



RIVER SUMMER CURRICULUM: The Historic Palisades Interstate Park Commission: A Collaboration Built on Differences

ABSTRACT: In 1900 the Palisades Interstate Park System (PIP) was born of a collaboration of states and individuals, each with their own motivation to place the New Jersey/New York waterfront lands into protected public ownership. Were they Conservationists? Environmentalists? Social Reformists? Or just some of the first NIMBYists? (not in my backyard)? The cast of characters involved in establishing and extending the park system held a wide range of reasons for supporting the project, and yet managed to work together to protect thousands of acres of forests and historic areas. From this foundation has grown a park that today holds over 100,000 acres and eight historic sites. In forming the 1st Interstate Park collaboration this group ‘broke ground’ at every step from their methods of finance that included both public and private funds, their ability to wrestle new parkland from successful companies and powerful individuals, the critical role that women played in this collaborative venture, their creation of lakes and campgrounds for both the state’s wealthiest and New York City’s poorest, and their ability to turn the Great Depression into an opportunity to expand and enhance their facilities.

PROJECT DEVELOPER:

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SUPPLEMENTARY PIECES POSTED SEPARATELY:

- Photo essay of the PIP
- List of discussion questions

LEARNING GOALS:

Skills – Students will be able to :

- Develop a timeline of important events in the establishment of the Palisades Park System



- Use art (cartooning, sketching, photography) as a way to juxtapose the tension in the opposing uses of the palisades
- Locate the Palisades Park and its iconic features as they travel along the Hudson River

Insights - Students will:

- Gain an appreciation of the rich history of this Hudson Valley park system and the individuals who created and developed it
- Be introduced to the prominent role that women played in the establishment of the park, and yet had to fight for recognition of their efforts
- Gain an appreciation for the physical effort in the development of many of the historic pieces that comprise the park system from the bridges to the frontage roadways, to the bathhouses, to the parkway itself
- Be introduced to the legacy of public service that has been a key component in the development of the park system.
- Gain an appreciation for the government Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Work Progress Administration (WPA) in the history of the park – putting many unemployed individuals to work in the park system creating the legacy behind much of the park infrastructure.

MATERIALS & PREPARATION NEEDED:

Special supplies or materials needed.

Drawing materials for use in sketching or cartooning activity – sketchpad, color pencils, charcoal, or cameras or camera phone if you chose to use photography as an expression instead.

If you want to use the pdf of park images for in class discussion prior to taking the students into the field, you will need a projection system.

Special preparation on the part of the instructor that would be needed prior to the day:

- Visit the site you select for your field visit yourself before you take your students.
- If you plan to visit one of the Palisades Park locations maps are available online: <http://www.njpalisades.org/maps.htm> or at the visitor's center at State Line Lookout.
- Print out the list of discussion questions for the students if you plan on doing some of the discussion while you are in the field.
- If you plan to hike along the top of the sill be sure the students have sturdy shoes. Long pants might also be a good recommendation, as seasonally there are ticks and poison oak in some areas of the park.

Site recommendation for this activity:

There are several locations along the Palisades Park that work well for the field component of this activity. It is suggested that background readings be done prior to



going into the field but that the question/discussion is best done while at one of the park settings. If possible include both a viewing of the sill from either on the river or the east shoreline of the river (Part #1) as well as one destination from Part #2 or Part #3 below.

Part #1 – Viewing the Sill face on – suggest this be included as one aspect in any field trip:

- **From the River** - If at all possible, a view of the Palisades Sill from the water is really helpful. The sheer majesty of this geologic feature was used historically by the women from the New Jersey State Federation of Women's Clubs to enlist the support of the politicians and powerful businessmen in New Jersey. Using a boat the women took the gentlemen onto the Hudson River to allow them to appreciate the full visual impact of the Sill. It is worth replicating this approach. The Sill from the water is impressive in size, the columnar joints in the geology are clearly visible, and the talus (broken rock fragments) provides a small hint of the rubble that would have been created through the constant blasting of the rock face during the quarrying process.
- **Across the River** – If a boat is not possible then view the Sill from the East side of the river in Yonkers, Riverdale, Harrison, Irvington – any of the New York towns in this stretch of the Hudson will serve as a second choice for developing a sense of the visual impact of this geologic feature.

