

## Professional Archaeologists of New York City, Inc.

**PANyc**

# **NEWSLETTER**

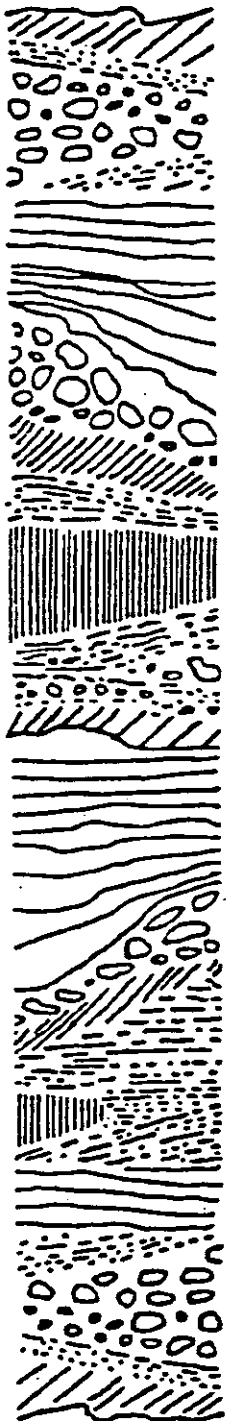
Number 98, November 2000

### Contents

Minutes, General Meeting	1
Correspondence	3
PANyc Award Nomination Request	5
In the News	7
A Funny (?)	12
Events Calendar	13
PANyc Membership Application	14

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**NOTICE OF NEXT MEETING: 15 NOVEMBER 2000**

Hunter College North, the intersection of East 68th and Lexington, Manhattan; Room 710  
Turn right out of elevator, go through doors, turn left and go to end of hall, the room is on the right  
Executive Board: 6:00 P.M.  
General Membership: 6:30 P.M.

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Minutes of the PANYC General Membership meeting: 27 September 2000.

President Geismar called the meeting to order at 6:36 P.M.

**SECRETARY'S REPORT:** The minutes of the previous General Membership meeting were accepted with the following corrections. Under **PRESIDENT'S REPORT:** tax-exempt "statue" should be "status". Under **URBAN STANDARDS:** at the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> line "standards" should be "standardized"

Stone reported Lillian Naar's minutes were returned "addressee unknown". It was suggested Stone contact Harris to see if she has a current address for Naar. Stone passed around a draft of a new "Dues Renewal Notice" form for comment. She noted the change of date when dues are due beginning next year because of the new by-laws. It was suggested she add a "sub-committee membership" section to the form. Stone also report the success of adding the dues-paid-through dates to the mailing labels.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** Freeman reported a balance of \$1731.55 in the PANYC treasury. She said people who have not paid dues since 1998 have been removed from our mailings. Some members thought the problem could be address changes we are not aware of. Geismar will contact Robert Grumet and Toni Silver about their addresses.

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT:** President Geismar stated PANYC has received not-for-profit status. She wrote letters of thanks to the Columbia law students who worked on this.

Geismar wrote a letter in favor of including archaeology in the Lower East Side Historic District National Register nomination. Dallal went to the hearing and read the letter. They were happy to report the district was nominated to the NRHP and archaeology was included.

Geismar discussed the SAA letter writing campaign about a proposed amendment to the cultural properties implementation act. She wrote a letter on behalf of PANYC.

Geismar reported Bonasera resigned as Vice President. According to the by-laws, the executive board elects someone to fill the vacancy. Fitts was elected unanimously. This left a vacancy on the board. To fill the board position, Geismar will ask Bonasera who received the most votes for board member in the last election of those not elected. She will then ask this person to fill the rest of Fitts' term on the board.

Geismar said both she and Dallal had been contacted by Ed Platt about PANYC co-sponsoring a public forum on Staten Island archaeology. She said the executive board discussed the issue and determined it was not part of PANYC's mission. Geismar will write a letter to Platt to this affect and suggest he contact Staten Island organizations for sponsorship.

Geismar asked McGowan for a copy of the MOA for City Hall Park and said PANYC would write a letter urging the city to follow it.

Geismar discussed the fact that all of the archaeologists at the Landmarks Preservation Commission have let their PANYC membership lapse. The membership felt she and Fitts should try to meet with the LPC archaeologists. Geismar also said there is a new director of the Historic House Trust of New York City. She and Fitts will also set up a meeting with this person. Geismar will also contact the Central Park Conservancy to find out who is responsible for archaeology.

**ACTION:** Spritzer had nothing to report.  
**AWARDS:** Cantwell had nothing to report.

**EVENTS:** Stone and other members related the upcoming events which didn't make it into the calendar or are noteworthy. These include an exhibit at Fordham University and a slide lecture by A. Gilbert on 10/24, a tour of Raritan Landing on 10/27, and an ASNJ field trip on 10/28. A web site has been set up for the Raritan Landing site: [www.raritanlanding.com](http://www.raritanlanding.com). The NY Genealogical Society is hosting next year's New Netherlands on 10/19/2001.

