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ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD TESTING  
AT THE SHAFT 21B PROJECT SITE  
NEAR KENT AND WILLOUGHBY AVENUES IN  
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

CEQR #89-119K

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The following report is based on archaeological work conducted at the Shaft 21B project location near the corner of Kent and Willoughby Avenues in Brooklyn, New York (see Figure 1 and Plate 1). Archaeological field testing of the Shaft 21B project site began on September 9, 1991 and continued through September 17, 1991.

The initial field effort was manually excavated shovel testing, as approved by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (NYCLPC) on June 1, 1991 and related by CEQR on July 9, 1991. Fourteen shovel tests were completed throughout the project impact area (see Figure 2). By the time these tests were complete, it became apparent that backhoe trenching would be more appropriate. This alternative was then recommended to NYCLPC on September 12, 1991 (see Figure 3). Verbal approval of this change in the scope of work was given that same day. Two backhoe trenches were completed as proposed (see Figure 4 and Plate 2). The one exception was a gap in trench 4001. The reason for this was a dog burial in that location. The stones marking the burial site can be seen near the center of Plate 1.

Each trench required two days to excavate and draw. As a result, all drawings are presented here with match lines. The portion of each trench which was excavated first is drawn in a dotted line where it is obscured by the second part of the trench. Soils within the two trenches were fairly consistent. Figures 5 and 6 are the trench section drawings. The soil descriptions are presented in Table 1. The top layer of fill was a dark yellowish brown compacted stony sandy loam. Rocks of all sizes were found throughout this level. It was not unusual for the backhoe to be pulling out rocks of about two feet in diameter. This soil layer contained a mix of modern trash. The second level appears to be the level related to the destruction of the nineteenth century Kent Avenue houses. It was composed of very dark gray sandy silt and contained a large amount of burnt wood and other destruction debris such as brick and glass. The third level was a strong brown compact sand. This layer is considered to have been the nineteenth century surface. Other soil layers relate to cultural features and are discussed later in this text.

The first trench, 4001, was laid out in accordance with the location of the rear of the former Kent Avenue houses as depicted in the Stage 1A report (Historical Perspectives 1988: Figures). Once excavation began in the southern end of the trench it was obvious that the trench was inside of the houses rather than outside. Part of the basement and a brick wall were exposed (see Figure 4). The trench was then relocated slightly to the east, behind the former houses. The first obstacle encountered was a concrete retention "wall" located at the boundary of the former 911 and 909 Kent Avenue lots. This was exposed at a depth of about two feet (see Figure 5 and Plate 3). Because it was located so close the surface and so near the edge for the project area, the trench could not be excavated any deeper in the 911 Kent Avenue lot. The 909 Kent Avenue lot was also obstructed; this time by a cement patio at about 3.5 feet deep (see Plate 3). The patio had an opening which appeared to be an entrance to the cellar of the former house, depicted in the foreground of Plate 3. Another concrete retention "wall" was located between 909 and 907 Kent Avenue. The trench was obstructed by the dog burial in 907 Kent Avenue and resumed near the northern end of this lot. A pipe was found *in situ* in 905 Kent Avenue in the destruction level. However it did not appear to lead to or from any features. A large rock and a large piece of concrete were left in the trench at the boundary of 905 and 903 Kent Avenue. Both of these were located at the interface of the second and third soil levels and did not extend into the third level.

Trench 4002 was also excavated beginning at the southern end of the project area. A brick cylindrical feature, numbered 11-6001, was first found in 911 Kent Avenue (see Figures 4 and 5 and Plate 4). It was about three feet in diameter. The brick was two courses thick along the sides and was apparently capped with one layer of brick laid in vertically. Because the trench went through the center of this feature and the brick was loose, the backhoe removed part of the feature. This exposed its contents for a depth of about two feet. The fill contained mottled soil mixed with coal ash and cultural material. Samples of potentially diagnostic artifacts were retained. Of note, however regarding feature 11-6001 was that it had a pipe running out of it. Since only one side of the feature was exposed it is not clear whether the pipe ran all the way through the feature. This pipe may represent either a later intrusion or be a part of Feature 11-6001. If the former is true, then it is likely that the top of feature 11-6001 has been disturbed. Such a disturbance would probably take the

