WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

WIAWAKA HOLIDAY HOUSE

HALS NO. NY-8

Location: 3778 State Route 9L, Lake George, Warren County, New York

Located on the eastern shore of Lake George and bisected by State Route 9L

Latitude: 43.425353, Longitude: -73.696720 (northeast corner of Fuller House, Google Earth, Simple Cylindrical Projection, WGS84)

Significance: Wiawaka Holiday House was established ca.1850 as an affordable retreat for working women during a time of increased women's rights and factory condition activism. Still in operation, it is the oldest continuously operating facility of its kind in the United States.

Description: Wiawaka Holiday House is comprised of one dozen structures on a sixty-three acre, landscaped property. Structures include: four buildings used for lodging (Rose Cottage, Mayflower Cottage, Lake House and Wakonda Lodge), Fuller House, used for lodging, dining and administration, a caretakers house (Pine Cottage), two maintenance and storage buildings (originally designed as a barn/chicken coop and as an ice house), House of Trix (a program building originally designed as a boat house), a screened picnic/sitting pavilion and a boathouse with swimming dock. Entry drive, access drives to Lake House and Wakonda Lodge and parking areas are surfaced with gravel or soil.

The landscape features can be categorized into several distinct zones. The waterfront zone, extending the width of the property is the major feature and appeal of the site. The boathouse and swimming dock, a staff dock, Wakonda Lodge, House of Trix and Mayflower Cottage are located in this zone. Topographic change varies along the water's edge with high cliffs at Mayflower Cottage and level water access at the north end of the property. A portion of the water zone includes dense shrubs and trees, with the remainder open to views, with low grasses or rocks. A trail was installed along the central portion of the lake edge in 2010. The central portion of the developed site includes manicured lawns and gardens. Fuller House and Lake House are located in this zone as well as a large lawn used for gatherings such as weddings, shuffleboard courts, a labyrinth, fenced seasonal garden and multiple informal plant beds. A wooded stream zone separates the garden zone from the land along Route 9L. This stream is open in the southern portion and within a closed aqueduct at the north end before passing beneath the House of Trix and entering Lake George. Remains of a masonry impoundment with spillway are located along the stream west of the state highway. The area to the east of Route 9L includes the current

maintenance storage building. This sloping area is predominantly wooded and has some hiking trails and a large open meadow area. The stream continues on the east side of the highway.

The subject property is seasonally used with visitors enjoying the retreat from June through September. With the exception of the caretakers house, all buildings are closed up for the winter and the water and sanitary sewer system winterized and shut off each fall. Comprehensive maintenance has been an ongoing challenge with efforts in the past focused on critical needs for each building. In 2009 Preservation Architecture prepared a planning study assessing long and short term needs of each building. This report documented several key items including roof and foundation repair as critical and in need of repair. Work is ongoing to address these items. Wakonda Lodge, currently closed to visitors due to advanced structural deterioration, has received funding through the New York State Office of Parks and Recreation and Historic Preservation grant program, with renovations imminent. The docks and boathouse, due to the extreme effect of winter ice (Lake George freezes most winters) often require rebuilding in the spring. The dock structure, stairs, decking and rails are not original construction. In terms of the condition of landscape features, there is not a preponderance of 'hard scape' or masonry features. Features include 'soft scape' elements, such as flower, herb and vegetable gardens, pervious walkways and trails, and open lawn areas. Garden elements include original, reconstructed and contemporary components. These elements blend the aesthetic of traditional late nineteenth century Victorian with the style of the Adirondacks. Victorian use of colorful seasonal flowers, bedded herb gardens and statuary merges with the rustic and wooded characteristics of the Adirondacks. The influence of climate has resulted in a landscape with simple palettes of open lawn and scattered trees, and use of hardy native plant material.

