

1991 USF  
962K  
Geismar

RECEIVED

ENVIRONMENTAL RECORD

APR 5 1991

ENVIRONMENTAL RECORD  
COMMISSION

Scope of Work for  
Archaeological Field Testing of the  
Bishop Mugavero Geriatric Center Site, Block 189, Brooklyn

CEQR No. 90-223K

Prepared for the Catholic Medical Center  
of Brooklyn and Queens, Inc.

Prepared by Joan H. Geismar, Ph.D.

April 1, 1991

159

(159)

## INTRODUCTION

Documentary research to determine the history and development of the proposed site of the Bishop Mugavero Geriatric Center in Brooklyn (Block 189; CEQR No. 90-223K) revealed that portions of the site have archaeological potential (Geismar 1990). This is not the archaeology of the rich and famous, but of the middle-class residents of an urban block developed in South Brooklyn beginning in 1842.

While the project block has been evolving for a century and a half and development has been intensive, there are yards of now-demolished residential buildings where archaeological material may be found. Several of these yards were never built upon, others were fully or partially covered by structures without basements, such as stables, sheds, or garages; in one instance, a covered walkway extends across the rear portion of potentially sensitive areas.

Older buildings on the site were apparently hooked into a municipal sewer system between 1858 and 1867. Since the potentially sensitive yards belong to structures built prior to 1867, this suggests that the middle-class owner or tenant families on the site during this time period were probably using the ubiquitous backyard privy for their sanitary requirements. It is also more than likely they were also using wells or cisterns as a source of water for their households. These and other abandoned backyard features have proven to be a treasure trove of archaeological information on nineteenth-century urban sites (e.g., Geismar 1989). Such features on the project site could offer information about the diet of members of these households, their approaches to health and healing, household management, and attitudes toward the laws and directives instituted to safeguard their health. In this case, it would provide information about the families of merchants, manufacturers, and professionals such as surveyors, a stockbroker, and a builder. The data from this site could then be compared with other similar sites, both local, such as the Metrotech Site in central Brooklyn (e.g., Roberts 1991:personal communication; report in preparation), and those excavated across the East River in Manhattan (e.g., Geismar 1989). Comparisons of this type will ultimately develop a picture of urban life during the nineteenth century not available through other sources.

Although the project site was also the location of a nineteenth-century hospital and of nurseries that provided health and child care, archaeological data from these structures have undoubtedly been destroyed by subsequent development: the yards of private homes on Dean Street that became St. Mary's Hospital and Nursery in 1871, and the Sheltering Arms Nursery by 1877, would not have survived construction of the Hospital of the Holy Family in 1937.

It was noted in the assessment that the 1888 St. Mary's Maternity Hospital, which stands at this writing, warrants photographic documentation not because of its architectural significance, but because it is one of the only surviving examples of a nineteenth century Brooklyn health care facility. Fortunately, measured floor plans for this building, dating from a 1909 alteration, are available

through the Catholic Medical Center of Brooklyn and Queens, Inc., the site's developer. In addition, the plans from a 1962 alteration are offered in the assessment (Geismar 1990:Appendix C), and arrangements have been made to photo-document the standing structure (Marino 1991: personal communication).

Five three-story dwellings included in the Boerum Hill Historic District created in 1973 stand on the site and are presently vacant. These will not be affected by the current development plans and are not included in this proposed scope of work.

