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# PHASE 1A CULTURAL RESOURCES INVESTIGATION

*for the*

**Staten Island Criminal Court and Family Court  
Complex, Staten Island, New York**

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ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

FEB 21 2001

*Prepared on behalf of:*

LANDMARKS PRESERVATION  
COMMISSION

**Dormitory Authority of the State of New York  
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*and*

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## MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

The Dormitory Authority of the State of New York and The City of New York (Office of the Mayor and Office of the Criminal Justice Coordinator) propose to construct a new Staten Island Criminal Court and Family Court Complex on a city-owned parking lot in St. George, Staten Island. The parking lot contains no structures. The parking lot, however, is highly sensitive for both prehistoric and historic archaeological resources.

One recorded prehistoric site is either within or adjacent to this lot, which falls into a zone of high prehistoric sensitivity according to the New York City Landmarks Commission.

Eighteen dwellings built between 1874 and 1907 existed on this lot in 1912. They were demolished in 1957 to make way for the parking lot. There is a strong possibility that many foundations survive.

From 1799 to 1858 this lot was entirely within the walls of the Quarantine Grounds, a facility at which all ships entering New York Harbor were required to stop and be inspected for the presence of any diseased passengers or crew. This 30 acre compound included many buildings, a formal cemetery and burial trenches used at times of high mortality.

The Quarantine Grounds is significant as one of the earliest public health institutions in the United States. It was deliberately burned to the ground by citizens of Staten Island in an event that stirred national censure and local pride.

There is a strong possibility that building foundations, burials and the burn layer exist within the project area.

We recommend that extensive documentary research be carried out as part of the next phase of investigation.

# **I. INTRODUCTION**

## **A. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The Dormitory Authority of the State of New York and The City of New York (Office of the Mayor and Office of the Criminal Justice Coordinator) propose to construct a new Staten Island Criminal Court and Family Court Complex on City-owned land in St. George, Staten Island, New York. The proposed facility will include criminal court parts, family court parts, hearing rooms, offices, and support and services functions. It is estimated that the Staten Island Criminal and Family Court Complex will encompass 225,000 gross square feet.

This report presents the results of a Phase 1A cultural resources sensitivity investigation conducted for the project site. The objective of this cultural resources investigation was to evaluate historical and archaeological sensitivity of the proposed project site.

## **B. PROJECT SITE LOCATION**

The proposed project site is presently a 578 space municipal parking lot known as St. George Field that is operated and maintained by the New York City Department of Transportation. The property is bounded by Hyatt Street on the north, Central Avenue on the east, private apartment and playground on the south and St. Marks Place on the west. The City-owned site is designated as Block 6, Lot 21.

The regional location of the project site is indicated on the Jersey City, N.J.-N.Y. quadrangle, United States Geological Survey map, 7.5 minute series, 1967 (FIGURE 1). The project site is also indicated on the local study area map (FIGURE 2).

## **II. ENVIRONMENTAL BACKGROUND**

### **A. LANDSCAPE HISTORY**

The environmental setting of the project site during the early years of Euro-American settlement on Staten Island is inferred from the examination of historic period maps. In the late eighteenth century, the general project site area is depicted as an elevated land form that was wooded and undeveloped (Sauthier 1776; Anonymous 1777; Clinton 1777; Masi 1777; Taylor and Skinner 1781; Sprong and Connor 1797). In particular, the 1797 Sprong and Connor map shows the area as "A ridge of mountains." Subsequent nineteenth century maps (Anonymous 1846; Hassler 1844-5; Lyons 1835; Beers 1874) show the project site as elevated, open and undeveloped land but surrounded by a pattern of city streets. However, by 1898 the property was subdivided into lots with dwellings and other structures present within each lot (Robinson 1898). In 1957, the structures within the project site were demolished.

### **B. PHYSICAL SETTING**

The project site is a large completely paved parking lot that is surrounded by paved streets and residential and commercial buildings. The present topography of the site is flat, and gently sloping from north to south. The on-site elevations range from 100 feet above mean sea level at the northwest to approximately seventy feet above m.s.l. at the southern end of the property.

The project site lies within the Coastal Plain physiographic province. The bedrock geology is Staten Island Serpentinite (Isachsen et al 2000:141). Pleistocene glacial deposits consisting of sands, silts, and gravels once covered this now fully developed area.

There are no water sources within the property and adjacent land at the present time. However, prior to the development of this region, two potable water sources were located nearby: the Watering Place to the southeast in Tompkinsville, and Hessian Spring on Jersey Street to the north and west. A map depicting colonial land grants in the period 1668-1712 shows the location of two streams to the north of the project site that flow into the Kill Van Kull (Skene 1907; FIGURE 3). The Butler 1863 map shows a stream flowing through the property (FIGURE 4).

### **III. NATIVE AMERICAN (INDIAN) ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The following discussion of Native American lifeways provides a basis on which to anticipate the kinds of cultural remains or sites that may be found in both the general project area and the specific project site. A brief description of Indian culture history, as determined by archaeological research, prior to and immediately following European contact is presented first. This information summarizes the ways in which Native American peoples lived in coastal New York. The cultural sequences presented describe the particular technologies, lifestyles, and environmental contexts of the region's first inhabitants.

The American Indian history of Staten Island has been researched extensively and the available data provides excellent background material with which to assess the project site. A search of the literature on this area, which includes Skinner 1909, Bolton 1920, Parker 1922, Smith 1950, Ritchie 1980, the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences site records and the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission's site records, has identified several Native American sites in the area of the project site. These documented sites, although directly outside the immediate project neighborhood, present a good picture of the former American Indian settlement and subsistence patterns.

This investigation evaluates the probable attractiveness of the project site for Native American peoples, i.e., were they likely to have lived and worked there. We considered the archaeological potential of the area by correlating environmental factors and the cultural history in the region.

#### **B. CULTURAL CONTEXT**

The Paleo Indian Period (c. 10,500 B.C. -8000 B.C.) represents the earliest known human occupation of Staten Island. The Paleo Indians were hunter-gatherers who roamed widely in search of food, and their settlement pattern consisted of small temporary camps on high well-drained land. They traveled in single or multiple family bands and evidence of their presence has been found in Rossville and Kreisherville (Kraft 1977:6). The material remains of the Paleo Indians includes their stone tools such as Clovis-type fluted projectile points, bifacial knives, drills, gravers, burins, scrapers, flake cores, and flake tools.

During the Archaic Period (c. 8000 B.C. - 1000 B.C.) a major shift occurred in the settlement and subsistence patterns of Native American bands. Hunting and gathering were still the basic ways of life during this period, but the emphasis in subsistence shifted from hunting large animals species which were becoming unavailable to smaller game and collecting plants in a deciduous forest. The settlement pattern of the Archaic people consisted of small bands that occupied larger and relatively more permanent habitation sites along the coast of Staten Island, its estuaries and streams and inland areas. Typically such sites are located on high ground overlooking water courses.

The tool kit of the Early Archaic people (c. 8000 B.C. - 6000 B.C.) included bifurcated or basally notched projectile points generally made of high quality stone. Evidence of Early Archaic sites on Staten Island is sparse. One site, known as the Richmond Hill site, was located adjacent to the southern foot of Richmond Hill and contained Early Archaic projectile points (Ritchie and Funk 1971:53-55).

The archaeological record suggests that a population increase took place during the Middle Archaic Period (c. 6000 - c. 4000 B.C.). In addition to projectile points, the tool kits of these people included grinding stones, mortars, and pestles. Such artifacts have been found throughout Staten Island.

Late Archaic people (c. 4000 - 1000 B.C.) were specialized hunter-gatherers who exploited a variety of upland and lowland settings in a well-defined and scheduled seasonal round. The projectile point types attributed to this period include the Lamoka, Brewerton, Normanskill, Lackawaxen, Bare Island and Poplar Island. The tool kit of these peoples also included milling equipment, stone axes and adzes. During the Terminal Archaic Period (c. 1700 - c. 1000 B.C.) new and radically different broad bladed projectile points were developed including Susquehanna, Perkiomen and Orient Fishtail types. A large number of Late Archaic Period sites have been found on Staten Island.

During the Woodland Period (c. 1000 B.C. - 1600 A.D.) of prehistory, Native American subsistence practices continued to be hunting, gathering and fishing. However, several important changes took place. Clay pottery vessels gradually replaced the soapstone bowls during the Early Woodland Period (c. 1000 B.C. - A.D. 1). The earliest ceramic type found on Staten Island is called Vinette 1, an interior-exterior cordmarked sand tempered vessel. The Meadowood type projectile point is a chronological indicator of the Early Woodland Period. Cord marked vessels became common during the Middle Woodland Period (c. A.D. 1 - c. 1000 A.D.). Jacks Reef and Fox Creek type projectile points are diagnostic of the Middle Woodland. During the Late Woodland Period (c. 1000 A.D. - 1600 A.D.) collared ceramic vessels, many with decorations, made their appearance. Large triangular projectile points known as the Levanna type became

common, and smaller triangular forms known as Madison appeared near the end of the Late Woodland.

