

"AFTON: A MINNESOTA STATE PARK DEVELOPMENT
PROJECT RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY"

BY

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Prepared for the
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Division of State Parks

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June 1981

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STATE OF MINNESOTA

Abstract

An archaeological reconnaissance survey was undertaken in May 1980 on several development projects in Afton State Park, Washington County. While an occasional isolated artifact was recovered, the area was surprisingly devoid of prehistoric resources. Extensive surface examinations and many shovel tests were all negative.

Afton State Park

The 1979 development projects for Afton were listed in the Scope of Work as follows:

- Entrance Road
- Park Office and Contact Station
- Service Area
- Utilities
- Beach Combination Building
- Trail/Picnic and Sanitation Building
- Elevated Steps and Deck
- Boat Dock
- Picnic Area Development
- Trails

Each of these will be discussed under the "Surveys" section.

Background

Previous archaeological work in Afton has been little. In the Spring of 1976 Hamline University went out to the park to do some initial checks for proposed developments. The weather was very bad, although some shovel tests were excavated and fields walked. No field report has been found, but checks with students who were in the field party indicate that no prehistoric artifacts were recovered. The exact areas surveyed are not known.

In 1978 the Minnesota Historical Society conducted a survey of a proposed prairie management project. A 30 acre previously cultivated field was surface checked with only one secondary flake found.

The 1979 Survey

The survey was conducted on 6, 9, and 10 May 1980 by field director Jan E. Streiff, with members of the Minnesota Archaeological Society and students to Hamline University along with State Archaeologist Christy Caine assisting the field director on the latter day.

Afton State Park is located in Washington County on the west bank of the St. Croix River. Individual projects and locations will be discussed below.

The Projects

The Entrance Road

Location

The proposed entrance road lies in the N 1/2 of Section 10, the NW 1/4 of Section 11, and the W 1/2 of Section 2 Twp 27N R 20W. It begins east of County Road 21, just off Co. Road 20. It starts where the proposed Contact Station will stand, in a plowed field. The road will run south across the field, over a steep hill and down its side into a deep ravine following the hill side. The road will cross the intermittent stream which runs through the bottom of the ravine. It will climb out of the ravine and cross another field running east/west. Continuing east, the road will cross a current township road, enter another field, turn north and pass between two small knolls. It will continue in a generally northerly direction through additional plowed fields until it reaches an area overlooking the St. Croix where it will terminate in a parking lot under the current power transmission line (see map 1).

Survey approach and results

The entire route was walked twice to observe any obvious signs of cultural resources. Most of the route runs through plowed fields which provided excellent visibility. Areas not plowed were shovel tested. Each test was approximately 50 x 50cm and excavated to subsoil (see profiles). All soil was screened through a 1/4" mesh screen.

There were fifteen shovel tests dug along the road route. All tests were negative. No material or features were observed during any of the surface examinations.

Park Office and Contact Station

The proposed Office and Contact Station will be in the NE 1/4, NE 1/4, NW 1/4 of Section 10 Twp 27N R 20W. It will sit in what is now a plowed field just south of the point where Twp Road 20 turns from its westerly direction to a northerly one (see map 2).

Survey approach and results

The entire plowed field was walked twice and the office location was checked for surface indications an additional two times. One test was placed where the engineering plans indicated the structure would sit. (test #16). The test and all surface indications were negative.

Service Area

Location

The survey area is within and to the south of a current farmstead. It will lie in the SW 1/4, SW 1/4, SE 1/4 of Section 3 and the W 1/2, NW 1/4, NE 1/4 of Section 10 Twp 27N R 20W. Part of the area is in lawn and

the reminder is in plowed field. (see map 2).

Survey approach and results

The entire plowed field (not just the project area) was walked twice to determine if there were any surface indications. There were none. A test (#17) was placed in the field near the edge of the lawn. It was negative. Another test (#18) was dug in the yard near the field and the fence line to the east. The test showed a soil profile that was very disturbed, probably from the creation of the lawn. No pre-historic cultural material was recovered.

