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ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

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PHASE 1A HISTORICAL/ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION OF THE  
MEBCO DEVELOPMENT, COLLEGE POINT  
QUEENS, NEW YORK

B 4403

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Phase 1A Sensitivity Study is to document the potential prehistoric and historic sensitivity of the Mebco Development Project in College Point, Queens, New York through the review of existing archival, cartographic and published references. In order to provide a context for evaluating any identified resources within the parcel itself, this survey shall include a synthesis of published and unpublished prehistoric and historic resources in the immediate locality surrounding the project area.

The project area is located in the College Point section of Queens. College Point has the atmosphere of a small suburban town with its small stores and restaurants, and its wooden and red brick homes. To the west of College Point lies Flushing Bay, to the north is the East River, and to the south and east is Flushing. The project area is in a flat, low-lying section of College Point. There is a noticeable downward slope when approaching the vicinity of the project area by automobile. South of the project area is the Whitestone Expressway and not far to the west is the College Point Causeway. Six blocks to the northeast is Flushing Airport. The project area is surrounded by open spaces with grass, along with some new industrial buildings.

## PREHISTORIC SENSITIVITY

As part of the project evaluation process, this sensitivity study has surveyed published and unpublished resources in the files of the New York State Museum Division of Historical and Anthropological Services, the Research Branch of the New York Public Library, and the Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

A total of four confirmed prehistoric sites are located within two miles of the project area. Three of these sites were reported by former New York State Archaeologist Arthur C. Parker, who described them as a burial, a camp with burials and a village with burials. Unfortunately, no description of artifacts recovered are included, so assignment of date ranges or cultural affiliations is not possible (Parker 1922). Judging from Parker's description of the College Point Site as a village, it is probable that this site dates to the Woodland period, but no information exists to confirm this. All three sites are located close to fresh water courses that flow into the East River. See Figure 2 for the location of these sites relative to the project area. See Table 1 designations A, C and D for site numbers, references and brief descriptions.

The remaining site, known as Graham Court after a local street name, is designated 'B' in Figure 2 and Table 1. This site is described only as a





Figure 2 Known prehistoric sites within a two mile radius of the project area.

**TABLE 1: PREHISTORIC SITES IN THE VICINITY OF COLLEGE POINT, QUEENS**

	SITE NAME	NYSH#	PARKER #	OTHER #	REFERENCE	PERIOD(S)	DESCRIPTION
A	---	4542 4540	ACP-QUNS	---	Parker 1922:Pl.208	---	Camp Burial
B	Graham Court	719	---	BAR 11-4	---	---	Village, Burials
C	College Point	4527	ACP-QUNS-4	---	Parker 1922:672	---	Village, Burials
D	Linnaean Garden	---	ACP-QUNS-1	---	Parker 1922:672	---	Burials



village with burials in the files of the New York State Museum. Its description as a village may imply a date range including the Woodland Period, but no information could be found to confirm this. The State Museum was unable to supply data regarding the location of any finds or the identity of the reporter.

R.P. Bolton describes Flushing as a village of the Matinecock chieftaincy (Bolton 1975:89). The actual location of this settlement cannot be placed with any certainty, so it is not included on Figure 2 and Table 1. Bolton's description was originally published in 1920, by which time Flushing was a sizable settlement to the southwest of the project area.

In terms of potential prehistoric sensitivity, the project impact area was evaluated from two points of view:

- 1) the proximity of known prehistoric sites in or near the project area; and
- 2) the presence of fresh water drainage courses in general, and particularly the identification of river or stream confluence situations, where two or more drainages come together, providing access to both the water and food supplies of both systems.

This survey has documented the recorded or published location of four prehistoric archaeological sites within two miles of the College Point project area. None of the locations are within the project area. At least three of these sites are near present or former stream courses. Evidence exists for stream courses on or adjacent to the project area. Since fresh water resources are indicated for this location, as well as access to the marine resources of the East River, it would appear that the project area is likely to have supported prehistoric use or occupation.

