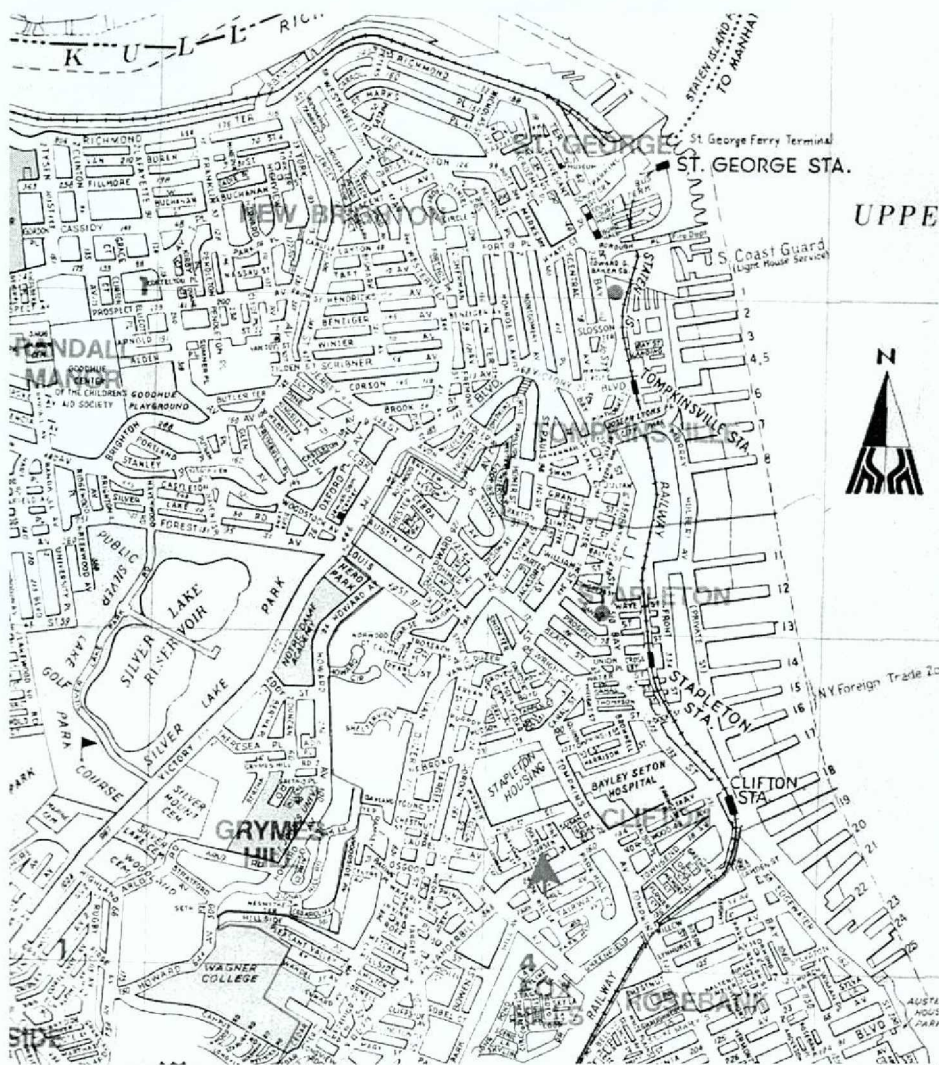


6944R  
Bergoffen  
2006

**NEW 120<sup>TH</sup> POLICE PRECINCT**  
**BLOCK 556, LOT 100**  
**BOROUGH OF STATEN ISLAND**  
**PHASE IA ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT REPORT**

120 Precinct NYPD - LA-CEQR-R



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Date: July 21, 2006

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## II. INTRODUCTION – PROJECT AND SITE DESCRIPTION

The New York City Police Department proposes to erect a new 120<sup>th</sup> Police Precinct on block 556 lot 100 in the Stapleton district of Staten Island, approximately two miles south of the current facility on Richmond Terrace in St. George (Front cover, and Figs. 1, 2, and 3). Now occupied by a field and trees, the project site measures approximately 305.67 feet on the north (Hill Street); 374.39 feet on the west; 303.40 on the south, and 310 feet on the east, encompassing a total of 104,659 square feet (DDC 1803B; Figs. 4, 5, and 6). The project site lot is bordered as follows: on the north by Hill Street; on the west, by the ball court three-story building of Public School 49, also known as the Bertha A. Dreyfuss Junior High School; on the south by part of block 557, which is occupied by various residential buildings, and on the east, by rows of one and two story residences around Susan Court and Thelma Court, also on block 556. East of these residences is Tompkins Avenue. On the opposite, north side of Hill Street, are the Stapleton Housing Complex (opened 1962) and P.S. 14. On the east side of Tompkins Avenue are St. Elizabeth Ann's Health Care and Rehabilitation Center, which is part of St. Vincent Catholic Medical Centers, and, south of Hill Street, the New York Foundling Hospital, formerly the Mariner's Family Asylum (Fig. 7). The Bayley-Seton Hospital is the present-day successor of the Seaman's Retreat (Fig. 8). It was purchased from the federal government in 1981 by the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul (LPC 1985, 5). Two of the buildings on the property were landmarked in 1985: the main building, building 7, in Greek Revival style (1837, with later additions, Fig. 9), and the nearby Physician-in-Chief's Residence, (building 10) built in 1842, in the same style as the hospital (Dolkart and Postal 2004, 341; Fig. 8).

The new three-story precinct station would occupy approximately 62,338 sf and include adequately sized and modern administrative spaces, locker rooms, lavatories, dormitories, shower facilities, equipment storage areas, an interrogation room, prisoner detention areas, and a muster room. The facility would also include a two-story, above-grade parking structure as well as an at-grade parking lot with up to one hundred and twenty-six accessory parking spaces. The easternmost portion of the station house is about eighty-four feet from the property line and landscaping and open parking are



provided as a buffer from the adjacent residential buildings. The southwest corner of the lot will not be impacted by the proposed construction (Fig. 3).

The Landmarks Preservation Commission has flagged the project site as potentially archaeologically sensitive for the recovery of the remains of a 19<sup>th</sup> century cemetery. This report has determined that while the documentary record, with respect to the existence of burials still present on the project site, is inconclusive, we can not rule out the possibility, and it is therefore recommended that field testing be conducted prior to the commencement of any construction work. Because the history of project site is hardly known and not well recorded, the researcher conducted several interviews, as well as consulting all repositories that might potentially contain information. The Staten Island Historical Society in Richmondtown does not possess any materials connected with either the Seaman's Fund and Retreat or with the Mariner's Family Society, according to the librarian. There is also a small archive at the Seaman's Society for Children and Families, but this organization is not connected to the earlier Mariner's Family Society, in spite of its name and the fact that it is headquartered in Staten Island (see: <http://www.rootsweb.com/~nyrichmo/ssh.html>).

The principal resources and individuals consulted in the creation of this report were:

The Department of Records, Richmond County, Deeds and Conveyances, file maps

National Archives

New York Historical Society

New York Public Library, Map Division, Local History and Genealogy, microfilms

Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences (S.I.I.A.S.)

Dora Arslanian, Director, Silver Mount Cemetery

Carlotta Defillo, Librarian, Staten Island Historical Society

Marjorie Johnson, Friends of Abandoned Cemeteries of Staten Island

Lisa Maddalone, Director, Oceanview Cemetery, Staten Island

Elizabeth Meade, Graduate Student

Lynn A. Rogers, Friends of Abandoned Cemeteries of Staten Island

Patricia M. Salmon, Curator of History, S.I.I.A.S.

Barnett Shepherd, former Executive Director of the Staten Island Historic Society

Bruno Seliste, Investigator, Division of Cemeteries, State of New York  
Richard L. Simpson, Historian for Moravian Cemetery

### III. ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING AND PREHISTORIC PERIODS

The project site is located near the northeast shore of Staten Island not far from the foot of Grymes Hill, which reaches a height of 310 feet above msl and is the second highest point on the Island after Todt Hill (Front cover). The shoreline is a short distance to the east, just beyond the line of Bay Street. Until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, a stream ran a couple of blocks west of the project site, just east of Gorden Street, crossing Warren Street near the northwest corner of the present-day Stapleton Housing complex, a short distance from the edge of the former property of the Seamen's Retreat (Fig. 10). This brook turned east to continue down Canal Street. Northwest of the project site is the manmade Silver Lake, a reservoir created in 1917 in Silver Lake Park. The insert map in Davis 1872 indicates a small pond immediately north / northeast of the project site as well.

The project site is a steeply inclined hill known to some in the neighborhood as "Dix Hill" after a local land owner.<sup>1</sup> The ground peaks in the southwest corner at 94 feet above msl, declining toward the northwest, where the elevation varies from about 40 to 43 feet above msl., and to the east where it varies from 68.3 feet at the southeast to 44.7 feet on the northeast (DDC 1803B, sheet 2). Near the northwest corner of the site, a second small, conical knoll rises to an elevation of approximately 56 feet above msl. But neither the contours of the site nor any part of the ground surface is discernable from the street, as the lot is densely overgrown with numerous trees and high weeds, and moreover is surrounded by a towering chain-link fence.

Many prehistoric sites have been documented in northeastern Staten Island. Within less than one mile from the project site are, for instance:

NYSM #4613 - three Woodland period campsites around Silver Lake, noted by both Skinner and Parker (Boesch 1994, number 68);

NYSM #4614 - a Woodland period campsite at Harbor Hill (Boesch 1994, number 66);

NYSM #8972 - a site near the intersection of St. Pauls and Cebra Avenues (HPI 1998, 9);

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<sup>1</sup> Marjorie Johnson, pers. comm. June 1, 2006.

NYSM #6956 – a campsite on Prospect Street west of the intersection with Bay Street (HPI 1998, 9).

NYSM #4629, a Woodland period campsite at Stuyvesant Place (Boesch 1994, number 69)

Boesch number 103 – Woodland period remains in Clifton, in the Site file listing of the SIIAS;

Boesch number 115 – a Woodland period camp site in Tompkinsville.

