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STAGE 1A ARCHEOLOGICAL/HISTORICAL SENSITIVITY EVALUATION
OF THE RICHMOND AND INDEPENDENCE AVENUES PROJECT
BOROUGH OF RICHMOND, NEW YORK

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Materials on file at Greenhouse Consultants, compiled for other projects conducted in the Borough of Richmond were used in preparing this report. Credit is extended to the document research completed by Anna V. Farkas for previous projects.



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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Archeological and Historical sensitivity study is to document the potential prehistoric and historic sensitivity of the proposed Richmond and Independence Avenues Project through the review of existing archival, cartographic and published references and then to make recommendations regarding possible further testing. In order to provide a context for evaluating any identified resources within the parcel itself, this survey will provide a synthesis of published and unpublished prehistoric and historic resources in the immediate vicinity surrounding the project area.

The project area is located in western Staten Island, New York, in the vicinity of Greenridge. The property consists of a roughly triangular parcel located along the east side of Richmond Avenue and north of Independence Avenue. It is within Tax Block 2359 and consists of lot 300. See Figure 1 for a map illustrating the location of the project area.

This study is organized in the following manner: first, a section describes the geography and physical setting of the project area; second, a section follows on the prehistoric sensitivity of the area; third, a review of the historic sensitivity of the area; and fourth, the conclusions and recommendations.

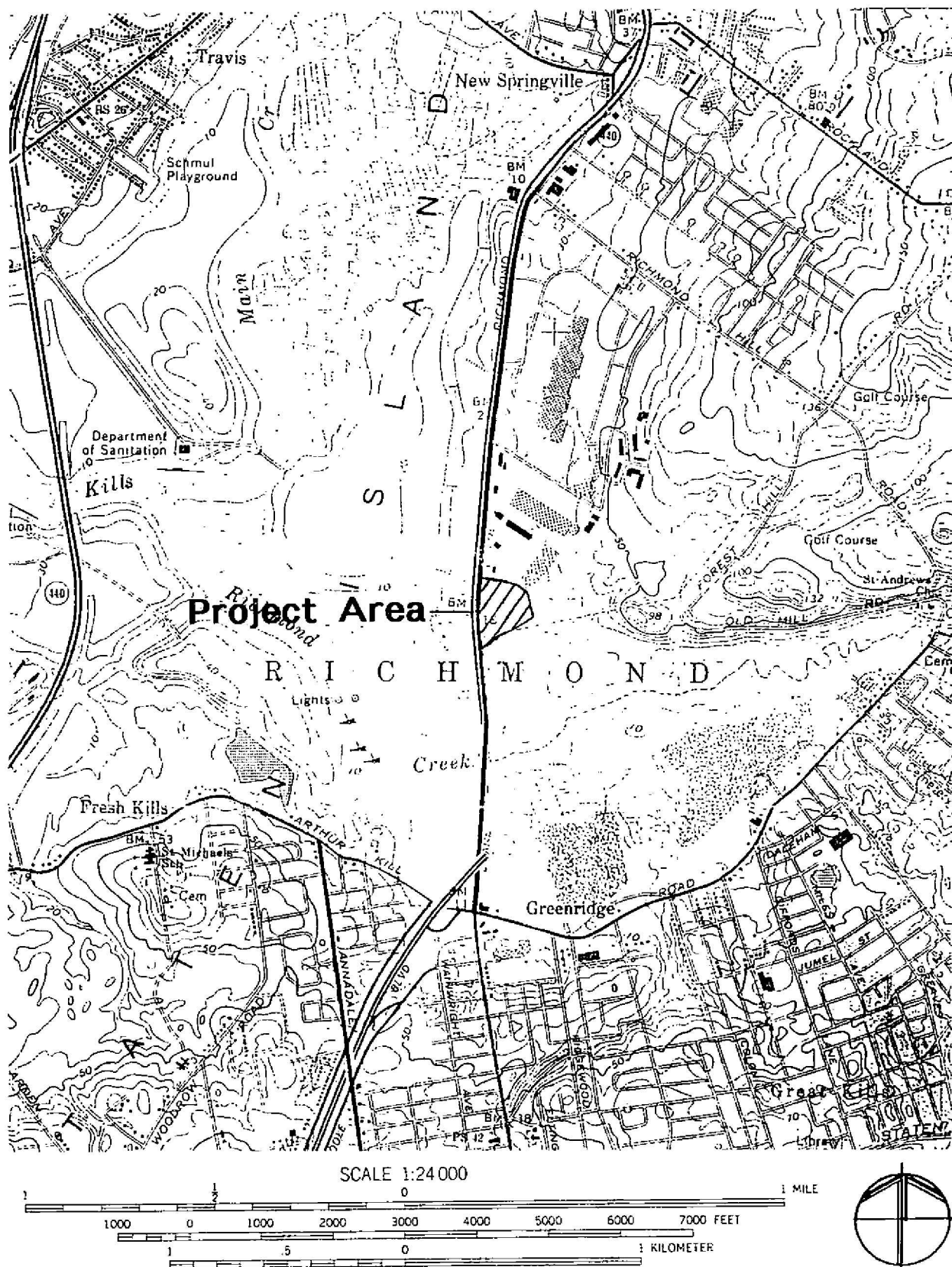


Figure 1 Project area location shown on portion of U.S.G.S. 7.5 minute series Arthur Kill, N.Y.-N.J. quadrangle, 1966 photorevised 1981.



GEOGRAPHY AND PHYSICAL SETTING

The project area is located in the Atlantic Coastal Lowland Physiographic Province of New York State. There is only one other location in the state (Long Island) where this province occurs (Van Diver 1985:34). Geographically, Staten Island is part of New Jersey from which it is separated by the Kill Van Kull and the Staten Island Sound (Skinner 1909).

