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# 95-Phase I Archaeological Assessment of 100+ Acres Included in the CDBG Base Industries Public Infrastructure Program in Portions of Section 19 of Lockport and Section 24 of Fabius Township for the Chamber of Commerce of Three Rivers, Michigan (ER-900496)

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DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY  
WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

REPORT OF INVESTIGATIONS NO. 95  
1990

PHASE I ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF 100+ ACRES INCLUDED IN THE  
CDBG BASE INDUSTRIES PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM IN PORTIONS  
OF SECTION 19 OF LOCKPORT AND SECTION 24 OF FABIOUS TOWNSHIP FOR THE  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF THREE RIVERS, MICHIGAN (ER-900496)

WILLIAM M. CREMIN

GREGORY R. WALZ

A Program of Research  
Undertaken on Behalf of:

Mr. Chris Byrnes  
Chamber of Commerce  
140 W. Michigan Avenue  
Three Rivers, MI 49093

## INTRODUCTION:

Upon receipt of authorization from Mr. Chris Byrnes of the Three Rivers Chamber of Commerce on 31 Jul 90 (and amended 6 Aug 90) for a Phase I archaeological survey of a portion of the CDBG Industries Public Infrastructure Program property in Three Rivers, Michigan, the authors and their associates began a literature and site file search and on 7 and 9 Aug conducted on-site evaluation of the project area in order to determine whether proposed development of the industrial park would have an adverse impact on potentially significant archaeological resources. There follows a report of our research program, together with recommendations derived from our examination of the study area.

## PROJECT PERSONNEL:

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

Field Supervisor - Mr. Gregory R. Walz, M.A. Candidate in Anthropology, WMU

Field Assistants - Mr. Robert Hull, M.A., Anthropology Instructor, WMU

- Mr. Brian DeRoo, M.A. Candidate in Anthropology, WMU

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT AREA:

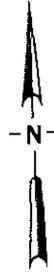
The research area of this study is a 100+ acre parcel that is but a portion of an approximately 350 acre industrial park that is

being proposed for development southwest of Three Rivers, Michigan. The entire site is generally bounded on the north by Broadway Avenue, to the east by Constantine Road, to the south by the St. Joseph River and property owned by Alex Kettles, and to the west by US-131, including the M-60 interchange area (Williams and Works 1989). The area of immediate concern lies in the northernmost portion of this larger property and comprises two fallow fields and an intervening woodlot occupying an estimated 67 acres (27.1 ha) in the SE corner of Section 24 in Fabius Township (T6S R12W) and virtually the entire 40 acres (16.2 ha) comprising the SW 1/4, SW 1/4 of Section 19 in Lockport Township (T6S R11W), St. Joseph County, Michigan (Fig. 1).

