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**BLOCK 1883.  
LOT 13-20 & 27.**

**45-59 TAAFFE PLACE & 796 KENT AVENUE.  
BOROUGH OF BROOKLYN. KINGS COUNTY, NEW YORK.**

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**STAGE 1A LITERATURE REVIEW AND  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORIC  
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION**

Prepared For:

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Sheldon Lobel, P.C.**  
9 East 40th Street  
New York, New York 10016

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ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

FEB 01 1999

LANDMARKS PRESERVATION  
COMMISSION

Prepared By:

\_\_\_\_\_  
**CITY/SCAPE: Cultural Resource Consultants**  
726 Carroll Street  
Brooklyn, New York 11215

September, 1998

144

# **BLOCK 1883. LOT 13-20 & 27.**

**45-59 TAAFFE PLACE & 796 KENT AVENUE.  
BOROUGH OF BROOKLYN. KINGS COUNTY, NEW YORK.**

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### **APPENDICES:**

- A: Discussion of Prehistoric & Historic Components
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# **PART 1A: LITERATURE SEARCH AND REPORT ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL**

**45-59 Taaffe Place and 796 Kent Avenue (Block 1883, Lot 13-20 & 27)  
Borough of Brooklyn. Kings County, New York.**

**Affiliation:** City/Scape: Cultural Resource Consultants  
726 Carroll Street  
Brooklyn, New York 11215  
718-965-3860

**Date:** September 6, 1998

## **A. PROJECT INFORMATION**

Permit Application:

Permit Number:

Permit Type:

**Prepared by:** Gail T. Guillet  
City/Scape: Cultural Resource Consultants  
726 Carroll Street, Brooklyn, NY 11215

### **Location of Proposed Action:**

The proposed action is located on Block 1883, Lots 13-20, on the east side of Taaffe Place at the intersection of Little Nassau Street and Lot 27, located mid-block on the west side of Kent Avenue. The parcels on Block 1883 are designated 45-59 Taaffe Place and 796 Kent Avenue, which abuts the rear lot line of Lot 14 (57 Taaffe Place). (Map 1 & 2)

The proposed project is located in an area that today is primarily one of light manufacturing, commercial enterprises, including a gas station, auto pair shops and off-street parking.

### **Description of Undertaking:**

The applicant seeks authorization to construct 30 units of housing within the overall project area. The plan is to construct five 3-story brick and block buildings with penthouses and

cellars. A 5 foot front yard and a common play area in the rear yard is planned. It is anticipated that these buildings will be offered as condominiums.

**Estimated Size of Impact Area:**

With the exception of the front and rear yard areas the buildings will cover the entire project area.

**Description of Impact:**

The proposed projects will not result in the demolition or significant physical alteration to any improvement. The sites are currently vacant land. (Photo 1)

## **B: ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION**

**Topography:**

The project areas are located north of the Harbor Hill Moraine, which forms the spine of Long Island. In terms of the present-day topography. The sites are located in an urban setting. At the present time the sites, which are enclosed by cyclone fences, are being used for parking and storage. The land surface is generally flat.

The elevation of Block 1883 at the present time is 18.25 feet at the intersection of Taaffe Place and Little Nassau Street. The block rises drops slightly to 18.00 feet at the intersection of Little Nassau Street and Kent Avenue. Between Little Nassau Street and Park Avenue along Kent the elevation rises from 18.00 feet to 33.25. These elevations differ only slightly from those noted on the 1904 Sanborn map for the area, indicating that no large scale filling of the area has taken place in the last 90 years.

**Geology:**

In geological terms, the project areas are located in the Atlantic Coastal Plain physiographic province. It is presumed that between 1.5 and 65 million years ago the Long Island landmass was formed. Glaciers helped create much of Long Island's distinctive terrain, which consists of the Ronkonkoma Moraine and the Harbor Hill Moraine. The precise underlying geology of the project areas has not been identified, but would be consistent with the types of materials associated with the glacial terminal moraines running east and west along the spine of Long Island. These include unconsolidated gravel, sand and clay deposits.

At street level the soils would today be classified as urban soils, in the sense that both sites have been disturbed, first by the construction of the dwellings and multiple dwellings with stores on the ground floor that existed within the project area, and then by the demolition of the buildings that formerly stood on the now vacant lots. At the present time portions of the site have been paved to provide parking for cars and trucks.

### **Soils:**

As with the geology, the underlying soils would be consistent with the types of materials associated with the glacial terminal moraines running east and west along the spine of Long Island. These include unconsolidated gravel, sand and clay deposits.

At street level the soils would today be classified as urban soils, in the sense that both sites have been disturbed, first by the construction of the structures that formerly stood on the site, and then by the demolition of those buildings. It is probably that much of the surface soil is mixed with substantial amounts of rubble from the demolition. There is no substantial vegetation on the site.

### **Drainage:**

Examination of historic maps and atlases indicates that the project area was not crossed by any streams or encompassed by any swamp or wetland areas. Historically, drainage would have been to north of present day Flushing Avenue where Wallabout Creek (draining into Wallabout Bay) and its associated salt marsh were located. The stream did not extend south of present day Flushing Avenue, but the salt marsh extended into Block 1882 immediately north of the project area.

### **Vegetation:**

Visual inspection of the property did not reveal significant trees or other vegetation.

### **Forest Zone:**

The project area lies within the Northern Hardwood Forest zone. Sugar maple, birch, beech and hemlock are the predominant trees in this type of forest. Visual inspection of the property did not reveal significant trees or other vegetation.

### **Man-Made Features and Alterations:**

The site would have experienced a variety of disturbances:

- 1) those that may have been associated with farming activities during the 17th through the early 19th centuries;
- 2) disturbances associated with the construction of the 19th and early 20th century dwellings and/or multiple dwellings with stores on the ground floor and any outbuildings associated with these buildings;
- 3) disturbances associated with the demolition of the buildings and the construction of the fences to enclose the vacant lots.

## **C: DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH**

### **1. Site Files**

#### **a. New York State Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP)**

The project area is located within New York City. Information was, therefore, not obtained from OPRHP. However, copies of the OPRHP Site Maps (USGS Brooklyn Quad, 7.5 Minute Series) examined at the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) show no prehistoric or historic sites associated with either of the project areas.

#### **b. New York State Museum Archaeological Site Files**

The project area is located within New York City. Information was not obtained from the New York State Museum Archaeological Site Files. However, information included in the New York State Museum Archaeological Site Files has been obtained for other projects, and the information is included in this report.

#### **c. New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission**

Prior to the involvement of the consultant, the Landmarks Preservation Commission had been consulted. The LPC response indicated that the project area possessed the "potential for the recovery of remains from 19th century occupation." There was no indication that the site was considered to contain prehistoric potential. LPC indicated that the project area did not possess architectural significance.

### **State Register**

No structures located within the immediate vicinity of either of the project area are listed on the State Register. A visual inspection of the area surrounding the sites does not suggest that such buildings exist in the immediate vicinity of the project. It should be noted that the Commander's Quarters (referred to as Quarters A and listed on the National and State Register of Historic Places on May 30, 1974) and the Rockwood Chocolate Factory Historic District (listed on the National and State Register of Historic Places on October 6, 1983) are located within a mile of the project area. The Commander's Quarters is located on the southwest side of the Brooklyn Navy Yard, too far from the project areas to be impacted by their development, while the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway effectively screens the project area from the Rockwood Chocolate Factory Historic District.

### **National Register**

No structures located within the vicinity of the project area are listed on the National Register. A visual inspection of the area does not suggest that such buildings exist in the immediate vicinity of either site. As noted above, the Commander's Quarters (referred to as Quarters A and listed on the National and State Register of Historic Places on May 30, 1974) and the Rockwood Chocolate Factory Historic District (listed on the National and State Register of Historic Places on October 6, 1983) are located within a mile of the project area.

The Commander's Quarters is located on the southwest side of the Brooklyn Navy Yard, too far from the project area to be impacted by its development, while the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway effectively screens the project area from the Rockwood Chocolate Factory Historic District.

#### National Register eligible listing

No structures located within the vicinity of the project area are eligible for listing on the National Register. A visual inspection of the area does not suggest that such buildings exist in the immediate vicinity of the project.

#### State/National Register proposed

No structures located in the vicinity of the project area are proposed for the State/National Register.

## 2. REFERENCES

### a. General Texts

(For complete bibliography see Appendix A)

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1900 *Aboriginal Occupation of New York*. New York State Museum Bulletin No. 32. Albany, NY.
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1976 *Recent Contributions to Hudson Valley Prehistory*. New York State Museum Memoir 22. Albany, NY.
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### 3. Maps

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1767 *Plan of the Town of Brooklyn and part of Long Island*. Prepared for British Army. Reproduced in Valentine's Manual. Scale: included on map. (Map 4)
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- Johnson, Jeremiah  
177- *Map of Brooklyn at the Time of the Revolutionary War*. New York Public Library, Map Division.
- Colton, J. H.  
1836 *Topographical Map of the City and county of New-York and the Adjacent Country*. J. H. Colton, New York.
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1844 *Plan of Brooklyn and Williamsburgh*. New York Public Library, Map Division. Scale: Included on map.
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1844 *Map of New-York Bay and Harbor and the Environs*. New York Public Library, Map Division. Scale: Reduced. (Map 5)
- Colton, J. H.  
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1852 *Map of Kings and Part of Queens Counties, Long Island, New York*. M. Dripps, New York. Scale: 5.5 feet = 2 Miles. (Map 6)
- Bishop's Manual  
1861 *Map of the Consolidated City of Brooklyn*. Prepared for Bishop's Manual of the Corporation.
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- Fulton, Henry  
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- Bromley, G. W. & Company.  
 1880 *Atlas of the Entire City of Brooklyn*. G. W. Bromley & Company: Philadelphia, PA. Plate 7. Scale: 140 feet to the Inch.
- Robinson, E. and R. H. Pigeon  
 1886 *Robinson's Atlas of the City of Brooklyn, New York*. E. Robinson, New York. Plate 8. Scale: 200 Feet to the Inch.
- Hyde, E. Belcher  
 1898 *Atlas of the Brooklyn Borough of the City of New York*. vol. 1. Plate 29. E. Belcher Hyde, New York. Scale: 160 Feet to the Inch.
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- Hyde, E. Belcher  
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 1929 *Desk Atlas Borough of Brooklyn City of New York*. E. Belcher Hyde: New York, NY. vol. 1. Plate 140 & 144. Scale: 160 Feet to the Inch. (Map 9)
- X Sanborn Map Company  
 1996 *Insurance Map. Borough of Brooklyn, City of New York*. Sanborn Map Company: New York, NY. vol. 3. Plate 52. Scale: 60 Feet to the Inch. (Map 10)  
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- 1981 *Insurance Map. Borough of Brooklyn, City of New York.* Sanborn Map Company: New York, NY. vol. 3. Plate 52. Scale: 60 Feet to the Inch.  
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1947 *Insurance Map. Borough of Brooklyn, City of New York.* Sanborn Map Company: New York, NY. vol. 3. Plate 52. Scale: 60 Feet to the Inch.  
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3. **Previous Surveys in vicinity of project**

CITY/SCAPE: Cultural Resource Consultants  
1994 *Stage 1B Archaeological Field Reconnaissance. Caribe Village Site. Williamsburgh. Borough of Brooklyn. Kings County, New York.*



Greenhouse Consultants, Inc.

