

Strategic Framework

Plan Purpose

NYS Town and Village Law requires that all zoning amendments be in accordance with a comprehensive plan. The current Joint Town/Village of Clayton Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2000. The Town and Village Boards established a Comprehensive Plan Committee to update the Plan.

The comprehensive plan process creates a vision for the future development of your community. The Plan is not a law or regulation but a guidebook for orderly growth. It is the reference document upon which land use regulations will be based.

A very important part of developing a comprehensive plan is the process itself. It is the community discussion that goes into developing the goals and strategies. This is an excellent opportunity for all the year round and seasonal residents and landowners to voice an opinion on how Clayton has developed and how they would like to see development occur in the future.

A successful comprehensive plan will provide the direction to manage future growth by establishing guidelines to governmental leaders, private enterprise, and individuals so that Clayton, Town and Village, land use decisions are sound, practical, and consistent.



**WHERE THE TRADITION
CONTINUES!**

Clayton Vision Statement

Clayton is a vibrant small town waterfront community. The residents of Clayton enjoy a quality of life and a very friendly community that welcomes all new residents and visitors to their safe, caring and diverse village and town.

The Village of Clayton retains its charming small town atmosphere, relishing its strong ties to the St. Lawrence River, upon which it relies for its tourist trade. Tourism has been important to the Village and Town for well over a hundred years as visitors arrive to partake of its opportunities for boating and fishing, its many museums, its quality restaurants, its burgeoning craft beverage industry, or just to enjoy its outstanding scenery and sunsets.

Clayton values its history and the architectural relevance of its downtown business section. Retail buildings are well maintained and attractive to residents and visitors alike. The downtown area is very pedestrian friendly, particularly its new Riverwalk, and sidewalks are well maintained and accessible to all.

The Town of Clayton recognizes the importance of its agricultural heritage and farming's contributions to open space preservation. It also recognizes the importance of wetlands, forests and shorelines in protecting the natural ecosystems we value so much.

Clayton's community churches are a part of the fabric of everyday life and we are proud of the strong association with the Thousand Islands Central School District and the quality education it provides for our students.

The Clayton Community strives to ensure that local residents and visitors alike benefit from future growth and development. Future development in the Town and Village will only occur in designated areas and will be compatible with nearby land uses and consistent with existing architectural styles.

Plan Process

In 2014, The Town of Clayton and the Village of Clayton Boards determined that it was time to update their Joint Comprehensive Plan. The boards appointed a committee to complete the process. They began meeting in November of that year.

NYS Town and Village Law authorizes municipal boards to adopt and update comprehensive plans and sets the process to be completed before approval. NYS Law does not have specific requirements for the content of a plan. The comprehensive plan is individually made for the community, by the community.

Probably the most important part of the comprehensive plan process is the public input. This is a plan to guide future development in the Village and Town. The plan will only be as good as the support it has from the residents of Clayton.

The Committee decided that an online survey would be the best way to collect the most information from the greatest number of the residents and landowners.

Also, a brainstorming exercise was conducted, identifying the community's assets, challenges, vision, underutilized assets, and strategies.

Next, after the survey was tallied, a chapter by chapter draft inventory was initiated, the bulk of which was utilized at a public meeting to further gauge public sentiment and garner input.

The last piece in the planning process was the Committee public hearing, which involved a brief summary of the planning process, selected overview of the plan contents, and input or comments received from the public attendees.

Thereafter the Committee considered the comments to edit, adjust, or confirm segments of the plan and considered referring the Final Draft to the respective

NYS Town/Village Law – Comprehensive Plan Content:

- ✓ *General statements of goals, objectives, principles, policies, and standards upon which proposals for the immediate and long range enhancement, growth and development of the town/village are based.*
- ✓ *Consideration of the regional needs and the official plans of other governmental units and agencies within the region.*
- ✓ *The existing and proposed location and intensity of land uses.*
- ✓ *Consideration of agricultural uses, historic and cultural resources, coastal and natural resources and sensitive environmental areas.*
- ✓ *Consideration of population, demographics, and socio-economic trends and future projections.*
- ✓ *The location and types of transportation facilities.*
- ✓ *Existing and proposed general location of public and private utilities and infrastructure.*
- ✓ *Existing housing resources and future housing needs, including affordable housing.*
- ✓ *The present and future general location of educational and cultural facilities, historic sites, health facilities, and facilities for emergency services.*
- ✓ *Existing and proposed recreational facilities and parkland.*
- ✓ *The present and potential future general location of commercial and industrial facilities.*
- ✓ *Specific policies and strategies for improving the local economy in coordination with other plan topics.*
- ✓ *Proposed measures, programs, devices, and instruments to implement the goals and objectives of the various topics within the comprehensive plan*
- ✓ *All or part of the plan of another public agency.*
- ✓ *Any and all other items which are consistent with the orderly growth and development of the town/village.*

