

# RESEARCH BULLETIN

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## Archaeological Research at Batoche National Historic Site, 1984

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Archaeological research at Batoche National Historic Site in 1984 was in response to the implementation of Parks Canada's management plan. Under the direction of the regional archaeologist Ellen Lee and assisted by Guy Mathias, I monitored site development to protect known cultural resources and salvage any prehistoric or historic resources which might be unearthed during construction. During this phase of the site's development, various roadways were constructed (Fig. 1). This involved the relocation of provincial Highway 225 to the eastern park boundary and the downgrading of its former right of way as well as the construction of an access road and parking lot for the East Village. Several minor access roads for site maintenance and a parking lot for the Visitor Reception Centre were also constructed. Utility trenches supplying services to several developments were excavated and the landscape adjacent to the Church and Rectory was partially restored. An outdoor exhibit and various recent structures and foundations were removed in order to restore the site to its nineteenth century appearance.

The relocation of provincial Highway 225 disturbed a corridor 62 m wide by 3 km long. A systematic post hole survey along this route in 1982 failed to locate any significant archaeological remains (Lee 1983). While construction machines removed the top soil this year the corridor was inspected for cultural features and artifacts. Particular attention was focussed on the vicinity of Major-General Middleton's military earthworks and the remnants of the Carlton Trail to protect these features and locate previously unknown resources which may be associated with them.

Isolated historic artifacts (ceramic, glass and metal fragments) and bone fragments were recovered along the newly relocated Highway 225, but the only significant features occurred in the vicinity of the military earthworks. Ceramic, glass and metal fragments, a Schneider rifle cartridge, machine cut nails and a large number of bird and mammal bones were found scattered for 20m along the western edge of the right of way approximately 80 m from the south east corner of Middleton's earthwork (Fig. 1a).



During the surface collection of this scatter an artifact concentration was discovered near its south eastern edge (Fig. 2). When excavated, this 1 m (N-S) by 1.45 m (E-W) concentration formed a small depression with a maximum depth of 23 cm below the disturbed ground surface. Glass and metal container fragments, a large number of machine cut nails, buttons, a suspender strap adjuster and many bird and mammal bones were recovered from the ash and charcoal enriched fill. This feature has been tentatively identified as a midden.

A second feature, situated 4.7 m west of the small midden, was also detected during the initial surface collection (Fig. 2). This slightly irregular rectangular feature, marked by a darker artifact rich fill was subsequently excavated. The resulting pit had a maximum depth of 1.2 m below the disturbed soil surface and was at least 1.8 m (NW-SE) by 3.5 m (NE-SW) in size. Rodent disturbance and slumping of the sides made it difficult to determine the exact dimensions of the original pit or to determine if its walls were originally vertical or sloping. The bottom of the pit is relatively flat. Although no structural elements were present this pit may represent the remains of either a cellar or a refuse midden. The lack of distinct layers and the mixed appearance of the fill suggests that it was deposited on a single occasion.

The hundreds of ceramic, glass and metal fragments, machine cut nails, bird and mammal bones, several glass medicine bottles and thirteen shoes recovered from the pit will be analysed with two objectives in mind: to determine whether the feature dates from the period of the 1885 battle and whether the artifacts constitute a domestic or military assemblage.

Road construction in the vicinity of the Carlton Trail uncovered a concentration of wood planks (Fig. 1b). The ensuing salvage excavation revealed an approximately 2 m (N-S) by 1 m (E-W) feature demarcated by vertical planks and divided by a common central wall. Both E. Bruce and E. Parenteau of the park staff identified this as a well utilized by the Nogier family during the 1950s.

The soil profiles of the two branches of the Carlton Trail exposed by highway top soil stripping were examined for evidence of the trail. No irregularities appeared to indicate the extent of the trail itself or ruts left by traffic. The machine made finish of an amber bottle was located in the disturbed soil close to the north branch of the Carlton Trail but it is unclear if this artifact was associated with the trail.

