

# THE CLERMONT FORUM

Report by Warren R. Hofstra, December 2011

## INTRODUCTION:

A *forum*, in its various meanings, is a place, an event, and a process. So it is with the Clermont Forum. The place is Clermont farm, all its appurtenances, and its community centered in Berryville, Virginia, but also including the lower Shenandoah Valley and Northern Virginia. The event upon which this report focuses—the Clermont Forum—took place as a series of presentations, commentary, and public discussions in Berryville, Virginia, on June 24–25, 2011. The process initiated with the Clermont Forum is ongoing, deliberative, and derivative of the historical and material assets of Clermont as resources for addressing a wide variety of contemporary issues of significance to the Clermont community and the nation as well as the world of which Clermont is apart.

## PURPOSE:

The purpose of this initial phase of the Clermont Forum has been to assess the historical significance of the archival holdings and physical fabric of Clermont and to evaluate the public purposes to which these resources could be put. This effort was conducted as an element of a much larger and longer planning process initiated by the board of Clermont Farm in the effort to establish and define the site as a state historic park in Virginia under the ownership and responsibility of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR).

The Clermont Forum of June 2011 held as its objective the assessment of Clermont's historical significance by academic experts according to seven major thematic areas previously identified by the Clermont board, namely, agriculture, architecture, women's history, African American history, military history, legal history, and public or community history. Although based on historical and architectural research into the archival and material resources of the Clermont estate, these presentations were intended to engage a diverse public and professional audience of people concerned for the future of Clermont and its role in the community. By assessing the historical significance and cultural value of these themes, by exploring the historic resources at Clermont that support them, and by stimulating public input into their development, presentations and commentary at the Forum will contribute to the planning process required to determine the ultimate use of Clermont as a state historic site and public facility.

## PRODUCTS:

The primary product emerging from the Clermont Forum will be a report prepared and submitted by Warren Hofstra. This report will summarize and interpret the papers prepared by the historian-scholars and the deliberations they stimulated at the Forum. But most importantly this report will assess the Forum proceedings for the contribution they can make to the planning process at Clermont and the preparation of the report to the Virginia Department of Historic

Resources, *Plan for the Uses and Interpretation of Clermont*. The input from scholars and their evaluation of the significance of Clermont's identified historical themes will allow Clermont to seek effective application of its historic resources in the future and insure the highest possible public use of the property.

The products of the Clermont Forum will also include nine papers addressing the significance of historical and material resources at Clermont and their possible uses in not only interpreting the site but also developing it for public uses. Employing very prominent and well-recognized scholars in the process of research and interpretation will lend immeasurable credibility and academic respect for public programs at Clermont while, at the same time, this approach will enhance public appreciation for these programs.

A final product of the Clermont Forum entails the intangible but inestimable good will of a community incorporated into the planning process for developing the mission and programs of Clermont. It is this collaboration between Clermont and its community that will determine and define the success of Clermont's program in the future.

#### SCOPE AND SCHEDULE OF WORK:

1. **Formulation (March–June 2010):** The effort of organizing and implementing the Clermont Forum began in March 2010, when Warren Hofstra was invited to direct the effort of recruiting scholar participants to assess the archival and material resources of Clermont and to take the lead in the presentation of their findings at a public forum planned originally for fall 2010. Hofstra agreed but recommended that the forum be deferred to the following spring or early summer so as to accommodate an initial planning meeting with the scholar participants for the purpose of acquainting them with the specific history of Clermont by theme, the physical resources of the estate, the current state of its relationship with the VDHR, the personnel of Clermont staff and board, and the possible missions of a projected state historic park at Clermont. The board concurred and fixed the date of this planning meeting for November 19, 2011.
2. **Recruitment (May–August, 2010):** Hofstra began identifying and recruiting scholar participants during the summer of 2010 according to their expertise in each of the seven thematic areas previously defined by the board. Explicit criteria guided this effort: (1) Each participant was to be a publically recognized specialist in the thematic area of their assigned proficiency, (2) each participant would possess acknowledged skill and experience in the public interpretation of his or her field of scholarly expertise, and (3) each was to be willing to work outside the usual parameters of academic life and scholarship in a creative and innovative planning process with an unprecedented and undetermined outcome for a historic site of yet-to-be-established significance. Hofstra completed this task by the end of August 2010. The roster of scholar participants with brief biographies can be found in appendix 1 of this report.
3. **Planning meeting for scholar participants (November 18–19, 2010):** The planning meeting was held during an evening and the full day following on November 18–19, 2010.

Arriving in Berryville and accommodated at the Battletown Inn, the scholar participants attended an introductory reception sponsored by the Clarke County Historical Association at the society's headquarters and museum on Main Street in the town followed by a dinner with Clermont board and staff members at the Battletown. Working sessions were conducted the following day at Clermont and at the Josephine School Community Museum.

4. **Research and preparation of presentations and papers (November 2010–June 2011):**

Whereas the purpose of the planning meeting was to equip scholar participants with the information necessary for their work, these individuals then conducted research and prepared papers on their thematic areas from the conclusion of the meeting until presentations at the Forum began the following June. Since the Forum was conceived as a first round of review and critique on the papers, scholar participants had an additional two months following the Forum for the completion of papers. Additional funds for travel and accommodation were made available to scholars to facilitate work in Berryville where archival resources are housed with the holdings of the Clarke County Historical Association. Mary Morris, archivist for both the association and for Clermont, assisted famously with this work.

