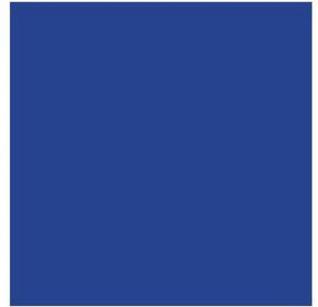
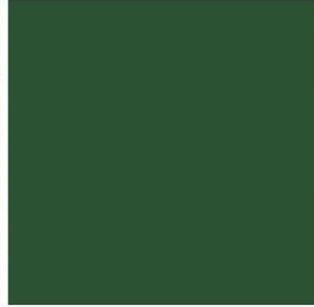


Clermont State Historic Site

Columbia County
Town of Clermont, NY



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

July 26, 2023



New York State
Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation



Final Master Plan
for
Clermont State Historic Site
Town of Clermont, Columbia County

Prepared by:

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

July 26, 2023

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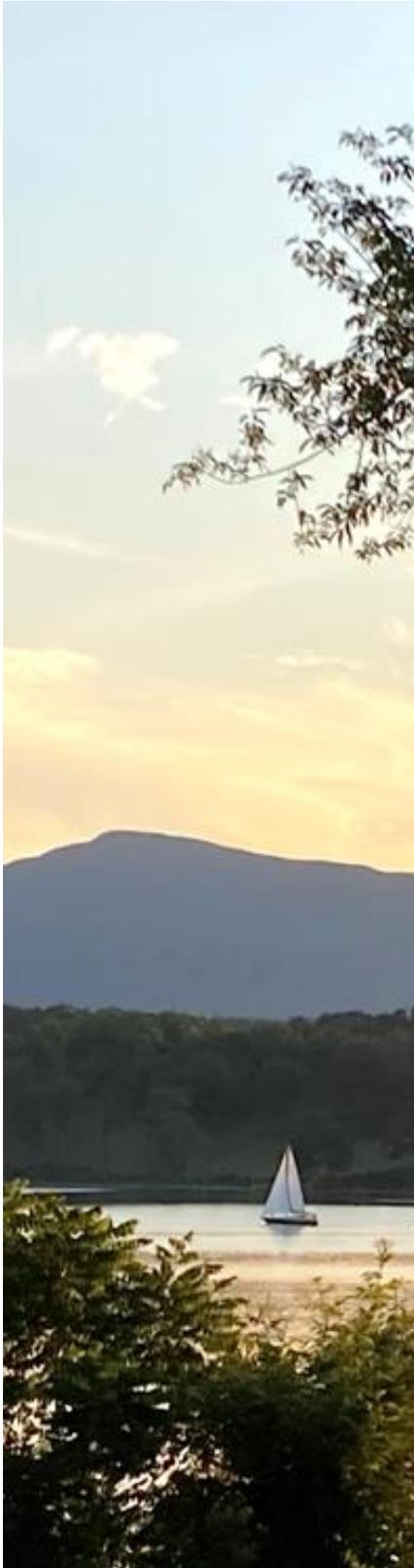
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Abbreviations and Acronyms Used

DEC	New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
DEIS	Draft Environmental Impact Statement
DOT	New York State Department of Transportation
FEIS	Final Environmental Impact Statement
NPS	National Park Service
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
NYS	New York State
OPRHP	New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
SEQR	State Environmental Quality Review Act
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office





Executive Summary

Set on a bluff overlooking the Hudson River, the Clermont State Historic Site features the rural estate once occupied by New York's politically and socially prominent Livingston family. Views toward the Catskill Mountains have changed very little over the centuries and this grand prospect was no doubt a draw for the family, who lived here from 1740 to 2000, leaving an indelible imprint on the Site's landscape, architecture, and design.

Located within OPRHP's Taconic Region, the former estate is integral to the region's—and State's—history. Appearing much as it did in the early 20th century, the estate's mansion and grounds offer visitors an authentic glimpse into the lives of the seven generations of Livingstons who lived here, many of whom played an important role in American commerce, politics, industry, and society. Their lifestyle remains evident in the home's architecture, furnishings, artworks, and interior, as well as in the elegant tree-lined carriage roads, well-built barns, stone walls, and pastures.

Clermont is located at the southwestern corner of Columbia County, with a small portion of the property within Dutchess County. The Site is part of the Hudson Valley's Great Estates Region and an anchor in the Hudson River National Landmark District. Public access was assured when Clermont became a New York State Park in 1962, and its preservation and value to the nation's history was further acknowledged when it was designated a NYS Historic Site in 1981 and a National Historic Landmark in 1972.

Central to the Historic Site's purpose today is an expanding awareness of the experiences of all its former inhabitants. In addition to the Livingston Family, this place has been a home and workplace for many others. Its earliest settlers were the indigenous communities who lived here for thousands of years. In the 18th century, the land was home to Palatine settlers, as well as members of the Livingston estate which included indentured servants, tenant farmers, indigenous people, and enslaved and free Blacks. Ongoing research and new source materials are helping create new programs and exhibits that reflect this multicultural past. By portraying a fuller spectrum of human experience, Clermont is offering more opportunities for visitors to connect with—and better understand—this place and its layered history.

Why a Master Plan?

Public open spaces today face pressures from climate change, usage trends, regional development, and budget constraints. A master plan builds more resilient facilities by providing a forward-thinking approach to navigating these pressures. The planning process identifies, activates, and protects places and objects that reflect our collective past.

A master plan becomes the institutional memory for a facility. The planning process documents a facility's physical elements and considers how well it functions. It provides site managers with a tool for effective decision-making, with prioritized recommendations for action. For a historic site, ensuring the long-term preservation of infrastructure, landscapes, and archaeological elements requires a specialized approach that can balance the — sometimes conflicting — need for preservation with natural resource stewardship.

An effective master plan is grounded in community engagement. Hearing from the people who use a facility and live or work in the region allows planners to identify key issues and barriers to access. Engaging a diverse group of stakeholders is integral to creating greater equity in the visitor experience. Community support for the changes proposed in the plan will enable a facility to offer the experiences, activities, and recreation relevant to a broader audience in the years to come.

Trends

The Hudson River Valley has seen dramatic changes over the past decade, perhaps the most notable the decrease of agriculture and the increase in residential use.¹ The region has seen a significant influx of new residents, primarily from the NYC metropolitan region, with both full-time and second home ownership expanding significantly. Columbia County saw a 204% increase in relocations in 2020, many of which are due to work and lifestyle changes that occurred during the Coronavirus

Pandemic.² The quantity of new residents has slowed but shifts in regional land use and demographics continues, influenced by lifestyle factors that include the ability to work remotely.

While NYS Park attendance has risen steadily overall, by about 43 percent since 2008, attendance rose dramatically between 2020 and 2021 alone, as people sought access to safe outdoor spaces during the Pandemic. These increases were sustained through 2022, when a record 79.5 million visits were recorded, an increase of more than one million visitors from the previous year.³ Clermont saw a corresponding increase in visitors during this period, from 86,711 visitors in 2018-19 to 117,818 recorded during 2021-2022.