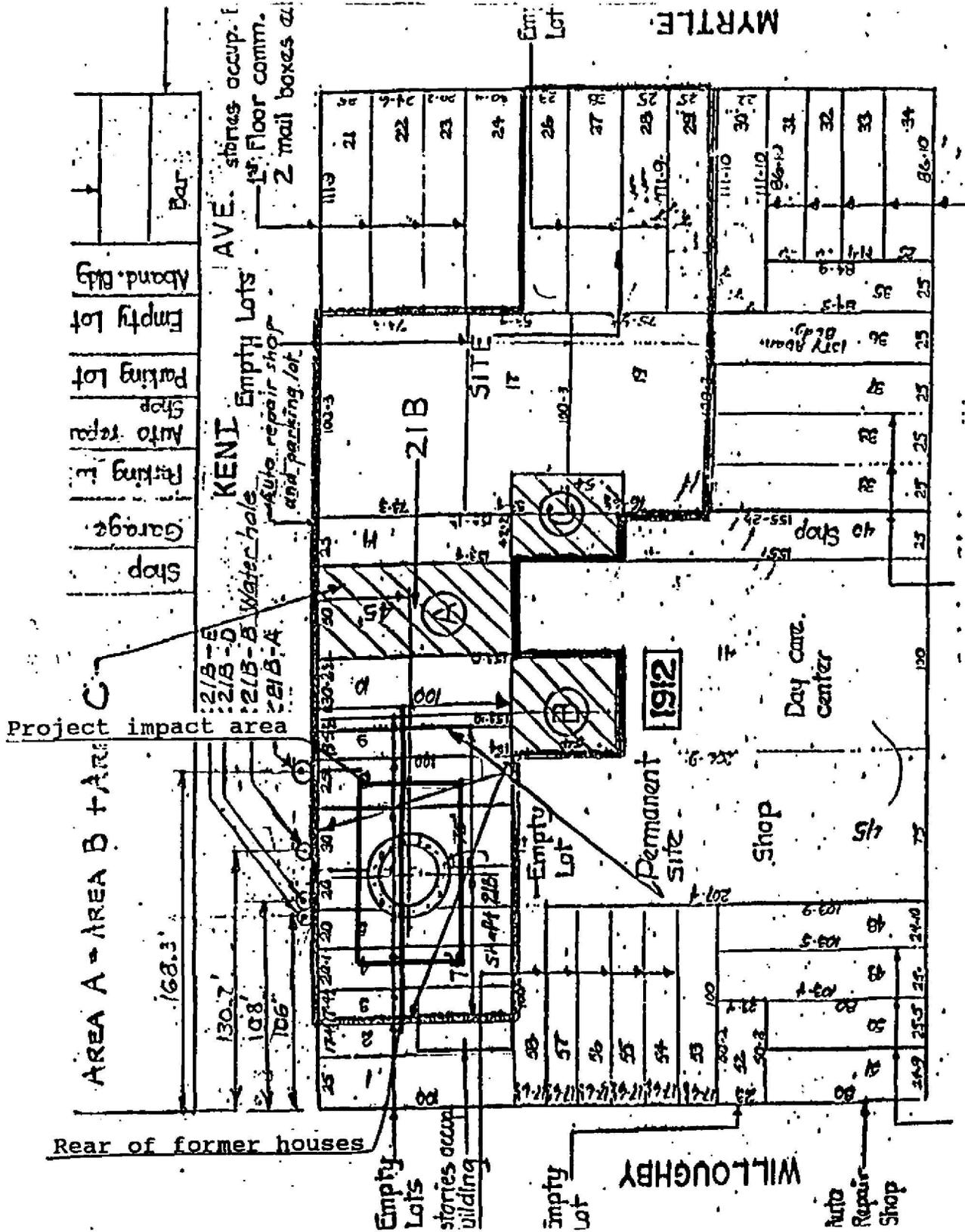


Figure 1

Shaft 21B project area and vicinity.

