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LITTLE MAQUOKETA RIVER MOUNDS
13DB36 AND 13DB37
SITE DESCRIPTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

A Report to the
Iowa Department of Transportation
Planning and Research Division

by

John Hotopp
Transportation Archaeologist
Office of the State Archaeologist

May, 1980

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to thank the members of the task force assembled to assist with the development planning for this project. Many suggestions received from the members have been incorporated into the draft plan. I particularly wish to thank Maria Pearson for arranging a series of meetings with various Indian groups in Iowa. Their input has been valuable for developing a site plan that is in harmony with their interests and for broadening my perspective on the range of Native American concerns in Iowa. Finally, I wish to acknowledge the assistance of the Office of Project Planning, Iowa Department of Transportation, in preparing estimates so that funding for development of this site could be secured.

John Hotopp
Iowa City
May, 1980

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 2
Description of the Site 3
Native American Coordination 5
Recommendations 5
Summary 7
Figures 8
Table 13

Project Completion Report
Primary Roads
Volume 3, Number 18
1980
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Forward

This document constitutes a Project Completion Report which has been prepared by the Iowa Office of the State Archaeologist under the terms of the ongoing transportation cultural resource surveys contract negotiated annually between the Iowa Department of Transportation and the University of Iowa, Iowa City. Under this continuing agreement, state transportation funds are appropriated by the Iowa DOT for the performance of surveys to determine the impacts of highways and other transportation improvement projects upon the cultural resources of the state. For the purposes of this agreement, cultural resources include archaeological, historical, and architectural elements. All archaeological site data, conclusions reached as to project impact, and recommendations made as to appropriate methods of mitigation are developed by the Office of the State Archaeologist, which is solely responsible for content and accuracy. Project descriptive information and research data pertaining to historic and architectural resources associated with the project are provided by the Iowa DOT, which is responsible for its content and accuracy.

INTRODUCTION

The Federal Highway Administration has assigned a high priority to Great River Road projects involving the acquisition of scenic easements and areas of scenic, historical, archaeological, or scientific interest. These procedures are issued under the authority of 23 U.S.C. 148, 23 U.S.C. 315, and 49 C.F.R. 1.48. The Federal-Aid Highway Program Manual, Volume 6, Chapter 9, Section 15, establishes the priorities to be followed in conducting cultural resource studies within the corridor of the Great River Road. The first priority in Section 7c encompasses:

Preliminary engineering including environmental studies for support of the selection of existing route segments including acquisition of scenic easements and other areas of interest.

The second priority includes:

Acquisition of scenic easements and areas of scenic historical, archaeological, or scientific interest which are on existing route segments.

In the interest of early identification of cultural resources within the corridor, the Highway Division of the Iowa Department of Transportation entered into a supplemental agreement with the existing highway archaeological surveys contract in February, 1977, to provide a preliminary cultural assessment of the Great River Road corridor. The study was designed to identify archaeological, historical, and architectural sites that would be impacted or amenable to development as part of the Great River Road concept.

Three major goals for the archaeological survey were established using the federal guidelines cited above. The first was to inventory those archaeological sites in or near the corridor that may be impacted by construction activities associated with the Great River Road. The second goal was to locate archaeological sites that could be integrated into the theme of providing scenic, recreational, and cultural areas of interest

along the route. The third goal was to locate archaeological sites that merit acquisition due to scientific value (Hotopp 1977, Vol. II:X).

The preliminary survey located 528 archaeological sites and 515 potential historic sites within the corridor. Specific recommendations for the archaeological sites were developed, ranging from Phase II testing for determination of significance for the National Register of Historic Places to immediate acquisition based upon previous investigations or surface manifestations.

