

HARLEM AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND

TASK FORCE



Aerial view of the 126th Street Bus Depot (highlighted in red) and the historic boundaries of the Harlem African Burial Ground (highlighted in orange).

Harlem African Burial Ground Task Force Vision & Mission Statements

On this sacred Lenape tribal site near the Harlem River and East 126th Street, where the Village of Harlem was founded in 1660, lie the desecrated remains of both freed and enslaved Africans who helped build this village, city, and nation. The Harlem African Burial Ground Task Force seeks to create a profoundly visionary memorial that empowers and educates all to the continued local, national, and global struggles for social and economic justice and spiritual fulfillment.

Working with the City of New York, the Harlem African Burial Ground Task Force seeks the creation of a vibrant memorial that is fully integrated into the social and economic fabric of East Harlem. The mission of the task force is to ensure that any new development on this sacred site be iconic in design and honor the lives and contributions of enslaved and free African colony and nation builders, their descendants, and indigenous people who inhabited Manhattan before the arrival of Europeans. This unique waterfront location reveals Harlem's and New York City's rich history and inspires its social, economic and spiritual future. Its redevelopment incorporates openness, grace and innovation. Nearby Harlem River Park, Harlem River Drive, Willis Avenue Bridge, 2nd Avenue Subway, and the larger neighborhood are visually connected through elegant landscaping, architecture and urban design that highlights this place, embracing residents and visitors alike.

In this sacred memorial place, the spirits of those once forgotten will be remembered: their wisdom will be received and renewed, and their stories will take their rightful place in the rich American narrative.

ELMENDORF REFORMED CHURCH

The Evolution of Harlem's Founding Church



1 FIRST CHURCH

Wooden Structure, completed 1667, located at First Avenue and 127th Street on what was Church Lane (miniature model-replica, now housed in the Elmendorf Reformed Church sanctuary).

2 SECOND CHURCH

Stone Structure, completed 1886, located at First Avenue and 125th Street; this structure was destroyed during the Revolutionary War; a church bell crafted in Holland in 1734 is the only remaining artifact from this building (N-YHS).

3 THIRD CHURCH

1825 church relocation to 121 Street and Third Avenue (N-YHS).

4 FOURTH CHURCH

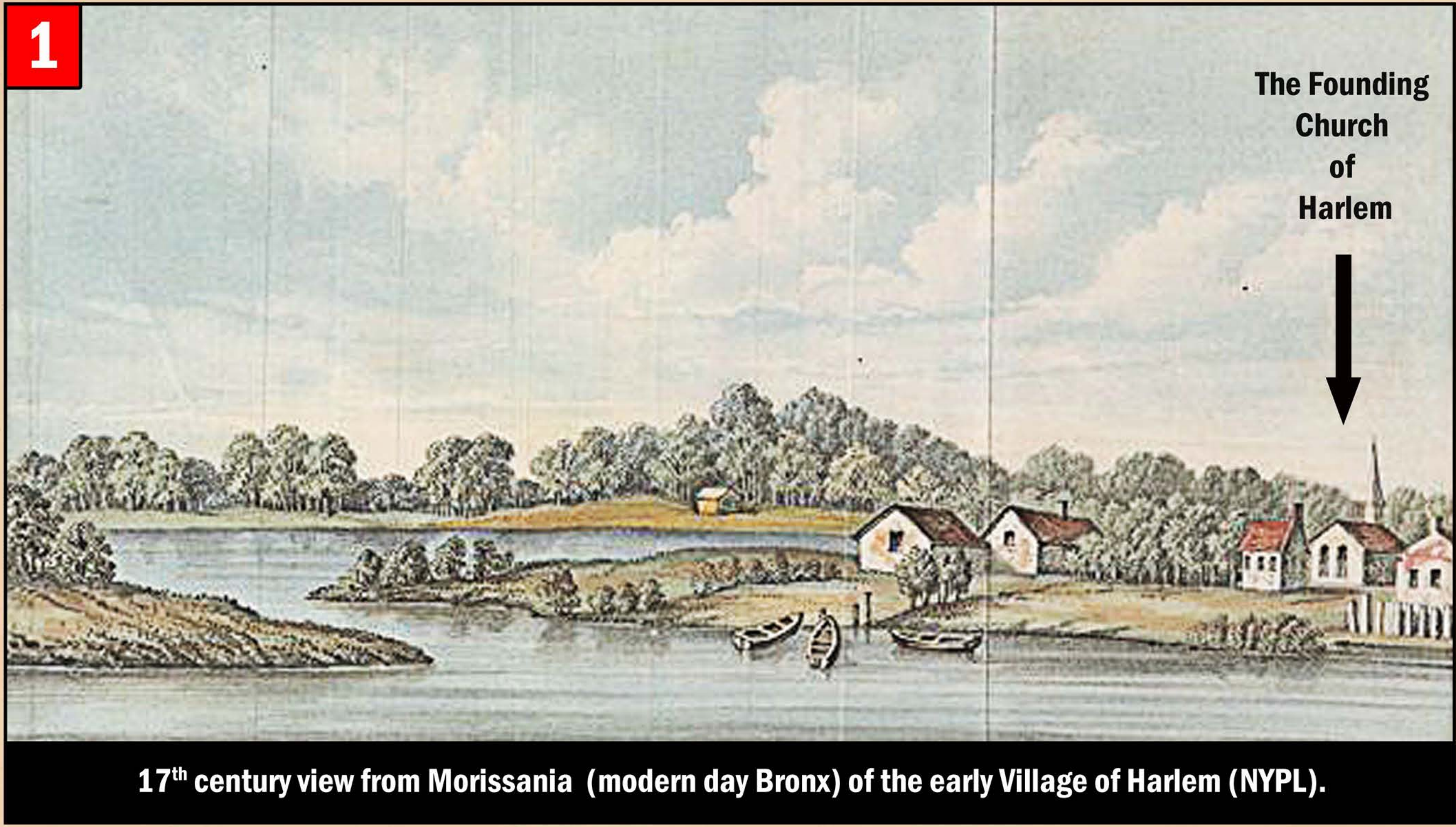
In 1884, economic development transformed Third Avenue into a business district. Church elders decided to move the church to its current location at 121st Street between Sylvan Court and Third Avenue. It is now called the Elmendorf Reformed Church (photo, J. B. Terepka).

As New York City grew from small agrarian villages to a more industrialized, urban center, the Low Dutch Reformed Church of Harlem congregation expanded, requiring several relocations. By the early 1870s, both the Negro Burying Ground and the European cemetery known as God's Acre had been sold. Many descendants of those buried in God's Acre were contacted so that their ancestors' bodies could be exhumed for re-interment in other cemeteries. In contrast, no arrangements were made for those of African descent. Their remains were left in the ground and the city was built on top of the Harlem African Burial Ground.

For more information please visit our website
<https://harlem-africanburialground.wordpress.com/>

