

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE PROPOSED KINNICKINNIC  
RIVER BRIDGE PROJECT: DIVISION STREET ALTERNATIVE,  
CITY OF RIVER FALLS, PIERCE COUNTY, WISCONSIN

by

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## ABSTRACT

On May 20, 1984, an archaeological survey was conducted by the author in the area of the proposed Kinnickinnic River Bridge Project: Division Street Alternative, located in the City of River Falls, Pierce County, Wisconsin. Examination of the project area by pedestrian reconnaissance and shovel testing produced no evidence of prehistoric sites or significant historic sites within the project limits. A records and archives search yielded similar negative results. Based on this investigation, it is recommended that the proposed project be allowed to proceed.

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## INTRODUCTION

The following report describes the results of an archaeological survey conducted by the author along the route of the proposed Kinnickinnic River Bridge Project: Division Street Alternative. The project area is located within the City of River Falls, Pierce County, Wisconsin (Figs. 1 and 2). The exact location of the project is the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , Section 1, T27N, R19W and the NE $\frac{1}{4}$  and NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , Section 1, T27N, R19W. The proposed project will involve the construction of an approximately 208 feet-long bridge across the Kinnickinnic River at Division Street. This structure would replace the existing Cedar Street Bridge, located one block to the south. Some filling of the floodplain along the west side of the river would be required as part of the project.

This study was commissioned by the City of River Falls to determine whether the proposed bridge construction would have any adverse impact on prehistoric and/or historic sites located within the project area. The Principal Investigator for the survey was Robert J. Barth, Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Field investigation in the project area took place on May 20, 1984. All field work was conducted by the author.

## PHYSICAL SETTING

The project area lies entirely within the City of River Falls, Wisconsin. The River Falls area is located in the Western Upland Geographical Province (Martin 1965:Fig. 10). This portion of the Western Upland is a flat-topped area whose surface relief is slight (Martin 1965:46). Average elevation above sea level in Pierce County is 1100 feet. A belt of Lower Magnesian Limestone underlies the area of the Western Upland in which the project area is located.

