



HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION OF THE  
BAISLEY PARK TRIANGLE PROJECT  
SPRINGFIELD GARDENS, QUEENS COUNTY, NEW YORK

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Historical and Archaeological Sensitivity Study is to document the potential prehistoric and historic sensitivity of the Baisley Park Triangle Project on Blocks 12131, 12133 and 12135 in Springfield Gardens, 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evaluating any identified resources within the parcel itself, this survey shall include a synthesis of published and unpublished prehistoric and historic resources in the immediate locality surrounding the project area. This report has been requested in advance of the construction of housing.



## GEOGRAPHY AND PHYSICAL SETTING

The project area lies on Blocks 12131, 13133 and 12135 within the Springfield Gardens section of Queens. These blocks lie within a rough triangle bounded to the northeast by Rockaway Boulevard, to the south by North Conduit Avenue and to the west by Baisley Boulevard. The project area includes Lots 1, 3, 10, 18, 34, 37 and 39 on Block 12131; Lots 35, 40 and 51 on Block 12133; and Lots 1 and 44 on Block 12135. Foundations have already been constructed on Lots 1, 3, 34, 37 and 39 on Block 12131; and Lots 35 and 40 on Block 12133.

The principal investigator inspected the project area during late August 1993. All of the lots are open and reasonably free of vegetation and debris excepting Lots 1 and 44 on Block 12135. Considerable mounds of debris cover these lots although some ground surface is accessible. The terrain is virtually level with the streets being the high points in most cases. The soil is sandy. See Plates 1-4 for illustrations of the project area. See Figure 1 for the general location of the project area and Figure 2 for the lots within the project area blocks.

The project area lies on Long Island, which is within the Atlantic Coastal Lowland Physiographic Province (Thompson 1966: 34). This province exists within New York State only on Long Island and Staten Island (*ibid.*: 34, 43). Long Island's fertile soil is good for the production of hay and grains. Farmers on Long Island also raise vegetables, potatoes and fruit. The climate of Long Island is basically mild and wet during the winters. During the summer it is warm and humid (Thompson 1966: 77). Ocean breezes help cool Long Island during the summer.

Present day elevations were compared with those shown on the appropriate portion of the Final Map of the Borough of Queens which were surveyed on or about December 1906. This comparison indicates that approximately three to four feet of soil has been deposited over the last 85 years.