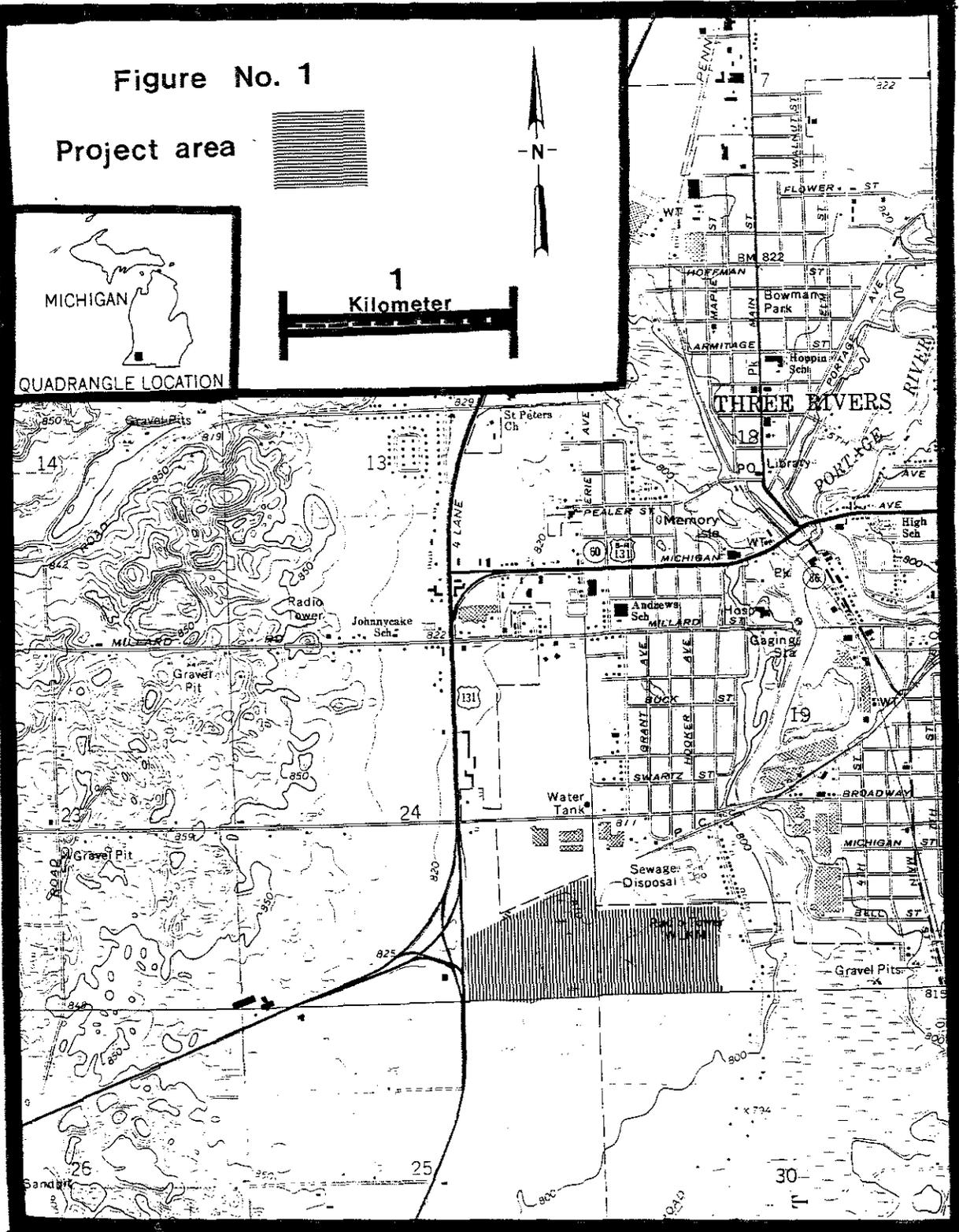
The study area is level to very gently rolling, with elevations across the entire parcel varying little from the 810 ft (243 m) contour that passes through the center of the parcel and borders the ponded woodlot where several inches of standing water at the time of fieldwork prohibited effective study. To the west of this woodlot lies a fallow cornfield which, at the time of our survey, supported a dense stand of various herbaceous species reaching to a height of 1.5 m. Vegetative cover consisted of Phytolacca, Aster, Asclepias, Abutilon, and Solanum where soils were dry, and moister soils were observed to support pinkweed (Polygonum pennsylvanicum). Soil borings here show surficial layers of sandy clay overlying sands and gravels, with inclusions of black organic material occurring at 3.6 m below ground surface near the woodlot with its surface wetland designation (Williams and Works 1989). Here also were observed surface deposits evidencing a distinct change from medium brown to nearly black in color with increasing organic content being visible to the naked eye.

# Figure No. 1

Project area



QUADRANGLE LOCATION



The field to the east of the woodlot was formerly planted in wheat, but now it supports a cover consisting entirely of ragweed (Ambrosia artemisiifolia). Surface observations and a single soil boring in this portion of the study area suggest soil conditions similar to those noted for drier areas to the west of the woodlot.

