

Preliminary Report on the 2016 Michilimackinac Archaeology Field Season

The 2016 field season was a continuation of the excavations carried out in 2007-2015 on House E of the Southeast Rowhouse. The main 2016 field season ran from May 31 to August 20, with preliminary work commencing May 23 and wrap-up continuing through August 23. Dr. Lynn Evans, MSHP Curator of Archaeology, directed the excavation, with the assistance of field supervisor Alexandra Conell. The crew consisted of Elizabeth Kerton-Schmit, James Dunnigan and John Cardinal. Nine volunteers contributed a total of 417.5 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.

We had five objectives for this season. The first was to completely expose the clay feature present in 220R30 q2&4 and 220R40 q1&3 and excavate it. The second was to continue excavation of the probable root cellar in 230R50 q2-4 and to look for its potential north wall in 220R50 q2. The third was to complete removing the features in 230R30 q4 and 230R40 q1. The fourth was to continue work in 230R40 q3 and 220R40 q2 to better understand the second deep area of deposit exposed in 230R40 q2&4. The final was to continue work on the other open quads in the interior of the house. Progress was made in all of these areas, although not all were completed.

The clay feature in 220R30 q2&4 and 220R40 q1&3 was exposed and named F.1065. At its full extent it had an irregular shape. A charred plank angled southeast/northwest was present on the west side of the feature. A line of large worked rocks angled southwest/northeast was present on the southeast corner of the feature. In appearance the feature resembles a hearth, but does not line up with the house walls. The feature was not artifact dense, but did contain a lot of chinking and seed beads. As the feature was excavated, the adjacent sand expanded underneath it.

Interesting artifacts from these quads included part of a door lock in the northwest, a button in the northeast and a cufflink, a hawkbell and the base of a polychrome creamware teacup in the southeast. Polychrome creamware is an extremely rare ceramic type. This find continues the pattern of numerous and varied ceramics found in this house.

The root cellar in 230R50 q2-4 was better defined and by the end of the season 220R50 q2 had been excavated down to the same depth (Level 34) and the north edge of the cellar defined. The cellar continued to yield interesting artifacts, including two buttons, a musketball, a hawkbell, an iron projectile point and a brass shield-shaped keyhole escutcheon.

220R50 q2 was an extremely interesting quad even above the cellar. Last season part of the collapsed fireplace was uncovered in this quad. Several large worked fireplace/chimney stones were excavated from this area this year. The broken window panes exposed among the structural stones at the end of last season were excavated this season. Looking at the location of the hearth, excavated as part of the House D project, the distribution of structural rock, window glass, and shutter hinges found to the south in 2011 and 2014, we can now propose that when House E was demolished, the chimney collapsed in a south southwest direction, taking down a dormer containing a window as it fell. A brass triggerguard from a French trade gun was recovered from this quad. This is notable as it is only the second gun part to be found at House E.

At Level 34, the north part of 220R50 q2 is sterile sand, except for some unusual staining along the north edge. Dark features are evident in the profile of 220R50 q4, although they are currently undefined. There is a great deal of chinking along the south edge of 220R50 q4, which is mostly still in demolition (at Level 14), with some sand appearing. There are also odd pockets of soil along the north edge (215 south line) of 220R30 q2 and 220R50 q1.

Two quads were completed this season. Feature 1046 was removed in 230R30 q4. It was determined to be charred wood from initial burning of scrub growth on the beach to clear the site for construction. Two wall-related features were removed from 230R40 q1. Feature 1045 is currently interpreted as the original French south wall of the house. Feature 1061 is interpreted as a post mold within F.1045.



The deepest area inside the house that is not the root cellar is 230R40 q4, which has been left at Level 29 for two seasons. We do not yet understand why it is so deep. The quad to its west, 230R40 q3, was excavated this season. Along its south, pockets of F.1045, the (French) south wall, are still present. The west half of the quad is now beach sand. The east half is still cultural deposit, either demolition or interior house deposit, at Level 27. A variety of interesting artifacts came out of this quad this season, including two cufflinks, a fancy civilian button, a Kings 8 button, a fragment of a trade ring with glass/paste sets and a knee buckle.

The quad to the north of deep 230R40 q4, which is 220R40 q2, was excavated to a depth of Level 22, with the entire floor still in cultural deposit. The quad to its east, 220R50 q1 was also excavated to a depth of Level 22. While cultural deposit is still present throughout, it is transitioning to beach sand. The extreme southeast corner of this quad is the northwest corner of the root cellar.

The final quad to be excavated this summer was 220R50 q3. At Level 7 it is still in 1781 demolition rubble. As usual, the demolition matrix contained interesting artifacts, including a lead seal, a button and what appears to be a fragment of a crucifix.

Two patterns noted in previous years were observed to continue this season. First, large quantities of burned corn kernels were recovered, in some contexts outweighing the faunal material. Second, blue doughnut-shaped necklace beads continued to be a common find.

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

Lynn L.M. Evans
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Current Status of Quads

220R30 q4	220R40 q3	220R40 q4 Not excavated 2016	220R50 q3	220R50 q4
Level 20- Clay feature	Level 20 – Clay feature	Level 12 – Demolition & 1960 stocks piers	Level 7 – Demolition	Level 14- Demolition& sand
220R30 q2	220R40 q1	220R40 q2	220R50 q1	220R50 q2
Level 20 – Clay feature & sand	Level 20- Clay feature & interior house deposit	Level 22-Interior house deposit	Level 22- Interior house deposit, transitioning to sand	Level 34-Root cellar and sand
230R30 q4	230R40 q3	230R40 q4	230R50 q3	230R50 q4
Complete	Level 27 –Sand on west, interior house deposit on east, F.1045	Not excavated in 2016 Level 29- Interior house deposit	Level 34- Cellar along east edge, remainder sand	Level 34 –Root cellar
230R30 q2	230R40 q1	230R40 q2	230R50 q1	230R50 q2
		Sand except Level		North half - Level

Complete	Complete	29 - Interior house deposit in extreme northwest	Complete	34 – Cellar and F.1043, South half - Complete
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