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ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SENSITIVITY EVALUATION

99-103 and 135-137 TAAFFE PLACE  
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

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19, 20, 21  
RECEIVED  
ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

FEB 28 2002

LANDMARKS PRESERVATION  
COMMISSION

prepared for:  
Classon Avenue Development, Inc.  
321 Rutledge Avenue  
Brooklyn, New York 11211

prepared by:  
Greenhouse Consultants Incorporated  
40 Exchange Place, 13th Floor  
New York, New York 10005

February 2002

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## LIST OF PERSONNEL

William I. Roberts IV	-	Principal Investigator Co-Author
Paula M. Crowley	-	Co-Author Word Processor
Richard Clark	-	Documentary Researcher Co-Author



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## INTRODUCTION

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This archaeological and historical sensitivity evaluation documents the potential prehistoric and historic sensitivity of the project at 99-103 and 135-137 Taaffe Place, Brooklyn, through field inspection and the review of existing archival, cartographic, and published references. Recommendations regarding further documentation or archaeological testing are also noted. In order to provide a context for evaluating any identified resources within the parcel itself, this survey includes a synthesis of published and unpublished documentation of prehistoric and historic resources within and around the project area.

This sensitivity evaluation is organized in the following manner: first, an overview of the geography and physical setting of the project area; second, a review of prehistoric findings in the vicinity of the project area; third, a discussion of the historic sensitivity of the area; and finally, conclusions and recommendations.

The project area is located within the neighborhood known as Fort Greene. This neighborhood is situated northeast of central Brooklyn and south of Williamsburgh. The project area consists of Lots 1, 3, 19 and 20 on Block 1897. Lot 20 was formerly two lots.

The nearest New York City landmark is the U.S. Naval Hospital. This structure lies approximately 0.3 miles to the northwest of the project area within the southeastern part of the Brooklyn Navy Yard (New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission 1979:65).





## **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 Taaffe Place 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 1985:70).

The Principal Investigator visited the project area during February 2002. The three lots at 99-103 Taaffe Place are vacant. They have been combined to form a rectangular area which is now being used for the storage of construction materials. These three lots are surrounded by a chain link fence. Plate 1 provides a view of these lots. The lot at 135 Taaffe Place is also vacant. The adjacent lot at 137 Taaffe Place was the location of a three-story house at the front of the lot. This building was being demolished during the site visit. This structure had a half-basement. Plate 2 illustrates the conditions at 135-137 Taaffe Place.



## PREHISTORIC SENSITIVITY

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

Table 1 presents the results of our search in the vicinity of the Taaffe Place project area. Included in the table are four sites located two miles or less from the project area. The locations of these sites are presented in Figure 2 with letter code identifiers which correspond to those in Table 1. Of the four known occurrences of prehistoric occupation within two miles of the project area, none were excavated recently under controlled conditions. They represent sites located during the early years of the twentieth century or earlier by avocational or professional archaeologists.

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 areas indicated in the documentary record. These groups included the Marechkawick, the Canarsee, the Keschacchquereren, the Rockaway and the Nyack (Grumet 1981:6). Several of these village sites have been identified with varying degrees of precision as having been situated in parts of Brooklyn although not in the project area. These groups, and others on western Long Island, spoke dialects of Munsee (Goddard 1978:215), one of two languages used by the Lenape or Delaware Indians.

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

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 1.3 miles northwest of the project area. See Figure 2 and Table 1, where this site is designated A.

The Indian village of Mareyckawick was identified by Bolton (1934) as being located at Galletin and Elm Place, approximately 1.5 miles southwest of the project area. Solecki (1977:7) places it in the vicinity of Lawrence and Jay Streets, approximately 1.4 miles west of the 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 Mareyckawicks, a branch of the Carnarsie who controlled much of western Long Island (Solecki 1977:75). This location would place the village 1.6 miles west of the project



parcel. MacCleod, quoted by Grumet, suggests this village was near Borough Hall (Grumet 1981:27) thus providing yet another possible location (see Figure 2 and Table 1). This final location is approximately 1.3 miles west of the project area, and is marked **B** on Figure 2. Another occupation site known as Werpos was located about half way between Marechawik and the Gowanus Creek (Grumet 1981:58). Unfortunately the references to Werpos do not provide any description of the type of site that existed at this location. Werpos is designated **C** in Table 1 and Figure 2.

The remaining site found within the search radius was registered by Arthur Parker with the New York State Museum. This unnamed site, designated **D** in Table 1 and Figure 2, is situated in Brooklyn about 1.6 miles southwest of the project area and slightly east of the headwaters of the Gowanus Creek. The files of the New York State Museum list this site as ACP-KNGS-2, which is described as a camp by Parker. The description provides a reference to Furman which is very similar to that of site A above (Parker 1922:582). Since the Furman reference is clearly to another location, this Parker site must be another of this unnumbered locations. Parker's illustration of Kings County (ibid.: Plate 197) includes an unnumbered camp site in this location, so it appears likely that the site number listed by the New York State Museum is in error.

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 no less than four sites within a two mile radius of the Taaffe Place 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. It would be inappropriate, however, to characterize this region as without prehistoric sensitivity. There is evidence that the project area is situated near a source of fresh water. A stream that formerly fed into Wallabout Bay was located near to the project area. This makes the project area a possible location for a hunting camp.

Prehistoric archaeological evidence could survive beneath buildings with shallow foundations or in yards or other areas that have not been built upon. It is, of course, possible that development during the historic period would have destroyed all evidence of prehistoric utilization.



