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**METHODIST EPISCOPAL  
CEMETERY  
INTENSIVE  
DOCUMENTARY STUDY  
SECOND AVENUE  
NEW YORK, NEW YORK  
SECOND AVENUE SUBWAY**

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METHODIST EPISCOPAL CEMETERY  
INTENSIVE DOCUMENTARY STUDY  
SECOND AVENUE  
NEW YORK, NEW YORK  
SECOND AVENUE SUBWAY

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**PHOTOGRAPH**

1. *Project Site: Street-level parking lot, southeast corner of Block 457. Photograph taken in October, 2001. Second Avenue, East 6<sup>th</sup> Street to East Houston Street.*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MTA New York City Transit (MTA NYCT) has prepared a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) for a proposed full-length Second Avenue Subway extending from 125<sup>th</sup> Street to Lower Manhattan (SDEIS, March 2003). The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the project is being prepared for the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) as lead agency, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). As per Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, an archaeological resources analysis was prepared for the project. This document, *Second Avenue Subway, Phase 1A Archaeological Assessment* (Historical Perspectives, Inc., March 2003) established Areas of Potential Effect (APEs) for the project (e.g. the areas where the proposed project may affect potential archaeological resources), identified designated and potential archaeological resources that may be affected by the proposed project, and assessed the proposed action's effects on those resources. This Phase 1A was accepted by the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). It was also accepted by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC).

Under Section 106, a draft Programmatic Agreement was also prepared and is included in the SDEIS, to be executed by FTA, MTA NYCT, and SHPO. The draft Programmatic Agreement sets forth protocols to be followed pertaining to Archaeological Properties in the Second Avenue Subway APE, including areas sensitive for human remains. Protocols established specifically for cemetery areas include 1) establishing the appropriate descendant communities for each cemetery site and initiating contact with them, and 2) undertaking intensive documentary research on the cemetery sites. The results of the cemetery analyses are to be summarized in a report for submission to SHPO for review.

Within the APE of the proposed Second Avenue Subway, the Phase 1A identified the west sidewalk on Second Avenue between East First and Second Streets adjacent to Block 457 as potentially sensitive for human remains. These remains may have been interred within the APE if the Methodist Episcopal Cemetery (originally referenced in the Phase 1A as the Methodist Episcopal Cemetery [MEC], but which became the Methodist Episcopal Church-East Circuit [MEC-EC] cemetery), formerly located on Block 457 in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, ever extended beneath the sidewalk. The proposed project has the potential to affect this site through the construction of the Houston Street Station.

Documentary research undertaken for this Topic Intensive Study and presented here indicates that the Methodist Episcopal Church-East Circuit (MEC-EC) cemetery once did in fact extend into the area of the present Second Avenue west sidewalk as well as a portion of the present Second Avenue roadbed. At the time that the cemetery was first laid out, it was bordered to the east by First Street (not to be mistaken with the present day east-west cross street), which was replaced in 1817 by Second Avenue. The new Second Avenue shifted the trajectory of the street bed farther west, so that the southeastern-most part of the former cemetery became located beneath the present day approximately 20-foot-wide west sidewalk of Second Avenue and a portion of the presently existing Second Avenue street bed (approximately the westernmost 25 foot width of the Second Avenue roadbed) from about the southwest corner of present Second Avenue and East First Street north to a point midway

between East First and Second Streets. Documents failed to provide the original number of burials within the cemetery so there is no guarantee that all human remains were removed prior to the laying out of Second Avenue over the former cemetery area. Therefore, the area of sensitivity for burials which may have been accidentally left on site within the APE for the construction of the Houston Street Station has been expanded to include both the west sidewalk and approximately the westernmost 25 foot width of the Second Avenue roadbed from the southwest corner of East First Street to a point midblock between East First and Second Streets. Since depths of potential burial vaults and/or other interments were at least to 14 feet below grade, it is anticipated that burials would be found anywhere from the surface down to 14 feet below grade.

Due to the possibility that human remains from the Methodist Episcopal Church-East Circuit cemetery may be extant on the project site, Historical Perspectives recommends avoidance of the sensitive area through project re-design. If avoidance is impossible, then archaeological testing of the site prior to construction and/or archaeological monitoring at the time of construction, in accordance with the appropriate state and federal standards, is recommended.

RPA-certified professional archaeologists, with an understanding of and experience in the recovery of skeletal material, would be required to be part of the testing team. Prior to any archaeological testing and/or project construction, a protocol, defining the testing plan and procedures for handling skeletal material, would be developed in consultation with SHPO. This protocol would incorporate input from the Church of All Nations (formerly the First German Methodist Episcopal Church), the descendant church of the Methodist Episcopal Church-East Circuit cemetery. This congregation is presently located at 48 St. Mark's Place. A representative from MTA NYCT discussed with Revered LaPorta of the Church of All Nations in June 2003 the potential for human remains to be present in the APE and the appropriate protocol to follow should human remains be found. It was agreed that MTA NYCT would transfer any human remains to the Church of All Nations for appropriate reburial in another location, should any such remains be encountered during testing and/or project construction.

## I. INTRODUCTION

MTA New York City Transit has prepared a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) for a proposed full-length Second Avenue Subway extending from 125<sup>th</sup> Street to Lower Manhattan (SDEIS, March 2003). The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the project is being prepared for the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) as lead agency, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). As per Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, an archaeological resource analysis, which established Areas of Potential Effect (APEs) for the project (e.g. the areas where the proposed project may affect potential archaeological resources), identified designated and potential archaeological resources that may be affected by the proposed project, and assessed the proposed action's effects on those resources, was completed. This document, *Second Avenue Subway, Phase 1A Archaeological Assessment* (Historical Perspectives, Inc., March 2003) was accepted by the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). It was also accepted by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC).

Under Section 106, a draft Programmatic Agreement was also prepared and is included in the SDEIS, to be executed by FTA, MTA NYCT, and SHPO. The draft Programmatic Agreement sets forth protocols to be followed pertaining to Archaeological Properties in the Second Avenue Subway APE, including areas sensitive for human remains. Protocols established specifically for cemetery areas include 1) establishing the appropriate descendant communities for each cemetery site and initiating contact with them, and 2) undertaking intensive documentary research on the cemetery sites. The results of the cemetery analyses are to be summarized in a report for submission to SHPO for review.

The Phase 1A Archaeological Assessment identified the west sidewalk of Second Avenue between East First and Second Streets within the APE as sensitive for burials associated with the former Methodist Episcopal cemetery. The Phase 1A indicated that the cemetery was formerly located on Block 457, on the west side of Second Avenue between East First and Second Streets. The Phase 1A indicated that it was possible that burials from the cemetery extended out under the west sidewalk of Second Avenue within the APE for the construction of the Houston Street Station. The depth of burials was approximated from the surface down to approximately 14 feet below grade.

Documentary research undertaken for this Topic Intensive Study indicates that a portion of the cemetery—originally referenced as the Methodist Episcopal cemetery (MEC), but which became the Methodist Episcopal Church–East Circuit (MEC-EC) cemetery—was in fact historically located in what is now the present Second Avenue sidewalk and a portion of the Second Avenue roadbed from ca.1805-1817, and on the city block itself from ca.1805-1855 (Figures 1, 2 and Photograph 1). For detailed information and cartographic history for the Block 457 through time, please refer to 4.5.6.Appendix, 4.5.6.1 Block Histories, pages 11-27 of the Phase 1A.

## II. RESEARCH GOALS AND METHODS

The proposed project has the potential to affect the circa 1805-1817 portion of the MEC-EC cemetery, once located in the present area of the west sidewalk of Second Avenue and a portion of the Second Avenue roadbed, through the construction of the Houston Street Station.

This Topic Intensive Study compiles the documentary research that was completed for the Methodist Episcopal Church-East Circuit (MEC-EC) (Figure 2 and Photograph 1). It 1) identifies areas sensitive for historical burials that may be affected by the proposed project; 2) documents post-cemetery period development and redevelopment to assess the potential effect it may have had on the cemetery-period resources; 3) assesses the potential project effects on the cemetery resources; and 4) provides recommendations for additional archaeological study and/or mitigation, where necessary.

To accomplish the goals stated above, a variety of documentary and cartographic sources, as well as archivists, librarians, and genealogists, who have studied New York City cemeteries, were consulted. See Appendix A for a list of the repositories searched.

Historical maps and atlases were obtained from local repositories and studied for land use over time. Evidence of prior disturbance was also established in order to determine site integrity and the potential presence of burials. Establishing prior impacts was essential toward determining whether additional research would be necessary. Among the maps and atlases consulted were: Manatus 1639; Montresor 1766; Ratzen/Ratzer 1766/1767; British Headquarters' Map 1782; McComb 1789; Taylor Roberts 1797; Randel 1807; Bridges 1807; Colton 1836; Tanner 1836; Dripps 1852, 1867; Perris 1853, 1857-1862; Viele 1865; Robinson 1885, 1893; Bromley 1897, 1911, 1916, 1926, 1932, 1955, 1967, 1974; Sanborn 1984/1985, and 1990/1991. See the Phase 1A report, 4.5.6 Appendix, 4.5.6.1 Block Histories, pages 11-27, for a full discussion of the changes through time to the MEC-EC cemetery parcel (Kearns et al 2003).

