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PHASE 1B CULTURAL RESOURCE REPORT AMBOY ROAD/WEIR AVENUE PROJECT #84-116R STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK

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LANDMARKS PRESERVATION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introductionpage 1
Summary of Results2
Prehistoric Sites in the Area
Local Historic Sites: Cartographic and
Documentary Evidence
20th Century Indicators8

				Remains	
Bibliogra	aphy.	 	 		

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Site Location Map

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Figure 2: Historic Structures in Impact Area

INTRODUCTION

The following report represents an initial Phase 1 Historic and Archaeological Sensitivity Evaluation of the proposed Amboy Road Development Project (CEQR 84-116R), performed under contract for Pleasant Plains Associates, Staten Island, N.Y.

The project parcel is defined as a north-south trapezoidal configuration running adjacent to Amboy Road and Weir Avenue in the Pleasant Plains area of southern Staten Island, between Prince's Bay and Richmond Valley. The parcel conforms to a truncated triangle measuring 660' on one long side along Amboy Road, 700' on the north side with either end measuring 520' and 200' at the west and east ends, respectively. The 660' boundary along Amboy Road contains a series of already recognized mid-late 19th century farmsteads and residences containing both primary and secondary outbuildings as well as 20th century structures. Three of the mid-late 19th century homes are excluded from the proposed impact area (see below). The property ranges in elevation between 36' and 26' along Amboy Road which reflects the "high ground", and then slopes downward to the north to low ground situated at 20'-22'. The low northern side is bounded by a paper street known as Weir Avenue, which is presently delimited only by the presence of drainage ditches which drain the damp and swampy portions comprising the majority of the project area.

This Phase 1 survey work consisted of an intensive archival and cartographic survey of available historic sources, published and unpublished accounts of archaeological remains in the area or region, and attempts, where available map sources exist, to reconstruct the presence and location of 18th and 17th century occupation sites and Revolutionary War related activities within a 1-3/4 mile radius of the project area. Historic site locations even farther afield are discussed in relation to the inhabitants and/or history of southern Staten Island as it pertains to the proposed project area. It must be pointed out that the available early historic maps are difficult to work with because of problems of scale and precise provenience control of potential site locations relative to modern topography and map perspectives.

Finally, this initial Phase 1 survey involved a site visit and partial walk-over of the defined impact area on February 24, 1985, with four members of the Greenhouse staff. The site impact area is covered predominantly with secondary growth with a few trees which appear to be 50 to 100 years old. Field observations confirm that the ground is very wet to swampy, which coincides with the need for drainage ditches which run along the boundary of the paper Weir Avenue, and drain into a small swampy area on the north side of the project tract.

Our documentary analysis focused on identifying the temporal span of the historic occupations within the project site, the presence and location of possible historic structures, either standing or destroyed which would have existed outside of the protected historic lot boundaries and within the impact zone itself, and finally, a synthesis of available prehistoric and historic archaeological site locations in a 1/2 mile to 1 3/4 corona or band around the project area as a basis for identifying any cultural remains within or adjacent to the defined impact area.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Based on available information on known prehistoric sites, the closest identified prehistoric remains are two sites, Sandy Brook and Richmond Valley, located no closer than 1/2 mile to the project area. No known prehistoric sites were encountered in or adjacent to the project area itself in the archival review. The analysis of possible 18th century remains focused on the mapindicated presence of a pre-1775 residence belonging to the Debow family somewhere on the north side of Amboy Road, possibly within the vicinity of historic Lot 122. However, as mentioned above, the problems of scale were such that when the 18th century map was enlarged to modern proportions, the ambiguity as to the precise location of this former 18th century homestead amounted to a fudge factor of plus or minus several thousand feet. As a consequence, there is no basis for arguing that this 18th century location was, in fact, in or even close to the actual project area. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that there are several Debow family homesteads in the area, one in the mid-19th century (spelled DePew) on the project parcel, and as such there is no basis for arguing that there are any mid-18th century structural remains within the project area itself.

