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LANDMARKS PRESERVATION
COMMISSION

PHASE IA DOCUMENTARY STUDY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

HARBOR ROAD SITE
349 Harbor Road, Staten Island

(CEQR No. 88-121R)

for

Lauria Associates
Staten Island, New York

Karen S. Robinson, Ph.D., SOPA
KEY PERSPECTIVES

August 1988

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INTRODUCTION

This study is designed to fulfill the requirement of a Stage IA documentary survey for Block 1249, Lots 75, 77, 141, and 143, Staten Island, New York, as required by The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission under CEQR (CEQR #88-121R). These lots were flagged for study because they were viewed as being a potential source of significant remains dating to the prehistoric period of Amerind occupation, specifically because of the project area's proximity to the "Goodrich" site.

The proposed project site is located between Harbor Road and Samuel Place, north of Forest Avenue and south of Dublin Place, on Staten Island (Figures 1 and 2). Today four empty lots with a stream running between concrete and rubble walls along the northern edge, the property is planned to contain 10 town-house units, with a new street, Gerard Court, over the course of the stream, which will run in a culvert beneath the roadbed. Another small street, Samuel Court, will border the southwest part of the new development, covering most of lot 141.

This study consists of an examination, through maps and texts, of the history Block 1249, Lots 75, 77, 141, and 143, and its natural topography. In addition, the building history of the site has been researched and the site visited and examined in its present condition. The information is analyzed to determine if a Stage IB archaeological survey should or should not be required, and an appropriate recommendation is made. A Stage IB archaeological survey will be required if, on the basis of the Stage IA documentary research, the site is determined to have the possibility of yielding significant archaeological materials.

The research for this study was conducted at The New York Public Library, primarily the Map Room and the Local History and Microfilm sections, The Archives of the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences, the Topographic Bureau, Staten Island Borough Hall, Avery and Butler Libraries, Columbia University, Watson Library, Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the author's private library.

TOPOGRAPHY

Geologically, the northwestern part of Staten Island is part of the Newark Basin, which is composed of Triassic sandstones and shales. The surface of both this part of Staten Island and adjacent New Jersey were part of a glacial lake formed at the end of the Wisconsin Glaciation. The terminal moraine from that glaciation episode lies to the south and west of the Mariner's Harbor area, at Harbor Hill. The sandy soils of this part of Staten Island are part of the glacial outwash from this period (Eisenberg 1982:39-40,43-44; Leng and Davis 1930: frontispiece, 17-18; Bayles 1887:9) (See Figure 3).

The site of the Harbor Road project lies at the side of a small brook, identified as Old Place Brook by Leng and Davis (1896), which flowed into Tunissen's or Old Place Creek and finally into the Arthur Kill in what today is the area of the Goethals Bridge. Branches of this system extended as far east as Graniteville (Leng and Davis 1930:7; Smith 1970:227).

The development site was visited on 8 July 1988. In general, at the street frontages the site appears to be quite level, although the area at the sides of the stream are somewhat lower than the rest of the lots. In its current condition Lots 75, 143 and part of 141 are covered by a dense growth of tall reeds and scrub brush about 2 meters tall (See Figures 4a and 4b). There is some evidence of modern dumping, especially along the Harbor Road frontage of the site. This dumping consists of construction rubble and concrete running from Harbor Road about 2 to 3 meters west, and then lighter debris, including wood, garbage, discarded Christmas trees, further into the site. The surface of the ground in Lots 75, 141, and 143 is irregularly contoured, suggested that the area has been bull-dozed in parts or unevenly filled. Seeming to confirm this is the presence of non-humic subsoils at the ground surface. This disturbance in the site's surface would make the identification of near-surface features unlikely.

The "stream" that runs along the north of Lots 143 and 75 is, due to June's drought, a damp but not wet open stone- and concrete-bordered channel. The stone work lining the channel suggest a date for the enclosing of the stream some time during the late 19th century. The 1909 Staten Island topographic survey comments on the stonework lining in the surveyor's field notes, so it had been lined with stones before that time.¹ And the

¹Field notebook from the 1909 Staten Island Topographic Survey, Topographic Office, Borough Hall of Staten Island.

watercourse is labeled a "ditch" in Beers 1874, which perhaps indicates that the course is no longer entirely natural by that time (See Figure 14). When the concrete walling was added could not be determined, nor could the date of the apparent straightening out of the watercourse for which the examined evidence is conflicting. The stream course, which can be seen on many of the historical maps, can be traced beyond the site by the man-hole covers of the sewer line into which much of the stream has been channeled in the area around the project site; its course crosses Forest Avenue just to the east of Grandview.

Lot 77 is cleared and is currently used as a parking lot for cars and two catamarans (See Figures 5a and 5b). Except for a 1 by 5 meter patch of concrete blocks in the center of the lot (a pathway perhaps; the blocks are too shallow and lack the footings needed to serve as a foundation), the lot lacks surface features. There were a limited number (fewer than a dozen) tiny chips of much weathered clam and oyster shell on the ground surface. Additionally, there was one small piece of late 19th to early 20th century white ware (a base ring fragment from a plate or bowl) visible on the surface. The ground surface consisted of dusty, grass and weed covered humus with a fair quantity of granite chip gravel mixed in. The gravel presumably comes from the gravel-paved driveway of the adjacent house to the south, 352 Harbor Road; the driveway in fact encroaches on the development site, according to the April 24, 1987 topographic survey (See Figure 7). Trowel tests in lot 77 reveal that the humus/topsoil is approximately 5 centimeters thick, covering apparently sterile reddish-yellow sand.

The majority of the surface of Lot 141 is grass-covered, with some wild flowers, and seem to have been utilized as yard/garden space by the adjacent house to the south at 18 Samuel Place (See Figure 6). No traces of culturally significant features were noted in the lot.

The fact that the topography of the site has been changed over time can be seen by comparing the 1987 Topographic Survey of the area (Figure 7) with the 1909 survey (Figure 8). Since the stream course has been modified within that time, the comparison can not be absolutely precise, but is close enough to demonstrate the changes in contour. As can be seen in Figure 8, where the modern lots are superimposed on the 1909 survey, most of lot 143 was lower than the 12 foot contour of the survey and all but the Harbor Road frontage of the other lots was below 14 feet. About twenty-five feet on either side of the stream was much lower and rather steeply sloped to the level of the stream which ranged from 10 feet at the Harbor Road frontage to 8.8/8.9 feet at the western edge of the current development site. Today the lot elevations are generally one to two feet higher than in the 1909 survey. Based both on the differences in elevation and on the presence of subsoils on much of the lot surfaces, apparently much of the

development site was filled in order to create a level surface sometime in the years since 1909. As can be seen in the 1909 map, a concrete headwall was in place at the western edge of Harbor Road where the stream entered the culvert under the road, and the streambed east of Harbor Road had already been straightened. The date of the concrete headwall now in place could not be determined from observation.