Village Board of Trustees and Town Board for their consideration and eventual adoption after they conduct their own public hearings as required.

History - Introduction

The Town of Clayton was organized from the Town of Orleans and Lyme by an act of State Legislature on April 27, 1833. At the suggestion of the Postmaster, Mr. Angel, a Whig himself, the name was chosen in honor of John M. Clayton, United States Senator from Delaware and a prominent Whig, a fitting political selection since most of the voters in the area were Whigs themselves.

The Village of Clayton was incorporated on April 17, 1872 by a vote of the citizens, as provided in an act passed by the State Legislature, April 20, 1870. The vote stood 140 for and 51 against the assumption of corporate honors.

The first known name given to the area around the present day village was Weteringhera-Guentere, an Indian term for “Fallen Fort”, referring to an ancient fort on the banks of French Creek. In the early 1820’s the area around French Creek Bay was being settled by the French. In 1823 the Post Office and the Village were called Cornelia. In 1831 they were both changed to Clayton. By 1835 the Village consisted of 93 buildings and 426 people.

The other major settlement in the Town is the Hamlet of Depauville, originally called Catfish Falls. At the head of the Chaumont River, it was formerly named after the 25-foot vertical waterfall there. The squatters that inhabited this area were often called ‘Catfish People,’ marking their settlement from the clearing of trees. Merchant Francis Depau purchased several lots in Penet Square including Catfish Falls, later renaming it Depauville after himself. Settled in 1816, the Chaumont River was utilized as a navigable waterway for transportation of timber, goods and people. Catfish Falls was also an excellent source of water power to operate a saw mill and grist mill.

Due to its favorable positioning on the St. Lawrence River and an ample supply of lumber, the first major industry in Clayton was timber. Trees were lashed together to form rafts and then sent down the River to Montreal and surrounding areas. There, the logs were cut into usable lumber. Depauville also had a

Historic/Cultural Resource Goal:

1. *Preserve and promote Clayton’s historic heritage as an integral part of the Town and Village culture, character, attractiveness and economic future.*

Historic/Cultural Resource Objectives:

1. Support and assist in the preservation of historic resources, properties and structures within the Town and Village.
2. Preserve important historic/cultural resources and improve the basis for initiatives and informed decision-making relative to the preservation of historic buildings, structures, objects and sites.

Historic/Cultural Resource Strategies:

1. To the extent possible, encourage the re-use of historic buildings.
2. Consider the character of historic buildings to mitigate potential impacts that may occur as part of the SEQR review process.
3. Consider zoning amendments to emulate historic building types and community character protection where applicable.
4. Consider the need for an historic overlay zone to include properties within the historic district in the Village.
5. Support efforts of the community to identify homes, structures, and sites for listing on the State and Federal Register.
6. Consider requiring underground utility placement within the historic district.

substantial lumber industry. The local economy was dominated by this industry until the railroad made its way to the North Country in the 1870’s.

Clayton’s dominant location and supply of timber became a natural fit for boat/ship building and repairs until the 1880’s when the ship building industry moved to the metro areas of Chicago, Detroit and other Great Lakes cities. Small boat building still carried on, notably the St. Lawrence River skiff and other small crafts used in the 1000

Islands. The small boat manufacturing, repair and rebuild businesses are still evident today as witnessed at the Antique Boat Museum and other wooden boat restorers. The classic St. Lawrence River skiff was built here up until WWI. The skiff manufacturing site later became the George Hawn Knitting Mill producing sweatshirts and bathing suits. The business became known as the Johnstown Knitting Mill and relocated to Graves Street. The last manufacturing use of the Graves Street building was the manufacturing of tents. The building has since been bought by a local engineering firm. There has been a resurgence of the boat trade and repair in the last fifty years to accommodate an increase in recreational boating.