Horticulture began at some point during the Woodland Period and included the cultivation of corn, beans, and squash. However, evidence of horticultural practices on Staten Island remain ill-defined. Tobacco pipes and smoking were also adopted and the bow and arrow replaced the spear and javelin during this period. The habitation sites of the Woodland Period Indians increased in size and permanence. A large number of Woodland Period archaeological sites have been found on Staten Island in a variety of environmental settings. A favored situation for occupation during this period was well-drained ground near stream drainages and coastal waterways.

The settlement of New Amsterdam (New York) by the Dutch in the early 1600s initiated the Historic Contact Period between the Indians of Staten Island and the Europeans. A regular pattern of Indian-European trade developed and the Indians began to acquire European-made tools, ornaments, and other items of material culture. At the time of European contact, the Indians who inhabited Staten Island were Munsee speaking groups known as the Lenape or Delaware (Goddard 1978a, 1978b). Journal accounts by European explorers, settlers and travelers described Indian settlements and lifeways. However, only a few Historic Contact Period sites have been found on Staten Island: at Wards Point, Old Place, Corsons Brook, Travis, New Springfield, and at the PS56R Site in Woodrow (Boesch 1994; HP Inc. 1996).

### **C. NATIVE AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN THE AREA OF THE PROJECT SITE**

In the early twentieth century, archaeologist Alanson Skinner of the American Museum of Natural History located and investigated twenty-four Indian sites on Staten Island. Seven of these sites were located in the St. George-New Brighton section. Sites located near the project site are summarized in the following table (Skinner 1909; Parker 1922; Boesch 1994):

**TABLE 1: INDIAN SITES IN THE VICINITY OF THE PROJECT SITE**

<u>Site Name / Location</u>	<u>Type / Cultural Remains</u>	<u>Culture Period</u>
West New Brighton, Upper or Pelton's Cove (NYSM # 4591)	Village; burials	Woodland (c.1000B.C.-1600A.D.)
West New Brighton, Ascension Church (NYSM # 734)	Village; burials, pottery, hammerstone	Woodland (c.1000B.C.-1600A.D.)
New Brighton, Harbor Hill Golf-links (NYSM # 4614)	Campsite; scattered relics	Unknown
New Brighton (three locations) Silver Lake, Harbor Hill, Nannyberry Hill (NYSM # 4613)	Campsite; pottery	Woodland (c.1000B.C.-1600A.D.)
Tompkinsville (NYSM # 4618)	Campsite; triangular proj. pts.	Woodland (c.1000B.C.-1600A.D.)
Stuyvesant Place (NYSM # 4629)	Campsite; traces of occupation	Unknown

Skinner (1909:16) reported that "scattered relics appeared along the shore road near St. George." In addition, one Native American stone artifact was reportedly found on Stuyvesant Place and is in the collection of the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences (Kardis and Larrabee 1977:8).

It must be noted that all of the sites described above are based on early, old, and often incomplete records. Therefore, their geographic location as shown in archaeological site files may be imprecise and the descriptions of cultural remains vague or general at best. See Appendix.

In summary, the background research indicates that there is one (1) recorded Native American archaeological site within or adjacent to the proposed project site: the Stuyvesant Place Site (NYSM # 4629) described by A.C. Parker (1922) as containing "traces of occupation" was located in the area bounded by Hyatt Street on the north, Bay Street on the east, Slosson Terrace on the south, and Montgomery Avenue on the west.

#### **D. POTENTIAL FOR NATIVE AMERICAN RESOURCES WITHIN THE PROJECT SITE**

The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission archaeological sensitivity map rates the area of the project site as having "High Sensitivity" for the presence of prehistoric resources (Boesch 1994). The documentary record suggests that Native

American peoples once occupied or used this area. See the Appendix for the New York State Museum precontact-era archaeological sites in relation to the project site.

The geographic location also suggests that the project site would have been an excellent location for occupation by Indian peoples: The area is a flat, elevated terrace that overlooks The Narrows and Upper Bay of New York. Prior to European settlement there were two potable water sources located nearby, "The Watering Place" near Tompkinsville and the "Hessian Spring" on Jersey Street in New Brighton (Leng and Davis 1930:9).

In summary, the documentary record together with the geomorphological conditions once present in the area suggest that the potential is there for the presence of Native American cultural resources at the proposed project site.



## **IV: BACKGROUND RESEARCH: HISTORICAL RESOURCES**

### **A. New Brighton-St. George-Tompkinsville on Staten Island**

These three neighborhoods run together – New Brighton west and Tompkinsville east and St. George occupying the heights in the middle – at the northeast tip of Staten Island. Today they represent the section best known to visitors arriving from Manhattan on the Staten Island Ferry. Early in the development of the Island this area was sparsely settled and not a major area of activity. For much of the nineteenth century this part of Staten Island was a nearby “summer place” for Manhattanites. As the commercial focus turned to Manhattan in the early twentieth century, the Borough Hall and the Courthouse were built here, turning the summer resort into the business center of the Island.

#### **1. THE COLONIAL YEARS**

In 1664, when the British took Manhattan from the Dutch, very few settlers made their homes here. The earliest settlement had been on the northwest shore in 1638, but these colonists were massacred by the Raritan Indians in 1640. No permanent settlement occurred until 1661. Under British rule, settlement was encouraged, land was patented and various groups and families moved on to the Island. The last Indian claims were extinguished in 1670. In 1683 the Island was organized as the County of Richmond and in 1788 the county was organized into five towns (Schneider 1977:13).

Labadenist missionaries Jasper Dankers and Peter Sluyter visited the Island in 1679, reporting that “there are now about a hundred families on the island of which the English contribute the least portion and the Dutch and French divide between them about equally, the greater portion” (Dankers and Sluyter 1867: 142). The settlers, then, were not the patentees, but Dutch who remained after the English takeover and Huguenot French who sought religious freedom in the New World.

A glance at a map of the harbor of New York illustrates that the current Staten Island Ferry Terminal at St. George is the most logical place for a ferry connection between Staten Island and Manhattan. A second glance at a topographical map of Staten Island illustrates that the current location is not the obvious spot at all. St. George, nestled between New Brighton and Tompkinsville, all three overlapping and entangled, sits on a quickly rising height, looking north to Manhattan. St. George is a knob at the end of the spine of hills that runs through Staten Island. What is today a relatively gentle drop

from the height to the water was much more abrupt before waterside landfill created a shore here.

Tompkinsville, slightly to the east, offered a bit of a coastal plain and a landing spot. In the seventeenth century the area between the two, where a stream ran down to the shore, was known as the Watering Place, where ships stopped to take on fresh water. It was also called the "First Landing" and was the site of an early ferry (Kardis and Larrabee 1977:20). Skene's 1907 map reconstructing the colonial land patent 1688-1712 places an "x" at the Watering Place. It is within the 1691 and 1708 patents making up the 340 acres holding of Ellis Duxbury (FIGURE 3 ). William Davis described the Watering Place in 1896 as "a large spring that existed until 30 or 40 years ago near the bluff at the southerly end of the present railroad tunnel at Tompkinsville, where ships used to procure a supply of water before going to sea" (Davis 1896: 64). The Watering Place is also indicated on the 1933 McMillan map reconstructing the Staten Island of the American Revolution (FIGURE 5). This map also names "Cole's Ferry" at what will become Tompkinsville and Ducksbury Point , which will become New Brighton/St. George. Settlement is sparse on this northerly point of the Island.

## **2. THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION**

The British held and occupied Staten Island during most of the American Revolution. Its productive fields and farms were a breadbasket for the troops, but most important was its position controlling New York Bay. For the duration of hostilities New York and its harbor was denied to the American forces. They moved their center of operations north and attempted to prevent British penetration of the interior along the Hudson River.

Fort Hill, one of the three fortifications constructed by the British in the New Brighton area is illustrated on the McMillan map (FIGURE 5). This large earthworks was located on Pavilion Hill, also called Fort Hill. It has been described as a square with each corner pointing to a cardinal compass point. Its sides measured 80 feet in length and its entrance was on the northeasterly side. It was built to house 200 men and had a commanding view of New York Bay (Leng and Davis 1930:174; McMillan 1933).

## **3. THE NINETEENTH CENTURY**

In 1718 Ellis Duxbury bequeathed a 200 acre farm to St. Andrews Church at Richmondtown. This farm became known as the Glebe Farm and included Duxbury Point and much of New Brighton-Tompkinsville (Morris 1898:42). The church leased the farm to a series of tenants.

Early in the nineteenth century this area consisted of farms and a village cluster near the shore. This idyllic setting beckoned to the inhabitants of Manhattan with its increasing human density. Here at the tip of Staten Island was a country village, a little seashore place on the water. It became a favored summering place. The Pavilion Hotel, built in the 1830s on Pavilion Hill, offered a magnificent bath house at the waters edge. Other hotels followed and the village became a cheerful resort.

