

Final Report Phase 1 Archaeological Survey Report of West Park, Ann Arbor, Michigan

Abstract

Andrews Cultural Resources (ACR) has completed a Phase I archaeological survey of West Park, within the City of Ann Arbor, Michigan. Almost all of the park property was found to have been disturbed due to park related construction activity. Historic period artifacts from the nineteenth century to the present were discovered but are not associated with an archaeological site within the current park property. No further archaeological testing is recommended.

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to conduct a Phase I Archaeological Site Location Survey of the entire park (exclusive of the baseball playing field) and follow it up with a Phase II archaeological testing as needed. Two visits to the site were made to compile information for this report, including one accompanied by Harry Sheehan, Environmental Manager and Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner. ACR also performed preliminary historical documentary research to acquire a better understanding of the area. All archaeological work for this project conformed to all applicable state, federal, and professional laws, guidelines and standards.

Acknowledgement to the following persons is given for their assistance with the successful completion of the project: Harry Sheehan and Mary Kowalski, both of the County of Washtenaw. Wesley L. Andrews served as the principal investigator and also authored the report and is responsible for its content. Cory Dudley served as the field technician. The opinions, conclusions and recommendations expressed within this report are those of Wesley L. Andrews and do not necessarily reflect those of the County of Washtenaw, the City of Ann Arbor, nor any of its employees.

Methods

The field Procedures for the Phase I Archaeological Survey of the West Park property included creating a 15 meter grid (excluding the softball field), then excavating small (approximately 20-30 centimeter in diameter) shovel test units excavated by hand along the grid about every 15 meters. The sod cap was carefully removed and set to the side for replacement after the unit is refilled. Soil from each shovel test unit was excavated by hand using shovels, sifted, and sorted for artifacts, through 1/4" hardware cloth onto plastic tarps. Any diagnostic artifacts that were found were placed in plastic bags and labeled to identify the unit from which they were recovered. Soil types and depths were noted using a Munsell Soil Identification Chart.

When artifacts were found within a unit, it was identified as a 'positive unit' and radial shovel test units were then performed 5 meters out in each cardinal direction until no artifacts were found in a shovel test unit (a negative unit). This procedure defines the horizontal extent of an artifact scatter/site. The depth of the shovel test units were determined by soil conditions within each unit. Usually, shovel test units are excavated to a depth of encountering sterile subsoil, which is to say no more artifacts occur after entering a different subsoil type. This depth can range anywhere from a few centimeters to 1 meter. Areas of disturbed soil such as where it had been graded or filled are usually not excavated because of an absence of integrity to the soils. However, if archaeological features occur within a unit the depth can go deeper. In accordance with standard archaeological field procedures, shovel test units were not performed on slope greater than 12%, in wetlands, or where there was an impasse such as concrete sidewalks, rock piles, wood piles, etc. Where the ground surface visibility was greater than 50% no shovel test units were performed. The investigative technique employed in the latter circumstance was to conduct a visual pedestrian inspection of the exposed ground surface to discover artifacts that may occur. When any were found they were subjected to the same procedure as described for finding them within a shovel test unit. Upon the completion of a shovel test unit the soil that was sifted upon the tarp was returned to the open hole and the sod cap neatly replaced.

Environmental and Historical Background

The project area is situated within the Northwest 1/4 of Section 29, of Township 2 South, Range 6 East (Ann Arbor), of Washtenaw County within the City of Ann Arbor. Elevation within the park ranges from about 797' Above Mean Sea Level (AMSL) to about 834' AMSL. The park is mostly lawn with some paved walkways, a play area for children, a band shell for public events, a community garden area, a softball field, and picnic areas with grills and picnic tables. The property is owned by the City of Ann Arbor.

The park lies within one of the steep sided ravines that comprise two of the old channels of Allen Creek which flows to the east and north, emptying into the Huron River. One of the creek channels is visible on the south edge of the park within the east 1/2 as an elongated pond with wooden walkways crossing over it. Movement of water within the pond is not noticeable. The western part of the south channel has been filled and is visible upon the ground surface as lower in elevation on the south side of the paved trail. The north channel is similarly visible upon the ground surface as a linear, east-west segment of land with a lower elevation where some wetland vegetation such as cattails appear in marsh-like setting. The two channels meet about the middle of the park and are separated by a triangular piece of upland high ground, ranging in elevation from about 814'-822' AMSL. There are two locations where oak trees representing the original vegetation within the park are situated. The first is upon the triangular shaped piece of upland mentioned between the two channels of the old creek, and the other is immediately north of where the two channels meet. The latter area contains several very large oaks of at least 12' in circumference. The former area has numerous oaks within the eastern portion of the higher ground but are not as large as those upon the lower ground. The area where the large oaks are situated upon the lower ground is another location that is believed to be an original bank of the north channel of this portion of Allen Creek.

