informed decisions about content
- A goal of Bureau of Historic Sites is to have a furnishing plan for all historic sites.
- If deviations in accuracy exist, they need to be deliberate and justified
- Will likely need a consultant

Alternative 3: Work with the OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites to re-evaluate Clermont’s Collections Policy; review parameters and scope of collections.

Considerations:

- The same collections policy has been in place since the Historic Site was established and should be reviewed periodically
- Only Site staff in coordination with BHS Collections Committee may acquire new artifacts, based on the collections policy
- Revisions to a collections policy must be coordinated with Bureau of Historic Sites
- Parameters for the Site’s Collections are identified in the Policy, which defines the scope of material
- Goals and actions for expanding interpretative and educational content should be reflected in the Site collections
- Underrepresented groups would be better acknowledged (e.g., items related to enslaved peoples, Palatine German tenants, tenant farmers, regional indigenous cultures)
- The policy should reflect changes in regional interest, visitor demographics, and museum curation goals
- The review will place demands on staff time

Alternative 4: Improve public access to Clermont’s collections by developing a “virtual wing” to provide online access to resources and enable wider and more active use by both staff, the academic community, and the general public.

Considerations:

- Original objects and materials in Clermont’s collections are unique and wide-ranging, and the potential for their programming use is relatively untapped
- BHS is getting new software that will allow public, researchers, etc., to have digital access to collections and allow for crowdsourcing
- Collections belong to people of NYS and access is important
- Some collections are too fragile to physically exhibit
- May need additional funding/comprehensive plan to implement
- Important to keep up with current museum practices
- Need a platform to host – BHS does not have website currently (see Philipse Manor for test-maybe by end of Aug)
- The collections comprise an important repository and record of NYS history
- Photo documentation of some collection items is underway
- Volunteer forces (e.g., students from local schools) supervised by professional staff could be utilized to implement some work
- No agency-wide efforts are currently in place
- Collections are underutilized
- Essential to document collections that may be affected by climate change in the future

Alternative 5: Evaluate storage conditions for object collections held in the mansion and make recommendations for improvements.

Considerations:

- Original objects and materials need appropriate climate control
- Typical of older, uninsulated houses, it is difficult to provide well-functioning HVAC environment
- If not addressed, conditions in the mansion pose a real threat to Clermont’s object collections
- Agency is moving to fossil-free energy sources
- Humidity control has been an issue at the Site
- Collections are housed variously in storage spaces: in mansion (on 2nd, 3rd floors, basement), and off-site at Peebles, Olana, John Jay
- Will require collaboration with DHP to determine best practices

Preferred Alternatives: 2, 3, 4, and 5

Historical object collections are a treasure trove for use by scholars, students, genealogists, filmmakers, journalists, and the general public. OPRHP’s historic sites are tasked with protecting these legacy items. An object collection is not a static entity; a Site may add to or change its holdings, based on factors such as newly discovered information, changes in archival methods, or emerging trends in public interest. A Site’s Scope of Collections statement defines the types of objects collected and why they are included, is also periodically reviewed and may be revised.

A furnishing plan reflects all known material regarding the rooms of a historic building, including photographs, inventories, receipts, and written accounts. It provides justification for choices made for the house, including furniture, paint colors, or wallpaper. The furnishing plan becomes the institutional memory for the agency as staff retire or move on. A plan can be used to help train staff in the care and maintenance of interior furnishings. As with the collections, these are living documents that get updated when new research comes to light.



Peebles Island Resource Center at Peebles Island State Park, headquarters for the Bureau of Historic Sites and administered by OPRHP. The Bureau of Historic Sites provides preservation assistance and interpretive support to 38 state historic sites and 193 state parks (includes preserves, marinas, golf courses, and recreation areas).

Cultural Landscape

The U.S. National Park Service defines a cultural landscape as “a geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources... associated with a historic event, activity, or person...”⁶³ These are elements of the landscape that show evidence of past engagement between people and their surroundings. Most historic properties have landscape components, outside the main structures, that are integral to the significance of the site. The land can provide a narrative of its history through centuries of use, as well as elements important to its regional identity.

A cultural landscape may include cemeteries, walls, foundations, evidence of indigenous habitation, historic trees, designed views – any of several character-defining features which contribute to the landscape's physical appearance as it has evolved over time. Vegetation and topography, ponds and streams may also be important elements, as well as human-built features, such as fountains, roads, paths, steps, walls, fences, benches, lights, and sculptural objects. The multidisciplinary quality of these landscapes may create management challenges as different disciplines are often called into play when making decisions related to their preservation, maintenance, and even interpretation. To successfully integrate preservation of these cultural resources alongside ecological factors, for instance, a broader array of disciplines and interests must be considered.

Cultural Landscape at Clermont

The extant landscape at Clermont offers the opportunity to understand the full range of its inhabitants, from prehistory to the present. Previous planning documents developed for Clermont have focused on buildings from the Livingston era: the mansion, cottages, and agricultural buildings. Consideration of the larger context of the landscape where these are sited has generally been limited to its gardens and historic plantings.

In 1979 OPRHP completed a landscape report that included detailed descriptions of the formal gardens, significant plant locations and species, the Lilac Walk and the Arryl House. The Master Plan identifies elements at the Site that are considered to have historical and cultural value and makes recommendations for actions related to their care, educational potential, and preservation. This information will help inform decisions about changes to the Site's physical setting and notable features.

The planning team identified the following as crucial to identifying, protecting, documenting, and interpreting Clermont's physical landscape:

- Staffing – A sufficient workforce is essential to the successful preservation and maintenance of any proposed changes to elements in Clermont's landscape.
- Sustainability - Any proposed changes need to be accompanied by a clear plan for their successful operation and maintenance.
- Funding – Additional and alternative resources may need to be identified to support proposed enhancements to Clermont's cultural/historical landscape.
- Partnerships – In addition to the Friends of Clermont, collaborations with new partners, such as regional colleges and schools, may be called upon to help with activities related to cultural landscape resources.
- Education – Interpretative content and programs can be developed to help visitors become more aware of these elements as well as to provide a more comprehensive picture of human experience at the Site.

Background

As Clermont's educators work to develop a more complete picture of the Site's history, Clermont's rich and layered landscape offers much potential for new opportunities. Untapped Site resources related to a wider range of the Site's former inhabitants (e.g., the servants, laborers, tenant farmers, indigenous communities) provide extensive material for portraying a broader spectrum of the Site's history. New interpretative content related to the elements in the cultural landscape can help inform the public about the experience of the Site for all people who have lived here.

Features of many different time periods co-exist at Clermont, and therefore it is difficult to determine how "intact" the cultural landscape may be. The landscape seen at Clermont today is largely representative of the 1931 era of development. However, remnants of buildings, roads, walls, plantings, and agricultural use remain from inhabitants of different time periods. Some overlap or are in some cases built on top of each other. Construction of the visitor parking lot revealed the remains of a structure, believed to be Belvedere, Chancellor Livingston's c. 1770 mansion. Evidence of the Site's prehistorical and indigenous inhabitants is largely theoretical, based on regional knowledge.

Clermont's grounds were developed according to the trends and tastes of the time. As tastes and times changed, gardens, walks, walls, and outbuildings were added, removed, abandoned, or re-imagined. New trees and shrubs were planted. While some images of earlier landscape conditions are available, the question as to how best to maintain or restore earlier conditions can be perennial.

Alternatives Considered

Alternative 1: Status Quo – No changes in management or protections for Clermont's historical and cultural landscape elements.

Considerations:

- Site elements (such as walls site-wide, such as the retaining wall southeast of the main house (toward spring garden) are subject to deterioration from weather, animal activity, and may be inadvertently damaged by visitors if they are unaware of their location or their significance to the Site and landscape (pick up stones, remove items)
- Without active measures, Site elements will be subject to damage from hurricanes and other storm events, the frequency and intensity of which are increasing
- Trees, an integral component of the historic setting, will continue to be lost (e.g., the pine allée on Pine Road, black walnut in cutting garden, locust allée, walnut at corner of mansion, etc.)
- Important elements of the Site will not be utilized for expanded interpretative and educational activities that will help convey a more complete picture of the Site's history
- Some structures may present safety hazards, which will continue to exist and be exacerbated (pathway erosion, path near retaining wall, old trees, et al)
- Does not meet Agency mission to protect and preserve the state's historic resources
- Site aesthetics are impacted by deteriorating elements
- Cost may be high to stabilize and clear some elements
- Some structures may require specialized treatments to address

Alternative 2: Work with Division for Historic Preservation staff to survey existing remnant historic structures at the facility to evaluate their condition, significance, and needs.

Considerations:

- Many site elements have been left untouched for decades and need to be evaluated for condition and priority needs identified
- Remnant historic structures will be professionally assessed and opportunities for stabilization and/or restoration identified
- May require the assistance of a consultant
- Important trees that have been lost or threatened will be documented and replaced
- Offers new opportunities for expanded interpretation and programs based on items in Clermont's historic/cultural landscape (e.g., lives of tenant farming families, scenic viewshed - historic vs. current views, changes in land use over time)
- Landscape elements can help inform a more complete story of human occupation at the Site
- A plan will be developed for replacing important trees, plantings and other natural elements that have been lost or are failing
- Will include how to address/adapt to climate change impacts for cultural landscape elements
- Includes an assessment of historic gardens
- Informs decisions regarding future management/maintenance of remnant Site elements

Alternative 3: Develop a management/maintenance program for historic landscape elements with tasks clearly spelled out.

Considerations:

- Will help preserve significant landscape elements that are irreplaceable components of the state's history

- Will help to protect these elements from future climate change impacts (e.g., increased storm frequency and severity, damage from wind/fallen trees, etc.)
- May require additional and/or specialized staffing to implement and may need to contract some work out
- Formerly, tradespeople were employed to executed specialized work/emergency repairs
- Requires consultation with Division for Historic Preservation/14.09 review
- Will include strategies for addressing issues and needs for historic gardens, a popular area for visitors
- Will provide information for special management/maintenance needs for historic materials
- Historic site infrastructure (e.g., walls, pavings, carriage roads, agricultural remnants) will be appropriately protected and maintained

Alternative 4: Restore the Locust Tree allée parallel to the main visitor parking lot.

Considerations:

- Restores a significant historic element, use, and visual feature
- Will function as a segment of the accessible route from Arryl House to the north part of the Site.
- Will contribute to interpretive experience and historic sense of place
- Will include an assessment of historic trees that may be failing and/or hazardous
- To implement, some picnic tables will need to be relocated away from route

Preferred Alternatives: 2, 3, 4

Attention to the cultural landscape at Clermont has largely focused on elements related to the Livingston Family's legacy. Remnants of other inhabitants can also be found at the Site, however, and the stories and experiences are being incorporated into interpretation and programming. The significance of these legacy elements needs to be assessed to determine their value to the state's history, along with recommendations for actions that will ensure appropriate care.



Arryl House Ruins

The remaining walls and foundations of Arryl House are an important part of Clermont's historic landscape. These remnants of the former residence are set in a pastoral context overlooking the Hudson River. The most visible elements are masonry walls, some with ornamental pilasters still visible. Less evident are vestiges of associated roads and outbuildings, including a root cellar and outhouse. A low stone wall runs along a hill above the ruins, and foundations of tenant farm cottages are found in the nearby woods. Pine and locust trees planted in the late 18th to early 19th century also remain. Some trees are in fragile condition.

Some stabilization work on the Arryl House was previously done by the Excelsior Corps. However, they remain in vulnerable to further damage and loss.

Letters from Clermont's collections indicate that there were gardens at Arryl House but few details are known. A 1796 sketch shows what may be garden plots on the rise to the east of the house, and family tradition holds that this is where Margaret Livingston had her garden.

Alternatives Considered

Alternative 1: Status Quo – No action taken to address the condition of the Arryl House Ruins.

Considerations:

- Arryl House Ruins are an important element from New York history's and a significant part of the Livingston Family story
- The ruins are structurally unstable and will be lost if not stabilized
- While interpretive signs are in place at the ruins, education staff has noted a need to develop new and more comprehensive content
- The structures are not protected from weather and vegetative growth is difficult to manage
- Arryl House has been identified by Site staff as an underutilized resource
- Visitors are naturally curious about the ruins, and they should be developed as a significant Site element
- The house had a progressive design for its time, contributing to its interpretive potential

Alternative 2: Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to stabilize the Arryl House Ruins and adjacent historic elements.

Considerations:

- A 1979 landscape report included recommendations for stabilization of the ruins, but it is significantly out of date and no implementable stabilization plan currently exists
- Condition of the ruins needs to be evaluated by a specialist
- Maintenance of the area requires a substantial amount of staff time
- An informed plan of action is needed to address the remaining portions of Arryl House and adjacent area, rather than stop-gap maintenance

Alternative 3: Redevelop the Arryl House as an events venue.

Considerations:

- Appropriately stabilizing the ruins will be a required project component
- Historic preservation considerations and/or archaeological constraints may limit the scope of redevelopment
- The original house design offers the opportunity to create a compelling events space
- Interpretative materials can be incorporated for an educational component
- Will provide a source of revenue for Site
- Location is near parking lot and is adequate for large groups
- Weddings currently take place nearby the Ruins
- Accessibility issues will need to be addressed

Preferred Alternative: 2

The Arryl House is a significant and compelling real-world element at Clermont important to the Livingston Family's history. Today, the remains of walls and foundations are unprotected from weather and plants and are increasingly fragile. Without appropriate stabilization, the ruins will be increasingly vulnerable to further deterioration and loss.

While the option to redevelop the Arryl House as an events venue was given significant consideration, this alternative was not chosen for implementation because of high costs. Proposed adaptive re-use of the Red Barn will meet the need for a large events venue at a lower cost.

Education, Interpretation, and Outreach

Background

Throughout the year, Clermont offers an array of seasonal activities, special events, tours, and programs, and the Friends of Clermont group offers programs and workshops for much of the year. Education staff is working to expand the scope of all content to include the stories of enslaved people and servants, tenant farmers and immigrants, as well as of the region's original indigenous inhabitants by modifying existing events, programs, and tours to include the wider story, continuing research into under-represented groups and reaching out to scholars to help create new programming opportunities at the site. This aligns with OPRHP's "Our Whole History" initiative, which aims to include the experience of indigenous, black, LGBTQ+, women, and other people not traditionally included in the historic narrative. Through research and new interpretations, "Our Whole History" seeks to bring a more balanced historic narrative to public awareness, to create an environment more reflective of our multicultural past.

Staff collaborate with other entities to develop new programming. Site staff has engaged Germantown and Clermont town historians to help inform content development. Clermont's Friends Group also develop and publicize activities and programming. While most active with the "Harvesting History" program (described on p. 12 of this document), other public programs the Friends have offered recently have included "Clermont and Construction" and "Pedal Pusher Story Hour," which are designed to appeal to different ages and interests.

Outreach

Staff noted the need for more comprehensive outreach to better get the word out about the Site's varied programming. A public survey completed for this plan found that the most common way that visitors found out about Clermont (64%) was through local knowledge. 15% learned about the Site through word of mouth and 7% through the internet.

A visitor survey completed during plan development indicated that a majority of visitors to the Site represent an older demographic. To a certain extent this is reflective of the region; however, it may also be that minority groups, young people, and others do not see themselves represented in the traditional history-telling that has characterized much of the Site's programming and interpretation. Culturally specific events such as Halloween or Christmas, for instance, are popular but some visitors may feel excluded. Efforts are underway to provide opportunities for new voices to be heard and staff have seen a shift in visitor demographics. The Harvesting History program, which brings children from schools throughout Columbia, Greene, and Ulster counties to harvest vegetables from the Site's teaching garden, reaches new and different groups. Drawing in a younger audience helps to energize the Site as well as build future visitorship. Going forward, Clermont will continue to create content that will resonate with visitors of all ages and backgrounds and provide them with fresh ways of engaging with the Site.

Education

Using education, programming, and interpretation to shift the Site’s focus outside the experience of the Livingston Family and depict the experiences of others who have lived at the Site, may also help to attract a broader range of visitors. The OPRHP interpretation unit is also developing content for the “NYS State celebration, 2025-2033.” The new material, related to Revolutionary War history, will help visitors better understand how the state’s historic sites.

A milestone was reached in 2022 when a new exhibit was installed in the Visitor Center. Entitled “Spero Meliora: Life In The Land of Livingston.” The exhibit content explores the lives of not only Livingstons, but others who lived and worked here from the 17th through the 20th centuries. Text and artifacts help portray the experience of enslaved people, indigenous communities, servants, and tenant farmers. The exhibit also includes a new children’s area where younger visitors can try on period clothing, listen to stories about Clermont’s workers, or explore a book.

Programming for the mansion that will complement the Visitor Center exhibit is under development. Text, graphics, and other information will be used to portray more completely depict the range of people who have lived at the Site. The content will be launched along with the reopening of the mansion, which was been closed since the start of the Pandemic in 2020.

The Covid-19 Pandemic was an important factor that shaped education efforts at Clermont between 2020 and 2022. Clermont saw a one-hundred percent increase in visitorship, and — of necessity — programs were moved outdoors. Visitorship has remained strong, and alternatives developed in this section seek to capitalize on this momentum by providing more meaningful experiences to all visitors.



A common thread running throughout this plan is a desire to redirect visitor attention beyond the Site’s historic core and raise awareness of the Site’s less visible elements. Planned improvements in the north part of the facility, to the Red Barn, the Ice Pond, Clermont Cottage, and Sylvan Cottage, will be accompanied by fresh programming and, where needed, updated interpretative material.