Beach Combination Building

Location

The proposed beach building will be in the SE 1/4, SW 1/4 of Section 35 Twp 28N R20W. The area is on the first terrace above the St. Croix River north of Trout Brook as it empties in the St. Croix. The beach building will sit on an abandoned rail road bed. The railroad cuts through a hill at this location, so there is no remaining natural soil surface. The area is badly disturbed. (see map 1).

Survey approach and results

Due to the nature of the proposed site, no tests were deemed necessary. The field crew did walk the rail bed and examined the bank cuts as well as checking the beach area and adjacent terrance, but nothing was recovered.

Trail/Picnic and Sanitation Building

Location

The Trail Building will be in the NE 1/4, SW 1/4 of Section 2 Twp 27N R20W. It will sit on the edge of the upper terrace overlooking the St. Croix and before the bank drops sharply to the river. It is to be excavated into a small hill which at the time of the survey was a cultivated field. (see map 5).

Survey approach and results

The plowed field was surface checked with negative results. Three tests were placed in the proposed building site (tests #26, 27, 28). All tests were negative.

Picnic Development

Location

The picnic area will be located in the NE 1/4, SW 1/4, and the SE 1/4, NW 1/4 of Section 2 Twp 27N R 20W on a terrace overlooking the St. Croix River and Trout Brook. It is the location of an old homestead with a paved drive leading up to the area. There is an existing sanitation building, but all structures from the homestead have been removed, although surface indications still remain from some of the structures. The accompanying parking lot, which will be to the south (between the picnic area and the Trail Building), will be in what is now a cultivated field. (see map 5).

Survey approach and results

The picnic area was examined for surface indications, however, most of the area is in lawn, with little exposure. Consequently, eleven

tests were dug in the area between the ridge overlooking Trout Brook on the north and the plowed field (and transmission line) on the south. All tests (#'s 22, 23, 24, 25, 20, 21, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36) were negative. In addition, dozens of rodent mounds were examined and sifted through. None produced any cultural material. The parking lot was walked several times and five shovel tests were dug in the area (tests #37, 38, 39, 40, 41). All were negative.

General methodology

All tests were 50cm x 50cm and excavated to a depth of subsoil. All soil was screened through 1/4 inch mesh screen.

Results summary

All shovel tests were negative. An occasional flake was picked up while the surface survey was in progress. But nothing was diagnostic and additional testing in a surface find location proved unsuccessful. It is believed that although several areas within Afton State Park look like high potential areas for prehistoric sites (terrace overlooking Trout Brook and the St. Croix, for example), any sites which might have existed in such locations have been destroyed by homestead development or plowing. It is also quite possible that no sites ever existed in the area. However, any future development within the park that was not included in the current plan should be checked for cultural resources.

The preliminary field report was submitted to DNR, the State Archaeologist and the SHPO on 12 May 1980. The State Archaeologist approved the report as did the SHPO. Neither had any objections to the development

projects on archaeological grounds.

Jan E. Streiff
Archaeology Lab
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, Minnesota
21 April 1981

Afton

Appendix A

Archaeological material from Afton State Park

<u>Year collected</u>	<u>Archaeologist</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Site #</u>
1978	Vernon, MHS	144A	
1980	Streiff, UM	866	

Bibliography

- Beto, Steven "Topographical Evidences for Archaeological Sites"
1979 unpublished paper, Archaeology laboratory, Department
of Anthropology, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.
- Department of Natural Resources "A Management plan for Afton State
1979 Park" Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. St. Paul.
- Johnson, Elden "Prehistoric Archaeological Sites in Minnesota State
1974 Parks" Archaeology laboratory, Department of Anthropology,
University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.
- Minnesota Historical Society, Afton State Park File, Fort Snelling,
1980 St. Paul.
- State Archaeologist Site File, Washington County, State Archaeologist
1980 Office, Hamline University, St. Paul.
- University of Minnesota Site and County Files, Washington County and
1980 Department of Natural Resources, Archaeology laboratory,
Department of Anthropology, University of Minnesota,
Minneapolis.
- Vernon, Robert "A Cultural Resource Survey for the Minnesota Department
1979 of Natural Resources", Minnesota Historical Society,
St. Paul.

