1990

96-Phase 1 Archaeological Survey of the 20 Acre Millcaaft Products, Inc. Property in the SE 1/4 of Section 34, Allegan Township, Allegan County, MI (EA-900610)

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WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

REPORT OF INVESTIGATIONS NO. 96

1990

PHASE I ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE 20 ACRE MILLCRAFT PRODUCTS, INC. PROPERTY IN THE SE 1/4 OF SECTION 34, ALLEGAN TOWNSHIP, ALLEGAN COUNTY, MI (ER-900610)

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A Report of Research
Conducted on Behalf of:

Mr. Robert J. Miller
Millcraft Products, Inc.
Milling District, P.O. Box 127
Allegan, Michigan 49010

INTRODUCTION:

Upon receipt of authorization from Mr. Robert J. Miller of Millcraft Products, Inc. of Allegan, Michigan on 28 Aug 90 for a Phase I archaeological survey of a 20 acre parcel in the SE 1/4 of Section 34, Allegan Township, Allegan County, Michigan, the authors and their associate initiated a literature and site file search and on 31 Aug conducted on-site evaluation of the project area in order to ascertain whether planned construction activities would have an impact on potentially significant archaeological resources. There follows a report of our research program, together with recommendations derived from examination of the information available to us.

PROJECT PERSONNEL:

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

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

Field Assistant - Mr. David McConkey, Graduate Student in Anthropology, WMU

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT AREA:

The Miller property is a roughly rectangular parcel enclosed by a recently erected chain-link fence in the NE corner of the SE 1/4 of Section 34, Allegan Township, T2N R13W, Allegan County, Michigan (Figure 1). Encompassing 20 acres (8.1 ha), it is bounded on the north by 113th Avenue and on the east and west by properties

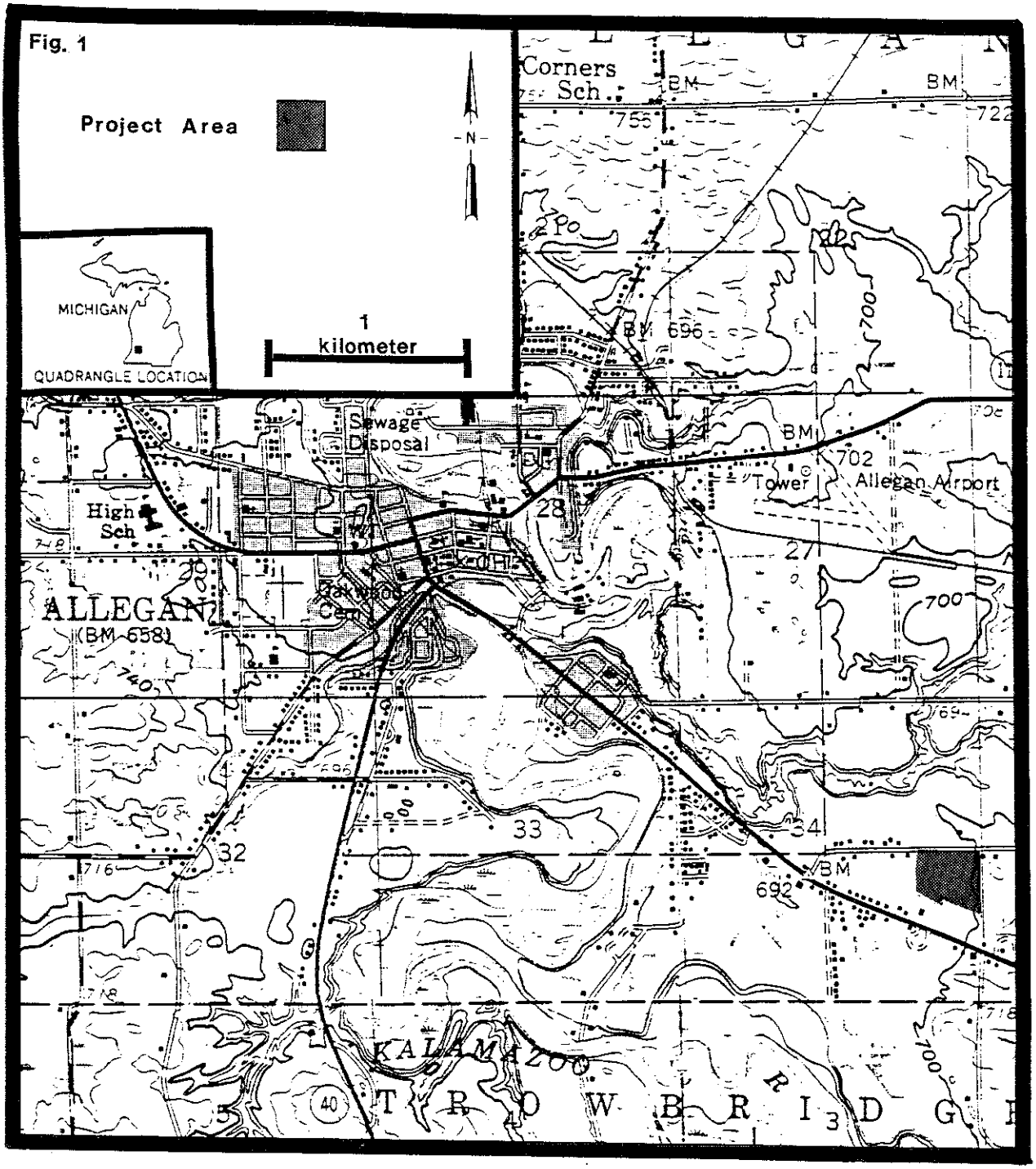
Fig. 1
Project Area
N
MICHIGAN
QUADRANGLE LOCATION
1
kilometer
Corners
Sch.
BM
755
722
Po
BM 696
700
Sewage
Disposal
BM
702
Tower
Allegan Airport
High
Sch
28
27
ALLEGAN
(BM 658)
Oakwood
Cem.
700
740
696
33
34
32
716
BM
692
718
KALAMAZOO
T 3 R 12 W
BRIDGE
40
5