Additional maps particularly pertinent to the cemetery included: the 1805 Survey Maps in the Deeds, Evert Bancker's survey maps, John Randel, Junior's 1807 drawings for the 1811 Commissioners' Plan, the 1820 John Randel, Jr. farm maps at the Manhattan Borough President's Office's Topographic Bureau, a 1917 manuscript "reindexed" map (R.D. 359) at the Municipal Archives, and maps from the deeds overlaid by the published 1867 Holmes map. New York City public-services manuscript plan views of subsurface conditions provided by the MTA also contributed to the understanding of the changes in land use as the project property was developed and redeveloped.

Numerous local and regional histories were examined for relevant data including I. N. Stokes' *Iconography of Manhattan Island*, Vols. III, V, and VI, which provided information on farm maps of the area and general history of the use of the area of land in the APE. Greenwald's manuscript entitled *The Cemeteries of New York City for 1830* and Carole Inskeep's *The Graveyard Shift: A Family Historian's Guide to NYC Cemeteries* along with Kenneth Jackson's *The Encyclopedia of New York City* provided general information on

cemeteries in New York City during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century when the MEC cemetery was established.

The official manuscript records of the Methodist Episcopal Church were reviewed, as was an essay in the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society's (NYG&BS) newsletter on the "Methodist Records of New York City in the NYG&BS Library." The vertical files at both the NYHS and the NYPL were also examined. In addition, local and regional newspapers, journals and magazines were consulted including *The New York Times* (NYC) backfile index that dates from 1851 onward and JSTOR, an online journal database.

Other resources and/or city offices that were consulted during the course of further research for this project include: The City Register of New York for conveyance records; The New York City Municipal Archives for city records such as farm maps, the 1917 reindexed map, the *Minutes of the Common Council* and tax assessment records; The Municipal Library for *Board of Alderman Minutes*; The Department of Buildings of New York City; The New York Public Library's Local History and Manuscript Divisions for records on city cemeteries; and the New-York Historical Society.

In addition, numerous genealogists and historians with knowledge of the MEC-EC or reinterments were contacted. These included: The Reverend James R. McGraw, Rector of the John Street United Methodist Church; Betty Soames, Archivist for the New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church; Wayne Kempton, Archivist for the Episcopal Diocese of New York; Harry Macy, Jr., Editor of *The NYG&BS Newsletter*; Ken Cobb, Archivist at the Municipal Archives (MA); and, Bill Moloney, at the Cypress Hills Cemetery (CHC).

Finally, a site visit was conducted and a photographic record of current conditions was made (Photograph 1).

### III. RESEARCH RESULTS

The MEC-EC cemetery was originally identified on historical maps and atlases on city Block 457 west of and adjacent to Second Avenue between East First and Second Streets (Kearns et al 2003). The west sidewalk of Second Avenue between East First and Second Streets was identified as sensitive in the Phase 1A due to the possibility that burials extended out of the cemetery boundaries and into the APE. Further documentary research for this study found that the original boundaries of the cemetery were greater than previously documented in the Phase 1A, and thus what was once the southeastern corner of the cemetery now lies in the APE in the area of the west Second Avenue sidewalk and a portion of the Second Avenue roadbed from mid-block between East First and Second Streets, south to approximately the southwest corner of Second Avenue and East First Street.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the area originally determined to be potentially sensitive for burials in the Stage 1A report has been revised and expanded. The following discussion details the history of the cemetery and its boundaries,

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<sup>1</sup> The former cemetery area also extends south into what is now First Street, outside the Second Avenue Subway project APE (see Figures 3 and 4).



attempts to delineate potentially sensitive areas, and documents interments and disinterments to the extent that is possible.

#### A. Boundaries

What became the MEC-EC cemetery property in 1805 had been part of the farm of farmer Philip Minthorn (T.R. 534; Figure 8). In 1765, as a part of his last will and testament, there was a partition of the farm among the deceased's children and spouses (Liber 37: 447-448). Each of his children received "an equal undivided one-ninth part of the property" (Ibid.). Those property lines continued to be drawn on most of the subsequent maps, including the 2001 Sanborn (Figure 2), so that the cemetery was easily defined on both early and later maps (Figures 2-5 and 7-8).

Nicholas Romine (Romain), then a house carpenter, and his wife Margaret Romine (Romain[e]) were granted the southernmost parcel of the farm, on which the MEC-EC cemetery would become located after 1805 when Nicholas Romine, a blacksmith, and his wife, Elizabeth Romine, sold part of their parcel to Trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the City of New York (Liber 71:194-198). The Romine parcel and the contiguous Graham parcel (the grantors were Joseph Graham, a gardener, and his wife, Hannah Graham) formed the property that the Methodist Episcopal Church in the City of New York purchased in fee simple (Liber 71:199-203).

It is also not clear as to when the first burials took place since there are no MEC of NY Trustees' minutes available between 1805 and 1820, by which time the Randel 1820 map labeled the cemetery site, "Methodist Cemetery" (Figure 5). The MEC cemetery did not appear on Randel's 1807 manuscript map, but then, neither did any other contemporary cemetery in the neighborhood. Although the Trustees of the Methodist Church were awarded \$191.26 in 1816 for "property taken for [opening] 2<sup>nd</sup> avenue", there is no mention of a cemetery (MCC VIII:403). Yet with Second Avenue opening in 1817, there was the potential for about 11 years' worth of burials, some of which could lie beneath Second Avenue; Figures 4 and 7 show the relationship between the 1805 lots facing the then First Street (that was to be renamed Second Avenue) and the realigned Second Avenue shown on the 1867 map. In 1818 the Committee on Assessments referred to the cemetery as "...a piece of ground... exclusively used as a Cemetery...." (MCC X:132-133).

The discussion about opening Second Avenue above North Street (present day East Houston Street) had begun as early as 1811 when the north/south street in place above North Street was then named First Street (MCC VI:597). With the ongoing Common Council discussions about land taking and compensation as well as about petitions and lawsuits concerning the merits of constructing a Second Avenue north of North Street, it was not until 1817 that the avenue was opened for use (MCC VI:632; VII:216, 723, 738; VIII:270, 403, 421, 447, 487, 633, 639; IX:140; X:132-133; XI:249). It was during this time that a portion of the cemetery lay in the future path of the Second Avenue street bed and sidewalk.

While the newly aligned Second Avenue was in place in 1817, it was not until 1820 that people along the avenue petitioned for a sidewalk (MCC XI:356). Within a year not only had

the ordinance passed providing for the paving and laying the curb and gutter stone, but also the contractors had received payment for the work (MCC XI:259, 370, 727; XII:143). Since sidewalks were taken from the street rather than from the land within the block, there is a potential for burial remains to underlie both the street bed and the sidewalk within the APE.

In 1835 there were plans to build a church on the northwest corner of East First Street and Second Avenue, on Block 457 adjacent to the APE. The MEC of NY Board of Trustees minutes indicated the following:

*...[an] examination of the Ground at the corner of 1st Street and 2nd Avenue relative to the Ground being in a State for the erecting a Church thereon.... ... Sixty by Seventy five feet fronting on 1st Street, as there would be but few of the dead to be removed & those that would have to be removed should be deposited in a Vault under the Church provided for the purpose....* (Volume 99: MEC of NY, Board of Trustees, Minutes, 1835-1856. In the Methodist Episcopal Church....:Official Manuscript Records. Placed on indefinite deposit in the NYPL by the Methodist Historical Society and the Methodist Book Concern).

During 1835-1836, five individual churches joined to form the East Circuit, and together became the overseers of what was renamed the Methodist Episcopal Church-East Circuit cemetery (MEC-EC) (Liber 364:508-522). Appendix B provides a table that lists the early names and founding dates for the five churches of the East Circuit as well as the other names by which they have been known. Throughout this report, the churches will be referenced by their 19<sup>th</sup> century names.

A 1917 manuscript “reindexed” map (R.D. 359) at the MA, plus the maps from the deeds, in combination with the published 1867 Holmes map (Figure 7), at both the MA and NYPL, allowed for a fine-grain analysis of the changes in the block, sidewalk, and street bed. Another 1917 map, from the Farm Histories folders on microfilm at the MA, overlaid the 1765 partition map included in a 1795 land conveyance upon a base map that included 20<sup>th</sup> century block numbers, allowing for a coordination of both landowners names and their real estate in real space (Figure 8).

The cartographic evidence for the MEC-EC cemetery on Block 457 outside the APE showed that the irregular six-sided “Methodist Cemetery” parcel in 1820 had become larger and an irregular rectangular “Methst Cemetery” by 1852 (Randel; Dripps). Although the “Cemetery” retained the same boundaries a year later, it was in 1855 that the MEC-EC sold the cemetery parcel in fee simple (fee simple is the most common type of ownership that allows one to have unlimited control over a property) (Liber 679:541-545). According to the Trustees’ minutes, human remains were exhumed and reinterred in Cypress Hills Cemetery (CHC) and Evergreen Cemetery (1853-1855).