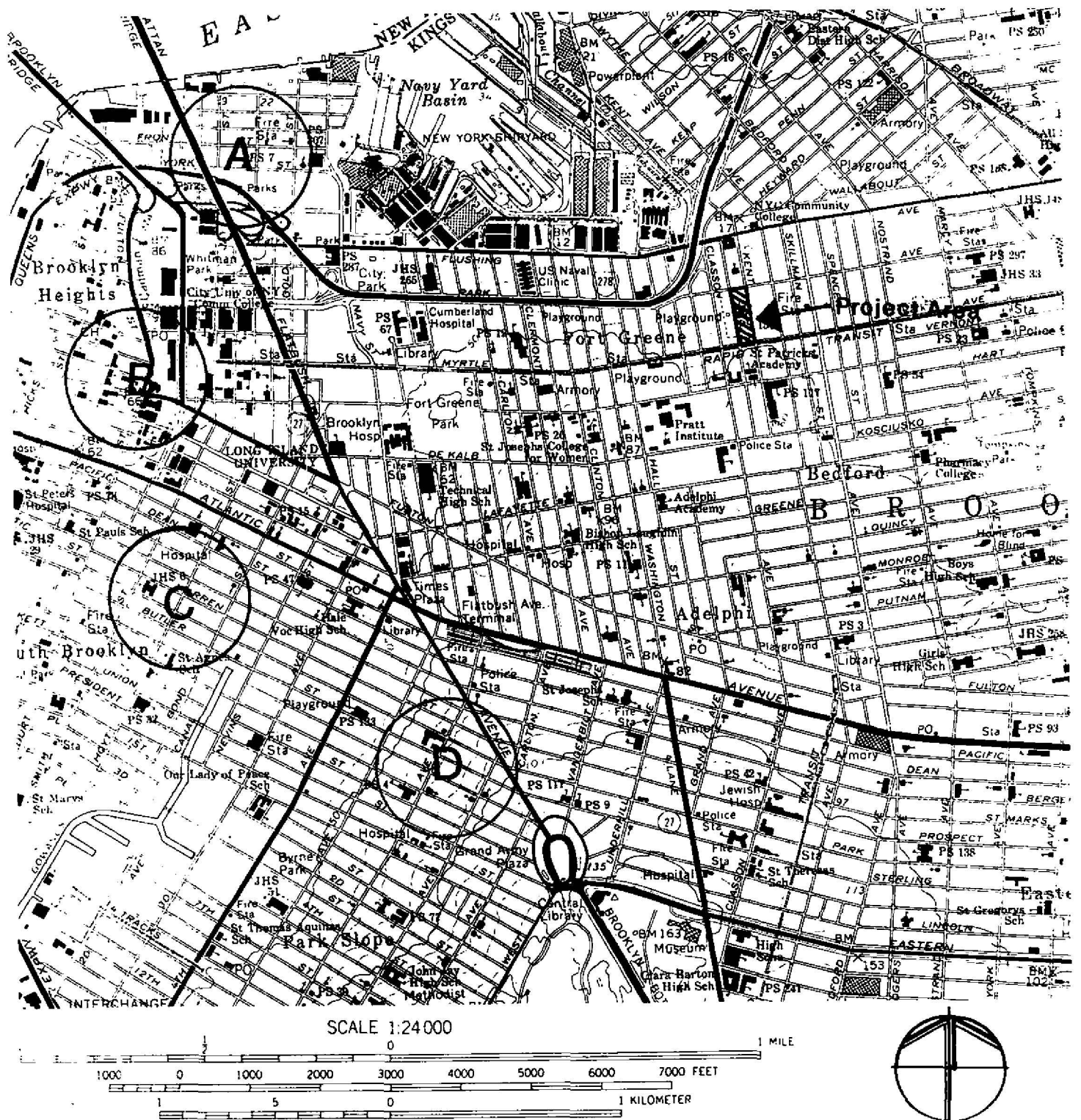


Figure 2 Known prehistoric sites within a two mile radius of the project area.



TABLE 1  
PREHISTORIC SITES IN THE VICINITY OF TAAFFE PLACE

Site Name	Site #	Reference	Period	Description
A.	----	<i>Furman 1865:34</i>	Contact, possibly earlier	Traces of occupation
B. Marechawik	Bolton: 117	Grumet 1981:27	Contact & Woodland (?)	Village
C. Werpos	Bolton: 67	Grumet 1981:58	Contact	----
D.	ACP-KNGS NYSM= 3606	Parker 1922:Pl. 179	----	Camp



## HISTORIC SENSITIVITY

As part of the background research into the Taaffe Place Project area, this archaeological and historical sensitivity evaluation surveyed published and unpublished sources located at the Main Research Branch of the New York Public Library, including the Local History and Map Divisions, the New York City Municipal Reference Library and the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. In addition, primary source material was examined at the Topographical Bureau of the Brooklyn Borough President's Office and the Brooklyn Sewer Department.

### Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

European settlement within what is now the Borough of Brooklyn began during the second quarter of the seventeenth century. The initial settlement consisted of farms concentrated around Wallabout Bay northwest of the project area. The Dutch established a village during 1645 along the shore of the East River just northeast of the present location of the Brooklyn Bridge. Throughout the colonial period, first under Dutch control and then under the British crown the village and surrounding farms developed very slowly. The project area location was a part of the Town of Brooklyn from the seventeenth century through the early nineteenth century (Stiles 1884:90).

The only eighteenth century map found that depicts the project area and surroundings in reasonable detail is the 1776 Ratzer Plan surveyed in 1776 and 1767. See Figure 3. This map shows the project area block as part of a farm field southeast of Wallabout Bay. There are no structures within or near the project area.

