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(1997)

1B Field Testing Report for 361 Great Kills Road

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

LPC 91-1594



F2 3/18/97

Prepared for Winthrop, Stimson, Putnam & Roberts

Prepared by Joan H. Geismar, Ph.D.

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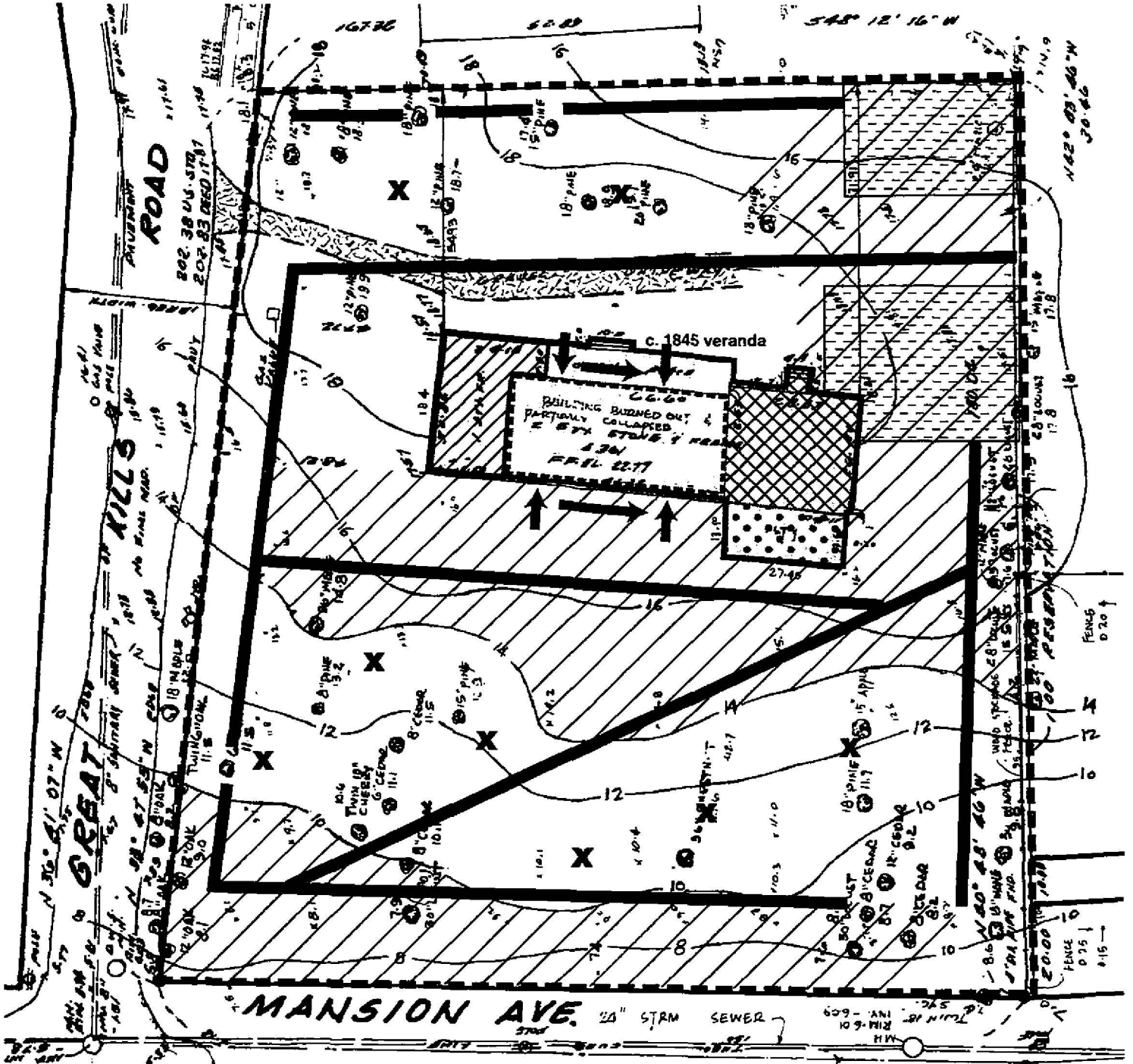
INTRODUCTION and SUMMARY













As part of an application to dedesignate a New York City landmark badly damaged by two fires and subsequently cleared for reasons of safety, four days of archaeological testing were conducted at 361 Great Kills Road (Block 5195 Lot 6) in Great Kills, Staten Island. This field work, which was carried out in accordance with an approved scope of work (Geismar March 13, 1997; LPC March 14, 1997), occurred between March 17 and March 24, 1997. It was implemented with the cooperation of the site's prospective developer who was on site to expedite field operations. Testing was carried out under the direction of the writer, Joan H. Geismar, Ph.D., assisted throughout by archaeologists Shelly Spritzer and, on March 18, Linda Stone. In addition, a construction worker in the employ of Phil Thompson, the prospective developer, was on hand to provide field assistance.

The scope called for between two and seven backhoe trenches and eight shovel test pits (Figure 1). Ultimately, seven backhoe test trenches, ranging between 55 and 140 ft. long, four backhoe-dug foundation trenches, one backhoe pit, and nine hand-dug shovel test pits were executed (when one of the planned shovel tests north of the former house encountered rocks in sterile soil, an additional test pit was opened nearby to further explore soil conditions in this area). The proposed testing plan and the actual tests are presented in Figure 2. Tracing the exterior of the original dry-laid stone Poillon house foundation in four trenches indicated the foundation was fairly well preserved on two of its four sides, less so on the other two. These trenches and other tests established that the foundation had been built from the inside out, so to speak, and there was no builder's trench. Debris incorporated into the builder's trench might have suggested a construction date for the oldest section of the house, but based on the field findings this is a moot point.

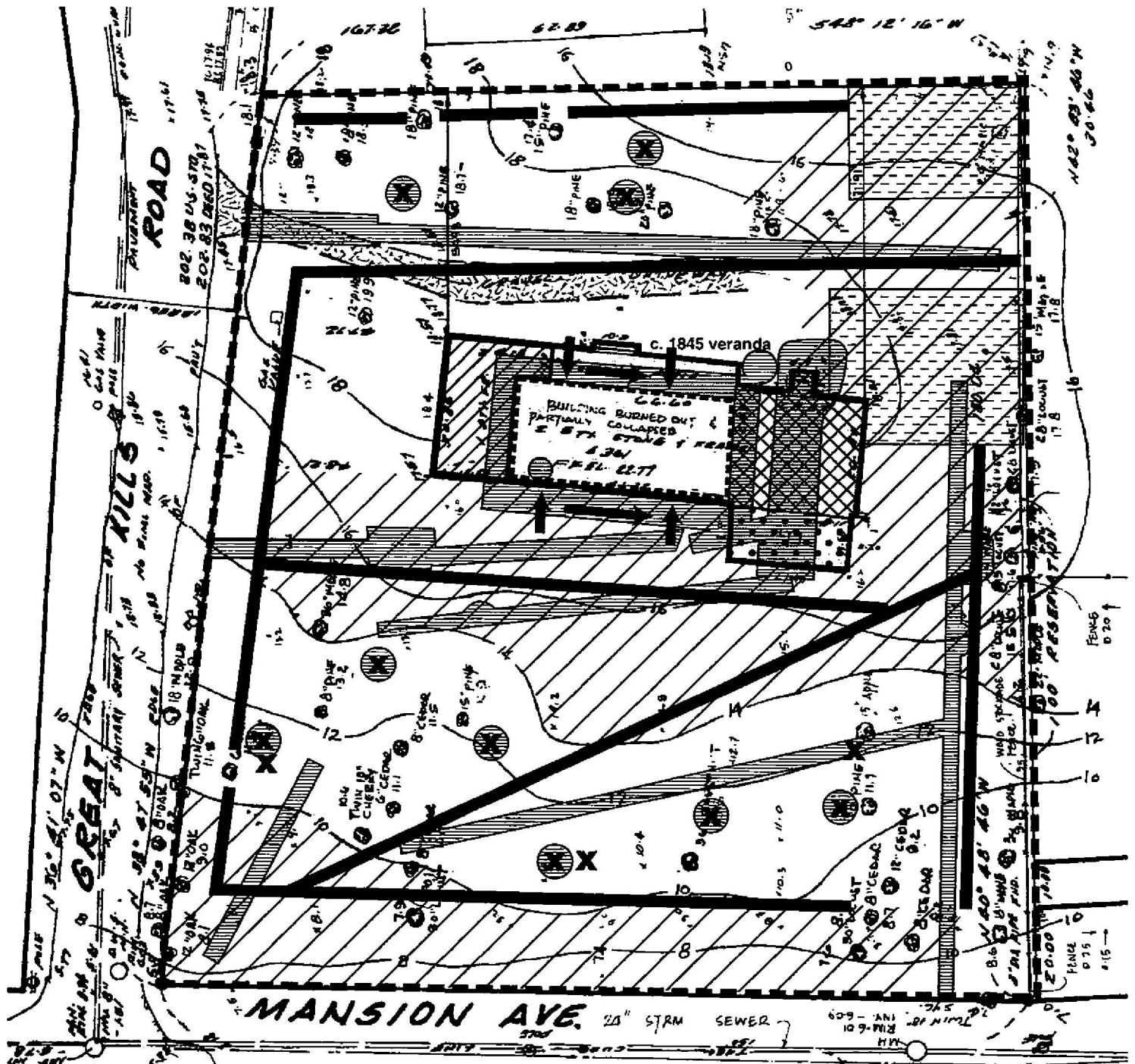
On the second day of testing, a round, mortared brick water cistern was found next to the house and a well-constructed beehive-domed cesspool and its terra-cotta drain were later encountered further away, near the eastern limit of the modern lot. The location of the cistern, believed to be a dry-well prior to excavation (Johnson 1997:personal communication), had been made known by Marjorie Johnson whose father was the last private owner-occupant of the former house. The contents of the cistern and the cesspool were fully tested, but neither deposit was archaeologically significant. In fact, the site proved to be relatively devoid of cultural material: a total of twenty-five potentially diagnostic artifacts were collected (see Appendix A), but the predominant artifact was merely noted. This was the











