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STAGE IA DOCUMENTARY CULTURAL RESOURCES SURVEY
FOR THE
184 EAST 70TH STREET PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION SITE
BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN, NEW YORK CITY

by

B 1404
L 37, 38, 39, 40

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I. INTRODUCTION

The following report is a of a Stage IA Documentary Cultural Resources Survey of the property at 184 E. 70th Street in Manhattan, New York City, performed by Historic Conservation and Interpretation, Inc. (hereafter "HCI") of Newton, New Jersey in 1984. HCI undertook this reasearch project as part of a team planning effort for the proposed construction of a new building on this site (presently an open lot) by Trafalgar House Real Estate, Inc. of New York City. The property, shown in Figure 1, occupies the southwest corner of the intersection of Third Avenue and E. 70th Street (see Figure 1).

The cultural resources work included documentary research into mankind's use of this site in both the prehistoric and the historic cultural eras; the analysis of all pertinent data resulting from this research; and the presentation of this analysis in a final report. Documentary research included a search of appropriate local and state site files, archives, and repositories of historical data. Researchers also consulted the personnel and files of government agencies, libraries, and museums in order to gain pertinent information on the site and its historical evolution. In addition to these data, they

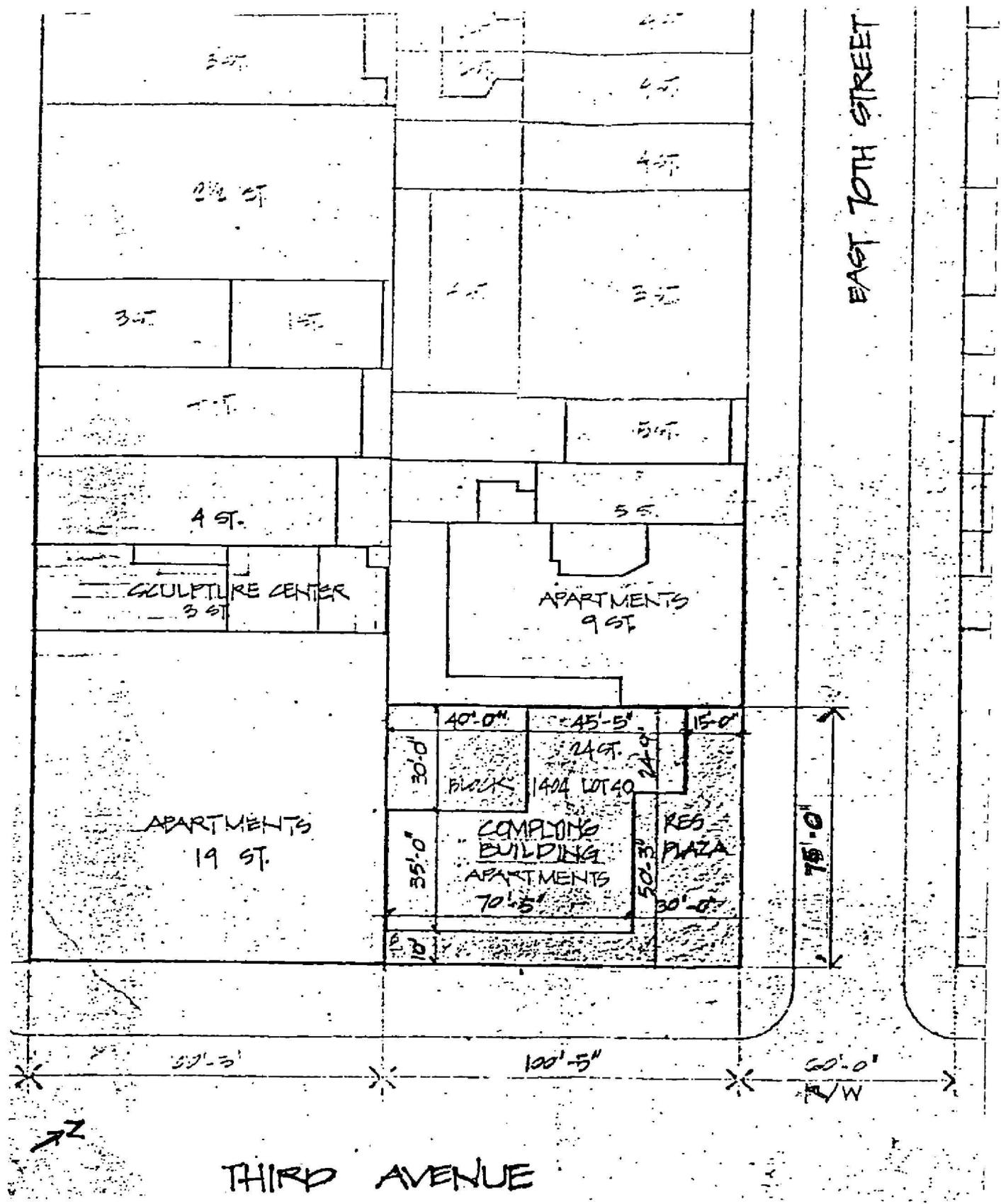


FIGURE 1. Map of the project site, showing the proposed construction (Trafalgar House Real Estate, Inc. 1984). The site occupies the southwest corner of the intersection of E. 70th St. and Third Avenue and fronts 100 feet 5 inches on Third and 75 feet on E. 70th.

collected information as to the nature of the physical characteristics of the site--e.g., through the study of existing soil borings and the depths of previous excavations.

All data thus researched were analyzed for their pertinence to the potential presence of significant cultural resources ("significance" is evaluated by compliance with the criteria for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places). A summary of all work performed and the resultant analysis are presented herein. Also included are (1) HCI's opinion regarding the likelihood that the study area contains potentially significant cultural remains; and (2) recommendations for additional cultural resource investigations, if necessary.

Participating in the project for HCI were the following: Primary Investigator Edward S. Rutsch and researchers David Church, Leonard Bianchi, and Kate Morgan. Advice and assistance from the following are thankfully acknowledged herewith: Dr. Sharene Baugher, New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, and Dr. Leo Hershkowitz, Queens College.

II. THE PHYSICAL SETTING

As part of one of the most urbanized areas in the world, the 70th Street and Third Avenue project site has a setting apparently long divorced from its original natural landscape. However, some understanding of the site's physiography is useful in appreciating its use over time, resulting in its present conditions.

Manhattan is situated entirely within what has been termed the Manhattan Prong of the New England Upland physiographic province. This province exhibits general landscape characteristics which include a quickly rolling terrain determined in part by the extensively folded and faulted bedrock. Beneath the project site, as well as beneath most of Manhattan, is the Manhattan schist formation, a highly foliated mica schist known to have once outcropped at numerous locations throughout the island. Exposure of this intensively folded and faulted bedrock occurred during the regional orogenic processes which formed the hilly terrain of much of New England.

