

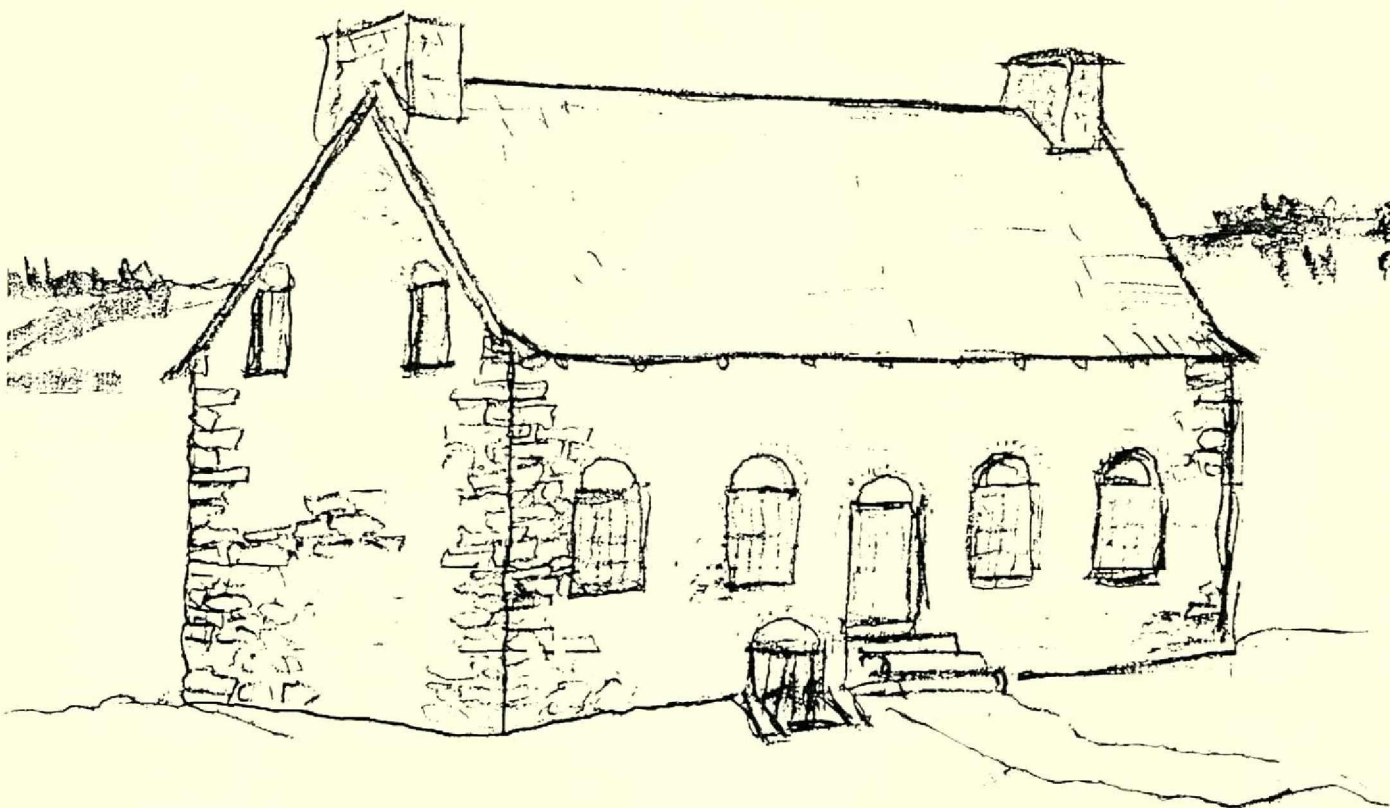
2605R

1996

1A Documentary Study of 361 Great Kills Road

(Poillon-Seguine-Britton House) Block 5195 Lot 6, Great Kills, Staten Island, NY

LPC 91-1594



RECEIVED
ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Sketch by W. McMillen 1989

DEC 18 1996

LANDMARKS PRESERVATION
COMMISSION

Prepared for Winthrop, Stimson, Putnam & Roberts
Prepared by Joan H. Geismar, Ph.D.
December 1996

680

1A Documentary Study of 361 Great Kills Road
(Poillon-Seguine-Britton-House)
Block 5195 Lot 6, Great Kills, Staten Island, New York

LPC 91-1594

Prepared for Winthrop, Stimson, Putnam & Roberts
Prepared by Joan H. Geismar, Ph.D.
December 1996

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
METHOD	3
ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL	3
Prehistoric Considerations	4
Historical Considerations	4
RESEARCH FINDINGS	8
Development History	8
In-Ground Research (Kardas & Larrabee 1985)	21
RECOMMENDATIONS	22
BIBLIOGRAPHY	24
APPENDICES	
Appendix A. Designation Report (Dibble 1981)	28
FIGURES	
1. Location Plan	2
2. Parker 1920	5
3. Colonial Land Patents 1660-1712	7
4. Sprong & Conner 1797	9
5. Conceptual Rendering of Original Poillon House (McMillen 1989)	11
6. Butler 1853	12
7. Walling 1859	13
8. Beers 1874	14
9. Sanborn 1937 Updated to 1963	15
10. Poillon-Seguine-Britton House 1910, photo	16
11. Poillon-Seguine-Britton House 1919, photo	16
12. Poillon-Seguine-Britton House 1980s, photo	17
13. Topographical Survey c 1912	19
14. Poillon-Seguine-Britton House Site Survey 1982 Updated to 1990	20
15. Proposed Test Areas	23

, Author/Research: Joan H. Geismar, Ph.D.
Research Assistant: Shelly Spritzer
Graphics: Amy Geller

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of a documentary study undertaken to evaluate the archaeological potential of 361 Great Kills Road (Block 5195 Lot 6) in Great Kills, Staten Island, New York (Figure 1). The property is currently under application for dedesignation as a New York City landmark. The study was conducted by Joan H. Geismar, Ph.D., assisted by Shelly Spritzer, for Winthrop, Stimson, Putnam and Roberts, the legal council preparing the application (LPC 91-1594). It was prepared for submission to the Landmarks Commission as part of the dedesignation process.

The former building on the property, known as the Poillon-Sequine-Britton House, was designated a New York City Landmark in 1981 (LP-1209, List 147C).¹ Built as a homestead by a member of the Poillon family, it remained a private residence owned and occupied by the Poillons in the eighteenth century, the Seguines in the nineteenth century, and the Brittons in the twentieth century. Richard Decker, a longtime Staten Island resident, and his family were the last to occupy the building as a residence. In 1983, it was altered and became a beauty salon and spa (the Harbor View Health & Beauty Spa), and then briefly a hair dressing salon (Rapunzel's Hair Design).

On February 10, 1989, when only part of it was being occupied by the hair dressers, and while plans for turning it into a restaurant were under consideration, a destructive fire occurred. Less than two months later, on April 3, a more intensive conflagration virtually destroyed the building (e.g., Duga 1989; Patrick 1989). Arson is recognized as the cause of the second fire (e.g., Fanciullo and Martin 1989) and vandalism is generally accepted as the root of this and other fires that destroyed or damaged numerous old, vacant Staten Island homes (e.g., Patrick 1992, 1989; *Staten Island Advance* 1989a, 1989b).

Following the second fire, various plans to rebuild the structure and convert it into a catering hall and restaurant met with opposition locally and from the Landmarks Preservation Commission (e.g., Schneider n.d., 1991). This issue and efforts to demolish the burned-out but possibly restorable building remained unresolved (e.g., Joyce 1991; Fanciullo 1990, 1989). Recently, the Department of Buildings found the fire-damaged structure unsafe and on October 10, 1995, its

¹The house has also been listed on both the State and National Registers of Historic Places since 1984 (Owens 1990), but since the structure is no longer standing, these registrations are probably no longer valid.



● project site (not to scale)



charred remnants were cleared, including part of the foundation (Thompson 1996: personal communication). This was done by the current owners, the applicants for the dedesignation, who intend to develop the property for residential use.

METHOD

An important component of this assessment was a two-part archaeological study completed in 1985 (Kardas & Larrabee 1985a and 1985b). The earlier of the two reports presents research from the landmarks designation regarding the building's ownership and development history. This is also presented here (Dibble 1981; Appendix A this report). The other report presents the methods and findings of limited field investigations associated with the construction of a swimming pool and gym as an addition to the renovated spa facility, but this was never built.

Information for this assessment also came from research undertaken at the Staten Island Historical Society, the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Science (SIAS), the Topographical Bureau of the Staten Island Borough President's Office, the Staten Island Register's Office, Surrogate's Court, and the New York Public Library. Newspaper articles in the Winthrop, Stimson, Putnam and Roberts project file were a valuable source of information.² Research also included discussions with William McMillen, Supervisor of Restoration, Richmondtown, and two site visits, one on September 30, 1996, the other on November 19, 1996. Both visits were made in the company of Phil Thompson representing the current owners. Rachel Tanur of Winthrop, Stimson, Putnam and Roberts was also present on the first visit when photos were taken, but the densely vegetated site did not lend itself to photographic documentation on either occasion.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

The site where the former Poillon-Sequine-Britton house stood is an elevated knoll overlooking the Great Kills harbor. It would have been attractive to Native American hunters and gatherers as a place to spot and hunt game and collect other food resources. It also was located near a protected mooring. For basically the same reasons, it was also attractive to early European settlers. In addition, the original, 130-acre land parcel included good and extensive farm land. Consequently, it is a location with potential for both prehistoric and historic-era sites and features.

²Several cited articles lacked publication dates; these are listed in the bibliography of this report by the name of the reporter or as *Staten Island Advance* followed by n.d. (no date).