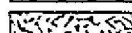
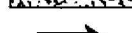


361 GREAT KILLS ROAD Poillon-Seguine-Britton House Site Survey 1982 (Updated to 1990) with Proposed Test Locations

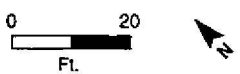


-  project site
 -  fill/possible fill (approx.)
 -  former Poillon-Seguine-Britton house
 -  original house
 -  c. 1845 frame addition
 -  proposed test trench (schematic)
 -  proposed shovel test
 -  previously tested (1985)
 -  1935 addition (library and sun porch)
 -  1983 addition (enclosed dining porch)
 -  driveway
 -  possible test pit or trench locations (foundation test)
- Note: notation on building says "BUILDING BURNED OUT & COLLAPSED"

361 GREAT KILLS ROAD Poillon-Seguine-Britton House Site Survey 1982 (Updated to FIELD TESTING 1990) with Proposed and Excavated Test Locations



-  project site
-  fill/possible fill (approx.)
-  former Poillon-Seguine-Britton house
-  original house
-  c. 1845 frame addition
-  proposed test trench (schematic)
-  proposed shovel test pit
-  previously tested (1985)
-  1935 addition (library and sun porch)
-  1983 addition (enclosed dining porch)
-  driveway
-  possible test pit or trench locations (foundation test)
-  excavated test trench/pit/feature
-  excavated shovel test pit (not to scale)



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

modern ceramic wall tiles of various colors undoubtedly installed when the house was converted into a health spa in 1983.

The trenches and test pits confirmed that fill was deepest in the vicinity of the house. Testing also established that fill was present elsewhere, but to a lesser degree. Only in the extreme southern portion of the property, and particularly to the southeast, was sterile soil found directly under the topsoil. Evidence of charring was noted in the foundation trenches, and the test trenches and test pits south of the house revealed ground disturbance caused by the installation of water and drain pipes and electrical boxes for outdoor lighting. Neither trenching nor shovel testing indicated any Native American archaeological potential nor did it reveal any historic-era features or deposits of archaeological significance.

The methods and findings of field testing are detailed below. The findings indicate that archaeological issues do not appear to be a concern in the proposed landmark dedesignation. Consequently, no further archaeological field work is recommended.

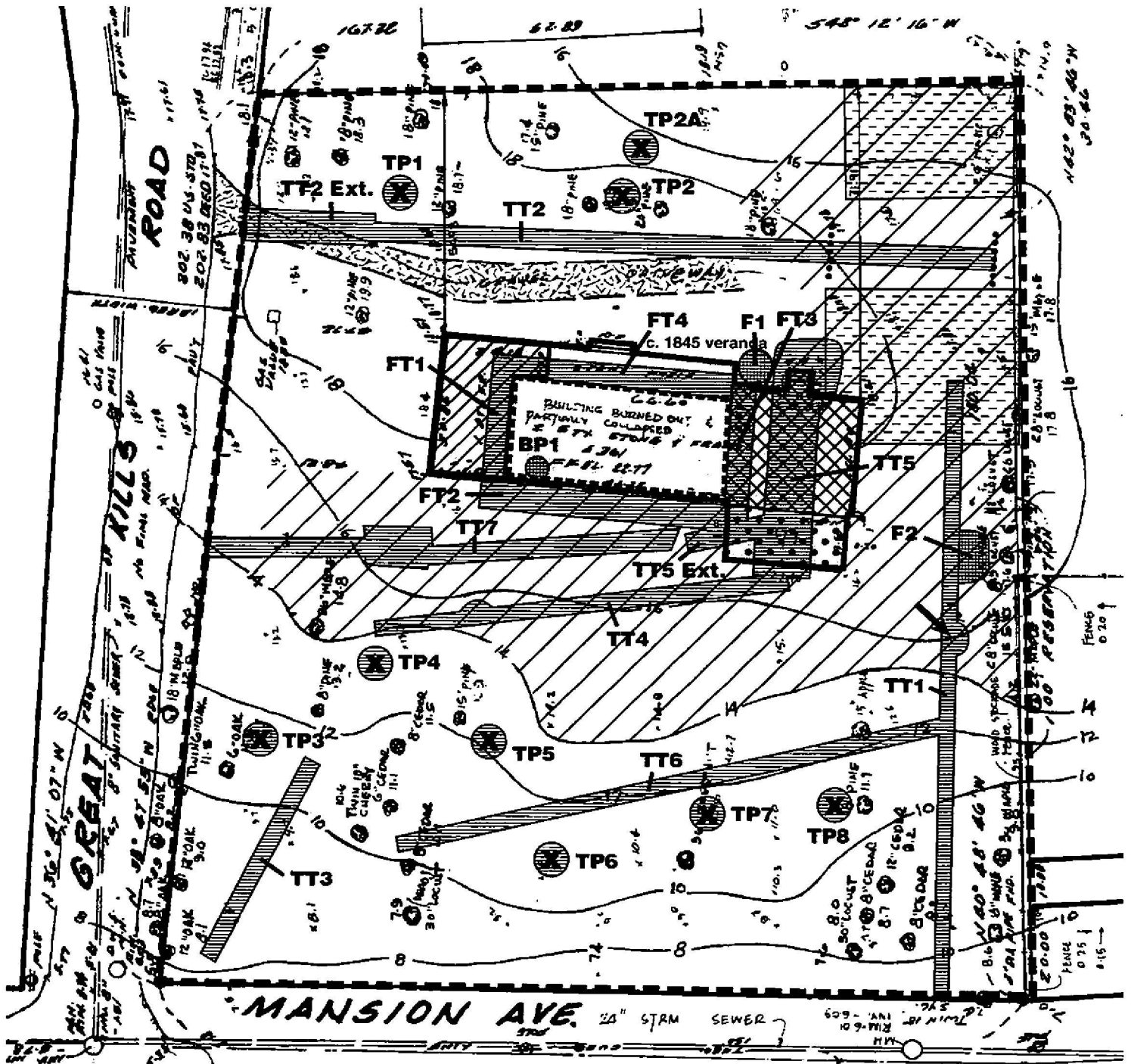
METHODS

Testing was carried out by monitoring seven backhoe-dug trenches (TT1-TT7) and by hand excavating nine shovel test pits (TP1-TP2A, TP3-TP8). In addition, the backhoe traced the Poillon house foundation, digging four contiguous trenches alongside the foundation (FT1-FT4). These trenches were between 4.1 and 5.1 ft. wide. This exposed the outside surface of the rectangular, dry-laid stone walls of the structure that were minimally 274 years old and possibly older¹ (Figure 3 presents a plan of the location and extent of all excavations). The backhoe was also used to dig a pit within the foundation that exposed a segment of the wall's interior. The pit was designated Backhoe Pit 1 (BP1).

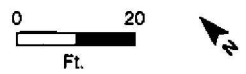
It should be remembered that the fire-damaged structure was demolished and cleared in 1996 (Geismar 1996:1, 3). Phil Thompson believed that the house foundation had been entirely destroyed during this demolition, and scattered foundation stones on the site's graded surface seemed to support this assessment. However, at the urging of the Landmark's Commission's director of archaeology, an attempt was

¹As noted in the 1A documentary report, the house was purportedly constructed in 1694, but Loring McMillen made a strong case for it being built after 1702 and possibly as late as 1723 (see Geismar 1996:6-8).

