THE CEDARS - 745 FOX STREET

Block 2707, lot 11

BOROUGH OF THE BRONX, NEW YORK

PHASE IB ARCHAEOLOGICAL TESTING

Prepared for: The Lantern Group
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demolishing the early 20th century extension on the south side of the building, Greenhouse Consultants (2006, 10) recommended that an archaeologist be present to study and photograph the original south wall and observe possible traces of the original back porch shown on the 1892 Final Section Map (Greenhouse Consultants 2006, 6, Fig. 8). Secondly, excavation along the eastern and western sides of the building that might be required during the renovation could yield deposits of historic interest from the time of Denison or White's occupation, and Greenhouse Consultants recommended these should be collected and studied by an archaeologist as well. Based on geotechnical investigations, the depth of the soil above bedrock was thought to be approximately two feet (Greenhouse Consultants 2006, 10). This was confirmed by the phase IB testing.

1. INTRODUCTION

The present report is an account of the phase IB archaeological field testing and monitoring at the 645 Fox Street project site conducted by Celia Bergoffen on January 3rd, 4th, and 29th, 2007. The phase IA archaeological assessment of the project site was prepared by Greenhouse Consultants Inc., and the work undertaken for the phase IB followed the recommendations set forth in that report (2006, 10), and approved by the Landmarks Preservation Commission (August 30, 2006; Appendix A).

The historically and architecturally significant Greek Revival style building at 745 Fox Street is the oldest and the only Greek Revival Style structure in the landmarked Longwood Park Historic District, designated by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission in 1980 and listed on the National and New York State Registers of Historic Places. The property was owned by New York merchant and Bank President Charles Denison from 1841 until his death in1864. The estate was then purchased by Samuel B. White, Denison's son-in-law and a banker (Greenhouse Consultants 2006, 7-8). The earliest probable evidence for the mansion's existence in the rather small-scale 1851 Sidney and Neff *Map of the County of Westchester*, which indicates that the property was owned by Denison and shows a building, presumably the one in question (Greenhouse Consultants 2006, 6, Fig. 3). Findlay's "Map of Longwood Park", dated 1858, provides a detailed map of the property and an engraving of the building itself (Greenhouse Consultants 2006, 6, Fig. 4). Around the turn of the century, an addition was made to the rear of the building for the installation of a bowling alley and other rooms that would serve the series of social clubs that occupied the premises during the 20th century, culminating in the Patrolman P. Lynch Community Center (Greenhouse Consultants 2006, 1, 7, and 9). In the introduction to their report, Greenhouse Consultants dated the mansion to ca. 1850 (2006, 1), but in their conclusions suggested a date in the early 1840s (2006, 10). The building has remained substantially unchanged save for the extension at the rear of the building that was added between 1892 and 1912, according to the map evidence (Greenhouse Consultants 2006, 6-7, Figs. 8 and 9).

The building is currently being renovated and will be reused and incorporated into a housing project for low income seniors and their grandchildren. Since the plans involved

II. REPORT ON FIELD TESTING AND MONITORING

There were no immediate plans to excavate along either the eastern and western sides of the building so the Lantern Group arranged for a backhoe to be made available for archaeological testing.

On January 3, testing was conducted on the east side of the building. A backhoe trench approximately 8 feet wide was excavated for a distance of 13 feet along the east side of the building (Figs. 7 and 9). The writer observed the excavation and collected three bags of artifacts by shoveling through the backhoe dirt. These included fragments of building materials such as a door plate (Fig. 20); marble veneer; square, light blue glazed ceramic tile, and small hexagonal tiles. There were also fragments of stoneware jars (see below). The soil was brown sandy silt with a great deal of the dark grey, sparkling gneiss characteristic of the Bronx. This material was extensively used in the house's foundation. At the bottom of the trench, approximately 32 inches below surface, we encountered a ceramic pipe twelve inches in diameter (Figs. 8 and 21). It ran diagonally towards the basement opening at the north end of the building's east side.

Following the completion of the backhoe trench, a small probe was excavated by hand at the north end of the trench, against the rubble foundation of the building, immediately south of the concrete wall of the stairwell for the basement entrance (Figs. 4, 5 and 6). The probe was excavated beginning just above the building's rubble foundation but below two large slate paving stone, originally lying at ground level and slotted under the lowest course of the wall (Figs. 2 and 3). When these were removed, an earlier ground surface, marked by a layer of organic material, came to light (Fig. 4). The probe was 2 feet wide and 3 feet 4 inches long and was excavated to a depth of 2 feet below the bottom of the brickwork and 18 inches from the top of the rubble. Three bags of the artifacts were collected from the probe. The brickwork and rubble foundation of the small spur wall that once enclosed stairs leading to a basement entrance is surely not much later than the original construction, if not contemporary (Fig. 6).

Two bags of artifacts of glass and ceramic fragments were collected from this operation (Figs. 22 and 23). None of this material appeared to be earlier than the late 19th century, dating either ca. 1890-1910 or early 20th century. When identifiable, the glass was all blown in molds, rather than pontiled, indicating a date in the second half of the 19th century at the earliest.