5. **Clermont Forum (June 24–25, 2011):** Because the object of the Clermont Forum was to engage the public in discussion with the scholar presenters, the Forum was held in public spaces: the Parish Hall of Grace Episcopal Church in Berryville on Friday, June 24 and on the following day, Saturday, at the old courthouse also in Berryville. In order to facilitate public response to and discussion about presentations by scholars, four individuals from the Clarke County community participated as a panel in each session to raise questions, provide comment, and stimulate discussion. Presentations were grouped into two-hour thematic sessions according to topic: two on Friday afternoon beginning at 12:45 and 3:15 and two on Saturday morning at 9:30 and 12:30 (see Clermont Forum program in appendix). Ample breaks between sessions allowed for discussion among presenters, commentators, and members of the audience. To further the objective of engaging the public in the discussion of Clermont's historical significance and in the process of planning for the public use to which the themes inherent in Clermont's history could be put, Friday concluded with a reception consisting of all locally prepared foods, and the Forum itself ended over a luncheon on Saturday afternoon.

- a. Approximately sixty-five people attended the opening Forum sessions on Friday and about forty-five were present the following Saturday morning. Public discussion was vigorous and productive but not as fulsome as was hoped or expected.
- b. By the conclusion of the Forum, it had become evident to the scholar-presenters that interesting and important themes, analyses, and interpretations were beginning to emerge from the cross fertilization of ideas at Forum sessions. This type of intellectual interchange about practical outcomes was, of course, the objective of the Forum, but the consensus among participants was that more time was required to pursue these ideas and render them applicable to the planning needs of Clermont. Thus the necessity of a follow-up session among scholar presenters was born at the Clermont Forum.

6. **Clermont Forum Evaluation Session (October 21, 2011):** With the approval by and financial support from the Clermont board of directors, an evaluation meeting of scholar presenters was held at Clermont Farm from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Friday, October 21, 2011. Board members participated on their own initiative, and approximately six to eight were in attendance at all times. Because all of the participant scholars had read each other's papers, discussion focused on themes and interpretations common among them. During the morning session, each participant summarized his or her findings according to designated themes and engaged in open discussion about its significance in terms of the archival holdings and architectural assets of Clermont. The afternoon session was devoted to crafting recommendations for the planning process at Clermont as the board and staff prepares its report to the VDHR.

#### SIGNIFICANCE AND PUBLIC VALUE OF CLERMONT'S HISTORICAL ASSETS:

Each participant scholar in the Clermont Forum was asked to review and evaluate the archival or architectural holdings of the Clermont estate in light of two questions: (1) "What is the significance of the historical theme upon which you are working as it is articulated in the archival, material, and oral history resources of Clermont"; and (2) "what is the public value of knowledge within your thematic area for Clermont and its community?" In sum, none of the scholar presenters assessed the historic resources and holdings of Clermont within his or her thematic area as insignificant. Each found these resources significant in different ways and in different contexts, but all agreed that Clermont's history is highly significant at the various levels of local, regional, national, and in some cases, transnational history. The completed papers addressing these questions and reviewing each scholar's findings are enclosed with this report. Synopses follow:

1. **Kym Rice, "Out with the Old, in with the New: Rethinking Clermont as a Historic Site."** Kym Rice began the Forum because her presentation on museums and communities was intended not as a review of any particular set of historic resources at Clermont but as an assessment of the contemporary status of history museums in American life and the possible roles Clermont could play as a state historic site in Virginia. Rice asserted that every successful historic site must have a compelling story to tell whether it is a historic house museum, a collection-based institution, or a site for varied cultural activities. Moreover, those museums thriving in the twenty-first century, she observed, are those deeply engaged in their communities as institutions to which people look not only for the preservation of their past but also for addressing issues significant in the present or the future. In the latter case history museums can provide a forum in which lessons from the past can be brought to bear on the needs of people today.
2. **Kenneth E. Koons, "Farming at Clermont during the Age of Grain: The World of Edward McCormick."** In assessing the significance of the agricultural history of Clermont and the archival sources to recount this history, Kenneth Koons focused on the activities of Edward McCormack, who owned and farmed Clermont from 1848 until his death in 1870. There are good reasons for this decision. McCormick's activities at Clermont fell squarely at the center of the period of high farming in the Shenandoah

Valley when farmers had developed agriculture in the region to an art form based on the high productivity of grains, primarily wheat, and wheaten flour. As Koons demonstrates, the Shenandoah Valley led the South in the production of wheat by both per acre and per capita measures of productivity. Clarke County, moreover, led the Valley in this regard, and Edward McCormack ranked among the top 20 percent of farmers in the county. Clearly McCormack's agricultural activities at Clermont were significant during the peak period of the "Age of Grain," which overall lasted from the late eighteenth century until the 1950s and shaped practically every aspect of rural life in the region.

Most significant among the features of agriculture in which Clermont and McCormick excelled was the diversity of rural enterprise. In addition to producing wheat—2,500 bushels in 1850—and flour, McCormick engaged in "general mixed farming" and the cultivation of other grains such as rye, oats, and corn; the raising of livestock including cattle, horses, oxen, swine, sheep, chickens, and various other barnyard fowl; and the production of other crops such as hay. The full range of commodities that Clermont yielded during this period would have included various kinds and grades of flour in addition to meat, hides, wool, cheese, milk, other dairy goods, honey, feathers, hay, yarn, and other commodities as demanded by domestic needs and the market economy. Although wheat and flour produced the greatest income, diversity was the keystone of agricultural activity. Diversity allowed for agricultural sustainability, market responsiveness, and protection from economic downturns. In the final analysis, the full significance of agriculture at Clermont from the end of the eighteenth century to mid-twentieth century lay not only in productivity but also in diversity and sustainability.

