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B5533 on USF Map

STAGE 1A ARCHAEOLOGICAL/HISTORICAL  
SENSITIVITY EVALUATION OF  
BLOCK-5532, LOT 127  
BOROUGH OF RICHMOND, NEW YORK

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ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

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LANDMARKS PRESERVATION  
COMMISSION

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to document the potential prehistoric and historic sensitivity of Block 5532, Lot 127, Staten Island, New York through the review of existing archival, cartographic and published references and then to make recommendations regarding possible further testing. In order to provide a context for evaluating any identified resources within the parcel itself, this survey will provide a synthesis of published and unpublished prehistoric and historic resources in the immediate vicinity surrounding the project area.

The project area is located in western Staten Island, New York, in the vicinity of Greenridge. The property consists of a roughly rectangular parcel located along the south side of Arthur Kill Road west of Ridgewood Avenue. See Figure 1 for a map illustrating the location of the project area.

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





## 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 (Long Island) where this province occurs (Van Diver 1985:34). Geographically, Staten Island is part of New Jersey from which it is separated by the Kill Van Kull and the Staten Island Sound (Skinner 1909).

The geomorphology of Staten Island consists of landforms and deposits of glacial origin. The sediments were deposited by the Wisconsin Ice Sheet 55,000 to 10,000 years ago and generally consist of ground moraine, terminal moraine and outwash settlement (Jacobson 1980:5). The shoreline area in this portion of Staten Island is comprised of sandy embankments of beach and adjacent to and at times overlying the area's geologically earlier glacial deposits of Cretaceous formations of sand and clay (Weingartner 1967:41). Local glacial deposits may be overlaid by fill as well as beach, marsh, dune, swamp, and estuarine deposits (Jacobson 1980:5).

There is a high ridge which runs down the northern half of the island formed by a large Ordovician serpentinite body (Okulewicz 1990). The southern and eastern portions of the island consist of low hills with a relatively flat sandy strip running along the eastern shore. The topography of the island owes much the glacial activity. The hills of the southern half of the island were formed by the terminal moraine of the Laurentide Ice Sheet (Okulewicz 1990). One important feature is a large marshy area in the west central region of the island, formed by a number of creeks known collectively as the Fresh Kills.



## PREHISTORIC SENSITIVITY

As part of the project evaluation process, the sensitivity study has surveyed published and unpublished resources in the archives and library of the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences (hereafter SIAS), the library of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, the files of the New York State Museum Division of Historical and Anthropological Services, the Research Branch of the New York Public Library, and the New York State Historic Preservation Office (NYSHPO). Most documented prehistoric archaeological work undertaken by both profession and avocational archaeologists has historically concentrated on the southwestern portion of Staten Island (Baugher 1985: personal communication). The problems of inadequate archaeological survey coverage particularly evident in the interior of the island may also be found in this location.

Table 1 presents the results of our search for prehistoric sites in the vicinity of the project area. Included in the table are nine 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.

Of the nine known occurrences of prehistoric occupation within two miles of the project area, four were excavated recently under controlled conditions. Four represent the work of professional archaeologist early in this century. Two professional archaeologist are included: Skinner and Parker.

Alanson Skinner, one of the first professional archaeologists to work extensively on Staten Island, characterized the locations chosen by prehistoric populations as follows:

Throughout Staten Island, with very few exceptions, aboriginal sites are confined to the sandy spots (1912:90).

Arthur C. Parker was New York State Archaeologist during the 1920s and 1930s. Many of the sites he included in his summary of the prehistory of Staten Island were originally reported by Skinner.

The nearest site to the project area is Parker's site ACP-RICH-11, also numbered 4601 by the New York State Museum. This site lies approximately 0.6 miles southwest of the project area. See A in Figure 1 and Table 2. Parker's description of this site is obviously taken from Skinner's description of the Greenridge Site, so there may be confusion about the location. A on Figure 1 is the location recorded by the New York State Museum, while B is based on Skinner's description.

The prehistoric site *Green Ridge*, designated B on Table 1 and Figure 2, located approximately 0.7 miles west of the project area, was reported by Alanson Skinner, an early twentieth century archaeologist with the American Museum of Natural History. Generally defining and locating the Green Ridge site as "a camp site" between "Journey (Woodrow) Avenue and Annadale Road, near Richmond Plank Road" (Arthur Kill road), he reported that "early relics" were found (Skinner 1909:10). Further research in the archives of the SIAS located the Metropolitan Area Archaeological Survey, Site Survey Sheet, recorded by Dr. Bert Salwen in 1967, in which he reported that artifacts recovered at the Green Ridge site included a fragment of a grooved slate bannerstone, "one chipped implement blank" and a fragment of a celt (Salwen 1967). Salwen, however, issued a warning that since these artifacts were found by various collectors, "... we can't be sure that these come from [the] area described by Skinner!" (ibid.).



