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# 97-Phase I Archaeological Assessment of Jean Klock Park, City of Benton Harbor, Michigan

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GREGORY R. WALZ  
WILLIAM M. CREMIN

PHASE I ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF JEAN KLOCK PARK,  
CITY OF BENTON HARBOR, MICHIGAN

REPORT OF INVESTIGATIONS NO. 97  
1990

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY  
WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

A Report of Research  
Undertaken on Behalf of:

City of Benton Harbor,  
Michigan 49022  
Attention: Mr. Roland Klocek  
City Engineer

and

The Troyer Group  
415 Lincolnway East  
Mishawaka, IN 46544  
Attention: Mr. Gerald Phipps

**INTRODUCTION:**

Upon receipt of authorization from the City of Benton Harbor (dated 17 Sep 90) and The Troyer Group (dated 20 Sep 90) for a Phase I archaeological survey of Jean Klock Park in Benton Harbor, Michigan, the authors and their associates initiated a literature, documents, and site file search and on 24 Sep conducted on-site evaluation of the property in question to determine if landscape alteration associated with the Master Plan for the park would adversely impact potentially significant archaeological resources. There follows a report of our program of research, together with recommendations derived from our findings.

**PROJECT PERSONNEL:**

- Principal Investigator - Dr. William M. Cremin, Professor of Anthropology, WMU and Owner, W. M. Cremin Consulting
- Project Supervisor - Mr. Gregory R. Walz, M.A. Candidate in Anthropology, WMU
- Field Assistants - Mr. Daniel Goatley, Graduate Student in Anthropology, WMU
- Mr. Lewis Wisser, M.A. Candidate in Anthropology, WMU

**DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT AREA:**

Jean Klock Park occupies some 90 acres (36.4 ha) in the NW 1/4 of Section 13, Benton Township (West Part), City of Benton Harbor, Michigan (Fig. 1). It extends from the lake shoreline on the west to the interchange of Red Arrow Highway on the east. In the late



Project area

1  
kilometer

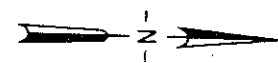
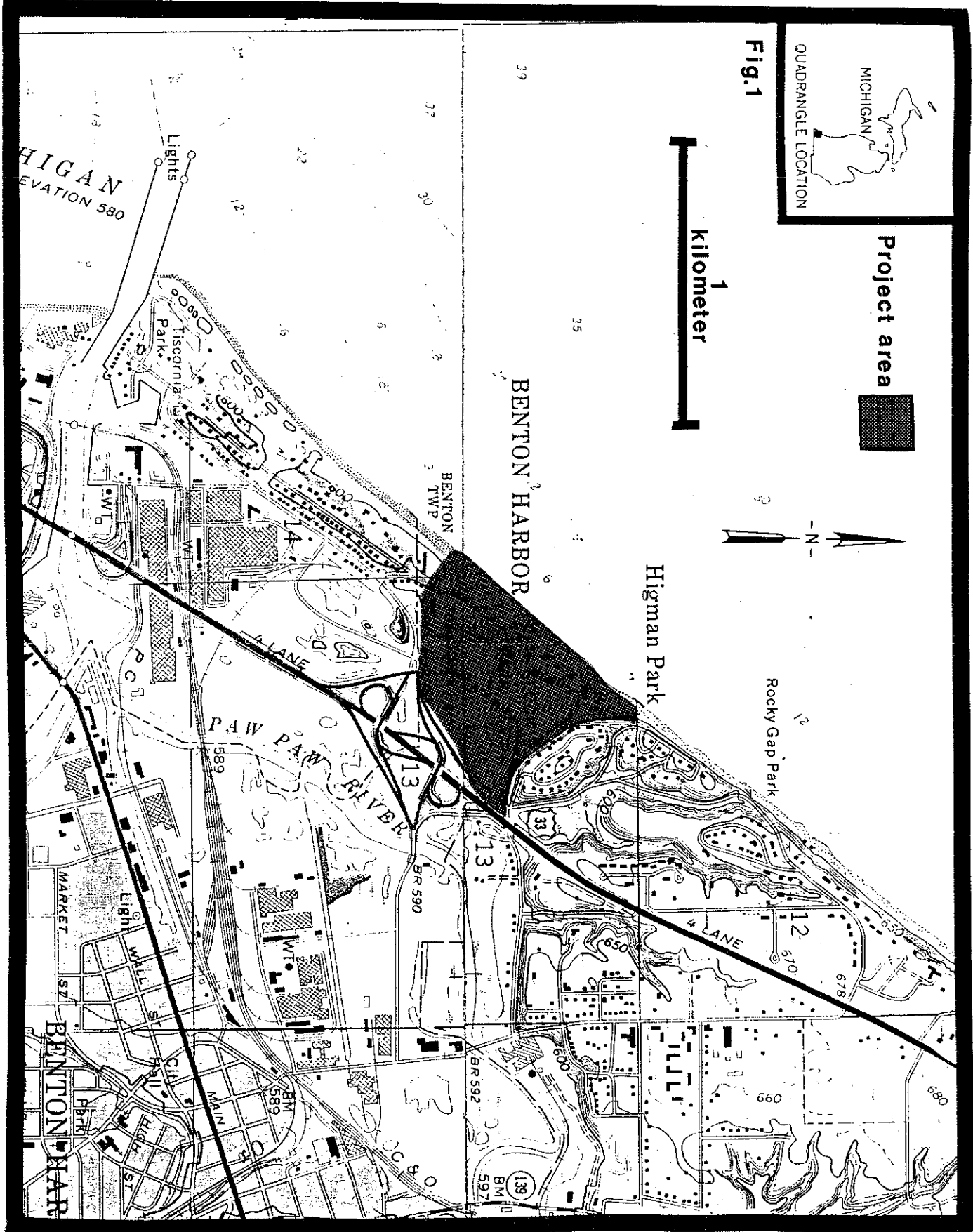


