03
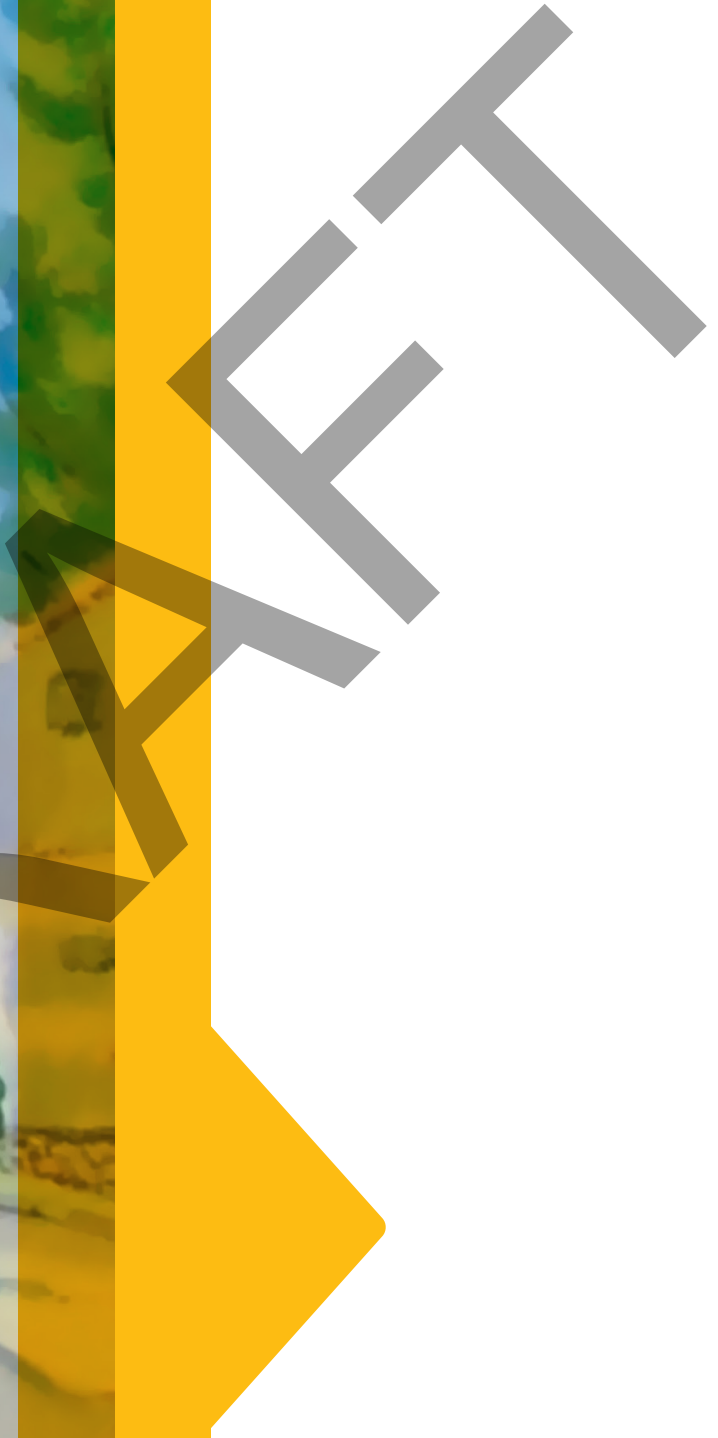## Community Character and Historic Resources

03

Historic Resources in Orangetown

Vision, Goals, and Objectives

Previous Image: "Historic Tappan," by Jane Noyes Toan. Source: Nyack Library Local History Collection

Main Street, Nyack, circa 1910. Source: Springfield College Archives and Special Collections

Nyack-Tarrytown ferry. New Jersey New York Hudson River, ca. 1921. Source: Library of Congress

Orangetown was officially established by the State of New York in 1788. Growth and development accelerated as transportation improvements eased the movement of passengers, produce, freight and stone, leading to new residential enclaves and industrial growth. From 1827, Hudson River sloops were replaced with steamboats. The Nyack Turnpike was completed in the early 19th century, connecting Nyack to Suffern, and the Orange Turnpike formed an inland route to Albany. Railroads were built to connect communities throughout the northeast. In the 1830s, a one-mile-long pier was built in the Hudson River at Piermont, where railroad cars and barges transferred freight.

