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ARCHEOLOGICAL SENSITIVITY MODEL  
FOR THE RUFUS KING MANOR & PARK  
JAMAICA, BOROUGH OF QUEENS, NYC

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DECEMBER 1984

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## HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL RESEARCH FOR THE RUFUS KING MANOR AND PARK

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The following report represents historical research and an archeological sensitivity model for the eleven acre Rufus King Manor and Park site located on Jamaica Avenue, Queens, under the jurisdiction of the New York City Department of Parks. This data was compiled by Archeological Research Consultants, Inc., as part of the Historic Structures and Landscape Report being prepared by Gibson Bauer Associates of Staten Island, New York. Robert Venables was historian for the project and Jo Ann Cotz was the archeologist and project co-ordinator.

The earliest stages of research on the Rufus King Manor and Park, named a National Landmark in 1974, revealed a vast primary data bank of manuscripts relating to Rufus King. While the document here presented gives a clear and continuous history of the property and its ownership from the 18th through 20th century, the potential for further research is immense. While not within the purview of this contract, continued research on the individuals linked to this property cannot but further enhance the architectural and landscape restoration, as well as help build the framework for its future interpretation.

ARCHEOLOGICAL SENSITIVITY STUDY OF  
RUFUS KING MANOR AND PARK, JAMAICA  
QUEENS, NEW YORK

Introduction

This archeological sensitivity study will examine the site surrounding the Rufus King Manor, paying particular attention to ways in which the property was utilized and changed by various tenants over time. The prediction of areas of potential sensitivity is based on historical descriptions, historic maps and recent observations of the property. In some cases, however, particularly for American Indian or seventeenth century remains, there is no exact documentation able to precisely mark where cultural features may be found. Yet the literature suggests the potential presence of these deposits. For this reason, there can be no blanket clearance for those areas not marked as sensitive (see enclosed map). Both the map and text are meant to be used as a guide to where activity was centered on the property and to aid in the avoidance or subsequent study of those areas. Additional areas may be added to this map as research on the site is continued.

An archeological research design should precede any excavation at the site. Utilizing the data compiled in this historic structures report, this design would formulate questions about the occupation periods and the lifestyles of particular inhabitants. These hypotheses would reflect the problems being asked in the current archeological literature as well as synthesize specific goals of the restoration. These tasks cannot be accomplished at this preliminary point ; this collective data will serve as a basis for them to be formulated in the future.



## PREHISTORIC PERIOD

Prehistoric or native American Indian occupation at the Rufus King Manor and Park site or its vicinity has not been verified by archeological excavation to date. The physical location of the site on high ground above a pond along a major transportation link suggests some potential for prehistoric activity. The possibility should not be dismissed by the current lack of documentation.

Venables describes the historic context of the native inhabitants in the adjoining report(see Summary,Section IV). Prehistoric sites found on Long Island have primarily been located along the coast and have been represented by shell middens associated with a broad artifactual scatter.<sup>1</sup> Village sites, however,are noted by Skinner as occurring inland where there is a water source, well drained land for cultivation and settlement.<sup>2</sup> Such a settlement is noted in the early 20th century accounts of Bolton and Thompson as being located adjacent to Beaver Pond, situated several miles south of the Rufus King site.<sup>3</sup> No verification has been made for these references, however. This site nor any other in the project area is listed in the files of the New York State Museum and Science Center or at the Nassau County Museum.<sup>4</sup>

Despite this lack of verification the Beaver Pond site remains a potential settlement area. The Rufus King site is located north of the water source between the east-west transportation network, the Mechawanienc Trail(now Jamaica Avenue) and what was called "the Woody Heights" in the 18th century.<sup>5</sup> This high ground above

the Jamaica Bay drainage, a natural throughfare north along what is today Flushing Avenue, would have provided numerous eco-niches for the Native inhabitant to exploit. The wooded northern area still boasted a large supply of small game at the time of European settlement, including deer, bear, wolves, foxes, raccoon, skunk and muskrat.<sup>6</sup> The supply of game coupled with the potential for wild duck along the pond (part of the Long Island flyway) would have made the location a particularly lucrative seasonal exploitation. Sites at the Rufus King Manor and Park may consist of scatters of lithics associated with these activities.