Alternatives Considered

Alternative 1: Status Quo: Continue current approach to content development for programming and interpretation.

Considerations:

- Site may not reflect evolving contemporary interests
- Programming will not be in line with the agency and Site’s history initiative
- Older material will be outdated and without fresh content may lose some existing visitors
- Site may not attract new visitors with different backgrounds and demographics
- Education staff have developed and launched new content and will continue to do so

Alternative 2: With support from the Bureau of Historic Sites, develop programs and educational content related to the experiences of enslaved people, indigenous communities, Palatines, servants, and tenant farmers, based on both the collections and content-driven approaches.

Considerations:

- Storytelling about historical objects can help visitors understand the Site's diverse history (e.g., straight pins can illustrate mending/sewing tasks done by servants or enslaved people)
- Will require working with the agency archaeologists (i.e., to utilize objects from off-site)
- Collections are extensive and there is much opportunity for additional content
- Need for more programming regarding indigenous communities in the region
- The Collections Policy may be modified to include items that reflect the Site's diverse history
- There may be no objects available related to the Site's enslaved people (e.g., no livery remains that enslaved 9- to 10-year-old boys are known to have worn)
- May need to re-interpret existing items to better reflect evolving approaches to content development
- There is high interest in hyper-regional topics, such as Palatine history, which attracts large audiences
- Some content about the Livingston's enslaved people is available at the Visitor Center exhibit
- Themed content related to objects may attract new audiences
- Exhibits are trending away from object-driven to content-driven approaches
- Many objects were lost when the house burned and therefore the collections do not tell a complete story
- Much of Clermont's history is not represented by objects or artifacts but is important to convey

Alternative 3: Implement special programs about different aspects of the Site's history, such as civilian experiences during the Revolutionary War era.

Considerations:

- Reflects a contemporary approach to interpretation that focuses on civilian experiences rather than military history (e.g., for Rev War 250, portrayals of people who lived through the war, not just of soldiers or battles)
- Specialists may be needed to develop some content and may require funding
- Some special programs have been implemented (e.g., topics included experimental agriculture)
- Content may take various forms (e.g., lectures, performances, first-person interpretation)
- Historical reenactments may reflect a more limited demographic and not attract as diverse an audience
- Site is interested in developing content that appeals to younger people (e.g., a comic-based exhibit in the Visitor Center remains very popular)

Alternative 4: Partner with community educators to develop educational resources that will engage local schools and offer programs and curricula for a range of grade levels.

Considerations:

- The Site would like to increase in-school program material (e.g., tours about local and American history with age-appropriate content for 4th and 7th grade students)
- The Site's mission includes engaging and collaborating with local schools
- School trips are not as common as in the past (busing, cost to schools, scheduling issues)
- Staff are developing curricula but need additional staff to revise all our curricula to reflect OWH
- To be useful to schools, Site must provide content that aligns with certain points in the classroom curriculum
- School group visits and after-school programs have been very successful
- Seeing a real-world historical setting can help expand students' understanding of history
- Engaging schools brings in a younger demographic and kids who have a positive experience at the Site often bring their parents to visit
- Would like to develop more relatable material for children and youth at the Visitor Center

- Curricula is available from Harvesting History (kits given to each student to be taken home or done with a teacher)
- Interest in developing downloadable curricula (e.g., John Jay has content that can be purchased)
- Site has worked with Friends on ideas for education curricula, but funding is limited

Alternative 5: Cultivate funding sources for developing an annual exhibit in the mansion gallery.

Considerations:

- Will require a partnership with the Friends group to obtain grants
- Opportunity to partner with Peebles Island (some funding is available for specific uses — e.g., content related to women, communities of color, African American, and indigenous people)
- Companion to Visitor Center exhibit in the mansion is changed annually
- Staff have enough internal capacity to develop an annual mansion exhibit

Preferred Alternatives: 2, 3, and 5

A fundamental change in the approach to public programming and educational content has been underway at Clermont for some time, and the Site has made significant progress in expanding its content to appeal to a more diverse audience. This is accomplished with limited staffing and funding constraints, however, and implementing these actions will build upon others proposed in the plan, including engaging with new partners, developing volunteer forces, and creating a staffing plan.



The Robinson family, photographed at the turn of the 20th century, lived in Germantown. While their specific history is unknown, many Black families in the Hudson Valley at the time could trace their ancestry to the first generation of freedmen after legal enslavement ended in New York in 1827.

Interpretation

Alternatives Considered

Alternative 1: Status Quo — No change to the Site’s approach to interpretation.

Considerations:

- A shift in the Site’s approach to interpretation toward providing more inclusive content is underway, but the process is still in the early stages
- Content will not reflect contemporary interests or trends and may not attract new visitors from different backgrounds and demographics
- Existing interpretive signage needs to be reviewed and updated, where needed
- Without fresh content the Site is less likely to attract repeat visitation
- There will be no additional expansion of existing interpretive themes/techniques
- Interpretation is a dynamic process, as new information, approaches, and research emerge

Alternative 2: With support from the Bureau of Historic Sites, revise and update Clermont’s Interpretative Statement.

Considerations:

- Clermont’s interpretive statement was last revised in 1993
- The approach and narrative for interpreting the Site’s history is evolving and the interpretive statement needs to reflect this new direction

Alternative 3: Develop interpretative content for the Site’s underutilized resources.

Considerations:

- Important elements, including the historic dock, the Arryl House and Englekirk ruins, have been identified as underutilized and have potential to inform the Site’s more inclusive narrative
- Site will continue to identify additional underutilized resources
- Content on previously overlooked elements may appeal to contemporary audiences and draw repeat visitors
- Limited staff time may require these elements to be a lower priority due to resources required to develop appropriate interpretive content

Alternative 4: With support from the Bureau of Historic Sites, update the interpretation program/plan for the Site to define new content goals, presentation methods, and ensure a cohesive message.

Considerations:

- Must be completed along with Alternative 2
- To ensure a cohesive message, interpretation at Clermont will be driven by historic content and context, relating the history to contemporary issues and themes (e.g., using John Henry’s approach to power generation to discuss clean energy development today)
- Will include exploring new themes and content areas
- OPRHP signage guidance has been released since the plan was created
- Site content will better reflect contemporary or upcoming interests
- Focus of future content changes over time and regular review is important
- Mission and narrative for interpretation are being reevaluated at the Site and Agency and interpretation should reflect this
- Site’s interpretation plan will be consistent with the revised Collections Policy
- Without an updated program/plan there are no parameters/road map for development of future interpretive content
- Current approach is narrower in focus than is now desired and message needs to be more clearly defined in a cohesive plan
- Process will be time-consuming

Alternative 5: Strengthen role of the Clermont’s Advisory Committee to guide interpretive development.

Considerations:

- Communication can be improved (e.g., increase to multiple times per year)
- Increasing size/make-up of group will bring in fresh/different ideas and new approaches
- Focus on including representatives from underserved populations (e.g., English Language learners/limited English proficiency, limited mobility)
- Improve connections in the local community (Red Hook, Clermont, Germantown)
- Bring in educators to participate
- Will require significant time investment to maintain higher level of communication

Preferred Alternatives: 2, 3, 4, and 5

Clermont’s educators have been actively developing interpretative content that features topics of interest to more wide-ranging audiences. Programs, tours, exhibits, and activities that are characterized by a thoughtful and diverse approach means that content may resonate with more people and speak to a larger audience, potentially bringing new and different visitors to the Site.

Outreach and Marketing

Background

Clermont maintains an active presence on social media (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, Clermont’s Blog) and online outreach is the primary method of publicizing the Site. Other methods that are used include print advertisements, press releases to local media, and working with county tourism offices to publicize specific events. Staff also post flyers about upcoming events on-site with QR code for improved access and at local businesses. A marquis on RT 9-G is used to publicize site events or seasonal changes. The Friends of Clermont send out a weekly e-blast to their mailing list, which has over 2000 recipients, and the regional public relations staff send out a monthly events calendar to other parks/sites in region. New outreach staff and an additional part-time person are also available to assist.

The Site has largely retained visitorship numbers that rose during the Pandemic. Interest has been generated from the new exhibit at the Visitor Center, and bicycle groups from the Empire State Trail are now stopping at the Site. Higher visitor numbers and the energy from different groups offer potential new audiences for the Site’s expanded programming. Clermont must also compete with the many other historic resources in the region, however, and its location is not convenient for some visitors. While the Site has some unique qualities that can be promoted to help it stand out against other historic attractions (e.g., expansive Hudson River/Catskill views), staff time is limited, and developing outreach content is labor- and time-intensive.

Effective methods for outreach have also evolved. Hard copy brochures and fliers are costly to produce and are no longer widely used. Signage or maps with QR codes, currently in use on some signage, provide more information and content is more easily updated.

Alternatives Considered

Alternative 1: Status quo — Maintain existing approaches and level of outreach for Clermont’s programs and events.

Considerations:

- Visitor attendance will remain static, and the region would like to increase attendance
- Targeted marketing and outreach material is needed to more widely roll-out the Site’s new direction in programming and educational content
- Outreach could be both more comprehensive and reach new and more diverse audiences
- At existing staff levels, only current levels of outreach can be sustained
- Alternative/untapped outreach methods would allow the Site to cast a wider net
- Revolutionary War 250 programming being developed will bring Clermont more attention

Alternative 2: Foster more visibility for Clermont and awareness of its offerings by expanding outreach and market strategies.

Considerations:

- Staff would like to reach new audiences and increase awareness of new, more inclusive content that Clermont offers
- Local tourism bureaus and other regional entities can help distribute information
- Staff can work with OPRHP’s Public Information unit for support and new strategies
- International interest in Clermont is evident on social media and the Site would like to respond
- Need to better tap into the greater online community and pursue new approaches (e.g., podcasts, targeted radio spots)
- Clermont does not have dedicated marketing group/staff to develop and implement additional outreach
- Regular visitor surveys and online reservation system can help inform where improvements in outreach can be made (e.g., “Where did you hear about Clermont?” questions)
- Staffing levels limits the amount of outreach that can be developed and implemented
- Attracting more visitors will result in more demands on staff and require more program development
- Clermont can be more widely promoted as a stop along the Empire State Trail
- Can be marketed as part of a statewide/national/international destination on a heritage tourism tour (e.g., included on Gilded Age Estate tour itineraries)
- QR codes can be incorporated on interpretive/wayfinding signage

Preferred Alternative: 2

While Clermont staff does regular outreach to publicize programs, events, and other offerings, these efforts may not reach some audiences that the Site hopes to engage. Targeted and comprehensive outreach strategies will bring new groups to the Site, and untapped methods may help appeal to new groups or individuals who have not yet discovered Clermont or are unaware of its offerings. This is particularly important in light of the new direction underway to provide more inclusive educational and interpretative content.

The planning team identified elements that draw people to Clermont, even within the context of the region’s bountiful menu of historic resources. Access to the Hudson River viewshed, an important and intact historic landscape, a walking trail system through quiet natural areas, and its “off-the-beaten-path” sensibility, all contribute to Clermont’s individuality. Tapping into a larger network of potential visitors, including “heritage tourists,” cyclists, birders, artists, and other special interest groups will contribute to the overall vitality of the Site.



Special events are popular with all ages

[Recreational Resources](#)

While outdoor recreation may not always be the primary feature at a historic site, a significant number of visitors come to Clermont to walk the trails, picnic, watch a sunset, or enjoy Hudson River views. Informal recreation use at Clermont has generally been for passive, solo or small group activities — strolling in the gardens, exploring the Site on foot or (occasionally) horseback, snowshoeing, or just generally enjoying the outdoors.

A public survey completed for this plan showed that visitors come to Clermont for a range of reasons. Seventeen percent came for specific events, programs, or to see elements related to the Site's history, 16 percent were interested in historic house tours, and 15 percent came to hike, bike, or walk their dogs. Ten percent of visitors visited for bird watching, and another 10 percent attended concerts and festivals. Survey results also indicated that visitor demographics are similar to the region as a whole.

The planning group felt that it would not be appropriate to add active recreation components (e.g., ball fields, tennis courts, playgrounds) at Clermont. They considered how to offer appropriate recreational opportunities that would encourage more people to enjoy the grounds and engage in passive recreation that can help promote a healthy lifestyle. The Site's five miles of trails, for instance, were identified by staff as an underutilized resource.

Alternatives Considered

Alternative 1: Status Quo – No changes to recreation offerings at the Site.

Considerations:

- The facility has potential to expand its recreation amenities and some aspects of the Site are underutilized (e.g., trails, natural areas)
- Adding or improving recreational amenities may attract to a wider range of visitors (a Master Plan goal)
- Site may not appeal to a broader demographic, limiting visitorship
- Some people come to the Site for passive recreation/access to the outdoors, enjoy views and/or nature, rather than for its historic significance
- No additional maintenance requirements
- Will not provide additional opportunities for an active lifestyle

Alternative 2: Assess the feasibility of providing public access to the Site's holdings along the Hudson River shoreline.

Considerations:

- The facility includes 88 underwater acres that have no physical access
- There is no way to safely access to this area from the landward side of the facility on foot
- Cost to install a footbridge would be prohibitive and the state may not be able to secure permissions/permits (Clermont staff applied for a DOT grant that would allow the public to access the dock via a bridge with an elevator, which was costly and would have had significant visual impacts (not awarded))
- Little of the original dock structure remains and would need to be rebuilt to accommodate any boating activity (e.g., non-motorized canoes/kayaks)
- Safety issues, including water depths and currents, would need to be evaluated to determine whether the dock location is appropriate for boating access
- People are known to use the dock (unofficially) by driving over the train tracks to fish, a safety concern
- No feasible option has been identified to provide safe access to the dock area
- The dock and riverfront have been identified as an underutilized part of the Site, and an important part of its historic use
- Interpretative content can increase awareness and education regarding this part of the park without the need to provide physical access
- Some interpretation about the Site's maritime history is available at the Visitor Center
- The state is working to activate the Hudson River waterfront for public recreational use (e.g., Hudson Eagles Initiative)
- Any move toward legitimizing public access to this area needs to be developed in conjunction with the Agency (e.g., would need to be formally developed and assessed)
- Providing some type of access to the riverfront could be beneficial to the Site, potentially increasing attendance

Alternative 3: Investigate offering special outdoor events that will encourage new groups to come to the site (e.g., temporary overnight camping for youth or bicycle groups).

Considerations:

- Day visitation from bicycle groups has increased since the EST was opened and there may be increased interest in this type of event
- Will increase security and maintenance needs, requiring overnight staffing; trash management
- Location needs to be adjacent to the public restroom, and the area is historically and archaeologically sensitive
- The only appropriate sites would be far from the public restroom
- Many other places to camp already exist in the region

- Other historic sites have had mixed results with these types of events
- Will be a relatively high cost and effort to implement and not feasible with current staffing levels
- Would require bringing in concessionaire
- Camping changes the dynamic of a facility
- More study is needed to determine whether overnight camping makes sense at Clermont

Alternative 4: Maintain connections with equestrian community by developing special events that highlight equestrian use as a historic recreation activity at the Site.

Considerations:

- Equestrian use already exists at the facility
- Horses must be trailered to the Site (there are no connections with regional equestrian trails)
- The Livingston Family was very interested in horses and active with their use
- May attract volunteers to help maintain trails
- Trails work for small volumes of equestrian activity, but the facility doesn't have the infrastructure or staffing to support significantly more equestrian activity
- If demand for equestrian facilities increases, users may request groomed trails, which would add maintenance tasks and expenses
- Would need to consider a permit system, adding to Site administration demands (e.g., at RSPP requires permits for horses at the Site and trails are groomed for equestrian use with work contracted out)
- Horse activity is harder on trails than foot traffic and more equestrian use will increase trail maintenance and cleanup, which can be time consuming and would require additional staffing
- No way to limit where people ride – may be use conflicts (pedestrians, kids), and the Site does not want to encourage visitors to ride on carriage roads or lawns
- One-time special events can bring in equestrians and increase awareness of other available resources at Clermont
- Potential for invasive species to be brought in by horse activity

Preferred Alternatives: 2, 3, 4

The Site is working to increase its appeal to a broader range of visitor interests, backgrounds, ages, and abilities. Developing new events and programs that reach beyond what have traditionally been offered will draw different people to visit and may capture their interest while visiting so that they gain new insights.

Picnic Facilities

To meet ADA accessibility recommendations, picnic facilities must be level, accessed by paths with a firm and stable surface, and provide accessible routes to handicapped parking stalls and restrooms.

Alternatives Considered

Alternative 1: Status Quo – The Site's picnic area remains in existing location and will not provide accessible surfaces and furnishings.

Considerations:

- Picnicking is a popular activity at Clermont
- Public facilities must offer equitable/accessible options
- Existing picnic area does not meet OPRHP or facility goals to provide access to all

- Picnic tables are on lawn, not an appropriate (firm and stable) surface for accessibility
- Current picnic area location is convenient, adjacent to parking lot and restrooms, tables are shaded and offer Hudson River views
- A restored Locust Allée parallel to the parking lot may not be compatible with the current picnic area location

Alternative 2: Create accessible picnic facilities within the existing picnic area.

Considerations:

- The existing picnic area is not currently accessible and does not meet OPRHP or facility goals to provide access to all
- Not all tables need to be accessible – some can remain as is in their current locations
- Visual impacts/intrusions and the historic/cultural landscape will need to be considered in locating and designing accessible picnic facilities
- Design will require DHP review for materials, paving, appearance
- To be equitable, the Site should offer Hudson River views for all picnic areas
- There may not be an appropriate location for accessible picnicking within the existing picnic area (e.g., important to maintain a clear, level lawn area for weddings in this part of the Site)
- The southern end of the parking lot can be evaluated as a potential location for accessible picnic tables
- There are opportunities to provide accessible picnic facilities elsewhere at the Site

Alternative 3: Create accessible picnic facilities in a separate location (i.e., not at existing picnic area).