Between 1857 and 1862, the cemetery’s former location on Block 457 had been subdivided into 13 lots, each with structures, one of which was a “Provison House” (Perris 1857-62). Second Avenue and East First Street continued to define the eastern and southern boundaries of Block 457. Mid-block between Second Avenue and Bowery, Extra Place and the diagonal



property line from the 1765 partition were still portrayed on maps where they previously formed the western and northern boundaries of the cemetery. Despite the fact that the cemetery had been removed, these boundary lines were visible on maps and atlases until some time between 1974 and 1984/1985 when a narrow passageway connected the former cemetery parcel with the equivalent of two lots on the northeast corner of the block (Dripps 1867; Robinson 1885; Bromley 1897, 1911, 1916, 1926, 1932, 1955, 1967, 1974, 1984/1985, 1990/1991).

## B. Interments

Absent from the manuscript collection were any early records between 1805 when the MEC of the City of New York was the grantee, in fee simple, of the cemetery property (Liber 71:194-203) and 1820 when John Randel, Jr. labeled the southeast corner of Block 457 "Methodist Cemetery" (Figure 5). This report relied heavily on the Trustees' minutes of the collective five parishes of MEC-EC of New York, 1835-1861, on microfilm at the NYPL. Trustees' and Quarterly Conferences' minutes for the individual churches (Allen Street, Bowery Village, Second Street/Forsyth Street, Second Street, and Willett Street) were not reviewed.

The manuscript records provided a context for the decisions the trustees made concerning the development of the MEC-EC cemetery. Although the actual numbers of burials and exhumations are not included, dates of use and discussions about placement of graves and walkways as well as location and depths of vaults furnish details absent from any other record found to date. While Carolee Inskeep's book on New York City cemeteries included information about several of the individual MEC-EC cemeteries, there was no mention at all of the MEC-EC cemetery on Block 457 (2000). Stokes was also silent on the subject (1916-1928).

Some time after 1805, but by 1818, a portion of Block 457 and what is now the Second Avenue roadbed was described as "...a piece of ground... exclusively used as a Cemetery..." (Liber 71:194-198; MCC X:132-133). No available records list the numbers of interments, much less the surnames of those buried in the MEC-EC cemetery. Nonetheless, the Trustees' minutes and other contemporary cemetery records do provide many details about not only the "mechanics" of burials, but also the attitudes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century parishioners.

Apparent from the Methodist Society Cemetery's conveyance map of 1822, describing the "Stillwell" cemetery outside the APE and one block directly east of the MEC-EC cemetery, was the ordered placement of blocks of burying lots, some facing east/west and many facing north/south, that were divided by 3.5 foot wide walkways (Figure 6). The individual lots were numbered and were 5 feet wide and 8 feet long (Liber 210:285). No depth for the burial shafts was noted.

For comparative purposes, information on other vaults from nearby cemeteries was pursued. One of these, the nearby New York Cemetery, placed their vaults 10 feet below the 1830 surface (Trustees of the New York Marble Cemetery 1830-1832). This cemetery, outside the APE and one block directly north of the location of the MEC-EC cemetery, is still in

existence. Their vaults were constructed from Tuckahoe marble. In 1830 the ground-water level beneath the New York Cemetery was 35 feet, and in 2000, when someone descended into a subterranean vault, it was dry (Trustees: Ibid.; Brown 1999; Kelley 2000).

The MEC-EC's Trustees' minutes do not describe graves and grave shafts, but vaults are mentioned several times in 1835 and 1836. The Building Committee "recommended the board to build 10 private Vaults to be about 8 by 12 feet in the clear and built after the manner of the Vaults in the Marble Cemetery in 2<sup>nd</sup> Street..." (October 1835). The Trustees' chose to have four new public vaults "at the Corner of 1<sup>st</sup> Street & 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue" each 14 feet in depth and to be made of limestone for "...it would be improper to build the Vaults with blue Stone or brick as was contemplated...." (February 3 and 17, 1836; October 28, 1835). At the same time, the Trustees approved the expenditure for a "brick wall [about 270 feet in length] around the said Ground...running measure 8 feet in height & coped with good blue Stone...." (Ibid.). During the late spring of 1836, the Trustees recommended "... that the sidewalks around the Burying ground, corner of first Street & 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue be paved with Brick...." (June 15, 1836).

In the spring the Board of Trustees were informed "that the Arches of the Vaults now building in first street, were too high above the surface, etc." (May 18, 1836). By summer, the problem must have been solved, for the vaults were finished (July 20, 1836). A committee was then formed to set the rates for the interment "in the Grounds and Vaults owned by the Methst Episcopal Church, East Circuit...corner first Street and second Avenue...[for] members and others...." (August 9, 1836). Appendix C provides a list of prices set for interment, which can be compared to the prices quoted by Ruggles in 1856 for exhumation, transportation, and reinterment, presented in Appendix D. The Trustees agreed to have the Sextons' Fees charged at one half the going rates, "for burying poor Members, when the Trustees give the Ground" (Ibid.). At that same board meeting, the Trustees' Committee recommended and approved the following:

*...Brother William Hadley to take charge of the Interments corner of first street and second avenue whose duty is shall be to keep a Record in a Book to be furnished him, of all Interments, with the name and age of every person interred, together with the name of the Sexton so interring.*

*The Com[mittee] further recommended, that the Board of Trustees in each Section keep a Record of all Interments within their Sections; and that the Treasurers of all the Boards meet quarterly to make dividends (?), and receive the accounts of the persons in charge of the Vaults and Grounds to which the Board of Treasurers they are to be accountable for the faithful performance of their duties (Ibid.).*

It appears that the Trustees were seeking some sort of order and greater accountability in terms of the financial aspects of the MEC-EC cemetery on Block 457, but documents detailing these accounts for the period between 1835-1855 could not be located.<sup>2</sup> It is likely that the "sections" referred to by the Trustees pertain to areas controlled by each of the five churches within the East Circuit; it is possible that each church had its own section within the

<sup>2</sup> Research indicated they are not available in public or private repositories.

cemetery. Several of the individual churches also had their own churchyard cemetery separate from the subject cemetery on Block 457. However, the MEC-EC also owned another cemetery as a group in Williamsburg, "on Long Island", as they referred to it. In 1835, for that cemetery, which would today be in Brooklyn if still in existence, the Trustees recommended that "in the future the plots should be sold in their regular order and not permit any purchaser to select a plot out of regular rotation" (April 5). This suggests that there was a need or desire to regulate the placement of graves and vaults. Later that year, the minutes mention that the MEC-EC cemetery has had an increase in "interments, not only of persons firmly attached to the Church, but [also] of others...." (December 16, 1835). This might have signaled the need for an orderly choosing of burial plot locations as opposed to allowing the living to choose which part of the cemetery their dead were buried.

During 1835-1836, when the individual five churches formed the East Circuit (Liber 364:508-522), the MEC-EC was also considering closing the cemetery, exhuming the dead bodies, and constructing a church in the cemetery's place on the southeast corner of Block 457. In the end, they decided to maintain the cemetery, but, in the process, there was an airing of conflicting attitudes about exhumation as well as about the merits of urban versus suburban cemeteries. They concluded that there was a need for burial grounds within the city. They also noted the "difficulties they [met] from the friends of those recently buried there & also from public sentiment...." of having the friends or relatives removed from the cemetery. "There was a "veneration for the ashes (figuratively or actually?) of the departed." Physicians were concerned about the "exhalation arising from the ground" should the dead bodies be exhumed. They and the public health officials, believing that miasma was the cause of illness, were concerned with both burials and exhumations, particularly in light of the yellow fever and other contagious disease outbreaks recurring from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century onward.

Thus, although the number of the dead interred in the MEC-EC cemetery on Block 457 and in the APE is unknown, the building material and depth of the vaults, the size of the individual plots, and the location of a brick wall and brick sidewalks surrounding the cemetery can be surmised.

### C. Disinterments

Research indicates that the MEC-EC Board of Trustees was not against exhumation entirely. The Trustees appointed a committee "to examine the oldest Vaults in the 1<sup>st</sup> Street Burying Ground with powers to have the same Cleaned out if they deem it expedient" (February 17, 1836). In 1854 they removed all the burials from the MEC-EC cemetery on Block 457 outside the APE in preparation for selling the project site parcel to George W. Edwards one year later (Liber 679:541-545). No records as of yet have been found that list the numbers of the dead who were exhumed and removed to other burying grounds or cemeteries either in 1817 when Second Avenue and East First Street were laid out across a portion of it, or later in 1854-55 when the remaining cemetery parcel was sold for development.

While the MEC-EC's Board of Trustees were making decisions about disinterments in their cemetery on Block 457, there were several New York City ordinances and laws as well as

State laws that influenced the disinterment policies for all Manhattan cemeteries in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The 1842 and 1847 State laws as well as the 1851 New York City ordinance had the most direct impacts on the MEC-EC cemetery on Block 457.

### Ordinances and Laws

Eighteenth-century New York City ordinances and a late-19<sup>th</sup> century volume on the laws of the state of New York relating to...burial grounds and cemeteries.... provided no information on the “mechanics” of a cemetery, such as the depth of burial shafts, the number of “layers” of interments allowed, the limit to the number of burials within a specified space, etc. (1707, 1749, 1763, 1774, 1793, 1797, 1799, 1881). However, a review of ordinances pertaining to the location of cemeteries in Manhattan indicates they were pertinent to the MEC-EC cemetery.

