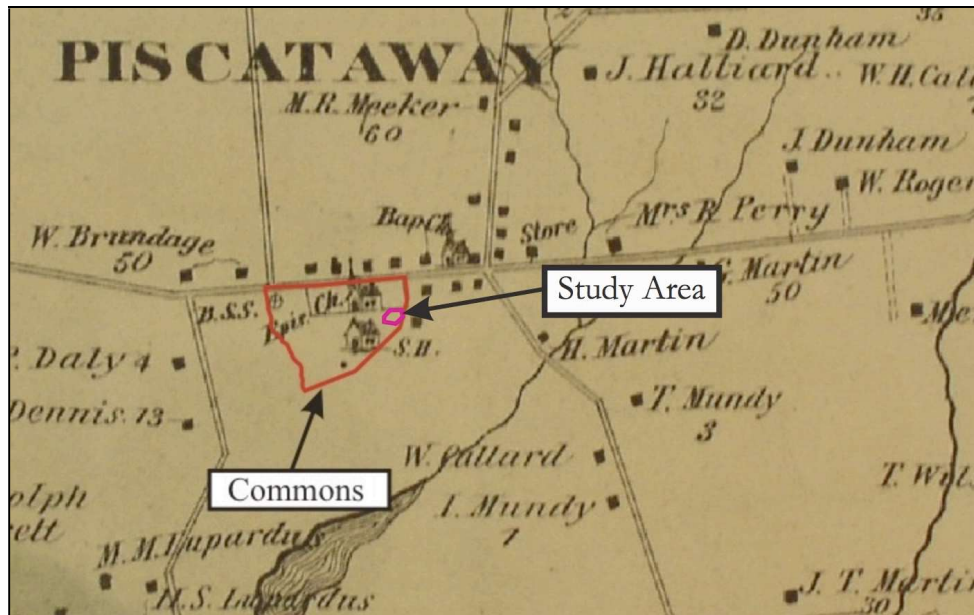


**Archaeological Study of the Former Piscataway Town Green,
Block 351, Lot 11, Edison Township, Middlesex County, New Jersey**



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Abstract

The Archaeological Society of New Jersey (ASNJ) conducted an archaeological study on a portion of Block 351, Lot 11 in Edison Township, Middlesex County, New Jersey at the request of the Middlesex County Cultural and Heritage Commission (MCCHC). The ASNJ conducted the study as a public archaeology research project. The parcel is privately owned by the St. James Episcopal Church, which graciously granted permission to archaeologically examine the lot. Prior to 1945, the parcel was part of the Piscataway (later Raritan, and subsequently Edison) town commons. Also known as the town green, this commons was formally created in the 1690s and contained several town buildings, including a town house, the original St. James Episcopal Church, an ammunition magazine, a jail, stocks, and school. It was also used as a militia training ground prior to the mid-19th century, and contains an unmarked mass grave of British soldiers. Currently, the commons encompasses the Piscatawaytown Burial Ground and a public park. The parcel is also situated roughly 60 feet west of the Dunham house, a mid-18th-century dwelling. It is unclear 18th or 19th-century owners of the Dunham house historically encroached upon the town commons during their residence in the adjacent home.

Archaeology on Block 351, Lot 11 focused on determining if archaeological deposits associated with the historic municipal use of the commons is present, and to locate cultural deposits that may be associated with the Dunham house. Several members of the ASNJ participated in archaeological fieldwork and offered tours, along with the MCCHC and the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society to the public while excavations took place. Archaeological fieldwork was conducted on September 19, 26, and 27, 2015. Approximately 300 members of the public attended the public archaeology event. Fieldwork included the excavation of 14 shovel test pits and two 3.0 by 3.0-foot square units. A cluster of early to mid-19th-century artifacts, along with prehistoric Native American artifacts, were identified in the southeastern portion of the study area, which yielded 6 prehistoric and 432 historic artifacts. In addition, a cobble floor within a possible outbuilding, perhaps a horse stall, was also identified, that appears to date from the 1830s to the 1840s. The deposits and building were registered with the New Jersey State Museum as the Edison Block 351, Lot 11 Site (28-Mi-267). The site measures a maximum of roughly 66 feet by 75 feet in plan. The historic artifacts and cobble floor may be associated with a building related to the commons use. Alternatively, the building may have been owned and used by former residents of the nearby Dunham house. The prehistoric archaeological deposits were composed of flake debitage and fire-cracked rock. These deposits suggest use of the site as an ephemeral lithic reduction station, where food processing and/or cooking was conducted by Native Americans.

