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STAGE 1A ARCHAEOLOGICAL/HISTORICAL  
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION OF THE  
960 RICHMOND AVENUE PROJECT  
BOROUGH OF RICHMOND, NEW YORK

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Prepared for:  
Land Planning and Engineering Consultants, P.C.  
2178 Forest Avenue  
Staten Island, New York 10303

Prepared by:  
Greenhouse Consultants Incorporated  
40 Exchange Place, 13th Floor  
New York, New York 10005  
William I. Roberts IV, Principal Investigator

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## LIST OF PERSONNEL

William I. Roberts IV	-	Principal Investigator Author
Paula M. Crowley	-	Word Processor Editor

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.





## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this archaeological/historical sensitivity evaluation is to document the potential prehistoric and historic sensitivity of the proposed Richmond Avenue development 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for evaluating any identified resources within the parcel itself, this survey includes a synthesis of published and unpublished prehistoric and historic data in the immediate area surrounding the proposed development location. This sensitivity evaluation is organized in the following manner: first, an overview of the physical setting of the project area; second, a review of prehistoric findings in or immediately adjacent to the proposed project area; third, a discussion of the historic sites on or immediately adjacent to the proposed project area; and finally, the conclusions and recommendations.

The nearest New York City landmark is the Stephen D. Barnes House at 2876 Richmond Terrace in the Mariners Harbor section of Staten Island. This building is approximately one mile northwest of the project area (New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission 1979:79). There are no New York City Landmarks within or adjacent to the project area. A survey of architecture on Staten Island notes not important structures within or near the project area (Szekely and Gabay 1980:97).



Figure 1 Location of the project area on U.S.G.S. 7.5 minute series, Arthur Kill N.Y.-N.J., Elizabeth, N.J.-N.Y. quadrangles.



## GEOGRAPHY AND PHYSICAL SETTING

Geographically Staten Island is part of New Jersey, from which it is separated by the Kill Van Kill and the Staten Island Sound (Skinner 1909).

The surficial geology 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 sediments (Jacobson 1980:5).

Local glacial deposits may be overlaid by fill as well as beach, marsh, dune, swamp and estuarine deposits (ibid.).

The elevation of the parcel today ranges from 35 to 50 feet above mean sea level. The project area slopes downward to the east. The project area is close to rectangular, measuring approximately 74 feet by 120 feet. It consists of Tax Lot 56 on Block 1704.



## PREHISTORIC SENSITIVITY

As part of the project evaluation process, this sensitivity study has surveyed published and unpublished resources in the Archives and Library of the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences (SIAS), and the New York State Historic Preservation Office (NYSHPO). Most prehistoric archaeological work undertaken by both professional and avocational archaeologists has historically been concentrated on the southwestern portion of Staten Island (Baugher 1985, pers. comm.)

This survey of northwestern Staten Island has documented seven sites within a two mile radius of the 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 actual survey work is available. Although no sites have been identified on the actual parcel, it would be inappropriate to characterize the northwestern region of Staten Island as without prehistoric sensitivity.

The Goodrich site was initially located by several avocational archaeologists during the mid-1960s and is 1.0 miles northwest of the project area. Professional archaeologists tested the site during 1969 and found eighteen projectile points, but no ceramic remains (Ottesen and Williams 1969:2-5, ms.). Five more professional excavations, carried out from 1969 through 1980, confirmed that this site dated to the Late Archaic period, based on the diagnostic bifaces found and the conspicuous lack of ceramic remains. The finds were primarily from the third layer below the surface, which consisted of orange sand and extended from seven inches below the surface down to the water table (Ottesen and Williams 1969:2-5, ms.; Eisenberg 1981:19-20, Fig. 1).

The Arlington Station site, A085-01-0138 (NYSHPO files) was a group of six shell pits from four to six feet in diameter and up to six feet deep (Skinner 1909:5-6). They contained pottery and stone artifacts dating to the Woodland Period. The site is located 1.1 miles northwest of the project area.

The Arlington Avenue site was noted by Skinner on his 1909 map but is not mentioned in his text or elsewhere. No data exists on stratigraphy, date range or the integrity of the site (Skinner 1909:6, Fig. 1). The site is positioned 1.3 miles northwest of the project area.



