Test Excavations at the Spencer Woods Locale of (20SA1374)

Jeffrey D. Sommer

Historical Society of Saginaw County, Inc.

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ABSTRACT

Between 20 May 2020 and 05 November 2020, the Historical Society of Saginaw County, Inc.* conducted test excavations in the Spencer Woods locale of the Spencer Farm site (20SA1374) in Bridgeport Township, Saginaw County, Michigan. An excavation block consisting of 18 one by one meter excavation units and two 1 by 0.5 meter units uncovered early Late Woodland ceramics, non-diagnostic prehistoric flaked stone artifacts, and 20th century historic period items.

*The Historical Society of Saginaw County, Inc. (HSSC) operates the Castle Museum of Saginaw County History. HSSC and Castle Museum refer to the same institution and are used interchangeably in this report.

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INTRODUCTION

The Spencer Farm site (20SA1374) is located in Bridgeport Township, Saginaw County, Michigan (Figure 1). Artifacts collected over a several decade period from the 40 acre (16.2 hectare) farm date from the late Paleo-Indian through the Historic Period. An Early Archaic Eden-like lanceolate point from the site has been previously reported (Spencer 2010). In 2014, a 0.5 X 10 meter trench was excavated in the northwest corner of the site in an area slated to be impacted by the installation of a drainage trench. Non-diagnostic prehistoric material including FCR, flakes, and cores and late 19th through 20th century historic material was recovered during the project (Sommer 2015).

Between 20 May and 05 November 2020, the Historical Society of Saginaw County, Inc. (HSSC) conducted test excavations in a portion of the Spencer Farm site dubbed the Spencer Woods locale (Figure 2). Previous research at this location revealed the presence of an early Late Woodland component (Sommer 2019). The 2020 excavations were intended to explore the nature and extent of this component and how it relates to regional early Late Woodland cultural systems. An excavation block, totaling 19 square meters, uncovered early Late Woodland ceramics, non-diagnostic flaked stone artifacts, and 20th century hunting ammunition.

All artifacts, notes, digital media, and other documents resulting from this project will be curated in the Archaeological Repository of the Castle Museum. Archaeological material from the test excavations at the Spencer Woods project area was assigned to Accession 2020.023 and includes Catalogue Numbers 2020.023.001 through 2020.023.192.

Acknowledgements
This project would not have been possible without the help of several individuals. First, thanks are due to the landowners, Bernard and Florence Spencer, for giving us permission, access, and time to conduct the investigation. In addition to the Project Director, Phase I fieldwork was conducted by Nick Bacon, Josh Badour, Cal Borden, Chris Douglas, Kiersten Frankowiak, Brad Jarvis, Ken Kosidlo, and Andy Stachowiak. Mike Hambacher and Quinn Sommer assisted with the Phase II fieldwork.

Figure 1: Project Area (derived from ACME Mapper 2.1 image).