The number of New Yorkers aged 65 and over has increased in the state, and grown more diverse, which also influences park usage trends.⁴ Changing demographic patterns of both the overall state and the Hudson River Valley will influence what visitors are looking for in types of activities, programs, and recreational open space. All these factors are considered when planning for Clermont in the future.

The frequency of severe storms, heat waves, and diminished snowfall from a changing climate continue to impact tourism and visitation patterns.⁵ In the OPRHP *Commissioner's NY Parks 100 Update on OPRHP Priorities and Strategies*, climate change was identified as the greatest challenge the NYS park system faces. Temperature extremes, flooding from more frequent and intense storms, and warming winters all have the potential to affect outdoor recreation.

In NYS, temperature increases since 1970 have surpassed national and global averages, and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has projected that the state will see another 2°F to 3°F rise in temperature in the 2020s, with as much as a 6°F increase by mid-century. An analysis of potential climate-related



Clermont's mansion today is largely representative of its 1930s appearance.

impacts on national parks indicates that visitation at almost all parks may change as severe heat waves become more frequent and last longer.⁶

Warmer air temperatures also impact sea levels, which are rising. The Hudson River is connected to the sea, which is why it experiences tides and contains saltwater in its lower regions. It is also why the river's water level is rising; since 1900, sea level in the lower Hudson has risen 15 inches, and scientists project it will rise another four to ten inches in the 2020s, and nine to 27 inches by mid-century.⁷ A higher sea level results in more storm surge flooding and puts coastal facilities at higher risk.

As climate change impacts increase, facilities with cultural, historic, and archaeological value are especially at risk of being damaged or lost altogether. Damage to historic buildings and landscapes from storms and wind, deterioration of sensitive objects and finishes from changes in humidity during power outages, and even loss of archaeological sites that have not yet been discovered, are all areas of concern.⁸

All public facilities have an opportunity to educate the public on climate issues. Historically significant sites must develop appropriate responses to changing climate conditions that will help adaptation and mitigation planners identify and recommend better strategies for protecting these resources that integrate both natural science and cultural heritage considerations.



Introduction

While Clermont today is an important historic resource with exceptional significance to the state and region, the plan was initiated with the belief that, with thoughtful planning, the Site has the potential to become more relevant and resilient. To this end, the planning group took a deep dive into how visitors experience Clermont and developed actions for improving the Site that will be implemented over the next 10 to 15 years.

It takes a community of individuals with diverse backgrounds, knowledge, and interests to create a well-rounded and well-thought-out master plan. The Clermont State Historic Site Master Plan was created by a dynamic group of staff and resource specialists that included the Taconic Regional Director, Clermont's Site Manager and operations staff, trails planners, historic preservation experts, educators, natural stewardship staff, the Friends of Clermont group members, and the public. The group compiled source documents, conducted extensive research, consulted with experts, and solicited public input. Public meetings during the plan's development were attended by members of the Friends group, community leaders, partners, nearby residents, and other stakeholders, reflecting a wide range of interests, experience, and viewpoints.

The resulting Plan will bring about thoughtful and measured improvements at Clermont by—among other strategies—expanding awareness of the Site's less evident elements, adapting underutilized buildings for new uses, and supporting these changes with improvements in maintenance, staffing, and operations.

While Clermont has important intrinsic value, it is its stories that people may relate to most and are among its most important resources. The Site's human history offers an opportunity to bring greater awareness to the full range of those who have lived and worked here.

Planning that has been done in the past

A master plan for Clermont was first developed in 1962, at the time of its founding as a state park. The plan reflects Clermont’s early days when the facility was developed for public recreation, with conveniences such as paved roads, a public restroom, and picnic tables. In 1981, when “Historic Preservation” was added to the administering agency (then named the Office of Parks and Recreation), the focus at Clermont shifted accordingly. In 1982, the first master plan was updated to reflect this change, and then revised again in 1993. Now 30 years old, the last plan no longer reflects current conditions. Changing demands on staff, new technologies, evolving approaches to preservation, and new threats to natural ecosystems, including climate change, all call for a fresh look.

Current Planning

A master plan for a park or historic site analyzes the facility’s existing cultural, natural, recreational, and operational resources in the context of relevant social, economic, and physical factors. From discussions surrounding these and other considerations, a series of proposed actions, or alternatives, are developed for the Site.⁹ Actions that best meet the agency’s mission and the site-specific vision for the facility are identified as actionable items, or “Preferred Alternatives,” for future implementation.

Cumulatively, the actions in the plan represent OPRHP’s long-term vision for protecting and preserving a facility. The plan always considers the Status Quo Alternative: to keep the site as it is used and operated today with no recommended modifications, new uses, or improvements.

OPRHP has agency-wide policies to address management issues commonly faced by its Parks and Historic Sites. These cover areas

including acquisitions for historic collections; the loan, transfer, and disposal of museum collections; public-private partnerships, recognition of donations, the management of trees and wildlife, and more. These policy documents are publicly available on the OPRHP website: <https://parks.ny.gov/inside-our-agency/public-documents.aspx>.

Public Outreach

Initial public feedback was collected using an online visitor survey, circulated in October 2021. Responses provided user feedback on visitation, recreation preferences, types of activities attended and ideas for future activities, as well as demographic data. The information collected in the survey helped to inform early goals development for the plan.

In March 2022, and April 2023, the planning group met with the Friends of Clermont to discuss the master plan process and hear about the group’s goals and vision for the Site. In May 2022, a public meeting to discuss the planning process was held online, attended by adjacent landowners, elected officials, regional nonprofits, and other stakeholders. In May 2023 the full Draft Master Plan/DEIS was published online, and two virtual meetings were held to provide an overview of the Plan and solicit feedback.





Planning and Environmental Review

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

Resilience

OPRHP is committed to reducing its impact on the environment and has established goals to mitigate climate change by becoming more carbon neutral. By adopting sustainable practices in park development, operation, and maintenance its facilities can help address these issues statewide. The agency incorporates nature-based solutions and green infrastructure practices, where practicable.

Recommended actions have been developed, whenever possible, to maximize energy efficiency and reduce fossil fuel use. Protecting, restoring, and enhancing natural areas and increasing biodiversity are also of high importance for the agency. Environmental impacts were considered in all planning decisions, to protect and enhance biodiversity

and ecosystems and use resources efficiently to meet park needs.

Implementation Priorities

This Master Plan establishes OPRHP’s vision for capital improvements and operational enhancements at Clermont over the next ten to fifteen years. Once adopted, the Master Plan will be reviewed annually to select projects for implementation and inclusion in the Site’s budget, and to assess implementation progress.

Implementation of actions in the Master Plan is divided into priorities, as follows:

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

Table 1 on the following pages indicates all actions that were selected as “Preferred Alternatives” in Chapter 2 of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), along with an estimated timeframe for implementation. Some actions proposed in the plan are already underway or soon to begin. These are indicated as “Ongoing.” Note that priority projects shown in Table 1 are subject to reorganization based on available funding.