Prehistoric Considerations

Staten Island has proven to be relatively rich in prehistoric sites and finds. To date, the earliest and most extensive prehistoric finds from the New York-metropolitan area were made on Staten Island beginning early in this century (e.g., Kraft 1977; Sainz 1962; Parker 1920; Skinner 1909) and the area's largest prehistoric cemetery is located on the island (Jacobson 1980). These noteworthy sites all lie well west and south of the study area. In the more immediate project area, Arthur C. Parker identified an aboriginal shell midden (discarded shells and often other debris) within approximately one-half mile of 361 Great Kills Road in 1920 (Parker 1920:685; No. 27 on Figure 2). However, no sites are reported directly on the project site. The shell midden was described by Parker as:

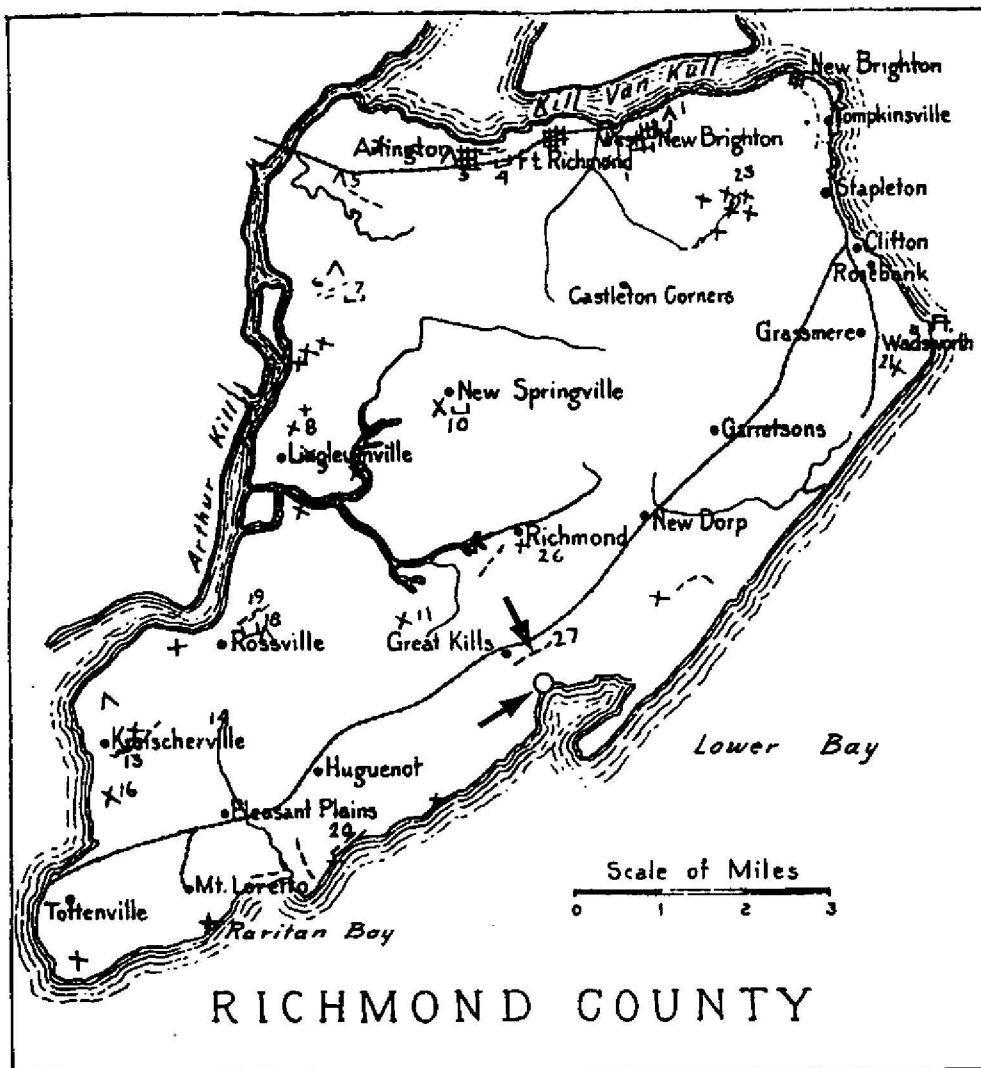
A shell heap...on the salt meadow near Lake's Mill [well east of the project site]. A search by [Parker] led to the discovery of a few shells on the meadow toward Gifford's, which are apparently aboriginal. No pottery or relics occur, but a few flint flakes are found. Apparently, this is a 'clam drying' place. We have been shown and have found a few arrow points in this vicinity, but they occurred on higher ground (Parker 1920:685 No. 27).



Although Parker's survey identifies a nearby site, Alanson Skinner, another early chronicler of Native American sites on Staten Island, did not note any comparable finds in his 1909 Staten Island survey (Skinner 1909). Since the only structures on the project site were a residence, albeit one that was ultimately altered and expanded, and a few minor twentieth-century outbuildings (see below), Native American finds continue to be an issue.

Historical Considerations

The former Poillon-Sequine-Britton house was recognized as one of Staten Island's historical homes long before it became a New York City landmark in 1981. As one of Staten Island's oldest standing structures, there was no question about its historical significance. Its exact age, however, is a question.

Historical accounts and architectural descriptions tend to agree that the building's core was a house built by Jacques Poillon, a well-to-do Huguenot, soon after he bought the land in 1694 (e.g., Owens 1990; Dibble 1981; see Appendix A this



 project site (approx., not to scale)
 identified shell midden

0 3
 Miles

N

report). One newspaper account dated it to 1677 (Connelly 1993), the year Jacques Poillon purportedly moved from Brooklyn to Staten Island, but this date certainly exaggerates the building's age. However, a reliable reconstruction of Staten Island patents--the island's original land grants--does not identify Jacques Poillon as the site's first patentee. It seems William Barker, a merchant and absentee owner who resided at Southampton, Long Island, received several Staten Island land grants in 1694; one included the future site of 361 Great Kills Road (Skene 1907; Figure 3).

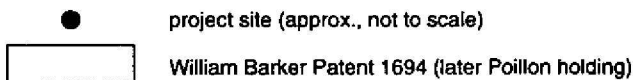
The late Loring McMillen, who had the distinction of being the Borough Historian of Staten Island for many years until his death in 1991, traced the building's early ownership history nine years after the Poillon-Sequine-Britton house had become a New York City landmark. His research confirmed that the patent went to Barker, not Poillon, in 1694.³ It also indicated that the property was part of Barker's estate at his death in 1702 (McMillen 1989:132).

In his will drawn in 1718 and proved in 1720, Jacques Poillon referred to land he was devising to his son, John (or Jean), as "Barker's land" purchased from Abraham Depeyster (McMillen 1989: 128; Hix 1993:132-133). Unfortunately, no deed between Depeyster and Poillon was found, but McMillen did locate a 1723 deed that cites "John Poillon's new dwelling" in Great Kills as a reference point (Liber of Deeds [LD] C:172 cited in McMillen 1989:132). What becomes clear is that the land John (Jean) Poillon received in 1720 from his father was not part of a 1694 patent to Jacques Poillon as previously thought. It was instead an acquisition made after 1702, the year William Barker died. It is not known whether the elder Poillon's purchase from Abraham Depeyster included a house. It could be that John Poillon's "new dwelling" cited in 1723 was built by him after he received the land, or it may merely have been a house he altered into a "new dwelling." Whatever the exact date of the land acquisition, the Poillon occupation apparently began with John (Jean).

It seems that John's father, Jacques Poillon, Sr., built his own home in Eltingville, about one and a half miles south of the project site. It also seems that there were at least three Poillon houses located in the Southfield Division of Staten Island (Johnson 1996:personal communication).⁴

³McMillen gives the date as August 8, 1694; the Skene map (Figure 3) says August 6, 1694.

⁴See Boyle-Cullen 1954 for a good historical account but one that confuses information about the branches of the family and does not consider the fact that there was more than one Poillon dwelling.



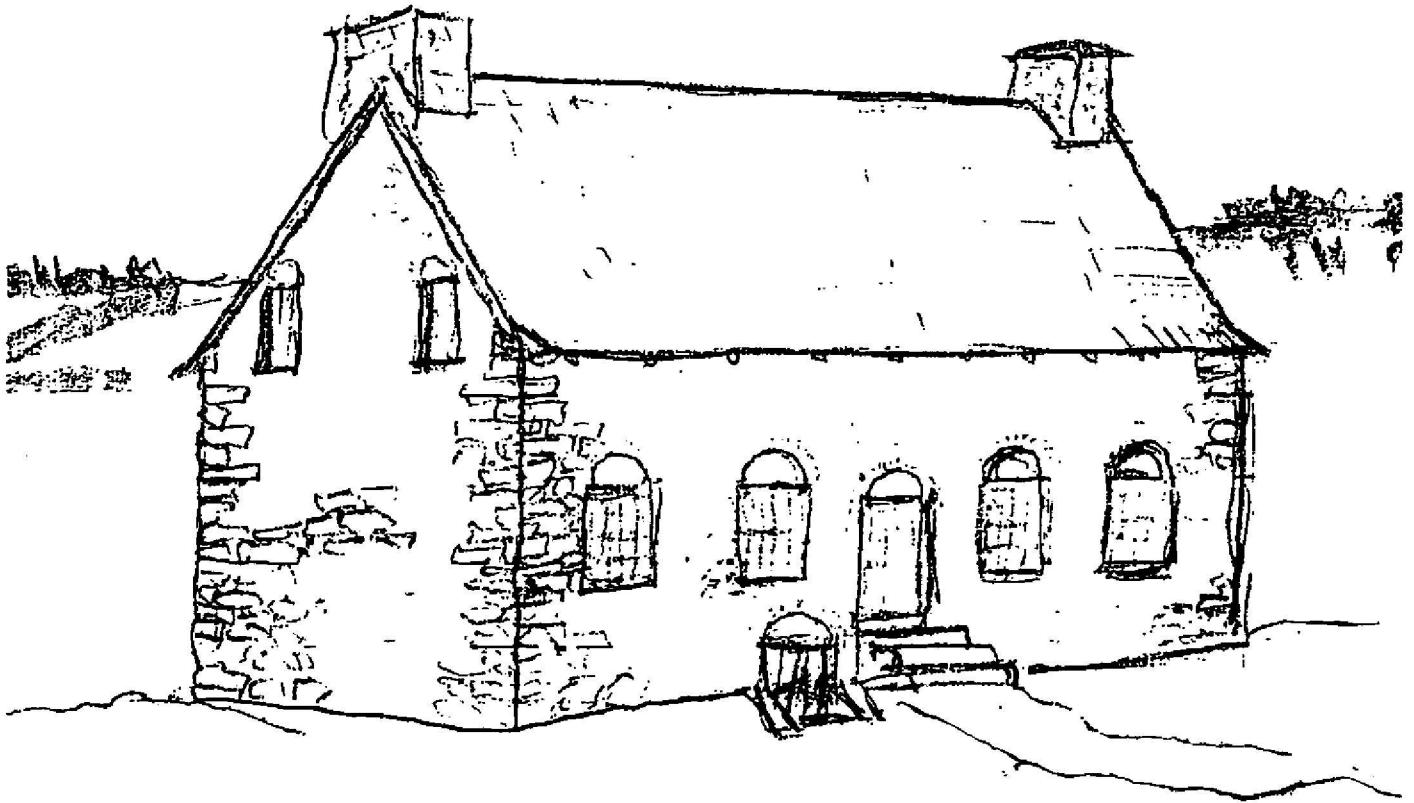
It should be noted that ownership reconstruction for early, large land holders is often very complicated, and the Poillon ownership of the Poillon-Seguine-Britton house is an example of this dilemma. However, available information suggests the house was probably built at the beginning of the eighteenth century rather than the end of the seventeenth. It also suggests its builder may have been a second, not a first, generation Poillon. But neither fact alters the significance of the structure. Nor does the fact that a purported visit by George Washington during the Revolutionary War is probably apocryphal (Dibble 1981; Boyle-Cullen 1954:7). McMillen goes on to note there are other inaccuracies in the designation report, but not to identify them. However, it is the age of the structure that is of interest in an archaeological assessment.

