

**Joan H. Geismar, Ph.D.  
Archaeologist**

**40 East 83rd Street  
New York, NY 10028  
(212) 734-6512  
(212) 650-1521 fax  
jhg@joanhgeismar.com**

To: Zachary Edinger, Sexton/Ritual Director, Shearith Israel  
From: Joan H. Geismar, Ph.D.  
Re: 11<sup>th</sup> Street Cemetery, Test Pit 1 (TP1) End-of-Field Memo  
Date: October 20, 2014

On Friday, September 19, 2014, a test pit was hand excavated adjacent and parallel to the north (street) side of the 11<sup>th</sup> Street Cemetery's north wall located on the south side of West 11<sup>th</sup> Street between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenues (74 West 11<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY 10011 [Block 754 Lot 8]; Figure 1). The protocol for this work was outlined in the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission's (LPC) permit (Docket No. 160773, PMW No. 16-2452; see attached) and I provided archaeological oversight with the understanding that work would halt for consultation with the LPC if human remains were encountered. In addition to you and Hardeep Shatia, P.E., from Jashar Engineering and his workers who excavated the pit, in attendance were Nathaniel Wice, an 11<sup>th</sup> Street resident who represents the 11<sup>th</sup> Street Block Association on Shearith Israel's committee for the rehabilitation of the cemetery, and, intermittently, several interested neighbors and passers by.

The goal of testing was to determine the depth and condition of the foundation of what is now a mortar-faced, painted brick wall believed originally constructed in 1829-1830 when 11<sup>th</sup> Street was run.<sup>1</sup> Running the street truncated what was the congregation's second cemetery, originally opened in 1805 and bounded by two off-grid streets, among them Milligan Street (the cemetery was often identified as the Milligan Street Cemetery). This reduced the original rectangular cemetery lot to a smaller triangle (see Figure 2). At the time, burials originally within the footprint of the new street (essentially two-thirds of the cemetery but said to contain relatively few burials) were reportedly reinterred in the truncated cemetery. Grading of 11<sup>th</sup> Street in this vicinity entailed the introduction of deep fill of an unknown depth and the remaining portion of the cemetery was graded up to the new street level behind a new brick wall.<sup>2</sup>

At 9:00 A. M., the concrete from a 5.0 x 4.6 foot (1.52 x 1.40 m) sidewalk square was removed, first by cutting and then by jack hammering. This exposed approximately 0.8 feet (0.15m) of ash fill followed by a fill with stones, water-worn cobbles, pebbles, and some small slag fragments in a brown soil. The upper layer of this fill also included some brick fragments. Further down, but from an undetermined depth, a decayed oyster shell and two small aqua glass bottle fragments were noted in the backdirt of what proved to be a basically clean fill. One evidenced a small part of the base corner and part of an embossed panel ("[O?] T I O N S" at the end of the upper line / ...[H?]

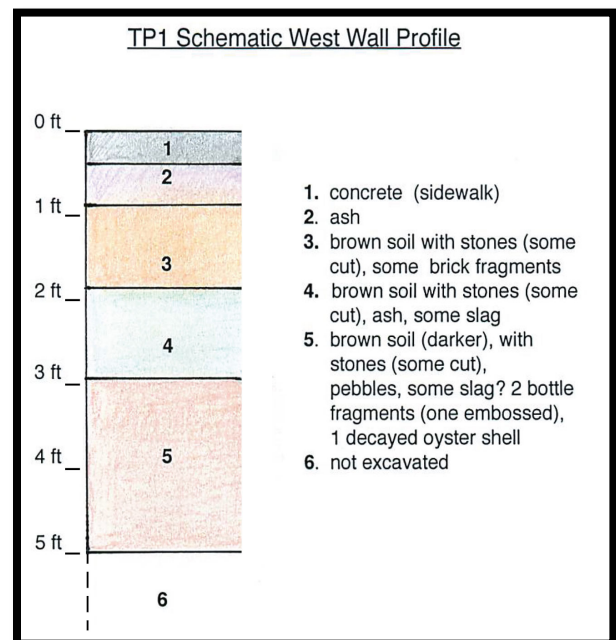
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<sup>1</sup> Apparently the wall has been repaired over time, most notably during the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but presumably not reconstructed (Z. Edinger 2014:personal communication).