In the American way that resorts attract year-round residents, interest in this area caught the attention of early developer Thomas E. Davis. In 1834 Davis envisioned the Village of New Brighton. He purchased much land and subdivided it into building lots. He issued a map of the future (FIGURE 6). Davis' plan for New Brighton is regarded as one of the first impulses toward planned suburban development on Staten Island. His vision included stately detached single family homes that resembled Greek temples lining a series of parallel terraces rising up the hills overlooking the harbor. Bathing pavilions and other landscaped delights were added amenities. His 1836 prospectus offered "to all men engaged in active business as well as to those of leisure, the means . . . of withdrawing from the labor and anxiety of commerce to the quiet of their own families, unexposed to intrusion" (Ward 1836; Leng and Davis 1930:346).

Davis and his partners went bankrupt in the Panic of 1837. Much of his street plan of New Brighton was realized and several houses based on the prospectus were built. However, the charming orderly suburban scene filled with domestic temples was not realized. New Brighton did evolve from a village into a suburb and into an urban area over the course of the nineteenth century, but followed an unplanned route.

One factor, the Quarantine Grounds, had a great impact on this growth. On the 1836 plan map for New Brighton (FIGURE 6) the Quarantine Grounds is a blank space between South Street and Tompkinsville.

In 1758 a marine quarantine had been established at Bedloes Island, presently the site of the Statue of Liberty, and in 1795 moved to Nutton Island closer to Manhattan. A marine quarantine facility provides inspection and patient treatment facilities for contagious diseases carried into port aboard ships. All ships from foreign ports were obliged to anchor, be inspected and to off load any diseased passengers or crew. These persons were treated in the hospitals that were part of the facility. In 1799 Manhattan suffered a terrible yellow fever epidemic and blame was placed on the proximity of the Quarantine. A new site was procured on Staten Island. The Glebe Farm, owned by St. Andrews Church, was taken by right of eminent domain at the direction of the New York State Legislature. The local population protested, but were few in number and even less impressive in political power.

The Quarantine Grounds housed the Marine Hospital, quarters for the attendant doctors and administrator, housing for the nurses, stevedores and other employees. The grounds were walled and gated and regulations allowed little contact between the staff and the patients and rest of the community. Docks were built to receive the ships and a harbor area was marked off where ships too full of diseased people to unload them were anchored. The local population was told that all steps would be taken to protect them from the deadly diseases housed within. In the first year of operation twenty five residents of the immediate local community contracted yellow fever. Twenty-four of them died (Clute 1877: 130-131). The current proposed project site is located within the Quarantine Grounds.

The Quarantine Grounds appear to have been a tolerated neighbor for most of the first half of their existence. The unit was self contained and addressed itself to the waterfront rather than the neighborhood. It included the Watering Place, thus procuring a fresh water spring near the docks. Indeed, there is some evidence that in its early years it was regarded as a model of institutional design and architecture. The Federal style Fever or Female Hospital, built in 1817, was a monumental brick and stone structure with two story piazzas to bring recovering patients into the fresh air. The imposing 1823 St. Nicholas Hospital was the first use of the new Greek Revival style, so popular in Davis' New Brighton plans, in an institutional setting on the island (Anon. 1983:11). A lithograph from 1858 shows the Quarantine from the water and presents a handsome site with stately structures on a landscaped hill. The 1830s development plans for a suburban oasis at New Brighton flowed right around the Quarantine with no indication that it might be other than a benign part of the neighborhood.

The 1853 Butler map of Staten Island illustrates both the Quarantine grounds and buildings and the expansion of the community (FIGURE 4). By the late 1840s increased immigration brought an increase in patients committed to the Quarantine and local residents sought relief. In 1858 after repeated unkept promises from the legislature that the Quarantine would be moved, a mob of thirty respectable citizens of the area burnt the Quarantine to the ground (Clute 1877: 133).

The Quarantine was not rebuilt here. Some parts of the land became the Lighthouse Depot and later Coast Guard land. Much of the dock area became commercial docks. The rest of the Quarantine was developed for housing. Central Avenue was cut through the grounds and the land was divided into house parcels. The 1874 Beers map (FIGURE 7) shows the lot lines and the 1898 Robinson map shows the houses that were built here. By 1907 a second Robinson map shows no trace of the Quarantine Ground in this urban section of Staten Island.

In 1880 developer Erastus Wiman envisioned St. George as the transportation center of Staten Island. He understood that the fortunes of the Island were linked to Manhattan's destiny as a great city. He fostered the railroad and ferry development here and built the Staten Island Amusement Company on the southwestern corner of the Old Quarantine Grounds to draw visitors to this area. The Amusement Company included a grandstand where Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show was performed, an illuminated fountain and amusement rides. The first "Mets" baseball team played here (McMillen 1952:3; Leng and Davis 1930:391)

Wiman built an electric power station to run his amusement park. In 1886 the amusement park company published "Picturesque Staten Island" extolling the pleasures of the park's "wonderful fountains illuminated by electric light . . . from the mysterious subterranean chamber of powerful electric lights shining through lenses of all colors changing with kaleidoscopic rapidity" (Leng and Davis 1930:319, 703).

By 1898 the Amusement Company was gone, but the transportation hub was growing. Landfill was expanding the available space at the water's edge and piers and new ferry slips were built. The railyards expanded as well. A new Ferry Terminal was erected in 1905, and in 1906 the St. George Public Library Center was completed. The Borough Hall, designed by Carrere and Hastings, was completed in 1907. Their design for the new Courthouse was begun in 1913 and finished in 1918. St. George had become an urban transportation, commercial and governmental hub.

The St George Theatre block was built in 1930, designed by Eugene DeRosa and James Whiteheads, festooned by griffins and other decorative ornamentation by sculptor John Skiba (Lundrigan 1998:np). Next to the library on Central Avenue, the Bonaire Apartment building went up in 1928, a bright white complex with decorative green tiles. Leng and Davis featured it in their 1930s five-volume history of the island as typical of the new era (Leng and Davis 1930: 376 opposite). Two new bridges to New Jersey had been completed, the Elizabeth and the Perth Amboy and a third was in progress, the Bayonne. Staten Island still had many rural areas, but New Brighton-St. George-Tompkinsville was not one of them.

## **B. THE PROJECT SITE**

As we observed above, the project site lies completely within the old Quarantine Grounds. Prior to the building of the Marine Hospital here, the area was farm land. Known as the Glebe Farm, it had been bequeathed to the Church of St. Andrew by the Duxbury family, the original patentees, in 1718 (Clute 1877:131). The Glebe Farm property taken for the Quarantine Grounds included the historic Watering Place. The McMillan map

places the Watering Place and two house, Doyle and Bate (?) within the farm. Neither structure appears to be within the project site (FIGURE 5). Documents published in 1858, by the Executive Committee of Staten Island on the destruction of the Quarantine Grounds include testimony from Isaac Simonson that prior to the taking of the land, he had been the lessee of the Glebe lot which he farmed and had been reluctant to relinquish (Anon 1858: 42).

We have searched extensively on the topic of the Quarantine Grounds and have only touched briefly on the wealth of documentation available. From the years 1799 until 1858 the project site was not a natural part of the growth of this area. As St. George-Tompkinsville moved from farms, to villages to resort to suburban growth, the Quarantine Grounds led a separate existence.

This was a walled-off and limited access facility. It did not serve the community in which it was built, save to offer employment to some. Most ingress was from the water. Ships anchored off the docks and smaller boats, lightners, carried medical inspectors out to them and diseased passengers and crew back to the hospitals. Only contagious diseases were treated here – cholera, yellow fever, small pox, typhoid fever and malaria . were the major contagions addressed. Today vaccines are available to prevent the spread of these diseases and many medicines speed recovery and ease discomfort. In the days of the Quarantine Grounds most care was purely palliative. Separation of the diseased population from the well population was imperative to prevent epidemics.

By the 1850s some one hundred to two hundred ships a day stopped here. The Health Officer could impound ships and require whatever time he felt necessary for the ship or cargo or crew and passengers to be held. He charged a per diem tax for this detention. Some in the community felt successive officers lined their pockets, holding ships with healthy crews in quarantine for the tax and in the process exposing them to contagions.

In the early years the numbers of ships and patients were within the limits that the grounds and facilities could handle. The facility was open only June through November, the season of contagion. By 1858 it was open year round and handled that year 7,000 patients in nine months. The daily patient population ranged from 700 to 1,000 patients. New hospitals had been built. A small pox unit designed for 120 patients regularly held over 200. "Shanty" hospitals, small rudely constructed houses for small groups, were added (Anon 1858: 24).

The doctors had houses within the compound. Testimony from Andrew Carrigan, a Commissioner of Emigration at the Quarantine, in the 1860 investigation of claims (Anon 1860: 27-29) notes the following structures:



Dr. Walker's house – wood frame with barn

Dr. Bissell's house – brick, two story

Dr. Thompson's house – old wood frame

Dr. Walser's house – Two story brick and range of outbuildings, cooking house and barn back of it

Carrigan also described and estimated values for:

Six buildings occupied by boatmen

Eight wooden shanties on the hill northwest of the St. Nicholas Hospital

Brick and wood offices

Brick two story mortuary with dissecting room on second floor

St. Nicholas, a 3 story brick and brownstone hospital

Female Hospital, a 3 story brick and brownstone hospital with a piazza all around

The Small Pox Hospital

The wash house dock

The McCabe house and coal and wood sheds

The Gate Keeper's House of wood and brick with various outhouses, sheds and a barn

The only plan we have located for the Quarantine is the 1853 Butler map of Staten Island (FIGURE 4). This map indicates that parts of two large buildings may have stood within the project site. We have seen a portion of a 1845 map by C.E. Blood that appears to have some indication of buildings within the Quarantine Grounds, but the copy we found was too faded to pick out details. Andrew Carrigan in the testimony cited above mentions a map in the Emigration office. Such maps may have survived in the archives of various government agencies or in collections pertinent to the Island or to shipping history.