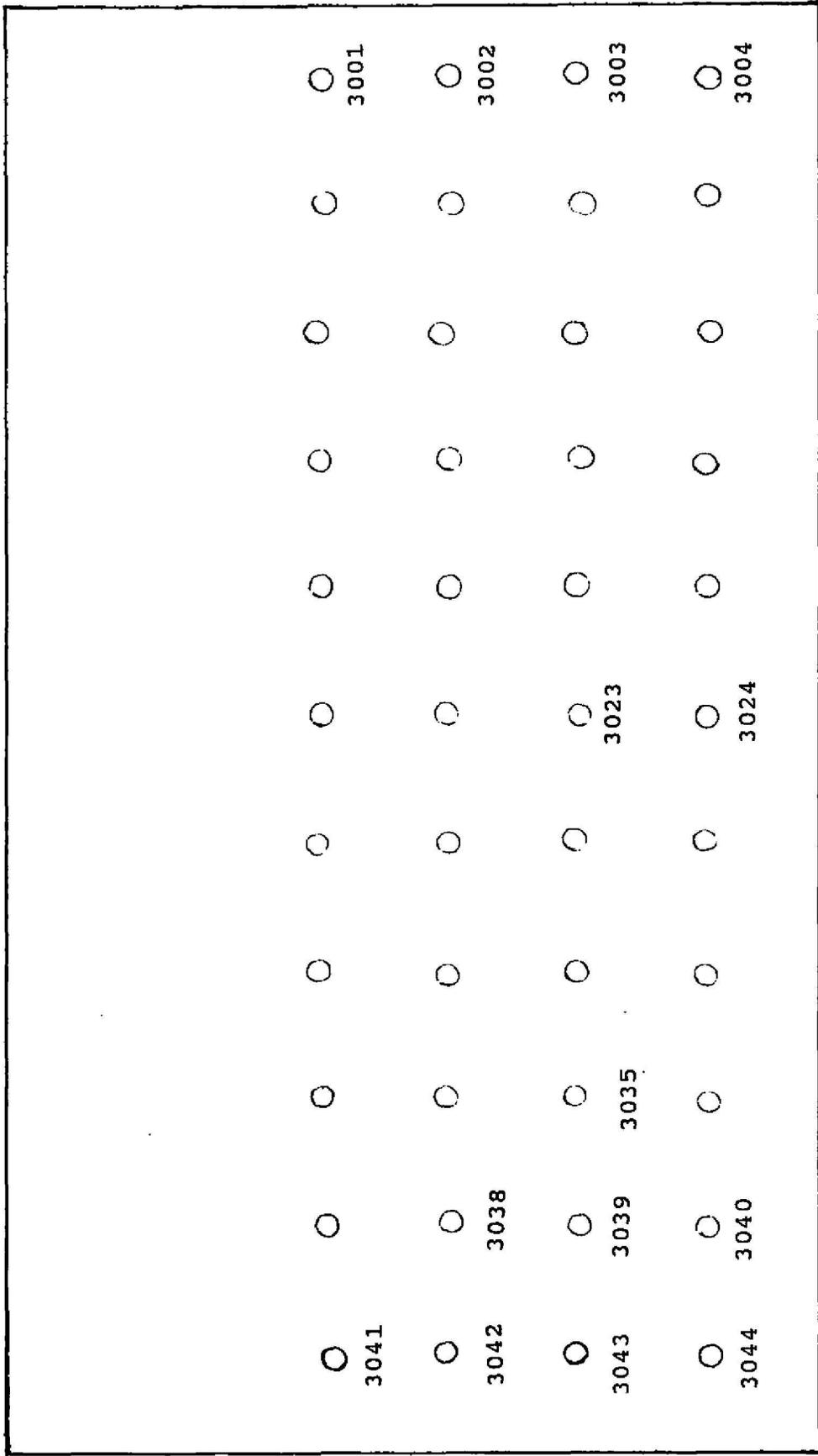


Figure 2 Schematic view of Shaft 21B project area showing locations of proposed and completed shovel tests.

