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LANDMARKS PRESERVATION
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PENN YARDS DEVELOPMENT AREA
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

PHASE 1:
CULTURAL RESOURCES SUMMARY

Prepared for McKeown and Franz, Inc.

by

Nan A. Rothschild, Ph. D.

Susan A Dublin, M. A.

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INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of a documentary study of the area which comprises the Penn Yards Project on the upper west side of Manhattan. The study area (Block 1171, Lot 1) is bounded on the west by the Hudson River, on the south by West 59 Street, on the north by West 72 Street, and on the east by the line of the Penn Central Railroad. It consists of a rough triangle of land approximately square feet in area.

Currently, the area is occupied by the Penn Central railroad yard on the east and by the city docks along the river. Aside from the block bounded by 59th and 60th Street, West End (12th) Avenue and the river, it consists of abandoned rail yards and docks. The 59th Street block is fronted on 59th by a parking lot along West End Avenue, and contains a one story nineteenth century brick building housing film studios mid-block, and two two-story nineteenth century brick buildings adjacent to the west.

Topographically, the area from 72nd Street to circa 65th Street has been cut along the building line on the west end of the block. The cut is not substantially deep; in any case, it is to the east of the project boundary. From 62nd to 65th Street, the rail line angles eastward; it appears to have been laid on original ground surface. From that point onward, it angles more sharply east and enters a cut at about 61st Street where it begins to approach the avenue. The block between 59th and 60th Streets

west of the railroad is the only substantial part of the study area which has not been filled and represents original ground surface.

This report is a preliminary study undertaken to define areas of archeological sensitivity and to make recommendations for future work, if needed, to satisfy governmental requirements concerning environmental impacts. The body of the report will deal with a number of subjects. The landfill history serves to isolate sections, chronologically, to facilitate historic and prehistoric research. We will then look at predictive models for prehistoric land use and the documentary record of historic land use in the area.

LANDFILL AND SETTLEMENT HISTORY

Although this section of Manhattan's Upper West Side was settled during the seventeenth century, it remained farmland allocated in large parcels until the middle of the nineteenth century. The area west of the current line of the railroad does not appear to have been used for either farmsteads or outbuildings during the historic period.

The original shoreline was irregular, with peninsulas extending into the Hudson River at 59th Street, 61st Street, and 65th Street (see map, Figure 1). There were streams entering the river between 60th and 61st Streets, at 67th Street, and between 68th and 69th Streets.

At the time of the construction of the Hudson River Railroad in 1849, the shoreline had not yet been filled to the line of 12th Avenue. Although water lot grants were issued during the years between 1852 and 1871 (Holmes, 1879), there is no direct evidence that landfilling occurred before 1880. The first indication of landfilling appears on the Bromley Map of 1880; at this point, the shore, bulkhead, and pier lines are the same as those of today. The area was apparently filled between the years 1874 (the date of the Viele Map) and 1880, although the exact dates of filling episodes cannot be pinpointed.

Development of housing on the upper west side commenced during the middle years of the nineteenth century and reached a peak after 1870. The project area itself was never developed for residential use. Throughout the nineteenth and into the 20th

century, it remained industrial in nature. Today, the only section not occupied by the rail yards and docks houses film studios and parking lots.

PREHISTORIC LAND USE

This section of the report deals with the potential for prehistoric occupation in the project area. We will outline previous research on the prehistoric inhabitants of the Metropolitan Area and the geographical conditions existing before White contact with the aim of constructing a set of predictions as to the probability of aboriginal settlement. Since the entire western half of the study area was not filled until the late nineteenth century, the portion under consideration here is quite narrow, 500 feet at its widest extent and averaging less than 200 feet overall.

There is no record of archeological excavations within the study area itself. However, excavations and research have been conducted in Manhattan, the most notable under the direction of Reginald Pelham Bolton at the turn of the century. Bolton and Alanson B. Skinner have produced summary volumes dealing with the excavated data as well as Contact Period documents and records of the indigenous peoples.

Defined Manhattan Island site types include shell middens, fire and trash pits, temporary hunting or fishing camps, burial sites, rock shelters, and villages. Shell middens are by far the most numerous site type encountered. Villages appear to have been concentrated in lower Manhattan and along the East River shore. Rock shelters cluster in upper Manhattan, in the Inwood and Washington Heights sections.

