

# **A LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR "THE POINT"**

MILLS-NORRIE STATE PARK AND  
THE NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION & HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
TACONIC REGION -- STAATSBURG, NY

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## **CHAPTER 3: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW & ANALYSIS**

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## CHAPTER 3: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND ANALYSIS

### INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 not only provides an historical overview of the Hoyt family's 108-year residency at "The Point," it also examines the events that shaped its form, fabric and character in the years preceding, and following, their tenure. Although the estate was designed by Calvert Vaux in the mid-1850s, many of the site's boundaries and cultural features reflect land transactions from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The lands that comprise "The Point" were originally part of the Pawling Patent -- a 4,000-acre tract of land granted to the family of Henry Pawling in 1698. Over the next one-and-a-half centuries, these vast patent lands were incrementally sub-divided and re-combined through numerous wills, deeds, mortgages and other conveyances to create the 91-acre Hoyt estate.

### ORIGINS OF THE SITE <sup>1</sup>

#### *The Pawling Patent*

At the onset of European settlement in the seventeenth century, the Dutchess County region of New York was inhabited by two aboriginal peoples -- the Wappinger and the Mahican. Between 1669 and 1695, these native Americans sold an area called the "Eaquaquanesinck" to Captain Henry Pawling, an early settler of Ulster County. "Pawling's Purchase," as it came to be known, included 4,000 acres of land that were bordered by the Hudson River on the west, Crum Elbow Creek on the east, the Beekman Patent at Rhinebeck on the north and the Fauconnier Patent on the south. In 1698, the provincial governor of New York granted a Crown Patent to Pawling's widow (Neeltje Roosa Pawling) and children, thereby confirming their title to this vast undeveloped tract; however, the Pawling family continued to live across the Hudson River in Ulster County. Figure 3-1 illustrates the location of the Pawling Patent within Dutchess County, and the relative position of "The Point" [the shaded area] within the patent lands.

#### *Sub-division of the Pawling Patent: 1751*

Shortly after receiving the Crown Patent, the Pawling family began to dispose of their interest in the Dutchess County property. In 1701, Mrs. Pawling and her three elder children sold their rights in the patent lands to two New York City investors -- Dr. Samuel Staats and Dirck Van Der Burgh. Ultimately, her four minor children conveyed their shares in the property to Petrus DeWitt and John Pawling -- two grandsons of the late Captain Pawling. Dr. Staats eventually acquired Van Der Burgh's share in the patent lands and, at the time of his death in 1715, bequeathed his interest in "Pawling's Purchase" to his six daughters. Thirty-six years later (1751), the six Staats heirs, John Pawling and Petrus DeWitt agreed to partition these commonly-held lands among themselves. With the assistance of surveyor Charles Clinton, Petrus DeWitt sub-divided "Pawling's Purchase" into eighteen distinct parcels, with half of the lots (No. 1 to 9) fronting on the Hudson River, and the remaining lots (No. 10 to 18) fronting on Crum Elbow Creek. Figure 3-2 is a nineteenth-century copy of Clinton's original partition survey. It denotes the number, dimensions, acreage and owner of the eighteen lots sub-divided among the Staats and Pawling descendants. For reference purposes, the shaded area on the plan delineates the relative position of "The Point" within the Pawling Patent.

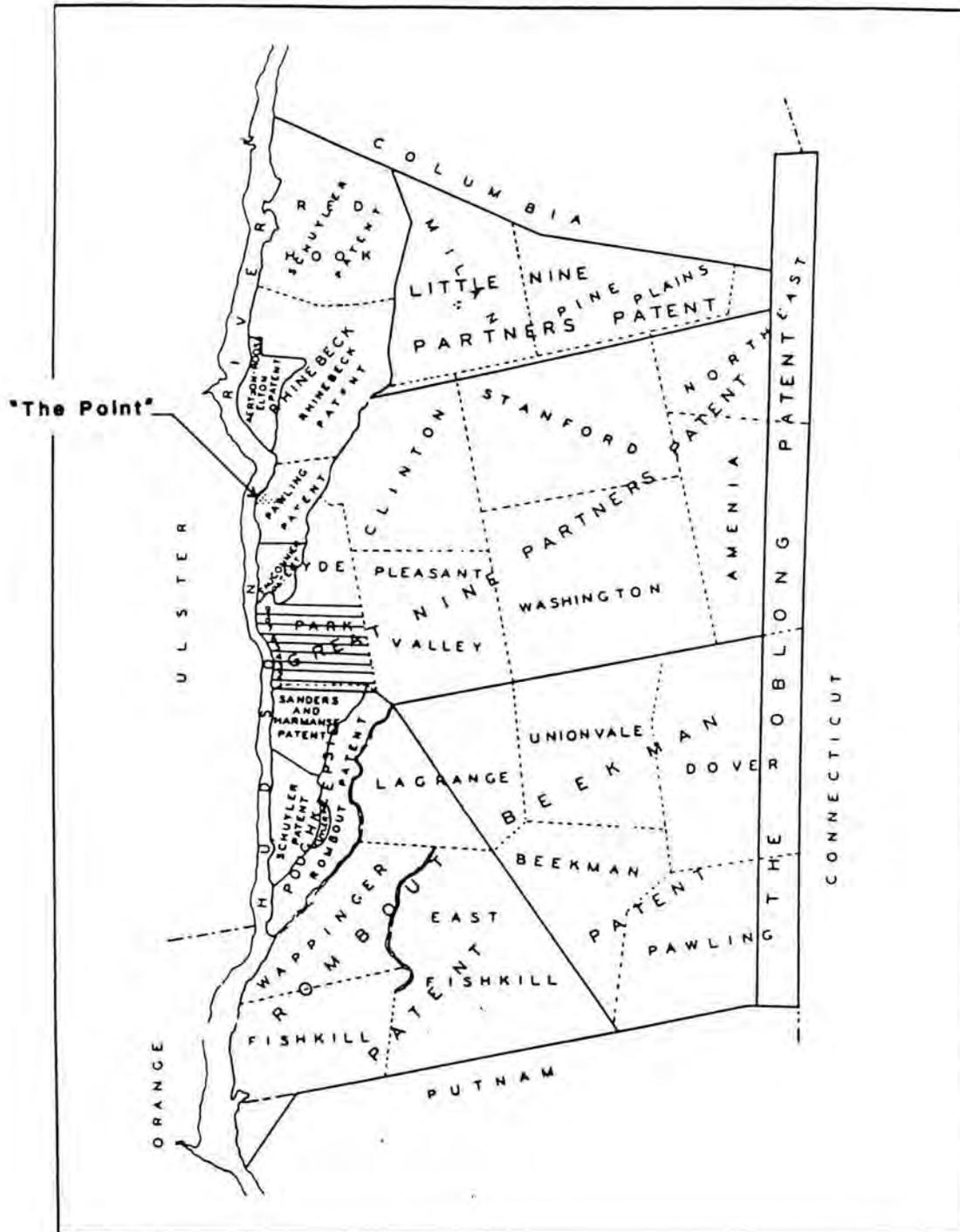


Figure 3-1: Map of Dutchess County Patents. (Year Book of the Dutchess County Historical Society, 1939. Copy available in Mills Mansion State Historic Site archives.)

Note: Shaded area on map delineates "The Point."



*Northern Half of Lot 6: the Russell Farm*

Like the Pawlings before them, neither Dr. Staats or his daughters ever resided on their commonly-owned patent lands in Dutchess County. Consequently, "Pawling's Purchase" remained largely undeveloped through the mid-eighteenth century. After the 1751 patent partition, however, the land gradually came under cultivation as the non-resident heirs began to sell or lease their individual holdings. Settlement and development also brought a new name to the area; within a decade, the Pawling Patent came to be known as "Staatsburgh."

Gertrude Coeymans, a daughter of Dr. Staats, received a 239-acre parcel fronting on the Hudson River (Lot 6), and a 256-acre tract bordering on Crum Elbow Creek (Lot 15), through the 1751 partition. As illustrated in Figure 3-2, both lots were directly south of those (Lots 5 and 14) partitioned to her sister, Sarah Staats Gouverneur. For nearly forty years, the two lots remained intact under the ownerships of Gertrude Coeymans (1751-1761) and Christian and John Bergh (1761-1789). In 1789, however, four New York City "gentlemen"-- Charles Shaw, Nicholas Hoffman, Nicholas DePeyster and Miles Sherbrook -- purchased Lots 6 and 15 from John Bergh. They subsequently (1791) sub-divided Lot 6 along its length, and sold the northern half (120-acres) to Captain Isaac Russell, a Dutchess County farmer.<sup>2</sup> Figure 3-3 illustrates this subdivision of Lot 6 and the relative position [the shaded area] of "The Point." The four "gentlemen" also sold the southern portion of the lot, and perhaps an adjoining one-acre parcel excluded from Russell's tract along the west side of the Post Road, to Captain Jesse Ames (or Eames). The latter parcel (see Figures 3-4 and 3-5) subsequently came to be known as the "Acre Lot" or "Frederick Marshall's House Lot." Over the next eighty-eight years (1791 to 1879), three generations of the Russell family -- Isaac, James Sr. and James Jr. -- continued to improve and cultivate the northern half of Lot 6.<sup>3</sup>

One of the most significant improvements to the farm took place in 1829 when James Russell, Sr. purchased a small portion of an adjoining estate on Lot 5 owned by Morgan Lewis.<sup>4</sup> This semi-circular parcel (illustrated in Figure 3-3) allowed Russell to obtain easier access from the Post Road to the Hudson River around the north end of a stony ridge that extended across the entire width of his farm. To facilitate this change, Lewis removed 330 linear feet of stone fence along their common boundary -- the partition line between Lots 5 and 6.

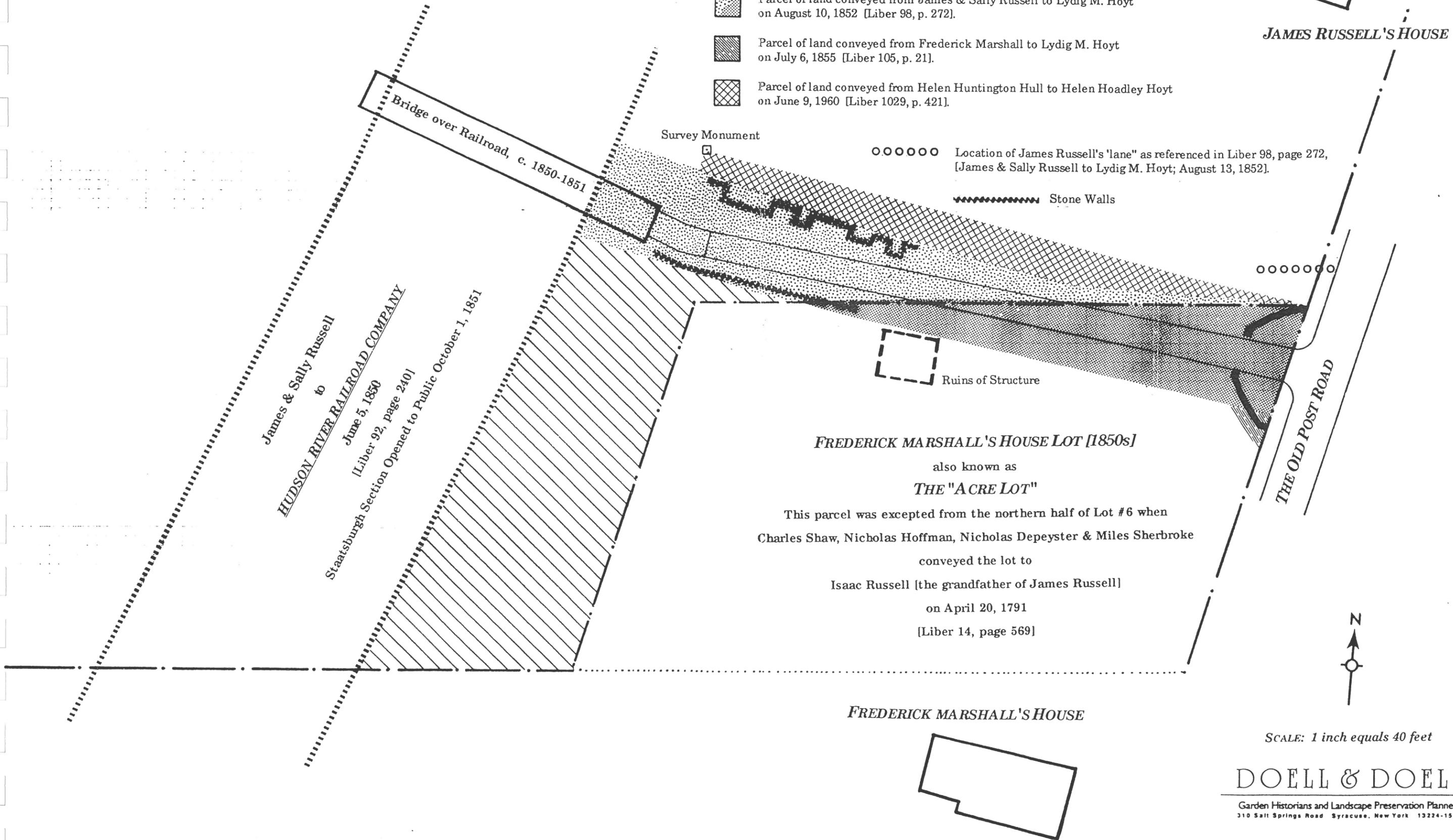
The farm's configuration was also altered in the early-1850s when James Russell, Sr. and his wife, Sally, sold a 99-foot wide strip of land (illustrated in Figures 3-4) to the Hudson River Railroad Company.<sup>5</sup> This right-of-way, and its associated cut in grade, severed the Russells' access to their riverfront lands, and required the construction of a bridge over the tracks in 1851. Placed perpendicular to the alignment of the tracks, the new bridge probably required the Russells to realign that portion of their farm lane between the bridge and the Old Post Road. The following year, perhaps in anticipation of selling their farmlands west of the railroad, the Russells traded two parcels near the bridge with their southern neighbor, Frederick Marshall.<sup>6</sup> On July 27, 1852, the Russells sold Marshall a remnant piece of their farmland east of the railroad, while Marshall apparently sold the northeast corner of his adjoining "Acre Lot" to the Russells. These transactions, it appears, allowed the Russells to create a new entrance to the bridge along the Post Road roughly midway between the Russell and Marshall houses. Please consult Figure 3-5 for a diagram illustrating the presumed alignment of the Russells' farm lane before and after these land transactions.



Figure 3-4: Map of 1852 Russell-Marshall Land Transactions near Old Post Road.

**KEY TO SYMBOLS**

-  Parcel or "Gore" of land conveyed from James & Sally Russell to Frederick Marshall on July 27, 1852 [Liber 97, p. 407].
-  Possible parcel of land conveyed from Frederick Marshall to James & Sally Russell on July 27, 1852, as referenced in Liber 97, p. 407 and Liber 105, p. 21 [July 6, 1855].
-  Parcel of land conveyed from James & Sally Russell to Lydig M. Hoyt on August 10, 1852 [Liber 98, p. 272].
-  Parcel of land conveyed from Frederick Marshall to Lydig M. Hoyt on July 6, 1855 [Liber 105, p. 21].
-  Parcel of land conveyed from Helen Huntington Hull to Helen Hoadley Hoyt on June 9, 1960 [Liber 1029, p. 421].



**FREDERICK MARSHALL'S HOUSE LOT [1850s]**

also known as  
**THE "ACRE LOT"**

This parcel was excepted from the northern half of Lot #6 when  
Charles Shaw, Nicholas Hoffman, Nicholas Depeyster & Miles Sherbroke  
conveyed the lot to  
Isaac Russell [the grandfather of James Russell]  
on April 20, 1791  
[Liber 14, page 569]

**FREDERICK MARSHALL'S HOUSE**

SCALE: 1 inch equals 40 feet

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Garden Historians and Landscape Preservation Planners  
310 Salt Springs Road Syracuse, New York 13224-1551

**KEY TO SYMBOLS**

- ○ ○ ○ ○ Probable alignment of James Russell's farm lane prior to construction of the Hudson River Railroad, c.1850-1851
- □ □ □ □ Alignment of Lydig M. Hoyt's entrance drive following construction of the Hudson River Railroad, 1852
- ..... Boundaries of Hoyt entrance lane purchased from James & Sally Russell, 1852
- \* Historic Avenue Trees (Sugar Maples, pre-1850)

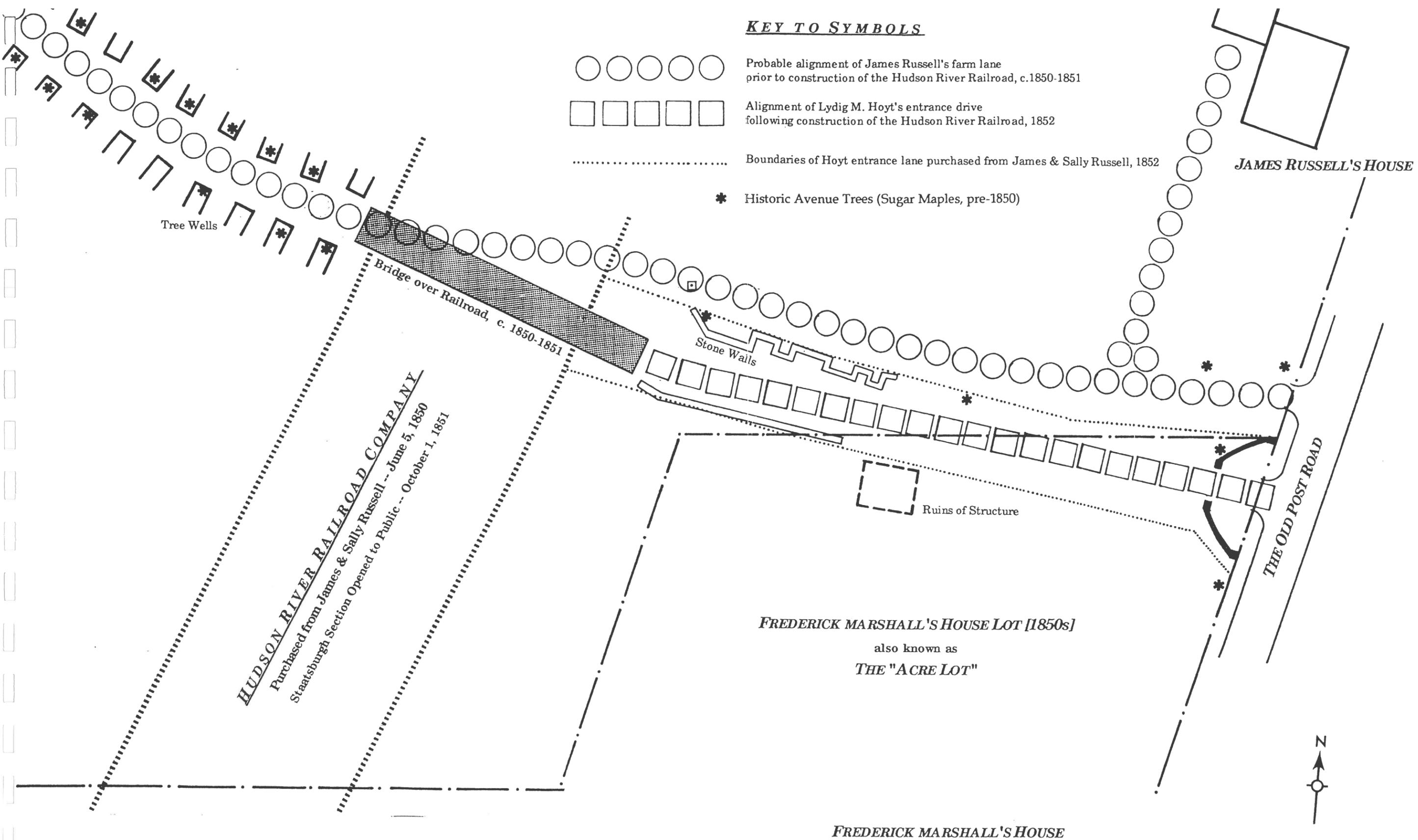
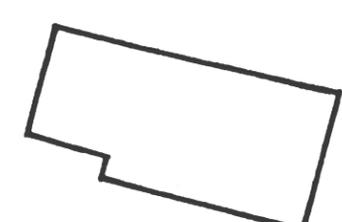


Figure 3-5: Map of 1852 Russell Farm Lane Re-alignment Over Hudson River Railroad.

