

Proposed Samaritan Daytop Village Development at 1387 University Avenue (Block 2533, Part of Lot 9)

HIGHBRIDGE, BRONX COUNTY, NEW YORK

Phase 1A Archaeological Documentary Study

Prepared for:

Samaritan Daytop Village
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JUNE 2021

Management Summary

SHPO Project Review Number: 21PR01690

Involved Agencies: New York State Housing Finance Agency (HFA)
New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD)

Phase of Survey: Phase 1A Documentary Study

Location Information

Location: 1387 University Avenue (Block 2533, Lot 29);
Bronx, New York

Minor Civil Division: 00501

County: Bronx County

Survey Area

Length: Approximately 448 feet

Width: Approximately 200 feet

Area: 1.66 acres (72,500 square feet)

USGS 7.5 Minute Quadrangle Map: Central Park

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Date of Report: June 2021

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A. INTRODUCTION

Samaritan Daytop Village (the “Project Sponsor”) is considering seeking construction financing from New York State and City agencies to facilitate the construction of a new development at 1387 University Avenue in the Highbridge neighborhood of the Bronx (see **Figure 1**). The Project Site is situated on Block 2533, part of Lot 9 and is currently developed with a one- to two-story (with basement and sub-basement) building that was initially constructed as a cloistered convent and is currently in use as a residential substance abuse treatment center for up to 152 residential clients at a time (see **Figure 2**). The Project Site is located on the west side of University Avenue between Undercliff Avenue to the west and University Avenue to the east. Because of a substantial grade change across the site, approximately six levels of the proposed new building (described below) would be situated below grade. As part of the proposed redevelopment, most of the existing on-site building would be demolished with the exception of a small portion of the University Avenue façade, which would be maintained as an outdoor portico. The remainder of the site is proposed to be redeveloped at this time with an approximately 27-story mixed-use building containing affordable, supportive, and transitional shelter housing, along with on-site social services, a publicly accessible childcare facility, and structured parking (the “Proposed Project”). The Proposed Project’s program may also include new space for the existing substance abuse treatment use, in which case one or more of the aforementioned uses would be reduced in size or eliminated. The Proposed Project’s landscaping program includes several open space and recreational spaces for building tenants, including an overlook terrace to the south of the building, a concrete staircase along the north property line, a terrace for the proposed childcare center on the ground floor, a terrace on the 2nd floor for the proposed transitional shelter residents, and a terrace on the 7th floor for the proposed affordable and supportive housing residents.

The Proposed Project may be developed through HPD's Supportive Housing Loan Program (SHLP). In addition to HPD funding, the project sponsor may seek construction financing from the New York State Housing Finance Agency (HFA). Construction financing from HPD is a discretionary action subject to City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) and construction financing from HFA is a discretionary action subject to the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). Though subject to change, it is currently assumed that HPD would serving as the lead agency for the CEQR review, with HFA identified as an involved agency.

B. RESEARCH GOALS AND METHODOLOGY

The Phase 1A Archaeological Documentary Study (“Phase 1A Study”) of the 1387 University Avenue Project Site has been designed to satisfy the requirements of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) as issued in 2018 and the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) as issued in 2005, while also following the guidelines of the New York Archaeological Council (NYAC) as issued in 1994 and adopted by SHPO in 1995. The study documents the development history of the Project Site and its potential to yield archaeological resources, including both precontact and historic cultural resources. In addition, this report documents the current conditions of the Project Site, as well as previous cultural resource investigations that have taken place in the vicinity.

This Phase 1A Study has four major goals: (1) to determine the likelihood that the Project Site was occupied during the precontact (Native American) and/or historic periods; (2) to determine the effect of subsequent development and landscape alteration on any potential archaeological resources that may have been located within the Project Site; (3) to make a determination of the Project Site’s potential archaeological sensitivity; and (4) to make recommendations for further archaeological analysis, if necessary. The steps taken to fulfill these goals are explained in greater detail below.

The first goal of this documentary study is to determine the likelihood that the Project Site was inhabited during the precontact and/or historic periods and identify any activities that may have taken place in the vicinity that would have resulted in the deposition of archaeological resources.

The second goal of this Phase 1A Study is to determine the likelihood that archaeological resources could have survived intact within the Project Site after development and landscape alteration (e.g., erosion, grading, filling, etc.). Potential disturbance—associated with paving, utility installation, and other previous construction impacts—was also considered. As described by NYAC in their *Standards for Cultural Resource Investigations and the Curation of Archaeological Collections in New York State*, published in 1994 and subsequently adopted by SHPO:

An estimate of the archaeological sensitivity of a given area provides the archaeologist with a tool with which to design appropriate field procedures for the investigation of that area. These sensitivity projections are generally based upon the following factors: statements of locational preferences or tendencies for particular settlement systems, characteristics of the local environment which provide essential or desirable resources (e.g., proximity to perennial water sources, well-drained soils, floral and faunal resources, raw materials, and/or trade and transportation routes), the density of known archaeological and historical resources within the general area, and the extent of known disturbances which can potentially affect the integrity of sites and the recovery of material from them (NYAC 1994: 2).

The third goal of this study is to make a determination of the Project Site’s archaeological sensitivity. As stipulated by the NYAC standards, sensitivity assessments should be categorized as low, moderate, or high to reflect “the likelihood that cultural resources are present within the project area” (NYAC 1994: 10). For the purposes of this study, those terms are defined as follows:

- **Low:** Areas of low sensitivity are those where the original topography would suggest that Native American sites would not be present (i.e., locations at great distances from fresh and salt water resources or where exposed bedrock would prevent the formation of archaeological sites), locations where no historic activity occurred before the installation of municipal water and sewer networks, or those locations determined to be sufficiently disturbed so that archaeological resources are not likely to remain intact.
- **Moderate:** Areas with topographical features that would suggest Native American occupation, documented historic period activity, and with some disturbance, but not enough to eliminate the possibility that archaeological resources are intact on the Project Site.
- **High:** Areas with topographical features that would suggest Native American occupation, documented historic period activity, and minimal or no documented disturbance.

The fourth goal of this study is to make recommendations for additional archaeological investigations where necessary. According to NYAC standards, a Phase 1B Archaeological Investigation is generally warranted for areas determined to have moderate sensitivity or higher. Archaeological testing is designed to determine the presence or absence of archaeological resources that could be impacted by a proposed project. Should they exist on the Project Site, such archaeological resources could provide new insight

into precontact occupation in the Bronx, the transition from Native American to European settlement, or the historic period occupation of the Project Site.