Fig.1



1950's, the channel of the Paw Paw River was filled to permit construction of this interchange, and the river was diverted to its present course which lies to the east and parallels the highway as it flows toward the St. Joseph River to the south. The northern boundary of the project area conforms to the base of the bluff on which the residential neighborhood of Highman Park is situated. This bluff rises to an elevation of 192 m above sea level, or 15 m above the highest elevation (177 m ASL) recorded for the project near the base of the bluff. On the south the project is bounded by a road that provides access to the beach area south of the park limits. Upon the arrival of the survey team it was immediately apparent that a significant amount of landscape alteration had occurred over the years, both in the large expanse of marsh occupying the eastern portion of the project where the Paw Paw River had formerly flowed and on the dunes that separate the strip of beachfront from the remainder of the study area. The beachfront has been developed as a recreational area with a bathhouse, play areas, and parking lots, as well as a sidewalk running parallel to the beach and lake shoreline. It appeared that the area lying north of the bathhouse had been most impacted by road construction and dune alteration over the years. To the south of this structure, natural foredunes were carefully walked and visually inspected for evidence of cultural material, with nothing being observed. Here, surveyors noted that remnants of natural plant communities still existed, with mature poplars, smaller maples, and a dense undergrowth of grape vines, greenbrier, and numerous herbaceous species being present. Behind the foredunes, however, the topography suggested that much of the area had been leveled and scraped. This is especially true for

the City of Benton Harbor water facility and its surrounding park-  
ing lot occupying the extreme southwest portion of the project

area.

East of the dunes and scraped areas, and separated from them  
by a road, lies the extensive marsh that flanked the former Paw

Paw River channel. This area initially appeared to be relatively

untouched by recent landscape alteration, but our program of shovel  
testing soon revealed otherwise. Much of what appeared to be marsh  
near the southern limits of the project area was found to constitute  
a fill consisting of foundry tailings, bricks, and cinders.

The slopes of the bluff that define the northern limits of our  
study area were found to be heavily wooded with climax species long  
common to the region. Mature tulip trees (*Liriodendron tulipifera*),  
red oaks, and maples formed the canopy, while the understory was

comprised of smaller elms, maples, and poplars.

