**Peter O. Wacker’s virtual field trip text**

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NEW BRUNSWICK AREA

New Brunswick and vicinity offer several interesting places to visit and or take scenic and informative walks. Indeed, many locations are of national historical significance. This series of narratives, maps and illustrations hopefully will provide a framework for enjoying these activities.

We will begin with the location of the foundation of New Brunswick and radiate out to a maximum of about ten miles, first on the south bank and then on the north bank of the Raritan. Our format will be to first show a simple map, then provide a narrative and then significant views through a series of slides or other illustrations.

New Brunswick is a "fall line" city. The fall line refers to the location on a navigable river where the hard rocks of the interior are first located as one travels upstream. This creates a "break in bulk" situation, where goods being brought upstream can go no farther because of the shallowness of the waterway and must be transferred to smaller vessels for further transit upstream or to overland transportation. Conversely, the products of the area upstream could be concentrated at this point for shipment elsewhere.

ALBANY STREET AREA

New Brunswick was also the place where the very important Native American Minisink Trail crossed the Raritan River. This later, as was the case with many other Native American routeways, became one of the most important colonial roads - the main overland route between New York and Philadelphia (today Route 27). A ferry crossing developed where the current bridge crossing is now located.

Several hotels arose to satisfy the needs of the overland travelers and, indeed, the famous Americans of that day "slept here." The archaeological remains of several early New Brunswick hotels are preserved, for future excavation, under an embankment leading up to Route 18, which, unfortunately, now separates the city from the river which gave it its origin.

New Brunswick was granted a Royal Charter in 1730. The city seal emphasized the fact that by that time the place had become a port. The main export which passed through New Brunswick was the wheat of the Raritan Valley, largely produced on large Dutch-owned and slave- worked farms which lay on the New Brunswick side of the river.

Little remains today in New Brunswick of the landscape generated by the wealth accumulated by the Raritan River Valley trade. There is a hint in the width of Albany Street leading away from the river crossing. Albany Street was so named from the fact that Dutch merchants from Albany had relocated to New Brunswick to take advantage of the lucrative trade there. In mid-eighteenth century Swedish naturalist Pehr Kalm commented on these status-conscious merchants having very substantial brick facades on their houses facing Albany Street but clapboard side and rear walls. We will be reminded of this trait when we visit the Low house at Raritan Landing and compare the front there with the other three facades.

NEILSON STREET AREA

New Brunswick's wealth and origin as a port is also hinted at by a walk along Neilson Street (King Street in colonial times) On the right hand (west) side of the street (with your back to the I.M. Pei-designed Johnson and Johnson administrative complex) are located two of New Brunswick's earliest houses of worship. Both were rebuilt after colonial times but their location, in the heart of the old commercial district, is the same. The Episcopal Church (Church of England in colonial days) faces away from the street. You may wish to walk a few feet along appropriately named Church Street and view the plaques on the front of the church, attesting to the importance of that church in the history of the Episcopal Church in America. The grave markers in the churchyard are also indicative of the importance of many of the parishioners. Walking back down Church to Neilson you glance at prosperous nineteenth-century commercial New Brunswick opposite the church. Turn to your right at Neilson and have a look at the Dutch Church.

The Dutch Reformed Church (now Reformed Church in America), reflects the importance early on of that ethnic group. If you turn your back to the front of the church, you will be facing what was a widened part of Hiram Street. The widened area housed a farmers' market which supplied the town with fresh produce. From here, over to Albany Street, would have been the center of historic New Brunswick. Indeed, the de-registered historic district for old New Brunswick was known as the "Hiram Market Historic District." One can visualize the importance of this church by seeing it in the center of the bustling commercial-port area and realizing that this structure would be the one dominating the skyline as one viewed New Brunswick from a vessel having come upriver. The churchyard of this house of worship is also of interest.

