Service Learning Projects in ARC 350: Public Archaeology

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What is Public Archaeology?

Public Archaeology seeks to 1) educate the public about archaeological issues and our Nation's cultural resources, 2) promote regional heritage programs, 3) assist local governments to identify & preserve archaeological resources under their jurisdiction, and 4) promote the stewardship & preservation of our Nation's cultural resources for future generations.

Project 1: Phase 1 Archaeological Survey for the City of Murray

Project Purpose:

The city of Murray has proposed construction of a fire sub-station to be located west of Hwy 641, between Holmes Family Restaurant and Wood Crafters (Fig 1). The City of Murray asked the ARC 350 class at MSU to conduct a Phase I archaeological survey to determine if any cultural resources present would be adversely impacted by the proposed construction. Section 106 of the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act mandates any federal or federally-assisted undertaking to assess the impact to archaeological sites and/or historic buildings that are included on, or eligible for inclusion to, the National Register of Historic Places. Since The City of Murray has not received federal funds or permits to construct the sub-station, it is **not** considered to be a federal undertaking and therefore **not** subject to Section 106 compliance. Despite this, the City of Murray voluntarily undertook the survey to ensure that no cultural resources would be adversely affected by the construction.
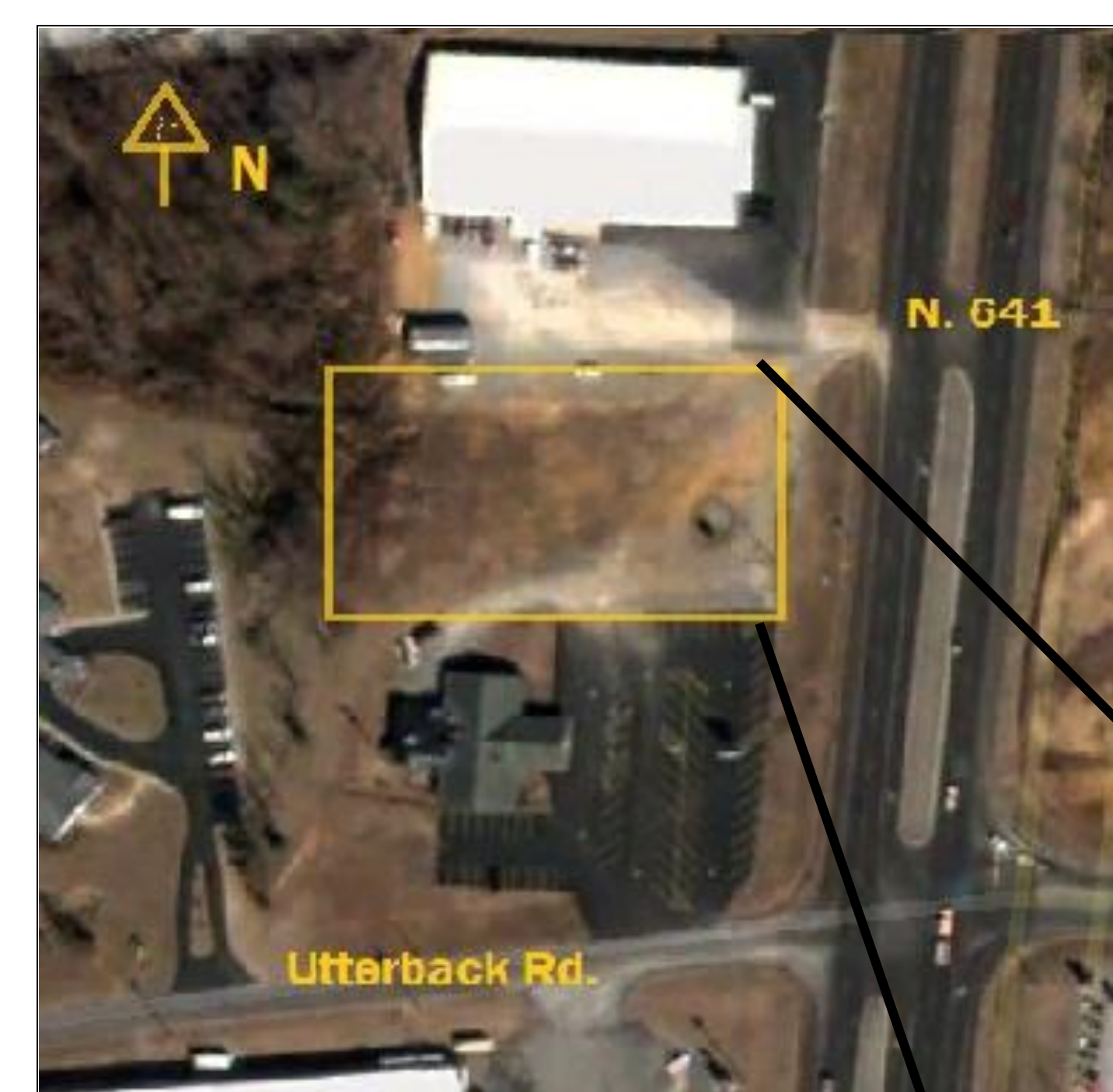

Figure 1. Aerial photograph of the project area (Source: Google Earth).