There are no reported sites in the project area. This, however, does not rule out their existence, since excavations in Manhattan have been limited and the archival research has focussed solely on the Contact Period. In order to evaluate the probability of encountering prehistoric sites, it is necessary to consider the settlement pattern of the aboriginal inhabitants. Where a settlement or a camp is sited is dependent on a number of variables, including the topographic conditions, the accessibility of resources, and the economy of the group.

The aboriginal population of Manhattan Island practiced a mixed subsistence economy. There was undoubtedly some cultivation of native plants such as maize and squash; however, the primary subsistence activities appear to have been hunting and fishing, judging from data recovered in excavation (Skinner, 1961:9). It is therefore likely that sites would be found in areas along the rivers. Another determinant of site location would be the availability of fresh water, the Hudson and East Rivers being tidal estuaries. Skinner points out that "wherever the fresh water joins the salt, especially where open water for fishing and a spring for drinking come together ... there is generally ... evidence of Indian occupation" (Skinner, 1961:15).

Bolton (1922:48) notes that the "extent of the population probably depended ... on facilities for food supply", also specifying the availability of fresh water. He points out, however, that the known village sites all have a southern or eastern exposure, probably as a protection against winter westerlies. The range of low hills along the Hudson would have

afforded additional protection, thus suggesting that villages would be more likely to have been located to the east of these hills, and thus out of the study area, which runs along the unprotected littoral of the Hudson.

The site type most likely to be found in the study area would be a summer fishing camp, indicated by shell middens. Midden deposits have been found in the vicinities of 79th and 96th Streets, near the location of fresh water springs (Bolton, 1922:62). Streams entered the Hudson at three points within the project area, between 68th and 69th Streets, at the southern side of 67th Street, and between 60th and 61st Streets. At least one of these was noted in the historic literature as spring-fed (Mott, 1908:83). These places are likely, therefore, to have supported summer fishing camps during the prehistoric period.

The original land surface at these three points averages about 200 feet in width. The Hudson River Railroad hugged the shoreline from 72nd to 62nd Streets, from which point it angled east to run along the line of 11th Avenue. There is no evidence either from the existing ground surfaces or from railroad records that the rail bed was cut into the ground, except along its east side, and where it angles east to meet 11th Avenue. Therefore, indications are that any prehistoric deposits in these very narrow areas would have remained relatively undisturbed: they would in fact have been protected by the cinder bed laid for the railway.

Records of the New York City Department of Buildings indicate that a permit was obtained in for the construction of a loading platform at the west side of the rail line at 66th Street. The

plans indicate that the foundation pilings were to have been driven 4 feet below grade at both the north (at the south side of 67th Street) and south (at 66th Street) ends of the structure. The construction may have disturbed predicted prehistoric deposits along the old stream confluence at 67th Street, but without information on the depth of the cinder bed for the railway, it is impossible to assess its impact. This is the only record of construction of railroad structures on file with the Department of Buildings.

In summary, there is a probability that the study area may have supported seasonal fishing camps in the areas at the confluences of streams with the Hudson. There is no indication that they were destroyed by later construction. Stratigraphical borings such as are generally necessary prior to development should indicate the presence or absence of prehistoric shell middens in these three areas.

