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STAGE 1A ARCHAEOLOGICAL/HISTORICAL
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION OF THE
ASTORIA SENIOR HOUSING PROJECT
BOROUGH OF QUEENS, NEW YORK

B 509

Prepared for:
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555



TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Table of Contents	ii
List of Figures	iii
List of Plates	iv
List of Personnel	v
Introduction	1
Geography and Physical Setting	2
Prehistoric Sensitivity	3
Historic Sensitivity	7
Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries	7
Nineteenth Century	8
Recommendations and Conclusions	13
Bibliography	14



LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1 Location of the project area shown on portion of U.S.G.S. 7.5 minute series Central Park, New York-New Jersey quadrangle 1966, photorevised 1979.
- Figure 2 Known prehistoric sites within two miles of the project area.
- Figure 3 *Portion of original Dutch Grants in Newtown showing approximate project area location.*
- Figure 4 Approximate location of the project area shown on portion of the Lewis and Seymour "Plan of New York Island, part of Long Island & c., shewing the position of the American & British armies before, at, and after the engagement on the Heights Aug. 27th, 1776."
- Figure 5 Project area location shown on portion of the 1850 Smith "Map of Valuable Building Lots in the Village of Astoria."
- Figure 6 Project area location shown on portion of the 1852 Quilitch "Map of the Village of Astoria."
- Figure 7 Project area location shown on portion of the 1859 Walling "Topographical Map of the Counties of Kings and Queens, New York."
- Figure 8 Project area location shown on portion of the 1873 Beers *Atlas of Long Island*, Plate 49.
- Figure 9 Project area location shown on portion of the 1891 Woverton *Atlas of Queens Co., New York*, Plate 6.
- Figure 10 Project area location shown on portion of the 1919 Hyde *Atlas of the Borough of Queens*, Vol. 2, Plate 8.



LIST OF PLATES

- Plate 1 View of southwestern portion of the project area looking north from Astoria Boulevard.
- Plate 2 View of the southeastern portion of the project area looking northeast from Astoria Boulevard.
- Plate 3 View of the rear of Lots 10, 12, 13, 14 and 15 and southern part of Lot 47 looking north. Note the disturbance caused by cutting away 12 to 14 feet of soil.



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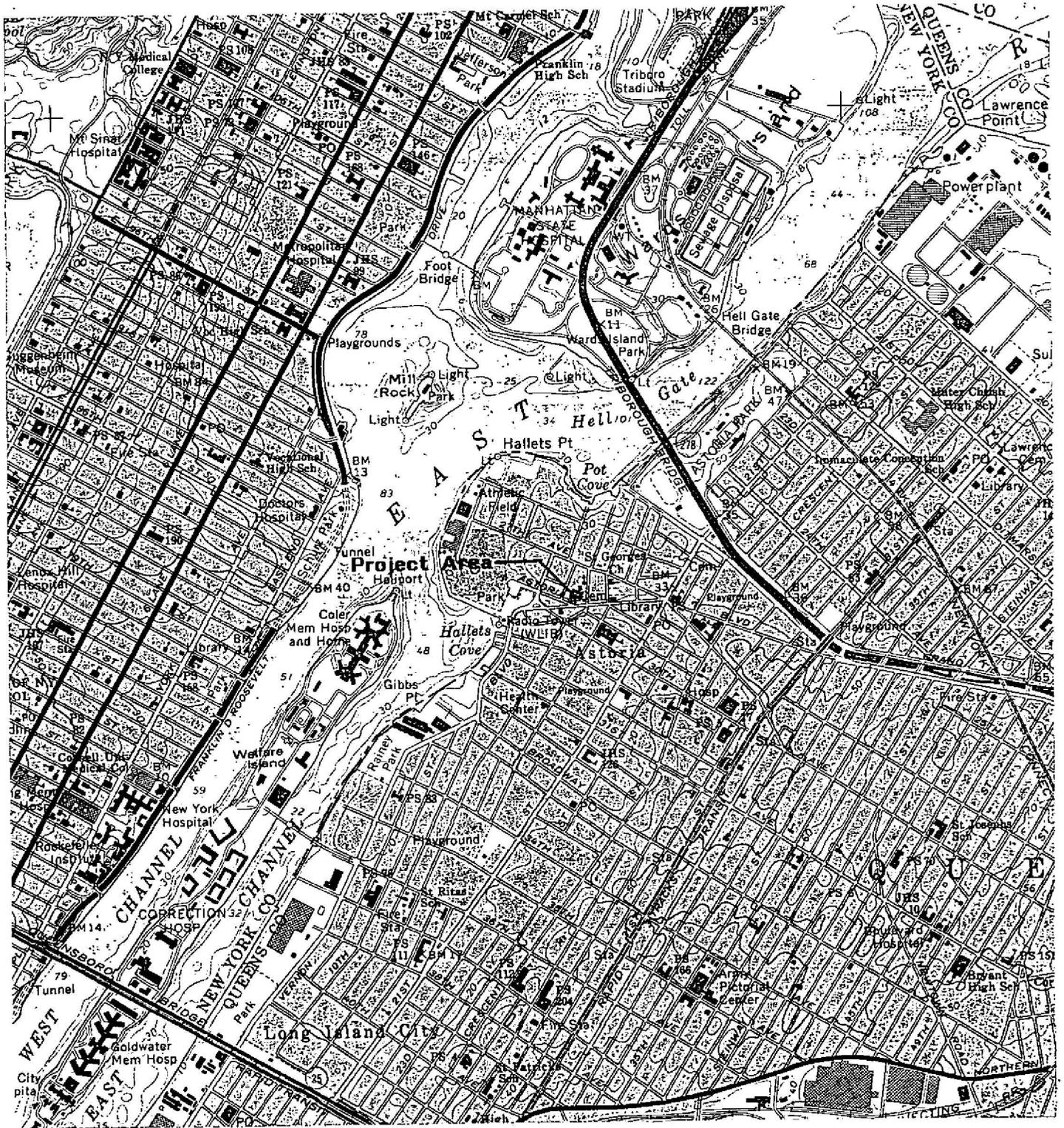


INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this archaeological/historical sensitivity evaluation is to document the potential for prehistoric and historic sensitivity of the Astoria Senior Housing Project on the corner of Main Avenue and Astoria Boulevard in Long Island City, Queens, New York through a review of existing archival, cartographic and published references. In order to provide a context for evaluating any identified resource within the parcel itself, this survey shall include a synthesis of published and unpublished prehistoric resources in the immediate locality surrounding the project area and a synthesis of the history of this parcel and its vicinity.

The Astoria Senior Housing project area is located in northwestern Queens. The project area, approximately 150 feet by 175 feet is situated on Halletts Point. It includes Lots 10, 11, 12, 14, 15 and 45 in the south-central portion of Block 509. The principal investigator visited the project area during July 1995. See Figure 1 for location of the project area.

This study is organized in the following manner: first, a section describes the geography and physical setting; second, a section on the prehistoric sensitivity of the area; third, a review of the historic sensitivity of the area; fourth, a section on evidence from soil borings; and fifth, the conclusions and recommendations.



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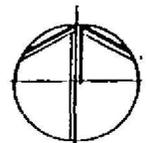
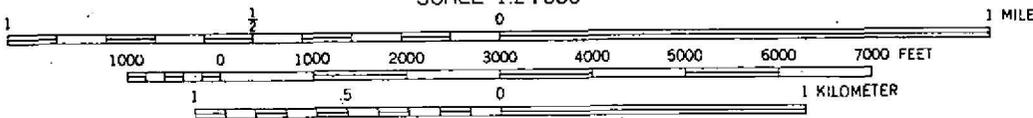


Figure 1

Location of the project area shown on portion of U.S.G.S. 7.5 minute series Central Park, New York-New Jersey quadrangle 1966, photorevised 1979.



GEOGRAPHY AND PHYSICAL SETTING

The project area is located in the Atlantic Coastal Lowland Physiographic Province of New York State. There is only one other location in the state (Staten Island) where this province occurs (Thompson 1966:34-35). The Borough of Queens forms part of west-central Long Island, which is the largest island adjoining the United States proper. The Astoria Senior Housing project area lies to the north of the Harbor Hill Terminal moraine at its western end. This moraine marks the maximum extent of the second advance of glaciation which partly covered Long Island (Thompson 1966:43; Van Diver 1985:70).

Greenhouse Consultants visited the project location during July 1995. The project area is presently used to store construction equipment and materials. See Plates 1 and 2 for views of the project area. The project area fronts onto Astoria Boulevard just west of its intersection with Main Avenue. Lots 10, 11, 12, 14 and 15 have street frontage, while Lot 47 lies behind them in the interior of the block. The proposed new housing will cover Lots 10, 11, 12, 14 and 15 while Lot 47 will become a parking lot. Deep impacts are expected in the five front lots, but Lot 47 will remain largely undisturbed by the proposed housing.

The block slopes with the high point being the northeast corner and the low point the southwest corner. This slope exists within the project area with Lot 47 being approximately ten feet higher at its north end than the lots adjacent to Astoria Boulevard to the south. The grade at the southern end is very close to that of Astoria Boulevard. There are no standing structures within the project area, and only a few trees within the project area. Photographs taken within the last two years show that some soil has likely been disturbed, especially on the slope. However, it appears unlikely that this disturbance is deeper than one to two feet particularly in the lower southern lots.