Considerations:

- Accessible picnic facilities require a level area with nearby access to parking and restrooms
- Must have appropriate materials, paving, design
- Historic preservation considerations/cultural landscape intrusion
- To be equitable, the area should offer a comparable setting to other picnic facilities at the site
- All new/added tables can be accessible

Alternative 4: Provide a historically sensitive picnic pavilion at the Site.

Considerations:

- Will visually impact the landscape and intrusion considerations must be evaluated
- Must be sited to avoid environmentally sensitive areas and historic elements
- Design (appearance) needs to be sensitive to historic landscape
- Not sited in core section of the facility
- Will require DHP review/approval for location and design
- Silhouette can approximate original structure (cow barn)
- Must be accessible with adjacent parking
- Proposed parking lot in the north section of the Site may be able to serve an accessible picnic pavilion (with accessible spur)
- May require electric, water, restrooms
- An existing structure, such as the Red Barn, can be retrofit as a rental/events venue
- A previously disturbed area can be considered for locating a pavilion (e.g., footprint of former cow barn adjacent to the Red Barn)
- Will generate revenue
- Trash collection/other maintenance issues will need to be considered

Alternative 5: Create a new picnic area adjacent to the Ice Pond.

Considerations:

- Will offer visitors an option for picnicking at the Site
- Can function as overflow when other areas are full
- This area offers a quiet, pastoral setting with views across the pond
- Adding a picnic area here will offer visitors an additional option away from the Site's central activity area.
- Restroom facilities and water are not available nearby
- Siting and screening with vegetation can mitigate visual impacts to the landscape from other parts of the Site
- A proposed new parking lot in the north section of the Site will be located nearby

Preferred Alternatives: 2 and 5

The Site's picnic area is well-located, adjacent to the main parking lot and public restroom, and with views overlooking the Hudson River. The tables and grills are not a universally accessible surface (lawn). Options were evaluated for creating a new, accessible picnic area which could offer the same or equal amenities; however, no appropriate location was identified that would provide an equitable experience.

The Ice Pond and its meadow setting are centrally located at the Site. Mowed paths lead to the pond, and a sloped area to its south offers views across rolling terrain and open fields. A potential location for a few picnic tables at the pond's east end, was identified near a grove of trees, which will provide shade and prevent visual impacts from other parts of the Site.

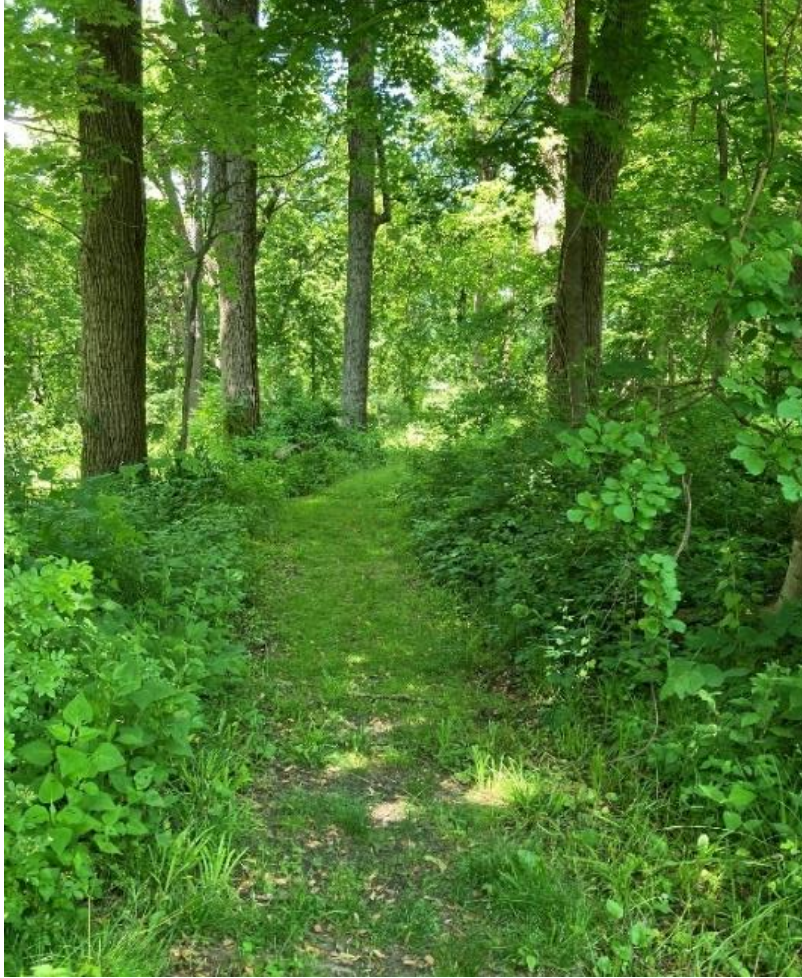
Providing a pavilion for seasonal outdoor events was given serious consideration but not ultimately chosen for implementation. Proposed improvements to the Red Barn will address this function in this part of the Site.

Trails

Clermont's trails are a component of the Hudson River Greenway System, and the Empire State Trail now passes through the Site along Woods Road (County Route 35).

Background

The OPRHP Statewide Trails Planner, Regional Trails Coordinator, and other staff walked Clermont's existing trail network to assess its condition, identify steep grades, wet areas, and other maintenance priorities as well as update the Site's trail map. Sections in need of repair, re-routing, or possible closure were identified and documented (see Appendices 11, 11a, 11b). Trails staff considered the assessment results and the site's various uses and made recommendations for optimizing the network to the planning team.



Accessible Trail Design

The Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) and the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) establish maximum and average running slope percentages, as well as other standards, for accessible trail segments and access routes. OPRHP staff trained in the Universal Trail Assessment Process preformed a preliminary review of pathways near the mansion, cottage, and other interpretive destinations. This information was provided to the planning team as background for potential accessible trail improvements.

An initial assessment for accessibility at Clermont found the following:

- Grades along the existing paved trail from the visitor parking area to the lawn behind the mansion are very close to meeting the accessible standards; the pavement is deteriorated, however, and minor grade adjustments would be needed in one location.
- The average running slope from the Arryl House Ruins to the visitor parking area are reasonable and could accommodate an accessible trail without significant earthwork.
- The area around the mansion's perimeter would need additional site work to create and connect accessible segments and meet ADA standards.
- The proposed accessible trails and walkways will require further analysis and design in order to create detailed project plans and cost estimates.
- Surfacing for existing and future paths and trails will need consideration; Gravel or stone dust paths can erode or subside and need maintenance to ensure continued accessibility. Grass and dirt are not considered accessible due to the variability in firmness and stability during the different seasons.

Alternatives Considered

Alternative 1: Status Quo – No changes or improvements to Clermont’s trail system.

- *Considerations:*
- Some trails are deteriorated or eroded in areas and may present safety or user experience issues
- Hiking/walking are popular activities in the state and region
- The main visitor parking area does not provide any information on the Site’s trails or how to access them
- Does not develop connections with the Empire State Trail, which passes through the Site’s east section
- Does not help realize a master plan goal to activate the full Site
- Most existing trail segments are not accessible and do not offer this amenity to visitors with mobility issues

Alternative 2: Improve the existing trail system at Clermont by addressing portions of trails where erosion, wetness, or steep grades exist.

Considerations:

- Poor trail conditions do not provide positive user experience
- Facility goals include making its trails more “user-friendly”
- Trail establishment likely not reflective of modern trail standards.
- Water-related trail conditions often become increasingly poor if not addressed over time.
- Trail issues can impact visitor safety, damage natural resources, and discourage use
- Clermont’s trail system is not extensive, and changes could be achieved with reasonable investment of resources
- Trails are a priority for Friends Group

Alternative 3: Close unused trail sections or trails in sensitive areas, re-route chronically wet trail segments, and install or replace trail bridges and culverts, where needed.

Considerations:

- Many informal or legacy trail corridors exist at the Site; some are used, and others are not.
- Some existing segments are unclear and may cause confusion or safety issues
- Closed trails can be allowed to revert to natural state, potentially expanding habitat
- Trails that are closed and no longer maintained within environmentally sensitive areas may be subject to the unchecked spread of invasive species
- Closing some trail segments will reduce maintenance needs in those areas
- Repair and replacement of bridges and water-management devices is critical to user experience as well as natural resource protection.

Alternative 4: Formalize trail access points at the Site and encourage connections with the nearby Empire State Trail by adding informational signage, maps, safety information and, where appropriate, bicycle racks, picnic tables, and/or parking.

Considerations:

- The visitor parking area does not provide trail maps or other Site information
- Multiple trails at the Site do not have clear entry points and locations are unclear
- Informal parking along the roadway and on lawn areas is an ongoing maintenance issue
- Improved trailheads will provide wayfinding and Site information for new visitors upon arrival
- Improvements will promote a greater sense of connection with the Empire State Trail
- Improves visitor safety and the overall user experience
- Provides an opportunity to communicate Site messaging
- Shows reinvestment in the Site’s resources
- Will help to address security issues at informal entry points (e.g., entering the Site after hours)
- May reduce impacts to natural areas

- May require additional signage and blocking at undesirable/problematic informal parking areas
- Will provide a formal trailhead in the main parking lot with informational maps and regulations

Alternative 5: Establish a formal trailhead and parking area at the existing informal access point near the flagpole where visitors currently park.

Considerations:

- Visitors regularly park on the side of the road at this location to access trails in this area
- Parking on an active roadway may lead to ticketing and/or unsafe conditions
- May attract more trail-focused users to the Site
- Current parking is limited in this location
- Parking area could potentially be reconfigured to accommodate 10-12 cars and, if needed, could be expanded in the future
- Horse trailer parking may be possible at this location
- Can consider adding a pay station

Alternative 6: Finalize and implement a preferred layout for the entire trail system.

Considerations:

- Ensures a cohesive, well thought-out trail system
- Will reflect closed or rerouted trail segments
- Will help protect environmentally sensitive areas
- Will meet Site goals to improve and develop a more legible trail system
- Will identify spurs not indicated on existing maps
- Trails will be labeled with names and blazing will be color coded
- Will identify potential interpretive opportunities

Alternative 7: Develop a trail signage plan based on final trail layout and produce and install trailhead kiosks, intersectional, and trail marking blazes and signage.

Considerations:

- Creates a cohesive, legible, and formalized trail network for the Site
- Improves user experience as well as safety.
- The main visitor parking area lacks direction for trail locations and use upon arrival
- Multiple trails within the Site do not have clear entry points and locations and extents are unclear
- Will aid visitor navigation and inform about the Site's entire trail network, including connections to adjacent trails (e.g., the EST)
- May improve Site management/security
- Helps delineate use types, such as equine, and keeps these uses from other areas

Alternative 8: Develop an accessible interpretive trail near the mansion.

Considerations:

- New signs will be based on an interpretive storyline
- Can incorporate existing sign panels into the interpretive narrative
- Requires significant staff time for planning
- Resources may be spent on higher priority projects
- Trail can be designed as accessible for all users as part of larger accessible trail network
- Content will align with new exhibits and inclusive educational content
- Needs to be sensitively designed to avoid intrusions or create visual "clutter"
- An accessible trail will provide greater mobility to Site's trending demographic

Alternative 9: Develop some trails for mountain biking.

Considerations:

- A loop specific to mountain biking could be developed on existing trails
- Signage, education, and/or "meet and greet/fat tire" events can help mitigate conflicts on trails (pedestrians, equestrians)
- Will attract new demographic/younger visitors
- Needs sufficient length to be appealing (connect w adjacent park/EST)
- Trail maintenance will increase
- This activity may not be appropriate for a historic site
- Could be located away from mansion/historic elements (e.g., east side of site)
- Use level can be determined by trail design (speed/elements)
- Would promote more winter use of Site

Alternative 10: Develop an accessible trail with elements for different senses (aural, tactile, smell).

Considerations:

- A small-scale approach could be implemented for low cost
- Would increase accessibility at the Site
- Would attract different/new audience
- Can have educational component/link to history (some Livingston family members had hearing impairments)
- Existing trails could be used
- Maintenance would increase
- Trail maps, brochures, signage can help guide
- Offers opportunities for new partnerships
- Funding may be possible from friends
- A trail designed for autistic individuals at Letchworth has been very successful

Preferred Alternatives: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8

Clermont's trails have been identified as an underutilized resource. Most are unmarked and there is no trail map or other information in the main visitor parking area. People access trails by entering at unauthorized locations, sometimes after hours, which results in security and management issues. Trails are not routed to avoid some sensitive natural areas. Will improve visitor navigation, safety, and access.

Facilities, Infrastructure, and Operations

Maintaining and operating a historic site so the facility can perform its intended function as a public resource can be a challenge. The day-to-day procedures, equipment, materials, and maintenance routines recommended by manufacturers of modern materials are not always appropriate for historic structures.⁶⁴ Caring for historic structures requires a knowledge of significant and character-defining features, past treatments that may have been done, and knowledge of best practices for preserving these elements.⁶⁵

It is OPRHP's responsibility to preserve the integrity of the state's historic resources at its facilities. Maintaining elements in their original form, however, is not always easy or even possible. When feasible, original materials and workmanship are appropriately maintained so deterioration is significantly reduced or prevented, and the integrity of the historic elements is protected.

Creating more sustainable facilities is an overarching goal both for the agency and the Site. Clermont has taken steps toward a more efficient operation, including replacing all lightbulbs with LEDs. With climate forecasts predicting more frequent and extreme weather events, options, including installing generators for back-up power and/or developing solar have been investigated. To help meet state and agency goals for reducing carbon emissions, each facility must do its part. This plan was developed to consider this directive wherever possible. One tool is building reuse of existing buildings. Preservation of existing buildings has the environmental benefit of avoiding carbon emissions that occur when materials are mined, harvested, manufactured, transported, and assembled to create a new structure.⁶⁶

Maintenance

Staff, equipment, and resources for maintenance are shared between Clermont and Olana, under the supervision of a Park Manager. The maintenance shop location works well for the Site. Storage space is at a premium; however, and the Site is able to provide covered or indoor storage for approximately half of its equipment. Staffing levels are insufficient for appropriate maintenance of the facility.

Infrastructure

Functional infrastructure at Clermont – the roads, sidewalks, trails, walls, restrooms, parking lots bridges, culverts, utilities, and other structural elements – is aging and in variable condition. Many of these elements require an added level of care because of their historic materials and character. Safety issues can also arise when, for instance, pavements and other walkway surfaces deteriorate or trails become eroded.

Utilities

The existing electric infrastructure connecting Clermont to the power grid is aging, and storms regularly cause power outages. Regional staff also identified the need for new and updated utility infrastructure within the Site, particularly its electric wiring and distribution systems. Historic items housed in the mansion require appropriate climate control especially as items are placed at risk when power fails, and a backup source for electric power is important for their protection. As a wedding and event venue, Clermont provide groups with supplemental electric service and capacity needs to be sufficient. Charging stations for Electric Vehicles (EVs), new uses for currently vacant buildings, and other planned work are some of the anticipated energy needs in the future.

Drainage and Stormwater Management Systems

Stormwater impacts are increasingly adding to maintenance requirements at Clermont, as periods of heavy rainfall occur more frequently. Surfaces that do not readily absorb or manage runoff, particularly along gravel carriage roads and in the Site's historic gardens, have recurring erosion, muddy spots, or standing water. Incorporating green infrastructure elements such as bioswales, permeable pavements, and tree islands when redeveloping the visitor parking lot, for instance, can help address these issues.

Some of the Site's culverts and bridges are deteriorated and many may no longer be sized appropriately to accommodate larger volumes of stormwater runoff as intense storms become more frequent.

Accessibility

Historic infrastructure often presents access challenges. Brick walkways or cobble roads are not generally smooth or level, and steps at building entrances are common. The terrain may have frequent grade changes. Historic sites that are open to the public are not, however, exempt from the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). To the greatest extent possible, the buildings and walks must be as accessible as non-historic elements.⁶⁷ A further challenge when adapting a historic facility for accessibility is maintaining the character as completely and while creating accessibility as unobtrusively as possible.

An important goal for the Site is to ensure that people of all abilities are able to comfortably explore Clermont's amenities to the greatest extent possible. Pedestrian routes from parking lots to major amenities will have a smooth and level surface and all visitors will be provided with a welcoming and equitable experience throughout the facility. Access challenges identified during plan development include:

- Mansion – the primary entrance has steep steps and visitors with mobility challenges must enter using an exterior lift on the building's north side. The lift provides access only to the second floor and is in poor condition. The adjacent parking area has deteriorating and uneven pavement.
- Visitor Center – has a paved accessible route from the main parking lot. This building houses exhibits and site information and is generally the first stop for people interested in getting tickets for mansion tours and programs. Accessible parking spaces are available, with a drop-off location for wheelchairs and a ramp to the entrance. An accessible restroom is available inside. Once tour tickets have been purchased, there is no accessible route to the mansion. Visitors must return to their cars and drive around the Site to the lift. Site staff report that people sometimes lose their way on the drive over to the mansion's north side.
- Clermont Cottage – Visitors attending programs or events must drive to the Cottage (north part of the Site). While originally designed as accessible, over time the gravel surface of the entry path has subsided, causing uneven surfaces and a lip at the front door.
- Lilac Walk – A paved path leads from the main visitor lot to the mansion through these historic plantings, but steeper sections and rough areas need to be addressed.
- Public Restroom – Needs to be assessed for accessibility.
- Historic Gardens – Touring Clermont's gardens is a popular activity. Most of the area is fairly level and there are some accessible paths. The gardens are surrounded mostly with lawn, however, and drainage issues can create wet or muddy areas that limit access for some visitors.
- Carriage Road – Visitors often walk to the north Site's section, which passes historic elements of interest including Clermont Cottage, the Red Barn, and the Ice Pond. The gravel surface is eroded, uneven, and has steep sections, limiting universal access to this part of the Site. During inclement weather, walking distances required to reach this section can deter visitors.
- Weddings/other group events – Often held on the lawn adjacent to the Arryl House ruins; does not currently meet ADA guidelines for accessibility.