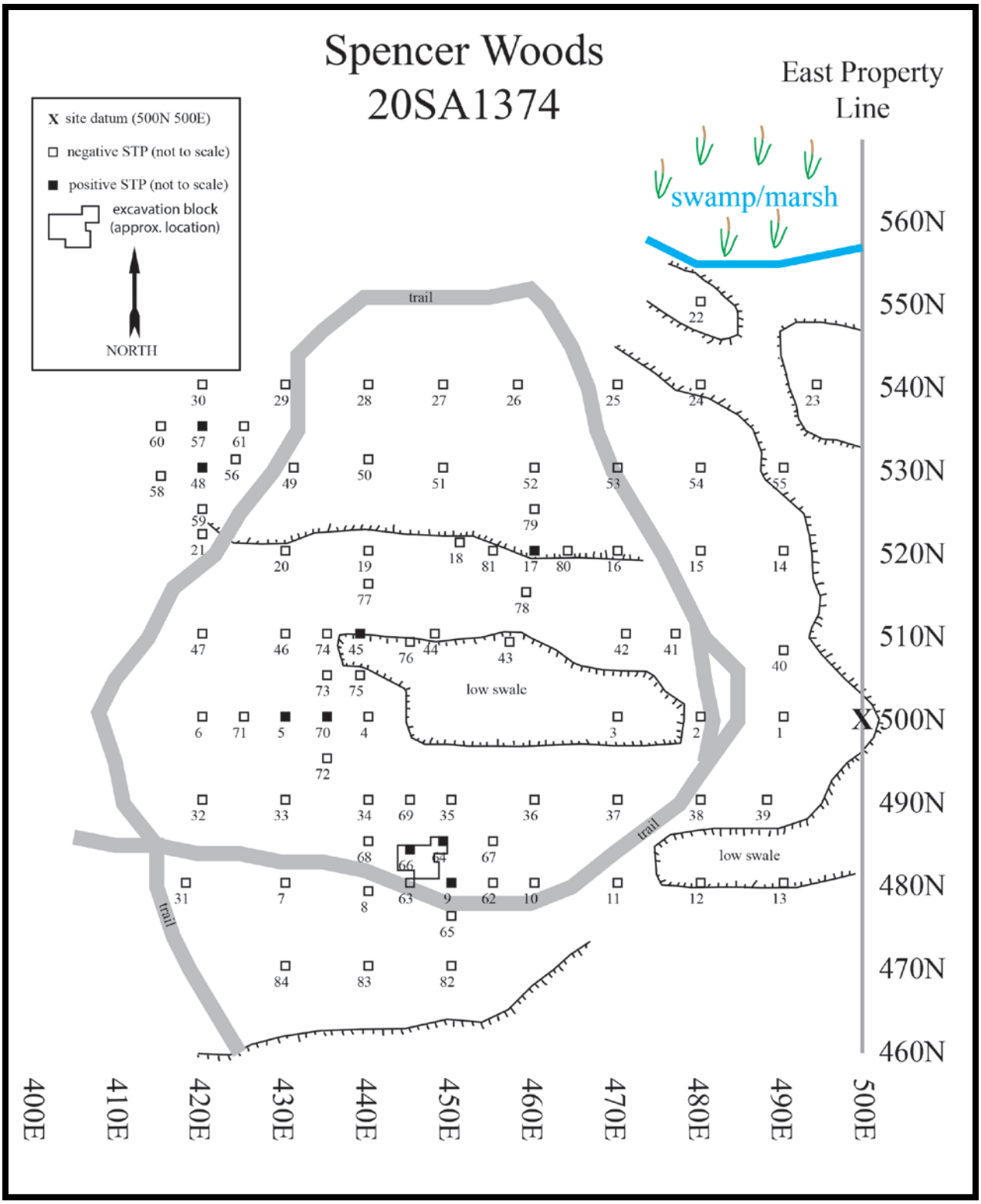

Figure 2: Site Map.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

Environment

The Spencer Woods locale of the Spencer Farm site is situated in a zone of lacustrine sand and gravel, which "occurs chiefly as former beach and near-offshore littoral deposits of glacial Great Lakes" (Farrand 1982). The soil in the immediate project area is classified as Pipestone sand with Granby fine sand also present approximately 50 meters to the northeast (Iaquinta 1994). The present surface elevation in the area of the test excavations is approximately 188.1 meters above mean sea level (617'amsl). The highest mid-Holocene level of the Great Lakes (Nipissing I Stage) stood at an elevation of 184.4 m (Monaghan and Lovis 2005). In fact, you would have to go back prior to the early Holocene beginning of the Lake Algonquin sequence (ca. 12,400 B.P.) to find lake levels higher than 185.3 meters (Monaghan and Lovis 2005). Presumably, this landform is a beach or dune deposit associated with one of the early high lakes levels. It therefore would have been available for occupation (i.e. not submerged) for most of the time people have been present in Michigan.

Large-scale changes in dominant vegetation patterns occurred in the region following deglaciation. Shott and Welch (1984: figures 10-14) describe these trends in a series of maps of the vegetation history of the "Thumb area" of Michigan. Their descriptions are broadly applicable to the project area. A spruce forest dominated the period lasting from 11,200 to 10,400 B.P., followed by a pine-fir-spruce forest, which lasted until 8,000 B.P. These first two periods cover the Paleo-Indian and beginning of the Early Archaic period and likely describe the conditions encountered by the first inhabitants of the Spencer Farm site. From 8,000 B.P. until 4,000 B.P. an elm-maple-beech forest characterized the vegetation. A mixture of elm-maple-beech and oak-pine forests dominated much of the region until historic period land clearing activities. Visitors to the Spencer Farm area ca. A.D. 1800 would have found themselves in a vast Beech-Sugar Maple Forest with smaller zones of Mixed Conifer Swamp, Black Ash Swamp, Mixed Hardwood Swamp and Shrub Swamp/Emergent Marsh within a few kilometers (Comer and Albert 1997). Today, the immediate project area is forested with dominant tree species including Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*), American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*), Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*), Blue Beech (*Carpinus caroliniana*), American Hop hornbeam (*Ostrya virginiana*), and others (Figure 3).

The Spencer Farm site lies just south and west of a small stream locally known as Fish Creek. Apropos of its name, local residents indicate that spring spawning runs of Northern Pike were common throughout much of the mid-late 20th century and presumably prior to that time. The creek is a tributary of the Cass River, which is located approximately 1.6 km to the north. An intermittent (at present) branch of Fish Creek appears to originate in the 2.2 acre (0.91 hectare) swamp/marsh, which is adjacent to the Spencer Woods project area. Notable plant species in the marsh include Cattail (*Typha* sp.) and Common Arrowhead (*Saggitaria latifolia*) (Figure 4).

Figure 3: View Looking South along Trail.

Figure 4: View of Marsh.

Culture History

Because of the large-scale interactions that obtained between human groups in the past, culture history must be viewed at a regional rather than local level. Several reviews of the regional cultural developmental sequence have been prepared (Cleland 1992; Fitting 1975; Halsey 1999; Mason 1981). The cultural history presented below is discussed in terms of discrete chronological stages. In reality, the stages grade into one another and there are no distinct boundaries between them. As in the previous section, dates for the stages are presented as radiocarbon years B.P. (Before Present). By convention, "Present" is considered to be A.D. 1950.

The initial human colonization of the Great Lakes region occurred during Paleo-Indian period (ca. 11,500 - 10,000 B.P.). These nomadic hunters and gatherers lived in small bands following herds of large game animals such as caribou and mastodon. In addition to hunting, Paleo-Indians probably utilized a variety of plant species. It is from the end of this period, or the beginning of the next, that we see the first evidence of people inhabiting the Spencer Farm site.

The subsequent Archaic period is divided into Early (ca. 10,000 - 8,000 B. P.), Middle (ca. 8,000 - 5,000 B. P.) and Late (ca. 5,000 - 3,000 B. P.) periods. Archaic groups continued to be highly mobile, periodically moving in order to exploit seasonally available resources. Towards the end of the Late Archaic period, people in the Great Lakes region began experimenting with horticultural practices as is shown by the presence of wild *Cucurbita* (squash) at around 3840 B.P. at the Marquette Viaduct site in Bay County, Michigan, and domestic *Cucurbita* by around 2820 B.P. at the Green Point site in Saginaw County, Michigan (Monaghan et al. 2006).

