

## **TOWN OF CORTLANDT MASTER PLAN**

### **CHAPTER 9: HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

**GOAL:** *Identify and protect the historic and archaeological resources of the Town to preserve its unique history and sense of place.*

History can be defined as a "narrative of events" or a "story". There are many buildings, structures, places and features that provide residents and visitors alike with a sense of the history of the Town of Cortlandt. Certain places and buildings within the town are linked to events of county, state and even national significance. A goal of the Master Plan is to identify and preserve Cortlandt's historic and archaeological resources that give the Town its unique sense of place.

As noted in the base studies, research has been done on historic places in Cortlandt and some historical societies have formed to help document Cortlandt's history. This has helped to preserve the historic integrity of some buildings and structures. However, some other historic buildings have been remodeled, with important architectural features and detailing lost in the process.



**Bear Mountain Toll House Visitor Center**

The Master Plan proposes to address Historic Preservation in the Town with a multi-faceted program to include:

- ❖ Development of historic preservation guidelines
- ❖ Listing historic properties, roads and neighborhoods
- ❖ Promotion of appreciation of Cortlandt's heritage

It is well established that dealing proactively and positively with Historic Preservation issues has a positive effect on property values. Continued inaction on historic preservation will contribute to the deterioration of historic quality in neighborhoods.

## **B. BASE STUDIES SUMMARY**

Cortlandt has a rich history that dates back to settlements by the Kitchawanks, an Algonquin-speaking sub-tribe of the Mahican tribe. These Native Americans inhabited an area extending from the Croton River north up the Hudson to Anthony's Nose, and east from the Hudson River to the Connecticut/New York border. During the summer, the Kitchawanks inhabited the Town's shore line and during the winter, the tribe retreated inland to Blue Mountain and beyond. "Pre-historic" artifacts of the Kitchawanks continue to be unearthed today.

Henry Hudson would have encountered Kitchawanks as he sailed up the Hudson River in 1609; history recounts that he anchored his *Half Moon* off Verplanck's Point. In the late 1600s, Stephanus Van Cortlandt was granted a Land Patent from the English Crown to lands that include most of present-day Cortlandt. The Ryck's patent and DeKay's patent also covered areas in the Town in the vicinity of Peekskill and present day Camp Smith. Dutch and English settlers came to the Town to settle its lands. In 1703, construction commenced on the Queen's Highway, later called the Kings Highway and Albany Post Road, opening up territory in the Town along what is now Route 9A. Settlers relied largely on the Hudson River for transport and trade during this time period. Fishing and agriculture were the mainstays of the economy.

During the Revolutionary War, Cortlandt was visited by a number of important personages, including Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, Aaron Burr, the Marquis de LaFayette Baron von Steuben, and George Washington. After the Revolutionary War, Cortlandt became a town in 1788. Philip Van Cortlandt was its first Supervisor and the Town would acquire its name from this founding family.

During the 1800s, Cortlandt became an "industrial" community that relied on the Hudson River for trade; the Hudson River Railroad would further fuel the Town's economy by increasing accessibility to New York markets. The Town's population diversified with industry. The construction of the Croton Dam and Aqueduct in the mid-1800s saw an influx of Irish, Swedish, Italian, and European settlers.

Brickmaking was established primarily in Verplanck at the waterfront, later supplanted by icemaking, ironworks, a wire mill, a plaster factory, shirt factory, and a variety of other businesses. A state camp was established near Annsville for the National Guard. In the 1920s and 1930's Cortlandt witnessed the growth of summer colonies including the "New Thought" summer colony for artists and writers along Mount Airy Road, Mohegan Colony in Crompond, and Croton Park Colony, among others.

After World War II, modern conveniences such as new highways opened up Cortlandt to suburban residential development. To control development, the Town adopted its first zoning ordinance in 1951. Ten years later, the Town enacted its first development plan. Single family residences, apartments, and new commercial centers to serve the needs of the suburban community, were established. This pattern is largely in place today. Scattered among new buildings and structures are prehistoric and historic buildings, structures, places and other reminders of the Town's unique past.

