

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY SHORT REPORT
Illinois Historic Preservation Agency
Old State Capitol, Springfield, Illinois

Reviewer: _____
Date: _____
 Accepted
 Rejected

Locational Information and Survey Conditions

County: La Salle

Quadrangle: Ottawa, IL (1994)

Project Type/Title: Phase II Archaeological Testing of Ottawa Toll House Relocation.

Responsible Federal/State Agencies: IDNR

Legal Location:

NE $\frac{1}{4}$, NW $\frac{1}{4}$, NE $\frac{1}{4}$, Section 11,
Township 35 North, Range 4 West of the 3rd P.M. (Ottawa Township),
La Salle County, Illinois

UTM: 4,579,580m North
345,956m East

Project Description: Phase II archaeological testing of the proposed site for the relocation of the Ottawa Toll House. Current plans call for the relocation of the toll house approximately 50' west of its existing location.

Topography: South berm of the Illinois and Michigan Canal, in the Illinois River floodplain near the juncture of Illinois and Fox Rivers.

Soils: Morley-Blount-Beecher-Eyler Association

Drainage: Fox River, Illinois River

Land Use/Ground Cover: Grass covered yard

Survey Limitations: Surface visibility was poor (0%) and the soil was very hard/compacted.

Archaeological and Historical Information

Historical Plats/Atlases/Source: The Ottawa Toll House is a small front-gabled frame commercial building that is believed to have been constructed ca. 1849 for use as an Illinois and Michigan Canal collector's office. At the time of its construction, the building was one of only four collector's offices then in operation along the canal. These toll collectors' stations played an integral role in the day-to-day operations of the canal, collecting the revenue that was the essential to the canal's continued operation and maintenance. The Ottawa Toll House apparently was located near LaSalle Street in

Ottawa initially and then moved to its present location, at Columbus Street, around 1872. It remained in use as a collector's station until 1926, after which it was leased out by the State of Illinois to private individuals. Between 1972 and 1990 the building was used as a barbershop. It is the only collector's office that is known to have survived along the canal. The history of the toll house has been well documented by Krupka (1990) and Stratton and Mansberger (1998).

Archival research suggests that a frame building associated with the early toll house structure was once present in the area of the proposed relocation. Sanborn fire insurance maps from 1888, 1891, 1898, 1907, 1913 and 1925 document the presence of a single-story, frame outbuilding located approximately 30' west of the toll house. The 1888, 1891, and 1898 maps label this outbuilding as "W. HO."—an abbreviation indicating "wood house" or perhaps "warehouse"—while the 1907 Sanborn map simply notes this building as a "shed". The 1913 and 1925 Sanborn maps depict the outbuilding but do not indicate its specific function. Documentary evidence suggests that this building was constructed at some point between 1872 (the date of the toll house's relocation from LaSalle to Columbus Street) and 1888, although it is possible that the structure may have been present at the LaSalle Street location and been moved to Columbus Street along with the toll house. Scaling off the Sanborn maps, the shed appears to have measured approximately 15' (north/south) by 25' (east/west). These maps do not indicate rooflines, but the building's orientation suggests that it had a gable roof with a ridge running parallel to the Illinois and Michigan Canal. During its active use, the warehouse/shed would have provided ancillary storage space for the toll house (for equipment and heating fuels like wood and coal) and may also have been utilized for maintenance work on the Columbus Street drawbridge. The structure was demolished at some point between the publications of the 1925 and 1949 Sanborn maps.

Previously Reported Sites: No other sites have been reported in the specific location surveyed for this project. The city of Ottawa, however, was first settled in the 1830s, and numerous middle-nineteenth-century domestic and commercial sites are located in proximity to the survey area.

