

**PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING**  
**INFORMATION PACKET**  
**JOHNSON HALL STATE HISTORIC SITE**  
DRAFT MASTER PLAN AND  
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

June 11, 2018  
Johnstown, NY



**Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation**

**ANDREW M. CUOMO**  
Governor

**ROSE HARVEY**  
Commissioner

## **Agenda for Public Information Meeting**

1. Introductions and Welcoming Remarks
2. Overview of the Planning Process
3. Overview of the Site
4. Public Input
5. Next Steps

### ***Introduction***

#### **Agency Mission Statement**

The mission of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) is to provide safe and enjoyable recreational and interpretive opportunities for all New York State residents and visitors and to be responsible stewards of our valuable natural, historic and cultural resources.

#### **Guiding Principles**

Fundamental to the successful achievement of our mission is the dedication of our employees and the adherence to a common set of values. These guiding principles serve as a pledge to the people we serve and a commitment to ourselves and to each other.

- **A Commitment to People.** We are committed to serving and protecting the public to the best of our ability, with courtesy and respect. We are committed to our employees and volunteers, encouraging teamwork, self-improvement and mutual support.
- **A Commitment to Preservation.** State Parks and Historic Sites are unique and irreplaceable public assets. We are committed to wise acquisition, planning, and, where appropriate, development; timely and professional care and maintenance; and a responsibility to future generations in whose trust we manage our resources. We are committed to providing encouragement to all agencies and individuals to identify, evaluate and protect recreational, natural, historic and cultural resources.
- **A Commitment to Service.** The availability of recreational, educational and cultural opportunities to all is vital in today's society. We are committed to equal access and outreach to all segments of our society, recognizing individual needs and interests. We are committed to safety, security, creativity and accountability in providing our programs and services.
- **A Commitment to Leadership.** We recognize the preeminence of the New York State Park and Historic Site System. We are committed to excellence, innovation and professionalism. We are committed to forging partnerships with others who are responsible for providing recreational, natural, historic and cultural services.

The master plan for Johnson Hall State Historic Site is part of a statewide planning initiative that will advance these principles, and determine the best course of action to preserve and utilize park resources for this and future generations.

Johnson Hall State Historic Site, the remaining core of Sir William Johnson's (1715 - 1774) estate and the Mohawk Valley's diplomatic, trade and military center during his time, is one of New York State's finest historic sites.

### ***Purpose of the Meeting***

The purpose of this public information meeting is to actively invite public participation and involvement in the planning process. Public participation will help OPRHP in identifying issues, concerns and alternatives as well as determining the depth to which each of the topics is explored within the Draft Master Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

This information packet and the public information meeting are intended to provide the public with a concise overview of Johnson Hall State Historic Site, its setting, resources and the issues identified to this point. Additionally, the meeting is designed to provide an opportunity for public input at an early stage in the master planning process.

Additional information can be obtained from OPRHP at:

Saratoga - Capital State Park Region 19 Roosevelt Drive Saratoga Springs, NY 12866 518-584-2000	OPRHP Planning Bureau 625 Broadway, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor Albany, NY 12207 518-486-2909
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Email: [JohnsonHall.plan@parks.ny.gov](mailto:JohnsonHall.plan@parks.ny.gov)

### ***Tentative Master Plan Timeline***

Public Information Meeting – June 11, 2018

Draft Master Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement – Fall 2019

