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WILLIAMSBURGH STREET WEST
BLOCK 2203 LOT 20
BOROUGH OF BROOKLYN
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

CEQR #91-228K

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March 1992

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Phase 1A Sensitivity Study is to document the potential prehistoric and historic sensitivity of the Block 2203, Lot 20 parcel on Williamsburgh Street West in Brooklyn, New York through a review of existing archival, cartographic and published references. In order to provide a context for evaluating any identified resources within the parcel itself, this survey shall include a synthesis of published and unpublished prehistoric resources in the immediate locality surrounding the project area and a synthesis of the history of the parcel and its vicinity. See Figure 1 for the location of the project area.

GEOGRAPHY AND PHYSICAL SETTING

The project area is located in the Atlantic Coastal Lowland Physiographic Province of New York State. There is only one other location in the state (Staten Island) where this province occurs (Thompson 1966:34-35). The Borough of Brooklyn (Kings County) forms the western end of Long Island, which is the largest island adjoining the United States proper. The Block 2203, Lot 20 project area lies to the north of the Harbor Hill terminal moraine at its western end. This moraine marks the maximum extent of the second advance of glaciation which partly covered Long Island (Thompson 1966:43; Van Diver 1987:70).

Greenhouse Consultants visited the project location during March 1992. Although the longest street frontage of the project area is now on Williamsburgh Street West, Block 2203, Lot 20 formerly consisted of a group of smaller properties fronting Wythe Avenue, Hooper Street and Hewes Street. When the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway was constructed, the eastern corner of the block was lost and Williamsburgh Street West was created. The project area is currently a vacant lot. Nearly all of the foundations and destruction rubble from the buildings that once faced Wythe Avenue and Hooper Street have been removed. The project area is now close to street grade at the southern end but approximately seven feet below street grade at the northern end.

PREHISTORIC SENSITIVITY

As part of the project evaluation process, the sensitivity study has surveyed published and unpublished resources in the Municipal Archives and Library of New York City, the files of the New York State Museum Division of Historical and Anthropological Services, the Research Branch of the New York Public library, and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.



At the time of the first European contact and settlement in the seventeenth century, Brooklyn was inhabited by a number of distinct Indian groups each with one or more village sites, seasonal encampments and food supply area mentioned in the documentary record. These groups evidently included the Marechkawiek, the Canarsee, the Keshaechequeren, the Rockaway and the Nayack (Grumet 1981:6). Several of these village sites have been identified with varying degrees of precision as having been situated in Brooklyn in the vicinity of the project area.

The Indian village of Mareyckawick was identified by Bolton (1934) as being located at Galletin and Elm Place, approximately 1.4 miles southwest of the project area. Solecki (1977:7) places it in the vicinity of Lawrence and Jay Streets, also approximately 1.4 miles southwest of the Block 169 project area. Confusingly, he states that " ...the area just north of Old Fulton Street (now called Cadman Plaza West) ...was occupied by a family of Indians called the Mareykawicks, a branch of the Carnarsie who controlled much of western Long Island" (Solecki 1977:76). This location would place the village 0.5 miles northwest of the project parcel. MacCleod, quoted by Grumet, suggests this village was near Borough Hall (Grumet 1981:27) thus providing yet another possible location. This final location is approximately 1.6 miles southwest of the Block 2203 project area.

Furman noted the physical evidence of Indian occupation " ...at Bridge Street, between Front and York and between Jay and Bridge Street" (Furman 1865:34). Remains included Indian pottery, projectile points and clay tobacco pipes. He further stated that the " ...material was found in situ (down to a depth of 3 feet to 4 feet) on the top of a hill about 70 feet high which is shown in Lt. Ratzer's map of 1766-67" (Solecki 1977:75). The hill has been razed, but would have been located approximately 0.8 miles west of the project area. This is the nearest prehistoric site to the Block 2203 project area.

Arthur C. Parker, the former New York State Archaeologist, reported that the early erection of European settlement over Kings County eradicated traces of aboriginal occupation. Parker had no doubts that the Borough of Brooklyn (or Kings County) was " ...occupied in nearly ever part ..." (Parker 1922:582). Despite the pessimistic nature of his statement, Parker was able to locate a few sites in Brooklyn.

In terms of potential prehistoric sensitivity, the project impact area was evaluated from two points of view:

- 1) the proximity of known prehistoric sites in or near the project area; and
- 2) the presence of fresh water drainage courses in general, and particularly the identification of river or stream confluence situations where two or more drainages come together, providing access to both water and food supplies of both systems.