Part #2 – Hiking to see the sites – legacy stops

- **Women's Federation Monument** – Visiting the Women's Federation Monument is a nice way to connect to the founding history of the park system and to honor the women who worked so hard to raise funds, awareness and the desire among those in power in New Jersey to set aside the land as park. There are two ways to hike into the monument site. The first is to park on 9W crossing over the pedestrian bridge about 2 miles north of Closter Dock Rd. As you hike into the park you will bear to the left and the monument sits prominently overlooking the cliffs – looking much like a mini stone castle. <http://www.njpalisades.org/overlooks.htm#Women>. The second way is to park at the State Line Lookout and hike south along the path that follows the cliff into the park (<http://www.njpalisades.org/overlooks.htm#State>). As you hike along the cliffs you will find the monument. (Note that if you are at the monument the remains of the Timken estate (see section on Development of the Activity) lie just to the south along the cliff top. While little remains, it is worth taking a few extra minutes to explore this skeletal estate just to get a sense of the location and the view.)
- **Hook Mountain** – Originally purchased to stop the quarrying at this highly visual spot along the Nyack waterfront, it fell under heated discussion when a shortage of funds for maintenance of their properties was becoming a problem for the park system. At that time there was much debate over whether to



allow the PIP itself to reinstitute quarrying at Hook Mountain. The argument was that the mountain had been so severely gashed by earlier stone removal that it was visually unappealing. Proponents of the quarrying hoped to use the stone in some of the park development projects (camp sites, roads etc.). The newly leveled area along the waterfront would be the site of new recreational facilities created to generate operating funds for the whole park system. Fortunately they decided against this and instead a lunchroom and a bathhouse were constructed at the water level entry (still existing). The area offers a series of hiking trails along the shoreline and along the top of the mountain.

- **Perkins Tower** – Built on top of Bear Mountain, Perkins Tower was completed in 1934 as a memorial to the original chairman of the Palisades Interstate Park Commission. Appointed by Theodore Roosevelt, Perkins was a charismatic leader who managed to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for the park development over his tenure. Perched 1,305 feet above the Hudson, the solid stone tower stands 65 feet tall with a 360 degree viewing room at the top. The drive to the top of the mountain was blasted into the hillside with 50,000 tons of dynamite and 1,500 workers during the height of the WPA and CCC programs. The tower originally served as a weather station and fire lookout, but was retired for that use in the 1950s, and now serves as a scenic vista for visitors to this incredible spot. Aside from an amazing view of the Hudson River, there are views of the four states of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Connecticut, and iconic items such as the Bear Mountain Bridge, West Point Military Academy, Storm King, Fort Montgomery, Mount Beacon, Shawangunk mountains, and of course New York City.
- **Harriman Park** – The park boasts many of the man-made lakes engineered by the incredibly talented engineer Major W. Welch, famous for his construction projects in the park and his vision for the development of the park system both at PIP and at the national level. Along with the lakes the area is filled with hiking trails, beach areas, and campgrounds. The many facilities in Harriman Park are the result of not only Welch’s vision but the large workforce available through the WPA and the CCC (see ‘understandings needed’ section below). Welch created amazing facilities throughout the park and his many camp and lake creations were used by inner city youth who traveled to the facilities over the summer to participate in the Fresh Air Camps, part of the group camps program. Unfortunately polio was an issue at the time and several campers and swimmers, including Franklin Delano Roosevelt contracted polio in a park lake.
- **Other Park Hikes** – There are numerous other hikes that can be taken along the Palisades. The following link lists several of them.
<http://www.njpalisades.org/hiking.htm#top>



- **Visit one of the quarries** – Tilcon still operates quarries in several locations in New York and New Jersey. The Haverstraw, NY location has been willing to provide tours of the facility in the past and it is well worth it to see the magnitude of the operation. The quarry provides local jobs and materials for road and sidewalk paving among other uses. <http://www.tilconny.com/>