Historic documents and 19th century atlas sheets document the presence of mid-late 19th century structures along Amboy Road, the majority of which are protected in the non-impact areas, which are delineated by current property boundaries. However, three structure locations, dating to the late 19th century have been identified as being within the impact area:

1) The first consists of the possible remains of an 1887-1898 house site belonging to the Lane family in Lot 122. This structure is no longer standing, and its level of preservation and integrity are undetermined; (Fig. 2).

2) The second locality consists of the remains of a 1898-1926 house site, situated at 6481 Amboy Road on Lot 134 for which no family name or ownership pattern could be identified; (Fig. 2).

3) The third un-protected historic structure location is identified generally as a barn or stable dating to ca. 1898 in Lot 134 behind 6475 & 6481 Amboy Road. Although the Beers' Atlas documentation of its presence is first illustrated in 1898, it may have been associated with the Weir family which was known to have had a homestead along Amboy Road as early as 1855, and/or it could have been associated with the Ware family of grocers who occupied the area in 1874; (Fig. 2).

Thus, the identified historic remains within the impact area are limited to three late 19th century former structure locations, two homestead sites and one former barn building. The earliest of these appears to be the barn structure (Fig.) which may have been associated based on visual impression alone, with the 1855 Weir structure which is protected, prior to the apparent historic subdivision of this larger parcel. No evidence of either early historic or prehistoric remains were indicated by the documents, map sources or visual surveying of the project area.

The relative significance of these late 19th century remains depends on their relationship to other contemporary known archaeological and historic resources and the relative level of knowledge available from non-archaeological sources. Given the relatively recent construction of these late-19th century structures within the impact area, and given the availability of on-going archaeological research pertaining to the occupational patterns and archaeological manifestations of the mid-19th century oystermens' homesteads in Staten Island (Roselle Henn 1984), it is questionable whether the above three structures would add significantly to non-documentary sources of information about this mid-19th century economic pattern on southern Staten Island. Furthermore, the oyster-industry related structures involving the Weir family were located outside the project area near Prince's Bay along the shoreline to the south.

Based on these considerations and the lateness of available documentary and cartographic sources pertinent to the period and area of study, we do not recommend additional Phase 1B testing of this parcel of this project area.

PREHISTORIC SITES IN THE AREA:

There is substantial evidence for prehistoric occupation and activity in the south eastern portion of Staten Island. Although the denser concentration of known sites lies to the north and west of the project area, Skinner (1909) notes the presence of shell mounds in the Prince's Bay area. Surface finds along the southern shore are concentrated in the Prince's Bay region, a likely area of aboriginal occupation, though the shoreline on either side of the Bay was probably equally attractive (Pickman 1977).

Most reported prehistoric sites on Staten Island reflect Middle and Late Woodland occupations, often including Contact Period evidence (Skinner 1909). Sites of village occupations, burial

mounds, shell heaps and camps have been noted (Skinner 1909, 1912).

There are eight known prehistoric sites in the general vicinity surrounding Pleasant Plains, ranging from 1/2 to 1 3/4 miles distance to the project area. Within 1/2 mile were two known sites, Sandy Brook and Richmond Valley. The first, north and east of the project area, was a "small village site on Sandy Brook between Pleasant Plains Road and Journeay Avenue. Sandy Brook eventually becomes Little North River or Lemon Creek, and empties into Prince's Bay near Devil's Elbow at Seguines Point. It contained early relics, no shells" (Proceedings 1903, Vol. VIII). The second, south of the project area, was described in 1961: "Joseph Bodnar and his sons have been working on a shell heap in Richmond Valley which was a dumping ground of prehistoric Indians. They have brought to light many decorated shards of pottery, several broken awls, triangular arrowheads and carbon for dating" (The New Bulletin, 1961). This site was most likely at Boiling Spring in Richmond Valley: "At Richmond Valley paths led through to the red sandstone lighthouse on the bluff overlooking Prince's Bay; another went past the one time Indian camping place at the spring " (Leng and Davis 1930:726).

