

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

**Draft Master Plan
for
Clermont State Historic Site**

Town of Clermont, Columbia County

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

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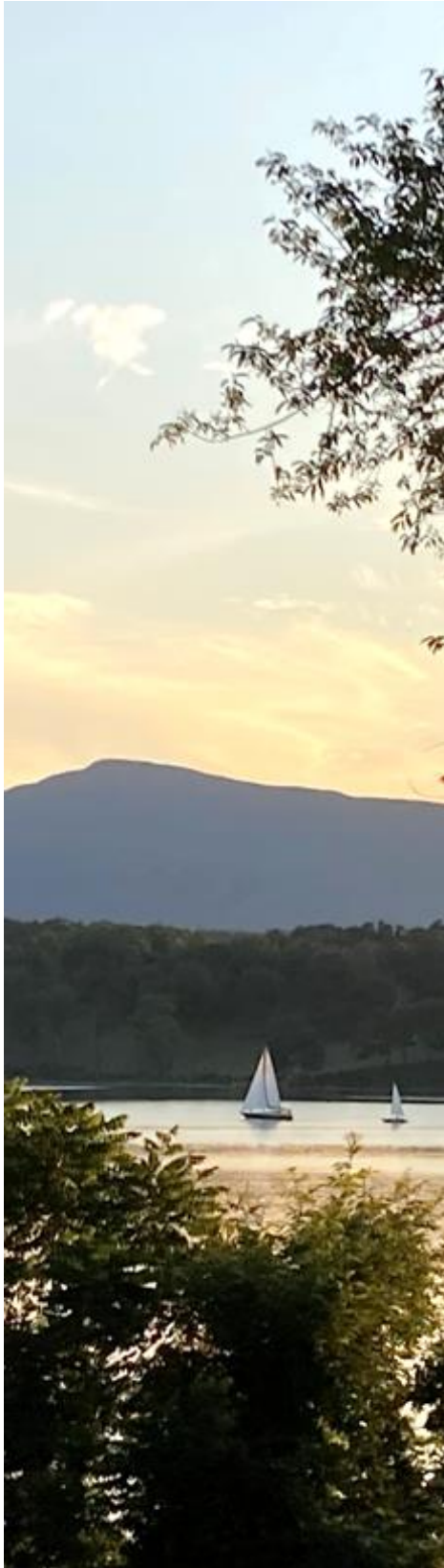
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Abbreviations and Acronyms Used

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
DEC	New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
DEIS	Draft Environmental Impact Statement
DHP	Division for Historic Preservation
DOT	New York State Department of Transportation
FEIS	Final Environmental Impact Statement
LWCF	Land and Water Conservation Fund
NYNHP	New York Natural Heritage Program
NHL	National Historic Landmark
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act of 1966
NPS	National Park Service
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
NYSEG	New York State Electric and Gas
NYS	New York State
OPRHP	New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
SEQR	State Environmental Quality Review Act
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office





Executive Summary

Over the centuries, views from the Clermont State Historic Site across the Hudson River towards the Catskill Mountains have changed very little. This grand prospect was no doubt a draw for seven generations of New York's politically and socially prominent Livingston Family, who lived here from 1740 until 2000, leaving an indelible imprint on the Site's landscape, architecture, and interior design. This site has also been a home and workplace for other inhabitants, including indigenous communities, indentured servants and tenant farmers, enslaved and free blacks, and early Palatine settlers.

Located within NY State Park's Taconic Region, Clermont is an integral part of a region rich in history. Its landscape today appears much as it did in the early 20th century, offering visitors an authentic glimpse into New York's past. Clermont's preservation was assured when, in 1962, it became a NY State Historic Site and then designated a National Historic Landmark in 1973. The Site is also within the Hudson Valley's Great Estates Region and an anchor within the Hudson River National Landmark District.

Generations of the Livingston Family played an important role in American commerce, politics, military, industry, and society. Perhaps most well-known was Robert R. Livingston, Jr., (1746–1813), a member of the committee that drafted the Declaration of Independence and who, in 1789, administered the presidential oath of office to George Washington. A younger brother, Edward Livingston (1764–1836) served as Mayor of New York City, was a Louisiana State Senator, and appointed Secretary of State by President Andrew Jackson in 1831.¹ The family's last two generations, Mr. and Mrs. John Henry Livingston, and their daughters, Honoria and Janet also lived at the Site, with Janet residing there until 2000.

Central to the Historic Site's purpose today is an expanding awareness of the experiences of all its former inhabitants. Ongoing research and new source materials help to create programs and exhibits that reflect the region's multicultural past. By portraying a fuller spectrum of human experience, the Site can offer more opportunities for visitors to connect with — and better understand — this place and its rich and layered history.

Why A Master Plan?

Public open spaces today face pressures from climate change, usage trends, development, and budget constraints. A master plan helps to build more resilient facilities by providing a forward-thinking approach to navigating these pressures and guiding productive change. It helps identify, activate, and conserve places and objects that reflect our collective past and ensure an integrated approach to preservation and stewardship in the future.

A master plan becomes the institutional memory for a facility. It documents a facility's physical and operational elements and considers how well it functions. It offers site managers an effective tool for decision-making, providing phased and prioritized recommendations for action. To ensure the long-term preservation of a historic site's buildings, landscapes, and archaeological resources requires a specialized approach. A master plan helps to balance preservation needs with natural resource stewardship.

A successful master plan is also grounded in community engagement. Public input helps identify barriers to access and fosters greater equity in the visitor experience. Engaging diverse stakeholders helps planners to identify and implement sustainable best strategies and solutions. Community support for proposed changes in the plan will help to ensure that the facility's infrastructure, activities, and educational content are accessible and relevant to a broader audience.

Trends

The Hudson River Valley has seen dramatic changes over the past decade, perhaps the most notable the decrease of agriculture and the increase in residential use.² An influx of new residents, primarily from the NYC metropolitan region, has been seen over the past decade, with both full-time and second home ownership expanding significantly. In 2020, Columbia County saw a 204% increase in relocations, many of which were due to work and lifestyle changes that occurred during the Coronavirus Pandemic.³ The influx of new residents has since slowed but these shifts in regional land use and demographics continue, influenced by factors that include the ability to work remotely.

While NYS Park attendance has risen steadily overall (by about 43 percent since 2008), attendance rose dramatically between 2020 and 2021, as people sought access to safe outdoor spaces during the Pandemic. These increases were sustained through 2022, when a record 79.5 million visits were recorded, an increase of more than one million visitors from the previous year.⁴ Clermont saw a corresponding increase in visitors during this period, from 86,711 visitors in 2018-19 to 117,818 recorded during 2021-2022.

The number of New Yorkers aged 65 and over has also increased and grown more diverse, which also influences park usage trends.⁵ Changing demographic patterns of both the overall state and the Hudson River Valley will influence what visitors are looking for regarding types of activities, programs, and recreational open space. Factors such as these are considered when making decisions about infrastructure and services to be offered at Clermont in the future.

