

Appendix I: Archaeology

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I. Summary of the Historical Development of the Project Area

I.1. Prehistoric

Distribution patterns of known prehistoric sites, especially in the later prehistoric periods as Native American populations increased in number and became more sedentary, show a strong preference for floodplain locations in major river valleys, such as the Hackensack and Passaic Rivers. Well-drained terraces adjacent to confluences or large areas of wetlands, for example, will typically produce archaeological evidence of aboriginal activities associated with the procurement and processing of food and the manufacture or maintenance of tools.

As proposed, the Build Alternatives will traverse the base of the western side of the Bergen Ridge and therefore lies adjacent to the Hackensack Meadowlands in the south and the floodplain of the Overpeck Creek in the north. In North Bergen (Hudson County) and Ridgefield (Bergen County), the railroad runs beside broad flat areas of the Meadowlands adjacent to Cromakill Creek and Bellman's Creek, both tributaries of the Hackensack River. Bellman's Creek, and its tributary Wolf Creek, drain the west side of the uplands. North of Ridgefield the alignment parallels the east bank of Overpeck Creek as far north as Englewood Hospital, where the Creek then runs beneath the tracks draining the uplands to the east. Between Englewood and Tenafly the rail alignment crosses a watershed. In Tenafly, the Tenakill Creek flows north about 400 feet west of the tracks to join the Hackensack River in Closter, about three miles north of the end of the proposed alignment. These topographic settings are, in a general sense, ones where prehistoric activity is likely to have occurred. However, the extreme landscape modifications of the last 150 years have severely reduced the chances of survival of extensive intact land surfaces where archaeological traces of such activity can be expected to survive.

Historical accounts place the Indian village of Achkinheshacky just west of the alignment at the confluence of Overpeck Creek and the Hackensack River. This village site, which appears to have occupied a large tongue of land west of Overpeck Creek, was reported to contain a large shell heap, the remains of a fort or palisaded wall, and hundreds of lithic artifacts.

Two sites (registered as sites 28Be147 and 28Be148) were identified near Teaneck in 1940, west of Overpeck Creek, approximately 3,000 feet west of the APE. A large number of lithic artifacts such as axes, pestles, mortars, projectile points, and bannerstones were recovered from this location. The sites overlook the Overpeck Creek and may possibly be related to the Indian village of Achkinheshacky.

The New Jersey Indian Site Survey records, maintained at the New Jersey State Museum, also indicate several sites along the Bergen Ridge to the east of the project alignment. Data regarding chronological period, location and present state of preservation are vague; however, the distribution of these recorded sites contributes to a general understanding of regional settlement and subsistence patterns.

In recent years, a number of detailed cultural resource surveys have been performed within one-mile of the project corridor (e.g. Hunter Research Associates 1987; Hunter Research Inc. 1992, 2006; Kardas and Larrabee 1975; Michael Baker Jr., Inc. 2002; New Jersey Department of Transportation 1980; Richard Grubb & Associates Inc. 2006). No significant prehistoric resources were encountered in any of these studies. Subsurface testing revealed heavily urbanized soils with extensive disturbance and fill deposits.

I.2. Early Historic

The first attempt at European settlement in the vicinity of the project area may have been made as early as 1641 when a fort and trading depot is reported as having been established approximately two miles from the project corridor by settlers associated with Myndert Myndertsen Vanderhorst. Vanderhorst was the holder of one of two patroonships granted by the Dutch West India Company in northern New Jersey. The trading post/fort is said to have been located near the site of modern day Little Ferry at the confluence of Overpeck Creek and the Hackensack River (Works Progress Administration 1941:7).

Due to violent confrontations with the Indian population in the mid-17th century, the Director General of the Dutch colony of New Netherlands issued a series of mandates for settling the west side of the Hudson River. Dwelling lots were to be concentrated within the confines of villages surrounded by palisades. Bergen village was laid out in this fashion in 1660 and incorporated by Governor Pieter Stuyvesant as the Town of Bergen. The village's rectilinear plan, based around a central public square (now known as Bergen Square), can still be seen in the street pattern of Jersey City to the southeast of the project alignment. Bergen village is generally recognized as the first truly permanent settlement within the State of New Jersey (e.g. Snyder 1969:7, 145; Wacker 1975:123, 239-240,389).