Part #3 – Visiting the Parkland

- **Alpine, NJ** – Visiting the Alpine stretch of parkland will provide the students with a sense of the park in its early days. The historic Kearney House (<http://www.njpalisades.org/kearney.htm>) predates the establishment of the Palisades Park System but it is representative of the secondary role the park has taken on, operating some of the historic buildings and parklands that exist in the mid to lower Hudson Valley.
<http://www.palisadesparksconservancy.org/historic/>
Aside from the Kearney Building, Alpine beach houses several beautiful hand built stone buildings from the early days of the park system. In case of poor weather, there is a wonderful covered two level stone picnic pavilion – the lower level was once changing rooms for what was once part of the Alpine ‘bathing beach’ (swimming beach). There are hiking trails through the park area.
- **Bloomers Beach (Engelwood Boat Basin)** – In the early days of the park this beach was called Bloomers Beach after a family who lived in that area during the 19th century. A small beach area with little cover if it rains. Several small old rock buildings remain as part of the early park construction.
- **Carpenter Brother’s Quarry /Ross Dock, NJ** – Built on sunken barges and landfill from the time of the early quarrying, this piece of property has strong connections to the origin and development of the parks system. The Carpenter Brother’s Quarry was a large and bustling enterprise in the late 1800s. Carpenter’s quarry was aggressive with their blasting practices and is remembered for blasting a famous 200 ft. vertical section of diabase, named Indian Head by the residents, and weighing ~350,000 tons. It is reported that the echoes of the 1998 blast lasted a full 6 minutes, reverberating up and down the river. The closing of the quarries and the acquisition of that waterfront property was a primary goal of the PIP, and this quarry became the focus of the early battles for establishing the parkland. The Carpenter Brother’s Quarry was closed in Dec. 1990.
- **Ross Dock** - Named for Sanford P. Ross an early owner of the property, this shoreline piece of Carpenter Brother’s Quarry became an early holding of the PIP. However it wasn’t until the early 1930’s that the WPA (see ‘understandings needed’) built a series of cabins, and the land became an active family summer camp for New York families. Cabins were available for rent by the week, with husbands taking a ferry into the city for work and return to their vacationing families at the end of the day. The entire flat



surface was covered in camp cottages. Today Ross Dock stands as mainly opened lawn area, a building with covered walkway & rest room facilities and some picnic tables. Access to the park hiking trails is available.

<http://www.palisadesparksconservancy.org/parks/13/>

- **Bear Mountain State Park** – A legacy of the Harriman family, Bear Mountain park, lies on the western side of the Bear Mountain Bridge and is an iconic piece in the PIP history. This location has a wide array of park history to view as well as wonderful hiking opportunities. The park serves as the gateway to the larger Harriman State Park, both possible through a generous gift of the Harriman family. Harriman was concerned about Sing Sing prison building a new facility at the base of his property, along the waterfront below the existing Bear Mountain lodge. Through extensive lobbying to the state and a promise of parkland being donated, Harriman managed to have the project stopped in 1910. Bear Mountain state park became the ferry stop of the more privileged New York families escaping the city. The NYC residents would stream out to the park by ferry and picnic, swim, and enjoy the country. The Bear Mountain Inn was built in 1915 in the same style as most of the park system buildings from the era, with rough wood and large stone blocking. In addition to the inn, the park holds an interpretive center, a small zoo, a pool and many hiking trails including a link to the original section of Appalachian Trail. The famous Bear Mountain suspension bridge was the first vehicular crossing between Albany and NYC, and when it was built in 1924 it was the longest suspension bridge in the world, and the first to have a concrete deck. The bridge was built by a privately formed company with a promise of the state taking over operations at a future date.

UNDERSTANDINGS NEEDED:

Students should be familiar with the following prior to launching further into this project:

Palisades Sill – A 200 million year old geologic intrusion of hard diabase (basaltic) rock that runs continuously above ground from Fort Lee, NJ up to Suffern NY. The sill formed when igneous rock intruded between layers of sandstone and shale during the breakup of Pangea. The sill is close to 1000 ft. thick, although we see only about half of that rising above the Hudson – the highest above ground point is at State Line Lookout in New Jersey where it is just over 500 ft. tall.

Talus – The broken rock fragments at the base of cliffs such as at the base of the Palisades Sill. Talus results from natural weathering such as the freeze and thaw of ice in the joints and discontinuities of the rock face, as well the human impact of quarrying that blasted apart bits of the cliff leaving debris to fall to the base.