The Arlington Place site was worked during the mid-1960s by Donald Sainz. He reported finding Woodland period artifacts in the disturbed topsoil, much of which had already been removed. Approximately one foot below the topsoil was an occupation zone from 0.5 feet to 0.7 feet thick, that yielded over 50 projectile points dating from the Late Archaic through Woodland periods. Sainz reported that this site was entirely destroyed by July 1966 (Sainz 1966:ms.; Ritchie 1980:147-8). The Arlington Place Site has been designated A085-01-0139 in the NYSHPO files.

The Bowman's Brook site was discovered during construction work on the former Milliken Brothers' iron foundry in March 1903 by Alanson Skinner. Skinner worked on this site intermittently until 1918. The site was located on land between 8 and 24 feet above Richmond high water as of 1911. At least 35 features, predominantly pits and burials, were excavated. These features were mostly within four feet of the surface although a few were noted as extending to a maximum depth of six feet below the surface. The majority of the finds dated to the Woodland period (Skinner 1909:6-8; 1925:70-81). Some further work was carried out by Donald Sainz and Albert Anderson prior to 1964 in a partially disturbed area formerly covered by a foundation of one of the foundry buildings. Five occupational horizons were identified by their relative depth and artifacts found within them, although only one could be differentiated by soil color and texture changes. These horizons were not superimposed, hence the validity of any sequence arrived at from this data is open to question. A number of projectile points of the Late Archaic period were found. Virtually this entire site was extensively leveled by bulldozers during the early 1960s, indicating that the possibility of any features or artifacts surviving *in situ* is very low (Ritchie 1980:146-8).

The site of Gertie's Knoll is included on Skinner's 1909 map, but no reference is made to it in his text. An archaeological-site survey form for Gertie's Knoll states that by November 1973 virtually the entire knoll had been destroyed by bulldozers and that only scattered surface finds remained. These included pottery, bone and shell. It can be concluded from the above data that this site dated to the Woodland period. Virtually no possibility exists that any finds remaining from this site would be *in situ* (Rubertone 1973:ms.; Skinner 1909:6, Fig. 1).

The Ascension Church site, located on the site of the Parish House of Ascension Church, consists of a village and a burial site. This site was reported to the New York SHPO by Dr. Salwen of New York University where it is listed as site number A085-01-0004. It was originally recorded by Skinner, who mentions







shells, skeletons and implements, including pottery, a three-pitted hammerstone and stone axes, found during foundation excavations for the Parish House during spring 1903 (Skinner 1909:5). Judging by its description as a village and the presence of pottery, this site dated to the Woodland period.

In terms of potential 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.

As detailed above, there are no known prehistoric sites within the project area. There are no confluence situations or even any streams presently on the Richmond Avenue project area, nor do any of the historic maps indicate that there were any there previously. The nearest water source for prehistoric populations appears to have been a stream probably called Palmer's Run (Leng and Davis 1968), that runs south and east of the project area. It is located approximately 1600 feet south of the southern edge of the project area and 3000 feet east of its eastern edge. The project area itself ranged in elevation from 36 to 55 feet above mean sea level in 1911. The best drained land in the past would most certainly have been the knoll that formerly existed just east of the intersection of Forest and Richmond Avenues. This landform was leveled by the mid-nineteenth century, and no traces of it remain on the 1911 topographic map or any later maps.

We consider the project area to be somewhat sensitive to preserving prehistoric cultural resources, but note that this sensitivity may have been affected by later development.



## HISTORIC SENSITIVITY

The earliest evidence of historic use of the area of Block 1704 project area is Frederick Skene's map of Staten Island (1907) illustrating colonial land patents from 1668 to 1712 which places the project area within the patent of Cornelius Coursen *and others*, dated December 30, 1680. See Figure 3. The designation, "Soldier Lots," also appears within this patent.

In 1675 an order to bring warrants to the fort in New York had been issued so that Staten Island could be surveyed and grants issued. In 1680 after repeated notice, many petitions were brought in, including the following one:

Great Playne: Cornelius Corsen and Company, to whom  
cattlemark was issued; John Taylor, sargent, John Fitzgarett,  
Daniel Thomas. The last three were soldiers so their allotments  
became known as the "Soldiers lots" (Leng and Davis 1930:124-5).

Captain Cornelius Corsen died in 1692 after holding civil as well as military positions. His civil positions included those of Constable and Justice. Throughout the eighteenth century his numerous family were active and prosperous (*ibid.*).