<sup>2</sup> De Sola David, 1952, *Portraits Etched in Stone: Jewish Settlers 1682-1831*, New York: Columbia University Press: Chapter 10.

E ~” at the end of the lower line) on what I presume was the front of the bottle. What I presume is the side panel, the embossing appears to be “...Y O R [K?],” so what I again assume is that it says "New York." (see Photo 9 inset). While my initial assessment was that this was the fragment of a post 1850 bottle, subsequent research suggests it could be considerably earlier<sup>4</sup> and might have been a component of the fill used to grade west 11<sup>th</sup> Street. It should be noted, however, that these artifacts were from fill excavated when the pit was extended east and could conceivably have fallen in from a higher, more recent fill episode, but this is unclear.

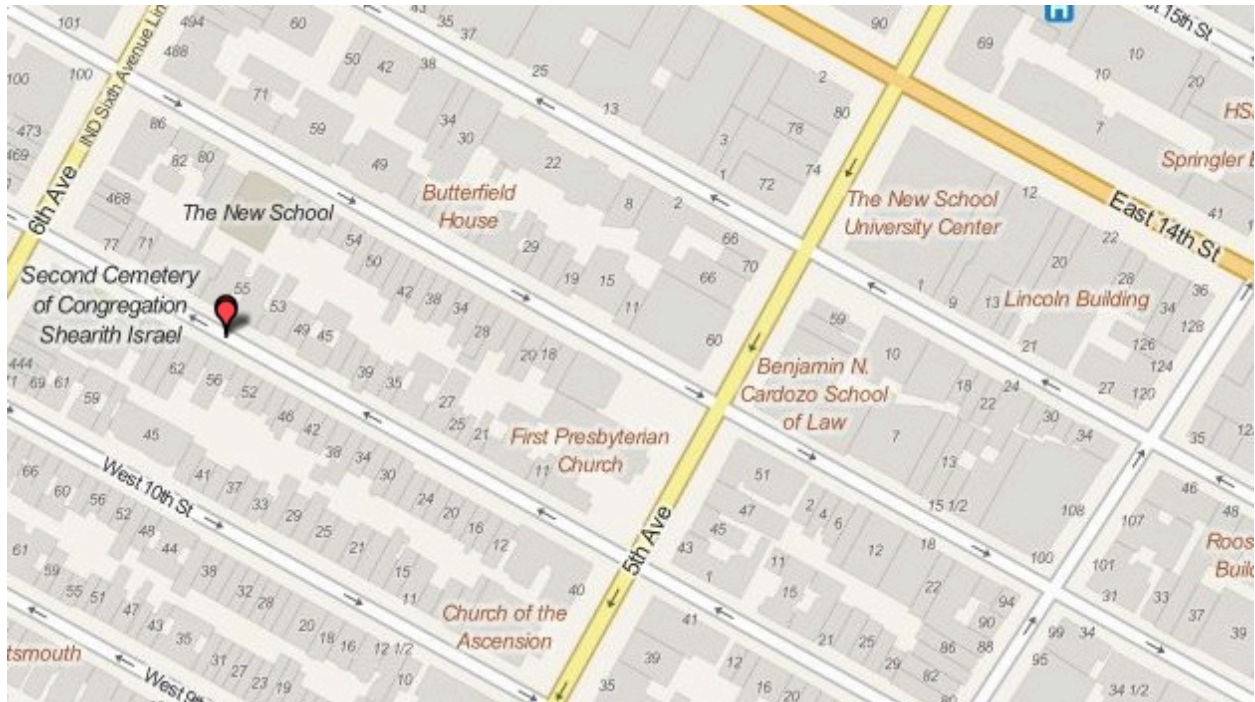
First by shovel, then with a posthole digger, the excavation was taken down 5.0 feet (1.52 m) below the current sidewalk level, the extent of the LPC permit depth, in a narrow trench or pit (approximately 3.5 feet [0.91 m] long by 1.5 feet [0.46 m] wide), its approximate dimension after the initial excavation was extended east to provide more information (see the TP1 Schematic Profile to the right for a representation of this sequence that, given its location and size, could not be precisely measured). This revealed a roughly laid foundation wall of randomly sized stones apparently in good condition, which was the sought after information. Some mortar was noted. When the bottom of the excavation was reached, the exposed stones were brushed off and then washed down with water pumped from a spring pump (see Photos 7 and 8). The wall’s founding stones, which were not encountered, are presumed to be located at an undetermined depth below the exposed portion of the foundation wall.



