



# Section 8: Special Districts & Historic Landmarks

## OVERVIEW

As a small riverfront village with a history of settlement dating back to the 1600's, Upper Nyack has several Special Districts and Historic Landmarks. These Special Districts and Historic Landmarks add to the special character of the Village of Upper Nyack. In recognition of this, the previous Village Comprehensive Plan (approved in 1999) stated that one of its Planning Goals was to: *"Encourage the preservation and*

*maintenance of historic buildings, neighborhoods and sites in Upper Nyack.” Further on, under the section entitled ‘Implementation’, the Comprehensive Plan stated: “Historic preservation provisions should be adopted, either as part of the Zoning Ordinance or as a separate ordinance. Procedures should be included for identifying significant historic structures, sites, and districts; for establishing criteria; and for reviewing proposed construction, demolition, alteration, or other actions affecting such structures, sites, and districts. The role of the Architectural Review Board should be expanded to include historical review.”*

Currently the protection and preservation of these unique Historic Landmarks and Special Districts are handled through the regular Planning Board, Architectural Review Board, and Zoning Board of Appeals land use review processes.

## **A. SPECIAL DISTRICTS**

### **HOOK MOUNTAIN STATE PARK**

Upper Nyack’s distinctive physical feature at the northern end of the Village is Hook Mountain. Designated a National Natural Landmark, Hook Mountain is located in Hook Mountain State Park, a New York State Park bounded by Rockland Lake State Park and Nyack Beach State Park and administered by the New York State Department of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation.



Aerial View North of Hook Mountain and Nyack Beach State Park

The late 1800’s saw the beginning of the industrial quarrying of Hook Mountain (along with other areas of the Palisades on the west bank of the Hudson River). By 1907 the rapid defacement of Hook Mountain was noticed by John D. Rockefeller, a supporter of the new Palisades Interstate Park Commission. After considerable public outcry, the

Palisades Interstate Park Commission bought the quarries operating along the face of Hook Mountain in 1917. Beginning in 1934 park facilities were developed by the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Works Progress Administration, New Deal programs created by the Franklin Roosevelt administration to relieve the effects of the Great Depression. The existing quarry boiler plant was renovated to create a bathhouse and lunchroom; a bathing beach was established; a walking path was built along the shore; and the upper working level was converted to a plateau with a grassy playfield and picnic areas at the base of the cliff. The enlarged cliff face created by the quarrying has actually resulted in a location for towering thermal currents and a world-class hawk watching spot. It provides a landmark for Upper Nyack visible for the length of the Tappan Zee.

Besides being part of the New York State Park system, Hook Mountain State Park has the following designations:

1. **National Natural Landmark**, US National Park Service, 1980.
2. **Important Bird Area**, New York Audubon Society, 1997.
3. **Bird Conservation Area**, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation

### **NYACK BEACH STATE PARK**



View North of Nyack Beach State Park



View South of Nyack Beach State Park

Nyack Beach State Park, at the northern terminus of North Broadway, is a 61-acre state park situated on the riverfront along the Hudson River and administered by the New York State Department of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation. The park provides public access to the Hudson River along with access to Hook Mountain State Park at the upper parking level. It is a heavily used park serving the greater Nyack community and beyond and provides a range of activities that include picnicking, hiking, jogging, bicycling, fishing, kayaking and cross-country skiing.



View of Entrance to Old Palmer Burying Ground from Old Mountain Road

### THE OLD PALMER BURIAL GROUND

The Old Palmer Burial Ground, Upper Nyack's only cemetery, is located on the north side of Old Mountain Road between Midland and Broadway. Officially designated a cemetery by Rockland County, it is officially administered by the Town of Clarkstown. The Burial Ground began operation in the 1730's on the land of Cornelius Kuyper, who originally settled this area in 1686. There are sixty-six graves including three

Revolutionary War soldiers and the graves of Cornelius Kuyper and his wife. The last known burial was in 1857. The graveyard subsequently fell into disrepair until 2003 when public awareness was raised about its condition and a joint private (The Nyack Historical Society)/municipal (Town of Clarkstown) effort began maintaining it.