A detailed map of Afton State Park. The map shows a network of trails represented by different line styles: solid, dashed, and dash-dot. Key roads include 50th Street at the top, HWY 21 on the left, and Douglas Road running vertically. A road labeled 'Point' is at the bottom left. To the right is St. Croix Lake. A north arrow and a scale bar (0 to 1000 feet / 0 to 300 meters) are in the top right. An inset map of Minnesota shows the park's location. Labeled areas include: BEACH BLDG, PICNIC AREA, PARKING, SHELTER, ENTRANCE ROAD, SERVICE AREA, CONTACT STATION, and TROUT BROOK.

ST

BEACH
BLDG

PICNIC
AREA

PARKING

SHELTER

ENTRANCE
ROAD

L A K E

50th Street

N
1

HWY 21

Road

Douglas

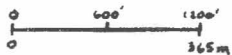
HWY 20

CONTACT
STATION

Point

TROUT BROOK

SERVICE AREA



T17

T18

Proposed Service Area

to Hwy 21

Proposed
Contact
Station

T16

AFTON

MAP 2

// Surface Survey

T 3 Shovel Test

x — Fence Line

... — Creek

DNR Tests

Proposed
Entrance Road

T12

T11

T5

T6

T7

T9

T8

T1

T2

T3

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AFTON

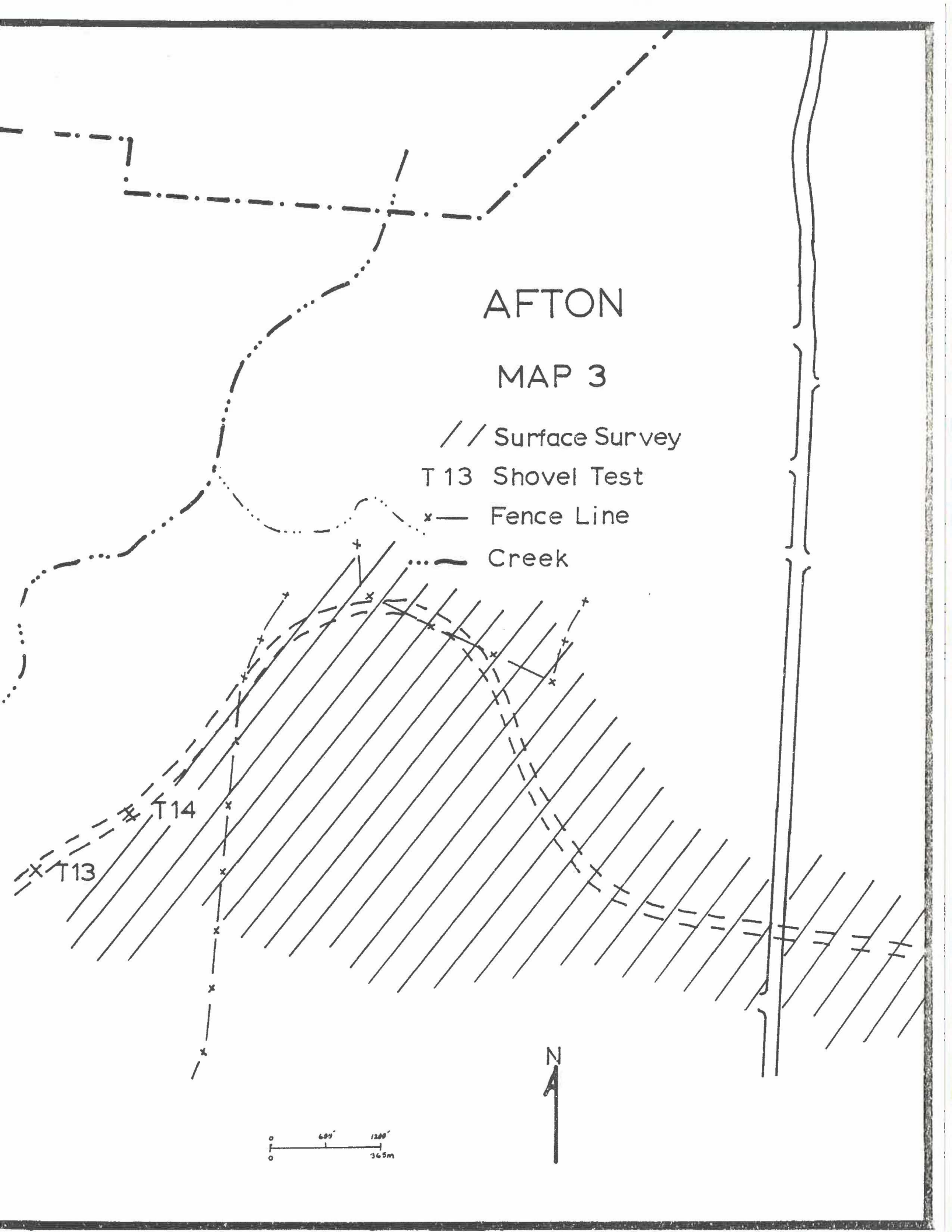
MAP 3

// Surface Survey

T 13 Shovel Test

x — Fence Line

... Creek



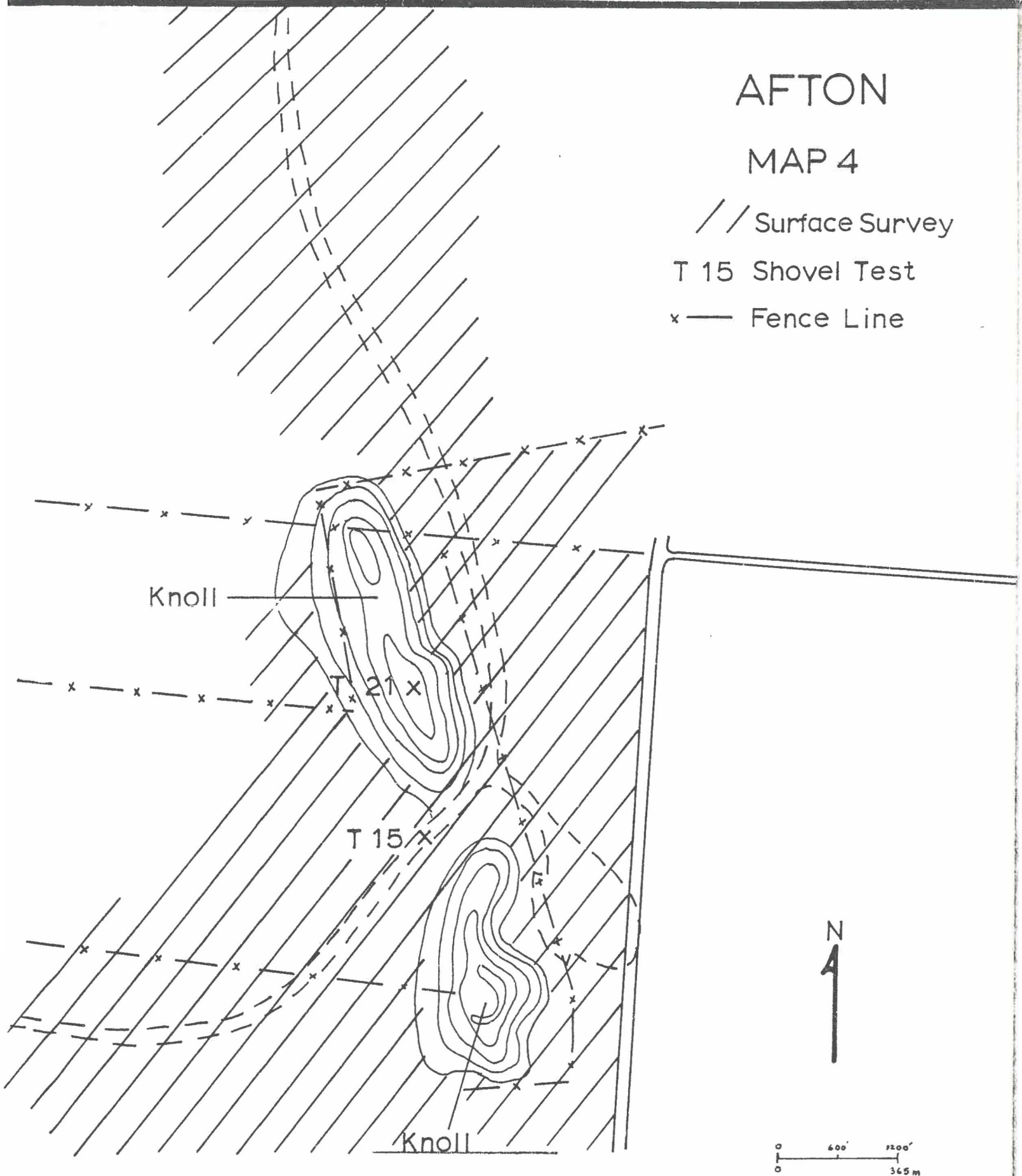
AFTON

MAP 4

// Surface Survey

T 15 Shovel Test

x — Fence Line



AFTON

MAP 5

T 30-36

x T25

// Surface Survey
T 26 Shovel Test
x—x Fence Line

4

0 600' 1200' 2400'