C in Figure 2 and Table 1 refers to the Fiddler's Green Site. This site was reported by Pickman and Yamin during 1985 as part of the survey for sewer lines associated with the Oakwood Beach Water Pollution Control Project. The Fiddler's Green Site lies approximately 0.8 miles southwest of the project area.

The next nearest site to the project area is the Ketchum's Mill Site, numbered A085-01-0112 by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. It lies approximately 0.8 miles northeast of the project area. See D in Figure 2 and Table 1.

The Richmond Hill Site lies approximately 1.1 miles northeast of the project area. It is designated E in Table 1 and Figure 2. Three loci dating to the Archaic and Woodland periods was reported by Anderson during 1976.

F in Table 1 and Figure 2 refers to a site numbered STD-CAB by the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences. They record it as a Woodland period camp. Site F lies approximately 1.5 miles west of the project area.

The next nearest site to the project area is designated G in Table 1 and Figure 2. It refers to a campsite recorded by Parker on his maps but not described in his text. It is numbered 4626 by the New York State Museum. Site G lies approximately 1.7 miles northwest of the project area.

Skinner also reported a small village site on Lake's Meadow Island, also known as Lake's Island. See H in Table 1 and Figure 2. This site lies approximately 1.8 miles northwest of the project area. Lake's Island was a point of land formed by the confluence of Great Fresh Kills and Fresh Kills. The site is described as a small shell heap and "early relics of Indian origin," which included "arrowheads" (Skinner 1909:10). The Metropolitan Area Archaeological Survey, Site Survey Sheet recorded by Salwen in 1967 reported the site as a small village and campsite. Lake's Island is now "under the garbage incinerating works (Salwen 1967). A 1966 letter from Donald Sainz to Gail Schneider, former archivist with the SIIAS, stated that "the entire region has been destroyed" (Sainz, April 7, 1966). Through the years, various collectors have recorded artifacts which included burnt stones, projectile points, lithic debitage, shells, scrapers, netsinkers, hammerstones, blanks, a bannerstone, and a fragment of a grooved axe. One collector, Peter Decker, "... picked up 90 points in a single day's visit to Lake Island" (ibid.). As stated above, the Lake Island area has experienced major disturbances since at least the 1940s. The Department of Sanitation "... bulldozed Lake's Island sands into a huge mound ..." and "... the site was first wiped out ..." prior to the dumping process (Sainz October 16, 1973). The area was bulldozed and a channel dredged across the island.

The final prehistoric site found during this search is the Huguenot Site, designated I in Table 1 and on Figure 2. This site has been located near Arthur Kill Road, 1.9 miles west of the project area based on recent information supplied by local archaeologist Albert Anderson (Geismar 1985:28). Geismar feels that this may represent the western edge of the Lake's Island site. If so, then that site would be nearly 1½ miles across.

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

1. the proximity of known prehistoric sites in or near the project area; and
2. the presence of fresh water drainage courses in general, and particularly the identification of river or stream confluence situations where two or more



drainages come together, providing access to both water and food supplies of both systems.

This survey has documented the recorded or published location of no less than sites within a two mile radius of the Block 5532 project area. The project area is situated on high ground approximately 1000 feet to the south of the marsh adjacent to Richmond Creek. This marsh would have attracted game, making the project area a possible location for a hunting camp.

Table 1  
Prehistoric Sites in the Vicinity of Block 5532

Site Name	Registration #	Reference	Period(s)	Description
A. ---	ACP-RICH-11 NYSM 4601	Parker 1922:682		Campsite
B. Greenridge	STD 19-3 NYSM 745	Skinner 1909:10		Campsite
C. Fiddler's Green	A085-01-0005	Pickman & Yamin 1984		
D. Ketchum's Mill	A085-01-0112			
E. Richmond Hill	A085-01-0109	Anderson 1976	Archaic & Woodland	
F. ---	STD-CAB	SIIAS	Woodland	Campsite
G. ---	ACP-RICH NYSM 4626	Parker 1922:Pl. 211		Campsite
H. Lake's Island	STD 1 ACP-RICH NYSM 4625	Skinner 1909:10 Salwen 1967 Parker 1922:Pl. 211	Woodland?	Village
I. Huguenot		Anderson 1964 Geismar 1985	Middle Woodland	



## HISTORIC SENSITIVITY

Staten Island was known as Aquehonga Manacknong by the bands of Lenape Indians who inhabited it during the seventeenth century, although the variant, Eghquaons, is used in the earliest Dutch document (Grumet 1981:2). Other versions exist, but these two are found in seventeenth century documents.

In 1626 the island was bought from the natives by the director of the Dutch West India Company. Michael Pauw was given a patent of patroonship in 1630, but he relinquished it to the Dutch West India Company. The company sold the patent to David Peters de Vries who established the first permanent settlement of Europeans on the island in 1638. In 1640 an Indian war broke out which brought destruction to the settlement. The Dutch West India Company granted Cornelius Melyn all of Staten Island in 1641 except for the de Vries farm (Historical Records Survey 1942:xiv). Ten years later, Melyn granted Hendrick van der Capellan a deed for one third of the island (ibid.:sv). Upon the death of Capellan in 1659, Melyn sold his interest to the company thus ending the patroon system on Staten Island (ibid.:xvi).

