

Searching for Singapore: Identification and Evaluation of Archaeological Resources in an Abandoned 19th Century Lumber and Mill Town in Michigan

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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 'wildcat' 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.



Figure 2. View of southern Singapore, Michigan, in 1869 (Michigan Radio, 2017). Note the saw mill in foreground and a potential second one in the background.

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.



Figure 3. Georeferenced overlay of 1873 historic plat of Singapore and general Marina construction outline (please note that the final Marina construction plans are significantly smaller in size than depicted here). Potential buildings highlighted in yellow. Shaded area denotes area of high archaeological sensitivity which was subject to ~100% GPR survey. Overlay provided by NorthShore.

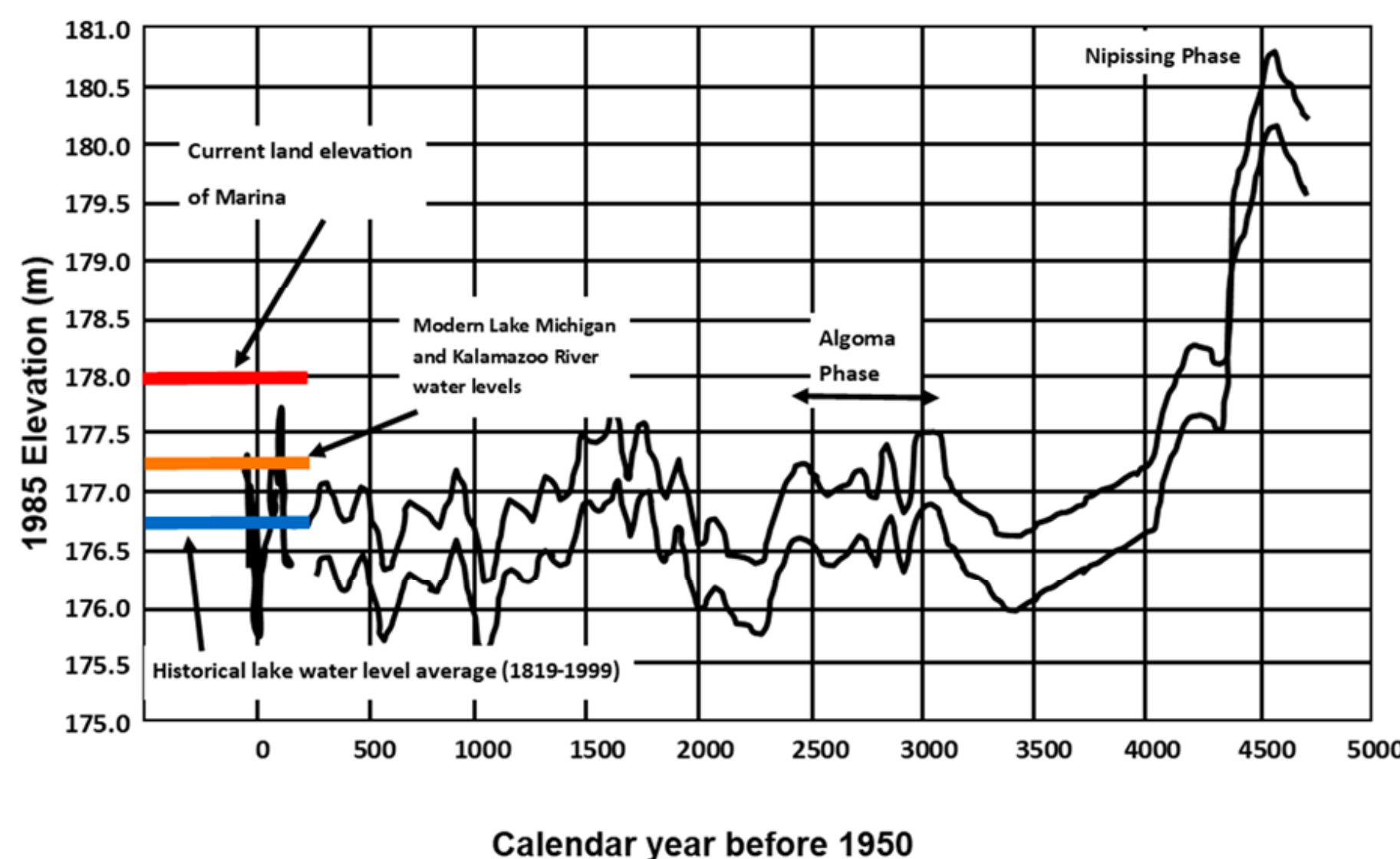


Figure 4. Reconstructed Late to Middle Holocene Lake Michigan water levels based on proxy data and post-1819 historical records (redrawn from Baedke and Thompson 2000; Figure 7). Data bracketed as projected high-low water level extremes. Note that since 4500 yrs BP lake elevation has never been more than ~2.5 m below the historic average of 176.7 m. Elevation data is based on the 1985 International Great Lakes Datum.

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/ protohistoric 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/protohistoric artifact was recovered during Phase I investigation of the Marina.



Figure 5. Composite GPR Anomalies 0-80 cm below Surface.

Conclusions

The results of the Phase I investigation for the Laydown area yielded no cultural material from the upper ~2 m of sediment. The results of Phase I investigation for the Marina area has identified a substantial historic artifact assemblage and features, many of which are interpreted as representing the archaeological remains of 19th C. Village of Singapore (Site 20AE619). Phase I investigations also have identified a single prehistoric artifact during shovel test investigation of the Marina. Shovel testing, bucket augering, GPR survey and ground-truthing all suggest that archaeological remains are restricted to the upper ~1 m of sediment in the Marina area due to the high water table now throughout the history of the area. Four areas were (Figure 10) recommended NRHP eligible, three are being avoided.