McMillen's findings present the possibility that household debris, often the core of historic-era archaeological material, from this site might date from the first quarter of the eighteenth century rather than the late seventeenth century as suggested in the designation report and elsewhere in the literature. Archaeological questions relate to possible trash deposits in the yard and to privy (outhouse) pits and abandoned water wells that become receptacles of household trash. Once abandoned, filled, and sealed, these trash-laden features are transformed from their original purpose into veritable time capsules that offer information about the households that lived on the property. Should any such deposits or features be found, they might determine when the house was first in use. Excavation in and around the foundation might also have offered dating information, but this is no longer a viable option since the foundation was highly disturbed during the building's demolition.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Development History

Despite the possible discrepancy in the construction date of the Poillon-Seguine-Britton House noted by Loring McMillen and presented above, a great deal is known about the house and property (e.g., Owens 1990; Dibble 1981). A conceptual rendering by William McMillen, the Supervisor of Restoration at Richmond-town and Loring McMillen's son, suggests what the stone house may have looked like when it was first built (Figure 4). Maps dating from 1797 to 1963 record the development of the site and its neighborhood (see Figures 5-9), and various twentieth century photos document the house over time. They also provide information



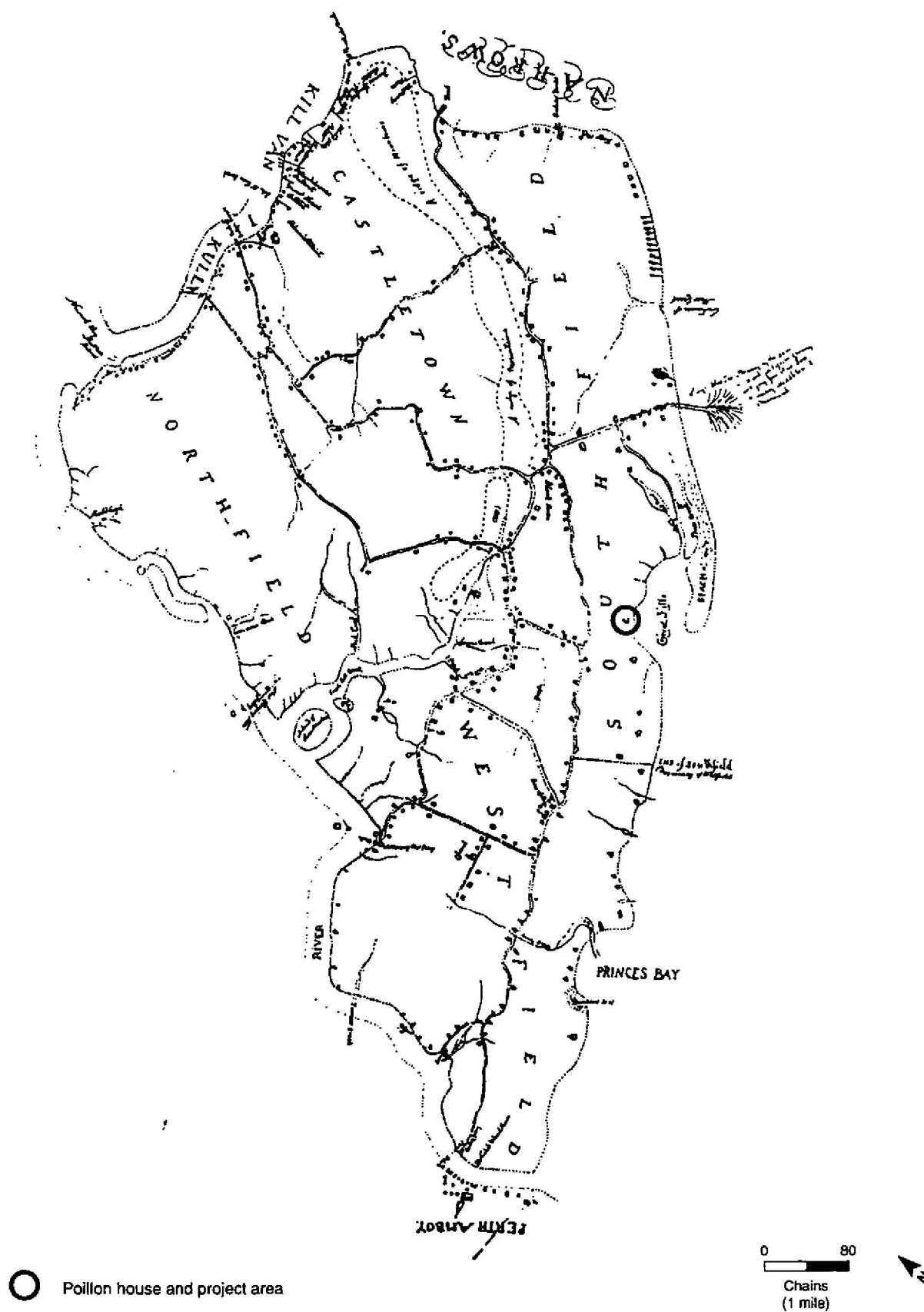
about the structure's alterations (see Figures 10-12).⁵

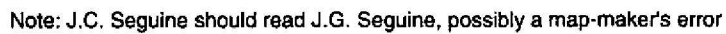
The 1797 Connor and Sprong map (Figure 5) shows the house above Great Kills harbor on the island's eastern shore when it was still in the possession of the Poillon family. In 1853, when it is shown on the Butler map, it had belonged to Joseph G. Seguire for almost a quarter of a century (Figure 6; note that the property is labeled "J. C. Seguire," apparently a map-maker's error). Six years later, in 1859, the Walling map shows the Sequine property now situated on Great Kills Road which was run after 1853 (Figure 7). By 1874, the size of the Seguire property had been greatly reduced as shown in the Beers atlas (Figure 8). An 1887 map, that indicates the property was then in the Seguire estate, does not show any house at all (Beers 1887; not illustrated). It is assumed this is another map-maker's error.

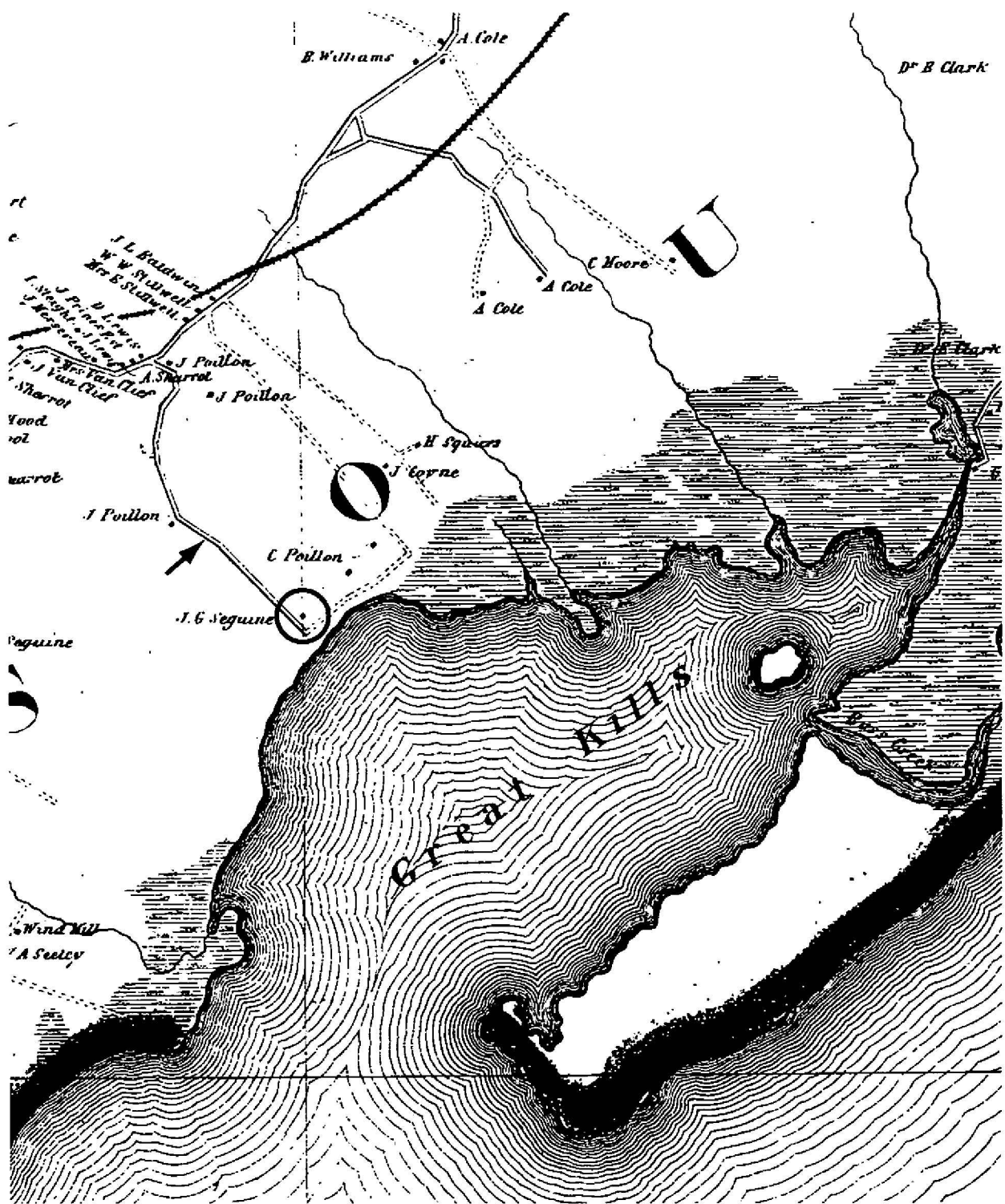
The 1937 Sanborn Insurance map, updated, to 1963, not only indicates twentieth-century subdivision of the surrounding land but also the construction of three outbuildings on the east side of the property (Figure 9). According to an early twentieth-century topographical survey (see Figure 13), these structures were built after 1912. They included a garage built by 1935 as discussed in the Kardas and Larrabee report (Kardas & Larrabee 1985a:2). All these buildings are now demolished.

Photos taken between 1910 and the 1980s record the stone and frame house that became a familiar Staten Island landmark. The 1910 photo, which depicts the western end of the house from the rear, documents the veranda added in 1845. It was taken by Alice Austen, the famed Staten Island photographer (Figure 10). A 1919 photo (Figure 11) was also the work of a well-known Staten Islander, William T. Davis, a founder of the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences and co-author with Charles W. Leng of *Staten Island and Its People* (1930). Davis, too, documented many of Staten Island's historical houses during the first decades of this century. A more recent photo (Figure 12) shows the house as it looked after it became the Harbor View Health & Beauty Spa in 1983 but before an enclosed dining porch had been added to the east side of the building.

⁵William McMillen drew sketch plans of the house and photographed and sketched many of its architectural details in the 1980s. He also saved structural and decorative elements. These are all available at Richmond-town. It also believed that the architect for the Harbor View Health & Beauty Spa, Ken Klintworth, also made "as is" drawings prior to the building's conversion into the spa facility in 1983 (Owens 1990:5), but this has not been confirmed (Johnson 1996:personal communication).