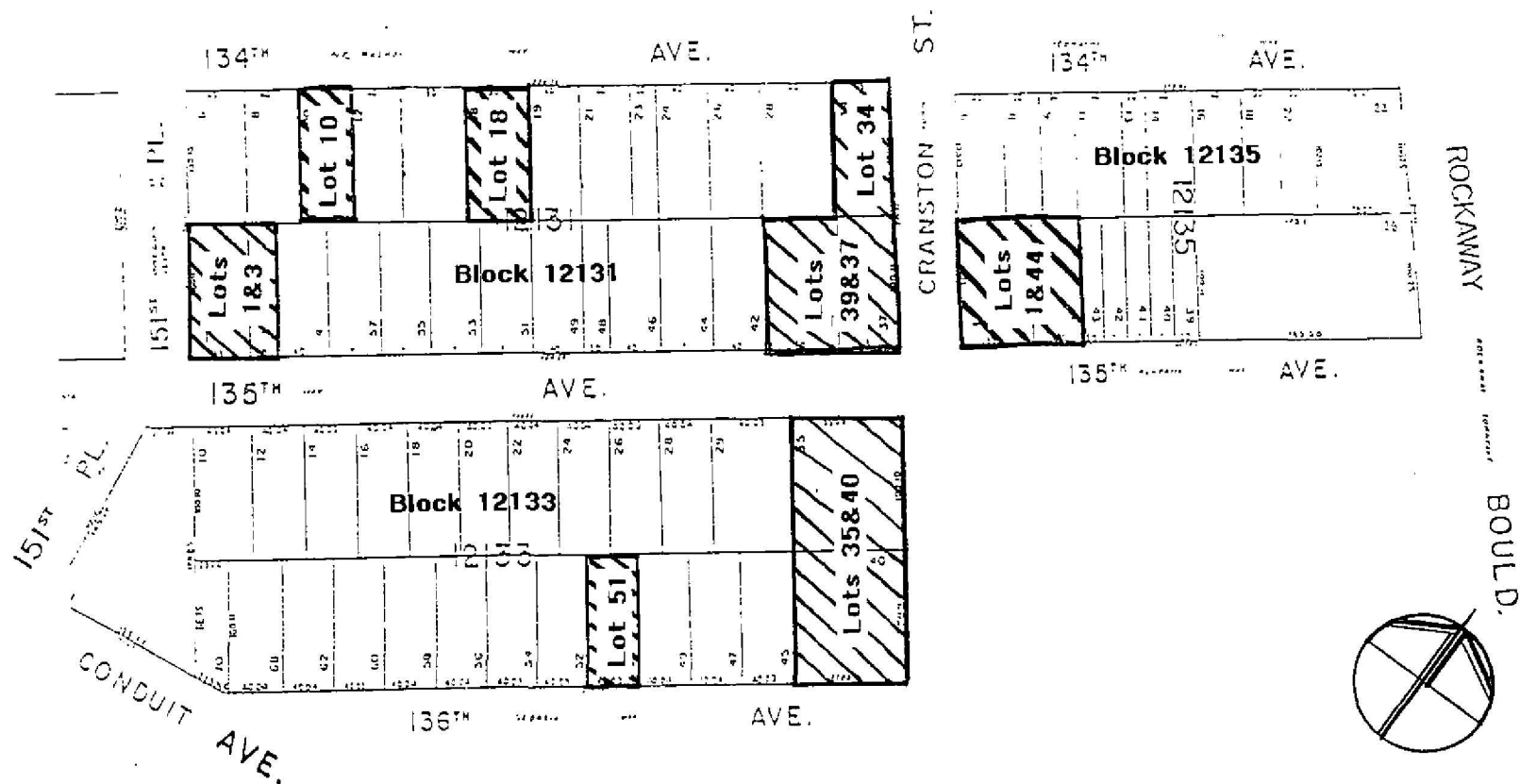


Figure 2 Location of project area lots shown on tax map of Blocks 12131, 12133 and 12135. Project area indicated by hatchure.  
Scale: 100 feet = 1 inch.



## PREHISTORIC SENSITIVITY

As part of the project evaluation process, this sensitivity study has surveyed published and unpublished sources in the files of the New York State Museum Division of Historical and Anthropological Services, as well as resources on file at Greenhouse Consultants.

Table 1 presents the results of our search for prehistoric sites in the vicinity of the Baisley Park Triangle project area. Included in the table are three sites located two miles or less from the project area. The locations of these sites are presented on Figure 3 with letter code identifiers which correspond to those in Table 1.

All of these three prehistoric sites are known primarily through the work of Arthur C. Parker, the former New York State Archaeologist, during the first quarter of this century. These are described as traces of occupation, a shell midden and a village. The village site (N.Y.S.M. #4531) is associated with the name Jameco and is situated along the stream feeding Baisley's Pond approximately 1.0 miles north of the project area. Unfortunately no detailed descriptions of artifacts recovered from any of these sites are supplied, so no assessments of date ranges can be made (Parker 1922: 672). The site known as Jameco is described as a village and therefore may date to the Woodland Period. This inference is based solely on the general fact that villages were not a common occupation pattern of the preceding Archaic and Paleo-Indian Periods. The Jameco Site is labeled "A" in Table 1 and Figure 3.

The second nearest site, labeled "B" in Table 1 and Figure 3, is described by Parker only as traces of occupation and appears only on his published map of Queens (Parker 1922: Pl. 208). The third site, labeled "C" in Table 1 and Figure 3, is described by Parker as a shell heap and village (Parker 1922: 672). It may therefore date to the Woodland Period using the same reasoning as above.

Documentary evidence from the seventeenth century also indicates that this region was utilized by the aboriginal population. The name Jamaica is derived from the Delaware and related Algonquian terms for beaver. This is not the same as the derivation of the Caribbean Island also called Jamaica which comes from the Carib language and means "land of wood and water". The Delaware term was evidently only a place-name reference and not the name of a group. Beauchamp states that it was a Delaware place-name referring to "ye bever-pond commonly called Jemeco" (Beauchamp 1906: 117; Grumet 1981: 16). According to Kelley, the Indians that lived at this place were "located along the banks of the stream connecting Beaver Pond with Jamaica Bay" (Kelley 1908: 35). Although there is considerable evidence that the group that occupied Jamaica was Delaware speaking, there are several possible affiliations

including the Canarsee, the Massapequa and the Rockaway. It appears that their mostly likely affiliation would have been with the Massapequa (Grumet 1981: 5-7, 29-31, 46-48). The stream that drains Baisley Pond was evidently known as "skupash" which may be a contraction of "maskituash" meaning a grassy area or meadow (Grumet 1981: 53).

During the summer of 1858 workmen excavating Baisley Pond for the water works found several teeth of a mastodon while removing a layer of peat (*Long Island Democrat* 1858). This indicates that the drainage course that still feeds the pond was active when extinct animals were alive. This indicates that resources from the Paleo-Indian period may exist along the stream course, as well as more recent Archaic and Woodland period remains. Baisley Pond appears on all the maps examined. Its size changes slightly through time as the dam forming it is raised or lowered.

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 water and food supplies of both systems.

