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NEW 120TH POLICE PRECINCT

BLOCK 556, LOT 100
BOROUGH OF STATEN ISLAND
PHASE IB ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD TESTING

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The phase IA archaeological assessment of block 556 lot 100, in Staten Island, where the NYPD intends to build a new 120th precinct house, determined that the property might contain part of the cemetery associated with the former Seamen's Retreat Hospital (Cover). The project site is on land that once belonged to the hospital. The Seamen's Retreat was founded in 1831 and continued functioning until 1882, when it was sold to the Marine Society of the City of New York (Bergoffen 2006, 12). The annual report of the Physician in Chief for 1881 recorded a total of 3,330 burials for the fifty years that the hospital had been in operation. The original graveyard was located behind the first hospital building, which stood east of Tompkins Avenue, on the grounds of the present-day Bayley-Seton Hospital (Bergoffen 2006, 19). Various written records, however, stated that the old cemetery filled up and so it was found necessary, in 1849, to establish a new burial ground at the "extreme end" of the Retreat's property (Minutes of the Board, 1849; Bergoffen 2006, 18). Historic maps in conjunction with reports of bones being discovered on the property adjacent to the project site, where the high school is now located (lot 80), point to the existence of a cemetery in that location. It would have extended to Warren Street, which was the "extreme end" of the Retreat's property. The map and documentary evidence was not conclusive, however, with respect to the eastern end of the cemetery and the area of the project site. The 1887 Beers and 1895 Colton maps show or imply that the cemetery extended over the project site, while other historic maps do not (Bergoffen 2006, Figs. 11 and 13). The Phase IA assessment therefore concluded that archaeological field testing be undertaken on the project site in order to determine the presence or absence of a cemetery or individual burials there.

A protocol for testing the project site was developed in consultation with the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC). It was determined that the best approach would be to conduct an investigation in three phases. These were: 1, a walkover of the site; 2, the excavation of test pits and 3, the excavation of backhoe trenches. The Senior Archaeologist on site was Celia Bergoffen, Ph.D., R.P.A., and the Physical Anthropologist, who was on call, was Andrew Scherer, Ph.D.

The walkover, which was executed with six archaeologists, was intended to check whether any fragments of gravestones or other features could be seen on the surface of the project area that might indicate the presence of burials. Prior to the commencement of our investigations, the site was cleared of the chest-high grasses, weeds, saplings and brambles that would have made such a survey futile (Figs. 1 and 2). The walkover, however, only indicated that the project site had been liberally used as a dumping ground by the adjacent properties, and no fragments indicative of the presence of burials were noted.

The second phase of the operation was intended to determine the nature of the project site's stratigraphy. In order to find possible outlines of the filled shafts once dug for graves, it would be necessary to know whether the present ground surface was more or less the same as the one that existed between 1831 and 1882, and to be able to distinguish between natural soils and 20th century fills, since the 19th century graves, if present, would lie below the latter. Below the topsoil and humus layer, the latter sometimes referred to as the "A" layer in the following report, there are two natural soil layers. The upper is brownish-yellow, varying from a sandy silt to a more clay-like consistency, with a higher organic content visible as grey to dark mottling. The latter appears in the center and western third of the site in the flat area on its northern side where water pools on and below the surface. Below the "yellow layer" is a "red layer" composed of a more granular soil with many small stones. During the excavation of the test pits we sifted 100% of the soil in order to determine that these layers were indeed "sterile" -- that is, free from cultural debris -- and therefore represented natural deposits. In the western half of the site, however, we found the red layer out of sequence immediately below the topsoil and containing cultural debris. This indicated that this upper red layer was redeposited soil that had been dug up, probably during building operations on one of the nearby properties, and dumped on the project site. During the excavation of test pit 3, two small fragments of human bones were recovered and identified as such by our Physical Anthropologist, Andrew Scherer. This led us to suspect that the redeposited soil came from the adjoining lot 80. Since however, these were the only human remains discovered on the project site, in spite of the massive amount of redeposited soil revealed in the excavation of the backhoe trenches, we can not be certain

where this soil came from, or when it was dumped on the project site except to say that it contained materials from the second half of the 20th century (plastics, for instance) and was therefore deposited relatively recently.

The third phase of the operation, the excavation of the backhoe trenches, was intended to provide the maximum exposure of the top of the stratum in which the potential burials would have been excavated. This meant removing the topsoil and the "A" layer and cleaning off the top of the "B" layer -- in our case, "the yellow layer" -- to a level where outlines of burial pits, if present, would be visible. With the stratigraphy of the test pits serving as our guide, we knew the approximate depths we would have to reach with the backhoe. But the up to five feet of redeposited red soil on the northwest side of the site, revealed in backhoe trench E (BT/E), was much deeper than test pits 2 and 3 had led us to expect. We did however excavate to levels below this fill in this trench and in BT/D in the middle of the north side of the project site. The other trenches were all much shallower, as there was much less redeposited red soil elsewhere on the site. We did not see the outlines of any grave shafts, nor did we encounter any other human bones than the above-mentioned two fragments from test pit 3.

We therefore concluded that the project site's sensitivity for the recovery of human remains is very low. Our detailed conclusions and recommendations are presented in part III, below.

II. FIELD REPORT

Phase IB archaeological testing of the 120th Precinct site began November 28, 2006. On site that day were the Senior Archaeologist, Celia Bergoffen, and the Field Director of Excavations, Mara Horowitz. These two staked the test pits and the test trenches and planned the site survey, which was undertaken on the following day. The other archaeologists who worked on the site were Dan O'Toole, Coni Rocklein, Jasmine Greene, Kimberly Wong, Jennie Ruvolo and Alison Walminsky.

A. SITE SURVEY

The site survey was conducted on November 29th by six archaeologists as per the specifications in the proposal for Phase IB testing approved by the LPC: the archaeologists walked east-west transects roughly parallel to the line of Hill Street at ten-foot intervals. We began at a distance of fifteen feet south of the north fence line in order to avoid surveying the gulley immediately south of the sidewalk that had evidently been carved out of the side of site, since its north face is steep and interrupts the natural gradient. This trough was probably excavated in the course of laying the sidewalk or some other operation connected with street construction. In order to get as complete a picture of the area as possible, the team surveyed the entire lot, including the portions at the southern and western edges that will not be impacted by the proposed construction. No fragments of grave markers or bones were found. The site was however found to be strewn with domestic garbage as well as building debris, the latter consisting of concrete slabs, street cobbles, brick, mortar and conglomerate. There are large boulders at the northern and eastern ends of the lot as well as cobble-sized stones, which were visible more or less throughout, wherever the ground cover was thinner or absent. The site was densely overgrown, and although the weeds had been mowed, there were still copses and individual trees, and in some places, thickets, at the edges of the site or in the midst of the clusters of saplings, that impeded or progress. Nevertheless, most of the surface was sufficiently clear so that had fragmentary grave markers or osteological remained on the surface, we would no doubt have sighted them. There were no such finds.

B. EXCAVATION OF TEST PITS

Having completed the site survey on November 29th in the morning, we proceeded in the afternoon to the excavation of the test pits. The six test pits were excavated on November 29th and 30th, and December 1st, 2nd and 5th. Their location is shown on Fig. 3.

TEST PIT 1

The northwest corner of this three by three foot test pit was located 70 ft. south of the north fence line and 104.8 ft. west of the east fence line. It was excavated on November 29th (Figs. 4, 5 and 6).

The stratigraphy revealed in this test pit was as follows:

Layer 1 - topsoil - dark gray to dark brown fine, silty soil with many small and medium-sized stones, small cobbles, fragments of brick and glass. This layer continued to 0.8 ft. below grade in the northwest corner; 0.9 ft. in the northeast corner; 0.7 ft. in the southeast corner and 0.7 ft. in the southwest corner.

Layer 2 - brownish-yellow clayey soil, many stones, and small amount of ceramic fragments, glass, and brick fragments. The closing depth of this layer was 2.2 ft. below surface except in the southwest corner where it was 2.3 ft. below surface.

Layer 3 - brownish-red soil, sandy, hard and compact, some fractured slate and many small pebbles, no cultural remains. The quantity of stones increased until it became very difficult to excavate. The matrix was composed of small round cobbles, decomposed sandstone, chips of a micaceous, gneiss-like rock. The closing depth of this level was 3.6 ft. below surface.