The British assumed control of the colony of Nieuw Amsterdam from the Dutch West India Company in 1664. Governor Francis Lovelace made the final purchase of Staten Island from the Indians in 1670. The English made all of Staten Island into a single town with Nicholas Stillwell as the first constable. Lovelace set up two villages on the island. Old Dorp or town and New Dorp, and granted patents to several people (Historical Records Survey 1942:xviii).

The next governor, Thomas Dongan, divided the colony of New York into counties with Staten Island designated as Richmond County. In March of 1688 Richmond County was partitioned into four towns, Castletown, Northfield, Southfield and Westfield (Bayles 1887:95). The project area lies within the old town of Westfield (ibid.:map facing 1).

Frederick Skene's 1907 Map of Staten Island, tentatively delineating colonial land patents between 1668-1712, places the project area within land granted to Francis Ulston comprising a total of 80 acres patented December 3, 1680. See Figure 3. Skene's map shows Richmond Creek as Karls Neck Run. Leng and Davis' Map of Staten Island With Ye Olde Names and Nicknames labels the project area and vicinity as Karle's Neck.

Staten Island remained under British control throughout the eighteenth century until the end of the Revolutionary War. Approximately 29,000 troops under British command landed on the island during July 1776. Despite this large number of men, there is no evidence that any were stationed within or adjacent to the project area. British officers occupied the Black Horse Tavern at Amboy and Richmond Roads, and Sir William Howe used the Rose and Crown Tavern as his headquarters (Mitchell 1976:27). Both taverns are some distance from the project area.

The late eighteenth century Plan (No. 31) du Anglo-Hessois dans Staten Island shows that there were scattered farmsteads along both sides of the Arthur Kill Road by this time. It is difficult to locate the project area on this map due to its inherent inaccuracy. The project area appears to lie west of a house labeled *S. Beagle*. See Figure 4.



The U.S. Coast Survey Charter of New York Harbor, surveyed 1836-1839 and published 1845, is the earliest available nineteenth century cartographic source. This map shows only one structure in the vicinity of the project area. The project area appears to lie to the east of this farmstead. Richmond Creek and the adjacent marsh are shown to the north of Arthur Kill Road. See Figure 5.

The 1874 Beers Atlas presented here as Figure 6, is the earliest cartographic source to show property lines and structure locations with a fair degree of reliability. The project area lies within the farm of J.S Underhill who owned 240 acres. The project area is vacant.

The 1887 Beers Atlas shows much the same situation as in 1874. By this time the property including the project area is owned by G.W. White. See Figure 7.

Figure 8 is taken from the 1898 Robinson Atlas. The project area is still part of the George W. White property. Structures are shown to the west and south, but the project area itself remains vacant.

The most recent map presented here is from the 1917 Bromley Atlas. See Figure 9. The project area remains within the George W. White property. Structures are shown to the south and west of the project area which remains vacant. The street to the east which is now Ridgewood Avenue is shown with dashed lines.

Later Sanborn atlases continue to show no structures on the project site through the present.

The one factor which raises the site potential sensitivity is the fact that one of the first churches on Staten Island, the 1695 French (Huguenot) Church was constructed in this area. As early as 1930, a marker existed on the corner of Arthur Kill Road and Ridgewood Avenue (*Staten Island Advance* October 19, 1933). Unfortunately, there is no consensus in the histories of the island regarding the date of construction and location of this church.

*Staten Island and It's People* (Leng and Davis 1930) is probably the most reliable of the histories. It places the church on the property of George W. White, specifically near the long barn shown on the 1917 Bromley atlas. They cite Gabriel Disosway who wrote in 1865 that he often visited the site and that a gravestone still stood there (Leng and Davis 1930:434).

Bayles' 1887 *History of Richmond County* includes a transcription of the Belvealle deed to a large tract of property, out of which they deeded one acre to the French Church. This deed locates the larger property between that of Abraham Lacmone (Lakerman) and Francis Oseltone (Ulstone), which agrees with the identification of White's farm. Bayles also states that remains were still visible in the early 1800s, that the church was approximately 32 feet by 45 feet and there was a small stone house (parsonage) to the east.



## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The above text has documented that the Block 5532 project area may preserve archaeological evidence from the prehistoric period. The project area lies within two miles of nine known prehistoric sites. It includes elevated land within 1000 feet of a marsh. The marsh would have attracted game, making it a possible location for a hunting camp.

The section on Historic Sensitivity provides evidence that the 1695 French Church was within the former White Farm. Since the project area was a part of this farm, the church may have been on or adjacent to the project area. There are no maps which accurately portray the church.