The Indians of the Archaic Period (ca. 8,000-1,000 B.C.) preferred coastal locations on islands, at the head of estuaries, or by the seashore. Marshlands, rivers and bays contained plentiful supplies of shellfish, fish and wild fowl. The Indians particularly favored elevated, well-drained tracts of land. The succeeding Woodland period, however, is the best attested culture phase in the vicinity of the project site. Beginning around 3,000 years ago, the first 1,000 years of this era, the Early Woodland period, is characterized by the introduction of pottery and the disappearance of the carved steatite vessels used during the preceding Transitional era. The increase in shellfish collection during this period, thought to indicate growing sedenterization, is attested by the huge piles of discarded shells called middens found in the harvesting localities. Domestication of plants is thought to have followed during the succeeding 1,000 years known as the Middle Woodland period. During the Late Woodland period, ca. 900 to 1,600 C.E., horticulture became the primary source of subsistence and permanent villages are attested. With the development of agriculture during the Late Woodland Period, the Indians created large, permanent or semi-permanent palisaded settlements although they still traveled seasonally to their hunting or fishing camps on the shore.

According to Boesch's model, highly sensitive locations for prehistoric remains would possess at least three of his list of characteristics, including the presence of known sites or surface finds in the "immediate vicinity" of a project site; the existence of a nearby freshwater source, and a location on high ground (Boesch 1996, 22). Although the project site possesses these characteristics, it is rather steep and might not have been considered well-suited for a settlement. It might have been used as a temporary encampment or food processing station. The site has never been developed except

possibly as a cemetery connected with a hospital for largely indigent sailors. If indeed there was a cemetery of this kind on the project site lot, with many burials, then it is likely that any potential prehistoric remains would have been disturbed. If not, then prehistoric remains may yet be found here. In any case, as will be demonstrated below, it will be necessary to conduct field testing in order to check for burials. The site's prehistoric potential then, will also be evaluated through the excavation of the test pits required.



#### IV. HISTORICAL PERIODS

Research of historic maps indicated that the project site was never developed except probably as a burial ground associated either with the Seaman's Fund and Retreat or with the Mariners Family Society or both. The present report brings together all the data about these cemeteries contained in secondary sources and adds some important new information from primary sources, along with the writer's own analyses.

In 1831, the newly formed Board of Trustees of the marine hospital known as the Seaman's Fund and Retreat purchased 36 acres of farmland from Cornelius Corson for \$10,000, with a farmhouse on the land standing near present-day Bay Street (the grantee was actually the State of New York, Liber T, pages 165, 170, July 1, 1831; LPC 1985, 2). The farmhouse was converted and enlarged to serve as the first hospital building.<sup>2</sup> The land had been in the Corson family since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Its location was eminently suitable for a marine hospital as it included water frontage, which allowed stricken seamen to be transferred directly by "water taxi" from their vessels to the hospital's newly refurbished pier (Zavin 1986, 3-3).

The creation of the village of Stapleton to the west, followed the hospital by a couple of years. In 1833 Minthorne Tompkins (son of Governor Daniel Tompkins, the developer of Tompkinsville), and W.J. Staples, after whom the village was named, purchased land from Cornelius Vanderbilt and his brothers and sisters to develop for housing (Zavin and Gilbertson 1986, 29; Steinmeyer 1987, 67). By 1836, the streets and lots of the village were laid out. The village was previously known as New Ferry, and sometimes also called Second Landing after the steamboat ferry landing established there by Cornelius Vanderbilt. By the early 1850s, two German-American breweries had opened in the village, taking advantage of the available spring water.

Although the Seaman's Retreat was the earlier of the two marine hospitals founded on Staten Island in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is often confused with the more famous Snug Harbor, created as a home for aged and disabled sailors. But the Retreat was

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<sup>2</sup> This deed is for 36 acres, as noted in LPC 1985, 2, and at the sale in 1882, 36 acres is again stated as the size of the original land purchase from Richard Corson; yet a number of sources record 40 acres as the property's size, i.e. Seamen's Retreat 1854, 4 and Dripps 1872. W.H. Vanderbilt's land adjoining the hospital's grounds to the south was acquired for the new U.S. Marine Hospital only in 1931 (Nat'l Register n.d.)

actually the first hospital devoted solely to the care of seamen in New York (Zavin 1986, 2-7). Until 1882, when the port entry tax was revoked and the property was sold, the Retreat was a state institution financed by the head tax on seamen that had been in existence since 1779. The proceeds of that tax were allocated to the new hospital thanks to "An Act to Provide for Sick and Disabled Seamen" passed by the New York State Legislature April 22, 1831 (LPC 1985, 1; Zavin 1986, 2-6). As the LPC's Designation report points out (1985, 2), the seamen's monthly payment of twenty cents, used to fund the hospital, in effect constituted the county's "first pre-paid health plan".

The Seamen's Retreat may sometimes be confused with the Quarantine as well, since the latter was also called the Marine Hospital and was located at Tompkinsville, the next village to the north of Stapleton. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a quarantine law was enacted that required ships carrying individuals infected with contagious diseases to stop at Bedloes Island and be quarantined. Briefly relocated to Governor's Island in the 1790s, the quarantine was moved in 1801 to Stapleton. Here it remained for over sixty years in spite of local resistance that climaxed, in 1857, when a mob burned the facilities down. The county had to pay one hundred thousand dollars to the state in damages (Quarantine 1879).

The seamen admitted to the Seamen's Retreat hospital suffered from many chronic as well as fatal diseases, but the largest number was admitted for tuberculosis, and this was by far the biggest killer. Contrary to what one might expect, venereal disease, though well represented in the patient population, was not more common than many other afflictions. One of the great contributions to medicine made at the Retreat was in connection with this "typical" sailor's illness. Bacteriological research began in 1887 with the establishment of the "hygienic lab" set up in the main building. In 1927, the U.S. Public Health Service's Venereal Disease lab was set up, and in 1943, Dr. John Mahony, Director of the lab, discovered the efficacy of penicillin in the treatment of the illness (Zavin 1981, 5; Nat'l Register n.d.). More broadly, the influential laboratory is credited with laying "the groundwork for the program of public health and medical research of the National Institutes of Health" (LPC 1985, 4).

It was clear from the beginning that the Corsen farm building would not be large enough to accommodate the numbers of patients expected. But although it was almost

immediately expanded, it still proved inadequate, and it was therefore decided to build a new, three-story brick hospital. This came to be known as the "Hill Hospital" because it was erected on the "summit of an elevation approximately one thousand feet from the shore", in the approximate location of present-day building 13 (Figs. 4 and 8; Seaman's Retreat Physicians 1862, 36; Zavin 1981, 3-18-19). This second hospital building, completed in 1832, was partly converted to a lunatic asylum in 1841 (Seaman's Retreat 1854, 4). An oven was also added and another part of the building then served as the hospital bakery. Zavin also noted that in the 1840s, there were segregated wards for colored patients in this building (Ibid.). On the 1887A Beers map (Fig. 11), the old hill hospital is designated "Carp. Shop", i.e. carpenter shop. A third, three-story building, erected in 1837, the current building 7, would become the hospital's main facility. Lateral wings of eight bays were added in 1847-48 on the north side, and 1852-53 on the south (Nat'l Register). The Chief Physician's house, built of dark grey granite to harmonize with the main building, was completed in 1842. The "Dead House", built in 1849 (below) and shown on the 1874 and 1887A Beers maps, was located behind the Hill Hospital. In addition, there were barns, out-houses, and offices on the hospital's property (Report 1854, 4). Twelve acres were reserved for growing "vegetables and garden stuff" (Report 1854, 7). This corresponds roughly to the area of the property west of the line of Tompkins Avenue and south of Hill Street, and includes the project site. But note that Tompkins Avenue – formerly Center Street ("Centre" on the Beers maps) -- was not built until the final years of the Retreat's existence (between 1877 and 1887). It is unclear how the remaining acres north of Hill Street were used; possibly for pasturage.

Perhaps because they so badly wanted to persuade the Retreat to give over some of its farm land for the erection of a "home for old ladies", the Building Committee of the Mariners Family Industrial Society claimed that "most of the farm of the retreat has proved of little or no profit for farming" (Beers 1874 and 1887; Hawkins 1865, 42). But in the 1870s, the farm appears to have been doing quite well. "From the garden and field: 800 cabbages, 500 bushels turnips, 30 bushels corn, 20 bushels carrots, 15 bushels beets, 12 bushels parsnips, 10 tons hay pasturage rented \$116.25" states the Retreat's annual Report for 1876, and the report for 1877 is equally impressive (Seaman's Physicians 1876, 13). The Mariner's Family Asylum, as it was also called, was a private charity

founded in 1843 to care for destitute mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, and widows of seamen. They did finally succeed in obtaining a plot for the erection of their home on the east side of Tompkins Avenue just south of the line of Hill Street, and also acreage on the west side of Tompkins Avenue, although it should be noted that the Avenue at that time did not yet exist. The Asylum's building, which still stands but is now occupied by the New York Founding Hospital, was erected in 1852 (Fig. 7). It served a "family" of between thirty-five to forty residents. Judging by Chief Physician Thomas Moffatt's description (Seamen's Physicians 1862, 51), the Asylum continued to farm the land that it received from the Seaman's Retreat: "The grounds, consisting of five acres, are highly cultivated, producing an ample supply of fruits and vegetables". This land encompassed the project site, but the small cemetery possibly belonging to the Asylum and marked "cem." on the 1874 and 1887A Beers maps (Figs. 10 and 11), was situated on the south property line immediately west of Tompkins Street, outside the boundaries of the project site.