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Table of Contents	ii
List of Figures	iii
List of Plates	v
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Research Design	14
Chapter 3: Environmental Setting	17
Chapter 4: Background Research	19
Chapter 5: Archaeological Field Results	50
Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations	78
Chapter 7: Sources	81
Appendices	
Appendix A: Author Qualifications	
Appendix B: Shovel Test Pit Log	
Appendix C: Artifact Catalog	
Appendix D: New Jersey State Museum Archaeological Site Registration Form	
Appendix E: Annotated Bibliography	

Cover Image: *Combination Atlas Map of Middlesex County, New Jersey* (Everts and Stewart 1876).

List of Figures

Figure 1: Project Location	3
Figure 2: 2007 Aerial Showing Block and Lots, Historic Properties, and the Study Area.....	4
Figure 3: U.S.G.S. Map Showing the Location of the Ca. 1696 Piscataway Commons.....	6
Figure 4: 2007 Google, Aerial Showing the Current and ca. 1696 Commons Boundary	7
Figure 5: 1967 Tax Map, Edison Township, Middlesex County, New Jersey	8
Figure 6: Metal Detector Survey Shovel Test Pit Map.....	10
Figure 7: Metal Detector Survey Artifact Location Map.....	11
Figure 8: Location of Grave Markers Dating between 1693 and 1748 in the Eastern Portion of the Piscatawaytown Burial Ground Showing Suspected Former Building Locations	12
Figure 9: Location of Grave Markers Dating between 1693 and 1835 in the Eastern Portion of the Piscatawaytown Burial Ground Showing Suspected Former Building Locations	13
Figure 10: Soil Map	18
Figure 11: 1685 John Reid, <i>A Mapp of Rariton River</i>	26
Figure 12a: 1677 House Lots Surrounding the Training Ground Commons (Town Green)	31
Figure 12b: 1677 House Lots Surrounding the Training Ground Commons (Town Green)	32
Figure 13: 1778 John Hills, <i>A Map of the Province of New Jersey</i>	39
Figure 14: 1836 United States Coast Survey, <i>Map of the Valley of the Rariton from Perth Amboy to New Brunswick</i> (Map 11)	41
Figure 15: 1840 United States Coast Survey, <i>Part of New Jersey</i> (Map 135).....	42
Figure 16: 1850 Otley and Keily, <i>Map of Middlesex County, New Jersey</i>	43

Figure 17: 1861 Walling, <i>Map of Middlesex County, New Jersey</i>	45
Figure 18: 1876 Everts and Stewart, <i>Combination Atlas Map of Middlesex County, New Jersey</i>	46
Figure 19: Excavation Base Map Showing the Study Area, Excavations, and Photograph Locations.....	51
Figure 20: Excavation Base Map Showing the Study Area, Archaeological Site Boundaries, and Excavations	52
Figure 21: Artifacts Recovered from STP 11N, Feature 1	60
Figure 22: Artifacts Recovered from STP 11S, Fill 3	62
Figure 23: EU 1 South Wall Profile.....	65
Figure 24: Artifacts Recovered from EU 1, Feature 2.....	69
Figure 25: Artifacts Recovered from EU 1, Fill 5	70
Figure 26: EU 2 North and East Wall Profiles	73
Figure 27: Artifacts Recovered from EU 2, Feature 2	76
Figure 28: Artifacts Recovered from EU 2, Fill 4/B1	77