PREHISTORY

Prehistoric occupation in the northeast, including the New York City area, has been divided into the following periods: Paleo-Indian, 10,500 - 8000 B.C., Archaic, 8000 - 1300 B.C., Transitional, 1300 - 1000 B.C., and Woodland, 1000 B.C. - historic occupation. The Archaic and Woodland periods have been subdivided into Early, Middle, and Late phases as follows: Early Archaic, 8000 - 6000 B.C., Middle Archaic, 6000 - 4000 B.C., Late Archaic, 4000 - 1300 B.C., Early Woodland, 1000 - 300 B.C., Middle Woodland, 300 B.C. - 1000 A.D., Late Woodland, 1000 A.D. - European contact. Each of these periods is characterized by particular economic bases settlement types.

The Paleo-Indian hunted now extinct mammoth, mastodon and other Pleistocene animals and their remains are primarily campsites. The micro-climate has changed since the time of the Paleo-Indian and with it the coastline and sea levels. Paleo-Indian sites are often along areas of low, swampy ground which were once lakes or on very high, protected areas (Ritchie 1980:7). Within New York City, Paleo-Indian remains have been excavated at the Port Mobil site on Staten Island, and worked stone implements of Paleo-Indian type have been found at additional locations within that borough, including Charleston Beach, Kreischerville, and the Cutting Site (*Ibid.*: pp. xvii f. and map, pp. 4f; Louis Berger 1988:2ff). In predicting the location of Paleo-Indian sites, it must be remembered that the topography of Staten Island and its surrounding region have changed considerably since the beginning of the Neothermal period. The discovery of the remains of land-based megafauna such as mammoth and mastodon on the Atlantic Ocean floor along the Continental Shelf opposite the New York - New Jersey sea coast serves as a reminder that the geography of the New York area has been altered considerably since antiquity, and that microhabitats such as the stream that flowed adjacent to the project area may have been radically different during the earlier periods of prehistory (Chesler 1982:20). However, the Paleo-Indian sites of Staten Island are clustered along what is now the Arthur Kill and the probability of such remains being present on the site is extremely low.

The Early Archaic was characterized by small hunting camps. According to the Landmarks Commission study for a city-wide archaeological predictive model, such sites do not have great archaeological visibility, nor are they likely to be associated with particular land forms (Baughner *et al.* 1982:10). Finds from other portions of the U.S. Northeast indicate that during the Middle Archaic there was a large increase of population. As yet, there is little evidence of this time period in the New York City region and thus it is especially important to watch for remains from this era. Discoveries of Middle Archaic components are

necessary in order to define occurrence-characteristics and increase the accuracy of future predictions of site occurrence.

For the Late Archaic, sites are most likely to be found in littoral areas (Baughner et al. 1982: 10-11, Ritchie 1980:143). Block 1249, situated along a stream and not far from a marsh area near the Staten Island shore would seem then in theory to have some potential for Archaic utilization .

Littoral areas and the zones along major inland water ways such as the Hudson are also known to have been settled during Transitional times. As yet, there is not a large enough body of information to accurately predict Transitional site occurrence within New York City in anything except the most general terms.²

In the Woodland period, many different kinds of settlements existed. Permanent and semi-permanent settlements, villages, as well as seasonal campsites and food gathering/processing stations, are characteristic (McManamon and Bradley 1988:100-101). Agriculture was practiced, although this development may date only to the end of the Late Woodland period, following the first contact with Europeans (Ceci 1982:2-36). Shellfish collecting sites at tidal inlets are particularly well represented in this period, although this may simply be a reflection of the fact that the tidal zones were less likely to have been disturbed by subsequent city development than were inland areas. In the mid-17th century, high hills near streams, rivers and agricultural fields, and fishing places were favored by the Indians for settlement.

At the time of European contact and Dutch settlement, the northern part of Staten Island was settled by Indians of the so-called Hackensack "chieftaincy" of the Delaware group. Below the hills extending from St. George to Richmond, the Indians were of the Raritan subdivision of the Delaware group. Both subdivisions were probably Munsee-speaking (Jacobson 1980:11-12 and footnotes). After skirmishes with the European settlers and three sales to them of the land of Staten Island (called by the Indians "Eghquaons" and "Aquehonga-Monacknong"), virtually all Amerindians left the area in 1675-76 (Jacobson 1980:11-12, Skinner 1909:32-37).

Four Amerindian sites have been located in the Mariner's Harbor section of Staten Island: Arlington, Bowman's Brook, Old Place and the Goodrich site. The first three were recorded by Skinner and first published in 1909 (Skinner 1909:5-9) (See Figures 9 and 10). The latter site was excavated in more recent times (Eisenberg 1982:37).

2. Ritchie 1980:150-178 for general characteristics and distribution of Transitional remains.

The Arlington site was located on South Avenue, immediately opposite the Arlington stop of the SIRT, on what had been a large, low sandy knoll. Several large midden deposits of Late Archaic through Woodland date were found in the area.

The Bowman's Brook site was located on the Kill van Kull, along Bowman's Brook. A village and cemetery site dating to Woodland times was excavated in the years after the turn of the century. A recent effort to find further remains of the site turned up no evidence despite extensive testing (Kardas and Larrabee 1982b).

Old Place also had a large village site reported by Skinner. Subsequently excavated by Anderson, the site was identified as having occupation dating over the period from Early Archaic through late Woodland (Anderson 1964:50-52).

The Goodrich site, west of South Avenue between Forest Avenue and the Arlington Railroad yards, lay on sandy ground elevated about 20 feet above mean sea level. It was excavated from 1969 through 1972 by six groups of archaeologists and yielded a variety of lithic remains of the Late Archaic period, indicating a short-term camp site (Anderson 1970; Eisenberg 1982). Part of the site had been disturbed by the construction of the railroad; this disturbance was verified by the "pencil-thin" humus layer (Anderson 1970:47). The majority of the cultural materials were retrieved from the first 15 inches of the yellow/orange sand stratum, which underlay the humus and a layer of brown earth (Eisenberg 1982:44,54ff).