The frequency of severe storms, heat waves, and diminished snowfall from a changing climate continue to impact tourism and visitation patterns.⁶ In the OPRHP Commissioner's *NY Parks 100 Update on OPRHP Priorities and Strategies*, climate change was identified as the greatest challenge the NYS park

system faces. Temperature extremes, flooding from more frequent and intense storms, and warming winters all have the potential to affect outdoor recreation. In NYS, temperature increases since 1970 have surpassed national and global averages, and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has projected that the state will see another 2°F to 3°F rise in temperature in the 2020s, with as much as a 6°F increase by mid-century. An analysis of potential climate-related impacts on national parks indicates that visitation at almost all parks may change as severe heat waves become more frequent and last longer.⁷

Warmer air temperatures also impact sea levels, which are rising. The Hudson River is connected to the sea, which is why it experiences tides and contains saltwater in its lower regions. It is also why the river's water level is rising; since 1900, sea level in the lower Hudson has risen 15 inches, and scientists project it will rise another four to ten inches in the 2020s, and nine to 27 inches by mid-century.⁸ A higher sea level results in more storm surge flooding and puts coastal facilities at higher risk.

Sites with cultural, historic, and archaeological value are especially at risk of being damaged or lost altogether as climate change impacts increase. Damage to historic buildings and landscapes from storms and wind, damage to sensitive objects and finishes from exposure to increased humidity during power outages and flooding, and even loss of archaeological sites that have not yet been discovered are all areas of concern.⁹

Historically significant sites also have an opportunity to educate the public on climate issues, and appropriate responses to changing climate conditions can help adaptation and mitigation planners identify better strategies that integrate both natural science and cultural heritage.¹⁰





Introduction

A group of OPRHP staff first met in June 2021 to begin the planning process. Already an important historic resource with exceptional significance to the State of New York, with thoughtful planning, the Clermont State Historic Site (“Clermont”) has the potential to become a more relevant and resilient public resource. To develop this plan, the group took a deep dive into understanding how visitors experience the Site and developed the actions in the master plan that will be implemented over the next 10 to 15 years.

This plan seeks to blend Clermont’s overarching historical theme with new uses and content to meet demand for activities that visitors look for today. Created by a dynamic group, including the Taconic Regional Director Clermont’s Site Manager and operations staff, as well as trails planners, historic preservation experts, members of the public and the Friends of Clermont group, as well as stewardship staff, and specialists in education and interpretative content development.

The planning team worked together to compile resource materials, conduct research, consult with subject-matter experts, and solicit community input. Public meetings held during the plan’s development were attended by members of the Friends of Clermont, community leaders and partners, nearby residents, and other interested participants, reflecting a wide range of interests and viewpoints.

The resulting plan will bring thoughtful and measured increases in activity to Clermont by — among other strategies — expanding awareness of the Site’s less evident resources, revitalizing less-frequented sections, adapting underutilized buildings for new uses, and supporting these changes with improvements in maintenance, staffing, and operations.

In addition, while Clermont’s features have important intrinsic value, it is the human stories that people may relate to most and are among its most important resources. The Site offers the opportunity to bring a greater awareness to the people who lived and worked here, and who made great contributions to the State’s economic, political, and cultural development over the past three centuries.

Finally, this master plan will help to align the sometimes-competing goals for natural resource stewardship, historic resource preservation, and public preferences. It gives these ideas form and provides a framework and realistic plan for implementation.

Planning that has been done in the past

A master plan was first developed for Clermont in 1962, at the time of its founding as a state park. This plan reflects the Site’s early days when the park was developed for public recreation, with conveniences such as paved roads, a public restroom, and picnic tables. In 1981, the state agency administering the Site evolved from the “Office of Parks and Recreation,” when “Historic Preservation” was added to its name. The focus at Clermont shifted accordingly. In 1982, the original plan was updated to reflect this change, and then revised again in 1993. That plan is now 30 years old. While some content is still relevant, it does not reflect current Site conditions or recreation trends. Changes in the region, visitor preferences, staff resources, technology, and new environmental concerns since that time call for a fresh look at the facility.

Current Planning

The master plan analyzes the facility’s existing cultural, natural, recreational, and operational resources in the context of relevant social, economic, and physical factors. From discussions surrounding these topics, and in the context of factors related to the region’s population, economy, housing, transportation, and other public amenities, a series of proposed actions, or alternatives, were developed for the Site.¹¹ Alternatives that best met OPRHP’s mission and the region’s vision for the facility were identified as actionable items, or Preferred Alternatives, subject to future implementation.

Cumulatively, the actions in the plan represent OPRHP’s long-term vision for the rehabilitation, interpretation and enhancement of the site, and the protection and preservation of its cultural, recreational, and natural resources. The plan always considers the Status Quo Alternative: to keep the site as it is used and operated today with no recommended expansion or improvements.

OPRHP has agency-wide policies to address management issues commonly faced by its Parks and Historic Sites. These cover topics such as historic collections acquisition; loan, transfer, and disposal of museum collections; public-private partnerships, recognition of donations, the management of trees and wildlife, and more. OPRHP policy documents are available at the following website:

<https://parks.ny.gov/inside-our-agency/public-documents.aspx>.

Outreach

Initial public feedback was collected via an online visitor survey, circulated in October 2021. Responses provided information on visitation, recreation, preferred activities, ideas for future activities and demographic data that helped to inform early goal development for the plan.

In March 2022, a meeting was held with the Friends of Clermont to discuss the planning process and hear about their goals and vision for the historic site. A virtual public outreach meeting attended by

adjacent landowners, elected officials, regional nonprofits, and other stakeholders, held in May 2022, provided an opportunity for the larger community to share their ideas, preferences, and identified needs for the facility. Site infrastructure issues, interpretation and education, special events, and community outreach were some of the topics discussed. Feedback received during this event helped set the stage for moving forward on the draft plan.

Planning and Environmental Review

The environmental review of Master Plans for state facilities is conducted in accordance with the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). OPRHP fully integrates its planning and environmental review processes. The Clermont State Historic Site Master Plan is accompanied by an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which provides that environmental review in compliance with SEQRA.

Sustainability

OPRHP is committed to reducing its impact on the environment, and to help mitigate climate change issues by becoming more carbon neutral. By adopting sustainable practices in park development, operation, and maintenance its facilities can help to address these issues statewide. The agency incorporates nature-based solutions and green infrastructure practices, where practicable. Sustainable practices and alternatives were considered when recommending proposed changes and updates to existing facilities, and these considerations have been applied throughout the plan.

Actions in this plan have been developed to maximize energy efficiency and minimize environmental impact. Reducing fossil fuel use; reducing or eliminating hazardous substances, protecting and enhancing biodiversity and ecosystems and using resources efficiently to meet Site needs are all of high importance for the facility. Recommended actions have been developed, when practicable, to maximize energy efficiency and minimize environmental impact; reduce fossil fuel use; reduce or eliminate hazardous substances; protect and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems and use resources efficiently to meet park needs. Protecting, restoring, and enhancing natural areas and increasing biodiversity are also of high importance for the facility.

