

Conference House Park Archaeological Site

298 Satterlee Street, Staten Island
Tax Map Block 7857 Lot 1 in part

Proposed Action: Propose for Calendaring January 19, 2021



Conference House Park Archaeological Site (Ward's Point), LPC

Located in Tottenville at the southern-most point of Staten Island, the Conference House Park Archaeological Site contains the region's largest known prehistoric burial ground and the largest and best-preserved known archaeological site documenting Native American life beginning about 8,000 years ago and continuing through the Colonial period. The proposed landmark site includes approximately 20 acres of highly archaeologically sensitive land located within the city's Conference House Park. Designation would recognize the over-8,000-year history of Native American occupation of the site and protect its below-ground archaeological resources.

Native Americans have lived in what is now New York City, including Conference House Park, for hundreds of generations. Over these thousands of years, the geography and ecology of the area have dramatically changed impacting the way people used the land, with the earliest groups moving frequently to hunt, and later groups settling in villages to utilize abundant adjacent resources. At least 16 archaeological projects have occurred in the vicinity of the proposed landmark since the 19th century. These projects uncovered an important burial ground that included over 70 burials. In addition, 127 features were found which were primarily associated with a Woodland-period village at the site, about 1,500 to 500 years ago. The archaeologists also uncovered a series of hearths and other artifacts from the Early Archaic period (about 8,000 years ago) confirming that cooking, butchering and toolmaking were among the activities that occurred at the site.

The British enacted a series of land deeds c. 1670 that took Staten Island from Native Americans who were likely Lenape, but we do not know when the last Native Americans left this site. Soon after, Christopher Billopp received a British patent for land that included the proposed landmark site as well as the land to the north, on which he built Conference House circa 1675, a designated New York City Landmark. The designated Henry Hogg Biddle House, built around the 1840s, is located just north of Conference House. Historic archaeological resources, such as projectile points made of copper and brass, have been found at the site and are significant evidence that the area was used during the period of contact between Native Americans and European colonists.

In 1926, Conference House Park was donated to the City of New York and today includes paths, trails, undisturbed woods, beach, and a distinctive ridge where many of the documented archaeological discoveries were made. The Conference House Park Archaeological Site would be the city's first Landmark to recognize its thousands of years of Native American habitation.