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# 33-A report of Archaeological Investigations Undertaken to Determine the Extent and Cultural Significance of the Grant Street site (20 AE 613), City of Otsego, Allegan County, Michigan

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DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY  
WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

REPORT OF INVESTIGATIONS NO. 33

1978

A REPORT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS UNDERTAKEN TO  
DETERMINE THE EXTENT AND CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GRANT  
STREET SITE (20 AE 613), CITY OF OTSEGO, ALLEGAN COUNTY, MICHIGAN

William M. Cremin

## INTRODUCTION:

Pursuant to a letter (Ref: ER-426) from the office of Dr. Martha M. Bigelow, State Historic Preservation Officer, to Mr. Barry Visel of Gove Associates, Inc. of Kalamazoo, and at the request of the City Council of Otsego, the Department of Anthropology at Western Michigan University undertook limited test excavation of the Grant Street site on 30 Nov 78. There follows a report of our activities and findings with respect to this site.

## PROJECT PERSONNEL:

Principal Investigator - Dr. William M. Cremin, Associate Professor of Anthropology, WMU

Field Associate - Mr. Jerrel Sorensen, M.A., Research Associate for Contract Archaeology, WMU

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

- Mr. James Marek, M.A. Candidate in Anthropology, WMU

- Mr. William Rutter, Graduate Student in Anthropology, WMU

- Mr. Kevin Kincare, Senior Major in Anthropology, WMU

- Mr. James Wojtala, Junior Major in Anthropology, WMU

All project participants have benefitted from much formal training in field archaeology and have also acquired considerable

experience in our contract archaeology program.

#### SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH:

On 12 Oct 78, the Principal Investigator and two assistants conducted an archaeological survey of land involved in the proposed expansion of sewage treatment facilities, City of Otsego. Our objective was to make a determination as to whether or not existing plans to expand the facility would impact cultural resources. A search of the literature and site files in the Department of Anthropology indicated that no sites, either prehistoric or historic, had ever been recorded for the four parcels of land, whereupon we undertook systematic transect survey of each parcel with subsurface testing at designated intervals.

Utilizing this procedure, we were able to rather quickly clear three of the parcels in question. However, during our examination of the fourth tract, Parcel A, we did encounter some evidence for prehistoric occupation (see attached inventory). In one test located in the eastern portion of this parcel (see attached map), we recovered a projectile point and a small piece of chert debitage. Subsequently, we clustered additional tests about this locus, unearthing three fragments of fire-cracked rock and two more flint chips in the process. Having determined that a prehistoric site in all probability existed in this area of the tract (and project), we then completed our assigned transects across Parcel A, reported our findings to city officials and prepared the necessary report of our work (Cremin 1978).

#### OBJECTIVES OF THE CURRENT PROJECT:

During the past month, the aforementioned team of researchers returned to the Grant Street site to undertake limited test excavation in order to determine its extent and cultural significance. Plans called for an intensive one-day effort, with emphasis on the excavation of several test squares, 1 m on a side, in the probable "core" area of the site. The "core" area may be defined as the general locus of those test probes which produced the artifactual material during our survey of Parcel A; an area which also appeared to be delimited on at least three sides by considerable post-occupation disturbance, both natural and artificial (see descriptive section below). In addition to our work in the central area, we also proposed to systematically shovel test a larger portion of the parcel in hopes of precisely delineating the spatial extent of the prehistoric occupation. Standard methods of recovery (and record keeping) were to be employed, including the use of small hand tools, screens for sifting soil and, if necessary, soil sampling and flotation, and photography.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA EVALUATED:

The Grant Street site is located in the SE 1/4, NE 1/4, NW 1/4 of Section 22, Otsego Township (T1N R12W), Allegan County, Michigan. It is situated on the south side of the present channel of the Kalamazoo River at an elevation of about 207 m above sea level (This elevation is derived from a contour map of Parcel A prepared by Gove Associates, Inc.). The old channel deposits which were encountered just below the modern surface, extending from river's edge to within 20 m

of the "core" area, during our survey in October, strongly suggest that the river channel may have been much closer to the site at the time of occupation.

