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REPORT ON
ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING
DURING STABILIZATION EXCAVATIONS
IN AND AROUND BUILDING 298
ON GOVERNORS ISLAND
NEW YORK, NEW YORK



<http://www.govislandarmybrat.com/index.html>

Prepared for: Bedford Construction Corp.
221 Industrial Loop
Staten Island, New York 10309

Submitted by: Linda Stone, MA, RPA
249 East 48th Street, #12B
New York, New York 10017

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a report on archaeological monitoring during stabilization excavations at Building 298 on Governors Island, part of the Governors Island National Historic Landmark District and the Governors Island Historic District designated by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. This archaeological report is being conducted to comply with environmental review regulations and meets the standards of both the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

Building 298 was originally constructed in 1811 as the South Battery, but was never completed. It was remodeled in 1904 and converted for recreational use by enlisted men. Between 1936 and 1938, the WPA rehabilitated the second floor for use as a dining hall and in 1939 the building became the Officer's Club.

The New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) had previously indicated monitoring would be appropriate for this project since the work planned in and around Building 298 had relatively low archaeological potential.

Four areas in and around Building 298 were monitored and no significant archaeological features related to the original construction of the South Battery were identified. The contractor's work was completed. It was recommended that should further excavations in and around Building 298 be needed that archaeological potential be evaluated for the specific locations at that time.

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In And Around Building 298 At Governors Island, New York, New York –
December 30, 2004

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INTRODUCTION

The Governors Island Preservation and Education Corporation (GIPEC) is in the process of stabilizing Building 298 on Governors Island. This building is called the South Battery Club or Officer's Club and is located within the part of the Island designated as a New York City Landmark and is also within the Governors Island National Historic District (see Figure 1). The building was constructed as a defensive structure in 1812 and was later augmented and used as an officers club.

The New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) had previously indicated monitoring would be appropriate for this project since the work planned in and around Building 298 had relatively low archaeological potential. The recommended archaeological monitoring was conducted to comply with environmental review regulations.

The below ground impacts from this work include:

1. Excavation for repair to foundation wall in the rear of the building up to 5-6 feet deep and one foot outside and about 3 feet wide and about 5-6 feet deep on the interior.
2. Excavation for sump pump and drain connection inside basement of the building and trench drain outside the back door, disturbing from 18 inches to 2 feet down.
3. Excavation to replace the drain in the center of the rear courtyard, increasing the diameter from 12 to 24 inches.
4. Excavation for new 12-inch diameter drain in the rear of the courtyard with a pipe connection to disturb to about 2 feet deep. The pipe will be approximately 3 feet long and connect to an existing leader drain.

Figures 2 and 3 are the plans provided by Bedford Construction Corporation showing the locations of the work. The New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) previously determined that monitoring would be an appropriate alternative to archaeological testing since there is a low likelihood of encountering archaeological resources associated with the original construction of the fort within the planned stabilization excavations.

This report will present the findings of archaeological monitoring conducted for the Building 298 excavations. The work has been done in accordance with the guidelines of both the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission and the New York State Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation. This report was prepared by Linda Stone, RPA for Bedford Construction Corporation. The archaeological fieldwork described in this report was conducted by Ms. Stone on January 12, 14 and 20, 2005. The author would like to acknowledge the assistance of Joe Lione and John Banks of Bedford Construction Corporation and Claire Kelly of Turner Construction for facilitating the project.

SITE HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

Pre-Contact Period

There is no documentation indicating the potential for the Building 298 stabilization work to impact any archaeological resources from the Pre-Contact period.

Historic Period

Building 298 was originally constructed in 1811 as the South Battery, but was never completed (U. Mass. 2003:121). The original one story structure was made of red sandstone. Plate 1 is a lithograph of the Island from the mid-nineteenth century showing the South Battery on the near right (Bachmann 1855). By that time, a second story had been added. "The building was remodeled in 1904 and converted into an amusement hall and lecture room for enlisted men. Between 1936 and 1938, the WPA rebuilt the second floor as The Corbin Dining Hall. In 1939 the building became the Officer's Club" (JCA 2003:Bldg. 298).

Potential archaeological resources within the proposed impacts of the Building 298 stabilization work include features related to its original construction.

METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

The scope of work for archaeological monitoring is attached as Appendix A. It included the ability of the archaeologist to temporarily halt excavations should any potentially significant archaeological resources be encountered during contractor excavations. This section is organized by location of work.

Foundation Wall Repair

Contractor excavations for repair of the foundation wall at the rear of Building 298 were done by hand (see Figure 4). The existing bricks were *carefully* removed. One of the surrounding bricks that was left *in situ* contained a stamp of the Belden Brick Company. The soil contained rubble with brick fragments, including bricks with the Peck and Washburn marks, and some corroded metal. Rotting leaf litter was found at about four feet down, the location of the breach in the wall. In addition to the leaf litter, several broom or brush fibers were also recovered from that depth. A complete "John Walker" scotch bottle was recovered at about 4.2 feet down, as were two sherds from a ceramic bowl. This was the bottom of the excavation. An extension of this excavation was later done outside of the rear entry. The leaf litter deposit was identified at about only one foot down in the eastern end of that extension. This deposit also contained another sherd from the same ceramic bowl found in the original excavation.