Early industry in Orangetown included red sandstone quarries and brick yards along the Hudson River. From 1840 to 1900, manufacturers built large brick factories. Nyack was home to multiple shoe manufacturers, as well as the steam tub and pail factory. Orangeburg became known for Orangeburg pipe, a fiber pipe used for water supply. Farming persisted as a dominant pursuit in Orangetown, including fruit and dairy farms that sent their goods to New York.

Introduction

Located in the southern Hudson Valley, Orangetown was once part of the region occupied by the Lenape Native Americans. Dutch farmers moved to the area in the 17th century, attracted by the dense forest and fertile farmland located close to the Hudson River. When the British ousted the Dutch from rule in Manhattan in 1664, many Dutch farmers moved to the Hudson Valley to continue practicing their way of life. Dutch families continued to farm the land in Orangetown for over a century and the Dutch language and customs persisted here well into the 19th century. This heritage is apparent in the names for localities throughout Orangetown, such as Blauvelt (Blue fields), Sparkill (Spar creek) and Tappan Zee (Tappan Sea). Enslavement was a common practice for farmers in Orangetown, and enslaved persons of African descent were transported to Orangetown until 1827, when the New York State Constitutional Convention proclaimed emancipation for African Americans residing in the state.
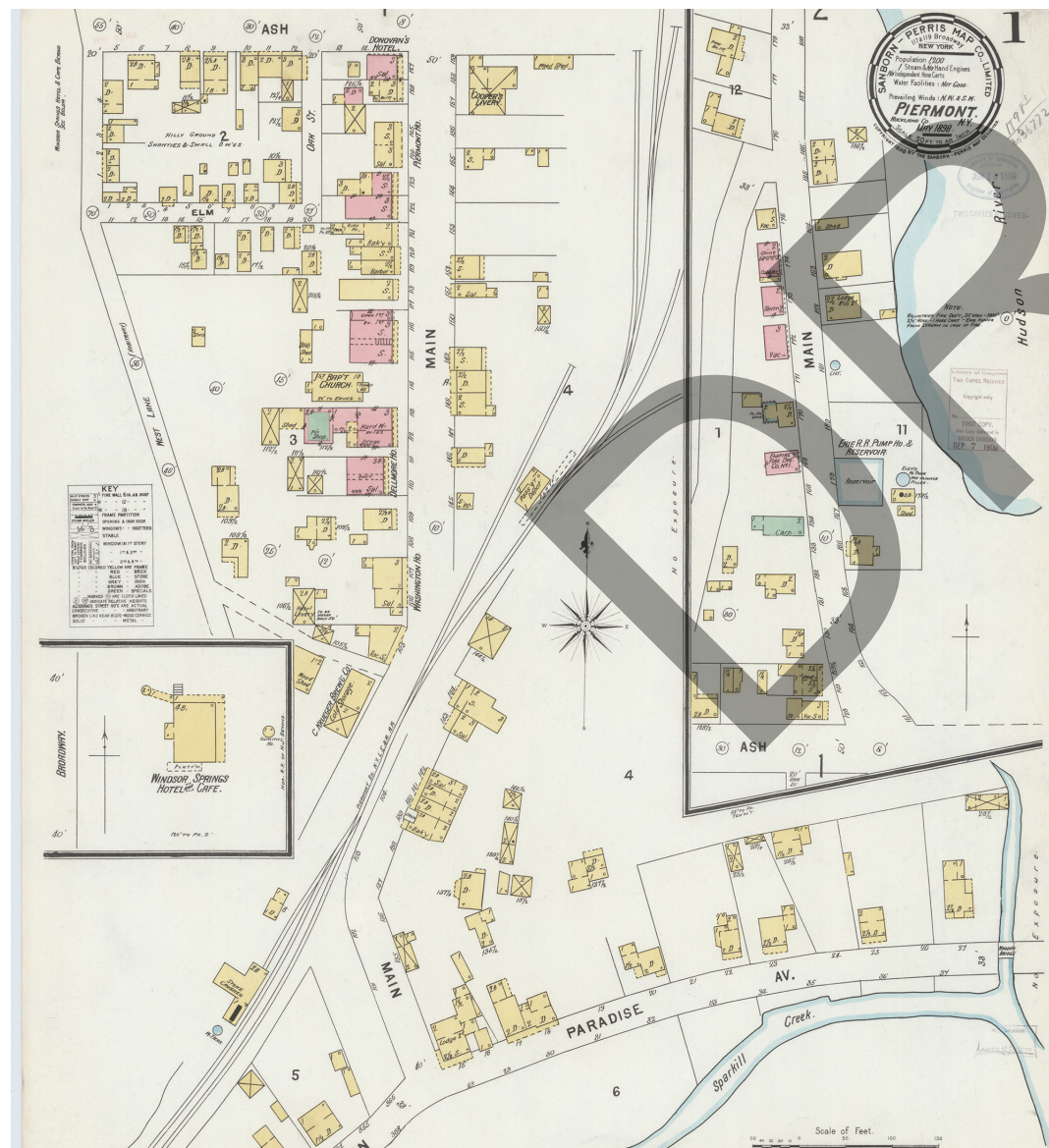