featuring limited development. To the south of this property is an auto dealership that fronts on M-89.

Upon their arrival on-site, the surveyors noted that a great deal of disturbance in the form of stripping and subsequent filling had already taken place across much of the study area. Located in the approximate center of this parcel, a large pond of approximately two acres in size had been excavated to a depth of six feet, or 1.8 m. A fair amount of disturbance to the natural vegetation was evident, especially on the west margin of this body of water. To the east of the pond, the topsoil and all vegetation had been stripped away, and at least a portion of the earth was found to be piled in two linear mounds, one located along the east fenceline and the second along the south fenceline in the southeastern portion of the property. The area between the pond and the mounds of earth was observed to have been filled with a layer of sand imported onto the site. Several shovel tests into this layer of sandy fill revealed its depth to range between 35-47 cm.

To the west of the pond, the degree of disturbance was not as pronounced. Here, scrubby vegetation consisting of sassafras, poplar, and small oak trees, with an occasional larger oak or hickory being noted. But even in the case of larger trees, seldom did surveyors observe one reaching a height of 20 m.

Some gravelly fill was encountered by the survey team along the south fenceline, but this was fairly restricted in its distribution. At various points in the western portion of the project, topsoil had been stripped away to create crude roadways, and nearby were piles of topsoil, concrete and tile pipe, scrap metal, and assorted junk heaps. The northwest corner of the project showed less impact and was again covered with scrubby tree growth, but

some prior use as a recreational area is indicated by the presence of a rusted swing set and chain-link backstop for a ballfield.

Finally, it was noted that the vegetative cover within the limits of the study area contrasted with that to both the east and west where numerous mature trees, mostly oaks and sassafras, were observed. Clearly, this parcel had experienced numerous impacts from modern useage prior to the most recent episode of stripping and filling undertaken by Mr. Miller as he prepared the site for construction of his proposed facilities.

PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN THE GENERAL AREA:

There is no evidence to suggest that archaeological resources have even been recorded for the project area. However, the general area of the Miller property is quite well known to us, occurring as it does in Transect A of the 1978 Kalamazoo Basin Survey study area (Cremin and Marek 1978). The Miller property occurs at an elevation of ca. 700 ft (210 m) above sea level and is characterized by soils that are coarse textured and lie on nearly level terrain. They are developed in sand, sandy loam, stratified sand and loamy sand, and stratified sand and gravel typical of the Oakville-Spinks-Oshtemo Association. Although the general area lacks permanent drainage in the form of streams and/or standing bodies of water, soils are regarded as being well drained with high permeability rates. Such soils favor conifers, mixed hardwoods, and oaks; albeit modern land use seldom shows stands of mature trees favored by these soils.

Although the SE 1/4 of Section 34 was not included among the quarter-sections surveyed in 1978, sampling units in the same stratum as the Miller property occurs were notable for low site density and occupational intensity values. This is to say that

archaeological sites rarely occur in situations such as this in the 1978A transect, and when they do occur they are typically either findspots of an isolated artifact or lithic debris scatters of very limited spatial extent. Therefore, on the basis of our prior work in the general area, the Miller property can be accorded a very low potential for yielding potentially significant archaeological information.

As a case in point, our survey work in this area of the 1978A transect produced almost 20 previously unrecorded sites within a radius of 2.0 km of the Miller property. All but six are found in dense concentrations at a distance of one kilometer from the present study area; one concentration of eight sides occurs to the south near the Kalamazoo River, while the second, consisting of six sites, lies in the "Flatlands" to the east of the Miller property where uplands harbor an area of swampland. The remainding sites are isolated one from another, but show a distribution corresponding to deep ravines containing small perennial streams flowing toward the Kalamazoo River (Cremin and Marek 1978). Thus, in the apparent absence of aquatic and riparian habitats in the <u>immediate</u> area of the Miller property, the potential for archaeological resources may be regarded as very low.

PROJECT FIELD PROCEDURES:

Given the degree and extent of prior disturbance, shovel testing on this occasion was limited to those areas not filled or otherwise altered. These areas were: the eastern border of the property between the topsoil mounds; most of the area lying west of the pond; and a strip along the north fenceline east of the gate providing entry to the property (Figure 2). All disturbed areas, including