During the cultural resource survey, the Little Maquoketa Mound Group (13DB36, 13DB37) was discovered in June, 1977 (Fig. 1). The site was included in the recommendations for immediate acquisition in the Great River Road preliminary cultural and natural resource survey report (Hotopp 1977, Vol. II:343). At the time of the survey, the mounds were obscured by dense vegetation. A preliminary count was made of 24 mounds on the summit of a bluff overlooking the Little Maquoketa River (Fig. 2). Subsequent to the identification of this site, the Iowa Department of Transportation, in cooperation with the Iowa Conservation Commission and the Federal Highway Administration, purchased the site for development as part of the northern segment of the Great River Road.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

A pedestrian survey of the entire Little Maquoketa River Mound Group, combined with construction of a transit plat of the mounds themselves, was conducted in April, 1979. Under nearly optimal conditions, a total of 32 mounds were located and platted (Fig. 3). The mounds range in height from 16 to 118 centimeters. The conical mounds range from 4 to 13 meters in diameter (see Table 1). The Department of Transportation completed a perimeter survey of the tract in January, 1980 and established ground control points for a contour plat of the ridge.

Although two separate site numbers (13DB36 and 13DB37) were given to the Little Maquoketa River Mound Group, the mounds should and will be treated as a single site since only a small saddle on the ridge separates the six conical mounds of 13DB36 from the 26 mounds of 13DB37. Both sites are situated within the SE 1/4, SW 1/4 of section 34, T90N-R2E, Peru Township, Dubuque County, on the summits of an elevated promontory overlooking the Little Maquoketa River and U.S. Highway 52. The sites are bounded by the Little Maquoketa River on the north and west, by Highway 52 on the east, and by the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad on the south. The area is accessible from the old U.S. 52 alignment and right-of-way just west of the present U.S. 52 highway right-of-way (Fig. 4).

The ridge summit is located approximately 60 meters above the valley floor and offers an excellent vantage point for viewing the surrounding terrain: "From the site there is a good view down Coule [sic] Valley, up and down the Little Maquoketa Valley, and into the Peru Bottoms of the Mississippi Trench" (Slattery, Bettis, Fisher, and Tiffany 1977:3).

The site is located upon an isolated bedrock projection extending north into the floodplain valley of the Little Maquoketa River approximately 1.2 miles west of the Mississippi River. The river makes an abrupt, nearly right-angle bend around the outcrop. At one time, the river flowed along the eastern margin of the ridge south into the Couler Valley. This valley was the former channel of the Little Maquoketa River.

[The valley] was abandoned when headward erosion by a smaller tributary of the Mississippi captured the headwaters of the Little Maquoketa and diverted them along the shorter, more direct route to the Mississippi Valley (Prior 1977:450).

The ridgetop provides an opportunity to view this example of the geological process of stream piracy.

The vegetal cover consists of mature deciduous trees, including oak, basswood, and walnut, combined with dense understory vegetation. According to the former landowner, the ridgetop area was used to pasture cattle until a few years ago. Since then, the understory vegetation has been returning.

NATIVE AMERICAN COORDINATION

Because one prominent feature of the 40 acre tract consists of 32 burial mounds located along the ridge spine, a series of informational meetings were held with Native American groups in Iowa. The purpose of the meetings was threefold: 1) to acquaint the Indians with the Great River Road project; 2) to advise them of the acquisition of a tract containing burial mounds; and 3) to solicit their input into planning for the site so that any development would be harmonious with their concerns and customs pertaining to burials.

Concern with the safety of the burials was a common theme of the meetings, since a number of the mounds had been disturbed in the past. The majority of the Indians felt that as long as the mounds and their immediate vicinity could be protected, some development of the remainder of the property would not pose a problem. The suggestions from the meetings have been incorporated into the recommendations for site development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The mounds are located on a promontory which commands an excellent view of the river valley and is partially covered with mature deciduous timber. It is felt that the site would provide an excellent overlook for the Maquoketa River Valley and surrounding area, and has the potential for multiple resource development emphasizing archaeology, geology, and natural areas. The opportunity for development as an outdoor learning center for

the residents of Dubuque as well as the River Road travelers must be emphasized. The following specific recommendations have been made for the site.