TEST PIT 2

The northwest corner of this three by three foot test pit was located 115.5 ft. southwest of the north fence line from a point 104.8 ft. west of the east fence line and

75.25 ft. southwest of the northwest corner of test pit 1. It was excavated on November 29th and 30th (Figs. 4, 7 and 8).

The stratigraphy was as follows:

Layer 1 - Topsoil - dark gray, fine, silty soil with a great deal of organic matter. This layer continued to 0.4 ft. below grade at the northwest corner; 0.45 ft. inches at the southwest corner; 0.45 ft. at the southeast corner and 0.4 ft. at the northeast corner. There was a great deal of garbage as well as building detritus in this layer including window and bottle glass, plastic, fragments of metal cans, brick fragments, and mortar.

Layer 2 - Dark brownish-red sandy silt with patches of yellow sand, green staining from decomposed rock and dark yellow and lighter brown soil mixed in. This layer contained many cobbles and small stones, glass, mortar, slag, two pieces of metal (undefined), nails, and sewer pipe fragments.

In this layer, near the southeast corner of the square, a small oval feature was noted filled with mortar, cobbles, fragments of modern bottle glass, tile and coal ash.

The bottom of this layer was reached at 1.2 ft. in the northeast corner; 1.0 ft. in the northwest corner; 0.7' in the southwest corner, and 1.2 ft. in the southeast corner.

Layer 3 - Medium brownish-yellow, finer, siltier soil with fewer stones, some pieces of glass, slag, and cultural material. At 1.5 ft. below surface there were many cobbles and a layer of concrete chunks and slabs as well as window glass. Closing levels of this layer were 1.7 ft. in the northeast, 1.7 ft. in the northwest, 2 ft. in the southwest and 1.8 ft. in the southeast.

Layer 4 - Fine and silty grey soil, organic material - buried topsoil. Below the surface of this stratum was a layer composed of greyish-yellow silty soil mixed with charcoal. Cultural material included a 1940 penny, small fragments of glass and ceramic, ash, charcoal, and chunks of coal. Amount of charcoal and ceramic fragments in this layer increased as we excavated lower. Also noted: a couple of pieces of window glass.

Layer 5 - Greyish-yellow clayey soil laminated with charcoal.

Layer 6 - Brownish-yellow sandy soil, "B" zone, a natural deposit immediately under the topsoil and the A layer, as observed in test pit 1, layer 2.

This test pit was closed when ground water was encountered, at 2.7 ft. below surface in the northwest corner, 2.4 ft. in the southwest corner, 2.6 ft. in the southeast corner, and 2.7 ft. in the northeast corner.

TEST PIT 3

The northwest corner of this three by three foot test pit was located 26 ft. south of the north fence line and 80.5 ft. east of the west fence line (inner fence). It was excavated on November 30th and December 1st and 2nd (Figs. 9 and 10).

The stratigraphy was as follows:

Layer 1 - A very thin layer of brown topsoil.

Layer 2 - Brownish-red sandy soil with abundant cultural remains: coal; a nail, glass, ceramic, building, tile, bronze casing perhaps for wire, and slag. At a depth of 0.8 ft. below surface a fragment of human male pelvis was found. At a depth of 1.6 ft. below surface a fragment of a fragment of a (human) humerus was found near the northwest corner of the test pit. Further cultural remains from layer 2 from above and below this depth included window and bottle glass, ceramic (white ware and porcelain), wood, nails, coal, coal ash, a small amount of brick and slag, tiles, possible sewer pipe, fragments of cinder block, gravel, a lump of metal and a thin strip of what appeared to be a synthetic material. Closing levels of this level were: northwest 2.2 ft., southwest 2.3 ft., southeast 2.6 ft., northeast 2.45 ft.

Layer 3 - Greyish-brown silty soil mottled with reddish brown sandy soil containing small and medium-sized stones. A tiny fragment of bone, too small to identify, was found at approximately 2.2 ft. below surface, just above the bottom of layer 2. Layer 3 contained very small pieces of glass, small fragments of brick and coal. Part of a wooden plank with nails, fragments of shell, small bits of ceramic, fragments of sewer pipe, one fragment of sheet metal and some fragments of concrete came out of the top of this layer. There was a moderate amount of building detritus but overall, not much other cultural material. The bottom of this layer was reached at 2.8 ft. below surface in the southwest; 2.85 ft. in the northwest; 3.2 ft. in the northeast, and 2.95 ft. in the southeast.

Layer 4 - Dark grey silty soil - buried topsoil. The bottom of this layer was reached at 3.0 ft. in the southwest; 3.05 ft. in the northwest; 3.35 ft. in the northeast and 3.2 ft. in the southeast.

Layer 5 - "A" layer of greyish-brown silty soil with a few small stones. Fragments of blue ceramic and a thick-walled, mottled brown ceramic, probably from a jug; small brick fragments, and small fragments of bottle glass, a bed spring, wood and anthracite. The bottom of this layer was reached at 3.8 ft. below surface in the northeast; 3.35 ft. in the northwest; 3.7 ft. in the southeast and 3.4 ft in the southwest.

Layer 6 - A very thin lens of brownish-yellow silty soil not clearly distinguishable from the red granular level that almost immediately follows it. These were identified as natural deposit.

TEST PIT 4

The northwest corner of this three by three foot test pit was located 140 ft. south of the north fence line and 61 ft. east of the west fence line (outer fence). It was excavated on November 30th and December 1st (Figs. 11 and 12).

The stratigraphy was as follows:

Layer 1 - Topsoil - slope wash and "A" layer, to 1.0 ft. below surface. Finds included a few fragments of ceramic.

Layer 2 - Redeposited red sandy soil, hard, some large stones; ceramic; small fragments of bottle glass, no building debris; very few cultural remains.

Layer 3 - Dark brown silty soil (as in test pit 2, layer 4), probably the buried topsoil and "A" layer; one piece of tile.

Layer 4 - brownish-yellow sandy soil begins at a depth of 1.7 ft. below surface on the north side and 2.3 ft. below surface on the south side; sterile.

Layer 5 - Red sandy soil, natural deposit, few stones, no cultural debris / sterile.

This test pit was closed at a depth of 3.6 ft. below surface on the south side and 3.2 ft. below surface on the south side.

TEST PIT 5

This test pit was excavated on December 2nd and 5th. It was located 175 ft. south of the north fence line and 132 ft. east of the west fence line (Figs. 13 and 14).

The stratigraphy was as follows:

Layer 1 - Dark grey topsoil and "A" layer of humus directly below it. The bottom of this layer was reached at 0.7 ft. in the northwest, 0.5 ft. in the northeast; 0.5 ft. in the southwest and 0.55 ft. in the southeast. One glass fragment, one stoneware sherd, one fragment of coal and one of coke were noted.

Layer 2 - A thick layer of brownish-yellow sandy silt. The top of this layer contained one piece of glass and thirteen pieces of coal. Below this, the layer was sterile. At 1.7 ft. below surface, small patches of black burnt material, either coal or burnt wood were noted. This layer transitions gradually to a layer of red soil, of the same consistency, at approximately 2.6 ft. below surface in the northwest corner of the square; 2.2 ft. in the center; 2.75 ft. in the northeast and southeast corners, and 2.75 ft. in the southeast. In the southwest corner we noted a lens of fine silty greyish-yellow soil on top of the red layer.

Once the red layer was encountered, which indicated that the sequence of deposits in this pit paralleled those already observed in all the other pits, and that the deposit was natural soil free of cultural debris, this pit was closed at 3.4 ft. below surface in the northwest corner; 3.1 ft. in the northeast; 3.35 ft. in the southwest and southeast corners.

TEST PIT 6

The northwest corner of this three by three foot test pit was located 100 ft. west of the east fence line and 40 ft. north of the south fence line. It was excavated on December 1st, 2nd and 4th (Figs. 15 and 16).

The stratigraphy was as follows:

Layer 1 - Very dark grey topsoil containing building detritus including glass and large brick fragments.

