

CSI short of funds for work on new site

By **DON GROSS**
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More than four years after a decision was made to consolidate the College of Staten Island's (CSI) two campuses on the grounds of the former Willowbrook State School, preparations have begun for the construction needed to convert the site from what may be the most infamous home for the mentally retarded into an institution of higher learning.

The project is now expected to cost far more than anticipated, and the college finds itself short of the funds needed to complete the work that is finally beginning.

Over the last two weeks laboratory equipment has been moved onto the site that will be used to monitor removal of asbestos from the buildings and the thousands of feet of underground tunnels that once carried steam from the power plant to the 64 now-unoccupied buildings.

Trailers to house the construction management firm hired to oversee the project and security personnel also have been brought on site. A cyclone fence has been erected around the perimeter of CSI's portion of sprawling, 330-acre grounds. About 200 acres will be used by CSI.

Peter McGlinchey, the project manager for the state Dormitory Authority, the agency that legally owns the land and is financing the construction, said PC&J Construction of Woodside, Queens, is expected to begin initial stages of asbestos removal within the next several weeks. An exact date for the beginning of work has not been set.

The firm will remove asbestos from four of the buildings, according to McGlinchey, two of which will be converted to administrative offices for CSI and two of which will be torn down.

Among the buildings to be demolished in this phase of construction is the tall hospital building. This building was once the centerpiece for the complex constructed during World War II as

Halloran Hospital, which was a receiving center for wounded American servicemen.

About 30 buildings that belonged to Willowbrook — later known as the Staten Island Developmental Center (SIDC) — stand on the CSI site. Fourteen will be used as administrative and classroom space, while the rest will be destroyed.

McGlinchey said the first stage of asbestos removal will take 200 work days and cost \$4.8 million.

The latest figures available from the City University of New York, of which CSI is a part, peg total asbestos removal costs at more than \$18 million and total construction costs at \$400 million.

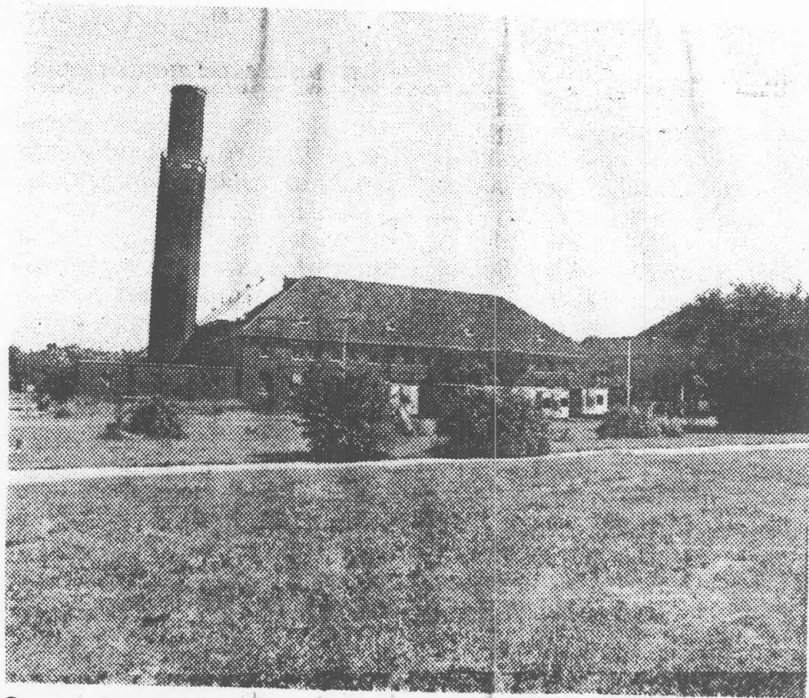
These figures are both well above original estimates of \$3 million for asbestos removal and

\$200 million for total construction.

Financed by the sale of Dormitory Authority bonds, CSI is now \$157 million short of the money it needs to complete the project. Caught in the midst of the state's fiscal crisis, both the city university and the Dormitory Authority failed to win permission to sell the additional bonds needed to fund the work this year.