Although all of these sites are in the area of Staten Island characterized either today or in the past as Mariner's Harbor, all of them are well west and/or north of the Harbor Road project site, closer to the shorelines of Staten Island. The Amerindian remains were characteristically in sandy soil, within a foot or two of the surface (Ritchie 1969:146-148; Kardas and Larrabee 1982b:32). Such soils may be what appear on the Harbor Road side of Lot 77, under an extremely thin humus layer which may indicate modern disturbance,

HISTORIC PERIOD

The property which eventually was to become the Harbor Road site entered modern documentation as part of 126 acres, including Shooters Island, granted to James Graham in 1680. Graham, a Scotsman, arrived in New York after the British conquest and eventually became wealthy and important in local society (Davis and Leng 1930:901; Skene 1907). There is no indication of any construction on the project site at that time.

During the 18th century, the pathway which was to become Forest Road was in use, eventually being called Old Place Road and Washington Avenue before acquiring today's appellation (Leng and Davis 1896; McMillen 1933; McMillen 1946:14; Clute 1877:234f.). Although there may have been a small structure along Forest Road at the intersection with Harbor Road towards the end of the 18th century, the cartographic evidence is conflicting on that point and nothing is indicated for the project site itself (See Figures 11 and 12).

By 1845 the land has been cleared as fields, but no structures appear on the project site (US Coast Survey, map 35). The property north of the development site contained a structure owned by D. Zeluff, who gave his name to a street on the east side of Harbor Road. This situation continued well into the 19th century (Dripps 1850, Butler 1853, Beers 1874), but the project site itself was still not the site of construction or obvious occupation (See Figure 13).

By 1874, the project property was owned by J. Sterling Drake, a merchant who owned several lots in the area including the building at the northeast corner of Harbor Road and Washington (Forest) Avenue which housed his store (Beers 1874) (See Figure 14). Drake, a descendent of the early Staten Island settler Benjamin Drake and active in community affairs, sided with the contractors building a garbage disposal plant at Lake's Island. This vigorous battle took place in 1916; Drake posted men in a house on the site to protect the property; the opposition removed the house by derrick with the men inside. The pro-disposal plant forces nevertheless won and the plant was in operation by 1917 (Davis and Leng 1930:368ff., 891). The reason Drake sided with the pro-plant forces was probably to increase his businesses. He not only ran a general store but was a commercial and residential real estate agent.³ Eventually he became a successful real estate

³In Trow 1898 Drake was listed under dry goods in the business directory but called a grocer in the residential section. In addition, he had placed an ad in the directory stressing his

broker, moving to Westerleigh, opening an office on Rector Street in Manhattan and giving up his shop (Richmond 1911). The growing extent of his property holdings can be seen in the cartographic evidence as well; by 1909 he has acquired much of the surrounding property, including the Van Name and Sarter lots (houses built by 1874) (Robinson 1909). Drake still owned the project property in 1917 (Bromley).

Parallel to and west of Harbor Road, a new road, Samuel Place, ran from Forest and divided the lots owned by Drake. The road delimits the west side of the Harbor Road project. This road does not appear to have been constructed by 1923, when a survey of the property of John R. Snyder shows planned lot divisions along Dublin Place (alternatively on the map also Johnson Place) which seem to include the northernmost part of the property eventually to become Samuel Place.⁴ Samuel Place may have been created as part of a planned subdivision called Harbor Gardens, the survey for which was done on July 22, 1926.⁵ The Harbor Gardens survey indicated a plan to construct houses on lots with 20-foot frontages on both Harbor Road and Samuel Place, up to and including the property for the Harbor Road project site.

The plans obviously changed before the execution of the 1926 project; perhaps the Depression intervened. Today the Harbor Road project property is still vacant and the sites to the south that finally had residential structures built on them have 30-foot frontages. More than the current project site was left unbuilt of the original 1926 Harbor Gardens plan; gas stations and vacant property at the south end of the block 1249 replace the planned housing units. Nevertheless, it is possible that the leveling of the Harbor Road project site might date to site preparation for the Harbor Gardens project during the 1920's. Alternatively, the leveling might have been done at the time of construction of the houses to the south of the project site under consideration, which appear, from architectural styles, to have been constructed in the 1930's or 1940's.

At some time during this same period, an eight-inch sanitary

business in commercial and residential real estate, noting as an aside his general store. He dealt in "Water Fronts, Factory Property, Terminal Lands, Etc." and noted he was "Owner of the Best" (19,28).

⁴This plan is filed in the Topographic Bureau, Staten Island Borough Hall. The survey is dated December 1923 and was signed by Charles Strohmeier.

⁵Plan is on file in the Topographic Bureau, Staten Island Borough Hall. The survey was dated July 22, 1926 and signed by F. Kennedy.