After several years of financial difficulties, the property of the Seaman's Retreat was sold December 23, 1882 (Liber 144, page 490) by the State of New York to the Marine Society of the City of New York by virtue of "An Act making appropriations for certain expenses of government and supplying deficiencies in former appropriations". The act named as beneficiaries the Mariners Family Asylum, the Society for the Relief of Destitute Children of Seamen at Staten Island, and the Marine Society of the City of New York. In this sale, however, the Seamen's Retreat retained six of the original thirty-six acres of land purchased from Cornelius Corson. "Mariner's Family Asylum" is written over a large area, including the project site, on the 1901 Board and 1907 Robinson maps (Figs. 14 and 15). This corresponds to the six unsold acres, which was apparently being leased by the Asylum until ca. 1907 / 1917 (see below, on the removal of the Asylum's cemetery in 1907). By 1917, the area west of Tompkins Avenue that includes the project site is designated on the Bromley map as "State of New York" while the remaining area west of the project site is marked "Marine Society of New York". The 1901 Board and 1907 Robinson maps do not note any cemetery, large or small, between Tompkins Avenue and later Warren Street. But we can not exclude the possibility that either or both the Marine Family Asylum or / and the U.S. Marine Hospital -- which began leasing the

hospital property in 1883 -- used part of the area containing the project site as a burial ground (LPC 1985, 1; Nat'l Register n.d.) After all, the project site is depicted as part of a large cemetery on the 1887B Beers map, and on the 1889 and 1895 Colton maps (Figs. 12 and 13). On the other hand, the "CEM." closer to Center Street (Tompkins Avenue) printed on the 1887B map may designate only the small square area on the southern edge of the green, that is, the supposed Mariner's Family Cemetery. The rest of this tract, including the project site, may have been simply part of the farm. The other two maps, however, show a burial ground occupying the entire area west of Tompkins Avenue as far as the Retreat's west property line and extending northward approximately to the line of today's Hill Street.

Fortunately, it is possible to document the removal of the burials of the Mariner's Family Asylum cemetery -- wherever it was -- to the Moravian Cemetery, thanks to the research conducted by the Moravian Cemetery's historian, Richard Simpson (Fig. 16). According to the cemetery's records of burials removed from other cemeteries and re-buried at Moravian, burials from the Mariner's Family Asylum Cemetery in Stapleton (so indicated) were removed on four occasions in November and December 1907: 15 women on November 16; 19 on November 21; 36 on December 7, and 37 on December 16, making a total of 107 burials. We do not know why the burials were moved at this time; perhaps the Federal government's purchase of the hospital in 1903 had something to do with it (Zavin 1981, 2; or in 1902, Nat'l Register n.d.). The names and death dates of the 107 individuals, which range from 1860 to the late 1890s are listed as having been interred in section G of the Moravian cemetery, but their location is unknown. Prior to the removal, the Mariner's home had already purchased plots at Moravian in section G: four on December 20, 1897 and another two plots on February 15, 1904. There are an additional 87 burials listed in the records as having been interred in section G, that is, not moved from the earlier cemetery. These have individual markers. There are four burials that predate the 1897 purchase date of the burial plots, but they have different headstones from the rest, and the burials were oriented north -- south rather than east -- west, like all the others. The stones are larger and they were placed horizontally and have been partly buried. Simpson located three and suspects that the fourth must be nearby but simply buried. Although they are not recorded as such, clearly these burials must have been



moved from the Asylum's cemetery, and Simpson plausibly suggests that the four horizontal stones were brought from that cemetery when the corresponding burials were removed. There are no headstones for the group of 107 burials actually recorded as having been moved from the Asylum cemetery, and the size of the six burial plots purchased would not be large enough for the 194 burials total -- assuming that the remains were re-interred individually.<sup>3</sup> Although the location of the group of burials is still a mystery, they easily account (along with the four marked burials) for the total number of deaths that probably occurred at the Asylum before 1897, judging by the fact that only thirteen of the "Asylum family" had died by 1864 (Hawkins 1865, 64, 65, 70, 71, 76). The Asylum continued in use until the early 1970s, but after 1959, the institution buried only three more old ladies at Moravian: one in 1966, and two in 1985 (the latter both cremations). Perhaps those who died in the last decade or so of the Asylum's existence were interred elsewhere by their families. Some earlier residents may also have been taken away for burial, but the records of interments between 1897 and 1959, together with records of annual deaths from earlier in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (above), nevertheless appear to give a fairly good indication of the mortality rate at the Asylum. The following Tables IA and IB show that typically, between zero and two individuals died each year.

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<sup>3</sup> The density of burials in cemeteries of course may vary greatly. The average, in modern cemeteries is about one thousand per acre, but the number can be even higher: Logan City Cemetery in Utah, established in 1865, contains 1,280 burials per acre; [www.ci.logan.ut.us/parksrec/Cemetery/information.html](http://www.ci.logan.ut.us/parksrec/Cemetery/information.html).

Table IA Moravian Cemetery – Section G, Mariner's Family Asylum, 1897-1929

Year	Number of interments					
	0	1	2	3	4	5
1897		x				
1898		x				
1899	x					
1900			x			
1901				x		
1902			x			
1903					x	
1904		x				
1905				x		
1906		x				
1907	x					
1908	x					
1909			x			
1910		x				
1911			x			
1912					x	
1913		x				
1914			x			
1915		x				
1916			x			
1917		x				
1918			x			
1919		x				
1920		x				
1921		x				
1922		x				
1923		x				
1924		x				
1925		x				
1926	x					
1927		x				
1928		x				
1929		x				
Subtotal	4	18	7	2	2	0

Table IB Moravian Cemetery – Section G, Mariner's Family Asylum, 1930-1959

Year	Number of interments					
	0	1	2	3	4	5
1930		x				
1931		x				
1932			x			
1933						x
1934				x		
1935		x				
1936		x				
1937		x				
1938	x					
1939		x				
1940	x					
1941			x			
1942				x		
1943		x				
1944		x				
1945		x				
1946		x				
1947		x				
1948		x				
1949	x					
1950		x				
1951	x					
1952		x				
1953	x					
1954		x				
1955	x					
1956		x				
1957		x				
1958		x				
1959		x				
Subtotal	9	16	2	2	0	1
Total	13	34	9	4	2	1

The Mariner's Family Asylum and the Seamen's Retreat had in common that they provided care for individuals with few if any resources, and in the case of the sailors -- many of whom were foreign -- usually no family, or no family nearby. Consequently the burials and the headstones in both cemeteries were probably of a simple "institutional" variety. The Asylum's cemetery, though, would have contained only old women, while the Seamen's Retreat Cemetery contained only men. Although the Retreat's patients could be either old or young, and most recovered, not infrequently, a broken-down old sailor might come to the Retreat and "hope to remain undisturbed, and ... at length compose himself for the last sleep, and have the rights of Christian sepulture performed for him, and a grave with his shipmates" (Seaman's Physicians 1858, 6). Very few individuals attended the dead at the Retreat. The orderly men, who were essentially laborers and were charged with cleaning and whitewashing the premises, were also required to "remove dead from the home to the examining room [where autopsies were performed]<sup>4</sup> and from thence to the grave." (Zavin 1981, 3-29). One of the carpenter's regular activities -- mentioned in almost every one of the Superintendent's weekly reports -- was to produce coffins, and we may surmise that these, as well as the cost of the burial itself, was assumed by the institution. "Funeral services are performed by the Chaplain, who attends the remains to the place of interment." (Seaman's Physicians 1862, 60).

The original Seaman's Retreat cemetery was located a "short distance west of the hill hospital", according to Zavin (1981, 3-19), whose unpublished study on the Seaman's Retreat Hospital is the only one to include any detailed information on the burial ground. Zavin further related (1981, 3-19), regarding the cemetery's location, that by 1837 the first burial ground was "nearly filled up and the trustees moved the boundary fence 60 to 70 feet to the west". In 1847, according to Zavin, the cemetery was expanded again. Unfortunately, she did not cite her source(s) for either of these events and we were not able to verify them.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The names of many though by no means all of those interred in the Seamen's Retreat Cemetery are preserved in a death register for the years 1831-73 kept at the National Archives, and burial records for the period 1831-1863 may be viewed online at [www.rootsweb.com/~nyrichmo/facsi/facsi\\_cemeteries.shtml](http://www.rootsweb.com/~nyrichmo/facsi/facsi_cemeteries.shtml). A number of patient registers have survived, and there are also autopsy reports preserved in the National Archives.

<sup>5</sup> The writer contacted Ms. Zavin by telephone on June 10, 2006, but due to illness, she was unable to supply any further details or references.

In 1849, the cemetery was moved to a new location. According to Zavin, the “earlier burials were disinterred and the land incorporated into the Retreat’s farm. The new burying ground was probably the area indicated on the 1887 map” (the Beers map). She noted that a road built in 1851, indicated in broken outline on the 1887 Beers map, connected the retreat to the cemetery grounds west of Center Street. The “removal of the burying ground” is first mentioned as part of the report of the Visiting Committee, May 12, 1849, details of which were deferred to the next meeting. The Minutes of the Board of Trustees for Jun 12, 1849 then records:

On motion Resolved that the burying ground be changed from its present location and hereafter the interments be made at the extreme end of the ground belonging to the Retreat. And the Superintendent be instructed to have the headstones put up by order of the Trustees removed and the ground levelled and seeded as far as practicable.

And a note in the margin reads “Removal Burying ground”. That a new burial ground was indeed created is confirmed by the entry for the Report of the Superintendent<sup>6</sup> for the October 9<sup>th</sup>, 1849 meeting:

So much of this report as relates to the erecting a (*sic*) high fence around the new burial ground – the erecting of a dead house separate from the Hospital and the removal of the gatehouse ... referred to the Farm Committee.

Note the “new” burial ground. This citation also gives us the 1849 date for the erection of the Dead House. There must have been an earlier morgue, perhaps one that was inside, not “separate” from the hospital.

Two last references to the cemetery’s site: in 1862 (Seaman’s Physicians, p. 60), the Physician-in-Chief Thomas Moffatt described the cemetery as “located upon a knoll at the western end of the grounds, overlooking the bay and City of New York”. And a 1914 article in the *New York Times* by Sarah Comstock reiterates: “at the western end of the land the Retreat laid out its cemetery”. The hill hospital stands upon a knoll that has a view of the bay, and there is also a hill on the project site. The view certainly would have

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<sup>6</sup> The Superintendent was responsible for the grounds and directing the work of the laborers, carpenter, orderlies, etc.



been better from the former vantage point, but by this date, the cemetery is supposed to have been moved away from it.