Layer 2 - Red to reddish-brown hard sandy soil with many large stones and cobbles and small boulders. A great deal of cultural material including ceramic and many

bottle glass fragments, plastic, small brick fragments and almost whole brick. Some noteworthy older cultural remains were also found: a fragment of a ball clay pipe stem and an old, square-headed nail. The bottom of this level was reached at 0.8 ft. in the southeast and northwest corners; 0.7 ft. in the southwest corner and 0.6 ft. in the northeast corner.

Layer 3 - Very thick black silty soil layer containing ceramics, brick, glass, mortar, one nail, tar, asphalt, and bottle glass.

Layer 4 - Brownish-yellow sandy-silt, same. This is a natural deposit devoid of cultural debris. The bottom of this layer transitions gradually to the following at approximately 2.3 ft. below surface in the southeast corner, 2.1 ft. in the middle of the south wall of the pit, and 2.8 ft. in the middle of the west wall of the pit.

Layer 5 - Red sandy soil. This pit was closed when large stones were encountered. Closing depths were 3.3 ft. in the northwest; 3.5 ft. in the southwest; 3 ft. in the southeast (on top of a boulder), and 3.1 ft. in the northeast corner.

C. EXCAVATION OF BACKHOE TRENCHES

The excavation of the backhoe trenches A, C, D, E, F and G was conducted on December 6th to 8th and 12th to 14th (Fig. 3).

BACKHOE TRENCH A (BT/A)

The northwest corner of this 100-foot long trench was located 15 ft. south of the north fence line and 115 ft. west of the east fence line. The southwest corner of this trench was located 50.75 ft. south of the north fence line and 23 ft. west of the east fence line. This trench was excavated on December 6th and 7th (Figs. 17 and 18).

Beginning in the east, the yellow soil layer was encountered immediately below the topsoil, the humus layer being virtually absent. In the northeast corner of the trench we encountered a large pit filled with black, greasy soil that smelled like sewage and contained rags and other debris. Approximately 15 to 25 ft further northwest, the red sandy layer was intermixed with the yellow layer, and there were many chunks of broken

concrete, small fragments of brick, part of a white-painted, steam riser pipe (identified as such by Philip Heller, Project Manager of Karlsberger Architects P.C., who was visiting the site that morning). In the line of the entranceway from the gate, the ground surface dips down. There was a great of broken concrete here and mottled soil, without a clear yellow soil layer. It seems likely that this layer was dug out perhaps as part of an operation connected with the entrance. Immediately west of the gate area, the yellow soil layer reappeared but the roots of several trees standing on the north side of the trench churned up a thicker "A" layer intermixed with this yellow soil layer. No cultural debris at all was encountered in this area except for one brick fragment approximately 70 ft northwest of the northeast corner of the trench. Approximately 80 ft. northwest of the northeast corner of the trench we began again encountering large pieces of garbage including plastic bags, sections of thick rubber hose, and half a brick. This section was dug down approximately 1.6 ft. to clear the tree roots. Closing levels for the rest of the trench were approximately 0.6-0.8 ft. in the eastern half and ca. 0.8 from 50 to 80 ft. northwest of the northeast corner of the trench.

BACKHOE TRENCH (BT/B)

In consultation with the LPC, it was decided that this projected trench need not be excavated. After trenches A, D, E, and C were excavated (in that order), it became clear that BT/B would no doubt duplicate the results of trenches A and C, and that these two trenches, along with the eastern end of BT/D provided an adequate sample for this side of the lot.

BACKHOE TRENCH C (BT/C)

The northeast corner of this 100-foot long trench is 108 ft. west of the east fence line and 87.5 ft. south of the north fence line. The southeast corner is 178.5 ft. south of the north fence line and 89 ft. west of the east fence line. This was the fourth trench excavated, on December 13th (Figs. 19 and 20).

This trench was quickly excavated as, for most of its length, the clean, brownish-yellow layer began almost immediately below the topsoil and there were few artifacts or debris, except in what was clearly the topsoil. The trench was excavated from north to south and dug to a greater depth at its southern end, where the ground rose in between a hillock on the east and a large tree on the west. This section was disturbed by the tree roots and had a thicker humus ("A") layer and a very shallow, redeposited red soil layer above it that may have slid down from higher up the slope and was poor in cultural debris.

The closing depths of this trench below surface were, from north to south: north end - 0.6 ft.; 25 ft. - 0.75 ft.; 50 ft. - 0.8 ft.; 75 ft. - 1.95 ft.; south end - 3.1 ft.

BACKHOE TRENCH D (BT/D)

The southeast corner of this 95-foot long trench is 42 feet south of the north fence line and 135 feet west of the east fence line. The northwest corner is 77 ft. east of the west fence line (inner fence) and 75 feet south of the north fence line. This was the second trench excavated, on December 7th and 8th (figs. 21 and 22).

Beginning on the east side of the trench, we encountered two brick fragments and, just below the surface (two or three inches), a large area approximately three-feet square of a thin, flat layer of concrete. Nearby, the soil was mottled yellow with charcoal fragments. The concrete layer did not continue and we were not able to determine its purpose. There were also glass fragments in the topsoil. We dug a small probe at the east end of this trench to a depth of 3.3 ft. in order to verify the stratigraphy. Immediately below the topsoil we encountered the red soil layer of redeposited material (layer 2). This was followed by a mottled layer composed of dark greyish-yellow to brown silty soil (layer 3). Below this was a cleaner, brownish-yellow sandy silt layer (layer 4), and, at the bottom of the trench, the red silty sand layer (layer 5).

Approximately 20 to 23 ft. west of the east end of the trench, a few brick fragments, a piece of ceramic pipe, and another ceramic fragment, probably all from layer 3, were noted, as well as a large piece of cinderblock, a bottle and a large battery. Between 30 and 40 ft. west of the east end of the trench, we noted a brick fragment, one

piece of ceramic, and wood fragments in layer 2, among other cultural debris. Layer two got gradually thicker towards the western end of the trench. Further fragments of concrete, glass, another battery, wood planks and tile were encountered on December 8th, when we excavated the western half of the trench. We noted that the layers sloped down towards the west and that the greyish green layer 3 became thicker, blacker and denser. The yellow layer below this, layer 4, had dark patches on the top and we therefore excavated deeper here, to reach a clean level of natural deposit. It was determined that layer 3 was also probably a natural deposit, however, that had become infiltrated by organic material as a result of the fact that rainwater pools in this part of the site. At approximately 80 ft. west of the east end of the trench, the yellow layer, 4, became very thin and difficult to distinguish from the red layer immediately below it.

As the backhoe excavation proceeded, one or two members of the team worked with shovels on the backhoe dirt to check for any bone fragments that might have escaped our notice. This procedure was also followed in all the subsequent trenches.

This trench was terminated at 95 ft. in length to allow room for the backhoe to maneuver between it and the adjacent trench E.

At 3 ft. from the east end of the trench, the closing depth below surface was 1.95 ft.; at 25 ft. it was 1.6 ft.; another probe at 50 ft. reached 4.05 ft. below surface; at 75 ft., the closing depth was 2.8 ft., and at 95 ft. it was 2.45 ft.

BACKHOE TRENCH E (BT/E)

The northeast corner of this trench is 15 ft. south of the north fence line and 12 ft. east of the west fence line (inner); the trench is 87 ft. in length. The south east corner of the trench is 66.5 ft. south of the north fence line. This very deep trench was third excavated, on December 8th, 12th and 13th (Figs. 24, 25, 26, 27, and 28).

This trench was begun at its northern end at the edge of the steep dip towards the street. The red, redeposited soil layer beginning immediately below the topsoil, was found to be very thick here and filled with building debris. But more surprisingly, it was followed by a layer of black soil filled with wooden planks up to 2.5 ft. long and both red and yellow bricks. There was also plastic and a bicycle inner tube, so clearly, modern fill

(post war) in what appeared to be a very deep pit, beginning approximately 5.4 ft. below surface, and extending some 15 ft. south from the north edge of our trench (Fig. 23). We excavated this pit to a depth of 9 ft. – where water began to well up -- without reaching the bottom. We reasoned however, that in any case, the 19th century ground surface and the levels immediately beneath it that might have contained the burials we sought would have been destroyed by the excavation of this dump. The depth of the deposit is noteworthy, reaching at least 3 ft. below the surface of the sidewalk. We think that we detected the greyish-green clayey layer at the bottom of this part of the trench, corresponding to layer 3 in BT/D, but there was still debris, and too little exposure to be sure that we had in fact reached the next stratum.