The geomorphology of Staten Island consists of landforms and deposits of glacial origin. The sediments were deposited by the Wisconsin Ice Sheet 55,000-10,000 years ago and generally consist of ground moraine, terminal moraine and outwash settlements (Jacobson 1980:5). The shoreline area in this portion of Staten Island is comprised of sandy embankments of beach and adjacent to and at times overlying the area's geologically earlier glacial deposits of Cretaceous formations of sand and clay (Weingartner 1967:41). Local glacial deposits may be overlaid by fill as well as beach, marsh, dune, swamp, and estuarine deposits (Jacobson 1980:5).

During April 1994 the Principal Investigator visited the Richmond and Independence Avenues project area. During this visit, a pedestrian survey was used to inspect the project area. Plates 1 through 6 provide views of the project area. There is clear evidence of the storm drains alongside both Independence Avenue and Forest Hill Road. The edge of both roads along the eastern and southern boundaries has been disturbed by the construction of the sewers. These disturbances are at least 30 feet wide. See Plate 5 for a view of the storm sewer easement. There is evidence of the filling of the property, especially within 100 feet of the northern boundary, and also near the eastern end. See Plates 5 and 6 for a view of this fill. A stream flows across the parcel roughly from north to south. It enters the project area in a culvert under Independence Avenue, flows across the project area and exits in a culvert under Forest Hill Road which also drains the storm sewer. See Plates 3 and 4 for views of the stream.



PREHISTORIC SENSITIVITY

As part of the project evaluation process, the sensitivity study has surveyed published and unpublished resources in the Archives and Library of the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences (hereafter SIAS), the library of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, the files of the New York State Museum Division of Historical and Anthropological Services, the Research Branch of the New York Public Library, and the New York State Historic Preservation Office (NYSHPO). Most documented prehistoric archaeological work undertaken by both professional and avocational archaeologists has historically concentrated on the southwestern portion of Staten Island (Baughner 1985 personal communication). The problems of inadequate archaeological survey coverage particularly evident in the interior of the island may also be found in this location.

Table 1 presents the results of our search for prehistoric sites in the vicinity of the Richmond and Independence Avenues project area. Included in the table are ten sites located two miles or less from the project area. The locations of these sites are presented on Figure 2 with letter code identifiers which correspond to those in Table 1.

Of the ten known occurrences of prehistoric occupation within two miles of the project area, none were excavated recently under controlled conditions. These data either represent surface finds, or the work of professional archaeologists early in this century. Two professional archaeologists are included.

Alanson Skinner, one of the first professional archaeologists to work extensively on Staten Island, characterized the locations chosen by prehistoric populations as follows:

Throughout Staten Island, with very few exceptions, aboriginal sites are confined to the sandy spots (1912:90).

The nearest prehistoric site to the Richmond and Independence Avenues project area, designated "A" in Table 1 and Figure 2, is the Richmond Hill site reported to the New York State Museum. Since the museum provides no description of the artifacts recovered, no estimate of date range can be offered. No description of the type of site is provided. The Richmond Hill site is located approximately 0.6 miles east of the project area.

The second nearest prehistoric site to the project area, designated "B" in Table 1 and Figure 2, is an unnamed site reported by former New York State Archaeologist Arthur C. Parker. This site, which appears on Parker's map of Richmond County but not in his text, is described only as traces of occupation. It is located approximately 0.9 miles southeast of the project area. Since Parker provides no description of the artifacts recovered, no estimate of date range can be offered (Parker 1922: Plate 211).