Schooners manufactured locally, sailed the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes. They also were periodically overhauled, repaired, and sometimes enlarged to carry more goods to and from various ports. Tradesmen with many skills were drawn to the area to build and maintain all boats on the River.

In 1873, the railroad was brought to Clayton and with it came people seeking time away from the city life. As a result, hotels, restaurants, boat liveries, fishing guides and tourist related services began to flourish and a new industry was born, tourism. Grindstone, Picton, Bluff, Murray and other smaller islands began to become settled by local residents and tourists. Luxury hotels were built to accommodate this influx of vacationers: The Windsor, The Walton, The Riverview, The Hubbard House, The Frontenac on Round Island, The Clayton Hotel and the Herald House. The Clayton Hotel is now O'Briens and the Herald House is the TI Inn. All of the other old hotels have either burned or were torn down. The influx of people during this period brought money and increased the local seasonal economy. The small boat trade and repair business quickly became lucrative for many entrepreneurs.

This period of growth lasted until the advent of the car as a family vehicle. Dependable roads and inexpensive auto ownership allowed more tourists to explore as it became easier to travel wherever you wanted vs. where the train would take you.

By 1920 automobile prevalence caused Carl Frink to invent and manufacture Frink Sno Plows in Clayton. This industry continued to be a major employer for 80 years (with 200 workers at its height) until its closing in 2000.

Staebler & Baker Printing Co. came to Clayton from Canada in the 1940's to print graph paper for distribution in the USA. This company employed a large workforce for many years and was later called Graphic Controls until it closed in 1994.

The Skinner Spoon Co manufactured world class fishing lures in Clayton from 1880 until 1962 when the business closed and its patents were sold. These lures were award winning and very popular in fishing circles.

The Town has a history of mining that includes granite quarries on Picton and Grindstone Islands that were active in the late 1800's. High quality granite from Grindstone and Picton Islands was widely used for paving blocks and prominent buildings such as the New York State Capitol Building. There are a number of active sand and gravel operations located on County Route 4, Crystal Springs Road.

Agriculture was also a very important industry in the Town producing hay for urban stables and milk for cheese. The number of active farms has been steadily decreasing, a trend that is occurring nationwide.

Not unlike other communities, Clayton has undergone many social and economic changes. Today, Clayton remains a reflection of its past. Small shops, restaurants, marinas, museums and cultural destinations, as well as a host of recreational opportunities are available to local residents and visitors.

Cultural History

Upon researching the cultural history of the Town, it is apparent that its residents were determined to be a community of distinction.

Civic Club - In 1880, a group of ladies decided that Clayton needed more cultural opportunities, including a library. This ladies group formed the Civic Club with about 15 to 20 members. Twenty four years later in 1904, there was a representative from New York State Dept. of Libraries staying at the Hubbard House. Several of these ladies requested a meeting with said official, and as a result, managed to raise \$200.00 matched by New York State. The first library was organized in the Village, under the Provisional Charter dated June 27, 1904.

Opera House - It has served as an important hub for cultural and community events for over a century and is a fine example of the vaudeville theaters which sprang up throughout the United States in the early 1900s. The initial Opera House in Clayton was in the main part of the first St. Mary's Catholic Church built in 1842. St. Mary's was in the process of building a new church, so Father Brice sold the old wooden frame church to Will Delaney in 1892. Mr. Delaney moved the old frame to Mary St. (across from what is now the Antique Boat Museum.) Many social gatherings took place in this building up through 1896. Some of the productions that took place in this building were "Lily Bell" and "The Culprit Fay and Tony the Convict," both in 1894.

Records indicate that around 1890, the residents felt there was a need for an amusement hall and a place to conduct town business. After much discussion, pros and cons, the decision was made to go forward with plans for a building that would be used as a Town Hall, Community Center and Opera House. The site for the new building was the abandoned Johnson Shipbuilding Co. on the corner of Merrick St. and Water St. (now Riverside Dr.) The cornerstone was laid in August 1903 and the building completed in 1904.

Now a National Registered Historic Place, the Opera House is a stately four-story brick structure overlooking the St. Lawrence River.

