



1989

87-Phase I Archaeological Survey of the Class 3 Landfill Site on Fenske Enterprises Property at 2637 Wilson SW, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504

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WILLIAM M. CREMIN

(ER-891111)

PHASE I ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE CLASS 3
LANDFILL SITE ON FENSKE ENTERPRISES PROPERTY
AT 2637 WILSON SW, GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN 49504

1989

REPORT OF INVESTIGATIONS NO. 87

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY
WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49008

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY
WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

A Report of Research in Response
to ER-89111 and Prepared For:

Fenske Enterprises
2637 Wilson SW

Grand Rapids, MI 49504

Attention:

Mr. William Slaght

INTRODUCTION:

Upon receipt of authorization from Mr. William Slaght on 26 May 89 for a Phase I archaeological survey of the proposed Class 3 landfill site on the property of Fenske Enterprises at 2637 Wilson SW, Grand Rapids, Michigan, the author and his associates began a literature and site file search and on the above date conducted on-site evaluation of the project area in order to determine whether construction of the landfill would adversely impact archaeological resources. There follows a report of our program of research, together with recommendations derived from our examination of the study area.

PROJECT PERSONNEL:

Principal Investigator - Dr. William M. Cremin, Professor of Anthropology, Western Michigan University and Owner, W.M. Cremin Consulting

Field Supervisor - Mr. Gregory Walz, M.A. Candidate, WMU
Field Assistant - Mr. Lewis Wisser, M.A. Candidate, WMU

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT AREA:

The research area of this study comprises approximately 3.2 ha (8 acres) in the SW corner of Section 7, 16N R12W, Kent County, MI. It is but a small portion of the almost 200 acres of land included in the holdings of Fenske Enterprises and occupying the inside of a pronounced bend to the south in the Grand River opposite that point where Buck Creek enters the river. The City of Grandville, Michigan lies to the SE and immediately across the river from the

Fenske Enterprises property (Fig. 1).

The parcel in question lies at an elevation above sea level of about 180-185 m. It is separated from the river to the south by a now closed landfill encompassing 12.1 ha (30 acres), and it is flanked on the east and west by parking facilities and small

buildings, respectively. An access road running east-west through the parcel splits it in half, with the area to the south of the road supporting a hay field and a pond and the northern half being in pasture for the most part. Several areas within the latter were also noted to contain concentrations of discarded machinery at the time of our survey.

Fenske Enterprises property includes bottomland flanking the river, terraces, and uplands; the latter rise more than 30 m (100 ft) above the river. After many years of diverse land use, most of the natural contours have been altered and obscured across this property. However, according to Mr. Slaght, some low lying areas that are today in corn cultivation have never known another land use. Certainly these areas might more profitably be evaluated for archaeological resources in the future.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES PREVIOUSLY REPORTED IN THE GENERAL AREA:

Although no archaeological sites have ever been recorded on Fenske Enterprises property, the state site files contain numerous references to Hindsdale listings, village and mound sites reported in historical documents, cemeteries encountered by area residents during construction activities or exposed by erosion along the river, and a few sites recorded during surveys undertaken by professionals in this segment of the Grand River Valley (Barbara Mead, Bureau of History, personal communication). From this information, it seems



most reasonable to conclude that evaluation of Levy formations on Fenske Enterprises property fronting the river would prove to be a valuable exercise. At this point in time, we have some very interesting information from the other side of the river, both upstream and downstream of Grandville. The river's edge and the Levy on the north side of the Grand should be studied!

THE PHASE I SURVEY:

As previously noted, the small parcel that is the subject of this report is separated from the river by a now closed landfill and has already experienced a variety of land use impacts that render it considerably disturbed. Be that as it may, our objective was to conduct a systematic and intensive study that would enable us to conclusively demonstrate whether any archaeological resources were present and could be anticipated to be impacted by the creation of a Class 3 landfill operation. To this end, we visited the site on 26 May 89, and through application of both surface reconnaissance and shovel testing procedures the requisite study was completed. Shovel testing along transects spaced from 15-20 m apart, with probes being placed from 10-15 m apart along each line of survey, permitted evaluation of most of the parcel, save those areas in standing water, supporting concentrations of old machinery, or, in a single instance, affording good surface visibility for walk-over survey. Shovel tests were routinely excavated to a depth of 60 cm or more, i.e. until glacial till deposits were encountered. In some instances, however, the soil was observed to be so disturbed by recent activities that excavating to this depth or even more proved futile, and shovel testing was terminated. A typical undisturbed profile showed a strong humic horizon extending to a depth of 30-50 cm, and this was underlain by a clayey B horizon with inclusions of

sand and, finally, a deep deposit of gravely material in a matrix

of sand and/or clay.

The locations of 103 shovel tests within the project limits

are shown in Fig. 2. Without exception, these produced only recent pieces of trash, for across much of the parcel both the surface

and subsurface deposits bore evidence of trash disposal. Another

impact in evidence resulted from the passage of heavy equipment,

leaving in its wake soil compaction, ponded water in numerous ruts,

and particles of metal debris ground into the land. Given these

byproducts of the nearby now closed landfill operation, it is quite safe to describe the site of the proposed Class 3 landfill as a

"wasteland".

