

PRELIMINARY ARCHAEOLOGICAL TESTING IN  
THE CELLAR OF THE JACOB ADRIANCE HOUSE,  
BELLEROSE, QUEENS, NEW YORK

1985

Prepared For

The City of New York  
Department of Parks and Recreation

Prepared By

The Cultural Resource Group  
Louis Berger & Associates, Inc.

March 1985

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## F O R E W O R D

Archaeological testing in the basement of The Adriance House revealed that the original surface underlying the addition has been disturbed. The original yard area sampled underlying the addition consists of in-place sterile soils rather than fill as had been previously thought. The results of the initial testing suggest that a higher potential for recovery of intact archaeological deposits will be found in testing yard area around the exterior of the original structure to the west and north of the addition.

Fieldwork and the preparation of the report of the basement excavation at the Adriance House Site was supervised by Leonid Shmookler. Field crew on this project were Matt Gajewski and Deborah Campbell. Overall project supervision was provided by Terry Klein.

THE CULTURAL RESOURCE GROUP  
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## INTRODUCTION

The preliminary archaeological testing in the cellar of Jacob Adriance House took place on March 11, 1985. The work was conducted by the Cultural Resource Group of Louis Berger & Associates, Inc. (LBA) under contract to the City of New York, Department of Parks and Recreation. As specified in the proposal for archaeological investigation (NO. 1122), a test trench running east/west (3' x 1.5') was excavated in the berm east of the end of the low interior rock wall of the cellar (Figure 1).

A shovel test (1' x 1' x 3') was dug in the path, midway between the interior wall and the northern cellar entrance, (Figure 1). Excavation proceeded by natural stratigraphy and arbitrary levels within natural stratigraphy. All depth measurements were recorded in relation to a datum established on the roof of the cellar. This datum is 16" above the top of the berm. All sediments removed from the eastern half of the Test Trench 1 and the Shovel Test 1 were dry-screened through 1/4' mesh hardware cloth.

### Test Trench 1

Following the removal of overlaying refuse, the berm in the eastern half of trench was excavated to a depth of -56" below datum, (Figure 2). This sediment (a strong brown clayey silt) displayed no stratigraphy. The structure of this soil is granular and is permeated with root channels. With the exception of the top three levels (total depth 11"), this sediment proved to be sterile. The artifact component from these upper levels concentrated within the uppermost seven inches of the berm. The non-diagnostic artifacts (i.e., the artifacts that cannot be identified in terms of date, form and/or function) include mortar, brick shell, window glass, metal, and redware sherds. Diagnostic glass fragments represent a late nineteenth century context. Nine Diagnostic ceramic sherd (creamware and pearlware) yielded a date range from late eighteenth to early nineteenth century.

The clayey silt deposits rested on a layer of yellowish red medium sand with levels of fine sand and cobbles. This stratum (-56" - 76" below datum) was sterile; however, nineteenth and twentieth century artifacts, as well as peanut and walnut shells, were removed from the fill of a large rodent burrow occupying a stratigraphic position between clayey silt and sand.

Following the excavation of the eastern portion of Test Trench 1, its western section was removed without screening. This was done because no in situ artifacts were present in the eastern section; furthermore, no changes in stratigraphy were observed in the newly available west profile. The removal of this section confirmed the stratigraphic unity of both portions of Test Trench 1.

