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The St. Paul District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is planning to construct a levee around Renville County Park (a.k.a. Mouse River Park), as part of the Souris River flood control project. A borrow area was selected to provide any additional material needed for levee construction and also serve as a disposal site for any unusable material from the cutoff excavation. The proposed borrow area is on private land. The area was surveyed for any cultural resources material. An historic rock concentration located in the borrow area does not have any potential to yield important information on historical activity nor is it eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. No further work is recommended.

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St. Paul District

RENVILLE COUNTY PARK IMPROVEMENTS BORROW AREA SURVEY, SOURIS RIVER BASIN PROJECT, RENVILLE COUNTY, NORTH DAKOTA

by

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Report of Investigations
Number CENCS-PD-ER-45

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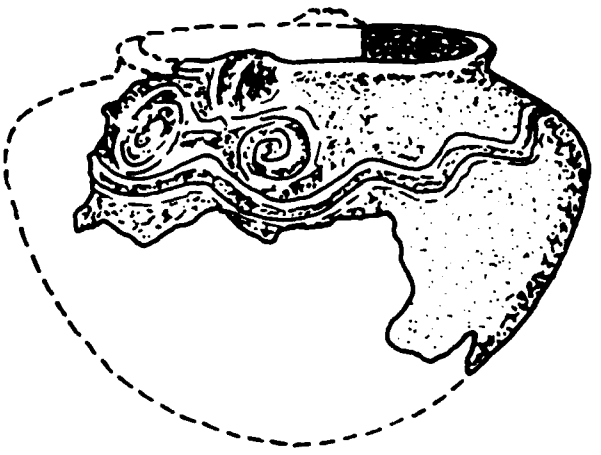

RENVILLE COUNTY PARK IMPROVEMENTS
BORROW AREA SURVEY, SOURIS RIVER BASIN
PROJECT, RENVILLE COUNTY, NORTH DAKOTA

INTRODUCTION

The St. Paul District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is planning to construct a levee around Renville County Park (a.k.a. Mouse River Park, Renville County Memorial Park) in Renville County, North Dakota, as part of their Souris River Basin flood control project. Much of the necessary levee construction material will come from the associated high-water river channel cutoff to be excavated in the area. A borrow area was recently selected to provide any additional material needed for levee construction and also to serve as a disposal site for any unusable material from the cutoff excavation.

Renville County Park is located inside a bend of the Souris River approximately 13 miles west-northwest of Mohall and 5 miles north-northeast of Tolley, North Dakota (Figure 1). The proposed borrow area is located one-half mile due east of the park on a ridge in the valley breaks, i.e., the area where the uplands and the floodplain meet. Its specific location is in the SE¼SE¼ and E½SW¼SE¼, Section 2, T161N, R86W, Renville County, North Dakota (Figure 2).

While Renville County Park itself consists of county-owned land, the floodplain lands surrounding it are part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Upper Souris National Wildlife Refuge. The proposed borrow area is on private land owned by Mr. Ernest Mau of Tolley, North Dakota. Mr. Mau had earlier requested that the Project Manager notify him prior to any work being conducted on his land. Consequently, Ms. Virginia Gnabasik, staff archeologist for the St. Paul District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, contacted Mr. Mau on September 10, 1990, regarding access permission in order to conduct the required cultural resources investigation of the area. Mr. Mau had no objections to the work and requested at this time that he be notified if any cultural resources sites are found as a result of the survey.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The proposed borrow area is located at a ridge in the Souris valley breaks due east of Renville County Park and adjacent to the south of a gravel road leading eastward out of the valley from the park (Figure 2). Soils in the survey area include Barnes loam (1 to 3 percent slopes) and Barnes loam (6 to 9 percent slopes) on the northeastern two-thirds of the ridgetop and Barnes-Buse loams (3 to 6 percent slopes) on the southwestern third. Zahl-Max loams (9 to 15 percent slopes) are found on the slopes extending southwestward down into the river valley, while Zahl-Max loams (15 to 60

percent slopes) are found in the drainage adjacent to the southeast of the ridgetop (Thiele et al. 1977:Map 30 and legend).

