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Geoarcheology

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**PHASE 1A ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION FOR
THE PROPOSED RANDALL'S ISLAND FIELD
DEVELOPMENT PROJECT**

Prepared for:

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MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

A Phase IA cultural resources study was conducted by Geoaerchology Research Associates, Inc. (GRA), under contract to the Randall's Island Sports Foundation, Inc., at 24 West 61st Street, 4th Floor, New York, NY 10023 and DMJM+Harris, Inc., 605 Third Ave., New York, NY 10158. The objective of the study was to investigate five locations on Randall's and Ward's Island proposed for the Randall's Island Sports Field Project. The locations are known as **East River Fields**, **Ward's Meadow Fields**, **Hell's Gate Fields**, **Central Fields**, and **Sunken Garden Fields**. Construction for these locations includes various utilities installed at a subsurface depth of three to four feet.

Randall's and Ward's Island is not a designated New York City Landmark, nor is it listed in the State or National Register of Historic Places, and it does not fall within a designated historic district. While the Triborough Bridge makes the island eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places the proposed project will have no impact on the Triborough Bridge.

There are no known prehistoric sites on Randall's and Ward's Island, but there is a historic period (mid 19th century) pauper's burial ground at an unspecified location (not identified on known maps and plans for the period) in the project area. Therefore, the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) in conjunction with the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) determined that a Phase IA archaeological study should be performed to avoid disturbance to human burials.

Results of GRA's research indicate that each of the proposed locations figured in the history of New York City's institutional construction on the island. **East River Fields** was subjected to extensive and continually expanding excavation and construction starting shortly after the mid 19th century. Structures that stood on the area were demolished beginning in the 1970's. **Ward's Meadow Fields** is a low-lying area that was dominated by swamp throughout the history of the island until the early 1920's when a dozen structures were erected across it. These buildings were short lived and were torn down in the late 1930's. **Hell's Gate Fields** is elevated, and supported a major multiple storey structure with a basement that opened in 1868 as the Inebriate Asylum, which subsequently became the Homeopathic Hospital. This construction was not torn down until the 1950's. The southern end of **Central Fields** was the site of the Male Lunatic Asylum, one of the largest complexes on Ward's Island beginning in the 1880's. Structures belonging to the facility, later converted into the Manhattan State Hospital followed by the Manhattan Psychiatric Center, are still in use, and several burials have been recovered from the front garden of the Asylum at the southern end of the parcel (not impacted by this project). The northern part of Central Fields was farmed and later planted with trees. The earliest obvious construction in this area took place in the 1930's when the Triborough Bridge was built. **Sunken Garden Fields** was the site of very minor construction in the form of a few outbuildings along its west boundary as early as the 1880's but the remainder of the parcel was undeveloped. By 1924 a two storey structure stood isolated in the southwest corner of the field. This same building appears on a 2007 demolition plan.

GRA focused research on the field areas identified for the Randall's Island Sports Field Project. Each field was assessed for its potential proximity to the possible location of the 19th century burial site, and an assessment of low, medium, and high probability was assigned to each, based primarily on a published article that described a visit to the burial site while it was in use in 1855. Additionally, a general archaeological sensitivity assessment was based on factors including previous structures and land use as discussed above. GRA's probability assessment indicates that 1) **East River Fields** is a medium to high probability area, 2) **Ward's Meadow Fields** is a low probability area, 3) **Hell's Gate Fields** is a medium probability area, 4) **Central Fields** is a medium to high probability area, and 5) **Sunken Garden Fields** is a medium to high probability area.

GRA's focus on the archaeological sensitivity for the five locations did not originally take into consideration the fact that excavation using heavy equipment was implemented at all of the five locations. A site visit conducted on September 9, 2008 by GRA's archaeologists and geomorphologist, viewed each of the previously excavated locations, and examined spoil piles produced by re-landscaping activities. The locations were digitally photographed to aid in development of an investigation strategy. The following observations were made:

All five fields have been cleared of top soil and the spoil piles have been, in the case of East River Fields and Ward's Meadow Fields, consolidated in other areas where they will be used for further landscaping and recontouring. The spoil piles may contain historic period sediments and soils that may have housed archaeological materials. Therefore it is advised to test the spoil piles extracted from each of the proposed fields and to determine, if possible, whether intact historical or pristine surfaces were impacted by recent landscaping operations.

- Spoil piles will be tested by backhoe excavation, with specific strategies aimed at isolating and characterising the age and composition of discrete fill types as well as depth to and nature of the pre-disturbance landform;
- Geoprobe testing will be undertaken at all fields to determine the composition, archaeological properties, and antiquity of the sediments in the substrate;

In the interest of serving the needs of LPC, the City of New York Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), and the client, GRA proposes a landscape based study that utilizes Geoprobe technology to assess altered landforms, especially Central Fields, Sunken Garden Fields, and Hell's Gate Fields. This minimally invasive method provides a window into the subsurface stratigraphy without substantially disturbing the existing landscape. Using this information a developmental sequence for the history of the Ward's Island physical landscape can be modeled.

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INTRODUCTION

A Phase IA cultural resources study was conducted by Geoarcheology Research Associates, Inc. (GRA), and is the subject of this report. GRA was contracted by the Randall's Island Sports Foundation, Inc., at 24 West 61st Street, 4th Floor, New York, NY 10023, and by DMJM+Harris Inc., 605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158 to investigate five locations on Randall's and Ward's Island. These locations are proposed for construction/alteration for the Randall's Island Sports Field Project. The proposed sites are known as **East River Fields**, **Ward's Meadow Fields**, **Hell's Gate Fields**, **Central Fields**, and **Sunken Garden Fields**. Construction for these locations includes various water mains, sewer and storm pipes, and electrical conduits. Subsurface penetration as indicated on construction drawings is to a depth of three to four feet.

Results of GRA's research indicate that each of the proposed locations (Figure 1), figured in the history of New York City's institutional construction on the island. **East River Fields** was subjected to extensive and continually expanding excavation and construction activities starting shortly after the mid 19th century. Structures that stood on the area were demolished beginning in the 1970's. **Ward's Meadow Fields** is a low-lying area that was dominated by swamp throughout the recorded history of the island until the early 1920's when a dozen structures were erected across it. These buildings were short lived and were torn down in the late 1930's. **Hell's Gate Fields** is elevated, and supported a major structure opened in 1868 as the Inebriate Asylum, which subsequently became the Homeopathic Hospital. This construction was not torn down until the 1950's. The southern end of **Central Fields** was the site of the Male Lunatic Asylum, one of the largest complexes on Ward's Island beginning in the 1880's. Structures belonging to that facility, later converted into the Manhattan State Hospital followed by the Manhattan Psychiatric Center, are still in use. Burials discovered in the front garden of the Asylum, at the southern end of the property, were likely interred before the hospital was constructed. Further, the burials do not fall within the area of impact for the proposed project. The northern part of Central Fields was farmed and later planted with trees. The earliest obvious construction in this area took place in the 1930's when the Triborough Bridge was built. **Sunken Garden Fields** was the site of very minor construction in the form of a few outbuildings along its west boundary as early as the 1880's but the remainder of the parcel was undeveloped. By 1924 a two storey structure stood isolated in the southwest corner of the field. This same building appears on a 2007 demolition plan.

An added impact of the prior one hundred and fifty years of institutional construction on Randall's and Ward's Island is the unknown location of several potter's fields of significant size. GRA reviewed historic documents to develop an estimate for the location of the Ward's Island potter's field. The proposed construction areas identified above were also considered with respect to their potential impact on the Ward's Island burial site, which was in use from after 1844 until about 1868. A New York Times article that described a visit to the Ward's Island potter's field is dated 1855 (Appendix B).

In a May 27, 2008 statement, LPC determined that the proposed action might infringe on areas potentially sensitive for human burials and historic archeological remains from colonial occupation and 19th century institutions. Consequently, this Phase IA archaeological assessment report was prepared by GRA for the proposed action. GRA has focused research on the field areas that make up Randall's Island South (formerly Ward's Island), consistent with the locations of the fields identified above. Each of the fields was assessed for its potential proximity to the presumed location of the 19th century potter's field, and a matrix was prepared to summarize low, medium, and high probability for the tracts included in that assessment. Further, a more general archaeological sensitivity evaluation was based on factors including previous construction and land use. The combined data for historic structures and the presumed whereabouts of the potter's field appear in the matrix in Table 1 and is central to the development of the probability map (Figure 2). These data were assembled with a view toward the sequence of disturbance on the island before that of the current project.

GRA's probability assessment for the project area indicates the following:

East River Fields is a medium to high probability area. While expansive construction over the area likely prohibited later use of the field as a burial site, construction debris from the buildings that occupied the site for a century would be expected to have left historic material remains. Therefore, it is possible that East River Fields may have construction debris mixed in with the fill.

Ward's Meadow Fields, deemed low probability, is a low-lying area that was predominantly swampy throughout its earlier history. This location does not conform to the 1855 Times article description of the potter's field, but is tangentially referred to by the author. There was no agricultural development of the location and no significant construction before the early 1920's. Development of the area expanded with the construction of the supports for the Triborough Bridge in the 1930's.

Hell's Gate Fields was determined to be a high probability area based on its elevation and similarity to the description in the 1855 Times article of the potter's field. The construction of the Inebriate Asylum (later Homeopathic Hospital), a multi-storey building with an excavated basement, on the western side of the field required that the central portion of the area be filled. Therefore, there is an additional potential for historical material in the area next to the former structure.

Central Fields, determined to be medium probability, is elevated and suitable for a potter's field site, though based upon the 1855 description it is too far inland. The area at the south end of the parcel has undergone substantial earlier construction and demolition in conjunction with modifications to the psychiatric hospital. Previously recovered human skeletal remains were attributable to the asylum garden at this location. However, this southern area is not included in the current project. The northern section of Central Fields was extensively plowed and subsequently planted with trees. This northern section is less likely to have been disturbed, until the construction of the Triborough Bridge. Therefore, there may be intact deposits from the period during which this area was leveled for institutional use.

Table 1.

RANDALL'S ISLAND SPORTS FIELDS PROJECT

PROPERTY	FIELD NUMBERS	HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	ARCHEOLOGICAL SENSITIVITY (LPC Comments 5/27/08)	CONSTRUCTION STATUS	EXCAVATION TO BE COMPLETED	ARCHEOLOGICAL SENSITIVITY BASED UPON HISTORICAL RECORDS	RECOMMENDATION
EAST RIVER FIELDS	80 thru 85	structure* shown on 1887 map (not named)	Potential for recovery of human burials and remains from colonial occupation and 19th century hospital	Fields 100% complete	0%	extensive and expanded construction in the area, medium to high probability of historical material	Spoil pile testing and Geoprobe cores
WARDS MEADOW FIELDS	70 thru 75	swampy area; light construction first appears in 1920's	Potential for recovery of human burials and remains from colonial occupation and 19th century hospital	Fields 100% complete	0%	very little prior construction, low probability of human burials and historical materials	Spoil pile testing and Geoprobe cores
HELL'S GATE FIELDS	62 and 63	structure* shown on 1887 map (opened in 1868 it became the Homeopathic Hospital which stood until the mid-1900s)	Potential for recovery of human burials and remains from colonial occupation and 19th century hospital	Field work on hold	60% - utilities trench	elevated area supported a large structure with basement for nearly a century, high probability of historical material and burials	Spoil pile testing and Geoprobe cores
CENTRAL FIELDS	50 thru 54	1851 map shows area with four small hillocks (kames) subsequently leveled, Mental Hospital at southern end from 1880's till present	Potential for recovery of human burials and remains from 19th century hospital	Fields 80% complete	0% - sod not in place	elevated landform leveled between 1851 and 1887, partly planted, part under buildings, medium probability of historical material	Spoil pile testing and Geoprobe cores
SUNKEN GARDEN FIELDS	90 and 91	structure* shown on 1924 map and is shown on 2007 demolition drawing	Potential for recovery of human burials and remains from colonial occupation and 19th century hospital	Fields 80% complete	0% - sod not in place	elevated landform with small construction footprint, medium probability of historical material	Spoil pile testing and Geoprobe cores

*NOTE: All brick and stone structures include a fully excavated basement

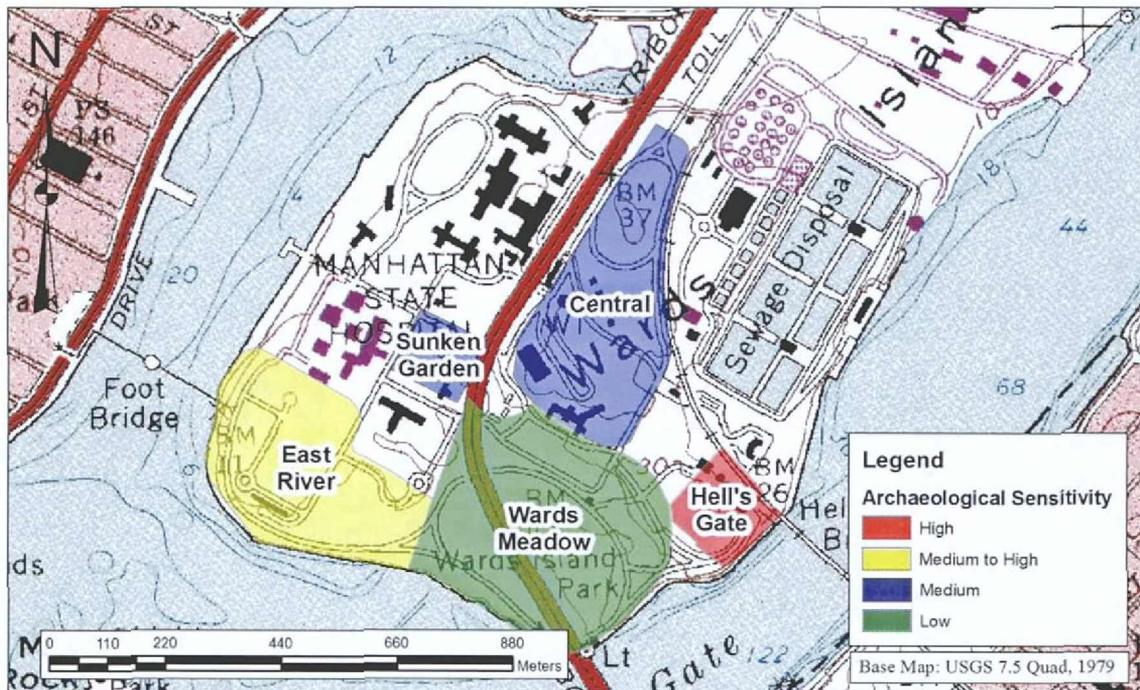


Figure 2. Archaeological Sensitivity Map for project area.