This description of the Opera House was found in the newsletter "On The St. Lawrence," dated July 29, 1904. "A capacity of 1200. Fine acoustic properties.

An ideal assembly hall for conventions. The Opera House can add an aura of respectability to theater and vaudeville productions."

The Opera House was in constant use and residents were delighted to have this venue in their community. The search for entertainment began almost immediately and in January 1904, a Quartet and an Elocutionist performed. The first big dance held in the new Opera House was a Fireman's Ball on February 20th, 1904, with music provided by Whittier & Lapatra's Orchestra.

In 1905, Mae Irwin and her troupe presented a play "Mrs. Black is Back". Miss Irwin was one of the favorite performers in the Opera House for many years. Miss Irwin eventually bought property in the Thousand Islands.

During the 1980's, there were several theater groups that performed during the summer season. In 1991, the formation of a Summer Theater Committee managed and promoted the Opera House activities. In 1994 the Performing Arts Fund initiated a master plan to renovate the Town Hall/Opera House. The Performing Arts Center, re-opened with an inaugural concert on July 29, 2002. In 2003, the Thousand Islands Performing Arts Fund (TIPAF) and the Town of Clayton contractually agreed upon the renovation and revival of the Opera House. TIPAF raised \$3,275,000 for the 2007 renovation of the facility and now manages its ongoing operations.

The Opera House continues to be an important part of the community and showcases the Community Band, which proudly performs several shows here throughout the year. All band members and the conductor are volunteers and are dedicated to sharing their love of music with the community.

The Town of Clayton (its offices on the lower level) owns the building, has dedicated it in perpetuity as a performance and community center, and is responsible for the maintenance, repair and utilities costs of the facility.

The revived and renovated Clayton Opera House is the year-round performance center for the region

and is used for a wide range of cultural, educational, social and community events.

Clayton Library - Talk about perfect timing! The 1904 Opera House/Town Hall, began housing the library. By 1926, the Library, housed in the Town Hall since 1904, made the decision to incorporate and proceeded to apply for a “Certification of Incorporation” from New York State which they received on November 19th, 1926. This was done so the Civic Club could own property. The Library was then moved from the Town Hall to the Civic Club (now the Eagle Shop) and continued to house the Library at that location until 1947. Property became available on John Street and the Civic Club purchased the property and operated out of a Quonset Hunt until 1951.

A donation of \$45,000 was made by Mr. and Mrs. George Hawn in 1952, to begin the construction of a building to house the library’s collection. There have been several additions to the building through the years, thanks to the generosity of major donors, village residents and the Village. Library services have been upgraded to include wireless internet service as well as children and adult programs. Through the efforts of those fine ladies of the Civic Club long ago, their vision became a reality!

Thousand Island Museum - In 1963, members of the community worked to preserve the heritage of the St. Lawrence River and formed the Thousand Island Museum and made its home in the Town Hall (Opera House). The Museum received its Charter in 1964 from the New York State Board of Regents.

Visitors to The Thousand Islands Museum were invited to “Relive River Life” with a look at a one room school, NYC railroad, Clayton Volunteer Fire Department, Native American room, Muskie and Decoy room, Village Square and history of Clayton pictorial wall.

In 2001 the Museum moved to 312 James Street to accommodate the renovations being made at the Opera House.

There is a modern gallery of permanent and rotating exhibits on the first floor along with a research library. The second floor houses older decoys, a room dedicated to Sam Denny (French Creek’s multi-talented fishing guide, carver of famed duck decoys, painter, and musician), a display by the local diving club and the Muskie Hall of Fame. The library, includes documents, clippings, scrapbooks, photos, maps, books and printed local histories along with a display honoring local servicemen and women. It is a valuable resource for students, professionals, historians and scholars.

The Museum sponsors many community events such as: the Festival of Trees and Craft Show; annual Shore Dinner; Hashing Over History; Historic Boat Tours; and Saturday programs with topics from vintage quilts to decoy carvers and wildlife painters.

Last, but not least, is the fact the Museum is proud to own the registered trademark of the beautiful St. Lawrence Tartan. Designed by Mrs. Helene Cobb, of Clayton, woven in Scotland, the greens are for the cedars along the shore, the blues are for the St. Lawrence River, and the reds represent the sunset over the islands. The Tartan won a gold medal at the San Francisco Exposition in 1962. The St. Lawrence Tartan fabric is available at the Museum.

