

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

The Reminiscences of

Joan Geismar

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Joan Geismar conducted by Interviewer Sarah Dziedzic on March 15, 2023. This interview is part of the New York Preservation Archive Project's collection of individual oral history interviews.

The reader is asked to bear in mind that they are reading a verbatim transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose. The views expressed in this oral history interview do not necessarily reflect the views of the New York Preservation Archive Project.

Joan Geismar began her career in a doctoral program at Columbia University's Anthropology Department. She had planned to study prehistoric archaeology, but the need to complete dissertation research close to her family—at the time, she was married and living with her husband and their three young children—led her to a 19th century site in nearby New Jersey, and so, with no regrets, she became a historical urban archaeologist instead.

In 1980, Geismar began working in New York City. She refers to this time as the “Golden Age of archaeology” because of the 1978 environmental laws, the City Environmental Quality Review and State Environmental Quality Review, which required archaeological analysis in and around historic sites where construction and infrastructure work was planned. This led to many rich archaeological discoveries and documentation. She describes uncovering part of an 18th century merchant ship, along with over three hundred thousand additional artifacts, at 175 Water Street. At Washington Square Park, where she's worked on many projects over the years, she explains how she confirmed details about the site's use as a potter's field in the early 19th century. She also describes her archeological findings at the Hunterfly Road Houses during a project for the Weeksville Heritage Center.

In this interview, Geismar talks about the challenges of returning to school as a working mother, Kent Barwick's role overseeing archeology for the first time at the Landmarks Preservation Commission, the relationship between archaeology and preservation, the founding of Professional Archaeologists of New York City, and her longtime advocacy of archaeology at 19th century sites.

Transcriptionist: Azure Bourne

Session: 1

Interviewee: Joan Geismar

Location: video call

Interviewer: Sarah Dziedzic

Date: March 15, 2023

Q: Today is March 15, 2023. This is Sarah Dziedzic interviewing Dr. Joan Geismar for the New York Preservation Archive Project, and we're connecting via video call. Can you start by saying your name and giving yourself a brief introduction?

Geismar: My name is Joan Geismar, and I'm an urban archaeologist and have been for a long, long time. And the interesting thing is I still love it. I'm a New York resident City resident, but that's on hold right now because of COVID. It's been on hold for three years and seems to be continuing. The thing is, I am still working, trying to do New York City archaeology from where I am on Eastern Long Island, and it's been a challenge. But it's also been somewhat interesting. Zoom comes in handy, it really does. I actually watched some digging, not archaeological digging, but just to get some information, and I watched it on Zoom. I could say, "Now stop. Now go. Okay right. Could you go to the left a little bit?" It was terrific. I didn't get cold, I didn't get wet, it was lovely. Anyway, what I do is urban archaeology, which means archaeology of the city. And I came to it almost by accident. It sort of evolved, and I've loved it for decades.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about where you grew up, and what your first encounters were with landscape?

Geismar: I was born in Brooklyn, and I grew up in Jamaica, Queens, in the same community that

Mario and Andrew Cuomo lived, and Donald Trump lived, which is sort of interesting, and was totally apolitical until recently, despite that. I went to public schools and—I have a very strange school career. I went to a high school in Queens that was very crowded, and I decided that I really didn't like being there. So I learned that you could leave a New York City high school if you had enough credits, so I made sure I got my credits. I went to summer school and then just left. I never graduated from high school, I just left. I have a doctorate in anthropology but no high school diploma [laughs], which is sort of wild—no one ever asked to see my diploma, so it worked out. I'm half teasing, but it is what happened. I was in a hurry and I don't know what I was in such a hurry about. What can I say?

I was an English major at Barnard College, and I thought I'd be in publishing, which I was for a minute. Actually, to step back, I went to North Carolina for my first year of college, because Women's College of the University of North Carolina was the only place out of town that would accept me since I wasn't accredited. I hadn't finished the junior year of high school when I applied, and it was a terrific experience for a New York teenager to go to Greensboro, North Carolina for a year. I loved that, too. It was a fantastic experience. But I decided that I didn't want to stay there. There were 2,500 women, and I thought maybe I'd prefer a co-ed school.

I had applied to the University of Michigan, and they said they couldn't possibly take me, but if I ever thought of transferring, I should think about it. So I thought about it, and I went to the University of Michigan for one semester. It was wonderful, I loved it. I had my own radio show, I was on a mock jury, everything was great. And then, for some reason, I decided I really wanted to be back in New York. So when I was home at break in January, I applied to Barnard, who had

also said they might consider me later [laughs]. I had an interview and the next day they called to say I was accepted. So back I went to Michigan, packed my clothes, and started Barnard a few days later. I was in a terrible hurry. I don't know what my hurry was, and I don't know why I was so flighty. But it turned out to be quite wonderful, and I completed my English major at Barnard.

Do you want my personal life? Yes? Okay. I met my husband, Tom Geismar, when I was out of school, and working at Random House where I was the slush reader. Do you know what that is? The slush reader? If you sent in a manuscript, or I sent in a manuscript, one that that did not come from an agent, twenty-year-old Joan [laughs] got to read it and decide. And they told me they didn't want me to find anything. And I kept saying, "Well, you know, Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind*, an unagented novel, went to ten publishing houses and was turned down until someone was smart enough to take it." But they didn't pay any attention to me, and I never did find anything. But I did send a letter out saying that Bennett Cerf—who was a television personality and the head of Random House at the time—has asked me to tell you to please look at this list of agents. That was if somebody had any of what I thought was talent. I don't know if I was right or wrong, or if anybody ever got anything from it.

Anyway, I met Tom then, and he was in a hurry. I was not, but he was, and we were married three months after we met. He asked me to marry him after six weeks, and [laughs] he had no one else to call, so [laughs] he asked me to marry him, and I did. We were married three months later, as I said, and that was a long time ago. We have three children (and now grandchildren) and I decided to go back to school when our youngest was six. I ended up at Columbia in the

Anthropology Department where I was studying to be a prehistoric archaeologist, dealing with Indigenous People in the northeast. At dissertation level, I couldn't find a site where I wouldn't have to move and I wasn't going to leave my husband and three children. And then one of my professors offered me a site on the Palisades of New Jersey, the Columbia field school, that turned out to be a community of freed slaves that went back to 1806. That was my dissertation, and that changed my life. I became a historical archaeologist and that's what I've remained.

Q: So let me ask you about deciding to go back to school when you did.

Geismar: It was not easy.

Q: What were some of the things on the scales to weigh that. What was the motivation? What were the challenges at the time?