Sunken Garden Fields was determined to be a medium probability area. This location was only moderately altered as a result of earlier construction projects, making it likely to preserve earlier deposits.

Finally, all of the five project areas have been excavated and the top soil has been mobilized and redistributed as spoil piles. It is recommended that these spoil piles extracted from each of the proposed fields be disregarded at this stage of the investigation, as they are unlikely to contain either human remains or intact archeological materials of further interest.

In summary:

- The work at East River fields has been completed and additional archaeological work will include spoil pile testing followed by geoprobe coring;
- Ward's Meadow fields have been completed and additional archaeological work will include spoil pile testing followed by geoprobe coring;
- Central Fields have been leveled and subsurface work has ended. The surface only requires sod to stabilize the field. Additional archaeological work will include spoil pile testing followed by geoprobe coring;
- Sunken Garden Fields have been leveled and subsurface work has concluded. The surface only requires sod to stabilize the field. Additional archaeological work will include spoil pile testing followed by geoprobe coring;
- Hell's Gate Fields has been leveled, but the trench for subsurface conduit(s) has not been excavated. It is not known at this time if further

landscaping will be conducted at this location prior to excavation of trenches. The archaeological work will include spoil pile testing followed by geoprobe coring.

GRA recommends a testing strategy for Central Fields, Sunken Garden Fields, and Hell's Gate Fields that employs systematic geoprobe cores along transects that would maximize information yield while minimizing surface and subsurface disturbance. This strategy is recommended to reconstruct subsurface stratigraphy that will not necessarily be accessible using either shovel probe testing or the excavation of meter square test units; neither of these methods is likely to extend to a depth below the level of fill. Geoprobe cores may extend to a depth of 20 to 25 feet. The objective of an examination of subsurface stratigraphy is to assess the potential for encountering buried cultural resources in or below levels of fill. Probe placements will be guided by historic maps and field observations. Subsequent to field investigations, soil and sediment stratigraphies will be mapped.

All aspects of this work will be developed in consultation with LPC, and if necessary, DPR will conduct any follow-up work for these parcels, as determined in consultation with LPC. Strategies may include a more detailed sampling protocol and other measures required to protect or avoid archeological resources.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Randall's island has been described as originally largely swamp with granite hills.¹ But during the 19th century, when various charitable institutions were constructed, orchards and farms thrived. Topographic maps show a ridge running parallel to the northern end of the island. The Triborough Bridge now runs roughly along this line. Marshland was situated northwest of the ridge as well as at the southeastern end of the island, where a stream drained into the Little Hell Gate. In the mid-19th century, the southern tip of the island was planted as an orchard.

Ward's Island was once capped by a cluster of four, small, steep sided hills (glacial Kames) that stood in its center (Figure 3). A steep ridge on the east side of the island also appears on the 1851 map. A cliff or bluff on the shore in the middle of the eastern shore of Ward's Island marked "Negro Pt. Bluff" overlooked the river. The southeast was largely salt marsh. Several of these landscape features fall within the project excavation areas discussed in this report.

¹ Richmond 1872, 562.

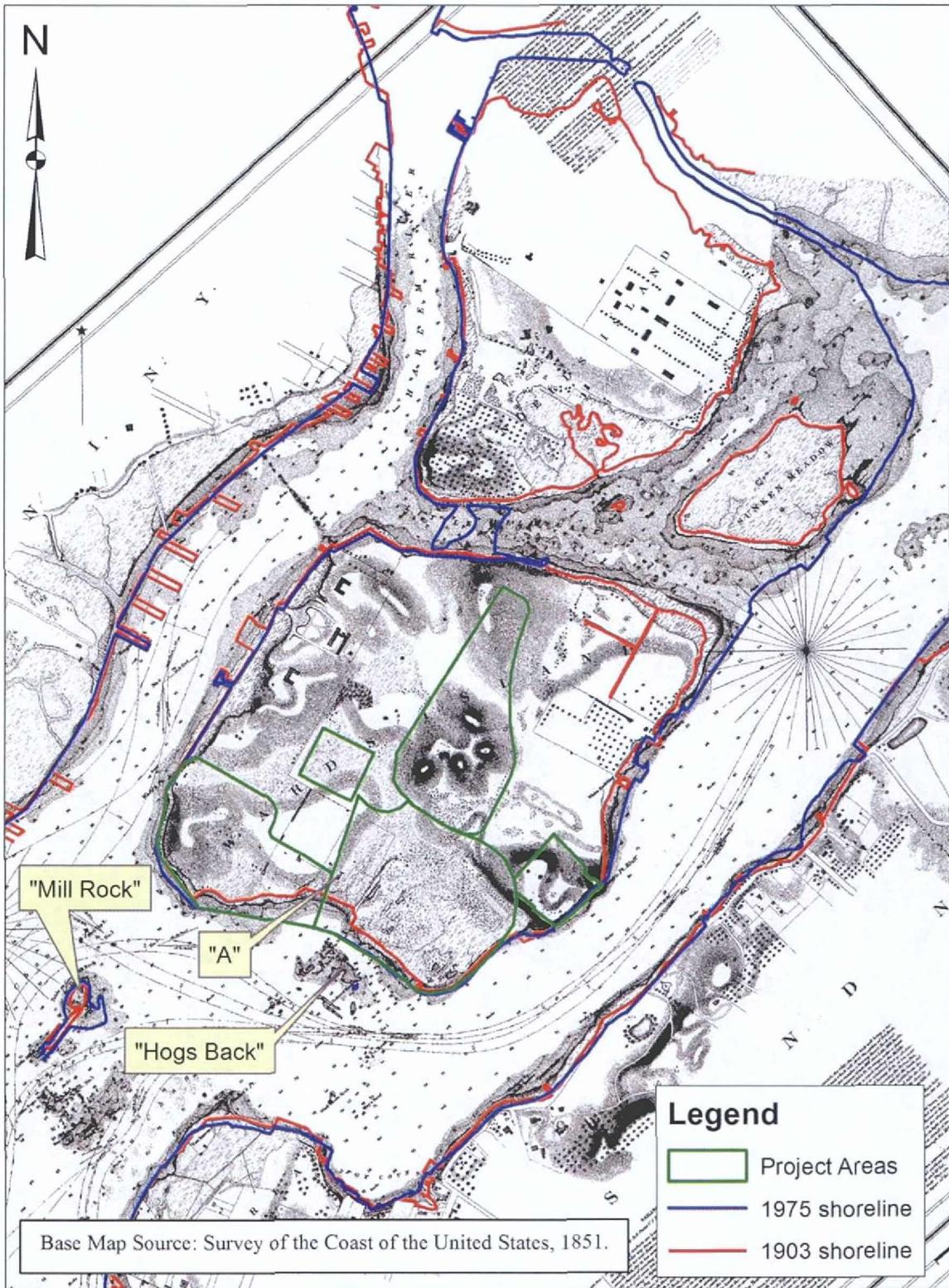


Figure 3. 1851 Map with historical shoreline overlay.

Currently Randall's Island, Ward's Island, and Sunken Meadow form a single landmass approximately 530 acres in size. Prior to infilling, Randall's island consisted of approximately 145 acres and Wards Island was nearly 240. A third island called Sunken Meadow located immediately east of Randall's Island was a little over 20 acres. The waterway that once separated Randall's from Ward's Island was called Little Hell Gate, while the Bronx Kill isolated Randall's Island from the Bronx. Now but a narrow channel, the Bronx Kill was once nearly as wide as the East River at 125th Street. The East River flows around the island and the western branch is the Harlem River. The treacherous bend southwest of Wards Island is called Hell Gate. An 1851 USCS map identifies the many rocks that made the Hell Gate dangerous. Figure 3 uses the map to show the project areas and changes in shoreline from 1903 and 1975.

In 1938 large scale efforts were implemented to infill the waterways that separated the islands both from each other and from the Bronx. Nearshore landfills narrowed the east branch of the East River (Figure 3). Two seawalls were initially extended northward from the northeast point of Ward's island and from a point near the Hellgate Bridge. These seawalls were eventually constructed to encircle Sunken Meadow, and they formed the boundary of the landfill. At that time, Sunken Meadow was not inhabited. During the 1990's, the most recent episode of land filling added to the swampy area between the Triborough and the Hell Gate Bridges where a footbridge once existed.² Today a narrow inlet remains of the Little Hell Gate. Figure 4 is a late 1990s aerial image showing the recent surface morphology of what is currently a single composite island. Note that the 1903 and 1975 shorelines are indicated for comparison with Figure 3.

The dominant structures on Randall's and Ward's Island are the Triborough and Connecting Railroad bridges (Figure 4). Opened in 1938, the Triborough Bridge runs from Manhattan to Randall's Island in a line approximately parallel to the northern side of the island. It then turns, north to the Bronx, and south to the end of Ward's island. From there the bridge runs southeast across the Hell Gate into Queens. Parallel to the Triborough Bridge, is the New York Connecting Railroad Bridge (1914-17) which crosses Randall's Island from the Bronx and then diverges from the Triborough to cross Hell Gate as the Hell Gate Bridge. A footbridge also once spanned Little Hell Gate between the Triborough and Hell Gate bridges. Other structures on Randall's Island include the offices and shops of the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority, and Icahn Stadium. The pavilions of the Manhattan State Psychiatric Center dominate the northwestern quarter of Ward's Island, and the Ward's Island Disposal Plant occupies a large area east of the hospital and stadium. Large tracts of both islands are open, either undeveloped or used as recreational parkland.

² Gary Guttman, pers. comm., Jan. 28, 2000.

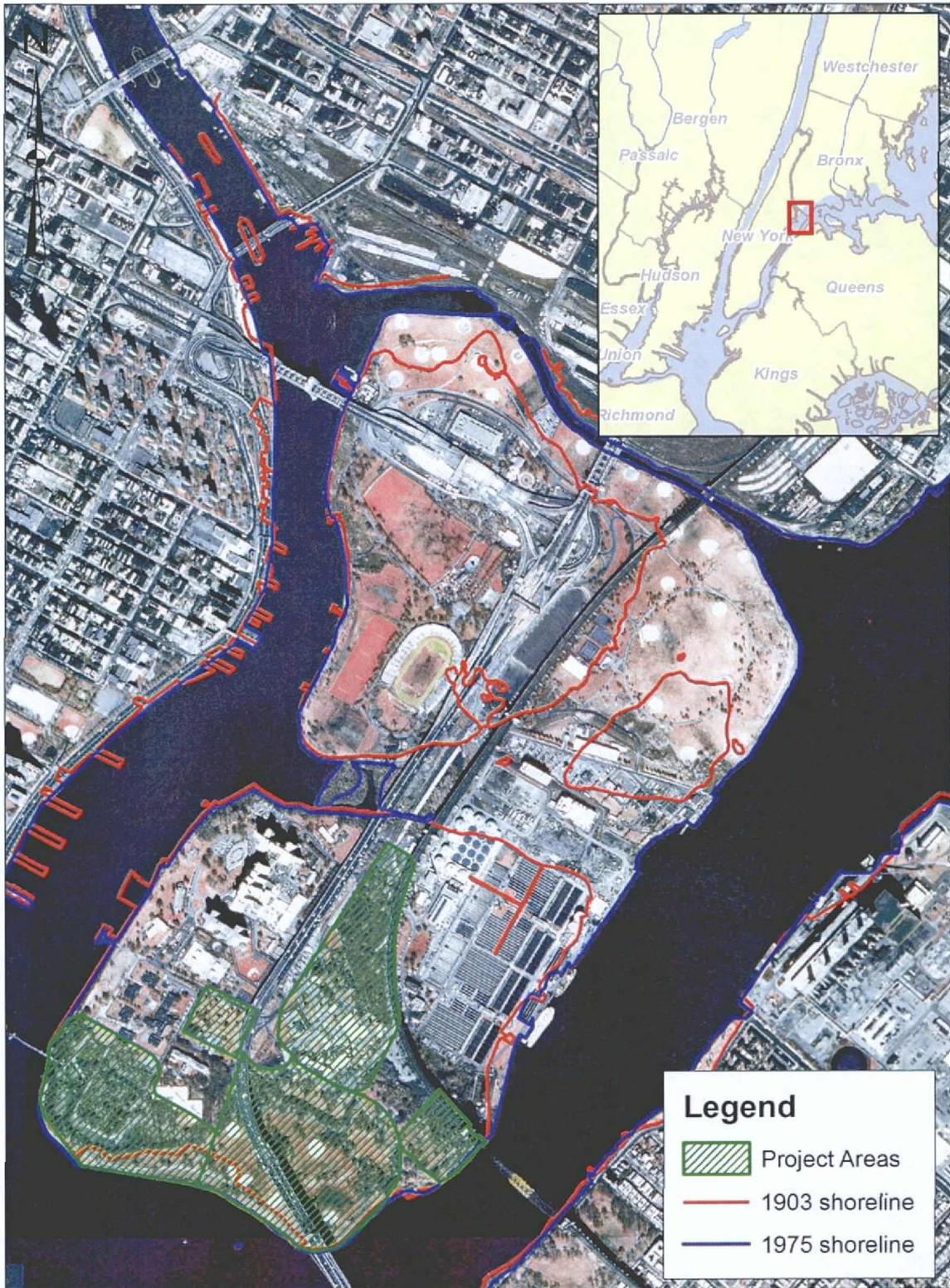


Figure 4. Contemporary aerial photo (circa late 1990's) with historical shoreline overlay.