No artifacts or features were observed while monitoring the downgrading of former Highway 225. This highway had been built more or less along the alignment of the historic East River Trail. The paucity of cultural resources was not surprising as this area was severely disturbed during the initial construction.

While monitoring the stripping of the 50 m wide corridor of the East Village Access Road between the new provincial Highway 225 and the former right of way, a small quantity of lithic debitage and one bone fragment were recovered (Fig. 1c). All the lithics were discovered on the top of a sandy rise where similar

material had been found during a 1983 posthole survey. A large number of modern artifacts attributed to recent "Metis Heritage Days" celebrations were also noted but not collected.

Our examination located several hundred lithic flakes and numerous large mammal bone fragments on the East Village Access Road, between 300 m and 400 m west of the former right of way of Highway 225 (Fig. 1d). This area was surface collected on two occasions and all subsequent construction was closely monitored. The lack of any substantial vertical depth for the cultural materials suggests that they may represent the remains of a single short term occupation. No features were found in association with the artifacts.

Numerous large mammal bone fragments were found scattered on the area stripped for the East Village Access Road and parking lot on the lower flat near the South Saskatchewan River (Fig. 1e). Approximately 75 cm of topsoil had been removed from the eastern upslope side of the area while from 20 cm to 40 cm of soil was stripped from the west side. Hundreds of chert and quartzite flakes, several scrapers, a biface and a portion of a Pelican Lake projectile point were found scattered over this 220 m long by 50 m wide area.

This portion of the East Village Access Road and parking lot was surface collected and the location of all artifacts recorded in relation to the right of way stakes. The artifacts were clustered in the shallow swales between slightly higher ridges which may indicate that the area was utilized as a campsite during unfavorable seasons when shelter from the elements would be desirable. This patterning may also be the result of hundreds of years of erosion.

The area with the greatest concentration of artifacts was subjected to further examination. Eleven 0.5 m (E-W) by 1 m (N-S) test pits were positioned approximately 5 m apart along the western edge of the road stripping (Fig. 3). A grid composed of 2 m<sup>2</sup> units was subsequently established over a 20 m (N-S) by 24 m (E-W) portion of the right of way directly east of the row of test pits. Although the clay subsoil had been packed by earth-moving machinery and baked to almost concrete hardness by the sun, a total of 30 square meters were excavated by a crew of five local people. Along the western edge of the right of way the vast majority of artifacts were recovered within 40 cm of the soil surface, although several isolated flakes were located from 50 cm to 60 cm below the surface. This assemblage also includes a small number of bone fragments. Historic artifacts (ceramic and glass fragments, several brass shotgun cartridges, fragments of metal and a machine cut nail) were also present in the plow zone. Unfortunately, a substantial portion of the plow zone had been removed from the right of way during the initial phase of construction without being inspected. It may be possible to identify activity areas once the artifacts are analyzed and their positions plotted on a site map.

The construction of several minor access roads was monitored during the field season. Several isolated historic and prehis-



toric artifacts were located on the access road which connects Provincial Highway 225 to the Visitor Reception Centre Complex and the Maintenance Compound. No cultural materials nor features occurred on the road from the highway to the Caron Sr. residence.

The road between the Maintenance Compound and the Church and Rectory was much more productive in terms of both artifacts and features. A prehistoric lithic scatter of approximately one half dozen flakes was located immediately west of the maintenance compound. (Fig. 1f). In addition to numerous isolated historic and recent artifacts, several features were located on the section west of the former highway. The topsoil stripping operation uncovered a recent midden where the access road cuts through the row of trees marking the boundary between river lots 49 and 50 (Fig. 1g). Many fragments of glass, ceramics and metal, plastic javex bottle caps, various crown bottle caps, tin foil, wire nails and barb wire were found. Approximately 80 m further south a 4 m (E-W) by 3.5 m (N-S) rectangular sand feature appeared in the silty clay surface of the stripped right of way (Fig. 1h). No artifacts were associated with this feature. An additional midden, at least 2 m in diameter was uncovered approximately 30 m further south (Fig. 1i). The ash enriched fill of this shallow pit contained numerous modern artifacts (glass bottles, metal containers and wire nails) as well as a large metal object which E. Bruce, has tentatively identified as being related to one of the recent Batoche ferries.