Geismar: Well, it was half ego and half need to do something. I loved my children, they were young, but I married a man who is a very good and well known graphic designer. So I was "Tom Geismar's wife," and I think at some point I wanted to see if Tom Geismar could become my husband instead. I wanted an identity beyond Tom Geismar's wife, and, more so, beyond a wife and mother. Tom was actually working on an exhibit in Japan and he had some fantastic books around on Native Americans, and I was looking at them. I initially thought I'd go into art history to study the beautiful art that I saw in those books, and then I realized it was the people I wanted to study, not just the art. So that's when I switched to anthropology and archaeology at Columbia. On one hand, my desire to become an archaeologist was because I was truly

interested, but it also was a need that I had at the time. And it was not easy, no, not easy at all. I had been out of school for fifteen years, and to go back was a very big decision. But Tom was wonderfully supportive, which was very helpful, and he could pay for it, which was also helpful. Otherwise, I don't know what I would have done. And that's how it all began.

Q: What was the field of archaeology like at the time and what was the department like? For example, were there other mothers in the PhD program?

Geismar: Well, there may have been. Not in what I was doing. There were no—well, not at Columbia. There were some around. There was Lynn Ceci who was on Long Island. She also had gone back to school and it was not easy, because we weren't taken seriously—at first. There was Bert Salwen at NYU, and he was considered the Father of Urban Archaeology, and he was wonderful. I wasn't his student. Actually, I became his student to a degree, but he did not take people—women—who went back to school seriously, which I really found interesting because he was an engineer who changed careers, and that was okay. But for a woman who was a wife and mother to change her career was not as acceptable, which was very interesting. But on the other hand, he did ultimately accept me, actually, very much, but before that, he stopped me on some levels. But actually, his stopping me ended up helping me, because it was also one of the reasons I became an urban archaeologist. What I had wanted to do was study pre-history in the Northeast, and he made it impossible for me to get some data I needed. Maybe I shouldn't say that, but [laughs] it's true. So I had to shift my focus and it turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

But it wasn't easy to go back. That was true. I was not a student, Sarah, until I became a graduate student, and then I was really a student. I remember my son saying to me one day—he's the eldest child in the family, Peter—I was studying and he said, "You know, a woman's place is in the home. You should be standing in front of the ironing board with a cigarette dangling out of your mouth," and I didn't smoke. "That's what you should be doing." And he said it three times. And I said to him, "You know, Peter, if you say that again, I may smash you." [laughs] So he walked away. But he thought he was being funny I know, but it was more than being funny. It was hard for him when I became a student. Not for my daughters, but for him, I remember.

Q: My mother went back to school when I was in, maybe, fourth or fifth grade. And I think she would say something similar, that she wasn't a student until she was an adult and was going back to school for something that was important to her.

Geismar: It was the focus. Yes, and the focus was extreme, I must say. It became very important to me. I learned to read while in the bathtub, because with three kids around, it was very hard to study. So all my books became bigger [laughs] and bigger and bigger because of the steam. To this day, my great pleasure [laughs] is being in the bathtub and reading. You have to adapt to the circumstances.

Actually, I was thrilled going back to school. It was very exciting, and to see that my brain did indeed work was very nice. But there weren't any people like me in the class. There were some who were older than the average age, but they were not women, as I recall, unless I'm wrong about that. I take it back, one or two were. It wasn't that unique in New York.

Q: Do you remember starting to look at the city in a different way as you were learning archaeology? I know it's an interesting time in this city that a lot of people would describe as bad [laughs]. Late 1970s, let's say.

Geismar: Well, yes.

Q: So how were you looking at the city, and how did your knowledge of archaeology start to impact how you saw the city?

Geismar: Well, first of all, my dissertation was in New Jersey, so I wasn't in the city. I was living in the city, but I was in New Jersey. My research was in New Jersey and that was my focus. When I did start working in the city, my first day was in 1980. That's an era that a lot of us call the "Golden Age" of archaeology, because there was so much work in lower Manhattan where buildings were being built in and near the historic district. But there also were new environmental laws that went into effect in 1978, and suddenly archaeology became something to be considered. It was a fantastic time to do what I was doing, and a number of other people were doing. And how did I feel about the city? I felt it was a place of discovery, because the first project I had, which was 175 Water Street, was just south of the South Street Seaport Historic District. It was just an extraordinary site. It was an entire city block of landfill, the second block going east into the river that was created in the 18th century. And fill in the 18th century was trash, and there were artifacts galore. There had been buildings (it had long been a parking lot by the time it became an archaeological site) and there was information, and then it turned out there

was a mid-18th century merchant ship holding in some of the landfill. The backhoe operator had said to me, “Joan, where should we put this last test of the landfill?” And I said, “Oh, Fred, how about there,” and I pointed, and he said, “Okay.” He was fantastic. He started digging and the earth fell away and exposed what proved to be the mid-section of the port side of an 18th century derelict merchant ship.

By the way, a backhoe is an urban archaeologist’s best friend, because you have to get rid of all the stuff on top [laughs] before you can get to the important stuff. And he dug, and, as I said, the dirt fell away, and there was wood, wood planks. Horizontal wood planks. We thought it was cribbing, and it was, but it turned out that it was the mid-section of this 18th century ship, and it was tied into the cribbing. And someone said, “Joan, your ship came in,” which I found very amusing. I mean, it was just unbelievable.

So how do I feel about the city? I think it’s the most fantastic place in the world. I mean, what we see in New York City now—in Manhattan and everywhere, actually, but Manhattan’s a great example—is not what it was. It was totally different. There were streams, and there were hills, and there was the Collect Pond in lower Manhattan, which was a fresh water pond. Just everything was different. What we see now is not what it was. And the act of discovery to paint the picture of what it used to be continues to thrill me, when I have the opportunity. But it’s always different. There’s always something to learn, always. You know, in archaeology, if you don’t find anything, and you expect to find something, even that’s interesting. Why is it not there? There’s always the pursuit of understanding what you’re finding and what it means. So I didn’t tell you how I felt about the city, really, except that I think it’s fantastic, and I have for a

long time.

Q: Can you talk a little bit about that 1978 law that made urban archaeology really possible?

Geismar: It's the environmental law that went into effect, as I said, in 1978, where if it was not an as-of-right building and you needed a permit, it triggered this review. It was the CEQR review, that is C-E-Q-R, which is the City Environmental Quality Review, a version of the State Environmental Quality Review (with an S, SEQR Review). And you know, initially, archaeology was something no one had ever thought of in a city like New York. But it was part of that review, just as water quality, or traffic, or whatever was to be considered, and now so was archaeology. And I do credit the New York City Landmarks Commission under Kent Barwick, who was then the head of the Commission. He thought archaeology was something that had to be considered, and he backed it up. And the agency, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, took on the role of looking at archaeology and reviewing archaeology. He was a wonderful catalyst for this work. You know, it was things coming together at the right time and the right place, for the city and for me, and so it all worked, if I'm being totally selfish. It was just a fantastic time, and part of it was because of Kent.