Owing to the variable resistance to erosion of the bedrock, millions of years of weathering have produced a rolling topography. Undoubtedly, the most dynamic period of

erosion occurred during the Pleistocene Epoch, covering approximately the last 1.5 million years, when successive periods of continental glaciation covered much of North America north of today's Staten Island. The awesome scouring power of such a series of glaciers further eroded the topography of Manhattan, enhancing its rolling character. Evidence of this erosion can also be seen in the polished and scratched surfaces of outcropping bedrock, most notably today in nearby Central Park.

Glacial erosion produced extensive sediments, which were deposited throughout the region. Such sediments accumulated at various locations but particularly where the glacial ice front stagnated for long periods. Staten Island, Long Island, and adjoining districts contain the most pronounced sediment accumulations, known as the terminal moraine. Nearby Manhattan received similar but less sedimentation, and much of the island, including the project area, is underlain by predominantly sandy loam subsoil developed from glacial sediments.

Also contributing to soil formation here is the relatively brief occurrence of a glacial lake covering much of Manhattan. Glacial Lake Flushing--like its cousins Lakes Hackensack, Hudson, and Passaic--occupied broad, low-lying areas when deglaciation of the region produced vast volumes of meltwater. The 70th Street and Third Avenue site, as part of the higher central section of Manhattan, may have been only marginal to this lake (Reeds 1933: 53; Schuberth 1968: 193).

By about 12,000 years ago, deglaciation and draining of the glacial lakes had exposed today's terrain. However, only after several thousand years of climatic modification did the modern natural vegetative setting appear. Beginning with the postglacial exposure of the terrain was a succession of plant and associated animal communities which human populations could exploit. Pollen studies from various bog locations in northeastern North America suggest that a succession occurred from a tundralike environment, through an environment dominated by conifer forests, to the more mixed hardwood forest of today's climax community. Prehistoric populations would have had to have adapted to this slowly shifting succession. (Figure 2 is a portion of an 1843 topographical map including the study area.)

A stratum of building rubble is evident on the surface of the 184 E. 70th Street site today. However, records of the mantle of material covering the site exist in data from borings previously made in the area and from construction records of the last building which stood on the site. The basement of this last building--a 5-story parking garage built c. 1916--extended 10 feet below the ground's surface. Construction notes reveal that the basement was built on clay, which, in turn, covered bedrock some 18 inches below it (Manhattan Building Records, Block 1404, Lot 40). We therefore hypothesize that the present-day site has a mantle of at least 10 feet of recent fill covering an approximately 1.5-foot layer of clay subsoil over bedrock.

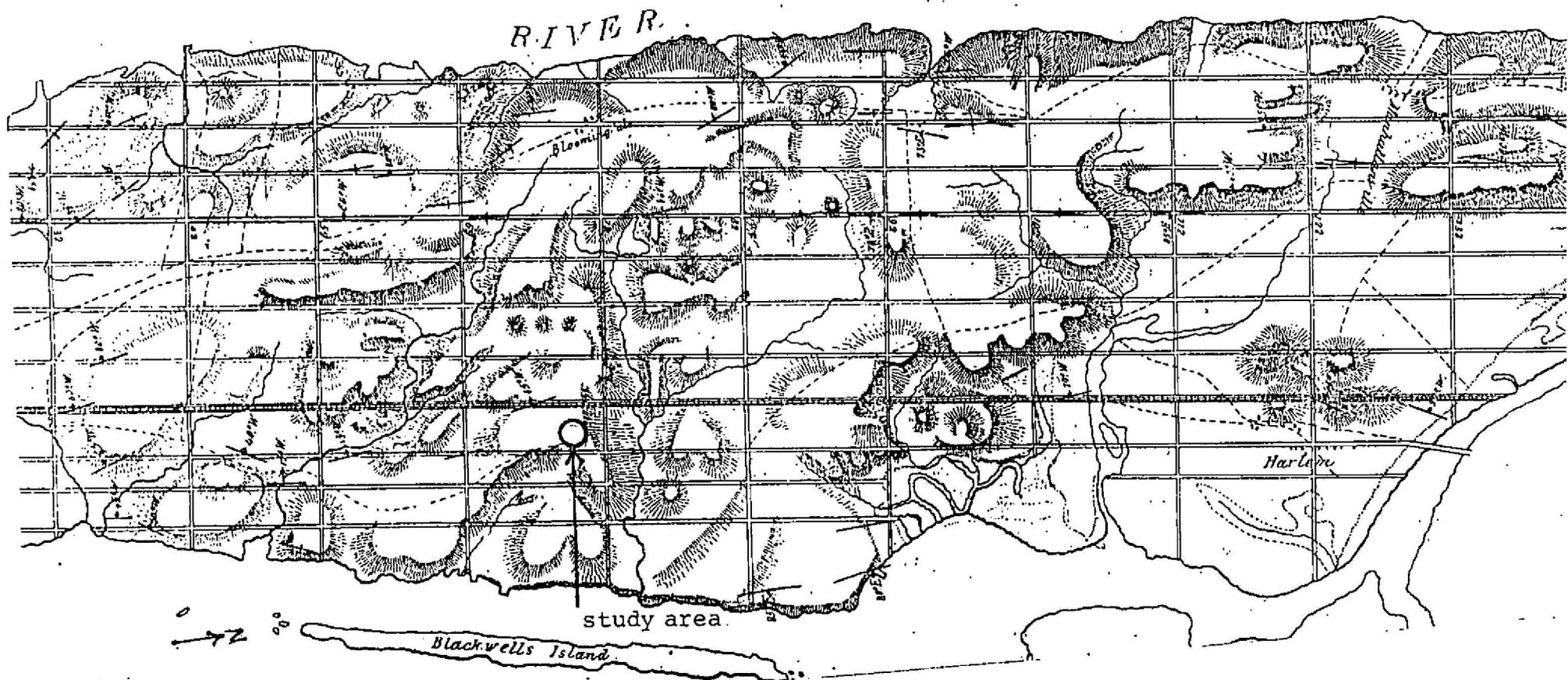


FIGURE 2. Map from of William W. Mather's 1843 Geology of New York, Part I, showing the topography of the island at that time superimposed with the part real/mostly ideal street grid. The approximate location of the study area is indicated by the circle, shown between Third Avenue and the New York and Harlem Railroad (Fourth, or today's Lexington, Avenue).

III. DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH

A. Prehistoric Cultures

Although there exists a fairly rich record made by European settlers of the initial contact between the Dutch colonists and the Indian residents, very little was ever written about the latter's places of settlement. Whatever was written has proved difficult to interpret, because the Dutch newcomers were not always knowledgeable or clear when describing their new home. Some efforts on the part of antiquarians to produce settlement maps from these earliest descriptions have long been questioned as to accuracy.

For the era before the contact period, all that is available regarding aboriginal settlement is a scanty record of reported archeological research work, which, unfortunately, had the ill-timed misfortune of being initiated during or after urban development. Although work of such early New York City archeologists as Alanson Skinner (1909A and 1909B), James Finch (1909), Reginald Bolton (1909), and Arthur Parker (1922) located relatively more evidence of inground aboriginal culture in the northern portion of Manhattan Island than in the southern portion, it is generally accepted that this situation resulted from the fact that the longest and densest urban development occurred

in southern Manhattan, which had early on obliterated many aboriginal settlement remains. The recently made careful excavations in this urban context have produced important samples of diagnostic prehistoric cultural remains, and further work can be expected to add more to our knowledge of these peoples' culture history.