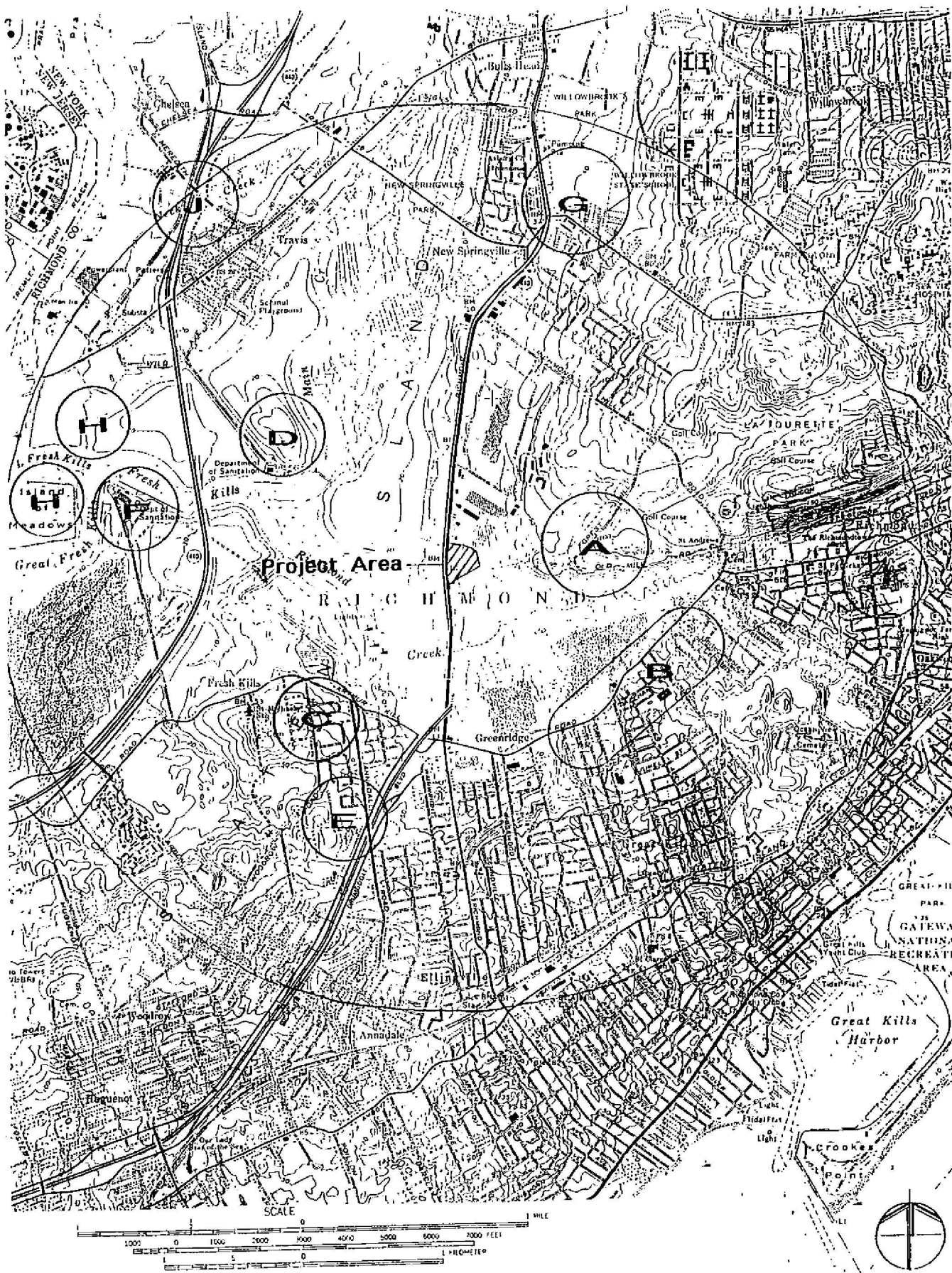


Figure 2 Prehistoric sites located within a two mile radius of the project area.

TABLE 1 Prehistoric Sites in the Vicinity of Richmond and Independence Avenues

| | Site Name | NYSM# | Parker # | Other | Reference | Period(s) | Description |
|---|---------------------------|-------|-------------|----------|----------------------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------|
| A | Richmond Hill | 749 | — | — | NYSM | ? | — |
| B | — | 8321 | ACP-RICH | — | Parker 1922: Plate 211 | ? | Traces of Occupation |
| C | Greenridge | 745 | — | STD-19-3 | Skinner 1909: 10 | ? | Camp |
| D | — | 4626 | ACP-RICH | — | Parker 1922: Plate 211 | ? | Camp |
| E | — | 4601 | ACP-RICH-11 | — | Parker 1922: 682 | ? | Camp |
| F | Lake's Island | 4625 | ACP-RICH | STD-L | Parker 1922: Plate 211 Skinner 1909: 9-10 | ? | Shell Middens and Occupation |
| G | New Springville | 4600 | ACP-RICH-10 | — | Parker 1922:682 Skinner1909: 9-10 | Contact | Shell Middens, Burials and Camp |
| H | Long Neck (Linoleumville) | 4599 | ACP-RICH-9 | — | Parker 1922: 682 Skinner 1909: 9-10 | ? | Shell Middens and Occupation |
| I | — | 4616 | ACP-RICH-26 | — | Parker 1922: 685 | ? | Camp |
| J | Long Neck (Travis) | 4598 | ACP-RICH-8 | STD-LN | Parker 1922: 682 Skinner 1909: 9-10 | ? | Shell Middens and Occupation |





The prehistoric site "Green Ridge" (designated "C" on Table 1 and Figure 2), located approximately 0.9 miles southwest of the project area, was reported by Alanson Skinner, an early twentieth century archaeologist with the American Museum of Natural History. Generally defining and locating the Green Ridge site as a "camp site" between "Journeay (Woodrow) Avenue and Annadale Road, near Richmond Plank Road" (Arthur Kill Road), he reported that "early relics" were found (Skinner 1909:10).

Further research in the archive of the SIAS located the Metropolitan Area Archaeological Survey, Site Survey Sheet, recorded by Dr. Bertram Salwen in 1967, in which he reported that artifacts recovered at the Green Ridge site included a fragment of a grooved slate bannerstone, "One chipped implement blank" and a fragment of a celt (Salwen 1967). Salwen, however, issued a warning that since these artifacts were found by various collectors, "we can't be sure that these come from (the) area described by Skinner!" (Ibid).

The next two sites, designated "D" and "E" in Table 1 and Figure 2, are camps reported by Parker. Parker provides no descriptions of the artifacts recovered, so no date range can be offered. The first of these camps is located approximately 1.0 miles northwest of the project area, and the other approximately 1.1 miles to the southwest. Parker includes the latter site in his text, but shows only the former on his map of Richmond County (Parker 1922:682, Fig. 211).

Skinner also reported a small village site on Lake's Meadow Island (designated "F" on Table 1 and Figure 2), also known as Lakes Island, which was located approximately 1½ miles west of the project impact area. Lake's Meadow Island was a point of land formed by the confluence of Great Fresh Kills and Fresh Kills where a small shell heap and "early relics of Indian origin", which included "arrowheads" were reported (Skinner 1909:10). The Metropolitan Area Archaeological Survey, Site Survey Sheet recorded by Salwen in 1967 reported the site as a small village and campsite. Lake's Island is now "under the garbage incinerating works" (Salwen 1967). The 1966 letter from Donald Saint to Gail Schneider (former activist with the SIAS) stated that "the entire region has been destroyed" (Saint April 7, 1966). Through the years, various collectors have recorded artifacts which included burnt stones, projectile points, lithic debitage, shells, scrapers, netsinkers, hammerstones, blanks, a bannerstone, and a fragment of grooved axe. One collector, Peter Decker, "picked up 90 points in a single day's visit to Lake Island" (Ibid). As stated above, the Lake Island area has experienced major disturbances since at least the 1940s. The Department of Sanitation "bulldozed Lake's Island sands into a huge mound" and "the site was first wiped out" prior to the dumping process (Saint: October 16, 1973). The area was bulldozed and a channel dredged across the island.

The next two prehistoric sites found, designated "G" and "H" in Table 1 and Figure 2, were originally reported by Alanson Skinner. Parker repeats Skinner's information in his text,

assigning them Parker numbers 10 and 9 respectively. Site "G" is known as New Springville. Shells, burials, and an iron arrowhead were reported to Skinner (1909:10), so the date range must include the Contact Period. Site "H" is known as Long Neck. Skinner reported scattered lodges and some shell heaps (Skinner 1909:9-10).