Transmission Tower

T27

x T26

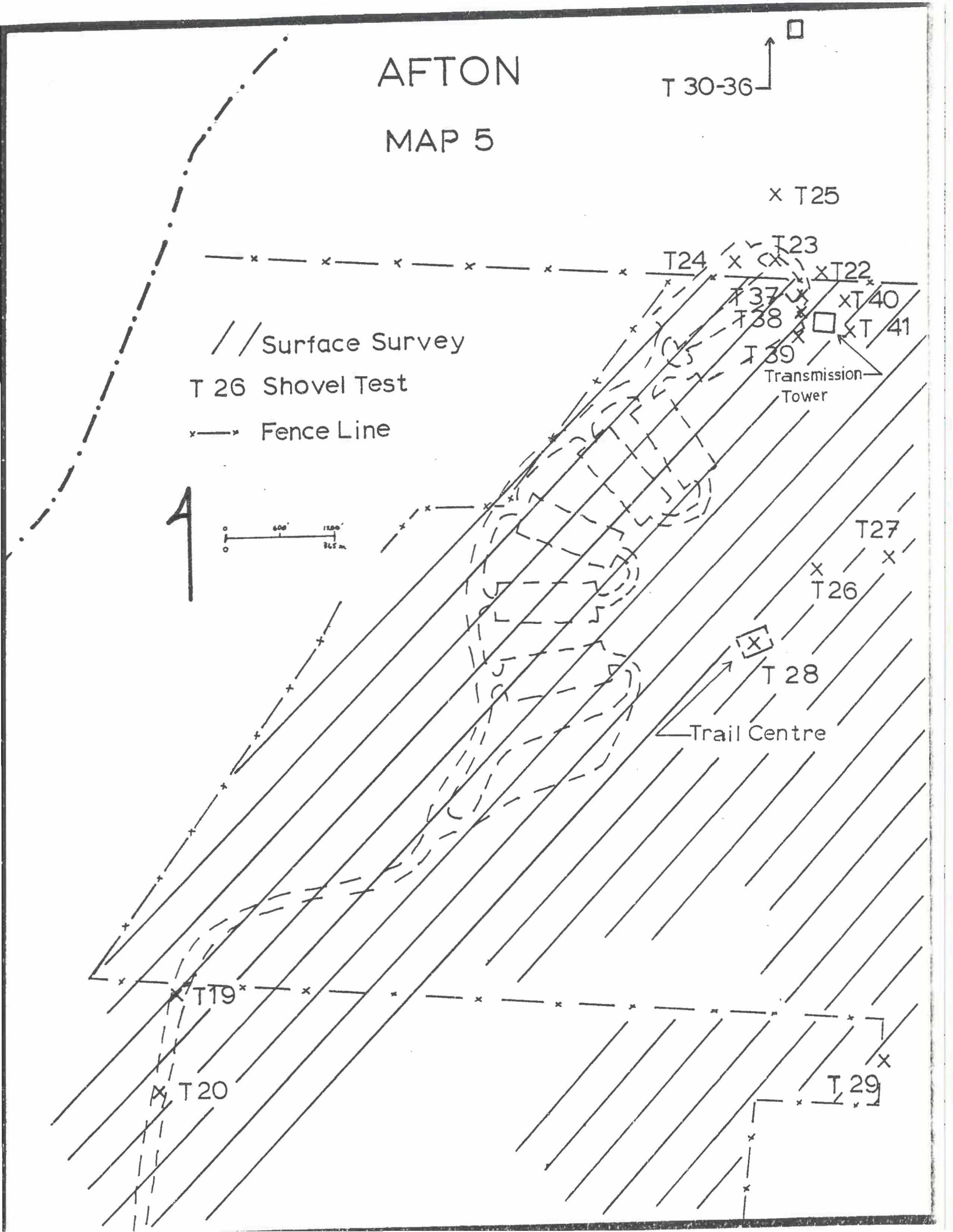
T 28

Trail Centre

x T19

x T20

T 29



AFTON STATE PARK

TEST UNIT SOIL PROFILE

TEST 1



humus

light
sandy clay

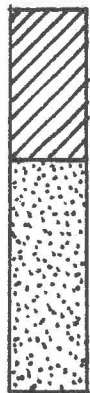
TEST 2



humus

light
sandy clay

TEST 3



humusy
sand

light sand

TEST 4



gravel

mixed sand
and gravel

light sand
in light and
dark bands

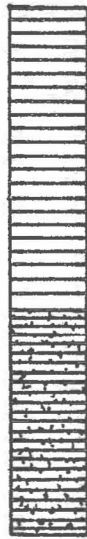
0 5 10 20 30 40 50
scale in centimeters

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TEST UNIT SOIL PROFILE

TEST 5



mixed
light and dark
sandy clay

dark sticky
sandy clay

TEST 6



sandy
gravel lensed

dark humusy
sand

TEST 7



light
mixed sand

dark sand

TEST 8



sandy humus

blend

wet sticky
reddish tan
sand

0 5 10 20 30 40 50
scale in centimeters

AFTON STATE PARK

TEST UNIT SOIL PROFILE

TEST 9



sandy humus

blend of
humus and sand

gravelly reddish
tan sand

TEST 10



gravel

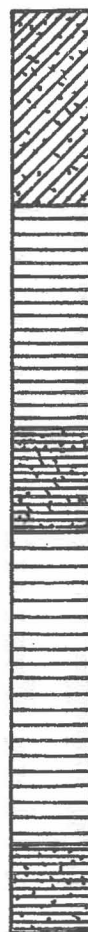
TEST 11



coarse gravelly
sandy humus

coarse red sand
with cobbles

TEST 12



medium dark
sandy humus

mixed dark and
light banded
sandy clay

dark band
clayey sand

mixed medium
dark sand
and clay

wet reddish
sandy clay (to 170 cm)

