



Master Plan for Johnson Hall State Historic Site

City of Johnstown, Fulton County

October 2020

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Governor

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Acknowledgements

The Johnson Hall State Historic Site Master Plan and Environmental Impact Statement are the result of a dedicated effort by many persons.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms Used

| | |
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| DEC | New York State Department of Environmental Conservation |
| EIS | Environmental Impact Statement |
| NYNHP | New York Natural Heritage Program |
| OPRHP | Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation |
| PIM | Public Information Meeting |
| SEQRA | State Environmental Quality Review Act |

Introduction

The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) administers over 250 parks, historic sites, trails, boat launches, and golf courses—encompassing more than 350,000 acres of land—across 11 State Park Regions. Under Section 3.02 of the Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation Law, OPRHP is directed “to conserve, protect and enhance the natural, ecological, historic, cultural and recreational resources contained therein and to provide for the public enjoyment of and access to these resources in a manner that will protect them for future generations.”



The Blue Parlor on the First Floor of Johnson Hall

OPRHP has determined that the preparation and implementation of a Master Plan at Johnson Hall State Historic Site will further the Site’s mission to interpret the story of Sir William Johnson—considered one of the most important men in colonial America—Molly Brant, and the Haudenosaunee people. The Plan provides comprehensive guidance for the long-term, sustainable management of the Site, preserving and protecting the inimitable resources associated with its cultural, social, and political legacy. The Plan includes recommendations to expand programmatic opportunities that appeal to a broader visitor demographic; to create interpretive structures—including a longhouse and trade house—that provide dedicated space for museum professionals and cultural communities to explore the historical narratives and experiences of all persons at Johnson Hall; to develop a new Visitor Center with professional exhibit spaces and visitor amenities (e.g. gift shop, meeting spaces, and modern restroom facilities); and more. Successful Plan implementation will help the Site nurture greater appreciation for the life of Sir William and his contemporaries and help it become a leading regional cultural center known for sharing the remarkable story of early America and the nation’s roots in the Mohawk Valley.

Planning and Development

Master planning is an important tool that helps OPRHP meet its stewardship responsibilities. It is an iterative process that determines research needs and analyzes a Park or Site’s existing cultural, natural, recreational, and operational resources, and provides for public participation and ongoing cooperation among stakeholders. Relevant social, economic, and physical factors also inform creation of a Master Plan. From discussions surrounding these topics, a series of alternatives is developed. The alternatives that best meet OPRHP’s mission and vision for a Park or Site are identified as Preferred Alternatives. These Preferred Alternatives form a list actionable items within the Plan, subject to implementation over the next ten to fifteen years.

No comprehensive planning effort has occurred at Johnson Hall prior to this master planning process. In years past, planning has been conducted piecemeal, with projects undertaken as needed and as funding allowed. On June 11, 2018, OPRHP kicked off the master planning process for Johnson Hall by hosting a Public Information Meeting (PIM) at Johnstown High School. Attendees viewed a presentation on site resources; were provided an overview of the planning process; and encouraged to share with OPRHP staff the issues, impacts, and alternatives they would like explored in the Master Plan. A month-long public comment period followed the event.

Since the PIM meeting, property abutting the Historic Site to the east—at 137 Hall Avenue—was listed on the real estate market. After extensive discussion among OPRHP and the Planning Team, it was determined that purchase of the property, fee simple, would be in the Site’s best interest. The purchase would aid the Site in terms of expanding the amount of acreage upon which it could develop interpretative opportunities and resolve existing space and organizational inefficiencies. Jurisdiction for the parcel was transferred to OPRHP in August 2020.

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 Johnson Hall Master Plan is accompanied by an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which provides that environmental review in compliance with SEQRA.



Public Information Meeting in June 2018

Site Description

The Region

Johnson Hall is in the Saratoga-Capital District Park Region. This region covers all of Albany, Rensselaer, Montgomery, Schenectady, and Schoharie Counties, as well as parts of Fulton, Saratoga, Washington, Greene, and Warren Counties. The Region has eight additional State Historic Sites and eleven State Parks.

Location and Access

Johnson Hall is located in the City of Johnstown, in Fulton County. The Johnstown community—first known as John’s Town—was founded in 1762 by Sir William Johnson (1715-1774), the largest single landowner in the settlement of the Mohawk Valley. The approximately 33-acre Historic Site is accessible by motor vehicle from West State Street (Route 29 W), a State Highway that intersects Johnstown approximately five miles north of Interstate 90 (I-90). The Site is within a one-hour driving distance from the cities of Albany, Saratoga, Schenectady, and Utica. Pedestrians and residents of Johnstown can walk to the Site using local streets and access its entrance from Hall Avenue. Johnson Hall can also be reached by bicycle from the Fonda, Johnstown and Gloversville Rail Trail, which intersects West State Street less than a half-mile from the Site. Rail service is offered in nearby Amsterdam, New York, making the Historic Site accessible by foot, bicycle, vehicle, and/or train.



Johnson Hall State Historic Site

Establishment of Johnson Hall State Historic Site

Johnson Hall was sold to the State of New York by a private landowner in December 1906. Throughout the twentieth century, management of the estate was handled by several State agencies. The Conservation Department—known today as the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)—Division of Parks managed the estate from 1907 until 1944. A reduction in the Division’s management responsibilities during World War II led to management of the estate by the State Education Department between 1944 and 1966. Responsibility for Johnson Hall returned to the Division of Parks in 1966, the same year the New York State Historic Trust—which later became the State Board for Historic Preservation—was established to assist with management of historic sites. The Division of Parks later became an independent State agency, the State Office of Parks and Recreation—renamed the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation in 1981—and manages Johnson Hall into the present day.

Johnson Hall was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1960, added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1966, and first included on the New York State Register of Historic Places in 1980.