#### HISTORIC SENSITIVITY

##### Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

Director-General Kieft of the Dutch West India Company purchased some land from the Manhasset Indian tribe around 1640 which was east of Rockaway on the southern shore of present-day Nassau County, extending north to Martin Gerretsen's Bay (Flint 1896:116). This transaction was the first known contact made by Europeans with present-day Queens County. The Dutch made no organized settlement of the area. English colonists from New England founded the earliest Queens' settlements which were known as the English Towns. These English settlers accepted Dutch rule (ca. 1640) which extended on the north shore of Long Island as far east as Oyster Bay (ibid.:118).

Kieft granted patents to English settlers from Stamford, Connecticut (Flint 1896:131). They paid a rent of one-tenth of all their agricul-





tural products each year to the Dutch West India Company. The charter of 1645 gave the patentees of the settlement, which was called Flushing (Vlissingen in Dutch), all of the land within the town (Waller 1899:16). According to the patent the town of Flushing began to the west at the mouth of the "creek upon the East River" (Flushing Creek) and east to Gerretsen's Bay (Trebor 1945:7). The patent extended from the East River (the north shore of Long Island) "south to the Hills" (ibid.). The "Hills", according to Trebor, was a ridge running through the center of Long Island. The town of Flushing included present-day College Point and the project area.

In 1644 New Netherland became English and all of Long Island, including present-day Queens, became part of the administrative division called Yorkshire (Flint 1896:116-117). Yorkshire was in turn divided into three sections called Ridings (West, East, and North) (ibid.:117). North Riding included four of the original English townships of western Long Island: Flushing, Jamaica, Hempstead, and Oyster Bay. In 1666 Governor Nicoll confirmed the Flushing patent of 1645 (Bozeman 1975:3). Governor Dongan ended the system of ridings and counties were set up by the Colonial Assembly (Flint 1896:117). In 1683 the colony of New York was divided into twelve counties with Queens County containing the townships of Jamaica, Newtown, Oyster Bay, Hempstead, and Flushing (including College Point and the project area) (Hazelton 1925 I:126). The 1645 patent, confirmed in 1666, was reconfirmed in 1685 by Governor Dongan (Bozeman 1975:3).

The name closely associated with present-day College Point during the colonial period was Lawrence. John Lawrence was born in England, lived in Massachusetts and then in Flushing. In 1655 he moved to New Amsterdam (Manhattan) (Robertson 1974:76-77). William Lawrence, John's brother, arrived in Flushing ca. 1665 and settled on a piece of land known as Tew's Neck which he renamed Lawrence's Neck (ibid.:87; Armbruster 1914:30). Lawrence's Neck included all of present-day College Point (Robertson 1974:87). William Lawrence, one of the original patentees of 1645, increased his ownership of land in the 1670s until he had the largest holding in Flushing (Waller 1975:16; Robertson 1974:90). According to an inventory of his estate, William owned "the neck of land called Tew's Neck with housing, orchards and meadows" (ibid.:91). He owned ten slaves, and one English boy "for a year and some months service" (ibid.). William Lawrence also served as a magistrate of the town of Flushing under both Dutch and English rule (Trebor 1945:9). William Lawrence died in 1680 (Robertson 1974:94).

The Lawrence family continued to reside at Lawrence's Neck (College Point) during the eighteenth century. Until the time of the American Revolution there were no other families in the vicinity (Hecht 1978:12). William Lawrence had a son, also named William, who died in Flushing in 1719 (Robertson 1974:93). William's son and grandson were farmers

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(ibid.:94). The Tax Lists of 1784 and 1788 for the township of Flushing show a number of Lawrence family members including Dr. Daniel Lawrence, Joseph Lawrence, Esquire, and David, who worked as a "ferryman" (Onderdonk 1940:2).

The Lawrence family served the American cause during the Revolutionary War (Hecht 1978:12). In 1776, when the British captured New York City, soldiers landed on Queens' northern shore. The British troops destroyed much of the Lawrence property, thus causing the family to go into debt. After the war the Lawrence family, who for more than a century owned present-day College Point, had to sell their property.

