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Native American Relics in the Hudson River Valley

The Native Americans of the Hudson River Valley were extremely resourceful people, demonstrated by unique artifacts found by archaeologists. They relied on hunting, gathering, fishing, and farming, and the various relics discovered today suggest they had a functional system of providing food, shelter, and medicine to the sick. Studying these artifacts is essential in gaining a genuine understanding of the Native Americans' way of life in the Hudson River Valley during a time when people relied on nature and were identified by the tribe they belonged to.

Studying the culture of Native Americans in the Hudson River Valley has illustrated the importance of pottery in daily life. Stone hammers, knives, axes, projectile points, scrapers, ceramic vessels, and net sinkers are only a few of the remains uncovered. Historians and archaeologists also examine “‘ecofacts’ — the remains of plants and animals from ancient campsites which offer data about past cultural adaptations.”¹ The “Tufano site” near Nutten Hook boasts a respectable amount of flint blade remains believed to have been used to slaughter fish, and is adjacent to one of the Valley's prehistoric cemeteries. Throughout the region, archaeologists have also discovered rock shelters, forts, villages, mounds, stockades, shell heaps, fishing weirs, and relics of stone, and bone tools. All have indicated Native Americans were exceptionally resourceful with available materials.

¹ <http://www.hrm.org/tivolibays/news-from-hudsonia-16-1.html>

Archaeologists have also discovered Native American human remains, allowing for a better understanding of how they were physically shaped. Particularly noteworthy, a skeleton was found near Pierre Van Cortlandt School in 1935 by a woman from Croton. The male skeleton was found in a crouched position, resting on his side. It was determined he lived approximately 300 years ago, and was about six feet in height and over 50 years of age. There are few landmarks remaining due to the settlement and development of the region. However, one monument, Spook Rock, still stands today and is located in Rockland County, New York. Spook Rock is a split and broken ledge on top of a high, natural mound of rocks. Originally it was a large cave filled with stones under what appeared to be a large round fireplace. It was the most sacred place for the Munsee tribe, a sanctuary for the spirit force present in nature. Spook Rock's location is significant in that it lies near Native American trails in the east. There was an established trade route between the North and South that led to the Hudson River crossings. Traders, hunters, and warriors constantly traveled along these trails, enabling the spread of goods and ideas. The tribes which used them the most were the Lenni-Lenape, Mahican, and Iroquois tribes. Ted Timreck, a Smithsonian research associate, said Native Americans often carved much of their work on the trees in the Hudson River Valley. Rock carvings survive in the Hudson River Valley near Kingston and Rhinecliff. There was also an elaborate pictograph along the Mohawk River in Amsterdam, but disappeared at the end of the 19th century according to Edward J. Lenik, author of *American Indian Rock Art in the Northeast Woodlands*, "There was a beautiful pictograph along the Mohawk River in Amsterdam. It disappeared by the end of the 19th century," Lenik said.²

² Kenneth C. Crowe II. Knight Ridder Tribune Business News. Washington: Jun 8, 2007. pg. 1.