Palisades Interstate Park (PIP) Commission- The first agency of its kind, the PIP was formed through the vision of NY governor Theodore Roosevelt, and by the agreement of the governors of New York and New Jersey in 1900. New Jersey's governors had been under pressure to protect some of the Hudson River waterfront land for several years but



had no money to spend on it, no political will to fight the wealthy landowners, and felt it was a local issue that they could not put state money or resources towards. In 1899 Theodore Roosevelt became the NY governor and established a study commission that recommended the 2 states take a 737 acre strip that ran 14 acres along the river, paying \$350/acre. In March 1900 Roosevelt took the first step toward making this happen by providing the political will to broker the two state collaboration that established the Commissioners of the PIP. The PIP was charged with developing plans for what land to acquire and how. Through legislation a board of 10 commissioners was established – 5 NJ and 5 NY. Roosevelt appointing Perkins as its president. It was a strange structure, two separate 10 member commissions but with the same membership. The group would convene as the NJ delegation, then adjourn and reconvene as the NY delegation. Perhaps the most unique feature was the establishment of an interstate agency, as well as a private funding mechanism to build and maintain the park system. Christmas Eve, Dec. 24th, 1900 brought the PIP's first land purchase as the Carpenter Brother's Quarry ceased operation and the PIP took ownership of that property.

George Perkins – Perkins resided in Riverdale, in what is currently called Glyndor House. Perkins loved the river view and wanted to stop the quarrying as it disturbed his tranquility and that of his young children. A charismatic individual, and a self-made man, he aspired early on to be a missionary (which one expects he would have been very good at). His poor economic upbringing denied him access to the training, instead he became an insurance salesman. Late in the 1800s Perkins met Roosevelt to discuss an insurance practice. Roosevelt liked him so much he chose him to lead his newly forming PIP. It was through Perkins' incredible charisma and extremely hard work the park was able to secure the financial contributions to grow at the rapid rate that it did. Perkins was charismatic enough to enlist the support and finances of JP Morgan and many other wealthy gentlemen in his battle to finance land acquisition. Perkins grew to be incredibly powerful and both he and his family devoted much of their lives to the PIP. Riverdale's Wave Hill, a public botanical garden and cultural center, is his old estate, pieced together from several riverfront property purchases. It seems likely that Perkins' early missionary philosophies had an influence on the park's social reformist focus access and accommodation to all classes of individuals, including ferry service being expanded to bring the poor out of the city to enjoy the facilities.

Works Progress Administration (also known as Work Projects Administration) – (WPA) – The most ambitious program of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's (FDR) New Deal, the WPA was created in 1935 and operated for 8 years (until 1943) as a means of dealing with the Great Depression. Millions of out of work individuals were employed in public works projects primarily building roads and public buildings. The development of many buildings and internal roadways of the PIP was completed under the WPA providing much needed jobs for the unemployed and facilities for the park users. Businessmen who had held white-collar positions in NYC traveled by ferry out to the parks, were handed boots and work clothes and offered a way to feed themselves and their families. The workers then ferried back to NYC at the end of each day. Some of the items built during the WPA include: cabins at Ross Dock, snack bars throughout the park,



pathways & roadway at State Line Lookout NJ, much of the work on Henry Hudson Drive, and the roadway up to Perkins Tower.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) – The CCC was another New Deal public work relief program of FDR providing resident camps focused on training young men. Between 1933-42 young 18-25 year old unemployed, unmarried men, were offered employment through the CCC in unskilled manual labor. The jobs related to the conservation and development of natural resources in lands owned by federal, state and local governments. The CCC had a dual focus of providing employment and job training for young men during the Great Depression while initiating natural resource conservation programs throughout the country. The PIP established 12 camps in Harriman Park for the young men who worked on their projects, which had quickly climbed to 10,000 men. Numerous projects were completed through this energetic workforce, including huge rock walls built to stabilize road-cuts along the face of the sheer Palisades cliffs, stone buildings scattered throughout the park system, cleared trails and created rest stops, and constructed lakes in Harriman Park.

PRE-ACTIVITY READINGS:

The following is a list of suggested pre-activity readings:

INSTRUCTOR - List of suggested readings & resources –

Print:

The Binnewies' book is an excellent resource for instructors as well as a very readable book for students:

“Binnewies, R. O., *Palisades: 100,000 acres in 100 years*, Fordham University Press and Palisades Interstate Park Commission, 2001, 406 p.

Stalter, E., *Doodletown: Hiking through history in a vanished hamlet on the Hudson*, Palisades Interstate Park Commission Press, 1996, 115 p.

Additional resources include several of the Images of America Book as a means of providing images of the park system when it was under development. Titles that are useful include:

Davis, E. E. and Nelson, E., *New Jersey's Palisades interstate Park*, Arcadia Publishing, 2007, 128 p.

Gottlock, B, and Gottlock. W., *New York's Palisades Interstate Park*, Arcadia Publishing, 2007, 127 p.