**MEMBERSHIP:** Stone will send membership application to Chris Matthews.

**MET. CHAPTER NYSAA:** Geismar reported on behalf of Lattanzi that Mike Papalardo spoke at the last meeting on the Navy Yard burial ground. John Vetter will speak at the October 10 Met. Chapter meeting. Stone asked for advance information on Met. Chapter events so she could put them in the PANYC events calendar. It was suggested she write to Lattanzi and ask for this information. Conversely Geismar suggested Lattanzi be given PANYC members email address to publicize his organization's meetings.

**NYAC:** Stone reported the upcoming NYAC meeting on October 14 in Binghamton. There will be a business meeting followed by the presentation of student papers.

**PUBLIC PROGRAM:** Fitts set the date for the upcoming public program as April 1, 2001. He liked the format used at last year's program where speakers gave 15 minute presentations followed by a panel format for questions and answers. He is formulating a theme for the program. Geismar will do a mark up of a flier for the program which will include the speakers' names. Fitts would like to get more publicity. He formed a committee with Rakos and Freeman. Geismar suggested the public program mailing use stickers to seal the fliers rather than staples.

**STONE STREET:** Geismar suggested the removal of this committee from the agenda.

**URBAN STANDARDS:** Stone reported the revised draft of Monitoring Guidelines is in the newsletter and the committee would like to receive comments as soon as possible, but no later than year end, to coincide with the winter NYAC meeting.

**WEB SITE:** Fitts spoke to Ricciardi who asked for more comments on the web site. Pickman said PANYC now must consider a host for the site since we have received not-for-profit status. Geismar will ask Rothschild about using Columbia. Cantwell said Rutgers is not an option. Fitts said it may only cost \$300 for 2 years to host our own site.

**NEW BUSINESS:** Stone brought a copy of a Times article about a cemetery site which was mis-captioned. Geismar said it should be published in the next newsletter. She will contact Bergoffen, whose picture was in the article and pass a copy onto Killeen for the newsletter.

Stone passed around a copy of a petition from Barbara Buske of MALFA about Croton Point Park. It was the consensus that PANYC does not comment on issues outside of the city. However should members wish to support the preservation of archaeological sites in Croton Point Park they should be encouraged to do so.

Geismar set meeting dates for most of the upcoming year: 11/15, 1/24, 3/21, 5/16, 9/12.

**OLD BUSINESS:** Geismar reported the PANYC publication sold out at our last public program. A discussion about reprinting it ensued. Geismar and Cantwell will investigate costs, etc... They ask members to review their copies to see if the book needs updating. Geismar asked if the Kaplan Fund could publish it, now that we are not-for-profit.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 P.M.  
Respectfully submitted by L. Stone, PANYC Secretary.

Juno e-mail printed Mon, 25 Sep 2000 17:15:43 , page 1

From: GILBERT@FORDHAM.EDU

To: lindastone@juno.com

Date: Mon, 25 Sep 2000 11:06:36 -0400

Subject: Bronx archaeology exhibit at Fordham--some pr

Message-ID: <OFE4D9C077.67068C99-ON85256965.0052A433@fire.fordham.edu >

Received: from mx1.boston.juno.com (mx1.boston.juno.com [63.211.172.33])

by m4.boston.juno.com with SMTP id AAA6684UFAZSRX32

for <lindastone@juno.com > (sender <GILBERT@FORDHAM.EDU >);

Mon, 25 Sep 2000 11:07:49 -0400 (EST)

Received: from fire-smtp02.fire.fordham.edu (fire-smtp02.fire.fordham.edu [150.108.2.27])

by mx1.boston.juno.com with SMTP id AAA6684UFAUECY42

for <lindastone@juno.com > (sender <GILBERT@FORDHAM.EDU >);

Mon, 25 Sep 2000 11:07:49 -0400 (EST)

MIME-Version: 1.0

Content-Type: text/plain; charset=us-ascii

Return-Path: <GILBERT@FORDHAM.EDU >

X-MIMETrack: Serialize by Router on

fire-smtp02.fire.fordham.edu/FIRE(Release 5.0.4a | July 24,  
2000) at 09/25/2000 11:07:52 AM

Linda,

Here is the press release information for the Bronx archaeology exhibit  
I've just set up. Any distribution channels would be appreciated.

Allan

What Lies Beneath:

Archaeology of Fordham and the Bronx

Fordham University has installed a major exhibit on Bronx archaeology in the first floor exhibition space of its Walsh Family Library, located on the university's Rose Hill campus at the corner of Fordham Road and Third Avenue, adjacent to Metro-North's Fordham Station. The exhibit is extensively labeled and suitable for school visits (appointments required). Individuals and small groups may visit any time during library open hours. Several collections are represented in this show, which will run until the end of December, 2000.

