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THE NEW YORK CITY

LONG RANGE SLUDGE MANAGEMENT PLAN

GENERIC

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT III

College Point, Queens

Preliminary Archaeological Assessment

582

HISTORICAL
PERSPECTIVES INC.



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THE NEW YORK CITY

LONG RANGE SLUDGE MANAGEMENT PLAN

GENERIC

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT III

College Point, Queens

Preliminary Archaeological Assessment

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Date

June 1991

PROPOSED COLLEGE POINT SLUDGE MANAGEMENT FACILITY

NEW YORK CITY LONG RANGE SLUDGE MANAGEMENT PLAN (GEIS III)

INTRODUCTION: New York City has entered into a Consent Decree and Enforcement Agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to end ocean disposal of its sewage sludge. A Long Range Sludge Management Plan is being developed by the City as part of the agreement. The Plan calls for the development of multiple City sites where dewatered sludge can be processed into sludge product with beneficial reuse technologies.

This preliminary archaeological report is part of a generic environmental impact statement (GEIS III) for the Long Range Plan. A full, and more costly, Phase IA archaeological study might not be deemed necessary if a preliminary review of the parcel's subsurface construction history indicates that the proposed building's footprint does not encroach on those areas of the site that might contain archaeological resources.

Research has included study of both old and current maps, historical accounts, guides to New York, a site file search and a May 7, 1991 visit to the area.

LOCATION: The project site (Block 4381, Lot 1, Block 4382, Lot 1 and Block 4383, Lot 5) consists of approximately 7 level acres in the College Point section of Queens (See Figures 1 and 2.). It is bounded on the north by 31st Avenue, diagonally on the east by College Point Boulevard, south by a paved drive and vacant land, and west by a wire fence and traces of the extension of 125th Street, now privately used. The site is currently vacant.

CURRENT CONDITION: The project site lies immediately southwest of the College Point Industrial Park and is surrounded by equipment storage yards to the south and both a new and an older Consolidated Edison facility to the north (See Photographs 1 and 2). A New York City Police Department Auto Pound is under construction across College Point Boulevard to the southeast. The entire tract is littered with debris and covered with weeds (See Photograph 3.). The concentration of broken up chunks of asphalt along College Point Boulevard is probably the result of recent resurfacing of that road (See Photograph 4.).

The southeastern boundary of the site is formed by a stream or deep ditch which empties into an underground culvert that leads in the direction of Flushing Bay (See Photograph 5 and Figure 3.). It should be noted on Figure 3, the Sanborn map, that the U.S. Bulkhead/Pierhead Line extends from Flushing Bay to this

culvert at the edge of the project site, but this inlet has since been filled. The Phragmites, or common reeds, in the ditch are a good indication of wet and disturbed land. The lone, small tree on the property grows at the side of this ditch. A depression near the center of the property possibly indicates landfill slump. An unused portion of 126th Street runs north and south through the property and the remains of 125th Street is used as a drive for the building on the west side (See Photograph 6.).

Two soil borings taken across College Point Boulevard south of 31st Avenue, approximately 300 yards east of the project area, indicate a layer of fill from approximately 11.4 to 13.9 feet below grade. The water table was 6.2 feet below grade. There is no sign of bedrock as deep as 58.4 feet below grade (See Appendix 1a and 1b.).

Other borings, done in 1987 for the College Point Corporate Park, cover the area from 122nd and 123rd Streets to the Whitestone Expressway service roads east of the project area. The fill layer here ranges from approximately 11 to 30 feet below current grade (Data from Public Development Corp., provided by Stone & Webster Engineering Corporation's New York City office).

CONSTRUCTION PLANS: No specific building or lay-out has been selected for the site. However, it is anticipated that any building will have spread-footing foundations to a depth of 5-6 feet below grade (D. Lang, Allee King Rosen & Fleming Inc., personal communication 5/22/91). There is also a possibility of pilings along the perimeter of the building going down to bedrock, a depth which is not known for this site.

PREHISTORY: A number of sources locate Native American sites within a half mile of the project site. According to Bolton (1922), Northern Boulevard was originally an Indian trail, and Grumet shows four habitation sites between that trail and the project area (See Figure 4.). The habitation sites were clustered around the mouth of a creek called "Sackhickneyah" which originated near Newtown, Queens and flowed northwest through Trains Meadow, emptying into Flushing Bay (Grumet 1981:48). Grumet says "Sackhickneyah" derived from a Delaware word meaning "the shore path".

It is not clear whether these are the same as State Museum Inventory sites #4540, a burial, and #4542 a camp, (Figure 5), or whether they are additional locations of aboriginal activity. Arthur C. Parker reported the sites in his 1922 Archaeological History of New York, but the locations have not been field checked and are not geographically precise (Kearns and Kirkorian 1985:69).

New York State Museum Site #719, previously called Graham Court #94, was both a village and burial site. Located about a mile and a half northwest of the project area, it was excavated by Carlyle Smith. It contained a whole ceramic vessel with stamping and cord-marking, which dates it to the Woodland Period. A dog burial was associated with it.

Another Woodland site, the Wilkins site, was about one and a half miles northeast of the project area at 14th Avenue near the Bronx-Whitestone Bridge. Excavated in 1939-40, it contained 18 shell and refuse pits and burials, with pottery, net sinkers, bone awls, projectile points and aboriginal pipe sherds (Smith 1950:177).

Although there are documented prehistoric sites near the project area, it is probable that the project location itself was too wet for settlement within the last 6,000 years because it was a tidal marsh, as will be discussed in the Historic section of this report.

When humans first entered what is now southwestern New York State at least 12,000 years ago, the last Wisconsin Glacier was retreating. Sea level was very much lower than it is today and did not reach its present configuration until about 6,000 years ago (Salwen 1962:46). Traces of habitation of these early people, called Paleo-Indians, were submerged as the glacier melted and released the water previously trapped as ice. Paleo-Indian sites are rare on Long Island for this reason, but conditions in the project area might have been conducive to occupation at that time. Then, and into the Archaic Period which followed, the project site would have been meadowland with a freshwater stream running through it.