Previous Surveys: The area adjacent to the toll house has been subject to limited archaeological investigations on several previous occasions. In 1996 Paul Kreisa and PSAP conducted a shovel testing survey adjacent to the toll house as part of a proposed renovation of the building (Kreisa 1996). In 1998 Fever River Research excavated a 1x2m test unit on the north side of the toll house which confirmed that 1) substantial fills had been placed on the levee during the early years of the twentieth century, and 2) the toll house structure had been shifted 14' south from its original location during the period 1925-1935. The latter investigations were conducted in conjunction with a detailed physical examination of the toll house (Stratton and Mansberger 1998:29).

Regional Archaeologist Contacted: None

Investigation Techniques: The Phase II testing strategy involved the initial hand-excavation of two 1x2m test units (to assess the character of the more recent twentieth century fills and

the location of the circa 1848 ground surface) followed by the mechanical excavation of four trenches across the site selected for the relocated toll house. The intention of the backhoe excavations was to assess the presence/absence of archaeological features and—if present—document them. See comments section for more details.

Time Expended: 40 man-hours

Sites/Features Found: The investigations found the remains of a masonry retaining wall and two post molds. See comments for more information.

Cultural Material: The vast majority of the artifacts recovered dated from the early and middle twentieth century, although there was a limited number of late nineteenth century artifacts (such as machine-cut nails) noted as well. Most of the material appears to have been deposited as fill, and hence may not be associated with the Ottawa Toll House. No artifacts were collected during the course of these investigations.

Collection Technique: No artifacts were collected during the course of these investigations. All nineteenth century artifacts encountered during the backhoe and shovel scraping work were noted while in the field and not collected.

Curated at: Fever River Research, Springfield (short-term)
Illinois State Museum, Springfield (long-term)

Area Surveyed (acres and square meters): Less than 0.1 acre (40 square meters)

RESULTS OF INVESTIGATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Phase I archaeological reconnaissance has located no archaeological material [in this portion of the site]; project clearance is recommended.
- Phase I archaeological reconnaissance has located archaeological materials; site(s) does(do) not meet requirements for National Register eligibility; project clearance is recommended.
- Phase I archaeological reconnaissance has located archaeological materials; site(s) may meet requirements for National Register eligibility; further testing is recommended.
- Phase II archaeological investigation has indicated that site(s) does(do) not meet requirements for National Register eligibility; project clearance is recommended.
- Phase II archaeological investigation has indicated that site(s) meet requirements for National Register eligibility; formal report is pending and a determination of eligibility is recommended.

Comments:

Field Investigations:

The archaeological survey described in this report was done at the request of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), which owns the Ottawa Toll House. At the present time, the toll house is in a deteriorated condition and occupies a site uncomfortably close to Columbus Street and a bridge over the Illinois and Michigan Canal. IDNR has decided to move the building onto new foundations directly west of its present location and renovate the structure. The new site selected for the toll house roughly corresponds to one occupied by the frame warehouse/shed that is depicted on the 1888-1925 Sanborn maps, hence there was a distinct possibility of subsurface archaeological deposits being located in this area. There also was a chance that other features associated with the toll house—such as privies—might be present.

The field investigations were initiated with the excavation of two 1x2m test units (numbered 1 and 2), which were laid out on a north-south line on-center with the proposed building site. The purpose of these test units primarily was to assess the soil stratigraphy in the survey area prior to mechanical trenching. The berm on which the toll house sits is a manmade feature created to form the canal prism; as such, it has a dynamic character, being formed by successive layers of re-deposited soils from the initial excavation of the canal and subsequent dredging activities. The archaeological testing conducted by Fever River Research in 1998 suggested that the early-twentieth-century ground surface in front of the toll house was located minimally 60cm below grade. The nineteenth-century surface was even deeper, though its exact depth was not determined at that time (Stratton and Mansberger 1998:29). Test 1 was laid out high on the south slope of the berm and abutted the south edge of the towpath, while Test 2 was positioned at the base of the berm. The two test units (Tests 1 and 2) were excavated over a two-day period, using both cultural and arbitrary levels. Both tests were dug approximately 90cm below grade without hitting sterile soil, or even a surface pre-dating 1900. Much of the fill in Test 2 consisted of pea gravel and mixed trash, which capped a layer of chipped limestone. The majority of the artifacts noted dated from the middle twentieth century and had been deposited after the Ottawa Toll House had ceased operating as a collector's station and its associated shed had been demolished.