We recommend that archaeological testing of the project area be completed prior to any construction activities there. A 50 foot grid pattern of shovel tests should be sufficient to determine the presence or absence of prehistoric and historic resources. Should any evidence of the French Church be discovered, then additional work will be needed. One or more transects should be mechanically excavated down to the top of the subsoil. This surface should be scraped with flat shovels and examined for the presence of burials and other features.



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Skene, Frederick

1907 *Map of Staten Island, Richmond County, New York, Showing the Colonial Land  
Patents from 1668-1712.*

United States Coast Survey Charter of New York Harbor 1836-1839

1845 Map #35.

United States Geological Survey

1966 *Arthur Kill Quadrangle.* 7.5 minute series topographic map. Photorevised 1981.

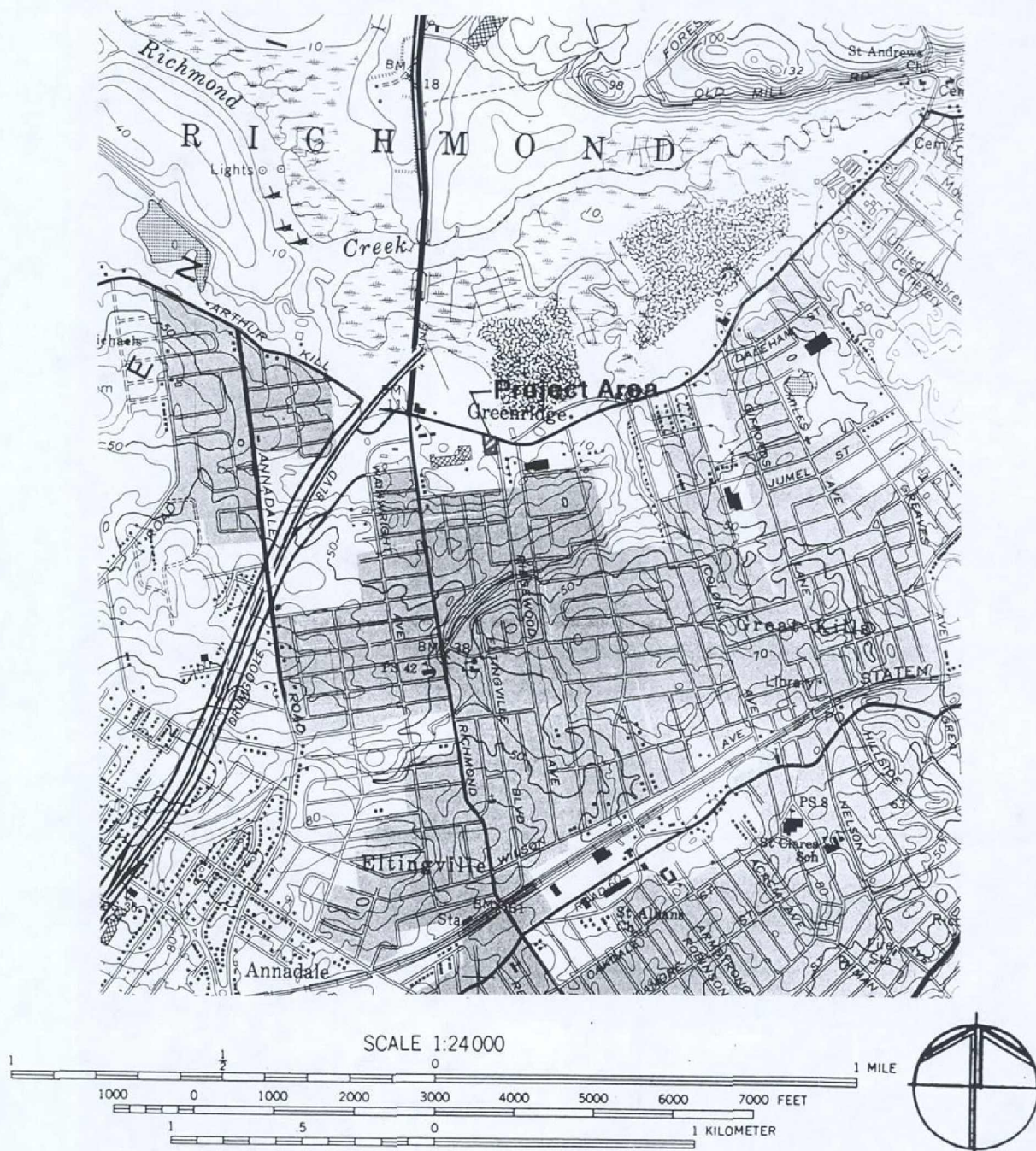


Figure 1 Project area location shown on portion of U.S.G.S. 7.5 minute series Arthur Kill quadrangle, 1966, photorevised 1981.