During the American Revolution from 1776 through 1783, Brooklyn was the scene of only one important military operation. The Battle of Long Island took place within Brooklyn during the final week of August 1776. The Americans had fortified a line running roughly from the Wallabout to Gowanus Bay. A maximum of 9,000 American troops faced roughly 15,000 British who had landed at New Utrecht and advanced toward the fortifications. The British forces prevailed and the Americans evacuated Brooklyn. New York City and the adjacent Kings County including the project area were held by the crown until November 1783 (Stiles 1867 (1):246-281, 297). The situation during the midst of the Battle of Long Island is depicted on the map entitled "Plan of the Battle of Long Island and Brooklyn Defenses" compiled by Henry P. Johnston during 1776. The project area lies approximately 0.8 miles east of the nearest fortification, within an unimproved area.

### Nineteenth Century

It is during the nineteenth century, in particular the second half, that dramatic changes began to take place in the Fort Greene neighborhood that included the project area. It is this century that gave Brooklyn much of the character that it still possesses today. During 1816 the settlement of Brooklyn was incorporated as a village. Brooklyn grew over the succeeding two decades and in 1834 was incorporated as a city. The City of Brooklyn absorbed the Old Towns of Greenpoint, Williamsburgh and Bushwick in 1855. Eleven years later the City of Brooklyn integrated with the Town of New Lots. In 1894 it merged with Flatbush, New Utrecht and Gravesend. During 1896 the Town of Flatlands became part of the City of Brooklyn which now contained all of Kings County. On





Figure 3 From the 1776 Ratzer plan, surveyed 1766/7.



January 1, 1898 the City of Brooklyn became a borough of New York City (Ellis 1966:452:453).

The earliest nineteenth century map found which depicts the project area is the 1850 Harrison map. This map shows the present street grid. Myrtle, Park and Kent Avenues are shown with their present names. Taaffe Place is labeled Graham Street. Approximately half the project area block has been developed. The lots now known as 99, 101, 103 and 137 Taaffe Place all appear to be vacant. A structure appears at the front of present 135 Taaffe Place. See Figure 4.

The next available depiction is the 1869 Dripps map. See Figure 5. This map shows that approximately 80 percent of the block has been developed. Structures are now shown on all five project area lots. All are at the front of the lots.

Figure 6 is taken from the 1886 Sanborn map. Taaffe Place is still called Graham Street. Buildings are shown at the front of all five project area lots. A two-story building with a one-story rear extension is at 99 Taaffe Place. It covers the front half of the lot. There is a one-story shed or stable shown in the northeast corner of the lot. A two-story dwelling with a two-story rear extension exists at 101 Taaffe Place in the front of the lot. There is a one-story shed covering most of the rear of the lot. At 103 Taaffe Place is a two-story dwelling with a small one-story rear extension in the front of the lot. A small one-story shed is in the southeast corner of the lot. The lot at 135 Taaffe Place has a two and one-half story dwelling at the front of the lot, and a one-story shed occupying the full width of the rear of the lot. A three-story dwelling is in the front third of the lot at 137 Taaffe Place, and a one-story shed across the full width of the rear of the lot. The lot at 137 Taaffe Place is deeper than 135 Taaffe Place.

The 1904 Sanborn map shows only a few changes since 1886. The structure at 99 Taaffe Place, still called Graham Street in 1904 has been labeled "Junk." The shed or stable at the rear has been removed. The lot at 101 Taaffe Place is unchanged. The rear shed has been enlarged at 103 Taaffe Place and a second shed added. A small extension has been added to the rear of the main building at 135 Taaffe Place. A small second shed was erected near the rear of the lot at 137 Taaffe Place. See Figure 7.

Figure 8 is taken from the 1918 Sanborn map. This is the first map to show Public School 157 and the present name for Taaffe Place. The buildings at 99 and 101 Taaffe Place have been demolished and both lots are now vacant. The rear extension of 103 Taaffe Place appears to have been enlarged somewhat, but the remainder of the lot appears unchanged. The appearance of 135 Taaffe Place is unchanged since 1904, except that the structure is now labeled as a shop. One of the two rear sheds is expanded at 137 Taaffe Place.

The 1918 Sanborn map updated to 1935 is the source of Figure 9. The structures at 103 Taaffe Place have been demolished and the lot is now vacant. The structure at 135 Taaffe Place is now a dwelling again, but the lot is otherwise unchanged. The lot at 137 Taaffe Place appears unchanged since 1918.



Figure 4 From the 1850 Harrison map.



Figure 5 From the 1869 Dripps map.



