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STAGE 1A ARCHAEOLOGICAL/HISTORICAL SENSITIVITY
EVALUATION OF THE EGER HARBOR HOUSE PROJECT
BOROUGH OF RICHMOND, NEW YORK

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ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

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v



INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this archaeological and historical sensitivity study is to document the potential prehistoric and historic sensitivity of the proposed Eger Harbor House project through the review of existing archival, cartographic and published references and then to make recommendations regarding possible further testing. In order to provide a context for evaluating any identified resources within the parcel itself, this survey will provide a synthesis of published and unpublished prehistoric and historic sources in the immediate vicinity surrounding the project area. Materials on file at Greenhouse Consultants, compiled for other projects conducted in the Borough of Richmond were used in preparing this report. Acknowledgments are extended to the documentary research completed by Anna V. Farkas for previous projects.

The project area is located in south-central Staten Island, New York, in the vicinity of the village of Richmond. The property consists of a irregularly shaped parcel located along the east side of Meisner Avenue. It is within Tax Block 2250 and consists of Lot 3. See Figure 1 for a map illustrating the location of the project area.

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

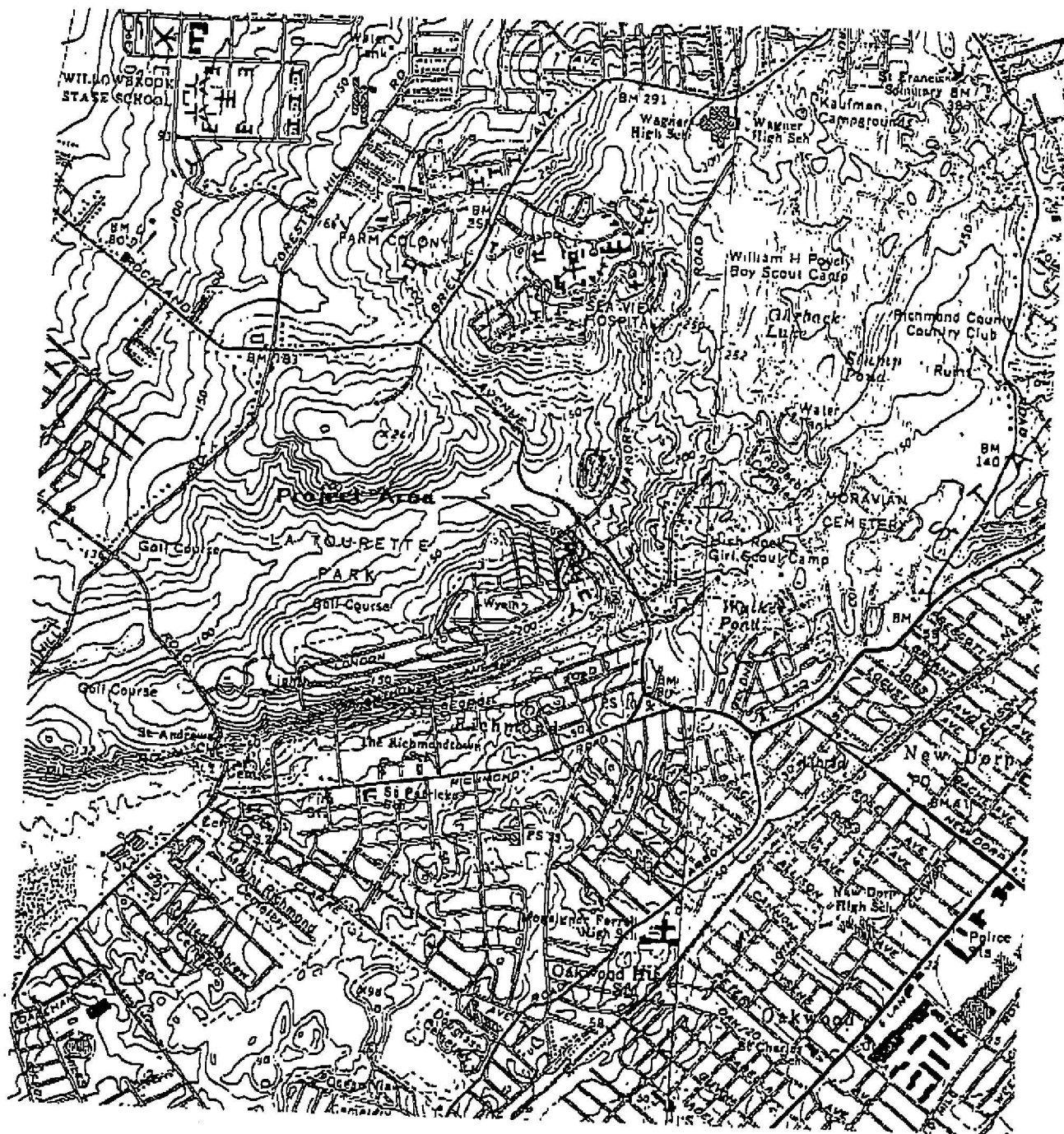


Figure 1 Location of the Eger Harbor House project area shown on portions of the U.S.G.S. 7.5 minute series Arthur Kill and The Narrows, New York Quadrangle, 1967, photorevised 1981.



GEOGRAPHY AND PHYSICAL SETTING

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

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

During May 1998 the Principal Investigator visited the Eger Harbor House project area. During this visit, a pedestrian survey was used to inspect the project area. Plates 1 and 2 illustrate the project area. There is evidence of grading in the southwestern part of the property. See Plate 1. To the north the terrain is sloping and the vegetation is trees and brush. See Plate 2. Much of the east side of the property consists of a paved driveway and parking lot. The property contains no structures.



PREHISTORIC SENSITIVITY

As part of the project evaluation process, the sensitivity study has surveyed published and unpublished sources in the Archives and Library of the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences (hereafter SIAS), the library of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, the files of the New York State Museum Division of Historical and Anthropological Services, and the New York State Historic Preservation Office (NYSHPO). Most documented prehistoric archaeological work undertaken by both professional and avocational archaeologists has historically concentrated on the southwestern portion of Staten Island (Baugher 1985, personal communication).

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

Of the nine known occurrences of prehistoric occupation within two miles of the project area, only one was excavated recently under controlled conditions. These other data represent the work of professional archaeologists early in this century. Two professional archaeologists are included: Alanson Skinner and Arthur C. Parker. Skinner characterized the locations chosen by prehistoric populations as follows:

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

The nearest site to the Eger Harbor House project area is the Vanderbilt Mausoleum. This site is recorded by Boesch as NA 98 in his recent survey of prehistoric sites on Staten Island. Files at the S.I.I.A.S. indicate that prehistoric artifacts were recovered during construction of the Mausoleum. See **A** in Table 1 and Figure 2. The Mausoleum site is located approximately 0.7 miles northeast of the project area.