Burke, K. W., *Hudson River Bridges*, Arcadia Publishing, 2007, 127 p.

Coffey, R. C., *Harriman State Park*, Arcadia Publishing, 2010, 128 p.



Online Resources:

For a summary of the history of the establishment of the National Parks Service the following is a nice article. It highlights some of the conflicts experienced in the establishment of the national system that were mirrored in the local PIP as well as highlighting the role of the WPA in the development of the parks at the national level.

THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE *A Brief History*, Barry Mackintosh, 1999
<http://www.nps.gov/history/history/hisnps/NPSHistory/npshisto.htm>

Series of short videos available on the Palisades Parks Conservancy website which provide an excellent synopsis on the topic.

The Perkins Effect: A history of the parks – 11:22 Minutes

The Harriman Touch: An enduring legacy – 12:56 Minutes

The website itself is also a good resource:

<http://www.palisadesparksconservancy.org/about/>

The New Jersey section of the Palisades Interstate Park has its own website which focuses only on the NJ section of the park and its history. It is a little less straightforward to navigate through.

<http://www.njpalisades.org/>

STUDENT - List of suggested readings for the students -

Any of the books listed above would be good reading for the students. Depending on how this fits into your curriculum the *Images of America* books provide a quick history, while the *Palsiades, 100,000 acres in 100 years* provides a more comprehensive overview.

Series of short videos available on the Palisades Parks Conservancy website which provide an excellent synopsis to launch the students into the topic.

The Perkins Effect: A history of the parks – 11:22 Minutes

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PRE-ACTIVITY EXERCISE:

Before going into the field start the conversation with some background on the **Human History of the Palisades Sill** and the role it has played at so many junctures.

The Palisades were named by Verrazano's expedition in 1524 – the word means “**fence of stakes**” as the rock formation looked like forts built by the local Native Americans. Verrazano would have seen an impressive steep rising façade, probably not much different than today with talus sloping fronts covered with forest. The Palisades rise on average 300 ft. above sea level, they tower above the Hudson, and are visible from Staten Island up to Pomona (although the rock formation spans a much larger area).

Native Americans used them for shelter, observation, and protection. They called the cliffs “Wee-awaken” or **rocks that look like trees**. They discouraged settlers on the cliffs by burning them out. The Dutch favored large estates on the flat east side of the river, as it was more like their homeland, so most of area was left undeveloped during the time of early settlement.

Early 1700s - first farmers and woodcutters began working extensively on the summit.

Early 1800s - first houses were built and during the next 100 yrs. estates were built and many trees were felled. The estates were very lavish with expansive lawn areas, fountains, pools and ponds. Much of the 300 plus year forest of old growth hardwood tree cover was removed during this period, some to clear for home building, and some to feed the insatiable appetite of industry - for use in RR lines, iron furnaces, the brick industry and other industrial operations. There are some who say that the forests were stripped clean of old growth hardwood during this time of ‘expansion’.

Conservation – Small groups of individuals began movements opposed to the expansion and development. Many track the origins of these groups back to the early American writers (early to mid 1800s), Emerson, Thoreau, James Fennimore Cooper. This profound group of writers developed a deep connection of the American people to the landscape, contributing to a focus that allowed the Hudson River School of art (1825) to develop and thrive. Both the literature and the art reacted against the growing impact of industrialization and deforestation.

Civil War - caused a boom of entrepreneurship (1860s), and following this the nation was in a post war industrial boom. Iron, textile, shipping, mining, RR, oil all were seen as part of growth and prosperity with seemingly **NO ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS**. The Palisades Sill was used as a giant billboard with people painting 20 foot tall advertisements. This was a nationwide lack of concern for the resources. In California 3000 yr. old sequoia trees were being cut to use as fence posts! Such was the mindset of the time period.

Quarries - Locally the Palisades was being sold in large sections by mayors and landowners for quarrying. Carpenter Bros. had a LARGE operation along Englewood NJ producing 1500 cubic yards a day that they sold for \$1/cubic yard. However, Carpenter



Bros. was only one of many quarry operators working the face of the sill. New technology for paved streets caused a major escalation in the need for crushed rock. The rock was also used in sidewalks and as a foundation for the first steel-framed skyscrapers. NYC's need appeared insatiable.