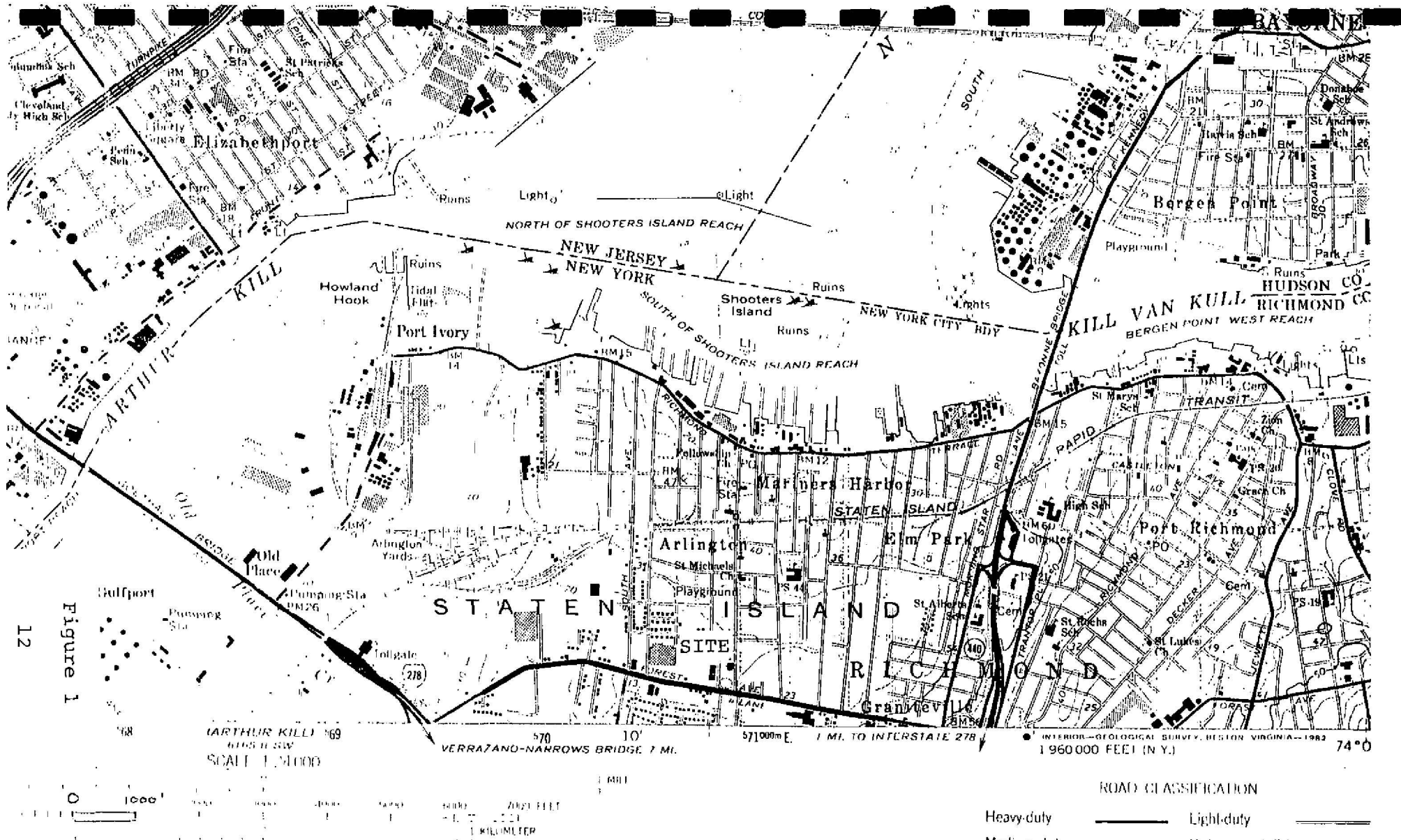
sewer was run from Harbor Road to Samuel Place along the southern edge of lot 77 and across the southern part of lot 143. Presumably the laying of this sewer created some disturbance along the line of the pipe.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As far as can be determined from a detailed cartographic survey, the site of the Harbor Road project, Block 1249, lots 75, 77, 141, and 143, Staten Island has not had construction on it in historic times, so there is no likelihood of significant historic remains. However, with the exception of the narrow line along the sewer pipe, this lack of historic period construction means that any prehistoric cultural materials would not have been disturbed by construction. In fact, there are indications, from both cartographic evidence and the site survey, that the site has been filled to raise the surface of the lots to that of the surrounding areas. Such landfilling might protect any prehistoric remains on the site.

The matter of prehistoric sensitivity of the site cannot be clearly determined on the basis of existing information. As discussed above, Amerindian remains on Staten Island have been found primarily in sandy soils. Since no core borings have been completed for the project site, the nature of the soils under the presumed landfilling cannot be determined and sandy soils do exist on lot 77, although there is no way to determine if they are in primary context. In addition, the site is directly adjacent to a source of fresh water, which could have attracted Amerind occupation, if only on an intermittent or temporary basis. Although the course of the water appears to have been altered in some degree, that alteration seems to have been small. And several major Amerind sites from a range of time periods have been found within two miles of the project site.

The above factors, taken together, indicate that there is a possibility, although not a probability, that prehistoric remains might be found on the Harbor Road project site. Since the probability is not high, the time and money required for a separate Stage IB field survey is not warranted. However, we recommend that a qualified archaeologist be present at the site at the time core borings are done and that the archaeologist be permitted to determine that the core borings done are sufficient to determine the nature of the presumed landfilling and the probable presence or absence of Amerind cultural remains on the site. If core borings are not going to be done prior to foundation excavation for the proposed project, then we recommend that a qualified archaeologist be present on the project site during the excavation of the foundation areas for the project. If the archaeologist determines that Amerind cultural remains are present, the foundation excavations would have to be halted until the materials are evaluated by the qualified archaeologist, in consultation with the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.



THIS MAP COMPILED WITH DATA FROM MAPS AT GEOGRAPHIC STANDARDS
 FOR SALE BY THE GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
 OTHER INFORMATION, GEOGRAPHIC DATA AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Revisions shown in purple and woodland compiled from aerial
 photographs taken 1976 and other sources
 This information not field checked. - Map edited 1981