This survey has documented the recorded or published location of three sites within a two mile radius of the Baisley Park Triangle project area. Although sites have been identified in the general region of the proposed project impact area, none are known to exist within the project area itself. No evidence, positive or negative, based on previous survey work is available. It would be inappropriate, however, to characterize the area as without prehistoric sensitivity, especially since a stream which has been dammed still exists adjacent to the project area. The stream draining Baisley Pond is situated approximately 600 feet west of the project area. This stream emptied into Jamaica Bay through the marshes that have since been reclaimed for J.F. Kennedy Airport. This source of fresh water, still quite evident, may have been utilized by prehistoric inhabitants of this region. This stream appears much the same on all the maps examined up to the twentieth century. During this century the portion of the stream running through the present airport was covered and is no longer visible. A second stream existed to the southeast of the project area. This small stream, situated approximately 400 feet from the project area, drained into the stream draining Baisley Pond. This second stream can be seen in Figure 6 at the bottom right, as well as on other maps such as the Final Maps of the Borough of Queens (1919: Section 139).



The project area is presently nearly level with some relatively elevated soils situated from approximately 10 to 15 feet above the Queens Highway datum. The existence of this elevated land with easy access to fresh water within the project area, combined with the knowledge of three prehistoric sites in the vicinity as well as Contact Period references to occupation in this region, indicates that the project area may preserve evidence of prehistoric occupation. Such evidence would probably consist of a temporary or seasonal hunting camp, since these camps often overlook marshes or streams where game might obtain food and water.







Table 1: Prehistoric Sites in the Vicinity of the Baisley Park Triangle

	Site Name	NYSM#	Parker #	Reference	Period(s)	Description
A.	Jameco	4531	ACP-QUNS-9	Parker 1922: 672	? Woodland	Village
B.	----	4558	ACP-QUNS	Parker 1922: Pl. 208	----	Traces of occupation
C.	----	4534	ACP-QUNS-11	Parker 1922: 672	? Woodland	Shell heap and village



## HISTORIC SENSITIVITY

### Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

Director-General Kieft of the Dutch West Indian Company purchased a tract of land east of Rockaway on the southern shore of present-day Nassau County (Flint 1896: 116). Kieft's land extended to the north as far as Martin Gerretsen's Bay. This purchase from the Manhasset Indians was the first known European contact within present-day Queens (ibid.). The Dutch, however, made no organized settlement in the region.

English settlers from New England arrived and established the first colonies in Queens, known as the English Towns (Flint 1896: 116). The English colonists of Queens accepted Dutch rule (c. 1640) which extended on Long Island's northern shore as far east as Oyster Bay (ibid.: 118). The settlers had to pay a rent of one-tenth of all their farm produce to the Dutch West India Company each year (ibid.: 131).

New Netherland became English in 1664, and all of Long Island including present-day Queens was included within the administrative district called Yorkshire (Flint 1896: 116-17). Yorkshire was subdivided into three divisions known as Ridings: West, East, and North (ibid.: 117). The township of Jamaica, including the present project area, was part of the West Riding.

Governor Dongan ended the Riding system and the Colonial Assembly set up counties (Flint 1896: 117). In 1683 the colony of New York was divided into twelve counties with Queens County composed of the townships of Jamaica, Newtown, Flushing, Oyster Bay, and Hempstead (Hazelton 1925 I: 126). The project area was within the township of Jamaica, Queens County.

In Jamaica, as in other portions of Queens County, the Tory feeling was dominant during the Revolutionary struggle. The only military action within the present limits of Queens during the American Revolution involved troops under the command of General Nathaniel Woodhull, less than two hundred in all, "whose task was to destroy crops and drive off cattle in the face of the British advance in August 1776" (MacMaster 1961: 1). General Woodhull and his men kept their position on the John Polhemus Farm on Eldert's Lane, near modern Woodhaven Boulevard on the night of August 27th, failing to come to the aid of Washington, while less than two miles away "10,000 British regulars ... completed the night march that left Washington surrounded and facing certain defeat at the Battle of Long Island" (ibid.). Woodhull and his troops fell back to Jamaica that same day. Woodhull was taken prisoner by the British on August