Thousand Islands Arts Center - In 1965 another one of Clayton’s treasures was initially housed in the Town Hall. The Board of Directors of the Thousand Islands Museum decided that a Craft School would add a new dimension to the ever widening scope of activities.

Volunteers converted the balcony of the Opera House into classrooms, then set about finding teachers proficient in basic crafts, i.e. pottery, weaving, painting, early American decorating and enameling. By spring of 1966, an impressive roster of instructors had been engaged. The Craft school expanded to the basement of the Town Hall and the Train Depot on Riverside Dr. was rented for art classes.

The programming expanded and the Craft School purchased property on John St. in 1970. The school

continued to expand and grow in opportunities offered to students and was renamed The Thousand Islands Art Center, Home of Hand Weaving. The museum has been well attended by students from all over the U.S., and Canada and many other countries.

The Antique Boat Museum - In 1967, the Board of Directors of the Thousand Islands Museum was asked to consider having a boat division for registering antique wooden boats. The Board of Trustees of the Museum decided they needed an official sponsor, thus the Antique Boat Auxiliary of the Thousand Islands Museum was born and became the official sponsor of the Annual Boat Show for many years. It is now known as the Antique Boat Museum. The museum has evolved into a world class collection of antique boats and related memorabilia.

The Museum is the premier freshwater nautical museum in North America. Located at 750 Mary Street, the museum galleries overflow with over 300 unique and beautifully-preserved boats and thousands of recreational boating artifacts. The 4.5 acre campus comes alive with boat rides, skiff rowing, special boat shows, and a wide variety of educational programming for all ages. The museum is seasonal to the public, opening in May and closing in October with administrative offices open year round.

In the 50 years since its founding, the museum has built up a substantial waterfront campus. In five short decades the Antique Boat Museum moved the annual operating budget to \$1.2 million dollars, built a staff team of 10 full-time year round professionals, developed a 4.5 acre waterfront campus with seven buildings providing a total of 29,000 square feet of exhibit space, 33,000 square feet of public programming, collections storage, archives, library and administration space, and obtained two off-site storage facilities. Membership in 2016 was just shy of 1,500 supporters, and the museum welcomed nearly 30,000 visitors between May and October.

The Museum transformed from a small town institution into a globally recognized museum with the most extensive and diverse public collections of

mid-19th to mid-20th century freshwater boats, engines, and archival materials in North America. The galleries and collection inspire educational programming that provides extraordinary opportunities for students, members, volunteers, and all who visit.

Depauville Cultural History

Another one of the North Country's treasures is the Hamlet of Depauville, seven miles from Clayton on Route 12 heading in a southerly direction. This small community began to settle in the early 1800's and became a self-sufficient, populated and thriving community.

Many organizations were formed in this community: Depauville Masonic Order; Order of the Eastern Star; Independent Order of Odd Fellows; Rebekah Lodge; Drama Clubs; Scout Groups; and a Glee Club. Many of the organizations may no longer be active, however, the community has retained its warmth and togetherness.

Churches were built and still thrive today. The Old Stone Church lays claim to being one of the oldest churches in Jefferson County.

Many public-spirited residents were interested in having a free public library in the Hamlet. In 1954 it was decided to use the Depauville Town Hall as a temporary library. The library was granted its first provisional charter in October 1955 and moved to the red brick schoolhouse on Caroline Street in 1984. The Library is an integral part of the hamlet and surrounding area.

Historic Sites

There are a number of sites on the National Register within the Village of Clayton, primarily within the Clayton Historic District along portions of James St and Riverside Drive within the downtown area (on the map) and listed in Table 1.

The Clayton Historic District incorporated 30 buildings and was officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1985. Twelve years later, its boundaries were increased to include 6 more buildings. Among these sites, there are Italianate, Romanesque, late Victorian, late 19th and early 20th Century Revival examples of architecture.

The **Captain Simon Johnston House**, also known as the Kemp House, was built in 1880-1882 and is a 2½-story frame Italianate style residence. The main façade features an engaged central tower extending one story above a low pitch hipped roof. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

Fairview Manor, also known as Longue Vue Manor and Our Lady of Fairview, was built in 1937 as a summer retreat for Carl Zimmerman.

