



Manahatta to Manhattan

Native Americans in Lower Manhattan



Smithsonian
National Museum of the American Indian





Location of the New York Stock Exchange, major U.S. financial institutions, Wall Street, and the Federal Reserve Bank. This vibrant area is also home to the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), George Gustav Heye Center.

The Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), founded in 1989 by an act of Congress, is the first national museum dedicated to Native cultures of the Western Hemisphere, which includes North, Central, and South America. The NMAI also has a museum located on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., and its expansive collection is housed in a state-of-the-art facility, the NMAI Cultural Resources Center, in Suitland, Maryland. The NMAI features exhibitions, public programs, and educational activities that highlight the diversity and strength of the Native peoples of the Americas.

The NMAI in New York City is located in the U.S. Custom House. It was designed by architect Cass Gilbert (1859–1934) and built between 1900 and 1907. The Custom House was the location where merchants paid money, known as “duties,” to transport goods in and out of the United States. The NMAI moved into this building in 1994.



Manahatta



The Lenape, Manhattan’s original inhabitants, called the island *Manahatta*, which means “hilly island.”



Photo by G. De Gennaro.

Rich with natural resources, Manahatta had an abundance of fruits, nuts, birds, and animals. Fish and shellfish were plentiful and the ocean was full of seals, whales, and dolphins. Migrant birds flew to local marshes based on the available food supply or weather conditions.

The body of water off the coast of Lower Manhattan is an estuary, a place where saltwater from the Atlantic Ocean mixes with freshwater from the Hudson River. Estuaries are particularly good places for wildlife to live.

The Lenape called the Hudson River *Shatemuc*, meaning “the river that flows both ways,” because the river alternates its flow from north to south along with the Atlantic tides. *Shatemuc* was an important water route for the Lenape who traded with other Native people living in villages along its banks. The Lenape of Manahatta used dugout canoes to travel and trade on the river. In this

booklet you will learn about the Native people of Lower Manhattan and the lasting impressions they left on this area.

The Lenape of Manahatta



The Lenape lived in Manahatta, now called Manhattan, prior to European contact. The word Lenape (len-AH-pay) means “the people” in their language. The Lenape spoke an Algonquian language, one of many families of languages in North America. The Algonquian language family consists of over 20 languages.

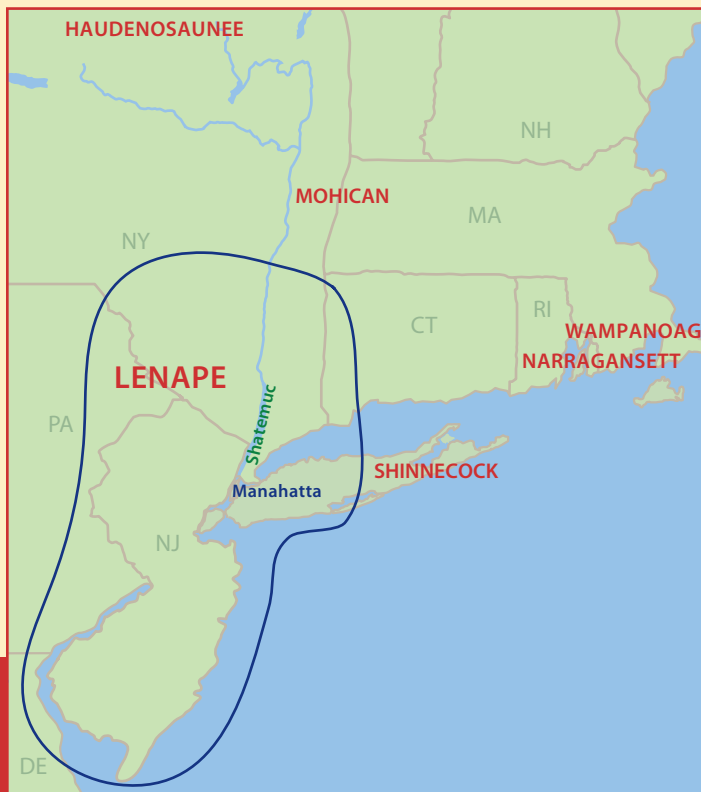
Lenape families lived in bark-covered houses shaped like a dome. They could extend their houses as families grew. Men tied sapling trees together to form the rounded shape, wrapped the structures with layers of bark, and covered the doorways with animal skins. Each home had an opening on the roof to allow smoke from the cooking fire inside to escape. They used pieces of bark to cover the opening during bad weather. Lenape people spent most of their time working outdoors, except in cold winter months when people visited one another and worked on indoor chores such as repairing clothing and tools.