Q: Could you talk a little bit more about that? How those conversations began with Kent and with the archaeology community, to bring archaeology under that purview.

Geismar: Well, what happened actually was Bert Salwen—who I've mentioned before, a professor at NYU—and Ralph Solecki at Columbia—where I was—were also practicing

archaeologists. They both worked in New York City. Although Dr. Solecki's archaeology was originally in Iraq, which was interesting, he too had projects in the city. With CEQR in place, there was the Goldman Saks site in lower Manhattan, where they thought there might be archaeology and it proved to be a spectacular site. It was a test to see if archaeology was a New York City issue and it turned out that it definitely was. And that's when Landmarks stepped in and decided that this was something that had to be watched, encouraged, and taken care of. I'm putting it very, very simply. Actually it was much more—what should I say—prescribed than I'm saying.

With all this, Bert Salwen and Ralph Solecki decided that we needed some oversight from the archaeological community, and so they organized Professional Archaeologists of New York City. The acronym is PANYC with a P and a Y, that started in 1980. They invited some students to the first meeting, like me and Nan Rothschild, and Diana [di Zerega] Wall, and Anne-Marie Cantwell, and Sydne Marshall. They started PANYC, which has been an effective advocate for archaeology in New York City for over 40 years, and is still active. I guess PANYC helped raise the consciousness of city agencies, and it certainly has helped raise the consciousness of its residents. PANYC has a public program every year and it's become very popular, except now with COVID it's been on hold. But it'll come back. Have I answered your question, sort of?

Q: Yes. Can you maybe walk me through how the process would work with the landmarking process and archaeologists? So if PANYC is getting together and talking about: here's how these two organizations are going to integrate, how archaeology is going to become part of the Landmarks Commission, in practice, what was that like in the landmarking process?

Geismar: Well, what happened was that Kent Barwick instituted having an archaeologist on staff to review the reports that were done when the law was—how should I say it—when the law made it necessary to address archaeology, Landmarks was the reviewing agency. Sherene Baugher was the first Landmarks archaeologist, and it was her role to review the reports and to be there. And she was, and she was terrific. She's still terrific, but she's up at Cornell now. And Kent and Lenore Norman made it part of the Landmarks agency. But of course—how shall I put this? Their input, really, only was triggered in a Landmarks district or on a landmarked property, except for 175 Water Street. If you have the right people on your side, an awful lot can get done. The block with the buried ship, the 175 Water Street site, was just south of the landmarked South Street Seaport Historic District. But it happened that the man who owned the block and was going to put up a building was also trying to make changes to St. Bartholomew's Church uptown. So he wanted to be on the good side of Landmarks, and was willing, when they called for archaeology—Dorothy Miner was the lawyer at Landmarks, and she and—[pauses]

Q: No problem. Take your time.

Geismar: Take my time. My mother used to say, "Take your time and hurry up." [both laugh] And, as I said, she and Kent—and Lenore Norman—took archaeology under their wing, and Dorothy said, "No, you have to get your permit," and to do so, she called for archaeology at the 175 Water Street site. So he did. It was beyond the district, and it was just amazing. And that's what they did. The Landmarks oversight was extraordinary, it really was. The agency was fantastic, and they cared very much, and they made it happen. It was terrific.

Q: Now, did you have to—again, this is thinking about the process—did you have to kind of find something of significance? And then that permit process would come into play? Or was it just the proximity of this location to [a landmark]? Or was it that no one knew anything?

Geismar: No one knew anything is basically it. And the question was, “Was there anything there?” And, you know, maybe this is a time to mention what archaeology is. It isn’t like a landmarked building. A landmark stands and you’re trying to save it. Archaeology doesn’t save anything. In fact, archaeology is destructive. You’re digging the site, you’re seeing what’s there, you’re taking away the artifacts to analyze them. It’s actually destructive for the site but the thing is, it will be destroyed in the development process—only now it is documented. And that’s really what we do. We document what’s being taken out of the ground. Unless there’s something that’s extraordinary and should be saved, and then we fight to have it saved. Maybe they can move to the east or the west, or to the right or to the left, and leave it in place; and maybe someone else can dig it up later if they want more information. But basically, archaeology destroys a site. But it destroys it and records and studies it, and learns and understands it, as much as it can be understood, which can change over time. Which is another reason we do it. Because you have the artifacts, you analyze the artifacts, you know where things were. But maybe you learn something later that feeds into that and it’s there, the information is there. And that’s what we do. It’s not preservation in the usual sense, actually it’s the preservation of information. And the artifacts, of course, are often quite extraordinary. But the information, to me, is one of the most important parts.

Q: You'd said before that your interest was really in the people. So through that preservation of the artifacts and the documentation of what was there, what were you then learning about that site in downtown Manhattan?

Geismar: We learned about choices that people made, where they chose to build something, how they chose to build it, perhaps. Maybe there's evidence of it. What they chose to buy, what they chose to make, what they chose to eat, what they chose to eat from. These are records that you can't really find. I mean, you can find records from stores, or whatever, saying what people bought. But this, what you see, is what they actually bought, and what they actually used—it's the story of their lives in the ground, until it's taken out and studied. And it's the kind of information you can't get any other way but from archaeology.

You know, history is written by all of us, actually. But with archaeology, you have facts in your hand. You're actually looking at that dish that someone ate from, by choice or whatever. But it's a very unique record and it's one that is not—what is the word? It's very clear. It's not muddied in any way. It's a fact. It's not my interpretation of the fact, or someone else's interpretation—or maybe, to a degree—but someone can look at that fact and decide what they think it is. It's not like the written word, where someone decides what they're going to say about something, like now [laughs]. It's a very interesting record.

Q: It's tangible.

Geismar: It's usable, it's interpretable, it that's a word, and it gives you information that can't be

had any other way.

Q: And so the ship and the other materials that you found at 175 Water Street, I mean, what specifically did that add to the information about the city?

Geismar: Well, we saw how British colonists (the site was from the 1730s) created the block with landfill, cribbing and water-controlling maneuvers and there's no record of that really. What they did to create that block, and how they did it, in this case, with log cribbing and a ship tied into the cribbing. What they used for the landfill, which was trash, which was typical in those times. But trash, again—it wasn't about a specific person's life, but it was trash in general, and it's—Sarah, tell me again what you just asked me, because I'm going to go off on a tangent, I can tell.