There are two known sites within 3/4 miles from the project area. The first was a lithic scatter located off Sharrot Road, excavated in 1983 by Archaeological Research Consultants, Inc. This site is now destroyed by the Sharrot Estates Housing Development. A shell heap was also reported off Sharrot Road to the east of the project area (Pickman 1977). A few small isolated heaps have been found in the vicinity as well (Skinner 1909).

Within 1 1/4 miles of the project area to the southeast, was the Red Bank site. It was located on Seguine's Pond on the bluff between Butler's or Jack's Creek and Raritan Bay.

Within 1 1/2 miles to the east was a site on Seguine's Point, called the Huguenot Site by Skinner (1909). He described it as: "a small shell heap located on the bluff overlooking the Bay near Seguine's Point. A few tiny fragments of pottery and deer bones were found. A few small isolated heaps are near Prince's Bay" (Skinner 1909). This site location is at the Huguenot Avenue-Arthur Kill Road intersection and was exposed when the area was bulldozed for fill (Pickman 1977). Predominantly Middle "The cutting site Woodland artifacts were found (Anderson 1964). produced the first fluted point from Staten Island and other Archaic and Woodland materials. Though the point - the Eastern Clovis type, made of jasper - was found between 1914 and 1917, its significance was not recognized until approximately 50 years later" (Sainz 1962). Also within 1 1/2 miles of the project area to the southwest were several shell mounds at Tottenville. "Extensive shell mounds may still be seen near the Billop House. Shells occur all over the point, and as far north as Richmond Valley. A grooved axe weighing 12 pounds was found here", (Skinner 1909).

Within 1 3/4 miles to the east of the project area was a site at Wolfe's Pond, located on the bluff overlooking the Bay.

LOCAL HISTORIC SITES: CARTOGRAPHIC AND DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Frederick Skene's map of Staten Island (1907) indicating the Colonial Land Patents from 1668-1712 places the project area within the patents of either Mark Dusachoy (1696) or Obadiah Holmes (1685). Schneider (1976) notes on this map, however, that Smoking Point is incorrectly identified on Skene's map. Most of the patents relate geographically to Smoking Point, therefore the possibility is considerable that these locations are inaccurate.

The McMillen Map (1933) of Staten Island during the Revolution, 1775-1783, was compiled from several sources, ie: The Taylor & Skinner Map of 1781, Plan No. 31 du Comp Anglo-Hessois dans Staten Island de 1780 a' 1783, and the Hessian Map, ca. 1777. This composite drawing demonstrated Amboy Road or "New Road" as the major east-west artery bisecting the southern portion of Staten Island. This thoroughfare was mentioned in a deed dating to 1762 (Davis 1903) and was known as "the Road from Stony Brook to Billop's Ferry" (Leng & Davis 1930:722).

"The original ferry was at the foot of Amboy Road. Reportedly, a ferry was established as early as 1650 by the Raritan Indians" (Pickman 1978:29). The Billop family, who owned the patent as early as 1676, continued the ferry service for four generations (Skene 1907). Just beyond the ferry to the south was "a strong battery erected to cover the retreat of the British Army from Perth Amboy in case of attack by American forces" (Tancredi 1977). The Hessian Map of ca. 1777 shows a Col. Van Wurmb and two companies of Hessians stationed at Billop's or the Amboy Ferry.

Prince's Bay, so named because a British Prince once sailed into the bay during the Revolutionary War (Davis 1903), lies south of the Pleasant Plains site of proposed construction. However, the history of both Prince's Bay and Pleasant Plains are intertwined. Throughout much of the late 18th and 19th centuries, it was an area of great economic and strategic importance.

Prince's Bay was settled late in the 17th century and the Purdy Hotel, (built in 1690) which is still standing is probably the first house in the area (Pickman 1978). This site is due north of Seguine's Point and southeast of the proposed area of construction.

The Hessian Map, ca. 1777 shows encampments and redoubts along

the southern shore during the Revolutionary War (ibid).