Pedestrian Infrastructure

Background

Clermont's pedestrian facilities include asphalt and gravel pathways, carriage roads, flagstone paths and terraces, and natural surface foot trails. Master Plan alternatives developed below seek to address identified accessibility challenges, where possible, focusing on providing access in key areas with variable surfaces and deteriorated materials.

Alternatives Considered

Alternative 1: Status Quo – No changes to pedestrian infrastructure at the Site.

Considerations:

- Limits the ability of both visitors and staff to fully experience and enjoy the site’s resources, amenities, and activities
- Does not address significant limitations in access at the Site
- Will not meet a Master Plan goal to make the site more inclusive
- Paths to many site elements have deteriorated pavements, loose gravel, erosion, and/or are steep in places (difficult for wheelchair/stroller users)
- Existing pedestrian infrastructure condition could cause injuries (liability concerns)
- Elements in the Site’s north section will continue to have limited accessibility
- Some programs and events will not be fully accessible
- Public facilities are required to be accessible

Alternative 2: Conduct a comprehensive site analysis to identify accessibility issues with recommendations for providing universal access.

Considerations:

- A technical assessment is necessary to determine feasibility of addressing accessibility issues and recommendations for best approaches
- Will require a survey of the entire Site to assess slope (1-foot contours)
- The study must be developed with SHPO input and approval
- Will require contracting with a consultant

Alternative 3: Develop an accessible route from the Arryl House to the Site’s north section, with connections to the mansion, Clermont Cottage, and other key points of interest.

Considerations:

- Provides an accessible link from the proposed new parking area in the Site’s north section with other elements of interest (e.g., Clermont Cottage, Red Barn, Ice Pond, Playhouse, Cutting Garden)
- Will help integrate pedestrian facilities with Site resources and provide an accessible route through much of the facility
- Some existing trail segments may be utilized
- Meets Plan goals to make the site more accessible and activate the north section of the Site
- An accessible trail will provide greater mobility to the Site’s trending demographic
- Can promote the path as accessible, potentially attracting new visitors
- Picnic tables/grills will need to be relocated away from path route
- Will connect to proposed accessible viewing platform overlooking the Hudson River
- Topography may present access challenges in some sections, but slopes along this route generally appear to be within accessible limits
- Proposed new paved path segments will need SHPO/archaeological review and materials/design will need DHP review/approval
- Can include an evaluation of a need for lighting along paths from parking lot to elements within the Site’s historic core

Alternative 4: Improve access to Hudson River views by constructing an accessible viewing platform adjacent to the visitor parking lot.

Considerations:

- This location is popular for viewing sunsets and river vistas
- Location is adjacent to handicap stalls and will link to the proposed accessible path

- Can utilize previously disturbed site (footprint of existing restroom to be removed)
- Platform can be used as a gathering space for groups and meeting place for outdoor programs
- Will improve vantage point for viewing the Waterfowl Concentration Area in the Hudson River
- Platform can incorporate an accessible picnic table and/or bench seating
- Materials and design will need SHPO approval
- Design must consider visual impact from riverside views from the west

Preferred Alternatives: 2, 3, and 4

Determining appropriate methods for addressing accessibility issues at the overall Site is outside of the purview of a master plan and requires technical evaluation by a professional. However, some parts of the facility can have greatly increased accessibility by the application of new routes, materials, and infrastructure. Installing an accessible walking route and an accessible viewing platform will enable more visitors to enjoy more of the Site. Implementing these actions will open the Site to more visitors of all ages, interests, and abilities.



Mansion

Background

The historic Livingston home at Clermont now serves multiple purposes. It is a museum, filled with fragile, original artifacts. It is open for guided public tours and is also used as an events venue. Behind the scenes, the mansion has staff offices and meeting spaces as well as providing storage for a portion of the Site's extensive object collection. The historic importance of the mansion means that there is little flexibility for layout modifications to accommodate universal access. Inside, its multiple floors are accessed by stairs.

Alternatives Considered

Alternative 1: Status Quo – No changes to accessibility at the mansion.

Considerations:

- The mansion is the most significant historic structure at the Site and the primary focus at the facility for many visitors
- Visitors and staff who are unable to use the steps to enter the house will continue to use an outdated lift
- Current accessible entrance is not equitable with the main entrance
- The mansion will not have any infrastructure that could result in visual intrusions to the Site (e.g., ramp, external lift)
- Agency and Master Plan goals to make the Site relevant and accessible to all visitors will not be realized
- Programs and events will be limited to the first floor
- The mansion will not meet its full potential as an educational tool
- Staff options for access will remain the same which may restrict future applicants

Alternative 2: In coordination with the Division for Historic Preservation, develop a study to provide an accessible entrance and restrooms at the mansion and include an elevator for universal access to exhibits and staff office space.

Considerations:

- Study will need to identify feasible locations and consider historic preservation considerations and an analysis of footprint requirements to accommodate proposed functions
- Will require contracting a consultant specialized in accessibility
- Will provide a better entry experience to the mansion for visitors with mobility challenges
- Historic/cultural landscape will be significantly altered
- Staff offices would remain at preferred location at mansion
- Will identify multiple options for making the mansion more functional and accessible
- Implementation will require appropriate SHPO involvement and design approval
- Mansion interior would require fewer alterations while addressing multiple identified needs
- Providing universal access to the mansion may involve more than one strategy or approach
- Addresses access issues related to the mansion's restrooms
- While the new addition would meet NYS building, fire, or safety codes, existing code compliance issues within the mansion would still exist
- SHPO review and approval would be required for design
- Cost would be substantial

Alternative 3: Build a ramp to provide universal access to the mansion.

Considerations:

- The mansion's interior layout and usage limit options for entering via an exterior ramp
- The most feasible ramp entry location has a significant elevation rise and would require a long ramp, and significant visual impacts to the mansion and setting
- Will improve functionality and accessibility at the mansion
- Will provide only main floor access (no second-floor access provided)
- Historic preservation considerations will be significant
- A more gradual landform ramp could be considered (fill/cultural landscape considerations)

Preferred Alternative: 2

The Mansion presents many accessibility challenges and multiple options were discussed. Some OPRHP historic sites have installed ramps to provide universal access. This alternative was not chosen for Clermont as it would require excessive modification to the exterior and interior of the building, as well as undesirable visual impacts.

An addition to the mansion would provide universal access and improve functionality for the interior. Variables to consider are technical and complex, however, and a more formal study is the recommended next step.

[Staff Offices](#)

Background

Office space for most staff is on the mansion's third floor and the basement kitchen is used for group meetings. The existing wheelchair lift services only the second floor, and therefore, staff workspaces are not universally accessible. The planning team discussed options that could potentially provide accessible staff office space.

[Alternatives Considered](#)

Alternative 1: Status Quo – No changes; staff offices will remain at their current locations with no upgrades or improvements.

Considerations:

- Staff report that the location of existing offices generally works well (at mansion and maintenance area)
- There is currently no access for those with mobility challenges or an alternative/second egress for offices on the mansion's third floor
- Does not meet requirements for accessible office space or potential expanded staffing and limits future staffing options
- The mansion restroom is not accessible, and its location is not optimal
- The basement kitchen meeting space is not accessible and able to accommodate only smaller groups (10-12 people)
- Internet connection is good at the mansion
- Mansion offices need significant updating and renovation (e.g., older carpets, paint, electric)
- Maintenance Center offices need internet connectivity, potable water, and updated restrooms

Alternative 2 – Keep staff offices in the mansion and renovate them.

Considerations:

- Office spaces in the mansion need renovation and are not universally accessible
- Universal access may not be feasible for some parts of the mansion
- Mansion offices are well-located for current staff needs
- The mansion's restroom is not accessible
- The basement kitchen used for meetings needs an accessible restroom
- Existing office space need to be evaluated to determine if they meet building and safety codes, and may need to be retrofitted to meet codes
- Code-compliant restrooms require a more space and may impact the mansion's interior
- Views from the mansion's offices are enjoyable

Alternative 3 – : Retrofit an existing building at the Site for staff offices (e.g., Red Barn; Sylvan Cottage, or the Visitor Center).

Considerations:

- No existing buildings have been identified as appropriate in location or type to function appropriately as staff offices
- Park Manager needs to be close to activities in the mansion (third floor is too far) and needs a better-designed office space
- Would need a radio system to allow staff to maintain necessary contact Site-wide

Alternative 4 – Construct a new, accessible building for staff offices at another location at the Site.

Considerations:

- Offices located away from the mansion will not be optimal for staff
- Challenging to find appropriate location at the Site for constructing a new building (historical, archaeological, visual considerations)
- A new building would need to be sited/designed to ensure no impacts to cultural resources
- The mansion's third floor originally housed servants' bedrooms and, if staff offices were relocated, could be added to the house tour, or used for storage
- Space would be available for year-round programs and larger events
- Would require a radio system to allow staff to maintain necessary contact
- Staff offices and meeting spaces would be universally accessible

Preferred Alternative: 2

Providing accessible staff office space proved to be a thorny issue, entwined with other concerns at the Site. Improving public access to the mansion, where staff offices are currently, is limited by preservation requirements.

The planning group eliminated the possibility of retrofitting an existing building at the facility for office space as no existing buildings were considered appropriate. The Park Manager noted that staff needs to be based close to the Mansion, where most activities take place and therefore constructing a new building elsewhere at the Site was not considered a viable option. A new building would add a visual intrusion to the historic landscape and no appropriate location could be identified. An elevator would be needed to access third floor offices and basement.

Visitor Center

Clermont’s Visitor Center has been renovated and is in overall good condition. Housed in a historic barn, it is operationally well-sited, within a short walk of the parking lot and the mansion. The interior’s pleasant rooms feature original woodwork and hardware, as well as an exhibit space. However, the Visitor Center is not easy to identify from the main parking area. There is no sign on the building’s exterior, and its function can be difficult to determine from its appearance. Unless the front door is open, the entry point is unclear. Walkways leading to the Visitor from the parking lot are deteriorated and their materials are not consistent.

Alternatives Considered

Alternative 1: Status Quo – No changes; Visitor Center remains without upgrades at its current location.

Considerations:

- The location works well for most visitation activity (e.g., mansion tour tickets, Site orientation, bus tours, etc.)
- The building is close to staff offices in the mansion with convenient access when holding events, supervising groups, etc.
- Does not address access issues on paths from parking lot and mansion or lack of visibility
- Visitor Center needs to provide a more welcoming and accessible entry experience
- Lack of an exterior sign prevents clear identification

Alternative 2: Keep the Visitor Center at its current location, with upgrades to include an accessible route from the parking lot, clear signage, and entry improvements (e.g., a portico and paved entryway), and improvements to interior restrooms.

Considerations:

- Appropriate signage, including an identifying sign on building façade and directional signs, will increase the Visitor Center’s visibility and improve wayfinding
- Grades from parking lot entrance to Visitor Center are within parameters for accessibility
- Adding an accessible walkway from the parking lot and a paved, covered entryway increases visitor comfort and facility functionality
- Visibility for this key building when entering from the parking lot is important
- Any new design elements, including signage, pavements, or lighting will require SHPO review and approval
- A paved landing at the entrance will be easier to maintain than existing materials (lawn, compacted soil)
- Restrooms in Visitor Center are aging and need to be updated/expanded

Alternative 3: Relocate Visitor Center to another part of the Site.

Considerations:

- No existing buildings or sites were identified as preferable for locating the Visitor Center
- Current location near the parking lot works well and is well-situated for staff and events
- Existing visitor center is accessible and much of the Site has access challenges
- Constructing a new facility is not cost-effective
- No other existing buildings at the Site are suitable for adaptive reuse as a visitor center
- Siting a new building will be a challenge at the Site

Preferred Alternative: 2

While the interior of the Visitor Center is in generally good condition and functions well for both staff and public uses, improvements in the building's visibility and access are needed. Implementing this alternative will better support the Visitor Center's important function as a central hub for Site information and activities.

Vehicular Infrastructure

Background

Visitors enter Clermont from a curving, two-way road (Woods Road/County Route 35). The entrance was constructed in 1967, during the first phase of the facility's development. The entry point was located prior to the state's acquisition of the facility's northern parcel. Options for the route were therefore limited, and a 1979 landscape report noted that "The entrance road... bisects earlier carriage drives and interrupts some of the natural drainage."⁶⁸

Clermont's main entrance location has several drawbacks. Its location on a curve makes it difficult for drivers to see the turn off for the Site, particularly for those approaching from the north. The limited sight distance affects cars entering or exiting at this location, and limited signage along Woods Road makes the entrance challenging to spot. Neither is there a sense of arrival or a "gateway" and there are no directional signs to the main parking area on the entry road.

Alternatives Considered

Alternative 1: Status Quo – No changes to the Site's existing roadways, entrance, or vehicular circulation.

Considerations:

- Primary entrance will continue to be confusing and hazardous, with poor visibility and sight lines
- Drainage issues on historic roads will not improve and they will continue to deteriorate
- North carriage road maintenance will continue to take significant staff time, as gravel continually erodes and needs to be replaced
- The cobblestone road under existing dirt road, an archaeological resource, will continue to be exposed by erosion and may deteriorate.
- Existing roadway configuration does not provide adequate emergency access to the mansion if north road is blocked.

Alternative 2: Relocate Clermont's main public entrance to the old entrance at the Site's north end and develop a new road along an existing trail.

Considerations:

- Is a more visible location and people driving south naturally want to turn in here
- Provides a safer location for visitors to enter the Site
- Reflects historic circulation patterns
- Roadway does not have a large enough turning radius to accommodate buses or trucks
- Historic stone walls/piers at this location provide a gateway experience but would need to be modified to accommodate buses and trucks

- Will require a sharp turn immediately after entry
- Will help activate the Site's north section, a Master Plan goal
- Current entrance can be retained as a service road and used as an alternative for emergency access

Alternative 3: Relocate the visitor entrance and construct a new entry road from Woods Road, in an existing open area identified in the woodlands.

Considerations:

- A new entrance will be designed to be safer and more visible, with improved signage and clear sight lines from Woods Road
- Will be designed as a gateway, providing a better entry experience for visitors
- Will require minimal impacts to historic elements
- Will be engineered to accommodate larger vehicles (e.g., buses bringing in groups)
- Route will utilize a portion of the existing entry road
- May include amenities to encourage cyclists on the EST to enter the Site (e.g., picnic table(s), informational signage, bike racks)

Alternative 4: Improve emergency access from the visitor parking lot to the mansion by installing a route with firm, stable surface materials.

Considerations:

- Would be used as an alternative to northern emergency access route if Northern emergency access is blocked
- Improves safety at the Site by ensuring that emergency vehicles have an alternative access route to mansion
- Appropriate materials will need to be approved by HP (e.g., "Chip Seal" product used at Olana")
- May help address ADA needs for VC and mansion
- Will impact the appearance of the Site's landscape
- Drainage issues exist along this route
- Steep grades would need to be addressed
- Stabilized gravel surface lasts only 1 year or so (maintenance)
- Will need to be evaluated for safety issues

Alt. 5 – Improve access to north section of the Site by re-paving the north carriage road and improving drainage infrastructure to address erosion.

Considerations:

- The north road is deteriorated and difficult to maintain
- Providing benches along the route will increase comfort for visitors with mobility issues
- This route is used by the public to access programs at Clermont Cottage
- Public facilities are required to be accessible
- Cobble stones under north road should not present an issue for repaving the road (DHP)
- Use appropriate materials (e.g., chip seal)

Preferred Alternatives: 3, 4, and 5

The Livingston Family entered their property near the Site's north end, where impressive stone walls and piers still mark the threshold to their estate. These structures still exist, but this entrance is now used primarily by staff and visitors attending programs at Clermont Cottage. Drivers frequently mistake this for the main entrance. Relocating the main entry point was determined to be desirable for improved visitor orientation and from a vehicular safety perspective.

Parking

Regional staff report that the visitor lot is adequate in size for most purposes. If capacity is exceeded during large events, overflow parking can be accommodated on lawns or other open areas. The visitor lot pavement is in poor condition, however, and lacks markings for stalls, drive aisles, and pedestrian lanes. Most park activities and events are accessed from this lot, and in its current condition it does not offer visitors a positive first experience.

Parking for the remainder of the Site is generally inadequate. The mansion's small parking area, used by staff or for drop-offs only, and the pavement is deteriorated. At Clermont Cottage, which is used for public programs, the parking lot is not well-defined and markings for handicap spaces are no longer visible. Proposed new development in the Site's north section will need to accommodate larger group events and meeting the demand for additional parking in this part of the Site is important.

Alternatives Considered

Alternative 1: Status Quo – No changes or additions to parking facilities at the Site.

