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HOSTOS COLLEGE ARCHAEOLOGICAL BORINGS

by

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Sanchez and Figueroa, Architects

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addition, although the project plans apparently call for construction of an open plaza at this location, Mr. Carlotti informed us that no construction will take place on this lot during the current phase of the project. At the request of Sanchez and Figueroa, Architects, archaeological testing was conducted only on the two other undisturbed lots.

Our preliminary site visit confirmed that conditions on the two lots would make the conduct of shovel tests difficult if not impossible. The major portion of the lot west of the Grand Concourse is used as a parking area and has a hardpacked, although unpaved surface. Furthermore, the relationship between the grade of this lot and the surrounding land suggested that fill might have been deposited in a portion of this lot. The lot at the corner of Spencer Place and East 144th Street had been the locus of extensive dumping. The surface was covered with piles of construction rubble, rubber tires, abandoned automobiles and other debris. Therefore, the subsurface examination was conducted by means of archaeological borings. We anticipated that the borings would detect the presence of any midden accumulations associated with prehistoric occupations, as well as any historic period midden accumulations. The small samples obtained from the borings would not necessarily detect surface scatters associated with short term prehistoric camp sites. However, the borings would enable us to detect the presence of ground surfaces on which such sites could be present.

The archaeological borings were conducted on November 26, 1986 under the supervision of Eugene Boesch and Arnold Pickman, the Principal Investigators for this project.

Field Methods

The archaeological borings were conducted using a truck mounted rig. Samples were taken with a two foot long, two inch diameter, split-spoon. Our sampling plan called for continuous samples to be taken from the surface until undisturbed subsoil was encountered. Due to the apparant absence of natural subsoil deposits, however, sampling was continued until bedrock was reached.

The soil strata present in each sample was recorded in the field and the soil screened through 1/4 inch mesh to detect the presence of artifacts. Artifacts recovered were retained for laboratory examination and tabulation. In a few cases, soil was also retained for closer examination in the laboratory.

A total of five archaeological borings were conducted at the locations marked "A1" - "A5" on the boring location plans included here as Figure 3a-3b. The stratigraphy encountered in and artifacts recovered from each boring are shown in the Appendix. It should be noted that a consistant problem was encountered with compaction of samples. Although the two foot long sampling tube would be driven its full length, the soil would only occupy the lower portion of the tube. Thus, the thickness of strata present within each sample could not be accurately determined. Therefore, the stratigraphic inventory lists the strata included within each two foot sample in the sequence encountered from top to bottom, without indicating the thickness of the strata. In a few cases samples were lost; that is, the soil fell out of the sampling tube before it was brought to the surface. In these cases, the uppermost portion of the subsequent sample consisted of the compacted soil lost from the previous sample. In several instances, the two foot long sampling tube was driven four or five feet to force compaction and

prevent loss of samples.

Block 2346, Lot 29 - Description

This lot is located on the west side of the Grand Concourse, approximately 187 feet south of East 149th Street. The lot extends westward to Walton Avenue.

The westernmost portion of the lot has been disturbed by the construction of a gas station. The portion of the lot north of the gas station and extending about 55 feet west of the Grand Concourse is approximately at street grade. However, the western portion of the lot, currently used as a parking area, is elevated approximately six feet above this grade, with a ramp connecting it with the lower portion. The surface is compacted but not paved. At the extreme western end of the lot, there is a retaining wall adjacent to the Walton Avenue sidewalk, which is approximately 16 feet below the grade of the parking area. From Walton Avenue, bedrock can be seen extending above the sidewalk grade, with the retaining wall built above the bedrock.

The surface elevation of the playground which adjoins the "undisturbed" lot on its south side is several feet above the grade of Walton Avenue.

We anticipated that the lower portion of this lot adjacent to the Grand Concourse and the gas station would probably have been disturbed by construction of the gas station and subway, and that the best chance of finding undisturbed ground surfaces would be in the higher, filled-in portion. We also considered the possibility that the original grade of the easternmost part of the elevated portion of this lot may actually have been above that of the street, with a natural downward slope to the west. If this were so, this lot could have included a

local height-of-land, which could have been an advantageous prehistoric camp-site location. Therefore two borings (A1, A2) were placed in this higher portion of the lot.

Boring #1

This was the easternmost of the two borings. The uppermost portion of the first sample consisted of the cinder and sand constituting the surface of the parking area. The remainder of this sample and topmost portion of the second sample consisted of reddish brown silty sand and gray-black sand with cinder. The latter stratum contained five pieces of "modern" corrugated surfaced glass, as well as pieces of plain glass, rusted metal and coal. Beneath this fill, at approximately three feet below the surface, three thin strata were encountered. The first was an approximately one inch thick layer of dark brown sandy silt. Immediately below this layer were three inches of medium brown sandy silt, followed by approximately four inches of tan-brown sandy silt. Beneath this soil the boring encountered layers of brown and reddish brown sandy silt. At approximately six feet, and again at eight feet, there were strata of reddish brown sandy silt mixed with gray-green clay. At approximately nine feet (in sample #5) we encountered a stratum of gray sand mixed with cinder and ash. Beneath this were strata of gray-green sandy silt with pebbles and reddish brown sandy silt. A piece of porcelain "bathroom" tile was recovered from this last stratum. The bedrock was encountered immediately below this reddish brown sandy silt at a depth of ten feet, four inches beneath the surface. Except for the three thin silt strata encountered at approximately three feet, which possibly represent a soil development sequence, all of the strata appeared to represent fill.

The data suggest that there may have been two episodes of filling

at this location. The first would have reached a point approximately three feet beneath the present surface. The surface at the top of this fill may have been exposed for a time, leading to soil development. The dark brown silt strata would represent the "A" soil horizon which existed prior to the final filling episode, with the lighter-colored silt strata representing soil from which the organic material has been leached. The three feet of fill above this surface may have been deposited in connection with the construction of the existing parking area.

Boring #2

The stratigraphic sequence in this boring was similar to that encountered in boring #1. The topmost three feet consisted of the parking lot surface and underlying black and reddish brown fill. The latter stratum contained a piece of mortar and two pieces of unidentified building material. The silty soil strata present at a depth of approximately three feet in boring #1 did not appear to be present at this location. However, at about the same depth, boring #2 penetrated an accumulation of artifacts. Six sherds of whiteware/ironstone ceramic, one sherd of which appears to have been burned, amber bottle glass and wire nail fragments, and an additional piece of rusted metal were recovered. Immediately beneath the artifacts there was a deposit of black sand, ash and cinder from which additional artifacts were recovered, including another whiteware/ironstone sherd, a piece of amber glass, mortar and brick fragments, and miscellaneous metal. A leaf fragment was also recovered from this stratum, suggesting that it was deposited relatively recently. The artifact types recovered are consistent with this

interpretation. It is possible that trash accumulated on this part of the lot prior to the last filling episode.