By the end of 1848, 1115 seamen had died at the Retreat, and probably almost all were interred in the hospital's cemetery (the number of deaths each year is recorded in Seamen's Physicians 1881, table no. 6, p. 11, reproduced in Zavin 1981, 3-31A). Given the discovery of burials on the hospital grounds in the 1960s, it seems clear that the trustees did not actually remove burials when they removed the headstones and "removed" i.e. moved, the burial ground to a new location. This is also suggested by the Physician-in-Chiefs commentary, in 1879 (p. 18), on the cemetery's neglected state:

The cemetery in the rear of the Hospital is in a sadly dilapidated condition. It has been used since the year 1831. Many of the graves are almost obliterated, and some of the headstones are broken, others defaced. I would respectfully suggest that the necessary repairs be made, and that an iron fence be erected around the entire cemetery. The grounds and fences at the sides and rear of the Hospital are exposed to the depredations of a lawless set of boys, who at night carry off the fence boards for firewood and drive cattle, goats, and pigs in the pasture grounds.

The cemetery that existed "in the rear of the hospital" from 1831 was surely the one on the present hospital's grounds, situated behind the former hill hospital, and the citation implies that it was still in use in 1879, in spite of the creation of a "new" cemetery at the western end of the hospital's property. The writer's observations also explain when and how the headstones were being "obliterated": by disappearing under the ground and by being destroyed by vandals.<sup>7</sup> In 1880, the Physician-in-Chief's report was the same (p. 17); "The cemetery is in a shameful condition, many of the headstones are broken, removed or defaced, and the graves in many instances almost obliterated." Fortunately, an infusion of funds in the following year made it possible for the Board to "cause the erection of a substantial fence around the cemetery which was greatly required as the place had become a common" (Seamen's Physicians 1881, 16). The "new" cemetery, as noted above, was already fenced, so this citation presumably refers to the old one.

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<sup>7</sup> Vandalism is a common problem. Barnett Shepherd informed us that the graves had been removed from the cemetery at Snug Harbor because of it. pers. comm. June 9, 2006.

The evidence from historic maps is unfortunately as vague and contradictory as the written records. The earliest detailed map of the area, the 1845 Blood map, does not indicate a cemetery connected with the Seaman's Retreat Nor do the 1866 or 1874 Beers maps. They both note "Seaman's Retreat" over the property though, including the project site (Fig. 10). The 1874 Beers records a "marine cemetery" on the north side of Richmond Turnpike, on the south side of Silver Lake Park and opposite Silver Mount Cemetery (Front Cover). This burial ground was used by the Quarantine (Barnett Shepherd, pers. comm. June 9, 2006; Inskeep 2000, 84). Richard Simpson related that there is a plaque in the golf course at Silver Lake Park commemorating the number of dead from the Quarantine buried there (pers. comm. June 7, 2006). The Marine Cemetery covers 3.9 acres, and in 1910 / 1913 was the property of the City of New York (List of Cemeteries 1910/1913). There are no markers there. The 1872 Dripps map notes the land of the "Seaman's home", but again does not indicate the location of a burial ground. The picture changes only in the 1880s. The 1887A Beers map (Fig. 11) shows a cemetery west of the project site encompassing the area of present-day P.S. 49 and its playground, with the project site merely vacant. We know that a cemetery was in fact located on the site of the school because bones were encountered here during construction (below). Note that the Retreat's property continued west of the line of present day Warren Street, and that the line marking the east end of the cemetery as shown on the 1887A Beers map is the lot line between lots 80 and the project site lot, 100.

Between 1831 and 1881, when the Retreat was sold, there were 3,330 deaths. This sounds like a very large number but in fact, the density of burials in most cemeteries is about one thousand per acre. This allows for a burial plot size of approximately seven by three feet (see n. 3, above).<sup>8</sup> Three and a third acres would therefore comfortably accommodate all the Retreat's burials and take up only a fraction of its property: the project site alone is approximately 2.4 acres. Since we know how many burials occurred each year, if the first burial ground was already getting full by 1837, with a mere 275 burials, it cannot have been very large. Allowing 45 square feet for the burial plot and the

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<sup>8</sup> Burial plot size, i.e. ca. 6'11" by 3', Norwich, U.K., [woodlandburialparks.co.uk/frames/home/framer.htm](http://woodlandburialparks.co.uk/frames/home/framer.htm); 2'6" X 6'8", Whistler, B.C., [whistler.ca/Community/Cemetery/FAQs.php](http://whistler.ca/Community/Cemetery/FAQs.php); standard coffin width is two feet.

space between burials means just over a quarter of an acre. Increasing the size of the burial ground by 70 feet in width, even if the original plot was long and narrow, would not provide space for more than an additional 250 to 300 burials, whereas from 1838 to 1848 there were a further 843 deaths. Either the original cemetery was larger or the extension actually made was greater than specified in the records, or there were other, unrecorded extensions. In any case, the area of grounds behind (west of) the Hill hospital up to Tompkins Avenue, not including the grounds of the Asylum to the south, comprise approximately three acres, enough space for a very substantial number of the Retreat's dead, even very widely spaced. There was a stage I archaeological report prepared in 1990 for the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (90PR0313) in advance of the building of the present St. Elizabeth Ann's Health Care and Rehabilitation Center on the east side of Tompkins Avenue (opened 1994).<sup>9</sup> But the report found that the proposed project would not have an adverse impact on potential archaeological resources and that no further archaeological testing was warranted -- this in spite of the fact that elsewhere on the hospital property, excavations in the 1960's had unearthed "remains from the Retreat's first cemetery", according to Zavin (1981, 3-19). Just where these remains were found is unfortunately not specified in her study, but the fact that such remains could still turn up at all on the very built-up hospital grounds must give us pause when considering the potential of the project site, which has never been touched.

What happened to the burial ground(s) after the Retreat was sold in 1882? Sailors of course continued to die in the federally run hospital that succeeded the Retreat, but after 1901, at least, they were no longer buried in the old cemetery -- if they ever were. Those who expired at the U.S. Public Health Service Hospital as well as sailors from the merchant marine, and a few W.W. I dead were buried in the Oceanview cemetery in Oakwood.<sup>10</sup> According to Slepian (2004, 1, cited in Salmon 2006):

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<sup>9</sup> Neither the State office nor the LPC had a copy of this report, or any record of having received one.

<sup>10</sup> This cemetery is located at 3315 Amboy Road, next to the United Hebrew Cemetery and the Frederick Douglass Memorial Park Cemetery, northwest of Oakwood Beach.

“...after filling in the graveyard in the grounds of the Seamen’s Retreat in 1901, the Public Health Service contracted 1,000 graves in a separate section of Oceanview Cemetery in Oakwood for deceased sailors.”<sup>11</sup>

There are no references cited for this information, but it is more or less in agreement with Inskeep’s catalogue (2000, 200), which records that 821 deceased seamen from the U.S. Marine Hospital (specified as today’s Bayley-Seton Hospital), were buried in a northern section of Oceanview cemetery between 1901 to 1935 and again in 1937. The dead of 1936 were interred at the Hillside cemetery, and those from 1938 to 1941 at Silver Mount Cemetery. After 1941, the hospital used the Rose Hill Cemetery in Linden New Jersey.

By 1910, the “old cemetery west of Center Street near Vanderbilt Avenue.” belonging to the Marine Society of New York, was “apparently abandoned” (this last in parentheses, List of Cemeteries 1910 / 1913). The List of Cemeteries also gives the cemetery’s dimensions as an unbelievably huge 18.25 acres. Bruno Seliste, who kindly made this document available to us, laconically remarked that this was large for a cemetery. Indeed, it would have covered almost all the property west of Tompkins Avenue! Thus although the list gives a probable *terminus ante quem* for the cemetery’s period of use, it does not bring us any closer to defining its location. An aerial view of the Marine Hospital dated ca. 1920 shows no sign of a cemetery on the hospital grounds any longer (LPC File), and none of the 20<sup>th</sup> century maps cited in the bibliography of this report indicate a cemetery anywhere on the former property of the Seamen’s Retreat.

Certainly, when Marjorie Johnson, now 81 years old, moved in to the neighborhood in 1952, there was no trace of a cemetery (pers. comm.; June 1, 2006).<sup>12</sup> She would have noticed any graves, she said, because her children used to go sledding on “Dix Hill” and she knew the site well. Johnson said that a friend of hers, a retired electrician, recalled going into neighborhood basements to read the meters and seeing gravestones stolen from the cemetery reused for paving. They were “very uniform” she said, like “from an institution” and so very suitable for flooring material. She also remembered that at the P.S. 49 construction site (around 1960) she met a man who told

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<sup>11</sup> According to the cemetery’s current director, Lisa Maddalone, the cemetery has no records whatsoever because everything was burned in a fire in 1921. She could only confirm that there are burials from the U.S. Marine Hospital at Oceanview.

<sup>12</sup> There is also an aerial photograph that includes the project site dated 1954 (ATC 2001, 14).

her that during the excavation for P.S. 49 the contractors found bones, but when they heard that Boro Hall had been alerted and was sending someone to the site to verify the reports, they covered the bones with "rocks", then loaded them in a truck and dumped them off the Stapleton shore.



## V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The project site has never been impacted by any construction episodes, and any potential archaeological remains on the site have therefore not been disturbed. There are a number of prehistoric sites in the vicinity, and the project site's location on a hill near a stream might indeed have made it attractive for prehistoric use, if not actually for settlement. Potential prehistoric remains might or might not have been negatively impacted by the site's possible use as a cemetery, depending on the density of the burials and the degree of lot coverage.

Documentary evidence – though not historic maps – suggests that there were in fact two cemeteries associated with the Seamen's Retreat marine hospital. One was somewhere behind present-day building 13, although its westward and southward extensions are unknown. In 1849, a new cemetery was created at the western end of the Retreat's property. Historic maps indicate that this was either on the site of lot 80, where P.S. 49 stands now, or on both block 556 lots 80 and the project site lot, 100. The Mariner's Family Asylum may also have used a portion of lot 100 for burials, but it is highly likely all of this institution's burials were removed in 1907 to the Moravian Cemetery. There is no evidence that burials of the Seamen's Retreat were removed. Indeed, reports of bones found on the site of P.S. 49 as well as on the hospital grounds indicate that not all (if any) of the remains in these locations were removed. Such evidence as exists suggests that the cemetery on the hospital's grounds was gradually obliterated, while the burial ground(s) on the west side of Tompkins Avenue were abandoned by 1910 and eventually suffered the same fate, that is, the modest gravestones were robbed out, broken or eventually simply grown over. Lot 80, along with the burial ground behind the hospital, contained more than enough acreage for the 3,330 dead from the Seamen's Retreat, and it is possible that the project site in the end was not (much) used as a cemetery. But in view of the map evidence, we can not count on this.