Q: No problem. I wanted to know what exactly did these facts that you unearthed actually say about the city's history.

Geismar: Well, besides how they created the block from the East River with landfill, what they needed to do. You know, being an urban archaeologist, you also have written records, as much as I disparaged them just a few minutes ago. I mean, we have written records, and you put the tangible features and written records together and you learn a great deal. It almost prompts you to look for things that you might not have looked for before, like who owned the water lots that were going to be filled. You might even be able to say how they interacted. One of the water lot grantees was Elizabeth Schuyler, a widow, and that was very interesting. Research showed that

she was a merchant and that her husband had been a merchant. She was widowed, which was the only reason she could conduct business and own property—under the English, a woman couldn't do so unless you were a widow or unmarried. It's because we do research, and want to do research about what we find, that we can learn a lot. It's because we have more than just the record that's in the ground. We also have the written record, and put the two together, and we often get wonderful information.

Q: Sure. And sometimes the artifacts contradict the written record. But then again, you can't deny the artifact once you find it.

Geismar: That's exactly it. You see what you've learned? [both laugh] And it's absolutely true. But of course, in all fairness, we're interpreting the artifacts, and there's no single interesting artifact from 175 Water Street: three hundred and ten thousand artifacts were saved, and they're at the State Museum in New York. Now someone else can go look at them. The New York State Museum has them. And somebody could do their interpretation, not just what we did in our report.

There was a stone, which I did not see—I was the principal investigator and I was on site every day, but there were things I didn't see. I mean, we learned about landfill, and I wrote a detailed study of landfill for that report, and found it enlightening, but you can't see every artifact. Others washed and catalogued, and identified the artifacts. Years later, Diane Dellal, who was looking at the artifacts for the South Street Seaport, discovered there was a mark on it. And it turns out it probably belonged to a slave, or a freed African American, and this was the symbol. There's a

cross on the stone. Now, I hadn't seen it, but someone else looked at it ten, or fifteen years later and realized what it could represent. So there's always something to learn and those artifacts—as I said before, there are three hundred and ten thousand artifacts—gives someone else the chance to look at them in light of new information that has come over time. I hope this does happen, that even more is learned from those artifacts. I'm not sure I answered your question.

Q: Yes, yes.

Geismar: Okay.

Q: Now, I'm thinking about the permitting process that comes into being in 1978. What was it that made that the time that this became part of the city's policy? Was it just Ken Barwick's interest? What was the context?

Geismar: This is a filtering down. There were new laws. There was the Historic Features Act [Historic Sites Act]. I don't think that's what it was called. That's all I can think of. It was a national government kind of a thing. Then the National Park Service came into play, and then there is the State Historic Preservation Office that also came into play, and then Landmarks. So there were many considerations, and with everybody adapting to the laws to save, protect, and in this case, document the historic past. The historic past is what it's all about. Again, I don't like to use the word preserving, but documenting it and keeping that record is what it's all about.

Q: Is there anything else that you'd like to talk about with kind of the downtown area before we

move to Washington Square Park?

Geismar: You know, since 175 Water Street and the Telco block, which was just north of 175 Water Street, and sites that were on Broadway, we learned something at every site. One thing you learn is that every site's different. There are some similarities, obviously. Like you always have privies, the outdoor toilets, in blocks that were inhabited and built on before there was plumbing. That's a given. But what's in those privy pits that had to be filled when they were abandoned—everything in them was sealed. It's like parking lots. Everything under a parking lot—they're an archaeologist's dream. It just gave us a focus about what could be found. But what's so interesting, as I just said, is that everyone is somewhat different. There were the privies from the laudanum people, where everyone seemed to have laudanum, a form of opium. Then there'll be another block, but not one of them had laudanum. You know, again, it's what people chose. Sarah, I think I'm not answering your question. I'm sorry.

Q: Oh no, that's okay.

Geismar: What else is there down there?

Q: Yes. It's like people like to pooh-pooh permits and anything that slows down construction and real estate. But on the other hand, you have an example like this, right after this law comes into place, where you're finding so much stuff. So what was the public's perception?

Geismar: I can't tell you. It's more like what was the perception of the builders who were trying

to put up the building—what was their perception. I remember having a meeting early on and one of the developers saying, “What would I have to pay you to say you found nothing?” And I said, “You couldn’t possibly pay me to say I found nothing.” I mean, they tried. They don’t do that anymore. That was the beginning, and someone thought that he’d be able to—maybe he was kidding. Maybe I’m being unfair. There’s been an acceptance just as there’s an acceptance, as I said, about the traffic and everything else. It’s part of the process. Not everyone likes it, and it can slow things down. But one thing that I find quite interesting is that archaeology, except for one instance that I know of in this city, has never stopped anything entirely. Except for the African Burial Ground, where it was being fought forever, it seemed like. They did stop digging after a while, and there is now a monument. That’s the only time I know of where archaeology actually stopped something in Manhattan.

Other than that, there is a process that you mentioned. There is the process, and you follow the process. And if you’re smart, you consider what that could mean before you do go get involved in the process, where you know what to expect. But people seem to accept it now. It’s been forty years, basically, I guess. Well, thirty-five years. So people do accept it now, at least they seem to. Not always happily, but there’s nothing they can do about it, so it seems to have worked, let’s put it that way. And there are sites now. I’m not involved in many of them. At this point, I seem to be doing a lot of reports and assessments, many for New York City Parks projects. Parks, too, like parking lots, are great places to do archaeology because they haven’t been developed. But I mean, it’s found a place in New York City’s processes, fortunately.

Now, that doesn’t mean everything is easy. For example, if I can say something about the

Landmarks Commission, which was, as I said, fantastic in terms of archaeology. They have a Director of Archaeology, Amanda Sutphin, who's the head of archaeology at Landmarks. But for some reason, Landmarks will not make 19th century archaeology a given on landmarked properties. There are times where they will ask for it in certain instances, but it isn't a given. Like 18th century buildings, archaeology is considered, but not 19th century buildings or 19th century archaeology. And I find that sad, because the 19th century is very important, of course. And there is so much information in these historic districts that has been saved because they're historic districts.

It reminds me of many years ago, I gave a lecture in London. The Museum of the City of London was where the lecture was, and afterward someone came up to me from the museum and said, "Thank you for this." He said, "We have gone through everything, boom boom boom, to get to the Roman stuff. Now, I realize that we should do a little more thinking about what we're going through," and that was wonderful. I mean, maybe I changed something in London, [laughs] I don't know.