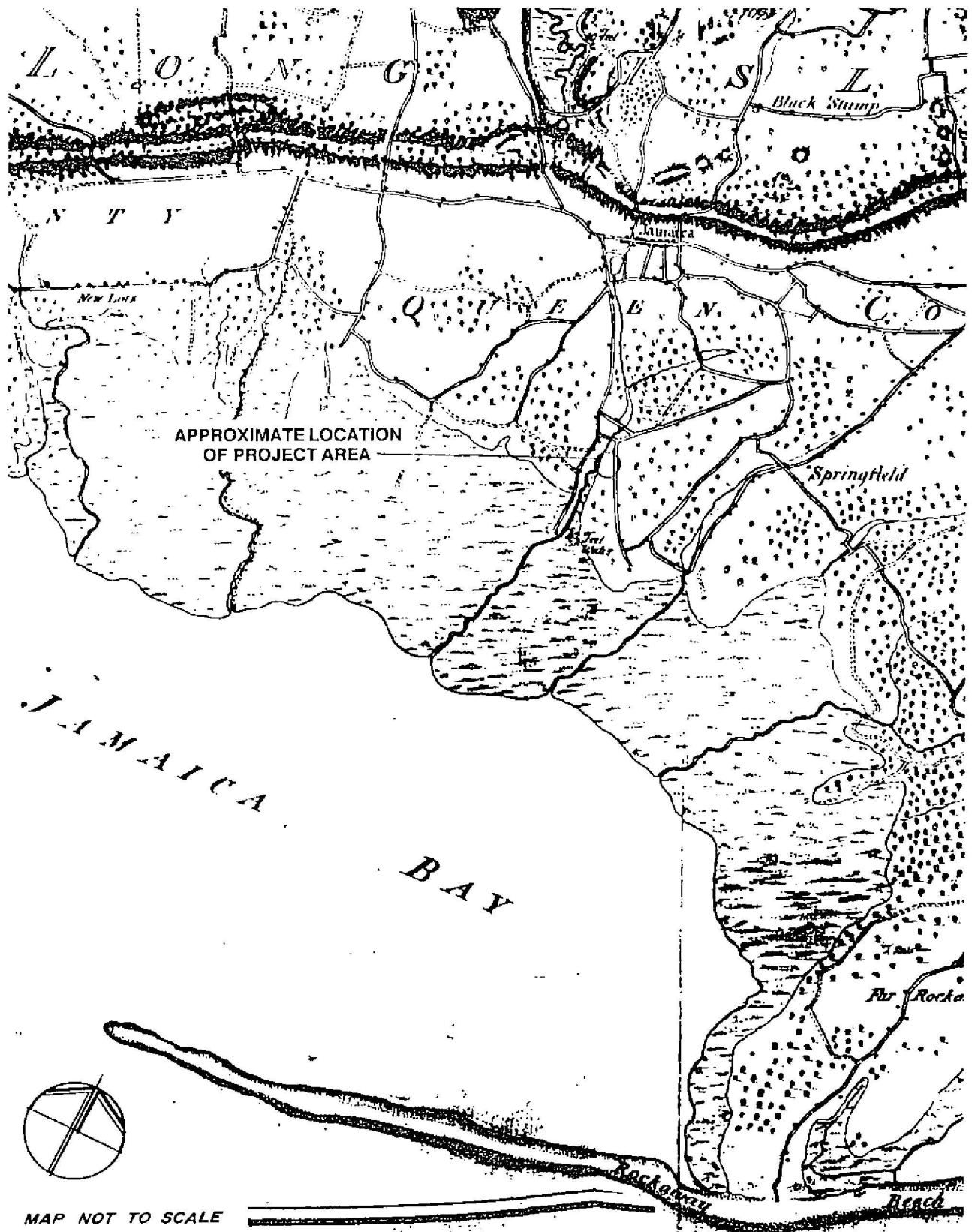


Figure 4 Location of the project area shown on portion of 1781 Map of new York, Staten Island and Part of Long Island, by Sir Henry Clinton.



28, 1776 about two miles east of Jamaica. During the following few days Sir William Erskine, with his 71st Fraser Highlanders and the 17th Light Dragoons, made Jamaica his headquarters.

After 1777 the main British forces tended to winter on Long Island or New York and General DeLancey, commanding three battalions of Loyalists, chose to make Jamaica his headquarters (MacMaster 1961: 4). Many of Jamaica's farmhouses, barns and churches served as barracks for these troops. Headquarters for British Grenadiers and Hessian Jagers and Grenadiers were maintained at Jamaica during 1780 and 1781 and the hill in Jamaica along which Highland Avenue runs became "dotted with the huts and cantonments of British troops" (ibid.).

A cartographic source was found dating to the late eighteenth century which shows some details with regard to the Baisley Park Triangle project area. Sir Henry Clinton's 1781 map shows Baisley Pond, streams and mills. The largest stream in Jamaica

runs from the vicinity of the village of Jamaica, and at Cornell's (or "Three Mile") mill empties into a creek that flows into Jamaica Bay. Formerly three grist mills were located on this stream. The first one was one mile south from the village, and was known as One-Mile Mill. Baisley's or Two-Mile Mill, was a mile farther south ... (Munsell 1882: 201).

See Figure 4 for a portion of Clinton's 1781 map. According to a 1935 map showing land ownership in 1800, the project area was part of a large parcel sold by Abaither Rhoades to DeWitt Clinton during 1794 (Queens Topographical Bureau 1935).



### Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

The project area history for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was primarily determined through the analysis of a series of historic maps.