View from North Broadway at West Entrance to River Hook Preserve

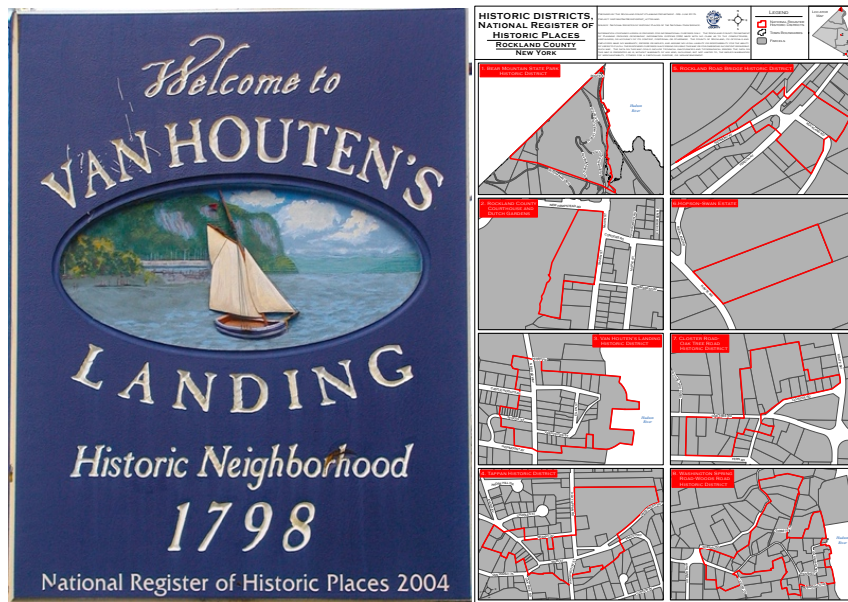
### **RIVER HOOK – THE HESTER HARING CASON PRESERVE**

In 2018 the Village of Upper Nyack purchased the nearly 12-acre Haring estate for municipal purposes. The largest remaining undeveloped private land in the village, it included a home built by William Haring circa 1935, a stone barn dating from an earlier owner, an occupied cottage and an unoccupied house in poor condition. The property, still recognizable as a former farm, contains open fields, mature trees and wooded areas. With a focus on open space preservation and a long-term master plan goal maintaining a rural, semi-wild quality, the Village continues to explore the options for its future use that include informational and outreach efforts with Upper Nyack residents.

## SCHOOL STREET

School Street in Upper Nyack is a short, curving one-way road accessed off of Highmount Avenue. The first half of the road is lined with single family residences indicative of its location in the Village’s R-4 Zoning District. But as the short road curves and turns south to North Broadway it also turns into one of the Village’s most unique residential areas: a stretch of historic, attached wood-framed residences, in a rowhouse configuration, on the north side of the road. Dating back to the 1800’s when they were residences for the boatyard workers, this section of School Street represents the highest density in the Village. There are no driveways; cars are accommodated by a long row of parking directly across the street.

This section of School Street is included in the Van Houten’s Landing Historic District, as designated in the National Register of Historic Places in 2004 by the U.S. National Park Service. Incongruously part of the Village’s R-4 Zoning District, this unique and historic section of School Street should have its own special zoning designation or become part of the Village Center Zoning District to which it abuts. Historic preservation review requirements should be developed for this District to preserve its historic character, and signage that delineates and publicly identifies this unique area should be developed.



Sign Designating Van Houten’s Landing Historic District

## VAN HOUTEN’S LANDING HISTORIC DISTRICT

**Van Houten’s Landing Historic District** is the historic heart of the Village of Upper Nyack. Designated in the National Register of Historic Places by the U.S. National Park Service in 2004, it encompasses the Marine Business Zoning District, the Village

Center Zoning District, the historic rowhouse section of School Street, and the residential area fronting on Van Houten Street and Ellen Street. It is a historic district that includes two Village commercial zoning districts that are distinctly different from each other and two Village residential areas that are both in the R-4 Zoning District but are also distinctly different from each other.



View South on Ellen Street in the Van Houten's Landing Historic District

The history that connects these disparate areas is the boatyard started by John Van Houten from which developed the houses for the boat captains, the housing for the boatyard workers, and the village shops that served them all. Historic preservation review requirements should be developed for this District that preserve its historic character and recognizes the uniquely different areas that comprise the district.