McMillen's composite map of Staten Island during the Revolutionary War, 1775-1783, shows two structures along Amboy Road; one within and one abutting the project area. These buildings are owned by I. Winants and I. DeBow. DeBow may be a misspelling of Depew, DePuy or DuPui, whose family holdings originated with one Nicholas DuPui, a French Huguenot from -Artois, in 1662. DuPui obtained land grants on Staten Island between 1680-1686. Although difficult to determine, the DeBow house may be within the project area, but the Winant property is too far west. The Winant (Wynant, Winants) family also had extensive land holdings throughout Staten Island. Since the DeBow house appears in the approximate place the later Lane and DePew properties stood in the 19th century, it is possible that former building foundations or other features exist below ground within the impact zone.

Prince's Bay was prominent in the oyster trade. By ca. 1800, the naturally occurring oyster beds in the New York/New Jersey area had been exploited until there was virtually nothing left. Local oystermen brought in seed oysters from other localities, planting them in Prince's Bay. "By 1813 Prince's Bay oysters were well known and the business was at its height in the 1850's" (Pickman 1978:29). It was about this time, that James Weir, a signer of the oystermen's petition, built his home in the project area at 6475 Amboy Road (Lot 134). Other structures associated with the oystering trade lined Prince's Bay east of the mouth of Lemon Creek at the foot of Seguine Avenue. A manual draw-bridge was located there as early as 1830, and it operated for a century (Pickman 1978).

The 1840 Greek Revival house of Joseph Seguine, President of the Staten Island R.R. and the S.I. Oil Co. still stands and is a N.Y.C. landmark. It is located southeast of the project area. Seguine's oil company existed in a series of factory buildings, since developed into a shopping arcade and still in existence. Subsequent to Seguine's Oil Co., and prior to the arcade, the buildings were used by a dental manufacturing company, and they are known today as the Dental Works (Ibid). The United States Coast Survey Charter of N.Y. Harbor, 1836-1839, depicted three structures along Amboy Road within the vicinity of

the project area - structures which were predominantly surrounded by forests and plowed fields. Unfortunately, these structures appear as a series of unchartable dots.

The 1850 Dripps Map indicated an absence of buildings along Amboy Road within the project area, although J. Weir and J. LaForge owned structures opposite the site along the south side of the road. This map may be inaccurate, however.

By 1852, the Atlas of Staten Island surveyed and drawn by Bacon & Barnes, reveals a single structure within the vicinity of the project area. Although only a small, darkened square on the map, this may represent 6495 Amboy Road, the dwelling of James

Polhemus, a carpenter, whose clapboard, 2-storey frame house with an entrance in the Greek Revival style was built ca. 1845-50 (Shepherd 1979). This structure (in what became Lot 128) has been designated a landmark based on its architectural integrity and will not be impacted.

Butler's 1853 Atlas of Staten Island reveals the same configuration of buildings on both sides of Amboy Road and additionally offers the names of the owners of the opposing structures: Wire, Williams, Manee, Wood and LaFarge.

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The 1874 Beers Atlas indicates that the project area has been divided into lots. Structures, probably dwellings, are indicated on 2 of the 5 lots, but no outbuildings are depicted. The structure on the Ware property, later known as 6475 Amboy Road (Lot 134), has been designated as having architectural significance. It stands today and will not be affected by construction. "This is a five-bay house with Greek Revival portico. The main block of the house is two stories; the wing on the left is one and one half stories" (Shepherd 1979). The date of initial construction is believed to be ca. 1855, and may have been built by James Weir, oysterman. James Weir is probably the son of Edward Weir, who came from Dalkieth in Scotland, established Weir's Mill at Richmond Valley and who died in 1858. "James Weir signed the oystermen's petition in 1831" (Leng & Davis 1930:973). By 1874, Mill Creek which is northwest of the project site had become known as Weir's Creek where there was a Saw & Grist Mill (Pickman 1978). Previously, ca. 1800, the Dissoway family had a mill on this creek (Leng & Davis 1930). Bv 1874, however, the property on Lot 134 was owned by Jacob Wares, grocer (Shepherd 1979).