But it's a shame that I can't get—I have tried as president of PANYC (I've been president of the Professional Archaeologists of New York City a number of times). We're a small group and we can't seem to do anything about influencing Landmarks in regard to 19th century archaeology. They're wonderful, but they don't want to take this under their wing, and I find that difficult to understand. It's part of their mission, as far as I'm concerned, and it's part of the history of the city, but I can't seem to make any headway. Maybe in the future someone else will.

Q: What are the reasons that they've given for why they wouldn't—

Geismar: It's too expensive, is the main reason, I think, and I find that unacceptable. It's not too expensive to get—oh, I shouldn't do this—but it's acceptable to get the paint the way it was in the 18th century, or to get the balustrade the way it was then. But archaeology is “too expensive.” And it can be expensive, but it doesn't have to be expensive. First of all, you can get some of the city colleges, places that do archaeology, they could do some of it. And it usually isn't—I mean, if you have a whole city block, it's going to be expensive. If you have a backyard, it's not going to be that expensive. Anyway, that's where we're at with that.

Q: Well, let's talk about the Washington Square Park example that you've worked on.

Geismar: Okay.

Q: Can you set the scene for that, and what the context was of your working there?

Geismar: Well, it's a park. And Parks has become very good about considering what's beneath the ground in their parks, particularly when it comes to burial sites. And two thirds of the Washington Square Park site was a potter's field in the late 18th, early 19th century, and actually it went east. It didn't stop at Washington Square Park in terms of east-west. And of course, it was known by many—not everyone, certainly not everyone, they didn't broadcast it—that it had been a potter's field. And consequently, the question was: were there any burials left in that potter's field. There's literature. Some say everything was taken out, which they always say. Some say

there are twenty thousand burials. That's the number given at every cemetery that one looks at archaeologically, they're told there are twenty thousand burials. I don't know where the number comes from, but it could be. Anyway, Parks wanted to know and Landmarks stepped in on that too. So the question was, were there burials, and the answer is, yes there are. I've spent a great deal of time at Washington Square Park. There were three episodes of the renovation, and I was the archeologist—with different contractors—but I was the archaeologist for all three of them. And what ended up happening there is, yes, we did establish that it was a potter's field. But what ended up happening—I should step back and I hope I remember where I was going. But we should step back.

You don't do archaeology where you want to do archaeology, because you think that's where you're going to find something. The question is, is what they're doing going to possibly effect an archaeological resource. So you do research to find out what you might find, and then you might find that where they're digging is just east of where there might be something. But if they're not digging to the east, you're not going to be allowed to go there. So you concentrate on where there is going to be disturbance in relation to what's being done.

So they were digging for a catch basin in Washington Square Park and me and the person who works with me, Shelly Spritzer, and also Matt Brown—he's an expert on human remains. We were on site, and the backhoe hit something, and it turned out to be a beautiful little gravestone. Now the question was, what was a gravestone doing in a potter's field? Because we had seen burials, but there were no gravestones. In fact, there was some evidence of coffins, but not always, and no gravestones. So, of course, work stopped. But anyway, research—and I did a

good deal of research. The gravestone belonged to James Jackson who died in 1799 and was born in County Kildare. With the help of librarians at the New-York Historical Society Library it was determined that this James Jackson had died of yellow fever and this was his gravestone. Reading newspaper from 1799, I found that shortly before James Jackson died, a law was put into effect that anyone who died of yellow fever had to be buried in the potter's field, which was beyond the city limits then, because everyone was petrified of contagion. Which of course it isn't necessary as it's the mosquito you had to worry about. But there were yellow fever epidemics almost every summer in New York City, and every big port city, actually. So poor Mr. Jackson had to be buried in the potter's field. But he obviously either had the wherewithal, or someone had the wherewithal, to provide a gravestone. So it changed the entire concept of the potter's field once in Washington Square Park. And it turns out there were many burials because of yellow fever in that park that we didn't see and don't know where they are, but they had to be buried there. So this whole thing changed the history of that potter's field, and that park. That was pretty exciting, Sarah, I must say [laughs].

Q: Yes, wow. And I guess, just to like bring it maybe into the context of landmarks for a minute, if Washington Square Park is already a landmark, how does your discovery there impact it?

Geismar: It doesn't change anything. It's still a landmark. And when they did work beyond the park, on the streets, they had to do archaeology. It was no surprise to me, I must say, that they found a burial vault, a large vault that had belonged to a church that was in the street north of Washington Square Park. This didn't surprise me because in my research I had seen in a newspaper article that that they had found that vault and those burials in 1965. Now it became an

issue that it hadn't been before. Am I losing track of what you were asking me? Yes. Were you losing track of what you're asking? [both laugh]

Q: Well, you know, I'm just trying to figure out the process, again. In my notes, I have that you prepared a report for the Landmarks Commission.

Geismar: There were four reports. Actually, five. There was one when they were doing work around Washington Arch, around the Arch. And that did not prove anything much, except to know that there had been burials found before, in 1890, when they built the Arch. Nobody understood what they were. Now I do understand what they are. It was because that law was in effect in 1803, and then in effect in 1820, and there were tombstones from that time that were found in 1890. So nobody could understand. They said, "Oh, there was a German church." There was no German church. But you know they always look for answers.

Q: You know, I'm not a preservationist, though I do interviews that are about historic preservation. So I'm doing a little comparing and contracting in my mind.

Geismar: You tell me.

Q: What does it mean for there to be landmarked places, and then what does it mean for there to be these archeological artifacts that might tell us new things about the places that we think we already know the history of? And that's me. I don't know if the public is like, "Potter's field!? We're not going to go to that park anymore!" [laughs]

Geismar: Now, let me tell you, some of the construction people were absolutely freaked out, because we did come across burials. Not all, but several. There was one guy who would not get out of the cab of the backhoe because he was so freaked out. And it can be freaky, it can. On the other hand, finding James Jackson's stone. We didn't find James Jackson. And this is a little aside: why was that stone where it was? And it was not deep in the ground. It was only a foot and a half under at the most. And was this James Jackson's burial, which, of course, one would assume. But it turns out it was not. This was a stone that had obviously been moved, because there were no remains of anybody who could have been James Jackson. There was a very old man and there was a woman who was also of a good age, and they were stacked burials near the stone, but there was nothing around the stone. And it certainly wasn't James Jackson. So my theory—and nobody can dispute it at the moment. But if they can, it's fine with me, is that when they closed the potter's field—it closed in 1825—and made it into a parade ground, which was essentially the park, maybe someone decided to keep that stone as a relic of when it had been a cemetery. That's my theory. I can't prove it, but nobody can disprove it.

