

DN 1/21/92 G

ARCHAEOLOGICAL TESTING REPORT
THE DUPONT STREET SENIOR HOUSING PROJECT
GREENPOINT, BROOKLYN
KINGS COUNTY, NEW YORK
68-78 Dupont Street
CEQR# 91-149K

Prepared for:
North Brooklyn Development
Corporation
894 Manhattan Avenue
Brooklyn, New York 11222

Prepared by:
William I. Roberts IV
Greenhouse Consultants Inc.
54 Stone Street, 7th Floor
New York, New York 10004

December 1991

192

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures	iii
List of Plates	iii
List of Personnel	iv
Introduction	1
Methodology	1
Stratigraphic Summary	2
Results	3
Conclusions and Recommendations	4
Bibliography	5
Appendix I: Field Record Sheets	

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1 Project area shown on portion of U.S.G.S. 7.5 minute
Brooklyn quadrangle (1967 photorevised 1979).
- Figure 2 Location of backhoe trenches shown on portion of the 1905
Sanborn Insurance Maps of the Borough of Brooklyn, City of
New York, Volume 4, Plate 38. Project area indicated with
shading.

LIST OF PLATES

- Plate 1 View of Backhoe Trench 1 looking east. Scale in tenths of
feet.
- Plate 2 View of Backhoe Trench 2 looking west.
- Plate 3 Detail of probable cellar entryway in Backhoe Trench 2
looking north.

G

LIST OF PERSONNEL

William I. Roberts IV	-	Principal Investigator, Author
Kenneth Richter	-	Field Technician
Angelo D'Epiro	-	Backhoe Operator
Paula Crowley	-	Word Processor



INTRODUCTION

The Dupont Street Senior Housing project area consists of a L-shaped piece of land on Block 2495 with 260 feet of frontage along Dupont Street and 110 feet of frontage on Eagle Street. This parcel is currently most of Tax Lot 17 and all of Tax Lot 23. The portion of Lot 17 within the project area is currently used as a community garden and is surrounded by a chain link fence. Lot 23 is paved with asphalt and sees occasional use as a playground. The current plans for the Dupont Street Senior Housing project call for a five story structure approximately 62 feet deep and occupying the full 260 feet of the Dupont Street frontage. The remaining 38 by 150 foot portion of Lot 17 will be landscaped with trees and grass, and the remainder of Lot 23 will be used for parking facilities and a garden approximately 50 by 85 feet in size (Hirsch/Danois Architects 1991). See Figure 1 for the location of the project area.

The general purpose of archaeological testing is to document the presence or absence of potential prehistoric and/or historic archaeological resources through the use of physical testing techniques. The specific purpose of the Dupont Street testing was to search for evidence of the presence or absence of two categories of archaeological remains. The first category consists of refuse deposits associated with a pre-1852 farmhouse which formerly occupied parts of the rear yards of 68 and 70 Dupont Street as well as adjacent lots outside the project area. The second category consists of cisterns associated with the original dwellings at 76 and 78 Dupont Street (Greenhouse Consultants 1991:18-19).

METHODOLOGY

The subsurface archaeological testing of the Dupont Street Senior Housing Project in Brooklyn, New York took place on 17 December 1991. As stated in the scope-of-work for this testing, the technique used to examine buried deposits and thereby determine the presence or absence of archaeological resources was the mechanical excavation of trenches. A total of two trenches were excavated by backhoe (see Figure 2), the results of which were closely monitored by archaeologists. This testing strategy was designed by the principal investigator and approved by the staff of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.

The use of mechanical means of excavation expedites the removal of large quantities of fill. A total of approximately 2,700 cubic feet of soil were removed from the trenches, the dimensions of which were 50 feet long, 4 feet to 5 feet wide, and 6 feet deep.

Excavation of Backhoe Trench 1 was halted at six feet below grade when a concrete basement floor was encountered. Since such floors are usually about 0.3 feet thick and have some additional disturbance beneath them up to another one foot in thickness, it was decided by the principal investigator that the



Figure 1 Project area shown on portion of the U.S.G.S. 7.5 minute Brooklyn Quadrangle (1967 photorevised 1979).