In anticipation of future site development a 72,000 m<sup>2</sup> area was subjected to a systematic post hole survey during the 1983 field season (Lee 1984a). This survey located several isolated prehistoric lithic flakes and a small number of historic objects from a late twentieth century homestead situated approximately 50 m north of the survey area. Additional isolated representatives of these assemblages were discovered while monitoring 1984 construction activities.

Electrical, communication and natural gas lines were placed in trenches which were 10 cm to 20 cm wide and approximately 1.2 m deep. For the most part they were located in areas previously disturbed by road construction. However, it was sometimes necessary for the trenches to cut through untested ground. When this occurred the operation was monitored by inspecting the profiles for features and checking the backdirt for artifacts.

An electrical communication trench cut through a privy approximately 51 m north of the northeast corner of the church and 22 m west of the northwest corner of the school (Fig. 1j). The artifacts from the privy included pressed glass tableware, patent medicine bottles, metal containers and wood fragments. This assemblage appears to date to the 1940s and may be associated with the Ranger and Pilon households which were situated in this area then (D. Payment, Pers. Comm.).

A second privy was encountered 23 m west of the Rectory in a trench excavated during the installation of the septic system. Use of this privy was discontinued in 1976 and its construction probably dates no earlier than the late 1960s. No artifacts were recovered.

In mid-November archaeologists returned to Batoche to monitor the installation of a waterline running from the well, on the west side the downgraded highway on River Lot 44, south to the Visitor Reception Centre, Church/Rectory and Caron Sr. Residence. The trench for the water pipes was 8 feet (2.4 m) deep and disrupted a 4 m wide corridor. Although whenever possible this corridor was situated on disturbed areas, several long segments ran across previously undisturbed ground. Several isolated artifacts were recovered while monitoring this operation but only one feature was located. A considerable number of milled wood fragments as well as a log with a 3 inch wire nail embedded in it appeared 10 cm to 15 cm below the surface of the trench approximately 130 m north of the Church and Rectory and immediately west of the minor access road (Fig. 1k). Emil Parenteau has stated that a stable associated with the Ranger residence was located in this general area.

The restoration of the landscape adjacent to the Church and Rectory commenced with the removal of a Historic Sites and Monuments Board cairn erected in 1925 (Fig. 4). Other mid 20th century features south of the Church and Rectory including a caragana hedge and several lilac bushes were also removed. Recent crown bottle caps, a sardine tin and various unidentified glass bottle fragments were found while monitoring this activity. No historic resources were found while monitoring the removal of the fieldstone path between the rectory and the parking lot, the flag pole, signs and the bollards surrounding the parking lot nor during the downgrading of the gravel parking lot immediately south of the cairn and the access road east of the Church. The gravel base for a boardwalk between the Church and Rectory was also installed and although the topsoil stripping was closely monitored no evidence of the original boardwalk was observed. While monitoring the establishment of a portion of the granular walk which will lead from the Church to the Visitor Reception Centre, a cement and fieldstone block was discovered approximately 8 m southeast of the Church. E. Bruce identified this as a gate footing dating to the 1950s.

As part of the plan to restore the Batoche landscape to the late 19th century, an outdoor exhibit and several modern buildings were removed (Fig. 1). The exhibit, originally erected on River Lot 52 in the early 1970s, was demolished and topsoil introduced to return the area to its natural grade. This operation was monitored to ensure that demolition equipment would not encroach upon North West Field Force rifle pits situated in the immediate area. Three log buildings, established on River Lot 51 in 1925 by Armand Caron and utilized until 1971 (D. Payment, Pers. Comm.), were also demolished. The foundation of a school constructed in 1917 and utilized until 1955 (E. Lee 1984b) was also removed from River Lot 51. Landscape restoration on River Lot 49 involved removing the Ranger house, constructed during the mid 1950s and occupied until 1981, and the foundation of a teacherage associated with the school constructed in 1955 (D. Payment, Pers. Comm.). Further north on River Lot 48 the

Parenteau House, which had been moved onto the site during the 1960s and occupied until 1978, was also demolished. All demolition activities were monitored to ensure that ground disturbance would not place cultural resources in jeopardy.