Table 1 – Implementation Priorities

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

<i>Cultural Resources - Clermont Cottage</i>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Provide accessible parking, walkways, and entrance at Clermont Cottage.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Fully remediate Clermont Cottage for mold and mildew and install appropriate insulation.
<i>Cultural Resources - Icehouse & Root Cellar</i>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Stabilize the icehouse and root cellar; remove vegetation, replace safety railing, and add gravel with weed barrier around the perimeter.
<i>Archaeological Resources</i>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Conduct a Phase I archaeological survey at Clermont and develop a comprehensive archaeological report and sensitivity analysis for the entire Site.
<i>Collections</i>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Work with the Bureau of Historic Sites to develop a furnishing plan for the mansion.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	With the Bureau of Historic Sites, re-evaluate Clermont’s Collections Policy; review its parameters and the scope of collections.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Develop a “virtual wing” that provides online access to Clermont’s collections and enable wider and more active use by both staff, the academic community, and the general public.
Priority Level 2 (3-5 years)	Evaluate storage conditions for object collections held in the mansion and make recommendations for improvements.
<i>Cultural Landscape - Arryl House Ruins</i>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to stabilize the Arryl House Ruins and adjacent historic elements.
<i>Cultural Landscape - Other Elements</i>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Restore the historic Locust Tree allée parallel to the main visitor parking lot.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Develop a management/maintenance program for historic remnant elements in the landscape with tasks clearly spelled out.
Priority Level 2 (3-5 years)	Work with Division for Historic Preservation staff to survey Clermont’s existing remnant historic structures to evaluate their condition, significance, and needs.
<i>Education & Programming</i>	
Ongoing	With the support of the Bureau of Historic Sites, develop educational content that conveys the experience of enslaved people, indigenous communities, Palatines, servants, and tenant farmers, using both the collections and content-driven approaches.
Ongoing	Implement special programs related to as-yet untold aspects of the Site’s history.

Priority Level 2 (3-5 years)	Cultivate funding sources for developing an annual exhibit in the mansion gallery.
<i>Interpretation</i>	
Ongoing	Strengthen role of the Clermont’s Advisory Committee to guide interpretive development.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Revise and update Clermont’s Interpretative Statement.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	With support from the Bureau of Historic Sites, update the interpretation program/plan for the Site to define new content goals, presentation methods, and ensure a cohesive message.
Priority Level 2 (3-5 years)	Develop interpretative content for the Site’s underutilized resources.
<i>Outreach & Marketing</i>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Expand outreach and marketing strategies to foster more visibility for Clermont and awareness of its offerings by increasing outreach and marketing strategies.
<i>Recreation</i>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Investigate offering special outdoor events that will encourage new groups to come to the site (e.g., temporary overnight camping for youth or bicycle groups).
Priority Level 2 (3-5 years)	Assess the feasibility of providing public access to the Site’s holdings and remnants of a historic dock along the Hudson River shoreline.
Priority Level 2 (3-5 years)	Maintain connections with equestrian community by developing special events that highlight equestrian use as a historic recreation activity at the Site.
<i>Picnic Facilities</i>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Create accessible picnic facilities within the current picnic area.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Create a new picnic area adjacent to the Ice Pond.
<i>Trails</i>	
Ongoing	Close unused trail sections or trails in sensitive areas, re-route chronically wet trail segments, and install or replace trail bridges and culverts where needed.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Improve the existing trail system at Clermont by addressing portions of trails with erosion, wetness, or steep grades.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Finalize, map, and implement improvements for the trail system.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Formalize on-Site trail access points and encourage connections with the nearby Empire State Trail, adding informational signage, maps, safety information and, where appropriate, bicycle racks, picnic tables, and/or parking.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Develop an accessible interpretive trail near the mansion.

Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Develop a trail signage plan based on a final trail layout to include trailhead kiosks, intersectional signage, and trail marking blazes.
Priority Level 2 (3-5 years)	Establish a formal trailhead and expanded parking at the existing informal access point at the Site’s flagpole.
<i>Accessibility - Pedestrian Infrastructure</i>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Conduct a comprehensive study to evaluate accessibility sitewide and make recommendations for addressing issues.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Develop an accessible multi-use path from the Arryl House Ruins to Clermont Cottage, with connections to the mansion and other points of interest at the Site.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Improve access to Hudson River/Catskill Mountain views by constructing a viewing platform.
<i>Accessibility - Mansion</i>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	In coordination with the Division for Historic Preservation, develop a study to determine approaches to providing universal access to the mansion’s entrance, restrooms, exhibits, and staff offices.
<i>Accessibility - Staff Offices</i>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Keep staff offices located in the mansion and renovate them.
<i>Accessibility - Visitor Center</i>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Keep the Visitor Center at its current location with upgrades to include clear signage from the parking lot, improvements to the restrooms and entry, such as a portico and paved landing.
<i>Accessibility - Vehicular Infrastructure</i>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Relocate the visitor entrance and construct a new entry road on Woods Road.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Improve emergency access from the visitor parking lot to the mansion by installing a route with firm, stable surface materials.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Improve access to north section of the Site by re-paving the north carriage road and improving drainage infrastructure to address erosion.
<i>Accessibility - Parking</i>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Redevelop the visitor parking lot with green stormwater management elements, pedestrian paths, and clear pavement markings.
Priority Level 2 (3-5 years)	Improve existing parking areas at the mansion, Sylvan and Clermont Cottages, and the Red Barn to ensure accessibility and to meet future demand.
Priority Level 2 (3-5 years)	Develop a parking area in the north section of the Site with green infrastructure.

<i>Utilities</i>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Purchase fuel generators to provide emergency backup power for the mansion and the maintenance facility.
Priority Level 2 (3-5 years)	Develop solar power at Clermont as a grid-tied system to offset utility costs.
<i>Operations, Maintenance & Management</i>	
Ongoing	Choose energy-efficient equipment and materials, and adopt lower-impact, approaches to Site maintenance and operations.
Ongoing	Improve litter/debris management by implementing new strategies to educate visitors
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Install a site-wide security camera system.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Develop a Site-specific plan that identifies current and anticipated future climate change impacts with strategies to protect at-risk elements.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Upgrade the maintenance area, repairing failing pavement, adding drive-through pole barns, a fueling tank, pickup truck, and a wash bay.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Evaluate the Site’s utility infrastructure to ensure it meets both current and future needs/requirements.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Upgrade and repair the Site’s drainage infrastructure site-wide to address chronically wet areas, erosion, and deteriorating pavements.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Implement a phased, prioritized plan to upgrade Internet/WiFi technology for both staff and public use.
<i>Management & Staffing</i>	
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Develop a plan that assesses staff requirements for appropriately supporting existing elements and future development.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Improve visitor management by stationing staff at key locations on high-volume days to address FAQs and address ongoing issues, such as litter management.
<i>Partnerships & Volunteers</i>	
Ongoing	Identify mutually beneficial partnerships to help support a full range of programs and projects.
Ongoing	Develop stronger connections with local fire departments, EMS, and police.
Priority Level 1 (1-3 years)	Create a paid position for a volunteer coordinator to develop and manage a strong volunteer force at Clermont.