By 1858 about 250 to 300 people were employed at the Quarantine and many of them lived on the grounds. Boatmen and stevedores moved officials, passengers and crew members between ships and shore. Inspectors and administrators handled the investigations and paper work. Doctors and nurses treated the sick. Nurses were not the formally trained persons we know of today, but people, mainly men, who could move and care for patients and removed the dead. Laborers buried the dead, tended the grounds and buildings.

John C. Thompson, known in the annals of Staten Island history as Honest John Thompson, was the son of John E. Thompson and Mary Lake. His wife, Elizabeth was the daughter of Anthony J. Johnson and Fanny Oakley. John C., by 1858, the superintendent

of the ferry to Manhattan, and his wife were descended from four old Staten Island families. In 1833 John and Elizabeth opened a grocery store in Tompkinsville at the corner of Swan and Bay Avenues. By 1834 John was the Postmaster and by 1840 a Supervisor of Castleton, the town in which Tompkinsville was located. He and Elizabeth lived on the property bounded by Hyatt Street, St. Mark's and Stuyvesant Place, immediately opposite the north wall of the Quarantine Ground. Here John established a model garden where he grew many varieties of pears. He published a small book called "Gardening Made Easy." He was known for his lifetime of efforts for the betterment of his neighborhood and his most spectacular effort was the burning of the Quarantine Ground (Leng and Davis 1930: 261-262).

John C. Thompson and Ray Tompkins were arrested, arraigned and tried for arson. They were acquitted by the judge. Arson was defined as the night time willful setting afire of a house with people in it. The Quarantine was not a house and the people were removed before the fire was set (Anon 1958: 4). The judge produced a lengthy statement explaining that they had taken up their rights as citizens to rid themselves and their community of an insufferable nuisance. The 1858 report of the Executive Committee of Staten Island contains this judgement and much of the testimony provided to describe what the Quarantine had become to the community:

Page 7: "The Quarantine Grounds were frequently overcrowded, the sick and the well placed in dangerous proximity to each other and promiscuous intercourse was permitted between those inside and those outside the walls."

Much testimony reported males nurses who climbed over the walls at night to frequent the local saloons. Even convalescent patients were seen on the streets and ferries and in the local establishments.

Page 25: "Poisonous miasmas were blown from ship to shore." "Twenty-seven people convalescent from one disease caught another and now moulder in the Quarantine cemetery."

A stench was present from the ships at anchor. Stevedores testified that they could recognize a diseased ship as they approached it and caught the "yellow fever smell." Many ships used this forced time at anchor to discharge bilge water and toss trash overboard. Rag pickers in rowboats combed the water for goods to recycle. Bedding and clothing from the dead were burned daily in an iron scow tied to the dock. Nearby was the Bathhouse, shown on the 1853 Butler map (FIGURE 4), not a recreational facility, but a place where people disembarked from the ships were washed before being admitted to the hospitals.



Page 27: "The Quarantine has become a pauper's establishment and is becoming the potter's field for all Europe."

The overcrowding of the Quarantine Grounds related directly to the increased immigration to the United States. Many steerage passengers survived their voyage, but died in the Quarantine.

Page 42: Benjamin Dawson lived in Manhattan and owned a summer house 500 to 600 feet northwest of the north wall of Quarantine. His name and this house appear on the 1853 Butler map. He reported that they had recently erected buildings too near the wall. "We can look into the windows and hear the cries of the patients . . . . The smell that seems to proceed from putrid flesh is horrid . . . . The stench was smelt everyday in the hot months, about the time the burial trench was opened, and it caused great nausea and sickness at the stomach."

The Quarantine Grounds had a cemetery which the Friends of Abandoned Cemeteries of Staten Island places "near the corner of Hyatt Street and St. Mark's Place" (posted on Rootsweb in the SIHS web site). An unattributed nineteenth century print "Burning the Quarantine" shows a formal cemetery near the southwest corner of the Grounds (Steinmeyers 1950: Plate 4). This print may be inaccurate as the buildings it shows aflame do not match the layout shown on the 1853 Butler map. It is difficult to know whether or not the FASCI cemetery is the area of the burial trench or the formal cemetery. Both existed and this corner is within the project site. Historian Ira Morris comments that "Central Avenue (the eastern boundary of the project site) runs directly through where the lake and burying ground were once located . . . . The bodies buried within these grounds were taken up several years ago and re-interred at Cooper's Cemetery" ( Morris 1898: 2/386).

Cooper's Cemetery is still active, although renamed. In their 1925 *Staten Island Gravestone Inscriptions*, Volume 2, Leng, Davis and Vosburgh transcribed the inscriptions of thirty-two gravestones that had been moved from the Quarantine Cemetery. The Staten Island Historical Society and FASCI have posted an index to this work on the SIHS web site. Three of these markers are for Captains. All of the names are English – Palmer, Fairchild, Thompson, Smalley, Ford, Morris, save for Salvadore Plise. The names imply that these burials are from the formal cemetery and may include employees and high ranking patients. An examination of the inscriptions would provide more details on who the deceased persons were. These are not the dead from the burial trench.

On the night of July 31, 1858, thirty men met at Fort Hill. They found their way up hill through the Hollick and Westerfeld farms where the gates had been left open. Each

man, under the glow of a red signal lantern hung in a tree, picked up matches, straw and camphine and carried them down the hill. At the corner of St. Mark's Place and Hyatt Avenue, where the hot dog vendor stands today, a pile of heavy timbers had been left. This upper corner was the only section of the Quarantine wall usually left unguarded. The timbers were used as battering rams and the wall soon fell away. The Quarantine staff gave way before the attackers and set about helping them remove patients, people, cats and canaries from the buildings. The patients were borne from the building on beds and deposited out of harm's reach. Citizens offered shelter, but the officials refused. The ladies of the village tried to make the patients comfortable. The buildings were torched. Fire fighting squads arrived, but were not let in and their hoses were slashed. The fire burned for two days. No lives were lost, but a patient was shot accidentally by one Brady, an employee of the Quarantine (Anon 1958: 10; Leng and Davis 1930:379-380).

After all was destroyed, save one building, the wall was rebuilt and temporary structures housed patients. The state militia was called in to help and maintain order. The Quarantine was moved to Princes' Bay, but diseases spread there and that site was closed and burned by the officials. In 1860 the Marine Hospital operated from a ship anchored at Tompkinsville. About 1900 the new Quarantine Station, was built at Rosebank (Leng and Davis 381-386).

Throughout the nation residents of Staten Island were called barbarians, savages, and incarnate fiends. The Governor declared the Island in revolt. The Executive Committee of Staten Island took up an investigation designed to explain to the world at large what they had suffered through and why John C. Thompson and Ray Tompkins, the only members of the raiding party arrested, were acquitted. The judge made a strong case that the Quarantine has been erected to protect the public from disease and had failed at this so miserably as to become an insufferable nuisance. The citizens were promised relief, but given none. A plan to move the facility to Sandy Hook in New Jersey, was dropped because the ship owners found no deep harbor there and New Jersey did not want the facility. Politicians promised relief, but did nothing.

"Certain it is that the annals of this country furnish no instance of a whole community having so long and patiently borne such oppressive grievances at the hand of its government as the people of Staten Island have been subjected to in connection with this Quarantine nuisance," wrote Nathan Barrett, chairman of the investigation committee in his October 7, 1858 introduction to the Executive Committee report (Anon. 1858:1)

In 1860 a new committee heard the damage claims filed in connection with the burning of the Quarantine. A crumbling copy of the 307 pages report, *In the Matter of the Commission for Ascertaining and Collecting the Damages Caused by the Destruction of*

*the Marine Hospitals and Other Buildings and Property at the Quarantine, Staten Island*, is housed at the New York Public Library on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan. Page after page provides descriptions of the buildings and the materials lost in the fire. Linens, bureaus, beds, drapes and silverware and ladies' finery from the Doctor's homes are described along with the bedsheet and pallets on iron bedsteads for the patients. Staten Island itself was billed for the damages as no individuals were found responsible.

Examination of the 1859 Walling map of Staten Island, printed a year after the fire shows the Quarantine Grounds empty save of one building, M. Weiner's Saloon at the Arrietta Street docks on the Tompkinsville side of the grounds. The J. C. Thompson and B. Dawson residences now look out over barren ground.