SCALE: 1 inch equals 40 feet

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*Lots 5 & 14: the Country Seat of Morgan Lewis*

Under the terms of the 1751 partition (please refer to Figure 3-2), Sarah Staats Gouverneur, another daughter of Dr. Staats, received a 200-acre parcel fronting on the Hudson River (Lot 5), and a 245-acre tract bordering on Crum Elbow Creek (Lot 14). Her heirs eventually sold mortgages for the lots to two Dutchess County farmers who, in turn, conveyed portions of these lands to additional farmers. In 1792, Judge Morgan Lewis acquired a significant portion of lots 5 and 14 by purchasing the farmers' equity in the land and their unpaid mortgages from Mrs. Gouverneur's heirs. Lewis immediately began to develop the property as his "country seat" and, by 1797, had erected a large brick house on Lot 5 (please consult Figure 3-3) overlooking the Hudson River. As the principal building in the vicinity of Staatsburgh, the Lewis residence became known as "Staatsburgh House." After a fire destroyed the house in 1832, Lewis rebuilt a spacious Greek Revival home on the site of the earlier structure. Enlarged and remodelled in the mid-1890s by noted architect Stanford White, the 1832 house continued to serve as a country residence for the descendants of Morgan Lewis (Ruth Livingston Mills and her husband, Ogden Mills) through 1937. Today, the property is known as Mills Mansion State Historic Site.

*"The Point:" Country Estate of Lydig Munson Hoyt & Geraldine Livingston Hoyt*

The conceptual origins of "The Point" may date from September 6, 1842 when Blanche Geraldine Livingston married Lydig Monson Hoyt. Miss Livingston, who preferred to use her middle name, Geraldine, was a grand-daughter of Morgan and Gertrude Lewis. According to family tradition, L. M. Hoyt built "The Point" as a wedding gift for his wife. Ironically, deeds and other documentary materials conflict with this account, and indicate that Hoyt waited a decade before acquiring any land for the new home promised to his bride.

It appears that physical development of the Hoyt estate took place over a three- to four-year period beginning in 1852. In August of that year, L. M. Hoyt purchased all of the Russell farmlands lying between the Hudson River and the Hudson River Railroad (62 acres), the Russells' interest in a bridge over the railroad tracks, and a narrow right-of-way from the Post Road to the bridge.<sup>7</sup> Two years later, Geraldine Hoyt added another 29 acres to their holdings with the receipt of a small portion of the contiguous "Staatsburgh" estate from her mother, Margaret Lewis Livingston.<sup>8</sup> Located at the southwest tip of Lot 5 and commonly known to the Lewis-Livingston family as the "point lot" or "dock lot," this parcel became the centerpiece of Hoyts' country seat, and apparently, the inspiration for its name -- "The Point." The configuration of both parcels are illustrated in Figure 3-6.

It is important to note that Mrs. Livingston's gift to her daughter excluded the "Lewis Dock" -- the family's deep-water landing on the Hudson River adjoining the Hoyt estate. Two years before her death in 1860, however, Margaret Livingston granted the Hoyts a 99-year lease on the "Lewis Dock." In turn, the Hoyts provided the Livingston family with a right-of-way to the landing and continued use of the dock for farming-related activities.<sup>9</sup>

During the summer of 1855, L. M. Hoyt purchased the last, and smallest, piece of his estate from a neighboring farmer, Frederick Marshall.<sup>10</sup> As illustrated in Figures 3-4, 3-5, and 3-6, this acquisition -- a tiny, triangular parcel located at the intersection of the estate's entrance drive with the Post Road -- may have enabled the Hoyts to construct the paired stone walls that flanked their entrance gates. Over the next century, the boundaries of the Hoyt estate remained largely unchanged with the exception of some minor adjustments associated with the railroad right-of-way, and the June 1960 purchase of a strip of land (please consult Figure 3-4) along the north side of the entrance drive by the estate's last owner, Helen Hoadley Hoyt.<sup>11</sup>

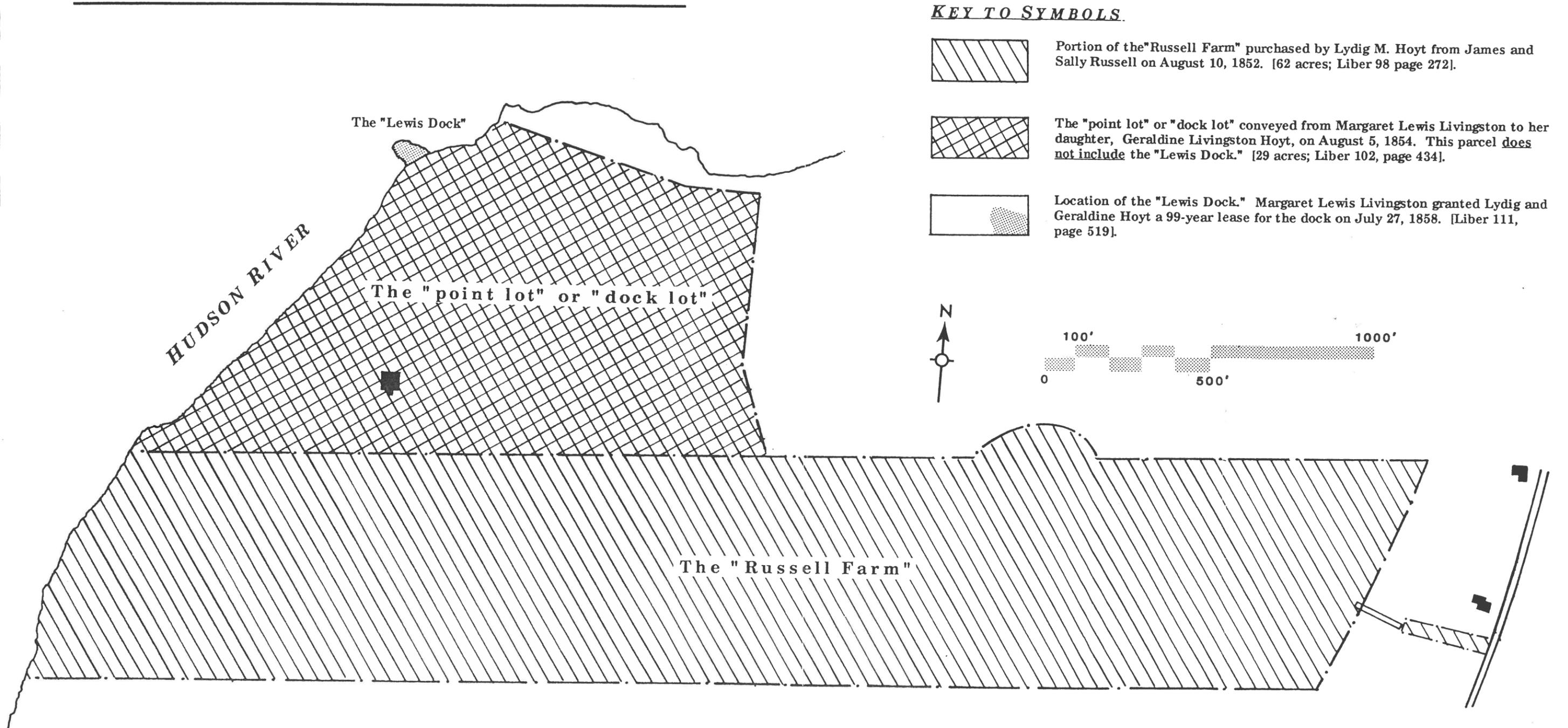


Figure 3-6: Map of Hoyt Land Acquisitions at "The Point."

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**CALVERT VAUX AND THE HOYTS -- A DESIGNER-CLIENT COLLABORATION***Historical Background on Calvert Vaux*<sup>12</sup>

The career of Calvert Vaux (Figure 3-7), one of America's most distinguished and innovative designers, spanned six decades, two continents and a revolution in design. It began in his native England in 1839 when, at the age of 15, he became an apprentice with Lewis Nockalls Cottingham, a prominent London architect with a scholarly knowledge of the Gothic style. During his eleven year (1839-1850) association with Cottingham's office, Vaux undoubtedly gained first-hand experience with the restoration of Gothic cathedrals -- his mentor's specialty -- as well as architectural and landscape designs for country manor estates.

The direction of Vaux's professional career changed dramatically in 1850 when he was introduced to Andrew Jackson Downing, the esteemed American landscape gardener and estate planner, editor of *The Horticulturist*, and author of two influential books: *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening Adapted to North America* (1841) and *Cottage Residences* (1842). A proponent of the neo-Gothic styles of domestic architecture in America, Downing had traveled to England in search of a skilled and knowledgeable architect to assist him with his growing professional practice. The twenty-five year-old designer immediately accepted Downing's offer and departed with him for New York State's Hudson Valley in September of 1850. At "Highland Gardens," Downing's residence and office at Newburgh-on-Hudson, the two Gothic enthusiasts began to establish a new office -- the "Bureau of Architecture" -- and a new American residential style that sought to integrate buildings with their landscape settings.

Vaux began his association with A. J. Downing as an architectural assistant, but became a full partner in the firm ("Downing & Vaux") the following year. Working in collaboration with Downing, Vaux prepared architectural designs or studies for at least ten residences, including "Springside," the Matthew Vassar House in Poughkeepsie, NY. (1850), "Algonac," the Warren Delano House in Newburgh, NY. (1851) and the Daniel Parish House in Newport, Rhode Island (1852). Vaux also assisted his partner in 1851 when President Millard Fillmore, a fellow New Yorker, commissioned Downing to prepare plans for improving the public grounds between the White House and the Capitol in Washington, DC. In addition to his sketches for two proposed architectural features (a suspension bridge and gateway arch near the White House), Vaux apparently assisted Downing with preparation of the park's master plan.

Frederick Clarke Withers, another English-trained architect, joined the office of Downing & Vaux in February of 1852 as an architectural assistant. Less than six months later, however, tragedy struck their burgeoning architectural and landscape planning practice. On July 20, 1852, A. J. Downing perished in a steamboat accident on the Hudson River, thus ending his productive 22-month partnership with Calvert Vaux. At the request of Downing's widow, Caroline, Vaux continued to operate the office at "Highland Gardens" for a brief period while completing work on the unfinished Downing-Vaux commissions. He also began to secure his own clients and projects during 1852 and 1853 before forming a new partnership in Newburgh, NY. with F. C. Withers (Vaux & Withers) sometime before January of 1854. By November of 1855, the young architect had completed work on the manuscript for his first book, *Villas and Cottages*, which was published in 1857 and available for sale by February of that year.



Calvert Vaux (1824–1895)

Figure 3-7: Portrait of Calvert Vaux. (William Alex and George B. Tatum. *Calvert Vaux - Architect & Planner*. Ink, Inc. New York, 1994.)

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The course of Calvert Vaux's career changed dramatically again in the late-1850s. After dissolving his partnership with F. C. Withers in May 1856, Vaux moved his home and office to New York City where planning for "The Central Park" was underway. With his published words and personal contacts, Vaux criticized the weakness of a proposed design for the park, and successfully persuaded the city's park commissioners to sponsor an open competition to select a better plan. After the competition was announced on October 13, 1857, Vaux invited the park's superintendent, Frederick Law Olmsted, to collaborate with him on a design. The following spring, the Parks Commission announced that the "Greensward" plan submitted by Vaux and Olmsted was the best of thirty-three designs entered in the competition. Shortly thereafter, Olmsted was appointed as the park's "Architect-in-Chief" and Vaux was named as the project's "Consulting Architect."

The "Greensward" collaboration signaled the start of Vaux's illustrious career as a park planner, and the beginning of a new profession which he termed "landscape architecture." Vaux and Olmsted's visionary design for Central Park also became an American prototype for the "country park in the city" as communities across the nation began to emulate its design. The two designers resumed their collaboration in the mid-1860s as "Olmsted, Vaux & Co." with an equally inspired plan for Brooklyn's "Prospect Park" -- perhaps the finest of their creations. They were also challenged in 1868 when the city of Buffalo engaged the firm to prepare a comprehensive plan for the city's parks, parkways and open spaces -- the first of its kind in the nation. In addition to these major projects, Vaux and Olmsted collaborated on noteworthy park plans for Chicago, Ill. (1871-1873) and Niagara Falls, NY. (1887-1895), as well as innovative town, campus and institutional planning projects in Washington, DC. (1866), Berkeley, Calif. (1866) and Riverside, Ill. (1868). The firm of "Olmsted, Vaux & Co." also designed the grounds of the State Asylum at Poughkeepsie, a structure designed by architect F. C. Withers.

From the 1870s through the 1890s Vaux also worked with another distinguished landscape architect, Samuel Parsons, Jr.. Their collaborative projects include numerous public parks in the New York City area (Morningside, Riverside, Highbridge and East River Parks), the New York Botanical Garden (Bronx, NY.) and a neighboring estate known as "Wilderstein" (1890; Rhinecliff, NY.), situated across the River Cove from "The Point."

Concurrent with his landscape planning projects, Vaux sustained a busy architectural practice and often worked in collaboration with architects F. C. Withers and George Kent Radford. Among his most notable works are the Samuel J. Tilden House (1881) in New York City, and the first buildings for the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1874-1880) and the American Museum of Natural History (1872-1878). Vaux also prepared design studies (1870) for "Olana," the idyllic Hudson River estate of landscape painter Frederic E. Church in Hudson, NY.

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*Site and Architectural Planning for the Hoyts' Country House*

Although Calvert Vaux's association with the rural estate of Lydig and Geraldine Hoyt is indisputable, a lack of documentary materials makes it difficult to know the full extent of his involvement with the property. Oral traditions, and a set of 1855 drawings (Figure 3-8) passed down by four generations of the Hoyt family, provide compelling evidence that Vaux designed the estate's focal point -- a picturesque stone country house. Vaux's role in other aspects of the Hoyt estate is further revealed in his 1857 book, *Villas and Cottages*, which not only credits the architect with designing the Hoyts' residence and farm cottage, but also, with selecting and planning the sites for these structures.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, his responsibilities for other portions of the estate, the nature of his relationship with the Hoyts, and details of the project's overall timetable, remain uncertain.

It appears that Calvert Vaux designed "The Point" within a three-year span from 1852 through 1855. Historical evidence suggests that the young architect began his association with the Hoyts during a 17-month period in which he worked without a partner. This interlude begins with Downing's death on July 20, 1852, and concludes late in 1853 when Vaux and F. C. Withers established a new partnership known as "Vaux and Withers." Similarly, it appears that his plans for the Hoyt estate were completed prior to November of 1855 when his manuscript for *Villas and Cottages*, which includes the Hoyt estate (Figure 3-9) as "Design No. 26," went to press. It is likely that actual construction of the house, however, continued well into 1856.<sup>14</sup>

This time frame is consistent with historical land records which indicate the earliest transactions for the Hoyt estate are dated July 27, 1852 -- one week after Downing's death. On that day, James and Sally Russell swapped contiguous parcels with Frederick Marshall to create a narrow corridor leading to the Russells' bridge over the Hudson River Railroad (Figures 3-4 & 3-5). Two weeks later (August 10, 1852), L. M. Hoyt purchased this corridor, the Russells' 62-acre farm, and their interest in the bridge connecting the two parcels. Conceivably, this single purchase gave L. M. Hoyt ample riverfront land to develop his proposed country estate (Figure 3-6).