In 1804, a year before the MEC bought the parcel on Block 457, the Common Council (CC) passed an ordinance “...That no person shall inter any Corpse in any Cemetery or other place in the said City to the Southward and westward of Pump Street and Nicholas Street....” (Pump Street became modern day Walker Street) with certain exceptions (MCC III:462). The MEC churches that would use the cemetery on the northwest corner of East First Street and Second Avenue were almost a mile north of the “no burial line.” Nonetheless, since they buried both church members and others in their cemetery, the ordinance could have had an effect on the early use of the cemetery parcel, purchased in 1805, as it may have caused an increase in the number of burials in the MEC-EC cemetery.

Later in 1804, the CC ordained, among other things, that the Sextons keep a weekly Register “of the persons buried in such Cemetery, Vault or burying ground...under a penalty of twenty five dollars for each neglect....” (MCC III:576). The ordinance also required that “on the Tuesday of every week in such papers as the Corporation employ an accurate list of the deaths of the preceding week... with the age Sex disease and other particulars of each person so dying and where buried....” (MCC III:577). If such records for the MEC-EC cemetery exist, these records have not yet been located, notwithstanding an intensive documentary search.

At least as early as 1806, the year after the MEC-EC purchased the parcel that became a cemetery, the CC’s Committee of the Board of Health recommended, among nine other things, that “...the interment of dead bodies within the city ought to be prohibited....” (as quoted in Stokes V:1442). The 1809 resolution rescinded the permission to construct vaults beneath streets and sidewalks. However, the 1809 resolution probably did not affect the MEC-EC cemetery because Second Avenue (and East First Street) had not yet been constructed over a portion of the cemetery. As described above, it was in 1817 that the Second Avenue street bed was constructed over a portion of the cemetery, encroaching on any potential burials within the easternmost portion of the cemetery<sup>3</sup> (See Figures 4 and 7).

<sup>3</sup> The MCC included the following revoking of previous grants. On June 26, 1809, *the following Resolution was presented and agreed to Resolved, that in future no permission be granted to build any vault for interment of the Dead under any of the Streets of this City* (MCC V:595). On July 10, 1809, *Resolved that all Licenses granted for building Vaults under the Street adjoining any Church, be rescinded, except so far as to completing*



It was not until 1823, after many years of discussion and debate, that the CC passed a law indicating that “[it shall not] be lawful to inter in any vault or tomb south of [Canal, Sullivan, and Grand Streets]” (from MCC XII:811, March 31, 1823, as quoted in Stokes V:1628). This law that went into effect, with some alterations, in June 1823, also included a moratorium on opening any grave southward of the new “no burial” line (MCC XIV:633; Stokes V:1442). The law affected burials south of Grand Street, and, at the same time, probably increased the use of the MEC-EC cemetery as a burying ground.<sup>4</sup>

Further increase in the number of burials in the MEC-EC cemetery by both the deceased church members and others may have been the outgrowth of the deliberations by a Committee of Delegates from different Religious Societies and the MCC’s Committee on Laws in 1825. The result was a 57-page report (MCC XIV:576-634) that revised the 1823 law yet again.<sup>5</sup>

The MEC-EC probably complied with an 1842 State law that required that a “Religious Society can not Remove Human Remains from Burying Ground without Written Consent” because the Board of Trustees of the MEC-EC proceeded with the removal of the human remains in 1854 (Snyder 1881:108; Board of Trustees Minutes 1850-1856).<sup>6</sup>

Yet it was a combination of the 1847 State Rural Cemeteries Act and the 1851 New York City ordinance that forbade interments south of 86<sup>th</sup> Street and prohibited the creation of new cemeteries in Manhattan that provided the impetus for the removal of the human remains from the MEC-EC cemetery and the reinterment of the dead bodies at the CHC and Evergreen Cemetery in rural Brooklyn (Jackson 1995:198; Cypress Hills Cemetery 1884:5; Trustees’ Minutes November 21, 1853; Inskeep 2000:xi). Acknowledging the wisdom of the legislature, the fledgling CHC, which opened in 1848, claimed that “...the Legislature of 1847, at the instance of many intelligent and public spirited men, erected a general law conferring upon voluntary Associations the right of establishing Rural Cemeteries throughout the State....” (Cypress Hills Cemetery 1884). These suburban and rural cemeteries tended to follow the contemporary Romantic ideals about designing cemeteries as “retreats from the

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*the same where Contracts have been made, or the ground opened in consequence of such license heretofore granted.* (MCC V:611-612).

<sup>4</sup> What is interesting is the number of vaults noted in the MCC: *June 1823... during the Year preceeding (sic) the Ordinance, there were 821 interments within those limits, and there are within the said limits, 87 Public or Church Vaults, and 417 private or family vaults* (MCC:XIV:638).

<sup>5</sup> One of the three resolutions was *That it be recommend[ed] to the Churches, and religious societies to extend their places of interment as far as possible beyond the line of Grand Street, and not to permit the deposite (sic) of a large and inconvenient number of dead bodies, in any tomb or vault, in any one field or inclosure (sic).* (MCC XIV:634).

<sup>6</sup> *Laws 1842, chap. 215, passed April 11: §2. It shall not be lawful for any person or persons to remove any dead body or human remains from any burying ground, for the interment of which compensation shall have been received by any church or religious corporation, or by any officer or officers thereof, and which shall have been used for that purpose during the last three years, with the intent to convert the said burying ground to any other purpose, without having first obtained the consent in writing of three-fourths in number of the congregation or society of such church or corporation; and which consent shall be proved or acknowledged and recorded in the manner prescribed by the first section of this act, before any such removal shall be commenced or attempted.* (Snyder 1881:108).

crowding and pressures of the city. It was believed that the air made unhealthful by human remains would be purified by trees....” (Jackson Op. Cit.).

The 1851 New York City ordinance that banned burials south of 86<sup>th</sup> Street and forbade the creation of new cemeteries in Manhattan signified the end of burial operations at the MEC-EC cemetery on Block 457. Additionally, as Manhattan moved uptown, the cemetery land, as negotiable real estate, represented a source of potential needed income since the churches of the East Circuit were frequently in need of capital. In 1853 the MEC-EC Trustees applied to the Supreme Court (of New York State) to:

*...Leave to sell the ground used for a Cemetery or burial ground situated in the City of New York at the NW corner of second Avenue And First Street....  
...After paying the expenses of such sale and of the Removal of the dead from such ground.... ...to remove the dead from said Ground to some suitable burial ground in Cypress Hills or the Evergreen Cemeteries...*

(November 21, 1853)

Permission must have been granted because, in 1854, money was allocated for the removal of the dead (January 9, 1854). The removal of the human remains probably took place during 1854, as Inskeep suggested, for the land on Block 457 was sold in 1855 and redeveloped no later than some time between 1857 and 1862 (Inskeep 2000: 5-6, 108-109, 215; Trustees’ Minutes, February 12, 1855; Liber 679:541-545; Perris 1857-1862).

As in the case of the interments, the actual number of disinterments from the MEC-EC’s cemetery is as yet unknown. Extrapolations from the known number of church members at a particular time combined with the founding date and the average life span would provide only an estimated number of church members buried in the cemetery.<sup>7</sup> This would exclude the unknown numbers of dead who were listed as “Strangers” in the 1836 interment prices list (Appendix C).

Samuel B. Ruggles, writing in 1856, noted that there were 25,460 interments in Greenwood Cemetery alone between 1851, when the New York ordinance forbade interments south of 86<sup>th</sup> Street and prohibited any new cemeteries in Manhattan, and 1854.<sup>8</sup> Carolee Inskeep wrote that were “...15,000 [bodies] removed from New York City Methodist cemeteries to a plot in Cypress Hills Cemetery between 1854 and 1856....” (2000:6,109,215). That would mean that there would have been an average of 41 burials or reburials a day for only two of the many rural cemeteries surrounding Manhattan for the years 1854-1856 by only a handful of churches. Accurate record keeping would have been very difficult.

In 1940, the Historical Records Survey, attempting to preserve the history of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the New York vicinity, noted “...that little has been done to preserve the

<sup>7</sup> As reported to a conference of the MECs in the City of New York in June 1845, four of the five MEC-EC churches were listed as to date founded and number of communicants: Forsyth Street, 1790, 655; Allen Street 1810, 955; Willet Street, 1819, 664; and Second Street, 1832, 793. Bowery Village was not on the list. (Greenleaf 1850:329)

<sup>8</sup> The interments in Greenwood Cemetery were: 1851, 5,254; in 1852, 5,933; in 1853, 7,189; and in 1854, 8,084 (Ruggles 1856:10).

records of our local churches....” (WPA 1940:iii). However, Betty Soames, Archivist for the New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, has no records for the five MECs connected with the MEC-EC cemetery. The records available at the NYG&BS and in the voluminous manuscript collection of the Methodist Historical Society at the NYPL do not include interment, exhumation, and reburial data. The CHC records will begin to be available online in June 2003, but are not accessible until then. However, since CHC was established in 1847/48, their records would only be able to provide information on the number of bodies reinterred from the MEC-EC cemetery in the 1850s – not in 1817 when and if bodies were removed from what is now the 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue roadbed and sidewalk within the APE.

