



1978

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DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY
WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

REPORT OF INVESTIGATIONS NO. 32

1978

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF LAND INVOLVED
IN THE PROPOSED EXPANSION OF SEWAGE TREATMENT
FACILITIES, CITY OF OTSEGO, ALLEGAN COUNTY, MICHIGAN

William M. Cremin

PURPOSE OF INVESTIGATION:

The project was initiated upon receipt of a letter (dated 21 Sep 78) from Ms. Jane Tice, Clerk of the Village of Otsego, and carried out with the assistance of Mr. Michael Doleski, City Manager and Mr. Dean Smalla, Superintendent of the treatment facility. Our objective was to determine whether existing plans to expand the facility might impact cultural resources.

PROJECT PERSONNEL:

Principal Investigator - William M. Cremin, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Anthropology, WMU

Field Assistants - Michael Higgins, M.A. Candidate in Anthropology, WMU

- William Rutter, Graduate Student in Anthropology, WMU

DESCRIPTION OF THE PARCELS EVALUATED:

Parcel A - This area of approximately 4200 m² is low ground lying due W of the existing facility in the NE 1/4, NW 1/4 of Section 22. It fronts on the Kalamazoo River and consists of rental property on the east and a former sludge pit on the west. The latter portion of the parcel has been significantly disturbed to a depth of ca. 1 m below the surface. The rental property has been only minimally disturbed. The south bank of the river channel, for a distance of 15-20 m, evidences much disturbance due to the

changing course of the river. Here, channel deposits were observed to commence just below the sod and extend to an undetermined depth in excess of 1 m.

Parcel B - This tract, encompassing about 890 m², is a city-owned rental property lying up slope and to the south of the existing facility in the NW 1/4, NE 1/4 of Section 22. A house and attached garage occupy most of the lot, and disturbance associated with the erecting of a modern structure is much in evidence.

Parcel C - Consisting of about 3700 m², this parcel boasts several structures as well as a vacant lot and is located due east of the existing facility in the NW 1/4, NE 1/4 of Section 22. It also fronts on the river, but in contrast to Parcel A is strongly sloping with only a narrow band of level land immediately adjacent to the channel. Disturbance associated with the construction of a house and two garages is again much in evidence.

Parcel D - Two vacant lots, aggregating approximately 1600 m² and lying south and east of the present facility in the NW 1/4, NE 1/4, Section 22, represent the proposed access road for the expanded sewage treatment plant. End-on-end, the lots link Allegan and Water streets. The lot adjacent to the present plant is largely maintained in garden. The parcel to the south is a well-kept lawn.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH:

Western Michigan University has recently completed a systematic survey to locate prehistoric sites in the Otsego area; however, access to land lying within the city limits was not possible

and currently no sites are recorded for the latter area. The closest known archaeological site is several kilometers upstream from the project. Based upon our experience in the immediate environs of the City of Otsego, it seemed quite possible that the project area would provide evidence of the presence of pre-historic residents.

FIELD PROCEDURES:

Field procedures consisted of systematic transect survey with subsurface testing at designated intervals. Parcel A was traversed from east to west at 15 m intervals, with shovel tests placed at 15-25 m. A total of 29 tests, ranging in depth from 60-160 cm, were placed in this area. Along the tree line at the southern boundary of the property, tests showed silt loams extending to a depth of 35 cm, with a thick underlying horizon of culturally sterile sand. As we entered the old sludge pit on the western half of the parcel, the soil profile appeared much disturbed due to the deposit of human waste at least 60 cm thick. Having determined the nature of the disturbance in this area of the parcel, we concentrated our efforts along the river and on the eastern portion or rental property. Here, we again determined that an in-tact natural soil profile existed over much of the area with only occasional evidence of recent disturbance being observed. It was in this latter area that we encountered some evidence of prehistoric activity.

Parcel B, because of the presence of a residential structure, could not be systematically traversed. Rather, six shovel tests were placed behind, in front of, and to both sides of the dwelling. We encountered the usual kinds of recent rubbish in our

tests, but nothing which would indicate potential impact on cultural resources.

Parcel C, also containing several structures, was traversed at variable intervals from north to south. Twelve subsurface tests and examination of the riverbank yielded absolutely no evidence of significant cultural resources in this parcel.

Finally, Parcel D was evaluated. We examined the garden bed and placed six shovel tests extending from Water Street on the north to Allegan Street on the south. Recent material was observed throughout the garden and in several of the shovel tests. However, little significance can be attached to any material observed given the age of the existing structures and evidence for their rather continuous occupation.

SITES RECORDED:

Absolutely no prehistoric (or historic) cultural material of significance was observed to occur in Parcels B, C or D. The presence of non-significant recent material (e.g. broken bottles, crockery, nails, fragments of wire) was noted in our tests again and again.

However, in Parcel A we did recover evidence for the existence of a prehistoric site in the eastern portion of this tract. The material recovered includes: a side-notched projectile point of Bayport chert, some debitage and several fragments of fire-cracked rock. Although the shovel tests from which these objects were recovered occur in fairly close proximity to the old sludge pit, and it is entirely possible that a portion(s) of the prehistoric site has already been significantly impacted, it remains quite possible that much of the site may still be in-tact due to

the more limited nature of recent activity in the eastern half of this parcel (that portion in rental property which includes an area of lawn).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Since no significant cultural material was observed in Parcels B, C or D of the proposed expansion site, it can be recommended that plans relating to the implementation of new sewage treatment facilities proceed in these areas as planned. However, with respect to the area designated as Parcel A, it is strongly suggested that additional testing to evaluate the significance of the archaeological site discovered be undertaken prior to the commencement of construction activity in this location of the project. The aforementioned site will be recorded with the Michigan History Division, Michigan Department of State.