Beneath the artifact-bearing deposit, boring #2 encountered light brown sandy silt. As in boring #1, there was a stratum of reddish brown sandy silt immediately above the bedrock, which was encountered here at nine feet below the surface. As noted above, the lower strata appear to represent a first episode of fill deposition on this lot.

Summary

Our analysis suggests that the two borings in this lot encountered no stratigraphy which pre-dates the late historic period. All of the strata above the uneven bedrock surface appear to represent fill. It is possible that little or no soil development ever occurred above the bedrock in this ridge-top area. Alternatively, such soil development may have occurred, but have been removed by construction activities (possibly during construction of the subway tunnels located immediately east and west of the lot)

An initial deposition of fill apparently raised the grade to approximately 3-4 feet below the present surface of the parking area. This fill does not appear to contain high artifact densities. Its date of deposition cannot be determined from the boring results or the documentary study previously conducted although the porcelain tile fragment recovered from boring #1, sample 6 appears to be of relatively recent manufacture.

There appears to have been some fairly recent soil development above the fill in a portion of the lot, with possible trash dumping in other portions, followed by deposition of an additional three to four feet of fill which raised the grade to the present parking lot surface. The artifacts deposited between the two filling episodes indicate that

the latter deposit is also recent.

Block 2343, Lot 1 and Anthony J. Griffin Place - Description

Three archaeological soil borings (A3, A4, A5) were taken in the vacant lot at the northwest corner of East 144th Street and Spencer Place (Figure 3b). This area, east of the present structures located between 416 and 454 Grand Concourse, is designated Block 2343, Lot 1. According to maps provided by Sanchez and Figueroa, Architects (1986:Map 5; Figure 2 in this work), the eastern boundary of this lot is Anthony J. Griffin Place, a northeast to southwest oriented street that separates Lot 1 from Lot 7. This street does not exist and is found only on local planning maps. In actuality, the lot is bounded on the east by Spencer Place, a north to south street which covers most of the area identified as Lot 7 on Map 5 (see Figure 2). The Lot 1/7 boundary is within the area covered by the Griffin Place 'paper street'. Except for a small eastern strip which is part of Lot 7, most of this area is within Lot 1. The western boundary of Lot 1 is marked by bedrock outcrops which extend in places to over ten feet above the grade of the lot. Because of inaccessibility due to the presence of surface debris (i.e. abandoned cars, tires, etc.) and heavy undergrowth, the borings were confined to the area identified on Map 5 as Anthony J. Griffin Place.

According to two maps dated 1882 and 1897 provided to us by Sanchez and Figueroa, Architects (Figures 4 and 5), the first structures present on this lot were constructed between these dates. On a 1928 map, these structures are no longer shown and others had been constructed in the lot's northern portion (Sanchez and Figueroa 1986:Map 2; Figure 6 in this work). The borings were placed between

the locations of the late 19th century structures as determined from the maps. This was done to avoid possible filled-in cellar holes and to test adjacent areas for the presence of domestic deposits and/or ground surfaces.

BORING #3

The initial deposit encountered in the first two foot sample was a black gray sandy silt mixed with rock and charcoal. Observations of the surface showed that this deposit was distributed across the lot and contained brick and other construction rubble. Below this black gray sandy silt, at approximately six inches, a fill deposit of brown sandy silt was encountered which, with variations, extended to bedrock. The first 4.5 feet of this fill appeared to be mixed with the overlying black gray sandy silt. Tan, green and gray clay lenses were also present. Starting at 9.5 feet, and extending for approximately one half foot, a darker brown sandy silt was encountered. This was followed by additional brown sandy silt to a depth of 14 feet. Below this depth, a stratum of brown sandy silt containing cinder, mortar and brick extended to bedrock at twenty feet and five inches. The last five inches of this fill was mixed with a reddish brown sandy silt. Besides the cultural materials mentioned, one piece of curved glass was recovered from the brown sandy silt at approximately 7.5 feet.

BORING #4

The black sandy silt was present in the first half of the initial sample (0-2 feet) followed by the brown sandy silt. The first foot of this fill, as in Boring #3, contained brown, tan, green and gray clay lenses. A cinder and ash deposit was also seen towards

the bottom of this initial two foot sample. A brown silty sand fill deposit extended down to bedrock at 19 feet. No distinct variability in color was seen. However, a change in texture was noted. This deposit appeared to be coarser and sandier with depth compared with Borings #3 and #5. Between 12 and 14 feet, brick fragments were included in this fill. No other cultural materials were recovered.

BORING #5

The black gray sandy silt was the first deposit encountered in this boring. Between two and four feet, a reddish brown sandy silt mixed with green clay was seen. This deposit was similar to the brown sandy silt mixed with variously colored clay lenses in Borings #3 and #4. Towards the four foot level the clay lenses disappeared and the deposit became tanner and more similar to the color of the brown sandy silt present in the other two borings. This brown sandy silt fill became darker at five feet due to the presence of cinder. The dark brown sandy silt extended to approximately 7.5 feet. At this depth, a layer of decayed mortar overlying four inches of red brick was encountered. Below this red brick was approximately two feet of brown sandy silt mixed with cinder, mortar and red brick fragments. At 10 feet, rock, similar to the surrounding bedrock outcrops, was encountered.

SUMMARY

The deposits encountered in these borings appear to represent fill placed directly over the bedrock. The major fill deposit is brown sandy silt or some variation. No deposits or ground surfaces associated with the late 19th century structures were seen. The

fill deposits probably pre-date the 1882 to 1897 construction on this lot. The filling may have taken place in 1841 during the first construction phase for the New York and Harlem Railroad when that line was extended to Fordham (Shonkard and Spooner 1900:547). The bed and right-of-way of this railroad were laid out east of this lot and are now owned and operated by Metro North Commuter Railroad. The relatively deep fill on this lot may have been placed here after blasting of the bedrock as part of the railroad construction. If blasting did indeed occur, the depth to which the bedrock was removed was variable since the bedrock-like rock encountered at 10 feet in Boring #5 is shallower than that encountered in Borings #3 and #4. Alternative explanations for the rock present at the bottom of Boring #5 is that it is either general construction/demolition debris in the fill or dressed or undressed stone that is part of an undocumented structure that was located here.

If the structures post-dated the fill, any late 19th century occupational deposits and/or ground surfaces would be present at, or near, the top of the fill. No such deposits were encountered by the borings. The clay, sinder and ash, and cut stone that were present were probably incorporated in the brown sandy silt subsequent to the land filling operations. This disturbance of the original land fill, as well as the accumulation of the overlying black sandy silt, may have occurred during and/or after the occupation of the structures.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of the five archaeological borings do not indicate the presence of any significant archaeological deposits on either of the "undisturbed" lots to be affected by the proposed construction (Block 2346, Lot 29 and Block 2343, Lot 1 and adjacent "paper street", Bronx, New York). In addition, no undisturbed ground surfaces were detected. No further archaeological testing is recommended.