To satisfy the four goals as outlined above, documentary research was completed to establish a chronology of the Project Site's development, landscape alteration, and to identify any individuals who may have owned the land or worked and/or resided there, and to determine if buildings were present there in the past. Data were gathered from various published and unpublished primary and secondary resources, such as historic maps, topographical analyses (both modern and historic), historic and current photographs (including aerial imagery), newspaper articles, local histories, and previously conducted archaeological surveys. These published and unpublished resources were consulted at various repositories, including the Main Research Branch of the New York Public Library (including the Local History and Map Divisions), the Library of Congress, the Westchester County Archives, and the Westchester County Clerk. Previously identified sites and previously conducted archaeological resources in the vicinity were collected from the files of LPC, SHPO, and the New York State Museum (NYSM). Information on previously identified archaeological sites and previous cultural resources assessments was accessed through the New York State Cultural Resource Information System (CRIS).¹ Online textual archives, such as Google Books and the Internet Archive Open Access Texts, were also accessed.

¹ <https://cris.parks.ny.gov>

A. CURRENT CONDITIONS

The Project Site is situated in an irregularly shaped area east of Underhill Avenue, west of University Avenue, and north of High Bridge Park/the entrance to the High Bridge that connects to Manhattan across the Harlem River. The eastern half of the Project Site is developed with what was originally constructed as a cloistered convent in 1941 (see **Photograph 1**). Modern Sanborn maps indicate that the on-site building is one to two stories in height with basements and subbasements. The complex includes a chapel and a tower in addition to open cloisters (see **Photographs 2 through 4**). Retaining walls are located to the south and southeast of the complex (see **Photographs 2 and 3**). The western half of the Project Site is steeply sloped and covered with dense vegetation and trees and is accessed by staircases from the former convent (see **Photographs 5 through 8**). A large (11-by-14-foot) storm sewer line runs beneath the site extending from the northeast to the southwest. Records on file with the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) indicate that the sewer extends as far east as Claremont Park. The line is situated at a depth of more than 60 feet below the ground surface near Undercliff Avenue and was initially constructed in 1905.

B. GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The Bronx is found within a geographic bedrock region known as the Manhattan Prong of the New England (Upland) Physiographic Province. This region is a “rolling lowland area...of metamorphic rocks” dating to the Early Paleozoic, which began approximately 575 million years ago (Isachsen et al. 2000). The bedrock underlying the Project Site is Fordham Gneiss, which was formed in the Upper Proterozoic Period and dates to more than 500 million years before present (Fisher, et al. 1970; Isachsen, et al. 2000). Surficial geology in the immediately vicinity of the Project Site is mapped as bedrock that is either exposed or situated within 1 meter (3.3 feet) of the ground surface (Cadwell, et al. 1986). Bedrock in the region is overlain by glacial till left behind by massive glaciers of up to 1,000 feet thick that retreated from the area towards the end of the Pleistocene. There were four major glaciations that affected the region until approximately 12,000 years ago when the Wisconsin period—the last glacial period—came to an end (Schuberth 1968). The rocks and sand deposits left behind as a result of glacial movements brought about the creation of hundreds of sand hills, some of which were nearly 100 feet tall. In many cases, the glaciers transported huge boulders, including “Pudding Rock,” a glacial erratic that was in the vicinity of East 166th Street and Boston Post Road until the early 20th century (Kelly 1909). The “immense, loaf-shaped boulder of sandstone and gravel” was named by “local English farmers [who thought] the huge, purplish rock shot through with small stones looked just like a great big Christmas plum pudding” (DeVillo 2015:75). The rock was later “blown up to make room for tenements” (ibid: 224, n45).

A topographical survey of the Bronx produced by the New York City Department of Public Parks in 1873 indicates that the Project Site was historically situated on a steeply sloped hill (see **Figure 3**). The site sloped up to the northeast from an elevation of approximately 55 feet relative to the Manhattan Borough Datum (MBD) (46.6 feet relative to the North American Vertical Datum of 1988 [NAVD88]) at the

southeast corner of the site to an elevation of 135 feet (136.6 feet NAVD88) in the northeast corner of the site.¹ A second topographical survey produced by the New York topographical Bureau in 1895 depicts a nearly identical topographical profile for the Project Site. The slope of the ground surface from the southeast to the northeast of the Project Site in 1873 was therefore approximately 17.2 percent. Current Light Detection and Ranging (Lidar) information published by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) suggests that the landscape of the Project Site is generally similar, with a maximum elevation of 137 feet NAVD88 (135.4 feet MBD) at the northeast corner of the Project Site and 52 feet NAVD88 (50.4 feet MBD) at the southeast corner. Therefore, the landscape of the Project Site as a whole does not appear to have been significantly modified since the late 19th century.

C. HYDROLOGY

The Project Site is currently situated less than 600 feet east of the shore of the Harlem River and was historically closer to the waterfront prior to the expansion of the shoreline as a result of landfilling efforts (see **Figure 3**). The 1873 topographical survey indicates that a small pond was situated approximately 700 feet to the southeast of the Project Site, and a stream bordered by marshland was situated approximately 1,300 feet to the south.

D. SOILS

The *Web Soil Survey* maintained the National Resource Conservation Service of the United States Department of the Interior² indicates that Project Site is underlain by two soil complexes known as “Urban land-Greenbelt Complex” (UGD) and the “Chatfield-Hollis-Greenbelt Complex” (CHGC). The UGD soils are largely mapped in the vicinity of the existing on-site building and are characterized by areas with steep slopes (15 to 25 percent) in paved, urban areas. The remainder of the site is occupied by CHGC soils, which are slightly less steep with slopes of 0 to 15 percent in areas where bedrock is generally shallow and may be less than 2 feet below the ground surface.

**Table 2-1
Soil Types in the Vicinity of the Project Site**

Series Name (Map Symbol)	Soil Horizon Depth (in)	Soil Type	Slope (%)	Drainage	Landform
Urban Land-Greenbelt Complex	M: 0 to 15	Cemented Material	15 to 25	Well drained	Summit
	2 ^{AC} : 15 to 79	Gravelly Sandy Loam			
Chatfield-Hollis-Greenbelt Complex	A: 0 to 4	Fine Sandy Loam	0 to 15	Well drained	Hills
	Bw: 4 to 22	Fine Sandy Loam			
	2R: 22 to 79	Bedrock			
Sources: Soil Survey Staff, Natural Resources Conservation Service, United States Department of Agriculture. Web Soil Survey. Available online at http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/ . Accessed May 2021.					

Soil borings completed across a portion of the Project Site by GZA GeoEnvironmental in 2021 confirm that decomposing bedrock/bedrock is shallow and undulating across the site and exposed on the ground

¹ The map’s elevations were recorded relative to a datum of “mean high water, [that] corresponds with the Datum of street grades in the city of New York,” which given the time the map was produced is presumed to be the Manhattan Borough Datum (MBD) as the Bronx was being annexed to New York County at the time. The MBD is situated 1.625 feet above NAVD88, which is commonly used to approximate sea level in the present day. Therefore, one must add 1.625 to an elevation recorded relative to MBD to convert it to NAVD88.