Not knowing that the nineteenth-century ground surface was buried beneath fills at least one meter deep, the field crew returned to the site the following week and excavated four backhoe trenches across the survey area. The trenching was done with a backhoe using a 2'-wide, smooth bucket. The trenches were laid out parallel to one another (leaving 45-60cm baulks in between) and measured 1.0m to 1.2m wide and approximately 6m long. Since the relocated toll house will have a full basement beneath it, the excavations were carried down to sterile soil. Approximately 78% of the proposed building footprint was opened up and exposed by the trenching.

Feature Description:

All four of the backhoe trenches cut across remnants of a masonry retaining wall, which runs east-west and lines up with the north wall of the toll house. Although *in situ* remains of this wall were present in only one of the trenches, stone rubble from the wall was encountered in the other trenches as well, and its location was readily evident in the soil profile. The *in situ* remains consisted of two courses of dry-laid cut limestone with concrete rubble as backing. The wall measured 26-38cm (10-14") wide and may have stood as high as 60cm (2') tall. The surface on which the retaining wall was constructed appears to date to circa 1900-1930 (suggested by the recovery of both wire and machine-cut nails from this level).

The only other features exposed during the field investigations were two round post molds, measuring 15-20cm (6"-8") in diameter. These were located in two separate trenches and were not on-line with one another. The lack of additional post molds would seem to rule out the posts as being part of either a post-in-ground or wood-pier building. It is possible that they are associated with one of the multiple generations of overhead utility lines (telegraph, telephone, and electrical) that have run along the Illinois and Michigan Canal over the years.

Summary and Conclusions:

Although there was some expectation of archaeological remains potentially being present in the area chosen for the relocated Ottawa Toll House, the Phase II archaeological testing of this area found otherwise. The only features exposed during the testing consisted of an early twentieth-century retaining wall and two post-molds. The investigations found no evidence of the historic warehouse/shed once associated with the toll house. Whatever foundations this building had beneath it apparently were ripped out when the structure was removed from the site; either that, or it may have had simply a wood sill set on the ground, which have left virtually no archaeological signature.

The archaeological survey, however, did result in a better understanding of soil stratigraphy in this section of the canal berm and its evolution through time. As originally constructed, the canal berm was rather low, being raised only about 1m (3'-3") above the natural ground surface outside the canal prism. The amount of post-construction soil deposition that occurred circa 1850-1900 appears to have been relatively modest, with much of the fill being dumped along the side of the berm (opposite the canal), rather than on the tow path itself. During the early twentieth century, the low retaining wall was built along the berm and roughly 70cm (2'-3") of backfill deposited behind it, thus raising the berm and tow path considerably. Around the same time, a pavement of chipped limestone was laid along the base of the berm, potentially as part of a street or parking lot improvement. It is possible that the Civilian Conservation Corps constructed both the retaining wall and limestone pavement as part of their improvement program along the canal during the 1930s. The retaining wall eventually was removed, or fell into disrepair, and a thick layer of trash and pea gravel was dumped along the south side of the exposed bank to stabilize it. The circa 1900 ground surface is now

capped beneath roughly 95cm (3'-1") of fill at the tow path level and 65cm (2'-2") of fill at the base of the berm.

The proposed relocation project for the Ottawa Toll House will not impact any significant archaeological deposits. No further work is recommended.

Surveyors/Excavators: F. Mansberger, C. Stratton, J. Senger

Survey Date: October 23-24 and 27, 2003

Report Completed By: C. Stratton

Submitted By (Signature and title):

F. Mansberger (Director)

Attachment Check List:

- 1. USGS Topographic Map
- 2. Project Map
- 3. Site Revisit Form (Two copies)
- 4. Relevant Correspondence
- 5. Additional Information Sheets

Address of Agency to whom SHPO comment should be mailed:

Dr. Harold Hassen
Division of Resource Review and Coordination
Illinois Department of Natural Resources
One Natural Resources Way
Springfield, IL 62702-1271

Reviewers' Comments:

REFERENCES CITED

Kreisa, Paul

- 1996 "An Intensive Archaeological Survey of the Ottawa Toll House Site, LaSalle County, Illinois." Draft report submitted to Architrave, Ltd., November 1996.