More recent archeological studies have been unpublished surveys of museum collections, such as one conducted by Edward Rutsch at New York City's Heye Foundation Museum of the American Indian and Museum of Natural History in 1966 and 1967 (Rutsch 1970). Although other recorded sites have been identified, none of these studies revealed known or recorded areas of aboriginal culture on or near the study site.

From a reconstruction of the pre-urban development of this site, we recognize that its environment had little to offer aborigines as a camping place. There was no fresh water nearby, and its relatively thin stony upland soils would have discouraged agriculture. Therefore, it does not appear that this particular study area in Manhattan would have fitted the currently accepted model of prehistoric Indian habitation and settlement. As a result, the study area has a low potential to produce cultural material from the entire prehistoric period.

B. Historic Overview

1. Introduction

Until the mid-nineteenth century, when New York City began to spread northward throughout Manhattan Island, the 184 E. 70th Street project area was part of a sparse, rural setting which remained somewhat isolated from the nearby city. Improvements in transportation to and from the outlying areas, as well as pressures to expand from the more congested southern districts of the island, later brought a sweep of development interest and construction into the outlying areas, such as the island's upper east side. The countryside was quickly transformed into another neighborhood within the ever-shifting metropolis of New York.

2. The Pre-Urban Setting

Throughout the Colonial and Federal periods within New York, the vicinity of the project area in question was part of the nearly endless hinterland of the village, and later city, of New York. Probably the first significant development within this district was the establishment of the route of the Boston Post Road through the upper east side of Manhattan Island near the present route of Third Avenue (see Figures 3 and 4). Stokes (1918: Vol. III, 998)

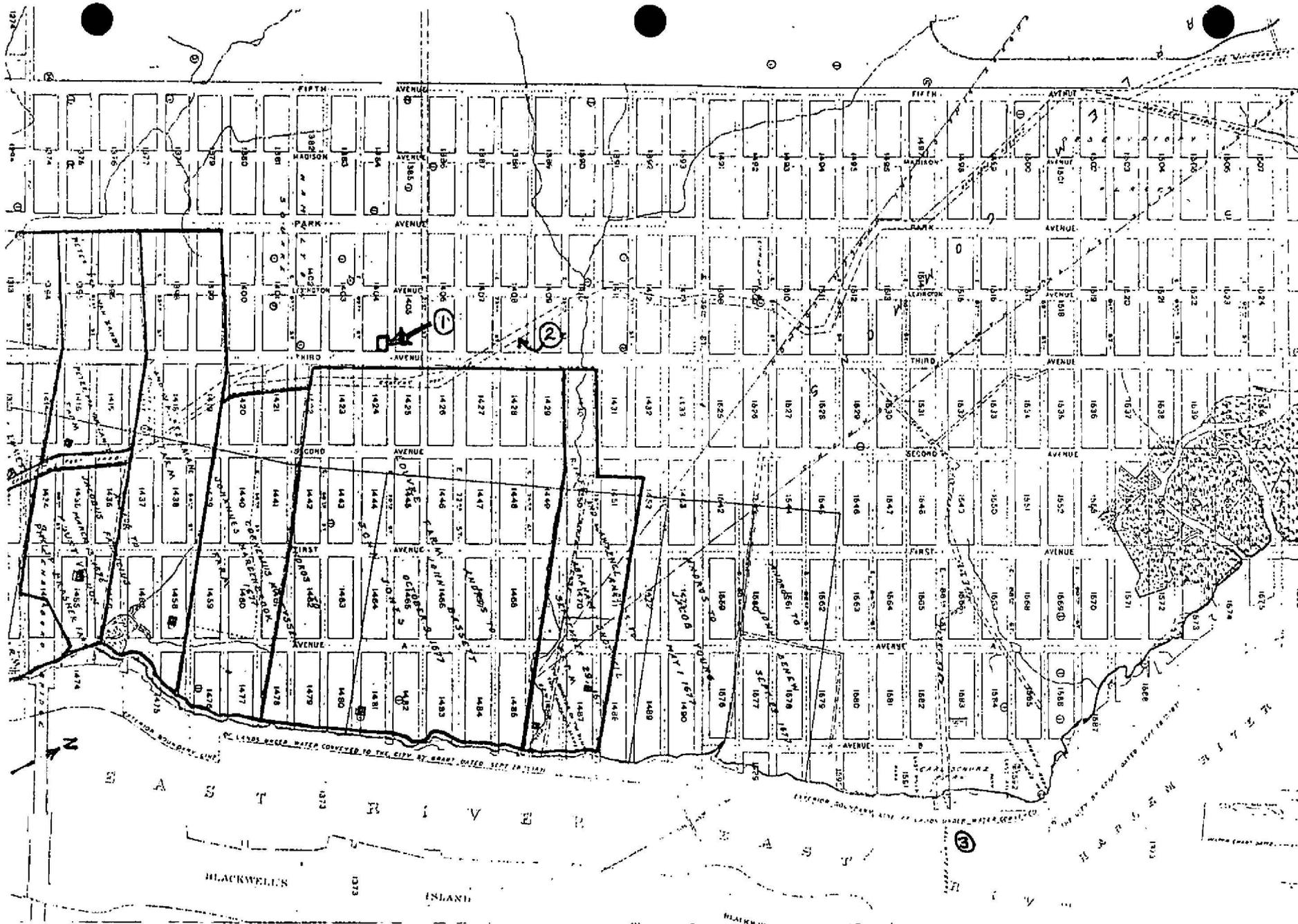


FIGURE 3. Portion of Stokes' Landmark Map (1927: Vol. VI, 13)--a modern street grid of the Upper East Side on which original farm boundaries have been superimposed. The numbers indicate the following: (1) the project area; (2) the Eastern Post Road; and (3) the Hell Gate Ferry.

identifies this section of the route as the "Eastern Post Road" (Figure 3), which diverged from the similar but western Bloomingdale Road near the present intersection of 23rd Street and Fifth Avenue. Ordered to be built in 1669 and again in 1671, the Eastern Post Road was the link to the colonial village on the island's southern tip.

Predictably, some settlement clustered along this early important route. The last decades of the seventeenth century saw a growth of interest in the purchase of farms situated between the road and the East River. In two transactions dated 1677, the then Colonial Governor Sir Edmund Andros deeded 60 acres immediately east and north of the project site to John Bassett and an adjoining 60 acres to the southeast to Cornelius Mattysen (Stokes 1927: Vol. VI, 108; see Figure 3). However, not until 1742 and David Provoost's ownership of the Bassett land and the northern 30 acres of the Mattysen tract was there any indication of serious settlement in this district. Provoost and his family called the tract--which now included the former Bassett property--and its dwelling house the Louvre Farm (see Figure 3).