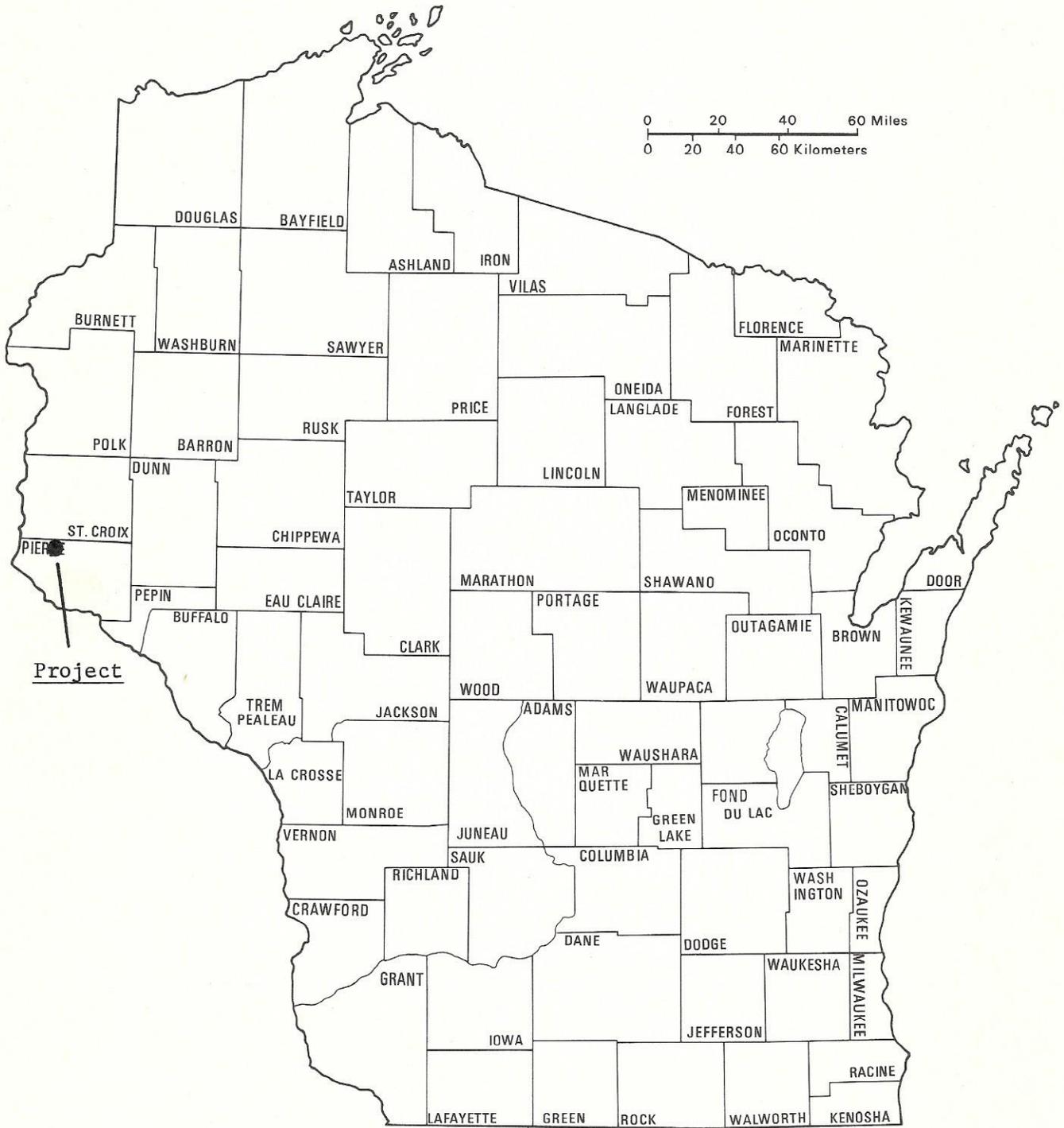


Figure 1. Location of the Project Within Wisconsin.



Within the project area, the Kinnickinnic River flows against the eastern wall of the valley. On the western side of the river, there is a small area of floodplain adjacent to the valley wall. The soil type within the project area is Waukesha silt loam (Whitson et al. 1930).

The upland areas on both sides of the valley have been totally disturbed by development. A gas station is located on the upland on the eastern side of the river and a parking lot is located on the western side of the river. An old dam power house projects into the valley on the eastern side. Additional disturbance was noted on the floodplain within the project area. Broken cement slabs, some partially buried, were encountered in the floodplain adjacent to the western side of the valley. These may be remnants of the dam which formerly existed in the valley.

General Land Office survey records indicate that the historic vegetation in this section of the Kinnickinnic Valley consisted of oak openings (Finley 1976). The present vegetation within the valley consists of trees and underbrush.

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Prior to the commencement of fieldwork, a records and archives search was conducted in order to determine whether any prehistoric or historic sites had been reported in, or adjacent to, the project area. The initial data sources consulted were the Wisconsin Archeological Codification File and the Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places. Both of these sources are housed at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison. Both of these sources indicated that only one prehistoric site, Pi-44, had been reported for all of River Falls Township. This site, a campsite of unknown cultural affiliation, is located several miles southwest of the City of River Falls. The Wisconsin Inventory

of Historic Places further indicated that no structures designated as having significant historical or architectural value had been reported within the project limits.

An additional unpublished data source consulted was the Charles E. Brown Atlas and Manuscript Collection, housed at the Museum Division of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. This source contained no reference to any sites or artifacts from the project area.

Published data sources consulted included The Wisconsin Archeologist, The Wisconsin Magazine of History, the Wisconsin Historical Collections, county and regional histories (Andreas 1881, Easton 1909, Gregory 1933, Neill 1881) and one county atlas (Nash and Morgan 1878). Although two of these sources identified a building on the east side of the river, outside of the project area, as the Prairie Flour Mill (Nash and Morgan 1878, Neill 1881), no references to sites within the project limits were found.

#### METHODS

Due to the extensive disturbance of the upland areas on both sides of the river, field investigation was confined to the undisturbed areas of the floodplain. The initial investigation consisted of a visual inspection of several trails cutting across the floodplain as well as areas exposed by the uprooting of several large trees. Areas within and adjacent to the project limits were examined in this manner. No cultural material was noted.

Undisturbed areas within the limits of the project were then examined by shovel testing. Two lines of shovel test units were excavated within the proposed right-of-way. The two transects, as well as the units along each transect, were spaced at 10-meter intervals. The shovel test units were approximately 50 centimeters in diameter and were excavated to a depth of 52 centimeters, a

depth which extended 10 centimeters into the subsoil.

The soil was removed from each shovel test unit and the sides and the floor of the units were scraped by trowel and examined for the presence of cultural materials or subsurface cultural features. The soil from each unit was passed through  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch hardware cloth to ensure maximum recovery of cultural material. Each unit was immediately backfilled after it had been examined. A total of 6 shovel test units were excavated in the undisturbed area of the floodplain.

Because the floodplain location made it possible that buried soil horizons might be present, each shovel test unit was additionally examined by soil coring after excavation. A one-inch diameter soil coring device was employed. Soil cores were taken to a depth of one meter below the ground surface.

#### RESULTS

No cultural material, subsurface features, or buried soil horizons were encountered within the project area.

#### IMPACT

Based on the results of this investigation, the proposed project will not have any adverse impact on any prehistoric sites. The project will, however, require removal of the dam power house on the east side of the river. This structure does not appear to have any historical or architectural significance.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to the negative results of this survey, it is recommended that the proposed bridge project be cleared for construction. Given the imprecision of the major survey technique employed (shovel probing), however, it is further

recommended that the State Archeologist be notified immediately if any buried cultural remains are encountered during construction.

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