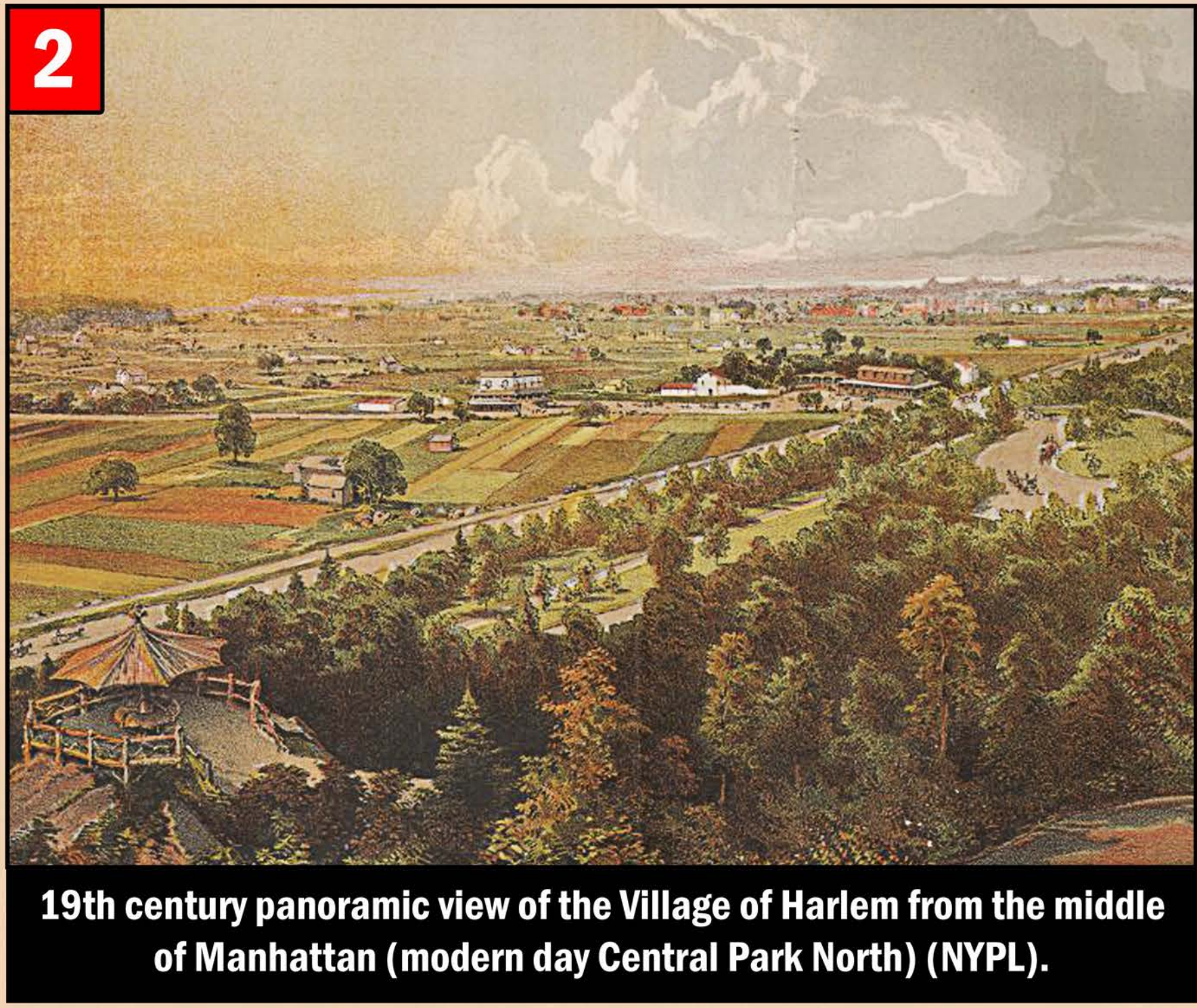
UPPER MANHATTAN

Early 1600s to Mid-1800s



17th century view from Morissania (modern day Bronx) of the early Village of Harlem (NYPL).

The Village of Harlem, established on an indigenous people's sacred site, was on a slight hill overlooking a gentle slope towards the Harlem River. In this early era, Manhattan was hilly and lush; the fertile land supported large farms. The long island was crisscrossed by Lenape paths that would become colonial roads; small villages dotted the landscape.



19th century panoramic view of the Village of Harlem from the middle of Manhattan (modern day Central Park North) (NYPL).

◀ 18th century topographical map of Manhattan (N-YHS).



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VILLAGE OF HARLEM

Early 1800s to Mid-1800s

Church & Farmlands

MAP KEY

-  Historical Boundary of the Harlem African Burial Ground
-  Historical Boundary of the Cemetery for Persons of European Descent

1820 John Randel Farm Map (MCNY)



From the beginning, the Low Dutch Reformed Church of Harlem maintained two cemeteries: one for people of European descent and one for people of African descent. The Harlem River was wider than it is today and the river side of the Harlem African Burial Ground was located on marshy land that joined the wide tidal zone. Outside the village, the wealthiest members of the community maintained large properties and estates. One of these families, the Ingraham family, were prominent members of the Harlem Church going back four generations. Judge Ingraham was an elder in the Church, a member of the Church's governing body. Beginning in the 1830s, he leased the "Negro burying ground" from the Church as grazing land for his sheep and cattle, thereby beginning a long tradition of disrespect for this sacred site: funerals and burials took place as farm animals wandered on the cemetery.



Home of Judge Daniel Ingraham, 1858 (NYPL).

Early 19th century view of the Village of Harlem from Church Lane / Old Harlem Road. The second church building of the Dutch Church of Harlem is seen in the middle-ground to the right (NYPL).



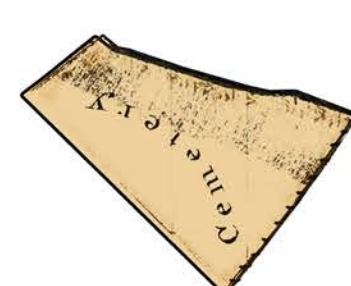
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SULZER'S HARLEM RIVER PARK