If the foundation dates from 1829, it is possible the founding stones were placed on the original, deeper ground surface prior to removal of the burials from what was to become the new street bed. It is also possible the test pit excavation was in a backfilled builder’s trench that extended further north to facilitate construction of a later wall of this depth, but all this is conjectural. No bone material of any kind was noted, and, other than the above-mentioned bottle fragments, the fill material was devoid of the domestic artifacts typical of 19<sup>th</sup>-century fill.

In accord with the permit, the pit was backfilled and the sidewalk restored. To document the undertaking, I photographed the excavation (for example, see Photos 1-7) as well as the restored sidewalk (Photo 8) and the bottle glass fragments. (Photo 9).

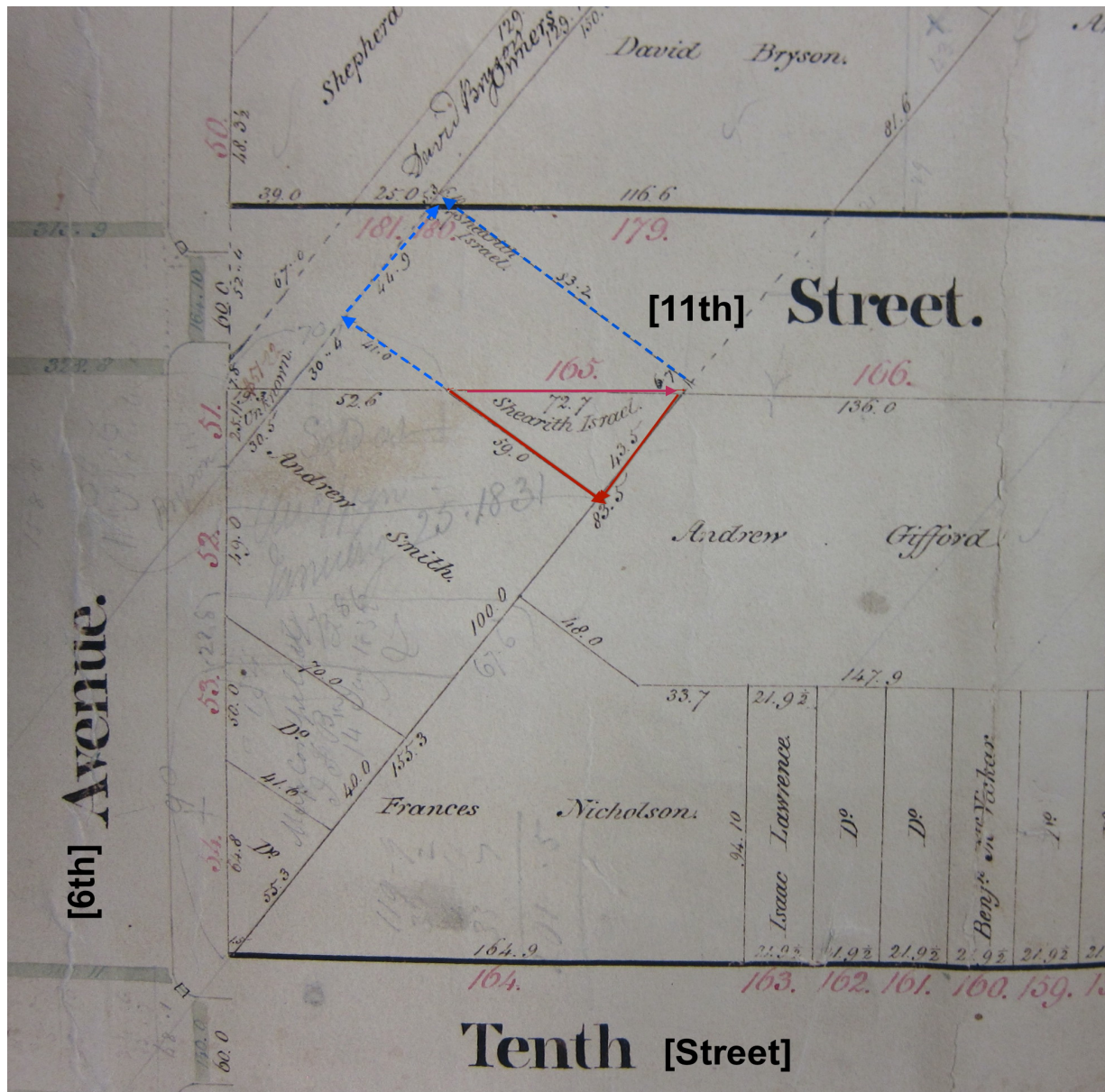
<sup>4</sup> e.g., Munsey, Cecil, 1970, *The Illustrated Guide to Collecting Bottles*, New York: Hawthorne Books: 40). Joseph Diamond, a bottle glass expert, reviewed photos of the bottle fragments but was unable to provide information beyond his assessment that serif embossments, which one fragment displays, are assigned a ca. 1840 to 1865 date lacking any additional information, such as an identifiable and researchable product or manufacturer (J. Diamond email 9-28-14).