The ninth nearest prehistoric site to the project area, designated "I" in Table 1 and Figure 2, was also reported by Arthur C. Parker as site number 26. This site is described as a large camp. Parker noted the presence of grooved axes and the absence of pottery and shells (Parker 1922). The New York State Museum suggests that the location of this site is questionable. However, the location they supplied is adjacent to a former stream course.

The final site found in this search was also reported first by Alanson Skinner, and included in Parker's text on Richmond County. This site, designated "J" in Table 1 and Figure 2, is situated approximately 2.0 miles northwest of the project area and is known as Long Neck (Travis). The description includes shell middens and occupation, but since no artifacts are described, no date range can be estimated (Skinner 1909:9; Parker 1922:682).

In terms of prehistoric sensitivity, the project impact area was evaluated from two points of view:

- 1) the proximity of known prehistoric sites in or near the project area; and
- 2) the presence of fresh water drainage courses in general, and particularly the identification of river or stream confluence situations where two or more drainages come together, providing access to both the water and food supplies of both systems.

This survey has documented the recorded or published locations of no less than ten sites within a 2 mile radius of the proposed Richmond and Independence Avenue project area. Although sites have been identified in the general region of the proposed project impact area, none are known to exist within the project area itself. No evidence, positive or negative, based on previous survey work is available. It would be inappropriate, however, to characterize this region as without prehistoric sensitivity.

The project area includes part of a tributary to Richmond Creek, and overlooks the confluence of these streams. Cartographic evidence shows that this tributary formerly ran just east of the project area. See Figures 8, 9, and 10. The tributary could have supplied fresh water, whereas Richmond Creek is tidal and therefore salt water. Game would have been attracted to the salt marshes adjacent to Richmond Creek. The project area would have been an excellent raised lookout point, and therefore has the potential to have been a hunting and/or fishing camp.



HISTORIC SENSITIVITY

Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

Staten Island was evidently known as Aquehonga Manacknong by the bands of Lenape who inhabited it during the seventeenth century, although the variant, Eghquaons, is used in the earliest Dutch document (Grumet 1981:2). Other variations exist, but these two are found in seventeenth century documents.

In 1626 the island was bought from the natives by the Director of the Dutch West India Company. Michael Pauw was given a patent of Patroonship in 1630, but he relinquished it to the Dutch West India Company. The company sold the patent to David Peters de Vries who established the first permanent settlement of Europeans on the island in 1638. In 1640 an Indian War broke out which brought destruction to the settlement. The Dutch West India Company granted Cornelius Melyn all of Staten Island in 1641 except for the de Vries farm (Historical Records Survey 1942:XIV). Ten years later, Melyn granted Hendrick van Der Capellan a deed for one third of the island (Ibid.: xv). Upon the death of Capellan in 1659, Melyn sold his interest to the company thus ending the Patroon system on Staten Island (Ibid.:xvi).

The British assumed control of the colony of Nieuw Amsterdam from the Dutch West India Company in 1664. Governor Francis Lovelace made the final purchase of Staten Island from the Indians in 1670. The English made all of Staten Island into a single town with Nicholas Stillwell as the first constable. Lovelace set up two villages on the island, Old Dorp or Town and New Dorp, and granted patents to several people (Historical Records Survey 1942:xviii). Land surveys were initiated under Lovelace and completed under the governorship of Edmund Andros in 1677.

The next governor, Thomas Dongan, divided the colony of New York into counties with Staten Island designated as Richmond County. In March of 1688 Richmond County was partitioned into four towns, Castletown, Northfield, Southfield and Westfield (Bayles 1887:95). The project area lies within the old town of Northfield (Ibid.:map facing 1).

Frederick Skene's 1907 Map of Staten Island, tentatively delineating Colonial land patents between 1668-1712, places the project area within land granted to Richard Harvey, comprising a total of 80 acres patented August 2, 1694 (see Figure 3). Skene's map shows Richmond Creek as Karls Neck Run. Leng and Davis' Map of Staten Island With Ye Olde Names and Nicknames labels the project area and vicinity Karle's Neck.



Staten Island remained under British control throughout the eighteenth century until the end of the Revolutionary War. Approximately 29,000 troops under British command landed on the island during July 1776. Despite this large number of men, there is no evidence that any were stationed within or adjacent to the project area. British officers occupied the Black Horse Tavern at Amboy and Richmond Roads, and Sir William Howe used the Rose and Crown Tavern as his headquarters (Mitchell 1976:27). Both taverns are some distance from the project area.

Late eighteenth century cartographic sources show that several farmsteads lined the northwest side of Richmond Road by the onset of the Revolutionary War (McMillen 1933; Plan (No. 31) du Anglo-Hessois dans Staten Island). Unfortunately, due to a certain degree of inaccuracy inherent in these early maps it is not possible to ascertain the project area's exact location on them. The Richmond and Independence Avenues project area appears to be located west of one structure shown on the Plan (no. 31) du Anglo Hessois and McMillen's Map of Staten Island During the Revolution, 1755-1783. This structure is labelled "Buele". A portion of Plan (No 31) is provided here as Figure 4.

Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

The U.S. Coast Survey Charter of New York Harbor, surveyed 1836-1839 and published 1845, is the earliest available nineteenth century cartographic source. This map shows no structures in the vicinity of the project area. The project area appears to lie on a slope partly within a farm field and partly within the meadow next to Richmond Creek.

The next cartographic source presented here is the Sidney and Dripps map of 1850. This map shows that the project area is within land which is not labelled as to owners or occupants (See Figure 5). The 1859 Walling Map was also consulted, but is not included as a figure here.