Figure 4 presents a portion of the 1780-1783 Plan No. 31 du Camp Anglo-Hessois dans Staten Island. This map shows Morning Star Ferry Road, now Richmond Avenue. Two structures are shown on the east side of this road near to the present intersection with Forest Avenue. No structures are shown on the western side of the road including the project area. McMillen's 1933 Map of Staten Island during the Revolution (1775-1783) shows that the project area was not fortified during this war. The closest troops were evidently Hessian companies stationed at Decker's Ferry to the north of the project area.

The United States Coast Survey of New York Harbor conducted from 1836-1839, does not show any structures within the project area. See Figure 5. It does show a knoll located northeast of the project area. This map shows the layout of roadways that persists throughout the nineteenth century and, in a somewhat altered form, to the present. These roads include what is now called Richmond Avenue, the project area's east boundary. According to Leng and Davis' Map of Staten Island with Ye Old Names and Nicknames (1896), this road was used prior to 1797. Leading from Port Richmond to New Springfield, this old highway is a direct continuation of Morningstar Road. During the history of its use the road changed name several times. "It was known at first







Map Not to Scale

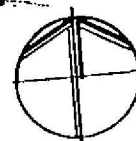


Figure 4 From Plan (No. 31) du Camp Anglo-Hessois dans Staten Island (Baie de New York) de 1780-1783.



Figure 5 From U.S. Coast Survey Charter of New York Harbor, 1836-1839, published 1845.







as the Church Road, then as the Port Richmond Plank Road, then as Stone Road, and now called Richmond Avenue" (Leng and Davis 1930:59).

On Butler's 1853 Map of Staten Island the project area is bounded on the east by Plank Road and is located in the general locality of "Granit Village." See Figure 6. Granite Village, or Graniteville, appears on maps of 1850 and later, the name originating with the quarries which began to be worked in the area during the late 1830s (Leng and Davis 1930:623-24). Although Graniteville derived its name from granite, the rock that was quarried is actually not a granite but a coarse crystalline diabase (ibid.:18).

By 1853 there were two quarries in active operations, one at the head of John Street, Port Richmond, the other on Washington Avenue, Graniteville. They each had a dock on the north shore, connected by a roadway with the quarry, and "shipped many tons of rock to New York, Charleston, and elsewhere for street paving, marine walls, etc." (Leng and Davis 1930:623-4). Butler's 1853 map shows both quarries. The "Graniteville Quarry" is shown to lie near the intersection of Plank Road and what is now Forest Avenue. A Quarry Rail Road is also shown running between the quarry and a north shore dock designated Staten Island Builders Granite Company. By 1896 the quarries were no longer in active operation, and some time during the following decade operations came to a complete halt (Leng and Davis 1930:18).

Butler's 1853 map also shows a structure designated Baptist Church that is located on the west side of Plank Road, or Richmond Avenue, south of the project area. Literature sources reveal that a Graniteville Church did exist and function at this location between 1830 and the early 1870s (Leng and Davis 1930; WPA 1942; Morris 1898). The church at Graniteville was an offshoot of the old Clove Meeting House, a licentiate of the First Baptist Church of New York dedicated on October 24, 1809, and was built to satisfy the desires of the Mariners' Harbor members to have a church of their own nearer to their houses (WPA 1942).

Ground for a building site, on the Richmond road at Graniteville, was given by Jerediah Winant, in 1829, and a building, thirty-one by forty-one feet, and twenty feet high, was erected on it. This edifice was opened on July 22, 1830. It stood upon what is now the burial ground known as "Hillside Cemetery," on the Richmond road, directly opposite the Graniteville school-house. (Morris 1898:313).



During the 1870s a new house of worship was built by the Church at Graniteville at Mariners Harbor. The Baptist Church also appears on Walling's 1859 Map of Staten Island, but was probably demolished some time before 1874, as it does not appear on Beers 1874 and 1887 atlases or any other later maps and atlases examined.

The Hillside Cemetery that Morris refers to in the passage cited above appears on later maps and atlases (Beers 1874, 1887; Robinson 1898; Topographical Survey 1911), as well as on a 1980 Pocket Atlas of New York City (Hagstrom).

Due to the relative inaccuracy of Butler's 1853 map, it is difficult to determine the actual location of structures shown as possibly lying within the project area. The project area may well be vacant land.

The Beers 1874 atlas shows one structure within the project area. See Figure 7. It faces Richmond Avenue; the proprietor's name is S. Simpson. The project area also includes part of the property of J. Lake to the south. The present Richmond Avenue is labeled "Church Road later Richmond St." It is the earliest map to show the project area in detail.

