

North Brother Island

Balancing Ecology and Cultural Heritage



North Brother Island Light, East River, N.Y.



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Individual Projects (attached under separate cover):

- *Early Building Campaign: Andrew Fearon*
- *Landscape Evolution: Christy Lombardo*
- *Conditions Assessment of Site Structures: Kelly Wong and Cynthia Silva*
- *New York/New Jersey Harbor Context Analysis: Sarah Katz and Jill Verbosek*
- *GIS Mapping of North Brother (including values): Sarah Cleary and Leslie Friedman*
- *Negative Memory Interpretation: Gretchen Hilyard*
- *Bronx Outreach Brochure: Hillary Adam*
- *Analysis of Stabilization Options: Sarah Shotwell*
- *Ecological and Cultural Case Studies: Sarah Thorp*

Introduction

This report was prepared as part of the HSPV 701 Studio class offered through the Graduate Program in Historic Preservation at the University of Pennsylvania during Fall 2005. A group of twelve students studied North Brother Island (NBI), located in the East River in New York City, to develop a values-centered preservation plan for the site. The goals of the studio class were to understand the history of NBI, as well as the values associated with site, and to develop policies, goals, and recommendations to guide future management and stewardship. This report contains our findings and provides a contextual overview, detailed reports on each of the four key identified values, a summary of these reports in the form of a statement of significance, a review of policies, goals and recommendations, and explores four potential “futures” for the island through scenario planning.

Overview

Part of New York City’s Bronx Borough, North Brother Island is located in the East River, east of Manhattan, south of the Bronx and north of Queens (Figure 1). Rikers Island is just to the northeast, and the small 8-acre South Brother Island lies immediately to

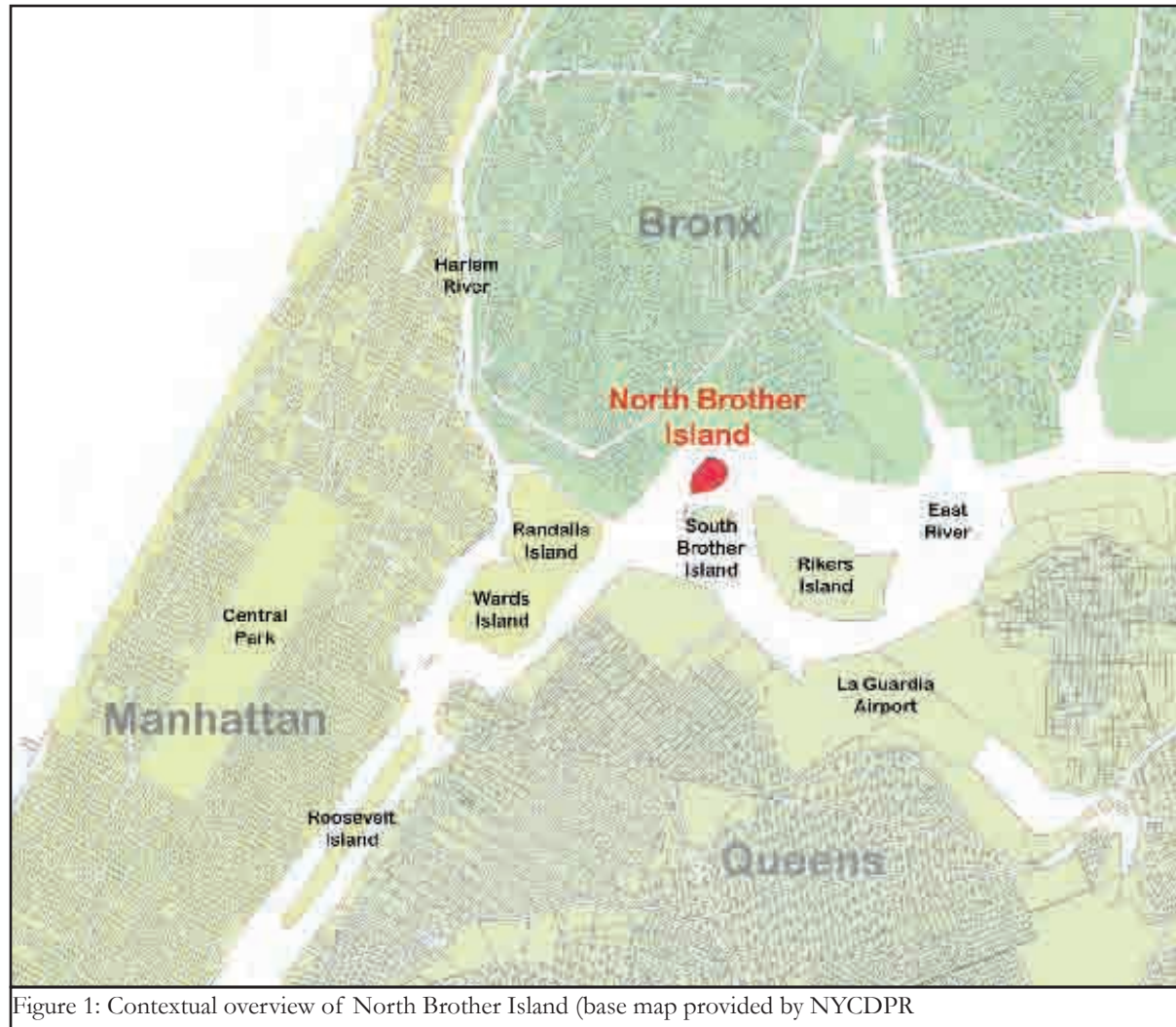


Figure 1: Contextual overview of North Brother Island (base map provided by NYCDPR)

the island’s southeast. The island is currently uninhabited and is owned by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYCDPR), which purchased the site in 2001.

Preserving the island presents a unique challenge. The site contains significant remnants from 150 years of human occupation along with a distinctive environment that has become an important

nesting area for wading birds. The island has been home to a variety of institutional uses, beginning with a contagious diseases hospital in the 1880s and ending with a drug rehabilitation center for youth, which closed in the mid-1960s. Since then, the island has been abandoned by humans but has become an important breeding habitat for the Black-crowned Night Heron.

Because of these two significant and potentially conflicting values, the historical and the environmental, our work focused on developing a deeper understanding of each area in order to prioritize goals and guide planning the long-term future of the island. After a great deal of research and investigation, we determined that the ecological value of the island should be considered as most significant. However, this decision came with the qualification that the cultural value reflected in the island's extant buildings, structures, and landscape features should not be disregarded. The island's material heritage needed to be addressed to prevent its loss to the elements and nature, thus preserving this legacy for the future.

Contextual overview

NBI is one of approximately 40 smaller islands located within the greater New York Harbor. Unlike NBI, other islands in the

immediate vicinity are devoted to a mix of uses, including residential, recreational, and prison. Most of the islands are publicly owned with the exception of South Brother Island, which is owned by the private company, Hampton Scows. On the mainland, NBI is surrounded by industrial uses, including oil refineries and La Guardia airport, features tending to have negative connotations, and that also emphasize the importance of maintaining the lush green stillness of North Brother Island. Today the island is currently only accessible by boat by prior arrangement with the NYCDPR. Visitation is limited to the period when nesting is not in season, approximately September to March.

Methodology

The main objectives for the studio were to determine the various values for NBI and to develop parameters and policies for the island based on these values. The process combined archival research and site visits with case studies of similar sites. To understand values are associated with the island, historic newspapers, maps, building plans, and images were consulted. Contemporary policy issues relevant to the island were investigated. From these materials, an extensive chronology was compiled providing insight into how the island has evolved over time (Appendix: Chronology). Visits to the island helped us

to gain an understanding of the physical conditions of the landscape's ecology and historic fabric and to experience the less tangible qualities, such as the aesthetic value of its ruinous state. Case studies, with comparable issues relevant to the particular dynamic of a nesting area located within a man-made environment, were examined. Pea Patch Island in Delaware is one such example of a site that has successfully incorporated a visitation program at an historic site, while carefully monitoring and maintaining the presence of wading birds.

It was important to identify major stakeholders associated with NBI to better inform the next phase of planning for the island as a whole. Organizations and groups identified as having an interest or stake in the island's future include:

- NYC Dept. Parks and Recreation
- Audubon
- Local Communities – The Bronx
- Greater New York City

Drawing on the identified values and stakeholders, policies, goals, and recommendations for NBI were developed. Policies provide general direction for the island as a whole. Goals, outlined as short-term, mid-term and long-term, are supported by more specific actions in the form of recommendations. Together, the policies, goals, and recommendations provide a

framework for future planning for the island. From these guidelines different scenarios for the future of the island were outlined. The scenarios are used to more fully comprehend the impact of two key variables on the future of NBI and help to better understand both advantages and constraints of the presence or absence of these variables.

To add another dimension of understanding different aspects of NBI, individual and small group projects on specific topics related to the island were undertaken. Projects include:

- Early Building Campaign: Andrew Fearon
- Landscape Evolution: Christy Lombardo
- Conditions Assessment of Site Structures: Kelly Wong and Cynthia
- New York/New Jersey Harbor Context Analysis: Sarah Katz and Jill Verhosek
- GIS Mapping of North Brother (including values): Sarah Cleary and Leslie Friedman
- Negative Memory Interpretation: Gretchen Hilyard
- Bronx Outreach Brochure: Hillary Adam
- Analysis of Stabilization Options: Sarah Shotwell
- Ecological and Cultural Case Studies: Sarah Thorp



Figure 2: Aerial view of North Brother Island (NYCDPR)

Existing Conditions

NBI encompasses approximately 20 acres and contains 26 buildings and structures spread randomly over much of the island (Figure 2). These features are in various stages of decay and are now completely overgrown by invasive plant species that have literally taken the island over (Figures 3 and 4). While there are no people living on the island, it is a nesting area for the Black-crowned Night Heron and, partly to encourage continued nesting, the island is currently undergoing ecological restoration by the NYCPDR.

Brick buildings, dating from the late 19th century to the mid 20th century, make up most of the remaining buildings on the island (Figures 5 and 6). There are also three docks,



Figure 3: Boiler room (left) and Morgue (right), note extensive kudzu growth, view southeast (Hillary Adam, 2005)

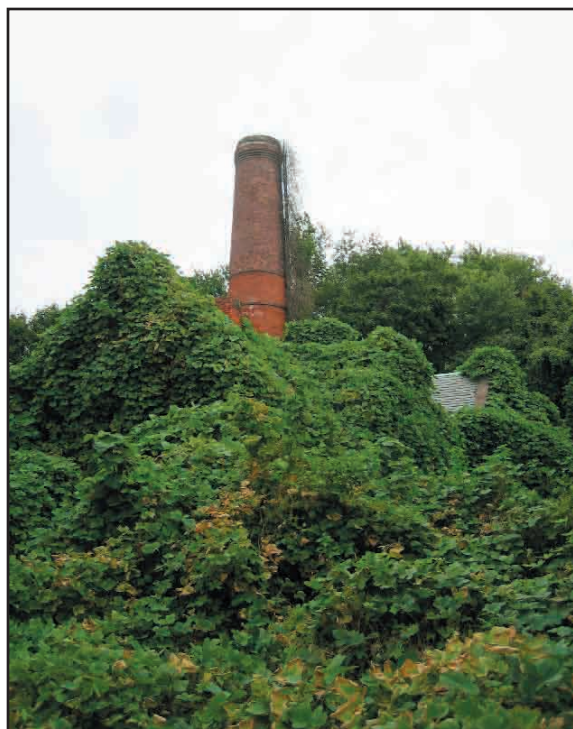


Figure 4: Coal house smokestack covered in kudzu, view north (Kelly Wong, 2005)



Figure 5: Male Dormitory, constructed c. 1885, view northwest (Kelly Wong, 2005)



Figure 6: Tuberculosis Pavilion, constructed 1943, view north (Gretchen Hilyard, 2005)

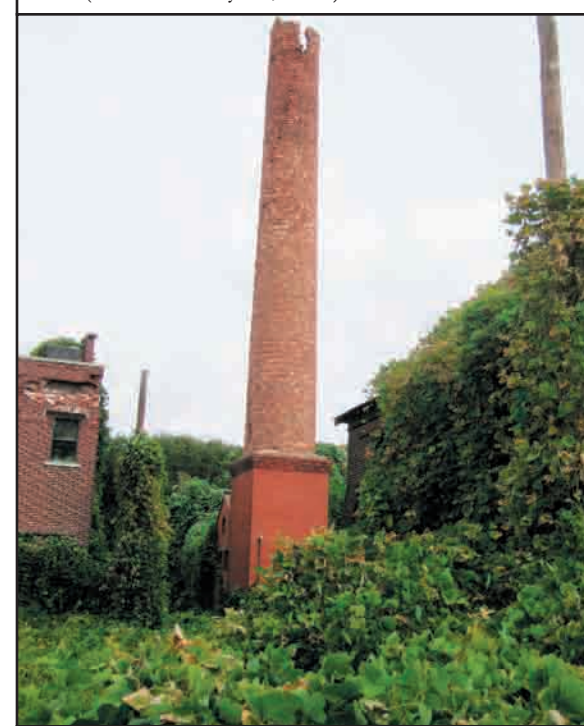


Figure 7: Boiler room smokestack, view east (Christy Lombardo, 2005)



Figure 8: Lamp post found near tennis courts, view north (Christy Lombardo, 2005)

smokestacks, a cistern and site features such as exposed aggregate concrete roads, lamp posts, utility poles and other remnants from 150 years of human occupation (Figures 7-8). The remaining buildings and structures on NBI are in various states of deterioration, caused by several different factors including



Figure 9: Breached seawall at north shore, view north (Christy Lombardo, 2005)

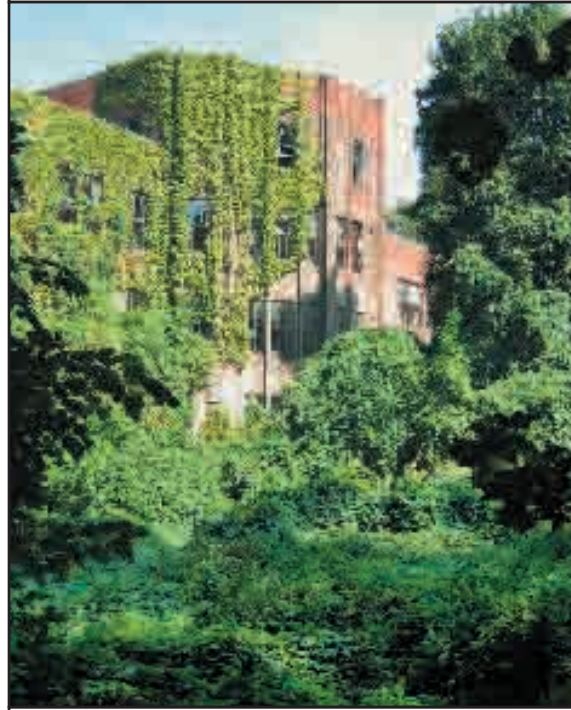


Figure 10: Invasive vines with Tuberculosis Pavilion in background, view northeast (Hillary Adam, 2005)

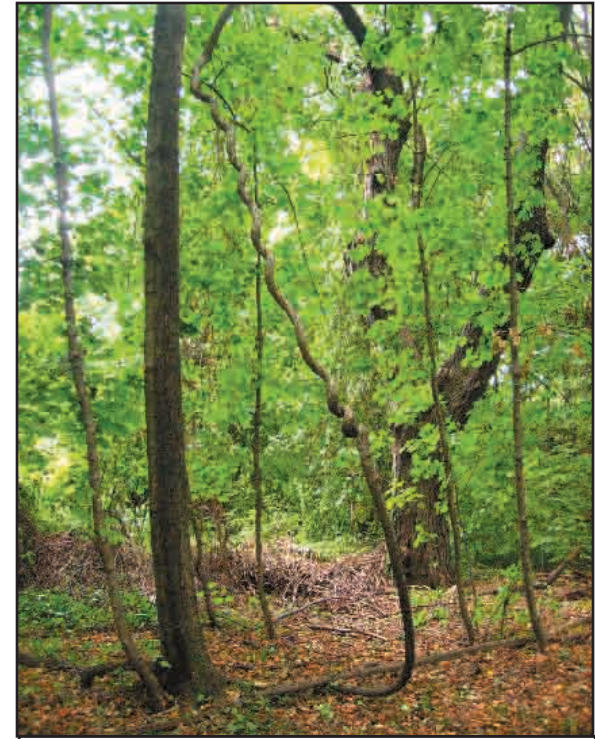


Figure 11: Overgrowth (Kelly Wong, 2005)

discontinued maintenance and overall general neglect, as well as plant invasion. These features represent the majority of cultural resources on site.

The island is encompassed by a concrete sea wall, which has been breached in several locations, mainly along the north and east shores (Figure 9). This has led to severe erosion, which combined with the dense overgrowth, has the potential to compromise the stability of the island as a whole.



Figure 12: Area of Norway maples and English ivy prior to habitat restoration, view northeast (Kelly Wong, 2005)

Vegetation on NBI consists mostly of invasive plant species that have grown out of control and now completely cover the island, making some areas almost impassable (Figures 10 and 11). In response to these invasive species, and in hopes of improving ecological diversity to provide a healthier habitat for both the island and nesting herons, a major habitat

restoration project (implemented in two phases) was undertaken in 2005 by NYCDPR, with support from NYC Audubon and a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. This effort included clearing approximately one acre of Norway maples, which are now being replaced with the native vegetation (Figures 12 and 13).

North Brother Island has specifically been recognized as an important breeding habitat for the Black-crowned Night Heron and is protected under New York State and Federal Law. The herons currently inhabit the southwestern region of the island during breeding season, which is from late March to early August.

NBI as it exists today is in extreme state of decay, as visibly demonstrated by the condition of buildings and structures, and in an extreme state of robust growth, clearly seen in the rampant invasion of vegetation. To place these existing conditions within the greater context of the island as a whole, each of the four identified key values will be outlined in greater detail in the next section.



Figure 13: Area of Norway maples and English ivy, during habitat restoration, view northwest (Christy Lombardo, 2005)

Statement of Significance

North Brother Island is an important ecological resource for the city of New York. As an historically significant cultural landscape, the island also offers a rare—and compelling—physical record of the past, a unique aesthetic experience in the present, and a potential social resource for the future.

Ecology

North Brother's dominant value is as a natural resource. Managed by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, the island is one of several that provides a habitat for nesting herons in the New York Harbor. The island has specifically been recognized as an important breeding habitat for the Black-crowned Night-Heron. North Brother is also a part of a system of islands and waterways that make up the New York Harbor, a dynamic local ecosystem that has improved dramatically in recent years. Additionally, North Brother is a component of the New York/New Jersey Harbor Estuary, which was designated as an "Estuary of National Significance" in 1988 by the US Environmental Protection Agency. As part of the Atlantic flyway for migratory birds, the Estuary has intercontinental significance. Ultimately, North Brother Island is a unique site that provides a critical nesting habitat in a densely developed urban landscape.



Figure 1: Black-crowned Night Heron
Source: www.morro-bay.com

History

One of New York Harbor's sites of social isolation, North Brother Island emerged as an important quarantine island in the 1880s. As part of the larger, nationwide trend toward institutionalization, many of the islands of New York Harbor have found use as prisons, immigration control points, asylums, reformatories, and hospitals. North Brother Island exemplifies the social and architectural history of medical institutions in the United States. The quarantine era coincided with the growth of public hospitals nationwide,

North Brother Island



Figure 2: 1869 Lighthouse
Source: United States Coast Guard

while the eventual abandonment of the site's drug treatment facility in the 1960s marked the beginning of a new era of de-institutionalization. The island's building and landscape phases were a reflection of changes in scientific theory regarding the treatment of disease (and later, addiction). Hospital structures also provide a view into the stylistic progression of American architecture from nineteenth century historicism to twentieth century modernism. During the late 19th century, many immigrants and citizens of New York City were confined on the island due to fears of disease. Following World War II, the island offered a home to returning veterans, who attended New York colleges and universities under the GI Bill. The island also witnessed one of New York's greatest—



Figure 3: View from within the Tuberculosis Pavilion. (Sarah Cleary, 2005)

though now almost forgotten—disasters: the sinking of the ferry *The General Slocum* in 1904, the single greatest loss of life in New York City before September 11, 2001. The legendary figure Typhoid Mary was also confined to the island for many years and died there in 1938.

Aesthetics

The aesthetic value of North Brother Island lies in the contrasts it offers. The island is only accessible by boat, and this journey involves a progression from the dense urban fabric of New York City to the isolated island sanctuary. Half-hidden circuitous pathways, lampposts, fire hydrants, benches, seawalls and other site features allude to the once carefully designed landscape. The remnants of past



Figure 4: Studio members kayaking to the island. (Sarah Shotwell, 2005)

horticultural plantings intertwine with more recent invasive and dwindling native species to create a disorienting mass of greenery. Decaying buildings set amid stands of trees form a ruinous landscape that evokes a sense of the institutional sublime. Today the island's natural landscape continues to evolve, offering new sensory experiences. As an integral component of the island's character, this process of change is both a source and a manifestation of the island's beauty.

Social

The potential social values of North Brother Island include using the island to meet the educational, recreational, and environmental needs of New Yorkers and visitors to the city. The island presents powerful educational opportunities that could foster an

understanding of its own history, as well as broaden understanding of the city's history. The island could also serve as an important environmental education resource and help to raise awareness about the importance of New York Harbor. The island could become a location for a multitude of seasonal recreational activities, including, kayaking, bird watching, picnicking, walking, and relaxing outside of New York City's hustle and bustle. As a potential public green space, the island could play a vital role in local communities' struggle for environmental justice. Finally, the island could support economic development through ecological and history-related tourism initiatives.

Conclusion

As an abandoned institutional landscape and an emerging natural resource, North Brother Island is characterized by its complex and overlapping values. Although the site's ecological value takes precedence, this value stems from North Brother's history of use and abandonment, geographical location, as well as its potential as a civic asset. These values intertwine to create a unique setting and irreplaceable resource.