Krupka, Francis O.

- 1990 "Illinois & Michigan Canal Toll Collector's Station: Historic Structure Report and Historic Furnishings Study." Draft report submitted to the National Park Service, Illinois & Michigan Canal National Corridor, Joliet, Illinois.

Sanborn-Perris Map Company

- 1891 *Fire Insurance Maps of Ottawa, Illinois*. New York: Sanborn-Perris Map Company.

Stratton, Christopher and Floyd Mansberger

- 1998 "Historic Structure Report: The Illinois and Michigan Canal Toll House at Ottawa, La Salle County, Illinois." Report prepared by Fever River Research for the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

United States Geological Survey (USGS)

- 1994 *Ottawa, Illinois, Quadrangle Map*. 7.5 minute series. Washington, D. C.: United States Geological Survey.

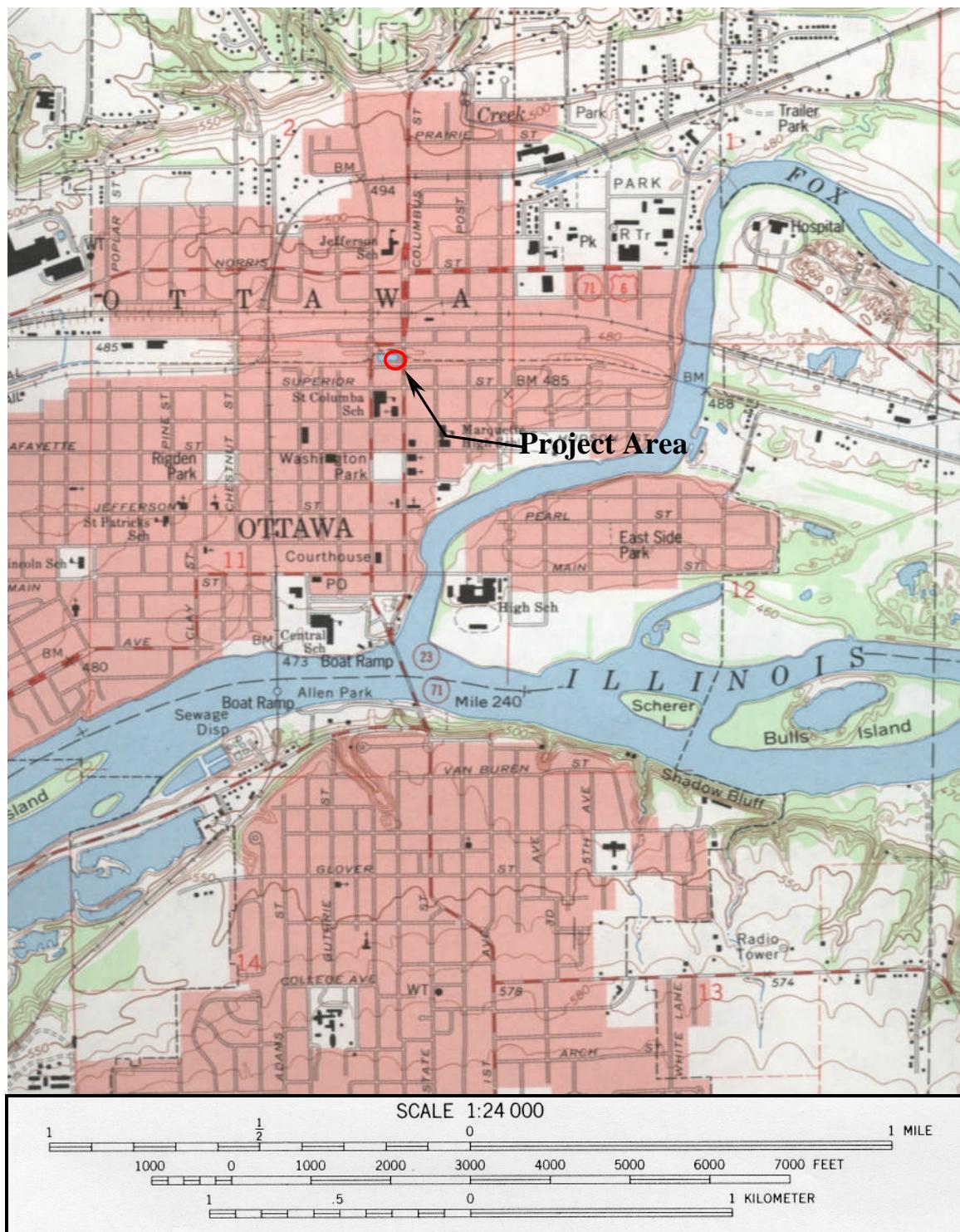


Figure 1. Location of the Ottawa Toll House, Ottawa (LaSalle County), Illinois (USGS Ottawa, Illinois Quadrangle 1994).