² <https://websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/>

surface in several locations. The borings documented rock at depths ranging between 0 and 8 feet below the ground surface. The soils observed above the rock were identified as fill materials, although it is unclear if that refers to fill imported to raise the grade or simply disturbed soils. At least one boring identified the presence of a large (approximately 5-foot) boulder between the fill and underlying bedrock.

In general, Native American habitation sites are most often located in coastal areas with access to marine resources and near fresh water sources and areas of high elevation and level slopes (less than 12 to 15 percent) (NYAC 1994). Further indication of the potential presence of Native American activity near a Project Site is indicated by the number of precontact archaeological sites that have been previously identified in the vicinity. Information regarding such previously identified archaeological sites was obtained from various locations including the site files of SHPO, LPC, NYSM, and from published accounts. Five precontact archaeological sites have been identified within one mile of the Project Site in databases maintained by SHPO and NYSM (accessed via CRIS); however, all of these sites were on the Manhattan side of the Harlem River. In addition, the Project Site is located within a generalized area of archaeological sensitivity as mapped by SHPO. These sites are summarized in **Table 3-1**, below.

Table 3-1
Precontact Archaeological Sites within One Mile of the Project Site

Site Name/ Number	Site Type	Approximate Distance from Project Site	Additional Source Information
NYSM Site 4065	Village	3,750 feet (Manhattan)	Parker (1920)
NYSM Site 4066	Village and agricultural fields	1,000 feet (Manhattan)	Parker (1920)
NYSM Site 4067	Shell middens, possibly associated with NYSM Site 7250	3,900 feet (Manhattan)	Parker (1920)
NYSM Site 7250	Camp and village site possibly representing a fishing camp	3,750 feet (Manhattan)	Parker (1920); Bolton (1922)
NYSM Site 8370	Campsite	4,750 feet (Manhattan)	Parker (1920)
Sources: The New York State Cultural Resources Information System (CRIS).			

All of the identified sites as mapped in CRIS were located on the island of Manhattan west of the Project Site and were based on limited descriptions provided in Arthur C. Parker's 1920 work, *The Archaeological History of New York*. No sites were documented on the Bronx coast of the Harlem River within one mile of the Project Site. Bolton (1922) indicates that a Native American trail/roadway was located several blocks to the east of the Project Site and continued along the line of what is now University Avenue to the north of the Washington Bridge. Bolton also indicates that the area in which the Project Site was situated was known as *Saproughah*. The absence of Native American archaeological sites on the Bronx side of the Harlem River near the Project Site may be due to the presence of shallow bedrock and steep slopes.

A. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

New York was “discovered” by Giovanni de Verrazano in 1524 and explored by Henry Hudson in 1609, thus marking the beginning of European occupation in the area. By 1621, the area had become part of a Dutch colony and the States-General in the Netherlands chartered the Dutch West India Company (WIC) to consolidate Dutch activities in the New World. It was at this time that the WIC began to purchase large tracts of land from the Native Americans. The WIC “purchased” *Keskeskeck* from the local Native Americans in 1639, initiating what would be centuries of European colonization (Hansen 1950).

Towards the end of the 17th century, the increasing European population rapidly displaced the indigenous population in the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam and the English colony of New York. The Bronx was settled as a series of independent small villages and towns. Much of the southwestern portion of what is now the Bronx was included within the historical township of Morrisania, named after the Morris family. The 19th century limits of Morrisania were immediately south of the location of what is now the High Bridge. The Project Site was therefore included within the Town of West Farms, which was originally settled by Edward Jessup and John Richardson in 1663 (Jenkins 1912). In 1673, under English colonial rule, the colony of New Amsterdam was divided into counties, with the modern Bronx being included in the original limits of Westchester County (*ibid*).

As it developed in the 18th century, the West Farms area became industrial, with the construction of numerous mills, including snuff, paper, flour, barley, and sawmills as well as paint, carpet, and pottery works along the Bronx River (Myers 1940). Although individual farms were scattered throughout the area, there were few substantial communities or settlements until the early to mid-19th century, only a few “miniscule towns” that were established along the Boston Post Road (Burrows and Wallace 1999: 661). In 1788, the county of Westchester was divided into 5 townships; the Project Site was located within what was defined as the Township of Westchester, which included much of the modern Borough of the Bronx (Jenkins 1912). Westchester remained largely rural throughout the 18th century and into the 19th.

The history of the Project Site and the area immediately surrounding it has long been influenced by major infrastructure and public improvement projects designed to benefit the urban residents of Manhattan. In the first half of the 19th century, New York City embarked on an ambitious construction effort to bring drinking water to the city from clean freshwater sources in upstate New York. The centerpiece of this effort was the Croton Aqueduct, the original conduit constructed to pipe potable water to the urban center (Koeppel 2000). The 40-mile-long and 66-foot-wide Croton Aqueduct was constructed through the Bronx and into Manhattan between 1837 and 1842 (Lange 1991). The water line was constructed both through cut-and-cover construction methods and was also tunneled through bedrock (*ibid*). The roadway that passed above the Croton network was named Aqueduct Avenue in 1886 and was renamed University Avenue in 1916 (McNamara 1996:234). The High Bridge, originally known as the Aqueduct Bridge, was constructed immediately to the south of the Project Site to carry the aqueduct over the Harlem River and into Manhattan (McNamara 1996; Koeppel 2000). A 1926 plan of the aqueduct and the High Bridge prepared by New York City Department of Plant and Structures that is in the collection of the New York

City Municipal Archives indicates that the conduit for the aqueduct runs through the center of University Avenue and that the Project Site is adjacent to its right-of-way rather than the aqueduct itself.¹

Relative to the growing city in Lower Manhattan, the Bronx remained largely vacant throughout the city's early development. In the first half of the 19th century, with the construction of bridges connecting it to Manhattan, the Bronx finally became accessible to individuals living and working in Manhattan. However, it was still far enough from the city to render a daily commute impossible. Nevertheless, with the establishment of railroad lines that connected the Bronx and Manhattan, the newly accessible Bronx quickly grew. A new bridge was constructed in 1840 to allow the New York and Harlem Railroad to continue on through the Bronx towards White Plains and other locations in upstate New York and Connecticut (ibid). The railroad was open for business by 1842. The newly constructed railroad lines allowed for the Bronx's rapid growth to continue. With the increased accessibility brought to the Bronx by these railroad installations, the area began to become fully populated towards the end of the 19th century. As a result, the portion of the Bronx west of the Bronx River (referred to as the 23rd and 24th Wards of New York County) was annexed to the City of New York in 1874 (Jenkins 1912).

