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28-Archaeological Survey of the Proposed I-94 Business Route Expansion Project, Battle Creek, Michigan

Robert G. Kingsley
Western Michigan University

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Archaeological Survey of the Proposed I-94 Business Route Expansion Project,
Battle Creek, Michigan

Project Personnel:

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

Field Assistants: Larry M. Wyckoff, M.A.; Kenneth Barr, Paul W.
McAllister (graduate students)

Purpose of Investigations:

This project was performed at the request of Mr. Mark Schrag of the Environmental and Community Factors Division, Michigan Department of State Highways and Transportation. The project was intended to locate and identify any prehistoric or historical cultural resources in the right-of-way for the proposed I-94 Business Route expansion that might be impacted as a result of road construction. The fieldwork for this project was carried out on July 6 and 7, 1978.

Description of Project Area:

The area in question is a strip of proposed right-of-way immediately adjacent to the existing I-94 BR; it runs from the interchange at I-94 north to Dickman Road, a distance of 4 mi. The width of the strip is 260 ft. from I-94 to Columbia Avenue (about 1-1/4 mi.), and 160 ft. from Columbia Avenue to Dickman Road. Also included in the project area are expansions of existing entry/exit ramps at the I-94 interchange, and an area of proposed interchanges near Dickman Road (see Map 1). The entire project area is located in the following: NE 1/4, NE 1/4, Sec. 25, Charleston Township, Kalamazoo County; NW 1/4, NW 1/4, Sec. 30; SE 1/4, SW 1/4; W 1/2, SE 1/4; E 1/2, NE 1/4, Sec. 19; NW 1/4, NW 1/4, Sec. 20; W 1/2, W 1/2, W 1/2, Sec. 17; center, S 1/2, SW 1/4; W 1/2, NE 1/4, Sec. 8; SE 1/4, SE 1/4, Sec. 5; all in Battle Creek Township, Calhoun County, Michigan.

Topography in the project area is variable. Graded areas were encountered at the present I-94 interchange; the 4 mi. strip of right-of-way ranged from relatively flat relief to rolling, hilly areas. Unsorted glacial till was omnipresent throughout the project area, though a few areas of mucky, relatively till-free soils were noted. The proposed right-of-way crosses creek/swamplands in 3 spots: W 1/2, NW 1/4, Sec. 17; center and NW 1/4, Sec. 8, Battle Creek Twp. Causeways have been constructed for the existing I-94 BR in these areas.

Vegetation was likewise variable in the project area, ranging from open fields to swamps. By far the bulk of the area was wooded with deciduous soft and hard wood trees. Undergrowth was abundant and included a wide range of flora.

Previous Research:

One previously known archaeological site had been recorded directly within the confines of the project area; this site was discovered in 1973 by Western

Michigan University field crews under the direction of Dr. Elizabeth B. Garland. This site, designated C-7, will be discussed below under the Sites Recorded section.

Other than this single site, no systematic archaeological research has been done in the total project area. Several contracted archaeological surveys have been conducted in this part of Calhoun County by Western Michigan University. One project was directed by Mr. Marvin Keller, and was located in Sec. 8 and 9, Battle Creek Township. Two projects directed by myself were undertaken in Sec. 30 and 31, Bedford Township, and Sec. 35 and 36, Battle Creek Township, respectively. None of these projects located cultural resources warranting mitigation.

Two other known sites are located near the present project area. These are designated C-2, Sec. 27, Battle Creek Twp.; and C-13, Sec. 14, Battle Creek Twp. These sites are respectively Archaic Period and Mound sites; the latter has been destroyed by modern development of the area.

Procedures:

Prior to fieldwork, the archaeological site files at the Department of Anthropology, Western Michigan University, were consulted to determine the existence and nature of known sites within or near the present project area.

Field procedures consisted of surface reconnaissance and subsurface test probing of the area. Crew members were spaced off from the present I-94 BR to cover the area of proposed impact. Shovel probes were generally placed every 25 yd., but were dug more frequently if warranted. The 3 wet areas were not walked. The areas of proposed interchange construction/expansion were similarly walked and shovel probed.

Subsequent to fieldwork, the Michigan History Collections in the Archives Section, Waldo Library, Western Michigan University, were inspected to determine the significance of the archaeological sites discovered in the course of the fieldwork.

Sites Recorded:

A total of 5 archaeological sites were located within the boundaries of the project area. One of these was the previously recorded C-7 site mentioned above. The other 4 were previously unrecorded.