The first use of fired-clay ceramics marks the beginning of the Woodland period in the Great Lakes region. Like the Archaic, the Woodland period is divided into Early (ca. 3,000 - 2100 B.P.), Middle (ca. 2,100 - 1,600 B.P.), and Late (ca. 1,600 - European contact) phases. The period from 600 B.P. until European contact is sometimes referred to as the Late Prehistoric Period. Throughout the Woodland period, mobility continued to decrease and cultigens such as squash, maize, and a variety of native seed plants became more important in the diet. By the latter part of the Late Woodland period permanent agricultural villages were established in many parts of the Great Lakes region.

The initial contact between Native Americans and Europeans marks the end of the Late Woodland period and the beginning of the Historic period. Between the 17th and 19th centuries, Native American groups living in what is now Michigan included the Ojibway (Chippewa), Sauk, Fox, Potawatami, Miami, and Ottawa (Cleland 1992; Tanner 1987). Historical records, as summarized by Mainfort (1979) and Tanner (1987), indicate that throughout the 18th century, the Saginaw region was occupied primarily by Northern Algonquin groups including Ottawa and Ojibway. By the late 18th century the Ojibway were the dominant Native American entity in the Saginaw Valley. France claimed much of the Great Lakes region in the 17th century. As a result

of the French and Indian War, in 1763 the area fell under British rule. The British period was relatively short-lived and by the end of the 18th century the United States had wrested control of much of the Great Lakes Region from the British.

The 1819 Treaty of Saginaw, negotiated between the United States and the Ojibway of Saginaw, ceded six million acres to the U.S. government and opened the Saginaw region to Euro-American settlement. Throughout the 1820s and 1830s, settlement proceeded at a slow pace and was primarily agrarian in nature. In 1822 a perception of lingering discontent among the local Ojibwa about the terms of the treaty and a wish to encourage further white settlement prompted the Federal Government to construct Fort Saginaw. The fort proved to be a short-lived installation; disease-ravaged troops were ordered to abandon the outpost in the autumn of 1823 (Mills 1918). According to Government Land Office records, the parcel including the Project Area came into private ownership when Norman Little received the Land Patent on October 1st, 1839. The Project Area was only a small part of the 3230.99 acres spread over five Townships in two Counties included in the Land Patent (BLM).

Project History

A portion of the Spencer Farm site was mined for sand in the 1950s leaving a pockmarked surface scarred by small ponds and pushed up piles. An Early Archaic lanceolate point, an even earlier Late Paleo-Indian Hi-Lo point, and several non-diagnostic prehistoric artifacts were found over the years in this disturbed area. Fortunately, a relatively undisturbed sand ridge and swale complex remains adjacent to the mined area. Designated as the Spencer Woods locale, this two acre (0.8 hectare) portion of the Spencer farm site was subject to a Phase I archaeological survey by the HSSC between 08 July and 09 September 2019 (Sommer 2019). Eighty-four shovel-test pits (STPs) were excavated and three clusters of three or more artifacts and one findspot were located (Figure 2). One cluster contained an Early Woodland biface and two FCR. A second cluster contained numerous sherds from at least one early Late Woodland ceramic vessel. The third cluster and the findspot contained non-diagnostic flaked stone artifacts. The cluster of early Late Woodland ceramics was selected as a location for the additional testing described in this report.

METHODS

Field Methods

A grid system was set up using the site datum established in 2019 for the shovel-test survey of the Spencer Woods locale (Sommer 2019). The site datum was assigned the arbitrary coordinates of 500N 500E. The grid system for the excavation units was laid out using a Brunton compass (-7 degrees declination), a CST/berger auto level, and a steel tape. An east/west transect line was shot in using the compass to shoot back to the site datum. The auto level was set up over point

500N 480E on this line and used to shoot in 485N 480E. The level was then moved to this new location and additional points were shot in at 485N 455E, 485N 450E, and 485N 448E. From this baseline, tapes and folding rulers were used to set up a 2X2 meter excavation block using the 485N 448E as the northwest corner and 485N 450E as the northeast corner. From this 2X2 meter block, tapes were used to lay out an additional baseline by establishing points at 484N 450E, 484N 448E, 484N 446E and 484N 444E. Measuring from this baseline, tapes and folding rulers were used to set up additional excavation units as needed. Although the same site datum was used for both the STP grid in 2019 and the test excavations in 2020, slight inaccuracies in laying out the grid each year resulted in a less than 100% correspondence. As a result, STP 64, located at 485N 449E on the 2019 grid, falls within unit 484N 449E on the 2020grid and STP 66, located at 484N 445E on the 2019 grid, falls within unit 483N 445E on the 2020 grid.

The basic unit of excavation was a one by one meter square labeled by the coordinates of the southwest corner. On two occasions, trees prevented excavation of the complete unit. Only the south half of unit 481N 446E and the west half of unit 482N 448E were excavated. Artifacts found *in situ* were plotted relative to the southwest corner of the excavation unit. One corner of each unit, generally the highest corner, was designated as the surface datum. Using a line level from the surface datum, all depth measurements for the unit were recorded as centimeters below surface (b.s.). Generally, the same surface datum was used for two or more adjacent units. The first level of each unit was either 0-10 cm or 0-15 cm depending on whether or not there was a >10 cm difference between the highest and lowest surface elevation in the unit. Subsequent levels were five centimeters thick and continued to a depth of at least 50 cm. If no cultural material was encountered in the 45-50 cm level, excavation was typically halted. If cultural material was present, excavation continued until a “sterile” level was reached. Unit 484N 449E, the first unit excavated, was an exception. To confirm a lack of material at greater depths (as the previous shovel-test survey indicated) and to expose the stratigraphy, it was excavated to a depth of 130 cm. Below 50 cm, the levels were 10 cm thick. General excavation material was screened through $^{1}/_{8}$” mesh hardware cloth. The only exception was the 10 cm thick deeper levels of 484N 449E, which were screened with $^{1}/_{4}$” mesh.