In 1985 archaeological support will be provided to monitor all construction activities involving ground disturbance. Furthermore, if the solution to drainage problems in the area of the East Village Access Road involves digging a ditch through the remainder of the prehistoric site, the impact on the site will be mitigated by salvage archaeology.

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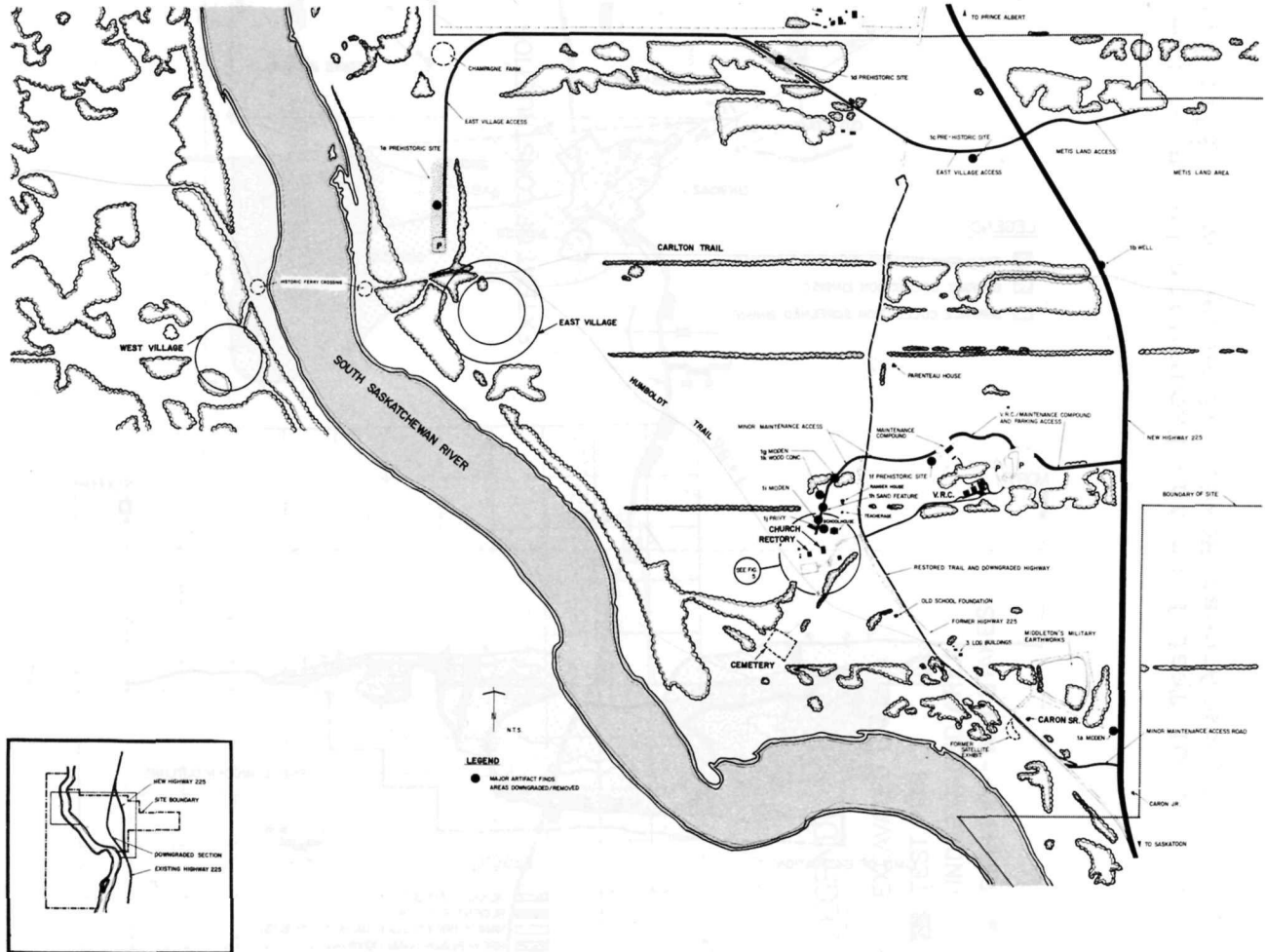