LAND USE HISTORY: In the seventeenth century, the project site was part of William Lawrence's estate. His descendants sold it to Eliphalet Stratton in 1790, and the elevated, well-drained land to the north became the village of Strattonsport (WPA Guide 1939:570).

The project site itself remained undeveloped into the twentieth century. Earliest available maps show it as tidal marsh with a stream flowing through or just east of it into Flushing Bay (See Figure 6.). Occasionally there appears to be an island or hillock on or just east of the site (See Figure 7.). By 1852, a road, "the Causeway", traverses the marsh about where College Point Boulevard now lies (See Figure 8.). It is most probable that the causeway construction took advantage of the elevated portions of the meadow and incorporated the hillock into the roadway. The causeway became College Point Causeway, after an Episcopal divinity school founded in 1836 by the Rev. William Muhlenberg but never opened (Willensky 1988:762).

In the second half of the nineteenth century, College Point was a thriving industrial community, with Swiss and German immigrants manning its rubber works, ribbon mills, toilet goods plants and brewery (WPA Guide 1939:570).

By 1926 the current street and avenue numbering system was in place, and city blocks were mapped in, if not actually in place. The project area remained vacant, but a "garbage crematory" and the Phoenix Construction Company appeared about 650 feet to the east (E. Belcher Hyde Vol.3, Plate 19: not shown).

The first documentation of construction on the site is in 1954, when Lew Morris Demolition Co., Inc. erected an office and storage facility for used incombustible building materials and lumber, and a 550 gallon gas tank on Block 4382, Lot 1 and Block 4383, Lot 5 respectively (See Appendix 2.).

Block 4381, Lot 1 became an auto wrecking yard in 1957. Functions included the storage and sales of new auto parts, a junk yard, and storage for cars and trucks. A one-story, onground building approximately 190x95 feet was constructed and an application was made and presumably granted to drop the curb and erect a chain-link fence around the yard. This fence is still in existence, but the buildings were no longer standing in 1977 when aerial photographs were taken (See Figure 9.).

RECOMMENDATIONS: Map study has shown that the project area was a tidal marsh from about 6,000 years ago until almost the middle of the twentieth century. For this reason, there are not expected to be any historic or relatively recent prehistoric (e.g. Late Archaic or Woodland) resources on the property. There is a possibility that Native Americans used the site prior to its inundation by rising sea level with the melting of the last Wisconsin Glacier, and that valuable prehistoric archaeological resources remain.

However, soil borings immediately east and west of the site indicate a layer of fill at least 11 feet deep. Thus, any potential prehistoric resources would not be impacted by the proposed 5 to 6 foot spread-footing foundation of the planned sludge management facility, and possible pilings around the perimeter would create very limited disturbance.

We therefore recommend no further archaeological consideration of the project area.

REFERENCES*

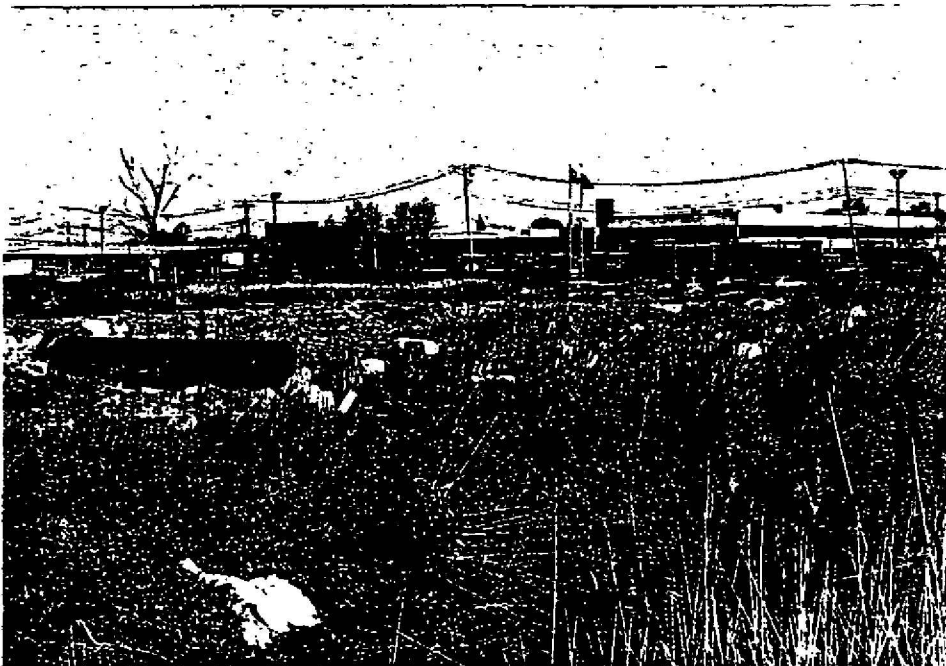
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*Maps are referenced on the pages on which they appear.



Photograph 1

Facing SSW across Block 4381, with abandoned 126th Street in foreground and Shea Stadium in background.



Photograph 2

Facing NNW across Block 4383 and northern section of Block 4382, with Consolidated Edison in background. Note slumped area containing fuel tank, with ditch in foreground.



Photograph 3

Facing NW across Blocks 4382 and 4381. White building is at corner of 31st Avenue and 125th Street.



Photograph 4

Facing SE along eastern boundary of property and newly paved College Point Boulevard.



Photograph 5

Facing NNW across project area, showing ditch with phragmites and sole tree.