The 1874 Beers Atlas, presented here as Figure 6, is the earliest cartographic source to show property lines and structure locations with a fair degree of reliability. The project area consists of partly farm field and partly marsh. No structures are shown within the project area. The 1887 Beers Atlas presented here as Figure 7 shows that the property ownership within the project area was either L. Simonson or Mrs. Berry. No structures are shown within the project area (Beers 1887).

The next nineteenth century cartographic source, presented here as Figure 8, is taken from the 1898 Robinson Atlas. The only changes evident since the 1887 Beers Atlas are changes in property ownership. The parcel has been subdivided into three lots, all owned by Brown and Quien. The project area includes nearly all of the central lot, a small portion

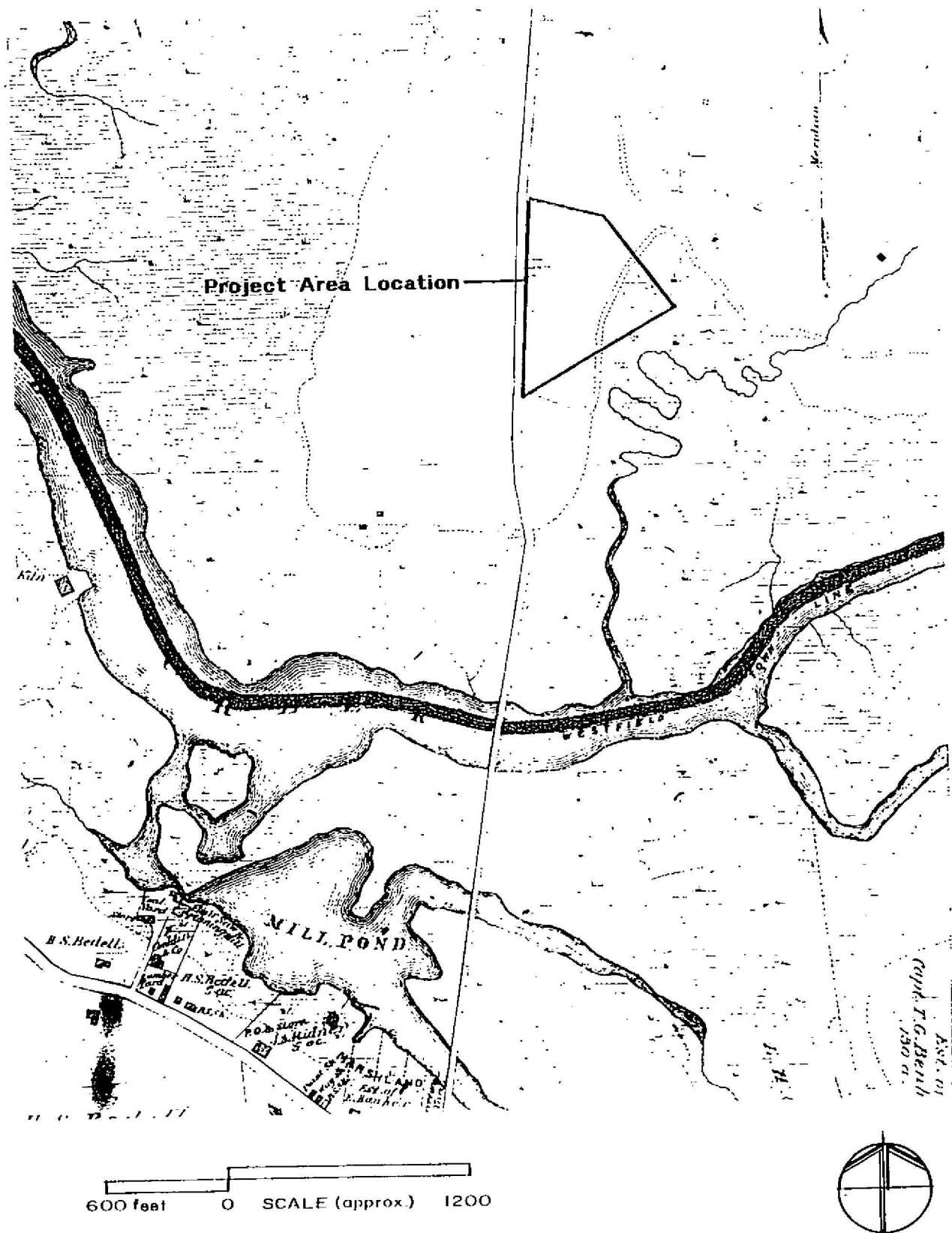


Figure 6 Approximate location of the project area shown on portion of Beers' 1874 Atlas of Staten Island, Richmond County, New York.