Because of the equipment we were using and the fact that a trench more than 6 feet in depth is not safe to work in unless the sides are banked, we made a step up and excavated the next ten feet of this trench, moving southward, to a depth of approximately 4 ft., without reaching the bottom of the red layer of redeposited material. On the last day of the excavation, however (December 14th), we returned to this spot and dug a probe which showed that the dark greyish-green clayey layer began about 0.5 ft. below where we had stopped. It is unclear whether the pit was dug through this layer or whether it dipped down very steeply to run under the bottom of the pit.

At this point, approximately 30 to 40 ft. south of the north end of the trench, we noted many bricks among the cultural debris in the red layer, as well as wooden planks, children's toys (a ball, a doll's leg); porcelain, ceramic, glass, and blue, green and brown glass fragments or jars and other vessels. As in other parts of the site, this layer also contained many small and larger, up to cobble-sized stones. At a depth of 4.65 ft. below surface we encountered several wooden planks lying parallel to one another apparently at the bottom of the red layer and on top of the dark greyish-yellow layer immediately below it. Since we determined from BT/D that this layer represented the transition to natural deposit, we dug the remainder of the trench down to below the top of it, to reach a clean (sterile) layer. At approximately 35 ft. south of the north end of the trench, the bottom of the layer of redeposited soil was observed at about 4.75 ft. below surface. At ca. 40 ft. south of the north end of the trench, we dug a narrow probe to check the stratigraphy below the dark greyish-yellow layer and encountered the brownish-yellow

silty soil and the red soil layer following it, as elsewhere on the site. Some 50 ft. south of the north end of the trench we again encountered wooden planks, brick and ceramics in the greyish-yellow layer, including a ceramic stopper marked "Stapleton" and "1893" on the top, and a fragment of a glass bottle marked "Stapleton Brewery" in embossed letters. Two German-American breweries were opened in Stapleton in the early 1850s (Bergoffen 2006, 9). Some 50-55 ft. south of the north end of the trench we recovered a large piece of bone from the red soil layer. This was examined on the following day by Andrew Scherer, who determined that it was a rib bone of an animal. We had the next day (December 13th) two other animal bone fragments from this trench, probably beef bones, both showing the smooth, flat faces of the butcher's hatchet. Both were examined by Dr. Scherer. At about 68 ft. south we encountered another deposit of wooden planks again in the top of the "greasy" dark yellowish-grey layer.

In the southernmost 30 ft. of this trench, as expected, the red redeposited layer and the dark yellowish-grey layer became increasingly thinner, and more in conformity with the depths observed in the adjacent BT/D.

The closing depths of this trench were, from south to north: at the southwest corner, 2.1 ft. below surface; at 25 ft., 4.4 ft. ; at 55 ft., 7.6 ft.; at 75 ft., 3.4 ft.; at 90 ft., 5.9 ft., and at 7 ft. south of the north east corner, in the deepest part of the pit, about 9 ft. below surface.

BACKHOE TRENCH F (BT/F)

This trench is 71 feet long. Its northeast corner is 113 ft. northwest of the east fence line from a point 33 ft. north of the south fence line and 122 feet west of a point 87.5 feet north of the south fence line. This trench was the fifth excavated, on December 14th and 15th (Figs. 29 and 30).

This trench was dug west to east. Since it was bordered by trees both north and south there were many roots that churned up the humus and brownish-yellow soil layers. It was clear that the brownish-yellow silty soil layer followed upon the topsoil / humus layer without an intervening redeposited red soil layer. There was cultural debris in the topsoil and "A" layer, consisting of clothing or cloth fragments, and some glass, sewer

pipe, brick, and plastic fragments. There were also two small dolls and a piece of iron. In the eastern half of the trench, where the ground sloped up, there was a shallow layer of red, redeposited soil below the topsoil and "A" layer and above the brownish-yellow silty layer.

The closing levels below surface of this trench were (measure on the north baulk), from west to east: west end -0.35 ft.; 25 ft. - 2.9 ft.; 50 ft. - 2.2 ft.; east end - 1.6 ft.

BACKHOE TRENCH G (BT/G)

This trench is 100 ft. long. Its northwest corner is 105 feet east of the west fence line (outer) and 175 ft. south of the north fence line. The southwest corner is 143 ft. southwest of the northwest corner and 47 ft. northeast from a point on the west fence line (outer) 273 ft. south of the north fence line. This was the last trench excavated, on December 15th (Figs. 31 and 32).

This trench was excavated from east to west. At the eastern end of the trench there was a thin layer of redeposited red soil below the topsoil but this quickly disappeared, and most of the length of this trench revealed natural soil deposit with the brownish-yellow silty soil layer immediately below the topsoil and a very shallow layer of humus. There were fragments of brick, bottle glass, plastic, cloth, white ware and a flower pot sherd, but compared to the other trenches, very little cultural debris. Approximately 40 ft. west from the east end of the trench, the "A" layer became very thin and a clean stratum of the brownish-yellow silty soil appeared almost directly below the grass roots. This layer was however also very thin at this point, giving way in a few inches to the red layer, which began approximately 0.6 ft. below surface (about 8 inches) and, as expected, contained no cultural material. At approximately 50 ft. west of the east end of the trench, we encountered many small stones in the red layer. At about 70 ft. west, we found a very large metal spike at the bottom of the top soil, and a piece of white ware at 80 ft. at the top of the yellow soil layer. The finds in this shallow trench, where the natural deposit was largely undisturbed, were very rare.

The closing levels of this trench below surface were: 1.4 ft. at the east end; 0.8-1.2' in the middle, and 1.0-1.1 ft. at the western end of the trench.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The lateral and vertical extent of the backhoe testing was extensive and made clear that although there may yet be individual burials scattered on the site in between our trenches, there were no rows of burials as one would expect to find had the project site been set aside as a formal burial ground. Had there been multiple graves on the project site, it is certain that we would have discerned some of the burial pits, especially in view of the light, yellow color of the "B" stratum immediately below the topsoil-plus-humus layer in which the darker outlines of a pit would have been very clear (viz. BT/A). We sifted 100% of the soil excavated from the six test pits, well into virgin soil, and that only in the redeposited red soil layer in test pit 3 were any human bones encountered, and then only two small fragments. Although some soil from the cemetery located on the adjacent site probably did find its way onto the project site, as suggested by the two fragments from test pit 3, it is clear that any human remains that may have been disturbed during the building of the school yard and school buildings on lot 80 were disposed of elsewhere. Note that the southwestern part of the project site, bordering lot 80, was not used as a dumping ground, and that the bulk of building detritus as well as soil possibly from the excavation for the building of the school or other building operations across the street, were concentrated in the northwestern third of the project site and were especially dense in the northwestern corner.

We conclude that while the possibility of individual burials on the project site remains, the likelihood that such exist is very low. We therefore do not think that it is necessary for an archaeologist to be present on site at all times during site leveling or other excavations connected with construction. In consultation with the LPC, however, we have three recommendations, with which the LPC concurs. First, the DDC and NYPD will engage an archaeologist and a physical anthropologist to be on call during the initial construction phase when the site is being leveled and strata that may potentially contain burials are being impacted. Should any bones come to light during any phase of building operations, those responsible on site will immediately suspend operations in the place where the bones were found and contact the archaeologist and the physical anthropologist, who will come to the site to examine and record the findings. Second, the

DDC and NYPD should be prepared to implement the protocol outlined in the letter of Inspector Anthony T. Tria to the LPC of November 7th, 2006, attached here as Appendix A. The two fragments of a male, human adult skeleton will be curated by the Medical Examiner's office until such time as they can be re-interred on the site. Our third recommendation is that the NYPD undertake, as stated in the above-referenced letter, to place a suitable marker in the southwest corner of the project site to pay tribute to the groundbreaking work of the staff of the Seamen's Retreat Hospital and to commemorate the seamen who were buried nearby, and whose grave sites and remains have disappeared through neglect and disrespect.