M. Weiner next appears on the 1874 Beers map of New Brighton (FIGURE 7). The project site has been divided into building lots and is owned by Swineburn, Weiner and Shortland. They have cut Central Avenue, the eastern boundary of the project site, through from Hyatt Street to Arietta Street (later Victory Boulevard). Stuyvesant Place is proposed by a dotted line east of and parallel to Central Avenue. J. Bostwick has his residence within his Bostwicks American Docks property with warehouses and piers on the water front and the U.S. Lighthouse Depot Property is north of Bostwick. These three groups have split what was the Quarantine Grounds.

On the 1898 Robinson map of this area 15 dwellings appear within the project site. Three face St. Mark's Place, but the rest are centered between Central Avenue and St. Mark's Place with several barns on St. Marks. The dwelling at the corner of Hyatt Street and St. Mark's Place is large and takes up at least two building lots. The three on St. Mark's Place are small, close together and at the street's edge. Robinson's 1907 map shows all of the buildings from the 1898 map plus three more small narrow dwellings facing Central Avenue just behind the three on St. Mark's.

The 1912 Topographical Survey (FIGURE 8) of the area presents the same scene and illustrates that most of the houses facing Central Avenue have expansive front porches. They sit at the brow of the hill much like the Greek Temples Thomas Davis proposed for suburban homes in 1836. They are all frame structures two and a half stories high.

Records on file at the Staten Island Borough Hall in the Building Department's Central Records and Archives Office indicate that these structures were demolished in 1957. The project site was paved over to become a municipal parking lot.

### **C. POTENTIAL HISTORIC RESOURCES WITHIN THE PROJECT SITE**

In sum, the project site has the potential to contain subterranean resources from several eras. The land was part of the Duxbury Patent and Glebe Farm in the 17th and 18th centuries. The project site lies between the British Revolutionary War era fort on Fort Hill and the Watering Place and ferry landings. Troops moving between the ferry and the fort may have crossed the project site.

From 1799 to 1858, the project area was part of the Quarantine Grounds, one of the earliest public health institutions in the country. The project area may contain building foundations and burials. A burn layer may be present. From shortly after 1874 until 1957 the project site contained 18 buildings dating from 1875 to 1907. Foundations of these buildings and their outbuildings may be present. No documents we reviewed presented any description of how the Quarantine Grounds were cleared after the fire and what land preparation preceded the building of the houses or the grading of the parking lot.

### **D. HISTORIC STRUCTURES ADJACENT TO THE PROJECT SITE**

1. 10 Hyatt Street St. George Public Library Center
2. 15 Hyatt St. Staten Island Savings Bank
3. 25-31 Hyatt Street St. George Theatre Block
4. 61 Central Street
5. NR 90-1035 New Brighton Reformed Church (either replaced or remodeled)
6. Residences on St. Mark's Place: 362, 420, 438

### **E. HISTORIC STRUCTURES IN THE VICINITY OF THE PROJECT SITE**

1. NR 06-24-81 Office Building and U.S. Lighthouse Depot Complex
2. NR 07-29-83 Staten Island Borough Hall and Richmond County Courthouse

## **V. PEDESTRIAN SURVEY OF THE PROJECT SITE**

### **A. ON-SITE CONDITIONS**

The project site is a flat completely paved parking lot (FIGURE 9). A fence extends around the perimeter of the property and sidewalks are present along Hyatt Street, Central Avenue, and St. Marks Place. There are no standing structures or other cultural features within the property.

### **B. HISTORIC CONTEXT**

The St. George parking lot is empty of structures, but surrounded on all sides by buildings reflecting many eras of Staten Island history.

#### **HYATT STREET**

Opposite the north end of the lot is Hyatt Street. The St. George Theatre block, 25-31 Hyatt Street, was built in 1930 (FIGURE 10). It has been considered for Landmark status but no decision was made. The architects are Eugene DeRosa and James Whiteheads and the decorative ornamentation is by sculptor John Skiba.

West of the St. George is an empty lot where the John C. Tompkins house stood.

#### **CENTRAL AVENUE**

At the corner of Central and Hyatt is the 1906 St. George Public Library Center. This building is listed on the LPC list as significant.

Just south is the 1928 Bonaire Apartments (FIGURE 11), shown in the 1930 Leng and Davis history as an example of the new architecture of St. George. This building is still painted bright white and decorated with tiles. It is an early example of Art Deco, as shown by the classic columns of its portico.

Several late nineteenth century houses, now converted and remodeled, are found south of the Bonaire. One at 61 Central Avenue had been considered for landmark status but no decision was given. These houses would have been built by Weiner and his associates and would resemble the houses torn down on the project site. They are frame structures, two and one half stories high with verandas and porches, many now enclosed.

## **ST. MARK'S PLACE**

On the 1853 Butler map (FIGURE 4) the western side of St. Mark's Place is lined with a row of single family homes as is Monroe Terrace above it. These are not the Greek Temples of the Davis plan but modest homes built in the 1830s. Several of these still exist, intermingled with later houses (FIGURE 12). Most are severely remodeled , but the original simple lines can be picked out on some of them.

At the corner of St. Marks' Place and Hyatt Street is the Brighton Heights Reformed Church. Today it is an imposing brick structure. The original 1864 building, a white clapboard Gothic Revival building with a tall spire, was on the National Register of Historic Places. It is gone.

## **VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The proposed facilities include court buildings and a parking garage. The urban footprint of this complex will cover most of the project site. While our pedestrian survey revealed that there are no standing structures within the project site, our documentary research demonstrated that the entire project site is highly sensitive for both prehistoric and historic archaeological resources.

At least one recorded prehistoric site may be within the project site. This early site has obscure location details, so we cannot say whether or not it is within the project site. The project site has been judged sensitive for prehistoric resources in a report prepared for the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.

The project site is highly sensitive for historic-era archaeological resources. In particular, foundations and burials from the era of the Quarantine Grounds, 1799 to 1858, may be present anywhere within the project site. Additional documentary research focused on locating any extant plans and maps of the grounds and any documentation on the placement of the cemetery and the burial trenches is necessary. Such resources would identify areas of particular sensitivity.

Eighteen dwellings were built within the project site between 1874 and 1907. These were demolished in 1957 to open up space for the parking lot. Additional documentary research on this project may provide information as to how these buildings were torn down and what parts of them may have survived the subsequent grading of the lot. The 1912 topographic survey provides a good base map of what was there. These dwellings reflect the era of expansion enjoyed by the St. George community as it became the transportation and commercial hub of the Island.

In sum, the entire project site should be regarded as highly sensitive. Prehistoric and historic archeological resources are likely to exist here. Additional research of historic documents will provide a finer evaluation of areas of particular sensitivity.

The potential for the discovery of burials is very high. No document reviewed so far has pinpointed the areas in which burials occurred. Graphic descriptions of burial trenches being opened every afternoon indicate the presence of mass graves. Such burials were made in times of high death rates, when concern focused on disposal to prevent the infection of the living, rather than preservation of the dignity of the dead. Because the Quarantine Grounds received the sick and the dying from all ships entering the port of New York there is political sensitivity to be considered as well. All attempts

should be made to learn who died and were buried here. Names of individuals may not be available, but details of what groups arrived on what ships might be.

We recommend that extensive documentary research as described above be carried out as part of the next phase of investigation.



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


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FIGURE 1: Portion of U.S.G.S. map Jersey City NJ-NY quadrangle showing location of project area.



**Legend - Study Area**

-  Project Site
-  Primary Study Area (1/4 Mile)
-  Secondary Study Area (1/2 Mile)

1" = 750'

**STATEN ISLAND CRIMINAL COURT  
and FAMILY COURT COMPLEX  
Environmental Impact Statement**

**Edwards  
and Kelcey**

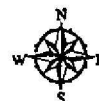


FIGURE 2: Map of the study area by Edwards and Kelcey.