Considerations:

- The existing visitor lot location works well for most common site activities (e.g., access to Visitor Center, mansion, picnic areas, trails)
- The visitor parking area's pavement is deteriorated and has minimal painted markings
- The visitor lot will continue to offer sufficient parking and access to Hudson River views
- When the main lot fills up, lawns used as overflow areas are sometimes damaged
- Parking for public events at Clermont Cottage is limited and some visitors are unable to walk from the main parking lot to the cottage, especially during inclement weather
- Accessibility to the north section of the Site will remain limited to those able to walk unassisted
- Limiting visitor parking to the main lot keeps the focus on the southern section of the Site
- Does not provide the opportunity to incorporate sustainable materials
- If elements in the north section of the park are redeveloped (e.g., Red Barn, Sylvan Cottage) no public parking will be available in these locations
- Accessibility considerations will not be addressed

Alternative 2: Redevelop the visitor parking lot with green stormwater management elements, pedestrian paths, and clear pavement markings.

Considerations:

- Helps to mitigate drainage issues and improves stormwater runoff management
- Will improve visitor comfort, safety, and overall aesthetics
- Incorporating green elements will reduce impervious areas and improve water quality
- Assessment of soil condition/testing would need to be done to ensure that green infrastructure would function effectively
- Pedestrian and vehicular circulation within the parking area will be improved
- Can be designed to accommodate overflow event parking
- Will need to design the new facility to ensure archaeological elements underneath the lot are appropriately protected

Alternative 3: Improve existing parking areas at the mansion, Sylvan and Clermont Cottages, and the Red Barn to ensure accessibility and meet future demand.

Considerations:

- Improves access to these site elements and allows more visitors to attend events in this area during inclement weather
- Will help to activate the northern section of the site, a Master Plan goal
- Will include appropriate handicapped parking spaces and ADA routes to entrances
- Visitors currently park along the road to attend events or access the trails, causing unsafe conditions
- Improved parking is essential to support the re-use/renovation of Sylvan Cottage and the Red Barn
- If the Site entrance is moved to the north, parking will be needed in this section
- Some improvements will require additional maintenance

Alternative 4: Develop a parking area in the north section of the Site with green infrastructure, if determined feasible.

Considerations:

- An existing mowed field has been identified between Red Barn and Clermont Cottage and will provide ample parking for events and by visitors to Red Barn, the new Ice Pond picnic area, and for public events at Clermont Cottage
- Site is well-drained
- Green elements such as porous pavements, tree islands, and bioswales will be evaluated for inclusion in the design
- Will require appropriate archaeological reviews
- A footpath from the lot to the Red Barn can be developed for visitors attending events
- More convenient for visitors using the accessible path through the north portion of the site

Preferred Alternatives: 2, 3, and 4

Most people arrive at Clermont by car, and the main parking lot is often a visitor's first experience at the Site. Well-designed parking facilities are integral to a safe circulation system, allowing universal access and smooth transitions so the setting or activity can be the focus of a visit.

Parking issues have been identified at Clermont include accessibility, overall condition, capacity, poor drainage, and water quality concerns. Incorporating green stormwater elements, where possible, is desired. The selected alternatives work with other proposed circulation improvements in the Master Plan, including a new entrance location and connections with an accessible multi-use path.



Utilities

Background

In 2022 the OPRHP Energy and Sustainability Bureau evaluated Clermont’s potential for developing a solar installation. Energy Bureau staff analyzed electric usage at the Site, factoring in future planned upgrades that may increase power needs, to ensure the array will accommodate anticipated additional loads.

The Site’s maintenance facility was selected as the most promising location for a solar installation, since this area has had more disturbance, is separated from the main activity areas, and will not impact historic elements or disrupt views. Preliminary evaluation determined a feasible array design that could fully offset the Site’s energy costs (see Appendix F).

Clermont staff noted the desire to have backup power available for outages, which happen regularly, sometimes leaving the Site without power for days. In addition to the inconvenience of frequent power outages to facility operations, this is particularly a concern for sensitive historic items housed in the mansion, which can be damaged by extended periods without air conditioning or heat. Alternatives below include analyses of on-site solar as a potential emergency backup power source for the Site.

Alternatives Considered

Alternative 1: Status Quo – Do not develop solar power at Clermont.

Considerations:

- Will not support agency goals to provide 100% clean energy at its facilities by 2030
- The facility will continue to carry significant energy costs
- Funding for solar development is available now
- No site disturbance will occur
- Action on climate change is crucial and impacts to the Site are likely to increase
- Will not address the need for backup power to protect objects/collections stored at the mansion
- Power outages in the area are frequent and can affect the Site for days
- Short-sighted planning will not address future issues

Alternative 2: Develop solar power at Clermont as a grid-tied system to offset utility costs.

Considerations:

- Preliminary analysis indicates that a solar installation could accommodate sufficient panels to offset 100% of the cost for typical electric usage at the facility
- The maintenance area was identified as a good location for installing solar infrastructure with minimal impacts to the Site
- No site disturbance will be required (e.g., from trenching)
- Solar installation includes panels installed on a proposed pole barn that the region will need to purchase
- Site staff will be trained to do small repairs and regular maintenance tasks on the solar components, but a maintenance contract may be required
- Retrofitting the solar system so that it can provide power for emergency backup can be assessed in the future as technology improves

Alternative 3: Purchase fuel generators to provide emergency backup power for the mansion and maintenance facility.

Considerations:

- A minimum 48-hour backup capability is needed at the Site, and batteries for solar power can store only up to 8 hours
- Generators will need to be sized for a regional, multi-day outage that can provide power for heat, critical lighting, some offices, and security systems
- A portable generator can be kept at the maintenance area and moved to the mansion prior to severe storms to provide back-up power during outages
- Portable generators will result in temporary visual impacts to the historic setting and installation will need to be evaluated by SHPO for this and other potential impacts
- Buildings will need to be retrofitted to accommodate generator hook-ups (e.g., install transfer switches)
- Generators require regular maintenance to ensure they are functioning (e.g., started up regularly), and can have some operational issues
- New technologies may emerge, and solar infrastructure can be retrofitted to replace generators with a backup system that utilizes solar power generated on-site

Alternative 4: Install solar at Clermont with connection to the mansion to provide a backup power source (i.e., trenching to install electric lines).

Considerations:

- Developing solar as an emergency power for the mansion would triple installation costs and provide only up to 8 hours of power
- Siting multiple smaller batteries to provide backup power for the mansion would be problematic due to space and historic elements constraints
- Less than 48 hours of emergency backup power is not sufficient to fully protect the mansion and its contents
- Trenching for electric connection from the maintenance area to the mansion will be extensive and may impact historic/cultural and natural resources
- Work will require separate SEQR review

Alternative 5: Develop solar with back-up capability for the maintenance area only (remainder of power generated will offset Site energy costs).

Considerations:

- One part of the Site would be provided with short-term (8-hour) emergency power
- The Site's energy costs would be offset, with significant cost savings
- Would not help protect sensitive resources in the mansion (a priority) and items would continue to be subject to damage during outages
- Would be useful for the maintenance center to have backup
- If Alternatives 2 or 3 are selected and implemented, the solar infrastructure could be assessed in 5-10 years and retrofitted to create a back-up system once longer-term battery technology is available and more cost-effective
- The solar installation includes panels installed on a proposed pole barn that the Site will need to purchase
- The cost for providing backup the mansion and other site buildings would triple overall costs for solar installation
- Agency has on-going issue of power failures and resources are being affected across the state

Preferred Alternatives: 2 and 3

Fluctuations in humidity and temperature extremes that occur during power outages can result in interior condensation which can damage furniture, books, finishes, artworks, and other vulnerable items. Power outages in this area generally range from two to five days, and there is a great need for emergency backup power to keep climate control systems online as well as the Site operational. Using solar power generated on-site as a backup power source for the mansion, although desirable, was not identified as a reasonable option. The required trenching for electric lines would involve significant disturbance tree clearing, and the route would need to be evaluated for potential impacts to historical, natural, and archaeological resources. Project costs with this option would also be increased an estimated three-fold.

The planning team agreed that it is crucial to consider climate change impacts in planning for Clermont's future. Severe storms with high winds and flooding are already impacting the Site more frequently, and it is imperative to protect objects and stored collections at the mansion. Technologies for longer-duration batteries are being explored but are not currently economically viable for larger sites. Until battery technology improves, an off-grid energy system or solar-generated backup is not a feasible option at Clermont.

Although the use of gas-powered generators does not align with the agency's clean energy goals, the need to protect the Site's irreplaceable resources was determined a priority. Purchasing a trailer-mounted generator that can be moved to the mansion when needed and installing an in-place generator at the maintenance area will protect Clermont's resources and ensure that the facility can continue to function during power outages.





Operations, Maintenance, and Management

Background

Ensuring appropriate maintenance for Clermont’s historic buildings and other infrastructure is an ongoing challenge. Historic preservation considerations, aging utility infrastructure, and many acres of landscape all contribute to maintenance overloads. While in the past the region had a restoration crew to address historic elements, without technical support, repairs and even minor maintenance tasks for some sensitive elements are sometimes deferred.

The planning team did a deep dive into how well the site functions from an operational standpoint (e.g., staff workloads, related infrastructure, equipment needs). The most pressing issues related to operations and maintenance of the Site largely were due to staffing. Clermont’s maintenance staff describes addressing the current level of upkeep as “treading water.” With current staffing, the crew can address only immediate needs and basic maintenance. On-going issues related to Site use include wear-and-tear from picnicking, large events, and outdoor programs.

Alternatives Considered

Alternative 1: Status Quo – No changes in Site maintenance, operations, or staffing levels.

Considerations:

- Staff levels will be insufficient for maintaining elements and activities proposed in the Master Plan
- Technical training and expertise are needed to appropriately protect and preserve Clermont’s historic resources
- The maintenance area needs upgrades (e.g., repair failing pavement, no potable water, lack of Internet connectivity)
- Trucks and other equipment are deteriorating more quickly from a lack of wash facilities and a lack of covered space to protect equipment from the elements

Alternative 2: Install a site-wide security camera system.

Considerations:

- There are no existing security cameras at the Site
- Would provide information during emergencies (e.g., visitor locations, other Site activity)
- Staff can better monitor vandalism and unauthorized after-hours activity
- Will increase the efficiency of the Site’s operations by helping to identify maintenance issues throughout the Site
- Olana has had positive results using a security camera system
- Camera systems can be expensive to maintain
- Other sites have had issues with connectivity, servers go down every few years, and systems need upgrades
- A maintenance contract is needed to ensure the system is appropriately managed
- A previous plan for installing cameras was unable to move forward due to funding limitations
- Will improve protection of the Site’s significant elements

Alternative 3: Develop a Site-specific plan that identifies current and anticipated future climate change impacts with strategies to protect at-risk elements.

Considerations:

- Historic resources are more vulnerable and may need additional protections
- Will consider HVAC demand and identify possible location for a back-up generator
- The Site has experienced power outages during storms
- Increasing impacts from climate change, which include more powerful storms, flooding, damage from fallen trees, and heat waves, may lead to accelerated deterioration of Site elements and damage that maintenance staff will need to address
- Historic garden plantings and trees may be subject to damage or impacts from climate shifts

Alternative 4: Improve litter/debris management by implementing new strategies to educate visitors (e.g., social media messaging, Leave No Trace, Don't Feed the Landfills Initiative).

Considerations:

- Staff currently spends significant time every week on trash/litter pick-up and a more effective approach will free staff to address other tasks
- Visitors are not always aware of the Site's carry-in/carry-out policy and many are not compliant
- Dog walkers leave waste in restroom trash cans and around the Site
- Signage is not effective for addressing this ongoing issue and new approaches are needed for it to improve
- Staff "educators" stationed in high-volume visitation areas may improve overall compliance
- Utilizing volunteers for periodic trash clean-up days may be a cost-effective approach but does not address the ongoing issue
- Composting will be considered to help reduce leaf debris and food waste

Alternative 5: Upgrade the maintenance facility by adding drive-through pole barns, a fueling tank, pickup truck, wash bay, and repair failing pavement.

Considerations:

- Will make the maintenance area more environmentally friendly and functional
- Adding covered storage will help protect equipment, potentially prolonging its useful life
- Having newer equipment and infrastructure will improve staff safety and efficiency
- Wet areas in the maintenance facility have caused sections of pavement to deteriorate, causing trucks to get stuck
- Pavement repairs and/or replacement will make deliveries easier
- A wash bay for salt removal from equipment will improve vehicle longevity and reduce staff time used to drive to a car wash
- Will support plans for solar installation at the Maintenance facility

Alternative 6: Evaluate the Site's utility infrastructure to ensure it will meet both current and future needs and requirements (e.g., distribution: wiring, poles, supplemental electric for events).

Considerations:

- As other site elements are upgraded, more reliable systems and additional locations for providing electric for events will be needed (e.g., adding in-ground boxes)
- Supplemental electric for events requires the use of extension cords (accessed from the mansion's basement and Arryl north)
- Water for events near the parking lot is from the base of a water fountain
- Agency facilities will need infrastructure for EVs in the near future
- Power outages impact operations and maintenance of the Site
- Water usage levels need to be evaluated to determine whether leaks exist in systems (e.g., between the mansion, public restroom, and pumphouse)

Alternative 7: Upgrade and repair the Site’s drainage infrastructure to address site-wide wet areas, erosion, standing water, and deteriorating pavements.

Considerations:

- Site-wide drainage issues impact the overall function of facility and require staff time for repairs
- Carriage roads wash out regularly and gravel must be replenished
- Some drainage infrastructure is aging and/or insufficient and in places is unable to manage the volume of stormwater (e.g., at culvert along main entrance road)
- To address the overall facility will require a site-wide assessment and design
- Gardens often have wet areas with mud and standing water, and damage to historic walls from water is occurring
- Arryl north can become too wet for groups to use, and events need to be relocated
- Poor drainage can impact historic plantings (e.g., in cutting garden)
- Path behind the Visitor Center washes out regularly; gravel washes onto lawn; repairs don’t last

Alternative 8: Implement a phased, prioritized plan to upgrade Internet/WiFi technology for both staff and public use.

Considerations:

- Internet infrastructure is inadequate, with no service in the Visitor Center or Maintenance area
- Internet access at the Visitor Center is insufficient (e.g., slowing the process when staff needs to scan barcodes for events)
- The main parking lot has some connectivity, but Internet service is sketchy for most of the site
- Poor connectivity hinders online programming
- Public WiFi would increase self-guided interpretation opportunities, and QR codes may be used more frequently for interpretation
- Maintenance staff needs to travel for access (e.g., to complete timecards)
- Purchasing parts and other items needed for maintenance and repairs is more efficient online
- The Internet is a key source of info/how-to on up-to-date maintenance tasks

Alternative 9: Select energy-efficient equipment, materials, and low-impact, green approaches for Site maintenance and operations.

Considerations:

- Process of changing to all electric equipment for maintenance (e.g., leaf blowers) is underway
- OPRHP will transition to 100% electric for its fleet/equipment over the next decade
- Will help meet agency goals for sustainable facilities and NYS goals for carbon reduction
- Electric vehicle/equipment charging stations will be installed
- OPRHP is working to eliminate fuel oil for heating by installing heat pump/recovery system, geothermal and the Maintenance Facility can be evaluated for potential geothermal system
- Facility has already changed over to LED lighting
- Site has reduced salt use by applying 30-70 sand/salt
- Spill kit is in place for 500-gallon gas tank

Preferred Alternatives: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9

Upgrading technology at OPRHP facilities was a priority in the Commissioner’s NY Parks 100 Update on OPRHP Priorities and Strategies. A larger support structure for maintenance and operations is needed for Clermont. While upgrades to Clermont’s HVAC system is in the five-year plan, with the agency’s shift to renewable energy and the planned addition of solar infrastructure, the maintenance area will need to be upgraded and possible additional evaluation to meet changing needs. While some fiber was installed in mansion in 2021 and at Clermont Cottage the Friends installed WiFi in 2022, the Site continues to lack sufficient connectivity overall.

Clermont Mansion

The contemporary use of historic structures presents some inherent conflicts with the need for preservation. Retrofits to the mansion's interior have been made to accommodate its multiple functions; however, the interior needs moderate, although not extensive, work. In 2022, a capital project was completed to repair and paint the mansion's exterior, including the west side patio, windows, and porches.

Alternatives Considered

Alternative 1: Status Quo – Do not assess the need for improvements to the mansion's interior.

Considerations:

- The mansion is the most significant historic element at the Site and the state is responsible for preserving it for future generations
- The mansion's exterior was renovated in 2022
- Continued deterioration and stop-gap repairs will eventually threaten the building's historic integrity, and it will continue to deteriorate and may lead to loss of irreplaceable and original elements
- The visitor experience will not be improved and may decline
- Safety issues may emerge as the mansion continues to deteriorate
- Staff offices housed in the mansion need renovation (e.g., painting, carpets, etc.)
- As deterioration increases, repairs and renovation will become more intensive and costly



The mansion during 2022-23 restoration of the exterior (prior to repainting).

Alternative 2: Develop and implement a comprehensive Historic Structures Report and Conditions Study that identifies work needed to appropriately protect and preserve the mansion.