Subsurface probes have furnished limited information on the natural and historic landscape development of the island. A soil boring taken near the Manhattan Toll Plaza at the north of Randall's Island in conjunction with the Triborough Bridge Rehabilitation Project recorded a surface elevation of 15', the top 5' consisting of miscellaneous fill. Below this was brown silt with traces of clay and little to some fine sand with traces of gravel--a typically lacustrine deposit. Other borings from the northern end of Randall's island in the area now used for playing fields penetrated fills varying in depth from 13' to 29'. Borings taken in 2003 south of the Mabon building on Ward's Island were also used to measure depth of fill.

OWNERSHIP AND USE OF WARD'S ISLAND TO THE MID-19TH CENTURY

The map of inventoried prehistoric archaeological sites compiled by the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation shows no prehistoric sites recorded for either Randall's or Ward's Islands.

Since its sale to the Dutch Governor in 1637, the island's name has reflected its various landholders or tenants. The Mayrechkeniockkingh Indian Chiefs, Seyseys and Numers, sold Ward's Island, which they-called *Tekenas* to Wouter Van Twiller in 1637.³ The translation of *Tekenas* is uncertain. Several meanings are possible including forest, uninhabited track, and wild land.^{4,5}

Twiller used Ward's Island only to graze livestock and did not reside there. His cowherd was the Danish farmer Barent Jansen Blom who earned the nickname Groot Barent or Great Barent. The first European names of both Randall's and Ward's Islands were based on this man's name: Great Barent Island for Ward's; Little Barent Island for Randall's. Those names were corrupted to Great and Little Barnes or Barn Island(s), and in the 1730 *Montgomerie Charter*, Ward's Island appeared as Great Barn Island.⁶

The English confiscated Ward's Island from the Dutch States General and in 1664 awarded it, along with Randall's Island, to Thomas Delavall of Harlem (d. 1682), a collector of customs.⁷ Thomas Delavall left his land to his son-in-law William Dervall. In 1687, Thomas Parcell bought Ward's Island and it remained in his family for 75 years. It was also then called Parcell's Island.⁸ In 1767, Thomas Bohanna purchased land here and briefly gave his name to the island. The Bohanna property, comprising 140 acres and

³ Board of Ed 1968, p. 7.

⁴ American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society 28th Annual Report, pp. 33-34. The author cites Beauchamp's *Aboriginal Place Names* for the translation of the Indian names. The historical summary in this section is largely taken from this source.

⁵ Grumet 1981, 56.

⁶ Hoffman 1862, p. 148; American Scenic.1923, p. 33.

⁷ Smith 1962, p. 100; Valentine's Manual 1855, p. 493.

⁸ Greenhouse Consultants 1994, 27. An earlier study is cited (not available at LPC or the Municipal Reference Library) by Rutsch, E.D. and R.L. Porter, Stage I Cultural Resources Survey of the Proposed Sludge Storage on Wards Island. Historic Conservation & Interpretation, 1980.

his home, was sold to Benjamin Hildreth in 1772, who sold it to William Lownds in 1785. The other half of the island was purchased by John William Pinfold.⁹

During the Revolutionary War, Ward's Island was occupied by British troops who used it as an army base.¹⁰ Both islands were contested during the conflict and passed from control of the Continental Army—George Washington established a smallpox quarantine on Randall's Island in the spring of 1776—to the British who drove them out in September of that year.

In 1806, Captain William Lowndes' estate was sold to Jasper Ward. It consisted of "half the Island situated at Hell Gate ...150 acres ... large dwelling... valuable building stone quarry, of the best kind of hard blue stone ... a wharf and creek near the house."¹¹ Pinfold's half was purchased first by John Molenaar, then by Jasper's brother Bartholomew Ward. Since that time, the island has been named after these owners.

The Wards sold parcels to a number of individuals and attempted to develop a farming community on the island. This effort was less than successful, and in 1811 the Wards turned their attention to the construction and running of a cotton mill. They also, with Phillip Milledoer, built the first bridge "Ward's Bridge" connecting the island to 114th Street in Harlem. The bridge was subsequently washed away by a storm in 1821.

Following the acquisition of Randall's Island and Sunken Meadow from the heirs of John Randel in 1835¹², New York City began to purchase large tracts of Ward's Island by a series of conveyances from 1851-52 and 1855.¹³

HISTORY OF WARD'S ISLAND FROM THE MID-19TH CENTURY TO THE PRESENT

The institutions built on Ward's Islands during the second half of the 19th century are briefly described in this section. The potter's field, which existed during the mid 19th century, is treated separately below.¹⁴

The first public institution to be erected on Ward's Island was created by the Commissioners of Emigration. This body, formed in 1847, consisted of six citizens and

⁹ A classified advertisement offers the "...southern half of Great Barn Island, commonly called Bohana's Island, to be sold at Public Auction on the 20th Day of November next... at the Merchants Coffee House (...) 140 acres... several convenient buildings on it," also wood, an orchard, and "many fruit trees" (*The New York Journal*, Oct. 30, 1772; collected in Kelby, W., Notes on Wards Island, MSS notes, New York Historical Society). Greenhouse 1994, p. 27, states that Bohanna sold 140 acres on the northern half of the island in 1772. See also American I Scenic 1923, p. 33.

¹⁰ American Scenic 1923, p. 34.

¹¹ Kelby MSS.

¹² The article gives "John Randall" as the name of the purchaser. In Seitz 1996, p. 164, it is Jonathan Randel, in Smith 1962, p. 101, Jonathan Randall.

¹³ American Scenic 1923, 34.

¹⁴ The cemeteries are mentioned, without further details, in several places including Smith 1962, p. 102; "Toward North Brother Island," N/A, 1978.

ex-officio, the mayors of New York and Brooklyn as well as the Presidents of the German Society and the Irish Emigrant Society.¹⁵ Their purpose was to create an institution to receive immigrants landing at New York. The Commissioners leased part of Ward's Island in 1848 and then purchased 121 acres "including the whole of the water front to New York City" on the western side of the island. This location, near "Paupers Dock," was where the buildings of the **State Emigrant Refuge** were situated.¹⁶ The 1852 Serrell map indicates that the Commissioners of Emigration further owned four lots at the southeastern end of the island.

None of the buildings associated with the State Emigrant Refuge were located within the footprint of the current project. The structures included the Verplanck Hospital, the largest building; the refuge itself, which could accommodate 450 destitute individuals, a large number of whom were women and children; a nursery; an insane asylum; Roman Catholic and Protestant chapels; and residences for the physicians and superintendent.¹⁷

The buildings of the Emigration Hospital and Refuge were turned over to the later constructed Insane Asylum in the 1880s. New York State assumed control of that institution in 1895. The original buildings of the Emigrant Refuge complex no longer exist. Various institutions discussed in this section can be seen on the 1887 USC&GS map (Figure 5).

The **Inebriate Asylum** opened in 1868 on the southeast side of the island. Disabled and indigent Civil War veterans were also housed there, as the facilities were not fully occupied by inebriates.¹⁸ In 1872, the Inebriate Asylum was converted into the **Homeopathic Hospital** although the building on Ward's Island may not have been renamed until after 1880. The largest building of the Homeopathic Hospital stood on the "Hell Gate" field within the project area.

¹⁵ Richmond 1872, p. 551.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 554.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 554-556. The 1851 USC & GS map (Figure 2) shows three structures on the west side of the island. It is uncertain whether these were already part of the institution because they are not labeled and do not correspond to the plans of the later buildings seen on the 1860 Valentine's Manual map or on the 1885 Robinson map. Four of the rectangular buildings on the 1860 Valentine's map shown at the northern end of the eastern row may correspond to the hospital wards shown on the 1885 Robinson map.

¹⁸ Richmond 1872, pp. 557, 559.

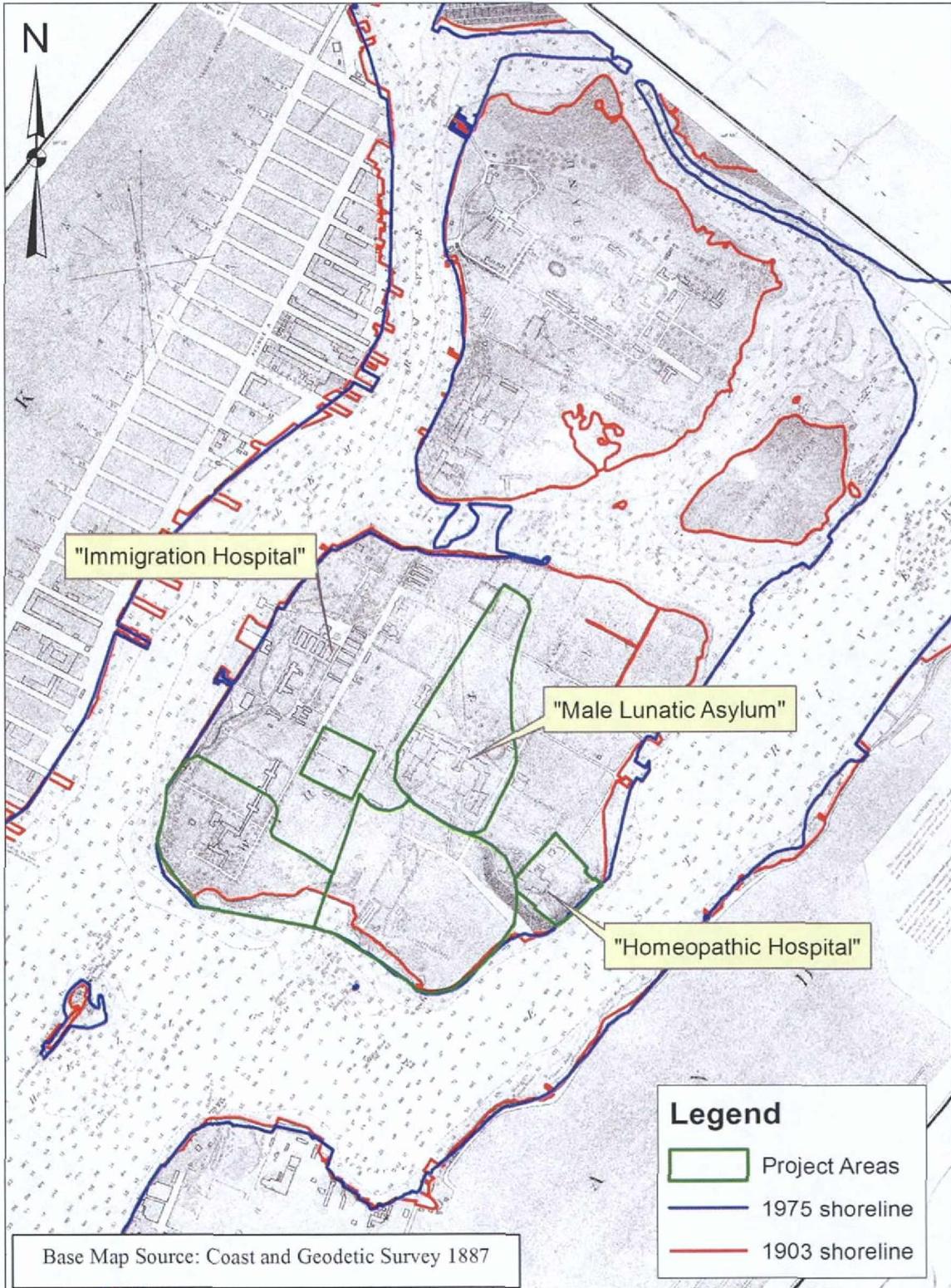


Figure 5. 1887 Map with historical shoreline overlay.

Built between 1880 and 1885, the hospital identified as the **Male Lunatic Asylum** stood on and near the Central Fields location. The facility was built over the terrain where the kames shown on the 1851 map had been leveled. Its once massive structures contained thousands of patients after 1896, when it was taken over by the State of New York and became part of the Manhattan State Hospital for the insane. By 1899, it was the world's largest mental institution, with 4393 patients.¹⁹ In 1926 the population was approximately 7000, but by 1930 many of the buildings had deteriorated and become unsafe. It was suggested that they be demolished and the area converted for recreational purposes. Most of the buildings were torn down in the 1950s. None of the older buildings survived. The Mabon Building, which still stands, was erected during the 'teens or 'twenties directly south of the State Hospital contemporaneous with the later occupation of that building.

Two burials discovered in the former front garden of the asylum most likely predate it. They were found during the excavation of a trench approximately 6 feet wide and 8 feet deep intended for two 24-inch pipes running side-by-side from the power plant of the Manhattan Psychiatric Center to Building 102 of the center.²⁰ The burials contained no chronologically diagnostic finds. Greenhouse (1994) suggested that they date to around the mid 19th century, and the individuals were from the Emigrant Refuge, or the Inebriate Asylum, or from the old Insane Asylum associated with the Emigrant Refuge.²¹ They probably do not belong to the period between ca. 1850 and 1868, since during those years there was a potters field on Ward's Island where they could have been interred in individual, marked graves. Riis reported that in 1891, the city allocated \$50 for funeral expenses for honorably discharged military personnel, but a "decent funeral" cost double that amount.²² The potters fields on Ward's and Randall's Islands were used both for the interment of the anonymous dead and for those who could not afford a better final resting place. This applied especially to residents of the island's many institutions.

A third burial was discovered while digging to repair a water main break behind the Mabon Building in 1995. W. Camargo stated that he saw only a skull and that it was "thrown back in the hold".²³ The Police Department's Street Crimes Unit (with an office located on the island) determined that investigation was not warranted because the remains were not recent.