Items from Fordham's own excavations at the Rose Hill manor (1694-1896) include historical information on the manor's owners, models of the house showing its modification over time, as well as artifacts and documents reflecting upon life at St. John's College (established 1841), for which the manor served as infirmary.

Pieces loaned from the large personal collection of Dr. Theodore Kazimiroff illustrate Native American finds from Bronx locations, military munitions and hardware recovered from the Revolutionary War site of Fort No. 8 (where Bronx Community College now stands), and a collection of pre-Prohibition beer bottles that invoke the important brewing industry that once operated in New York. The late Dr. Kazimiroff was the former Bronx Historian and founder of the Bronx County Historical Society.

**ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE MEMBERSHIP**

**NOMINATIONS REQUESTED FOR  
SPECIAL PANYC AWARD  
FOR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS MADE BY A NON ARCHAEOLOGIST TO  
NEW YORK CITY ARCHAEOLOGY**

PANYC (Professional Archaeologists of New York City) is pleased to request nominations for a special award honoring non archaeologists or institutions who have made outstanding contributions to the furtherance of New York City archaeology. Please send three copied of letters of nomination documenting the nominee's qualifications to Anne-Marie Cantwell, PANYC Awards Committee Chair, Apt. 5C, 14 Stuyvesant Oval, New York, New York, 10009. Nominations must be received by February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2001. The award will be presented at the PANYC Public Program at the Museum of the City of New York.

**ANNOUNCEMENT**

**2001 BERT SALWEN AWARD  
FOR THE BEST STUDENT PAPER ON NEW YORK CITY ARCHAEOLOGY**

A prize of \$100.00 will be awarded by Professional Archaeologists of New York City (PANYC) to the author of the best paper on New York City archaeology written by a student in fulfillment of an academic requirement. Although preference may be given to papers written using materials from contract archaeology projects in the city, the competition is not limited to such research. Both graduate and undergraduate students are urged to apply. Papers should not be longer than 50 pages and must be submitted in triplicate. The deadline for submission is February 15, 2001. Please send three copies of the manuscript to Anne-Marie Cantwell, PANYC Awards Committee, Apt. 5C, 14 Stuyvesant Oval, New York, New York 10009. The Bert Salwen Award will be presented at the annual PANYC Public Program at the Museum of the City of New York in April 2001.

**PLEASE POST**

Some of the spectacular finds from the Brooklyn College excavations at the Van Cortlandt House are also displayed. When the Van Cortlandt family donated the house to the city in 1889, thousands of pieces of dinnerware and glassware were discarded within pits on the property. These pits were rediscovered in the early 1990s, and their contents retrieved. The enormous assemblage containing nearly complete examples of Oriental export porcelain, blue transfer printed pearlware, and assorted forms of earthenware and bottles will provide researchers with study materials on the 19th century styles and tastes of the Van Cortlandt family for many years.

A slide-illustrated lecture and gallery tour by the exhibitors (Profs Allan Gilbert of Anthropology and Roger Wines of History) is scheduled for Tuesday, October 24, 2000 at 7 PM. The lecture will take place in the Library's Flom Auditorium, after which attendees will retire to the exhibit space for a tour and reception.

# What lies beneath

After the Civil War, Seneca Village was razed to make way for Central Park. Now, 150 years later, the buried community is coming back to life.

By **Barnett Cohen**

**T**he existence of Seneca Village is no great mystery. Plenty of New Yorkers have heard of the pre-Civil War, largely African-American settlement, which once stretched from 81st to 89th Streets, and from Seventh to Eighth Avenues, before it was razed in 1857 to make way for Central Park. But surprisingly little is known about the people who lived there.

Judging by accounts from that era, outsiders viewed Seneca as a settlement of derelicts and outcasts. Over the past decade, however, historians have argued that such descriptions simply reflect the bias of the time; Seneca, they say, was actually a diverse hamlet populated by the lower working-class.

Until recently, little had been done to confirm these speculations. Now, nearly a century and a half after the village's destruction, three scholars—Diana Wall, an anthropology professor at City College; Nan Rothschild, an anthropology professor at Barnard; and Cynthia Copeland of the New York Historical Society—have spearheaded an archaeological effort to finally solve the mystery of the people who once lived in our own backyard.

After locating and deciphering hundreds of



**PARK CITY** Is the history of Seneca Village buried under Central Park near the West 80s?

19th-century documents—mostly land surveys, and census and church records—the trio has been able to piece together clues about Seneca's inner-workings.

Not only were African-Americans the village's main occupants, they were also its primary landowners. In the 1800s, African-American men needed to own at least \$250 worth of property to be eligible to vote in New York State elections. To qualify, many black entrepreneurs

bought cheap property in Seneca. As a result, men like Epiphany Davis, a black shipping merchant who worked at the South Street Seaport, controlled the majority of Seneca realty.

Even more unusual, many of the black landowners were also landlords—to whites. At that time, most whites would not rent or sell to Irish immigrants, who were then fleeing the Potato Famine in droves. Those who settled in New York rented Seneca property from established African-Americans.

