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DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY
WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

REPORT OF INVESTIGATIONS NO. 64
1984

PHASE I ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE TEKONSHA SEWAGE PLANT
EXPANSION PROJECT, VILLAGE OF TEKONSHA, CALHOUN COUNTY, MICHIGAN

William M. Cremin

Prepared for:

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through

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INTRODUCTION:

Upon request from Mr. Daniel Romes, President of Gove Associates, Inc., Kalamazoo, Michigan, acting on behalf of Thousand Trails, Inc., Des Plaines, Illinois, the Principal Investigator, Dr. William M. Cremin, submitted a proposal and budget for on-site evaluation of about 10 acres (4 ha) of land adjacent to the existing sewage treatment facilities of the Village of Tekonsha, Calhoun County, Michigan. There follows a report of fieldwork conducted on 29 Nov 84, together with appropriate background information and recommendations based upon our findings.

It should be understood that our evaluation of a parcel including all of the Village's property at this site, involving an estimated 11 ha (27 acres) to the south as well as to the west of the existing cells (treatment lagoons), has been undertaken at no additional cost to the sponsors. Realizing that the extent of impact due to construction equipment being on this property would exceed the estimated area of proposed Cell # 4, and well aware of the potential for the presence of an archaeological site(s) on land adjacent to the St. Joseph River, the survey team elected to "clear" the entire area about Cells 1-3 as long as we were on the property. This should be viewed as a professional contribution to the management of archaeological resources in a very sensitive zone along the St. Joseph River, and one that in part has been proposed for landscape altering

activity associated with the construction of expanded sewage treatment facilities.

PROJECT PERSONNEL:

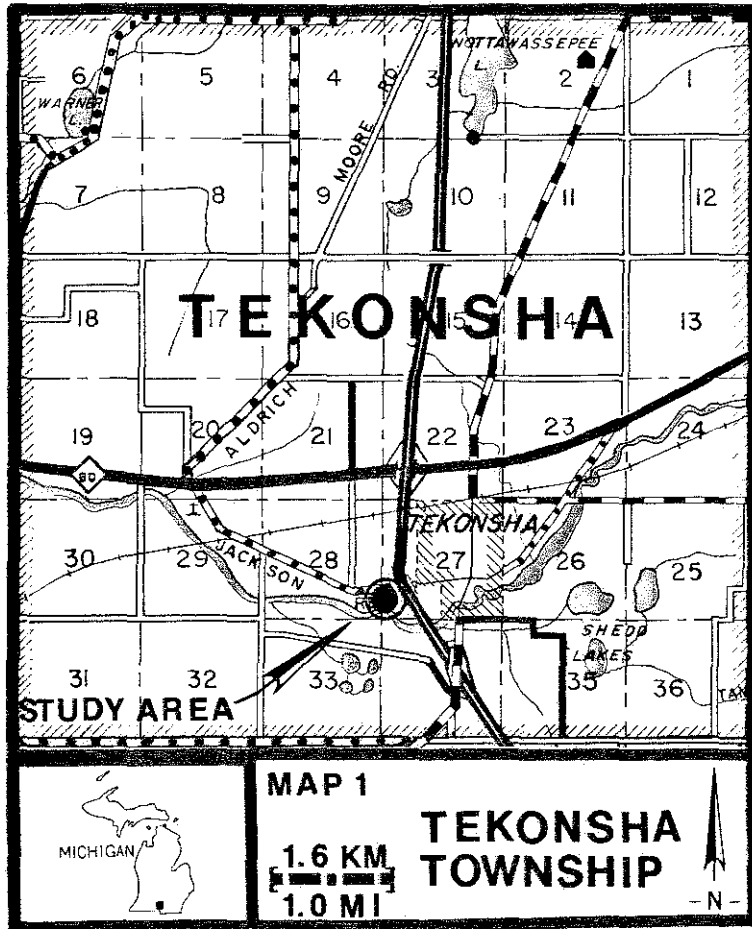
Principal Investigator - William M. Cremin, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Anthropology, Western Michigan University

Field Assistants - James Cogswell, M.A. Candidate in Anthropology, WMU
- David De Fant, M.A. Candidate in Anthropology, WMU

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT AREA:

Tekonsha Township is located in south central Calhoun County and is drained by the St. Joseph River and its tributaries. The St. Joseph enters the township in Section 24 and flows in a west-southwesterly direction for 12 km before exiting in Section 19. Formerly, this was an area of oak and oak-hickory forest, broken only by an occasional bur oak opening, small prairie remnants, and patches of tamarack swamp and bog forest (Brewer 1979).