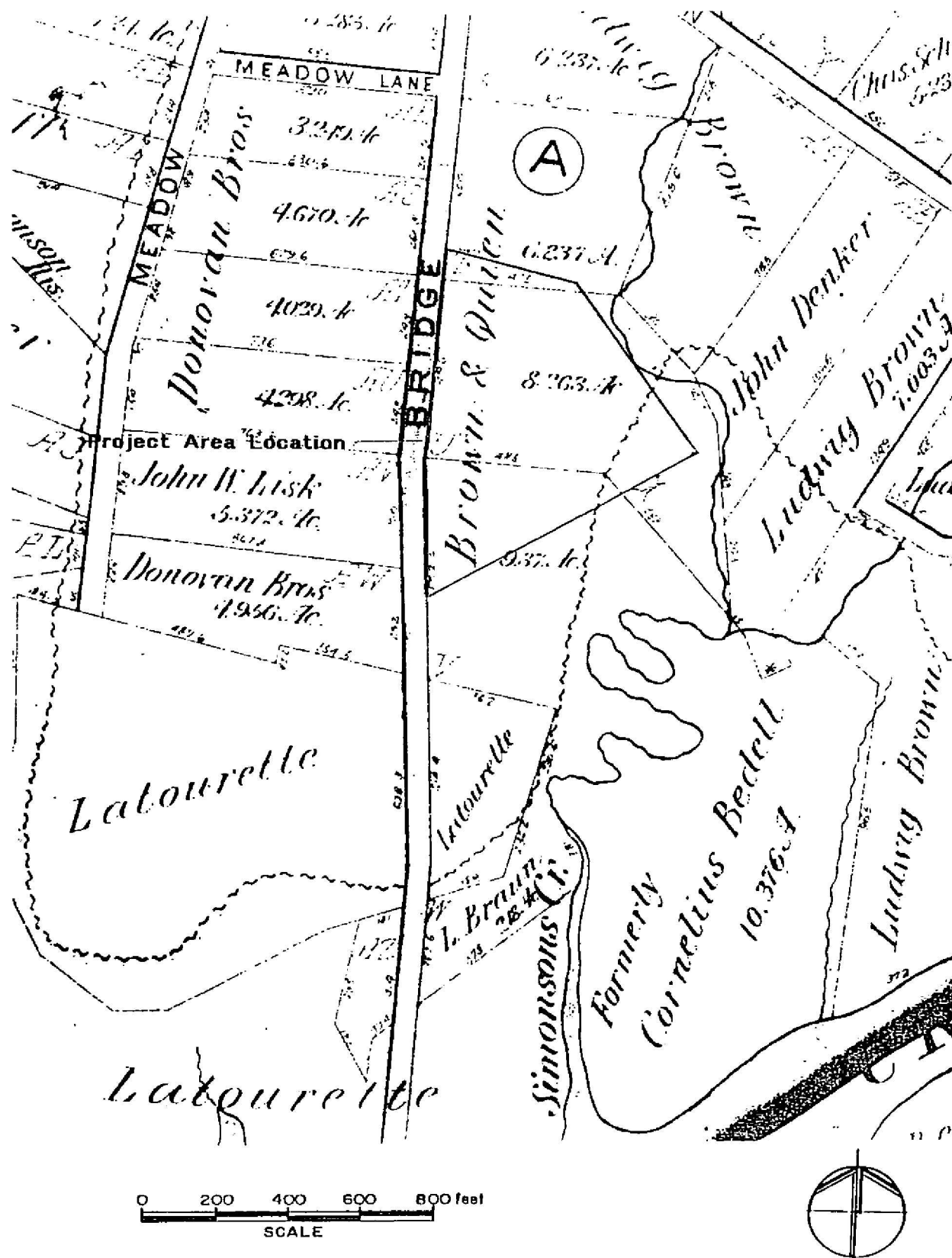


Figure 8 Approximate location of the project area shown on portion of Robinson's 1898 Atlas of the Borough of Richmond, City of New York.



of the northern lot, and about one-third of the southern lot. Once again it appears that the eastern end of the project area is marsh, while the remainder is presumably farm fields. No structures are shown.

Figure 9 is taken from the 1911/1912 Borough of Richmond Topographical Survey, which may be the most accurate map of Staten Island ever completed. This map shows the eastern end of the project area as a low marshy area just west of a stream flowing south into Richmond Creek. Richmond Avenue exists along the western project area boundary, and a pathway crosses the project area from west to east about 200 feet south of the northern boundary. There are no structures within the project area.

The final historic map presented here is Figure 10, taken from the 1917 Bromley Atlas. This map shows basically the same information as the Borough of Richmond Topographical Survey adding only property ownership. The three lots owned by Brown and Quien in 1898 have been consolidated and are now owned by Ellen R. Brown. The 1907 Robinson Atlas, which was consulted but is not illustrated in this report, shows that the three lots owned by Brown and Quien in 1898 were probably owned by Ellen R. Brown as of 1907. There were still three separate lots at that time.

Research into the deeds for the project area was undertaken at the Richmond County Clerk's office. It was not possible to reconstruct a complete chain of title in the time available, but several nineteenth century deeds for the property were found. The research indicated that Ellen R. Brown was the wife of Robert Brown. Robert Brown and Louis Quien were the people referred to as Brown and Quien. They purchased property including the project area on November 4, 1897 from William Allaire Shortt. Shortt was acting as referee for the Supreme Court of the State of New York. As a result of this case heard in Poughkeepsie, between Cornelius Simonson (plaintiff) and David F. Simonson and others (defendants), Shortt was authorized to sell this land at auction. Two additional parcels of adjacent land were sold to Ludwig Brown at this time (Liber 262:166; Liber 261:57 and 61). The prior deed for the land including the project area was from Garret Simonson, Jr. and his wife Mary to John G. Berry. This transaction on February 15, 1872 (Liber 96:244) provides the link to Mrs. Berry who was evidently named Ellen. It also helps to explain why both her name and that of L. Simonson appear on the 1887 Beers Atlas. The Simonson family had evidently owned this property since the 1850s. Unfortunately no previous deeds could be identified given the state of the early nineteenth century Libers and indices in Richmond County. The Leng and Davis Map of Staten Island With Ye Olde Names and Nicknames provides additional evidence of the Simonsons tenure of this property. The stream feeding Richmond Creek that formerly ran just east of the project area is named Simonson's Brook.

