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New-York  
from  
Canal & Street  
to  
Greenwich  
Village-  
1807-21.

John Randel Esq.  
Civil Engineer.

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R18

Q 1776

City of New York, north of Canal street, in 1808 to 1821.

*John Varick*

In the years 1808, 1809, and 1810, whilst acting as Secretary and Surveyor to the "Commissioners of Streets and Roads in the city of New York," and also as their Chief Engineer, superintending and aiding in the surveys and maps of the assistants employed by them, I went almost daily from the city to our office, *then* in the country, at the northeast corner of Christopher and Herring streets, previous to performing field work with them in the suburbs of the city, and on distant parts of the Island; at which times, and subsequently, I obtained the following information.

In going from the city to our office in 1808 and 1809, I generally crossed a ditch cut through Lispenard's salt meadow (*now a culvert under Canal street*) on a plank laid across it for a *crossing-place*, about midway between a stone bridge on Broadway, with a narrow embankment at each end, connecting it with the upland, and an excavation then being made at, and said to be for, the foundation of the present St. John's Church, on Varick street.

From this *crossing-place* I followed a well-beaten path, leading from the city to the *then* village of Greenwich, passing over open and partly fenced lots and fields, *not at that time under cultivation*, and remote from any dwelling-house, now remembered by me, *except Col. Aaron Burr's* former country seat, on elevated ground, called "*Richmond Hill*," which was from about 100 to 150 yards *west* of this path, and was then occupied as a place of refreshment for gentlemen taking a drive from the city. Its site is now in Charlton street, between Varick and McDougal streets. I continued along this main path to a branch path diverging from it to the east, south of *Manetta water*, (*now Minet a street*), which branch path I followed to *Herring street*, passing on my way there, from about 200 to 250 yards *west*, the country residence of *Col. Richard Varick*, on elevated ground *east* of *Manetta water*, called "*Tusculum*," the site of which is now "*Varick Place*," on Sullivan street, between Bleecker and Houston streets. I entered the south end of *Herring street*, a short distance beyond *Manetta water*, and continued along the easterly side of that street to our office, at the northeast corner of it and Christopher street.

\* I passed only *three* dwelling-houses on the easterly side of this street, and they were two story frame buildings, connected by fences, extending northerly to Christopher street, and southerly to about Jones street. There was no street opened eastward out of this part of Herring street, nor did I observe any opening in that fence for any such street. The *middle building* of those three on Herring street, *all of which are yet standing*, is the one hereinbefore described by me as the house occupied by a Mr. Ryder, with whom Thomas Paine and Madame Bonneville and her two sons resided to within a few weeks of his death, and now No. 293 Bleeker street.

Col. Richard Varick, who was *Mayor* of the city of New York for the *twelve years* from 1789 to 1801, always became *bail* for my appearance at Court, when, in the absence of the Commissioners, I was arrested by the Sheriff, on numerous suits instituted against me as agent of the Commissioners, for trespass and damage committed by my workmen, in passing over grounds, cutting off branches of trees, &c., to make surveys under instructions from the Commissioners. The persons who instituted those suits were a few of the numerous opponents of the field of operations of the Commissioners, which included their property in the *then new Plan for the city*, many of whose descendants have been made rich thereby.

This Plan of the Commissioners, thus objected to *before its completion*, is *now the pride and boast of the city*; and the facilities afforded by it for *buying, selling, and improving* real estate, on streets, avenues, and public squares, already laid out and established on the ground by monumental stones and bolts, *at the cost of the city*; and of greater width and extent, safety from conflagration, beautiful uniformity and convenience, than could otherwise have been obtained; having *streets* from 60 to 100 feet in width, and from  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to  $2\frac{1}{4}$  miles in length, and *avenues* 100 feet in width, and from  $6\frac{1}{2}$  to  $11\frac{1}{2}$  miles in length, and extending *in straight lines* from river to river, and to the end of the Island at Kingsbridge; with 10 public squares, exclusive of three triangles, containing in the aggregate 470 acres (and 576 acres, including their surrounding streets), and admitting the free circulation of air through them; thereby *avoiding* the frequent error of laying out *short, narrow, and crooked streets*, with *alleys and courts*, endangering extensive conflagrations, confined air, unclean streets, &c., must have greatly enhanced the value of real estate on New York Island, • thus laid out on the Commissioners' Plan.

