



ARCHEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT LITTLE SAND BAY VISITOR CENTER AREA APOSTLE ISLANDS NATIONAL LAKESHORE



By
Dawn Bringelson

Archeological Report No. 15

ARCHEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT LITTLE SAND
BAY VISITOR CENTER AREA
APOSTLE ISLANDS NATIONAL LAKESHORE

BY
DAWN BRINGELSON, PHD

Archeological Report No. 15

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Lincoln, Nebraska

2017

Cover image courtesy of Apostle
Islands National Lakeshore.

This report has been reviewed against the criteria contained in 43CFR Part 7, Subpart A, Section 7.18 (a) (1) and, upon recommendation of the Midwest Regional Office and the Midwest Archeological Center, has been classified as

Available

Making the report available meets the criteria of 43CFR Part 7, Subpart A, Section 7.18 (a) (1).



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Little Sand Bay Visitor Center Project Details.....	1
Results and Conclusions	2
Tables	3
References Cited.....	4
Figures.....	5

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Artifacts collected via shovel testing at Little Sand Bay, May 2016.	3
--	---

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Little Sand Bay proposed Visitor Center core APE.	5
Figure 2. Historic images of the Little Sand Bay project area.	6
Figure 3. Historic images of Hermie Johnson’s residential cabin at Little Sand Bay.	7
Figure 4. Distribution of shovel-test investigations across the Little Sand Bay APE.....	8
Figure 5. Example soil profile from Little Sand Bay project area, Shovel Test 21.....	9
Figure 6. Grill parts observed 18-30 cm bs in Shovel Test 31 at Little Sand Bay.....	10
Figure 7. Excavating Shovel Test 24 to investigate site of 47BA222, Little Sand Bay.	11

INTRODUCTION

Apostle Islands National Lakeshore (APIS) is in the process of planning for a new Visitor Center at Little Sand Bay, involving the removal of the existing structure, and building of two new structures. While much of the project area has been previously disturbed and prior inventory in the general vicinity revealed no significant resources, this project has potential to impact any remaining resources. Archeological investigations were required to determine whether archeological deposits remained, whether any remaining deposits retained integrity, and whether proposed activities were likely to impact them.

A Midwest Archeological Center (MWAC) team, including Archeologist Dawn Bringelson, Archeological Technician Allan Wolfrum, and NCPE Intern Sean Field, traveled to APIS in May 2016 to conduct archeological investigations to support an assessment of effect for the Visitor Center project. APIS Archeological Technician Kyleleen Cullen also participated in field investigations. All collected artifacts were brought to MWAC and are curated, along with project records, under Accession MWAC-1703.

LITTLE SAND BAY VISITOR CENTER PROJECT DETAILS

Plans for the new interpretive complex at Little Sand Bay include a new visitor center, a fishing boat display, and interpretive kiosks (Figure 1). They also include the removal of the existing contact station, originally a general store and tavern, built in 1940 by Hermie Johnson as part of a tourist resort and associated with his commercial fishery (Figure 2). This recreational complex had incorporated several housekeeping cabins, a dock and boat house, fish house, ice house, and twine shed (Busch 2008:201-202), as well as Johnson's residential cabin, which he had built circa 1920 (Figure 3). All of the structures but the general store are now gone, and the NPS is in continuing consultation and planning for the removal of this final structure, with demolition and new construction tentatively planned for 2017. Archeological investigations in support of project planning were funded under Line Item Construction.

The MWAC team excavated 32 shovel tests across the APE (Area of Potential Effect), as shown in Figure 4. Shovel tests 1-21 were arranged in a 10-meter interval grid across the APE for the new Visitor Center and boat display; Shovel Tests 22-24 were placed to investigate possible archeological deposits associated with The Honeymoon Site (47BA222, discussed below); Shovel Tests 25-28 were placed to supplement the initial grid in the posited location of Hermie Johnson's cabin; and Shovel Tests 29-32 were placed to test deposits in the location planned for interpretive kiosks. Shovel tests were excavated 100 centimeters below surface (cm bs) with the exceptions of Shovel Tests 6, 7, 15, and 21. These were truncated between 25 and 55 cm bs due to obstruction by dense tree roots, large rocks, or extremely compacted sediments. In addition, Shovel Test 10 was not excavated due to proximity to an intersection of buried utilities. All excavated sediments were screened through ¼" hardware mesh.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Overall, shovel testing revealed mixed and/or imported sediments across the APE. Shovel tests revealed highly modified soil profiles, with disturbance observed in the upper 30 to 100 cm bs. Figure 5 provides an example soil profile, showing 20th century strata over earlier, sterile sediments.