Implementation Priorities

This master plan establishes OPRHP's vision for capital improvements and operational enhancements at a facility over the next ten to fifteen years. 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 budget), the availability of staff, and the need to balance investments throughout OPRHP facilities.

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 priorities, as follows:

- Priority 1 (high: completed in 1-3 years)
- Priority 2 (medium: completed in 3-5 years)
- Priority 3 (long-term: completed in 5-10 years)

Plan elements shown in the table on the pages below are subject to reorganization based on need and available funding.

IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITY LEVEL	SITE ACTIVITY/ COMPONENT
<i>Alternatives for Natural Resources</i>	
Ongoing	Using current climate change data and modeling techniques, develop long-range planning recommendations to protect the Site's natural elements from future impacts.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Define and prioritize regular invasive species management tasks Site-wide.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Identify and implement protections for old-growth native trees (150-year-old range) within Clermont's woodlands and historical/cultural landscape.
Priority Level 2 (3-5 years)	Identify and evaluate mapped and unmapped water resources at the Site and determine priority actions for their protection.
Ongoing	Protect the Hudson River and other waterbodies from Site runoff by implementing green infrastructure (GI), where feasible, in retrofits and new infrastructure.
Ongoing	Implement pollinator support strategies including mowing reductions, invasive species management, and strategic planting of important food species.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Improve habitat connectivity at adjacent properties by fostering relationships and increasing outreach to adjacent landowners.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Identify and implement best management strategies for addressing nuisance animal species at the Site.
<i>Alternatives for Cultural Resources - Clermont Mansion</i>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Develop and implement a comprehensive Historic Structures Report and Conditions Study to appropriately protect and preserve the Mansion.
<i>Alternatives for Cultural Resources - Sylvan Cottage</i>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Rehabilitate and retrofit Sylvan Cottage as an accessible, multi-use education center with classrooms, a kitchen, restrooms, and defined parking area.
<i>Alternatives for Cultural Resources - Red Barn</i>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	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).
Priority Level 2 (3-5 years)	Develop an area adjacent to the Red Barn to serve as a seasonal outdoor events venue.
Priority Level 2 (3-5 years)	Build a small addition at rear of the Red Barn to house a public restroom, changing area, storage, and a warming kitchen.
Priority Level 2 (3-5 years)	Rehabilitate the interior of the Barn to accommodate three-season use such as exhibits, while preserving character-defining elements.

<u><i>Alternatives for Cultural Resources - Clermont Cottage</i></u>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Provide accessible parking, walkways, and entrance at Clermont Cottage.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Remediate Clermont Cottage for mold and mildew and install appropriate insulation in needed areas.
<u><i>Alternatives for Cultural Resources - Icehouse & Root Cellar</i></u>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Stabilize the icehouse and root cellar; remove vegetation, replace safety railing, and add gravel with weed barrier around the perimeter.
<u><i>Alternatives for Archaeological Resources</i></u>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Implement a Phase I archaeological survey at Clermont and develop a comprehensive archaeological report and sensitivity analysis of the entire Site.
<u><i>Alternatives for Collections</i></u>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Work with the Bureau of Historic Sites to develop a furnishing plan, to research and document objects at the Site as they existed historically.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	With the Bureau of Historic Sites, re-evaluate Clermont's Collections Policy; review its parameters and the scope of collections.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	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.
Priority Level 2 (3-5 years)	Evaluate storage conditions for object collections held in the mansion and make recommendations for improvements.
<u><i>Cultural Landscape - Arryl House Ruins</i></u>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to stabilize the Arryl House Ruins and adjacent historic elements.
<u><i>Cultural Landscape - Other Elements</i></u>	
Priority Level 2 (3-5 years)	Work with Division for Historic Preservation staff to survey Clermont's existing remnant historic structures to evaluate their condition, significance, and needs.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Develop a management/maintenance program for historic landscape elements with tasks clearly spelled out.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Restore the Locust Tree allée parallel to the main visitor parking lot.
<u><i>Education & Programming</i></u>	
Ongoing	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.

Ongoing	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.
Priority Level 2 (3-5 years)	Cultivate funding sources for developing an annual exhibit in the mansion gallery.
<u><i>Interpretation</i></u>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Revise and update Clermont's Interpretative Statement.
Priority Level 2 (3-5 years)	Develop interpretative content for underutilized resources.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	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.
Ongoing	Strengthen role of the Clermont's Advisory Committee to guide interpretive development.
<u><i>Outreach & Marketing</i></u>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Foster more visibility for Clermont and awareness of its offerings by increasing outreach and marketing strategies.
<u><i>Recreation Infrastructure</i></u>	
Priority Level 2 (3-5 years)	Assess the feasibility of providing public access to the Site's holdings along the Hudson River shoreline.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	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).
Priority Level 2 (3-5 years)	Maintain connections with equestrian community by developing special events that highlight equestrian use as a historic recreation activity at the Site.
<u><i>Picnic Facilities</i></u>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Create accessible picnic facilities within the current picnic area.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Create a new picnic area adjacent to the Ice Pond.
<u><i>Trails</i></u>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Improve the existing trail system at Clermont by addressing portions of trails where erosion, wetness, or steep grades exist.
Ongoing	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.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	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.

Priority Level 2 (3-5 years)	Establish a formal trailhead and parking area at the existing informal access point near the flagpole where visitors currently park.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Finalize and implement a preferred layout for the entire trail system.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Develop a trail signage plan based on final trail layout and produce and install trailhead kiosks, intersectional, and trail marking blazes and signage.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Develop an accessible interpretive trail near the mansion.
<u><i>Accessibility - Pedestrian Infrastructure</i></u>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Conduct a comprehensive analysis to identify accessibility issues site-wide with recommendations for addressing issues where possible.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	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.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Improve access to Hudson River/Catskill Mountain views by constructing a viewing platform.
<u><i>Accessibility - Mansion</i></u>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	In coordination with the Division for Historic Preservation, develop a study to determine how to provide an accessible entrance and restrooms at the mansion and an elevator for universal access to exhibits and staff office space.
<u><i>Accessibility - Staff Offices</i></u>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Keep staff offices located in the mansion and renovate them.
<u><i>Accessibility - Visitor Center</i></u>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	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.
<u><i>Accessibility - Vehicular Infrastructure</i></u>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Relocate the main visitor entrance, adding a new roadway section through an existing open area in the woodlands .
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Improve emergency access from the visitor parking lot to the mansion by installing a route with firm, stable surface materials.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Improve access to north section of the Site by re-paving the north carriage road and improving drainage infrastructure to address erosion.
<u><i>Accessibility - Parking</i></u>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Redevelop the visitor parking lot with new pavement, green stormwater management elements, pedestrian paths, and clear pavement markings.