The woodlot, itself, while mapped in the Williams and Works report as "probable wetlands", actually evidenced two quite different sets of conditions. The northern portion of the woodlot was noted to be permanently ponded and to support water tolerant arboreal and herbaceous species. Many of the elm stems in standing water were dead. To the south, the woodlot appeared both more open and mature, with white oaks, hickories and a lesser number of maples comprising the canopy. Very large diameter stumps attest to some recent cutting of marketable timber. Here, the understory consisted of immature stems of the dominant canopy species and small dogwoods and sassafras trees. Undergrowth comprised raspberry thickets and a variety of other herbaceous plants.

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

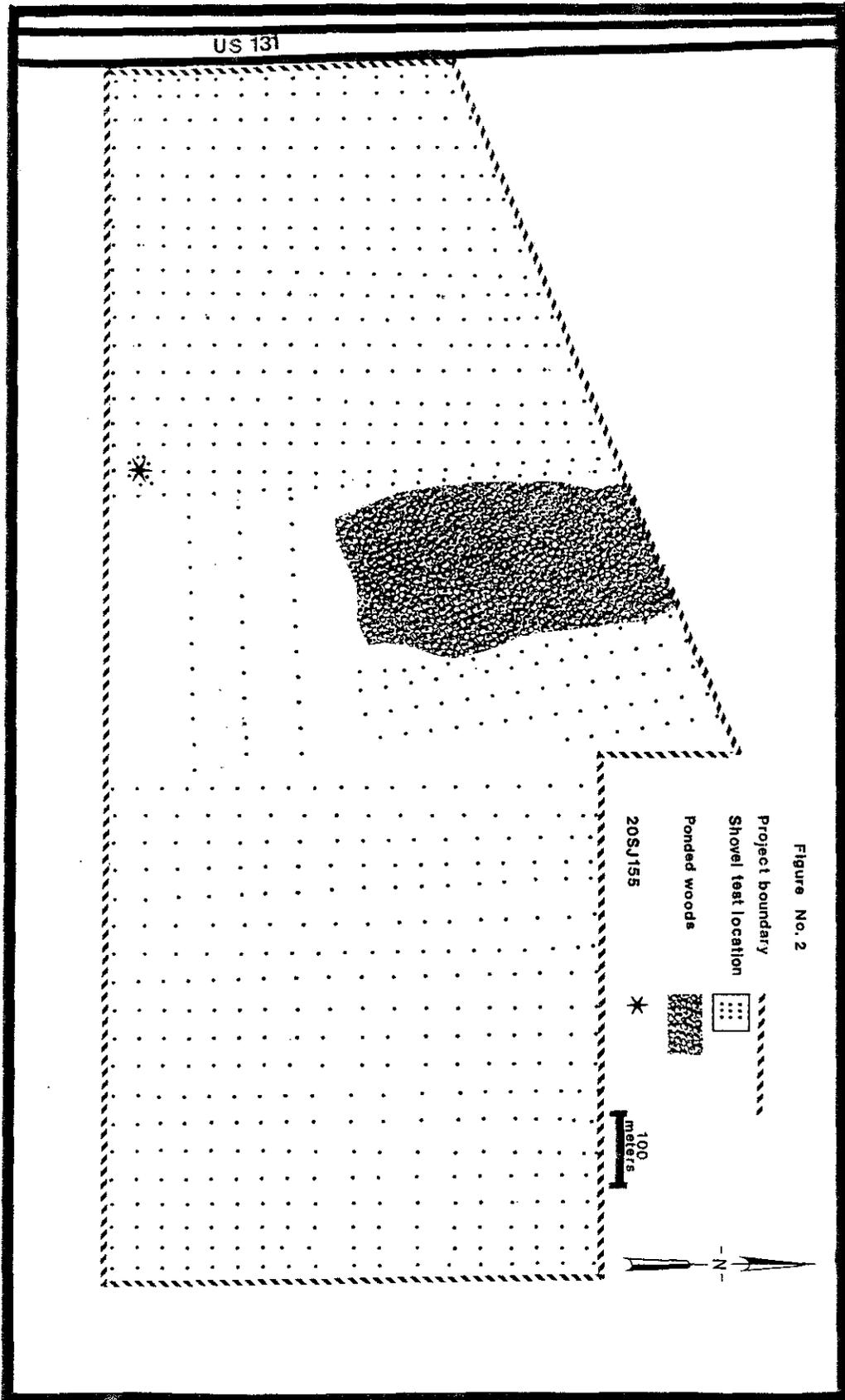
There exists no evidence to suggest that archaeological resources have even been found in the study area and, in fact, there is nothing to suggest that archaeological survey work has ever been undertaken here. Be that as it may, several compliance surveys have been performed upstream of the project, and historical documents reference several sites of note. According to information provided by Barbara Mead (personal communication, 1 Aug 90), the state site files record the Cassoway-Gibson trading post (20SJ153) on the west side of the St. Joseph River south of Michigan Avenue in Three Rivers. A second site, King Gravel Pit (20SJ152), lies south and