## Notes

1

Carlyle S. Smith, The Archaeology of Coastal New York (New York: Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History 1950) Vol. 43, Part 2; Lynn Ceci, The Effect of European Contact and Trade on the Settlement Pattern of Indians in Coastal New York (New York: Ph.D. dissertation, City University of New York, 1977).

2

Alanson Skinner, Indians of Greater New York (Cedar Rapids: The Torch Press, 1915).

3

Reginald P. Bolton, Indian Paths in the Great Metropolis (New York: Museum of the American Indian, 1922); Benjamin F. Thompson, History of Long Island (New York: Robert H. Dodd, 1918), Volume 2.

4

Robert Funk, New York State Museum and Science Center and Ronald Wyatt, now at the Sands Point Preserve in Port Washington, formerly of the Garvie Point Museum, Glen Cove both checked site files for prehistoric sites in the area of Queens near the site. Personal communication with Debbie Bode, an archeologist performing a Phase III at the GSA Federal Building site for Soil Systems, Inc., located two blocks west of the Rufus King site just south of Jamaica Avenue, revealed that there was no prehistoric component recovered from that location.

5

n.a., The Seat of Action Between the British and American Forces. or An Authentic Plan of The Western Part of Long Island. From the Surveys of Major Holland, 1776, in Public Papers of George Clinton, First Governor of New York, 1777-1795 - 1801-1804 (New York: Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Co., 1899) Map enclosure, faces 328.

6

Daniel Denton, an original settler of Jamaica, as quoted in John Kiernan, A Natural History of New York City (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin); see Diana Rockman, Susan Dublin and Amy Friedlander, Proposed Federal Building Jamaica, New York: Cultural Resources Plan and Scope of Work (New York: Soil Systems, Inc., 1982), for an excellent synopsis of Prehistoric Land use in the area.

## HISTORIC PERIOD

### 17th Century

The earliest documentary record of activity in the vicinity of the site is the 1666 map of the western end of Long Island drawn by Scott Hubbard.<sup>1</sup> In a close-up detail, this map reveals a structure, noted as the "Quarterny House" or Quartermasters House, located at a point north of what is now Jamaica Avenue in the approximate location of the King Manor. The enigmatic nature of the massive foundations and chimney base in the manor, coupled with the evidence of the Hubbard map, lead to speculation about its possible 17th century occupation as an English military outpost.

Archeological investigation of the property will shed some light on this dilemma. Testing, particularly along the exterior of those massive foundation walls, could reveal a builders' trench, reflecting the building techniques used to erect the original structure. Testing along the interior of the foundation or around the chimney bases, in undisturbed areas, may provide information about activities conducted there. Artifacts recovered from this potential feature should reflect a material culture (i.e., ceramics, glassware, hardware) characteristic of the period of time when the structure was built. Since we know that the main house underwent extensive renovations in 1806, there may be some intrusion of more recent artifacts in the upper levels of the builders' trench.<sup>2</sup>

There is <sup>other</sup> circumstantial evidence that a 17th century

structure existed on this site. The evidence documented by Venables suggests that John Owlfffield, a leathermaker, may have occupied this site sometime after 1666. Tanning required the use of pits, lined with wood, clay or stone, in which to soak the hides.<sup>3</sup> The presence of the below ground remains of such features, in association with 17th century artifacts, would demonstrate that such an activity took place on the site. The location of an activity area such as this would probably be in the rear or side yard close to a good source of water, i.e., the well.

Site specific research questions for the 17th century might include: (1) testing along the western portion of the foundation to determine when it was built and to locate evidence of military, tanning or other activities; (2) a heightened sense of awareness for the remains of tanning pits when testing in the rear and side yards, especially near the well.

### 18th Century

The historic documentation traced by Venables places a house in the location of the present manor house by 1730. Eighteenth century maps, however, do not show the house, and lost original manuscript material further clouds this early period.

Documentary evidence provides some specific data about the 18th century structure that eventually became the King Manor.

By 1755, there was a house with "...eight rooms on a floor and two good rooms upstairs."<sup>4</sup> In his description of the house, 19th century historian Henry Onderdonk noted that the house had "sash windows" with a view of Beaver Pond, located to the southwest, verifying that the building has always faced south. Charles King, ~~grand~~son of Rufus King, also recalled in 1854 that the house faced south.