The Beers 1887 atlas presented here as Figure 8 continues to show the same structure but omits the label. No other changes are evident within the project area.

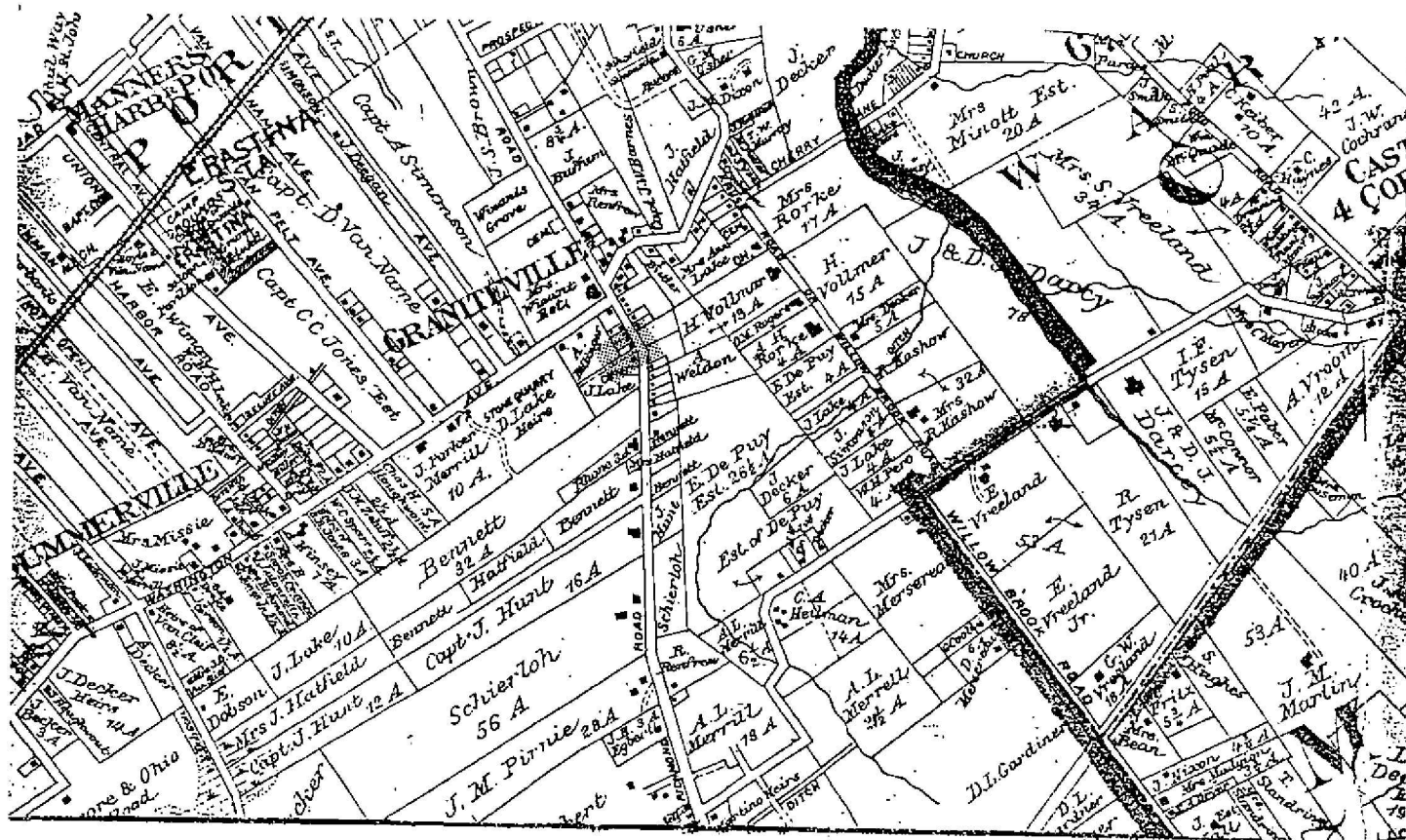
Figure 9, taken from the 1898 Sanborn-Perris maps, shows two structures within the project area lot. The house remains. It is one and one-half stories high. Behind it is a one and one-half story barn or stable. Water lines are shown under both Morningstar Road and Washington Avenue, now Richmond and Forest Avenues respectively. ✓

The 1907 Robinson Atlas was examined but could not be copied due to its size and condition. It shows three structures in the project area lot. The house and barn shown in Figure 8 remain. A new structure has been added just southwest of the house. The property is labeled "H. Appel."