Vision Statement

Agency Mission Statement

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

Vision

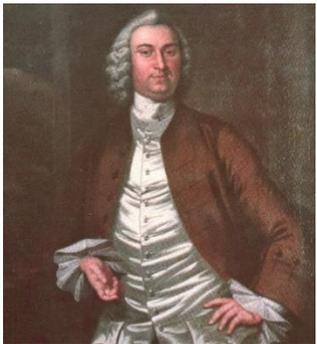
Early in the planning process, the planning group developed a statement as to how they envision Clermont in the future. The vision statement below was developed as a guide to the planning process.

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





Robert Livingston
"The First Lord"



Robert Livingston
"The Judge"



Margaret Beekman
Livingston



Robert R. Livingston,
"The Chancellor"

Background

New York's Livingston family included politicians, technological innovators, merchants, and artists who helped shape the state and country, from the time of its founding into the twentieth century. Perhaps most well-known was Robert R. Livingston, Jr., (1746–1813), a member of the committee that drafted the Declaration of Independence and who, in 1789, administered the presidential oath of office to George Washington. A younger brother, Edward Livingston (1764–1836) served as Mayor of New York City, was a Louisiana State Senator, and was appointed Secretary of State by President Andrew Jackson in 1831.¹⁰ The family's last two generations, Alice Delafield Clarkson Livingston and John Henry Livingston, lived at the Site with their daughters, Honoria and Janet, with Honoria residing there until 2000.

The original Clermont estate was established in 1728, by Robert Livingston following the death of his father, the "First Lord" Robert Livingston, a colonial New York official, fur trader, and businessman. The First Lord Livingston owned a 160,000-acre tract of land granted to him in 1715 by King George I of Great Britain. One of the larger family landholdings in the Hudson Valley, this property, known as Livingston Manor, included a large portion of what is now Columbia County.¹¹ ("Manors" along with various patents and land grants, were the basic units of European settlement in the Hudson Valley.) As the First Lord Livingston brought tenant farmers in to work the land, this early member of the family was one of the driving forces for European settlement in the Hudson River Valley.

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

An active patriot during the Revolutionary War, Chancellor Livingston served as Secretary of Foreign Affairs, becoming lead negotiator for the Louisiana Purchase. Chancellor Livingston also partnered with Robert Fulton in 1807 to create the first commercially viable steamboat used on the Hudson River, which stopped at Clermont on its inaugural trip.

Many of Chancellor Livingston's agricultural pursuits were research driven. For example, he tried domesticating elk and moose. Those attempts failed but one of his projects that did succeed was the use of gypsum as a fertilizer. For a time, Chancellor Livingston also maintained an experimental farm where he developed new varieties of fruits and vegetables.¹²

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

When Judge Livingston died unexpectedly on December 9, 1775, his wife, Margaret Beekman Livingston, was left alone with several of their ten children. She was living there in 1777 when British ships sailed upriver from New York City. Having already stormed two forts in the Hudson Highlands and burned the City of Kingston, the British army led a raiding party to Clermont where they burned the house and 24 other buildings at the estate as retaliation for the Livingston Family's support of the Revolution.

Margaret and her children escaped safely to a relative's house in Connecticut. She rebuilt the house at Clermont and was able to host George

and Martha Washington at her new home in 1783.¹³

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

The children and grandchildren of Judge Robert and Margaret Beekman Livingston were important members of the wealthy New York community, with significant accomplishments of their own. Their son Henry commanded the 4th New York Regiment at the Battles of Saratoga and Monmouth and at Valley Forge. Their son Edward was a senator and served as Andrew Jackson's secretary of state. Of their daughters, Janet married General Richard Montgomery, and Margaret Livingston married Thomas Tillotson, an army surgeon who became New York Secretary of State. Janet was



"July 1847 Clermont," a Hudson Valley scene attributed to Montgomery Livingston, grandson of Chancellor Livingston. The original work is on display in the mansion's second floor hallway.

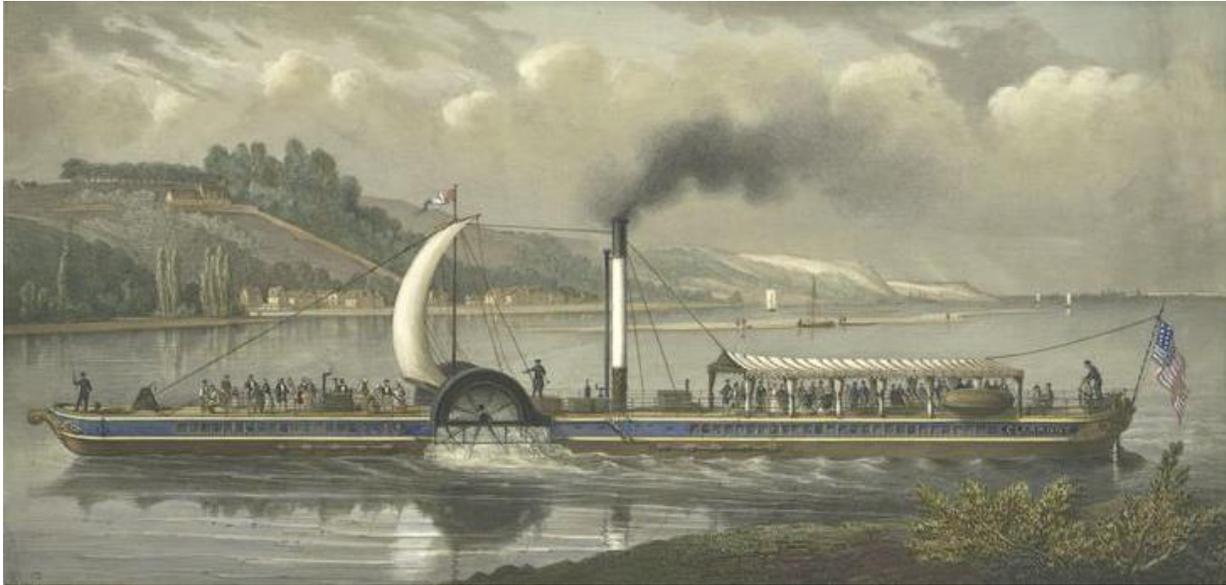


a powerful woman who lobbied George Washington to give her brother a political appointment on the Supreme Court or Treasury Department, and managed Montgomery Place for decades as a widow. Catherine married Freeborn Garretson and helped to bring Methodism to the Hudson River Valley.

Gertrude married General Morgan Lewis, one of New York's early governors. Joanna married Peter Livingston, a successful cousin and lieutenant governor. Alida married General John Armstrong, a senator and Secretary of War. Clermont was also the home of the Chancellor Livingston's grandson, Montgomery Livingston (1816-1855), who lived in the Arryl House. An artist who lived most of his life at Clermont, he was a member of the Hudson River School of painting. Several of his paintings are in Clermont's collection.