Each of these sites will be discussed in turn below; all are structures built during the Historic Period by white immigrants into the area. None are prehistoric or historic aboriginal sites. The number designations for these sites are from the site files at the Department of Anthropology, Western Michigan University.

Site C-7: NE 1/4, SW 1/4, Sec. 19, Battle Creek Twp. (See Map 1).

As indicated above, this site was discovered in 1973. The site consists of 2 foundations; one is approximately 100 ft from the edge of I-94 BR, the other about 200 ft. Both are constructed from poured concrete. The precise dimensions

of the foundations were difficult to determine due to very heavy overgrowth, but both are under 20 ft. by 20 ft. A possible well was found in front of the structure nearest the road, and what appears to be a poured cement water tank is located in back. A similar construction was noted on the north side of the second foundation, as well as poured concrete slabs.

Between the two structures a refuse area was discovered, partly buried. The refuse included debris of relatively modern origin, i.e., probably not more than 50 yrs. old. None of this material was removed from the site, but included a Roman Cleanser bottle, Heinz ketchup bottle, various unidentified beer and liquor bottles, broken crockery, window glass, and metal pieces in various states of decomposition.

The area in and around this site was intensively shovel probed in an attempt to locate other cultural material or features, such as other foundations, debris, and/or prehistoric materials. Test probes uncovered no other materials however.

Evaluation:

In-field evaluation of these structures and artifacts indicated that this site was probably not more than 50 yrs. old. Structure foundations are notoriously hard to date, and it should be pointed out that poured concrete was used for foundations and streets as early as 1900, and in some cases as early as the 1880's. No modern cinder blocks were noted in the construction, possibly indicating that the structures could be of greater antiquity than 50 yrs.

The presence of a single structure at this location appears on the 1961 USGS Topographical map of this area (Augusta Quadrangle, 7.5 min. series), indicating an antiquity older than that date. Likewise, a plat map dated 1873, located in the Archives at Waldo Library, WMU, also indicates a single structure at this location. This observation does not, of course, necessarily mean that the present structures are older than 1873. It was also noted, however, that the land owner in 1873 was one Anson Mapes, an early settler in the area who moved here in 1835 or 1836 (Lowe 1976:13). It seems likely that this site was the location of Mapes' original house. It does not seem likely, however, that the foundations found by the survey crew represent this original structure; that is, these foundations do not appear, from field inspection, to pre-date 1873. The refuse examined by the crew is definitely of much more recent origin. As stated, evidence of other or older structures was not discovered due to dense overgrowth. Whether or not the present structures are built on or near the original structure can only be determined through excavation.

Site C-20: NW 1/4, SE 1/4, Sec. 19, Battle Creek Twp. (See Map 1).

This site is located about 700 ft. NE of C-7; it lies about 100 ft. from I-94 BR. The site is a single poured concrete foundation, similar in size to those at C-7. A possible well is located at the front of the structure. This area was intensively test probed, but no other structures or debris was discovered; the foundation and area in general was heavily overgrown with grasses, shrubs and trees.

Evaluation:

This site likewise appears on the 1873 plat map. It does not appear on the 1961 USGS map. The land upon which the site sits was owned in 1873 by A.R. Cole; no further reference to this individual was found in the Archives.

Like the previous site, this foundation does not appear to pre-date 1873. This observation is based on the presence of poured concrete which was not used prior to 1880. This structure was apparently built near (or on top of) the structure that existed in 1873, though this possibility cannot be confirmed without excavation.

Site C-21: Center, S 1/2, S 1/2, NW 1/4, Sec. 19, Battle Creek Twp. (see Map 1).

C-21 is located about 1/4 mi. NE of C-20. Again, it lies adjacent to I-94 BR; one of 2 structures lies within 100 ft. from the edge of the road, the other about 200-250 ft. These 2 foundations may not be related, i.e., they are quite different from one another. They will, however, be treated here as the same site.

The structure nearest the road is a fieldstone basement with fieldstone and concrete foundations associated. The area in and around the structure was relatively free of underbrush or general overgrowth, and the size of the structure was estimated. The basement proper measured approximately 15 by 20 ft.; the entire structure, which was larger than the basement, measures about 30 by 40 ft. What may be basement stairs are located at the NW corner of the structure, and a poured concrete slab and 2 steps are located along the NE side. A small depression, possibly a well, lies about 4 ft. from the NE corner of the structure. Poured concrete slabs extend from the presumed basement steps to a small (about 5 by 5 ft.) stone and concrete foundation, a distance of about 40 ft. This small structure contained fragments of coal.