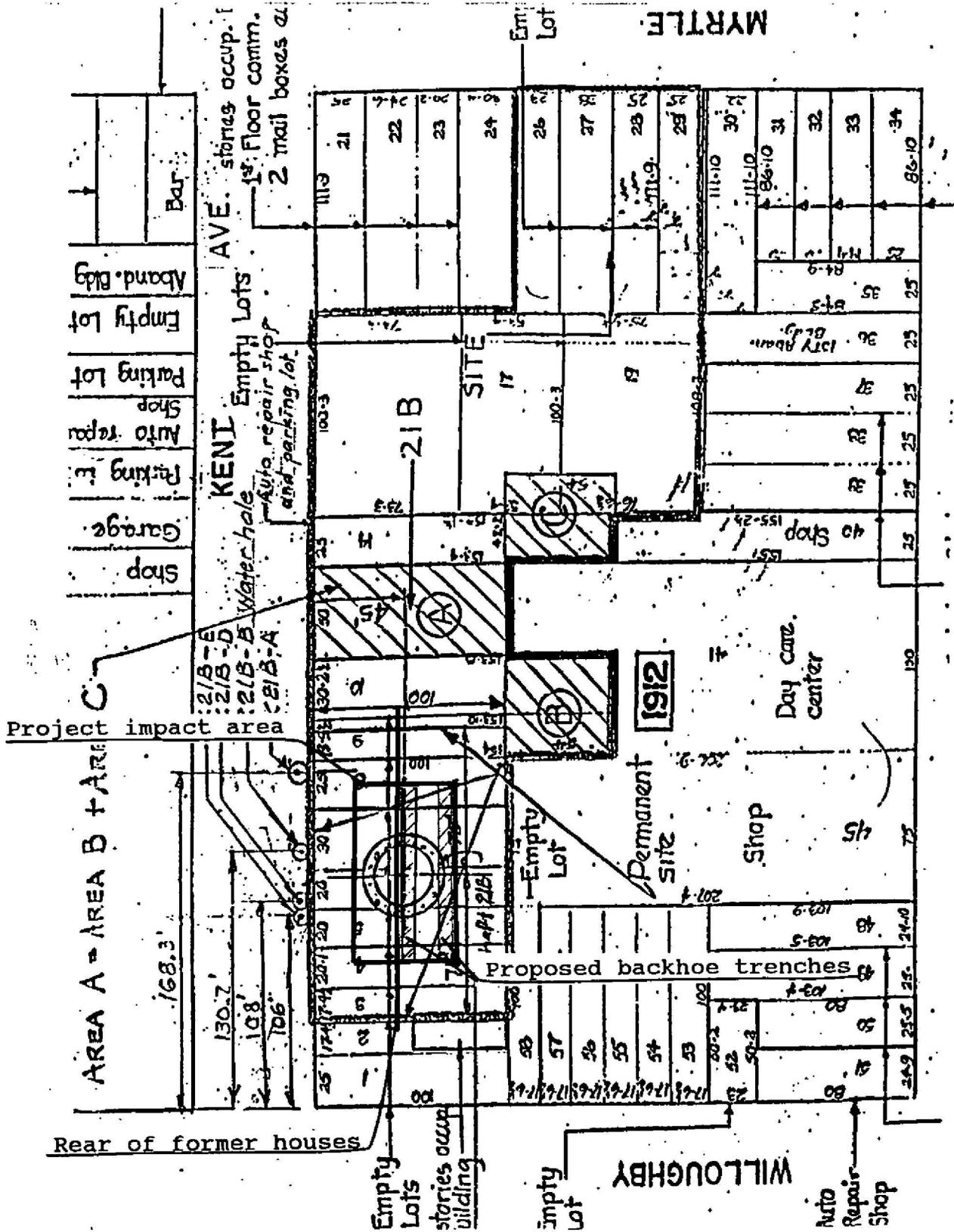


Figure 3 Shaft 21B project area and vicinity showing locations of proposed backhoe trenches.