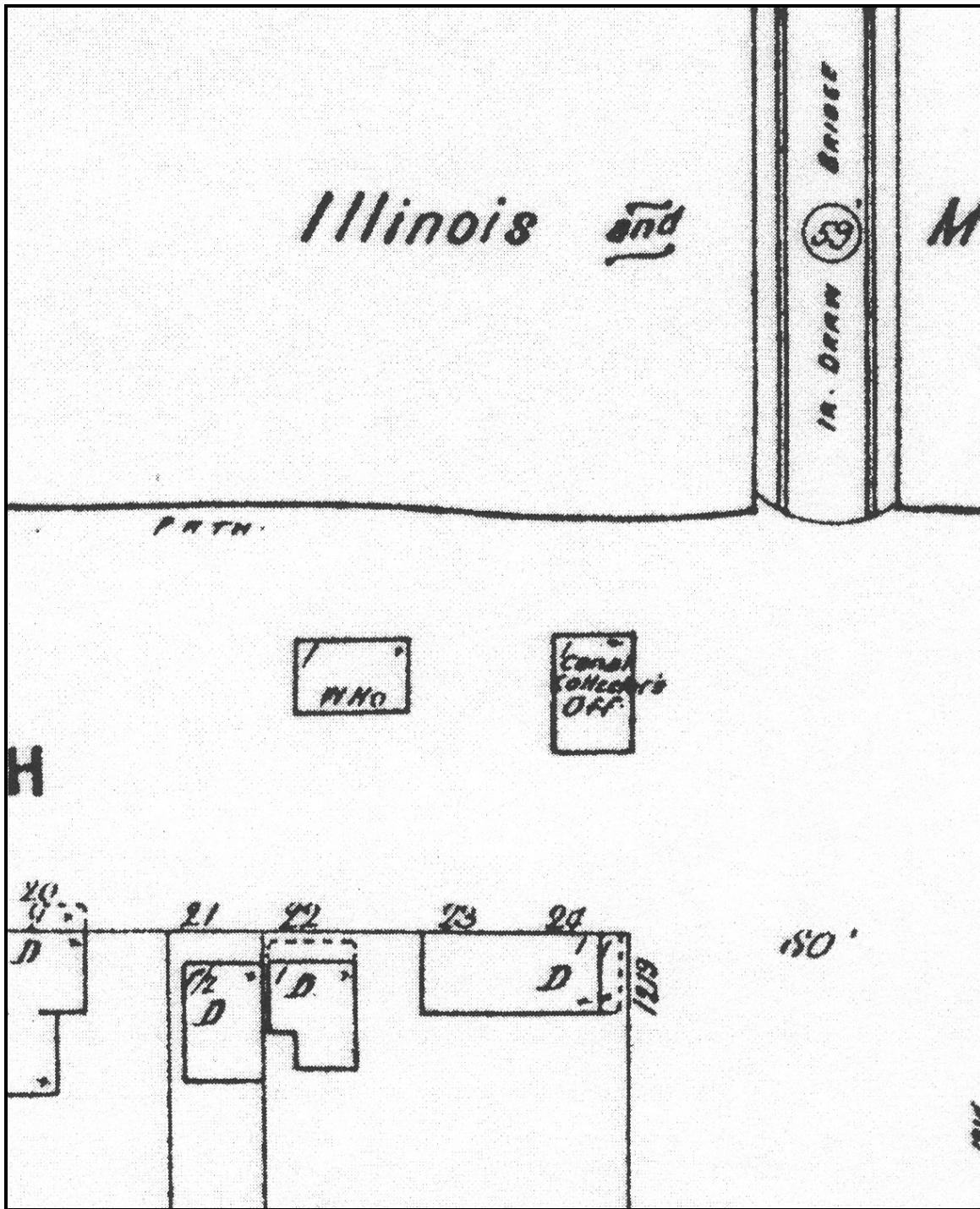


Figure 2. Detail from an 1891 Sanborn map of Ottawa showing the Ottawa Toll House (labeled “Canal Collector’s Off.”) and associated outbuilding (labeled “W. Ho.”). Both buildings are depicted as being of frame construction and as having roughly the same dimensions (Sanborn-Perris Map Company 1891).