The unusual racial mixture of this community was reflected in both family and spiritual life. Of the three churches in Seneca, at least one congregation, All Angels (the largest), mirrored the local ethnic diversity: African-Americans, German-Americans and Irish-Americans worshiped there together. There was at least one interracial wedding in the village. But while the Irish and German women gave birth at Bellevue Hospital, African-Americans used midwives at home.

Although the scientists have sketched a rough portrait of daily life in Seneca, they believe that many more valuable clues remain buried under Central Park's landscape. Hoping to confirm their suspicions, the researchers have scanned the area with ground radar; if significant evidence exists, the team will push for a partial excavation.

Parks Commissioner Henry Stern remains tentative about whether permission will be granted. Still, one of these days your favorite picnic spot may be converted into an archaeological dig.

TOP PHOTOGRAPH BY THOMAS FAULK; BOTTOM: COLLECTION OF THE NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

WARRIORS: ROBERT LURECY/ANIMALS; ANIMALS: GREEN HERON: RONALD GREEN/ISTOCKPHOTO.COM; ANIMALS

Time Out New York



ΤΑΥΤΑ ΕΣΤΙΝ 6/28-7/4 '00

## Unearthing our past

It vanished 143 years ago. But at last a search is being launched to find the remains of Seneca Village, the storied African-American and Irish-American shantytown that was flattened to make way for Central Park.

What better occasion than July 4 to recall the saga of one of the city's earliest settlements of black homeowners who lived side by side with the survivors of Ireland's Great Famine? New Yorkers grow up learning that Wall St. was named for an old Dutch wall. That the United Nations was built on the site of a slaughterhouse. But most people who stroll the park between Central Park West and the Great Lawn don't know that a school, three churches, four cemeteries and dozens of homes once stood on the site.

That's about to change. Armed with ground-penetrating radar and electronic sensors, archeologists from City College and the New York Historical Society have been conducting a high-tech hunt for the secrets of Seneca Village. All without yet turning over a single shovelful of dirt.

The team will map the area this month. If evidence of artifacts, structures or graves is found, permission to excavate will be requested. The ultimate goal: commemorate Seneca Village and its hidden cemeteries as sacred ground — marked off with a memorial garden or a grove of trees.

"These are New Yorkers who've been ignored, forgotten or treated as if they never existed," said City College archeologist Diana Wall. Yes, the city would be much the poorer without the treasure that is the park — but acknowledgement is due those who were displaced, or whose graves were lost, in order that it be developed.

## Among us

From the wires: RUSTON, La. (AP) — A Louisiana Tech professor has patented a fungus that kills kudzu as well as other weeds. Yeah, but what kills the fungus?

# Archaeologists to seek Central Park remains of Irish, African town

Using special radar and other instruments to peer under Central Park, a team of researchers and students will search for the remains of Seneca Village — one of the earliest settlements in New York City of African Americans and Irish immigrants that may have been an early center of political activism. The remote sensing testing will start as early as this week and will continue for a period of two to three weeks.

From 1825-57, Seneca Village was one of the first significant communities of African-American property owners, and included several hundred residents living in simple houses, three churches and a school.

Approximately two-thirds of those who lived there were of African descent, while the remainder were Europeans, mostly Irish who had emigrated to escape the Famine.

The houses in the Village were purchased and demolished by the City of New York under eminent domain laws in order to permit the building of Central Park.

At the time, newspapers

but they were, in fact, homes built in one of the few places African Americans were permitted to buy land. Since the right to vote was only permitted to property owners, the landowners may have bought the land in order to vote. The prospect of better understanding life at Seneca Village interests the research team.

The team is headed by Cynthia Copeland, intermediate and high school programs coordinator for the New-York Historical Society. Nan Rothschild, professor of anthropology at Barnard College, and Diana Wall, professor of anthropology at The City College of New York.

In preparation for the survey, the team has been examining hundreds of tax records, death records, deeds and old newspapers, to map out precisely where they expect the foundations to be — in the area of 82nd Street to 87th Street on the west side of the park. The team also hopes to document the location of several cemeteries, though not to dig them up but to com-

Your Partners in Ireland

DAILY NEWS

Tuesday, July 4, 2000

# Central Park town unearthed

## Scientists use radar to map razed village

By PAUL H.B. SHIN  
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Modern-day New Yorkers would be hard pressed to imagine Manhattan without Central Park.

But the seemingly timeless masterpiece was built on the rubble of a once bustling, all-but-forgotten neighborhood.

Now a team of archaeologists is probing the subterranean depths of this urban sanctuary in search of secrets to one of the earliest African-American and Irish-American settlements in the city — all without turning a shovelful of dirt.

Researchers from the City College of New York, Columbia University and the New-York Historical Society are using ground-penetrating radar to map out underground remnants of Seneca Village — an early 19th century community that contained hundreds of houses, three churches and a school.