The research area of this study comprises an estimated 11 ha (27 acres) in the W 1/2, SW 1/4, SW 1/4 of Section 27 and the E 1/2, SE 1/4, SE 1/4 of Section 28, Tekonsha Township, T4S R6W, Calhoun County, Michigan (Map 1). Entirely in village ownership, this irregular tract of flood bottomland flanks the existing sewage treatment facilities of Tekonsha on two sides and is in turn bounded on the north by Jackson Road, on the east by south-bound I-69, and on the south by the St. Joseph River. The western



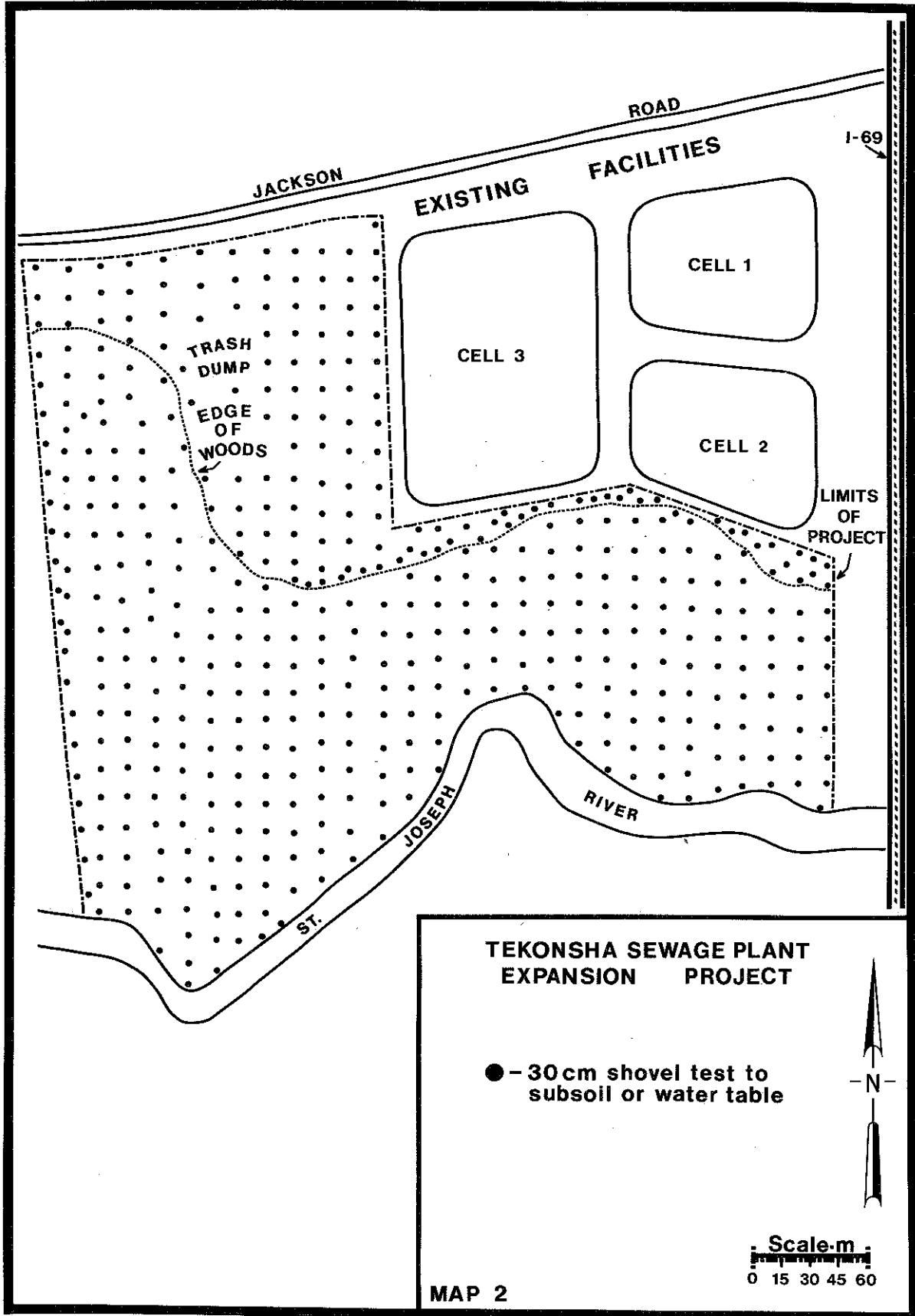
limits of the property are defined by a parcel of land currently in private ownership (Map 2).

This parcel of land on the north bank of the St. Joseph River is for the most part wet bottomland, characterized by a slight ridge and swale topography created over the years by a shifting river channel, muck soils, and dense second growth forest consisting principally of slippery elm, quacking aspen, black ash, and silver maple, but with some birch, hickory, black walnut, butternut, and swamp white oak being present. Grape vines nest in many of the trees, and poison ivy is a major constituent of the undergrowth. The deep leaf litter covering the forest floor at the time of our survey did not really permit identification of ground cover across the forested portion of the study area.