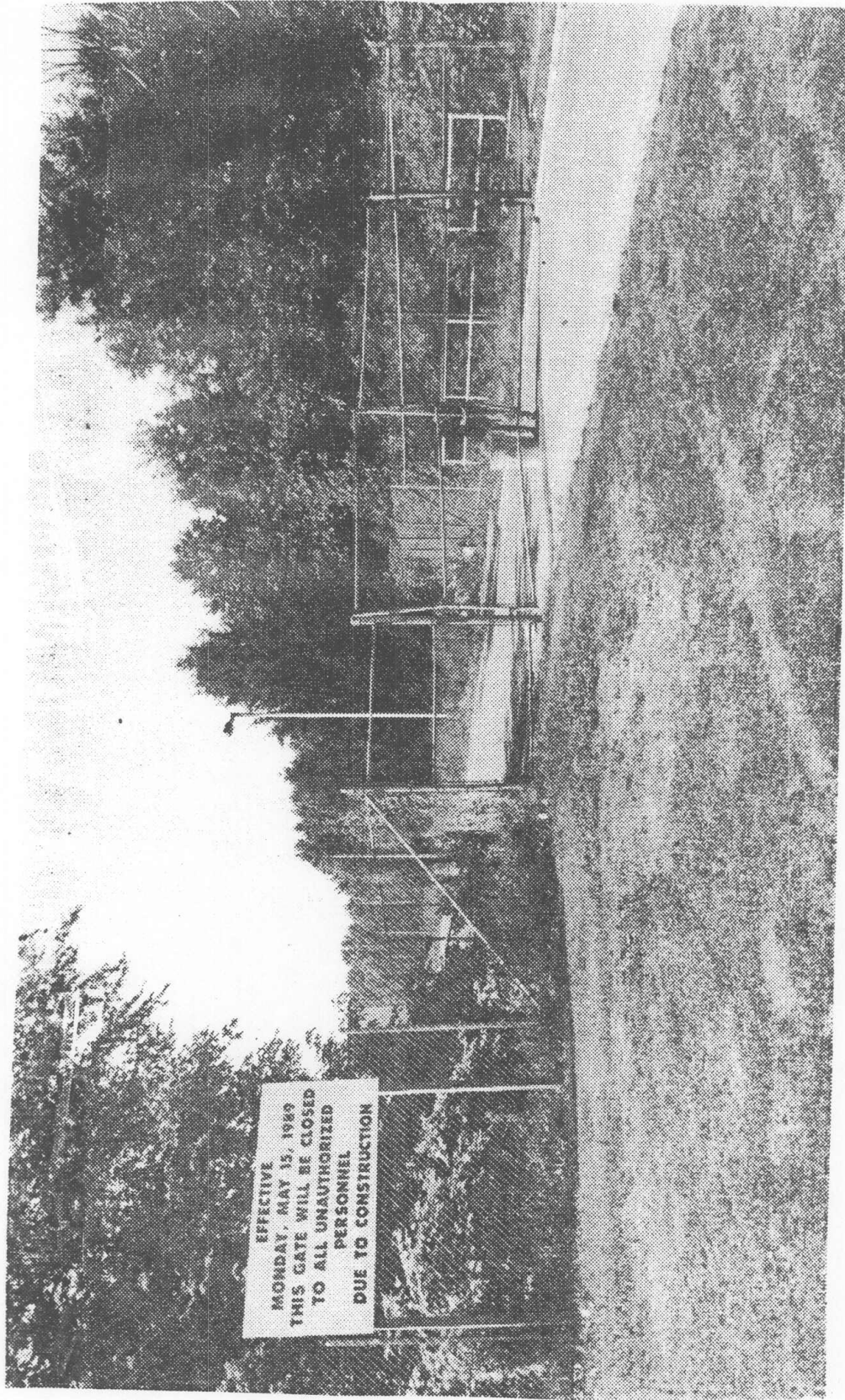
Rita Rodin, a spokeswoman for the 19-college university system, said she expects the legislature will authorize the bond sale next year.

CSI officials, in the meantime, admit the lack of money will slow the planned consolidation of the two campuses. In interviews earlier this year, Edmond Volpe, the CSI president, said he expects the final move onto the new campus will take place in 1994, two years later than expected.



One of the old buildings now standing on the future CSI campus.

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The front gate of the future College of Staten Island campus.

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