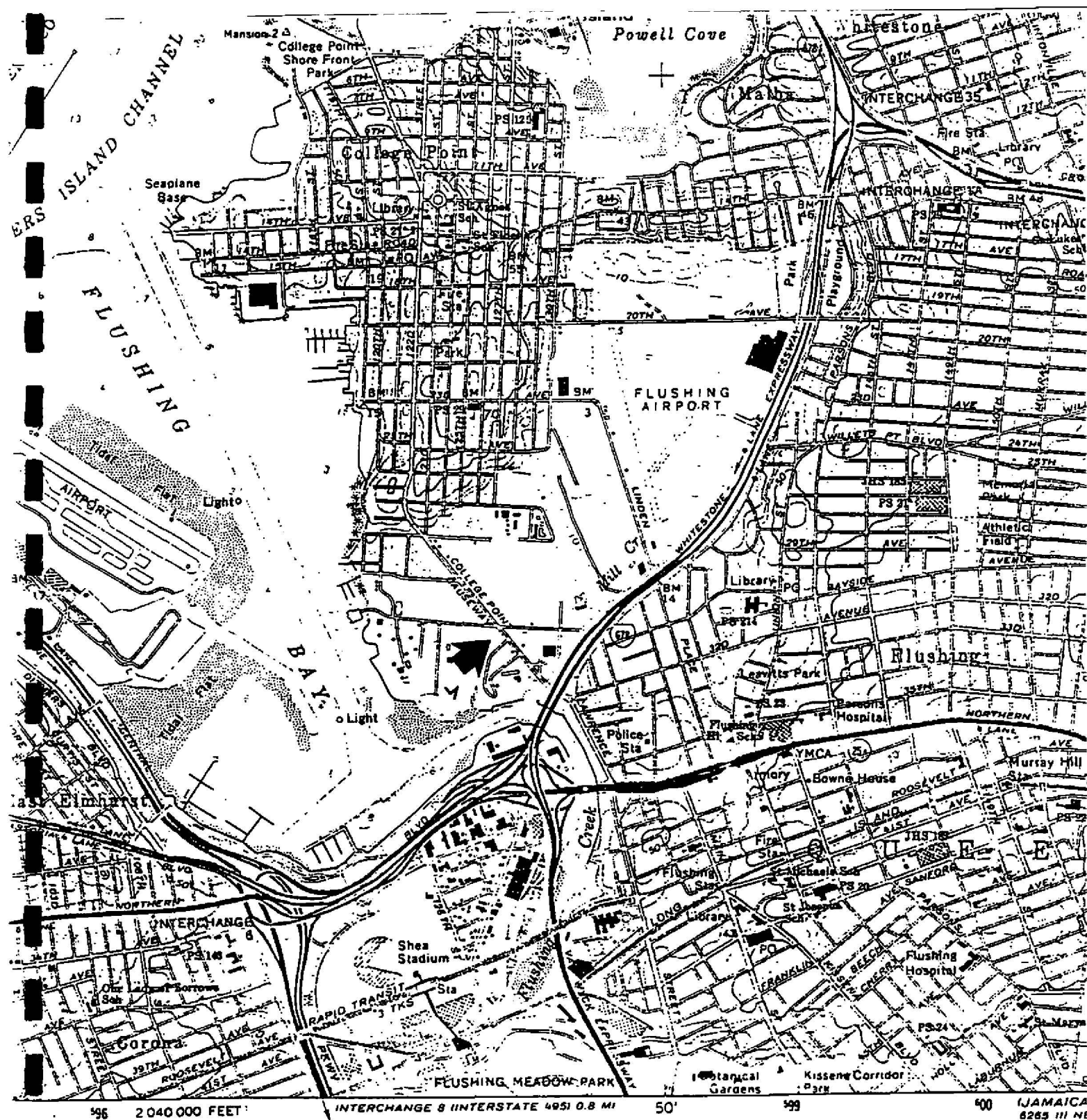


Photograph 6

Facing S along western boundary of property, with the 125th Street extension at right.

Figure 1

U.S.G.S. Topographic Map - Flushing Quadrangle

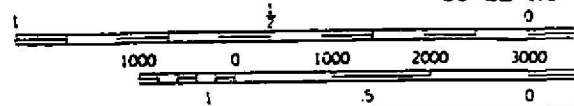
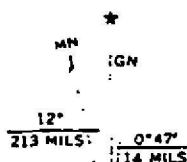


and published by the Geological Survey
in cooperation with New York Department

U.S.G.S. and Nassau County

revised from USC&GS Charts T-5089, T-5090,
T-5091, T-5092, T-5093, T-5094, T-5095,
T-5096, T-5097, T-5098. Topography by photogrammetric methods
aerial photographs taken 1954. Field checked 1955.

