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LANDMARKS PRESERVATION
COMMISSION

DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH REPORT (STAGE IA)

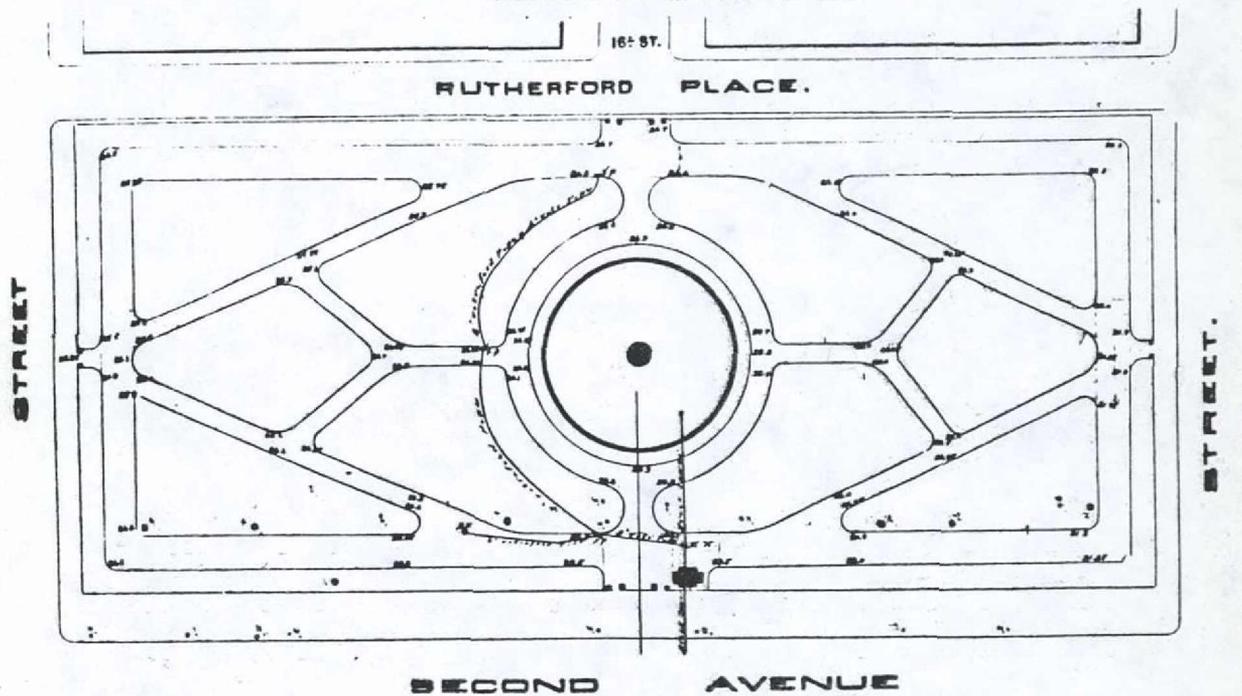
STUYVESANT SQUARE

Adjacent to Second Avenue, Between East 15th and East 17th Sts
Borough of Manhattan

(Property No. M-86)

in fulfillment of contract OMBP 1191

NEW YORK CITY
PARKS AND RECREATION



Dr. Frederick A. Winter, SOPA

for

KEY PERSPECTIVES

Dr. Karen S. Rubinson, SOPA
President

April 1988

470

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INTRODUCTION

This study is designed to fulfill the requirement of a Stage IA documentary survey for the western half of Stuyvesant Square, an area bounded by Second Avenue on the east, Rutherford Place on the west, and 16th and 17th streets on the south and north. This work was requested by the City of New York, Department of Parks and Recreation. The site was flagged for study because it was viewed as being a potential source of significant remains from the historic period, particularly the 19th century, the period when the park was established, and also because it was considered to be a possible place of prehistoric Amerind activity.

This study consists of an examination, through maps and texts, of the history of the area of Stuyvesant Square and its natural topography. In addition, the site has been visited and examined in its present condition. The information is analyzed to determine if additional archaeological testing in the form of a Stage IB archaeological survey should or should not be required, and an appropriate recommendation is made. A Stage IB archaeological survey will be required if the site has the possibility of yielding significant archaeological materials.

The research for this study was conducted at The New York Public Library, Avery Library, Columbia University, the Watson Library, Metropolitan Museum of Art, and The New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, in addition to the author's personal library.

SITE DESCRIPTION

GENERAL AREA

In its natural, undeveloped form, the site area consisted of an isotopic flat that was located between streams that ran to the north and south of the square and which drained into the East River. According to Viele's 1865 and 1874 Manhattan topographic maps, the stream located to the north of the square crossed Second Avenue at 19th Street and then proceeded to enter the river on the original Manhattan coast line at First Avenue and 18th Street. The stream located to the south of the square ran about half a block below the square (between 14th and 15th Streets) and then entered the East River just to the east of Avenue A and 15th Street. (See Figure 1). The stream configuration shown in Viele's plans is similar to that depicted in the 1815 Manhattan Blue Book and in Stokes' Iconography.¹ An alternative location for the head of the southern stream is presented in the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission's pilot study for an archaeological predictive model for Manhattan. In that study, the southern stream actually rises at the southwestern corner of the square.