1885 to 1917

Beer Garden & Casino

MAP KEY



Historical Boundary of the Harlem African Burial Ground

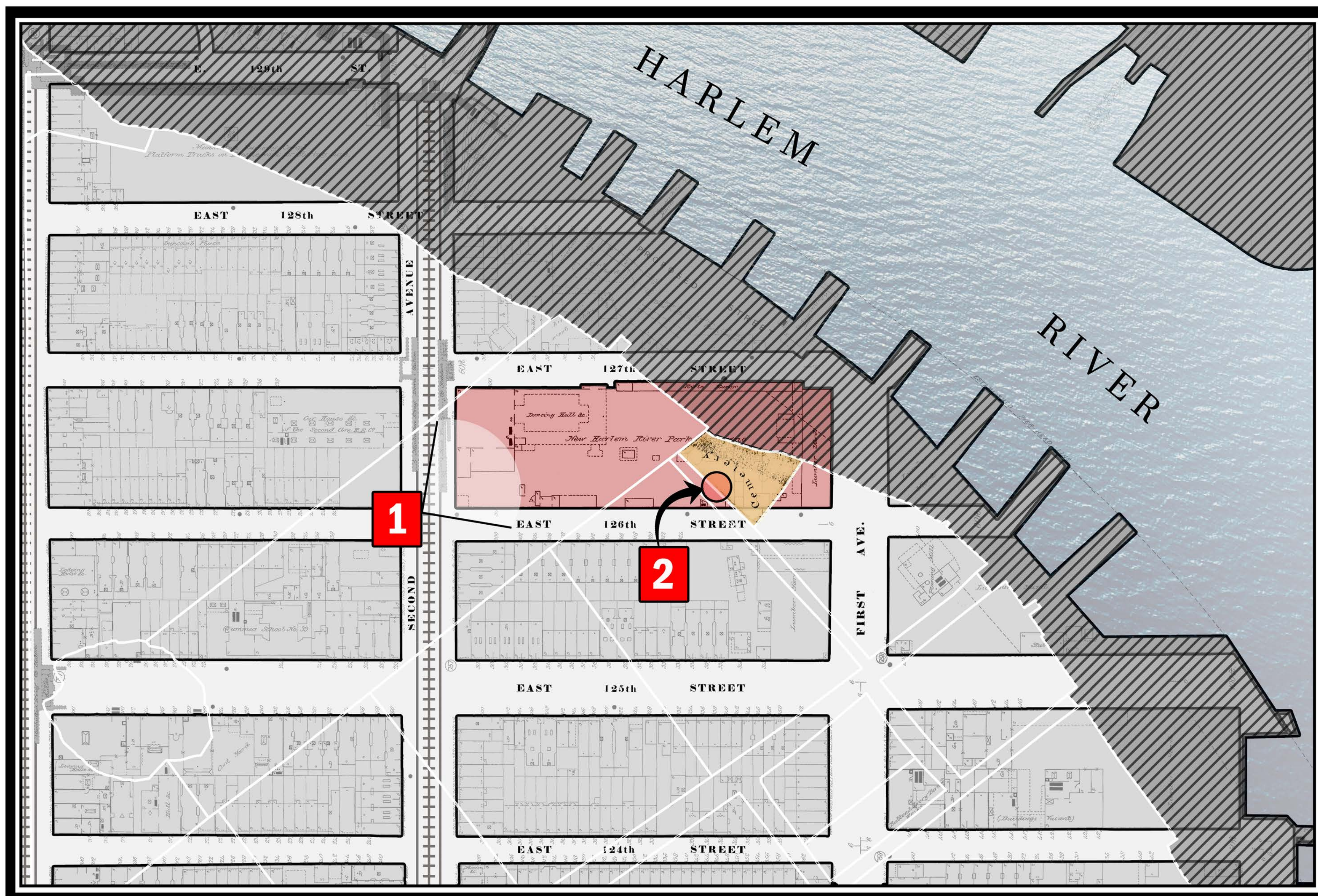


Project Site Block

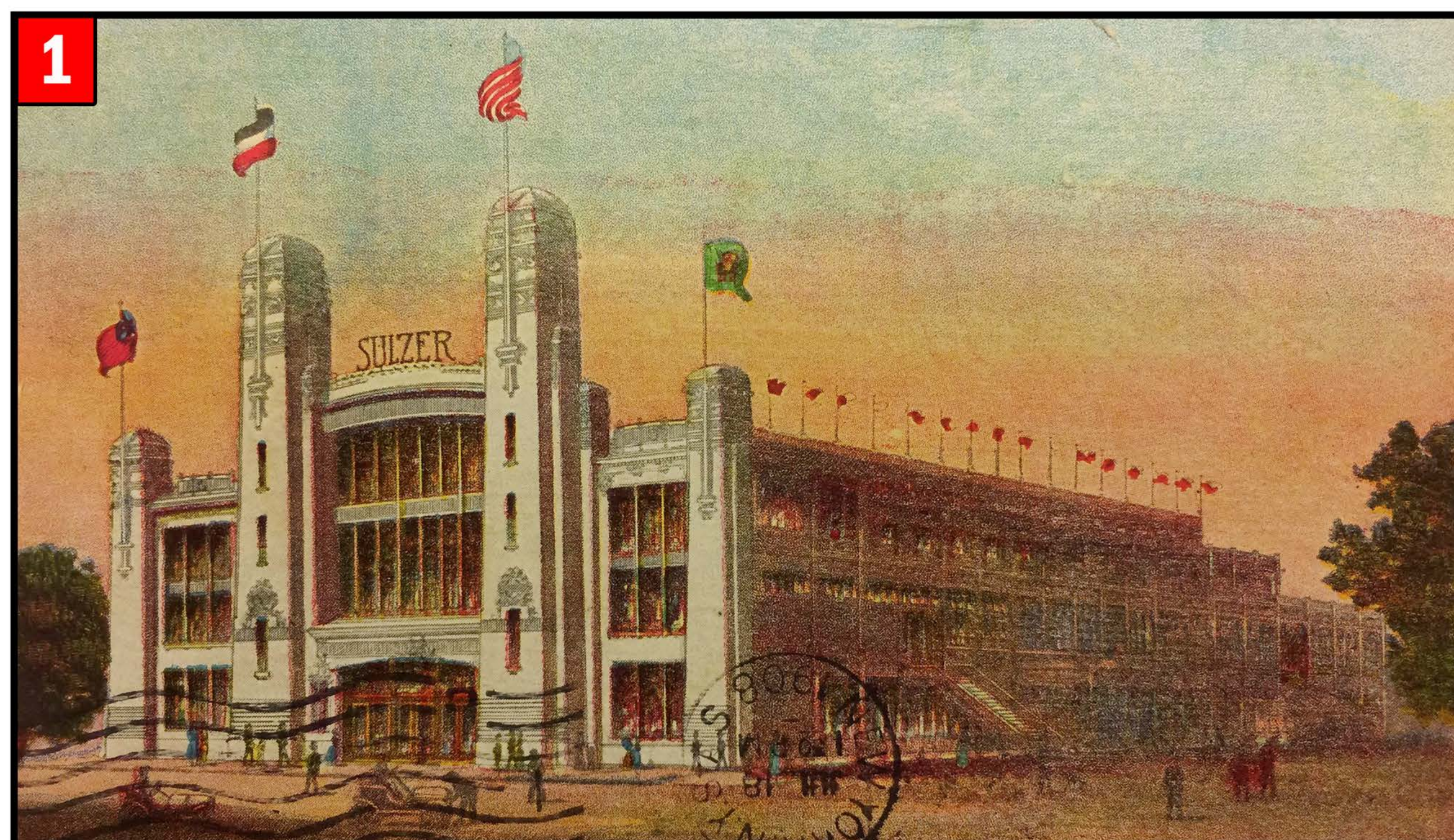


Landfill - a method of creating more usable land here by depositing refuse and/or soil in the water

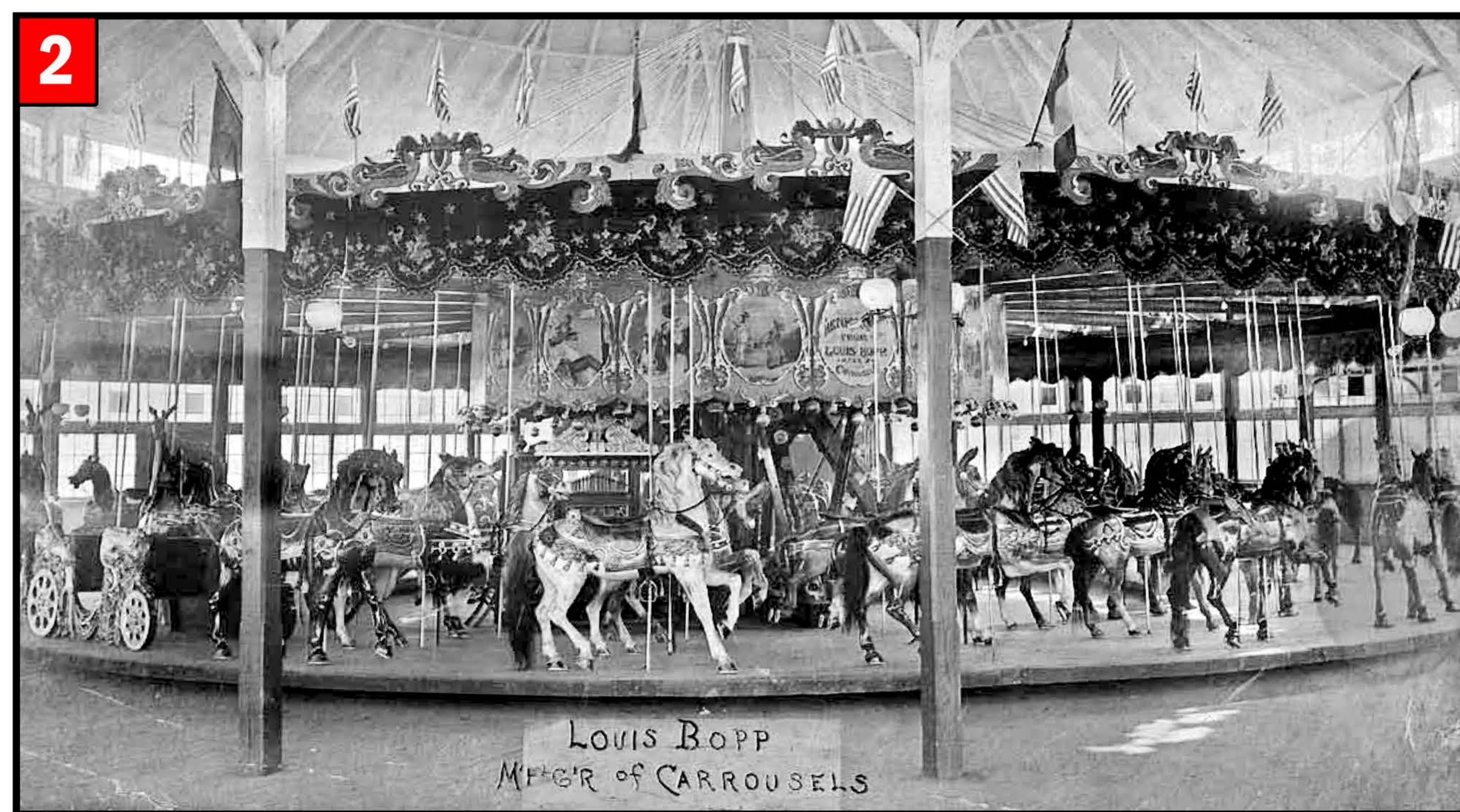
1896 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (NYPL)



By 1885, urbanization and the rectilinear street grid had arrived in Harlem. River life included commercial shipping, ferries, leisure boating and competitive rowing. The prominent German American Sulzer family opened one of New York City's most popular "beer gardens," Sulzer's Harlem River Park and Casino; its carousel was famous for its finely sculpted animals and bright colors. Groups of all sorts - Italian, Jewish, German, Irish and Spanish immigrant societies, as well as wrestling, archery, basketball, dancing, singing, dramatic, veterans and civic clubs - rented the Casino for private parties. These activities took place on top of the now forgotten Harlem African Burial Ground.