#### PROPOSED FIELD TESTING

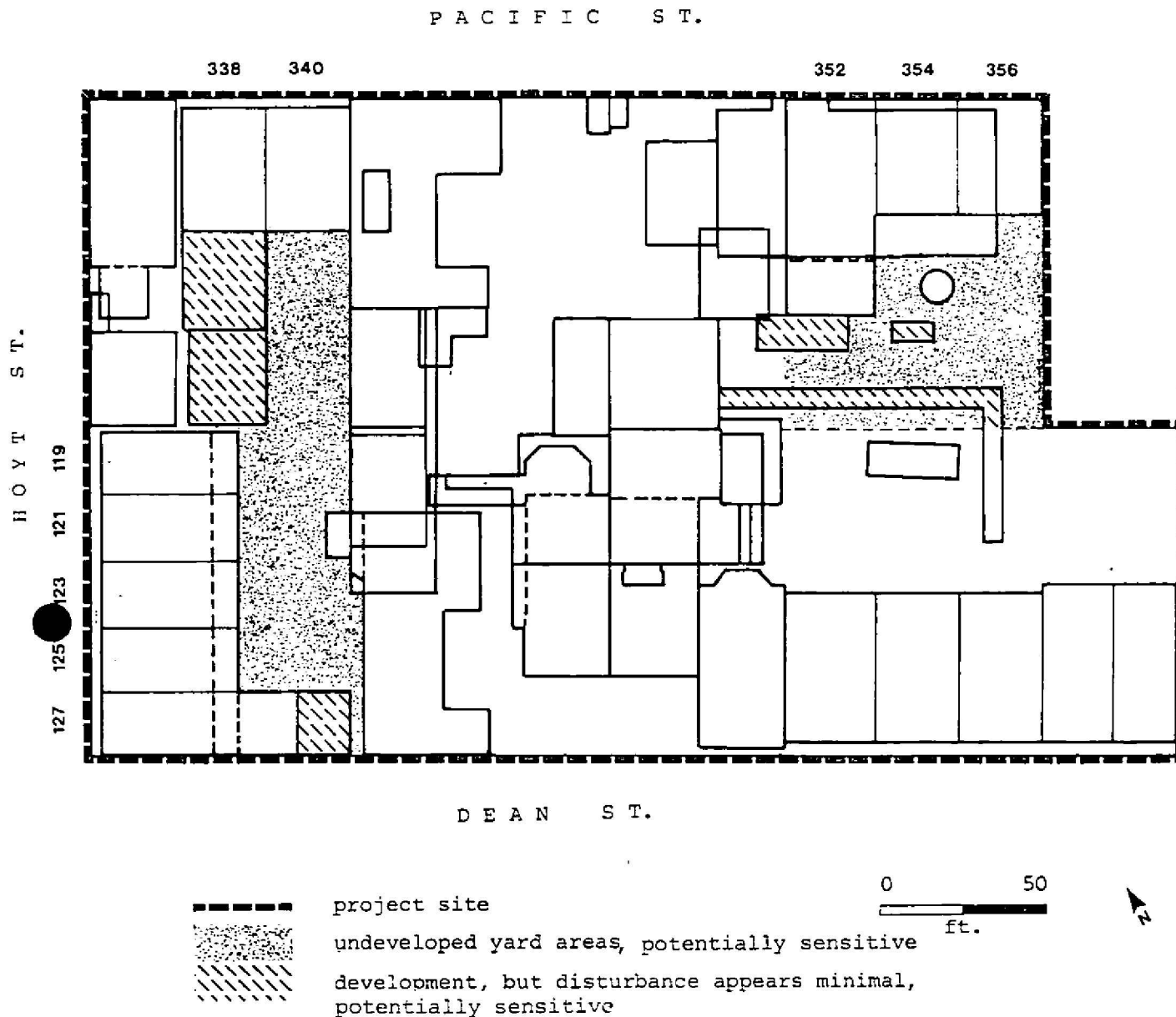
Based on the documentary research, it is proposed that archaeological field testing be undertaken in selected yards of former houses on the proposed project site (see Exhibit 1 for location of potentially sensitive areas). The research indicated that these yards either were never developed or were fully or partially covered by buildings or structures with no basements. In all, these include ten former house yards: 119-127 Hoyt Street, five row houses developed by William Alexander; 338 Pacific Street, the oldest house on the site and block (the yard of this house was ultimately covered by an extension to the building and a stable or garage, but these do not preclude the possibility of archaeological features and deposits) and 340 Pacific Street; and 352-356 Pacific Street (although a laundry/boiler facility covers the site of these buildings at this writing, their former yards appear intact around and conceivably under a covered wooden walkway that crosses them).