The other pre-Revolutionary structure known to be within the region was the Dove Tavern, located on the Post Road near the present-day 67th Street and Third Avenue intersection (Stokes 1918: Vol. III, 978). Although no other significant structures could be documented as extant within this region prior to the Revolution, the British

Headquarter's manuscript map, Map of New York and Environs c. 1782, shows the region as becoming domesticated, containing a mixture of forest, field, and plantation (Stokes 1915: Vol. I, Plate 50; see Figure 4).

Development increased near the project area following the end of the Revolutionary War hostilities. Several families established a hamlet called Yorkville, just north of the site on the Post Road. Yorkville generally occupied the district now bounded by 83rd and 89th Streets near Third Avenue. In 1801, this hamlet was linked to Newtown by the Horn's Hook (or Hell Gate) ferry across the East River, located at the foot of today's 86th Street (see Figure 3).

Closer to the project site, the city designated a public park in 1807. Although it is not clear what action was taken to improve this land as a park, Hamilton Square survived, at least partially, as public open space until 1868 (see Figure 5). By 1811, the so-called "Commissioner's Plan," also known as the "Randel Plan," had established the grid system of streets for most of Manhattan (Bridges 1811). Bounded by 66th Street, Fifth Avenue, 69th Street, and Third Avenue, Hamilton Square was later abandoned and pierced by this street grid in conjunction with the expansion of the city uptown (Lockwood 1976: 310). Indeed, Hamilton Square was abandoned--as were similar early, small parks in uptown Manhattan--when land pressures and the opening of Central Park reduced the need for such neighborhood open spaces.

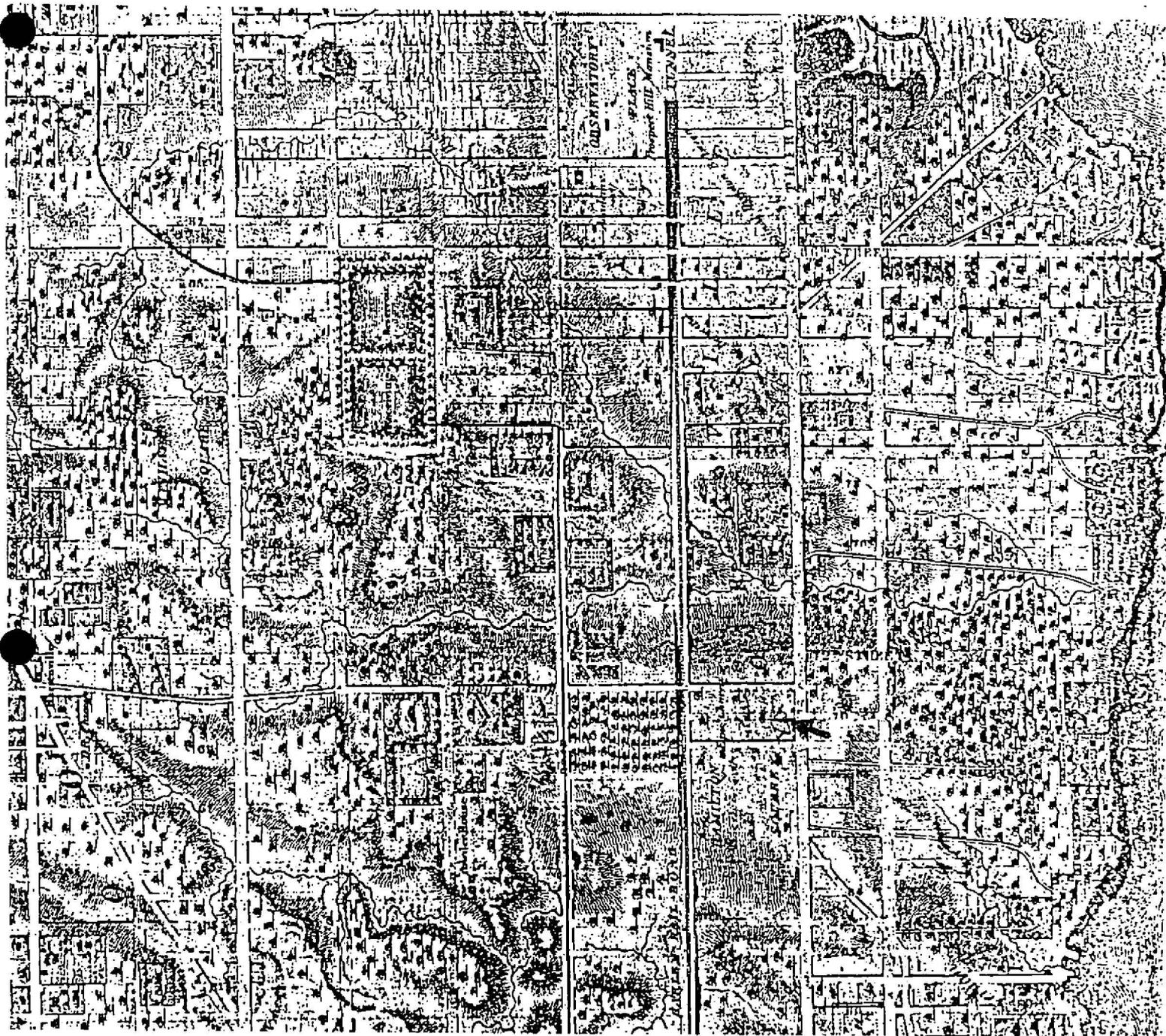


FIGURE 5. Elements of the city's street grid were evident in 1839, the date of this topographical map (Colton 1839). The arrow points to the corner of Third Avenue and 70th St. No buildings appear in the project area, but the "Epis. Church" is present and so labeled in Hamilton Square.

Also established in this period was the Saint James P.E. Church, formerly located near the present southwest corner of 69th Street and Lexington Avenue (see Figures 5 and 6). In 1809 ground was allotted for this church within what was then the newly designated Hamilton Square. The 1810 church building was demolished in 1869, probably as part of street dedications through the square (Stokes 1918: Vol. III, 933).

Therefore, the region which today is known as the Upper East Side was becoming, through the first half of the nineteenth century, a domesticated landscape containing some estates bordering the East River shore, some mixed but scattered development along or near the Post Road, and the single hamlet of Yorkville. The New York Evening Post of September 13, 1826, as recounted by Stokes (1926: Vol. V, 1226), carried the following account of the area:

We received this morning the first number of a new paper established at Yorkville, on Harlaem Heights, about five miles from City Hall. The 3d Avenue passes through the village. Twelve months ago there were not more than two or three buildings on the barren rock, wheere there are now upwards of sixty, some of them built in a good substantial manner of brick....