Tourist post card of Sulzer's Harlem River Park and Casino, view from Second Avenue (Carousel History).



Engraving of carousel designed by Louis Bopp within Sulzer's Harlem River Park (Carousel History).

Sulzer's Harlem River Park, Casino and Garden,
 HARLEM MUSIC HALL.
 Books open for Engagements for Balls, Banquets, Pic-Nics, etc.
 OFFICE: 127TH STREET & SECOND AVENUE.
 TELEPHONE: 144 HARLEM.

1892 Advertisement for the Harlem River Park (eBay post).

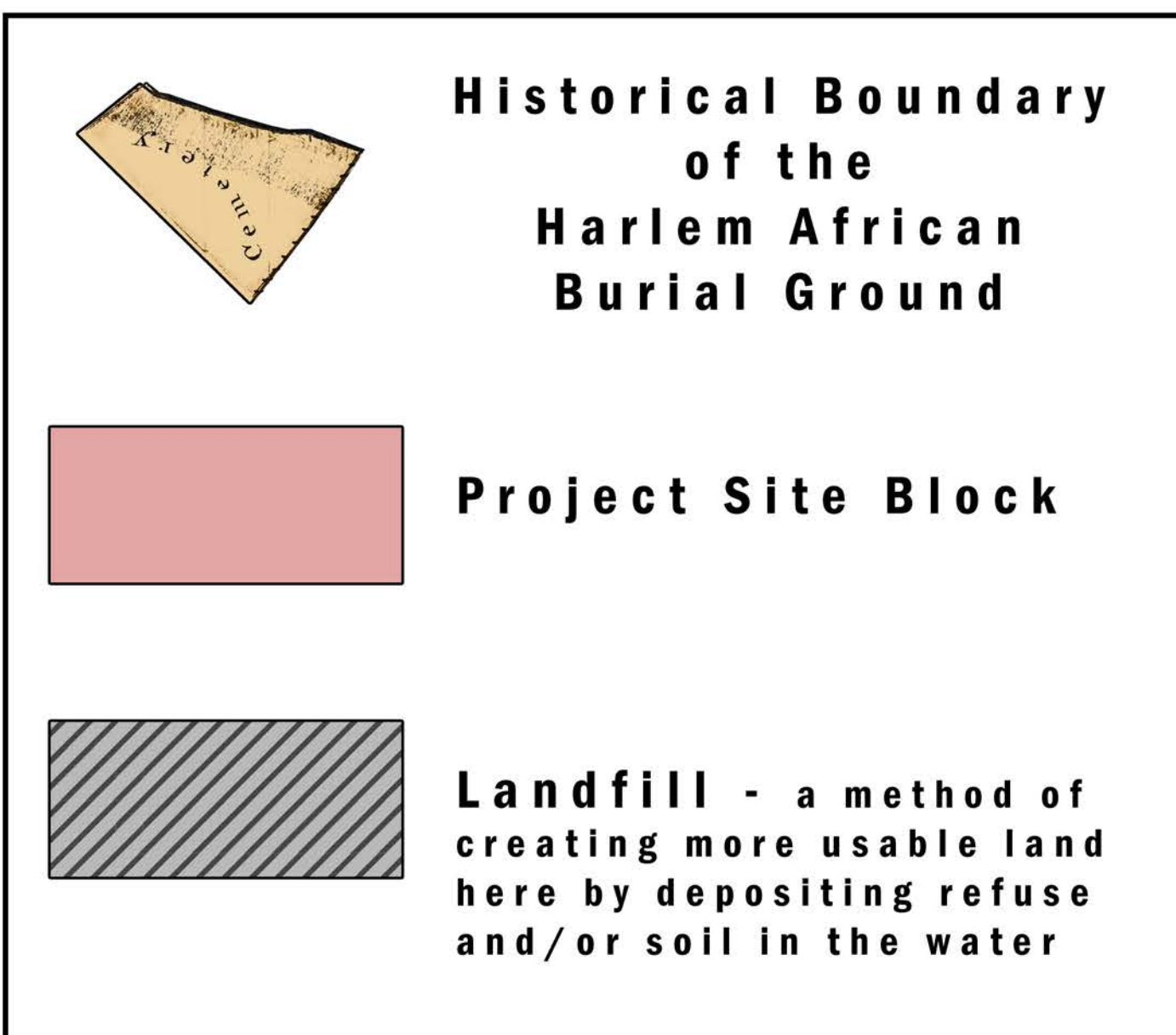
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BARRACKS & MOVIE STUDIO

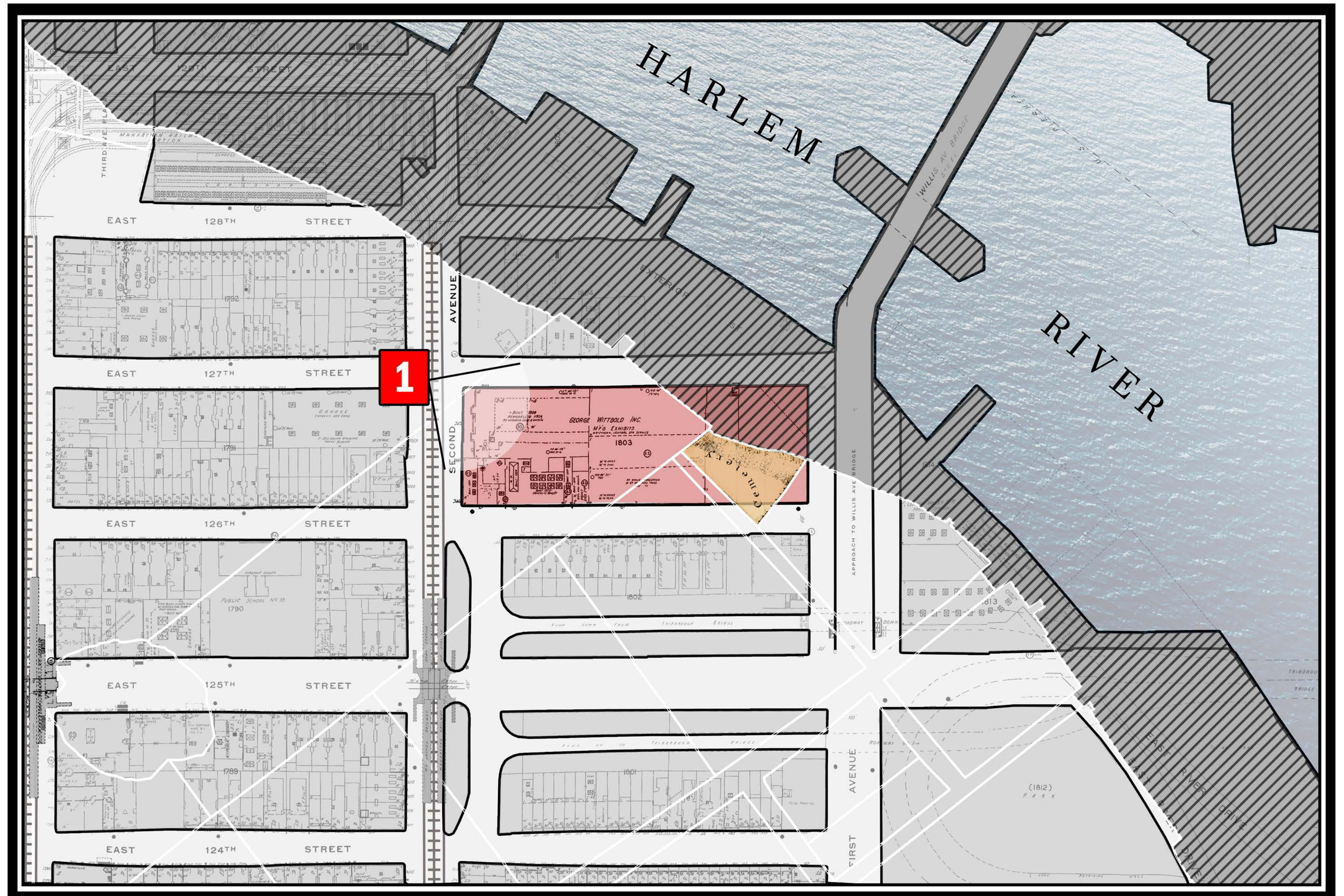
1917 to 1924

Infantry Barracks; Cosmopolitan Productions

MAP KEY



1933 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (NYPL)



With the onset of World War I and the possibility of Prohibition, the Sulzer family sold the park and casino complex to the City. In 1917 and 1918, the building was converted to a barracks for the newly formed 15th New York National Guard Infantry Regiment, or 369th Regiment, an all black infantry unit with both white and black officers.