- 3. Melvin Patrick Ely, "House of Bondage, Springboard into Freedom: Clermont and Clarke County's Black Community."** Mel Ely shared responsibility with Karen Hughes White for evaluating the African American history of Clermont and reviewing Clermont's assets for studying and interpreting this history. As Ely puts it: "Clermont and Clarke County boast a fascinating and sometimes surprising African American history. That story should be presented to the public" (p. 1). Ely's report leaves little doubt that associations between Clermont and African American peoples both in slavery and in freedom are significant not only for the African Americans of contemporary Clarke County, including all those living on the Josephine Street today, but also for the larger story of African Americans in the sum of American history. Clarke County and its system of mixed agriculture and grain farming, Ely acknowledges, bears the status of an "outlier" in the economic and social systems of earlier Virginias in which slavery played a major role in tobacco production. But the history of the county "*both in its representativeness and in its peculiarities*, can help us define what has been 'normal' in the history of the American South" (p. 2). That the combination of general agriculture and slave labor conferred upon Clarke County an outlier status increases opportunities for and enhances the significance of further study of slavery's economic and social adaptability in antebellum America.

Due to its outlier status and the diverse labor demands of mixed agriculture, Clarke County not only possessed a "numerically significant" free black population but free people also "participated noticeably in the antebellum economy," they served as a lightning rod "in defenses of slavery that white Virginians generated," and their

relationships with white people were “far more varied, and sometimes more friendly, than has generally been assumed” (p. 2). Therefore Clermont and Clarke County constitute an excellent site for the study of the complex interaction between slavery and freedom in American life before the Civil War and for how the place and its region became a “springboard into freedom” (p. 1) as a result of the conflict. The activities of antebellum emancipationists such as William Meade and Ann Randolph Mead Page, the development of small but autonomous black communities after the Civil War, and the large outmigration of black people in post-Reconstruction society demonstrate how this springboard might have worked in the story of African American freedom. For the purposes of researching and relating all these developments, the archival holdings and architectural assets of Clermont prove sufficient and substantial.

4. **Karen Hughes White, “African American Daily Life at Clermont.”** Karen Hughes White’s research makes abundantly clear that the architectural and archival holdings of Clermont not only document African American life there extensively but that these resources reveal the significance of the lives of both slaves and freed people in the larger story of Clermont’s history. As Hughes comments: “Clermont cannot be accurately interpreted without extensive efforts to interpret the African American presence and the intricate laws that governed their daily lives from slavery to freedom” (p. 2). The extent of information about African American lives at Clermont, White asserts, also allows for possible collaborations with major research efforts at historic sites such as Monticello and Mount Vernon to document and vivify the lives of these people. Clermont could additionally contribute significantly to the National Park Service “Network to Freedom” program.

Moreover, the scope of the Clermont archives invites extensive research into important subjects such as the family connections among Clermont slaves and within the larger slave community of Clarke County, the religious practices of both slaves and slaveholders, the economy of slaveholding in the diverse, mixed agricultural systems described by Kenneth Koons, the transition from a slave to a free society in the course of the 1860s, and additional topics such as the medical care of slaves, slave hiring, slave artisans, and the resistance of slaves themselves to the peculiar institution. Regarding the final point, the Clermont archives document the remarkable stories of particular slaves such as James Lee, who vigorously resisted attempts by the McCormicks to sell him, or of Jack, who at the same time he had won the affection of his owners earned their fear as a black man who evidently defied the will of whites with power over him.

All of the ambiguities of the slavery, in other words, are fully evident in the Clermont archives—as are the challenges of freedom and reconstruction after the Civil War. Vital information about the founding and development of the Josephine community and the stories of Josephine Street people are contained in these archives. In conclusion, White’s research makes a strong case for the significance not only of the lives of enslaved African Americans at Clermont and their free descendants but also of the power of the Clermont archives to tell their stories.

5. **Deborah A. Lee, “Wedded to the Land, Nurturing Its People: Women at Clermont.”** The broad scope and considerable depth of content in Deborah Lee’s report on the resources for women’s history at Clermont makes a case for the great significance of the

lives of women documented at Clermont and the profound impact of women on life at the farm and in the communities of its region. Lee focuses on the women of the McCormick era from the 1820s through the tenure of Elizabeth Rust Williams. In addition to Williams, many remarkable women stand out in Clermont's history, about which there are ample resources in the Clermont archives to describe personal, social, and public lives. Most notable are Ellen Lane (Jett) McCormick, Josephine Williams, and Elizabeth Stribling Wright (Milton) Taylor—Edward McCormick's "Aunt Bet"—because as a frequent visitor to Clermont she was close to her sister Florinda Milton McCormick (Mrs. Dawson McCormick) as well as Edward's wife Ellen McCormick. Aunt Bet's story by itself stands out as a vignette about family, nurturing, and childcare of not only great power and complexity in her community but also of considerable significance for American women's history nationally. Ellen McCormick operated Clermont independently for more than three decades after her husband Edward died in 1870. And the story of Josephine Williams, the African American woman after whom the Josephine Street Community was named, traces the lives of black women from slavery to freedom.