In 1790 Eliphalet Stratton, originally from Huntington, Long Island, bought 320 acres of land from Abraham Lawrence (Armbruster 1914:30; Stratton 1908 I:139). Eliphalet built the Stratton homestead in 1792, and shortly afterward Lawrence's Neck became known as Strattonport (Stratton 1908 I:139; Hecht 1978:12).

#### Nineteenth Century

New families arrived in the vicinity of the project area in the early nineteenth century and purchased land from the Lawrence family. Captain John Graham, a steamboat owner, bought a piece of land in 1832 near the Stratton property where he built a mansion (Hecht 1978:19). Jacob Wilkins bought 100 acres from the Lawrence family around 1835. The Nichols family, in turn, purchased Wilkins' property in 1836 (ibid.:13). The population of Strattonport (College Point) was very small in 1836 with no more than six or seven homes. Sidney's map (1849) indicates the locations of the property at Strattonport (see Figure 3). This map shows the property of Stratton immediately northwest of the project area. The Sidney map also shows a structure on the property of P. Stratton, but Dripps' map (1852) indicates what appears to be a tripartite building with three very small structures (see Figure 3). The small structures were probably outhouses or sheds. The project area is shown as marshland on Dripps' map. Both Dripps' and Sidney's maps show a road traversing Strattonport, leading through the Stratton property, and then passing to the southeast near the project area (see Figure 3). In 1850 the daughter of Eliphalet Stratton sold 140 acres of property where the village of Strattonport would later be incorporated (Armbruster 1914:30; see Figure 3).

Changes came to Strattonport in the middle of the nineteenth century, thus giving the region a character entirely different from the rural farming community with its sparse population and scattered homesteads. In 1857 some of the land that the Strattons sold was made into village lots for incorporation into the village of Strattonport (Stratton 1908 I:139). The most important change during the 1850s was the arrival of Irish and German immigrants. German culture predominated during the second half of the nineteenth century at Strattonport (Hecht 1978:40).