Finally, it is perhaps noteworthy that an old map of the area  
provided by the clients shows a "hairpin-shaped" feature extending

from the old channel in a northwesterly direction through the marsh  
and below the bluff (Fig. 2). We wondered whether this might repre-  
sent a former meander bend in the river long since cut off from the  
channel occupied by the river prior to construction of the inter-

change. However, while it was shown on the map, we were unable to

observe this feature when on-site. Our curiosity was satisfied

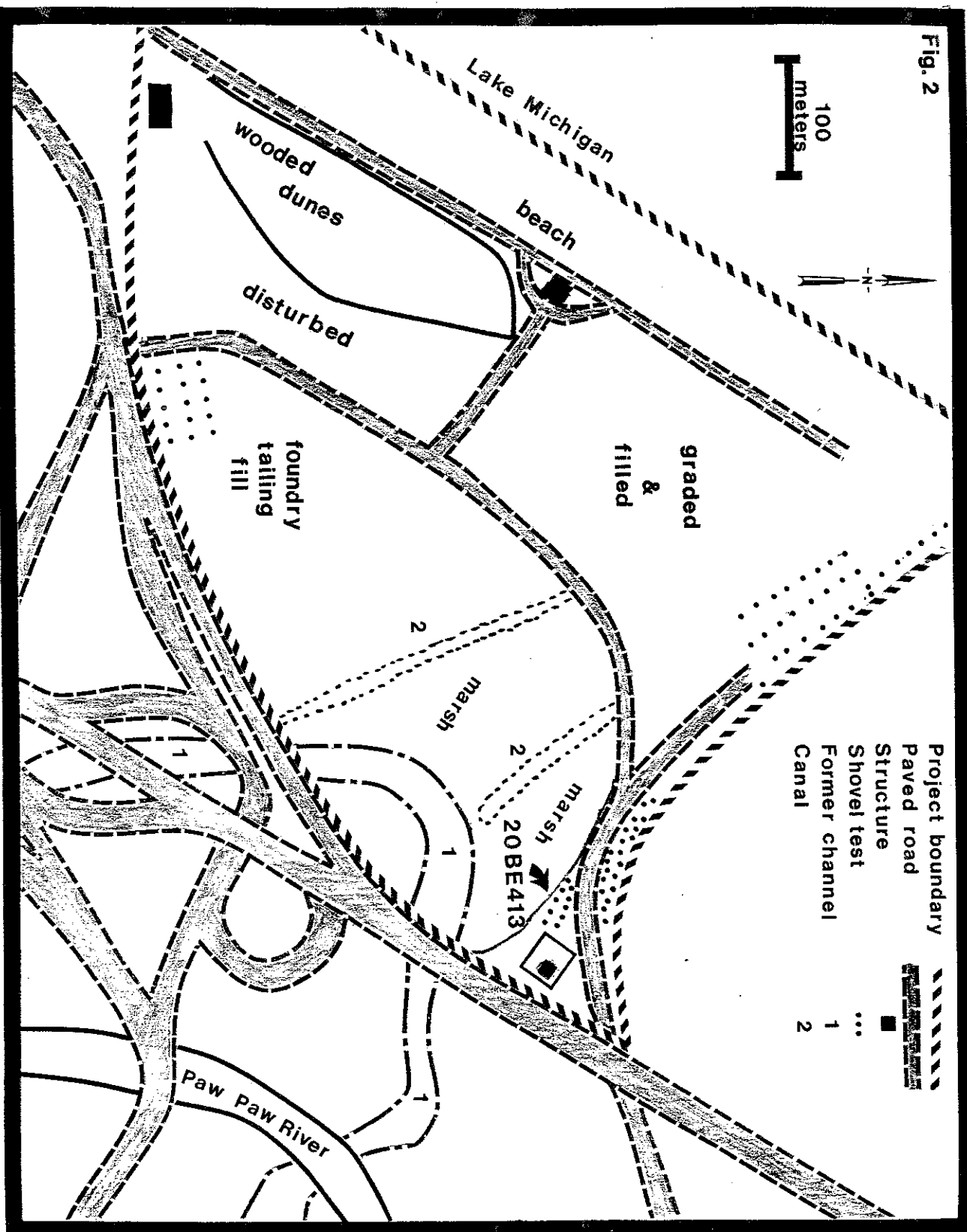
when a lifelong resident of the city, Mr. R.J. Burkholz, informed

us that a canal had been excavated early in the century to bring

river traffic to a commercial enterprise formerly located at the

northeast corner of the project area.

