

**CHAPTER 13**  
**Tree Stump Removal Excavations at Aztalan State Park, Jefferson County**  
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The Aztalan Site (47Je1) is the most famous archaeological site in Wisconsin, and has had a long and storied history of excavation (e.g., Baerreis and Freeman, 1958; Barret 1933; Goldstein and Richards 1991; Lapham 1855; McKern 1946; Richards 1992; Ritzenthaler 1958). It is a large, palisaded Late Woodland and Middle Mississippian occupation on the banks of the Crawfish River in Jefferson County. Although a state park since 1984, indifferent management by the Department of Natural Resources resulted in the growth of scrub trees across much of the site (1994:38). Many of the trees within the palisade were cut down in a spate of clean up activities in the early 1990s. Removal of the tree stumps was accompanied by excavations to recover archaeological material disturbed by the tree roots and their subsequent removal. A total of 197 stump sites were tested, resulting in the recovery of 1837 grit tempered sherds, 261 shell tempered sherds, 25 stone tools, and 557 pieces of lithic debitage (Goldstein 1995:42). In 2000, the regional office and UWM were asked if we could assist the DNR by excavating around another set of stumps scheduled for removal. The work conducted was similar to the work reported by Goldstein (1995), with the singular difference that Goldstein had material culture to report upon.

On September 30, 2000 PIMA staff and volunteers met at Aztalan to conduct limited test excavation around tree stumps that DNR had slated for removal. Volunteers included individuals from the UWM Program in Midwest Archaeology (PIMA), UWM Historic Resource Management Services (HRMS), Archaeological Rescue, the Kenosha Museum Society, Rock River Archaeological Society, the Wisconsin Archeological Society, UWM Department of Anthropology, and the UWM Anthropology Student Union. A total of 30 volunteers were at the site by 8:30 am. After a short lecture/discussion about site history and the nature of the project, excavations around 15 stumps (or clusters of stumps) were initiated and concluded. The following day, professional staff and 15 volunteers excavated around an additional 7 stumps (Figure 13.1).

### **Methods**

Each excavation unit was sized according to the size of the stump, or cluster of stumps, around which it was laid. Most units were close to 1x1 meter units. After removal of the sod by shovel, each unit was excavated using trowels to the base of the former plowzone. Large roots were removed with axes, and saws. All matrix was screened through 6.3mm mesh. All screens were

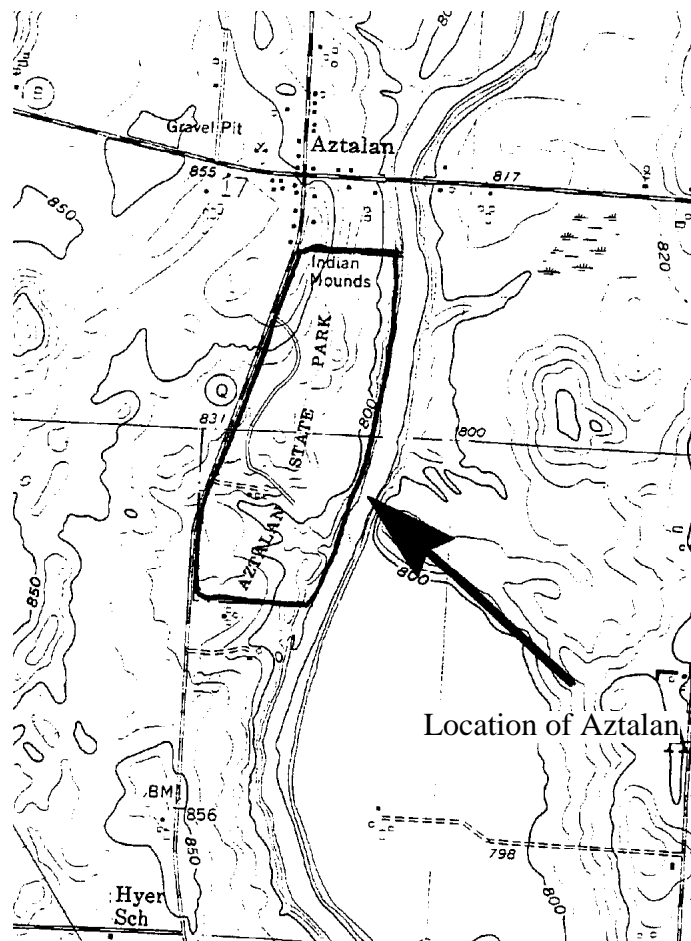
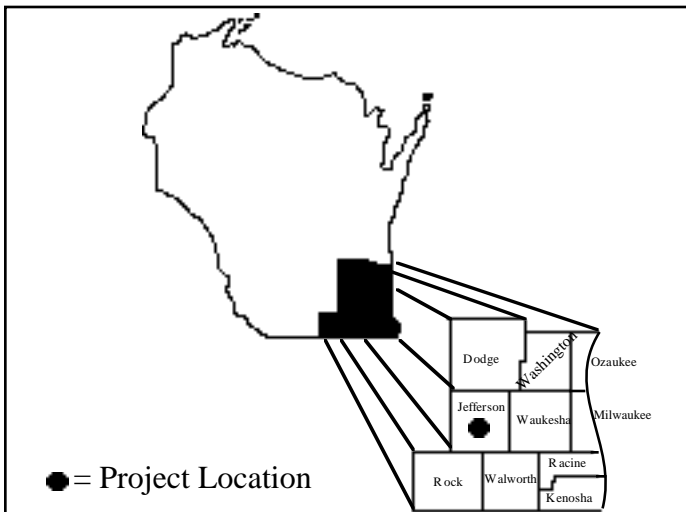


Figure 13.1. Location of project area on USGS 7.5 minute Jefferson topographic quadrangle.



Figure 13.2. Location of excavated stumps at Aztalan, autumn 2000.

checked by experienced PIMA and HRMS personnel before natural material was disposed. Each unit's locational, metric, mapping and material culture information was recorded on Stumpfest forms devised for the occasion

To our great surprise, virtually no prehistoric cultural material was recovered from the units. All but six of the units were entirely sterile of prehistoric cultural material, and each one yielded only a single flake or flakelike piece of chert. No prehistoric ceramics or shaped tools were recovered. All of the historic material (glass, metal, ceramics) was probably 20th century in origin. One rodent jaw bone and the sternum of a medium sized bird, both from recently deceased animals, were also recovered.

At the edge of the project area, St43 yielded one chert flake, but this unit was unique in that it was composed of sorted sands, much like a dune deposit. A 30 cm x 30 cm square excavated to a depth of 1.15 meters yielded a profile of three distinct sand layers, the lowest of which was gravelly. The origin of this lone sand deposit is still unknown.

### **Conclusions**

Excavations at 23 stump locations between the reconstructed palisade and the park road at Aztalan State Park indicates that, in stark contrast to the east of the palisade, very little cultural material is located outside the southwestern portions of the palisaded portion of the site. Only two units yielded a total of three chert flakes. A number of other stumps still need testing. Future work will provide more information on the distribution (or lack thereof) of material outside of the park's palisade.

Table 13.1. Materials recovered from Aztalan Stumpfest, 2000.					
Stump Number	Debitage	Historic Ceramics	Glass	Metal	Bone
122	1				
123					
124	1	1			
125	1				
126			1	1	
127					
128					1
129					
130	1				
131					
132	1				
133			1		
134				1	
135					1
136			1		
137					
138				3	
139					
140					
142					
143	1		1	3	
150				3	
Total	6	1	4	20	2