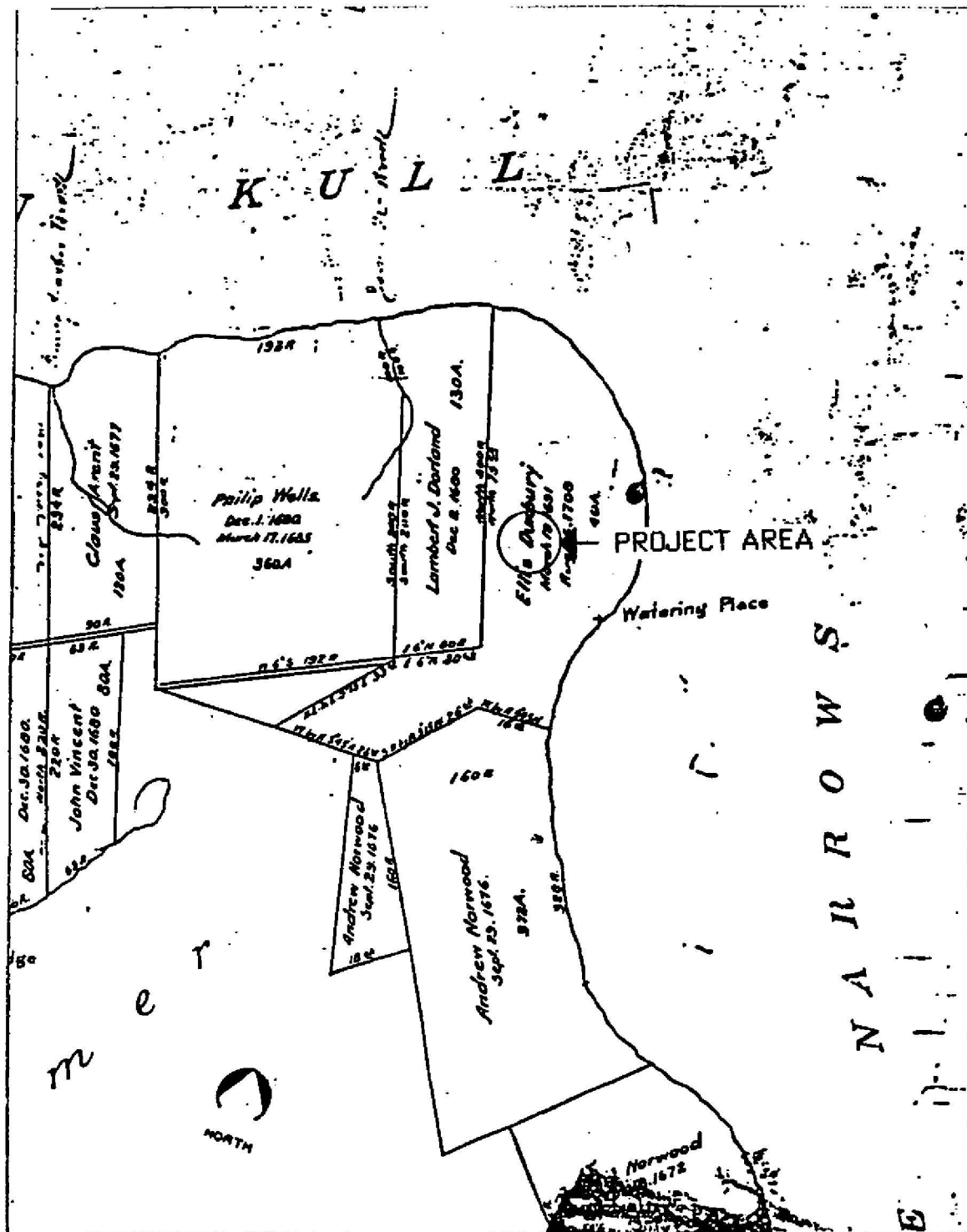


FIGURE 3: Portion of Skene's 1907 Map of Staten Island showing the Colonial Land Patents from 1688-1712 in the area of St. George. No scale.



FIGURE 4: Portion of J. Butler's 1853 Map of Staten Island. Scale 1" = 0.3 miles.

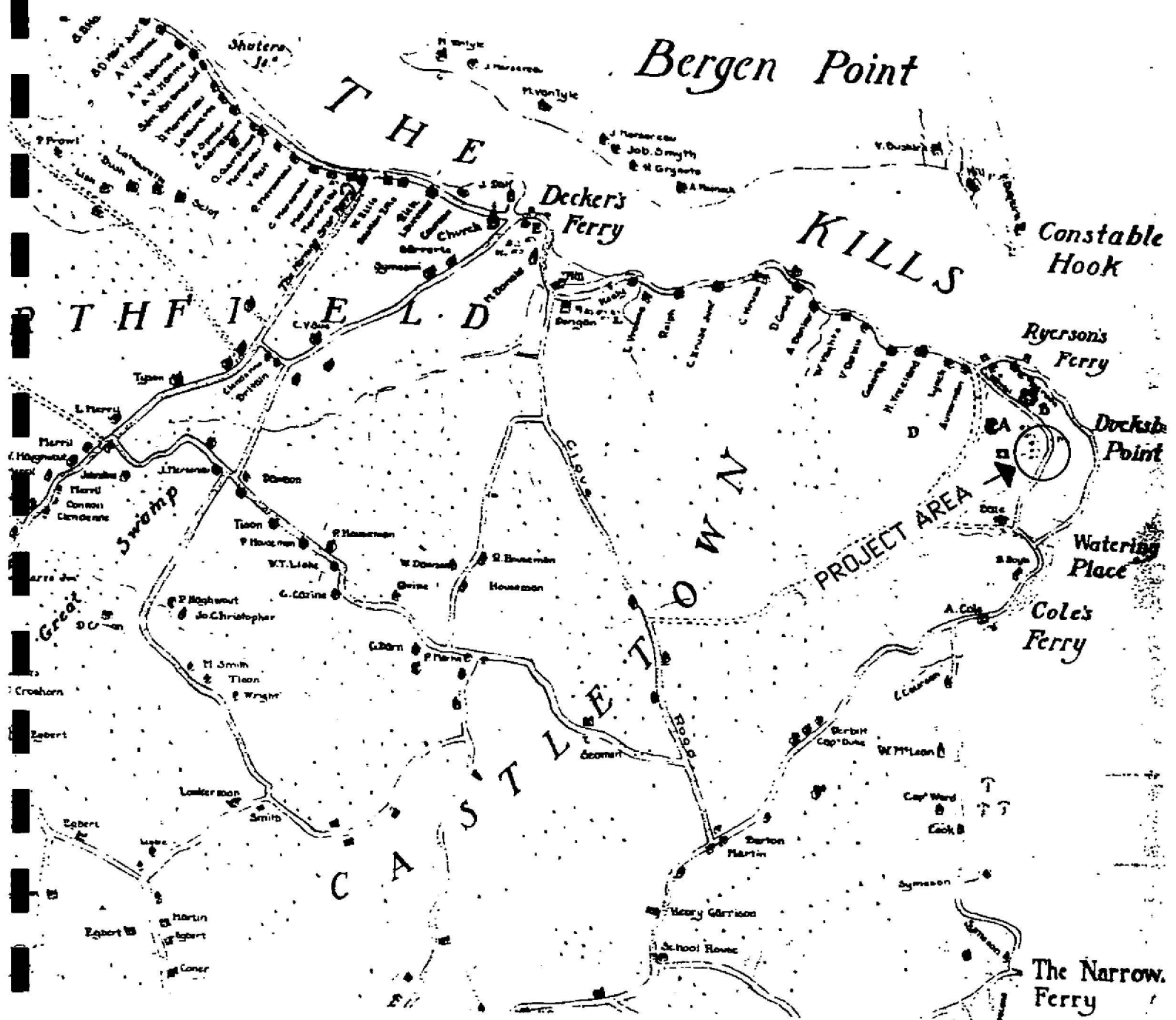


FIGURE 5. Portion of McMillen's 1933 "A Map of Staten Island During the Revolution 1775-1783 Compiled from the Following Maps and other Sources, The Taylor and Skinner Map, 1781, The Hessian Map 1777 and the Plan No. 31 du Camp Anglo-Hessois dans Staten Island de 1780 a 1783." No scale.

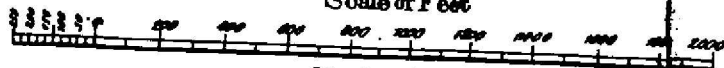
Map of New Brighton, Property  
Belonging to the New Brighton  
Association In The Town of Castleton.

STATE OF NEW YORK

Surveyed and Drawn by James Lyons 1835.

P.A. Maser's L. 28 Wall St. N.York.

Scale of Feet



Explanation

The Blocks are 200 feet wide and the Streets and Avenues 60 feet  
excepting a few instances where they are marked differently.

