

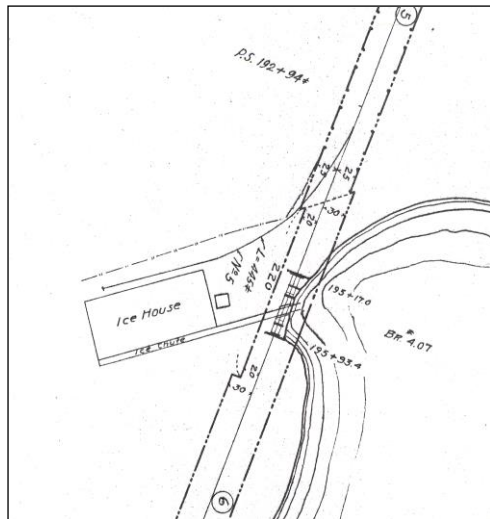
Phase IA Archaeological Survey Quinnipiac River Trail Meriden, Connecticut

The Town of Meriden planned a 1.25-mile-long hiking and bicycle trail that would follow the old railroad right-of-way built by the Meriden and Waterbury Railroad in 1888. In addition to the trail bed itself, the project proposed two new bridges over intersecting streams. In conformance with SHPO recommendations, AHS conducted a reconnaissance survey that evaluated the project's potential impacts on archaeological resources and historical features. Tasks included assembling a prehistoric context for the project area, historical background research, and inspection in the field.

Because of the ground disturbance associated with the initial construction and subsequent maintenance of the rail line, the proposed trail bed was judged to have minimal potential for prehistoric and pre-railroad historic archaeological remains. Extreme erosion at the site of one of the new bridges also excluded any archaeological impacts from that action. The second bridge was to be located where an existing former rail bridge crossed a stream; the construction of the abutments for that bridge was assumed to have disturbed any archaeological remains. Adjacent fill and drainage engineering further compromised the site, so the construction of the new bridge was determined to have minimal potential to disturb significant archaeological resources.



Former I-beam railroad bridge.



The former railroad bridge consisted of paired I-beam stringers set atop brownstone abutments, to which had been added a modern plank decking and railings. Because it represented a common type of construction with little engineering significance and had been altered in appearance, it was not recommended as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. No other bridges, culverts, rail-related buildings, or rail-related artifacts were observed during the walkover (the tracks had been torn up in 1924). Although the research indicated an ice house and rail siding within the project area, no evidence for either was observed in the field.

The 1915 track map showed an ice house, ice chute, and rail siding adjacent to the track, but no evidence of these features was found during the walkover, and the ground appeared to have been substantially disturbed.