Part of the 1911 Borough of Richmond's Topographical Survey is Figure 10. Few changes are shown within the project area. A second dwelling has been added to the front of the lot south of the existing house. The new house is a two and one-half story frame structure. The barn at the rear of the lot has been extended by adding a shed to the south.



Figure 7 From Beers' 1874 Atlas of Staten Island.



1500 0 feet 3000  
SCALE APPROX.

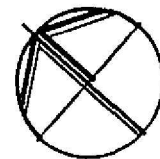


Figure 8 From Beers' 1887 Atlas of Staten Island, Richmond County, New York.



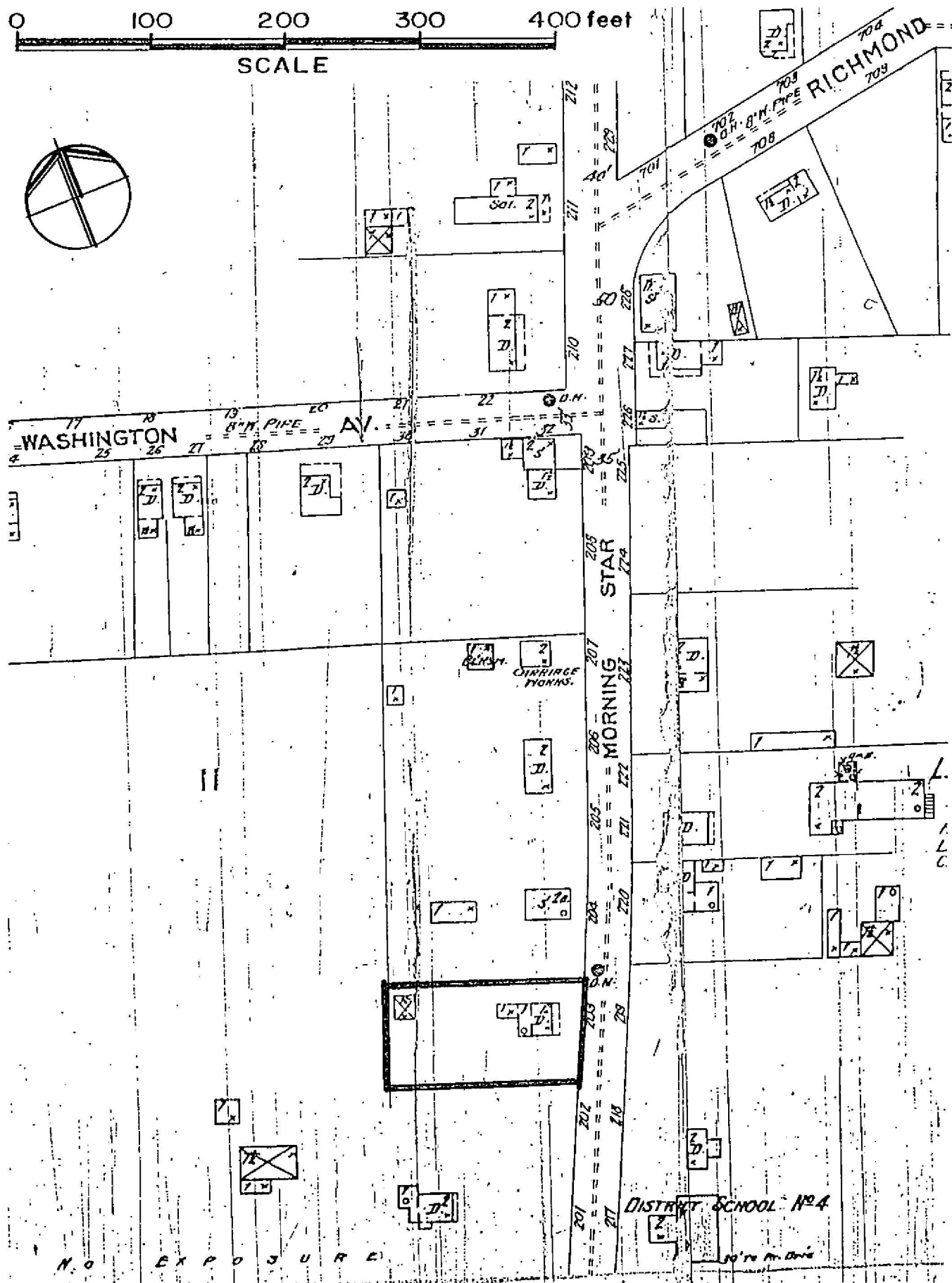


Figure 9 From the 1898 Sanborn-Perris Insurance Maps.