A hospital cemetery for merchant mariners – as opposed to a military naval cemetery – is a very unusual type of site, so much so that it is not even included as one of the types of burial place that might qualify for National Register listing. But it would no doubt fit the criteria, were it preserved, by virtue of the importance of the institution with

which it was connected, and the rarity of this type of cemetery. There are several interesting questions that could be addressed through an archaeological investigation. We do not know what type of gravestones were used here or anything about how a graveyard of this kind might have been laid out, in particular, it would be important to get data about the density of the burials that might be useful in future when investigating former institutional burial grounds of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In its review of this assessment, dated July 7, 2006, the Landmarks Preservation Commission recommended that successor organizations or other potentially interested parties be identified and consulted regarding the “appropriate treatment of any human remains that may be found BEFORE archaeological testing uncovers any remains.” To the best of the writer’s knowledge there are no successor organizations of the Seamen’s Retreat or of the Mariner’s Family Asylum. While conducting research for this report, the author attempted to identify and contact the successor organization(s) of the Seamen’s Retreat in order to locate any additional archival material that might relate to the cemetery. Local historians Barnet Shepherd and Patricia Salmon (see p. 4, above) were consulted on this question. The writer also contacted the Seamen’s Society for Children and Families, a not-for-profit based in Staten Island. This organization however is not the successor either to the Mariner’s Family Asylum or to the Seamen’s Retreat, according to Martha Brock, a volunteer who works on historic documents and other papers of the society (telephone conversation, June 5, 2006; confirmed by Barnet Shepherd, June 6, 2006). --

On July 17<sup>th</sup>, in response to the LPC’s review and recommendations, further inquiries were made to identify potentially interested parties. The writer telephoned The Marine Society of the City of New York, which purchased the property of the Seamen’s Retreat in 1882 (see p. 12 above), although a six acre parcel containing the project site was actually retained by the Seamen’s Retreat that is, it became the property of the State of New York (Bromley 1917), and it was used by the Mariner’s Family Society (Board 1901, Robinson 1907). The writer spoke to Karen Laino, Administrative Assistant of the Marine Society, who was able to relay our inquiry to the Board of the Society, which was meeting that afternoon (June 17, 2006). The Board was not aware of a cemetery on the Seamen’s Retreat property but nevertheless expressed an interest in our investigations.

When contacted by telephone on July 20, 2006, Captain Timothy Ferrie, President of the Marine Society, said that he was interested in the history of his organization and that the Marine Society would appreciate being “kept in the loop” about the archaeological work, although they did not want to become involved in the treatment of any human remains that might be found. Captain Ferrie also did not know of any successor organization of the Seamen’s Retreat.

This report therefore recommends that, as far as consulting successor organizations or interested parties, the client contact the President of the Society, Captain Timothy Ferrie, before the phase IB archaeological testing begins, and apprise the Society in the event that any human remains are encountered.<sup>13</sup>

In order to determine whether burials are present or absent on the site prior to the commencement of any building operations, this report recommends archaeological field testing. Specifically, it is recommended that the Scope for Phase IB field testing consist of opening a series of two to three-foot square test pits at no more than fifteen foot intervals (depending on the topography), to check for the presence (or absence) of either fragments of tombstones, the outlines of burial plots, or human remains. If any of the above come to light, measures for mitigating potential impacts would be worked out by the archaeologist in consultation with the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Excavation of in situ burials, should these be located in the course of Phase IB testing, would be undertaken in a second phase of operations after LPC approval of the Scope for Phase II excavations, which would include a description of the methodology to be employed and the research questions that would be addressed.

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<sup>13</sup> The writer also contacted the Seamen’s Church Institute, and spoke to Communications Director Debra Wagner, who was not aware of any connection with either the Mariner’s Family Asylum or the Seamen’s Retreat. Her source of information was a recent history of the Institute by Leah Robinson Rousmaniere *Anchored within the veil*. New York: Seamen’s Church Institute, 1995.

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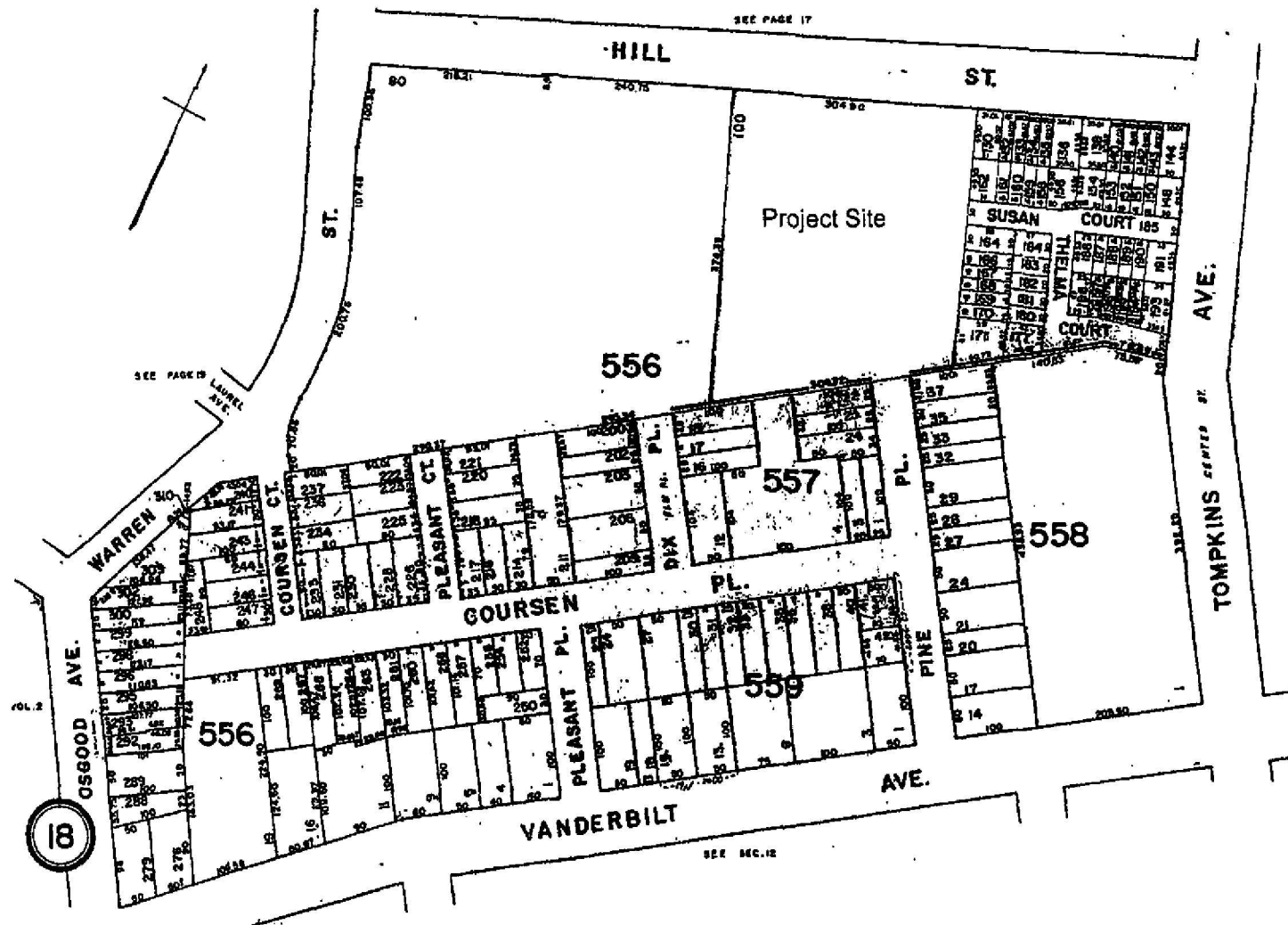


Fig. 1. Tax map of Block 556 and neighboring blocks.