Diagnostic fragments included the mouth and shoulder of a bottle with an applied lip of dark green glass; two bottle bases, one dark green, the other very dark green, not pontiled; fragments of a blue glass bottle with the letters "CH..." above and "NE..." below, i.e. New York, possibly for medicine; and two bases of Saratoga New York spring water bottles, probably from the turn of the 19th century. The pottery included: many sherds of small, cylindrical stoneware jars, made of white fabric, glazed inside and out, with a clear glaze on the lower part of the vessel and a tan glaze above; fragments of Rockingham ware with its characteristic tortoise-shell glaze, and a faceted porcelain cup. Rockingham ware was made in many potteries from the mid-19th to early 20th centuries. The potteries at Bennington, Vermont, were noteworthy producers of the ware in the northeast.

Excavation of the soil adhering to the rubble foundation further south along the east wall face was conducted to recover artifacts from a foundation trench or lodged between the stones. Only one small fragment of a glass vessel with gold paint adhering to it was recovered from this operation. The sherd was too small to be diagnostic, but appeared to be mold made rather than hand made and so probably postdated the time of the house's construction. Wherever the plaster had fallen off one could see the brownstone veneer that was formerly left exposed (Figs. 2, 7, 9, 10 and 15). The walls however were built of brick on a rubble foundation.

The trench was backfilled at the end of the day.

On January 4th, testing was conducted on the west side of the building (Figs. 10-14). There was a great deal more building detritus strewn over the surface on this side of the building than on the east side, consisting of bricks and brick fragments and fragments of concrete.

A backhoe trench approximately 22 feet long and 6 feet wide was excavated to an average depth of 38 inches and a maximum depth of 44 inches below the bottom of the wall. The trench extended to within approximately three feet of the northwest corner of the building and stopped at the concrete wall, dug into the ground, which enclosed a flight of concrete steps, cast in one piece and leading to a basement (figs. 10 and 11).

Below a dark grey layer of humus was a layer of brownish-yellow sandy silt. At the bottom of the trench we encountered a layer of grey packed shale. Very little cultural debris was collected either from the backhoe trench or from shoveling through the backhoe dirt. One jar base, a few fragments of what was probably window glass, bricks and brick fragments, roofing

tar, and a fragment of ceramic sewer pipe were noted. Following the backhoe excavation, almost the entire length of the wall was excavated by hand to explore the layer of soil adhering to the rubble foundation and, as much as was safe, the earth between the stones, in an attempt to recover artifacts contemporary with the building's construction (Figs. 12 and 13). Unfortunately, the foundation trench on this side of the building was as sterile as on the east side of the building.

At a distance of approximately 3 feet south of the northwest corner there was a short section of vertical metal pipe against the wall with a bend at the bottom that ran into the building (Fig. 10, to the left of the shovel). Neither the backhoe trench nor the hand excavation was continued to the northwest corner because the area around this pipe had evidently been disturbed during its insertion -- the south outline of the pit, extending approximately 6 feet from the corner of the building, was clearly visible (Figs. 10 and 11). Its depth was traced to ca. 31 inches below the bottom of the wall.

The rubble foundation course on this side of the building was exposed to a depth of 32 inches below the base of the wall at the south end of the trench and 45 inches at its deepest point, approximately in the center of the trench, where it was possible to verify that the wall rested on bedrock (Fig. 14). The only finds from between or adhering to the stones of the foundation were a few fragments of window glass that was mold-made and therefore dated to the later 19th or 20th centuries. The natural rock slopes up from north to south, which accounts for the different depths of the foundation course. It appeared that on this side of the building, the foundation trench had been partially filled with rubble (Figs. 12 and 13). This filling was traced in a small area only -- where it was not removed by the backhoe -- beginning approximately 22 inches below the bottom of the base of the brownstone wall and about 9 feet north of the south end of the trench. Below the packing, the bottom of the foundation was reached at 45 inches below the base of the brownstone wall. The deepest point of the trench was 52 inches below the bottom of the brownstones. The contrast between the finely dressed brownstone blocks and the uneven layers of gneiss slabs and chips of the foundation was noteworthy.

The trench was backfilled at the end of the day.

The writer returned to the site on January 29th, following the demolition of the turn-of-the-20th century addition on the south side of the original building -- shown still standing on the cover of this report -- to examine the exposed facade and document it photographically. It should