The project area was part of a farm owned by the Stoothoff family during most of the nineteenth century. According to a deed on file at the Queen's County Clerk's Office, the project area was part of a larger farm purchased by Wilhelmus Stoothoff on January 28, 1815. Wilhelmus Stoothoff was a resident of Brooklyn, Kings County at that time (Liber O: Page 103). By 1850 there were 22 Stoothoffs living in the Town of Jamaica, Queens County. These include one extended family of eight members. The head of this household was a William Stoothoff who was 74 years of age, born in New York State, and worked as a farmer (Eardeley n.d.: 291). An unidentified map dating to the early 1850s on file at the Queensborough Public Library, Long Island division shows the farm labeled "Stoothoff." The farmhouse is on the northeast side of the Rockaway Turnpike. No structures are shown within the project area. The slightly earlier U.S. Coast Survey was also consulted at the Main Research Branch of the New York Public Library. This map, published in 1845, also shows no structures within the project area, which is depicted as part of farm fields. The U.S. Census for 1870 includes eleven Stoothoffs living in the Town of Jamaica, Queens County (Steuart 1989: 1538-39). By 1873 the farm was the property of a Mrs. Stoothoff, as shown in Figure 5. The farmhouse was adjacent to Rockaway Turnpike, now Rockaway Boulevard, to the northeast of the project area. No structures are shown within the project area. The 1891 Wolverton Atlas of Queens County shows virtually the same situation, with the property now labeled "Est. Stoothoff." During 1895 the Stoothoff family sold the farm, including the project area. Catherine W. Stoothoff and her husband James H. Stoothoff sold this property to George H. Stratton on June 25, 1895 (Liber 1074: 263).

By 1908 streets have been mapped within the Stoothoff property. These appear on the 1908 E. Blecher Hyde Map of the Borough of Queens, but are presented at a larger scale in Figure 6 taken from the 1913 Hyde Atlas. Only a few lots are shown on this map and even fewer structures. None of the project area lots had been divided from the larger lots yet and no structures existed within the project area at this time.

Figure 7 presents part of the 1930 Hyde Atlas as updated to 1941. By this time the present street names have come into use. Nebraska Way has become 134th Avenue, Alabama Way has become 135th Avenue, Georgia Way has become 136th Avenue, and York Street has become Cranston Street. Three of the four lots now have structures on them. Lot 10 on Block 2907, now Block 12131, has a one story structure covering part of the front of the lot. Lot 16 on Block 2907, now Lot 18 on Block 12131, has