At some point over the next sixteen months, Hoyt commissioned Calvert Vaux to design a country house for his newly-acquired farm. Undoubtedly, the architect's first challenge was evaluating the property's design potential and selecting a house site that was mutually acceptable to Vaux and his client. Vaux's own words, as revealed in his description of the Hoyt estate in *Villas and Cottages*, suggest that this proved to be a rather formidable task:<sup>15</sup>

*"After much examination of different parts of the property, and due deliberation pro and con, for there were many points to be discussed, the site that seemed the most appropriate was ultimately determined on . . ."*

It is possible that the Vaux-Hoyt deliberations over prospective house sites brought the project to a virtual standstill for more than a year. Although portions of Hoyt's 62-acre farm overlooking the Hudson River probably had sufficient "prospect" for a house site, they may have lacked other design qualities desirable in the setting for a picturesque country residence. The old Russell farm, in cultivation since the 1790s, was undoubtedly a hodge-podge of rectangular fields, meadows, pastures and woodlots defined by high stone fences and tree-lined farm lanes. In contrast with portions of the "point lot" on the adjoining Lewis-Livingston estate -- with its mature stands of native trees and its spectacular panorama of the Hudson River and distant Catskill Mountains -- Hoyt's open farmlands may have seemed inadequate for a rural

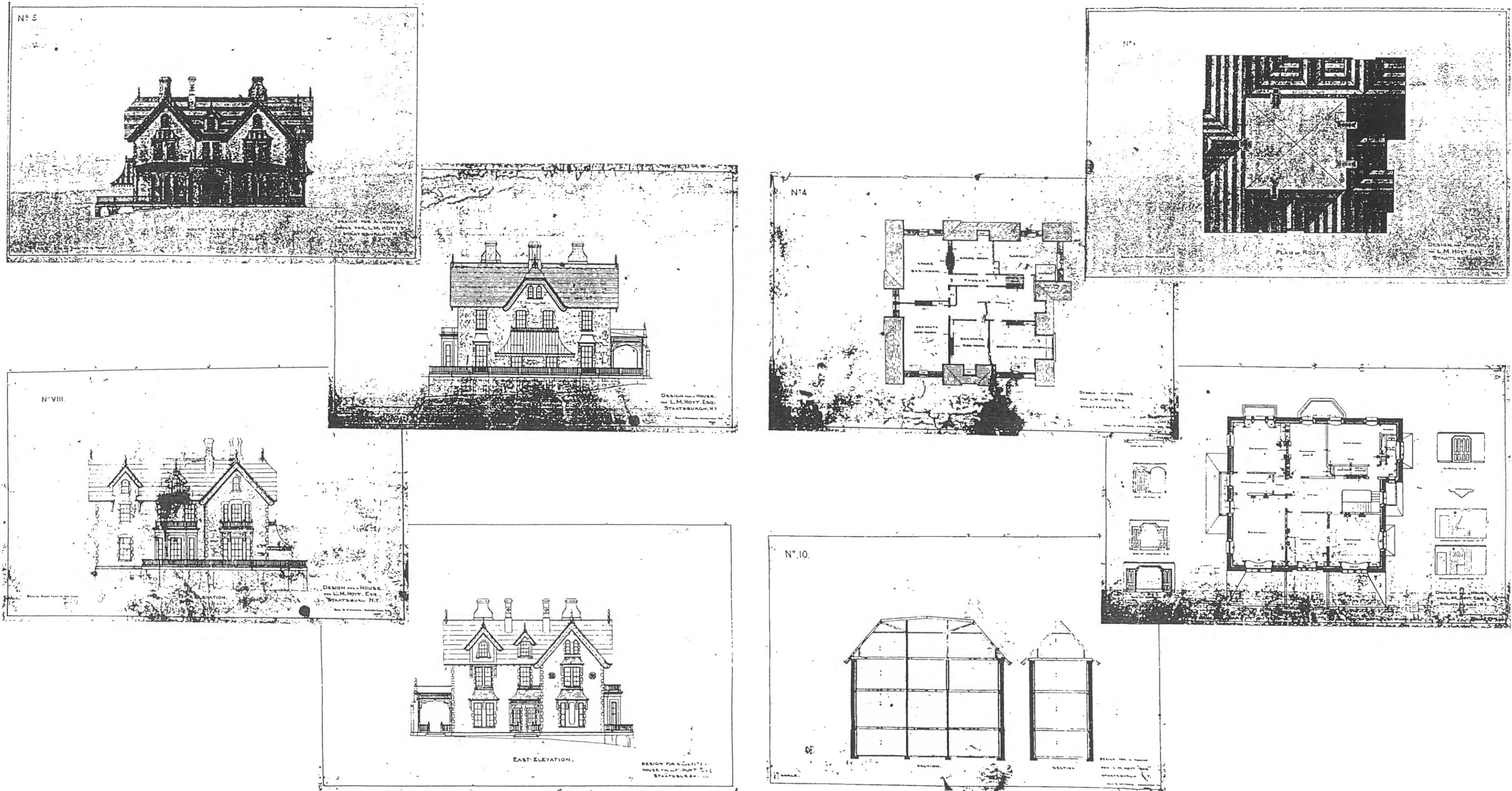


Figure 3-8: Reductions of 1855 Elevations by "Vaux & Withers" for the Country House of Lydig M. & Geraldine Hoyt.

DESIGN No. 26.



PERSPECTIVE VIEW.

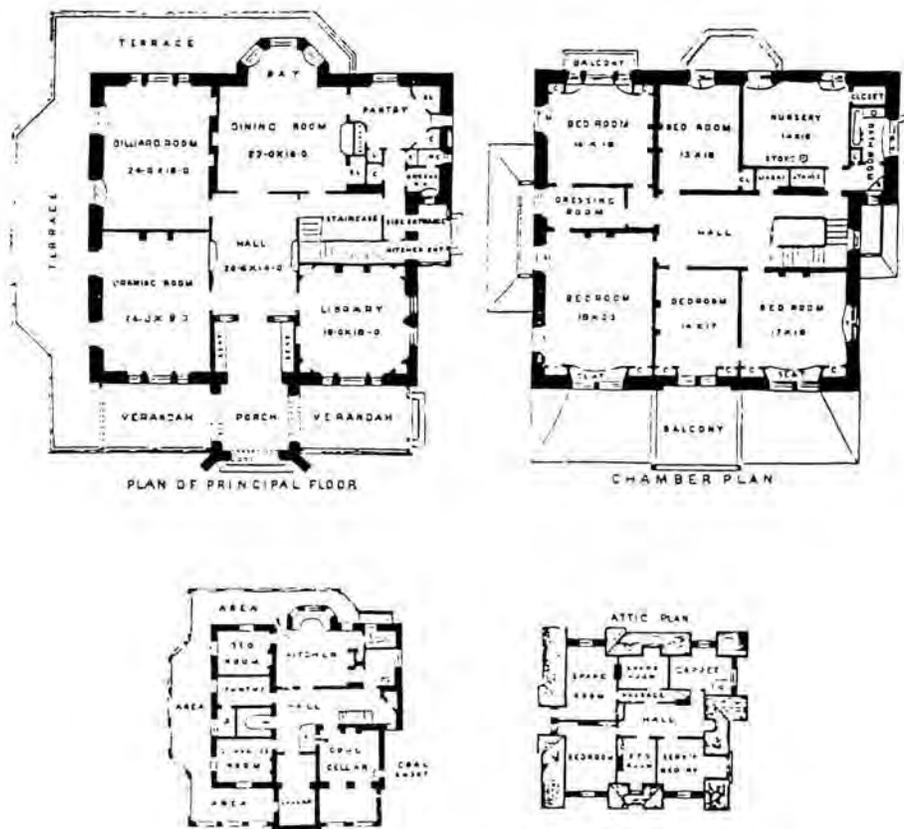


Figure 3-9: Vignette and Floor Plans for the Country House of Lydig M. & Geraldine Hoyt. (*Villas and Cottages*, pp. 282-283)

residence in the picturesque style. Perhaps acting upon the advise of Calvert Vaux, Margaret Lewis Livingston conveyed the "point lot" to her daughter, Geraldine Hoyt, on August 5, 1854 -- nearly two years after her husband purchased the Russell farm. Vaux's plans for the Hoyt residence (Figure 3-8), completed sometime before November of 1855, suggest that the project proceeded without delay after the Livingston-Hoyt land transaction.

*Site Planning for the Hoyts' Landscape Garden and Farm*

The same historical resources which clearly attribute Calvert Vaux with designing the Hoyts' country house and farm cottage provide fewer insights into his possible role as the estate's landscape architect. The exceptional "Vaux and Withers" drawings, preserved by members of the Hoyt family since 1855, feature only architectural floor plans, elevations and cross-sections of the residence (Figure 3-8). Surprisingly, they do not include any site plans (i.e. topographic surveys, grading plans, road profiles, planting plans, etc.) for the house or cottage environs, let alone, the remainder of the 91-acre Hoyt estate. The architect's 1857 book, *Villas and Cottages*, also presents attractive "vignettes" of these two structures, but similarly fails to include any site plans for the estate grounds (Figures 3-9 & 3-10).

In his description of the Hoyt estate in *Villas and Cottages*, Vaux articulates what appears to be a critical, but limited, role in landscape planning at "The Point." This narrow range of services, however, seems to be consistent with his stated scope of work on other domestic commissions of the period -- the artful integration of a structure with its unique landscape setting. His own words imply that his landscape architectural design services at "The Point" were restricted to the immediate vicinity of the house, and focused principally on the following concerns: evaluating and selecting an appropriate house site; adapting the design of the house to suit the site and, to a lesser degree, modifying the site to accommodate this structure; the preservation of existing trees at the house site; the orientation of scenic river views from the proposed house; and the first impressions of the Hoyts' country house and farm cottage from the estate's approach road.<sup>16</sup>

The following excerpts from *Villas and Cottages* highlight these selective responsibilities:

*"... the actual building spot is somewhat limited in size, because it was necessary to select an elevated situation commanding the best views, and this happened to occur in a part of the property which was not only very varied in surface, but entirely covered by a handsome growth of trees, which it was desirable to preserve uninjured as far as was compatible with a convenient arrangement of the plan . . ."*

*"... it then became a question how to suit the design of the house to the formation of the ground, and, so far as might be necessary, to adapt the site to the house. . ."*

*"... [an extensive kitchen wing on the house] would have rendered it necessary to cut down several more trees, and this . . . was to be avoided, if possible."*

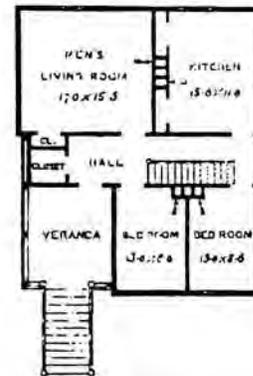
*"... a wing must have blocked up the west or north views, which command the river, and are in every respect delightful. . . or . . . it must have been placed on the east, which is the first seen, and the most prominent at all times from the approach road."*

Although Vaux's collaborative work on Central Park, Prospect Park and other landscape projects later in his career suggest that he had the requisite skills and knowledge to plan an estate like "The Point," he is remarkably silent in *Villas and Cottages* regarding his role in site planning for the Hoyt estate. In fact, his brief and ambiguous statements on the subject make it unclear whether L. M. Hoyt actually gave him responsibility for designing the estate's roads, paths, gardens, lawns, ornamental grounds, and farmlands.

In contrast to the detailed account of his role in designing the Hoyts' picturesque country house and its immediate landscape setting, Vaux offered only a few passing comments about the rest of the property. He noted that the ". . . estate is of considerable extent, the drive-road . . . being perhaps a third of a mile from the entrance of the grounds . . ."; yet, he never explicitly acknowledged having any responsibility for their design. Vaux also offered equally vague remarks concerning the farm cottage (Figure 3-10), stating the structure ". . . is in full view from the principal drive-road, and it therefore seemed worth while to consider it as an accessory in the landscape . . ." Aside from indicating the relative position of the cottage and his design intent for this structure, the quote provides few insights into his overall landscape design responsibilities at "The Point."



DESIGN FOR A FARM COTTAGE.



PLAN OF PRINCIPAL FLOOR.

Figure 3-10: Vignette and Floor Plan for Hoyt Farm Cottage (*Villas and Cottages*, p. 288)

Taken together, Calvert Vaux's drawings and writings can only substantiate the distinguished architect's role in planning the grounds immediately adjacent to the Hoyts' country house, and perhaps, the farm cottage. His minimal statements regarding the larger estate grounds may be even be intentionally vague – perhaps to avoid overstating his role in its design or acknowledging a collaborative relationship with his client, another designer (i.e. landscape gardener, horticulturist, engineer, etc.), or a landscape contractor. Consequently, his design association with the estate's other landscape elements – its entrance gates, tree-lined approach drive, kitchen garden, ornamental trees, farm lands and minor outbuildings (reservoir, ice house) – remains conjectural. Although Vaux may have informally advised his client on such matters while visiting "The Point," there is no known written, graphic or oral account of these discussions.

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*The Role of the Hoyts in Site Planning at "The Point"*

It is conceivable that the estate's proprietor, Lydig Monson Hoyt, personally planned significant portions of "The Point," and transformed the property from a simple farmstead into an embellished country seat. Throughout much of the nineteenth century, interest in landscape gardening, and the ability to put its principles into practice, were limited to members of the upper class. Men of wealth, education and social position took pride in their worldliness. They mastered not only their chosen professions, but practical matters such as agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry, in addition to cultivating their tastes in architecture and landscape gardening.

In her 1974 report on the historical significance of "The Point," researcher T. Robins Brown presented L. M. Hoyt as one of Calvert Vaux's enlightened clients:

*"Vaux was convinced that there was a low general standard of artistic taste in mid-nineteenth century America which could be raised by a leisured, wealthy second generation with time for cultural and intellectual pursuits. Lydig M. Hoyt exemplified Vaux's category of "the born rich" who . . . could "enjoy the rightful opportunity to live an easy life of elevated action and noble exertion."*

L. M. Hoyt was no stranger to this American aristocracy. His father, Gould Hoyt was a wealthy merchant in the China trade whose ancestors emigrated from England to Massachusetts in the late-1620s. His mother, Sabina Sheaf[f] Hoyt, was [possibly?] a member of the prominent Sheaf[f] family of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. As a result, L. M. Hoyt may have been well-acquainted with the suburban Philadelphia (Fort Washington, PA.) farm of George Sheaff. In his 1841 book, *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening Adapted to North America*, Andrew Jackson Downing described the Sheaff farm as ". . . one of the most remarkable in Pennsylvania." He noted that:

*"The house is a large and respectable mansion of stone, surrounded by pleasure-grounds and plantations of fine evergreen and deciduous trees. The conspicuous ornament of the grounds, however, is a magnificent white oak, of enormous size, whose wide stretching branches, and grand head, give and air of dignity to the whole place . . . This whole estate is a striking example of science, skill, and taste, applied to a country seat, and there are few in the Union taken as a whole, superior to it."*

Downing's book also records the comments of a British tourist who inspected the Sheaff farm as part of an agricultural tour of the United States:

*"The farm is 300 acres in extent . . . the only instance of regular, scientific system of husbandry in the English manner, he saw in America. Indeed, the large and regular fields, filled with luxuriant crops, everywhere of an exact evenness of growth, and everywhere free from weeds . . . ; the perfect system for manuring and culture; the simple and complete fences; the fine stock; the very spacious barns . . . as clean as a gentlemen's stable . . . and the masterly way in which the whole is managed, both as regards culture and profit, render this estate one of no common interest in an agricultural, as well as ornamental point of view."*

Hoyt may have been equally familiar with the exemplary Hudson River estates owned by relatives of his wife, Geraldine Livingston Hoyt. Perhaps the most notable of the Livingston estates were "Clermont," which Downing described as ". . . highly remarkable for extent, elegance of arrangement, and the highest order and keeping. . ." and "Montgomery Place," which he noted was ". . . nowhere surpassed in America, in point of location, natural beauty, or the landscape gardening charm which it exhibits."

Vaux's own words in *Villas and Cottages* provide a clear indication that Lydig Hoyt was intimately involved with the planning and construction of his picturesque residence. The architect begins his description of the property with a statement that the ". . . design has been lately carried into execution by Mr. L. M. Hoyt . . ." Vaux also acknowledged the proprietor's role in planning the library's ceiling and book-cases which were designed ". . . at Mr. Hoyt's request . . ." He similarly credits Hoyt with providing ". . . the cistern and drains, the hauling and the rights of quarry . . ." for the project. Like many of his contemporaries throughout the Hudson Valley, Hoyt was probably well-acquainted with the writings of Andrew Jackson Downing and other proponents of the Romantic styles in rural art and architecture. Hoyt's personal library might have include copies of the *Treatise* and two other popular books by Downing -- *Cottage Residences* (1842) and *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850) -- as well as subscriptions to influential periodicals like "The Horticulturist." These and other resources not only provided romantic enthusiasts with the latest information on architectural fashions, landscape gardening trends, and progressive agricultural practices, they also inspired individuals like Hoyt to plan their own properties -- preferably with the guidance of a professional estate designer like Downing or Vaux. In *Cottage Residences*, Downing offered the following advice to his readers in conjunction with a series of design studies for laying out home grounds:

*"By studying such plans . . . almost any person who has a little talent in drawing may be able to compose a design . . . that will exhibit more or less taste, and combine with it the advantages of entire convenience and usefulness." (p. 241)*

In the 1860 agricultural census of Dutchess County, Lydig M. Hoyt lists his occupation as a "farmer." With his wealth and social position, Hoyt was not a man who labored in the fields to feed his family, but rather, a "gentleman farmer." This is not to say, however, that Hoyt was merely a dilettante with only superficial understanding of agricultural operations. His education at Columbia University may have provided him with scientific knowledge of agricultural topics far greater than the common farmer. As such, he may have been well prepared for the task of transforming the old Russell farm into a picturesque country seat, and intellectually capable of collaborating on its design with a gifted architect like Calvert Vaux. "The Point," therefore, should be seen as the product of an enlightened designer-client relationship that reflects Hoyt's personality, taste and priorities as well as Vaux's design talents, technical skills and aesthetics values.