All of these are deep, well-drained soils which developed on glacial till plains in the case of the Barnes and Barnes-Buse loams and on glacial till in the Souris valley breaks in the case of the Zahl-Max loams (Thiele et al. 1977:7, 8, 9, 11, 22, 32). The black to very dark brown to very dark grayish-brown loam topsoil (A horizons) of these soils range in depth from the surface to 4 to 7 inches below the surface. The dark brown to very dark grayish-brown subsoils (B horizons) of the Barnes and Max loams are 9 inches thick. The Buse and Zahl loams lack a B horizon subsoil. The upper portions of the underlying light olive brown to very dark grayish-brown (C horizon) material of all of these soils have an accumulation of lime which disappears at depth (Thiele et al. 1977:7, 8, 9, 11, 23, 32-33). The Barnes and Barnes-Buse loams are generally used for cultivated crops, while the Zahl-Max loams, due to their slopes, are generally left in native grass for use as pasture or for haying (Thiele et al. 1977:7, 11, 32, 33).

Vegetation in the survey area includes grasses (species undeterminable due to grazing), sagebrush (Artemisia spp.), and shrub-sized hawthorns (Crataegus spp.), with deciduous trees located in scattered small clusters in the drainage adjacent to the southeast. Hawthorns "commonly occur on disturbed sites, along the margins of woodlands, along streams, and in abandoned fields" (Elias 1980:605).

PREVIOUS ARCHEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL STUDIES

A search of the contract and project files and associated reports at the St. Paul District office of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers turned up one literature and records search report (Schneider 1977) and two survey reports (Schweigert 1979; Floodman et al. 1985) which are relevant to the borrow area survey. The first two reports are related to the Burlington Dam Flood Control Project and the third is related to the Lake Darling-Souris River Project, which flood control projects have since been replaced by the current Souris River Basin Project.

In 1977, the University of North Dakota conducted a literature and records search for archeological, historical, and paleontological resources in the then proposed Burlington Dam Flood Control Project area along the Souris River in North Dakota (ref. Schneider 1977). A five-day preliminary field reconnaissance also conducted at this time concentrated on local informant interviews and visits to known sites. The literature and records search turned up information on 124 archeological site leads for that part of the study area in Renville County (Schneider 1977:Table 1). No formally recorded sites were on file for the county. Only one of the site leads is applicable to the currently proposed borrow area. It is to an unspecified type of archeological site in the W½SW¼, Section

2, T161N, R86W, the same section the borrow area is in. This site lead was recorded by Hecker in 1938 (Schneider 1977:108-App.A).

In 1978-1979, Mr. Kurt Schweigert, who was then working for the University of North Dakota, conducted a combination pedestrian and windshield survey for historical and architectural sites in the proposed Burlington Dam Flood Control Project area and some of the adjacent uplands (ref. Schweigert 1979). He covered the SW¼ of Section 2, T161N, R86W, using intensive pedestrian survey techniques. The remainder of Section 2, including the currently proposed borrow area in the SE¼, were only covered by a windshield reconnaissance for standing buildings and structures (Schweigert 1979:Figure 1). Site 32RV441, Mouse River Park, was recorded as a result of the pedestrian survey of the section's SW¼. This recreation and political/social/religious meeting area was established in 1911. It was and continues to be an important central meeting site for northwestern Renville County. Schweigert recommended that the Mouse River Park site be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places (Schweigert 1979:37-38; site form). Schweigert (1979:Appendix B) does not list any other structures, farmsteads or historical sites for Section 2. It is to be noted that the archeological survey conducted by the University of North Dakota for the Burlington Dam Flood Control Project did not extend this far north in the Souris Valley (ref. Good and Fox 1978).

In 1982, Powers Elevation conducted a cultural resources survey of the Souris River Valley to 1610 feet above mean sea level for the St. Paul District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' proposed Lake Darling-Souris River Project (ref. Floodman et al. 1985). This intensive pedestrian survey does not include the currently proposed borrow area, being confined primarily to the Souris River floodplain from two miles south of North Dakota highway 5 to seven miles south of the Canadian border. The literature and records search that Powers conducted as part of this survey turned up only one site (32RV441, Mouse River Park) and one site lead (Hecker's 1938 archeological site of unspecified type) in Section 2, T161N, R86W (Floodman et al. 1985:Table 1). While Mouse River Park was revisited by Powers, no other sites were recorded for the section as a result of this survey (Floodman et al. 1985:Figures 26 and 38). Floodman et al. (1985:166) state that Mouse River Park was "the focus of regional history from 1912 to about 1930" and as such "meets the National Register criteria of being associated with people and events important to local history." The source of Hecker's site lead was apparently never relocated.