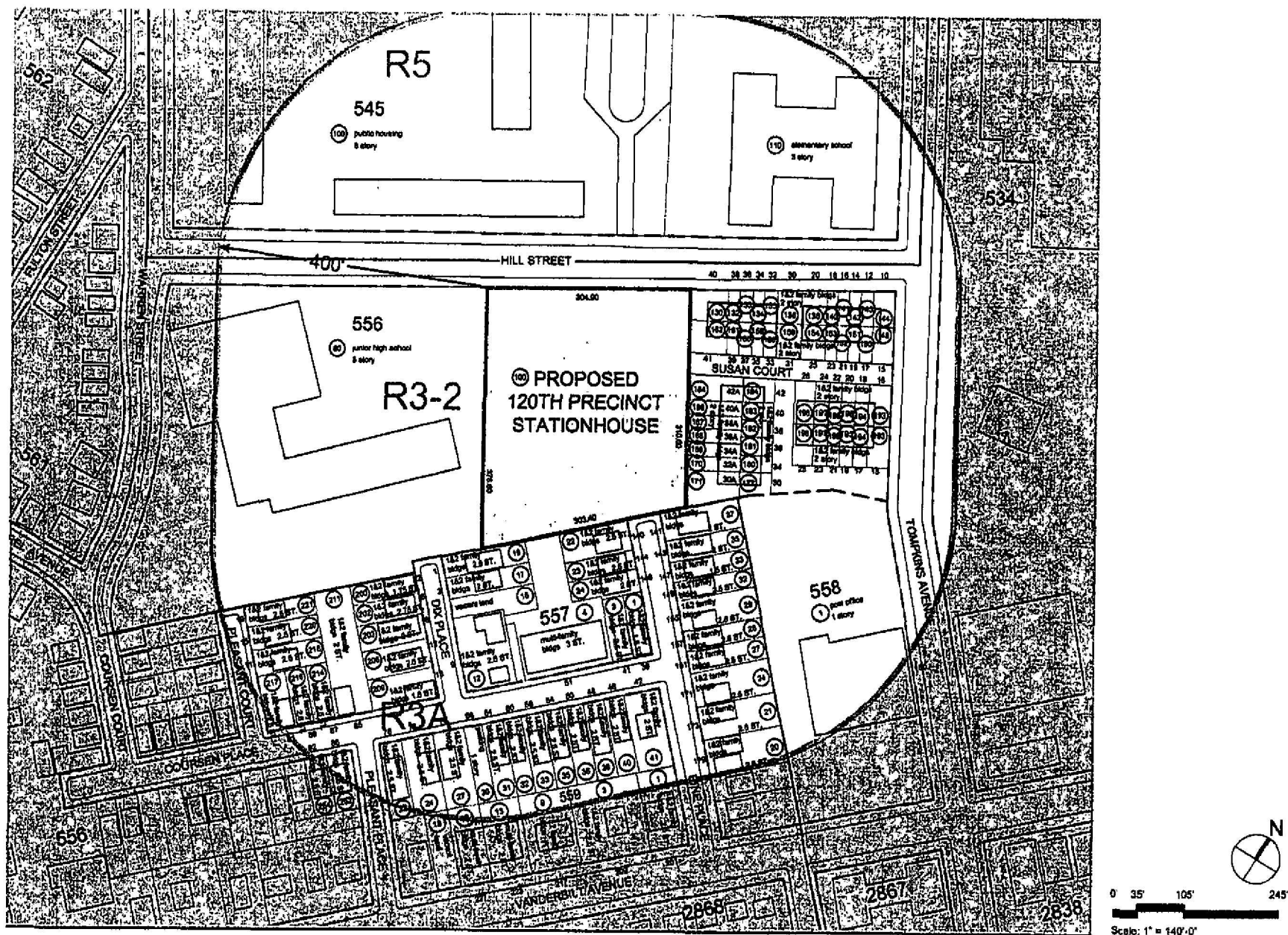
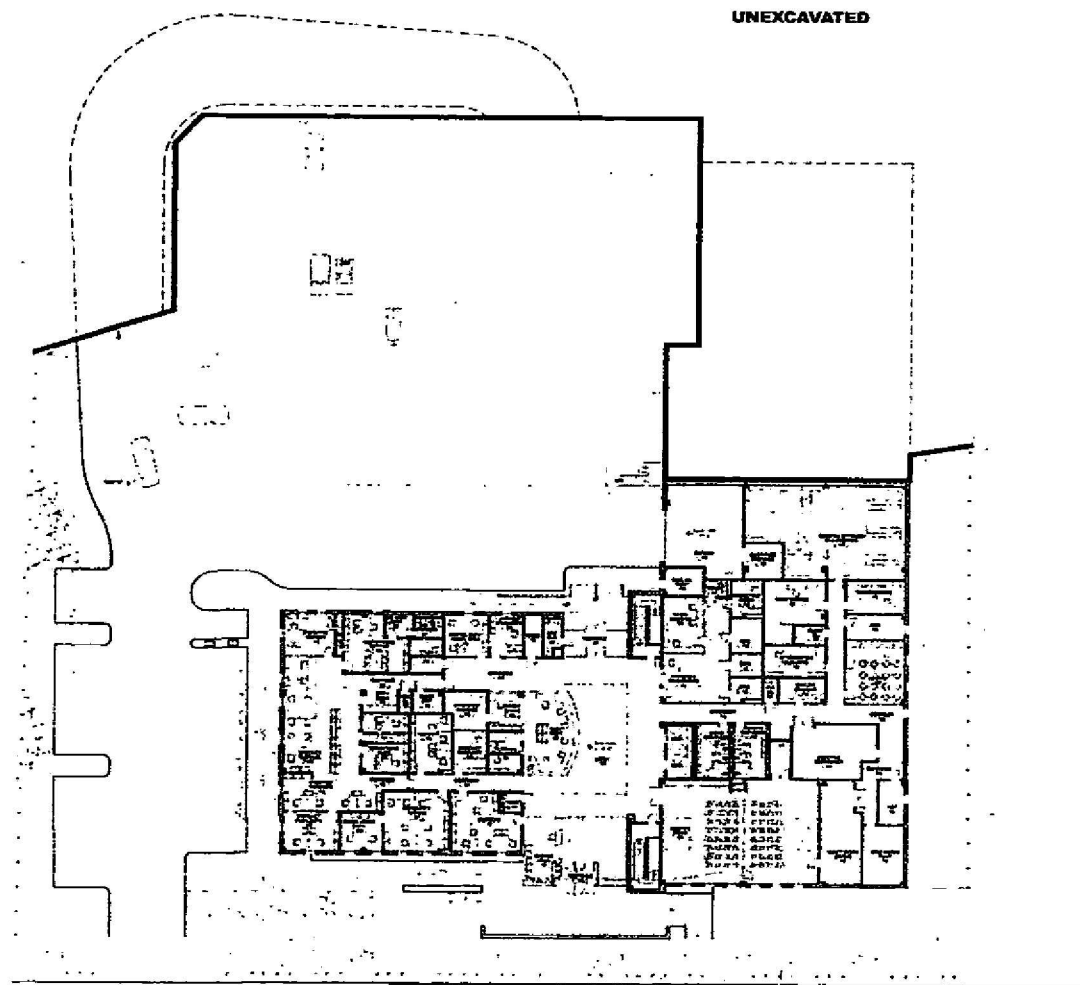


Fig. 2. Area map of the Proposed 120th Precinct station house.(Courtesy of Karlsberger Architecture, PC).



### First Floor Plan

Scale: 1/32" = 1'-0"



Fig. 3. First floor plan of the proposed new 120th Precinct Station House.  
(Courtesy of Karlsberger Architecture, PC).



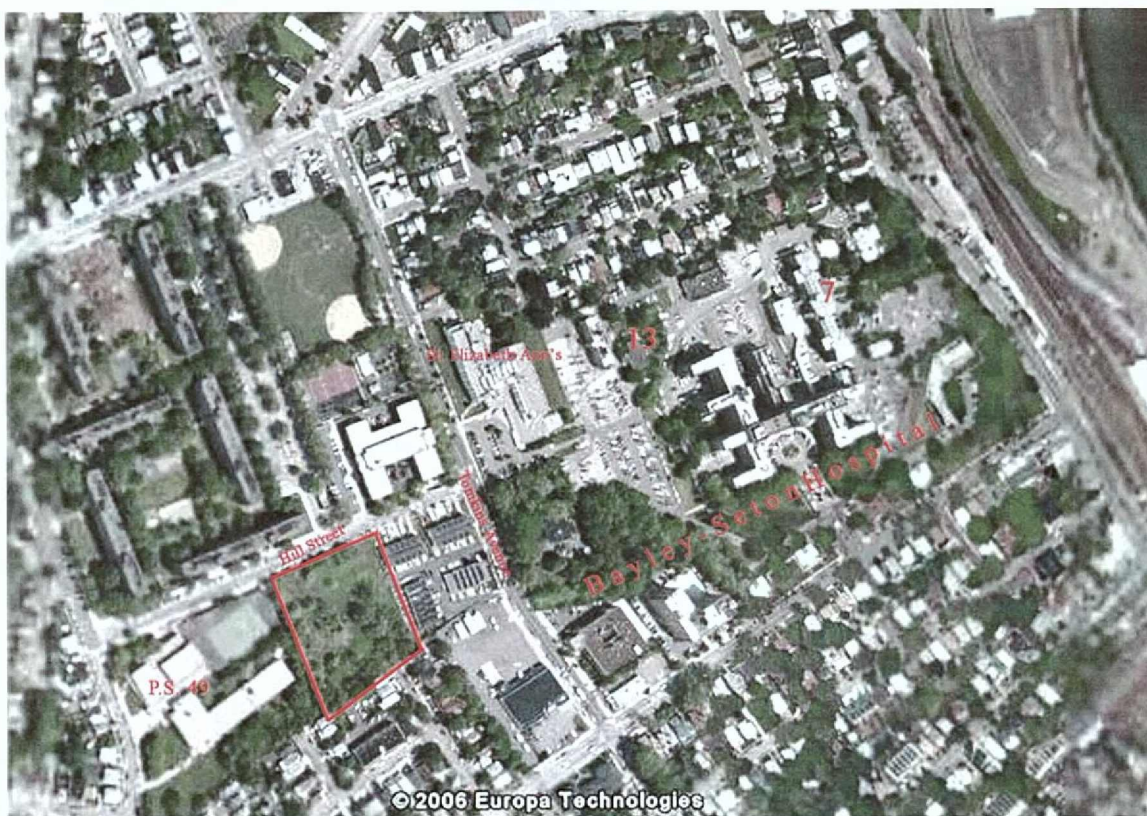


Fig. 4. Aerial view of the project site area showing the location of the project site, of St. Elizabeth Ann's Health Care and Rehabilitation Center, and of buildings 7 and 13 of the Bayley-Seton Hospital.



Fig. 5. Aerial view of the project site. (Courtesy of Karlsberger Architecture, PC.)





Fig. 6. View of the Project Site from the ball court of P.S. 49



Fig. 7. View of the New York Foundling Hospital building, formerly the Mariner's Family Asylum.