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, Queens Public Library, 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 Astoria Senior Housing project area. Included in the table are eleven sites located two miles or less from the project area. The locations of these sites are presented on Figure 2 with letter code identifiers which correspond to those in Table 1.

Ten of these 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. Parker describes the sites as villages, camps, shell middens, traces of occupation and burial sites. Unfortunately no detailed descriptions of artifacts recovered from any of these sites are supplied so no assessments of chronological or cultural affiliations can be made (Parker 1922:672). The only exception to this situation are sites E and F, N.Y.S.M. #4538 and #4063, which Parker describes as villages. This may indicate a date range including the Woodland Period.

The nearest site to the project area is N.Y.S.M. #8217, designated "A" in Table 1 and Figure 2. This site is recorded by the State Museum as a circle including the project area. It was reported by Arthur C. Parker as a camp, appearing only on his maps of Queens (Parker 1922:Plate 208). Since Parker's original map was very small, the State Museum maps include a circle much larger than any camp site. There is no hard evidence of any prehistoric material being recovered from the project area itself. The next two nearest sites are N.Y.S.M. #4535 and #4539, designated "B" and "C" in Table 1 and Figure 2. Both were reported by Parker as shell middens, and both lie along the East River shore near Hell Gate. Parker also reported four other sites in Queens and the three in Manhattan, which he described as two villages, two burials, a camp, a shell midden, and traces of occupation.

The remaining site found during our search is designated "I" in Table 1 and Figure 2. This site, known as Saint Michael's Cemetery, is located approximately 1.7 miles southeast of the project area. It is listed in the prehistoric site files of the New York State Museum as a cemetery although no additional information such as date range is supplied. A report prepared recently to document a portion of this cemetery was reviewed as part of this research. This report describes the potential prehistoric sensitivity of the cemetery and concludes that although the cemetery location would have been conducive to its use by



prehistoric populations, no evidence exists to confirm St. Michael's Cemetery as a known prehistoric site. This location has definitely been used for burials since the middle of the nineteenth century (Geismar 1986), but its listing in the prehistoric site files of the New York State Museum is apparently erroneous.

Documentary evidence from the seventeenth century also indicates that this region was utilized by the aboriginal population. Land on Hallet's Point was sold in 1664 by two Native Americans, Shawestcout and Erramorhas (Grumet 1981:52). At the time of the first European contact and settlement in the seventeenth century, Queens was inhabited by at least three Indian groups each with one or more village sites, seasonal encampments and food supply area(s). These groups were the Massapequa, the Matinecock, and the Rockaway (Grumet 1981:29, 32, 47). Several village sites have been identified with varying degrees of precision as having been situated in Queens. These groups, and others on western Long Island, spoke dialects of Munsee (Goddard 1978:215), one of two languages used by the Lenape or Delaware nation.

In terms of potential prehistoric sensitivity, the project impact area was evaluated from two point 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 eleven sites within a two mile radius of the Astoria Senior Housing 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 formerly existed near the project area. A small unnamed stream ran off to the south of the project area draining into Sunswick Creek and then into the East River at Hallets Cove.

This source of fresh water, although no longer evident, may have been utilized by prehistoric inhabitants of this region. The project area is presently situated from approximately 30 to 43 feet above the Queens Highway datum and less than 200 yards north of the stream. The existence of this land with easy access to fresh water near the project area, combined with the knowledge of the 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 temporary or seasonal hunting camp, since these camps often overlook marshes and streams where game might obtain food and water. It is also possible that subsequent use of this land during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries could have destroyed any evidence here.



TABLE 1
PREHISTORIC SITES IN THE VICINITY OF ASTORIA SENIOR HOUSING

SITE NAME	NYSM#	PARKER#	OTHER#	REFERENCE	PERIOD(S)	DESCRIPTION
A. -----	8217	ACP-QUNS	-----	Parker 1922: Pl. 208	-----	Camp
B. Sanford's Point	4535	ACP-QUNS-12	-----	Parker 1922:672	-----	Shell midden
C. -----	4539	ACP-QUNS	-----	Parker 1922: Pl. 208	-----	Shell midden
D. -----	4537	ACP-QUNS-14	-----	Parker 1922:672	-----	Burial
E. -----	4538	ACP-QUNS	-----	Parker 1922: Pl. 208	Woodland?	Village
F. -----	4063	ACP-NYRK	-----	Parker 1922: Pl. 192	Woodland?	Village
G. -----	4064	ACP-NYRK	-----	Parker 1922: Pl. 192	-----	Camp
H. -----	4061	ACP-NYRK	-----	Parker 1922: Pl. 192	-----	Traces of occupation
I. St. Michael's Cemetery	5472	-----	14	NYSM files	-----	Cemetery
J. -----	4532	ACP-QUNS-9	-----	Parker 1922:672	-----	Burial
K. -----	4533	ACP-QUNS-10	-----	Parker 1922:672	-----	Shell midden

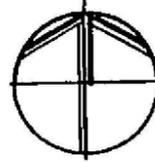
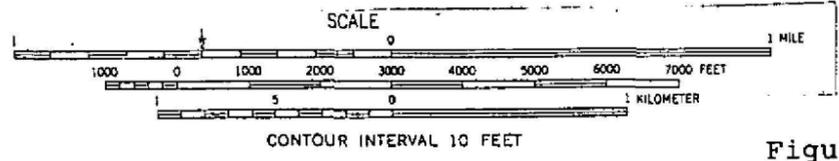
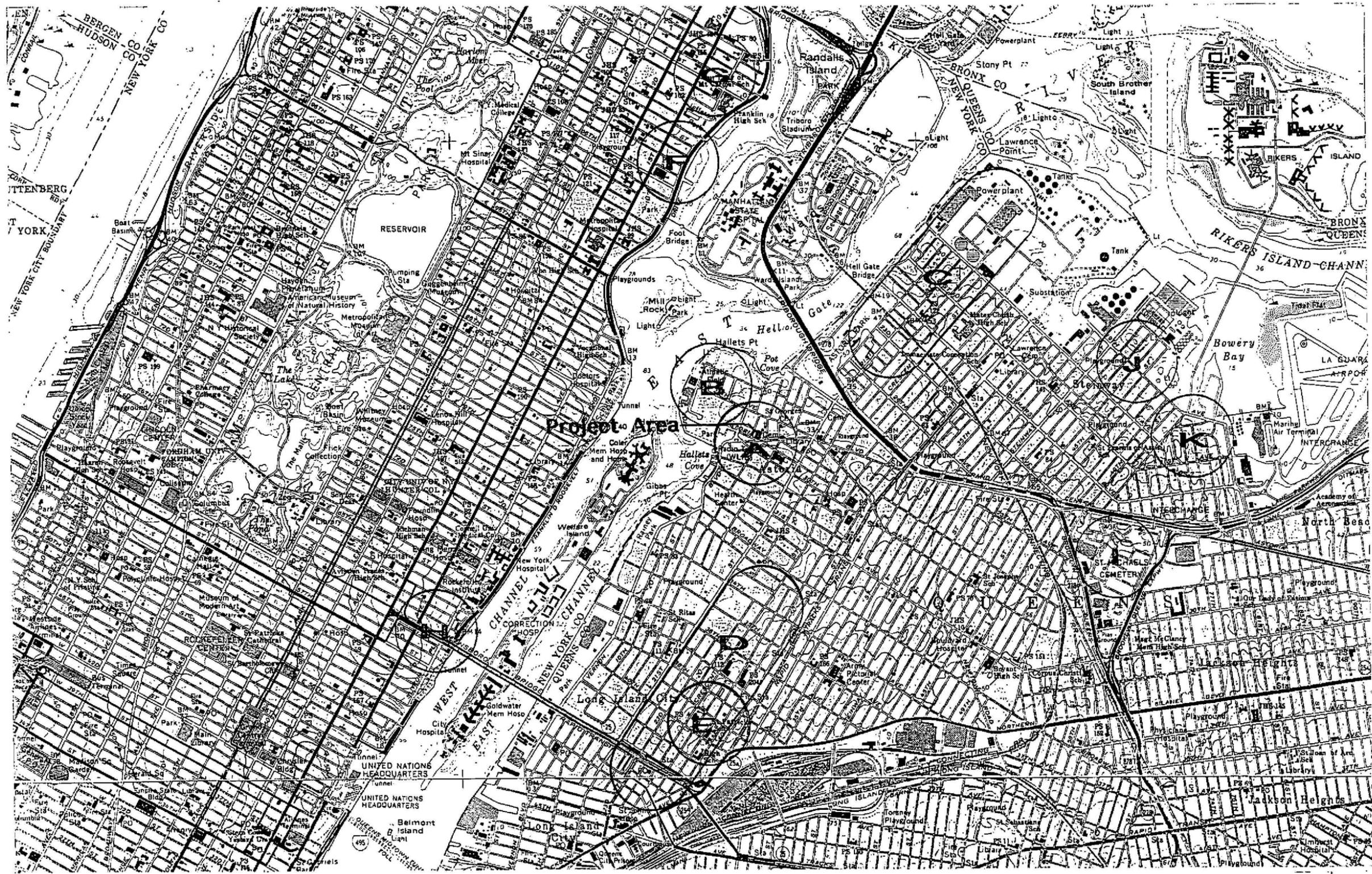


Figure 2 Known prehistoric sites within two miles of the project area.