be noted that what now serves as the main entrance to the building, on its north side, was originally the rear, and that the addition was attached to the former facade. An undated photograph of the front of the building (Fig. 15) shows that it was equipped with a verandah whose roof was supported on six pseudo-corinthian-style columns. Judging by the photograph, the floor of the verandah was reached by two steps. The entablature is decorated with three fasciae and an undecorated frieze zone surmounted by a row of dentils below the heavy, projecting cornice. The facade was framed by pilasters, as on the rear of the building, but these did not survive the construction of the addition. The outline of the southeast corner pilaster is however visible on the east side of the building (Fig. 7). On the south side of the building, the east edge was cut out by the large opening cut at the second story level to permit access to the addition. Originally, there were four windows of double height or French doors on the ground floor, framed by the verandah, and four windows directly above the verandah roof on the second story. The two ground-floor windows on the west side of the building, filled with brick and visible only in outline, were revealed after most of the plaster that was applied to the wall in its later periods of use fell off (Figs. 16 and 17). The two eastern windows were destroyed by the above-mentioned opening but their sills are still preserved in situ (Figs. 16; Fig. 17, the western of the two only). Fig. 15 shows that the ground level on this side of the building was originally considerable higher than at the rear, because of the natural upward slope of the bedrock from north to south, as observed in the excavation of the trench on the west side of the building. The original ground surface would have been approximately at the height of the iron I-beam of the basement ceiling (Figs. 16, 17 and 19). The floor of the verandah would have been attached to the facade below the level of the window sill, Fig. 19. Perhaps the slot seen in that view was used for one of the verandah's floor beams. Regarding the attachment of the veranda roof, the photograph shows that it was several feet above the top of the ground floor windows. Only a small section of the facade at that level, on the east side above the I-beam, has possibly been preserved (Fig. 18). A series of vertical slots seen there may have held the ends of the verandah's roof beams.

III. CONCLUSIONS

The field testing and photographic recording of the building's original south facade were completed according to the recommendations of the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Neither the finds from the backhoe trenches opened along the east and west sides of the buildings, nor those recovered from the probe opened on the east of the building yielded artifacts datable to the first half of the 19th century that might have been contemporary with the building's erection. These trenches did however reveal aspects of the construction, as did the examination and recording of the south facade. From the latter observations, it was possible to reconstruct the probable construction methods used for the attachment of the veranda. No further archaeological testing is recommended for this property.

IV. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Greenhouse Consultants
2006 *Archaeological and Historical Sensitivity Evaluation 745 Fox Street Bronx, New York*. Greenhouse Consultants Incorporated.