Existing Conditions

Descriptions of the Site’s existing conditions are meant to be summaries highlighting its most important elements. More detailed descriptions and maps of these resources are included in “Chapter One: Environmental Setting” of the EIS.

Cultural Resources and the Historic Landscape

Johnson Hall, its inhabitants, and the surrounding area are associated with several broad patterns in American history. Johnson Hall is significant to the nation’s Indigenous, early-American trading, French and Indian War (1754-1763), and Revolutionary War (1775-1783) histories. As the largest single landowner and most influential person in the settlement of the Mohawk Valley, Sir William was one of the most important men in colonial America.



Johnson Hall Hidden Beneath a Variety of Anachronistic Victorian-Era Building Additions, c. 1900

Pre-Historic

To date, archaeological testing at the Historic Site has not uncovered any pre-historic collections. Teams have uncovered, however, cultural materials dating to the mid-1700s. The bulk of this material includes architectural artifacts (nails, brick, window glass) and food-related items (ceramics, glass, food remains).

Indigenous Nations

Indigenous peoples occupied the land known today as New York State following the retreat of the Wisconsin glacier, approximately 11,000 years ago. Indigenous groups traveled alongside the animals they hunted and progressed through a period of more restricted movement into a well-defined social organization that combined agriculture, cultivating wild plants, hunting and fishing.

The Haudenosaunee (*People of the Longhouse*), also known as the Six Nations, are a confederacy of Indigenous nations spread across a vast territory that once extended from Ontario, south to the Susquehanna River, and from Lake Erie east to the Hudson River. The Mohawk, one of the Six Nations, held claim to their namesake Mohawk Valley and, as *Keepers of the Eastern Door*, helped to defend the Confederacy and region against attacks from outside groups. With significant value placed upon community, Haudenosaunee peoples like the Mohawk often built villages of long-houses—a distinctive form of communal housing—throughout the area. Given the frequency with which members of the Haudenosaunee visited Johnson Hall during the mid-1700s, it is likely Indigenous visitors to Johnson Hall erected many small temporary structures such as this across the estate. While no archaeological evidence of the structures has been found, small clusters of rock discovered throughout the property during excavations are suggestive of this building type.

The first European people to establish contact with the Haudenosaunee were French fur traders. Both French and later Dutch fur traders moved relatively freely within Haudenosaunee territory but did not establish extensive settlements until after the mid-17th century. In the early 18th century, the British Crown encouraged settlements throughout the Mohawk Valley as the British Crown vied with the French for control of the region. Johnson's charge to encourage settlement of his uncle Sir Peter Warren's (1703-1752) land grant, and eventually his own lands, was part of this effort to occupy and hold claim to at least a portion of the Mohawk's traditional lands.

During the era of the French and Indian War, when the British colonies were pitted against those of the French, Mohawk-Anglo relations were largely shaped by Mohawk leaders. Younger Mohawks like Joseph Brant (1743-1807) observed political discussions and participated in military actions throughout the War. Brant would become an influential Haudenosaunee leader during the Revolutionary War (1775-1783). In 1759, Brant's older sister Molly Brant (c.1736-1796) married Sir William, who was by then well-known for his capture of Fort Niagara from the French. As part of the Haudenosaunee—a matrilineal culture in which families follow the lineage and clan of the mother—native women in this culture, like Molly, held positions of power, and were responsible for managing property or dispensing advice to leaders. Molly became not only an important link between the Haudenosaunee and Sir William, but a renowned intermediary between the Mohawk people and British officials during the Revolution. Contact between Europeans and native peoples, however, proved devastating. Interaction exposed nations to increased warfare and new, highly infectious diseases, contributing to large losses in the population of Indigenous groups. These events helped to weaken social structures and the Indigenous communities' physical capacity to retain control over their vast territory.

Historic European Settlement

Johnson Hall State Historic Site is comprised of approximately 33-acres of what was once Sir William's 700-acre working estate. Here, differing cultures, traditions, and languages combined to create a vibrant and unique life at the edge of the early American frontier. During Sir William's lifetime, the tract served not only as the family's home, but a regional diplomatic and trade center of the Mohawk Valley. Sir William, Molly, and their eight children, resided at Johnson Hall from its building date in 1763 until Sir William's death in 1774. At the home, many outbuildings were necessary to house servants, enslaved persons, and domestic animals, and to accommodate the daily chores required to support Sir William's extended family, colonial and Indigenous visitors.

As a colonial military commander, Johnson led troops and native allies responsible for some of the defeats suffered by the French during the French and Indian War. For his victory at the Battle of Lake George in 1755, Johnson was bestowed the title of Baronet by King George II. The following year, the British Crown appointed him Superintendent of Indian Affairs, a position he held throughout his life, along with the responsibility to oversee approximately 170,000 acres of landholdings.

A council fire was established at Johnson Hall where Haudenosaunee leaders would meet with Sir William to discuss important matters. Until his death in 1774, Sir William worked alongside the Haudenosaunee with dignity and respect,

using knowledge of the Confederacy's customs and languages. This sagacity had a lasting impact on the Haudenosaunee's relationship with the British and contributed to the ultimate victory of the British Crown in the Anglo-French struggle for control of colonial North America.

The Revolutionary War began approximately one year after Sir William's death. The Loyalist Johnson family—including Sir William's son, Sir John Johnson (1741-1830)—fled to Canada. Molly would soon relocate to Fort Niagara in Youngstown, New York, and further cultivate diplomatic relations between the British and the Haudenosaunee. After the war, Molly would receive a substantial military pension for her services and spend the rest of her days in Kingston, Ontario (NPS, 2015).