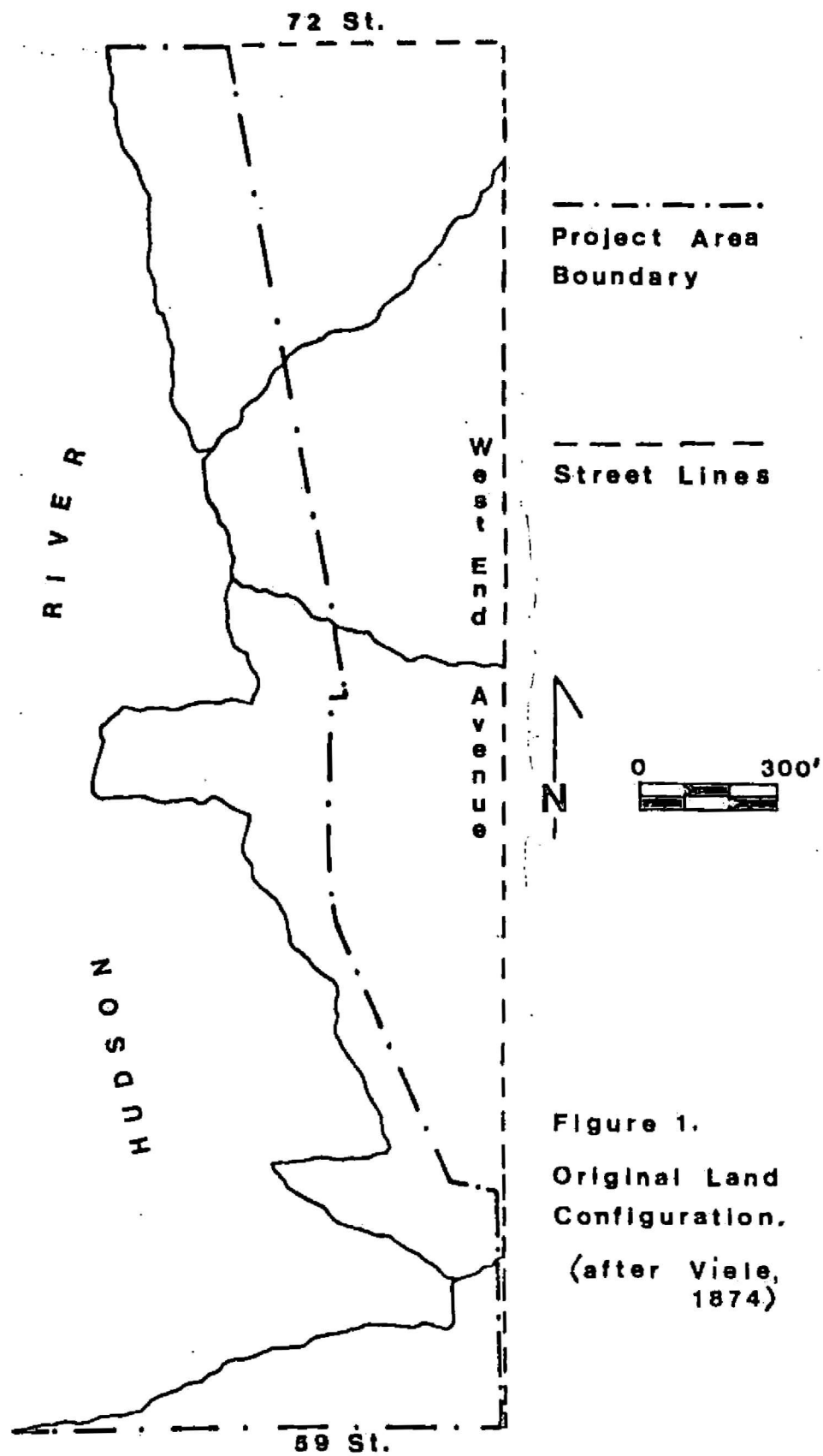


Figure 1.
Original Land
Configuration.
(after Viele,
1874)

THE STUDY AREA DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD

This and the following section of the report document the history of land use in the project area during the Historic Period. As noted above, the western section was not filled until the 1880s, at which point the entire area except for the block between 59th and 60th Streets was in use as a rail yard. The historic research will therefore concentrate on the original land surface along the narrow eastern section of the area.

The study area was part of a patent known as the Ten Lots, which was granted in 1667 by the provincial governor William Nicoll to Johannes Van Brugh, Thomas Hall, Jan Vigne, Egbert Wouters, and Jacob Leendersen (Patents Liber II:97, 111). The entire property stretched along the west side of the island from 42nd Street to 90th Street, and from the Hudson River to Central Park. The patentees subsequently divided the property into ten lots of approximately 100 acres each. The lots containing the study area are those designated by Stokes by the numbers 3 through 6. Lots 3 and 4, from 59th to 66th Street, became the property of Thomas Hall. Lot 5, from 66th to 70th Street, was the land of Johannes Van Brugh, as was Lot 6, from 70th to 74th Street. Lots 3, 4, and 5 will be treated as a unit here since they passed into the hands of a single owner relatively early and remained a unit throughout the Colonial Period.

A deed of 1696 (Deeds Liber 27:116) conveys the parcel between 66th and 70th Streets (Lot 5) to Theunis C. Stille. A second deed of that year transfers Lots 3 and 4 from Thomas Hall

to Stille. The land was mortgaged to John Harpendincke in 1720 (Liber 31:271). According to Stokes, one Pieter Lecquier, a former constable, was living on the land in 1722. Circa 1729, the property passed to Stephen (Etienne) Delancey (no deed extant). It remained in the Delancey family through the remainder of the period.