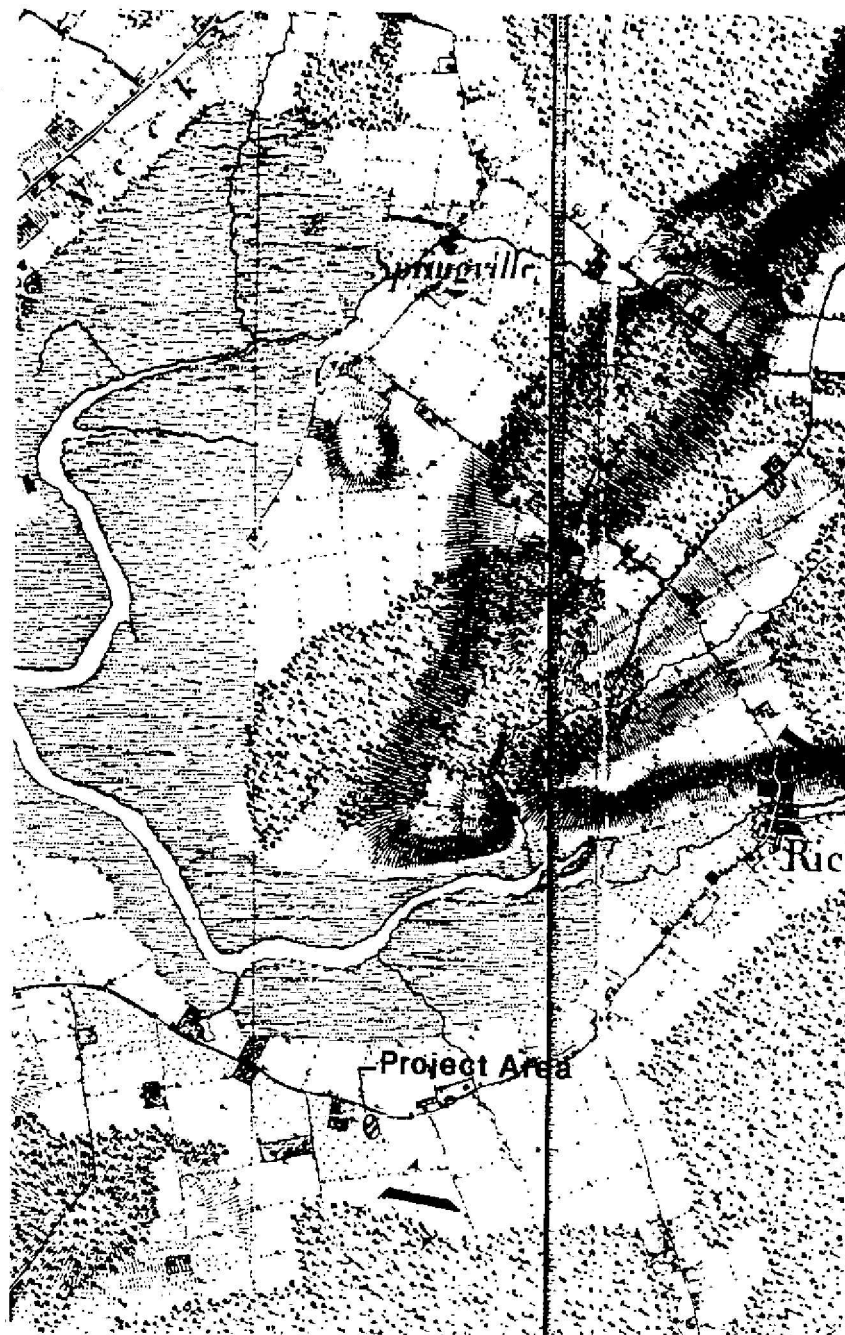


Figure 5 From the U.S. Coast Survey Charter of New York Harbor  
1836-1839, published 1845.