Excavation was accomplished primarily by shovel-skimming with flat-bladed shovels. Trowels were used to clean up the floor of each level and occasionally for general excavation. If they were found *in situ*, artifacts were plotted and bagged individually. Artifacts found in the screen were placed in a general level bag for each level. After completion of the first two units (484N 448-449E), each level was excavated in quarter sections. Counts of artifacts found in each quarter section were recorded, but artifacts continued to be bagged together in general level bags. Occasional discrepancies between the preliminary field counts and the final counts recorded in the artifact catalogue result from items misidentified in the field.

Excavation data, including information about soil characteristics, artifacts, excavation problems, etc., for each excavation level were recorded on standardized Square Level sheets. Additional information was recorded in the project director's field notes. Plotted artifacts and general level bags were assigned a Field Sample (F.S.) number. The F.S. numbers were assigned sequentially as samples were collected. They serve as a redundant record of provenience information to guard against accidental loss of this important data. Representative wall profiles and floor plans were drawn on graph paper and were recorded with digital photographs.

Five small soil samples (S.S.) were taken from the south wall of unit 480N 446E near the west edge of the wall. Each sample was removed using the end of a margin trowel and measured approximately 5X1X1 cm. Measuring from the surface datum for the unit, the samples were taken at the following depths: S.S. 1 - 6 cm; S.S. 2 - 11 cm; S.S. 3 - 23 cm; S.S. 4 - 40 cm; and S.S. 5 - 48 cm. These samples are not included in the artifact catalogue.

Laboratory Methods

In the lab, stone, bone, and metal objects were washed using tap water and a toothbrush. Ceramics were simply brushed clean with a soft-bristled paintbrush. Unique catalogue numbers were assigned either to individual artifacts or groups of like artifacts from the same provenience. Artifacts from the Spencer Woods test excavations comprise Accession 2020.023 and include Catalogue Numbers 2020.023.001 through 2020.023.192.

ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

Excavation Characteristics

Previous shovel-testing at the Spencer Woods locale had revealed the presence of a cluster of early Late Woodland ceramics (Sommer 2019). To further sample this component, an excavation block consisting of 18 one by one meter excavation units and two 1 by 0.5 meter units was positioned around and between STPs 9, 64, and 66 (Figure 2). The surface at this location slopes down to the north and there is a difference in elevation of approximately 44 cm between the north and south edges of the excavation block. The south edge of the excavation block abuts a trail, which has been in use for at least several decades, perhaps substantially longer.

Soil profiles were similar across the entire excavation block. On average, the soil profiles consisted of a 3-4 cm thick, 10YR2/1 (black) to 10YR2/2 (very dark brown) root mat followed by a 7-9 cm thick A-horizon of 10YR3/2 (very dark grayish brown) fine sand and then a 7-15 cm thick mixed zone of 10YR3/2 (very dark grayish brown), 7.5YR4/6 (strong brown), and 10YR5/3 (brown) fine sand. This mixed zone appeared to have components of A, E, and B soil horizons. This zone graded into a 20-30 cm thick B-horizon consisting of a mix of 7.5YR4/6 and

10YR5/8 (yellowish brown) fine sand, which, in turn, graded into a B/C horizon of 10YR5/8 fine sand sometimes mottled with 7.5YR4/6 fine sand. In unit 484N 449E, which was excavated to a greater depth than the others, the zone of 10YR5/8 fine sand was 2 0-30 cm thick and graded into 10YR5/6 (yellowish brown) fine sand, which continued down to 130+ cm below the surface. This slight color change may have been due to increasing moisture with greater depth.

A total of 2275 objects were catalogued from the Spencer Woods test excavations in 2020. These objects include 1014 prehistoric items, 11 historic period items, four faunal remains that are likely relatively recent and of non-cultural origin, and 1246 floral remains. The floral remains include charcoal and partially burnt wood.

Prehistoric Period Artifacts

The Prehistoric Period assemblage from the Spencer Woods test excavations includes 962 ceramic sherds, 51 flaked stone artifacts, and one fire-cracked rock (FCR). The FCR is a small quartzite specimen weighing a mere 2.18g. It is fractured on all sides, suggesting multiple use episodes.

Flaked Stone

The flaked stone assemblage includes one biface, one retouched flake, and 49 unmodified flakes. The biface is a tip/blade fragment from a projectile point or knife made of Bayport chert (Figure 5). Slight wear/polish is visible on both faces near the tip and minor areas of rusty staining, or patina, are also present. The retouched flake is also made of Bayport chert (Figure 6). Unifacial retouch and edge-damage are present on the dorsal surface of both lateral edges of the flake. Extensive rusty staining/patina is present on both faces of the retouched flake. Wear/polish is present on each face, but is mostly absent from the lateral edges of the flake. The unmodified flake assemblage is comprised of 47 Bayport chert examples and two specimens identified as possibly Bayport chert. As a group, the flakes tend to be quite small (average weight = 0.16g). Indeed, it is likely that only 22 flakes would have been recovered using the standard ¼" mesh screen instead of the ⅛" mesh screen used here. Three flakes exhibit cortex on their striking platform. Twenty-seven of the 49 flakes (55%) exhibit light to moderate rusty staining and this characteristic becomes more prevalent with depth. Two of nine flakes (22%) from the 0-15 cm levels, 10 of 20 (50%) from the 15-30 cm levels, and 15 of 20 flakes (75%) from the 30-50 cm levels exhibit this characteristic. For the most part, flakes were clustered in the south/central portion of the excavation block (Figure 7). Unfortunately, none of the flaked stone artifacts is temporally diagnostic.