North Brother Island's dominant value is as a natural resource. Long abandoned, North Brother sits almost forgotten within the New York-New Jersey Harbor. The island's thickly overgrown landscape has become an important breeding ground for a variety of wading birds, most notably the Black-crowned Night Heron. Years of intense human habitation followed by forty years of neglect have left the island in a degraded state. However the island's current unmanaged condition also offers a unique opportunity for ecological restoration. North Brother's significance today stems from its potential as a natural resource, its position in the greater New York/New Jersey Harbor, and its role as an important bird habitat.

The Island

North Brother Island is located in the East River, a 16-mile long saltwater estuary that separates Manhattan from Brooklyn and Queens and links Upper New York Bay with the Long Island Sound¹ (Figure 1). Known for its turbulent waters, especially those around the notorious Hell Gate, the river is home to seven islands, including the nearby 8-acre South Brother. Christened the “Gesellen” or “Companions” by early Dutch settlers, North and South Brother Islands have been considered as closely allied for more than 300 years.² Although today the islands are

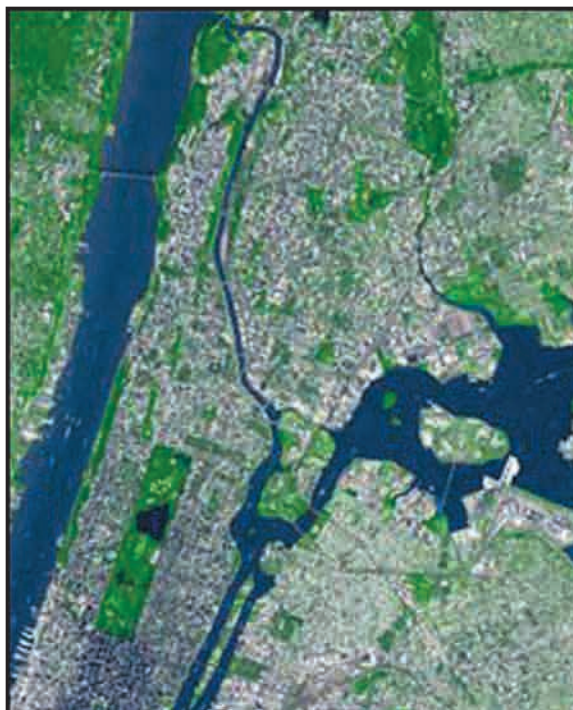


Figure 1: Satellite photo of the East River
Source: www.eastrivernyc.org



Figure 2: North Brother and South Brother Islands
Source: NYC Department of Parks and Recreation

under separate ownership—South Brother, which is privately owned, is the only island in the harbor system to never have been under public control³—the two islands are united through proximity, and together comprise a significant 28-acre habitat for the New York's harbor herons⁴ (Figure 2).

While North Brother serves as an attractive bird habitat, the island's eco-system has been dramatically altered during its years of human use, and today represents a deeply disturbed environment. Although the island is a natural formation, its shoreline and contours have been significantly changed. The first major building campaign in the 1880s included a seawall, which created a major barrier between the island and its waters. In 1909, the island was enlarged, when four acres of infill were added to its eastern shore to accommodate the expansion of the Riverside Hospital campus, altering the site's natural conditions even further.⁵ Throughout the island's building campaigns, the construction of docks has further disturbed its borders, as well as the surrounding harbor bed, resulting today in significant shoreline erosion (Figure 3).

The island's vegetation also reflects the legacy of human use and abandonment. Little evidence remains of North Brother's original flora, and photographic and documentary sources indicate that the island was clear-cut



Figure 3: Shoreline of North Brother Island (Kelly Wong, 2005)

during the late 19th century to create Riverside Hospital's early manicured landscape. Areas of open lawn adorned with carefully located trees continued to define the island until its abandonment in the 1960s. During the last forty years of the island's life, a lack of care and management has resulted in the emergence of a densely overgrown, jungle-like landscape (Figure 4).



Figure 4: Dense vegetation on North Brother Island (Hillary Adam, 2005)

Today a tangled mix of native and non-native species characterizes North Brother's vegetation. Native species include: canopy trees, such as Tulip poplar, Sugar maple, Linden, American sycamore; perennials, such as Pokeweed, shrubs, such as Red mulberry; and herbaceous and woody vines, including rampant Poison ivy. Mixing with, and indeed in many cases dominating native plants, are the island's invasives. Following abandonment, elements of the earlier planted landscape,

including Norway maples, English ivy and privet, spread throughout the island. More recently, new invasive species have arrived, including Amur honeysuckle, Porcelain berry, Oriental bittersweet, Japanese honeysuckle, Ailanthus, Stilt grass and Mile-a-minute, and, most alarmingly, Kudzu. With the dubious distinction of being the northernmost occurrence of this predominantly southern vine, the rapidly-spreading plant—now on the island's western edge—threatens to overtake North Brother.⁶

While the waters of the East River serve as the connective tissue which binds North Brother to its broader urban and harbor contexts, today they also constitute a significant threat to the island's integrity. With more than 90% of its landmass in the 100-year flood plain,⁷ the island is at increased risk for flooding, as dramatic global climatic changes and intensifying storm patterns threaten to raise water levels. The river's tidal patterns also wash garbage and debris onto North Brother's shores, further degrading its already compromised environment.

In spite of these environmental concerns, North Brother Island holds considerable potential as a natural resource within the New York/New Jersey Harbor. As a primarily natural feature (unlike many other harbor islands, which have been created or significantly altered through infilling and

other interventions), the island's ecology can be rebalanced and restored. Careful and environmentally-friendly interventions can arrest erosion and address the disturbed harbor floor. With its flourishing heron population and relatively undisturbed landscape, South Brother Island can offer a model for restoration efforts, and together the Brother Islands can be reclaimed as an important ecological resource for the city of New York (Figure 6).

The Harbor

North Brother Island also derives significant ecological value from its position within the New York/New Jersey Harbor, a natural resource of national—and indeed global—importance. Today the harbor is understood as encompassing more than just the Upper and Lower New York Bays, but is considered to extend around both sides of Manhattan Island up the Hudson River and the East River and into Long Island Sound; south and southeast into New Jersey waters; and westward around Staten Island and into the waterways of Union, Essex, Hudson and Bergen counties in New Jersey⁸ (Figure 7). All together, this area encompasses approximately 1,500 square miles.⁹ The site of a major urban archipelago, the harbor also features more than 50 islands, reefs, and shoals.¹⁰



Figure 6: South Brother Island as seen from North Brother (Kelly Wong, 2005)



Figure 7: New York/ New Jersey Harbor
Source: "Health of the Harbor"

The harbor was formed 12,000-15,000 years ago by the retreat of the North American glacier, which created its unique topography.¹¹ Its rich natural resources have attracted continuous settlement since at least 1400 AD, when the area was settled by members of the Leni Lenape tribe.¹² The harbor also marks the junction of the Atlantic Ocean and inland waterways, and as such forms a tidal estuary. Estuaries occur where inland freshwater mixes with saltwater from the ocean. Estuaries are among the most productive habitats on earth and support diverse populations of plant and animal life. Because estuaries provide access from oceanic to inland waters, major port cities, including New York, Boston, New Orleans, and San Francisco, have emerged on their shores.¹³

In 1987, the harbor was recognized by the Environmental Protection Agency as one of 28 Estuaries of National Significance and designated as the New York/New Jersey Harbor Estuary. Today the Harbor Estuary Program, an inter-state public-private cooperative organization, is an importance presence in the harbor, seeking to restore this unique and diverse ecosystem.¹⁴

The harbor includes a number of distinct habitat types, including: tidal rivers, salt and freshwater tidal marshes, woodlands, shallow bays, barrier beaches, and sand dunes (Figure 8). Water is the predominant habitat type,

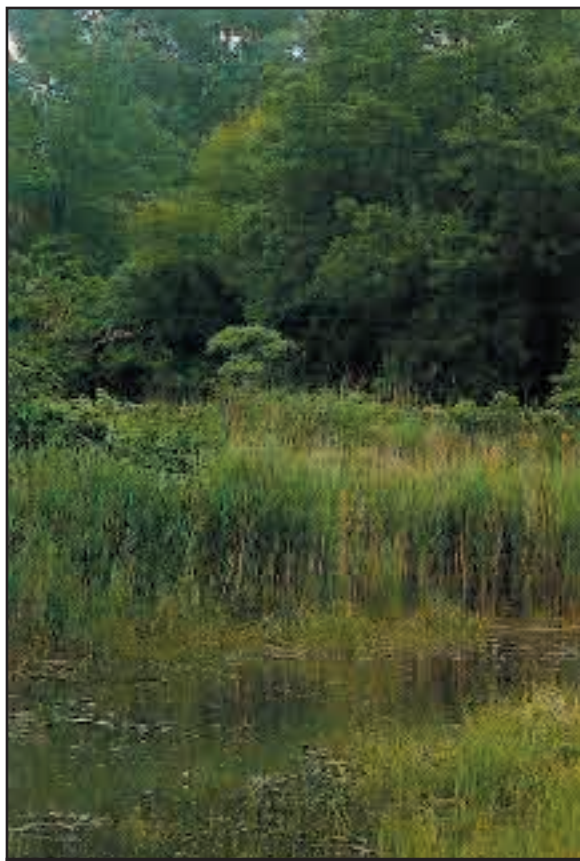


Figure 8: High tide at Sharrotts Road Shorelands, Staten Island. Source: *An Island Nature*

and the harbor is characterized by a rich and diverse marine life, including over 100 species of fish, 160 species of wading birds, and numerous plant species.¹⁵

The harbor is also a deeply disturbed environment. Year of human use and abuse, including massive pollution, dumping, dredging, infilling, over-fishing,

and waterfront development, have led to dramatically reduced air and water quality and have depleted important habitat areas (Figure 9). For example, 80% of the harbor's wetlands and underwater lands (approximately 300,000 acres) have been lost due to human activities.¹⁶

However, starting with the Clean Water Act in 1972, there has been a concerted effort to replenish and restore the harbor's natural habitat. Today, although contamination, pathogens, debris, and erosion, continue as



Figure 9: Marshes and industrial site on the Arthur Kill, Staten Island. Source: *An Island Nature*

the major threats to the harbor, there are indicators that the harbor's health is returning and that its habitats are reviving. Today levels of toxic contamination are down while water nutrient and oxygen levels are improving. There has been a reduction in harmful algae, while variety of aquatic wildlife and vegetation is returning. Perhaps the greatest success story in recent years has been the return of the wading birds—the harbor herons.¹⁷

The Birds

North Brother derives much of its ecological value from its location along the Mid-Atlantic flyway, as well as its identity as a significant nesting habitat for wading birds (i.e. herons, egrets, and ibis) in the New York Harbor (Figure 10). North Brother Island is an important breeding habitat for one species of wading bird in particular, the Black-crowned Night-Heron, and is protected under state and federal laws.

Since the mid-1980s, New York City Audubon has led the Harbor Herons Nesting Survey, an annual survey of nesting activity on all islands in the harbor where wading birds and cormorants are known to breed.¹⁸ In 2003, New York City Audubon expanded their work with the Harbor Herons and began conducting a related citizen science-

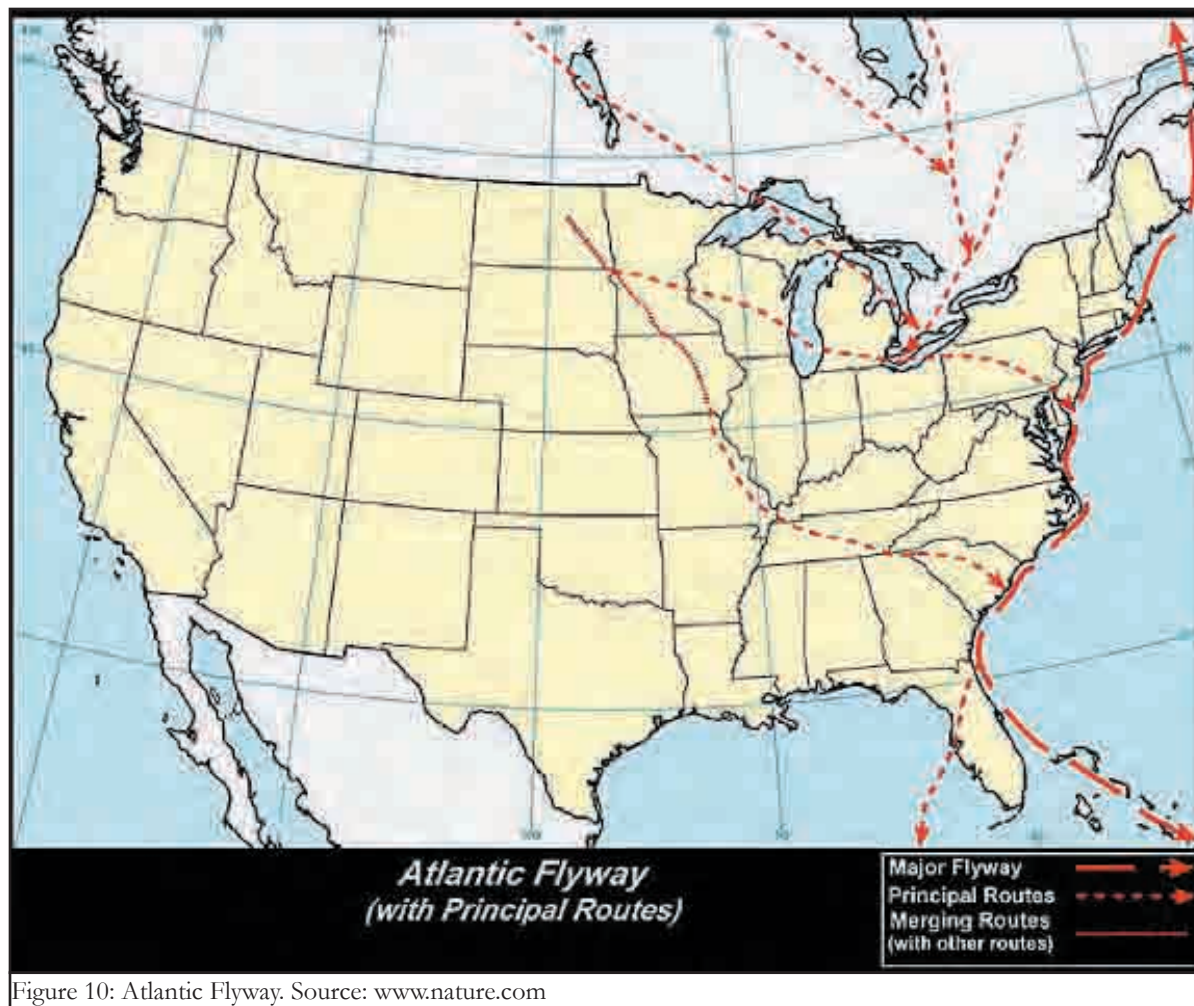


Figure 10: Atlantic Flyway. Source: www.nature.com

based study – the Harbor Herons Monitoring Program – to investigate the movement patterns of these wading birds from their nesting sites to the foraging areas.

Wading birds were first discovered breeding on South Brother Island in 1978,¹⁹ and Black-crowned Night Herons were subsequently found breeding on North Brother Island in 1989.²⁰ South Brother Island supports a diversity of waterbirds, including several species of wading birds, cormorants, and gulls.



Figure 11: Adult Black-crowned Night Heron
Source: Andrew Bernick

The reasons why Black-crowned Night Herons populated North Brother Island are not well understood; however, as is the case with South Brother, the island is an abandoned and spacious site, without predators or human disturbance. As well as nesting areas, herons require foraging habitats, which typically include wetlands, including salt, brackish, and freshwater marshes, swamps, streams, lakes, and agricultural fields.

Black-crowned Night Herons (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) are stocky, medium sized, long-legged wading birds.²¹ Adults have short necks, thick black bills, red eyes, black crowns and backs, white underparts, and gray wings (Figure 11). Younger birds are similar in shape, but have streaked brown plumage overall (Figure 12). As nocturnal feeders (hunting from dusk until early morning), they are not commonly encountered by humans.



Figure 12: Young Black-crowned Night Herons in nest
Source: Andrew Bernick

The majority of Black-crowned Night Herons found on North Brother Island likely forage in the New Jersey Meadowlands, just to the southwest of the island.²² When disturbed, the Black-crowned Night-Herons characteristically disgorge their stomach, allowing ornithologists to study their diet through bolus composition. Regurgitation data have shown that Black-crowned Night Herons feed on a variety of aquatic invertebrates, fish, amphibians, and rodents. As the birds fly through the night, one can hear their low and harsh call that sounds like “woe, quock, or quark.”²³

The permanence of wading bird colonies varies; some colonies remain stable for decades, others are formed and abandoned within a few years. This makes it difficult to predetermine their annual return to any one given breeding site. The 2005 monitoring

report indicated that the bird’s presence on North Brother Island has decreased 15% from the 2004 breeding season, part of a longer decline over the past decade. In 2005, however, a new colony was formed on Mill Rock, only a few miles east of North Brother. It is possible that these birds previously nested on North Brother, accounting for the aforementioned decline.²⁴

The herons currently inhabit the southwestern region of North Brother Island during the breeding season, from late March to early August, with the peak of reproduction in the months of May through July. New York City Audubon’s current stated position is that no humans be permitted on the island during the breeding period.²⁵

By the summer of 2004, over 3,400 birds were reported on islands scattered throughout the New York Harbor.²⁶ Indeed, it is the return of the harbor herons in the New York Harbor and the presence of the Black-crowned Night Herons that have brought renewed attention to the Brother Islands. Closely linked, North and South Brother Islands must be considered as a single, integrated habitat for these birds, which are both reflection and harbinger of the re-emergence of a healthy harbor wide ecosystem (Figure 13).



Figure 13: Locations of bird sanctuaries in the harbor
Source: *New York Times*, 2003

North Brother Island’s ecological value is multi-faceted and is the result of a dynamic relationship between the island’s history and its environment. The island, the harbor, and the herons are parts of a single eco-system that is constantly evolving. The island’s significance lies in these interconnections, and thus no part of its ecology can be understood in isolation (Figure 14).

The historic value of North Brother Island lies not only in its past uses, but also in its present identity as a cultural landscape. The island reflects major changes in social programming and institutional architectural styles from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries. The most significant period of the island's history dates to the time it was used as a quarantine facility in the late-nineteenth century, and the site derives much of its importance as a historic resource from this aspect of its past. As a quarantine site, North Brother Island documents a significant but often-neglected period in American history that was characterized by the suppression of the poor and the sick as part of experimental programming to control disease outbreak.

As contagious diseases threatened New York City during the late nineteenth century, the location of quarantine facilities on North Brother Island isolated infected persons from the city in order to protect the general population. Authorities saw building such a facility on an island as a necessary step in assuring that the new and seemingly uncontrollable diseases permeating the city were treated in a systematic fashion. The Riverside Hospital for contagious diseases was intended as a refuge for patients who would have otherwise been expelled from New York City by those fearing the diseases. However, many of those patients were members of the city's poor and immigrant communities, who

were forcibly detained on the island. Also an important part of the island's history are the doctors and nurses, who risked their lives to help the ill, despite uncertainties about how these diseases spread and should be treated. Health care workers lived alongside the sick, and many lost their lives from the contagious diseases as well.

By the twentieth century the need for quarantine facilities declined, and North Brother Island was forced to adjust along with changes taking place in the public health system. The adaptability of the island enabled its continued use through the middle of the twentieth century, until it finally closed in 1964, after a period of somewhat successful adaptive reuse of its buildings. Though North Brother Island was left to deteriorate, its significance has not waned. Now, the island's story is beginning to resurface as stakeholders become increasingly aware of the events that took place on the island only a short time ago. In order to fully comprehend the richly layered history of this site, it is helpful to consider the island's chronological development through its five major periods, detailed in the following pages.

Early Settlement 1675 - 1880

"As an institution, North Brother Island is unique. There is nothing like it anywhere in the world." -
Jacob Riis 1892

On a visit to North Brother Island in 1892, journalist Jacob Riis remarked on the impressive complex of buildings set against greenery; the harmony of its inhabitants provided in perfect isolation from the busy metropolis of late-19th century New York City. He also reflected on the emergence of a modern medical institution, one that marked a sharp departure from the infamous "pesthouses" of the former era. In revisiting the island through historical investigation, this marked evolution of hospital planning resurfaces through an examination of the site's built features, which were perhaps among the most important of their kind as per time and place.²

The early history of North Brother Island is not fully known. In 1675, it was granted to a James Graham, and in the early 1870s, the town of Morrisania purchased the land from Anna and Martha Ackerson. Although little is known about these sisters, it is likely they were the official proprietors of a temporarily hospital that is recorded as becoming the Westchester County Hospital in 1872. At the time, little defined the landscape of the island apart from a newly erected lighthouse of freshly painted white clapboard siding capped by mansard roof of which the tower could be seen in all directions (Figure 1).

Descriptions of the early hospital tell of a one-story frame structure on the northeast



Figure 1: Jacob Riis image of Lighthouse.
Source: *The Encyclopedia of New York City*.