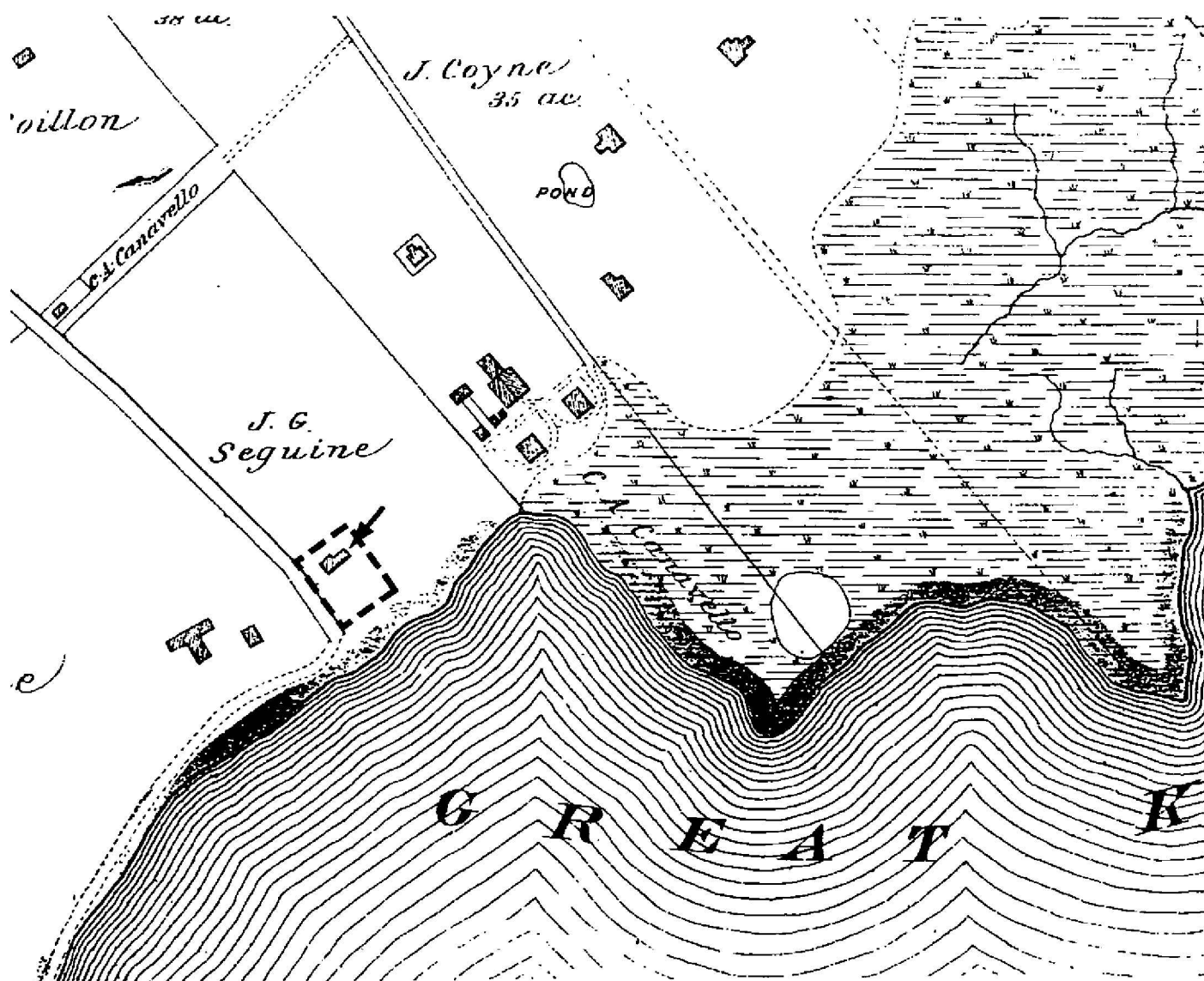


J.G. Sequine house and project area

Great Kills Road

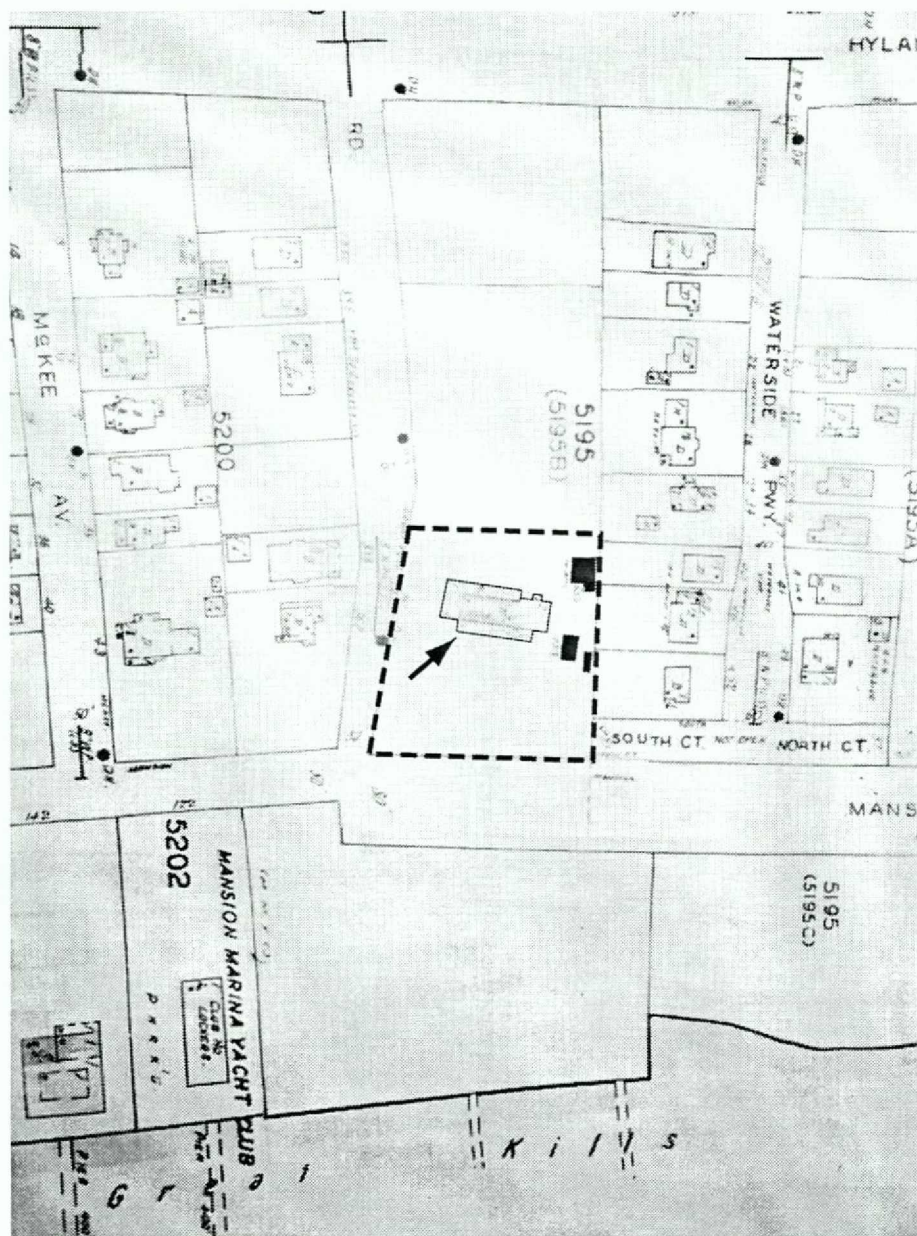
0 600
Ft.

N



--- project site (approx.)
 ↘ J.G. Seguire house

0 400
 Ft. N



- project site
- Poillon-Seguine-Britton house
- 20th C. out buildings demolished 1983 (garage, sheds)

0 100
Ft.

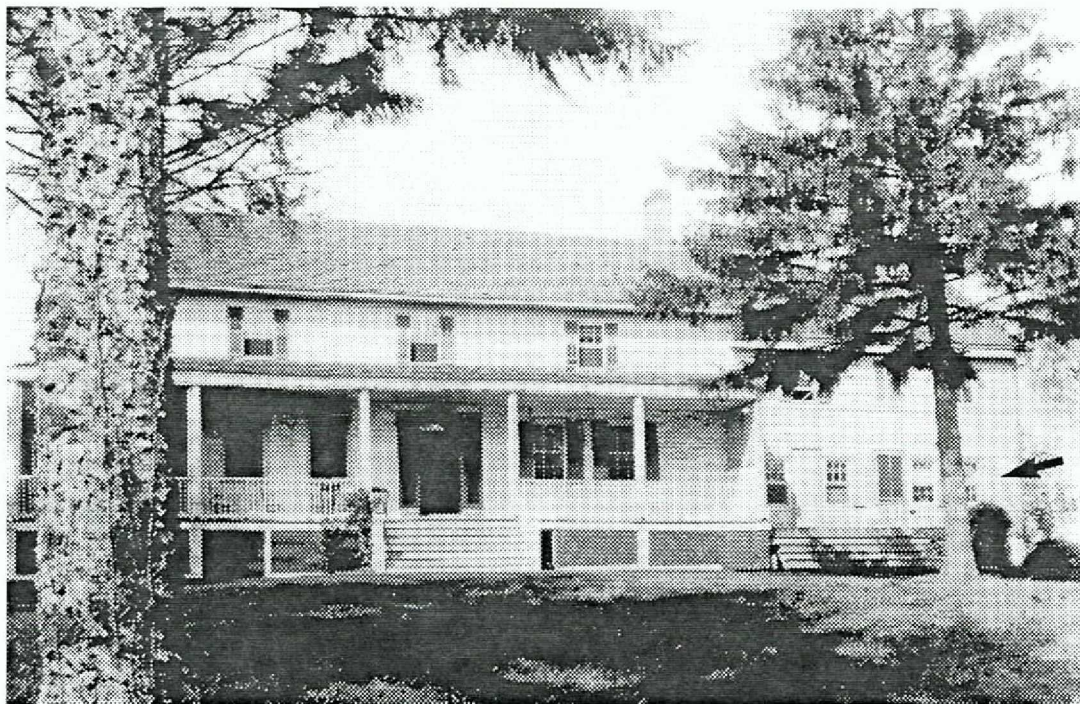




10 Western end and rear of former Poillon-Seguine-Britton house in 1910 photographed by Alice Austen, twenty-five years before sun porch was added to this part of the house. (Staten Island Historical Society Collection)



11 Former Poillon-Seguine-Britton house, west side and facade in 1919. (photocopy of W.T. Davis photo in SIIAS Collection)



12 Former Poillon-Seguine-Britton house in the 1980s, before alterations were made by the Harbor View Health and Beauty Spa that included an enclosed dining porch added to the front of the eastern portion in 1983 (arrow). A 1930s sun porch appended on the west end can be glimpsed behind the tree in the left foreground. (Staten Island Historical Society Collection)