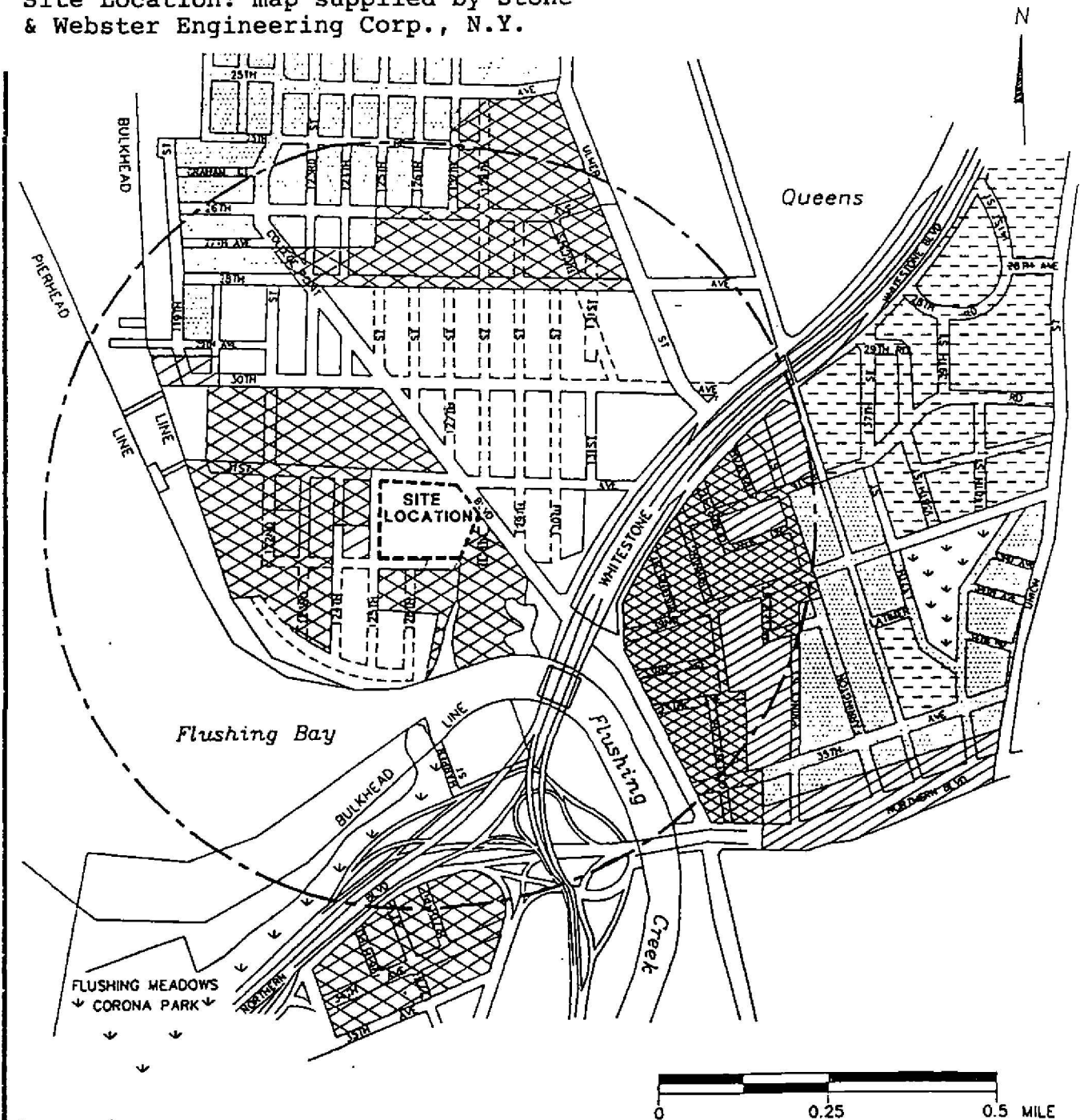
data compiled from USC&GS Charts
(1967). This information is not intended



CONTOUR INTERVAL
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE T
SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROX
THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS APPL

Figure 2

Site Location: map supplied by Stone & Webster Engineering Corp., N.Y.



Legend

| | | |
|-------------------------|------------|--------------------|
| 1-2 Family Residential | Commercial | Open Space/Vacant |
| Multifamily Residential | Industrial | Halfmile From Site |
| Institutional | Recreation | Site Location |

0 0.25 0.5 MILE

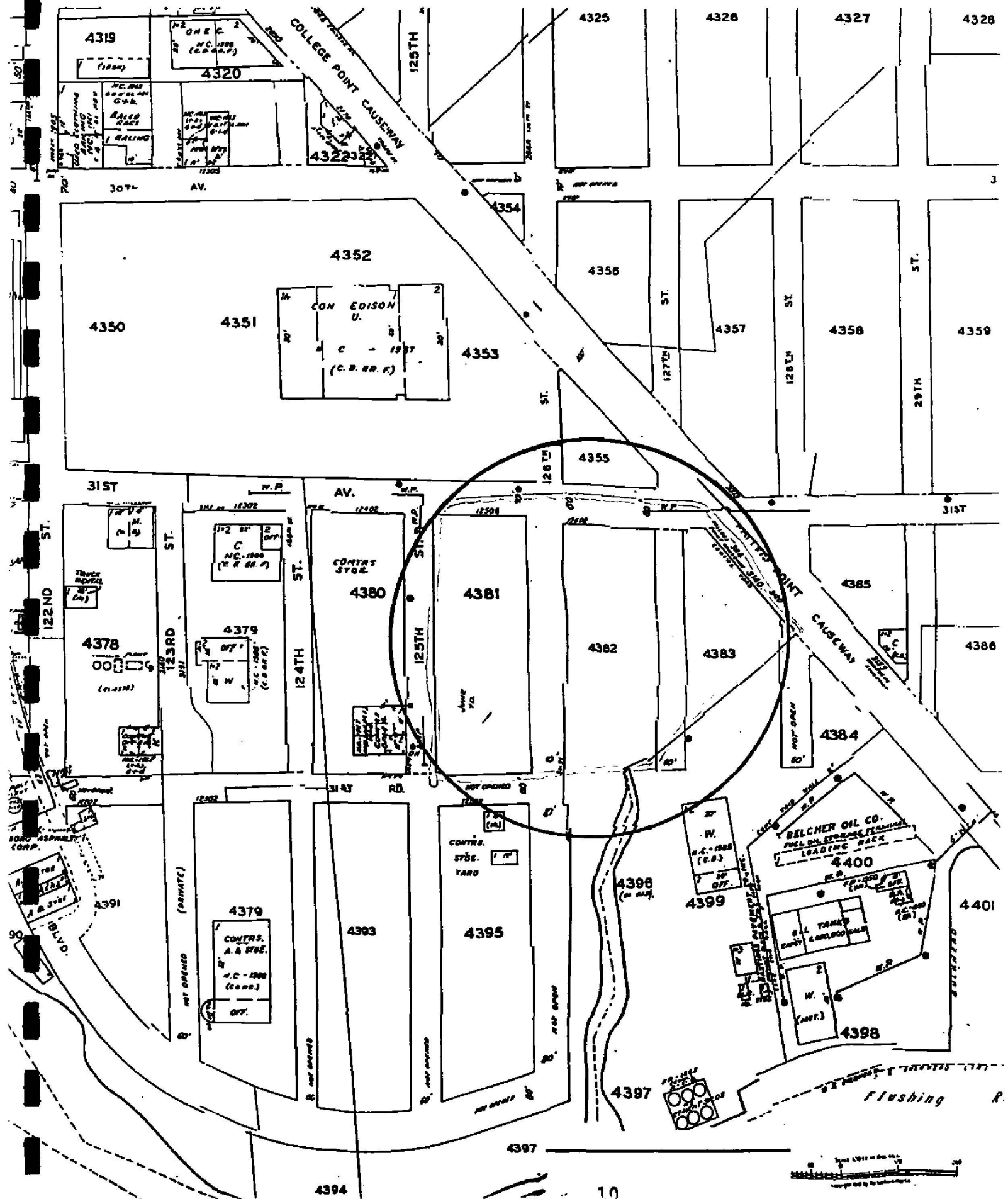
New York City Department
of Environmental Protection