361 GREAT KILLS ROAD Poillon-Seguine-Britton House Site Survey 1982 (Updated to 1990) with Tested Areas and Features Indicated



- project site
- fill/possible fill (approx.)
- former Poillon-Seguine-Britton house
- original house
- c. 1845 frame addition
- test trench (TT)/foundation trench (FT)
- shovel test pit (TP), not to scale
- backhoe pit (BP)/feature (F)
- previously tested (1985)
- 1935 addition (library and sun porch)
- 1983 addition (enclosed dining porch)
- driveway
- garage (demolished) footing
- slag deposit



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

made to locate any remaining foundation walls. This exploration was originally planned as pits or perpendicular trenches (see Figure 1), but instead backhoe trenches were placed outside the foundation beginning in the western part of the building, the part least damaged by the house fires. A 1982 survey updated to 1990 (Site Survey 1982/1990) was used to locate the foundation (Figure 14 in Geismar 1996 is the base for Figures 1 - 3 this report). This exploration proved quite successful, although the eastern part of the old foundation was indeed badly damaged (Figures 4 - 7). A single backhoe pit (BP1) was placed inside the foundation to determine the width of the wall and the method of its construction. This pit also revealed that the floor was concrete in the vicinity of the backhoe pit (Figure 8). As noted above, all tests are identified in Figure 3.

With possibly only two exceptions, all tests, including those tracing the house foundation, reached sterile soil. The concrete floor in BP1 was one exception, the other may be TP3. Here excavation stopped when a tree root was encountered at 1.1 ft. below the ground surface and the soil beneath was found to be extremely compacted and hard to dig. It is unclear whether sterile soil was reached in this pit. The depths and dimensions of the various test units are presented in Table 1.

Of the nine shovel test pits placed around the property, three were located north of the former house structure where as much as 2.45 ft. of fill were recorded (in test pit 2 [TP2] on the north side of the house). All were approximately 1.5 ft. in diameter at the surface (a little more than a shovel blade width), but narrowed slightly with depth. None were situated along the eastern property line where TT1, the longest of the test trenches (140 ft.), was excavated. In this trench sterile soil was reached immediately below the humus and sod in the southern part of the trench while filling and ground disturbance were documented to the north, nearer the former house structure.

Only a few artifacts were noted during the trenching of the foundation walls and the test trenches, and those recovered were solely grab samples. That is, selected artifacts were collected either for dating purposes or because they might provide other information. All soil from the hand-dug test pits, however, was screened through 1/4-in. wire mesh and any diagnostic artifactual material found in the screen was collected for laboratory processing and analysis (coal, a mortared brick fragment, small undiagnostic bottle and window glass fragments, shell fragments, a pink ceramic tile fragment, a modern nail, a corroded nail, a terra-cotta sewer



4 Northwest corner of the original Poillon house foundation exposed in foundation trench 1 (FT1) on the right and 4 (FT4) on the left. The view is south toward Great Kills harbor. (3/17/97)



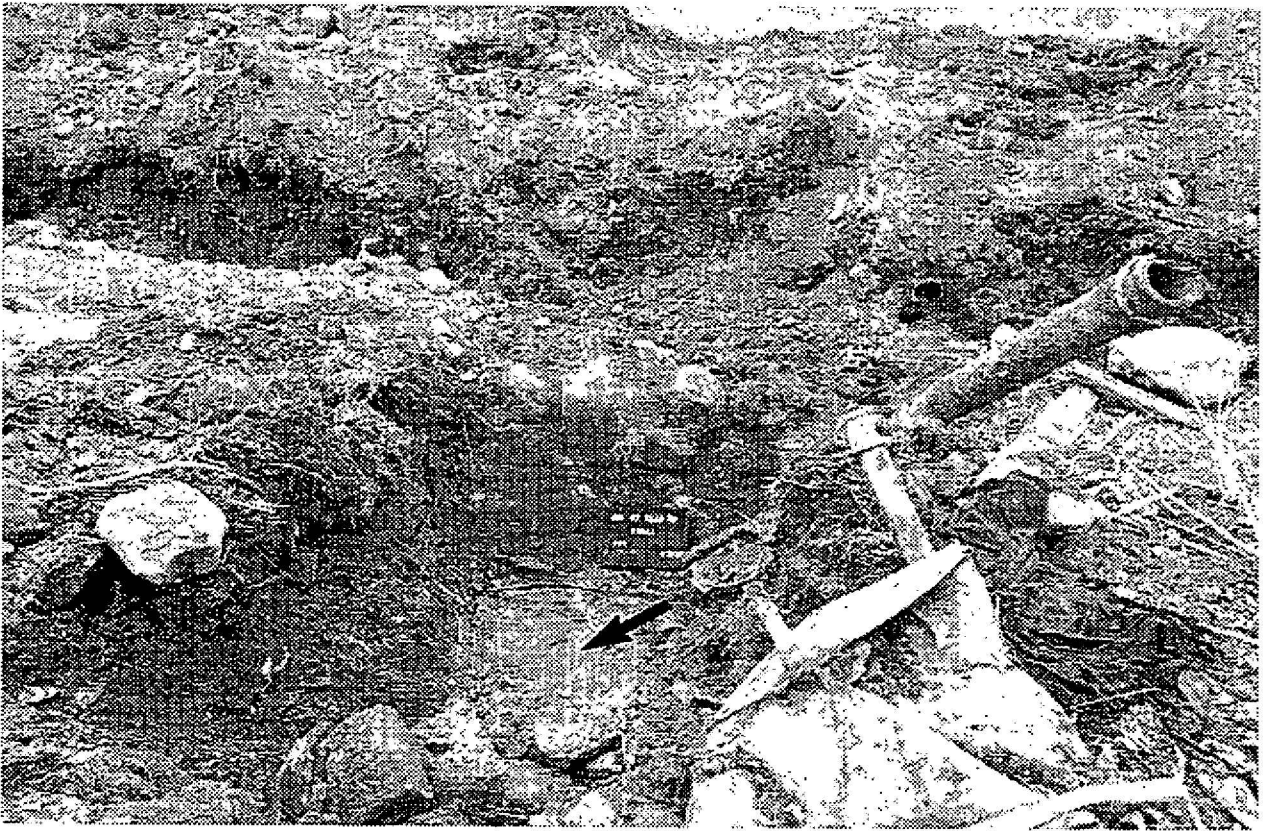
5 Foundation trench 2 (FT2) on the left and 3 (FT3) on the right. The view is northwest toward Great Kills Road. Note that the eastern foundation wall in FT3 (right) is less well-defined than the southern wall in FT2. Damage from fire and demolition was greatest in this part of the structure. (3/17/97)



6 The outside of the Poillon house foundation traced in four backhoe trenches. The view is from the northwest corner of the foundation looking southeast. The northern wall in FT4 is in the foreground, the western wall in FT1 is on the right. Great Kills harbor is in the background. Note structural support (arrow) possibly for a former hearth. Similar supports were noted in the eastern wall. (3/18/97)



7 Southwest corner of the original Poillon house foundation is in lower left corner of the picture. Foundation trench 2 (FT2) extends to the right. The view is east. Note the paving stones (arrow) that purportedly marked the entrance to where a boiler and furnace were located (see Figure 13 for detail of steps). (3/18/97)



8 Interior section of the southern foundation wall, its smooth side, abutting a concrete floor (arrow). Excavating this pit (BP1) revealed charring and building debris including stones, wood, and pipes. (3/18/97)

Table 1. 361 GREAT KILLS ROAD Test Unit and Feature Dimensions

Unit/Feature	Location	Length (TT & FT)	Width/Diameter	Depth BGS/BID* (depth of TP fill)
<u>Test Trench</u>				
TT1	N-S trench East side of property	140 ft	3 ft to c. 9 ft at F2	3 ft to 8.5 ft; 8.5 ft is .9 ft below F2
TT2	E-W trench Former garage and driveway	135.75 ft	2.5 ft to 3.1 ft	2.6 ft to 4 ft
TT2 EXT	Added to E end of TT2	30 ft	3 ft?	4.2 ft to 5.1 ft
TT3	N-S trench SW corner; 5 ft from rear fence	54 ft	2.5 ft	3 ft to 3.2 ft
TT4	E-W trench S of house; 113 ft S of N property line	94.2 ft	3.5 ft to 4 ft	3.2 ft to 4.2 ft
TT5	N-S trench w/short E-W ext; area of Kitchen wing	c. 52 ft	9 ft to 12 ft	3.5 ft to 5.7 ft
TT6	E-W diagonal trench 48 ft from W fence line	120.3 ft	3 ft	3.8 ft to 4 ft
TT7	E-W trench 100 ft S of property line at W end; 96 ft at E end	106 ft	3 ft to 9 ft	3.8 ft to 4 ft
<u>Foundation Trench</u>				
FT1	W trench (outside of W wall)	35.5 ft	4.9 ft	**
FT2	S trench (outside of S wall)	53 ft	5.1 ft	6.4 ft BID
FT3	E trench (outside of E wall)	34.5	3.8 ft	**
FT4	N trench (outside of N wall)	54 ft	4.1 ft	**
<u>Test Pit</u>				
TP1	N side of foundation	—	c. 1.5 ft (surface)	2.1 ft (fill .85 ft)
TP2	N side of foundation	—	c. 1.5 ft (surface)	2.6 ft (fill 2.45 ft)
TP2A	N of TP 2	—	c. 1.5 ft (surface)	2.1 ft (fill 1.15 ft)
TP3	W side of property, S of foundation	—	c. 1.5 ft (surface)	1.1 ft (terminated at tree root)

