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35-An Archaeological Survey of Hubbard and Riverside Parks and Interconnecting Road Right -Of-Way, City of Buchanan, Berrien County, Michigan

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DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY
WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

REPORT OF INVESTIGATIONS NO. 35

1979

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF HUBBARD AND RIVERSIDE
PARKS AND INTERCONNECTING ROAD RIGHT-OF-WAY,
CITY OF BUCHANAN, BERRIEN COUNTY, MICHIGAN

William M. Cremin

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The project was initiated upon receipt of a letter and contract dated 5 Apr 79 and signed by Mr. Wayne Writer, the Director of Recreation, City of Buchanan, Michigan. Our aim was to ascertain whether plans to create camping, river access (boat ramp) and parking facilities on land adjacent to the St. Joseph River north of Buchanan would impact cultural resources.

PROJECT PERSONNEL:

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

Field Assistants - John Nass, Jr., M.A. Candidate in Anthropology, WMU

- William Rutter, M.A. Candidate in Anthropology, WMU

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT AREA:

The portion of the St. Joseph River Valley in which the project is located is rich in archaeological resources. Examination of the University of Michigan, Museum of Anthropology site files reveals that site density is very high for portions of Buchanan Township bordering on the St. Joseph. And, importantly, the Moccasin Bluff site (20 BE 8) is situated on the same side of the river at a distance of about one kilometer downstream from the project.

The project may be divided into 3 parcels. These include: a parcel of land with proposed parking and camp site facilities

lying between Richards Road and the river and comprising 2.9 ha (7.4 acres); a second tract intended for parking and boat ramp facilities and located on 2.3 ha (5.6 acres) situated between Redbud Trail and the river a short distance downstream from the first parcel; and a road right-of-way about 475 m in length which parallels Redbud Trail and connects the aforementioned parcels.

The project flanks the river on the south and west in the N 1/2, NW 1/4 of Section 25, NE 1/4, NE 1/4 of Section 26 and SE 1/4, SE 1/4 of Section 23, Buchanan Township. Elevation ranges between 210 m (700 ft) on the bluff top and 189 m (630 ft) at the river's edge. The steep slope is heavily dissected; cut through by numerous small streams which originate as springs on the upper slope and flow over the surface (sheet wash) or in rills/gullies toward the river below. Some of the deeply entrenched channels are 2-3 m in depth and up to 10 m across. All indications are that the springs have been active for a very long time.

The ground downslope from the source of these streams is often very spongy and commonly supports wetland vegetation--albeit the angle of slope may greatly exceed 30 degrees. Drier sites on the slope are occupied by hardwoods, some of which are very large and presumably quite old.

We learned from an employee of the marina located on an adjacent parcel that virtually the entire south bank of the river had at one time or another been subjected to considerable land-filling. In addition, the general area of the project has long served as a dump for trash of all kinds. In several locations,

for example, we noted that fill and debris originally deposited on the upper slope had partially buried trees located on mid-slope to a depth of several meters or more. Clearly, recent activity has significantly altered the original land surface throughout most of the project area.

FIELD PROCEDURES AND RESULTS:

Despite the recent disturbance and heavily dissected topography which made systematic survey difficult at best, a very thorough program of subsurface testing was implemented. Shovel probing and frequent examination of erosional features provided ample opportunity to examine the depositional history of soils and seek evidence for cultural context. In aggregate, more than 140 tests, ranging in depth from 30-70 cm or more, were placed wherever we could ascertain that recent disturbance had not thoroughly obscured/altered the landscape, with the result being that not the slightest indication of occupation predating the recent and dramatic alteration of this area of the valley was encountered.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Although the project area occurs in a portion of the St. Joseph River Valley having high site potential, our on-site evaluation indicates only that the area has been significantly disturbed by recent landfilling and the dumping of trash. Those features on the landscape which have thus far escaped total destruction yielded absolutely no evidence of either pre-historic or early historic occupation.

Since no significant archaeological resources would appear

to be threatened by the proposed land use, it is recommended that plans to construct recreational facilities for the residents of the City of Buchanan on this property be permitted to proceed as scheduled.