ELIZABETH, N. J. - N. Y.
 N4017.5 W7407.5/7.5

1967
 PHOTOREVISED 1981
 UMA 6185 II NW-SERIES V822

Site Location - USGS Topo, Elizabeth Quadrangle

Plan provided by Luria Assoc.
undated

Figure 2
Site Location

R3-2

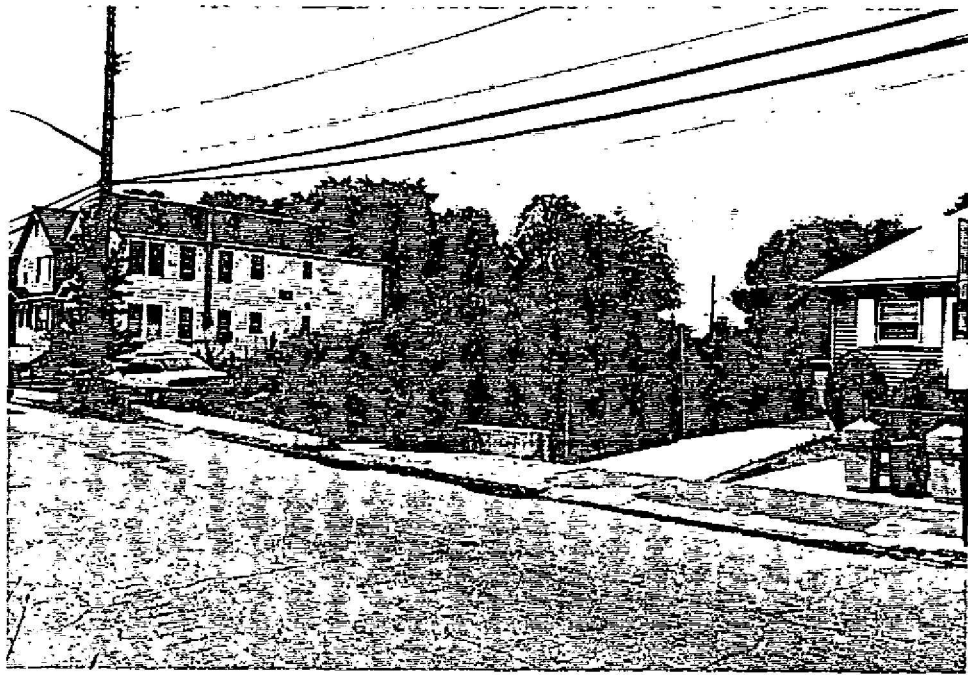


Figure 4a View of site from Northeast
Harbor Road in foreground
(Winter photo)



Figure 4b View of lot 75 from East
Note concrete headwall over watercourse
(Winter photo)

Figure 4 - Views of Site

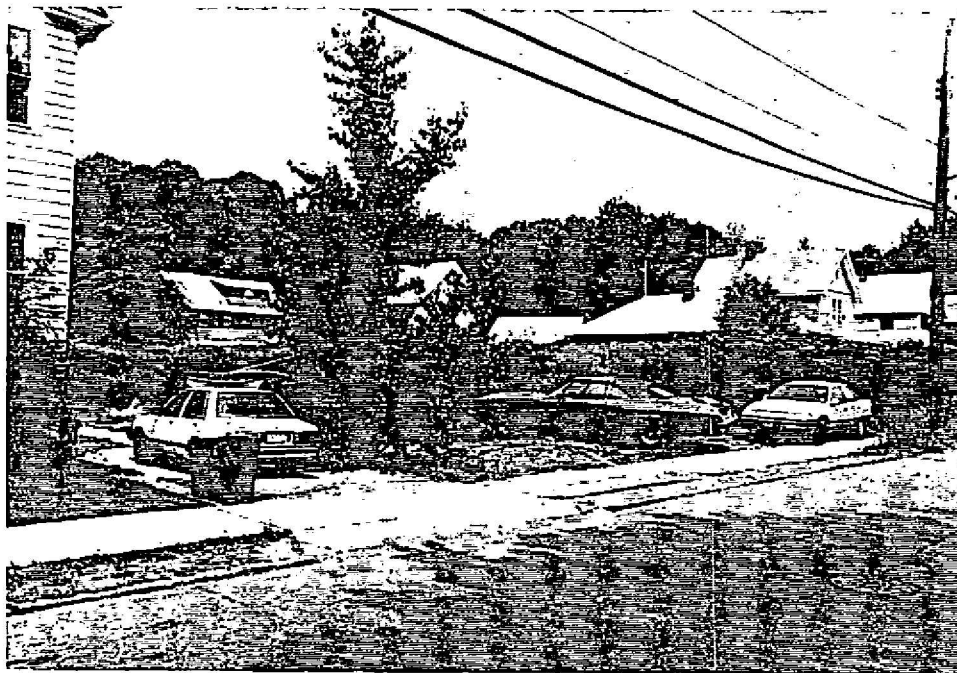


Figure 5a View of site from Southeast
Cars and boat parked on Lot 77

(Winter photo)

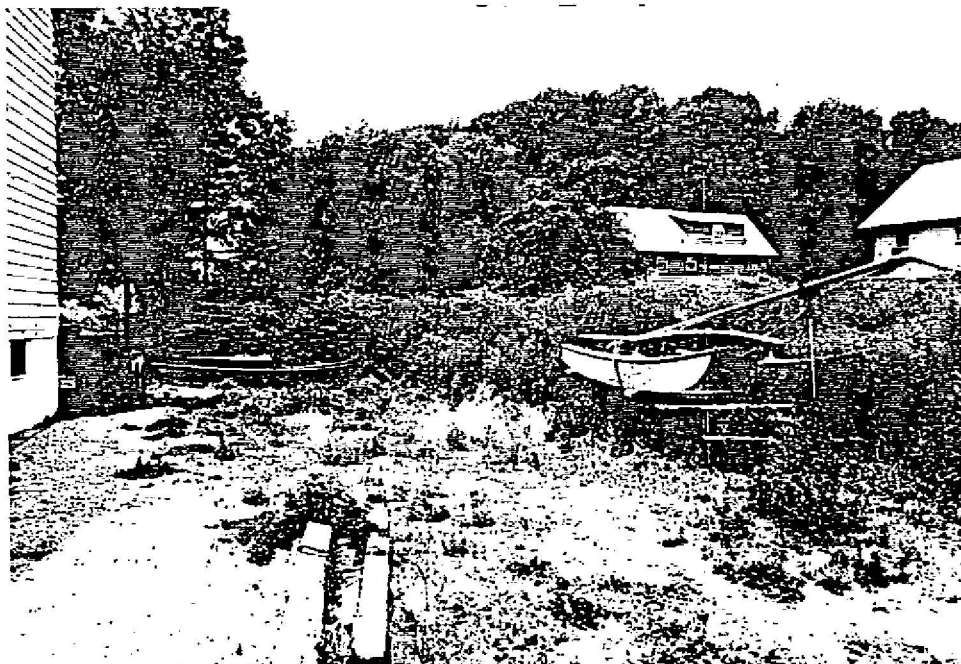
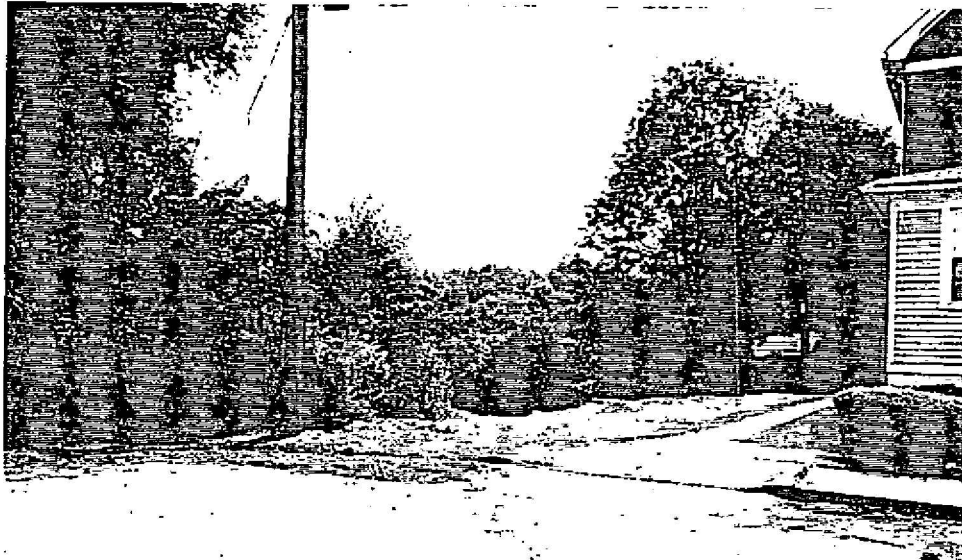