Anniversary of the 1774 Council Meeting Reenactment

1800s–Today

In 1776, the family's property—like that of many families loyal to the British Crown—was confiscated by the State of New York. The subsequent sequestration sales of real and personal property found at the estate influenced ensuing changes in ownership of the house, lands, and family possessions. Over the next two decades, the property experienced several changes in private ownership. During this period, many outbuildings disappeared, and the main home and stonehouses were altered to exhibit the most fashionable architectural designs of the Victorian period. During the last quarter of the 19th century, many improvements were made to the property by John Wells, a locally prominent businessman. In the early 1920s, the grounds saw the installation of a 20th century strolling park, just south of the home.

Recreational Resources

Interpretation

Johnson Hall State Historic Site interprets the story of Johnson Hall and its inhabitants in the years between 1763-1774. Through guided tours of the home and historic grounds—and public programs—site staff and volunteers inform the public about domestic life at the estate, as well as the lasting impact of Sir William, Molly, and the Haudenosaunee people. The Site has a calendar of events and special programs. It also offers curricula-driven school programs that serve more than 1,000 students each year.



Interpretation During Market Fair

Annual Events

Holiday Open House: Organized in conjunction with the City of Johnstown's Colonial Stroll event, Johnson Hall's annual Holiday Open House draws visitors from across the region. Lanterns illuminate walkways and guide guests to a festively decorated, candlelit house filled with music and interpreters in period dress. Visitors warm themselves by the fireplace in the Northwest Stonehouse and enjoy homemade mulled cider and cookies while they wait for the popular horse-drawn wagon ride across the grounds.

Annual Lecture Series: Lectures are scheduled throughout the operating season at locations both on- and off-site. Lectures are free to the public and are intended primarily for adult audiences. Lecture topics vary each year based on site anniversary events, public interest, and new research.

Hands on History: An annual children's event hosted each July, this free event offers multiple family-friendly presentations that demonstrate a craft or interpret a historical event. Through hands-on activities, children may experience the past through role play, game play, or interaction with reproduction toys and tools.

Market Fair: Johnson Hall's eighteenth-century Market Fair is a bi-annual event begun by Sir William in 1772. This event attracts over thirty vendors from across the northeast who sell period and reproduction

goods ranging from knives, firearms, leather goods and jewelry to candles, soap, pots and pans.

Eighteenth Century Slavery at Johnson Hall: The Site continues to expand interpretation of 18th century slavery at the estate, in the Mohawk Valley, and across colonial America. Engaging African American scholars, educators, and artists to interpret the African American experience in the period, the Site hosts lectures, cooking demonstrations, and performances.

Open Hearth Cooking and Baking Workshops: Each year, the Friends of Johnson Hall offer an annual series of open hearth cooking and baking workshops. Guided by historic foodways experts, students use period recipes, authentic reproduction kitchen tools, and the Northwest Stonehouse's working fireplace to learn the art of cooking and baking over an open fire.



Living History Interpretation During Market Fair

Passive Recreation

Year-round, the Site provides passive recreational opportunities popular with local residents. These opportunities including walking, running, picnicking, biking, dog-walking, photography, and birding. More active forms of recreation, such as snowshoeing and cross-country skiing, occur at the Site's formally designed 20th century strolling park, Johnson Hall Park. There are no overnight recreational opportunities at Johnson Hall.

Natural Resources

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 headwater stream traversing the Historic Site's northern portion. It is a Class C stream, appropriate for contact recreation such as fishing. The classification, however, indicates that there are no records of trout populations in the 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 trout populations downstream.



Hall Creek, Part of the Cayadutta Creek Subwatershed

Land Cover, Flora and Fauna

The Historic Site is a post-agricultural landscape typical of the Mohawk River Valley region. Most of the Site is developed. During Sir William's time the lands were part of a larger working estate with gardens and orchards. Later the grounds were maintained for formally-designed landscapes.

Today, most of the Site's land cover is an extensive lawn area interspersed with small clusters of trees and shrubs, many of which are not native to the region. A small island with a floodplain forest exists in the middle of Hall Creek. There is successional forest on the Creek's north side.

There are no significant natural communities, rare or endangered species currently found at the Site (DEC, 2020; USFWS, 2020).

Agency Mission

The mission of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation 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.

Johnson Hall Interpretive Statement

Johnson Hall State Historic Site was the home and business headquarters of Sir William Johnson (c.1715-1774) from the building's construction 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, Johnson was responsible for some 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 made a Baronet, a royal appointment. As Superintendent of Indian Affairs, his commitment to working with the Haudenosaunee, also known as the Six Nations, in a dignified and respectful way using his knowledge of the Confederacy's language and culture had a lasting impact on the Haudenosaunee's relationship with the British and the ultimate victory of the English in the Anglo-French struggle for North America.

Johnson Hall, Sir William's final home, was the nucleus of a working estate designed to encourage frontier settlement and to further Johnson's development of his lands. A council fire of the Haudenosaunee was established at Johnson Hall. At the site, many outbuildings were necessary to house servants, enslaved persons, visitors and domestic animals, and to accommodate the chores required daily to support Johnson's extended family, colonial and Indigenous visitors.



The Restoration of the Northwest Stonehouse

Primary Interpretive Time Period

The primary period covered will be 1763-1774, the period of Sir William's residency at Johnson Hall.

Primary Interpretive Themes

- Sir William Johnson, his activities as a landowner and land developer, trader, military hero, and king's official among the Haudenosaunee (Six Nations).
- The daily life of the Johnson family and that of the surrounding communities and farms developed under Sir William's patronage.
- The political, cultural, and social history of the Haudenosaunee (Six Nations) Confederacy particularly as influenced by Sir William's superintendence.
- Sir William's influence on the political, social, and cultural life of the inhabitants of the Johnson Hall estate.
- The institution of slavery at Johnson Hall, in the Mohawk Valley, and in colonial New York.
- The history of the architecture, material culture, and land use during the period covered.