"So far, to my knowledge, there hasn't been an extensive survey of Central Park," said City College archaeologist Diana Wall, who is leading the survey near the W. 86th St. entrance with Columbia University anthropologist Nan Rothschild and New-York Historical Society curator Cynthia Copeland.

For three decades before it was razed in 1857 to make way for the park, Seneca Village was home to hundreds of African-Americans and Irish-Americans who purchased land in the then-rural area so they could vote.

The importance of Seneca Village, as a community and center for political activism, was often downplayed by champions of building the park, who belittled the neighborhood's denizens as "insects" and "squatters," Copeland said.

Researchers pored through historical documents — including tax records, death records, deeds and old newspapers — to choose areas most likely to yield old structures.

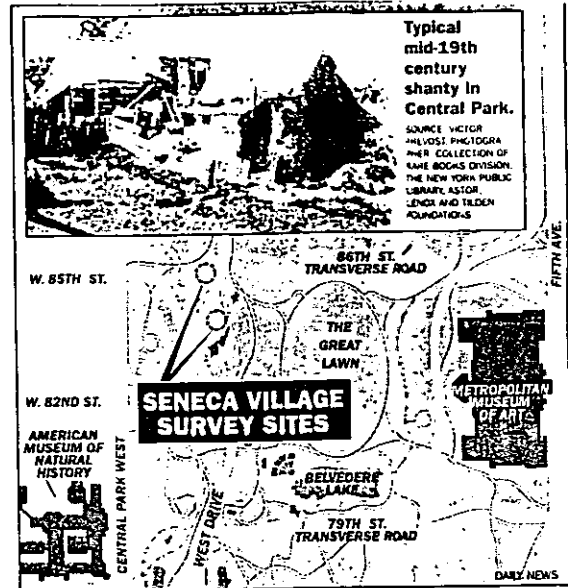
The team has surveyed five sites between 82nd and 87th Sts. on the west side of the park since May 30, completing their last scheduled field work yesterday.

The ground-penetrating radar is operated by two people. One moves an H-shaped antenna along the ground as the other, equipped with an instrument backpack and a laptop computer, records the measurements.

Like inferring the structure of a loaf of bread from its slices, a subterranean map up to 5 feet deep will be reconstructed in the lab.

"Nobody really knows what's under the pavement in New York, and Central Park is no exception," said Roelof Jan Versteeg, a geophysicist from Columbia's Lamont-Doherty Earth Institute and the survey's technical expert.

The research team hopes to have a preliminary map by early fall. If they find what appears to be a significant artifact, they'll ask the city for permission to dig. "What's wonderful about this is it goes relatively quickly, and it allows you to pinpoint the areas that warrant further investigation," Wall said.



JENNIFER S. ALTMAN

**GOING UNDERGROUND** Anthropology students Alicia Senia (l.), Nina Finch (c.) and Siobhan Cooke hope to find Seneca Village remnants with ground-penetrating radar.

Oscar Olivo, left, and Siobhán Cooke used electromagnetic equipment last week to produce a contour map of part of Central Park, below. The light band running through the center and upper left could indicate remnants of a village, or power lines.



Ruby Washington/The New York Times

NY Times 7/28/00

# A Technological Dig

## Scientists Seek Signs of Central Park Past

By KAREN W. ARENSON

A stroller enters Central Park through Mariner's Gate at 85th Street. She passes a playground on her left and Summit Rock on her right. Turning left onto West Drive, she crosses the bridle path and heads toward the Great Lawn.

Before the Civil War, the views were very different. Walking east on 85th Street, a stroller would see farms and stables. He would pass All Angels' Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church cemetery and the African Union Methodist Church. There was no Great Lawn; 85th Street ended at the

Croton Receiving Reservoir. But that was before Seneca Village, a community of more than 260 people that once stood between Seventh and Eight Avenues from 82nd to 89th Streets, was razed to make way for Central Park in 1857.

Eight years ago, when Diana Wall, a professor of anthropology at City College, learned of Seneca Village, she asked the question any archaeologist would ask: Is anything left of it underground? Now she and a team of researchers are coming closer to answering that question.

