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391/132949

ARCHEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION
of
THE CARRIAGE HOUSE

INDEPENDENCE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

By
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December, 1959

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INTRODUCTION

The two-story brick, wall-bearing structure referred to as the "Carriage House" is located on the south side of De Silva's Court, Area B. It was erected between 1796 and 1797.

Historical and architectural investigations were conducted in 1958, but separate and conflicting conclusions concerning the building's originally intended function were reached.[1] To date an agreement as to whether the building was originally built as a stable or as a warehouse has not been reached.

My own course was simply to add such additional knowledge of the below-ground structural details as I could, hoping that something might be found which would be of help to the historian and/or the architect. The most apparent problem area was visible in the cellar, where the stone foundation walls are interrupted on the south by a brick area. This was suggestive of a doorway which had been closed with a brick seal after its use had been discontinued. It was reasoned that by excavating the adjacent area in the south courtyard it could be ascertained whether this had indeed been a door, and how access to it had been gained. It was also hoped that the stratification of the soil, which would show in the excavation walls, would provide information regarding the original ground level.

THE EXCAVATION

Excavation within the south courtyard of the stable was begun on April 13, 1959. The physical situation provided three factors which inhibited the usual procedure for excavating a probable stairwell. The first factor was the concrete paving of the courtyard, which would absorb much of the energy of the single laborer, and a good deal of the project's time. The second was a heavy slate border stone which it was not feasible to move or destroy. The third factor was the single large tree which it was desired to preserve, which meant cutting as few of its roots as practicable. The location of the slate border prevented us from "straddling" the assumed location of the east stairwell, and its weight posed a safety hazard if we dug deeply next to it.

In view of the above situation, it was decided to sink a small exploratory pit straddling the assumed location of the west cheek. A crude hole 2.7' x 3.8' was sledge-hammered through the pavement, which was 0.35' thick (See Fig. 1). Neither a physical stair-cheek, nor a line between sterile and disturbed earth was noted. In expanding the pit southward, it became evident that all of the soil beneath the pavement was disturbed fill. The soil itself was vari-colored yellow-orange-brown and gravelly, containing small lumps of coal, sandy plaster, and brick fragments.

The pit was extended south to 6.5', where a concentration

of chalk-white rubble was encountered. While excavating around this rock-rubble, to determine its nature, the east face of a row of large stones appeared in the excavation wall. In following them out it was found that they were laid in mortar, but were separated from the stone wall of the cellar by 4.65', and were about two feet too far west to be a stair cheek. The pit was extended west to uncover these rocks, which were designated Feature #1. They form an asymmetrical square with maximum measurements of 2.55' x 3.05'. A squarish hole had been dug in fill to lay these stones, and river gravel had been packed in around them. The individual stones tend to be somewhat flat, up to 1.5' long, and most of them are a kind of schist. Both Feature #1 and the rubble were of an elevation equal to the bottom of the gravel "grout" beneath the pavement (See Figs. 2 and 3), and therefore may originally have been higher.

The pit was expanded eastward to the slate border and taken down to the general level without encountering anything new. The excavation was then deepened across the doorway, and the west cheek was encountered at a depth of 2.85'. This cheek was constructed of mortared stone and is actually a right angle extension of the stone wall of the cellar (See Fig. 5). The mortar is chalky white, and probably shell derived. In tracing out this cheek, it was found that it connected with the rock rubble, which forms its highest point. It then turned east, where we found that it joined the east cheek.

The brick seal of the cellar door is well finished on the interior, but excavation revealed very crude masonry on the exterior. Eight courses below the door sill of the main floor, a "terrace" is formed by an additional row of stretchers 21 courses deep (See Figs. 4 and 5). These bricks are laid even more casually and are buckled in places. The mortar is yellowish, sandy, and sometimes difficult to recognize as such (See Figs. 4, 6, and 7). The doorway is 5.4' in width and was made by leaving a space for it when the stone wall of the cellar was built. The doorway starts 0.65' above the bottom of the wall and extends upward 6.2' to the bottom of the main story door sill.