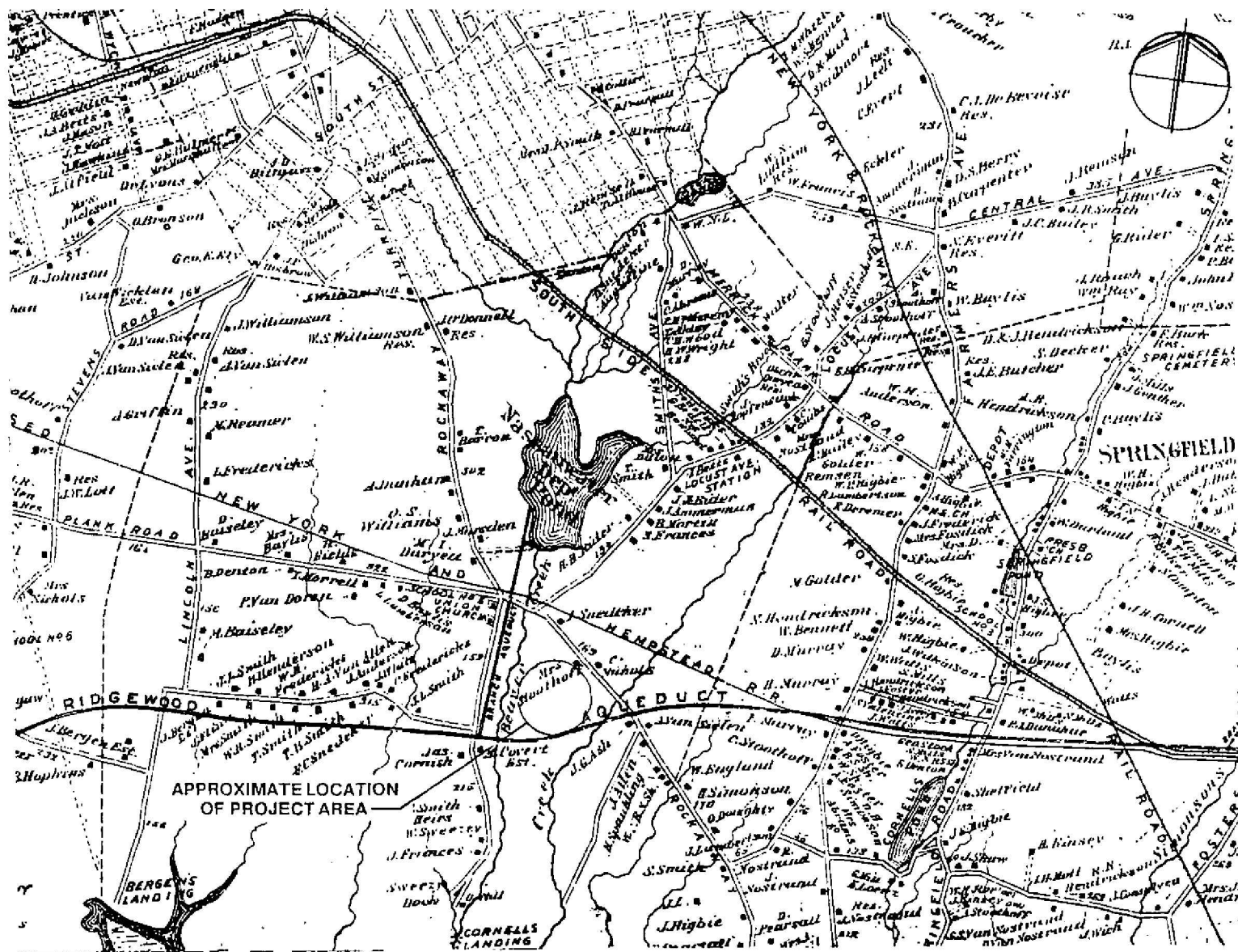


Figure 5 Location of the project area shown on portion of 1873 Beers' Atlas of Long Island, Jamaica Plate. Approximate scale: 2450 feet = 1 inch.

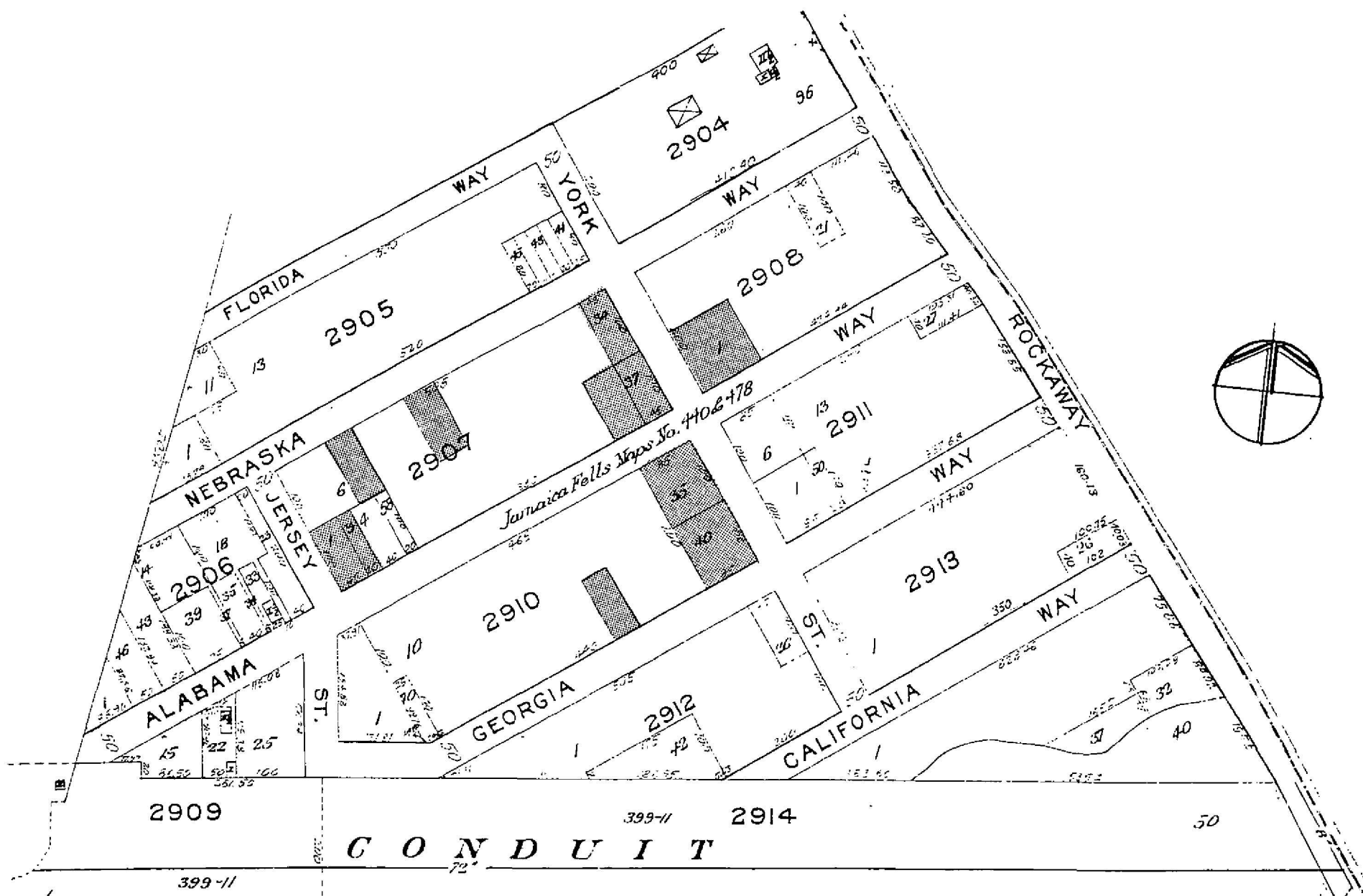


Figure 6 Project area shown on portion of 1913 E. Belcher Hyde Atlas of the Borough of Queens, Plate No. 24. Project area lots indicated by grey shading. Scale: 200 feet = 1 inch.