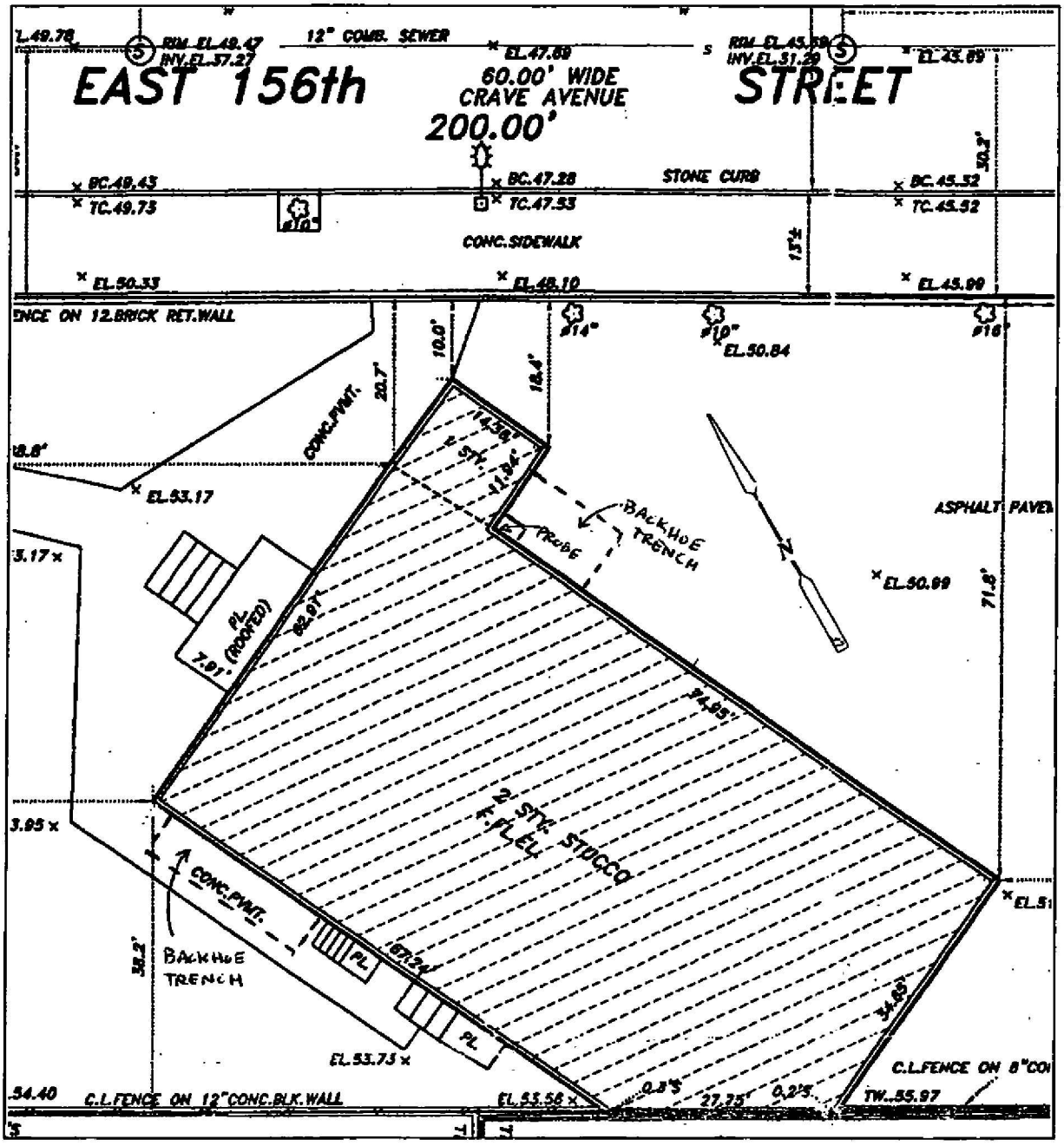

Fig. 1. Plan of the building at 745 Fox Street showing the location of the backhoe trenches and the probe.

Fig. 2. View of the building's east side showing the paving stones above the foundations in situ

Fig. 3. Paving stones from above the rubble foundation, east side of the building

Fig. 4. View of the probe and dried grass below the paving stones, east side of the building

Fig. 5. View of the probe on the building's east side

Fig. 6. View of the probe at the end of excavation looking north

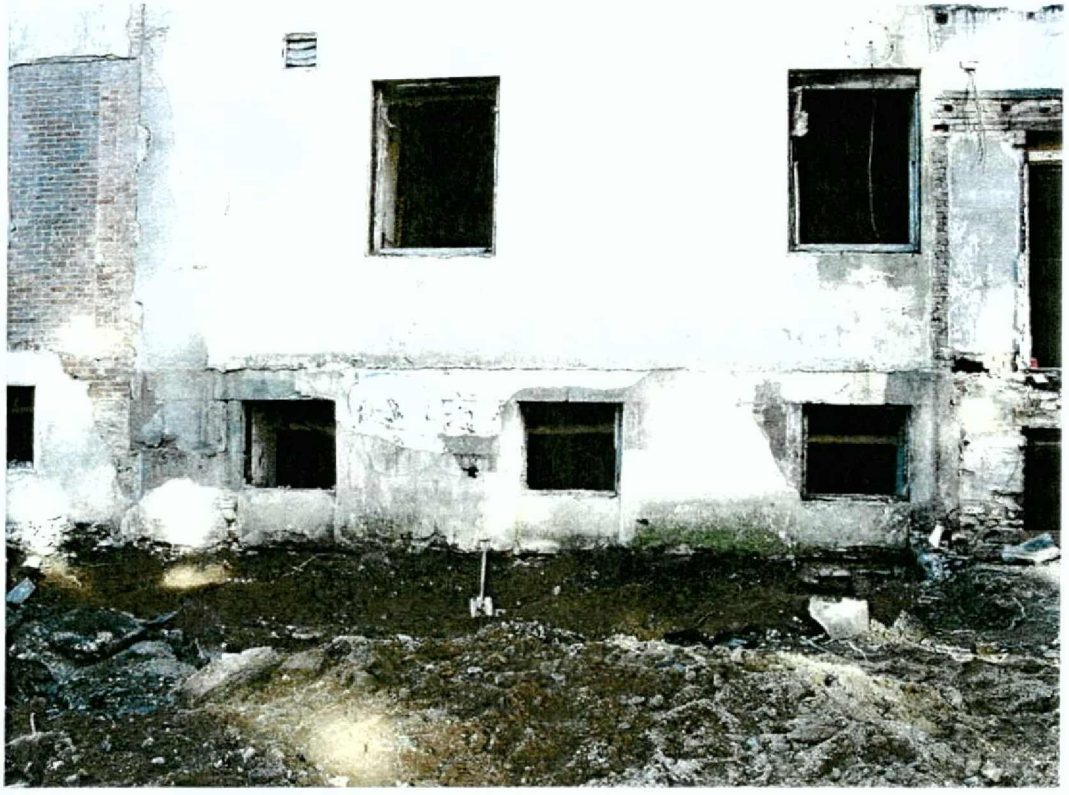

Fig. 7. View of the backhoe trench on the building's east side

Fig. 8. View of the ceramic pipe in the bottom of the backhoe trench, north end

Fig. 9. View of the backhoe trench on the building's east side looking south

Fig. 10. View of the backhoe trench on the building's west side looking south.