HISTORIC SENSITIVITY

As part of the background research into the Astoria Senior Housing project area, this archaeological and historical sensitivity evaluation surveyed published and unpublished sources located at the Long Island Division of the Queensborough Public Library, the Main Research Branch of the New York Public Library, including the Local History and Map Divisions, the New York City Municipal Reference Library and the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. In addition, primary source material was examined at the Topographical Bureau of the Queens Borough President's Office, the Queens Sewer Department, the Queens County Clerk's Office, and the New York City Bureau of Water Supply.

In addition *The Guide to New York City Landmarks* and its current supplement were searched for the location of designated landmarks in close proximity to the Astoria Senior Housing project area. There is one designated New York City landmark within one mile of the project area. This is the Astoria Motion Picture and Television Center Building No. 1 located at 35-11 35th Avenue in Long Island City. This structure was erected during 1919-1920 as part of the Famous Players Lasky Studio. It later became Paramount Studios (New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission 1979:72). The Astoria Motion Picture Center is located one mile south of the project area. There are no registered landmarks within or adjacent to the project area.

Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

The project area is located within the old neighborhood of Astoria. More specifically it is situated on Hallett's Point. Hallett's Point was among the earliest lands granted to settlers within the present Borough of Queens. The original grant was to Jacques Bentyne sometime between 1633 and 1638. It included 160 acres with buildings north of Astoria Boulevard near Vernon Boulevard, or about two blocks southwest of the project area. Bentyne's farm was soon abandoned, perhaps during the Indian uprising of 1643. A second grant was then made to William Hallett on December 1652. This grant was also of 160 acres, probably the same land previously granted to Bentyne. It ran from the East River to approximately the line of 29th Street, and from the creek feeding Pot Cove to Sunswick Creek on the south. See Figure 3 for the location of land granted to William Hallett. During 1655 a second Indian uprising destroyed the Hallett farm, and William Hallett moved to Flushing. During 1664 William Hallett returned to Astoria and purchased a huge tract of 2200 acres from Chief Mattano. This land ran from Sunswick Creek to Bowery Bay. The sale was confirmed by the British government in 1668. During 1664 through 1670 William Hallett restored his farm with the assistance of his sons, William Jr. and Samuel. By 1678 they had 48 acres under cultivation, all south of Astoria Boulevard.

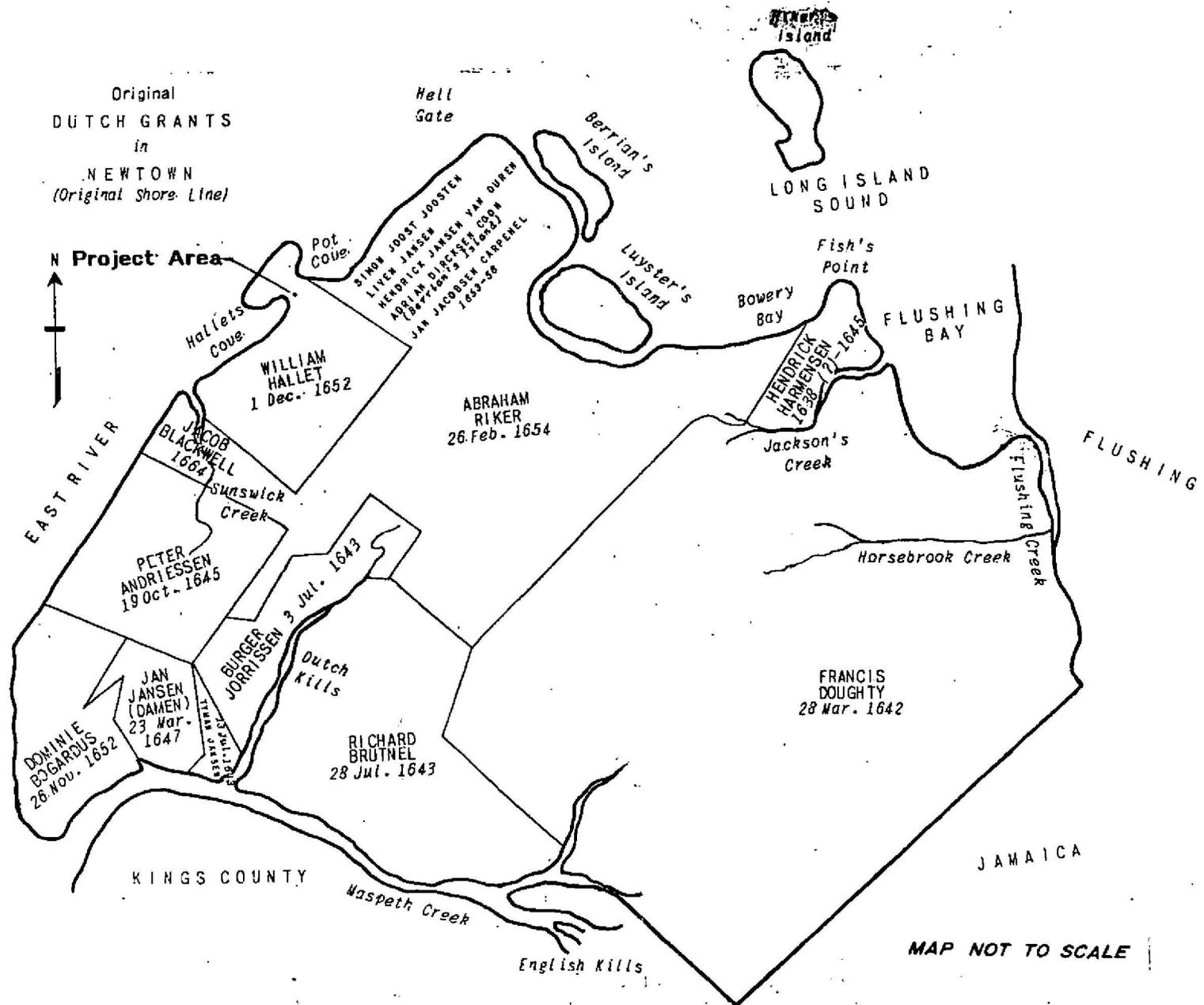


Figure 3 Portion of original Dutch Grants in Newtown showing approximate project area location.



Both William and William Jr. had farmhouses near the East River along what is now Welling Court (Seyfried 1984:7-8).

The land north of Astoria Boulevard including the project area was retained by William Hallet and his son Samuel. It then passed to Samuel Hallet II, the son of Samuel and grandson of the patentee. During 1752 Samuel II deeded this land to his sons: John, James and Samuel III (Seyfried 1984:8-9). The Hallet family cemetery was located between Astoria Boulevard and Main Avenue, either on the block immediately south of the project area or one block further west. It was in use from the seventeenth century until 1861. During 1905, fifty bodies were moved to Mount Olive cemetery (ibid.:10).

During 1711, Mary Hallet, a daughter of William Hallet Jr. married Jacob Blackwell. Jacob was the son of Robert Blackwell who was a freeholder in Newtown by 1656. Robert married Mary Manning in 1672 and through her inherited Blackwell's Island. He lived there by 1676. One of Robert Blackwell's daughters, Bridget, married Samuel Hallet II. Three of Jacob Blackwell's daughters, Mary, Sarah and Lydia, married Moses, John and James Hallet respectively, so the connections between the two families were numerous (Hallet and Blackwell Family Genealogies n.d.)

During the Revolutionary War the British ordered General Robertson to Hell Gate. On the 30th of August 1776 he marched through Astoria. He stayed at the old John Hallet farmstead at 30th Avenue and Steinway Avenue for two weeks (Seyfried 1984:12). This location is approximately one mile southeast of the project area, so there is no reason to believe that any Revolutionary War military activities took place within the Astoria Senior Housing parcel. Figure 4 shows the line of British encampments on September 3, 1776. None are on Hallet's Point.

Nineteenth Century

During the War of 1812 a fortification known as Fort Stevens was erected on Hallet's Point. Construction began during July 1814. Fort Stevens is located at First Street and 26th Avenue, about six blocks northwest of the project area (Seyfried 1984:15). Fort Stevens saw no action during the war. During August 1824 Samuel Blackwell of Hallet's Point leased Fort Stevens from the federal government for \$1.00 per annum. Blackwell used the fort to store kegs of gunpowder (ibid.:16).

During the early 1830s the Blackwell family owned the majority of the peninsula which would be known later as Astoria (Seyfried 1984:16). On April 12, 1839 the former village of Hallet's Cove was incorporated as Astoria. The name was a tribute to John Jacob Astor. The Blackwells continued their association with the new village. They owned the Blackwell and Company Turpentine Distillery on the East River above Astoria Boulevard,



which was one of two such distilleries in Astoria. It burned down during July 1841 with a loss of \$50,000 (ibid.:19-20).

It was during the early 1850s that the earliest maps showing the project area in detail first appear. The earliest of these was drawn by E.A. Smith during 1850 and appears here as Figure 5. The project area is shown as vacant land, although buildings exist to the east on the same block. Figure 6, taken from the E.T. Quilitch "Map of the Village of Astoria," has a more detailed rendering of the lots on the project area block. It is the earliest map to show the line of Blackwell's Lane (unlabeled on this map), and confirms that most of the block was owned by the Blackwells. The project area remained vacant.