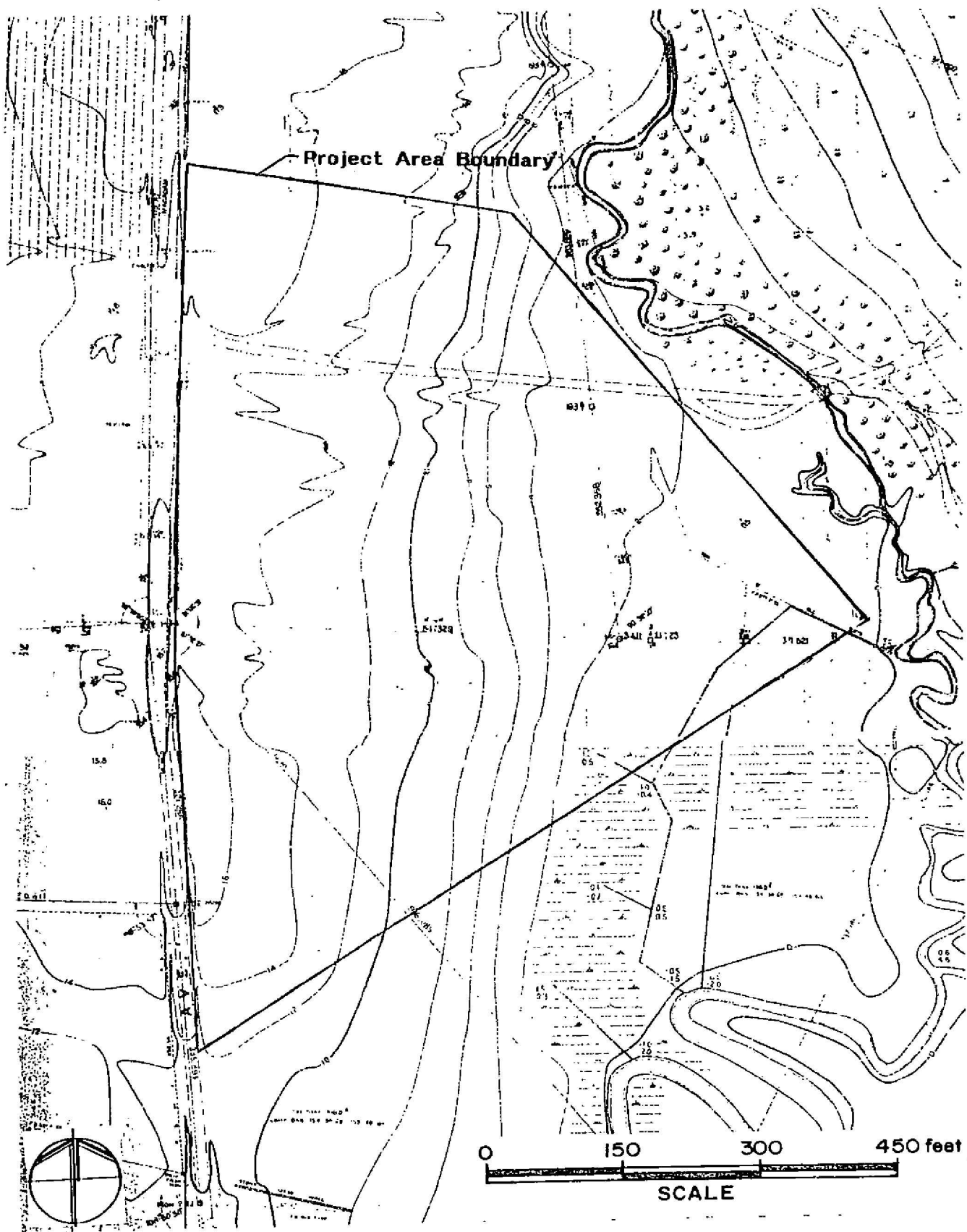


Figure 9 Project area shown on portions of the 1911/1912 Borough of Richmond Topographical survey, Sheets 53 and 60.



Figure 11 1993 Topographic Map of the Richmond and Independence Avenues project area, taken from a survey by Anthony A. Lo Bianca, Professional Land Surveyor.



In summary, the historic documents and maps examined provide no evidence that any structures were ever erected on the project area during the historic period. The only structures that can be documented on this land are the trailers and billboards that currently exist there.



EVIDENCE OF FILLING

Comparison of the 1911/1912 Borough of Richmond Topographical Survey with a survey of this property updated to April 1993 indicates that fill has been added, especially to the eastern third of the project area. See Figures 9 and 11. Elevation there in 1911/1912 were all below four feet, with the lowest at 0.5 feet. The elevations east of the present stream now range from about 7 feet to 18.5 feet. In some places over 15 feet of fill have been added. Near the northwestern corner of the property, the 1911/1912 elevations were 16 feet. They now range from 16 to 22 feet, indicating that up to 6 feet fill has been added here.

Two soil borings near the project area were found on file with the Subsurface Exploration Section of the New York City Department of General Services. These serve to confirm the information from the topographic maps. Boring 1 of Job 676 B is situated directly across Richmond Avenue from the northwest corner of the project area. This boring completed during June 1971 shows no fill. The top layer consists of red-brown clay with a little silt and traces of sand and gravel (Subsurface Exploration Section 1971). Boring 1 of Job 2408 is situated across Independence Avenue from the culvert where the stream enters the project area. This boring completed during April 1993 shows a fill layer two feet thick over a layer of red-brown silt with some clay and traces of roots (Subsurface Exploration, Section 1993).



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The above text has documented that the Richmond and Independence Avenues project area may preserve archaeological evidence from the prehistoric period. The project area is located within two miles of ten known prehistoric sites. Fresh water would have been easily available from the stream just east of the project area. The salt meadow making up the east end of the project area would probably have attracted game, making this a possible location for a *temporary or seasonal* hunting or fishing camp.

The section on historic sensitivity provides evidence that this location was used for agriculture from as early as the mid-seventeenth century until the middle of the current century. There is no evidence that any permanent structures were ever built within the project area, which remains mostly vacant today.

It is our recommendation that a program of archaeological testing take place prior to the beginning of construction activities. This testing will search for evidence of prehistoric use of this land. The eastern end of the project area and the northern edge near Independence Avenue have both been disturbed and had fill deposited on them. The remaining two-thirds of the project area still has topography very similar to that existing in 1911/1912. We recommend that this relatively undisturbed portion of the property be tested with shovel tests equivalent in coverage to a 50 foot grid pattern.