The population of the Bronx continued to grow after the Interborough Rapid Transit lines connected the Bronx and Manhattan in 1904. With the growth in population, development also began to increase in the Bronx, beginning with the construction of new streets. The advent of the automobile brought about the need for new networks of highways and parkways that were constructed throughout the Bronx during the 20th century.

B. REVIEW OF HISTORICAL MAP-DOCUMENTED STRUCTURES

The Project Site was situated in a largely undeveloped area through the mid-19th century with the exception of the construction of the aqueduct to the east and south of the Project Site. The majority of the map-documented structures observed on the Project Site in the 19th and 20th centuries were associated with one of the many hotels that lined the Harlem River waterfront in this area at the time. The 1851 Sidney and Neff map depicts the line of the Croton Aqueduct and the High Bridge to the east and south of the Project Site. The map shows two unidentified structures in the vicinity of the Project Site, one of which appears to have been located southeast (possibly in association with the bridge) and the other to the north along a former roadway that may have been a precursor to modern Undercliff Avenue. Identified buildings along the waterfront in the vicinity of the Project Site include hotels and taverns, suggesting that the waterfront area near the High Bridge was popular with travelers and those seeking leisure activities. As described below, the Project Site would remain associated with these types of tourist destinations through the 20th century.

Miller's 1888 copy of an 1859 survey of the High Bridge by Francis Nicholson (see **Figure 4**) depicts conditions similar to those seen on the 1851 Sidney and Neff map. Miller's map appears to indicate that the Croton Aqueduct right-of-way and its associated buildings were immediately east and south of/adjacent to what is now the Project Site. While the map does not depict any buildings on the Project Site itself, it depicts a hotel to the southeast of the Project Site on the eastern side of the aqueduct and "Woodbine Cottage" along the waterfront southwest of the Project Site and south of the High Bridge. Subsequent maps, including the 1860 Walling map and the 1867 Beers atlas appear to depict similar structures in the vicinity of the Project Site but do not clearly depict any buildings on the site itself. A map of the Town of Morrisania—historically located to the south of the High Bridge—published by F.W.

¹ Accessible at: <https://nycma.lunaimaging.com/luna/servlet/s/6n0dkz>

Beers in the late 1860s¹ depicts a portion of the Project Site and shows a large rectangular building west of the Croton Aqueduct and east of Undercliff Avenue. This building was located in the center of the Project Site and is identified as a hotel on later maps.

The 1868 Beers atlas is the first to depict Undercliff Avenue in an alignment similar to its current route. The map also depicts the aforementioned building in the vicinity of the Project Site between Undercliff Avenue and the Croton Aqueduct as seen on the late-1860s Beers map of Morrisania. The site appears to have been within the larger property of M. Kyle, which the map indicates was an estate known as “Kyle Cottage.” The 1872 Beers atlas depicts the only building in the vicinity of the Project Site to the south of the Croton Aqueduct and identifies it as “Kurls Cottage,” likely referring to John Karl, the proprietor of the hotel. The adjacent Kyle property was also known as “Kyle’s Park,” a “popular amusement center” accessed by both rail line and steamboat that offered picnic grounds, canoeing/rowing, and other leisure activities (McNamara 1996:331).

The 1870 federal census indicates that Matthew Kyle and John Karl resided in nearby or neighboring homes in West Farms, Westchester County and were also neighbors of individuals who worked as superintendents of the High Bridge. Karl had emigrated to the Bronx from Prussia and owned \$5,000 in real estate. He lived with his wife, Catharine, their four children, and four boarders employed as a bridge superintendent; a cook; a servant; and a bar keeper. Kyle was born in New York and identified as a motel keeper who also owned \$5,000 in real estate. He shared his home with his wife, Sarah, who was an Irish immigrant, their two children, and a variety of boarders who appeared to work for the hotel or associated amusement facilities as bar keepers, a boatman, a waiter, and servants. It therefore appears that the proprietors of local hotels lived on-site.

The building seen on the Beers maps published in the late 1860s appears to be the same one identified on the Project Site on the 1873 topographical survey (see **Figure 3**). A second, smaller building is depicted on the survey to the southeast of the Project Site adjacent to University Avenue/the Croton Aqueduct. The same buildings are depicted on the 1879 Bromley atlas, which identifies the owner of the building as “Kart” and identifies another structure to the west, within the line of Undercliff Avenue. Similar buildings are depicted on the 1885 Robinson and Pidgeon atlas.

The 1891 Sanborn map identifies the owner as “J. Karl: and depicts the building seen on the 1873 topographical survey as a one- to three-story wood frame building. The map also depicts one-story outbuildings on the Project Site to the north and to the east within what is now the roadbed of University Avenue. The map also depicts the other hotels and amusement facilities that lined the waterfront in this portion of the Bronx, including Kyle’s Park to the west, which featured a carousel, a rifle range, and multiple pavilions, including one on a waterfront dock that was accessed by a bridge. An 1893 Bromley atlas depicts the wood-frame building as a “hotel” and depicts two small wood frame outbuildings on the Project Site. The map depicts the aqueduct right-of-way to the east and south of the Project Site and notes that University Avenue was at that time known as “Aqueduct Avenue.” The same buildings are shown on the 1904 and 1911 Bromley atlases and the 1909 Sanborn map, which continue to identify the large building on the Project Site as a hotel, though the latter maps indicate that it was vacant or unoccupied at the time. The 1909 Sanborn map (see **Figure 5**) identifies the hotel as a two-story (without basement) wood frame building and indicates that the wood frame stable/garage to the north was one-story tall with

¹ The exact date of this map’s publication is unclear. A copy in the collection of the New York Public Library that is thought to have been published in 1860 (a hand annotation with that date appears on the map) while a second copy on file with the Library of Congress suggests that it was published ca. 1865. Based on the depiction of buildings with known construction dates that post-date 1865, it is presumed that the map was published in the late 1860s.

a basement. The map also identifies the mapped width of Aqueduct Avenue as 66 feet, the same width as the right-of-way for the underlying aqueduct.

The former hotel was demolished before the publication of the 1921 Bromley atlas, which depicts the Project Site as almost entirely vacant with the exception of a small two story (with basement) brick house that was located in the Project Site's northeast corner. The map depicts the large stormwater tunnel that was constructed at a great depth below the Project Site in 1905, as described in **Chapter 2, "Environmental and Physical Settings."** An undated photograph in the collection of the New York City Municipal Archives appears to depict the Project Site at this time.¹ The image depicts the Project Site as a landscaped area with paths and trees and visible rock or rubble across portions of the site, much of which was steeply sloped. The small building at the northeast corner of the site is also visible in the image as is a small shed to the south.

