Abstract

The AAL conducted Phase I archaeological survey the proposed construction of a new marina near Saugatuck, Michigan in an area potentially including portions of the Village of Singapore (20AE619). Singapore represented an early Michigan lumber and mill town that contained a number of residences, multiple saw mills, a company store, a ‘wilkan’ bank, warehouse, town hall, a cemetery, and a hotel/boarding house. The village was occupied between 1837 and 1896. The investigation included 17.8 acres of GPR, shovel testing, and auger testing yielding hundreds of artifacts and dozens of features. Most historic artifacts and features are interpreted as representing the remains of Singapore. Several areas retained intact and NRHP eligible deposits. We present the results and preservation initiatives that resulted from this project.

Background

The Village of Singapore was quite successful until the late 19th C. when it was abandoned due to the northern movement of the lumber industry, and possibly as a result of environmental degradation. A modern legend that has persisted that Singapore was ‘buried by shifting sands’ (e.g., Lane 1994; Kidorf et al., 2010; Royce 2007). There remains a common belief that buildings associated with Singapore remain partially intact beneath modern sand dunes, despite historical evidence that indicates that most buildings were deconstructed and moved to nearby towns such as St. Ignace, Holland, or Saugatuck, Michigan (Walz and McGowan 2017:19).

Methods

Phase I investigations for the Marina and Laydown areas involved a range of approaches including shovel testing, bucket augering, cut-bank inspection, walkover, ground penetrating radar (GPR) survey, and ground-truth units used to investigate GPR anomalies. A total of 84 2m x 3 m ground truth trenches were excavated via backhoe.

Results

The results of shovel testing and general walkover failed to identify any prehistoric or historic artifacts within the Laydown area. In the Marina area 50 of the 167 shovel test probes were positive for historic artifacts and a single prehistoric/protolithic artifact. GPR survey and post-processing identified 89 strong-case GPR anomalies suspected to potentially represent cultural features or artifact bearing deposits. Two pit features were located, one of which contained aqua glass and a cut nail representing 19th century occupation. The second appeared modern and was not associated with Singapore. Artifacts including aqua glass and cut nails recovered from 2 of 5 historic foundations indicate these foundations are associated with Singapore. Midden 1 contained concentrations of early to middle 19th C. artifacts including whiteware, pearlware, stoneware, glass, miscellaneous metal, square nails, bricks, metal hardware, porcelain, and faunal remains. A total of 548 historic and 1 prehistoric/protolithic artifact was recovered during Phase I investigation of the Marina.

Conclusions

All work was conducted by the Ball State Applied Anthropology Laboratories at the request of Northshores of Saugatuck, LLC. The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers - Detroit District is the lead federal agency for the project.

References