This survey has documented the recorded or published location of only two sites within a two mile radius of the Block 2203 project area. Although sites have been identified in the general region of the proposed project impact area, none are known to exist within the project area itself. No evidence, positive or negative, based on previous survey work, is available. The Block 2203 project area is located to the northeast of a stream that flowed into Wallabout Bay. It appears that this water source would have been brackish and therefore unsuitable as a source of drinking water. This stream was later channelized and became the Wallabout Canal. The maps give no indications of any other water sources near to the project area.

HISTORIC SENSITIVITY

As part of the evaluation process, this historic sensitivity study included a survey of published and unpublished resources located at the Main Research Branch of the New York Public Library and the Municipal Reference Library of the City of New York. In addition, primary resources housed at the Brooklyn Topographical Bureau, the Brooklyn Sewer Department and the New York City Department of Water Supply were also surveyed.

The earliest reliable map to show the project area is Ratzer's 1766/7 Plan of the City of New York. This map shows that the project area is within an area of farmland to the northeast of a stream flowing into Wallabout Bay. There are one or two structures in the vicinity but none appear to be within the project area. This agricultural use of the project area evidently continued until the latter half of the nineteenth century. The openings for the streets surrounding the block were: Hooper Street, 6 May 1859; Hewes Street, 5 March 1853; Wythe Avenue, 5 March 1853; and Kent Avenue, 9 January 1847 (Brooklyn Topographical Department, n.d.). Dripps' 1869 Map of the City of Brooklyn provides the earliest detailed view of the project area block (see Figure 2). The project area block with its four surrounding streets is shown. The project area consists of the majority of the northeastern end of the block and is vacant. One house and three smaller structures occupy the southwestern end of the block. These structures are not aligned to the street grid but are parallel to an earlier road shown with dashed lines. The next depiction of the project area found was Bromley's 1880 Atlas of the City of Brooklyn. This map could not be copied due to its fragile condition. The project area remained vacant and the three small structures to the southwest have been demolished. The larger structure remains and is shown to be of brick construction. It is labeled "Appleton's." "Appleton's Bindery" is shown on the block adjacent to the southeast. The block had been divided into lots by 1880. These are all 22 by 100 feet and face either Hooper or Hewes Streets. By 1880 Brooklyn had numbered its blocks, with the project area falling on a Block 39 (Bromley 1880:Plate 20).