In consequence of those suits, the Commissioners reported to the Corporation the impracticability of their completing the duties of

their appointment unless protected from such vexatious interruptions; whereupon the Corporation obtained from the Legislature an Act, passed 24th March, 1809, authorizing the Commissioners, and all persons under them, to enter upon grounds to be surveyed, and to "cut down trees, and do other damage;" and allowing a specified time thereafter within which to compensate the owners for such damage.

The ditch over which I passed at the "crossing-place," in going from the city to our office near *Greenwich village*, was cut through *Lispenard's* salt meadow, from *Hudson's River*, northeastward to and under the *Stone Bridge* on *Broadway*, and continued to the "*Collect*" or "*Fresh Water Pond*," East of *Broadway*; from which water, for the use of the city, was taken to "*the Tea Water Pump*," on *Duane street*, near the present missionary church at "*the Five Points*."

This pump furnished water to the city, in addition to a scanty supply of tea and drinking water obtained from "*Knapp's Spring*," near the west end of *Greenwich lane*, and from other springs, from which it was brought to the city by carts, in hogsheads, and sold by the pailful.

The *Collect* was at that time filled up by a collection of spare earth and rubbish, &c., carted from the city, which being of greater specific gravity than the debris, or mud at the bottom of "*the Pond*," or "*Collect*," caused it to rise, and mix with the rubbish and stand out; forming a very offensive and irregular mound of several acres; which appeared to me, as seen from *Broadway*, between which and it there were no buildings, to be from 12 to 15 feet in height above the level of the tide, and of the water remaining in the *Pond*. It is now occupied by *Centre street*, southerly to near "*The Tombs*," or "*Halls of Justice*."

On *Broadway*, north of *Lispenard's* salt meadow (now *Canal street*), to "*Sailors' Snug Harbor*," a handsome brick building, called by that name, erected on elevated ground near the bend in *Broadway* at the present 10th street, and formerly the residence of *Captain Randall*, who bequeathed it to the Trustees of "*Sailors' Snug Harbor*," together with his adjoining grounds, opposite to and also south of *Grace Church* to *Art street* and *Greenwich lane*; and from the *Bowery road*, westward, to *Manetta water*, there were only a few scattered buildings, except country residences which were built back from *Broadway*, with court yards and lawns of trees and shrubs in front of them.

Between *Sailors' Snug Harbor* (now 10th street) and *Love lane* (now 21st street) were a narrow causeway and perhaps from 6 to 8

frame dwelling-houses. This part of the present Broadway was at that time the "*Bloomingdale Road*."

By the "*Commissioners' Plan*," Broadway was to have been *straightened* at this place, by continuing it from the bend at the present 10th street, northward between 3d and 4th avenues to 23d street, where it was lost in "*The Parade*" (a public square laid out by them for military parades, containing 238 7-10 acres, which was reduced by a statute of 15th April, 1814, to 89 1-10 acres, and by a later statute it was reduced to less than seven acres, and is now called "*Madison square*."

This part of the Commissioners' Plan for *straightening* Broadway was repealed by a subsequent statute, and the bend in it remained as before; otherwise, Broadway would have intersected 23d street near the present "*Free Academy*" on Lexington avenue.

*The Bowery* was at that time (1809) the principal road leading out of the city to *Harlem* and *Manhattanville*, and thence to Boston and Albany, and was settled, in part, to near North (now Houston) street. At this street the Commissioners' Plan for the streets and avenues commenced; north of it we encountered in our surveys extensive ancient and neglected hawthorn hedge-fences, then grown to saplings, extending along the east side of the Bowery, in front of the Stuyvesant estate, that were impassible without the aid of an axe; a short distance beyond which the Bowery road and the (then) *Bloomingdale road* formed a junction at the Commissioners' 16th street (now a point in *Union Square*, about 110 yards southwest of *The Everett House*), and formed an acute angle at that place, which, when further intersected by the streets crossing it, left so small an amount of ground for building purposes, that the Commissioners instructed me to lay out the ground, at the *union* of those streets and roads, for a *public square*, which, from that circumstance, they named *Union Place*.

From this angle at 16th street, the *Bloomingdale Road* (more recently called *Broadway*) continued northward, through *Manhattanville*, to near the gate of the country residence of Dr. Samuel Bradhurst (now near 147th street at 9th avenue), where it formed a junction with the *Kingsbridge Road*, passing in its route from 16th street along the westerly side of the *United States Magazine*, opposite 25th street and 5th avenue, across "*The Parade*," which the Commissioners set apart "for *military exercise*, and also to assemble, in case of "need, the *force* destined to defend the city." It contained, by their Plan, 238 7-10 acres.