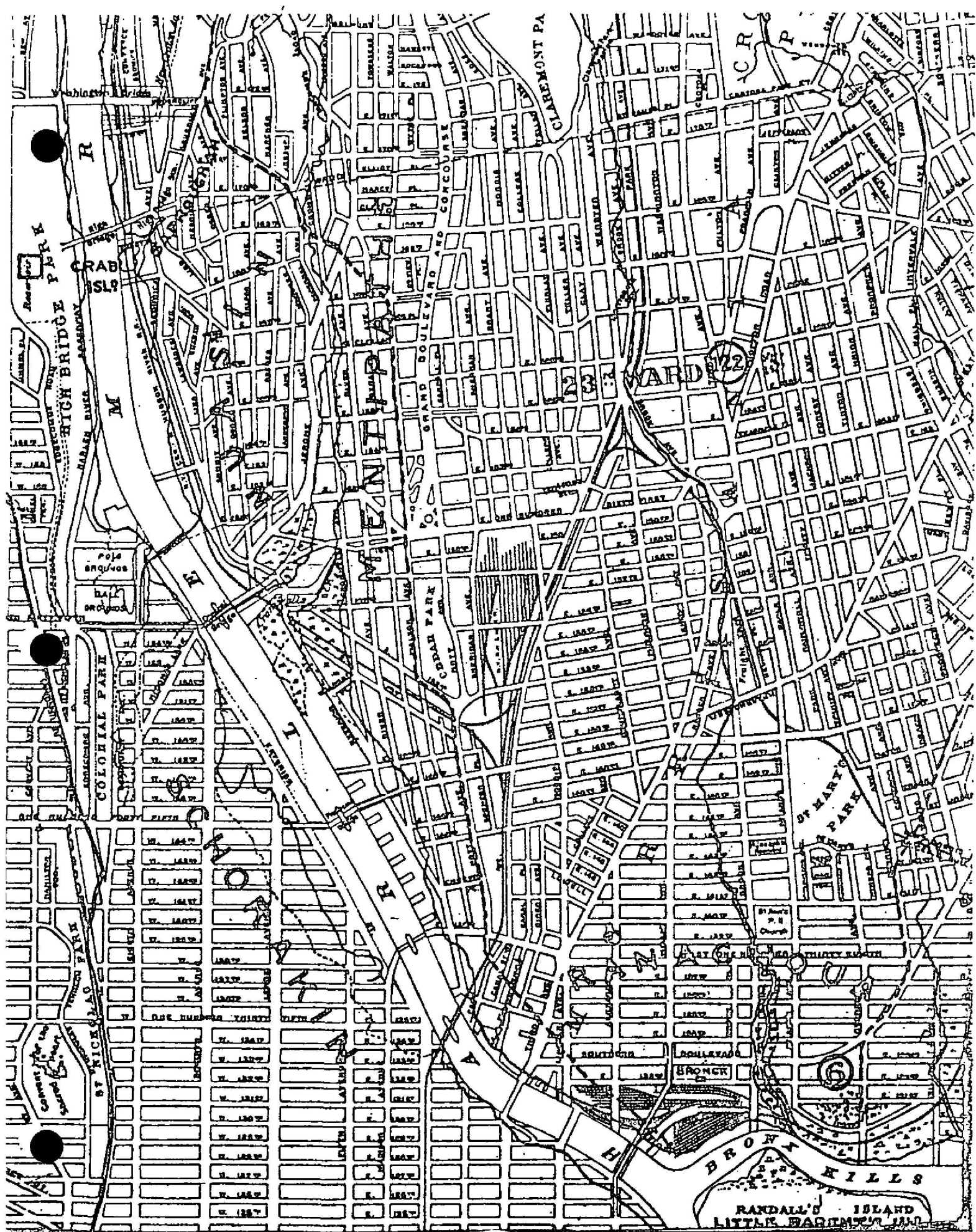


FIGURE 1. Route of aboriginal trail along the heights east of the Harlem River (Source: Bolton 1922:Map VIIc).