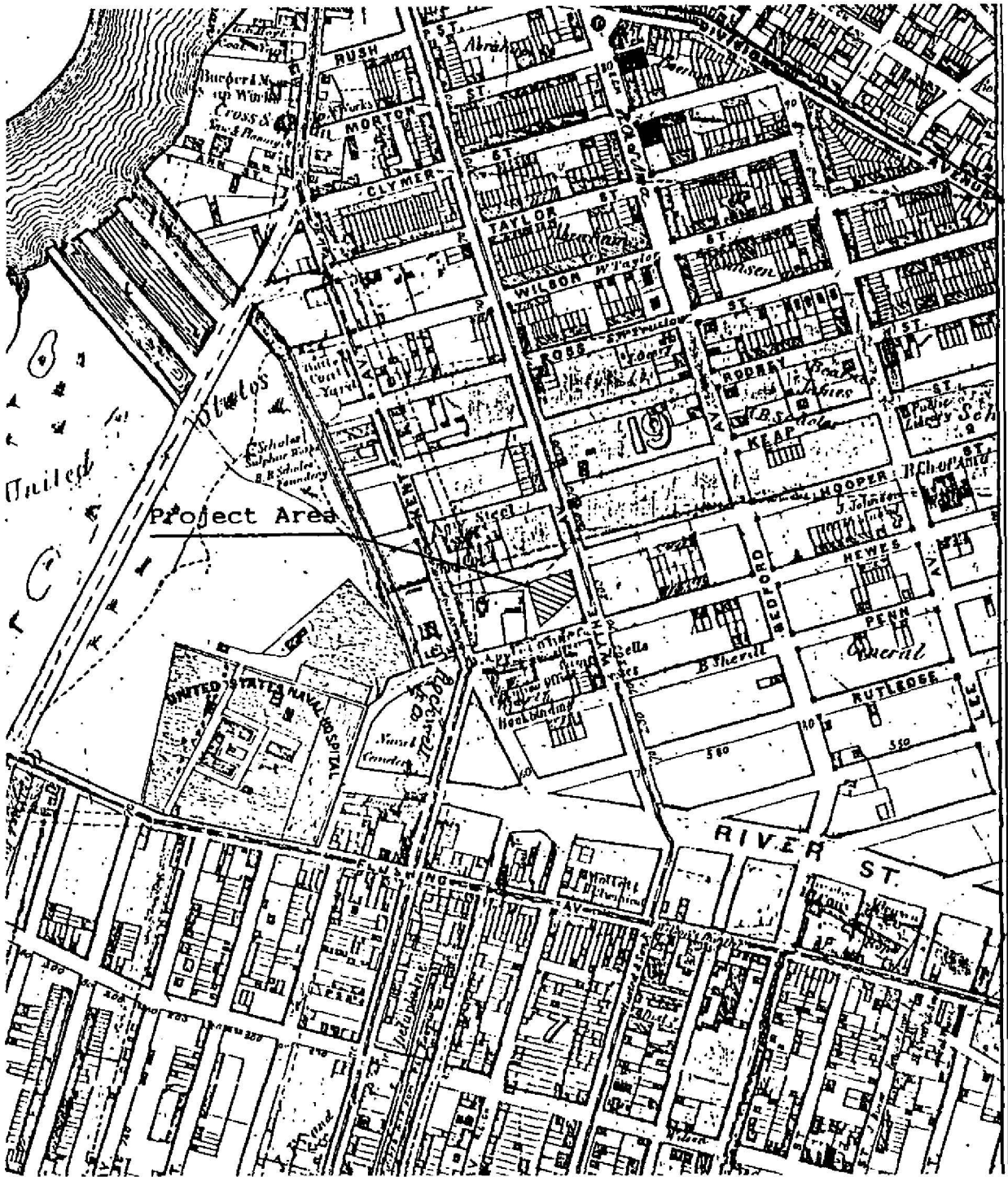


Figure 2 Project area shown on portion of Dripps' 1869 Map of the City of Brooklyn.
Approximate Scale: 1 inch = 600 feet.



The next depiction of the project area found was Robinson's Atlas of the City of Brooklyn from 1886. This map shows that considerable changes occurred from 1880 through 1886. A series of ten lots have been created facing Wythe Avenue, all 20 by 80 feet in size and numbered 41 through 50. The lot to the southwest is numbered 54 and 88 by 200 feet in size. It is labeled "Stoneyard." The stoneyard includes two small frame structures at its northern and western corners adjacent to Hooper Street. Lots 41 through 50 are occupied by brick structures facing Wythe Avenue. The northwestern half are 40 feet deep and the remainder 50 feet deep (Robinson and Pidgeon 1886:Plate 9). The situation in 1886 is nearly identical to that shown in 1898. Hyde's Atlas of the Brooklyn Borough of the City of New York, depicted here in Figure 3, shows no changes in lots 41 through 50. Lot 54 remained a stoneyard and a brick and stone structure still exists in its northern corner. The brick structure in the western corner is gone, but a larger L-shaped frame structure, 88 by 50 feet, surrounds the remaining building in the northern corner. The block has been renumbered 2203. The project area includes all of lots 41 through 44, most of lot 45, part of lot 45, and about two-thirds of lot 54 (Hyde 1898:Vol. 1, Plate 29).

Research at the New York City Bureau of Water Supply provided the dates of water main installation in the streets adjacent to the project area. A main was installed under Wythe Avenue in June 1876. A main already existed under Hewes Street by this date (New York City Bureau of Water Supply 1890:62). Another main was installed under this portion of Hooper Street during July 1882 (ibid.:212).

Documents on file at the Brooklyn Sewer Department provided the dates of sewer hook-ups for lots 41 through 50 facing Wythe Avenue. These lots were assigned consecutive hook-up numbers 57876 through 57885 all in Volume 7. All were connected on 13 September 1881 when owned by Appleton and Company. The plumber was E. Galeson in all ten cases (Brooklyn Sewer Department Vol. 7:n.d.). Only one hook-up is shown for lot 54, the stoneyard. The number is 100373 in Volume 12. The relevant pages of Volume 12 are missing, but enough survives to indicate that the date was probably January 1896 (ibid.:Vol. 12).

The next depiction of the project area consulted was the 1929 Hyde Desk Atlas. This map shows no changes in the lots facing Wythe Avenue. The former stone yard has now been completely covered by a one-story garage. No indication of a basement is shown (Hyde 1929:Vol. 2, Plate 60).

CONCLUSIONS

The research conducted has clearly demonstrated that no structures existed in the project area until after 1880. By 1886 the project area contained six brick structures facing Wythe Avenue, as well as a stoneyard with two brick structures facing Hooper Street. Water was available under Wythe Avenue by June 1875 and under Hooper