The master site location card files at the Archaeology and Historic Preservation Division of the State Historical Society of North Dakota in Bismarck were checked on September 10, 1990 for any additional sites or site leads to the proposed borrow area or near vicinity. The survey reports files were also checked for possible prior surveys of the intended borrow area's vicinity. As

a result of this records search, one site (32RV441, Mouse River Park) and one site lead (32RVX172, a prehistoric artifact scatter recorded by Hecker in 1938) were found to occur in Section 2, T161N, R86W. Although one previous historical and architectural sites survey (Schweigert 1979) included the location of the borrow area, no surveys for prehistoric resources have ever been conducted of that particular area.

According to site records at the State Historical Society, site 32RV441 (Mouse River Park/Renville County Memorial Park/Mouse River Loop Chautauqua Association) was listed in the state's Regional Environmental Assessment Program (REAP) by Tweton in 1978. It was formally recorded as a site during a historical and architectural survey of the lands to be affected by the then proposed Burlington Dam Flood Control Project (see Schweigert 1979). This site is considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places based on the significance of events which took place at that location in relation to the development of the region (32RV441 site form).

Site lead 32RVX172 is based on a general section/township/range map of Renville County whereon Thadeus Hecker noted the presence of an artifact scatter of unknown prehistoric period in the W½SW¼, Section 2, T161N, R86W (Hecker 1938; site lead form). The notes by Hecker accompanying this map only list that there are prehistoric artifacts at this general location, without giving any further details. This map and notes are located in the library archives of the Archaeology and Historic Preservation Division at the State Historical Society of North Dakota in Bismarck.

FIELD METHODS

On September 11, 1990, Ms. Gnabasik, the St. Paul District Corps archeologist, spent 1.5 hours conducting an intensive pedestrian survey of the entire proposed borrow area. Parallel transects five meters apart were walked in a northwest-southeast direction across the ridgetop; parallel transects spaced 15 meters apart were walked following the ridge slope contours in the drainage to the southeast. Surface visibility was generally 50 to 70 percent. The grass had been grazed down to a height of six inches or less. The roadcuts and cowpath along the fence by the road were carefully inspected for any evidence of subsurface cultural materials or features. Surface visibility was 100 percent there. As visible in the roadcuts, the ridge's topsoil is only 4 to 6 inches deep. Both the topsoil and the underlying subsoils contain quantities of glacial cobbles and gravel. An old barbed wire fence is lying twisted on the ground across the ridgetop roughly paralleling the road.

Although the survey area is at the edge of the glaciated upland plains overlooking the Souris River Valley, only one large boulder and a few scattered cobbles and rocks were present on the

surface of the ridgetop, except for a concentration of such rocks and cobbles at four boulders located at the ridgetop's southeastern edge (Figure 2). There are additional scattered rocks located along the ridgetop edge southwest of this concentration as well (Figure 3). This rock concentration was the only prehistoric or historic feature observed in the survey area.

Upon completion of the actual pedestrian survey, the Corps archeologist returned to the rock concentration to determine if it was historic or prehistoric in origin and to record it on the appropriate NDCRS site form. A careful search of the surface of the feature and the immediate vicinity did not reveal any artifacts. The Corps archeologist proceeded to dig three 20 cm diameter holes in the interior of the feature in a further attempt to determine the origins of the feature and if it was confined to the surface and topsoil and/or if it had a subsurface pit feature present below it. Due to the number of rocks present at the surface, a trowel was used for this work rather than a shovel. A fourth 20 cm diameter trowel hole was dug outside the feature to the northeast to function as a subsurface control.