base map Google Maps

▲  
no scale

**Figure 1.** Project Location (red marker)



measurements as indicated

**Figure 2.** Proposed truncation of the 11<sup>th</sup> Street Cemetery indicated on an 1829 map prepared for the grading of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The full extent of the original cemetery is indicated with a blue dashed line; the truncated cemetery is outlined in red. (Detail of Map Accompanying the Assessment for Pitching and Paving Sixth Avenue from Sixth to West 13<sup>th</sup> Streets. Ms. Edward Doughty, City Surveyor, 1829. File Map 343 Topographic Bureau of the Manhattan Borough President's Office)



**Photo 1.** Cutting sidewalk cement, the first step in accessing the excavation area. The view is southeast from the north side of the cemetery wall. (9-19-14)



**Photo 2.** After the cement was cut, a jackhammer was used to break up the sidewalk square. The cement debris was then removed to an awaiting truck. The view is northwest from the north side of the cemetery wall. (9-19-14)



**Photo 3.** A ca. 0.5 feet (0.31 m) ash layer was exposed under the concrete. Note soil change visible in the upper left corner of the square (arrow). This soil level, which was about 1.5 to 2.0 feet (0.45 to 0.61 m) thick, contained brick fragments as well as stones. and some ash. (9-19-14)



**Photo 4.** Test excavation along the north side of cemetery wall. Note the rough surface of the foundation stones that have been brushed clean. (9-19-14)



**Photo 5.** Looking into the test pit at the end of the excavation. Founding stones, which undoubtedly would be found below the wall, were not encountered in the 5-foot (1.5-m) deep excavation. (9-19-14)



**Photo 6.** The exposed stones were then washed with water from a spring pump. (9-19-14)



**Photo 7.** Foundation stones after washing. (9-14-14)



**Photo 8.** View of the restored sidewalk looking south toward the cemetery wall. (9-19-14)



**Photo 9.** Bottle glass fragments, possibly from the same bottle but no mend. The one on the right reads "...[O?]TIONS," "... [I?] E ~" on the line below (see inset). An embossed side panel suggests a New York City origin. The iridescence is the hallmark of "sick" glass.