The Base Studies contain a substantial amount of data that describes the Town's unique places, buildings, and features that contribute to the Town's history. The objectives and policies that follow are intended to preserve the historic and archaeological resources that have been identified, as well as to continually expand the Town's list of resources that it deems are worthy of protection.

Table IV.A-1 identifies historically important places in the Town. This list has been developed from the following primary sources:

- ❖ National Register of Historic Places
- ❖ State Register of Historic Places
- ❖ Westchester County List of Historic Sites
- ❖ History of the Town of Cortlandt

Figure IV.A-1 illustrates the location of historically significant resources on the National Register of Historic Places. Historic significant resources are categorized as follows:

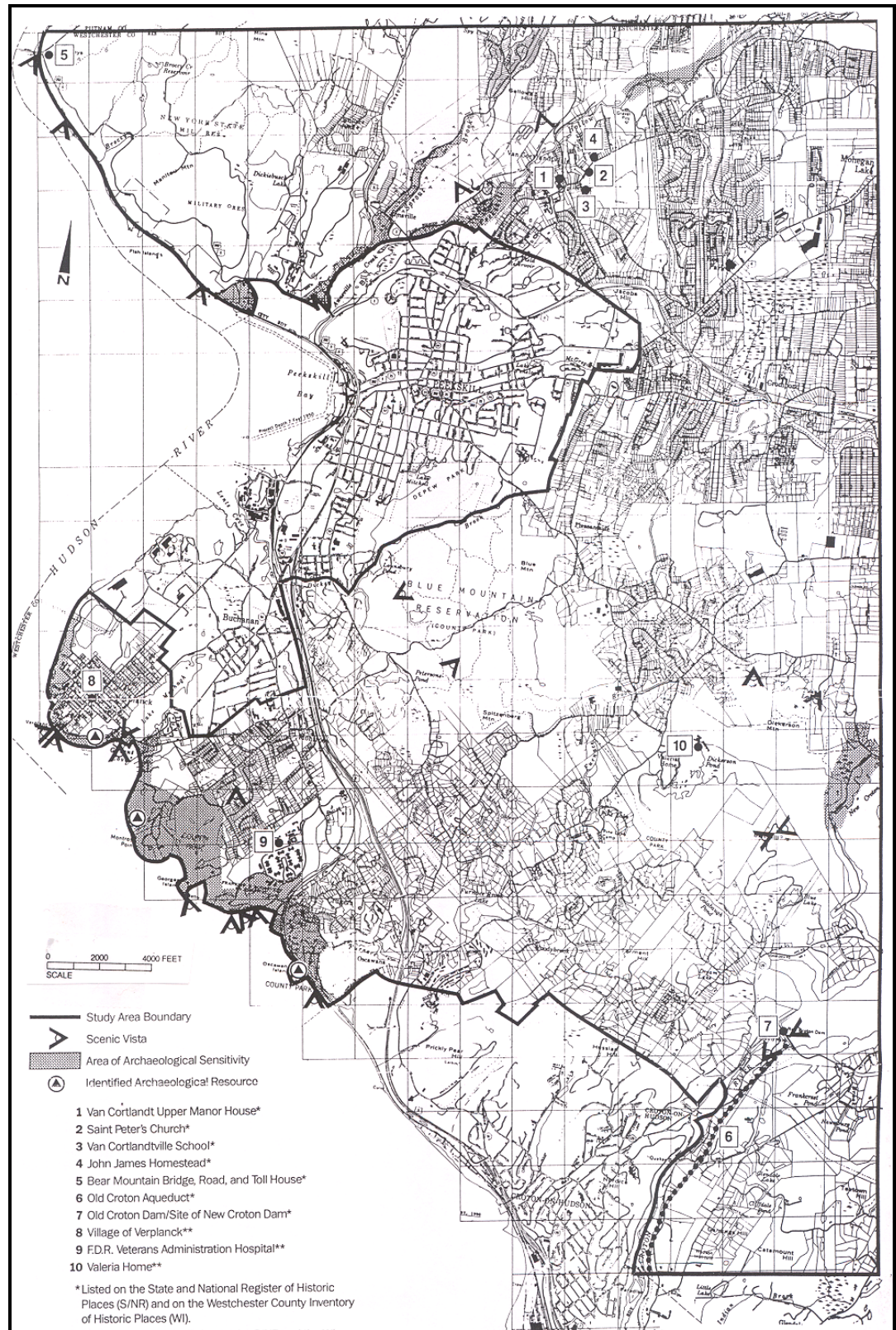
- ❖ National Register of Historic Places: The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 established the National Register of Historic Places. Listing on the National Register is a federal designation signifying that a building or site has historic or archaeological significance to the nation. Such designation does not trigger any restrictions on private property owners. It may, however, call upon federal agencies to consider the impact of their activities on federal sites before proceeding with federally funded or licensed projects. In addition, a National Register listing may make tax credits and grants available for restoration and rehabilitation.