Fig. 2





## ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND RESOURCES IN THE AREA:

A review of the literature and documents (Carney 1976;

Cummingham 1961, 1967; Ellis 1880; Moulds 1963; Pender 1915; and

Tucker 1942) and examination of the state site files strongly sug-

gest an absence of archaeological sites and/or archaeological

activity on the part of the professional community in the Paw Paw

River Valley of Berrien County. While the nearby St. Joseph River

Valley experienced a long history of human occupation and has been

a "hotbed" of activity for those interested in both the prehistory

and early history of southwest Michigan, our review has produced

only a single reference relevant to our program of research.

According to Pender (1915:31), a Potawatomi village was located

on the Paw Paw Flats near the confluence of this river and the St.

Joseph a short distance below the project area in the period of

initial Euroamerican settlement. Perhaps the apparent absence of

historic period Indian settlements of any consequence along this

stream, when compared to the nearby St. Joseph River, reflects on

the "tortuous" course of this river, with its low banks and very

marshy adjacent land (Ellis 1880:187).

The state site files (Barbara Mead, personal communication)

reference six (6) sites in the general area, the closest of which

is loosely located in Section 14 to the southwest of the project

area. This site, 208E58, designates a prehistoric village located

by Hinsdale in his Archaeological Atlas of Michigan (1931). A

second Hinsdale listing, 208E65, is recorded as an 18th century

cemetery, but is located on the south side of the St. Joseph River

very near to the favored location for Laballe's Fort Miami (208E213)

in 1679 (Cummingham 1961; Ellis 1880). A third Hinsdale site,

208E66, is also located in close proximity to the old French Fort,

but is identified as being prehistoric in age. Also purportedly situated on the south bank of the St. Joseph River a short distance about its mouth was a 17th century French mission (208E215). However, I am unaware of any primary sources (documents) that firmly establish the presence of a mission to the Miami in this part of the valley at such an early date.

Finally, the site files record 208E144 at the mouth of the Paw Paw River. We noted earlier that a historic Potawatomi village was situated here during the period of establishment of Benton Harbor. However, when visited in 1948 by a University of Michigan survey party, all that was noted was an extensive surface scatter of pre-historic cultural debris. At least this observation, together with the previously cited historic reference, serves to establish some Amerindian interest in this river. And perhaps this interest at least in part reflects on the natural resource availability that we can associate with the extensive marshes that formerly flanked the "tortuous" course of the Paw Paw River!

#### SURVEY FIELD PROCEDURES:

Although it was originally anticipated that two field days would be required to perform a systematic and intensive survey of the project area, the condition in which we found this 90 acre parcel enabled surveyors to complete their task in one long day. Survey procedures employed consisted of visual inspection of the ground surface in those areas where beach and dunes prevailed and in other areas where vegetative cover afforded a good look at the ground surface for evidence of cultural debris. Many of the areas evidencing recent disturbance were initially probed to verify that indeed rigorous shovel testing was unnecessary. When all is said

and done, only three areas of limited spatial extent were determined to require shovel testing on the basis of extensive recent disturbance elsewhere in the study area.

Shovel testing along parallel transects was conducted along the base of the bluff forming the northern limits of the study area. On the western end of this area, three lines of survey 15 m apart were tested by means of placing probes well into the underlying subsoil at 15 m intervals. These transects were continued, with some deviation to compensate for roadways, to the northeastern corner of the project near a pumping station which occupies a high bank overlooking the wetlands dominating the central portion of the study area.

In addition to the shovel testing performed in the northeastern and northwestern corners below the bluff, surveys also initiated shovel testing along transects in the south-central portion of the project area. Here, the program of shovel testing was terminated when surveys determined that the entire area between two paved roads and south of the extant marsh had been filled with foundry tailings and other debris of recent origin. Figure 2 shows the approximate locations of 70 shovel tests excavated on this occasion.

#### RESULTS OF THE SURVEY PROGRAM:

While the bulk of the project area has been significantly disturbed so as to preclude recovery of archaeological material, the survey team did record the presence of one prehistoric site. Our discovery of the Jean Klock Park site (20BE413) was facilitated by Mr. Burkholz, who was curious as to our activities and came down from his house on the bluff top to visit with us. He informed surveyors that at some time in the past his daughter had collected

"arrowheads" from a location very near to the pumping station that sits on the bank above the wetlands in the northeastern corner of the project area (Fig. 2). He further informed the survey team that workmen had long ago recovered and removed from this location a partial human skeleton and that local historian, Wilbur Cunningham, had reported it to be the site of an Indian camp and associated cemetery. Unfortunately, the source of any report by Cunningham is unknown to us.