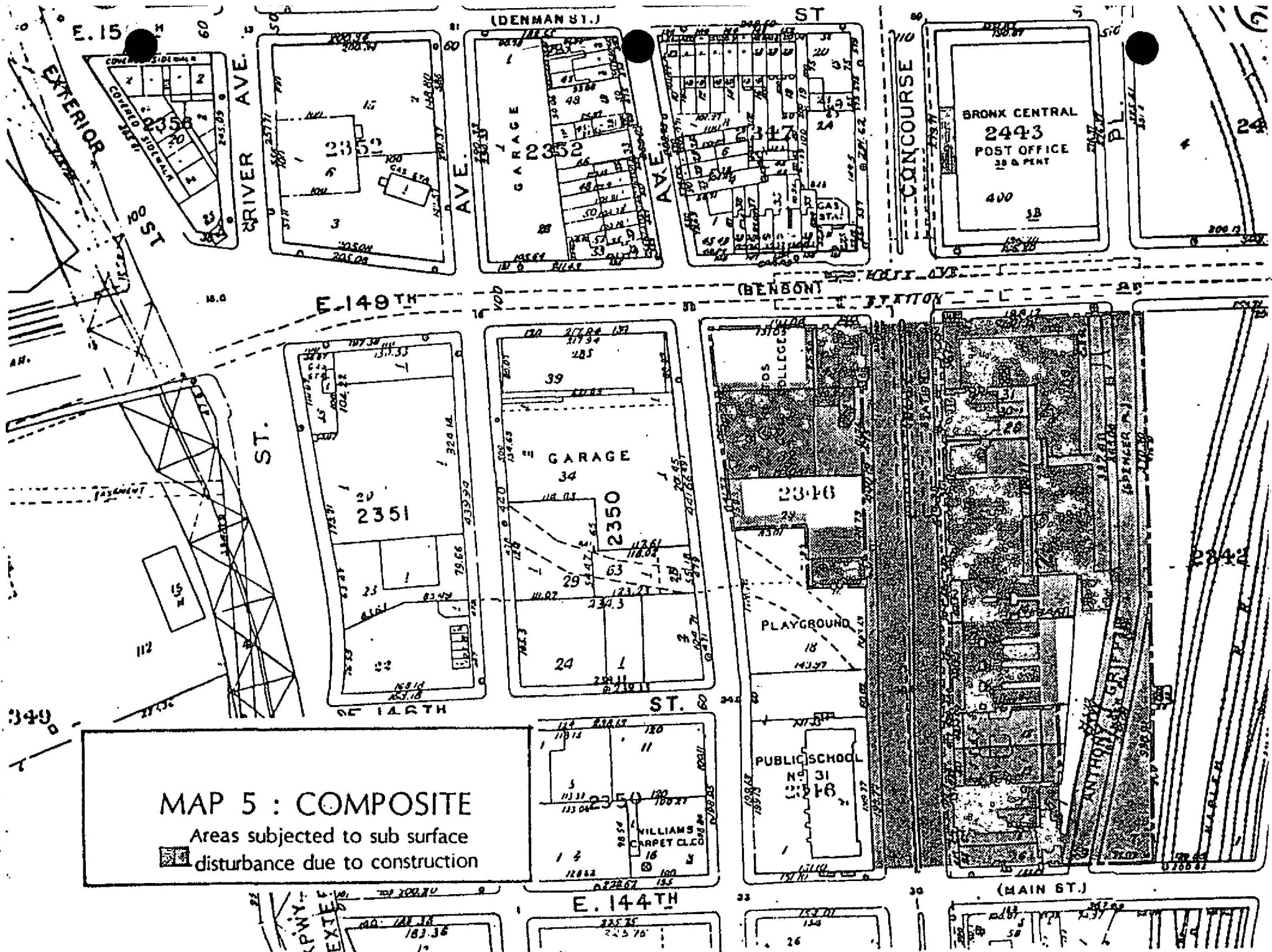


FIGURE 2. Location of lots mentioned in the text (Source: Sanchez and Figueroa, Architects, 1986).

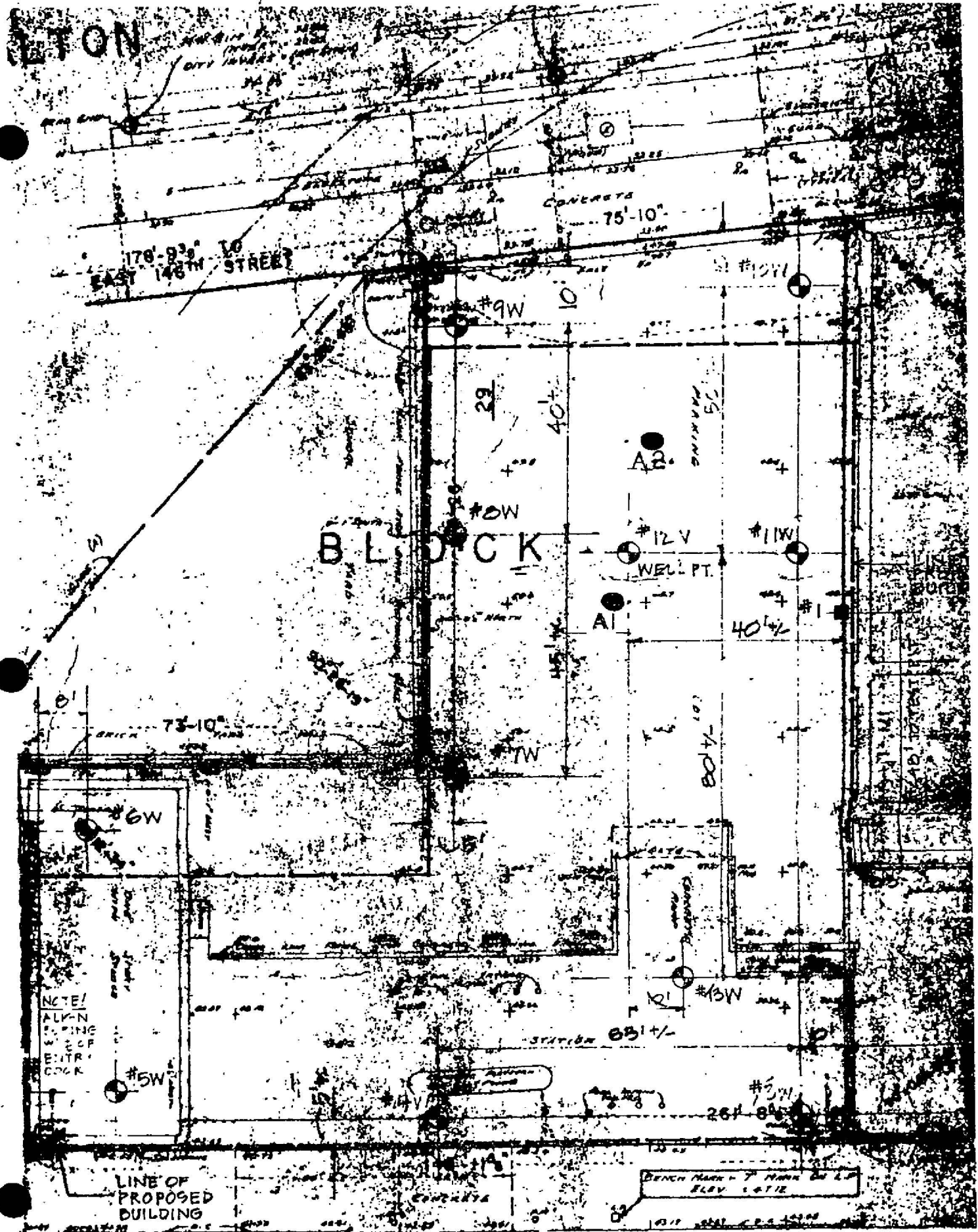


FIGURE 3a. Boring Location plan for Block 2346, Lot 29.