Behind (NW of) the structure a refuse area was found. No artifacts of definite great antiquity (i.e., 100 yrs.) were discovered. Present were remains of canning lids and jars, various glass and bottles, a glass electrical insulator, a light bulb socket/shade/chain assembly, broken crockery, and various decomposing metal pieces. None of these artifacts were removed from the site.

Within the confines of the structure, mortar or plaster that possibly contains hair temper was discovered. Also, badly crumbling red brick fragments were noted throughout the area generally, as well as within the structure. These bricks may have been part of the construction of the structure, or were possibly a chimney.

As mentioned, a second foundation was discovered some distance from this one, direction WNW. This feature resembles the previous two sites discussed above; it is a poured concrete foundation lacking any fieldstone, measuring about 10 by 10 ft. No artifactual material was found near this feature.

As indicated, it is unknown if these two structures are related, or were built/used at the same time. It seems likely that they were not, given the difference in construction technique.

Evaluation:

On the 1873 plat map, a structure is indicated at the location of the first, or basement, structure. The landowner was one E.J. Hunt; no further reference to this person was found. The building was not on the 1961 USGS map.

The age of these two foundations is difficult to assess. Stone basements were constructed by the earliest pioneers in Michigan. Stone basements are not a de facto indicator of great antiquity however because some people even today use fieldstone in basement construction. Further complicating matters is the fact that some of the fieldstone was mortared together with poor-grade, decomposing cement, and poured concrete slabs were noted also. The presence of electrical fixtures would indicate a date of post-1873 as well. One factor does argue for an earlier temporal position. This is the hair tempered plaster or mortar; horse hair and similar fibres were used in the early 19th century as an additive to plaster to help give it strength and resist cracking. This may be a situation whereby an earlier building was added to or remodeled and upgraded at a later time. Controlled excavation is needed to verify this assumption, and to locate artifactual material indicative of the 1873 and pre-1873 occupation of the building.

The second concrete foundation remains problematical at this point. Its nature and function are unclear and it may not be related to the previous structure. Again, excavation is needed to determine the nature of this feature.

Site C-22: NW 1/4, NW 1/4, Sec. 17, Battle Creek Twp. (see Map 1).

This site is located about 1-1/4 mi. NNE of C-21; it lies within the proposed right-of-way of I-94 BR. Found in this area was a fieldstone basement nearly identical to the one at C-21. Also, several fieldstone foundations were associated; this is probably more than one structure, or possibly one rather large one. This structure covers an area of about 70 by 70 ft. Very heavy overgrowth and burying of the site prevented precise determinations of size or number of buildings. Poured concrete was noted within parts of the structure; at one spot, a raised concrete step on a concrete slab occupied a probable corner of the structure. A section of badly rusted pipe protruded vertically from this step. Basement stairs were noted at the SW side of the basement. This building may have burned down, as much charcoal and cinders were found in the basement, as well as a badly warped and partly melted bottle. Glass and brick fragments were discovered, but very little other artifactual material. No refuse dump was discovered, in spite of intensive test probing.

Evaluation:

A single structure is indicated at this location on both the 1961 USGS map and the 1873 plat map. The plat map showed the 1873 land owner to be one A.C. Stafford, but no further reference to this gentleman was discovered. It is of probable significance that this structure is located immediately adjacent to Territorial Road. This road, which reportedly had at least three

branches in Calhoun County, was the first road constructed across southern Michigan (Lowe 1976:11). In some areas the road still exists, and indeed extends west from C-22 across the Fort Custer Military Reservation. The road appears on the 1961 USGS map. Territorial Road in Calhoun County was commissioned to be constructed on November 24, 1829, and had been completed by 1830 (Lowe 1973:6-7).

The structure(s) at C-22, or at least part of it, probably dates to pre-1873, as indicated by the plat map. The location of the site along the first road in the county is interesting, and this association may attest to the antiquity of the site. It should also be pointed out, however, that this structure(s), like the stone basement at C-21, shows evidence of later construction or use, as indicated by the poured concrete and probably the metal pipe. The function of this building(s) remains obscure, but several way-stations and taverns have been reported as being built along Territorial Road soon after its construction (ibid.). No reference to one such at this location was found in the Archives, but the possibility that this could be one cannot be dismissed without further examination and excavation of the site.

Site C-23: NE 1/4, SW 1/4, Sec. 8, Battle Creek Twp. (see Map 1).