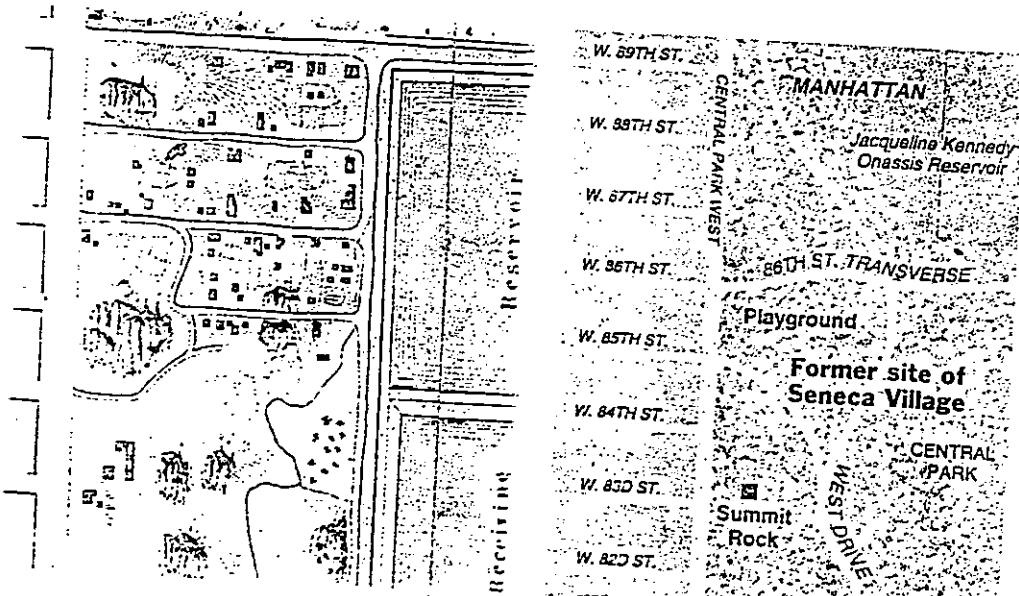
Although it is too early to say definitively what their work adds up to, the

researchers say there is mounting evidence that there are indeed some building foundations underground, particularly where All Angels' Church once stood. They will present their findings in the park near the West 85th Street entrance tomorrow at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.

Since early June, Dr. Wall and other researchers have been poking and prodding the gentle, grassy slopes of Central Park with electrical currents, electromagnetic waves and ground-penetrating radar. — everything but digging down.

Their goal is to use imaging techniques

Continued on Page B8



A team of researchers has been searching for remnants of a community that was razed to make way for Central Park in the 19th century. The maps show a village site in 1856, far left, and the park today.

# Scientists Are Seeking Signs of Central Park's Past

Continued From Page B1

traditionally applied to all fields or cancerous tumors to determine whether there are any building foundations, skeletons or other physical remains from the village.

A dig, of course, would provide more definitive answers. But Dr. Wall and the other researchers recognized that a major excavation among the park's heavily populated playgrounds and pathways seemed unlikely to win support, an attitude reinforced by conversations with Parks Department officials.

Still, if the Seneca Village investigators find convincing evidence of physical remains, they will seek permission to do some limited digging. (The group also includes Nan A. Rothschild, an anthropology professor at Barnard; Cynthia K. Copeland, an expert on Seneca Village at the New-York Historical Society; Rudolf J. Versteeg, a geophysicist at

Columbia University; Herbert Seligman, a City College graduate student; and nine student interns.) They would focus on a few small spots that look most promising, like a house or a well that might yield clues to what people ate or wore, and the site would be covered over within days.

"If we can actually do some archaeology, we will be able to say something about how people were living there that cannot be discovered in any other way," Dr. Wall said.

Parks officials are noncommittal. Alan M. Moss, first deputy commissioner of parks, said: "Our preference is not to dig up the park, but it would depend on the kind of evidence they put forward. If it were a fishing expedition, I don't think we would be receptive. But we don't want to stand in the way of science. We would have to be convinced that what they want to do was in the best interest of science and the park."

In 1991, the discovery of the 18th-

century Negro Burial Ground and the painstaking removal of the graves delayed construction of a federal office tower in Lower Manhattan. Dr. Wall said her group did not want to excavate any graves, but might want to mark or commemorate them in some way.

Of all the communities uprooted by the creation of Central Park, Seneca Village was the largest and most densely populated. The seven-square-block area was home not only to many free African-Americans in the decades before the Civil War, but also to a scattering of poor Irish and German immigrants.

In their book, "The Park and the People: A History of Central Park" (Cornell University Press, 1992), Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar argued that Seneca Village's inhabitants were not the vagabonds and squatters suggested by news accounts at the time, but a stable community of working people. Three years ago, Ms. Copeland

helped mount an exhibit on Seneca Village at the New-York Historical Society. The show was such a hit that 300 people showed up for a walking tour of the Seneca Village area in Central Park in a snowstorm.

Yet Ms. Copeland was not satisfied; she wanted more physical evidence of the village and began to talk to Dr. Wall and Dr. Rothschild about ways to gather it. "I can't imagine the city without the park," Ms. Copeland said, "but it does have a history, and people can learn from it."

One challenge, Dr. Rothschild said, is "thinking about how one would do an evaluation of whether there was anything there."

With grants from City College, Columbia University and the National Science Foundation, Ms. Copeland and the two professors expanded their team. Working with Dr. Versteeg and another geophysicist, Bruce Bevan, they did some trials using above-ground sensing techniques. And, this summer, they took on nine summer interns.

The interns — an eclectic group ranging in age from 18 to over 50 — have spent weeks combing through 19th-century deeds, tax records and newspapers. They have also provided much of the muscle to gather the physical data in the park.

Their work in the park began inconspicuously. It rained for two days. A dog hit an intern. But last week, as two interns methodically marked off a 30-by-40-meter area they wanted to investigate, the sun smiled.

