



1990

# 92-Phase 1 Archaeological Assessment of the S. Becker Property, 160th Street, Grand Haven for Resource Management Group, Grand Haven, Michigan 49417

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DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY  
WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

REPORT OF INVESTIGATIONS NO. 92  
1990

PHASE I ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE S. BECKER  
PROPERTY, 160TH STREET, GRAND HAVEN FOR RESOURCE  
MANAGEMENT GROUP, GRAND HAVEN, MICHIGAN 49417

WILLIAM M. CREMIN

GREGORY R. WALZ

A Report of Research in Response  
to a Request from:

Mr. David Zuckerman  
Resource Management Group  
P.O. Box 487  
Grand Haven, Michigan 49417

## INTRODUCTION:

Upon receipt of authorization from Mr. David Zuckerman of Resource Management Group on 19 Mar 90 for a Phase I archaeological survey of the S. Becker property on 160th Street in Grand Haven, Michigan, the authors and their associates began a literature and site file search and on 13 Apr conducted on-site evaluation of the project area in order to determine whether proposed development of this parcel of land would adversely impact potentially significant archaeological resources. There follows a report of our program of research, together with recommendations derived from our examination of the study area in light of the proposed land use.

## PROJECT PERSONNEL:

- Principal Investigator - Dr. William M. Cremin, Professor of Anthropology, Western Michigan Univ. and Owner, W.M. Cremin Consulting
- Field Supervisor - Mr. Gregory R. Walz, M.A. Candidate in Anthropology, WMU
- Field Assistants - Mr. Daniel Goatley, Graduate Student in Anthropology, WMU
- Mr. Timothy Knapp, Graduate Student in Anthropology, WMU
- Mr. David Zuckerman, M.A., Resource Management Group, Grand Haven, MI

**DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT AREA:**

The research area of this study encompasses in excess of 40 acres (16+ ha) in the SW 1/4, NW 1/4 and N 1/2, SW 1/4 of Section 26 in Spring Lake Township, Ottawa County, Michigan (Fig. 1). On the west, the parcel is bordered by 160th Street, while the southern limits are defined by a residential development fronting on Mercury Drive. The northern and eastern boundaries are formed by wetlands flanking the south side of the Grand River which here flows in a west-northwesterly direction toward its mouth at Grand Haven.

The northern boundary of the study area corresponds to the 100 year floodplain and lies at an elevation of 178.6 m ASL. This contour marks the boundary of the wetland soils and vegetational communities flanking the river and represented an appropriate point at which to terminate the survey.

Much of the parcel was fallow field at the time of survey work and is further characterized by slightly rolling topography that features low ridges that roughly parallel and conform to the contour marking the 100 year floodplain. A portion of the western end of the project could not be surveyed due to the presence of abandoned dairy facilities that occupy the highest elevation within project limits. The old barn, silo, and smaller out buildings, together with junked farm machinery, located here simply precluded assessment by surveyors.

A small woodlot occupies the center of the study area, extending from the farm buildings in an easterly direction toward a small pond at the opposite end of the field. Numerous stumps attest to the harvest of trees in this area. Currently this woodlot is

