

**The Spencer Woods Project:
a Phase I Archaeological Survey of a
Portion of the Spencer Farm Site
(20SA1374)**

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ABSTRACT

Between 08 July 2019 and 09 September 2019, the Historical Society of Saginaw County, Inc.* conducted a Phase I archaeological survey in a portion of the Spencer Farm site (20SA1374) in Bridgeport Township, Saginaw County, Michigan. The shovel-test survey was confined to an approximately two acre (0.8 hectare) area referred to here as Spencer Woods. Eighty-four shovel-test pits (STPs) were excavated at approximately 10 meter intervals, with STPs spaced at five meter intervals around positive STPs. One Early Woodland biface, sherds from at least one early Late Woodland ceramic vessel, and other non-diagnostic prehistoric material were recovered.

*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). It is a multicomponent site represented by artifacts collected over a several decade period from a 40 acre (16.2 hectare) farm. The farm collection contains artifacts dating from the late Paleo-Indian/Early Archaic Period through the Historic Period. An Early Archaic Eden-like lanceolate point from the site was previously reported (Spencer 2010). A portion of the farm was mined for sand in the 1950s leaving a pockmarked surface scarred by small ponds and pushed up piles. The 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 area consisting of a sand ridge and swale complex and a natural swamp/marsh remains adjacent to the mined area. Our interest was piqued by the possibility that Late Paleo-Indian/Early Archaic components might be present in the ridges adjacent to the marsh. Any intact archaeological deposits would be significant. Given the paucity of their presence in the Saginaw Valley, a Paleo-Indian or Early Archaic component especially so. Therefore, the opportunity to test the area was deemed worth pursuing.

Between 08 July 2019 and 09 September 2019, the Historical Society of Saginaw County, Inc. conducted a Phase I archaeological survey in a portion of the Spencer Farm site (20SA1374). The shovel-test survey was confined to an approximately two acre (0.8 hectare) sand ridge and swale area referred to here as Spencer Woods. Eighty-four shovel-test pits (STPs) were excavated at approximately 10 meter intervals, with STPs spaced at approximately five meter intervals around positive STPs (Figure 2). One Early Woodland biface, sherds from at least one early Late Woodland ceramic vessel, and other non-diagnostic prehistoric material were recovered. A 0.5 X 10 meter area slated to be impacted by the installation of a drainage trench in the northwest corner of the site was tested in 2014. Non-diagnostic prehistoric material including FCR, flakes, and cores and late 19th through 20th century historic material was recovered during that project (Sommer 2015).

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 Spencer Woods project area was assigned to Accession 2019.020 and includes Catalogue Numbers 2019.020.001 through 2019.020.018.

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. Bernie and Flossy were generous hosts and even provided a delicious lunch on one occasion! In addition to the Project Director, fieldwork was conducted by

Nick Bacon, Josh Badour, Cal Borden, Chris Douglas, Kiersten Frankowiak, Brad Jarvis, Ken Kosidlo, and Andy Stachowiak.