Sump Pump and Drain

The contractor originally planned to hand excavate a two-foot square pit for a sump pump along the wall at the entry of the basement of Building 298. Once the concrete was removed, they found a footing along the wall that covered almost half of the excavation. The square was then expanded to about two and a half by three feet to find the space for the sump pump. Ultimately, a pit about one and a half foot square was excavated to the full depth of three and a half feet (see Figure 5). The soil was reddish brown sand. It contained no cultural material.

Center Courtyard Drain

The contractor exposed the existing drain in the center of the courtyard by hand excavating about a one-foot ring around it. Sandy fill containing fragments of brick and concrete and an occasional rock was observed in the first foot of excavation. Below that depth, the fill was clean. The excavations extended to only one and a half feet below the courtyard. No artifacts were recovered and no features were identified. Although no artifacts were recovered from the excavations for the drain in the center courtyard, a piece of modern green bottle glass was recorded and discarded. It was embossed with the letters "CA".

New Rear Yard Drain

A two-foot square pit was hand excavated by the contractor in the rear courtyard; two steps down from the main part of the courtyard. This excavation exposed the "Y" connection of an existing pipe (see Figure 6). Brick and concrete covered the pit to a depth of about six inches down. This was underlain by reddish brown sandy silt, clean fill. The pit was excavated to about sixteen inches, the base of the pipe. An additional pit was hand excavated at the top of the stairs to expose the pipe in that location. The pipe was exposed at a depth of about 2.7 feet down. Excavation continued to about 3.5 feet. No artifacts were recovered and no features were identified.

ARTIFACTS RECOVERED

Recovered artifacts include 3 fibers, three ceramic sherds and a glass bottle. GIPEC has asked that all artifact processing and storage take place on the Island. All recovered artifacts were washed and stored at Building 107. Artifacts were washed and rinsed in tap water and left to air dry before labeling and rebagging in clean 4-mil zip-lock bags. The ceramic and glass were individually labeled with the project name abbreviation (GI298). All zip bags were labeled with this same abbreviation as well as the excavation date.

The three ceramic sherds recovered from the excavation of the foundation wall repair are depicted in Plate 2. The sherds mend and are part of a bowl that has a maker's mark on the base. It reads "SCAMMELL'S/TRENTON CHI...". The Scammell family bought an existing Trenton pottery business in the 1920s. Scammell Pottery "was well known for its custom designed restaurant and hotel China" (Trenton City Museum 2004). The pottery closed in the 1950s.

The liquor bottle was also recovered from the foundation repair excavations (see Plates 3 and 4). It is embossed "FEDERAL LAW/FORBIDS SALES/OR REUSE OF/THIS BOTTLE" near the neck and "John Walker & Son Ltd./Kilmarnock/Scotland" near the center. There are remains of metal from the cap along the rim of the bottle, as well as remains of a paper label on the opposite side from the embossing. The remains are of the upper right corner of the label and can be seen in Plate 4. It appears to be a red border with some red lettering above. The border is at an angle, similar to the angle of the Johnnie Walker scotch bottles of the present day. It seems most probably this bottle was an early Red Label scotch. The Johnnie Walker introduced Red Label in 1909 (Diageo 2003).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

No archaeological features related to the construction of the South Battery were identified during monitoring of contractors excavations in and around Building 298 on Governors Island. The bottle and bowl recovered from the foundation wall repair excavations most likely date from the early- to mid-nineteenth century when Building 298 was used as an amusement hall, dining hall and an officer's club. No further archaeological work is recommended for the contractor's work as described in the introduction of this report. However, should additional excavation be planned in and around Building 298, an evaluation of archaeological potential should be made at that time.