The inside dimensions of the stairwell, which should now be referred to as a bulkhead, are 4.05' (N-S) x 5.1' (E-W). From the highest to the lowest levels of the excavation, fragments of plaster of varying thicknesses were found. Some were smooth-backed, while others of greater thickness showed the impressions of split wood lathing. All showed evidence of having been white-washed 3-5 times, and most had a final coating of dull red. It is possible that the thinner plaster without lath marks may have lined the walls of the bulkhead. This would have given it inside dimensions of 4.0' x 5.0'. There was no evidence that permanent steps had ever been installed, which means that a ramp, or the "ship's-ladder" so typical of present day Philadelphia bulkheads was used.

THE CELLAR

The cellar is divided symmetrically by a brick partition wall which runs north-south. This wall contains two wide, low arch-ways, and on the south it is flush with the west jamb of the sealed door-way. On the east the stone wall is not visible due to a furred-in brick facade, which is hollow, and open at the top, being several inches lower than the present ceiling. This facade contains a series of vertical slots near the base. This modification of the wall has left the brick fireplace recessed. The fireplace is not centered in the wall, but is 6.0' - 11.35' from the north wall. The north wall is stone, and was plastered to a point that is now 6.9' from the east wall. The east jamb of the sealed doorway is 7.2' from the east wall, which is close enough to suggest an alignment.

Test Pit #1 was dug across the base of the door-way, from the partition wall to 1.5' east of the east jamb. In line with the jamb, a wooden floor was found 0.7' below the overburden. This overburden consisted of, at the top, a black powdery dust, rubbly clay, three layers of ceiling plaster and dirt.

Pit #2 was dug in the cognate position at the foot of the north wall straddling the end of the plaster. A mere two inches of overburden covered a brick floor which proved to be practically intact. The present indicated dimensions are 14.0' x 6.9'. The latter figure is the width, and since the bricks continue under the facade, the

original dimension was greater. The bricks of the floor indicate that they were contemporaneous with the fireplace.

Pit #3 was dug in line with Pits #1 and #2, 6.8' - 11.3' from the north wall. The brick floor was still intact, and the west edge still lined with a plaster ridge which appeared to be the remnants of a very thin partition wall. Ninety-five fragments of plate glass were recovered here. In extending this pit southward, the condition of the brick floor deteriorated, and appeared at one point to end opposite the fireplace. When the floor was completely uncovered, it was found to extend 2.6' beyond the fireplace, for a total north-south dimension of 14.0'. A fragment of a pair of fireplace tongs of late 18th-century type was found.

The west wall is of brick, identical in appearance to that on the east, except that it contains no joist holes at its base. A small pit was troweled out to determine that it has a spread footing 0.9' below the present dirt floor level. A similar investigation of the east facade revealed no footing; it continues south at the level of the top of the brick floor.

In the northeast corner of the brick floor is a feature which is designated #9. It is a rectangular section of floor 0.45'-1.2' west of the present brick east wall, and extends from the north wall 2.76' south. This was a slot 0.75' x 2.76' filled with eight bricks, set in mortar and laid at right angles to the bricks in the rest of the floor. Of the original eight bricks, laid side to side,

the first and seventh are missing, while the second through fifth and the southwest corner of the eighth remain. Troweling revealed that they were set in mortar over sterile soil. No identification of this feature has been made. The fact that it is 3.24' from the fireplace justifies a comparison with a similar feature at Fort Frederica National Monument, Georgia. The kitchen of the Caldwell House, Lot 3 North, is floored with 8"x8" red tiles except in the northeast corner where it is brick. Here, 1.8' east of the west wall, a rectangular slot 0.7' wide extends 2.2' from the south wall, which puts it 3.65' south of the fireplace. No bricks or other material filled this slot, although the interior was lined with mortar. This feature dates between 1738 and 1748; the owner of the house was a soap and candle tallower. The similarities are striking (See Fig. 8), but neither has been identified.

Near the east end of the north wall is a sealed door 4.1' in width. It was apparently made after the construction of the wall since the brick jambs are irregular. This suggests that a crude opening was knocked out of the wall and evened out with brick. Later the door, which must have opened into a bulkhead, was sealed with stones, bricks and bats. Some time after this the higher portions of the door, left jamb, and wall were modified in order to restore the area way window. All of this, to judge from the mortar, the appearance, and the condition of the area way window, occurred early in the building's history, but later than the construction of the

south bulkhead. The area way window itself differs from the other three only in having horizontal iron bars instead of vertical ones. The bars are of the same rectangular type and the window generally has suffered equally through time. Like the southwest area way window opposite, it was truncated when the main floor was lowered to its present level, and the installation of the large double doors made it necessary to close them off.