east of 20SJ153 on the west bank of the river and is reported to be an 18th century cemetery. This site documents the 1908 discovery of six Indian burials at a short distance from the old French post.

A survey of the Riverside Housing Development by Taggart in 1979 produced no archaeological remains of any kind, according to the site files. And Garland's 1979 survey of the Waterfront Apartment Complex in close proximity to the reported location of the Indian burial ground produced only a single piece of lithic debitage.

#### PHASE I SURVEY PROCEDURES:

On-site investigation of the study area was conducted by a very well trained and experienced field crew of three on 7 and 9 Aug 90. Although their days were long and conditions less than desirable, especially from the perspective of allergies to the pollen of ragweed, they succeeded in attaining surveyor coverage that was both systematic and intensive. Because surface visibility was absolutely nil, the survey team relied on a program of shovel testing along transects spaced 20 m apart. Shovel tests were placed at intervals of 20 m along each line of survey. In aggregate, 771 shovel tests were excavated on this occasion. Their approximate locations are shown in Fig. 2. Each shovel test was routinely excavated through the plow zone and into the subsoil in search of cultural items and evidence of preserved archaeological context in the form of features and/or midden deposits. The only portion of the project that was not so treated was the ponded area in tree cover. Here, surveyors carefully examined the margins of standing water to the extent that vegetation permitted.



**SURVEY RESULTS:**

In total, 767 (99.5%) shovel tests across the study area produced absolutely no evidence of human occupation. A single bifacial thinning flake of an unknown blackish chert, most likely of nonlocal rather than local origin, was recovered from a shovel test near the western edge of the woodlot (Fig.2). Cluster testing about this findspot yielded a single piece of fire-cracked rock. Two widely separated shovel tests in the fallow wheat field also produced single occurrences of FCR, thus completing the total inventory of items suggestive of a human presence prior to historic times.

The findspot of this flake has been recorded with the state as 20SJ155, the Black Flake site. And the precise location of this findspot is the SE 1/4, SE 1/4, SW 1/4, SE 1/4, SE 1/4 of Section 24, Fabius Township (T6S R12W), St. Joseph County, Michigan.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Having completed a systematic and intensive evaluation of the project area, together with a literature and site file search, we are quite confident that the recommendation that follows is most reasonable and appropriate. While we have located and recorded an archaeological site, 20SJ155, little in the way of potential importance can and should be attached to the occurrence of a findspot of a chert flake in an upland area proximal to a major stream valley like that of the St. Joseph. For surely the prehistoric residents of the valley had passed this way!

It is our considered opinion that preserved archaeological contexts in the form of features and/or middens are in all likelihood absent from the project area, as are potentially significant concentrations of cultural debris. Therefore, it is our recommendation that planned construction activities be permitted to proceed

as planned.

**REFERENCES CITED:**

Williams and Works  
1989 Site evaluation: proposed industrial park, Three Rivers,  
Michigan. Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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