1991 *Broadway Triangle Partnership Housing Project. Brooklyn, New York. Archaeological Testing Report. Blocks 1730 and 1732.*

1991a *Archaeological and Historical Sensitivity Evaluation of Caribe Village Development Project. Williamsburgh, Brooklyn, New York. CEQR 88-083K.*

1992 *Broadway Triangle Partnership Housing Project. Brooklyn, New York. Review of Archaeological Potential. Blocks 1721, 1722, 1726 and 1731.*

Historical Perspectives, Inc.

1991 *Taaffe Place Pumping Station and Park Avenue Force Main Archaeological Assessment. 91-162K. Prepared for Allee King Rosen & Fleming, Inc., NYC.*

TAMS Consultants, Inc.

1989a *Broadway Triangle Industrial Park (86-304K). Brooklyn, New York. Cultural Resource Study. Prepared for New York City Public Development Corporation.*

1989b *"Second Level" Documentary Study. Broadway Triangle Industrial Park. Brooklyn, New York. (CEQR #86-304K). Prepared for New York City Public Development Corporation.*

#### **4. Sensitivity Assessment/Site Prediction**

##### **Prehistoric Sensitivity**

Regional prehistory dates to the first human entry into the area approximately 12,000 years ago. This coincides with the retreat of the Wisconsin glacial advance. At this same time sea levels began to rise along the Atlantic coast inundating the continental shelf off Long Island and the Lower New York Bay. The precise timing of the retreat of the glacial ice and the rise in sea level is a matter of debate.

The earliest occupants of the northeastern United States, called Paleo-Indians by archaeologists, are identified by their distinctive lithic tradition of fluted projectile points. Later cultures occupying the area are broadly termed Archaic (9000 to 3000 BP) and Woodland (3000 BP to 1600 AD). Reliance on cultigens became an increasingly important part of cultural adaptations during the Woodland Period. A Transitional Phase between the Late Archaic and Woodland has been treated by some scholars as a separate cultural period. The Transitional Phase is characterized by the use of soapstone utensils, whereas the Woodland Period is identified in part by the use of pottery.

Four prehistoric archaeological sites are identified in the general vicinity of the project area. The first of these is located near Flatbush Avenue between 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Carlton Avenue (NYSM Site #3606), approximately 1.5 miles southwest of the project area. The other three sites are located in the vicinity of the Brooklyn Navy Yard, less than a quarter of a mile west of the project area.

Although prehistoric peoples would have ranged over all of Long Island, archaeological investigations indicate that habitation sites were situated in proximity to water sources such as tidal creeks, substantial streams, and wetland areas. Upland areas, away from water, would have been used for hunting. (Smith 1950: 101)

Although no fresh water flowed across the project area, an examination of early maps indicates that a stream (Wallabout Creek) and associated salt marshes were located immediately north of the site. The stream flowed just north of present day Flushing Avenue, while the salt marsh extended into Block 1882, now the site of the Borough of Brooklyn Department of Water Supply, Gas and Electricity service station. Based on the predictive model developed by the LPC, the juxtaposition of the site to the stream and salt marsh greatly increases the likelihood that prehistoric peoples may have utilized the project area. It is probable that several of the roads in the vicinity of the project area, particularly the historic "Road to Wallabout which follows the general line of Flushing Avenue in the vicinity of the project area corresponds with older Indian paths, and that prehistoric peoples passed this way on a regular basis going from the Wallabout area to the interior. Despite these facts, probable alterations to the land surface (including grading to establish a level surface for construction in the 19<sup>th</sup> century), combined with the construction (including excavation for basements) and subsequent demolition of the structures formerly located on the site, greatly decreases the probability of recovering significant, intact prehistoric cultural material from the project area. Based on the foregoing, it is not anticipated that the project area would yield prehistoric cultural resources. However, should an investigation be undertaken to examine the project area for historic cultural resources, the field archaeologist would, of course, examine the area to determine whether or not prehistoric remains were present.

### Historic Sensitivity

The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission communication identified the project areas as possessing the potential to yield archaeological evidence of 19th century occupation. This would be in the form of privies, cisterns and refuge pits located behind the houses that formerly stood on the lots.

It should be noted that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Taaffe Place was known as Graham Street. Presumably to avoid confusion with Graham Avenue, located some distance to the north and east in Williamsburgh, the name was changed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The street addresses remained the same following the name change. The individual lots are discussed below:

#### **Lot 20 (45 Taaffe Place)**

Map research indicates the structures on this lot changed over time, with each new construction resulting in the coverage of more of the lot. Initially, in 1880 and in 1898 the lot is shown with a dwelling on the front of the lot, with a small structure mid-lot and on the north edge. In 1904 the building at the front of the lot was shown as a 4-story dwelling with a stone or brick foundation. (Map 7) At the rear of the lot was a 2-story structure with a stone or brick foundation. Mid-lot on the north edge of the property was a small shed-like structure. On later maps similar structures in this location are identified as water closets

(privies). At the rear of the lot a second dwelling is shown with an extension that extended to the south. That building fronted on Little Nassau Street. In 1918 the configuration of the buildings on the lot was the same. (Map 8) By 1929 virtually the entire lot is built and the small shed-like building is no longer a distinct structure. (Map 9) In 1935 there were two buildings that covered the entire lot. The building on the front of the lot had a store on the ground floor. Between 1950 and 1977 these buildings were demolished.

No sewer records were available for Lot 20. However, buildings on Taaffe Place were being connected to the sewer in 1868-69, indicating that one had been installed by that date. Taaffe Place (formerly Graham Street) is shown as fully developed on the 1850 Drupp's *Map of the City of Brooklyn, showing the Streets as at present with existing buildings* . . . suggesting that the building on this lot pre-dates the installation of sewer in the area. There is little question that the small shed-like building at mid-lot was a privy. However, in the case of this particular lot, the subsequent building episodes would have destroyed all evidence of privies and/or cisterns.

#### **Lot 19 (47 Taaffe Place)**

Although the Sewer Department records suggest that structures had been built on the east side of Taaffe Place by 1868-69, the earliest maps to show individual structures date from 1880. In 1886 the building had a store on the ground floor. In 1904 this use had been discontinued, and the building is shown as a 3-story dwelling with a foundation of stone or brick. (Map 7) On the northern edge of the lot were three small shed-like structures – one mid-lot (presumably a privy) and two at the rear. This configuration of buildings existed until 1950. Between 1950 and 1977 the structures on this lot were demolished.

No date is given for the connection of Lot 19 to the sewer; however, records at the sewer department indicate that a house on Graham Street (now Taaffe Place) that was located 210' south of Flushing Avenue was connected to the sewer in 1868. This should be 47 Graham Street (now Taaffe Place). At the time the property was owned by a J. Devlin. As is the case with all the buildings within the project area, this building is included on the 1850 Drupp's map referred to above. The Drupp's map indicates that this building existed prior to the connection to the sewer, suggesting the potential for both a cistern and privy on this lot.

#### **Lot 18 (49 Taaffe Place)**

Research indicates that in 1880 this lot was vacant. It remained vacant in 1886, but by 1898 a structure had been built in the northeast corner of the property. This building appeared to be connected with a shed or stable located on the lot to the east (790 Kent Avenue). In 1904 this structure is shown as a 1-story shed or stable. (Map 7) No other structures appear on the lot. In 1935 this structure was identified by the word "Rags." This building continued in existence until some time between 1950 and 1977, by which date it had been demolished.

No record of a connection to the sewer was found for this lot. Based on its use, it is likely that none was ever made. It is, therefore, not anticipated that either privies or cisterns would

be present. It is, however, possible that the lot was used as a dumping ground, either in pits or as sheet deposits.

#### **Lot 16 (53 Taaffe Place)**

Research indicates that in 1880 this lot was vacant, as it was in 1886. By 1898 a 4 story brick building with a basement had been built at the front of the lot. This building (identified as 51-53 Graham Street) is shown on the 1904 maps as an "old law" tenement building with two stores on the ground floor. (Map 7) At the rear of the lot was a small shed-like building. In 1918 the shed-like structure had been replaced by a structure in the northeast corner of the lot identified as a water closet ("W.C."). (Map 8) In 1929 the small building at the rear of the lot was still standing, but it was no longer identified as a water closet. (Map 9) After 1935 this lot was vacant.

The building on this lot post-dates the installation of the sewers in Taaffe Place, suggesting that the likelihood of either cisterns or a privy was slight. Yet in 1918 a W.C. is shown in the rear yard of this property. This building was a multiple-family building, and it seems unlikely that it would have been built in 1898 without sewer connections. Although it is possible that the W.C. may have been used as a repository for refuse, the fact that a number of families lived in the building reduces the usefulness of any information that might be associated with this feature, should it exist.

#### **Lot 15 (55 Taaffe Place)**

Research indicates that 55 Graham Street (later 55 Taaffe Place) was connected to the sewer system in 1873. It is the only building on the block that is identified in the record by its street address. By 1886 the building contained a store on the ground floor. There was a building at the rear of the lot in the southeast corner. In 1904 the lot contained two dwellings, a 3-story dwelling with a stone or brick foundation at the front of the lot, and a 3-story dwelling with a basement and a 1-story extension to the north at the rear. (Map 7) At that time Lot 15 and Lot 16 appear joined, but by 1918 a clear division between these two properties had taken place. In 1918 the same configuration of buildings existed, but on the northern boundary mid-lot was a structure identified as a water closet. (Map 8) The same configuration existed in 1929, but the water closet is not identified. (Map 9) This lot was vacant by 1935.

The construction of the building on the front of the lot would (based on Dripps' 1850 map) appear to pre-date the availability of sewers on Taaffe Street. This suggests that a privy and cistern might be associated with this structure. The presence of a water closet on the property in 1918 may relate to the conditions in the second dwelling at the rear of the property. The density of the lot indicates that several families lived at 55 Taaffe Place. Further investigation into the ethnicity of the families living at 55 Taaffe Place might lead to the conclusion that an investigation of potential archaeological deposit is warranted.

**"Lot 14" (No street number indicated)**

This lot lacks a number and street address, but should be Lot 14. In 1904 the street address was given as 57 Graham Street (now Taaffe Place). This lot abuts 796 Kent Avenue. In 1880 there was a dwelling on this lot, which was still standing in 1898. By 1904 this lot was vacant. Map 7) It has remained vacant since.

Based on the information on the 1850 Dripp's map, this lot was occupied by that date. That indicates that a structure existed on the site prior to the availability of sewers in the neighborhood. It is possible that both a cistern and a privy would be located within the boundaries of this lot.