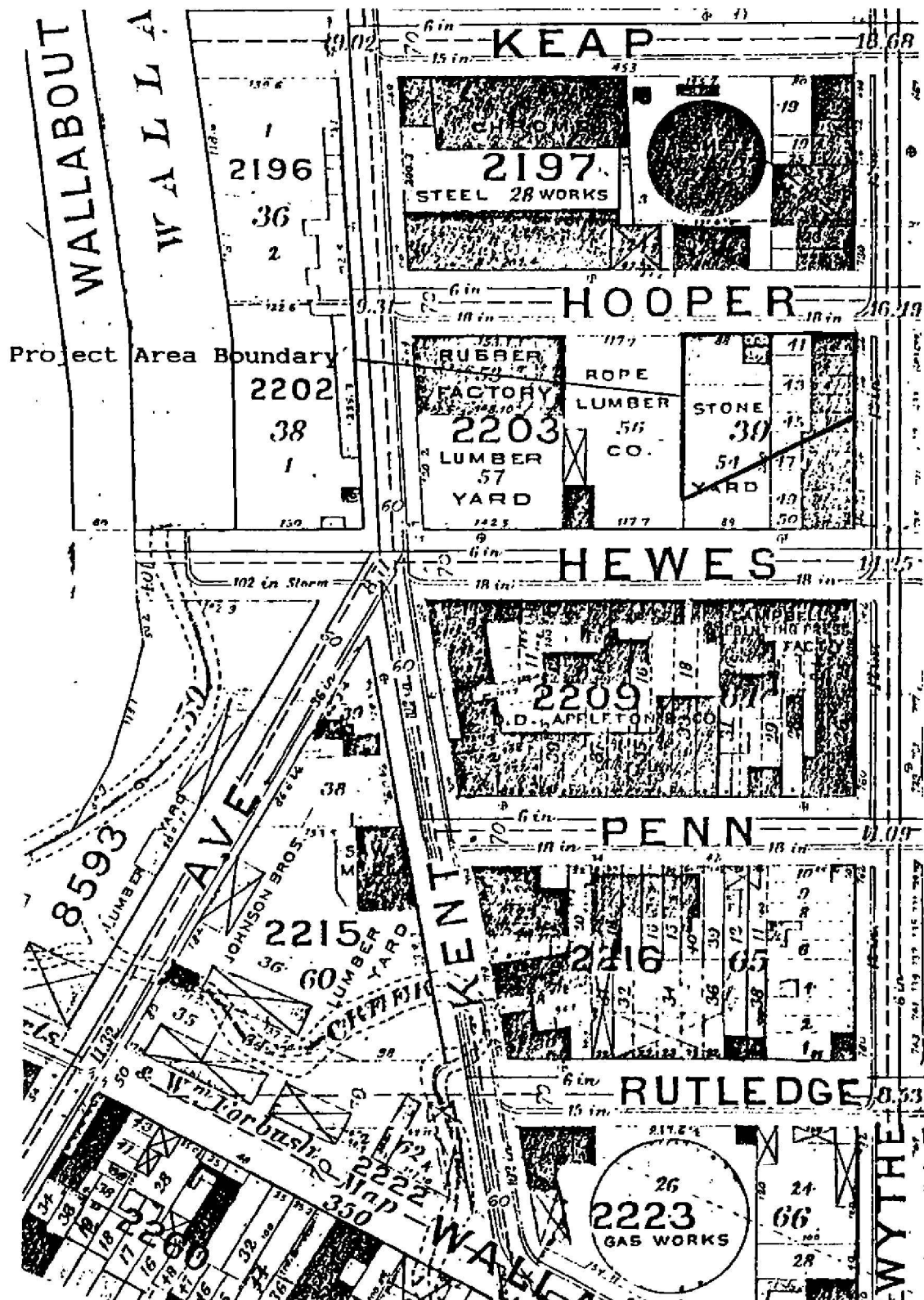
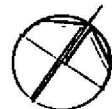


Figure 3 Project area shown on portion of Hyde's 1898 Atlas of the Brooklyn Borough of the City of New York. Scale: 1 inch = 160 feet.





Street by July 1882. There is no reason to suspect that any of these properties had cisterns or wells. The brick structures facing Wythe Avenue were all connected to the sewers on the same day in September 1881. All were owned by Appleton and Company. This is a very good indication that these buildings were erected during 1881 and therefore never had privies. The remainder of the project area was a stoneyard from at least 1886 until this century. Although the only sewer hook-up along Hooper Street for this lot is from 1895 or 1896, the property to the southwest, which was at one time part of the same lot, had several earlier hook-ups going back to 1869. By 1929 the stoneyard had been replaced by a one-story garage. This would have destroyed any shallow remains but probably spared deep features. It appears unlikely that any deep features existed here. The stonecutters may well have had no need for a privy in this lot since they may have had access to toilets in adjacent buildings to the southwest. Recent excavations of a stonemason's dwelling and lot in Delaware failed to locate any deep features associated with stone working. The only associated artifacts found were a few stonemason's points and some fragments of worked stone (Catts and Custer 1990:259). It therefore appears unlikely that any remains from the stoneyard could have survived construction of the garage prior to 1929.

It is our conclusion that no additional documentary research and no archaeological testing are warranted for Block 2203, Lot 20.



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