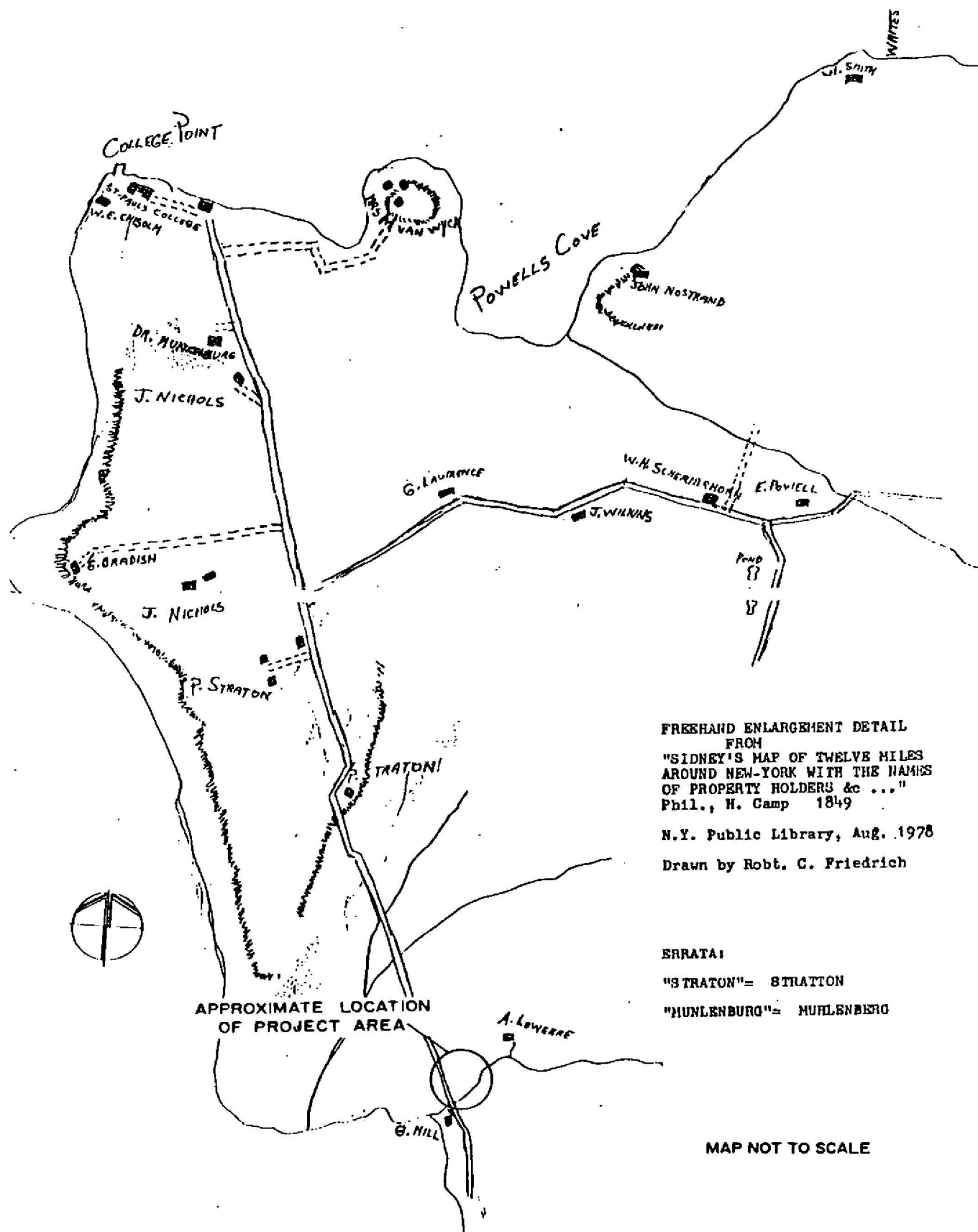


Figure 3 From Sidney's 1849 Map of Twelve Miles Around New York, with Names of Property Owners.



The German immigrants brought the beginnings of industrialization to the area. In 1854 Conrad Poppenhusen opened a factory, the Enterprise Rubber Works, in Strattonport for the production of hard rubber knife handles (Wilson 1902:216). Rubber combs were manufactured as well as some whale-bone objects (Trebor 1952:7). The factory was also responsible for field telegraph sets which were used by the Union soldiers during the Civil War. It was through the influence of Conrad Poppenhusen that the Long Island Railroad Company built the Flushing and North Side Railroad in 1868 to connect Flushing with Strattonport (Seyfried 1966 III:114). Before the coming of the railroad the only link between Strattonport and the rest of Flushing was the causeway built in 1855. Before that there was only a plank road across the meadows (Waller 1899:226). Sidney's map (1849) and Dripps' map (1852) show the road leading southeast across the meadows not far to the west of the project area (see Figure 3). Other industries coming to Strattonport in the 1850s and 1860s included ribbon factories and a brewery (Wilson 1902:216).

Changes occurred in social and cultural contexts as well as in industry and transportation. Again Conrad Poppenhusen was the influence that made such changes a reality. He built homes for his employees, established a community center (later called the Poppenhusen Institute), planned parks, and encouraged the improvement of streets and sewers (Queensborough Public Library 1922:1). In 1883 Poppenhusen had the first cobblestone road constructed across the meadows to Flushing (Long Island Star Journal 1953:3). By 1876 Strattonport had about 6000 people, most of them of German extraction (Hecht 1978:55). In spite of the industrialization of the area, there were still farms and orchards which were producing dairy products, hay, and apples. Strattonport became known as a resort area at that time, attracting vacationers for weekends and picnics. In the following decades, the region developed as a major tourist center.

The next improvement in Strattonport's transportation system came in the 1890s. The New York and Queens County Railway, incorporated in 1886, came to Strattonport by 1891 (Seyfried 1950:13). It ran a course from south to north along Lawrence Street and the old road (see above) that connected Strattonport with the rest of Flushing. This road later became known as the College Point Causeway. The project area lies about two blocks to the southwest of the railroad (see Figure 5).