Figure 5b View of rear of lot 77, with lots 141 and 143
in background - photo from East

(Winter photo)

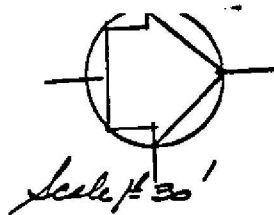
Figure 5 - Views of Site



View of lots 141 and 143 from Southwest
Samuel Place in foreground
Note lawn and garden on lot 141

(Winter photo)

Figure 6 - View of Site



April 24, 1987
Francis B. De Luca
Surveyor
Survey provided by
Luria Associates

TOTAL AREA = 15,604 Sq. Ft.

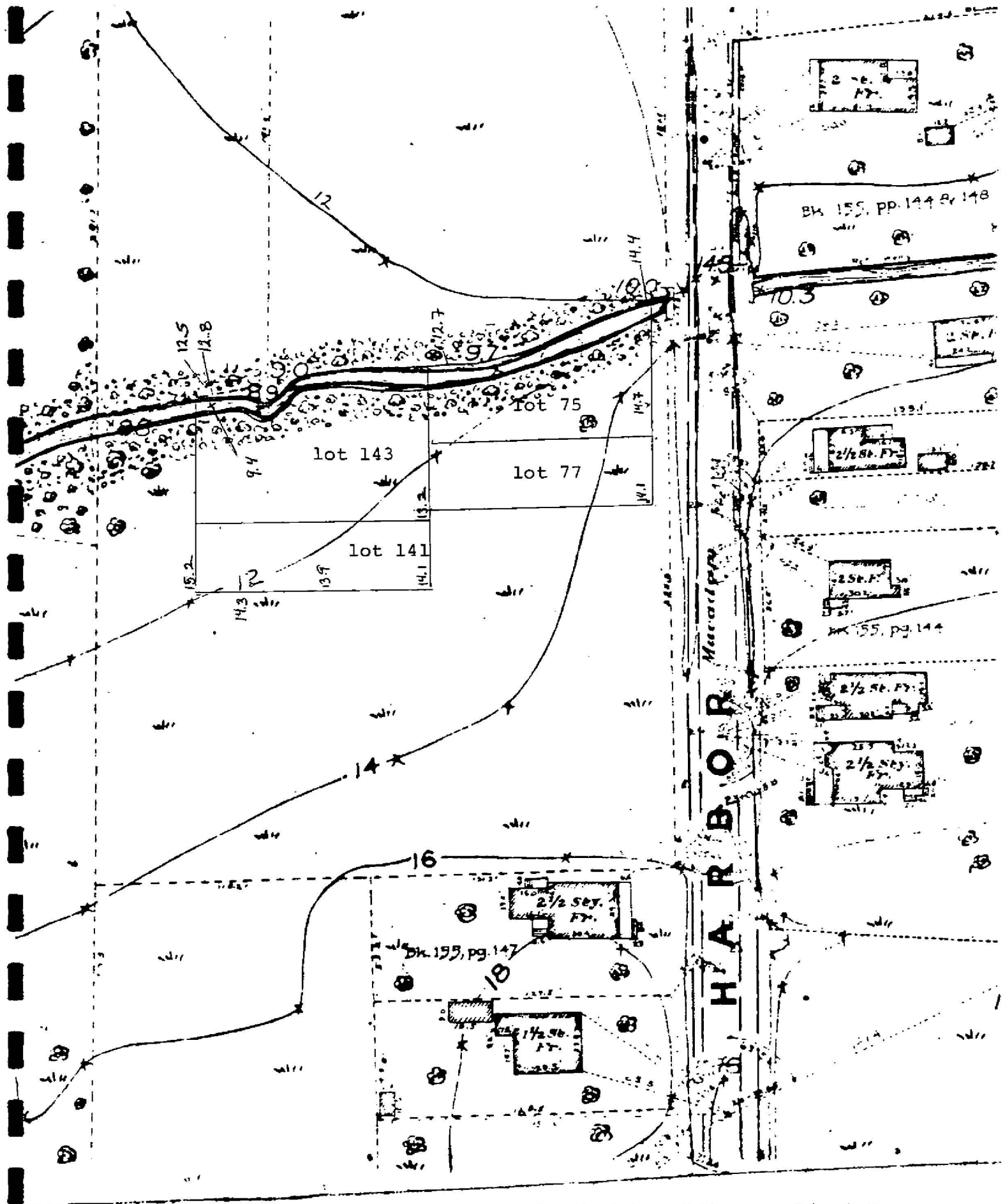
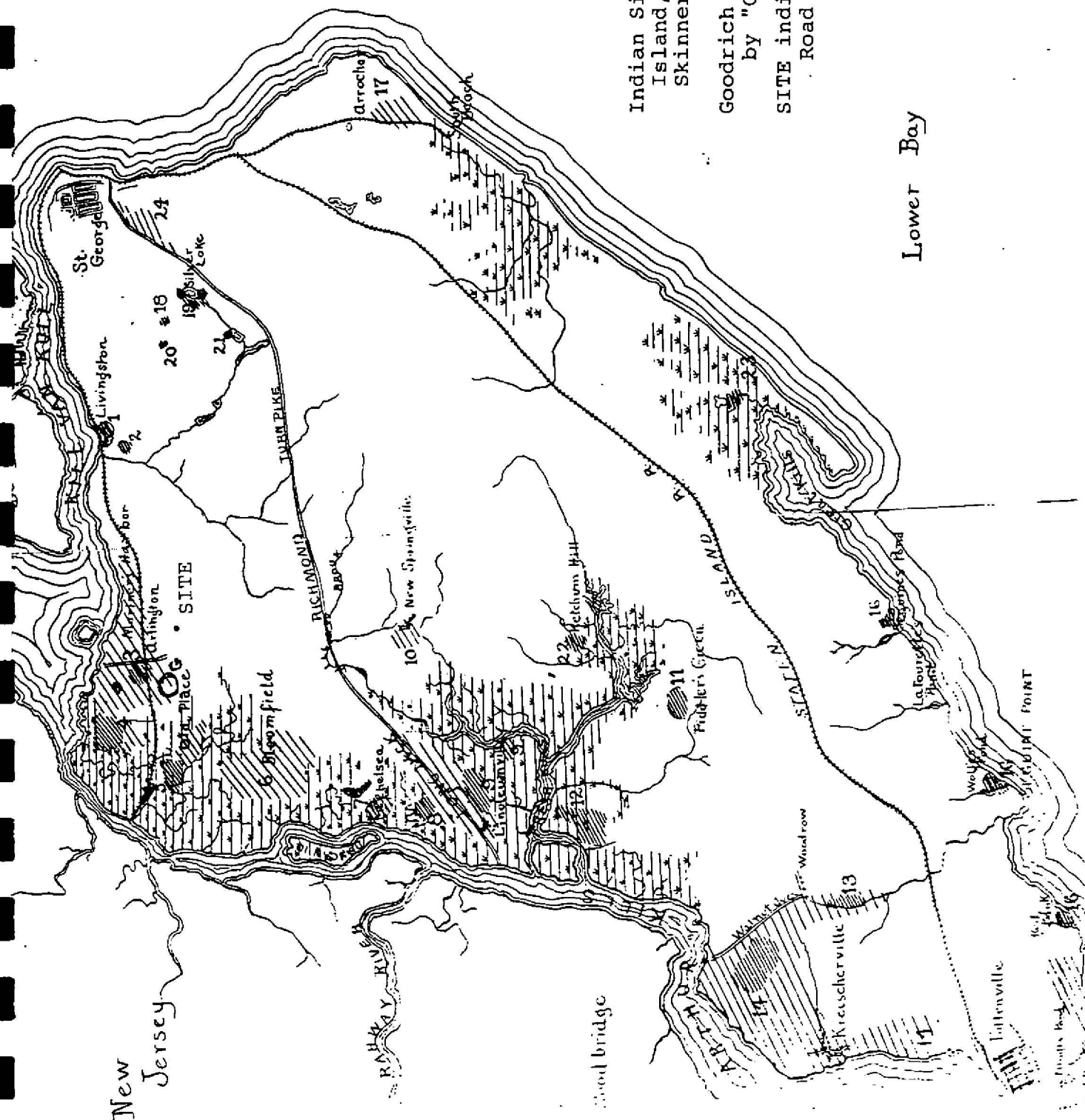