Although elevation above sea level varies from about 279 m to 281.5 m across the parcel, the lowest elevations generally lie between the river and a natural levee that is coterminous with the edge of the forest as shown on Map 2. Elevations on the levee from east to west range between 281.5 m and 280 m ASL. To the north of the levee in the central portion of the project, grass and weed cover predominates in an area that was until a few years ago regularly cultivated. Aside from several small depressions holding water, elevation here varies little, i.e. between 279.7 m and 280 m ASL.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH:

Examination of the literature, documents, and state site files revealed that no archaeological sites had ever been recorded



for the project area. However, three historic aboriginal sites, 20CA1, 20CA2, and 20CA9, are reported to occur but a short distance upstream from the project in and near the present community of Tekonsha in the W 1/2, SW 1/4 of Section 26 and the SE 1/4 of Section 27.

H.B. Pierce (1877) and W. Gardiner (1913), in their short but informative histories of this village, note that Tekonsha was established on the old Jackson and White Pigeon Territorial Road along the north bank of the St. Joseph River where there was located in 1832 a Potawatomi town of 200-300 inhabitants residing in canvas tents and bark wigwams. The chief of this band was Tekonquasha, after whom the white settlement was named. Moreover, throughout the town were scattered the graves of the Indians, and as the town grew these graves were regularly encountered by the whites, yielding their remains of the Potawatomi, themselves, together with guns, bows and arrows, and powder horns (Pierce 1877: 147).

One grave in particular warrants brief comment. According to Pierce (1877: 147), this grave, surrounded by a well maintained fence of logs, contained the remains of Tekonquasha and was on the property of John Geisel. Reference to the plat of the Village of Tekonsha in Beers' (1873: 82-83) Atlas of Calhoun County, Michigan places this property and the aforementioned grave on the northwest corner of the intersection of Catherine and Walnut Streets, or in the Center, SW 1/4, NE 1/4, SE 1/4 of Section 27. The Potawatomi village site, itself, probably spread over much of the N 1/2 of the SE 1/4 of Section 27; hence, this is probably as precise a

provenience as can be given site 20CA2.

Site 20CA9, an 8-10 acre (3.2-4.0 ha) Indian corn field on the south side of the river across from Tekonsha, is located by Pierce (1877: 147) on the Phelps Farm. Beers' (1873) Atlas of Calhoun County, Michigan shows a J.A. Phelps to have owned 126 acres in the S 1/2, SW 1/4 of Section 26 and the adjacent SE corner of Section 27 between two small streams flowing north to the St. Joseph across from the village. Given the corn field's location on the Phelps Farm across the river from Tekonsha and the fact that the corn field was near the Potawatomi burial ground (20CA1), "which occupied the site of the cemetery now used by Tekonsha's inhabitants" (Pierce 1877: 147), together with Beers' (1873: 79) placement of the Tekonsha Cemetery on the Granger Farm across a stream and west of the Phelps Farm in the SW 1/4, SE 1/4, SE 1/4, SE 1/4 of Section 27, it appears quite reasonable to locate the corn field (20CA9) on land in the SE 1/4, SE 1/4 of Section 27.

Aside from the information gleaned from the histories prepared by Pierce (1877) and Gardiner (1913), there are no documents recording early historic and/or prehistoric Indian sites in this township. In fact, the only other site that has been recorded by the State of Michigan for the St. Joseph River Basin in this county is 20CA3; a Woodland period earthwork in Burlington Township downstream and west of the Village of Tekonsha and the research area of this study.

FIELD PROCEDURES:

Inasmuch as ground surface visibility across the project was

absolutely nil, the survey team relied on shovel testing to conduct on-site evaluation. The project was systematically traversed from north to south along transects spaced approximately 15 m apart, excepting where surveyors crossed over the natural levee bordering the wet bottom. Here, many additional shovel tests were excavated, given that the levee would have provided occupants with a higher and drier site for locating an encampment. The individual shovel tests placed by surveyors along each transect were spaced at intervals of 15 m. In total, 461 shovel tests, ranging in depth from 30-70 cm, or until contact with sterile subsoil or the water table had been made, were excavated. Their approximate locations are shown on Map 2. Systematic and intensive shovel testing of this property, in conjunction with the literature, documents, and site file search summarized above, provides a firm basis upon which to make the recommendation which follows.

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Fieldwork conducted on 29 Nov 84 resulted in not a single observation of potentially significant cultural material being made in the project area. In fact, with the exception of the trash dump located on Map 2, surveyors were hard put to come up with anything during the shovel testing of the property in question.

Review of the literature, documents, and site files in the Bureau of History, Michigan Department of State revealed that no sites had been recorded for the project, albeit three sites are known to have existed at the time of the settlement of the

Village of Tekonsha a short distance upstream from the study area. The information pertaining to these historic aboriginal sites is reviewed in a previous section of this report.

In the absence of potentially significant information from the project area adjacent to the existing sewage treatment facilities of the Village of Tekonsha, it is recommended that the expansion of these facilities be permitted to proceed as scheduled.

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