till (at 170 cm)

0 5 10 20 30 40 50
scale in centimeters

AFTON STATE PARK

TEST UNIT SOIL PROFILE

TEST 13



dark sandy humus
with gravel

coarse red sand
with gravel

TEST 14



sandy humus
(plowzone)

red sandy
clay

TEST 15



sandy humus

tan/red
sandy clay

TEST 16



humus
(plowzone)

reddish clay

0 5 10 20 30 40 50
scale in centimeters

AFTON STATE PARK

TEST UNIT SOIL PROFILE

TEST 17



humus/gravel mix
plowzone

reddish sandy clay
with cobbles
and gravel

TEST 18



roofing piece

humus, light
sandy loam

historic ceramic
blend

reddish tan
sand

TEST 19



plow zone

red/brown
clay and loam

TEST 20



finely grained
red gravel
and sand

thumb sized
gravel (to fist size)
mixed with red
sand

0 5 10 20 30 40 50
scale in centimeters

AFTON STATE PARK

TEST UNIT SOIL PROFILE

TEST 22



dark loam

mixed clay
and loam

orange sandy
clay

TEST 23



dark loam

orange sandy
clay

TEST 24



dark loam

plastic piece
rocks and gravel

orange sandy
clay

TEST 25



dark sandy
loam

reddish clay

0 5 10 20 30 40 50
scale in centimeters

AFTON STATE PARK

TEST UNIT SOIL PROFILE

TEST 26



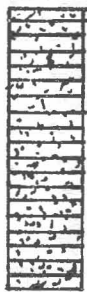
no humus
grading clay
(area stripped)