**Lot 13 (59 Taaffe Place)**

There is some confusion concerning the use history of Lot 13. Research indicates that it contained a building by 1850 (Dripp's map), which would pre-date the availability of sewers in the neighborhood. The lot contained a frame structure in 1880. In 1904 (according to the Sanborn map) the lot as containing a 1-story structure at the front of the lot that is identified as "Apparently vacant," with a 1-story shed or stable at the rear of the lot. (Map 7) A second map from 1904 (E. Belcher Hyde's *Atlas of the Borough of Brooklyn City of New York*) shows the lot as containing a 4-story frame building with a stone or brick foundation, and a shed at the rear that spanned the entire width of the lot. To increase the confusion, there is a Certificate of Occupancy from 1960 that describes a 3-story structure with a basement, with the first and second floor occupied. For our immediate purposes the number of stories is not terribly important, but the discrepancies are difficult to resolve.

No record of the connection to the sewer was located, but, if a building existed on the lot by 1850, then it pre-dated the sewers in the neighborhood. It is, therefore, possible that both a cistern and privy may be located on this lot.

**Lot 28 (796 Kent Avenue)**

As is shown by the Sewer Department records, buildings were being constructed in this area by 1867. None of the records include a street address that corresponds with those currently in use. In fact, it is clear that Kent Avenue was renumbered at some point. To cite one example, 314 Kent Avenue (described as 85' south of Flushing Avenue) was connected to the sewer in 1872. Using the Sanborn maps (60' to the inch), that building would have been located in Block 1882, immediately north of Block 1883 (location of the project area). Today the address of that house would correspond with 778 Kent Avenue. It is clear from checking some of the measurements that the distances from Flushing Avenue may be approximations, but, taking that into consideration, it is possible that the building on Lot 28 was connected to the sewer in 1867. The earliest map that shows buildings in this area dates to 1880, but we know from the 1850 Driggs map that buildings were located in this neighborhood by that date. If a dwelling existed on this site prior to the installation of water and sewers, then the possibility of encountering a cistern or privy exists on this lot. By 1904 the building was shown as a 3-story dwelling with two extension at the rear and a store on



the ground floor. There was also an open 1-story structure at the rear that spanned the width of the lot. (Map 7) By 1918 the 1-story extension had been removed. (Map 8) Between 1918 and 1950 the structures on this lot were unchanged, but at some point between 1950 and 1977 the buildings on this lot were demolished. From 1977 to the present the lot has been vacant.

If this structure existed by 1850, then the potential for the lot to contain a cistern and privy exists. No obvious privy structure is shown on the lot, unless it was encompassed in the 1-story extension at the rear of the dwelling.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Prehistoric Sensitivity**

Based on the environmental models promulgated by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission and the New York State Museum Archaeological Site Files, the project area would be considered to have a high potential to yield prehistoric cultural material. As noted, Wallabout Creek and its associated salt marshes were located immediately north of the project area – both of which substantially increase the prehistoric potential. Based on a comparison on historic and current elevations in the immediate area, it does not appear that the substantial grading has taken place on the site. Such grading might have protected subsurface prehistoric resources, increasing the potential for recovery. In the absence of substantial fill on the site, it is most likely that episodes of building in the 19th century, and subsequent demolition of the structures within the project area have removed the potential of the site to yield significant, intact prehistoric cultural resources.

### **Historic Sensitivity**

Based on documentary research, including an examination of Sensitivity Maps for the Borough of Brooklyn at the LPC and an examination of historic maps and atlases of the area, it is concluded that the project area does not contain the potential to yield significant historic archaeological resources dating from the 17th or 18th centuries. The map examined at the LPC indicated that the project area lay outside the developed areas and would have been farmland. Ratzer's 1766-7 *Plan of the City of New York in North America* (see Map 4) indicates that the Schenck family farmstead was located on the east side of Wallabout Road (later corresponding more or less to Flushing Avenue) with the fields extending south. The portion on which Block 1883 is located subsequently came into the possession of the Skillman family (for whom Skillman Avenue is named), who were direct descendants of the Schenck family. They held the land until the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when they sold to the family of General Jeremiah Johnson. The Johnson family held the land until its development, which – according to the Drapp's map – had begun prior to 1850.

With respect to the potential for 19th century cultural remains, it is concluded that development along Kent Avenue took place as early as 1850, and perhaps somewhat earlier.

Water was available in Kent Avenue in 1860. In 1865 there was no sewer in Kent Avenue (Armbruster, 1942: 203), but the sewer between Flushing Avenue and Park Avenue had been installed by 1867-68 when the first connections were recorded. The map research indicates that buildings had been constructed on several of the lots on Taaffe Place by 1850. We do not know the date that water was available in Taaffe Place, but it may be assumed that it was installed by the time that sewers became available in 1868. Business existed in Taaffe Place as early as 1803, when the Tucker & Carter ropewalk was established. It and other businesses related to shipbuilding and repair that established in East Brooklyn were responding to the presence of the U. S. Navy Yard. The residential development seen in this area was likewise related to the Navy Yard and the businesses that supplied it. At the time that East Brooklyn was being populated the area had a high percentage of families with Irish surnames – Devlin, Sullivan, Coglin, etc.

The research indicates that a number of the lots within the project area have the potential to contain historic archaeological deposits. Further research, including an examination of the census data, business directories and tax records, would identify the names of the families living at the addresses included within the project area. From the information derived from this material it would be possible to develop a testing strategy to gather information concerning the ethnicity, occupation, and economic status of the inhabitants living within the project area. In addition, such an investigation might provide insight into the types of service businesses (stores and other businesses occupying a number of ground floors) that supported larger industries, such as the Tucker & Carter ropewalk.

Archaeological investigation of the project area could provide a unique opportunity to examine a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Brooklyn neighborhood. Immediately to the south – at Kent and Myrtle Avenue – in an area dating to the same time period as that of the project area, an archaeological investigation revealed cisterns with deposits dating from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> to the 1880's that revealed important information on the material culture of the residents of East Brooklyn. In addition, further investigation could be gathered on the economic implications (as reflected in the material cultural remains) of single family, owner occupied dwellings, as opposed to owner occupied, multi-family dwellings, and those buildings that were multi-family dwellings occupied solely by tenants.

The possibility of intact archaeological deposits in the form of features such as cisterns and privies or sheet middens certainly exists on lots within the project area. The recovery of this material could contribute to information important to local history and increase our understanding of the development of this early and important area of Brooklyn.

## 6. Attachments

- X Appendix A: Discussion of Historic Information concerning the Project Area.
- X Appendix B: Maps & Photographs

## End of Part 1A

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# APPENDICES

## **LIST OF APPENDICES**

Appendix A: Discussion of Prehistoric and Historic Component

Appendix B: Maps & Photographs

**APPENDIX A**

**DISCUSSION OF PREHISTORIC AND  
HISTORIC COMPONENT**

## **DISCUSSION OF THE PREHISTORIC AND HISTORIC COMPONENT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The proposed action is located on Block 1883, Lots 13-20, on the east side of Taaffe Place at the intersection of Little Nassau Street and Lot 27, located mid-block on the west side of Kent Avenue. The parcels on Block 1883 are designated 45-59 Taaffe Place and 796 Kent Avenue, which abuts the rear lot line of Lot 14 (57 Taaffe Place). (Map 1 & 2)

The proposed project is located in an area that today is primarily one of light manufacturing, commercial enterprises, including a gas station, auto pair shops and off-street parking.

The applicant seeks authorization to construct 30 units of housing within the overall project area. The plan is to construct five 3-story brick and block buildings with penthouses and cellars. A 5 foot front yard and a common play area in the rear yard is planned. It is anticipated that these buildings will be offered as condominiums.

Correspondence from the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission indicates that the proposed project area contains the potential to yield historic archaeological resources associated with the 19th century.

Based on its review, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) identified the potential for subsurface historic and/or prehistoric archaeological resources located within the project area, and requested that a documentary study be undertaken to assess the likelihood of subsurface resources. In response to this request, CITY/SCAPE: Cultural Resource Consultants was retained to perform a Stage 1A Archaeological and Historic Sensitivity Evaluation for the site and adjacent areas.

### **Prehistory of the Area**

Among the tasks required in the Stage 1A study is an assessment of the potential of the project area to yield significant prehistoric cultural resources. In making the assessment there are a number of factors to be considered, the first of which is the presence on or in the immediate vicinity of the project area of streams or springs that could have served as a source of fresh water for Native American peoples, secondly, is the presence of nearby resources such as wetlands, salt marshes, tidal marshes, streams, and forested areas where deer and other species could have been hunted or open areas that could have been used as cropland, and, finally, the presence on or in the vicinity of the project area of known prehistoric sites.

An examination of the 1844 U. S. Coastal Survey map (Map 5) that includes the study area indicates that no streams or other sources of fresh water were available within the boundaries of the project area. However, immediately north of present day Flushing Avenue was Wallabout Creek, which was edged by salt marshes that extended southward as far as Block 1882, immediately north of the project area. Wallabout Creek and the associated salt

marshes would have provided fresh water, as well as riverine and tidal resources. Based on these considerations, the presence of Native American sites would not be able to be ruled out except for the fact that the entire area was developed during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. This development, which included excavations for basements, would in all probability have impacted any prehistoric resources that might have been located within the project area.

With the criteria outlined above in mind, information concerning known prehistoric sites in the vicinity of the project area was examined. It should be noted that no prehistoric sites are identified within the boundaries of the proposed project area. According to information obtained from surveys covering the general area and from published resources such as Parker's 1922 *Archeological History of New York*, there are several prehistoric sites located within the general vicinity of the project area. Several of them are associated with Wallabout Bay, less than a quarter of a mile to the west of the project area. None of these sites, all of which were recorded early in the century, were professionally excavated (Greenhouse, 1991 & 1992).

One of these sites is the village of Mareyckawick, said by Bolton to have been located near Fulton Street between Galletin and Elm Place (Bolton, 1924 in Greenhouse, 1992). Another resource, writing in 1977, indicated that this village, occupied by a group of Indians identified as Mareyckawick (a branch of the Canarsie), was located "just north of Old Fulton Street (now called Cadman Plaza West)" (Greenhouse, 1992). Still another possible location is suggested by Grumet, who quotes an earlier resource, is the site of present day Brooklyn Borough Hall (Grumet, 1981:27 in Greenhouse, 1992). This site must be considered anecdotal and is not included on the map of archaeological sites in the vicinity of the project area.

The second site, identified by Gabriel Furman in the mid-19th century, was located "... at Bridge Street, between Front and York and between Jay and Bridge Street." According to Furman, the material was located on the top of a hill approximately 70 feet high shown on Bernard Ratzer's 1766-7 *Plan of the City of New York in North America*. (Map 4) The hill has since been razed, but Furman states that "... the material was found *in situ* (down to a depth of 3 to 4 feet)." Evidence of Indian occupation included pottery, projectile points and clay tobacco pipes (Greenhouse, 1991:2).

The third site noted by Arthur C. Parker as "traces of occupation" along the south side of Newtown Creek is to the north of the project area (Parker, 1922: Plate 179). This site is identified as New York State Museum Site #3613.

Parker also identified the location of a village on the Manhattan side of the East River. It was located southwest of Corlaer's Hook, a place that provided one of the narrowest crossing points along the East River south of present day Roosevelt Island (Parker, 1922: Plate 192). This is identified as New York State Museum Site #4060.

In addition to the sites noted above, the New York State Museum identified a site (designated NYSM #3606) located on the route of Flatbush Avenue at the intersection of Sixth Avenue.