This road thence crossed 57th street, 120 yards east of *Blooming-*



*dale Square*, which, by the Commissioners' Plan, extended from 53d to 57th street, and from 8th to 9th avenue, and contained 18 1-10 acres; it thence passed through *Harsenville*, from 68th to 72d street, at 10th avenue, and crossed 79th street 167 yards west of 10th avenue, and 500 yards west of *Manhattan Square*, which, by the Commissioners' Plan, extended from 77th to 81st street, and from 8th to 9th avenue, and contained 19 1-10 acres; thence crossed 96th street; west of 10th avenue, and east of *Striker's Bay*, on Hudson River; thence crossed 117th street, 113 yards west of 11th avenue, and 200 yards west of the *New York Hospital* and *Bloomingdale Asylum* for the Insane, and thence passed through the *Barrier Gate*, built across this road at the *Manhattanville Pass* during the war of 1812, at 123d street, 33 yards west of 11th avenue; the road then passed through *Manhattanville*, from 126th street at 11th avenue to 132d street, 100 yards east of 11th avenue (the end of the *Manhattanville wharf* on Hudson's River, opposite this road, between 132d and 133d streets, and west of it, and west of 12th avenue, is distant from *Fort Lee Ferry wharf* 2,840 yards, and 1,472 yards from *Woolsey's wharf*, on the west shore of Hudson's River, as measured by "*Triangulation*" in 1821); thence passed 100 yards north of the country residence of the widow of *Col. Alexander Hamilton*, at 143d street, 80 yards east of 10th avenue; and thence to the junction of this road with the *Kingsbridge Road*, 10 yards east of 9th avenue, between 146th and 147th streets.

"*The Eastern Post Road*" diverged northeasterly from the *Bloomingdale Road*, at 23d street and 5th avenue, and run by a circuitous route through the *village of Harlem*, from 118th to 125th street, west of 3d avenue to "the *Harlem Bridge*," built over *Harlem River*, near 130th street and 3d avenue.

This road, in its route from the *Bloomingdale road* at 23d street and 5th avenue, passed south of "*the United States Magazine*" at 25th street, and "*The Old Pottersfield*," at 26th street (both of which were included in "*The Parade*," and their sites are now covered by *Madison square*). It crossed the 4th avenue at the *Middle road*, near 29th street, and passed through the *village of Kip's Bay*, from 32d to 38th street, west of 3d avenue; it thence passed the "*Cross Road*" to "*Burr's Corner*" (on the *Middle road*, opposite the present *Croton Reservoir*) at 41st street, and the road to *Turtle Bay* on the *East River*, between 47th and 48th streets; thence crossed the 2d avenue at 52d street, and recrossing it between 62d and 63d streets, entered the present 3d avenue at the southeast corner of *Hamilton Square*, which,

by the Commissioners' Plan, extended from 66th to 68th street from 3d to 5th avenue, and contained 20 6-10 acres. This continued thence along the present 3d avenue, passing Harsen's C road at 71st street, and east of Smith's Tavern, opposite "*K Bridge*," at 77th street, where the Commissioners held their office 1809 and 1810. It crossed the division line between New York Harlem Commons between 81st and 82d streets, and continued a 3d avenue to near 83d street. At this place several branch r diverged from it eastwardly to the following *places* on the River near Hell Gate, to wit: *Commodore Chauncey's*, on the south of 85th street; *Hell Gate Ferry*, at the foot of 86th street, opposite the north end of Blackwell's Island; *John Jacob Astor's*, on the south side of 88th street; *Oliver Gracie's*, on the north side of 88th street — *Prime*, on the north side of 89th street, and *William R. Under*, on the north side of 91st street. The three last named country seats were nearly opposite the following *rocks* at the entrance of Hell Gate, to wit: *Hancock's Rock*, 3 *Gridiron Rocks*, 4 *Middle Reef Rocks*, 2 *Flood Rocks*, and *Mill Rock*. *The Pot Rock*, in the middle of Hell Gate, was about 700 yards east of Mill Rock, and south of *The* was *Way's Reef Rock*, and north of it was *The Frying Pan*, *Holmes' Rocks*, and 3 *Hogsback Rocks*. During the war of 1812, a *b* house was built on *Mill Rock*, and opposite to it, at *Hallet's Point*, Long Island shore, *Fort Stevens* was built; and on the high ground southeast of it a *tower* was erected, called Castle Bogardus. The fortifications were built to command *Hell Gate Pass*.