Three themes stand out in Lee's interpretation: (a) nurturing, (b) place, and (c) lineage. As Lee explains: (a) "the women cared for others physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually"; (b) "the women were deeply connected to place—their homes, the land and landscape"; and (c) "they also seemed deeply interconnected with the living and the ancestors that came before them" (p. 1). These themes and the women who embody them in Lee's accounting possess extraordinary power to illuminate major issues and developments at key moments in American history such as the Civil War, the Progressive Era of the early twentieth century, and the culturally transformative era of the 1960s.

6. **Dennis J. Pogue, "Clermont: Portrait of an Evolved 'Virginia' House."** According to Dennis Pogue, the architectural significance of Clermont lies in what the structure reveals about the architectural history of its immediate area, about the larger regional architecture of the Chesapeake, and about the architectural transformations shaping the Atlantic world from the middle of the eighteenth to the twentieth century. Key to architectural change and its meaning at Clermont is the additive nature of the edifice and the reflection of discrete building campaigns in its separate structural features. In this regard, Pogue compares Clermont to some of Virginia's most famous and revered dwellings such as George Washington's Mount Vernon and Thomas Jefferson's Monticello. As Pogue observes these monuments "followed international design models and strove to meld the phases of building behind the now iconic neo-classical facades" (p. 1). Although its owners and builders were "less prominent" and the house they produced "less pretentious," Clermont "nevertheless underwent many of the same types of changes that occurred at the homes of their more famous neighbors" (p. 1).

The architectural significance of Clermont, however, lies in more than its resemblance to or association with the world-famous architectural monuments of Virginia. The independence of the various elements of Clermont and their lack of integration into an architectural whole such as exists at other additive structures including Mount Vernon render Clermont a "remarkably well-preserved palimpsest of architectural evidence and a fascinating cultural artifact" (p. 2). At Clermont the original structure of Thomas Waddington represents an excellent model of contemporary planter architecture

throughout the Chesapeake region extending apparently as an outlier in this case into the Shenandoah Valley. Each addition including the dining room, kitchen, central passage, two-story stone pile, and various porches or outbuildings reflects trends evident throughout not only the Shenandoah Valley but also across the Atlantic world. At Clermont, however, expressions of these trends achieve a spatial autonomy and architectural distinction that renders the structure as unique as it is typical. This remarkable combination of elements in a single structure allows Clermont to stand out as an exceptional site for architectural research and material culture education in Virginia.

7. **Maral S. Kalbian, “From Wadlington to Williams: Clermont as an Evolving Homestead.”** Maral Kalbian’s analysis of the architectural history of Clermont from the point of view of its occupants and from the perspective of its context in the material culture created by other dwellings and structures in the region confirms the contention that Clermont is “one of the best understood houses in the state when considering its original construction and subsequent additions and alterations” (p. 1). Thus the architectural significance of Clermont arises from the clear articulation of its construction history and with the help of accurate dendrochronological dating, the association of distinct building campaigns and structural elements with particular owners. The social history of architectural space and room use as expressed at Clermont therefore provides an extremely important research opportunity for the dwelling as a study site.

The significance of Clermont within the larger architectural history of its region also arises from the regional context of the structure, its various elements, and their builders. Extensive knowledge gained in the study of the social and material cultural history of Clermont can assist in illuminating the architectural meaning of other structures contemporaneous to Clermont in each of its building phases in the same way that information about building practices throughout the region can be brought to bear on the further exploration of Clermont’s architectural significance. In sum, it is the clarity of the associations among the building history of Clermont, the social history of its builders, and the important architectural contexts in which the building of Clermont progressed that establishes the site as an architectural expression of great significance in the history of American architecture. Maral Kalbian also includes the slaves quarters and the meat house in her evaluation of architecture at Clermont arguing that the excellent state of preservation of both structures and their unique construction add to the architectural significance of the site.

8. **Peter Wallenstein, “Law, Medicine, and Clermont.”** Peter Wallenstein chronicles the long history of men and women who owned Clermont, lived there, or were associated with it and who also practiced either law or medicine. Wallenstein’s catalogue of lives and careers by itself speaks to the significance of the site for telling the stories of law and politics in Clarke County, the history of medical practice, or the struggle of women to establish themselves in a legal profession that well into the fourth quarter of the twentieth century remained an exclusive preserve of men. Many of the lawyers and doctors were members of the McCormick family who traced their origins in the region to Dr. John McCormick and include Francis, Cyrus, Province, Charles, Hugh Holmes, Marshall, Albert Montgomery Dupuy, and James Jett McCormick. Involved in the settlement of the Shenandoah Valley and many of its most significant events such as the founding of

Clarke County in 1836, the Civil War, or the reconstruction of the region during the postwar epoch, these men provide the means for writing a larger history of Clermont and Clarke County.

Critical to these personal stories, however, would be the Clermont women in the law who before 1920 were prevented from attending law school or practicing law as members of the bar. Although never trained as a lawyer but serving as a juvenile court judge from 1924 to 1931, was Rose Mortimer Ellzey MacDonald, who was also an educator serving as supervisor of Clarke County's rural schools and author of several histories of the South for young readers. Elemental to Wallenstein's thesis, however, is Elizabeth Rust Williams, whose McCormick connections apparently suited her for the law and by the early 1980s provided a legacy sufficient to sustain her as the first woman lawyer in Clarke County in company with her colleague Mary Ellen Kerr. It was Williams, of course, who established Clermont as an estate designated for public use and who could serve as a medium for continuing the discussion Deborah Lee began on issues of gender and public service in connection with Clermont.