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## HISTORICAL PERIOD ANALYSIS

For the purposes of this study, the 200-year history of "The Point" has been divided into five historical periods which reflect significant changes in the landscape's character-defining features. These time periods include:

1. Pre-design Conditions on the Lewis-Livingston Country Seat (the "point lot") and the Russell Farm (1790-1852/1854);
2. "The Point" -- The Farm & Country Estate of Geraldine & Lydig Hoyt (1852-1896);
3. "The Point" -- The Farm & Country Place of Mary & Gerald L. Hoyt (1897-1927);
4. "The Point" -- The Country Home of Helen & Lydig Hoyt (1927-1963); and
5. The Tenure of the State of New York at "The Point" (1963-Present)

The findings for each of the five historical periods are summarized in a succinct narrative and accompanying period map (Figures 3-11 through 3-15). They are based on a comparative analysis of site evidence and archival resources as revealed through field observations and historical research. The five periods also contain detailed information about specific changes in the site's topography, vegetation, natural systems, circulation, buildings and structures, furnishings and objects, water features, views and spatial relationships, and surroundings.<sup>17</sup>

There are relatively few historical resources that document the estate's pre-design condition (1790-1852), construction period (1852-1855) and initial residency by the Hoyt family (1856-1896). The little information that is known about "The Point" during these periods was obtained largely from historical land records, atlas maps, agricultural census records, and the writings, plans and renderings of Calvert Vaux and F. C. Withers in *Villas and Cottages*. It is also derived from an analysis of extant landscape features (annual growth rings, old fence lines, road profiles, evidence of robbed stone walls, etc.) and anomalous site evidence (mounds, depressions, etc.), as well as the interpretation of historical resources from subsequent time periods. These materials include: site-specific historical references compiled from regional newspapers; historical black-and-white photographs from the twentieth century [HP-2 through HP-17]; and planimetric aerial photographs from 1935 [HP-1], 1955 (Figure 2-1) and 1975 (Figure 2-2).

In reviewing the balance of this chapter, the reader may find it helpful to consult the following illustrations that appear in other portions of the report:

- └ Figure 2-6: Site Analysis Map.

This map documents the location of anomalous features (mounds, depressions, etc.) and evidence of "lost" elements (stone wall remnants, etc.), and their relationship to natural features (ridges, wetlands, etc.) that map have influenced site development since the 1790s.

- └ Figure 2-11: Key to Historic Buildings and Landscape Structures.

This map provides a comprehensive reference to the location, name and origins of all known buildings, structures, architectural ruins, and former building sites at "The Point." Extant structures are also identified with a number from 1 - 13, while architectural ruins and archaeological sites are identified by a letter from A to R.

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**PRE-DESIGN CONDITIONS ON THE LEWIS-LIVINGSTON COUNTRY SEAT****(THE "POINT LOT") AND THE RUSSELL FARM (1790 -1852/1854)**

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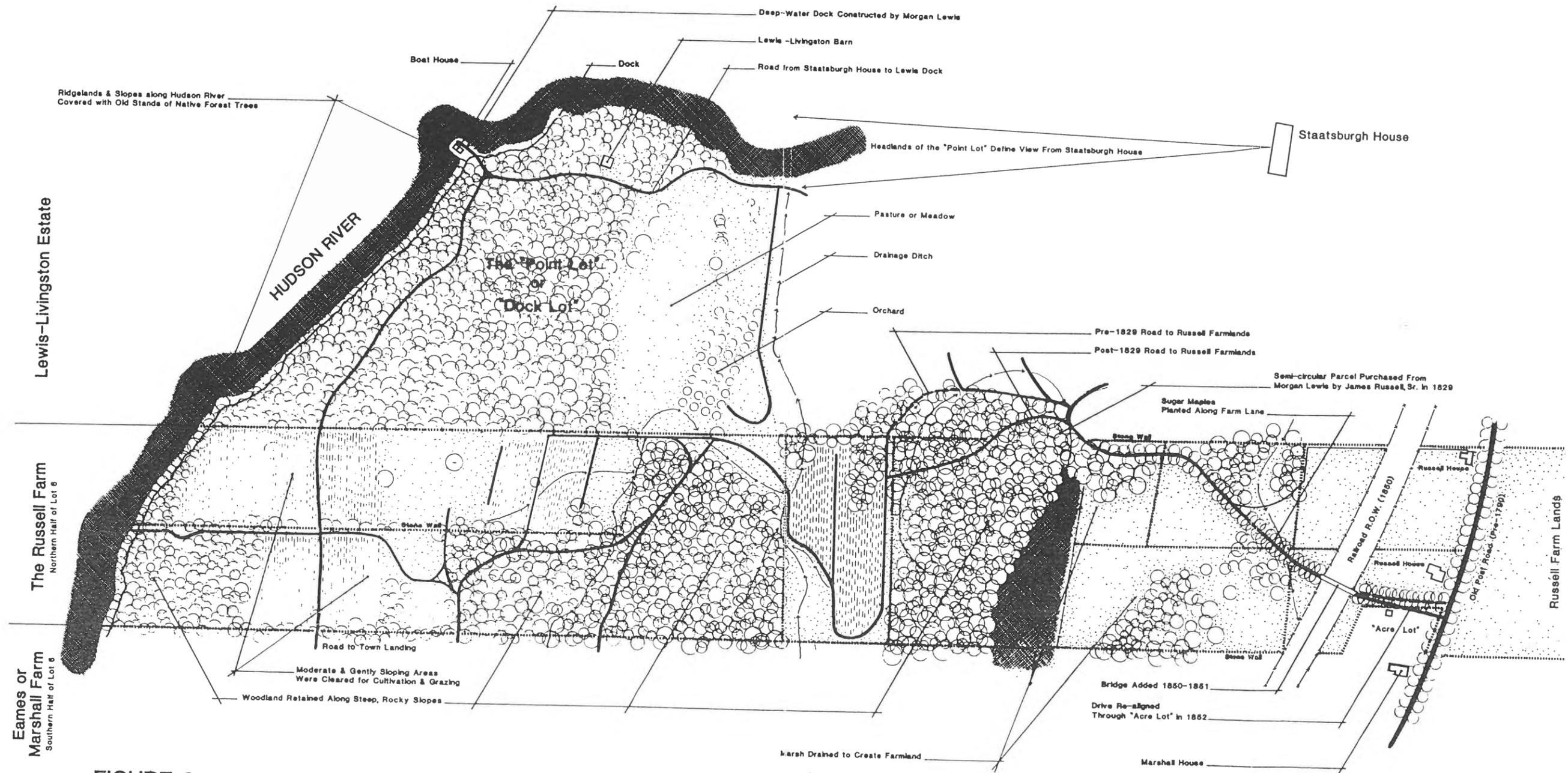
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The landscape character of "The Point" not only reflects the talents of Calvert Vaux and the taste of Lydig and Geraldine Hoyt, but also, the stewardship practices of the Russell and Lewis-Livingston families that owned these lands from the early-1790s through the mid-1850s. After acquiring their properties in the late-eighteenth century, both Morgan Lewis and Isaac Russell undoubtedly devoted considerable resources to the improvement of their lands in Lots 5 and 6. It is likely that both tracts were largely undeveloped and heavily forested at the time of settlement in the 1790s, and requiring considerable "improvement" (clearing, draining, grading and fencing) to make them useful homesteads and productive agricultural lands. Nevertheless, site evidence suggests that Russell and Lewis differed considerably in their land management practices along the river ridge.

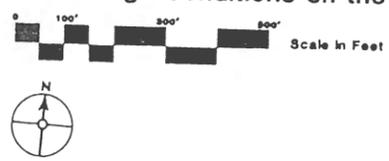
Morgan Lewis was a man of wealth, political power, social position and considerable land holdings -- a "gentleman farmer" for whom agriculture was undoubtedly a leisure-time pursuit, not a livelihood. As such, his riverfront property was more than a farmstead; it was also the centerpiece of his ornamental country seat known as "Staatsburgh." Situated at the southwest tip of his estate, the "point lot" or "dock lot" was presumably within view from the Lewis residence which stood (from the mid-1790s through 1832) on the site presently occupied by Mills Mansion. Perhaps for both aesthetic and practical reasons, Lewis preserved the stands of ancient hemlocks, oaks, hickories and other hardwoods that covered the slopes of the "point lot." The annual growth rings on several oaks that were recently cut in this area place their origins between 1635 and 1745, or roughly 50 to 150 years before Lewis settled the land and more than 100 to 200 years before the Hoyts acquired the property. The lack of comparable trees within the eastern third of the site, however, suggests that Morgan Lewis may have cleared this gently-sloping plateau for use as a meadow, pasture and/or orchard. A large wooden barn, used by the Hoyts from the 1850s through 1899, presumably stood nearby. It is also likely that Lewis was responsible for constructing a Hudson River boat landing that bears his name (the "Lewis dock") and an existing road that leads to the dock from the Mills Mansion property.

The Russell farm, by contrast, was probably cleared of virtually all its virgin timber in order to provide ample land for cultivation, grazing and habitation, as well as wood for lumber and fuel. Sheet erosion patterns suggest that large areas of the site were cultivated, while the annual growth rings on stumps indicate that the oldest trees on the former Russell farm date from the 1790-1800 era -- the period of earliest known settlement. Concurrent with his land clearing, Russell probably began to improve his property through a variety of efforts that included: the removal of stones, stumps and other debris from areas intended for cultivation; the construction of stone walls and fences to define their boundaries, to partition their holdings into various land uses, and to control the movement of livestock; the ditching and draining of wetlands to increase the size of productive areas; the construction of a suitable access road from the Post Road to the Hudson River; the erection of buildings for domestic and agricultural purposes; and the planting of trees for utilitarian and ornamental purposes. As the decades passed, the Russell farm became a patchwork quilt of cultivated fields, meadows, pasture, woodlands, and wetlands.

The following categories provide an overview of changes in character-defining landscape features at "The Point" from the 1790s through the early-1850s, while Figure 3-11 offers a conjectural view of site at the time of its acquisition by the Hoyts.



**FIGURE 3-11**  
**PERIOD MAP #1: 1790-1852/1854**  
 Pre-design Conditions on the Lewis-Livingston Country Seat (the "point lot") and the Russell Farm.



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**TOPOGRAPHY (1790-1852/1854):**

- ┆ A portion of the Hudson River shoreline was filled with stone to create a deep-water boat landing known as the "Lewis dock." A rocky ravine northeast of the landing may be a former quarry that supplied stone for the dock.
- ┆ The natural contour of the hillside east of the dock was altered to construct a road from the Lewis residence to the Hudson River.
- ┆ Land contours on the second ridge were altered circa 1829 when James Russell purchased a semicircular piece of the adjoining Lewis estate to construct a farm lane around the northern end of the ridge.
- ┆ A narrow strip (99' wide) of the Russell farm that was sold to the Hudson Valley Railroad in 1850 was subsequently excavated and graded to facilitate construction of the railroad.
- ┆ Earthen ramps were constructed at the eastern and western ends of the railroad bridge in order to carry the Russells' farm lane over the Hudson River Railroad circa 1850; stone retaining walls may have been built at this time as well to protect 18 Sugar maples that flanked the drive west of the bridge.

**VEGETATION (1790-1852/1854):**

- ┆ The Lewis and Livingston families preserved a climax forest of hemlocks, oaks, hickories and other hardwoods that covered the slopes of the river ridge within the "point lot."
- ┆ With the possible exception of steep slopes or wetlands unsuitable for cultivation or grazing, the Russell farm was cleared of virtually all of its mature trees from the Post Road to the Hudson River.
- ┆ Sugar maples were planted at regular intervals (20' apart) along the Russells' farm lane between the house lot and the second ridge.
- ┆ Possible vegetation patterns on the Russell farm:
  - the area between the Russell house and the first ridge was probably used as a pasture;
  - the eastern portion of the upland marsh was probably used as meadow;
  - the gently-sloping area between the second and third ridges was probably used for field crops;
  - the steep, rocky slopes of the second and third ridges were probably used as woodlands;
  - the low-lying area between the third ridge and the river ridge was probably used as a meadow or pasture;
  - the gently-sloping portions of the river ridge were probably used for field crops; and
  - more moderately sloping areas of the river ridge that were unsuitable for cultivation were probably used as pastures or wooded pastures.

**NATURAL SYSTEMS (1790-1852/1854):**

- ┆ The excavation of drainage ditches on the Russell farm and the Lewis-Livingston "point lot" probably transformed extensive wetland areas into meadows and cultivated fields, producing drastic changes in the associated plant and animal communities of these areas.

- ┆ Extensive land clearing on the Russell farm, and perhaps eastern portions of the "point lot," quickly transformed climax forest communities into meadows, pastures and cultivated fields, producing a radical disruption in plant and animal communities throughout the site.

#### CIRCULATION (1790-1852/1854):

- ┆ The Russells constructed a network of farm lanes between the Post Road and the river to access their various fields and farm lots. Site evidence suggests that many of the lanes ran parallel with the farm's boundary walls and internal partition fences except where natural obstacles (wetlands, rocky ridges, prime agricultural land, etc.) required a diversion.
- ┆ The Russells acquired a semicircular portion of the adjoining Lewis estate in 1829 to improve access around the north end of the second ridge. Another lane further north on the Lewis estate may have provided the Russells with access to their lands prior to 1829.
- ┆ The Hudson River Railroad constructed a bridge in 1851 to provide the Russells with access to their farmlands west of the railroad's right-of-way.
- ┆ The Russells and an adjoining farmer, Frederick Marshall, traded land parcels in 1852 to create a new access road to the railroad bridge midway between their two homes.
- ┆ Morgan Lewis constructed a road through the north end of the "point lot" to link "Staatsburgh House" with the "Lewis dock."
- ┆ Morgan Lewis may have constructed a farm lane next to a drainage ditch that defined the eastern boundary of the "point lot."

#### BUILDINGS AND LANDSCAPE STRUCTURES (1790-1852/1854):

- ┆ A large barn [A] was constructed on the "point or dock lot" of the Lewis-Livingston family, perhaps at the crest of the river ridge along the road to the "Lewis dock."
- ┆ A dock/boat house [B] was constructed on the "Lewis dock."
- ┆ Approximately 2,000 linear feet of stone fences were constructed from the Post Road to the Hudson River along the common boundary line between the Russell and Lewis properties; however, about 320 linear feet of this fence were removed by Morgan Lewis in 1829 to facilitate Russell's construction of a farm lane around the northern end of the second ridge.
- ┆ Approximately 2,000 linear feet of stone fences were constructed from the Post Road to the Hudson River along the common boundary between the Russell and Ames-Marshall farms.
- ┆ More than 4,000 linear feet of stone fences were constructed to partition the Russell farm into distinct fields, pastures, and wood lots.
- ┆ Stone retaining walls and trees wells were constructed along portions of the farm lane to protect existing Sugar maples from elevated soil levels near the railroad bridge.

#### SITE FURNISHINGS AND OBJECTS (1790-1852/1854):

[No information available]

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**WATER FEATURES (1790-1852/1854):**

- ┆ The Russells, perhaps in collaboration with their southern neighbors, Jesse Ames and Frederick Marshall, ditched and drained an extensive upland marsh (5 acres) to reduce its size and facilitate agricultural activity along its margins. Smaller wetland areas throughout the site were also treated in a similar manner.
- ┆ A ditch was excavated along the eastern boundary of the "point lot" to improve the utility of adjoining areas.
- ┆ As stipulated in his deed with the Hudson River Railroad, James Russell installed a culvert under his drive to prevent an accumulation of water behind the earthen ramp that was built at the western end of the railroad bridge.

**VIEWS AND SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS (1790-1852/1854):**

- ┆ Most of the "point lot" was covered with a climax forest of hemlocks and native hardwoods; however, a gently sloping plateau in the eastern third of the lot may have been cleared for use as a meadow or pasture. Since land contours in this area slope to the south and dense trees covered the river banks, views of the Hudson River were probably unavailable from the "point lot" except in the immediate vicinity of the "Lewis dock" and along a drainage ditch on the lot's eastern border.
- ┆ Sugar maples and other native trees were planted at regular intervals to define a farm lane or avenue from the Russell house lot to the second ridge. It is unclear, however, whether the Russells planted comparable avenue trees beyond the second ridge.
- ┆ The Russell property was subdivided into a grid of rectangular farm lots that was superimposed over a natural landscape dominated by the Hudson River, four rocky north-south ridges, and a large upland marsh. High stone walls were also a dominant feature in the landscape, separating the Russell farm from the adjoining properties of Morgan Lewis and Frederick Marshall, as well as partitioning the farm into distinct and separate lots for use as pastures, meadows, cultivated fields and woodlands. Unlike the "point lot," large areas of the Russell and Marshall farms were probably cleared of trees all the way to the Hudson River, providing panoramic vistas to the west and south.

**SURROUNDINGS (1790-1852/1854):**

- ┆ The Esopus Meadows lighthouse was constructed in the Hudson River north of the Lewis-Livingston estate in 1839.
- ┆ The Hudson River Railroad was constructed through the Staatsburgh region in 1850-1851.
- ┆ The southern half of lot 6, which bordered the Russell farm on the south, was developed as a farm by Jesse Ames, and later, Frederick Marshall. Marshall also owned a one-acre parcel along the Old Post Road just north of his residence. Located in the southeast corner of the northern half of lot 6, this parcel was known as the "Acre lot" and "Frederick Marshall's house lot."
- ┆ The Russell, Lewis-Livingston, and Marshall families also owned extensive farmlands on the east side of the Old Post Road

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 "THE POINT"-- THE FARM & COUNTRY ESTATE OF GERALDINE & LYDIG HOYT (1852-1896)
 

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The words that follow were written in 1855 by Nathaniel Parker Willis, a noted journalist, writer and poet, and the proprietor of "Idlewild," a celebrated Hudson River estate planned by architect Calvert Vaux. Although not specific to the Hoyts or "The Point," they aptly describe the character of the Hudson River Valley in the mid-nineteenth century, and the radical transformations taking place on properties that were designed, or inspired, by A. J. Downing, Calvert Vaux and other romantic enthusiasts:

*"A class who can afford to let the trees grow is getting possession of the Hudson; and it is at least safe to rejoice in this, whatever one may preach to the displacement of the laboring tiller of the soil by the luxurious idler. With bare fields fast changing into wooded lawns, the rocky wastes into groves, the angular farmhouses into shaded villas, and the naked uplands into waving forests, our great thoroughfare will soon be seen (as it has not been for many years) in something like its natural beauty. It takes very handsome men and mountains to look well bald."*

Clearly, Geraldine and Lydig Hoyt faced a formidable task in converting portions of two adjoining late-18th century farms into a cohesive design expressive of the picturesque ideals in landscape gardening and rural architecture. Although site and archival evidence suggest that much of the Lewis-Livingston lot was heavily wooded with an assortment of mature oak, hickory and hemlock trees, the Russell farm undoubtedly had a character that more closely resembled the barren landscape described by N. P. Willis. Unifying the two disparate tracts into a seamless whole presented the Hoyts with a variety of problems that demanded solutions beyond the addition of architectural features (the country house and farm cottage) designed by Calvert Vaux. It required the Hoyts to reconcile their aesthetic ideals with the pragmatic requirements of a "gentleman's farm," and to exercise good judgment in preserving selected elements from the old farms (i.e. Lewis-Livingston barn, avenue trees, farm lane segments, boundary walls, fenceline trees, etc.), in demolishing incongruous landscape features (i.e. internal/partition stone walls, linear farm lanes, etc.), and in designing new features (stone gate posts, curvilinear drives, kitchen garden, etc.).