Action Items

After a 2-year planning process informed by continued evaluation of site resources, public input, visitor survey results, historical documentation, visits to other Historic Sites in the State system, consultation with cultural communities, and the expertise of an array of OPRHP professional staff, the Planning Team has prepared a Master Plan dedicated to the thoughtful reinvigoration and interpretation of Johnson Hall State Historic Site. The Plan—inclusive of recommendations to expand programmatic opportunities that appeal to broader visitor demographic; create four new interpretive structures (a longhouse, trade house, blacksmith shop, and garden house); and build a new Visitor Center replete with captivating exhibits, a gift shop, meeting spaces, and modern restroom facilities—will bring to life the vibrant, enduring legacy of Sir William Johnson and his Mohawk Valley contemporaries.

The Action Items below are a narrative description of the Master Plan, outlining what will be done at the Site for cultural resource and landscape protection; interpretation and education; recreation enhancement; natural resource protection; access, circulation, and wayfinding; communication and partnership development; management and operations, all pending available funding. The Action Items presented have been guided by the overarching vision for Johnson Hall. Each element of the Master Plan has one or more Action Items that will be part of its realization. Successful implementation of these items promises to strengthen Johnson Hall's ability to effectively interpret the Site, and increase its visibility as a premier Historic Site whose story is inextricable from the larger history of the early American nation.

Action Items are listed in geographic order from the Site's north to south end. They are not listed in order of importance. Most Action Items are based on the considerations and analysis located in "Chapter Two: Preferred Alternatives" of the accompanying EIS. Some of the Action Items, however, are administrative or managerial in nature and are presented without extensive discussion in the EIS.

The Master Plan is also presented graphically in the large format Master Plan Map which is included in this document.



Planning Team Meetings Involve Staff from Multiple Offices Within the Agency

Cultural Resources

Historic Structures

Action Items are listed in geographic order from the Site's north to south end. They are not listed in order of importance. Planning and construction-related items in this section will require substantial phasing and coordination by OPRHP.

Action Item: Remove the restroom from the basement of Johnson Hall and restore the space.

Remove the outdated restroom from the basement of the mansion and restore the space to a more original condition. Removing the restroom will help to mitigate risks associated with running water through a historic structure and make the space more conducive to interpretive programming.

Action Item: Continue interior restoration work and furnishing of Johnson Hall.

Continue to install handblocked reproduction wallpaper and textiles, as documented to the time period, throughout the house. Create reproductions of original furnishings and decorative arts based on the home's 1774 probate inventory, surviving examples, and archeological remains.

Action Item: Open the second floor of the Northwest Stonehouse to interpretation.

Open the second floor of the Northwest Stonehouse to interpretive programming by relocating equipment stored on the second floor to another location on-site. This reorganization of building use expands the Site's capacity to provide original interpretation and educational programming in a more effective, professional setting.

Action Item: Install a fire detection system in the Northwest Stonehouse.

Install a fire detection system in the Northwest Stonehouse in order to provide for the health and safety of patrons and the integrity of the historic resource.

Purpose-Built Interpretive Structures

Action Items are listed in geographic order from the Site's north to south end. They are not listed in order of importance. Planning and construction-related items in this section will require substantial phasing and coordination by OPRHP.

Action Item: Repurpose the first floor of the Northeast Stonehouse as a flexible, multipurpose space.

Improve the functionality of the Northeast Stonehouse by relocating the staff desk, gift shop, and museum elements from the building's first floor to the new Visitor Center. Freeing this space will accommodate temporary exhibits, period workshops, and provide sufficient room for visitors to move about the floor. The building's second floor will remain operative as collections storage and staff break area. The basement will remain as storage and overflow space during programming.

Action Item: Construct an additional restroom on the first floor of the Northeast Stonehouse.

Construct an additional restroom on the first floor of the Northeast Stonehouse to expand the number of restroom facilities available to the public during operating hours and help replace the loss of the restroom facility previously provided in the mansion basement.

Action Item: Outline the footprint of the Trade House and install interpretive signage.

Design a paver outline of the approximate building footprint of the Trade House—accompanied by interpretive signage—in the north side yard to better convey to visitors the spatial organization of Sir William's estate without compromising potential archaeological resources below ground.

Action Item: Construct a Trade House in the north side yard.

Construct a Trade House in the north side yard, in proximity to the paver outline, to enhance the Site's capacity to interpret pre-industrial economies, business transactions, and cross-cultural exchanges between Johnson Hall's inhabitants and persons throughout the Mohawk Valley and early America.

Action Item: Outline the footprint of the Blacksmith Shop and install interpretive signage.

Design a paver outline of the approximate building footprint of the Blacksmith Shop—accompanied by interpretive signage—in the north side yard to help convey to visitors the spatial organization of Sir William's estate without compromising potential archaeological resources below ground.

Action Item: Construct a Blacksmith Shop in the north side yard.

Construct a functional Blacksmith Shop in the north side yard, in proximity to the paver outline, to enhance the Site's capacity to interpret and demonstrate 18th century trades. Establishing this interpretive space will allow for cultural demonstrations that showcase artisan skills and may lead to the production of hand forged, one-of-a-kind, products for purchase in the gift shop.

Action Item: Construct a Garden House in the front yard between the new Visitor Center and Johnson Hall.

Construct a Garden House to provide opportunities to interpret period leisure and recreation as well as help convey the spatial organization of Sir William's estate. This aesthetically-pleasing structure is expected to be available for rental and special event use.

Action Item: Construct a Longhouse in the location of the old Hall Avenue roadbed.