CONCLUSIONS

There were apparently four changes in the usage of this building between 1797 and 1824. From various documentary sources[2] we find a stable or coach-house to be the one brick outbuilding referred to on this property. The cellar is well precedented for such a structure in Philadelphia,[3] and the brick-floor and fireplace indicate that there was probably a kitchen, and an adjacent sleeping quarters in this one. For the first period, 1797 - 1809 the cellar can be described as having four stone walls and four area way windows, and the ceiling height was some 1.5' higher. The east quarter of the cellar contained a wood-floored room and a brick floored kitchen, with access and egress by way of the south bulkhead.

When Reeve Lewis, merchant, acquired this property late in 1809 he apparently converted the stable into a storehouse. The floor of the first story, and thereby the ceiling of the cellar, was lowered and the northwest area way window removed. A second bulkhead was constructed where this window had been. In 1814 the building was purchased by Edward Wilson, merchant, who probably already had a warehouse and was in worse need of a coach house. The ceiling of the cellar was again raised, the bulkhead sealed, and the northwest area way window rebuilt. A brick facade was provided for the east wall containing floor joists and a wood floor installed

covering the east half of the cellar.

In 1824 this structure was acquired by Charles Poulson, whose occupation is listed as "gentleman." It was probably at this time that the floor of the main story was again and finally lowered, and large double doors installed which truncated and sealed off the west area way windows. The wood flooring for the east half of the cellar was then impractical, with headroom of barely five feet, and it was removed. Since an insurance survey describes the building as a stable at this time, the present trap door from the main floor probably did not exist, and the south bulkhead still provided access to the cellar.

The Philadelphia Contributionship for the Insurance of Houses from Loss by Fire bought the building from Poulson in 1835. It was probably at this time that the south bulkhead was filled in and the doorway to the cellar sealed off. The late materials, which were intermixed with earlier materials throughout the fill, were available in Europe while Poulson was the owner, but it is unlikely that he would have had access to them for a time sufficient to have broken and discarded so many. In 1835 blue transfer-print Staffordshire white wares were at the peak of their popularity in this country, and Ironstone (represented by only one sherd) was just emerging. The heterogeneous nature of the fill, and the accretion of dirt and sherds to the mortar in the door seal indicate that it was placed there before the mortar could completely dry.

The placement of the river pebble grout and the concrete paving appear to have been laid down after the Philadelphia Contributionship converted from carriages to automobiles.

The hope that original landscape levels could be determined from the stratigraphy in the profiles of the excavation were not realized. The excavation outside the bulkhead reached a depth of three feet without encountering sterile soil. From the grout to a depth of 1.2' there was an irregularly laminated stratum of yellow clay containing brick fragments and plaster. Below this to a depth of 2.0' there was a more compact stratum of yellow clay which contained small amounts of 18th-century materials. Next followed a very straight and level stratum of pebbles which became oyster shell to the south, which contained a few sherds of Delft and cobalt/grey stoneware. From 2.15' down was a dark grey clay which contained some 18th-century materials. This was the heaviest concentration of early materials, but the entire total was of so few specimens that it cannot be regarded as representative or significant. Apparently the entire archeological excavation was within the working excavation of the workmen who built the bulkhead and Feature #1.

ARTIFACTS

The artifacts recovered from the stable excavation range from pre-Revolutionary times to the beginning of the second quarter of the nineteenth century. They were separated as recovered by area and depth, but all ceramic types occurred fairly evenly from the uppermost to lowest levels. The iron ware consists primarily of nails, of which 66% are between one and two inches. The condition of all of the iron is extremely poor; a jack knife and a fork are identifiable only by their bone handles. The identification of much of the iron is impossible at this time because of the tendency to large blisters and the accretion of sand, gravel, shell, bone, etc. Artifacts of brass are scarce and only one specimen of copper was recovered.