THE NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
1 CENTRE STREET 9TH FLOOR NORTH NEW YORK NY 10007  
TEL: 212 669-7700 FAX: 212 669-7780



## PERMIT FOR MINOR WORK

<b>ISSUE DATE:</b> 09/11/14	<b>EXPIRATION DATE:</b> 9/11/2018	<b>DOCKET #:</b> 160773	<b>PMW #:</b> PMW 16-2452
<b>ADDRESS:</b> 74 WEST 11TH STREET <b>HISTORIC DISTRICT</b> GREENWICH VILLAGE		<b>BOROUGH:</b> MANHATTAN	<b>BLOCK/LOT:</b> 574 / 8

Display This Permit While Work Is In Progress

**ISSUED TO:**

**Zachary Edinger, Sexton**  
**Congregation Shearith Israel**  
**2 West 70th Street**  
**New York, NY 10023**

Pursuant to Section 25-310 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission hereby approves certain alterations to the subject premises as proposed in your application completed on August 29, 2014.

The approved work consists of removing a 4'-0" x 4'-0" portion of the existing concrete sidewalk, and excavating a test pit adjacent to the cemetery wall on West 11th Street; as shown in drawing entitled "Test Pit Plan" dated 10/08/2009 prepared by Anastos Engineering Associates, and submitted as components of the application.

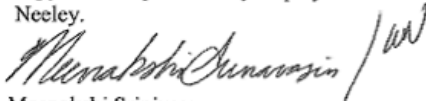
In reviewing this proposal, the Commission notes that the Greenwich Village Historic District Designation Report describes 72 West 11th street as a cemetery on a triangular lot, with a low masonry wall surmounted by a light iron fence enclosing the cemetery; and that cemetery contributes to the special historic character of the Greenwich Village Historic District.

With regard to this proposal, the Commission finds that the work will allow investigation and evaluation of conditions, facilitating restoration work; that the concrete sidewalk to be removed is not a significant feature of the building or district; and that the replacement concrete flag[s] will match the existing. Based on these findings, the Commission determined the proposed work to be appropriate to the cemetery and the Greenwich Village Historic District. The work, therefore, is approved.

The LPC notes that the excavation has the potential to impact potentially sensitive archaeological resources including graves and that this work will be archaeologically monitored by a professional archaeologist. If anything significant is discovered, the LPC should be consulted about how to proceed. In addition, an archaeological report detailing the work should be submitted to the LPC for review and approval. For all archaeological matters, please contact Amanda Sutphin at (212) 669-7823.

This permit is issued on the basis of the building and site conditions described in the application and disclosed during the review process. By accepting this permit, the applicant agrees to notify the Commission if the actual building or site conditions vary or if original or historic building fabric is discovered. The Commission reserves the right to amend or revoke this permit, upon written notice to the applicant, in the event that the actual building or site conditions are materially different from those described in the application or disclosed during the review process.

All approved drawings are marked approved by the Commission with a perforated seal indicating the date of approval. The work is limited to what is contained in the perforated documents. Other work or amendments to this filing must be reviewed and approved separately. The applicant is hereby put on notice that performing or maintaining any work not explicitly authorized by this permit may make the applicant liable for criminal and/or civil penalties, including imprisonment and fines. This letter constitutes the permit; a copy must be prominently displayed at the site while work is in progress. Please direct inquiries to William Neeley.

  
Meenakshi Srinivasan  
Chair

**PLEASE NOTE: A COPY OF THIS PERMIT HAVE BEEN SENT TO:**

Chris Anastos, PE, Anastos Engineering Associates

cc: Sarah Carroll, Director of Preservation/LPC; Amanda Sutphin, Director of Archeology/LPC