Figure 8 - 1909 Borough of Richmond Topographical Survey
with project site and current elevations
superimposed. Harbor Road is wider today than
in 1909. Scale 1" = 150'



Indian Sites on Staten
Island, after
Skinner 1909:62f.

Goodrich site, noted
by "G", added

SITE indicates Harbor
Road project

Lower Bay

Figure 9

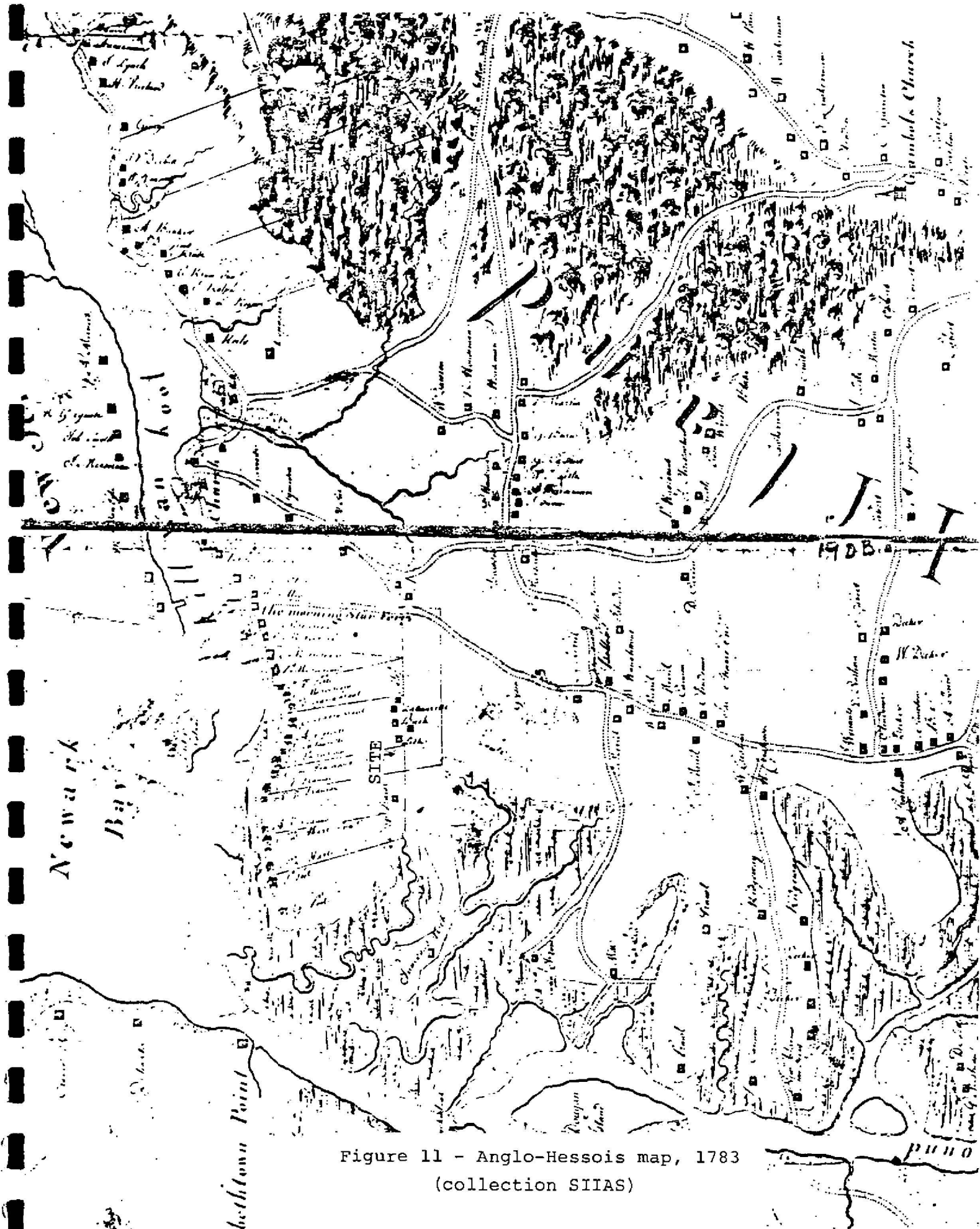


Figure 11 - Anglo-Hessois map, 1783
(collection SIIAS)