This site is located on the edge of the proposed right-of-way on a small hill. Like the preceding C-22 site, C-23 is heavily overgrown and partially buried. The site covers about 50 by 50 ft.; it appeared in the field that a single structure was represented here, but this cannot be stated with certainty because no distinct foundation lines could be discerned. A stone basement similar in size to the ones at C-21 and 22 was found here. This one was unique in that most of the fieldstones had been plastered over with poor quality cement. Hand-hewn beams, in poor states of preservation, were found in the basement. One contained both round wire nails, which are a relatively recent innovation, and nails with square cross-sections, which are usually indicative of an antiquity of greater than 100 yrs. This probably indicates re-use of the beam. Near the south edge of the basement, a section of galvanized pipe protruded at an angle out of a poured concrete slab. This pipe is probably not older than 50 yrs.

Artifactual remains were found in the basement. None were removed from the site but included a metal pail, glass, and unidentified metal pieces. The pail appeared to be of relatively recent origin, i.e., less than 50 yrs.

The foundations near and adjoining the basement included short (3 ft.) square pillars of cemented fieldstone capped by cement squares, such as might be found near a doorway. As mentioned, precise foundation locations could not be discerned.

Evaluation:

This structure also appears on the 1873 plat map; it does not appear on the 1961 USGS map. The 1873 land owner was one W.G. Clapp. Thus, some structure stood on this spot prior to 1873. The building(s) has definitely been reused or reconstructed at a later date though, as indicated by the galvanized pipe, the round nails, and perhaps the pail. The plastering of the fieldstone basement may have been an attempt at renovation and strengthening the structure.

Excavation is needed to determine the sequence of construction/renovation, and to locate artifacts dating to the pre-1873 occupation.

Discussion:

At present, there is a paucity of archaeological data concerning house and/or farm structures dating to the 19th century in Michigan. It is likely that some or all of the five sites found in the course of this project are such buildings. It is possible that the structure(s) at site C-22 functioned as some kind of way-station for travelers on Territorial Road.

That all five sites are reported as existing in 1873 is significant. Though each site shows evidence of later construction, it cannot be assumed that the 1873 and/or pre-1873 structures are totally destroyed.

Based on data gathered in the field, as well as information from the Archives, a tentative ranking of probable importance of these sites is possible.

That is, certain of these sites would probably yield more information about temporal placement, function, and general knowledge of the early history of the area than others. This ranking and justification is as follows:

Site C-22 - probably the most important due to relatively few indicators of reuse/reconstruction; proximity to Territorial Road; possible function as way-station; probably multiple structures present; relatively undisturbed condition.

Site C-21 - second in importance due to multiple structures present; presence of refuse dump; relatively undisturbed condition; presence of hair-tempered plaster; presence of both cement and fieldstone and possibly brick construction.

Site C-23 - Fieldstone basement; presence of square nails; possibility of multiple structures; relatively undisturbed condition.

Site C-7 - considered less important than the previous 3 due to lack of fieldstone construction, probably indicating rebuilding of structure; present however is refuse dump; multiple structures; possible homestead of Anson Mapes, 1835-6 settler in area.

Site C-20 - Single cement structure; no refuse dump; no fieldstone construction.

It should be stressed that this ranking of importance of sites is obviously based on data that was not gained from controlled excavation of these sites. As indicated, this ranking should be considered tentative, since only excavation can reveal artifacts and features that might affect the relative importance of the sites.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the 1873 plat map indicated a single structure at the edge of the proposed interchange area near Dickman Road, center, N 1/2, NE 1/4, Sec. 8, Battle Creek Twp. This area was walked and test probed by the survey crew, but no evidence of this structure was found. It is presumably destroyed or possibly completely buried, though the former seems more likely.

Recommendations:

In light of the foregoing descriptions and discussion, it is the recommendation of this report that these five sites be mitigated against destruction. There is good evidence that each or part of each structure is at least 100 yrs. old. To date very little is known about the dwellings of Michigan's earliest pioneers. The possibility that one site, C-7, may be the home of one of Calhoun County's earliest settlers is significant. It is the opinion of this author that the study and analysis of these sites by archaeologists and historians would produce valuable data and information regarding the earliest non-aboriginal inhabitants of Battle Creek, Calhoun County, and southern Michigan in general.

Thus, the following alternative mitigation recommendations will be made.

- 1) Relocate the proposed right-of-way of I-94 BR to areas that do not intersect these 5 (or any other) sites;
- 2) Salvage excavation of the sites prior to destruction by road construction;
- 3) Some combination of 1 and 2 above;
- 4) Abandon project.

It is recommended, then, that this project, as outlined to me by Mr. Mark Schrag of the Michigan Department of State Highways and Transportation, not proceed as originally planned, but allow for the mitigation of the archaeological sites in the proposed impact area.