A former sludge lagoon delimits the site area on the west. According to Mr. Dean Smalla, Superintendent of the sewage treatment facility, use of the lagoon for the deposition of processed human waste some years ago has resulted in considerable disturbance over much of Parcel A to a depth of about 1 m below the modern surface. It is suspected that excavation of the lagoon took out part of the prehistoric site.

City rental property, consisting of four structures, lies to the south and east of the site. One of the structures, a small shed, is shown on the accompanying map. It is approximately 19 m southeast of datum. The activities of tenants over the years are reported to have resulted in some disturbance to the general site area; albeit our survey test probes produced little to confirm this occurrence. On this occasion, however, our excavation units and more tightly spaced shovel tests yielded much evidence to suggest that modern garbage was commonly deposited in the site area (see attached inventory).

Finally, the site (and specifically the "core" area) is bounded on the east by a well maintained lawn interspersed with mature deciduous trees. The lawn, in turn, fronts on Grant Street, which passes between the existing treatment facility and Parcel A and terminates abruptly at river's edge.

#### TESTING PROGRAM:

We initiated our work by establishing a grid over the site area, with datum located about 20 m east of the lagoon and

approximately 3 m northwest of the shovel test where the artifact was recovered during our previous survey of the parcel. Three test squares were placed near datum and labeled as follows:

Test Square A - grid 1N, 1W

Test Square B - grid 4S, 0E

Test Square C - grid 0N, 6W

These were excavated in arbitrary 10 cm levels, with all soil from each level being carefully sifted through 6.2 mm mesh to facilitate the recovery of small-scale archaeological remains. Any debris found was then bagged by level and test square for subsequent analysis. The three units were terminated at depths of 60 cm, 70 cm and 40 cm below surface, respectively.

In addition to test excavation, a program of systematic shovel testing was implemented. Tests were spaced at intervals of from 1 m to 10 m along the east-west and north-south base lines of the site grid and were excavated to a depth of 30-60 cm below surface before being terminated. Eighteen tests were placed in this manner, with another series of 18 shovel tests being located along a line 1 m south of the east-west base line just prior to the completion of fieldwork and our departure from the site. In aggregate, an area encompassing about 400 m<sup>2</sup> and centered on the location where the artifact had been found during survey was intensively evaluated, with more widely spaced shovel tests extending our coverage in a limited way over a larger area of some 1500 m<sup>2</sup>. These excavation units and shovel tests, together with the 14 tests which had been placed in this portion of Parcel A during the survey in October, provide a

rather good basis for making recommendations regarding the significance which should be attached to the Grant Street site in face of the City's wish to utilize this parcel for expanding the existing sewage treatment facilities.

#### RESULTS OF RESEARCH:

Our testing of the Grant Street site has resulted in the recovery of some additional evidence (fire-cracked rock and lithic debris) of the prehistoric occupation. However, even more impressive than the scant remains from the more remote past were the quantities of recent garbage deposited by the city and/or tenants of the rental property (see attached inventory) and found scattered throughout the excavation units and shovel tests. It is felt that the very recent nature of this debris warrants the conclusion that the historic material from this site is not significant with respect to the management/conservation of cultural resources.

Unfortunately, the degree of recent disturbance observed during testing of the site did not allow for the delineation of an occupation floor (midden) or any cultural features. And while it has been demonstrated that a prehistoric site did exist at this location, and it may be presumed that the occupation was probably more extensive than the prehistoric data available to us would indicate, it has not been possible to determine either the site's extent or its cultural significance. Thus, in the final analysis, it can only be concluded on the basis of the evidence available from the site that the archaeological context has been inadvertently destroyed in recent years as a result of land alteration activities, especially the deposition

of sludge in the lagoon located immediately west of the "core" area and the dumping of modern trash throughout the general site area.

#### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The single diagnostic artifact recovered from the Grant Street site, a "classic" Brewerton side-notched projectile point (see the illustration of this artifact) fabricated from locally available Bayport chert (Jerrel Sorensen, personal communication), indicates that the prehistoric occupation in all probability dates to the Late Archaic period. This artifact is quite commonly encountered throughout the Great Lakes and adjacent Northeast regions in contexts dating between 3000 B.C. and about A.D. 1 (Ritchie 1961).