Table 1. 361 GREAT KILLS ROAD Test Unit and Feature Dimensions

Unit/Feature	Location	Length (TT & FT)	Width/Diameter	Depth BGS/BID* (depth of TP fill)
TP4	S of foundation	—	c. 1.5 ft (surface)	1.6 ft; tree root at base in sterile soil; (fill 1.0 ft)
TP5	S of foundation	--	c. 1.5 ft (surface)	1.55 ft; water pipe .9-1.1 ft (fill 1.2 ft)
TP6	S of foundation	--	c. 1.5 ft (surface)	2.0 ft (fill 1.6 ft)
TP7	S of foundation	--	c. 1.5 ft (surface)	2.75 ft (fill 1.4 ft)
TP8	SE of foundation	--	c. 1.5 ft (surface)	2.25 ft (fill 0.8 ft)
<u>Backhoe Pit</u>				
BP1	Inside S foundation wall, just east of paving stones and steps	--	—	3.16 ft to concrete cellar floor
<u>Features</u>				
F1 Brick Cistern	Outside, in crook formed by old foundation and Seguire kitchen wing	—	Ext diam 6.5 ft; int diam 5.66 ft	c. 5.32 ft
F2 Brick Cesspool	Near eastern limit of property in TT1, c. 92 ft N of S property line	—	Ext diam 6 ft; int diam c. 5 ft	c. 7.6 ft from broken dome to bottom
Slag deposit	TT1, 77 ft N of S property line	c. 8 to 9 ft N to S	—	—

*BGS=below ground surface; BID=below interim datum, a datum established for measuring the foundation trenches (FT). **Foundation trenches terminated in sterile soil just below the foundation or about 3+ ft below the ground surface

pipe fragment, a plastic cup lid, a plastic fragment, cement and asphalt fragments, and a paint chip, all in the fill, were noted on the field sheets but not collected).

All excavations were photographed and schematic renderings were created of the soil strata in the nine shovel test pits, the deepest being 2.75 ft. (TP7, see Table 1 and Figure 23 for depths). After measuring and photographing the trenches and test pits, the trenches were backfilled using the backhoe, the test pits were backfilled by hand (the exceptions were the two most southerly test pits [TP 7 and TP8] which were to be filled by the backhoe during nearby trenching).

Just before going into the field, a question to Marjorie Johnson regarding the whereabouts of any known features resulted in the aforementioned information about the circular brick feature next to the house. Known to be located on the north side of the building and believed to be a dry-well, this feature (F1) was sought, found, excavated, and identified as a former water cistern (Figures 9 and 10 and below). Daniel Pagano, director of archaeology at the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, was on site when F1 was located and tested using the backhoe (testing virtually emptied the feature; see Figure 10).

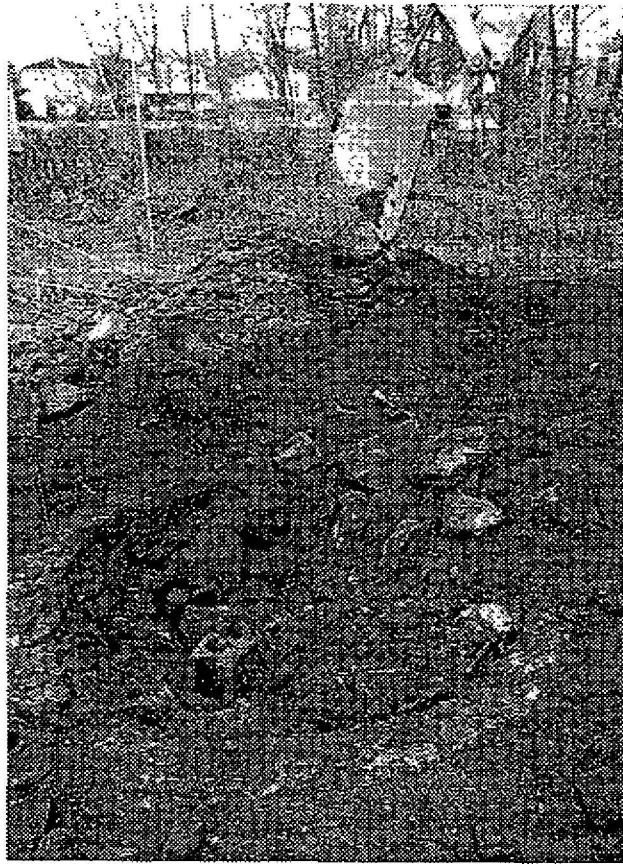
A second brick feature, the beehive-domed cesspool (F2) mentioned earlier, was later located in TT1 on the eastern side of the property as was a slag deposit that contained at least some household trash since it included a long bone from a cow. The well-made cesspool feature was fully exposed, revealing that a terra-cotta sewer pipe entered it from the north (Figure 11). Other sections of this pipe were later found further north (nearer the kitchen wing) in TT1 (Figure 12).

To determine the feature's size, the backhoe was used to excavate outside its western quadrant, but the depth of the excavation made it unsafe for close inspection. Instead, the bricks on the feature's western side were removed with the backhoe and, like F1, virtually the entire feature was excavated (see Figure 11).

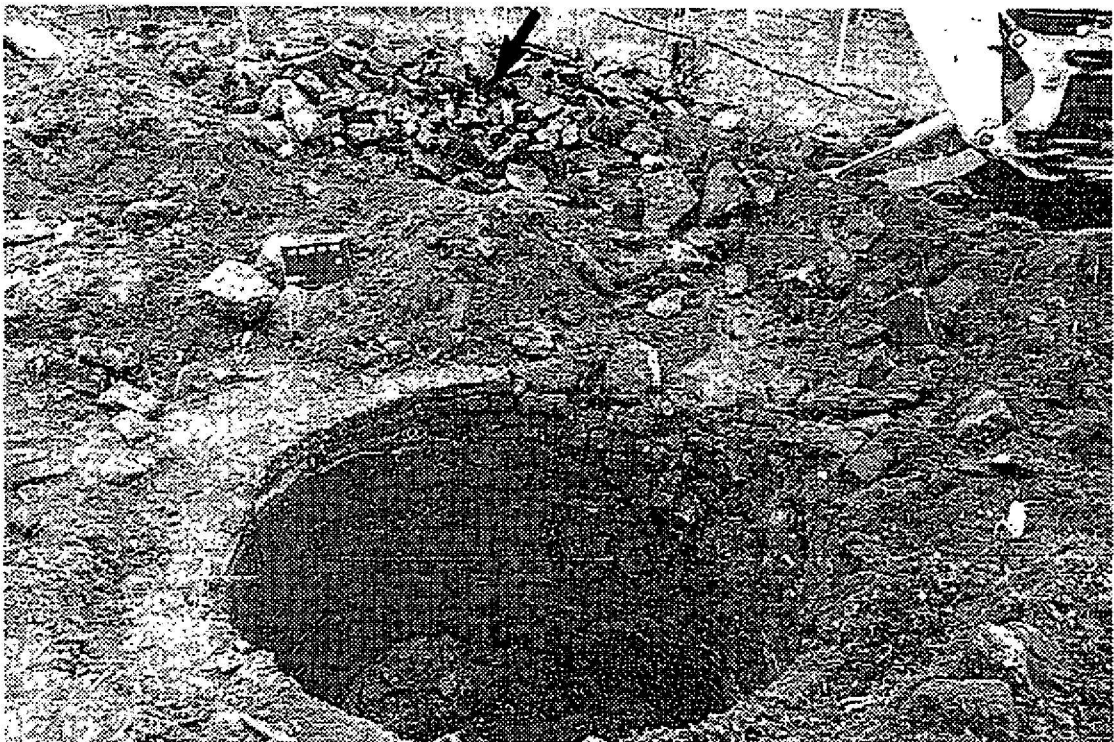
FINDINGS (see Figure 3 for locations of trenches, pits, and features)

Foundation Trenches (FT1 - FT4)

Of the four foundation walls exposed in FT1-FT4, those on the west and south were most intact, although backhoe exploration disturbed part of the western wall as it was uncovered in FT1. The south wall, exposed in FT2, was by far the