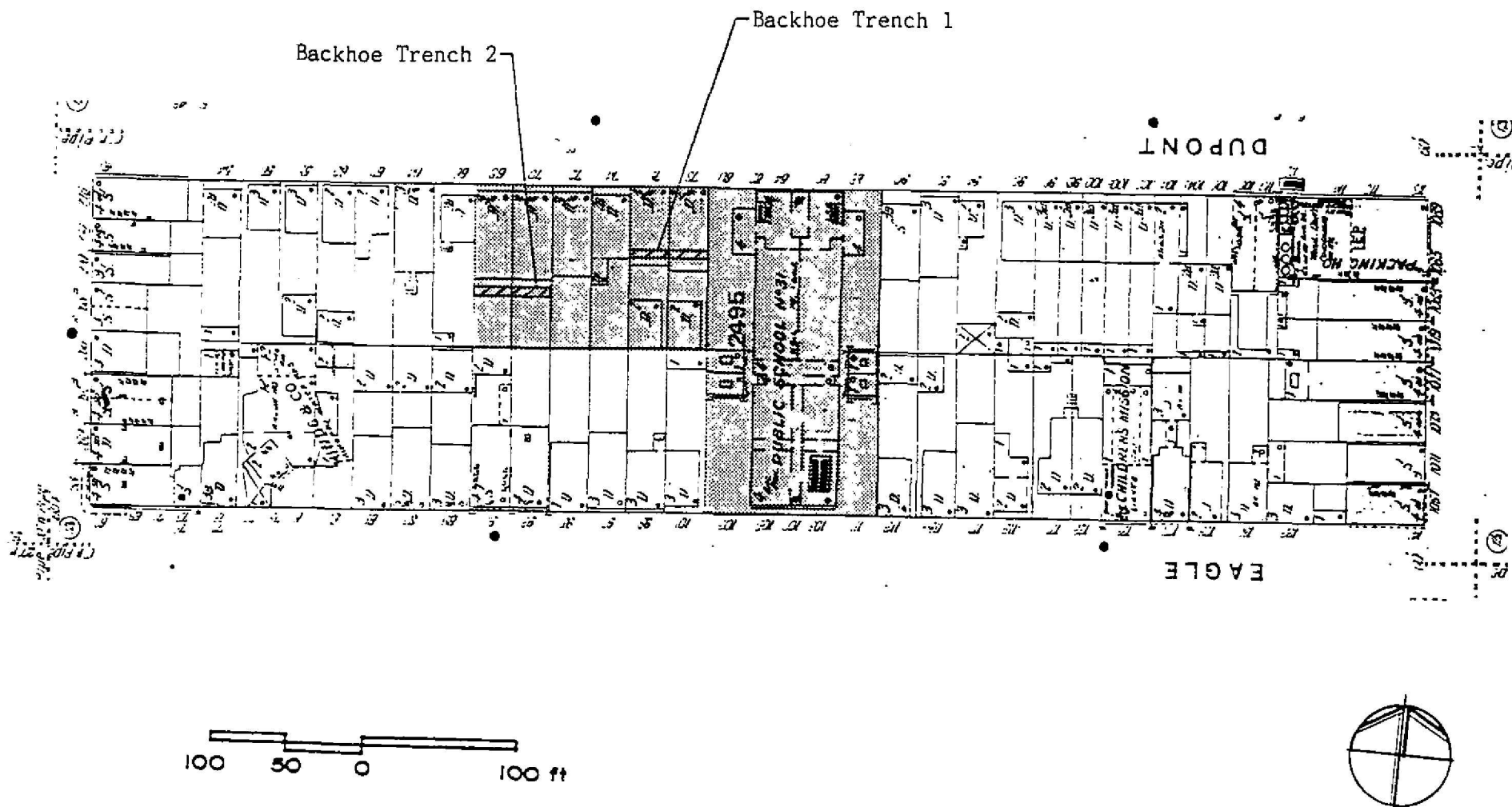


Figure 2 Locations of Backhoe Trenches shown on portion of the 1905 Sanborn Insurance Maps of the Borough of Brooklyn, City of New York, Volume 4, Plate 38. Project area indicated with shading.



chance of any undisturbed cistern fill deposits surviving beneath this floor would be very small. Although the two structures at 76 and 78 Dupont Street are shown without basements on the 1905 Sanborn Map (Greenhouse Consultants 1991:Figure 9), it is now evident that they included cellars which were at least two-thirds subterranean.

Backhoe Trench 2 was excavated to a depth of six feet below grade. This was about 0.5 feet deeper than the proposed impact. The trench was located behind the proposed footprint of the new structure in a location which will require the excavation of a 45 degree slope extending to a maximum of nine feet below grade at the rear of the new footprint.