### **VILLAGE CENTER DISTRICT**

This is the Village of Upper Nyack's smallest zoning district and includes only the six properties that front along North Broadway between the north side of School Street up to the start of the R-2 Zoning District. The area encompassing the Village Center District is included in the **Van Houten's Landing Historic District**, as designated in the National Register of Historic Places in 2004 by the U.S. National Park Service. As noted in **Section 6: 'Business & Economic Development'**, the Village Center District is entirely built out with existing buildings and essentially no available land parcels for expansion or new development. Historic preservation review requirements should be developed for this District to preserve its historic character.



View of Entrance to Marydell Faith and Life Center

## **MARYDELL FAITH & LIFE CENTER**

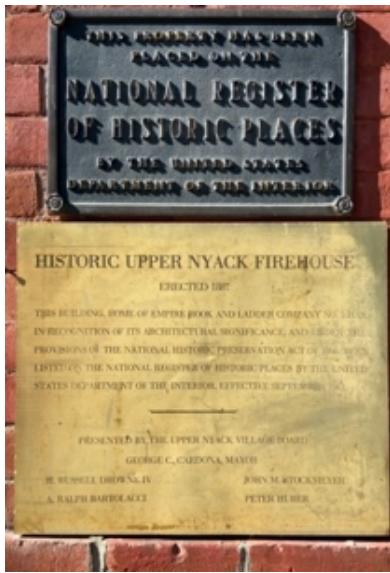
In 1924 the Sisters of Christian Doctrine, a small Roman Catholic order that ministered to poor and immigrant families in New York City, acquired the former Helmer farm, a dramatic location at the base of Hook Mountain, as a retreat for the nuns and a place to bring inner city children for fresh air and summer camping. Naming it Marydell, the sisters operated a summer camp there for about 60 years. No longer operated as a summer camp, the facilities have become Marydell Faith and Life Center, a place for retreats and events. In the early 2000's the remaining sisters built a new convent building in the meadow, designed as an assisted living facility for their retirement. In 2017, through a campaign effort of the Trust for Public Land and with contributions by the Village of Upper Nyack, the Town of Clarkstown, and other organizations and individuals, 30 acres of meadow and woods at the base of Hook Mountain, constituting much of Marydell, were purchased from the Sisters of Christian Doctrine for the benefit of the public and made part of Hook Mountain/Nyack Beach State Parks, to remain forever natural.

## **B. HISTORIC LANDMARKS**

### **UPPER NYACK FIREHOUSE**

The Upper Nyack Firehouse, built in 1887, is a wood-framed brick building that once served as the Upper Nyack Village Hall and is now the home of Upper Nyack's resident fire company, Empire Hook and Ladder Company #1. Located immediately adjacent to the current Village Hall, the Firehouse was designated in the National Register of Historic Places in 1982 by the U.S. National Park Service.





**Note:** *Founded in 1863, the Empire Hook and Ladder Company #1 is older than the incorporated Village of Upper Nyack. It began using horse-drawn firetrucks and acquired its first motorized firetruck in 1916. Today the fire company is part of the Nyack Joint Fire District.*



200th Anniversary Celebration of the Old Stone Meeting House

### **THE OLD STONE MEETING HOUSE**

Built in 1813, the Old Stone Meeting House is the oldest surviving place of assembly in Rockland County. A wood-framed building with locally quarried sandstone walls, the Old Stone Meeting House began as the Methodist Church of Nyack. Served at first by

circuit-riding ministers, it was outgrown by the Methodists in a few decades and ultimately became a non-denominational place of worship known as the Old Stone Church. Designated in the National Register of Historic Places in 1998 by the U.S. National Park Service, today it belongs to the Village of Upper Nyack and is used for small public and private gatherings. Future use of the Old Stone Meeting House might include it's use as a center for the history of Upper Nyack, with displays cataloging the history of the Village from pre-Village times to the present date and housing a repository for historic artifacts.