Public Hearing – Winter 2019/ 2020

Final Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) – Summer 2020

Findings and Adoption – Fall 2020

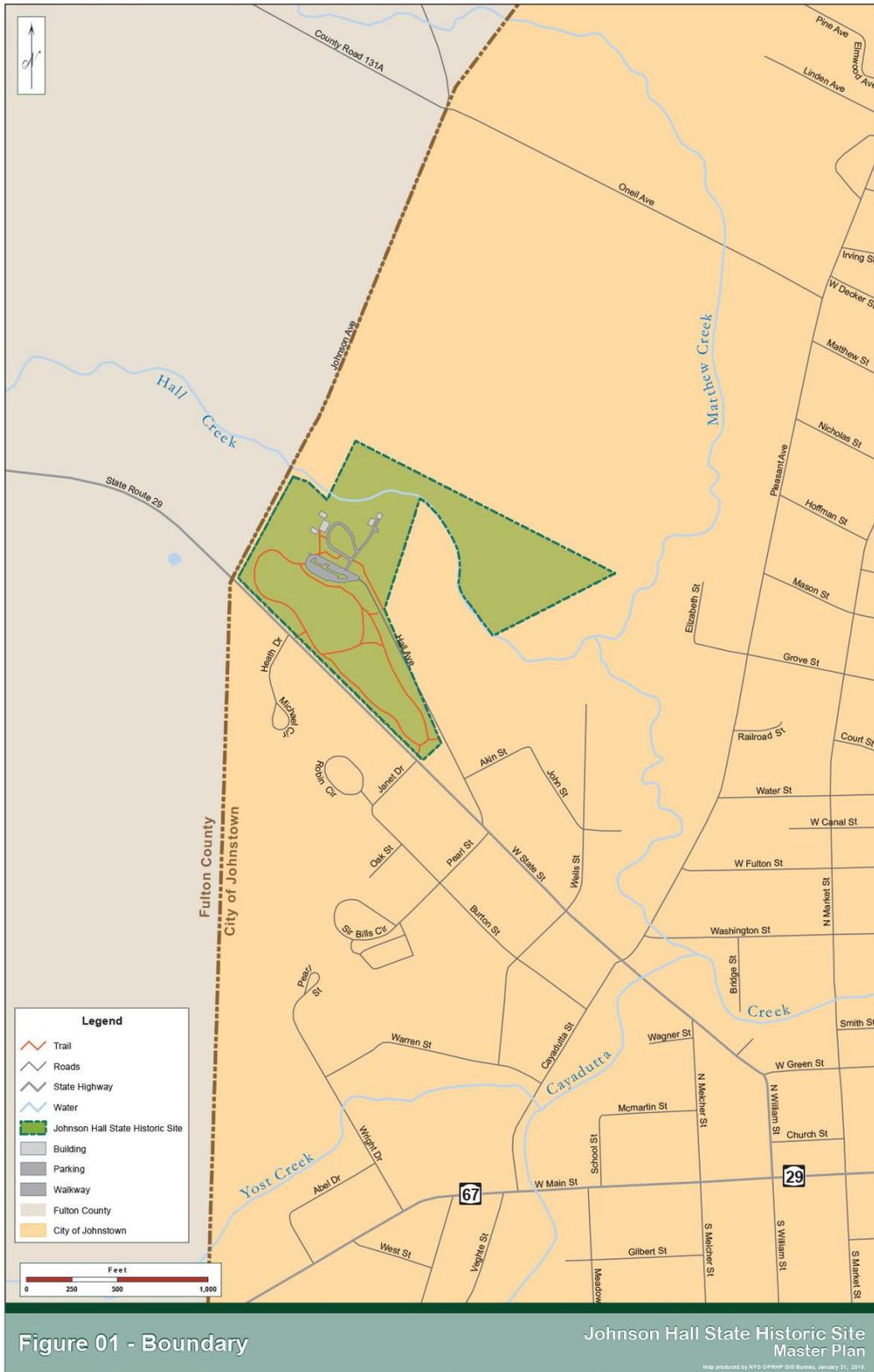
### ***Next Steps***

- The suggestions, issues, concerns and alternatives identified at the public information meeting and through written comments will be summarized and made available. The Draft Master Plan/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (the draft plan) will address these issues.
- Public review of the draft plan will include a public hearing and public comment/review period. Comments made during this time will be considered in the preparation of the Final Master Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement (the final plan).
- After the issuance of the final plan and a public consideration period, a findings statement will be issued along with the Commissioner's decision regarding adoption of the plan.

Written comments will be accepted until Monday, July 9, 2018. Please send them to:

Sara Hart  
OPRHP Planning Bureau  
625 Broadway, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Albany, NY 12207

Or by email to: [JohnsonHall.plan@parks.ny.gov](mailto:JohnsonHall.plan@parks.ny.gov)



## **Overview of the Site**

Johnson Hall State Historic Site (Johnson Hall) in Johnstown, NY comprises the remaining 30 acres of Sir William Johnson's (1715 - 1774) once vibrant 700-acre working estate and a regional diplomatic- and trade center in the Mohawk Valley. Differing cultures, traditions and languages combined to create a unique life at this vital historic home. Molly Brant, Mohawk Indian wife of Sir William Johnson, and their eight children also resided at Johnson Hall.

After Sir William Johnson's death, Johnson Hall experienced several private ownership changes. The mansion underwent numerous architectural alterations and the grounds saw the installation of a 19<sup>th</sup> century strolling garden in the Hall's vicinity.