Undoubtedly one of the most significant events that helped open up the Upper East Side for development was the construction of the New York and Harlem Railroad, which was open by 1832 between Prince and 14th Streets, the latter then being the northern limit of the built city. By 1834 New York's first railroad was open along Fourth Avenue to

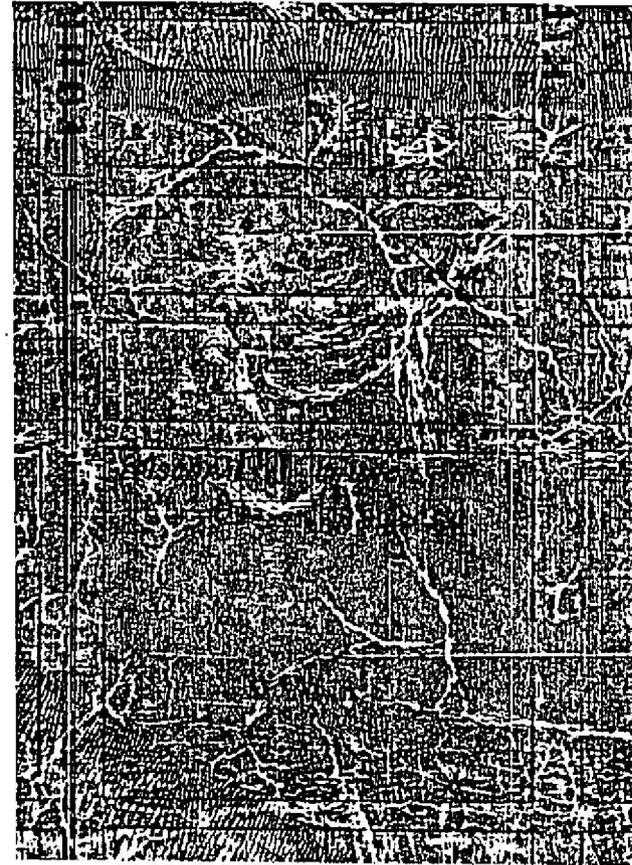
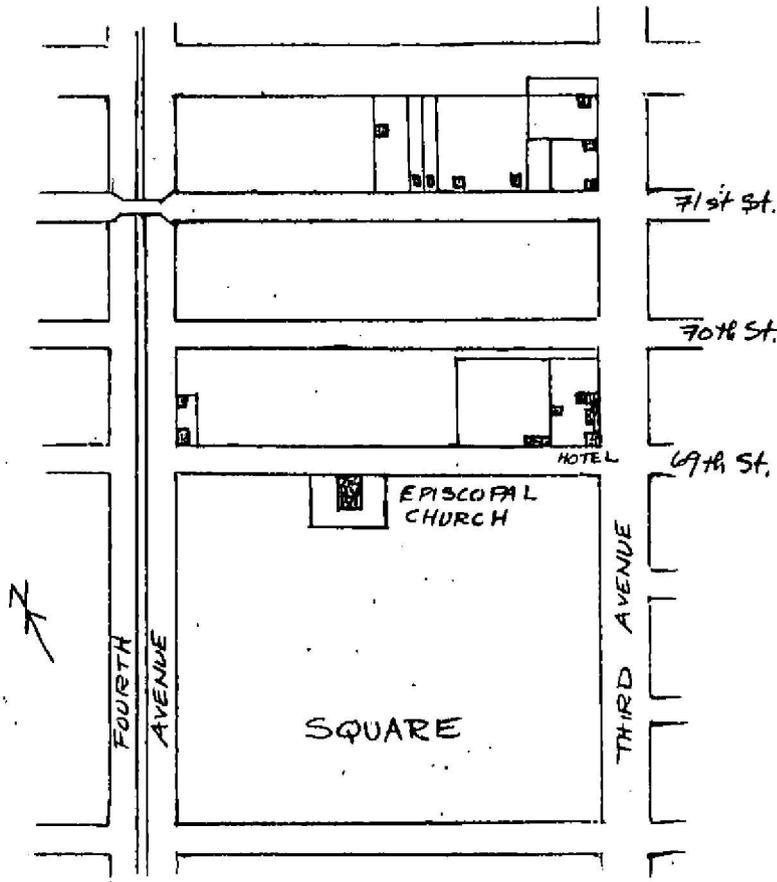


FIGURE 6. Portion of the 1851 Dripps map, including the project area. The tracing at the left (which does not include the trees) has been made in an attempt to clarify the nearly unreproducible original (right). Hamilton Square contains the Episcopal Church (69th St. between Third and Fourth avenues), and Block 1404 contains 5 buildings but none within the present-day study area.

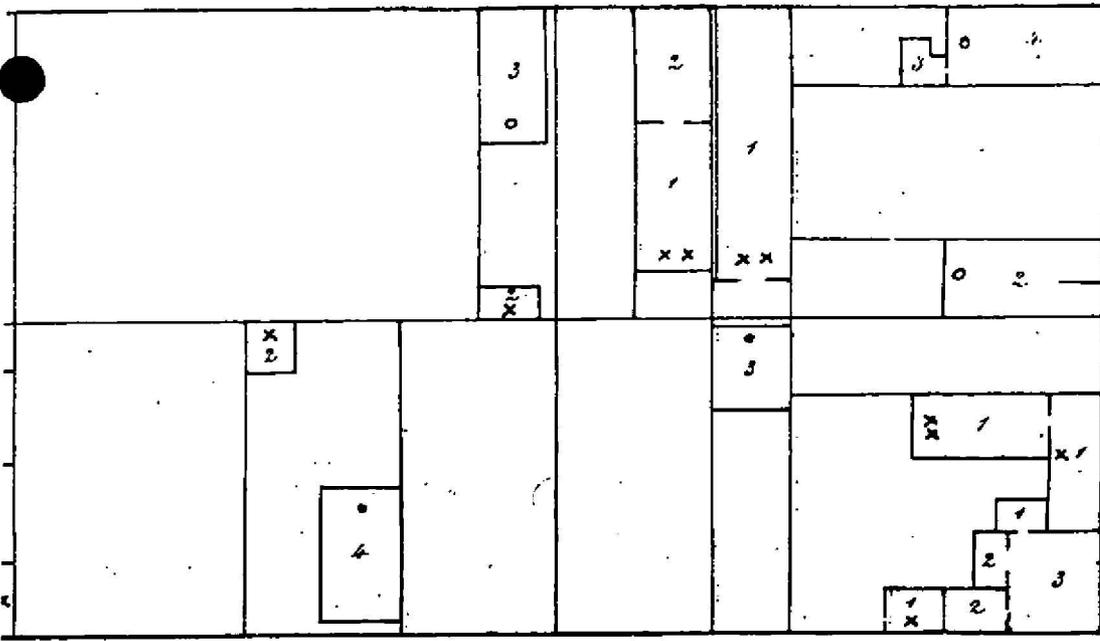
Harlem (Lockwood 1976: 244). At first a simple horse-drawn streetcar, this railway brought the East Side into direct contact with the nearby city.

3. Urban Development

The Dripps map of 1851 (Figure 6) shows the region of the project area at the transition point from being a part of New York City's nearby hinterland to becoming one of its districts (Figure 6). This transition was not abrupt; rather, it was a slow transformation evinced by many of the previously referenced improvements to the district. However, once these first decades of steady development of the upper east side of Manhattan made the land available and attractive, this and other uptown districts experienced a boom period. This expansion is evidenced by the extensive rectangular subdivisions and numerous buildings shown by Bromley's 1880 atlas map (see Figure 8).