View from North Broadway of Upper Nyack Village Hall and Upper Nyack Village Firehouse

### **UPPER NYACK VILLAGE HALL**

For the first fifteen years of the incorporated Village of Upper Nyack there was no Village Hall. The Upper Nyack Board of Trustees met in the home of the Board President or a Village Trustee. Then, when the Upper Nyack Firehouse building was built in 1887, it began as a combination Village Hall and Firehouse with the Village Meeting Room and Village Offices on the Second Floor. Accessible only by a long flight of stairs, over time the location of the Village Hall on the Second Floor of the Upper Nyack Firehouse building became increasingly difficult. The Village acquired the existing two-story, wood-framed, former store building next to the Firehouse in 1973. After renovations that included making it wheelchair-accessible, the building was dedicated that year as the new Upper Nyack Village Hall.

### **BROOKSIDE**

Also known as Lochburn, Brookside is a historic home located at 406 North Broadway. Built circa 1865 as a 2 1/2-story Italian Villa style frame residence, it was enlarged and modified around 1890 when Colonial Revival style design elements were added. Features on the house include a three-story tower, veranda, and porte cochere. The property also has a large carriage house circa 1890. Brookside was designated in the National Register of Historic Places in 2012 by the U.S. National Park Service.

### **SHADOWCLIFF**

Located at 521 North Broadway, Shadowcliff is a historic home built circa 1921 for local artist and concert pianist Mrs. Eleanor Manville. The two-story Neo-Classical masonry design features three porticoes, Palladian windows, and a clay tile roof. Beginning in 1957 it housed the headquarters of the Fellowship of Reconciliation for many years. Shadowcliff was designated in the National Register of Historic Places in 2014 by the U.S. National Park Service.

## **C. PROTECTION OF SPECIAL DISTRICTS & HISTORIC LANDMARKS**

In recognition of the Historic Landmarks and Special Districts that are an integral part of, and help define the unique character of, the Village of Upper Nyack, this Comprehensive Plan restates the Planning Goal espoused in the previous Village Comprehensive Plan:

*“Encourage the preservation and maintenance of historic buildings, neighborhoods and sites in Upper Nyack.”*

Recognizing that other areas or buildings in the Village, aside from those identified above, may have unique historic qualities that have value in being identified and / or preserved, future Village planning efforts and zoning codes should consider the following actions:

### **1. Adopt Historic Preservation Regulations**

Historic preservation regulations should be adopted, either as part of the zoning ordinance or as a separate ordinance. The historic preservation regulations should establish criteria for identifying structures, sites, neighborhoods, and districts whose preservation would be significant in maintaining the character and quality of life of the Village. The age of the structures, sites, neighborhoods, and districts might not be the only qualification for historic preservation (e.g. Marydell Faith & Life Center or the former Christian Missionary Alliance building). Criteria should consider the following:

#### **a. Age**

Historic preservation is appropriate due to the age of the structure, site, or district.

**b. Significance**

Historic preservation is appropriate due to the significance of the structure, site, or district. This significance might be that it is a good example of a specific type of construction, building type, or period of design.

**2. Create Historic Preservation Overlay Map**

Create an Historic Preservation Overlay Map for the Village of Upper Nyack that identifies historic and/or otherwise significant structures, sites, neighborhoods, and districts. This Historic Preservation Overlay Map would assist the Architectural Review Board and Planning Board during the approval process in understanding the historic and/or other significance of the projects under review.

**3. Develop Historic Preservation Review Process**

Historic preservation regulations should establish procedures for reviewing proposed construction, demolition, alteration, or other actions materially affecting the identified historic and/or otherwise significant structures, sites, neighborhoods, and districts. This historic preservation review process might be performed by the Architectural Review Board (ARB), whose role would be expanded to include historical preservation review. In expansion of the role of the ARB to include historic preservation review, the ARB should have a licensed architect or other qualified architectural historian either on the Board or acting as a consultant to the Board for applications requiring historic preservation review.

As part of this expansion of the role of the ARB to include historic preservation review, consideration should be given to changing the application review process such that the ARB reviews applications first, prior to the Planning Board. This would allow the ARB review, both historic preservation and otherwise, to come to the Planning Board and be part of that Board's consideration of an application for final site plan approval.