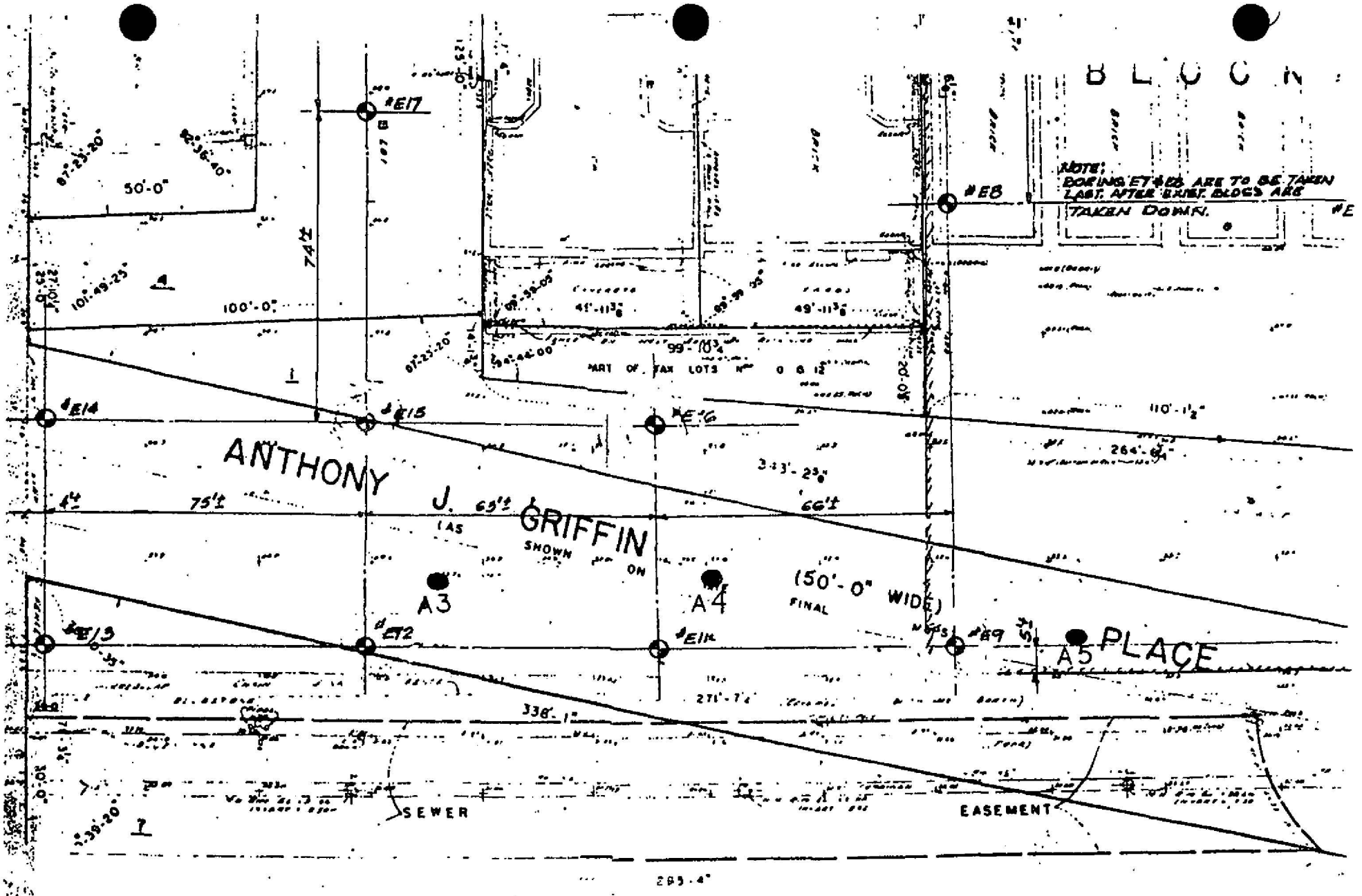


FIGURE 3b. Boring Location plan for Block 2343, Lot 1 and Anthony J. Griffin Place.

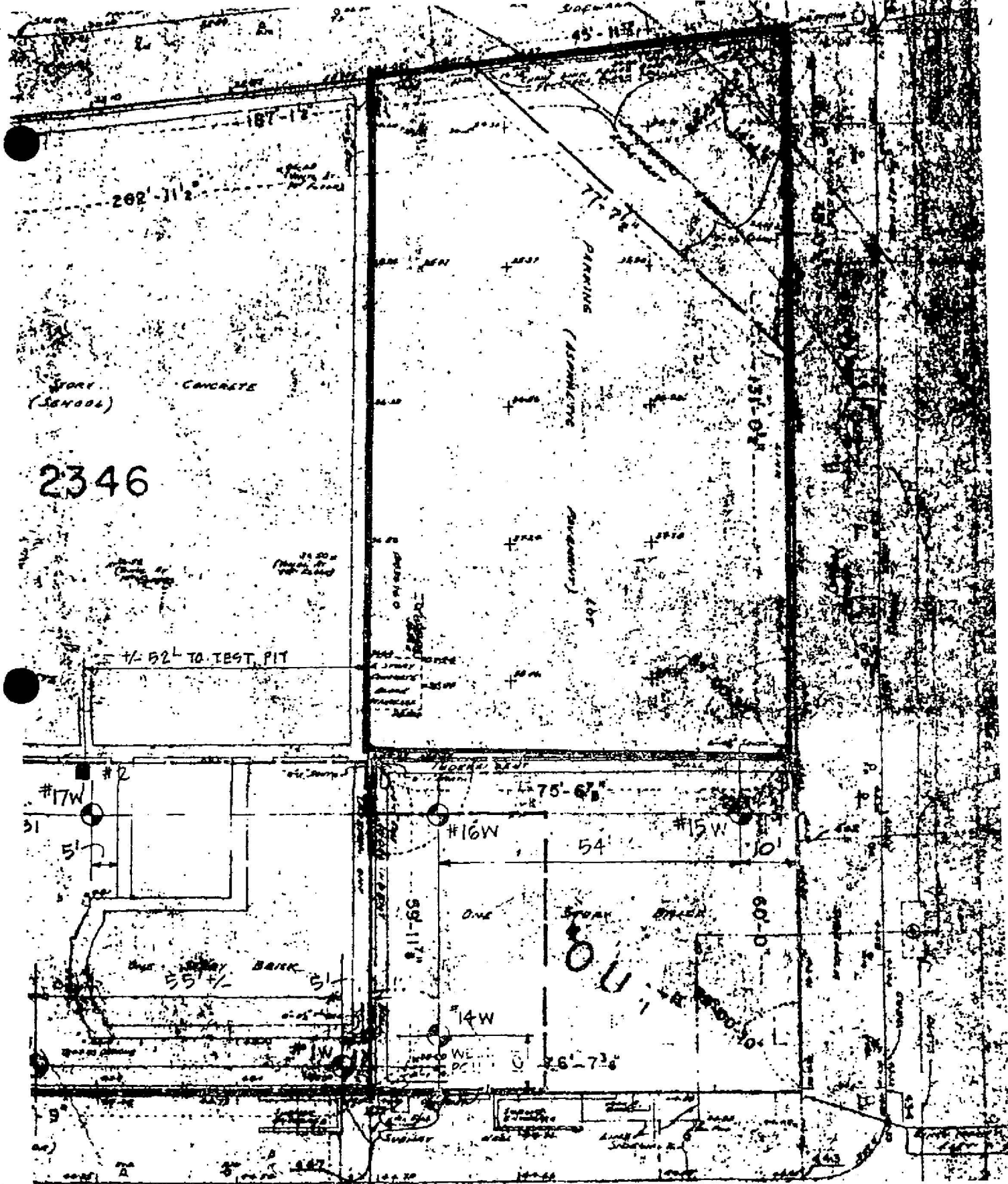


FIGURE 3c. Plan of third 'undisturbed' lot.