The existing on-site buildings were constructed as a cloistered convent in 1941. Sanborn maps published between 1951 and 2007 depict no changes to the building or the surrounding property. Though Sanborn maps continue to identify the site as the Sisters' property through at least 2007, public property records indicate that in 1982, the Carmelite Sisters of the City of New York (at that time known as the Discalced Carmelite Nuns of the City of New York) sold the property to the Samaritan Holding Corporation (Bronx County Conveyance Reel 466, Page 1751). The deed recording the conveyance indicates that a vault associated with the building encroaches on University Avenue and that the property contained an easement associated with the City of New York's "storm relief tunnel sewer."

C. THE HISTORY OF THE CARMELITE SISTERS

The Discalced Carmelite Nuns are cloistered, dedicating themselves to a life of "prayer and penance," and "the work of the church and for the sanctification of priests" (Rohrbach 1967: 122). The Carmelite Spirituality, which includes orders of both monks and nuns, was named in honor of the biblical location of Mount Carmel, the home of the prophet Elijah (Rohrbach 1966). As the sisters believe in silent religious practice, the term "discalced" refers to fact that the Carmelite sisters cover their feet with only soft sandals so as to minimize the sound of their footsteps (Thomas 1955). While Calced Carmelite orders exist, Discalced orders have been more common in America (Rohrbach 1967). Except for when they relocate to new convent facilities, nuns live their entire lives within the convent they enter, speaking to "visitors only through a grill-work in the convent parlor" (Rohrbach 1967: 122).

The first Carmelite convent in the United States was established in Maryland in 1790; the New York Carmel was not founded until July 1920 (ibid). Soon after, the founding sisters relocated to what was known as the "Claremont mansion" at 300 (now 304) Gunhill Road in the Bronx, which was demolished in 1944 (*Brooklyn Times Union* 1927). The convent remained at the Gunhill Road location until 1940, when an anonymous donor presented the Carmelite Nuns with the Project Site, to build a more spacious convent (Thomas 1955). Archbishop of New York Francis J. Spellman accepted the gift and performed a blessing ceremony to consecrate the site in September 1940 (*The Herald Statesman* 1940). Plans for the new building were completed by June 1940, after designs by architects Maginnis and Walsh, a Boston firm best known for their ecclesiastical architecture for the Roman Catholic Church (White 2010). As described in the previous section, the Discalced Carmelite Nuns of the City of New York sold the land including the Project Site in 1982. That year, the sisters relocated to a 30-acre site in Beacon, New York (*Poughkeepsie Journal* 1983). By the 1960s, there were 64 Carmelite convents housing approximately 15,000 sisters in the United States (ibid). In response to the decline of the number of sisters in the area in recent years, in 2001, the Carmelite monasteries in Beacon, Saranac, and Barre, New York combined as

¹ <https://nycma.lunaimaging.com/luna/servlet/s/jpf769>

the “Carmel of the Incarnation,” which was consolidated in the sisters’ Beacon campus (Disalced Carmelite Nuns n.d.).

A. CONCLUSIONS

As part of the background research for this Phase 1A Archaeological Documentary Study, various primary and secondary resources were analyzed, including historic maps and atlases, historic photographs and lithographs, newspaper articles, and local histories. The information provided by these sources was analyzed to reach the following conclusions.

PREVIOUS DISTURBANCE

Two major episodes of development and disturbance have been documented on the Project Site. The first involved the construction of a 19th century hotel and associated outbuildings on the property and their subsequent demolition by the 1920s. The second involved the construction of the existing on-site buildings, which were built as a cloistered convent in 1941. Additional major infrastructure improvement projects have occurred in the area, including the construction of a large stormwater sewer more than 60 feet below the surface of the Project Site in 1905 and the construction of the Croton Aqueduct to the east and south of the Project Site in the first half of the 19th century. As described in **Chapter 2, “Environmental and Physical Settings,”** bedrock is extremely shallow across the Project Site and is present either on the ground surface or at a maximum depth of 8 feet below grade. The construction and demolition of buildings and associated elements (including landscaping, paved pathways, and utility connections) would therefore be expected to have resulted in extensive disturbance to the shallow soil deposits located across the site.

PRECONTACT SENSITIVITY ASSESSMENT

The precontact sensitivity of Project Sites in New York City is generally evaluated by a site’s proximity to level slopes less than 10 to 12 percent, watercourses, well-drained soils, and previously identified precontact archaeological sites (NYAC 1994). As described in **Chapter 3, “Precontact Period,”** the Project Site is in a waterfront area that was located near resources associated with streams and wetlands. Given the presence of steep slopes across much of the Project Site, the shallow nature of the underlying bedrock, and the disturbance resulting from the construction and demolition of map-documented structures, the Project Site is determined to have no sensitivity for archaeological resources associated with the precontact occupation of the area.

HISTORIC SENSITIVITY ASSESSMENT

The Project Site was developed with 19th century buildings associated with a hotel complex and recreational and leisure activity. While these facilities may have been present on the site prior to the connection of on-site buildings to municipal water and sewer networks, the shallow bedrock would have significantly limited the ability of the on-site residents and guests to construct extensive shaft features for the purposes of water gathering and sanitation. Given the shallow depths of on-site soil layers and steep slopes, it also seems unlikely that soil deposits containing archaeological resources associated with the occupation and use of the site in the 19th century or earlier would remain intact given the construction of

the existing buildings, which feature both basement and subbasement levels. Furthermore, the Project Site appears to be adjacent to the right-of-way for the Croton Aqueduct but does not appear to contain the aqueduct itself, which runs through the center of the road now known as University Avenue. As a result, the Project Site is determined to have no sensitivity for archaeological resources associated with the historic period occupation of the Project Site.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Project Site is determined to have no sensitivity for archaeological resources associated with either the precontact or historic periods. As such, no further archaeological analysis is recommended.