Map of Orange and Rockland Counties area of New York, circa 1750. Source: Library of Congress

The Hudson River Valley thrived with tourism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Hotels and mansions were constructed to serve the visitors and part-time residents who flocked from New York City to enjoy open air and the riverfront.

As Orangetown's population grew, the Town became the site of various institutional uses. The Dominican Home for Children and St. Agnes Home for Children established services in the area at the turn of the 20th century. Nyack College was located in South Nyack from 1897. Rockland State Hospital, later Rockland Psychiatric Center was built in 1926 in Orangeburg. In Tappan, Camp Shanks was a large port of embarkation during World War II.

In the 1950s, The New York Throughway and the Tappan Zee Bridge changed the landscape and transformed Orangetown from a smaller farming and manufacturing community into a suburb of New York City. The population grew and diversified, as new residents settled in the region.

Piermont Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1898. Source: Library of Congress

Historic Resources in Orangetown

Hamlets

Orangetown encompasses eight hamlets, where early settlements formed at historic crossroads, railroad stations, and ports. The historic hamlets are described below.

Blauvelt

The hamlet of Blauvelt is a residential center in the north central portion of Town. The hamlet was originally settled as Greenbush by several families, including members of the Blauvelt family. In the early 19th century, residents built the Greenbush Presbyterian Church in 1812, a school, and a road to transport produce to Tappan Landing (now Route 340).[1] Development in the hamlet continued through the 19th century, propelled by the Erie railroad, which included a stop in the hamlet center. Today, Blauvelt is a residential hamlet that includes sandstone houses dating to the early 1800s.

Orangeburg

The hamlet of Orangeburg is a busy commercial crossroads located in the center of Orangetown. Orangeburg developed as a center of commerce and was known as the intersection of the two major rail lines, the Erie and the West Shore. The hamlet developed with large manufacturing and institutional uses. In the late 19th century, factories operated on Greenbush Road and along Route 303.[2] The Rockland State Hospital was built in the 1930s. Camp Shanks was created in 1942, to process soldiers for deployment to World War II, as well as prisoners of war.

---

1   The Orangetown Historical museum and Archives. (2011). Images of America: Orangetown. Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing.

2   The Orangetown Historical museum and Archives. (2011). Images of America: Orangetown. Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing.

Camp Shanks, Orangeburg, circa 1945. Source: Library Association of Rockland County

Palisades

The hamlet of Palisades dates to the 1600s, when European settler William Merritt built a house on the riverside. Serving as a ferry crossing early in its history, Palisades grew in the 19th century as a thriving residential center perched above the Hudson River. The hamlet is characterized by single family houses on forested lots. Residential neighborhoods line the narrow hillside streets that descend to the waterfront.

Pearl River

The hamlet of Pearl River grew as an industrial town from the late 19th century, with manufacturers such as the Aetna Sewing Machine Company and the Dexter Folder Company operating near the Pearl River railroad station. The hamlet is located in the southern portion of Orangetown. The Pearl River railroad station is at the center of the hamlet, surrounded by dense commercial streets and residential neighborhoods.

South Nyack

The former village of South Nyack is a residential area on the Hudson River front, near the incorporated community of Nyack. The South Nyack community dates back to the 18th century, with settlers benefiting from the rich farmland on the riverfront. Much of the hamlet's historic fabric was lost during the 1950s with construction of the Tappan Zee Bridge and the New York Throughway. Today the former village retains older residential neighborhoods near the riverfront.