The name "College Point" is derived from St. Paul's College, an Episcopalian Seminary founded in 1835 (Armbruster 1914:30). The institution was located on the northwestern tip of Strattonport (see Figure 4). Even though the seminary did not exist for long, the name College Point remained in use for the immediate vicinity of the school. Both Strattonport and College Point seem to have been used in the latter part of the century. According to Allen J. Bozeman (1975:5) the area was called Strattonport until Queens County became a part of New York City. Then it



Figure 4 From Walling's 1859 Topographical Map of the Counties of Kings and Queens, New York.

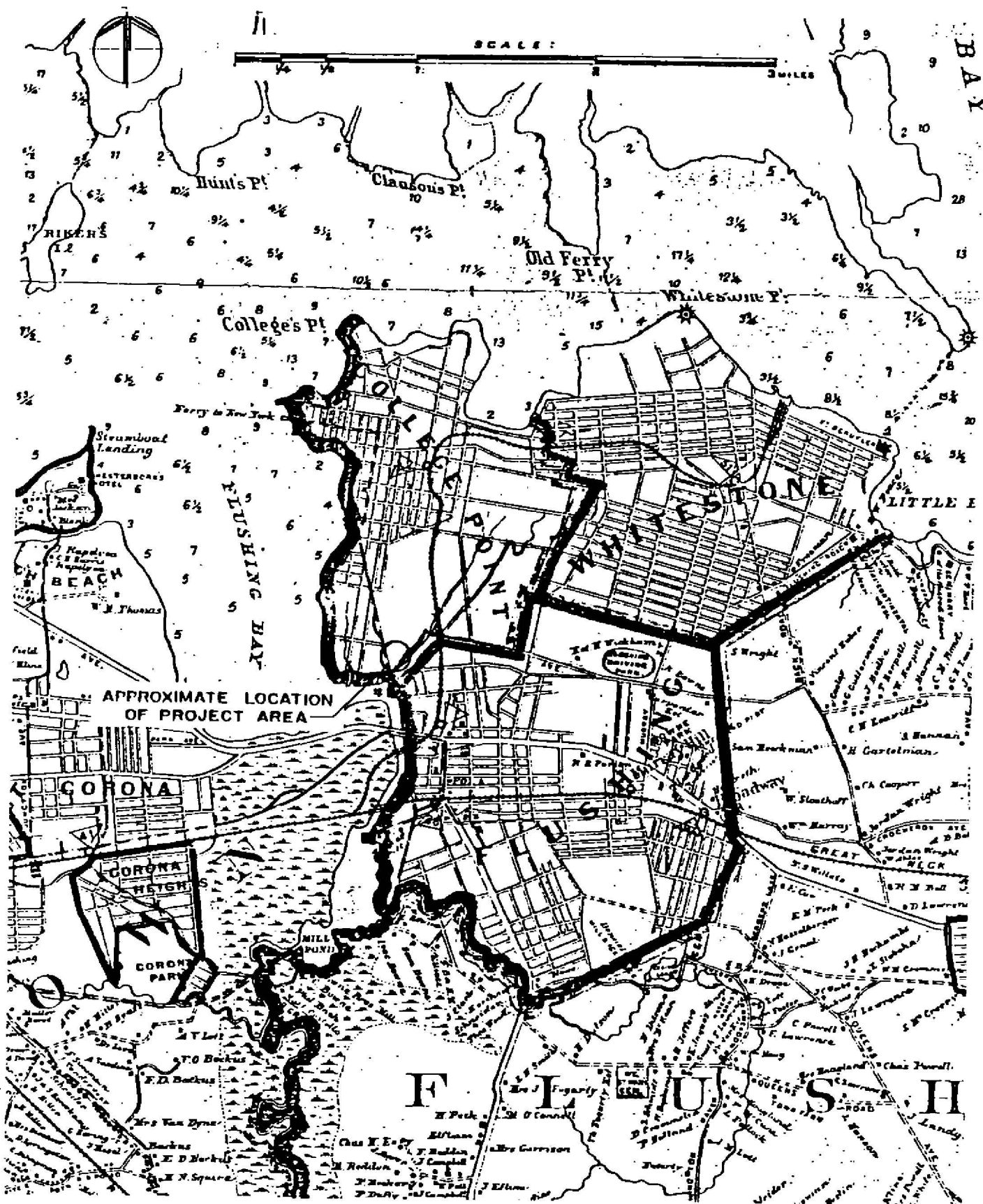


Figure 5 From Hyde and Co. 1896 Map of Long Island Based upon Recent U.S. Coast Surveys Together with Local Maps on File.



was renamed College Point. The name College Point originally applied only to the site of the seminary at the northwestern tip of Strattonport. Eventually usage extended to the entire area (see Figure 5). College Point has been the official designation since the end of the nineteenth century.

In 1880 College Point was incorporated as a village within the township of Flushing (Wilson 1902:216; Waller 1899:227). Ten years later New York State set up a commission to investigate the advantages and possibilities of consolidation with New York City. In 1894 the commission presented the state legislature with a bill which put the issue to a popular referendum (Seyfried 1982:39). On November 6, 1894 the townships of Queens County, except for the township of Flushing, which included College Point, voted in favor of the proposal (ibid.). The New York State Legislature passed the consolidation bill, and Governor Morton signed it. In 1897 all of the old townships and local governments became defunct, and on January 1, 1898 Queens, Bronx, Brooklyn, Staten Island, and Manhattan all became consolidated into one city, New York City.

During the late nineteenth century the project area was owned by a William Morrell, Esquire and consisted primarily of meadows (Charles Reichman, personal communication, Poppenhusen Institute, June 28, 1989). Morrell had an office in New York City when he owned the College Point property in the 1880s, but there is no further information on his use of the land. The sources, including maps, show no evidence that there were any buildings on Morrell's land (see Figures 5 and 6). Considering the title of Esquire, Morrell was probably a lawyer who invested in real estate. This general area, where the railroad was built, was low marsh land, tidal flats, and small streams (Seyfried 1966 VI:123).