Construct a Longhouse structure to enhance the Site's capacity to interpret the lasting impact of the Haudenosaunee on the political, trade, and social landscapes of Johnson Hall and the surrounding Mohawk Valley. The preferred location for the structure is in the old Hall Avenue roadbed, atop ground that has been previously disturbed and likely to possess minimal archaeological integrity.

Historic Landscape

Action Items are listed in geographic order from the Site's north to south end. They are not listed in order of importance. Planning and construction-related items in this section will require substantial phasing and coordination by OPRHP.

Action Item: Plant a period-appropriate formal garden.

Plant formal gardens using period-appropriate plantings—in accordance with Agency policies on planting—to enhance interpretation concerning the evolution of landscape design at Sir William's estate. This Action also helps to re-establish the dramatic sense of place Sir William cultivated in his lifetime. In addition, formal gardens will play a perceptible role in enhancing the visitor experience.

Action Item: Create a dramatic sense of arrival to the site.

Use landscaping to create a dramatic sense of arrival. This action is intended to help with interpretation of Sir William's elaborate approach to landscape design. A carefully curated approach—which Sir William used to convey his wealth and social standing to guests—will also help transition visitors from their orientation in a modern-day Visitor Center back in time to the 18th century and life on a lavish frontier estate.

Action Item: Install landscaping, fencing, etc. to screen mechanicals or development occurring outside State land.

Install landscaping and other interventions that screen mechanicals and development built outside the Site's property boundary to help preserve the Site's sense of place. Johnson Hall strives to cultivate an environment compatible with its period of significance and enhance the interpretive experience.

Action Item: Remove the subsurface roadbed to facilitate orchard health.

Remove the subsurface roadbed beneath the orchard; relocate and transplant trees to create a viable orchard where possible. This will reestablish an important element of the Site's historic landscape design. New fruit trees may be required.

Action Item: Improve the aesthetics and function of the rear property boundary.

Remove the chain-link fence at the rear property line to help with the elimination of non-historic materials from the 18th century landscape. Replacing this material with landscaping or other period-appropriate fencing materials will also ensure a continued level of safety and security for the visiting public by creating a barrier between guests and traffic along Johnson Avenue.

Action Item: Develop and implement the site planting plan.

Work with Regional Landscape Architects to develop and implement a site planting plan mindful of guidelines for native plant conservation, management, restoration, and cultural landscape needs.

Documentation

Items not listed in order of importance. Appropriate sequencing of actions will occur prior to implementation.

Action Item: Update the Cultural Landscape Report.

Update the Cultural Landscape Report, written in 2006, to document alterations and improvements made to the historic landscape. Implicit in this action is the identification and protection of culturally significant site features.

Action Item: Update Johnson Hall's National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmark files with the State Historic Preservation Office and the National Park Service.

Update Johnson Hall's National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmark designation files, written in 1966 and 1960, respectively. The revised documentation will evaluate all resources on the property to reflect the historic contexts not considered in the earlier nominations; document current site conditions for the historical record; and help ensure eligibility for grant funding procurement.

Action Item: Site and engineer new construction in a location and manner that is least impactful to the archaeological record.

Site and engineer new construction in a location and manner that minimizes potential impacts to archaeological resources and use mitigation measures during project planning and construction phases.

Action Item: Prepare a Phase 1B Archaeology Report for areas of new construction.

Prepare a Phase 1B archaeology survey to determine the presence, or absence, of cultural resources in probable areas of impact. Subsurface testing is the major component of this level of survey and is required unless the presence or absence of resources can be determined by direct observation or examination of specific documented references. If no cultural resources are discovered, the survey process is complete. If resources are discovered as a result of this survey, modifications to any proposed project may be made to avoid or minimize potential resource impacts.

Action Item: Prepare a Historic Furnishing Plan.

Prepare a Historic Furnishing Plan to inform and guide the acquisition, care, and maintenance of historic and reproduction furnishings exhibited at Johnson Hall.

Action Item: Expand collections and exhibits based on current Collections Policy and available exhibit space.

Expand collections and exhibits in accordance with Johnson Hall's written Statement of Museum Collections and with the Agency's Procedure for the Acquisition, Loan, Transfer and Disposal of Museum Collections policy in order to contribute to the long-term protection and interpretation of the Site.

Action Item: Develop relationships with partners to gain access to rotating collections.

Develop relationships with museum partners to gain access to rotating collections to support important elements of the Site's interpretive program and its educational objectives. Displaying unique or rare pieces available from other collections contributes to the Site's ability to attract repeat attendance and nurture ongoing interest from the public.

Action Item: Enhance public access to Site records and collections.

Provide public access to Johnson Hall's library and collections upon request for study, research, or exhibition in service of the Site's mission to nurture a greater appreciation for the life of Sir William and his contemporaries.

Action Item: Monitor climate and environmental controls for collections storage.

Monitor climate and environmental controls of collections storage in accordance with the Agency's Collections Management Policy to provide for the long-term preservation of the Site's material culture.

Interpretation and Education

Items not listed in order of importance. Appropriate sequencing of actions will occur prior to implementation.

Action Item: Increase engagement and consultation with Indigenous Nations, African American, and other stakeholder communities to shape interpretive content.

Increase engagement with Indigenous Nations, African American, and other stakeholder communities in the development of educational and interpretative programming to ensure the Site offers representative, diverse perspectives on its historical legacy and provides a comprehensive portrait of the experience of all persons at Johnson Hall. This effort will be further coordinated through the Agency's central office and Commissioner initiatives that promote representation, inclusion and diversity through site programming and interpretation.

Action Item: Develop exchange programs with Indigenous Nations and communities.

Develop exchange programs between Johnson Hall staff, Indigenous Nations and communities to enhance the capacity of staff to share interpretation sensitive to the native cultures that shaped Johnson Hall; promote the educational and cultural significance of 18th century life at Johnson Hall; and emphasize the value of cross-cultural engagement.