Of course, great changes to the Hiram Market area occurred through time. In the 1830's the Delaware and Raritan Canal removed and made obsolete the port facilities as did the coming of the railroads soon after. As new immigration entered the Raritan Valley, and as the city grew, the more affluent earlier population groups could increasingly be found in the more recently developed areas on the periphery of the old core. Although much of the fabric of the Hiram Market area has been destroyed, another house of worship just down the street from the Dutch Church bears witness to the arrival of some of these immigrants. This is Poile Zedek (Men of Righteousness) synagogue built in 1922 and reflecting the coming of age of the Jewish community in the city, which was often involved with commercial activities in the Hiram Market area. Before we leave the Hiram Market area we may wish to note that there are several very appropriate places to satisfy one's hunger in the immediate vicinity.

QUEENS CAMPUS VICINITY

Let us now view an area developed a bit more recently than the Albany Street-Hiram Market area. We walk back on Neilson to Albany, make a left, walk up to George Street, make a right and walk a block to the Rutgers campus, entering the attractive iron gates and proceeding to the front of Old Queens, location of the chief administrative functions of Rutgers.

An important part of the history of New Brunswick is the role of Queen's College, now Rutgers University, established in 1766. The college had several locations, but by 1816 was located on a hill on the outskirts of the core of the small town of New Brunswick. The building housing classrooms, dormitories, administrative offices and the like is now known as "Old Queens." It is a National Landmark. Several of the attractive older buildings of what later became Rutgers College are located in near proximity. One, open to the public, is Geology Hall, well worth a visit for its interesting displays concerning the geology of New Jersey, including dinosaur footprints and the world-famous and unique New Jersey fluorescent minerals. The museum is open to the public, without charge, 1:00-4:00 p.m. Mondays, 9:00-12:00 a.m. Tuesday-Friday.

As one walks about admiring the buildings and well-kept grounds, one may notice that there is a cannon imbedded in the lawn in front of Old Queens. Why so? New Jersey, of course, is known as the "Cockpit of the Revolution." More battles during that conflict took place here than in any other state. The river crossing at New Brunswick, on the main overland route between Philadelphia and New York, was a very important strategic location (indeed, the British had erected a permanent stone barracks in the town) and the high ground later occupied by Old Queens was an ideal spot to fortify. Another emplacement, on an even higher hill, was the position now occupied by the New Brunswick Theological Seminary, located on Seminary Place, a short distance from Old Queens. Let us walk over there to get an idea of the peripheral development in New Brunswick in the nineteenth century. But, before we go, have a look, with your back to Old Queens, across the street, at the house of worship located there and admire the lovely Gothic architecture of St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church, built just after the Civil War.

At this point, it may be interesting to speculate a little bit on the locational relations between several of the religious edifices located in this vicinity. Queens College began largely to train young men for the Dutch Reformed clergy (as did Columbia and Princeton for the Presbyterian Church). Indeed, it is no accident that our next destination, a short distance away, appropriately named Seminary Place, is the location of one of the two Reformed Church in America seminaries. Until the early 1860's there was an extremely close association between Rutgers College and the American Dutch Reformed Church. It is then significant, perhaps, that when the Irish Catholic community was numerous enough (and when its men had returned from the Civil War) the very attractive and impressive St. Peter's was built right across the street from what then must still have been a strong presence of the Protestant establishment. There appears to be no evidence that this was done deliberately as a symbolic act, but, nevertheless, one can't help but find the relative locations interesting.

VOORHEES CAMPUS VICINITY

Let us now proceed to Seminary Place. Walk around Old Queens, to the rear, then straight ahead, and cross Hamilton Street. To your right, facing the street, is the Zimmerli Art Museum, well worth a visit. (Entrance fee for non-Rutgers community is $3.00. Other than summer, hours are Tuesday-Friday 10:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. and Noon to 4:30 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays.) Head straight ahead through the very pleasant Voorhees Campus of Rutgers College, the oldest of the University's several colleges. Just before you reach Seminary Place you will notice a statue of William of Orange, donated to Rutgers by the Holland Society, another reminder of the Dutch roots of Rutgers.