TEST 27



humus
clayey sand
bedrock

TEST 28



no humus
reddish tan
sandy clay

TEST 29



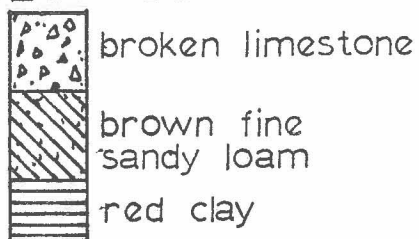
humus
limestone bedrock

0 5 10 20 30 40 50
scale in centimeters

AFTON STATE PARK

TEST UNIT SOIL PROFILE

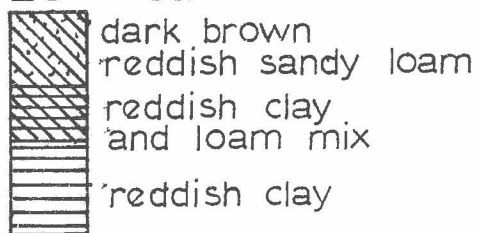
TEST 30



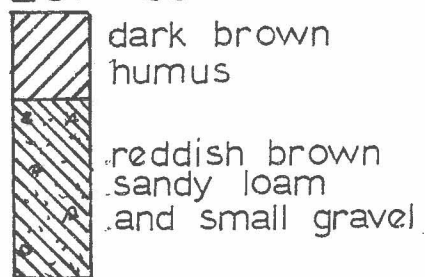
TEST 31



TEST 32



TEST 33



0 5 10 20 30 40 50
scale in centimeters

AFTON STATE PARK

TEST UNIT SOIL PROFILE

TEST 34



light brown
humus

dark brown
loam

red sandy subsoil

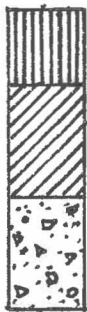
TEST 35



reddish grey
humus

limestone

TEST 36

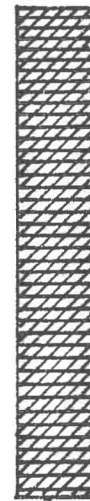


sod

reddish loam

red subsoil
with limestone

TEST 37



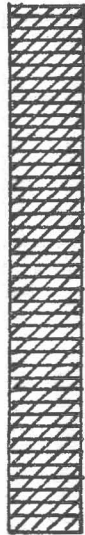
brown clay
loam

0 5 10 20 30 40 50
scale in centimeters

AFTON STATE PARK

TEST UNIT SOIL PROFILE

TEST 38



brown and red
clayey sandy
loam

TEST 39



fine sandy
loam

TEST 40



humus

orange clay
subsoil

TEST 41



humus

orange clay
subsoil

0 5 10 20 30 40 50
scale in centimeters



MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

690 Cedar Street, St. Paul, Minnesota 55101 • 612-296-2747

June 11, 1980

Ed Welsch
Bureau of Planning
Department of Natural Resources
3rd Floor - Box 10
Centennial Building
St. Paul, MN 55101

Dear Mr. Welsch:

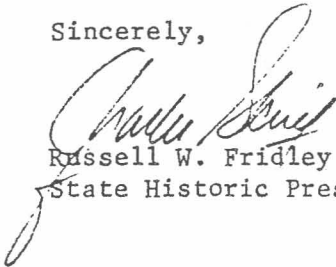
RE: Review of the Archaeological Survey Work
Conducted at Afton State Park, Washington County
Picnic Area
Shelter Building
Beach Combination Building
Service Area
Contact Station
Entrance Road

MHS Referral File Number: K 931

This letter is to inform you that our office has received a statement regarding the above-referenced project. No archaeological sites were located. Consequently, there are no sites of historic, architectural, cultural, or archaeological significance in the area which are on the National Register or eligible for inclusion on the National Register, which may be affected by the above proposal.

Thank you for your participation in this important effort to identify and preserve Minnesota's cultural resources.

Sincerely,



Russell W. Fridley

State Historic Preservation Officer

RWF/sl

cc: Ms. Jan Streiff

✓ Department of Anthropology

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