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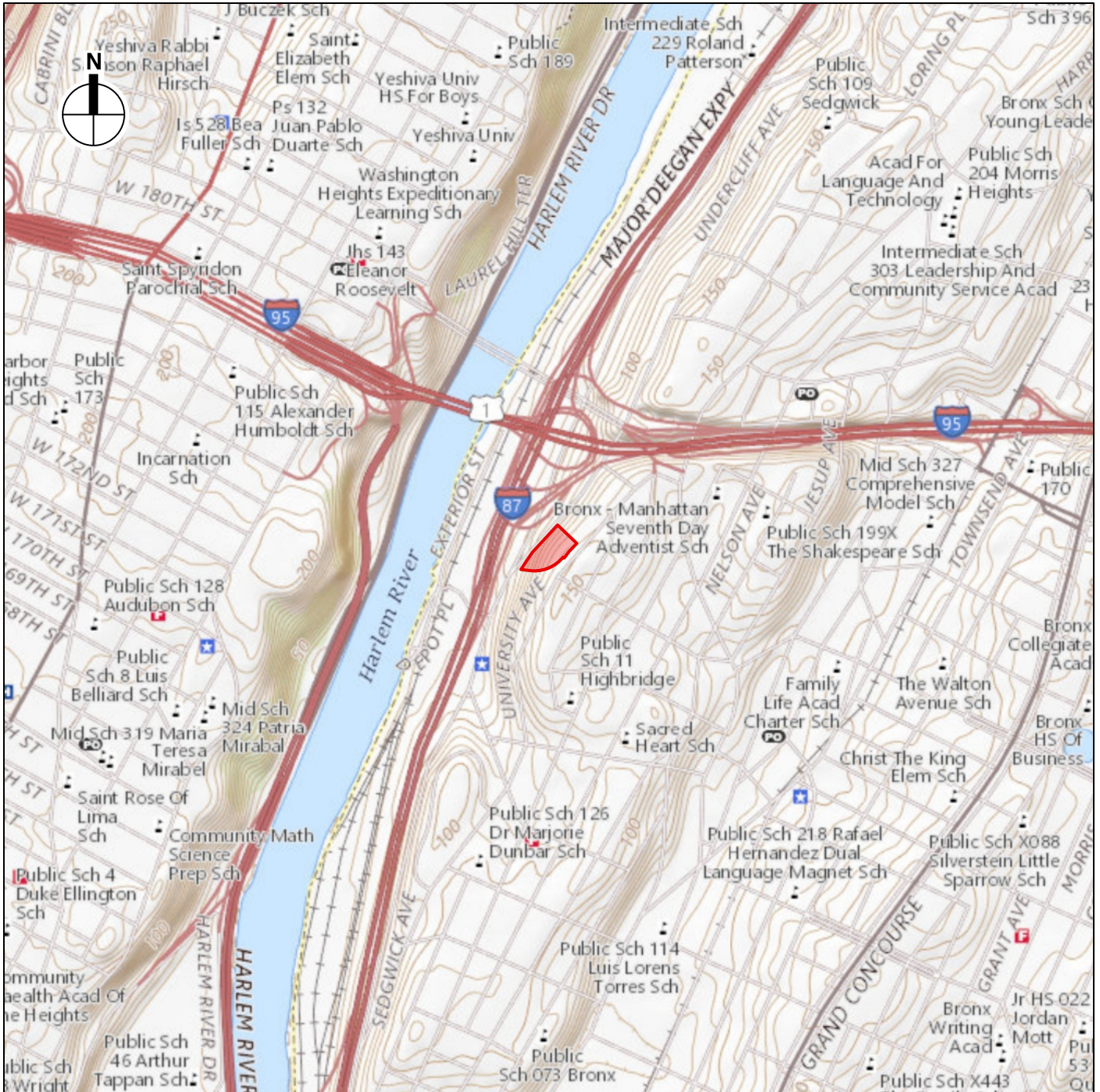
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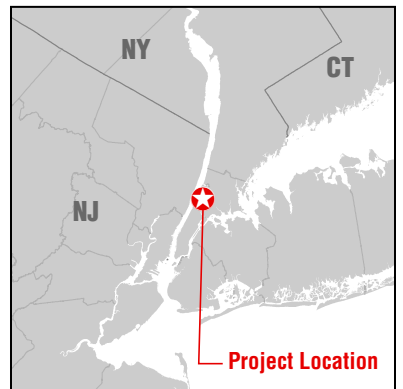
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Figures

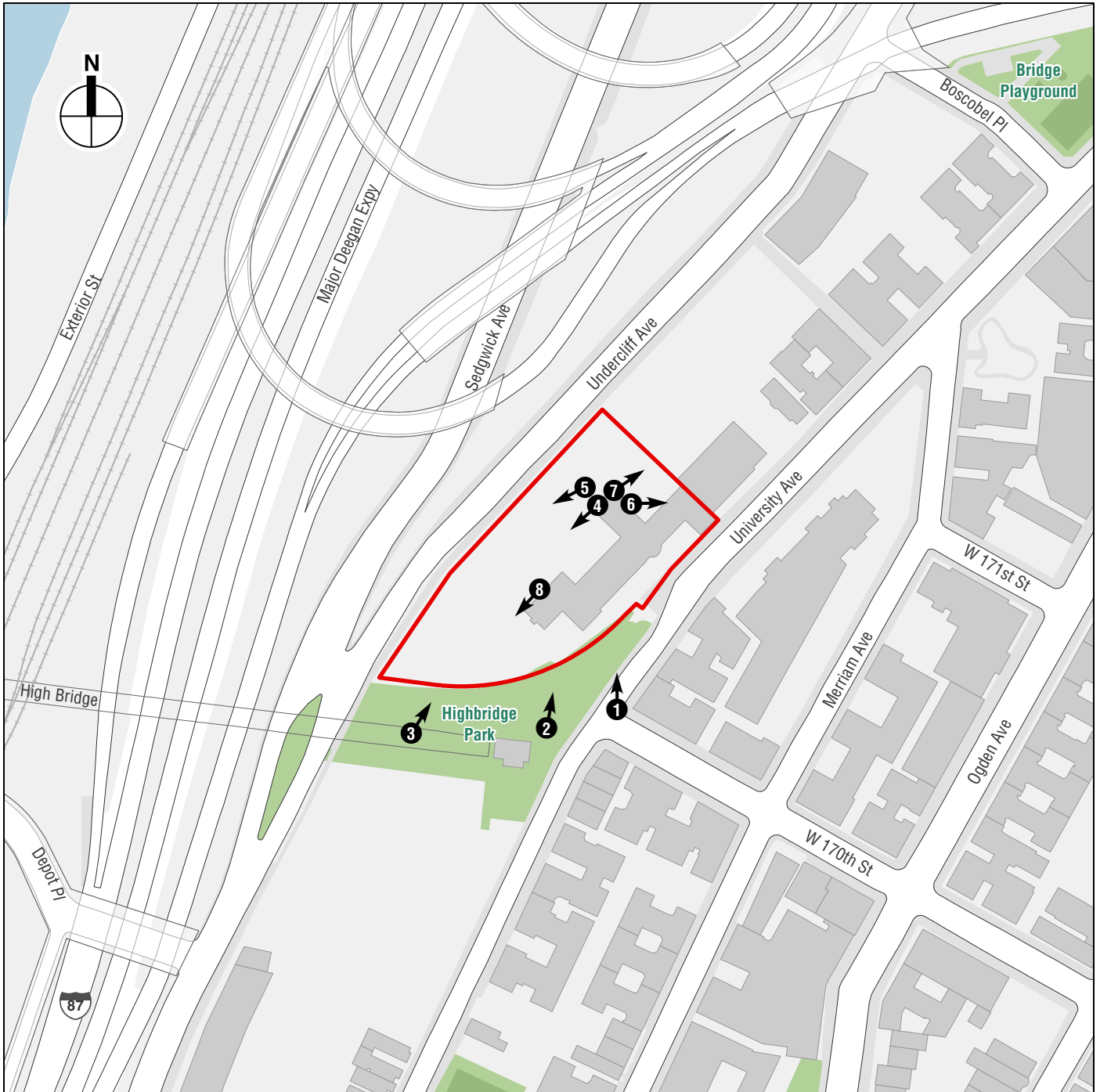


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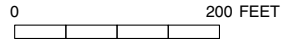
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 73°55'35"W 40°50'34"N