Seminary Place evokes a remembrance of what part of prosperous nineteenth century New Brunswick looked like. There are the older structures of the seminary and a twentieth-century chapel and classroom building, all, appropriately, to be looked up to on a hill. There is a building , formerly a residence, on the Voorhees Campus, in the popular Italianate high style of the post-Civil War period. If you walk to your right, down to the corner with George Street, you will encounter George Cook's high style "cottage. " Most of these stylish dwellings were built of frame construction. This is a good solid "Jersey brownstone (Stockton sandstone)." Cook, of course, is the man after whom Cook College is named. Appropriately so, given his status as a renowned scientist and agricultural researcher in the nineteenth century. There are many other vestiges of high style nineteenth century New Brunswick in the vicinity but it is time to move on, outside the city to locations telling us a little more about the hinterland of New Brunswick.

NJ MUSEUM OF AGRICULTURE

Located south of historic New Brunswick on College Farm Road on the Cook College campus of Rutgers University and easily accessed from southbound U.S. Route 1 is the New Jersey Museum of Agriculture. (You may wish to get there from Seminary Place by making a right on George Street, continuing through the present commercial district of New Brunswick to the Douglass Campus, making a right on Nichol Avenue, left on Lipman Drive and continuing on College Farm Road. The museum is on your left before you reach Route 1.) Here there are well-designed exhibits highlighting New Jersey agriculture through the years as well as the technology associated with it. The whole is contained within a very pleasant modern building which is well-worth visiting. It is open to the public Tuesday-Saturday 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. and on Sunday 12:00 noon - 5:00 p.m. There is a $4.00 entrance fee.

The general rule for the Dutch landscape of central New Jersey is that the Dutch adopted English tastes early in dwellings (as we will later see with wealthy merchant Cornelius Low at Raritan Landing) but kept on building their characteristic Dutch barns (as we will see in a reconstruction at East Jersey Olde Towne) well into the nineteenth century. The Van Wickle house is an excellent example of early (1722) Dutch (or Flemish) architecture in the Raritan Valley. Although it is of frame construction it mirrors many of the features of the surviving stone Dutch houses of northeastern New Jersey.

The siting of the house is also of interest. It is built very near the river and not that far above it. Originally, it faced a road later obliterated by the construction of the D&R Canal. It reminds us of the ease with which the Dutch dealt with riverine locations; very likely an inheritance from the Old World. Associated with the house is a lovely garden and a well- designed plank walk over a small marshland with prominent vegetation types identified. The Van Wickle house was restored by the Meadows Foundation, which also has restored five other historic houses in Franklin Township. These are open each month, on the second Sunday, from 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p. m. The Meadows Foundation also sponsors special programs at these sites. For further information, call (732) 246-2184.

Also associated with the Van Wickle house is a parking area and a bridge leading to a hiking trail between the Delaware and Raritan Canal (State Park) and the Raritan River. This is a favorite path for walking or bicycling alongside these two very attractive waterways. The Van Wickle house is accessed by travelling about two miles north of New Brunswick, paralleling the Raritan on Easton Avenue (an old turnpike road). You can access Easton Avenue from the street separating the Old Queens and Voorhees campuses of Rutgers in New Brunswick, heading west and turning right at the first traffic light after College Avenue. Make a right on DeMott Lane a light with an avenue of pine trees leading toward the Raritan. If you see the Rutgers Preparatory School campus on your right you have gone too far and should circle back. There are no entrance fees.