#### Twentieth Century

Georg von Skal (1908:51) described College Point as a "village laid out for the most part in regular squares." Continuing his description, he says that "it is really a small city, with good schools, factories, and everything else that makes a community complete" (ibid.). Some wealthy families with large homes and plenty of land lived in College Point but most of the houses are described as moderately-priced cottages.

According to another description, a large portion of the meadows which separated College Point from Flushing were filled in (Queensborough Public Library 1922:1). The sources do not mention when the meadows were filled. Some filling may have occurred during the late 1880s when the railroad was constructed. The meadows included the project area, but there is no evidence that the project area was filled in at that time. By 1924 there were 11,000 people residing at College Point (Hazelton 1925 II:1036).





Figure 6 From Queens Topographical Bureau, 1912, City of New York, Borough of Queens.



The Sanborn map (1943) shows the project area, Block 4403, to the immediate north of the Whitestone Bridge Boulevard and south of Bayside Avenue (31st Road) (see Figure 7). Mill Creek lies to the northeast. The project area is open and has no structures on it. On the other side of Bayside Avenue, to the immediate north, there is a city incinerator and a city parks service building not far to the southwest.

In 1962 an Industrial Park was proposed with the backing of the City Planning Commission (Bennett 1962:31). Twelve million square feet at College Point, north of Whitestone Parkway and east of Flushing Bay, was designated for the Industrial Park (ibid.:59). The proposed park would accommodate light manufacturing and some public recreational facilities (ibid.:31). More than half of the vacant land was owned by the city (ibid.:59). There is no evidence that the project area was included within the proposed Industrial Park, but the description indicates that it was in the vicinity. In 1971 the mayor, borough president, and a Queens councilman asked for the "immediate and complete development of the College Point Industrial Park" (Douris 1971:n.p.).