The major function of a listing is simply to recognize and identify the historic significance of a resource. It is important to note that the National Park Service will not list an individual, privately-owned property for which it has received the owner's objection. Table IV.A-1 identifies properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

- ❖ **New York State Register of Places:** The New York State Historic Preservation Act of 1980 created the New York State Register of Historic Places. The State Register is a listing of sites, districts, structures, buildings, areas or objects above or below the surface of the earth, whether on land or in the waters of the State, with any designated improvements thereon, significant in the history, architecture, archeology, or culture of the State, its communities or the nation. Such designation does not trigger any restrictions on private property owners. However, Section 14.09 of the act established a review process for state agency activities affecting historic properties, requiring state agencies to consult with the Commissioner of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (OPRHP). If a project requires any permit or funding/grants or any other approvals from a state agency, review by the State OPRHP is required. All historic places within the State listed on, or nominated by, the Commissioner for inclusion on the National Register is listed on the State Register. More importantly, the provision that prohibits listing on the National Register when a property owner objects does not apply to nominations on the State Register. As a result, properties could be listed on the State Register but not subsequently listed on the National Register.
- ❖ **Westchester County Listing:** Westchester County maintains an inventory of properties that the County considers to be significant to its history. Such designation does not trigger any restrictions on private property owners. The major function of a County list is to recognize the historic value of the resource and consider its significance when reviewing County actions.
- ❖ **Town of Cortlandt Potentially Significant Properties:** The Master Plan Committee, through consultation with a number of sources, including the Cortlandt, Van Cortlandtville and Croton historical societies, the Town Historian, and the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, has identified properties and locations that it has determined are significant to the Town's history. Note that these properties include all properties listed on the National and/or State Register of Historic Places, as well as the County's Historic Resource list.

Please see Map & Table IV-A-I on the next page which is taken from the Base Studies.





**Historic, Scenic and Archaeological Resources**  
**Figure IV.A-1**

**Town of Cortlandt**  
**TABLE IV.A-1**  
**LIST OF HISTORIC RESOURCES**  
**TOWN OF CORTLANDT**

<b>Ma p No.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Address/Tax Lot, Block No.</b>	<b>National Register of Historic Places</b>	<b>NY State Register of Historic Places</b>	<b>Westchester County Inventory of Historic Places</b>	<b>MPC Historic Place of Importance</b>
1	Old Croton Aqueduct N.H.L		X	X	X	X
2	New Croton Dam		X	X		
3	St. Patrick Church		X	X		
4	Little Red Schoolhouse		X	X		
5	John Jones Homestead		X	X		
6	Van Cortlandt Upper Manor House		X	X		
7	Old St. Peter's Church		X	X		
8	Quaker Bridge Road Bridge		X	X		
9	Bear Mountain Bridge and Toll House		X	X	X	X
10	Cortlandt Furnace (Furnace Dock Rd.)				X	X
11	New Croton Dam Spillway		D			X
12	Anthony's Nose					X
13	Camp Smith					X
14	Pumphouse					X
15	Colonial Terrace					X
16	Town Hall – Old Van Cortlandtville School		X	X		X
17	The Community Church					X
18	50th Milestone					X
19	Gallows Hill Mile Marker					X
20	Gallows Hill Road Monument					X
	Gallows Hill					
21	Lent's Cove					X
22	Verplanck Community Center					X
23	Steamboat Dock					X
24	Old Cortlandt Town Hall					X
25	Lake Meahagh					X
26	Post Hannoeh House					X
27	Corne/Kennedy House					X
28	Boscobel Methodist Church					X
29	St. Christopher's Catholic Church					X
30	The Church of Divine Love					X
31	Catholic Kolping Society Property					X
32	College Hill Road					X
33	Reformed Church of Cortlandtown					X
34	George's Island					X
35	FDR VA Hospital		D			X
36	Lieutenant Benjamin Dyckman House					X
37	Belmont					X
38	Oscawana Island					X
39	McAndrews Estate					X
40	deGraaf Estate					X
41	Spook Rock					X