DEVELOPMENT OF ACTIVITY:

1. Time Allocation:

1.75 to 2.5 hours plus any travel time to your field area. This assumes that the students have reviewed the materials listed above and have some familiarity with the topic. The time will be dependent upon where you chose to go with the students but in each instance it is important to review the set of questions you chose to have the students discuss and consider.

2. Motivation: Review the following information with the students as a starting focus to engage the students in the activity.

The Palisades Interstate Park was founded through a unique set of partnerships and seemingly conflicting motivations. There are many issues that arose along the way of the development of the park system that merit discussion. We will be looking at four main themes in our trip, activities and discussions. Each is highlighted below with a summary.

A) The role of women in the establishment and the operation of the park system; Did it mirror the history of women in the U.S.?

- **Beginnings** - A group of 17 women formed Englewood Women's Club, a new chapter of the NJ Federation of Women's Clubs, with a primary focus of halting the quarrying on the Palisades Sill and saving the cliffs. Women at the time had no voting rights – their role was in the home tending to domestic issues. However these women devised a means for women to have influence. Two of the women (Elizabeth Vermilye & Cecelia Gaines) embarked on a letter writing campaign to the newspapers, made personal contact with local politicians, and exhorted their husbands to influence other influential gentlemen. The women noted it was the 'practical duty of women to conserve the beauties of nature'. In 1897 fifty women, along with several gentlemen members of the new American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, set out on a yacht. They proposed that the best view of the Palisades was from the water. Being a spirited group they dropped in on a quarry just as it prepared for its mid-day blast, hence stopping the operation. It was through the work of these women that the waterfront land preservation issue remained a point of focus for the New Jersey mayors, and funds were raised for land purchases not only to establish, but to grow and develop the park system.

- **Leadership** - With the establishment of the park there was a commission of leaders selected. The two NJ women (Elizabeth Vermilye & Cecelia Gaines) who had worked so hard to garner support among the NJ decision makers through sending letters to the editor and legislators etc., were NOT appointed. They were informed that their presence would stifle the deliberations of the men. It took a full 60 years for the first women commissioner to be appointed! Not until March 21, 1960, when Linn Perkins was



appointed by Gov. Nelson Rockefeller to succeed her husband did the PIP find room for its first female commissioner.

- **Monument** - The NJ Federation of Women's Clubs continued to work hard for the newly established PIP raising money for land purchases and raising support through letter writing. The group was long promised a monument for their work and unceasing effort but it took a full 30 years for this to be built. Other priorities seemed to arise for the funds that could have been used for this project. In the end the women raised funds themselves for the land for the monument, which is located along the waterfront hike to State Line Lookout, boasting a commanding view of the river.

- **Employment** - In 1920, after 20 years in operation, the first woman was hired with a significant role in the operations of the PIP. Ruby Jolliffe was hired as director of the group-camp program, where she remained for 28 years. Jolliffe was well suited for the job, having worked in NYC YWCA as their director of camps.

B) Eminent Domain – Both New Jersey and New York battled not only businesses, but private owners to collect the land for the park.

- **In New Jersey there were 147 private owners** in the 14 miles from Fort Lee to border. People facing displacement included the very wealthy estate owners down to fishermen, boat builders and families squatting along the shoreline. In order to gather the land in New Jersey alone the commission created by more than 1000 real estate transactions, including one instance where representatives were sent to the state of Washington to secure 1/240th interest of a 2.25 acre parcel. They begged and borrowed money and fought many owners using eminent domain as both a threat, and an actual action for removal.

- **Elephant House of John Burnett and Cora Timken** – Cora was an artist and sculptor, and an heiress to the Timken roller-bearing fortune. Her husband built their home on the cliff tops where they first picniced. Built in the 1920s Burnett designed all of the buildings, crafting them to fit the contours of the stone-swept landscape. Their residence, faced in green terracotta tiles, stood on the very cliff edge, plate glass windows offering a panoramic sweep of the Hudson. They refused to sell when the park approached them and ultimately eminent domain was threatened. They were the last New Jersey estate hold out when Cora died in 1956. When her husband died in 1959 the land was acquired.