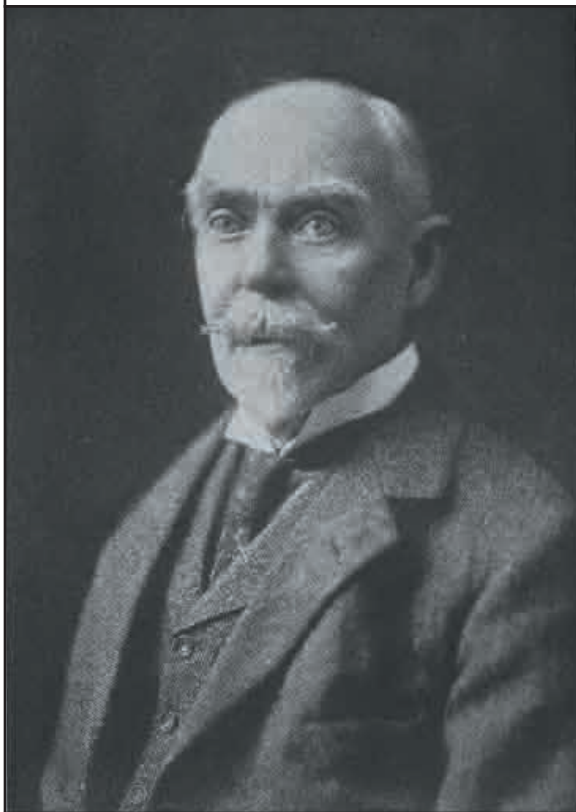


Figure 2: Charles Coolidge Haight, 1917.
Source: *Architectural Record*.

shore known as the “old pest house”- a vernacular term referencing pestilence or the fatal contagions of the buildings occupants. As the dissemination of germ theory was still in its infancy, there remained a disconnect between the ailments of the sick and the environment which sought to relieve them. The pesthouse, at best, was the result of an empirically based design, perhaps isolating the toilets to the exterior, while patients suffering from a variety of contagious diseases lay overcrowded in cots next to one another in an interior of limited ventilation and light. This hospital eventually found reuse as a measles pavilion when the island landscape saw a dramatic transformation in response to the advent of new medical theory.³

The Riverside Hospital 1881-1943

On August 3rd 1881, surveyor James E. Serrell and architect Charles Coolidge Haight (Figure 2) visited North Brother Island to begin implementation of the Department of Health’s new plan Hospital for Contagious Diseases. The *New York Times* documented the trip and described plans for a group of hospital structures, including pavilions for typhus diphtheria and other contagious diseases.⁴ A portion of these plans survive at the Avery Library at Columbia University, particularly those for the main hospital building (Figure 3), and the seawall that still encloses the island today. A Sanborn map from 1885 (Figure 4) shows a cohesive

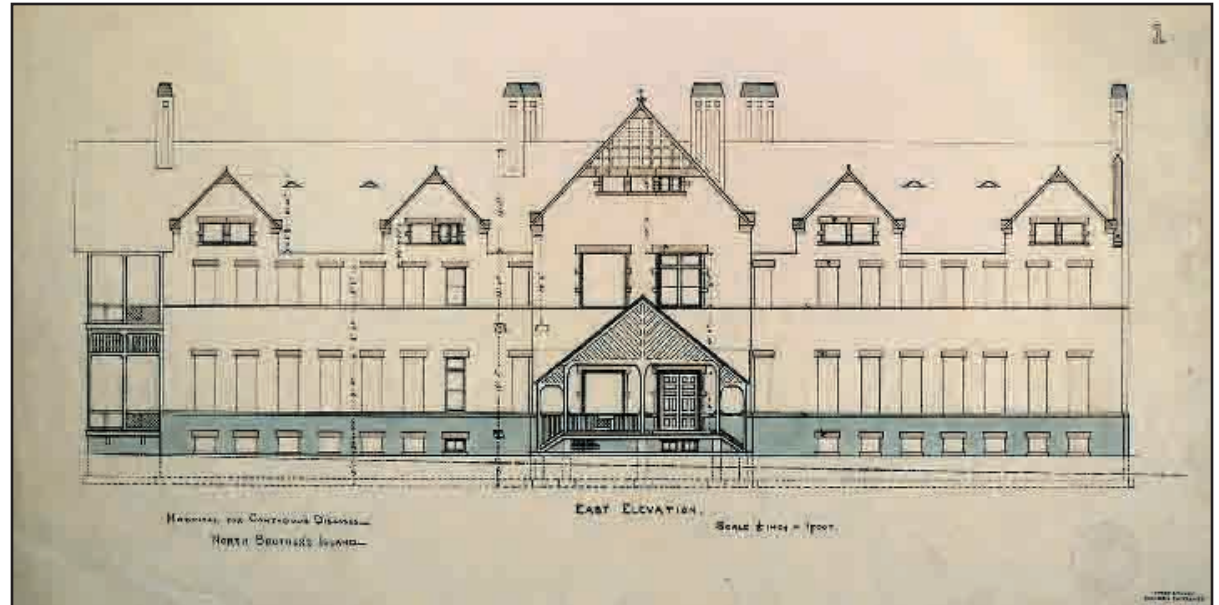


Figure 3: Riverside Hospital elevation drawing, 1881. Source: Columbia University Avery Library.

network of brick structures, with the main hospital lying at the northwest shore near a large dock and a series of wood frame pavilions radiating outward in a half circle from a central structure. Historic photographs and written accounts of visitation suggest the uniform character of the island during this period. Warm red brick with limestone details, steeply gabled roofs interrupted by copper dormers provided a pleasant vocabulary of forms and ample space for occupancy. Each of the buildings' designs and placement

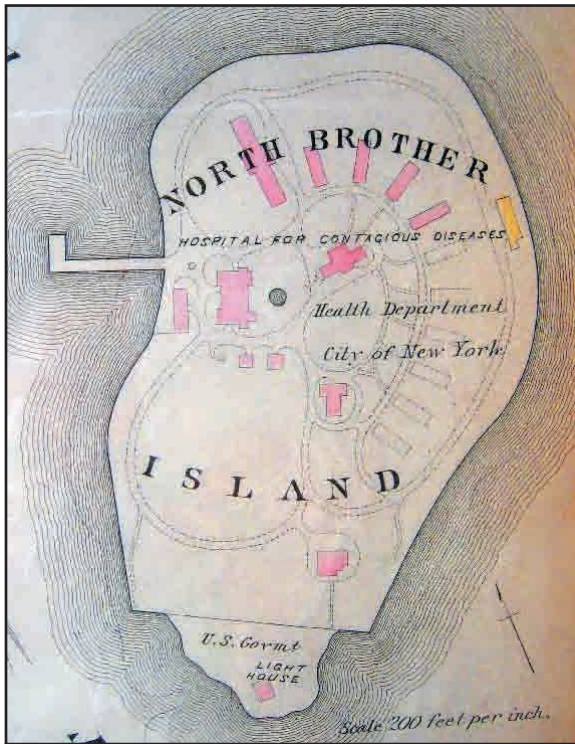


Figure 4: 1885 Robinson map.
Source: New York City Municipal Archives.



Figure 5: Boiler House, (Andrew Fearon, 2005)



Figure 6: Staff House, (Andrew Fearon, 2005)

followed the logic of the greater plan to deter the spread of various contagions. The long narrow one-story pavilions in wood were intended to isolate specific diseases while letting large volumes of light and air pass between them. In the pavilion-based plan, the individual radiating wards were essentially modular and could be constructed rapidly as needed in the occurrence of an epidemic. Haight's original plan called for ten of these pavilions, nine of which were constructed between 1882 and 1893.

Although the main hospital building was demolished sometime in the mid-20th century, several of the structures from the 1885 plan remain today in various conditions. The Boiler House (Figure 5), the administration building, later to become the staff house (Figure 6), are in advanced stages of disrepair. The original

kitchen, later to be called the Male Dormitory (Figure 7), served as the central hub from which the wood pavilions radiated outward has survived relatively intact. It remains the most important example of architecture on the island because of its centrality, not only in the Haight Plan, but also in subsequent configurations of the island. Additionally the Male Dormitory represents one of only two surviving examples of innovative designs for hospitals by the architect, Charles Coolidge Haight.⁵ His New York Cancer Hospital of 1884-1889 still sits at 106th and Central Park West, although it has undergone a recent renovation for use as luxury condominiums (Figure 8).

During a period of expanded urbanization and the influx of immigration towards the end of the 19th century, outbreaks of typhus

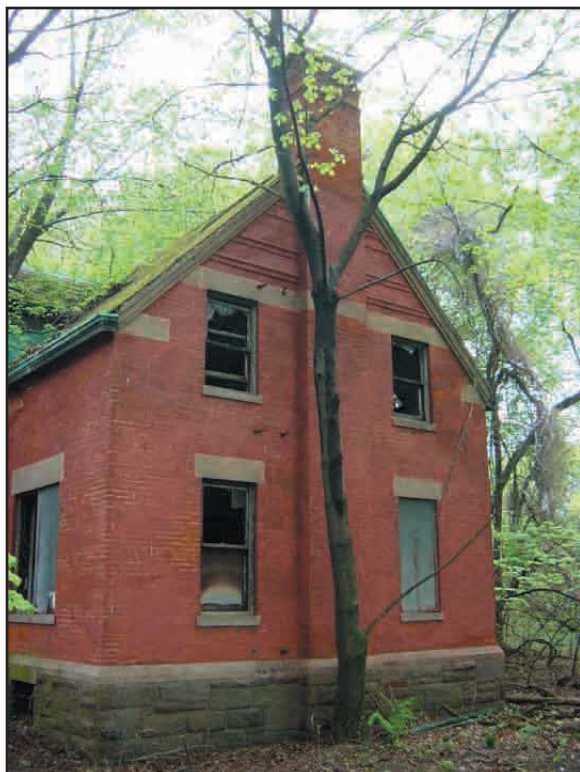


Figure 7: Male Dormitory, (Andrew Fearon, 2005)



Figure 8: New York Cancer Hospital, (A. Fearon, 2005)



Figure 9: General Slocum disaster.
Source: www.general-slocum.com.

and cholera led to the construction of new structures on the island. What began as additional wooden-frame pavilions quickly culminated into the introduction of a large brick three-story brick Tuberculosis Hospital to welcome the afflicted unfortunates of the new century. The landscape prior, between the period of 1892 and 1904, had changed little as seen in the many photographs of the General Slocum disaster (Figure 9).

The sinking of the steamship General Slocum in 1904 marked one of the most tragic events in New York history. More than one thousand German immigrants, mostly women and children, died in the waters off of North Brother while on a recreational outing from the Lower East-Side German neighborhood known as Kleinduetchland. As the captain of the ship, in a state of panic, directed the

burning ship full speed towards the shores of North Brother, nurses and patients of the Hospital for Contagious Diseases rescued over 250 of the survivors, utilizing the ladders from the island construction sites and catching small children as they were tossed from the inferno. Photographs of the 1021 lifeless bodies, mostly children still dressed in their Sunday best, strewn about the manicured grounds of the hospital, remain as indelible images of the dark episode of the island’s history.⁶

The arrival of the folk icon “Typhoid” Mary Mallon to the island in 1907 marked the second era of modern hospital planning, in this case, in continuity from the hovering pavilions in wood to vertical Beaux-Arts pavilions in cast concrete. This most dramatic of the island transformations began in 1909 with the construction of a concrete retaining wall off of the entire eastern shore and the infill of four new acres. Between 1913 and 1914, construction began on a series of concrete pavilions, two designed by Clinton, Russell and Charles F. Post and two by William E. Austin (Figure 10).

“Typhoid” Mary Mallon (Figure 11), North Brother Island’s most notorious patient, was found working at the Sloane Hospital as a cook and was sent back to North Brother Island in 1915 and remained there until her death on the island in 1938.⁷ Typhus was



Figure 10: 1949 aerial view of North Brother Island showing the predominance of buildings during the WWII Veteran's housing period. Source: "Learning by Experience: the Island Nursery School. Riverside Campus: North Brother Island, 1949."



Figure 11: Typhoid Mary Mallon (4th from right) among a group of "inmates" quarantined on North Brother Island. Source: New York Public Library

arguably the most feared infectious disease threatening the United States at this time, and the high-profile quarantine of Mallon was widely publicized to show the measures being taken by the federal and state governments to protect citizens from outbreak. The figure

of "Typhoid Mary" remains today a household name in infamy of the era of rampant contagions. Her demonized personality has been attributed to her unwillingness to accept her ailment and her resistance to be held against her will. Over a lifetime of imprisonment on the island, Mary Mallon worked as nurse, and after a stroke, spent the last six years of her life paralyzed and confined to a bed in the children's ward on North Brother.⁸

The island grew in buildings and inhabitants through the first part of the 20th century as a contagious diseases facility (Figure 12). In 1918, the federal government, in response to the needs of the War Department, took over North Brother Island for use as a treatment facility for soldiers suffering from infectious



Figure 12: Postcard view of the south end of North Brother Island circa late nineteenth century. Source: The Smithsonian

diseases. Soldiers were treated on the island and then sent to Willard Parker Hospital. At the end of World War I, ownership of the island was returned to New York City, which had been dictated in the original agreement between the state and federal governments.⁹

Improved social and economic conditions in New York City reduced the tuberculosis death rate by half from 1900 to 1920. By the 1920s, immigration into the New York Harbor was beginning to slow, and quarantine facilities on Hoffman and Swinburne Islands closed in 1921 in response to these changes.¹⁰ However, despite improvements in public health overall, many New York hospitals, including North Brother Island, were cited by the Public Health Committee for poor and unsanitary conditions in the 1920s.

At this time, Health Commissioner Harris classified Riverside Hospital on North Brother as “positively disgraceful” at a meeting of the New York Visiting Committee of the State Charities Aid Association, attributing conditions to “a system of afterthought rather than forethought.”¹¹ It was not uncommon to find open garbage heaps adjacent to the island’s hospital buildings and unhygienic food preparation practices. Harris also noted the problems associated with bringing the patients to the island via ferry, which meant they had to cross the river in open boats to reach the island, furthering the potential of spreading and aggravating their diseases.

Despite public criticism of the hospital, building improvements continued, and other buildings were added to the North Brother Island landscape including the Physician’s Home in 1936 (Figure 13). As a direct result of this public criticism, funds were appropriated for a new kitchen, morgue and service building on the island. In 1929, the four-story brick Service Building (Figure 14) was constructed by architect George M. McCabe at a cost of \$240,000.¹² A morgue (Figure 15) was also built in 1929 and located just south of the historic 1885 ferry dock on the western shore of the island.

In the mid 1930s, several Works Progress Administration (WPA) projects were carried out on the island. These projects included a



Figure 13: 1926 Physician’s Home.
Source: Molly McDonald, 2003.



Figure 14: West elevation of 1929 Service Building.
(Kelly Wong, 2005)

new two-story brick incinerator by Jacob Lustig that was built in 1936 (Figure 16) and alterations to the Nurse’s Home (Figure 17).¹³ A *New York Times* article at the time wrote that the “new rectangular disinfecter [is] to be furnished, delivered, and installed, including piping work incidental thereto, in the building adjacent to the Laundry at Riverside Hospital,

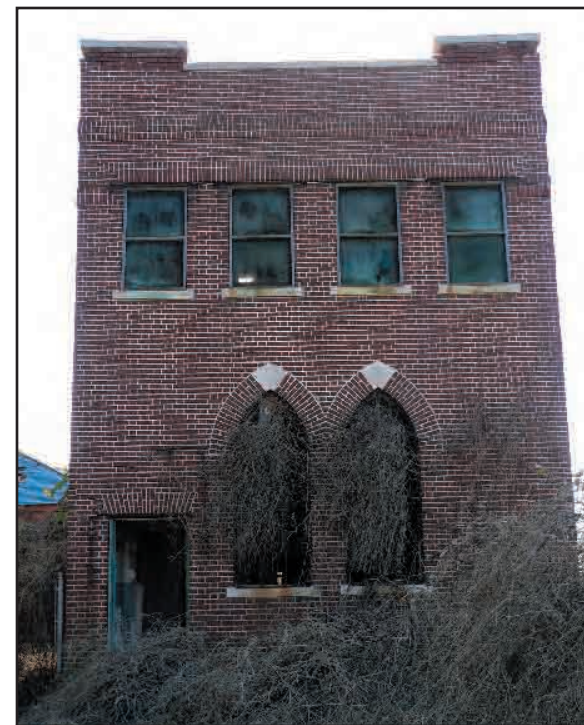


Figure 15: 1929 Morgue, North Elevation.
(Kelly Wong, 2005)



Figure 16: 1937 Incinerator (East Smokestack). Source:
The New York Public Library Local History Division.



Figure 17: Nurse's Home west elevation, alterations in 1937 by the WPA. Source: The New York Public Library Local History Division.



Figure 18: Shop and Storage Building. (Kelly Wong, 2005)

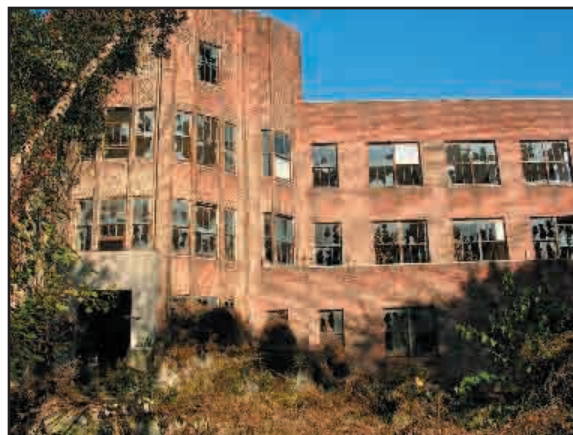


Figure 19: 1943 Tuberculosis Hospital. (Christy Lombardo, 2005)

new building campaigns. Architect W.E. Helm was commissioned to build a two-story Shop and Storage Building (Figure 18) at the cost of \$125,000, which was completed by 1940.¹⁵ In 1941, the cornerstone was laid for the island's most ambitious building; the four-story Tuberculosis Hospital by architect Electus D. Litchfield (Figure 19). By this time, the primary illness treated at Riverside Hospital was tuberculosis, and the new hospital was highly anticipated and cost over \$1.2 million. The building was designed at such a large scale that it dwarfed many of the pre-existing structures on the site. Despite the need for tuberculosis facilities, other contagious diseases were not as much of a concern to the city, as public attention was directed towards the war effort. Changes in the city's public health system also necessitated accessible facilities within the city, making

the isolated nature of North Brother Island disadvantageous. It was also difficult to make the island appealing to potential staff, who often commuted from the mainland by ferry so they would not have to live on the island. By the time the Tuberculosis Hospital was completed in 1943, the facility was no longer required and plans were already in place to put the island to use to meet more pressing needs.

WWII Veteran's Housing: The Riverside Campus 1946-1951

North Brother Island was mothballed from 1944 until 1946, when a proposal was made to reuse the island in response to a housing shortage for returning WWII veterans attending New York universities. Architects from the F.P. Platt & Brothers firm drafted plans for the project, known as the Riverside Campus, and included the adaptation of the existing buildings to fulfill the housing needs. A vibrant island community quickly emerged, composed of some 1,500 veterans and their families. Returning veterans attended Columbia, New York University, Fordham, Julliard, Union Theological, and Cornell Medical (Figure 20).

The state of New York leased the island from New York City for one-dollar per year and converted the island to facilities for temporary student veterans housing. The

North Brother Island, Bronx."¹⁴ This structure was used to burn the infected clothing and items used by patients, who were considered to be extremely contagious.

By the 1940s, North Brother Island was beginning its decline, despite the initiation of



Figure 20: 1949 view of WWII veteran students leaving North Brother Island via ferry. Note the wives and children of the veterans who stayed on the island while their husbands/fathers went to school each day. Source: “Learning by Experience: the Island Nursery School. Riverside Campus: North Brother Island, 1949.”

state spent \$1 million in improvements to the island, including \$10,000 toward repairs to the ferry slip. The city provided ferry service to the island every twenty minutes, easing the commute from home to school for the veterans. The newly finished Tuberculosis Hospital was used as male dorm facilities along with the Nurse’s Home, and the concrete buildings around the perimeter of site were reserved for families. The island had a cafeteria, movie and assembly hall, chapel,

grocery store, and library. The existing tennis courts were renovated and the old Male Dormitory was converted into a nursery school.¹⁶ The community that emerged found comfort in the slow pace of the island. The lack of vehicular traffic and the small scale of the island were much appreciated departures from the overcrowded and hectic city. However, the carefully designed landscape that had characterized the Riverside Hospital period was slowly disappearing at this time as the need for increased facilities changed the island’s bucolic character. As aerial views from this period show, buildings came to dominate the island, and little tree canopy remained (see Figure 10).¹⁷

Drug Rehabilitation Center: Riverside Hospital for Juvenile Drug Addicts 1952-1964

Following the closure of Riverside Campus in 1951, the Riverside Hospital for Juvenile Drug Addicts was established on North Brother Island in 1952. A *New York Times* article from 1951 noted that, “the use of narcotics by teenagers is alarming and widespread.” The hospital was specifically designed to treat “youthful narcotics addicts” and utilized the school and recreation facilities that had been adapted for the Riverside Campus. Once brought to the island, patients were examined by a doctor and placed in the



Figure 21: Patients at the Juvenile Drug Rehabilitation Center on North Brother Island. Source: New York City Municipal Archives

withdrawal ward, where they were gradually weaned off of drugs through the aid of medication. The patient was then brought to the diagnostic clinic where a team of physicians decided if the patient could go home or needed to stay on the island. Patients who remained on the island for a period of time participated in recreational programs, a half-day of school, and a half-day of work as part of rehabilitation, the goal of which was to reintroduce the patient back into the New York City community (Figure 21).¹⁸

The Tuberculosis Hospital was renovated to house 152 patients, the Male Dormitory was converted into a Rehabilitation Center, the Service Building became a school, P.S. 619, and the chapel was revived as a non-denominational institution. Although improvements greatly benefited the four selected buildings, the remaining structures on the island were left to decay, and the grounds slipped into disarray.¹⁹

The rehabilitation system was designed for intervening with patients who were adolescents, who entered the island voluntarily, and were presumed to be not as far advanced in their drug addictions as adults. However, in reality, many of the patients sent to North Brother were notably older, which surely strained the system designed to treat youths. The seemingly ideal isolation of the island did not stop drugs from being brought to the island by corrupt security officers and others. Racial prejudices aggravated already existing tensions between patients, and eventually the facility was forced to close in 1964 after serious public criticism over its inadequacies.²⁰

Post-Human Habitation 1964 to 2005

In 1970, New York City put North Brother Island up for sale, but despite several proposals including re-use of the island as a prison, never found the right buyer to develop

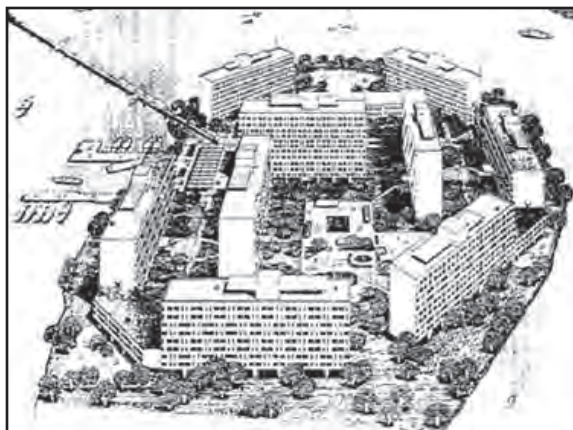


Figure 22: 1984 proposal for Correctional Facility on North Brother Island. Source: "Proposal for Metro State Correctional Facility." Prepared for State Senator Israel Ruiz, Jr., West Bronx Local Development Corporation, 1984.

the site (Figure 22). Occasional newspaper articles highlighted the uniqueness of North Brother Island as a forgotten resource in the New York Harbor, but no realistic proposals were made for its re-use, and the island was left to decline without intervention. The only structure routinely maintained over the past forty years has been the United States Coast Guard lighthouse, built in the 1940s. The Coast Guard owns the southern end of the North Brother Island, including 1940s lighthouse structure, but do not own or maintain any of the other 26 structures that remain on the island.²¹

Since the abandonment of the island in 1964, the island's natural resources have taken over and enveloped abandoned buildings. Today the site's conglomeration of built structures and pathways are very much a complete departure from the original 1885 plan, showing evidence of the island's long and ever-changing development. Fragments of the various building campaigns are partially extant, including the massive Tuberculosis Hospital. However, many of the structures are structurally unsound and difficult to access because of overgrowth and obstructions to the site.