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

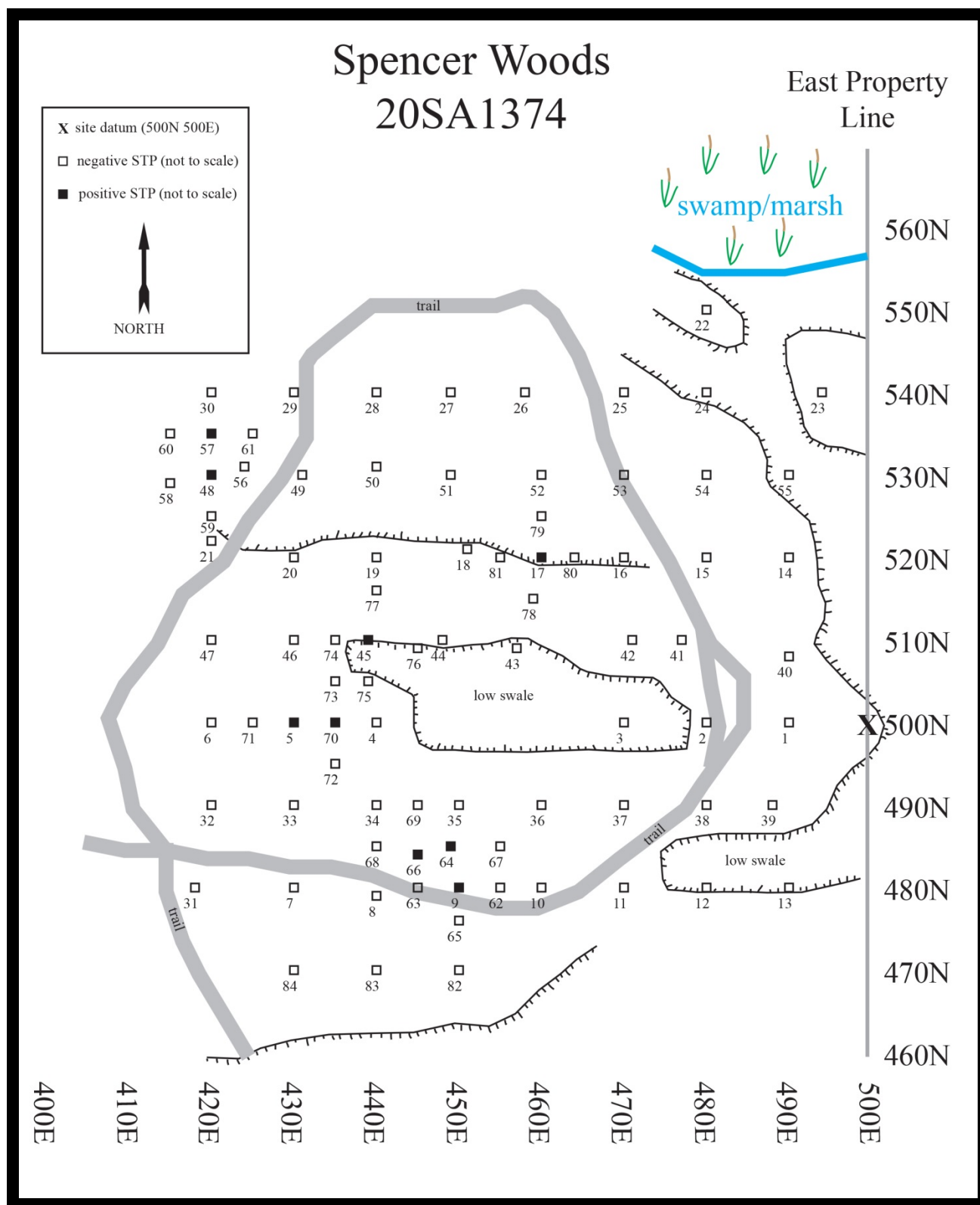


Figure 2: Site Map.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

Environment

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 mostly classified as Pipestone sand (soil code 31A) with a small amount of Granby fine sand (soil code 33) also present (Jaquinta 1994). Lower elevation areas at the north end of the Spencer Farm site are comprised of Covert sand (soil code 58B) (Jaquinta 1994). The present surface elevation in the Spencer Woods project area is between 185.3 meters above mean sea level (608’amsl) and 188.4 meters amsl (618’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). Consequently, this landform 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 (*Sagittaria 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).

METHODS

Field Methods

After walking over the site and determining, based on surface indications, which area appeared to be (relatively) undisturbed, the first order of business was to set up a grid. The east property line for the Spencer Farm site is marked with green metal stakes with white tops. The property line cuts through the west edge of the 2.2 acre swamp/marsh (most of the swamp/marsh is west of the Spencer Farm site and the Spencer Woods project area). The fifth property line stake south of the swamp/marsh was selected as the site datum and assigned the arbitrary coordinates of 500N 500E. The datum stake is 56 meters south of the south edge of the swamp/marsh. An east/west transect line was shot in using a Brunton compass (-7 degrees declination), a CST/berger auto level, and a steel tape. Flags were placed every 10 meters from 500N 510E to 500N 530E. From this baseline the auto level and steel tape were used to lay out an additional east/west transect from 480N 490E to 480N 430E and a north/south transect from 480N 490E to 520N 490E. All additional transects and shovel test locations were measured by pulling a steel tape between these points that were shot in with the auto level.