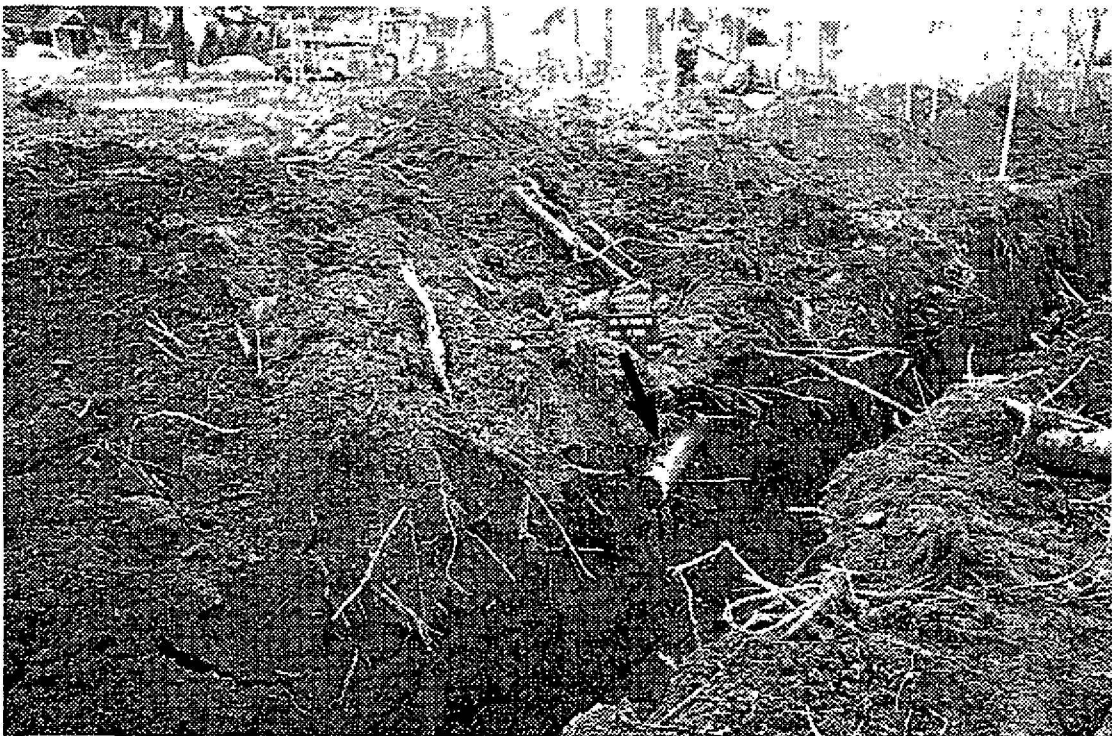
9 Top of a mortared brick feature (F1) filled with stones and cinder block. Thought to be a dry-well, the mortar sealing the interior and its location next to the house indicates it was probably a water cistern. (3/18/97)



10 The cistern (F1) almost completely emptied by the backhoe. Note stone, brick, and cinder block debris in background (arrow) that filled the feature which still held water. (3/18/97)



11 Beehive-domed, mortared brick cesspool with a terra-cotta-pipe (arrow), broken by the backhoe but in place, discovered in TT1. Although the brick dome was broken, the open-bottomed feature was well made. The backhoe broke away the western brick wall to test the deposit inside which was virtually sterile fill. (3/18/97)



12 Northern part of test trench 1 (TT1). Note the terra-cotta sewer pipe (arrow) *in situ*. This apparently carried sewage from the Poillon-Seguine-Britton house to the cesspool (F2) and was probably a late 19th-century construction. (3/19/97)

most complete and in the best condition (see Figure 7), but it lost much of its definition as it extended east toward what was known as the "kitchen wing." This was the frame structure moved into place and altered when the Poillon house was enlarged by John G. Seguire, Jr., in 1845 (Johnson 1997:personal communication). It was also where the building was most severely damaged by the two fires that destroyed the house between 1989 and 1993. The most intact elements exposed in FT3 on the eastern side were cement structural supports that may have been related to a hearth located on this side of the building as mentioned by William McMillen, Chief of Restoration at Richmondtown, during a conversation about the house (McMillen 1997:personal communication; see Figure 5).

Tracing the building's southern wall in FT2 exposed where a boiler and furnace had been located (Thompson 1997:personal communication) and the concrete steps that led to this area from the far side of the trench. The steps provided access to the foundation under the veranda added in 1845. Excavation of the steps and the opening in the foundation marked by paving stones revealed a charred wooden sill at the base of the opening. Both the paving stones and the concrete steps were photographed (Figure 13; see also Figure 7). Further backhoe exploration and shovelling indicated that the foundation wall on this side, and therefore throughout, was about 2 ft. thick and extended about 3.25 ft. below the current ground surface where it was founded on a natural clay-like, reddish-brown soil. The unevenness of the foundation stones exposed in the backhoe trenches and the lack of a builder's trench suggested the foundation had been built from the inside out. This was confirmed when the backhoe exposed part of the interior side of the foundation wall and its concrete floor in BP1. Here, inside the foundation, the stones formed an even, neatly-laid wall (see Figure 8) as opposed to the rough texture of the outer surface exposed in the foundation trenches.

What was surprising was the almost total lack of household debris in association with the wall (isolated ceramic fragments were noted or collected as a grab sample and construction debris, which filled the foundation, covered a concrete floor). A deposit of clam and oyster shells was exposed in FT4 just below the surface in the northwest corner of the foundation, but this appeared to be a fill component devoid of artifacts.

Test Trenches (TT1 - TT7)

The seven backhoe test trenches, which, as noted earlier, ranged from 55 to



13 Detail of paving stones (arrow) and steps found during excavation of foundation trench 2 (FT2). The steps on the right allowed access under the veranda added to the house in the mid 19th century. The steps, which are concrete, were apparently added after the foundation was built. A badly charred wooden sill at the base of the foundation (not illustrated) abutted the paving stones. (3/17/97)

140 ft. long, were placed mainly to determine subsurface conditions. They were located throughout the site, albeit in a somewhat different configuration than proposed prior to field work (see Figure 2). Some changes were made to avoid trees while others were based on information from shovel pit tests or preceding trenches.

Conditions noted in the trenches confirmed that more than 2 ft. of fill had been placed around the original house, and that it became shallower toward the southern part of the site, virtually disappearing in the southeast portion. When this filling occurred remains unknown. As trenching in TT1, the longest trench (140 ft.), continued from south to north (Figure 14), the extensive deposit of large pieces of slag noted earlier was exposed (Figure 15) 77 ft. north of the southern property line. About 12 ft. beyond the northern end of the slag deposit (92 ft. north of the south property line), the backhoe encountered the brick cesspool (F2) on the east side of the trench (see Figure 11).

Excavation of test trench 2 (TT2; Figure 16) exposed footings for the garage once located in the northeast corner of the site. The most easterly footing--at the back of the garage--was concrete, the one at the front was dry-laid stone (see Figure 3 for locations). Under the concrete footing was a fill deposit that included a shell concentration. The shell density at first suggested a Native American shell heap, but a brick, or bricks, under the shells negated this interpretation (Figure 17), indicating it was fill associated with construction of the garage.

Undocumented stone footings or foundations were found in two trenches near the house. A small footing was exposed in TT5, a north-south trench that cut through the site of the former 19th-century kitchen wing (Figure 18), and part of a relatively substantial dry-laid stone foundation or footing was found in TT7, an east-west trench that ran south of the house foundation (Figure 19). Backhoe testing on either side of the construction in TT7 revealed it did not extend much beyond the trench and its function remains unknown. The stone footing in TT5 may have provided support for the kitchen wing that had no basement.

The test trenches confirmed the introduction of fill in the vicinity of the former house and determined there was little or no fill in the southern part of the site. They also revealed that much of the property had been worked over either before or when the fill was introduced. This was suggested by water pipes (also noted in TP5 about 1 ft. below the surface), terra-cotta drain pipes, and an electrical box from an outdoor lighting system as well as the lack of an "A" horizon--a former,



14 Test trench 1 (TT1), the longest of the test trenches, looking north. Sterile soil was encountered almost immediately below the surface in the southern part of the trench. (3/19/97)



15 A large slag deposit found about 77 ft. north of the southern property line. A segment of a terra-cotta sewer pipe (arrow) in the deposit may be trash or have been dislodged by the backhoe. An animal bone (a cow tibia) was found in the slag. This deposit possibly provided drainage and served as an overflow for a cesspool (F2) found about 8 feet further north, nearer the house. (3/18/97)