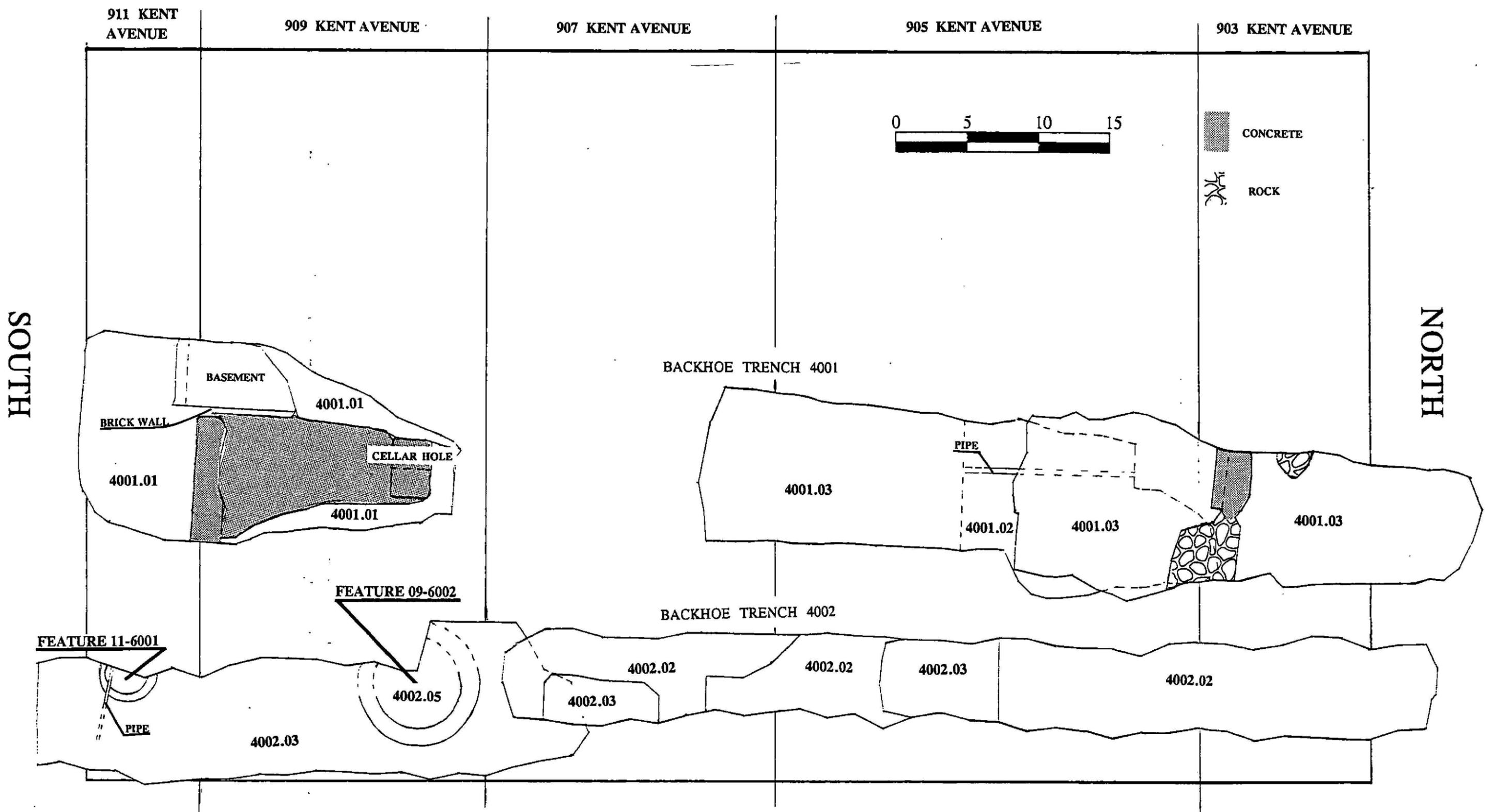


Figure 4 Shaft 21B project area showing locations of completed backhoe trenches.

# BACKHOE TRENCH 4001

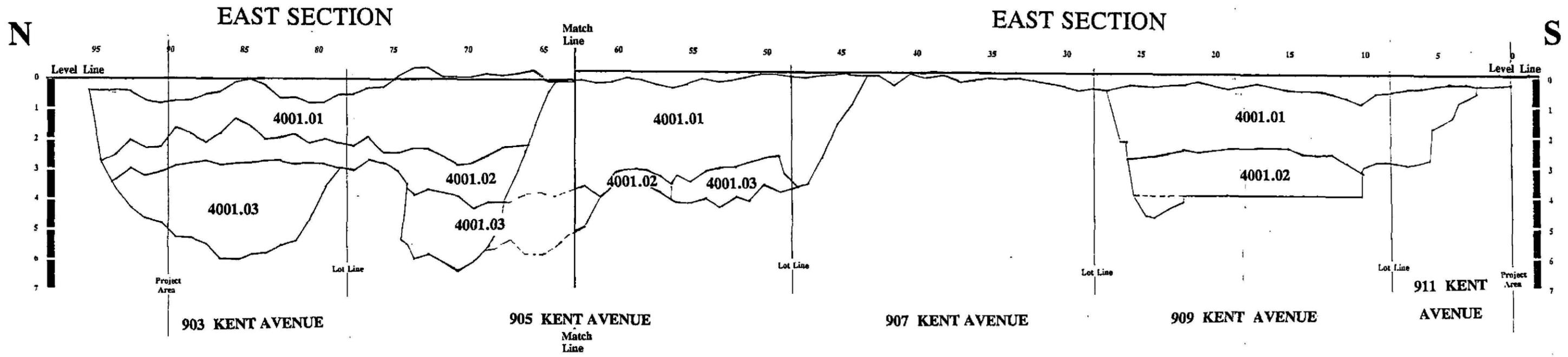


Figure 5

East section of trench 4001.