The most complete description of the house prior to King's acquisition in 1806 was made by the latter's son, Charles, in 1854.<sup>5</sup> He described the house at that time as "well built, comfortable and roomy", and that it was "after the uniform pattern, then almost universal in the region". The enclosed map reflects the pre-1806 configurations (a-e) of the property described by King. From the house (a), "a narrow gravel path (b) led in a straight line from a little gate (c), down to the door of the house". East of the gravel path was a carriage path for horses and an entrance gate (d), also "On another straight line, running down by the side of the house". King also noted the absence of trees and lack of privacy from the high road in 1806, interrupted only by two horse chesnuts 30' from the house to the east and west. These trees were there in 1935, and were probably focal activity areas (e).<sup>6</sup> The house was separated from the road by a white picket fence, not shown on our map as its exact location is unknown. King also remarked that the house was set 100' <sup>yards</sup> back from the road, rather than the 200' it is set back today. However, the earliest map which shows the house indicates a similar orientation to that

which exists today.<sup>7</sup>

King offered no description of outbuildings associated with the house, yet the enumeration of a carriage path makes clear that a horse barn or ~~a~~ carriage shed could have been present. Other probable outbuildings might have included a privy or outhouse, a well, and perhaps a cistern for holding rainwater. There may have been numerous other structures related to a working farm, such as corn cribs, cow barns, poultry house, smokehouse, dairy and tenant houses. Since there is no evidence for the location of any of these buildings, those areas most likely to have been their sites have been indicated by a dash line on the composite map.

Subsequent research detailing the lifestyles of Reverends Poyer (1730-1732) and Colgon (1732-1755), Mary Smith Colgon (1755-1776) and Christopher Smith (1776-1806) may provide details that further illuminate the use of the property in the 18th century.

### 19th Century

Rufus King's purchase of the property in 1806 marked a new phase in its development, and fortunately it is one which has left substantial documentation. Charles King notes that "alterations and improvements" were undertaken immediately after Rufus King moved in in the spring of 1806.<sup>8</sup> These changes to the property are designated on the Archeological Sensitivity Map as Rufus King additions, 1806-1813, letters f-j.

Charles King's description somewhat shows the transformation of the comfortable but unstylish home into the manor house of a prosperous, middle aged, Federalist statesman.<sup>9</sup> The changes which he noted include; the reorientation of the front walk to a circular configuration (f), plantings in a belt 20'-30' wide along the front of the grounds, and numerous trees including pinus and firs, some of which were still present in 1935 when a detailed topographic map of the site was made.<sup>10</sup> These plantings reflect 19th century use patterns of the grounds. For example, as shown on the map, a group of 24"-30" diameter linden trees created a semi-circular enclosure at the rear of the house. This screening provided privacy for the family, keeping it spatially and socially separate from the working farm in the rear. This space may have included small gardens, herb beds, a sitting area and the family privy. A second feature within this enclosure is also delineated by trees (i). An area 10'-12' in width, with no standing structure, is located 25' north of the northwest corner of the house, and is flanked on either side by 15" diameter cedars.<sup>11</sup> This is the probable location of the family privy. A pre-1926 photograph showing the northwest corner of the house very faintly shows a small building in this approximate location, and it seems to have the shape and size of an outhouse.<sup>12</sup> *Question whether this was the location from the photo.*

Three outbuildings are shown as part of the King farm on the 1813 map.<sup>13</sup> Two of these buildings, parallel to each other, are identical 50'x75' structures (g, h), located 475' north of the rear of the house. The third building is not within



the project area, and seems to be in the <sup>road</sup> bed of present Grove Street. No functions are attributed to these structures, nor is there any evidence of other buildings or deep features that may have been associated, such as privies, wells or cisterns. King raised cows and was known to be an avid horseman; therefore it is conceivable that one building functioned in each of these capacities.<sup>14</sup>

Rufus King's renovations extended to the house as well as to the grounds, including the alteration of the bedrooms and the enlargement of the dining room. <sup>In his report</sup> Venables notes that King added a new kitchen in 1806, and that it was "made of oak beams and pine lumbered from their own woodland plus shingles bought from a neighbor".<sup>15</sup> While the location of this new kitchen is not clear, the wing to the rear of the house, at the northeast corner, (j) on the composite map, is probably <sup>in part this building</sup> ... This wing does not appear on the somewhat undetailed 1813 map, but it is delineated on the 1842 map.<sup>16</sup>

Rufus King died in 1827, and the estate and farm passed to his eldest son, John A. King. The Rufus King period is especially interesting to study because of his ongoing relationship with England and frequent travel there. It would be fascinating to see, for instance, if King purchased English rather than American made goods. As a Federalist and advocate of the development of American manufactures, he should have supported American manufacturers; but did fashion divorce him from his political philosophy? Not available from the documentary

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evidence found thus far, archeological research on the manor and farm buildings erected by King should provide some information about the function and spatial relationship among structures as well as provide data from which to analyze the social space between master and servant.