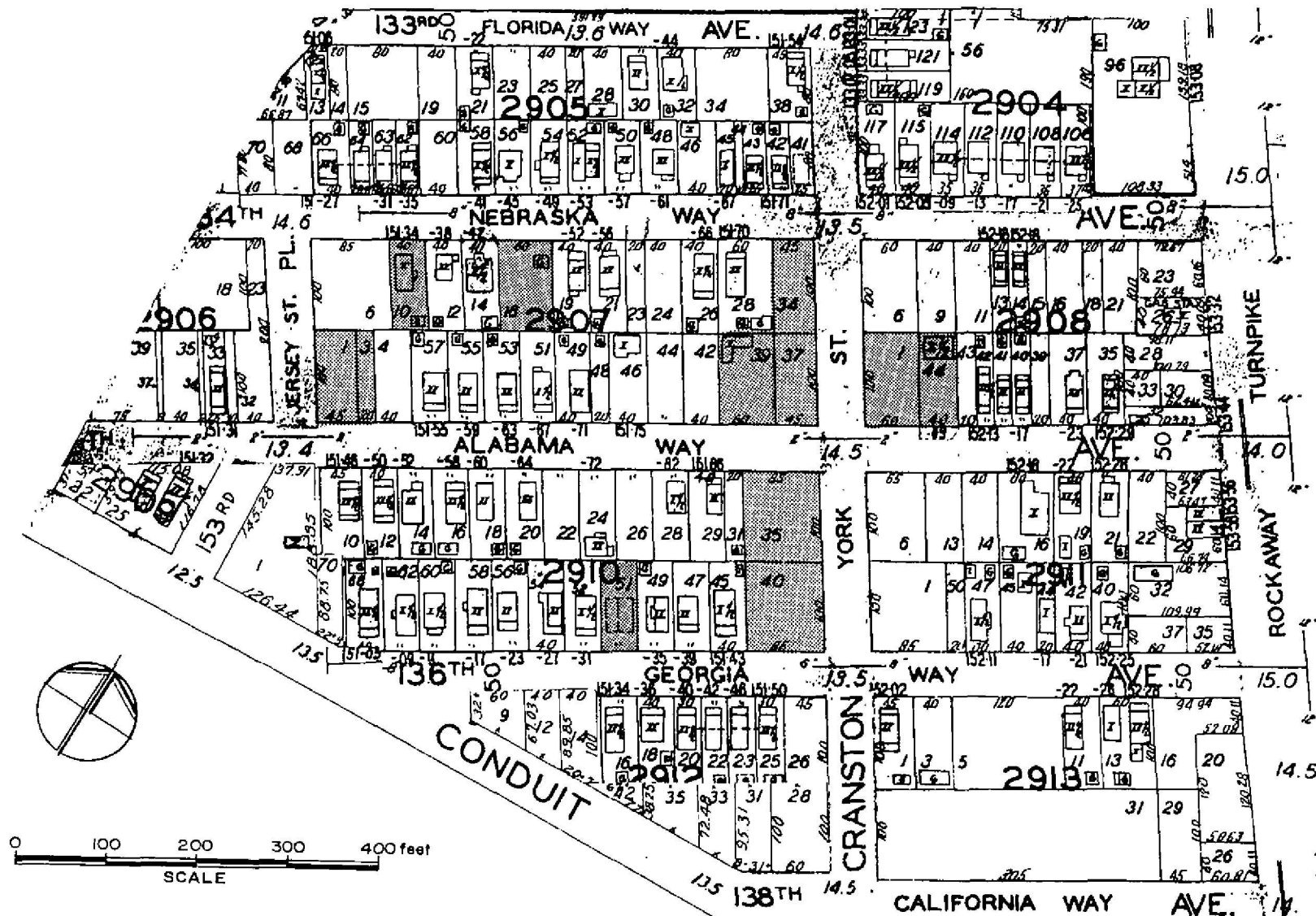


Figure 7 Project area shown on portion of 1930 E. Belcher Hyde Atlas of the Borough of Queens, Plate No. 30, updated to 1941. Project area lots indicated by grey shading.



only a small garage or shed near the front of the lot. Lot 44 on Block 2908, now Block 12135, has a one and one-half story structure at the rear of the lot. Lot 51 on Block 2910, now Block 12133, has a structure location indicated with dashed lines. This was probably a planned structure not yet built in 1930. In another copy of this atlas, updated to 1974, Lot 51 is shown as vacant.

The water supply to the project area is controlled by a private company, The Jamaica Water Supply Company. Their Engineering Department has records on file indicating that mains were installed under 134th and 136th Avenues during 1928, and under 135th Avenue during 1932. According to information on file with the Sewer Department of the Borough of Queens, sewers were installed under 134th, 135th and 136th Avenues during 1942.

In summary, the information found in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century maps shows that the project area remained part of a farm until the second decade of this century when it was subdivided. The area became reasonably built up during the late 1920s and 1930s. Water mains became available during 1928-1932 and sewers during 1942. The area is now characterized by small one and one-half or two story frame houses.

