

Preliminary Report on the 1997 Michilimackinac Archaeological Field Season

This was the ninth and final season of excavation at the site of House D, the fourth unit of the Southeast Row House within the palisade wall. The field season ran from June 9 to Oct. 17. The excavation was under the direction of Dr. Lynn Morand Evans, Curator of Archaeology for the Mackinac State Historic Parks. Reneé Lutes-Kurtzweil was the field supervisor. Jenna Hamlin, Keri Kutt, Sue Carroll Roberts and John Thompson were the crew members. They were joined three days a week throughout the summer and fall by volunteer Frank Stahl (458.5 volunteer hours). Other volunteers provided 400 hours of interpretation, screening and excavation. Regular public interpretation was provided by Debbie Gafill.

The plan for the summer was to continue removing architectural features from the west half of the house area. Architectural features were removed from the east half of the house during 1996. The southern yard was saved for last, and ultimately not completed due to time constraints, because it can be protected during reconstruction.

Several features found were continuations of features or patterns from last summer. The most obvious examples are the north and south walls of the house (British - F.574; French - F.847). The west (F.863) and south (F.881) walls of the ell, still being interpreted as a pantry or other food-related area, were excavated as well. Additional pits for rafter support posts on rocks were excavated (British: F.911, F.939, F.950; French: F.940). The western half of the small British porch or door shelter on the north side of the house was found (1996 - F.904; 1997 - F.919).

Several interesting artifacts were found in the south British wall and ell wall. These were all toward the top and were probably pushed into the holes created as the walls were knocked over during the demolition of the fort. They include a bayonet fragment, which appears to be from a Brown Bess, a religious medal, showing Christ and the Virgin Mary, a bone-handled awl, and a carved catlinite gaming piece. A Jesuit ring marked "A.S." was found in the northern French porch ditch (F.816).

The main feature removed this summer was the double fireplace along the west wall of House D, which served both House D (south hearth) and House E (north hearth). British features removed included the stone fireplace bases (F.859 - south, F.862 - north) and fireboxes (F.920 - south, F.861 - north) made of oxidized sand and clay. Beneath the well-defined British fireplace was evidence for the earlier French fireplace



(F.936, F.941). Like most French features of House D, it had been disturbed by British rebuilding.

One of the features we hoped to find was the dividing wall between Houses D and E (F.860). Unfortunately, it turned out to be not as well preserved as the other walls; only sections remained. We did hit the edge of a root cellar in House E, however (F.866 - cellar fill, F.946 and F.948 - surrounding walls). The top eight inches were removed, yielding a ring with blue faceted stones and a thimble. This will be an exciting feature to excavate in the future.

Based on previous research we believe this house was constructed in the 1730s and lived in by the Beaulong/Bolon family for most of the French era. It was rebuilt shortly after the British gained control of the fort, and subsequently used by the military, first foot soldiers of the 60th and later officers of the 8th.

This summer we also found evidence for earlier activity on the site. Immediately south of the ell, we encountered a feature (F.892) which consisted of four logs and surrounding cobbles. One log showed definite saw marks. Three of the logs appeared to be stacked on top of one another, with the fourth running perpendicular to them, suggesting *piece sur piece* (horizontal log) construction. These may be remnants of an ancillary structure for House D.

Under the ell was a deep feature (F.945) excavated to a depth of nearly four feet below the present ground surface before the season ended. The feature continues down and to the west. It appears to line up with F.731 from the House C yard, and may be related to the first palisade.

A concentration of about 120 sherds of pre-contact Native American pottery was uncovered while looking for the French wall ditch between the houses. This concentration appears to represent one grit-tempered, cord-marked pot. Similar sherds were identified as Lake Michigan ware by Maxwell (1964:25). There were no other artifacts associated with the sherds, and they were lying in typical orange beach sand, rather than in a colored (cultural) soil matrix. We interpret this to mean that the pot is probably an isolated artifact that was broken while being carried across the beach. A small gray and white sand feature (F.952) which contained charcoal, animal bone and one piece of Native American pottery was found under the northwest corner of the house. It probably predates the fort.

The interior features of the house have been completely excavated. The southwest corner walls of the house, the features located in the yard, and the root cellar associated with House E are not complete. They have been covered with plastic, then clear sand and finally clean back dirt, which will be seeded in the spring. This should protect them until we can return following the excavation of House 7 of the South Southwest Row House.

All interpretations offered here are preliminary, subject to artifact analysis which will take place this winter. The overall results of the House D project will be published as a monograph in the MSHP *Archaeological Completion Report Series*.

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