Based on the information presented above and an examination of the historic maps which include the project area, it appears that archaeological investigations indicate that habitation sites were situated in proximity to water sources such as tidal creeks, substantial streams, and wetland areas. Upland areas, away from water, would have been used for hunting. (Smith 1950: 101) Without question the land associated with the project area would have been an attractive place for Native American peoples; however, subsequent alterations to the land, including grading and the construction of dwellings in the mid-19th century, make it improbable that any significant intact prehistoric cultural material would be associated with the project area.

### History of the Area

To our knowledge, the first European to visit Brooklyn was Giovanni da Verrazano in 1527 and 1529 when he is said to have landed on Coney Island. This was followed in 1609 by more extensive explorations undertaken by Henry Hudson. Hudson also landed at Coney Island where he was met by the Canarsie Indians, the tribe inhabiting the western portion of Long Island. Hudson's first mate, Juet, described waters teeming with various species of fish and a land of abundant fruit trees and grape vines. Similar descriptions are available from the late 17th century, when Daniel Danton and Jasper Dankers visited Kings County. During the 17th century, the Canarsie Indians sold land to the Dutch inhabitants of Kings County, of which Brooklyn (Breuekelen) was a part. The process of land transfers continued under the English when they took over the colony from the Dutch in 1664. The area associated with the project site was located immediately east of Wallabout Creek, an area that was settled early. A road from the Village of Brooklyn ran approximately along the present day route of Flushing Avenue. These early road undoubtedly followed an earlier Indian trails.

Early historical records indicate that the land containing the project area was purchased by the Dutch West Indies Company from Cacapoteyno, Menquen and Suwirau -- representatives of the Native American tribe in possession of the western end of Long Island -- on August 1, 1638. The Indian deed included:

*... [a] certain parcel of land situate on Long Island . . . extending in length from Joris Rapalje's plantation, called Rinnegaconck, eastward one mile and a half to Mespaechtes, and in breadth from the East River about one mile into the Cripplebush of said Mespaechtes. (Stiles 1884: 80)*

Rinnegaconck has been identified as an area at the mouth of a creek on the west and south shore of Wallabout Bay (the present location of the Brooklyn Navy Yard). Based on the description, the project area lies within the boundaries of Rinnegaconck on the southern edge of Wallabout Creek, where by 1654 Joris Jansen de Rapalje had established a plantation. These lands remained in the family, passing through the Skillman lines until the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Frances Skillman sold her land to the family of General Jeremiah Johnson. This land corresponds to Block 1883.

Stiles described the Wallabout area as "... lowlands that were overflowed by the sea at every tide and covered with salt grass, coarse and hard to cut with a common scythe, but which

cattle preferred to fresh hay or grass (Stiles, 1884: 25). The road leading from Brooklyn Ferry to Bushwick and Flushing hugged the shoreline, running immediately north of the project area.

Based on maps of the period, the headwater of this creek with its associated marshland was located in the vicinity of Harrison Avenue between Middleton Street and Bartlett Street. As noted above, in the vicinity of the project area, this stream and its associated wetlands (salt marsh) were located north of Flushing Avenue, with the salt marsh extending southward into Block 1882, the present location of the Borough of Brooklyn Department of Water Supply, Gas and Electricity service station.

Historically this area appears to have been served by a series of small farm roads, which followed the line of farm fields to a bridge that crossed Wallabout Creek just west of the project area. (Map 4) In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century the road served this part of Brooklyn to Wallabout which ran from the Brooklyn Ferry. This roadway was regulated in 1805, when the Bedford and Wallabout Turnpike Company established it as Wallabout Road. This turnpike joined Cripplebush Road at the intersection of present-day Flushing Avenue and Throop Avenue, north and west of the project area. Until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century these were the only roadways in the area. (Dikeman, 1870, cited in TAMS Consultants, Inc. 1989: Table 2). Based on the early maps, which will be discussed in more detail below, it does not appear that any structures stood within the boundaries of the project area during the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Descriptions of the appearance of Kings County and the area around the project area for this time period may be found in Daniel Denton's *A Brief Description of New-York, Formerly Called New-Netherlands*, published in 1670, in which he reports that

*Long Island . . . is inhabited from one end to the other. On the West end is four or five Dutch Towns; the rest being English to the number of twelve, besides Villages and Farm houses. The Island is most of it of very good soil, and very natural for all sorts of English Grain; which they sow and have very good increase of, besides all other Fruits and Herbs common in England, as also Tobac, Hemp, Flax, Pumpkins, Melons, etc. . . . The greatest part of the Island is very full of Timber, as Oaks white and red, Walnut-trees, Chestnut-trees, which yield store of Mast for Swine . . . also Maples, Cedars, Saxifrage, Beech, Birch, Holly, Hazel, with many sorts more. . . . The Island is plentifully stored with all sorts of English Cattle, Horses, Hogs, Sheep, Goats, etc.; no place in the North of America better, which they can both raise and maintain, by reason of the large and spacious Meadows or Marches, wherewith it is furnished, the Island likewise producing excellent English grass, the seed of which was brought out from England, which they sometime mow twice a year. For wilde Beast, there is Deer, Bear, Wolves, Foxes, Raccoons, Otters, Muskrats and Skunks, Wild Fowl, there is great store of, as Turkeys, Heath-Hens, Quails, Partridges, Pidgeons, Cranes, Geese, of several sorts, Brants, Ducks, Widgeons, Teal and divers others . . . (Denton 1966:3-6)*

Denton also described the streams and rivers which entered the oceans off Long Island, all abounding in fish, and the salt water areas where shellfish were harvested by the Indians to be



taken to Manhattan to market. Denton described in some detail the lives of the Indians whom he found living on Long Island, and identified the types of crops grown on Long Island during the last quarter of the 17th century, along with the types of animals raised by the farmers of the island, and the game animals and birds hunted by both the Indians and the European inhabitants. He identified the importance of the meadows and marshes that were mown for fodder, and the woods that provided timber for building, wood for the kitchens and homes of the farmers, and mast (acorns, walnuts and chestnuts) for the swine that ran free in them.

Another description, this time specifically of Brooklyn, from the same time period is provided by a member of the Labadist sect by the name of Jasper Dankers, who, in the year 1679-80, traveled to North America with a companion to "scout" the American colonies for a place of settlement for their people. Sailing into New York harbor through the Narrows after many weeks and a stormy journey from Europe, they saw:

*. . . not only woods, hills, dales, green fields and plantations, but also houses and dwellings of the inhabitants, which afford a cheerful and sweet prospect after having been so long upon the sea. (Dankers 1966:98)*

Several days after their arrival in Manhattan, Dankers and Sluyter crossed to Long Island by the ferry to Brooklyn to spend several days exploring Kings County. The journal contains many particulars of their visit there, which can assist us in imagining the appearance of Brooklyn 300 years ago.

*[From the ferry] We went on, up the hill, along open roads and a little woods, through the first village, called Breukelen, which has a small and ugly little church standing in the middle of the road. Having passed through here, we struck off to the right, in order to go to Gowanes. We went upon several plantations where . . . the people . . . made us very welcome, sharing with us bountifully whatever they had, whether it was milk, cider or tobacco, and especially . . . miserable rum or brandy. . . . It is impossible to tell how many peach trees we passed, all laden with fruit to breaking down, and many of them actually broken down. We came to a place surrounded with such trees from which so many had fallen off that the ground could not be discerned, and you could not put your foot down without trampling them; and, notwithstanding such large quantities had fallen off, the trees still were as full as they could bear. The hogs and other animals mostly feed on them.*

They visited with the woman who owned the land on which the peach trees grew, who fed them their first smoked strip bass, which they compared with smoked salmon. Continuing along the road, they reached the house of Simon Aartson DeHart, located in the vicinity of present day 27th Street overlooking Gowanus Bay, where they found

*. . . a good fire, half-way up the chimney, of clear oak and hickory, of which they made not the least scruple of burning profusely. We let it penetrate us thoroughly. There had been already thrown upon it, to be roasted, a pail-full of Gowanus oysters, which are the best in the country. . . . They are large and full, some of them not less than a foot long, and they grow sometimes ten, twelve and sixteen together, and are then like a piece of rock. Others are young and small.*

*In consequence of the great quantities of them, everybody keeps the shells for the purpose of burning them into lime. They pickle the oysters in small casks, and send them to Barbados and the other islands. We had for supper a roasted haunch of venison, which he had bought of the Indians. . . and which weighed thirty pounds. The meat was exceedingly tender and good, and also quite fat. It had a slight spicy taste. We were also served with wild turkey, which was also fat and of a good flavor; and a wild goose, but that was rather dry. Everything we had was the natural production of the country. We saw here, lying in a heap, a whole hill of watermelons, which were as large as pumpkins. . .*

The stone house and wooden wing where they spent the night was still standing in 1866. The next morning after breakfast Dankers and Sluyter walked on to explore other areas of Kings County. They first traveled to present-day Fort Hamilton where they found Indian plantations planted with maize and between seven and eight families living in a long house.

*Their house was low and long, about sixty feet long and fourteen or fifteen feet wide. The bottom was earth, the sides and roof were made of reed and the bark of chestnut trees; the post, or columns, were limbs of trees stuck in the ground, and all fastened together. The top, or ridge of the roof, was open about half a foot wide, from one end to the other, in order to let the smoke escape, in place of a chimney. On the sides, or walls, of the house, the roof was so low that you could hardly stand under it. The entrances, or doors, which were at both ends, were so small and low that they had to stoop down and squeeze themselves to get through them. The doors were made of reed or flat bark. . . . They built their fire in the middle of the floor, according to the number of families which live in it, so that from one end to the other each of them boils its own pot, and eats when it likes, not only the families themselves, but each Indian alone, according to his hunger, at all hours, morning, noon and night. By each fire are the cooking utensils, consisting of a pot, a bowl, or calabash, and a spoon also made of a calabash. These are all that relate to cooking. They lie upon mats with their feet toward the fire. . . Their other household articles consists of a calabash of water, out of which they drink, a small basket in which to carry and keep their maize and small beans, and a knife. The implements are, for tillage, a small, sharp stone, and nothing more; for hunting, a gun and pouch for powder and lead; for fishing, a canoe without mast or sail, and without a nail in any part of it, though it is sometimes full forty feet in length, fish hooks and lines, and scoops to paddle with in place of oars. . . . All who live in one house are generally of one stock or descent, as father and mother with their offspring. Their bread is maize . . . mixed with water, and made into a cake, which they bake under the hot ashes. . . . They had dogs, fowls and hogs. . . They had, also, peach trees, which were well laden.*

The land on which these Indians lived was owned by Jacques Cortelyou, who was thought by Dankers to have purchased the land from them, although he permitted them to live on a corner of it. Cortelyou lived in the village of New Utrecht, which had been burned during the years of Indian warfare in the middle of the 17th century. By the time Dankers and Sluyter saw the village in 1679 it had been almost completely rebuilt, with "good stone houses." At Flatlands, they found the land not as good as at Gowanus and at the Narrows, but noted the salt marshes, which were covered each tide, producing "a species of hard salt grass or reed grass." This salt grass was mown for hay, which, Dankers states, ". . . the cattle would rather eat than fresh hay or grass." Behind Flatlands they noted a large meadow or heath on which

sheep could be grazed, although they saw none. The meadow was crossed by streams, which were navigable and where fish could be taken. Along the roadways they noted several types of grapes, and at Gravesend they found small blue grapes. Dankers wrote that the inhabitants of Gravesend hoped to plant vineyards of these grapes, but so far had failed. At Gravesend the land was reported to be flat, but not as flat as at Flatlands and less barren, yielding good crops. After several days of exploring Kings County, they returned to Manhattan, passing on the way to the ferry through Flatbush:

*... a village situated about an hour and a half's distance from there, upon the same plain, which is very large. This village seems to have better farms than the bay, and yields full as much revenue. Riding through it, we came to the woods and the hills, which are very stony and uncomfortable to ride over. We rode over them, and passed through the village of Breukelen to the ferry, and leaving the wagon there, we crossed over the river. . .*

From the description, it appears that Dankers and Sluyter passed through the Flatbush Pass, located in present-day Prospect Park. Their journey to Brooklyn took them to each part of Kings County, except the northern portion where Bedford Corners, Bushwick and Wallabout were located. However, their descriptions of the other areas of Kings County would apply equally to these areas, which were also inhabited by Dutchmen. The houses and domestic arrangements would have been similar, the crops and fruits grown would have been the same, and the same domesticated and wild foods would have been served to family and guests alike. Dankers also comments on the large meadows (part of the common lands) and the salt meadows. Although they do not specify the condition of the road, it is clear that the hamlets and villages of Kings County, as well as the farmsteads on the outskirts of the most settled areas, were interconnected by a series of roadways sufficiently established to permit the passage of wagons. (Dankers and Sluyter 1966: 117-134)

During these years, the pattern of occupation for communities in Kings County and for the rest of Long Island followed the pattern of individually owned farmsteads on which each man built his house, barns, and outbuilding, and on which he planted his orchards and crops. These were the plantations. In addition to their own farms, each member of the community also was entitled to the use of the common land on which were pastured the cattle and from which the farmers cut hay for fodder. Woodlots were the third division of land, providing timber for building and firewood for the kitchen and fireplaces, as well as mast for the swine. As will be seen below, the woodlots were initially held in common, but in time were divided among the villages. Later these woodlots were further divided, with specific lots being allocated to each family. Finally, in communities in proximity to the ocean, salt meadows were purchased in common and subsequently divided into lots, which assigned to individuals in the community.

Although common meadows and woodlots had been the norm during much of the 17th century, by the early years of the 1690's the residents of the various hamlets and villages met to divide these lands among the various villages. One such agreement states that:

*1. All the lands and woods after Bedford and Cripplebush, over the hills to the path of New lotts shall belong to the inhabitants and freeholders of Gowanus . .*

*2. And all the lands and woods that lyes betwixt the above said path and the highway from the ferry towards Flatbush, shall belong to the freeholders and inhabitants of Bedford and Cripplebush . . . 3. And all the land that lyes in common after the Gowanus, betwixt the limits and bounds of Flatbush and New Utrecht shall belong to the freeholders and inhabitants of Brooklyn. . . (Stiles 1867: 206)*

From the information provided above it is clear that several highways, including the road from the Village of Brooklyn (at the ferry) to the farms along Wallabout, existed prior to the 1660's. With the development of Kings County these roadways underwent improvement, being straightened and widened to conform with the regulations of the New York Legislature. In 1704, when the legislature undertook to improve highways throughout the populated areas of the colony, the highway commissioners laid out and standardized the main road or "King's highway" through Brooklyn.

During the 18th century, Wallabout was one of the hamlets of Brooklyn. Although Wallabout was populated from the earliest time, the plantations were located at the water's edge, with the farm fields and woodlots in the interior. No roads extended into the project area, and early maps of Long Island show no structures within the project area. The 1670 Ryder map identified Wallabout Bay and Wallabout Creek is shown, but the hamlet of Wallabout and the building that comprised it were not included. (Map 3)

By the end of the 18th century, we have the Ratzer map, which shows Wallabout Bay as a horseshoe shaped cove with a stream flowing into the northwest corner. That stream, known as Wallabout Creek, was also called Runneconck (various spellings) by the Indians. It had extensive wetlands and numerous tributaries. Ratzer's map shows the distribution of the farmsteads in the vicinity of the project area – these generally hugged the shoreline, with their farm fields, pastureland and woodlots extending southward. (Map 4) The Rapelye farmstead is shown overlooking Wallabout Creek where the bridge crosses it. Immediately to the south and west was the farmstead of Lambert Schenck. His dwelling and farm buildings are located immediate south of the road with a series of fields and pastures extending to the south. The project area is immediately to the east. No structures appear in this area.

After the Battle of Brooklyn in the summer of 1776, Brooklyn and Long Island was in the hands of the British during the remainder of the American Revolution. Maps from this period show the fort that was situated on the high ground now included in Fort Greene Park and a series of earthen works that provided protection for Wallabout and the shore along the East River. These earthworks extended eastward toward the Cripplebush Road (the Road to New Towne) and did not impact the project area. Wallabout Bay was the location of a number of ships, including the notorious prison ships in which many hundreds of American soldiers died, following which their bodies were dumped along the shores of the bay, where they remained until the were gathered together in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and deposited in the crypt below the columnar monument erected in Fort Greene Park.

During this period of occupation, despite being protected from the ravages of further battles, the inhabitants of Brooklyn suffered great depravations. The description provided by Stiles

matches in many details descriptions of Manhattan and the Bronx, which were also held by the British, and southern Westchester, called in those days, the Neutral Ground:

According to Stiles, Brooklyn, which, during the war, had been wholly military ground, presented a sadder scene of desolation than any other town in Kings County. In 1786, after the occupation of the British, free range had been given to the pillaging propensities of the soldiery.

*Farms had been laid waste . . . woodlands were ruthlessly cut down for fuel, buildings were injured, fences removed, and boundaries effaced. Farmers were despoiled of their cattle, horses, swine, poultry, vegetables, and of almost every necessary article of subsistence, except their grain, which fortunately had been housed before the invasion. Their houses were also plundered . . . and much furniture was wantonly destroyed . . . stock became very scarce and dear, and the farmer of Brooklyn who owned a pair of horses and two or three cows was 'well off.' The scarcity prevailing in the markets, however, soon rendered it necessary for the British commanders to restrain this system of indiscriminate marauding, and to encourage agriculture . . . (Stiles 1884:100)*

With the end of the war, Kings County began to recover. Homes were rebuilt. Boundaries were redrawn, and fences reestablished. On March 7, 1788 Brooklyn became a town under the laws of the New York State Legislature. At that time the Town of Brooklyn contained seven hamlets: The Ferry, Red Hook, Brooklyn, Bedford, Gowanus, Cripplebush, and Wallabout. Despite its designation as a hamlet, Wallabout remained relatively unpopulated.

This changed after 1801, when the United States Government purchased several private ship yards on Wallabout Bay and began to use the area for the repair and resupplying of ships during the War of 1812 (Palisi: 32 in Historical Perspectives, Inc., 1991). It is in direct response to development at the U. S. Navy Yard that the area around Wallabout Bay began to be developed. As early as 1803 Tucker and Carter Cordage Company had a ropewalk that extended from Myrtle Avenue through to Flushing Avenue, including the portion of Block 1881 that fronted on Taaffe Place, opposite the project area. Wallabout Road was regulated in the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and opened as Nassau Street in 1819 (Dikeman, 1870: 90). Today it is Flushing Avenue. At that time this area was decided rural, with only a few houses along the main road. In 1825 Armbruster describes Wallabout as containing 10 farmhouses and a few dwellings in the hamlet, with the remaining district consisting of fields and trees. In 1884, Stiles writing of the area in 1830 described “. . . a few dwellings along Flushing [Avenue] (Stiles 1884: 145), and Samuel Barnes, writing in 1888, still described “. . . a rural community relatively unchanged since the beginning of the century” (Pickman & Dublin 1989: 21). Within a very few years that was to change – Kent and Myrtle Avenues were opened in 1835 and Park Avenue, established as 70 feet wide, was opened in 1839.

Street openings did not mean that an area underwent immediately development. In 1840, several years after the streets in the neighborhood had been opened and the block and lots plated, Wallabout is reported to have contained 30 houses between Fort Greene and Broadway (the boundary between Brooklyn and Williamsburgh. The 1844 U.S. Coastal Survey map still shows the “few dwellings” described by Stiles on the south side of



Wallabout Road (present day Flushing Avenue). By this date houses had been built one after another on both the north and south side of the road. Several of these houses were located on Flushing Avenue immediately north of the project area, but at this time there are no structures within the boundaries of the project area. The distinctive bend in the Wallabout Road at Skillman Avenue may be used to locate the general boundaries of the project area. Kent and Park Avenue may have been opened by this date, but they do not appear on this map, nor does the Tucker & Carter ropewalk — all the land south of Flushing Avenue is shown as open, unimproved land. Based on the U. S. Coastal Survey we see a picture of an area that in 1844, in contrast to Williamsburgh and Brooklyn, had not yet begun to succumb to urbanization. (Map 5)

In 1849 J. H. Colton prepared a *Map of the City of Brooklyn* that included the project area. Although Wallabout Creek and its salt marshes are still shown on this map, indicating that these features had not yet been channelized or obliterated by development, the area immediately south of Flushing Avenue from Skillman Avenue west is shown as developed. Individual structures are not shown on this map, and, indeed it will be some years before details of individual lots are provided, but on this map every block from Skillman to Classon and from Flushing south is shown as fully built. That is not to say that every lot contained a building, but clearly East Brooklyn was changing. This change was in direct response to development of the U. S. Navy Yard, which required workers and supporting industries, such as sail makers, coopers, ironmongers, and, of course, ropewalks.

In 1852 R. F. O. Conner prepared a *Map of Kings and Part of Queens Counties, Long Island, New York* for M. Dripps. (Map 6) In contrast with the map from 1849, this map shows the street pattern established along the entire Williamsburgh-East Brooklyn line. On the northwest corner of Wallabout Bay was Johnson's Lumber Yard, while on the southwest corner the buildings of the U. S. Navy Yard may be seen. The Tucker & Carter Cordage Company is not shown on this map, but we know that it was located, as it was for over 100 years, between Flushing Avenue and Myrtle Avenue on the west side of Graham Street (now Taaffe Place). We know that as of 1850 portions of the project area had been developed, and that the 7<sup>th</sup> Ward Hotel stood in the north side of Flushing Avenue at Taaffe Place. In 1855, and perhaps earlier, Keenan's stage company was located at Flushing and Taaffe Place. By this date, other facilities in the area included distilleries, iron foundries, sailmakers, and institutions, including the U. S. Marine Hospital, churches, schools, an orphan asylum and a city park.

It is not until 1880 that the individual structures are shown on the lots in Block 1883, but we from maps dating from 1850 and the 1860's that development was taking place prior to 1868-69, when sewer connections were made to structures within the project area. With the exception of 55 Taaffe Place none of the buildings were identified by street address, making the precise identification difficult, but using the distance from Little Nassau Street or, alternatively, Flushing Avenue, as a guide, it was possible to identify the dates at which sewer connections were made in the general area of 45-59 Taaffe Place and 796 Kent Avenue. Details concerning the development of each of the individual lots within the project area have been included in the first part of this report (see pp. 11-14).