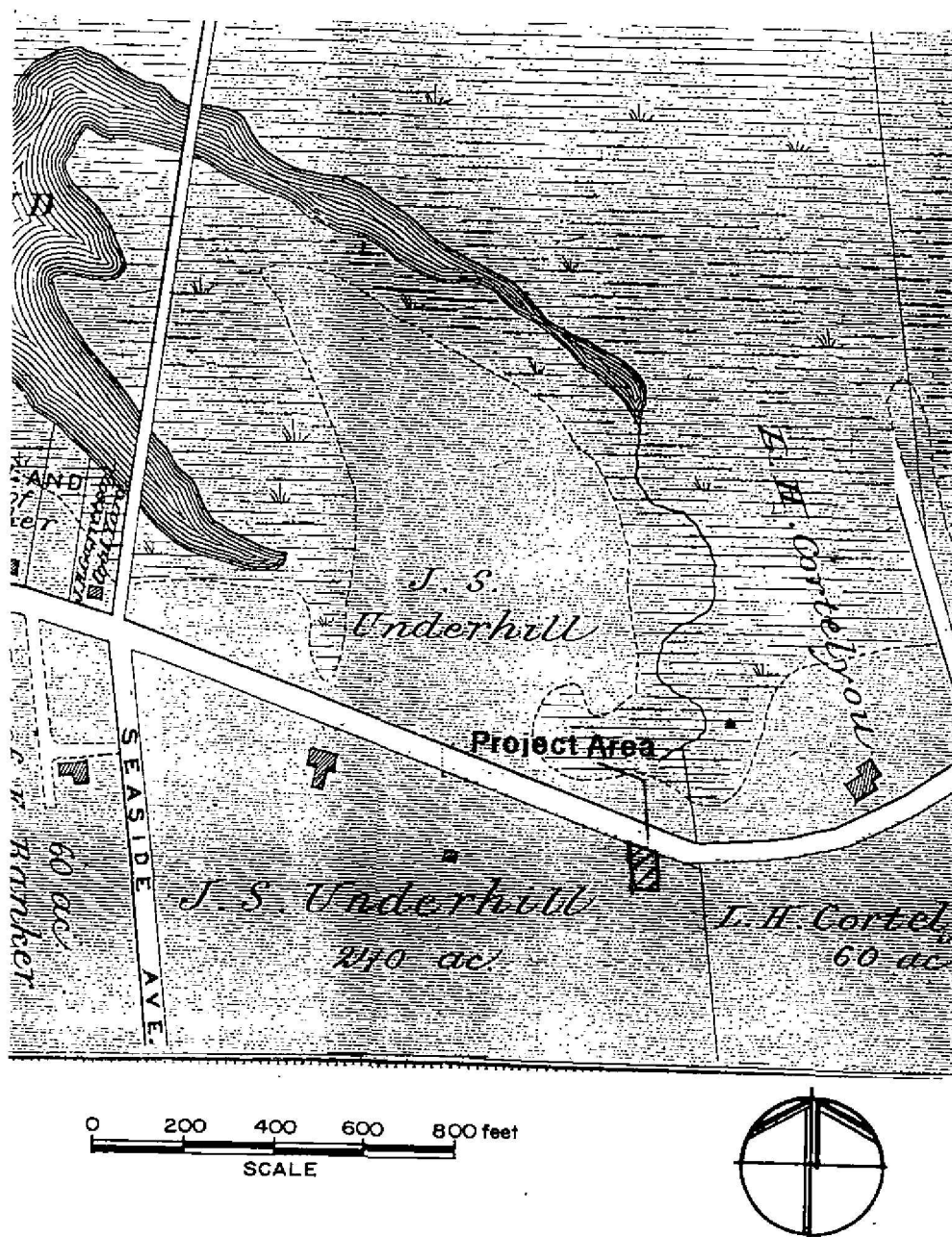


Figure 6

From Beers' 1874 Atlas of Staten Island, showing the project area.