# BACKHOE TRENCH 4002

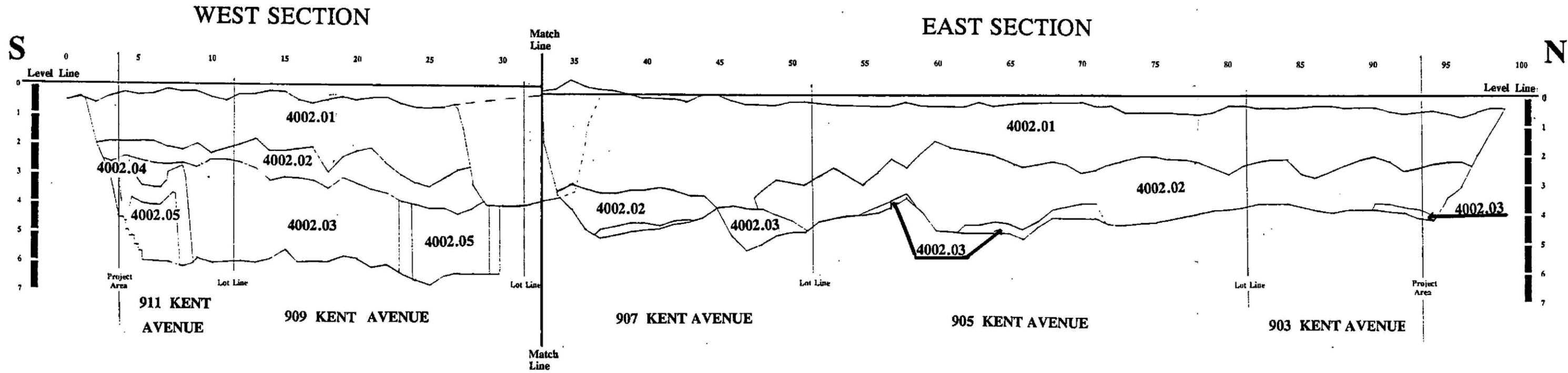


Figure 6

East and west section of trench 4002.



**Table 1 - Shaft 21B Soil Descriptions**

**Contexts**

**Soil Descriptions**

4001.01, 4002.01

Dark yellowish brown stony sandy loam

4001.02, 4002.02

Very dark gray sandy silt with burnt wood

4001.03, 4002.03

Strong brown compact sand

4002.04

Dark yellowish brown sandy silt

4002.05

Dark brown and light yellowish brown sandy silt with coal ash; feature fill



form of a trench 0.1 to 1.0 feet wider than the pipe itself and 0.1 to 0.2 feet deeper than the bottom of the pipe. If Feature 11-6001 is a cistern or privy it could well extend at least five feet below the portion that was found.

A brick cylindrical feature, numbered 09-6002, was also found in 909 Kent Avenue (see Figures 4 and 6 and Plate 5). This feature was about six feet in diameter and was also two courses thick. Like 11-6001, 09-6002 was also found along the edge of the trench and partially excavated by the backhoe. The trench was widened somewhat at this point. The feature fill was similar to 11-6001. However obviously diagnostic cultural material was less apparent. Nevertheless, a sample of artifacts was retained. The interior of both brick features was probed with a three foot steel probe and no bottom was discerned.

No additional brick features were found in trench 4002. However there were several spots where the second soil level, containing the destruction debris, was excavated deeper. This can be seen in Plate 6.

Several pieces of bottle glass fragments were retained from 11-6001. These include pale green glass exhibiting multi-piece vertical mold construction with a separate base and molded seam to lip. This has been dated to ca. 1850 - 1920s (Jones and Sullivan 1985: 28). Parts of an embossed rectangular bottle were also recovered. These were from "Dr. J. F. Churchill's Specific Remedy of Consumption Hypophosphites of Lime and Soda". This remedy was manufactured beginning in 1858 and is documented through 1900 (Fike 1987: 206).

No glass was recovered from feature 09-6002. However pieces of an ironstone plate and a stoneware vessel were retained. The stoneware rim has a buff exterior and Albany slip interior. Stoneware vessels were used as crocks or jars for storing food. Albany slip was discovered in the Hudson River Area ca. 1830 (Ketchum 1987: 11). The clay slip was used to coat the interior of stoneware vessels until the demise of the stoneware industry ca. 1900.

#### SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although two features were identified at the Shaft 21B site and dated to the late nineteenth century, their relationship to the data in the Stage 1A report and to the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission standards needs to be established in order to apply a context and establish their significance. The Stage 1A report suggests that the lots in the Shaft 21B project area contain potential archaeological significance because of their occupancy by blue collar immigrants from the British Isles post-1870 (Historical Perspectives 1988:26).

Feature 09-6002 was located in the former rear yard of 909 Kent Avenue. The Stage 1A report documents the 1880 census of the residents of this property.

Sarra L. Smith headed the household. Her son made a living as a house painter. One boarder was also employed as a house painter while another was a hatter. All members of the household had American born parents (Historical Perspectives 1988:21).