9. **Joseph W. A. Whitehorne, "Clermont as Military Witness."** Like Peter Wallenstein for the fields of law and medicine, Joe Whitehorne finds that the owners and occupants of Clermont with significant military careers span two and one half centuries and touch upon major aspects of American military history. People associated with Clermont participated in every American war from the French and Indian War to World War II, and some played very prominent roles in American military life. Whitehorne concludes that beginning with the Spanish-American War of 1898 the careers of members of the interrelated McCormick and Williams families plot the rise to global power of the American nation and trace the course of world history in developments that have come to be regarded as defining the American century.

The significance of Clermont during the Civil War derives from its proximity to major campaigns such as Antietam and Gettysburg as well as to the worst wartime atrocities associated with the guerilla campaigns of Major John Singleton Mosby. Both Edward McCormick, the exemplar of high farming according to Ken Koons, and his nephew, Province McCormick, served in the Confederate Army, the former as depot quartermaster and the latter as a cavalryman. Other prominent Clermont men played important roles in America's wars beginning with Edward Snickers in the French and Indian War and his son William in the American Revolution.

As in the field of law, it was the McCormicks and Williams who beginning with the French and Indian War provide stories and historic resources with which major aspects of American military and national history can be told. Five of Dr. John McCormick's sons saw military service in the French and Indian War and the Revolution. Two of the family patriarch's grandsons, Province and William, served in the War of 1812. Most notable and distinguished was the service of Albert Montgomery Dupuy McCormick in the Spanish American War, of Lloyd Williams in the World War I, and finally Lynde D. McCormick in the First and Second World Wars. Williams has become an icon of U. S. Marine heroism earning the U. S. Silver Star at Bellaeu Wood and shortly before his death proclaiming "Retreat, Hell! We just got here!" a phrase now engraved in stone on the frieze of the National Marine Corps Museum. Lynde D. McCormick also served in the U. S. Navy in World War I and remaining in the service

rose to battleship command in World War II and later during the Cold War to Chief of Naval Operations and head of NATO naval forces. So it is with good reason that Whitehorne attaches national and international significance to historic events witnessed by Clermont through a remarkable cast of military leaders associated with it.

**Summary: The Historical Significance of Clermont:** The summary consensus among all these scholars and investigators is that the historical and architectural resources of the Clermont estate are sufficient to establish its significance locally, regionally, nationally and in some cases internationally according to each of the themes identified by the board of directors. Moreover, the conjunction of these themes in various ensembles creates additional broad areas of historical significance.

Most notable among these broad areas would be the theme of **agricultural and economic activity**. Clermont was settled as an outlying plantation of an extraordinarily profitable Virginia system of tobacco production during the British colonial period. Architectural associations link the earliest phases of construction at Clermont to building practices in tidewater, Virginia. The early owners of Clermont, however, quickly made a transition to the mixed grain and livestock farming characteristic of the Shenandoah Valley. Economic diversification often including by-employment was key to this success. The career of Edward Snickers as a civilian contractor, paymaster, and commissary officer in the French and Indian War and American Revolution testifies to the role Clermont has played in shaping a system of agricultural production and marketing that characterized the American economy in the period of the early Republic and the market revolution that shaped it. Diversification was certainly the defining feature of the period of high farming that defined the economy of the Shenandoah Valley by the mid-nineteenth century in which slave labor was incorporated into the system of mixed grain and livestock production. This system, personified by the family of Edward McCormick, integrated domestic and agriculture production in which Clermont emerges as one of the most productive farms in one of the most productive agricultural regions in the United States at that time. Because mixed farming integrated family and commercial farming, the theme of agricultural significance also embodies the productive lives of women and slaves and creates a material culture of economic intensification. In this manner, the agricultural and economic significance of Clermont encompasses most of the thematic areas addressed in this report, most notably agriculture, architecture, women's history, and African American history. Insofar as economic diversification has assumed extraordinary importance in today's twenty-first-century system of private contracting, small business, and autonomous employment, the historic significance of Clermont in this regard has important implications for public and community history in the multitude of examples in the Clermont archives of how its people bent and adapted to economic circumstances and opportunities in the past. Asking the question of how someone like Edward McCormick might have responded to today's opportunities for utilizing alternative energies or for recycling waste products as soil nutrients can actually help guide contemporary decision making in an agricultural community such as Clarke County remains today.

Integral to Clermont's agricultural significance is the thematic area of **architecture and material culture**. Here too, the historic importance of a number of themes converge in an important interpretative opportunity at Clermont. As both Dennis Pogue and Maral Kalbian demonstrate, Clermont is not only one of the most thoroughly studied buildings in Virginia but the additive nature of its structure spanning more than two hundred years of history gives

meaning to each building campaign at the site in the human terms of its owners' and occupants' ambitions or values and in the cultural terms of those fundamental movements reshaping the material culture of the Atlantic world during this long period. Agricultural activities, the lives of women, and the labor of African American slaves all find expression in the architecture of Clermont.

So do the **lives of notable people**. As this report makes clear, critical to establishing a vigorous and sustainable role for any cultural institution in America today are the historically important stories that define a site and shape its significance. In the absence of a single life of extraordinary historical importance, Clermont has the opportunity to explore and present the lives of numerous ordinary people who lived through periods of extraordinary stress or possibility at the site. Already mentioned, for instance, the experiences of Edward McCormick during the Civil War or Edward Snickers during the American Revolution identify realms of historic significance in which defining moments in history become real in the lives of otherwise plain folk. This claim can be made particularly for the lives of women and African Americans who lived through these as well as other periods and who demonstrated an outstanding capacity to seize initiative to manage agricultural enterprises, found new communities, fight oppression, strike a blow for freedom by resisting slavery, or find independence, in one notable instance as the first woman lawyer in a community. The extraordinary lives of Clermont people and families in the fields of law and military service are amply documented in this report and in the cases of individuals such as Lloyd Williams or Lynde D. McCormick assume proportions of great national and international significance.