Ma p No.	Name	Address/Tax Lot, Block No.	National Register of Historic Places	NY State Register of Historic Places	Westchester County Inventory of Historic Places	MPC Historic Place of Importance
42	Railroad Pond					X
43	Valeria					X
44	First School in Furnace Woods					X
45	Cemetery (by Furnace Woods School)					X
46	Cortlandt Grange					X
47	Pleasantide Chapel					X
48	Hercules Lent House					X
49	Todd House					X
50	Crompond Post Office					X
51	Toddville School					X
52	Verplanck Hamlet, including					X
53	134 Sixth Street		I			X
54	Little Lake Historic Sites #1 and #2		I			X
55	Old Trolley Hotel at Oregon Corners					X
56	Stone pump house on Oregon Road					X
57	Paul Robeson Concert in 1949, Oregon Road					X
58	Old Curry Homestead on Oregon Road					X
59	Aaron Copland House			X		X
60	The Old Cemetery (Van Cortlandtville)					
61	Anthony's Nose					
62	McCoy Homestead, Camp Smith					
63	Lafayette Avenue graveyard					
64	Quaker Bridge Road Bridge(aka Block Rock Bridge)					
I = Individually Eligible but not yet listed D = Eligible as part of a district but not yet listed						

Source: New York State Historic Preservation Office, 2001 and Town of Cortlandt Master Plan Committee Members.

### **C. OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES:**

The following objectives and policies are intended to implement the goal of protecting the Town's historic and archaeological resources.

#### **OBJECTIVE: Create a Historic Design Manual**

A set of suggested design criteria should be created in order to guide proposed activities which might be detrimental to a historic property or properties within a historic district. Standards need to be established to determine whether activities would be compatible with the landmark's existing character, or the character of a historic area. The design guidelines should generally include consideration of the following:

**Policy 144: Prepare design guidelines appropriate to historic areas, and guidelines appropriate to landmarks.**

The Town is encouraged to seek grant funding to help with a Historic Design Manual. Design guidelines will vary depending upon the historic resource intended for protection. To guide activities, it is useful to distinguish the unique features of a particular resource that would be impacted by inappropriate activities. Design guidelines should be prepared by a professional consultant working with the Architectural Review Committee. Design guidelines should give consideration to the following:

- Building scale, massing, and proportion between building height and width and its relationship to nearby buildings;
- Building setbacks, roof shape, the number and spacing of doors and windows on a facade, and materials and architectural details including colors and textures.
- The nature and relationship of open spaces, e.g. yards, around the buildings.
- Existing and proposed trees and other landscape features.
- Proposed lighting and signage.
- Traffic and pedestrian circulation in terms of driveways, parking lots and walkways.



Upper Manor House - Oregon Road

**Objective: Identify and List Historic Roads**

**Policy 145: Preserve the character of the Town's historic roads through the creation and adoption of a Historic Roads Ordinance.**



There are a number of scenic roads within the Town that date back to the Town's settlement during the pre- and Revolutionary War Period that are graced by colonial residences, stone walls, and mature tree rows planted along the roads and driveways that gave access to these historic properties. The following roads are considered "historic" and their existing alignments, pavement widths, stone walls, and mature trees should be retained to the maximum extent by a Historic Road Ordinance: Furnace Dock Road; Kings Ferry Road; Albany Post Road; Gallows Hill Road; Oregon Road; Watch Hill Road; Red Mill Road; Croton Avenue; and Teatown Road. This list should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis by the Historic Review Council. The historic mile markers found along Albany Post Road and elsewhere in the town, should also be protected and maintained.