Even if numbers and surnames of the dead may be gotten from the CHC records, there is always a chance for bodies to have been missed during the exhumation process, as Inskeep noted for the Stillwell Methodist Cemetery, outside the APE, one block east of the MEC-EC cemetery (Inskeep 2000:109; Figure 6). Inskeep states that at that cemetery,

*Some graves may have been missed during the removal [between 1854 and 1856 with the rest of the 15,000 removed from NYC Methodist cemeteries to CHC]. In 1891, the New York State legislature authorized the "Board of Education in the City of New York... to remove the human remains buried in the old burying ground, between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Streets and 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenues in said city... and to reinter the same in any cemetery or burying-ground selected by or under the direction of the said Board of Education." It isn't clear how many graves remained, when the removal took place, or where the bodies were reinterred.* (Ibid.)

Additionally, some families may have reburied their family members in any number of other cemeteries besides CHC and Evergreen.

The ordinances and laws concerning burials, exhumation, and reburial under which the Trustees of MEC-EC operated in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were located. Some slight information about disinterments was found in the MEC-EC's Trustees' Minutes. The 1836 minutes noted that some of the oldest vaults *might* have been cleaned out – possibly due to the stench and concerns about public health – thus possibly disinterring some skeletal remains that might have been buried there for at least 18 years. However, as previously noted, in 1836, there was a discussion about and decision not to disinter the dead from the MEC-EC's cemetery on Block 457 (December 16). In 1853 and 1854 the Trustees allocated money for removing the dead from the burying ground (November 14 and 21, 1853; January 9, 1854). However, as in the case of the interments, the actual number of disinterments from the MEC-EC's cemetery is at this time not yet known.

#### IV. SENSITIVITY FOR HUMAN REMAINS

The Second Avenue Subway APE is sensitive for human remains, which were interred at the MEC-EC Cemetery between ca.1805 and 1817. The Second Avenue roadbed and west sidewalk extend over the former southeastern corner of the cemetery parcel. When it was first laid out, the cemetery bordered an earlier street bed designated as First Street (not to be confused with modern-day East First Street) on its eastern side. Later, with the laying out of Second Avenue in 1817, there was a shift in the alignment of the street bed, so that the southeastern-most part of the cemetery was incorporated into what is now the APE. Therefore, a portion of the cemetery may lie beneath both the sidewalk and the Second Avenue street bed (See Figure 3, 4, and 7; Figure 9), and there is the possibility of encountering human remains in the APE.

Proposed cut-and-cover construction for the Houston Street Station adjacent to Block 457 (MTA 2002) has the potential to disturb any potential human remains that may lie beneath the 20-foot wide sidewalk and the westernmost 25-foot width of Second Avenue from approximately from midway between East Second and First Streets south the southwestern intersection of Second Avenue and East First Street (Figure 9). As described above, there was an approximately 10-year period in which the burial ground bordered an earlier street bed (First Street) that lay to the east of present day Second Avenue and that was subsequently covered over by that avenue in 1817 (Figures 4, 9).

#### V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The APE has potential archaeological sensitivity for human remains that were interred in the former MEC-EC Cemetery some time between 1805 and 1817. The 1805 survey map places an approximately 25-foot wide section of the cemetery within the existing Second Avenue street bed and a 20-foot wide section within the present sidewalk width (Figures 3, 4, 7). This trapezoid-shaped sensitive area within the APE is approximately 45 feet to 25 feet in width, from north to south, by 100 feet in length. However, since mapped boundaries of cemeteries are not always exact, and bodies were known to be buried outside demarcated boundaries, it should be conservatively assumed that a slightly greater area in the APE is potentially sensitive for burials. Block 457 itself, outside the APE, is also sensitive for human remains for the period between 1805 and 1854 (Block 457; Figures 3, 9). Burials would be located from the surface down to about 14 feet below grade.

Documentary research has been unable to determine the original number of burials within the APE, so it is impossible to know if all remains were removed from the site. Therefore, there is the possibility for human remains to exist beneath the west side of Second Avenue and beneath the sidewalks from mid-block between East First and Second Streets, south to just below East First Street (Figure 9).

Due to the possibility that human remains from the Methodist Episcopal Church-East Circuit cemetery may be present within the project APE and could be disturbed through construction of the Houston Street Station, Historical Perspectives recommends avoidance of this parcel through project re-design. If avoidance is not feasible, then archaeological testing prior to



construction and/or archaeological monitoring during construction, in accordance with the *Standards for Cultural Resource Investigations and the Curation of Archaeological Collections in New York State (1994)*, the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards and Guidelines for Archaeology and Historic Preservation (48 FR 44716, September 29, 1983)*; and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's handbook *Treatment of Archaeological Properties (1980)*, would be necessary.

RPA-certified professional archaeologists, with an understanding of and experience in the recovery of skeletal material, would be required to be part of the testing team. Prior to archaeological field testing and/or project construction, a protocol defining the testing plan and procedures for handling skeletal material would be developed in consultation with SHPO. This protocol would incorporate input from the Church of All Nations (formerly the First German Methodist Episcopal Church), the descendant church of the Methodist Episcopal Church-East Circuit cemetery. This congregation is presently located at 48 St. Mark's Place. A representative from MTA NYCT discussed with Revered LaPorta of the Church of All Nations in June 2003 the potential for human remains to be present in the APE and the appropriate protocol to follow should human remains be found. It was agreed that MTA NYCT would transfer any human remains to the Church of All Nations for appropriate reburial in another location, should any such remains be encountered during testing and/or project construction.

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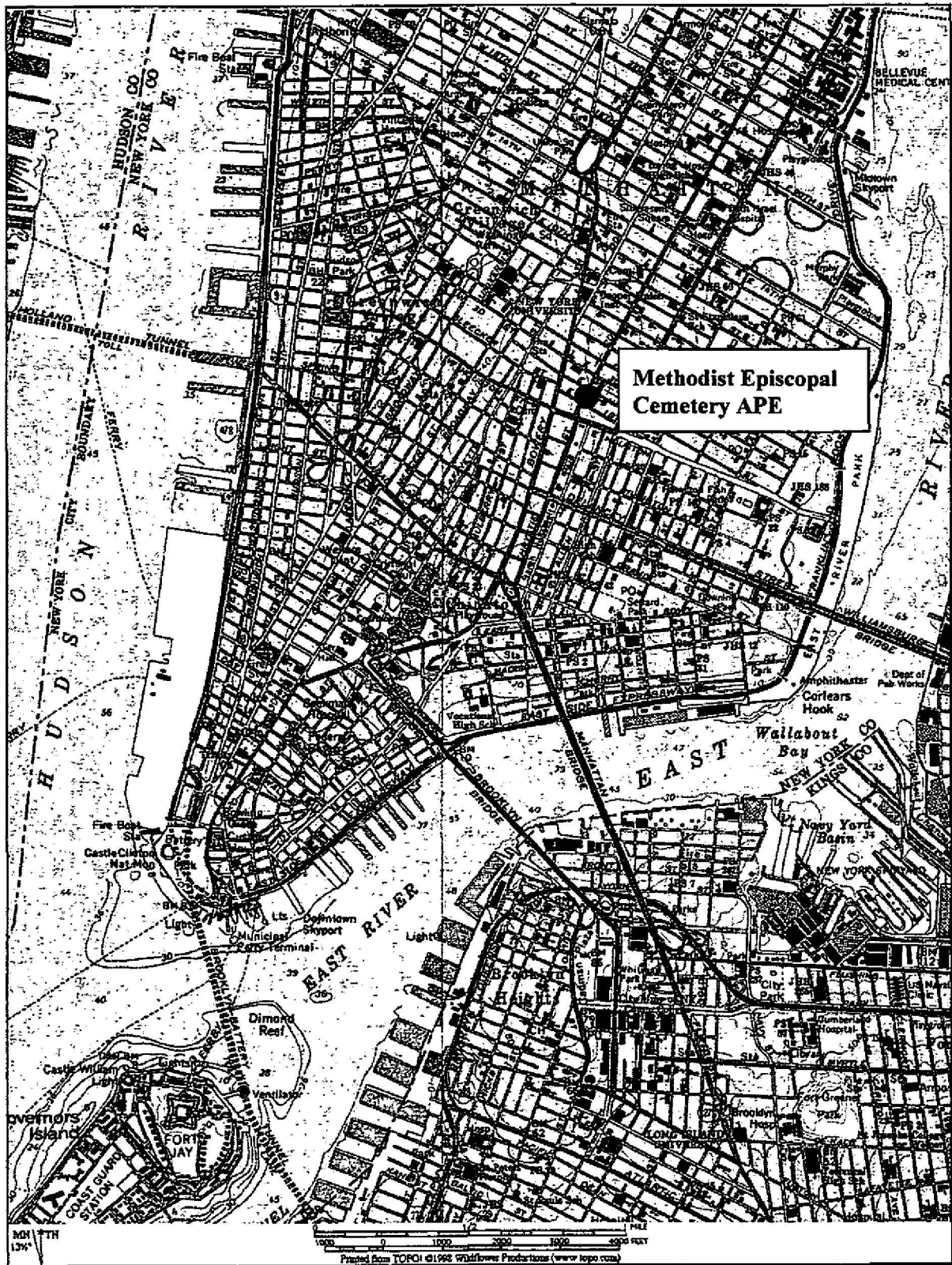


FIGURE 1

U.S.G.S. Jersey City and Brooklyn Quadrangles, 1981.