The next nearest site is the Richmond Hill site numbered N.A.22 by Boesch and 30-RIC-5-AJA by avocational archaeologist Albert J. Anderson. This site is assigned to the Early Archaic period. It is located approximately 0.8 miles southwest of the project area. See **B** in Table 1 and Figure 2.

The third nearest site to the project area is N.Y.S.M. site 8499. It is described only as a camp so no estimates of date range or cultural affiliation can be made. It is



located approximately 0.9 miles west of the project area. See **C** in Table 1 and Figure 2.

The fourth nearest prehistoric site to the project area, designated **D** in Table 1 and Figure 2 is the Richmond site reported by former New York State Archaeologist Arthur C. Parker. This site, which appears on Parker's map of Richmond County and in his text, is described as Site Number 26. The site was previously reported by Skinner as site #22. It is located approximately 1.6 miles west of the project area.

The fifth nearest site to the project area, designated **E** in Table 1 and Figure 2, is an unnamed site reported by Parker. This site, which appears on Parker's map of Richmond County but not in his text, is described only as a campsite with traces of occupation. It is located approximately 1.7 miles southeast of the project area. Since Parker provides no description of the artifacts recovered, no estimate of date range can be offered (Parker 1922:Plate 211).

F in Table 1 and Figure 2 represent the Todt Hill site. This site consists of a camp and lithic scatter. It is located approximately 1.8 miles northeast of the project area. Boesch assigns it as number NA 30.

The seventh nearest site to the project area, designated **G** in Table 1 and Figure 2, is the New Springville site. This camp with burials and a shell heap is located approximately 1.9 miles northwest of the project area. This site was initially reported by Skinner as Site 10. Parker repeats Skinner's description. The cultural range includes and Woodland and Contact periods.

Boesch's Site N.A. 89 is represented by **H** in Table 1 and Figure 2. This site is a Woodland period shell midden now within the Oakwood Beach Water Pollution Control Plant. It is located approximately 1.9 miles south of the project area.

I in Table 1 and Figure 2 represents two small sites listed in the files of the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences as STD-GK and STD-GF, representing Great Kills and Giffords. Lithics were found in these two locations which lie approximately 2.0 miles southeast of the project area.

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

1. the proximity of known prehistoric sites in or near the project area; and
2. the presence of fresh water drainage courses in general, and particularly the identification of river or stream confluence



situations where two or more drainages come together, providing access to both the water and food supplies of both systems.

This survey has documented the recorded or published locations of nine sites within a two mile radius of the Eger Harbor House Center project area. Although sites have been identified in the general region of the proposed project impact area, none are known to exist within the project area itself. No evidence, positive or negative, based on previous survey work is available. It would be inappropriate, however, to characterize this region as without prehistoric sensitivity.

The 1910 topographic map shows an unnamed brook just east of the project area. Game would have been attracted to the brook. The project area included some relatively elevated land overlooking the brook and therefore has the potential to hold the remains of a hunting camp.



Figure 2 Prehistoric sites within two miles of the project area.

TABLE 1
Prehistoric Sites within Two Miles of the Project Area

Name	NYSM#	Parker#	NYSOPRHP#	Other#	NYCLPL#	References	Period(s)	Description
A. Vanderbilt Mausoleum Moravian Cemetery					NA98	Boesch 1994:119		Prehistoric artifacts found during construction
B. Richmond Hill				30-RIC-5-AJA	NA22	Boesch 1994:105	Early Archaic	
C.	8499							Camp
D. Richmond	4616	ACP-RICH-26	A-085-01-0109	Skinner #22		Skinner 1909:16-17 Parker 1922:685		Camp
E.	4628	ACP-RICH	A-085-01-0169		NA60	Parker 1922:P1,211 Boesch 1994:113		Camp Traces of occupation
F. Todt Hill				STD-TODI	NA30	Boesch 1994:107		Camp and lithic scatter
G. New Springfield	4600	ACP-RICH-10		Skinner #10	NA74	Skinner 1909:10 Parker 1922:682 Boesch 1994:115	Woodland Contact	Camp, Burials, Shell heap
H.					NA89	Boesch 1994:118	Woodland	Shell midden
D. Great Kills				STD-GK STD-GF	NA88	Bolton 1934:152, 156 Boesch 1994:118		Three lithics One lithic





HISTORIC SENSITIVITY

Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

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

In 1626 the island was bought from the natives by the director of the Dutch West India Company. Michael Pauw was given a patent of patroonship by the Director and Council of New Netherlands in 1630, but he relinquished it to the Dutch West India Company. The Dutch West India Company granted Cornelius Melyn all of Staten Island in 1641 (Historical Records Survey 1942:xiv). Ten years later, Melyn granted Hendrick van der Capellan a deed for one-third of the island (ibid.: xv). Upon the death of Capellan in 1656, Melyn sold his interest to the company thus ending the patroon system on Staten Island (ibid.: xvi).

The British assumed control of the colony of Nieuw Amsterdam from the Dutch West India Company in 1664. Governor Francis Lovelace made the final purchase of Staten Island from the Indians in 1670. Land surveys were initiated under Lovelace and completed under the governorship of Edmund Andros in 1677 (Historical Records Survey 1942:xviii).

Governor Dongan designated Staten Island as Richmond County. In March 1688 Richmond County was partitioned into four towns: Castletown, Northfield, Southfield and Westfield (Bayles 1887:95). The project area lies within the old town of Northfield (ibid.:map facing page 1).

Staten Island remained under British control throughout the eighteenth century until the end of the Revolutionary War. Approximately 29,000 troops under British command landed on the island during July 1776. Despite this large number of men, there is no evidence that any were stationed within or adjacent to the project area.