Navigating around glint maple trees and overgreens, the students — Oscar Oliva from Columbia University and Shabbir Cooke from Trinidad — ran thin white measuring tape up and down grassy lumps and over sprawling bookshelves to mark the research area. They dove thin metal probes — 32 in all — into the ground along one side of the rectangle, and attached each to a control box with long wires.

In an hour, they collected about 350 measurements of the electrical resistivity beneath the ground. Then they started again: unhooking the clips, moving the probes, reattaching the electrodes and waiting some more. The data were later entered into computers at the blind engineering building at Columbia.

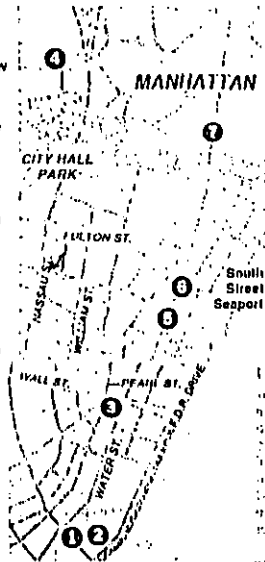
The students used another set of equipment to measure the ground conductivity using electromagnetic waves. As the bees buzzed around the clover at her feet, Ms. Cooke stopped every two feet to call out readings from the box she was carrying with long poles sticking out from each side. Ms. Oliva recorded each reading.

At the group's base camp, under a towering oak tree, Nina Finch, a City College student from Denmark, prepared to use ground-penetrating radar to take other readings.

Marino Massey, a senior at Lehman College, carried the lumber-

## Excavations in Manhattan

- 85 Broad Street, 1979-80**  
The first large-scale site to be excavated; artifacts from Lovelace's Tavern and Dutch New Amsterdam.
- Broad Financial Plaza, 1984**  
Uncovered portions of Augustine Heermans' 17th-century warehoused and artifacts from Dutch homes.
- 7 Hanover Square, 1981** (in 17th-century artifacts from Dutch and English homes.
- African Burial Ground, 1991-92**  
18th-century cemetery used by African slaves; more than 400 individuals exhumed.
- 175 Water Street, 1981** Mid-18th-century site built on top of landfill to extend Manhattan Island.
- 199 Water Street, 1981** Artifacts from late 18th century and early 19th century.
- 500 Pearl Street, 1991** Artifacts from German, Irish and Italian immigrant dwellers in the Five Points slum.



Source: Dr. Diane R. Wall, City College of New York

some H-shaped antennae that would receive the radar signals and send them to the computer Ms. Finch was carrying.

They paced along the tape, stopped, and then tried again. The equipment was not behaving.

After several tries, Ms. Finch marched over to Dr. Versteeg.

"I'm sorry, Rudolf, but it just doesn't work," she said.

"Maybe you're sending bad vibes," he joked.

"I had very happy vibes when I started this," she said.

As he scrutinized the laptop, the screen showed some data, including signs of a formation in the ground. Could it be the outline of something 150 years old? Dr. Versteeg was skeptical. His guess: probably a utility line. But, he added later, "That's a preliminary interpretation."

In all, the group has taken soundings on about 25,000 square feet, or about a tenth of Seneca Village.

Despite the odd-looking equipment in the park, few of the people passing by seemed to notice the scientists.

One who did was Steve Villalobos, a husky man in sunglasses walking a silky chow on a leash. "Any land mines there?" he yelled.

When told about the project, he applauded the work and said he would support a dig: "It wouldn't bother me; there's a lot of park."

Interpreting the data is more like solving a puzzle than reading a book. First, the data must be transformed into computerized maps that show

areas where there seem to be disruptions or "anomalies" that suggest the presence of something solid in the soil.

To try to determine whether the anomalies are remnants of Seneca Village or modern-day power lines, those maps must be compared with surveys from the 1800's showing property lines and buildings, and recent maps showing where utility lines are supposed to be.

Dr. Versteeg says there is no more certainty in the data than there is in a mammogram of a woman's breasts. (Radar, for example, does not keep as easily through Central Park soil as it does through dry desert sand. And unlike a spot in a desert that has been untouched for centuries, Central Park is heavily used and has been landscaped and replanted.)

Also, some of the magnetic readings appear to have been affected by the nearby subway lines. And, as Dr. Versteeg cautioned the students, "Just because you have a utility map doesn't mean it's accurate."

He explained that the maps were sometimes misleading because the people laying utility lines often retracted them when they encountered rocks and other obstacles.

Dr. Rothschild said that even without the ground readings, the documentary research had shed new light on the lives of the Seneca Village inhabitants.