Priority Level 2 (3-5 years)	Improve existing parking areas at the mansion, Sylvan and Clermont Cottages, and the Red Barn to ensure accessibility and meet future demand.
Priority Level 2 (3-5 years)	Develop a parking area in the north section of the Site with green infrastructure, if determined feasible.
<u><i>Utilities - Solar</i></u>	
Priority Level 2 (3-5 years)	Develop solar power at Clermont as a grid-tied system to offset utility costs.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Purchase fuel generators to provide emergency backup power for the mansion and maintenance facility.
<u><i>Site Maintenance & Operations</i></u>	
Ongoing	Develop a schedule of rotating wedding tent locations to decrease damage to lawns and reduce soil compaction.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Install a site-wide security camera system.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Develop a Site-specific plan that identifies current and anticipated future climate change impacts with strategies to address at-risk elements.
Ongoing	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).
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Upgrade the maintenance area facility by adding drive-through pole barns, a fueling tank, pickup truck, wash bay, and repair failing pavement.
	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).
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Upgrade and repair the Site's drainage infrastructure to address site-wide wet areas, erosion, standing water, and deteriorating pavements.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Implement a phased, prioritized plan to upgrade Internet/WiFi technology for both staff and public use.
Ongoing	Select energy-efficient equipment, materials, and low-impact, green approaches for Site maintenance and operations.
<u><i>Management & Staffing</i></u>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Develop a staffing plan to ensure that staffing levels are sufficient to support future development proposed in the master plan.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Improve visitor management on high-volume days by stationing staff or volunteers at key locations as "ambassadors" to address FAQs and address ongoing maintenance issues, such as litter.

<i>Partnerships & Volunteers</i>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Create a paid position for volunteer coordinator.
Ongoing	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).
Ongoing	Develop stronger connections with local fire department, EMS, and police.



Playhouse and Cutting Garden

Vision Statement

Agency Mission Statement

Actions and recommendations in master plans developed for OPRHP facilities are guided by the mission of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, which is: “to provide safe and enjoyable recreational and interpretive opportunities for all New York State residents and visitors and to be responsible stewards of our valuable natural, historic and cultural resources.”

Clermont Vision

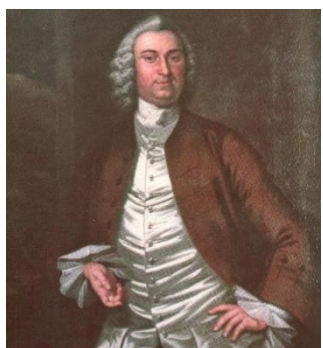
Early in the planning process, the planning group developed a statement as to how they envision Clermont in the future. The vision statement below was developed as a guide to the planning process.

Clermont will be a cultural, historic, and natural destination that is accessible and relevant to all New Yorkers and beyond. It will be a leader in visitor engagement and dialogue. It will reflect our diverse regional heritage along with our present and future role in the Hudson Valley, using the site’s historic context and restorative landscape.





Robert Livingston
"the First Lord"



Robert Livingston
"the Judge"



Margaret Beekman
Livingston



Robert R. Livingston,
"the Chancellor"

Background

On a bluff overlooking the Hudson River in southwestern Columbia County, the Clermont State Historic Site features a grand estate that was occupied for more than two centuries by seven generations of New York's politically and socially prominent Livingston family. New York's Livingston family included politicians, technological innovators, merchants, and artists who helped shape the state — and country — from the time of its founding into the twentieth century.

The original Clermont estate was established in 1728, by Robert Livingston following the death of his father, the "First Lord" Robert Livingston, a colonial New York official, fur trader, and businessman. The First Lord Livingston owned a 160,000-acre tract of land granted to him in 1715 by King George I of Great Britain. One of the larger family landholdings in the Hudson Valley, this property, known as Livingston Manor, included a large portion of what is now Columbia County.¹² "Manors" along with various patents and land grants, were the basic units of European settlement in the Hudson Valley. As the First Lord Livingston brought tenant farmers in to work the land, this early member of the family was one of the driving forces for European settlement in the Hudson River Valley.

In 1775, the First Lord Livingston died, passing the estate on to his son Robert, known as "Judge" Livingston to distinguish him from his father. Judge Livingston was a member of the New York General Assembly, served as judge of the admiralty court, and was a delegate to the Stamp Act Congress of 1765. He married Margaret Beekman, and their son, Robert R. Livingston (later known as the "Chancellor"), served on the Committee of Five that drafted the United States Declaration of Independence.

The Chancellor Livingston, who lived from 1746 to 1813, was Clermont's most prominent resident. An active patriot during the Revolutionary War, in 1789, he administered the oath of office to President George Washington. He also served as Secretary of Foreign Affairs and was lead negotiator for the Louisiana Purchase. Chancellor Livingston also partnered with Robert Fulton in 1807 to create the first commercially viable steamboat used on the Hudson River, the North River Steamboat (later known as the Clermont), which stopped at the house on its inaugural trip.

Many of Chancellor Livingston's agricultural pursuits were research driven. For example, he tried domesticating elk and moose. Those attempts failed but one of his projects that did succeed was the use of gypsum as a fertilizer. For a time, Chancellor Livingston also maintained an experimental farm where he grew new varieties of fruits and vegetables.¹³ He recorded all his agricultural experiments in *The Transactions of the Society for Promoting Agriculture, Arts & Manufactures* (Now the Albany Institute of History and Art) of which he was a founding member.

The first Livingston house on the site was a brick Georgian mansion burned by British troops in 1777. The home was rebuilt soon afterwards and repeatedly remodeled over the next 120 years as the Colonial Revival home that now stands at the site.

When Judge Livingston died unexpectedly on December 9, 1775, his wife, Margaret Beekman Livingston, was left alone with several of their ten children. She was living there when in 1777, during the American Revolution, British ships sailed upriver from New York City, having already stormed two forts in the Hudson Highlands and burned the City of Kingston. The British army led a raiding party to Clermont and, as retaliation for the Livingston Family's support of the Revolution, burned the house and 24 other buildings at the estate. Margaret and her children escaped safely to a relative's house in Connecticut, and she rebuilt the house at Clermont and was able to host George and Martha Washington there in 1782.¹⁴

In 1793, Robert Livingston built a second mansion on the property, called New Clermont (subsequently known as both "Arryl House" and "Idele"), which burned in 1909. The ruins of that house are still visible at the south end of the property.

The children and grandchildren of Judge Robert and Margaret Beekman Livingston of Clermont were important members of the wealthy New York community, with substantial accomplishments of their own. Their son Henry commanded the 4th New York Regiment at the Battles of Saratoga and Monmouth and at Valley Forge. Their son Edward was a senator and served as Andrew Jackson's



A Hudson Valley scene painted by Montgomery Livingston, who was active in the Hudson River School of Art

Secretary of State. Of their daughters, Janet married General Richard Montgomery and Margaret Livingston married Thomas Tillotson, an army surgeon who became New York Secretary of State. Janet was a powerful woman who lobbied George Washington to give her brother a political appointment on the Supreme Court or Treasury Department, and managed Montgomery Place for decades as a widow. Catherine married Freeborn Garretson and helped to bring Methodism to the Hudson River Valley. Gertrude married General Morgan Lewis, one of New York's early governors. Joanna married Peter Livingston, a successful cousin and lieutenant governor. Alida married General John Armstrong, a senator and Secretary of War.