Fig. 1. Map of Batoche National Historic Site showing areas investigated during the 1984 field season. (Drawing by D. Elrick.)

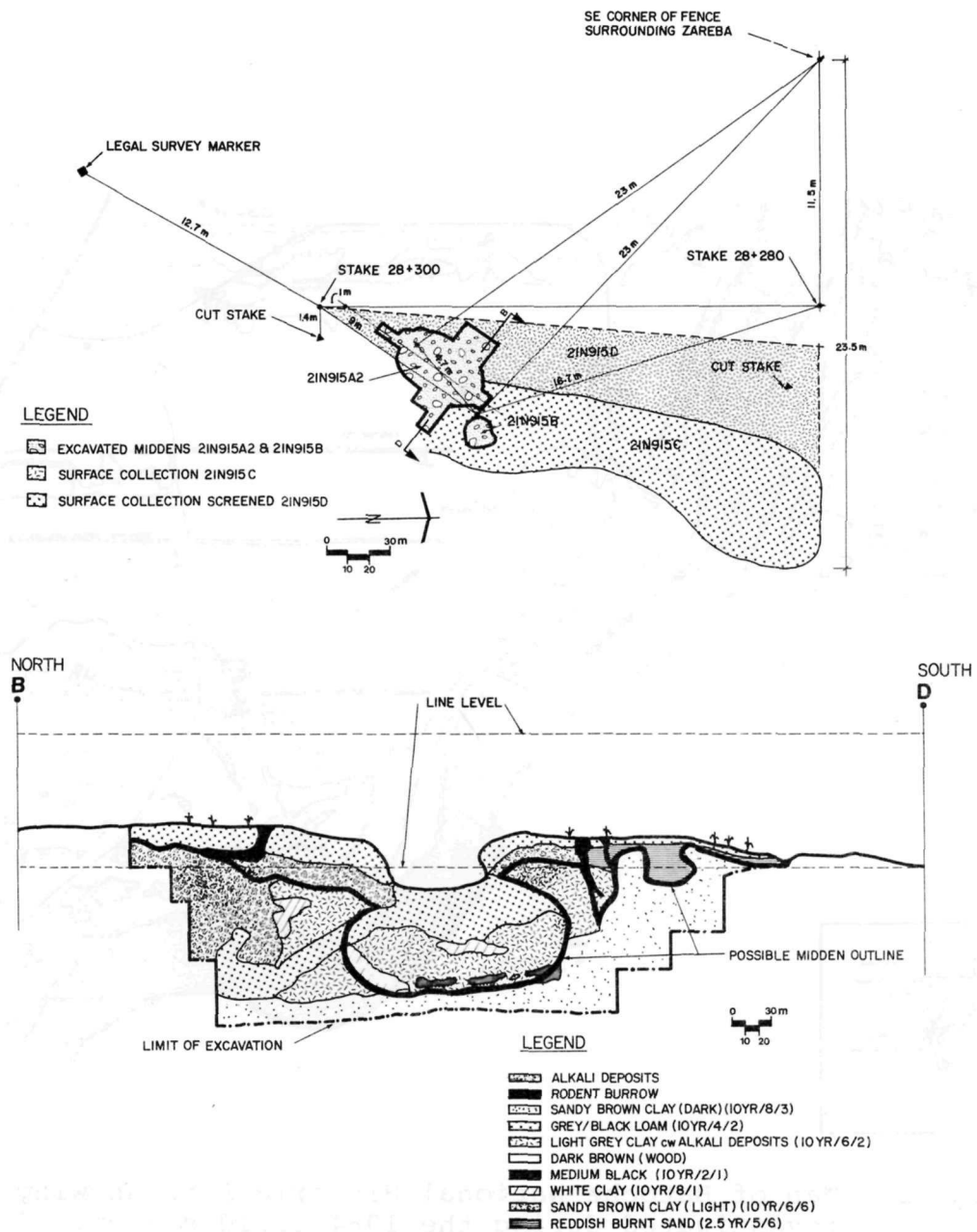


Fig. 2. Top: Plan of features located 80 m southeast of the military earthwork.

Bottom: Profile of feature 21N915A2 illustrating the outline of the cellar/refuse midden.  
(Drawing by D. Elrick.)