After 1664, the removal of Dutch authority and a lessening of the Indian problem were accompanied by a change in the settlement pattern in the Bergen region. The nucleated village system became unnecessary and was no longer enforced, and it was soon replaced by a settlement pattern characterized by widely scattered, isolated farmsteads, many along the developing road system. Bergen village remained the area's primary town, however, and was an important focus for the development of a rural agricultural economy serving the growing city of New York. The in-migration of Dutch settlers (mostly from Long Island and the Hudson Valley) continued well into the early 18th century, ensuring the continuation of a distinctively Dutch character in the Bergen area despite the arrival of English authority.

Throughout the 18th and early 19th centuries, the project corridor remained sparsely settled. The nearest settlement consisted of a string of residences situated east of the project corridor along the main road extending along the western edge of the Bergen Ridge in what are now Palisades Park and Leonia. This little settlement was known as the "English Neighborhood". In general, there was very little change in the cultural landscape of the Bergen area during the 18th century, with a strong Dutch influence continuing to pervade through into the Revolutionary War era and beyond. During the American Revolution, Loyalist sentiment was strong among the Dutch in New Jersey throughout the war. This strong Tory presence and the proximity of New York City (occupied by the British for most of the war) meant that the county was the scene of much violent confrontation.

By the 1830s, the advent of transportation features (railroads and the Morris Canal) resulted in the beginnings of urban development, notably in Jersey City. However, the project corridor itself was not greatly affected by the early urban development until well after mid-century and in the south remained characterized by long lot outlots that extended westward into the Hackensack meadows. To the south, outside the project area, Jersey City ranked as the second largest city in the state after Newark by 1860.

The Northern Railroad of New Jersey, completed in 1859, was the first railroad to be constructed in the vicinity. The contemporary map of the railroad (Seymour and Tower 1859) provides a snapshot of the landscape at that time. With the exception of Englewood, where a street grid was already in place, the railroad traversed a sparsely populated landscape of dispersed homesteads extending along a road pattern largely developed in the Colonial period.

Seven stations are identified on the map, and are shown in Chapter 24: Archaeology.

- New Durham (North Bergen)
- Fairview (Ridgefield/Fairview)
- Hackensack Junction (Edgewater)
- Fort Lee (Leonia)
- Van Brunt Station (Englewood)
- Palisade Avenue (Englewood)
- Tenafly (Tenafly)

By 1867, the population of the project corridor had already doubled from its 1860 total. The coming of the railroad signaled the development of planned villages, each with its own grid pattern of side streets, small urban lots and a railroad stop on the nearby Northern Railroad of New Jersey. Most of these village plans were laid out by landowners who formed real estate companies to market small residential lots in new subdivisions.

The expansion of the area is well reflected in the municipal history. Until 1871 the entire Bergen County portion of the alignment was located in Hackensack Township, established as early as 1693. In 1871 a portion of Hackensack Township was subdivided into the townships of Ridgefield and Englewood. In the 1890's the townships of Ridgefield and Englewood were further subdivided into the boroughs of Ridgefield, Palisades Park, Leonia, Tenafly, and the City of Englewood. By the mid-20th century, the project area was nearly fully developed. Urban street plans had by this date entirely engulfed the earlier straggling hamlets all along the railroad corridor.

Two surviving stations from this later era are the Englewood Station, constructed in 1889, and the Tenafly Station, dated 1873. Railroad traffic increased significantly through the later 19th century. By 1887, the railroad had erected three stations in Englewood to accommodate travelers and businessmen (History of Englewood 2002). Approximately 80 daily trains ran on the route by the beginning of the 20th century.

In 1899, the Northern Railroad was leased to the Erie Railroad Company. By 1910, other stations had been constructed along the route in the project area (Highwood Station, Nordhoff Station, and Morsemere Station) and depots were constructed at Leonia, Palisades Park, Ridgefield and Fairview. By 1914, the railroad had also erected a number of freight houses and tool sheds on the Northern Branch. Additionally, the railroad had implemented safety mechanisms including 20 highway-crossing alarms along its route (Interstate Commerce Commission Division of Valuation: Eastern District 1914-1916).

The Northern Railroad Company of New Jersey officially dissolved in 1949. The Erie continued to operate the line and merged to become the Erie-Lackawanna Railroad in 1960. By the 1980s, much of the track had fallen into disuse, commencing with the segment in New York State, although portions of the track in New Jersey are still utilized for local freight service.