And finally, the historic significance of Clermont rises in importance with what Deborah Lee identified as an ever-magnifying **power of place** in shaping people's lives, in nurturing others, in consolidating family lineages of domestic, professional, and public service, and providing a particular place—Clermont—with a role to play in a community that can be as sustainable as it is profound. Clermont is a place where numerous stories can be told, each significant in itself but creating as an assemblage a legacy of great historical significance.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

Along with the brief of assessing the significance of Clermont's historic resources, each scholar participant was asked to envision how these resources might be best put to use in shaping Clermont's future mission. At the Clermont Forum Evaluation Session, participants reconsidered the two questions that shaped the Forum in June ("What is the significance of the historical theme upon which you are working as it is articulated in the archival, material, and oral history resources of Clermont?" and "What is the public value of knowledge within your thematic area for Clermont and its community?") Additionally participants were asked to provide advice on a third question: "What are the implications of answers to these two questions for planning for Clermont as a public resource." Recommendations offered in individual papers and collectively as a consensus of the Evaluation Session follow:

1. **Kym Rice, "Out with the Old, in with the New: Rethinking Clermont as a Historic Site."** Rice offered numerous recommendations on her own behalf based on her expertise as a museum professional and professor of museum studies. Her paper makes clear that the kind of success for which Clermont as a cultural site strives requires that

institutions embody a compelling story and that they fully engage the contemporary life of the community. More specifically, Clermont could:

- a. participate in joint ticketing arrangements and thematic tours with area museums and cultural institutions,
  - b. employ theatrical presentation, social media, and new technologies to reach a wider public,
  - c. develop innovative and imaginative public programming that supports community initiatives and efforts,
  - d. engage in partnership arrangements with other cultural or civic institutions to share space, programs, and staff,
  - e. create recreational programs and cooperative gardens for the benefit of community health and nutrition,
  - f. explore partnerships with educational and community arts organizations for the development of arts and artisan programming and instruction,
  - g. repurpose itself as a center for sustainable agriculture,
  - h. cooperate with the Josephine School Community Museum in the interpretation of African American life in the Shenandoah Valley, and
  - i. interpret Clermont's story by developing exhibit space within the Clermont house.
2. **Kenneth E. Koons, "Farming at Clermont during the Age of Grain: The World of Edward McCormick."** Insofar as productivity, diversity, flexibility, and sustainability characterized the agricultural system at Clermont during the Age of Grain and high farming in American agriculture, the history of farming on the estate provides a wealth of examples illuminating contemporary concerns for the future of agriculture in areas like Clarke County striving on the one hand to capitalize on proximity to major urban markets and on the other to preserve agricultural open space and the rural ways of life that sustain it. If Clermont were to become an experimental or demonstration farm modeling sustainable agriculture in new farm-to-market consumer economies, then its own, well-documented history provides invaluable resources for demonstrating the efficacy and efficiency of high productivity, diversity, general mixed farming, sustainability, and the combination of market responsiveness and resistance to industrial farming so characteristic of nineteenth-century agriculture in its best and highest form. How someone such as Edward McCormick might have responded to the kind of opportunities availing themselves to Clermont today such as the use grey water and fertilizers from neighboring sewage treatment plants, the production of whiskey from farm-raised products such as barley, corn, or rye, the provision of educational resources for regional school systems, and so forth can provide a guide for the future development of Clermont not only as a demonstration farm modeling sustainable agriculture and alternative energies but also as a state historic site. More specifically Koons suggests that Clermont could:
- a. market historic products such as stone-ground flours, beef, pork, lamb, whiskey, apples, cider, pork, truffles, range-fed poultry, honey, wax, wool, milk, cream, cheese, yogurt, soaps, lotions, grass-fed lambs, wool and many other commercially viable goods deriving from the "symbiotic interdependence" of general mixed farming;
  - b. offer farm stays and vacations with on-site bed and breakfast accommodations;