The research questions that will be addressed through the proposed field investigations mainly concern the sanitary practices and adherence to, or rejection of, municipal laws instituted to protect the health and well being of the block's inhabitants. This entails establishing the date when the single- and multi-family houses on the project site--many of them occupied by one family for over twenty-five years--were connected to public sewers by dating when privies, wells, or cisterns were no longer used (e.g., Geismar 1989). These backyard features are often the repository of invaluable archaeological materials. It also entails recording where privies were placed in the yards and, when abandoned, whether they were filled according to municipal directives. Another question considers the day-to-day practices employed to maintain the various households--the diet, the personal goods used and discarded, and the methods employed and the medicines taken to attain and preserve personal health.

Testing in the form of monitored backhoe clearing and trenches is recommended to determine whether or not archaeological features such as privies, wells, or cisterns are present. A machine with a front end loader and a backhoe bucket will be used so that all contingencies will be covered. Once located, features will be partially hand excavated to determine the nature, the extent, and the integrity of the deposits within them. In the case of 352-356 Pacific Street, field testing should follow demolition of the covered walkway that crosses the yards since privies are most likely to have been located where this walkway now stands.

BISHOP MUGAVERO CENTER Areas of Potential Archaeological Sensitivity

1



Backhoe trenching will also determine if any yards have potential for harboring Native American sites; those yards recommended for testing may contain fill that would protect any such sites (an undeveloped portion of the site--346-350 Pacific Street--appears to have no nineteenth-century fill; while construction did not take place directly in this area, what occurred nearby would undoubtedly have disturbed or destroyed ephemeral prehistoric sites). Exhibit 2 illustrates the location of proposed test trenches.

At this writing, no soil borings are planned; therefore, the location of proposed test trenches is based solely on the findings of documentary research presented in Geismar 1990. It should be noted that these trench locations and any test units will of necessity be governed by field conditions and it is conceivable, and indeed probable, that modifications to proposed trenches and their locations will be necessary. Spoil from the trenches will be used to backfill those parts of them that are deemed archaeologically sterile. All exposed features will be tested and sampled; soil will be screened through 1/4-in. mesh, a process that may require using water. Any features or deposits that will warrant additional excavation will remain open; these will undoubtedly be located in shallow excavations since the tops of backyard features should be relatively close to the surface.

Safety and security measures include raising a relatively low chain link fence that now encloses the site to 8 ft.; all gates should be capable of being secured; a 24-hour security guard now on the site will be maintained throughout the testing period.

Based on the findings of the documentary research, it seems likely that testing will be a prelude to further field investigations, but it is conceivable that the proposed testing may be an end in itself. If so, a field report will be prepared documenting the findings of testing. Any artifacts recovered will be processed (washed, numbered, and conserved if necessary) and will become the property of the Catholic Medical Center of Brooklyn and Queens, Inc. Artifact processing and conservation will be done on site at a location to be determined by the Principal Investigator and Joseph Marino representing the Catholic Medical Center of Brooklyn and Queens, Inc. If warranted, it is anticipated that any such artifacts will be donated to a proper repository, or will be used as part of a public exhibit prepared by the Catholic Medical Center of Brooklyn and Queens, Inc.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission's urban archaeologist will be apprised of all findings and is encouraged to make site visits. Moreover, he will be consulted regarding any further field investigations deemed necessary. Should additional excavation be warranted, the field investigations will be designed and implemented to take into account planned demolition and building schedules.

#### TESTING FIELD SCHEDULE AND PERSONNEL

It is anticipated that the proposed field testing program will begin either the third or fourth week in April and that it will en-