Late eighteenth century cartographic sources show that a few farmsteads lined both sides of the present Rockland Avenue by the onset of the Revolutionary War (Plan No. 31 du Anglo-Hessois sans Staten Island). Unfortunately, due to a certain degree of inaccuracy inherent in these early maps, it is not possible to ascertain the project area's exact location on them. The Eger Harbor House project area appears to be located north of one structure shown on Plan No. 31. Part of Plan No. 31 du Anglo-Hessois is provided here as Figure 3. The New and Correct Map of the County

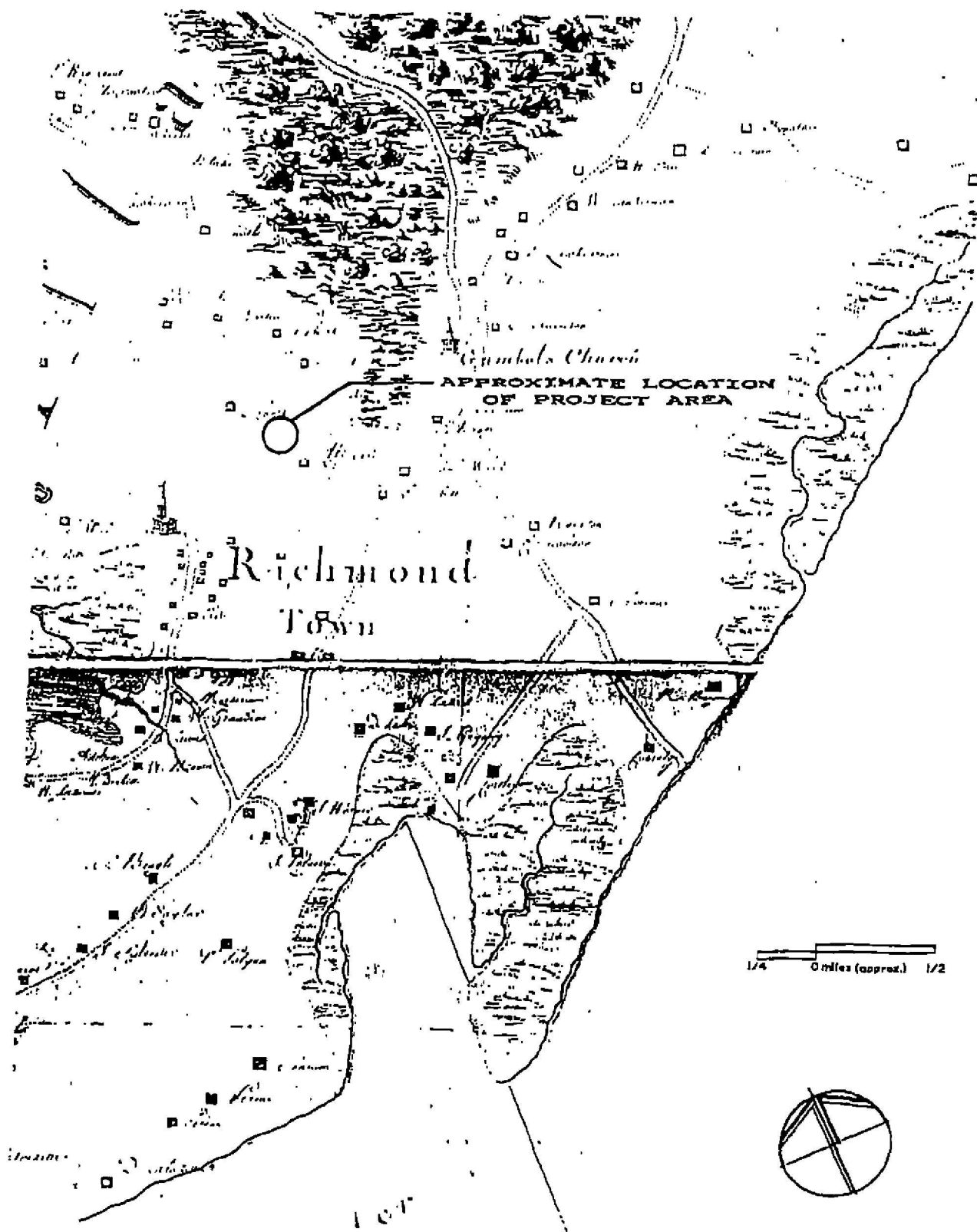


Figure 3 From Plan No. 31 du Camp Anglo-Hessois dans Staten Island, 1780-1783.



of Richmond completed during 1797 shows the project area as vacant. It is the earliest map to show the name Northfield for the town, including the project area. This map was not reproduced for this report.

Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

The United States Coast Survey Charter of New York Harbor, surveyed from 1836-1839 and published in 1845, is the earliest available nineteenth century cartographic source. This map shows no structures in the vicinity of the project area. The Eger Harbor House project area appears to lie within a forest. The present Rockland Avenue is shown but Meisner Avenue is not. See Figure 4.

The next cartographic source presented here is the Butler map of 1853. This map shows that the project area is labeled J.P. Kellet, Richmond Seminary. Meisner Avenue does not exist yet. See Figure 5. The Butler map shows the proposed line of the railroad, that is not its present location.

The 1852 Bacon and Barnes map was also consulted, but is not included as a figure in the report since it shows the same situation as Butler.