In the 1920s to 1930s, land was also set aside for the sewer plant and a right-of-way was laid out for the Triborough Bridge (begun in 1929).²⁴ In 1935, four hundred patients in the House of Refuge were moved. The plan was to demolish that building as well as eighty-seven other large and small structures by the end of 1936.²⁵ In 1938, the WPA began to develop 38 acres at the southern end of Ward's Island for parkland and the old civil war dormitories were destroyed. But in 1943 the Manhattan State Hospital ignored

¹⁹ Seitz 1996, p. 166.

²⁰ Walter Camargo, Plant Superintendent, Manhattan Psychiatric Center, pers. comm. Feb. 28, 2001.

²¹ Greenhouse 1994, 29.

²² Riis 1891, p. 45.

²³ Walter Camargo, pers. comm. Feb. 28, 2001.

²⁴ NYC Department of Parks, Apr. 27, 1953.

²⁵ NYC Department of Parks, Feb. 9, 1935.

a mandate demanding the shutdown of that facility, and in 1954 a 350 million dollar bond fund added three new buildings to the hospital. In 1979, the Manhattan State Hospital was reconsolidated into the Manhattan Psychiatric Center and it was renovated in 1988. Also in 1979, the city opened a “temporary” emergency shelter for 200 homeless men, which later became known as the Charles Gay Homeless Shelter. It is still operational, housing over 500 individuals.

THE POTTER’S FIELD

This section traces the history of potter’s fields in New York and presents various lines of evidence that argue for the presence of a potter’s field on Ward’s Island. The potter’s field was the burial place of last resort for the poor, the unknown and the unclaimed dead. As Riis observed: “The Potter’s Field stands for utter, hopeless surrender. The last the poor will let go, however miserable their lot in life, is the hope of a decent burial.”²⁶

The custom of providing a place to bury the poor or friendless is ancient. A potters field is mentioned in St. Matthew 27: 1-10. Because it was unclean to keep Judas’ “blood money” in the temple, the chief priests took the thirty pieces of silver that the repentant apostle had cast down and used the funds to purchase a potter’s field as a burial site for strangers, or foreigners.

In Colonial New York, middle class, white Christians were buried in their churchyards. But African slaves and freedmen, indigent whites, and in some cases Jews, buried their dead on the outskirts of the town near the potters’ workshops and tan yards. During the Revolutionary War, prisoners were buried in the area now occupied by City Hall Park, where the almshouse was then located.

In 1796, the city purchased its first potter’s field at the junction of the Albany and Greenwich Roads, and hired a keeper at six shillings a day.²⁷ But in 1800, city authorities decided that it was too near the public roads and a new site, in the area of present-day Washington Square was selected. The Washington Square site was used until 1823, by which time the city had grown into that neighborhood, and a new location was established at 5th Avenue between 40th and 42nd Street, the current Bryant Park.²⁸ The burial plot, however, was transformed in 1842 into the Murray Hill distributing reservoir (fed by the new Croton Aqueduct) and the human remains were moved to 4th Avenue and 49th Street. No permanent rest would be given here, because the potter’s field was later given over for a woman’s hospital. The disinterment of remains for reburial at Randall’s and Ward’s Islands was conducted throughout the 1850’s to the consternation of city residents.²⁹

²⁶ Riis 1891, 244.

²⁷ Macatamney 1909, 124.

²⁸ Lossing 1884, 668; Dept. Of Corrections 1907, p. 2, summarizes the history of New York City potters fields; see the report to the Board of Aldermen, Nov. 14, 1842, pp. 524-525, which pleads for the relocation of the burial ground whose “excessively offensive” effluvia were noticeable for several hundred feet around.

²⁹ Bahde, 2006.

As early as 1835, one Jacob Lorillard petitioned the Council to move the pauper's burial ground to Randall's Island, which the city had purchased for this purpose.³⁰ But the Board of Assistants' Lands and Places Committee had settled on Randall's Island for the location of an almshouse—opened in 1845—and did not want the potter's field to be situated there. Finally, in 1843, following eight years of indecision, the plan for a graveyard on Randall's Island passed the Council.³¹ The potter's field on Randall's Island remained in use at least until 1850.³²

The Manhattan 4th Avenue potter's field was still being used during the early 1840s, though the Randall's Island burial ground had opened. This would have reduced the number of interments on Manhattan. The continued use of the Manhattan burial ground is evidenced by two requests to the Board of Aldermen, one in January 1843, to remove a fence on the north side of the 4th Avenue potter's field and a second, at the end of 1844, to continue using the old potter's field during the winter.³³

Contemporary documents indicated that the potter's field on Randall's Island was located south of the nurseries.³⁴ In 1850, the Alms House Governors reported that 1360 interments had been made in the potter's field between June 15 and December 31.³⁵ The 1850 report also stated that the field was not large enough, and not actually suitable for burial.

[The] field is upon rock, below the surface, so that the decomposition of human remains there interred, and the effluvia resulting from it, will not sink in the ground, but the latter will exhale and taint the atmosphere. Its proximity therefore to the Nurseries... is objectionable, and at certain seasons dangerous.³⁶

The dangerous season was summer. The "emanations from this spot vitiate the atmosphere in its immediate vicinity, and the prevailing southerly winds of the summer season waft the pestilential exhalations directly over the plot covered by the nursery buildings".³⁷

The warden of Randall's Island reported that of the "great number" of pits dug in 1849, six remained, and each could hold 120 bodies. These burial pits must have been smaller than the ones on Ward's Island (below) and consequently, the Randall's Island potter's field would have contained more pits. The potter's field was in use for approximately seven years. In 1850, the rate of burial was around seventy individuals per week. This includes an elevated summer mortality rate, since the annualized number of 3,640 is rather high; over a seven year period, the number of interments would have been greater

³⁰ Klips 1980, 542.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 543-44, 547.

³² Alms House Governors 1850, p. 15.

³³ New York City Board of Aldermen 1842-1 843, Jan. 16, p. 284, and 1844-1 845, Dec. 9, p. 54.

³⁴ Alms House Governors 1850, p. 15.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

³⁶ Alms House Governors 1850, p. 15.

³⁷ Alms House Commissioners 1849, pp. 23-24.

than 25,300. A more realistic figure is around 21,000. If each burial pit contained 120 bodies, at least 130 pits would have been required for the seven year period.

The location of the Randall's Island potter's field, like that of Ward's Island, is not indicated on historic maps or plans for the period. The only area large enough to serve as a potter's field on Randall's Island, that is also relatively undisturbed, is at the southern tip, south/southwest of the Stadium.

The burial ground on Ward's Island, which succeeded that on Randall's, most likely does not predate 1851, since the Corporation of New York only began acquiring land there in that year.³⁸ It remained in use until 1868, when the Commissioners of the New York City Departments of Public Charities and Correction authorized the purchase of Hart's Island for that purpose. The potter's field on Hart's Island is still in use.

The location of the potter's field on Ward's Island can be inferred from an 1855 New York Times article that describes a visit there and provides illuminating details (see Appendix B). The anonymous writer traveled in an open rowboat from the ferry pier, at the foot of 116th Street in Manhattan, to "Ward's Island Hospital wharf" and then proceeded to walk southward to "the end of the Island." He met up the "guardian" of the potter's field at a house described as being located a few rods from the shore with the Hog's Back in front and "a little to the left" and Mill Rock to the right when looking out over the water. To one side was an orchard and to the other "a little cove." Following "crooked, right-angled path" the reporter and his guide traveled a quarter mile to the potter's field. Along the way they stopped at the "old house on Great Barn Island." A structure with the same identification is labeled "A" on the 1851 USGS map (Figure 3). Eventually, a slight rise led to the gate of the burial field. The burial ground was a few rods northwest of the shoreline (one rod equals 16.5 feet) near "an abrupt wood crowned bank" overlooking Long Island. A hill, with a steeper stretch near the shore shown on the 1851 USGS map may represent the features described in the article.

The burial process was summarized as follows. The human remains, in coffins, were rowed to a landing house "on the shore of the cove spoken of as hollowing the south end of Ward's Island." This is the cove in the center of the southern side of the island. The bodies were then taken by road to a "large receiving vault at the western hill end of the cemetery" where they could be preserved in airtight chambers for a few days in case anyone came to identify and claim them.

The two acres of the potter's field were enclosed by a "tight board fence." Under one corner of the field, graded about four feet higher than the surrounding land, were three trenches measuring three hundred feet long by eighteen feet wide and fifteen feet deep. Note that this depth is more than twice that normally used for individual interments. A fourth had just been dug a few weeks before.³⁹ The burials were placed three coffins end-to-end across the trench, and layered up to within two feet of the surface. When the trench was filled, the earth from a new trench was used to cover the old, which further

³⁸ Hoffman 1862, p. 148.

³⁹ Rambling 1855.

raised the level. As soon as the mound had settled, it was turfed and planted with “cedars, willows and other appropriate trees.”⁴⁰ In 1858, the pits still only occupied an area 400 feet square.⁴¹ These would be enough, according to Mayor Tiemann, “to last for another 25 years.”

The Ward’s Island trenches contained the burials of some 16,000 people, according to the anonymous reporter. This figure is consistent with the statistics for pauper burials at Hart’s Island between 1867 and 1885, which averaged 3117 individuals annually—if the Ward’s Island field had been in operation for about five years. The reporter noted that the average number of burials per day was eighteen, or one hundred twenty-five per week, for a total of 6,570 in a year. However, this must represent the higher mortality rate of the summer months, resulting from epidemics. The total number of burials in the Ward’s Island potter’s field in 1859 was 2,278, in 1860, 2,383,⁴² and in 1864, 1946.⁴³ A third of the dead were sent to the burial ground by the Commissioners of Emigration, and were buried by the Governors of the Almshouse at a cost of fifty cents per burial.⁴⁴ In 1857, the Corporation of New York added to the number of burials on Ward’s Island by transferring the remains of some 100,000 individuals from the old Manhattan potter’s fields discussed above.⁴⁵

Because the trenches were mass burials and the individuals unknown, they were not identified with grave markers; “...no marble tablets and that earthly oblivion which the storied urn averts but a few brief years falls at once upon the sleepers.”⁴⁶

However, there also were individual burials and these may have been marked. The Governors of the Almshouse fenced off a one acre plot on the west side of the potter’s field for the “Randall’s Island boys” residing in the House of Refuge, opened on that Island in 1854. And the 1855 reporter further mentions that residents of the Almshouse might request that their friends be buried “in another part of the yard, and a headstone...or a board with the name and age painted on it... mark the spot.” There were already “many such single graves.” In sum, given the number of years in use, the burial practices and the mortality rate, the area occupied by the potter’s field on Ward’s Island may have covered a smaller area than the cemetery on Randall’s Island.

It is concluded that project area East River Fields is medium to high probability for historical material associated with the many structures constructed on the parcel through time, but is unlikely to contain the old potter’s field. No further investigation of the parcel is recommended. Wards Meadow Fields is a low probability location that requires no additional testing. Hell’s Gate Fields may have been suitable for the burial site and the location somewhat resembles the 1851 Times article description of the potter’s fields.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Purchase of Ward’s Island, 1858, p. 8.

⁴² Commissioners of Public Charities 186 1, Jan. 1, p. 65.

⁴³ Homes of the Dead 1866.

⁴⁴ By 1967, the price of an adult burial on Hart’s Island had risen to \$75, New York City Department of Correction 1967, p. 8.

⁴⁵ Lossing 1884, p. 668, cited in Stokes 1926, p. 1875, under April 17, 1858.

⁴⁶ The Homes of the Dead 1866, p. 2.

It is a high probability location (Figure 2). Central Fields and Sunken Garden Fields are both medium probability areas that may have historical materials other than those associated with human burials. These three archaeologically sensitive areas are recommended for additional investigation.

ONSITE ASSESSMENT

A visit to Randall's Island to view the five fields identified for proposed alteration was conducted on September 9, 2008. Archaeologists Mark A. Smith and Susan Malin-Boyce and geomorphologist Michael Aiuvalasit met with three members of the Randall's Island Sports Foundation staff, including Assistant Director Scott McAuliffe, who provided information concerning the current condition of the five project areas. Digital images presented below are from that visit. Each of the five fields was viewed and the work completed to date was outlined by members of the Sports Foundation staff.

East River Fields:

East River Fields is 100% complete for the new field development project. Top soil was removed, the field was prepared as a sports playing field and no further work is anticipated for the location. Top soil removed from the East River Fields was relocated and consolidated into a composite spoil pile with that of Ward's Meadow Fields (Figure 6).

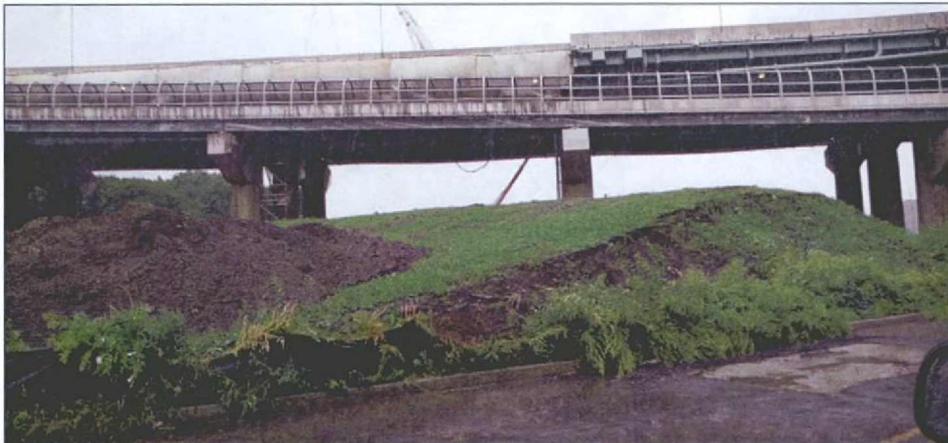


Figure 6. Composite spoil pile from East River Fields and Ward's Meadow Fields. (Digital Image taken by M.A. Smith, September 9, 2008).