OMP KINSVILLE

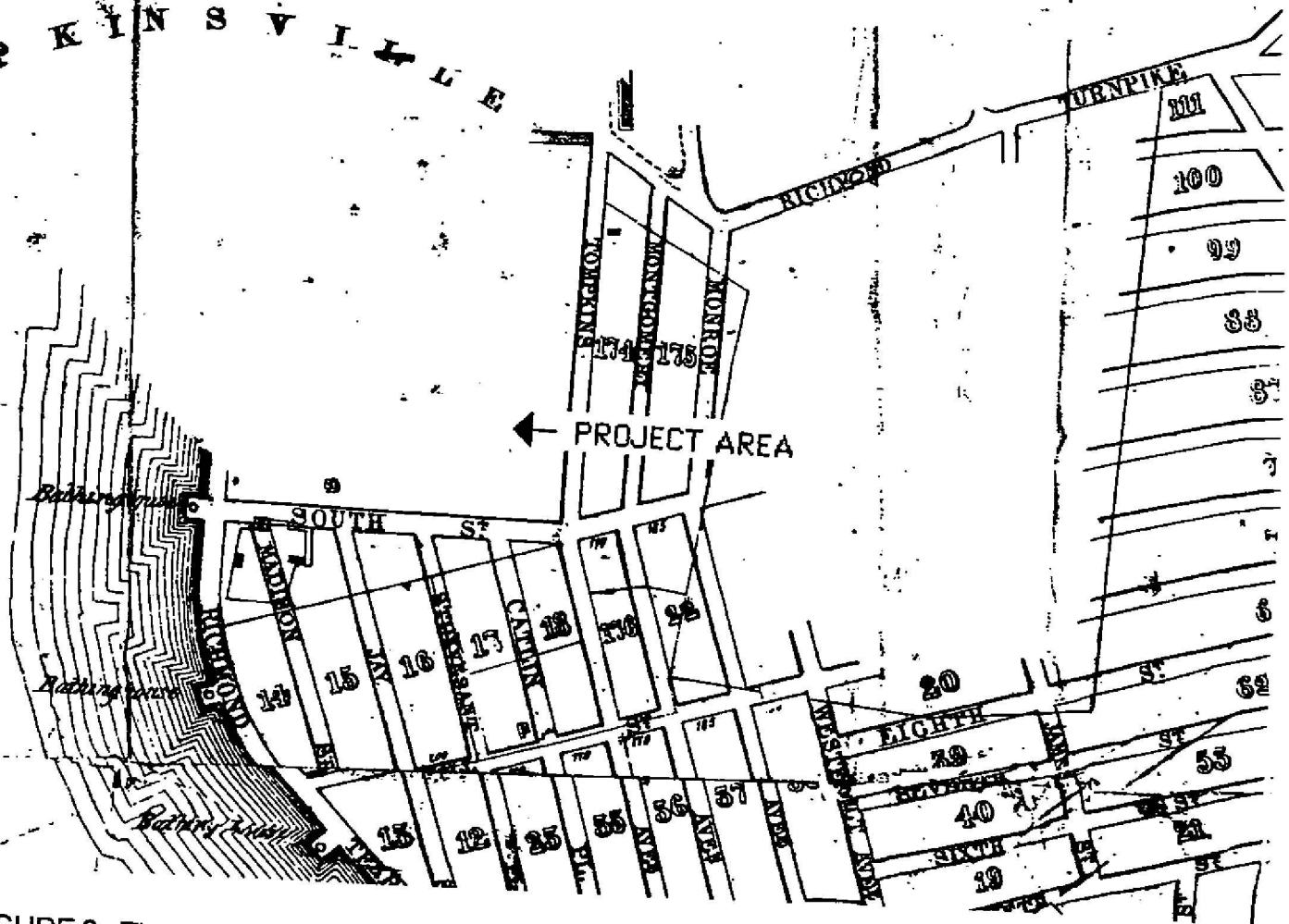


FIGURE 6. Thomas Davis' Plan for the Village of New Brighton, 1835. Surveyed and  
drawn by James Lyons. Scale 1" = 600'

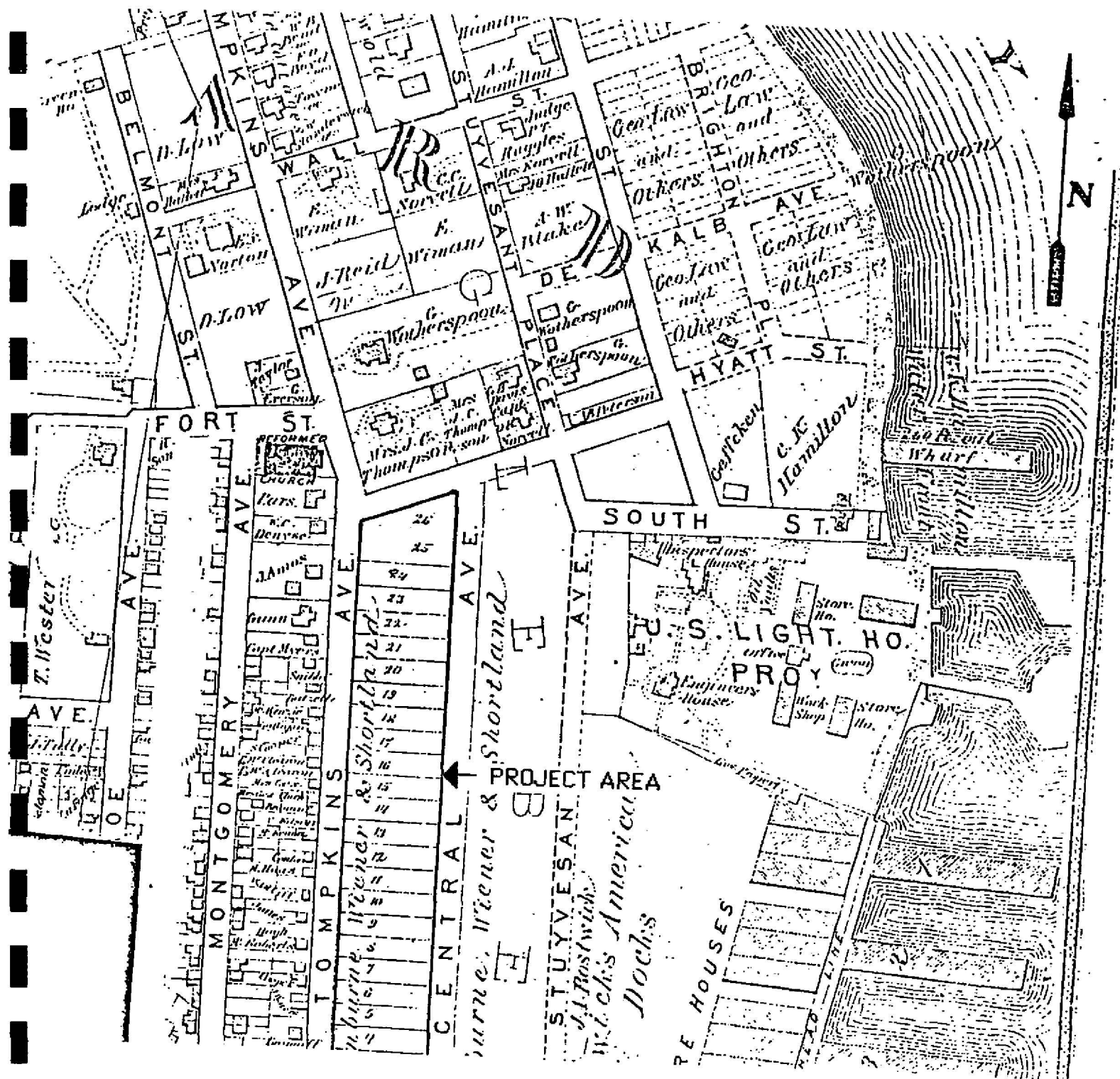


FIGURE 7. Portion of F.W. Beer's 1874 Atlas of Staten Island. No scale.



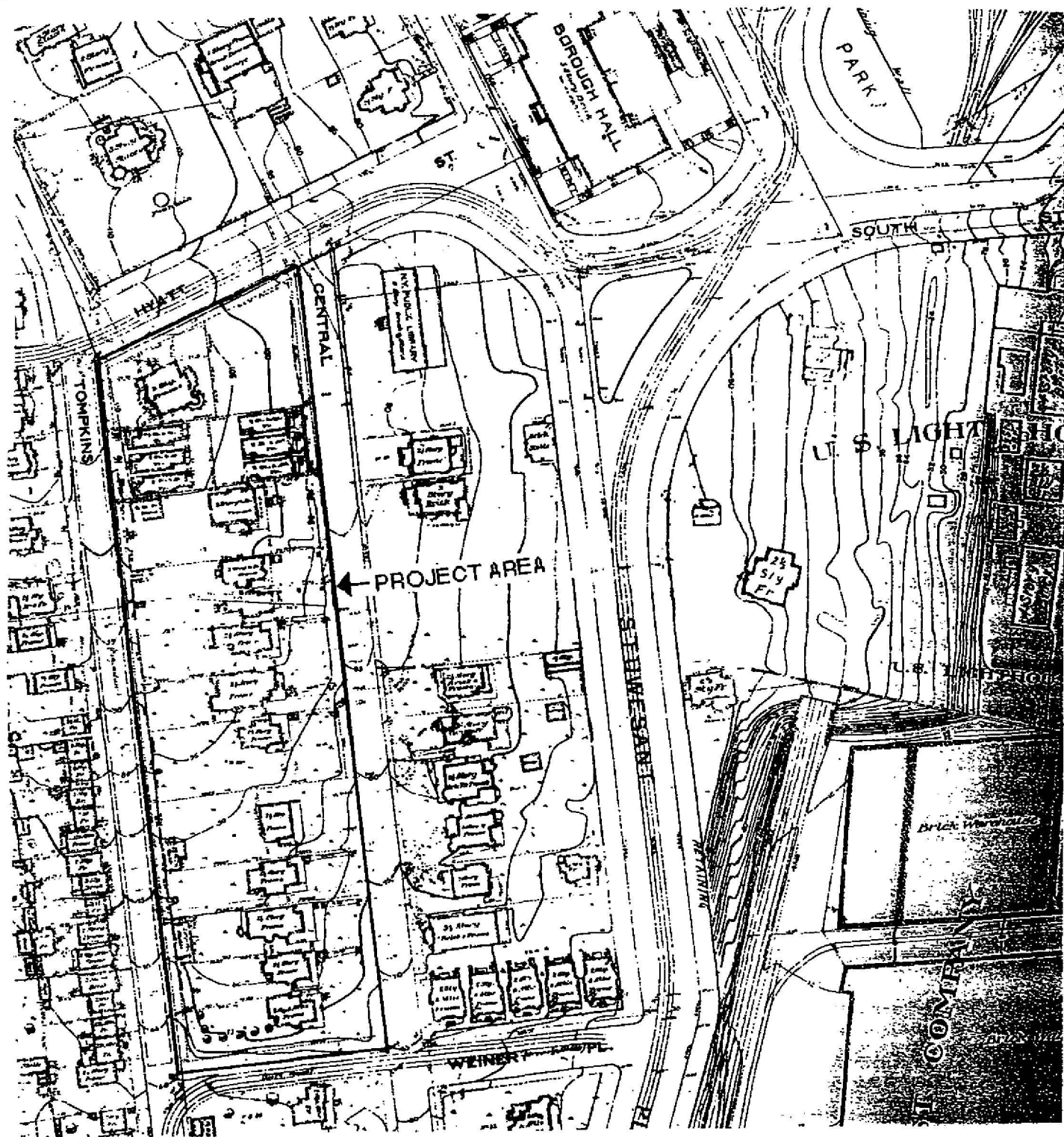


FIGURE 8. Portion of 1912 Topographic Survey of Staten Island, Section 11.  
Scale 1" = 150'