PERTH AMBOY

One cannot discuss New Brunswick's origins without mentioning Perth Amboy. Perth Amboy was established in 1683 as the port for the colony of East New Jersey. (New Jersey was two proprietary colonies until 1702). It was also the capitol of East New Jersey. It was named after the Earl of Perth and the Lenape term for a point of land. Deep water, sheltered by Staten Island to the east, suggested an excellent place to develop a port. The problem was that vessels could go farther upstream to tap the rich harvests of the Dutch settled area south of the Raritan and then sail either directly abroad or to the great entrepot of New York, completely bypassing Perth Amboy. So, New Brunswick stole Perth Amboy's trading area. We call that "hinterland piracy." Perth Amboy, despite its loss of trade to New Brunswick, remained an important place. Many of the wealthy landowners continued to reside there and the East Jersey Proprietors continued to keep their office there. The city has produced a very interesting walking tour pamphlet, which can be obtained in the historic city hall, next to the East Jersey Proprietors' office, lying on the attractive square (now an oval) laid out in 1683. Many well-preserved historical buildings, such as the Governor's Mansion are well worth viewing. The port area supports a modern marina, with a delightful public walk, with vistas of lower Raritan Bay and Staten Island and the possibility of excellent restaurants nearby. The easiest way to get to Perth Amboy today is by Route 1 north from New Brunswick to Route 287east, which becomes Route 440. Get off at State Street which is the last exit before the Outerbridge Crossing (named after a man named Outerbridge) to Staten Island. Continue in to Perth Amboy on State Street, making a left on Market Street for two blocks, which will put you on the historic square (now oval) in front of the historic city hall (Open 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Monday-Friday. Walking tour guide free in City Clerk's office).

RARITAN LANDING

Although the head of relatively deep water navigation (in colonial days) was at New Brunswick, smaller vessels could ascend the Raritan on high tide to a landing on the north bank of the river a little more than a mile and a half above the port of New Brunswick. This location developed into a landing with numerous houses and warehouse facilities which became known as Raritan Landing. The site had the advantage of being located on the bank of the Raritan opposite New Brunswick and thus could tap the produce of the Raritan watershed north of the river. This was a considerable advantage before bridges spanned the river. And, of course, with overland tranportation being more costly than riverine transportation, it made sense to take on half a cargo at Raritan Landing and drop down to New Brunswick for the other half.

Today, there remains a magnificent vestige of the Raritan Landing landscape in the form of the Cornelius Low House, which is located on the bluff above the site of Raritan Landing (Landing Lane and River Road). In 1741, Low, although of Dutch descent, built a very impressive Georgian mansion of Stockton sandstone directly above his extensive warehouse operations in the Raritan floodplain below. This house has been acquired by the Middlesex County Freeholders, as a project of the Middlesex County Cultural and Heritage Commission, has been painstakingly restored, and now serves as a museum open to the public, without charge, Tuesday-Friday & Sunday 1:00-4:00 p.m. (Closed Mondays, Saturdays and state holidays).

The current exhibits focus on life in the Raritan Valley up until the early 19th century. This includes a significant archaeological exhibit made possible by salvage archaeology in the floodplain beneath the bluff when a sewer line was constructed.

Whether or not the house is open to the public, a good idea of the significance of the Landing can be gained by a recently constructed Interpretive Path, leading down from a parking lot accessed off Sutphen Road on the Rutgers University Campus. Here well-designed markers introduce the Lows and the Landing. There are maps, both on the ground and on a marker, explaining the spatial nature of the Landing and the relation of the Low house to it. You may reach the Low House by traveling northwest on George Street in New Brunswick, crossing the Raritan on the Lynch Bridge and proceeding across River Road, until you make the left turn on Sutphen.

EAST JERSEY OLDE TOWNE

East Jersey Olde Towne is located about a mile west of the Low House/ Raritan Landing off River Road. It consists of an assemblage of reconstructed buildings that, in fact, would not have existed together at the time they were built. The rural structures are largely of New England and Dutch origin. There is a very nice Dutch barn, which, in general, would be more appropriate in a location south of the Raritan, such as in association with the Van Wickle house in Franklin Township. There is also an East Jersey Cottage (typical of New England settlement), very similar to those still to be seen west along River Road. The construction of the barracks for colonial troops, long gone from New Brunswick, is modern but, again, reminds us of the strategic significance of New Brunswick more than two hundred years ago. Entrance is free at East Jersey Olde Towne. The buildings are marked on a map and viewing them consists of a pleasant stroll. Tours which visit the interiors of several buildings begin at 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Monday-Friday and at 1:00 p.m. on Sundays.