Action Item: Prepare an Interpretative Plan.

Prepare an Interpretive Plan to serve as a management document guiding decisions about Johnson Hall's interpretive themes and programming. The plan will identify key interpretive themes—e.g. legacy of Sir William's leadership, the influence of the Haudenosaunee, contributions of the enslaved—and how that content will be revealed to visitors through their site experiences.

Action Item: Regularly offer living history events and other hands-on programming.

Offer living history events and other hands-on programming regularly to promote more personal connections to historic themes and provide the visiting public with memorable sensory and tactile experiences of interpretive value.

Action Item: Increase the number of special events and programs.

Increase the number of special events and programs to help the Site develop a broad, attractive portfolio of programming. A multitude of events can appeal to a wide variety of audiences and encourages repeat visitation.

Action Item: Develop specific programs for interpretive buildings.

Develop building-specific programs to maximize the educational and experiential value of original and interpretive structures. Rich, detail-oriented programs can provide interpretive opportunities and educational content of significant quality and impact.

Action Item: Create programming that reflects upon the ongoing impact of historical themes.

Create programming that reflects upon the ongoing impact of historic themes to provide visitors with information that helps to explain the relevance of historic sites into the modern day.

Action Item: Use interpretation and programming to connect with broad audiences.

Use interpretation and programming to connect with broad audiences and recognize local and regional interests. This action helps fulfill the Agency's commitment to providing exceptional educational service, cultural stewardship, equal access, and outreach to all segments of society.

Action Item: Create interpretive brochures and guidebooks for interpretive structures.

Produce interpretive brochures and guidebooks to increase the ways in which audiences engage with the Site; dispense more detailed information than may be reasonably provided during a standard tour; and ensure access to educational content outside of regular operating hours.

Action Item: Provide interpretive materials in multiple languages.

Provide interpretive materials in multiple languages in order to provide equitable access to information and remain relevant to the surrounding residential community and the diverse heritage traveler economy.

Action Item: Introduce multimedia platforms and other media services.

Introduce multimedia platforms and other media services to create highly-effective interpretive and educational experiences. Technological mediums such as virtual reality can enhance a visitor's understanding of physical space. Cellphone applications facilitate more personalized tours and make certain elements of a site (e.g. collections or subsurface archaeology) more accessible and attractive to a wider range of visitors.

Action Item: Expand curriculum-based programming at local schools.

Expand curriculum-based, interpretive programming and educational programs at local schools to introduce students to the local and national histories that surround them. History education at an early age encourages future engagement with historic sites and stewardship of those resources.

Action Item: Develop and implement an interpretive signage plan.

Develop and implement an interpretive signage plan to improve the visiting public's understanding of the Historic Site. Signage will reveal important information on the Site's cultural and natural heritage, providing visitors with pertinent and meaningful information on a subject. The simplicity, effectiveness, and cost of different signage systems will be considered prior to implementation and be consistent with Statewide signage guidelines.

Recreation

Action Items are listed in geographic order from the Site's north to south end. They are not listed in order of importance. Planning and construction-related items in this section will require substantial phasing and coordination by OPRHP.

Action Item: Build a bridge across Hall Creek and expand the signed interpretive trail onto parkland north of Hall Creek.

Construct a wooden bridge across scenic Hall Creek and expand the interpretive walking trail onto the acreage north of the Creek to improve opportunities for interpretation and low-intensity recreational activities at the Site.

Action Item: Construct a signed interpretive trail at the rear of the 2020 Acquisition (137 Hall Avenue) parcel.

Construct an interpretive walking trail at the rear of the newly-acquired parcel to improve opportunities for interpretation and low-intensity recreational activities at Johnson Hall.

Action Item: Pave Johnson Hall Park's strolling path with asphalt.

Pave the strolling path at Johnson Hall Park with asphalt to provide safer, more accessible, use by the visiting public and reduce demands for staff maintenance.

Action Item: Incorporate the Johnson Hall Park strolling path into interpretive programming.

Incorporate the Johnson Hall Park strolling path into interpretive programming to complement existing interpretation initiatives and help create a sense of cohesion between the 18th century estate and 19th century landscape.

Action Item: Introduce new programs interpreting period recreation and leisure.

Introduce new programs interpreting 18th century recreation and leisure at the Site to expand the breadth of interpretation while also offering increased opportunities for low-intensity recreation on-site.

Environmental Stewardship

Action Items are listed in geographic order from the Site's north to south end. They are not listed in order of importance. Planning and construction-related items in this section will require substantial phasing and coordination by OPRHP.

Action Item: Use living shoreline design to stabilize the banks of Hall Creek.

Use plants and other natural elements—sometimes in conjunction with harder structures—to stabilize the banks of Hall Creek, minimize erosion, and provide for stream health.

Action Item: Partner with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), and the Fulton County Soil Conservation District.

Partner with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the DEC, and the Fulton County Soil Conservation District to obtain additional resources to stabilize of the banks of Hall Creek. Mitigating the risks erosion poses to historic, interpretive, and natural resources is of significant import to ensure their integrity for decades to come.

Action Item: Interplant and restore native species populations.

Interplant and restore native species populations to preserve both the natural heritage and ecological health of Johnson Hall. In accordance with Agency policies on plantings, the selection of plant species or communities will be site-specific and take into consideration the natural, historical, archeological, and aesthetic elements of the Site.

Action Item: Develop a site-specific management strategy for invasive species.

Develop a site-specific management strategy to provide guidance for minimizing invasive species, including a decrease in the number of Norway Maple trees. This strategy will include best management practices to prevent accidental introduction of invasive species through construction, operations, and other activities.

Access, Circulation and Wayfinding

Action Items are listed in geographic order from the Site's north to south end. They are not listed in order of importance. Planning and construction-related items in this section will require substantial phasing and coordination by OPRHP.