- **New York quarry business denied** due to Eminent Domain - In 1927 one more quarry surfaced through Standard Trap Rock Corp. The company arranged to open a quarry buying property along the waterfront below Tallman Mountain. This was the largest quarry operation that had been proposed to date on the Hudson covering some 171 acres of property. Standard Trap forced a channel through the Piermont marsh to provide barge access to the mountain and constructed a giant crushing plant. Several of the park supporters recognized the potential impacts and offered funds to purchase the land back from Standard Trap. Thomas Lamont offered \$100,000, Rockefeller \$300,000 and Harriman \$100,000 but the quarry company backed out upping the sale price to \$2Million. The PIPC stepped using eminent domain, but Standard Trap Rock sued. The court ruled against the PIPC but an appeals court ruled in their favor and they ultimately won. The noteworthy part of this ruling was that the **'preservation of scenic beauty by appropriation was deemed by the US Supreme Court to be a legitimate responsibility of public park agencies'**.



• In New York **whole towns** were in the way of the park development plans. In Harriman Park a series of small hamlets were felled – some were dammed and flooded and others just scrubbed from the landscape. Sandyfields, Baileytown, Bulstown, Johnstown, Pine Meadows, Pittsboro, Queensboro, Woodtown, Doodletown, all small mountain settlements, were destroyed. Doodletown remains one of the more memorable towns to be lost to the development of the park system. People were moved out, homes, schools and buildings were leveled and all that remains are old foundations and several historic graveyards. Was the ‘price worth the product’ in the elimination of these small towns?

C) *Altruism versus NIMBY – does the motivation for involvement really matter?*

We remember many of the individuals involved as philanthropists who helped mold the country’s face with their generous gifts and contributions...but should this really be the case? For example:

- Perkins – wanted to stop the blasting of Carpenter Brothers quarry from across his home in Riverdale as it was disturbing his peace.
- Morgan wanted Perkins to work for him and so offered him a large financial contribution in exchange for that commitment. Morgan was known as a tyrannical individual, so this was a commitment not to be considered lightly.
- Rockefeller wanted his view of Hook Mtn. across Kykuit protected
- Harriman wanted to avoid a prison at the base of his mountain

D) *Conservation versus Recreation – The park system was originally set up to protect the land and envisioned as an idyllic wilderness area, with ‘well behaved’ people occasionally strolling the edges. What happened was far different, with active recreational use being the dominant park usage.*

- Active park use was a real surprise. The land was **purchased to protect its passive beauty so it was indeed** an unexpected situation when the park was so popular for recreational play that it was hard to keep it natural. The picnicking, swimming, camping and canoeing (400 canoes on one weekend) was unexpected and unprecedented.
- No police force was thought of when the park was established, but with the accelerated usage in 1905 they hired ONE marshal to deal with 100,000s of visitors. Maintenance, security, lifeguards...all these were unanticipated expenses, management and supervision issues.
- No infrastructure was in place to deal with the large usage – no sewage, piped water, changing rooms etc.
- Natural Versus Constructed - Many camps were established in Harriman Park for children and families. Dams were built and lakes constructed. The camps were a huge success but there were those who felt a constructed park was not within the original design of the PIP. The lack of infrastructure created health issues. During several seasons campers contracted polio or typhoid fever after swimming in the lakes and streams. Quarantines were put in place. FDR would contract polio after swimming in a Harriman State Park Lake.
- A New Focus - ‘Worthy Social Purposes’ - Along with a focus of acquiring and protecting the land there was a new thought that “Parklands could be used for worthy social purposes.” This was a new kind of park for the urban population i.e. camps set



up for the poor, and included all the fresh air camps for the inner city youth that were built in Harriman Park. These large group camps were viewed as a way to protect these children from the dangerous conditions of the city; dangerous in safety as well as health.

- Available to all – The original thought was to build rental cabins in the parkland for the more affluent to use, but instead the development of the park ended up favoring rustic camp sites for the general population. The parks were open to all for enjoyment and with this came the overarching concept that they would be operated without profit to concessionaires or others.
- Even with the focus on the everyday people there were separated park usages – The park provided ferry service to Hook Mtn. park for the “really poor” (minorities), women only campers were allowed to go to Blauvelt, and other visitors ferried up to Bear Mtn.