In recent years, the island has been colonized by Black-crowned night herons, who use the site for nesting (Figure 23). New York City Audubon and the New York City Department of Environmental Conservation began nesting surveys on the island in 1987 as part of a broader campaign investigating bird activity in the New York Harbor. The New York City Department of Parks and Recreation acquired the site in 2001 and is now considering how to re-use and interpret the island as part of its programming and as a resource to the local community. Current efforts by the Parks Department include initiatives to maintain the current bird population through the introduction of various plant species in order to create more nesting habitat areas.

The aesthetic value of the island was not determined by research, but rather experienced during site visits to the island, and is therefore much easier to describe with pictures rather than words. The island was not initially considered to be aesthetically valuable; the studio goals were originally very much focused on the ecological and historical values of the island. However, as a group we could not disregard the strong emotions that the character and beauty of the island evoked in us after our first site visit.

The aesthetic experience of the island is a series of contrasts beginning with the journey to the island. The island is only accessible by boat and the trip involves a progression from the dense urban fabric of New York City to a power boat ride across the river to paddling a canoe underneath the massive portal of the historic ferry dock to arriving at an unexpected and isolated island sanctuary (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Progression from NYC to North Brother Island (Adam/Thorp/Wong 2005)

The present aesthetic value of the island is significant in several ways, and derives from a complete sensory experience ranging from sight to sound to touch.

First, a boat ride on the East River is a unique experience in itself as a very different way of experiencing New York City. The views from the river are quite different than those from within the dense fabric of Manhattan. They include several industrial sites, some of which are abandoned, Riker's Island, the site of New York City's largest jail, and LaGuardia Airport (Figure 2). All of these images are set against the backdrop of the distinct and impressive skyline of Manhattan, reminding the viewer that he or she is, in fact, still in New York City (Figure 3). From the river, North Brother Island appears wild and overgrown, and the once impressive portal of the coal dock is still a looming presence, though now because of its state of dilapidation.



Figure 2: Rikers Island with jet overhead landing at LaGuardia Airport (Gretchen Hilyard, 2005)



Figure 3: North Brother Island with Manhattan skyline in background (Hillary Adam, 2005)

The involved nature of the approach to the island by power boat and then canoe results in a high amount of anticipation and adventure before even setting foot on the island itself. Once there, the visitor is immediately confronted with an apparently impassible tangle of dense vegetation on the

ground which covers not only the pathways, but has crawled over much of the ruinous buildings as well (Figure 4). The waist-high kudzu and poison ivy form a contrast with the remnants of past horticultural plantings, and the tangle of vines eventually yields to half-hidden circuitous pathways, lampposts, fire hydrants, benches, seawalls and other site features alluding to the once carefully designed, but now abandoned, landscape. Eventually, the visitor emerges into a scene of decaying buildings set amid stands of trees. This ruinous landscape is quite powerful and evokes a sense of the ‘institutional sublime’ (Figure 5).

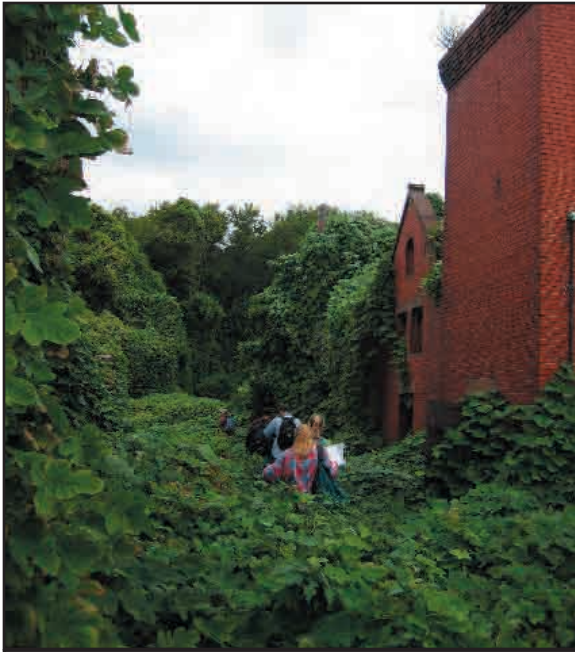


Figure 4: Studio members wading through kudzu (Kelly Wong, 2005)

Another contrast present on the island is that between the former human presence as evidenced by the decaying built environment and the current presence of the Black-crowned Night Heron. The southern part of the island is currently blanketed in low-canopy trees and brush, in which heron nests are scattered (Figure 6). The peaceful sounds of birds and other types of wildlife are interrupted by the roar of jets overhead landing or taking off from nearby LaGuardia Airport.

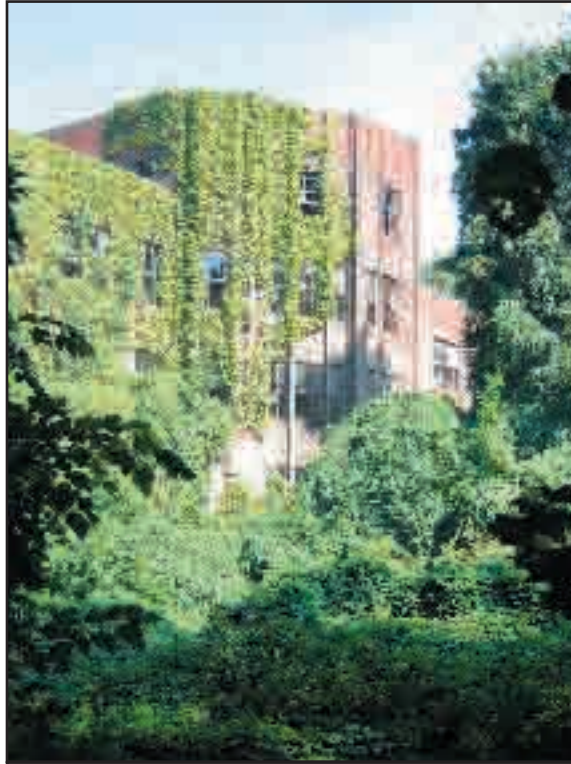


Figure 5: Vines cling to the Tuberculosis Pavilion, (Hillary Adam, 2005)



Figure 7: Heron Nest (Christy Lombardo, 2005)

All of these contrasts paint a stunning picture of an incredible place. Part of North Brother Island’s aesthetic value lies in its rarity as a park-like commodity in a dense urban environment. Like the ecological value of the island, however, the aesthetic value is fragile, and continues to evolve and change. In just the three-month duration of the studio project, the beautiful stands of Norway maple trees carpeted with English ivy were replaced with a field of tree stumps as the trees were cleared in a heron habitation management

effort (Figure 8). This amazing forest where studio members rested and picnicked in September, was transformed by November into a forest of tree stumps, and by the Spring of 2006 could possibly be transformed again and covered with more invasive kudzu. This action also affected the historical value of the island, as studio members had a much more difficult time identifying and documenting historic elements of the landscape. This example illustrates the delicate nature of aesthetic value, and also that any decisions made concerning the island can affect many values simultaneously.

In summary, the aesthetic value of North Brother Island lies in its contrast and rarity as an island sanctuary in the midst of New York City. The ruins of formerly beautiful buildings which used to serve the purpose of quarantine and drug rehabilitation hospitals stir strong emotions. The current ‘natural’ setting that has become a habitat for the Black-Crowned Night Heron is a contrast to the formerly dense and still visible built environment. In short, a visit to the island is a powerful sensory experience, and the process of change is both a source and a manifestation of the island’s beauty.



Figure 7: A striking forest of Norway maples and English ivy (September 2005) was cleared as part of habitat management (November 2005) (Lombardo/Thorp, 2005)

During our investigation of North Brother Island, we viewed the site's social value as lying in its potential to benefit the surrounding community. The island could provide educational and recreational opportunities, public green space that would support the community's struggle for environmental justice, and as well as a possible source of economic development.

Education

North Brother Island has the potential to offer a wealth of educational opportunities regarding its ecological significance and its cultural history. Ecologically important for a number of reasons, the island is part of New York Harbor as well as the greater New York/New Jersey Estuary system. North Brother Island is part of the Atlantic migratory bird flyway zone and is the home to a significant population of nesting Herons. Additionally, the Island has the potential to become a valuable green space within the city of New York and, with careful ecological restoration, can become a flourishing space for native plant life.

Future environmental tours, managed by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation and the New York City Audubon Society, could be an important way of communicating the Island's ecological importance, both as it stands alone and as



Figure 1: North Brother Island provides opportunity for environmental stewardship programs.

Source: www.thepoint.org

part of a larger system. The opportunity to teach the public about the island's ecological significance, native plant species, and the herons, is a critical component of the island's overall value, and particularly its potential social value (Figure 1). Additionally, continued ecological research by Audubon and other researchers about the herons and other bird populations—including their nesting patterns, habitat, and migration—offers yet another layer of social value.

North Brother Island has much to offer in terms of historical education as well. As detailed more fully in the historical values report, North Brother Island—reflecting larger trends nationwide—has witnessed a long history of institutionalization and social isolation, including eras of quarantine,

hospitalization, and drug rehabilitation. Additionally, the island has been utilized for veteran's housing, mirroring yet another era in America's history. As part of New York City's story, North Brother was witness to the General Slocum disaster, the greatest loss of life in New York before September 11, 2001. Additionally, the notorious figure Typhoid Mary was quarantined on the island for many years and ultimately died there. Architecturally, the island offers a wealth of resources that again, reflect larger nationwide trends in hospital design and medical and communicable disease theory.

Educational programming geared toward interpreting this history would be incredibly valuable for communicating the history of North Brother Island, New York City, and larger aspects of U.S. history such as immigration and quarantine. Within this

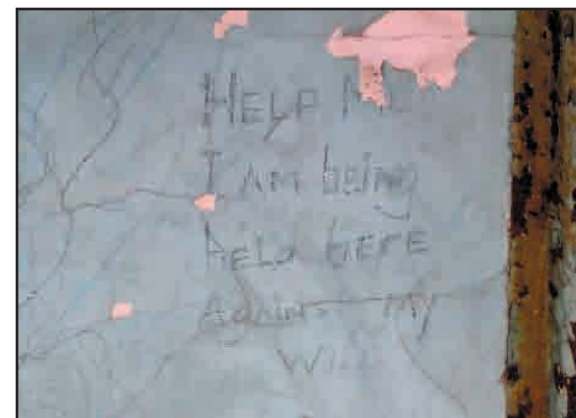


Figure 2: Emotional graffiti found in Tuberculosis Pavilion. (Sarah Shotwell, 2005)

topic also lies the field of “negative memory” (Figure 2). Prisons, hospitals, and other sites of tragedy or injustice, are today being interpreted as sites of negative memory for the public—to educate, to teach, and to demonstrate the less than positive aspects of the nation’s history. New York City Department of Parks and Recreation could take the lead in providing interpretive tours to private groups and school groups.

Education is a critical area of North Brother Island’s potential value. The Island’s ecological and historical significance should be communicated to the public through interpretive and guided tours, led by qualified Parks, Audubon, and other docent staff. Educational opportunities to teach about the birds, the island’s ecology, and its social history are vital components of the Island’s overall social value. The island is an important and rich resource for teaching about these issues, which should be utilized to the fullest extent possible without coming into conflict with the other values of the island (Figure 3).

Environmental Justice

North Brother Island is part of the Bronx, a borough of New York City, characterized by lower income levels and high levels of industry, as well as great community pride. The Hunt’s Point community, which lies closest to the island, has the greatest potential



Figure 3: Interpretive panels, like those on Pea Patch Island, Delaware, can inform visitors of the island’s ecological and historical significance. (Hillary Adam, 2005)

benefit from preserving the island as a greenspace. The industrial character of the Bronx and the East River has produced a rate of childhood asthma twelve times greater than the national average in Hunt’s Point.¹ As is often the case with lower-income communities, well-maintained public spaces

are an afterthought to safety concerns and mere survival. However, over the last few years, the economics of Hunt’s Point and the South Bronx have been slowly improving. Nonprofit organizations such as The Point Community Development Corporation and Sustainable South Bronx

have taken a leadership role in building awareness and stewardship of the community and the environment of the Bronx. These two organizations have developed youth-oriented educational programs that teach neighborhood children the value of a quality living environment, as well as exposing them to outdoor activities. The Bronx River Alliance has also been engaged in restoring the water quality and access to the Bronx River by creating and implementing a Bronx River Greenway plan.

North Brother Island has the potential for serving as an additional greenspace for the Bronx if access to the site is allowed on a limited basis. The island also has the potential for serving as the location of additional environmental stewardship programs, administered by The Point CDC and Sustainable South Bronx. Even if access was not allowed, preserving the island as greenspace, rather than allowing it to be developed for other purposes would serve to at least maintain, if not improve, air quality in the vicinity.

Recreation

There are a variety of potential recreational activities that could occur at North Brother Island, including bird watching, walking, picnicking, kayaking, and canoeing. The strongest impetus to provide recreational



Figure 3: Plan for Bronx River Greenway
Source: www.bronxriver.org

activities on this particular island is the development of green areas in surrounding neighborhoods, including the Bronx River Greenway (Figure 3) and the South Bronx Waterfront Project. Creating public green spaces for recreational activities is encouraged to improve the physical and public health of local communities.

There has been a marked increase in the numbers of people participating in these particular recreational activities. Bird watching is the fastest growing recreational activity in the United States; it is an estimated 50 billion dollar industry.² Kayaking and canoeing organizations have become increasingly popular throughout New York City in recent years. This is due to both an increased interest in the waterways and the waterfront and additional opportunities to access the waterfront from new boat launches throughout the City. Potentially, North Brother Island could be linked to the South Bronx Waterfront through off-site interpretation panels or as a destination point for local kayak and canoe clubs during the non-nesting season.

Economic Development

One of the components of North Brother Island's potential social value is as a spur for economic development. This value is derived from the island's income-generating potential as a recreational site and as a possible tourist destination. Tourism and recreation both generate billions of dollars every year, a small portion of which North Brother could harness. It is also important to consider the fact that the island is located within the New York City limits, where land is valued at a premium. North Brother's location in the East River with its stunning views of Manhattan

could demand very high prices from a developer looking to build a hotel, rental properties, or condominiums.

Although it may not be immediately apparent, one of North Brother Island's most prominent residents has the potential to generate significant recreational dollars. The herons and other wading birds that nest on the island would be very attractive to bird watchers. However, bird watching is not the only recreational activity that has proven to be lucrative. *'From rock climbing to biking to backpacking, the outdoor recreation industry – worth at least \$132 billion annually to the U.S. economy – is growing by leaps and bounds. The biggest and most noticeable effect has been on public lands: Visits to parks and other spaces increased by well over 100 million in the last decade...'*³

The ferry service that would need to be used to get to North Brother would most likely have a fee associated with it, and concessions sold at the mainland dock or on the island itself could bring in funds as well. If the island were connected to the other islands in New York Harbor, there is the possibility for ticket sales for ferry tours that include all of the islands. As has been mentioned several times before, North Brother also has great potential as a landing site for canoeing and kayaking excursions, which also adds to the economic potential of the island. Finally, an aspect of economic value that

cannot be ignored is that of the land itself. Should the Parks Department choose to sell the island to a developer, the island has the potential to demand a high price due to its location within New York City. This option is not one that need be extensively researched at this time, since development is out of the question as long as protected herons still nest on North Brother.

There is no doubt that North Brother Island has some economic value, but it is important to consider the impact that some of these activities would have on the island. Real estate development would be an incredibly high impact activity, and so it is not likely to occur at this time. Recreational activities such as bird watching, hiking/walking trails, or historical and ecological tours would require an extensive trail system that would allow visitors entry to most parts of the island (excluding the nesting sites). These medium impact activities could be goals for the future to be phased in gradually over time, and carefully regulated to accommodate restrictions surrounding the herons. Canoeing, kayaking, and ferry tours, which do not incorporate access to the island, have the least impact on the island, while still providing potential to generate revenue.

Conclusion

North Brother Island has the potential to serve as a powerful community resource. The island's rich history and current use as a nesting area provide a wealth of educational opportunities. Using the island to educate the community about these resources will serve to protect the legacy of the island as awareness and personal stewardship increases. Preserving the island as a greenspace will benefit the public health of the local community as well as provide the potential for recreation opportunities. Many of these opportunities can generate revenue for New York City Department of Parks and Recreation and related organizations and businesses through donations and other spending on heritage and eco-tourism.

The Statement of Significance for North Brother Island outlined four areas of significance, which can be seen as interrelated and at times conflicting. For example, the ecological value of the island cannot be completely preserved if there is public access to the island, but in order to interpret the historical and aesthetic values and appreciate the social value of the island, public access in some form is essential. In order to visualize and explore the values in the Statement of Significance, scenario planning was completed. Scenario planning is an exercise used to explore possible alternative futures for a particular site.

We identified the management of the ecology and the issue of public access as the two main critical factors that would alter the future of the island. Additional factors are significant as well, such as economic development and funding, and these are considered in the stories that we developed. These scenarios were projected twenty years from now, 2005, in order to analyze the long-term impact these decisions have on the future of NBI. A matrix was developed, placing ecological management on one axis, and public access on the other axis. This created four quadrants, in which to play out four different scenarios (Figure 1).

Building these scenarios helped to reinforce the conclusion that having a carefully



Figure 1: Scenario Matrix (Friedman/Silva, 2005)

managed ecology is extremely important to maintaining the ecological value of the island. The two scenarios at the bottom of the matrix involving an unmanaged (or little maintained) ecology did not meet the established values. The scenario on the lower left, ‘Trump Brother Island’ (unmanaged ecology with no public access), was perhaps the most negative scenario with respect to the values and significance that we had identified for NBI. Here, the island loses its value as both a heron habitat and heritage site, causing New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYCDPR) to sell the island to a private developer. In the scenario on the lower right, ‘Park for the People’ (unmanaged ecology with public access), the island becomes a

public park with regular ferry service and guided tours of the ruinous buildings, offering interpretation of the cultural heritage and providing a beautiful green space for New York City; however due to the free access, the herons leave the island completely. In the scenario ‘Jurassic Park’ (managed ecology with no public access), the island is a paradise for migratory birds and becomes an ecological oasis in the midst of New York. The lack of public access, however, and, therefore awareness, leads to problems securing funding for the island’s programs. The last scenario, ‘Herons and Humans’ (managed ecology with public access) attempts to balance the needs of the birds with public access; resulting in an island that is available to both.

The scenarios are each discussed in further detail in the following pages.

**Trump Brother Island
Unmanaged Ecology With No Public Access**

In 2025, North Brother Island is no longer a heron habitat or heritage site, as the lack of management and maintenance planning, combined with the lack of public access, has led to a decrease in the island's value. The absence of an ecological maintenance plan has resulted in kudzu taking over the island and choking any sort of agreeable habitat for the herons. In addition, because of the lack of security, the island has become an underground destination for adventurous New Yorkers. Without any Parks presence on the island or regulatory policies in effect, unauthorized visitors have disturbed the heron habitat.

Due to the absence of a management plan, the island continued to experience unmitigated degradation. The remaining buildings, some with historical and architectural significance, are now in ruins, mere piles of rubble. Lost along with the architectural heritage is any possibility for historical educational opportunities on site. In addition to the loss of physical fabric, the island has been taken over by kudzu and invasive species. Limited and short-term ecological restoration practices undertaken by Parks (such as the removal of the Norway maples) without the parameters and benefits of a thoughtful long-term management plan,

have back-fired and resulted in a complete lack of biodiversity on the island. Although the herons have shown evidence of nesting in the kudzu, it has overgrown the rest of the tree and plant species that are favorable to the birds. The loss of the buildings has removed an additional nesting habitat for the birds, as there was evidence they were using the ruined buildings for nesting as well.

Due to these processes, the herons have left the island. As a result, the value of the island as a bird preserve has vanished, associated funding for ecological restoration and bird habitation has been eliminated, and the City has been forced to sell the island to a private developer. In addition, the erosion of land mass, caused from breaches in the seawall continued unchecked. This loss of land was another contributing factor in the disruption of the heron habitat and the loss of the buildings. NYCDPR, as a result, decided to sell the land, as the steady erosion would make it less desirable for private interests as time passed. The developer has since leveled the remaining historic buildings, and any evidence of the island's physical heritage has now been lost. The island is now developed; condominium complexes provide exclusive housing for the privileged who enjoy its location in the East River and spectacular views of Manhattan. Because no physical reminders of the island's past remain, the lack of managed planning for North Brother

has also resulted in a loss of its history. Even the residents of the island are unaware of its ecological and architectural heritage.

