

Archaeological Potential & Your Property

Potable water is arguably the single most important resource necessary for any extended human occupation or settlement of an area. Since water sources have remained relatively stable in Southern Ontario since the post-glacial period, proximity to water is regarded as a useful index for the evaluation of archaeological site potential.

The Ministry of Tourism and Culture's 2011 Standards & Guidelines for Consultant Archaeologists defines proximity to water as an indicator of archaeological potential, with areas located within 300 metres of a water source considered as containing archaeological potential requiring further investigation. The Ministry of Culture primer on archaeology, land use planning and development in Ontario stipulates that undisturbed lands within 300 metres of a primary water source, and undisturbed lands within 200 metres of a secondary water source, are considered to be of high archaeological potential (1997: pp.12-13). With both primary, and secondary sources of water occurring both currently and historically in close proximity to the study area it is considered to be of high potential for the location and recovery of Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian archaeological resources within undisturbed portions of the study area.

For the Euro-Canadian period, the majority of early nineteenth Century farmsteads (i.e., those which are arguably the most potentially significant resources and whose locations are rarely recorded on nineteenth Century maps), are likely to be captured by the basic proximity to water model outlined and as noted above, since these occupations were subject to similar environmental constraints.

An additional factor is the development of the network of concession roads and early railways through the course of the nineteenth Century. These transportation routes frequently influenced the siting of farmsteads and businesses. Accordingly, undisturbed lands within 100 metres of early settlement roads are also considered to have potential for the presence of Euro-Canadian archaeological sites.

Furthermore, often First Nations people followed the source of water itself, and many native trails became settler's roads and these in turn, legal concession roads:

"For the settlers, the trails were the easiest way into the back country. They drove cattle over the lakeshore trail and up the Don and Rouge Trails, and where it suited them, they made wagon roads. Few of these have endured: landowners do not like slanting roads across their lands. But the old roads are not all forgotten and they help to show where the Indians travelled" (Rouge Duffins Highland Petticoat Valley Conservation Report, 1956:55).

Finally, geographic characteristics such as distinct topographic features and soils may also indicate archaeological potential, which in the case of the current study area would also indicate high potential for the location and recovery of Aboriginal archaeological resources.