These apparently minor distinctions in the location of the stream head might be significant for the prehistoric history of the square, since it is generally agreed that native Amerind

¹ Stokes III: Pl. 175.

settlement in the inland portions of Manhattan would have been concentrated in areas directly adjacent to the island's streams. This is due to the dual role played by the streams as transit routes and as food resources. In the particular case of Stuyvesant Square, however, it does not seem particularly likely that the site would have been the place of a significant prehistoric settlement. The banks of the East River, with their access to the river's abundant fish and shellfish, or areas further downstream and closer to the river, where a settlement could be situated to take advantage of both the salt River and freshwater stream, would seem much better candidates for prehistoric habitation.

THE PROJECT AREA

The project area as it appears today consists of a well-landscaped city park which, although modified over the years, still retains the traditional character of the public park that was established on the site in the mid-nineteenth century. In the description that follows, special attention is given to the area of the fence that forms the park's perimeter since that is the area in which the proposed construction work is due to take place.

The most glaring modern intrusion into the park is the chain-link fence that surrounds the park just within the line of the park's original and still standing ornamental iron fence. This chain-link fence, erected recently to permit the planned

reconstruction of the park, is set approximately two feet within the line of the earlier fence. Its posts, which are set into the ground at intervals of between six and ten feet, are likely to be a source of at least some subsurface disturbance of any preserved archaeological strata. An approximately thirty-foot length of modern chain-link fencing that has been set along the line of the original fence north of the park's west gate presents a similar intrusion into the original fence bedding.

On its north, south and east the park is surrounded by sidewalks. On the west, there is only a roughly two-foot-wide border between the park's fence and the early twentieth century gray stone curbing of Rutherford Place. This border had been paved with bluestone or slate slabs, one stretch of which remain in situ in the mid-section of the northern half of the block. Concrete patches have replaced the paving slabs in a few places. Towards the northern end of the block there is an approximately twenty-five-foot long strip from which all of the paving has been removed, thus exposing the earth below. Similarly, all paving has been removed from the western border on the southern half of the block. In the park today, there is a large pile of paving slabs stacked around the flag pole on the southern side of the park. Presumably, these slabs come from this border.

The sidewalks on 17th and 16th Street, the northern and southern sides of the park, are paved with hexagonal paving blocks installed in 1937. Patches from which the paving has been removed suggest that there was some limited digging in the past

along the fence line on the north, as well as more extensive disturbance along the park's southeast corner in the vicinity of the existing 1936-1937 octagonal comfort station. (See Figure 2).

The sidewalk that runs along the eastern or Second Avenue side of the park shows scarring on its surface that indicates previous trenching running in an approximately three-foot-wide strip along the median line of the pavement. This trenching scar widens to approximately six feet in places on the southern half of the block. (See Figure 3). In a few locations, the trench extends up to the line of the park's original ornamental fence.

Another possible source of subsurface disturbance along the eastern side of the park consists of modern concrete retaining walls that have been constructed between the park's fence and some of the trees existing just within the fence on the park's Second Avenue frontage. These walls are positioned approximately one foot within the fence line and extend in a line approximately three to four feet long running parallel to the fence. (See Figure 4). There is no way to determine from surface indications how deeply into the ground these walls are set and thus it is not clear how great a disturbance they might have caused for any subsurface strata.

A final source of archaeological disturbance takes the form of a limited number of large, mature trees growing just within the fence line. These have caused some buckling of the sidewalks surrounding the park, a clear indication that their root systems would have caused extensive disturbance to any subsurface strata.

PREHISTORY

Prehistoric occupation in the northeast and New York City area has been divided into the following periods: Paleo-Indian, 10,500 - 8000 B.C., Archaic, 8000 - 1300 B.C., Transitional, 1300 - 1000 B.C., and Woodland, 1000 B.C. - historic occupation. The Archaic and Woodland periods have been subdivided into Early, Middle, and Late phases as follows: Early Archaic, 8000 - 6000 B.C., Middle Archaic, 6000 - 4000 B.C., Late Archaic, 4000 - 1300 B.C., Early Woodland, 1000 - 300 B.C., Middle Woodland, 300 B.C. - 1000 A.D., Late Woodland, 1000 A.D. - European contact.

Each of these periods is characterized by particular settlement types. Paleo-Indian sites are often along areas of low, swampy ground or on very high, protected areas.² Within New York City, Paleo-Indian remains have been excavated at the Port Mobile site on Staten Island, and worked stone implements of Paleo-Indian type have been found at additional locations within that borough.³ Although Paleo-Indian materials have not yet been discovered in Manhattan, some portions of the island were, in the recent past, of the topographic type favored by the Paleo-Indian hunters. Thus, the City Archaeologist's predictive model lists

²Ritchie 1980:7.

³Ibid.: pp. xvii f. and map, pp. 4f.

the Collect Pond area in lower Manhattan and Washington Heights in the north as being probable areas for Paleo-Indian remains.⁴

The project area does not fall into either of the topographic categories that were known to have been favored by the Paleo-Indians, and indeed, it was probably even less desirable for settlement in remote antiquity than it was in early historic times. The topography of Manhattan and its surrounding region have not been constant. The discovery of the remains of land-based megafauna such as mammoth and mastodon on the Atlantic Ocean floor along the Continental Shelf opposite the New York - New Jersey sea coast⁵ serves as a reminder that the geography of the New York area has changed considerably since antiquity. In the remote past, the project area would have been even further from the ocean than it is today. The Hudson and East Rivers would have been of reduced scale during glacial and immediately post-glacial times, and thus the project area also would have been further from the rivers' banks.