Soil samples were selectively removed from the deepest layer encountered. This soil was then screened through 1/4 inch mesh in order to recover artifacts in the case of Trench 2. Artifacts were also recovered for examination when they were observed in the trench by directing the backhoe operator to selectively remove them with the backhoe bucket. Soil strata were measured, described, and recorded for all trenches. All trenches were backfilled immediately following excavation and the recording of data. All artifacts examined were redeposited in the trenches.

STRATIGRAPHIC SUMMARY

The stratigraphy encountered in the two trenches excavated at the Dupont Street Senior Housing project area is discussed by trench due to the differing nature of the deposits.

A total of four layers were recorded in Backhoe Trench 1. The top layer consisted of very dark grayish brown silty loam with some turf. It was 0.5 feet thick, and was interpreted as topsoil from the community garden that currently occupies this location. The second layer began at 0.5 feet below grade and extended to two feet. It consisted of yellowish brown sandy silt. This second layer was interpreted as fill deposited to level the area. The third layer was encountered from two to six feet below grade. It consisted of profuse building destruction rubble in some grayish brown silt. The rubble included brick, mortar, wood and metal pipes and conduits. Remains of a furnace were seen at the eastern end of the trench. Layer 3 overlay layer 4 which was a concrete floor. The floor, at six feet below grade, was interpreted as the cellar floors of the houses at 76 and 78 Dupont Street and layer 3 as the destruction rubble from those houses used as cellar fill. See Plate 1 for a view of Backhoe Trench 1.

Five soil deposits consisting of four layers and one feature were recorded in Backhoe Trench 2. The top layer consisted of very dark grayish brown silty loam. It was 0.9 feet thick and was interpreted as topsoil from the community garden. Below this was a layer of brown to dark brown silt with some pebbles which was 0.7 feet thick. The second layer was interpreted as a fill brought in to level the area prior to the establishment of the garden. Below layer



2 in most of Backhoe Trench 2 was layer 3. This deposit of yellowish brown sandy silt was devoid of cultural material. It was found between 1.6 and 5.5 feet below grade. Below this was layer 4, a pale brown silty sand also devoid of cultural material. Layer 4 extended from 5.5 feet below grade past the limit of the excavation which was at six feet. Layers 3 and 4 in Backhoe Trench 2 were interpreted as subsoil. Along the north side of the trench from 11 to 16 feet from the western end was the fifth deposit. This deposit was found underneath layer 2 and cut into layers 3 and 4. It had a stone and soft mortar lining or foundation. The fill of this feature contained building destruction rubble including relatively undecayed wooden planks, as well as red bricks, stone, mortar and metal pipes. It was interpreted as a probable cellar entryway for the building formerly at 68 Dupont Street. See Plate 2 for a view of Backhoe Trench 2 and Plate 3 for a detail of the cellar entryway feature.

RESULTS

Backhoe Trench 1, located within the footprints of the most recent structures at 76 and 78 Dupont Street, was designed to search for evidence of cisterns constructed to serve the occupants of the original structures in these two lots. This 50 by 5 foot trench was excavated to a depth of six feet below grade. A concrete floor was encountered at this depth in both lots. The existence of this cellar floor strongly suggested that these two lots were disturbed to a minimum of seven feet. Since cisterns are often no deeper than eight feet below grade (such as the one excavated at 104 Johnson Street in the MetroTech Project, Brooklyn), this would leave only a very small portion of such features below the cellar should they survive at all. For this reason excavation was halted at the cellar floor and it was concluded that significant amounts of undisturbed cistern fill could not survive. No artifacts were recovered since it was obvious from the field observations that the cellar fill included mid- to late twentieth century debris such as electrical wiring. Unfortunately this field investigation failed to answer the question of whether the original houses at 76 and 78 Dupont Street had cisterns. Even if the concrete floor had been removed, the evidence if negative, would not have been definitive since the later construction could have completely destroyed the cisterns if they existed here.