The Clermont estate was a working farm, as well as a country retreat for the Livingston family, well into the twentieth century. The seven successive generations of the family left their imprint on the Site's architecture, room interiors, and landscape.¹⁴

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



Establishment of the Historic Site

New York State acquired Clermont for public use in 1962. In its early years the facility was operated as a traditional park within the Taconic Region of the Conservation Department's Division of Parks. In 1966, the Rockefeller administration created the NY State Historic Trust, to revitalize the historic site program under the Conservation Dept, and in 1970, Clermont moved to the new agency, the Office of Parks and Recreation. The final name change, to NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation occurred in 1981.

Clermont was designated a U.S. National Historic Landmark (NHL) in 1972. The Site is on the State and National Registers of Historic Places, which officially designates properties with significant history, architecture, archeology, and engineering. This designation ensures that Clermont will be preserved for the enjoyment of future generations.

Significant elements at Clermont include the Livingston mansion and remains of a burned residence, the Arryl House, a livestock barn (known as "Red Barn"), a carriage house (now the visitor center), two historic cottages

(Clermont and Sylvan), a children's playhouse, and several formal gardens. These elements are set within over 500 acres of open meadows and woodlands and threaded by the estate's original carriage roads. In addition, Clermont holds a substantial collection of original objects, including paintings, documents, furnishings, decorative items, and artwork that belonged to generations of the Livingston Family.

Today the mansion appears much as it did in the 1930s, as rebuilt by Margaret Beekman Livingston, with additions by later generations. It has been kept largely intact, with furnishings that reflect three centuries of the Livingston family's occupancy, which include fine Empire period furniture, exquisite chandeliers, porcelain objects, and original paintings. The grounds feature a brick-walled garden, an 1820s "Lilac Walk," a formal cutting garden, and a wilderness garden with a pond.

Location and Access

Clermont is located about midway between the Rip Van Winkle and Kingston-Rhinecliff Bridges which span the Hudson River to link Columbia, Dutchess, and Ulster Counties. The Site is approximately 45 miles south of Albany and 110 miles north of New York City. Bordered to the east by U.S. Route 9G, the closest major

highway is the Taconic State Parkway. The closest municipality is the Village of Tivoli, directly to the south. Although the Site is located in the Town of Clermont, its mailing address is in nearby Germantown.

The Region

Columbia and Dutchess Counties where Clermont resides are in the eastern part of New York State, southeast of Albany and immediately west of the Massachusetts border. Their western border is the Hudson River. The name “Columbia” comes from the Latin feminine form of the name Christopher Columbus, which at one time was a popular proposal for the name of the United States.¹⁵ Dutchess was named after Mary of Modena, then Duchess of York and wife of the future King James II of England.¹⁶

For decades this bucolic region has attracted urban residents looking for a quiet rural retreat. The area’s working farms, historic inns and taverns, wineries, and views of the Catskills across the river offer a cross-section of the Hudson Valley’s iconic landscape and history.

The Site

Pre-Historic

Carbon testing has revealed that people were living and hunting in the Taconic Region by 7000 B.C.¹⁷ These first inhabitants were hunters and gatherers who likely followed migrations of birds and game as far north as Albany or even Lake George in the summer and then moved into Pennsylvania and other points south in winter. Their weapons were Stone Age in nature.

Over time, the Hudson Valley became peopled with small, semi-nomadic groups. They built their camps along creeks, moving on as resources were depleted. Some groups lived on inland sites in winter, moving closer to the Hudson River in summer. With its tall trees and rock shelters, the shoreline provided protection from both cold and heat, making the area

appealing for longer habitation. Although hunting and gathering were still prevalent during this era, a more settled lifestyle began to emerge. This way of life existed for around 7500 years, gradually coming to an end about 3000 years ago.

When the Dutch arrived in 1609, the people they encountered living in the region were still hunting, fishing, and gathering a variety of natural foods, but were also cultivating large gardens of corn, beans, squash, melons, and pumpkins. This period would last beyond the arrival of Henry Hudson and through the early years of Dutch settlement.¹⁸

In the early eighteenth century the area now known as Germantown was still occupied by the Mohican people. Those who settled in the valley named the river Mahicannituck, meaning the Waters That Are Never Still. At this time a vast Mohican territory extended on both sides of the Hudson River, from the isle of Manhattan to Lake Champlain, east to Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Vermont, and west to Schoharie Creek.

Early European Settlement

As European settlers expanded their range throughout New England, Mohican communities were progressively affected. King Philip’s War was an armed conflict between the region’s indigenous inhabitants and colonists with their indigenous allies which took place from 1675 to 1676. The war resulted not only in a significant loss of life within the native populations of southern New England, but the continued erosion of indigenous sovereignty, land rights, and communities.¹⁹

As more Europeans settled in the region, Mohicans sold their land to the Dutch and others in exchange for needed resources lost in the destruction of their farms and communities. Their self-reliance and sustenance from the land was further diminished by increased dependency on the settlers for their provisions.

Between 1647 and 1734 there are many recorded sales of land in Columbia County and other parts of the Mohican nation, first to the Dutch and then to the English. Settlers began dividing the land, establishing fences and boundary lines. Eventually, the Mohicans were driven from their territory west of the Hudson and continued to move further east. By 1736 most of these communities had left the region.²⁰

In 1710, Robert Livingston sold 6,000 acres of his property to Queen Anne of Great Britain for use as work camps and the resettlement of Palatine German refugees. These groups were brought as indentured laborers who lived at the camps as they paid off their passage. First known as "East Camp," the colony was later renamed "Germantown" for these early residents. Germantown was one of the seven original towns of Columbia County established by an act passed March 7, 1788 (the others

were Kinderhook, Canaan, Claverack, Hillsdale, Clermont, and Livingston).²¹

Cultural Resources

Mansion

The nine-bedroom, brick Georgian-style mansion is the predominant structure of historic significance at Clermont. The house has a formal central hall plan, with an unusually spacious parlor and dining room which open from the wide stair hall. The rooms are furnished with an original collection of Livingston furniture, much of it in the Federal and Empire styles, and are filled with original paintings, prints, and books.²²

The visitor tour of Clermont's mansion reflects how the structure evolved over time. After the mansion was burned, in 1777, it was rebuilt as a two-story brick Georgian residence (apparently using the north and south (end) walls of the



Palatine refugees, from "War Scene" (detail) by Flemish painter Sebastiaen Vrancx (1573–1647)

1740s structure). Its exterior walls were covered with a thin veneer of stucco and scored to resemble stone blocks. Later, in 1803, a one-story brick kitchen wing was added and, in 1830, a library wing.²³ In 2022 a capital project restored the mansion’s exterior.

As part of the Hudson River Valley National Historic Landmark district, buildings contributing to the historic significance of the Clermont estate include the mansion, Clermont Cottage, Sylvan Cottage, the Playhouse, the Red Barn, and a second historic barn, now used as a visitor center. Historically significant structures also include the ruins of an earlier Livingston residence, the Arryl House, an icehouse and root cellar, and a greenhouse. Foundations and rubble of early tenant farmhouses are found at multiple locations on the property, and additional archaeological resources have been identified throughout the property.

A system of former carriage roads, walking paths, and wooded trails allow visitors to access natural areas and river views. Clermont also has five historic gardens, as well as open meadows, the man-made Ice Pond, and remnants of outbuildings from the Site’s agrarian past.