History: Wiawaka Holiday House is located on a parcel of land that has long been used for hospitality. Wiawaka was founded by Mary Wiltsie Fuller on the former grounds of the Crosbyside Hotel (Ca. 1850, originally constructed in the 1840s as the United States Hotel). As an activist for women's rights, Fuller conceived of the idea of providing affordable vacations for working women in a relaxing setting where they could find respite from the factories in which they worked, and the crowded cities in which they lived. Fuller established Wiawaka with the assistance of her friends, Spencer and Katrina Trask, who purchased the land and then sold it to Wiawaka for a dollar and a bouquet of flowers.

Wiawaka is currently the oldest continuously operating women's retreat in the United States and in 1998 was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Prior to establishment of the holiday house in 1903, the property was owned by F.G. Crosby who built and maintained the Crosbyside Hotel on the site. The main building of the hotel complex was located in the area of the current great lawn. Pine Cottage, Rose Cottage and Mayflower Cottage were

constructed as part of the Crosbyside Hotel complex around 1873 and Fuller House was built in 1876. These buildings were the first facilities used by Wiawaka when the retreat was established in 1903 under the auspices of the Girls' Friends Society. In 1904 the facility was renamed Wiawaka, meaning "the spirit of God in Woman" or "The Great Spirit in Woman". A major fire in 1905 destroyed the hotel building and some other structures, including a cottage adjacent to Rose Cottage. The large hotel structure and cottage were not rebuilt. The construction of the House of Trix (1904), the boathouse (1907), the ice house (1907) and the barn (1912) soon followed. The gardens, both ornamental and kitchen, of Crosbyside were reconfigured to work with the new facilities. Wakonda Lodge, initially called Amitola and constructed in 1905 by Katrina and Spencer Trask as an artist retreat, was added to Wiawaka for additional lodging space in 1908. The construction date of the gazebo adjacent to the boathouse is sometime in the 1940s. The most recent structure is Lake House built in 1963. While the use of the site overall and the functioning of the majority of the buildings has remained the same since the Holiday House was established, several landscape changes have occurred. When first established the center portion of the site along the stream was open lawn, with manicured garden beds. Paths crossed this area and open views swept across this open valley. Today, the central portion of the site is wooded, with mature hemlocks, pines and maple trees. The paths remain and while the vistas are different, visitors can still stroll throughout the area. The eastern portion of the site, now meadow and woodland was also previously open with pasture and agricultural lands. The retreat grew and produced its own milk, eggs and vegetables with livestock and farming on site.

Prior to establishment of the United States Hotel, the area had a long and colorful history, being the site of battles, raids and troop movements during the French and Indian War. In 1758 several British vessels, called bateaux were sunk off shore. They are in place to this day and a historic marker west of the open lawn notes the significance of the site.

Sources:

Bateaux historic site information:
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Sayers, Mary. National Register of Historic Places Nomination. United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, May 1998.

Springate, Megan E. Resorts and Reform: Archeology at the Wiawaka Holiday House, Lake George, NY. http://works.bepress.com, January 2012.

Wiawaka Holiday House website:
www.wiawaka.org

Mapping Sources

Aerial Mapping: New York State Statewide Digital Orthoimagery Program (NYSDOP). 2008 orthoimagery.

Glenn B. Coulter, Topographic Map of Part of Lands of Wiawaka Holiday House Inc, Situate in Town of Lake George, Warren County, NY. September 4, 1962.

Preservation Architecture, Building Survey at Wiawaka Holiday House, Route 9L, Lake George, NY – Site Plan. November 8, 2007.