Aside from chips of building materials, the stone assemblage is comprised almost entirely of slate. Several pieces of slate are certainly fragments of roof-tile, one containing a hole for a square nail. Two slate fragments are of particular interest, being part of a blackboard with penmanship letters inscribed on the left margin. In all probability these fragments came from Mrs. Mallon's Boarding School which was at 106 Walnut Street from 1802 until 1809. Slate roofs were rare enough to cause mention in any insurance survey, therefore the roof tiles, along with the porcelain and other elegant items were surely the trash of some nearby dwelling, and never associated with this building.

The per centum occurrence of the ceramic types is shown on the following page. It should be pointed out that the term "cream ware" is used here to include only the Queen's Ware and undecorated Leeds Ware. Because of their deliberate and consistant stylistic difference, I have listed the polychrome hand-painted wares and the Feather Edge wares separately; there is considerable precedence for this. Despite their glazes and decoration, both of these types are legitimate cream wares. The term "soft-paste earthenware" as used here refers to all earthen wares, whether "kitchen" or decorative, whose pastes do not contain petuntse or kaolin. I make an exception of the tin-enamelled Delft types and the double-slipped Combed Ware because their treatment as separate types is widely accepted.

Per Centum Occurrence of Ceramic Sherds

Type	T-26-1 to 12			
	no.	%	no.	%
Cream ware	247	32.8	279	32.97
Soft-paste EW	223	28.3	251	29.66
Porcelain	71	9.3	77	9.10
Poly-hand p'ted.	50	6.6	50	5.91
Staff. hand p'ted.	37	4.9	37	4.37
Shell Edge	34	4.5	39	4.60
Stone ware (all)	32	4.2	32	3.78
Unident. white glaze	27	3.5	44	5.20
Staff. Transf. Pt.	21	2.7	27	3.19
Delft-type ware	7	0.9	7	0.82
Mocha	1	0.13	1	0.11
Antico Rosso	1	0.13	1	0.11
Ironstone	1	0.13	1	0.11

Per Centum Occurrence of Glass Artifacts

Type	no.	%	no.	%
Plate	290	42.58	412	43.05
Bottle, Wine	306	44.93	454	47.44
Bottle, Other	25	3.67	27	2.81
Tumbler	27	3.96	31	3.22
Goblet	33	4.84	33	3.43

NOTES

1. Historic Structure Report on Stable (Carriage House) in Independence National Historical Park, 1958. Historian Youlson's views implicit throughout Chapter II; Architect Doe is explicit on page 1, Chapter III, Section I.

2. Philadelphia City and County Tax Records, 1796 - 1805; Minute Books for December 18, 1810, Mutual Assurance Company Survey #1638; Advertisement in Porcupine Gazette, June 10, 1797.

3. Letter from Israel Israel to Mathew Clarkson, Esq. dated January 29, 1794.

FEATURE DATA

T-26 Stable/Carriage House

Feature No.	Location	Depth	Identification	Associations
1	Stable patio	0.45' - 1.95'	Unidentified	
2	Stable south wall		Sealed door to cellar of stable	Feat. #3
3	Abuts cellar So. wall		Bulkhead	Feat. #2
4	Cellar floor SE 1/4	0.7'	Remains of wood floor	
5	North Wall		Partition wall scar	
6	East wall		Brick facade	
7	East wall		Fireplace	
8	Cellar floor		Brick Floor	Feat #6
9	Cellar floor	0.18'	Unidentified floor feature	Feat. #8, poss. #7
10	North wall		Sealed door	

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure #1. The beginning of the excavation. The door of the main floor behind the shovel. At upper right is the slate border stone.

Figure #2. Feature One, viewed from the east.

Figure #3. Feature One, viewed from the west.

Figure #4. Exterior view of the brick seal in the basement door. Notice the "terrace" made by an extra row of bricks.

Figure #5. The first appearance of the west cheek of the bulkhead. Notice the gravel stratum in the wall trench; all soil encountered was disturbed.

Figure #6. Arrow rests on the old sill of the doorway. The stone foundation beneath the door is 0.55' high. No evidence of a floor was found, and rubble is deeper than the foundation at this point.

Figure #7. View of east cheek of bulkhead. At left is the sealed door. Arrow points north.

Figure #8. Comparison of Feature #9 with a similar feature at Ft. Frederica NM.

Figure #9. Plans and profiles of excavations.



