

1.18 Historic and Cultural Resources

The Highlands, an area stretching from Pennsylvania to New York State, include about 80 % of Watershed Management Area 3. The many rivers and streams in the Highlands were an essential part of early settlement in the area. Water bodies were used for transportation and later for mining operations.

The first settlers of the area were the Lenni Lenape Indians. The Lenni Lenape bestowed many of the area names, such as Pequannock, Pompton and Ramapo. Some of the trails they built are still in use today. The Minisink Trail, along the Pequannock River, led to Minisink Island in the Delaware River, where the Lenni Lenape held their tribal council meetings.¹

In the 1700s, Dutch settlers arrived in the area to hunt beaver for their fur trade. The Dutch established farms of native produce using techniques learned from the Indians.²

In the mid 1700s, it was discovered that deposits of high-grade iron ore existed throughout the Highlands area. Plentiful water and timber for processing allowed the development of a thriving industrial society. Ammunition and other iron products produced at the Highlands forges were crucial during the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. Approximately 150 sites in the Highlands are listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places, including remnants of furnaces and forges in Ringwood, Bloomingdale, and Pompton Lakes.³ Ringwood Manor, part of Ringwood State Park and a notable historic landmark of WMA 3, was the home of Abraham Hewitt, a prominent iron producer of the mid-19th century.

During the Revolutionary War, a famous mutiny occurred at Federal Hill in Riverdale. General George Washington relocated to Ringwood to be close by until the mutiny was resolved.

Industries in the 1800s included the Rubber Comb and Jewelry Company in Butler and the Slater Felt factory in Riverdale.

Plate 1.18.1, Major Open Space Land Areas, also shows the locations of several historic and cultural sites in WMA 3.

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¹ The Kinnelon Bicentennial Committee, Kinnelon: A History, by Lucy A. Meyer, 1976, from <http://www.kinnelon.com/hm/Community/History/Intro.asp>

² Ibid.

³ USDA Forest Service, NY-NJ Highlands Regional Study, 1993, p. 94.