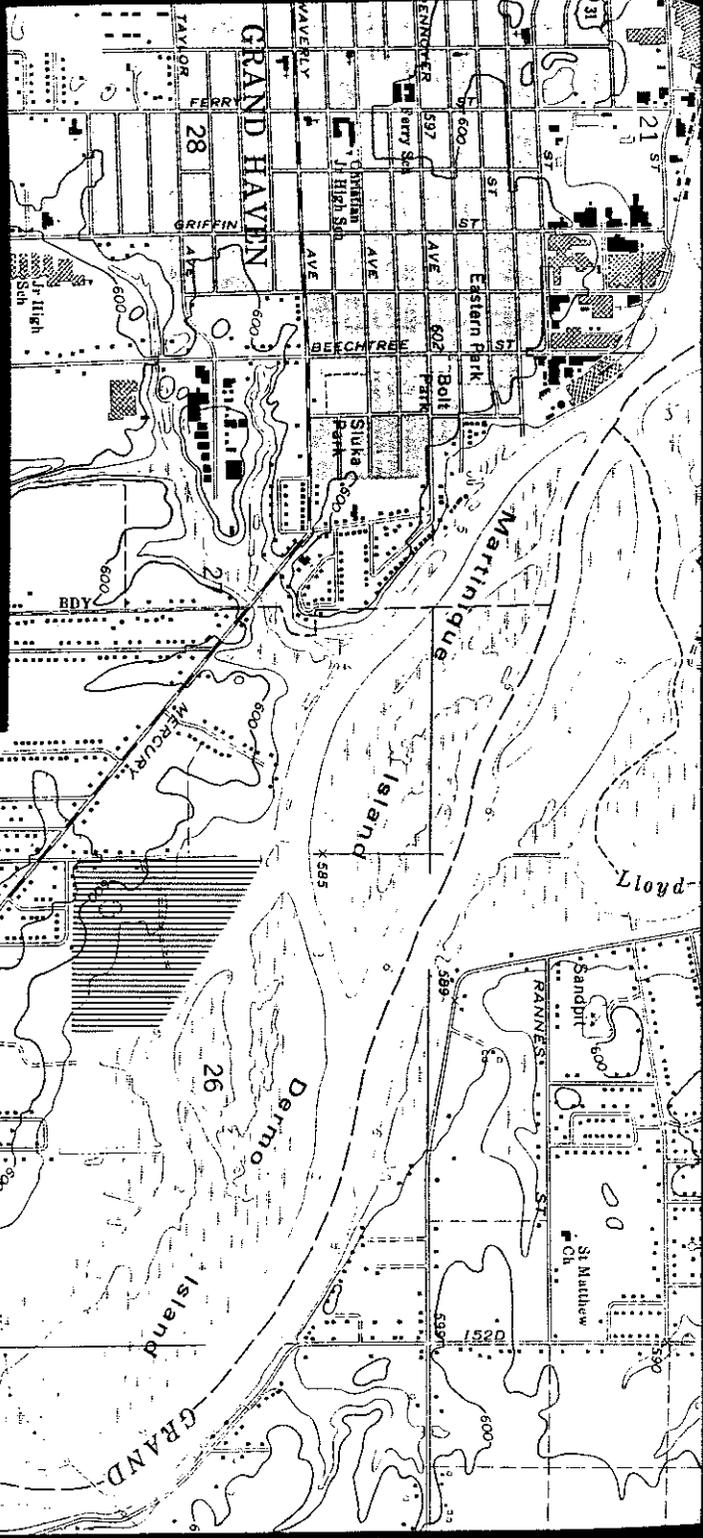
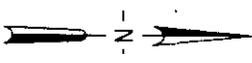


Figure No.1

Project Area



dominated by sassafras stems and a few hickory trees that are generally in the 10-12 inch diameter or less range.

On the eastern end of the parcel is a channel that has been excavated from the river in a southerly direction. Spoil from channel excavation was dumped along its western edge, resulting in a strip paralleling the channel where wetland soils were noted to overlie the sandy soils typical of higher elevations in the river valley.

#### **PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN AND NEAR THE PROJECT AREA:**

Although no archaeological sites have ever been recorded for the Becker property, the state site files contain a number of references to reported sites within several miles both upstream and downstream of this location on the Grand River. The much referenced Battle Point site (200T4) and the Paggeot site (200T89) flank Indian Channel, part of the Dermo Bayou complex of the Grand River, about two miles (3.2 km) southeast of the project, and Old Black Bird's Camp (200T84), a historic Potawatomi site, lies along the Grand at a distance of about 1.5 mi (2.4 km) to the southeast of the Becker property. West northwest and downstream of the study area are 200T86, purportedly a historic period Indian encampment, and 200T55, representing a Hinsdale reference to a Woodland Period group of three burial mounds. On the Lake Michigan shoreline about one mile (1.6 km) north of the mouth of the Grand River is 200T128, a prehistoric findspot of undetermined affiliation.