Essentially, not having a management plan and keeping the island completely inaccessible to the public has ultimately resulted in a severe narrowing of opportunities and options for the island's use. By 2025, we have lost the buildings, the herons, the ecological benefits of the island in of itself, funding, opportunities for ecological and historical education and research, and the possibility of a public green space. The absence of managed policies has also created tension and discord between the earlier stakeholders, such as Audubon, the local communities, and Parks. The longer the island goes without a management plan, including a plan for limited public access, the narrower the island's future becomes. As the island's value declines, so will stakeholder interest, until there is no use for the island except as exclusive real estate with a great view of the Manhattan skyline.

Park for the People

Unmanaged Ecology with Public Access

North Brother Island, purchased by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation as a natural resource, now offers the citizens of New York an island recreation destination. While initial funding from ecological resource groups such as NYC Audubon afforded habitat restoration pilot programs, the island's environment took a monumental shift in 2009. It was at this time that Bronx Borough representatives and other local community groups championed the cause of accessible public green space for its residents. With the number of cases of child asthma reaching new heights and new-found public awareness regarding the detrimental effects of poor air quality plaguing this industrialized borough, a monumental Green Bronx campaign was waged. Green Bronx became a major issue in the 2009 Borough President Election resulting in the selection of Rosa Vazquez, (a Green Bronx pioneering member). With new political power and public support both public and private sponsors provided the vehicle for change. NYCDPR was granted the funds needed to transform North Brother Island into a much needed public green space for the Bronx and New York City residents.

Efforts were made by NYCDPR to try to mitigate the effects of public access on the valuable ecological resources, but insufficient funding prohibited the implementation of any kind of comprehensive ecological management plan. Heron-nesting habitats were fenced off in attempts to protect them and previous habitat restorations were smothered by invasive species. New funding sources stipulated that monies be spent for site stabilization, safety improvements, a comfort station, park facilities and a new dock. Site stabilization efforts included both built structures and landscape. Most of the building interventions resulted in stabilized ruins with select building re-use for restrooms, maintenance and administration facilities, and concessions. The landscape intervention reinstated paths, secured/rebuilt the seawall, as well as filled dangerous sinkholes. With the completion of a new ferry dock, North Brother Island Historic Park was opened to the public in the spring of 2015.

Ten years later, North Brother Island is now a unique recreation destination. Visitors arrive to the island by watercraft. Ferries run regularly between several different New York harbor points. NYCDPR provides ferries from both the Bronx and Queens and cooperative service is also provided by water taxis from points in Manhattan. With improved water quality New York City is now home to an increasing number of canoe and

kayak clubs. The southeast shore, former site of the wood dock, is now the launch area for hand-powered water craft.

Once on the island, visitors are free to roam under a shady tree canopy along historic paths. Visitors are welcome to partake in guided tours of the historic ruins by NYCDPR interpreters or they may opt for a self-guided exploration of the site using an island map and didactic panels. If history is not of interest, visitors may decide to enjoy a simple leisurely stroll experiencing the beauty of lush green vines mingling with remnants of times past followed by an afternoon picnic in a meadow of ivy. In addition, NYCDPR is host to numerous school groups with field trips to the island that are both educational and recreational.

The success of the North Brother Island Historic Park is evident in its high public visitation. This increase in visitor volume is thought to have contributed to the 2019 crash of NBI's heron colony. Despite efforts to protect the nesting area with a series of enclosures, public access to the island during the breeding season proved to be too disruptive for the birds. While the herons have abandoned North Brother, it still remains a vibrant stopover for migrating species. NYC Audubon has seasonal bird watching expeditions to the Island for experienced as well as novice birders.

In summary, North Brother Island is an urban oasis providing green space for the local communities, a destination of urban adventurers, as well as an educational resource for all who come to visit.

Jurassic Park Managed Ecology With No Public Access

In the year 2025, North Brother Island has become a unique wildlife refuge in the center of densely populated New York City. Access to the island is limited to park staff and ecological researchers, and during the heron nesting season, access is confined even further to only those visits necessary for the maintenance of the ecological landscape. A new small dock has been built next to the old coal dock for access by park employees. The island is monitored by harbor police to prevent unauthorized access, and a publicity campaign has educated the public on the need for people to stay away from the island in order to maintain the habitat for the many different types of birds that nest there.

In order to educate the public about the interesting wildlife species present on the island, virtual access to the island is available through an elaborate website that describes the different species of wildlife. It uses live web cameras on the island as well as video and still photography taken by renowned wildlife

researchers and photographers to allow the public to see that even in urban areas, pockets of natural landscape can exist. However, the buildings are now piles of rubble and, except for previous documentation, there is no existing evidence of their place in the island's history. The website also contains a detailed account of the island's nineteenth and twentieth century history as a hospital and housing facility. In addition to the interactive website, all of the interpretive information is displayed at the Museum of the City of New York.

The island has had limited funding available for management and improvement by its owner, the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation; however, many ecological research and advocacy groups have been interested in the island for the last twenty-five years. Therefore extensive research and interpretation funding has been acquired by grants or personal gifts from environmental supporters, and the island has been well-managed by qualified professionals. The landscape has been carefully planned and maintained. Initially, Parks personnel carried out haphazard cutting of trees and removal of invasive species due to limited funding sources, but by 2007 a long-term management and restoration plan was in place with funding promised from several organizations such as the Audubon Society.

The landscape has been restored by first doing a careful inventory of plant species existing in 2005. When this was completed in 2006, there were only a few isolated mature native trees still living on the island—a small grove of sugar maples on the east side. A large planting campaign of 2,000 trees was undertaken in 2005, but because of limited care most had died by the time the inventory was completed in 2006. The Sugar maples and trees left from the 2005 campaign were saved and the rest of the island was slowly rid of invasive species and planted in meadow by 2016. Each year more trees were planted as funding allowed and extensive weeding was done to maintain the meadows and allow the new trees to grow. In 2025, approximately half of the island is young forest while the other half is healthy meadow. The shoreline of the island was softened by grading and breaking up the concrete sea wall in several places, and native grasses and shrubs were planted there to help prevent erosion.

The primary disadvantage of this scenario is that the prohibition of public access has led to the buildings severely decaying—resulting in loss of historical fabric and the cultural heritage value of the island. The birds and the ecology have taken precedence at the expense of the built environment. The vigilant ecological management of the island had resulted a habitat for birds and species that had been long gone from New York.

Today the island is a beautiful and balanced ecological system that is a model for other harbor islands. This model is also being applied to limited areas of inland city parks in order to promote increased nesting and wildlife habitat.

**Hérons and Humans
Managed Ecology With Public Access**

In the year 2025, North Brother Island has become a site for significant ecological research, a known heron habitat, and a site for educational and interpretive tours. Managed by New York City Department of Parks and Recreation and the New York City Audubon Society, North Brother Island maintains an important heron nesting habitat located along the southern part of the island, while also supporting limited public access for educational groups during the non-nesting season.

As part of the management plan, there is a permanent Parks presence on the island, which helps deter unauthorized access, reducing vandalism to buildings and disruption to bird habitation areas. Selected stabilization of the site has been implemented to provide a safe environment for the public and Parks staff, and has included the stabilization of a number of historic

buildings. The Physician's Home has been converted into a ranger station and residence for a permanent Park caretaker. The c. 1885 Male Dormitory is being utilized as an interpretive center/visitors center (Figure 2). Public utilities have been restored to the island to support the caretaker's house and a visitors' comfort station. In addition to regular tours, some special events are held on the island, including the annual Haunted Hospital Tour at Halloween.

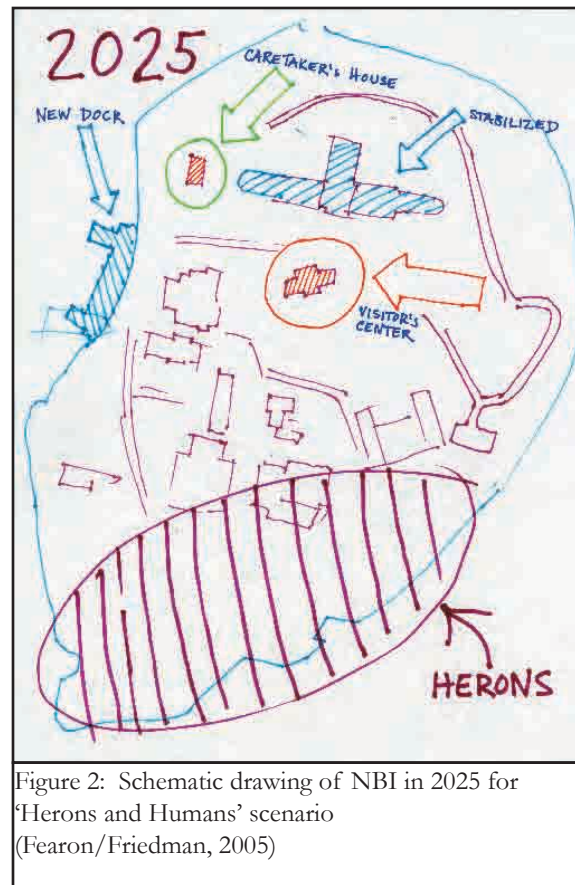


Figure 2: Schematic drawing of NBI in 2025 for 'Herons and Humans' scenario (Fearon/Friedman, 2005)

A well-planned, long-term management system has been in place for North Brother Island since 2006, resulting in a site that has undergone careful, scientifically-based ecological restoration, including diverse plantings consisting of meadow, old field, forest edge, and new growth woodlands throughout the island. Similarly, efforts have resulted in the flourishing of a nesting zone on the southern tip of the island, which supports not only the Black-crowned Night Heron, but other bird species as well. The Island has become a noted stopover point for migratory birds during the fall and spring months.

NYC Audubon hosts seasonal bird-watching expeditions to the island for all levels of birders, which serves to increase public awareness and, in turn, assists funding initiatives that pay for programming and the management of the island. While these tours are important to the value and longevity of the island, it remains imperative for the sake of the birds that the tours are highly controlled and restricted. The Harbor Herons Program, run through NYC Audubon in conjunction with the Wildlife Trust, has continued its research and monitoring of the NBI heron colony, including conducting annual surveys and toxicology screening.

Educational tours present North Brother Island's cultural history to the public, telling

North Brother Island

the significant story of the island's use as site of social isolation. The focus of these tours is on the early quarantine period, including the life of Typhoid Mary, the use of the island for veteran housing, and later, as an adolescent drug rehabilitation center. The island is discussed within the context of the other such sites of isolation in New York Harbor, including islands which have been used as prisons, asylums, quarantine hospitals, and rehabilitation centers, and connected to the broader history of institutionalization in the United States.

The island's management is shared between NYCDPR and NYC Audubon. A Friends of North Brother group has been formed that aids in funding, public outreach, and advocacy for the island. Through a variety of programs and environmental efforts, North Brother has been linked economically historically and ecologically with several other islands in the New York Harbor, including South Brother Island. A connecting ferry service has been established for the islands with docks in the Bronx, Queens, and upper Manhattan. The ferry dock on NBI has been stabilized for interpretation and a new dock has been built for access to island.

Although not available for active, unsupervised recreation, North Brother Island hosts important educational tours and other special interest groups. Though not a freely

accessible green space, NBI is maintained as a natural outdoor space for the people of the New York.

The main limitation of this vision is that although both people and the herons both utilize the island, the balance that has been achieved remains a compromise for both. The heron population has been maintained since 2005, but has not seen a significant increase. The herons, additionally, are limited to the southern part of the island. Although the public can visit the NBI, due to restrictions surrounding the herons' breeding season, access to the island is prohibited during the warmer months of spring and summer when outdoor activities are most desirable, and all public access throughout the year is limited to the northern section of the island. Despite these limitations, however, the successes of North Brother Island is manifested through its continued use by nesting birds, its balanced ecology, and the historical and environmental education tours the island provides. By implementing a detailed short and long-term management plan that takes into account the need for public access early on, North Brother Island has been successful at balancing the needs of herons, humans, and cultural history.

North Brother Island's uniqueness derives from its history, ecology, location, landscape, its sense of seclusion, and the way its ambience and solitude contrast with its surrounding neighbors. The following policies seek to preserve these important characteristics, while providing a guide for opening the site to the public. Based on the Statement of Significance and an assessment of North Brother's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, these policies augment initiatives already underway by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation and identify areas for future action. Listed in order of priority, these policies suggest a course of management for North Brother Island in the coming years.



Entrance to North Brother Island from Ferry Dock.
(Hillary Adam, 2005)

Natural Resource Management

Maintain island as a protected natural resource within the New York Harbor, and establish scientifically based program for ecological restoration and monitoring.

Habitat Maintenance

Protect existing heron habitat, prohibit access to the nesting areas, and create a buffer zone between the nesting areas and visitors.

Public Safety

Provide a safe environment for visitors and staff, allow no unsupervised visitation, and address risk management issues.

Site Access

Prohibit all public access to the island during nesting season, restrict access to authorized personnel, and develop opportunities for limited supervised public access during non-nesting season.

Cultural Resource Conservation

Survey and document cultural resources, and develop and implement a prioritized stabilization plan for the whole island.

Education

Create interpretive programming both on-site and off-site, including the site's history and ecology.

Community Engagement

Consult with community groups as part of transparent decision-making and to encourage their involvement.

Partnerships with Outside Groups

Actively form partnerships with outside groups, including federal, state, local and private agencies, to assist in fundraising, publicity, interpretation, and management of the island.

Economic Development Activities

Limit economic development activities to those that have no adverse environmental impact.



Artistic expressions found in the Tuberculosis Pavilion could be part of interpretive programming.
(Sarah Shotwell, 2005)

North Brother Island

To provide the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation with a framework for moving forward with work on North Brother Island, we have developed a series of goals that have been classified as short-, medium-, and long-term. These goals inform our recommendations and provide a series of realistic and achievable action steps to form a staged plan for preserving North Brother's ecological and historical assets. The goals and recommendations are presented in prioritized order, based on our Statement of Significance, as well the need to develop a staged plan for preserving the island. The limited public awareness will facilitate efforts of NYCDPR to address stabilization and habitat protection issues before beginning full public engagement. These goals and recommendations offer a structure for protecting North Brother Island as an ecological, historic, and community resource for future generations.



View of South and North Brother Islands
(Sarah Shotwell, 2005)

Short-Term Goals and Recommendations

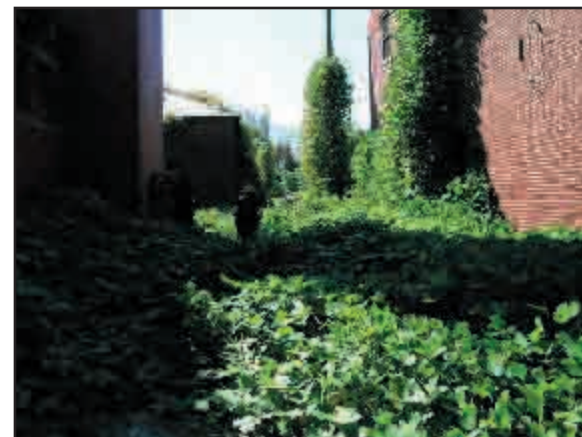
Develop management plan for natural and cultural resources.

- Create a long-term management plan to avoid short-term actions that harm existing ecological and historic resources. The management plan should include specific short- and long-term actions to address the needs of the birds, ecology, people, and cultural resources and identify associated costs and staff needs.

Maintain the present population of birds.

- Maintain the population of birds without detriment to the ecology and landscape.
- Avoid negative effects to the other resources on the island, including the landscape and built environment.
- Limit access during the nesting season to authorized personnel only.
- Limit all work that takes place for natural and cultural resources to the non-nesting season.

Goals and Recommendations



Kudzu Overgrowth
(Sarah Shotwell, 2005)

Restore and balance native ecological functions on the island.

- Manage for native vegetative communities, taking into account the needs of the bird population, and future public uses of the island, including historical interpretation.

Address public safety concerns.

- Secure high-risk areas including the main access point to the island, open wells and holes in the terrain, and unstable structures.
- Ensure a safe environment for visitors and park staff by securing structurally unsound buildings through emergency stabilization or installing barriers.



Physician's House
(Sarah Shotwell, 2005)



Site Visit of North Brother Island
(Sarah Shotwell, 2005)



Kudzu and poison ivy overgrowth threatens buildings
(Sarah Shotwell, 2005)

Document and survey the island.

- Create a comprehensive record of the site's historic resources before any further decay or other changes occur. Photographic documentation should be created of every structure and landscape feature on the island, including extant roads, curbs, lampposts, fire hydrants, walls, fences, the seawall, etc. Interior and exterior photographs should be keyed to a map of the island and archived.

Initiate emergency stabilization of historically significant structures.

- Work with architectural conservators to develop stabilization or preservation plans. All work should be performed under the supervision of preservation professionals.
- Ensure that significant structures in immediate danger do not further deteriorate by removing encroaching vegetation.

Build financial and political support.

- Implement campaign to raise awareness among key public officials about the historical and contemporary importance of North Brother Island.
- Build grassroots support among community groups, stressing the possibilities of future programming at North Brother Island.

Mid-Term Goals and Recommendations

Continue with full documentation of the site.

- Create measured drawings, conditions surveys, aerial photography, and written history to inform future conservation work. Compile all materials in archive.

Mobilize and coordinate stakeholders.

- Create clear and transparent policies with interested stakeholders through community engagement.
- Encourage community members and stakeholders to take an active role in decision-making.

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Establish on-site Parks presence.

- Stabilize one of the structures to be used by NYCDPR staff and to discourage illicit visitors.
- Initiate research into how to restore utilities that will be needed for public use of the island.

Increase public awareness.

- Build awareness through media, websites, and other strategies to educate the public of island ecological and cultural resources.

Begin programming for staged public access.

- Schedule private and/or public group tours through Audubon, NYCDPR, and The Point CDC.



Boat transportation to the island
(Sarah Shotwell, 2005)

Establish private non-for-profit to assist in fundraising, publicity, interpretation, and management.

- Identify existing or create new third-party organization to share responsibility of island management and funding.

Long Term Goals and Recommendations

Revise the management plan when needed.

- Revisit and edit the management plan every two to five years to make changes (when significant changes have occurred) and adapt to current conditions and potential threats.

Develop and implement interpretive programs.

- Meet with community groups to determine programming needs.
- Work with educators and museum professionals to develop interpretive programs for the island's history and ecology, including electronic and print resources, as well as tours.
- Use a restored/stabilized structure to house educational/interpretive programming and on-site exhibit.
- Connect the island to the South Bronx Waterfront as a destination point through off-site interpretive panels.

Goals and Recommendations

Maintain ongoing ecological research.

- Continue research and partnership with Audubon and encourage partnership with other research groups interested in the island's ecosystem.

Connect North Brother to other islands in the harbor system.

- Initiate ferry service, tourism, and management plans that integrate North Brother with the other islands.

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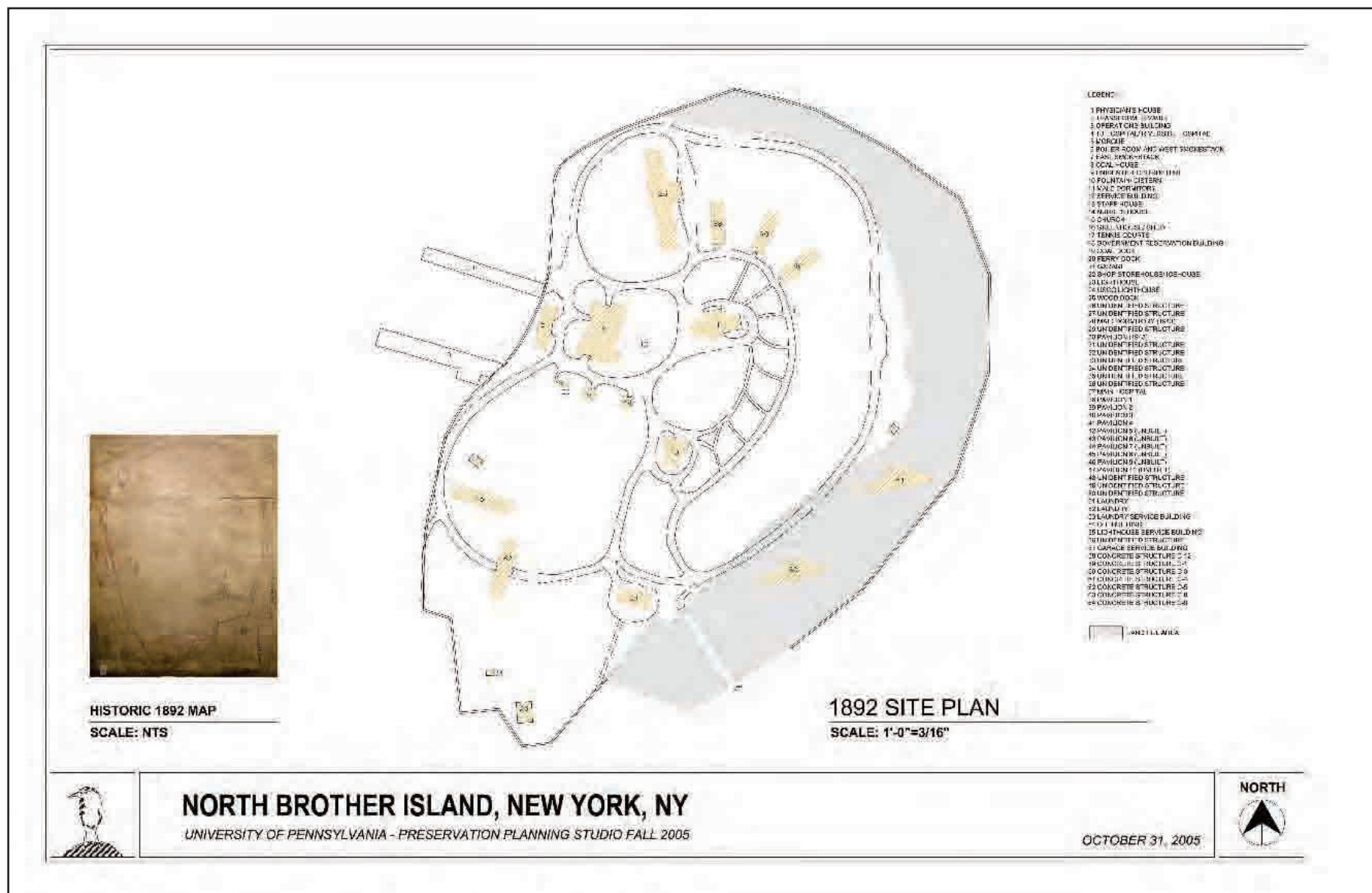


Figure 2: 1892. Map (with 1909 additions). This 1892 map actually shows the conditions of North Brother Island in 1909. On January 4, 1909 four acres of fill (in grey) at the northern and eastern edges of the island as well as 1,900 feet of concrete retaining wall was added to North Brother Island by the City of New York for use of the Department of Health. The 1885 radial plan is still extant. This layout is based on a 1892 survey plan from the New York Municipal Archives. Source: Fearon/Thorpe/Verhosek/Wong, 2005.