It is still unclear how the development of the property proceeded between 1813, the end of Rufus King's life in 1827 and the subsequent tenure of his eldest son, John A. King at the site. The 1842 map of the property shows <sup>that</sup> numerous new outbuildings have been built to the north and east of the manor (buildings k, l, m, n, o on the Sensitivity Model).<sup>17</sup> The working farm seems to have increased in intensity and activity and to have reached its height during this period of time.

The period between 1842 and 1868 reflects little change in the property, save the addition of a small complex of buildings (p) located north of Grove Street.<sup>18</sup> The function of these buildings is also uncertain, but seem to reflect the continued growth of the farm unit activity. During this period, <sup>the map indicates that several of</sup> of the earliest outbuildings <sup>were</sup> taken down or moved.

The farm complex saw a steady demise through the last third of the 19th century. The 1873 county atlas reveals little new activity and by the end of the century (1895, 1897) only one outbuilding is shown standing; <sup>(building h)</sup> another may have existed in a state of disrepair.<sup>(K) 19</sup> While it has not been within the purview of this report to examine census records for the period involved, it would be interesting to compare the members of the family occupying

the house over time and compare it to the building, reflecting the prosperity or interest in maintaining the farm. How much relationship does the wider community play in the expansion of the grounds? Is the growth of Jamaica and the introduction of the railroad reflected in the quantity or quality of material goods the King's have deposited? How did an influential family and its estate loosen family ties enough to be sold to the village rather than a family member? <sup>while may call room like</sup> These <sup>not</sup> archeological questions, <sup>there are questions about social interaction that</sup> will be reflected in the material culture in many direct and indirect ways.

#### Rufus King Manor and Park-1898 to the present

The last King to inhabit the property was Miss Cornelia King who died there.<sup>20</sup> On June 29, 1897, the house and the surrounding 11 acres were sold to the Village of Jamaica for \$50,000 by one of the sons of John A. King. Within a year the Village was consolidated as part of the City of New York (1898) and the property came under the jurisdiction of the New York City Department of Parks.<sup>21</sup> A group of individuals interested in the preservation of the manor formed in 1900 called the King Manor Association. Since 1904 the association has had a lease with the Parks Department to maintain the interior of the manor house and its furnishings.<sup>22</sup> Maintenance of the grounds was under the jurisdiction of the Parks Department.

Several substantial changes have been made to the grounds as it assumed its new role as a public park. These include

comfort stations, a bandstand, playgrounds, asphalt walkways, and sidewalks along the perimeter of the park. The first comfort station on the grounds is reflected in the records of the Jamaica Office of the Queens County Building Department, but refutes the late 19th century map data gathered. The building permit in question (1914-1915) is for an alteration to "one old building...to be occupied as a comfort station...presently a comfort station... and located 35' east of the King Mansion."<sup>23</sup> This description refers to building k, put up between 1813-1842.

It is likely that building k functioned as a comfort station from the inception of the park. The new alterations were to utilize the existing 20" stone walls and called for new partitioning of the interior. The new floor plan, barely surviving on rotting linen, reveals a one story building with six rooms, having a stove and chimney in the center room. A French or blind drain was put in at the same time 20' from the building.<sup>24</sup>

Unfortunately all but one other permit <sup>(in the Jamaica Building Department file)</sup> was either missing or not applicable. According to the Building Folder exterior, in 1922 a new building was added to the property, but the data was missing from the file. Perhaps this reflects the building of the bandstand which was put up some time before 1926.<sup>25</sup>

Two buildings had been added to the property before 1936: a bandstand located north of the house (pre-1926), as well as a new comfort station (c. 1935) located just east of building k which had been razed by that time.<sup>26</sup> Both of these buildings are listed as letter q on the Sensitivity Model. The <sup>M/C</sup> Parks Department property card for the Rufus King Manor and Park lists the bandstand, comfort

station, flag pole and cannon as existing on the property in 1936, just after the new comfort station was put in.<sup>27</sup> The same source notes that the sidewalks were laid on Jamaica Avenue in 1931.