In addition to these sites, it is further noteworthy that a number of compliance surveys have been undertaken in this general area. Five surveyed areas are located to the southeast of the Becker property in Sections 28, 32, 33, and 34 of Spring Lake Township.

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Sites recorded include 200T127, on the edge of Pottawattomie Bayou about 1.2 mi (2.0 km) south of Becker property, and 200T129, a 20th century dump. The lithic scatter represented by 200T127 does occur in a setting similar to that of the project area, albeit the bayou would not have provided the resource potential of the Becker wetlands on the Grand River.

Finally, during the survey of the Becker property the field team was visited by three neighborhood children who were curious as to our activity. When informed as to the nature of our work, one of the boys, Brandon Bernia, reported previously finding an "arrowhead" on the farm in the vicinity of the site we would find (see Survey Results section). He was quite precise regarding the location of the findspot, near the mouth of the aforementioned channel excavated by the landowner, and when joined by his father we received a good description of the artifact--a triangular, bifacially worked blade with a distinct notch at the base and roughly 1.5-2.0 inches in length. Unfortunately, the item has since been misplaced and was not available for our examination.

#### **PHASE I SURVEY PROCEDURES:**

Investigation of the project area was conducted by a team of four persons on 13 Apr 90. A total of 427 shovel tests was needed to complete coverage of the parcel that was both systematic and intensive (Fig. 2). Shovel tests were generally placed at intervals of 15 m along transects that were spaced 15 m apart. Deviation from this standard was necessary along the wetland margin, where, in order to maximize data recovery, the spacing between transects and shovel probes was reduced. All shovel tests were excavated through the A horizon, a brownish-gray sandy lens, to the point of contact