Prior to 1853 the Village of Astoria had made water available to the public by erecting pumps. One of these was on the southwest part of the project area block, at the intersection of Stevens and Fulton Streets. It was repaired during August 1853 (Seyfried 1984:24).

The Samuel Blackwell Mansion is the large building to the northwest of the project area, shown on both Figures 5 and 6. Samuel Blackwell was living there as of 1852. The house was evidently built during 1826 by C. Wardell. Wardell died by 1840 (Seyfried 1984:43). Figure 7 from the 1859 Walling maps shows the mansion labeled as S. Blackwell. The other large house just north of the project area is labeled J. M. Blackwell, and the project area itself is vacant. J.M. Blackwell was James Madison Blackwell, a son of Samuel (ibid.).

Figure 8, the next detailed map available is from the 1873 Beers Atlas of Long Island. The project area is still vacant. The mansion to the north of the project area is labeled James Blackwell Est. The former S. Blackwell Mansion to the northwest is labeled J. Tisdale. Samuel Blackwell's daughter Margaret had married James Tisdale, so this property remained in the Blackwell extended family (Seyfried 1984:44). Figure 8 is the earliest map found to use the name Long Island City. The incorporation of Long Island City was accomplished by act of the New York State Legislature and signed into law by Governor Hoffman on May 4, 1870 (ibid.:102). Long Island City was an independent municipality for less than 28 years. On January 1, 1898 it became part of New York City when the Borough of Queens was created (ibid.:135).

The next map, taken from the 1891 Wolverton Atlas and presented here as Figure 9, is the first to show structures within the project area. Buildings are shown at the southwestern and southeastern corners of the project area. Blackwell's Lane appears as two dashed lines. Tisdale Street is shown just north of the project area, but it must have been a paper street since it cuts through part of the Dutch Reformed Church.

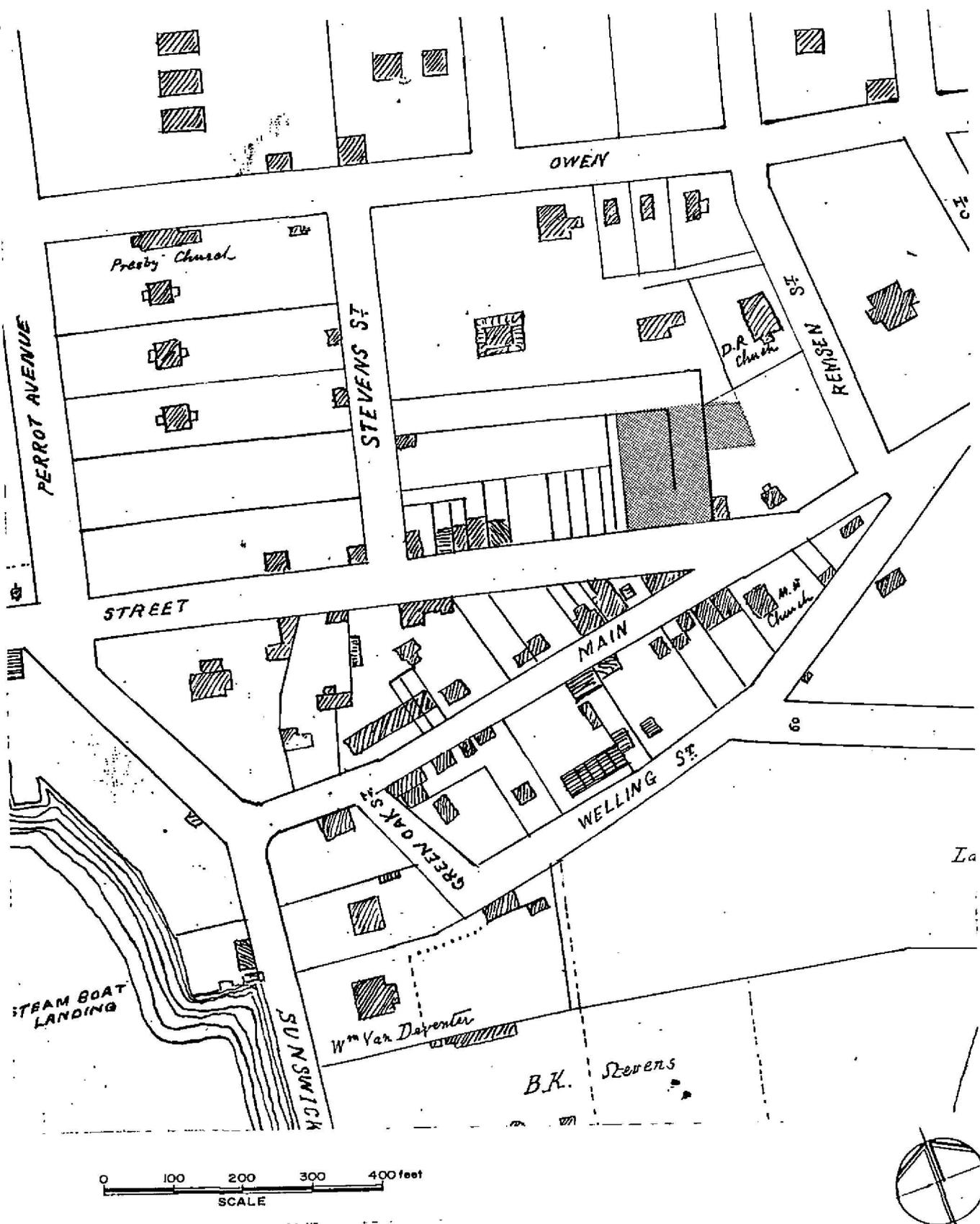
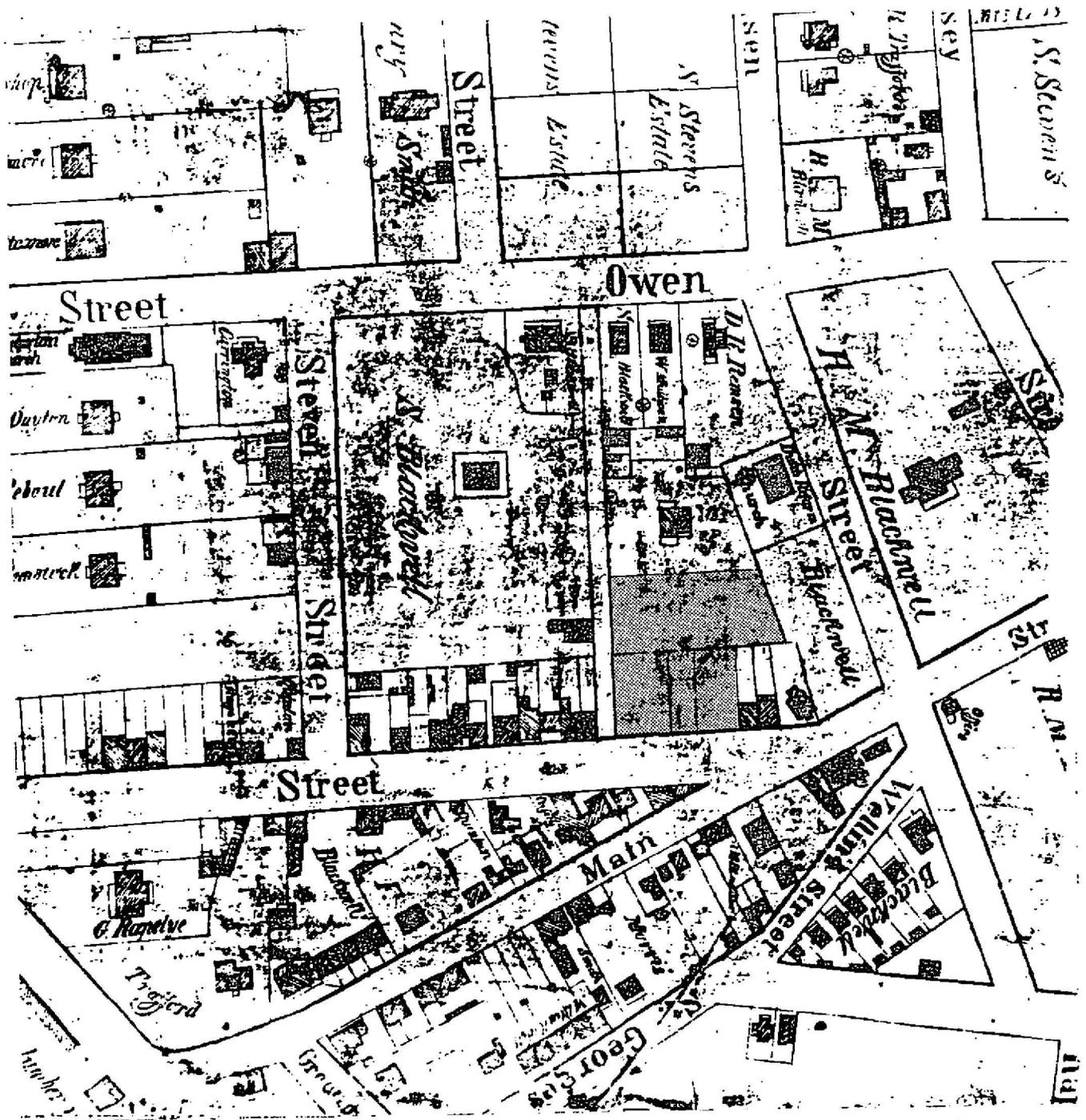


Figure 5 Project area location shown on portion of the 1850 Smith "Map of Valuable Building Lots in the Village of Astoria."