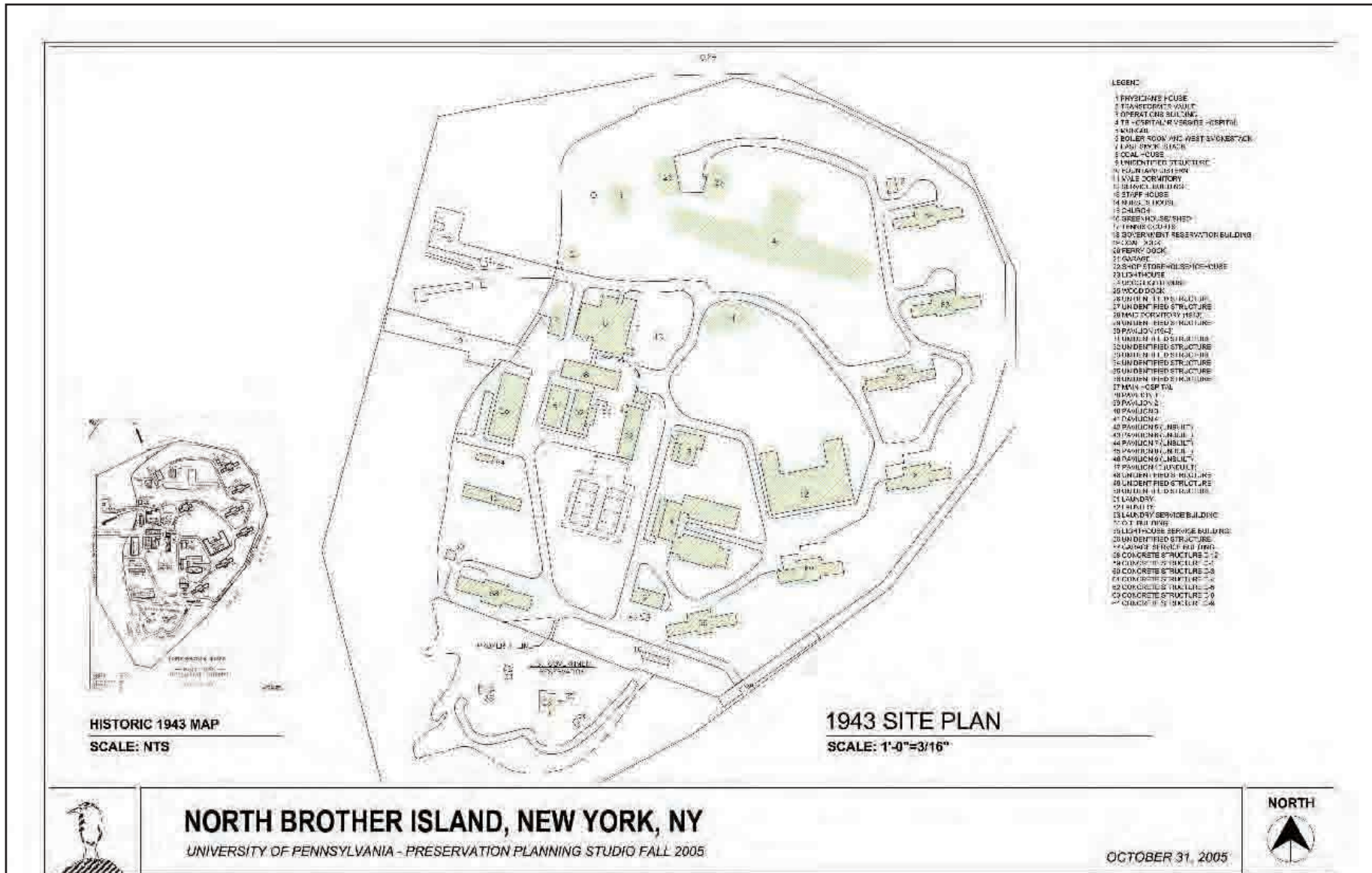


Figure 3: 1943 Map. This map is based on a 1943 Plot Plan of the Riverside Hospital campus - an expansion of the original 1885 construction and shows the extant Tuberculosis Pavilion building that underwent construction in 1941 during World War II. The plan abandoned the original 1885 radial layout and includes the addition of the concrete structures at the eastern perimeter. Original Map: New York City Municipal Archive; Recreated Map: Fearon/Thorp/Verhosek/Wong, 2005.

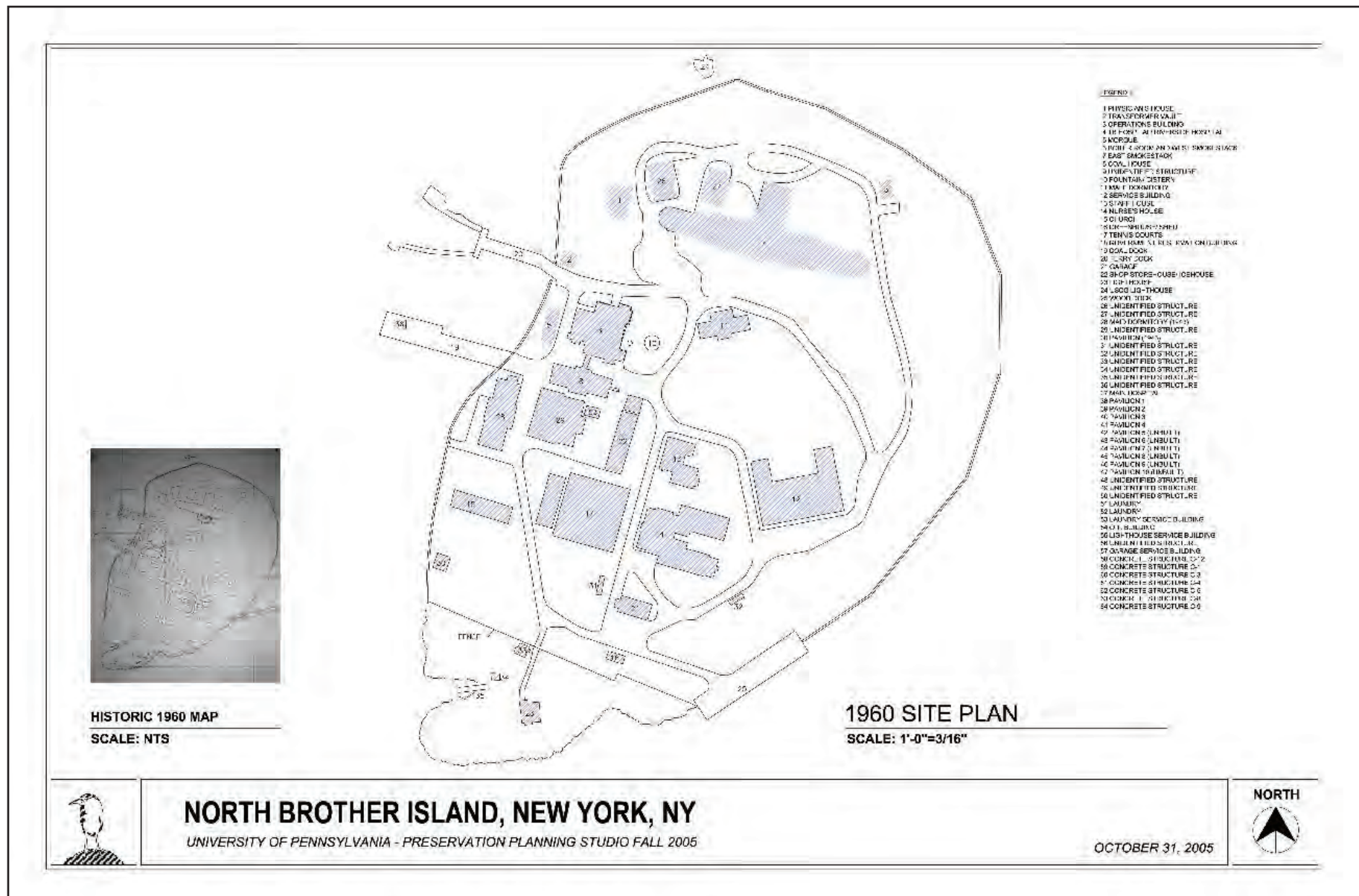


Figure 4: 1960 Map. This map shows the plan of North Brother Island in 1960 and is based on a demolition plan produced for a prison project proposal after the close of the Drug Rehabilitation Center in 1963. This illustrates the last building campaign on North Brother Island before its current state of abandonment. Original Map: New York City Municipal Archive; Recreated Map: Fearon/Thorp/Verhosek/Wong, 2005.

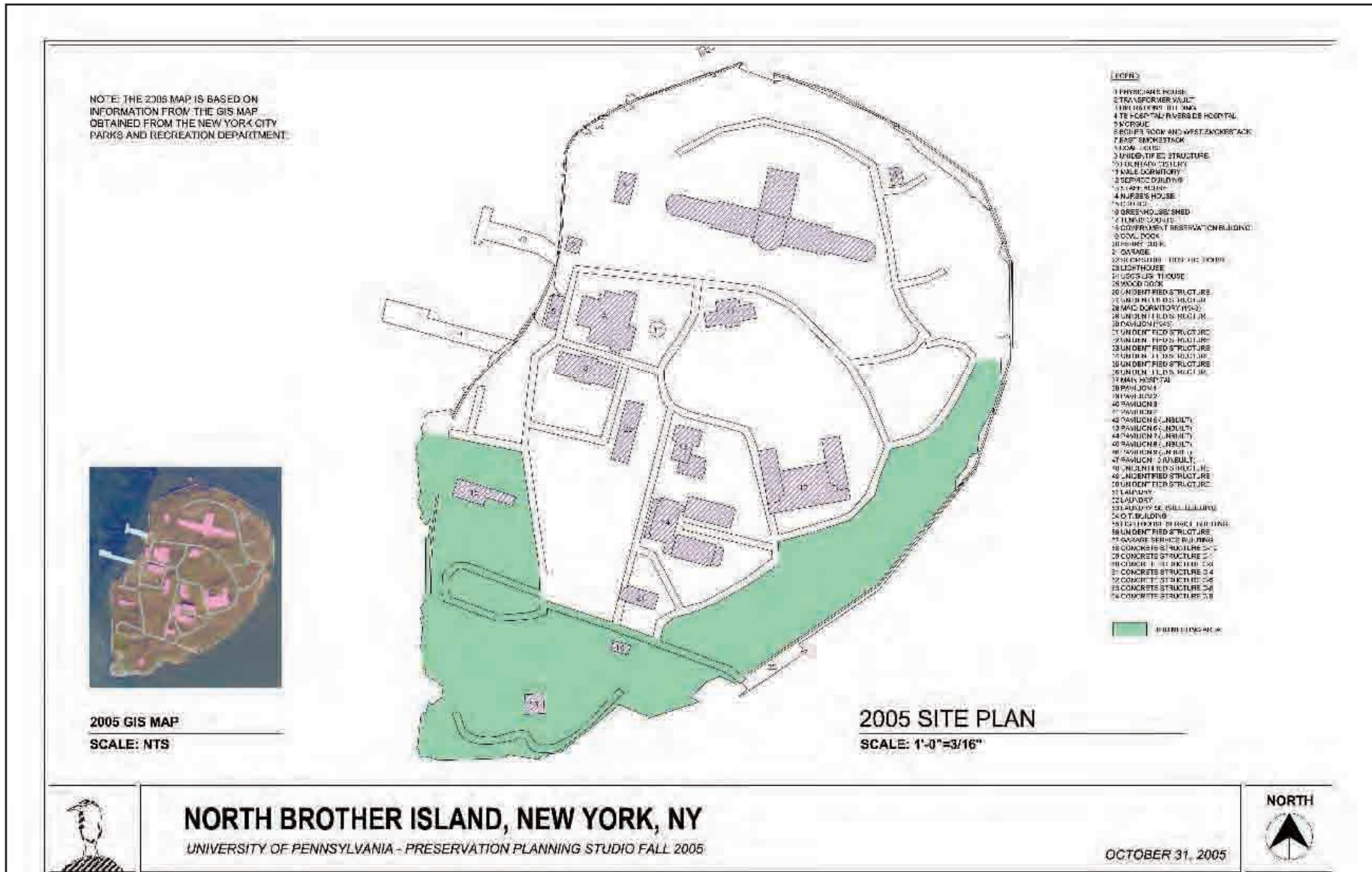
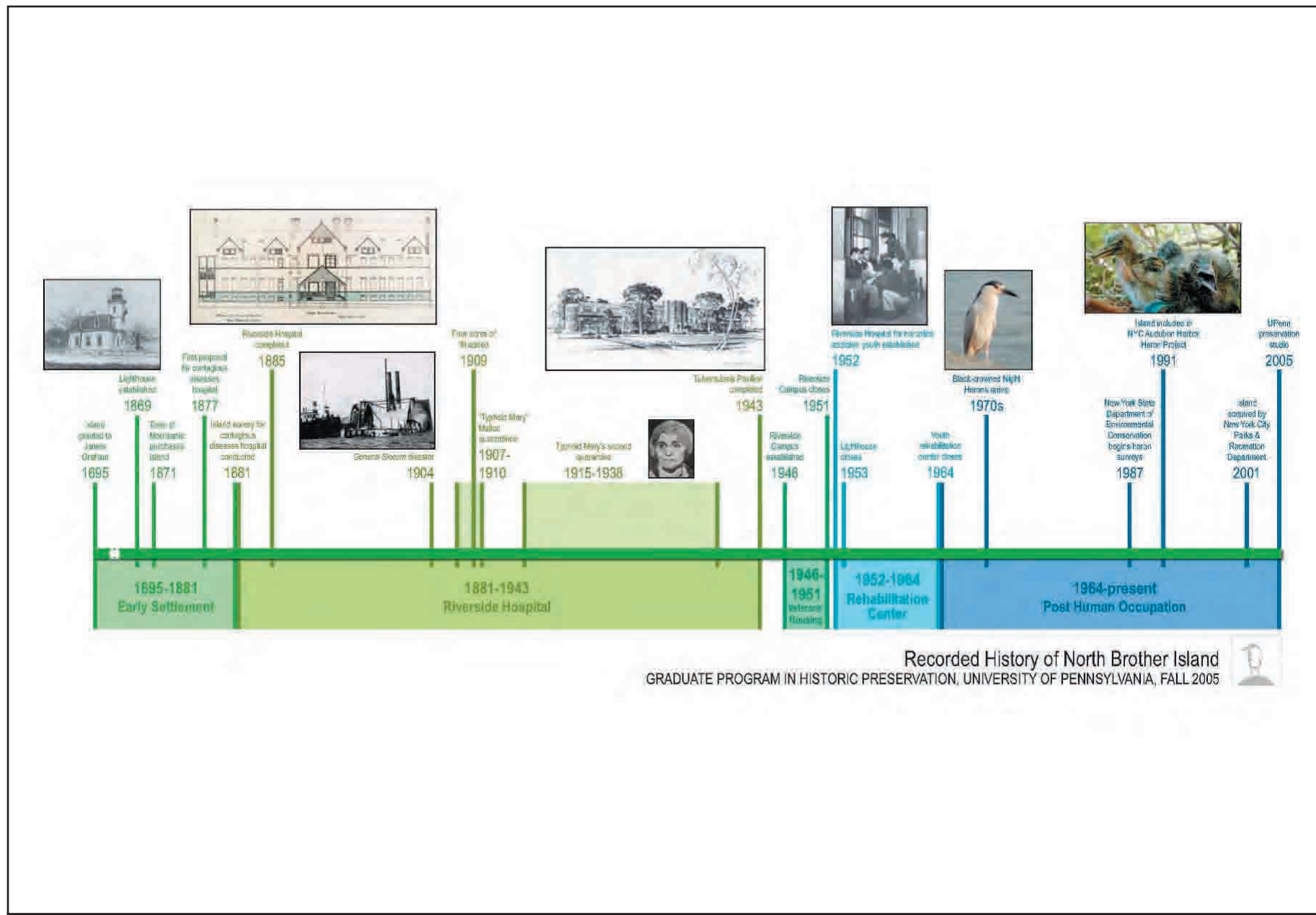


Figure 5: 2005 Map. The current plan and status of North Brother Island is shown here in this 2005 map, including the extant structures found during our recent site investigations. The Black-crowned Night Heron nesting area is shown in the region shaded green.

Original Map: New York City Department of Parks and Recreation; Recreated Map: Fearon/Thorpe/Verhosek/Wong, 2005.



Graphic Timeline (Christy Lomardo, 2005)

Date	Event	Comments	Source	Image
January 17, 1695	North Brother Island is granted to James Graham. – Cal. Coun. Min., 103		Stokes, v. 4, 387	
1774	Hart Island (aka Spectacle Island or Little Minnefords) acquired by Oliver DeLancey of West Farms. Hart Island subsequently owned by: Haight and Rodman families and then John Hunter		WPA, 551	
1778	Map: Senior’s Map of NYC for London Magazine by Thomas Kitchin	Indicates Two Brothers Island	King’s, 15	Yes
1788	Morrisania, in the Middle Bronx, is made into a township		WPA, 529	
1791	New York Hospital established		Preston: 512	
1791	Morrisania ceases to be a separate township		WPA, 529	
July 18, 1791	Owner Eleanor Brasher is auctioning off the Two Brothers Islands at the Merchants Coffee-House. Advertisement posted on June 29. – Daily Adv. Jl 6, 1791		Stokes, v. 5, 1282	
1826	Bellevue Hospital established at E 26 th Street	Largest of the city institutions in 1892 with 700 bed capacity...for cases of accident or sudden illness.	Preston: 509	
1849	St. Vincent’s fd at 11 th St and 7 th Ave	In charge under Sister’s of Charity, contagious cases not admitted	Preston: 513	
1850	St. Luke’s Hospital established at 54 th Street		Preston: 512	
c.1850	Site of “Widow McGown’s Tavern” in Central Park was known as location of Mount St. Vincent’s convent		WPA, 355	
1852	Mt. Sinai Hospital fd at 66 th St.		Preston: 513	
1856	Sisters of Charity purchases the College of Mount St. Vincent from Edwin Forest		WPA, 528	
1869	New York City purchases Hart Island		WPA, 551	
1869	Lighthouse established on southern end of NBI		http://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/lighthouses/object.cfm?id=70	
1869-1938	Approximately 425,000 burials at Potter’s Field on Hart Island		WPA, 551	
1870	“Typhoid Mary” Mallon is born		Encyclo of NYC, 1207	

Date	Event	Comments	Source	Image
April 14, 1871	Town of Morrisania purchases NBI from Anna J. and Martha Ackerson for the sum of \$40,000.	The Ackersons had been residing on the island.	NYT, February 10, 1872, 3 “Westchester Frauds” Encyclo of NYC, 853	
pre-1872	US Quarantine Station (at Nautilus and Bay Streets) is part of the O’Leary’s, a prominent NY family, estate		WPA, 608	
1872	NYT article refers to “Westchester County Hospital, North Brother Island.”		NYT, February 13, 1872, 8 “Long Island”	
1872	NYT lists Daniel Kelly as “keeper of the North Brother Island light-house.”		NYT, February 4, 1872, 6 “Castaway on Ice”	
1872	Hoffman and Swinburne Islands artificially constructed to serve as quarantine stations		WPA, 638 and Encyclo of NYC, 549 and 1146	
1875	House of Relief/Chambers Street Hospital established by Society of New York Hospital		Preston: 512	
1876	New York Hospital’s new building at 15 th and 5th Ave built		Preston: 512	
1877	Board of Health proposes to move the contagious diseases hospital from Blackwell’s Island to NBI.	Implementation of the move is hindered because “the island belongs to Queens County, and ...it cannot be used for this purpose without the consent of the authorities of the latter place.” The move also requires approval by the Legislature.	NYT, July 17, 1877, 2 “The Board of Apportionment”	
1879	An excursion to the island is planned for the field music of the 12 th Regiment.	“The party will enjoy a sail on a steam-yacht, and is to have a clam-bake and other accessories of a well-regulated picnic.”	NYT, June 29, 1879, 9 “Military Gossip”	
1881	Health Commissioners Chandler and Janeway petition the Legislature to allow the island to become, “a station for a hospital for contagious diseases.”		NYT, April 3, 1881, 2 “He Will Not Take the Office”	
May 3, 1881	Bill is passed by New York State Senate, transferring jurisdiction of the island from Queens County to New York.		NYT, May 4, 1881, 2 “General Legislative Work”	

