

Preliminary Report on 1998 Archaeological Field Season

This year archaeological excavations took place in the southwest quadrant of Michilimackinac for the first time in thirty years. Our work this summer was on House 7, the easternmost house of the South Southwest Row House. The westernmost five feet of this house were excavated in 1966 under the direction of Lyle Stone. The completion of excavation of this house will complete the row house. This is the first step in the MSHP plan to reconstruct the row house for a museum. Returning to this area also provides an opportunity to attempt to tie data from two eras of excavation together.

The 1998 field season ran from June 10 to September 11. Dr. Lynn L.M. Evans, MSHP Curator of Archaeology, directed the excavation, with the assistance of field supervisor Renée Lutes-Kurtzweil. Keri Kutt, Sarah Jordan, Susan Koitch and Todd Reck were the crewmembers. Frank Stahl volunteered on the crew throughout the field season (357 volunteer hours). Elizabeth Lazdins spent five weeks with the crew through a Beloit College Venture Grant (201 volunteer hours). Other volunteers provided 396 hours of interpretation, screening and excavation. Debbie Gafill provided regular public interpretation.

The major goals of excavation for the 1998 season were to locate the edge of the 1966 excavation and the house walls and to determine the general stratigraphic sequence. We opened a thirty-foot long, five-foot wide trench from 290L30 q2 to 270L30 q4. We subsequently added one square to the east (290L20 q1) and to the west (280L30 q3).

Much of the early field season was spent doing the archaeology of recent park activities. In the first week we encountered a 600-volt electric line providing service from the barracks to the archaeology shed. Soon after that we found posts which were remnants of a wall separating prison laborers on the 1960s archaeology projects from park visitors. This wall is well documented in park photographs and postcards of the era. A separate wood post (F956) is the remnant of a later "Rue de Diable" sign, seen on page 2 of *Michilimackinac: A Handbook to the Site*. Postmolds of undetermined origin and other modern disturbances were encountered in 290L20 q1 (F955), 280L30 q2 (F958), 290L30 q4 (F966) and 290L30 q2 (F970). A large, c.1920 pothunter pit (F965) disturbed all of 270L30 q2 to a depth of 1.73' below datum.

Based on the pictorial evidence, the area of our trench appears to have been protected from excavation under supporting braces propping up the wall. For this reason we expanded to the west in 280L30 q3. Here we believe we have found the edge of the 1966 excavation. Our grid was established using benchmarks set in 1968. These were set after previous benchmarks, including those used in 1966, were accidentally destroyed (D. Armour, personal communication). This could account for the discrepancy of where we expected to find the edge and where it actually was.



The southern wall of the house is clearly defined in 290L30 q2&4 and 290L20 q1 (F959, F962, F964, F969). The north wall is less well defined at this time, but appears to run through 270L30 q4. Several north-south running clay features (F963, F967, F968) are present in the south yard area.

One of the puzzles this summer was F960, a hump of orange sand and rock/gravel that was present in 280L30 q2&4. It appears to be beach sand, and contains few artifacts. It is not clear at this time if it is a natural beach ridge or redeposited beach sand. In either case, it is not clear why it is so high with occupation deposit to the north of it. Its southern extent is not defined at this point.

We found a variety of fairly typical artifacts this summer, including food remains, nails, broken glass & ceramics, buttons, beads and other trade goods. The most unusual find was a large number of sequins.

There was no quad in which we bottomed out completely, so we have not seen the entire stratigraphic profile yet. So far the general profile is modern, very thin W.P.A., 1781 demolition, British occupation. One of our major goals for next summer will be to complete the quads currently open. All interpretations offered here are preliminary, subject to further excavation and analysis, which will begin this winter.

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