0 100 200 300 400 feet
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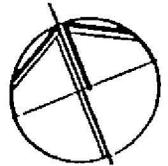


Figure 6 Project area location shown on portion of the 1852 Quilitch "Map of the Village of Astoria."

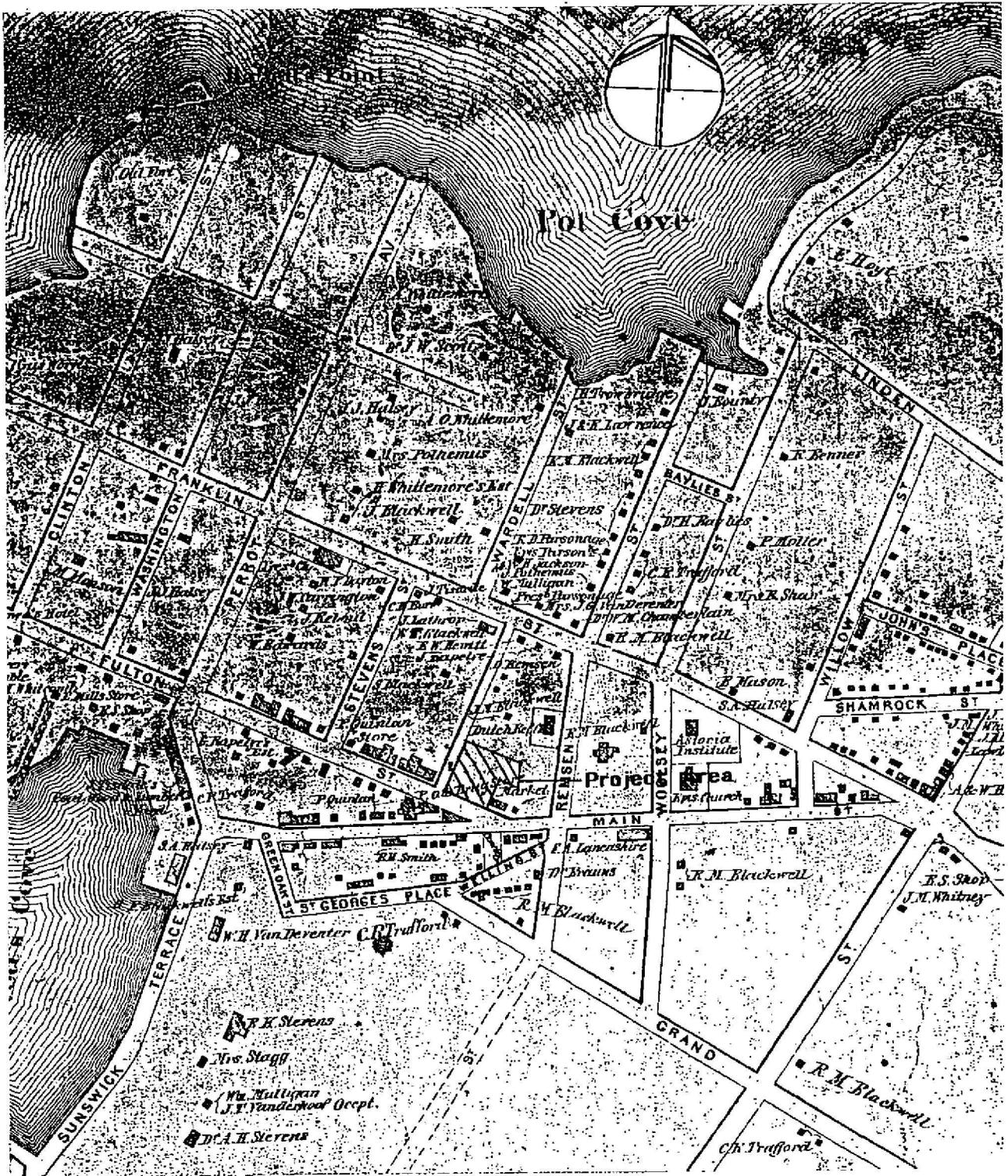


Figure 7 Project area location shown on portion of the 1859 Walling "Topographical Map of the Counties of Kings and Queens, New York."

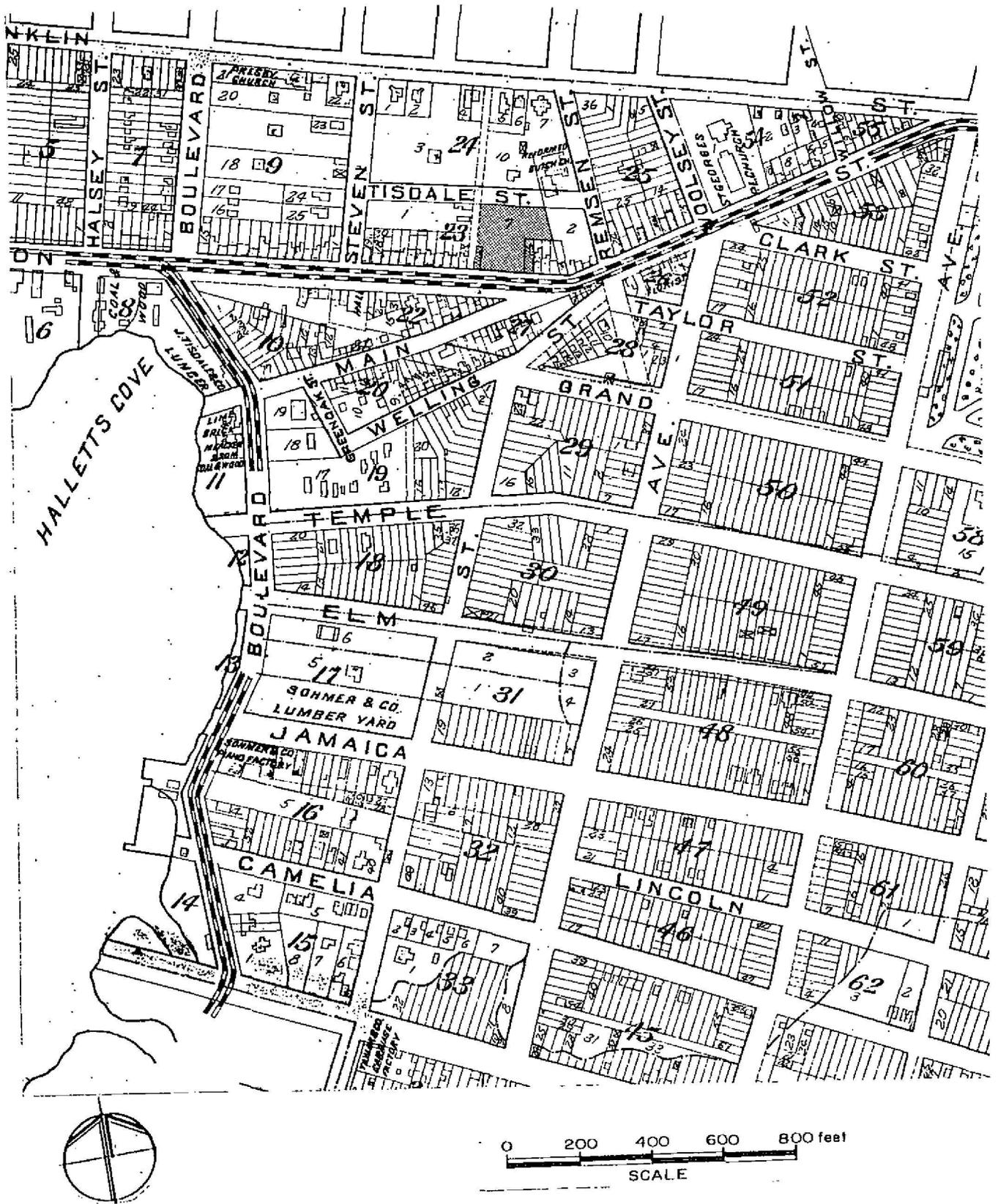


Figure 9 Project area location shown on portion of the 1891 Woverton Atlas of Queens Co., New York, Plate 6.



Research at the Sewer Department of the Borough of Queens indicated that sewers were available adjacent to the project area by July 1880. Plate 25 of the "Map of Grades Monuments and Sewers, Long Island City, Queens County, N.Y." which is labeled "Grades as of 1880," confirms this. This plate shows a brick sewer measuring 2 feet 4 inches by 3 feet 6 inches under Main Street and Fulton Street (now Astoria Boulevard). Original records of water line installation were sought at the New York City Bureau of Water Supply, but none could be found. However, Seyfried's history of Long Island City indicates that water mains were installed under most street during the 1880s (Seyfried 1984:135). This indicates that certainly sewers and probably also water mains were available adjacent to the project area prior to the date of Figure 9, the first map to show structures within the parcel. The structure at the southeastern corner of the project area has a small notation behind it in Figure 9. This may be the numeral 6, referring to the lot number. The adjacent lot is numbered 7. However, Daniel N. Pagano, Senior Archaeologist on the staff of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission felt that it could be a symbol denoting the presence of a cistern in this lot (Pagano 1995 pers. comm.).