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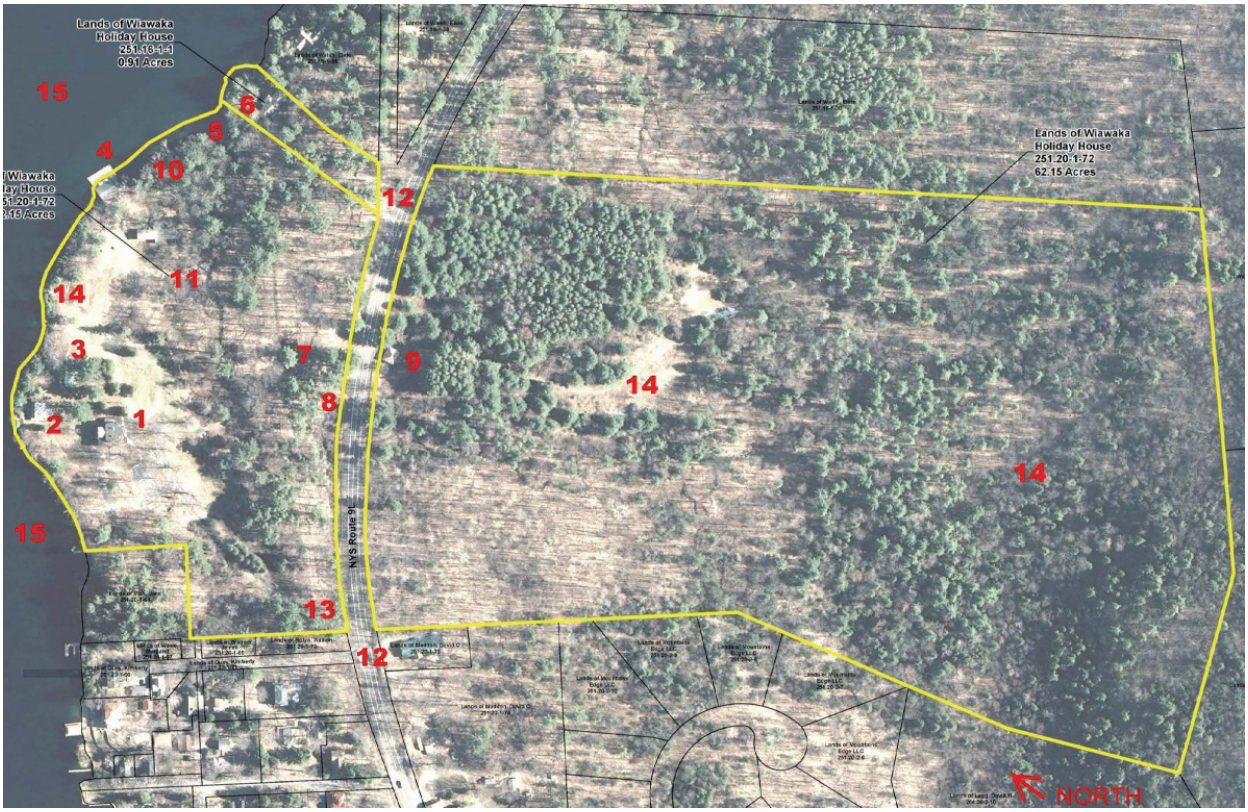
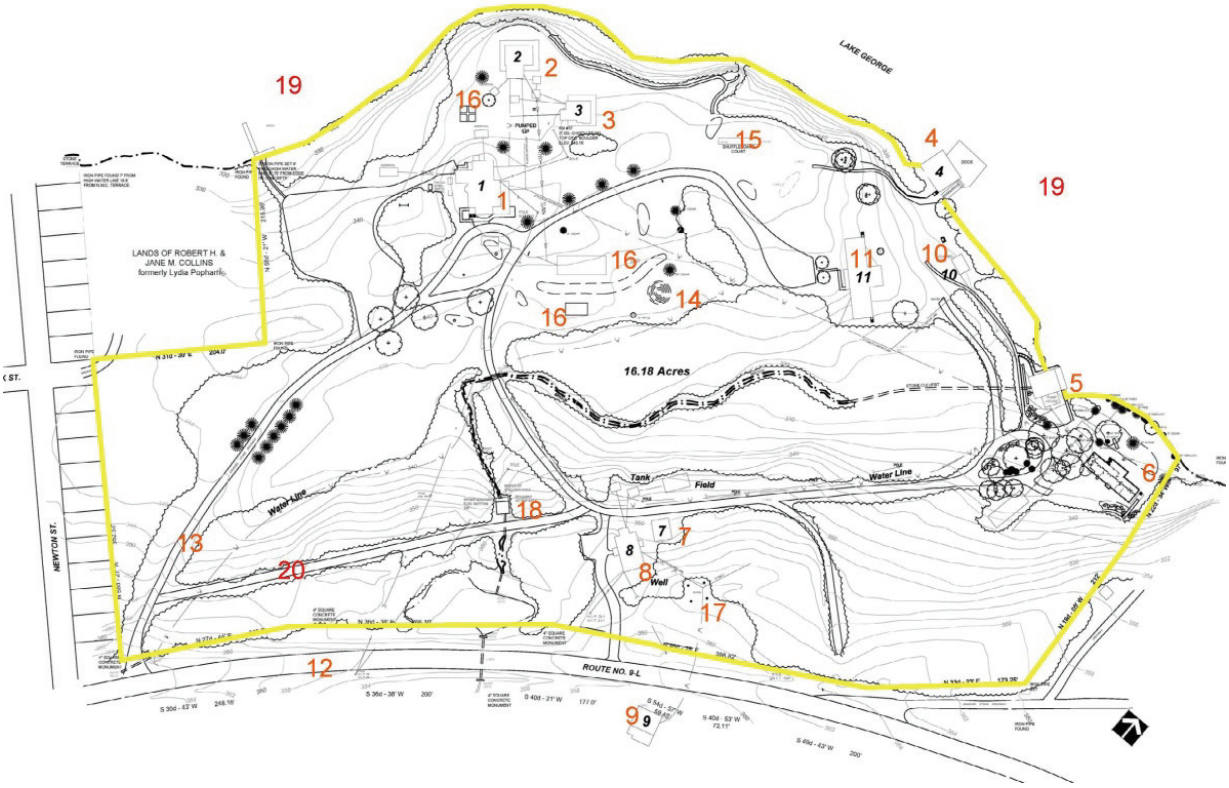
2013 HALS Challenge Entry: *Documenting the Cultural Landscapes of Women*