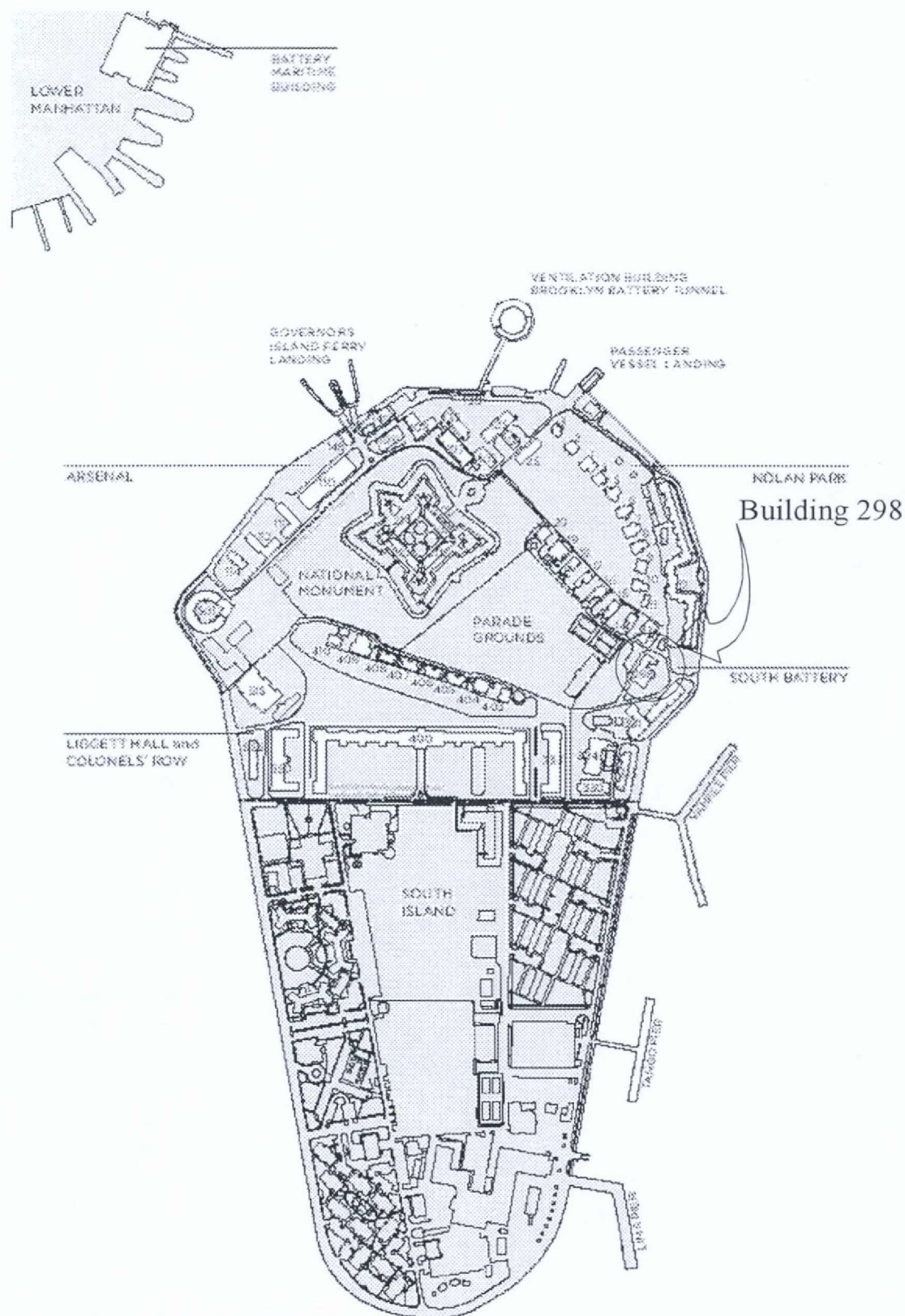


Figure 1 Location of Building 298 within Governors Island.