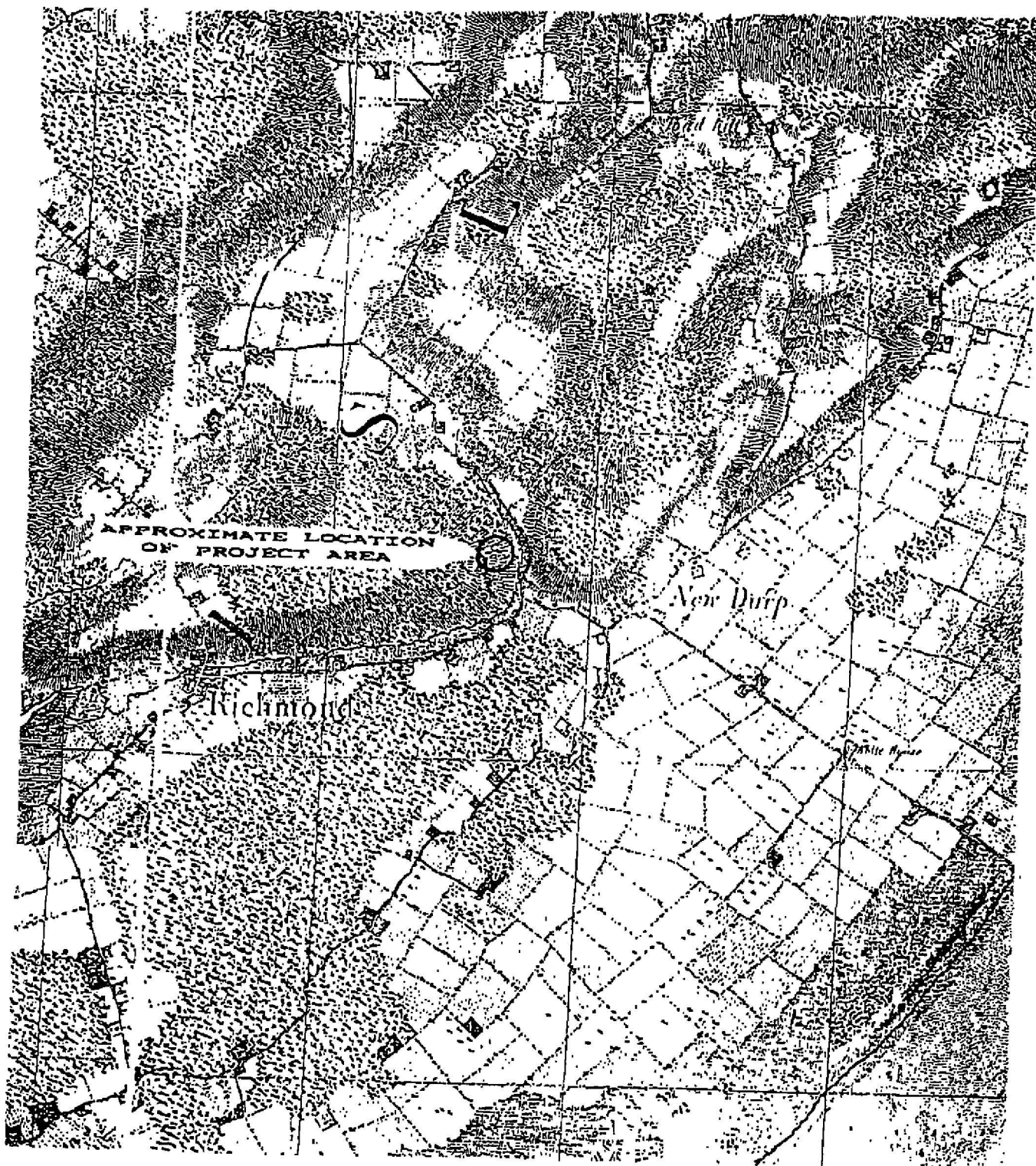
The 1859 Walling map was consulted but could not be copied due to its large size. It shows the project area as part of a parcel labeled *Richmond Hill Hotel, J.P. Kellett, Prop.* One structure is shown to the east of the project area.

The 1874 Beers Atlas, presented here as Figure 6, is the earliest cartographic source to show property lines and structure locations with a fair degree of reliability. The Eger Harbor House project area consists of part of a 20 acre property labeled *Est. of J.P. Kellett*. No structures are shown within the project area, but Kellett's house lies just to the east, as do a pond and a stream. Meisner Avenue is shown.

Figure 7, taken from the 1887 Beers Atlas, continues to show the same situation. The project area is vacant. The property is part of a larger parcel labeled *J.P. Keteltas*.

The last nineteenth century cartographic source, presented here as Figure 8, is taken from the 1898 Robinson atlas. No structures are shown within the project area. The stream is shown. The project area is part of a 20 acre parcel owned by Martin Keppler. It is labeled *Aquahonga*. A house, barn and windmill are shown to the south and east.

The 1907 Robinson Atlas shows a change in ownership. The project area is now owned by Carl F. Grieshaber. The project area remains vacant. The house, barn



1/4 0 miles (approx.) 1/2

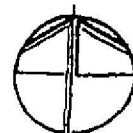


Figure 4 From the U.S. Coast Survey Charter of New York Harbor 1836-1839, published 1845.

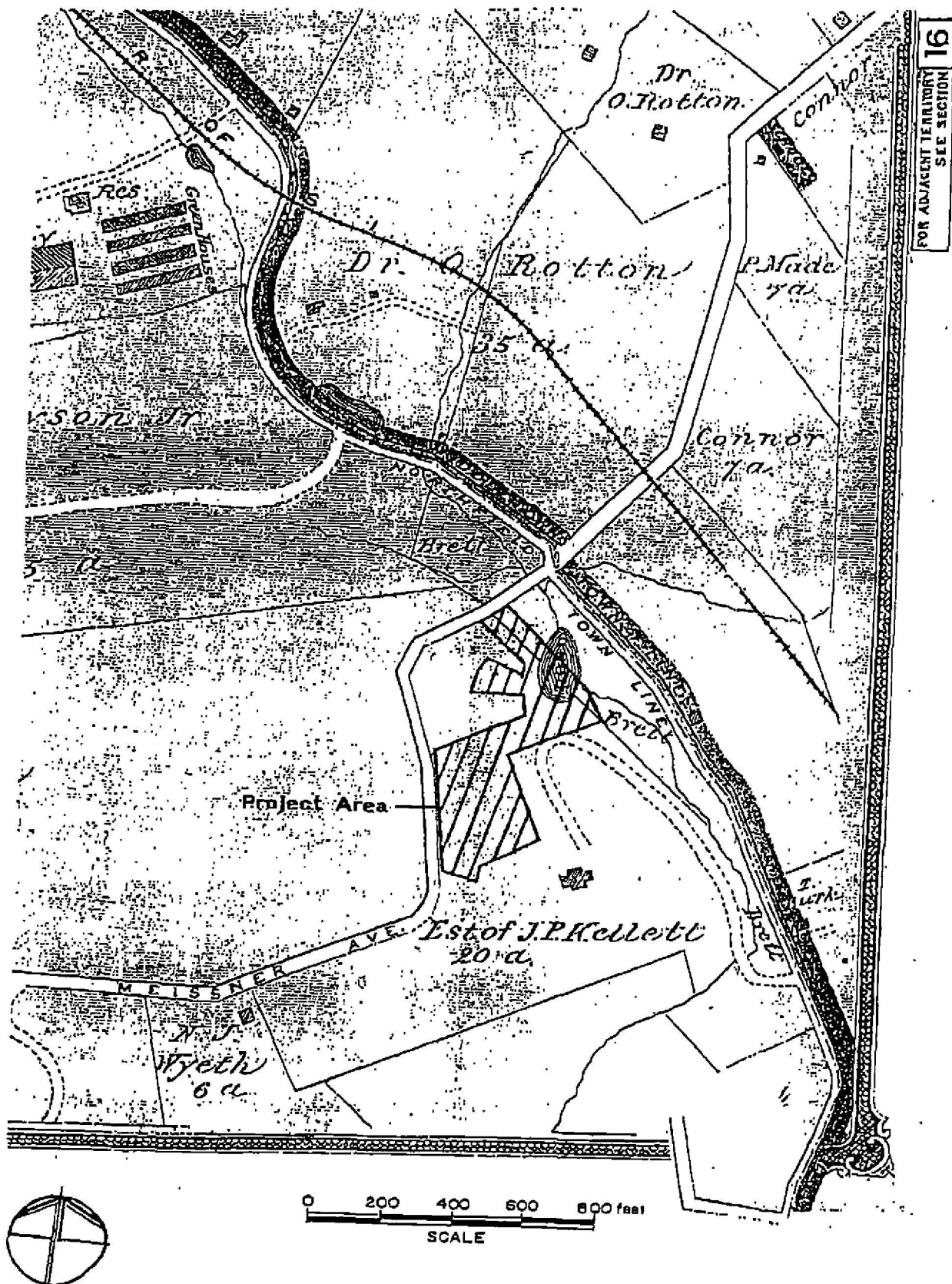


Figure 6 From the 1874 Beers' Atlas of Staten Island, Richmond County, New York.