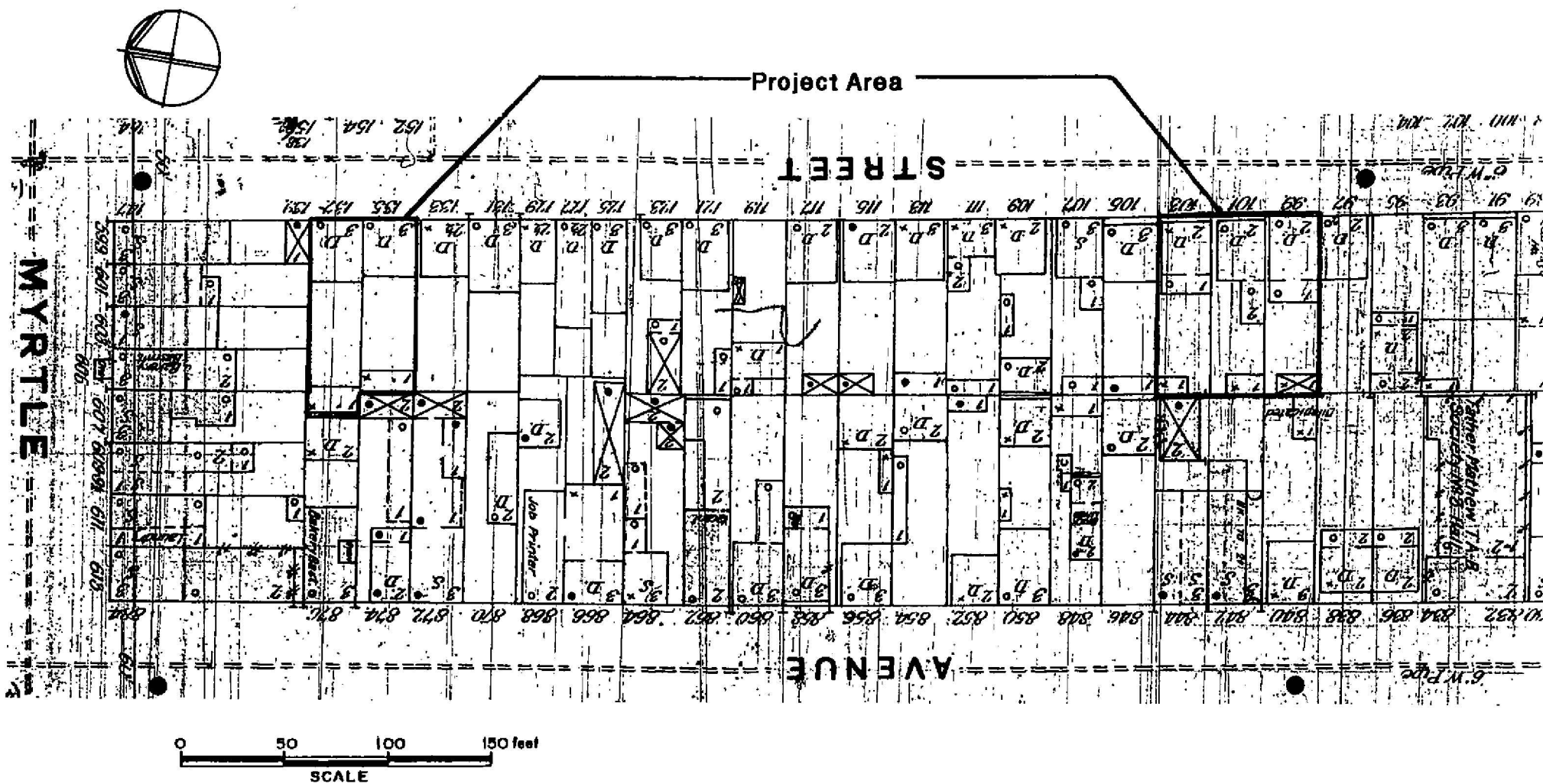


Figure 6 From the 1886 Sanborn map.

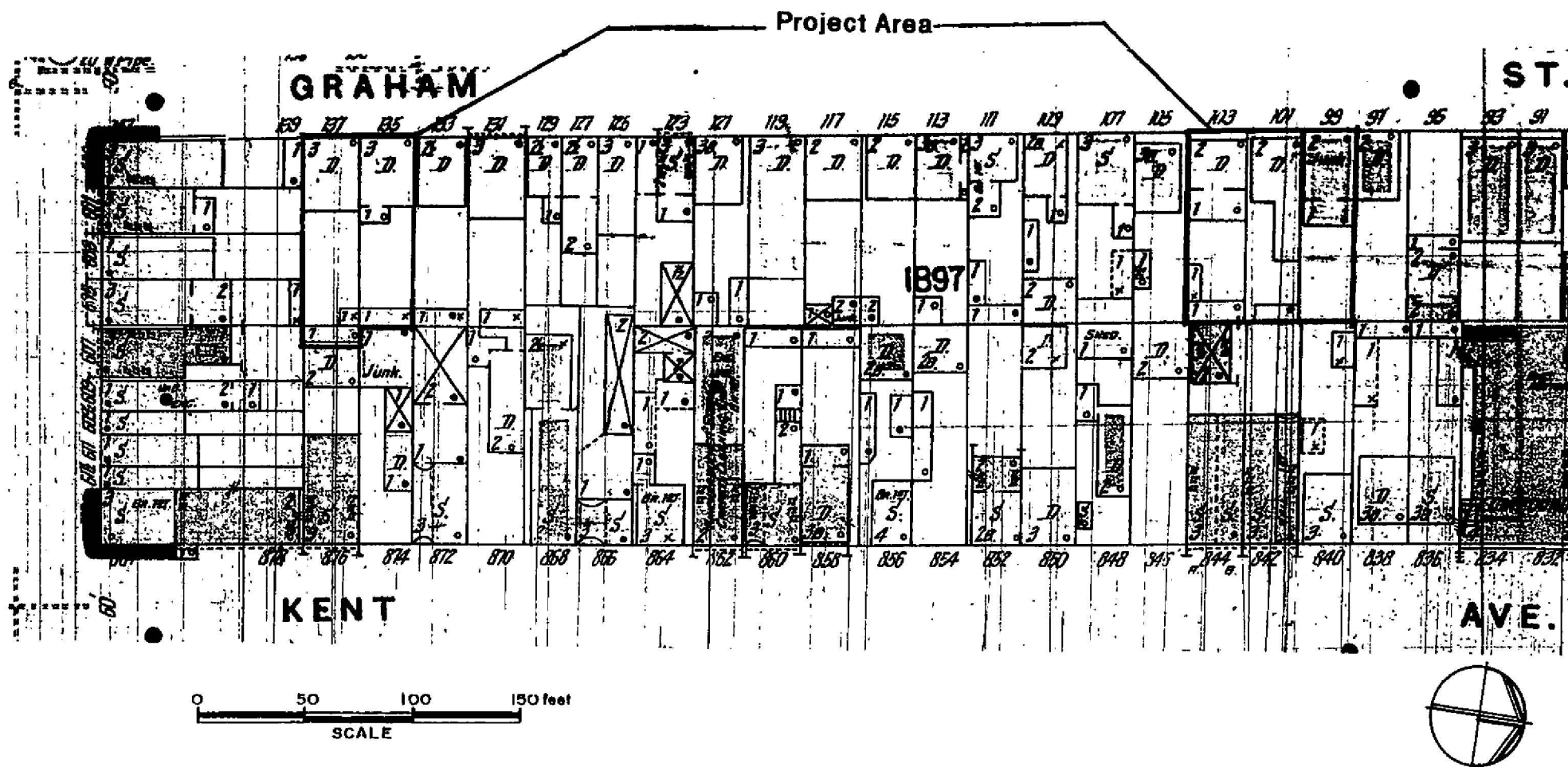


Figure 7 From the 1904 Sanborn map.