Figure #1. The beginning of the excavation. The door of the main floor behind the shovel. At upper right is the slate border stone.



Figure #2. Feature One, viewed from the east.

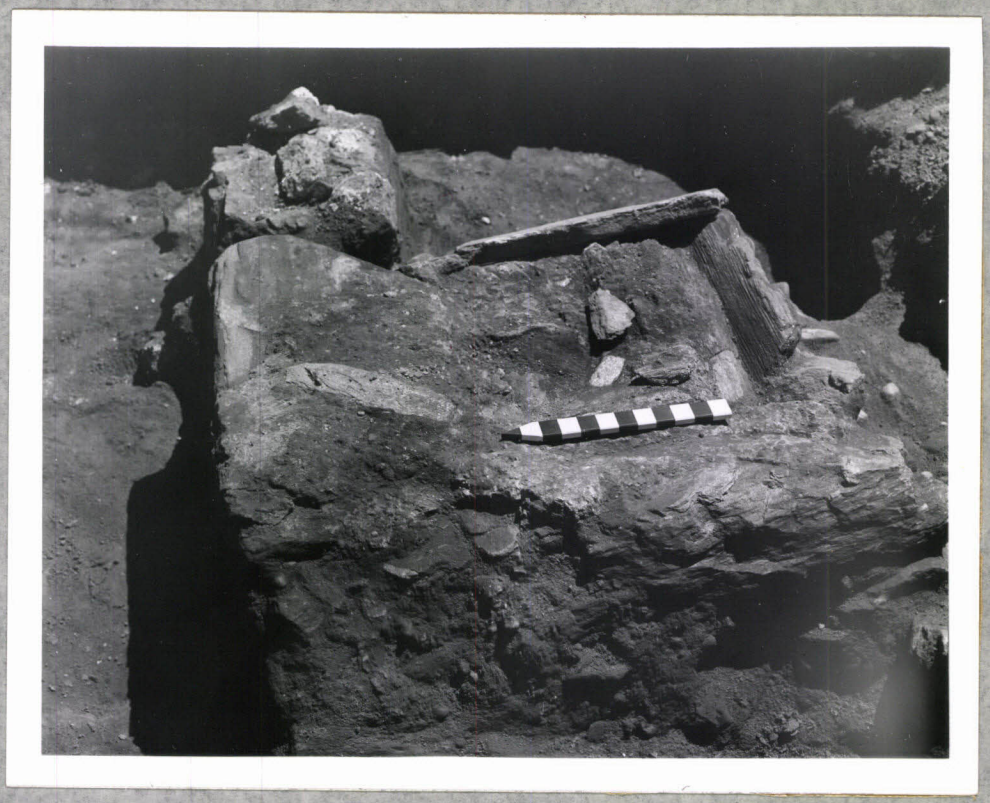


Figure #3. Feature One, viewed from the west.



Figure #4. Exterior view of the brick seal in the basement door. Notice the "terrace" made by an extra row of bricks.



Figure #5. The first appearance of the west cheek of the bulkhead. Notice the gravel stratum in the wall trench; all soil encountered was disturbed.

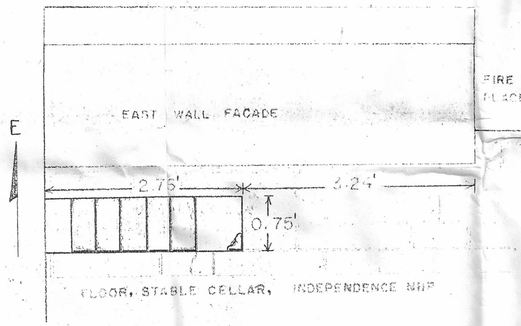


Figure #6. Arrow rests on the old sill of the doorway. The stone foundation beneath the door is 0.55' high. No evidence of a floor was found, and rubble is deeper than the foundation at this point.



Figure #7. View of east cheek of bulkhead. At left is the sealed door. Arrow points north.