List of Plates

Plate 1:	View Northwest of the Study Area showing Park Way in the Foreground, STP 11 in the Left Mid-ground, and the St. James Episcopal Church and Adjacent Piscatawaytown Burial Ground in the Background.....	53
Plate 2:	View Looking South at the Study Area Showing Germantown Avenue in the Foreground and Park Way in the Left Background.....	54
Plate 3:	View Looking Southeast at the North Elevation of the Dunham House East of the Study Area.....	55
Plate 4:	View Looking Northeast of ASNJ Members Excavating STP 1 in the Northeast Corner of the Study Area	56
Plate 5:	View Looking East of ASNJ Members Digging STPs 4, 5, and 6 in the Study Area and the Dunham House in the Right Background.....	57
Plate 6:	Plan of STP 11 Looking North Showing Feature 1 Cobbles in the West Side of the STP.....	58
Plate 7:	View Looking South of EUs 1 and 2 Excavation and Public Tour. Note EU 1 in the Foreground Showing Feature 2.....	63
Plate 8:	View Looking Northeast of EUs 1 and 2. Note EU 1 is in the Background and EU 2 is in the Foreground.....	64
Plate 9:	South Wall Profile of EU 1 Looking South	66
Plate 10:	Opening Plan view of Feature 2 in EU 2 Looking North.....	68
Plate 11:	EU 2 North Wall Profile, Looking North.....	74
Plate 12:	EU 2 East Wall Profile Looking East.....	75

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

This report presents the results of a public archaeological study of a portion of Block 351, Lot 11, in Edison Township, Middlesex County, New Jersey currently owned by the Rector, Wardens and Vestrymen of the St. James Episcopal Church (Figures 1 and 2). The archaeological study was performed by the Archaeological Society of New Jersey (ASNJ) at the request of the Middlesex County Cultural and Heritage Commission (MCCHC), which secured access to the aforementioned parcel from the Rector, Wardens and Vestrymen of the St. James Episcopal Church. This study was conducted as a research project and does not fall under the review authority of the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office. No local, state or federal permits were required as part of the completion of this study. The results of the study may be used as a planning tool by the property owner to preserve identified, intact archaeological deposits.

The purpose of the archaeological study was to examine a portion of the former Piscatawaytown commons, also known as the town green and training ground commons. The commons was historically part of Piscataway before the formation of Raritan Township in 1870 and its subsequent renaming as Edison Township in 1954. The commons is currently present north and west of Block 351, Lot 11. This parcel was part of the commons prior to June 5, 1961. The commons was officially established in 1796 for the purposes of town use, but it was likely established unofficially at an earlier date, and currently encompasses the Piscatawaytown Burial Ground. The commons also formerly contained a town house, jail, stocks, ammunition magazine, and school, and was used as a militia training ground. The original St. James Episcopal Church, built in 1724, was also present within the boundaries of the commons. The church was destroyed in an 1835 tornado, and was subsequently rebuilt. In 1916, the second St. James Episcopal Church was set off from the commons on present-day Block 351, Lot 2.

This study was undertaken between September 19 and 27, 2015 as a public archaeology endeavor and was preceded by an historical study, metal detector survey, and Piscatawaytown Burial Ground GIS mapping survey conducted by Michael J. Gall between 2009 and 2015 to study the historical use of the commons (Gall 2009, 2011a, 2015). The Piscataway commons is one of New Jersey's earliest town commons and one of few that remains largely undeveloped. This commons has the potential to provide important information about municipal use and town buildings from the 17th through 19th century (Gall 2009).

All artifacts recovered during the archaeological study were processed, cleaned, analyzed, and cataloged by the ASNJ. Artifacts associated with an intact archaeological site were curated in a manner that meets 36 CFR Part 79 federal guidelines. All artifacts and survey documents were transferred to the MCCHC with the report submission for permanent curation. The MCCHC has a curation facility that meets 36 CFR Part 79 standards. This study was made possible due to the generosity of Reverend Kristen C. Foley, Vicar-in-Charge of the St. James Episcopal Church in Edison, who permitted the ASNJ to conduct archaeological excavation on Block 351, Lot 11. Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders Ronald Rios, Kenneth Armwood, Carol Bellante, Charles Kenny, H. James Polos, Charles Tomaro, and Blanquita Valenti approved funding the public outreach and education portion of this study. Mark Nonestied, Division Head of Historic Sites and History Services at the MCCHC served a crucial role in securing permission, support, and funding for this study. He also lead site tours and provided background research. RGA, Inc., Alice Domm, and Richard Grubb are thanked for lending archaeological fieldwork equipment. During the course of the archaeological fieldwork, tours of excavations were held for the public by the ASNJ, MCCHC, and the Metuchen Edison Historical Society. Approximately 300 members of the public participated in the tours on September 26 and 27, 2015. This study was overseen by Archaeologist Michael J. Gall, RPA, a board member of the ASNJ, who meets the requirements of 36 CFR 61 (Appendix A). Michael Gall performed artifact analysis, report writing, archaeological fieldwork, and background research. Allison Gall also conducted artifact analysis and artifact photography. Fieldwork and site tour tasks associated with this study were conducted with assistance from members of the ASNJ and the MCCHC. The following individuals are thanks for their assistance:

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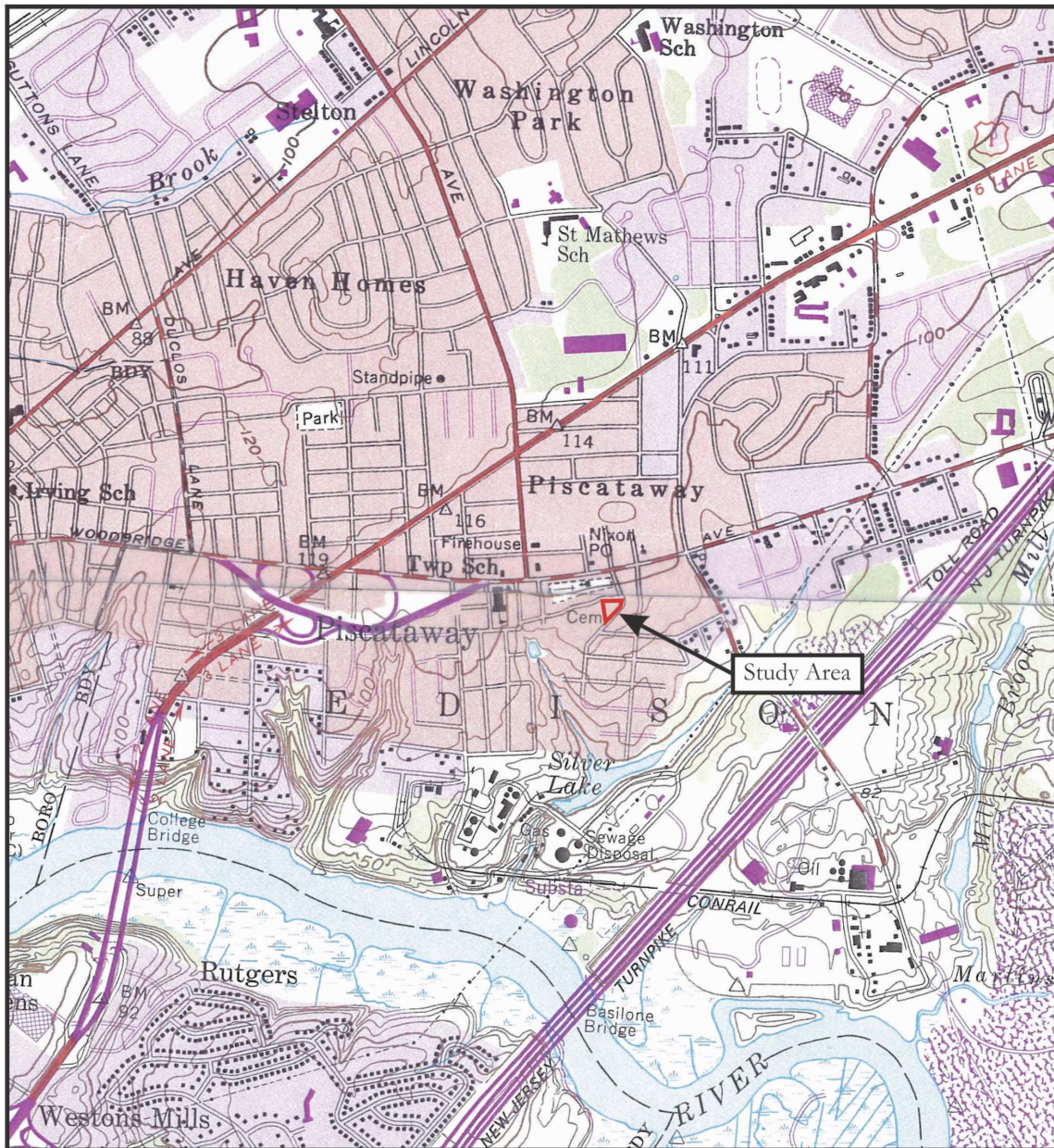
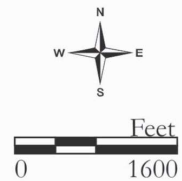


Figure 1:

Project location (1954 U.S.G.S. 7.5' Quadrangle: New Brunswick, NJ
 (Photorevised 1981; 1955 U.S.G.S. 7.5' Quadrangle: Plainfield, NJ
 (Photorevised 1981).