In 1918, multimillionaire and newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst bought the building, added another floor on top, and converted it to a movie studio, Cosmopolitan Productions. Interior spaces were redesigned as movie sets and more than forty major films, many featuring Hearst's mistress, actress Marion Davies, were made here; these movies represented the best final efforts of the silent film era.

The complicated work and daily lives of enlisted soldiers, army officers, movie directors, set designers, actors and actresses all took place in the large, frequently remodeled and increasingly industrial building that was built over the now many times desecrated "Negro burying ground."



Cosmopolitan Productions movie studio building. c. 1923 (MCNY).

These soldiers, ultimately known in the United States as the Harlem Hellfighters and in France as the Black Rattlers or Men of Bronze, fought valiantly against the Germans in World War I and were among the most decorated of all American units, receiving numerous medals for valor and heroism. c. 1918 (NYPL).



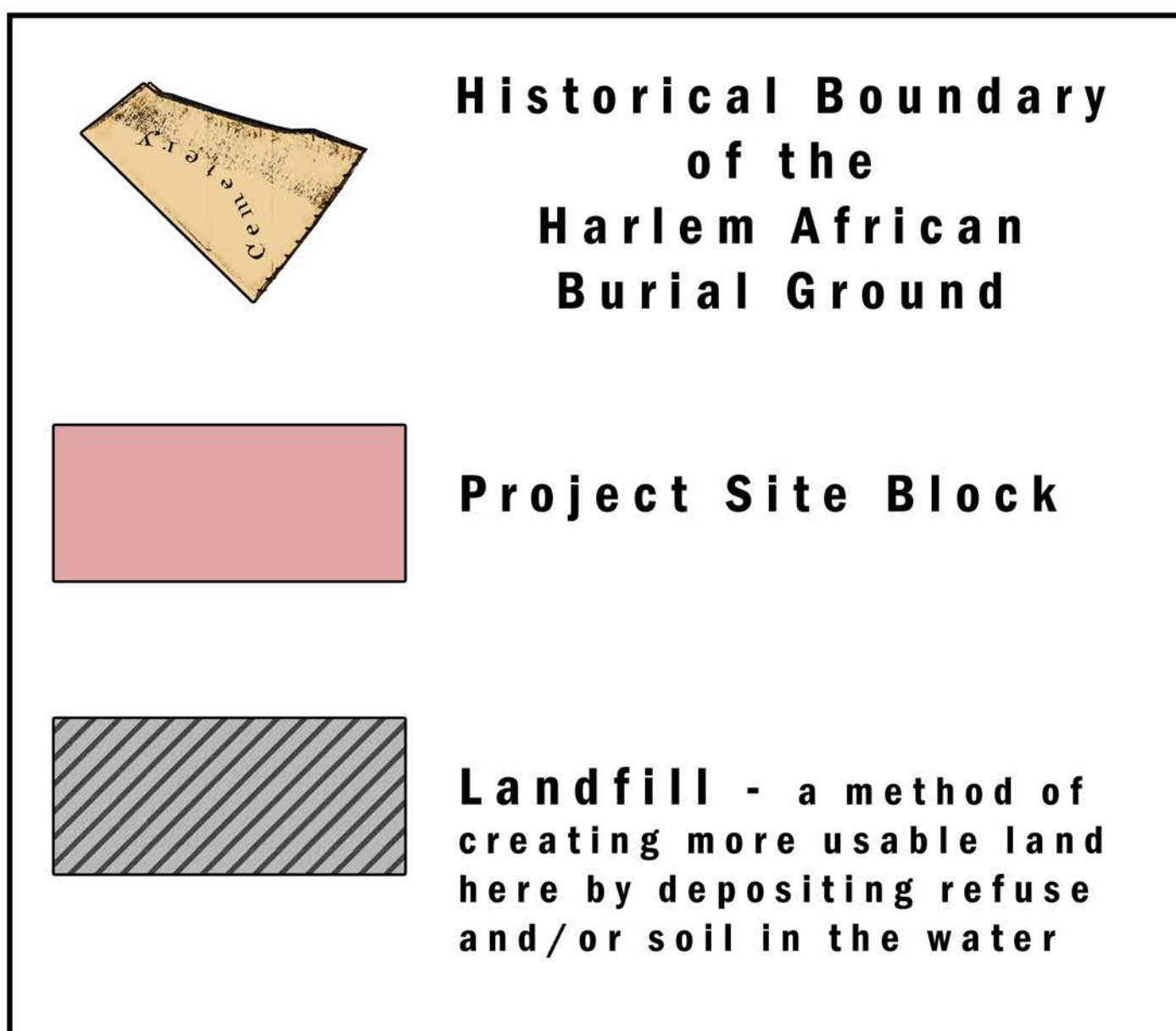
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126th STREET BUS DEPOT

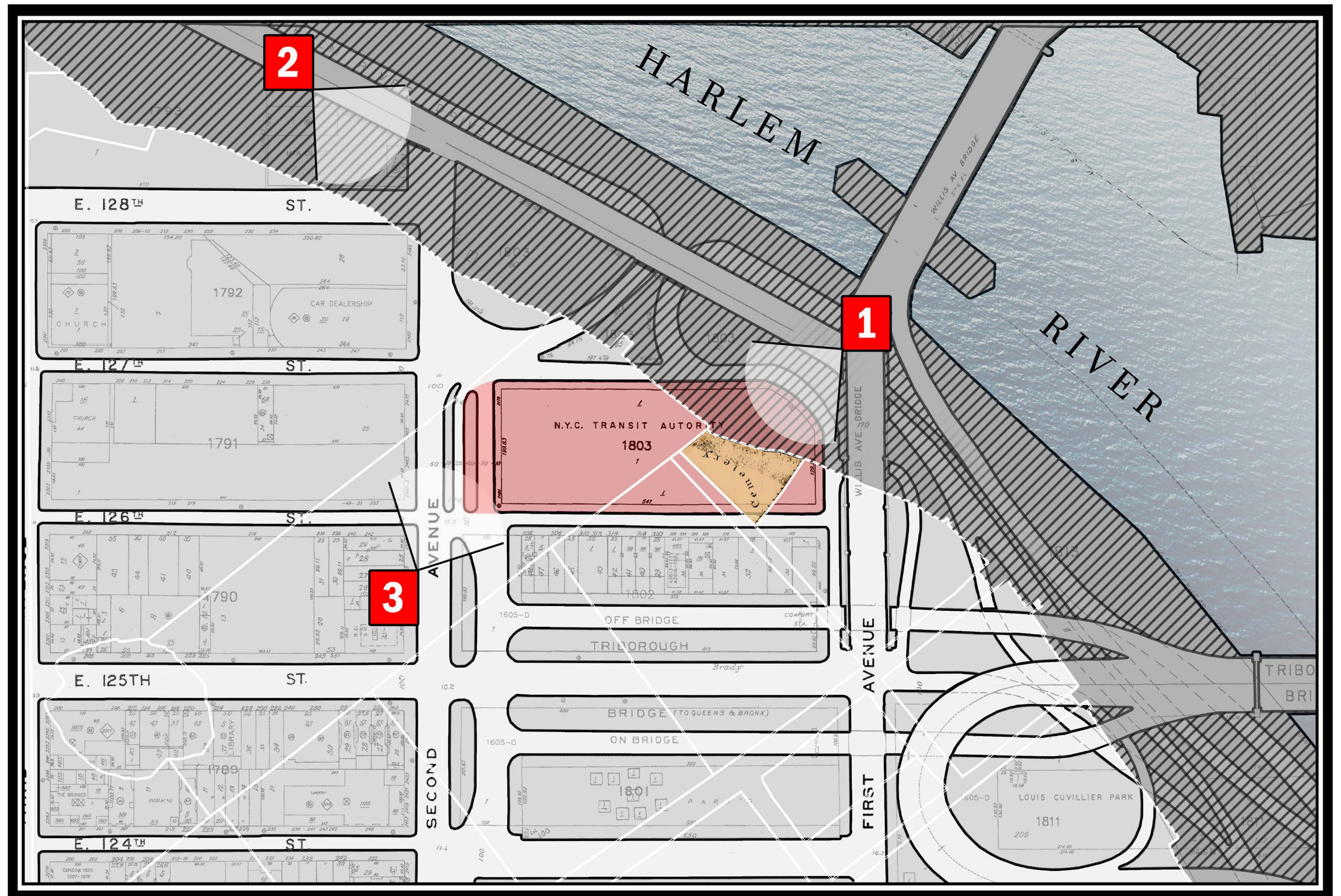
1940s to Present

N.Y.C. Transit Authority Bus Garage

MAP KEY



2014 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (NYPL)