Upon its completion circa 1856, "The Point" served as a seasonal country residence for Mr. and Mrs. Hoyt and their four children -- Angelica, Gerald, Henry, and Gertrude. Agricultural census records of the period indicate that L. M. Hoyt actively pursued his avocation as an amateur farmer, and cultivated 25-acres of grains/crops (winter wheat, oats, winter rye, Irish potatoes), 24-acres of meadow grasses, and a 1-acre apple orchard (40 trees) on the property. It is likely that Hoyt utilized all of these agricultural products on the estate as livestock feed for his horses (5), meat cattle (7), butter cows (5), swine (3) and assorted poultry. After her husband's death in 1868, Geraldine Hoyt continued to farm the property, undoubtedly with the assistance of laborers like the Scottish farmer who resided on the estate in 1880. Mrs. Hoyt also maintained a residence in New York City, suggesting that she and her family continued to use "The Point" only as a seasonal home from 1868 through 1897.

The following categories highlight the changes in character-defining landscape features at "The Point" from the mid-1850s through the mid-1890s, while Figure 3-12 illustrates the conjectural organization of the site during this period.

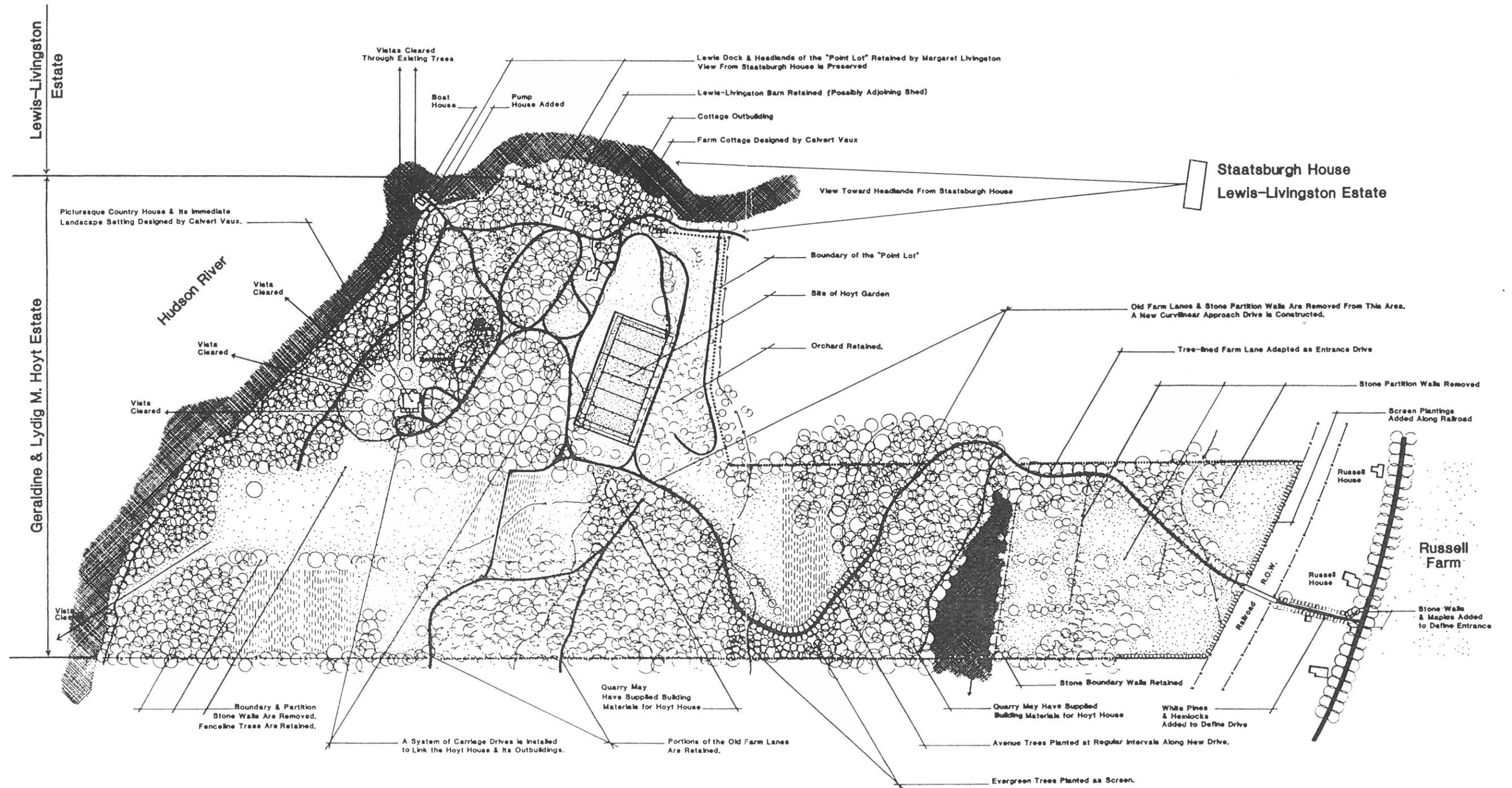


FIGURE 3-12  
 PERIOD MAP #2: 1852-1896

"The Point" — The Farm and Country Seat of Geraldine & Lydig M. Hoyt.



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**TOPOGRAPHY (1852-1896):**

- ┆ Calvert Vaux sculpted the contour of the ground in the vicinity of the Hoyt residence to integrate the Gothic-revival country house with its picturesque landscape setting.
- ┆ L. M. Hoyt opened a quarry at the north end of a rocky ridge on his property to provide a source of bluestone for the façades of his country house. He may have also opened a sand and gravel pit at the southern end of another ridge to provide raw materials for his mortar.
- ┆ The contour of the land was altered at various points throughout the site to facilitate construction of a network of curvilinear approach roads, drives, and paths, as well as utilitarian farm lanes.

**VEGETATION (1852-1896):**

- ┆ Approximately 45 acres of the property were devoted to cultivated fields, meadows and pastures, while the balance of the estate was composed of "unimproved" land, specifically woodland & forest (25), wooded pasture (15 acres) and wetlands (5 acres).
- ┆ White pines and hemlocks were planted very densely (8-10' apart) along both sides of the approach drive from the Post Road to the railroad bridge in order to define an entrance corridor and to screen views of the adjoining Marshall and Russell homesteads.
- ┆ Black locust trees were planted at regular intervals (20' apart) along the estate's eastern boundary with the railroad and portions of the adjoining southern and northern property lines to screen incongruous off-site views.
- ┆ Existing Sugar maples and other native trees (oaks, hemlocks, etc.) were preserved along portions of the Russell's farm lanes that were integrated into the Hoyt approach drive. Spaced at 20-foot intervals, the trunks and canopies of these trees helped to define an attractive entrance corridor while framing views of picturesque and pastoral landscape scenes.
- ┆ More than 100 Sugar maples and other native trees (Sycamore, Black locust, Red maple) were planted at regular intervals along new portions of the approach drive to define an attractive entrance corridor while framing views of picturesque and pastoral landscape scenes.
- ┆ Clusters of White pine and hemlock were planted at salient points along the approach drive to articulate spaces, screen features and frame landscape views.
- ┆ A combination of White pine and Norway spruce trees were planted near the approach road to screen views of Lydig Hoyt's stone quarry.
- ┆ A variety of oak trees on the former "point lot" were preserved and/or planted along the approach drive to define a spacious entrance corridor while framing views of picturesque and pastoral landscape scenes.

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- ❑ Ancient oaks, many of which date from the 17th and 18th centuries, on the former "point lot" were preserved in the vicinity of the Hoyt residence and the farm cottage through sensitive site/architectural design, judicious grading for structures and roads, and the use of stone wells to protect endangered trees from elevated soil levels.
  - ❑ A few "spiry-topped" trees (White pine, larch, hemlock) were planted amid the ancient oaks near the Hoyt residence to enhance the site's picturesque qualities.
  - ❑ Narrow clearings (approximately 30 feet wide) were cut in the dense woodland along the western slope of the river ridge to create five distinct vistas from the rooms and verandas of the Hoyt Residence.
  - ❑ Groups of hemlocks trees were densely planted (10-20' apart) to screen utilitarian features on the site, including the reservoir and another structure (ice house?) northeast of the residence, a small outbuilding north of the farm cottage, and perhaps, the old Lewis-Livingston barn.
  - ❑ Existing trees growing along stone fences throughout the former Russell farm were preserved after Hoyt removed all of the farm's partition walls and portions of its boundary walls.
  - ❑ Existing trees growing on isolated rocky outcrops or in wet areas amid the fields and meadows of the former Russell farm were preserved as landscape specimens.
  - ❑ An apple orchard, consisting of 40 trees, was planted (or already existed) on the property, perhaps within or adjoining the Hoyts' garden.
  - ❑ A 1.3-acre portion of the "point lot," perhaps a former meadow, pasture or orchard, was developed as a large, rectangular-shaped kitchen garden.

#### NATURAL SYSTEMS (1852-1896):

- ❑ A significant portion of the site with steep slopes and soils unsuitable for cultivation was preserved as woodland and forest (25 acres) or managed as wooded pasture (15 acres).

#### CIRCULATION (1852-1896):

- ❑ Approximately 1,400 linear feet of the Russell farm lane (from the railroad bridge to just beyond the boundary diversion) were preserved and incorporated into the approach drive for the Hoyt estate; an additional 500 linear feet of drive east of the quarry site may have been re-used as well.
- ❑ Approximately 2,500 linear feet of road were constructed on the estate (from just beyond the boundary diversion to the Hoyt residence) to create a curvilinear approach drive characteristic of the picturesque style of landscape gardening.
- ❑ Approximately 750 linear feet of road extending from the Lewis-Livingston property line to the "Lewis dock" were preserved and incorporated into the Hoyts' circulation system.

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- ❑ An additional 5,000 linear feet of curvilinear drives and paths were constructed to link the Hoyt residence with the estate's farm cottage, barn, outbuildings, dock and garden. Limited portions of these routes may have incorporated old farm lanes on the former Russell and Lewis properties.
  - ❑ A drive was constructed prior to 1876 to link the Hoyt estate with an adjoining property (formerly the Ames/Marshall farm) owned by J. L. Lee, a cousin of the Hoyts. This road may have been an adaptation or extension of an earlier farm lane built by the Russells. The adjoining property was subsequently acquired by one of the Hoyts' children, Angelica L. Morgan, sometime after 1879.
  - ❑ The Hoyts' kitchen garden was sub-divided into narrow rectangular plots by a series of parallel paths (east-west orientation), and linked to the rest of the estate by two north-south farm lanes bordering the length of the garden.
  - ❑ A farm lane may have been preserved or built next to a drainage ditch that extended along the eastern boundary of the "point lot."

#### BUILDINGS AND LANDSCAPE STRUCTURES (1852-1896):

- ❑ Calvert Vaux, in consultation with his clients, selected the site of the Hoyts' country house and subsequently prepared plans, elevations and sections for a Gothic cottage [1] that is highly expressive of the picturesque ideals in rural architecture and landscape gardening of the period.
- ❑ Calvert Vaux selected a site near the approach drive for the Hoyts' farm cottage [C] and subsequently prepared plans for this simple picturesque structure.
- ❑ A barn [A], presumably standing on the "point lot" prior to 1854, may have been preserved by the Hoyts for use as a coach house and stable. This structure may have also served as a barn for the Hoyts' limited number of horses, cattle, cows, swine and poultry.
- ❑ A boat house [B], presumably standing on the "Lewis dock" prior to 1854, may have been preserved by the Hoyts.
- ❑ A number of minor outbuildings were presumably constructed on the site during this period, including: a reservoir [2]; a pump house [E]; an ice house [D]; and an unidentified outbuilding [M] near the farm cottage.
- ❑ A picket fence was built to enclose the Hoyts' 1.3-acre kitchen garden.
- ❑ More than 4,000 linear feet of stone fences that partitioned the Russell farm into various lots were removed to give the estate a more spacious and naturalistic appearance. It is possible that some of the stones removed from these walls were incorporated into the foundation and non-ornamental walls of the Hoyt residence, as well as the foundations of the farm cottage and numerous outbuildings throughout the site.
- ❑ More than 2,000 linear feet of stone wall that once marked the boundary between the Russell farm and the "Point lot" were removed to facilitate the integration of the house site, approach drive and garden with the larger landscape.

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- ❑ More than 800 linear feet of the property's southern boundary wall were removed, presumably after 1879 when the Hoyts' daughter, Angelica L. Morgan, purchased the land for her estate known as "Morgan Hall."
  - ❑ Bluestone walls and piers were built on opposite sides of the approach drive to define the estate's entrance along the Post Road.
  - ❑ The "Lewis dock" was preserved and maintained as required in the lease agreement between the Hoyts and Margaret Lewis Livingston.
  - ❑ Stone wells were installed around mature trees near the Hoyt residence to protect them from changes in grade associated with construction of the residence designed by Calvert Vaux.
  - ❑ Post-and-wire fences were installed to define the boundaries of the farm's meadow and pastures.

#### SITE FURNISHINGS AND OBJECTS (1852-1896):

[No documentation available]

#### WATER FEATURES (1852-1896):

- ❑ Drainage ditches within the estate's wetlands were probably preserved and maintained to facilitate agricultural activity along their margins.
- ❑ Underground pipes and drains were installed (1861) to transport spring water from the adjoining Marshall farm to the Hoyt estate.

#### VIEWES AND SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS (1852-1896):

- ❑ An attractive entrance to the Hoyt estate was created between the Post Road and the railroad with the construction of paired stone walls, the preservation/planting of Sugar maple trees, and the installation of a dense hedge of White pines and hemlocks along both sides of this short drive.
- ❑ A continuous cathedral-like corridor, defined by the trunks and canopies of nearly 400 regularly-spaced trees (30' wide and 20' apart), was created along the approach drive between the railroad bridge and the Hoyt residence by the preservation and planting of Sugar maples, oaks and other native trees.
- ❑ Views of pastoral scenery, juxtaposed with vistas of rugged picturesque beauty, were created along the Hoyts' approach drive by the preservation of existing land uses (meadows, pastures, cultivated fields, woodlands and wetlands) and natural landforms, the introduction of designed elements (lawns, gardens, drives, outbuildings), and the removal of internal stone walls that artificially sub-divided the former Russell farm into geometrically-shaped plots.

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- An intimate and rustic setting, expressive of the picturesque ideals in landscape gardening, was created in the immediate vicinity of the Hoyts' country house by the following design decisions:
    - carefully siting the structure within a mature grove of native forest trees;
    - closely integrating the structure with its setting through the use of verandas and porches, picturesque architectural details, and bluestone quarried on the site;
    - selectively thinning and pruning these woodland trees to elevate their canopies, dramatize their irregular forms, and provide unobstructed views from the residence;
    - tempering the site's irregular land forms with judicious grading to create rounded forms that gently slope away from the house;
    - screening views of incongruous outbuildings with massed plantings of evergreens;
    - creating a limited area of lawn beneath the high-canopy trees near the house; and
    - preserving stands of dense woodland just beyond the lawn to help define the space.
  
  - Five spectacular vistas from the Hoyts' country house were created by:
    - carefully selecting an elevated house site with inherently fine views of the Hudson River and the distant Catskill Mountains;
    - designing a compact structure with a floor plan that was precisely oriented to take advantage of the site's 150° panorama of the Hudson River from specific rooms within the house and strategic positions on the veranda.
    - preserving and pruning mature native trees in the immediate vicinity of the structure to provide a foreground for those views;
    - clearing all trees and underbrush on the banks of the Hudson River within five narrow corridors that radiate from the house; and
    - designing an approach road to the house that did not interfere with any of the river vistas, or diminish their impact upon entering the house and/or veranda.

#### SURROUNDINGS (1852-1896):

- The Lewis-Livingston estate, which adjoins the northern boundary of the Hoyt property, was inherited in 1890 by Ruth Livingston Mills, a granddaughter Margaret Lewis Livingston. She and her husband, Ogden, immediately began an extensive program of architectural and landscape improvements which include: enlarging and remodeling the Greek Revival residence (1895) under the direction of the prominent architectural firm of McKim, Mead and White; constructing a new pump house (1891), brick carriage house (1894), ice house (1896), and brick barns (1897); building new drives (1896); and planting two-thousand new trees (1897).
  
- The old Marshall farm, which adjoins "The Point" along its entire southern border, was converted from a farm to an estate by J. Lawrence Lee about 1871. At some point after 1879, the property was purchased by one of the Hoyts' children, Angelica Livingston Morgan, who transformed it into her estate known as "Morgan Hall."
  
- A second track was laid for the Hudson River Railroad during 1863-1864.
  
- A new Esopus Meadows lighthouse was constructed in 1871 to replace the original structure built in 1839.