Teatown Road

**OBJECTIVE: Identify and List Historic Neighborhoods**

**Policy 146: Any approval or permits with respect to historic areas of the Town should consider the historical richness of the area and incorporate the same into any building design or land use in those areas. such as Verplanck, Van Cortlandtville, Oregon Corners and Pleasantside.**

Major areas of historic significance in the Town are:

- ❖ **Van Cortlandtville:** *The Van Cortlandtville hamlet* possesses four State and National Register listed properties in close proximity to each other. These properties could serve as the core properties of a larger historic district. These properties include St. Peters Church, the Old Van Cortlandtville Cemetery and the Little Red Schoolhouse located near the intersection of Locust Avenue and Oregon Road. Just northeast of this location is the John Jones Homestead on the corner of Durrin Avenue and Oregon Road and the Curry Homestead on Oregon Road. To the west on Oregon Road at Pump House Road is the Van Cortlandt Upper Manor House. Other historically significant properties in the Van Cortlandtville hamlet are the old Peekskill pumphouse on Pumpphouse Road, the Colonial Terrace on Oregon Road and the Cortlandt Town Hall on Heady Street. There are concerns that new construction, or redevelopment activities, may introduce structures or improvements that will negatively impact the character of this area.
- ❖ **Verplanck:** *The hamlet of Verplanck*, located on the historic Hudson River, is significant for its associations with the events of the Revolutionary War and as an early planned community. The hamlet has an urban grid street system unusual for its setting and contains many early-1900 structures constructed from locally-manufactured bricks. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) made an informal determination, based on a 1979 survey by students from the Columbia University Historic Preservation Program, that the hamlet may be eligible for listing on the National Register.
- ❖ **Oregon Corners:** *Oregon Corners* is a hamlet located in the northeast area of Town on the Putnam Valley border and may be historically significant for sites such as The Old Trolley Hotel, the Lockwood House, and the Old Toll House and Trolley stop.
- ❖ **Pleasantside:** *Pleasantside* is a small area that is centered in the vicinity of Lafayette and Maple Avenues. Pleasantside Chapel and farm are located in a rural setting that should be protected.



**Broadway - Verplanck**

The Master Plan Base Studies and the Historic Resources Appendix provides a description of the significance these areas have had in the Town's history. Figure IV.A-1 is a map of the Town of Cortlandt which generally shows historic, scenic and archeological resources. The above areas should be surveyed for nomination and at a minimum, be inventoried and historic designation sought for individual landmarks.

**OBJECTIVE: Promote Activities that Maintain and Improve Publicly Owned Historic Properties**

**Policy 147: Complete Improvements to Steamboat Riverfront Park and continue to maintain this unique waterfront area.**

As recommended in Historic Preservation Policy #6 in the 1991 Master Plan, the Town of Cortlandt implemented a program to enhance public use of historic Steamboat Dock, due to its scenic location along the Hudson River and its historic significance as a Revolutionary War site. Since 1990, the Town of Cortlandt, with the assistance of the Verplanck Waterfront Preservation Committee, created and implemented a Steamboat Dock Riverfront Park Master Plan.

The Town has received numerous grants and donations to acquire and improve the park. Latest construction plans call for the development of the Verplanck Pedestrian Trail that will become a section of the Hudson River Greenway Trail and will include significant streetscape type enhancements to Broadway Boulevard through the creation of sidewalks and a pedestrian trail.

Future recreational improvements are planned for the area surrounding the Clay Pond and the Martin Trailer Park property when this property becomes available pursuant to

the terms of the Martin life estate when it is deeded to the Town. Future uses envisioned for this site include a significant public boat launching facility, extension of the Riverwalk, and a seaplane themed playground. In addition, the Town is considering the acquisition of two historic waterfront properties in the Verplanck area. One located near the former Harbour Landing property and off 6<sup>th</sup> Street near Madeline Avenue.