Tappan Zee Bridge, looking west, 1980. Source: Nyack Library Local History Collection

Sparkill

The hamlet of Sparkill is located at an inlet of the Sparkill Creek near the Hudson River. From the 17th century, shallow slops carried people and freight down the Sparkill Creek into Orangetown. Sparkill contains a downtown center surrounding Depot Square. The hamlet includes the community of Skunk Hollow, a settlement of free African Americans dating from the early 1800s.[3]

Tappan

The hamlet of Tappan is one of the oldest communities in Orangetown. Located at an important crossroads and along the Sparkill river, Tappan was a center for trade in the 18th century. Until 1773 Tappan was the county seat of Orange County. Tappan's role in regional trade subsided in the early 1800s, when the deeper ports of Piermont and Nyack

3   African American Historical Society of Rockland County. "Skunk Hollow." Accessible at
     https://aahsmuseum.org/dt_portfolios/skunk-hollow/

were better suited for steamships. From the late 19th century, Tappan evolved as a picturesque residential hamlet and farming community.

Upper Grand View

The small hamlet of Upper Grand View is located in the northern portion of Orangetown, up the hill from the incorporated Village of Grand View-On-Hudson. This area contained stone quarries in the early 19th century. With the extension of the railroad, the area grew with new residences, hotels and inns. The hamlet and village are named for the "grand views" overlooking the Hudson River. The hamlet is characterized by houses built into the steep hillside.

**Erie Railway, Sparkill Station, circa 1880.
Source: Historic American Engineering Record, Library of Congress**

Villages

Piermont

Piermont is an incorporated village located in the eastern portion of Orangetown, on the Hudson River. The village was an early European settlement, due to its location beside the Sparkill Creek, one of the first interior passages for boats traversing up the Hudson River. With railroad travel, the mile-long Piermont pier was built to connect rail cars to large barges docked in the deeper waters.

Nyack

Nyack is an incorporated village located in the northeastern portion of Orangetown. Early industry in Nyack included sandstone quarrying and boat building. The quarry business provided materials for New York City building construction in the early 1800s. Local boat yards constructed sloops to carry the stone, as well as passengers, produce, and freight, down the river to the city. With improvements in technology, sloops were replaced with steamboats for faster and more reliable service. With the success of these two industries, Nyack attracted workers and their families, and further investment.

Grand View-on-Hudson

The incorporated village of Grand View-on-Hudson is located in eastern Orangetown, just north of Piermont. The small village is largely along River Road, a coastal route overlooking the west bank of the Hudson River. The road is characterized by large residences built in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

HISTORIC AREAS

The Town of Orangetown protects Historic Areas in the Hamlet of Tappan and in the Hamlet of Palisades. The boundaries of the Historic Areas are delineated on the Town Zoning Map. The Tappan Historic Area encompasses a larger area than the National Register Tappan Historic District, described below. The Palisades Historic Area encompasses the National Register Closter Road–Oak Tree Road Historic District, the National Register Washington Spring Road-Woods Road Historic District, the S/NR-Listed Neiderhurst-W.S. Gilman Jr Estate, the S/NR-Listed Big House, and the S/NR-Listed Little House, as well as additional properties not S/NR designated.

Historic Districts

Orangetown includes four historic districts that are designated as Listed or Eligible for Listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Tappan Historic District

The hamlet of Tappan is located in the southern portion of Orangetown. The hamlet's boundaries are indefinite, though the Tappan Historical Area map adopted by the Orangetown Town Board in 1965 includes the area that covers 30 properties within the commercial and residential core, roughly bounded by the Sparkill River on the east, the south side of Main Street, Brandt Avenue to the west, and Greenbush Road Cemetery to the north. The period of significance for the district is 1730 to 1920, including sandstone structures from the 18th century, Greek Revival style buildings constructed in the early 19th century, Gothic Revival-style residences, and a Colonial Revival style store and a stables, both built in the early 20th century.

Tappan Historic District © AKRF

Washington Spring Road – Woods Road Historic District

The Washington Spring Road-Woods Road Historic District is located in Palisades along the Hudson River. The historic district includes 42 properties, representing the historic hamlet of Palisades. The district is located within a narrow valley that descends to the Hudson River, and includes properties along Washington Spring Road, Woods Road and Dirt Lane. The historic district's period of significance is 1730 to 1930, developing as a middle-class and upper-middle class residential area. The historic district represents a variety of architectural styles, representing the diversity of residents who came to occupy the neighborhood.

