

Preliminary Report on the 1995 Michilimackinac Archaeological Field Season

This summer's excavations were the seventh at the site of House D, the fourth unit of the Southeast row house within the palisade wall. The field season ran from June 19 to Sept. 29. The staff consisted of field director Dr. Lynn Morand, field supervisor Frank Stahl, and crew members Jenna Hamlin, Lynda Kennard, John Thompson and Jay VanHoesen. Public interpretation was carried out by John and Mary Ulrich. We also benefitted from the talents of numerous volunteers, who contributed 477 hours of their time to the project. We had two major objectives for the summer, to complete work in the south yard of the house and to begin removing architectural features within the house.

Excavations in the south yard of the house were begun between 1989 and 1994. This meant that several days at the beginning of the summer had to be spent removing backfill, plastic and washed-in material. Unfortunately, much of the yard was greatly disturbed by the demolition of the fort by the British in 1781. Much of the summer was spent removing demolition rubble (brown sandy loam with chinking, rocks, charcoal and sand pockets) from 240R60 quad 4, 240R70 quads 3 and 4, and 240R80 quads 3 and 4. Considerable demolition remains in 240R80 quad 4, which has been used as the "volunteer" square for the past two seasons. The demolition rubble layer contained numerous trade goods including several intact finger rings, a complete crucifix, and trade gun parts. Artifacts confirming military presence also were present, including military braid and buttons and a barrel band stamped with the King's arrow.



Previous excavations had confirmed the presence of an ell shown on the south side of the building on the 1749 Lotbiniere map. Our current interpretation of this extension is that it was used for the cleaning and possible storage of food. This is based on the presence of large quantities of animal bone and fish scales, the absence of large numbers of ceramic and glass fragments (which would suggest a meal preparation area) and the absence of a root cellar within the house. A possible refuse pit, containing gravel, clay and faunal remains, was excavated within the ell this summer (F.891). A portion of the collapsed east wall of the ell was excavated this summer in 240R70 quads 3 and 4 (F.885). It consisted of a timber surrounded by clay, and was found within the demolition layer. Its presence in this layer suggests the ell was extant during the British era despite its absence from the 1766 Magra map.

Evidence for a previously unknown porch or ancillary structure in the south yard was uncovered in late September. The evidence consists of an east-west running trench, in 240R70 quads 3 and 4 and 240R80 quad 3, cut into the Algoma beach, but apparently filled with demolition rubble (F.893). Two stains running south perpendicular to the trench were found in 240R70 quad 4 and 240R80 quad 3. The north-south running stain in the latter quad contains a large post (F. 894). More definite interpretation of these features awaits further excavation.

Along the southern edge of the excavated area (240R60 quads 3 and 4, 240R70 quads 3 and 4,

240R80 quad 3), a linear feature of rock and gravel has been exposed and partially excavated (Fs. 880 and 892). We believe this feature is in some way associated with the *Rue de la Babillarde*, possibly a drainage area or fence ditch or ditches separating the yard and street. This feature continues deeper in these quads, and also into currently unexcavated quads to the south. It is underlain by a north-south running French trench in 240R60 quad 3 (F.886).

Two refuse pits originally exposed in 1989 were removed this summer (Fs. 838 and 842). These two pits were located adjacent to the southeast corner of the house in 230R80 quad 1. Both consisted of a brown soil matrix containing many faunal remains. They are tentatively identified as British.

Perhaps the most interesting feature excavated this summer is actually in the yard of House E (F.884). The feature is in the west halves of 230R60 quad 1 and 240R60 quad 3 and extends into the adjoining quads to the west. It is a large saucer-shaped pit consisting of two matrices. The inner matrix is mixed sand and pinkish clay with large quantities of fish bones. The outer matrix is almost solid yellow clay. There is a thin char layer at the interface between the pit and surrounding matrices. The pit is interpreted as a puddling pit where chinking used in *poteaux-en-terre* construction was mixed. The fish bones may have been used as a binding agent. The char and outer dense clay may have resulted from an attempt to provide a strong edge to the pit. A smaller, clay-filled pit to the east (F.889) is tentatively identified as spill-over from the main puddling pit. Two refuse pits, which may have been joined at the top (obscured by the corner pedestal), were cut into the main puddling pit (Fs. 887, 888). Their matrix was much more dark and organic than the surrounding clay.

The puddling pit contained some unusual artifacts, although it did not have a high artifact content. A half-dozen or so small metal posts, bent at right angles were recovered. These appear to be thread guides from the spindle of a spinning wheel. The most unusual artifact of the summer was a clay religious medallion, or brooch setting. Only two fragments, forming the bottom two-thirds of the object, were recovered. The design appears to be the Virgin Mary holding the Baby Jesus. The front has a recessed lip and the back is smooth, indicating that it was in some kind of setting. The clay is fine textured, reddish-pink. The design is quite detailed and must have been made using a mold or die. I am unfamiliar with any similar artifact from contemporary sites.

Our work within House D was concentrated along the eastern tier of quads adjacent to House C, the Solomon-Levy House. This was done to facilitate installing pest barriers along the reconstructed wall. We excavated portions of both the north and south wall ditch (F.574).

A section of the southern wall was removed in 230R80 quads 1 and 3. A few post fragments were recovered. Immediately south of the wall ditch was another feature consisting of light brown sandy loam with clay mottles and few artifacts (F.841). It extended under the wall ditch and obviously was associated with it. It extended to a depth of four feet below datum! It is currently interpreted as material from the wall ditch leached into the surrounding sand.

A section of the northern wall was removed in 210R80 quad 3. A clear break in the wall, presumably for the door, was found in the center of this quad. This would put the door in the same relative position of the house (northwest corner) as the door in House C. A gray French ditch immediately south of the wall ditch may be the ditch from the original construction of the house (F.837). Both ditches continue to the west. North of the main wall ditch portions of two ditches associated with the French porch were removed.

More definitive interpretation and cultural associations await artifact analysis and further excavation. Artifact cataloging will take place this winter; excavation will continue in 1996. Following completion of the project, final results will be published as a monograph in the MSHP Archaeological Completion Report Series.

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