The Delancey family is prominent in New York history. Stephen Delancey (1663-1741) was a leading New York City merchant and property holder. As a member of the Provincial Assembly from 1705 to 1737, he was a spokesman for merchant interests (Bonomi, 1971). Delancey's will, recorded in 1745 (Liber 14:258), leaves the estate to his children, James, Peter and Oliver Delancey, Susannah Warren and Ann Watt. In 1747, the property was consolidated in the hands of James Delancey. James Delancey (1703-1760) also had an illustrious public career, as a member of the governor's council, as Chief Justice of the New York Supreme Court and as acting provincial governor from 1753 until his death in 1760.

James Delancey (1732-1800), the son of the elder James, inherited the estate from his father in 1860. Delancey was a member of the Provincial Assembly from 1768 to 1776 and an ardent supporter of the Sons of Liberty during the earlier part of his career. During the years prior to the Revolution, however, his loyalties shifted to the Crown, which he supported during the war. His estates, like those of other Loyalists, were confiscated under the Laws of Forfeiture in 1779. The property was sold to John Somerindyck in 1785.

The remaining Ten Lots property of concern here is Lot 6. In 1701, the land was sold by the heirs of the original patentee, Johannes Van Brugh, to Rebecca Van Schaike, who sold it in that same year to Cornelius Dykeman. Upon Dykeman's death during the 1730s, the land passed to his wife and children. The southern segment, from 70th to 72nd Street, was owned by Nicholas Dykeman until his death in 1758, at which time it passed into the hands of Jacob Harsen (Liber 380:161). This farm remained in the hands of the Harsen family through the middle of the nineteenth century (Holmes Map, 1879).

Although the documents note that lands on the west side of Manhattan were being farmed as early as the seventeenth century, it is unlikely that any structures or outbuildings existed in the project area itself. The 1808 Bridges survey of the property of John Somerindyck (Liber 85:298) places his farmstead on the line of 10th Avenue between 61st and 62nd Streets and the barn a block east. The Harsen farmstead was located between 10th and 11th Avenues and 70th and 71st Street. A drawing of the house (Figure 2) shows a Dutch-style home surrounded by woods and fields.

In conclusion, it is very unlikely that any significant Colonial Period remains exist in the project area. The shoreline along the river does not appear to have been heavily used or built upon during this period.

THE STUDY AREA DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

This section of the report documents land use in the project area from the period following the Revolution through the nineteenth century. With the exception of the block bounded by 59th and 60th Streets, West End (11th) Avenue and the Hudson River, the area had become the right of way for the Hudson River Railroad by 1849. It was not filled beyond the original shoreline until 1880 (Department of Docks, 1881). The landfill area was in use during the latter part of the nineteenth and through the twentieth centuries as rail yards, and is not of any archeological significance. For the remainder of the project area, only the block noted above, between 59th and 60th Streets, showed any significant distinction in land use after 1849.

As noted in the previous section, property in the project area was owned by the Somerindyck and Harsen families at the end of the Revolution. The 1815 Sackendorff map notes the Harsen land from 70th to 72nd Street along the river. The 1839 Deeds Map shows the Harsen homestead east of Ninth Avenue, outside the study area. According to Holmes (1879), the family held title to the property until the death of Jacob Harsen, a descendant, in the 1870s, well after the construction of the railroad.

John Somerindyck died in 1890 (Stokes, 1906). The property presumably passed to his wife Ann, since an 1809 deed (Liber 85:295) lists her as grantor transferring the land to her children. The 1815 Sackendorff Map shows the Somerindyck property divided into six parcels. William Cock and his wife Abigail,

daughter of John Somerindyck, held the property between 59th and 61st Streets. The land between 61st and 63rd Streets was owned by William Hardenbrook and his wife Margaret, another daughter of Somerindyck. George W. Somerindyck owned the parcel between 63rd and 65th Streets, Hyder Somerindyck that from 65th to 67th Street. Sarah Tallman, another daughter of John Somerindyck, and her husband John Tallman held title to the land between 67th and 69th Streets. A Quaker banker, Jacob Barker, owned the land between 69th and 70th Streets.

It does not appear that the land fronting the river was extensively, if at all, used before the construction of the railroad. The Bridges Map (1807) shows the Tallman house north of 68th Street between 10th and 11th Avenues, east of the project area. The Dripps Map, published in 1854 but compiled earlier, shows the Barker homestead north of 69th Street between 10th and 11th Avenues, also east of the area. There is no cartographic information on the other homesteads in the area, but Mott, in his history of the area, refers to several homes, all of them east of 11th Avenue and, therefore, outside the study area.