IV. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX A

The City of New York
POLICE DEPARTMENT
Capital Construction
620 Circle Drive
Fort Totten, NY 11359-1011
Tel.: 718.281.1254
Fax: 718.281.1593
Email: atria@nypd.org

November 7, 2006

Ms. Amanda Sutphin
Landmarks Preservation Commission
1 Centre Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Re: 120th Precinct Stationhouse - Block 556, Lot 100 - Staten Island, NY

Subject: Scope of Work for Archaeological Field Testing – Phase 1B Handling of Remains

Ms. Sutphin:

We are writing to confirm the methodology for handling of potential human remains as referenced in the Phase 1B Scope of Work prepared by Celia Bergoffen, dated September 21, 2006. As stated in the Scope of Work, protocols for handling of potential findings are required for the Phase 1B and Phase 2 work.

For the Phase 1B Field Investigation we will coordinate with the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner for the City of New York (OCME). The OCME will obtain any bone fragments and provide reports confirming whether any remains are of human origin and if they are of forensic significance. As any material discovered at this stage would be relatively small, they will also provide temporary storage of these remains at their offices in Manhattan.

For the Phase 2 work, we understand that findings of human remains during the Phase 1B work may lead to the removal of larger amounts of bones or fragments. In the event that the OCME is not able to accommodate such remains, NYPD Capital Construction will provide storage at a secure location. These remains would be made available to the Archaeologist and Physical Anthropologist for study.

Upon completion of all excavation and study of potential remains, and at the completion of project construction, we anticipate the ability to re-inter such remains at the site near the southwest corner of the site boundary. Based on the quantity encountered, if the site is not of sufficient size to accommodate these remains, they may be re-interred either at Hart Island or a private cemetery. In either case, a suitable marker would be placed in an appropriate location on the site based on consultation with the LPC and the Archaeologist.

We trust this information will satisfy the requirements of the LPC so that this investigation may continue in an appropriate manner. Please contact this office with any further questions in this regard.

Sincerely,

Anthony T. Tria
Inspector

COURTESY • PROFESSIONALISM • RESPECT

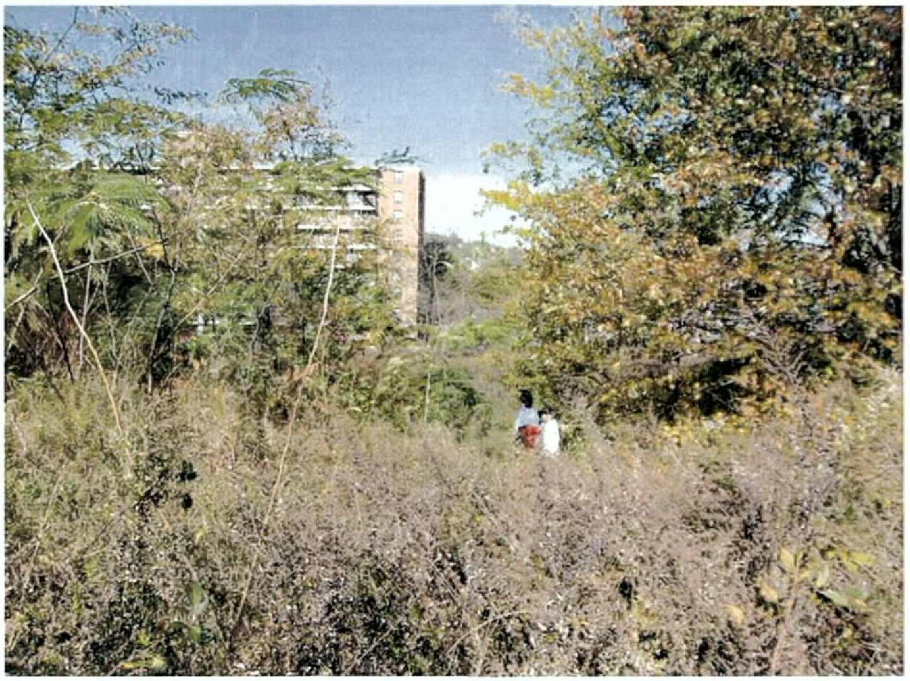


Fig. 1. View of the project site before mowing, from the southeast looking north.

Fig. 2. Mowing the project site.

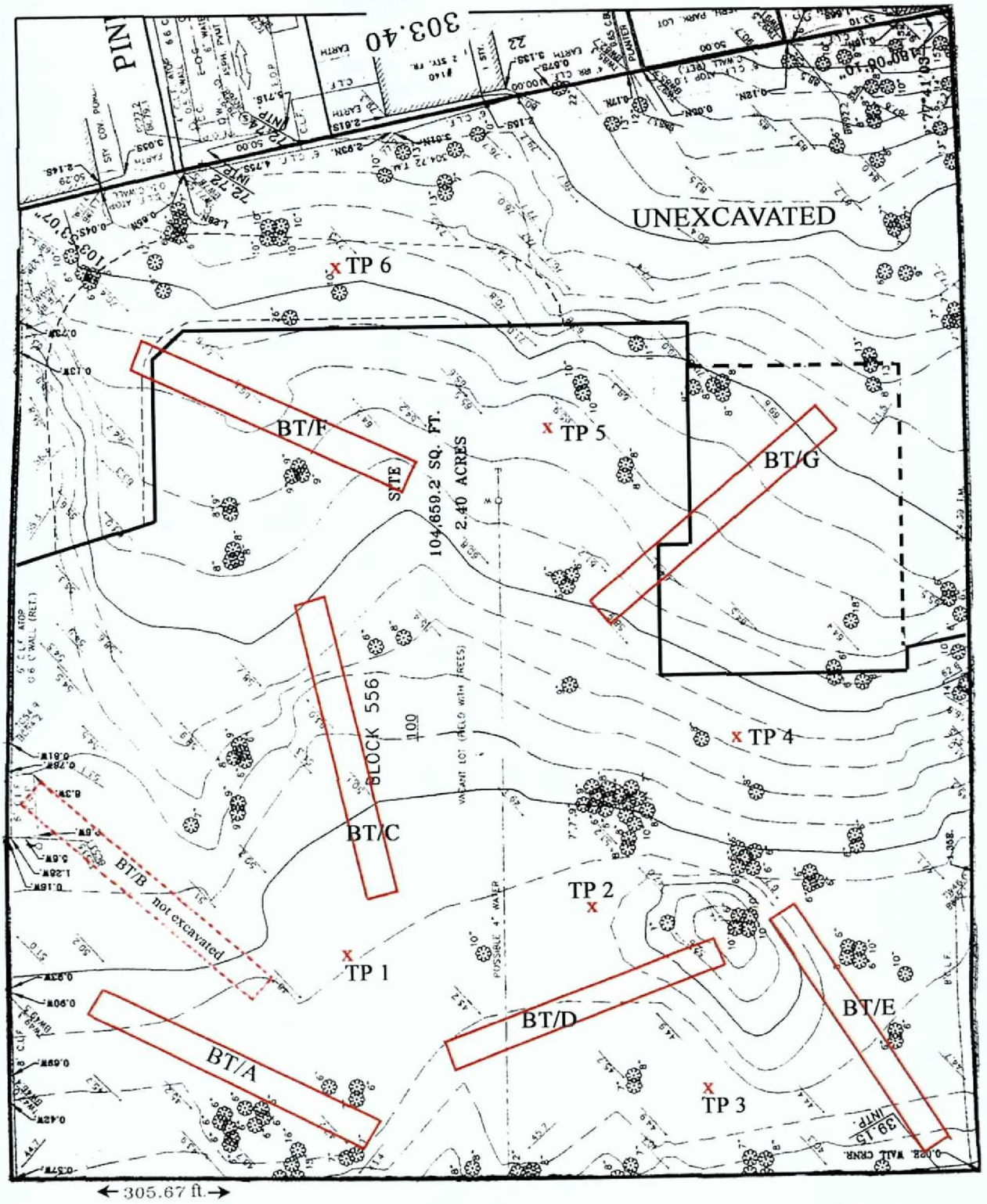
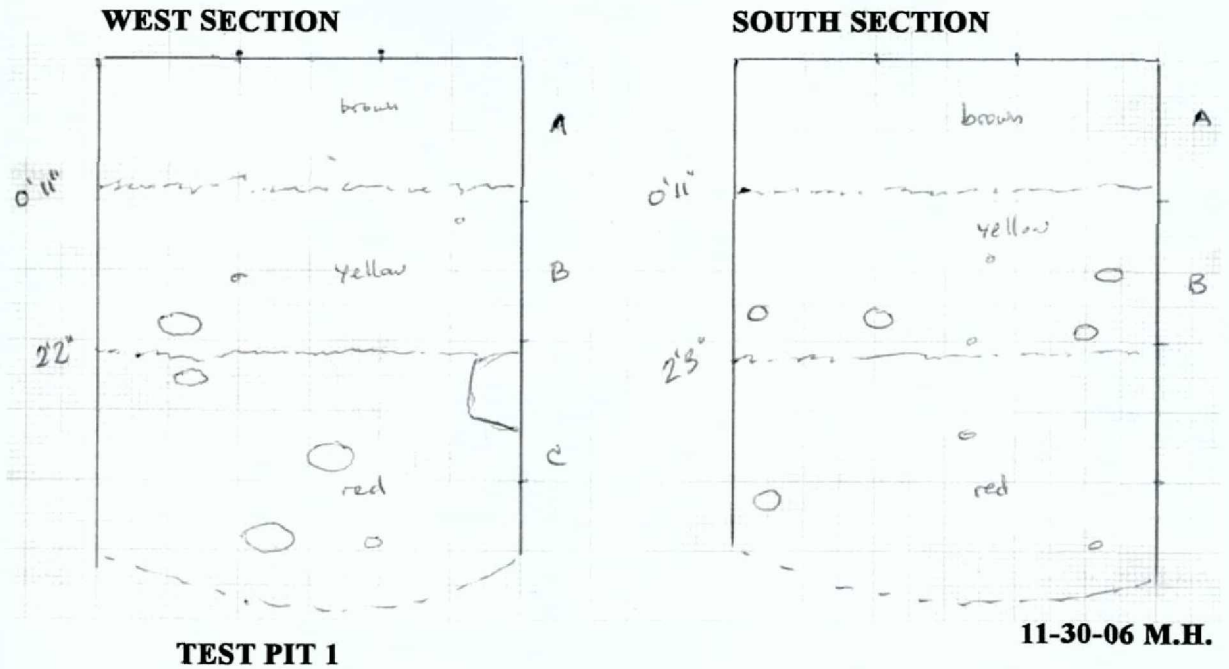