1. Prior to any repair work on the vandalized mounds, an Indian intertribal delegation will visit the site. This visit is scheduled for June 5, 1980.
2. The damaged mounds should be stabilized by carefully filling in the depressions and seeding with a dense stand of shallow-rooted, shade-tolerant grass.
3. A cyclone fence should be placed around the mounds to physically limit access to them. The fence should provide a clear area approximately 100 feet on either side of the group.
4. The brush and dead timber should be removed from the immediate vicinity of the mounds along the spine of the bluff. The establishment of a parkland environment with overstory trees will provide a pleasant setting in which to view the mounds and, more importantly, the increased visibility will lessen the chance of vandalism to the mounds.
5. Because many of the mounds are low and difficult to distinguish, all work in the vicinity of the group must be monitored by an archaeologist to prevent inadvertent damage to the mounds. All clearing and grubbing should be conducted by hand within the immediate vicinity of the mounds.
6. A scenic overlook should be established on the northern noselobe of the bluff. In addition to providing a scenic view, this overlook location will allow the visitor to observe the geological phenomenon of stream piracy.
7. The walking trail to the overlook should parallel the mound fence along the bluff. This will allow the visitor to view the mounds and lessen the possibility of vandalism.
8. Reconstruction of the fencing around the perimeter of the site is imperative. The fencing around some sections of the bluff is badly deteriorated. Fencing will discourage informal access to the west side of the bluff which has been established from the north terrace, apparently to obtain firewood.
9. An off-road parking area with typical wayside amenities should be provided between old and new U.S. 52 right-of-way at the east base of the bluff. Because visitation by school groups from Dubuque is anticipated, provisions for bus parking should be included.

10. Included at this wayside should be outdoor interpretive signing, explaining the geology, archaeology, and natural features of the area. The potential for displaying Native American art within the wayside should be considered.
11. Cut stone foundation remnants and a well from a historic house structure, which might be of interest to visitors, are located along the east terrace at the base of the bluff. The walking trail up the ridge could pass this site (Fig. 3).
12. If visitor usage is adequate, the future establishment of a walking trail along the western edge of the property adjacent to the Little Maquoketa River would be highly desirable. This area is particularly beautiful and would provide a relatively easy walking trail for visitors.

A proposed development plan incorporating many of the recommendations has been developed and is presented in Figure 5.

SUMMARY

The Little Maquoketa River Mounds site provides the visitor with an opportunity to appreciate Native American burial mounds. The combination of archaeology, geology, and an exceptional scenic view adjacent to historic Dubuque suggests a high potential for visitor attendance at this site.

