

3.12 Cultural Resources

3.12.1 Introduction

Section 14.09 of the New York State Historic Preservation Act of 1980 requires State agencies to consult with the Commissioner of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) prior to approving a project. If a project requires any permits or is receiving funding/grants or any other approvals from State agencies, review by OPRHP is required.

This project is subject to New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) review and approval and thus must follow the criteria determined by OPRHP for cultural resource management, as set forth in the "Standards for Cultural Resource Investigations and the Curation of Archaeological Collections in New York State". These standards were developed by the New York Archaeological Council and adopted by the OPRHP to ensure uniformity in the review of cultural material in New York State.

Cultural Resource Management investigations are divided into three levels: Phases I, II and III. A project may receive OPRHP approval after the completion of any of these phases by a qualified archaeologist, based on the determination that the project site has undergone sufficient investigation to eliminate the probability of significant artifacts being recovered at that location. Phase I is subdivided into a Phase IA and Phase IB. The Phase IA consists of a Literature Review and Sensitivity Assessment, which entails the following:

- 1) a review of pertinent published historic material pertaining to the portion of the Town that includes the project site;
- 2) a search of the historical or archeological site files of the New York Museum and the New York Historic Preservation Office to identify documented cultural resources located on or adjacent to the property, and;
- 3) a reconnaissance of the parcel to identify areas of greater and lesser potential for containing buried cultural remains, to note areas where serious prior disturbance to upper soils may have eliminated such potential, and to photodocument any potentially affected standing structures over 50 years of age.

For any area that would be disturbed by the Proposed Action, Area of Potential Effect (APE), a Phase IB Field Investigation is conducted, which involves a systematic, on-site field inspection to verify the presence or absence of archaeological or historic artifacts. The most common method for conducting a Phase IB is systematic subsurface testing, which requires the excavation of small test pits at fixed intervals throughout the APE. The soil from these pits is examined for buried cultural remains. Significant findings can trigger the requirement of more extensive investigation via a Phase II. However, mitigation (Phase III) or avoidance of that portion of the site where remains are known or suspected within an APE may be accepted by OPRHP and allow a modified project to continue.

A Phase IA Literature Review and Sensitivity Analysis and Phase IB, Site Assessment were conducted between August and October, 2008, by CITY/SCAPE Cultural Resource Consultants (CITY/SCAPE). The final Phase I report documenting the results of both the Phase 1A and Phase 1B work is included in Appendix L and summarized below. As a result of the findings documented in the Report, CITY/SCAPE recommended that no further archaeological

investigations be undertaken on the project site. The APE for the project site included all areas proposed for disturbance and totaled approximately 200 acres.

3.12.2 Existing Conditions

Phase IA - Site Assessment Phase

The study area for historical and archaeological resources is defined as the project site and properties contiguous to the project site.

The Phase IA Analysis was conducted to evaluate the potential for proposed construction to impact standing or buried Native American and/or European American era cultural resources. The project site is an irregularly shaped parcel with the southernmost tip situated at the intersection of Baldwin Place Road and US Route 6 on the Putnam-Westchester County line. The project extends northward along Baldwin Place Road to its northern boundary, a power line corridor owned by New York State Gas and Electric. The power line corridor and property line extend eastward before turning south along portions of the eastern boundary of the site. The project is located in an area of commercial and residential development along US Route 6 and by residential development along Baldwin Place Road.

The general character of the project site is comprised of agricultural fields and woodland. The topography of the project area is characterized by a large level knoll which is bordered by sloping land and wetland areas. The project site varies in elevation from approximately 876 feet at the top of the knoll to 599 feet in the central wetland area.

Soils on the project site are an important indicator of archaeological potential, with elevated areas overlooking wetlands being considered to have a high potential to contain prehistoric cultural material. At the present time, the northern portion of the project site is vacant and significant portions are cleared agricultural fields. The southern portion of the parcel contains an existing farmstead. North of the farmstead, in the southern portion of the site at the top of the center knoll there is an area of open space. The eastern portion of the project site is comprised of sloping land and wetlands, while the northwestern portion of the site is cleared and overgrown agricultural fields.

The northern and northeastern boundary of the project site is defined by the New York Gas and Electric Corporation Easement, which supports overhead power lines. A branch of the Mahopac Mine Railroad crosses the eastern portion of the parcel. During the site inspection, the railroad was only identified by a break in the forested area. At the location where the railroad intersects with US Route 6, there is a steep soil berm. The berm and former railroad bed is heavily overgrown with thicket and briar. No remains of tracks were identified.

Native American Era

No prehistoric sites have been reported within the boundaries of the project site, nor are there any prehistoric sites reported adjacent to the parcel. The only reported prehistoric site within a 1-mile radius (1.6 km) is a large camp site or sites (NYSM 4521) located on the south side of Lake Mahopac.

