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NEWS RELEASE

Historic Hudson Valley Welcomes State and Local Officials to Van Cortlandt Manor

July 29 event kicks off multi-year restoration project at National Historic Landmark

Croton-on-Hudson, NY (July 25, 2024) - Historic Hudson Valley is pleased to announce the launch of a multi-million-dollar restoration project at Van Cortlandt Manor, set to be completed in 2026. The project, designed to improve safety, accessibility, and site stabilization, will enhance Van Cortlandt Manor, a National Historic Landmark in Westchester. Historic Hudson Valley, which owns and operates the site, is hosting an event to officially announce the project on Monday, July 29, at 10am, with remarks from New York State Assemblywoman Dana Levenberg, New York State Senator Pete Harckham, Westchester County Deputy County Executive Ken Jenkins, and other local and state officials.

The project has received important funding from the Federal Highway Administration through the New York State Department of Transportation with a \$2.2 million appropriation, the Indian Point Community Fund, an Empire State Development grant of \$600,000, as well as Community Resiliency, Economic Sustainability, and Technology Program support with the assistance of New York State Senator Harckham and Assemblywoman Levenberg, who have allocated \$100,000 and \$125,000, respectively. The village of Croton-on-Hudson is the municipal sponsor for the project.

The focus of the restoration project will be on the historic site's entrance and Long Walk, an 800-foot brick walkway created during the property's 1950s restoration. Key work will improve vehicular and pedestrian safety; upgrade crucial infrastructure relating to visitor accessibility and comfort, and enhance drainage and stormwater management. The project also includes the suppression of invasive species and the replanting of trees and shrubs on the 36-acre historic landscape. The restoration is part of a broader initiative, including recent work which has already improved stormwater management and preservation at the site's Manor House.

The project will help Historic Hudson Valley welcome schoolchildren in a more accessible way to explore life in the "New Nation" period, when the political and social aftershocks of the Revolutionary War were experienced by a community that included enslaved Black residents as well as wealthy and working-class whites. The stories of Ishmael, Sib, and Abby, an enslaved family who worked in a domestic capacity for the Van Cortlandts, are also told in HHV's award-winning interactive documentary, *People Not Property*, which offers a comprehensive look at slavery throughout the Northern colonies from the perspective of the enslaved. Historic Hudson Valley

looks forward to once again hosting school groups and the public to Van Cortlandt Manor in time for Semiquincentennial celebrations upon the completion of this project in 2026.

Van Cortlandt Manor is also home to The Great Jack O'Lantern Blaze, a major driver of economic development through tourism in the Lower Hudson Valley. Now in its twentieth year, The Great Jack O'Lantern Blaze is one of the country's largest Halloween events and Historic Hudson Valley is appreciative of Blaze sponsors including Con Edison and JPMorgan Chase. In 2023, Blaze and other Historic Hudson Valley public programming drew more than 250,000 visitors from around the country. Attendees stay overnight in area hotels, eat in local restaurants, shop in local businesses, and visit other attractions. Audience research indicates these visitors contribute \$18 million to the regional economy annually.

About Historic Hudson Valley

Historic Hudson Valley, Westchester County's largest cultural organization, educates and entertains hundreds of thousands of visitors a year through school programs, tours of National Historic Landmarks, and large-scale events like The Great Jack O'Lantern Blaze. From its lower Hudson Valley base of operations, the organization focuses on delivering quality educational and entertaining experiences, striking a balance between tradition and vision, from preserving the past, to contextualizing it in creative ways for 21st-century audiences.