Fig. 3. Topographic plan of the project site showing the location of the test pits (TP) and backhoe trenches (BT)

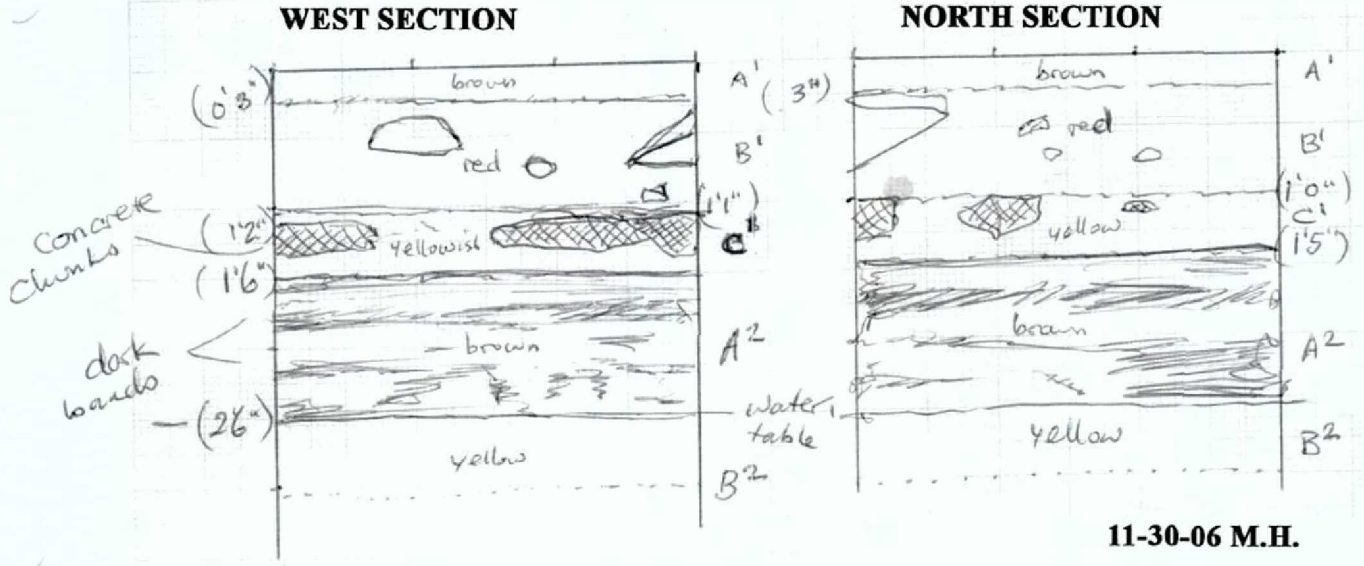
Fig. 4. View of the project site from near the northeast corner looking west towards the locations of test pits 1 and 2.

Fig. 5. View of test pit 1 at the end of excavation.



TEST PIT 1

Fig. 6. West and south section drawings of test pit 1



TEST PIT 2

Fig. 7. West and north section drawings of test pit 2

Fig. 8. View of test pit 2 at the end of excavation

Fig. 9. View of test pit 3 at the end of excavation.

