



CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION, SCOPE OF WORK & METHODOLOGY

A. INTRODUCTION

The Marshlands Conservancy & Jay Property is important for both its cultural and natural resources. It is a cultural landscape shaped, modified and managed by people over time. Cultural landscapes are human-altered natural places that take on many forms and scales. The National Park Service defines cultural landscapes as “a geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein, associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values.”¹ Historic designed landscapes, historic vernacular landscapes, historic sites, and ethnographic landscapes are the four defined types of cultural landscapes set forth in Federal preservation guidance. Marshlands Conservancy & Jay Property has attributes of three of these categories: historic designed landscape, due to particular landscape design styles implemented on the property at various times; historic vernacular landscape, reflecting the evolution of the property by multiple owners based on agricultural use and farming traditions, and on later country estate traditions; and historic site due to its association with John Jay and his significant role in the early history of the United States.

A Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) serves a valuable purpose in providing a comprehensive study of a historically significant property. This compilation of historic research, period plans, existing conditions documentation, assessment of change and treatment recommendations provides a sound basis for preservation treatment and management into the future. The Marshlands Conservancy & Jay Property Cultural Landscape Report (MJ CLR) encompasses a CLR Parts 1 and 2. Part 1 of a CLR focuses on researching property history and chronology, documenting existing conditions of the property, and analyzing the integrity of the landscape today. Part 2 of a CLR explores the possible application of the four preservation treatments to the subject property, selects the most appropriate treatment, and provides guidance for the implementation of that treatment. CLR Part 3 records the treatment undertaken and is an important task for the future as the treatment is implemented.

This MJ CLR project was undertaken by the Westchester County Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation, focusing on the Marshlands Conservancy and the Jay Heritage Center lands in Rye, New York. The project consultants and report authors are HERITAGE LANDSCAPES, Preservation Landscape Architects & Planners, formerly LANDSCAPES Landscape Architecture•Planning•Historic Preservation. The overarching objective is to enhance understanding, stewardship

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and interpretation of this significant historic property by following the CLR process to document the rich history and current conditions, analyze landscape change and continuity, and to determine and provide detail about the preferred approach to landscape preservation treatment.

The Marshlands Conservancy & Jay Property is a rich example of a regional landscape and its associated character and history. The property's association with John Budd, as one of the early settlers of this region, and its association with the Jay family, specifically John Jay, the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, deems this a significant landscape. In addition, the fact that this landscape remains relatively intact as an example of estates typical of this region from the 17th through the 20th centuries, also adds significance. As this draft of the Marshlands Conservancy & Jay Property Cultural Landscape Report will reveal, there are many significant features associated with this historic landscape. The Marshlands Conservancy & Jay Property has evolved, altering in many ways and under the influence of a succession of owners over its more than 300-year history and through each time period it has reflected the character of American landscapes as well as the continuity of this unique, Long Island Sound property.

B. SCOPE OF WORK & METHODOLOGY

Heritage Landscapes has approached this MJ CLR for Westchester County Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation in a comprehensive manner addressing the required aspects of a cultural landscape report in accordance with federal guidance for cultural landscape preservation, with primary reference to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes (Guidelines)*. One of the primary goals of this project is to gain as thorough an understanding as documentation allows of the character and details of the landscape, as it evolved through each period of ownership.

The scope of work for this MJ CLR includes several steps. Foremost is the undertaking of archival research in order to gain a full understanding of the property and its evolution over time. For this MJ CLR a range of repositories was consulted. Intensive historic research was conducted and the variety of sources consulted to date include: Westchester County Department of Planning; Westchester County Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation; Marshlands Conservancy; Morristown Public Library in Morristown, New Jersey; Westchester County Historical Society; Westchester County Archives; Jay Heritage Center; Rye Historical Society; John Jay Homestead at Katonah; New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation; and individual oral history contacts with several persons associated with the property. A wide variety of materials including published and unpublished text, artists sketches, historic photographs, historic aerial photographs, maps, surveys and property boundary plans were gathered to provide evidence of property character, physical conditions and land uses over time. These materials were obtained and studied, comparing and contrasting the fragmentary evidence to piece together the puzzle of property evolution through seven ownership periods. The social history for each ownership period is also detailed from the research findings to the degree possible.