Action Item: Build a new parking lot.

Build a parking lot adjacent to the new Visitor Center. Traffic flow and circulation within the lot will be carefully designed and consistent with safety, accessibility, capacity, and archaeology goals.

Action Item: Remove the existing parking lot and restore ground vegetation.

Remove the existing parking lot and, upon abandonment, plant ground vegetation to restore open space at the Site. The removal of this lot helps to eliminate a non-historic element from the National Register-listed strolling park. The paved driving loop from Hall Avenue into the front lawn of Johnson Hall will be preserved to meet accessibility and emergency service needs.

Action Item: Encourage pedestrian and bicycle access.

Encourage sustainable transportation alternatives by installing a bicycle rack on-site.

Action Item: Establish circulation paths around the site.

Establish circulation paths to accommodate visitors and encourage Site exploration without making visitors feel as if their experience is heavily prescribed. Site circulation should feel organic and natural. Strategic, well-planned paths facilitated by good landscape design will give visitors a safe, efficient, and enjoyable visit.

Action Item: Improve directional and wayfinding signage.

Improve directional and wayfinding signage. Proper signage and wayfinding—for pedestrians and vehicular traffic—are critical to a positive site experience. Appropriate directional and wayfinding signage will be installed as paths of inner-perambulation are established and resources made available.

Action Item: Install a gateway monument sign closer to the Hall Avenue road entrance.

Install a gateway monument style sign closer to the Hall Avenue entrance to create a pronounced entry point to the Site and help attract passersby. Signage holds the unique responsibility of giving a positive first impression of a site.

Action Item: Improve site signage along Route 29.

Coordinate with the NYS Department of Transportation to install infrastructure for special event signage along Route 29 W. This will ensure that signs posts or other materials used to advertise events will conform to modern transportation safety standards.

Facilities

Action Items are listed in geographic order from the Site's north to south end. They are not listed in order of importance. Planning and construction-related items in this section will require substantial phasing and coordination by OPRHP.

Action Item: Repurpose the maintenance garage for use as the residential staff garage.

Repair the maintenance shop—the Caretaker Cottage's original garage—for use by support staff in residence.

Action Item: Construct a new maintenance building and consolidate maintenance functions.

Construct a new maintenance building and consolidate maintenance functions, including staff workspace and equipment storage. New construction will include a heated bay so that staff may service and maintain equipment in an appropriate climate.

Action Item: Landscape screen maintenance facilities.

Install landscaping to mitigate the visual impact of maintenance facilities, help preserve the Site's sense of place, and provide privacy to employees during the workday.

Action Item: Repurpose the Caretaker's Cottage as support staff housing.

Repurpose the original Caretaker's Cottage as support staff housing. The single-family home retains sufficient integrity to justify its use as residential property. No major renovation work is anticipated at this time.

Action Item: Landscape screen the support staff cottage.

Install landscaping to mitigate the visual impact of the Caretaker's Cottage to better preserve the Site's sense of place and enhance privacy for Cottage residents. Johnson Hall strives to cultivate an environment compatible with the Site's period of significance to enhance the cultural landscape and interpretive experiences.

Action Item: Construct a Visitor Center to include exhibits, gift shop, multipurpose space, offices, and restrooms.

Construct a new Visitor Center. The Northeast Stonehouse, which currently serves as a Visitor Center and orientation point for visitors does not provide the public with appropriate levels of comfort amenities nor a museum collection appropriate to the significance of the Site. The preferred location for this structure is along the property line between the original Historic Site property line and the 2020 Acquisition (137 Hall Avenue) parcel. This location is contingent upon the completion of archaeological review and support from the Bureau of Historic Sites. The new Visitor Center will be designed to include restrooms (accessible from outside), historical exhibits, a gift shop, multi-function meeting room, staff offices, a small kitchenette, and more. The design will incorporate green design and landscaping elements that complement the Historic Site without detracting from the grandeur of Johnson Hall itself.

Action Item: Relocate staff offices, gift shop, and exhibits to the new Visitor Center.

Resolve space and organizational inefficiencies by relocating staff offices from the Caretaker's Cottage to the new Visitor Center. Museum functions provided in the Northeast Stonehouse will also be relocated to this location.

Action Item: Renovate the residence on the 2020 Acquisition (137 Hall Avenue) parcel for use as support staff housing.

Renovate the residence on the 2020 Acquisition (137 Hall Avenue) parcel for use as support staff housing. The single-family home retains sufficient physical integrity to justify its continued use as residential property. Significant renovations will be necessary to offer comfortable, modern housing to staff, Student Conservation Association interns, or artists-in-residence. The provision of housing creates opportunities for staff to expand programmatic offerings at the Site.

Action Item: Demolish the barn on the 2020 Acquisition (137 Hall Avenue) parcel.

Demolish the visually-intrusive barn which is not original to the Johnson estate. Its removal clears the way for new construction that better provides for services necessary to site operation.

Action Item: Demolish the Visitor Kiosk.

Demolish the non-historic visitor kiosk to help return the Site to its historic condition and expand available open space on the lawn surrounding Johnson Hall.

Action Item: Create utility corridors when introducing, replacing, or removing service lines.

Create utility corridors when introducing or replacing service lines to ensure maintenance staff and utility companies may efficiently locate and access lines. The removal of old service lines also mitigates health and safety risks associated with inadvertently tapping into unknown utilities.

Action Item: Maximize energy efficiency using green design, utilities, and infrastructure where appropriate in the historic landscape.

Strive for energy independence and explore all sustainability features the Site can reasonably incorporate into operations without detracting from its historic resources. OPRHP Sustainability staff, emergent technologies, and potential funding opportunities make green infrastructure increasingly accessible to Historic Sites.