Native American occupation of the region is documented to at least the last retreat of the glaciers about 10,000 years before the present time (BP). The earliest of these people are referred to by archaeologists as the Paleo and Archaic cultural periods. The beginning of the early archaic period in Michigan roughly coincides with a major drop in the levels of Lakes Michigan, Huron, and Erie. Lake Erie dropped to 40 meters below that of modern levels, but the water gradually rose again to modern levels or above by the end of the Early Archaic period. The dividing line between the Paleo-Indian and Early Archaic period is arbitrary and based primarily on the absence of fluted points for the Archaic (Shott 1999: 72-73).

The Plano Horizon, an Early Archaic phase occurs in Michigan by the Hi-Lo biface tool form. They are usually made of local cherts, unlike the Paleo forms they succeed, and exhibit a variety of shapes. Hi-Lo sites are widely distributed across southern Michigan. The Satchell biface is another common form in southern Michigan made of greywacke or argillite and resemble some Early Woodland points, but these are now considered to be associated with the Late Archaic period (Shott 1999: 75-76).

The Kirk Horizon is an Early Archaic phase that is represented by a sequence of stemmed and notched biface forms spanning the period between approximately 9,500 and 8,000 BP and are well represented in surface collections from Michigan, indicating many Kirk phase sites here. These tools, like earlier Paleo tools, often are made of exotic cherts such as from sources in Ohio. Whatever the distinctions between the Plano and Kirk Horizons they are not mutually exclusive (Shott 1999: 76).

In southeast Michigan, the Tomasko site in eastern Washtenaw County (20WA50) is one of the more significant Late Archaic sites in the region because it does not fit into any of the known burial complexes for the period. It comprised the skeleton of a young male about 11 years old which held a large side-notched biface in its left hand. Beneath the head was a lump of Yellow limonite. Deer bones were found in the grave, including a deer bone awl, as well as a side notched scraper, one side scraper, one scraper blank, a hammerstone, an abrading stone and a flake (Robertson, Lovis & Halsey 1999: 98-99, 121-122).

The Early and Middle Woodland periods in southeastern Michigan are poorly understood compared with the Grand River Valley and southwestern Michigan where the Hopewellian societies are best known to archaeologists. Southeastern Michigan has a conspicuous lack of Hopewellian materials on sites. Research on these non-Hopewellian Middle Woodland sites has resulted in the identification of the 'Western Basin Tradition' in southeast Michigan as well as southwestern Ontario and northern Ohio. These sites date from 0 - 500 A.D. and generally occur in riverine and lacustrine environments. Some interpretations of the Western Basin Tradition suggest that it continued through the Late Woodland Younger Tradition (Kingsley 1999: 154).

The Late Woodland period in southeastern Michigan begins ca. 500 A.D. with the Southeastern Wayne Tradition, of which the Riviere au Vase phase appears toward the end of that period ca. 800 A.D. The next cultural period is known as the Younger Tradition which consists of the Younger phase ca. 1100, which is succeeded by the Springwells phase ca. 1300, and ending with the Wolf phase ca. 1400 which continued to the time of European contact in the region in the sixteenth century. This sequential interpretation has changed little since it was first introduced in 1975 (Brashler, Garland, Holman, Lovis & Martin 2000: 544).

In the southeastern portion of Michigan, archaeologists have proposed the existence of two separate and distinct late prehistoric cultural traditions called the Western Basin Tradition (formerly Younge), and the Sandusky Tradition (Stothers 1999: 197). The Western Basin Tradition consists of four developmentally sequential phases: 1) Gibraltar (ca. 500-750 A.D.), 2) Riviere au Vase (ca. 750-1000 A.D.), 3) Younge (ca. 1000-1200 A.D.), and 4) Springwells (ca. 1200-1300 A.D.) (Stothers 1999: 197). Wolf Phase populations from northern Ohio spread into Michigan subsequent to the withdrawal of the earlier resident Western Basin Tradition groups (Stothers 1999: 207).

