

(Source: Niagara Frontier Planning Board 1939)

FIGURE 3-17. Project Location in 1939.

accommodate the technology pertinent to automobile manufacturing. This can be seen on maps by continual subdivision of properties and occupation. Although the Depression eras impeded significant industrial development in this area, World War II revived industrial activity and brought in additional workers from surrounding areas. The 1939 Works Progress Administration (WPA) map (see Figures 3-17 and 3-18), identifies several industries along River Road and Kenmore Avenue, including Farrell Birmingham, GM, Dupont and others.

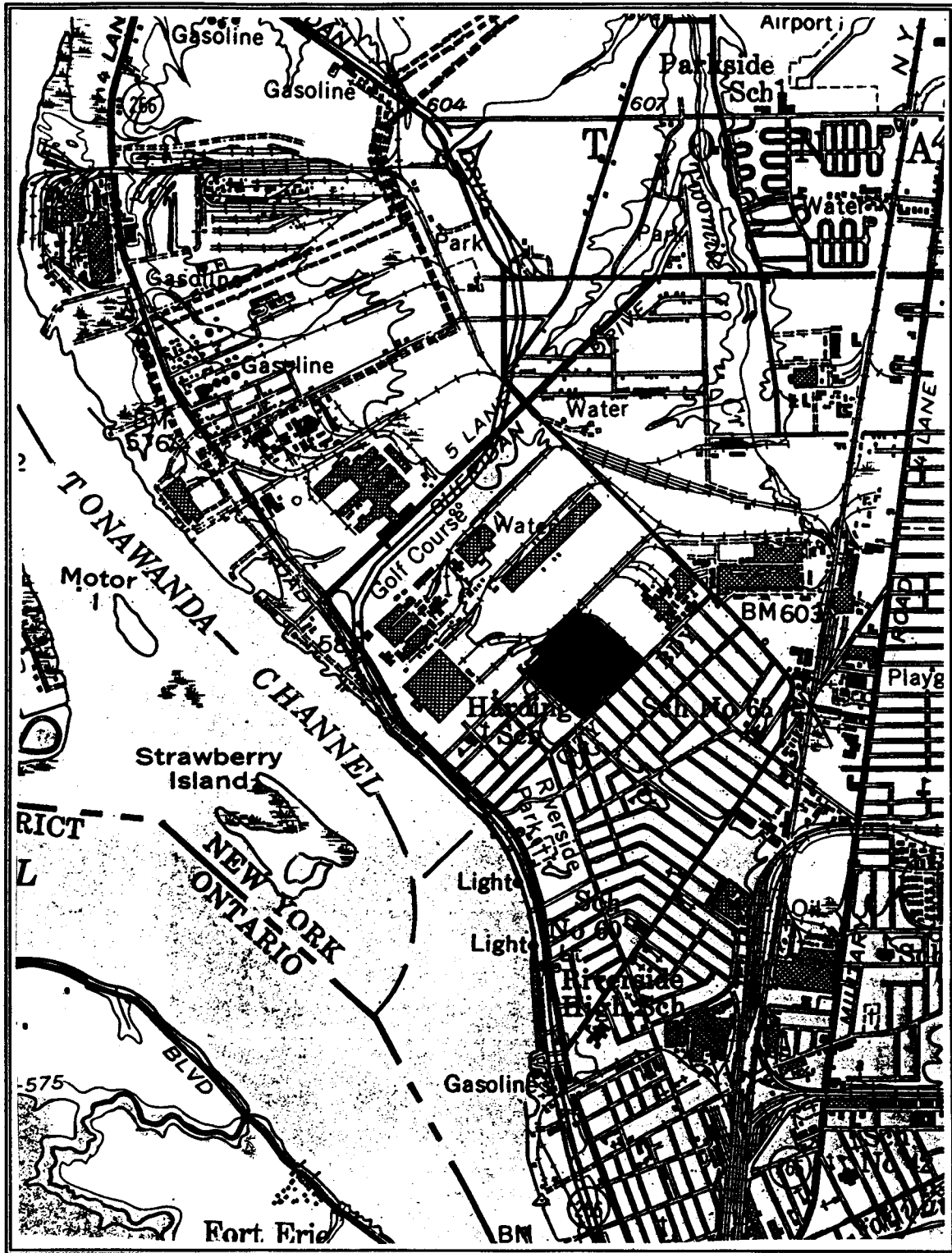
### **3.3 SENSITIVITY ASSESSMENT**

#### **3.3.1. Historic Archaeological Sensitivity**

It can be stated with certainty that the project area holds a very low, if non-existent sensitivity for the location of unrecorded historic archaeological sites. Mapa research clearly indicates that the project parcels were undeveloped for a long period of time, while the areas to the south (Lower Black Rock/Riverside) became more populated. Much of the development in this vicinity was predicated on the transition from farmland to industrial. The housing and development that occurred at this time appear to be associated with providing housing so that workers would live conveniently to the industrial plants. There was simply no development within the project area until the industrial complex of Farrell Birmingham took place.

