

Preliminary Report on the 2009 Michilimackinac Archaeology Field Season

The 2009 field season saw the continuation of excavations begun during 2007 on House E of the Southeast Rowhouse. The main 2009 field season ran from June 1 to August 22, with preliminary work starting May 26 and wrap-up continuing through September 8. Dr. Lynn Evans, MSHP Curator of Archaeology, directed the excavation, with the assistance of field supervisor Justin Baetsen. Anna Broge, Lierin Holly and Libby Smith were the crew members. Thirteen volunteers provided a combined 447.5 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 main objective of the season was to try to define the south wall trench of the house. This had been observed continuing into the west balk of 230R60 during the excavation of House D.

Five new quads were opened: 220R30 q2; 230R40 q3&4; 230R50 q3&4. These were immediately north of the previously opened quads. The "volunteer quad" begun last year, 230R30 q4, was also excavated this summer. Quads left mid-level at the end of last season were leveled out at the end of this season. By the end of the season, the entire excavation was nearly level, all within 0.10' of 2.25' below datum.

There is a lot of twentieth-century overburden present, particularly towards the east. Some of this is backdirt that was not removed at the completion of the House D project. The remainder of the soil excavated this summer appears to be rubble dating to the 1781 demolition of the fort. The sand exposed last year in 230R30 q2 and 230R40 q1 expanded into 230R30 q4, but nowhere else. One post was uncovered (F.1040), but no other colonial features.

The overall impression of the artifacts recovered this summer is that they were smaller than last season: fish bones, not as many mammal bones as last year; much smaller pieces of glass, not the recognizable bottle parts of last summer; fewer structural pieces. This fits the hypothesis that the wall was along the quad line if the differences in artifacts, even in the rubble, reflect differences in the underlying deposit related to being inside or outside the house. Notable artifacts this summer included cufflinks and lead seals. One intact cufflink half was found, round with a clear glass set. Two similar sets were found. Three lead seals were uncovered. Two had new (to us) marks and are still being researched. One was from stockings from Nimes. A possible religious medallion was found, but that awaits conservation.

Excavation will continue on this house next summer. The currently open squares will be further excavated to look for more definitive evidence of the wall trench. All interpretations offered here are preliminary, subject to further excavation and analysis.

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