European American Era

A search of the site files maintained by the New York State OPRHP in Albany indicated no properties eligible for listing or listed on the National Register of Historic Places within one mile of the project parcel.

The OPRHP files were reviewed to identify structures on or in the vicinity of the project site that have been listed on the National Register or identified as National Register eligible. In 1999 a NYSM survey, examined historic structures in the hamlet of Baldwin Place, in Putnam County, and along Tomahawk Street, in Somers (Westchester County), but identified no structures eligible for listing on National Register. Another NYSM survey along US Route 6 and Route 6N likewise identified historic structures, but deemed none of them eligible for National Register listing. Examination of the area around the Union Place site identified several structures on Baldwin Place Road that date to the 19th century. Two of the houses near the intersection of Baldwin Place Road and US Route 6 are 19th century structures that have fallen into disrepair. A third is a bungalow-style house dating to the first quarter of the 20th century. The bungalow-style house is associated with the farm noted above. None of these structures are deemed eligible for National Register listing as confirmed by the project archaeologist, CITY/SCAPE Cultural Resource Consultants.

Phase IA Summary

Based on the archaeologist's research, no prehistoric sites have been identified on or in the immediate vicinity of the project site. However, based on the environmental model used by OPRHP and the NYSM, the potential for the more level and undisturbed areas of the site to contain intact prehistoric cultural resources is considered moderate to high. It, therefore, recommended that the undisturbed areas of the site within the APE be subjected to a Phase 1B Archaeological Field Reconnaissance Survey, which would involve a visual inspection of plowed, disked and rain washed fields, as well as subsurface excavation of shovel test pits in areas that are not now or cannot be plowed.

Phase IB - Site Identification Phase

Based on the findings of the Phase IA, a Phase IB, Site Identification Survey, was conducted to determine whether such cultural resources actually exist on the subject property. In addition, the landscape closely conforms to an ecological model that indicates the project area is sensitive for prehistoric cultural materials. The testing strategy for the site was, therefore, structured around the knowledge that the property possessed a moderate to high probability to yield prehistoric cultural remains. Two methods of subsurface testing were employed in examining the Union Place site for prehistoric cultural resources: wooded and overgrown areas, as well as areas that could not be plowed, were subjected to shovel tests at a 50 foot (15.24 m) interval, while open field areas were tested by the surface collection of plowed and rainwashed furrows.

Phase IB Summary

Once areas unsuitable for testing were eliminated from the survey, potentially sensitive areas that could not be plowed were systematically shovel tested and inspected. Wetlands cover approximately 40 acres (16 hectares) of the Union Place site, creating a potentially rich prehistoric landscape.

From the end of September through October of 2008, CITY/SCAPE completed a Phase 1B Field Reconnaissance survey of the Union Place site. A thorough review of the existing body of archaeological data relevant to the project area was undertaken and conclusions drawn concerning the probability of encountering historic and prehistoric cultural remains on the site. A total of 1052 shovel tests were excavated within the APE of the Union Place site. An additional 197 shovel tests were excavated around foundations with the potential to yield historic information. A total of 20 plowed furrows were carefully inspected as part of field excavations on the Union Place site in areas considered to have potential to yield prehistoric cultural material.

The Union Place site yielded one prehistoric artifact, a quartz Orient Fishtail projectile point, and numerous artifacts dating to the early 20th century.

Although several foundations and structures were identified on the Union Place site, some of them within the APE, it was the opinion of CITY/SCAPE that they do not warrant additional investigation. The foundations located within the northwestern portion of the project area are modern in construction and, therefore, do not have the potential to yield historic cultural material. These foundation first appear on the 1945 USGS topographical map, and are not present on the 1894 USGS topographical maps included in the Phase 1A portion of this document.

The structures within the Mahopac Farm area, while they may date to the early part of the 20th century, have experienced significant alterations and additions. The area around these structures has been disturbed by landscaping and paving. Disturbance in the form of the demolition of structures is also possible. Given these factors, it is considered unlikely that shaft features would have remained intact in the Mahopac Farm area. Based on these results it is the recommendation of CITY/SCAPE that no further archaeological investigations be undertaken on the Union Place site.

3.12.3 Potential Impacts

A search of the site files maintained by the New York State OPRHP in Albany indicated that no properties were listed on the National Register of Historic Places or were eligible for such listing within one mile of the project parcel. There are no standing structures on the project site and no structures within its viewshed that meet the requirements for inclusion on the National or State Register of Historical Places. In addition, a field investigation of the APE yielded no artifacts of importance.

Therefore, no impact to historical or archeological resources are projected to result from the development of the Proposed Action.

3.12.4 Mitigation Measures

The cultural resource investigation for this site yielded no significant findings in the archives in Albany nor through systematic field investigation. No further archeological investigation is warranted therefore no mitigation is proposed.