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Prehistoric Sensitivity

Based on the environmental models promulgated by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission and the New York State Museum Archaeological Site Files, the project area would be considered to have a high potential to yield prehistoric cultural material. As noted, Wallabout Creek and its associated salt marshes were located immediately north of the project area – both of which substantially increase the prehistoric potential. Based on a comparison on historic and current elevations in the immediate area, it does not appear that the substantial grading has taken place on the site. Such grading might have protected subsurface prehistoric resources, increasing the potential for recovery. In the absence of substantial fill on the site, it is most likely that episodes of building in the 19th century, and subsequent demolition of the structures within the project area have removed the potential of the site to yield significant, intact prehistoric cultural resources.

### Historic Sensitivity

Based on documentary research, including an examination of Sensitivity Maps for the Borough of Brooklyn at the LPC and an examination of historic maps and atlases of the area, it is concluded that the project area does not contain the potential to yield significant historic archaeological resources dating from the 17th or 18th centuries. The map examined at the LPC indicated that the project area lay outside the developed areas and would have been farmland. Ratzer's 1766-7 *Plan of the City of New York in North America* (see Map 4) indicates that the Schenck family farmstead was located on the east side of Wallabout Road (later corresponding more or less to Flushing Avenue) with the fields extending south. The portion on which Block 1883 is located subsequently came into the possession of the Skillman family (for whom Skillman Avenue is named), who were direct descendants of the Schenck family. They held the land until the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when they sold to the family of General Jeremiah Johnson. The Johnson family held the land until its development, which – according to the Drupp's map – had begun prior to 1850.

With respect to the potential for 19th century cultural remains, it is concluded that development along Kent Avenue took place as early as 1850, and perhaps somewhat earlier. Water was available in Kent Avenue in 1860. In 1865 there was no sewer in Kent Avenue (Armbruster, 1942: 203), but the sewer between Flushing Avenue and Park Avenue had been installed by 1867-68 when the first connections were recorded. The map research indicates that buildings had been constructed on several of the lots on Taaffe Place by 1850. We do not know the date that water was available in Taaffe Place, but it may be assumed that it was installed by the time that sewers became available in 1868. Business existed in Taaffe Place as early as 1803, when the Tucker & Carter ropewalk was established. It and other businesses related to shipbuilding and repair that established in East Brooklyn were responding to the presence of the U. S. Navy Yard. The residential development seen in this area was likewise related to the Navy Yard and the businesses that supplied it. At the time

that East Brooklyn was being populated the area had a high percentage of families with Irish surnames – Devlin, Sullivan, Maguire, Coglin, etc.

The research indicates that a number of the lots within the project area have the potential to contain historic archaeological deposits. Further research, including an examination of the census data, business directories and tax records, would identify the names of the families living at the addresses included within the project area. From the information derived from this material it would be possible to develop a testing strategy to gather information concerning the ethnicity, occupation, and economic status of the inhabitants living within the project area. In addition, such an investigation might provide insight into the types of service businesses (stores and other businesses occupying a number of ground floors) that supported larger industries, such as the Tucker & Carter ropewalk.

Archaeological investigation of the project area could provide a unique opportunity to examine a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Brooklyn neighborhood. Immediately to the south – at Kent and Myrtle Avenue – in an area dating to the same time period as that of the project area, an archaeological investigation revealed cisterns with deposits dating from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> to the 1880's that revealed important information on the material culture of the residents of East Brooklyn. In addition, further investigation could be gathered on the economic implications (as reflected in the material cultural remains) of single family, owner occupied dwellings, as opposed to owner occupied, multi-family dwellings, and those buildings that were multi-family dwellings occupied solely by tenants.

The possibility of intact archaeological deposits in the form of features such as cisterns and privies or sheet middens certainly exists on lots within the project area. The recovery of this material could contribute to information important to local history and increase our understanding of the development of this early and important area of Brooklyn.



**APPENDIX B**

**MAPS & PHOTOGRAPHS**

## STAGE 1A LITERATURE REVIEW

### MAP LIST

#### MAPS

- |        |  |
|--------|--|
| Map 1  | Location Map. USGS Brooklyn Quadrangle. 7.5 Minute Series. Taken 1967. Revised 1979.               |
| Map 2  | Area Map (derived from Hagstrom's <i>New York City 5 Borough Atlas</i> Map 19)                     |
| Map 3  | 1670 Ryder <i>Map of Long Island</i> .   |
| Map 4  | Detail from Bernard Ratzer's <i>Plan of the Town of Brooklyn and part of Long Island</i> . 1766-67 |
| Map 5  | 1844 Survey of Coast of the United States <i>Map of New-York Bay and Harbor and the Environs</i>   |
| Map 6  | 1852 R. F. O. Conner <i>Map of Kings and Part of Queens Counties, Long Island, New York</i> .      |
| Map 7  | 1904 Sanborn Map, including project area. Plate 52.  |
| Map 8  | 1918 Sanborn Map, including project area. Plate 52.  |
| Map 9  | 1929 E. Belcher Hyde's <i>Desk Atlas/ Borough of Brooklyn, City of New York</i> .                  |
| Map 10 | 1996 Sanborn Map, including project area. Plate 52.  |



Appendix B: Maps & Photographs

Block 1883, Lot 13-20 & 27. 45-59 Taaffe Place & 796 Kent Avenue. Borough of Brooklyn, Kings County, New York.

Map 2: Area Map. (derived from Hagstrom's New York City 5 Borough Atlas, Map 19. Scale: 13/4"=3000')

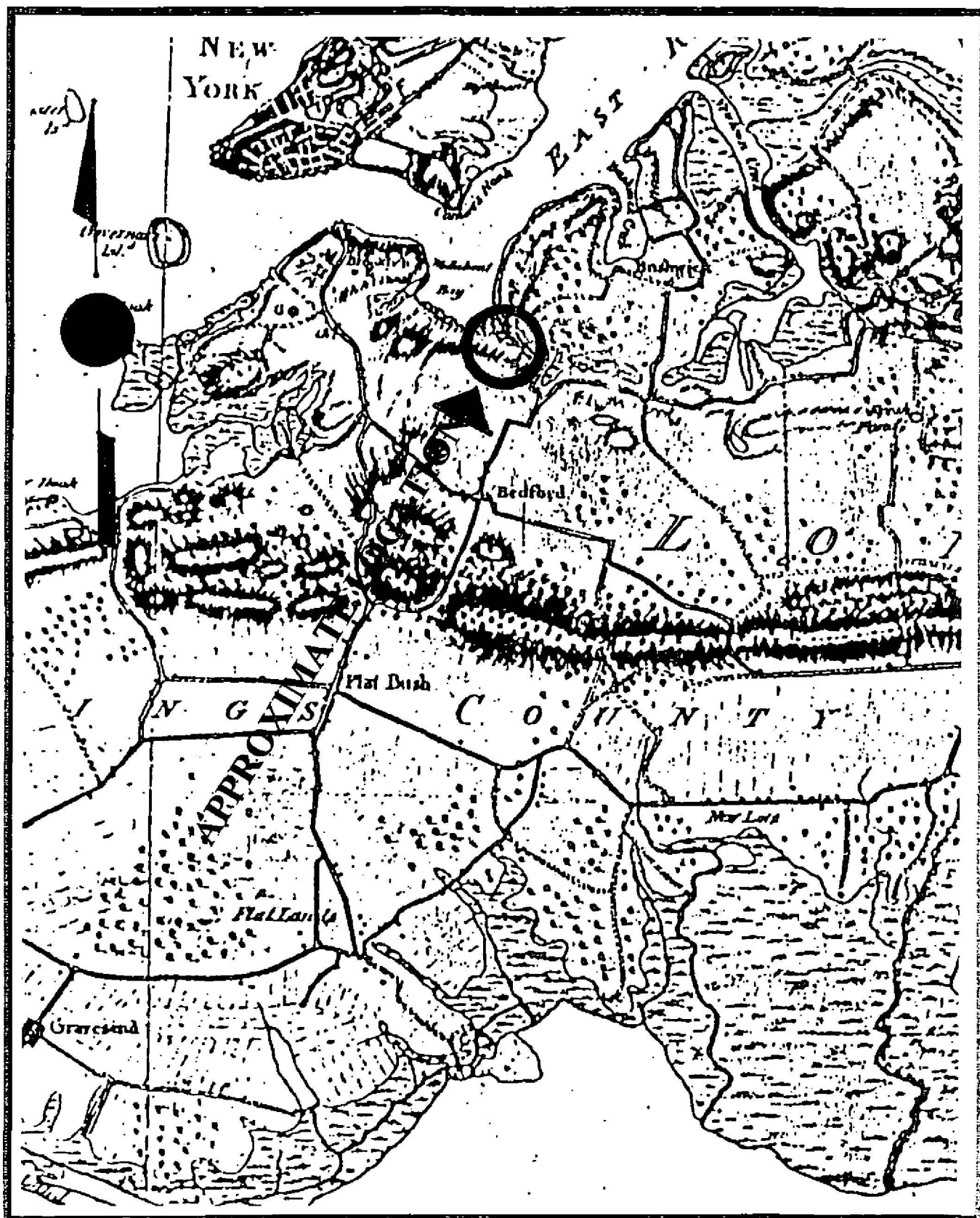




Appendix B: Maps & Photographs

Block 1883, Lot 13-20 & 27. 45-59 Taaffe Place & 796 Kent Avenue. Borough of Brooklyn. Kings County, New York.