RESULTS

Historic rock concentration 32RV267 was the only cultural feature observed in the proposed borrow area during the cultural resources survey. This is a rock concentration of four boulders and several hundred cobble-sized rocks located on the surface and partially silted into the topsoil at the southeastern edge of the ridgetop. The concentration measures 6.5 meters in rough diameter. No artifacts were observed on the surface at this feature. Three 20 cm diameter trowel test holes were dug into the interior of this feature (Figure 4). All three were dug to a maximum depth of 20 cm below the surface. Surface-visible rocks at all three locations extended down to the bottom of the topsoil layer, which bottomed out at 10 cm b.s. The subsoil from 10 to 20 cm b.s. was loamy with glacial gravel. No artifacts or subsurface features were encountered during the testing. The fourth or control trowel test hole, which was located outside the feature, had no surface-visible rocks, but rocks were present in the 10-cm-thick topsoil layer. The subsoil below that to 20 cm b.s., the bottom of the hole, was loamy soil with glacial gravel.

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSIONS

Based on the location of the rock concentration at the edge of the ridgetop where four boulders were already located, and considering the lack of glacial cobbles and rocks over much of the rest of the ridgetop, and further considering the lack of any prehistoric materials in or subsurface pits below the feature, this rock concentration (32RV267) is evaluated as most probably being historical in origin. The presence of the hawthorn shrub inside

the feature's boundaries also indicates that the ridgetop may have been previously disturbed by cultivation (Elias 1980:605).

Surface observations and the limited subsurface testing conducted during this survey indicate that historic rock concentration 32RV267 does not have any potential to yield important information on historical activity in the area on a local, state or national level. This isolated feature does not meet any of the other criteria for National Register eligibility either. It is believed to be not eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places and no further work at it is recommended.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Historic rock concentration 32RV267 was the only cultural feature located in the proposed Renville County Park levee construction borrow area during this survey. This historic feature is not significant on a national, state, regional, or local level. Because this historic feature is not eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, it is recommended that use of the survey area as a source of borrow fill for levee construction and for disposal of unusable material from excavation of the channel cutoff be allowed as proposed. No significant historical properties will be affected by use of the area for fill removal and disposal of unusable material.

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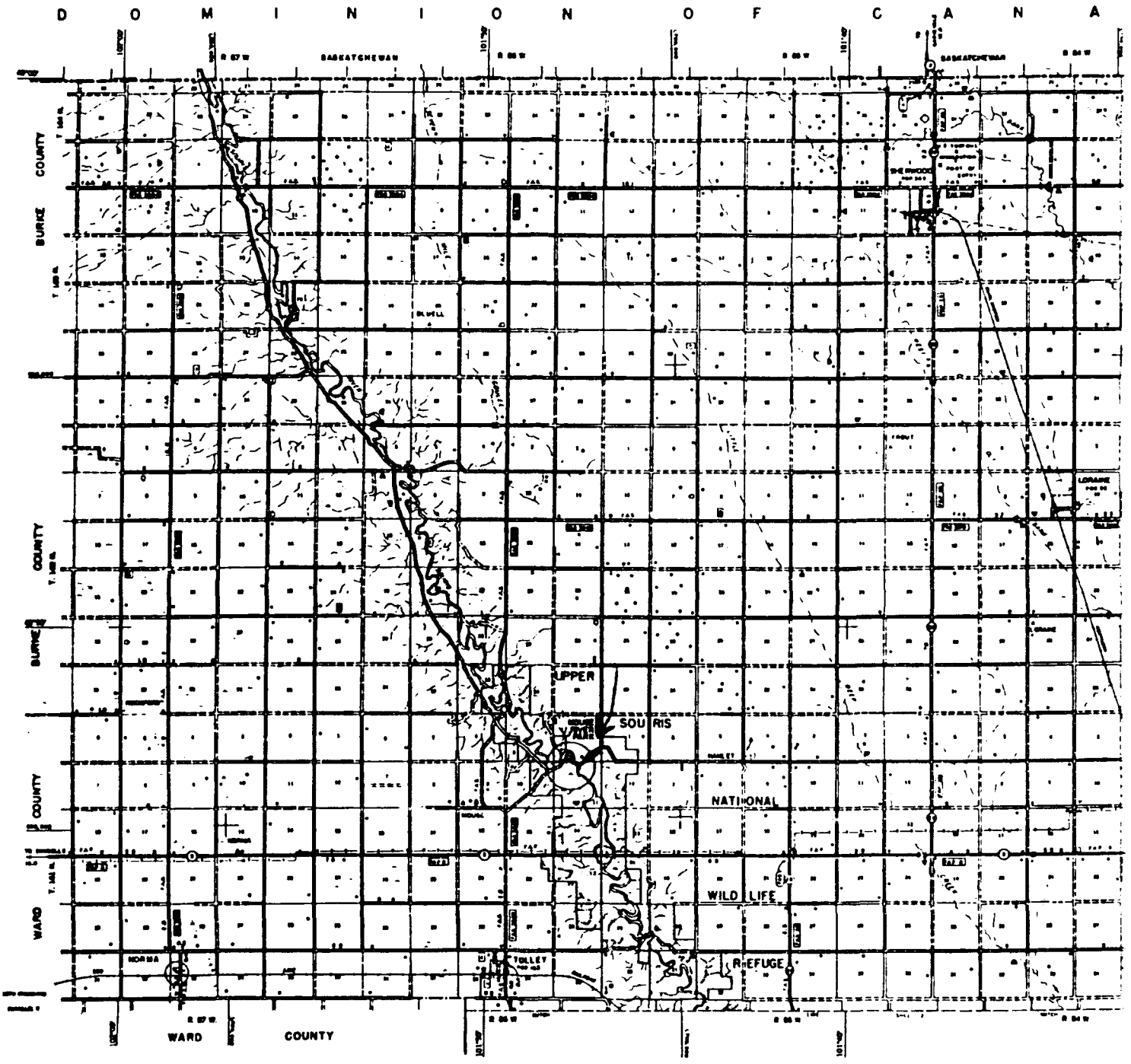