The Early Archaic was characterized by small hunting camps. According to the Landmarks Commission study for a city-wide archaeological predictive model, such sites do not have great archaeological visibility, nor are they likely to be associated with particular land forms.⁶

Finds from other portions of the U.S. northeast indicate

⁴Baugher et al. 1982:10.

⁵Chesler 1982:20.

⁶Baugher et al. 1982: 10.

that during the Middle Archaic there was a large increase of population. As yet, there is little evidence of this time period in the New York City region and thus it is especially important to watch for remains from this era. Discoveries of Middle Archaic components are necessary in order to define occurrence--characteristics and increase the accuracy of future predictions of site occurrence.

For the Late Archaic, sites are most likely to be found in littoral areas, which makes the study area an unlikely place to find remains of this period.⁷

Littoral areas and the zones along major inland water ways such as the Hudson and East Rivers are known to have been settled during Transitional times. Stone projectile points of Transitional type have been found in northern Manhattan, in the Inwood/Washington Heights district.⁸ As yet, there is not a large enough body of information to accurately predict Transitional site occurrence within New York City in anything except the most general terms.

In the Woodland period, many different kinds of settlements existed. Permanent and semi-permanent settlements, villages, as well as seasonal campsites and food gathering/processing stations are characteristic. Agriculture was practiced, although this development may date only to the end of the Late Woodland period,

⁷Baughner et al. 1982: 10-11.

⁸Ritchie 1980:150-178 for general characteristics and distribution of Transitional remains.

following the first contact with Europeans.⁹ Shellfish collecting sites at tidal inlets are particularly well represented in this period, although this may simply be a reflection of the fact that the tidal zones were less likely to have been disturbed by subsequent city development than were inland areas.

In the mid-17th century, high hills near streams, rivers and agricultural fields, and fishing places were favored by the Indians for settlement. The project area, located near but not, to judge from the majority of the cartographic sources, actually on two of Manhattan's many small streams, would have probably had a low potential for being the site of a permanent or seasonal Woodland period settlement.

At the time of European contact and Dutch settlement, Manhattan was occupied by Munsee-speaking Delaware groups: the Canarsee, who occupied western Long Island and probably controlled southern and possibly eastern Manhattan, and other Indian groups, whose territory included the northern portions of the island.¹⁰ Until recently, the Indians of northern Manhattan had been identified as the Reckgawawanks; Robert Grumet has now placed this group at Haverstraw in Rockland County.¹¹ Of the tribal groups occupying Manhattan, the Canarsee are the ones most likely to have had a territorial interest in the area of Stuyvesant Square.

⁹Ceci 1982: 5-36.

¹⁰Trigger 1978:214, fig. 1.

¹¹Grumet 1982.

According to Bolton, temporary or seasonal fishing camps would have been likely along the major river shores and streams of Manhattan, particularly on the island's sheltered east side.¹² The interior of Manhattan, especially in the middle portions of the island, was not likely to have been much occupied. This is due to the combined factors of a relatively rugged terrain and a relatively limited supply of wildlife (itself a result of the restricted area of the island). Areas along stream courses are likely to have been the only exceptions to this general rule that focuses settlement along the island's coast. Thus, again, according to current understanding of prehistoric land use within the metropolitan area, the project site has a low potential for providing remains of prehistoric occupation.

The closest known Amerind settlement to the project area was at Corlears Hook to the south, where a village site called Rechtauck, Naghtogack or Nechtanc was located. This village was the scene of a massacre of lower Hudson River Delawarean refugee groups on February 26-26, 1643 during Governor Kieft's infamous Dutch - Indian War (1640-1645).¹³ It is highly unlikely that a settlement nearly a mile distant would have left recoverable traces within the Stuyvesant Square project area.

In conclusion, there is no evidence in the historic documen-

¹²Bolton 1922:61.

¹³R. P. Bolton, New York City in Indian Possession (New York: 1975), p. 79; R. S. Grumet, Native American Place Names in New York City (New York: 1981), p. 39.

tary or prehistoric archaeological record which would suggest that the project area was a place of a permanent prehistoric settlement. The presence of stream heads to the north and south of the project area, if one recognizes the role of stream paths in the establishment of foot paths and transit routes through the wooded and hilly terrain of early Manhattan, raise the possibility of some transitory prehistoric activity in the vicinity of the site, but none of this activity would have been likely to be of a scale to produce significant archaeological remains.

HISTORIC PERIOD

The area that today makes up Stuyvesant Square was formed out of land that had originally been part of two Dutch Colonial holdings: the "Bowery Number 1," which formed the southeast portion of the park, and "The Honorable [Dutch West India] Company's Great Bowery," on the northwest.

