

HISTORICAL
PERSPECTIVES INC.



ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD INVESTIGATION

186 ST. GEORGES CRESCENT

BLOCK 3313: LOT 12
BRONX, NEW YORK

**Archaeological Field Investigation
186 St. Georges Crescent
Block 3313: Lot 12
Bronx, New York**

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Executive Summary

Stagg Group, Inc. proposes to construct a ten-story and cellar multi-family residential building at 186 St. George's Crescent in the Bronx. The project site is on Block 3313, Lot 12 (Figures 1 and 2). Block 3313 is bounded by Grand Concourse on the west, Mosholu Parkway South on the east, Van Cortlandt Avenue East on the north, and East 206th Street on the south. Block 3313 is bisected by St. George's Crescent, and Lot 12, an irregularly-shaped parcel, is located on the east side of St. George's Crescent.

Historical Perspectives, Inc. (HPI) completed an Archaeological Documentary Study on this parcel in 2009 and recommended a limited program of archaeological testing to ascertain presence/absence of Revolutionary War features and/or artifacts. LPC's review of the Documentary Study concurred with HPI's recommendations and, subsequently, approved HPI's testing protocol (5/8/14).

HPI's shovel testing of the 186 St. George's Crescent project site in June of 2014 was unable to determine the presence/absence of intact soils from the Revolutionary War-era fort site due to the depth of fill. HPI recommended one final field effort: the archaeological monitoring of the mechanical removal of site soils in the site sensitivity areas that were delineated for testing in the initial protocol. LPC reviewed and approved HPI's monitoring protocol on 10/28/14.

HPI completed the monitoring of the soil and rock removal on Block 3133, as per the approved protocol, the week of January 1, 2018. A combination of mechanical trench excavations and shovel testing was undertaken. Four trenches and eight test units were excavated during the current field study. As in the 2014 testing, extensive fill and disturbance was noted throughout the areas deemed potentially sensitive. A small scatter of artifacts was collected to assist in dating the disturbed soil matrix. Only one sensitive area, located on the highest elevated landform that parallels St. George's Crescent, revealed a limited buried A-Horizon. Extensive shovel testing and screening within this buried stratum found no evidence of military-occupation artifacts and/or features. Therefore, no further archaeological testing and/or monitoring are recommended for Block 3133/Lot 12.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Stagg Group, Inc. proposes to construct a ten-story and cellar multi-family residential building at 186 St. George's Crescent in the Bronx. The project site is on Block 3313, Lot 12 (Figures 1 and 2). Block 3313 is bounded by Grand Concourse on the west, Mosholu Parkway South on the east, Van Cortlandt Avenue East on the north, and East 206th Street on the south. Block 3313 is bisected by St. George's Crescent, and Lot 12, an irregularly-shaped parcel, is located on the east side of St. George's Crescent.

As part of the 186 St. George's Crescent project the sponsors submitted project materials to the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) for an initial archaeological review in accordance with New York City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) regulations and procedures. Additionally, a letter was sent to the LPC dated June 15, 2009 by District Manager Fernando Tirado of the Borough of the Bronx Community Board 7 to the Board of Standards and Appeals, noting that

“...as per the Bronx Historical Society, the proposed site is most likely the location of a Revolutionary War fort named the “Negro Fort” and we believe that there may be items of significant cultural and historical value located underneath” (Tirado 2009).

LPC recommended “that an archaeological documentary study be completed to further assess this potential as per the CEQR Technical Manual” (Sutphin 2009). A Phase 1A report, prepared by Historical Perspectives, Inc. (HPI) was completed for Block 3313, Lot 12 in October 2009.

The research completed for the study indicated that the former “Negro Fort,” likely built in the fall of 1776 and abandoned in the fall of 1779, was located across the street from the project site. The fort was located on land that was later covered by a house belonging to John Corsa. Corsa's dwelling was constructed by at least the 1840s and was standing until just after the turn of the 20th century. The former fort and house site is currently covered almost entirely by multi-story apartment buildings with basements, suggesting that the small, earthen “Negro Fort” was obliterated by modern development.