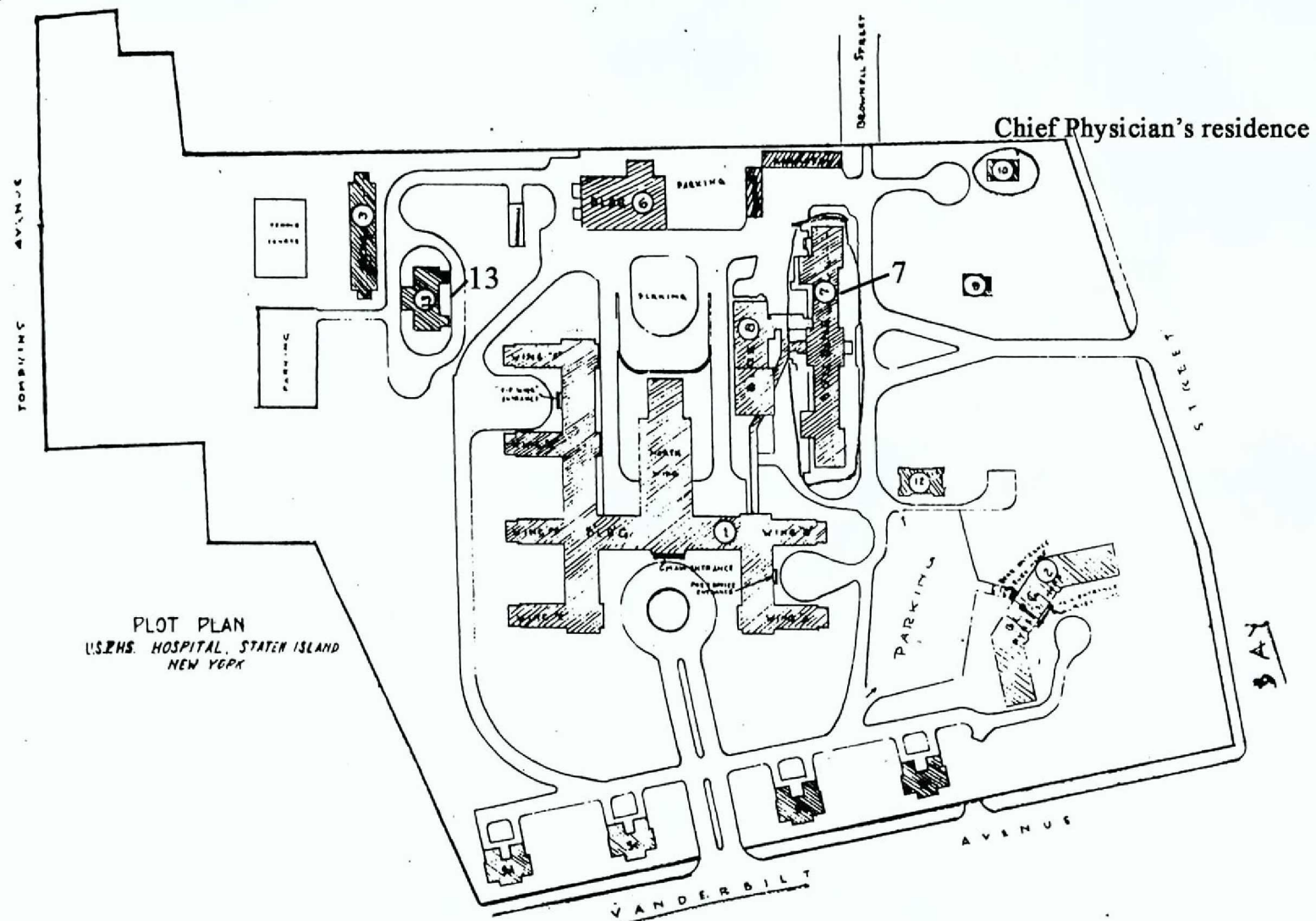


Fig. 8. Plot Plan of Bayley-Seton Hospital. (Zavin 1981, Fig. 3-101A. Courtesy Landmarks Preservation Commission, New York).





Fig. 9. View of Building 7, the third hospital building of the Seamen's Retreat







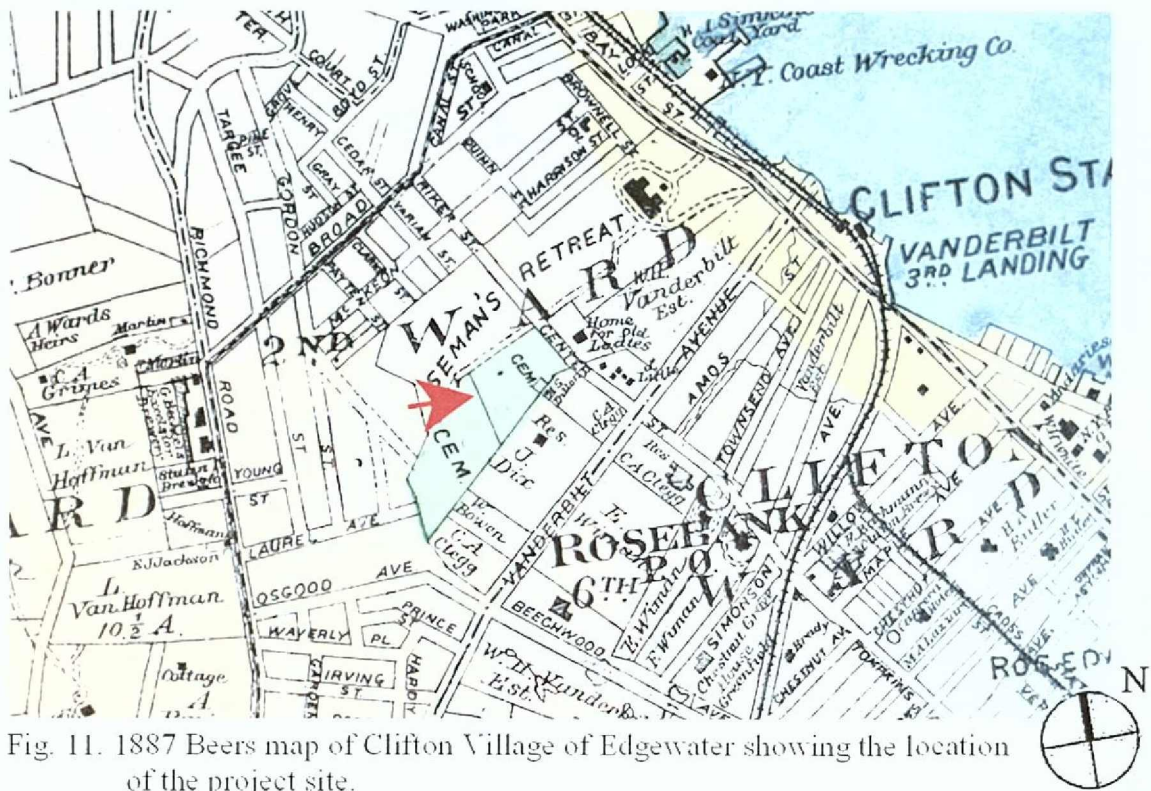


Fig. 11. 1887 Beers map of Clifton Village of Edgewater showing the location of the project site.

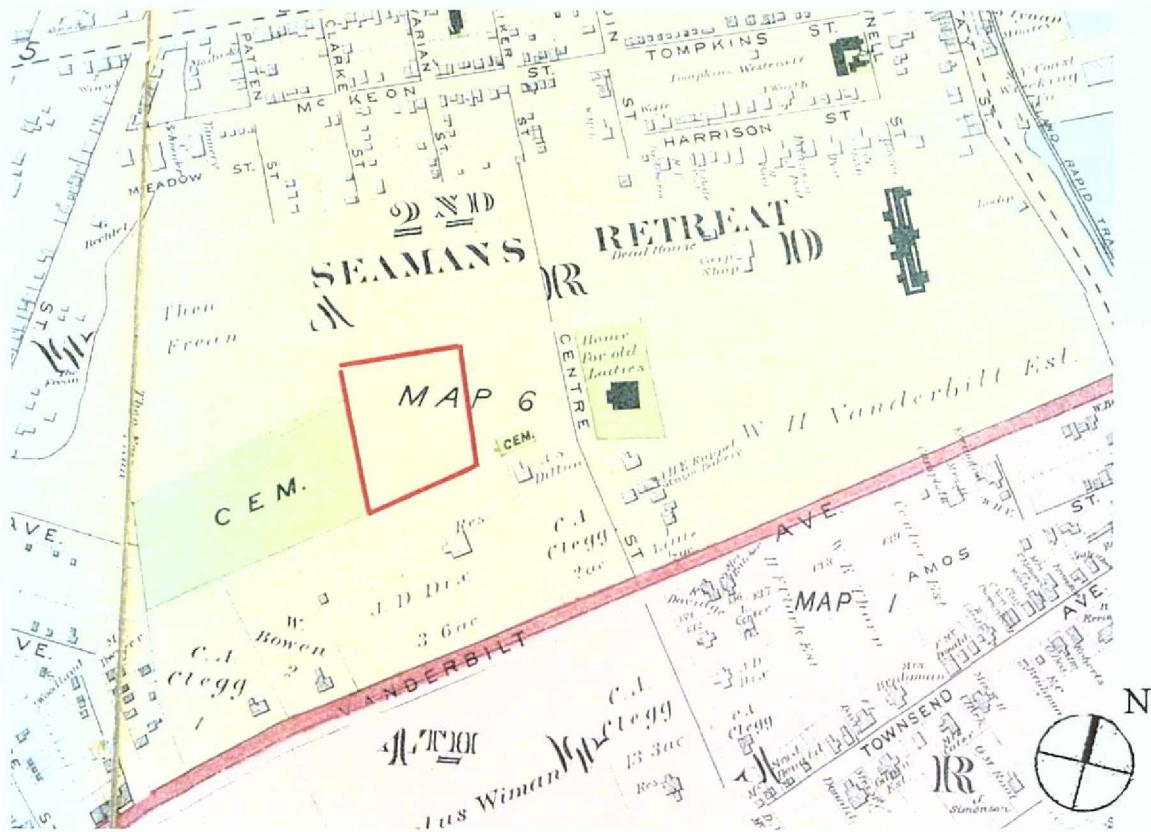


Fig. 12. 1887 Beers new map of Staten Island showing the location of the project site.