In conclusion College Point remained a rural, sparsely-populated community for close to two centuries. In colonial times it was a part of the English township of Flushing in Queens County. Until the end of the eighteenth century the Lawrence family owned all of College Point, which included the project area. The Strattons were the first family to purchase some of the Lawrence property. Sidney's map (1849) and Dripps' map (1852), the earliest maps to show property ownership at College Point, indicate Stratton's property with structures to the northwest of the project area (see Figure 3).

The dividing point in the region's history came in the middle of the nineteenth century with the arrival of Irish and German immigrants. The Germans introduced industry in the 1850s and 1860s and changed the cultural character of the area. Conrad Poppenhusen, a German manufacturer, was responsible for many civic improvements including transportation. College Point was also becoming a resort area during the latter decades of the nineteenth century. Village status came in 1880, but in 1898 Queens County became a part of New York City. During the 1880s William Morrell, probably an investor in real estate, owned the project area. There is no evidence, however, that he built anything in these meadows.

The Sanborn map (1943) is the earliest one to show the Mebco project area in detail (see Figure 7). It was an open area with no buildings. There were some city facilities in the immediate vicinity.

In 1962 the general vicinity was designated for the development of an Industrial Park. The project was given further encouragement by officials in 1971.

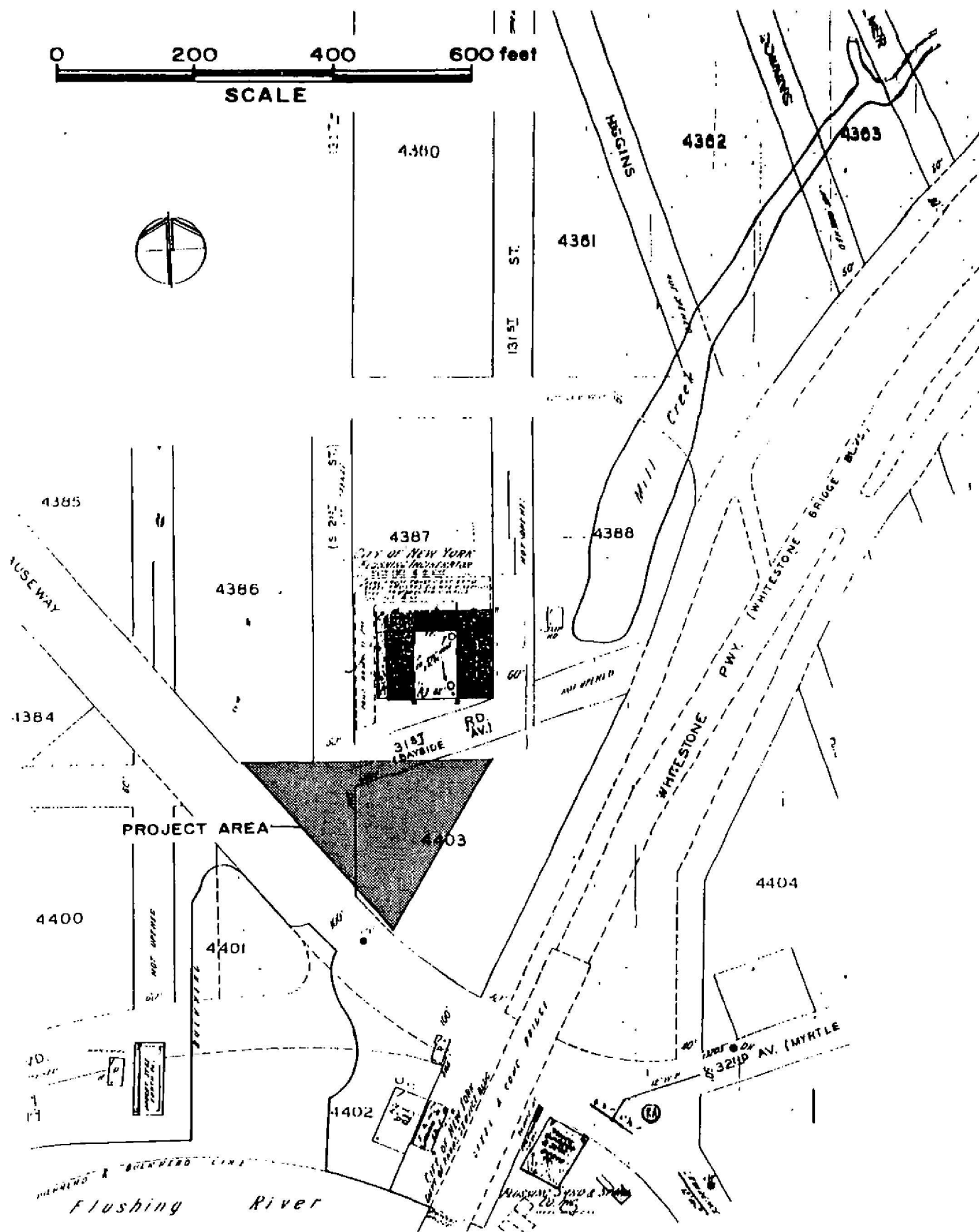


Figure 7 From Sanborn Map Company, 1943, Queens: City of New York.

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## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The above text has documented that the MEBCO College Point Development project potentially may preserve archaeological evidence from the prehistoric period. This location is considered sensitive to the preservation of prehistoric archaeological remains because it is topographically similar to several locations of documented prehistoric sites. Four such sites exist within a two mile radius of the project area, and nearly all are adjacent to streams, a description which characterizes the MEBCO College Point Development site. The nearest site lies within what was marshy ground as recently as 1912, which also applies to the project area. Although no prehistoric artifacts have been reported from this location, it is our opinion that its physical condition would have been a temporary camp for the procurement of fish, shellfish and/or game. It is also our conclusion that the MEBCO project area is not sensitive to the preservation of historic archaeological evidence. This location is shown as marsh on the nineteenth century maps, and no evidence for any structures is shown on any of the maps or plans examined as part of this research.