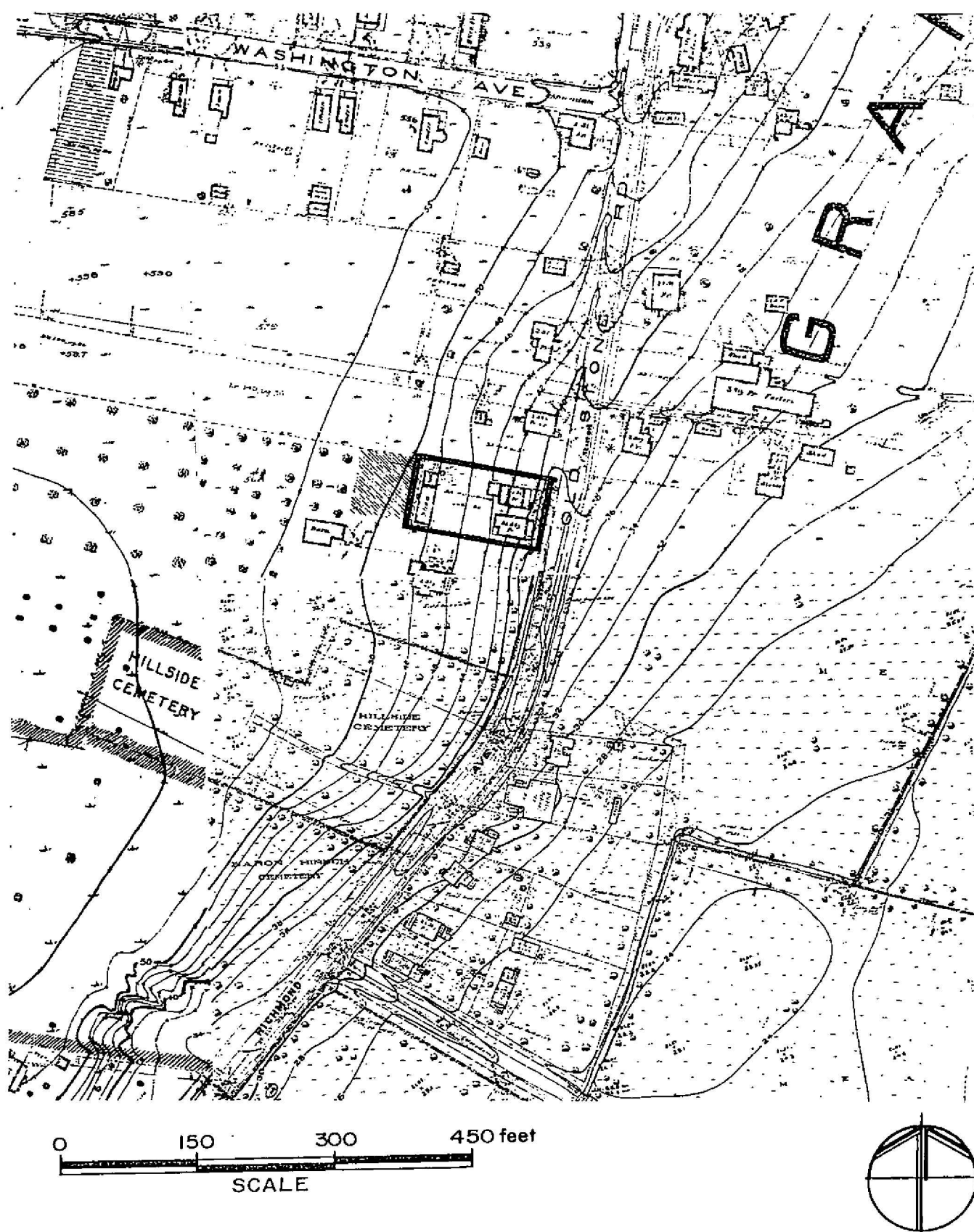


Figure 10 From the Borough of Richmond's 1911 Topographical Survey.



