

Phase II Subsurface Archaeological Testing at the Onion Hill Site (12 Mo 1126), Monroe County, Indiana

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Reports of Investigations 99-15
May 2000

Abstract from Introduction and Management Summary

At the request of Monroe County Parks and Recreation (MCPR), the Glenn A. Black Laboratory of Archaeology, Indiana University (GBL) performed Phase II archaeological testing at site 12 Mo 1126 (the Onion Hill site) in Monroe County, Indiana. The site will be impacted by construction of facilities related to the development of the proposed Flatwoods Park in northwestern Monroe County. The request for subsurface archaeological investigations stemmed from requirements set forth by the Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology, Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DHPA-IDNR), which in turn resulted from a recommendation made by the GBL after documenting the site during a Phase Ia surface reconnaissance of the proposed park property in the Fall of 1998 (Natt 1998).

The primary goals of the investigations at 12 Mo 1126 were: 1) to identify the nature, integrity, and extent of subsurface cultural deposits; 2) to make recommendations concerning whether or not the deposits are eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and the Indiana Register of Historic Sites and Structures (IRHSS); and 3) to make recommendations concerning the preservation of significant archaeological resources or for mitigation of proposed adverse impacts. Additional goals of the investigations at 12 Mo 1126 included gathering basic information about the site's size, age, internal structure, function, and seasonality.

Fieldwork at 12 Mo 1126 included intensive augering of the site area, backhoe stripping and trenching, hand excavation of test units and cultural features, and opportunistic surface collection. Excavations at 12 Mo 1126 revealed the presence of intact, subsurface cultural deposits and twelve subsoil anomalies encountered during backhoe excavations. Two of these anomalies were of definite historic origin. Three other anomalies appeared to be prehistoric features, though radiocarbon assays suggest a more recent (i.e. historic) origin. The sub-plowzone natural/cultural stratum encountered both in test units and a backhoe trench appears to be limited to the central portion of the site. This zone produced lithic artifacts (chipped stone debitage and tools) to a depth of approximately 90 cm below surface in one test unit. Lithic diagnostics recovered from 12 Mo 1126 indicate the presence of an Early Archaic (i.e. Kirk) component. The natural/cultural stratum is hypothesized to be in association with this component.

Site 12 Mo 1126 is recommended to be significant and eligible for inclusion on the NRHP and IRHSS. The lithic assemblage suggests that early stage lithic reduction was a primary activity on 12 Mo 1126. Artifacts recovered during testing of 12 Mo 1126 suggest an Early Archaic occupation of the site in association with the presence of a sub-plowzone natural/cultural stratum. While the excavation of several subsoil anomalies suggested that intact cultural features are also present, radiocarbon assays indicate that these anomalies are not related to the Early Archaic component of the site. In total, an area of approximately 300 m² contains intact deposits recommended for data recovery investigations. This area is recommended for avoidance. If avoidance is not feasible, Phase III archaeological data recovery should be undertaken on this portion of 12 Mo 1126.

*Abstract created by Patrick Sovereign
February 2020*