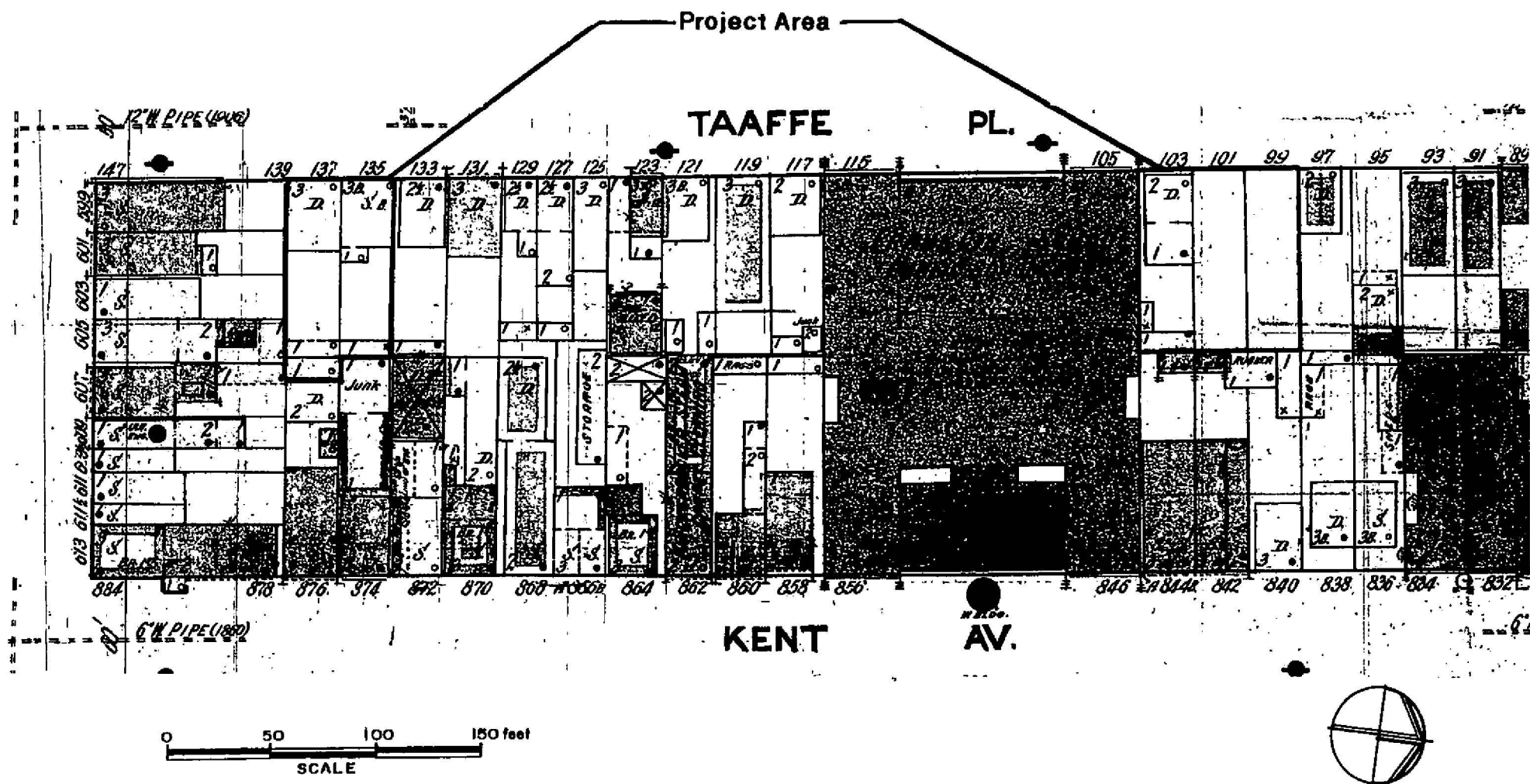


Figure 8 From the 1918 Sanborn map.