Figure 10, from the 1919 Hyde Atlas, shows no major changes from Figure 9. The two structures shown in 1891 are listed as three stories each. The structure at the southwestern corner has a small outbuilding behind it. The remainder of the project area is vacant, and Tisdale Street still shows passing through the church as in Figure 9.

Examination of the present tax map indicates that the southeastern portion of the project area is Block 509, Lot 10. Since this lot contained the structure with a possible cistern, a chain of title was reconstructed for Lot 10.

Chain of Title for Block 509 Lot 10

Grantor	Grantee	Transaction Date	Liber:Page
Eliza H. Wardell	Samuel Blackwell	October 29, 1850	88:178
Samuel Blackwell Margaret Ann Blackwell	James M. Blackwell	May 1, 1851	90:453
Samuel Blackwell Margaret Ann Blackwell	James M. Blackwell	May 1, 1852	97:170
Heirs of James M. Blackwell Jennie B. Strobel W.D. Strobel, Jr.	George E. Blackwell	December 21, 1893	1027;290
David Noble (referee)	George E. Blackwell	June 20, 1894	1027:231



Grantor	Grantee	Transaction Date	Liber:Page
Jennet D. Blackwell George E. Blackwell Marguerite A. Blackwell Frank E. Blackwell	James Olwell	July 12, 1907	1519:159
James Olwell Margaret Olwell	Jacob Mittleman Jacob Kornreich	November 25, 1925	2829:124679
John K. Hetherington, referee Jacob Mittleman, <i>et al.</i>	Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn	September 24, 1935	3771:292
Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn	Frank Philip	October 15, 1940	4289:105
Frank Philip	Mary Klein	October 16, 1940	4289:108
Heary Patent <i>et al.</i> referees Mary Klein, defendant	Lujoe Realty Co., Inc.	May 27, 1949	5766:393
Lujoe Realty Co., Inc.	LLF Realty Co., Inc.	July 13, 1949	5797:87
LLF Realty Co., Inc.	Louis Friedman Realty	November 30, 1962	7471:297
Louis Friedman Realty Co.	Sutton Associates, Inc.	December 31, 1962	7561:410
Sutton Associates, Inc.	Sol Goldman	March 27, 1978	1059:852
Empire Associates Realty Sol Goldman	Astoria Boulevard Management & Realty Corp.	December 31, 1985	01992:00077

The chain of title proves that Lot 10 remained in the Blackwell family from 1851 through 1907. This includes the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the most likely period when the cistern would have been filled (should one have existed here). This information provided data on ownership but not on occupation of the lot, so additional research was undertaken. Tax assessment records would be a good source for this, but none are known to survive from Long Island City (Seyfried 1995, pers. comm.). Census records for the period 1873 through 1900 were then considered. Inquires with the Queensborough Public Library Long Island Division indicate that no New York State Census records prior to 1915 are available. In particular they confirmed that the 1892 state census records are missing. This left the United States Census records, which were completed for 1880, 1890 and 1900. The 1890 census for New York no longer exists, so the 1880 and 1900 records were consulted. The 1880 census lists the family of Frank and Alice Blackwell, but they

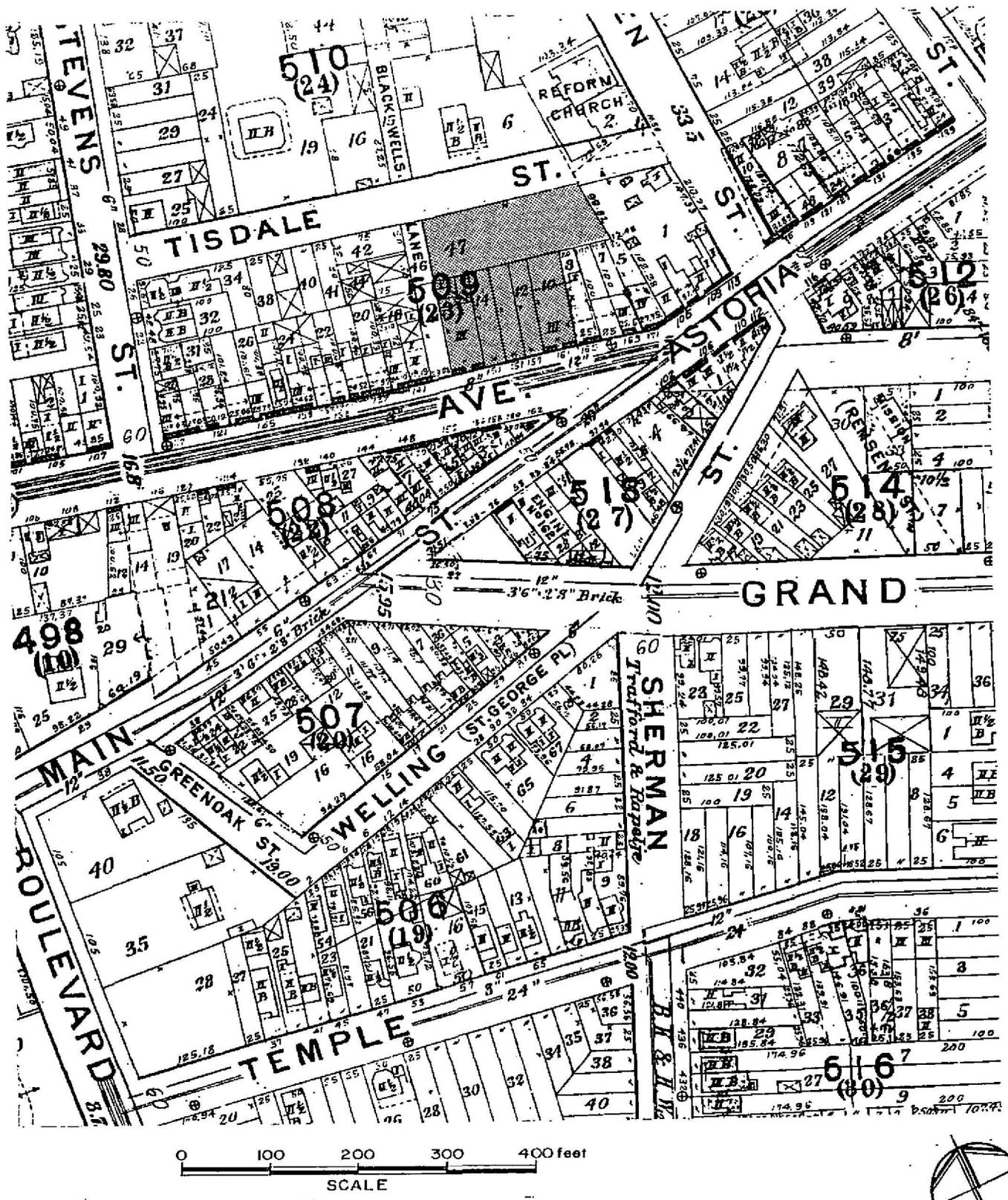


Figure 10 Project area location shown on portion of the 1919 Hyde Atlas of the Borough of Queens, Vol. 2, Plate 8.



reside on Remsen Street and not Fulton Avenue or Main Street. The 1900 census includes several Blackwell, but none on Fulton Avenue or Main Street. James Olwell is not listed. The lack of useful data from the census records leads us to conclude that only directories could provide evidence of occupation. Research was conducted at the Long Island Division of Queensborough Public Library. Eight directories dating from 1872 through 1894 were available. Prior to 1878 no street numbers are included. James M. Blackwell is listed as living on Fulton near Main for 1872 through 1877 (Curtin 1872: 383; 1874:480; 1876:?). No Blackwell are listed in the next two directories (Lain 1878; 1881). The Star Directory of Long Island City for 1888-1889 lists both Frank and George Blackwell at 157 Fulton Avenue, Astoria (Todd 1888:34). The final directory consulted, the Star Directory for 1894-1895 lists Frank E. Blackwell, lawyer at 157 Fulton Avenue (Todd 1894:72).

The only map presented here that includes street numbers is Figure 10, taken from the 1919 Hyde Atlas. The structure at the southeastern corner of the project area is listed as 161 Fulton Avenue. Immediately west of this vacant lot numbered 157 Fulton Avenue. It is possible that the numbers changed somewhat from 1888 to 1919, so Frank and George Blackwell may have been living in the structure on Lot 10 at this time, approximately when a cistern there could have been filled.

There is good evidence that part of the project area has been disturbed recently. Plate 3 shows that the southern part of Lot 47 and the northern parts of Lots 10 and 12 through 15 were cut out to a depth of 12 to 14 feet. This would have destroyed any potential for archaeological resources here. Since this would be the most likely location for privies associated with the structures in Lots 10 and 15, it appears that these potential resources have been destroyed, if they existed at this location.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The above text has documented that the Astoria Senior Housing project area may preserve archaeological evidence from the prehistoric period. The project area is located within two miles of eleven known prehistoric sites. Documentary evidence of the sale of this locality has survived and fresh water would have been easily available from the stream feeding Sunswick Creek. This location would probably have attracted game, making this a possible place for a temporary or seasonal hunting camp. Subsequent historic development of this location and recent disturbances may have destroyed this potential.