Although it is unlikely that archaeological features associated with the fort, such as fireplaces for troop housing, would have been located on this exposed slope, it is possible that rubbish tossed down the hill by troops stationed on the summit might be present on the project site. Further, the presence of unspecified fill on the property suggests that there is an unknown degree of disturbance to the ground surface that might have preserved some older historical strata.

Subsequent to the completion of the Phase IA report, preliminary field testing was conducted on the site in 2014. HPI completed a series of Shovel Tests (STs) and two 1 x 1 m Excavation Units (EU). All fieldwork was conducted under the direction of William Sandy, RPA. The STs that were investigated ranged in depth from 53cm to 95cm and indicated that the recent fill extended to depths greater than the STs could reach. The artifacts recovered from the fill consisted of demolition and domestic debris (nails, brick, and floor tiles, bone, shell, bottle glass, and ceramics). The diagnostic artifacts date to the 20th century. The hand excavation of two trenches was completed and within each trench, an EU was investigated. EU1, within Trench 1, was located on the west side of the site and excavated to a depth of 271cm (8.94 ft) below the surface (cmbs). The EU was comprised entirely of fill and contained a few 20th century artifacts. EU2 was located on the steeply sloping north end of the property. It was manually excavated to a depth of 90cmbs. Two fill strata were identified and only a few fragments of modern bottle glass and coal were recovered.

HPI's testing of the 186 St. George's Crescent project site in June of 2014 was unable to determine the presence/absence of a buried ground surface or soils from the Revolutionary War-era fort site due to the depth of fill (up to 8.9 feet below grade). It was recommended that once geotechnical borings were completed, HPI would analyze the results and recommend additional archaeological excavations and/or monitoring if required. HPI recommended one final field effort: the archaeological monitoring of the mechanical removal of site soils in the site sensitivity areas that were delineated for testing in the initial protocol and the investigation of any potential strata buried beneath the fill. LPC reviewed and approved HPI's monitoring protocol on 10/28/14.

Archaeological monitoring was initiated for the first Stagg Group, Inc. action on the property, which was soil and rock removal. The subsurface excavation of Block 3013, Lot 12 was limited to the portions of the project area identified as sensitive in the 2009 documentary study. The results of the current field investigation are presented in this report.

II. PROJECT SITE SETTING

As noted above, the Area of Potential Effect (APE) is a steeply sloped parcel located on the northeast side of St. George's Crescent (Photograph 1). The project site is located on the northeast-facing hillside overlooking the former Boston Post Road. There are apartment buildings located immediately to the south and to the northeast. A gasoline station and a surface parking lot are also situated to the north and east.



Photograph 1. View of the project site, facing northwest toward St. George's Crescent.

III. FIELD METHODOLOGY

The Documentary Assessment identified a section of the project site as potentially sensitive for historical resources associated with the 18th century "Negro Fort" (HPI 2009). Prior to the current field project, testing was conducted in 2014 (HPI 2014). The locations of the 2014 tests are depicted on Figure 3. This initial field project was inconclusive for the identification of early resources as the fill on the site was determined to be too deep for hand excavation. The subsequent examination of soil borings determined that there might be some locations where a buried ground surface is present and a combination of archaeological monitoring and field testing was recommended.

Monitoring the excavation of four large trenches was proposed and approved for the current field project. In order to facilitate the examination of the site, a combination of machine-aided and hand excavation techniques were utilized. Soils within each of the trenches were removed by the backhoe under the direction of the archaeologists. Once the machine-aided excavation reached the bottom of the fill in each trench, a series of Test Units were investigated. This combination of testing methods was initiated in order to identify, recover, protect and/or document potential archaeological information or materials from the deeper strata at the project site. Any artifacts collected were packaged for removal to the laboratory for cleaning, cataloging, and analysis. Appropriate notes and photographs of each trench were completed during the field investigation.

IV. RESULTS OF INVESTIGATIONS

HPI completed the monitoring of the soil and rock removal on Block 3133, as per the approved protocol, the week of January 1, 2018. The HPI team on site was Cece Saunders, Jonathan Bream, Rosita Tirado, and Jonathan Weiner.