Ward's Meadow Fields:

Ward's Meadow Fields has been landscaped and the top soil has been removed and relocated where it has been incorporated with spoil from East River Fields (Figure 6). Trenches for utilities have already been completed on Ward's Meadow Fields, and per communication with DPR and representatives of the Randall's Island Sports Foundation the surface has been covered with an artificial turf.

Hell's Gate Fields:

Hell's Gate Fields has been landscaped (Figure 7), and top soil from the area has been removed to a nearby spoil pile (Figure 8). A utility trench has yet to be installed. That work is pending further archaeological investigation.



Figure 7. View of Hell's Gate Fields looking east with railroad bridge at left in photograph. (Digital Image taken by S. Malin-Boyce, September 9, 2008).



Figure 8. View of Hell's Gate Fields spoil pile with railroad bridge in background. (Digital Image taken by M.A. Smith, September 9, 2008).

Central Fields:

Central Fields has been landscaped and utilities have been installed. Weeds on the surface will be removed and sod will be emplaced to complete the work at this location.



Figure 9. View of Central Fields. (Digital Image taken by M.A. Smith, September 9, 2008).

Sunken Garden Fields:

Sunken Garden Fields has been landscaped and top soil has been removed. Utilities have been installed, and the surface will be stabilized with the addition of sod.



Figure 10. View of Sunken Garden Fields. (Digital Image taken by M.A. Smith, September 9, 2008).

RECOMMENDATIONS

GRA proposes to implement a cultural resources mitigation strategy attuned to the archaeological sensitivity of the Randall's Island/Wards Island complex, with a focus on the parcels known as Central Fields, Sunken Garden Fields, Hell's Gate Fields, East River Fields, and Ward's Meadow Fields. Archaeological integrity of the latter two properties have been compromised by previous landscaping operations. The extent and depth of such operations have minimized primary archaeological integrity and resulted in the accumulation of spoil piles possible housing archaeological debris in secondary context.

All five fields have been cleared of top soil and the spoil piles from landscaping have been variously consolidated in other areas where they will be utilized for regarding, contouring, and additional re-landscaping. While it is thought that East River and Wards Meadow fields have provided the bulk of the top soil, it is not clear whether or not the

other three (3) parcels have been disturbed. Further, there is some question as to the extent and depth of relandscaping and the degree to which the spoil piles contain sediment that is purely top-soil or if it incorporates matrix from historic fill-period fill or even components from the undisturbed, buried surface of any or some of the parcels. The latter contexts have the potential to furnish critical archaeological information.

The development status and the archaeological recommendations for the individual parcels may be summarized as follows:

- The work at East River fields has been completed and additional archaeological work will include spoil pile testing followed by geoprobe coring;
- Ward's Meadow fields have been completed and additional archaeological work will include spoil pile testing followed by geoprobe coring;
- Central Fields have been leveled and subsurface work has ended. The surface only requires sod to stabilize the field. Additional archaeological work will include spoil pile testing followed by geoprobe coring;
- Sunken Garden Fields have been leveled and subsurface work has concluded. The surface only requires sod to stabilize the field. Additional archaeological work will include spoil pile testing followed by geoprobe coring;
- Hell's Gate Fields has been leveled, but the trench for subsurface conduit(s) has not been excavated. It is not known at this time if further landscaping will be conducted at this location prior to excavation of trenches. The archaeological work will include spoil pile testing followed by geoprobe coring.

In the interest of serving the needs of LPC, City of New York Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), and the client, Randall's Island Sports Foundation Inc (RISF), and DMJM + Harris Inc., GRA proposes a two-phase landscape-based study. The first phase will test the spoil piles produced by recent surface alteration in preparation for construction. The second phase will utilize Geoprobe technology to assess the altered landforms of the five properties that have either been impacted or are may be potentially impacted by landscaping activity. The Geoprobe is a minimally invasive method that provides a window into subsurface stratigraphy and landscape history without substantially disturbing the existing surfaces. The collective product of these investigations is a baseline model for developmental history of the geography of Ward's Island.

The initial spoil pile testing will utilize a backhoe or other subsurface testing method that will permit sufficient lateral exposure to determine the phases and ages of disturbance of the parcels under investigation. It is possible that earlier (historic) fill episodes, or even older sediment of formerly undisturbed surfaces, will be documented in the stratigraphy of the spoil piles. The prospect for recovery of archaeological remains within the older fills cannot be precluded.

The second phase of field testing will rely on a geoprobe coring device. The geoprobe utilizes a hydraulic system to penetrate the subsurface and extract successive and continuous lengths of 2-3 foot sediment columns. The device is highly mobile and maneuverable in landscapes where access is constrained by terrain and vegetation. Two-inch core sections are recovered in plastic sleeves and sealed upon retrieval. At the conclusion of fieldwork, the samples are transported to the soil-sediment facility at GRA where the sleeves are sliced open and arrayed vertically. Analysis involves detailed soil and sediment descriptions following the criteria of USDA (1994) for soils and NACSN (1983) for sediments. Sections of samples are based on relative depths from the top of the column and measurements of distinct layers establish a vertical sequence of deposition. Further a laterally spaced series of these cores will demonstrate variability of deposition within and across the individual parcels. Depositional episodes can also be isolated. It is anticipated that significant historic disturbances will be found across all testable areas of the five outlined parcels and that differing episodes of fill will be distinguishable.

Cores will be extracted along transects in each parcel as indicated in Figures 11 through 20 below. The layout of the transect lines is indicated in the same position on each of two historic maps, that of 1851 and 1887. Transect lines will be adjusted if necessary based on field conditions and the presence of any recently installed subsurface utilities.

Central Fields:

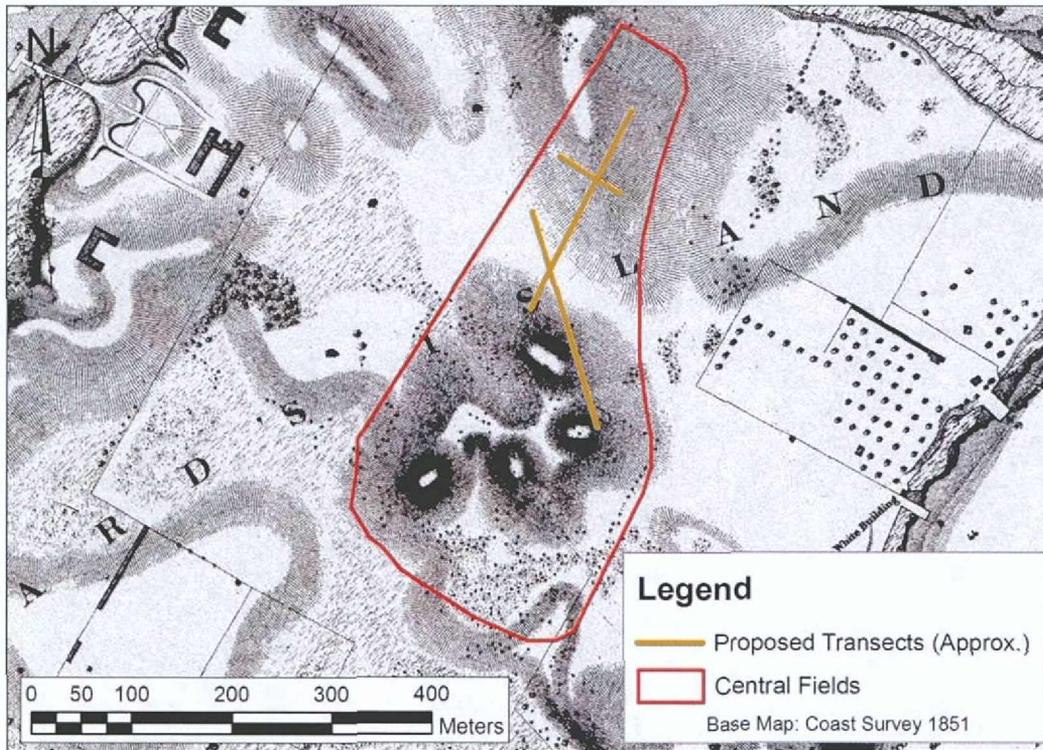


Figure 11. Proposed Geoprobe transects on 1851 base map.

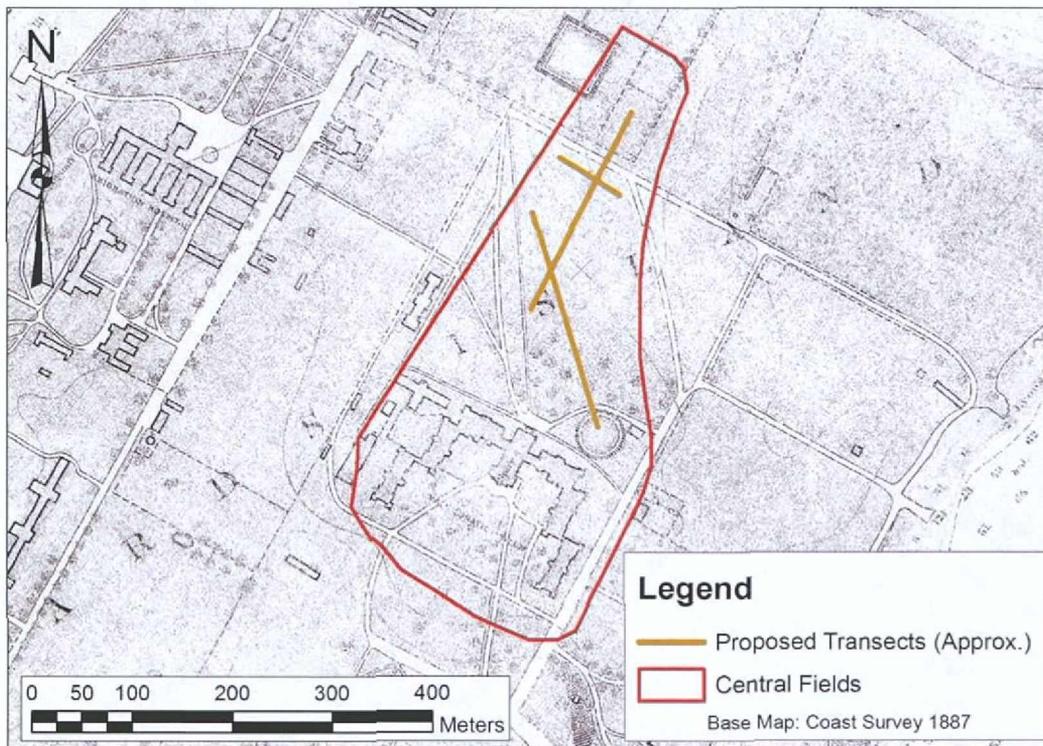


Figure 12. Proposed Geoprobe transects on 1887 base map.

Sunken Garden Fields:

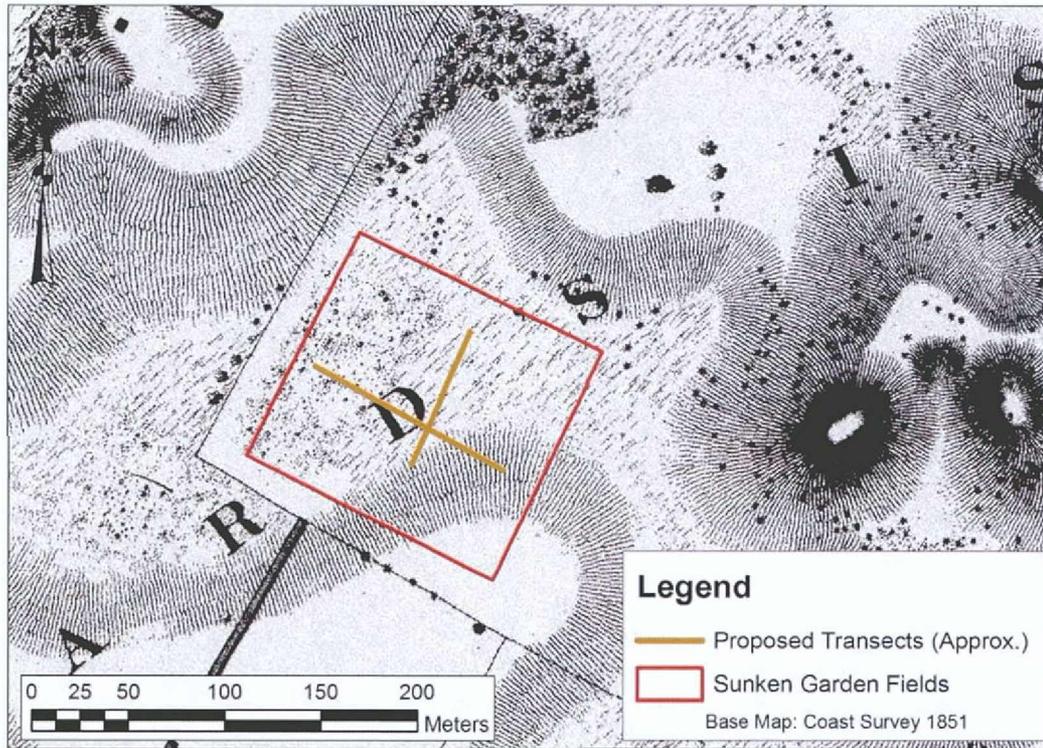


Figure 13. Proposed Geoprobe transect on 1851 base map.

