

**Celebrating NYS Archaeology Week and
National Archaeology Week**

Archaeology Round Table

Monday, May 9 - 7:30 PM
Hoyt Farm Park - New Highway, Commack
For more information - 421-4222

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE CONTAMINATION--
GARDEN VARIETY**

Ralph S. Solecki, PhD. Texas State University

One of the many problems in urban archaeology is that of landfill, and its effect on the local landscape, or urban geomorphology. It goes on everywhere around us, and in New York City, we need not go far. Both east and west sides of Manhattan and a big stretch on the East River in Brooklyn are built on landfill. Even Governor's Island (formerly Nut Island) in New York Harbor was built up with the tonnage extracted from the IRT construction around World War I. In another category are the great man-made mounds, - garbage dumps, in polite society called "sanitary landfills," which abound on southern Staten Island and in other handy marshy places like the Pelham Bay Park area. There is still a third variety of land fill, more gentle and subtle, of the garden type sometimes called "beautification" and "landscaping." It is the third variety which I have never seen discussed in New York archaeological papers.

As a high school student in the mid-1930's, using my Bolton, Parker and Skinner archaeological guides, I often took the subway and street car to check the sites mentioned by these gentlemen. One of my trips took me to Canarsie, to where there had been an amusement park. A large Indian site was reportedly situated in the area of the Paerdegat Canal, (Parker, 1922, Part 2:582; Bolton, 1922:149-150). This was the "Canarsee Planting Ground." There were many open lots in this area at the time, the soil was loose and sandy, and everything showed up quite plainly on the surface. The ground was whitened with both oyster and clam shells, tell-tale signs of Indian occupation. The local streets were not paved, and the sidewalks were just hard packed lanes paralleling the nascent streets. There were even some shell pockets tightly packed right in the middle of the sidewalk areas. Small bits of quartz flakes and an occasional potsherd were enough

to tell me that I was not wasting my time. An occasional fallow garden afforded more upturned earth for surface hunting. The finds were not many, but the rewards in potsherds and chipped stone specimens were enough to keep the search going. According to my notes and surveys, some half dozen trips over a space of six years, took me from Flatlands Avenue to Ralph Avenue down to the docks, Canarsie Avenue, Avenues K, L, N to Avenue T. There was a site at E. 107th Street and Flatlands Avenue.

On Seaview Avenue, I chanced across a vest-pocket sized park which was undergoing construction. There were a number of men plying the earth in small groups. They frequently took time off to stand and gossip around a scrap wood fire burning in an iron drum for warmth (it was February). This was during the Depression era, and these men were employed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). They were spreading a thick, black dirt over the park area. A spread of oyster and clam shell fragments told the story. I noted that the rakings were picked up in a wheel barrow and carted outside the park to an empty lot and

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD SCHOOL FOR
STUDENTS**

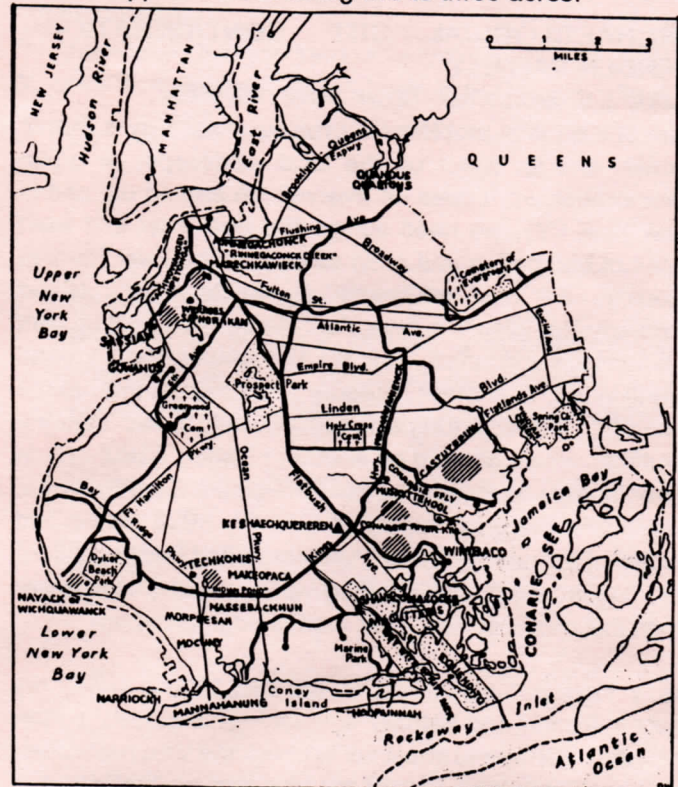
Eastern Suffolk BOCES and SCAA are sponsoring a Middle School - High School level Archaeological Field School for their Summer 1994 Enrichment Institute. Two 2-week sessions will be held at Blydenburgh County Park, Session A July 5 to 15, Session B July 18 to 29. Students are generally bused to the coordinating campus site at 8:00 AM, Blydenburgh by 8:30; they leave the site at 11:30 to be back at the campus by 12 noon. Participants carry out all aspects of archaeological survey, testing, excavating, and processing artifacts. They also do architectural studies, blacksmithing, 19th century carpentry, cooking, and textiles. Two week courses cost \$220/course; four week courses are \$433. For information, Call Millie Burke at 289-2200 or 687-3085.