Step by Step Directions:

- a) For whatever location you select to visit with your students have each student pick one of the 4 themes listed above as a focus to be considering as they explore the park area. It is ideal if you have a variety of topics represented in your student population; hopefully you will have all four topics. Explore the park area, hike etc. for ~30-40 minutes.
- b) Using their topic as a focus, have the students create one of the following pieces to be discussed while they are in the field (30 minutes):
 - Design a political cartoon around the topic they select.
 - Create a drawing - split it in half with one half representing the protected parkland and the other half representing the land being used for its natural resources.
 - If using a digital camera, take a photo or two that would showcase how the goals of the original founders of the park system have been achieved OR have not been achieved.
 - One of the strong beliefs of the early park system was that signage should be kept to a minimum. Imagine that you have been hired to create a minimalist sign for the early park users to fit into the style and design of the parks. Develop a mock-up of such a sign including what you feel would be essential components.
- c) Have the students lay out their projects for review by the larger class group without any formal presentation or explanation by the creator (10 minutes).
- d) Let the students respond to the works – being sure that each one has some discussion and examination by the group (20 mins.)
- e) Wrap up this activity by reviewing each of the presented topics to determine if students feel that ‘being in the space’ had an impact on their original thinking of the topic, i.e. did it strengthen it? Change it? Weaken it? etc. (15 mins.)
- f) While in the field open the discussion of the role of the quarries in New York State’s economic as well as social development. Is there room for such a large-scale business to operate along the Hudson waterfront? Consider the jobs and the product, both have filled and continue to fill a need in New York State. (10 mins.)
- g) If there is time you can tackle any of the questions on the supplementary discussion sheet. Some might require your students to dig into the readings that



are recommended. Note that this part could be done as follow up back in the classroom or as an assigned writing.

INTERDISCIPLINARY OPTIONS:

This topic leads itself easily to any number of interdisciplinary items.

Geology: This activity has been successfully combined with fieldtrips that included geology. A group hike to examine and discuss the rocks and formation of the Palisades Sill or the Hudson Highlands can lead into a rich discussion of the value in the protection of this resource OR of the value of this resource as a natural material for building. The columnar joints in the Sill are brought to life by a geologist, as is the exposure of the contact at the base of the sill where it intruded.

History: Combining this Environmental topic with a historical focus would make perfect sense as the two are deeply intertwined. This movement emerged when America was young and witnessing industrialization at a rapid rate. Examining the economic and political situations that drove the consumption of the resources leading to the destruction of the wilderness that had been the hallmark of the new world would be interesting. Weaving both the National Parks movement together with the creation of the PIP against the broader backdrop of the war's economy and the New Deal would be a nice interdisciplinary piece.

English Literature: This activity can also be successfully combined with an early American English literature class. As was noted earlier, the conservation movement was emerging following the early American literature field with authors like James Fennimore Cooper, Washington Irving, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. These authors wrote of an America that was deeply connected to its landscape and wilderness, and this strong focus is central to the conservationist motivation to protect and enjoy this uniqueness.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Adding to the Activity –

- The sketches and photographs could be worked into an annotated digital presentation about what was learned on the trip.
- Building on the “power of the pen” which was a key tool in the ongoing battles for land acquisition for the park system, have the students write an editorial on any of the 4 topics examined in the field, or any of the discussion items on the discussion sheet.
- Have the students create a timeline of Historic events that ran in parallel to the creation of the parks system. Identify key dates in the park system establishment from the reading list to add to the timeline. Look for items that were interrelated.



(b) Simplifying the Activity- For a less rigorous activity students could all tackle a single topic with their field activity, or they could work in teams in the field to create a team project for 3 or 4 students together.

2. Extension or Supplementary Activities: The connection between the National Parks System and the PIP is very interesting and worth further examination if you have the time. There are several movies made by Ken Burns for PBS that would be interesting to review with your students. I would suggest the *History of the National Parks* or the *People Who Made a Difference*
<http://www.pbs.org/nationalparks/>

Have the students reflect on the question “What if the Palisades had not been protected, and the park system did not exist?” The state and national parks are an unexplored and underappreciated resource. Perhaps brainstorming this topic will bring this to light.

Tough Questions – Some tough questions that might arise –

A difficult question is how one strikes a balance between protecting and preserving natural habitat, and providing a recreational space for an urban population that so desperately searches it out. There is no easy answer to this question. Certainly this ‘conflict’ is being currently ‘played out’ in several other areas in New York that could be included in the discussion: The Mohonk Preserve has ongoing conflict between the large number of climbers and recreational users in the preserve, and the scientific research projects and historic naturalist observations they continue to maintain; The Adirondacks Park Blue Line zone has had ongoing tension between the park residents who need to work and earn a living in the park area and the state park agency that focuses on maintaining the blue line area as a pristine wilderness.

Common Misconceptions & Mistakes – Many people are not aware that the PIP is a partnership between the two states with shared management.

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