The smaller lot (Lot 128) circumscribed by Ware's house and lot on the east, and marked "J.P." may be the structure depicted in Bacon & Barnes' 1852 and Butler's 1853 Atlases, and described as the dwelling of James Polhemus, carpenter. What became Lot 126, to the west of Polhemus (Lot 128) is owned by a member of the Wares family, but is vacant in 1874, as are the other lots owned by Lane (Lot 122) and D. Bedell (Lot 116).

The configuration of lots and structures is identical in 1887 as indicated by Beer's Atlas, except for the addition of a new building on Lane's property (Lot 122 along Amboy Road) and which is in the impact area. This structure is no longer in existence.

Outside of the project area but immediately to the south is Mt. Loretto, or the Mission of the Immaculate Virgin, which was founded ca. 1885 when Rev. John C. Drumgoole established a home for blind, homeless and destitute children. The grounds (500 acres) extended from Amboy Road to the beach where the property known as Light House Hill was acquired. As of ca. 1929, this property embraced a large number of buildings including the Church of St. Elizabeth. Robinson's 1898 Atlas of Staten Island indicates 3 buildings on the Ware property (Lot 134) at 6475 Amboy Road. The main dwelling described above as originally erected by James Weir, oysterman ca. 1855, and later as the home of Jacob Wares, grocer by 1874, now has a smaller structure to the southwest of the main dwelling. Later atlases (see below) reveal this to be a 1-storey frame structure. Subsequently given the address 6481 Amboy Road, the foundations of this building still exist as indicated by a walkover survey, and will be impacted by the proposed construction. A larger out-building, behind and to the northwest of the main house, was probably a barn or stable and will also be impacted.

To the west of the Ware house is the lot and dwelling house that has been marked "J.P." on the 1874 Beer's Atlas and which belonged to James Polhemus, grocer (6495 Amboy Road). Two outbuildings behind the Polhemus house, on Lot 128, are shown in 1898 (Robinson). The smaller may have become an addition to the house. The larger structure, which is a stable, is not within the impact area.

West of the Polhemus lot is the home of David Wares, grocer (Lot 126), and a partner in J. Wares & Son (Shepherd 1979). This property, 6505 Amboy Road, is a "2 1/2 story frame house of 4 bays with cross gable roof....The porch and gable peak are decorated with turned spindles in a Queen Ann mode" (Ibid). Built ca. 1895, this dwelling is not in the impact area.

Also in 1898, the Lane property (Lot 122), now devoid of its structure, is owned by John Depew, It is within the area to be developed. The Daniel Bedell lot to the west (Lot 116) is still undeveloped at this time.

It is in Robinson's 1898 Atlas that Weir Avenue appears for the first time. The area west of the project site is occupied by frame structures, vacant lots and the Three Leaves Hotel. South and east of the site are dwellings and stable. In 1898, an historian wrote "Prince's Bay consists of two neighborhoods - one along the shore, known as Seguine's Point, and the other along the railroad and the Amboy Road. The Prince's Bay post office is located at Pleasant Plains. To a stranger the two villages appear as one. They are divided by a small stream called Lemon Creek" (Morris 1898:443).

20TH CENTURY INDICATORS

Lot numbers appear for the first time in Robinson's 1907 Atlas of Staten Island. Lot 134 (6475 Amboy Road) belonging to Jane Wares is unchanged, while Lot 128 (the James Polhemus house, 6495 Amboy Road) has lost its outbuildings. Lot 126, owned in 1898 by D. Wares, is unchanged. Lot 122, owned by John W. Depew and Lot 116, owned by Daniel Bedell are still vacant.

The area east, west and south of the site consists of a series of

frame structures and vacant lots. North of the project area and across Weir Avenue, is W. St. Van Clief's Lumber yard. Mt. Loretto and/or the Mission of the Immaculate Virgin contain a large number of buildings including an infirmary and cemetery.