Sylvan and Clermont Cottages

Clermont’s two historic cottages are in the northern portion of the Site. Sylvan (also known as the Gatekeeper’s Cottage) is located near the estate’s original gated entrance. The last family member to live on the Site, Honoria Livingston, and her husband Rex, lived at Sylvan Cottage, called the Honeymoon Cottage by the family. In December 2000, the State of New York acquired Sylvan Cottage and its associated 10 acres. The cottage is vacant and in deteriorated condition.

Still in active use, Clermont Cottage provides office space for the Friends of Clermont and is used for public programs. The structure’s original section dates to between 1790-1830, when it was used to house estate employees. The cottage was expanded in the mid-20th

century. It was restored with support of the Friends group and today is in good condition.

Collections

Clermont’s substantial object collection also contributes to the Site’s historic value. While many items are in storage, on mansion tours visitors will see original furniture, artwork, decorative items, jewelry, clothing, household items, books, letters, and photographs from the Site’s collections, many owned by generations of the Livingston Family.

Cultural Landscape

Historic buildings reside within a larger context, which often contributes to their significance. The U.S. National Parks Service (NPS) defines a cultural landscape as “a geographic area, including both natural and cultural resources, associated with a historic event, activity, or person.”²⁴ At Clermont, the grounds, and many accompanying landscape elements, are all part of the Site’s cultural heritage.

Recreational Resources

In addition to its historic significance, Clermont also functions as a park, with hiking trails, picnic areas, open lawns, and recreational programming. Mature trees dotting the landscape create a tranquil setting that provides visitors a public space to relax, meet friends and family, take a walk, and enjoy the views. Its historic gardens are popular for strolling, with benches for relaxing. Interpretive signs and Visitor Center exhibits offer information on Clermont’s history and encourage reflection on the development of the Site from its pre-development state into an agricultural site.

The Site is also a popular venue for special events, including live music and seasonal festivals. The Site also has five areas available for wedding ceremonies and four reception areas.

Trails

Clermont has seven miles of marked trails and walking the trail network and the Site's historic carriage roads are popular activities. All trails are open to pedestrian use for hiking and snowshoeing. Some trails are open for cross-country skiing and equestrian use. Horseback riding has a long tradition at Clermont, as the Chancellor Livingston spent hours riding around the estate and Janet Livingston was an avid horse jumper.

Clermont's trails also afford access to some of the best bird watching in the region.²⁵ The Site's forest and meadow habitats attract migrating songbirds and support more than 150 observed bird species. Clermont is listed on the [DEC's](#) website as part of a statewide birding network, the New York State Birding Trail. Birds can be found here year-round, but in fall and winter, birders come to view large flocks of migrant geese and ducks that gather seasonally in the Hudson River.

Natural Resources

The terrain is a dominant natural feature at Clermont. As it steps dramatically down to the Hudson River, the Site's upland portion is level or gently rolling, while in the less developed sections to the south, rock outcroppings emerge. On the Site's western border steep slopes drop down to the Hudson River shoreline. The landscape is varied, with



woodlands, wetlands, meadows, streams, and a variety of landforms, from level to quite steep.

Scenic Resources

Clermont is within a designated NYS Scenic Area of Statewide Significance (SASS), Estates District.²⁶ Set within the Hudson River Valley and Catskill Mountain viewshed, it contributes to Columbia County's pastoral landscape with scenic charm across the seasons.

Educational Programs & Events

Workshops, programs, and special events are offered throughout the year at Clermont. Subjects range widely, from the history and traditions of the Site and region to more contemporary and topical issues. Guided mansion tours are offered Thursday-Sunday from 11:00am-4:00pm, on the hour, year-round and Monday holidays.

A free program for children and organizations offered by the Friends of Clermont group, "Harvesting History" centers on a model nineteenth century kitchen garden while dealing with the issue of food insecurity and nutrition, using produce from the garden to cook healthy snacks with the students. The program incorporates interdisciplinary lessons developed to help students learn about climate science, art, creative writing, meteorology, and entomology. Based on a design from journals kept by Clermont Livingston between 1854-1880, the teaching garden is planted and maintained by staff, volunteers and students.

Special Events

Clermont hosts dozens of events, lectures, performances, art exhibits, special programs, camps, and demonstrations throughout the year. Each spring, the Chancellor's Sheep and Wool Showcase kicks off Clermont's open season, showcasing the Site's agrarian history with demonstrations of herding, shearing, spinning, and knitting, using both modern and historic techniques. Live demonstrations are the centerpiece of the event, with programs

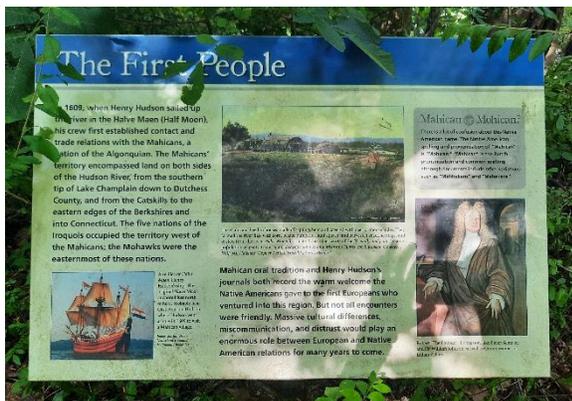
illustrating how raw wool is transformed into yarn. Sheep, goats, and other wool-bearing animals are on display along with local vendors and fiber artists, music, crafts, and food.

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

Clermont’s year ends with a month of holiday events. Programs include storytelling for children, a nighttime tour with costumed interpreters, and a holiday open house.

Interpretation

Effective interpretative material is vital to creating a rich visitor experience at a historic property. At its most effective, interpretation can enable visitors to make associations between the information shown, and even alter previous perceptions.²⁷ Clermont’s educators work closely with OPRHP historic preservation staff and the Friends of Clermont to develop interpretive material in its tours, exhibits, signage and programming that embodies the agency’s, “Our Whole History” initiative. The intent is to offer inclusive content that will feel relevant to a diverse range of audiences.



Interpretive Themes

The history of the former Livingston property lends itself as a springboard for inquiry into—and dialogue on—the rich heritage and ongoing study of the Hudson Valley region and its people. Social and ethnic topics, architecture and cultural landscapes, labor and economics, industry and commerce, housing and community, environment and land use, politics and economics are among the many possible subject areas for interpretive content.

Visitation

Visitors to historic sites are generally expected to be comprised of a range of people with a range of interests. The first are from within the community, and include nearby residents, local interest groups, and students and instructors from local schools and colleges. Others may travel from outside the area, including residents from other parts of the state, travelers from other states, or people visiting from other countries.

“Cultural heritage tourism” is a growing trend that brings visitors with specific interests in the history or culture of a region to destinations with the primary purpose of exploring the history and heritage of a place. As part of the “Historic Estate” district, Clermont is within easy traveling distance of the Olana and Staatsburgh State Historic Sites as well as the Thomas Cole National Historic Site across the Hudson River in the Town of Catskill, NY. These and other historic properties are among the many potential destinations in the region available for people interested in immersing themselves in American history.