Considerations:

- A significant element from New York’s history will be appropriately preserved
- Will meet Park’s mission to be responsible stewards of our state’s cultural resources
- A comprehensive conditions assessment of the mansion’s interior will require specialized staff and/or a consultant and be costly to develop and implement
- The public experience and conditions for staff working in the mansion will be improved
- Will prioritize repairs and work needed to appropriately preserve the mansion
- Plan will include assessment and recommendations for upgrades to HVAC, code issues, fire suppression, security system
- Without meeting environmental qualifications of potential lending institutions (e.g., appropriate climate control), the Site will not be able to obtain loans from other collections for special exhibits

Preferred Alternative: 2

Lack of specialized skills, constraints on materials and repair methods, and preservation considerations are some of the issues that staff discussed as challenges for staff tasked with maintaining the mansion. With the exterior renovation completed, identifying appropriate repairs and/or restoration on the interior proved complex and beyond the scope of this document. A comprehensive Historic Structures Report and Conditions Study developed by historic preservation professionals will ensure that the mansion's significant and character-defining features are preserved. It will provide operations and maintenance staff with direction regarding appropriate actions they can do to maintain the structure and make recommendations for preservation skills training.

Site Operations & Staffing

Clermont operates its 503-acre facility year-round with eight full-time and eight part-time staff. In addition to a full-time Site Manager staff include: Education: (2) full-time and (2) part-time seasonal, Security: (2) part-time/year-round seasonal, Wedding/Business: (1) full-time, year-round seasonal, Maintenance: (4) full-time, (4) seasonal/part-time. The wedding coordinator is shared with Staatsburgh SHS and maintenance staff are shared with Olana. The Friends of Clermont are also a significant source of support, planning and implementing programs and volunteer projects, and contributing financially to Site improvements.

Alternatives Considered

Alternative 1: Status Quo – No modifications to Site management procedures, policies, or staffing levels.

Considerations:

- Staffing levels are insufficient for appropriate management of the existing facility
- Demands on staff are high and at existing staff levels can be overwhelming
- Some positions are difficult to fill, and ongoing vacancies contribute to staff workloads
- Some roles may be partially addressed by volunteers

Alternative 2: Develop a plan that assesses staff requirements for appropriately supporting existing elements and future development.

Considerations:

- Need to identify staff levels required to appropriately maintain both existing and future investments in rehabilitated and upgraded Site elements
- New emphasis on cultural landscape features and development of the north section of the Site may present management challenges, requiring new approaches and staff knowledge
- Specialized training or staff may be required to appropriately maintain upgraded historic facilities
- A plan will identify areas that volunteers can assist with, such as public program support and/or landscape maintenance tasks
- Will determine sitewide staffing needs for education/programming to optimize Site potential (e.g., a Site curator)
- Qualified, part-time, seasonal staff are difficult to find due to low pay rates

Alternative 3: Improve visitor management by stationing staff at key locations on high-volume days as “ambassadors” to address FAQs and address ongoing maintenance issues, such as littering.

Considerations:

- This approach has worked well at other OPRHP sites
- Members of the Friends Group and/or other volunteers may be utilized
- Having extra support is important on busy weekends and during larger events when demands on staff are high
- Could install a temporary/portable information booth in high-volume areas
- May decrease staff time devoted to answering common questions
- Will improve the visitor experience by increasing knowledge and understanding of the Site
- At current staff levels it may not be the most efficient use of their time
- Intensive to manage volunteers - need a volunteer coordinator

Preferred Alternatives: 2 and 3

Volunteers are a valuable resource and provide invaluable support. An effective volunteer force requires recruitment, training, and supervision, which require staff time. Developing a staffing plan for Clermont will provide an overview of needs and recommend staffing requirements.





Partnerships & Volunteers

A strong, well-managed volunteer force has the potential to play an important role in supporting activities and functions at a facility. The agency relies on volunteers to support a wide range of operational and programmatic activities, including assisting with public events, invasive species removal, trail clean-ups, and caring for heritage gardens. Public access to information and staff availability for visitor needs can in some cases be addressed by volunteers.

Alternatives Considered

Alternative 1: Status Quo – No further development of partnerships or volunteer forces.

Considerations:

- Adding volunteers or developing new partnerships requires staff time to support (supervision training/scheduling)
- Volunteers at a historic site with many sensitive resources may be problematic if not appropriately trained/supervised
- Friend's groups are generally a positive force but draw considerably upon staff time
- Volunteer forces are desirable overall but not always straightforward to implement
- Partnerships with schools, colleges could be better developed at Clermont
- Concern that volunteers may replace paid staff
- Attracting and developing a volunteer force is an important role that both maintains regional connections and promotes the Site as a good neighbor and an integral part of the community
- Volunteers can make an impact but are not a significant support for Site maintenance
- Any work related to historic elements will require more oversight, adding to staff responsibilities

Alternative 2: Create a paid position for a volunteer coordinator.

Considerations:

- A shared coordinator between Sites could be a cost-effective option
- Part-time seasonal staff may not have the qualifications or continuity to maintain important connections
- The role needs to be professionalized to be successful
- If not appropriately trained/supervised volunteers can create new issues

Alternative 3: Identify new, mutually beneficial partnerships to help support a range of projects (e.g., education/programming/research, timber framer guilds, special needs community (e.g., Hudson Kindness Club) etc.).

Considerations:

- Trails groups have been beneficial at other facilities and are generally more organized, well-trained, needing less supervision (e.g., NY/NJ Trails Conf)
- Partnerships with many organizations have the potential to be worthwhile but require staff time and effort and therefore this alternative needs to be implemented along with Alternative 2

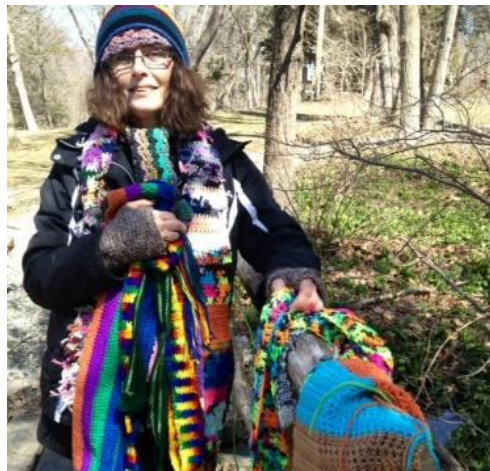
Alternative 4: Develop stronger connections with local fire department, EMS, and police.

Considerations:

- Important for the Site as climate change impacts increase (i.e., more emergencies due to extreme weather, etc.)
- Staff trainings for emergency protocols have been held but should formalize/increase frequency
- Clermont can be a good neighbor by offering facilities at the Site for fire dept/police events/meetings

Preferred Alternatives: 2, 3, and 4

Historic sites do not exist within vacuum; they are connected to the world around them. Clermont has benefitted from the strong support of its Friends Group and has partnered with many others over the years. Collaborations with local municipalities, historic societies, parks and trail planners, or other special interest groups help connect the Site with its context. Additionally, national, or even international entities can provide invaluable sources of ideas, support, and expertise for historic sites. Local emergency support services are invaluable partners that work to ensure public safety. Clermont will continue to grow its relationship with these essential workers.



Chapter 3 – Selection of the Preferred Alternative

Two alternatives have been considered for this Master Plan. The first is the Status Quo alternative — a compilation of all the Status Quo alternatives in Chapter 2. Under the Status Quo, the Site would continue to operate as it does now with no proposed changes to natural, cultural, or scenic resource protection, or improvements to recreation, management, or infrastructure.

The second alternative is the Master Plan alternative — a compilation of the preferred alternatives developed in Chapter 2. The Master Plan alternative is preferred over the Status Quo because new ideas, strategies, and protections will be implemented that will address known issues while creating a more accessible and inclusive facility. Implementing the Master Plan alternative will foster an increased awareness of the Site’s resources and provide greater protections for future generations.

Rationale for Selection

The planning team analyzed the status quo and proposed alternatives for Clermont within the context of the goals and vision determined for the Site. Preferred alternatives were selected that will improve the visitor experience and responsibly steward Clermont’s historic, cultural, and natural resources.

Clermont operates with a high degree of excellence. A visitor survey completed for this plan found that overall, 88% of total visitors indicated they were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the Clermont State Historic Site. Some changes at Clermont are necessary, however. Throughout the planning process, both regional staff and visitors have noted areas where changes and improvements could be made to better support, and expand upon, its existing resources in the years to come. Preparing for the increasing impacts of climate change, ensuring accessibility for visitors of all abilities, repairing, and upgrading aging infrastructure, are all vital to ensuring the Site will thrive in the future.

Major Master Plan Elements

Before the start of the planning process, the Site had been implementing improvements, including a capital project to restore the mansion’s exterior and install a new roof on the Red Barn. Ongoing repair and maintenance are important and not overlooked in the analysis of Master Plan alternatives. Projects proposed in the plan are designed to support and improve current conditions while identifying unmet needs and providing new opportunities that will benefit the Site’s overall function.

Cultural Resource Protection

Clermont’s core historical structures — the mansion, cottages, barns — were the initial focus for the planning process. The proposed adaptive re-use and/or stabilization of deteriorating or at-risk historic buildings, including Sylvan Cottage, Arryl House Ruins, and the Red Barn, will ensure they will be active and functional Site components. Less-evident Site elements, such as those evaluated in the cultural landscape, documented foundations of early farmhouses and utilitarian buildings such as the icehouses and root cellar, are also at-risk without appropriate action.

Natural Resource Protection

Actions in the plan will establish important protections for Clermont’s woodlands, wetlands, and other significant natural features. Threats from climate change, invasive species, and visitor use will be planned for and — if possible — mitigated. Trail segments routed near sensitive natural areas will be redirected or closed. Improved stormwater management, including green infrastructure, will be incorporated into parking area retrofits and in new construction to help protect regional water quality.

Recreational Resource Enhancement

Walking, hiking, and picnicking, painting, or photography, or attending an outdoor event or workshop, are all popular activities at Clermont. Actions in the plan will support and further develop opportunities for this type of recreation at the Site. The addition of accessible paths, picnic facilities, and a viewing platform will open new sections of the Site to more visitors, and improved parking facilities will facilitate access to new and rehabilitated amenities.

Education and Interpretation

New programs and educational material are developed continually at Clermont, and staff are committed to providing an understanding of the full range of people who have lived at Clermont. However, as state and regional demographics shift and lifestyles evolve, Clermont needs to offer programs and amenities appropriate to a more diverse audience. Site educators seek to provide relevant and contemporary programs, events, interpretive material, and exhibits that will appeal to people with different interests, backgrounds, ages, and abilities. An updated interpretive statement will articulate this approach, ensuring that its goals and objectives are clear for both present and future staff.

Infrastructure Improvements

Central to the Master Plan vision is making changes to the Site that will improve visitor access – both pedestrian and vehicular. A significant proposed change is to relocate the Site’s main entrance. The new entrance location will offer a safer, more visible access point and provide a defined gateway into the Site, with signage, plantings, and appropriate road design.

Proposed accessible elements will be interconnected so that more visitors are able to explore more of the Site. The Site’s network of trails will be repaired, and access improved with dedicated trailheads, signage, and blazes. The accessible viewing platform will be reached from a paved route that provides a continuous route from the Arryl House ruins in the south to Clermont Cottage in the north and will help realize a master plan goal of activating Clermont’s underutilized north section.

In choosing the Master Plan alternative over the status quo alternative, OPRHP is making a commitment to implement these changes and improvements at Clermont over the next 10 to 15 years, subject to available funding. These changes will improve both the experience for Clermont’s visitors and the ability of staff to accomplish goals outlined in this plan. The site will function better, and staff conditions will improve.

Chapter 4 – Environmental Impacts and Mitigation

Introduction

This chapter considers the environmental impacts and mitigation of potential adverse impacts that may result from the implementation of the master Plan (Plan). For SEQR compliance, the two documents together (Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)) satisfy the requirements for an environmental impact statement as specified in NYCRR §617, the rules and regulations implementing SEQR. A description of the preferred alternative can be found in the Plan document.

This chapter has two primary parts: a summary of environmental impacts associated with the alternatives considered, and a more detailed analysis of impacts associated with implementation of the Plan, including a discussion of mitigation measures.

The environmental setting is discussed in the DEIS Chapter 1. Chapter 2 of this document contains the alternatives analysis and the selection of the preferred alternative.

Environmental Impacts of the Preferred Alternatives

In Chapter 2, alternatives were analyzed and developed for natural resource protection strategies, recreation development and management support at the Site. The analyses and choice of preferred alternatives are based on:

- Information about existing conditions (DEIS Chapter 1)
- Vision and goals of the Plan
- Consideration of demand for various activities
- Site constraints
- Other considerations as identified in resource analyses for each element.

The Plan consists of the combined preferred alternatives for each identified activity.

Status Quo Alternative

This alternative consists of the current facilities, programs and practices at the Site as described in Chapter 1. Under this alternative, current resource protection, operations, and facility management practices would continue. Any increasing or changing recreational demand on the Site would not be addressed, nor would existing impacts be mitigated. There would be no opportunity to address conservation of the resources under recent changes to Environmental Conservation Law or Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation Law.

Although the Status Quo alternative may not result in any immediate additional adverse environmental impacts, the potential exists for long-term indirect adverse environmental impacts. The facility would continue to be managed with no specific Plan or goals to guide continued use, protection, and development of the Site. If more visitors seek to use the Site, and/or use it in new or unforeseen ways, additional demands will be placed on the natural, cultural, and recreational resources.

Without the guidance provided by the Plan — which directs more intensive use and development toward areas with capacity for such use, and away from the more sensitive areas in the Site — the

potential for adverse impacts on environmental resources will increase. Without the guidance of an overall Plan, which directs more intensive use and development toward areas with capacity for such use and away from the most sensitive areas of the park, the potential for adverse impacts on environmental resources increases.

Issues such as erosion or the introduction of invasive species of plants and wildlife into the Site would be handled on a case-by-case basis as they arose.

Preferred Alternative and the Draft Master Plan

The Plan compiles all preferred alternatives for natural resource protection, recreation development, and support facility development elements identified in Chapter 2. These elements were subject to final evaluation and synthesis to assure that there was consistency among the various alternatives. This assessment resulted in the Draft Master Plan. The Plan will provide considerable resource protection and recreational benefits. The Plan/EIS identifies potential adverse impacts, both short and long term, and ways to, if not eliminate, minimize them, to the fullest extent possible, through appropriate mitigation measures. From a long-term perspective, implementation of the Site's Plan will result in a beneficial environmental impact by ensuring that recreation development takes place in areas of the Site that are appropriate and effective while the most sensitive areas of the Site will be identified, monitored, and provided appropriate stewardship. Potential environmental impacts of the Plan are discussed more fully in the rest of this chapter.

Environmental Impacts Associated with Implementation of the Plan and Proposed Mitigation

Most of the physical disturbance proposed in the Master Plan for Clermont State Historic Site will take place in areas that are already developed or otherwise previously disturbed. The Plan seeks to provide improvements to existing natural resource protection strategies and recreation development while providing additional protection of sensitive natural and cultural resources within the Site and new and expanded recreational resources. Planning for new facilities in the park reflects this and the proposed location of new or expanded facilities avoids sensitive resources to the extent practicable.

Actions proposed by the Master Plan include:

Actions for Natural Resources

- Using current climate change data and modeling techniques, develop long-range planning recommendations to protect the Site's natural elements from future impacts.
- Define and prioritize regular invasive species management tasks Site-wide.
- Identify and implement protections for old-growth native trees (150-year-old range) within Clermont's woodlands and historical/cultural landscape.
- Identify and evaluate mapped and unmapped water resources at the Site and determine priority actions for their protection.
- Protect the Hudson River and other waterbodies from Site runoff by implementing green infrastructure, where feasible, in retrofits and new infrastructure.
- Implement pollinator support strategies including mowing reductions, invasive species management, and strategic planting of important food species.

- Improve habitat connectivity at adjacent properties by fostering relationships and increasing outreach to adjacent landowners.
- Identify and implement best management strategies for addressing nuisance animal species at the Site.

Actions for Cultural Resources

Mansion

- Develop and implement a comprehensive Historic Structures Report and Conditions Study to identify repairs, restoration, and other work needed to appropriately protect and preserve the mansion.
- Keep staff offices located in the mansion and renovate them.

Red Barn

- Improve weather-tightness of the Red Barn and implement necessary repairs to ensure its long-term protection (e.g., repair broken windowpanes, close gaps in exterior walls).
- Develop an area adjacent to the Red Barn to serve as a seasonal outdoor events venue.
- Build a small addition at rear of the Red Barn to house a public restroom, changing area, storage, and a warming kitchen.
- Rehabilitate the interior of the Barn to accommodate three-season use such as exhibits, while preserving character-defining elements.

Clermont Cottage

- Provide accessible parking, walkways, and entrance at Clermont Cottage.
- Remediate Clermont Cottage for mold and mildew and install appropriate insulation in needed areas.

Sylvan Cottage

- Rehabilitate and retrofit Sylvan Cottage as an accessible, multi-use education center with classrooms, a kitchen, restrooms, and defined parking area.

Cultural/Historical Landscape

- Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to stabilize the Arryl House Ruins and adjacent historic elements.
- Work with Division for Historic Preservation staff to survey existing remnant historic structures at the facility to evaluate their condition, significance, and needs.
- Implement a Phase I archaeological survey at Clermont and develop a comprehensive archaeological report and sensitivity analysis of the entire Site.
- Stabilize the icehouse and root cellar; remove vegetation, replace safety railing, and add gravel with weed barrier around the perimeter.
- Restore the Locust Tree allée parallel to the main visitor parking lot.

Collections

- Work with the Bureau of Historic Sites to develop a furnishing plan, to research and document objects at the Site as they existed historically.
- With the Bureau of Historic Sites, re-evaluate Clermont's Collections Policy; review its parameters and the scope of collections.
- Improve public access to Clermont's collections by developing a "virtual wing" to provide online access to resources and enable wider and more active use by both staff, the academic community, and the general public.
- Evaluate storage conditions for Clermont's object collections and make recommendations for improvements.