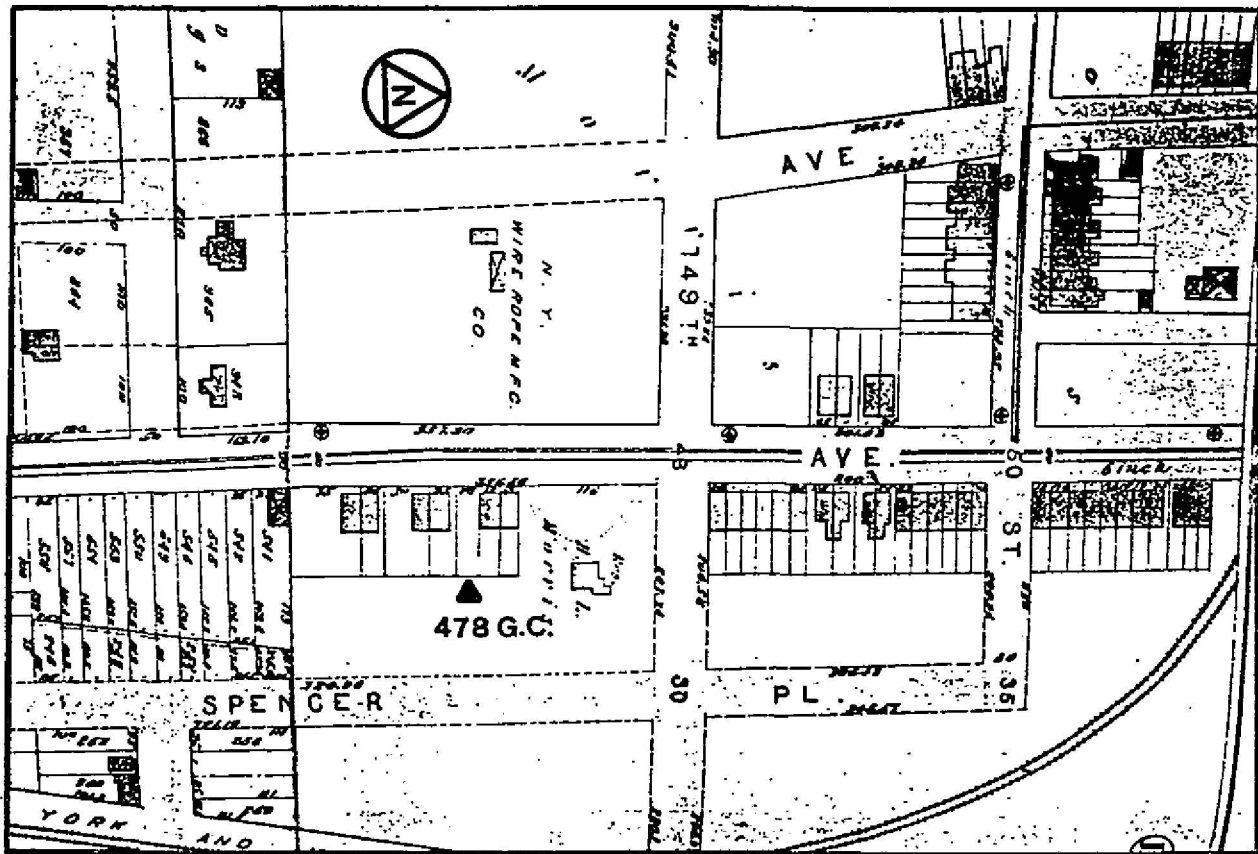


FIGURE 4. 1882 map showing no structures on Block 2343, Lot 1 (Source: Sanchez and Figueroa, Architects 1986).