*The Guide to New York City Landmarks* and its supplement list all city landmarks registered up to October 12, 1989. These publications were searched for landmarks within one mile of the Baisley Park Triangle. As of that time there were none within the search area.



## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The above text has documented that the Baisley Park Triangle project area may preserve archaeological evidence from the prehistoric period. The location is considered sensitive due to the existence of three known prehistoric sites within two miles, and the topographic conditions of the project area and its surroundings. The project area is less than 1000 feet east of a year round fresh water source, the stream that drains Baisley Pond. This stream would also have attracted game. The project area is also less than one mile north of the former salt marshes, now covered by J.F. Kennedy Airport. The project area soils are sandy and reasonably well drained. It is our opinion that the physical condition of the project area would have been conducive to its use during prehistory.

It is also our conclusion that the project area is not sensitive to the preservation of archaeological evidence from the historic period. The area was used only for agriculture until early in the twentieth century. Although Long Island saw action during the Revolutionary War, no skirmishes or encampments were nearby.

Although prehistoric sites have been identified in the general region of the proposed project impact area, none are known to exist within the project area itself. Nevertheless, we recommend that a Stage 1B archaeological survey be undertaken on the project site where the planned construction activities might disturb such a resource, if one exists.

Prior to any excavation activities on Lots 10 and 18 on Block 12131, Lot 51 on Block 12133, and Lots 1 and 44 on Block 12135, a Stage 1B archaeological survey shall be undertaken. This will serve to test this location for the presence or absence of prehistoric remains. The best method for conducting this testing given the sandy soil and the addition of fill would appear to be the excavation of backhoe trenches with the manual excavation of shovel tests in the trenches once the fill layer has been removed. One trench per lot will be undertaken, unless such testing reveals the presence of a resource. If so, additional trenches will be dug to ensure that any resource will not be disturbed by the proposed construction.

Lots 1, 3, 24, 37 and 39 on Block 12131 and Lots 35 and 40 on Block 12133 have already been partly disturbed and according to the developer's plans will only be further disturbed for the installation of drywells. Therefore, non-invasive construction can move forward on these lots, except in those areas where the drywells are planned; and Stage 1B testing is recommended in these locations. The testing will follow the procedures outlined in the above paragraph.



If resources are found on the project site, they will be recovered in a fashion approved by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. Once the resources are recovered in accordance with NYCLPC regulations, excavation and construction can move forward on the entire project site.



Plate 1 View of Block 12131 Lot 10 looking southeast.



Plate 2 View of Block 12131 Lot 18 looking southeast.

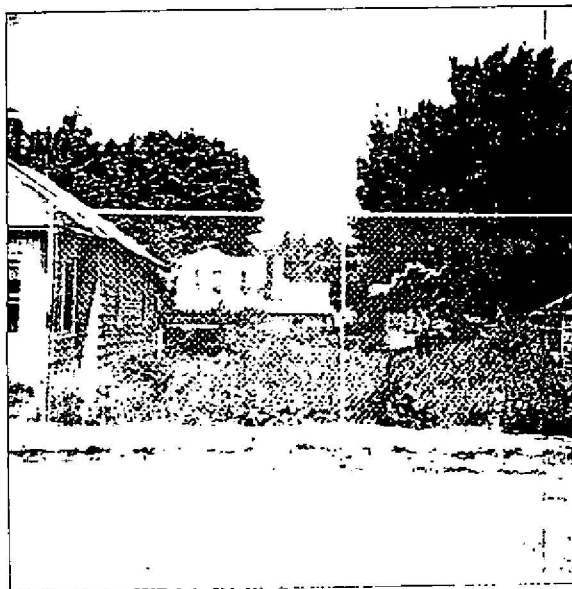


Plate 3 View of Block 12133 Lot 51 looking northwest.

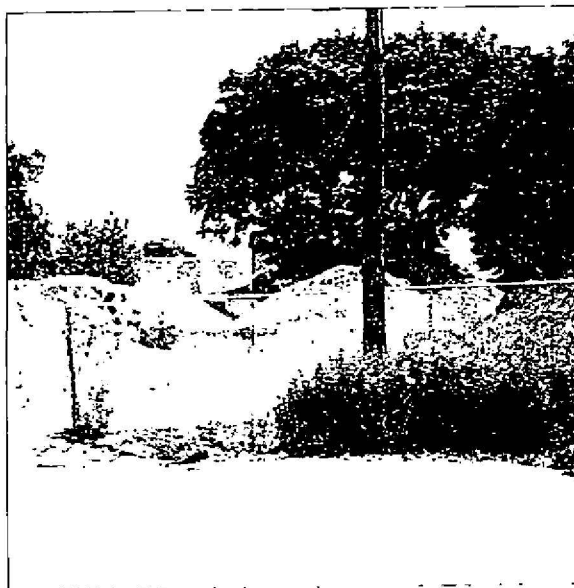


Plate 4 View of Block 12135 Lots 1 and 44 looking northeast.



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