Lenape dressed in clothes they made from materials found in their environment. Women made clothes that were suitable to the weather of the season and appropriate for the work to be done. When it was warm, Lenape women and girls wore wrap-around skirts they made from plant materials and men and boys wore loincloths made from deerskin. When it was cold, men, women, and children wore animal skins and furs.

The Lenape of Manahatta used natural resources for things they needed in their daily lives. They lived in environments filled with sea animals, birds, and larger mammals such as deer. Though they grew some crops, including corn, beans, and squash, the Lenape devoted most of their time to hunting, fishing, and gathering and preparing wild plant foods. Communities moved seasonally, harvesting wild plants and following animals that they used for food. The men hunted and fished; women gathered fruits, berries, and nuts. Friends and families shared

land. The Lenape also relied on the oysters, clams, and other shellfish that were plentiful in the waters surrounding Manahatta.

The Lenape of Manahatta used stone, clay, bone, horn, shells, animal skins, and wood to make things they needed. They nurtured bustling trade relationships with other Native people, including other Lenape villages, the Haudenosaunee, the Mohicans, and the Shinnecock. They traded goods such as food, pottery, animal pelts, tools, weapons, and wampum.

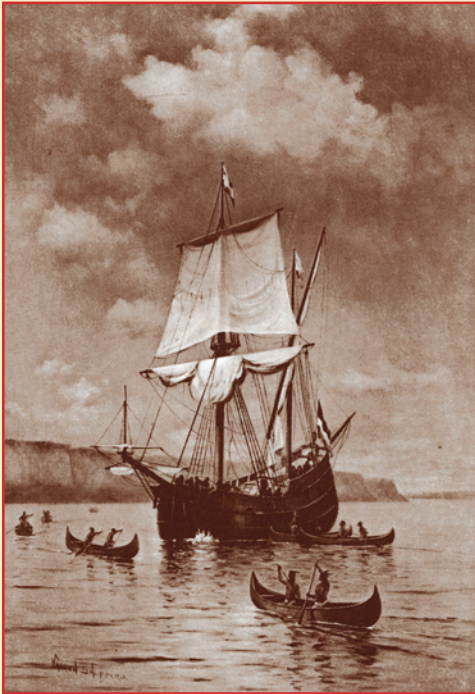


The Lenape homeland around the year 1500.
NMAI Map.

Manahatta Changed



The Lenape first encountered Europeans in the 1500s.



Europeans Giovanni da Verrazzano in 1524 and Henry Hudson in 1609 sailed into the Manahatta harbor. Hudson went back to Europe and spoke of the large numbers of beaver in what is now the northeast coast of the United States. By the early 1600s, the Lenape were actively trading furs and other items with the Europeans. In 1624, as the Dutch settled in what is now Lower Manhattan, the Lenape of Manahatta began to lose their homeland.

It has been said that in 1626 the Lenape “sold” Manahatta to Peter Minuit, director of the Dutch settlement, for sixty guilders (about \$24 at that time) worth of trade goods. However, the Lenape didn’t see the transaction as the official handing-over of one thing for another. They saw it as a chance to share the land with the Dutch. Minuit, however, saw the transaction as a sale, and assumed the Dutch had become the owners. The Dutch called their settlement at the southern tip of Manahatta “New Amsterdam.”

During the early years of Dutch settlement in Manahatta, the Lenape helped the Dutch settlers get used to their new environment and the two groups lived peacefully together. By the mid-1600s, however, the Europeans had learned how to take care of themselves in Manahatta and conflicts began.

Disagreements also arose between the Lenape and other Native people who were competing with each other for trade with the Europeans. Many Lenape died from diseases brought by the Europeans because their bodies hadn’t developed any immunity, or resistance, to them. New Amsterdam was taken over by the English in the 1660s, at which time the name was changed to New York. By the early 1700s, those Lenape who survived the effects of European arrival were forced to move from Manahatta.



The Fur Trade



The fur trade forever changed the relationship between the Lenape and the Europeans.