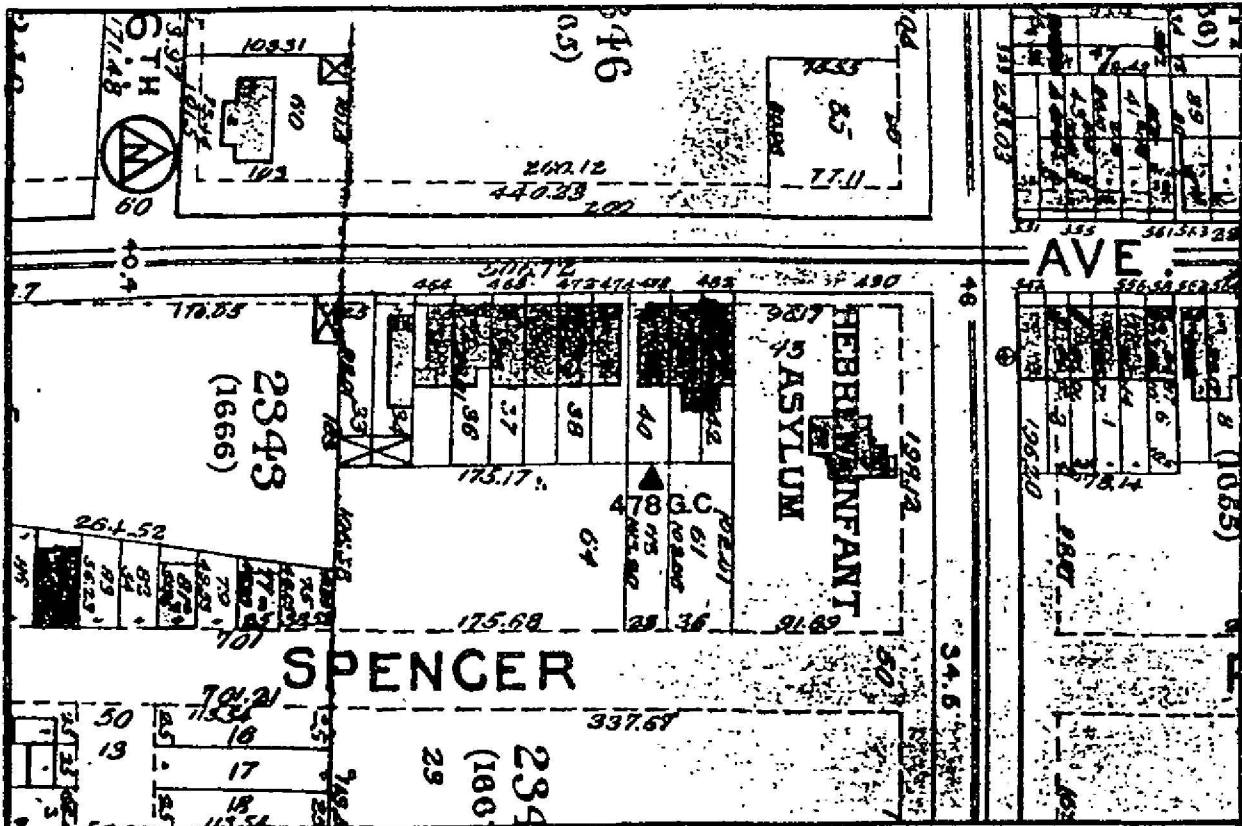
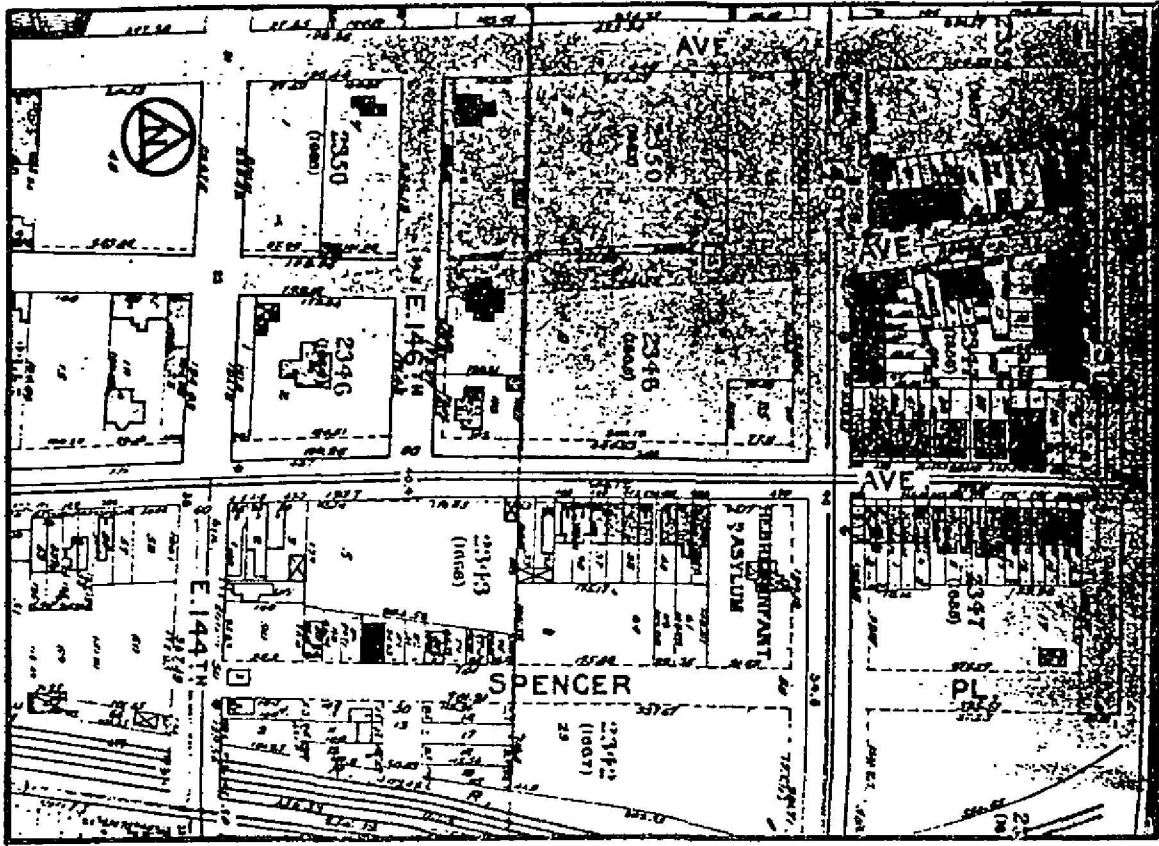
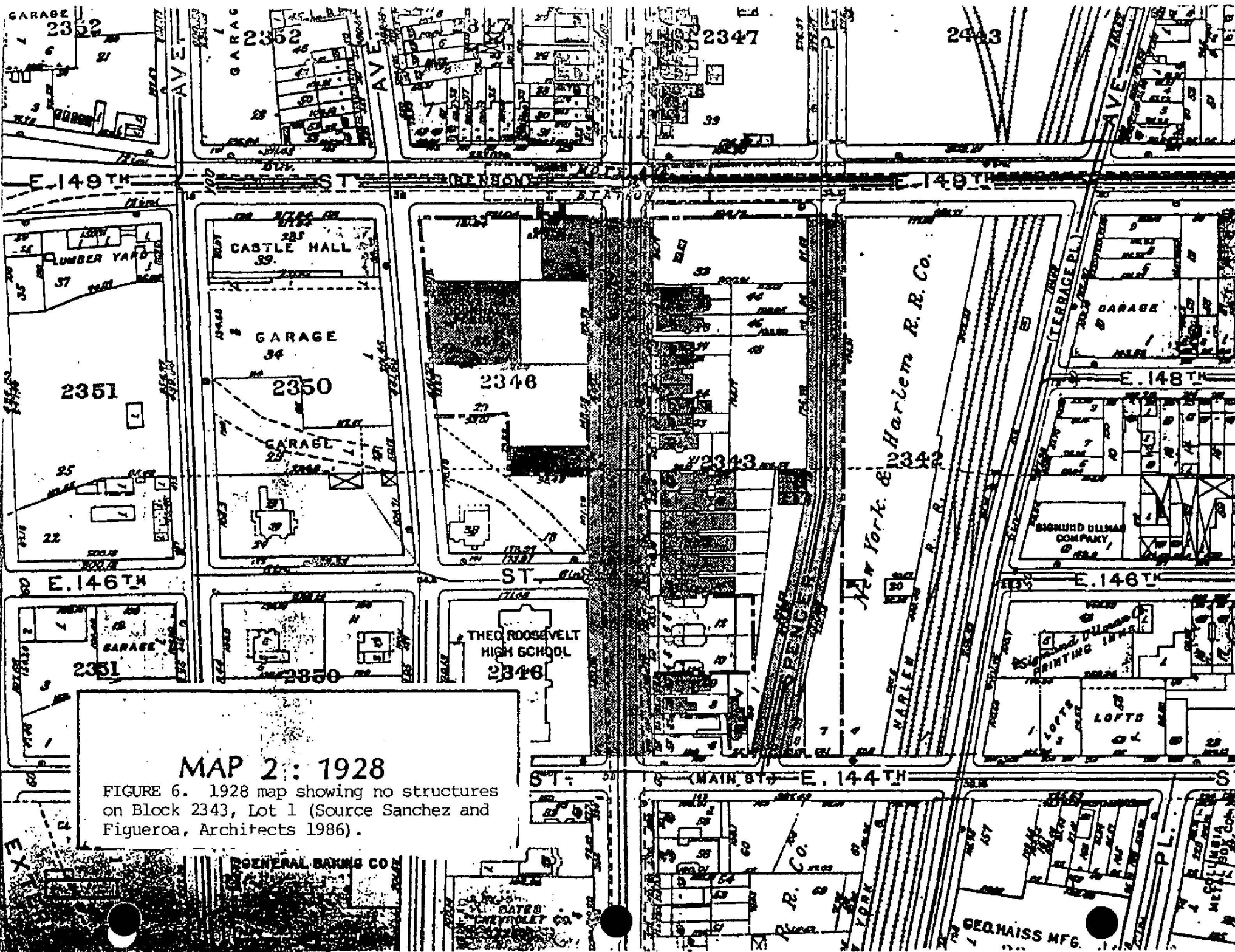


FIGURE 5. 1897 map showing structures on Block 2343, Lot 1
 (Source: Sanchez and Figueroa, Architects 1986).



