



# Introduction

**G**o ahead—feel the white, long-grain texture of this paper, grasp the heavy stock cover. Flip through the pages. No, wait. Bathe in the illuminated glow of the screen, feel the smooth contours of the mouse or stylus. Touch the screen. The first issue of *River Chronicles* is sitting on your lap (top). You can open it and read this journal right now!

No, this is not an introduction to intentionality in linguistic studies, but a metaphor for the way archaeologists remove the modern surface to get at the historic contexts of features and artifacts buried beneath their feet. We have to begin at the recognized surface, and then, as we excavate, things start to get very interesting. Once exposed, artifacts and features offer the longest memories. With a little coaxing, they speak as witnesses of our past. No artifact or feature stands alone, however—each is related to others, dependent on them for context. Some artifacts and features give us aesthetic satisfaction; others, a jolt of knowledge that brings us into closer contact with time gone by, the hidden objects and places that filled the hours of people’s lives, details that would otherwise elude us. The substance of *River Chronicles* is the result of experienced AECOM scholars mentoring competent AECOM novice scholars through the process of analyzing these lives in the past.

## The Undertaking

**T**he Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) and the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) are undertaking a long-term, multi-phase project to improve and rebuild Interstate 95 (I-95) in Pennsylvania. Section GIR, which is the focus of the intensive archaeological investigations that inspired this journal, involves the improvement of three miles of highway between I-676 and Allegheny Avenue in Philadelphia. Section GIR includes the reconstruction of the Girard Avenue Interchange: widening of the overhead highway, installation of new utilities and landscaping, and improving access to the Delaware River waterfront.

Historical lots and streets remain buried below the open spaces adjacent to I-95. Today, within the Northern Liberties, Kensington-Fishtown, and Port Richmond sections of Philadelphia—where Section GIR is located—there is a high density of standing structures that straddle the western side of I-95 in the form of early- to mid-nineteenth-century brick row houses; two-part commercial structures and the former Port Richmond rail yard dominate the eastern side. These sections of the I-95 highway are either supported on earth embankments with occasional retaining walls or on raised bridge structures, many with numerous piers. Immediately beyond the embankments are the modern businesses and open paved areas adjacent to the highway, reflecting the dense, urban nature of the neighborhood, which is still mirrored below in the surface buried during the original construction of I-95.

Given the complex urban setting, the archaeological subsurface testing for the I-95/GIR Improvement Corridor Project is being guided by a programmatic agreement (PA) approved by PennDOT, the FHWA, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the Pennsylvania Historical Museum Commission (PHMC), and the Delaware Nation. The PA approach is innovative and was specifically developed to streamline the normal archaeological identification and evaluation process required in Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). Its main goal was to meet design and construction schedules and provide significant cost savings—which it has. All parties that signed the PA agreed that seventeenth-through early-twentieth-century domestic and industrial deposits, if found intact, would be significant. All parties agreed that any intact Native American sites would also be significant.

But the PA provided for much more, especially in terms of the immediate dissemination of information to a technologically savvy twenty-first-century audience. The local component of this audience can’t get enough of their neighborhoods’ past, and have become so engaged with the project at this point that I-95 construction and design issues are no longer the focus of public interest. Most

near-neighbor groups want to ensure that the archaeological tasks will continue to maintain this exploration of the area's past.

**The Research Design**  
***Life Develops along this Section of the Delaware River Waterfront from 3600 B.C. to A.D. 1940***

Yes, you read that correctly. Daily life played out along this section of the Delaware River waterfront for nearly 6,000 years. AECOM researchers developed a research design to understand Native American activities and describe everyday life along this section of the Delaware River at its confluence with Cohocksink Creek (West Allen Street) and Tumanaraming Creek (Aramingo Avenue). The research model attempts to recreate everyday life at distinct points in time prior to European contact and explain their cultural similarities and differences. The ultimate goal of the precontact research model is to reconstruct Lenape lifeways and place their activities into a regional settlement pattern within the lower Delaware River Valley. With abundant available resources, the Lenape Woodland Indians of southeastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey found no need to evolve into a complex society; most groups developed simple political and social forms of organization. Their activities did not pollute the environment or drive any species into extinction. Therefore, if success is measured by environmental and economic stability, then the Lenape Woodland Indians would rank extremely high.

Northern Liberties, Kensington-Fishtown, and Port Richmond's post-seventeenth-century reconstructed historical past is derived from the scientific collection of technological and environmental data, as well as from historical documents. During this time period, new technology was introduced, new natural resources were exploited, the Penn Treaty event (circa 1682) occurred, political boundaries were defined and redefined, houses were demolished for factories, streams were sealed and turned into drains and sewers, the riverbank was encapsulated with wharfs and docks, and conflicts occurred. These types of events interrupted historical life; day-to-day living was then reconstituted, and society moved on toward the future.<sup>1</sup> In understanding historical life, scientific and social-scientific approaches can in some cases substantiate

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EDITOR

**Grace H. Ziesing, RPA**

ADVISORY CHAIRPERSON

**Stephen W. Tull, RPA**

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

**Mary C. Mills**

COPY EDITOR

**Paul Elwork**

LAYOUT DESIGN

**Chester Cunanan**

CONTRIBUTORS

Mark E. Petrovich

Chester Cunanan

Meta F. Janowitz

Jeremy W. Koch

Douglas Mooney

Rebecca L. White

Mary C. Mills

George Cress

Daniel Eichinger

Thomas J. Kutys

Samuel A. Pickard

INQUIRIES/INFORMATION

Letters may be addressed to Editor, River Chronicles, 437 High St, Burlington, NJ 08016, or sent via e-mail to [editor@riverchronicles.org](mailto:editor@riverchronicles.org). Those selected may be edited for clarity and length.

