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REPORT OF INVESTIGATIONS No. 27

Archaeological Survey of the Proposed Gift Tract (76 acres), Fort Custer Military Reservation, Battle Creek, Michigan.

Project Personnel:

Principal Investigator: Robert G. Kingsley, M.A., Research Associate

Field Assistants: Larry M. Wyckoff, M.A.; Lynn E. Skinner, B.S.;
Kevin A. Kincare (undergraduate student)

Purpose of Investigations:

This survey was performed at the request of Mr. Dee Weaver of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Lands Division. The purpose of the project was to determine whether or not extant cultural resources existed on a 76 acre parcel of land in the Fort Custer Military Reservation; this determination was to be made prior to the proposed exchange of the parcel from the U.S. government to the DNR. The fieldwork for the project was carried out on June 28, 1978.

Description of Project Area:

As stated, the project area covers 76 acres. It is located in the SE 1/4, SE 1/4, Sec. 30; the E 1/4, SW 1/4, SE 1/4, Sec. 30; the NE 1/4, NE 1/4, Sec. 31; and the E 1/4, NW 1/4, NE 1/4, Sec. 31, Bedford Township, Calhoun County, Michigan.

The topography of the parcel is sloping and undulating; the land generally rises from the north end of the parcel to the south. The elevation at the north end of the parcel is 820 ft. MSL, and at the south end is 920 ft. MSL. The degree of slope is relatively constant, although small ravines and ridges are present. As indicated, the land can be best described as undulating.

The parcel is heavily forested, and general underbrush was plentiful. Vegetation included both hard and soft wood deciduous trees, ferns, grasses, vines, and brambles. Conifers have been planted in rows in two places; near the NE corner, and near the SW corner.

The soil within the area is unsorted glacial till. Rocks of several sizes were observed, ranging in size from small pebbles to fairly large boulders. Topsoil is more plentiful in the lower elevations at the north end of the parcel; here, rich organic loam overlays the till. At the higher elevations however topsoil was less rich and occasionally was not present at all.

Several dirt roads are located within the limits of the parcel, and a power line runs north-south through the approximate center of the area.

Previous Research:

Western Michigan University has conducted archaeological research in this

area of Calhoun and adjacent Kalamazoo Counties. WMU had not examined the specific project area, however. Inspection of the archaeological site files at the Department of Anthropology at WMU revealed that a known site exists across the Kalamazoo River from the parcel in Sec. 29 at a distance of about 1/2 mi., direction ENE. The site is designated C-6, and possibly dates to the Woodland Period. To the south of the area in Sec. 19, Battle Creek Township, is another site which is designated C-7. This site is of unknown cultural affiliation. There were no recorded sites within the project area itself.

One contracted archaeological survey has been performed near the project area. This survey was conducted by WMU under the direction of Mr. Marvin Keller. The area is located SE of the present parcel in Sec. 8 and 9, Battle Creek Township. No cultural resources were located during this project.

Procedures:

Prior to fieldwork, the archaeological site files at the Department of Anthropology, WMU, were consulted to determine the nature of known cultural resources in the immediate area.

Field procedures consisted of systematic transect survey with subsurface test probes. The parcel was transected at 30 yd. intervals, and test probes were placed every 25 yds. Heavy vegetation made keeping straight transects difficult, as well as totally obscuring the ground surface. The dirt roads and power lines were examined when crossed since they are the only areas of relatively clear ground in the parcel.

Sites Recorded:

Absolutely no historic or prehistoric cultural material of any significance was encountered by the survey crew. Non-significant recent material (e.g., cans, bottles, etc.) was noted.

On the USGS topographical map of this area, two small knolls were noted about half-way up the slope and in the center of the parcel. The crew made efforts to locate these since the map led us to suspect that these might be burial mounds. Both were probably located; the heavy underbrush made this difficult to determine for certain. In any case, two small knolls were found and test probed. No cultural material was found, indicating that these are probably not mounds, but natural features.

Recommendations:

Since no significant historic or prehistoric cultural materials or sites were found in the project area, as outlined to me by Mr. Dee Weaver of the Department of Natural Resources, I can recommend that this project proceed as planned.

Prepared and submitted by:

Robert G. Kingsley, M.A.
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