- c. develop a scholarly center for the study and practice of historic agricultural techniques in relation to issues of agricultural sustainability and alternative energy so important today; and
  - d. serve as a visitor center for agricultural tourist in the Shenandoah Valley.
3. **Melvin Patrick Ely, “House of Bondage, Springboard into Freedom: Clermont and Clarke County’s Black Community.”** Clermont, according to Ely, is particularly well situated to research and interpret two important themes in the history of the region: black self-help in churches, schools, and community institutions; and interracial relations. Ely illustrates the latter point with examples of how the complex interactions among members of the McCormick family and the African Americans of Josephine Street have been misinterpreted and how misconceptions about racial tensions have complicated black-white relations that were in fact more friendly and mutually respectful than appearances would allow. Both endeavors ought to be pursued only in partnership with the Josephine Street Community Museum “to present the *entire sweep* of Clarke County’s black history” and only with the “participation of black residents of Clarke in every step” (p. 7). As for “practical ideas . . . for disseminating the history of black (and white) life at Clermont and in Clarke County” (p. 12) Ely recommends:
- a. driving tours of African American life, neighborhoods, and sites of historical importance;
  - b. interpretative signage for these sites;
  - c. educational visits by students to the Josephine Street Community Museum; and
  - d. a possible Clermont summer camp devoted to African American history.
4. **Karen Hughes White, “African American Daily Life at Clermont.”** Karen Hughes White makes a strong case that the archives and architecture of Clermont possess remarkably rich resources for “those seeking a better understanding of roles and endurance of the once enslaved people of Clermont and the transition into reconstruction and the settlement of Josephine City” (p. 18). The most significant recommendation emerging from White’s work is that these resources ought to become the core of a major research effort and that this effort could be accompanied by an extensive series of public programs and interpretative exhibits on the lives of African Americans both slave and free. Such an undertaking would position Clermont to join the ranks of major historic sites in Virginia such as Monticello, Mount Vernon, and Montpelier in a larger effort to illuminate the story of African Americans in both Virginia and the nation.
5. **Deborah A. Lee, “Wedded to the Land, Nurturing Its People: Women at Clermont.”** Deborah Lee keys specific recommendations for the future of Clermont and affiliated public programming to the inner history of woman at or associated with the site. Cast as recommendations, Lee’s three themes of nurturing, place, and lineage constitute a mission “to nurture members of the community in a holistic way that includes body, mind, and spirit; to help them connect with the land, landscape, and growing things; and to help them engage in the present and build the future in a conscious way that is sensitive to the needs and aspirations of the community” (p. 1). In taking this approach to recommendations Lee provides insightful and influential methods by which the history of Clermont can be brought to bear on the needs and issues of the present. More

specifically, she suggests that in the future Clermont could develop a true community garden not of individual plots but of shared land and efforts. As exemplified by the historic women of Clermont, foodways could become a special concern of the historic site through public programs addressing not only what people ate but the places and means by which historic figures also produced and prepared their own food. Special programming for children could encourage young people to begin thinking along these lines. And the continuation of a farm apprentice program could encourage future farmers to look to the past of what Ken Koons called the “Age of High Farming” for models of sustainable, energy-efficient, alternative farming today.

6. **Dennis J. Pogue, “Clermont: Portrait of an Evolved ‘Virginia’ House.”** According to Dennis Pogue, recommendations concerning the public uses to which Clermont would lend itself emanate from its status as an “unparalleled example of an evolved 18<sup>th</sup>-century house for which more precise dating evidence has been found than anywhere else [in Virginia] to date” (p. 12). By “evolved” Pogue refers to the additive process of construction by which Clermont developed across more than two centuries in the clear articulation of discrete structural elements and building campaigns. This clarity lends Clermont exceptional value for architectural study and research, and Pogue recommends that the value of Clermont for material culture scholarship be fully explored and developed. This could be accomplished through additional sponsored research or through academic programs such as future Clermont Forums on the architectural significance of the site and its appurtenances. These forums should produce collaborative publications. A major objective in these undertakings would include “understanding how Clermont fits within the local context of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century architecture of Clarke County and of the Upper Shenandoah Valley” (p. 11). As more information and knowledge about Clermont is thus attained, its educational value will be enhanced accordingly, and Pogue recommends that instructional programs for the property and its architectural resources be developed for distribution to local educational institutions and more broadly through electronic and other new media.
7. **Maral S. Kalbian, “From Wadlington to Williams: Clermont as an Evolving Homestead.”** Maral Kalbian is cognizant that the specific architectural features of Clermont—the clarity of its construction sequence in relation to its occupants and to the regional environment of comparable structures—constitute its architectural significance and evoke recommendations for its additional study. More broadly conceived, however, the research agenda for Clermont should be promoted as an important opportunity for architectural historians and their students. Clermont could thus become one of the foremost study centers for the examination of material culture and architectural change in Virginia. Incorporating the slave quarters in this vision would additionally permit the integration of African American history into the study of Clermont and its cultural region.
8. **Peter Wallenstein, “Law, Medicine, and Clermont.”** Implicit in Wallenstein’s chronicle of men and women who practiced medicine and particularly law at Clermont is the recommendation for furthering research into the family associations of the estate and in the prominent example of the McCormicks, into the cultural associations among family, place, and profession. In the cases of medicine and law this research could lead

in many varied directions from themes of diet and health to history and politics. Wallenstein encourages us to ask, as Deborah Lee did, how the historical influences of place and lineage nurtured so many men and women who pursued the law not only as lawyers but also as judges and commonwealth attorneys.

9. **Joseph W. A. Whitehorne, “Clermont as Military Witness.”** If the association of family, place, and profession centered in Clermont governs the significance of the estate in American legal history, then it would clearly be Joe Whitehorne’s recommendation that the role of the McCormick and Williams families be given a prominent place in the interpretation of American military history as it can be revealed at Clermont. In Whitehorne’s vision, military history includes but also exceeds the chronicling of conflict to explore subjects such as the pardoning of Confederate leaders after the Civil War, the inflation of hostility in the partisan warfare exemplified by John Singleton Mosby, the logistical challenges of supplying mass armies faced by the likes of Edward McCormick, and the roles of civilian government thrust upon military forces in post-conflict situations. That members of the McCormick and Williams families helped shape the national history of the United State as it rose to global significance through the expansion of sea power during the early twentieth century and to the status of a super power as a result of World War II represents an important opportunity to become a widely recognized center for the exploration of these developments in American history and life.

**Summary: Recommendations for the Future of Clermont:** The recommendations emerging from the Clermont Forum are all based upon the historical significance of the site as previously described in this report. The historic significance of Clermont and recommendations for its future therefore go hand in hand, and the value of the recommendations is keyed to the significance of the estate’s archival and architectural resources.