#### **3.3.2. Prehistoric Archaeological Sensitivity**

Initially, the project area was considered to have a high potential for the location of previous unrecorded prehistoric archaeological sites. This is based primarily on the fact that the area along the river was long known as being utilized prehistorically (see Table 3-2). This aside, the primary consideration of sensitivity must be related to whether or not intact ground surface, and thus sites, would be present.



**FIGURE 3-18.** Project Location on 1948 USGS *Tonawanda, NY* 15 Minute Series Quadrangle.

It is uncertain to what degree the urbanized landscape has affected the apparent distribution of recorded sites. The majority of the sites in Table 3-2 were documented by early archaeologists such as Dr. A.L. Benedict, Frederick Houghton and Arthur who worked in this area between 1890 and 1920, prior to heavy population and development. The presence of farms in and near the project area in the nineteenth century suggests that any large sites might have been known to local collectors, particularly since Benedict recorded numerous sites elsewhere. The types of sites recorded in settings similar to the project area consist mostly of short term camps, small lithic scatters and stray finds. Few of these site had identifiable cultural affiliations. The few recurrently occupied camps, villages, quarries and burials recorded near the project area all occur in close association with a large drainage (i.e., the adjacent Niagara River or Scajauada Creek to the south) and/or the Onondaga escarpment (southeast of the project).

Background site file, literature and historic map research have identified several prehistoric archaeological sites recorded within a 1.0-mile radius of the project area, but none within it. The nearest recorded site to the project area is approximately 2,000 feet away under the main GM Complex along River Road - Plant 1. The archaeological sensitivity of the project area varied by parcel (e.g., 240 Vulcan Street; 280 Vulcan Street; 344 Vulcan Street).

### *3.3.2.1 344 Vulcan Street*

The 344 Vulcan Street parcel, the so-called Farrell Birmingham parcel, maintains a low archaeological sensitivity. In spite of its proximity to recorded prehistoric sites, historic impacts to the parcel have effectively disturbed original ground surfaces. The types of disturbances across 344 Vulcan Street include episodic construction, demolition and removal activities for buildings and railroad lines; subsurface utility emplacement; and cut and fill activities to bring the parcel up to grade (at various times). No basements were constructed at the 344 Vulcan Street parcel. The reinforced concrete slabs which supported the various buildings, however,

are thick, and in various states of erosion. In addition, two- to four-foot-deep depressions and holes in the slabs, once used to support machinery, are apparent across the few locations where the slabs are still in place. The destruction (by fire) of the Farrell Birmingham building in 1985 and the subsequent environmental remediation activities have also contributed to lowering the archaeological sensitivity of the 344 Vulcan street parcel. Based on the above facts, no archaeological field investigations are recommended for the 344 Vulcan Street Parcel.

### *3.3.2.2 280 Vulcan Street*

Background site file, literature and historic map research indicated that the 280 Vulcan parcel has never been occupied prior to the construction of the Plant 5 complex. No information was available that would verify impacts (aside from subsurface utilities) to the areas outside of Plant 5 at this time.

The 280 Vulcan Street parcel contains the potentially NRHP-eligible Plant 5 Building (built on concrete slab circa 1942) (Longiaru 2000). The remainder of the parcel is currently undeveloped, primarily supporting a reinforced concrete slab parking lot to the south and various highly disturbed locations and staging areas to the north where former railroad tracks once were. In only one location is lawn present - just west of Plant 5. Shovel testing can be attempted in the lawn, but the parking lot and northern area here are too disturbed for testing.

### *3.3.2.3 240 Vulcan Street*

The 240 Vulcan Street parcel is currently undeveloped, primarily supporting a reinforced concrete slab helicopter landing pad and concrete slab parking and staging areas. In two locations, grass lawn is present: a) south of the heli-pad; and b) between the south property

line and Vulcan Street. Available utility maps for the parcel indicate subsurface utilities throughout the concrete slab heli-pad and staging areas, but not within the grassy locations.

Recommendations for the 240 and 280 Vulcan Street parcels include shovel testing at 50-foot intervals in the grassy areas in order to determine a) the extent of past historic impacts to those locations and b) the presence or absence of original ground surfaces and/or archaeological resources. It is also recommended that coring be done under the parking lot at 240 Vulcan Street to ascertain ground surface presence and stratigraphy.

It should also be noted that at this time plans for the proposed GM L-6 Engine Plant call for construction on top of the existing surfaces and brought up to grade. In this case, with the possible exception of deep supporting caisson locations, the current surfaces and sub-surfaces will be sealed in place.

### **3.3.3 HISTORIC STRUCTURES**

The Longiaru (2000), in a separate study, assessed the architectural value of all extant structures at 240, 280 and 344 Vulcan Street. This is discussed above.