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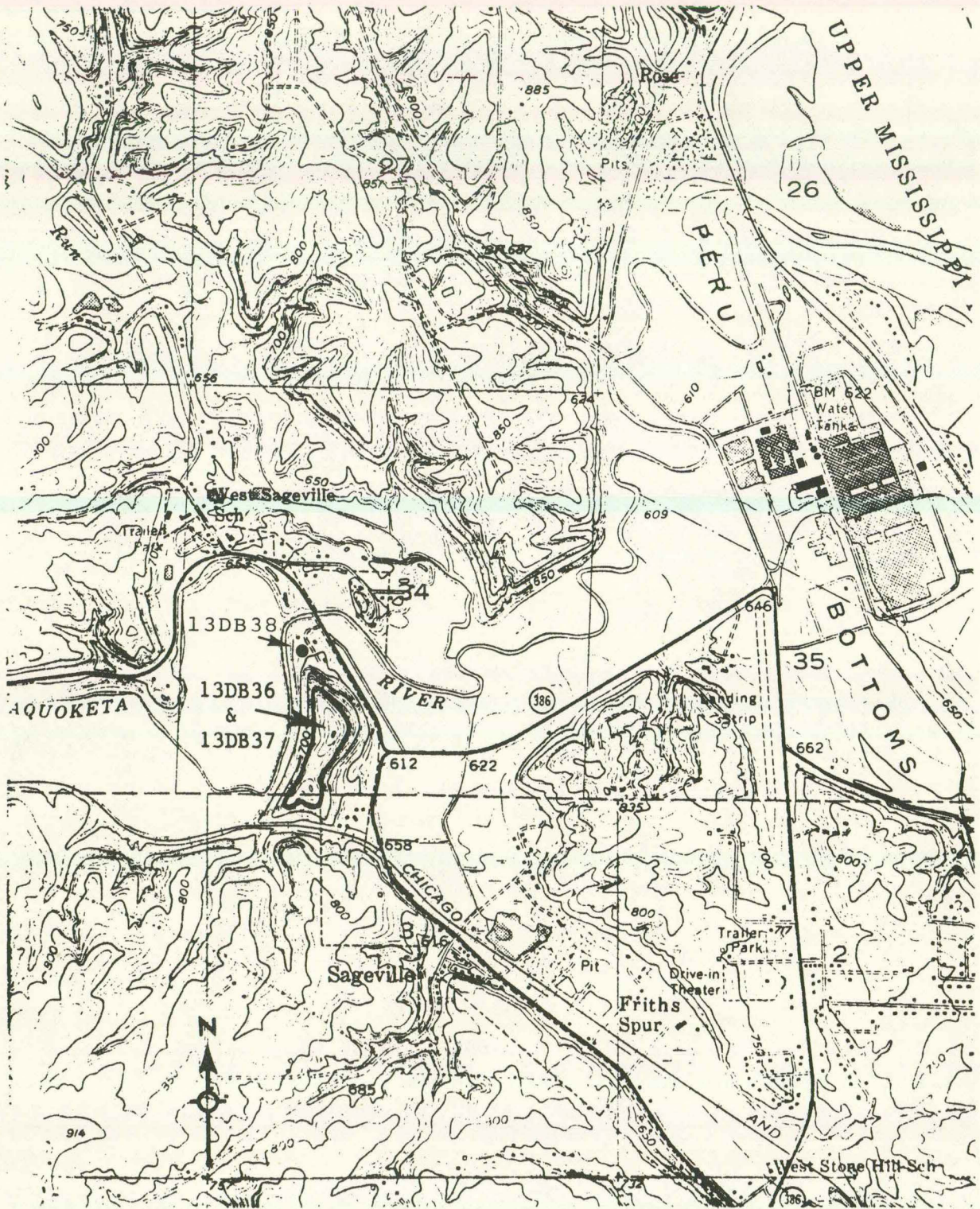


Fig.1. Topographic map showing the location of the Little Maquoketa River Mound Group. From U.S.G.S. Dubuque North Quadrangle. Scale 1:24000.