Although horticulture was practiced from at least the start of the Late Woodland period, agricultural communities are not distinguished in the archaeological record until ca. 1000 A.D. in southeastern Michigan. At that time there is a shift to areas adjacent to well-drained arable soils at the margins of the wetlands. The size of those communities began to increase after ca. 1300 A.D. At about the same time defensive works begin to appear. Throughout the Late Woodland period ossuary type burials in the region become more frequent and larger in size, containing more burials (Krakker 1999: 232-233; Brashler, Garland, Holman, Lovis & Martin 2000: 557). The situation in southeastern Michigan during the Late Woodland is possibly similar to that found in the Saginaw basin where it is agreed that the locational strategies of groups practicing a mixed collecting and horticultural subsistence pattern by small dispersed farmsteads flanking Saginaw Bay to the southeast near Caseville, across the margins and lowlands of the central valley, and through the wetlands of the Tobico region to the northwest (Brashler, Garland, Holman, Lovis & Martin 2000: 557).

Seasonal aggregation of large groups was possible at 'central place' Late Woodland sites in most regions of the lower peninsula. For the southeast part of the state this included: Riviere au Vase (20MB3) in Macomb County, Younge (20LP1) and Draper Park (20SC40) (Holman & Brashler 1999: 215).

The western end of Lake Erie was known to Europeans by the middle of the seventeenth century. The Taunton map of ca. 1635 shows a cluster of tribal groups between Saginaw Bay and the western end of Lake Erie by the name of 'Gens de feu' the French term for the Assistaeronon or Fire Nation. The tribal group shown nearest to the project area are the Totontaratonhronon who are located on the west end of Lake Erie (Stothers 1999: 207-211). The Jesuit Relations mentions this tribal group as appearing on a Huron map that Paul Ragueneau possessed. The priest who saw the Huron map wrote in ca. 1640 that the Totontaratonhronon tribe along with others were all sedentary, cultivated the land and were very populous (JR 1898, 18: 233).

Callender (1978: 636; 1978a: 648; Callender, Pope & Pope 1978: 656) have suggested that the Fox tribe was located in southern Michigan and/or northwest Ohio along with their linguistically related brethren, the Sauk and Kickapoo, before European contact.

Warfare between the 5 nations Iroquois in New York state with tribes in the lower peninsula of Michigan and other areas of the Great Lakes resulted in the westward dispersal of many tribes by ca. 1650. After that time the western Lake Erie basin including the Huron River watershed appears to have been used by the 5 nations Iroquois and the Huron for beaver hunting into the late seventeenth century (NYCD 9: 176; Havard 2001: 46-50, 64).

A map from ca. 1685-1686 shows 3 rivers between the Detroit River and Maumee Bay. The only one provided with a name is the southernmost which is labeled 'R. Aux Ours' which flows from the southwest to the northeast, it is possibly the Raisin River of today. The river shown immediately to the north of that is most likely the Huron River of today and shows that it was known to Europeans by that date (Franquelin 1685-1686). In 1687 mention is made of the St. Denis River south of the strait at Detroit (Farmer 1881: 325). A 1687 and a 1718 map also shows the 'R. Aux Ours'. A map from 1744 and another from 1794 shows what is probably the Huron River of Lake Erie but it is named 'R. St. Denis' and 'R. St. Denys' respectively (Paris 1744; Laurie & Whittle 1794). A 1755 map by an anonymous maker shows 'River Raisin' while another map from 1755 by Jno. Mitchell shows 'Bear River' at location of where is today the River Raisin (Mitchell 1755). 'Ours' is bear in the French language.

In 1701 some segments of 3 Ottawa bands, along with the Huron from the Straits of Mackinac, and some Potawatomi, settled at the Detroit River and maintained a strong presence in that region for the next 130 years (Feest & Feest 1978: 773). From ca. 1720 to 1761, an Ottawa, a Potawatomi, and two Huron/Wyandot villages are known for the Detroit River region, but no settlement is known to Europeans within the Huron River watershed. However these tribes would have most likely used the upper reaches of all these watersheds in the region for a variety of purposes (Tanner 1987: map 9). By 1768 the Potawatomi had settlements that were known to the Europeans up the Huron and Saline Rivers at what are now the towns of Ypsilanti and Saline respectively. (Tanner 1987: map 13 & 16; Heward 1928, 1: 339-260). By ca. 1830 the Potawatomi settlements at Ypsilanti and Saline were supplanted by Euro-American towns (Tanner 1987: 135-136).

The Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti area was also at the intersection of many east-west trails that connected the Lake Erie Basin with the Lake Michigan basin. A water route also existed between the upper reaches of the Huron River and the Grand River with a portage between the two rivers in northwestern Washtenaw County and northeastern Jackson County in the vicinity of the 'Portage River' and 'Portage Lake' (Hinsdale 1931).

It is mentioned in the late nineteenth century that the native name for the Huron River was 'Cos-scut-e-nong sebee' interpreted as 'Burnt River District' meaning the plains, or oak openings lands or country (Chapman 1881: 120). That name would be consistent with pre-European settlement vegetation, ca. 1820, of the upland west portion of the project area which was mixed oak savannah that extended further to the west outside what is now the park. The area within the lower elevated portion of the project area immediately adjacent to the two branches of the creek was wet prairie. The environment to the north and south upon higher ground outside the project area was an oak-hickory forest (Albert & Comer 2008: Map 16).

Diplomatic and treaty relations between the tribes in the region with the United States Government further document the presence of the Ottawa Chippewa and Potawatomi in the Huron River watershed. Windigo, a Potawatomi chief, signed the 1789 treaty of Fort Harmar which ceded land in northern Ohio and was also signed by Ottawa and Chippewa of the Detroit region (Kappler 1904, 2: 18-23).

Mention is made at the 1805 Treaty of Fort Industry of the Potawatomi living on the River Huron of Lake Erie and the neighborhood thereof were paid, along with the Ottawa and Chippewa to have all received payment for land on the south side of Lake Erie. The Potawatomi chiefs who signed the treaty were Mogawh, Noname, Ninnewa, and Skush (Kappler 1904, 2: 77-78). The 1807 Treaty of Detroit again mentions the Potawatomi who are living on the River Huron of Lake Erie as receiving payment including annuities for a land cession in the region. The tribes also reserved through this treaty several tracts of land for themselves which were not located upon the Huron River. The Potawatomi who signed this treaty were: Toquish and Noname, (Kappler 1904, 2:92-95). Another treaty in 1808 concluded at the Wyandot Village of Brownstown also has Potawatomi signatories including Mogau, Wapememe or White Pigeon, and Mache (Kappler 1904, 2: 99-100). The 1815 Treaty of Springwells lists 22 Potawatomi chiefs who signed the document from a wide area of the Great Lakes (Kappler 1904, 2: 117-119). Likewise the 1817 Treaty of the Rapids of the Miami of Lake Erie lists 31 Potawatomi chiefs from a wide area of Michigan who signed that document (Kappler 1904, 2: 145-155).

By 1809 a trading post and small settlement were known to be situated at what is now Ypsilanti on the west bank of the Huron River inhabited by Gabriel Godfrey, Francis Pepin and Louis Le Shambre. It was known as 'Godfrey's, on the Pottawatomie trail' (Chapman 1881: 117).

The first Euro-American property owners out of federal holding were John Allen and Elisha Rumsey for what is now the project area. On November 10, 1824 they purchased the SW 1/4 of the NW1/4, and the NE1/4 and the SE1/4, of section 29 (BLM, GLO Land Records, T2S, R6E, Washtenaw County, Michigan). There is no evidence that they utilized it for any purpose during the period of time when they owned it.

An 1853 plat map of the City of Ann Arbor shows the location of structures at that time, however there are none shown within the project area. Miller Road is named 'Corhan Road' (Hart 1853). The project area can clearly be seen as an open park-like area on an 1866 'Birds Eye View' drawing of Ann Arbor. Miller and Huron Streets are depicted. Seventh Street is shown to only exist from Huron Street north to the south branch of the creek where it stops. Chapin Street is not shown to exist at that time (Ruger 1866).

An 1874 plat map of Ann Arbor shows the west part of the park as Maynards Plat, with many long lots with homes along Miller Street. Central portion of the park owned by D. McIntyre. The east area of West Park was owned by David Godfrey, his house is on Huron Street. No structures are shown on any part of what is now the park. Chapin street is shown. J.F. Miller and J. Toms are land owners at the east end of West Park with a house on Miller Street (Everts & Stewart 1874).