An STP was excavated at each flagged location along a transect (every 10 meters) unless trees, roots, obvious disturbance, or other obstacles were in the way. In such cases the STP would be offset one or more meters in whichever cardinal direction permitted avoidance of the obstacle. STPs 500N 450E and 500N 460E were not excavated because they were situated in the midst of a low, wet swale. STPs were 50 cm square and were dug in 10 cm levels. All sediment was screened through ¼ inch mesh hardware cloth. The 0-10 cm level of each STP included the root

mat/humus layer, which generally was left intact and replaced after backfilling the STP. Material from each 10 cm level was bagged and the bags were labeled with the appropriate provenience information (i.e. Spencer Woods, STP #, grid coordinates of the southwest corner, and depth), date, and the names of the excavators. Information about each level, including a description of the soil and contents, was recorded on standardized Shovel-Test forms. At least one wall of each STP was photographed. Soil colors were recorded using a Munsell Soil Color Chart.

STPs 1-31, located along the 480N, 500N, 520N, and 540N transects, were excavated down to 100 cm unless the water table prevented going that deep. After completing these transects and finding no artifacts deeper than 30 cm and no evidence of buried former land surfaces, we concluded there was no need to continue going so deep. STPs 32-84, located along the 470N, 490N, 510N, and 530N transects, as well as discretionary tests, were only excavated to a depth of 50 cm.

Laboratory Methods

In the lab, stone and metal artifacts 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 project comprise Accession 2019.020 and include Catalogue Numbers 2019.020.001 through 2019.020.018.

ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

One hundred and fifty-two objects were recovered from the 84 STPs excavated in the Spencer Woods project area. These objects include 138 prehistoric items, one historic period item, and 13 faunal remains that are likely relatively recent and of non-cultural origin. In addition, at least a few (in some cases many) small charcoal fragments were noted in every STP. The charcoal fragments were neither counted, nor saved. Only STPs with prehistoric items are indicated as “positive” on Figure 2. In the soil profile descriptions presented below, soil colors are described using Munsell Soil Chart terminology.

Prehistoric Period Artifacts

The Prehistoric Period assemblage from the Spencer Woods STPs includes 131 ceramic sherds, two bifaces, one retouched flake, two unmodified flakes, and two fire-cracked rocks (FCR). These artifacts were distributed across the project area in three clusters of three or more objects and one isolated find. The clusters are comprised of two or three positive STPs spaced less than 15 meters apart and separated from the other clusters or isolated find by more than 15 meters. Material will be discussed by cluster/isolated find moving from north to south.

The first cluster of prehistoric artifacts includes material from STP 48 (530N 420E) and STP 57 (535N 420E). It is in a relatively low-lying area with numerous small hummocks. It is possible that the general area was disturbed by sand mining operations or other activities. The soil profile in STP 48 appears relatively undisturbed with a four centimeter thick root mat followed by an A-horizon of 10YR2/2 (very dark brown) fine sand mixed with 10YR4/2 (dark grayish brown) fine sand down to 10 cm; a B-horizon of 10YR4/4 (dark yellowish brown) fine sand from 10-18 cm; and a mixed/mottled layer of 10YR6/4 (light yellowish brown), 10YR5/4 (yellowish brown), and 10YR4/4 fine sand down to 50+ cm (Figure 5). The soil profile in STP 57 is quite different and probably heavily disturbed. It consists of an eight centimeter thick root mat followed by an A-horizon of 10YR3/2 (very dark grayish brown) fine sand down to 16 cm and a zone of mixed 10YR4/3 (brown/dark brown), 10YR5/3 (brown), and 10YR3/2 fine sand down to 50+ cm (Figure 6).



Figure 5: STP 48, south wall.



Figure 6: STP 57, north wall.

Artifacts found in the first cluster include a stemmed biface from the 20-30 cm level of STP 48 and two FCR, which refit, from the 20-30 cm level of STP 57. The FCR weigh a combined total of 143.15 g. The biface, which is made of an unidentified (probably pebble) chert, exhibits a slightly expanding stem with light grinding on the lateral edges and an impact fracture on the tip (Figure 7). Metrics for the biface are: length – 37.01+ mm, width – 19.32 mm, thickness – 5.83 mm, stem length – 7.76 mm, stem width – 14.11 mm, and weight – 3.93 g. Although the flaking on this specimen is more refined and the stem is shorter and less heavily ground than is typical, this biface most closely resembles Early Woodland Kramer Points (Justice 1987:184-186). Kramer points are known from a number of sites in the region, perhaps most prominently at the Schultz site (Fitting 1972; Ozker 1982).