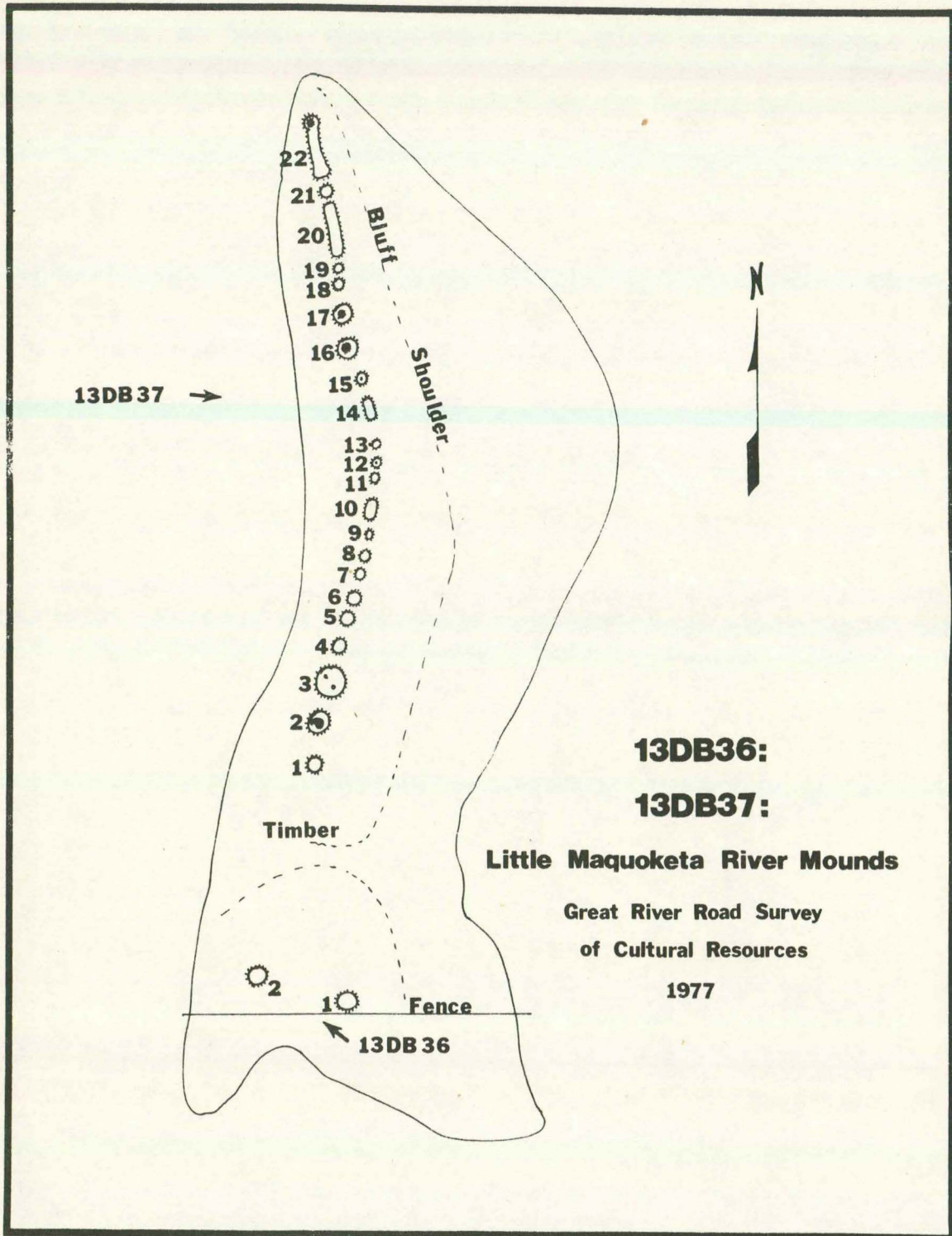


Fig. 2.. Little Maquoketa River mound groups as mapped in June, 1977 (from Hotopp 1977, Vol.II:336).