Fairview Manor is an intact interpretation of a European castle or manor house with a distinctive eclectic French influence. It was listed on the National Register in 2007. It is now the St. Lawrence Spirits home and Conference Center.

Grindstone Island Upper Schoolhouse, is a one-room school building, 1½ story three bay by one bay, frame building on a granite foundation built in 1885. Added to the National Register in 2012, the building includes a vestibule and small teacher’s apartment. Also on the property is a contributing well pump. It operated until 1989, making it the last public one-room school in operation in New York State.

While the district/sites were nominated and officially listed on the National Register, many other older homes and buildings throughout the Village and

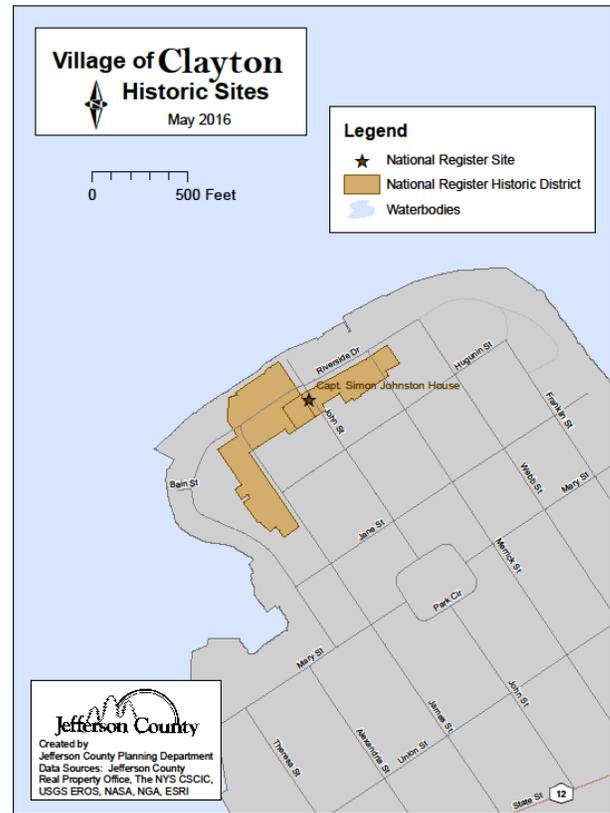


Table 1. Town and Village of Clayton National Register Historic Sites and Districts

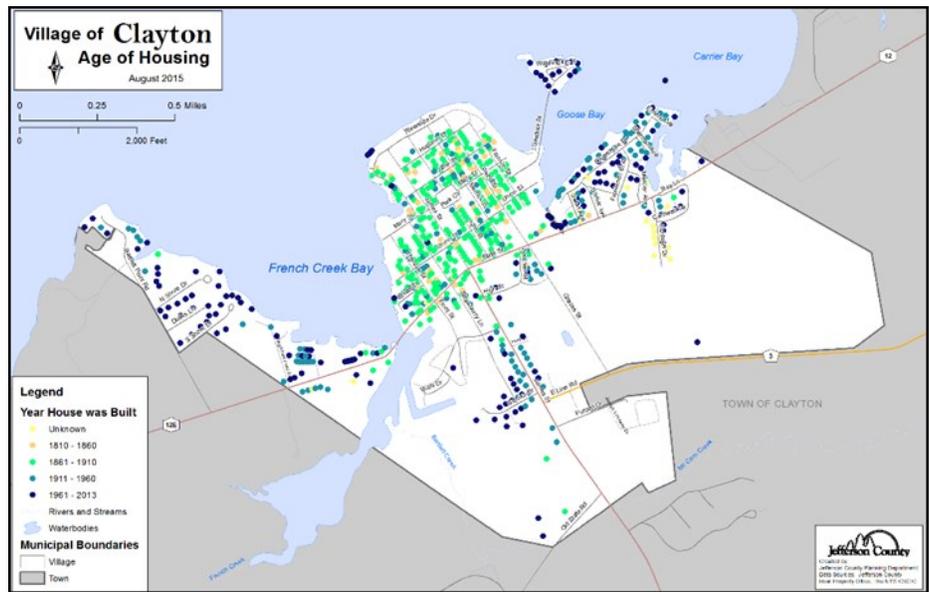
Site/District Name	Address
Johnston, Capt. Simon, House	507 Riverside Dr.
Clayton Historic District	203--215 & 200--326 James St., 500--544 & 507--537 Riverside Dr.
Clayton Historic District (Boundary Increase)	335, 403, 409, 413, 419, and 435 Riverside Dr.
Swarthout Site-	Address Restricted
Fairview Manor	38289 NY 12-E
Grindstone Island Upper Schoolhouse	41591 Cross Island Rd.