Actions for Recreational Resources

- Create a new picnic area adjacent to the Ice Pond.
- Investigate offering special outdoor events that will encourage new groups to come to the site (e.g., temporary overnight camping for youth or bicycle groups).
- Maintain connections with equestrian community by developing special events that highlight equestrian use as a historic recreation activity at the Site.
- Assess the feasibility of providing public access to the Site's holdings along the Hudson River shoreline.
- Foster more visibility for Clermont and awareness of its offerings by increasing outreach and marketing strategies.

Trails

- Establish a formal trailhead and parking area at the existing informal access point near the flagpole where visitors currently park.
- Develop a trail signage plan based on final trail layout and produce and install trailhead kiosks, intersectional, and trail marking blazes and signage.
- Improve the existing trail system at Clermont by addressing portions of trails where erosion, wetness, or steep grades exist.
- Close unused trail sections or trails in sensitive areas, re-route chronically wet trail segments, and install or replace trail bridges and culverts, where needed.
- Formalize trail access points at the Site and encourage connections with the adjacent Empire State Trail by adding informational signage, maps, safety information and, where appropriate, bicycle racks, picnic tables, and/or parking.
- Finalize and implement a preferred layout for the entire trail system.

Actions for Infrastructure Improvements

Visitor Center

- Keep the Visitor Center at its current location, with upgrades to include an accessible route from the parking lot, clear signage, and entry improvements (e.g., a portico and paved entryway), and improvements to interior restrooms.
- Improve emergency access from the visitor parking lot to the mansion by installing a route with firm, stable surface materials.

Accessibility

- Conduct a comprehensive analysis to identify accessibility issues site-wide with recommendations for addressing issues where possible.
- In coordination with the Division for Historic Preservation, develop a study to provide an accessible entrance and restrooms at the mansion and include an elevator for universal access to exhibits and staff office space.
- Create accessible picnic facilities within the current picnic area.
- Improve access to Hudson River/Catskill Mountain views by constructing a viewing platform.
- Develop an accessible trail from the Arryl House to the Site's north section, with connections to the mansion, Clermont Cottage, and other key points of interest, utilizing existing trail segments where possible.
- Develop an accessible interpretive trail near the mansion.
- In coordination with the Division for Historic Preservation, develop a study to provide an accessible entrance and restrooms at the mansion and include an elevator for universal access to exhibits and staff office space.

Circulation and Parking

- Relocate the main visitor entrance, adding a new roadway section through an existing open area in the woodlands .

- Redevelop the visitor parking lot with new pavement, green stormwater management elements, pedestrian paths, and clear pavement markings.
- Improve existing parking areas at the mansion, Sylvan and Clermont Cottages, and the Red Barn to ensure accessibility and meet future demand.
- Improve access to north section of the Site by re-paving the north carriage road and improving drainage infrastructure to address erosion.
- Develop a parking area in the north section of the Site with green infrastructure, if determined feasible.
- Upgrade and repair the Site's drainage infrastructure to address site-wide wet areas, erosion, standing water, and deteriorating pavements.

Maintenance Center

- Upgrade the maintenance area facility by adding drive-through pole barns, a fueling tank, pickup truck, wash bay, and repair failing pavement.

Utilities

- Develop solar power at Clermont as a grid-tied system to offset utility costs.
- Purchase fuel generators to provide emergency backup power for the mansion and maintenance facility.
- Evaluate the Site's utility infrastructure to ensure it will meet both current and future needs and requirements (e.g., distribution: wiring, poles, supplemental electric for events).
- Implement a phased, prioritized plan to upgrade Internet/WiFi technology for both staff and public use.

Actions for Site Maintenance and Operations

- Develop a management/maintenance program for historic landscape elements with tasks clearly spelled out.
 - Develop a site-specific plan that identifies current and anticipated future climate change impacts with strategies to address at-risk elements.
 - Improve litter/debris management by implementing new strategies to educate visitors (e.g., social media messaging, Leave No Trace, Don't Feed the Landfills Initiative).
 - Install a site-wide security camera system.
 - Select energy-efficient equipment, materials, and low-impact, green approaches for Site maintenance and operations.
 - Develop a staffing plan to ensure that staffing levels are sufficient to support future development proposed in the master plan.
 - Improve visitor management on high-volume days by stationing staff or volunteers at key locations to address FAQs and address ongoing maintenance issues, such as litter.
-
- Develop a Site-specific plan that identifies current and anticipated future climate change impacts with strategies to address at-risk elements.
 - Develop a schedule of rotating wedding tent locations to decrease damage to lawns and reduce soil compaction.
 - Install a site-wide security camera system.
 - Improve litter/debris management by implementing new strategies to educate visitors (e.g., social media messaging, Leave No Trace, Don't Feed the Landfills Initiative).
 - Purchase fuel generators to provide emergency backup power for the mansion and maintenance facility.

Staffing

- Keep staff offices located in the Mansion and renovate them.
- In coordination with the Division for Historic Preservation, develop a study to provide an accessible entrance and restrooms at the mansion and include an elevator for universal access to exhibits and staff office space.

Partnerships & Volunteers

- Create a paid position for volunteer coordinator.
- Identify mutually beneficial partnerships to help support a range of projects (e.g., education/programming/research, timber framer guilds, special needs community (Hudson Kindness Club) invasive species removal, trail maintenance, etc.).
- Develop stronger connections with local fire department, EMS, and police.

Education & Interpretation

- With support from the Bureau of Historic Sites, develop programs and educational content related to all former inhabitants of the Site based on both the Site's collections and content-driven approaches.
- With support from the Bureau of Historic Sites, develop programs and educational content related to the experiences of enslaved people, indigenous communities, Palatines, servants, and tenant farmers.
- Cultivate funding sources for developing an annual exhibit in the mansion gallery.
- Revise and update Clermont's Interpretative Statement.
- Develop interpretative content for underutilized resources.
- With support from the Bureau of Historic Sites, update the interpretation program/plan for the Site to define new content goals, presentation methods, and ensure a cohesive message.
- Strengthen role of the Clermont's Advisory Committee to guide interpretive development.

General Project Considerations

Storm water runoff will be increased by the minor addition of impervious surfaces, such as the entrance roadway, mansion addition and solar array. Green design will be used, where feasible, for any new construction to minimize the effects of storm water runoff. Proper drainage design, porous pavement, and vegetated drainage swales will be used where applicable to help mitigate water quality impacts from runoff following storm events. These elements slow the rate by which storm water is conveyed to the Hudson River. Pollutants are filtered by local vegetation and by percolating through the ground before entering groundwater. Careful site-specific design will be applied to all new facilities to minimize the potential for erosion.

An erosion control Plan will be prepared for all construction projects proposed in the Plan that have the potential to disturb park soils or result in erosion. Any projects that will disturb one acre or more will be subject to the State Pollution Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) General Permit process. This process includes the development of a site-specific Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) and sedimentation and erosion control plans. Best Management Practices (BMPs), as described in the New York State Standards and Specifications (NYS DEC, 2016)^[OBJ], will be used to reduce impacts to soils on the project sites. Some measures which will be used include minimizing soil disturbance and vegetation removal, the use of silt fencing and straw bales where needed, preservation of vegetated buffers, and

seeding and mulching of disturbed areas as soon as possible following work. New plantings of native species may also be used for aesthetics, shade, and soil stabilization.

Land

The Plan provides a framework for improvements to existing facilities, programs, and access. Implementation of the Plan will result in some physical change to the land, particularly during trail construction and maintenance and the restoration of the main entrance road to its original location. Consideration for the additional protection of the park's sensitive natural resources is reflected in the planning process and proposed actions.

Overall, most of the Site will remain as it currently is. The following is a discussion of projects and actions proposed in the Plan and their potential impact on the land.

Impacts to land will occur where the Plan calls for new or redeveloped facilities. Those proposed in the Plan include upgrades to the electric systems; solar installation; entrance relocation; access to the mansion; public restroom replacement; trailhead parking; existing trail maintenance; Red Barn event area; proposed interpretive trail; proposed multi-use trail; and root cellar weed barrier.

Proposed redevelopment of these park amenities and infrastructure will require some grading and land disturbance, however, disturbance will be minimized by site specific designs of these facilities to accommodate the existing grade levels and natural drainage where possible. Best management practices will be utilized to prevent impacts to adjacent areas.

Table 3 - Quantity of Park Land Changed

Project or Action	Acres	Impact to land
New Entrance Roadway	2-3 Acres	Moderate
Maintenance Facility Storage	.1 Acres	Moderate
Solar Array	.2 Acres	Moderate
Parking Lot	.05 Acres	Minimal
Red Barn Event Area	.5 Acres	Minimal/Moderate
Interpretive Trail (No design, grass mainly)	.1 Acres (projection)	Minimal
Multi use trail (no design)	.2 Acres (projection)	Moderate
Root cellar weed barrier/gravel	.01	Minimal
Flagpole trailhead parking	.1	Minimal
Accessibility study (may slightly increase totals)	Undetermined	Undetermined
Picnic tables (no disturbance etc.)	Zero to Negligible	Minimal

Potential impacts on land would also result from the construction of new trails. The net result of these activities will be minimal; however, the length of the proposed accessible trail will be approximately .5 miles and wider than the wet, underutilized trails that will be removed from the trail network. Some trees and shrubland vegetation will need to be removed for trail construction, and there will be a very minor increase in impervious surfaces. The design of the multi-use trail will take place at a later date and its surfacing material has yet to be determined. Existing lightly used or wet trails will be closed and left to reclaim themselves which will reduce impacts to land within the site. Approximately .48 miles of trails will be removed while approximately .25 miles of trail will be rehabilitated (see Figure 12).

The impacts of trail construction projects will vary based on the proposed uses, its proposed surfacing, and its location with respect to steep slopes and waterbodies. Stormwater runoff from the additional impervious surfaces is expected to be minor. Best management practices will be used to minimize movement of sediment from the site during construction and over the life of the trail. Disturbance of land will be limited to the required width of the trail corridor. Trail construction will follow the policies and guidelines for trail building that have been established by recognized trail organizations and government agencies. Adherence to these guidelines will ensure that work is completed in a manner that maximizes protection of resources. Trail alignments will be planned very carefully for grades, accessibility, surfacing, minimum required width to the extent practicable, and providing appropriate viewpoints and access to park resources while protecting highly sensitive areas. Signage may be installed to help educate patrons about the need for protection of resources. Coordination with the region's trail coordinator for trail design will assist in minimizing potential impacts as well.

The addition of solar energy infrastructure at the site will be designed and reviewed after the completion of the Plan. As part of this planning process, the most appropriate, least impactful site has been identified in Appendix F. The site has been chosen due to its minimal impact to the land, flora, and fauna. It will be located adjacent to the maintenance area in a mowed area. It is not expected that grading will be required, however, the trenching of electric lines, the installation of the solar array posts and the fencing will require minimal disturbance.

[Water](#)

Impact on Pond and Stream Water Quality

No projects in the Master Plan will have a detrimental impact on water quality in any of the wetlands and waterbodies in the park. Actions are proposed that will improve water quality and waterbody function. Erosion and sediment controls will be installed as needed during construction. No new buildings or facilities are proposed in flood-prone areas within the Site.

Increased stormwater runoff can affect surface waters such as streams and ponds by increasing the sediment load and introducing pollutants that are carried by the runoff. Stormwater can also cause erosion and changes to stream habitats. This has a direct effect on the biodiversity of the stream and its corridor. Stormwater runoff is increased by the addition of impervious surfaces such as building roofs, roadways, trails, and parking lots.

New pavement proposed in the Plan including a small visitor trailhead parking lot and the new entrance roadway. These facilities will be constructed using techniques to reduce runoff such as rain gardens, detention pond, or porous pavement. The surface area of proposed new structures with impervious roofs will include the addition to the mansion, maintenance facility and the replacement of the public restroom. The final design of the red barn area may have a small structure to facilitate patron use of the area. The total maximum acreage of all these new impervious surfaces is small, between 2 and 3.75 acres depending on surfacing, representing approximately .006% of the Site. Green design will be utilized for new construction as much as possible.

Proposed new trails have the potential to impact water resources in the site. Green stormwater management techniques will be utilized wherever possible to remediate these concerns. Proposed trail areas that require more than routine measures will be identified through the approval process described in the Plan and remedies, such as construction of culverts, bridges, or boardwalks, will be planned in consultation with regional and staff. Regional staff will review proposals and consult with NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and/or the US Army Corps of Engineers as appropriate. It is not expected that any new or rerouted natural surface trails will have a significant impact on water quality.

When implemented, an erosion control plan will be prepared for new and redevelopment construction projects proposed in the Plan. Any projects that disturb one acre or more will be subject to the State Pollution Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) General Permit process. Best management practices (BMPs) as described in the New York Standards and Specifications for Erosion and Sediment Control (DEC, 2016 Blue Book) will be used to reduce impacts to soils on the project sites. Some measures which will be used include minimizing soil disturbance and vegetation clearing, the use of silt fencing and straw bales where needed, preservation of vegetated buffers and seeding and mulching of disturbed areas as soon as possible following work.

During field layout of trails, the agency will attempt to minimize stream crossings to the extent possible and retain a buffer between new trails and waterbodies. All new trail work will be designed to control stormwater and minimize erosion.

Impact on Ground Water Quality

Current pavement and impervious surfaces at the site are limited compared to the acreage of the site, consisting mostly of the roadways, parking areas and structures. Additional impervious surfaces from new structures or facilities have the potential to change the way stormwater infiltrates to groundwater. There will be minor increases in impervious surfaces as noted above. These elements are generally sited in previously disturbed areas and the total maximum acreage of new impervious surfaces from structures will not be significant. In all new construction, green design will be used, where possible and appropriate, to help capture and filter stormwater before it enters groundwater.

Wetlands

The park contains two wetland complexes, one is classified as State-regulated freshwater wetlands and both are identified in the National Wetland Inventory (NWI). There are also many smaller, unmapped wetland/vernal pool areas which are not classified (see Figure 7 – Water Resources).

Existing measures for protection of the wetlands are already in place and none of the site's wetlands will be changed or affected by implementation of the Plan. Proposed improvements to natural areas in the Plan will further enhance and protect the park's existing wetlands. Although none are currently proposed, any new development proposed near these locations in the future would be done in consultation with regional natural resource stewardship biologists and staff from NYNHP to avoid or minimize potential impacts to these sensitive areas.

As part of this planning process, vernal pools have been identified and mapped by stewardship staff. Consideration will be given to protect these areas from impacts from trails such as erosion, invasive species and trampling from patrons and any other development as they provide habitat for Clermont's diverse wildlife.

Air

Full implementation of the Master Plan will result in increased use of the site. The increased travel to the site to use new amenities are expected to be minor. Air quality impacts from increased traffic, however, are not expected to be significant. Short-term, temporary air quality impacts may occur due to a minor temporary increase in vehicle exhaust during large events such as weddings and some generation of dust during construction. Air quality impacts from construction vehicles will be mitigated by assuring that these vehicles are in good running condition and are not producing excessive exhaust. These will be temporary and localized and will occur over time as the Plan is implemented.

Biological Resources/Ecology

Overall, the Plan will have a positive impact on the natural resources within Clermont. Limited new development is proposed in the Plan, and therefore direct impacts to biological resources are expected to be minimal. Projects have been primarily sited in areas with previous development, limited environmental sensitivity, and placement of proposed facility improvements is in accordance with OPRHP stewardship staff recommendations. The Site contains habitat for rare and protected species, and the importance of these resources is recognized throughout the development and location of alternatives in this Plan, its strategies, and implementing the specific recommendations that recognize the significance of the resources. Overall, this Plan is expected to have a net positive impact on these resources by developing additional invasive species management strategies, utilizing and repurposing existing buildings, siting most development in previously disturbed areas, addressing stormwater, and implementing design strategies that will reduce impacts to sensitive areas.

Ecological Communities

NYNHP has identified 17 ecological community types in Clermont, including natural and culturally derived types as defined in the NYNHP classification. Almost 85 percent of the site is in a natural community type with Appalachian Oak-Hickory Forest comprising the largest quantity. The Hudson River is a designated Significant Natural Community (tidal river) and will not be adversely impacted by proposed projects.

Master Plan implementation will have some impact on several natural communities. Projects have been sited primarily in areas with previous and recent development/disturbance and general accessibility to, and use of, existing infrastructure and structures. Impacts will be mitigated by providing on-site design implementation to reduce vegetation loss.

Impact to natural communities from construction of new trails will be mitigated by careful assessment of the trail routes on site before any construction begins. Locations for new trails will be assessed and use sustainable design during layout and construction to minimize impacts to sensitive areas. Construction will be monitored to avoid and minimize any impacts to significant natural communities at or adjacent to the site.

Flora

The construction of new facilities will require removal of some minor quantities of vegetation during construction. For the proposed entrance roadway, solar array, Red Barn event area and other small improvements, vegetation loss will primarily be within previously disturbed areas and mowed lawn. Minor vegetation removal may also be required for trail construction; however, this would have little to no impact on the overall forest community.

Where new trail segments are built, impacts will be mitigated by requiring selection of the most appropriate routes and minimizing removal of existing vegetation. Some vegetation will be trimmed, and signs or blazes will mark trail corridors for trail users. The regional biologist will review the most recent Natural Heritage Program data to report any newly found rare plants prior to any development or new management practices. Consideration for the protection of the park's rare species and sensitive areas will be part of the final planning process when selecting preferred locations of new trail development. Well-designed trails to provide access to a variety of natural features will enhance the visitor experience and help to reduce potential impacts from off-trail and social trail development.