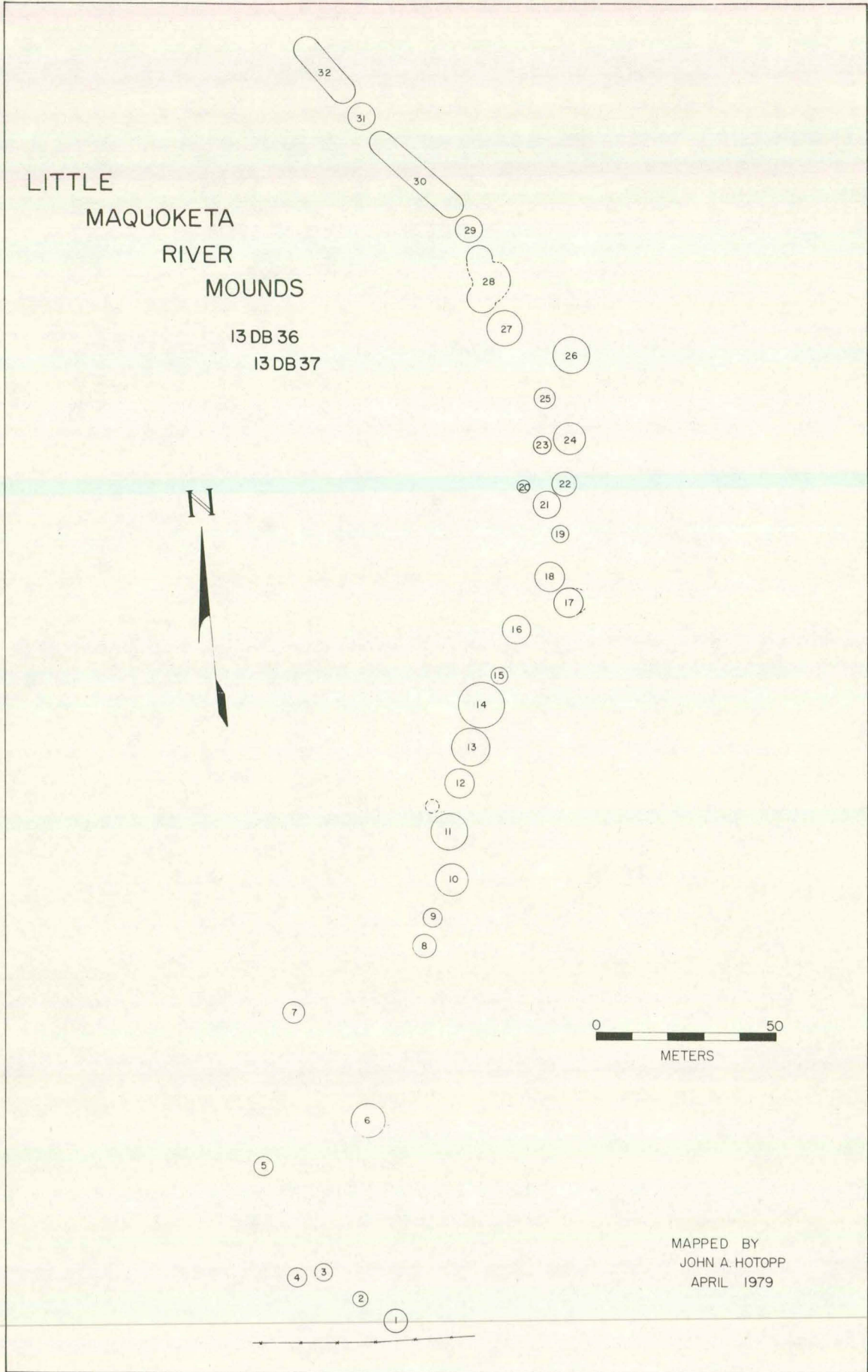


Figure 3. Plat of Little Maquoketa River Mounds.

