

Preliminary Report on the 2007 Michilimackinac Archaeology Field Season

The 2007 field season at Michilimackinac included two distinct projects, House 7 of the South Southwest Rowhouse and House E of the Southeast Rowhouse. The main 2007 field season ran from June 5 to August 25, with preliminary work starting May 29 and wrap-up work continuing through September 19. Dr. Lynn Evans, MSHP Curator of Archaeology, directed the excavation, with the assistance of field supervisor Amy Roache. Conrad Latuszek, Justin Baetsen and Garnet Miller were the crew members. Fourteen volunteers provided a combined 581 hours of screening, excavation and lab work. Again this season we had no full time interpreter, instead, each archaeologist devoted one day a week solely to public interpretation.

The House 7 project was the conclusion of fieldwork carried out in 1966 and 1998-2006 on the easternmost unit of the South Southwest Rowhouse within the palisade wall. The original structure was built during the 1730s. The 1749 Lotbinière map indicates that a Des Riviere owned the house. This is probably Jean Noel Desrivieres, who held trade licenses for Michilimackinac from 1747 through 1750. The structure was rebuilt in the 1760s and occupied by British foot soldiers for a time prior to completion of the soldiers' barracks. Based on the analysis of artifacts recovered through 2001, Todd Reck has concluded that French-Canadian traders resided here in the late British era. The house appears to have been dismantled and moved to Mackinac Island around 1780.

The main area remaining to be excavated was the east edge of the root cellar, identified last summer under the collapsed hearth (270L20 q1, 280L20 q3). Justin Baetsen and Conrad Latuszek carried out this excavation. Their work included removing some of the charred hearth material (F.1026) and some of the large associated rocks. One of the large hearth rocks was left in place to help support portions of the root cellar (F. 1035). Removal of the hearth material helped to better define the eastern structural elements of the root cellar (F.1024, F.1032, F.1034, F.1035). Baetsen and Latuszek also excavated to the bottom of the interior of the root cellar, exposing more floorboard remnants (F. 1036, F.1037). As in seasons past, the cellar area continued to yield interesting artifacts, including a bone handle, pewter cufflinks and the brass tip of a ramrod from a



Northwest trade gun along with a fragment of the wooden ramrod shaft. At the conclusion of the excavation, the root cellar elements were carefully preserved, packed and backfilled, preserving the possibility of being displayed as an in-situ exhibit when the rowhouse is reconstructed.

The other area remaining to be excavated in House 7 was a small section of the trench for the south wall (F. 959; 290L40 q2). Lynn Evans excavated this unremarkable area down to sterile sand. At the conclusion of the project, the entire excavation was backfilled with clean sand. In the spring it will be covered with topsoil and seeded. Reconstruction is included in the current long-range plan.

The House E project was the first season of work on this particular unit of the Southeast Rowhouse. Four units to the east were excavated between 1976 and 1997. A narrow strip of House E was excavated along with the common D/E wall in the mid-1990s. A portion of the House E yard was excavated during the Rue de la Babillarde project in 1979.

On the 1749 Lotbinière map, the house is labeled Gonneville. 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. By 1765, following the British takeover of Michilimackinac, House E is listed as an English trader's house on a map drawn by Lieutenant Perkins Magra.

Because so much work has been done in the southeast corner of the fort, this house will give us a chance to try to answer some comparative questions. However, this season we did not get below the layer created by the 1781 demolition of the fort, which is quite thick in this corner of the fort.

Amy Roache, Garnet Miller and the volunteers carried out the majority of work on this house, although the entire team had some involvement. A strip of five 5' x5' squares was opened (230R30 q2, 230R40 q1&2, 230R50 q1&2). The sod was removed and then several layers of modern deposit: backdirt from the House D water-screening; construction debris (cement spills) from the reconstruction of the British Officer's and Solomon-Levy Houses; post-1933 park deposit. A thin layer from the 1933 fort reconstruction and grading was next. By the end of the season the remains of 1781 demolition layer were exposed across most of the excavation.

Although it is still very early to say anything conclusive, the demolition layer for this house seems very rich, with a wide variety of artifacts related to the fur trade. Particularly notable artifacts include a button from the 10th regiment (at Michilimackinac 1772-1774) and ceramic sherds from a variety of types, which is quite a contrast to the few ceramics recovered from House 7.

Excavation will continue in all of these squares next summer and additional area will be opened to the north. Processing of this season's finds from both houses is underway. All interpretations offered here are preliminary, subject to further excavation and analysis.

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