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"THE POINT"-- THE FARM & COUNTRY PLACE OF MARY & GERALD HOYT (1897-1927)

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Gerald Livingston Hoyt, the oldest son of L. M. and Geraldine Hoyt, inherited "The Point" in 1897. Although Hoyt maintained a permanent residence in New York City where he worked in a banking and investment firm, he and his wife, Mary Appleton, continued the family's traditional use of the Staatsburg property as a seasonal country home and gentlemen's farm.

At the time that Mary and Gerald Hoyt acquired "The Point," many comparable Hudson River estates were being renovated by their wealthy owners in response to changing aesthetic standards, technology, and new leisure pursuits. It is likely that the Hoyts were influenced by the dramatic architectural and landscape improvements taking place at the adjoining estate of Ogden and Ruth Mills, particularly the construction of: brick coach houses (1894); a lawn tennis court (1900); new roads (1900); and greenhouses (1903 and 1910) within view of the Hoyts' driveway. Nevertheless, the Hoyts' alterations to "The Point" were relatively restrained by comparison, and generally preserved the character-defining elements and picturesque qualities of their Vaux-designed country house and its immediate landscape setting. Aside from the addition of a lawn tennis court within a vista southwest of the residence, most of the changes made between 1897 and 1927 were limited to garden, farm and service areas well away from the house.

The Hoyts' earliest site improvements were two brick structures -- a coach house and a cow barn -- that were built to replace a single wooden barn destroyed by fire in 1899. Constructed on opposite sides of the farm cottage, the new buildings may have been designed and sited by Robert Palmer Huntington,<sup>18</sup> a Staatsburg architect responsible for remodeling the interior of the Hoyt residence in 1905. It was the addition of these structures, however, that provided the framework for a functional and spatial re-organization of the estate -- a change that was accelerated with the introduction of the automobile in 1903. This technological advance not only required the construction of additional buildings on the site (an "Auto house" or "Mechanics Garage" in 1903, and a 5-bay garage in 1911), it also precipitated changes in the materials, alignment, and grade of roads throughout the property. The most notable of these alterations occurred on the wooded hillside west of the garden where the Hoyts constructed a steeper, but a more expedient, approach road to their residence.

Mary and Gerald Hoyts' pursuit of gardening as a hobby also brought about significant changes in the organization and character of the property. They constructed three greenhouses (two in 1905 and one in 1910) and a mushroom house in the area north of the garden between the farm cottage and the barn. A 1935 aerial photograph [HP-1] of the site also suggests that the Hoyts built a large building of unknown function near the approach road just south of their garden.

The following categories highlight the changes in character-defining landscape features at "The Point" from the late-1890s through the mid-1920s, while Figure 3-13 illustrates the organization of the site during this period.

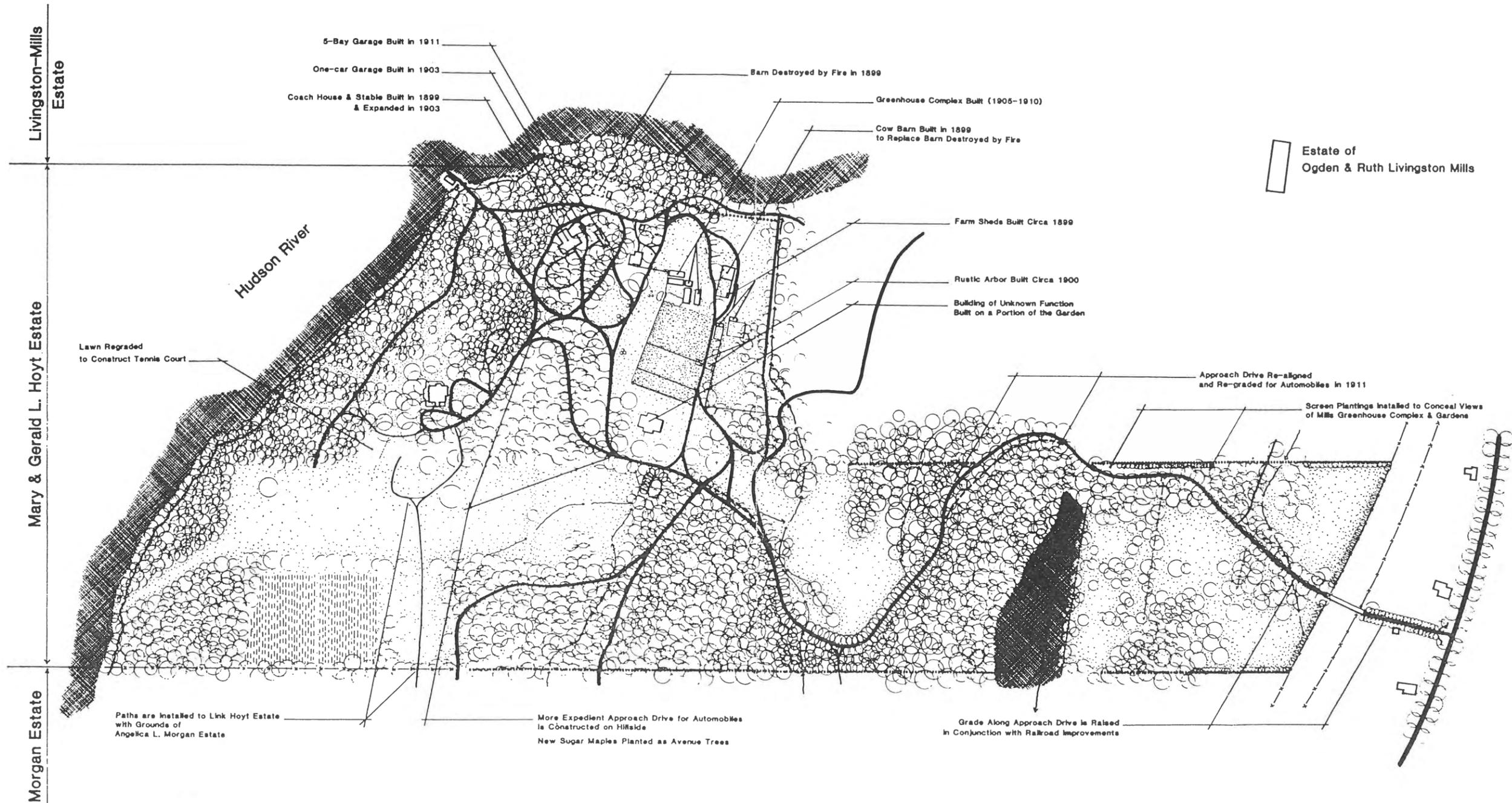


FIGURE 3-13  
 PERIOD MAP #3: 1897-1927

"The Point" — The Farm and Country Place of Mary and Gerald L. Hoyt.



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**TOPOGRAPHY (1897-1927):**

- ❑ The natural contour of the land southwest of the Hoyt residence was presumably altered circa 1900 by grading and filling to create a level terrace (100' x 120') suitable for a lawn tennis court. [NOTE: A comparable court was created on the adjoining Mills estate in 1900.]
- ❑ Portions of a wooded knoll located just west of the farm cottage were regraded to accommodate construction of a coach house (1899), mechanics garage (1903), and a 5-bay garage (1911), as well as the roads associated with these structures.
- ❑ An area just north of the Hoyts' garden was regraded to accommodate construction of a greenhouse complex in the early-1900s.
- ❑ An area northeast of the Hoyts' garden was regraded in 1899 to accommodate construction of a brick cow barn and three other small outbuildings, as well as the retaining walls, yards and farm lanes associated with these structures.
- ❑ A 60' x 100' area south of the Hoyts' garden may have been filled and leveled during this period to accommodate construction of an unidentified building [Q].
- ❑ The site of the Hoyts' original barn [A] was probably filled and leveled after the 1899 fire that destroyed the structure.
- ❑ The contour of the hillside directly east of the Hoyt residence was altered circa 1911 to facilitate construction of a steeper, but shorter, approach road.
- ❑ The contour of the hillside along the boundary diversion (also known as the Hoyt-Mills woods) was altered in 1911 to facilitate the widening and re-alignment of the Hoyts' approach drive.
- ❑ Grades along the approach drive in the vicinity of the railroad bridge were probably raised in the mid-1910s to accommodate improvements by the New York Central Railroad; the height of the stone retaining walls protecting 18 Sugar maples west of the bridge may have been increased at this time.

**VEGETATION (1897-1927):**

- ❑ A limited number of deciduous shrubs and/or vines were planted at entrances to the Hoyt house, and along the base of its veranda.
- ❑ A few mature trees southwest of the residence may have been removed circa 1900 to facilitate construction of a lawn tennis court.
- ❑ Topiary trees in wooden tubs were arranged on the lawn at the base of the south veranda.
- ❑ Avenue trees (Sugar maples) were planted along the new section of the approach road.
- ❑ A screen plantings of hemlock trees was planted along the west side of the tennis court.
- ❑ Clusters of exotic ornamental evergreens (Sawara false cypress) were planted to define paths leading to the estate's greenhouses and garden.

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- ❑ Boston-ivy was planted at strategic points along the foundation of the estate's new brick coach house and 5-bay garage, and presumably, on two other new brick buildings (the mechanics garage and cow barn).
  - ❑ A narrow wedge of land along the eastern edge of the Hoyts' garden was removed from cultivation and devoted to small outbuildings, yards and pens associated with the cow barn.
  - ❑ A fence-enclosed paddock or pasture was developed on the sloping lands east of the garden.
  - ❑ Vista clearings in the dense woodland along the western slope of the river ridge were preserved and maintained.
  - ❑ Ancient trees in the vicinity of the house, trees that once grew along the Russell stone walls, and avenue trees along the approach road were preserved and maintained.
  - ❑ All or part of the Hoyts' apple orchard was removed, perhaps to create a paddock or pasture south of the cow barn.
  - ❑ A hedge was planted during this period along the garden's southern boundary.
  - ❑ Farming continued during this period, preserving the estate's overall agricultural land use patterns.

#### NATURAL SYSTEMS (1897-1927):

- ❑ The estate's woodlands and wetlands remained relatively unchanged in size.

#### CIRCULATION (1897-1927):

- ❑ A new hillside approach road, approximately 500 feet in length, was built circa 1911 to provide more direct automobile access to the Hoyt residence; other improvements to the estate's roads (widening; cobblestone gutters, etc.) may have been made at this time as well.
- ❑ Paths were installed to connect the Hoyt property with new features (greenhouse complex, lawn tennis court, etc.) located on the adjoining Mills estate to the north, as well as the residence and grounds of Angelica L. Morgan ("Morgan Hall"), to the south.
- ❑ The drive passing through the Hoyt-Mills woods (the boundary diversion) was widened and re-aligned in 1911. These improvements moved the roadway 20-30 feet further north onto land owned by the Mills.
- ❑ Grading and filling for the lawn tennis court may have eliminated, or altered the alignment of, a path or drive through the meadow/fields south of the Hoyt residence.
- ❑ Road alignments in the vicinity of the Hoyts' original barn may have been altered after the 1899 fire that destroyed the building.

- ❑ A farm lane along the east side of the Hoyts' garden was adapted to provide access to the new outbuildings, yards and paddocks, while a new road was constructed along the crest of a ridge just to the west.

#### BUILDINGS AND LANDSCAPE STRUCTURES (1897-1927):

- ❑ The first floor of the Hoyt residence was remodeled in 1905 according to plans of Robert P. Huntington, a Staatsburg architect; however, there were no significant changes to the exterior of the structure at this time
- ❑ The Hoyts' original coach house/stable [A] was destroyed by fire in July of 1899. This structure, possibly a pre-1854 barn from the Lewis or Livingston periods, may have stood along the road to the "Lewis dock" just northwest of the farm cottage.
- ❑ In 1899, the Hoyts built a new brick coach house/stable [4] on a knoll west of the farm cottage to replace a barn destroyed by fire earlier that year. Expanded in 1903, this Tudor-inspired structure may also be the work of architect Robert P. Huntington who remodeled the interior of the Hoyt residence in 1905. [Note: Brick coach houses were built on the adjoining Mills estate in 1894.]
- ❑ In 1899, the Hoyts also built a brick cow barn [3] on a ridge northeast of the Hoyts' garden. Similar in architectural details to the coach house/stable [4] built the same, this structure may also be the work of architect Robert P. Huntington.
- ❑ Three small outbuildings, possibly used as tool or livestock sheds [F, G, & H], were built near the cow barn circa 1899. Stone retaining walls associated with these structures may also date from this period.
- ❑ In 1903, the Hoyts built a one-car garage [5] near their new brick coach house/stable. This brick structure was also called the "Auto house" and the "Mechanics Garage."
- ❑ Two iron-frame greenhouses [I & J], and perhaps an associated potting shed/heating plant [6], were constructed just north of the Hoyts' garden in 1905. A third greenhouse was added to the complex in 1910. A fourth structure [L] in this vicinity may be a "Mushroom House" noted in oral accounts. [Note: New greenhouses were built at the adjoining Mills property in 1903 and 1910].
- ❑ In 1911, the Hoyts added a 5-bay garage to the knoll west of the farm cottage. Similar in design to the 1899 coach house/stable, this structure may also be the work of architect Robert P. Huntington.
- ❑ A rustic arbor [R] was added at the eastern terminus of the garden's central path (east-west alignment) before 1916.
- ❑ An unidentified building with a cruciform-shaped roof plan [Q] may have been built near the approach road during this period just south of the Hoyts' garden.
- ❑ The picket fence that enclosed the estate's garden may have been removed during this period.

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- ❑ The "Lewis dock" was used extensively during this period to unload large quantities of building materials for architectural and landscape improvements underway at the adjoining Lewis-Livingston-Mills estate.
  - ❑ A boat house [B] on the "Lewis dock" may have been removed during this period.
  - ❑ Stone walls along the estate's southern border may have been removed during this period, perhaps to provide a source of stone for the foundations of the cow barn [3], coach house and stable [4], auto house [5], the 5-bay garage [7], and several smaller outbuildings [F, G, H].

#### SITE FURNISHINGS AND OBJECTS (1897-1927):

- ❑ Wooden tubs filled with topiary trees were arranged on the lawn near the south veranda.

#### WATER FEATURES (1897-1927):

[No documentation available]

#### VIEWS AND SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS (1897-1927):

- ❑ The subtle visual transition between the Hoyts' lawn and an adjoining meadow southwest of the residence was disrupted circa 1900 with the construction of lawn tennis court that replaced the area's gently undulating contours with an abruptly-ending level surface. Situated prominently in the mid-ground of a narrow vista from the Hoyt residence to the Hudson River, the artificial form of the tennis court diminished the picturesque qualities and inherent scenic beauty of the area.
- ❑ The spatial character and agrarian simplicity of the Hoyts' cottage and garden/orchard were diminished significantly during this period by a number of actions, including:
  - the removal of space-defining elements (picket fence, apple trees, paths, etc.);
  - the introduction of new ornamental features (rustic arbor);
  - the alteration of the garden's eastern boundary;
  - the re-alignment of a farm lane along the garden's eastern border; and
  - the construction of at least 14 new buildings [3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and F, G, H, I, J, K, L, Q] in the immediate vicinity of the cottage and garden with little consideration of landscape gardening design principles.
- ❑ Construction of a more expedient automobile route to the Hoyt residence altered the visual character of the wooded slope east of the house, and disrupted the intended spatial sequence along the approach drive. Panoramas across the Hoyts' garden/orchard and glimpses of the estate's picturesque farm cottage from the wide-sweeping curves of the original approach drive were replaced with more limited woodland views along a much steeper, sharply-curving ascent.

#### SURROUNDINGS (1897-1927):

- ❑ Ogden and Ruth Mills continued to improve their adjoining estate with the following architectural and landscape improvements: a new dairy, farm house, brick gardener's house, and reservoir (1898); a lawn tennis court (1900); new roads and stone entrance walls (1900-1901); greenhouses (1903 and 1910); a large poultry house (1903); and a steel railroad bridge (1908). Some of these projects may have inspired similar work on the Hoyt estate.

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**"THE POINT"-- THE COUNTRY HOME OF HELEN & LYDIG HOYT (1927-1963)**

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Lydig Hoyt, the only son of Mary and Gerald Hoyt, inherited "The Point" upon the death of his mother in 1927. Although he and his second wife, Helen Hoadley Hoyt, continued his parents' traditional use of the estate as a seasonal country home for another thirty-six years, they ceased farming the property -- a practice that began in the 1790s -- prior to World War II.

In addition to this significant change in land use, Helen and Lydig Hoyt altered the property in a number of other ways that diminished the integrity of the estate's character-defining features and its picturesque and pastoral qualities. During the early years of their residency, the Hoyts removed several Gothic Revival exterior architectural elements (the veranda, porches, hoods, wood trim, etc.) that helped to integrate the Vaux-designed structure with its picturesque landscape setting, and added a porch and kitchen wing that were incompatible with the original design, form, and materials of the house. They also extended the kitchen wing with a one-car garage later in their residency.

The Hoyts simplified the estate's circulation system as well, particularly in the vicinity of the garden, farm cottage and garage complex. In doing so, they not only destroyed portions of historic drives that were highly expressive of the romantic style, they also altered the spatial sequence approaching the house and the visual order of the area. Alterations to the estate's garden had an equally dramatic impact on the spatial organization of the property. An avid gardener, Mrs. Hoyt may have been responsible for replacing the family's traditional kitchen garden with lawn, and constructing a modest perennial border backed by a free-standing brick wall at the south end of a former lawn tennis court. Situated prominently within the south vista from the house, however, this ornamental feature was incongruous with the picturesque design principles espoused by Calvert Vaux.

During World War II, the Hoyts' patriotic fervor may have overwhelmed their sense of stewardship for the family estate. In 1944, they hired Christopher Lumber Company to log trees on the property in support of the war effort. A comparison of aerial photographs from 1935 and 1956, however, suggests that the logging had a devastating impact on the historic fabric, spatial organization and picturesque character of the estate in the immediate vicinity of the house. It appears that 5 acres of dense woodland -- perhaps climax forest hundreds of years old -- were cleared along the banks of the Hudson River from the south vista to the "Lewis dock." In addition to destroying the woodland edge that defined the space surrounding the Hoyts' country house, the lumbering replaced the narrow vistas defined by Calvert Vaux with broad panoramas of the Hudson River and Catskill Mountains.