After the Hearst movie studio closed and was torn down, the Third Avenue Railway Company built a trolley barn to house its trolley cars/buses, which were no longer connected to rails embedded in the avenue. In 1962, the Manhattan and Bronx Surface Transit Operating Authority (now New York City Transit Authority) purchased the privately controlled bus depot and the City of New York took control of the land. After acknowledgment of the existence of the colonial Harlem African Burial Ground under the depot, together with New York City Transit Authority's reassessment of its transportation infrastructure needs, the bus depot was vacated in 2015. Operations formerly conducted in the depot were moved offsite.



View of the bus depot from the walkway on the Willis Avenue Bridge (Photo, Henry Ballard Terepka).



View of the bus depot from 2nd Avenue and 126th Street, circa 1940 (Photo, NYC Municipal Archives)



Aerial view of the bus depot looking East towards Randall's Island (Library of Congress).

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PARTIAL LISTING OF THOSE INTERRED

IN THE

African burying ground at Harlem

These individuals have been identified in historical records as those buried in the Harlem African Burial Ground. Described in documents as colored, Negro or African, these enslaved and free people sacrificed their freedom of movement, dignity and humanity to provide labor that fueled and helped to sustain all aspects of New York's increasing development and modernization. With continued research by members of the Harlem African Burial Ground Task Force and associated scholars, the life stories and personal contributions of these individuals and their families will enrich our understanding of New York City history. Historical materials being studied include sources as varied as detailed sacramental notes composed by clergy, church financial ledgers, census data, city directories and local histories.

JANE ANTHONY
FRANCIS ARMSTRONG
(NO NAME) ARMSTRONG
JOSEPH ATTINELLI
BENJAMIN PEARSALL BENEDICT
HENRY BLAKE
(CHILD) BLAKE
FRANKLIN BUTLER
HERMAN CANON
JANE CANON
ROBERT CHURCH
SARAH LOUISA COLE
CHARLES B. CONNER
HENRY B. EDWARDS
MARY ELIZABETH FERGUSON
ELIZABETH FRANCISCO
WION FRANCISCO
HENRIETTA FRASER
ARETAS HAGERMAN
CATHERINE AMELIA HAGERMAN
GEORGE WASHINGTON HAGERMAN
PHOEBE TAMAR CANON BLAKE HAGERMAN
LYDIA ELIZA HAGERMAN
ISABELLA IRVINE
MARGARET JAPAN
JACOB JEPAIN
JULIA ANN JOHNSON
WILLIAM LAIGHT
GEORGE NICHOLS
ROSEANNE NICHOLS
DANIEL W. PARKER
JANE PEARSALL
CHRISTINE ROBINSON
SUSAN SAYERS
EMILY SCOLES
WILLIAM SCOLEY SHAW
MARY STEWART
MARGARET WALKER
ISRAEL WILLIAMS

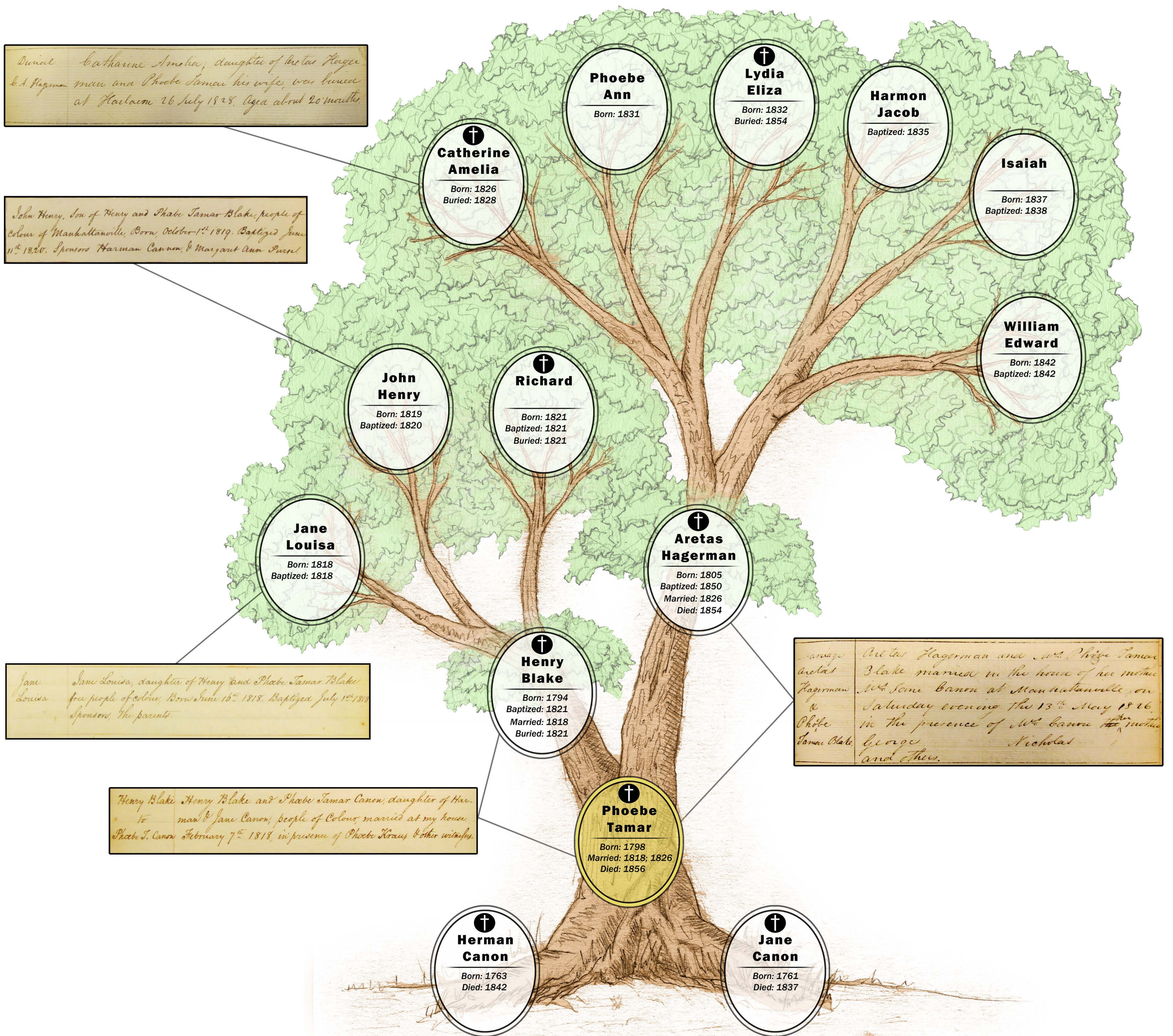
THREE GENERATIONS OF ONE FAMILY

IN THE

African burying ground at Harlem

PHOEBE TAMAR CANON BLAKE HAGERMAN

Three generations of the family of Phoebe Tamar are buried in the Harlem African Burial Ground. Her parents are Herman and Jane. Her first husband was Henry Blake. He was baptized as an adult when he was ill on the same day that the couple's new little baby Richard, also ill, was baptized. Both Henry and the little baby died almost immediately afterwards. Phoebe Tamar's second husband was Aretas Hagerman. He too, at Phoebe Tamar's insistence, was baptized as an adult and at his death was buried in the Harlem African Burial Ground. Altogether, Phoebe Tamar buried both of her parents, both of her husbands and three of her nine children in the Harlem African Burial Ground before she herself was buried there in 1856.