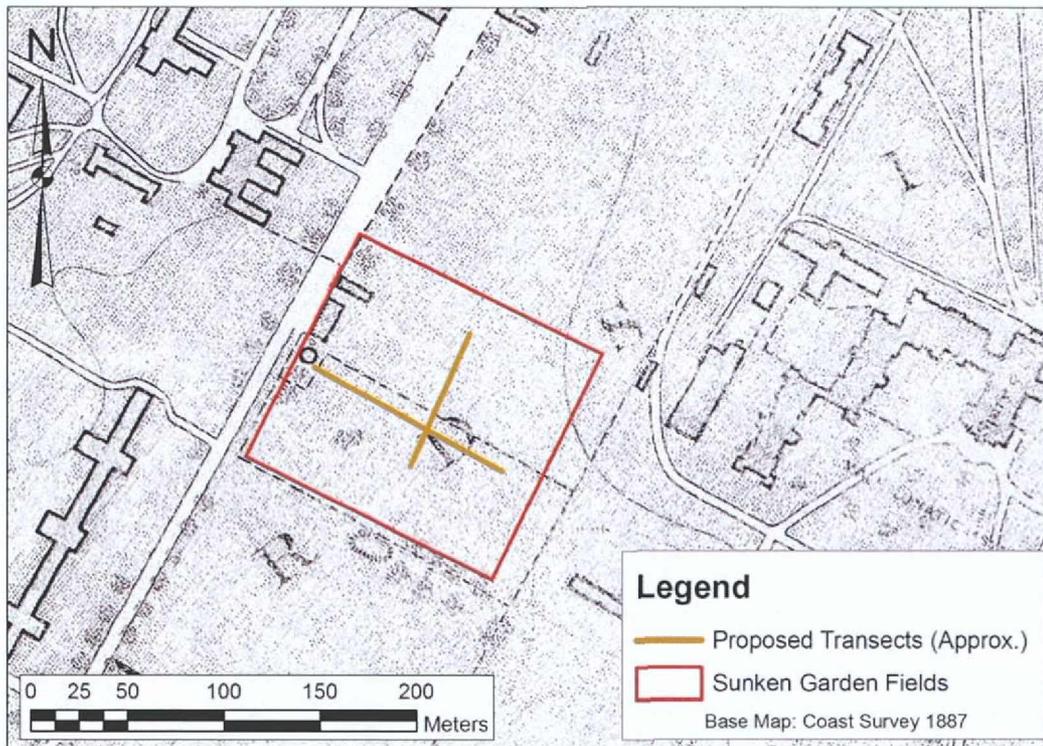


Figure 14. Proposed Geoprobe transect on 1887 base map.

Hell's Gate Fields:

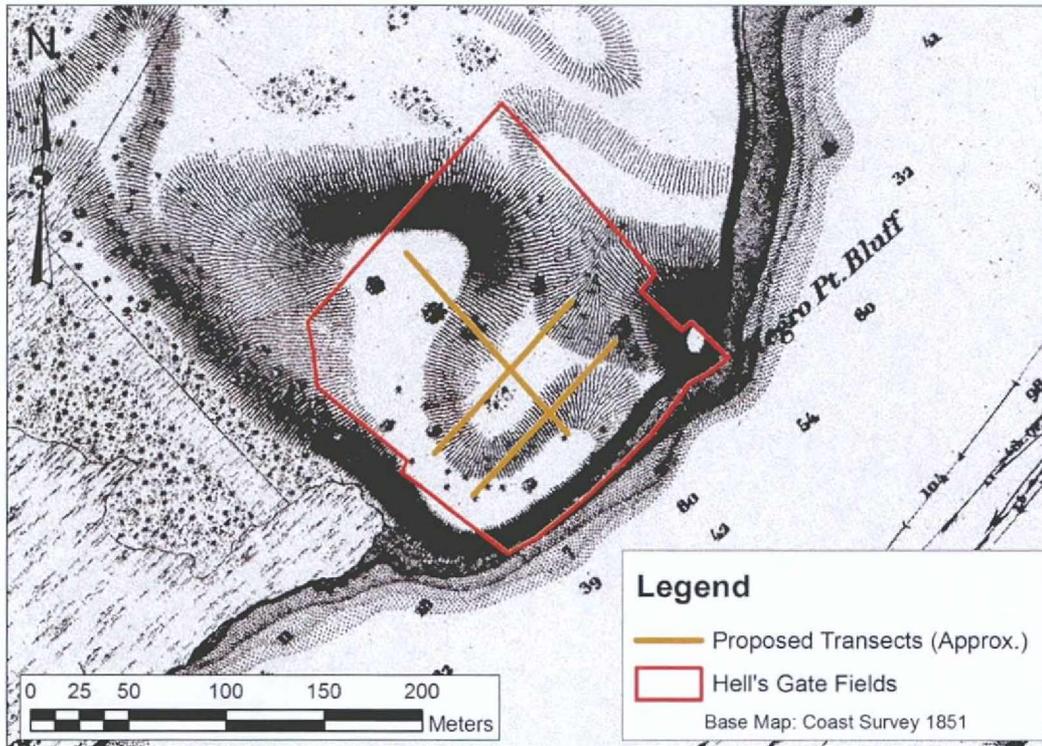


Figure 15. Proposed Geoprobe transect on 1851 base map.

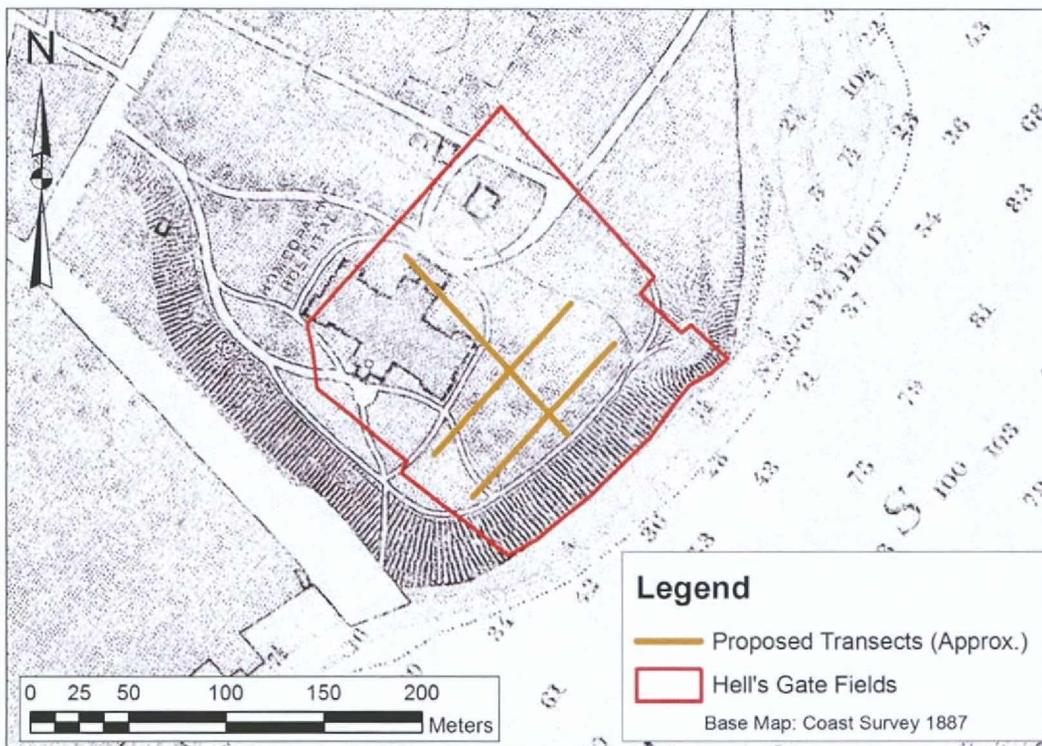


Figure 16. Proposed Geoprobe transect on 1887 base map.

East River Fields:

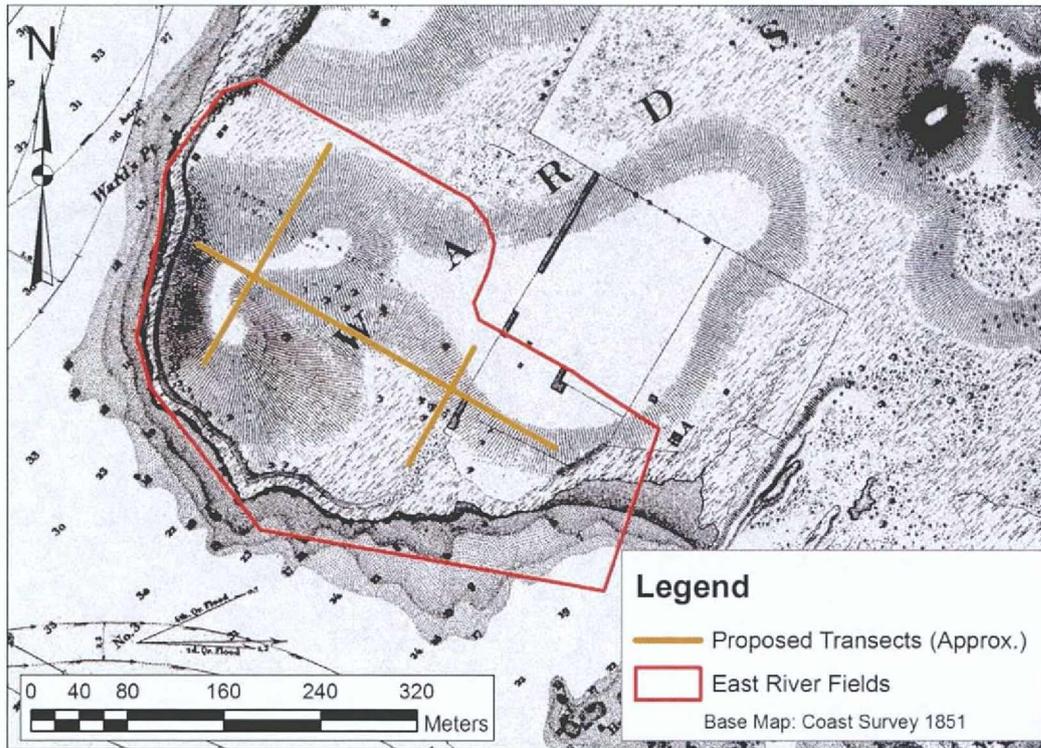


Figure 17. Proposed Geoprobe transect on 1851 base map.

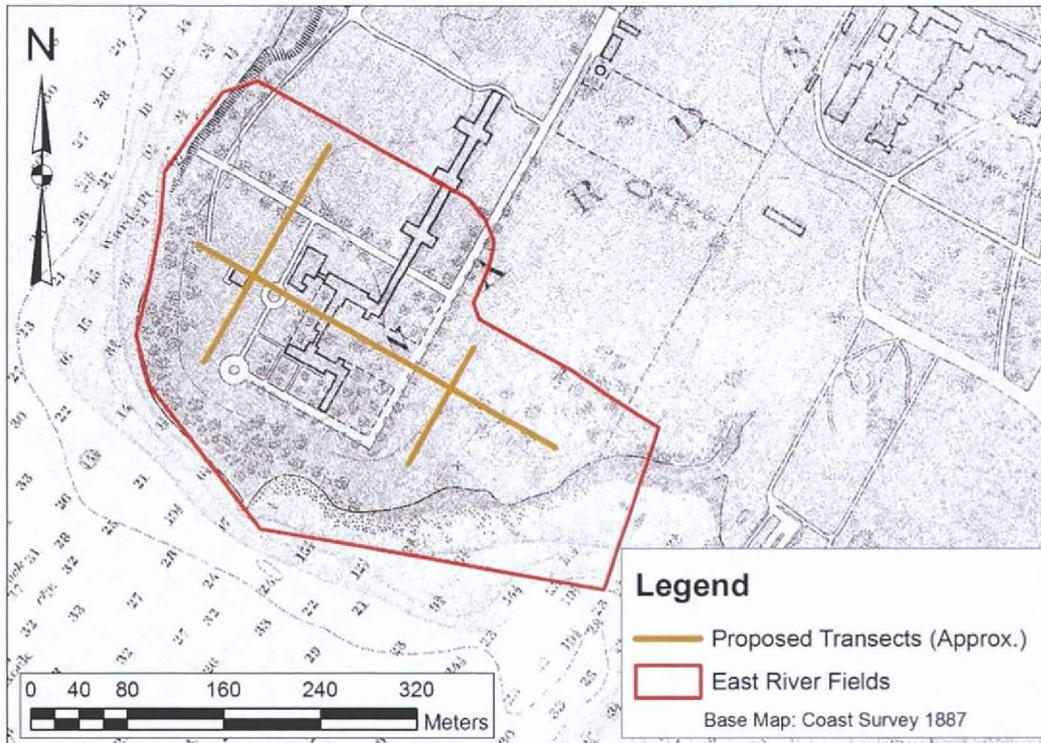


Figure 18. Proposed Geoprobe transect on 1887 base map.

Wards Meadow Fields:

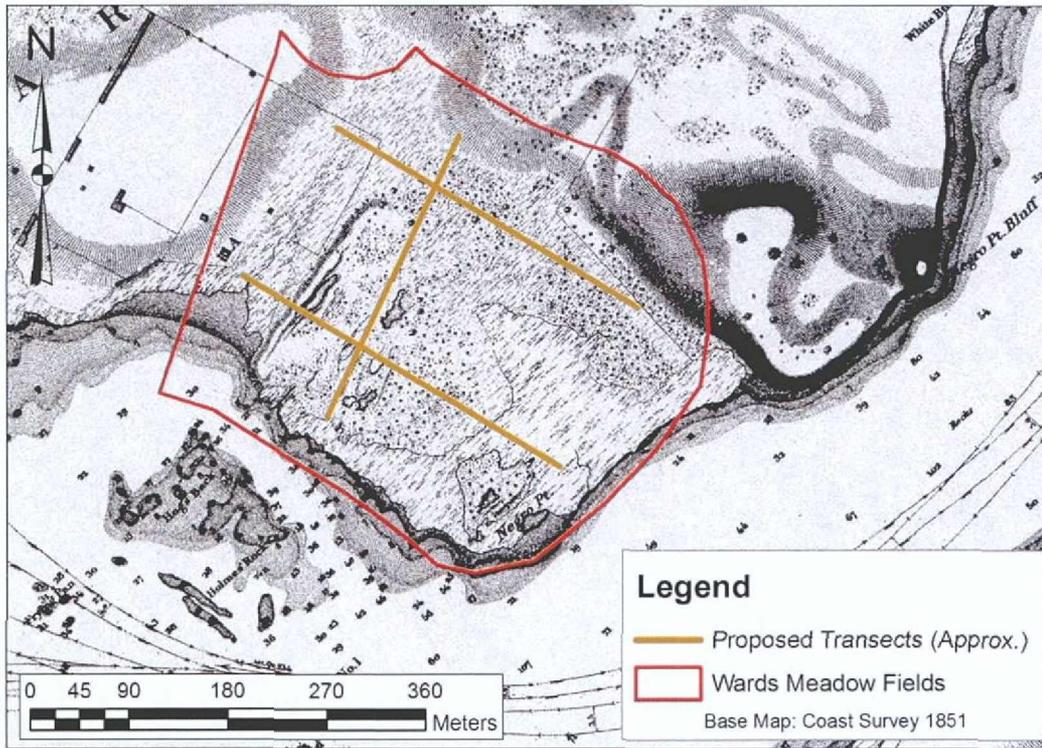


Figure 19. Proposed Geoprobe transect on 1851 base map.