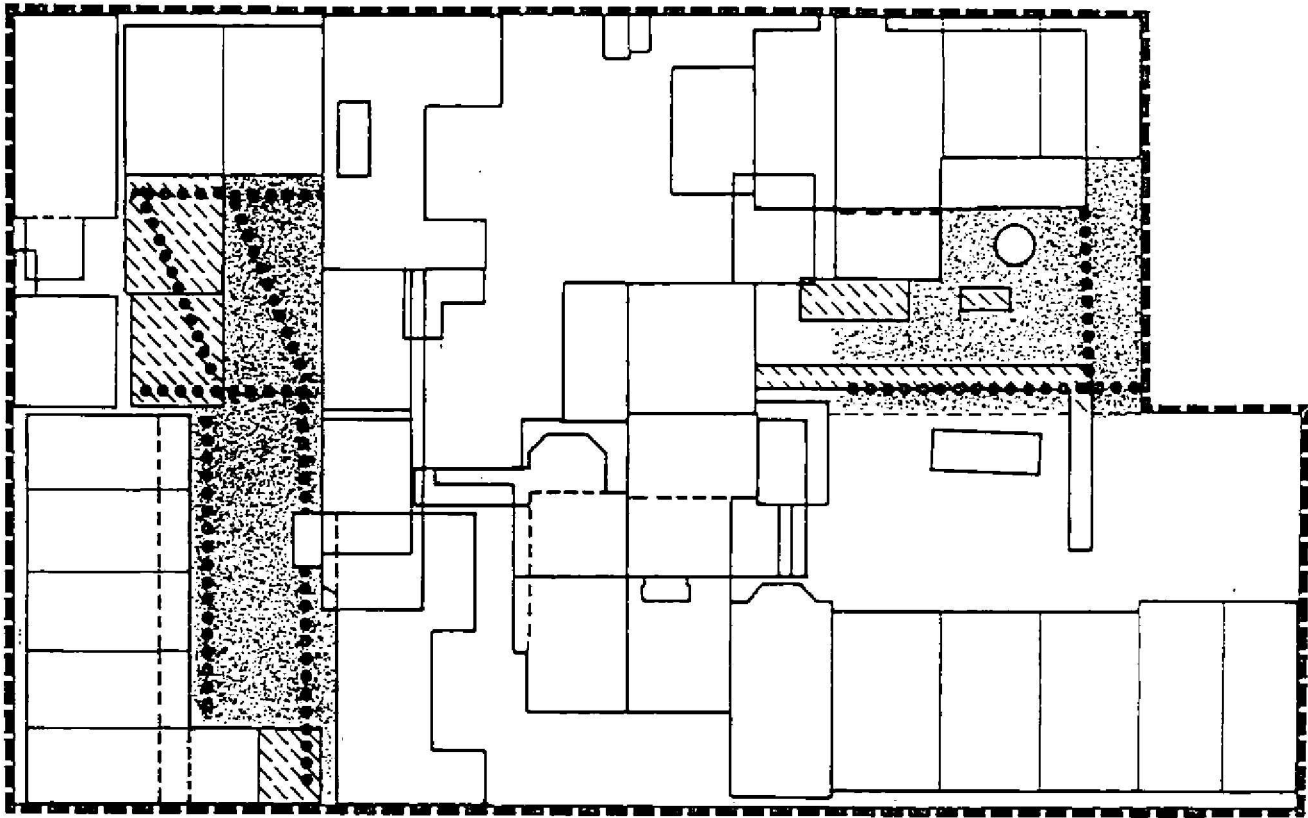
P A C I F I C S T.

338 340

352 354 356

H O Y T S T.

127 125 123 121 119



D E A N S T.



project site

undeveloped yard areas

development, but disturbance appears minimal

proposed test trenches (may be modified)

0 50  
ft.





tail no more than ten field days. In addition to the principal investigator and the backhoe operator, a field crew of six will undertake the testing. Should additional fieldwork be necessary, its methods and scheduling will be outlined in a separate scope of work or by agreement with the Principal Investigator, the developer (the Catholic Medical Center of Brooklyn and Queens, Inc.), and the Landmarks archaeologist.

#### REFERENCES CITED

Geismar, Joan H.

1990 Archaeological Assessment of the Proposed Bishop Mugavero Geriatric Center Site, Block 189, Brooklyn. CEQR No. 90-223K. Prepared for the Catholic Medical Center of Brooklyn and Queens, Inc. Prepared by Joan H. Geismar, Ph.D. December, 1990.

1989 History and Archaeology of the Greenwich Mews Site, Greenwich Village, New York. CEQR No. 86-144M. Prepared for Greenwich Mews Associates. Prepared by Joan H. Geismar, Ph.D. May, 1989.

Marino, Joseph V.

1991 Personal communication. Director of Development Planning, Catholic Medical Center of Brooklyn and Queens, Inc., Jamaica, New York.

Roberts, Will

1991 Personal communication. Greenhouse Associates, New York.