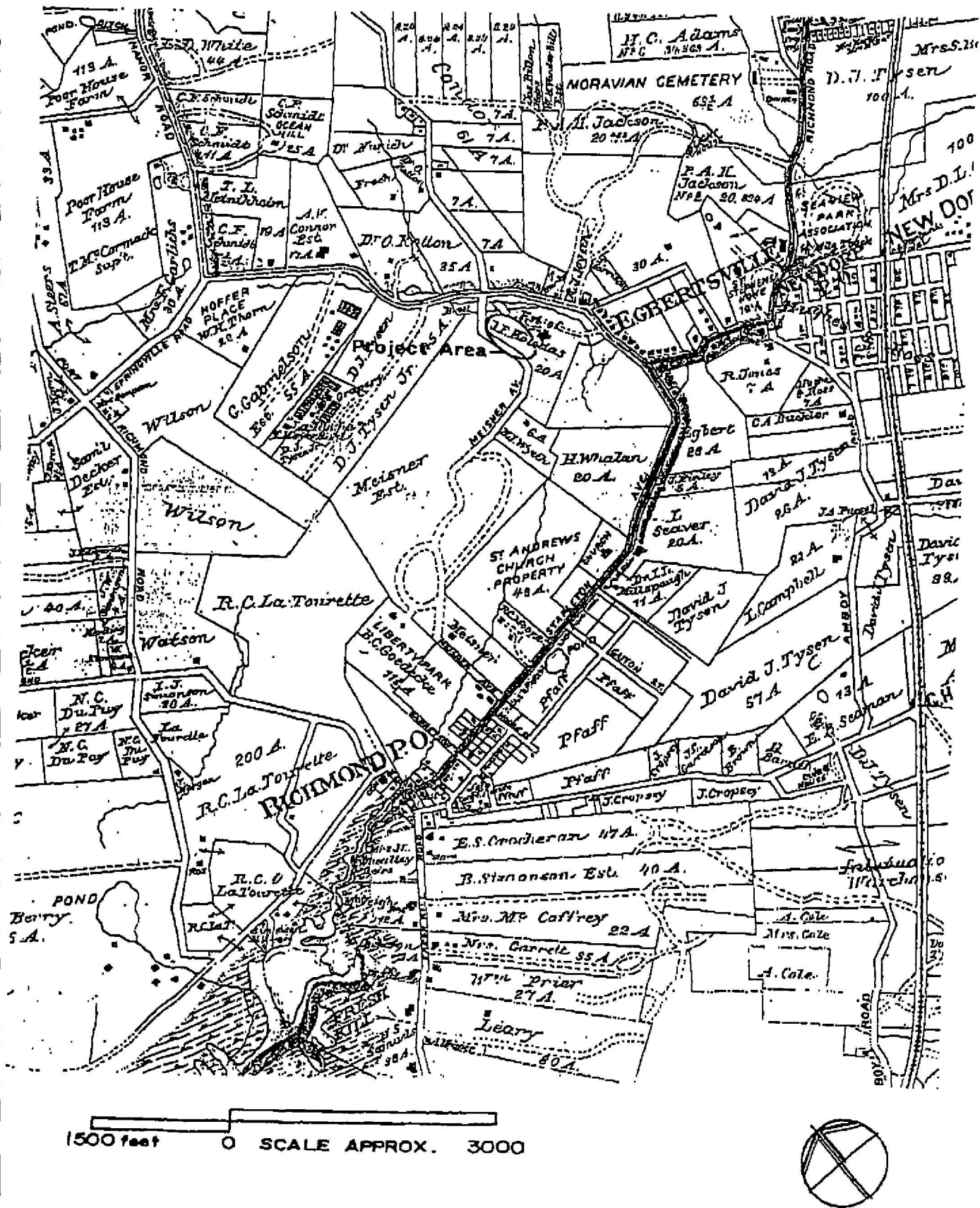


Figure 7 From the 1887 Beers' Atlas of Staten Island, Richmond County, New York.