Date	Event	Comments	Source	Image
August 3, 1881	Board of Health visits NBI, with group of officials including city surveyor James E. Serrell and Mr. Haight, an architect who has drawn up plans for the Hospital Buildings.	This article is the first article that identifies Charles Coolidge Haight as the Architect for the Buildings of this phase. Mentions, “spot on northern portion was selected... building will be brick, not over two stories high, and is intended for... small pox. It also proposed to erect hospitals for... typhus., diphtheria, and other contagious diseases, but... before... the ground will have to be graded and filled in and a sea-wall built around the island. It is expected that the new small pox hospital will be ready for occupancy next spring.”	NYT, August 4,1881, 8 “A Site for Small-Pox Hospital”	
April 19, 1882	Charles C. Haight, the architect, files building plans for a hospital for contagious diseases to be erected on NBI.	“It is to be of brick and stone and, 160 feet front and rear, with a depth of 44 by feet 8 inches. In the rear of this building wards will be erected 32 feet 8 inches in length. The cost of the building will be \$67,000.”	NYT, April 20, 1882, 8 “City and Sub-Urban News”	
1883	Water main to supply fresh water to the hospital is constructed, extending from 138 th Street across the channel to the island.	At 2200 feet long, it is, “the longest water-supply pipe ever laid on the bed of any river in this country.”	NYT, November 21, 1883, 8 “A Water Main on a River Bed”	
1885	Map: New York City Robinson Map, Plate 21	Includes building footprints.	NYPL, Maps Division	Yes
1885	Sisters of Charity TB Hospital on North Brother Island closes. The City of New York takes possession of the island and builds Riverside Hospital.		Encyclo of NYC, 853	
July 3, 1885	Hospital System on NBI nearly ready to be occupied. Officials visit, among them Godfrey N. Zingsem, landscape gardener who is to decorate the island.	“The hospital building is of brick, two stories high, heated and ventilated with the most improved appliances ...with a large ward on each floor, lighted on three sides, overlooking each ward is a glass-incased room, the hospital design is to hold 75 patients. The plans call for an 10 additional frame buildings, capable of holding 40 people each, to be used in the case of epidemic, bit only three of these will be built at present. Situated at a convenient distance from the main hospital building, and from the proposed sites of the minor hospitals is the kitchen; a double building...Overlooking the entire island is what is know as the administration building, which will be used as a residence for physicians, nurses and attendants, is a two story brick structure, handsomely finished.	NYT, July 3, 1885, 3 “A New Island Hospital”	

Date	Event	Comments	Source	Image
1890	New York Medical Journal reports on Aug 9 th that a case of anesthetic leprosy has been reported	Patient will be forcibly sent to NBI under orders of Board of Health. Article reports that source of fear may be accounts of leprosy in the Bible. Debated whether this action is too severe. "To deprive an individual of his liberty is a very serious matter, and in view of the fact that contagious diseases of far greater danger to public health than leprosy are treated at the domicile, there seems to be no good reason for such arbitrary, though well intended, action as that taken by the Board of Health."	MSR August 16, 1890, 63, 7; APS Online: 204.	
1890	Experiments done in architecture of NBI buildings for small pox	"Red glass is to be tried in one of the small pox pavilions at North Brother Island, New York, in order to test the value of the experiments done by Drs. Lindholm and Vinsen of Norway who claim that the pitting of SP patients is due to sensitiveness of skin to violet rays of light."	MSR March 17, 1894, 70, 11; APS Online: 410.	
January 11, 1890	Three to four cases of typhus fever discovered at North Brother Island hospital	Infection is presumed to have come from steamship "Westernland," in the luggage of German immigrants.	Medical News, January 11, 1890; 56, 2	
July 20, 1890	Man with leprosy taken to NBI		NYT, July 20, 1980, 2 "A Dangerous Delay"	
July 30, 1890	Follow up to July 20	Mentions cases of leprosy in NYC hospitals with a "number of cases" in the Charity Hospital on Blackwell's Island	NYT, July 30, 1890, 8 "No Danger of Contagion"	
Aug. 16, 1891	Two leprosy cases sent to NBI	Dr. advises establishment of permanent lazaretto on East Coast to isolate and treat people with leprosy	NYT Aug. 16, 1891, 13 "Chinese Lepers Secluded"	
1892	Hospitals seen as solution to societal problems.	"Here the great-hearted benevolence of the big city takes the sufferer by the hand and places him again on his feet prepared to continue the struggle advantageously or, if recovery is impossible, cares for him during the remainder of his days in some pleasant retreat under agreeable surroundings."	Preston: 507	
1892	Riverside hospital for contagious diseases on NBI is under the control of the Board of Health		Preston: 508	
1892	New World Order published account of NBI	"utter lack of systematic work or precautions." " In the enforcement of public health by the isolation of infectious diseases and quarantine, the authorities need the active assistance of the public...and the exposure of such conditions as have been found on NBI, can surely only win distrust and fear."	MSR April 9, 1892, 66, 15; APS Online: 579.	

Date	Event	Comments	Source	Image
1892	Typhus scare	“NBI is teaming with patients.” ”it is an open war between the deadly germ of typhus and scientific health regulations, and the result, merely from a scientific point of view, is of vast interest to the profession.”	MSR April 9, 1892, 66, 15; APS Online: 579	
1892	Map: Survey of North Brother Island	Map includes buildings and descriptions with dimension, number of stories, building materials, some identified with names, and some identified with usage. Indication of utility lines, including Edison Electric line going to Rikers. Shows PHD (Pierhead Line) and BHD lines (Bulkhead line), modified by Secretary of War March 19, 1921. Unsure about Pierhead and Bulkhead lines.	NYCMA: Map S-113	Yes
February 15, 1892	“Typhus on an Incoming Steamer”	Diagram of contagious disease Hospital (with building usage) at North Brother Island.	New York Herald February 15, 1892	Yes
February 27, 1892	“Typhus Fever in New York”	“The most serious outbreak of typhus fever that has occurred in the country for many years...”	Medical News, February 27, 1892; 60, 9	
Feb. 12, 1892	57 cases of typhus sent to NBI	Major outbreak	NYT Feb. 12, 1892, 5 “Typhus Fever in the City”	
Feb. 13, 1892	Six more cases found	Cases sent to NBI from Ellis Island	NYT Feb. 13, 1892, 1 “More Typhus Cases Found”	
Feb. 16, 1892	Tent fire at NBI	Pres. Wilson of Health Dept. to investigate	NYT Feb. 16, 1892, 1 “New Typhus Fever Cases”	
Feb. 24, 1892	\$6000 to be spent on new pavilions	Construction delayed due to absence of alderman	NYT Feb. 24, 1892, 6 Typhus Fever Patients”	
Feb. 25, 1892	Burial places of NBI typhus victims	NBI typhus victim buried in metallic casket at East New York Cemetery; Pres. Wilson of Health Dept. decides remains should go to Hart’s Island	Feb. 25, 1892, 6 “Two more cases of typhus	
Mar. 2, 1892	Patients housed in tents on NBI		NYT Mar. 2, 1892, 10 “Another Typhus Patient”	
Mar. 9, 1892	Alderman vote for new pavilions		NYT Mar. 9, 1892, 10 “What the Aldermen Did”	
Mar 11, 1892	Investigation into the mismanagement of typhus cases at NBI		NYT Mar 11, 1892, 9 “One Case, Two Deaths”	

Date	Event	Comments	Source	Image
Apr. 13, 1892	Charges against Dr. Percival unfounded		NYT Apr. 13, 1892, 6 "City & Sub News"	
Apr. 20, 1892	Dr. Percival resigns		NYT Apr. 20, 1892, 2 "Changes in the Health Board"	
June 14, 1892	Death of Hospital Surveyor	James E. Serrell, who did surveying for Hospital of Contagious Diseases bldg. dies	NYT June 14, 1892, 9 "An Old Surveyor's Funeral"	
June 29, 1892	New Rules for Hospitals		NYT June 29, 1892, 9 "New Rules for Hospitals"	
July 13, 1892	Dr. Valentine resigns	"too much politics"	NYT July 13, 1892, 9 "Dr. Valentine's Resignation"	
July 27, 1892	Contract awarded for erecting 2 new hospitals		NYT July 27, 1892, 3 "City and Sub. News"	
Sept. 4, 1892	Inspection of NBI	Haste urged in construction of 2 wooden pavilions, 200 feet long, with 2 wards each; may be used for cholera if epidemic occurs	NYT Sept. 4, 1892, 2 "Health Board and Police"	
Sept 16, 1892	Accommodating the sick from typhus outbreak beginning in February	Steam pipes run from the boiler house to radiators "set out in the field." Tents built around the radiators	NYT Sept. 16, 1892, 2 "No Danger of an Epidemic"	
Oct. 12, 1892	Beacon light in the water at "North End of NBI" recommended to "mark channel btwn No and So Bro Islands	Cost of \$800	NYT Oct. 12, 1892, 11 "Care of Coast Lights"	
Nov. 28, 1892	Fire in NBI Reception Hospital	(Hospital at E. 16 th St.) \$200 damage	NYT Nov. 28, 1892, 8 "Small Fire in a Hospital"	
Dec. 29, 1892	Memorial Tablet Ordered by Board of Health	To commemorate those in the Health and Police Depts "who bravely died while in the performance of their duties during the visitation of typhus fever last Spring" to be erected at Riverside Hospital on NBI	NYT Dec. 29, 1892, 5 "Memorial Tablet Ordered"	
Jan. 1, 1893	Finding a place for cholera patients after floating hospital is filled	"Examined the hospital at NBI, where in addition to the main bldgs, are 12 large wooden pavilions (and more are to be erected)" tents also possible	NYT Jan. 1, 1893, 9 "Guards Against Cholera"	

Date	Event	Comments	Source	Image
Jan. 6, 1893	Available accommodations at NBI – new typhus outbreak	3 portable cottages can hold 35 each; Pavilion 7 will hold forty; 12 steam-heated tents each hold 3, 18 tents ready to put up; 2 pavilions, each will hold forty – steam fitting appliances nearly completed; contract for tent 50x38 feet will hold 35; At present NBI will accommodate 250 patients – in a week, twice that	NYT Jan.6, 1893, 2 “Progress of the Typhus”	
Jan. 15, 1893	Frozen water pipe	“The island is supplied from the mainland by a connection made with the water main which runs through 138 th St. Since the freezing of the pipe it has been necessary to take water to the island in barrels by boat. There is a large cistern on the island which is filled every day...”	NYT Jan. 15, 1893, 9 “Typhus Still in Evidence”	
1893	Typhus epidemic declines	“Although the present epidemic of typhus fever is on the decline, new cases and deaths are reported every day.” When cases are discovered sent immediately to Bellevue Hospital where patients are kept inside until they are transferred to NBI	MSR January 18, 1893, 68, 4; APS Online: 138.	
Feb. 2, 1893	Typhus patients to be set up in maternity ward at Blackwell’s Island	To avoid overtaxing the hospitals at NBI, maternity wards at Blackwell’s Island to be used if needed	NYT Feb. 2, 1893, 2 “To Care for Typhus Patients”	
Feb. 19, 1893	Reception Hospital torched	The wooden reception hospital at E. 16 th St. was destroyed to make room for a new building – fire deemed safest way to get rid of it. To be replaced by a one-story glazed brick and iron bldg. 140’x55’ containing 12 wards, each 15’x25’, and two 30’x27.5’. Also to be built: A boiler house75’x26’ and a180’x40’ bldg. With 4 wards, each 66’x20’ on site of old cement shed.	NYT Feb. 19, 1893, 9 “Reception Hospital Burned”	
Apr.6, 1893	Physicians from around the country meet to establish protocol for dealing with immigrants who arrive with cholera		NYT Apr.6, 1893, 8 “Barriers to Cholera”	
May 21, 1893	Woman escapes Willard Parker Hospital through window	She was almost fully recovered from a case of scarlet fever and was terrified of the possibility of being transferred to NBI	NYT May 21, 1893, 16 “Escaped from the Hospital”	
May 25, 1893	Elizabeth Thornton to be disinterred	Was a helper at NBI during typhus outbreak and died from the fever – was buried at Hart’s Island, to be re-interred in Woodlawn Cemetery	NYT May 25, 1893, 9 “To Receive Decent Burial”	

Date	Event	Comments	Source	Image
June 20, 1893	Leper from 1891 dies	He had been isolated at the extreme end of NBI	NYT June 20, 1893, 2 “Death of a Chinese Leper”	
July 11, 1893	New Reception Hospital at E. 16 th St. soon to open	Detailed description of new Reception Hospital in Manhattan. Description of buildings on NBI including square footage: 12 pavilions of varying size, brick hospital, residence for physicians and nurses, administration building, boiler and wash house, disinfecting plant, ice and coal house, barn and greenhouse; all lit with gas and heated by steam, supplied from a central plant also used for laundry. “During the year a disinfecting plant was erected for the purposes of disinfecting by means of hot air all material that had become infected on the island.”	NYT July 11, 1893, 2 “Health Department’s Pride”	Yes
July 15, 1893	One case of leprosy is reported at Riverside Hospital on North Brother Island		Medical News, July 15, 1893; 63, 3	
Dec. 23, 1893	Confusion over the identity of a body from NBI	Woman was not notified of her son’s death until 3 months after and is unsure that the body buried in the Potter’s Field is that of her son	NYT Dec. 23, 1893, 9 “Not Sure it is her Dead Child”	
Jan. 12, 1894	Nurse runs away from NBI	She was found intoxicated on 128 th St. and said she had not been off the island in 9 years	NYT Jan. 12, 1894, 11 “Ran Away from North Brother Island”	
May 9, 1894	New? Fog bell by May 15, 1894	“The fog bell is now sounded (without change in characteristic) from a white wedge-shaped bell tower, 30 feet high, erected at the shore line to the southward and eastward of the lighthouse.”	NYT May 9, 1894, 6 “Notice to Mariners”	
July 17, 1894	Dredging of Hudson and East Rivers, etc.	Depth of water around North Brother Island Reef increases from 16 feet to 26 feet – it is not stated where the material from this specific area went	NYT July 17, 1894, 4 “Improving New York Harbor”	
Oct. 14, 1894	Dr. Hubbard is released from his duties at NBI after firing a nurse for striking a smallpox patient with her hand	There have been several stories about patient abuse, but this is the first we’ve seen from a superior	NYT Oct. 14, 1894, 8 “Dr. Hubbard’s Temper Caused Trouble”	
Nov. 11, 1894	NBI a “well-kept” island	Detailed description of every island in the East River at that time except NBI but still interesting	NYT Nov. 11, 1894, 21 “Up Through the East River”	
Aug. 25, 1896	Response to the idea of NBI as a “pesthouse”	It is a “pleasant, breeze swept place, where one might pleasantly spend the period of convalescence in perfect rest and quiet”	NYT Aug. 25, 1896, 8 “Gathered About Town”	

Date	Event	Comments	Source	Image
1894	South Brother Island is bought by Colonel Jacob Ruppert; where he erects a summer home which he occupies until 1907		MRL Notes, 101 and Encyclo of NYC, 1098	
April 13, 1901	NBI, Hospital Ward plans filed	One-story frame hospital, 26.4 x 98 feet, Horgan and Slattery, architects, \$10,000, opposite 139 th St..	NYT, April 13, 1901, 11 "Building Dept."	
April 20, 1901	New smallpox pavilion planned for the island.	"The building will be of frame construction, and will cost \$10,000..."	Medical News, April 20, 1901; 78, 16	
September 13, 1901	NBI, Plans for Two Hospitals filed	Two one story frame hospitals, 26 by 98 Horgan and Slattery, architects, \$19,000	NYT, September 13, 1901, 10 "Building Dept."	
1902	Granite cross erected on Hart Island, inscribed "He calleth His children by name"	"Approximately 50 bodies disinterred annually and removed to other cemeteries, after being identified from photographic records at the mortuary headquarters, or claimed by relatives or friends..."	WPA, 551	
March 22, 1902	Private smallpox hospital proposed for North Brother Island		Medical News, March 22, 1902; 80, 12	
August 5, 1902	New boat under construction to provide transportation for patients to and from the island.	The "Claudine" is also equipped with water pumps, so that it may be used to extinguish river front fires, and a large water tank, so that it can provide emergency water supplies to islands when necessary.	Medical News, August 5, 1905; 87, 6	
November 11, 1902	Two one-story hospital buildings planned.	"Plans have been filed with the Department of Buildings for the erection of two one-story frame hospital buildings. The buildings will occupy a site 26x98, and will be known as the Riverside Hospital. They will be used for contagious-disease patients. Each building will cost \$9,500."	Medical News, November 9, 1902; 81,19	
April 26, 1903	NBI, Storehouse plans filed	Two-story frame, on south-side, 102 x 30, Smith, Westervelt & Austin, architects, \$5000	NYT, April 26, 1903, 20 "Building Dept."	
May 3, 1903	NBI, Alterations to a Disinfecting Station plans filed	One-story brick, 23 x 20, Smith, Westervelt & Austin, architects, \$2500	NYT, May 13, 1903, 41. "Building Dept."	
May 24, 1903	NBI, Storage Building plans filed	One-story brick on north-side, 100 x 35, Smith, Westervelt & Austin, architects, \$12,000	NYT, May 24, 1903, 21 "Building Dept."	
September 16, 1903	New Health Board regime favored over old. Examples of change for the better given.	"The article says that people who came off North Brother Island... declared that it was worse than the Black Hole of Calcutta. It adds: It has been evident for years that North Brother Island has been a name to be dreaded by the poor of this city."	Medical News, September 26, 1903; 83, 13	

Date	Event	Comments	Source	Image
November 28, 1903	NBI, Laundry building plans filed	Two-story brick w/attic on west-side, 77.4 x 36, Smith, Westervelt & Austin, architects, \$25,000	NYT, November 28, 1903, 14 "Building Dept."	
1904	Typhoid Mary first recognized as a carrier in Oyster Bay, NY		Encyclo of NYC, 1207	
June 15, 1904	General Slocum wreck		WPA, 123 and Encyclo of NYC, 457	
July 23, 1904	Health Commissioner advertises for bids to build a "rest cure pavilion."	"The pavilion is needed as an adjunct to the hospital for consumptives which has been established, on the island.	Medical News, July 23, 1904; 85, 4	
July 1, 1905	New three-story hospital (Nurse's Home) planned for North Brother Island	"Plans have been filed with the Bronx Building Bureau for a new three-story hospital to be built on the southwest side of North Brother Island. It is to be of ornamental brick, 114 feet long and 73 ½ feet deep, and will cost \$150,000."	Medical News, July 1, 1905; 87, 1	
1906	Map: Theoretical Angles to Locate Corners on Center Line of Stone Embankment Under Construction at NBI	Drawn by Crosby. Shows north end of island with main hospital and three frame buildings.	NYCMA:Map S-109	Yes
1907	South Brother Island: House of Colonel Jacob Ruppert burned		MRLNotes, 101 and Encyclo of NYC, 1098	
1907	Typhoid Mary quarantined on North Brother Island		Encyclo of NYC, 1207	
January 4, 1909	Enlargement of North Brother Island	About 1,900 feet of concrete retaining wall has been built in the rear of North Brother Island, in a manner similar to that used at Riker's Island (depositing of the City's refuse and made into available land for use); these four acres of made land are designed for the use of the Department of Health	Stokes, v. 5, 2074	
1910	Typhoid Mary released from North Brother Island on the terms that she would never work as a cook		Encyclo of NYC, 1207	
July 20, 1911	NBI, Alterations to Brick Office Building and Dormitory filed	One and a half-story brick, 59.5 x 92, William E. Austin, architect, \$7, 000	NYT, July 20, 1911, 13 "Building Dept."	
July 2, 1913	NBI, Concrete Hospital Pavilion plans filed	Three- Story Concrete Hospital , 130 x 37, Clinton & Russell and Charles F. Post, architects, \$50,000	NYT, July 2, 1913, 16 "Building Dept."	
July 2, 1913	NBI, Concrete Dormitory plans filed	Four-story concrete dormitory, 115 x 44, Clinton & Russell and Charles F. Post, architects, \$80,000	NYT, July 2, 1913, 16 "Building Dept."	
March 16, 1914	NBI, Two Hospital plans filed	Two, four-story concrete, 123 x 35.5 each, William E. Austin, architect, \$120,000	NYT, March 16, 1913, 18 "Building Dept."	