The most recent addition (1957) to the park has been an extensive playground and basketball court to the east of the manor.<sup>28</sup>

These 20th century additions to the property will have, in some cases, obliterated the existing archeological record. In most cases, however, bulldozing of a building will not disturb those deposits well below the surface. The extent of the archeological record at this site is still undetermined. Some building has created deep disturbance to the original deposition of stratigraphy. The 1914 comfort station, for example, had an open sewerage vault added under the south end of the comfort station which probably destroyed much of the 1813-1898 King context. The bandstand is in the approximate location of the earlier (1813-1842) building m. Since the bandstand required a basement level, it is reasonable to assume that part of the remains of building m have been destroyed by subsequent construction. The 1957 playground complex (r) overlays the remains of earlier building 1 (1813-1842). While plans will probably not directly effect this area at this time, the potential for data about this earlier building may certainly still exist below ground.

## Summary

The preceeding text has been written to augment the Archeological Sensitivity Model, a map which chronologically delineates the historic development of the property in the Rufus King Manor and Park. It is important to be able to visually perceive this information in a composite drawing where historic structures have been superimposed at a single scale in order to determine the archeological potential for the site.

Based on this map, very <sup>(little ground remains of)</sup> few features associated with the 19th century King family occupation of the site have been destroyed. Many features lie below the walkways and pavement that traverse the park while others remain grass covered. Building l rests under the present playground, while a portion of building m and k deposits have been destroyed in subsequent building. The locations of some 19th century deep features such as the cisterns, dry wells, and trash deposits are still unknown as are those before the 19th century.

The safest route for future below ground disturbance at the King Manor would be along presently existing gas, water, sewer or electric lines. Some of these lines have been delimited on the map. It is recommended however, that if excavation in the area of the lines exceeds the general depth excavated for such utilities, i.e. 18" for gas and electric, 3'-5' for sewers, control tests be dug to determine the nature of the matrix below the utility disturbance.

how do you know this?

The task of archeological research at the Rufus King Manor and Park is as much to determine the unknown factors associated with its prehistoric and 17th and 18th century occupation as to finely analyze the details of a broadly defined 19th century gentleman's manor and farm. Both offer the challenge of defining economic boundaries within and between the family unit, and of observing social relationships as defined by the use of space through the analysis of material remains.

Notes

1

Scott Hubbard, "A Plott off ye situation of the towns & places on ye western end of Long Island to Hempstead," July 3, 1666, photocopy of original in the New York State Library, Albany; in the Map Division, New York Public Library.

2

Charles King son of Rufus King in Homes of American Statesmen: with Anecdotal, Personal, and Descriptive Sketches, by Various Writers (New York: G.P. Putnam and Company, 1854), 357-360.

3

W. H. Pyne, Picturesque Views of Rural Occupations in Early Nineteenth-Century England, All 641 Illustrations From Ackermann's Edition of the "Microcosm". (New York: Dover Press, Inc., 1977), Plate 99.

4

Henry Onderdonk, Jr., Antiquities of the Parish Church, Jamaica (Jamaica, New York: Charles Welling, 1880), 30-39.

5

King, Homes, 357-360.

6

Robert K. Taylor and A.T. Anderson, Topographical Map of King Park, City of New York Department of Parks, Sept. 14, 1935, Scale 1" = 50'.

7

[William H. Maxwell's personal map, 1816], "Plan of the Proposed Turnpike Road from Williamsburgh to Jamaica in Long Island, December 1813," in the Manuscript Division, #39, Charter Case, New York State, Drawer 13, New York Public Library, New York City.

8

King, Homes, 357.

9

Ibid., 355-368.