Figure 1. General highway map of Renville County, North Dakota showing location of proposed borrow area checked for cultural resources.

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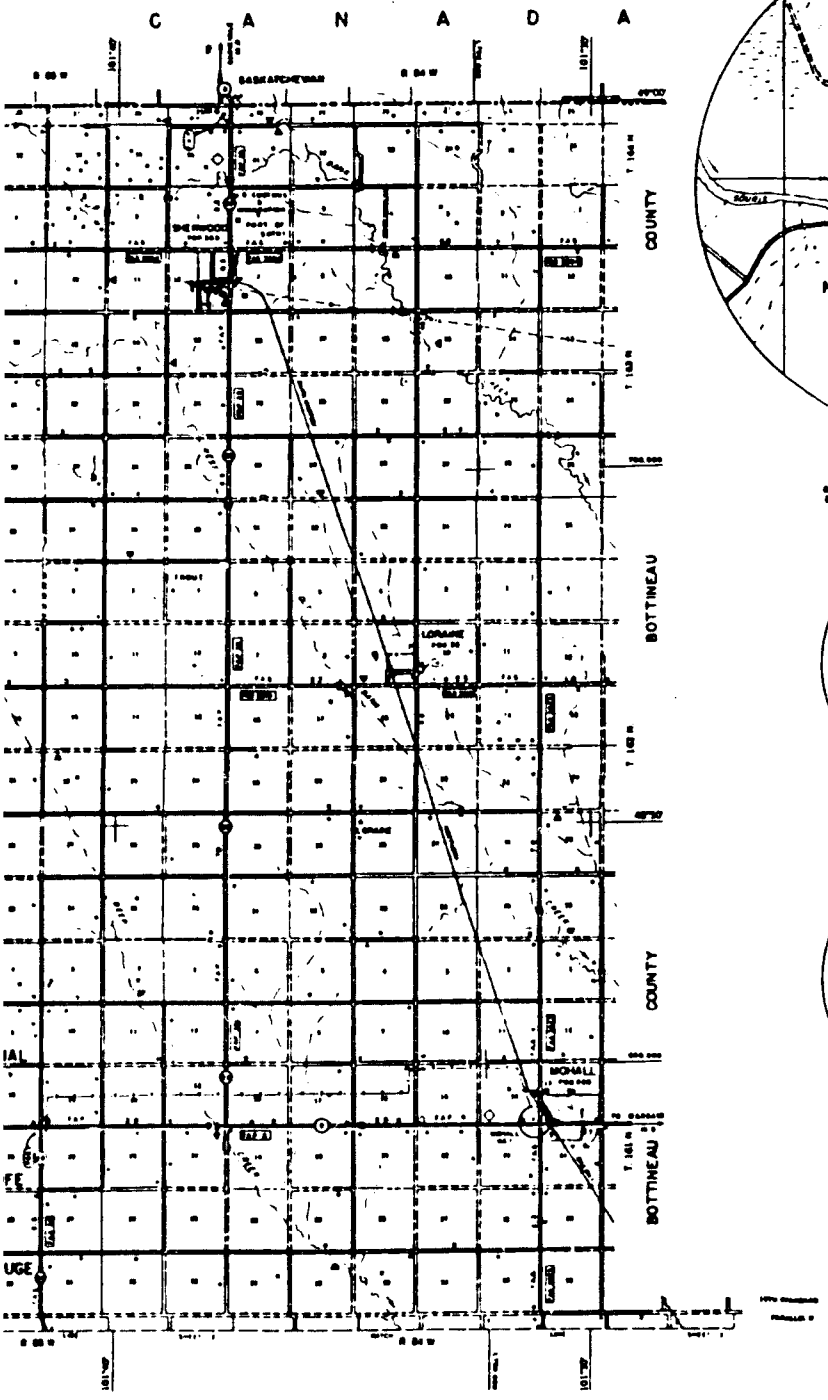