Visit us online at

[www.riverchronicles.org](http://www.riverchronicles.org)

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these kinds of major events and, moreover, highlight cultural elements of stability maintained for generations in between. In this light, the archaeologist can assist in recreating social relations while examining material items to understand cultural concepts that reinforced a historical group's lifeways. Various historical groups (i.e., neighbors, politicians, industrialists) maintained or imposed new technology or exploited new ecological niches, establishing the degree to which change would occur.

The basic premise of the research design is an attempt to recreate historical life at distinct points in time, and then assess the interruptions and adaptive changes to that life. The focus of inquiry is a simple one, and pervades the discipline of anthropology: Why does the behavior of human individuals or groups change over time? Are these changes caused by the environment, or through technological inventions? Are these changes inherent to culture, trade, religion, politics, population growth, random accidents, or myriad responses to everyday life?

The general research design is dynamic enough to show a progression of change over time and space, as historical settlement progressed north along the Delaware River away from the city's center. The focus is on points in time (dated material culture) and points in space (opportunistic subsurface disturbances) as they relate to the recovered archaeological record. In this way, the research design can be applied to each archaeological site and those yet to be identified. The research design comprises the continuous time period from 3600 B.C. (based on absolute dating techniques) through A.D. 1940 within the three waterfront neighborhoods, and can be found throughout the myriad journal articles in this and future issues of *River Chronicles*.<sup>2</sup>

**Disseminating the Discoveries**  
***The Digging I-95***  
***Interactive Report, Journal, and Museum***

The archaeological waterfront discoveries will be highlighted in this professional journal, the web-based Digging I-95 interactive report, and a future museum.

Digging I-95 Interactive Report: In the usual process, archaeological reports associated with data-recovery projects often take many years to complete, and all of the information is rarely available or understandable to the general public. The Digging I-95 interactive report ([www.diggingi95.com](http://www.diggingi95.com)) provides access to enhanced digital information for both the public and professionals in real time. This secure electronic report format satisfies PHMC guidelines, the Pennsylvania State History Code, and Section 106. Digging I-95 takes an innovative approach to sharing archaeological discoveries from Philadelphia's waterfront with the public, government agencies, and professional archaeologists.

There are dual secure versions of the Digging I-95 interactive report—one for agencies and one for the public. The agency version provides an automated progress report and review access to all reports at the contributing (full editor) level and at the member level (comments only). The public version provides read-only interactive friendly navigation and, as required, certain content can be restricted. Both versions provide image-based exploration, map-based navigation, and a query-ready search box with tips for better access control.

Significant cost savings and enhanced public awareness are realized in this collapsed review time. PennDOT and PHMC have contributing level capabilities; their reviewers receive emails notifying them that a report chapter is complete. The chapter is then reviewed—no need to wait until the entire report is complete. This

constant feedback provides agencies with a vehicle to provide report comments and research directions in real time, and rework is kept to a minimum. If project areas expand due to new ground-disturbing construction and/or if monitoring is required, then new information can be added to existing site data without report addenda. Member-level comments can be considered instantly (FHWA and the Delaware Nation are examples of member-level agencies). Again, review time and comments are addressed instantly.

By making use of the latest technology, public visitors can search through and explore this information as they please via their computers or any web-enabled devices. What you will find here includes images, 3-D reconstructions, and information about individual artifacts; photos and videos of site excavations; historical research on these neighborhoods; stories about the diverse people who made the riverfront their home over the past 6,000 or more years; detailed reports of discoveries from individual archaeological sites; artifact databases that can be used for further research; and information about upcoming public events featuring the latest discoveries from this project.

One important aspect of the Digging I-95 interactive report is that the professional archaeologist can now compare and contrast data from multiple archaeological sites. University professors can have graduate students pose research questions for future theses. Middle and high school educators can synchronize the interactive

report with their classroom smart boards. And most importantly, the public has access to the archaeological record now, not 5 to 10 years from now.

The Journal: In light of such an interactive report, one might ask: "Why a professional journal?" The journal brings information to a much wider audience beyond those who would delve into the interactive report's website. The journal highlights specific noteworthy features and artifacts, providing sharp images and photographs. The journal brings an additional layer of excitement to the archaeology project. It also provides well-deserved individual recognition, especially for our younger novice scholars. Future issues will also focus on comparative and thematic studies, as well as technological innovations—and issues further in the future will report on museum activities.

The Museum: Given the size of the collection and the intensity of local public interest, plans are moving forward to create a museum on the waterfront. Details concerning these plans, programs, and interpretive exhibits will populate future journal issues.

**Next**

Let's return to our intentionality metaphor. Take a really deep breath—still waiting—exhale, feel the oxygen ignite your brain cells with curiosity. Pick up the journal, turn the page. Access the digital media, touch the screen. And read on!

**Stephen W. Tull, RPA**  
*AECOM Vice President*  
**Cultural Resource Department**