The section on Historic Sensitivity provides evidence that the project area was vacant land until after 1873. By 1891 two structures were erected at the southeastern and southwestern corners of the project area. The structure at the southeast corner, Lot 10, may have had a cistern based on cartographic evidence. Privies have most likely been destroyed if they ever existed here. The structure in Lot 10 may have been the residence of Frank and George Blackwell during 1888-1889. Frank Blackwell was a lawyer and continued to be listed at the same address in 1894-1895. It is our conclusion that a cistern could survive in Lot 10, and that it would likely have been filled by the Blackwell family.

We recommend that archaeological testing in the form of backhoe trenching be undertaken in Lot 10 to search for a possible privy, and in Lots 12-14 to search for evidence of possible prehistoric occupation. This should take place prior to any construction activities here.

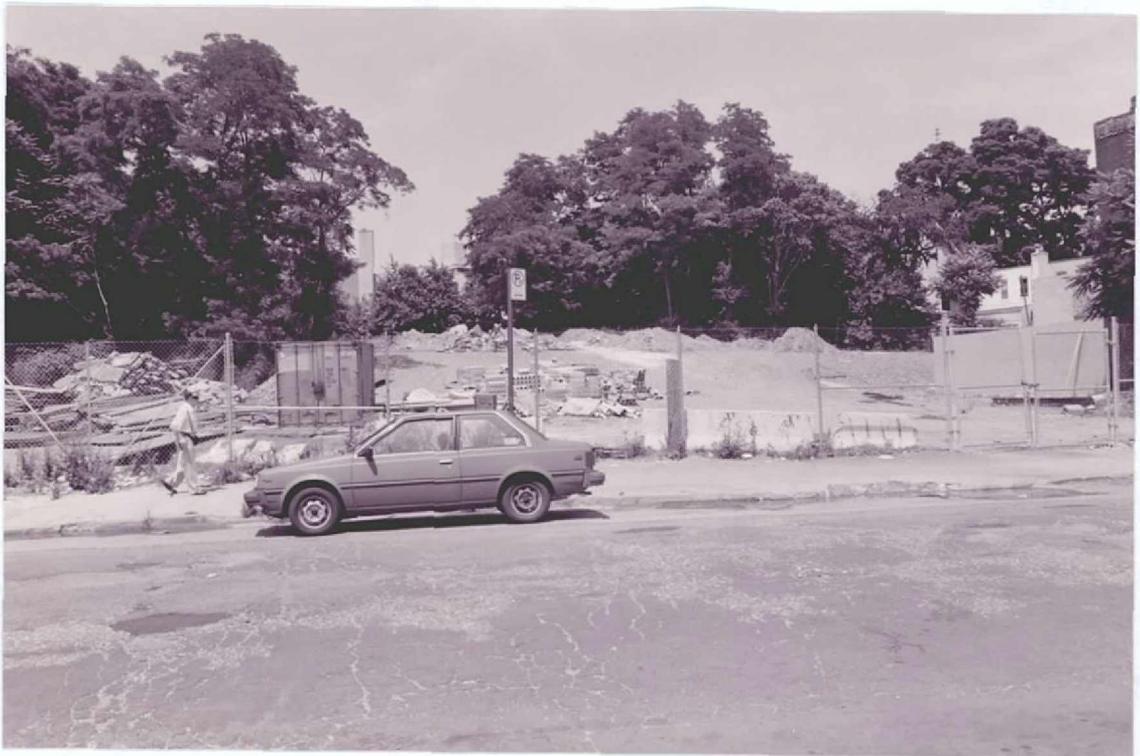


Plate 1 View of southwestern portion of the project area looking north from Astoria Boulevard.



Plate 2 View of the southeastern portion of the project area looking northeast from Astoria Boulevard.



Plate 3

View of the rear of Lots 10, 12, 13, 14 and 15 and southern part of Lot 47 looking north. Note the disturbance caused by cutting away 12 to 14 feet of soil.



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MEMORANDUM TO: Daniel Pagano, N.Y.C. Landmarks Preservation Commission

FROM: William I. Roberts IV, S.O.P.A. *WIR*

DATE: 1 September 1995

SUBJECT: Summary of Archaeological Testing of the Astoria Senior Housing Project, Astoria, Borough of Queens, New York

On 9 August 1995 archaeological testing of the proposed Astoria Senior Housing project at Astoria Boulevard and Main Avenue in the Borough of Queens was conducted. See Figure 1 for the location of the project area. The testing consisted of two trenches excavated by backhoe. as stated in the conclusions of our Archaeological/Historical Sensitivity Evaluation report on this property, there were two possible resources that were tested for. There was evidence that a cistern may have existed within lot 10, which makes up the southeastern portion of the project area. this cistern would have been constructed between 1873 and 1891, and probably filled during the 1880's or 1890's. this was during the ownership and probable occupation of the lot by the Blackwell family. The other resource was possible prehistoric occupation of this property. Eleven prehistoric sites are known within two miles of the project area, which would have had easy access to fresh water. The project could have been used as a temporary hunting camp.

Two backhoe trenches were excavated as shown in Figure 2. Backhoe Trench 1 was designed to search for evidence of prehistoric occupation. It was placed near the front of lot 12. Backhoe Trench 2 was designed to search for a possible cistern. It was placed within lot 10 just behind the former structure location. Both trenches 5 feet wide by approximately 30 feet long. Excavation was by backhoe. It began with the removal of the top 0.5 feet of soil and continued with the removal of increments of 0.5 feet or less. In Backhoe Trench 1 this continued as long as 19th or 20th century debris was visible in the soil deposits. At about 5.0 feet below grade we encountered a layer of clean light olive brown sand. The backhoe bucket was used to remove a sample. Six screen loads of this soil were sifted through $\frac{1}{4}$ inch mesh. No prehistoric artifacts were recovered, in fact no artifacts of any date range were found in this layer (Context 1.03). We concluded that the deposit was undisturbed subsoil.

Backhoe Trench 2 was excavated in a similar manner. Most of the former rear was covered by a thin layer of unreinforced concrete at 2.5 feet below grade. Below this was a layer of clean brown to dark brown sand that was interpreted as subsoil. The western end of the trench was different from the rest. At 2.5 feet below grade here the top of a feature was encountered. the feature consisted of red bricks and soft mortar which formed a wall. to the west of

Memorandum
1 September 1995

page 2

the wall was a deposit of very pale brown fine sand with pockets of silt. This was interpreted as the fill of the feature. The only cultural material seen in this fill consisted of two wire nails and fragments of heavy white porcelain from a toilet tank. The brick wall extended to 7.0 feet below grade. There was no evidence of a floor in the feature. the fill extended west of the end of the backhoe trench. Despite a diligent search of the fill exposed in the trench section, no evidence of domestic refuse such as animal bones, glass bottles or ceramic fragments was seen. The feature found in Backhoe Trench 2 could be a cistern, a cellar wall, a retaining wall, part of a dry-well, or another type of drain. If this feature was a cistern, then its floor had been broken up and removed prior to its being filled. Regardless of the nature of the feature, its fill contained no domestic refuse from the 1880's or 1890's that could be associated with the Blackwell family.

It is our conclusion that no evidence of possible prehistoric use of the Astoria Senior Housing project area remains in the ground here. If this location was used during the prehistoric period, then the 340 years of historic period use of this land has removed or destroyed any evidence of this use. It is also our conclusion that a brick feature existed on the western side of the former rear yard of lot 10. this feature may have been a cistern, although other explanations are possible. Regardless of the type of feature found, its fill did not contain any 19th or early 20th century domestic refuse. Instead nearly clean sand was found. Excavation of this feature fill would probably not advance our understanding of the lives of the Blackwell family here during the 1880's or 1890's. We recommend that no additional archaeological work be undertaken within the Astoria Senior Housing project area.