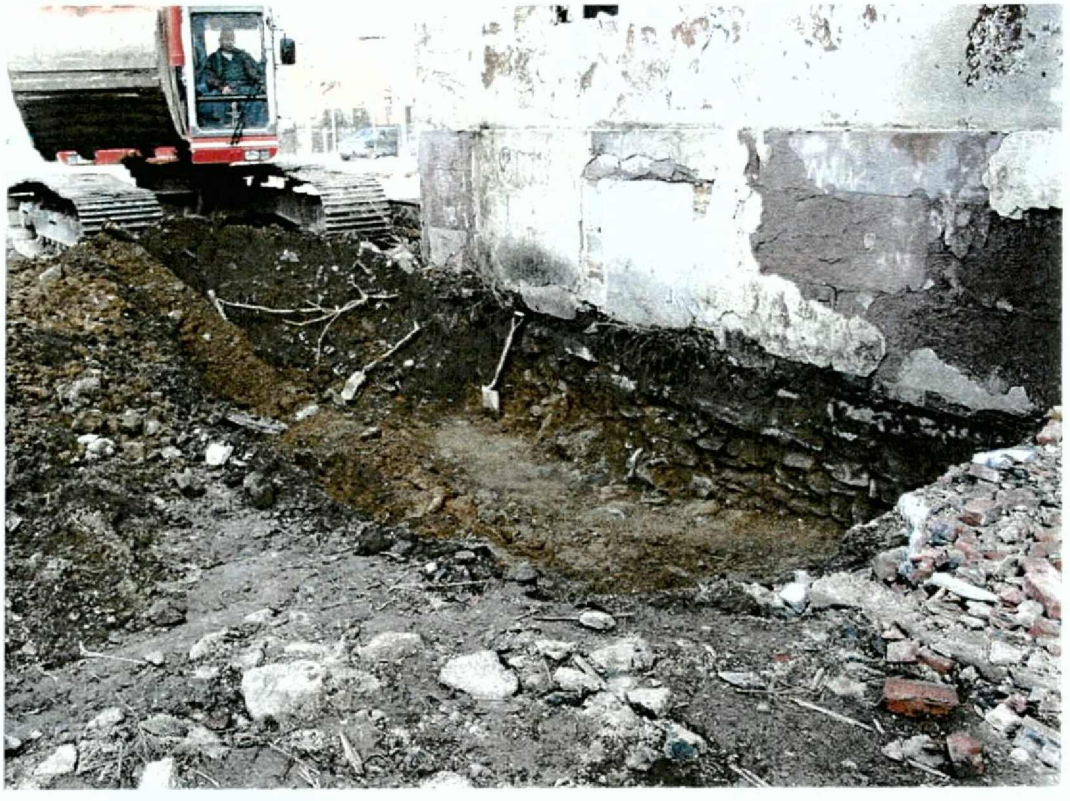

Fig. 11. View of the backhoe trench on the building's west side.

Fig. 12. View of the middle of the backhoe trench on the building's west side.

Fig. 13. View of the north end of backhoe trench on the building's west side looking north.

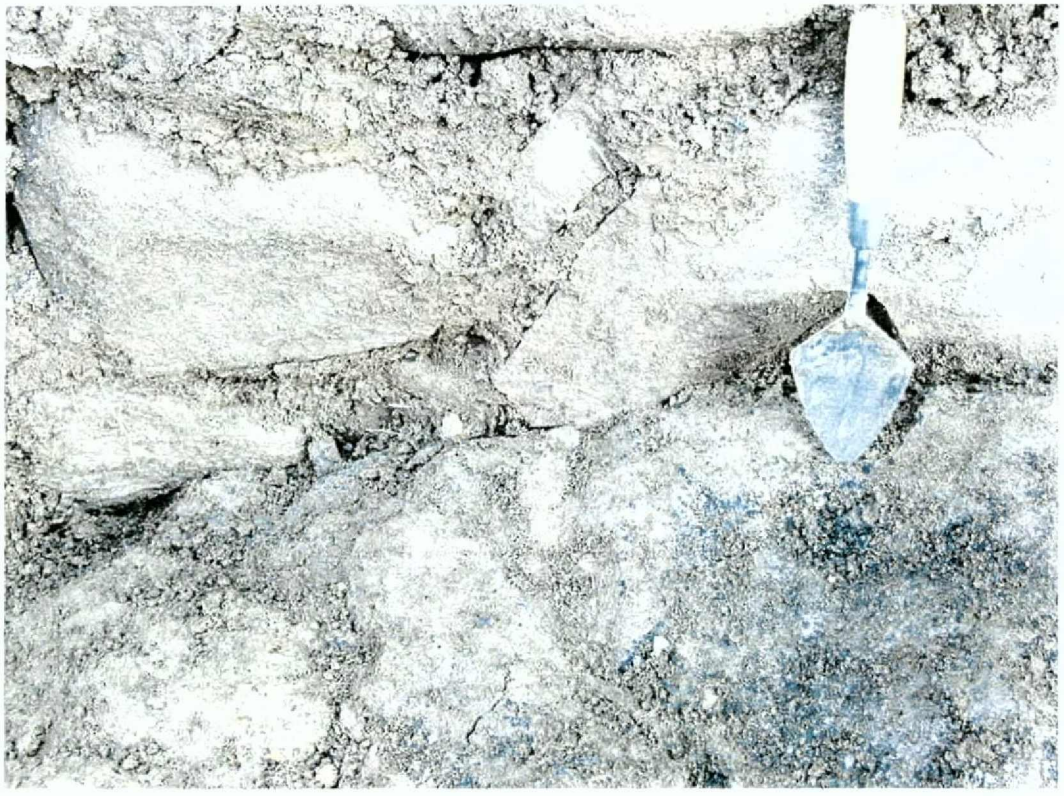

Fig. 14. View of the base of the rubble foundation in the middle of the west side of the building standing on the natural rock.