- 10  
Taylor and Anderson, Topographical.
- 11  
Ibid.
- 12  
Edward Hale Brush, Rufus King and His Times (New York: Nicholas L. Brown, 1926).
- 13  
"Plan of the Proposed Turnpike, 1813"
- 14  
King, Homes, 360,361.
- 15  
Robert Ernst, Rufus King: American Federalist (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, 1968), 293. See Venables, this report for detailed documentary research details on King.
- 16  
Martin G. Johnson, "Map of the Village of Jamaica, Queens County, Long Island" (New York: Miller's Lith., 1842), in the Long Island Historical Society.
- 17  
Ibid.
- 18  
E.W. Conklin, "Map of the Village of Jamaica, Queens County, L.I. Surveyed and Laid Out Under the Direction of the Board of Trustees" (New York: Endicott & Co. Lith., 1868), in the Long Island Historical Society.
- 19  
Beers, "Jamaica Village, Queens Co. L.I., " 1873, in the New York Historical Society; D.L. Hardenbrook, "Jamaica, Long Island. New York" (Jamaica, New York: D.L. Hardenbrook and O.H. Bailey & Co. Lith. Boston, 1895) in the Long Island Historical Society; Sanborn Map Company, "Insurance Map for 1897," Map Division, New York Public Library.

20

Brush, Rufus King, 157.

21

Acquisition File, New York City Department of Parks, Parklands Department, Olmstead Center. Special thanks to Larry Beckhart for his helpful guidance.

22

Personal communication, Vera Rawlings, president of the King Manor Association and Charles and Helen Hirzel, members, December 3, 1984. Copies of the leases between the Association and the Parks Department are included in the Acquisition File in the Parklands Department of the Parks Department.

23

Files, City of New York Building Department, Borough of Queens, for Jamaica, Alteration Permit # 62 for the Comfort Station, 1914-1915. Special thanks to Donna Walcavage for sharing this data with me; also to T. Rush, at the Que Gardens Building Department Office for information on deciphering the Building Department system of filing.

24

Alteration Permit # 62, Map enclosure.

25

New Building File, City of New York Building Department, Borough of Queens, Jamaica for Block #9682, Lot #1.

26

Taylor and Anderson, Topographical.

27

Acquisition File, City of New York Department of Parks.

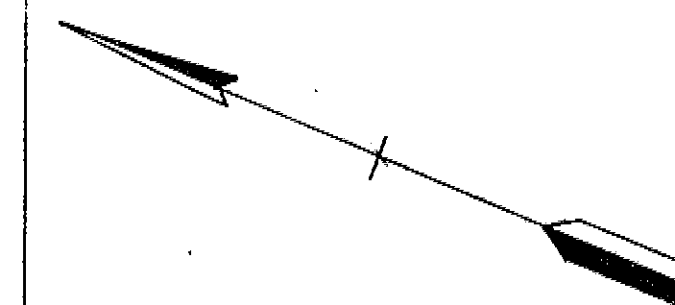
28

Ibid., special thanks to Linda Sterman of the Parklands Division for her assistance.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDY BY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
RESEARCH  
CONSULTANTS, INC.

179 PARK AVENUE  
MIDLAND PARK, N.J. 07432



LEGEND

- PRE-1806 CONFIGURATION  
A,B,C,D,E
- RUFUS KING ADDITIONS  
1806-1813 F,G,H,I
- RUFUS KING ADDITIONS  
1813-1842 K,L,M,N,O
- JOHN KING ADDITIONS  
1842-1868 P
- NYC PARKS DEPT.  
1898-1935 Q
- NYC PARKS DEPT. 1957 R
- ACTIVITY AREAS ASSOCIATED  
WITH STRUCTURES

JOHANSSON & WALCavage  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

91 ATLANTIC AVE.  
BROOKLYN, N. Y. 11201

CITY OF NEW YORK  
DEPARTMENT OF  
PARKS & RECREATION

OLMSTED CENTER  
FLUSHING MEADOWS-CORONA PARK  
FLUSHING, NEW YORK 11368

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF  
RUFUS KING PARK,  
COMFORT STATION  
AND BANDSTAND

JAMAICA AVE., 153RD ST.  
89TH AVE. & 150TH ST.  
BOROUGH OF QUEENS

DRAWING TITLE  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SENSITIVITY MODEL

DRAWN BY ST CHECKED BY DW

SCALE 1" = 50'

CONTRACT NO.  
Q-23-284

DATE  
8/85

SHEET 2 OF

89TH AVENUE (SHELTON AVENUE)

90TH AVENUE (GROVE STREET)

90TH ROAD

153RD STREET (RAY STREET)

JAMAICA AVENUE

150TH STREET (ALSOP STREET)

90TH AVENUE