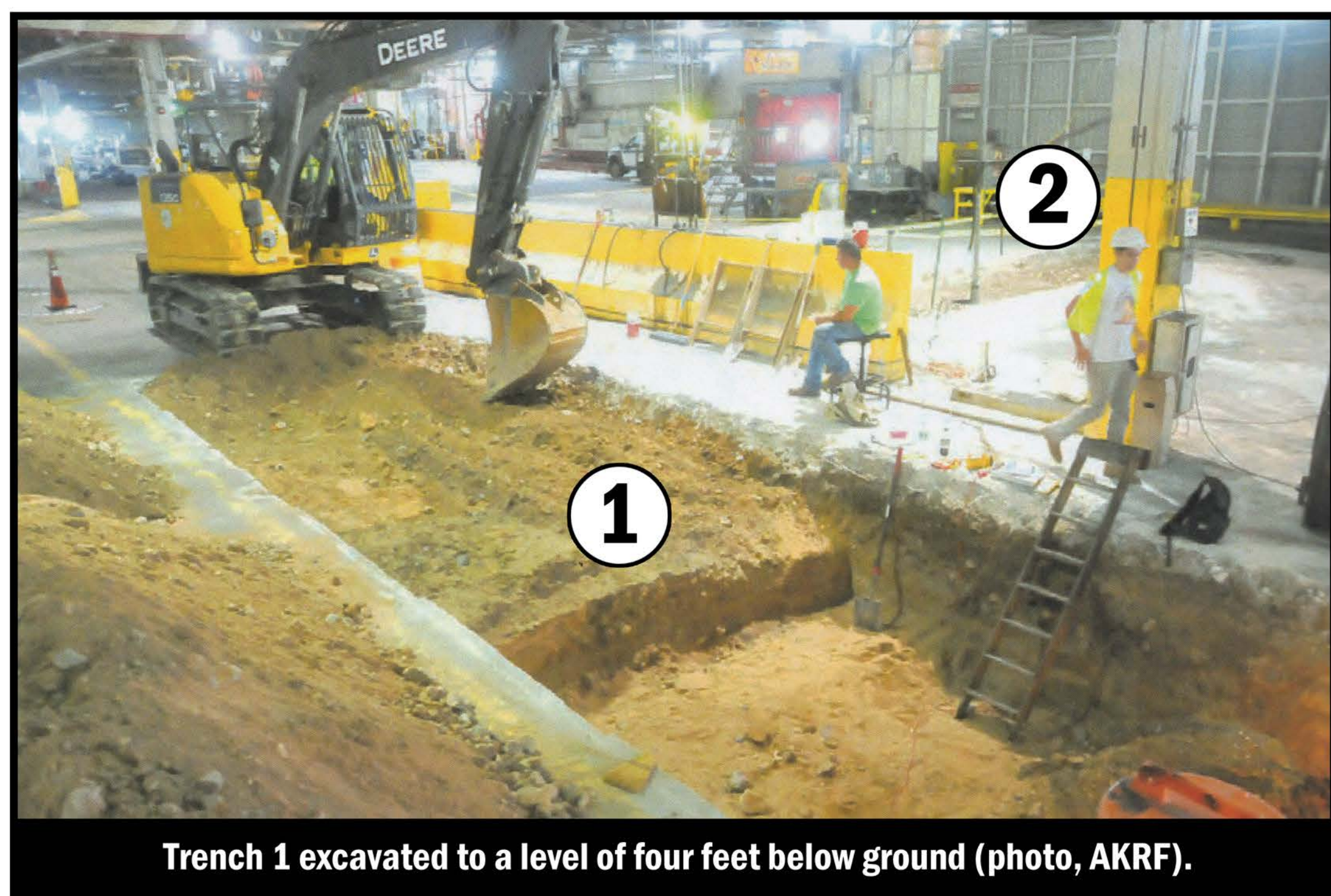
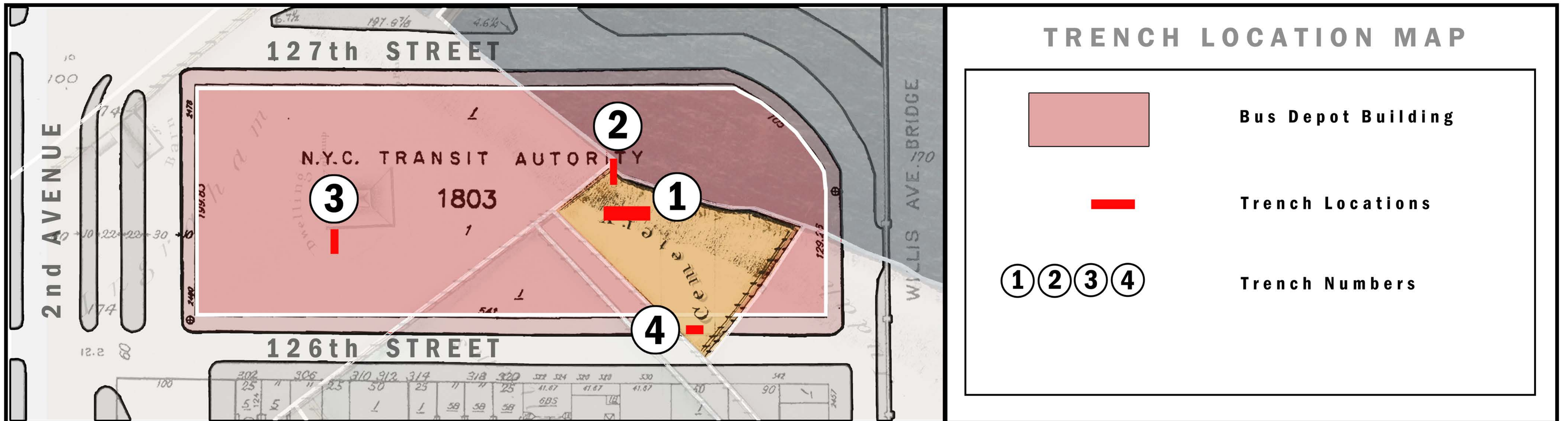
† Buried in the Harlem African Burial Ground

The archival records of St. Michael's Church (located on 99th Street and Amsterdam Avenue) and St. Mary's Church (located on 126th Street between Amsterdam and Broadway Avenues) contain information about three generations of one family buried in the Harlem African Burial Ground. Church records do not reveal every birth, baptism, marriage or death detail of every person, but they do give enough information to enable historians to form a complete picture.

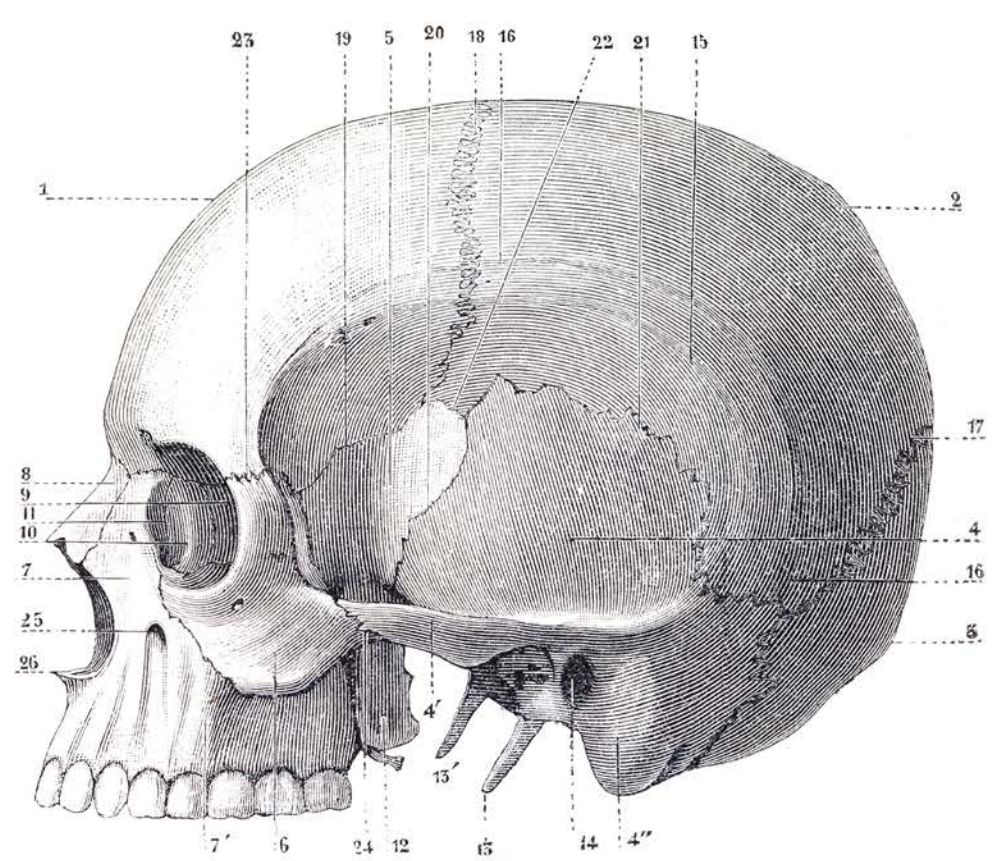
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS