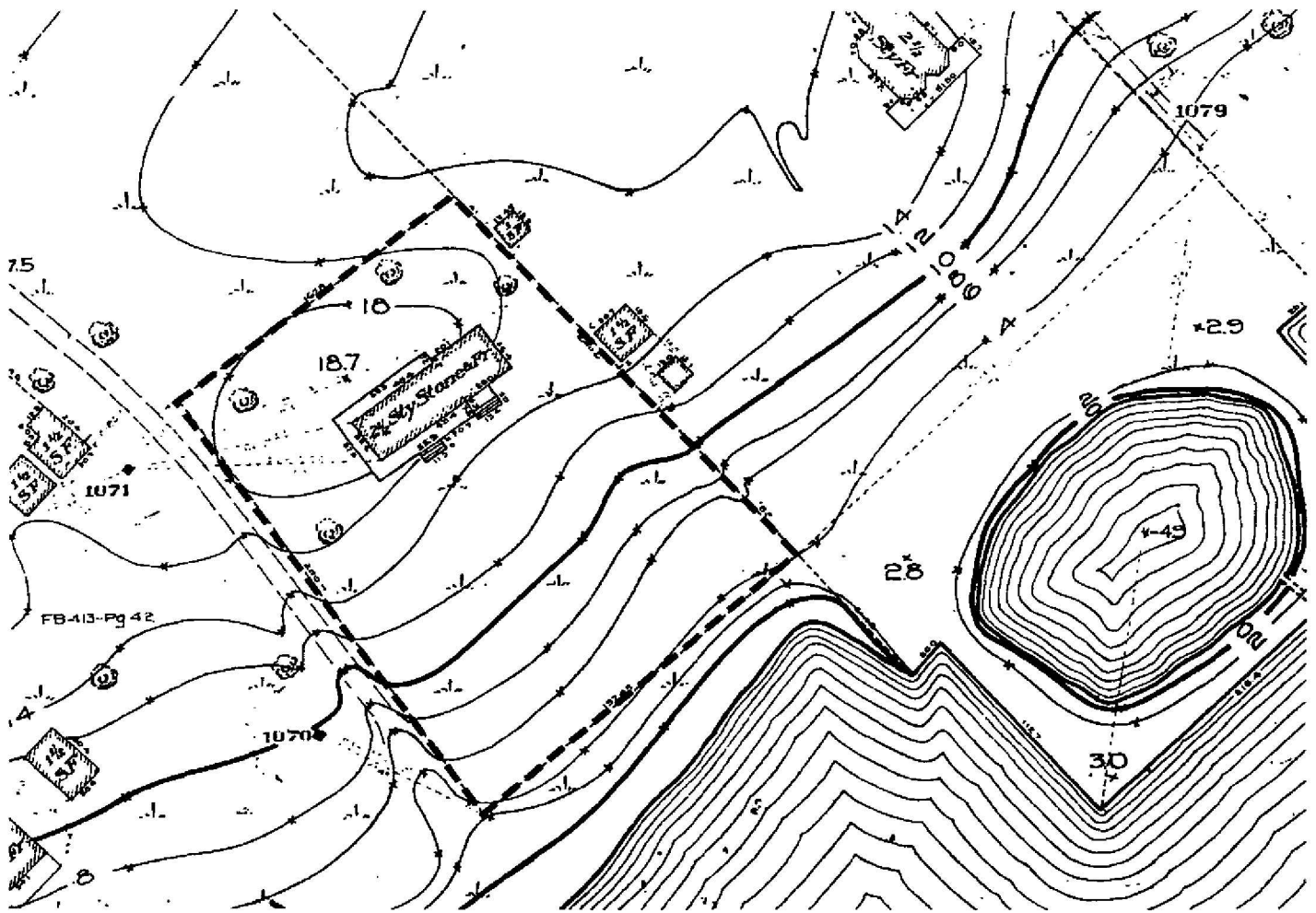
When the photos are compared to William McMillen's conceptual rendering of the original building (see Figure 4), changes that included verandas and an east wing in the mid-nineteenth century (Owens 1990; Dibble 1981) are clearly apparent. It should be noted there was almost a full cellar under the original part of the house. According to William McMillen, the cellar was missing in a 6-ft. section of the hearth area located on the eastern end of the original building. McMillen also feels certain that this core part of the house was entirely original. If so, the elements that suggest an addition between 1720 and 1730, as stated in the literature, actually lend credence to an early-eighteenth century construction date for the original house. A mid-nineteenth-century kitchen wing added to the eastern end of the house by Joseph Seguire did not have a cellar (McMillen 1996:personal communication).

The 1912 topographical survey alluded to earlier (Topographical Survey c. 1912; Figure 13) locates the house. At that time there were no outbuildings within the limits of the modern project site (three small structures shown east of its eastern boundary apparently belonged to the house next door).⁶ To verify this finding, the field book for the map was checked (Field Book 1912?:413), but, like the final version, it did not indicate any associated outbuildings.

When the 1912 topographical survey is compared with a 1982 survey updated to 1990 (Figure 14), it can be seen that the ground immediately in front of the house and on its eastern side has been graded up to create an elevated plateau (compare the 16-ft. contour on both maps). Otherwise the topography has remained virtually the same since 1912. A gravel drive, which still exists, is shown on the later map, but not on the 1912 survey. This driveway led to a hollow-block garage built between 1912 and 1935 that was demolished in 1985 as described in one of the Kardas and Larrabee reports (Kardas & Larrabee 1985a:2).

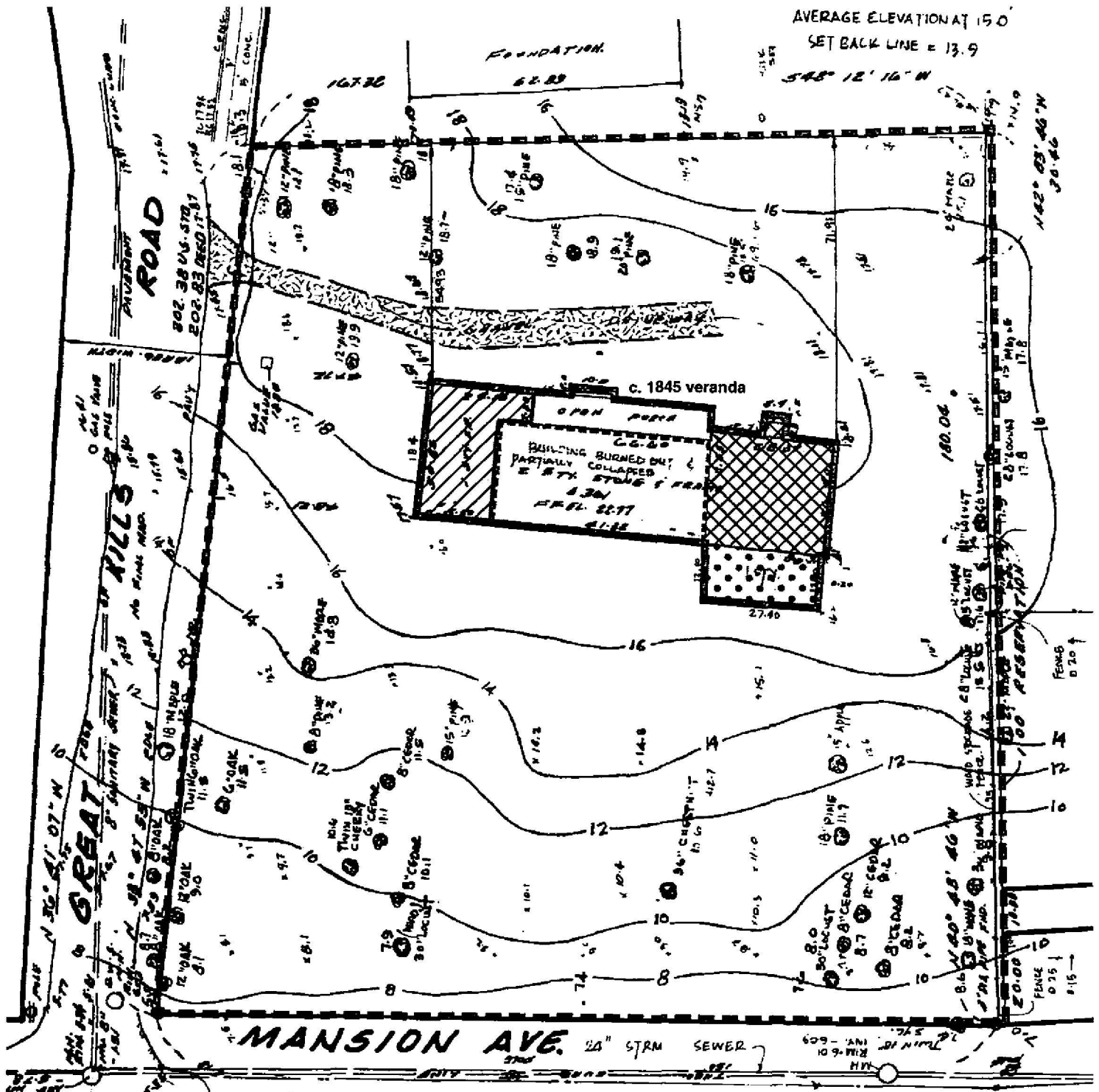
It should be remembered that the Poillon holding originally comprised at least 130 acres. Over time this was reduced to about one acre, the site's current size. Perhaps most importantly in regard to archaeological issues, two acres adjacent to the back (north side) of the house were sold in 1980 (LD 19802404:214) and are now the site of semi-detached homes. Since outhouses are most often located behind a dwelling, it is conceivable that privy pits dating to the nineteenth century or earlier were located on the lot or lots that were once part of the immed-





⁶These are not to be confused with three outbuildings mentioned earlier that are documented on the project site in the twentieth century (Sanborn 1937 updated to 1963; see Figure 9).

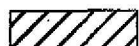

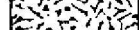


--- project site
 [] former Poillon-Seguine-Britton house

0 50
 Ft. N



-  project site
-  former Poillon-Seguine-Britton house
-  original house
-  c. 1845 frame addition

-  1935 addition (library and sun porch)
-  1983 addition (enclosed dining porch)
-  driveway

Note: notation on building says "BUILDING BURNED OUT & COLLAPSED"

0 20
FL



iate house site. At this writing, this remains speculative since the lots are not only inaccessible but are also developed. It is possible, however, these backyard features may be found directly on the project site.

In-Ground Research (Kardas and Larrabee 1985b)

In 1985, Kardas & Larrabee conducted limited field testing in the northeastern corner of the site. Three hand-augered tests (A, B, C) and five 2-ft. square test pits (Tests 1-5) were placed where an addition to the Harbor View Health & Beauty Spa was planned (see Figure 15). Testing occurred around the concrete slab remaining from a demolished garage that had been built between 1912 and 1935. A fill was encountered that contained nineteenth-century artifactual material; this was interpreted as evidence of an early-nineteenth century fill episode (Kardas & Larrabee 1985b:6). However, based on information from the 1912 and 1990 surveys, this fill was introduced after 1912, possibly to create a level foundation for the garage. It may be part of the expanded plateau noted at the 16-ft. contour that post-dates 1912. Here, as elsewhere (e.g., Geismar 1989:14, 28-34, 42), it appears the tested area was filled in the twentieth century but with redeposited nineteenth-century material .

