

2011 PRELIMINARY REPORT

Preliminary Report on the 2011 Michilimackinac Archaeology Field Season

The 2011 field season was a continuation of the excavations carried out in 2007-2010 on House E of the Southeast Rowhouse. The main 2011 field season ran from June 9 to August 20, with preliminary work starting May 31 and wrap-up continuing through August 25. Dr. Lynn Evans, MSHP Curator of Archaeology, directed the excavation, with the assistance of field supervisor Justin Baetsen. Andrew Novack, Alexandra Conell and Elizabeth Kerton were the crew members. Nine volunteers contributed a total of 485 hours of excavation and 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 objectives for the season were to better define and understand previously exposed features and to expand the area of excavation to the north. All previously open quads (220R30 q2, 230R30 q 2&4, 230R40 q 1-4, 230R50 q 1-4) were further excavated this summer. A new quad (220R40 q1) was opened, and is currently in the 1781 demolition level.



Feature 1043, an east-west feature believed to be the south wall trench of the British-era house expanded slightly to the east and west. It is better defined on its south edge, where it cuts through gray and yellow sand and undisturbed decaying limestone (a.k.a. "rotten" glacial beach). This indicates that yard deposits for this house, at least in this area, are extremely thin. Feature 1042 expanded into 230R50 q3 in the north. This north-south feature intersects F.1043 and is present in both the house and the yard. Its function is still unknown.

A linear pattern of soils in the western area of the excavation appears to be a remnant of a wall trench. It is a band of light brown sand with rocks along the 230R30 q 2/4 border, which cuts through the light gold sand that is the dominant matrix in this area. It does not line up exactly with F. 1043, but there is brown sandy loam deposit between the two. Once it is removed, the relationship between the two trench segments should be more clear.

The light gold sand is another mystery. It is the main matrix in 230R30 q4 and extends into 220R30 q2, 230R30 q2, and 230R40 q 1&3. A layer of yellow sand dated to the 1760s rebuilding of the Southeast Rowhouse was identified during the excavation of House C (Halchin 1985:76). If the current sand is the same stratigraphically, then the light brown sand with rocks represents the British-era wall. The artifact content of the sand, mostly chinking, seems to support this hypothesis. Alternatively, the light gold sand could be part of the natural beach. In this case, the light brown sand with rocks would be the remnant of the French-era wall. Again, further excavation should make the soil relationships more clear.

The sterile decaying limestone layer was uncovered along the southern edge of 230R30 q2 and 230R40 q1. This is another indication of how shallow the yard deposits are.

As we move out of the 1781 demolition deposit and into house and yard occupation deposit, artifact size and density decreases. The wide range of ceramics continued, including a sherd from a Rhenish mug or tankard, quite rare at Michilimackinac. Other unusual artifacts included a bone projectile point and a large fragment of a double-sided bone comb. The first and last weeks of the season were marked by the discovery of intact cufflinks, not a matching set. A concentration of fish scales in 230R50 q2 was so dense as to indicate an area of primary refuse deposition.

Excavation will continue on this house next summer. All interpretations offered here are preliminary, subject to further excavation and analysis.

Lynn L.M. Evans

December 2011

Halchin, Jill Y.

1985 Excavations at Fort Michilimackinac, 1983-1985: House C of the Southeast Rowhouse, The Solomon-Levy-Parant House. *Archaeological Completion Report Series* No. 11. MISPC, Mackinac Island, Michigan.