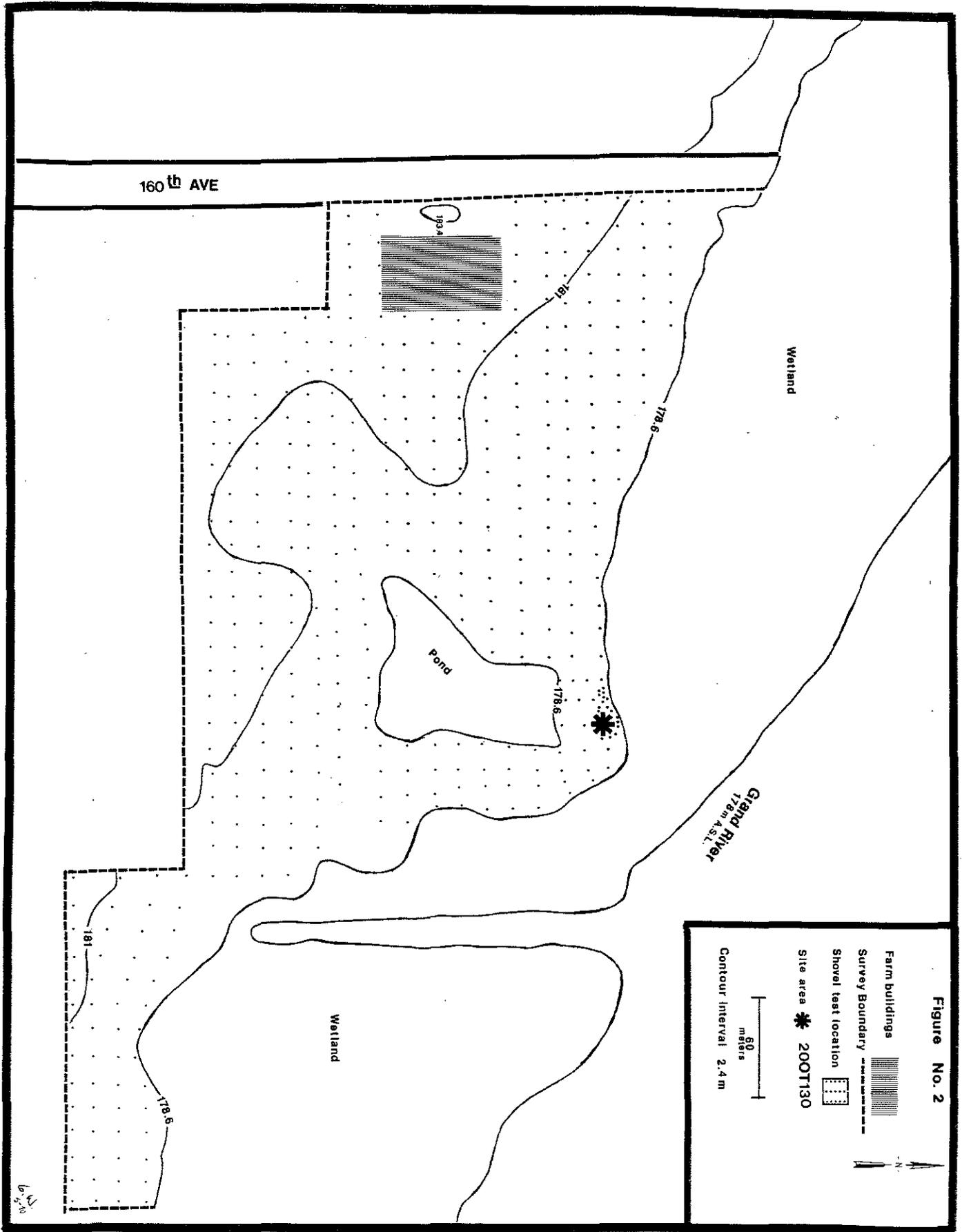


Figure No. 2

with the subsoil, in this case a light yellowish-brown sand. The soil from each shovel test was carefully scanned for evidence of cultural material prior to being replaced.

#### **SURVEY RESULTS:**

The vast majority of shovel tests produced absolutely no evidence of cultural materials; however, one site (200T130) has been defined in a location north of the pond along the 178.6 m (100 year floodplain) contour in the SE 1/4, SE 1/4, SW 1/4, NW 1/4 of Section 26. The S. Becker site occurs in a spatially discrete area where shovel tests produced several flakes and pieces of FCR. Subsequent to the discovery of the first lithic specimen, 15 more shovel tests were clustered about the findspot within a 10 m radius. The second flake and pieces of FCR resulted from the cluster testing. In addition, small flecks of charcoal were observed in shovel tests, and more pieces of FCR were noted on the surface in the grass stubble.

It is the opinion of surveyors that the site area parallels the wetland along the 178.6 m contour for a limited distance on either side of the initial findspot. Had surface conditions been amenable to the application of reconnaissance procedures, it is quite likely that more information about the site would have been retrieved. And, parenthetically, this is the location where the Bernia boy claims to have found the artifact he and his father described to surveyors.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Having completed a systematic and intensive evaluation of the Becker property on the Grand River near Grand Haven, we are quite confident that most of the parcel can be quickly "cleared" from

the standpoint of development impacts on potentially significant archaeological resources. However, 200T130 presents another problem. Ordinarily, we would unhesitatingly recommend that a Phase II study be undertaken prior to issuing a "no effect" regarding this resource. However, an alternative possibility with respect to this site can also be considered, i.e. avoidance. Mr. David Zuckerman, writing on behalf of his client, Mr. S. Becker, owner of the property in question, proposes that should development occur on the property that this archaeological resource be preserved. In a letter to the senior author dated 8 May 90, Zuckerman states "one objective of the (development) plan is to maintain the area identified as having archaeological remains in green/open space. This area will not be subjected to disturbances associated with development or subsequent use." He further states that "it is the expressed goal of the developer to avoid impacting the archaeological resource by restricting/prohibiting any development or other subsurface earth changes within identified resource areas." Finally, he notes that "the finalized development plan, including preservation/avoidance mechanisms will be submitted to the MDNR (as well as Bureau of History) as part of the complete permit application package", thus providing the State Archaeologist with the opportunity to evaluate and pass on this solution as an alternative to intensification of archaeological research at the S. Becker site.

Therefore, it is our considered opinion that should avoidance be possible, Phase II test excavation will not be necessary. However, in the event that protection of this resource proves impossible to accomplish, additional evaluation of the site would be advisable prior to impact as a result of landscape alteration associated with

development of this area of the project.