And James Jackson's stone has become a memento from the potter's field. Actually, it's going to be on display. At least, it's meant to be on display soon, under glass, at the building that they built in the park, where you can actually see the stone. It was a beautiful little stone of brownstone stone. And it just had all the information. It had information that we suddenly knew about, not only of his name, but we knew when he was born. And we knew that he was from County Kildare in Ireland. So anyway, that's going to go on display, and that tombstone and the research that was associated with it, has changed the entire concept. Kind of exciting, to me

[laughs].

Q: Yes, absolutely. Was that one of the first times that you had encountered human remains on an archaeological site?

Geismar: I have to think. Was that my first one? I think it actually was. I don't remember finding intact human remains. You might find a human bone, as you would find animal bones. Because part of what we go through is a lot of landfill. I don't mean landfill like in the Seaport, but just landfill to change the height of the street, or whatever. And often that's mixed with human remains, as well as pottery and glass and all kinds of things.

One interesting site that I had was the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, when that was being formed. And there is the backyard, and I thought that I'd find a privy. This was from 1863. And it turns out that plumbing was put in this street, Orchard Street, about the same time the building was being built. But I didn't think they'd be hooked up. I mean, I didn't know what to think. So we were looking for the privy in the backyard, and it turned out that it wasn't a privy, it was something called a school sink. And the man who built that building—and he lived in it for a while—was ahead of his time. As Andrew Dolkart said, he was ahead of the law, because he had this structure called a school sink, which was several compartments, like a privy, only there was water that flushed out the contents below the compartments. It was certainly not—far from perfect, but it's what was in effect until 1906, when they put one toilet on each floor in the building. So that was a surprise. That was one of my archaeological surprises. Again, we've changed history, that people were doing things beyond privies as early as 1863 in the city. So,

that was something to learn, and a surprise. Lots of surprises, Sarah.

Q: Yes, I'm still thinking about what you said about even when you don't find anything, you're still engaged with—

Geismar: If you expect to find something, if your research says, “Oh, such and such happened,” and you expect that it will be there, like I expected a privy, but it's something else. Or it could be nothing, and then that would have meant a different interpretation. “Oh, they did have something else going on.” There was a site in Brooklyn called the Village of New Brooklyn, which is a German community that was mid-19th century. We did a lot of research there, did a lot of work there, and we found one small privy. And this is from 1850 or so. There should have been privies, which makes you think, “So what was different here? What was the German community doing?” As I said, they may have had a different concept of what sanitary conditions should be. Perhaps, instead of a pit, they might have had a pail for the privies that would leave no trace, you know. You would just have to rethink what you thought, which is interesting, too.

Q: I guess these two examples that we talked about from your career are maybe twenty, twenty-five years apart, and maybe go beyond that era that you had described as the golden age of archaeology in New York City. So, can you maybe talk me through some points about how was it different twenty years later from that time?

Geismar: First of all, there are more of us doing it. Well, actually, that's not true anymore [laughs]. There were more of us doing it for a while, and the sites aren't quite as plentiful. As I

say, lower Manhattan was like a bonanza because a lot of it was in the historic district, and so that archaeology was necessary. If you're putting up a building in midtown Manhattan, chances are you don't have to do anything because there isn't soil, and there isn't much left of what was there before. So that's part of it, lower Manhattan is pretty much developed now. So there are fewer sites, but there still are many. I shouldn't bemoan what's happening. There still are sites. Many of them in the streets when street work is being done, where there could be old remnants of plumbing in the street. It's just different. It's just you're looking for different things in a different place. The historic district of a seaport was one of the oldest areas developed in the city, so of course there's much more there. As you go further north, it's all much later. You're not going to find anything on the Upper East Side to speak of, that's archaeological. You'd find history, but you might not find archaeology. It's geographic, and it's time that you're dealing with. A different time.

Q: Something that comes up a lot when I'm talking about the Landmarks Preservation Commission over the years is that, you know, the miniscule politics of who was in charge of the Commission, or the mayor, or everyone's agenda. So was there any of that that impacted how things changed over the years, with different attitudes towards archaeology, let's say, after Kent Barwick left, or different administrations?

Geismar: Kent Barwick and others, I mean, Gene Norman. There were others who were before, but no one is as enthusiastic as Kent. Well, yes, there's a definite shift. There's a definite shift in what is considered important and what is considered—what you have to take into account within the Landmarks Law. Now Landmarks itself has changed. It isn't only beautiful buildings and

whatever, I mean, it's also culture. That's what I can't quite understand. That culture has become important, but 19th century history has not. And that's difficult for me because I applaud culture becoming important, and I am appalled by history not being important. So things do change, and they change depending upon who is in charge. I mean, Kent couldn't have been more enthusiastic and caring. Partly it's what he is, and partly it's what the time was, but things have changed and I find that complicated. Maybe one day Landmarks will reconsider, and they'll be as enthusiastic about archaeology in regard to what comes under their jurisdiction, as I think they should be. But that's me.

Q: Let's talk about another example. This time in Brooklyn, in the houses at Weeksville.

Geismar: Yes, that's been an interesting example. Weeksville is interesting because it's a remnant of what has been. It isn't Weeksville, it's a cluster of houses that had been, actually, just an afterthought to Weeksville, but it comes under that jurisdiction. That was a fantastic site, too, for different reasons. It had been excavated in the 1980s by the City College Archaeology Field School, and they did collect a lot of artifacts. But being a field school, they didn't have the luxury of really going through everything the way one might hope to do. And the artifacts that they collected were all stored. I think there were about eight thousand artifacts that were stored in one of the buildings in Weeksville.

And when Weeksville was about to be—really it's the Hunterfly Road House cluster in Weeksville. Weeksville was a very large, free Black community that went back to 1835. The Hunterfly Road Houses, which are wooden houses, are situated along a road that no longer

exists, instead of the street grid that's now in effect in Brooklyn. And these houses were lived in. They were owned by a man named Mr. Volkening, who bought the property in the mid-1860s. He was from Germany, and he fixed up these houses to be rented to the Black people in the Black community. This house cluster remains, as I said, and in fact, these houses were occupied until 1968, I believe. As late as that. What was interesting, is that, as I say, this is a remnant of a much larger community, and the field school did a very good job, although I must tell you a funny story. They saved everything. It was a field school, so you don't know what you really should and shouldn't save, and also it was when archaeology was relatively new in the city in 1980, '81 and '82. And one bag that I opened later, because I was working on the renovation to make it what it is now, which is the Weeksville Heritage Center. There was one artifact bag that had not been looked at; in it was someone's trowel. They had put it in the bag [hearty laugh]. So it was an artifact of the 1980s, which was interesting.