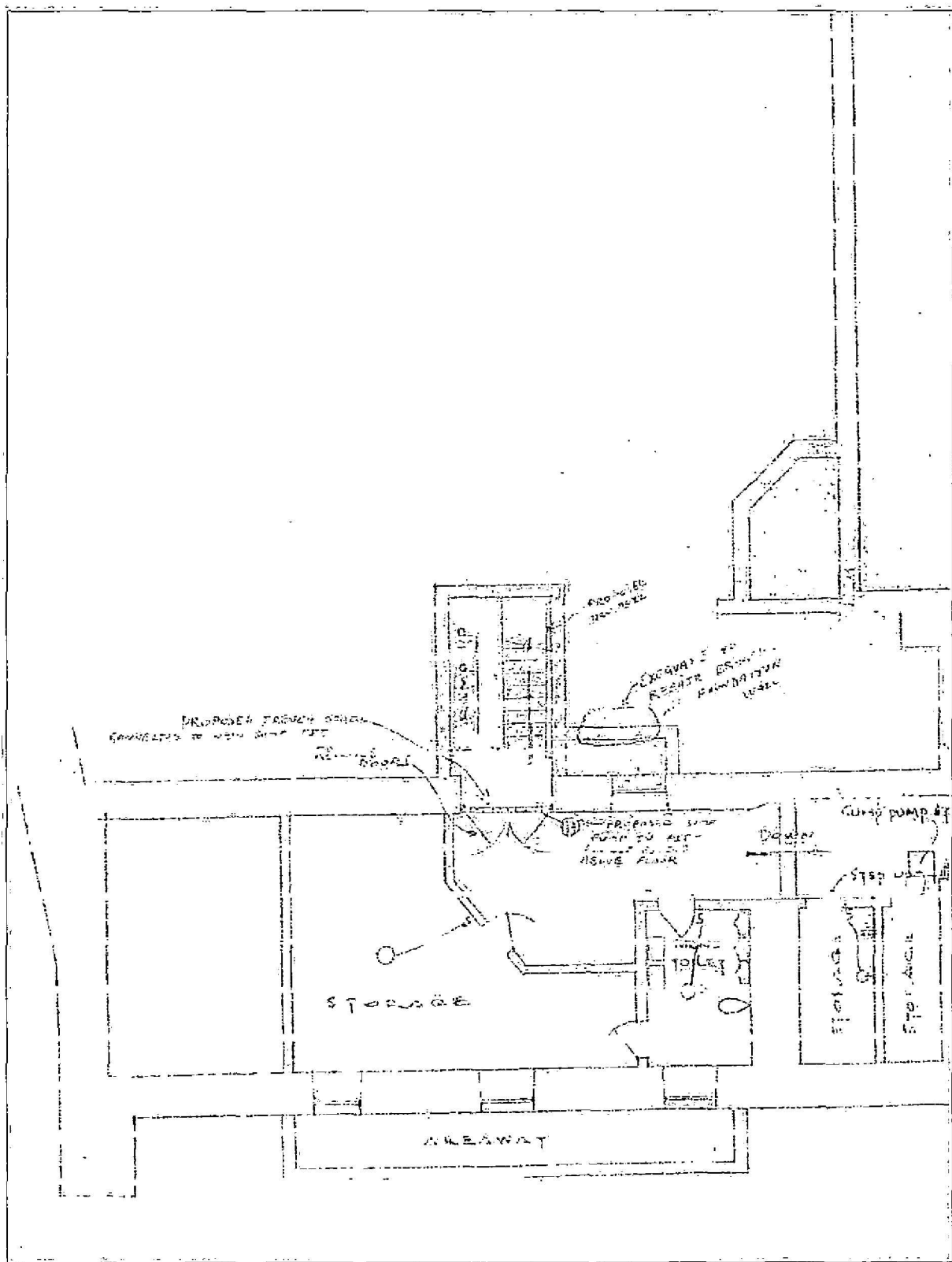


Figure 3 Basement Floor Plan of Building 298, Governors Island showing stabilization/excavation locations.

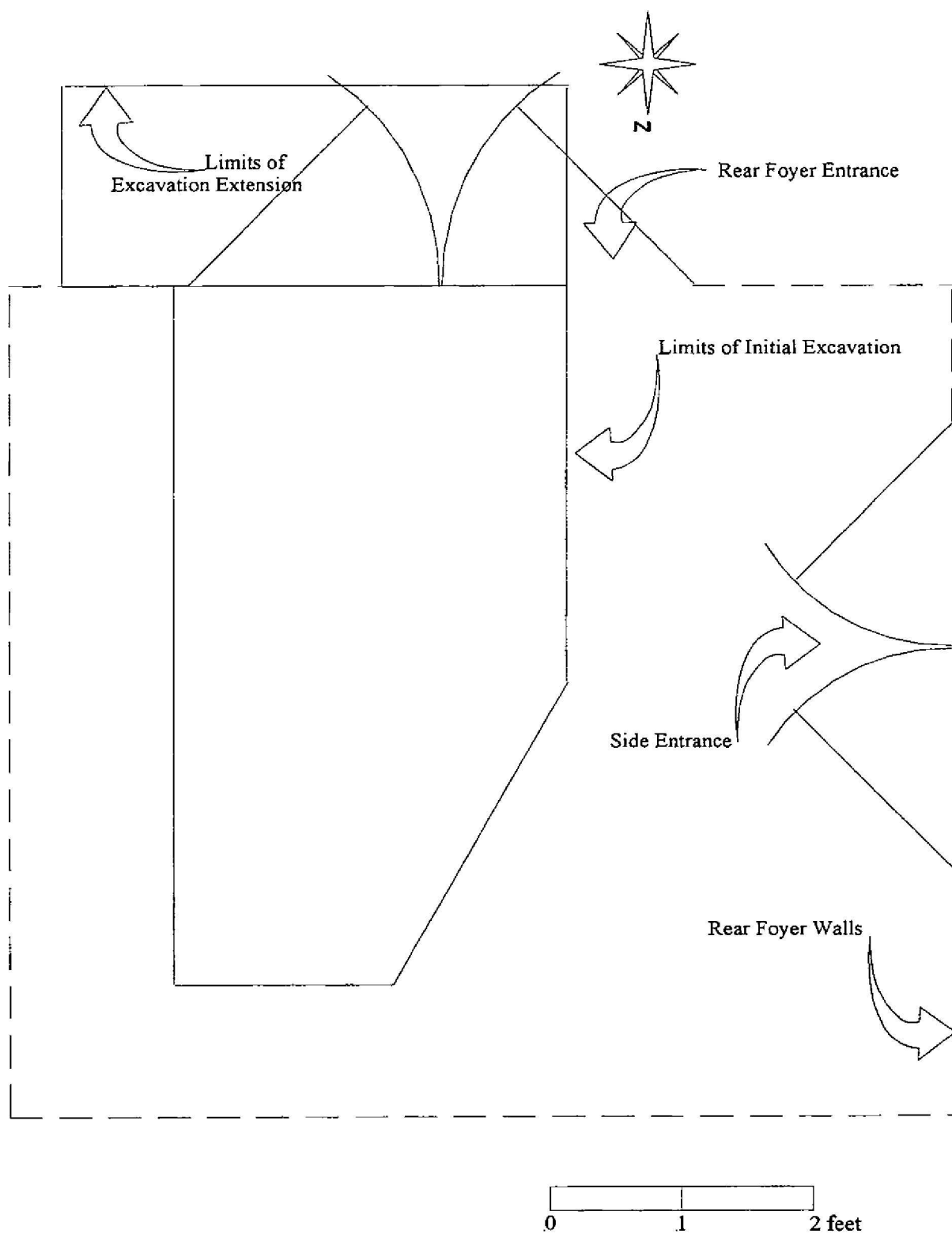


Figure 4 Excavations beneath mortared brick inside rear door of Building 298.

