

# I. PROJECT OVERVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Town of Clinton reconnaissance-level survey was conducted from the fall of 2012 through 2013, with analysis of the historic resources and the compilation of a final report completed in 2014. This survey involved a field review of properties containing buildings that have reached fifty years of age—of which there are an estimated 792 in Clinton.<sup>1</sup> The survey and review also took note of Clinton’s rural landscape, which is the result of historic and current farming activities and provides a legacy of its rural past. The survey report documents the survey findings and provides a context within which to appreciate the built and designed environments of the town.

The report includes an account of the town’s history, originally written by William P. McDermott and updated by Norene Collier, which is excerpted from the Town of Clinton Comprehensive Plan (2012). A bibliography, maps, and a list of significant properties are provided in the appendices. A database that categorizes the physical characteristics of the 792 properties identified as built in 1965 or earlier is provided in electronic form on compact disks (CDs). In addition, digital photos of the analyzed properties are being provided on CDs. In many cases these current photos highlight alterations to historic properties that have been made since they were photographed and placed online on the Dutchess County Parcel Access website.

Possibly the most important feature of this report is Appendix C, a “List of Significant Properties” that serves to confirm and update a list contained within the town’s 2012 Comprehensive Plan. This list, which references 359 individual tax parcels, includes most—but not all—of the historic properties that were previously identified.<sup>2</sup> Ninety-nine tax parcels were added to this list, including seventeen that contain buildings constructed in 1940 or before as outstanding architectural examples of development in the Second World War and post-war era.<sup>3</sup> The database of all 792 tax parcels (many of which contain multiple buildings and/or structures) will allow the town to manage information about all its historic resources, build intensive-level records on them, and track actions taken to protect them or that otherwise affect their historic integrity. The digital format of the database will facilitate presenting this information in map form and can be posted on the town’s website in a form that is searchable by address.

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<sup>1</sup> The Historic Preservation Act of 1966, which established the National Register of Historic Places, set the 50-year-old threshold for considering buildings, structures, objects, and sites historic, and is the standard for all such historic resource surveys.

<sup>2</sup> Certain properties listed as historic in the Comprehensive Plan were removed if the historic building or structures no longer existed or were altered to such a degree that they were unlikely to be viewed by a resident layperson as historic.

<sup>3</sup> Further disaggregation of the “List of Significant Properties” shows that 40 were constructed in the 1700s; 57 in the period 1800–1829 (Federal Period); 171 from 1830–1869; 43 from 1870–1899; and 35 from 1900–1939.

This report also provides recommendations for local designations and other applications of the survey data, as well as the potential for registration of selected historic resources on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. No historic districts with particular local overview authority have been designated in the Town of Clinton, although six historic hamlets—Clinton Corners, Clinton Hollow, Frost Mills, Hibernia, Pleasant Plains, and Schultsville—are recognized in the town’s Zoning Code and have been designated as critical environmental areas (CEAs). A seventh neighborhood, Bulls Head, is also historic, although not designated by the town. Each of these hamlets contains examples of early architecture that enhance the historic character of the town. Thirty-one properties have been listed as Clinton Landmarks in the Comprehensive Plan, many of them individual historic properties lying outside of the hamlets. Only five properties in the town have been listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places: the Creek Meeting House and Friends Cemetery, Clinton Corners Friends Church, Windswept Farm (all listed in 1989), the Benjamin C. Tousey House, also known as the Willows (1994), and the Warren Masonic Lodge (2007). In addition, the Taconic State Parkway—which runs through Dutchess County and the Town of Clinton—is on the National Register of Historic Places. Many more properties in Clinton have the potential to be listed, as recommended below.

## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

### 1. **Explore the potential for designating rural historic districts.**

Several areas with distinctive historic landscape features have been identified in this survey (See Appendix D). These generalized areas warrant more intensive documentation to better understand the history of agricultural activity in them and develop a record of their historic components, including farmhouses, barns, outbuildings, fences, and fields. More specific district boundaries would be one outcome of such intensive documentation. (The “List of Significant Properties” also notes those that are farmsteads.) The town recognized the significance of its farmland and agricultural resources and open space in its 2012 Comprehensive Plan, identifying historic features, introducing historic preservation measures associated with these resources, and creating an innovative, cooperative project with shared goals. The following areas are identified in Appendix D.

- Bulls Head
- Clinton Corners
- Clinton Hollow
- Frost Mills
- Hibernia
- Pleasant Plains
- Schultsville

**2. Evaluate the eligibility of historic hamlets for listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.**

The town has already recognized that seven of its hamlets are historic; therefore obtaining the honorific designation of being listed on the State and National Registers makes sense. Such designation would convey financial incentives for preservation of designated properties, particularly tax credits for the rehabilitation of commercial or income-producing buildings. (These tax credits apply to rental housing as well as stores.) Most importantly, having a property listed on the National Register heightens people's awareness of its significance and fosters community pride.

**3. Evaluate the eligibility of all pre-Civil War properties for listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.**

In the context of the region and recognizing the distinctiveness of early architecture in Clinton, the properties included in the "List of Significant Properties" constructed prior to the Civil War have historical significance simply as a result of their survival. Beginning a systematic documentation of these properties (many of which are included within the rural areas and hamlets noted under recommendations 1 and 2, above) will bring to light additional historical significance that would support their listing on the State and National Register of Historic Places. Given the large number of resources falling within this timeframe, 18th century properties should be prioritized.

**4. Undertake intensive-level documentation of 20th century camp and lakeside cottage developments.**

The significance of two historic camps—Camp Boiberik on Long Pond and the Jerry Lewis Camp east of Centre Road—calls for further investigation and documentation. Clinton's rural character served to attract these types of developments and they are a complement to activities to recognize and preserve rural landscapes. In addition, the early lakeside cottage developments around Silver Lake (south and east sides) and Long Pond, as well as the small cluster of cottages on Blue Heron Lane, contain distinctive building types that deserve to be studied and more intensively documented than what could be accomplished within the scope of this survey. Many of the buildings developed during the camp and resort era are approaching one hundred years of age.

**5. Develop an appreciation for post-World War II architecture in the town.**

One way to begin protecting post-World War II resources is to educate property owners and the general public to the distinctive characteristics and significant historic associations of these mass-produced buildings and designs. These more recent historic resources, and the planned subdivisions within which they are often found, are the subject of continuing study and assessment in communities nationwide. Architecture changed radically in this period and proliferated to a degree that requires an entirely different method of evaluation than has been

applied to 18th and 19th century buildings. With the help of evolving guidelines from the National Park Service, community preservationists will need to carefully study and contextualize recent architecture to determine an appropriate approach to designation. There are also specialized preservation standards for the design and materials of mass-produced houses. Critical to their preservation is how these small dwellings can be enlarged and adapted to current housing standards in appropriate ways.

**6. Advocate for adoption of a Historic Preservation Ordinance.**

Any serious efforts to preserve Clinton's significant historic resources must necessarily involve establishing a local ordinance that provides for a Historic Preservation Commission to oversee them. The State Historic Preservation Office within the New York State Department of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation can provide assistance in undertaking such regulation. The town will want to consider being designated a Certified Local Government, which would provide for some matching grant opportunities as well as official notification and input on state or federally funded projects that impact the community's historic resources.

**7. Continue with public outreach as to the results of this reconnaissance-level survey.**

One simple step to increase residents' and property owners' awareness of the significance of the town's historic resources would be to post the study on the town's website. The public can be further enlightened about the town's history through special events such as house tours, possibly in partnership with the Clinton Historical Society.