The Dripps (1851), Perris (1862), and Bromley (1880) maps show the transformation of the district from rural to urban (see Figures 6-8). In 1851 the block including the project site--as well as eight surrounding blocks, as indicated by Dripps--contained only six small structures, including the aforementioned Episcopal church and a hotel immediately south of the project site at Third Avenue and 69th Street. The Dripps map shows much of the terrain as open, but with significant remaining woodlots, particularly east toward the river. By 1862, the Perris map shows a much

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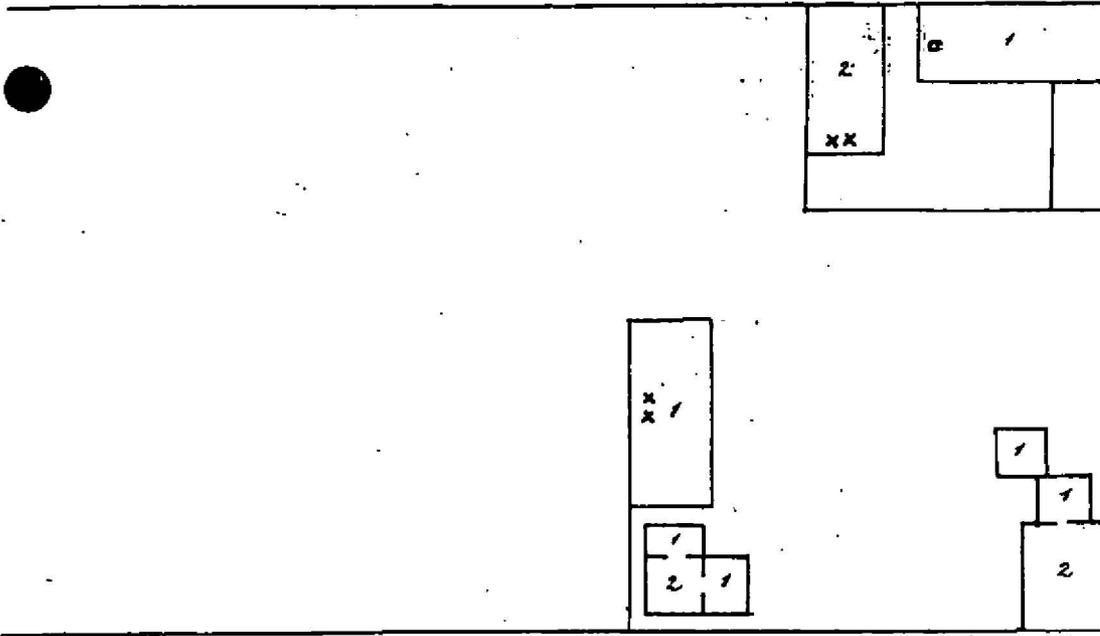


70th Street

Study area

ET

121



THIRD AVENUE



FIGURE 7. Portion of the Perris map of 1862, which shows two buildings in the project area: a one-story building and a two-story building.

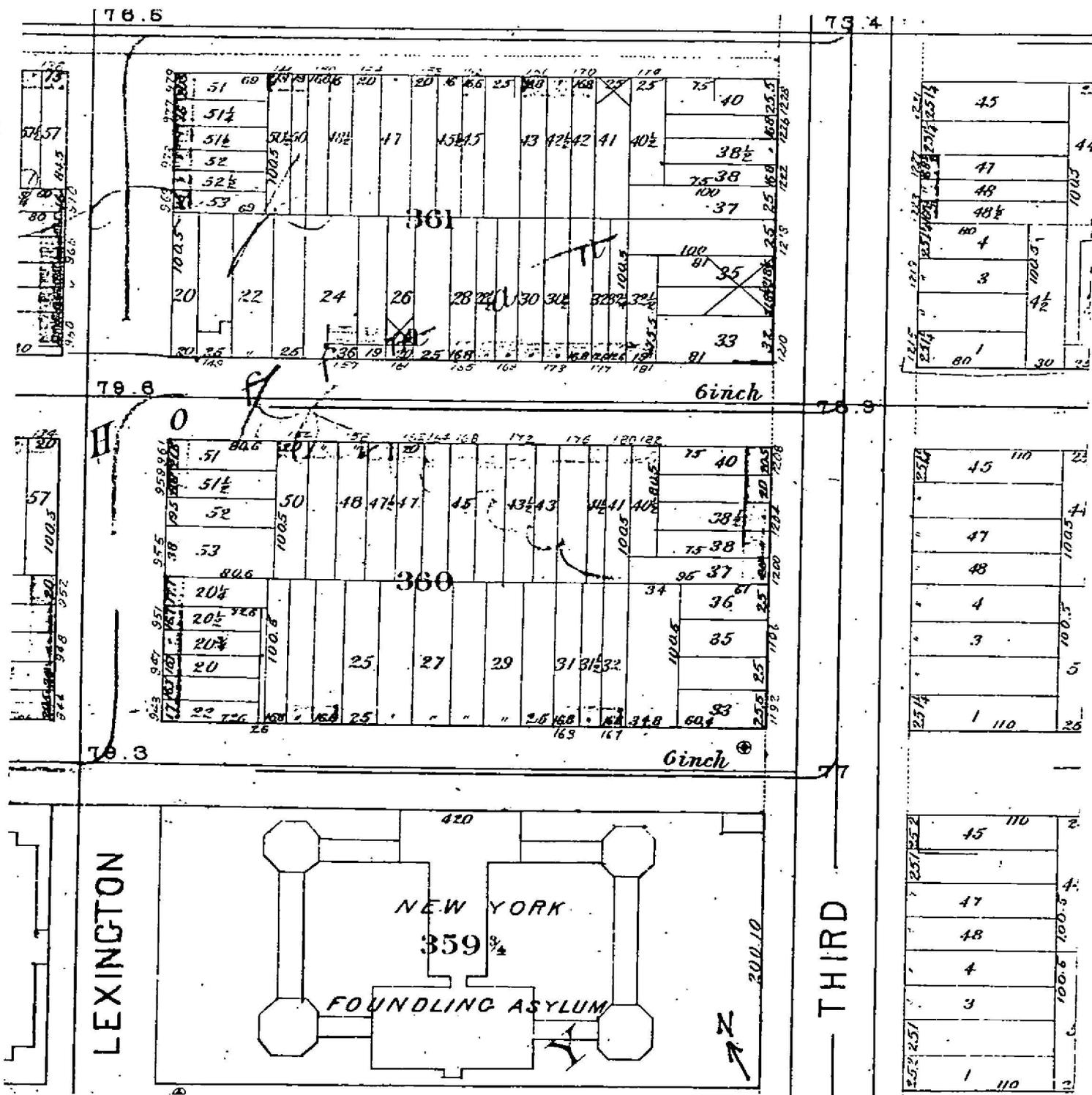


FIGURE 8. Portion of Bromley's 1880 atlas map including the project area: lots 37, 38, 38½, 39 (unnumbered), and 40, which here all front Third Avenue (Nos. 1200-1208). Hamilton Square has become the site of the New York Foundling Asylum.

greater density of structures in the region, including one two-story and another single-story frame structure on a subdivided lot corresponding to the project site. By this period the grid system of the 1811 Commissioner's Plan has clearly been established, whereas previously it was partially idealized. By 1880 rows of rectangular lots are occupied by stone, brick, and, to a lesser extent, frame structures. The project area has now become the location for a series of four stone buildings on nearly identical 20 by 75-foot lots.