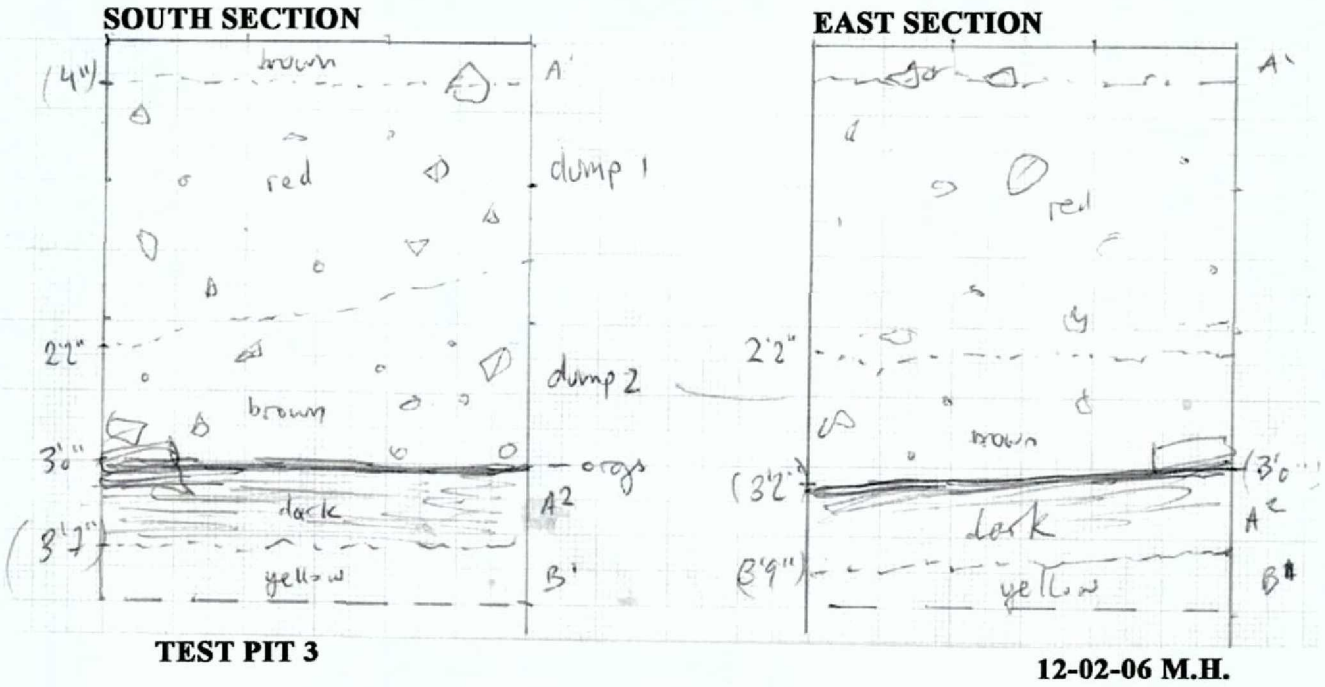


Fig. 10. South and east section drawings of test pit 3

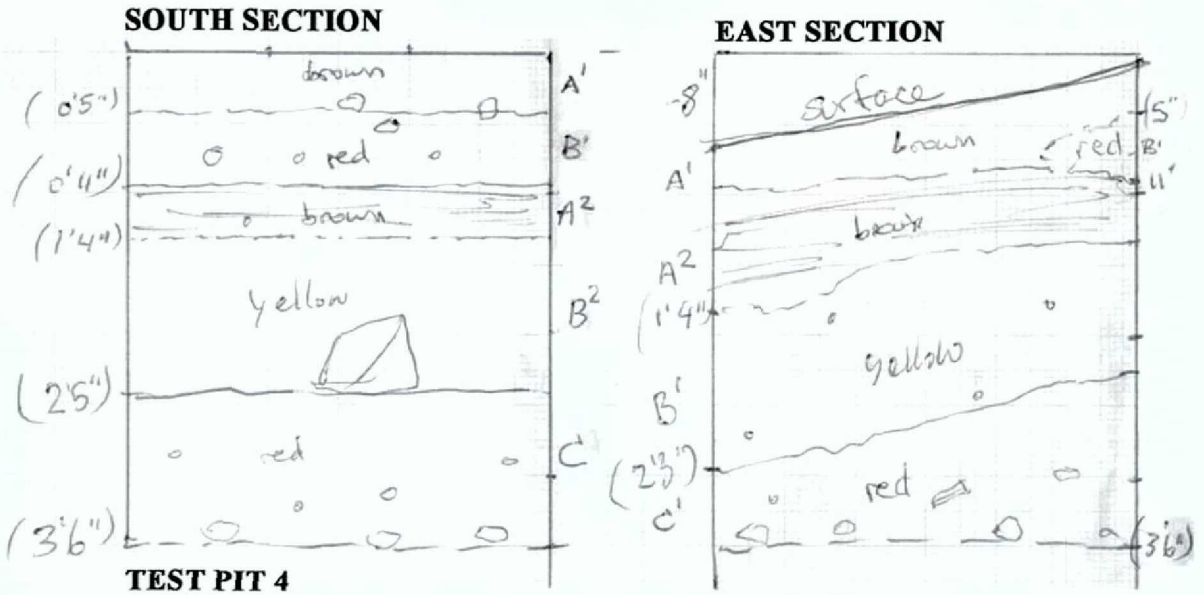
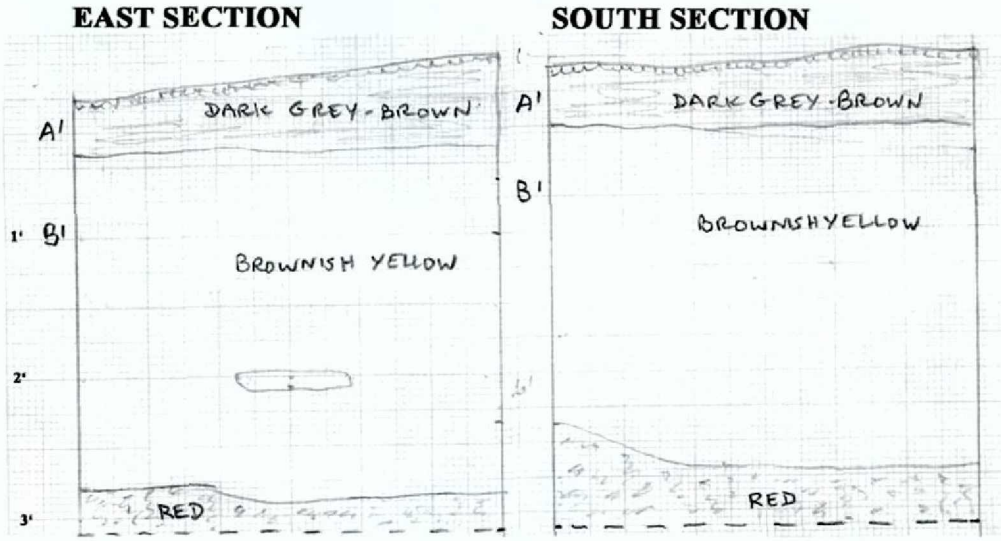


Fig. 11. South and east section drawings of test pit 4

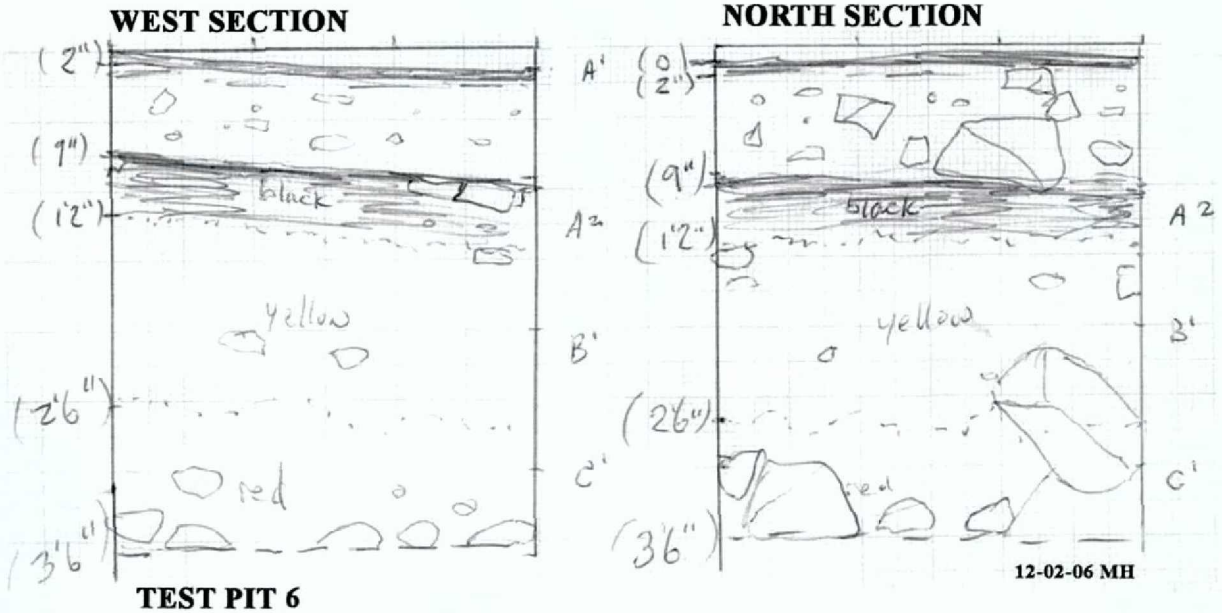
Fig. 12. View of test pit 4 at the end of excavation.

Fig. 13. View of test pit 5 at the end of excavation.



TEST PIT 5

Fig. 14. South and east section drawings of test pit 5



TEST PIT 6

Fig. 15. West and north section drawings of test pit 6

Fig. 16 View of test pit 6 at the end of excavation.

Fig. 17. View of backhoe trench A from its eastern end looking west during excavation and showing the location of the pit in the northeast corner of the trench.

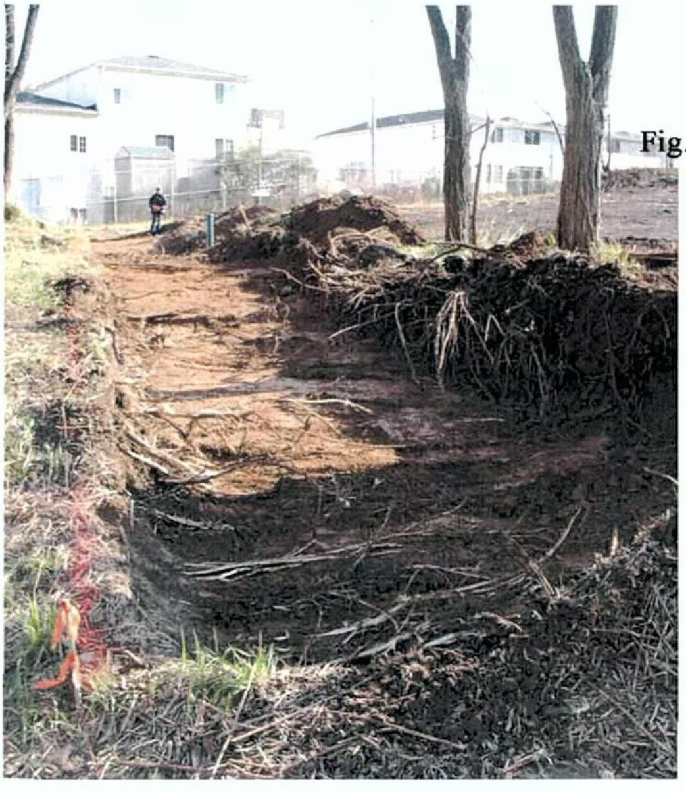


Fig. 18. View of backhoe trench A from its western end looking east at the end of excavation.