Closter Road-Oak Tree Road Historic District

The Closter Road-Oak Tree Road Historic District is located in the western portion of Palisades. The district includes 19 properties. The historic district is located along one block of Closter Road and a block of Oak Tree Road, located on a large plateau above the hamlet. The district's period of significance is between 1780 and 1910. The district is characterized by single-family two-story residences that are similar in size but feature a variety of architectural styles. The district also contains two commercial buildings, a schoolhouse, and a former ecclesiastical building.

Rockland Road Bridge Historic District

The Rockland Road Bridge Historic District is located in the Village of Piermont. The district encompasses 5.38 acres and includes buildings along Piermont and Ferdon Avenues, on both sides of Sparkill Creek. The roads are connected by Rockland Road Bridge, a masonry arch bridge constructed in 1874. The district's period of significance is ca. 1785 to ca. 1940 and is characterized by mid-19th century residential buildings.

Local Historic Sites and Landmarks

The following historic resources are identified as Historic Sites and Landmarks by the Town of Orangetown.

The following historic resources are identified as notable historic sites by the Town of ORangetown. Many of these properties are also Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (S/NR-Listed) (see **Table 3-1**).

John Green House, Nyack

The John Green House (S/NR-Listed) is located at 23 Main Street in Nyack. Constructed in 1817, the Dutch style building is one of Nyacks's oldest houses. John Green was a local businessman and founding member of the Nyack community, overseeing the construction of the Nyack Turnpike and investing in steamboats at the waterfront, which helped transform Nyack from an isolated river town to a commercial center. In 2015, the John Green Preservation Coalition was formed to save the house from demolition.

John Green House, Nyack

Edward Hopper House, Nyack

The mid-19th century wood frame at 82 North Broadway in Nyack (S/NR-Listed) is the birthplace and boyhood home of artist Edward Hopper (1882-1967). The two-story building is clad in clapboard siding. It features a medley of architectural styles, including features associated with the Colonial Revival, Victorian, Greek Revival and Carpenter Gothic styles.

Edward Hopper House, Nyack © WikiCommons

Dewint House, Tappan

The Dewint House is located on Livingston Street within the Tappan Historic Area. The Dewint house was built in 1700 by Daniel de Clark. It was known as the De Windt House when Washington occupied it during the Revolutionary War. The one-and-a-half-story building is built of brick and local stone.

Dewint House, Tappan, built 1700 © AKRF

Andre Monument, Tappan

The Major Andre Monument (S/NR-Listed) is located on Andre Hill within the National Register Tappan Historic District and the local Tappan Historic Area. The black Maine granite monument is 3'6'' square by 5'8'' tall. Taseman and Company in Nyack created the monument in 1879, in honor of Major John Andre. Accused as a spy by the Continental Army, the British Major was hanged close to the site in 1780. The original base was dynamited by vandals in 1882.

Major John André Monument © WikiCommons

The Tappan Reformed Church, Tappan

The Tappan Reformed Church is located within the National Register Tappan Historic District and the local Tappan Historic Area, at 35 Kings Highway. Constructed in 1835, the brick church is significant for its Greek Revival-style architecture.

Tappan Reformed Church © AKRF

Dutch Reformed Church, Tappan, 1933. Source: Historic American Engineering Record, Library of Congress

110 Main Street, Tappan

The 18th century sandstone house at 110 Main Street (S/NR-Listed) is significant as the location where convicted British Spy Major Andre was confined prior to his hanging on a nearby hill. The property is located within the Tappan Historic Area and within National Register Tappan Historic District.

110 Main Street, Tappan ("76 House") © AKRF

Depew House, Orangeburg

The DePew House is located at 196 Chief Bill Harris Way in Orangeburg. The historic site is part of the Orangetown Historical Museum complex. The building is also included within the S/NR-eligible Rockland Psychiatric Center Historic District. The building was constructed circa 1778. In 2010 the Orangetown Historical Museum and Archives acquired the property and extensively restored the 18th century building.

Edward Salyer House, Pearl River

The Edward Salyer House (S/NR-Listed) is located at 241 S. Middletown Road in Pearl River. The Dutch Colonial-style residence was built in the late 18th century. The stone building is part of the Orangetown Historical Museum and Archives complex.