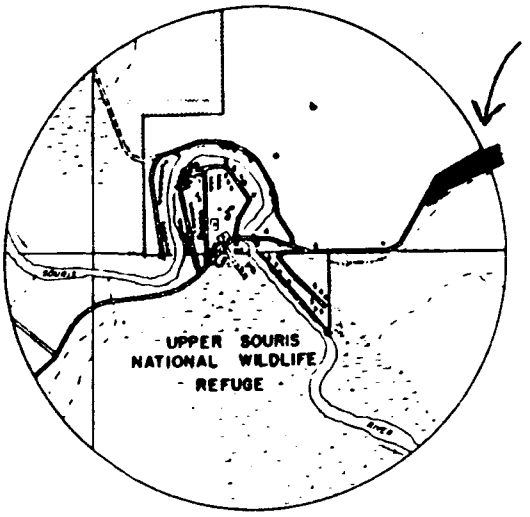

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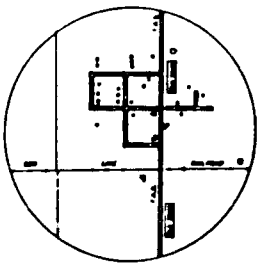

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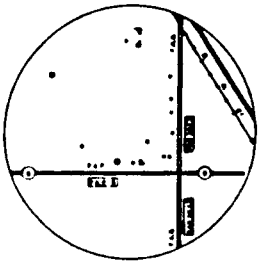

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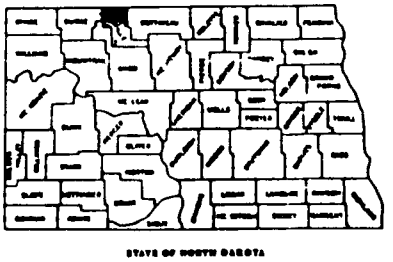

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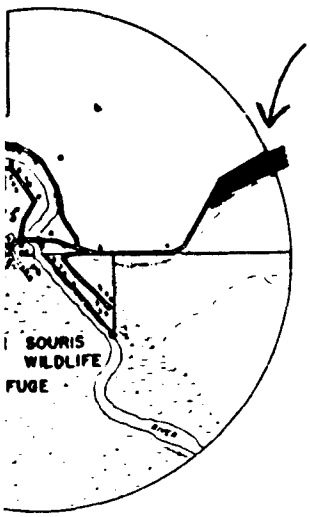