A review of deed transactions for the second half of the nineteenth century also reveals the growth of this district. Before 1863, deeds record transactions for the entire block or larger parcels. Beginning in 1863 and afterward, deeds record an individual lot or a series of lots within the block. By 1871 individual rectangular lots are being sold and leased, obviously reflecting the increased urbanization of the the district. (See Appendix-- Index to Deeds to Block 1404.)

The exact character of the project area and its surroundings during this period of transition is difficult to reconstruct. A variety of graphic materials reproduced in Stokes (1915-1927), Lockwood (1976), and Patterson (1978) from holdings of The Museum of the City of New York, The New-York Historical Society, and the New York Public Library show numerous uptown locations in the 1850's through the 1880's where estates sat next to squatters' shacks and

rowhouses next to garbage dumps. Such mixed land use was typical of the city's frontier areas, and the Upper East Side was part of its northern frontier at this time.

With the construction of rowhouses such as those located in the project area in the 1880's, we can assume that the district was on its way to becoming a middle and upper middle class residential neighborhood. In the Guild's Committee for the Federal Writers' Publications book entitled New York City Guide (1939: 243), Yorkville is acknowledged as a larger district. Including the project area, Yorkville consisted of solid blocks of brownstone rowhouses, at first built for the "well-to-do" but later occupied by a mix of residents including many of German ancestry. The Bromley atlas of 1898 shows the project site as well as numerous surrounding lots occupied by four-story brick buildings with stone facades. Three- and four-story brick buildings, separated by an occasional stable, dominate this neighborhood at the turn of the century.

Of course, the neighborhood was never entirely residential. In the 1870's a number of large institutions erected buildings there, including the second site of the Mt. Sinai Hospital from 1872 to 1904, three blocks south of the project site; the Normal College for Girls (now Hunter College), which occupied a whole block immediately to the southwest beginning in 1873; and the Seventh Regiment Armory, completed in 1880 one block west of Mt. Sinai Hospital (Stokes 1918: Vol. III, 923, 941, 954).

With the ever-continuing growth and changes in New York's environment, the project site too was brought into new use in the 1920's. The 1921 Bromley atlas shows the entire project site occupied by a five-story brick garage with basement (Figure 9). This use of the project area continued until the garage's demolition made way for the presently proposed 31-story apartment building.

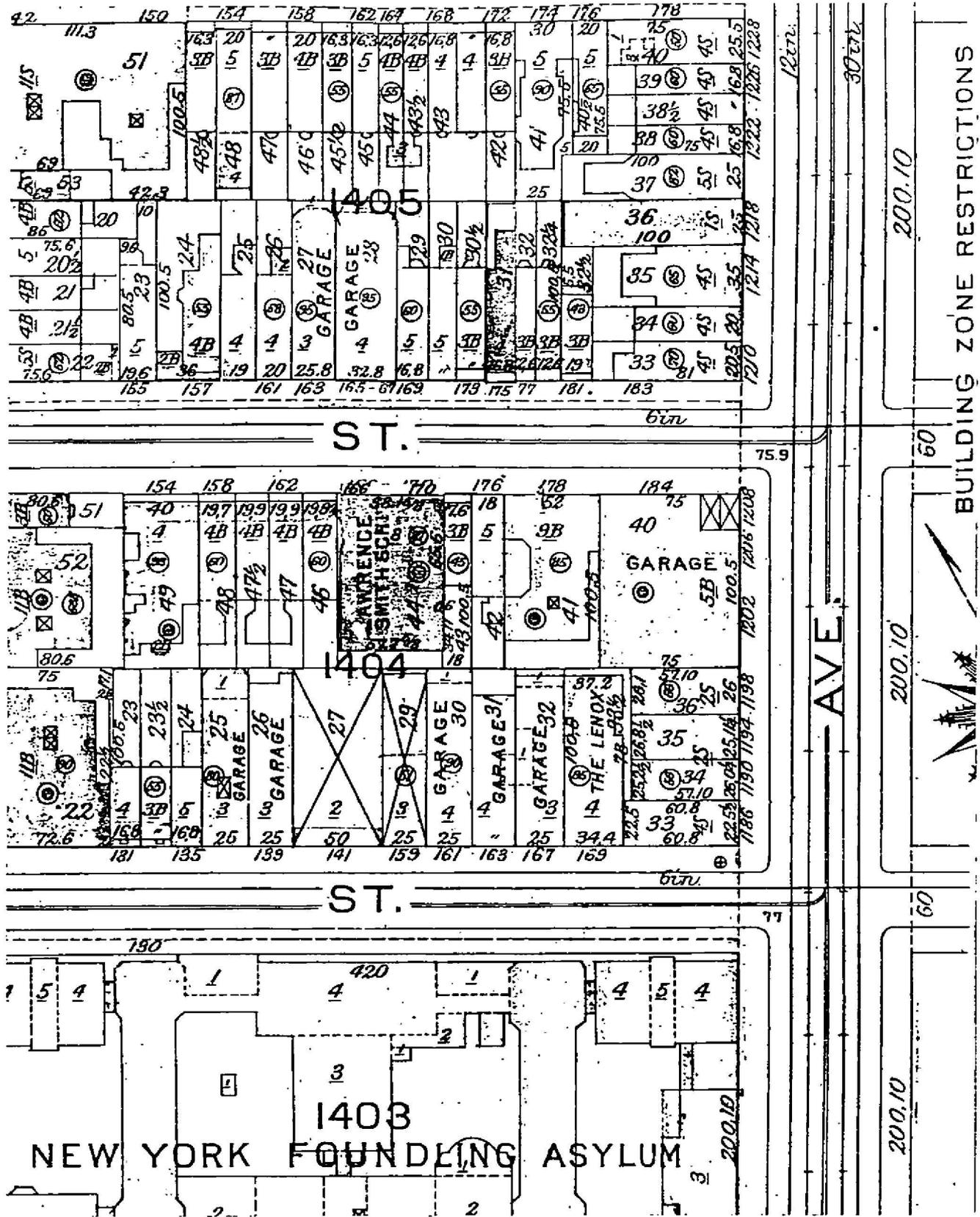


FIGURE 9. Portion of Bromley's 1921 atlas showing the project area occupied by a 5-story brick garage building (lot 40, block 1404, including Nos. 1200-1208 Third Ave. and 184 E. 70th St.).