Figure 7: Stemmed Biface from STP 48.



Figure 8: STP 17, south wall.

The isolated find consists of a single biface preform fragment found in the 20-30 cm level of STP 17 (520N 460E). This STP is located on the downslope on the north side of the low east/west trending ridge that crosses the center of the Spencer Woods project area. The soil profile in STP 17 includes a 5 cm thick root mat followed by an A-horizon of 10YR2/2 (very dark brown) fine sand from 5-15 cm; a B-horizon of 7.5YR4/6 (strong brown) fine sand from 15-36 cm; a leached zone (E-horizon?) of 10YR6/3 (pale brown) fine sand from 36-55 cm 10YR5/2 (grayish brown) fine sand from 55-83 cm; and another B-horizon of 10YR5/6 (yellowish brown) fine sand from 83-100+ cm (Figure 8). Unfortunately, the biface fragment, which is made of Bayport chert, is not temporally diagnostic (Figure 9).

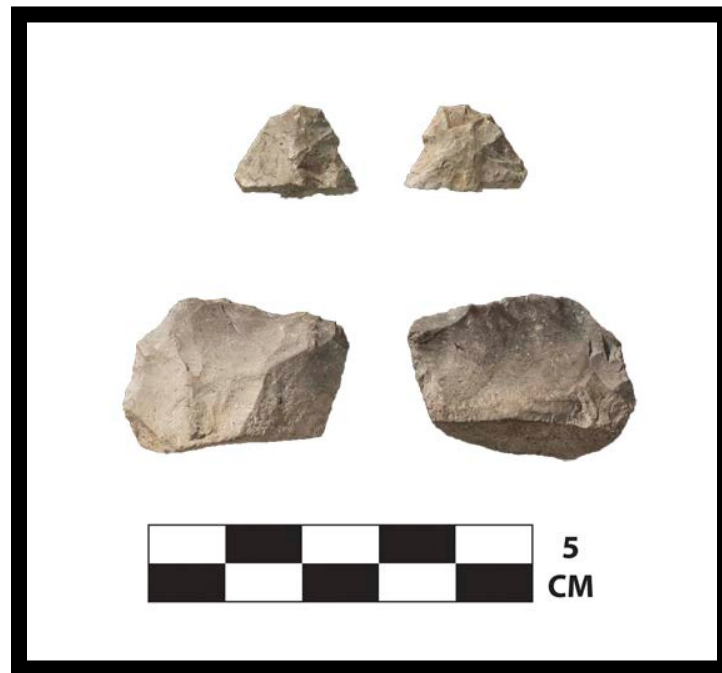


Figure 9: Biface Preform from STP 17, top row; and Retouched Flake/Bipolar Core from STP 5, bottom row.



Figure 10: STP5, north wall.



Figure 11: STP 45, south wall.

The second cluster of prehistoric material includes a retouched flake found in STP 5 (500N 430E) and one flake each found in STP 45 (510N 439E) and STP 70 (500N 435E). They are situated on relatively low ground with ridges rising slightly to the north and significantly to the south. The soil profiles of STPs 5 and 70 are quite similar to each other, but dissimilar to STP 45 (Figure 10). STPs 5 and 70 do not show a distinct E-horizon as is seen in STP 45. Instead, they show a 4-7 cm thick root mat followed by an 11 cm thick A-horizon of 10YR3/2 (very dark grayish brown) fine sand (mixed with 10YR2/1 and 10YR3/4 fine sand in STP 70) and a B-horizon consisting of 11-25 cm of 7.5YR4/6 (strong brown) fine sand. The B-horizon continues in STP 5 as a mix of 10YR5/6 (yellowish brown) and 10YR6/4 (light yellowish brown) fine sand down to 100+ cm and in STP 70 as 10YR5/8 (yellowish brown) fine sand down to 50+ cm. The soil profile of STP 45 includes a 4 cm thick root mat followed by an A-horizon of 10YR2/2 (very dark brown) fine sand from 4-11 cm; an E-horizon of 10YR6/3 (pale brown) fine sand from 11-25 cm; and a B-horizon of 7.5YR3/4 (strong brown) fine sand from 25-40 cm and a 10YR5/6 (yellowish brown) fine sand from 40-50+ cm (Figure 11).