Clermont was also the home of the great-grandson of Chancellor Livingston, Montgomery Livingston (1816-1855). An artist who lived most of his life at Clermont, he was a member of the Hudson River School of painting. Several of his paintings are in Clermont's collection.

The Clermont estate was a working farm, as well as a country retreat for the Livingston family, well into the twentieth century. The seven successive generations of the family left their imprint on the Site's architecture, room interiors, and landscape.¹⁵

The Site's final Livingston owners were John Henry Livingston and his wife Alice Delafield Clarkson Livingston, who remodeled the mansion in the late nineteenth century and the 1920s, and greatly valued its important historical role. Alice Livingston was responsible for creating many of the landscaped gardens that are seen today. After John Henry's death, Alice turned the mansion and property over to the state in 1962 so that "all the people of New York could enjoy it."¹⁶



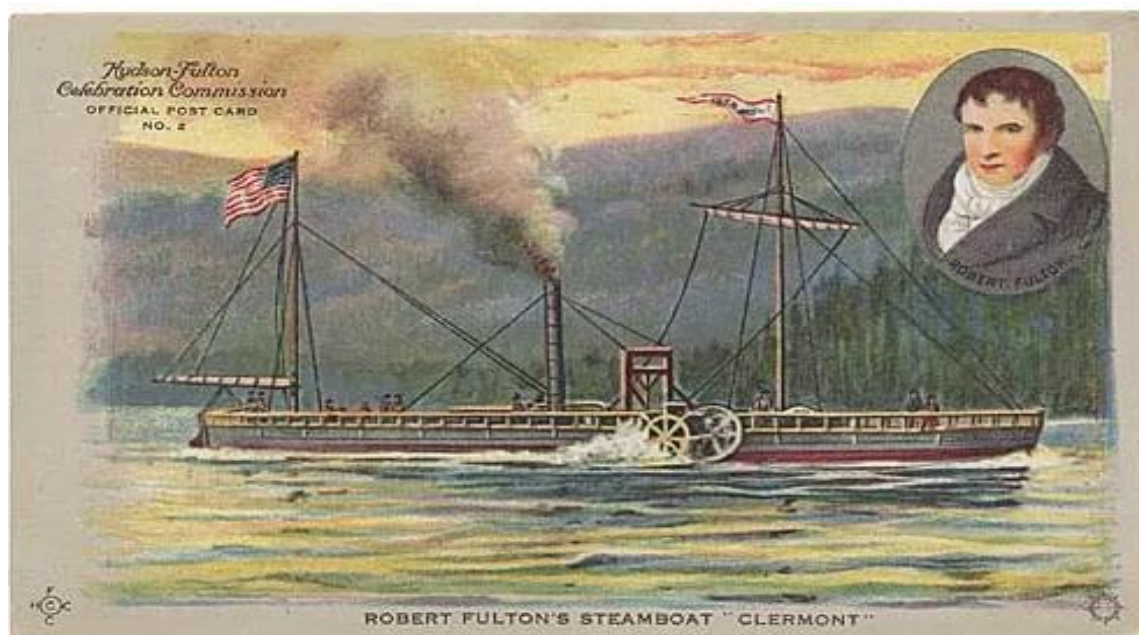
John Henry Livingston's library

Timeline

1674	Robert Livingston the First Lord arrives in America from Scotland
1740	The original house at Clermont is built by (Judge) Robert Livingston
1777	The original Clermont house is burned by British troops during the Revolutionary War
1779-1782	Margaret Beekman Livingston rebuilds the Clermont home after her husband's death
1783	George and Martha Washington are hosted in the newly rebuilt house at Clermont
1793	A second mansion is built at the Site, which burns in 1909; remains are still visible
1807	Robert R. Livingston develops the first commercially successful steamboat for use on the Hudson River
1816-1855	Hudson River School artist Montgomery Livingston resides at Clermont
1962	Alice Livingston gives the mansion and property to NYS
1972	Clermont State Historic Site is designated a U.S. National Historic Landmark

Establishment of the Historic Site

Clermont passed through generations of Livingstons before being turned over to New York State in 1962 for public use. In its early years the facility was operated as a traditional park; roads, parking lot, picnic tables, grills, and a public restroom were installed.¹⁷ In 1966, the Rockefeller administration created the New York State Historic Trust, later the Division for Historic Preservation, and Clermont State Historic Site was designated a United States National Historic Landmark in 1972 and is listed in the State and National Registers of Historic Places. In 1974, a Historic Site Manager and Interpretive Programs Assistant were hired for Clermont and the Site gained a new administrative framework as a historic park.



Chancellor Livingston was active in the development of the first steamboat for practical use on the Hudson River

The current Historic Site encompasses not only the mansion, rebuilt by Margaret Beekman Livingston, and added onto by later generations, but over 500 acres of landscaped gardens, meadows, and woodlands preserved for the enjoyment of future generations. The Playhouse is also a contributing resource to this historic property.

The house and its contents and grounds were given to the state in 1962. The mansion was kept intact, and today it still appears much as it did in the 1930s. Its furnishings reflect three centuries of the Livingston family's occupancy, with fine Empire period furniture, exquisite chandeliers, porcelain objects, and original paintings. The grounds feature a brick-walled garden, the 1820s "Lilac Walk," and a wilderness garden. Clermont's trails and natural areas also feature some of the best bird watching in the region.¹⁸

Location and Access

Clermont is located about midway between the Rip Van Winkle and Kingston-Rhinecliff Bridges that span the Hudson River to link Columbia, Dutchess, and Ulster Counties. It is approximately 45 miles south of Albany, and 110 miles north of New York City. The Site is bordered by U.S. Route 9G, and the closest major highway is the Taconic State Parkway. The closest village is Tivoli. Although located in the Town of Clermont, the Site's mailing address is in nearby Germantown.

The Region

Columbia and Dutchess Counties are in the eastern part of New York State, southeast of Albany and immediately west of the Massachusetts border. Their western border is the Hudson River. For decades this bucolic region has attracted urban residents looking for a quiet rural retreat. The area's working farms, historic inns and taverns, wineries, and views of the Catskills across the river provide a cross-section of the Hudson Valley's landscape and history. The name Columbia comes from the Latin feminine form of the name Christopher Columbus, which was — at the time of its formation — a popular proposal for the name of the United States.¹⁹ Dutchess was named after Mary of Modena, then Duchess of York and wife of the future King James II of England.²⁰

Site Description

Detailed descriptions of the Site's existing historical, cultural, recreational, and natural elements in this section are summaries that highlight its most important elements. More detailed descriptions, data, and maps of these resources are included in the DEIS and Appendices.

Pre-Historic

Carbon testing has indicated that by 7000 B.C. people were living and hunting in the Taconic Region.²¹ These first inhabitants were hunters and gatherers who likely followed migrations of birds and game as far north as Albany or even Lake George in the summer and then down into Pennsylvania and other points south in winter. Their weapons were Stone Age in nature.

