

Preliminary Report on the 2017 Michilimackinac Archaeology Field Season

The 2017 field season was a continuation of the excavations carried out in 2007-2016 on House E of the Southeast Rowhouse. The main 2017 field season ran from June 5 to August 26, with preliminary work commencing May 26 and wrap-up continuing through August 30. 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. Eight volunteers contributed a total of 395 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.

Our goal for the season was to continue excavating previously opened areas in hopes of better defining and understanding the features present. We also hoped to complete some of the southern quads.

The root cellar, located in 230R50 quads 2-4 and 220R50 q2, with the northwest corner of the cellar in the southeast corner of 220R50 q1, became even better defined. Remnants of vertical planks are now visible in the southwest corner of 230R50 q4. The cellar continued to yield interesting artifacts, including a complete lock from a chest or other piece of furniture, two Whieldon-type vegetable motif ceramic sherds, a trade silver circle brooch, a small buckle, an intact brass trade ring with clear and blue paste sets, and a kitchen knife blade.



Another deep area is present to the west in 230R40 q3 & 4, separated from the cellar by a rocky beach ridge. This area is angled from, rather than parallel to, the house walls. It is now at Level 31 (4.5' below datum) and still appears to contain 1781 demolition fill. Interesting artifacts include two Jesuit rings and a decorative cast brass tube of unknown function. The quads to the south of this are complete; 230R40 q2 was the only quad completed this season. The quads to the north are still at higher levels.

One of these, 220R40 q2, is at Level 26, which appears to be interior house deposit. The quad to its east (220R50 q1) is at the same level. It appears to be transitioning to beach sand, except for the southeast corner, which is the northwest corner of the root cellar. The most notable artifact to come out of this area was a trade silver triangle with a single perforation at its apex.

The northwest corner of the open excavation area is the site of the clay, rock, charred wood feature (F.1065) completely exposed in 2016. Over the course of the 2017 season, the charred wood and large structural rocks were removed, as well as much of the clay. It is beginning to

transition to sand at 3.75' below datum. The feature area was surprisingly rich in artifacts, including a child's jaw harp, the third one from this house, an intact trade ring with a green paste set, and an elaborate brass pendant section with four blue paste sets. The function of the feature is still unclear.

The northeastern-most open quad (220R50 q4) was excavated down to sterile sand except for three trenches. Two of these (F.1069 & F. 1073) run north-south extending the length of the quad

into the north profile. An east-west running trench connects them. They appear to be too deep for joists, particularly F. 1073, so probably represent some sort of interior wall. It is not clear why there would be a wall so close to the front of the fireplace, if they are contemporary.

The quad to the west (220R50 q3) started the season in the 1781 demolition rubble level. This contained a cast brass crucifix. Below this a line of five posts appeared in a north-south running trench (F.1077-F.1083). This wall appears to be in the middle of the house.

In the north central open area of the excavation (220R40 q4), the concrete piers (F.1059 & F.1060) from the c.1960 stocks exposed in 2015 were removed. Interior house deposit transitioning to beach sand is now present (3.65' below datum). A new quad (210R40 q2) just to the north of this one was opened this summer. Three more concrete piers (F.1070-F.1072) were exposed and currently extend into the 1781 demolition rubble.

Overall, chinking and food remains continued to be the most common artifacts recovered. While yet another ceramic type, the Whieldon-type vegetable motif sherds in the root cellar, was found, there were fewer ceramics than in previous years. There were no cufflinks recovered this season, but personal adornment artifacts were still well represented, including the trade and Jesuit rings, pendant section and buckle mentioned above, parts of at least seven buttons, and several pieces of trade silver. Trade silver is an excellent time marker for the British fur trade, and is commonly found on Great Lakes fur trade sites, but has been uncommon at Michilimackinac. This season we found a brooch, a triangular pendant, two small closed-end cones (ear bob sized), and a small (ear?) cuff. Although gun parts continue to be scarce, three dozen gunflints and fifteen musketballs, of a variety of trade gun calibers, were recovered this season. They were especially prevalent in the northwestern area of the excavation.

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

		210R40 q2 Level 7 – Demolition & 1960 Stocks piers		
220R30 q4 Level 22- Clay feature	220R40 q3 Level 22– Clay feature	220R40 q4 Level 22 – Interior house deposit & sand	220R50 q3 Level 14 – Interior wall and house deposit	220R50 q4 Level 24- Interior wall features & sand
220R30 q2 Level 23 – Clay feature & sand	220R40 q1 Level 23- Clay feature, interior house deposit and sand	220R40 q2 Level 26-Interior house deposit	220R50 q1 Level 26- Interior house deposit, transitioning to sand	220R50 q2 Level 37-Root cellar and sand
230R30 q4 Complete	230R40 q3 East -Level 31 – interior house deposit S- F1045 W- Complete	230R40 q4 NW half Level 31- Interior house deposit SE half - complete	230R50 q3 Level 37- Cellar along east edge, remainder complete	230R50 q4 Level 37 –Root cellar
230R30 q2 Complete	230R40 q1 Complete	230R40 q2 Complete	230R50 q1 Complete	230R50 q2 North half - Level 37 – Cellar South half - Complete