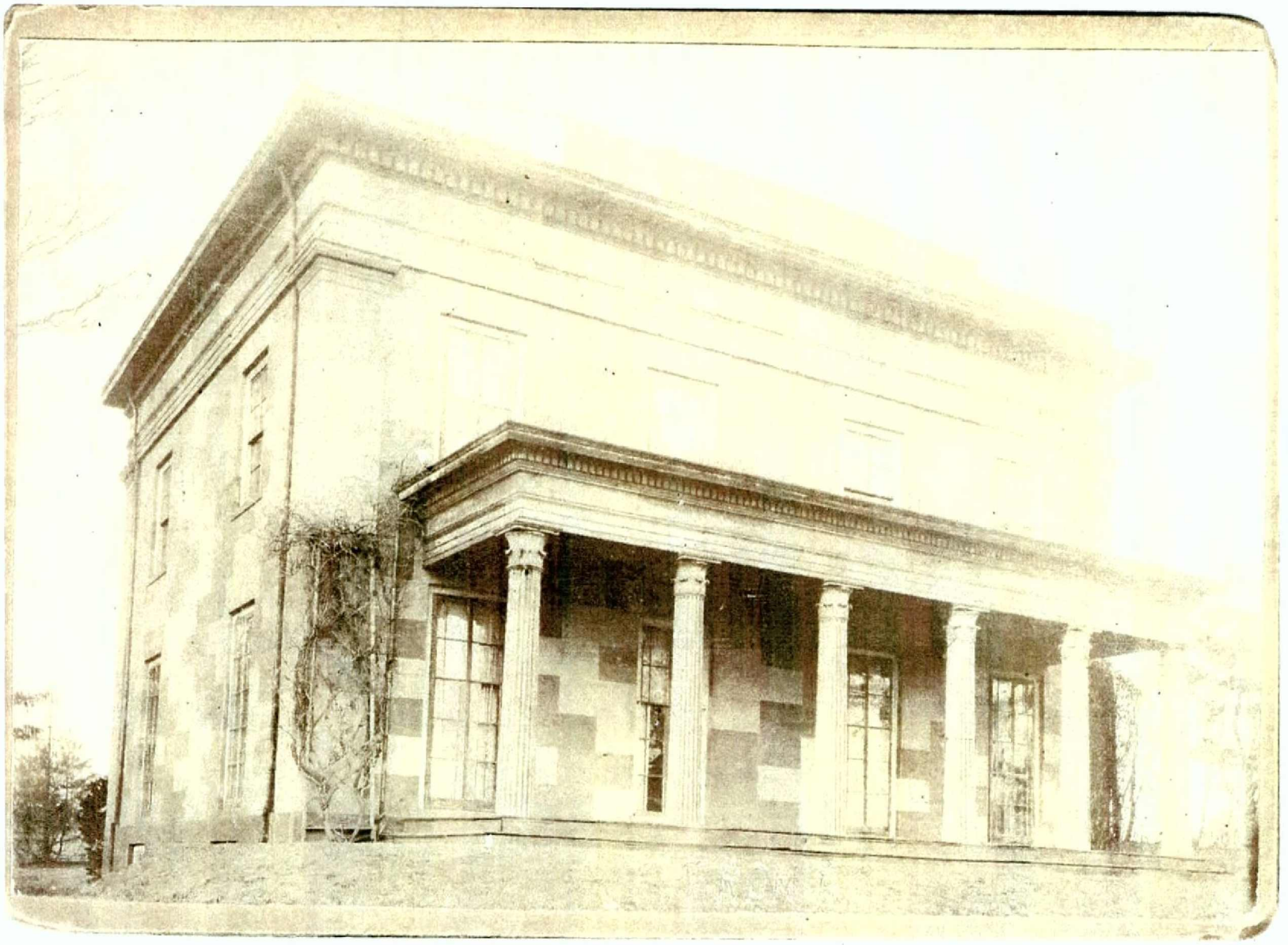

Fig. 15. Undated view of the rear of the Charles Denison Mansion showing the porch [Reproduced from Greenhouse Consultants 2006, Pl. 4].