dumped. This proved to be a treasure trove of finds, including quartz and chert flakes and bits of pottery. While I was poring through the little heap of discards, a truck pulled into the park and unloaded yet another dump load of the rich black earth. The men, directed by an overseer, attacked this heap with shovels and wheelbarrows, scattering the earth around in designated areas. I finally got the courage to ask the supervisor where the dump loads of earth came from. He said that they came from somewhere on Long Island (Brooklynites do not consider themselves Long Islanders as everyone knows), from Great Neck. The realization of this fact did not come to me until later. Who would ever guess that a little park sitting in the midst of an important Canarsie archaeological site would be contaminated with a veneer of foreign soil containing non-local Indian artifacts. Worse, this covering with this putative Great Neck earth lay over native Canarsie soil, giving a stratigraphy in cultural material that was misleading.

The Canarsie incident opened my eyes to the operations of Long Island developers. Since top soil is a valuable commodity and is not to be wasted, the first thing the land developer does after the property is cleared of brush, trees, etc., is to have the bulldozer scoop the topsoil off. It is taken down about a foot in depth, or just down to the sterile soil line or about plow zone level. In scooping up this earth, the bulldozer may lay bare shell pockets, hearths, etc. on Indian sites. Such was the condition at the Graham Court site in College Point, Queens, where a number of shell pits, including a burial pit was uncovered (Solecki, field notes). According to my College Point colleague, Matt Schreiner, the top soil from Graham Court was trucked out the 1939 World's Fair in Flushing, which was being built at the time under Robert Moses' direction. He also had the valuable peat moss, 88 acres of it, carted away from Juniper Swamp in Middle Village to the fair grounds (Hutter et al, 1976, pp. 138-9). Reportedly the value of the peat moss was over a million dollars. One can imagine the mixture of sites represented in the top soil covering the old fairgrounds today.

The instrument most responsible for rapid top soil removal is the blade or scoop-equipped bulldozer. Using the limitations of this vehicle, the earth is heaped into rectangular mounds which could be c. 50 feet long by 20 feet wide and 8 feet high, the number and size of the mounds depending on the area of the ground to be stripped. This stripped earth policy accounts for the many barren stretches of ground found in suburban lots. The mounds are spotted around the acreage, and may stay for several weeks; then as suddenly as they appeared, they disappear. And with them goes the cultural heritage of the area, even the grass roots. True, the subsurface soil remains exposed, at least for a while, but one cannot say that it is the same. While the mounds are still in place, they are good sources for artifacts, especially after hard rains have washed the heaps down. Needless to say, there is no doubt that they are out of context.

In the wake of the huge parkway construction and sewer projects around the city before and after WW II, I observed a number of areas which had been cleared of top soil preparatory to construction. I do not know when the habit of clearing off the top soil became a custom, but it certainly took hold with the introduction of the high powered bulldozers some time before WWII. Horse drawn scoops could do the job, but not as quickly and efficiently. I noted many top soil mounds during the construction of La Guardia airport. I measured one at Powell's Cove, Tallman's Island in northern Queens. It measured about 75 feet across the length of the top, at least 15 feet wide and about 9 feet high, with sloping sides measuring about 15 feet and 10 feet long at either end. Calculating the volume of this heap at about 375 cubic yards, at 1980's prices (in New Jersey) this would bring about \$3,750.00, a nice return with little cost involved, just like strip mining. An acre of land with a foot of top soil will yield about 163 cubic yards of top soil. Translated into 1980's prices this comes to about \$1,630.00 (including cartage to a nominal distance). This means that the big heap I saw on Tallman's Island must have come from a stripped area covering two to three acres.