**SLUDGE
MANAGEMENT
PLAN**

**Generalized Land Use
College Point**

Figure 3

Sanborn Insurance Map: supplied by Stone
& Webster Engineering Corp., N.Y.



Photocopied from:

Grumet 1981: page 71

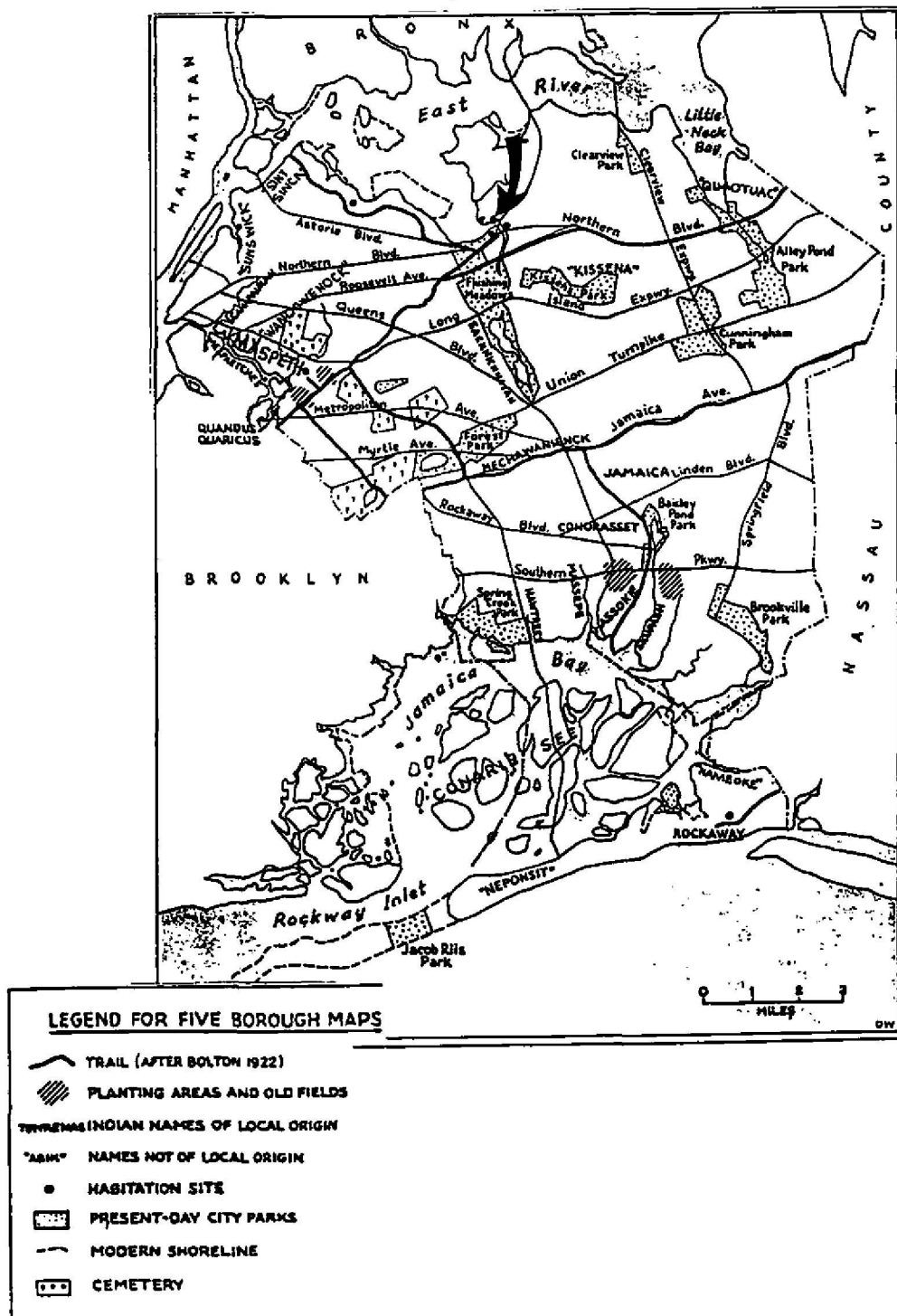


Figure 5

Prehistoric site identification map
provided by the New York State Museum.