But they saved everything; every piece of glass, which is a whole other—what has to be saved, and what needn't be saved, and can you be sure that you're right if this needn't be saved. And sometimes you're not, I can tell you that. I mean, you make a decision based on current conditions, and maybe you've made the wrong decision, which then haunts you. What happened in 2000—what was it, 2004? I'm going to get the date mixed up—was that these four buildings that remained as the cluster were going to be renovated, as I said. And it was thought that the buildings dated from the 1830s. They were landmarked, based on that assumption, and they should be landmarked, but it was that information that really triggered it.

Well, looking at the artifacts that were collected by the field school, and artifacts that we

collected during the renovation of the grounds, it seems that Mr. Volkening might have moved old houses onto the site. Or they may have been built, at least some of them, by a carpenter, who was using a vernacular method to build the buildings. But whatever, they were not occupied until after the Civil War. So either they didn't exist on that site, or something else. But even that was very interesting and not to denigrate them in any way. They're still historically very important. But the facts don't seem to be what they were thought originally, and that in itself was very interesting.

One thing that I did find interesting, based on what I knew, is that one of the buildings burned in 1704-1706 Bergen Street, a double house. So it was renovated in the 1980s. And when they renovated, they built out onto the back—what had been the back yard—and they took down a feature that they came across that apparently was a cistern. It was a water cistern at the back of the house that was stone, which is relatively unusual. Usually it's brick and mortared brick. This was mortared stone. And just the base is in the floor of the basement because they dug out. So the base of this cistern is there. Well, during their excavations and our archaeological input, we found another cistern between two other houses, 1700 and 1698. And it's a stone cistern of the same proportion of the base of the one that's in the other building. And it was somewhat identical to the cisterns that we found at the 1850 German community, and Mr. Volkening was from Germany. And I can only assume that he had someone who he knew, make these cisterns for this house cluster, and they used the same method that was used in the German community. Okay, there—you know how I think [laughs]. The same method they used in the German community from the mid-19th century. And it tied the two things together. I could be wrong, but I don't think I am.

Oh, Sarah, I love what I do [laughs]. I can't always remember what I want to say about it, but I love what I do [both laugh].

Q: I wanted to ask about these houses and I guess your role in providing input here was that you were advising on the future plans for what would become the Weeksville Heritage Center. Is that right?

Geismar: Yes. Well, again, it was what was planned to be built, and how what they were doing was going to affect any archaeological resources. And they have built this lovely building that is the Heritage Center. They have renovated the houses, you know, made them more secure, and it is a cultural center now, which is fantastic. But my input was to make sure, yet again, that what they were doing when they were putting in new plumbing, new infrastructure, or whatever they were doing, wasn't affecting any archaeological resources. And of course, I was looking for Hunterfly Road, evidence of the road that had been there, which went back to colonial times. We did not find any; too much has gone on there. We did not find any evidence of the former road, except for the configuration of the houses along that road, which is a very good indication of what the road was like. But not the road itself. It was probably a dirt road, and it just disappeared over time with what's gone on there. Again, I was just working where they were going to be doing something that could destroy archaeological resources.

But one very interesting thing is that 1698 Bergen Street faces Bergen Street. That one is on the Bergen Street Road and Hunterfly Road. But basically, on Bergen Street. And I did know from

records that they had put on a back addition on that building. So I thought that we would find evidence of a privy, or whatever, in the basement of that addition. You know, that it would have been something where they had had a privy before they built out, and we didn't find any evidence of that. And it was just interesting to me what we did find. It was this cistern, when we excavated between the two houses, 1698 and 1700, and that cistern may have provided water to both houses. It was just something—I don't know why I'm telling you this—but it just was interesting that they may have shared this large stone cistern that was like the one in the village of Brooklyn. And also, to me, it indicated that these houses were not occupied as early as 1835.

Q: And that surely helped with some of the history that the Heritage Center is telling, right?

Geismar: I hope so.

Q: [laughs] Right.

Geismar: I'm not involved any longer, but I hope so. I'm sure it did.

Q: In other words, if history is not top-of-line for every city agency, then history may still be top-of-line for many other smaller organizations that are dedicated to that. And so the impact of your work can be felt there.

Geismar: Yes, it goes on and on, I hope [both laugh]. I certainly hope so, and I think it does. They care very much, and I think it's wonderful.

Q: You've said you really love what you do a number of times, and I wanted to ask about what it's been like to be an archaeology consultant over the years. Maybe the emphasis on consultant and less on the archaeology. What has that been like for you in terms of periods of work, or breaks, or continuity of projects, or shifting focus?

Geismar: No, it's been relatively simple, Sarah. It really has. Like at Washington Square Park, as I said, I was there for four episodes of what they did. It may not have been that way, and that would have been a shame. What I think can be difficult or more complicated than it need be is if somebody does—you know, when you do archaeology in an historic site, you do research first, as I said before, to see what might be there. And if you've done that research and then someone else comes in with a different—let's say you have a contractor who's doing something, and then with the next episode, a new contractor comes in and they get someone else. That second person has to hopefully understand what the first person who's doing it found and how they interpreted it. It's so much simpler if there's continuity.

And you know, I've been doing this for so long so I have—what do I have? I have a store of knowledge about what one can find. There are others like me, so I'm not too unique in this, but there aren't too many of us like this, and it can be very helpful. Not making mountains out of molehills, and knowing what can be important. And I could be wrong, but I do have a history, and that's helpful in determining what one might find. So sometimes when the next phase of a project goes to someone else, it gets more complicated than it need be, perhaps. And maybe I'm wrong. I could very well be wrong. Maybe they think of something that the first person never

even thought of. But it just seems to me, that continuity is important, and I guess they thought so at Parks, which is why I was there for all four renovation episodes. And it ends up being a fantastic project. Again, I'm not sure I [laughs] answered your question, so you can set me straight.

Q: No that's fine. I think it underlines how some things are important to consider, when you're looking at projects that are going to take a long time. Years, not afternoons [laughs].

Geismar: But on the other hand, Sarah, let me just say, I mean, there are reports done. So anybody who does come in can see those reports and take it from there, if they look. You know, if they bother to look. And sometimes I think they do, and sometimes I think they don't. So, you know, it's interesting.

Q: Yes, a little bit of a roll of the dice.

Geismar: Yes.

Q: Exactly, when things are changing, including the people who are working on a project.

Geismar: Yes, that's true. We agree. [both laugh]

Q: Yes. So how would you describe the field of urban archaeology now?