MAP 2: 1928

FIGURE 6. 1928 map showing no structures on Block 2343, Lot 1 (Source Sanchez and Figueroa, Architects 1986).

APPENDIX

STRATIGRAPHIC INVENTORY

Boring #1

<u>Soil Description</u>	<u>Sample</u>		<u>Artifacts</u>
Gray Sand with Cinder and Concrete	1	(0-2 feet)	None
Reddish Brown Silty Sand	1	"	None
Grayish Black Sand with Cinders	2	(2-4 feet)	5 pcs. corrugated flat glass (4.9 gms) 1 pc. clear glass (0.8 gms) 2 pcs. rusted metal (1.7 gms) 1 pc. coal (1.6 gms)
Dark Brown Sandy Silt	2	"	None
Medium Brown Sandy Silt	2	"	None
Brown-Tan Sandy Silt	2	"	None
Brown Sandy Silt	3	(4-6 feet)	None
Reddish Brown Sandy Silt	3	"	None
Reddish Brown Sandy Silt mixed with Gray-Green Clay	4	(5-8 feet)	None
Brown Sandy Silt	4	"	None
Brown Sandy Silt mixed with Gray-Green Clay	5	(8-10 feet)	None
Gray Sand with Ash and Cinder	5	"	None
Gray-Green Sandy Silt with Pebbles	6	(10 feet-10'4")	None
Reddish Brown Sandy Silt	6	"	1 pc. porcelain tile w. attached mortar (2.4 gms)

Bedrock encountered at 10 feet, four inches.

Boring #2

<u>Soil Description</u>	<u>Sample</u>	<u>Artifacts</u>
Black Sandy Silt	1 (0-2 feet)	None
Reddish Brown Sandy Silt	1 "	None
Reddish Brown Sand	2 (2-4 feet)	1 pc. mortar (3.3 gms) 2 pcs corrugated building material (10.0 gms)
Artifact Deposit	2 "	5 pcs whiteware/ironstone 1 pc. whiteware (burned) 1 pc. amber bottle glass (1.9 gms) 1 frag. wire nail (3.2 gms) 1 pc. misc. metal (0.9gms)
Black Sand with Ash	2 "	None
Black Sand with Ash and Cinder	3 (4-6 feet)	1 pc. whiteware/ironstone paste (3.5 gms) 1 pc. amber bottle glass (1.2 gms) 2 pcs. corrugated building material, (2.3 gms) 2 pcs. misc. metal (1.7 gms) 1 pc. brick (0.2 gms) 1 pc. mortar (1.8 gms) leaf fragment
Light Brown Sandy Silt	3 "	None
Sample lost (material at top of next sample)	4 (6-8 feet)	
Light Brown Sandy Silt	5 (8-9 feet)	None
Reddish Brown Silty Sand	5 "	None
Bedrock encountered at 9 feet.		

BORING #3

<u>Soil Description</u>	<u>Sample</u>	<u>Artifacts</u>
Black Sandy Silt mixed with ash, charcoal and rock	1 (0-2 feet)	None
Brown Sandy Silt mixed with Tan, Green and Gray Clayey Silt lenses	1 "	None
Brownish Gray Sandy Silt with rocks	1 "	None
Brown and Gray Sandy Silt with rocks	2 (2-4 feet)	None
Brown Sandy Silt with Green and Gray Clay lenses	2 "	None
Brown Sandy Silt with Green and Gray Clay	3 (4-6 feet)	None
Brown Sandy Silt	3 "	1 piece of clear, curved glass (1.1 grams)
Brown Sandy Silt	4 (6-8 feet)	None
Brown Sandy Silt	5 (8-10 feet)	None
Dark Brown Sandy Silt	5 "	Decayed mortar
Brown Sandy Silt	6 (10-12 feet)	None
Brown Sandy Silt	7 (12-18 feet*)	None
Brown Sandy Silt	8 (18-20 feet)	None
Brown Sandy Silt with cinder and coal	8 "	1 piece of coal, 1 piece of red brick**
Dark Brown Sandy Silt	8 "	None
Dark Brown Sandy Silt mixed with Reddish Brown Sandy Silt	9 (20-22 feet)	None
Bedrock encountered at 20 feet, 5 inches.		

* This sample driven 5 to 6 feet rather than the usual 2 feet.

** These artifacts were discarded in the field.

BORING #4

<u>Soil Description</u>	<u>Sample</u>	<u>Artifacts</u>
Black Gray Sandy Silt	1 (0-2 feet)	None
Brown Sandy Silt	1 "	None
Brown Sandy Silt with Brown, Tan and Green Gray Clayay Silt lenses	1 "	None
Cinder and Ash	1 "	None
Brown Silty Sand	1 "	None
Brown Silty Sand	2 (2-4 feet)	None
Brown Silty Sand	3 (4-6 feet)	None
Brown Silty Sand	4 (6-8 feet)	None
Brown Silty Sand with decayed mortar and cinder	5 (8-10 feet)	None
Brown Silty Sand	6 (10-12 feet)	None
Brown Silty Sand	7 (12-14 feet)	Red Brick fragments**
Brown Silty Sand	8 (14-19 feet*)	None

Bedrock encountered at 19 feet.

* This sample driven 5 feet rather than the usual 2 feet.

** These artifacts were discarded in the field.

BORING #5

<u>Soil Description</u>	<u>Sample</u>	<u>Artifacts</u>
Black Gray Sandy Silt	1 (0-2 feet)	None
Reddish Brown Sandy Silt with Green Clayey Silt lenses	1 "	None
Cut Stone in nose of spoon	1 "	None
Tan Brown Silty Sand	2 (2-4 feet)	None
Brown Silty Sand	3 (4-6 feet)	None
Dark Brown Sandy Silt	3 "	None
Cinder	3 "	Cinder**
Cinder	4 (6-8)	Cinder**
Tan Gray Sand and Mortar	4 "	Decayed mortar**
Red Brick	4	Red Brick**
Brown Sandy Silt with cinder, mortar and red brick fragments	5 (8-10 feet)	Red Brick fragments**
Bedrock encountered at 10 feet.		

** These artifacts were discarded in the field.

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