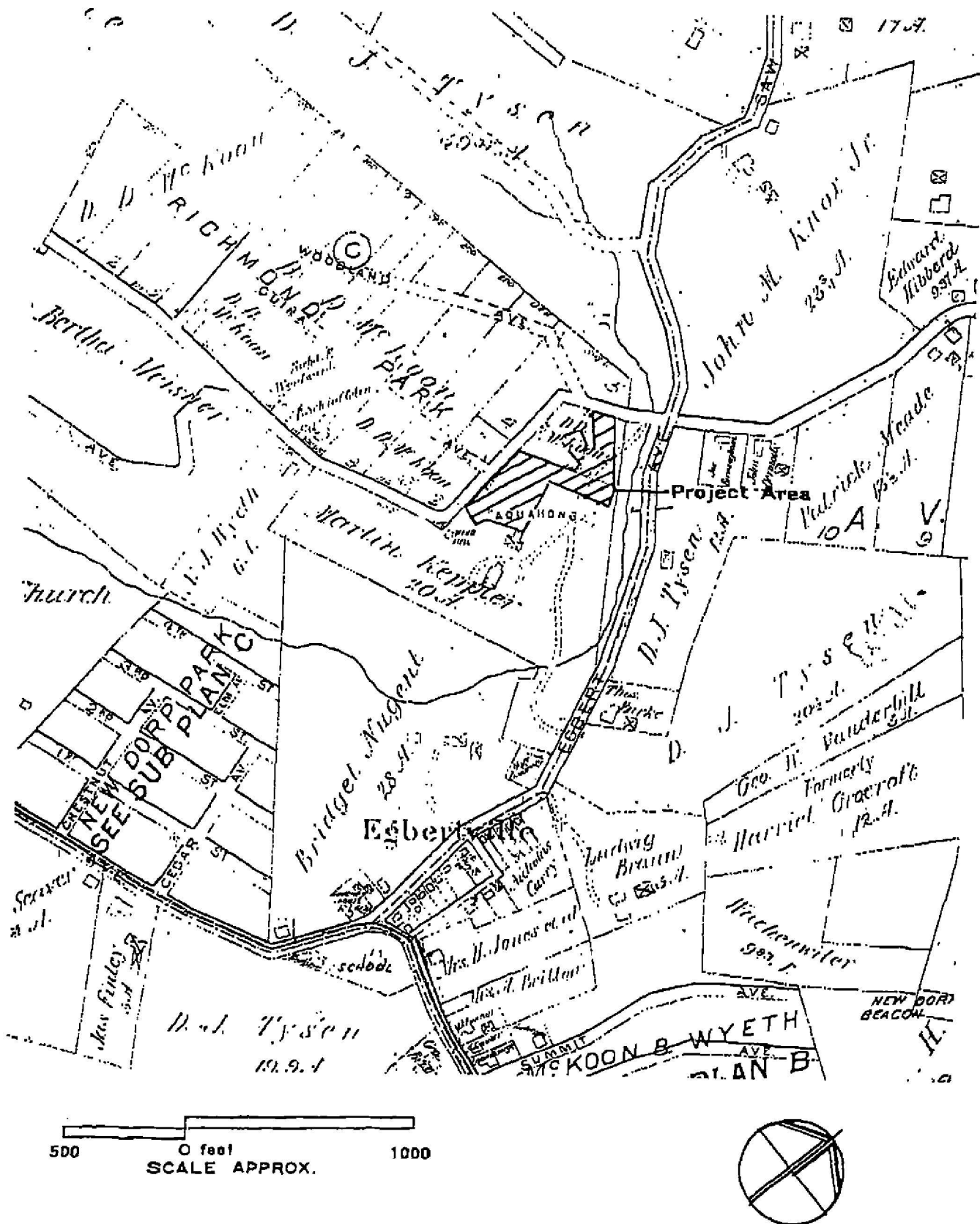


Figure 8 From the 1898 Robinson Atlas of the Borough of Richmond.



and stream are still shown to the east. The property is still called *Aquehonga*. See Figure 9.

Figure 10 is taken from the 1910 Borough of Richmond Topographical Survey. This map shows the southwestern part of the project area as a farm field. The house and barn are to the east, the stream is shown along the eastern boundary. No structures are shown. Elevations range from 195 feet in the southwest to 120 feet in the northeast.

Figure 11 presents the 1997 survey of the project area by Rogers Surveying. No structures exist within the project area. Elevations appear to be roughly the same as in 1910.

In summary, the historic maps and atlases do not show any structures within the project area. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth century the project area was forested. The eastern side of the project area is the location of a stream.

The project area was owned by J.P. Kellett from at least 1853 until after 1859. During 1853 he operated the Richmond Seminary just to the east of the project area. By 1859 it became the Richmond Hill Hotel. By 1874 the project area was owned by the J.P. Kellett estate. Ownership during 1887 was by the J.P. Ketettas estate. This appellation may still refer to J.P. Kellett assuming the name was corrupted. The owner of the project area during 1898 was Martin Keppler. Carl F. Grieshaber owned the property by 1907. During 1917, ownership was by C.H. Aldrich.

Information was then sought on the various owners. J.P. Kellett was manager of the Richmond Seminary for Young Ladies during the late 1840s and early 1850s. The school opened during April 1848. J.W. Frazer served as principal and secretary (Powell 1989:124). Nothing else was found on Kellett, and nothing on Ketettas or Keppler. Carl F. Grieshaber was an architect working for the firm of Delano and Aldrich. They were responsible for some of the buildings at the Staten Island Hospital (Leng and Davis 1930:805). Grieshaber evidently sold the property to one of his employers: C.H. Aldrich.

The names of few assistants or associates are known for the Delano and Aldrich firm, but Carl F. Grieshaber, along with four other names, are known to have risen to the rank of associate in the firm due to their position being listed on the letterhead (Wilson 1997:131).

Delano and Aldrich were in business from 1903 to 1940, when Aldrich died. Chester Holmes Aldrich was born to a prominent Rhode Island family on June 4, 1871 in Providence. He graduated from Columbia College in 1893 after studying