W.H. Gesner House (Palisades Free Library), Palisades

The Palisades Free Library is located at 19 Closter Road within the National Register Closter Road-Oak Tree Road Historic District and the local Palisades Historic Area. The building is also known as the W.H. Gesner House. The Greek Revival-style house was built circa 1830.

William Devoe Store (Tappan Free Library), Tappan

The Tappan Free Library, also known as the William Devoe Store, is located at 93 Main Street within the National Register Tappan Historic District and within National Register Tappan Historic District. The Federal-style building was initially erected circa 1750 as a house. In the 1800s, the building was converted to a store and was substantially altered.

Table 3-1

National Register Listed Properties in Orangetown

Historic Resource	Location	Town/Village/Hamlet	Photo Key
Tappan Historic District	Roughly bounded by Main St./Kings Hwy., Andre Ave. and New York Central RR	Tappan	1
Washington Spring Road--Woods Road Historic District	Roughly area along Washington Spring Rd. from Highland Ave.	Palisades	2
Closter Road-Oak Tree Road Historic District	Roughly N side of Closter Rd. and S side of Oak Tree Rd.	Palisades	3
Rockland Road Bridge Historic District	Ferdon Ave., Rockland Rd., Piermont	Piermont	4
Neiderhurst	Ludlow Ln. S of River Rd.	Palisades	5
Seven Oaks Estate	End of Ludlow Ln.	Palisades	6
Dewint House	Livingston Ave. and Oak Tree Rd.	Tappan	7
Palisades Interstate Parkway	Fort Lee, NJ, to Bear Mountain, NY	Fort Lee, NJ to Bear Mountain, NY	8
Ross-Hand Mansion	122 S. Franklin St.	South Nyack	9
Tappan Zee Playhouse	20 S. Broadway	Nyack	10
Sparkill Creek Drawbridge	Bridge St. over Sparkill Creek	Piermont	11
Salyer, Edward, House	241 S. Middletown Rd.	Pearl River	12
Concklin, Abner, House	Closter Rd.	Palisades	13
US Post Office--Nyack	48 S. Broadway	Nyack	14
US Post Office--Pearl River	Franklin and Main Sts.	Pearl River	15
Big House	US 9W near jct. with Closter Rd.	Palisades	16
Little House	US 9W N of Oak Tree Rd.	Palisades	17
Haring--Eberle House	US 9W N of Oak Tree Rd.	Palisades	18
Haddock's Hall	300 Ferdon Ave.	Piermont	19
Hopson--Swan Estate	US 9W E of Sparkill, Tallman Mountain State Park	Sparkill	20
Wayside Chapel (Former)	24 River Road	Grandview-on Hudson	21
Hopper, Edward, Birthplace and Boyhood Home	82 North Broadway	Nyack	22
St. Paul's United Methodist Church	11 Division Street	South Nyack	23
"Stonehurst" (Dederer Stone House)	82 Rockland Road	Sparkill vicinity	24
Salyer, Michael, Stone House	Blue Hill Road (CR 23)	Nauraushaun vicinity	25

Historic Resource	Location	Town/Village/Hamlet	Photo Key
Perry, Jacob P., House	15 Sickeletown Road	Pearl River vicinity	26
Rockland Road Bridge	Rockland Road	Piermont	27
McCullers, Carson, House	131 South Broadway	South Nyack	28
Onderdonk House	748 Piermont Avenue	Piermont	29
Andre, Major John, Monument	42 Andre Hill	Tappan	30
Piermont Railroad Station	50 Ash Street, Piermont	Piermont	31
Blauvelt, Johannes Isaac, House	820 Western Highway	Orangetown	32
Christ Church	14 Union Street	Sparkill	33
Ferdon, William, House	270 Ferdon Avenue	Piermont	34
House at 352 Piermont Avenue	352 Piermont Avenue	Piermont	35
First Reformed Church of Piermont	361 Ferdon Avenue	Piermont	36
Cliffside	24 Lawrence Lane	Orangetown	37
Green, John, House	23 Main Street	Nyack	38
Palisades Interstate Park	Bear Mountain State Park	Bear Mountain	39

Historic Roads

Historic roads in Orangetown are protected locally in order to preserve their historic characteristics (see Tools for Historic Preservation). Designated historic roads in Orangetown include: Washington Springs Road, Closter Road and Oak Tree Road in Palisades; Kings Highway (northern portion) in Piermont; and Rockland Road in Sparkill. All five of these Historic Roads were designated in 1993. In addition, Palisades Interstate Parkway is a New York State Scenic Parkway.

