

What happens after The Lustron Project is completed?

Once the survey work, documentation, research and development of the National Register nomination are completed, and after official designation by the Keeper of the National Register, copies of the nomination and survey will be disseminated to preservation organizations across the state and potentially to each Lustron homeowner. Historic Albany Foundation and the Preservation League will work with colleague organizations, local preservation commissions, and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation on disseminating this information. This dissemination of information will ultimately help raise awareness of the importance of these buildings on our landscapes.



In addition to disseminating relevant information on New York State Lustrons, we hope to facilitate the establishment of a NYS Lustron Homeowners' Network, through which technical information and resources for the maintenance and preservation of Lustron houses is shared among those that can benefit from it.

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The Lustron Project

A Joint project of Historic Albany Foundation, The Preservation League of New York State and the State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.



What is The Lustron Project?

In November of 2006, the Preservation League of New York State awarded Historic Albany Foundation, a preservation advocacy organization in the Capital Region, a grant to locate, research, document and nominate the Lustron Houses throughout the state that are worthy of recognition and preservation to the State and National Register of Historic Places. Lustron houses all across New York State have “come of age” reaching the 50-year-old mark making them eligible to be considered for listing as landmark buildings.

The “Lustron house” was the brainchild of Carl Strandlund, an Ohio manufacturer of porcelain-coated steel panels, who developed these pre-fabricated, all-steel homes to ease the housing shortage for GIs returning from service during World War II. Only 2,492 houses were built in the United States between March 1948 and February 1950, when the company defaulted on its government loans.

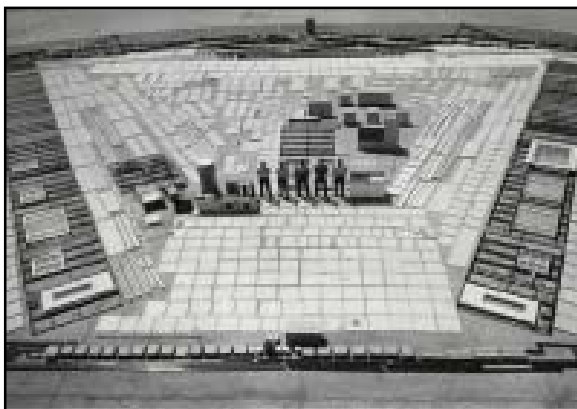
Of these 2,492 Lustron houses, at least 103 houses are known to have been shipped to and erected in New York State by 1950. Of these, almost half were built in the Capital Region suggesting that the largest NY dealer was based in or around Albany. It is for this reason that Historic Albany Foundation has taken the lead in the project. The extant Lustrons indicate concentrations in five distinct zones across the state. They are concentrated in the eastern or Capital Region; in Western NY; in the Southern Tier; in Central NY; and in the Lower Hudson/Downstate region. These concentrations are likely due to the placement of Lustron dealerships which were required to be established only in cities having a population of 50,000 or more. The houses were sold in a similar fashion as automobiles, and shipped according to a radius distance of approximately 100 miles. These franchised dealerships were often held by large well-established housing developers or construction companies. The research of the New York State Lustrons will also involve the research of the dealerships that made them available to New Yorkers.



Presently, we have identified the existences of approximately 80 of 103 houses in New York. While some have been substantially altered, these buildings are significant on a state and national level in terms of their historic and architectural importance as a building type. The purpose of this project is to conduct survey work to confirm the locations and document the conditions and current status of as many Lustron houses as possible, and to evaluate the authenticity and physical integrity of each of these structures. As part of this project, the research conducted will enable us to explore the historic context for each region and the state in a national arena, and to develop a statement of the significance of this unique building type in order to nominate the buildings state-wide to the National Register of Historic Places.

What does Listing on the National Register of Historic Places mean for a Lustron homeowner?

Historic properties are tangible links with the past that help provide a sense of identity and stability. The National Register of Historic Places, the official list of historic properties worthy of landmark status, recognizes the value and diversity of New York's rich heritage. Since being established in 1966, more than 80,000 properties have been listed on the National Register. These properties possess historic period integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Benefits of designation include recognition of the honor of being important to community, state and national history while raising the public's awareness of and appreciation of its shared past. Economic incentives and protection are other benefits of listing on the National Register. Designated properties receive protection and consideration in the planning of projects that involve state or federal funding, permits or licenses. On the other hand, listing on the National Register in no way interferes with or prohibits a property owner in his/her right to remodel, alter, manage, sell or even demolish a property when using private funds for projects not requiring state or federal permits or reviews.



Why we need your help.

Our band of volunteer surveyors is working from a list of limited information on the known Lustron houses around the state. We need Lustron homeowners, Lustron enthusiasts and Preservation professionals to come forward and help us to identify and obtain correct information on each building. As a Lustron homeowner, you are in the best position to conduct the simple survey of your home. As a Lustron enthusiast in your area, you are in the best position to assist with locating and providing information on the existing Lustrons in your region. Typical survey information includes data on model type, color, date of construction, noting alterations and/or conditions. We are providing black & white film to those willing to assist in documenting the buildings. Preservation professionals are needed to research the history and development of the Lustron in your area and to draft individual National Register nominations to be included in the Multiple Property nomination. Working together on *The Lustron Project*, it is our hope to generate a new awareness and appreciation for the Lustron House.