Figure 5: Biface tip.

Figure 6: Retouched flake.

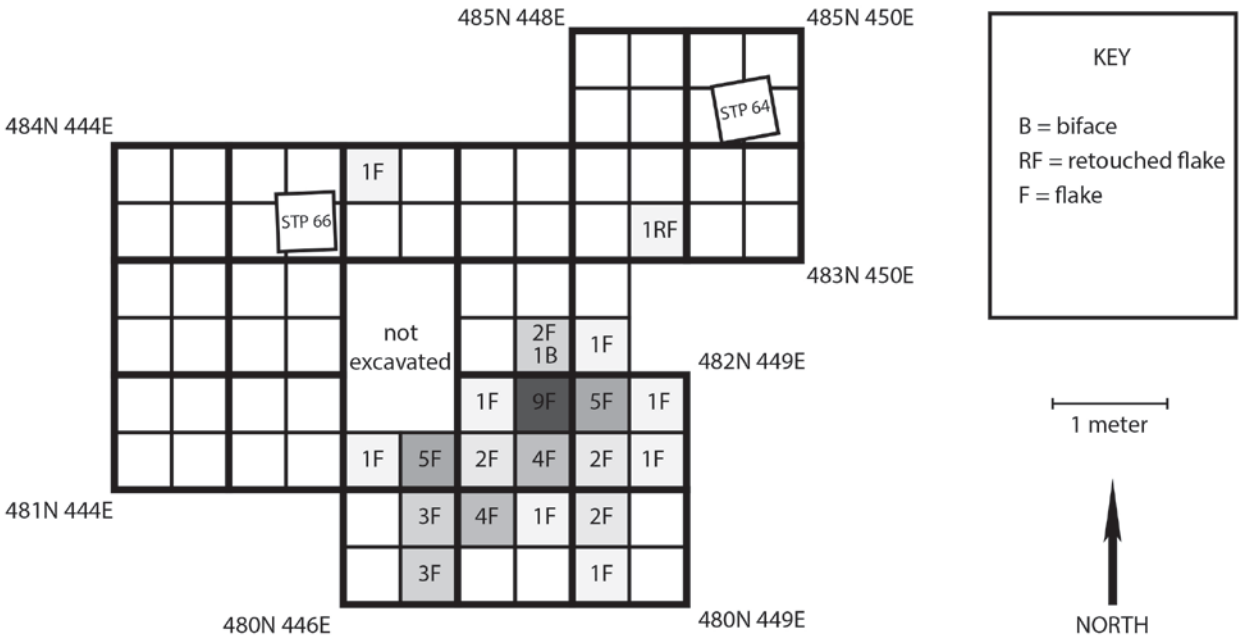

Figure 7: Flaked stone artifact distribution.

Ceramics

The excavated ceramic assemblage is comprised entirely of highly fragmented grit-tempered pottery. Of the 962 specimens recovered in the excavation units, only 88 (0.9%) are large or intact enough to analyze. The rest are sherdlets, defined here as pieces small enough to pass through a ½" mesh screen, or larger "destroyed" sherds in which the surface is missing. Of the analyzable sherds, 68 (77%) have a cord-roughened exterior surface, 19 (22%) have a smoothed-over cord-roughened exterior, and the surface of one (1%) is smoothed-over to the extent the original treatment cannot be determined. Only five sherds are decorated. Four have short, punctate-like, cord-wrapped stick impressions and one sherd has a cord impression (Figure 8). Analyzable rims were absent from the excavated assemblage, but five small rim sherdlets were recovered (Figure 8, top row, left).

The entire ceramic assemblage from the Spencer Woods locale, including ceramics recovered in shovel-tests in 2019, could be derived from a single vessel. Because more intact sherds were actually found in the shovel-tests, the following description of the vessel is based primarily on those specimens (Sommer 2019). Rim, neck, and body sherds show cord-roughened exterior surfaces, often with some degree of smoothing (Figure 9). The lip is decorated with oblique cord-wrapped stick impressions spaced 2.6-5.9 mm apart. The application of these impressions caused the lip to be pushed over/outward slightly. The neck is decorated with three rows of oval punctates/cord-wrapped stick impressions measuring 1.9-3.3 mm wide by 3.7-5.1 mm long. Irregular incised lines, possibly unintentional, are present between the upper and middle row of

punctates on one sherd. The vessel is quite thin, measuring 3.9 mm thick at 10 mm below the lip and 4.2 mm thick at 28 mm below the lip. The thickest body sherd is 5.9 mm thick. Although the paste has a distinctly silty feel, it does contain sand-sized particles and a moderate amount of crushed light and dark (granitic) temper, the largest pieces of which range from 3-4 mm across. Many sherds are exfoliated/split and there are no visible coil breaks. This vessel is an example of Fischer's (1972:182-185) “Saginaw Thin,” which is usually considered indistinguishable from early Late Woodland Wayne ware, in this case the type Wayne Decorated, Corded Punctate (Brashler 1981).

Figure 8: Selected ceramic sherds and sherdlets from excavation units.