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The literature search has indicated that the study area cannot be evaluated as a potentially good location for aboriginal sites or cultural remains. In the historic period, no building activity or development occurred until after the mid-nineteenth century. During the second half of the 1800's, the study area hosted full residential use. Subsequently, however, this nineteenth-century building landscape was totally removed from the site in question and replaced in 1921 by a large garage. This edifice has likewise been removed for the presently proposed building, and soil borings data show no human-placed fill or even topsoil remaining on the site. For these reasons, it is our opinion that there is little chance that any historic remains lay buried on this site.

Therefore, given the very low probability that cultural remains from either the prehistoric or historic era are extant on the site, we recommend that no further research of a cultural resource nature (i.e., infield testing) be carried out.

V. APPENDIX: INDEX TO DEEDS TO BLOCK 1404

The following tabulated data have resulted from deed research on the following Manhattan parcel--Section 5, Block 1404, Lots 37, 38, 38½, 39, 40--located at 1201-1208 Third Avenue (100.5 feet frontage) and 184 E. 70th Street (75 feet frontage). Research was conducted in the Block Index--Reindexed Conveyances, Surrogate's Court, New York City.

GRANTOR	GRANTEE	DATE	LIBER	LOT
	no record	<u>1654 to</u> <u>1807</u> <u>1808</u>		
Hoffman, Martin Mary	Lenox, Robt Waddington, Josh Ogden, Will.	Jan. 11	79:128	Entire Block
"	Howard, Sam.	<u>1810</u> Nov. 17	89:357	"
Howard, Sam. Mary	Martin, Georg			
"	Wilkes, Charles	<u>1811</u> Aug. 27	94:225	"
Colden, Cadwallader Ogden, Thos. Ludlow Waddington, Josh. Ogden, Will Wilkes, Chas. Hoffman, Martin Mary	Hoffman, Martin Colden, Cad. Ogden, Thos L.	<u>1812</u> Jan. 30 Apr. 10	96:204 98:178	1-72 incl. Entire Block
Martin, Geo. Harison, Rich	Harison, Richard Martin, Georg	<u>1815</u> Apr. 11 Apr. 11	109:21 109:22 and 24	" "
Martin, Geo. Howard, Sam. Maria	Hoffman, Martin	Dec. 22	111:581	"
	no record	<u>1816-34</u> <u>1835</u>		
Mayor, Alderm. Commonality of City of NY	Hoffman, Murray Lindley M. Martin Livingston, Anna Maria Gilman, Serena Hoffman, Mary Seton Maria Colden Cecelia Seton Harriet Seton Cadwallader C. James Farquabar	May 25	337:27	Entire Real. of Covenant
"	Roberts, Matilda Hoffman, Murray	Sept. 11	344:37	40-51 incl. 57, 58, 59, incl.

GRANTOR	GRANTEE	DATE	LIBER	LOT
Hoffman, Lindley Susan. Mary Eliza Mary S. Maria C. Livingston, Anthony Anna M. Gilman, Chandler Serena Roberts, William C. Mathilda	Hoffman, Murray	<u>1836</u> Mar. 16	354:74	Entire
Hoffman, Mary F. widow of Martin	De Forest, Alfred	Mar. 16	354:77	Entire Real. of Dower
Hoffman, Cecelia Harriet Cadawallader Colden James Farquabar ?(special Gdn of)	De Forest, Alf	Mar. 16	354:78	Entire
Hoffman, Murray Livingston, ? Anthony R. Anna Maria	De Forest, Alf De Forest, Alf	Mar. 16 Apr. 14	354:84 353:219	" "
Hoffman, Cecelia Seton Heir of Martin	De Forest, Alf	<u>1837</u> Feb. 13	374:54	"
	no record	<u>1838 to</u> <u>1863</u>		
Cannon, Le Grand B. Gale, Ezra Thompson, Caroline De Forest	De Forest, Geo.B. Margaret-Eliza	Apr. 8	898:596	1-4 incl. 13-17 28-31 38½-39 40½-45 57½-57-60
Gale De Forest	Cannon	Apr. 8	898:599	9-12 23½-27 33½, 35, 38½ 39, 40, 40½, 45-50 61-64, 68½, 71, 72

GRANTOR	GRANTEE	DATE	LIBER	LOT
De Forest, Marg.- Eliza	Leamy, Jeremaih	<u>1867</u> Dec. 17	1033:419	38½, 39, 40½
(several Dec. 17 transactions, all Cannon, Gale, De Forest. families out to other parties)				
?Cannon, Le Grand B. Mary B.	Early, John Lane, James (firm of)	Dec. 31	1027:681	Lexington Ave. ?
Cannon, Le Grand B. Mary Burlock	Farley, Terence	<u>1868</u> Jan. 16	1041:315	27, 38, 38½, 39, 40, 40½
Leamy, Jerem Eliza	Kohner, Marcus	May 22	1053:492	38½, 39, 40½
Farley, Terence Bridget	Kohner, M.	May 25	1050:606	37, 38, 38½, 39, 40, 40½
Martin, John Jr. Maria Louisa Maucaulay, John L.	Jackson, Peter Steinmetz, John H.	<u>1871</u> Nov. 1	1189:479	38
Wagner, William Eva	Maucaulay, John L.	<u>1872</u> Mar. 29	1209:203	38
Maucaulay, John L.	Byrnes, Matthew	<u>1878</u> Nov. 15	1476:84	33½, 36, 37 Certif. of Satisf.
1891 (Railway Company Agreement) NY ELevated Manh. Rail. Co.		<u>1891 New Deeds?</u> Jun. 20	5:287	Not lotted
Maucaulay, John L.	Bergmann, Georg	<u>1896</u> May 7	42:179	38 Lease
Maucauley, John L. Maucauley, Grace (widow of J.L.)	Parker, Henrietta Parker, H.	<u>1898</u> Jan. 19 May 3	52:184 59:47	37-41½ 40½, 41, 41½
(obvious that widow kept for herself Lots 37-40)				
Parker, Henrietta M.	Groskurth, Emelie	<u>1900</u> Aug. 17	69:208	40
Parker, Henrietta M.	Emanuel, Albert H.	<u>1901</u> May 22	76:198	37 Lease

GRANTOR	GRANTEE	DATE	LIBER	LOT
Schonhard, August	Muller, John	<u>1906</u> Apr. 6	121:424	38 Lease
Parker, Henrietta	749 West End Ave. Co.	<u>1911</u> Nov. 1	177:3	37-40
West End Ave. Co.	Cutner, Harry B.	<u>1912</u> Dec . 6	180:38	37-40
Parker, Henrietta M.	Brixton Construction (sold rest of her property for bldg.)	Dec. 31	179:79	40½-41½
Cutner, Harry B. Kate	Directors Realty Hold Co.	<u>1913</u> June 20	178:431	37-40
Cutner, Harry B.	Kursch & Rubin	Nov. 19	184:95	40 Lease
Rande Realty Corp.	Pinehurst Garage Co.	<u>1916</u> July 26	203:106	37,38-40

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- | | |
|------|----------|
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| 1916 | Vol. II |
| 1918 | Vol. III |
| 1922 | Vol. IV |
| 1926 | Vol. V |
| 1927 | Vol. VI |

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