

2008 PRELIMINARY REPORT

Preliminary Report on the 2008 Michilimackinac Archaeology Field Season

The 2008 field season saw the continuation of excavations begun during 2007 on House E of the Southeast Rowhouse. The main 2008 field season ran from June 2 to August 23, with preliminary work starting May 27 and wrap-up continuing through August 29. Dr. Lynn Evans, MSHP Curator of Archaeology, directed the excavation, with the assistance of field supervisor Justin Baetsen. Lierin Holly, Amber Rose and Libby Smith were the crew members. Thirteen volunteers provided a combined 379 hours of screening and excavation. Each archaeologist devoted one day a week solely to public interpretation.

House E is labeled Gonneville on the 1749 Lotbinière map. Research by John Gram indicates this is Charles Henri Desjardins de Rupallay de Gonneville. Born in Canada in 1698, he began trading at Michilimackinac in 1727 and continued to trade there and at other western posts through the 1754 season. During this time he married Marie Charlotte Laplante, making him brother-in-law to René Bourassa, his neighbor in House F to the west. Gonneville still owned House E as late as 1758 when his name is mentioned on the transfer of an adjacent property. House E is listed as an English trader's house on a map drawn by Lieutenant Perkins Magra in 1765.

The professional crew continued work on the strip of five 5'x5' squares opened last summer (230R30 quad 2, 230R40 quads 1&2, 230R50 quads 1&2). At the end of last summer, these had been excavated to the 1781 demolition level. This strip should span the width (east-west) of the house and the goal for the summer was to locate evidence for the south wall trench. By the end of the season some clay concentrations were present as well as numerous sandy patches; the wall ditch was not apparent however. The recovery of artifacts dated solidly in the French period (see below) in the demolition deposit seems to indicate that the demolition cut deep into occupation deposits in this area. One additional 5'x5' square was opened this summer (230R30 quad 4), located to the north of the west end of the main trench. This was the designated "volunteer square." Based on last summer's work the thick twentieth-century deposits were removed quickly. By the end of the season this quad was only a little higher than the main trench, also still in the 1781 demolition layer.

Although not much in the way of stratigraphy was encountered, the demolition layer did yield many interesting artifacts this season. The most common were faunal remains, especially fish bones, but also bones from larger mammals, including, potentially, horse, cow, pig and/or sheep. Other common finds included seed beads, lead shot, nails, glass fragments (bottle and window) and sherds from a variety of ceramics. In addition to the window glass, building material included chinking, brick fragments and some fairly intact latch hardware.

As mentioned above, several distinctly French artifacts were found. These included a lead seal and gun part. The lead seal, originally attached to a bolt of cloth to indicate ownership, was stamped CDI for the Compagnie des Indes (1719-1769). The gun part was the upper jaw and bolt from an early French trade gun. Several pieces of a MicMac pipe, which fit together, most likely belonged to a French, Métis or Indian person, rather than to someone of English heritage. One definitely British item found was a plain, pewter, pre-1768 military button.

The majority of the artifacts recovered fit into what a fur trader might have in his home for use or trade: brass buttons with a floral design; a knee garter buckle; a cufflink with a glass set; blue necklace

beads; gunflints; knife blades; a Jesuit ring with an “IXXI” motif, derived from interlocked Ms signifying Mater Misericordia or Mother of Mercy. Perhaps the most unusual artifact of the season is a brass piece that appears to be the eyepiece from a spyglass.

Excavation will continue on this house next summer. Additional squares to the north may be opened to search for traces of the wall. All interpretations offered here are preliminary, subject to further excavation and analysis.

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