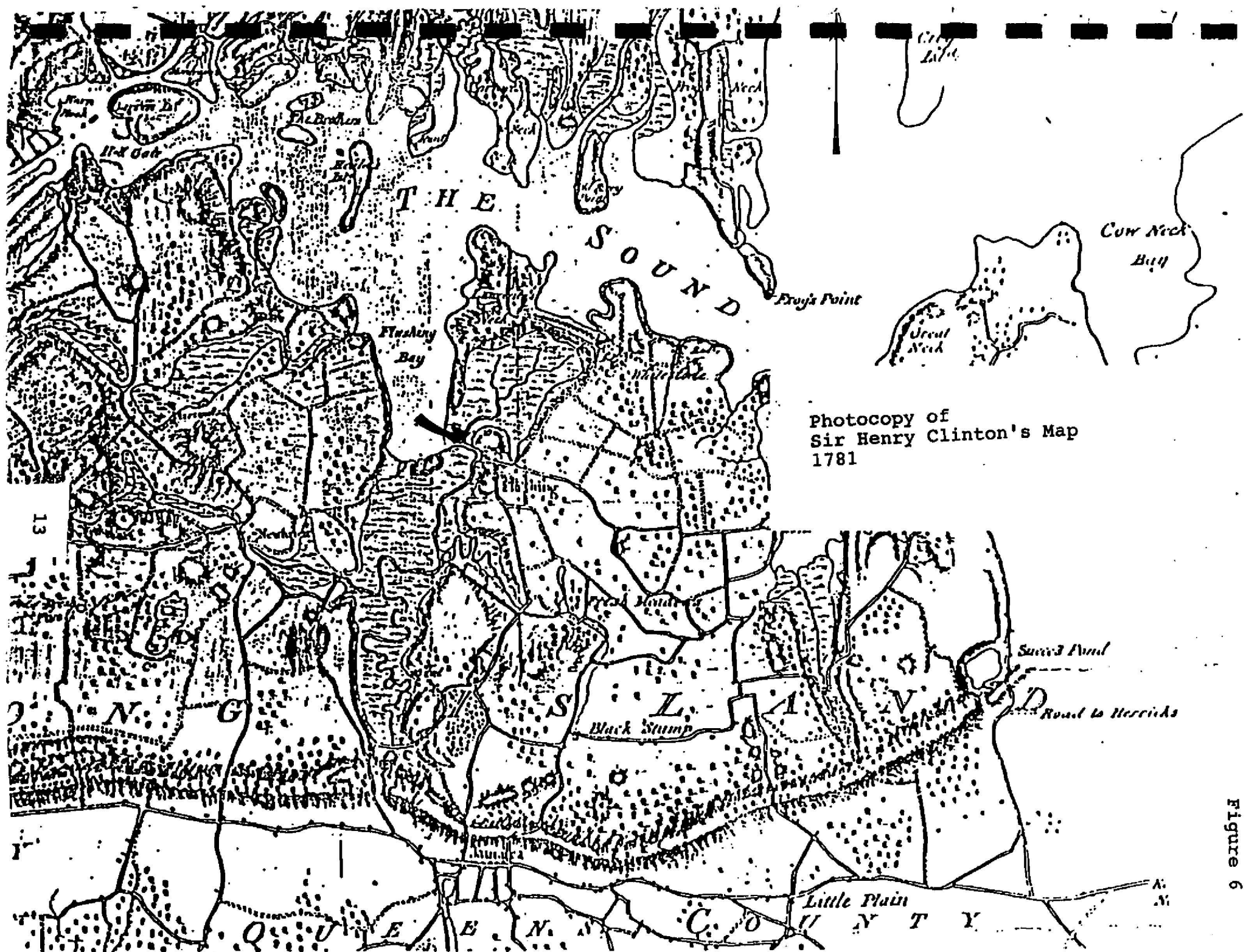
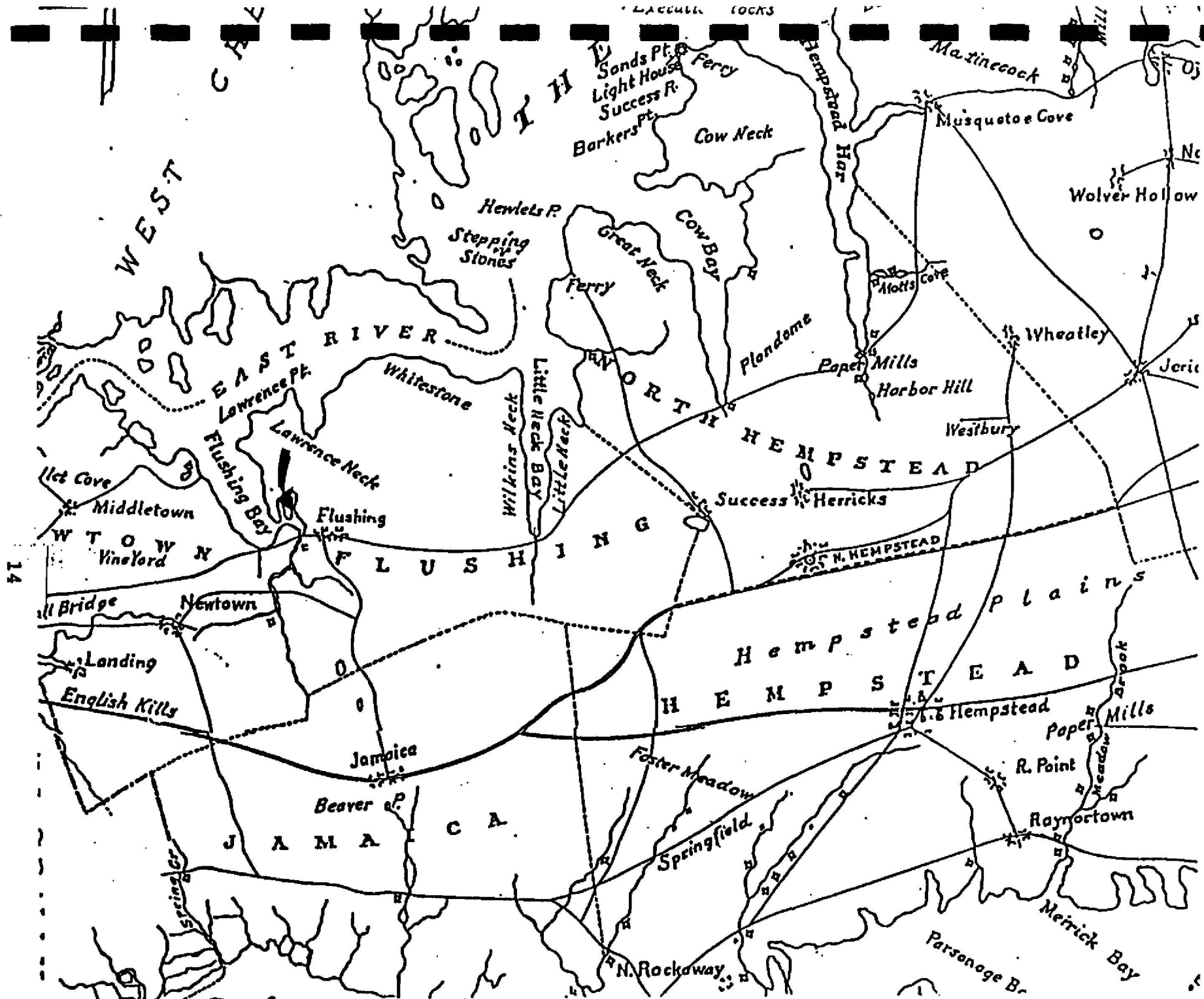


