

Preliminary Report on the 2015 Michilimackinac Archaeology Field Season

The 2015 field season was a continuation of the excavations carried out in 2007-2014 on House E of the Southeast Rowhouse. The main 2015 field season ran from June 1 to August 22, with preliminary work commencing May 26 and wrap-up continuing through August 28. Dr. Lynn Evans, MSHP Curator of Archaeology, directed the excavation, with the assistance of field supervisor Alexandra Conell. The crew consisted of Elizabeth Kerton, James Dunnigan and Erin Whitson. Twelve volunteers contributed a total of 722 hours of excavation, interpretation and lab work.

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. In 1731 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 complete the southernmost tier of quads, to determine if there is a root cellar in 230R50 q4, and to determine the nature of the clay feature first exposed in 220R30 q2. These objectives were partially met.

All of the south yard deposit and the refuse pit (F.1051) have now been removed, as well as part of both the French and British south walls (F.1045, F.1058, F.1061). There are still south wall features present in 230R40 q1 (F.1045, F.1056) and 230R50 q2 (F.1043). Because the southern half of the south tier was down to beach sand and the south profile was unstable due to being open since 2007, it was decided to build a plywood retaining wall along the eastern half of that profile and backfill it at the end of the season.



Excavation continued in the hypothesized root cellar in 230R50 q4, extending into q 2&3. A barrel band gradually exposed since 2013 was removed, but the matrix shows no sign of diminishing.

There is also deep house deposit in 230R40 q 2,3&4, separated from the hypothesized cellar by a rocky beach ridge. Very little excavation took place in this area in 2015.

In the far southwest corner of the house, only a charred feature (F.1046) remains. It is made up of charred wood oriented in a variety of directions. Very few artifacts have been found in the deeper levels of this feature. It is currently hypothesized to be related to pre-construction beach-clearing activity.

Excavation continued in 220R30 q4 in order to try to further expose the clay feature first exposed in 220R30 q2. This was accomplished. Clay, cobbles and a charred plank were exposed at the same depth. In the level immediately above the feature, we had a spectacular find, an intact rosary. It is composed of ivory beads connected by brass links. Rather than the five decades (groups of ten small beads separated by single large beads) found on a standard Dominican rosary, this rosary has six decades, except that the sixth decade only has nine beads. Six decade rosaries are used by Brigittines and Discalced Carmelites. At this point it is not known if this rosary represents a connection to one of these orders or some other devotion. More research will have to be done on the rosary over the winter.

The clay/cobble feature extended to the east, so 220R40 q3 was opened to expose it. At the same time 220R40 q4 was opened to accommodate volunteers. These quads are now near the demolition/interior deposit transition. The most notable find in these quads was a pair of modern features in quad 4. Two concrete piers, remnants of the stocks from the 1960 punishment display were exposed in the modern levels and continue into the colonial deposit. A third quad, 220R50 q3, was opened this season. It is still just at the top of the demolition rubble, and contains large tree roots.

Excavation continued on the interior of the house as well. The demolition rubble is quite thick in this house, but was removed in 220R40 q2 and 220R50 q1. The soil is now quickly turning sandy. A cache of burned botanical material, which appears to be corn and beans, was excavated in the former quad. On the east side of the house, demolition rubble and tree roots are still present in 220R50 q4. Just to the south, in 220R50 q2, lines of worked cobbles appear to indicate the collapsed fireplace. One of the cobbles crushed a pane of glass where it fell.

We did not find as many ceramics this season as in previous years, although they were still present. In addition to the large quantities of window glass found in the demolition near the fireplace, we recovered a tumbler base nearly identical to one excavated in 2011. We also found two cufflinks, one with a clear glass or paste set and one brass with floral engraving, two iron shoe buckles, and a heart-shaped Jesuit ring. More unusual finds included a nearly complete MicMac pipe and eleven more rosary beads strung together.

Lynn L.M. Evans
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Current Status of Quads

220R30 q4 Level 16- Clay feature	220R40 q3 Level 12 – Demolition	220R40 q4 Level 12 – Demolition & 1960 stocks piers	220R50 q3 Levels 3&4 – Demolition	220R50 q4 Level 11- Demolition
220R30 q2 Not excavated in 2015 Level 16 – clay feature	220R40 q1 Not excavated in 2015 Level 17-interior house deposit	220R40 q2 Level 17- interior house deposit	220R50 q1 Level 17- interior house deposit	220R50 q2 Level 22-collapsed fireplace
230R30 q4 Level 25 –beach sand and F.1046	230R40 q3 Level 22 –sand on west, interior house deposit on east, F.1045	230R40 q4 Not excavated in 2015 Level 29- interior house deposit	230R50 q3 Level 30- cellar along east edge, remainder sand	230R50 q4 Level 30 – hypothesized root cellar
230R30 q2 Complete	230R40 q1 Wall features – F.1045, F.1061	230R40 q2 Sand except Level 29 interior house deposit in extreme northwest	230R50 q1 Complete	230R50 q2 North half - Level 30 – cellar and F.1043, south half - complete