A combination of trench excavations by a 36-inch bucket backhoe and shovel testing was undertaken in the areas designated as sensitive. As in the 2014 testing, extensive disturbance was noted throughout the areas deemed potentially sensitive. A small scatter of artifacts was collected to assist in dating the disturbed soil matrix. Only one sensitive area, located on the highest elevated landform that parallels St. George's Crescent, revealed a limited buried A-horizon (Figure 3). Hand excavation and screening above and within this buried stratum found no evidence of military-occupation artifacts and/or features.

Below is a review of the results of the field investigation within the project APE. See Figure 3 for exact locations.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was located in the northeast corner of the property and is parallel to the northern boundary of the property (Figure 3). A large bedrock outcrop and the rockiness throughout the fill (10YR 3/1 sandy loam) in the trench precluded any shovel testing (Photograph 2). Excavation was halted at depths between ca. 150 and 180 centimeters below the surface (cmbs). No buried A-horizon was observed.



Photograph 2. View of Trench 1 during excavation at the east end of the trench. Note the extremely rocky soil.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was perpendicular to Trench 1 and located roughly parallel to the eastern property boundary (Figure 3). The presence of extremely rocky fill made excavation on the east side of the project site difficult as the trench walls slumped during testing (Photograph 3).



Photograph 3. View of a section of the west wall of Trench 2 during excavation. Note the distinct fill soil stratigraphy.

The three distinct fill layers encountered in Trench 2 are described below in Table 1.

Table 1. Stratigraphy of Fill Strata in Trench 2

Level	Depths	Description
1	0-30 cm	Surface cover mixed with dark brown (10YR 3/3) loamy sand fill
2	30-150 cm	Dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/6) mixed silty sand fill
3	150-250 cm	Dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/4) gravelly sandy loam fill

At depths between 240 to 250 cmbs two shovel tests (Test Unit 1 and Test Unit 2) were investigated in the possible buried A-horizon (Figure 3). Test Unit 1 was located in the northern half of the trench and was hand excavated an additional 30 cm to a depth of ca. 280 cmbs (Table 2). The soil stratum was found to be the same soil type as that excavated by the backhoe - dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/4) gravelly sandy loam fill. No artifacts were recovered from the shovel test and excavation halted when bedrock was encountered.

Table 2. Stratigraphy of Test Units 1 and 2 in Trench 2

Level	Depths	Description
Test Units 1 and 2	240- 285 cm	Dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/4) mixed silty sandy fill with artifacts (modern fragments of whiteware, bottle glass, window glass - discarded)

Test Unit 2 was hand excavated in the southern half of the trench for an additional 35 cm to a depth of ca. 285cmbs (Figure 3; Table 2). The soil from the shovel test was also the dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/4) gravelly sandy loam fill. Three artifacts were noted during testing: modern window glass, modern green bottle glass, and a fragment of undecorated whiteware. Similar to Test Unit 1, Test Unit 2 also encountered bedrock.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was excavated parallel to the St. George's Crescent street and sidewalk. The west half of the trench was machine-excavated to approximately 180 cm below surface (Table 3). Machine-excavation stopped at almost the

same depth on the southeast half of the trench when a possible buried A-horizon was encountered. Four Test Units (Test Unit 3 - Test Unit 6) were investigated in the trench (Figure 3).

Table 3. Stratigraphy of Machine-Excavated Fill Strata – West Side of Trench 3

Level	Depths	Description
1	0-35 cm	Surface cover mixed with dark brown (10YR 3/3) loamy sand fill
2	35-180 cm	Dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/4) mixed silty sandy fill with a few modern artifacts noted

Test Unit 3 was located in the western half of the trench and was hand excavated an additional 45 cm to a depth of ca. 225cmbs (Figure 3; Table 4). The soil stratum was found to be the same soil type as the final stratum excavated by the backhoe - dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/4) gravelly sandy loam fill. No artifacts were recovered from the test unit and excavation halted when subsoil/bedrock was encountered. Test Unit 4 was excavated near the center of the trench and was also hand excavated an additional 45 cm to a depth of ca. 225cmbs (Figure 3; Table 4). The soil from the shovel test was also the dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/4) gravelly sandy loam fill. A handful of artifacts were noted during testing; modern window glass, a ceramic jug fragment, and a fragment of undecorated whiteware.