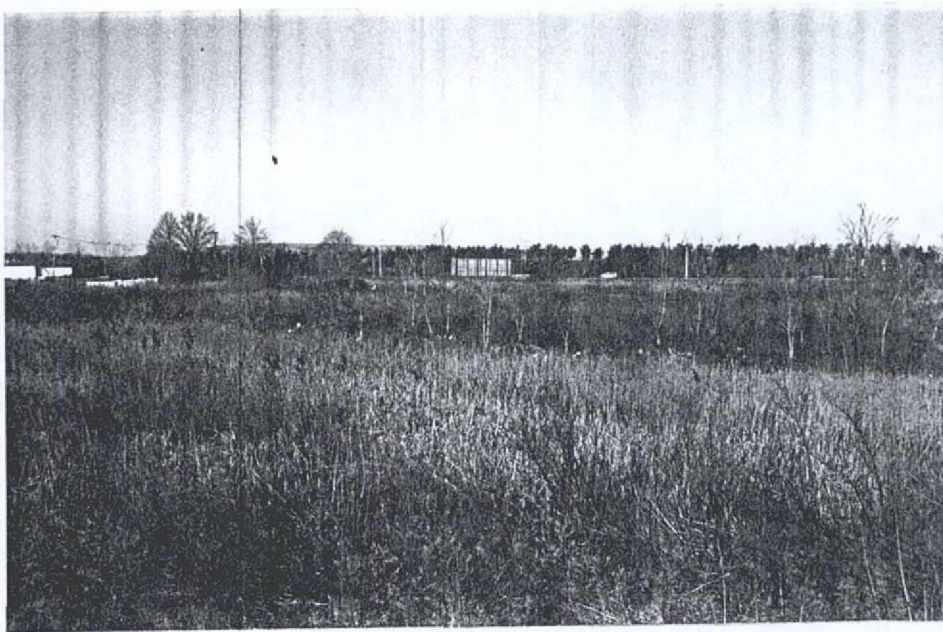


Plate 1 General view of the interior of the project area looking west from near the intersection of Independence Avenue and Forest Hill Road.

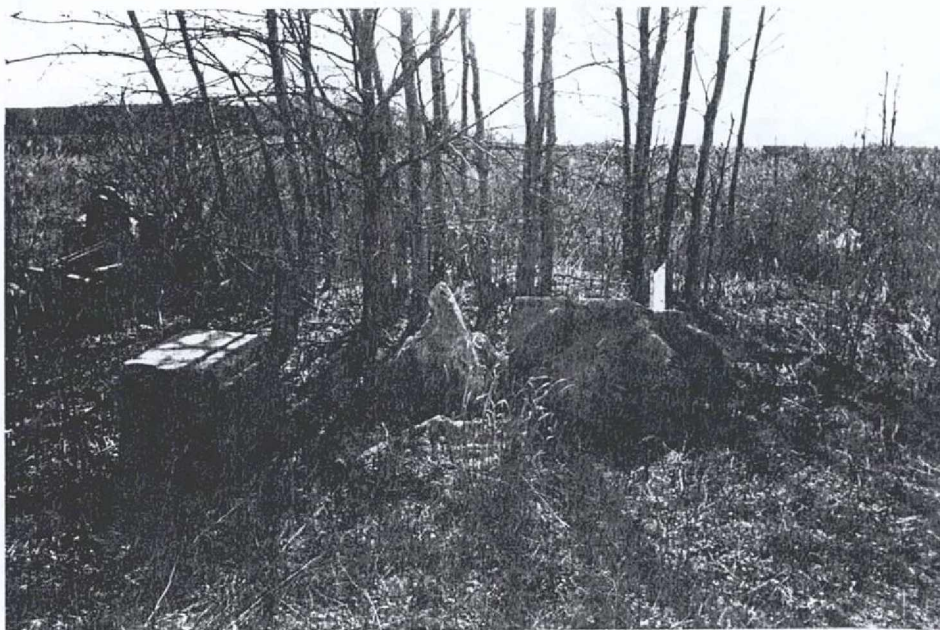


Plate 2 View of group of trees in interior of the project area looking northeast.



Plate 3 View of portion of stream near Independence Avenue looking north.

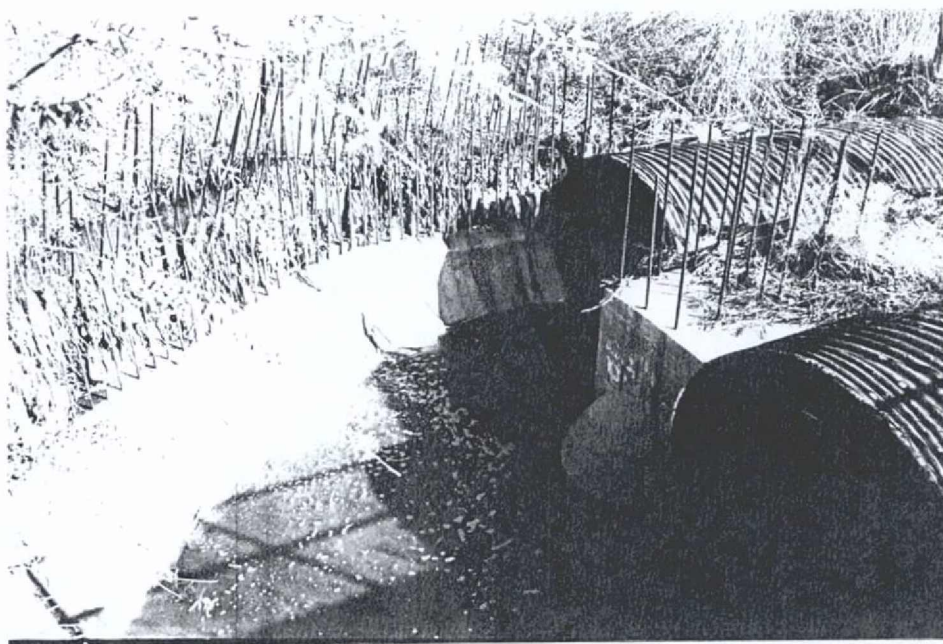


Plate 4 View of stream and storm sewer emptying into culvert under Forest Hill Road looking northeast.



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