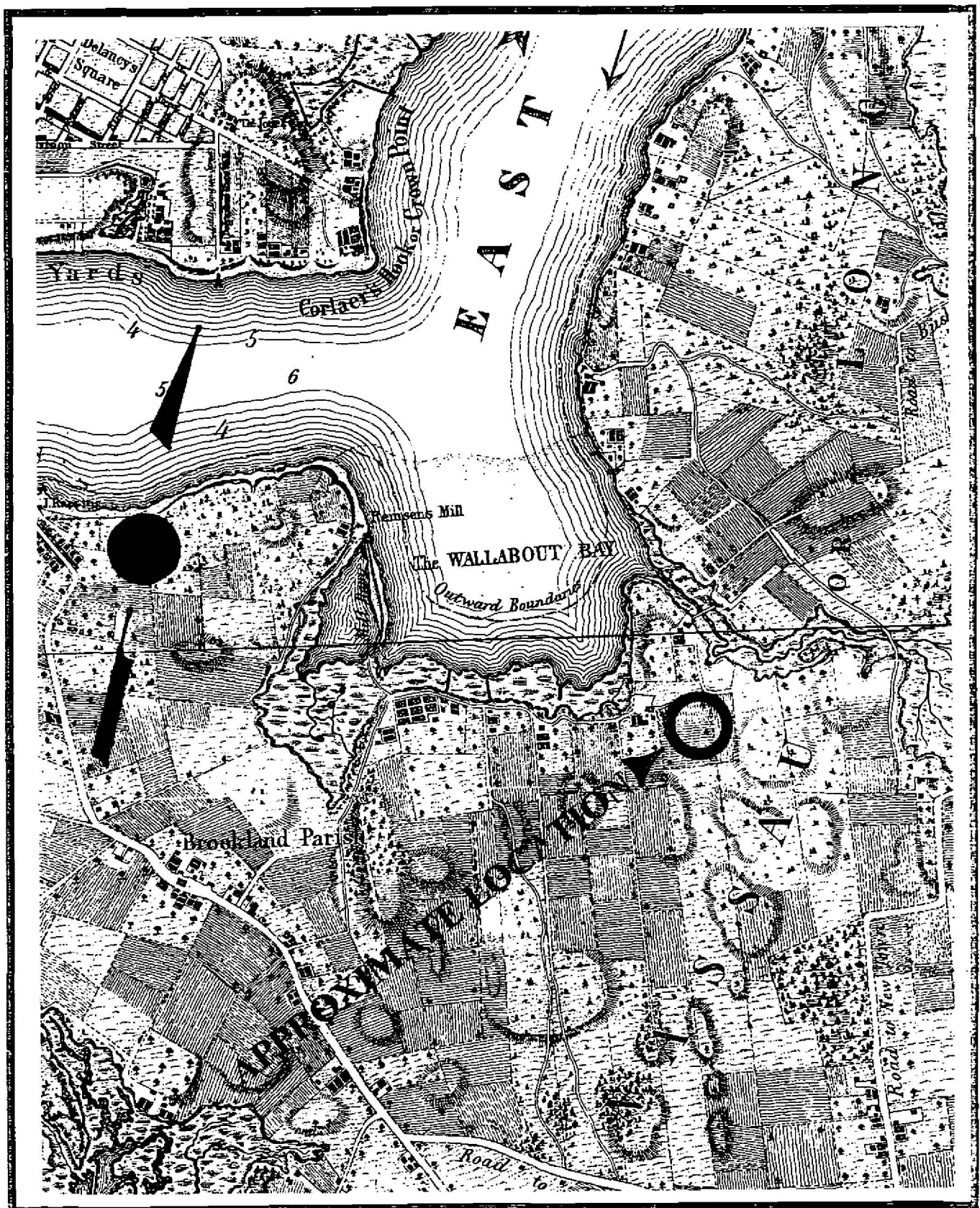
Map 3: 1670 Ryder Map of Long Island. Scale: No scale shown. Map enlarged.



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Block 1883, Lot 13-20 & 27, 45-59 Taaffe Place & 796 Kent Avenue, Borough of Brooklyn, Kings County, New York.

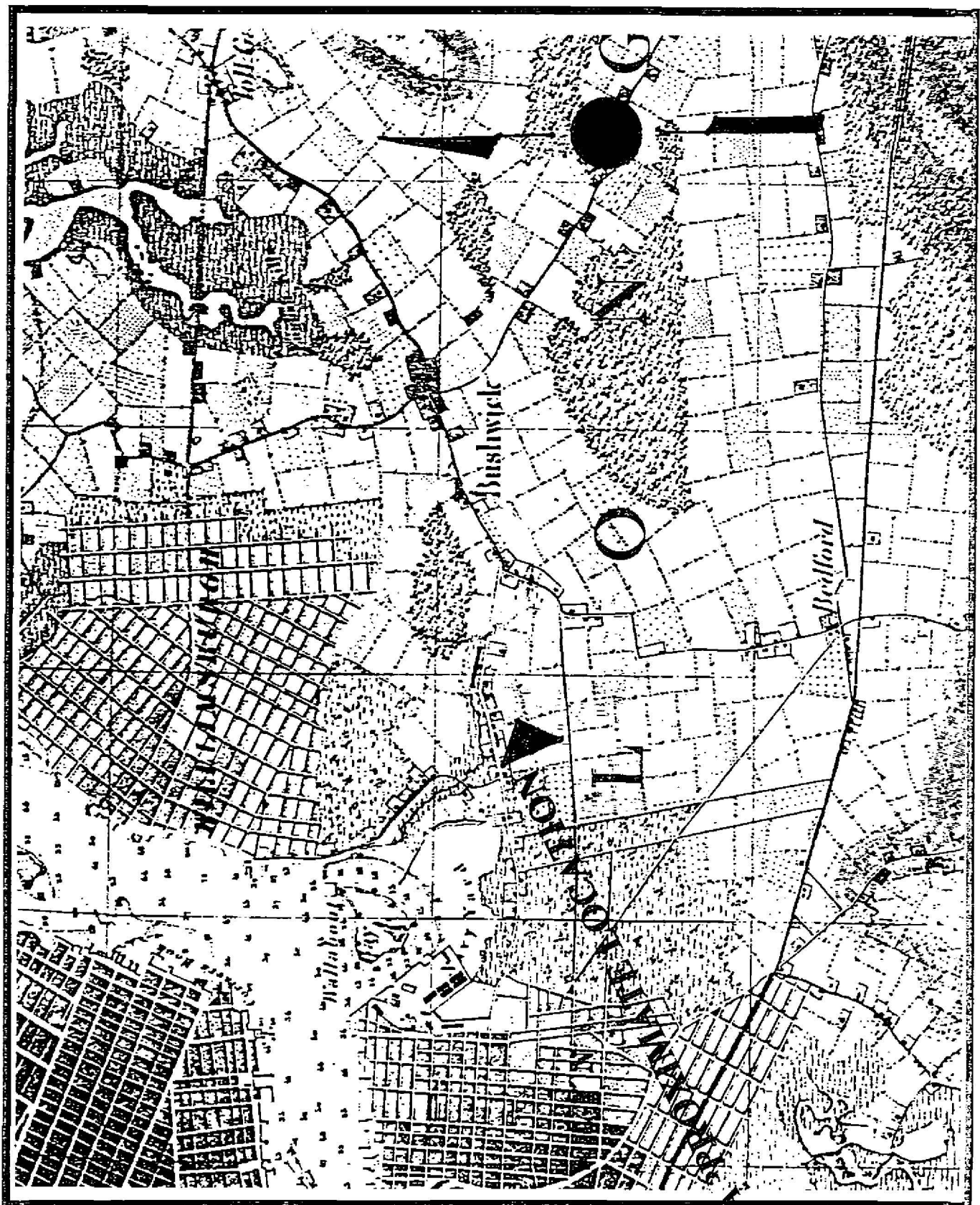
Map 4: 1767 Ratzer Plan of the Town of Brooklyn & Part of Long Island. Scale: Included on map.



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Block 1883, Lot 13-20 & 27. 45-59 Taaffe Place & 796 Kent Avenue. Borough of Brooklyn. Kings County, New York.

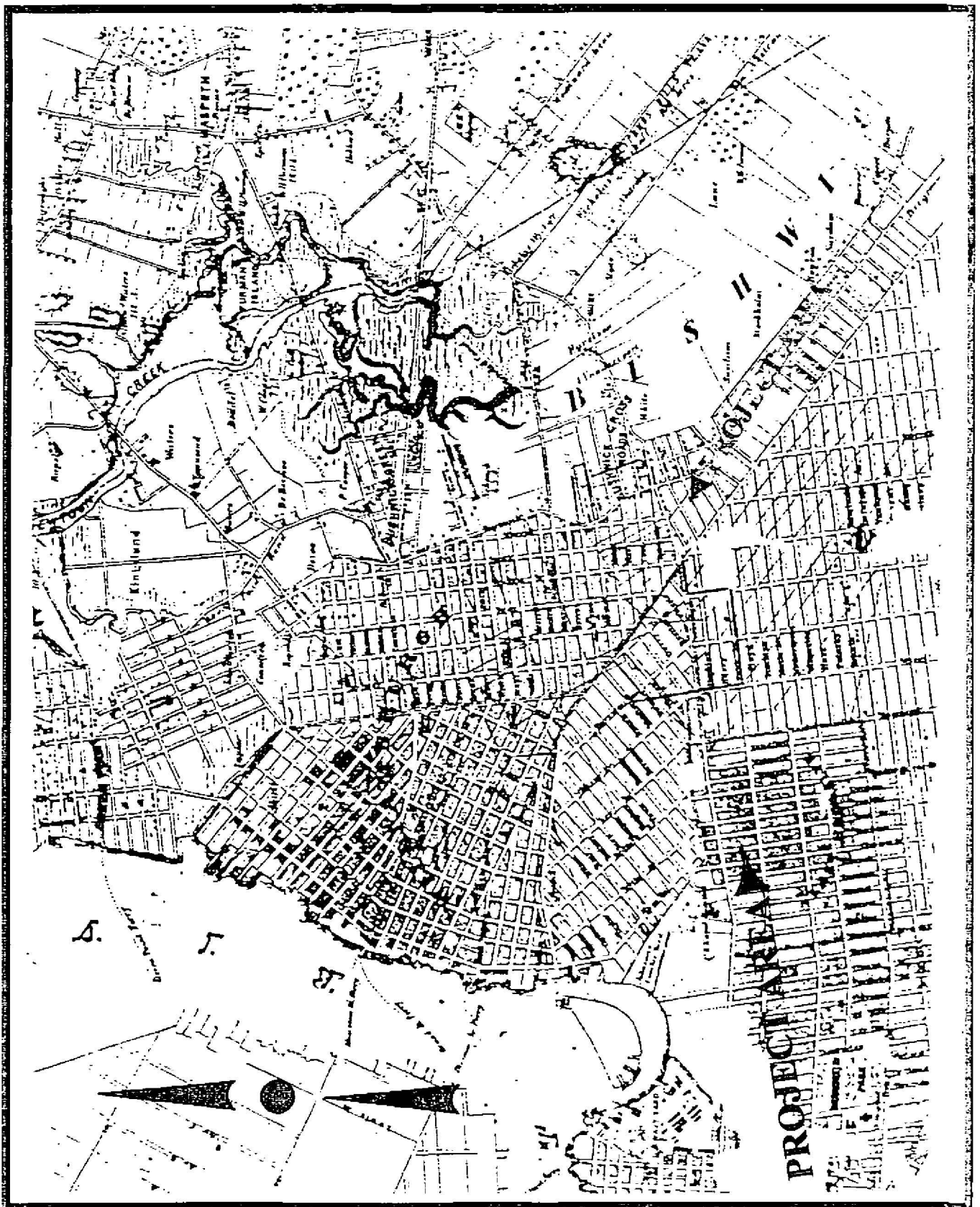
Map 5: 1844 Coastal Survey Map of New-York Bay & Harbor & Environs. Scale: Reduced