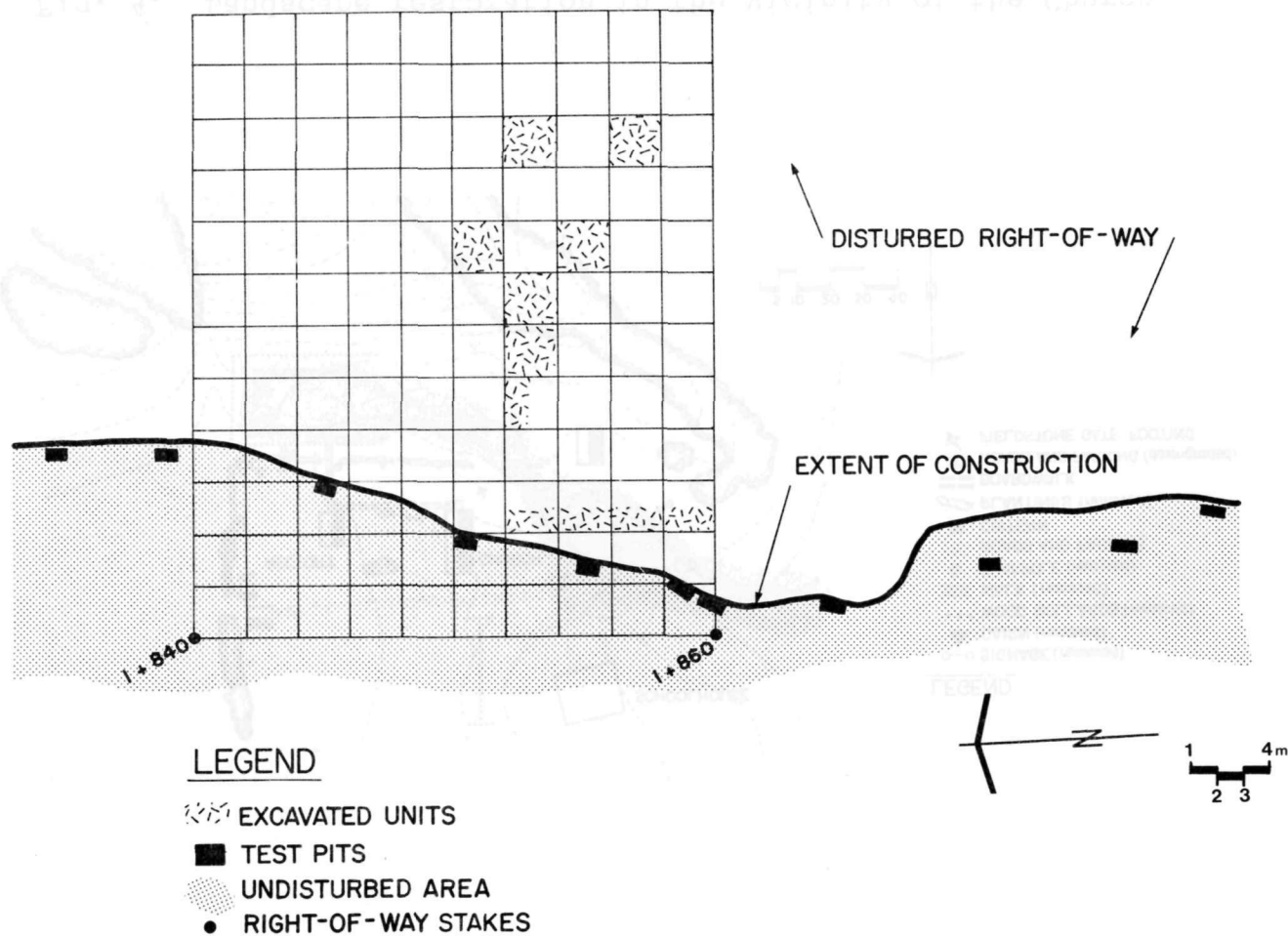


Fig. 3. Location of Test Pits and Excavation Units on the East Village Access Road. (Drawing by D. Elrick.)