The construction of a swimming pool on a portion of the old garden site, and the conversion of a former greenhouse potting shed/heating plant into a bath house and cocktail terrace, were among the last alterations made to "The Point." These modern amenities were introduced by Helen Hoyt, following the death of her husband, Lydig, in 1959. A 1963 appraisal of the property quantified land uses on the site in this manner: 25 acres of river frontage and home site area; 10 acres of open fields lying to the east of the home site area; 5 acres of swampy area; 42 acres of woods and rough area; and an 8-acre commercial area adjacent to the railroad tracks.

The following categories highlight the changes in character-defining landscape features at "The Point" from the late-1920s through the early-1960s, while Figure 3-14 illustrates the organization of the site during this period.

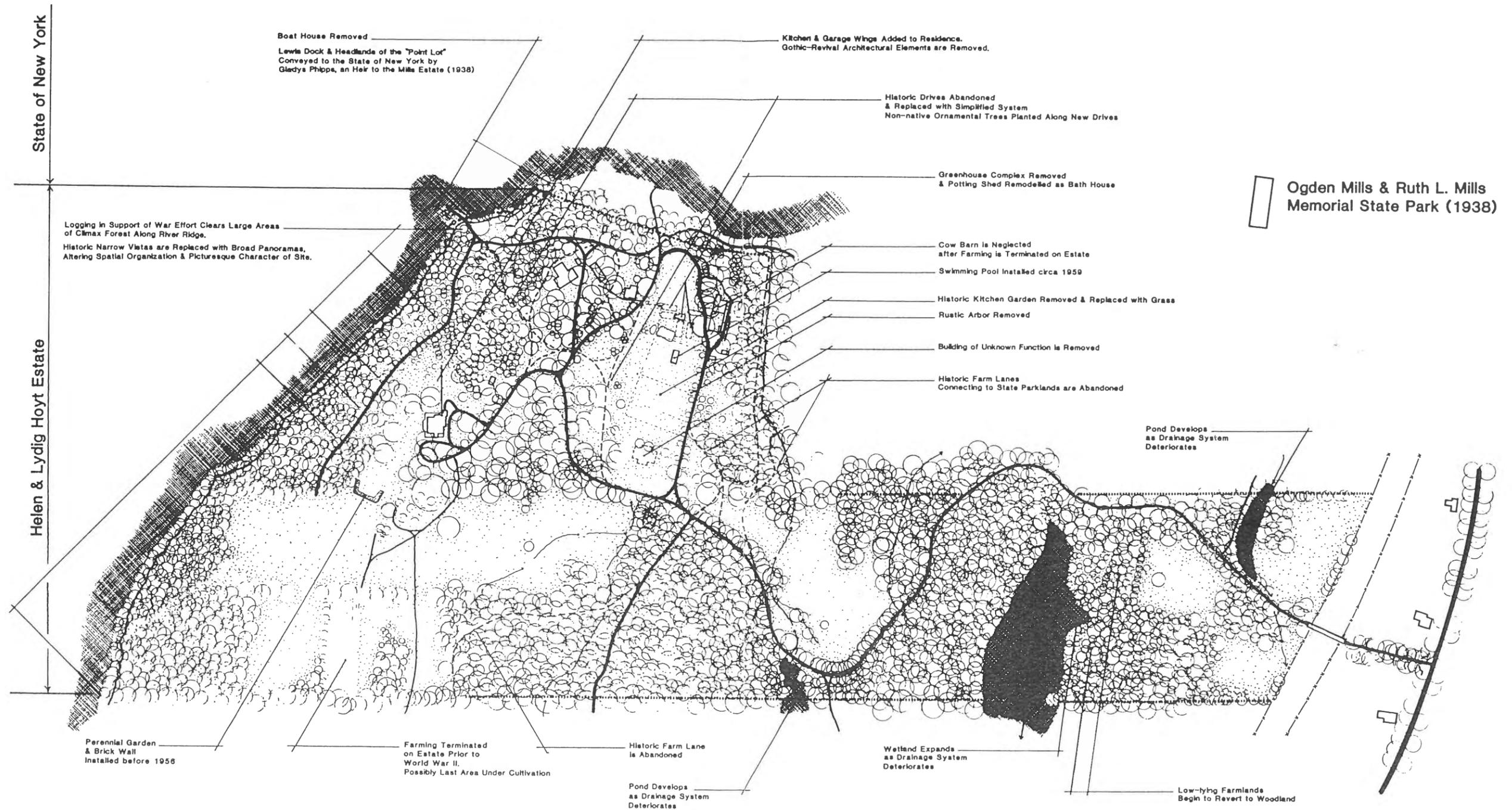


FIGURE 3-14  
 PERIOD MAP #4: 1927-1963

"The Point" — The Country Home of Helen and Lydig Hoyt.



DOELL & DOELL

Garden Historians and Landscape Preservation Planners  
 210 Salt Springs Road, Syracuse, New York 13224-1861



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**TOPOGRAPHY (1927-1963):**

- ❑ Land contours south of the farm cottage were modified prior to 1935 to facilitate construction of a new road segment.
- ❑ Land contours at the north end of the garden site were modified circa 1959 to facilitate construction of a swimming pool.
- ❑ Land contours near the potting shed [6] were modified after two greenhouses [I & J] and another building (possibly a "mushroom house") were removed from the site prior to 1956.
- ❑ Land contours south of the garden site were modified after an unidentified building [Q] was removed from the site prior to 1956.
- ❑ The former quarry, and steep slopes east of the cow barn and northeast of the Hoyt residence were used as dump sites.

**VEGETATION (1927-1963):**

- ❑ Exotic trees, predominantly Colorado and Norway spruce, were planted near the farm cottage and coach house/garage complex prior to 1935 to help redefine circulation patterns in this area. Extensive lawns and ornamental shrubs were also introduced in these areas during this period, significantly diminishing its picturesque character.
- ❑ The Hoyt estate was heavily lumbered in 1944 and again in 1950, especially the densely wooded slopes bordering the Hudson River. An extensive area from the southwest vista to the "Lewis dock" was virtually "clear cut," resulting in the devastating loss of nearly 5 acres of picturesque old growth woodland. The visual character of the site was also severely compromised by these actions.
- ❑ At least a dozen native woodland trees of picturesque habit in the immediate vicinity of the Hoyt residence were removed during the 1927-1963 period.
- ❑ A limited number of exotic ornamental trees (including Norway spruce, European beech, and Saucer magnolia) were planted within or near the driveway loop east of the Hoyt residence during the 1927-1963 period.
- ❑ Apple trees were planted on a ridge south of the Hoyt residence and along the east side of the farm lane south of the cow barn prior to 1956.
- ❑ Regularly-spaced Pin oaks were planted along the west side of the farm lane south of the cow barn circa 1959.
- ❑ The traditional Hoyt garden and its associated paths and drives were converted into lawn circa 1959.
- ❑ Ornamental plantings were installed in the vicinity of the swimming pool and potting shed (adapted for use as a bath house) circa 1959.
- ❑ An evergreen hedge (*Taxus* sp.) was planted near the northeast corner of the Hoyt residence to enclose a U-shaped automobile court before 1956.

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- ❑ A perennial flower border was developed at the base of a brick wall constructed near the south end of the former lawn tennis court before 1956.
  - ❑ Lawn and groundcovers replaced portions of the historic approach road and service drives in the vicinity of the farm house and coach house/garage complex.
  - ❑ A line of willow trees was planted prior to 1956 between the south end of the former garden and the former site of an unidentified building [Q].
  - ❑ Dense stands of young, mixed hardwood trees began to establish themselves in portions of the site that were extensively lumbered during the 1940s and 1950s.
  - ❑ A small orchard of apple trees was planted on the knoll directly south of the Hoyt House.

#### NATURAL SYSTEMS (1927-1963):

- ❑ Extensive lumbering on the densely wooded slopes bordering the Hudson River altered the composition of plant and animal communities in this area during the 1940s and 1950s.
- ❑ Pond and wetland communities developed in low-lying areas along the approach road as drainage ditches, pipes and culverts deteriorated.

#### CIRCULATION (1927-1963):

- ❑ Circulation patterns characteristic of the landscape gardening style were altered on the estate in the late-1920s when portions (approximately 1,000 linear feet) of the approach road and service drives in the vicinity of the farm cottage were replaced with more expedient routes.
- ❑ The switchback curve in the Hoyts' approach drive -- a steep and abrupt turn midway up the river ridge -- was paved with concrete to minimize erosion problems.
- ❑ Cast stone/concrete curbs were installed along the edges of the approach drive in the vicinity of the Hoyt residence.

#### BUILDINGS AND LANDSCAPE STRUCTURES (1927-1963):

- ❑ The picturesque character of the Hoyt residence was significantly diminished in the late-1920s by the removal of many exterior Gothic Revival features (window hoods, verandas, wood trim), and the addition of architecturally incompatible features, including a kitchen wing and garage at the northeast corner of the house, and a porch on the west facade.
- ❑ A concrete swimming pool [10] was constructed on a portion of the former garden site after the death of Lydig Hoyt in 1959.
- ❑ All of the estate's greenhouses [I, J & K] and a structure presumed to be the "Mushroom house" [L] were removed or partially demolished prior to 1956.

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- ❑ The greenhouse potting shed/heating plant [6] was converted into a bathhouse and cocktail bar after the death of Lydig Hoyt in 1959. The foundation of an adjoining greenhouse (K) was adapted for use as a terrace overlooking the swimming pool, and a small lean-to greenhouse [9] was attached to the west side of the bathhouse/cocktail bar.
  - ❑ A free-standing brick wall [8] was constructed prior to 1956 at the south end of a former lawn tennis court near the Hoyt residence. The structure served as a backdrop for a perennial flower border of the same period.
  - ❑ An unidentified building [Q] near the approach road south of the former garden was removed prior to 1956.
  - ❑ An outbuilding [M] north of the farm cottage [C] was removed prior to 1956.
  - ❑ A rustic arbor [R] in the garden was removed prior to 1956.
  - ❑ A small structure [P], identified as a "reservoir" in the 1960s, was constructed on this site prior to 1935. Presumably, it was associated with a spring located only a few yards to the west.

#### SITE FURNISHINGS AND OBJECTS (1927-1963):

- ❑ A pair of ornamental urns were used atop the ends of the brick garden wall southwest of the house, and a statue served as a focal point in the flower border.

#### WATER FEATURES (1927-1963):

- ❑ Streams and springs that crossed the approach drive gradually became ponds and wetlands during this period as drain pipes and culverts deteriorated or filled with sediment.

#### VIEWS AND SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS (1927-1963):

- ❑ Extensive lumbering along the banks of the Hudson River (from the southwest vista to the "Lewis dock") during the 1940s and 1950s severely diminished the picturesque character of the site, and the spatial organization of the landscape setting for the Hoyt residence. The destruction of nearly 5-acres of old-growth trees on these slopes resulted in the loss of an important visual barrier -- the woodland edge -- that defined:
  - the "walls" or boundaries of the intimate tree-shaded space surrounding the Hoyt residence; and
  - the "frames" or borders of five distinct vistas that linked rooms and verandas of the Hoyt residence with the larger landscape. The selected vignettes provided by these narrow visual corridors were replaced with a broad panorama of the Hudson River and Catskill Mountains.
- ❑ The area between the Hoyt residence and the woodland edge was transformed from an intimate, picturesque grove to a spacious ornamental lawn during this period with the loss of at least a dozen high-canopied trees surrounding the house.

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- The picturesque character of the Hoyt residence itself, and its visual relationships with the surrounding landscape, were also diminished during this period by the following actions:
    - the removal of historic Gothic Revival elements (window hoods, verandas, wood trim) from the house;
    - the addition of inappropriate architectural features (kitchen wing, garage and porch);
    - the installation of a U-shaped evergreen hedge at the northeast corner of the house; and
    - the addition of exotic trees (Norway spruce, Saucer magnolia, etc.) with inappropriate forms or habits on the lawn.
  
  - The pastoral character of the Hoyts' garden and farmlands was further diminished during this period by:
    - terminating all farming on the property between 1928 and 1944, and converting its cultivated fields into lawns and meadows;
    - removing the garden and replacing its character-defining elements (drives, paths, flower beds, etc.) with lawn;
    - constructing a swimming pool on a portion of the Hoyts' garden.
  
  - The spatial sequence approaching the Hoyt residence was further diminished during this period by:
    - eliminating a segment of the approach drive with views of the garden and farm cottage;
    - constructing a new drive in the vicinity of the cottage and installing exotic ornamental trees to define its margins;
    - replacing the garden's character-defining elements with lawn; and
    - replacing picturesque wooded areas in the vicinity of the coach house/garage complex with mowed lawns and ornamental shrubs.

#### SURROUNDINGS (1927-1963):

- The adjoining Mills estate became a public park in 1938 when Gladys Phipps, the daughter of Ogden and Ruth Mills, gave her parents Staatsburg property to the State of New York for use as an ornamental and historical park known as the Ogden Mills and Ruth Livingston Mills Memorial State Park.

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**THE TENURE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK AT "THE POINT" (1963-PRESENT)**

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In November of 1962, New York State initiated a program to unite the Ogden and Ruth Livingston Mills Memorial State Park with the Margaret Lewis Norrie State Park by procuring "The Point" and several other privately-held Staatsburg properties as parklands. The following spring, the Taconic State Park Commission acquired "The Point" from Mrs. Lydig Hoyt for the sum of \$300,000, thus ending the family's century-long ownership and stewardship of the 91-acre property. Terms of the sale entitled Mrs. Hoyt to reside at "The Point" for an additional five years; however, she elected to vacate the property on October 15, 1963, less than six months after the transaction. Just prior to her departure, Mrs. Hoyt also sold most of her household furnishings during a three-day public auction (October 3-5, 1963) held at "The Point." Shortly thereafter, the State removed all utilities for the Hoyt House and demolished the Vaux-designed farm cottage and several minor farm outbuildings on the estate.

In 1968, the Office of Parks and Recreation retained Vollmer Associates, a New York City planning and design firm, to prepare a master plan for Mills-Norrie State Park. Their concept, endorsed by the Taconic State Park and Recreation Commission, called for the demolition of the Hoyt House and the installation of picnic tables and recreational equipment on the site. Intervention by the New York State Historic Trust and other concerned parties in 1969, however, forced the Commission to consider adaptive use of the property as an alternative to demolition.

Preservation planning for the site advanced in the mid-1970s when T. Robins Brown, a research assistant for the Division of Historic Preservation, prepared reports documenting the architectural and landscape significance of "The Point." In 1979, the Hoyt House was placed on the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing structure within the "Sixteen Mile District" along the east side of the Hudson River. Subsequently, the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) attempted to attract a private developer to rehabilitate the Hoyt property and the adjoining Mills Mansion in a sympathetic and compatible manner under a long-term (10 year) lease agreement.

When these efforts proved unsuccessful, however, the OPRHP initiated a program in 1985 to rehabilitate Mills Mansion State Historic Site as a house museum, while continuing to explore alternative preservation strategies for the former Hoyt estate. In 1989, OPRHP entertained a proposal from Bard College to utilize the Hoyt House and its surrounding landscape as the administrative and faculty headquarters for a summer program in landscape and environmental studies, with funding from the J. M. Kaplan Fund, Inc. Although this adaptive use concept was never realized, it provided OPRHP with an incentive for preparing an historic landscape report and preservation management plan for the property.

Lacking resources and a clear vision for the property, OPRHP has been unable to provide a consistent program of responsible stewardship at "The Point" over the past 34 years. Unlike previous periods in the site's history that were characterized by dramatic site improvements (new roads, structures, etc.), this interval saw an incremental erosion of the site's character-defining features and a diminishing of its picturesque and pastoral qualities. These changes included: the degradation of architectural elements on the Hoyt House due to weathering and vandalism; the encroachment of vistas and tree-shaded lawns near the house with dense successional vegetation; the loss of picturesque specimen trees and stately avenue throughout the site; the replacement of pastoral open space bordering the approach road with woodland; and the expansion of wetland areas.

successional vegetation; the loss of picturesque specimen trees and stately avenue throughout the site; the replacement of pastoral open space bordering the approach road with woodland; and the expansion of wetland areas.

The following categories highlight the changes in character-defining landscape features at "The Point" from the early-1960s through the present, while Figure 3-15 illustrates the conjectural organization of the site during this period.

#### TOPOGRAPHY (1963-Present):

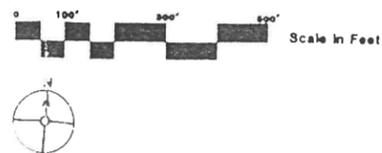
- ❑ Grades along the approach drive in the vicinity of the railroad bridge were raised to accommodate an elevated bridge surface.
- ❑ The swimming pool was filled with earth for stabilization and public safety reasons.
- ❑ Land contours were modified:
  - south of the former Hoyt residence to facilitate construction of a service road that linked the site with adjoining park lands (the former Morgan estate);
  - in the vicinity of the farm cottage when the hillside structure was demolished in 1963;
  - and, perhaps, along foot trails bordering the Hudson River.

#### VEGETATION (1963-Present):

- ❑ Ecological succession since 1963 has established a dense secondary growth of young mixed hardwood trees along the banks of the Hudson River between the south vista and the "Lewis dock" within the former vistas and the large clearings (approximately 5 acres) created by lumbering of the 1940s and 1950s.
- ❑ Ecological succession since 1975 has transformed virtually all of the estate's tree-shaded lawns and open fields into dense forest of young mixed hardwoods (with an occasional open glade) aside from limited areas in the vicinity of the Hoyt House, the coach house/garage complex and the former garden and greenhouse complex. These overgrown areas include:
  - approximately 5 acres between the railroad right-of-way and the upland marsh;
  - approximately 4.5 acres between the boundary diversion and the road to the cow barn;
  - approximately 13 acres of the former Russell farm between the quarry site and the Hudson River.
  - approximately 1.5 acres south of the cow barn; and
  - approximately 6 acres of wooded hillside bordering the approach road between the lawn tennis court, the coach house/stable complex and the former site of the farm cottage.
- ❑ The unmitigated growth of arbor-forming vines (poison-ivy, bittersweet, wild grape, etc.) over the past 30 year has killed or severely damaged numerous avenue trees, many of the old "fenceline" trees within the former Russell farm lot, and several of the ancient oaks, hickories and hemlocks preserved by Hoyt and Vaux in the vicinity of the residence.
- ❑ The expansion of wetland areas bordering the approach road has resulted in the loss of a limited number of avenue trees.
- ❑ Ornamental foundation plantings at the base of the Hoyt House and its veranda were removed.