**FIGURE 2**

*Insurance Maps. Sanborn 2001.*  
Methodist Episcopal Cemetery APE,  
Second Avenue between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Streets.  
Approximate Scale: ½ inch = 100 feet

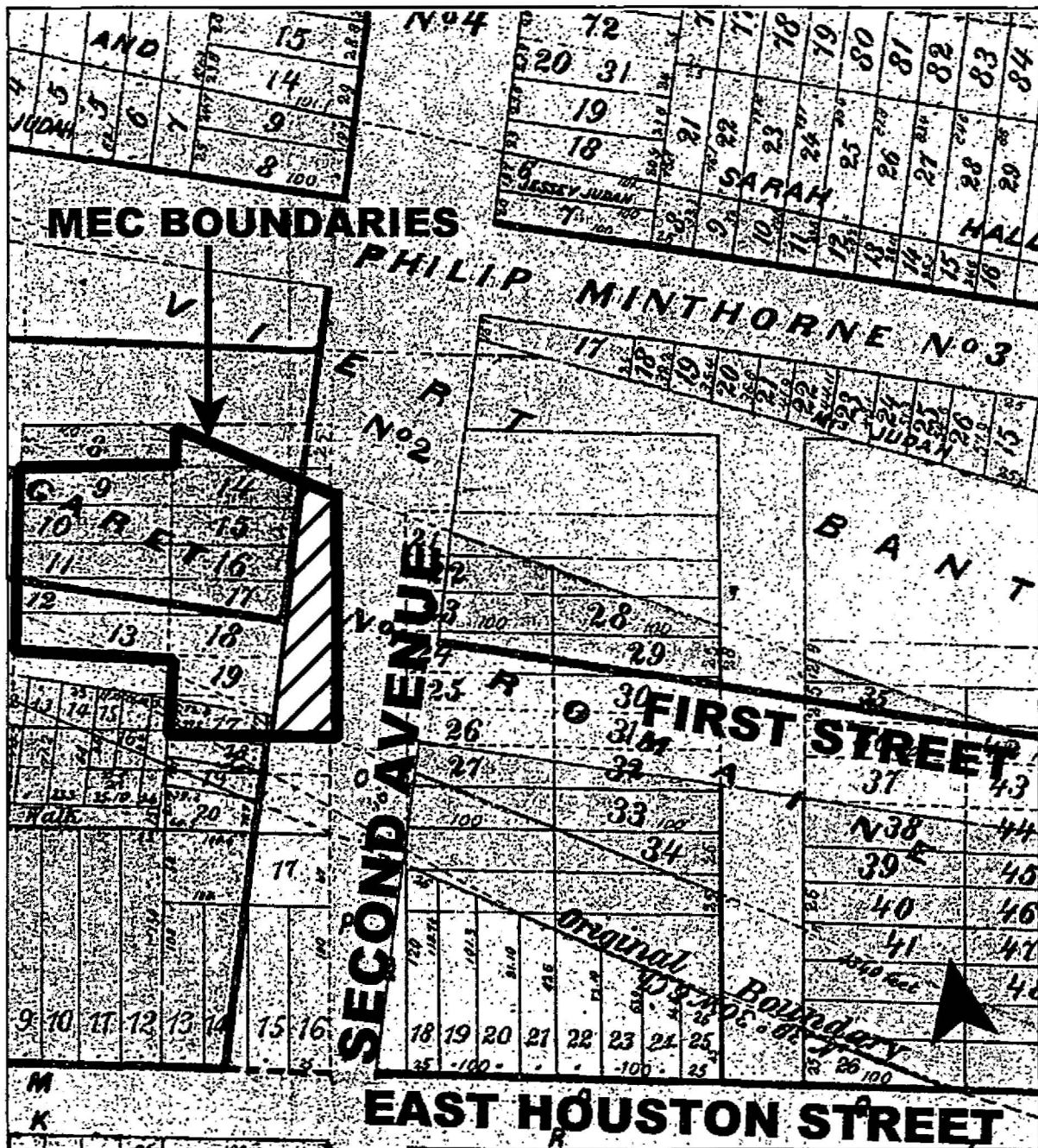


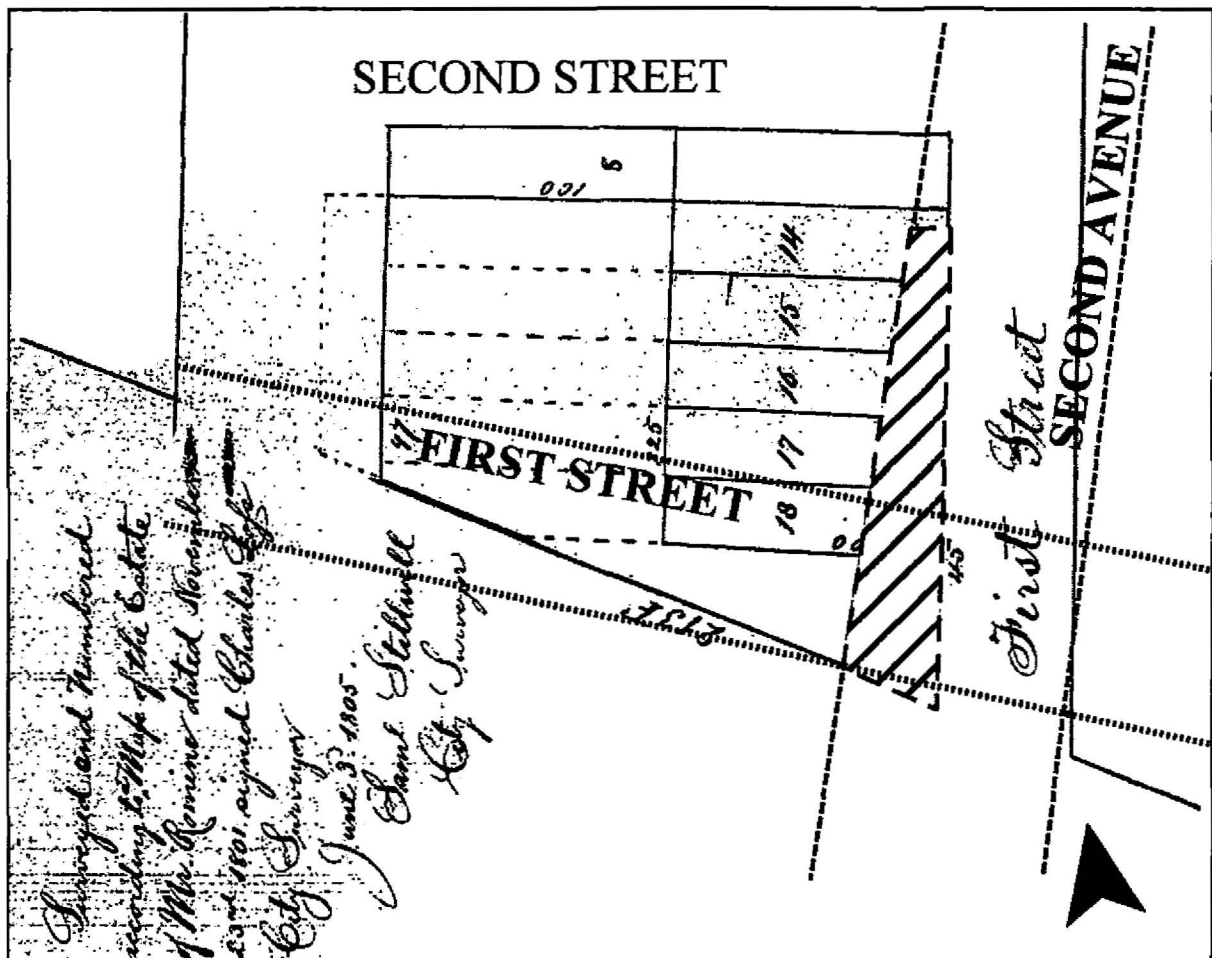
FIGURE 3



*Area of Potential Archaeological Sensitivity.*  
Methodist Episcopal Cemetery, Second Avenue,  
East 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> Streets. Holmes 1867.