The three hand-augered tests were terminated when rocks were reached between 18 and 28 in. below the ground surface. Of the five hand-dug test pits, three reached sterile soil at 17 to 33 in. below the ground surface and rocks were encountered in the two others. In one test excavation (Test 1), three discrete layers were found to contain shell, ceramic fragments, and other fragmentary material. Where possible, the hand auger was used to deepen the test pits "to confirm there were no underlying archaeological deposits." This seems to have extended three or perhaps four of the tests to between 40 and 60 in. below the ground surface, but this is unclear. All recovered soil was screened through double mesh (1/2 in. and 1/4 in.). The test pits were then profiled (drawn), backfilled, and the sod replaced.

Fragmentary artifactual material was recovered in all the test pits, but none was noted in the auger tests. One pit contained clinkers (burned coal). What is described is a typical fill material that appears to have dissipated to the north. Artifactual material in one test pit near the former garage (Test 1) may have extended 33 in. below the ground surface. However, a lack of information regarding the location of the material within a 2-ft. strata makes this speculative (Kardas & Larrabee 1985b:10).

No seventeenth century material was found, and any possible eighteenth century material was mixed with nineteenth century debris. Backhoe testing had been recommended to survey the periphery of the fill associated with the former garage (Kardas & Larrabee 1985b:1), but this was never carried out.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Documentary research suggests that the former Poillon-Seguine-Britton House that stood at 361 Great Kills Road prior to its devastation by fire in 1989, and clearing in 1995, may date from the early-eighteenth century rather than the late seventeenth century. Since the site's development mainly concentrated in the vicinity of the house, it is possible that prehistoric cultural material or historic-era deposits and features may still be present on the site.

Based on the findings of manual testing in the northeast corner of the site in 1985, archaeologically monitored, shallow backhoe test trenches are recommended. The proposed trenches should be taken into sterile soil to determine if there are any buried ground surfaces that might harbor prehistoric material, or if there is any archaeological evidence of historic-era occupation. This would include primary eighteenth or nineteenth century cultural material (rather than fill), such as trash pits or artifact scatter, or features such as a privy pit (or pits) or a well. Since testing did not reveal any cultural material below 33 in., it is expected that test trenches will not need to exceed a depth of 4 ft. if subsurface conditions are similar.

A minimum of two shallow trenches is recommended, one in the former gravel driveway, the other along the eastern side of the site. The driveway is a protected area, and the east side of the site seems undisturbed by recent clearing. Five additional test trench locations are indicated on Figure 15. If necessary, one or more could be excavated to explore the site's archaeological potential more thoroughly and put the issue of archaeological sensitivity to rest. The number of trenches needed to accomplish this would be determined by the archaeological investigator after field conditions are assessed in the two recommended trenches. The developer supports this flexible test plan.

Should archaeologically significant and viable deposits and/or features be found, a scope of work will be developed for data recovery. This will be submitted to all involved parties for review, including the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

DR

STILK

GREAT

PARKWAY

WATERSIDE

Same habitat
95 trees.
demolition
Age of trees avoid in resting
role on the site
Indian point + pot

2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997	1996	1995	1994	1993	1992	1991	1990	1989	1988	1987	1986	1985	1984	1983	1982	1981	1980	1979	1978	1977	1976	1975	1974	1973	1972	1971	1970	1969	1968	1967	1966	1965	1964	1963	1962	1961	1960	1959	1958	1957	1956	1955	1954	1953	1952	1951	1950	1949	1948	1947	1946	1945	1944	1943	1942	1941	1940	1939	1938	1937	1936	1935	1934	1933	1932	1931	1930	1929	1928	1927	1926	1925	1924	1923	1922	1921	1920	1919	1918	1917	1916	1915	1914	1913	1912	1911	1910	1909	1908	1907	1906	1905	1904	1903	1902	1901	1900	1899	1898	1897	1896	1895	1894	1893	1892	1891	1890	1889	1888	1887	1886	1885	1884	1883	1882	1881	1880	1879	1878	1877	1876	1875	1874	1873	1872	1871	1870	1869	1868	1867	1866	1865	1864	1863	1862	1861	1860	1859	1858	1857	1856	1855	1854	1853	1852	1851	1850	1849	1848	1847	1846	1845	1844	1843	1842	1841	1840	1839	1838	1837	1836	1835	1834	1833	1832	1831	1830	1829	1828	1827	1826	1825	1824	1823	1822	1821	1820	1819	1818	1817	1816	1815	1814	1813	1812	1811	1810	1809	1808	1807	1806	1805	1804	1803	1802	1801	1800	1799	1798	1797	1796	1795	1794	1793	1792	1791	1790	1789	1788	1787	1786	1785	1784	1783	1782	1781	1780	1779	1778	1777	1776	1775	1774	1773	1772	1771	1770	1769	1768	1767	1766	1765	1764	1763	1762	1761	1760	1759	1758	1757	1756	1755	1754	1753	1752	1751	1750	1749	1748	1747	1746	1745	1744	1743	1742	1741	1740	1739	1738	1737	1736	1735	1734	1733	1732	1731	1730	1729	1728	1727	1726	1725	1724	1723	1722	1721	1720	1719	1718	1717	1716	1715	1714	1713	1712	1711	1710	1709	1708	1707	1706	1705	1704	1703	1702	1701	1700	1699	1698	1697	1696	1695	1694	1693	1692	1691	1690	1689	1688	1687	1686	1685	1684	1683	1682	1681	1680	1679	1678	1677	1676	1675	1674	1673	1672	1671	1670	1669	1668	1667	1666	1665	1664	1663	1662	1661	1660	1659	1658	1657	1656	1655	1654	1653	1652	1651	1650	1649	1648	1647	1646	1645	1644	1643	1642	1641	1640	1639	1638	1637	1636	1635	1634	1633	1632	1631	1630	1629	1628	1627	1626	1625	1624	1623	1622	1621	1620	1619	1618	1617	1616	1615	1614	1613	16
------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	----

Former house site
(approx.)

[MANSION AVE.]

Note: A minimum number of two backhoe trenches is recommended. Trench locations are approximate and not to scale.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Beers, F. W., 1874. *Atlas of Staten Island, Richmond County*. J. B. Beers and Co., New York. SIAS.

Beers, J. B., 1887. *Atlas of Staten Island, Richmond County*. L. N. Newman, New York. SIAS.

Boyle-Cullen, Margaret, 1954. The Woods of Arden House. *The Staten Island Historian* 15 (1). Part 2. January-March. Serial No. 57.

Butler, James, 1853. *Map of Staten Island or Richmond County, New York*. New York Public Library, Map Division.

Connelly, Eileen A. J., 1993. Continuance On Request To Demolish Landmark. *Staten Island Advance*. Wednesday, July 28, 1993.

Dibble, James, 1981. Poillon-Seguine-Britton House, 361 Great Kills Road. Designation List 147. LP-1209. August 25, 1981.

Duga, Amanita, 1989. Fire damages 300-year-old landmark. *Staten Island Advance*. Saturday, February 11, 1989.

Fanciullo, Anne, 1989. Panel Says Fire-damaged Landmark Can Be Rebuilt. *Staten Island Advance*. Friday, May 5, 1989.

_____, 1990. Landmark Set For Demolition? *Staten Island Advance*. Saturday.

Fanciullo, Ann and David Martin, 1989. Arson Leaves Historic House a Charred Ruin. *Staten Island Advance*.

Field Book, 1912. No. 413. Field Notes Survey of the Poillon-Seguine-Britton House. Borough of Richmond Topographical Survey. Topographical Bureau, Borough President's Office, Staten Island.

Geismar, Joan H., 1989. The Jacob Crocheron House (the Woodrow Road House) Archaeological Investigation. Part 2. June 1989. Prepared for the Staten Island Historical Society. Prepared by Joan H. Geismar, Ph.D.

BIBLIOGRAPHY (continued)

Hix, Charlotte Megill, 1993. *Wills & Letters of Administration, Richmond County, New York 1670-1800*. Heritage Books, Inc., Bowie, Maryland.

Jacobson, Jerome, 1980. *Burial Ridge, Tottenville, Staten Island, New York. SIIAS*.

Johnson, Margery, 1996. Personal communication. Former owner of 361 Great Kills Road. Staten Island.

Joyce, Patrick, 1991. Great Kills Landmark Plan Criticized. *Staten Island Advance*. Thursday, January 17, 1991.

Kardas, Susan and Edward Larrabee, 1985a. Archaeological Assessment of the Poillon-Seguine-Britton-House, Staten Island, New York. Prepared for Harbor View Health & Beauty Spa. Prepared by Historic Sites Research, Princeton, New Jersey. February 1985.

_____, 1985b. Field Survey Addendum to Archaeological Assessment of the Poillon-Seguine-Britton-House, Staten Island, New York. Prepared for Harbor View Health & Beauty Spa. Prepared by Historic Sites Research, Princeton, New Jersey. April 1985.

Kraft, Herbert C., 1977. The Paleo-Indian Sites at Port Mobil, Staten Island. Ms. SIIAS.

Leng, Charles W. and William T. Davis, 1930. *Staten Island and Its People 1609-1929*. Lewis Historical Publishing Co. Inc., New York.

Liber of Deeds (LD), Misc. Richmond County Clerk's Office, Staten Island.

Liber of Wills (LW), Misc. Surrogate's Court, Staten Island.

McMillen, Loring, 1989. The Poillon-Seguine House, Great Kills, Staten Island. *Chronicles of Staten Island*, Volume I (15):128,132-134.

BIBLIOGRAPHY (continued)

McMillen, William, 1996. Personal communication. Supervisor of Restoration, Richmondtown.

_____, 1989. Conceptual Rendering of Original Poillon House. Supervisor of Restoration, Staten Island Historical Society, Richmondtown.

Owens, Patricia, 1990. The Poillon-Seguine-Britton House, Staten Island, New York. Typescript. On file, Staten Island Historical Society, Richmondtown.

Parker, Arthur C., 1920 *Archaeological History of New York*. University of the State of New York. *New York State Museum Bulletin* Nos. 237, 238. Part 2. September/October 1920.

Patrick, Reginald, 1992. The Burning of Staten Island. *Staten Island Advance*. Tuesday, March 17, 1992.

_____, 1989. South Shore arson rise probed. *Staten Island Advance*. Friday, July 21, 1989.

Poillon-Seguine-Britton House Site Survey, 1982 (updated to 1990). Survey No. 5882. Map of Survey of Property in Borough of Staten Island, Richmond County, New York. Anthony LoBianco, Surveyor. (Note: although Survey represents conditions existing as of 12/17/1990, the house had burned in 1989).

Sainz, Donald, 1962. The Fluted Point People. *The New Bulletin* 12 (1) 2. SIIAS.

Sanborn Insurance Maps, 1937 Updated to 1963. Volume 4, Plate 406, Richmond County, New York.