Site Map:

1. Fuller House (1876)
2. Mayflower Cottage (1873)
3. Rose Cottage (1873)
4. Boat House (1907)
5. House of Trix (1904)
6. Wakonda Lodge (1905)
7. Storage Building (formerly Ice House) (1907)
8. Pine Cottage (1876)
9. Maintenance and Storage Building (formerly Barn) (1912)
10. Gazebo (1940s)
11. Lake House (1963)
12. New York State Route 9L (military road from 1770s, designated 1930)
13. Entry Drive
14. Walking Trails
15. Lake George

Base image courtesy the New York State Statewide Digital Orthoimagery Program. 2008.



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11. Lake House (1963)
12. New York State Route 9L (military road from 1770s, designated 1930)
13. Entry Drive
14. Labyrinth
15. Shuffleboard Court
16. Gardens
17. Foundation
18. Spillway
19. Lake George
20. Original route of highway/now walking path

Base image courtesy the New York State Statewide Digital Orthoimagery Program. 2008.

Fuller House and entry drive (Lisa Tonneson-McCorkell, June 21, 2013).

Rose Cottage and access drive (Lisa Tonneson-McCorkell, June 21, 2013).

Labyrinth (Lisa Tonneson-McCorkell, June 21, 2013).

Mayflower Cottage with Lake George views (Lisa Tonneson-McCorkell, June 21, 2013).

Boat House and dock (Lisa Tonneson-McCorkell, June 21, 2013).

House of Trix (Lisa Tonneson-McCorkell, June 21, 2013).

Access drive and storage building (Ice house) (Lisa Tonneson-McCorkell, June 21, 2013).

Gardens (Lisa Tonneson-McCorkell, June 21, 2013).

Maintenance Building (prior barn) at Route 9L (Lisa Tonneson-McCorkell, June 21, 2013).

Great lawn with temporary tent set up for a wedding (Lisa Tonneson-McCorkell, June 21, 2013).