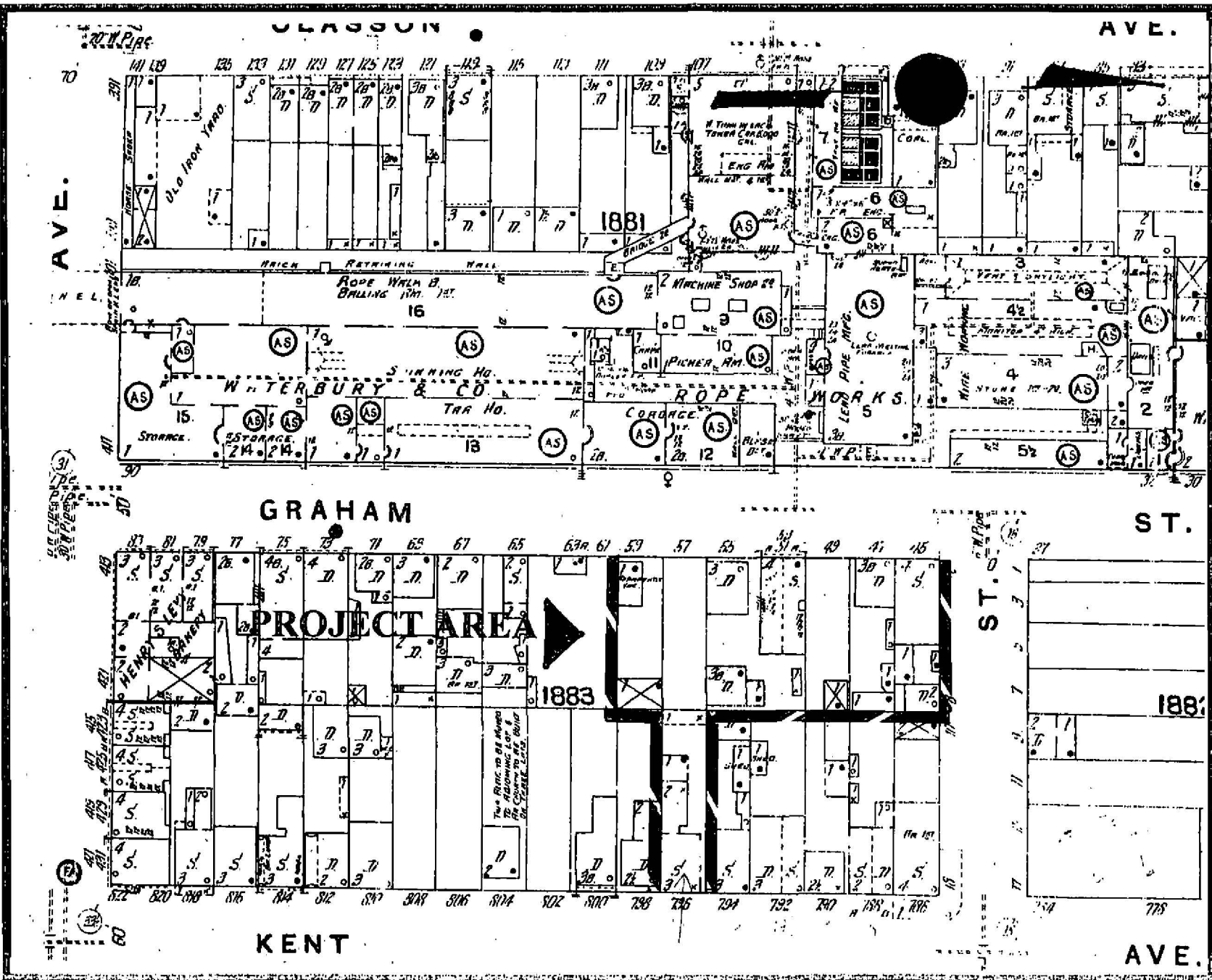


Appendix B: Maps & Photographs

Block 1883, Lot 13-20 & 27. 45-59 Taaffe Place & 796 Kent Avenue. Borough of Brooklyn. Kings County, New York.  
Map 6: 1852 Connor Map of Kings & Part of Queens Counties, Long Island Scale: 5.5" = 2 Miles



Block 1883, Lot 13-20 & 27. 45-59 Taaffe Place & 796 Kent Avenue. Borough of Brooklyn, Kings County, New York.  
Map 7: 1904 Sanborn Insurance Map, including Project Area. Scale: 60' = 1 Inch.

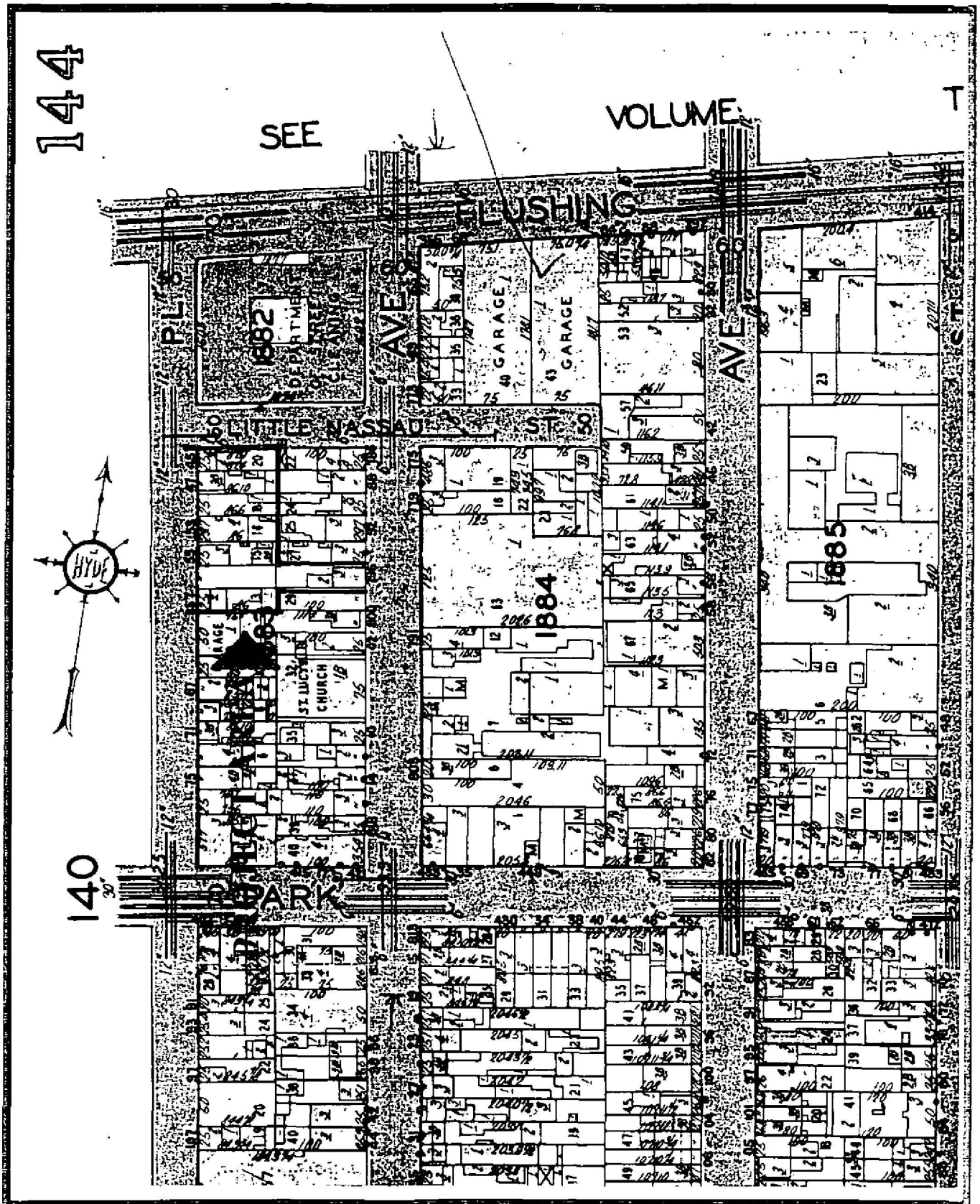




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Block 1883, Lot 13-20 & 27. 45-59 Taaffe Place & 796 Kent Avenue. Borough of Brooklyn, Kings County, New York.

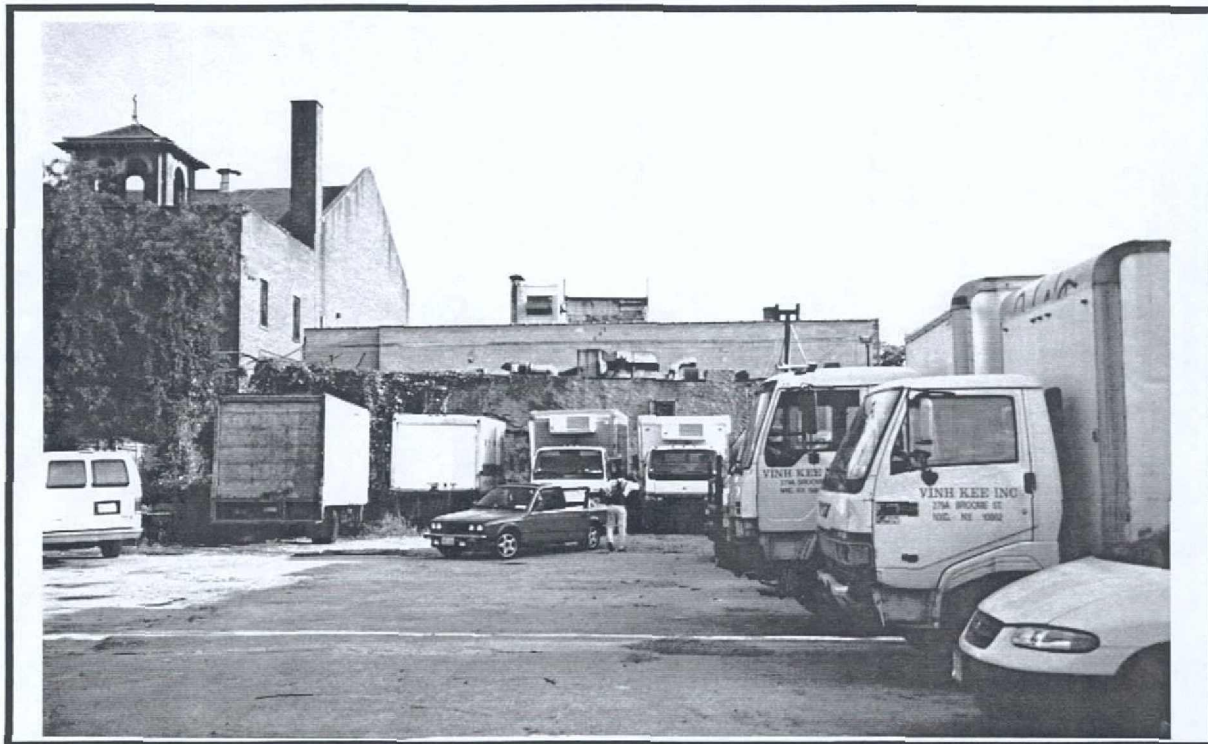
Map 9: 1929 Hyde Desk Atlas Borough of Brooklyn City of New York. Plate 144. Scale: 160' = 1 Inch.



Map 10: 1996 Sanborn Insurance Map, including Project Area. Scale: 60' = 1 Inch.







**Photo 1:** View of project area looking south. At the present time this portion of the project area (on Taaffe Place) is paved and used for parking.



**Photo 2:** View looking northeast across Little Nassau Street to Brooklyn Boro Service Station of the Department of Water Supply, Gas & Electricity. The vehicles are parked on what would have been Lot 20 (45 Taaffe Place). The project area is generally flat, without substantial vegetation.





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