Schneider, Craig, 1991. Landmark Panel Criticizes House Plan. *Staten Island Advance*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY (continued)

Skene, Frederick, 1907. Map of Staten Island, Richmond County, New York, Showing the Colonial Land Patents form 1668-1712. Prepared under the direction of Frederick Skene, State Engineer and Surveyor. Staten Island Institute of Art and Sciences Archives (SIAS).

Skinner, Alanson, 1909. The Lenape Indians of Staten Island. *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History* III (9).

Sprong & Conner, 1797. Map of Staten Island. On file, Staten Island Historical Society Richmondtown.

Staten Island Advance, 1989a. Editorial: History burning. Sunday, April 9, 1989.

_____, 1989b. Fire Destroys 3 Vacant Houses. Staff writer. Monday, May 8, 1989.

Tax Map 1996. Block 5195, Lot 6. Municipal Building, New York.

Thompson, Philip J., 1996. Personal communication. Staten Island, New York.

Topographical Survey, c. 1912. Sheet 591. Topographical Bureau, Borough President's Office, Richmond County.

USGS, 1966. Map Arthur Kill Quadrangle, photorevised 1981. United States Geological Survey. Washington, D.C.

Walling., H. F., 1859. *Map of Staten Island, Richmond County, New York*. H. F. Walling, New York. New York Public Library, Map Division.

POILLON-SEGUINE-BRITTON HOUSE, 361 Great Kills Road. Borough of Staten Island.
Built circa 1695, 1730, and 1845.

Landmark Site: Borough of Staten Island, Tax Map Block 5195, Lot 6.

On September 9, 1980, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Poillon-Seguine-Britton House and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 6). The hearing was duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Three witnesses spoke in favor of designation. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The Poillon-Seguine-Britton house survives as one of Staten Island's and New York City's oldest houses. Beautifully sited a short distance from the seashore, it enjoys a fine view to the south across the waters of Great Kills Bay to the distant hills of the New Jersey Highlands. Originally an isolated country farmhouse situated on 130 acres of land, the house is, today, an urban residence on a large city lot. The families for whom it is named--Poillon, Seguine, and Britton--were all among the earliest settlers of Staten Island's south shore and prominent members of the community.

As seen today, the Poillon-Seguine-Britton house is a two-and-one-half story building constructed of stone and wood. The first floor stone portion of the house is the oldest and dates from the eighteenth century. One part of it may be as early as the seventeenth century. The wood frame portions of the house represent mid-nineteenth century alterations and additions, with the exception of the large sunroom on the western end which was added in 1930. Over the years, the house has been very well maintained, thus preserving the intricate history of its construction. The thick stone walls are in excellent condition and the shelter afforded by the veranda has helped to protect and preserve the original wooden panelled shutters at the windows. The history of the property and of the families who built and enlarged the house spans a period of over 300 years and begins with a man named Jacques Poillon who came from France in 1671.

Seventeenth Century - Poillon settles in Great Kills

Jacques Poillon, the progenitor of the Poillon family in North America, was born in 1646. A Huguenot who fled from France to Holland, he came to this country in 1671 and settled in Brooklyn. While there, he married Adrianna, daughter of Jean Crocheron, on October 24, 1677. That same year he took title to some land on Staten Island and within a short time, he and his bride left Brooklyn to settle in Great Kills.

The Poillon family had been quite wealthy in France and Jacques Poillon must have brought his wealth with him to the new world for he bought land and quickly became a prominent man. In 1680, his cattle-mark was registered; on December 14, 1689 he was appointed a Justice of the Peace by Governor Leisler; on the same day, he was also commissioned Captain of the Richmond County Militia; shortly after 1692, he acquired the land of the ill-fated Dominie Petrus Tesschenmaker; By 1694, Jacques Poillon held the appointed office of Road Commissioner under Governor Slaughter; and in 1696, he received a "Royal Grant to Jacques Poillon of Our County of Richmond." It is likely that this royal grant from King William III of England served to give Poillon clear title under English law to property which he already owned.

Clearly, Jacques Poillon, Gentleman, was a man of great importance on Staten Island, and it seems quite certain that he would have had a better than average house at a time when the typical home of the settler was a one-room house with a loft above. This is borne out by Poillon's will in which he leaves "to my beloved wife, Adrianna, all my personal Estate and the Room in the house in which I now live in during her natural lifetime." Poillon's will concludes with the sentence, "I make my wife Adrianna and my sons Jean and Jacques executors, dated at my dwelling house in Richmond County November 1, 1718."²

Since the house and the homestead farm were left to Jacques Poillon II, it appears that the son, his wife and family, and his mother were all to live together, and since Adrianna was specifically left a room of her own, the house must have been larger than most. It seems logical to believe, then, that the house Jacques Poillon I left to his son was one he had erected for himself and that it was very likely built in the late seventeenth century. Today this would be the western portion of the stone section of the present day house and the early date would account for the exceptionally large floor beams and the enormous chimney base at the western end of the cellar. ✓

The relieving arches above the windows of the first floor are a detail of vernacular construction in the New York area in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and very few examples remain. The Billopp house of 1680 at Tottenville has such arches, but they may serve some structural purpose in this two-and-one-half story house.³

Valentine's Manual of the Common Council of New York for the year 1847 depicts two early Dutch stone houses in Manhattan; one on Pearl Street built in 1697, and another on Broad Street built in 1698.⁴ Both of these houses have relieving arches above the window openings and exactly the same sort of three-panel shutters which now exist at the first floor windows of the Poillon-Seguine-Britton house. Since relieving arches would not really be necessary in the walls of a one-and-one-half story house, it follows that they were simply a common method of construction of the time.

The earliest part of the house takes in the present large parlor, the area of the center hallway and the second floor above them. This would have allowed for a house of five or six rooms plus the cellar. The stone wall of the west end was carried up about one-third of the height of the gable, and the area above (now covered with clapboards) was shingled. The original roof was very steep in the seventeenth-century manner. Proof of this may be found in the attic where the hand-hewn collar beams which originally connected the long rafters now lie unattached above the ceiling of the second floor. The original windows would have had very small panes of glass.

Further testimony to the great age of the Poillon house is to be found in the memoirs of Ralph Middleton Monroe, a local resident, who divided his time between operating an oyster planting business, studying the various forms of local wildlife, and delving into the social history of Staten Island. In 1879, while describing his home in Great Kills, Monroe stated, "I had bought a few acres on the waterfront at Great Kills, a beautiful little harbor on the south-east shore of Staten Island....My land was part of the old Poillon Seguine Farm and the my house next door to their old stone house, which was over two hundred years old."⁵

Eighteenth Century - The House Enlarged; The Revolutionary War

Jacques Poillon II, born in 1681, had three wives. Little is known of the first wife except that her name was Katherine. The second wife was Frances Billeau who died in 1714, and the same year Jacques Poillon married his third wife, Judith Bodine. There were two daughters by the second union and five sons and three daughters by the third. When Jacques Poillon inherited the family house from his father in 1720, his household consisted of his wife and himself, his mother, and four children. By 1725, there were seven children and by 1732 (the year before he died) there were nine children.⁶

Such a large family would have required a large house and the addition which is now the dining room was probably attached to the eastern end of the original house sometime between 1720 and 1730. Alternatively, Jacques Poillon II may have either abandoned or demolished his father's dwelling and built the stone section of the present-day house all at one time before his death in 1733, but that would not explain the seventeenth-century features described above.

At his death Jacques Poillon II was 52 years of age. In his will he left "to my four sons, Peter, Abraham, John, and James, all my houses, lands, and tenements in Richmond County, except as hereafter stated."⁷ He also stipulated, "My will and due desire is that my dearly beloved wife, Judith Poillon, shall remain absolute Mistress and have sole Use, Profit or Income of all my Estate so long as she remain my Widow." In the eventual distribution of the "houses, lands, and tenements" the homestead farm became the property of John Poillon who was only ten years old when his father died. No doubt the property was held for him until he came of age. John Poillon (1723-1802) married Margaret Perine and they had three sons and seven daughters, so the Poillon house continued to shelter a large family.

During the years of the Revolutionary War, John Poillon was in his forties, and he was quite active in support of the Colonial cause. At that time, the population of Staten Island was about evenly divided between Continentals and Loyalists. General Washington considered the Island to be important in the strategy to prevent the British from taking New York, and he made two trips to Staten Island in April and May of 1776 to determine how the Americans might employ fortifications on Staten Island to protect New York City. A number of British ships were at anchor off Sandy Hook and Raritan Bay, and a few were as close to Staten Island as Great Kills Harbor. There is a local tradition that General Washington stopped at the John Poillon house on his second reconnaissance trip. This could be so for the Poillon house would have afforded one of the few safe spots near the water from which to observe the British ships.⁸

History was made at Great Kills beginning in July, 1776, with the arrival of Lord Admiral Howe with a fleet of 150 ships loaded with soldiers fresh from England. By August, an army of some 32,000 professional fighting men, backed up by a great number of warships had assembled at Prince's Bay and Great Kills off the southern shore of Staten Island.⁹ All this was in preparation for the move to capture

New York City. By August 26, 1776, the major part of the British forces had landed on Long Island without opposition and the Battle of Long Island began. As the overwhelming British army bore down on the Americans there was nothing to do but retreat and by August 30th, Washington had successfully led his troops back to New York City. However, it was a crushing defeat and eventually the city, too, was lost. Long Island, New York City, and Staten Island remained in British hands until the war was over.

Nineteenth Century - A Fashionable House for the Seguines

John Poillon, Sr. died in 1802 at the age of 79 years. He made a long and detailed will, dated March 16, 1802. In it, he left his wife, Margaret, five hundred pounds to be put at lawful interest and used for her support. He stipulated that she was to choose household articles enough to furnish a room, and he gave her "her choice of a Negro Woman from amongst the Slaves that I Shall Die possessed of and also two milk cows and one horse and my Riding Chair One-horse chaise." These last bequests were "in lieu of her Dower Right and Shall Operate as full and entire Bar and Preclusion to any further demand She may Make in upon or against My Estate as My Widow." He designated sums of money to be paid to his daughters, or their heirs, and he left money to his son Peter Poillon. To his son, John Poillon, he left only his sword and some clothing, going on to say, "My said Son John Poillon Shall not be Considered as one of the heirs to any part of my Estate bequeathed or divided in this my last will and testament nor shall he be allowed to share with them as such, he having received his share already."