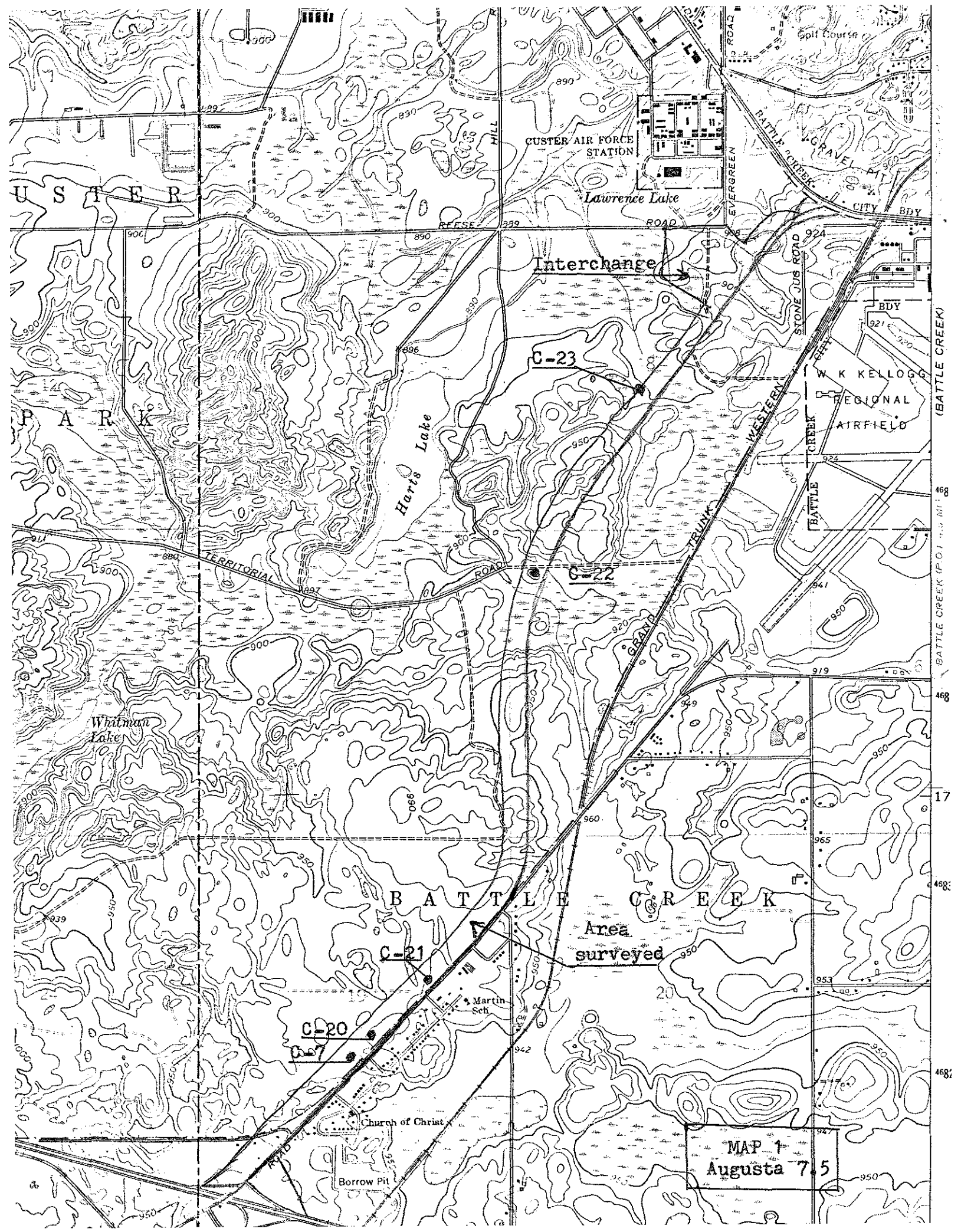
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Prepared and submitted by:

Robert G. Kingsley, M.A.
Research Associate; Principal Investigator
Department of Anthropology
Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, MI 49008

July 13, 1978



U S T E R

P A R K

CUSTER AIR FORCE STATION

Lawrence Lake

Interchange

C-23

Harts Lake

C-22

REGIONAL AIRFIELD

Whitman Lake

TERRITORIAL ROAD

GRAND TRUNK

BATTLE CREEK

BATTLE CREEK

Area surveyed

C-21

C-20

Martin Sch

Church of Christ

Borrow Pit

MAP 1
Augusta 7.5

(BATTLE CREEK)

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