The above analysis suggested that a Phase 1B archaeological survey be undertaken within the project area to determine the presence or absence of any prehistoric site(s) at this location, including all of the MEBCO Development project area that may be impacted by the planned construction and related activities, excepting locations of filled streams.

**Analysis of Soil Borings:** During September 1989 a series of logs from four borings at this location were forwarded to the offices of Greenhouse Consultants. These borings were conducted during 31 May to 2 June 1988 by Soil Mechanics Drilling Corporation utilizing a two-inch diameter split spoon two feet in length. Samples were taken every five feet. A map dated 27 June 1988 accompanies the boring logs and indicates that the project area is covered with four boring locations within the footprint of the proposed new building. These four boring logs were examined and analyzed by the Principal Investigator. In all four cases the top layer is described as a fill deposit ranging in thickness from 13 to 18 feet. Below this is a second layer described as organic silt except in two cases where a layer of brown peat five feet thick lies between the fill and the organic silt (Borings B-1 and B-4). No solid layer of shells was encountered in any of the borings. In all four cases, the water table was reached within the top layer, at approximately 10 feet below the surface. The top of the organic silt layer lies from 3 to 8 feet below the water table. The top layer can be identified as fill deposited during this century or possibly the last years of the nineteenth century. The second and third layers represent the soil of the marsh and creek bottom which is shown on the historic maps as recently as 1912 (Roberts and Adams 1989:Figure 6).



Since no substantial deposits of shells were encountered, we have no evidence to suggest the existence of shell middens at this location. No possible prehistoric artifacts are described in any of the soil boring logs. It is our conclusion that these four borings provide no evidence for possible prehistoric use of this location and we recommend that no further archaeological testing of the project area is necessary.

Acknowledgements: We would like to express our appreciation for assistance from the Local History Division, the Map Room, and the Photocopy Service of the New York Public Library; the New-York Historical Society, the Queens Historical Society, the Brooklyn Historical Society, the Poppenhusen Institute, the College Point Public Library, the Queensborough Public Library at Jamaica, and Dr. Leo Herskowitz of Queens College for their generous help.



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