16 Test trench 2 (TT2) looking east. Fill was deepest near the eastern end. (3/19/97)



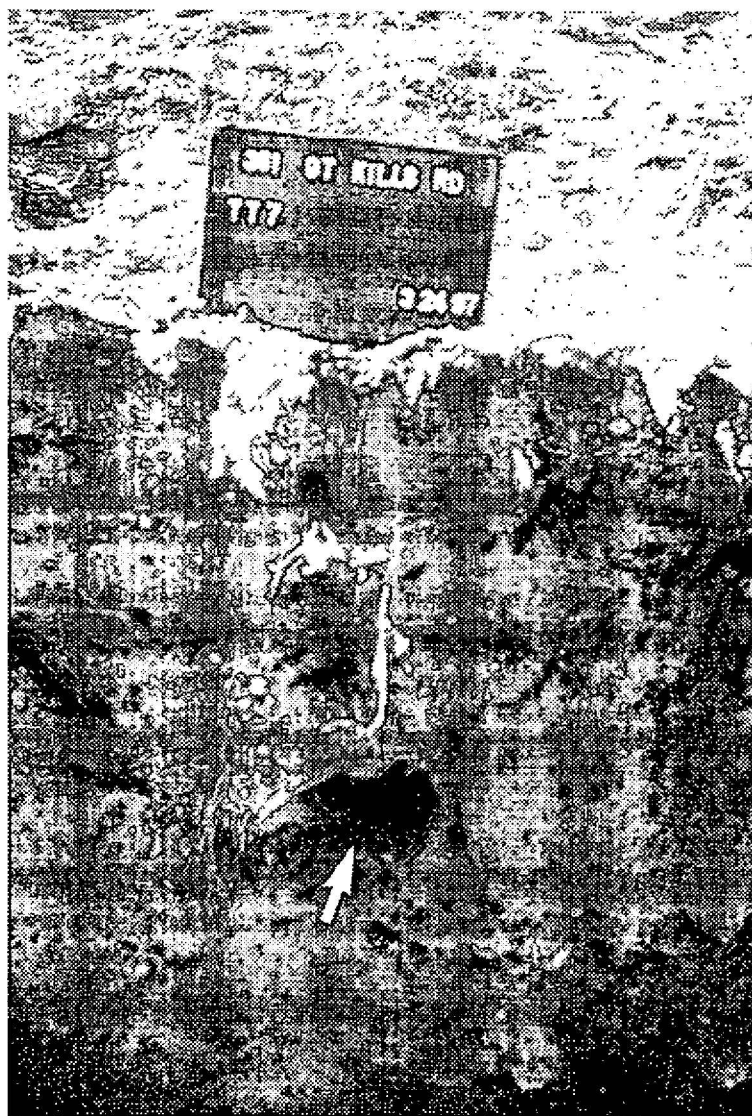
17 Eastern end of test trench 2 (TT2) in the vicinity of a concrete footing for the demolished garage. The fill on the south side of the trench included a shell deposit with a brick beneath it (arrow) indicating it is a relatively recent deposit. (3/19/97)



18 Test trench 5 (TT5), a wide trench through the former mid-19th century kitchen wing site on the east side of the house. A dry-laid stone footing (arrow) was located and a trench extension was run west (TT5 ext) to trace the footing that proved to be little more than a pile of rocks. (3/24/97)



19 Test trench 7 (TT7) looking east with a substantial dry-laid stone construction exposed (arrow). The trench was widened to the north and south to determine if this construction continued, but it was confined to what is shown here and remains unexplained. (3/24/97)



20 A broken terra-cotta drain pipe (arrow) *in situ* on north side of test trench 7 (TT7). The pipe, with fill above it, was broken by the backhoe and was also found on the south side of the trench. (3/24/97)

undisturbed ground surface buried under fill. (See Figure 20 for photos of a north-south running terra-cotta drain in TT7.) The absence of a buried surface under the fill also suggested that Native American deposits protected by fill were not likely to be an issue on the site, and, indeed, no evidence of Native American material was found in any of the trenches. Nor, as discussed below, was it found in any of the test pits where the excavated material was fully screened.

Test Pits (TP1 - TP2, TP 2A, TP3 - TP8)

Excavation of the three test pits located north of the foundation (TP1, TP2, and TP2A; Figure 21) revealed a dark brown or dark gray-brown² sandy soil with silt, some clay, and stones that was difficult to dig. As mentioned earlier, although sterile soil was reached north of the house site in TP2, dense rocks made it impossible to continue to excavate much beyond the interface with fill. Artifacts were notably sparse, and the fill extended 2.45 ft. below the surface (TP2). South of the house, some fill was noted in TP5, TP6, and TP7, but natural soil was reached between 1.2 and 1.6 ft. below the surface in these tests (the water pipe in TP5 was about 1 ft. below the surface; Figure 22).

In TP1, TP4, and TP8, sterile soil was reached between .8 and 1.0 ft. below the surface (see Table 1 and Figure 23). None of the tests revealed any evidence of Native American material, and historic-era artifacts collected as diagnostics included fragmentary household ceramics (such as a redware plate or pan fragments), a fragment of a kaolin smoking pipe, and a bottle fragment with a color-applied label that post-dates 1930 (Munsey 1970:52) and is probably of even more recent manufacture (see artifact catalogue in Appendix A and a brief discussion of the ceramics in footnote 4). A schematic soil profile of each test pit is presented in Figure 23.

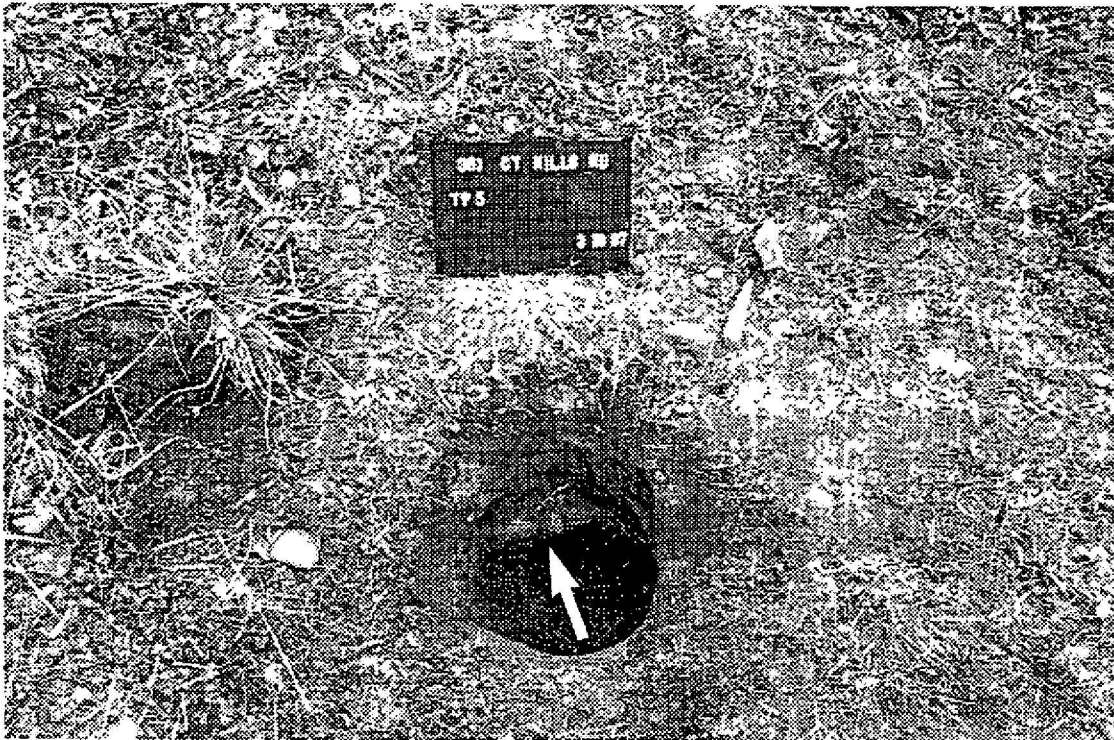
Backhoe Pit (BP1)

The backhoe pit (BP1) placed on the north side of the southern foundation wall exposed in FT2 was intended to allow examination of the inside of the wall to confirm the assessment that the foundation was built from the inside out. Based