Geismar: Well, I think it's pretty much established, which is nice. I mean, that doesn't mean you don't run into issues, you know. There was a site in the Bowery that did not trigger a review, but it was in an area where there seemed to be a good chance there would be archaeological information. And it wasn't my site. But people, including PANYC, tried to talk the owners into considering archaeology, and it worked. They did do it. They did find interesting things, and that's great. So it's more accepted than it was. They didn't have to do anything, but they did. And so they now have a little museum in the building that they built, which is wonderful. So I guess what's happened over the years is there's just much more acceptance of what archaeology can do, and what it is, and that it should be considered, perhaps even when it isn't mandated to be considered. Which brings you back [laughs] to the Landmarks Commission. I'm waiting for them to mandate 19th century archaeology. But there have been 19th century sites in the Village where they did ask for archaeology. It's just it's not a usual thing. There's a word that I can't seem to find. It's not part of their—of what they focus on in their—I'll think of the word after we stop talking.

Q: So does that mean that every time there's another site that's being discussed, that PANYC, in a sense, needs to be paying attention and then, advocating each and every time for the involvement of archaeology?

Geismar: Yes, that really is what's happened. When I was president two years ago, or whatever, I wrote many letters and testimonies. Then COVID happened. And that even made it harder to do anything. So it didn't go anywhere. It just didn't go anywhere. But, I did do a site in Greenwich Village on Waverly Street, where there was a cistern, because somebody on the commission, one

of the commissioners felt that it could be important, and then they made it happen. It was very quick, very easy, and what was there was recorded, and that was it. It happened to be someone who could afford it, if it had been expensive, which it wasn't. They were intending to put in a swimming pool. And somebody who can afford to put in a swimming pool in their house can afford to do archaeology [laughs]. Anyway, so it has happened. And then just like 175 Water Street, it was not mandated by the law, it was mandated by Landmarks. So, I mean, they have been very supportive. It's just I'm aching for it to become part of what they consider—19th century—as I've [laughs] said several times.

Q: Yes. It sounds like in order to be an urban archaeologist, you also have to be an urban archaeology advocate.

Geismar: One does. And I can't imagine anyone who is an urban archeologist who wouldn't be an archaeologist advocate. And it is being taught in schools. It's taught at Brooklyn College, it's taught at City College. You know, I'm not sure, and I'm going to say something stupid. I'm not sure it's being taught at Columbia, which is where I went. I'm not sure. Things shift. Again, it depends upon who's in charge. Even in schools.

Q: Yes. And I guess just, are there any particular artifacts when you look back that are really your favorite?

Geismar: Besides the ship?

Q: Well, it may be the ship [both laugh].

Geismar: My favorite artifact. I mean that ship was quite—I mean it is an artifact. It's an artifact of its time of building a block. Ohhh, there are lots of wonderful—they're all extraordinary in one way or another for what they tell us. So I don't have a favorite. No, I don't have a favorite. And in fact, I don't have artifacts. I have one artifact. It's a brick from 175 Water Street. It's a disfigured brick. It's a throwaway. It was probably ballast on a ship, and then became part of the landfill, and they were about to throw them out. I mean, the ship was documented. I don't think I told you this. I didn't excavate it. I'm not a ship person. Ship people, Warren Reece and Shelley Smith, were brought in from Texas A&M, and they were in charge of excavating the ship, with most of that ship on the eastern part of the block. Some of it's still under Front Street. And the brick, as I said, may have been part of the ballast on the ship that became part of the landfill.

Well, someone said, "Joan, do you want a brick because we're throwing them away." They kept a sample. They had documented the ship, and the bough was taken out and it's swimming in Newport News in polyethylene glycol, I presume, maybe someday to be put together and be a wonderful exhibit at the South Street Seaport. That's my other dream, besides 19th century archaeology. It hasn't happened yet. I had this one brick, and I said, "Sure I'll take one." I call it my ordinary, usual, very extraordinary brick, because it came from that site, and I have it. Oh, there's a little volume that was put together about unusual, fun things in archaeology, and that was my story about my usual ordinary brick. My brick almost got me kicked off a plane. I was trying to get on a plane to give a talk. It was very funny, but I made it. So we don't keep artifacts, but that's my artifact. Again, I'm not sure I answered your question.

Q: No, that is a great answer.

Geismar: Okay, thank you.

Q: I think some of the discarded bricks somehow made it in to the party wall behind me. [both laugh] Not a lot of quality back there but—

Geismar: Are they yellow?

Q: No, they're not yellow.

Geismar: It would be Dutch bricks if they were yellow. No, they're just badly made bricks.

Q: [laughs] Just badly made bricks. Interior quality. Never meant to be exposed. So, I know that we kind of covered a long amount of time, but we haven't gone into all these different areas that have been part of your life. So I just want to say, if there's anything that you had intended to share that you're thinking of, or had notes on that I didn't ask about, please do.

Geismar: You mean now?

Q: Yes.

Geismar: As I said, Sarah, I love the fact that you did research, and you really knew what you were going to ask me. No, I think you've covered it quite well. I hope that I answered what you wanted to hear. I mean, not what you wanted to hear, but what you hoped to get, I just hope that you got it. And if you feel that there is something that you want to clarify, you just feel free to get in touch with me.

Q: Thank you so much. Yeah, I think we've covered everything for today.

Geismar: How long have we been at this?

Q: About an hour and a half.

Geismar: Just like you said. You knew exactly what you were talking about.

Q: Yes.

Geismar: Did you feel that you got what you wanted to get?

Q: Yes, absolutely. This is the first time that I've talked to anybody about the relationship between archaeology and the Landmarks Preservation Commission [approach to] preservation. So it's really helpful to hear that there is a relationship, but there's also a lot of differences.

Geismar: Well, I'd say there's one difference, you know. It's called the 19th century [heartly

laugh]. Other than that, I admire the Landmarks Commission, I really do. I mean, I think it's fantastic. I should have said this early on, because I really feel that way. I think they do a wonderful job, and I think that they care. It's just they won't think out of the box. Actually, the box is closed a little bit. That's the part that bothers me because it was much more open originally, and that's a shame. But it's a wonderful agency, and the people in it are very caring and, mainly, supportive. Amanda Sutphin cares about archaeology, and they have her there to care about it, which is wonderful. It's just that 19th century! [both laugh].

Q: Well, I'm going to keep my eyes open for any opportunity to advocate for that.

Geismar: Thank you.

Q: I'll keep that in mind.

Geismar: That would be very helpful, I'm sure. It was lovely talking to you, and you asked, as I said, really good questions, and I hope I didn't fumble too much.

Q: No, not at all. Thank you so much, Joan, and you'll hear from me in maybe a few weeks or a month. And thank you again.

Geismar: Okay. Lovely to meet you.

Q: Have a great day. Bye-bye. Lovely to meet you, too.

[END OF INTERVIEW]