Fig. 19. View of backhoe trench C from the southeast looking northwest during excavation.

Fig. 20. View of backhoe trench C from its south end looking north at the end of excavation.

Fig. 21. View of backhoe trench D from its western end looking east at the end of excavation.

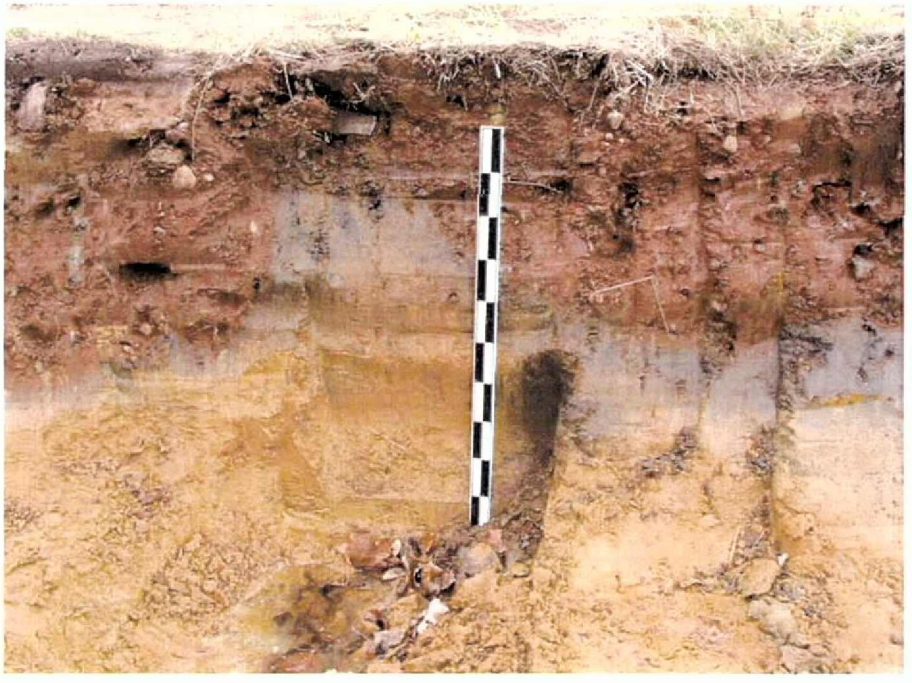


Fig. 22. View of the middle of the south baulk of backhoe trench D at the end of excavation.

Fig. 23. View of the deep pit at the northern end of backhoe trench E.

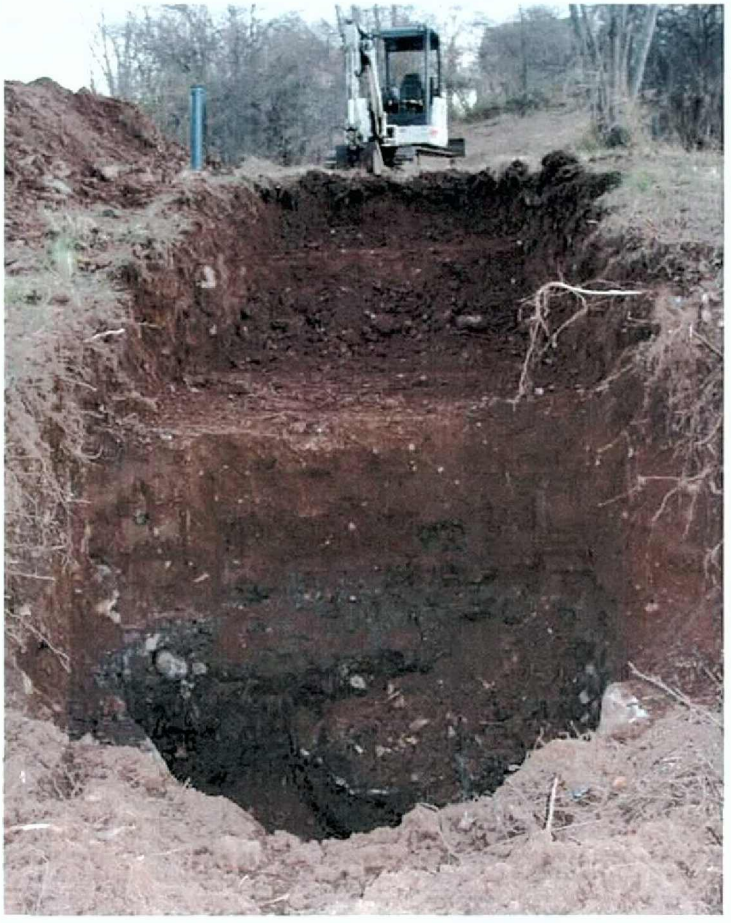


Fig. 24. View of backhoe trench E during excavation from its northern end looking south.

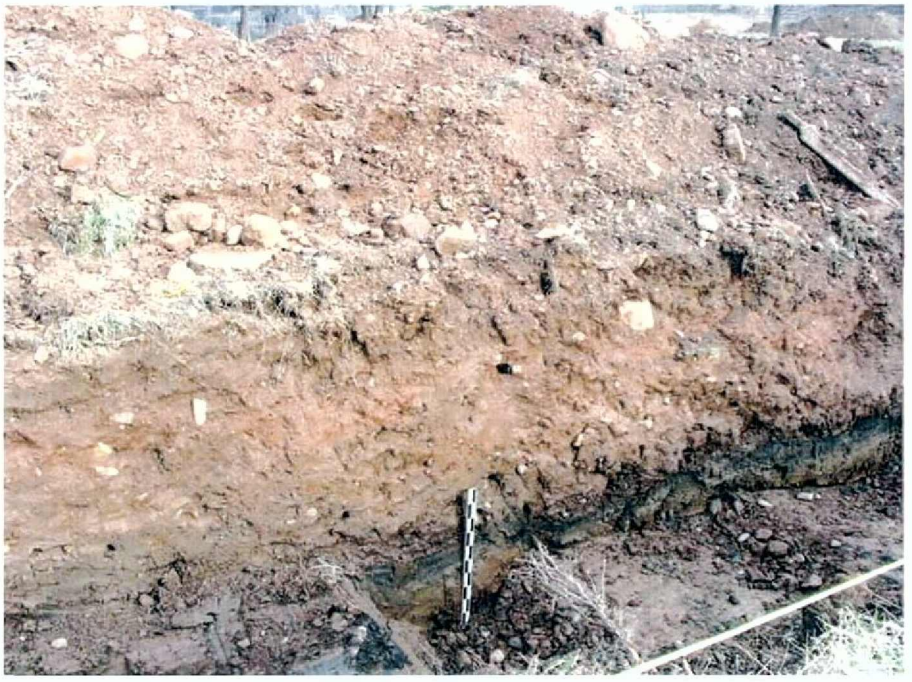


Fig. 25. View of the middle of the east baulk of backhoe trench E at the end of excavation.

Fig. 26. View of backhoe trench E from its southern end looking north at the end of excavation.

Fig. 27. View of the northern end of backhoe trench E looking north towards Hill Street.

Fig. 28. View of the southern end of backhoe trench E looking south.

Fig. 29. View of backhoe trench F from its eastern end looking west at the end of excavation.

Fig. 30. View of the middle of the north baulk of backhoe trench F at the end of excavation.

Fig. 31. View of backhoe trench G from the western end of the trench looking east at the end of excavation.

Fig. 32. View of the eastern end of backhoe trench G looking east at the end of excavation.