The 1900 and 1910 censuses document occupancy at 909 Kent Avenue by people with Irish and/or English backgrounds. It is conceivable that the feature remained unfilled until this later period when the Irish and English immigrants arrived. However, this feature may well have been filled by people living at 909 Kent Avenue prior to the Smiths. The house was owned by the Cartwrights and Laidlows during the 1860s and 1870s. There does not appear to be sufficient evidence to determine whether Feature 09-6002 was filled by blue collar immigrants from the British Isles. Recovery of additional fill could resolve the problem by providing more and better dating evidence. This deposit could be used to address the research issue of investigating the lives of blue-collar British immigrants, or it might provide a comparison if it was filled by



blue-collar second or third generation Americans. Therefore, mitigation in the form of data recovery is recommended for Feature 09-6002.

Feature 11-6001 was located in the former rear yard of 911 Kent Avenue. The Stage 1A report establishes ownership and occupancy by families with Scottish backgrounds in 1880. The ownership by one of these families was traced back to 1864 (Historical Perspectives 1988:22). Therefore, Feature 11-6001 could be related to the research issues raised in the Stage 1A report. However, the feature was intruded by a pipe which could have affected integrity. The pipe probably affected only the top portion of this feature, so the majority would be undisturbed below the pipe and its associated trench. 911 Kent Avenue was both owned and occupied by people of Scottish background from 1864 until 1880 or later. It appears that this feature contains a refuse deposit dating to after 1858 which very probably can be associated with the Ross family who owned this house from 1864 through 1884, or the Knox family who rented part of the house in 1880 (Historical Perspectives 1988:22). Recovery of the fill of this feature would allow research issue of investigating the lives of blue collar immigrants from the British Isles to be addressed. Therefore, archaeological data recovery is recommended to recover this feature and its fill prior to its being destroyed by construction of Shaft 21B.

In conclusion, two brick lined features were found at the Shaft 21B project site during archaeological testing. One feature (09-6002) may or may not be related to blue collar British Isles immigrants. Feature 11-6001 was related to at least one family of Scottish background. Feature 09-6002 could produce information related to the Smith family who occupied the house in 1880 or earlier occupants who were there during ownership by the Cartwrights or Laidlows (Historical Perspectives 1988:20-21). This information could provide a comparison with that from Feature 11-6001 which was probably filled by families of Scottish origin. Therefore, data recovery excavations are recommended for both features.



Plate 1                      General view of Shaft 21B project area facing northwest.



Plate 2                      Backhoe testing in progress at trench 4001 facing north.



Plate 3

Southern portion of trench 4001 facing south.



Plate 4

Feature 11-6001 facing southwest.



Plate 5                      Feature 09-6002 facing south photographed from above.

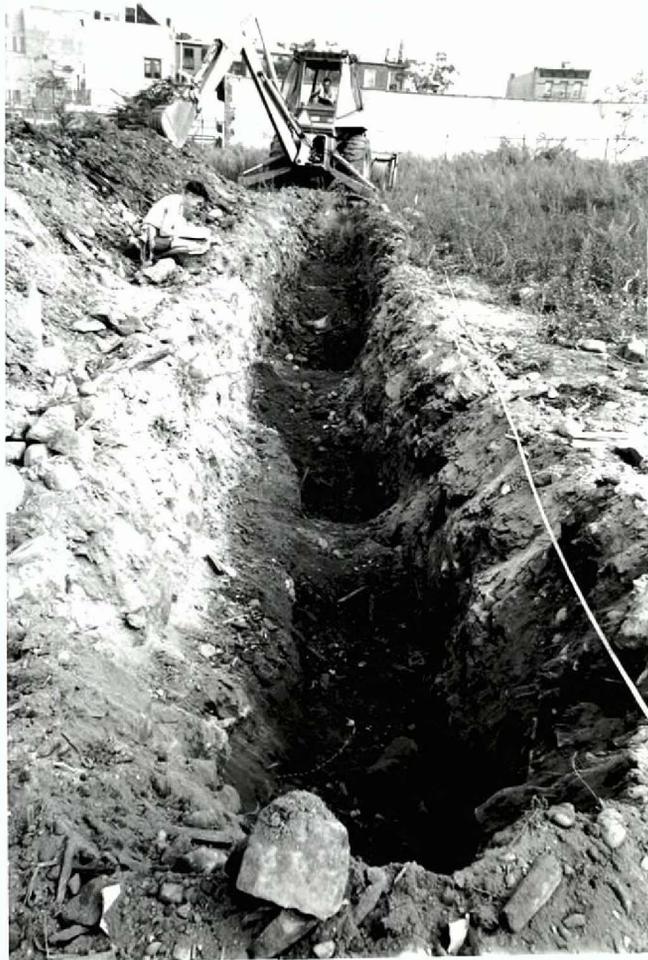


Plate 6                      Northern portion of trench 4002 facing north.