From the 3d avenue, near 83d street, this Eastern Post road diverged westerly, and crossed and recrossed the division line between New York and Harlem commons, and crossed 4th avenue near 85th street; thence passed over the southwestern corner of *Observatory Place*, and intersected the *Middle Road* at 90th street. This *Observatory Place*, or square for *Reservoir*, was laid out, on the Commissioners' Plan from 89th to 94th street, and from 5th to 6th avenue, and contained 26 3-10 acres. From 90th street, this Eastern Post road continued along the Middle road to 92d street, and there diverged westerly, and passed between 5th and 6th avenues (where it was also called "*the Kingsbridge road*"). through the Barrier gate, built across it during the war of 1812, at *McGowan's Pass*, at 107th street, about 100 yards east of 6th avenue: thence crossing a small bridge over the head of Benson's tide mill pond, near 109th street and 5th avenue, passed through the village of Harlem, at 116th to 125th street, near and west of Third avenue, to Harlem Bridge.

During the war of 1812, the Barrier gate at McGowan's pass was connected with the Barrier gate at Manhattanville pass by the following military defenses, which were extended across the Island, from Harlem River to Hudson River, to wit:

Fortifications on Benson's point, near 3d avenue and 106th street; Fort Clinton, between 106th and 107th streets, and about 170 yards east of 6th avenue; Fort Fish, between 105th and 106th streets, and about ten yards east of 6th avenue; a stone tower, about 14 yards south of 109th street and 7 yards west of 7th avenue; a stone tower, between 113th and 114th streets, and between 9th and 10th avenues; a stone tower, on the south side of 121st street, and about 110 yards east of 10th avenue; a stone tower, on the south side of 123d street, and about 54 yards east of 10th avenue; Fort Haight, at Manhattanville pass, about 20 yards north of 124th street, and 120 yards east of 10th avenue.

"*The Middle Road*" diverged northward from "*the Eastern Post Road*," near 29th street and 4th avenue, and thence ascended "*Likensburgh Hill*" (now Murray's Hill), and connected with Manhattan (now 5th) avenue, at the present Croton Reservoir on 42d street, and continued along that avenue to its intersection with "*the Eastern Post Road*" at 90th street; and thence continued on a straight line, along a (then) new road, called the "*The Middle*" or "*Harlem Bridge Road*," to Harlem Bridge, at 130th street and 3d avenue.

This road passed in its route from the Croton Reservoir at 42d street the following places, viz.: along the east side of Dr. Hosack's "Elgin (Botanic) Garden," from 47th to 51st street; about 210 yards east of the Powder House, between 64th and 65 streets; along the west end of *Hamilton Square*, as laid out on the Commissioners' Plan, from 5th to 3d avenue and from 66th to 68th street; crossed "the Harsen Cross Road" at 71st street; crossed the division line between New York and Harlem commons at 87th street; reached the southwest corner of Observatory place at 89th street, and crossed that square to 94th street; thence crossed "Harlem Marsh" square, which was laid out, on the Commissioners' Plan, from 106th to 109th street, and from 5th avenue eastward to Harlem River at "Benson's point," and contained 68 6-10 acres; and thence passed through Harlem village from 116th to 125th street.

"*The Kingsbridge Road*" commenced at the crossing of the Middle road by the Eastern Post road, at 90th to 92d street; and continued along the Eastern Post road through the Barrier gate, at McGowan's pass, to "Harlem lane," near 108th street, where it diverged east-

