

Cultural & Historic Value

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- ❖ Native Americans
- ❖ European Movement and American Independence
- ❖ Historical Sites and Reenactments

❖ Native Americans

The Delaware River holds a spiritual and cultural significance to those living within the watershed and beyond. Native Americans from the valley continue to meet and spread their stories and history to the community.

Pre-dating European settlement, Native Americans, the Lenape, inhabited the land along the Delaware River and Bay. Their “Lenapehoking” (land of the Lenape) encompassed southern Connecticut, New York, all of New Jersey, eastern Pennsylvania, and Delaware.³³⁰ The Lenape made canoes and used the Delaware River for both transportation and sustenance.³³¹

Today, archaeologists from American University’s Department of Anthropology have found more than 55,000 Lenape artifacts from 25% of what is believed to be the total site area in the upper Delaware River Valley region. Archeological evidence of the region’s native people and their settlements have been found up and down the River and its Watershed. There has even been some findings that may prove ancient cultures that pre-date the Lenape.



More recently, prehistoric Native American artifacts were found along the Delaware River in Philadelphia, at the site of the proposed Sugar House casino. Common artifacts found at Native American archaeological sites include arrowheads and other tools used during the time the Lenape inhabited the area.³³² Museums throughout the Basin describe Lenape history and culture. The Delaware River still holds a very spiritual and cultural connection to their descendents. The River is a link to the life and spirit cherished by the Lenape.

ED FELL SERVED AS PRESIDENT OF THE NATIVE AMERICAN ALLIANCE OF BUCKS COUNTY FOR MANY YEARS UNTIL HIS PASSING IN 2009. THE ALLIANCE CONTINUES TO HOLD REGULAR MEETINGS EDUCATING OUR YOUTH ABOUT NATIVE CULTURES OF THE PAST AND ENSURING NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURE LIVES ON IN THE DELAWARE VALLEY.

❖ European Movement and American Independence

With such a long history, the Delaware River valley holds significant opportunities for people looking to rediscover events of the past. From the formation of the River to the first human settlement, its colonial history, the revolutionary war, and more recent accomplishments, several places of interest bring in visitors year round. Many historic sites are located along the Delaware River or one of its tributaries. Keeping the water clean as it flows past and through these sites entices people to continue visiting them. A bad smell, dirty water, or degraded streams detract from the historic presence of a site.

Henry Hudson was the first European to discover the Delaware River when he and the crew of the Dutch Half Moon entered the mouth of Delaware Bay on August 28, 1609. They quickly ran aground in the Bay, making a u-turn that allowed Lenapes to enjoy a little more time before settlers intruded.³³³ The English discovered the Delaware the following year, and Dutch, Swedish, Finnish, German and other settlers from Europe followed over the next 166 years.³³⁴



BATTLE OF TRENTON REENACTMENT . PHOTO CREDIT: PAUL CARLUCCIO

Today, the site where George Washington crossed the Delaware on December 25th 1776, is one of the most heavily visited locations on the River, particularly on Christmas Day when this event is reenacted. On the other side of the River in Trenton, NJ, there are annual reenactments of the Battle of Trenton which ensued on Christmas night, and the second Battle of Trenton that occurred seven days later. These reenactments and Revolutionary War reenactments attract reenactors and visitors from all over the country.

History Telling

Valley Forge Park along the Schuylkill River is also a heavily visited site. Valley Forge housed Washington's army during the harsh winter of 1777.³³⁵ Historic details mixed with recreational possibilities and nature centers, provide people of all ages and interests with an exciting day-long outing. People come from all over to visit many of the historic sites where reenactments occur, and where markers describe the event and its significance.



OLD BARRACKS MUSEUM, TRENTON N.J. BATTLE OF TRENTON REENACTMENT. PHOTO CREDIT: PAUL CARLUCCIO

In the Estuary portion of the River, Fort Delaware is a famous historic site located on Pea Patch Island claimed to have grown from a cargo of peas that was lost overboard by the Dutch. Pea Patch Island today offers historic reenactments from the days when it was used as a Union prison during the Civil War.³³⁶ In addition, the Island offers ferry rides, hiking trails, and an observation platform from which to view nine different species of birds, including Herons, Egrets, and Ibis.

Historic Sites and Reenactments	Where	Details
Minisink Archaeological Site	Bushkill, PA	Archaeologists have been making discoveries at this site for decades. More than 55,000 artifacts have been found in only 25% of the total site area. Arrowheads, relics, and details of early people continue to bring out new questions about the area's history. ³³⁷
Valley Forge National Park	Forge, PA	Visit the encampment where Washington's army rested through the winter of 1777 during the Revolutionary War ³³⁸
Washington Crossing the Delaware	Washington Crossing, PA	This famous site hosts annual reenactments of General George Washington crossing the Delaware River toward Trenton during the Christmas holiday bringing thousands of visitors ³³⁹
Battle of Trenton	Trenton, NJ	The Battle of Trenton reenactments feature soldiers dressed in Revolutionary War era uniforms and traditional weaponry marching along the streets of Trenton, New Jersey. ³⁴⁰
Pea Patch Island	Fort Delaware, DE	This well known site holds reenactments of the days when the island was used as a prison during the Civil War. Today it is also home to a protected wildlife preserve for numerous waterfowl species ³⁴¹

Figure 10: Historic Sites and Public Reenactments along the Delaware River

Historic Figures from the Delaware Valley

After becoming famous, Zane Grey, one of the nation's favorite Western authors from the early 20th century, moved with his wife Dolly to Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania from New York City.³⁴² The convergence of the Lackawanna and Delaware Rivers was one of Grey's favorite spots and is where he settled with his family around 1905.³⁴³ The home and farmstead remain at this unique and gorgeous location as a museum for travelers and locals. The museum contains Grey's library and office full of the photos, writings, and books he used while authoring his more than 40 books and essays, the first being "A Day on the Delaware" published in *Recreation Magazine* in 1905.³⁴⁴

Another historic attraction in the same reach of the Delaware River is the Roebling Aqueduct. In 1847, John Roebling, future engineer of the Brooklyn Bridge, designed and helped to construct several aqueducts along the Delaware and Hudson canal.³⁴⁵ The D&H Canal was vital in transporting coal from Pennsylvania mines to New York City, where it helped to fuel the industrial revolution.³⁴⁶ The only remaining aqueduct of Roebling's is along the Delaware, because of its adaptation to a car bridge in the

early 20th Century.³⁴⁷ Almost all of the original ironwork, cables, and structures, remain on the Delaware Aqueduct, and other characteristics of the time have been reconstructed so that visitors can see exactly how early transportation by mule labor and water gravity occurred.³⁴⁸

In order to maintain the region's history and keep visitors coming to these sites, it is important to keep the neighboring streams and rivers clean. The Delaware River Watershed is a part of America's history. Maintaining this history for future generations to experience is an important aspect in understanding our past and our country's foundation. Keeping the river clean, with a goal of restoring it to the conditions our prehistoric and long-ago ancestors experienced, and ensuring that it is a complement and enticement for viewing and experiencing the local economic historic and cultural offerings of our region is important for education, ecotourism, cultural values, and local economies.