Source: National Park Service - Federal listings: National Register of Historic Places listed properties

portions of the Town should also be considered historic and part of the area’s cherished heritage. Many, if not all, of these buildings reflect eras of architecture and building styles from any number of time periods. The following includes Village and Town Age of Housing maps based on Real Property Assessment data.

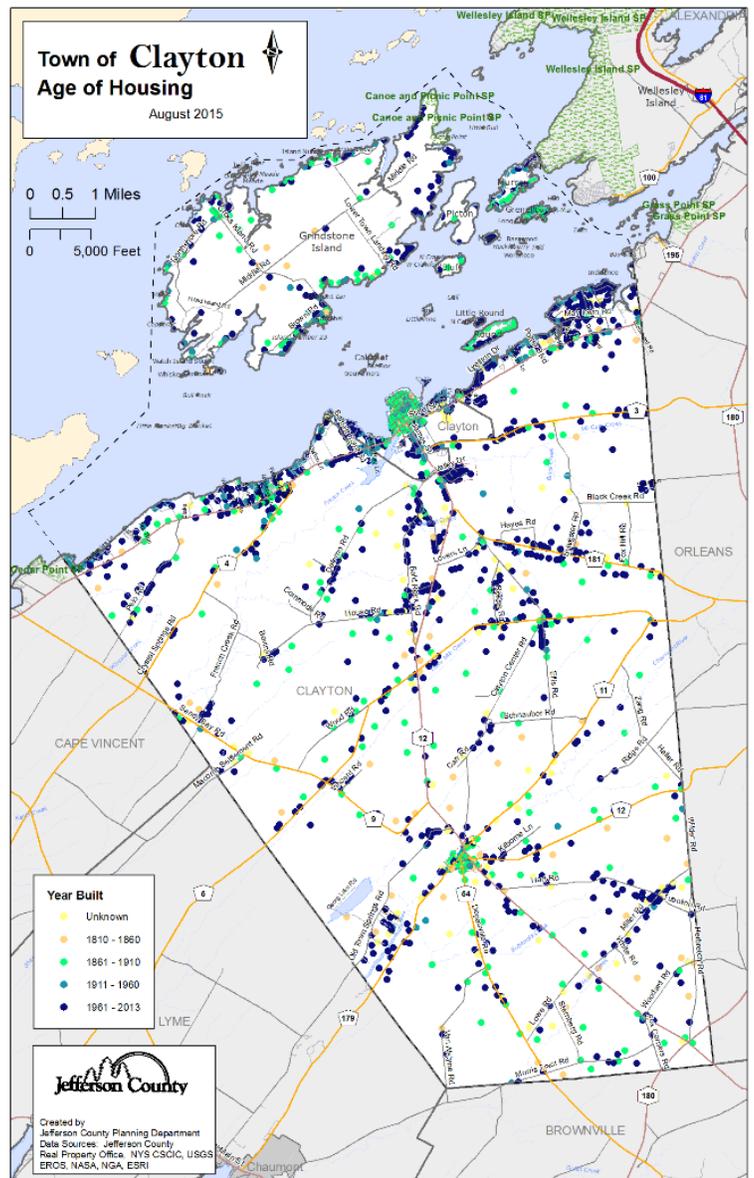
Village Age of Housing

According to assessment data, the Village of Clayton has a few houses built between 1810 and 1860, however, it has a much higher concentration of houses built between 1860 and 1910. As illustrated by the Village map they are concentrated in the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. Many homes built after 1910 extend out from the downtown/center of the Village, as do those built after 1961.



Town Age of Housing

The Town has clusters of older homes in Depauville, within the Village itself, and others scattered where earlier settlement occurred. Grindstone and several other islands include a number of older homes as well.