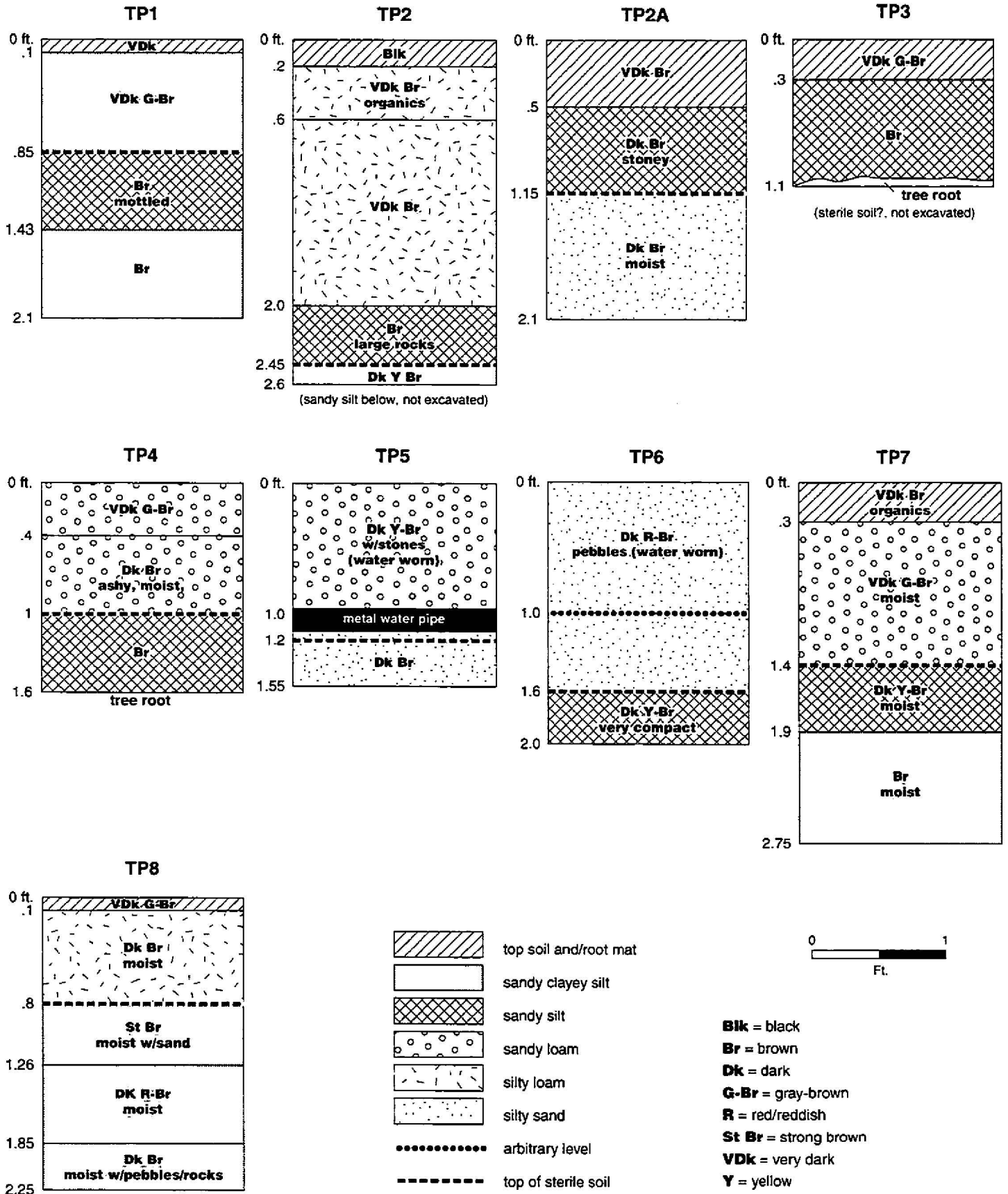
²Although the sterile soil throughout the test pits appeared to be reddish brown, the Munsell soil charts (1992), the standard for soil identification, suggested greater variety, classifying it as brown (7.5 YR 4/3 or 4/4), dark brown (10 yr 3/3, 3/4 or 7.5 YR 3/2, 3/3), dark yellowish brown (10 YR 4/6), or, only in one instance, dark reddish brown (5 YR 3/4).



21 Excavating test pit 2 (TP2) north of the former house. The test pits were shovelled and all material screened through 1/4-in. wire mesh. TP2 was terminated in sterile soil when dense rocks made it impossible to continue. TP2A was opened nearby. (3/18/97)



22 A metal water pipe encountered at .9 ft. BSG in test pit 5 (TP5) on the south side of the former house structure. The 10-in. trowel indicates north. TP5 was terminated at 1.55 ft. BGS at the top of sterile soil because the pipe (arrow) and stones made it impossible to continue. (3/18/97)



on the findings, it appears that a rectangular cellar hole was excavated and the dry-laid stone walls laid from the inside, thus eliminating the need for a builder's trench. The evenness of the inside of the wall exposed in the backhoe pit (BP1) confirmed this assessment (see Figure 8). In addition, as noted earlier, the excavation determined that a concrete floor had been poured or laid in this section of the cellar.

Brick Cistern (F1)

The mortared brick cistern (F1) was located just northeast of the corner formed by FT3 and FT4 (see Figure 3). When the Poillon-Seguine-Britton house was standing, this feature was located on the north side of the kitchen wing, between a kitchen entrance and the northeast corner of the old foundation (see Figure 3 for location in relation to the former structure). It is more than likely its construction dates to the mid-19th century occupation of Joseph G. Seguine, Jr. (see Dibble 1981 in Geismar 1996:33). The mortared brick walls, sealed with additional mortar, and probably a floor of similar construction although it was obscured by standing water, indicates it was intended to hold liquid. Its location suggests it was meant to collect and store rainwater from the roof of the building (if it were a dry-well, it would have had an open bottom so water could drain away). Backhoe excavation of the feature revealed that it was filled with cinder blocks, bricks, and foundation-type stones but was still holding water. No artifactual material of archaeological significance was noted during this excavation which was virtually complete (see Figures 9 and 10).

Slag Deposit and Brick Cesspool (F2)

Excavation of TT1, the 140-ft. long test trench that began at the southern property line and continued north into the area tested in 1985 (Kardas & Larabee 1985a, 1985b), indicated that the southeastern part of the property was not filled. As testing continued north and approached the plateau where the house once stood, not only was fill present, but the dense deposit of slag noted previously (see Figure 15) was encountered about 77 ft. north of the southern property line. Here large chunks of slag were mixed with some household trash (a cow tibia was identified in the field by Shelly Spritzer). This was apparently fill used to create a drainage area or perhaps an overflow for the cesspool (F2) found just to the north, although no pipe leading from the brick feature (F2) to the slag deposit was noted in the test trench. However, a section of unattached pipe was found in association with the slag deposit (see Figure 15).

The cesspool (F2), its mortar-sealed domed top partly destroyed (see Figure 11), was exposed about 1.2 ft. below the ground surface on the east side of the trench (if the dome were intact, it would have been located just under the surface). A stone and sand fill with ash was found inside. The cesspool feature (F2), like the cistern (F1), was intensively tested with the backhoe and proved devoid of significant artifactual material. While the fill contained some shell, only four distinctive artifacts were noted: a corroded shovel blade, two iron rods that may have been cast-off hinges,³ and an 1.5-ft. long corroded iron spike. All were found near the bottom of the feature which was open ended and founded on ash and sand.

The feature proved to be 7.6 ft. deep and about 6 ft. across; its interior diameter was about 5-ft. Although there is little doubt it was a cesspool, the bricks inside were clean, and since the brick was mortared, the surrounding soil was free of traces of organics from any human waste the feature may once have contained. It is more than likely that this open bottomed cesspool feature was constructed during the latter part of the 19th-century, although it could have been made earlier.

INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSIONS

The five research questions that guided this investigation (Geismar 1997) and the relevant findings are presented here.

1. **Question:** Was the site used by Native Americans prior to European settlement? A corollary is, are there original ground surfaces, some perhaps protected by fill, that contain Native American deposits?

Finding: No evidence of Native American use or occupation was found during testing and no original ground surfaces buried by fill were identified. However, this lack of evidence may have little to do with the site's archaeological potential in a natural state and everything to do with its development history which includes intensive ground disturbance.

2. **Question:** What is the composition of fill used after 1912 to extend the natural plateau where the house was situated? This was addressed in the limited testing undertaken in 1985, but do the findings of a mixed 18th and 19th century fill east of the house site hold true throughout the altered area?

³The "rods," set aside for photographs, were inadvertently reburied during backfilling of the trenches dug around the old house foundation.

Finding: Although little artifactual material was collected, it appears from the diagnostic fragments noted in and recovered from the test pits and trenches that a mixed 18th, 19th, and 20th century fill was introduced.⁴ While this fill may have been deposited in more than one episode, just when this occurred remains a question.

3. Question: There is a question about the age of the structure. This may be answered by determining when the foundation of the central, or earliest, portion was built. Should undisturbed buried remnants of this part of the demolished foundation or an associated builder's trench still exist, the question of age could be addressed. It may also be addressed through discarded primary household trash.

Finding: Testing around the foundation determined there was neither a builder's trench nor any concentrated deposit of household trash or features containing significant archaeological material to address this question.

4. Question: Based on household debris found in trash deposits or filled features, what goods were available to an early-18th century Staten Island family and how did they compare with those found on Manhattan Island, the center of trade and commerce in the colonial and early years of the Republic? Taking this further, what lifestyle was adopted by a second-generation Staten Island family of means (the John Poillons) and their successors, the Joseph G. Seguines?

Finding: The disturbed nature of the property and the lack of archaeologically significant deposits made it impossible to address this question through archaeological investigation.

5. Question: Is there any evidence of outdoor amenities--a water well or cistern? Did they include the classic privy pit, or was some other toilet facility used by the early residents of the house?

Finding: No features were found to address these questions, however a water cistern and a brick beehive-domed cesspool, both of them apparently constructed in the 19th century, indicate that water was collected from the roof and

⁴The twenty-five diagnostic fragments collected from the trenches and test pits were processed (washed and given an identification number [361GK97 plus the unit, level if applicable, and artifact number]) and preliminary identifications were made by the writer. The ceramic identifications were confirmed and expanded by Nancy A. Stehling, a ceramics analyst, who found that they represented mixed ware types from the late 18th century through the very late 19th century and perhaps into the 20th century (the latest date came from a large fragment of a small plate collected from TT 6 [361GK97-TT6-1]). Late-18th century fragments include pearlwares, tin enameled (possibly Debased Rouen Faience [361GK97-Tp5-2-3]), and red-bodied slipwares (see Artifact Catalogue in Appendix A).

indoor toilets were in use some time before municipal water and sewers were available. It is possible that earlier toilet facilities and perhaps a well were located on portions of the property that are no longer part of the site, or they may have been eliminated during the several intensive alterations made to the house and property over the years, although this seems the less likely of the two explanations.