Figure 6. Representative sample of whiteware ceramics with black decoration, all with plain glaze: (a) body sherd, burnt, F.S. 22, STP 26; (b) body sherd, F.S. 223, GT 2-8; (c) base sherd, F.S. 242, GT 3-5; (d) body sherd, F.S. 273, GT 3-17; (e) body sherd, Carolina print by Ralph Hall, F.S. 287, GT 3-44; (f) rim sherd, F.S. 319, surface find.



Figure 8. Representative sample of ceramic pipes: (a) pipestem, molded "A. Sparna" "N Couda", F.S. 196, STP 162; (b) pipe bowl fragment, unglazed, F.S. 332, surface find.



Figure 9. Representative sample of aqua glass (cont.): (d) curved, body shard, opalescent sheen, melted, F.S. 216, STP 172; (e) curved, bottle rim and neck, F.S. 234, GT 2-14; (f) curved, base, wine bottle, embossed "7492, Roma Wines, MO 8", F.S. 299, GPR Block 60N, 80E; (g) curved, body shard, embossed "HO", GPR Block 120N, 80E.



Figure 7. Black transfer-print whiteware sherd (lower right) recovered from buried midden in GT unit 3-44. Upper image demonstrates an example of entire plate with Carolina print pattern and lower left represents makers mark (please note that these complete items were not recovered during investigation).

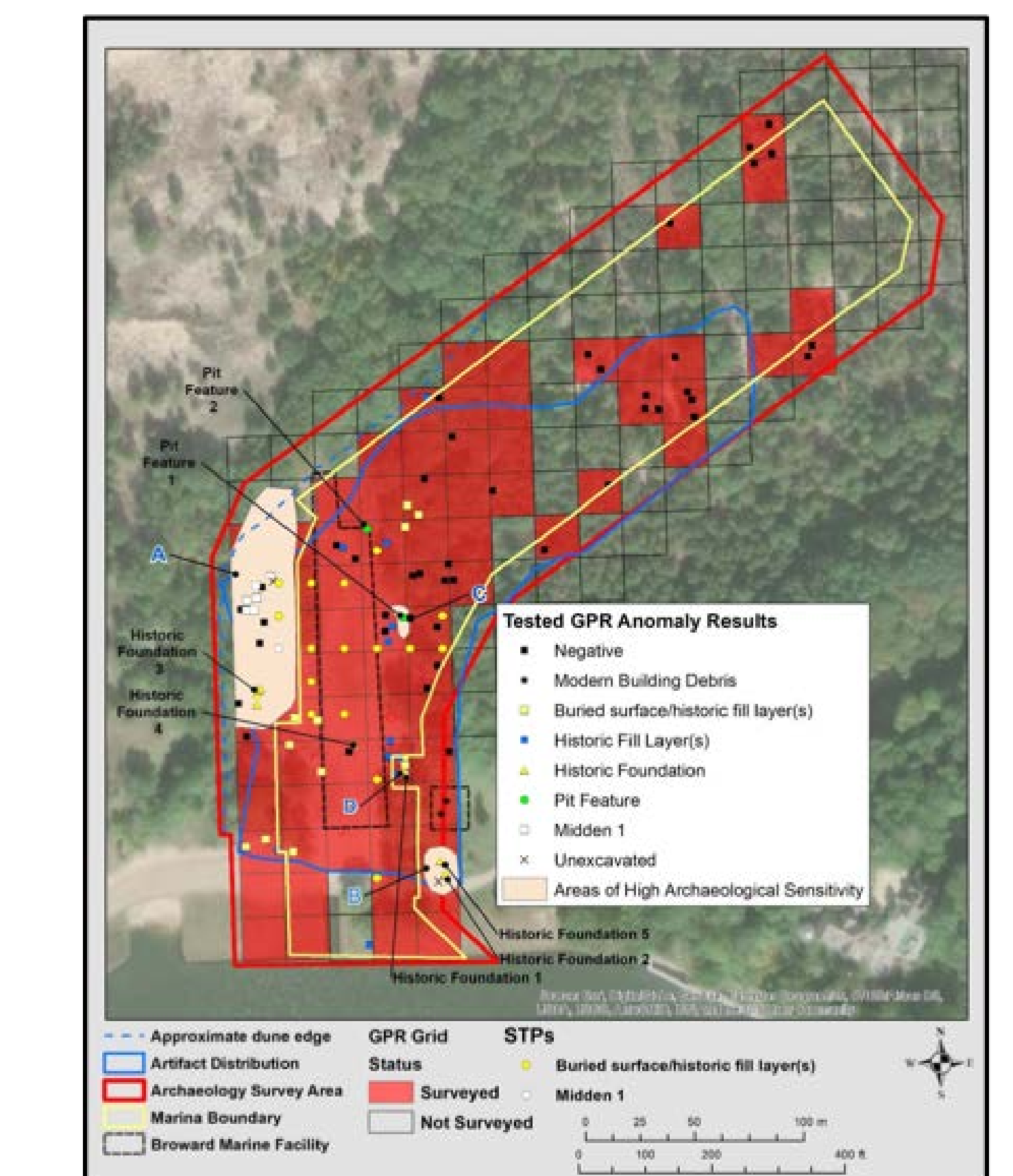


Figure 10. Distribution of areas determined to have high archaeological sensitivity. Areas A, B, and C recommended eligible for inclusion to National Register of Historic Places. Area D recommended as potentially eligible for inclusion to the National Register of Historic Places.

Acknowledgements

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