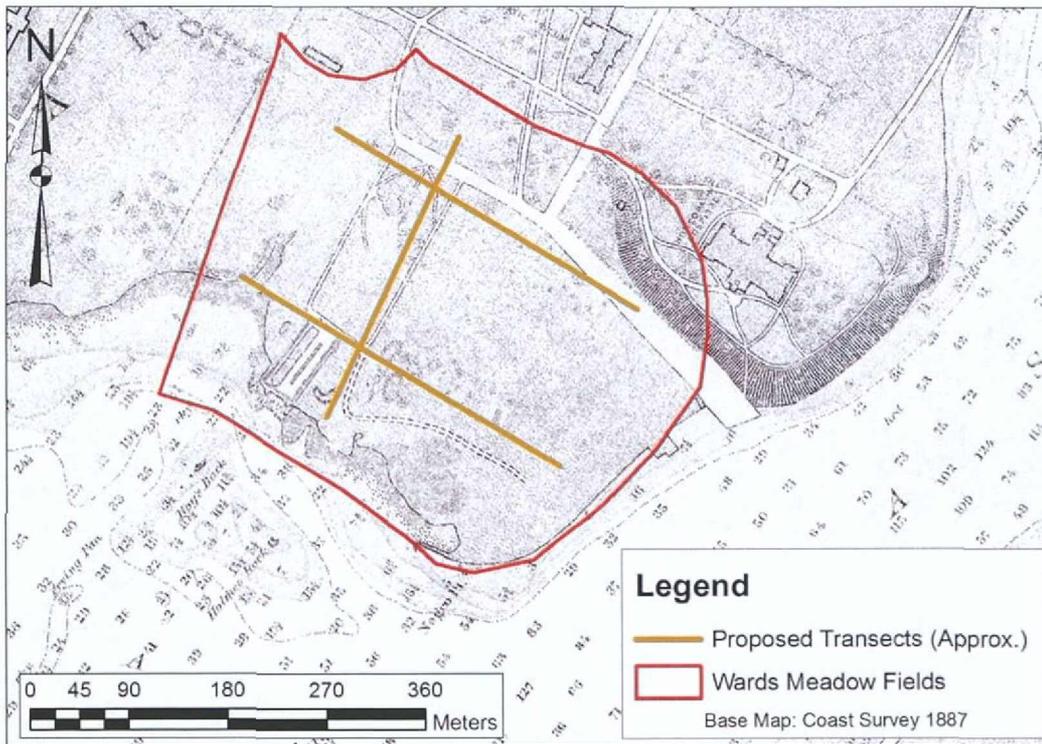


Figure 20. Proposed Geoprobe transect on 1887 base map.

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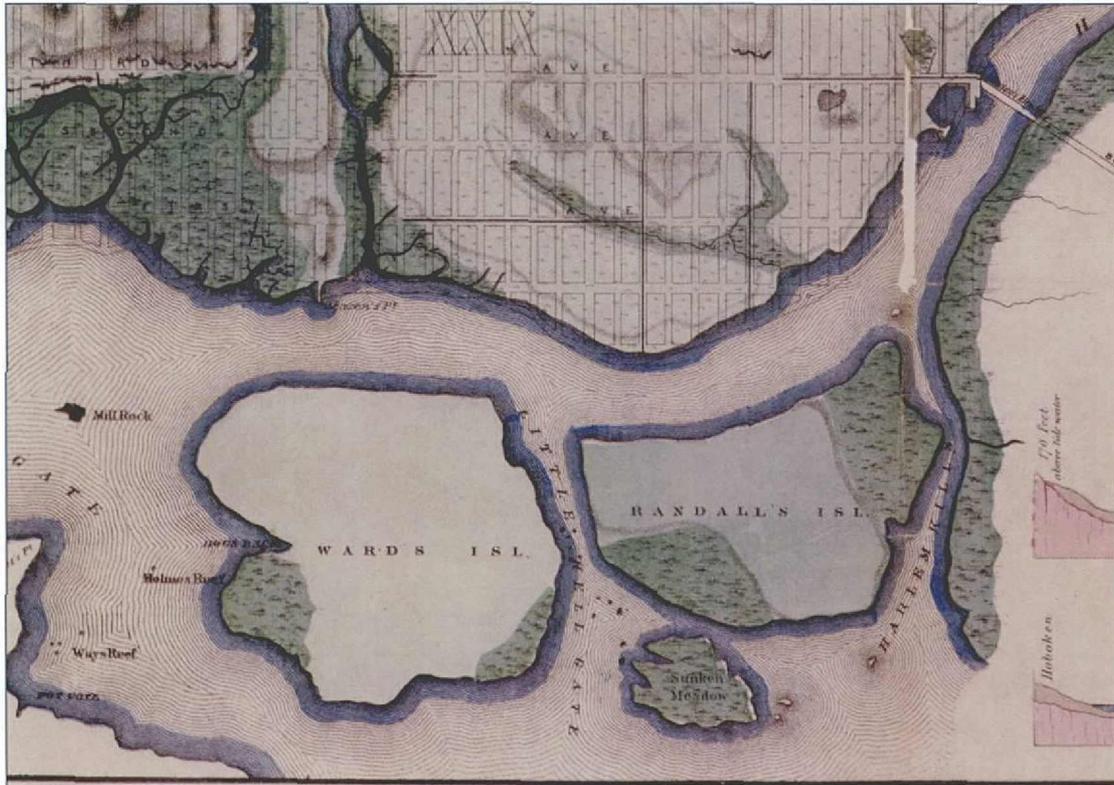
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Appendix A: Additional Maps Consulted



Map 1. Viele, 1874. Map depicting original geography of New York with overlay of contemporary street grid.



Map 2. Bridges, 1811.



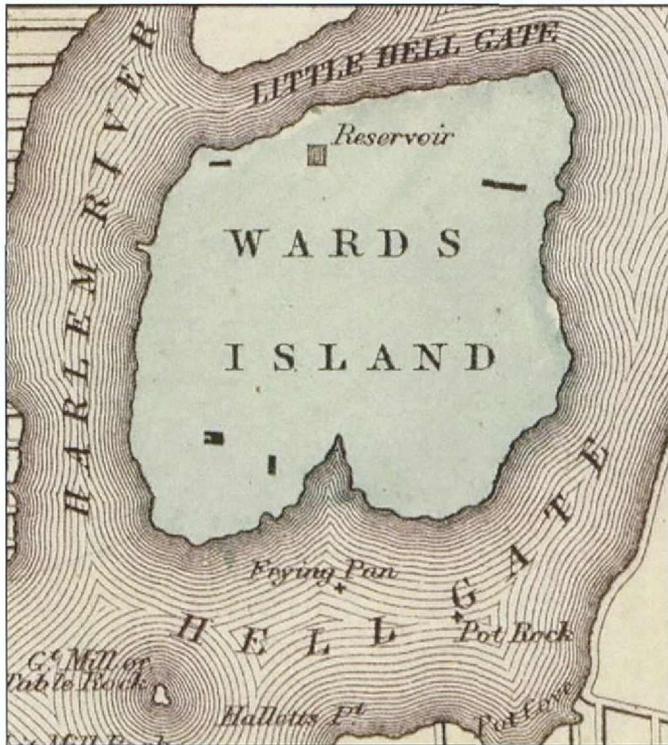
Map 3. Colton, 1836.



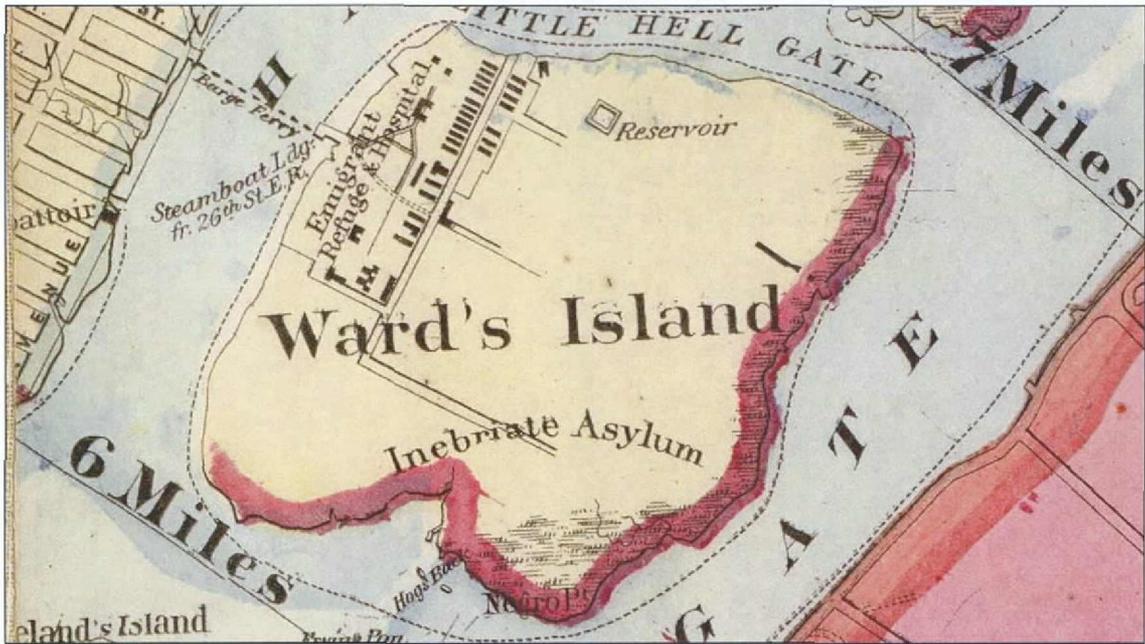
Map 4. Colton, 1849.



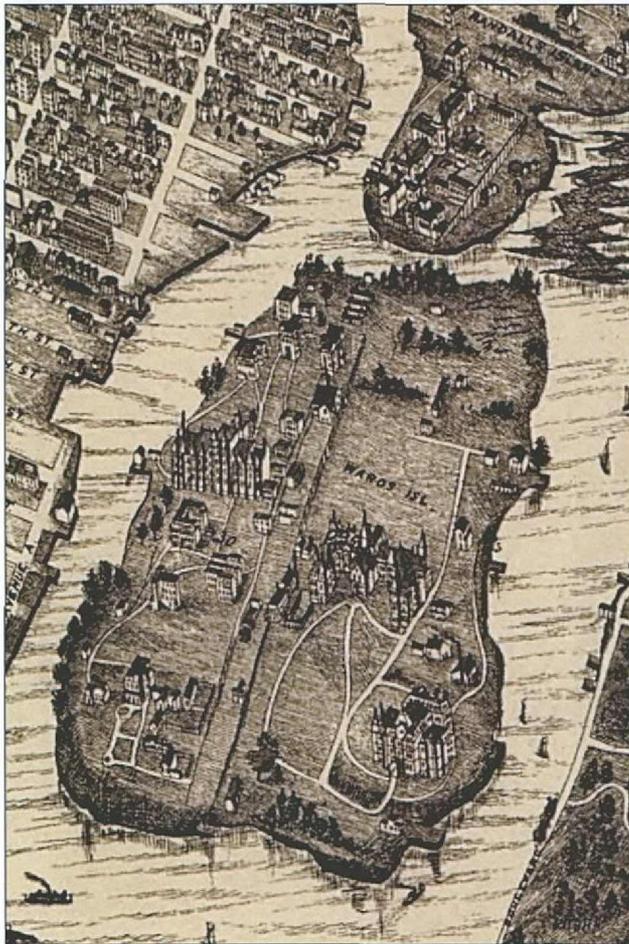
Map 5. Dripps, 1863.