From the late 1500s until the mid 1800s, felt hats made from beaver fur were the height of fashion in Europe. By the early 1600s, beavers were nearly extinct in Europe, so people who had furs were considered important or celebrated. Henry Hudson told the Europeans about the large numbers of beaver he found along what is now the northeast coast of the United States. It was then that the Lenape began to trade furs with the Europeans in exchange for goods that were useful to them — metal axes, glass beads, guns, wool and linen cloth, and other items. In 1624, the Dutch reportedly shipped 1500 beaver skins from New York to Europe to be made into hats. Eventually, after beavers were hunted to near extinction in Manahatta, the Lenape had to travel farther into what is now New Jersey and New York State to hunt and trap beaver. This created conflicts with other Native people who were also hunting beaver to trade with the Europeans. The Lenape fur trade ended because the beaver were hunted to near extinction.



Native Americans and Europeans trade during the 17th century.
Print from Pioneers in the settlement of America: from Florida in 1510 to California in 1849
by William A. Crafts (1876). Picture Collection, The New York Public Library.



Mapping Southern Manahatta



This map shows how the Lenape made use of the land in southern Manahatta around 1500.

SHATEMUC

[HUDSON RIVER]

The Lenape called the Hudson River Shatemuc, meaning “the river that flows both ways.” This part of the river is an estuary, which causes the river to flow both north and south. Shatemuc was an important water route for the Lenape who traded with other Native people living in villages along its banks.

LENAPE WALKING TRAIL

[BROADWAY]

The Lenape used this trail that ran from what is now Battery Park in southern Manhattan northward, as far as what is now Boston, Massachusetts, as a trade route. This trail was also used by other Native nations in the northeast.

KAPSEE

[STATE STREET]

Once the southernmost tip of Manhattan, the Lenape called this point *Kapsee*, which translates to “sharp rock place.” The Lenape did not have a community at Kapsee because it was rocky, and likely a difficult place to fish or to launch a canoe.

LENAPE SHELL HEAP

[PEARL STREET]

When the Lenape lived in Manahatta, what we now call Pearl Street was the eastern shoreline of the southern part of the island. The Lenape left unneeded seashells in that area, most likely after eating the meat inside them.

WERPOES VILLAGE

[FOLEY SQUARE]

A Lenape settlement was once located around a pond with a stream that stretched to the Hudson River. This settlement had access to plenty of fresh water and land in which crops grew easily.



SHATEMUC
[HUDSON RIVER]


WERPOES VILLAGE
[FOLEY SQUARE]

LENAPE
WALKING TRAIL
[BROADWAY]

KAPSEE
[STATE STREET]

LENAPE SHELL HEAP
[PEARL STREET]





Mapping Lower Manhattan



The Lenape created a blueprint for Manhattan's modern landscape. This map shows the evidence of Lenape presence in the landmarks that all New Yorkers use today.

HUDSON RIVER

Today the Hudson River continues to serve as a major trade route used by commercial ships, rather than canoes, carrying goods into North America.

WALL STREET

In the mid-1600s, the Dutch built a wall to keep Native Americans and British out of the area. The wall on Wall Street was eventually removed. New York City served as the original capital of the U.S. government, and on April 30, 1789, George Washington was sworn in as the first president of the United States on the steps of Federal Hall on Wall Street. Later, in 1790, men began meeting under a Buttonwood tree at what is now 68 Wall Street to buy, trade, and sell goods. On May 17, 1792, 24 traders signed the Buttonwood Agreement that established the New York Stock and Exchange Board, now called the New York Stock Exchange. Today, the New York Stock Exchange is located at the corner of Broad and Wall Streets.

BOWLING GREEN AND BROADWAY

Once the beginning of the walking trail that became Broadway, today Bowling Green is a public park located in front of the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, George Gustav Heye Center. In the 1620s, the Dutch named the Lenape trail *BredeStraat*, which means "wide street." In 1664, when the English took control of the area, they changed the name to Broadway.

STATE STREET

The Europeans took on the Lenape name for this spot, calling it Copsey Street. In 1625, the Dutch began building Fort Amsterdam in this area to protect the harbor against attacks from the British and French. In 1793, the street was given its present name, State Street, named after the state house built there.



HUDSON RIVER

WALL STREET

BOWLING GREEN AND BROADWAY

STATE STREET

PEARL STREET

FOLEY SQUARE

PEARL STREET

Today, parts of Pearl Street are lined with government buildings.