Archeological Resources

The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation website allows you to view areas of the State for archeologically sensitive areas.

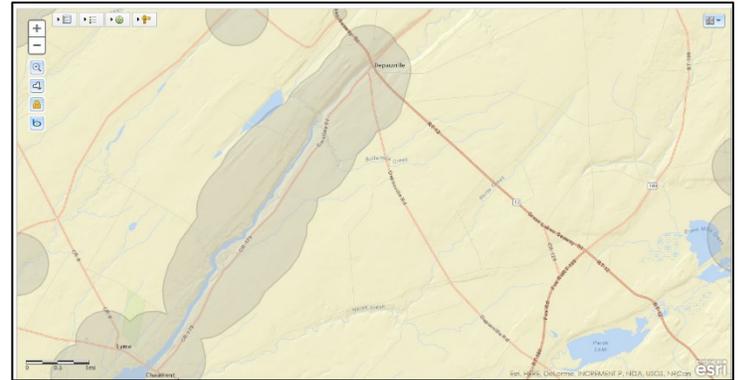
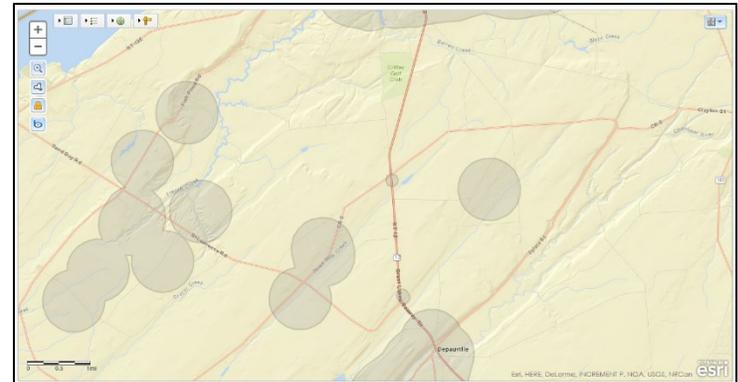
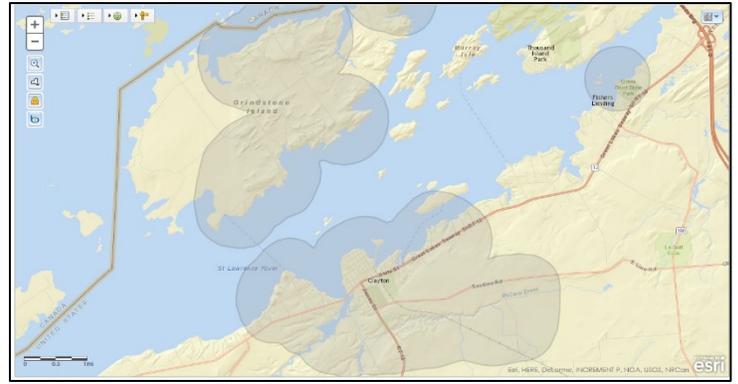
The three maps to the right show potential archeologically sensitive areas within the Town and Village. Each map is a print screen image from the map viewer, as one zooms-in and then pans around the Town to view the general areas of archaeological sensitivity identified.

The exact locations are not displayed on this website since they are protected from disclosure by Section 304 (16 USC 4702-3) of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and Section 427.8 of the implementing regulations for the State Historic Preservation Act of 1980. This information can only be accessed at the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in accordance with the SHPO's Policy on Access to Files, Data, and Information. This information is used to provide recommendations to state and federal agencies on the need for further archeological surveys before projects may begin.

Churches and Social Organizations

Clayton boasts a number of churches and religious institutions that shape the community and their hundreds of members:

- ❖ Clayton United Methodist Church
- ❖ River Community Church
- ❖ Christ Episcopal Church
- ❖ Grindstone Methodist Church
- ❖ Depauville Methodist Church
- ❖ St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church
- ❖ New Life Christian Church



The Town and Village of Clayton also boast of a variety of social organizations based in the community.

- Clayton Rotary Club
- The American Legion
- Knights of Columbus
- The Clayton Lions Club
- Clayton/Depauville Masons
- Thousand Island Young Leaders Organization (TIYLO)