Over time, the Hudson Valley gradually became peopled with small, semi-nomadic groups. Though still hunting and gathering, they built their camps along creeks, moving as resources were depleted. Some groups lived on inland sites in winter, moving closer to the Hudson River in summer. With its tall trees and rock shelters, the shoreline provided protection from both cold and heat, making the area appealing for longer habitation. Although hunting and gathering were still prevalent during this era, a more settled lifestyle emerged. This way of life existed for around 7500 years, gradually coming to an end about 3000 years ago.

By 1609, when the Dutch arrived, the people they encountered in the region were still hunters, fishers, and gatherers of a variety of natural foods but were also cultivating large gardens of corn, beans, squash, melons, and pumpkins. This period would last beyond the arrival of Henry Hudson and through the early years of Dutch settlement.²²

In the early eighteenth century the area now known as Germantown was still occupied by the Mohican people. Those who settled in the valley named the river Mahicannituck, meaning the Waters That Are Never Still. During this time, a vast Mohican territory extended on both sides of the river, from the isle of Manhattan to Lake Champlain, east to Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Vermont, and west to Schoharie Creek. When the Dutch arrived in the region, Mohican communities of around 50 people each were found throughout the Mohican nation.²³

Early European Settlement

As European settlers expanded their range throughout New England, Mohican communities were progressively affected. An armed conflict known as King Philip's War, which occurred from 1675 to 1676, took place between the region's indigenous inhabitants and colonists with their indigenous allies. The war's impact on native populations of southern New England included not only loss of life but the continued erosion of indigenous sovereignty, land rights, and communities.²⁴



Carriage Road routes are a popular walking route at the Clermont Site.

As more Europeans settled in the region, Mohicans sold their land to the Dutch and others in exchange for needed resources lost in the destruction of their farms and communities. Their self-reliance and sustenance from the land was further diminished by increased dependency on the settlers for their provisions. Between 1647 and 1734 there are many recorded sales of land in Columbia County and other parts of the Mohican nation, first to the Dutch and then to the English. Settlers began dividing the land, establishing fences and boundary lines. Eventually, the Mohicans were driven from their territory west of the Hudson and continued to move further east. By 1736 most had left the region.²⁵

In 1710, Robert Livingston sold 6,000 acres of his property to Queen Anne of Great Britain for use as work camps and resettlement of Palatine German refugees. These groups were settled at the camps to pay off their passage as indentured labor. The colony, first known as "East Camp", was later renamed "Germantown" for these early residents. Germantown was one of the seven original towns of Columbia County established by an act passed March 7, 1788 (the others were Kinderhook, Canaan, Claverack, Hillsdale, Clermont, and Livingston.)²⁶

Clermont's Cultural, Historical, and Recreational Resources

The centerpiece of Clermont today is the Livingston Family mansion, a nine-bedroom, brick Georgian-style house sited on a bluff overlooking the Hudson River. Entering the restored mansion filled with original furnishings and artwork allows visitors to step back in time into rooms that illustrate a significant period in early New York. Other historically significant structures include two rustic cottages and two historic barns, as well as the ruins of an earlier Livingston residence, the Arryl House, and remnants of an icehouse, a root cellar, and a greenhouse. Foundations and rubble of early tenant farmhouses can be found at multiple locations on the property.

A system of former carriage roads, walking paths, and wooded trails are threaded throughout the Site, allowing visitors to access views that have not much changed over the centuries. Clermont also has five historic gardens, as well as meadows, a man-made pond, and remnants of outbuildings from Clermont's agrarian past.

In addition to its historic significance, Clermont also functions as a park, with recreational amenities that include hiking trails, picnic tables, and a public restroom. Mature trees dotting the landscape create a tranquil setting that provides visitors a public space to meet friends and family, take a walk, or enjoy nature. Interpretive signs and a Visitor Center offer information on Clermont's history and encourage reflection on the development of the Site from its pre-development state into an agricultural site, and finally to a 21st century recreational space.

Historic Structures

Mansion

The intact Livingston mansion is the predominant structure of historic significance at Clermont. In 2022 a capital project restored the mansion's exterior. Deteriorated stucco and masonry walls, architectural wood components, windows, and storm windows were repaired or replaced, and exterior stone terraces and walls were also restored. Other buildings contributing to the historic significance of the Clermont estate, as part of the Hudson River Valley National Historic Landmark district, include Clermont Cottage, Sylvan Cottage, the Children's Playhouse, the Red Barn, and a historic barn, now used as a Visitor Center.



Scenic Resources

Clermont is within a designated NYS Scenic Area of Statewide Significance (SASS), Estates District.²⁷ Set within the Hudson River Valley and Catskill Mountain viewshed, Clermont is part of a region known for its rural beauty and sweeping natural vistas. In addition to the Site's unparalleled views across the Hudson River, its setting within Columbia County's pastoral landscape contributes to its scenic charm across the seasons.



Collections

Clermont’s substantial object collections also contribute to the Site’s historic value. On mansion tours visitors view original books, furniture, artwork, decorative items, jewelry, clothing, household items, letters, and photographs, many of which were owned by generations of the Livingston Family.

Cultural Landscape

Historic buildings reside within a larger context, which often contributes to their significance. The U.S. National Parks Service (NPS) defines a cultural landscape as “a geographic area, including both natural and cultural resources, associated with a historic event, activity, or person.”²⁸ At Clermont, the grounds and many accompanying landscape elements are considered important cultural and historical resources.

Recreational Resources

Guided mansion tours are the primary recreation offering at the Site, with tours offered from Wednesday to Sunday (April 12 to October 31), and on Saturdays and Sundays, (November 1 to December 16).

Clermont is also a destination for outdoor activities, with visitors regularly coming to picnic, hike, and bird-watch. The historic gardens are also popular for enjoying the plantings, strolling, and relaxing. Grounds are open year-round from 8:30a.m. to sunset.

The Site’s Visitor Center is open April 12 to October 31, Wednesday to Sunday, from 10:30a.m. to 4:00p.m., and on Saturday and Sunday, November 1 through December 16. From January to April, the Site offers special programming and group tours by appointment only.

The Site is a popular venue for special events, with five ceremony Sites and four reception areas for weddings.



Nature

Hiking Clermont’s trail network and walking its historic carriage roads are popular activities at the Site. Trail routes wander through woodlands that attract many migrating songbirds, and Clermont is listed on the NYS DEC’s New York State Birding Trail as part of a statewide birding network.

While not a physically connected or built trail, visitors can use the [DEC’s](#) online map to identify birding locations across the state. Clermont’s forest and meadow habitats are noted on the website as supporting more than 150 observed species, with spring and fall migrations offering the best opportunities for sightings at Clermont. Birds can be found here year-round, but in fall and winter, birders come to the site to view large flocks of migrant geese and ducks that gather in the Hudson River.

Trails

Clermont has seven miles of marked trails. All trails are open to pedestrian use including hiking and snowshoeing (when conditions allow). Many trails are also open for cross-country skiing and equestrian use. Horseback riding has a long tradition at Clermont as the Chancellor Livingston spent hours riding around the estate and Janet Livingston was a horse jumper.

Hunting

Deer hunting is permitted at the Site (archery only). A limited and controlled hunt with strict boundary limits is allowed from November 1 through November 30. A special permit is required and is awarded by lottery. Hunters are required to attend an orientation session to familiarize them with the strict hunting boundaries at the Site.