The unifacially retouched flake found in STP 5 is made on a Bayport chert decortication flake/shatter that has been split using bipolar reduction (Figure 9). Thus, it could also be classified as a bipolar core/spall with unifacial retouch. It was probably used as a scraper. The two flakes, both complete and weighing 0.20 g and 0.12 g, are also made of Bayport chert. None of the tools from this cluster are temporally diagnostic.



Figure 12: STP 9, south wall.

The third and final cluster of prehistoric material includes 131 grit-tempered ceramic sherds found in STP 9 (480N 450E), STP 64 (485N 449E), and STP 66 (484N 445E). These STPs are located at, or near, the highest elevation in the project area. The soil profile for these three STPs is remarkably similar, consisting of a thin 3-4 cm root mat followed by a 7-9 cm thick A-horizon of 10YR3/2 (very dark grayish brown) fine sand and then a fine sand B-horizon ranging from 7.5YR4/6 (strong brown) or 10YR5/8 (yellowish brown) to 10YR6/4 (light yellowish brown) or 10YR6/6 (brownish yellow) down to 50+ cm (100+ cm in STP 9) (Figure 12).

One small sherd was found in the 10-20 cm level of STP 9. STP 64 yielded three sherds from the 0-10 cm level, three sherds from the 10-20 cm level, and one sherd from the 20-30 cm level. Finally, STP 66 yielded 26 sherds from the 0-10 cm level, 71 sherds from the 10-20 cm level, 22 sherds from the 20-30 cm level, and four sherds from the 30-40 cm level. It is quite possible that all of the sherds from these three STPs are derived from a single vessel. Rim, neck, and body sherds all show cord-roughened exterior surfaces (Figure 13). 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," now considered indistinguishable from early Late Woodland Wayne ware, specifically the type Wayne Decorated Corded Punctate (Brashler 1981).



Figure 13: Ceramic sherds from STP 66.

Historic Period Artifact

The only Historic Period item recovered in the STP survey at Spencer Woods is the brass/copper head from a 12-gauge shotgun cartridge found in the 0-10 cm level of STP 43 (509N 457E). The cartridge head is corroded, but appears to be stamped [REMINGTON] and [EXPRESS]. According to at least one website this style of cartridge was in use between 1944 and 1961 (Anon). This artifact likely represents 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.

Faunal Remains

In addition to the Prehistoric and Historic Period artifacts described above, 13 small/medium mammal bone fragments were found in the upper levels of STP 34 (490N 440E), 10 in the 0-10 cm level and three in the 10-20 cm level. Identified specimens from the 0-10 cm level include one vertebra, one right maxilla, one right mandible and one ilium/acetabulum fragment from a cottontail rabbit (*Sylvilagus floridanus*); and one left mandible and one right mandible from a Norway rat (*Rattus norvegicus*). Two conjoining right proximal femur fragments from a cottontail rabbit were identified from the 10-20 cm level. None of the bone fragments are burnt and they all appear to be relatively recent. STP 34 is located directly beneath 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 are almost certainly the disaggregated remnants of an owl pellet. Although interesting, they are not considered to be archaeologically significant.

DISCUSSION

Artifacts recovered in the 84 STPs excavated at the Spencer Woods locale of the Spencer Farm site are indicative of sporadic use of the area by small numbers of people over a span of roughly a millennium or more. Of the 152 objects recovered from the STPs, 13 are faunal remains, likely of relatively recent and of non-cultural origin, one is a shotgun cartridge from the mid-20th century, and 138 date to the prehistoric period. Of this last group, 131 are ceramic sherds and seven are lithic artifacts including a stemmed biface, a biface preform fragment, one retouched flake, two unmodified flakes, and two FCR.