Figure 11, taken from the 1917 Sanborn Insurance Atlas, once again shows the same two dwellings. The northern and older house is two stories with a one-story portion at the rear and a porch facing Richmond Avenue. The southern house is two and one-half stories with a small one-story rear section. It also has a porch facing Richmond Avenue. The barn is of one and one-half stories with the one-story shed to the south. A second one-story shed has been added just to the northeast of the barn.

Figure 12, taken from the 1937 Sanborn Insurance map shows the same two dwellings. The barn and sheds have been demolished. Richmond Avenue has been widened adjacent to the project area.

The 1937 Sanborn map, updated to 1995, was inspected but not copied. Both structures seen on the 1937 map have been demolished. One structure has been built, roughly in the position of the older house. This structure is one-story and made of concrete blocks.

Since the cartographic data supplied the property owners only for 1874 and 1907, attempts were made to reconstruct the chain of title for the project area lot. This proved difficult since the records for the nineteenth century include neither block/lot references or street addresses. See the following table.

PARTIAL CHAIN OF TITLE  
BLOCK 1704, LOT 56

Grantor	Grantee	Recording Date	Liber:Page
Whitly, Henrietta	Samuel Squire	May 11, 1864	55:245
Squier, Samuel Squier, Ann Eliza (wife)	Mary Emma Wheelwright Charles M. Wheelwright (husband)	June 8, 1867	70:516
Wheelwright, Mary Emma Wheelwright, Charles M.	Samuel R. Syms	February 8, 1869	79:71
Syms, Samuel R.	Orison Blunt	1869	?
Blunt, Orison	David Decker, Jr.	April 24, 1869	80:406
Decker, David Jr. Decker, Elizabeth B.	Solomon Simson	February 2, 1872	96:42