Educational Programs & Events

Workshops, programs, and special events are offered at Clermont throughout the year. Some focus on the history and traditions of farming, as well as contemporary issues and topical issues on farming, food, and nutrition. The Friends of Clermont offer “Harvesting History” a free program for children and organizations. The program centers on a model nineteenth century kitchen garden with a design based on journals kept by Clermont Livingston between 1854-1880. The teaching garden is planted and maintained by the local 4-H club. In recent years, the garden has expanded to incorporate interdisciplinary lessons developed to help students learn about climate science, art, creative writing, meteorology, entomology, and more.

Special Events

Every year, Clermont hosts dozens of events, lectures, performances, special programs, camps, and demonstrations. In spring, the Chancellor's Sheep and Wool Showcase kicks off the open season at Clermont, where the Site's agrarian history is showcased with demonstrations of herding, shearing, spinning, and knitting using both modern and historic techniques. These live demonstrations are the centerpiece of the event, with programs illustrating how raw wool is transformed into yarn. Sheep, goats, and other wool-bearing animals are on display along with local vendors and fiber artists, music, crafts, and food.

Clermont also hosts an all-day Fourth of July celebration with reenactors, historic crafts, food, and live music. In October, Clermont's popular Halloween program, includes candlelight tours of the mansion. “Legends by Candlelight” offers stories about the Site's 250 years of residents. Hot cider is served at the Visitors Center, a bonfire is available for toasting marshmallows. Hundreds of jack-o-lanterns carved by local school kids are also on display.

Clermont's tour season ends in December, with a month of holiday events and parties. Programs include storytelling for children, a nighttime tour with costumed interpreters, and a free holiday open house.

Art Exhibits

Concrete panels designed to house local birds (Eastern Bluebird, Tree Swallow, Black-Capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, and Carolina Wren) provided a specific nest entrance size, cavity size, sun exposure, level of insulation, and protection from predators.

Interpretation

A primary goal of interpretation is to enrich a visitor's experience by helping them to understand the significance of the people, events, and place they are visiting, and connecting this content to their contemporary lives. Effective interpretation enables visitors to make associations between the information shown, and even alter previous perceptions. Interpretation can also be used to foster greater understanding of wider topics, such as social, environmental, or political issues.²⁹

Clermont's educators work with Park's historic preservation staff and the Friends of Clermont to develop educational material that embodies the agency's, "Our Whole History" initiative. Methods of conveying information to the public in a meaningful way at a historic site can vary and may include guided walks, talks, drama, staffed stations, displays, signs, labels, artwork, brochures, interactive technology, audio guides and audio-visual media.³⁰

Interpretive Themes

The history of the former Livingston property lends itself as a springboard for the inquiry into, and dialogue on, the rich heritage and on-going study of the Hudson Valley region and its people. Social and ethnic topics, architecture and cultural landscape, labor and economics, industry and commerce, housing and community, environment and land use, and politics are among possible subject areas for interpretive content. The recent popularity of the theatrical hit "Hamilton" has provided an opportunity for Clermont to capitalize on a heightened awareness of this era, which touches on the social and political circles of the Livingston family.

Visitor Needs and Expectations

Potential Park Visitor Profiles and Numbers

It is anticipated that visitors to historic Sites will be comprised of several types. The first group is projected to include residents from the neighborhoods and students and instructors from the area's schools and colleges. Other group types are comprised of visitors coming from out of the area, including New York residents from other parts of the state, as well as travelers from other states and countries. "Cultural heritage tourism" is a trend that brings visitors to a region to tour with the primary purpose of exploring the history and heritage of a place. In addition to Clermont, nearby sites in this "Historic Estate" area, including the Olana and Staatsburgh State Historic Sites, are within easy traveling distance and are a draw for people interested in American history.



Interpretive signs are found throughout the Site.



Historic Buildings

The Mansion

The visitor tour of the mansion at Clermont today reflects how the structure has evolved over time. After the mansion was burned, in 1777, for instance, it was rebuilt as a two-story brick Georgian residence, apparently using the north and south (end) walls of the earlier, 1740s structure. Its walls were covered with a thin veneer of stucco and scored to resemble stone blocks.

Later, in 1803, a one-story brick kitchen wing was added and, in 1830, a library wing.³¹ The house has a formal central hall plan, with an unusually spacious parlor and dining room which open south (right) and north respectively from the wide stair hall. The rooms are furnished with an original collection of Livingston furniture — much of it in the Federal and Empire styles — and filled with the Livingston family's original paintings, prints, and books.³²

Sylvan and Clermont Cottages

Other significant structures at Clermont include two historic cottages located in the Site's north section. Sylvan Cottage, also known as the Gatekeeper's Cottage, is located near Clermont's original entrance off Woods Road. Sylvan is within the last portion of the estate to be occupied by a Livingston family member. The State of New York acquired Sylvan Cottage and its 10 acres in December 2000.

Clermont Cottage is still in active use at the Site. The original section dates to between 1790-1830, when it was used to house farm employees. The structure was expanded in the mid-20th century, and today the cottage provides office space for the Friends of Clermont group and is used for public programs.

Operations

Clermont's grounds and gardens are open year-round, from 8:30am to sunset. A parking fee at the visitor lot is required on Saturdays, Sundays, and Monday holidays; 11am-4pm and for special events.

Actions Proposed in the Master Plan

The analysis of proposed alternatives for a master plan is a step toward synthesizing the complex elements identified during the planning process. Alternatives that will meet the facility's current and anticipated future needs are selected as "preferred." The section below is comprised of all selected alternatives organized by resource category.

Natural Resources



The Clermont State Historic Site provides natural wildlife habitat in a region subject to increasing development pressure. The Site's woodlands, streams, wetlands, and meadows are home to a diverse range of plants and wildlife, which, in turn, afford recreational opportunities such as birding and hiking. The Site's natural areas are evolving from agricultural use back to nature. In upcoming years actions proposed here will help ensure appropriate stewardship of these natural resources

Actions for Natural Resources

- Develop long-range planning recommendations based on current climate change data and modeling techniques 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 (GI), where feasible, in retrofits and new infrastructure.
- Implement/continue 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.



Cultural Resources



Evidence of former human occupation at Clermont is found throughout landscape. While the Livingston mansion is perhaps the most prominent, evidence of farmsteads and outbuildings used by tenant farmers, servants, laborers, agricultural workers, and others who lived here remain. The region's indigenous communities are an important part of the Site's cultural history. Many of these elements are vulnerable to damage or loss. Actions developed for Clermont's cultural resources will help identify and preserve these elements for future generations of New Yorkers.