wardly to Harlem; it thence continued along that lane over Harlem flat to Myer's corner, about 67 yards west of 8th avenue at 131st street—passing in its route along “Harlem lane,” the residence of Valentine Nutter, in 6th avenue, between 109th and 110th streets; and thence passed 73 yards west of the southwest corner of “Harlem square,” which was laid out on the Commissioners' Plan from 117th to 121st street, and from 6th to 7th avenue, and contained 18 1-10 acres; crossed the road leading from Manhattanville to Harlem at 125th street, between 8th and 9th avenues, and east of the Manhattanville Academy at 126th street and 10th avenue. From Myer's corner the Kingsbridge road continued northward, between 8th and 9th avenues, to its intersection with the Bloomingdale road at 9th avenue, between 146th and 147th streets; passing in its route from Myer's corner west of the country residence of Cadwallader D. Colden—who was Mayor of the city in the years 1818, 1819, and 1820—standing in 7th avenue, between 139th and 140th streets; passing Bussing's Point road 133 yards west of 8th avenue, between 143d and 144th streets; thence ascended Bradhurst hill west of a Revolutionary redoubt at 145th street, and connected with the Bloomingdale road 10 yards east of 9th avenue, between 146th and 147th streets; this Kingsbridge road thence passed the 10-mile stone, the southern side of which is described in the Commissioners' report as “being touched at the surface of the ground by the southern side of 153d street;” thence passed 120 yards west of the residence of Madame Jumel, the widow of Stephen Jumel, and afterwards the widow of Col. Aaron Burr, standing 150 yards east of 10th avenue, between 160th and 161st streets. At 161st street the road passed east of and opposite to Mount Washington spring, at 11th avenue, and redoubts, &c., from 11th to 12th avenue; at 175th to 176th street the road passed 67 yards east of 12th avenue, and 900 yards east of a fort and redoubts on a point of rocks on Hudson's River, about 30 yards south of 176th street, and 200 yards west of 14th avenue. From this point to the wharf at Fort Lee ferry was 1,950 yards, and to the opposite shore of Hudson River, at the foot of the Pallisade, was 1,267 yards, as measured by triangulation in 1821. At 183d street the road was 43 yards east of 12th avenue, and 343 yards east of *Fort Washington*, on 13th avenue. At 192d street the road was 33 yards west of 12th avenue, and 533 yards west of *Fort George*. At 196th street the road was 133 yards east of 13th avenue, and 233 yards east of *Fort Tryon*. At 206th street the road crossed the west side of 12th avenue, and was 730 yards east of

Tubby Hook Point, on Hudson's River, from which point the oblique distance across that river to Norman's cottage, on the New Jersey shore, was 1,570 yards, as measured by triangulation in 1821. Between 208th and 209th streets this road was opposite the residence of *Jacobus Dyckman*, and 150 yards west of 11th avenue. From 213th to 217th street the road passed along the foot of the eastern slope of marble quarries. At 216th street the road was 33 yards west of 10th avenue, and 1,070 yards east of *Cock Hill Fort*, on high ground, between Spuyten Duyvel (Spiteing Devil) creek and Hudson's River. At 222d street the road crossed the *Canal* cut across New York Island from Harlem River to Spuyten Duyvel creek. At 226th street the road was 150 yards east of *Fort Prince Charles*, on 10th avenue, at the southerly side of that street. At 228th street and 10th avenue, where the most northerly monument on New York Island was placed by me, Kingsbridge road was about 34 yards east of that avenue; and McComb's mill, built over Harlem River, along the west side of Kingsbridge, was about 17 yards north of that most northerly monument.

"*The Harlem Road*" passed from the village of Harlem over the Harlem Flat, north of "Snake Hill," on 5th avenue, from 121st to 123d street (now Mount Morris square), and formed a junction with the Kingsbridge road at Myer's corner.

*The Bussing's Point road* diverged eastwardly from the Kingsbridge road, between 143d and 144th streets, and intersected the 8th avenue at 145th street, and continued along it to near 149th street, and thence diverged northeastward, on a straight line, to McComb's Bridge and Dam across Harlem River, at 155th street, 20 yards west of 7th avenue.

All the redoubts and forts from Bussing's Point road to Kingsbridge were built during the Revolutionary War, and consisted of embankments of earth, some of which remained standing, from 6 to 8 feet in height, and the outlines of the ruins of others remained pretty well defined upon the ground, when I surveyed them in the years 1819, 1820.

I obtained the names of those fortifications from Jacobus Dyckman, on the Kingsbridge road, and other old gentlemen in that neighborhood—some of whom informed me that they lived there when those fortifications were being built, during the Revolutionary War.

The streets and avenues herein mentioned, although reported on the Plan filed by the Commissioners in 1811, for streets as far north as 155th street, and for 10th avenue thence to Harlem River near

Kingsbridge, and all the streets and avenues north of 155th street were extended across the Island, and northward to Harlem River, on maps subsequently made by me and filed in the Street Commissioners' office. Yet many of the streets and avenues on New York Island were not defined upon the ground by monumental stones and iron bolts till as late as about the year 1818, and none of them were placed by me north of 155th street, except on 10th avenue to 228th street, near Kingsbridge ; and the distances herein *stated in yards* were obtained from measurements made on those maps.

All the streets laid out by the Commissioners were numbered from Houston (formerly North) street, which is about one mile north of the City Hall ; and as twenty of these streets, including the adjoining block, measure *one mile* (within about a yard), the proximate distance *in miles* from the City Hall to any of the places herein described by the number of a street, may be readily obtained by dividing such number by 20, and adding *one m'le* to the result.