FIGURE 9. Photograph of the St. George Parking Field. View looking north. Photo by E.J. Lenik, October 2000.

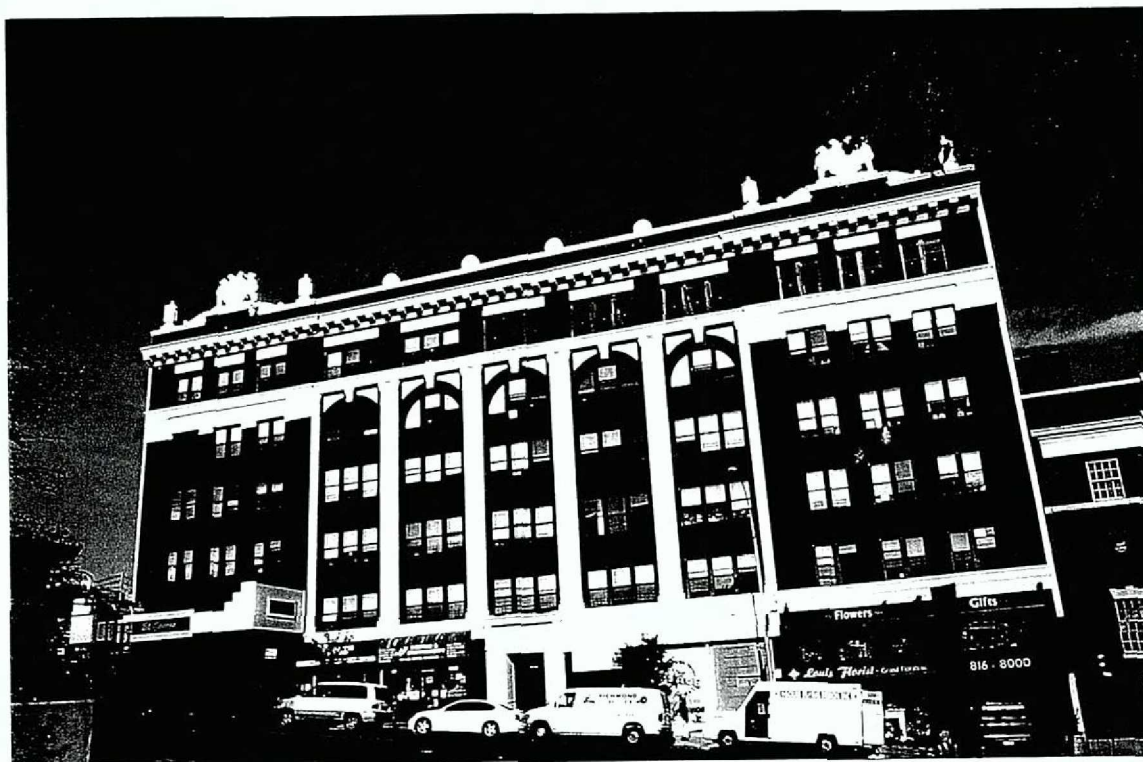


FIGURE 10. Photograph of the St. George Theatre Block 25-31 Hyatt Street. View looking north-northwest. Photo by E.J. Lenik, October 2000.





FIGURE 11. Photograph of the Bonaire Apartments, 15 Central Avenue. View looking northeast. Photo by E.J. Lenik, October 2000.

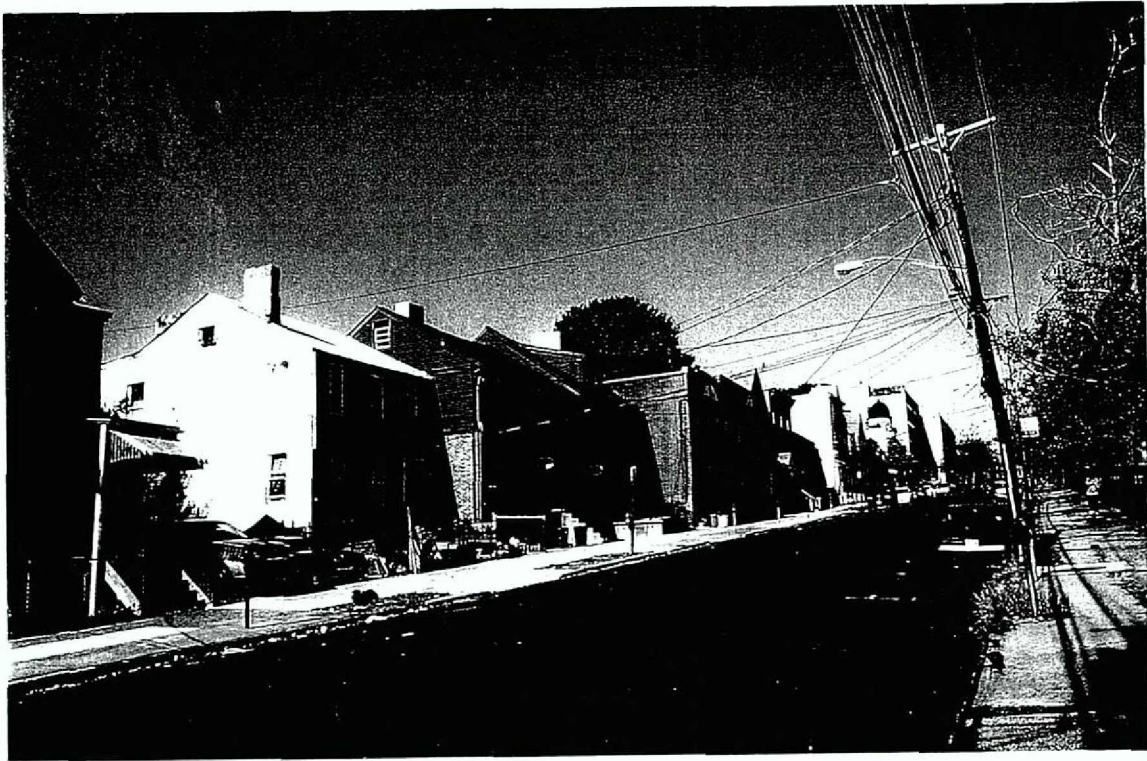


FIGURE 12. Photograph of St. Mark's Place streetscape. View looking north. Photo by E.J. Lenik, October 2000.

# **APPENDIX**

**NEW YORK STATE MUSEUM**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL FILE SEARCH: PREHISTORIC SITES**

Project Name Staten Island OutcropsProject Number 1031Client Historical PerspectivesVillage \_\_\_\_\_ Town New York County RichmondQuadsheets Jersey City, The Narrows

NEW YORK STATE MUSEUM

conducted by: Kim CrossDate 10/10

Site Sensitivity requested \_\_\_\_\_

# Sites 5

NYSM#	Other#	Name	Period	Type	Comments
4613	ACP Rich 23 A	_____	_____	(Woodland 1000 BC - 1600 AD) CAMPS	ACP... CAMPS... AT (shell + pottery found) by Skinner, Old SF (Set A) 1904R Staten Is. IS Shows 3' x 5' ... CAMPS AT Silver Lake Reporter: A.C. Parker - Skinner A.B.
4614	ACP Rich 24	_____	_____	CAMP	on Harbor Hill near Harbor Brook + Lafayette Ave... NYSM Locat. near Ave. 11 Reporter: AC Parker - [Skinner, A. B.]
4629	ACP Rich	_____	_____	CAMP	Traces of occupation - Slaves' Place Reporter: A.C. Parker / 1922
6956	ACP Rich	_____	_____	CAMP	Reporter: AC Parker - [Skinner, A. B.] / 1922
8972	_____	_____	* - PH?	_____	old SF A/B 1915R IS' map marked with "B" 2nd rd, adjacent circle, no other info"