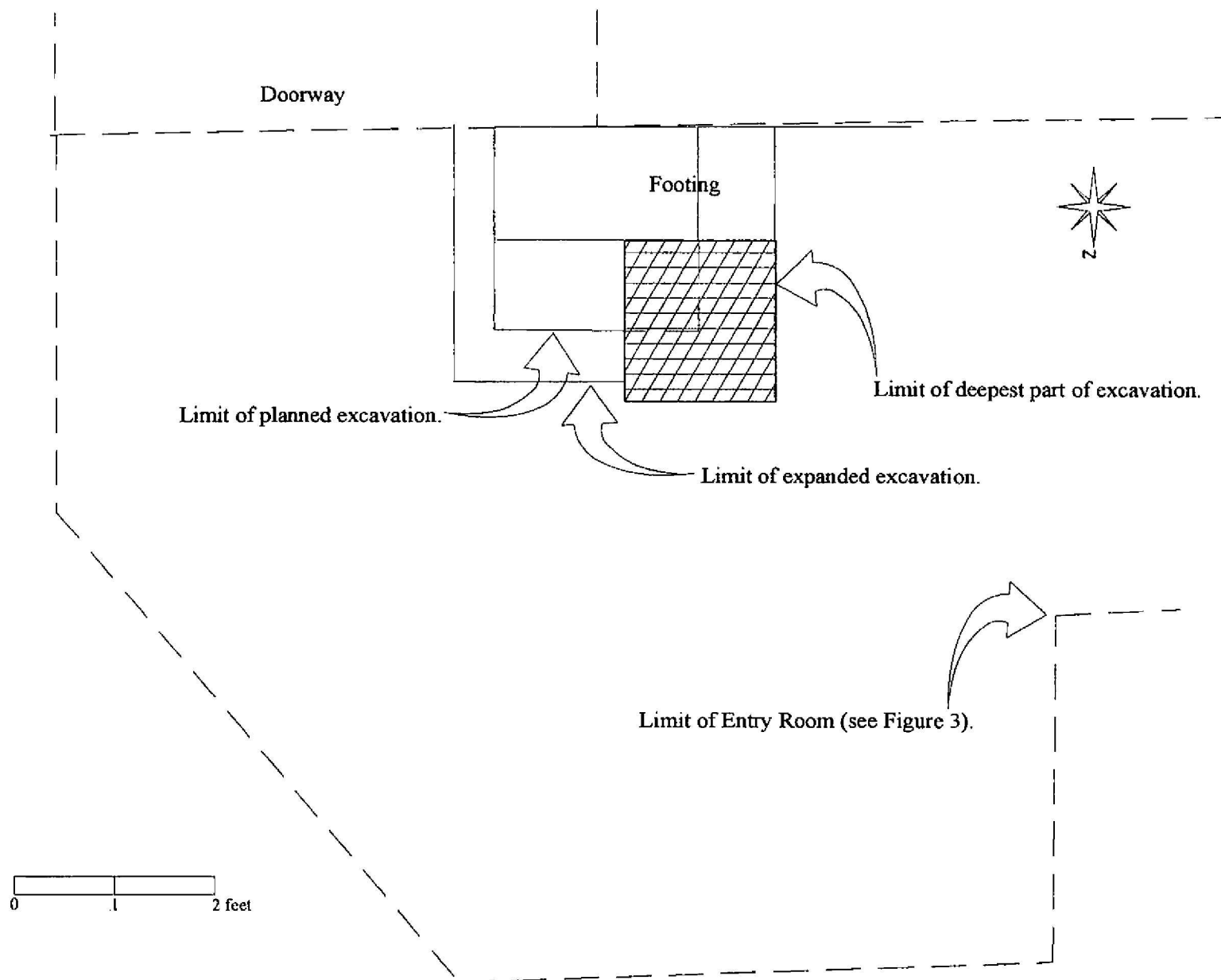


Figure 5 Excavations for new sump pump inside basement of Building 298.