While it is surprising that outdoor toilet facilities used by the site's earliest residents, the Poillons in the 18th century and early 19th century, and even more surprising that those used by the Seguines beginning in 1828, were not found, there are several possible explanations. For example, a privy feature--or perhaps more ephemeral latrine pits--associated with the Poillon ownership and occupation of the property may have been located beyond the modern northern property line where homes were built in the 1980s. It is also possible that any early privy pit, or pits, were shallow and were destroyed during the alterations that expanded the original Poillon house east and west, and then, in the 20th century, to the southeast.

Another possibility is that the Seguines in particular may have used a variation on the privy pit. Human waste may have been collected in a tray or trough rather than a pit and used as fertilizer, a common mid-19th century farm practice (Ackerly 1843). An indoor feature of this sort, part of a carriage house, is preserved on the Gericke (Winant) farm on Fresh Kills Road in Staten Island (Geismar 1989:37-42; Figure 24 this report). This would be in keeping with mid-19th-century practices, but would not explain the absence of an earlier outdoor toilet facility. A simple bucket or barrel privy may have served the earlier residents, features that would leave little evidence, particularly where there has been extensive building and ground disturbance.

It is also possible that the brick cesspool (F2) found in TT1 was built in the mid rather than the late 19th century to service an indoor water closet, although the terra-cotta sewer pipe leading to it appears to be of later manufacture and may have been a replacement. If this cesspool dates to the mid-19th century, it could have served as a receptacle for the waste from an indoor or attached water closet as advocated by such fashionable mid-19th century architects of country "cottages" as A. J. Davis, A. J. Downing (1842, 1850, 1873),⁵ and Calvert Vaux (e.g., Vaux

⁵Downing died in a steamer mishap on the Hudson River in 1852. The 1873 Dover edition of his *Victorian Cottage Residences* contains original text and updated sections by others. The 1842 edition was checked to confirm that the information regarding water closets dated from the earliest edition. Also see discussion in Geismar 1989: 38-53 regarding an A. J. Davis "gardener's cottage" in New Brighton, Staten Island, that was a wealthy man's home.



24 Indoor privy in the Gericke (Winant) farm carriage house. The "three seater" appears to accommodate adults and children (the seat on the left is noticeably smaller than the other two). The light comes through an above-ground access hole (arrow) on the side of the building. This was undoubtedly a means of cleaning what appears to be a very shallow privy that may have accommodated a trough or tray that collected human waste for fertilizer. (Geismar 5/88)

1857:46-46-48).

In 1842, Downing remarked that many country residences were being provided with indoor plumbing, what he considered "a great desideratum" (Downing 1873:96). In the 1840s, Joseph G. Seguire, Jr., acquired the former Poillon property originally purchased by his father in 1828 (Dibble 1981 in Geismar 1996: 33). At that time, the younger Seguire expanded the house and it is said he took great pride in his property, making a number of improvements that included landscaping the grounds with specimen trees and shrubs (Dibble 1981 in Geismar 1996: 33). This interest in landscaping suggests he was aware of the trends of the time and was perhaps also interested in the sanitary amenities then becoming popular. The technology for indoor and outdoor water closets was available and attic cisterns offered a water source, albeit one with drawbacks, if there was no nearby stream or spring to tap (e.g., Downing 1850:275fn; Ogle 1996:44-46). It is therefore possible that the younger Seguire may have incorporated indoor plumbing into his altered and expanded home, but this is purely speculation and does not explain the absence of earlier outdoor toilet facilities.

In summary, as stated in the introduction, seven test trenches, four foundation trenches, nine shovel tests, and one backhoe pit were excavated to assess the archaeological potential of 361 Great Kills Road. While two 19th century brick features--a cistern and a cesspool--and the early 18th century house foundation were located, no artifactual material of either prehistoric or historic-era archaeological significance was identified. Indeed, with few exceptions, the most noteworthy artifact was the modern wall tiles from the house converted into a spa, and excavation of the test trenches and pits documented extensive site disturbance. Consequently, no further archaeological investigation is called for.

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361 GREAT KILLS ROAD ARTIFACT CATALOGUE (Artifact ID: 361GK97)

Unit/ Fea.	Level	Loca- tion*	Art. No.	No. of Pieces	Material	Ware/ Color	Description	Remarks	Dates
TT2	--	--	1	1	Ceramic	W	Plate/soup bowl, rim frag; lt blue tp, floral design; faded; thick bodied	Grab sample; small frag; spalled	1850+
	--	--	2	1		Pe	Unid, frag; underglaze blue painted	Grab sample; spalled frag	1795+
TT5	--	S end	1	1		W	Cup?; rim frag; undec	Grab sample; tr blue, poss indicates decoration, but not evident	Mid- 19th C
	--	N end	1	1		Pe	Plate? (tableware), base frag; blue Willowware tp	Grab sample; dec fine quality	c. 1800 to 1830
	--	N end	2	1		S	Bottle/jug, body frag; salt glaze ext; brown slip int; gray bodied; tr cobalt dec	Grab sample; ext grey with tr brown incised lines	nd
		nr footing	1	1		W	Bowl?, rim frag, undec	Grab sample	Mid- 19th C
		nr footing	2	1		Pe	Unid, body frag; annular ware?; mocha dec ext	Grab sample; fine porous body; undec int	Late 18th/ Early 19th C
			3	1		R	Jug/pitcher, base frag; black lustrous glaze int/ext brick red body	Grab sample; thick body; poss evidence of wear or kiln damage	nd
TT6		E end, nr surface	1	1		W	Plate (c.1/4) rim/body frag; 7 in diam; underglaze polychrome painted rim; floral design; stamped and printed mark (p/o) on base	Grab sample; "...ENGLAND"; tr of black printed mark or writing above	1891+ ?
FT3		Center of FT	1	1		I	Saucer, base frag w/foot ring and well; faded blue tp; sloppily applied	Grab sample; some wear; prob mid-19th C landscape pattern, English manu	Post 1850
TP2	3	.6-2.0 ft BGS	1	2		R	Plate/pan rim frags; trailed white slip band at rim; plain edge	Tr slip on both int and ext; frags mend; large diam vessel	Late 18/19th C?
TP2A	2	0-1.15 ft BGS	1	1		Pe/W?	Unid, body frag; tiny; underglaze blue int; spalled ext, painted	Fine porous body	Late 18th/ Early 20th C

361 GREAT KILLS ROAD ARTIFACT CATALOGUE (Artifact ID: 361GK97)

Unit/ Fea.	Level	Loca- tion	Art. No.	No. Pieces	Material	Ware/ Color	Description	Remarks	Dates
TP4	1	0-4 ft BGS	1	1		K	Pipe, bowl frag, nr stem	No evidence of use	nd
TP5	1	0-1 ft BGS	1	1	Faunal	Shell	Barnacle, hinged portion	Identified by T. Amorosi(1997 personal communication)	--
	2	1-1.2 ft BGS	1	1	Ceramic	S	Unid, body frag; clear salt glaze ext; unglazed int	Buff body	nd
TP5 cont'd	2 cont'd	1-1.2 ft BGS	2	1		S	Unid, body frag; clear salt glaze ext	Buff body; poss same object as TP5-2-1	nd
			3	1		D?	Unid, spall; tin glazed earthenware; glaze on one side only; poss Delft	Red-orange body; (Debased Rouen Faience?)	Late 18th/ Early 19th C
TP6	1	0-1.0 ft BGS	1	1	Glass	C	Bottle, beverage, body frag; color applied label	"...ORCHARD PEACH/...EAR..." (date from Munsey 1970:52)	Post 1930
TP8	2	.1-.8 ft BGS	1	1	Ceramic	W	Unid, tableware, base frag w/foot ring; undec, thick bodied	Very little wear on foot ring	1850+
			2	1		W?	Unid, rim frag; small, spalled; undec		Mid 19th C
			3	1		W?	Unid, spall, thin, small, undec		Mid 19th C
			4	1		W?	Unid, spall; tiny		Mid 19th C
			5	1		Pe/W?	Unid, spall; tiny		Late 18/19th C
			6	1		W	Unid, base frag, w/foot ring; tiny, undec		Mid 19th C

Total Artifacts 25

Art=artifact; BGS=depth below ground surface; C=clear; CC=Creamware; D=Delft; dec=decorated; ext=exterior; frag=fragment; Fea=feature; FT=foundation trench; I=Ironstone; int=interior; K=kaolin; Location=location in TT and FT, depth in TP; lt=light; manu=manufacture; nr=near; Pe=Pearlware; p/o=part of; poss=possible; prob=probable; R=Redware; S=Stoneware; TP=test pit; Note: Nancy A. Stehling provided ceramic analyses; other sources noted in "Remarks"