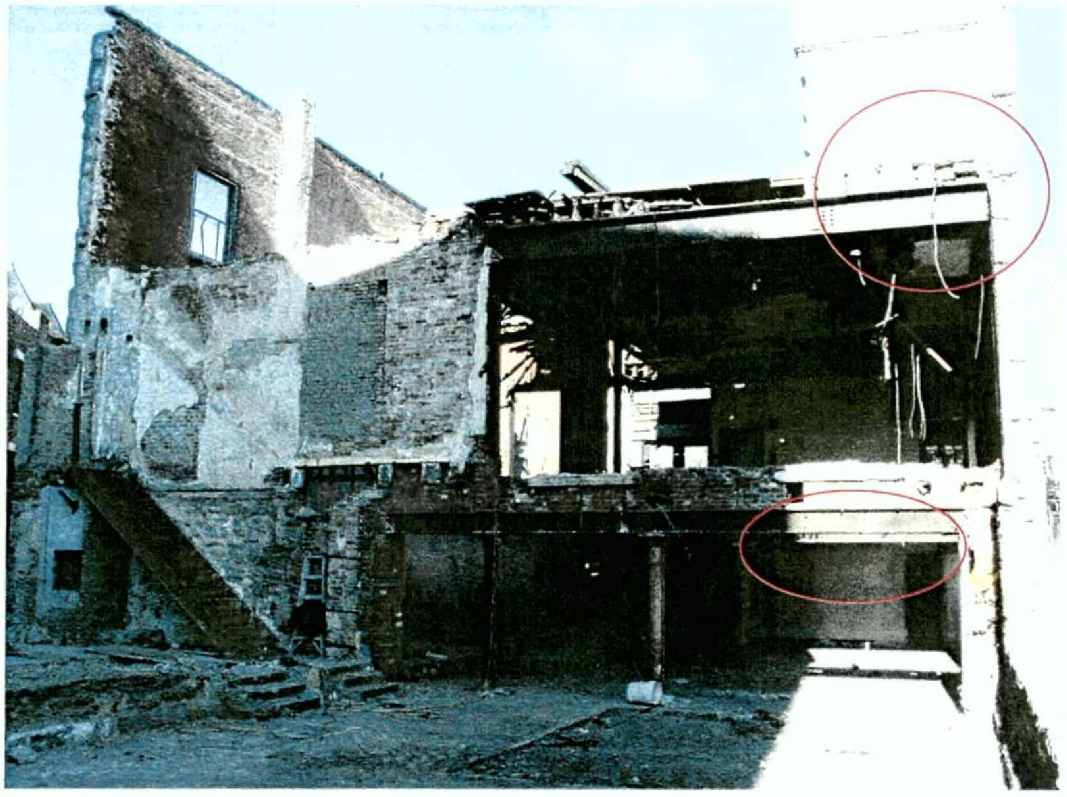

Fig. 16. View of the facade of the Charles Denison Mansion after demolition of the turn-of-the-century addition, showing the area of the details in Figs. 18 and 19.

Fig. 17. View of the facade of the Charles Denison Mansion after demolition of the turn-of-the-century addition (detail).

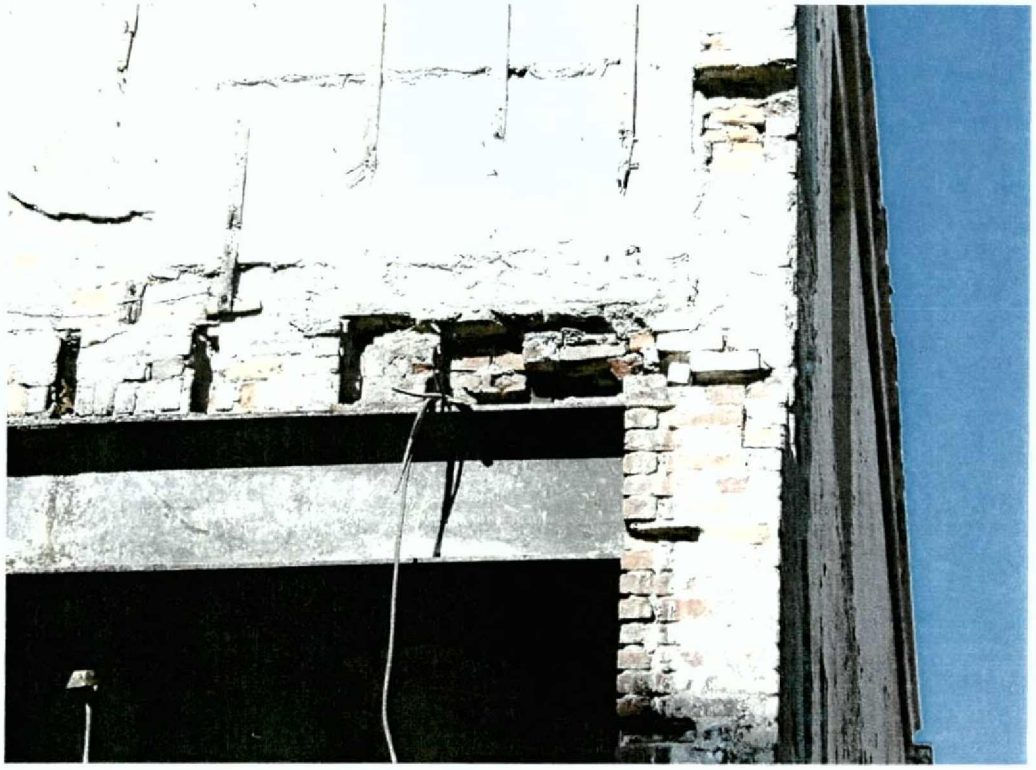

Fig. 18. View of the facade of the Charles Denison Mansion (detail)

Fig. 19. View of the facade of the Charles Denison Mansion (detail).