An 1880 map shows that the streets surrounding the West Park area (Chapin, Seventh, Miller, and Huron) were all in place by that date as they exist today (Stoner 1880).

Archaeological Field Results

The archaeological field investigation has shown, through the placement of 212 shovel test units and 18 soil probes, that almost all of the West Park property which lies on the lower elevated portions consists of highly disturbed soils. As mentioned previously, there are only two locations where the ground was found to not have been disturbed to any significant degree. One is the higher elevated portion of land between the two branches of the creek on the west side of the park. The other is to the north of the end of that point of land upon lower elevated ground near 3 very large oaks. This finding is supported by comparing a topographic map from the early twentieth century with that of conditions found at West Park today which shows that extensive land altering activities have occurred over much of the property (Washtenaw County Drain Commission Map).

The typical profile of the soils within the disturbed areas below the sod cap was 12" of a dark brown (10YR3/3) loamy sand with some small chunks of yellowish clay and water worn gravel/pebbles. This is followed by a mostly clay and gravel layer with some sand intermixed. Some areas, especially near the old creek channels contained much higher concentrations of water worn gravel.

Historic and modern/contemporary period artifacts were discovered in almost all areas of the park. These consisted of:

STP 1:

1 small red brick fragment.

STP 16:

1 small fragment of undecorated white ware ceramic.

STP 17:

1 small fragment of a ceramic pipe stem.

3 pieces of undecorated white ware ceramic. One is from a bottom portion of a bowl and the other two are from the sides of a cup or bowl. There are no manufacturer's stamps.

Artifacts Surface Collected between STP 17 and 18:

1 flat piece of white ware ceramic probably the bottom of a plate or platter, with a partial green colored back stamp showing the letters "...cuse China" which is probably 'Syracuse China'. A manufacturer of a type of ceramic pattern that was used beginning in 1895.

1 rim piece of flow blue ware produced on an ironstone medium probably from a bowl. No distinguishable pattern is visible, nor any manufacturer's stamp, upon the specimen collected from West Park. The arc of the rim suggests that it came from a large bowl. This specific type of ceramic was first produced around 1830 and continued in production in varying patterns and quantities until ca. 1945. Dates vary in the literature from 1825-1840 as to when Blue Flow ware was first manufactured. The

more recent literature on the subject tends to push the date back earlier within that time span, while the older literature places it toward the latter part of the date span (An example of the date of ca. 1830 used here is: Jeffrey B. Snyder, 'Fascinating flow Blue', 1999; 'Flow Blue Collector's Guide to Pattern, History & Value', 1996; 'Historic Flow Blue', 1994; 'A Pocket Guide to Flow Blue', 1995, all published by Schiffer Publishing. Also see article by Jeffrey B. Snyder in New England Antiques Journal 'Flow Blue Ceramics: Victorian Tableware and Collector's Passion').

1 flat piece white ware ceramic probably from the bottom of a plate or platter, with a partial grey colored back stamp showing the letters "...ount Cl..." which is the logo for the 'Mount Clemens' Pottery Company that dates from a type used in the 1930's and 1940's (Lehner 1988: 306-307).

1 white ware rim with two decorated green colored lines parallel with the edge. The line nearest the edge is thicker than the one below it. Another thin green colored decorative line appears about one inch below the latter. The arc of the rim suggests it is from a large bowl.

4 fragments of undecorated white ware ceramic (1 flat, 3 curved).

1 clear glass lip fragment of a bottle with no seams. This type indicates a twentieth century manufacture.

1 slightly curved piece of clear glass with a thin coated white layer on the inside. It has an 'opaque' or 'frosted' appearance with a raised line with a concave back on the inside. This manufacturing technique is often applied to various types of light bulbs. The specimen from West Park is possibly a fragment of a large light bulb probably of the type used to illuminate street lights and those within the park.

STP 25:

1 United States Jefferson Head Nickel dated 1943 with a 'P' stamp indicating it was minted in Philadelphia. It exhibits a light amount of wear with many details that are visible on both sides. It is not made of steel as were some of that period during World War II.

STP 26:

1 small bottom piece of a white ware dinner plate with a partial grey colored back stamp showing the letters "...ina" which is probably the word 'china', but there is too little information visible to determine the specific manufacturer.