Table 4. Stratigraphy of Test Units 3 and 4 from East and Center of Trench 3

Level	Depths	Description
Test Units 3 and 4	180-225 cm	Dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/4) mixed silty sandy fill with artifacts (modern porcelain and window glass - discarded)

As mentioned above, what appeared to be a buried A-horizon was encountered at a depth of approximately 160 cm in the eastern half of the trench but was not evident in the western half of the trench (Photograph 4). Machine aided excavation also identified a shallow ash lens in the southeastern section of the trench. Several artifacts were noted in both the ash lens and the fill above the potential buried A-horizon.



Photograph 4. View of a section of the South wall of Trench 3 during excavation. Note the arrow is pointing to the shallow buried A-horizon below the distinct fill layer and above subsoil.

Test Units 5 and 6 were located in the eastern half of the trench where the potential buried A-horizon was located. Following the investigation of the Test Units, the eastern section of the trench was machine excavated to a depth of 260 cmbs (Table 5).

Table 5. Stratigraphy of Fill Strata – East Side of Trench 3

Level	Depths	Description
1	0-30 cm	Surface cover mixed with dark brown (10YR 3/3) loamy sand fill
2	30- 160 cm	Dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/4) mixed silty sand fill with mixed artifacts
Lens	160-170	Ash fill lens noted in the southern section of the East Side only
3	160-175 cm	Brown (10YR4/3) silty sand with artifacts – possible Buried A-horizon
4	175-260 cm	Dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/6) silty sand

Test Unit 5 was excavated on the east side of Trench 3 (Figure 3, Table 6). The top of the unit was at 170 cmbs and the unit was excavated to a depth of 206 cmbs. The soil stratum was found to be a mottled fill level that contained a few artifacts (window glass and nails) and excavation halted when bedrock was encountered.

Table 6. Stratigraphy of Test Unit 5 from East Side of Trench 3

Level	Depths	Description
Test Unit 5	170-206 cm	Brown (10YR 4/3) mottled with Dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/4) silty sand fill with two artifacts (iron bolt, window glass fragment)

Test Unit 6 was excavated near the east end of the trench and was hand excavated to the base of the A-horizon, which was 175 cmbs (Figure 3; Table 7). This shallow, potential A-horizon soil was a brown (10YR 4/3) silty sand. No artifacts were observed and/or recovered from this stratum.

Table 7. Stratigraphy of Test Unit 6 from East Side of Trench 3

Level	Depths	Description
Test Unit 6	160-175	Brown (10YR 4/3) silty sand, Buried A – no cultural material recovered

Near the location of this test unit, however, a small section of a metal utility pipe was observed in the A-horizon (Photograph 5). Mechanical and hand excavation commenced around the utility pipe and several artifacts were collected from the buried A-horizon (Photograph 6).



Photograph 5. View of a section of the east wall of Trench 3 and the section of utility pipe after exposure.



Photograph 6. View of a section of the east wall of Trench 3 following excavation and collection of the artifacts in the buried A-horizon beneath the utility pipe.

As described above, once the excavation of the test units was completed, the trench was excavated to a depth of 260 cmbs when subsoil and bedrock was encountered.

Trench 4

Trench 4 was excavated in the northwest corner of the project area to a depth of approximately 200 cm below surface (Figure 3; Table 8; Photograph 7). A very large stone or bedrock outcrop was encountered in the southwest corner of the trench and excavation was halted in the trench. No evidence of a buried A-horizon was observed throughout the trench. Two test units (Test Units 7 and 8) were explored to the north and east of the exposed bedrock/stone in order to confirm that no buried A-horizon was present.

Table 8. Stratigraphy of Fill Strata in Trench 4

Level	Depths	Description
1	0-65 cm	Surface cover mixed with dark brown (10YR 3/1) sandy loam fill
2	65-200 cm	Dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/4) mixed sandy loam fill



Photograph 7. Profile of the fill strata in Trench 4.