Figure 6



Photocopy of Burr's 1828 Map, Redrawn in 1940
Nassau Historical Society

Figure 8

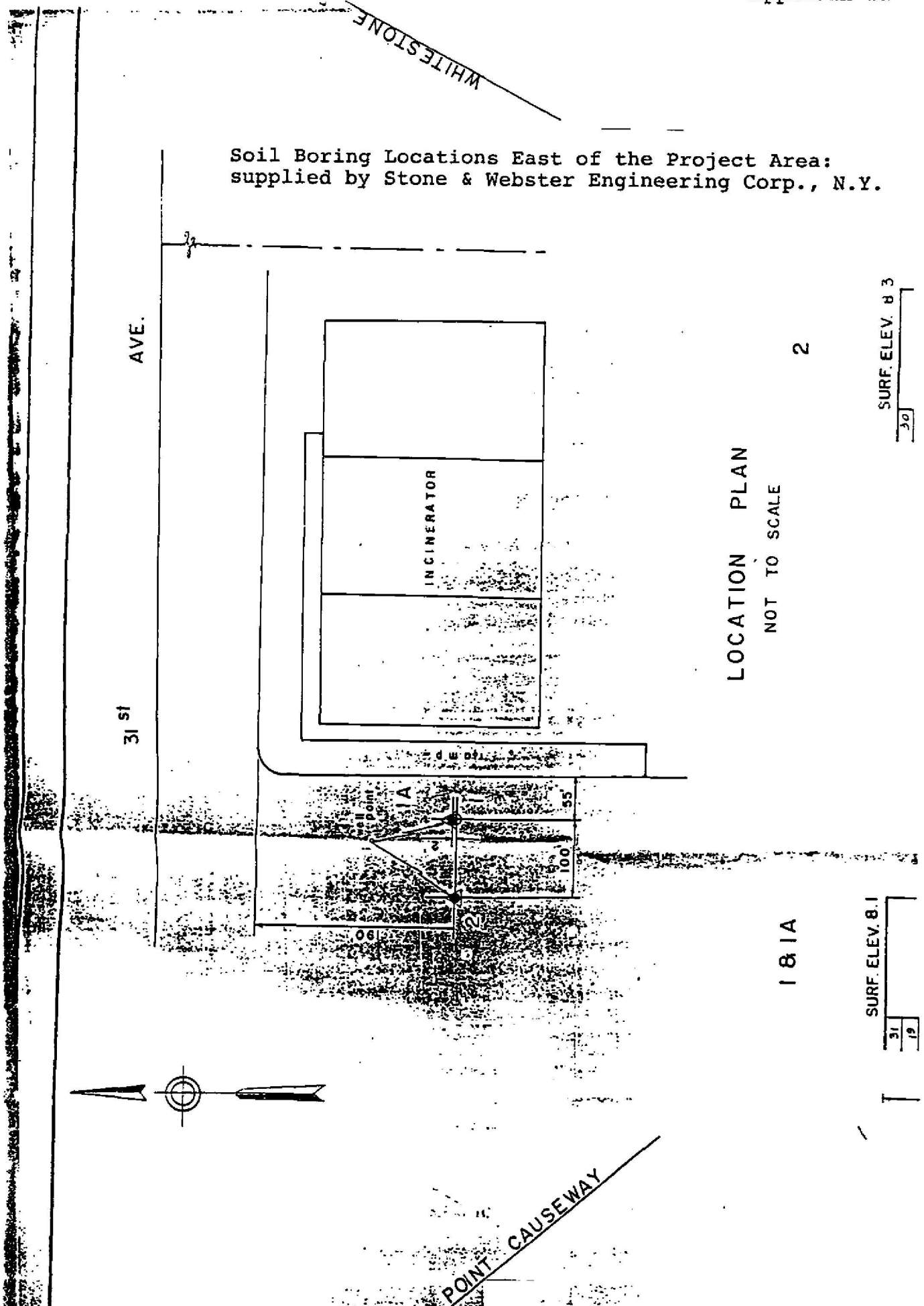


Figure 9

1977 Aerial Photograph: supplied by Stone
& Webster Engineering Corp., N.Y.

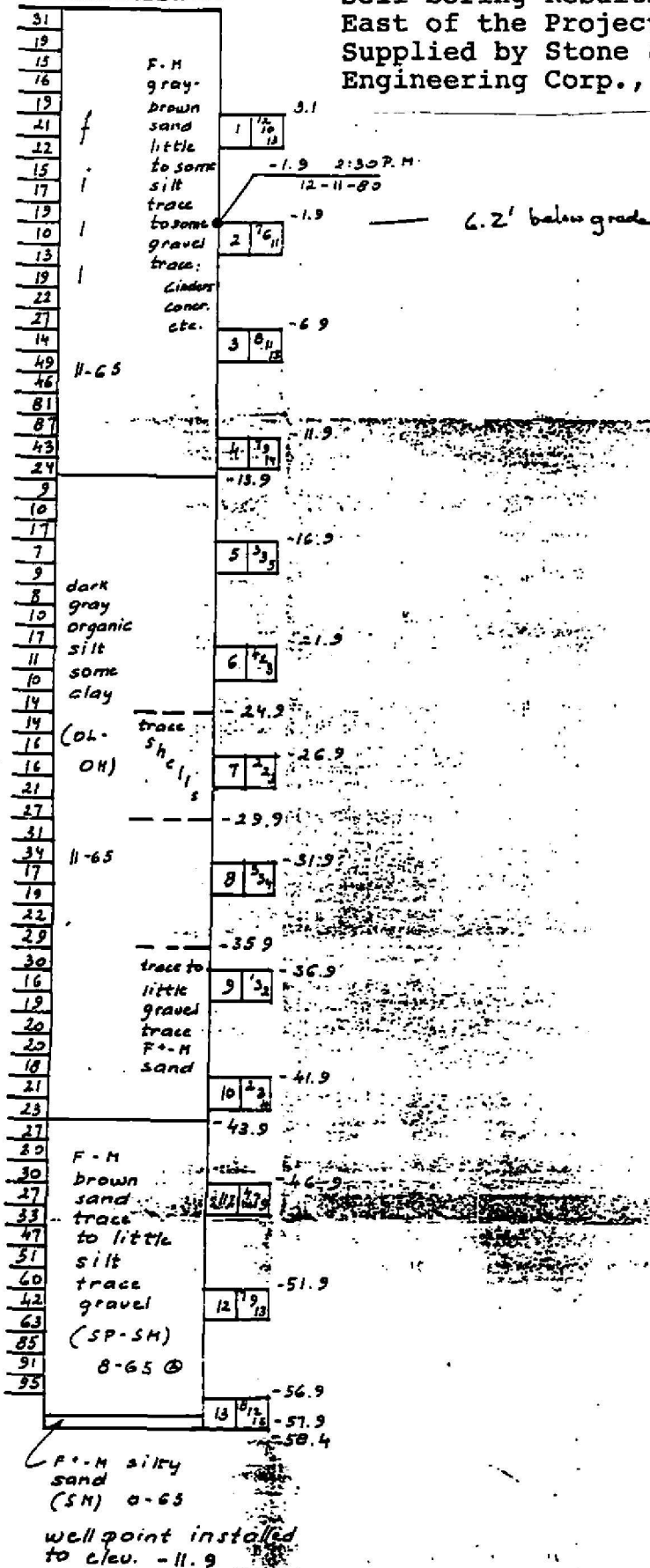


Soil Boring Locations East of the Project Area:
supplied by Stone & Webster Engineering Corp., N.Y.



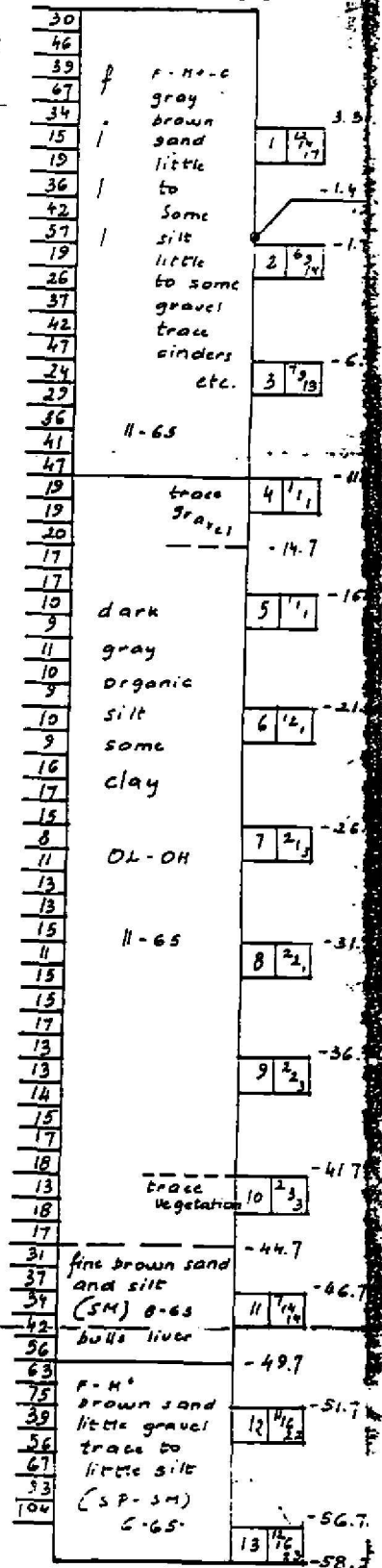
SURF. ELEV. 8.1

Soil Boring Results
East of the Project Area:
Supplied by Stone & Webster
Engineering Corp., N.Y.



- P.M silty
sand
(SM) 0-63
well point installed
to elev. -11.9

SURF. ELEV. 8.3'



well point installed
to elev. - 11.7

Appendix 2

Block 4382, Lot 1 and Block 4383, Lot 5:
Field sketch provided by Stone & Webster
Engineering Corp., N.Y.

Storage + office in conjunction w/ storage of used
bldg. materials on lot

1954

owner, Lewis Morris Demolition Co, Inc.

lumber storage + incombustible bldg. materials.

550 Gal. Gas Tank

31st AVE

C.P. Caseway

1
2
4th
S
T.

21'
15'

26'

25'