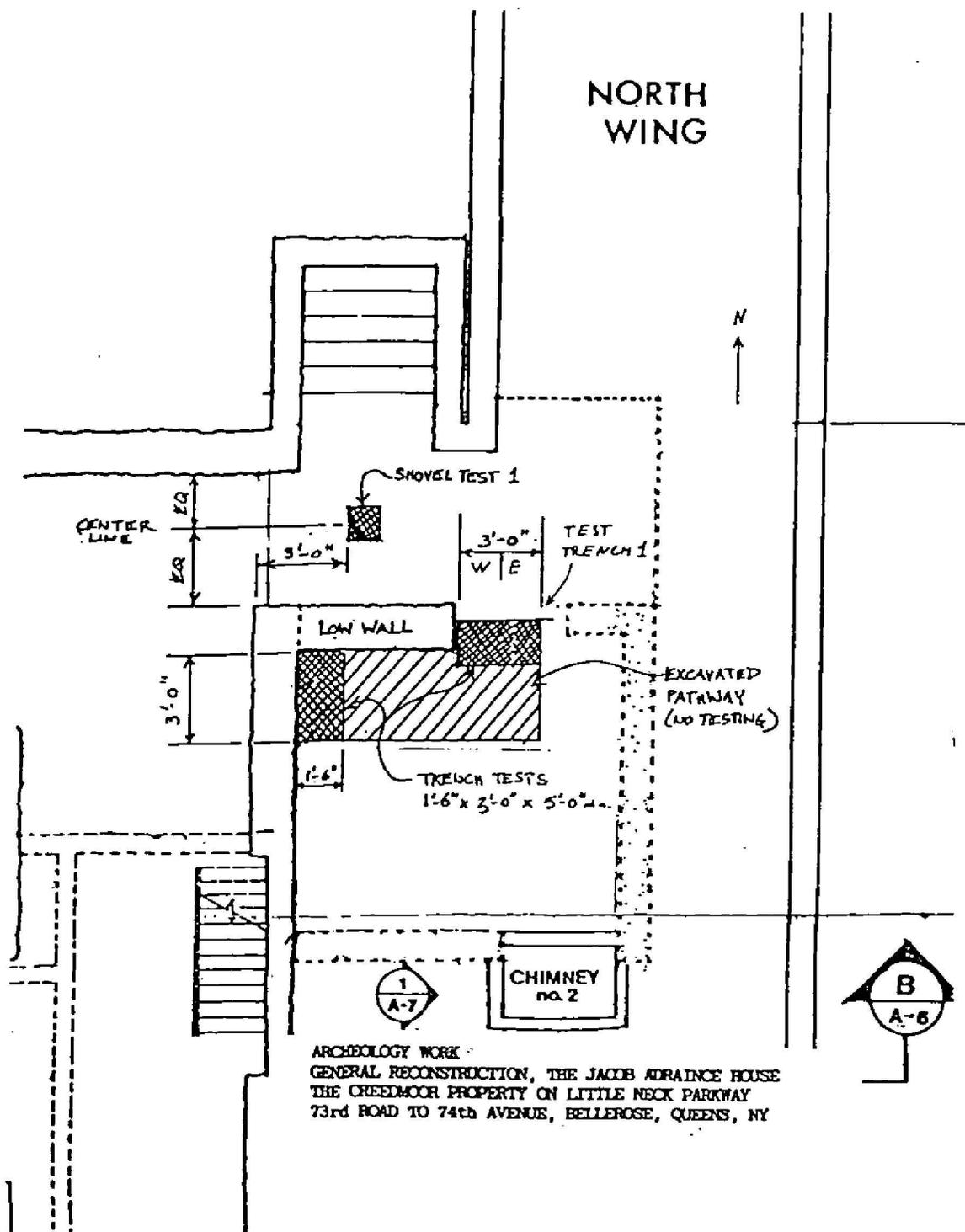


FIGURE 1: FARMHOUSE CELLAR TESTS

\* 0.0 (Datum)  
 \* 0.0 (Datum)