Backhoe Trench 2, located within the former rear yards of 68 and 70 Dupont Street, was designed to search for evidence associated with the farmhouse owned by the heirs of John Meserole. This 50 by 4 foot trench was excavated to a depth of six feet below grade. This slightly exceeded the expected impact here. No evidence of any trash deposits potentially associated with this farmhouse were found. The excavation of the trench was carefully observed and the equivalent of one backhoe bucket of soil from the bottom layer was screened through 1/4 inch mesh, but no artifacts dating to the mid-nineteenth century were seen. Artifacts were seen in the top two layers and a probable cellar entryway discovered, but these all appeared to date to the twentieth century. The third and fourth layers appeared to be sterile



subsoil. It appears likely that the surface on which the Meserole farmhouse stood was probably the same as that on which the later houses at 68 and 70 Dupont Street were constructed. No evidence was seen that would suggest that fill was deposited prior to the construction of 68 and 70 Dupont Street.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is our conclusion that no potentially significant cultural resources were found within the two mechanically excavated trenches. Based on this subsurface testing, we further conclude that it is highly unlikely that any significant archaeological resources will be impacted by the proposed construction of the Dupont Street Senior Housing project. We recommend that no additional archaeological testing or mitigation is necessary at this location within Block 2495 in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, New York.

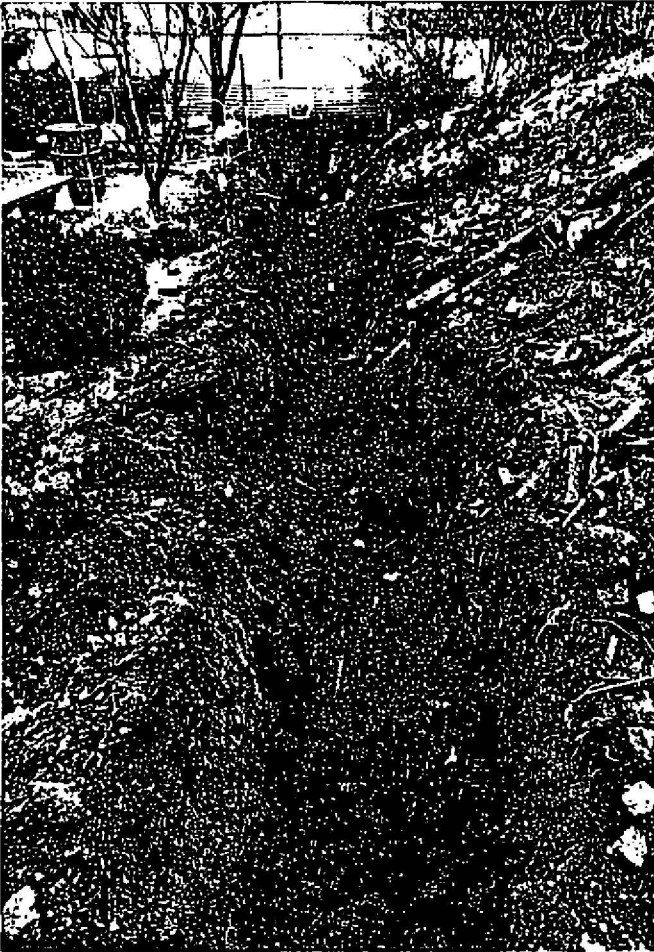


Plate 1 View of Backhoe
Trench 1 looking
east. Scale in
tenths of feet.

Plate 2 View of Backhoe Trench 2
looking west.