Test Unit 7 was placed to the north of the stone/bedrock outcrop (Figure 3). The top of the test unit was located at 200 cmbs and the unit was excavated to a depth of 223 cmbs (Table 9). No cultural material was noted in the test unit.

Table 9. Stratigraphy of Test Unit 7 from North Side of Trench 4

Level	Depths	Description
Test Unit 7	200-223	Dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/4) mixed gravelly sand fill, NCM

Test Unit 8 was placed to the east of the stone/bedrock outcrop (Figure 3). The top of this test unit was located at approximately 200 cmbs and the unit was excavated to a depth of 245 cmbs (Table 10). Only a couple of artifacts were observed in the fill.

Table 10. Stratigraphy of Test Unit 8 from North Side of Trench 4

Level	Depths	Description
Test Unit 7	200-223	Dark yellowish brown (10YR 4/4) mixed gravelly sand fill (window glass, screw top bottle rim - discarded)

V. LABORATORY ANALYSIS

Artifacts that were observed and recovered from the fill and ash levels in Trench 3 were brought back to the lab for processing. The assemblage recovered appears to be a mix of 19th and 20th century domestic refuse artifacts. None of the artifacts recovered appear to date any earlier than the last three decades of the 19th century. Below is a brief catalog of the artifacts recovered.

Trench 3, Ash fill, above buried A-horizon at southern end of trench

1 clear glass condiment bottle, seams on sides, flat rim, 7 ¾ inches high

1 base of a buff body stoneware container

1 whiteware coffee cup fragment with handle, no decoration

1 whiteware square bowl base, partial makers mark "PORCEL...GEORGE JONES & ..."

Trench 3, From east wall by ST 6 immediately above buried A-horizon

- 1 top of grey body stoneware jug, clear and brown glazed exterior with “r” mark on side, brown glaze interior
- 1 plain ironstone saucer or bowl with partial mark on base “IRO...”
- 1 rim of large white-banded yellowware bowl
- 1 rim of molded yellowware bowl
- 1 plain whiteware saucer,
- 1 black-glazed redware vessel base with small piece of handle
- 1 square medicine bottle, clear glass, “20” molded on bottom
- 1 clam shell half
- 2 butchered long bone fragments, large mammal, sawn and cleaved

Trench 3, 15 meters from SW corner and 60 cm below surface

- 1 plain whiteware plate base “IRON STONE CHIN...E.M.G....”
- 1 gold-banded American porcelain cup with handle mold like three intersecting sticks or logs
- 1 green soda bottle base, “TRADE MARK BOTTLE...EASTON, MD” molded on bottom

The collection appears to be fairly modern domestic refuse that was recovered from fill strata. The few diagnostic artifacts recovered included two fragments of whiteware with partial makers marks. The first was the square bowl base that was recovered from the ash fill lens with a partial mark “PORCEL...GEORGE JONES & ...” This company started operation in ca.1864 as George Jones and in 1873 it became George Jones & Sons Ltd (<http://www.thepotteries.org/allpotters/611.htm>). The company operated the Trent Potteries in Stoke-upon-Trent. It was renamed "Crescent Potteries" in ca.1907 and continued operation until 1951. The mark appears to be one that was used by the company from the last decades of the 19th century until sometime prior to 1907. Although the second visible mark that reads “IRON STONE CHIN...E.M.G....” could not be definitively associated with a specific company, the fragment also appears to date to the same time period. Although there are no other makers marks on the remaining ceramic fragments, the recovered assemblage appears to have been manufactured from the late-19th through early 20th century. The final artifact identified above was a green “Coca Cola” soda bottle base that was manufactured in Easton, MD post-1925.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The original documentary assessment of the project site determined that portions were potentially sensitive for historical resources dating from the 18th century and the nearby Revolutionary War site. The archaeological field investigation found only a diffuse artifact deposition in the fill strata dating from the late 19th through the early 20th century. Further, the assemblage collected could not be associated with a specific site occupant or residential building and as the site was covered with a significant amount of fill it is possible that the artifacts and the ash lens were deposited on the site from elsewhere when the block was filled and leveled during the 20th century. No historical features were recovered during the trench excavations. Therefore, based on the results of the initial 2014 excavation combined with those of the current field investigation, no further archaeological consideration is recommended for Block 3313, Lot 12.