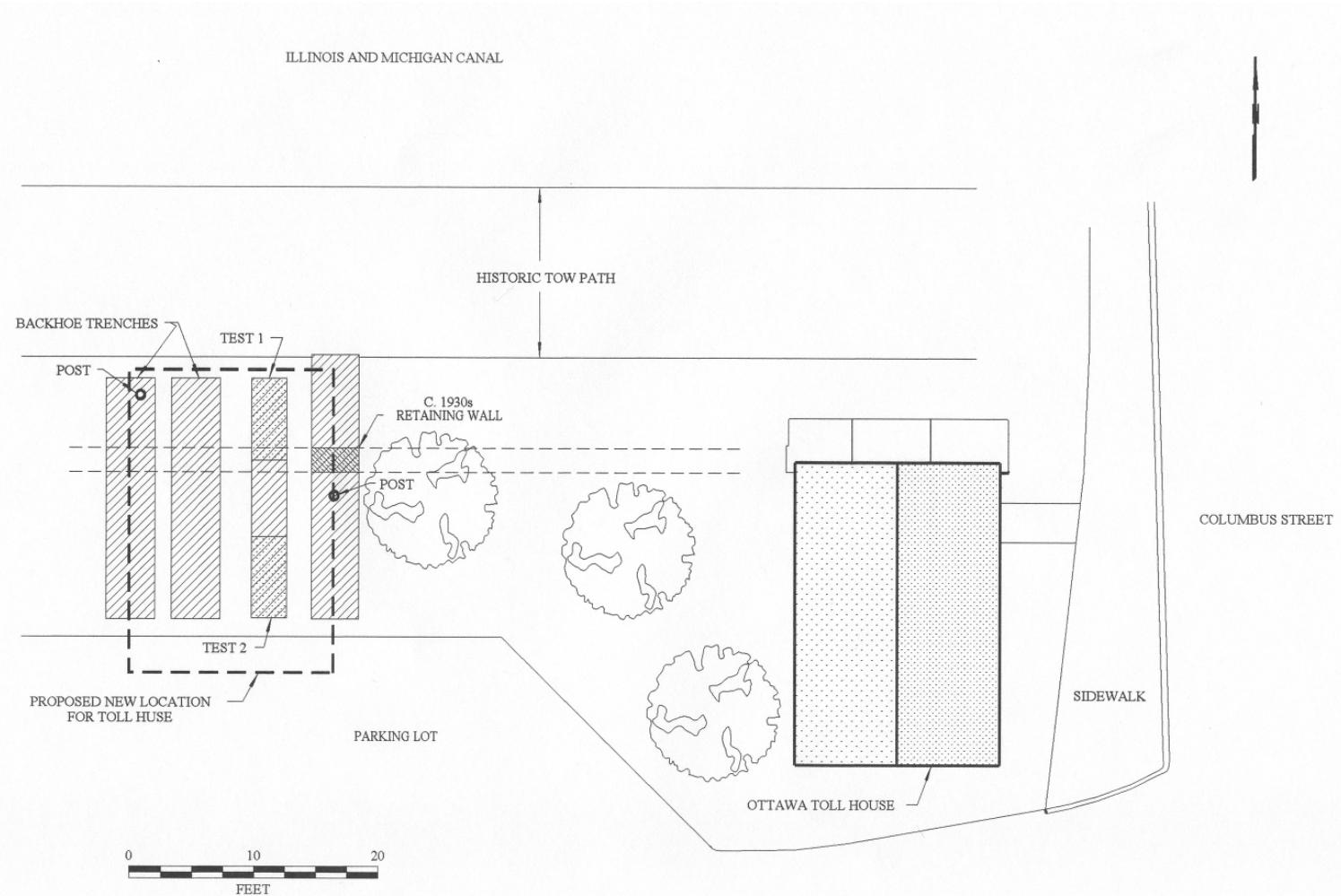


Figure 3. Site plan showing the area tested as part of the Ottawa Toll House relocation project. Excavation units and features identified are noted (FRR 2003).



Figure 4. Photograph of the Ottawa Toll House looking southeast, showing existing conditions and setting (FRR October 2003).



Figure 5. View of the area in which the Ottawa Toll House will be relocated. The two excavation units shown are centered on the new site selected for the building (FRR October 2003).