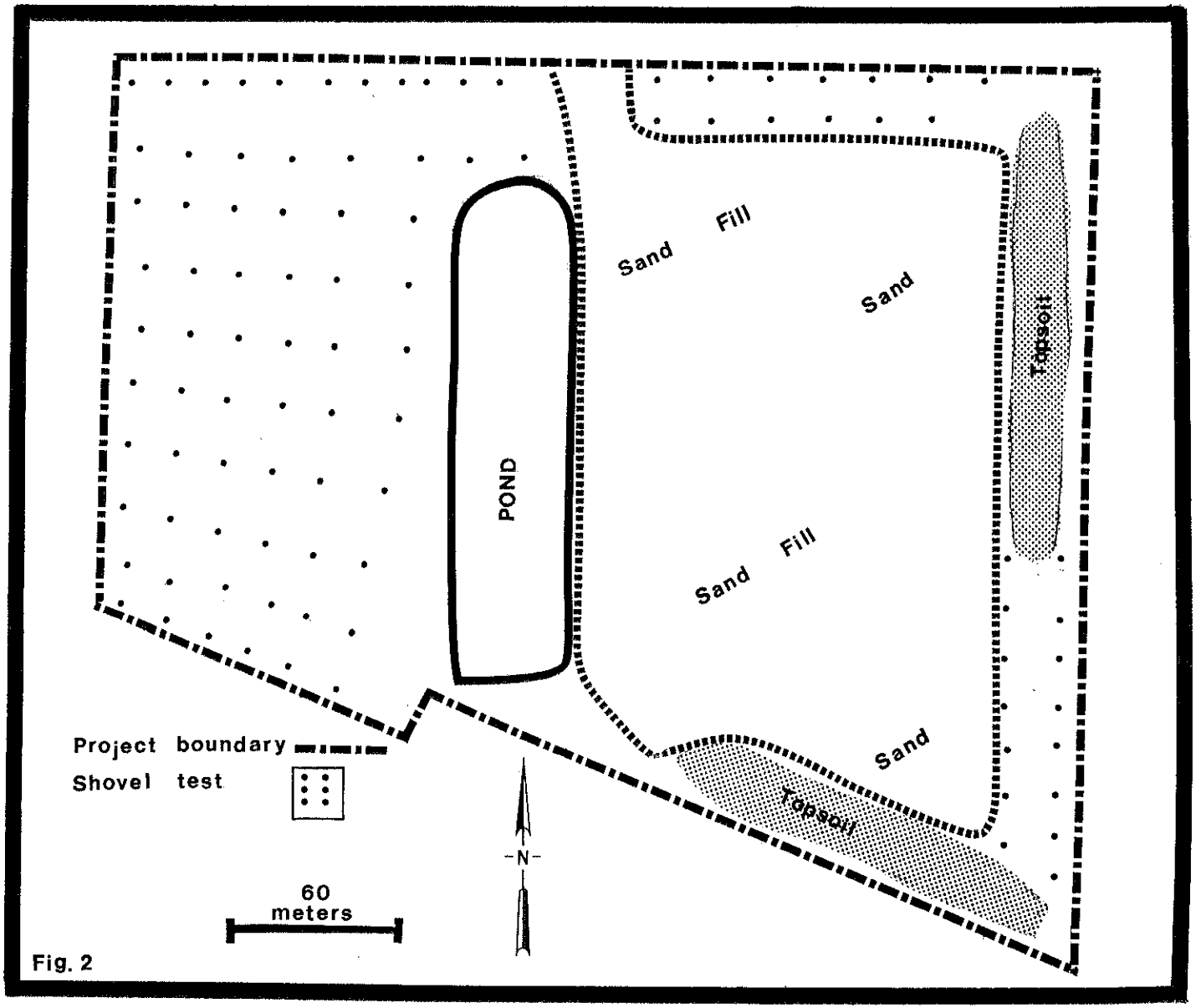
Sand
Fill
Sand
Topsoil
POND
Sand
Fill
Sand
Topsoil
Project boundary
Shovel test
N
60
meters

Fig. 2

the mounds of topsoil, pond margins, and areas recently stripped by machinery, were visually inspected (and judiciously shovel tested to ascertain the maximum depth of disturbance in areas that had been filled).

Shovel tests were spaced at intervals of 15 m along parallel lines of survey that varied between 15-20 m apart. These probes were seldom excavated deeper than 25-30 cm before surveyors made contact with the orangish sandy subsoil underlying the more humic, brown topsoil across the parcel. Figure 2 shows the approximate locations of 95 shovel tests excavated during on-site evaluation of the Miller property.

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Not too surprisingly, given our prior knowledge of the general area, surveyors observed not the slightest evidence of cultural material other than copious amounts of modern trash in the study area. The degree of recent and, perhaps, long-term disturbance observed may be in part responsible for the survey team's failure to recover evidence for the presence of archaeological resources. However, we are more inclined to emphasize the location of this property in an upland setting lacking permanent water and at some distance from the Kalamazoo River trench as precluding heavy residential use by earlier occupants of this drainage system.

Having completed a systematic and intensive on-site evaluation of the project area, together with a literature and site file search, we are quite confident that our client's proposed construction activities will not adversely impact potentially significant archaeological resources. Therefore, we recommend that Mr. Miller be permitted to move forward with the erection of those facilities

necessary for the land use he now proposes.

REFERENCES CITED:

Cremin, W.M. and J.F. Marek
1978 An archaeological survey of Allegan County, Michigan: 1978 multiple transect survey in the middle Kalamazoo river valley. Department of Anthropology, Western Michigan University, Archaeological Report 3.