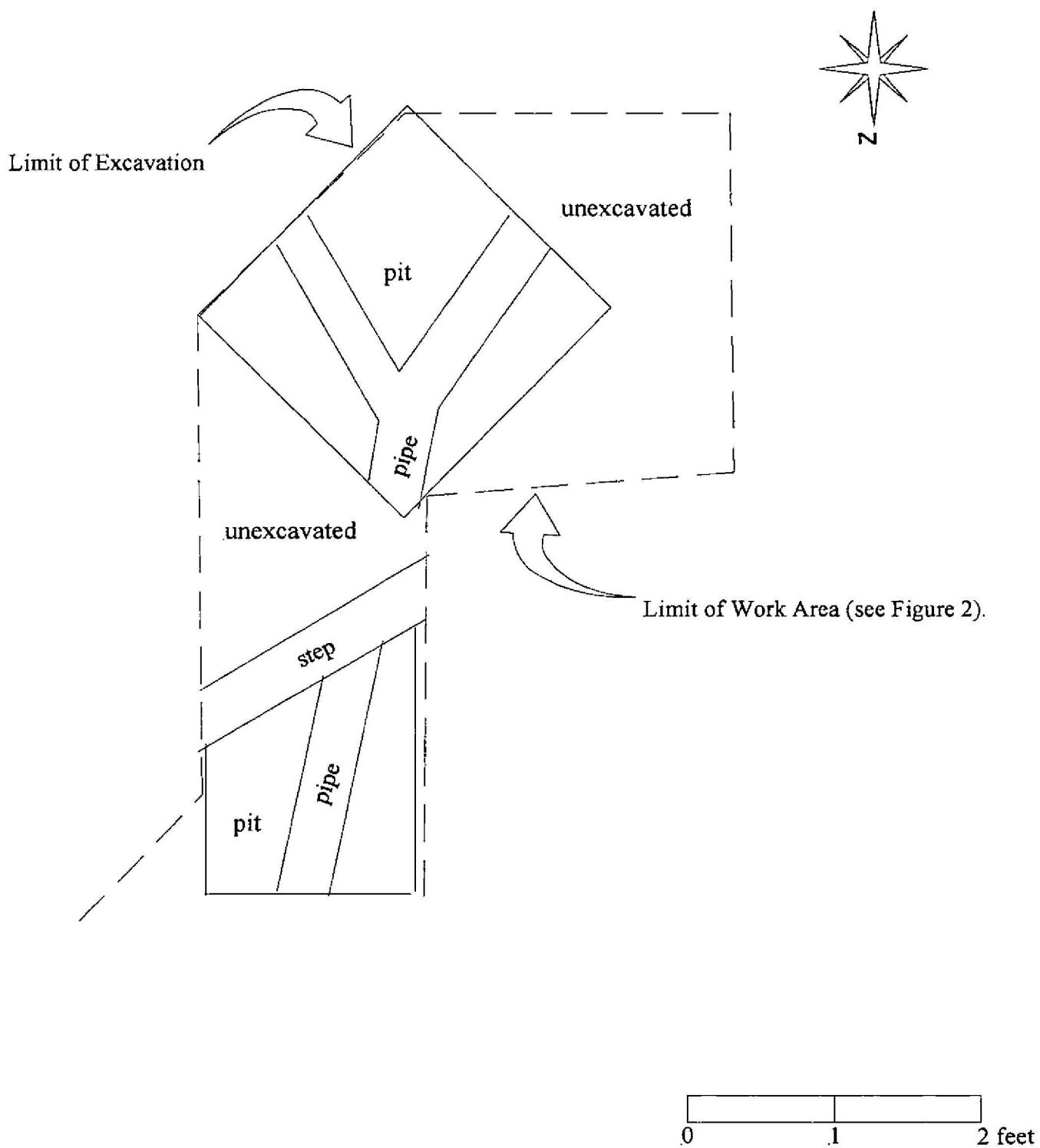


Figure 6 Excavations for new drain at the rear of the courtyard behind Building 298.

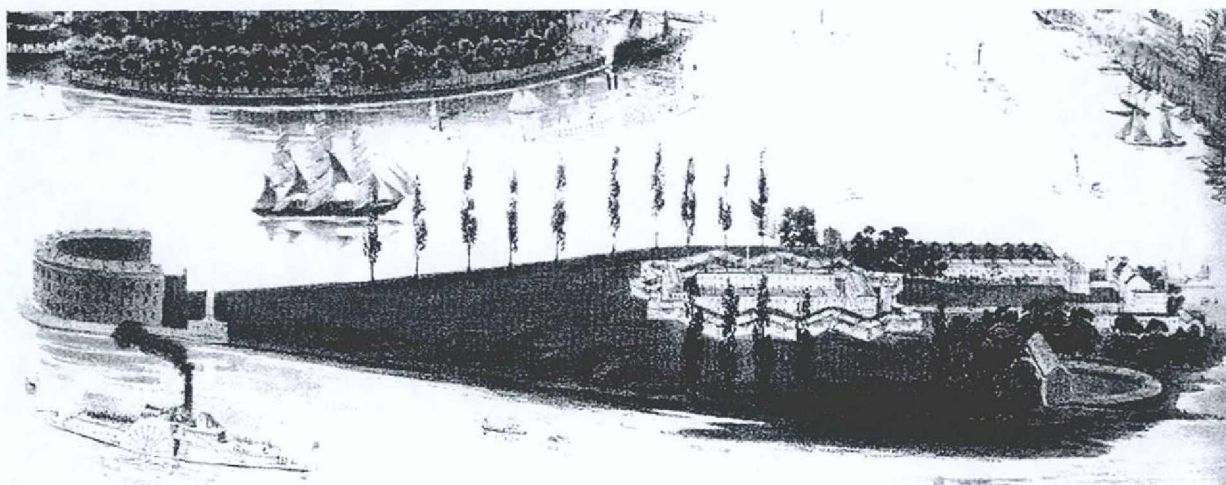


Plate 1 Lithograph of Governors Island in 1855 with Building 298 at the lower right (Bachmann).