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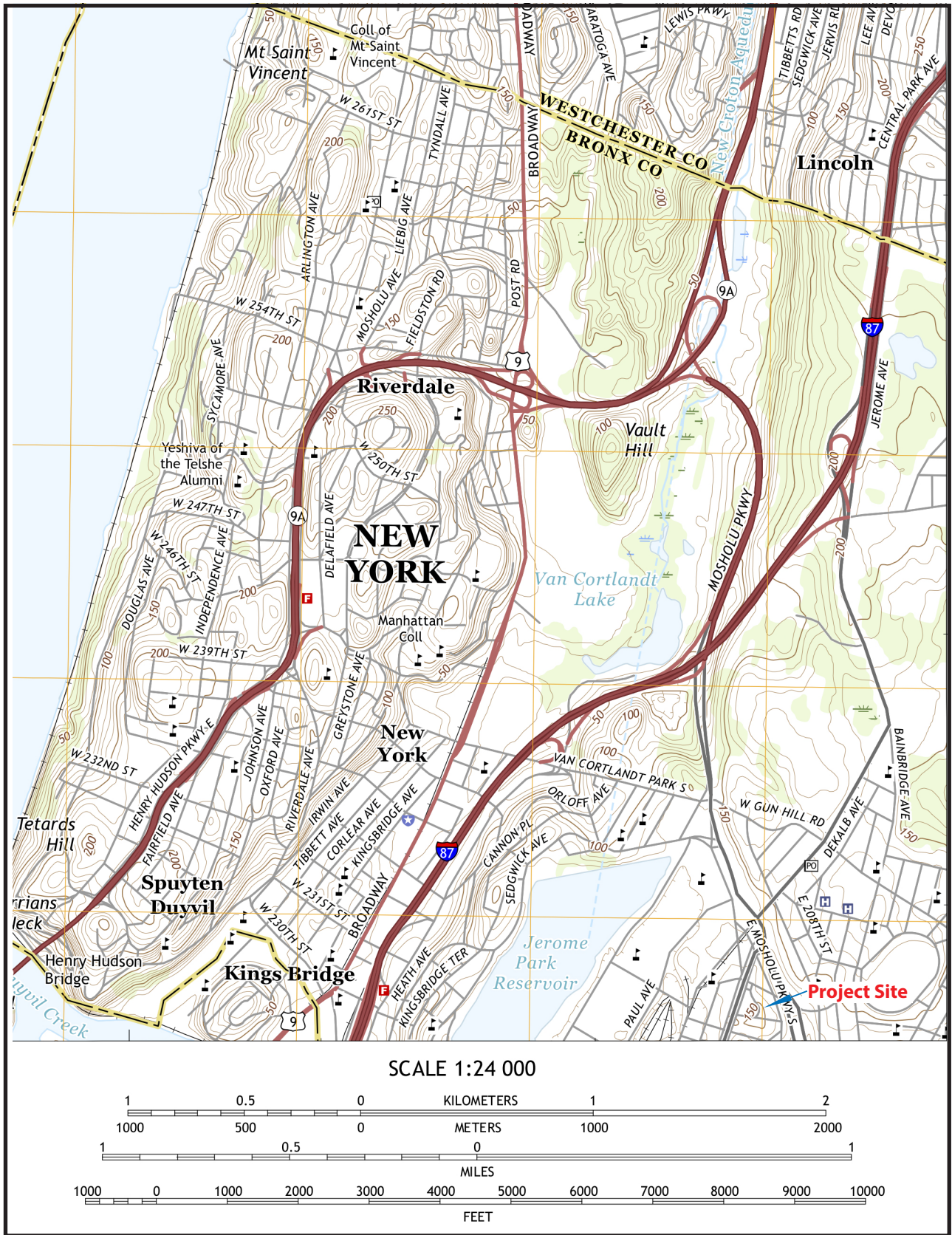
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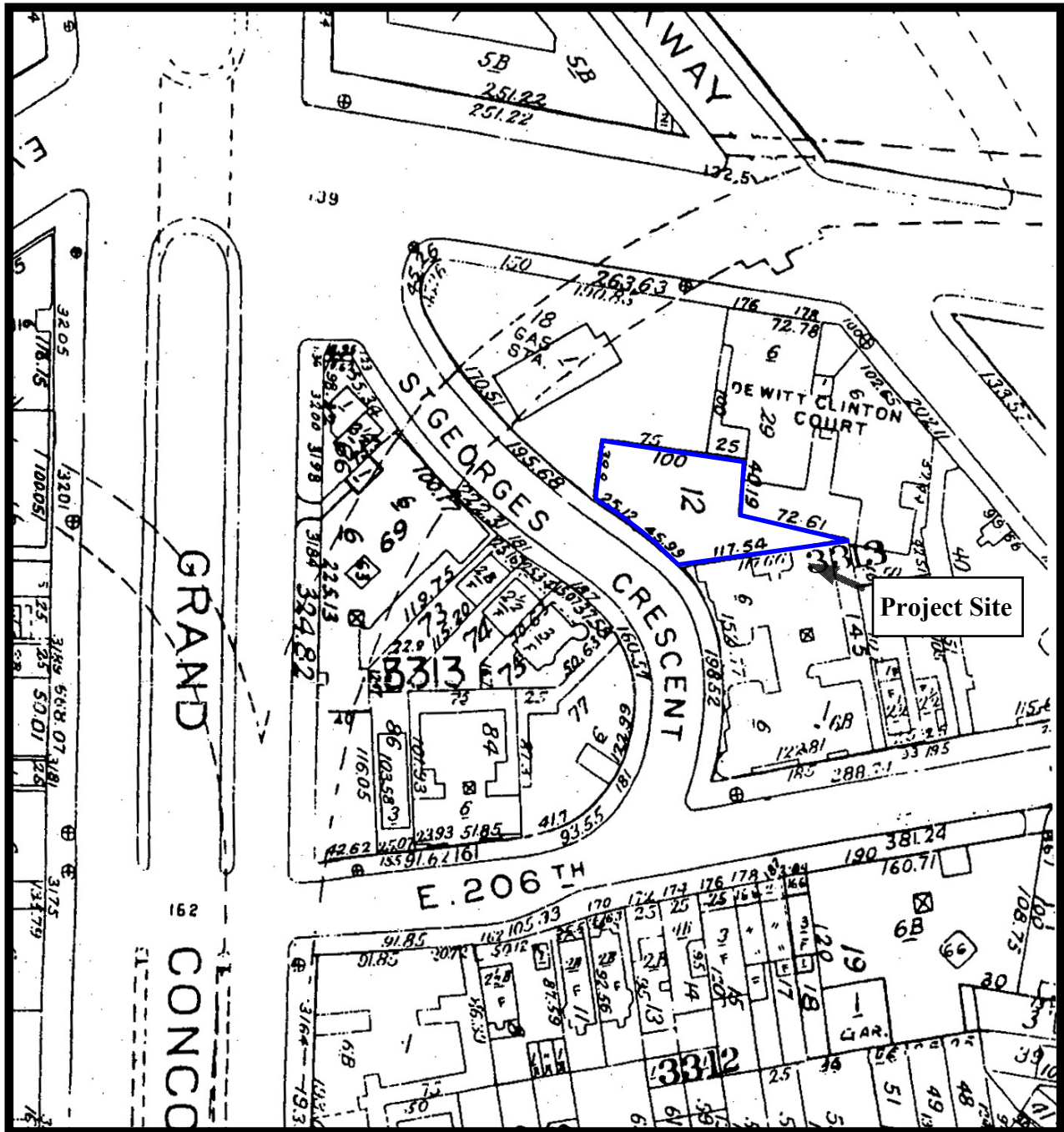
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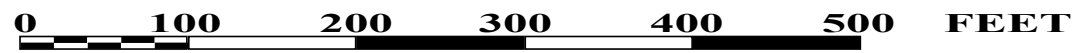
Figure 1. Project Site on Yonkers, NY 7.5-Minute Quadrangle (USGS 2016).