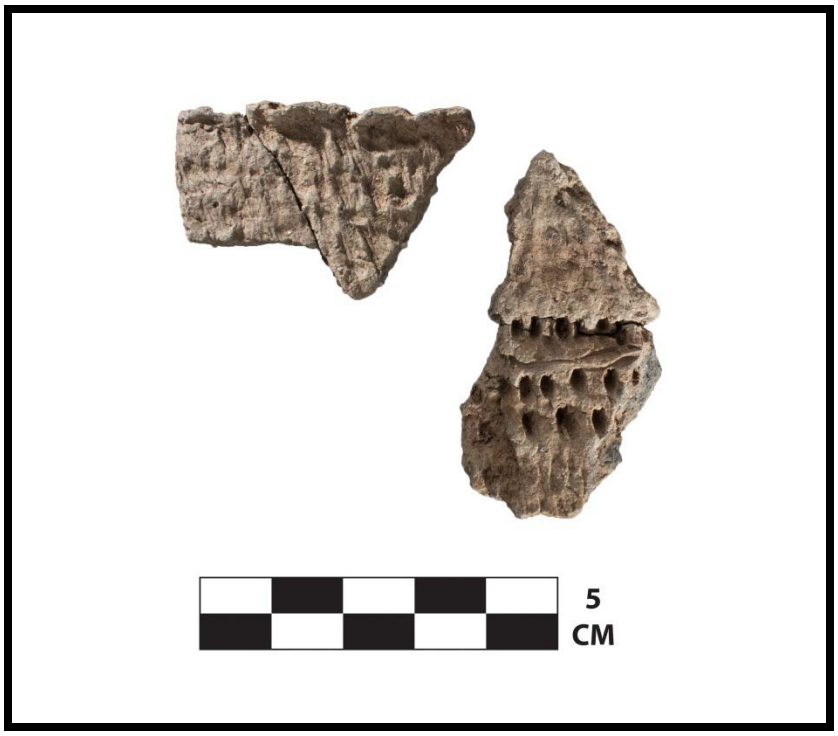

Figure 9: Ceramic sherds from STP 66.

Ceramics were not evenly distributed across the excavation block. Indeed, they were concentrated immediately around STP 64 and, especially, STP 66 (Figure 10). The fact that there appear to be two centers of ceramic concentration may indicate that more than one similar vessel is represented in the assemblage. This possibility is further bolstered by the fact that all of the cord-wrapped stick impressed sherds and all of the rim sherds and sherdlets were clustered around STP 66, while the only cord-impressed sherd came from the cluster around STP 64. On the other hand, the concentrations are only separated by approximately two meters and they may simply reflect where different portions of a single vessel were deposited.

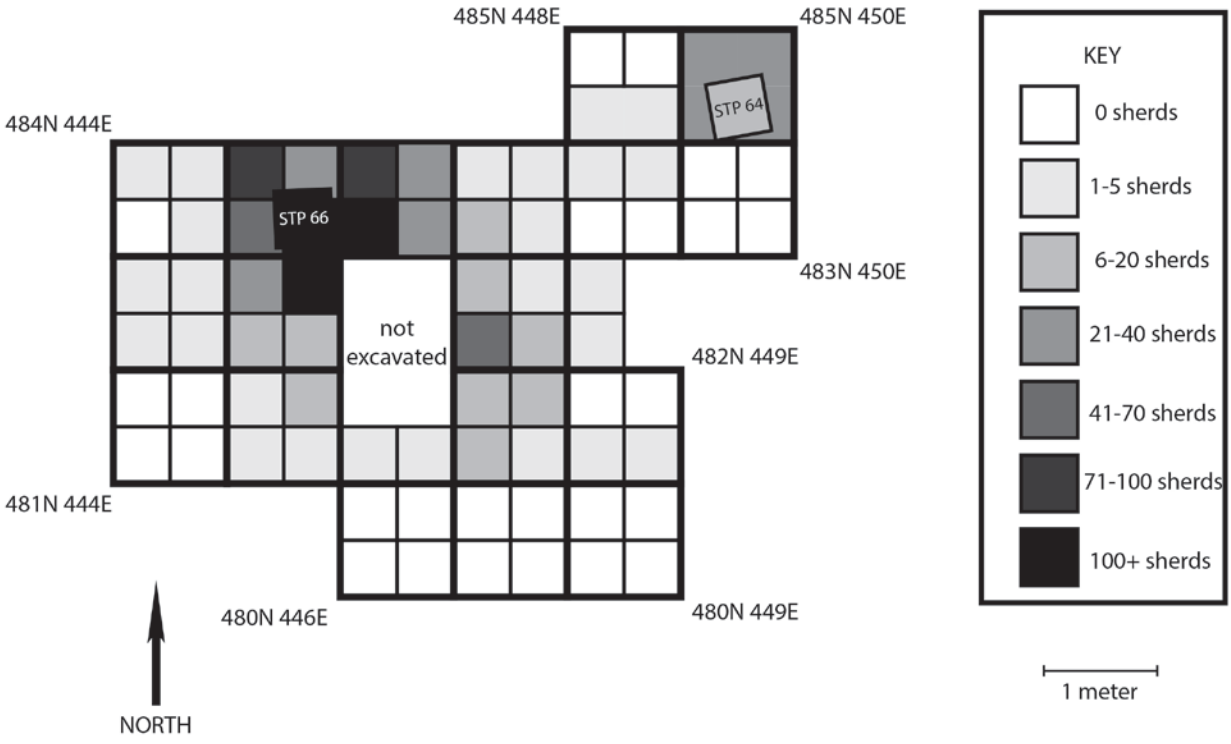

Figure 10: Ceramic distribution.