Operations and Staffing

Items not listed in order of importance. Appropriate sequencing of actions will occur prior to implementation.

Action Item: Purchase a point of sale system.

Purchase a point of sale system to allow the Site and Friends Group to manage gift shop sales with improved efficiency, to accept multiple payment methods, and more accurately monitor stock levels and purchase trends.

Action Item: Develop an artist-in-residence program.

Develop an artist-in-residence program to create opportunities for staff to expand programmatic offerings and simultaneously support the arts community in providing artists a non-traditional space in which to develop their arts.

Action Item: Initiate a volunteer docent and junior docent training program.

Initiate a volunteer docent and junior docent training program to expand the capacity of the Site to provide a variety of unique tours, demonstrations, interpretive programming, and educational instruction to visitors.

Communication and Partnerships

Items not listed in order of importance. Appropriate sequencing of actions will occur prior to implementation.

Action Item: Enhance the site's social media presence.

Enhance the Site's social media presence. The timely, consistent use of social media is a cost-effective tool for marketing events, programs, and exhibits. Social media can attract new visitors and provide a new dimension to visitor engagement. Additionally, social media messaging can be shared by patrons as they comment on social media posts or share their own thoughts and experiences with friends and family, helping to promote the State Parks and Historic Sites system.

Action Item: Enhance the partnership with the Friends of Johnson Hall.

Maintain and enhance the partnership with the Friends of Johnson Hall in their efforts to fundraise, supplement interpretive programming, and recruit volunteers as to accomplish shared stewardship goals and ensure timely implementation of the Master Plan.

Action Item: Develop partnerships with the area Chamber of Commerce and other tourism agencies to promote Site-specific and regional tourism.

Advance the Site's partnership with the area Chamber of Commerce and other tourism agencies to increase the Site's visibility in multiple markets; ability to connect with potential visitors; ease the burden of advertising and promotion costs; and facilitate collaboration between the Site, local businesses, and other community donors.

Action Item: Enhance partnerships with local colleges and universities.

Enhance partnerships with local colleges and universities to build goodwill within the community, provide the next generation of interpretation and preservation professionals with real world experience, enhance the Site's capacity to perform independent research, and create opportunities to expand programmatic offerings.

Action Item: Encourage collaboration and thematic connections with other Regional historic sites.

Heighten levels of collaboration and develop thematic connections between Regional historic sites to maximize the utility of limited resources for mutual benefit; promote preservation stewardship across the region; and raise site visibility to ensure viability for generations to come.

Action Item: Continue to offer opportunities for stakeholder and public input regarding site programming and development.

Continue to provide opportunities for stakeholder and public input to increase the Site's ability to make decisions that better serve public interests and values; build community rapport; and nurture an interest in new and ongoing volunteerism.

Action Item: Explore merchandising partnerships.

Explore merchandising partnerships. Merchandise not only contributes to Johnson Hall's revenue intake but can educate visitors by making more explicit the Site's material culture. The exploration of merchandizing partnerships will also allow the Site to support local artisans and the creative arts; commission unique cultural products; and market items that thematically connect to the history and culture of Johnson Hall.

Implementation

The Master Plan sets forth OPRHP’s vision for capital improvements and operational enhancements at the Historic Site over the next ten to fifteen years. OPRHP has not developed detailed cost estimates for the proposed components. Cumulatively, improvements will cost tens of millions of dollars to implement. The pace and sequencing of recommended actions will be determined by the availability of funding (which is a function of the size of OPRHP’s annual capital budget), the availability of staff, and the need to balance investments throughout the State Parks and Historic Sites system. The Master Plan will be reviewed annually to both select projects for implementation and inclusion in the Site’s budget, as well as assess the progress of the Plan’s implementation. Operational improvements that are already planned at the time of the Plan’s adoption will go forward as scheduled.

The implementation of the Master Plan is divided into priority phases. Plan elements are subject to reorganization based on available funding for specific components.

| Implementation Priorities | Description/Development Component |
|---------------------------|--|
| Ongoing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create utility corridors when introducing, replacing, or removing service lines. • Maximize energy efficiency using green design, utilities, and infrastructure where appropriate in the historic landscape. |
| Immediate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install a fire detection system in the Northwest Stonehouse. • Demolish the barn on the 2020 Acquisition (137 Hall Avenue) parcel. • Demolish the Visitor Kiosk. • Pave Johnson Hall Park’s strolling path with asphalt. |
| Priority 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renovate the home on the 2020 Acquisition (137 Hall Avenue) parcel for use as support staff housing. • Construct a new Visitor Center. • Build a new parking lot. • Remove the existing parking lot and restore ground vegetation. • Construct a Trade House in the north side yard. • Develop and implement comprehensive signage plan. • Use living shoreline design to stabilize the banks of Hall Creek. |
| Priority 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construct a Blacksmith Shop in the north side yard. • Construct a Longhouse in the location of the old Hall Avenue roadbed. • Remove restroom from the basement of Johnson Hall and restore the space. • Construct an additional restroom on the first floor of the Northeast Stonehouse. |
| Priority 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construct a Garden House in the front yard between the Visitor Center and Johnson Hall. • Create a dramatic sense of arrival through landscaping, signage, etc. • Construct a signed interpretive trail at the head of the 2020 Acquisition (137 Hall Avenue) parcel. • Build a bridge across Hall Creek and expand the signed interpretive trail onto parkland north of Hall Creek. • Remove subsurface roadbed to facilitate orchard health. |

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Cover Image

Edward Lamson Henry, 1903. *Johnson Hall (Sir William Johnson Presenting Medals to the Indian Chiefs of the Six Nations at Johnstown, NY, 1772)*, oil on canvas. Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, New York.



**Parks, Recreation
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