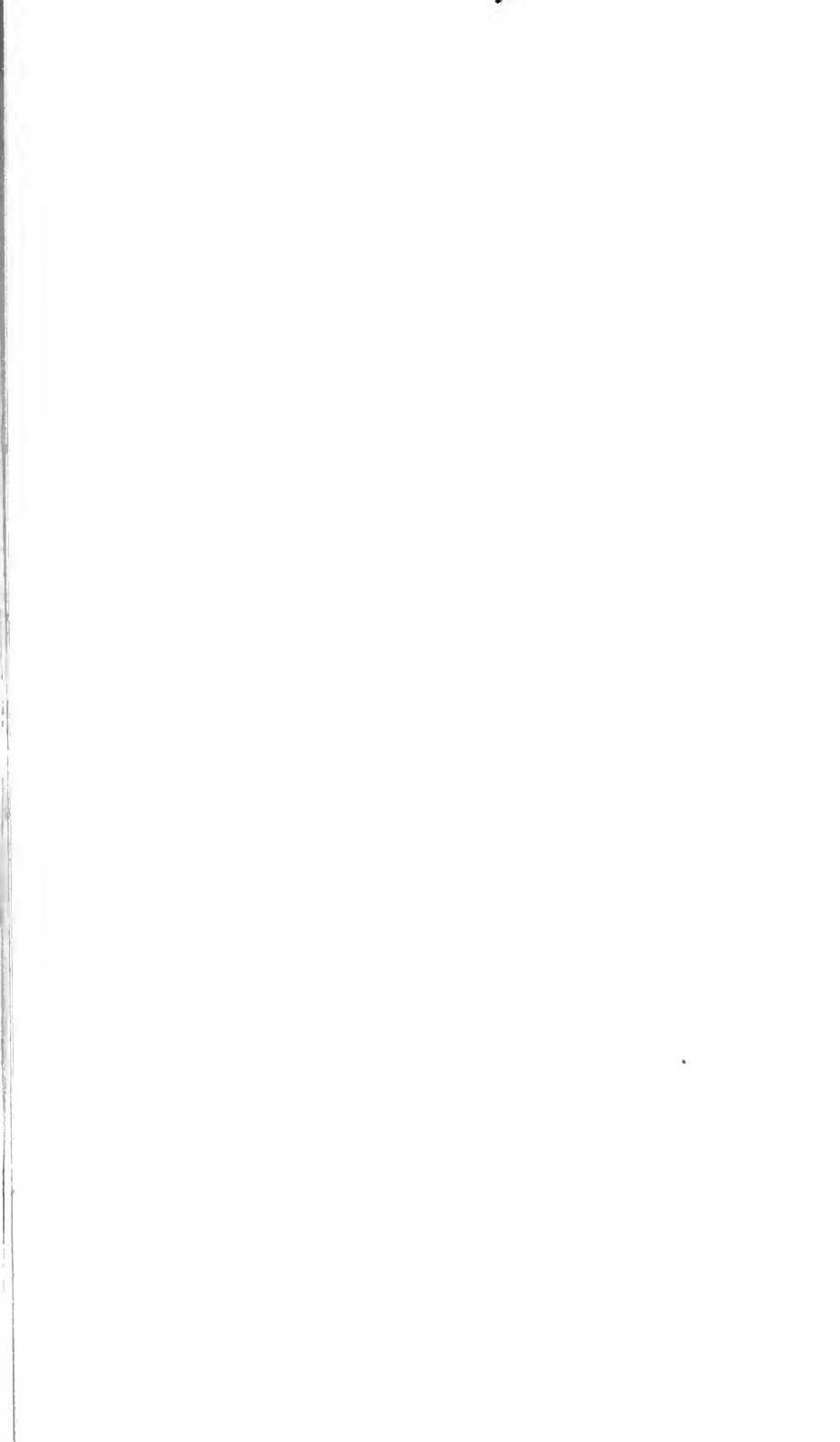
Take, for example, the village of Harlem (which is described as extending from 116th to 125th street) as at 120th street, which, being divided by 20, gives 6 miles as its distance from Houston street, to which add one 1 mile, and it gives 7 miles for the distance between Harlem, at 120th street, and the City Hall.

Very respectfully,

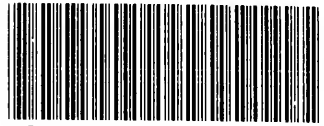
JOHN RANDEL, Junr.,

*Civil Engineer.*

THE END.



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