USGS Topographic Map – Central Park Quadrangle



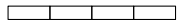
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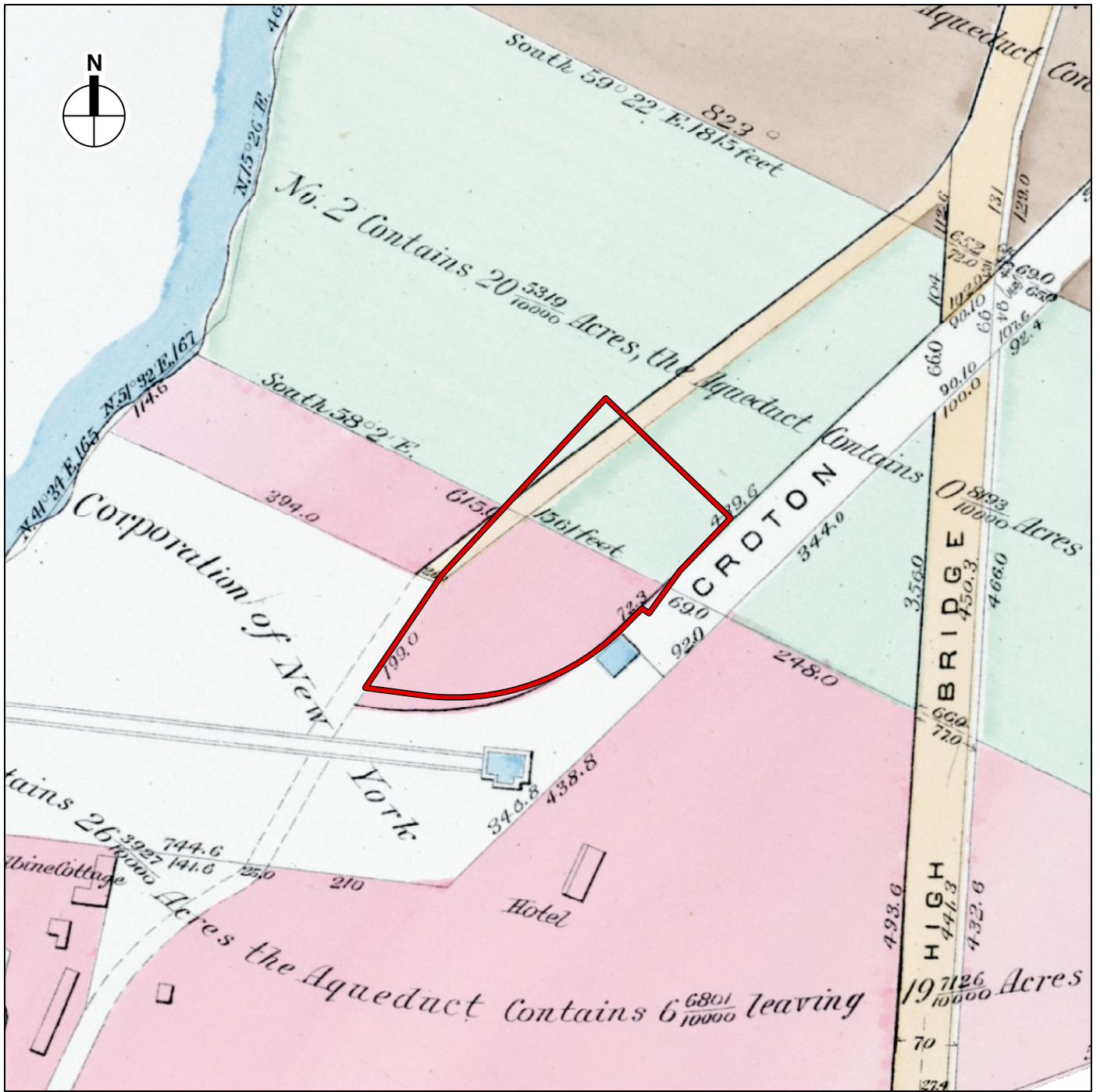
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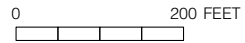
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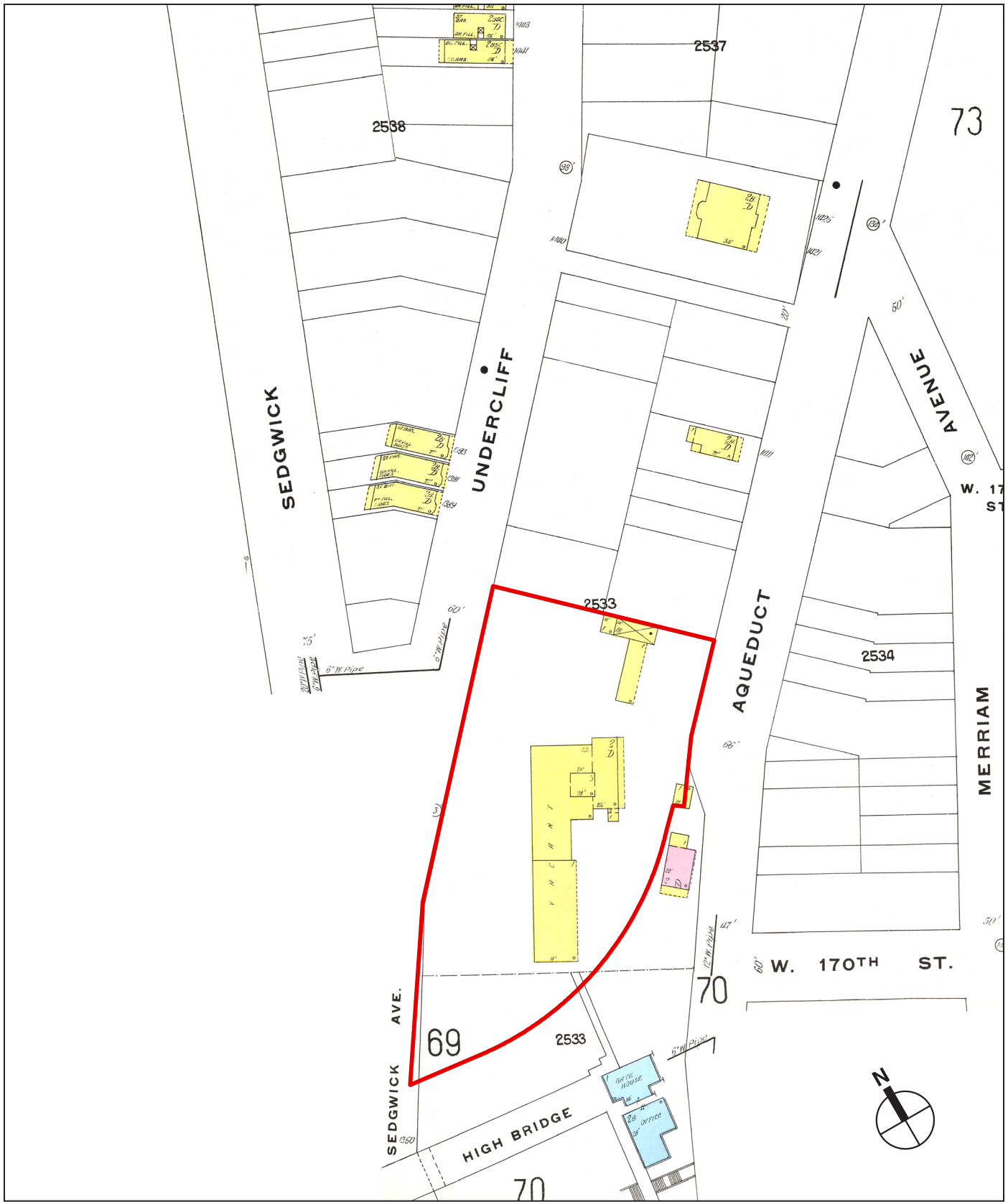
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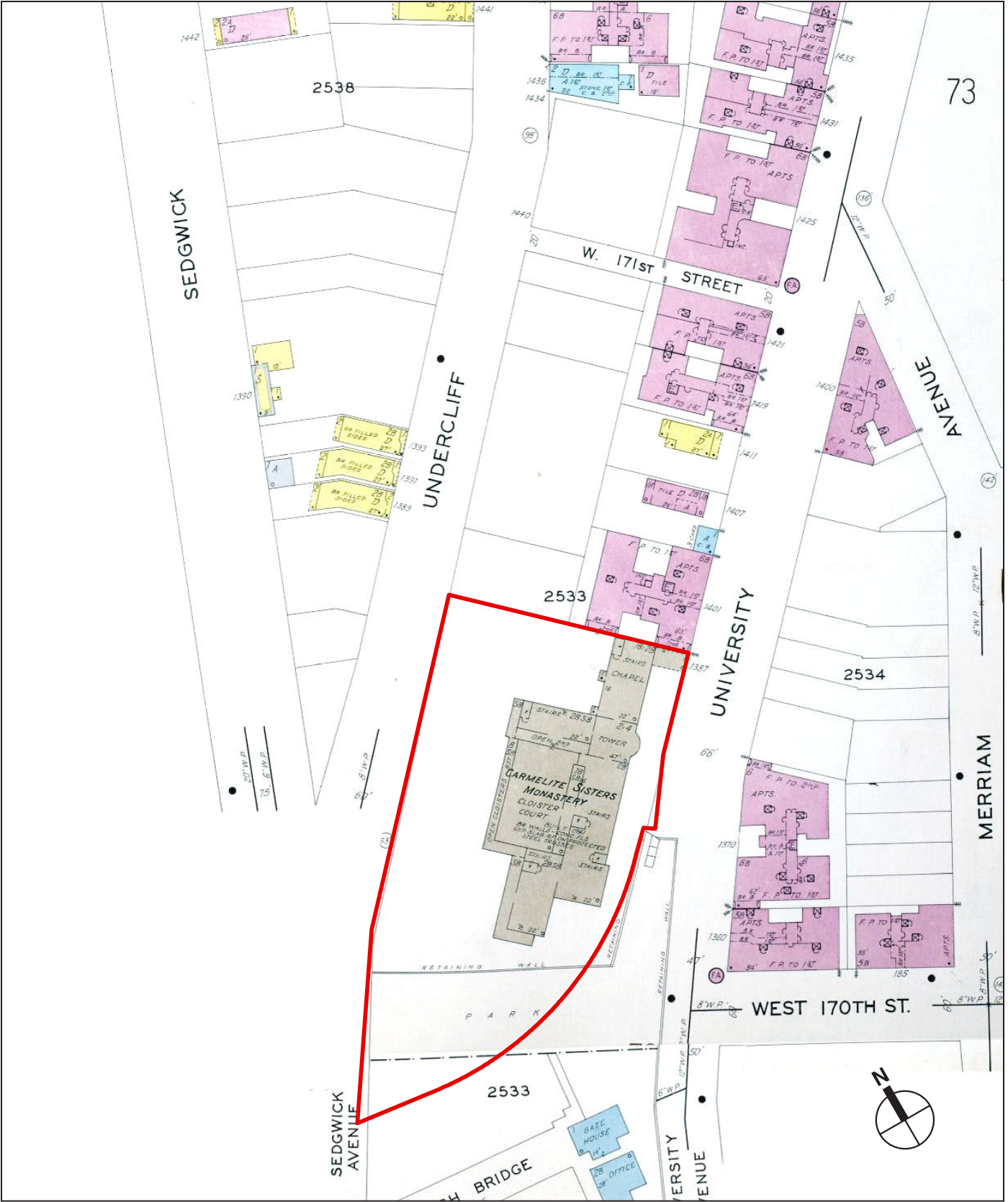


 Project Site





 Project Site



 Project Site

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Photographs



View of the former convent looking northwest from University Avenue 1



Looking north at the former convent from Highbridge Park, showing the steep grade change to the west (left) and the retaining wall lining the south of the Project Site 2



View of the Project Site from the High Bridge; showing the steep slopes to the west (left)

3



Looking south at the cloistered walkways on the western side of the former convent and the steep slopes to the west (at right)

4



The steep slopes on the western side of the Project Site 5



Stairs leading down the steep hills in the northern portion of the Project Site 6



Stairs leading down the steep hills in the northern portion of the Project Site 7



Stairs leading down the steep hills in the southern portion of the Project Site 8