The final use to which part of the study area has now been put

is a small cattle feeding operation. The feed lot was examined by

visual means, without benefit of shovel testing. Again, nothing was

observed on the surface, and shovel tests located along the fence

lines also proved negative.

RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS DERIVED FROM THE SURVEY:

Based upon a thorough on-site evaluation, together with a brief

review of relevant literature and a site file search, it is my

professional opinion, without reservation, that the site of the pro-

posed Class 3 landfill is already so negatively impacted as to render

it most useful for this purpose. Were archaeological sites ever

present, and we have not a shred of evidence to support this, it is

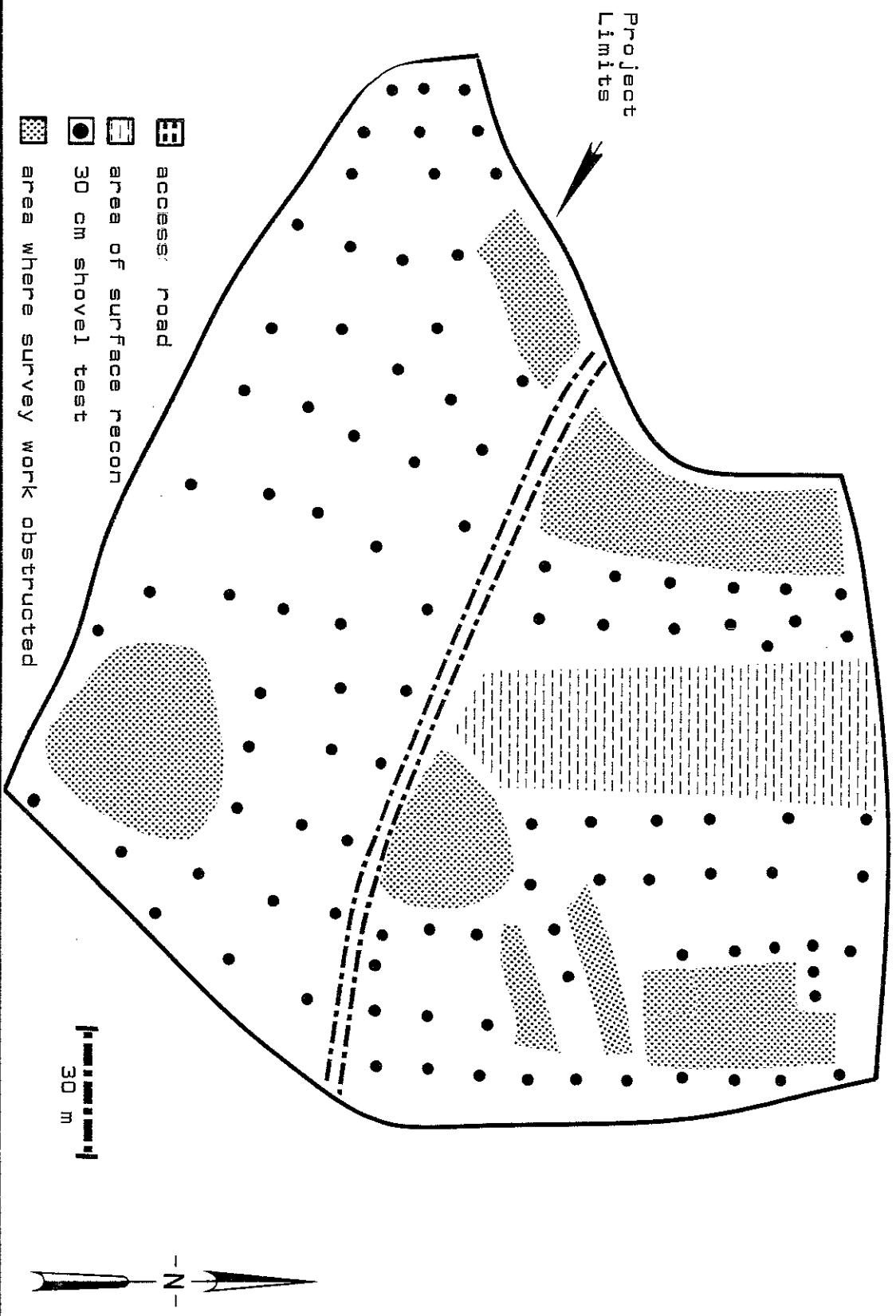
virtually impossible that significant resources would have survived

the recent use(s) to which this parcel of land has been put.

Inasmuch as no important cultural items were recovered by the

survey team and shovel testing across the parcel revealed an absence

Fig. 2. Class 3 Landfill on Fenske Enterprises Property.



of deposits with possible cultural affiliation, I can recommend that the construction of a Class 3 landfill be permitted to proceed as planned.