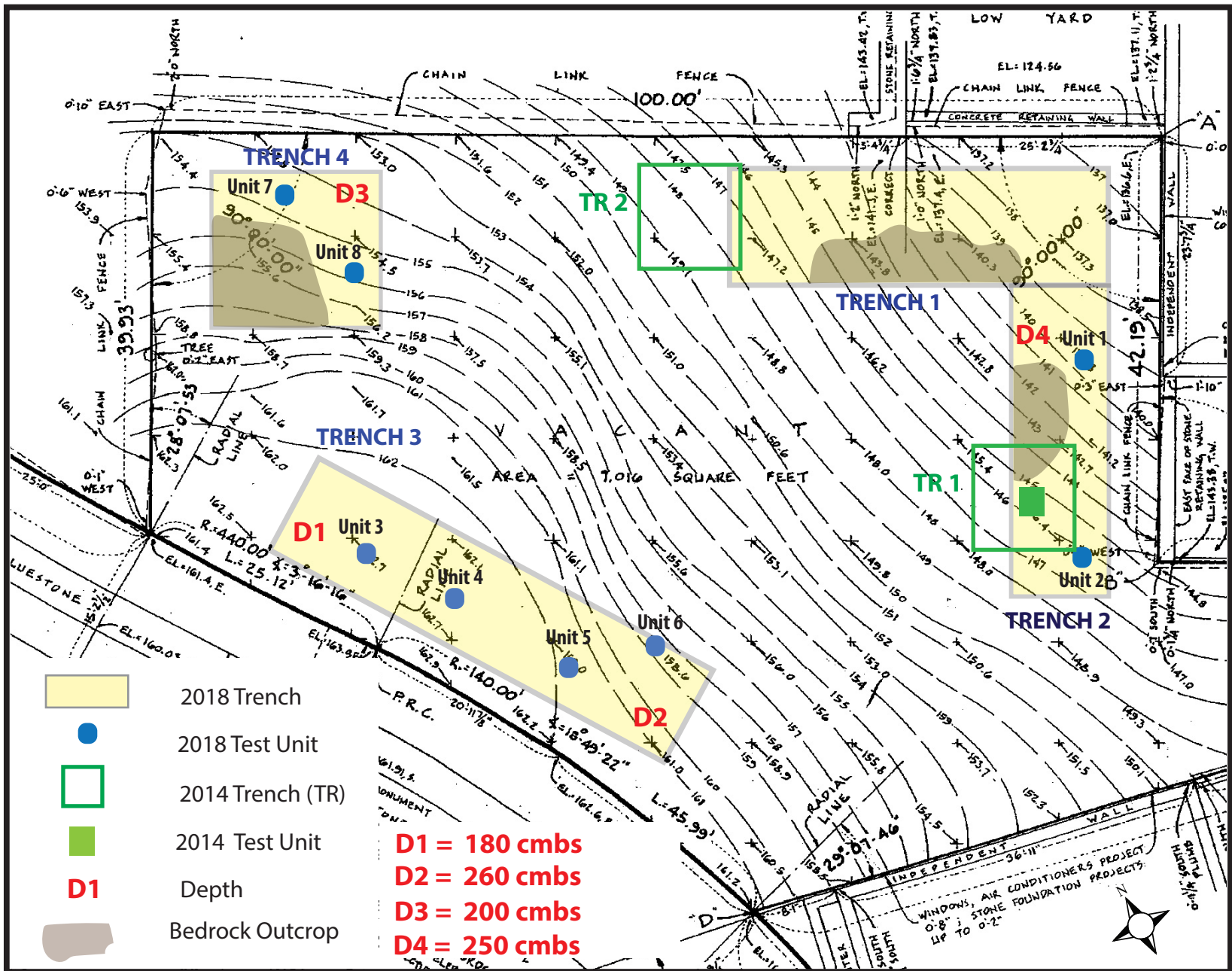


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Figure 2: Project Site on G. W. Bromley Atlas, Part of Section 12, Borough of Bronx (provided by client, 2014).





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Figure 3. Location of Archaeological Test Trenches and Tests Units. (Base Map 2016).