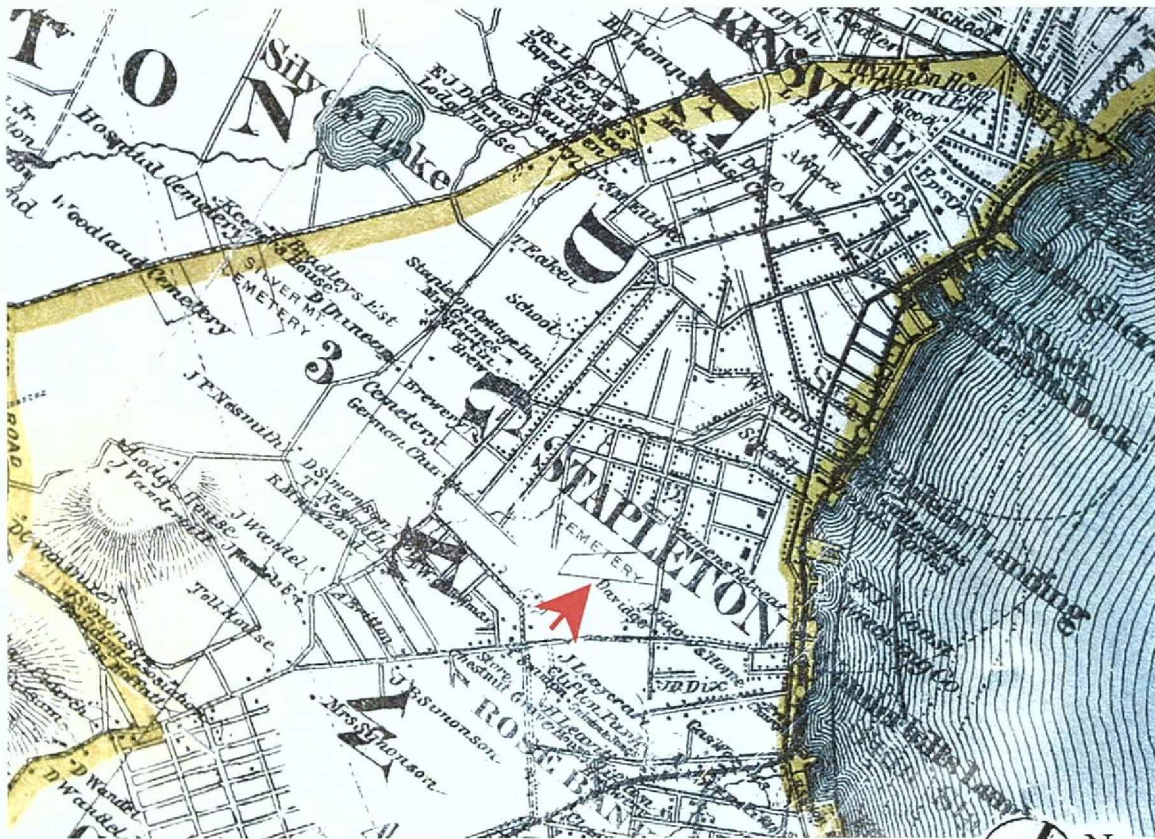


Fig. 13. 1895 Colton map showing the location of the project site.

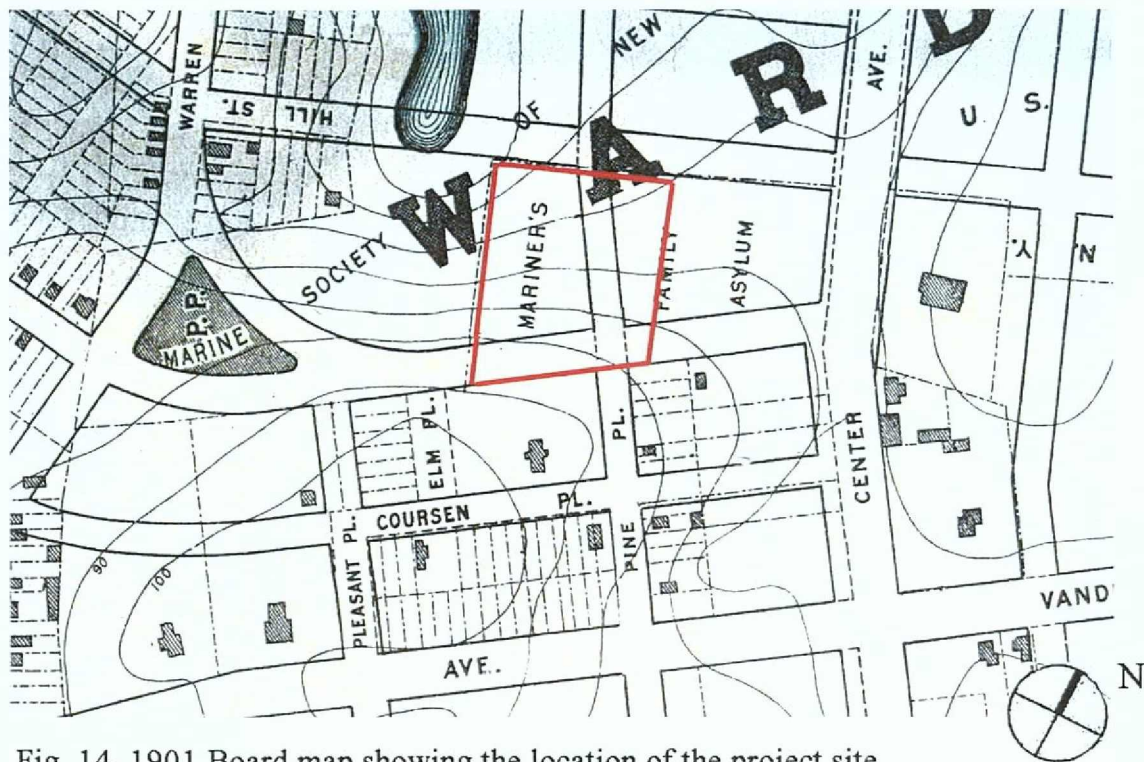


Fig. 14. 1901 Board map showing the location of the project site.



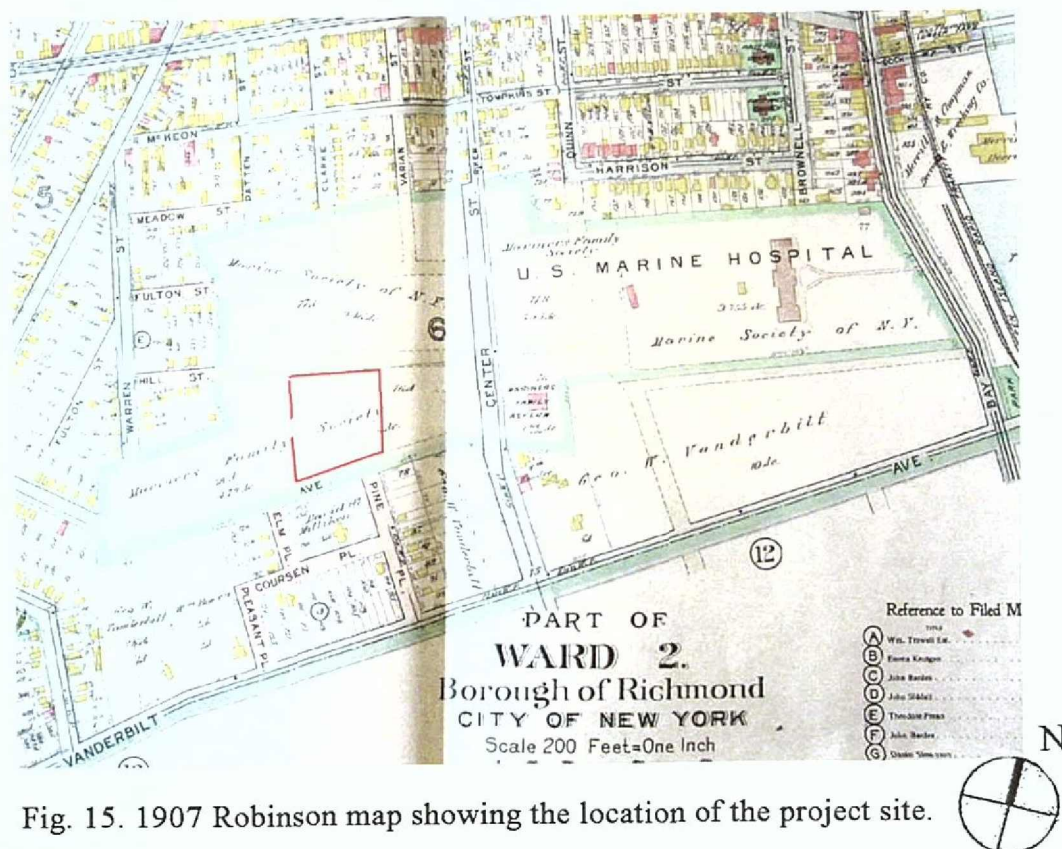


Fig. 15. 1907 Robinson map showing the location of the project site.

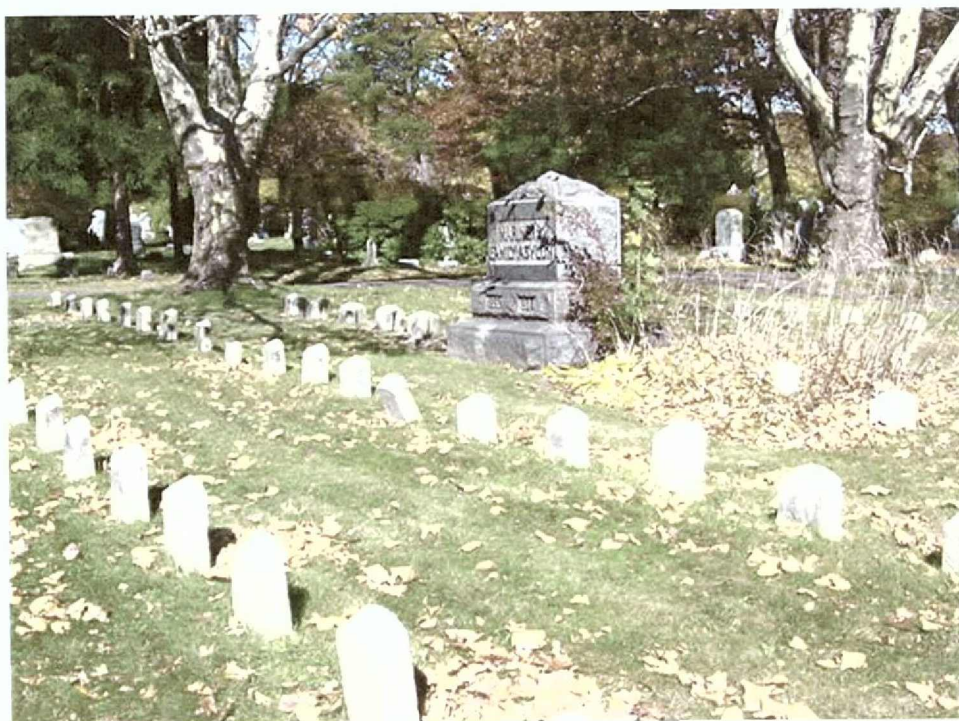


Fig. 16. View of the Mariners Family Asylum plots at Moravian Cemetery.  
Photo: Richard L. Simpson.