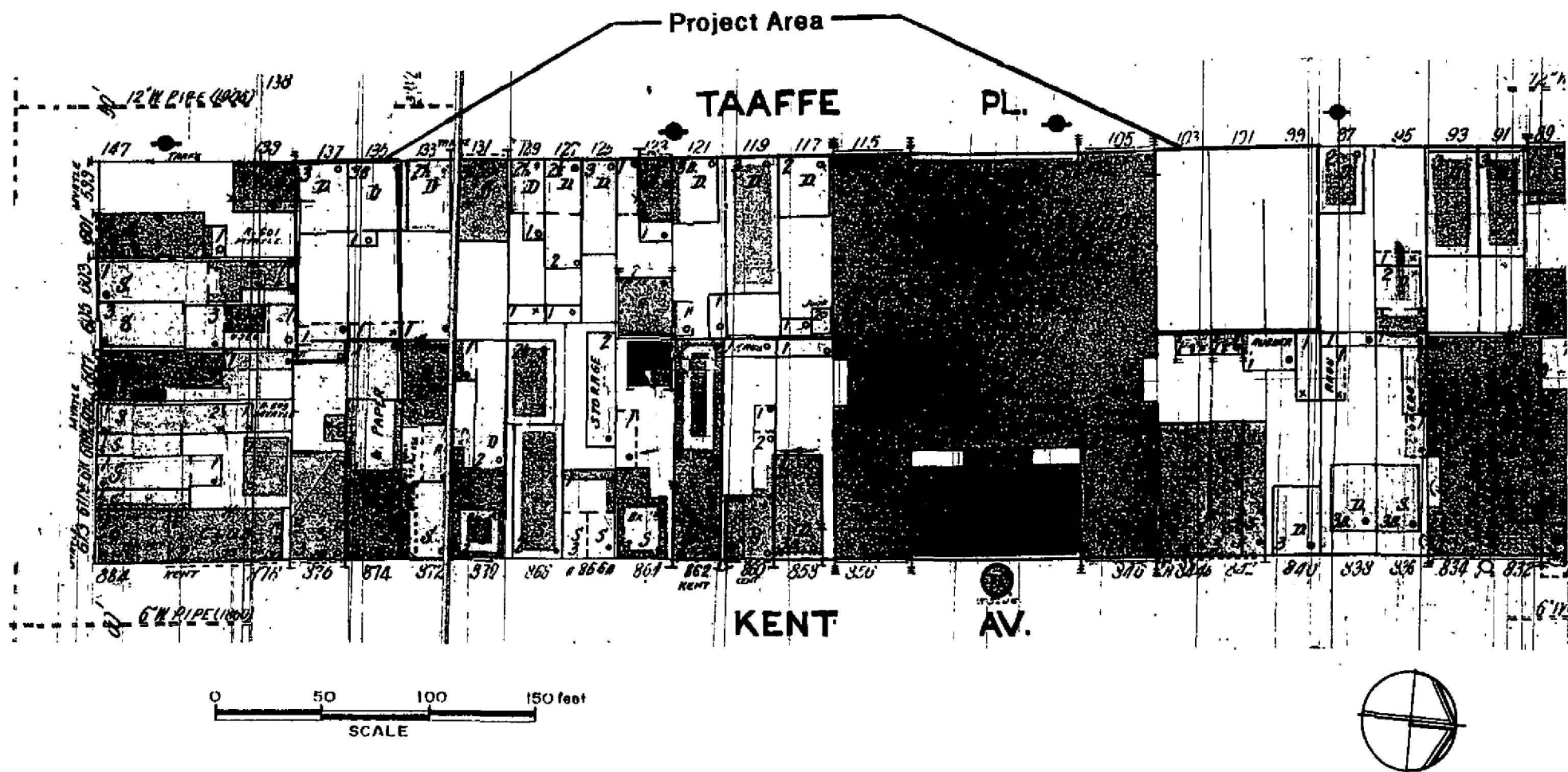


Figure 9 From the 1918 Sanborn map updated to 1935.