Operations

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

Actions Proposed in the Master Plan

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

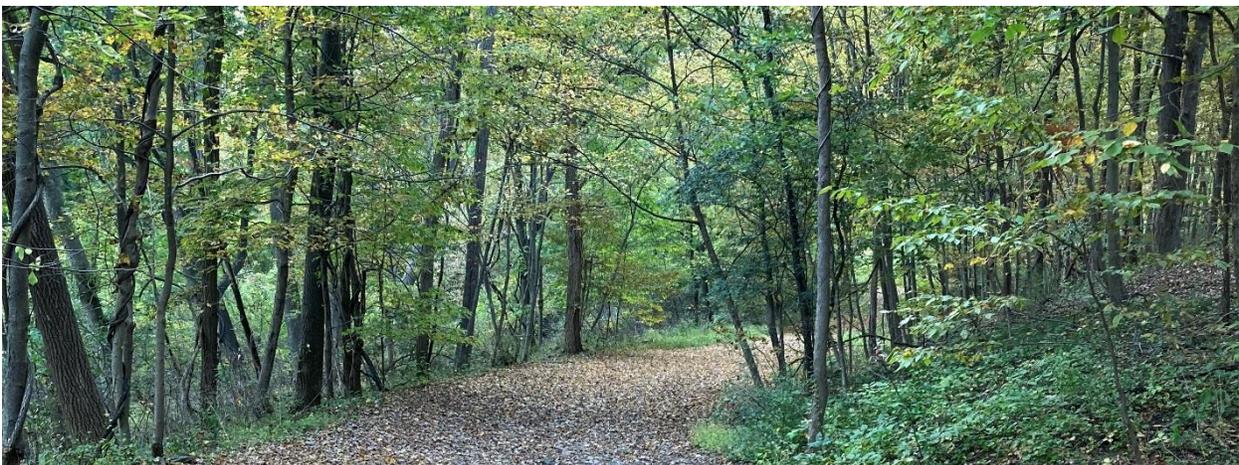
Natural Resources



Clermont’s natural areas provide important wildlife habitat in a region increasingly subject to development pressure. The Site’s woodlands, streams, wetlands, and meadows are home to a diverse range of plants and wildlife which, in turn, afford recreational opportunities such as birding and hiking. Much of Clermont’s landscape is evolving from centuries of agricultural use to a more natural state. With increasing impacts from climate change, the actions proposed for the Site’s natural resources will help to ensure appropriate care and future stewardship.

Actions

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



Cultural Resources



Evidence of human occupation at Clermont can be found throughout the landscape. Indigenous communities are known to have lived in the region for many thousands of years prior to European settlement. More recent evidence includes the remnants of farmsteads and outbuildings used by tenant farmers, servants, enslaved people, laborers, agricultural workers, and others who lived at the Site. Many of these are exposed to the elements and vulnerable to damage or loss. Actions developed for Clermont’s cultural resources will help to identify and preserve these elements for future generations.

Actions

- Develop and implement a comprehensive Conditions Study to appropriately protect and preserve the mansion.
- Rehabilitate and retrofit Sylvan Cottage as an accessible, multi-use education center with classrooms, a kitchen, restrooms, and defined parking area.
- Improve weather-tightness of the Red Barn and implement repairs to ensure its long-term protection.
- Develop an area adjacent to the Red Barn to serve as a seasonal outdoor events venue.
- Build a small addition at the rear of the Red Barn to house a public restroom, changing area, storage, and a warming kitchen.
- Rehabilitate the interior of the Barn to accommodate three-season use such as exhibits, while preserving character-defining elements.
- Provide accessible parking, walkways, and entrance at Clermont Cottage.
- Fully remediate Clermont Cottage for mold and mildew and install appropriate insulation.
- Stabilize the icehouse and root cellar; remove vegetation, replace safety railing, and add gravel with weed barrier around the perimeter.
- Work with Historic Preservation staff to stabilize selected remnant historic structures.
- Conduct a Phase I archaeological survey at Clermont and develop a comprehensive archaeological report and sensitivity analysis of the entire Site.
- Work with the Bureau of Historic Sites to develop a Furnishing Plan.
- With the OPRHP Bureau of Historic Sites, re-evaluate Clermont’s Collections Policy; review its parameters and scope of collections.
- Develop a “virtual wing” to provide online access to Clermont’s collections and enable wider, more active use by staff, the academic community, and the general public.
- Evaluate storage conditions for object collections held in the mansion and make recommendations for improvements.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to stabilize the Arryl House Ruins and adjacent historic elements.
- Work with Historic Preservation staff to survey remnant historic structures at the facility to evaluate their condition, significance, and to address any needs.
- Develop a management/maintenance program for historic remnant elements in the landscape.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to stabilize the Arryl House Ruins and adjacent historic elements.
- Restore the Locust Tree allée parallel to the main visitor parking lot.

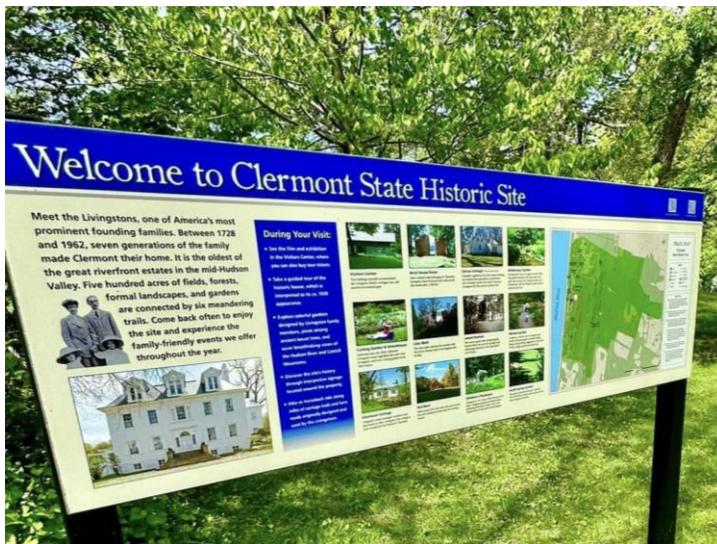
Education, Programming and Interpretation



A key part of the Master Plan vision is to expand Clermont’s relevance by creating activities and educational content that will be meaningful to a full range of visitors. The Site’s educators would like to ensure that the next generation of visitors will be representative of a wide range of interests, ages, and backgrounds. Actions developed in this category help to foster a more inclusive atmosphere by developing innovative programs geared toward all ages and abilities, expanding the Site’s outreach.

Actions

- With the support of the Bureau of Historic Sites, develop educational content that conveys the experience of enslaved people, indigenous communities, Palatines, servants, and tenant farmers, using both the collections and content-driven approaches.
- Implement special programs related to as-yet untold aspects of the Site’s history.
- Cultivate funding sources for developing an annual exhibit in the mansion gallery.
- With support from the Bureau of Historic Sites, revise and update Clermont’s Interpretive Statement.
- Develop interpretative content for underutilized resources.
- With support from the Bureau of Historic Sites, update Clermont’s interpretation program/plan to define new content goals, presentation methods, and ensure a cohesive message.
- Strengthen role of the Clermont’s Advisory Committee to guide interpretive development.
- Expand outreach and marketing strategies to foster more visibility and awareness about Clermont and what it has to offer.