Figure 6. View of the toll house, looking north from the parking lot abutting the south end of the site (FRR October 2003).

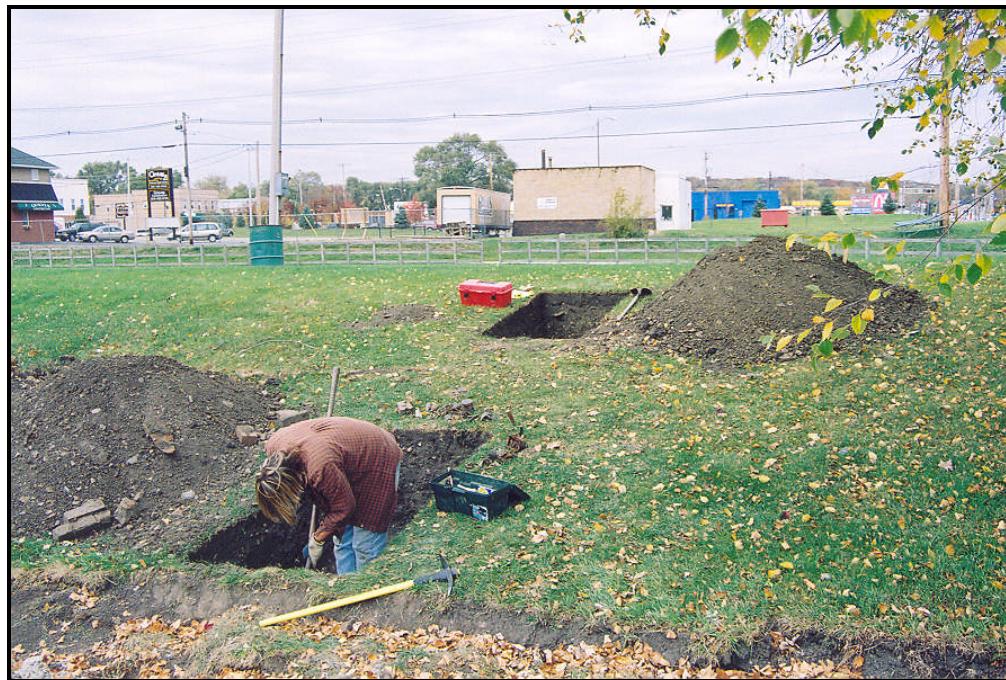


Figure 7. View of the two 1x2m test units excavated prior to the backhoe trenching at the site. Both units were dug nearly one meter below the existing ground surface without hitting the nineteenth-century ground surface (FRR October 2003).