Methods

Archaeologists constructed 3 transects oriented parallel to HWY 641 and spaced at 20 meter intervals (figure 2). Following these transects, they then conducted a walk-over in areas of good ground visibility (to the east) and excavated shovel test pits in areas of poor ground visibility (vegetated portion in west). Soils were screened through ¼" mesh screen.

Figure 2. Location of modern landmarks, shovel test probes, grass, and previous surface disturbance within project area.

Results:

1. No cultural resources were identified in the project area

2. The project area is extensively disturbed by previous land use

3. Since no cultural resources were found, there are no properties eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places and therefore no additional survey is necessary.

Conclusion:

• Due to lack of cultural resources we recommend that the fire sub-station be cleared for construction

• The project was a valuable chance for the ARC 350 students to provide a service to the City, gain experience designing & conducting an archaeological project and writing the final report for submission to the State Historic Preservation Office; and educating the public about the importance of cultural resources to the local community.

Project 2: Preparation & Repatriation of Human Remains at Wickliffe Mounds State Park

Project Description

The Geosciences Department currently participates in an on-going repatriation project in coordination with the Wickliffe Mounds State Historical Site and the Chickasaw Nation and in compliance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. Faculty and students from MSU and South-East Missouri State University volunteer once a month to inventory and bundle human remains formally displayed at the site's museum. Located in Ballard County, KY, the site was once occupied A.D. 1100-1350 by pre-historic people of the Mississippian culture.

Figure 1. Replication of a Wickliffe burial pedestal using <u>ARTIFICAL</u> human remains.

Methods

The reburial process began by numbering the graves. Starting with Burial 1, we compared what human remains were present to what was recorded in the original inventory. If all of the remains were accounted for, the bones were photographed and bundled in muslin cloth. The muslin bundle was tied together with twine and labeled with the date of excavation and the burial number. Once the remains of an individual burial were completely bundled, they were placed in a labeled box for storage until the reburial event. The bundles themselves were also numbered and the number correlated with the original burial number.

Figure 2. Location of the proposed reburial, Wickliffe Mounds

Cultural Resource Management

The 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) directs museums (public & private) and Federal agencies to return Native American human remains, funerary remains, and other cultural objects to lineal descendents and affiliated Native American tribes. NAGPRA mandates that museums and federal agencies undertake the following: 1) identify, inventory, and repatriate all human remains, funerary objects, and items of cultural patrimony; 2) consult with lineal descendents & affiliated tribes concerning repatriation and cultural affiliation; and 3) keep all interested parties informed as to the inventoried cultural items and state that the cultural items will be repatriated.

Conclusion

The Wickliffe reburial project is planned to continue until 2011. Once all burials have been bundled, a reburial ceremony will take place in coordination with the Chickasaw Nation (who have physical custody to the Wickliffe human remains). In the ceremony, the bundles will be placed in the mound they were excavated from and the building presently built on the mound will be torn down.

Project 3: Phase 1 Archaeological Survey at Sullivan Golf Course

Project Description

In the spirit of the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), this project was untaken to promote stewardship of local cultural resources at the Sullivan Golf Course located just west of N. 16th St. in Murray, KY. (fig 1) where local residents noted some historic artifacts on the surface. After speaking to the golf course owners, we learned that the family thought a house had once sat near that location, but they were unaware of the artifacts. While no legal precedent mandated this survey, we undertook an investigation of the site in order to help expand public interest in archaeology and help the Sullivan family learn more about their history.