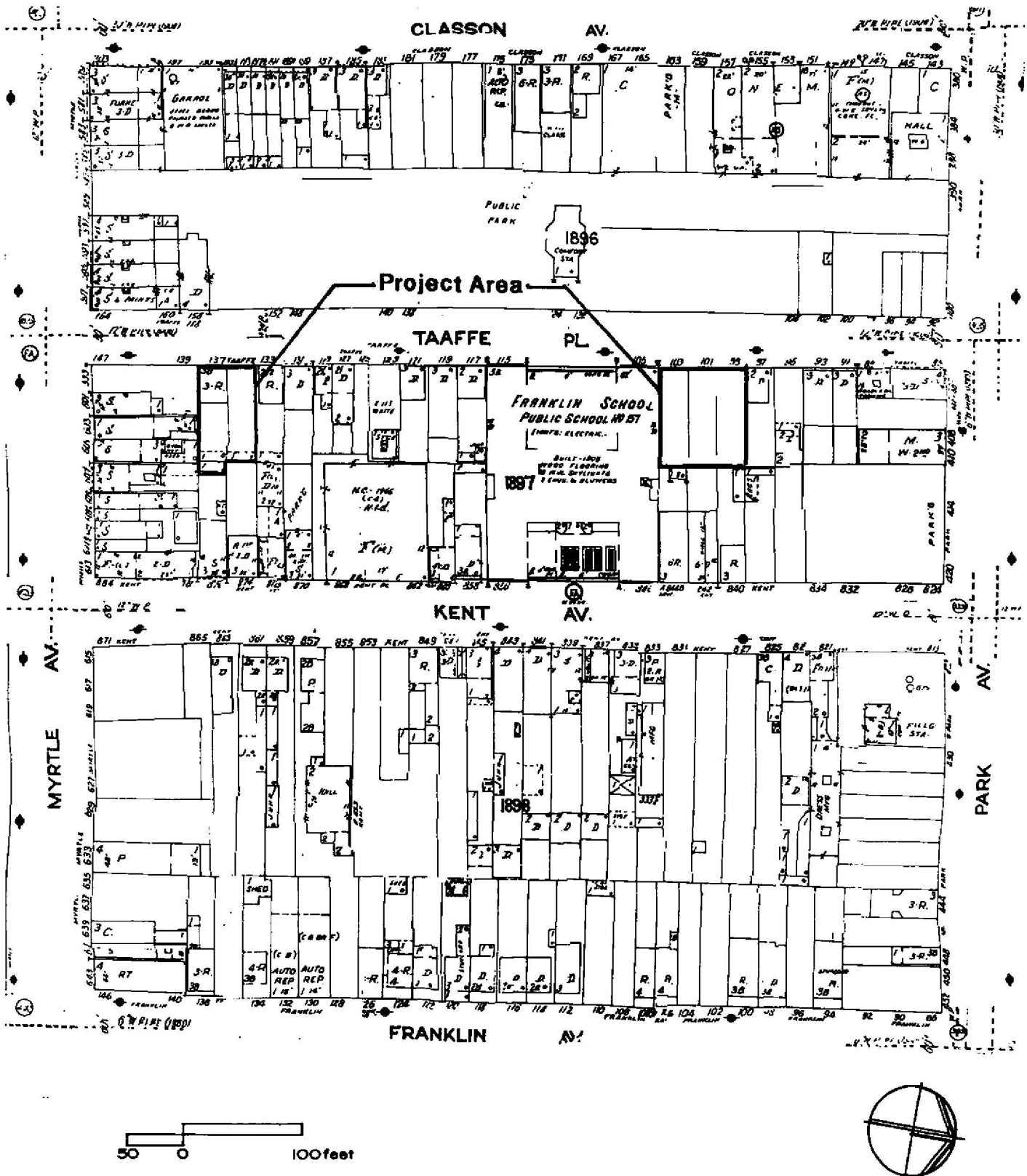


Figure 10 From the 1988 Sanborn map.



The final map presented is the 1988 Sanborn. See Figure 10. The structures at 135 Taaffe Place have been demolished and the lot is now vacant. The lot at 137 Taaffe Place appears unchanged. The lots at 99 through 103 Taaffe Place remain vacant.

Information was then sought on sewer hook-ups from the Brooklyn Sewer Department. Records were found for four of the five lots. 99 Taaffe Place was connected to the sewers on March 25, 1872. The owner is listed as A.H. Wagner. 101 Taaffe Place was connected on August 18, 1870 when owned by G. Gorman. The hook-up date for 103 Taaffe Place could not be found since Volume 8 of the sewer records is now lost. Volume 9 is also gone, but Volumes 7 and 10 exist. They show that 103 Taaffe Place was connected after May 1882 and before August 1888. 135 Taaffe Place was connected to the sewers on January 20, 1915. The owner is listed as D. Mosca. 137 Taaffe Place was connected on October 15, 1868. The owner was John Connor.

Water lines were installed under Taaffe Place one block north of the project area during 1862 or 1863 (City/Scape 1999:3). It is a reasonable assumption that water was available to the project area lots at this time or shortly thereafter.

An attempt was made to trace the chains of title for these lots at the City Register for the Borough of Brooklyn. Unfortunately none of the deeds for Block 1897 mention lot numbers prior to 1894. The deeds did show that Lot 20 (probably 99 Taaffe Place) was lost in a court case by a James Wagner during 1916 (Liber 3597:511). Lot 1, 137 Taaffe Place, was sold by the executor of Ann Connor during June 1896 (Liber 5:533). Lot 3, 135 Taaffe Place, was still owned by Domenico or Mary Mosca during February 1902 (Liber 21:461). Lot 19, 103 Taaffe Place, was purchased by Foxwell Catts on April 13, 1876, and sold by the administrator of his estate on January 16, 1912 (Liber 1322:353 and Liber 3699:375).

The 1880 U.S. Census was consulted to determine the occupants of the project area at that time, as well as their occupations. Two families are listed at 99 Graham Street (Taaffe Place), one large family each at 101 and 103 Graham Street, and two families each at 135 and 137 Graham Street. Table 2 presents the results.

Table 2  
1880 U.S. Census

Address/Name	Race	Gender	Age	Relationship	Occupation
99 Graham St.					
Horning, George	White	Male	37		Peddler
Horning, Annie	White	Female	32	Wife	Keeps house
Horning, Maggie	White	Female	13	daughter	
Connoly, James	White	Male	65		
Connoly, Philip	White	Male	27	son	Plumber
Connoly, Mary	White	Female	21	daughter	Keeps house



Address/Name	Race	Gender	Age	Relationship	Occupation
101 Graham St.					
Borden (?), Samuel	White	Male	44		Clerk
Borden, Susan	White	Female	43	wife	Keeps house
Borden, Samuel	White	Male	20	son	Clerk
Borden, William E.	White	Male	15	son	Clerk
Borden, Frank W.	White	Male	14	son	Clerk
Borden, Egbert	White	Male	12	son	
Borden, George	White	Male	10	son	
Borden, Freddie	White	Male	3	son	
Borden, James	White	Male	36	brother	Laborer
Hyde, William	White	Male	20	nephew	Clerk
103 Graham St.					
Westman (?), ?	White	Male	56		carpenter
Westman (?), Mary	White	Female	45	wife	keeps house
Westman (?), Eva	White	Female	32	daughter	
Westman (?), Lizzie	White	Female	36	daughter	
Westman (?), Peter	White	Male	22	son	clerk
Westman (?), Mary	White	Female	18	daughter	
Westman (?), Fred	White	Male	16	son	clerk
Westman (?), Frank	White	Male	12	son	
135 Graham St.					
Famel (?), John	White	Male	38		Policeman
Famel (?), Annie	White	Female	25	wife	Keeps house
Famel (?), Joseph	White	Male	12	son	
Famel (?), Michael	White	Male	4	son	
Famel (?), Francis	White	Male	3	son	
Famel (?), John	White	Male	2	son	
Halahan, James	White	Male	49		Stonecutter



Address/Name	Race	Gender	Age	Relationship	Occupation
Halahan, Ellen	White	Female	46	wife	Keeps house
Halahan, George	White	Male	22	son	Stonecutter
137 Graham St.					
Brican, John	White	Male	52		
Brican, Elizabeth	White	Female	43	wife	Keeps house
Brican, James	White	Male	22	son	Bartender
Brican, Mary	White	Female	30	daughter	
Brican, Charles	White	Male	19	son	Clerk
Connor, Ann	White	Female	60		Keeps house
Connor, Jeremiah	White	Male	26	son	Bartender

In summary the 1880 Census shows that two of the families listed as owners during the sewer hook-up were living in their lots during 1880. 137 Taaffe Place was owned by John Conner during the hook-up in October 1868. Ann Conner was still there in 1880. 101 Taaffe Place was owned by G. Gorman during the hookup in August 1870. During 1880 a family named Borden was living there. Borden and Gorman could be corruptions of the same name.