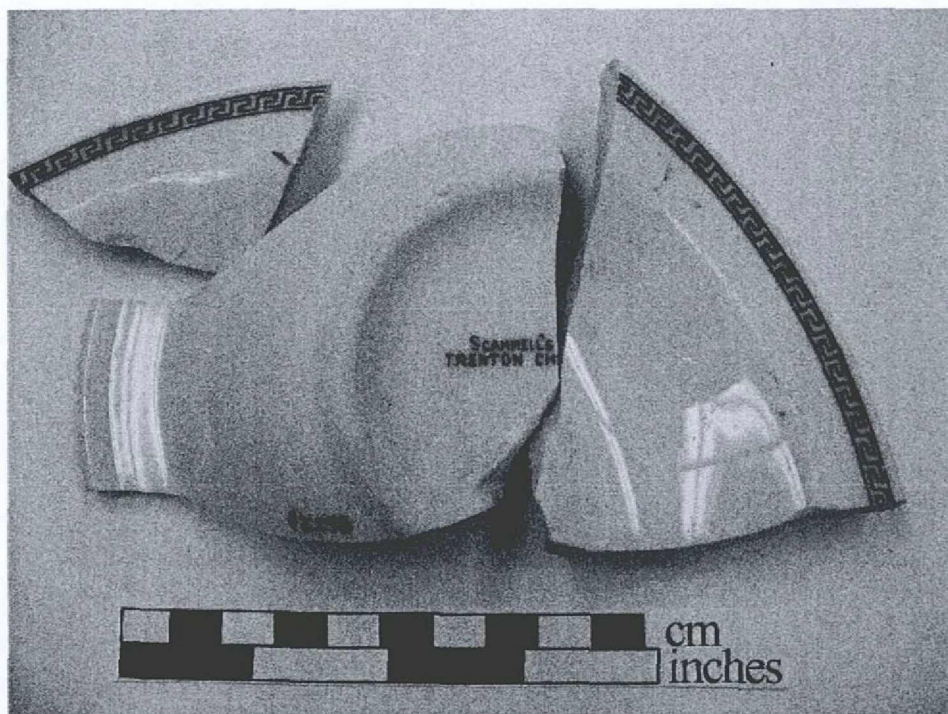


Plate 2 Three sherds recovered from foundation wall repair at Building 298 on Governors Island.

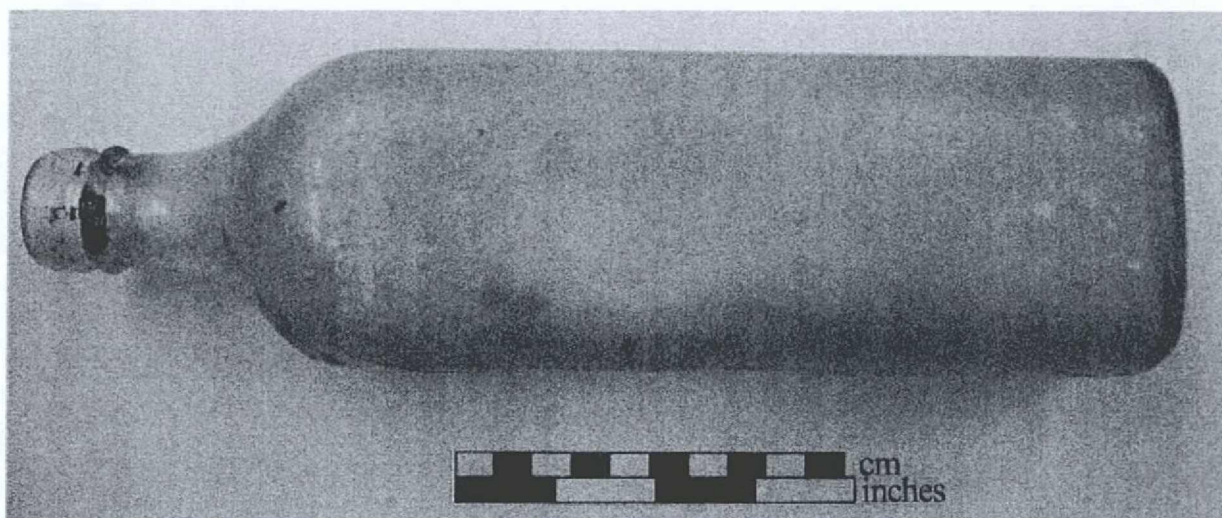


Plate 3 John Walker Scotch bottle recovered from foundation wall repair at Building 298 on Governors Island.



Plate 4 Close-up view of the paper label on the scotch bottle.

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Appendix A
SCOPE OF WORK

SCOPE OF WORK FOR
ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING
DURING STABILIZATION EXCAVATIONS
IN AND AROUND BUILDING 298
ON GOVERNORS ISLAND
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

December 30, 2004

The Governors Island Preservation and Education Corporation (GIPEC) is in the process of stabilizing Building 298 on Governors Island. This building is called the South Battery Club or Officer's Club and is located within the part of the Island designated as a New York City Landmark. The building was constructed as a defensive structure in 1812 and was later augmented. The attached schematic is copy (originals were previously sent) of the excavation plan. The following is a summary of the ground-intrusive work:

5. Excavation for repair to foundation wall in the rear of the building up to 5-6 feet deep and one foot outside and about 3 feet wide and about 5-6 feet deep on the interior.
6. Excavation for sump pump and drain connection inside basement of the building and trench drain outside the back door, disturbing from 18 inches to 2 feet down.
7. Excavation to replace the drain in the center of the rear courtyard, increasing the diameter from 12 to 24 inches.
8. Excavation for new 12-inch diameter drain in the rear of the courtyard with a pipe connection to disturb to about 2 feet deep. The pipe will be approximately 3 feet long and connect to an existing leader drain.

The archaeological work associated with these excavations will be conducted in a manner consistent with the New York Archaeological Council's Standards for Cultural Resources Investigations and the Curation of Archaeological Collections in New York State (1993) and their Monitoring Guidelines (adopted 2002), as well as the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission's Guidelines for Archaeological Work in New York City (2002).

The New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) previously determined that monitoring would be an appropriate alternative to archaeological testing since there is a low likelihood of encountering archaeological resources associated with the original construction of the fort within the planned stabilization excavations.