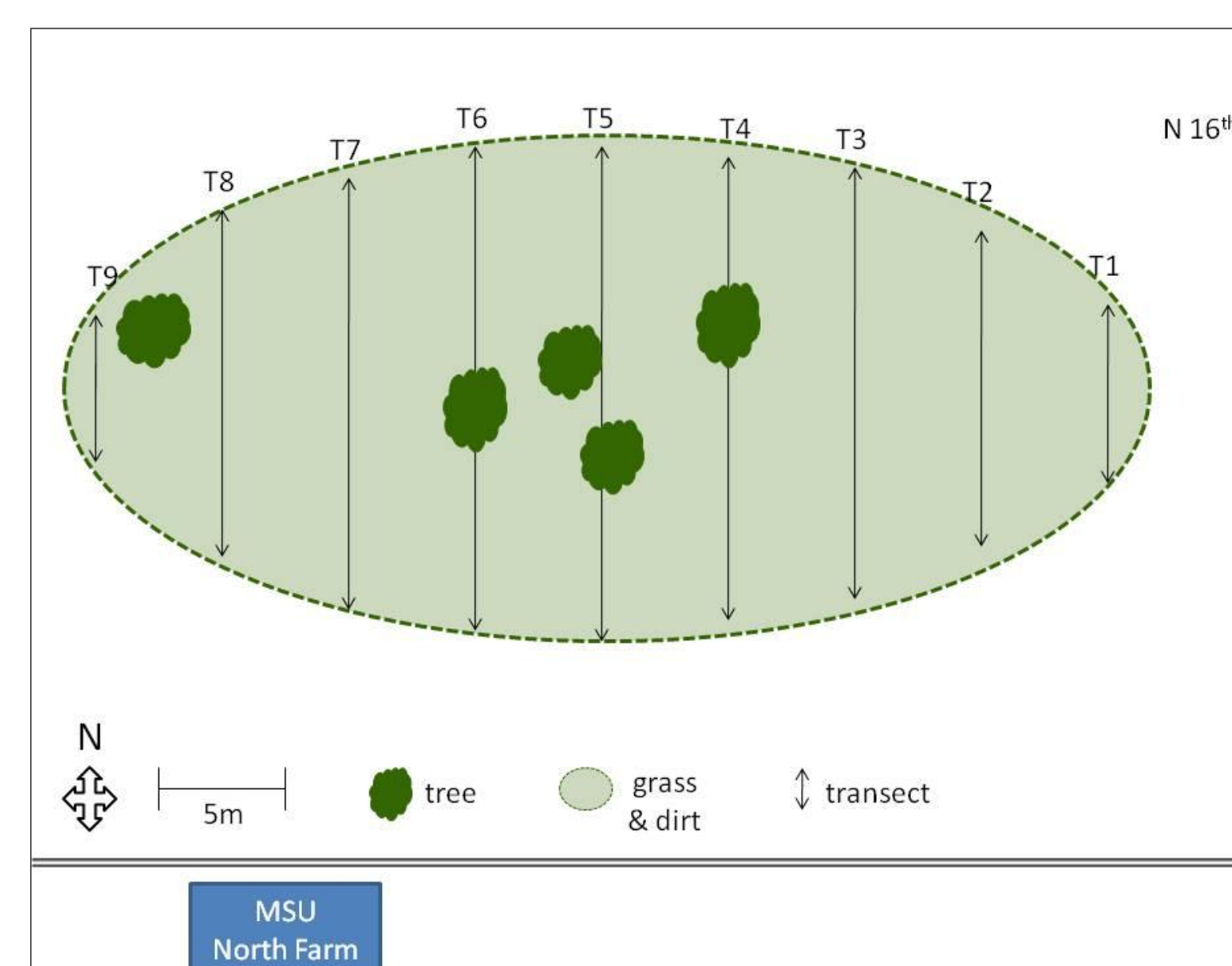Figure 1. Aerial image of the project location with survey site outlined in white (Source: Google Earth).

Methods

We set in 9 transects oriented N-S, parallel to N. 16th St. spanning the site & along which we conducted a walk-over survey (Fig 2). Normally, in areas of low visibility, shovel tests would be excavated, but this was not done since excavation would negatively impact activity at the privately owned golf course. All artifacts visible along each transect were collected. Artifacts were then washed, sorted, and analyzed in the Archaeology Laboratory, Dept. of Geosciences, MSU.

Figure 2. Schematic of modern landmarks and transects in the project area.

Results

The 450 historic artifacts consisted mostly of ceramics, bottle glass, brick & nails, all indicative of an historic farmstead. Based on the presence of amethyst glass, Type B cut nails, and a "J&G Meakin" marker's mark on a piece of white-ware, we dated the site between the 1880s-1920s. The 48 prehistoric artifacts include chert flakes and core fragments resulting from stone tool manufacture. No stone tools diagnostic of a particular time period were recovered, though the lack of ceramics suggests that the site predates the Woodland Period.

Conclusion:

The goal of Public Archaeology is to raise awareness about archaeological resources and get the public involved in recovering and preserving their heritage. This project verified a suspected historic farmstead and previously unknown prehistoric occupation at the southern end of the Sullivan Golf Course in Murray, KY. It is hoped that this project will help raise awareness of, and instill pride in, the cultural resources in our region.