1. **Clermont Forum:** The Clermont Forum held in June 2011 as the principle element of the project described in this report could be regarded as the first in a series of forums on topics related to the historic themes investigated herein. A forum in 2013, for instance, could be developed on the agricultural history of Clermont and the implications of general mixed farming for contemporary agricultural movements including farm-to-market production and the utilization of alternative energies. All future forums should explore how the historic and architectural resources of Clermont can be developed and brought to bear on important issues of contemporary concern in the region, state, and nation. These resources are sufficiently broad to embrace most issues confronting the community or the world today. Clermont could, therefore, become a central place for asking large questions of small places or in the contemporary cliché, for “thinking globally and acting locally.”
2. **Current Clermont Forum participants** could be asked to serve as consultants to Clermont in the future. They could additionally be invited to constitute an academic advisory board for the project. Current participants could also help identify additional consultants or advisory board members.
3. **Publications:** The papers written by the Clermont Forum participants were intended as reviews or reports and not publishable essays, but each participant could be encouraged to revise his or her work and publish it in a peer-reviewed journal in an appropriate field. Taking perhaps five years, this process could then yield a set of

essays that could be brought together and republished in a distinctive volume attesting to the historical significance of Clermont and establishing the academic credentials of the institution.

4. **Compelling stories** were one of the essential ingredients described by Kym Rice for the success of museums, historic sites, and cultural institutions. The Clermont Forum identified a number of stories of key individuals and their representative themes including those of Edward Snickers or Edward McCormick and the provision of armies during time of war, Edward McCormick and the Age of High Farming in American economic history, Jim Lee and the resistance to slavery, Josephine Williams and the transition from slavery to postbellum African American community life, Ellen Jett McCormick and farm management by women, Aunt Bet and the nurturing of children, Lloyd Williams and heroic military service, Lynde D. McCormick and American naval power in the Cold War, or Elizabeth Rust Williams and courageous women practicing law. Telling these stories could be the objects of Clermont publications, interpretive exhibits, and public programs. New media and communications technologies including on-line publication ought similarly to be explored for presenting these stories to Clermont's varied audiences.
5. **Community engagement** constitutes another area identified by Kym Rice and advocated by other Forum participants as essential for the planning process at Clermont. Numerous suggestions arose in planning, executing, and evaluating the Forum as valuable for effecting a close engagement between Clermont and its immediate community in the Shenandoah Valley and with the varied imagined communities of its larger audience. Clermont could
  - a. establish a series of public programs including lectures, seminars, demonstrations, or living history experiences addressing the themes of its archival and architectural resources;
  - b. partner with local institutions in educational, recreational, environmental, medical, and therapeutic programs;
  - c. develop a visitor center for agricultural tourism in the Shenandoah Valley;
  - d. collaborate with major historic sites in Virginia including Mount Vernon, Monticello, and Montpelier in the development of interpretive programs concerning slavery and freedom, agriculture, architecture, and other important historic themes;
  - e. assist in the creation of a network of African American historic sites in the Shenandoah Valley or more extensively throughout Virginia; and
  - f. institute programs addressing issues of race relations in association with the Josephine Street Community Museum that could include homecomings for descendants of the slaves who labored at Clermont.
6. **Demonstration or Experimental Farm for Sustainable Agriculture and Alternative Energies:** A consensus among Forum participants was that Clermont possesses an excellent opportunity to draw as deeply on a legacy of high farming in the Shenandoah Valley as on contemporary interests in sustainable farm-to-market agriculture and alternative energies to create a demonstration or experimental farm to serve as a model for rural community development in the Shenandoah Valley. Specific recommendations in this regard include the continuation and expansion of agricultural internships to train young people in new farming techniques; the

- development of facilities for extended farm visits, training workshops, and agricultural tourism; and the organization of special public events and demonstration programs to help disseminate information about what could be called the New High Farming in the twenty-first century.
7. **Research at Clermont** should continue as recommended by a number of presenters in specific areas, most notably architecture and material culture, the geography of Clermont's cultural region, African American life at Clermont and throughout the Shenandoah Valley, and landscape as an expression of the power of place over the lives of individuals, families, and communities. As exploratory essays, each of the papers included with this report suggests many additional research endeavors that could be significantly furthered and developed by institutional support from Clermont.
  8. **New media and technological resources** ought to be utilized for a variety of purposes relevant to the Clermont Forum and the larger objectives of the planning process at Clermont. These could include the on-line publication of Forum papers and other sponsored research, web access to the archival and architectural resources at Clermont, virtual conferencing, and interactive educational programs.

#### CONCLUSION:

What was accomplished with the Clermont Forum was as much a process as it was an event. The event, devised to assess the historical significance of the archival and architectural resources of Clermont and to evaluate the public value of these resources in a series of recommendations, has concluded. The process can continue. Out of this process has emerged a methodology for evaluating the historic significance of cultural sites or archival and architectural resources. This methodology could be applied elsewhere by other institutions. But the process of the Clermont Forum entails a larger objective of reconciling past and present and exploring the past for models, examples, or case studies for comprehending today's issues and challenges. Learning from the past in ways that not only illuminate the present without constraining its potential but also open the present to possible futures is not easy. So confounding can it be that contemporary academic institutions discourage its pursuit. But freed from institutional constraints in an open planning environment, the process of research, exposition, debate, and public engagement established by the Clermont Forum could become an integral part of the plan for Clermont as it evolves into a state historic park in Virginia.