

3.4 HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

A preliminary research effort was conducted to determine the development history both of the project site and the surrounding area. Sources consulted included historic maps, secondary sources, and an assessment of historic and architectural resources prepared as part of another environmental assessment of the site. The findings of this research were submitted to the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (in its capacity as SHPO, or State Historic Preservation Office) for review in the spring of 1998. The SHPO determined that the proposed project would have no impact on cultural resources on or eligible for inclusion on the State or National Register of Historic Places (see **Appendix B**).

The research summary submitted for SHPO review is paraphrased below. Since the original submission was made, the project site was cleared of all buildings (i.e., the food warehouse and lumber yard buildings referenced below).

3.4.1 Historic and Architectural Resources

The project site is located on Block 3886, Lots 800 and 830. The two constituent lots have been physically divided by a spur of the LIRR for most of their recorded history, and Lot 800 is bounded to the south by the active LIRR Babylon line tracks and to the west by the inactive LIRR Glendale Cut-Off, a spur that connects to the Rockaway Beach line to the south; the Glendale Cut-Off lies on a berm that rises approximately 20-25 feet above grade from Lot 800. Lot 830 (approximately 0.5 acres), last used as a lumberyard, was developed early in the history of Forest Hills (in the 1920s). The lot fronts onto Metropolitan Avenue and last contained one two-story building, a complementary tall-stuccoed wall, and two storage sheds. Lot 800 (approximately 7.3 acres) last contained two single-story brick buildings enclosed by chain link fencing which were developed after most of the neighborhood's characteristic detached single- and two-family houses had been built. The project site does not lie in a New York City Historic District, nor were any of those buildings designated New York City Landmarks.

The buildings on Lot 830 dated from about 1925 and were among the earliest developed in the Forest Hills neighborhood. The 1936 Sanborn map identifies the parcel as used by the Central Foundry Company, a company which sold plumbing supplies. The buildings were designed in the Spanish Mission style: the stuccoed wall had an opening on each side of the two-story building, with two small tower elements with niches at the ends of the wall along Metropolitan Avenue.

Lot 800 is currently only accessible off of Sybilla Street. It contained two one-story brick structures of utilitarian design erected in the late 1940s: one was approximately 78,000 sq.

ft., and the other 10,700 sq. ft. These buildings were built for use by H. J. Heinz Co. as a food processing factory/warehouse, and offices. Their last recorded use was in the early 1990s, when the smaller building was used as the office for a funeral escort service. The service's accessory vehicles parked on-site.

There is one New York City Landmark in the vicinity of the project site: the Remsen Cemetery is located approximately 700 feet (one block west and one block north) from the project site's frontage on Metropolitan Avenue. The Cemetery, which is believed to have been used from the mid-18th through the 19th centuries, contains the graves of members of the Remsen family; the oldest identified grave is that of Jeromus Remsen, who fought at the Battle of Long Island and was interred in 1790. The cemetery features tombstones dating from 1790 to 1819, gravestones erected by the Veterans Administration in memory of other Remsen family members who served in the Revolutionary War, and a World War I memorial. There are no other identified historic resources in the immediate area.

3.4.2 Archaeological Resources

A survey of historic maps indicates that before the development of the Forest Hills area into its current configuration of detached single- and two-family homes from 1900-1930, Central Queens was generally vacant land. H.F. Walling's *Topographical Map of the Counties of Kings and Queens* indicates that as of 1859, the current project site did not contain any recorded structures, though Trotting Course Lane – much of which has since been demapped – did run through the project site. The 1873 Beers Atlas indicates more clearly that the area was generally divided into large parcels of land between private landowners. By 1891, the current project site is composed of sections of three estates: the Thomas Hunt, Henry Wolfert, and Jerome Vanderveer Estates.

The first recorded structure in the vicinity of the project site is a house that lies just to the west of Trotting Course Lane and is located on the Wolfert Property; this house apparently was constructed in the years between 1873 and 1891 since the Wolverton Atlas indicates its existence (however, it does not appear on the 1899 Hyde map). The 1902 Sanborn Atlas indicates that an additional outbuilding has been erected on the Wolfert property, also located on the west side of Trotting Course Lane. The 1903 Hyde Atlas identifies the buildings as a two-story dwelling and a one-story stable, and the property owner as Henry Wulforst. This atlas also indicates that an 8-inch water main has been laid on the southern section of Trotting Course Lane (subsequent Hyde and Sanborn maps identify this as a 6-inch main).

By 1909, the Bromley Atlas indicates that the Wolfert/Wulfrost House has been removed and replaced by the tracks for the LIRR's Glendale Cut-Off. Contemporary Hyde maps themselves reflect this replacement as the correction plate depicting the Cut-Off was

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Final Environmental Impact Statement*

pasted over the Wolfert/Wulfrost buildings. A trestle allowing the line to cross Trotting Course Lane is depicted on the Hyde maps as well.

The 1914 Sanborn Map indicates that the Vanderveer house and outbuildings are still extant, though a new street grid is planned for the immediate area. The area in the immediate vicinity of the project site, which had been predominantly vacant save the LIRR tracks, begins to be developed: a building identified as the Forest Park Pumping Station is depicted to the east of the project site, off Sybilla Street. Twenty years later, the Sanborn Map shows that the residential uses currently located east of the project site have been developed, and that the project site itself is becoming an industrial superblock. A Reynolds Metal Company (foil) factory has been built to the west of the project site, the planned streets west of the site – e.g. Orville Place – indicated on the 1914 map were never opened, additional railroad tracks and spurs have been constructed on the block, and what had been the Forest Park Pumping Station is now identified as a City Asphalt Plant and the Munro Gordon Coal Co.

By 1950, the section of Trotting Course Lane between 73rd Avenue and Union Turnpike has been closed, allowing for the construction of the warehouse and office buildings that most recently occupied the project site. Woodhaven Boulevard, located to the west of the industrial superblock, has been opened, providing alternative north-south access to Trotting Course Lane. A paper factory has been built next to the Reynolds factory. In the years between 1950 and 1981, the Vanderveer buildings were demolished and replaced by what the Sanborn maps identify as a bowling alley and factory. General Electric completes the industrial character of the superblock by constructing a factory south of the old Reynolds factory. Since 1950, the fire insurance atlases do not indicate significant changes in the project site or its immediate area.

Historical atlases and property maps suggest that prior to the construction of the Heinz factory and office buildings that were demolished in spring 1999, the Wolfert/Wulfrost house and stable were the only structures that might have been located on the site. However, by comparing the property lines of the Wolfert/Wulfrost Estate to those lines as indicated on the 1909 Bromley Map, it appears that the Wolfert/Wulfrost buildings were located either directly under or west of the berm constructed for the Glendale Cut-Off; when the Glendale Cut-Off was pasted into the Hyde Atlas, it was placed directly over the Wolfert/Wulfrost buildings as well. Since the current project site lies 10 to 15 feet east of the berm, it appears highly unlikely that the site contains any remnants or outbuildings of the Wolfert/Wulfrost House.

In 1996, Historical Perspectives, Inc. examined an area – in which the current project site is entirely located – to assess its potential to contain archaeological resources. They contacted the New York State Museum for its evaluation of the site's potential to house

Metropolitan Avenue School Campus, Queens
Final Environmental Impact Statement

prehistoric archaeological resources. The State Museum determined that there was a “mixed probability of producing prehistoric archaeological data”. However, the absence of natural features that might have invited Native American settlement on or near the project site combined with the area’s extensive disturbance for construction of the existing structures and rail tracks makes it unlikely that the site contains significant remains *in situ*.