Historic Period Artifacts

Eleven Historic Period items were recovered in the test excavations at Spencer Woods, all of which are related to ammunition (Figures 11 and 12). One specimen is the brass head from a 16-gauge shotgun cartridge stamped [WINCHESTER REPEATER]. According to at least one website this style of cartridge was in use between 1896 and 1938, with a most likely period of use between 1920 and 1927 (Anon). The rest of the assemblage includes one complete .22 caliber cartridge, two empty .22 caliber shells, three .22 caliber bullets, without shells, and four lead shot. The complete cartridge is a "long rifle" style with a brass shell and a copper-plated lead bullet. The head is stamped [SUPER X]. The two empty shells are copper and both are stamped [U]. One of the bullets is copper-plated lead. The other two, one of which is deformed from having been fired, are lead. These artifacts likely represent episodic hunting that occurred during the 20th century. The presence of several "tree stands/blinds" on the property, including one in the Spencer Woods project area, indicates that such practices continue to the present day.

Figure 11: Historic Period artifacts.

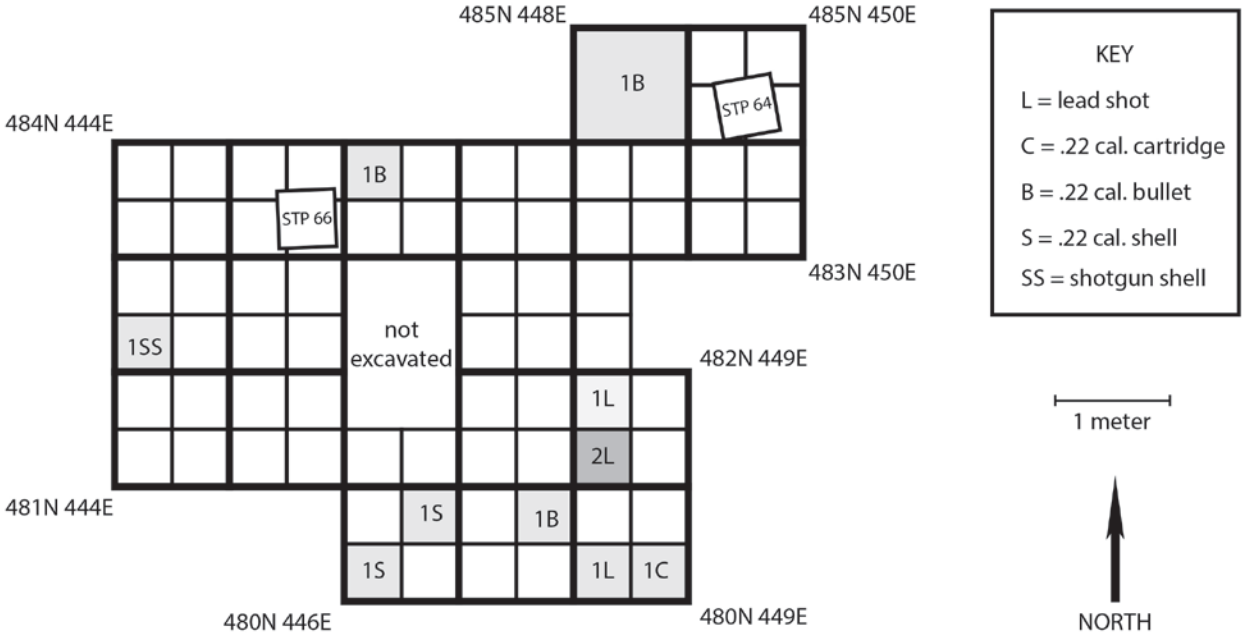

Figure 12: Historic Period artifact distribution.

Faunal Remains

In addition to the Prehistoric and Historic Period artifacts described above, four medium (duck-size) bird bone fragments were found. The specimens include two femur fragments, one vertebra, and one carpometacarpus. The excavation units where these fragmentary bones were found are located less than 10 meters from a large white pine (*Pinus strobus*) tree, which, according to the landowner, has been a favored roost for a great horned owl in recent years (B. Spencer pers. comm. July 2019). These bones could be the disaggregated remnants of an owl pellet. In any case, the bones appear to be of relatively recent origin and are unlikely to be related to the prehistoric component(s) at the site.

Floral Remains

The 1246 floral remains from the Spencer Woods excavations include completely charred, partially charred, and unburnt wood and other organic material. Non-wood charcoal in the assemblage includes three unidentified seeds and six root/tuber fragments. Charcoal may be derived from hearths/fire pits or other intentional burning during the Prehistoric or Historic periods, or from wildfires. The unburnt and partially charred wood fragments in the assemblage are likely derived from burnt and/or rotted stumps and roots.

DISCUSSION

Test excavations were initiated at the Spencer Woods locale in 2020 with hopes of learning more about the nature of a previously identified early Late Woodland component and how it articulates with recent models of regional cultural systems for the period. As currently understood, the early Late Woodland (Northeastern Wayne Tradition) inhabitants of the Saginaw Valley (ca. A.D. 600 to 1000) were primarily hunter-gatherer-fishers who followed a seasonal round little changed from their Late Archaic predecessors, spending spring through fall transitioning through sites in the central valley and near the lakeshore and spending fall and winters hunting in more upland areas around the Shiawassee Flats and outer fringe of the valley (Brashler et al. 2000; Brashler and Holman 1985; Holman and Brashler 1999; Lovis 1985). The system was flexible and there were locations, especially in the central valley, where settlement could occur at any time of year. These year-round residents of the Saginaw Valley were the makers of Wayne Ware ceramics and were practitioners of the Wayne Mortuary complex (Halsey and Brashler 2013).