Bowery Number 1 had been reserved, from the earliest days of the Dutch colony, for use by the colony's commander. (See Figure 5). Governor Peter Stuyvesant purchased the bowery from the Dutch West Indian Company on March 12, 1651 for 6400 guilders. According to the purchase deed, the Governor received not only the land but also "the appendages thereof, consisting of a dwelling house, barn, barrack, lands, six cows, two horses and two young Negroes."¹⁴ Presumably, the structures noted in the deed are the ones indicated as the "Treffelyck Huys" on the 1639 Manatus map. It is thought that this structure was constructed by Wooter van Twiller, the third director of the Dutch colony.¹⁵

The Honorable Company's Great Bowery which today includes the park's northwestern portion, was meadow land in the seventeenth century. It passed from the Dutch West India Company to Trinity Church in 1705 under the terms of the Cornbury patent. At that time, the area was called the "Church Meadow." The meadow was sold to John Watts in 1750 under a deed that conveyed

¹⁴Stokes VI: 142. Kessler and Rachlis 1959: 122.

¹⁵Stokes, *ibid.*

11 and 9/10 acres of salt meadow and 1/2 acre of drowned meadow. Watt's property, including the meadow, was forfeited to the People of the State of New York under the Acts of Attainer in 1779. Then, on June 16, 1784, the state passed the salt meadow acres on to Robert Watts and John Watts, Jr. who, in turn, sold the land to Peter Stuyvesant, the Dutch governor's descendant, on June 28 of the same year.¹⁶

The residence for the Stuyvesant family farm was located within the block that is today bounded by 15th and 16th Streets and First Avenue and Avenue A. It is likely that the earlier Treffelyck Huys, noted above, had preceded the Stuyvesant residence at the same location. In the early 1760's, Governor Stuyvesant's grandson, Petrus, constructed a new residence, called Petersfield, at the site. The residence was demolished in 1829-1832.¹⁷ Although its exact plan is not recorded, it would probably have not been terribly dissimilar from the typical eighteenth century Dutch New Netherlands farm depicted in the Van Bergen Overmantel, a seven-foot-long by eighteen-inch-tall rendering of the Old Catskill homestead of Martin G. Van Bergen, that shows the Dutch burgher, his family members and servants working among the various buildings and outbuildings of the farmstead.¹⁸

As a typical Dutch farm of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Stuyvesant farm would have been likely to rely on

¹⁶Stokes VI: 144.

¹⁷Stokes III: 952.

¹⁸Kenny 1975: 98ff.

As a typical Dutch farm of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Stuyvesant farm would have been likely to rely on wheat as its main cash crop.¹⁹ The farm's population would have consisted of members of the Stuyvesant family, white indentured servants and Black slaves.

The original farm had served as a welcome rural retreat for Governor Stuyvesant whose town house below Wall Street, which functioned as the official residence of the governor, provided him only limited escape from his administrative duties. Although designed as a retreat, the farm occasionally witnessed official acts and it was there that Stuyvesant negotiated the terms under which Nieuw Amsterdam was surrendered to Richard Nicolls and his English forces in 1664. Stuyvesant died at his farm in February 1672.²⁰

The area of Stuyvesant Square was conveyed to the city of New York by the Governor's great great grandson Peter Gerard Stuyvesant on September 22, 1836, who had inherited the farm upon the death of Petrus in 1805. At no time since the founding of the Dutch colony had the land within the square been the site of any documented habitation or construction. Of the streets surrounding the square, Second Avenue was opened from North Street to 29th Street in 1816, the cross streets between 8th and 22nd Streets were opened between 1826 and 1830, while Rutherford Place and its eastern complement Livingston Place (now renamed as

¹⁹Ibid., 94f., 113.

²⁰Kessler and Rachlis, 203-205.

Nathan D. Perlman Place) were noted as being present on the second state (although not on the first) of the 1836 Colton Map.²¹

The terms under which Stuyvesant conveyed the park's land to the city required that the city "enclose [the park] with an iron railing, and otherwise embellish the ground granted to [it] for a public square."²² Presumably due to the projected costs, the city did not carry out this work immediately. Following "much litigation,"²³ resolutions were passed and monies appropriated in early 1846 to complete the work.²⁴ By May, 1846 the fence had been "ordered but not yet contracted for,"²⁵ and the work on it was completed approximately a year later at a final cost of \$17,641. The contractor was Maurice McNamee of Philadelphia, who constructed the 2660-foot-long fence around the east and west segments of the park according to a unique plan that involved using deep-set posts rather than the more common shallow posts with angled bracings. This style of construction was apparently unusual for park fencing; it may have been related to rural fence

²¹Stokes III:687 & VI:596, 599.

²²Proceedings of the Board of Alderman from November 24, 1845 to May 11, 1846, Vol. XXX (Bryant and Co.: New York), p. 184, citation for Jan. 5, 1846.

²³Ibid.: 185.

²⁴Ibid.: 188.