Johnson Hall was acquired by the State of New York in 1906 and opened to the public as a State Historic Site. New York State removed the Victorian additions and embellishments from the main building. The mansion was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1960. OPRHP also built a caretaker's cottage, visitor parking and paths to the mansion, as well as a supporting stone structure on a historic footprint that today houses the visitor center.

Johnson Hall hosts historic exhibits, provides interpretive and educational programs, and offers passive recreational opportunities. The Site receives approx. 57,000 visitors annually.

## ***Cultural Resources***

The entire Johnson Hall State Historic Site, including its grounds and structures, represents a cultural resource capturing American political, military, and trade history between the mid- and late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Johnson Hall was the home and business headquarters of Sir William Johnson from its building date in 1763 until Sir William's death in 1774. As the largest single landowner and the most influential person in the settlement of the Mohawk Valley, William Johnson was one of the most important men in colonial America.

As a colonial military commander, William Johnson was responsible for many of the defeats suffered by the French during the French and Indian War. For his victory at the Battle of Lake George in 1755, he was bestowed the title of Baronet by King George II. The British Crown appointed him Superintendent of Indian Affairs, a position he held throughout his life, along with overseeing approximately 170,000 acres of diverse landholdings. His genius in dealing with the Six Nations of the Iroquois with dignity and respect through a knowledge of their customs and language had a lasting impact on their relationship with the British and the ultimate victory of the English in the Anglo-French struggle for control of colonial North America.

The second council fire of the Six Nations was located at Johnson Hall, known to the Iroquois as the place "where the sun rises." At the site, many outbuildings were necessary to house servants, slaves, and domestic animals, and to accommodate the domestic chores required on a daily basis to support Johnson's extended family, colonial visitors and Native Americans. The Loyalist Johnson family, including Sir William Johnson's son, Sir John Johnson, fled to Canada during the American Revolution. The Third New Jersey Regiment looted and damaged Johnson Hall after its confiscation in 1776. Subsequent confiscation and sequestration sales of real and personal property found at the Johnson estate influenced the ensuing changes in ownership of the house, lands, and family possessions.

The historic grounds and strolling paths, designed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century while Johnson Hall was in private hands, are well preserved and popular with locals who come to enjoy a walk or a snowshoe at the Site.

Since New York State took ownership of Johnson Hall in 1906, they strived to restore the mansion and part of the grounds to the period of the Johnsons' residence. Today, the Site is interpreted as the political, trade, and military center of the Mohawk Valley between 1763-1774, as well as the setting for the Johnsons' domestic life.

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### ***Recreational Resources***

Johnson Hall provides year-round passive recreational opportunities popular with local residents, including walking, running, photography, birding, dog-walking, and in the winter snowshoeing and cross-country skiing on ungroomed trails. The Site's formally designed 19<sup>th</sup> century garden contains a half-mile strolling path. There are no overnight recreational opportunities at Johnson Hall.

### ***Geology, Topography and Soils***

Bedrock of the area is Canajoharie Shale, one of several black shales in a belt of indigenous Paleozoic rocks that occupy the Mohawk, Champlain, and Hudson valleys.

Topography and soils found at the Site are typical of the Mohawk Valley. The topography is gently sloping, and soils are dominated by well-draining Palatine and Appleton Silt Loams.

### ***Water and Watershed***

Hall Creek is a rocky, cool headwater stream traversing the Site's northern portion. It is a Class C stream, appropriate for contact recreation such as fishing. However, the classification indicates that there are no records of trout populations in Hall Creek. This is likely due to a general lack of refuge pools in the stretch passing through the site and the sizable bedrock outcrop that forms a small waterfall at the base of the large culvert under Johnson Avenue. Hall Creek eventually feeds into Cayadutta Creek, which does support trout. As part of the Hall Creek-Cayadutta Creek subwatershed, Hall Creek helps to supply cold, oxygenated water to the trout populations downstream.

### ***Land Cover, Flora, and Fauna***

The 30-acre Johnson Hall is a post-agricultural site typical of the area. Most of the Site is developed: during William Johnson's time it was part of a larger working estate with gardens and orchards, later the grounds were maintained for formally designed landscapes. Similarly, today most of the Site's land cover comprises extensive lawn areas interspersed with small clusters of trees and shrubs, many of them not native to the region. Overall, there are no significant natural communities or natural resources, and no rare or endangered species at the Site.

A small stream, Hall Creek, runs through the northern portion of the Johnson Hall property. The Creek's banks, a small island in the Creek with a floodplain forest, and the successional forest on its north side represent the natural habitats at Johnson Hall.