Upon the team's arrival at the location in question, now well maintained in lawn and partially fenced to limit access to the pumping station, visual inspection of the bank at the edge of the wetlands commenced. This bank, strongly sloping and rising between 2-2.5 m above the marsh, revealed a total of 32 pieces of lithic debitage, weighing 30.5 g, and a single rim sherd. The following cherts comprise the debitage: Lambrix -7; Wyandotte -3; Deerlick Creek -3; Burlington -2; Flint Ridge -1; Onondaga -1; and unidentified -15. In addition to the pieces of debitage collected from the bank, two of 10 shovel tests in the grassed area back from the edge of the wetlands produced four more lithic items, including two specimens of Deerlick Creek, one of Lambrix, and a piece of an unidentified chert. In aggregate, the lithic assemblage examined by Dan Goatley and reported herein comprises 36 excellent specimens weighing 50.5 g.

The single rimsherd collected from the bank was clearly associated with the lithic material. It is approximately 6 mm thick and has a dark, grit-tempered paste. Dr. Elizabeth Garland of Western Michigan University believes that this specimen is consistent with Middle Woodland period ceramics known from southwest Michigan (Garland, personal communication), and furthermore fits the temporal

placement suggested by the one diagnostic implement that Mr. Burkholz

was able to produce from his daughter's collection from this site.

The biface he showed us is a thin, well-made corner-notched point

that falls within the Snyders Cluster (Justice 1987). The point

was made on an unidentified greyish-white chert and exhibits use

wear bilaterally on the distal end.

In summary, all of the above noted items were recovered from

a limited area no more than perhaps 400 m<sup>2</sup> in area and primarily

from the bank immediately above the marsh. Shovel tests in the

grassed area revealed little subsurface disturbance, with the humus

layer varying from 27 cm deep near the fence around the pumping

station to less than 5 cm a mere 10 m from the fence. However, it

is possible that some topsoil has been taken from the area as a

result of establishment of the facility or subsequent maintenance

of the surrounding area. Only additional examination will reveal

the extent to which archaeological context is preserved at 20BE413.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

Having performed a systematic and intensive examination of the

entire parcel, we are convinced that developments associated with

the Master Plan for Jean Klock Park will have no impact on potentially

significant archaeological resources over an area comprising perhaps

99.9% of the entire project. However, we must recommend that should

development plans include the immediate area that we have herein

identified as the Jean Klock Park site (20BE413), additional study

of this resource should be considered prior to any landscape alter-

ation. In this case a program of limited test excavation should

serve to delimit site area and, more importantly, make it possible

to determine if archaeological context in the form of midden deposits

and/or subsurface cultural features is preserved.

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SITE FORM

The Jean Klock Park site (20BE413) encompasses an estimated 400 m<sup>2</sup> in the SE corner of the NE 1/4, NE 1/4, SE 1/4, NW 1/4 of Section 13, Benton Township (West Part), Berrien County, Michigan. It lies near the base of the bluff on the bank of a marsh flanking the former channel of the Paw River immediately west of a City of Benton Harbor pumping station. The site was recorded with the help of a local informant who brought the survey crew to this location. A brief visual inspection of the sloping bank rising 2-2.5 m above the marsh produced cultural material, and subsequent shovel testing of the grassed area west of the pumping station and a short distance back from the edge of the bank also resulted in the recovery of cultural items. A Middle Woodland cultural affiliation is proposed on the basis of a single rimsherd collected by surveyors and a Snyders Cluster projectile point retrieved from the site by the daughter of our informant, Mr. Burkholz.

Inventory of Cultural Items. (37 pieces)

- 1-rimsherd, 6 mm thick and exhibiting a dark, grit-tempered paste
- 8-pieces of Lambrix chert from Oceania County, Michigan
- 5-specimens from Deerlick Creek south of South Haven, Michigan
- 3-flakes of Wyandotte chert from extreme southern Indiana
- 2-pieces of Burlington chert from west-central Illinois
- 1-flake of Flint Ridge chert from central Ohio
- 1-specimen of Onondaga chert from New York
- 16-pieces of lithic debitage from sources unknown to us, but presumably representing local till material