Illustrations Nos. 8 and 9



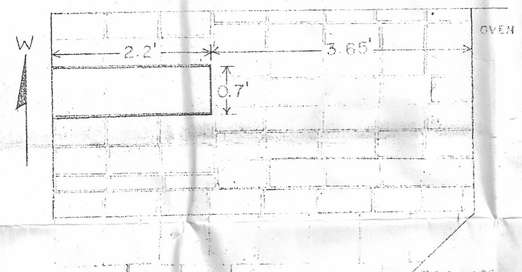
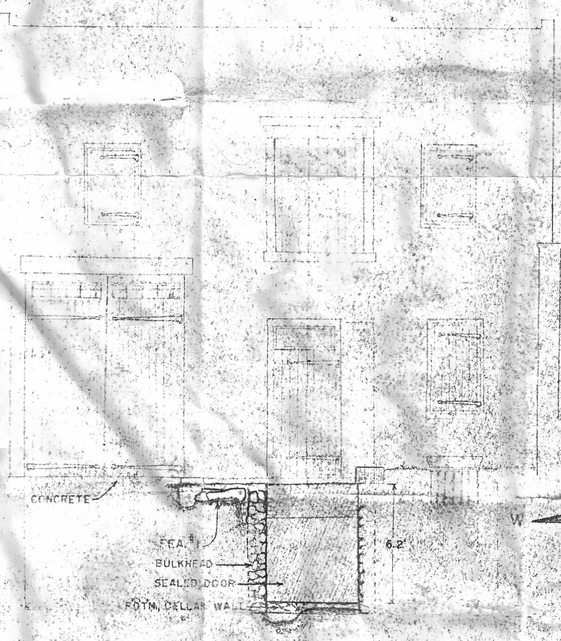


FIG. 8: COMPARISON OF FEA. #9 WITH A SIMILAR FEATURE AT FT. FREDERICA NM, GEORGIA
SCALE: 1" = 1'



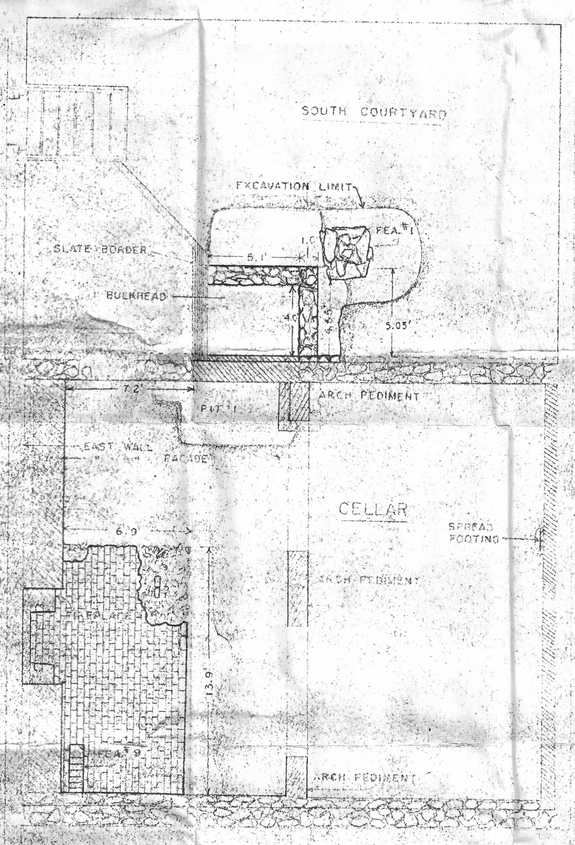


FIG 9: PLAN & PROFILE OF EXCAVATION
SCALE 1" = 4'

ORIENTATION REVIEWED

OPERATIONS REGION
WASHINGTON
INTERP. REGION
WASHINGTON
COOP. ACTV. REGION
WASHINGTON
DES. & CONST. STERN
A.
E.
L.A.
WASHINGTON
A.
E.
L.A.
OTHER
PREPARED
DESIGNED J.W. MOORE
DRAWN
CHECKED
REVISED
DATE | INITIAL

RECOMMENDED
DATE
APPROVED

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
ARCHEOLOGY
PREPARED BY FIELD OFFICE

STABLE
TITLE OF DRAWING
B
LOCATION WITHIN AREA
INDEPENDENCE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
NAME OF AREA

REGION FIVE
PCP
SHEET 1 OF 1
DRAWING NO. 26:79
DATE Dec. 1959

BASIC DATA ARCHEOLOGICAL FIELD NOTES, NHP-IND 2595