The next item of the will is as follows: "I will order and direct for the love and affection I have to my son, John Poillon, that fifteen days after my decease he shall have the privilege to purchase the farm that I now live on (if he incline to do so) in preference to any other person on the following conditions, that is to say, for the express purpose for himself to live on and no other, the Consideration Monies to be Three Thousand Pounds Current Money of this State in three equal payments."¹⁰

Taking advantage of this provision of his father's will John Poillon, Jr., bought the homestead farm. His brother Peter and Alexander Cairns--executors of the will--received payment and transferred ownership of the farm to John Poillon on June 3, 1805, although the deed was not recorded until August 28, 1816.¹¹ John Poillon Jr. (1753-1840) was then 49 years of age. On June 24, 1776, he had married Jane Corsen and they had a family of six sons and three daughters. John Poillon Jr., a member of the third generation in direct descent from Jacques I, was the last Poillon to own the family homestead, for on April 1, 1828, he and his wife sold the property for eight thousand dollars.¹²

The new owner was Joseph G. Seguire of New York City. He was born in 1793 and married Margaret Guyon by whom he had two sons, James G. Born in 1818, and Joseph G., Born in 1824. Joseph G. Seguire, Sr., died in 1832 after owning the Poillon house for only four years. In 1835, his widow remarried; her second husband, John Bennett, was a resident of Southfield and a first cousin of her deceased husband. James G. Seguire, the older son, was then about fourteen years old and the legal heir to the farm. After James Seguire obtained the homestead upon reaching his majority, his mother and stepfather moved to New Utrecht in Brooklyn; this was about 1840. Apparently the younger son, Joseph G. Seguire II desired to own the homestead and made arrangements on reaching manhood to settle with his brother and his mother for her dower interest in the property.

Joseph G. Seguire II married Sara Jane Mundy, daughter of the well-known Southfield physician, Crowell Mundy. In the Census of 1855, they were listed as living in the Great Kills house with their children; Anna, 12; Mary, 9; Johanna, 7; Crowell, 4; and Margaret 1. In 1856, a son Henry was born and in 1858, the last child, Joseph G. Seguire III.

By the mid-1840s, people of means lived in larger houses and in a more comfortable manner than in the eighteenth century. These larger houses contained parlors and dining rooms plus the usual kitchens, pantries, storerooms and quarters for numerous servants required to run a prosperous household.¹³ As a young married couple, Joseph and Sara probably wanted a stylish home and took steps to bring their old-fashioned house up to date. Stylistically, at least, the major alterations of the house fit in with a date of about 1845.

A wooden clapboard addition placed atop the original stone walls raised the house to a full two stories providing a large parlor, a center hall, and a dining room downstairs and family bedrooms on the second floor. A handsome wooden colonnaded veranda was built along the front, the west end, and rear of the house. It is still a prominent architectural feature of the building and displays simple round posts made from solid logs and an oval railing with square-section spindles. The woodwork in the principal rooms was converted to the prevailing Greek Revival style, with crossetted corners on the window and door frames, and floor-length French doors from the parlor to the side veranda. The center hall was given a beautiful stairway with a turned mahogany newel and balusters, also in the Greek Revival mode. The new roof, framed with machine-sawn timbers, had a more moderate slope and the window sashes became six-over-six.

The conversion of all the space in the old house to living rooms and bedrooms made it necessary to have a wing devoted to cooking, storage, and rooms for servants. This need was met by moving a small wooden house from another location to the eastern side of the stone house and attaching it there. It is obvious that this wing was not planned as an addition for there is a great difference between the floor levels of the two sections. Originally the wing was a very plain clapboard-covered house, and since it was to be the kitchen and servants wing, no stylish improvements were made and there is no cellar beneath this part of the house. The added wing had a good-sized kitchen with a fireplace, a pantry, a storeroom, and a coal or wood room on the first floor and four bedrooms on the second floor. In the attic of this wing one can still see the original shingled gable of the eastern end of the Poillon house; the outlines of the shingles indicate that the kitchen wing originally had a gambrel roof which was later raised to its present height.

Joseph G. Seguire II took great pride in his property and made a number of improvements. He brought the farm to a high state of cultivation and landscaped the grounds with specimen trees and shrubs, some of which he may have obtained from his nearby neighbor Frederick Law Olmsted.¹⁴ He died on September 6, 1878, without leaving a will. His wife and his son Henry were no longer living. Surviving were five children, all of legal age, and one minor fourteen years of age (Joseph G. Seguire). On March 3, 1879, Crowell M. Seguire was appointed Administrator of the Estate.

Twentieth Century - The Britton Family

By 1900, Anna Seguine had married Hiram H. Decker and was living in Rossville. Crowell had married and become prominent as the developer of a residential community on the south shore of Staten Island known as Giffords-by-the-Sea.¹⁵ Mary and Margaret, both unmarried, were living in the old home and Joseph G. III, a bachelor, and a house painter, was living with his brother Crowell. Joseph died on July 6, 1941, at the age of 82 years and is buried in the Moravian Cemetery at New Dorp.

On August 12, 1912, Joseph G. Seguine, Miss Margaret Seguine and Mrs. Anna Seguine Decker sold their family home to Richard Hamilton Britton and his sister, Harriet. The Brittons also acquired the rights to the land along the shore and beneath the waters of Great Kills. After the sale, Margaret Seguine went to live with her sister in Rossville.¹⁶

Richard H. Britton was descended from an old and distinguished English family which settled on Staten Island in the seventeenth century. He was a credit administrator by profession but by 1925 he had retired. At that time his household consisted of his sister and himself; Florence Worth, cook and housemaid; Harry Stevens, chauffeur; and Opda Mour-Harz, gardener.¹⁷

The last recorded alteration to the house took place in 1930 when Britton remodeled the veranda. He had the western section enlarged to twice the original width and enclosed in one enormous room with a bathroom attached. The roof became an open sun deck surrounded by a wooden railing. The plans were drawn by Robert C. Hornfager of Great Kills. The posts and railings removed from the open porch were kept and carefully stored away. Britton also added the porch on the front of the Kitchen wing for a photograph taken in 1919 shows it to have been an open deck at that time.

On April 1, 1957, Sherman Baldwin of Redding Ridge, Connecticut, sold the Poillon-Seguine-Britton house. He was the trustee and executor of the last wills of Richard and Harriet Britton. The purchaser was David L. Decker, a banker from Port Richmond, Staten Island.¹⁸ He bought the house and about two acres along with the riparian rights and lived there until his death in 1979. He left a son and two daughters, one of whom presently owns the property.

The Poillon-Seguine-Britton house is a landmark of great significance. Almost 300 years old, it is a rare survival of a structure which is a tangible link between past and present and is a striking reminder of the history and development of Staten Island.

Report prepared by James E. Dibble
Senior Landmarks Preservation Specialist
Research Department

FOOTNOTES

1. Dominie Petrus Tesschenmaker was the minister of a Dutch congregation on Staten Island from 1682 to 1685 when he left to take charge of the church at Schenectady. One midnight in February, 1690, the Indians attacked the Schenectady settlement and, in a violent massacre, they killed Tesschenmaker and most of his congregation. Jacques Poillon acquired the land which had belonged to Tesschenmaker sometime between 1692 and 1696.
2. Will of Jacques Poillon, dated November 1, 1718. Archives of the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences.
3. The Billopp House at Tottenville, built circa 1680, is a New York City Landmark. It is famous as the site of the conference held on September 11, 1776, between Lord Howe, Commander of the British forces, and Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Edward Rutledge representing the Americans. Lord Howe had called the conference to see if, after the defeat of the Battle of Long Island, the rebels would peacefully return to British rule, but the Declaration of Independence had been signed two months previously, and Lord Howe's offer was refused.
4. D.T. Valentine, Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York, (New York: Casper C. Childs. 1847), plates facing pages 346 and 371.
5. Ralph Middleton Munroe was also an author and his "The Commodore's Story" written in 1856 gives a good description of the lifestyle of the farmers who held property on the southerly side of Staten Island.
6. By 1732, there would have been ten children but a son, James, died in childhood.
7. Will of Jacques Poillon II, dated September 17, 1732. Archives of the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences.
8. Vernon Boyce Hampton, Staten Island in Transition, (New York: New York Board of Education and The Staten Island Historical Society. 1970), p. 27.
9. Ibid., p. 30.
10. Will of John Poillon, Sr., dated March 16, 1802. Archives of the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences.
11. Richmond County-Deeds, Liber H., Page 94.
12. Richmond County Deeds, Liber P, Page 393.
13. The Census of 1855 lists the unrelated persons living in the Seguire household as, John Godfrey, 37, and Michael Quinn, 30, Laborers /farmhands/ and Catherine Brennan, 22; Bridget Culbert, 20; and Daniel Donniugh, 15, servants.

14. From 1848 to 1855, Frederick Law Olmsted, famous as the designer of Central Park owned a farm on Staten Island not far from the Poillon-Seguine-Britton house. His house, a New York City Landmark, was also a Poillon house having been built about 1720 by an heir of Jacques Poillon I. While on the farm, Olmsted planted several acres with nursery stock and supplied specimen trees and shrubs for landscaping..
15. The area which Crowell Seguine developed as Giffords-by-the-Sea is now a part of the locality known as Great Kills.
16. Richmond County Deeds, Liber 410, Page 234.
17. This information is taken from the U.S. Census for 1925.
18. Richmond County Deeds, Liber 1386, Page 99.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Poillon-Seguine-Britton House has a special character, special historic and aesthetic interest and value as a part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the Poillon-Seguine-Britton House is one of Staten Island's and New York City's oldest houses; that the first floor stone portion of the house dates from the early eighteenth century and that one part of it may be as early as the seventeenth century; that the wood frame portions of the house represent mid-nineteenth century alterations and additions; that the house retains an exceptional degree of integrity, clearly revealing its long construction history; that the families for whom it is named--Poillon, Seguine, and Britton--were all among the earliest settlers of Staten Island's south shore; that the history of the property and the families who built and enlarged the house spans a period of over 300 years; that the Poillon-Seguine-Britton House is a striking reminder of the rural character of Staten Island in the 18th and 19th centuries; and that it is a tangible link between past and present in the history of Staten Island.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 21 (formerly Chapter 63) of the Charter of the City of New York, and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the Poillon-Seguine-Britton House, 361 Great Kills Road, Borough of Staten Island, and designates Tax Map Block 5195, Lot 6, as its Landmark Site.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bayles, Richard M. History of Richmond County, Staten Island, New York.
New York: L.E. Preston Co., 1887.
- Clute, J.J. The Annals of Staten Island From its Discovery to the Present Time.
New York: Charles Vogt, 1877.
- Hampton, Vernon Boyce. Staten Island in Transition. New York: New York Board
of Education and the Staten Island Historical Society, 1970.
- Hill, Howard R. "History of the Great Kill's" Richmond County Yacht Club.
Vol. I, No. 1. Staten Island: Richmond County Yacht Club, 1958.
- Leng, Charles W. and Davis, William T. Staten Island and its People, Vol. II.
New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., 1930.
- Morris, Ira K. Memorial History of Staten Island. New York: The
Winthrop Press, 1900.
- Phelps-Stokes, I.N. The Iconography of Manhattan Island. Vol. V.
New York: Robert H. Dodd, 1926.
- Richmond County, Office of the Register. Liber Deeds.
- Steinmeyer, Henry G. Staten Island 1524-1898. New York: Staten Island
Historical Society, Richmondtown, 1950.
- Stillwell, John E., M.D. The History of Captain Nicholas Stillwell, Son of
Lieutenant Nicholas Stillwell and his Descendants. Vol. III. Edited by
Harrison McNear. New York: Private printing, 1930.
- The Staten Island Historian. Vol. 15, No. 1, January-March, 1954.
- Valentine, D.T. Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York.
New York: Casper C. Childs, 1847.