That the site represents more than just the occurrence of another isolated projectile point is indicated by the presence of both fire-cracked rock and chert debitage in close proximity to the artifact. If the author may be permitted to speculate, data recovered from many sites recorded during our program of systematic site location survey in the Kalamazoo River Valley of Allegan County lead me to believe that this scatter of cultural material represents what might be anticipated of a short term, limited activity site--a camp used by a small, mobile community of prehistoric hunter-gatherers for the purpose of carrying out a special extractive task probably on a seasonal basis.

Inasmuch as we have been unable to define any undisturbed archaeological context during our testing of the Grant Street site, and our observations to date strongly suggest that further

excavation will only serve to confirm the disturbed nature of the site, it is recommended that current plans relating to the construction of new sewage treatment facilities be permitted to proceed as scheduled in Parcel A of the proposed expansion site.

## REFERENCES CITED

Cremin, W.M.

- 1978 Archaeological survey of land involved in the proposed expansion of sewage treatment facilities, City of Otsego, Allegan County, Michigan. A report of work conducted on 12 Oct 78 and submitted to the City of Otsego and the Michigan History Division, Lansing.

Ritchie, W.A.

- 1961 A typology and nomenclature for New York projectile points. New York State Museum and Science Service Bulletin, no. 384, pp. 1-119. Albany.

INVENTORY OF CULTURAL MATERIAL RECOVERED DURING TEST EXCAVATIONS  
AT THE GRANT STREET SITE, CITY OF OTSEGO, MICHIGAN (30 NOV 78)

- 743-fragments of bottle glass
- 1-12 guage shotgun shell
- 1-22 cal. shell casing
- 1-metal toy revolver
- 17-modern nails
- 3-fragments of wire strap
- 3-pieces of modern plate
- 3-fragments of tin can
- 1-mother-of-pearl button
- 2-lumps of coal
- \* 3-bifacial thinning and/or retouch flakes
- \* 1-fragment of fire-cracked rock

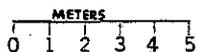
INVENTORY OF CULTURAL MATERIAL RECOVERED DURING THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SURVEY OF PARCEL A (GRANT STREET SITE), CITY OF OTSEGO, MICHIGAN  
(12 OCT 78)

- 1-fragment of bottle glass
- \* 1-projectile point of Bayport chert
- \* 3-fragments of fire-cracked rock
- \* 3-pieces of chert debitage, one a retouch flake

Note:

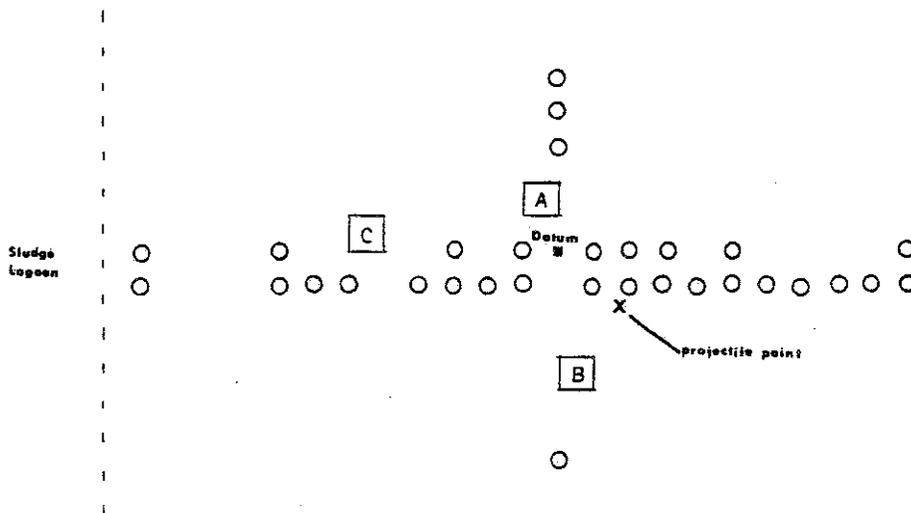
An asterisk (\*) denotes pieces of evidence for a prehistoric occupation of the area herein referred to as the Grant Street site (20 AE 613).

GRANT STREET Site  
20 AE 613



□ Excavator unit

○ Shovel feet



Note: The datum or reference point is located 13 m South and 69 m West of the metal post bearing a stop sign at the terminus of Grant Street. This is the only permanent feature available for determining our bearings.

SHED





**3 TIMES NORMAL SIZE.**