The 1911 U.S. topographic survey of the Borough of Richmond depicts a 1 1/2 storey frame dwelling on the J. Wares property (Lot 134, 6475 Amboy Road). As stated above, this home is not to be impacted. However, a former barn northwest of the property as well as a 1-1/2 storey frame building along Amboy Road (also known as 6481 Amboy Road, also Lot 134) are included in the impact zone although neither structure exists today.

A 2-storey frame dwelling at 6495 Amboy Road (Lot 128) has a small structure (storeys unknown) of unknown type and use, between it and 6505 Amboy Road. No such structure exists today. It is not within the zone of proposed construction. The 2 1/2 storey dwelling at 6505 Amboy Road (Lot 126) has two small outbuildings behind the house. The one closest to the house is not within the impact zone, although a corner of the smaller and farthest structure may be within the project area. There are no other structures on the site in 1911, except the remains of an "old rail fence" bordering the western property line of Lot 116, as well as the southern lines of Lots 122 and 124. It travels along the western boundary of Lot 126.

Bromley's 1917 Atlas indicates that Lot 122 had been subdivided into 2 vacant lots, Lot 124 owned by Charles W. Depew and Lot 122 by Clara E. Depew. Lot 116 (owned by Bedell in 1907) is now the property of Emma F. S. Hunter and is occupied by a 1 1/2 storey frame building. Today, there is a 2-1/2 storey frame house on this lot, which is in the designated impact zone. The other lots are unchanged.

According to the 1926 Sandborn map, the dwelling on Lot 134, designated 6475 Amboy Road, appears to have been heightened and expanded, but this may be due to more detailed information and the larger scale of the map. The barn behind the house has a one-storey structure to the east. Both are in the impact zone.

The one-storey structure on Lot 134 at 6481 Amboy Road is described as being vacant. Today, this building is no longer in existence but is also within the impact zone. Lot 128, 6495 Amboy Road, has a new 1-storey building designated "Auto". The foundations of this structure still exist and are not in the impact area.

A new 1-storey building appears on the 1926 Atlas behind and between 6495 and 6505 Amboy Road. This structure no longer exists but would have been in the impact area.

The two vacant Depew lots (122 & 124) have been incorporated into one lot by 1926, and are represented by 6523 Amboy Road, known as the Emma F. S. Hunter property and dwelling.

APPENDIX I SUMMARY OF IMPACT AREA REMAINS

- I. Prehistoric
 A. No known sites closer than 1/2 mile from project area.
- II. Historic 17th Century A. No known sites within project area.
- III. Historic 18th Century A. Possible remains of the Debow house, ca. 1775, in the vicinity of Lot 122 (McMillen 1933).
- IV. Historic 19th Century
 - A. Possible remains of ca. 1887-1898 Lane House in Lot 122 (Beers 1887); (see Fig. 2, No. 1).
 - B. Possible remains of house (6481 Amboy Road Lot 134) dating ca. 1898-1926 (Robinson 1898, Robinson 1926); (see Fig. 2, No. 2).
 - C. Possible remains of barn or stable ca. 1898 (Beer Atlas 1898) in Lot 134 behind 6475 & 6481 Amboy Road. May be associated with the Weir family of oystermen, ca. 1855 and/or the Ware family of grocers ca. 1874. (earlier maps do not show outbuildings); (see Fig. 2, No. 3).
- V. Historic 20th Century
 - A. Outbuilding ca. 1911-1926 (Lot 126). Corner may be impacted (Robinson 1926).
 - B. Remains of 1-1/2 storey structure ca. 1917 owned by Hunter at 6523 Amboy Road in Lot 116. Building still standing (Bromley 1917).
 - C. Remains of 2-1/2 storey modern house still standing (Lot 116) next door to the east of V (B) above.
 - D. Foundations of 1 storey building designated "Auto" ca. 1926 (Sandborn 1926; walkover of site). Lot 128.
 - E. (See IV C). Ca. 1926, small 1 storey structure east of barn, Lot 134 - 6475 Amboy Road.