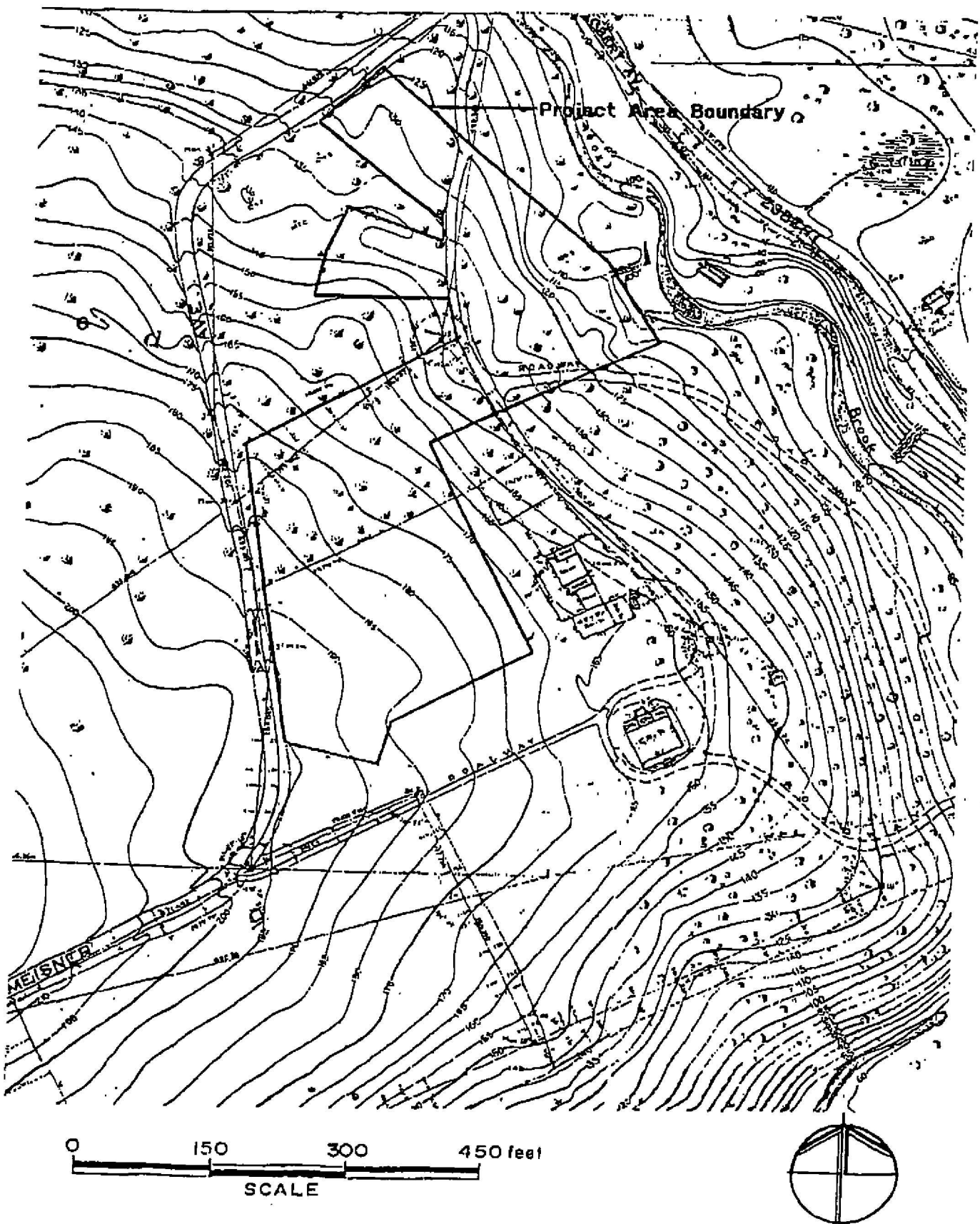


Figure 10 From the 1910 Borough of Richmond Topographical Survey.

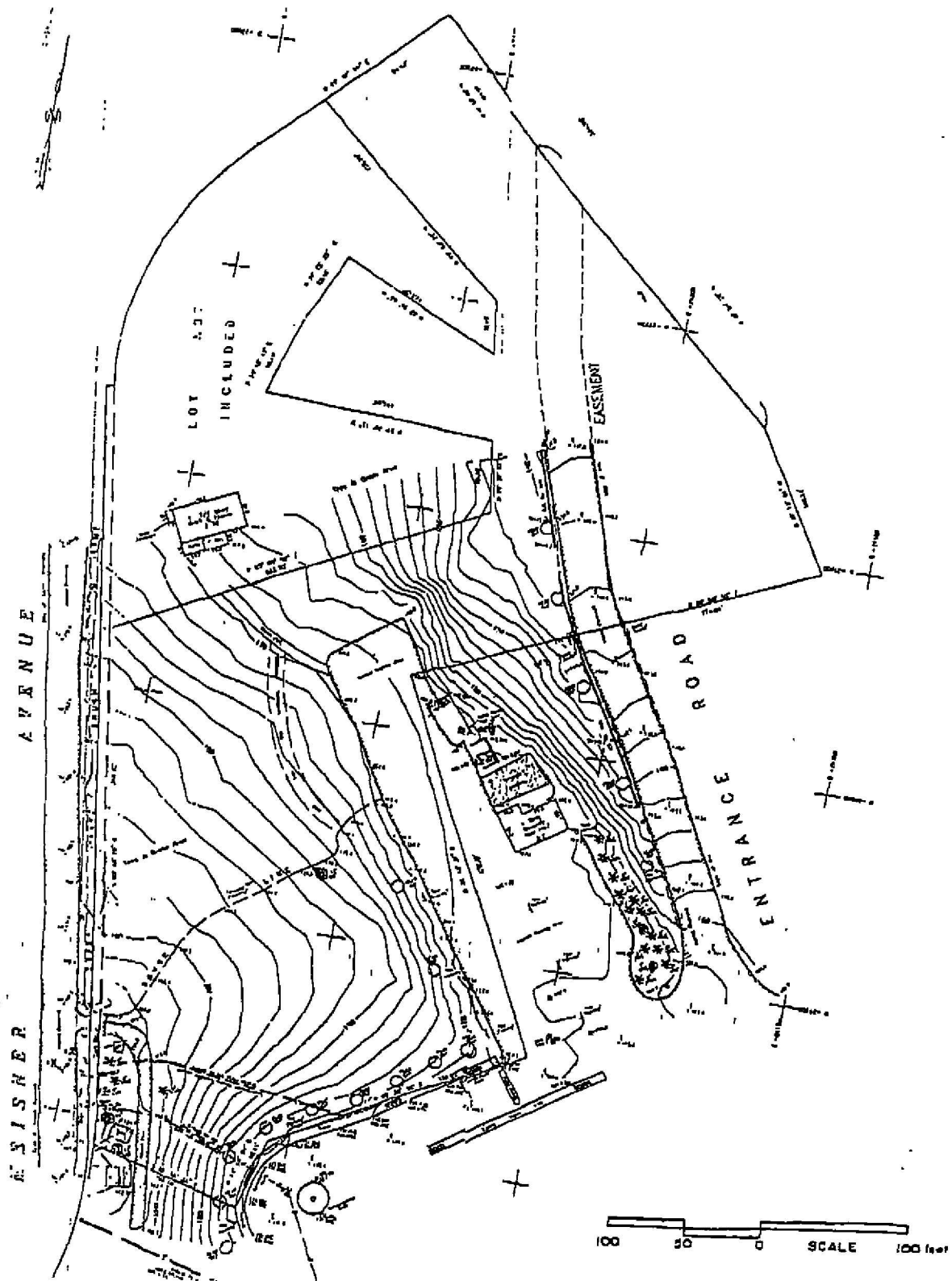


Figure 11 From the 1997 Survey by Rogers Surveying.



architecture. He worked first for the architectural firm of Carrère & Hastings from 1893 to 1895 and then 1900 to 1903. Between 1895 and 1900 Aldrich studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and received his *diplôme* in 1900. He remained a bachelor, taking active roles in social and civic affairs, and receiving an honorary doctorate from Columbia in 1929. Aldrich became director of the American Academy in Rome and died there in 1940 (Wilson 1997:128).