The Brooklyn City Directories were then consulted in an effort to locate the owners listed in the sewer connections. 103 Taaffe Place could not be included since the sewer connection records do not survive. Directories ending in the years 1867 through 1873 were searched for Gorman, Conner or Connor, and Wagner. Other names from the 1880 Census were also included: Connolly, Borden, Horning or Hornung, Halahan or Hallahan, Famel or Farrell, and Westman or Weston. This search found Arthur Connor and Nancy Connor, a plumber and a widow, both living at 137 Graham Street during 1861; and Jeremiah Connor and John Connor, a clerk and a carpenter, at 137 Graham Street during 1872 (Lain 1871:139; Lain 1872:141). An attempt was made to locate the Mosca family at 135 Taaffe Place, but no directories ending in the years 1914 through 1916 were available.



## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The section on prehistoric sensitivity shows that the project area may have been used during prehistory. It is located within two miles of four known prehistoric sites. A stream formerly existed to the north which could have supplied fresh water. However, the nineteenth and twentieth century development of the block probably destroyed or disturbed any prehistoric remains. We do not recommend any archaeological testing to search for prehistoric remains.

The section on historic sensitivity provides 1863 as the probable date for the availability of water mains under Taaffe Place. Only the building at 135 Taaffe Place is known to be earlier than this date. This structure probably had a cistern but the other project area lots did not. All of the structures probably had privies since the sewer connections date to 1868 through 1915, and all the structures existed by 1869 or earlier. 99 Taaffe Place was connected to the sewers during March 1872 when owned by A.H. Wagner. No Wagners were seen in the census or directories. The census shows the Horning and Connolly families during 1880. 101 Taaffe Place was connected to the sewers during August 1870 when owned by G. Gorman. The 1880 Census shows the Borden family. This could be the same family since the names sound similar. The connection data for 103 Taaffe Place no longer exist. 135 Taaffe Place was connected to the sewers during January 1915 when owned by D. Mosca. No directories for this time could be found. 137 Taaffe Place was connected to the sewers during October 1868 when owned by J. Conner. The Connor family lived here during 1871, 1872 and 1880.

We recommend archaeological testing to search for privies at 101 and 137 Taaffe Place filled by the Gorman/Borden and Connor families. The privy at 99 Taaffe place may have been filled by the Horning and Connelly families, so testing is also recommended for this lot. Testing is not recommended for 103 Taaffe Place since no families can be associated with the lot for the mid- to late 1880s. No testing is recommended for 135 Taaffe Place since the privy was filled during or after 1915, when refuse disposal was easily available. We suggest backhoe trenching as the best method for searching for privies.

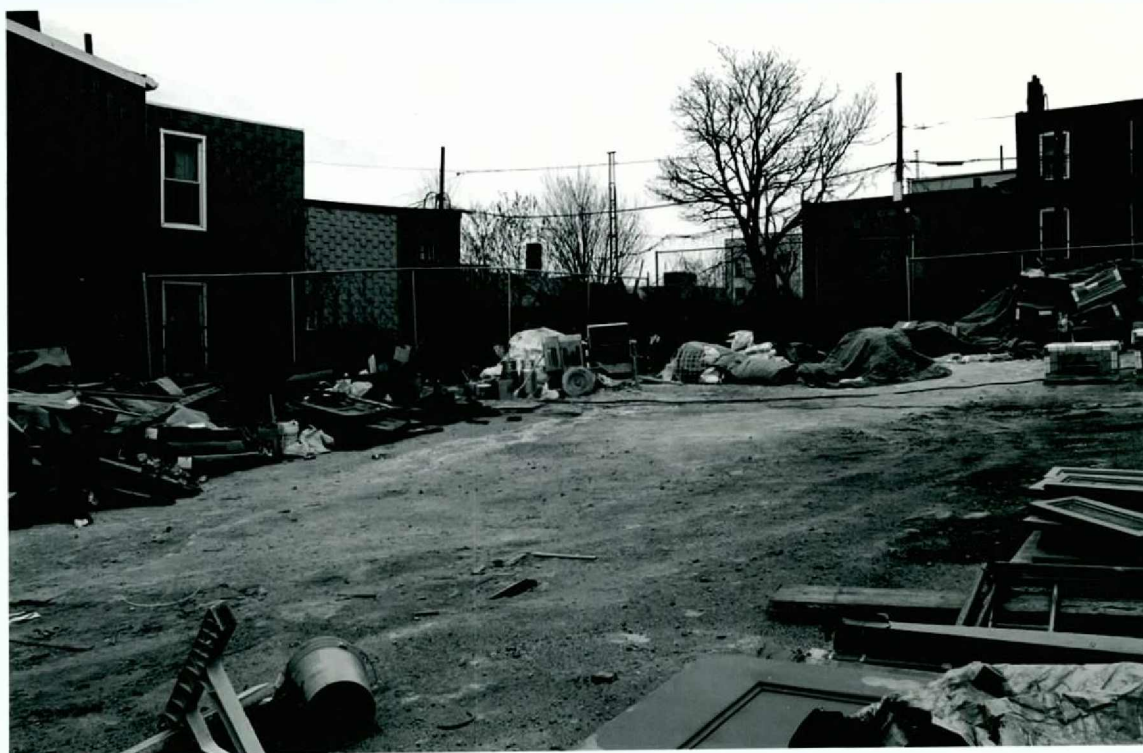


Plate 1      View of 99-103 Taaffe Place looking northeast.





Plate 2      View of 135-137 Taaffe Place looking east, showing demolition of 137 Taaffe Place in progress.



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