Newark Bay

Bergen Point

KILL

N M O

STILL

Decker's Ferry

THE

NORTH

ELD

Swamp

Grass

Dongan's Is.

Fresh Kills

Cannon's Pt.

Long Neck

New Blaring Star Ferry

3

Figure 12 - Staten Island During the Revolution, McMillen (Collection SIIAS)

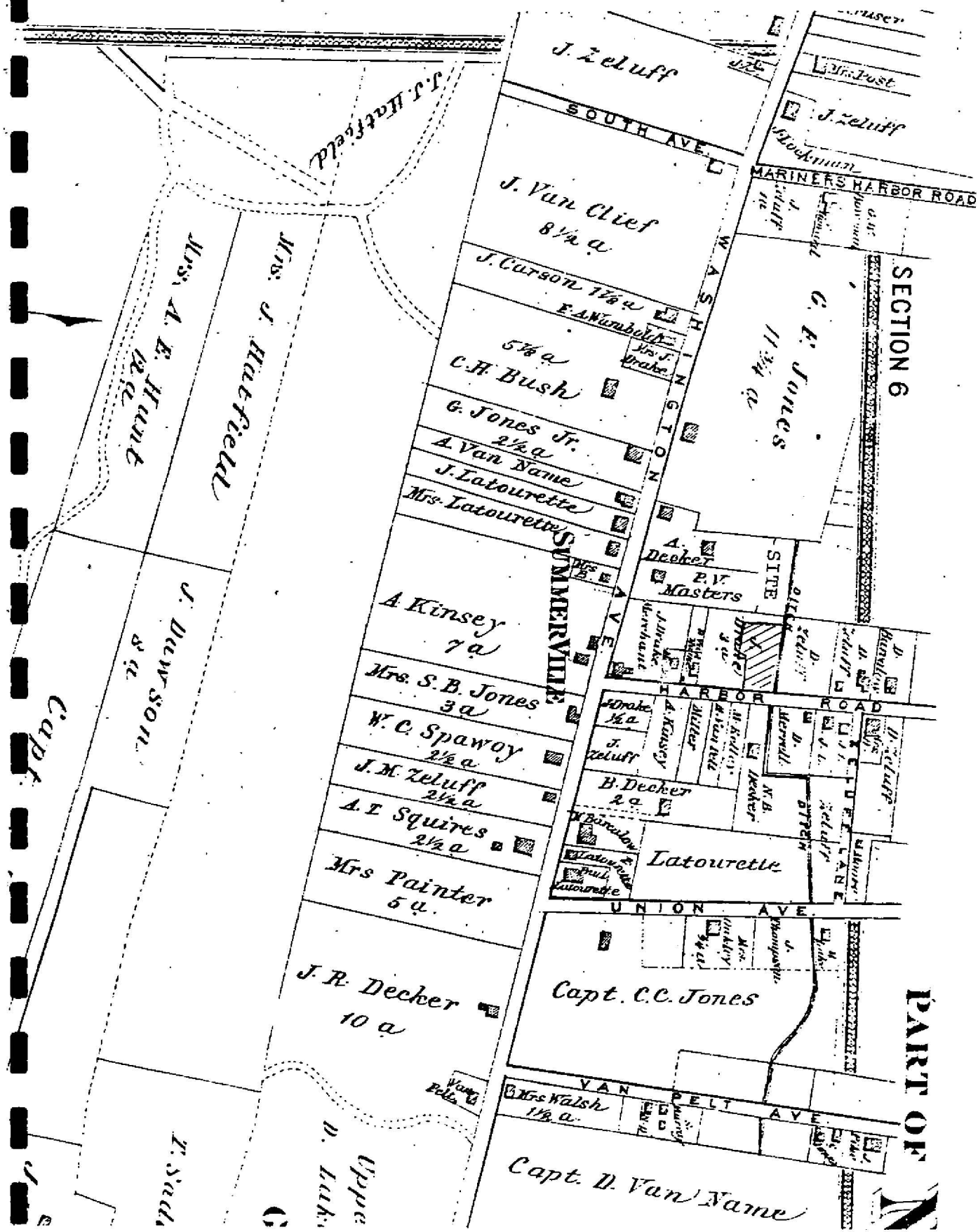


Figure 14 - Beers 1874
 Collection Staten Island Institute of Arts
 and Sciences
 Scale ca. 400' = 1" Site location approximate

MAPS AND ATLASES CONSULTED

1668-1712	Skene 1907, Map of Colonial Land Patents
1775-1783	McMillen, Map of S.I. During the Revolution
1783	Plan No. 31 du Camp Anglo-Hessois
1836-39	U.S. Coast Survey, published 1845
1850	Dripps, Map of Staten Island
1853	Butler, Map of Staten Island
1859	Walling, Map of Staten Island
1874	J.B. Beers, Richmond County
1885	Sanborn, Richmond County
1887	J.B. Beers, Atlas of Richmond County
1896	Leng and Davis, Map of SI with Ye Olde Names
1898	E. Robinson, Atlas of the Borough of Richmond
1898	Sanborn, Richmond County
1898	USGS Topographic Sheet, New York-New Jersey Quad
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1910	Sanborn, Richmond County
1917	G.W. Bromley, Atlas of the Borough of Richmond
1917	Sanborn, Atlas of the Borough of Richmond, vol II.
1920	USGS Topographic Sheet, New York-New Jersey Quad
1923	Survey of property of John A. Snyder
1926	Survey of Harbor Gardens
1932	USGS Topographic Sheet, New York-New Jersey Quad
1917-35	Sanborn, Atlas of the Borough of Richmond
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