Date	Event	Comments	Source	Image
1915	Typhoid Mary discovered working at the Sloane Hospital for Women as a cook; sent back to North Brother Island		Encyclo of NYC, 1207	
1918	"Federal Government Takes Over North Brother Island"	"Will be used to isolate and treat soldiers suffering with infectious diseases." The island, buildings, and boats were purchased by the War Department. Patients that had been treated on NBI were transferred to Willard Parker Hospital. NBI was transferred to federal ownership for the duration of the war and not to exceed 18 months after the wars end. At that time the island would return ownership to NYC.	Bronx Home News, October 3, 1918	
Apr. 25, 1920	Riverside Hospital is in danger of closing	The Board of Estimate is said to be meeting this week, and if they do not take favorable action on the pending appropriation for the continuation of the work at Riverside, the hospital will have to close. An appropriation of \$15,000 is expected to continue the work until July 1.	New York Times, April 25, 1920	
1920s	Hoffman and Swinburne Islands abandoned due to curb in immigration		WPA, 608	
1921	Federal government takes over the US Quarantine Station from New York Stat		WPA, 608	
Apr. 4, 1922	A fire was reported on North Brother Island	The fire was reported at 11:00a.m., but no information was given as to the loss sustained or who reported it.	New York Times, April 8, 1922	
July 1, 1923	Improvement and maintenance of New York Harbor and waterways to begin	More than \$8,000,000 has been asked to be appropriated for this project, the largest portion (\$3,025,000) going towards the East River from the Battery to Port Morris. Within the current fiscal year beginning July 1 \$500,000 has been spent in the vicinity of North Brother Island.	New York Times, Jan. 7, 1923	
Feb. 18, 1924	Puerto Rican man with leprosy removed to Riverside Hospital	Saturnino Jimenez, 22 years old, who was in Bellevue Hospital was taken to Riverside Hospital on North Brother by order of Dr. William L. Somerset, chief diagnostician of the Dept. of Health. He was diagnosed with "leprous neuritis."	New York Times, Feb. 17, 1924	

Date	Event	Comments	Source	Image
Mar. 13, 1924	A testimony in court showed that a man who had been the owner of a restaurant and bakery is a typhoid carrier	Alphonse Cotils, 44 years old, had been handling food under a permit from the Health Dept. for 18 years and was found to be in violation of Sec. 146 of the Sanitary Code, which relates to the handling of food by typhoid carriers. Despite warnings from the Health Dept. he had been discovered making Strawberry Shortcake. This was the first case of its kind presented since the “Typhoid Mary” case.	New York Times, March 14, 1924	
Mar. 20, 1924	A fire was reported at Riverside Hospital on North Brother island	At 1:00p.m. a fire was reported by a person who did not give their name. The loss was listed as “trifling,” but no information was given as to which building the fire occurred in.	New York Times, March 20, 1924	
Jun. 8, 1924	Steps toward reorganization of the Institutional Boat Service was recommended	The recommendation was made in a letter to the Board of Estimate, Grover A. Whalen, Commissioner of Plant and Structures. It was suggested to provide “real ferry service instead of the present steamboat service” to islands including North Brother.	New York Times, June 6, 1924	
Jun. 13, 1924	Dr. Shirley Wynne was said to be considered by the Mayor as the head of the new Dept. of Hospitals	Dr. Wynne was at the time the Deputy Commissioner of Health. On June 14, bills that suggest consolidation of the 27 city institutions (hospitals)—now in 3 separate groups—under single management, and reorganization of the Board of Health will be presented in the Municipal Assembly.	New York Times, June 14, 1928	
Nov. 23, 1924	Land acquired for operation of a ferry to North Brother and Riker’s Islands	The land between East 134 th and 135 th Streets, which included the old terminal of the North Beach Ferry was recommended to be purchased as the terminal of a ferry to North Brother Island.	New York Times, November 23, 1924	
Jan. 17, 1925	A woman was admitted to Riverside Hospital after being diagnosed with leprosy	Lillian Baird, 40 years old, was admitted to Riverside for observation after diagnosis of leprosy. She had been concealing her ailment for some time. She had lived with her brother in Brooklyn.	New York Times, Jan. 18, 1925	

Date	Event	Comments	Source	Image
Mar. 11, 1925	Unsanitary conditions and overcrowding were found to be a problem at several New York hospitals, including Riverside on North Brother	The report was made by members of the Public Health Committee and the Hospital Committee of a Women's City Club. A visit was made to determine the needs of the hospitals before appearing before the Board of Estimate and Apportionment to support the proposal of a \$28,000,000 bond issue to remodel the institutions. The Dept. of Health is asking for \$300,000 for a new kitchen and service building at Riverside. An argument was made saying that lepers were actually Federal patients, and the Federal Gov't should take them instead of Riverside (there were 4 lepers residing in a building that could hold 80 patients). Nothing has come of this request.	New York Times, March 12, 1925	
Mar. 4, 1926	Riverside Hospital was found to be in terrible condition	Health Commission Harris condemned Riverside Hospital on North Brother as "positively disgraceful" at a meeting of the New York Visiting Committee of the State Charities Aid Association. He said that this was a result of "a system of afterthought rather than forethought." Some of the problems included buildings with no elevators, "dirty kitchens with adjacent garbage heaps," and the issue of patients having to cross the river in open boats to reach the island.	New York Times, March 5, 1926	
Dec. 6, 1926	\$500,000 appropriated towards removal of North Point Reef, North Brother Island, to a depth of 35 feet		New York Times, December 7, 1926	
Nov. 2, 1928	Announcement of \$1,725,000 contract for dredging channel in and around Hell Gate	The article stated that the contract would be awarded "in a few days" and was carrying forward a \$40,000,000 project that was started in 1918 "for the completion of a channel 1,000 feet wide and thirty-five feet deep at mean low water." This included "the dredging of ledge rock and other material from the reef at the north point of North Brother Island."	New York Times, November 3, 1928	
Dec. 13, 1928	Building plans filed for a four story brick hospital pavilion	The City of New York is listed as owner, George M. McCabe as the architect, and the cost is said to be \$240,000	NYT, December 13, 1928, 58 "Building Dept."	

Date	Event	Comments	Source	Image
Oct. 7, 1929	A new service building is opened at Riverside Hospital on North Brother	The new bldg. was constructed for \$243, 985, and is to replace a structure that has been used for 45 years. It is to house 265 employees of the hospital, and provide dining rooms, dormitories, and a modern refrigeration plant for the hospital.	New York Times, October 6, 1929	
November 10, 1930	1 photo of South Brother(?) by P.L. Sperr	East part of island taken from the Bronx	NYPL, Local History Div	Yes
December 19, 1930	Bids open for remodeling of Old Service Building of Male Dormitories at NBI	Work included general construction, electrical, plumbing, heating	NYT 12.11.1930: 28	
Feb. 27, 1931	Bids open for work on Nurse's Home at NBI	Bids received for general construction and electrical work, plumbing, heating, and ventilation, all for construction and equipment for addition to Nurse's Home	NYT 2.19.1931: 22	
April 12, 1931	1 photo of South Brother(?) by P.L. Sperr	East part of island taken from the Bronx	NYPL, Local History Div	Yes
September 18, 1931	4 photos of North Brother by P.L. Sperr	Views of SW, SE, and NE part of island taken from across East River.	NYPL, Local History Div	Yes
October 23, 1931	'Around New York in an Airplane'	Good aerial photograph. Photo taken by Fairchild Aerial Surveys, Inc.	No source given except p. 7 <i>Islands</i> . No. 129 – North Brother Island	Yes
March 9, 1933	Bids open on new disinfecter for NBI	"new rectangular disinfecter to be furnished, delivered, and installed, including piping work incidental thereto, in the building adjacent to the Laundry at Riverside Hospital, NBI, Bronx."	NYT 3.2.1933: 33	
December 11, 1935	First Prisoner to Escape from Riker's Island	Prisoner Walter Zell, escaped from the prison through a coal shoot and swam to NBI, where the light house keeper took him into custody and notified prison authorities. Zell was promptly returned to Riker's Island.	NYT 12.11.1935	
April 23, 1936	NBI, Riverside Hospital, Incinerator plans filed	Plans for 2 story brick incinerator (8x13) filed for NBI. Owner: Dept. of Hospitals, 125 Worth Street, architect: Jacob Lustig, cost: \$3,000	NYT, April 23, 1936, 43 "Building Dept."	
1937	Map: U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey (U.S.C. & G.S. 226), published May 1937	Includes building footprints and tidal heights.	NYPL, Maps Division	
January 6, 1937	4 WPA photos	Nurses' Home, Boiler Room, East Smokestack, and WPA employees working on unknown buildings	NYPL, Local History Division	Yes
July 10, 1937	2 images of North Brother by P.L. Sperr	SE and SW part of island from across East River	NYPL, Local History Division	Yes

Date	Event	Comments	Source	Image
September 23, 1937	School tours of Harbor including NBI	City civics and government students participate in ferry tours around NY harbor, started at the Battery, visited Ellis Island, Statue of Liberty, Buttermilk Channel, the East River, Riker's Island, NBI and various bridges	NYT, Oct. 24, 1937, 37 "School Experiment on Ferry boat Wins Praise of City's Educators"	
1938	Hoffman Island becomes the Training School of the US Maritime Service, under the US Coast Guard		WPA, 608	
November 11, 1938	Typhoid Mary dies		WPA, 426 and Encyclo of NYC, 1207	
November 12, 1938	"Only Nine Mourners at Funeral Rites in Bronx Church for 'Typhoid Mary'"	Mary Mallon dies at age 69. Funeral Service at St. Lukes Church, 138 th St.	Bronx Home News November 12, 1938	
February 23, 1938	Addition to Riverside Hospital and improvements to the area around the island	Addition to hospital, now primarily used in treating TB, will expand service to 500 beds. Quote by Dr. S.S. Goldwater, "Although previously some of the surroundings of NBI had been objectionable, the purification of the water about it, resulting from the new sewage disposal plant on Wards Island and from the park-like treatment of...Riker's Island, was changing the surroundings so that the hospital should have a fine site."	NYT, Feb 23, 1938, 23 "New Hospital Unit to Aid TB"	
1939	NBI is 13 acres. Riverside Hospital has 332 beds		WPA, 426	
September 9, 1939	City Plans Hospital on NBI, plans filed	Hospital, four-story, Electus D. Litchfield, architect \$850,000	NYT, September 9, 1939, 33 "Building Dept."	
April 23, 1940	Building plans filed for a, "103.6x30, 2-story shop and storage building," at a cost of \$125,000. Architect for project is W.E. Helm.		NYT, April 23, 1940, p. 43.	
1941	Improvements to NBI in 1941 include, "the erection of a new two-story shop and storage building and a number of other improvements at the Riverside Hospital."		NYT, January 25, 1942, p. RE4.	
January 19, 1941	New hospital planned for NBI.		NYT, January 19, 1941, p. 38.	Yes
October 20, 1941	Mayor La Guardia lays cornerstone of Tuberculosis Pavilion.		NYT, October 22, 1941, p. 18	Yes

Date	Event	Comments	Source	Image
October 21, 1941		“The new pavilion will serve as a reception center for tuberculosis admission, as an infirmary for patients seriously ill and as a pre-operative and post-operative service for patients in need of chest surgery....The three-story fireproof, brick building [will] be completed in February. It was begun last March [1940] and will cost \$950,000.”	NYT, October 21, 1941, p. 25.	
1942	Improvements to NBI in 1942 include, “an addition to the Riverside Hospital.”		NYT, January 3, 1943, RE2	
January 18, 1942	Horace B. Collins dies. Collins was an aide to Electus D. Litchfield, and assisted in the design of the Tuberculosis Pavilion.		NYT, January 18, 1942, p. 42.	
July 28, 1942	Priority restrictions delay opening of Riverside Hospital.	The new \$1,100,000 building will be three stories high and contain, “a penthouse and basement, facilities for X-ray, pathological, laboratory and other work, and a receiving ward for 150 patients.” The building was scheduled to be completed in 1941.	NYT, July 28, 1942, p. 29.	
March 10, 1943	Building plans are filed for a three-story nurses’ home on NBI.		NYT, March 10, 1943, p. 31	
1944	Map: U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey (U.S.C. & G.S. 226), published December 1941	Includes building footprints and tidal heights.	NYPL, Maps Division	
1944	South Brother Island: Colonel’s estate sells the island to John Gerosa		MRLNotes, 101	
April 1944	Riverside Hospital closed by Department of Hospitals.	The hospital closes owing to a shortage of available workers due to the war.	NYT, December 17, 1945, p. 29.	
December 17, 1945	Fifteen hospital-related buildings remain on NBI.	Most are, “old and in run-down condition and are to be replaced with new units,” to accommodate student veteran housing.	NYT, December 17, 1945, p. 29.	
1946	“Riverside Campus, home of Island Nursery School.”	Southern tip of Island owned by Federal Government the remainder belongs to NYC. NY State leases island from NYC (for \$1/year), and converts it to temporary student veterans housing. Hospital building serves as dorm for single men while other buildings are divided for families. Island cooperative nursery school formed by 10 mothers. State Housing Division in consultation w/ nursery school experts rehab two-story brick building (#11, Male Dormitory). Article includes aerial image of NBI as well as nursery plan.	Stanton, Jessie and Mabel Rossbach Learning by Experience: the Island Nursery School. Riverside Campus: North Brother Island, 1949. <u>Encyclo of NYC, 853</u>	Yes

Date	Event	Comments	Source	Image
January 28, 1946	New York State Division of Housing announces plans to convert closed Riverside Hospital buildings to student veteran housing.		NYT, January 29, 1946, p. 22.	
March 24, 1946	Fourteen of the 33 hospital buildings are planned for conversion.		NYT, March 24, 1946, p. 32.	
July 13, 1946	Architects for veterans' housing project are F.E. Platt & Bros.		NYT, July 13, 1946, p. 28.	
August 27, 1946	Opening of housing project on NBI delayed due to lack of furnishings.	New York State, "is spending \$1,200,000 to convert the former hospital buildings on the island, one of which never has been used." Students utilizing housing come from nine participating colleges: Columbia University, Teachers College, Union Theological Seminary, New York University, Fordham University, City College, Cornell University Medical College, New York Medical College and the Juilliard School of Music.	NYT, August 27, 1946, p. 29.	
January 20, 1947	Drexel Furniture Company sells Freedom Oak furniture, a moderately-priced line of oak furniture designed exclusively for veterans.	Furniture is designed by Henry Koster and features, "straight lines and smooth surfaces. Drawers are flush with frames of bureaus and desks and have recessed pulls."	NYT, January 20, 1947, p. 28.	Yes
February 21, 1947	New York State Division of Housing is providing housing for 213 married couples and 30 single men on NBI.	Single men reside in furnished rooms in, "the converted, brick buildings." The State is planning on increasing housing and adding other improvements, including, "330 apartments, rooms for 411 unmarried students, and various recreational facilities." Facilities on the island include a new grocery store, with 500-capacity cafeteria to open soon.	NYT, February 21, 1947, p. 21.	
August 28, 1947	NBI described as a "grassy, breezy dwelling community"		NYT, August 28, 1947, p. 3.	
October 18, 1947	"A provisional charter for five years [is] granted to Riverside Campus Nursery School, Inc."	The school, "will serve the children of veterans... who live in a state housing project for veterans' families.	NYT, October 18, 1947, p. 17.	
September 20, 1948	Improved ferry service to NBI started.	New ferry boat, the Williamsburgh, "will accommodate twenty-five automobiles and 472 persons. Her predecessor, the Greenwich Village, carried four cars and 100 persons."	NYT, September 21, 1948, p. 24.	Yes

Date	Event	Comments	Source	Image
1949	1000 people live on the island.	Island uninhabited except for the Lighthouse during WWII.	Stanton, Jessie and Mabel Rossbach Learning by Experience: the Island Nursery School. Riverside Campus: North Brother Island, 1949.	Yes
June 8, 1949	State Division of Housing publishes book on Riverside Campus nursery school.		NYT, June 8, 1949, p. 31.	Yes
January 28, 1950	Round trip fare for ferry transportation remains at 10 cents, despite efforts to eliminate fee.		NYT, January 28, 1950, p. 30.	
June 21, 1951	State lease of NBI expires.	“Buildings are expected to be returned to the city in about three months.” Former hospital buildings on NBI considered as possible site for care and treatment of teenage drug addicts	NYT, June 21, 1951, p. 18.	
July 1, 1951	“The Riverside Hospital on North Brother Island in the East River is to be put in use ‘at the earliest possible opportunity’ for the treatment of youthful narcotics addicts.”		NYT, July 1, 1951, p. 1.	
October 26, 1951	Board of Estimate appropriates, “\$513,000 for alterations and equipment of the building on [NBI]... to be converted into a rehabilitation center for teen-age narcotics addicts.”		NYT, October 26, 1951, p. 1.	
May 17, 1952	New public school planned for NBI.	P.S. 619 will accommodate 250 students, and will be, “housed in a building directly opposite Riverside Hospital. It is a modern structure that is being altered by the Department of Public Works to meet the Board of Education’s requirements. Personnel will include a junior principal, a clerk, four industrial arts teachers and twelve other teachers.”	NYT, May 17, 1952, p. 19.	
June 26, 1952	City and state officials tour new hospital facility prior to opening.		NYT, June 26, 1952	Yes
July 1, 1952	Rehabilitation center for “youthful users of narcotics,” opens on NBI.		NYT, July 2, 1951, p. 9.	
1953	Lighthouse on the southern tip of the island is no longer used.		http://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/lighthouses/object.cfm?id=70	

Date	Event	Comments	Source	Image
January 24, 1953	“Narcotics Hospital, Planned for Juveniles, Fails in Effort to Meet Older Patients’ Needs”		NYT, January 24, 1953, p. 11.	
1954-55	Map: City of New York department of Public Works, Division of Buildings. North Brother Island, Borough of Bronx for the Department of Hospitals. Demolition of Existing Concrete Buildings and Alterations to Electrical Systems.	Shows detailed electrical plan.	NYCMA:Map S-117	Yes
1955	Map: City of New York department of Public Works, Division of Buildings. North Brother Island, Borough of Bronx for the Department of Hospitals. Demolition of Existing Concrete Buildings and Re-Alignment of Roadway.	Demolition of Existing Concrete Buildings and Re-Alignment of Roadway. Good details of road and curb. Details for South and East edge of island only. Shows man hole cover and utility tunnels. Some landscaping indicated, for example U.G.A. = undisturbed grass area.	NYCMA:Map S-116	Yes
1958	South Brother Island: John Gerosa sells island to Manhattan Sand Company		MRLNotes, 101	
May 2, 1958	“South Brother Island Sold to Manhattan Sand Company”	“John Gerosa, president of the Metropolitan Roofing Supplies Co., Inc., has sold South Brother Island in the East River, midway between 138 th St., the Bronx, and Rikers Island, to Manhattan Sand Co., Inc. Mr. Gerosa was represented by Irving J.W. Marx of Friedman, Marx & Handler, attorneys, and James P. Clark was the broker. The island consists of about seven and one-half acres above water, and about fourteen acres below high-water mark. It was the summer home of the late Col. Jacob Ruppert, and was acquired by Mr. Gerosa shortly after Col. Ruppert’s death.”	No indication where newspaper article originated. Under Real Estate Section.	
c.1960	Map: Topographic Map of NBI.	“Site for Institution for Female Prisoners”. From City of New York Department of Public Works Division of Engineering Services, Topographical Section. Shows footprints of all buildings, paths, and roads, trees,	NYCMA:Map S-111	Yes
June 1962	North Brother Island, formerly known as one of the Gesellen, is part of the Bronx and contains Riverside Hospital, a treatment center for narcotic addicts. South Brother Island is a part of Queens.	Both North and South Brother Islands were once known as Gesellen, a Dutch name that means companions or brothers.	MRLNotes, 99-101	
1964	Drug rehabilitation center on NBI closes		Encyclo of NYC, 853	
1969	Map: Coast and Geodetic Survey Map (C. & G.S. 226)	Includes building footprints and tidal heights.	NYPL, Maps Division	

Date	Event	Comments	Source	Image
1970	City of New York offers NBI for sale		Encyclo of NYC, 853	
1971	<p>“Abandoned North Brother Island Has Jewel of a Future”</p> <p>-proposed uses</p> <p>-past ferry service</p>	<p>Seagulls nest in buildings. Hospital in 1950’s was PS619 for drug addicted teens. Church of St. John of the Sea in ruinous state. “1948 Dodge rots in the garage of nurses quarters” -“Island overrun by wild plants and small maples.” Lighthouse quarters maintained by USCG but no one lives on the island. EPA places hold on NYC attempt to auction island. Commissioner Jerry Kretchmer asks for delay to study the potential use of NBI as site for disposal plant. Other proposed use is for gambling. Idea includes casino, hotels, and convention center. Ferry service once ran from NBI to College Point, Queens as well as to 134th St in the Bronx. Hydrofoils considered as high speed ferry option as well as footbridge to Bronx. Proposal requires demolition of all buildings and structures.</p>	<p><i>Sunday News</i> January 17, 1971</p>	Yes
1974	<p>“Island Unused for 10 Years Is Still Center of Dispute”</p> <p>-proposed uses</p> <p>-brief historical overview</p> <p>-aerial photo of island</p>	<p>Advocate for visionary plan for NBI as waterfront property is Robert Abrams, Bronx Borough President. Abrams would like island to be an “environmental monitoring station with recreational an parks facilities.” Wild pheasants nesting on NBI. 15 buildings remain and are considered beyond repair.</p>	NYT, July 28, 1974	Yes
February 2, 1976	“North Brother Island for Lease”	<p>“North Brother Island, a 20-acre, city-owned piece of land off Port Morris in the South Bronx that has been vacant for more than a decade, will be offered for long-term lease for commercial or industrial development by private entrepreneurs. Real Estate Commissioner Ira Ducan said the city, which sought unsuccessfully to sell the island five years ago, hopes that 1,000 new jobs would be provided by a business lessee.”</p>	NYT, February 2, 1976, 27	
August 23, 1981	‘City Seeks Plans for Use of East River Island’	Discusses sale of island. Brief history. by Molly Ivins	NYT, August 23, 1981	
August 24, 1981	‘Promoting an Island Cast Adrift by Time’	Possibilities for redevelopment and request for proposals. by Renee Edelman and Mary Ann Giordano	<i>Daily News</i> , August 24, 1981, 31	
August 15, 1982	‘City Parcels to Bidders with Better Ideas’	Brief history of island. Discusses possibilities for redevelopment. by Dee Wedemeyer	NYT, August 15, 1982, R7	Yes

North Brother Island

Date	Event	Comments	Source	Image
1984	Prison Plan for NBI	Governor Cuomo proposes NBI prison to replace site in South Bronx. TB Hospital would house some of prison population.	NYT, March 6, 1984	Yes
1984	Prison Plan NBI	Rikers Island escapees occasionally swim to NBI. Ferry dock propositions at 132 nd St, 135 th St, and 140 th St in Bronx.	<i>The Bronx News</i> April 15, 1984	Yes
1985	Prison Plan Dropped	Cost too high for prison on NBI	<i>Bronx Press-Review</i> May 16, 1985	
1987	NBI Photo Exhibition at South Street Seaport	Betsy Tanner and Christina Forbes kayak to NBI and take photos published in Seaport magazine as well as exhibition.	<i>Daily News</i> June 17, 1987	
1990	Prison use again	Brief article about second prison plan that was not considered. A brief description of an island visit speaks of 15 building "husks". Brief island history included.	<i>The New Yorker</i> May 14, 1990	
No date given	"Bronx, Queens Claim South Brother Island; Only Seagulls Inhabit It"	Chronology of S. Brother Island. Manhattan Sand Co. owned in 1958 Article by John McNamara.	Source of article not indicated. Section titled 'Bronx in History'	

North Brother Island

Abbreviations:

CF: Course Folder

Encyclo of NYC: The Encyclopedia of New York City

King's: King's Handbook of New York City 1893

MM: Molly McDonald

MN: Medical News:

MRL Notes: Municipal Reference Library Notes

MSR: Medical and Surgical Reporter

NAR: The North American Review

NPG: The National Police Gazette

NYCMA: New York City Municipal Archives

NYT: New York Times

PJ: The Phrenological Journal and Science of Health

Preston: Preston, Thomas D. "Our Hospitals" Godey's Magazine (Nov. 1892), 125, 749; APS Online: 507

Stokes: The Iconography of Manhattan Island

T&R: Times and Register

WPA: The WPA Guide to New York City

Repositories Consulted for Timeline:

Molly McDonald

New York City Municipal Archives

New York Times

New York Public Library

ProQuest American Periodicals Series Online (1740-1900). <http://proquest.umi.com>.

ProQuest Historical Newspapers: New York Times (1885-2002) <http://proquest.umi.com>.



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