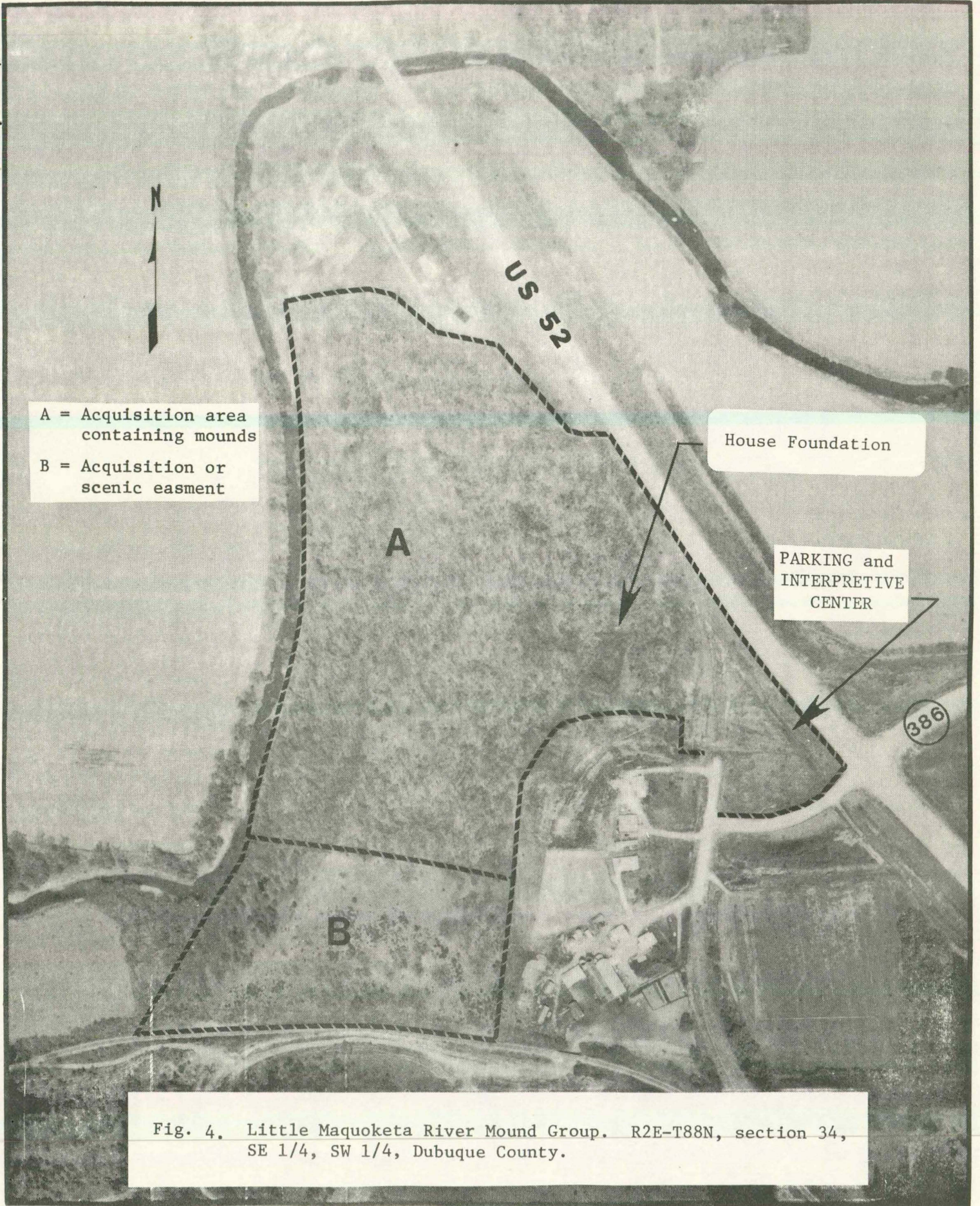


Fig. 4. Little Maquoketa River Mound Group. R2E-T88N, section 34, SE 1/4, SW 1/4, Dubuque County.

Table 1. Mound Descriptions.

<u>Mound Number</u>	<u>Height*</u>	<u>Diameter*</u>	<u>Form</u>	<u>Condition and Comments</u>
1	45 cm	7 m	conical	depression in center; tested by Slattery
2	16 cm	4 m	conical	
3	31 cm	6 m	conical	
4	28 cm	5 m	conical	depression in center; possibly tested by Slattery
5	12 cm	4.5 m	conical	
6	85 cm	9.5 m	conical	
7	23 cm	6.5 m	conical	
8	70 cm	6.5 m	conical	
9	58 cm	5 m	conical	
10	87 cm	8.5 m	conical	depression in center
11	108 cm	10 m	conical	recent depression in center
12	90 cm	9 m	conical	depression in center
13	118 cm	10 m	conical	depression in center
14	94 cm	13 m	conical	
15	16 cm	4 m	conical	
16	62 cm	7.5 m	conical	
17	63 cm	7 m	conical	
18	44 cm	7.5 m	conical/ linear	possibly linear, east margin is unclear
19	43 cm	5 m	conical	
20	27 cm	4 m	conical	
21	52 cm	7.5 m	conical	
22	46 cm	7 m	conical	
23	15 cm	4 m	conical	
24	41 cm	9 m	conical	
25	39 cm	6 m	conical	
26	103 cm	9 m	conical	
27	70 cm	10.5 m	conical	depression in center
28	33 cm	19x12 m	indeterminate	possibly interlocking linear mounds; badly disturbed
29	23 cm	7.5 m	conical	
30	49 cm	33x7 m	linear	
31	42 cm	8 m	conical	
32	48 cm	22x7 m	linear	depression in north end

* Diameters and elevations are approximate.

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