Actions for Cultural Resources

- Develop and implement a comprehensive Conditions Study to appropriately protect and preserve the mansion.
- Rehabilitate and retrofit Sylvan Cottage as an accessible, multi-use education center with classrooms, a kitchen, restrooms, and defined parking area.
- 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.
- Remediate Clermont Cottage for mold and mildew and install appropriate insulation.
- Stabilize the icehouse and root cellar; remove vegetation, replace safety railing, and add gravel with weed barrier around the perimeter.
- Work with Historic Preservation staff to stabilize selected remnant historic structures identified at the facility.
- Implement a Phase I archaeological survey at Clermont and develop a comprehensive archaeological report and sensitivity analysis of the entire Site.
- Develop a furnishing plan to research and document objects at the Site as they existed historically and how best to interpret them.
- With the OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, re-evaluate Clermont's Collections Policy; review its parameters and the scope of collections.
- Improve 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 object collections held in the mansion and make recommendations for improvements.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to stabilize the Arryl House Ruins and adjacent historic elements.
- Work with Historic Preservation staff to survey existing remnant historic structures at the facility to evaluate their condition, significance, and needs.
- Develop a management/maintenance program for historic landscape elements.
- Restore the Locust Tree allée parallel to the main visitor parking lot.

Interpretation, Programming, and Education



A key component of the master plan vision is to expand the Site's reach by creating thought-provoking content that is relevant and meaningful for all visitors. The Site's educators aim to ensure the next generation of visitors will be representative of a wide range of interests, ages, and backgrounds. Actions developed in this category are therefore toward creating a more inclusive atmosphere by developing innovation programs and expanding outreach.

Actions for Education & Programs

- Develop programs and educational content related to enslaved people's experience at the Site based on both the Site's collections and content-driven approaches.
- Implement special programs related to different aspects of the Site, such as the lives of local indigenous peoples and enslaved families, the Revolutionary War era.
- 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.
- 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.
- Foster more visibility for Clermont and awareness of its offerings by increasing outreach and marketing strategies.



Recreation



Some visitors come to Clermont with a specific interest in the American history, or to experience the ambiance of New York’s “Gilded Age.” Others come to relax and spend some leisure time outdoors — to walk the trails, see a sunset, birdwatch, or meet for a family picnic. Special events bring in those with other interests — to hear live music, do arts and crafts, see outdoor exhibits, or join fun activities designed for children and youth. Going forward, actions for recreational development at Clermont will ensure that events, including performances, camps, lectures, and demonstrations, will be varied and relevant to a wider range of audiences.

Actions for Recreational Development

- Assess the feasibility of providing public access to the Site’s holdings along the Hudson River shoreline.
- 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.
- Create accessible picnic facilities within the current picnic area.
- Create a new picnic area adjacent to the Ice Pond.
- 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 nearby Empire State Trail by adding informational signage, maps, safety information and, where appropriate, bicycle racks, picnic tables, and/or parking.
- 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 and produce and install trailhead kiosks, intersectional, and trail marking blazes and signage.
- Develop an accessible interpretive trail near the mansion.



Infrastructure



Clermont's functional elements – its roads, parking areas, pathways, public restrooms, drainage systems, and other parts of the built environment – are aging. Maintaining the infrastructure of both historic and modern elements is a challenge, with an ever-growing list of needed repairs. A major issue identified at Clermont is the Site's access challenges. While the Site has some universally accessible features, there is a need for a comprehensive assessment and overhaul to provide equitable access to the buildings, walkways, and other amenities.

Actions for Infrastructure

- Conduct a comprehensive analysis to identify accessibility issues site-wide with recommendations for addressing issues where possible.
- 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.
- Improve access to Hudson River/Catskill Mountain views by constructing a viewing platform.
- In coordination with the Division for Historic Preservation, develop a study to determine how to provide an accessible entrance and restrooms at the mansion and an elevator for universal access to exhibits and staff office space.
- The Visitor Center will be upgraded 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.
- Redevelop the visitor parking lot with new pavement, green stormwater management elements, pedestrian paths, and clear pavement markings.
- Provide accessible parking, walkways, and entrance at Clermont Cottage.
- Improve existing parking areas at the mansion, Sylvan and Clermont Cottages, and the Red Barn to ensure accessibility and meet future demand.
- Develop a parking area in the north section of the Site with green infrastructure, if determined feasible.



Facilities Management



For public use of a historic facility to be sustainable, its conditions must meet current needs while not compromising the Site's overall integrity and significance. How can the Site's significance be retained in the context of the need for new approaches, uses, or future development? The Master Plan proposes strategies for integrating sustainability into operations and management while appropriately maintaining historic structures. Proposed actions were developed by defining what is needed to effectively operate the Site now and in the future.

Actions for Facilities Management

- 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 as “ambassadors” to address FAQs and address ongoing maintenance issues, such as litter.
- Create a paid position for volunteer coordinator.
- Develop 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).
- Develop stronger connections with local fire department, EMS, and police.



Operations & Maintenance



The modern use of historic structures can create conflict with the need to preserve them and maintain their historic integrity. Code requirements, accessibility issues, comfort, safety, and other needs can require compromise. Clermont staff noted that challenges related to maintaining any large facility are compounded by the need for specialized training or materials required for some maintenance tasks and especially for repairs on historically significant elements.

Actions for O & M

- Develop a schedule of rotating wedding tent locations to decrease damage to lawns and reduce soil compaction.
- Install a site-wide security camera system.
- 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).
- Upgrade the maintenance area facility by adding drive-through pole barns, a fueling tank, pickup truck, wash bay, and repair failing pavement.
- 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).
- Upgrade and repair the Site's drainage infrastructure to address site-wide wet areas, erosion, standing water, and deteriorating pavements.
- Implement a phased, prioritized plan to upgrade Internet/WiFi technology for both staff and public use.
- Select energy-efficient equipment, materials, and low-impact, green approaches for Site maintenance and operations.



Implementation

The master plan sets forth OPRHP's vision for capital improvements and operational enhancements to the park for the next ten to fifteen years. OPRHP has not developed detailed cost estimates for the proposed components. Cumulatively they may cost tens of millions of dollars to implement. The pace and sequencing of recommended actions will be determined by the availability of funding, which is a function of the size of OPRHP's annual capital, staffing and operations budgets and the need to balance investments throughout the park system.

The master plan will be reviewed annually to select projects that will be added to the park's budget for implementation and to assess the progress of plan implementation. Any operational improvements that are already planned at the time of the master plan will go forward as planned.

Implementation of this master plan is divided into priority phases (see Table 1, p.7). Proposed actions for specific components that are described in this plan shown below are subject to reorganization based on available funding.



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P. 3 – https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clermont,_New_York; By Dmadeo - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2588482>

P. 4 – <http://www.iment.com/maida/familytree/henry/genealogy/portraits/robertlivingston-1654-1728.htm>

P. 4 – <http://clermontstatehistoricsite.blogspot.com/2020/05/margaret-beekman-livingston-and.html>

P. 5 – Image George Grantham Bain Collection/Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (LC-DIG-ggbain-00005). Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Clermont-steamboat>

P. 7 – The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Print Collection, The New York Public Library. (1820 - 1871). *The Clermont on the Hudson* Retrieved from <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47d9-7b61-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>

P. 9 – <http://clermontny.org/history-properties/the-clermont-estate/>

P.13 – Image: George Grantham Bain Collection/Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (LC-DIG-ggbain-00005) <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Clermont-steamboat>

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