FIGURE 3-15  
 PERIOD MAP #5: 1963-PRESENT  
 The Tenure of the State of New York at "The Point":



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- ❑ Aggressive young successional trees, competing for light, nutrients, moisture and space, have damaged the canopies of mature avenue trees along the approach road.
  - ❑ Areas in the immediate vicinity of the Hoyt House, the west lawn and tennis court, and the coach house/garage complex, as well as roads from the coach house/garage complex to the dock were cleared of invasive vegetation in 1985. Selected vistas from the house were also thinned at this time.

#### NATURAL SYSTEMS (1963-Present):

- ❑ Wetland communities throughout the site have expand further during this period as drainage ditches, pipes and culverts continue to deteriorate.
- ❑ Plant and animal communities throughout the site were altered as ecological succession gradually transformed the estate's tree-shaded lawns and open fields (approximately 30 acres) into dense secondary growth of mixed young hardwoods after mowing ceased on the property in the mid-1970s.

#### CIRCULATION (1963-Present):

- ❑ Circulation routes throughout the site were gradually overgrown with successional growth during this period, including:
  - paths and drives on the wooded slopes between the Hoyt house and the Hudson River;
  - paths, drives and farm lanes in the meadows and woodlands south of the Hoyt house;
  - farm lanes southeast of the former garden site;
- ❑ A new service road was constructed along the crest of a ridge south of the Hoyt House to connect the estate's old approach road with a network of roads on the former Morgan estate, now part of the Mills-Norrie State Park.
- ❑ Roads throughout the site were periodically regraded in order to allow continued vehicular access.
- ❑ Bridle trails were created throughout the site, connecting the estate with other portions of the state parklands.

#### BUILDINGS AND LANDSCAPE STRUCTURES (1963-Present):

- ❑ The Hoyt House [1] was "mothballed" in 1963 when its use as a residence ceased. This action, and the subsequent degradation of its external architectural elements by vandalism and weathering over the past 33 years, further diminished the picturesque character of the structure and its landscape setting.
- ❑ Demolition of the farm cottage [C] in 1963 significantly diminished the estate's picturesque character and spatial organization, as well as its historical associations with Calvert Vaux, Lydig M. Hoyt and Geraldine Hoyt.
- ❑ Demolition of the estate's ice house [D] and pump house [E] in 1963 diminished the estate's spatial organization and its historical associations with Lydig and Geraldine Hoyt.

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- ❑ The 1963 demolition of six small outbuildings [F, G, H, N, O, P] with 20th-century origins altered the estate's spatial organization.
  - ❑ Vandalism and weathering over the past 33 years have diminished the historic fabric and character of the Hoyt family's 1905 potting shed [6] and a shed greenhouse [9] attached to the structure in 1959.
  - ❑ The estate's coach house and stable [4], one-car garage [5] and 5-bay garage [7] have been preserved and maintained during this period.
  - ❑ Weathering over the past 33 years have degraded the historic fabric and diminished character of the Lewis Dock and the brick garden wall southwest of the residence.

SITE FURNISHINGS AND OBJECTS (1963-Present):

[No information available]

WATER FEATURES (1963-Present):

- ❑ The incremental obstruction/deterioration of underground drainage systems over the past 33 years has transformed the south end of the former garden site, and adjoining areas further east along the approach road, into wetlands.
- ❑ The incremental sedimentation of open drainage ditches over the past 33 years has resulted in the elevation of water levels and the expansion of wetlands in the following areas:
  - the western margin and eastern third of the upland marsh; and
  - along the eastern margin of the "point lot" along the former boundary with the Lewis-Livingston-Mills estate.

VIEWS AND SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS (1963-Present):

- ❑ The visual/spatial character of the Hoyt House environs was simultaneously enhanced and diminished over the past 30 years by the growth of mixed hardwood trees along the slopes bordering the Hudson River. Although ecological succession in this area partially re-established the woodland edge that was destroyed by lumbering in the 1940s and 1950s, these dense young trees also obliterated the five historic vistas of the Hudson River and the distant Catskill Mountains.
- ❑ Ecological succession over the past 20 years has also created an impenetrable visual barrier south and east of the Hoyt House, severing its spatial ties with the surrounding pastoral fields and picturesque tree-shaded lawns, and effectively isolating the picturesque structure within a tiny "island" of space amid a sea of dense young vegetation.

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- The spatial sequence approaching the Hoyt House was also diminished during this period by ecological succession that replaced more than 20 acres of open fields and tree-shaded lawns flanking the approach road with a dense forest of young mixed hardwoods. This change in management practices incrementally altered the site's visual/spatial character by:
    - replacing a combination of pastoral and picturesque views from the tree-lined approach road with a continuous woodland scene;
    - transforming the spacious, cathedral-like character of the approach drive into a narrow, dark, tunnel-like corridor;
    - concealing occasional glimpses of the Hoyt House from the approach road; and
    - obscuring the site's overall land use patterns and compartmentalization.
  - The estate's visual character was also diminished by the loss of specimen trees, notable for their picturesque or pastoral qualities, throughout the site.
  - Evergreen screen plantings have lost their effectiveness due to reductions in their number and density in the following areas:
    - along the approach road between the Post Road and the railroad bridge;
    - near the reservoir [2] and possible ice house site [D];
    - at salient points along the approach road;
    - near the quarry site; and
    - north of the cow barn [3] and the site of the former farm cottage [C].

#### SURROUNDINGS (1963-Present):

- The estate known as "Morgan Hall," which bordered the Hoyt property on the south, was acquired by the State of New York during this period and incorporated into Mills-Norrie State Park. Although its road system was preserved and linked to the Hoyt House grounds with a new service road, all of its structures were demolished and the site became overgrown with a dense stands of young, mixed hardwood trees.

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#### ENDNOTES TO CHAPTER 3: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND ANALYSIS

- 1 Unless otherwise noted, the information presented in this section of Chapter 3 was compiled primarily from the sources listed below. Footnotes regarding specific people or transactions were omitted, however, for the sake of brevity and the convenience of the reader. For more detailed information on the estate's historical development, readers are encouraged to consult these sources directly.
  - Allan Weinreb, *Staatsburgh - The History of the Lewis-Livingston-Mills Estate*. New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, May 1996 (Draft).
  - George S. Van Vliet, "Pawling Patent, Alias Staatsburg, and Some of Its Early Families," *Year Book of the Dutchess County Historical Society*, October, 1915 - October, 1916, p. 28-42.

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- Helen Wilkinson Reynolds, *Dutchess County Doorways and Other Examples of Period-Work in Wood 1730-1830, With Accounts of Houses, Places and People*. William Farquhar Payson, New York, 1931, pp. 138-140.
  - T. Robins Brown, *Historical Analysis of the Hoyt House And Its Outbuildings*. Division for Historic Preservation, August 1974 (Draft), pp. 1-9.
- 2 Dutchess County Clerk's Office. Deeds, Liber 14, page 569.
  - 3 The generational relationships of the Russell family members are revealed in an analysis of several deeds in the Dutchess County Clerk's Office (Liber 14, p. 569; Liber 23, p. 140; Liber 92, p. 240; Liber 97, p. 407; Liber 98, p. 272; Liber 198, p. 460; Liber 356, p. 96; and Liber 586, p. 332) and references in the *History of Dutchess County*.
  - 4 Dutchess County Clerk's Office. Deeds, Liber 60, page 212.
  - 5 Dutchess County Clerk's Office. Deeds, Liber 92, page 240.
  - 6 Dutchess County Clerk's Office. Deeds, Liber 97, page 407.
  - 7 Dutchess County Clerk's Office. Deeds, Liber 98, page 272.
  - 8 Dutchess County Clerk's Office. Deeds, Liber 102, page 434.
  - 9 Dutchess County Clerk's Office. Deeds, Liber 111, page 519. Although the lease limited the Livingston family's use of the right-of-way and dock to "farming-related activities," a variety of historical resources (newspaper articles, oral accounts, etc.) indicate that they were also used for the delivery of construction materials for renovations on the Mills estate, and for the delivery of coal for the estate's greenhouses.
  - 10 Dutchess County Clerk's Office. Deeds, Liber 105, page 21.
  - 11 Dutchess County Clerk's Office. Deeds, Liber 1029, page 421.
  - 12 This profile on the professional life of Calvert Vaux was compiled from the following sources:
    - William Alex and George B. Tatum, *Calvert Vaux - Architect & Planner*. Ink, Inc., New York. 1994.
    - William B. Tishler, editor, *American Landscape Architecture: Designers and Places*. The Preservation Press, Washington, DC., 1989, pp. 34-37.
  - 13 Calvert Vaux, *Villas and Cottages*. Harper & Brothers, Publishers, New York, 1857, pp. 282-288.
  - 14 William Alex and George B. Tatum, *Calvert Vaux - Architect & Planner*. Ink, Inc., New York, 1994, pp. 1-31 and 233-242.

Francis R. Kowsky, *Country, Park & City, The Architecture and Life of Calvert Vaux*. Oxford University Press, New York, 1998, pp. 60-62.

In the most current published research on the work of Calvert Vaux, Kowsky offers the following insights:

*"Perhaps as early as 1853, Vaux undertook another important project on the Hudson, the house and grounds for Lydig Munson Hoyt and his wife, Blanche Geraldine Livingston, at Staatsburg, New York (Fig. 3.5). Although the plans for this Gothic stone dwelling are dated 1855, Vaux must have consulted with Hoyt about charting the 92-acre farm and pleasure grounds somewhat earlier. The delay in determining the plans may have been related to the time it took the Hoyts to acquire their land. In August 1852, Lydig Hoyt, the heir of a wealthy New York City merchant, had purchased 62 acres, but it was another two years before his wife, a descendent of Governor Morgan Lewis, received a portion of the adjacent Lewis-Livingston property from her mother. Furthermore, Vaux himself testified that it took a while for him and the owners to agree on the best location for the house. Featured as Design 26 in Villas and Cottages, the building was finished by the time the book appeared in February 1857."*

- 15 Calvert Vaux, *Villas and Cottages*, pp. 283.
- 16 Doell & Doell take exception with Francis R. Kowsky's conclusions that Calvert Vaux was responsible for planning all of the Hoyts' 91-acre farm and pleasure grounds. Our interpretation of available historical resources suggests that Vaux may have had a much more limited role than that outlined by Kowsky in his book, *Country, Park & City, The Architecture and Life of Calvert Vaux* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1998, pp. 60-62). Nevertheless, we present the following excerpts from Kowsky's book to offer the reader another perspective:

*"The Hoyts' gently undulating land supported many fine trees and offered numerous opportunities for Vaux to try out the landscape design skills he must have sharpened under Downing's tutelage. With his guiding principle in mind that the "great charm in the forms of natural landscape lies in its well-balanced irregularity," Vaux proceeded to lay out roads and to site the house and other buildings with the aim of preserving and enhancing the rich treasure of scenery that nature had stored up at the Point.*

*Continuing an existing farm road that entered the property from the Albany Post Road, Vaux conducted the visitor to the house along a winding course that offered many charming vignettes of country life. Rounding an upland marsh, the drive hugged the base of a forested ridge while offering the traveler bucolic glimpses of cattle grazing in open meadowland across the way. Where the road rose to the top of a small ridge, Vaux located a brick stable (replaced in the early twentieth century by a larger structure). Here the road forked, one branch turning northward to a farm cottage and vegetable garden and the other veering south through a shallow ravine and up again to the site of the house. (A third road led from the stable to a deepwater dock, the ownership of which the Livingston family retained.) Following this three-quarter mile approach road today, one can still appreciate the care with which Vaux adapted its twistings and turnings to the singularity of the ground. Along this shady lane, we can almost hear Vaux reciting the words he wrote on planning rural drives: "A single existing tree," he said, "ought often to be all-sufficient*

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*reason of slightly diverting the line of a road, so as to take advantage of its shade, instead of cutting it down and grubbing up its roots." The accumulated influences of study, travel, sketching, and life with Downing that had formed Vaux's attitude toward landscape design had reached maturity by the time he laid out the drives and otherwise arranged the Hoyt property. And although the landscape stands in need of restoration, it is still poignantly evocative of its past beauty."*

- 17 The character defining features listed here are not all necessarily relevant to the Hoyt House landscape. They are categories of landscape features which have been determined to be significant components of historic landscapes in general and should be included for consideration where appropriate. They are taken from the *DRAFT Guidelines for the Treatment of Historic Landscapes*, National Park Service, Washington, DC., May 1992, pp. 9-10.

For the convenience of the reader, the following excerpt from the *DRAFT Guidelines* defines the relevant characteristics and qualities of these historic landscape features:

- **Topography**, the shape of the ground, is a character-defining feature of the landscape. Topography may occur naturally or be manipulated through human activity. Landforms may contribute to the creation of outdoor spaces, serve a functional purpose, or provide visual interest.
- **Vegetation** features may be an individual plant, as in the case of a specimen oak tree, or groups of plants such as a hedge, allee, forest, agricultural field, or planting bed. Vegetation may be evergreen or deciduous trees, shrubs or ground covers, and include both woody and herbaceous plants. Vegetation may derive its significance from historical associations, horticultural or genetic value, or aesthetic or functional qualities. It is the primary component of the constantly changing character of the landscape. The treatment of historic landscapes must recognize the continual process of growth, seasonal change, maturity, decay, death, and replacement of vegetation. Vegetation derives its character from form, color, texture, bloom, fruit, fragrance, and scale.
- Many designed and vernacular landscapes derive their character from a human response to **natural systems**. As a result, historic landscapes may contain associations of both cultural and natural features. The significance of these natural resources may be derived from their cultural associations or they may have importance for their inherent ecological values. Natural resources often form systems, which are interdependent on one another and may extend well beyond the boundary of the historic property. These systems include geology, hydrology, plant and animal habitats, and climate. Many natural systems such as wetlands or rare species fall under local, state and Federal regulations. Soil and subsurface geology play an important role in shaping the character of the land and environment and may affect the landscape's ability to support vegetation, water features, or structures. Similarly, hydrology including both surface water and subsurface aquifers, affect the property and may be affected by alterations to the landscape. Climate and site-specific microclimates cause variation in natural vegetation and have an important affect on both natural and historic landscapes. Finally, many landscapes provide habitat for important plant and animal species and natural communities. Some of these biotic resources are particularly susceptible to disturbances caused by changes in landscape management. Since natural

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resource protection is a specialized field distinct from historic landscape preservation, specialized expertise may be required to address specific issues or resources found on the property. Thus, natural systems are an integral part of historic landscapes and should be considered and protected in an preservation treatment.

- ❑ **Circulation** features include roads, parkways, drives, trails, walks, paths, parking areas, and canals. These features may occur individually or be linked to form networks or systems. The character of circulation features is defined by attributes such as alignment, surface treatment, width, edge, grade, materials, furnishings, view /vistas, walls, signs, and infrastructure.
- ❑ **Landscape structures** are non-habitable, constructed features unlike buildings which have walls and roofs and are generally habitable. Structures may be significant individually or they may simply contribute to the historic character of the landscape. They include walls, terraces, arbors, gazebos, follies, stadiums, tennis courts, playground equipment, plazas, greenhouses, cold frames, steps, bridges, and dams. Buildings found in historic landscapes include but are not limited to, residences, gate houses, barns, visitor centers, inns or hotels, and cabins. The placement and arrangement of buildings and structures, whether designed or not, are important to the character of the landscape.
- ❑ **Site furnishings and objects** are small-scale elements in the landscape that may be functional, decorative, or both. They include benches, lights, fixtures, signs, drinking fountains, trash receptacles, fences, tree grates, clocks, flagpoles, sculpture, monuments, memorials, planters, and urns. They may be movable, seasonal, or permanently installed. Site furnishings and objects occur as singular items or in groups of similar or identical features. They may be designed or built for a specific site, available through a catalog, or created as vernacular pieces associated with a particular region or cultural group. They may be significant in their own right as works or art or as the work of a master.
- ❑ **Water features** may be aesthetic as well as functional components of the landscape. They may be linked to the natural hydrologic system or may be fed artificially. Their associated water supply, drainage, and mechanical systems are important components of water features. Water features include fountains, pools, cascades, irrigation systems, ponds or lakes, streams, or aqueducts. The attributes of water features include shape (form), sound, edge and bottom condition/material, water level or depth, movement of flow, reflective qualities, water quality, and associated plant or animal life. Special consideration may be required due to the seasonal changes in water such as variations in water table, precipitation, and freezing.
- ❑ **Spatial relationships** are the three-dimensional organization and pattern of spaces in a landscape, like the arrangement of rooms in a house. They may have evolved for visual or functional purposes and includes views within the landscape itself. Spatial organization is created by a variety of smaller scale elements, some which intentionally form visual links or barriers such as fences and hedgerows; others which less intentionally create spaces and visual connections in the landscape such as topography and open water. The organization of these elements define and create spaces in the landscape. The functional and visual relationship between these spaces is integral to the character of the historic property. Individually or collectively, these

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features form the spatial relationships of the landscape. These individual features must in turn be treated as they relate to the spatial organization of the property as a whole, not just in isolation.

- The environment or **surroundings** in which a landscape occurs, whether an urban neighborhood or rural area, contributes to its historic character and should be considered in any treatment project. This larger **setting** may contain components or features which relate to the significance and historic character of the property, but are located generally outside the individual parcel or National Register boundary. These elements include adjacent lands, views, watersheds, transportation/circulation corridors, land use patterns, streetscape, and natural systems all of which may contribute to the historic character of the property.
- 18 Huntington, who was trained in the office of "McKim, Mead & White," was affiliated with the firm of "Hoppin & Koen." His own country seat was located a mile north of "The Point."