The earliest identified period of occupation/use of the Spencer Woods locale is the Early Woodland period. The stemmed Kramer-like point found in STP 48 is diagnostic for the period in Michigan, particularly the Schultz and Eidson Phases of the Early Woodland dating from roughly 700 B.C. to 200 B.C. (Garland and Beld 1999). The point probably functioned as an atlatl “dart” point, but may also have been used as a knife. The impact fracture on the tip of the projectile point may have occurred while hunting at, or near, the site. The damaged tip would appear to be easily reworked, so it seems unlikely the point would have been intentionally discarded. The two FCR found five meters away, in STP 57, are likely associated with this projectile point. FCR are evidence of the (probably repeated) use of fire for heating, cooking, or stone boiling. Their presence suggests the location of a nearby hearth. They indicate at least a brief stop-over at this location by one or more individuals rather than just a dropped artifact by someone passing through.

The next period of occupation we can confidently identify at the Spencer Woods locale is the early Late Woodland. The combined 131 grit-tempered ceramic sherds from STP 9, STP 64, and STP 66 could all be derived from a single 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). If the sherds are, indeed, all from a single vessel, they may simply represent an accidental pot breakage by an individual just passing through the area. Alternatively, they may be remnants from a brief period of occupation by an individual or small group. If multiple vessels are present in the assemblage, the latter possibility is likely. Ceramics usually represent food preparation or storage activities. However, food storage seems unlikely in an area with such limited evidence for occupation.

The biface preform fragment and unmodified flakes are evidence for occasional tool production and curation activities. The retouched flake, which is made on a bipolar core, may be indicative of tool production, or, possibly, cutting or scraping associated with processing unidentified materials. Unfortunately, these items are not temporally diagnostic and they are spatially distinct from the Early Woodland and early Late Woodland materials identified at the site. It is impossible to say whether they are associated with one of the identified Woodland components, or with other components/time periods.

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 occupation and limited types of activities conducted at the sites mean that relatively few artifacts or features are available for interpretation. 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.

The presence at the Spencer Woods locale of spatially separated artifact clusters containing diagnostic Early Woodland and early Late Woodland material is significant. The presence of FCR in the Early Woodland cluster suggests the possibility that an associated cooking hearth may be located nearby. Such features often contain a wealth of information including evidence for subsistence practices and season of occupation. Unfortunately, much of the immediate area, including the soil profile of the STP in which the FCR were found, appears to be disturbed and it is quite possible that the hearth has been destroyed. The cluster of early Late Woodland ceramics also has potential to yield additional information. Given their frequent use in cooking, the presence of ceramics may likewise indicate the existence of a nearby hearth or other features.

The late Paleo-Indian and Early Archaic artifacts found in areas immediately adjacent to the Spencer Woods locale were a major impetus to starting the project. It is disappointing, but perhaps unsurprising, that no artifacts diagnostic of these early periods were recovered in our testing. Even if present in an area, such components are expected to be extremely low-density, especially in regards to diagnostic artifacts, and could easily be missed with a shovel-testing strategy. Furthermore, we did not discern any evidence for buried former land surfaces in our STPs. It is possible that components associated with earlier land surfaces are present in the Spencer Woods locale, but they are more deeply buried than we were able to test.

CONCLUSIONS

An extant surface collection from the Spencer Farm site (20SA1374) contains artifacts spanning much of the local Prehistoric period including a late Paleo-Indian Hi-Lo point, an Early Archaic Eden-like lanceolate point, several Early Archaic bifurcate points and a number of later Archaic, Woodland and non-diagnostic artifacts. Some of the earliest artifacts were found in a portion of the site that was heavily impacted by sand mining in the 1950s. The current project was initiated to see if additional early components could be located in a relatively undisturbed area adjacent to the mining operations.

Between 08 July 2019 and 09 September 2019, the Historical Society of Saginaw County, Inc. conducted a Phase I archaeological survey in a portion of the Spencer Farm site. The shovel-test survey was confined to an approximately two acre (0.8 hectare) sand ridge and swale area referred to here as Spencer Woods. Eighty-four shovel-test pits (STPs) were excavated at approximately 10 meter intervals, with STPs spaced at approximately five meter intervals around positive STPs.

Although no late Paleo-Indian or Early Archaic components were identified, one 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 evidence indicates the Spencer Woods locale saw sporadic, low density, short term occupations during the Early Woodland, early Late Woodland, and perhaps other portions of the prehistoric period. The temporally discrete artifact clusters identified at the Spencer Woods locale have potential to yield information pertaining to portions of settlement systems rarely investigated by archaeologists. Additional testing is therefore warranted.

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