Approximate Scale: 1" = 100'



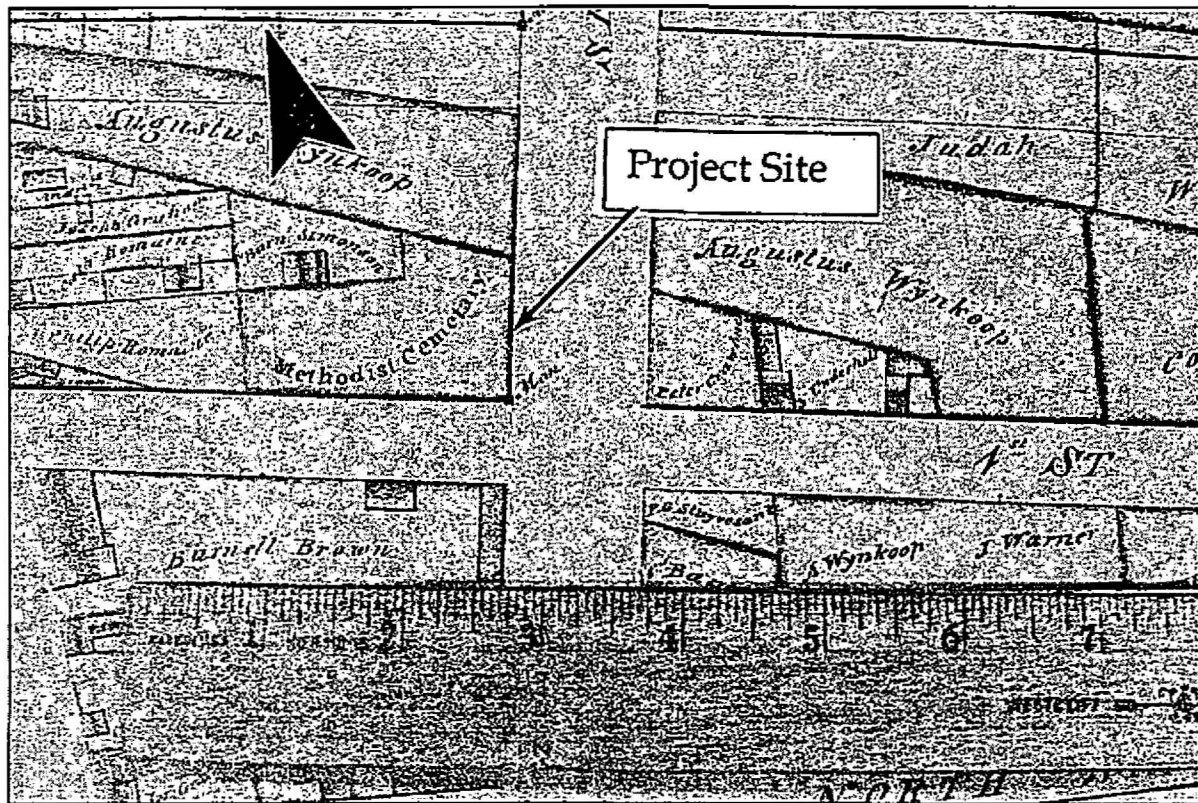


 PORTION OF MEC  
IN SECOND  
AVENUE APE

**FIGURE 4**

*Project Site Survey in 1805.*  
Second Avenue, East 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> Streets. Liber 71, Page 199.

Approximate Scale: 1" = 100'



**FIGURE 5**

*Project Site Survey in 1820.*  
Second Avenue, East 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. Randel 1820.

No Scale.

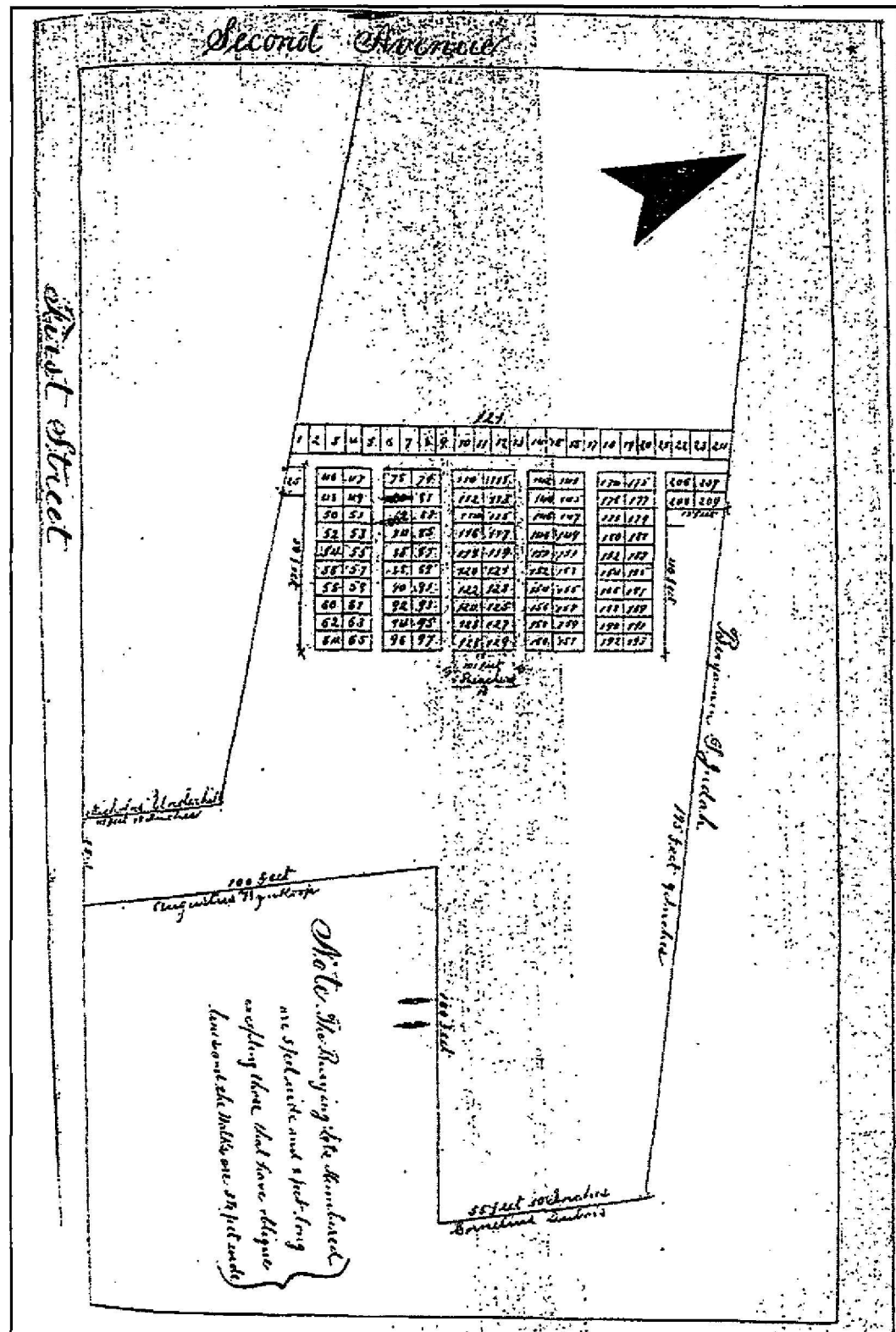


FIGURE 6

"Stillwell's" Cemetery Survey in 1826 on Block 443 Outside of APE.

Liber 210, Page 284.

No Scale.