²⁵Documents of the Board of Aldermen, Docs. # 1-41, 5/1846-1847, Vol. XII: 47.

style of the period.²⁶ (See Figure 6) It is possible that the City turned to Philadelphia for the fence because there was no company in New York yet capable of such elaborate cast iron work²⁷ or that it was cheaper to buy in Philadelphia.²⁸

The remaining work within the parks was completed by 1850, and included tree-lined pathways, plantings, a central display fountain in each park segment (east and west), and bluestone sidewalks. (See Figure 7) In 1884, the fountains were replaced by smaller, still-present display fountains and a frame comfort station was added to the west park. Documented work within the park during the earlier twentieth century was limited to modifications in the plantings, including the transfer to the park in 1929-1930 of twenty-five elms removed from Union Square. Illustrations from this period show a dense line of hedges running around the park just within the fence, a potential source of root disturbance for any archaeological strata beneath. Then, in 1937, the park was redesigned by Gilmore D. Clarke as part of a WPA-sponsored project that caused extreme disturbance to the interior of the park. Contemporary photographs show that these disturbances included excavations to at least a few feet below surface in the area abutting the park's fence, certainly destroying any intact archaeological strata along the fence line. (See Figure 8). Further disturbance of the area near the fence oc-

²⁶Wickersham 1977:16, fig. 36.

²⁷Southworth 1978:87.

²⁸Sonn 1928:iii,9.

curred during the regrading of the park in 1982.²⁹ During the regrading, a few pottery sherds were collected by Mr. Rex Wasserman of the City of New York Parks and Recreation Department. These dated to the period of the park's construction and the few subsequent decades, giving no indication of occupation of the site in the pre-park period.

²⁹New York City Parks and Recreation file, provided by Mr. Rex Wasserman.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While there can be no doubt that Stuyvesant Square retains enormous historic significance, both as a remnant of the landholdings of the city's last Dutch governor and as an example of the nineteenth-century parks movement (most conspicuously memorialized in Central Park) and philanthropic interests of the famous governor's descendant, there can also be little doubt that the park holds almost no promise of preserving archaeological remains of significance. The prehistoric topography of Manhattan island and the known settlement distribution of pre-Contact Amerind occupation make it highly unlikely that the square was the site of a prehistoric settlement. During colonial and early Federal times, the park was part of a farm for which the known structures were located a considerable distance away (to the south and southeast) from the park's boundaries. In 1836, the area was designated as a park, precluding any subsequent major construction. Thus, there is little chance of the park holding within its perimeter the remains of any significant historic structures. Finally, construction projects culminating with the large-scale redesign of the park in 1936-1937, as well as the 1982 regrading, would have caused serious disturbance to any subsurface archaeological strata, if such remains existed. Under these circumstances, no further archaeological work is recommended.