To develop a means of articulating the evolution of the property, the different periods of ownership were determined and considered in the context of alterations to the property. The range of materials gathered from repositories was organized by date into their associated periods of ownership. Through study of historic documents, including written and published information,

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sketches, photographs, maps and plans and through an inventory of the existing conditions of the landscape, several ownership periods for the main part of the estate were determined. These include:

- 1661 – 1745 John Budd and his ancestors
- 1745 - 1782 Peter Jay
- 1782 – 1813 Peter Jay, Jr.
- 1813 – 1822 John Jay
- 1822 – 1843 Peter Augustus Jay
- 1843 – 1891 John Clarkson Jay
- 1891 – 1904 Jay family owned and rented
- 1904 - 1910 Warner Van Norden
- 1911- 1935 Edgar Palmer
- 1935 - 1967 Zilph Palmer Devereux
- 1967 – 1983 Westchester County and United Methodist Church
- 1983 – 1992 Westchester County and DGM Partners
- 1992 - present Westchester County, New York State, and Jay Heritage Center

It is also important to note that a member or members of the Jay family have owned the Jay family cemetery, established in 1815 and expanded in 1947, since the property was first purchased by Peter Jay in 1745. The cemetery is now owned by the Jay Cemetery Association, which is comprised of descendants of the Jay family.² The final significant note pertaining to ownership relates to the 27 acres donated to Marshlands Conservancy by Fanny Wickes Parsons in 1977. The Budd family also once owned this part of the current-day Marshlands Conservancy holdings. It was sold to Richard Lounsberry, the source of the property name, in 1672. It then passed through several private owners before being sold to Edward Lamb Parsons in 1831. The entire property stayed within the Parsons family for nearly 150 years until the donation of the parcel in 1977.³

To further articulate the property evolution, its history, the changes that have occurred over time and the integrity of the landscape today, the character-defining features of the property are documented and evaluated. Period plans were developed to show the features of the property at several points in time. These plans were developed from records available for each time period that include sketches, photographs, maps and plans as well as written documentation for each period. Primary sources are selected for each period of ownership and the period plans closely reflect those primary sources both in content and by date. Secondary sources are used to clarify or illuminate additional details to the degree possible. Each period plan reflects a related ownership period.

- c. 1745 is the early Jay family ownership of Peter, Peter Jr., and John Jay
- c. 1858 is Peter Augustus & John Clarkson Jay's ownership and the rental period
- c. 1904 is the Van Norden ownership
- c. 1927 is the Palmer ownership
- c. 1940 is the Devereux ownership
- c. 1977 is the Westchester County/United Methodist Church ownership
- c. 1986 is the Westchester County/DGM Partners ownership
- 2002 is the Westchester County, New York State, and Jay Heritage Center

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An important parallel task is the inventory and recording of the property's existing conditions. The historic document review and existing conditions field work are carried out simultaneously because these investigations inform each other by directing attention to sometimes obscure details and by supporting an informal comparison of former and current conditions while the work is underway. The field investigation, photography and study of recent maps, plans and aerial photographs all contribute to an illustrated narrative and plan that conveys, in text and graphics, the character-defining features of a property.

This contemporary plan is then used in concert with the historic graphic documentary evidence to construct period plans that convey the historic landscape character, to the full degree that documentation allows, with limited speculation. These period plans are circa-dated to represent conditions known in each period. Focusing on the physical conditions and character of the landscape in past eras, an illustrated narrative accompanying the period plan explicates what has been discovered about the property as it evolved.

The period of significance for the property is discussed based on the history, character and details of the property over time. In this detailed investigation it is important to study and assess the landscape as a continuum through time. A way of thinking about the duration of the period of significance is to seek evidence of the timing of the final set of changes to the property that contribute to its historical value, and the point at which changes to the property begin to degrade and alter the historic features or character is changed. This analytical approach was applied to the Marshlands Conservancy & Jay Property as the plethora of documentary evidence was studied.

Once the period of significance has been framed by these considerations, a comparison of the historic character of the property at the end of this period against the existing conditions is carried out. This comparison highlights the degree of continuity and change, assessing the overall integrity of the property. Integrity is the degree to which the historic character and qualities of the cultural landscape are evident today. By understanding in a holistic manner, the changes that have occurred to a landscape, its significance and integrity can be appropriately evaluated and treatment considered in an informed manner.

The potential preservation treatments, set forth in the *Guidelines*, include preservation, restoration, rehabilitation or reconstruction. The application of each of these treatments to the Marshlands property is discussed and the implications tested in a narrative. The mission of the historic property, its current conditions, visitation, maintenance and management, and the future goals for the property are all considered as appropriate in the selection of the recommended preservation treatment for this unique cultural landscape. For any historic property, preservation of the remaining historic character and features through appropriate stewardship is a baseline for present and future stewardship. More intensive interventions are also considered.

The preservation treatment selected is described at a schematic level of detail. The actual interventions undertaken for cultural landscape treatment are recommended using a range of approaches for carrying out treatment including staff initiatives, organized volunteer efforts and capital projects. Priorities and phasing are discussed and a recommended approach set forth as the final element of this Marshlands Conservancy & Jay Property Cultural Landscape Report.

CHAPTER I ENDNOTES

¹ Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Historic Preservation with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*, 1996, p. 4.

² *The Jay Cemetery*, Rye, New York, October 1947.

³ Parsons, David. *History of the Property Known as "Lounsberry" in Rye, New York*, 27 May 2002.