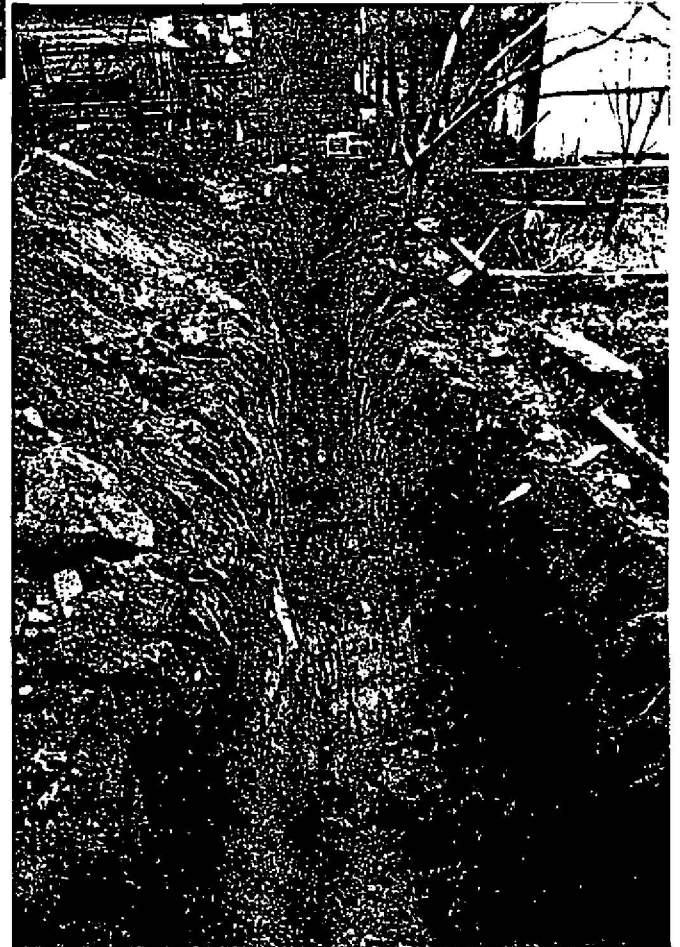




Plate 3

Detail of probable cellar entryway in Backhoe Trench 2 looking north.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Greenhouse Consultants Incorporated

- 1991 Archaeological and Historical Sensitivity Evaluation of the Dupont Street Senior Housing Project, Greenpoint, Brooklyn, New York, William I. Roberts IV, Principal Investigator. New York: Greenhouse Consultants Incorporated.

Hirsh/Danois Architects

- 1991 Drawing No. A-1, Job No. 89-18. New York: Hirsch/Danois Architects, P.C.

Sanborn Map Company

- 1905 *Insurance Maps of the Borough of Brooklyn.* Volume 4, Sheet 38.

United States Geological Survey

- 1967 *Brooklyn Quadrangle.* Topographical map, 7.5 minute series. Photorevised.

G

APPENDIX I
FIELD RECORD SHEETS

SURVEY RECORD SHEET : Postholes, Auger holes, Shovel tests

PROJECT : <i>Delmont street</i>			COORDINATES :		
SITE :	SUPERVISOR : <i>W. Roberts</i>	EXCAVATOR : <i>K. Richter</i>	SCREENED ? <i>NONE</i>	DATE : <i>12/17/91</i>	TEST TYPE AND NO. : <i>Buried TR. 1</i>

STRATIGRAPHY. :

LAYER	DEPTH •	DESCRIPTION	COLOR	CULT. MAT.	NOTES
1	0.0' - 0.5'	silty loam w/ fluff	10y R 3/2 very fine greenish brown		
2	0.5' - 2.0'	sandy silt	10y R 5/4 yellowish brown		
3	2.0' - 6.0'	Building rubble (bricks, mortar, wood, metal)	10y R 5/2 grayish brown	Metal / brick / mortar wood / ceramic / pipe (all discarded)	1. 11' of cellar
4	6.0' - ?	concrete floor	—	—	cellar floor
5					
6					
7					
8					

* Give depths relative to ground surface

General Notes : (Note if cult. material retained, and if soil samples are taken.)

Stopped @ 6.0' No cultural material retained.

Cross Refs :

Section

Photos *Photos 1-3 Roll 1*

Notebook

SURVEY RECORD SHEET : Postholes, Auger holes, Shovel tests

PROJECT : Dupont Street			COORDINATES :		
SITE :	SUPERVISOR : W. Roberts	EXCAVATOR : K. Richter	SCREENED ? 1/4 (1 bucket)	DATE : 12/17/91	TEST TYPE AND NO. : Buckshot TR 2

STRATIGRAPHY :

LAYER	DEPTH *	DESCRIPTION	COLOR	CULT. MAT.	NOTES
1	0.0' - 0.9'	Silty loam	10 yr 3/2 very dark greyish brown	None MODERN trash	discarded
2	0.9' - 1.6'	Silt w/ pebbles	10 yr 4/3 Brown D. Brown	MODERN trash	discarded
3	1.6' - 5.5'	SANDY silt	10 yr 5/4 yellowish brown	NCM	
4	5.5' - ?	Silty sand	10 yr 6/3 pale brown	NCM	
5					
6					
7					
8					

* Give depths relative to ground surface

General Notes : (Note if cult. material retained, and if soil samples are taken.) Stopped @ 6.0'.
cellar entryway in western lot begins under layer 2 and cuts into 4
Starts at 11' ~~East~~ East of fence and continues to 16'. feature contained
relatively undecayed wooden planks.

Cross Refs :

Plan

Section

Photos Photos 4-7 roll 1 West
8-9 Roll 1 North
Notebook