The location of Canarsie in Brooklyn. From Robert S. Grumet, Native American Place Names in New York City. Museum of the City of New York.

In the little Canarsie Park I recovered about a hundred potsherds, several columella of whelk shells (possible wampum blanks), a white quartz point, some white clay trade pipestems, a grey chert Levanna projectile point, a spearhead, a celt or wedge, and white quartz and chert debitage. The ceramics were predominantly grit tempered and exterior cord marked. At least one was plain surfaced and dentate stamped in three rows across the sherd. It resembled the Abbot Zoned Dentate illustrated by Lopez and Wisniewski (1972, Plate 3, Fig. 2) from the Ryders

Pond Site, a Canarsie Indian site nearby at Sheepshead Bay, now part of the Brooklyn Marine Park. I would like to have reported that these patently non-local artifacts from the Seaview Avenue park stood out like beacons among the Canarsie artifacts, but cannot do so. Unfortunately, they all look the same, although it is possible that analysis of the pottery paste that makes up the ceramics may show a difference. The two areas, Canarsie and Great Neck are close enough to have been occupied by Indians bearing the same cultural traditions.

The lesson we learn here is not to take everything at face value in urban surface surveys. It pays to ask some questions regarding surficial treatment of the property, such as possible landscaping, etc., and whether or not any fill was brought in. There is certainly something to be said for researching the integrity of a site.

Editor's Note: This experience parallels Lynn Ceci's findings at the Lloyd Manor site (Unpublished ms. SPLIA)

Bolton, Reginald Pelham 1922, Indian Paths in the Great Metropolis. Indian Notes and Monographs. Museum of the American Indian. Heye Foundation. New York.

Hutter, Walter J. and Rev. John D. O'Halloran, Maureen Walthers, Philip P. Augusta. 1976 Our Community, Its History and People. Greater Ridgewood Historical Society, Inc. Ridgewood, N.Y.

Lopez, Julius and Stanley Wisniewski 1972 The Ryders Pond Site II. New York State Archeological Association Bulletin, No. 55; pp. 6-20.

Parker, Arthur C. 1922 The Archeological History of New York, 2 Parts. New York State Museum Bulletins Nos. 237, 236. Albany.

Solecki, Ralph S. Manuscript, unpublished. A stratified pit burial at Graham Court, College Point, New York.

UNDERWATER PRESERVE ESTABLISHED IN LAKE GEORGE

New York State's first underwater historic sites have been established in Lake George. The preserves' shipwrecks date from the French and Indian War and from the 1930s. They are equipped with mooring buoys, marked by ropes leading to the site, and accompanied by pamphlets. Preservation groups and state agencies from both New York and Vermont worked together to establish these underwater historic sites. Scuba divers with proper credentials are welcome to dive on these known wrecks in order to view and study them; touching them is forbidden.

Underwater preserves are inexpensive to establish and maintain and are meant to complement existing museums such as Fort Ticonderoga and Fort William Henry. Similar preserves have been established in Vermont, Florida, Michigan, North Carolina, and Washington State.

NEWS OF EARLY HUMANKIND

The dates for human activity throughout the world appear to be earlier than formerly thought, based on recent research. Russian archaeologists Yuri A. Mochanov and his wife Svetlana Fedoseeva toured leading American universities recently with pebblestone artifacts (their closest analogs from the African Oldowan site) from the Diring site in Siberia, which their geomorphologists have dated minimally at 1.7M years to 4.2M years. Texas A&M geologist Michael Waters and Ohio State University Steven Foreman's preliminary thermoluminescence tests on the site soils yielded a date of c. 500,000 years. If these dates hold, the theories of the peopling of the world will have to be changed. These findings confirm the view of the scientists who think the Americas were peopled long before the Clovis culture c. 12,000 years ago.

(To Be Continued in Next Issue).

RESOURCES

The Long Island Society of Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) has prepared a bibliography of resource materials that includes books, workbooks, magazines, newsletters, and games. Entitled "**Finding Out About Archaeology**," the listing will be particularly useful to teachers of world culture and world history who want to introduce an archaeology component, since additional readings relating to Ancient Greece, Rome, Egypt, Asia, and the Near East are given. Entries are identified according to appropriate age level. To receive a copy of this resource, contact Ed Pores, AIA Long Island Society, 16 Dorchester Dr., Manhasset, NY 11030: (516)627-4694

Simulations based on archaeological research at Wolstenhome Towne (1620) and an Anasazi site (A.D. 900-1300) are available from GSP, Inc. Groups choose sections of the site to investigate, and make inferences about artifacts found there. Geared for upper elementary and high school students, these simulations are available from GSP, Inc. 7426 N. Bradley Pl., Tucson, AZ 85741.