Delano & Aldrich rapidly grew in reputation. By 1910, "Delano & Aldrich was *the* quality country-house architectural firm in the United States,..." (Wilson 1997:127), designing homes as far as Santa Barbara. In an article from *Time* (June 2, 1930:28), the homes were described as 'never spectacular', but noted for their 'finesse', 'nicety in detail', 'discreet erudition' and constituted an 'architectural aristocracy' (Wilson 1997:127). The firm of Delano & Aldrich was "the best of its time" and "set the standard for the period" (ibid.). The architecture of Delano & Aldrich was

"... a product of their location and the time and circumstances in which they were designed and built, as well as of their owners' desires. The Long Island residences by Delano & Aldrich were designed for a particular style of life, and they contributed to the fostering of that life. At the same time, these country houses had another dimension; many critics and architects of the period saw them as particularly American and exemplars of the modern" (ibid.).

In fact, one of the major characteristics of the firm's work—the way its country houses fit into the landscape and their relation to the garden—may be most due to Aldrich, reflecting his lifelong passion for and study of Italian villas and their gardens (ibid.:131).

The clients requiring such finesse and erudition in their homes were the Astors, Kahns, Lindberghs, Pratts, Rockefellers, Vanderbilts and Whitneys. Aldrich and Delano received these and other commissions because they had good backgrounds, were cultivated and had proper education credentials (Wilson 1997:129). They were part of society's elite culture. Delano & Aldrich built the studio at Roslyn for Gertrude Payne Whitney (ibid.:136-37), with cost as no object. Their largest private home was *Oheka* for Otto Kahn at Cold Spring Harbor at 62,000 square feet, with 72 rooms and 25 baths, a degree of bombast quite distinct from the usual Delano & Aldrich offering (ibid.:138-140). The Burden estate at Syosset shines as their finest, winning the 1920 Medal of Honor at the Architectural League Exhibition in New York (ibid.:141-142). The Georgian house, *Woodside*, set in an Olmsted Brothers park inspired Edward, Prince of Wales, when he stayed there in 1924 to write: "*Compared to the creature comforts Americans took for granted, the luxury to which I was accustomed in Europe seemed almost primitive*" (ibid.:135).



Delano & Aldrich also completed public buildings: the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore, Pan American Airways stations in Miami, Midway, Wake and Guam Islands, the Knickerbocker club, the Colony and the Union clubs in New York City, buildings at Yale, Smith, Lawrenceville and St. Bernard's. In 1935 the firm listed 243 individual commissions, 111 of which were country houses. Delano & Aldrich kept the firm small, around 67 employees in 1930, so they could control the projects personally (Wilson 1997:129). The strength of the firm is noted by Wilson as he observes that other firms failed during the Depression or had to change completely to public/commercial work, while Delano & Aldrich continued to 1940, when Aldrich died (*ibid.*:127).

Despite the association of the project area with the above list of owners, there is no evidence that anything was ever built within the project area.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The above text has documented that the Eger Harbor House project area may preserve archaeological evidence from the prehistoric period. The project area is within two miles of nine prehistoric sites. Fresh water would have been available from the stream along the eastern side of the parcel. The stream would have attracted game, making the higher ground to the west a possible location for a hunting camp.

The section on historic sensitivity shows that the project area was largely forested until the mid-nineteenth century. There is no evidence that any structures were built on the project area. Despite ownership by a number of locally and internationally known persons in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it appears unlikely that any deposits would exist here which relate to their ownership.

The southwestern portion of the project area is presently a graded lawn. Gravel could be seen at the surface in places. Service lines run across this hillside. Although the topography is similar to that in 1910, there is evidence of disturbance from the grading and landscaping. This alteration appears to date to the latter part of the twentieth century, during the present ownership by the Eger Health Care Center. It lies to the north of their nursing home constructed during 1969 (REDI-Sanborn 1989:Pl. 426). The northwestern portion is presently wooded and appears to be in a condition very like that shown in 1910. Much of the project area in the eastern portion is a paved driveway and parking lot, and is therefore already disturbed. The northeastern portion is a wetland and will not be impacted.

We recommend that archaeological testing be conducted on the forested portion excepting where the slope is twelve percent or greater. The purpose of the testing will be to search for evidence of prehistoric use of this land. We recommend a grid pattern of shovel tests at 50 foot intervals. ✓

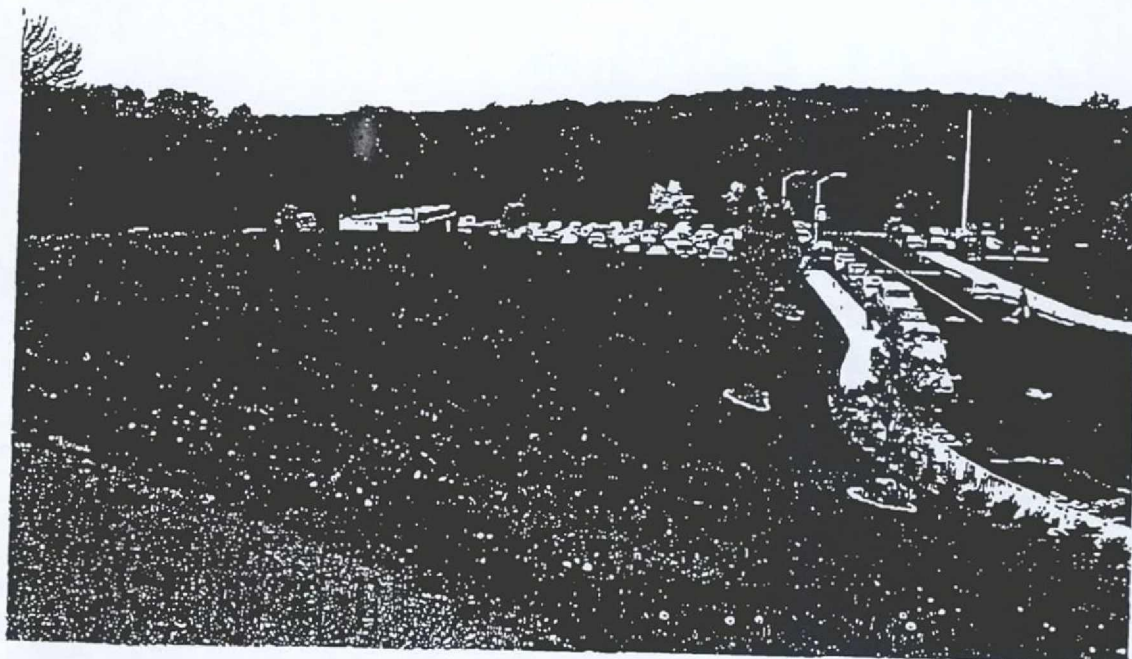


Plate 1 View of the southwestern portion of the project area looking northeast showing graded lawn.



Plate 2 View of the northwestern portion of the project area looking east showing forest with parking lot behind.



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