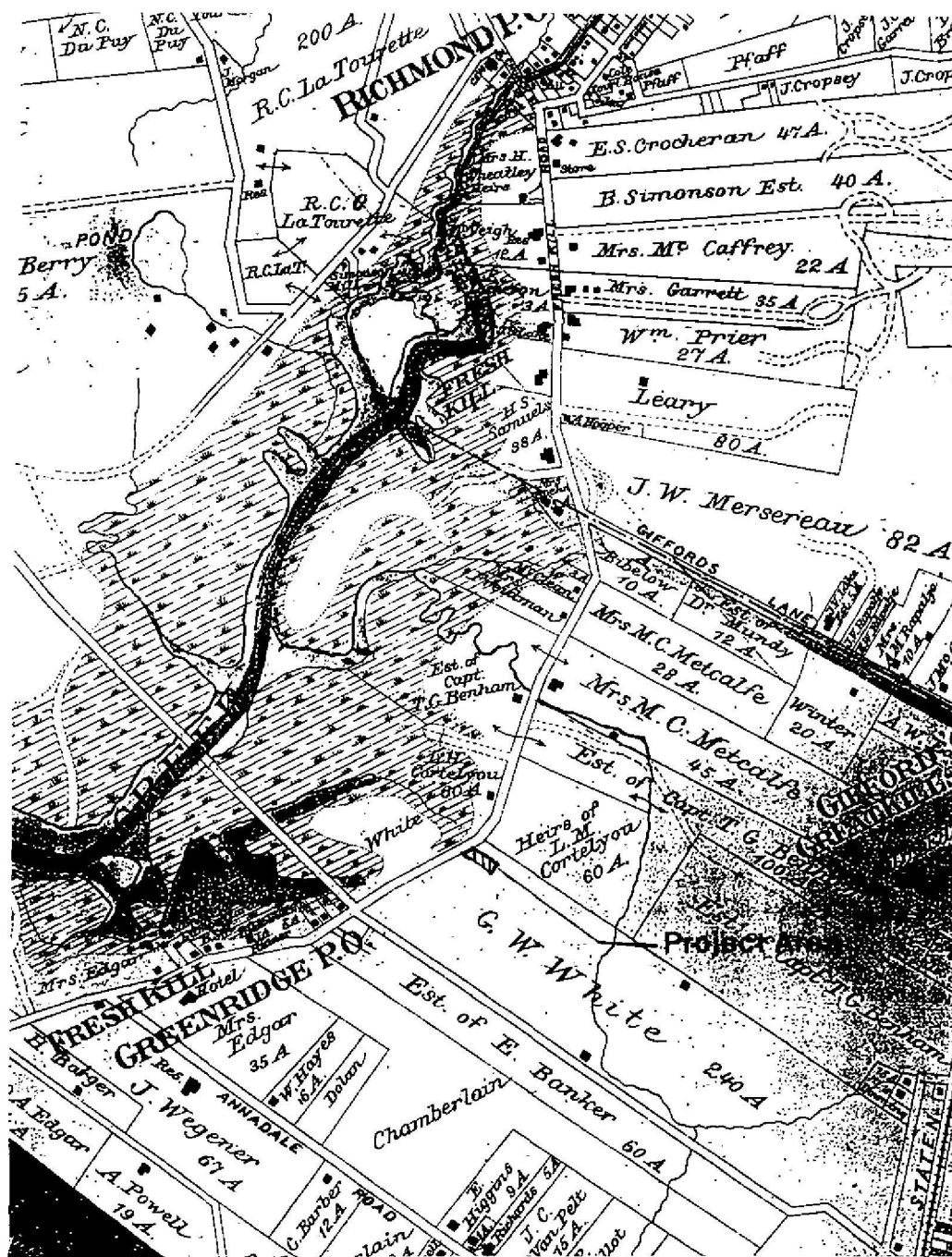


Figure 7

From Beers' 1887 Atlas of Staten Island showing project area.