FOLEY SQUARE

In 1811 the pond was drained and filled in. Today, the site of the original pond is now home to several government buildings, including the New York County Supreme Court and the Thurgood Marshall Federal Courthouse.

Lenape Today



After leaving their homeland in Manahatta, some Lenape joined together to form the Delaware Nation. The term Delaware was first used when an English boat captain named a bay on the Atlantic coast after the governor of the Virginia colony, known as the Baron de la Warre (1577–1618). Eventually, the term Delaware became associated with the people who lived along the river’s banks. Today, the Lenape people living in the United States speak English. Some also speak their language, which is part of the Algonquian language family. There are now Lenape and Delaware communities located in the United States and Canada.

LENAPE COMMUNITIES TODAY

Delaware Nation

Anadarko, Oklahoma
delawarenation.com

Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Indians of New Jersey

Bridgetown, New Jersey
nanticoke-lenape.org

Ramapough Lenape Indian Nation

Mahwah, New Jersey
ramapoughlenapenation.org

Delaware First Nation/ Moravian of the Thames First Nation

Thamesville, Ontario, Canada

Delaware Tribe of Indians

Bartlesville, Oklahoma
delawaretribe.org



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*“Even after all that has happened
to us — there were thousands
[of Lenapes] when the ships first
came — we are still here.”*

— Linda Poolaw (Delaware/Kiowa)

Native Americans Build New York



Haudenosaunee Ironworkers



**A Family of Mohawk Ironworkers:
Jeffrey, Paul, and Dave Tripp,
and Devin Hill.**

Photo courtesy of Dave Tripp.

The Haudenosaunee, more commonly known as the Iroquois Confederacy, is comprised of six nations — the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora. Haudenosaunee ironworkers from upstate New York and Canada came to New York City for work building skyscrapers and bridges in the beginning of the 1900s and continue to do this dangerous work today. Haudenosaunee men worked on practically all of New York's major construction projects, including the George Washington Bridge, the Chrysler and Empire State Buildings, the United Nations, and the World Trade Center. In September 2001, after the collapse of the twin towers, Haudenosaunee ironworkers returned to dismantle what their elders had

contributed to the Manhattan skyline decades earlier. Many ironworkers take jobs in cities all over the country and in other parts of the world. For many Haudenosaunee communities, ironworking has become a tradition. They learn from and with people they trust. Today they continue to work on high steel, carrying the Haudenosaunee reputation for skill, bravery, and pride into the twenty-first century.



Paul Tripp (Mohawk). *Photo courtesy of Dave Tripp.*

Native New Yorkers in Lower Manhattan Today



While the presence of Native Americans in New York City has changed over time, they continue to contribute skills, talents, and culture to the city.

Today, Native Americans continue to observe traditions of their ancestors through celebrations, food, music, ceremonies, and other activities. The 2000 United States Census reported 87,241 people of Native American or Alaska Native heritage who currently live in New York City.

American Indian Community House



The American Indian Community House (AICH) is an important and vibrant part of New York City's modern Native community. Founded in 1969, AICH strives to improve the physical, economic and social wellbeing of Native Americans and to encourage intercultural understanding. In 2006, AICH moved to its current location on Broadway in Lower Manhattan. Today, AICH serves an estimated 27,000 Native American New Yorkers, with a membership that includes Native Americans from seventy-two nations.

National Museum of the American Indian

The Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, George Gustav Heye Center, is a source of great pride for Native American people. In addition to showcasing a rich collection of Native objects, the museum hosts an array of events intended to share many aspects of Native culture with the general public. The museum provides a forum where singers, dancers, actors, and musicians present live traditional and contemporary performances. Writers, artists, scholars, and community leaders share their knowledge and experiences during intimate talks about issues and topics relating to past and present Native culture. These programs and exhibits celebrate the living cultures of Native Americans throughout the Western Hemisphere.



Clockwise from upper left:
Day of the Dead, 2007. *Photo by Stephen Lang.* Big Draw, 2008. *Photo by Stephen Lang.*
Resource Center Storybook Reading, Carrie Gonzalez, 2008. *Photo by G. De Gennaro.*
Haudenosaunee Friendship Weekend, November 2005. *Photo by Stephen Lang.*

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GOVERNOR DAVID A. PATERSON
MAYOR MICHAEL R. BLOOMBERG
LMDC CHAIRMAN, AVI SCHICK
LMDC PRESIDENT, DAVID EMIL

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