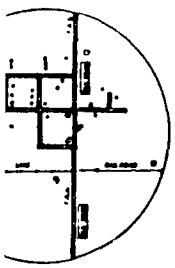

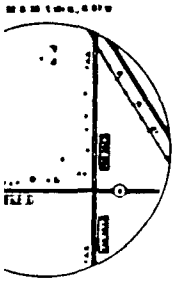

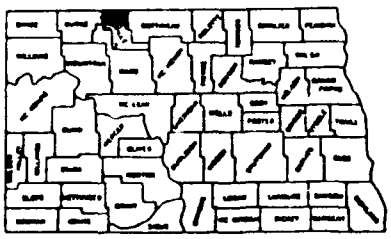

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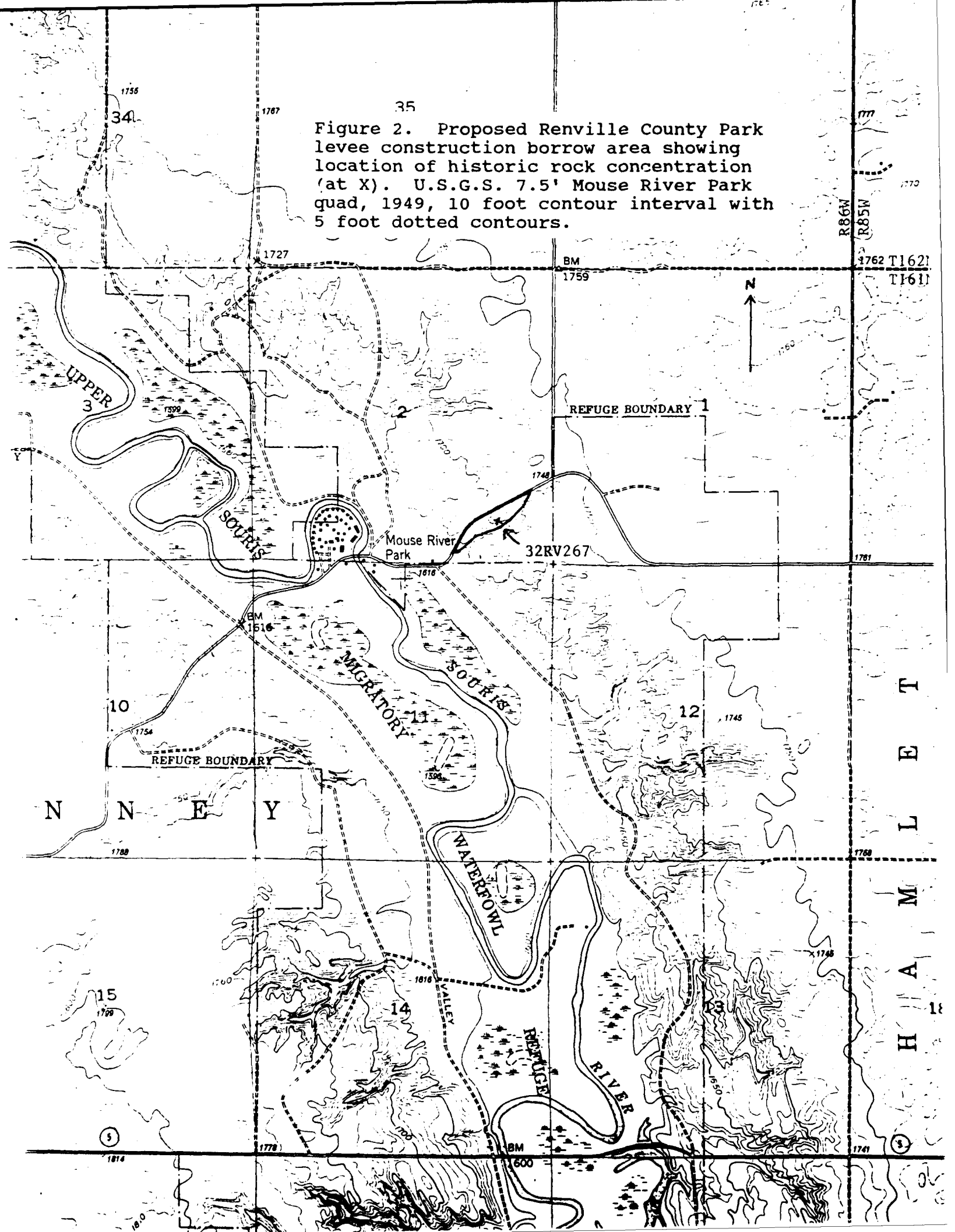

Figure 2. Proposed Renville County Park levee construction borrow area showing location of historic rock concentration (at X). U.S.G.S. 7.5' Mouse River Park quad, 1949, 10 foot contour interval with 5 foot dotted contours.