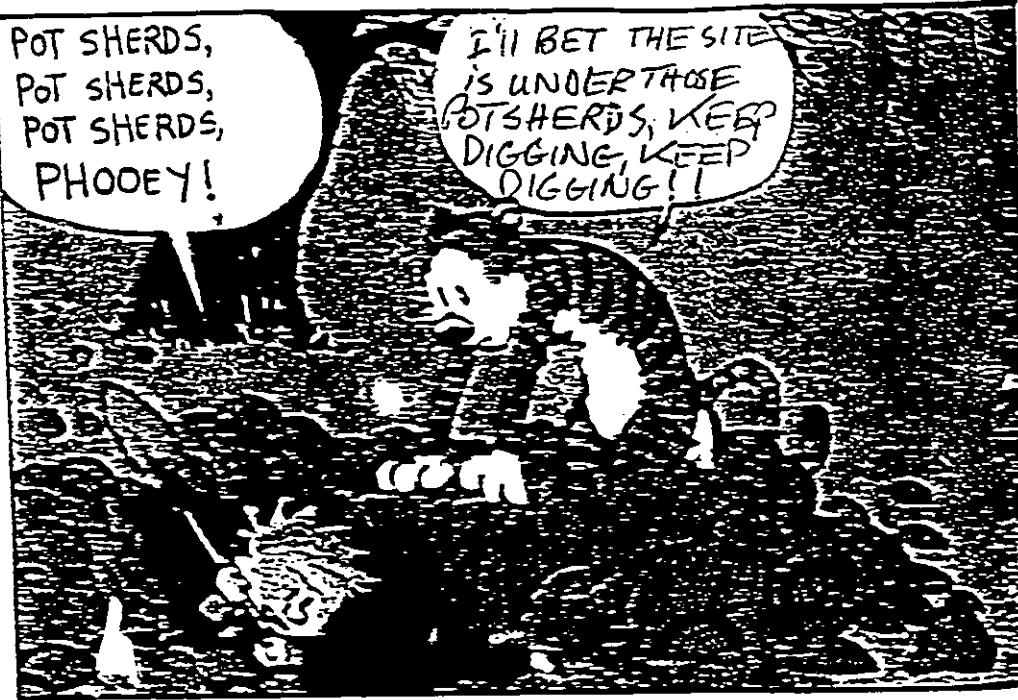
"I noticed while I was looking at the death records, that the African-Americans were born at home while the Irish and Germans were born at Bellevue Hospital," she said.

But the researchers still yearn for tangible evidence of the past. They know they have no assurances that they will ever be allowed to excavate, but they remain hopeful.

Dr. Wall laughed. "It's very political," she said. "But I would like to think it will happen."

POT SHERDS,  
POT SHERDS,  
POT SHERDS,  
PHOOEY!

I'LL BET THE SITE  
IS UNDER THOSE  
POT SHERDS, KEEP  
DIGGING, KEEP  
DIGGING!!



PANYC EVENTS COMMITTEE REPORT - November 15, 2000 - January 30, 2001

EVENT	SPEAKER	DATE	TIME	LOCATION	PHONE #	FEE
Art and Culture of the Viking Age		Fri 11/17	7:00 PM	American Museum of Natural History	212-769-5176	\$12 each, \$35 series
Vikings Sagas and Social History		Mon 11/20	7:00 PM	American Museum of Natural History	212-769-5176	\$12 each, \$35 series
Greenland Vikings		Tue 11/28	7:00 PM	American Museum of Natural History	212-769-5176	\$12 each, \$35 series
Glory of India: Archaeology and Architecture	Ronjon Lahiri	Tue 11/28	8:00 PM	National Arts Club-15 Gramercy Park South	mail to Archaeology Magazine	\$12
Survivors of the Middle Passage: Autobiographical Accounts by Enslaved Africans in British America	Jerome Handler	Thurs 11/30		Barnard College	212-854-9011	
Vikings in North America		Tues 12/5	7:00 PM	American Museum of Natural History	212-769-5176	\$12 each, \$35 series
Healing Waters: Utopian Responses to Dirt, Disease, and Disorder, 1890-1940	exhibit	opens 12/1		South Street Seaport Museum, Melville Gallery, 213 Water St.	212-748-8600	admission
What Lies Beneath: Bronx Artifacts from Manor to Mansion	exhibit	thru semester		Walsh Library, Fordam University		free
Society for Historical Archaeology	annual meeting	1/9-13		Long Beach University	562-424-0201	varies
Art and Empire City: New York, 1825-1838	exhibit	thru 1/17		Metropolitan Museum of Art	212-923-3700	admission
Gold of Nomads: Scythian Treasures from Ancient Ukraine	exhibit	thru 1/21		Brooklyn Museum	718-638-5000	admission
Anthropology and the New Reductionism		Mon 1/29	7:30 PM	New York Academy of Science, 2 E. 63 St.	212-838-0230	free

If any members have events which they would like listed, please contact Linda Stone by phone or fax at (212)888-3130 or by mail 249 E 48 St. #2B, New York, NY 10017.

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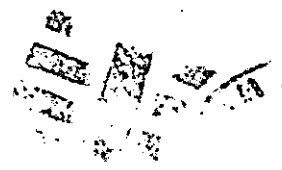
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