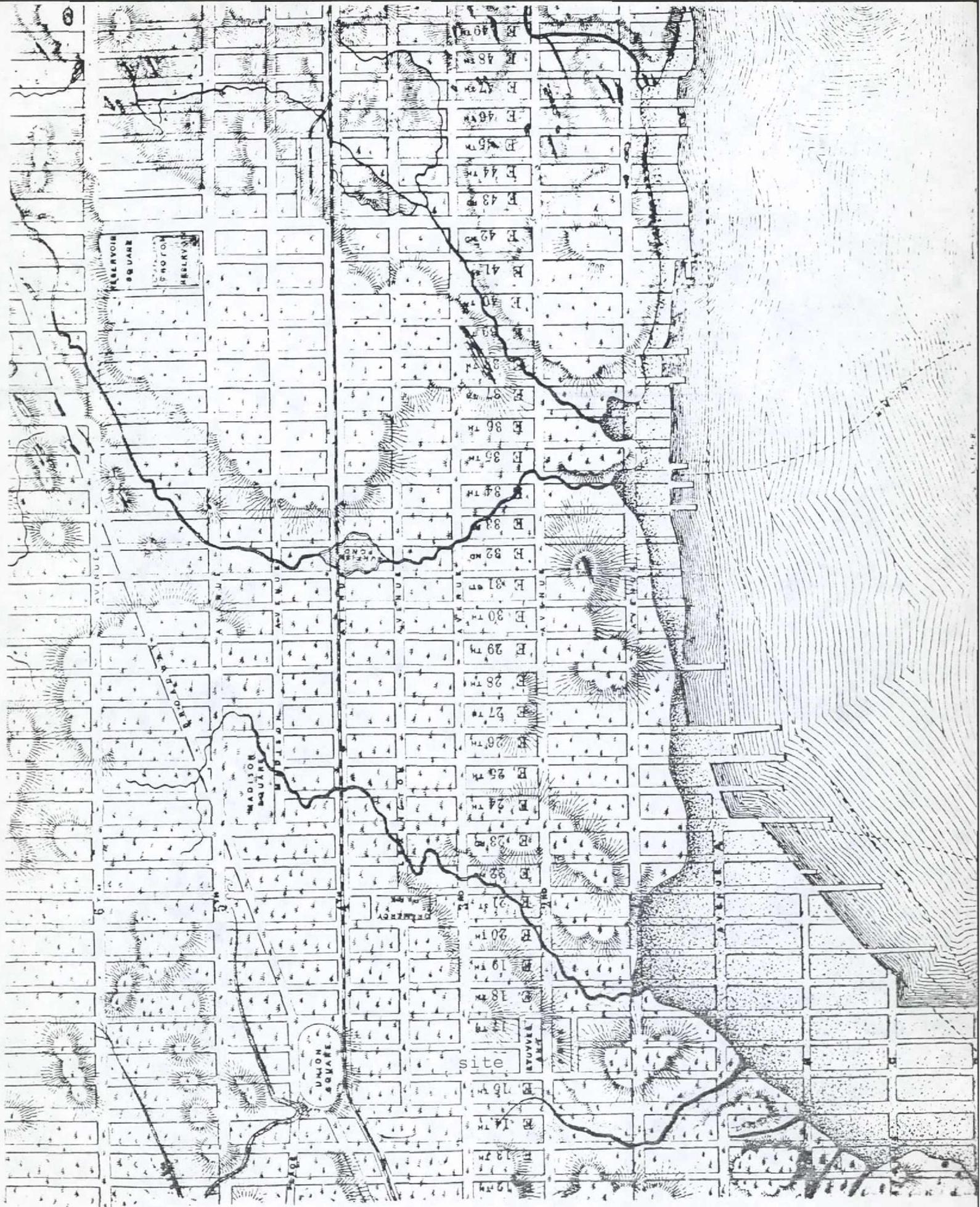


Figure 1 VIELE 1874

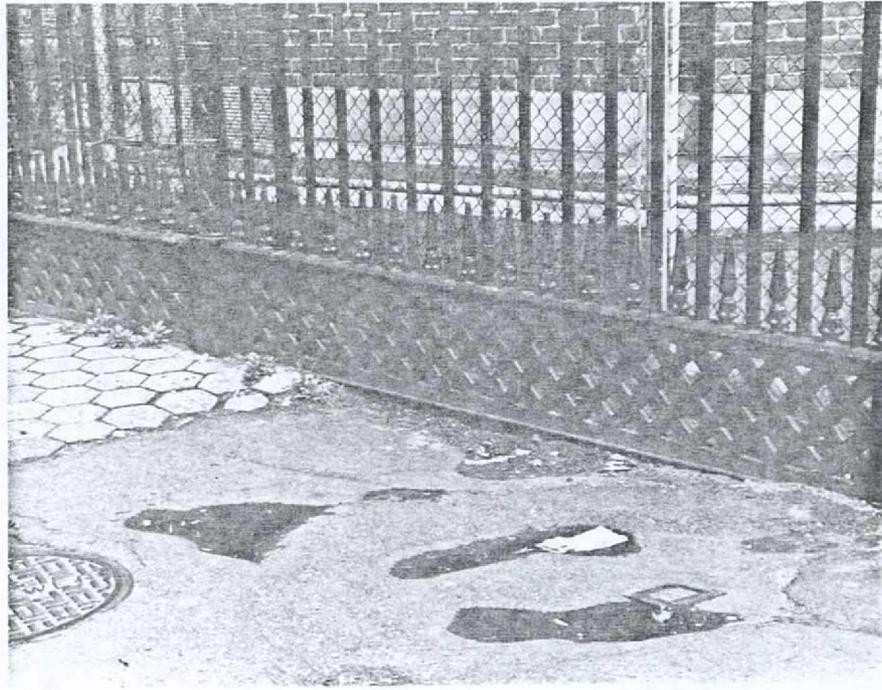


Figure 2 Southeast corner with sidewalk scars
F. Winter photo

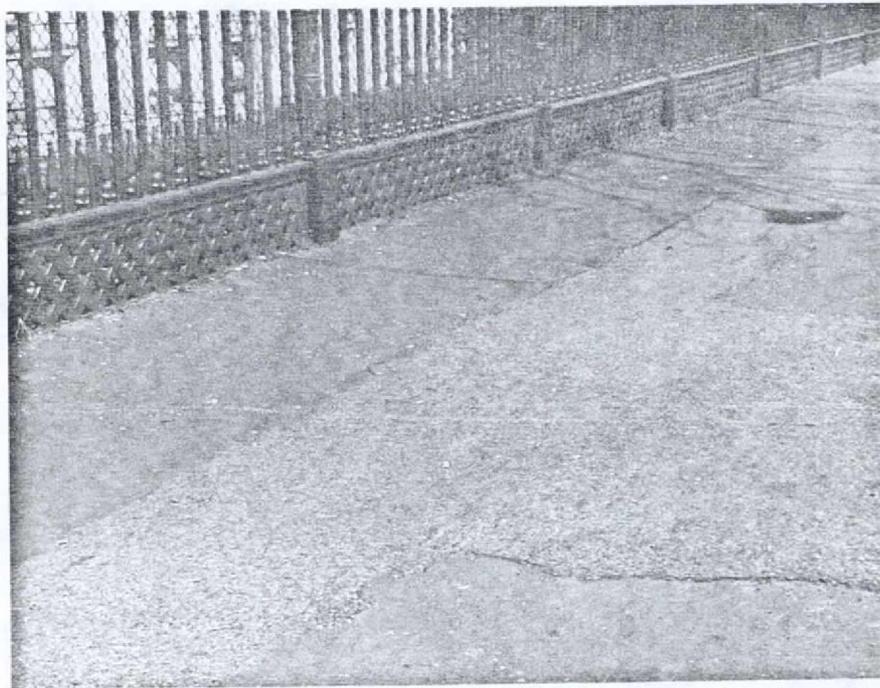


Figure 3 Second Avenue side: sidewalk scars
F. Winter photo

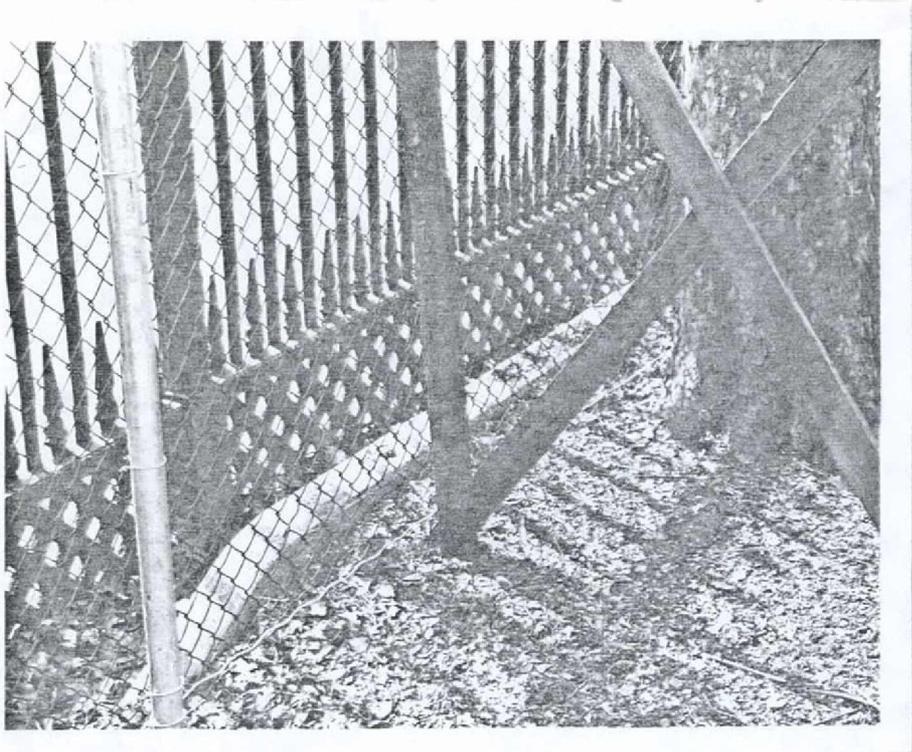


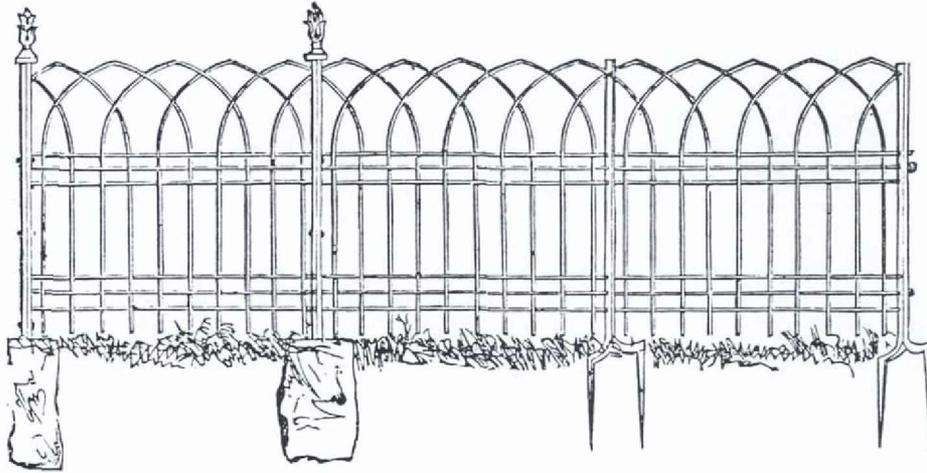
Figure 4 Concrete retaining wall between tree and fence
F. Winter photo

CHAPTER V.

WIRE RURAL FENCE.

Fig. 36 shows a style called the Wire Rural Fence, of which large quantities are used for Fronts of Villa and Cottage property, and for division fences. It is made entirely of wire rods of the larger sizes, is neat and tasty in appearance, and extremely durable. The method of fastening the posts in the ground is also shown in the illustration:

Fig. 36.



PRICES PER LINEAL FOOT.

Fig. 1,—Rural Fence, 3 ft. 6 in. high, $\frac{1}{4}$ in. Wire	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$0 40
" 2 " " 4 " " "	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50
" 3 " " 3 " 6 in. " $\frac{5}{16}$ in. "	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50
" 4 " " 4 " " "	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	60
" 5 " " 3 " 6 in. " $\frac{3}{8}$ in. "	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	62
" 6 " " 4 " " "	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	75 $\frac{1}{2}$
Iron Posts for Hurdles, each, extra	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50
" " 1 in. square, with buds, each, extra	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 00

CHAPTER VI.

POSTS.

THE ornamental Posts are furnished with the Wire Railing at an extra charge. They are needed only at the corners and at the gates. The intermediate posts (see Posts design, Fig. 12), made of wrought iron, and surmounted with a bud, are always furnished without extra charge, and are included in the foregoing prices for the Railing. It is, however, frequently the case that persons prefer cast-iron posts between the panels; and where such is the case, much is added to the ornamental appearance of the Railing, at a trifling additional cost. These posts are made of all sizes, from two inches in diameter to two feet, and from one foot in height to eight. The prices range from \$1 to \$75. We have many designs for Posts, which are not included in the following illustrations: they are made in great variety and of very beautiful patterns. Styles of large Posts for Villa entrances are shown in the succeeding chapter, on "Composite Railing."