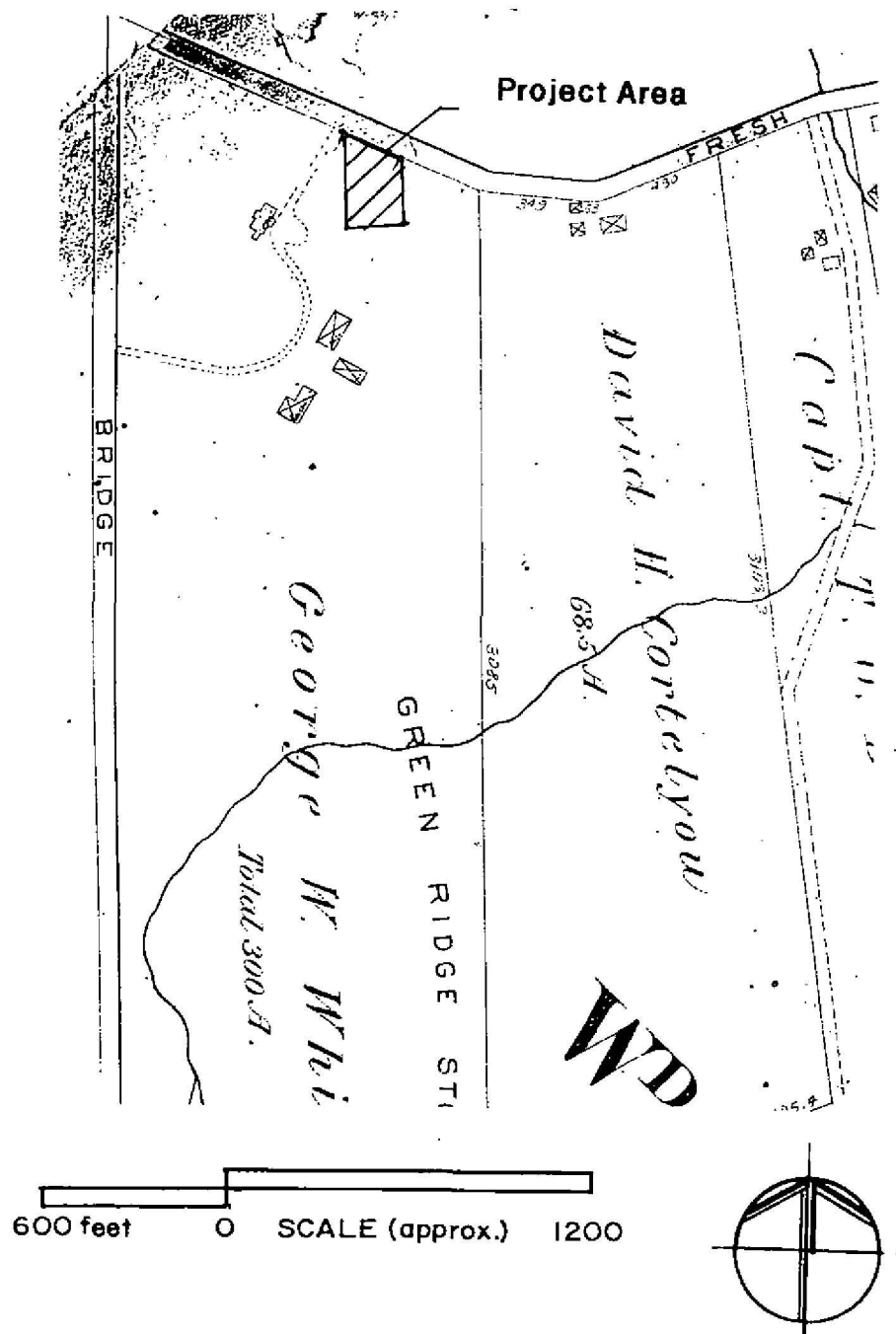


Figure 8

From Robinson's 1898 Atlas of the Borough of Richmond, showing the project area.

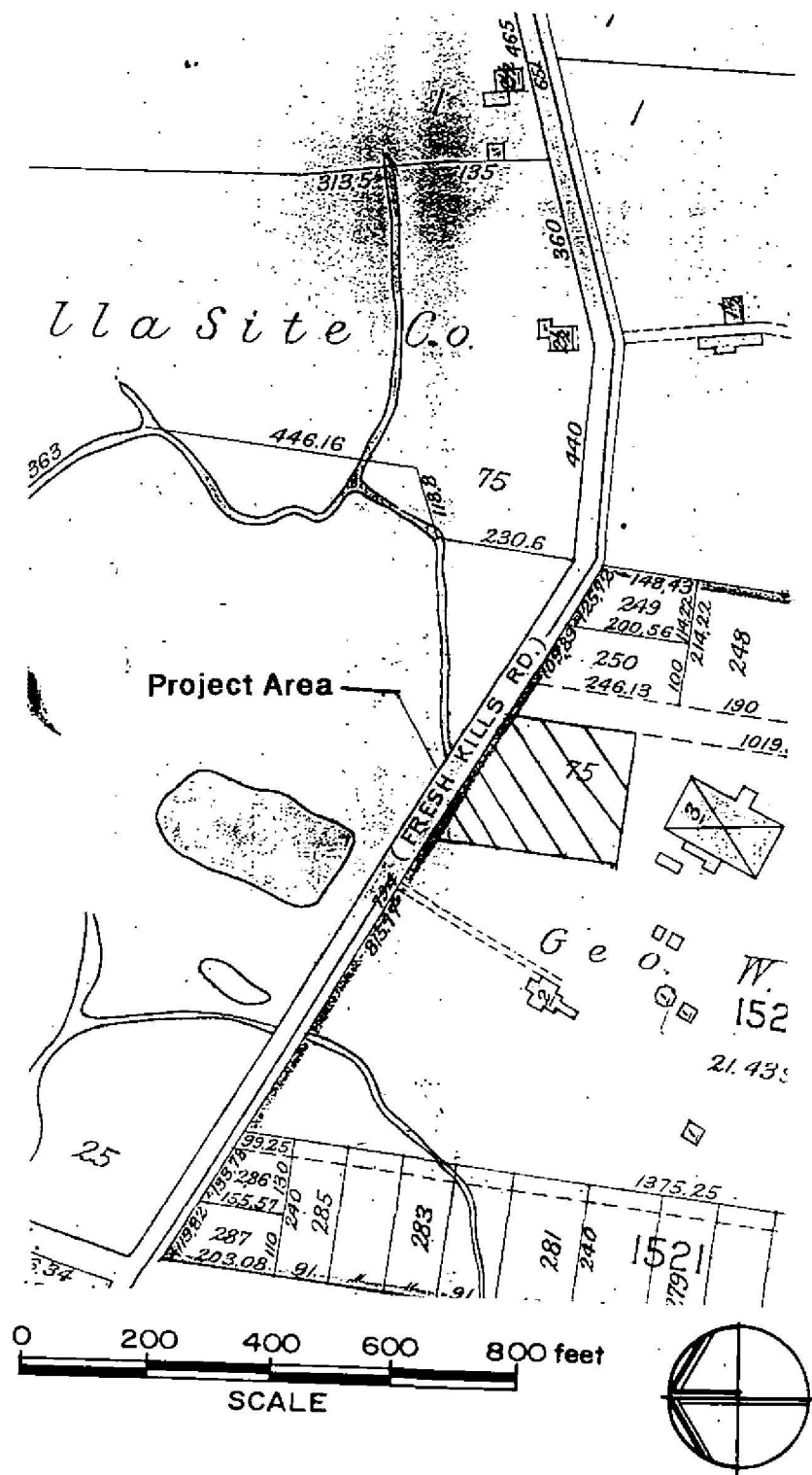


Figure 9

From Bromley's 1917 Atlas of the City of New York.