The block bounded by 59th and 60th Streets, 11th and 12th Avenues, is the one entire block in the study area which was not partially filled. Part of the property on this block was sold in 1839 by William T. Cock, one of the heirs of Somerindyck, to Lebbeus B. Ward (Liber 397:653). The property, which included two parcels, is described as follows:

1) beginning at the north side of 59th Street, 275 feet west of 11th Avenue, running northerly 100 feet, 4 inches to the midpoint of the block, continuing westerly parallel with 59th Street 25 feet, southerly parallel to 11th Avenue to the river (at the southern end of the peninsula) and thence east along 59th Street to the place of beginning

2) beginning at a point on the south side of 60th Street 200 feet west of 11th Avenue, proceeding south 100 feet and 4 inches to the midpoint of the block, thence west 62 feet "more or less" to the river, along the river to 60th Street, then 52 feet, "more or less", to the point of beginning. (Liber 397:653)

In other words, Ward purchased a property, depicted on the map, Figure 3, which ran along the line of 60th Street midway through the block to the river. Mott (1908:11) describes the Haddersley (or Hammersley) Forge set up on this land during the 1840s as "the first established in this country fitted with furnaces and steam hammers of sufficient size to manufacture shafts and cranks for steamer and steamboat use". Ward maintained control of this land until 1874, when it was sold to William H. Vanderbilt, one of the owners of the consolidated New York Central and Hudson River Railroad. At the point when the land was sold, the parcel extended through the entire north south extent of the block from a point about 220 feet west of 11th Avenue to the river.

The foundry appears on the Dripps Map of 1854. On the 1862 Perris Map, an enlarged complex of buildings is shown. This was labelled a "Bone black manufactory". Although Ward retained title

to the land, the foundry had a relatively short life. There is no indication in the New York City records that the building was demolished. Therefore the structure standing on the lot today, a one story brick building housing a film studio, is most likely the original nineteenth century building constructed and subsequently enlarged by Ward.

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, a number of small two- and three-story commercial buildings were constructed on the eastern end of the block. Deeds indicate that these lots passed into the hands of the railroad during a period from the turn of the century until the 1930s. There is currently a paved parking lot on this eastern section.

The Hudson River Railroad Company was established in 1832. Its construction was not completed until 1849. The company's papers indicate that the railway was built on the original land contours with minimal grading and the laying of a shallow bed of cinder. Therefore, there would be very little disturbance from the construction of the railway. In the 1870's, the Hudson River Railroad merged with the New York Central, becoming the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad. The land was not filled to 12th Avenue until the 1880's. Through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the area adjacent to the railroad north of 60th Street was occupied by freight and stock yards.

The only historic structure of any potential archeological significance in the project area is on the site of the Haddersley Foundry. It is on a lot which has apparently seen minimal disturbance from the construction of later structures.



Figure 2. The Harsen Farmstead. (from Mott, 1908)