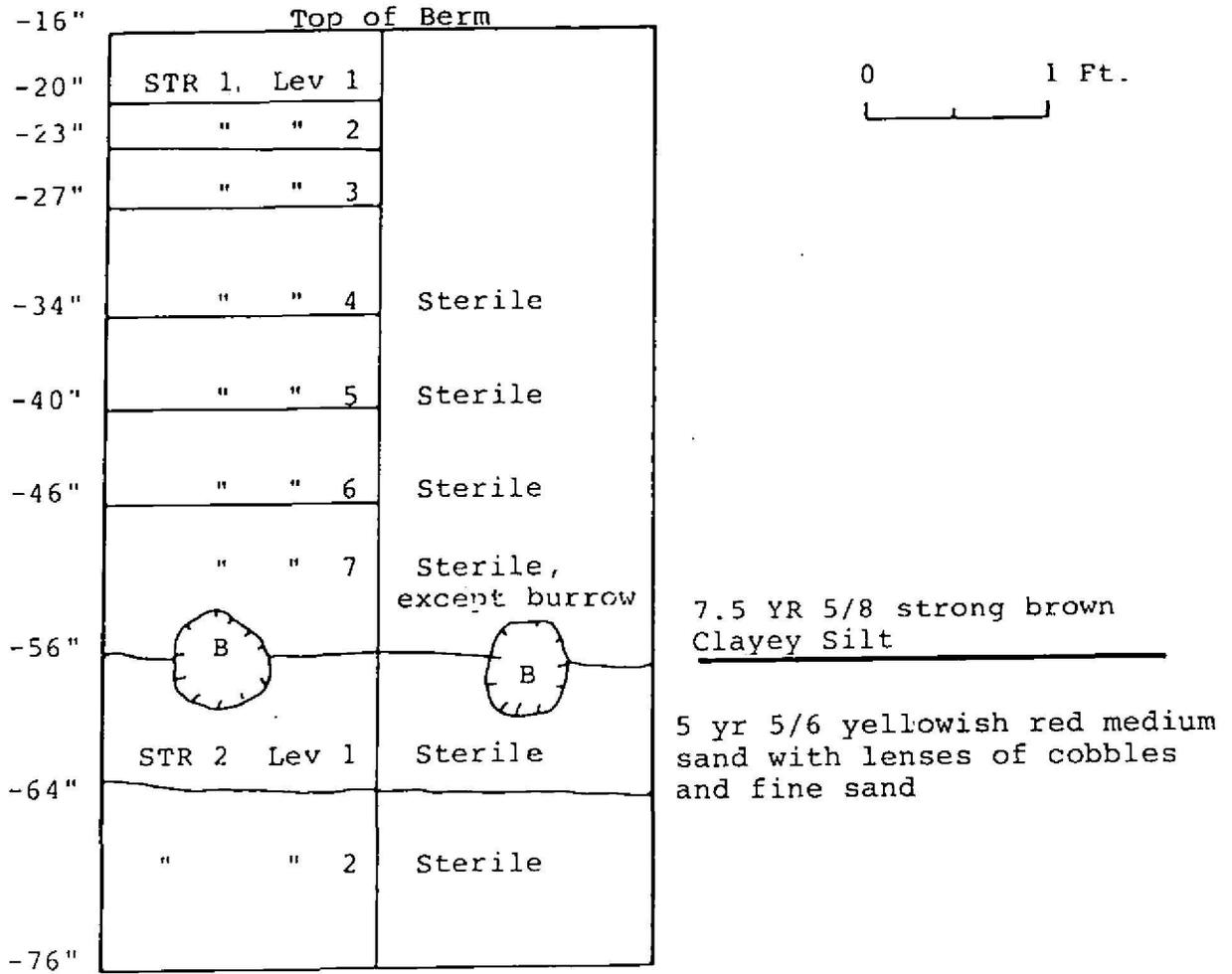


FIGURE 2: TEST TRENCH I. PROFILE OF SOUTH WALL

## Shovel Test 1

This test was excavated at a depth of -64" to -99" below datum; therefore it provided a stratigraphic overlap with the neighboring Test Trench 1. Beneath the contaminated sediments of the pathway, a mortar floor resting on cobble surface was uncovered at a depth of -70" below datum, (Figure 3). The underlying sediment (Stratum 2, a strong brown medium sand) extended - 84" below datum. This layer contains levels of fine sand and cobbles and resembles the deposits at the bottom of Test Trench 1. The underlying stratum (Stratum 3, a light yellowish brown, reddish sand) was followed by a stratum identical to Stratum 2.

The excavation was terminated upon encountering Stratum 5 (a brownish yellow fine sand). With the exception of the sediment immediately adjacent to the bottom surface of mortar floor, which produced a small number of non-diagnostic artifacts, all sand layers of the Shovel Test 1 were sterile.

## Conclusions

The artifact-free layers at the bottom of both the trench and the shovel test are characterized by extensive sorting. They appear to represent glaciofluvial stratified deposits formed by a stream of outwash plane. The sediment of the berm displays an absence of cultural stratigraphy, a granular structure of soil, an accumulation of clay, and a strong brown colour. These pedological features are commonly associated with solum (natural soil resulting from soil-forming processes) and may be indicative of a B2 horizon. The upper portion of the solum, including the topsoil are not preserved in the berm.

Prior to approximately 1840 this sediment was outside of the house cellar. The construction of additions to the house that took place in the first half of the nineteenth century incorporated it into the extended NE portion of the cellar. It is reasonable to conclude that the existing pathway was excavated at that time to accommodate the northern cellar entrance, and to provide the link between the old and newly added section of the cellar. Thus, the north face of the existing berm is a remnant of the standing wall of this excavation. It is worthy to note that the low interior wall which abutts the buildings foundation wall at a 90° angle, bordering the berm in the north is only slightly higher than the berm itself. Its size and position corresponds to the northern cellar entrance. This wall probably served as a retaining structure preventing the slumping of the berm toward the northern cellar entrance.

The top of the berm does not represent the original surface, therefore, the artifacts found in its upper levels do not constitute in situ refuse associated with the eighteenth century structure. Their presence here results from redeposition.

-64"		
-67"	STR 1, L. 1	
-70"	" " 2	7.5 YR 5/8 Clayey silt. Pathway surface
-74"	STR 2, L1	
-77"	" " 2	
-80"	" " 3	7.5 YR 4/6 Strong brown medium sand with lenses of fine sand and cobbles
-84"	" " 4	
-89"	STR 3, L1	10 YR 4/6 light yellowish brown medium sand
-94"	STR 4, L1	7.5 YR 4/6 strong brown medium sand with lenses of fine sand and cobbles.
-99"	" " 2	
	STR 5, L1	10 YR 6/4 brownish yellow fine sand

FIGURE 3: SHOVEL TEST 1. PROFILE

## Recommendations

The completed testing of the sediments in the cellar of Jacob Adriance House is sufficient to demonstrate three important points.

- 1) The clayey silt and sand deposits are void of meaningful cultural stratigraphy;
- 2) The artifacts found in the upper levels of the berm do not reflect patterns of refuse disposal associated with original eighteenth century houses.
- 3) The overlying strata where these patterns could be observed were truncated during the excavation of the nineteenth century crawlspace.

The probability of encountering intact artifact deposits in the proposed Test Trench 2 is very low, as it is only five feet away from Test Trench 1 and the overlying sediments there were also removed. From the culturally sterile nature of the sediments encountered in Test Trench 1 and the shovel test, we recommend discontinuance of the cellar excavations. The best potential for locating intact archaeological deposits associated with the original eighteenth century house may be found in the sixteen shovel test units proposed for the north and west areas outside the structure.