Figure 3. Historic rock concentration 32RV267 in foreground, looking south-southwest toward the Souris River (at line of trees).

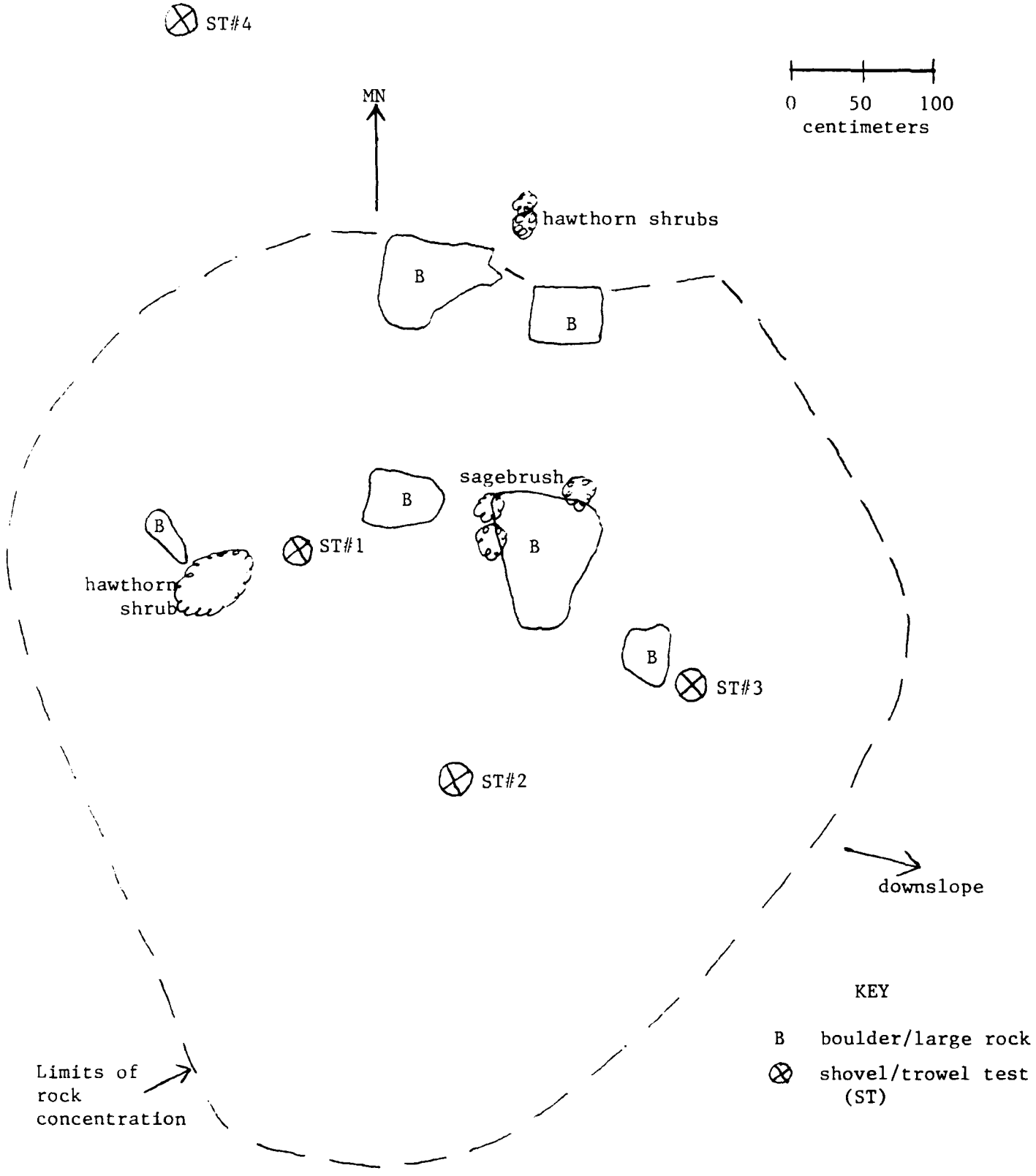

Figure 4. Sketch map of rock concentration 32RV267 showing location of four subsurface tests.