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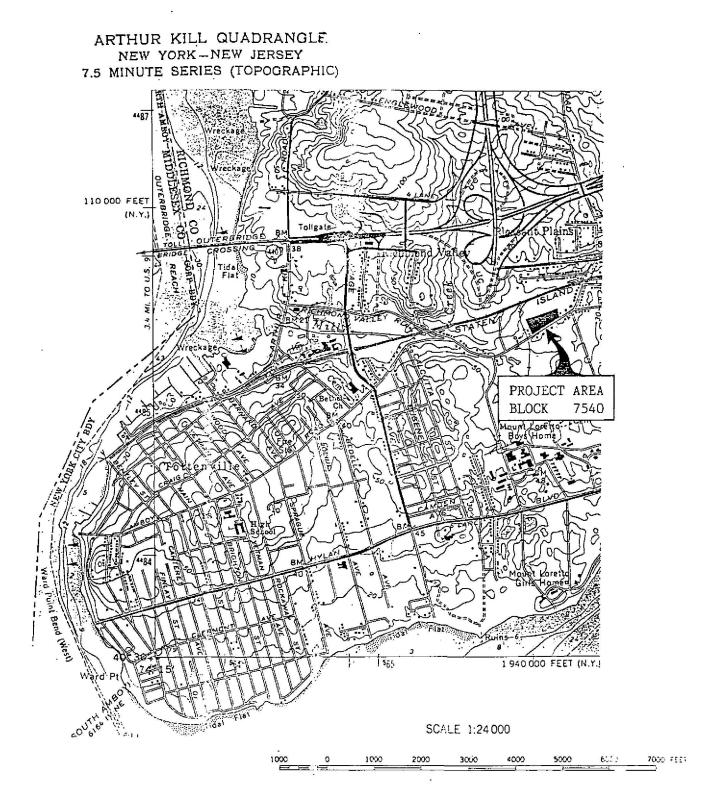
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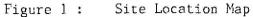
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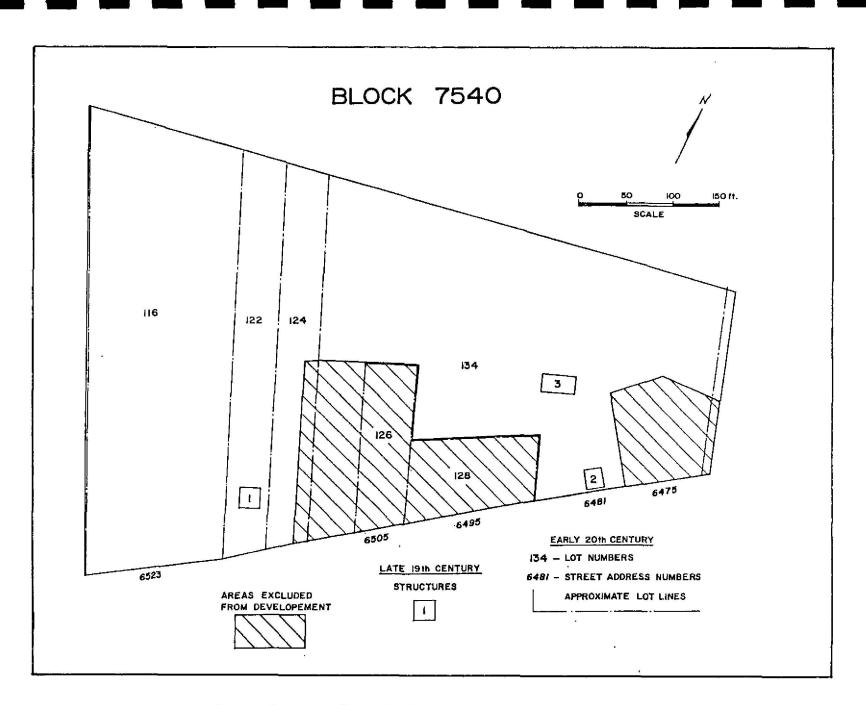
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Figure 2 : Historic Structures in Impact Area

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