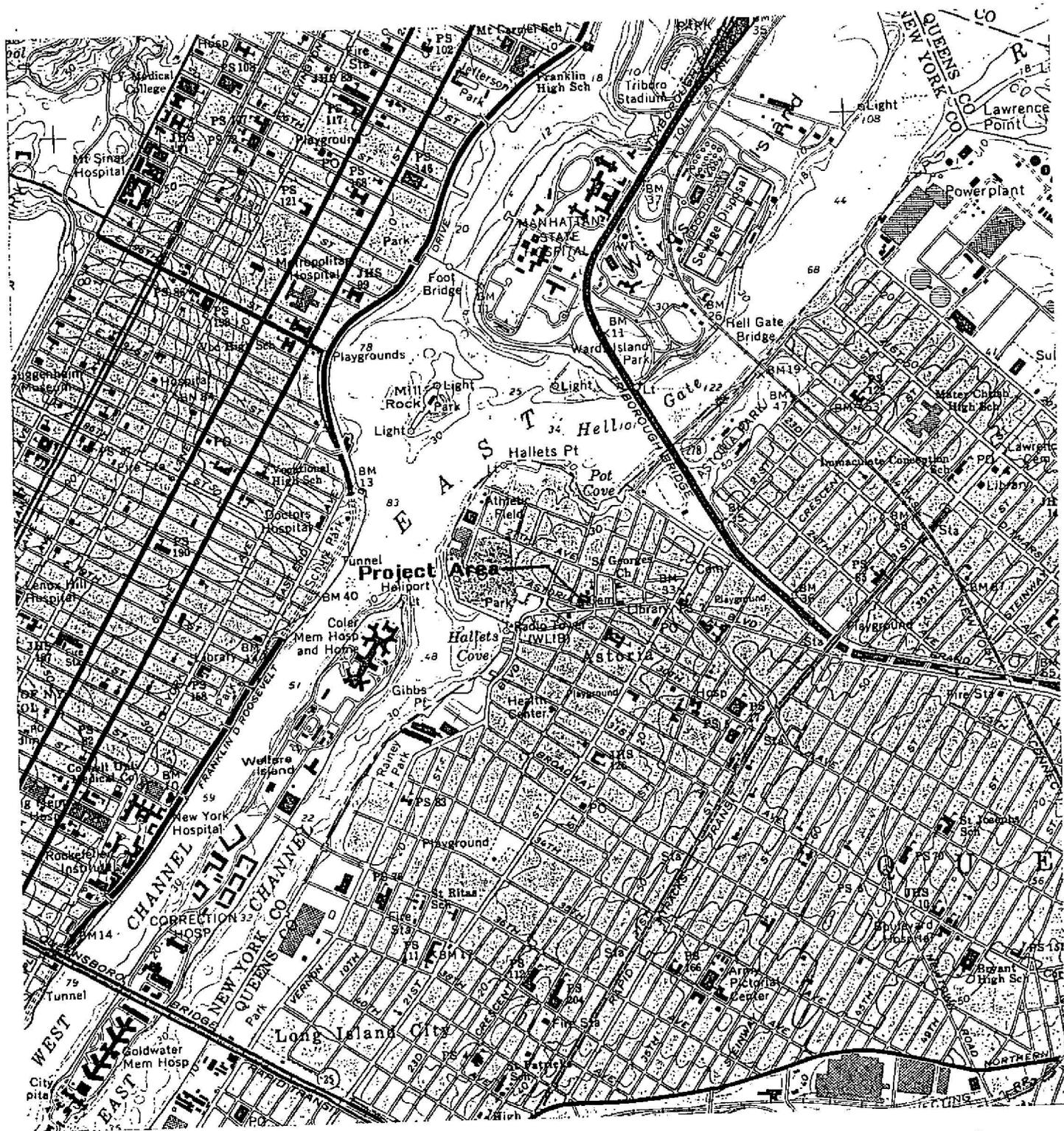


Figure 1 Location of the project area shown on portion of U.S.G.S. 7.5 minute series Central Park, New York-New Jersey quadrangle 1966, photorevised 1979.

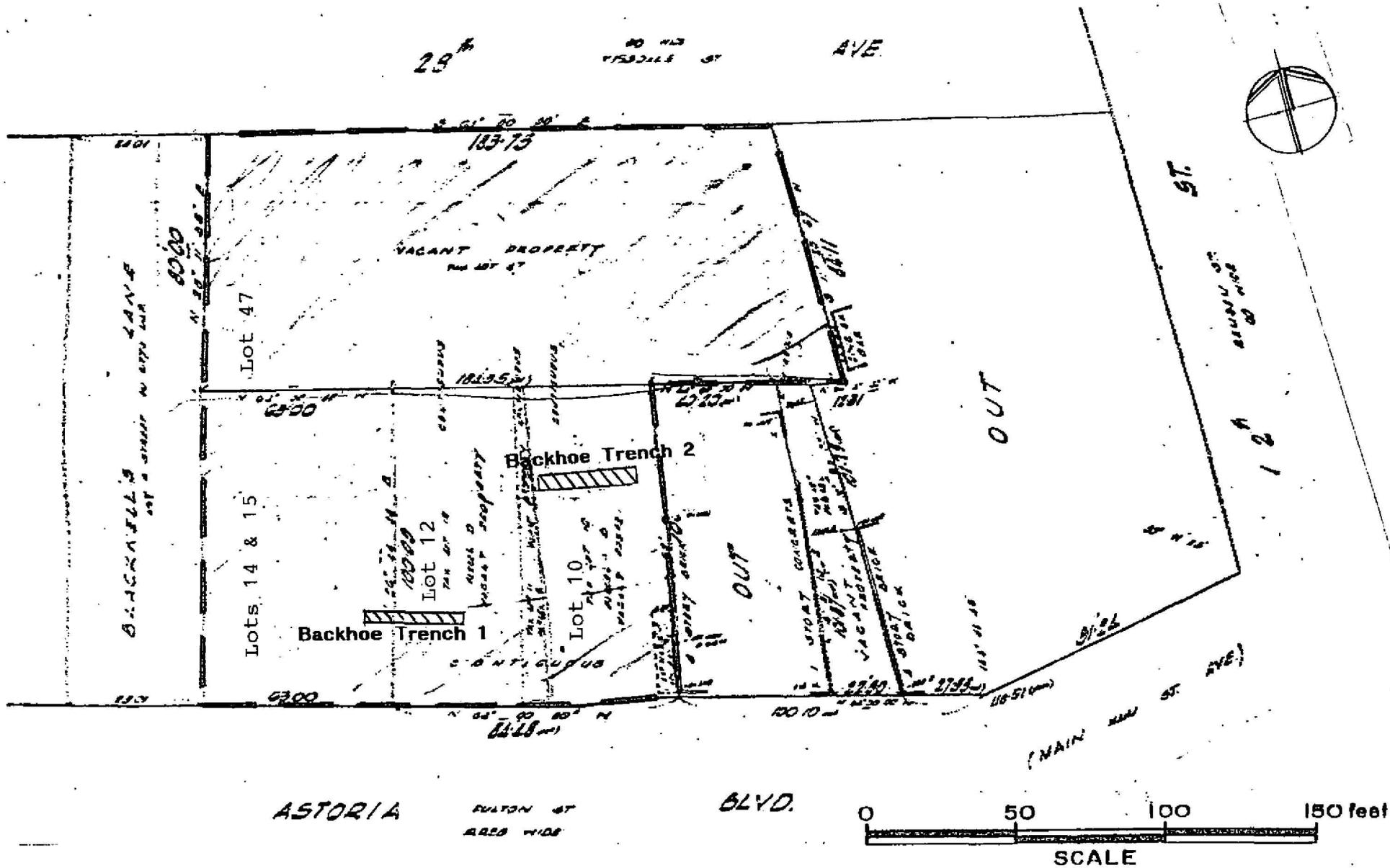


Figure 2 Location of Backhoe Trenches shown on present Tax Map.

SURVEY RECORD SHEET : Postholes, Auger holes, Shovel tests

PROJECT : Astoria Senior Housing		COORDINATES :			
SITE :	SUPERVISOR : WR	EXCAVATOR : GM	SCREENED ? Samples 1/4"	DATE : 9 Aug. 1995	TEST TYPE AND NO. : B.T. 1.
STRATIGRAPHY :					
LAYER	DEPTH *	DESCRIPTION	COLOR	CULT. MAT.	NOTES
1	0-1.2'	Heavy Gravel in Sand	2.5 Y 4/2 Dk. Gr. Br.	Modern Oolitic pebbles Plast. not collected	Fill
2	1.2 - 5'	Compact silt w/ Gravel. Concrete Asphalt Rubble, Pebbles of Clay & Sand	10 YR 4/6 Dk. Gr. Br.	Concrete, Plastic Wood Ceramic Pipe, Metal, etc. (Not Collected)	Fill
3	5. - ? *	Sand	2.5 Y 5/6 Lt. Olive Br.	N.C.M.	Soil and Sample
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
* Give depths relative to ground surface					
General Notes : (Note if cult. material retained, and if soil samples are taken.) * stopped @ 7.0' below grade Approx. 30' x 5' began 63' E. of Blackwells Lane Parallel to Astoria Blvd. Rubble incl. plast., window glass, metal pipe, etc.					
Cross Refs :					
Plan		Photos			
Section		Notebook			

SURVEY RECORD SHEET : Postholes, Auger holes, Shovel tests

PROJECT : Astoria Senior Housing		COORDINATES :			
SITE : Lot 10	SUPERVISOR : WR	EXCAVATOR : GM	SCREENED ?	DATE : 9 Aug. 1995	TEST TYPE AND NO. : B.T. 2
STRATIGRAPHY :					
LAYER	DEPTH *	DESCRIPTION	COLOR	CULT. MAT.	NOTES
1	0-2.4'	Compact silt w/ Rubble	10 YR 4/2 Dk. Gr. Br.	Concrete, Metal, Ceramic Pipe (Microbeled)	Fill
2	2.4-2.5'	Concrete	10 YR 5/1 White		Probably Sand Structure
3	2.5 - ?	Sand	10 YR 4P Br to dk. Br.	N.C.M.	Probably Subsoil
4	2.5-7.0'	Bricks & Mortar 12 courses No floor evident		Red brick, soft mortar (disintegrated)	Probably Cellar Wall
5	2.5'-7.0'	Sand (fine) w/ pebbles of silt	10 YR 8/3 V. Pale Bl.	Nails (wire) / silt (Microbeled) Sand frag.	Fill of Cellar or Foundation
6					
7					
8					
* Give depths relative to ground surface					
General Notes : (Note if cult. material retained, and if soil samples are taken.) stopped @ 6.0 Feet below grade Approx. 30' x 5' began 8' W. of standing structure to the east. Cx. 2.04 and 2.05 were at west end of trench only.					
Cross Refs :		Bill Quentin - operator			
Plan		Photos			
Section		Notebook			