**Policy 148: Continue to maintain and expand the use of historic sites such as the Toll House, the Aaron Copeland home and the Cortlandt Museum and identify historic properties for public acquisition and /or preservation**

On-going efforts to preserve and improve historic sites throughout the Town of Cortlandt will continue to maintain the Town's historic character and promote tourism (see Table IV.A-1 for a listing of properties with historic significance).

Consider other locations throughout the Town for tourist-related centers similar to the Toll House on Bear Mountain Road. As was accomplished with Steamboat Riverfront Park, historically significant sites may be acquired by donation or acquisition and potential funding sources should be identified to help finance any needed site improvements. Potential public ownership and use of historic properties should also be focused within historic districts to promote tourism and preservation of their historic character.

## **OBJECTIVE: Promote Appreciation of Cortlandt's Heritage**

The following policies may be accomplished by several organizations working together or separately, including the Historic Review Council, the Town Historian, the Cortlandt Historical Society and the VanCortlandtville Historical Society and Historic River Towns of Westchester.

**Policy 149: Sponsor educational forums and publish historic preservation brochures and driving tour guides.**

The Town should work cooperatively with local historic groups to sponsor educational forums with school districts and others in order to educate residents and visitors of the Town's unique history and its significant places.

The Town should publish a historic preservation brochure that identifies the historic sites within the Town of Cortlandt as a method to promote tourist-related activities. The brochure could be modeled after Dutchess County's program that describes driving routes to pass-by historic places.

The driving tour or brochures could be sponsored by local businesses that would advertise their business on the brochure, particularly if they are in close proximity to, or are located within a historic structure or place. These brochures could be distributed at

Town Hall, local realtors, businesses, the train station, and other locations readily available to the public.

**Policy 150: Sponsor walking tours and special events in historic neighborhoods.**

As a means to encourage interest in the Town's historic resources, and as way to promote tourist activity, the Town, in cooperation with local businesses, residents, historical societies, should sponsor special events with historic themes. For example, many communities sponsor winter or spring "open houses" where visitors can tour historic homes decorated in-season.

Communities also host "festivals of lights" or other seasonal events where the streetscape and properties within historic districts are decorated and special events are coordinated. Another example was the VanCortlandtville Revolutionary War Skirmish held in March 2002. These activities promote visitor interest in the community and can stimulate economic development.

**Policy 151: Sponsor a Historic Plaque Program**

The installation of a commemorative plaque is one method to recognize historic properties. In one community with such a program, a homeowner obtains a plaque application and conducts research on the history of their property. A plaque is custom-made for the structure, and includes the historical society or town logo, the date of initial construction, the original owner or architect's name, and four or five words describing the significance of the property, e.g., former blacksmith shop.

Neighborhood pride has been generated by the plaque program, and it has acted as an incentive for homeowners to maintain and rehabilitate their residences. The data gained by way of the application process allows a community to develop "house histories" of each property. The information is also used for a self-guided tour. A brochure and map provide a description of the location and historic significance of each site.

Alternatively, an application can be filled out and a fee paid for a historic resource specialist to conduct an inspection of the property after the application is received. A committee can review an application and determine its eligibility for historic designation. If selected, the property is awarded a bronze plaque with the historic society logo imprint. Historic structures are identified on a Registry, and photos accompanying the application can be used in a booklet published by the society. In addition, the information contained in the application can be used for historic booklets or brochures. Custom-made bronze plaques are approximately \$100 per plaque. Prices are reduced if ordered in groupings, e.g., 25 plaques, with uniform imprints - these can cost \$50.



**Policy 152: Conduct interviews with Cortlandt's residents and others who are familiar with Cortlandt's history**

The Town should establish a program where Cortlandt residents and others who have knowledge of the Town's history are interviewed in order to catalog the events, activities and places that have been instrumental in shaping the Town. This oral history is one means of gathering the supporting data to support historic designation.