A sparse scatter of artifacts was encountered across the southern project area (Table 1), limited to the upper 30 cm bs. All materials appear to be of 20th-century origin. Construction-related artifacts (nails, concrete and asphalt fragments, shingle fragment) were found across the APE, and a few items are related to personal use (possible vinyl record fragments, bottle [curved glass] fragments) were recovered from Shovel Tests 15 and 21, just south of the general store. Recreational uses of this area are interpreted by small, calcined bone fragments in Shovel Test 15, as well as the remains of shallowly buried (20-40 cm bs) campfires evident in the stratigraphy on the north end of the study area (Shovel Tests 30 and 32). In addition, grill parts were encountered down to 30 cm bs in Shovel Test 31 (not collected, see Figure 6).

Three shovel tests were also excavated just north of the Visitor Center project APE to investigate deposits near the location of The Honeymoon Site (Figure 7). According to the site form, it was originally identified by “a scatter of quartzite debris found on the ground surface among a number of mature trees.” Shovel tests were conducted in 10-meter intervals across the area to confirm site location and evaluate depositional integrity. No artifacts were located during this testing, and sediments showed disturbance in upper levels. Given the degree of 20th-century activity in the immediate area of this reported site (see boathouse shown in Figure 2), it is unlikely that the site retains depositional integrity; it may even be possible that the flakes observed in 1988 had been gathered elsewhere and set in place relatively recently. While this work did not confirm site location, a more intensive investigation may yet do so. Maintaining this site’s ASMIS record as is (a Local Resource Type), is recommended for the time being.

The widespread disturbance of sediments and sparse distribution of 20th-century artifacts across the Little Sand Bay Visitor Center project area suggests that the archeological record within this APE preserves little information on historic use of this area, and has limited, if any, potential to contribute information not available through other sources (e.g., historic documents). Activities proposed in conjunction with development of the new Visitor Center are not anticipated to impact significant archeological resources.

TABLES

Table 1. Artifacts collected via shovel testing at Little Sand Bay, May 2016.

Object	ST-15	ST-21	ST-25	ST-26	ST-27	ST-29	ST-32	Total
asphalt fragment	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
asphalt shingle fragment	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
bone fragment	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
bottle cap	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
concrete fragment	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
curved glass	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	3
nail	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	5
vinyl fragment	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
wire	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	15	3	5	1	1	1	2	28

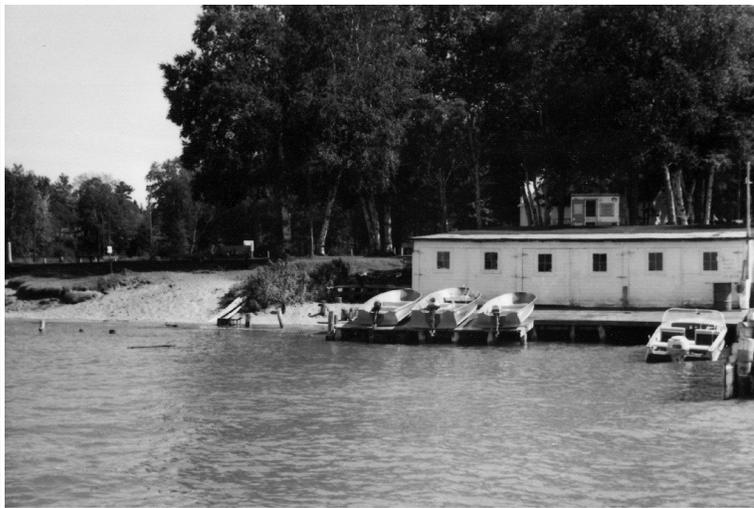
REFERENCES CITED

Busch, Jane C.

2008 People and Places: A Human History of the Apostle Islands. Historic Resource Study of Apostle Islands National Lakeshore. USDI, National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office, Omaha, Nebraska.



Picnic on lawn north of general store, 1950. Image courtesy Apostle Islands National Lakeshore.



Boathouse and dock in 1974, with general store in background (at arrow). View south. Image courtesy Apostle Islands National Lakeshore.



Johnson's (at arrow) and housekeeping cabins, situated west of general store, 1974. View to west. Image courtesy Apostle Islands National Lakeshore.

Figure 2. Historic images of the Little Sand Bay project area.



Figure 3. Historic images of Hermie Johnson's residential cabin at Little Sand Bay. Clockwise from top left: circa 1920, circa 1930, circa 1950. Images courtesy Apostle Islands National Lakeshore.