Lectures in Northeastern Archaeology
SUNY Stony Brook
Information (516)632-7620

"Archaeological Evidence for Native American Horticulture" April 28, 1994, 3:30 PM: Stephen A. Mrozowski, University of Massachusetts-Boston

"Historical Archaeology in New York City"
May 3, 1994, Nan A. Rothschild, Barnard College.
"Historical Archaeology in New York City."

The Archaeology of 17th Century Virginia, Special Publication 30, edited by Theodore R. Reinhart and Dennis J. Pogue, 1993. This is the fifth volume overall, and the first on historical archaeology. \$15.00 plus \$2.00 postage. ASV Treasurer, Box 340, Courtland, VA 23837

Bottles and Business in Plattsburgh, New York: 100 Years of Embossed Bottles as Historical Artifacts. Dr. Gordan Pollard. \$17 plus \$1.37 sales tax. Clinton County Historical Association, 48 Court Street, Plattsburgh, NY (518)561-0340.

The History and Archeology of Vermont's Iron, Charcoal, and Lime Industries, Victor R. Rolando. Paper \$32.95 Hard Cover \$39.95. Mountain Publications, PO Box 1812, Manchester Ctr., VT 05255 (802)362-4382

"New York City's Buried Past," A Guide to New York City's Revolutionary War Artifacts 1776-1783, Robert Apuzzo, Foreward by Michael Cohn. 163 pages, 272 illus., 2 maps, 6 1/2 X 9 1/2. \$26.95 plus tax. R&L Publishing 28 Vesey St., Sutie 2116, New York, NY 10007.

First Americans Expedition seeks volunteers for the 1994 field school at Mammoth Meadows (c. 14-8,000 years ago) near Dillon, Mont. Participants provide their own transportation to the site and camping gear; the Center for the Study of the First Americans provides food and instruction. For information call (503)737-4595 or write Expeditions, CSFA, Weniger 355, Oregon State university, Corvallis, OR 97331.

Mammoth Meadow: An Archaeological Quest for the First Americans, is available from the Center for the Study of the First Americans for \$13.95. Order from CSFA/Weniger 355, Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR 97331

MEETINGS AND CONFERENCES

Northeastern Anthropological Association, April 6-9, 1994. SUNY Geneseo (716)245-5176

1994 Middle Atlantic Archeological Conference, April 7-10, Sheraton Fontainebleau, Ocean City MD (800)638-2100

59th Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology, April 20-24 Disneyland Hotel, Anaheim, California

NYS Archeology Association Conference, April 29, 30, May 1. Eddy Farm Resort Hotel; Sparrowbush, NY Info: Ed Lenik (201)492-8525

Conference on New York State History, June 3-4, 1994 Brooklyn College Host Africana Studies Dept. Museum Director Gaynell Stone will be giving a paper. Info: Steven Bieliuski (518)474-6917

PUBLICATIONS OF THE SUFFOLK COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Readings in LI Archaeology & Ethnohistory: All volumes are \$35. Vols. I and VI are out of print.

- I. Early Papers in Long Island Archaeology
- II. The Coastal Archaeology Reader
- III. The History & Archaeology of the Montauk, 2nd Edition
- IV. Languages & Lore of the Long Island Indians
- V. The Second Coastal Archaeology Reader
- VI. The Shinnecock Indians: A Culture History
- VII. The Historical Archaeology of Long Island: Part I: The Sites

Student Series:

Booklet: A Way of Life: Prehistoric Natives of LI	\$5.50
Study Pictures: Coastal Native Americans	\$7.50
Wall Chart: Native Technology (26X39" 3 colors)	\$13.00
Map: Native Long Island (26X39" 3 colors)	\$13.00

Exhibit Catalogs:

The Montauk: Native Americans of Eastern LI	\$3.50
Women's Work: Native & African Americans of LI	\$3.50

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Membership in SCAA includes 3 Newsletters per year and a 20% reduction in workshop and publication costs. All contributions are tax deductible.

Student (To age 18) \$10	Individual \$20
Family \$30	Sustaining \$50
Contributing \$100	Patron \$200
Life \$400	

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Occupation: _____

Send Check to: Suffolk County Archaeological Association, P.O. Drawer 1542 Stony Brook, NY 11790