Proposed actions in the Plan to increase management of non-native, invasive plant species will benefit native plants in the park, providing them with more opportunity to flourish. Invasive species/non-native plant removal projects have taken place under supervision of the regional biologist and stewardship staff and will continue.

The Plan has located facilities to help control conflicts with or impacts to rare species and sensitive natural resources, thereby reducing potential impacts of development. During the design of the proposed renovation and redevelopment projects, the regional biologist will be consulted regarding the

need for additional rare plant surveys in these areas and regarding any trees to be removed. Areas that will require vegetative restoration or will be part of a design will incorporate the use of native species or regionally appropriate non-invasive species that are indigenous to the area. The regional landscape architect and the regional biologist will be consulted regarding the appropriate species to be used in any planting plans. In addition, facility design and implementation will be consistent with OPRHP's Tree Management and Native Plants policies (OPRHP, 2009 and OPRHP, 2015). This includes providing appropriate buffers to ensure protection of known rare plants and animals.

Fauna

Some positive impacts to animals at the Site may occur due to proposed restoration and expansion of habitat in the Plan. Current wildlife management practices will continue in consultation with NYS DEC and the NYS Natural Heritage Program.

Minimal impacts to fauna are expected due to the small amount of physical change being proposed in the Plan. Consideration of potential impacts on the fauna of the park was part of the planning process when selecting preferred alternatives and will also be considered during future implementation of pedestrian pathways and new trails. Areas proposed for improvements through either rehabilitation or new construction are not located near sensitive environmental areas and are not expected to affect wildlife in the area.

Construction in OPRHP facilities is usually planned for the late fall and winter when public use is lower. This timing also minimizes any disturbance to wildlife by avoiding periods of higher biological activity, such as bird breeding seasons and bat roosting. Similarly, any tree removals will be timed to occur between November and December as feasible to minimize disturbance to bats and other wildlife (see Appendix D). Outside of this window, consultation will occur with the regional biologist to minimize impacts to fauna. Site-specific design of new facilities and trails will include surveys for sensitive or rare species or habitats. If needed, proposed facilities or trails will be relocated to avoid or minimize any adverse impacts to wildlife.

Hunting

The current hunting program at Clermont, which is based largely as a recreational activity, will be expanded as part of OPRHP's deer management strategies to reduce impacts to flora. Detailed strategies will be developed with Regional Stewardship staff. (For a map of Clermont's hunting areas, see Appendix G.)

Invasive Species

Forest pests and invasive species are a significant threat to the Site. The Emerald Ash Borer has been identified at the Site and throughout the region. The Spotted Lanternfly is a growing threat that has not yet been observed at the Site but has potential to impact the region if introduced. Precautions such as surveying and monitoring for such species will be included as part of a more proactive invasive species strategy. Educational information is provided within OPRHP properties, including brochures, posters, and other materials to inform visitors of best management practices related to invasive species.

Table 4 - Invasive Species

Common Name	Species Name
Tree-of-Heaven	<i>Ailanthus altissima</i>
Oriental Bittersweet	<i>Celastrus orbiculatus</i>
Emerald Ash Borer	<i>Agrilus planipennis</i>
Multiflora Rose	<i>Rosa multiflora</i>
Wineberry	<i>Rubus phoenicolasius</i>
Black Swallowwort	<i>Cynanchum louiseae</i>
Porcelain Berry/Amur Peppervine	<i>Ampelopsis brevipedunculata</i>
Garlic Mustard	<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>
Japanese Stiltgrass	<i>Microstegium vimineum</i>
Asian Longhorned beetle	Asian Longhorned beetle
Forsythia	<i>Forsythia</i> sp.
Jumping Worms (species unknown)	<i>Amyntas-Metaphire</i> sp.

Park and regional environmental staff are very knowledgeable regarding the impacts of invasive species. Interpretive programs and training will improve their ability to prevent the spread of invasives. Implementation of new and more proactive invasive species strategies at the Site will focus on prevention, identification of invasives, early detection, rapid response, and eradication from sensitive habitat areas.

To date, the following invasive species have been identified within Clermont. There are regional stewardship strategies in place to manage these invasive species through specific projects using staff and volunteer labor.

It is important to implement Best Management Practices to minimize the spread of these invasive species. New construction projects as well as day-to-day operations can introduce and spread invasives. Trail use, construction, and landscaping management can also facilitate the spread of invasive species. Invasive plant seeds can be inadvertently introduced on construction equipment and through the use of imported mulch, imported soil, straw, gravel, and sod. Proper material disposal and equipment cleaning methods help limit the potential of invasives to establish in new locations both within and beyond a site.

OPRHP has drafted BMPs for invasive species control for park projects and operations. The [NYS DOT](#) has developed useful BMPs and [construction specifications](#) for invasive plant control that can be tailored to agency or park-specific projects and operations. These methods will be implemented at the Site during construction as appropriate.

Cultural Resources

Clermont State Historic Site is listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places. The master plan is not expected to have any significant adverse impacts on cultural or historic resources. All projects proposed at Clermont will be reviewed by OPRHP's Division for Historic Preservation.

When repair or alteration of a historic building or site is needed to accommodate contemporary use and ADA access, any repairs or alterations should not damage or destroy materials, features, or finishes that are important in defining the building's historic character. Recognizing these elements as a physical record of their time, place, and use, in general, their modification for new uses should result in minimal changes to their defining characteristics, including their site and context, with a goal of retaining and preserving their historic character. Design modifications should avoid removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize the element.

Alterations or modifications to these elements is subject to review by DHP prior to implementation and the guidelines below should be followed:

- Minimal changes to a property's defining characteristics should be made, and the historic character should be retained, preserving as much of the original fabric as possible.
- Changes proposed to the exterior and the interior of historic buildings, the building's site and environment and landscape features, and any attached, adjacent, or related new construction must be reviewed and approved by DHP.
- As much as possible, building elements should be repaired rather than replaced. If an element cannot be repaired, then a replacement should be identical in appearance and material to the original, as practicable.
- If a new work or an addition is to be made, it should be differentiated from the old while keeping with the original structure's architectural features and scale.
- Buildings and their surroundings must not be harmed during the rehabilitation process. This includes the use of harsh surface treatments or using irreversible connection methods for new additions.
- Additions that create a conjectured or false history are not to be made, though additions that have been made throughout a building's life should be preserved.

Any projects or activities that require ground disturbance either associated with the Plan or routine operation and maintenance will require review by OPRHP's Division for Historic Preservation to ensure that such resources are not adversely impacted.

The Site is within the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area Management Plan and the Clermont Estates Historic District. The implementation of the Clermont State Historic Site Master Plan supports and contributes to both the management plan and associated designations and their efforts to promote historic sites along the Hudson River Valley and educate patrons of the contributing features.

[Archaeological Resources](#)

Archeological surveys have been conducted during ground disturbing projects within the Site over the past several decades. These surveys have been documented and identified on site maps to identify known sensitive areas at the Site.

To assure that there are no adverse impacts to archaeological resources, any project that could result in ground disturbance and potentially affect cultural resources of the park will require consultation with the Field Services Bureau (FSB) to determine if a site-specific archeological survey is needed. All projects will follow the OPRHP Intra-Agency Protocol for the Application of Section 14.09 of the NYS Parks,

Recreation and Historic Preservation Law. If required, all ground disturbance should be in consultation with FSB to develop appropriate plans, investigate and document all archeological resources.

Scenic Resources

Implementation of the master Plan will not result in any significant adverse impacts on scenic resources in the park, and recommendations in the Plan for the protection and enhancement of natural, historic, and recreational resources will result in protection of the Site's scenic resources and vistas. The Plan also recommends continued monitoring and maintenance of current, as well as to-be-identified scenic vistas throughout the park, following Agency policy (OPRHP, 2009) and NYNHP recommendations (Ring, 2017).

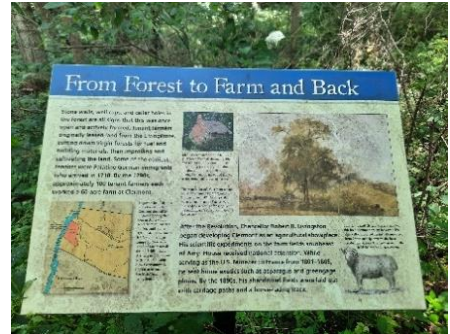
Similarly, projects proposed in the Site will not have any significant effect on the view from off-site due to the minimal amount of proposed development.

Recreation

Implementation of the Plan will result in significant, beneficial improvement to all aspects of the Site's recreational facilities. Current recreational opportunities at Clermont will remain available. The Plan provides for the expansion of the trail system and educational/interpretive opportunities. The existing picnic area will see minor improvements to enhance visitor experience and ADA access. The Red Barn area will be improved to provide a reservable group event area for gatherings which can facilitate recreation within Clermont. The current trail use patterns facilitated the creation of a small, designated parking area.

The trail network will see modifications which will improve patron experiences. Some existing trails will receive modifications to reduce erosion and wet conditions while other trails will be removed and replaced to provide a higher quality, user friendly network. A designated parking area will be created to improve the current undesignated roadside parking which will reduce existing erosion and increase patron safety along the roadside. The accessible trail will enhance opportunities for all abilities at Clermont with minimal physical impacts to the land. During trail planning, regional stewardship staff will inspect the proposed corridors and make recommendations to reduce impacts to flora and fauna.

Facility upgrades and other recreational improvements will follow ADA guidelines as required.



From left to right: Harvesting History event; Para-treck group; Donerly Farm interpretation sign

Open Space

The 591 acres (504 accessible to the public) of historic public open space at Clermont are an important piece of the county and region's open space system. The Site provides significant open space that will continue to be protected and preserved under the master Plan. OPRHP will evaluate and consider acquisition of fee, title, or easements on adjacent open space areas as they become available. It will also monitor any development proposals that may affect the quality of its scenic and open space resources. The Plan will result in improved conditions for the Site's natural resources. Proposed improvements to riparian areas, increased protections for wetlands, reduced mowing and more intensive management of invasive species will benefit wildlife habitat and natural areas.

There will be no adverse impacts to open space resources resulting from the implementation of the Master Plan. If any future acquisition recommendations are implemented, the impact will be positive including adding open space acreage and improving wildlife habitat in an area with increasing development pressure. All acquisitions will be reviewed separately under SEQR.

Circulation, Access, and Traffic

The capacity of the existing road system was examined during the planning process. While changes will be made, it was determined that it generally functions effectively for the current and projected volume of traffic. While full implementation of the Plan may result in some increased visitation to the facility, and an associated potential increase in traffic, the roadway system should be able to accommodate added use. Implementation of the master plan will result in access improvements with the restoration of the original entrance. The entrance project will positively impact the accessibility, safety and visitor experience at the park while restoring the historic entrance. The current entrance roadway will be retained to support maintenance access and circulation.

Proposed redevelopment of the facility's entrance road and parking lots will further improve circulation at the Site. Circulation issues can occur during large events, which can be taxing on staff time. The parking area and associated roadways become congested, and cars need to be directed to maintain safe conditions. Implementing the proposed design of the Red Barn area into an event space and parking lot and development of the trailhead parking lot will result in a slight increase in the quantity of parking spaces at the facility. It is not anticipated that additional parking areas will increase traffic and congestion but rather address existing impacts to traffic and circulation. During times of large events, cars will be directed to grass overflow parking areas, and clearly delineated Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant parking spots, as required, will be available.

Access to the mansion will be expanded to all floors in the mansion with the construction of an elevator and associated walkway. Plans for this addition and associated circulation system will be developed through a separate planning and design project and require subsequent consultation with DHP and other OPRHP staff.

Public Health and Safety

Public health and safety are important elements in the operation of the Site. New or substantially rehabilitated facilities will be designed and constructed to meet all applicable health and safety codes including compliance with the ADA. Design and rehabilitation of infrastructure systems such as electric, water, and sewer, where needed, will ensure public health protection.

Energy, Noise, Odor and Light

Sustainability principles and energy efficiency will be incorporated into the design of all new park buildings, including the mansion addition, entrance roadway, solar array, parking lot and the public restroom replacement. Plan implementation may result in some minor temporary increases in noise, odor, and energy use during construction. Energy expenditures will be fully offset by installation of the solar array. Proposed sustainable practices include upgraded utilities and LED lights to improve energy efficiency. Lighting at new or rehabilitated site facilities will be designed to be “dark sky” friendly and to minimize impacts on adjoining properties. No significant adverse impacts to the local community or adjacent landowners are anticipated from projects proposed in the park.

Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

The proposed Plan will result in some unavoidable adverse impacts. There will be some minimal permanent loss of pervious soil surface and vegetative cover as a result of construction of the new parking lot, entrance road and solar array and structural additions. During the design of these elements, staff will use professional judgment, expertise, and standards to minimize or mitigate impacts. After construction, projects will be monitored by park staff and action will be taken, if necessary, to prevent any significant impacts from occurring. In addition to the impacts outlined above, there will also be minimal, temporary adverse air and noise impacts (e.g., fugitive dust, noise from construction equipment and vehicles, etc.) associated with construction of proposed improvements.

Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources

The planning, development, and implementation of this Plan, including construction of the new entrance road, solar array and facility improvements, utility and trail improvements, will involve the irreversible and irretrievable commitment of public resources in the form of time, labor, and materials. It will also require a commitment to the long-term operation and maintenance costs of the Site.

Growth Inducement

Implementation of the Plan may result in some increased recreational use of the Site. This increased recreational use will be carefully managed to support the vision and goals established to maintain the quality of the Site’s important natural, scenic, and historic resources. There will be positive, on-going, economic impacts to communities surrounding the Site in the form of business to gas stations, restaurants, and convenience stores. Tourism-related expenditures for activities such as special events, and use of rental facilities can be an element in the economic vitality of localities. The following all contribute to regional benefits: new educational and recreational activities; rehabilitated and new trails; open space with significant natural resources and scenic vistas of the Hudson River Valley; and the Site’s location near state and county roadways.

Supplemental Environmental Review

Portions of this Plan/EIS are somewhat general or conceptual. Decisions regarding the type and extent of certain actions will be dependent on the findings from specific studies or analyses still to be completed. For example, the specific site designs for the solar array, parking area, park entrance and some trail projects will require more detailed site analysis. The findings from these site-specific evaluations may identify impacts that were not addressed or known during the development of this Plan/EIS. Under such a circumstance, an additional or supplemental environmental review may be required.

As part of the agency's responsibility under the State Environmental Quality Review Act, OPRHP will review proposed implementation projects with respect to consistency with this Plan/EIS. Projects found by OPRHP to be consistent with the Plan can go forward without any additional review. Other types of proposals may require additional review ranging from completion of an environmental assessment form to perhaps a site-specific environmental impact statement. To assist in this consistency evaluation, the following types of actions have been identified in 6 NYCRR Part 617 as likely to require additional review under SEQR:

- Any new actions not addressed within this DEIS that do not meet the Type II categories identified in Part 617, the rules and regulations implementing SEQR;
- Any change from the preferred alternatives for natural resource protection, recreational and facility development (including trails) or other elements of the Plan which would result in significant environmental impacts not disclosed in this DEIS;
- Any leases, easements, memoranda of understanding, or other agreements between OPRHP and private entities or other agencies that affect resources in a manner that is not sufficiently addressed in this DEIS;
- Any project determined through review by the OPRHP Division for Historic Preservation to have an Adverse Impact on historic or cultural resources at the Site;
- Any proposals for new trails, trail segments or trail uses not addressed in the Plan that would affect resources in a manner not sufficiently addressed in this DEIS;
- Site design of the solar array and roadway entrance, historic structure modifications/additions, the new parking lot and trailhead, as the scope of work for these projects is not known at this time.

Relationship to Other Programs

Coastal Zone Management Program Consistency

Clermont State Historic Site is located within New York's coastal area, specifically the Hudson River. In accordance with the NY Waterfront Revitalization and Coastal Resources Act (Executive Law Article 42) state agency actions within the coastal area must be evaluated for their consistency with the State's coastal policies. The overall objective of this program is to assure a balance between development and preservation of the State's coastal areas.

A small section of Clermont State Historic Site is located within the boundaries of the Town of Red Hook Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) in Dutchess County. There are currently no actions proposed within this small area of the Site. If future actions are proposed, they will be reviewed under SEQR prior to implementation and will also be reviewed for their consistency with the Town of Red Hook LWRP as appropriate. The actions within the remainder of the Site, which are outside of the boundary of

the LWRP, have been reviewed for their consistency with the statewide coastal management policies (NYCRR Title 19, Part 600.5). (See Appendix H, Coastal Assessment Form.)

After a review of all policies (NYCRR Title 19, Part 600.5), OPRHP has determined which policies are applicable to this Master Plan. A State Coastal Assessment Form (CAF) has been completed to assist in the identification of applicable policies. The CAF and discussion of those policies are provided in Appendix H. Policies applicable to the plan include those related to fish and wildlife habitats, scenic quality, public access, recreation, and water resources.

Summary

Based on the coastal policy discussion contained in Appendix H, it is OPRHP's determination the action will not substantially hinder the achievement of any of the policies and purposes of the State Coastal Policies as described in the New York Coastal Management Program



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P. 28 – User:Nikater, CC BY-SA 3.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>>, via Wikimedia Commons

P. 62 – The Robinson Family, Germantown Historical Society



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