Figure 8. All four of the backhoe trenches cut across remnants of a twentieth-century masonry retaining wall, most of which had been demolished or fallen into disrepair prior to being cover with later fill. The wall was constructed on a ground surface dating to the circa 1900-1930 period. Note the depth of the fill above it (FRR October 2003).



Figure 9. View of the masonry retaining wall. The wall was constructed of cut limestone with concrete rubble backing. Only two courses of the wall remained intact in the trench shown above (FRR October 2003).

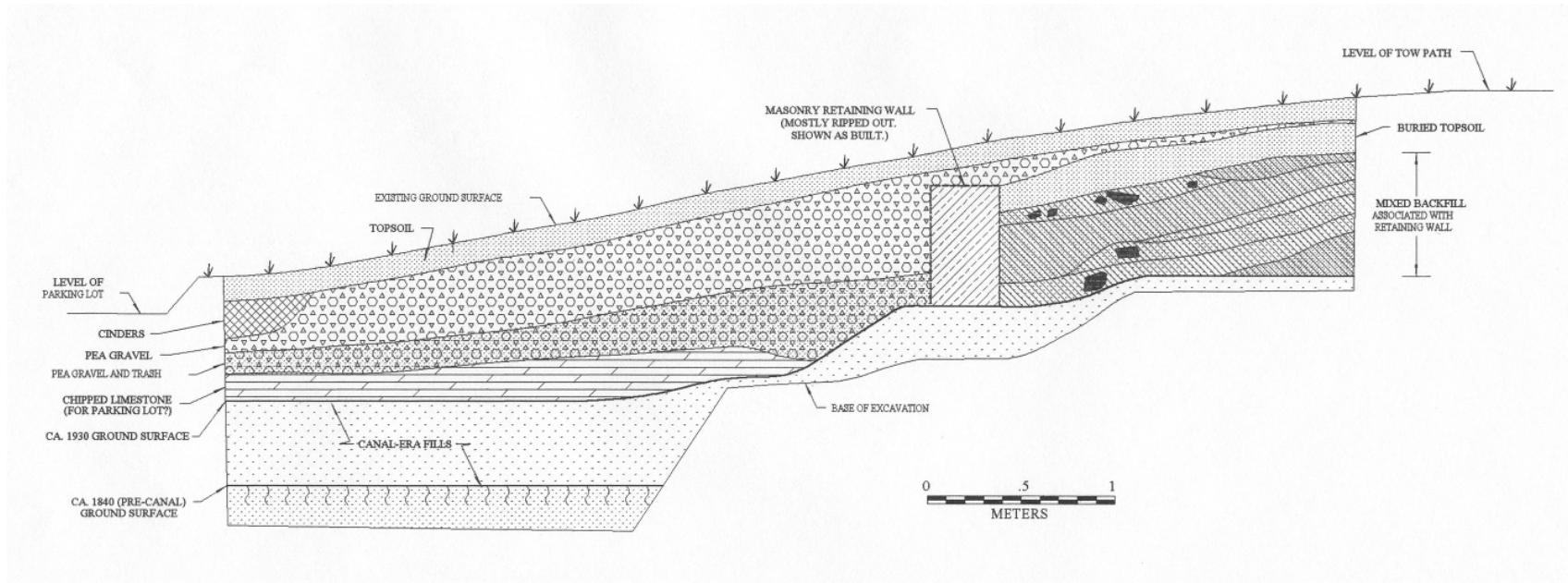


Figure 10. Representative soil profile of the area where the Ottawa Toll House will be relocated (looking west through the canal berm). The ca. 1900 ground surface is located well below the existing one (FRR 2003).