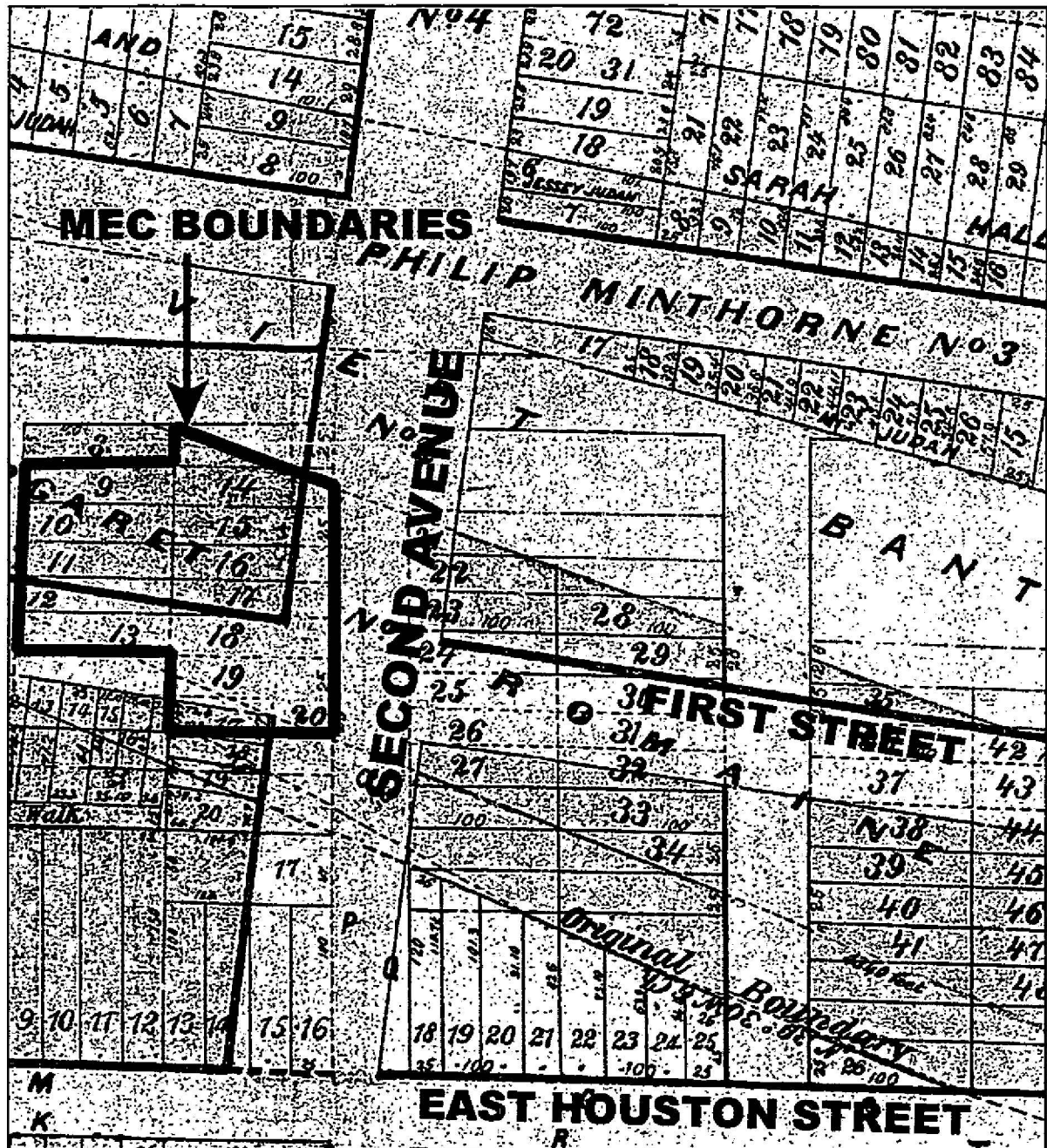
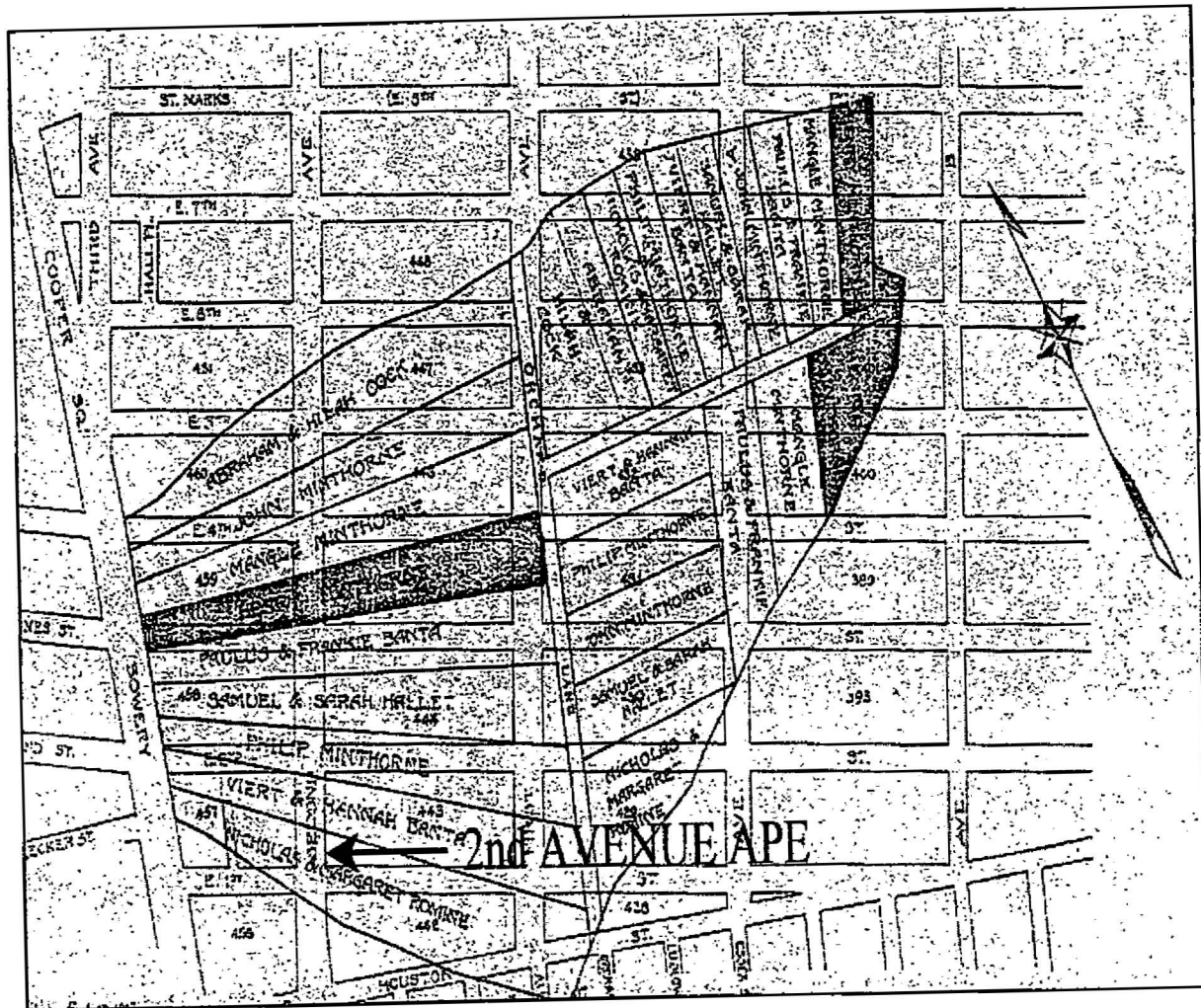


FIGURE 7

*Farms Map Showing 1805 Boundaries in Relation to 1817 Boundaries.  
Second Avenue, East 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> Streets. Holmes 1867.*

Approximate Scale: 1" = 100'



**FIGURE 8**

*Philip Minthorne Farm Superimposed on 1917 Base Map.  
Second Avenue, East 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. Farm Histories, Vol.2, Map 15.*

Approximate Scale: 1" = 400'



**FIGURE 9**

*Area of Potential Sensitivity for Burials. Sanborn 2001.*  
Methodist Episcopal Cemetery APE,  
Second Avenue between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Streets.  
Approximate Scale: ½ inch = 100 feet

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**PHOTOGRAPH I**

*Project Site: Street-level parking lot, southeast corner of Block 457.*

*Photograph taken in October 2001.*

**Second Avenue, East 6<sup>th</sup> Street to East Houston Street.**

**APPENDIX A**  
**REPOSITORIES SEARCHED**

**AKRF**

Soil borings

**City Register**

Land conveyances

**DDC**

Subsurface conditions maps

**Manhattan Borough President's Office-  
Topographic Bureau**

Maps

**Municipal Archives**

Building Department Block & Lots folders

Common Council Papers

Farm histories

Holmes 1867

Minutes of the Common Council

R.D. map (re-indexed map)

Tax assessments

**Municipal Reference Library**

Board of Aldermen Minutes

**New York Genealogical  
& Biographical Society**

Land conveyances

MEC records

Common Council papers

Vertical files

**New-York Historical Society**

Bancker's survey notes

NY Marble Cemetery records

Published works

Vertical files

**New York Public Library**

Local History

Manuscript material

Newspapers

Published works

Main Reading Room

Published works

Manuscript Department

Bancker plans

Methodist Historical Society  
records

Map Division

# APPENDIX B

## METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCHES OF THE EAST CIRCUIT

<i>Church Name</i>	<i>Year Founded</i>	<i>Other Names Prior to 1900</i>	<i>Pre-1900 Locations (s)</i>
2nd Street	1832		276 East 2nd Street
7th Street	1800	Two-Mile Stone Meeting	
		Bowery Village	121 East 7th Street (1837)
Allen Street	1810	Fourth Street	Allen Street
			Rivington Street
Forsyth Street	1789	New	
		Second	
		Second Street	Forsyth Street
Willett Street	1817		Willett Street bet. Grand & Broome Streets

This table is adapted from Table B: Methodist Records of NYC in the NYG&BS Library:  
By Church in *The NYG&B Newsletter*, Vol. 4, No. 4, Winter 1993, page 29.



# APPENDIX C

## PRICES FOR INTERMENTS IN THE GROUNDS AND VAULTS OWNED BY THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH- EAST CIRCUIT

(Trustees' Minutes, August 9, 1836)

<u>Prices</u>			
for Interments in the Grounds and Vaults owned by the Meth <sup>d</sup> Episcopal Church, East Circuit			
Grounds & Vaults corner of First- Street and Second Avenue.			
from 15 years of age & upwards	\$7.50	Sextons fees	\$10.00
from 10 to 15 years -	5.	Do.	8.
5 to 10 "	4.	Do.	6.50
3 to 5 "	3.	Do.	5.50
1 to 3 "	2.50	Do.	5.
1 year & under	2.	Do.	4.
<u>Members</u>			
from 15 years & upwards	\$4.	Sextons fees included	\$7.
" 10 to 15 years of age	3.50	Do.	5.50
5 to 10 "	2.50	Do.	5.
3 to 5 "	2.00	Do.	4.50
1 to 3 "	1.50	Do.	4.
1 year & under	1.00	Do.	3.

**APPENDIX D**

**COSTS OF NEW VAULTS, PLOTS OF LAND, ETC.**  
**AND**  
**REMOVING AND RE-INTERING BODIES**

*...It is shown that the cost of a new vault in Greenwood Cemetery, 9' x 15', is from \$190. to \$220.; of the plot of land, \$110.; and of the iron railing around it, from \$130. to \$239. The expense of removing and re-intering the bodies,...\$48. to \$150.*

*The average amount expended on these items has been: new vault, \$200.; plot of land, \$110.; iron railing, \$180.; removing and re-intering the body, \$100.; therefore [the total] equals \$590. (Samuel B. Ruggles 1856:9)*

[Added to these costs were those of transporting the deceased to the ferry on the East River, the ferry ride itself, and the carting of the body from the ferry to the rural cemetery in Brooklyn or Queens.]

Cypress Hills Cemetery was "about five miles from Peck Slip, Division Avenue, Grand and Houston Street ferries...." (Cypress Hills Cemetery 1857:7).