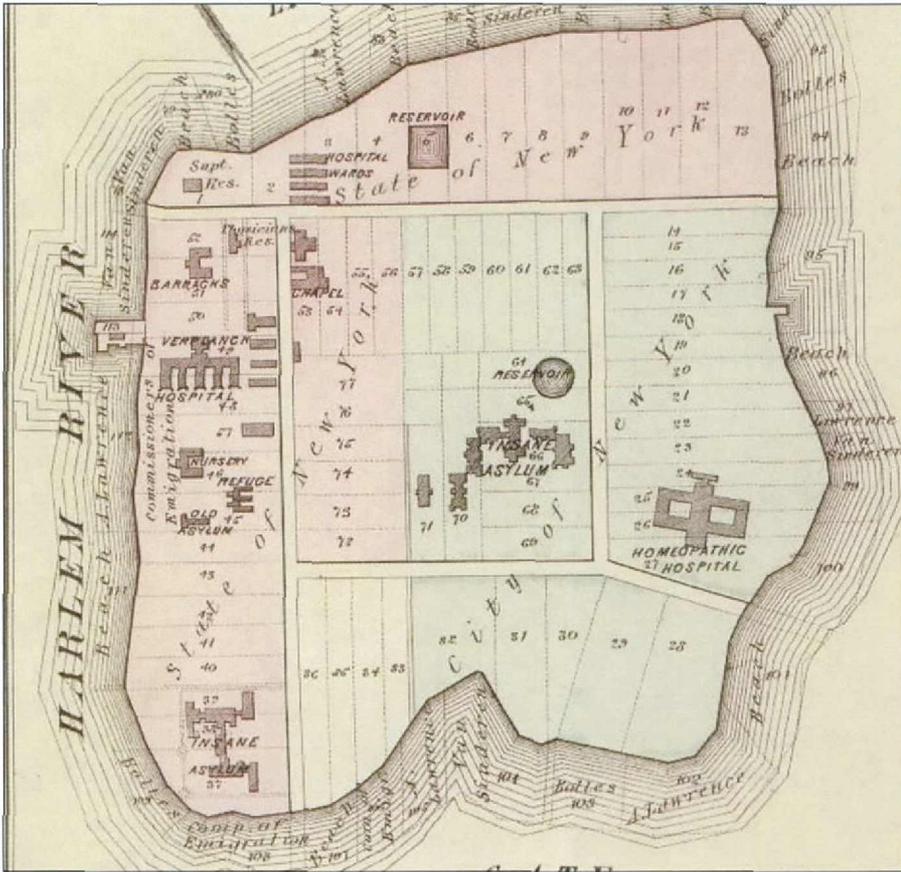
Map 6. Mitchell, 1870.



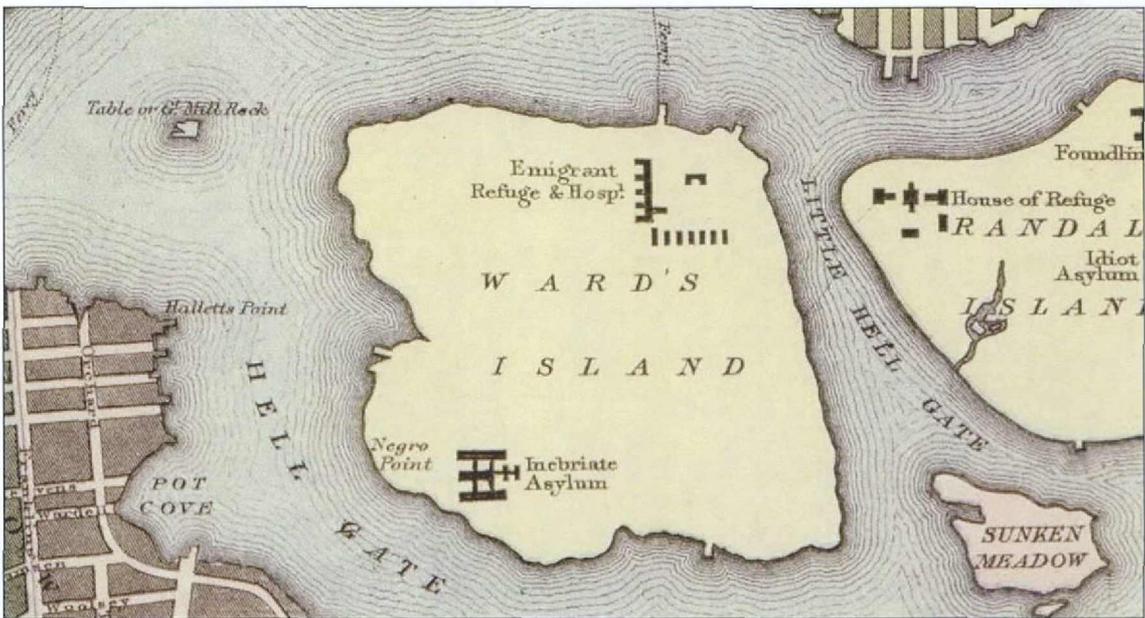
Map 7. Watson, 1874.



Map 8. Taylor, 1879.



Map 9. Bromley, 1879.



Map 10. Letts, 1883.

Appendix B: 1855 New York Times Article

NEW-YORK CITY.
RAMBLING ABOUT WARD'S ISLAND.
A Visit to Potter's Field.

Lately we sketched the appearance of Trinity Church and where many of "the great, the tall, the reverend lie"--powdered already to the "brown, infragant powder," to which Rev. SIDNEY SMITH saw himself hurrying. It was but natural to wish next to see how "the cheaper classes" are entombed- to note whether their monuments are so soon moss-covered, if the trees over their unaching heads are as rich in worms, and if dust so buries up all the shrubbery that should make their resting places inviting to passers by.

So we took a Second avenue car, paid twice a half dime and were set down at "the Red House" in Harlem, crossed the Race Course, held up at the Ferry. foot of One Hundred and Sixth-street, didn't break a leg on that rascally old wharf, was rowed across in an open boat, whereof the rowers do not row "for a consideration;" was set down at the Ward's Island Hospital wharf, and was told to turn to the South, and push on to the end of the Island if we wished to visit the POTTER'S FIELD.

POTTER'S FIELD was our destination, so we followed directions, till at the door of a snug wooden house that looks out on Hell Gate, and New- York in the distance, we found the jolly guardian of the FIELD- Mr. WEBB.

"What can I do for you, gentlemen?" asked, be, blandly.

"Show us how you bury the poor and the friendless, - let us see these brave lodgings for one to which not even Poverty, nor Famine, nor Murder can deprive any citizen of his 'title clear.'"

So Mr. WEBB, buckling his suspenders a little tauter, addressed himself to the task.

First, he would have us take an observation of the glorious scenery on which the house looks out. The green turf slopes gently down to the water, which is but a few rods off, flanked on one side by an orchard, whose fruit would sorely tempt a Young American of the strictest integrity and on the other by a wooded pasture-ground. It is a little cove that puts in here. The Hog's Back is in front, a little to the left. The "Hen and Chickens" and "Flood Rock" are directly in front - Mill Rock is to the right.

The southern part of the island separates Harlem River, a clear, still, deep stream, from Hell Gate, through which the waters roar, and break, and tumble, as if veritably they were at the mouth of a bottomless pit; for none must think because subterranean and sub-aqueous engineers have blown up some of the more threatening rocks, that this is a smooth strait, or a gently-rippling river, which is called Hell Gate because our fathers thought it terrible. While we stand talking, we hear a skipper shouting from a schooner's deck - "Hard up, hard up your helm!" But the shout comes a moment too late. His craft's bows have struck an eddy, and now, swiftly, as if twisted by a giant hand, she spins 'round without reference to the gentle breeze that did fill her sails, and the tide is working her in- she must anchor and wait till both wind and tide favor, or she will go bumping on the rocks. It is a most glorious landscape - for we suppose where the sea most prevails there especially is a landscape - that lies before us. Far away is the city, its spires easily descried, but the centre obscured by Blackwell's Island, On the right is JOHN JACOB ASTOR'S old place - Mr., BRISTED'S now we believe - the house mostly hidden by fine old trees that look like so many hale and hearty chronicles of the olden time in a green old age. In the background, on the left, lies Astoria, always a beautiful suburb whether seen as with a bird's eye far away, or traversed throughout its villa-bordered

streets, Nearer, on the left, is Hallett's Cove, One point that bounds it is still surmounted with the ruins of an old fortress. The line of mounds is turf-covered now and green - to the east of this; but another point gave us a better look at it.

"Ready, gentlemen?" said Mr. WEBB, at last,

"Quite." And we started. We followed a cowpath from the point up to the field - a crooked, right-angled path that made it a quarter of a mile away. But there was an evil odor, the fragrance of humanity in its dissolution, that took the shortcut across the brush, and the swamp and the wood - and reached us so soon that we thought we were close by the dreaded enclosure. We halted a moment on the site of the old house, which years and years ago the Long Island Sound cruisers remembered "the old house on 'Great Barn Island,'" for it is a modern trick calling this "Ward's Island." There was an old man living a year or so back, in the Eleventh Ward, who was born on this spot 87 years ago. For years he has come over here on his birthday and reviewed the landmarks. But this year he failed - indeed he may have passed away like the old house and the "old barn" itself, but we have not noticed it in the papers.

Climbing a slight hill and entering a gate we are within the POTTER'S FIELD. Our route to reach it has been a pleasant one. Now, let us stop to tell the route by which the poor stranger reaches it after his spirit that is immortal has been expired.

A large wagon daily conveys the dead that are to be buried at the City's expense to the river-side somewhere near Bellevue Hospital. Its contents, in plain substantial coffins, are transferred to a row-boat and so borne to the landing-house, which stands by the head of a small wharf on the shore of the cove spoken of as hollowing the south end of Ward's Island, thence by an easy sweep the road leads to a large receiving vault at the western hill end of the cemetery. This vault is an admirably constructed tomb, which has not get been put to use, being scarcely now completed. In it are airtight separate chambers, where the bodies of those that have died suddenly are retained a few days after death, to facilitate recognition by friends. A forcing-pump connecting with a well at some distance, and with drains and sewers, enables all necessary cleanliness to be enforced. With a supply of ice there will be no difficulty in preserving unmarred the features of the unrecognized dead for just so long a time as may be deemed desirable. But those who have died uncared for by any but strangers, or by those whom the City's blessed, charity has made friends, are not stopped here. They are carried directly into the cemetery. And what fashion of place is that?

POTTER'S FIELD.

Some two acres are enclosed within a tight board fence. One corner of the enclosure you will notice is graded some four feet higher than the rest. Under this are three trenches filled, and in them there lie the remains of 16,000 people. The fourth trench has been open only a few weeks. Already it has over 600 buried in it. This trench is dug 15 feet deep, 300 feet long and 18 feet wide. They begin to bury at one end of it. The trench is wide enough to admit three coffins lying end to end, and they are piled up till the uppermost is within two feet of the surface. The average of doily burials here at present is eighteen, or 125 a week. During hot weather the corpses arrive in the early morning and after nightfall. When the new arrivals are announced at the trench, the diggers throw aside the little dirt that covers the last lot, deposit the new ones and cover them. When the whole trench is filled, the earth of a new trench is thrown upon the late one, and it is graded off like the mound before spoken of, some four feet above the former surface. This is done, because when the coffins decay the earth sinks. The mound

is to be turfed so soon as it has settled, and cedars, willows, and other appropriate trees planted.

We spoke of an offensive odor that met us far away from the spot. But standing by the side of the open trench it was intolerable. With the wind west, we are told that it is wafted - a horrible stench - to the sick in the hospitals on the other end of the Island; and, if we were told that it sometimes is borne across the East River to the delightful residences of the grandees on that shore, we should think it no marvel. But we do wonder that the Governors of the Almshouse are so choice of the Ward's Island soil. They have an abundance of it - if it is not all as compactly placed as they might desire - to afford enough to each new cargo of the dead to prevent their being an offence to the living, a terrible fright to the sick, and an unseasonable memorial of the corruption that awaits us to the quiet dwellers in sea-side mansions. The poorest man has a right to earth enough to be buried in. Gentlemen Governors, be good enough to order that none be cheated out of their proper share.

Of those buried here the Commissioners generally send up one-third, though at seasons the emigrant proportion is larger. Nor let any suppose that all are thus buried indistinguishably in the ditch. If any one has a friend who will request it, his body is given a separate grave. If one at the Almshouse dies, his old mate's wish is heeded to place him in another part of the yard, and a headstone, if any care to erect it, or a hard with the name and age painted on it, if that alone can be afforded, will mark the spot. Many such single graves there are already. The Governors are now cutting off by a fence an acre on West End, wherein each Randall's Island boy that falls in his unequal race will be laid to deep, and for each such one a stone of memorial is to be planted. The Commissioners of Emigration have several times undertaken to lay out a cemetery of their own, but for various reasons the project has never been carried into effect. By an arrangement lately entered into, all their dead are buried by the Governors, a fee of fifty cents being paid for each one buried.

Ah! reader, it is good that it is only in imagination you are visiting Potter's Field. Inimitably beautiful as the scenery is from the hill, you would not have lingered long enough to have seen half we have written of. We will not dwell upon *the* reasons, however. It is no wonder that the sailors look up with a shudder at the spot when they pass through Hell Gate at midnight. If the spirits of the dead hover over their mortal resting place, where the moon looks down on them, what a congregation must crown that hill. Sixteen thousand ghosts of newly buried men, women, and children, gibbering in the night wind, or mutely gliding and noiselessly jostling each other - too thick to sit and weep over their unhonored sepulture! Cold chills creep through the mariner's veins at the thought, and the hair of his flesh rises up.

Let us leave the place. Striking south and eastward, it is but a few rods to the shore, which here is an abrupt wood-crowned bank. The great steamers are just passing from the city, and the wind serving with the tide, a fleet of sail vessels are crowding in from the Sound. It is a scene of unequalled beauty. The land opposite, on Long Island, is laid out in noble homesteads. The houses are capacious and tasteful, the grass is well-trimmed, and into the road that winds along the shore, defended by a stout seawall, open at pretty regular intervals, the gates that admit to the yards of each proprietor. They say that if a man goes there to buy a lot, he has to give references as if he were an Irish girl seeking service. They want not the cash merely, but the "position," specially. They are the men that buy none but "Little Neck Clams, fresh" - from Catharine Market, when the

market-man thinks he is going to be stuck with a stale lot. These are they who delight to buy weak fish - from the jolly fisherman who swaggers and swears as he carries one only on his finger, that he caught it trolling in South Bay, and wants a smashing price for it ; - but the jolly fisherman chinks the silver in his pocket as he goes back to his boat, whose lie scores of other weak fish with pale gills, all which he bought exceedingly cheap of a smack-man down by Catherine Market But we must hold up here ; our jocular keeper of the " field " suggests that it is time to lunch, and the printers say it is time to go to press. So putting a pin in where we left, we will hold up. We have a good deal of walking, some rowing, and more talking to do before we are done with Ward's Island.