Fig. 1 is a newel. It is a style used for Stoops, and Gate, and corner Posts.

Figure 6

From Wickersham 1977

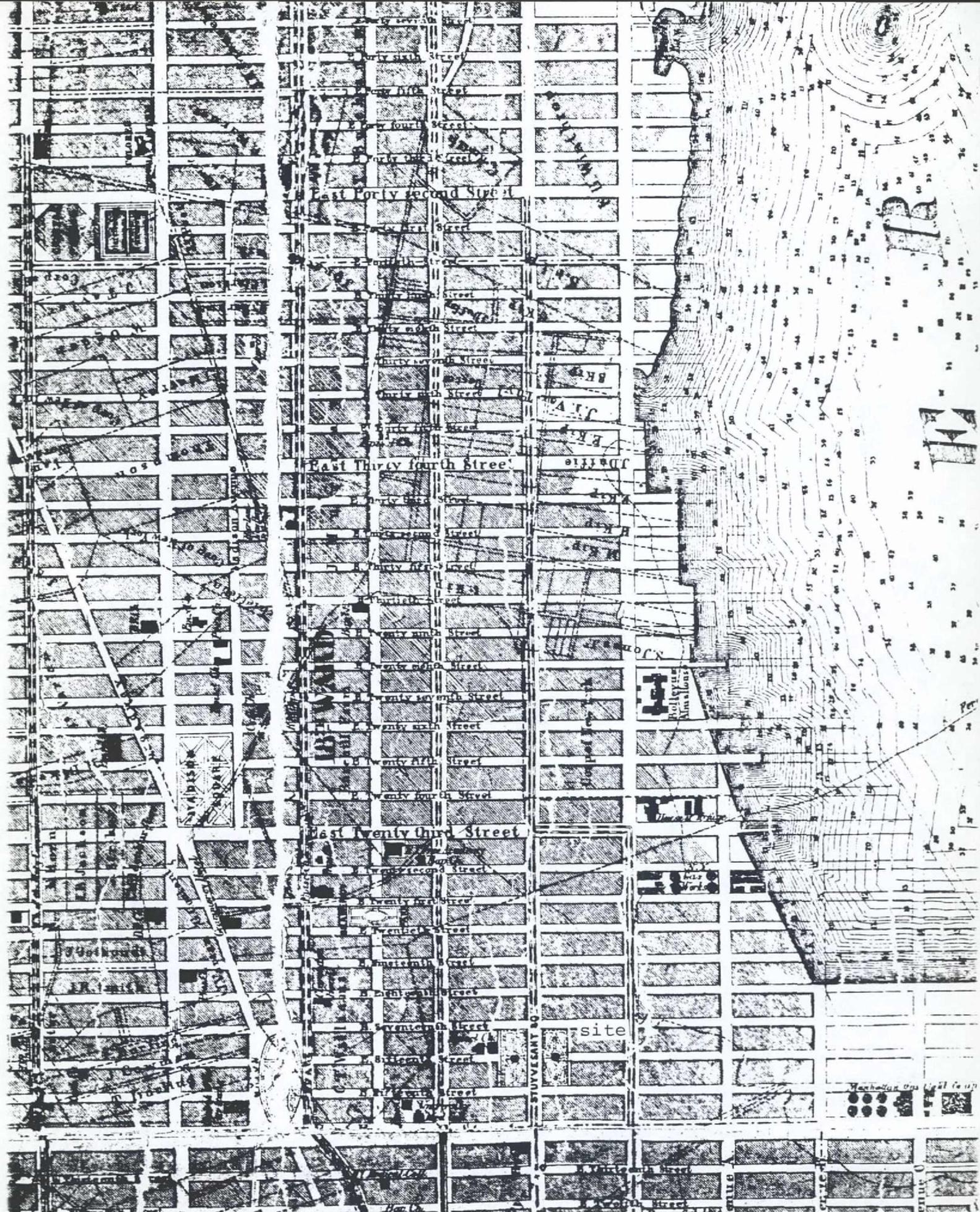


Figure 7 DRIPPS 1854



Figure 8

Department of Parks & Recreation

West Park, June 1, 1936

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land. (New York).
- Handbook of North American Indians,
The Northeast (Smithsonian Institu-
tion, Washington, D.C.)
- Colonial Ironwork in Old Philadel-
phia. (NY: Architectural Book
Publishers, Inc.)
- Victorian Ironwork. (Philadelphia:
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LIST OF MAPS CONSULTED

ca. 1639/1670	Manatus Map
ca. 1664-68	Nicholls Map
1766/1767	Ratzer Map
1815	Sackersdorf Blue Book
1817	Prior and Dunning: Plan of the City of New York
1824	William Hooker: New Pocket Plan of the City of New York
1851	G. Hayward: Map of the City of New York engraved for Valentine's Manual
1854	Dripps Map
1854	Perris Atlas
1859	Perris Atlas
1867	Dripps Map
1874	Viele Map
1875	Dripps Map
1879	Bromley Atlas
1880	Robinson Atlas
1891	Bromley Atlas
1897	Bromley Atlas
1907 (to 1950)	Hyde Atlas
1920	Bromley Atlas
1957	Bromley Atlas
1983-84	Sanborn Atlas