Recreational Resources



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

Actions

- Assess the feasibility of providing public access to the Site’s holdings and remnants of a historic dock along the Hudson River shoreline.
- Investigate the possibility offering special outdoor events that will encourage new groups to come to the site (e.g., temporary overnight camping for youth or bicycle groups).
- Maintain connections with equestrian community by developing special events that highlight equestrian use as a historic recreation activity at the Site.
- Create accessible picnic facilities within the current picnic area.
- Create a new picnic area adjacent to the Ice Pond.
- Improve the existing trail system at Clermont by addressing portions of trails where erosion, wetness, or steep grades exist.
- Close unused trail sections or trails in sensitive areas, re-route chronically wet trail segments, and install or replace trail bridges and culverts, where needed.
- Formalize trail access points at the Site and encourage connections with the Empire State Trail by adding informational signage, maps, safety information and, where appropriate, bicycle racks, picnic tables, and/or parking.
- Establish a formal trailhead and expanded parking at the informal access point where visitors park to access the trail on-site near the flagpole.
- Develop a trail signage plan and produce and install trailhead kiosks, intersectional, and trail marking blazes and signage.
- Finalize, map, and implement improvements for the trail system.
- Develop an accessible interpretive trail near the mansion.



Infrastructure



Much of Clermont’s functional infrastructure is aging. Its roads, parking areas, walking paths, public restrooms, drainage structures, and other parts of the built environment require frequent repair, and most need updating. Appropriately maintaining and preserving to the Site’s historic elements, while providing public access is an additional challenge. Barriers to universal access throughout the Site were identified during Master Plan development. Welcoming visitors of all abilities is essential to realizing the Master Plan vision of making the Clermont Site open and accessible to all.

Actions

- Conduct a comprehensive analysis to identify accessibility issues site-wide with recommendations for addressing issues where possible.
- Develop an accessible multi-use path from the Arryl House Ruins to Clermont Cottage, with connections to the mansion and other points of interest at the Site.
- Improve access to Hudson River/Catskill Mountain views by constructing a viewing platform.
- In coordination with the Division for Historic Preservation, develop a study to determine approaches to providing universal access to the mansion’s entrance, restrooms, exhibits, and staff offices.
- Keep staff offices in the mansion and renovate them.
- Relocate the visitor entrance and construct a new entry road on Woods Road.
- Improve access to the Visitor Center by providing an accessible route from the parking lot with clear signage, entry improvements (e.g., a portico and paved entryway), and improve interior restrooms.
- Redevelop the visitor parking lot with green stormwater management elements, pedestrian paths, and clear pavement markings.
- Improve emergency access from the visitor parking lot to the mansion by installing a route with firm, stable surface materials.
- Improve existing parking areas at the mansion, Sylvan and Clermont Cottages, and the Red Barn to ensure accessibility and meet future demand.
- Develop a parking area in the north section of the Site with green infrastructure.
- Improve access to north section of the Site by re-paving the north carriage road and improving drainage infrastructure to address erosion.



Facilities Management



The planning team identified issues related to Site operations and management and developed strategies for improving its function. Clermont’s experienced and knowledgeable staff face many challenges when managing this large facility with many sensitive historic features. Strategies for improving the visitor experience largely focused on the Site’s staffing needs. Actions were developed by defining what is needed to effectively manage the Site now and to accommodate proposed future development.

Actions

- Develop a plan that assesses staff requirements for appropriately supporting existing elements and future development.
- Improve visitor management by stationing staff at key locations on high-volume days to address FAQs and address ongoing issues, such as litter management.
- Create a paid position for a volunteer coordinator to develop and manage a strong volunteer force at Clermont.
- Identify new, mutually beneficial partnerships to help support a full range of programs and projects (e.g., education/programming/research, special needs community (Hudson Kindness Club) timber framer guilds).
- Strengthen connections with local fire departments, EMS, and police.



Operations & Maintenance



The modern use of historic structures can often conflict with the need to preserve them and maintain their historic integrity. Code requirements, accessibility, comfort, safety, and other needs at public facilities may require some compromise. At Clermont, staff noted that challenges related to maintaining the facility are compounded by the frequent need for specialized skills, training or materials often required for appropriate maintenance of historic infrastructure.

Actions

- Develop a Site-specific plan that identifies current and anticipated future climate change impacts with strategies to address at-risk elements.
- Develop solar power at Clermont as a grid-tied system to offset utility costs.
- Purchase fuel generators to provide emergency backup power for the mansion and the maintenance facility.
- Install a site-wide security camera system.
- Improve litter/debris management by implementing new strategies to educate visitors (e.g., social media messaging, Leave No Trace, Don't Feed the Landfills Initiative).
- Upgrade the maintenance area, repairing failing pavement, adding drive-through pole barns, a fueling tank, pickup truck, and a wash bay.
- Evaluate the Site's utility infrastructure to ensure it will meet both current and future needs and requirements (e.g., distribution: wiring, poles, supplemental electric for events).
- Upgrade and repair the Site's drainage infrastructure to address site-wide wet areas, erosion, standing water, and deteriorating pavements.
- Implement a phased, prioritized plan to upgrade Internet/WiFi technology for both staff and public use.
- Select energy-efficient equipment and materials and adopt lower-impact approaches to Site maintenance and operations.



Implementation

The pace and sequencing of implementing the actions proposed in the Master Plan will be determined by the availability of funding (a function of the size of OPRHP’s annual capital, staffing and operations budgets), as well as the need to balance investments throughout the park system.

OPRHP has not developed detailed cost estimates for the proposed components. Cumulatively they may cost tens of millions of dollars to implement. Priority projects shown in Table 1, p.7 are subject to reorganization based on available funding. The master plan will be reviewed annually to select projects that will be added to the park’s budget for implementation and to assess the progress of plan implementation. Any operational improvements that are already planned at the time of the master plan will go forward as planned.



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

P. 14 – Image of Robert Livingston, “The First Lord.” Courtesy of NYSOPRHP, Clermont State Historic Site.

P. 16 – “July 1847 Clermont,” Montgomery Livingston. Courtesy of NYSOPRHP, Clermont State Historic Site.

P. 17 – The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Print Collection, The New York Public Library. "The Clermont on the Hudson" New York Public Library Digital Collections. Retrieved from: <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47d9-7b61-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.

P. 19 – Sebastiaen Vrancx. War Scene. Wikimedia Commons. Retrieved from: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:War-Scene-xx-Sebastian-Vrancx.JPG>

P. 21 – Alexandre Légaré from Sherbrooke, Canada, CCO. Public Domain. Accessed at Wikimedia Commons. Retrieved from: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Black-throated Blue Warbler, Parc %C3%89coforestier de Johnville, Quebec, Canada.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Black-throated_Blue_Warbler,_Parc_%C3%89coforestier_de_Johnville,_Quebec,_Canada.jpg)



Endnotes

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