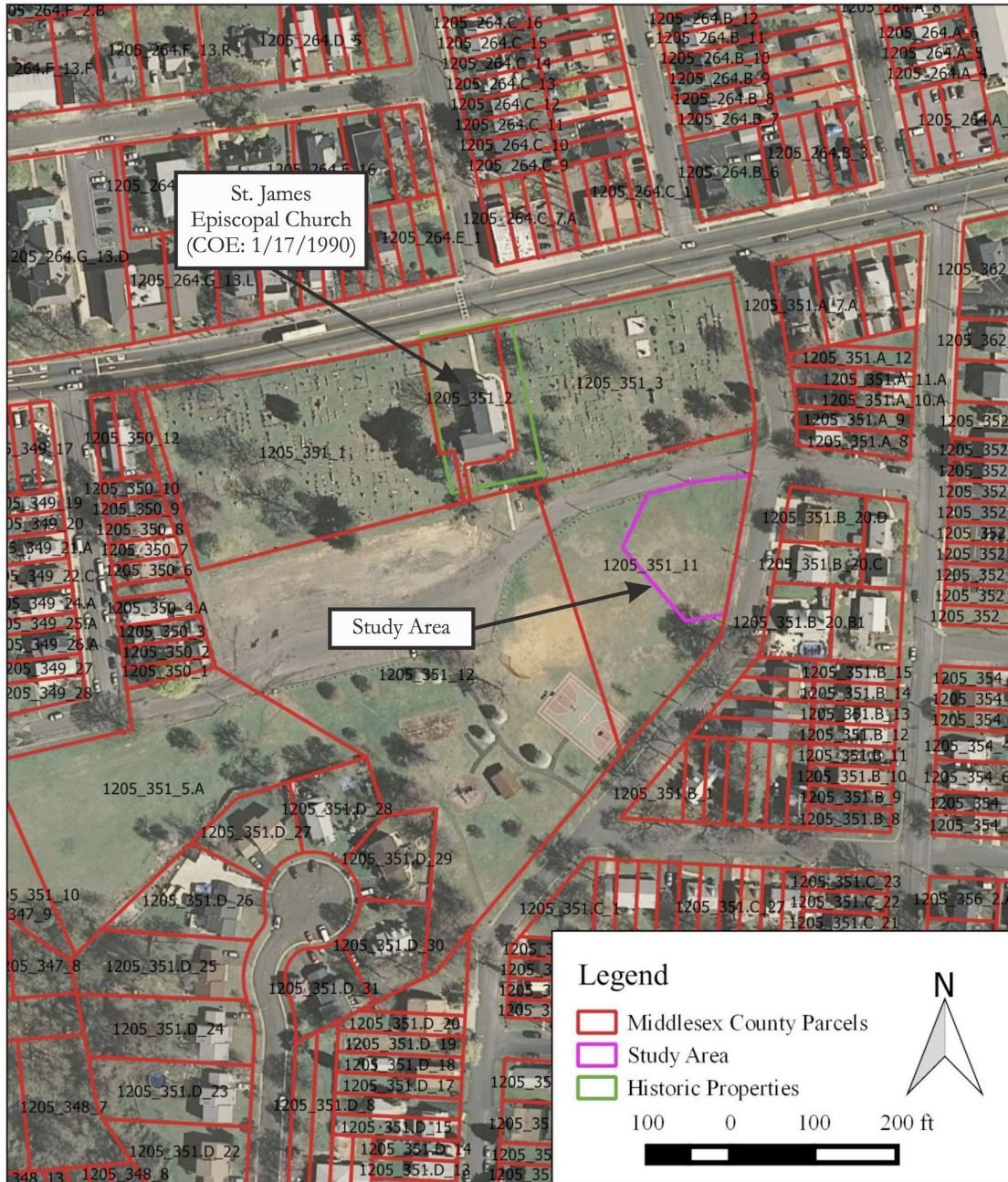


Figure 2: 2007 Aerial Showing Block and Lots, Historic Properties, and the Study Area.