AT THE

African burying ground at Harlem



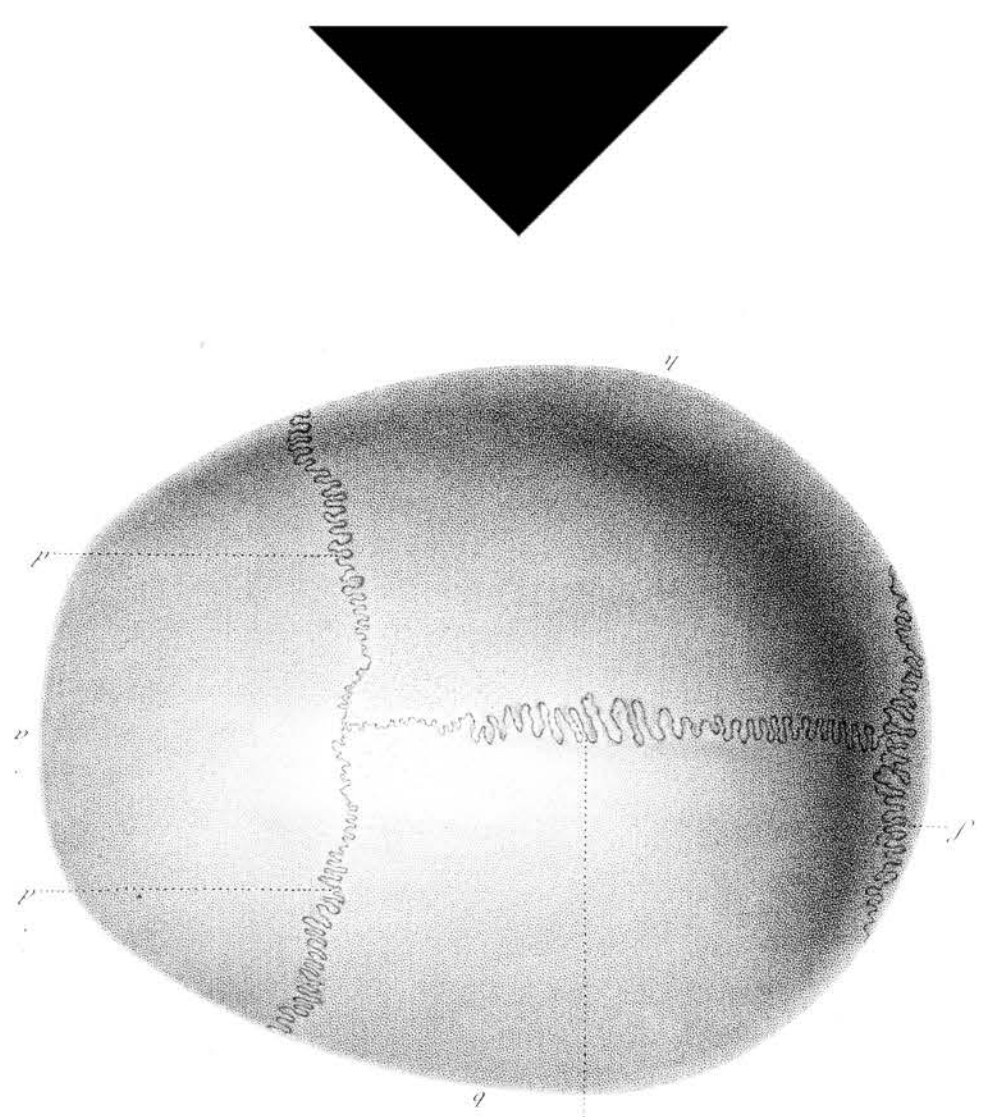
The New York City Economic Development Corporation hired environmental planning and engineering consultants, AKRF, Inc. to conduct a Phase I-B Preliminary Archaeological Investigation. Subsurface testing was limited in scope; its purpose was to identify the presence or absence of important buried resources. In Trench 2 (1 of 4 test pits excavated at the 126th Street Bus Depot), disarticulated human remains were found along with other archaeological artifacts. All recovered artifacts have been safely secured in accordance with approved city and state archaeological protocols.



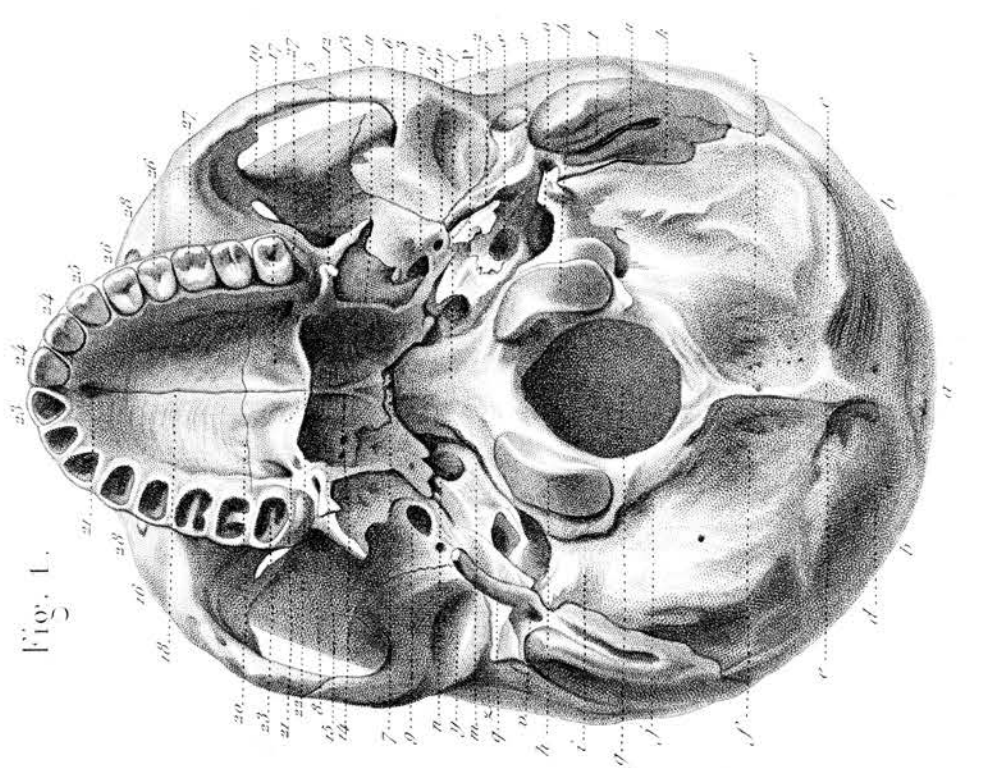
The above illustration depicting a skull is representative of a partial skull such as the one found in Trench 2 and exhibited below.



City and state archaeological protocols dictate that an archaeologist must be on site when any future construction occurs.



The above illustration depicting the top of a human skull is intended to identify the human remains shown in the adjacent photograph.



The above illustration depicting the base of a human skull is intended to identify the human remains shown in the adjacent photograph.