The excavated assemblage from the Spencer Woods locale contains evidence for a small number of activities related to food acquisition and preparation and to tool maintenance and manufacture. The biface fragment may be evidence that hunting related activities occurred at, or near, the site. It may also be evidence of tool maintenance and production. The retouched flake may be

indicative of tool production, or it may indicate cutting or scraping associated with processing materials. The unmodified flakes are evidence for tool production and maintenance activities. Unfortunately, these flaked-stone items are not temporally diagnostic. The fact that the flakes and tools made of Bayport chert exhibit variable amounts of staining/patina that increases with depth may be an indication that multiple components are represented by the lithic assemblage.

Only one FCR was recovered in the test excavations. It is a small, heavily fractured specimen indicating multiple episodes of use. It is obviously one of several fragments that must have been produced by the fracturing of a larger cobble and it is curious that no other pieces were found. Its occurrence in the assemblage is evidence of the (probably repeated) use of fire for heating, cooking, or stone boiling and it suggests the presence of a nearby hearth. The presence of FCR indicates at least a brief stop-over at this location by one or more individuals rather than just an artifact dropped by someone passing through.

Ceramics are the only temporally diagnostic prehistoric artifacts recovered in the test excavations. All of the grit-tempered sherds (and sherdlets) from the test excavations, as well as those from STP 9, STP 64, and STP 66 dug in 2019, could be derived from a single early Late Woodland Wayne ware vessel. Wayne ceramics were produced in the Saginaw Valley beginning at least in the seventh century A.D. and continuing into the twelfth century A.D. (Lovis 1990). Ceramics usually represent food preparation or storage activities. They, too, could suggest the presence of a nearby hearth. If the sherds are all from a single vessel, they may simply represent an accidental pot breakage by an individual just passing through the area. Or, especially if more than one vessel is present, they could reflect a brief period of occupation by an individual or small group.

Small scale, low-density archaeological sites, or artifact clusters within larger site areas, are critical for understanding cultural systems in which at least a portion of the settlement system is characterized by short-term occupation of locales by individuals or small groups. Because of their low visibility, such sites are often difficult to locate on the landscape and thus, these portions of past settlement systems are rarely investigated archaeologically. The short duration of the occupation(s) and limited types of activities conducted at the sites mean that relatively few artifacts or features are available for interpretation and the sites are often difficult, or impossible, to place in a temporal framework. On the other hand, the archaeological signatures that are present will be less likely to be a result of mixed assemblages from different activity sets or time periods. Unfortunately, this latter statement is not necessarily true for the portion of the Spencer Woods locale excavated to date. The ceramic and lithic artifacts recovered in the test excavations were found at depths ranging from within, or just below, the root mat at the surface, down to depths of 40-45 cm for ceramics and 45-50 cm for lithics. Given the lack of stratigraphy, it is not clear whether the vertical distribution of artifacts is due to multiple periods of occupation, bioturbation or other post-depositional mixing, or both.

As a whole, the prehistoric assemblage represents one or more short-term occupations by an individual or small group. At least one occupation is assignable to the early Late Woodland Period. The assemblage is compatible with a fall or winter hunting camp as predicted by the regional model of early Late Woodland cultural systems outlined above, but, in the absence of any seasonality or subsistence data, it offers little direct support for the model.

The presence at the Spencer Woods locale of spatially separated artifact clusters containing diagnostic Early Woodland, early Late Woodland and non-diagnostic prehistoric material is significant. Despite a lack of features in the area excavated to date, the presence of FCR in both the Early Woodland and early Late Woodland clusters suggests the possibility that associated cooking hearths may be located nearby. Such features often contain a wealth of information including evidence for subsistence practices and season of occupation and material suitable for radiocarbon dating.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Surface collected artifacts from the Spencer Farm site (20SA1374) span much local prehistory. The collection includes diagnostic late Paleo-Indian, Early and later Archaic, and Woodland Period types. Some of the earliest artifacts were found in a portion of the site that was heavily impacted by sand mining in the 1950s. In 2019 the HSSC conducted a Phase I archaeological survey of an approximately two acre (0.8 hectare) sand ridge and swale area referred to here as Spencer Woods. An Early Woodland biface, sherds from at least one early Late Woodland ceramic vessel, and other non-diagnostic prehistoric items were recovered. A mid-20th century shotgun cartridge and several non-cultural faunal remains were also found.

The current project was initiated to explore the nature and extent of the early Late Woodland component and how it relates to regional cultural systems. An excavation block, totaling 19 square meters, uncovered additional early Late Woodland (Wayne Tradition) ceramics, non-diagnostic flaked stone artifacts, and 20th century hunting items. The lack of clear stratigraphy, cultural features, and additional diagnostic artifact types hampers an assessment of the association between the ceramic and lithic artifacts from the site. Although it is probable that at least some of the unmodified flakes are associated with the early Late Woodland component, an undetermined, earlier, component may also be present.

Together, the evidence from the Phase I survey and test excavations, as well as the landowner's surface collection, indicate the Spencer Woods locale saw sporadic, low density, short term occupations during the late Paleoindian, Early Archaic, Early Woodland, early Late Woodland, and perhaps other portions of the prehistoric period. The spatially, and perhaps temporally,

discrete artifact clusters identified at the Spencer Woods locale have potential to yield information pertaining to portions of settlement and other cultural systems rarely investigated by archaeologists. Additional testing is warranted.

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