Items discovered but not collected included: pieces of coal, small fragments of clear window glass, brick fragments, small pieces of plastic bags, drain tile fragments, brown bottle glass, fragments of roof shingles, clear bottle glass, round nails, thick automobile window glass, lumber fragments, small fragments of undecorated white ware ceramic, a fragment of a plastic phonograph record, green plastic bottles, white plastic bottle caps, metal screws, fragments of concrete and small pieces of asphalt.

Conclusions and Recommendations

West Park has always been an open wetland environment adjacent to the creek channels that were subject to seasonal flooding since at least the beginning of the nineteenth century and probably much earlier. It was possibly used as a pasture for grazing animals in years past, being a wet prairie with marsh grasses. Such use is frequently mentioned in the historic record of Michigan. There is no evidence that it has ever been used for habitation except in the late nineteenth century along what is now Chapin Street on the east boundary of the park where houses once stood but were removed in the recent past to expand the park. All of the other property owners of what is now West Park in the past, before it became a park, lived on the surrounding streets of Miller, Seventh, and Huron with their lots extending into the park. The back portions of these lots in what is now West Park were probably also used as dumps for household refuse.

The artifacts recovered from the project area are unremarkable in terms of their type and interpretive value. They date to the Euro-American occupation of the area ca. 1830-present day. Their origin cannot be clearly ascertained because of the high degree of land disturbing activities including the construction and reconstruction of the park facilities, building of water and sewer drains, and fill being placed into the old creek channel from unknown sources. It is possible that some of the artifact assemblage reflects residential occupation along Miller, Seventh, Chapin, and Huron Streets. They could also be the result of park patrons over the last 100 years engaging in such activities as picnics, but there is inadequate evidence to support any of those views.

Although no archaeological investigation was conducted upon the area of the softball playing field, it is not believed that it contains any different characteristics than that found within the rest of the park on the lower ground.

It is the opinion of the principal investigator for this project, Wesley L. Andrews, that there are no significant cultural resources present within the present boundaries of West Park. There is no recommendation made for additional archaeological field investigation. Any proposed undertakings within West Park will have no effect upon cultural resources.

It is further recommended that the artifacts recovered during this project be given to one of the local historical societies or museums.