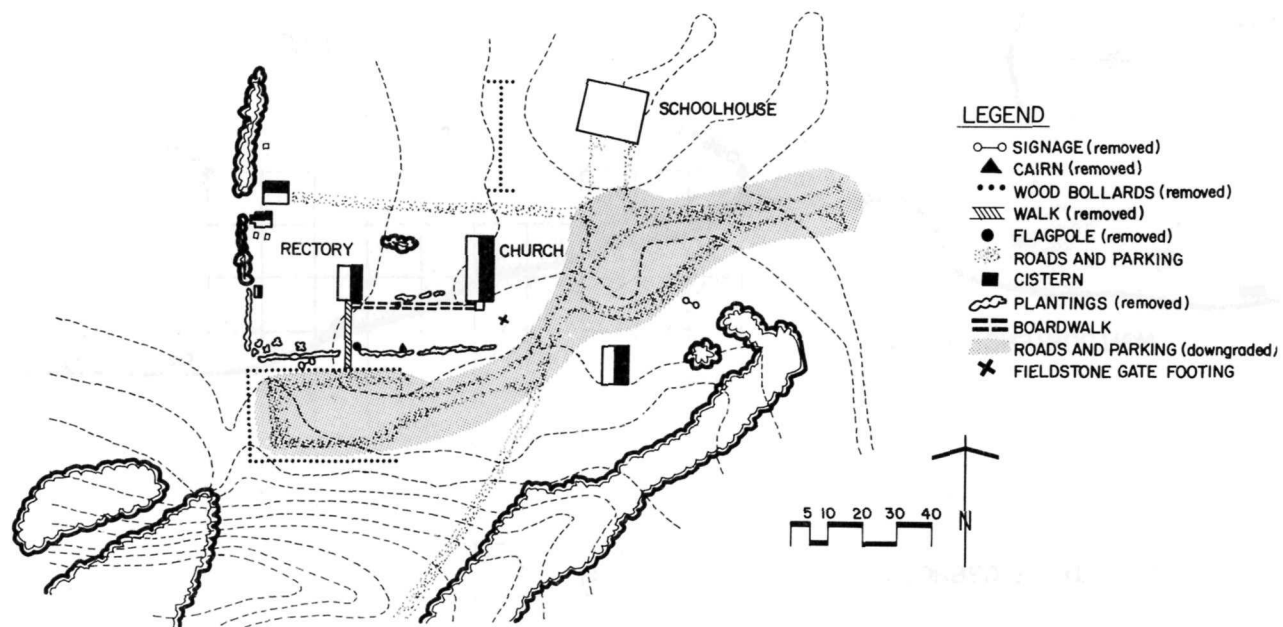


Fig. 4. Landscape restoration in the vicinity of the Church and Rectory. (Drawing by D. Elrick.)

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