Tools For Historic Preservation

The historic hamlets of Tappan and Palisades are protected as Historic Areas in Orangetown (see Town Code §§ 12, "Historic Areas"). Properties within the hamlets are protected through restrictions on use, development, and renovations/alterations, in order to protect their historic value. The Historic Areas in Tappan and Palisades were established by local law in 1965 and 1968, respectively. The boundaries of the Tappan and Palisades Historic Areas are delineated on the Orangetown Zoning Map, and encompass much of the historic hamlets, described above.

Within the two Historic Areas, the Historical Areas Board of Review must review all construction to buildings constructed prior to 1918. All applications for new buildings must be reviewed by the Board of Review appointed by the Town Board. Proposed changes, additions

Palisades Historic District © AKRF

Figure 3-1
Historic Sites Map

or new construction must be in keeping with the existing structure, and new structures shall harmonize with the surrounding buildings. The Historic Areas Board of Review also must review any applications for the demolition of buildings constructed before 1945.

Orangetown protects historic roads that are significant to the history of the Town, county, state and nation. The Town protects historic roads in order to preserve the educational, cultural, tourism/recreational, environmental and aesthetic, economic, and general welfare benefits that historic road preservation is found to provide (see Town Code §§ 19-1 to 19-8, "Historic Road Preservation"). The Town Board designates historic roads based on their historical significance and integrity. A certificate of approval is required for work that may alter or improve the road. Such alterations include material change, changes in road design, changes in signs, and changes in zoning for the land adjacent to the road. The local law requires maintenance must be carried out so as to preserve the historic and scenic features of the road. Routine maintenance must not included the following activities: widening, changes of grade, straightening or realignment, removal of stone walls or bridges, removal of mature trees, or the paving of existing unpaved roads. The legislation also regulates the existing environment along the road including any new construction along the roadside, or alterations to topography or landscaping beside the road.

Dewint House, Tappan. John Scott photographed this Edwin Dahlberg painting. Source: Nyack Library Local History Collection

The Manse, home to Domine Samuel Verbryck, Tappan, built 1726 © AKRF

Vision, Goals, and Objectives

The vision, goals, and objectives related to historic preservation were developed based on an inventory of the existing historic preservation measures and public feedback. In the community survey, 64% of respondents indicated that the preservation of historic buildings and structures was important or very important factors to consider in terms of future development.

Proposed Implementation Strategies

The 2022 Comprehensive Plan goals include maintaining the Town's community and neighborhood character while balancing the need for growth and development and preserving history, open space, and hamlet center character, while promoting a diversity of housing options in appropriate neighborhoods to ensure members of the community have access to quality housing.

© AKRF

The following strategies are proposed to implement the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan:

– Maintain existing local preservation tools.

The existing historic preservation tools as established by Chapter 12 of the Town Code should be maintained.

– Develop designation criteria for Historic Areas.

Update Chapter 12 of the Town Code to include designation criteria for Historic Areas. This would allow for the nomination of new Historic Areas for local protection. The hamlets of Tappan and Palisades are protected through local Historic Areas legislation. The remaining historic hamlets in Orangetown do not have protections guiding their future development.

– Develop design guidelines and performance standards.

Visual guidelines offer building owners and the Historical Areas Board of Review clear and predictable recommendations for supporting the design review process. Design guidelines describe an area's historic design aesthetic, so that alterations and new construction can conform to the neighborhood aesthetic and reflect the community's preservation goals.

– Publish online an inventory of locally-designated historic roads.

A public database allows for residents, municipal staff, and property owners to identify protected historic roads and ensure their protection.

– Consider individual landmark protections.

Further investigate amending Chapter 12 of the Town Code to include local protections for individual landmarks, which includes a process for the designation of a review board, standards for review, the process for designating an historic building or site, and the criteria to be used for that designation.

– Survey Orangetown's historic buildings and structures.

Conduct a historic resources survey of potentially eligible buildings and sites in Orangetown.

– Consider joining the CLG Program.

Pursue enrollment in the Certified Local Government (CLG) Program administered by the State. CLGs are eligible to receive services from the State Historic Preservation Office, including technical preservation assistance, training opportunities, and exclusive grants.

Dewint House, Tappan, built 1700. Source: WikiCommons