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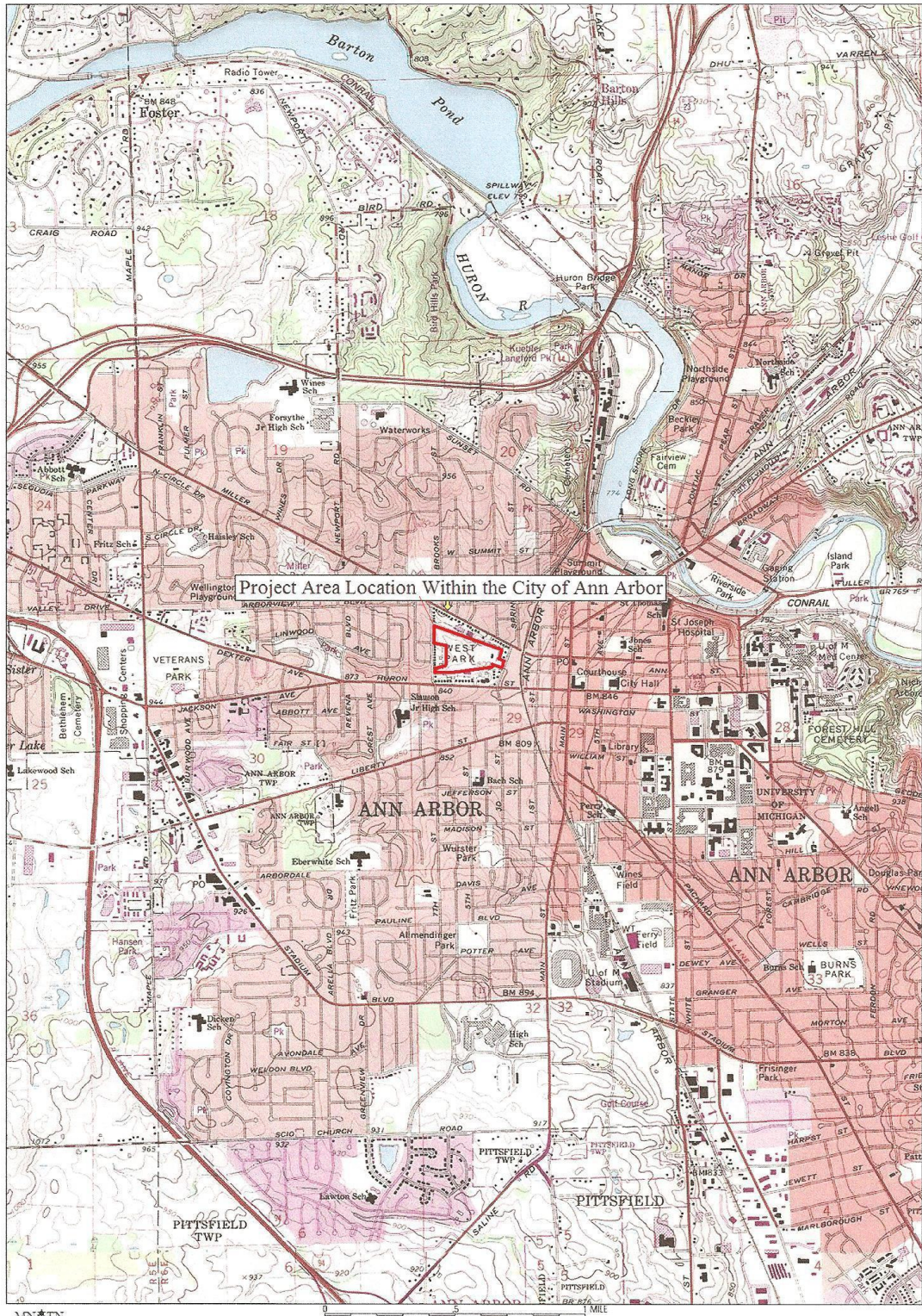
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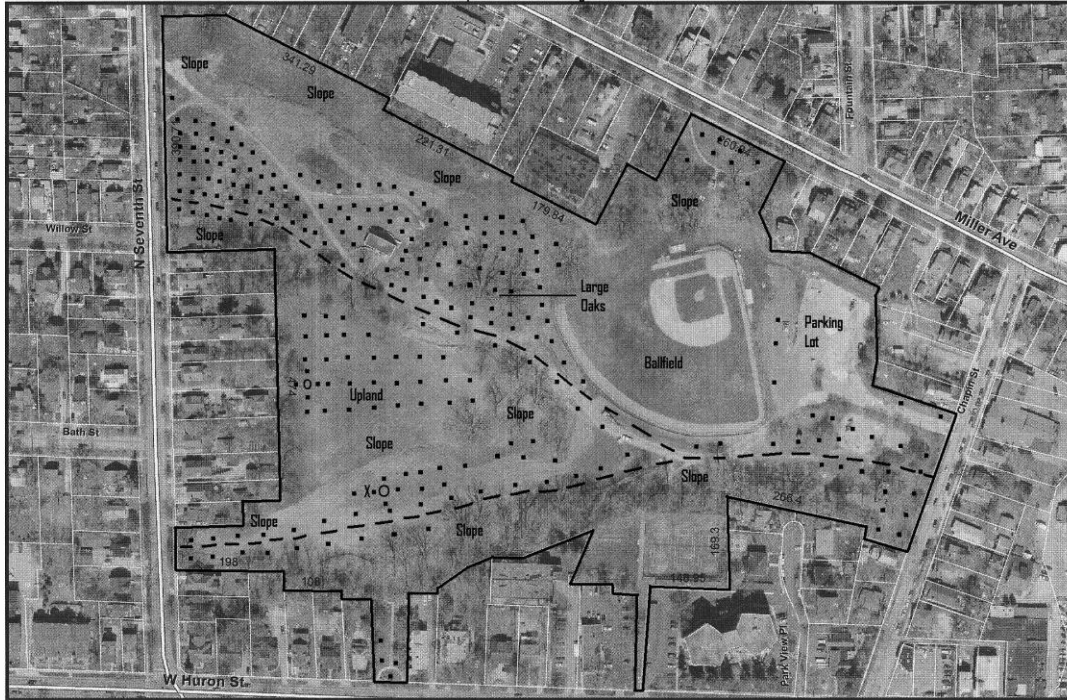
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Project Area Location Within the City of Ann Arbor

Map of West Park Showing Location of Shovel Test Units



Source: Modified Map From Washtenaw County Geographic Information System

West Park
City of Ann Arbor



- = West Park Boundary
- - - = Old Creek Channels
- = Shovel Tests
- = Positive Shovel Tests
- X = Surface Scatter of Historic Artifacts