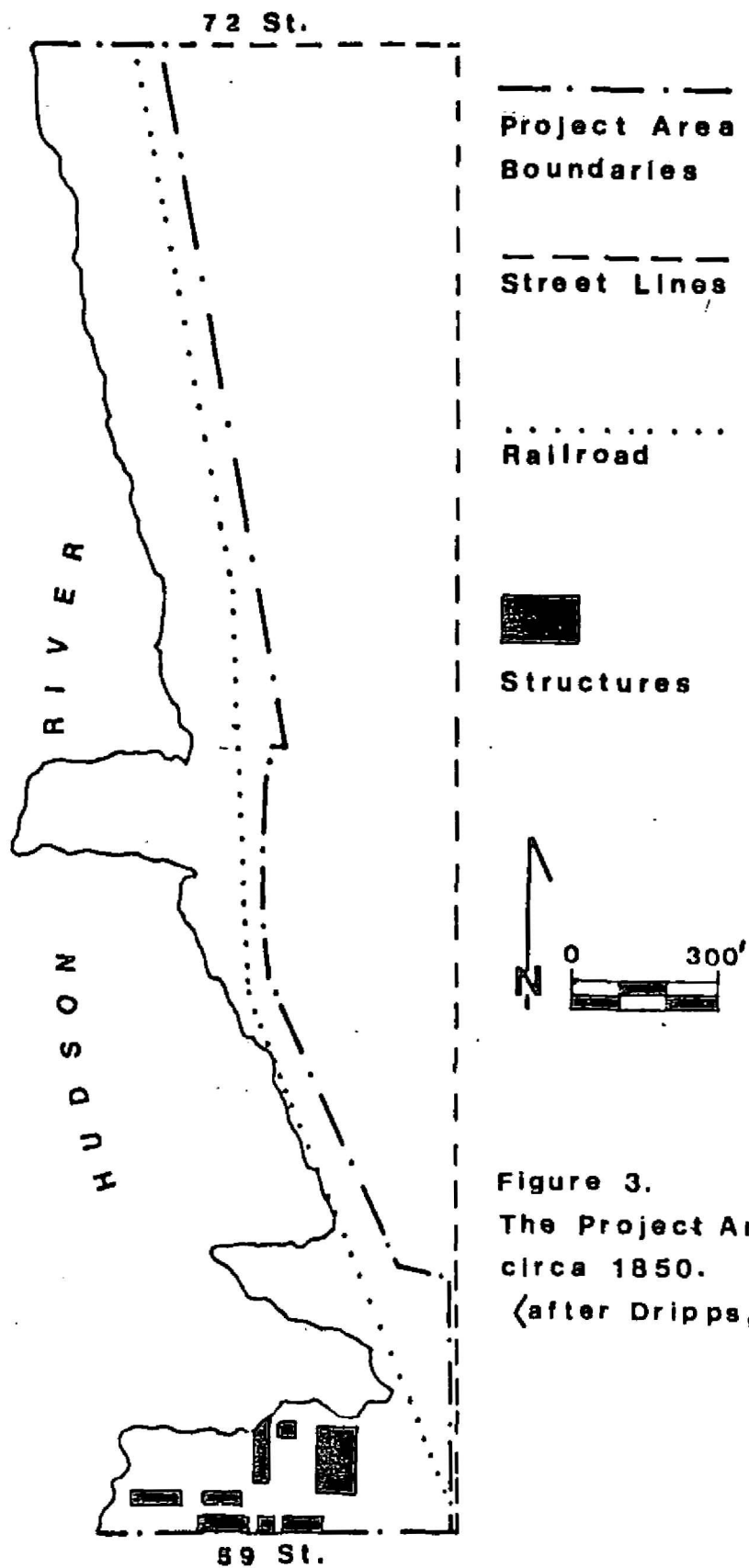


Figure 3.
The Project Area
circa 1850.
(after Dripps, 1854)

This section of the report presents a brief summary of the results of the research, along with an evaluation of the archeological potential of the Penn Yards area and our recommendations for mitigating the impact of construction on the cultural resources.

Approximately one-half of the entire project area consists of landfill deposited during the late nineteenth century. This section was in use as rail yards and stockpens throughout its existence. There were no substantial structures in the area, and it does not appear to be of any archeological significance.

The remainder of the study area, consisting of original land surface, is very narrow in extent. The only whole block in this segment is the one bounded by 59th and 60th Streets. It is this original land surface which presents areas of significance from an archeological standpoint.

The pre-landfill topography of this area suggests that it was suitable for prehistoric occupation. The three points at which streams entered the Hudson River could have supported seasonal fishing camps, a site type known to be located along the shorelines of Manhattan and at stream confluences. Temporary fishing camps would be manifested stratigraphically by alluvial deposits as well as a concentration of shell from midden deposits. Such stratigraphy evidence should be clearly evident in soil cores. In accordance, we recommend archeological evaluation of a series of borings clustered around the areas most likely to have supported aboriginal populations in order to assess the presence or absence of deposits associated with prehistoric populations.

There is no indication from historic documents that the project area was extensively used during the Colonial Period or during the years before 1835. All the farmsteads and buildings mentioned in the literature or appearing on early maps are east of the project area. We can therefore rule out (with a reasonable degree of certainty) the probability of encountering archeological deposits from this period.

The only area which appears to be significant from a historic standpoint is the block between 59th and 60th Streets. During the middle part of the nineteenth century, the Haddersley Forge stood on the site, midway through the block. The forge was succeeded by a bone-black factory: today it houses film studios. While there is evidence from the historic maps of several building episodes and extensive modification of the original structures, there is no indication that the original foundry was destroyed by later construction. The building standing on the site today is of nineteenth century construction.

Archeological deposits likely to be associated with foundries are an oily sand, slag and such remnants from furnaces, and structural remains (Edward Rutsch, personal communication). The structural remains would include the massive concrete block foundations used to support the furnaces, retorts, and machinery and may show up in visual inspection of the standing structure. We recommend that the building be inspected with the assistance of an Industrial Archeologist in order to evaluate the need, if any, for further work on this block.

In conclusion, our recommendations will serve the function of definitively ruling out or establishing the existence of archeological and cultural resources in the project area. Both the borings and the inspection of the foundry site can be conducted within the framework of preparations for construction.