Little Sand Bay Visitor Center Project



Figure 4. Distribution of shovel-test investigations across the Little Sand Bay APE.

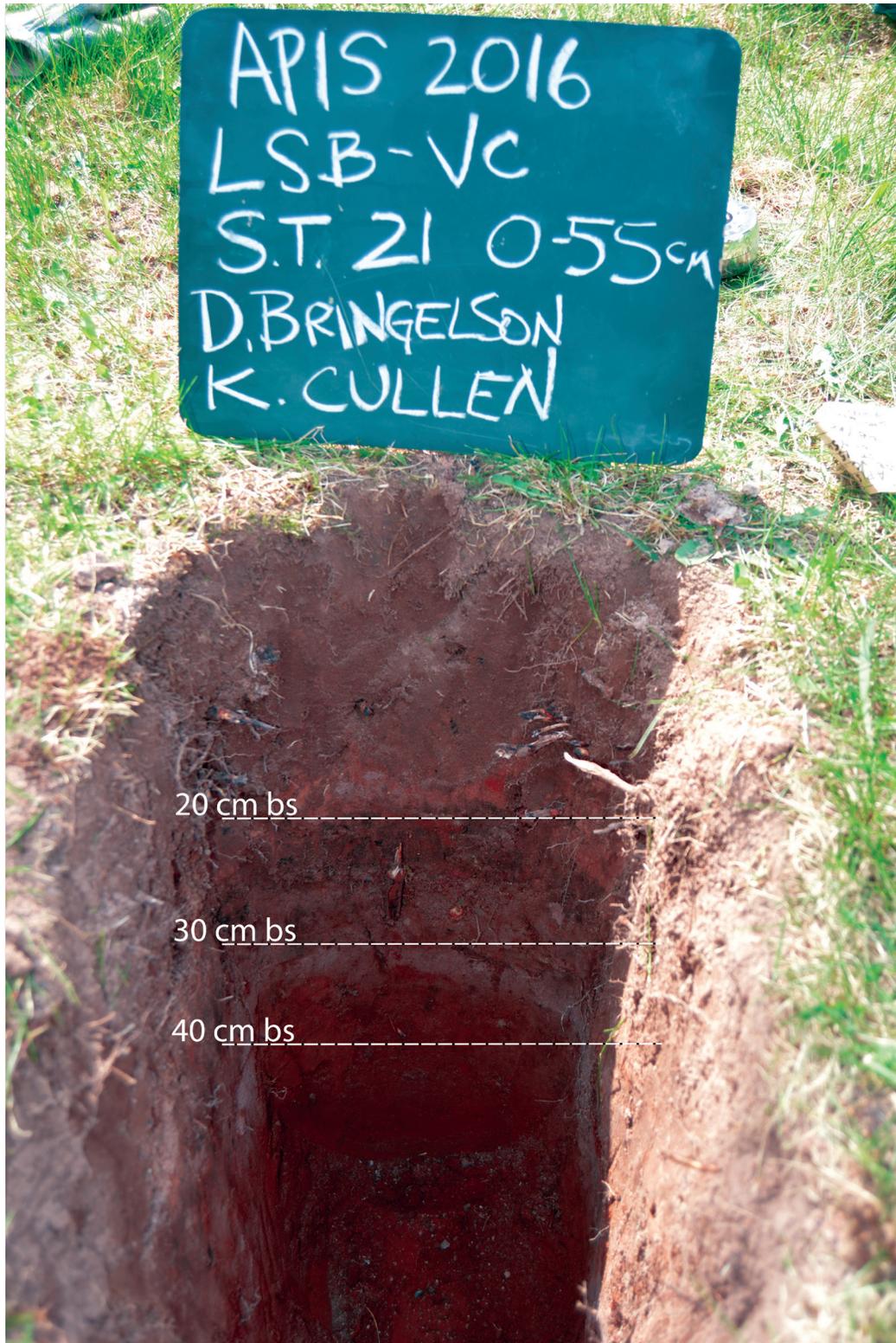


Figure 5. Example soil profile from Little Sand Bay project area, Shovel Test 21.



Ferrous grill grate fragment, 30 cm bs.



Ferrous bolt fragment, 28 cm bs.

Ferrous metal pipe at 18 cm bs.

Figure 6. Grill parts observed 18-30 cm bs in Shovel Test 31 at Little Sand Bay. Pipe fragment similar to those in use currently in grill pedestal stands nearby.



Figure 7. Excavating Shovel Test 24 to investigate site of 47BA222, Little Sand Bay. Shovel test is just north of general store, and just south of non-extant boat house shown in Figure 2 (note break in grade at right). View to west.