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Shaft 218  
Brooklyn, New York  
Artifact Inventory 1B Testing

| <u>Context</u> | <u>Gp</u> | <u>Cl</u> | <u>Morph</u> | <u>Mat</u> | <u>Identity</u> | <u>Count</u> | <u>Weight</u> | <u>Comments</u>  | <u>Reference</u>            | <u>Range</u>   | <u>Cat#</u> |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|--|-----------------------------|----------------|-------------|
| 6001           | 01        | 02        |              | 078        | Container glass | 1            | 0.0           |  |                             |                | 1           |
| 6001           | 01        | 02        |              | 078        | Container glass | 2            | 0.0           |  |                             |                | 2           |
| 6001           | 01        | 02        | 021          | 078        | Bottle glass    | 1            | 0.0           | Base<br>Embossed "SREWSBURY TOMATO KETCHUP"  |                             |                | 3           |
| 6001           | 06        | 04        | 002          | 008        | Button          | 1            | 0.0           | 4-hole<br>Complete<br>Plastic  |                             |                | 4           |
| 6001           | 09        | 08        | 022          | 005        | Can?            | 1            | 0.0           | w/material inside  |                             |                | 5           |
| 6001           | 01        | 01        | 003          | 004        | Ironstone       | 2            | 0.0           | Rims<br>Bowl? shallow  |                             |                | 6           |
| 6001           | 01        | 02        |              | 078        | Bottle glass    | 1            | 0.0           | Base<br>Mint green<br>Embossed "W"   |                             |                | 7           |
| 6001           | 01        | 02        |              | 078        | Bottle glass    | 1            | 0.0           | Base<br>Green<br>Embossed  |                             |                | 8           |
| 6001           | 01        | 02        |              | 078        | Bottle glass    | 5            | 0.0           | Green<br>Miscellaneous body parts  |                             |                | 9           |
| 6001           | 01        | 02        |              | 078        | Bottle glass    | 2            | 0.0           | Mend<br>Green<br>Shoulder<br>Mold seam   |                             |                | 10          |
| 6001           | 01        | 02        |              | 078        | Bottle glass    | 3            | 0.0           | Mend<br>Green<br>Flattened side lip<br>Mold seam to lip<br>Multipiece vertical mold with separate<br>base?   | Jones & Sullivan<br>1985:28 | ca. 1850-1920s | 11          |
| 6001           | 01        | 02        |              | 078        | Bottle glass    | 2            | 0.0           | Mend<br>Base-1<br>Bluish-green<br>Multipiece vertical mold with separate<br>base   | Jones & Sullivan<br>1985:28 | ca. 1850-1920s | 12          |
| 6001           | 01        | 02        |              | 078        | Bottle glass    | 3            | 0.0           | Mend<br>Aqua   |                             |                | 13          |
| 6001           | 01        | 02        |              | 078        | Bottle glass    | 5            | 0.0           | Flat chamfer<br>3 mend<br>Aqua<br>Flat chamfer(s)<br>Rectangular<br>Recessed panel(s)<br>Embossed "S"<br>"DY""ON"<br>"PHITES"<br>"D SODA""Dr. J.F. Churchill's<br>Specific Remedy<br>for Consumption<br>Hypophosphites<br>of Lime and Soda<br>J. Winchester New York | Fike 1987:206               | 1858-1900+     | 14          |
| 6001           | 01        | 02        |              | 078        | Container glass | 1            | 0.0           | Press mold panels  |                             |                | 15          |
| 6002           | 01        | 02        |              | 078        | Container glass | 3            | 0.0           | Olive green  |                             |                | 16          |
| 6002           | 02        | 09        |              | 089        | Shell           | 1            | 28.3          | Clam   |                             |                | 17          |
| 6002           | 09        | 08        | 003          | 002        | Stoneware       | 1            | 0.0           | Rim<br>Buff paste<br>Albany slip interior  |                             |                | 18          |
| 6002           | 01        | 01        | 001          | 004        | Ironstone       | 2            | 0.0           | Rims<br>Mend<br>Plate<br>17 cm diameter  |                             |                | 19          |
| *** Total ***  |           |           |              |            |                 | 38           | 20.3          |  |                             |                |             |