Fig. 20. Metal door plate found in the backhoe dirt, trench on the east side of the building.

Fig. 21. Ceramic pipe found in the trench on the east side of the building.

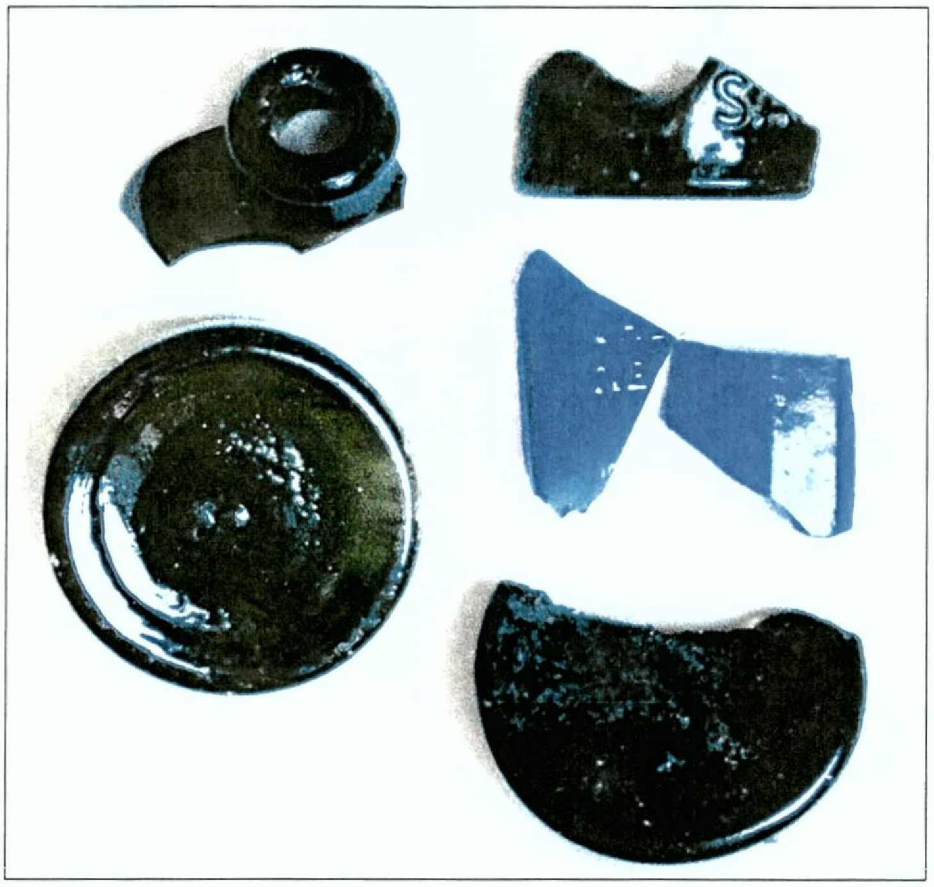

Fig. 22. Glass fragments from the probe on the east side of the building.

Fig. 23. Pottery fragments from the probe on the east side of the building.

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September 27, 2006

Project: 745 Fox Street, Bronx, New York (Cedars)

SCOPE OF WORK FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

Description of the work to be performed:
The following scope is based on the results of the archaeological assessment of the above-referenced project prepared by Greenhouse Consultants Inc. for the Lantern Group and dated August 2006 ("assessment"), and the recommendations contained therein. That document was reviewed and approved by the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), August 30, 2006.

The 200 by 100 foot project site is located in a historic district and contains a building erected in the early 1840s. The client intends to reuse the original structure as part of a housing project for low income seniors. Renovations entail removing the early 20th century extension on the south side of the building. This demolition will provide the opportunity to study the building's original south wall face and the place and manner of the porch's attachment. Excavation is also planned along the building's east and west sides. This may yield fills containing archaeological materials contemporary with the building's construction that could help to date its erection more precisely and shed additional light on the material culture of the area at that time. The depth of the fills are estimated to be approximately two feet. Below the fill, according to soil borings, is bedrock.

The assessment recommended that an archaeologist monitor the demolition of the extension on the south side of the building and the excavation of soils on its western and eastern sides. The archaeologist would photograph and record architectural and artefactual findings connected with these operations. Celia J. Bergoffen, Ph.D., R.P.A. proposes to provide these services to the client, The Lantern Group, represented by Carol Jackson. The results of the monitoring would be presented in a written report accompanied by photographs, plans and sections, as appropriate. Any artifacts recovered from the excavation will be curated by the client.

Time frame and fee:
The client has indicated that the work will be performed in early November and will take approximately three to five days. We will provide an archaeologist to be on site and perform the work above-described during that period, at the client's convenience.

The fee for the work will be $400 per day for monitoring; $50 per hour for every hour above 8 hours (pro-rated).The fee for the creation of the report will be $600.

Agreed:

Celia J. Bergoffen, Ph.D., R.P.A.

Carol Jackson
for MiCasa HDFC