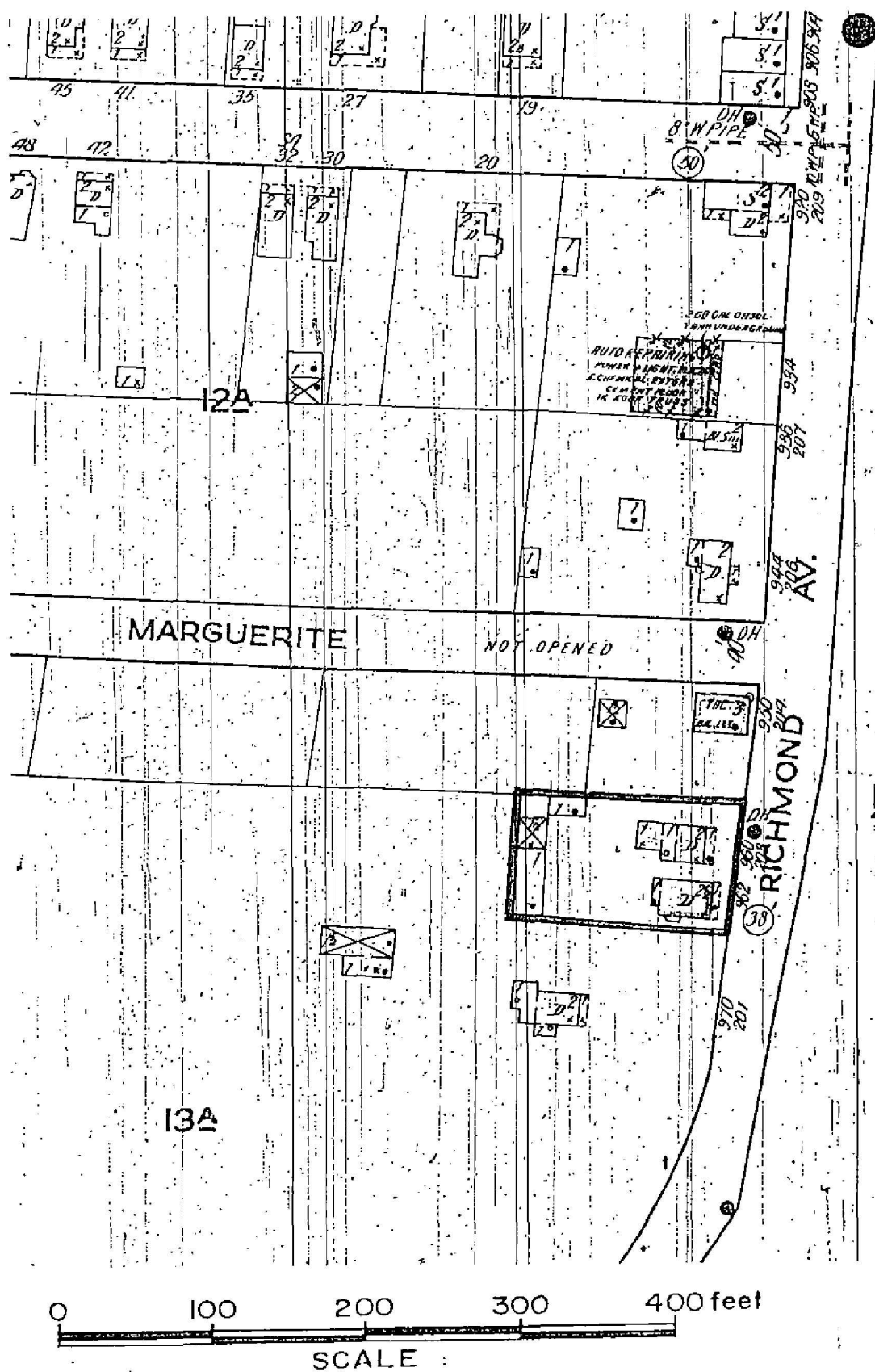


Figure 11 From the 1917 Sanborn Insurance Maps.





### Chain of Title con't.

Simson, Solomon Simson, Christiann	Elizabeth Heilmann Charles A. Heilmann	June 30, 1880	133:512
Heilmann, Elizabeth Heilmann, Charles A.	Wendel Roth	July 1, 1892	222:367
Roth, Wendel Roth, Julia	Magdalene C. Jameson	June 17, 1908	343:442

Review of the chain of title shows six owners prior to 1872, none of whom owned the project area for longer than three years. The next three owners all owned the property for longer terms. Solomon Simson owned the property for eight years before selling it to Elizabeth and Charles A. Heilmann. The Heilmanns owned it for twelve years and then sold to Wendel Roth. He held the property for sixteen years, selling it during 1908.

These three long-term owners were sought in the few extant directories for Richmond County. Water lines first appear here on the 1898 Sanborn-Perris Map, during the ownership of Wendel Roth. Directories for 1882-1883 and 1893-1894 were examined at the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences. No listings for 1882-1883 were found for Wendel or Julia Roth, Charles or Elizabeth Heilmann, nor anyone named Simson (Webb 1882). During 1893 Wendel Roth is listed as a farmer on Butcherville Road in Port Richmond (Libby 1893:192). Charles or Elizabeth Heilmann were not listed, but Solomon Simson is listed with no occupation on Richmond Avenue in Graniteville (ibid.:195). This could be the project area, but considering that it is thirteen years after Simson sold this property it appears more likely that the reference is to another location on Richmond Avenue. The then current owner, Wendel Roth, was a farmer who probably rented out the project area.

The same three longer-term owners were then sought in the biographical index to Leng and Davis, but no references were found. The lists of genealogical materials on file at the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences were also reviewed, but no references to these three families could be found.

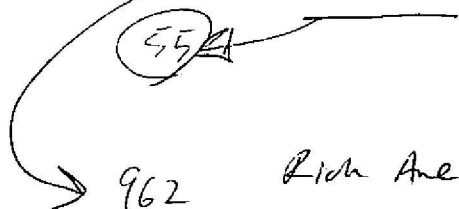
In summary, the project area was owned by Wendel and Julia Roth during the time water service became available. Wendel Roth was a farmer on Butcherville Road in Port Richmond during this time. No concrete evidence of occupants of the present 960 Richmond Avenue could be found for the 1890s.



## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The above text has documented that the Lot 56, Block 1704 project area has no sensitivity to preserving archaeological evidence from the prehistoric period. The lack of fresh water on or adjacent to the project area indicates that this location was probably not occupied by prehistoric peoples.

This report has also documented that the project area has no sensitivity to preserving archaeological evidence from the historic period. During the historic period a house was built here prior to 1874, possibly during 1864. Water lines were available by 1898. The project area had nine different owners from 1864 through 1908. Length of ownership varied from less than one year to nearly sixteen years. The owner during the probable water line installation was Wendel Roth. He was a farmer who did not live on this property. No solid evidence of the occupants during the 1890s was found during our research. One or more privies and a well could survive within this lot, but there would be no way to determine the families responsible for filling them after they went out of use. For these reasons, we recommend that no archaeological testing be undertaken for Lot 56, Block 1704, 960 Richmond Avenue, in Staten Island.





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