The archaeologist will work with the construction excavation contractor, Bedford Construction Corp., and will have the authority to halt their excavations to document any archaeological resources, should they be encountered. Should this be necessary, excavation will be temporarily suspended while the archaeologist hand excavates, measures and records the find(s). The amount of time necessary for this will be relative to the extent of the find(s) and the weather conditions. A minimum of one half hour will be needed for each pit, trench or trench segment where an archaeological resource is encountered. Should a feature such as a builder's trench be encountered, some of the soils will be screened for the recovery of artifacts. Structural features will be archaeologically exposed, without screening soils. Measurements will be taken for field drawings and the find(s) will be photographed.

Should the potential findings be determined to be archaeologically significant, the archaeologist will contact GIPEC, the SHPO and the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) to consult and offer the opportunity to visit the site. As with any historically important site, significant archaeological finds could be incorporated into interpretive programs and such recommendations would likely be made for Governors Island if such finds are encountered, possibly altering construction plans midstream. Any changes to the construction plan will also be archaeologically evaluated.

LINDA STONE, MA, RPA

Once the archaeologist has completed any field documentation, the contractor may continue with their excavations. Once the work is completed and any analyses are completed, the archaeological work will be summarized in a report on archaeological monitoring that will be prepared for review by GIPEC, SHPO and LPC.

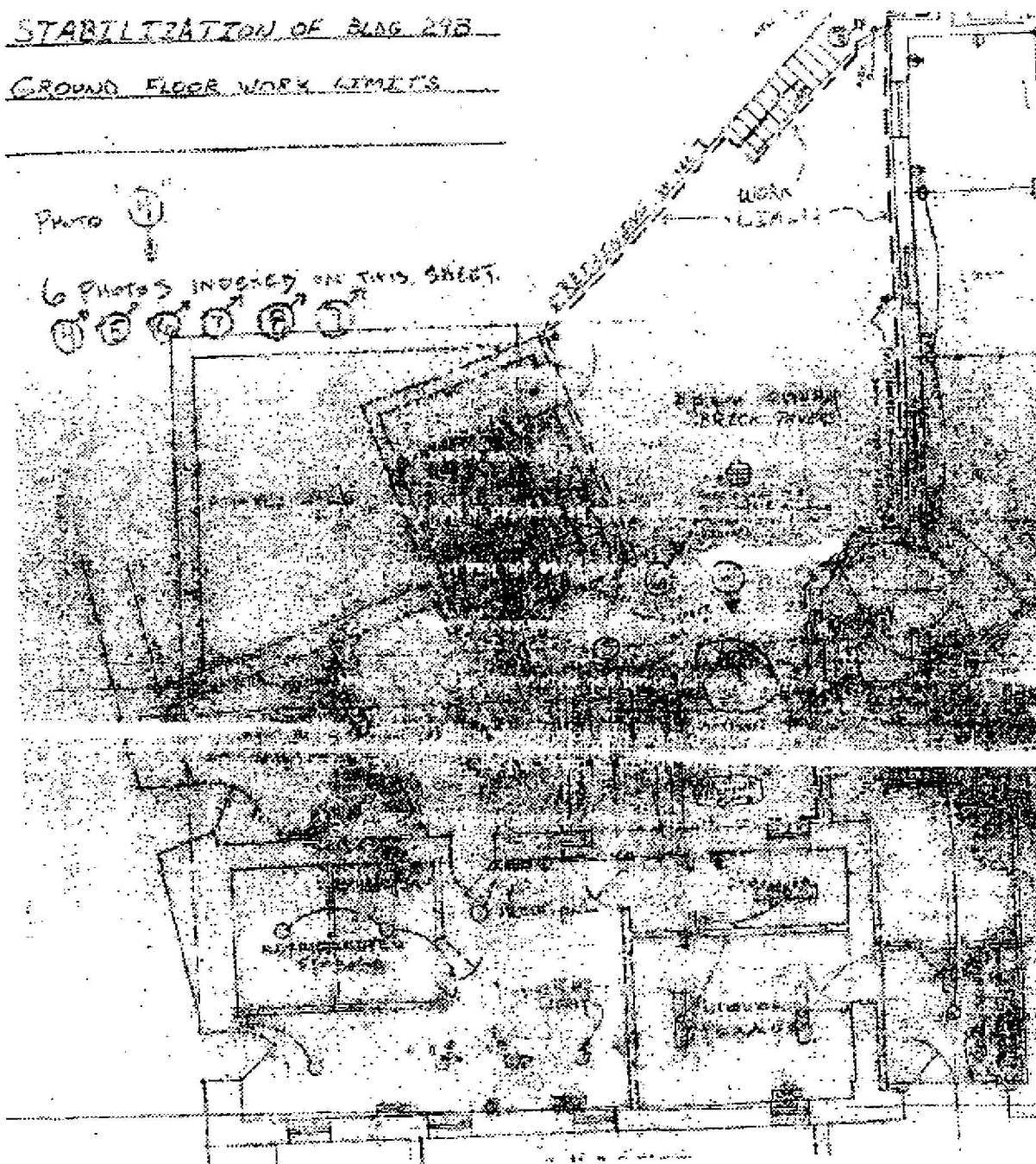
STABILIZATION OF BLDG 29B

GROUND FLOOR WORK LIMITS

PHOTO ①

6 PHOTOS INDEXED ON THIS SHEET.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥



STABILIZATION OF BLDG 29R

BASEMENT WORK LIMITS

Photo ① SHOWS LOCATION OF WASTE
ENCLOSURE PHOTO WAS TAKEN

3 PHOTOS INDEXED ON THIS SHEET

① ② ③

