

## Preliminary Report on the 2020 Michilimackinac Archaeology Field Season

The year 2020 will always be remembered as the year of the covid-19 pandemic. Like everything else, the Michilimackinac archaeological field season was impacted by the pandemic. It started later than usual. Extensive safety protocols meant that there were no volunteer excavators and most processes took longer due to the need to sanitize hands and equipment and maintain social distance.

The 2020 field season was a continuation of the excavations carried out in 2007-2019 on House E of the Southeast Rowhouse. The main 2020 field season ran from June 10 to August 22, with preliminary work commencing June 3 and wrap-up continuing through August 27. 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, Caitlin Lobl and Sarah Coffey. Three volunteers contributed a total of 177.5 hours of interpretation.

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.

The main goal for the season was to keep everyone healthy. Archaeological goals were to complete F.1066 (the random structural post) and the southeast root cellar, and to better define the south-central root cellar. We also planned to keep excavating along the 210 line in hopes of finding the bottom of the interior house deposit.

The post in F.1066 was first mapped at 2.75' below datum in 2015. It bottomed out at 6.45' below datum onto a flat rock. Once that rock and associated soil were removed, the final depth of the feature was 6.65' below datum. There are multiple possible interpretations for this very deep feature. One possibility is that it is simply a support post for the floor due to the presence of two root cellars. We do not know the final depth of either cellar at this time.

A more intriguing possibility, given the depth of F.1066, is that it is related to the 1715 fort. Previous excavations have located the north (F.5) and west walls and two candidates for the south wall, as well as some possible structures associated with it (Stone 1974:313-317). No one has ever suggested that they have found the east wall of the 1715 fort. Perhaps not coincidentally, the House E project is the first time archaeologists have excavated along the L50 line, which is where this feature is located. This turned our attention back to the complex of north-south trenches (F.1040/F.1042/F.1050) further south along this line. Comparing depths these still seem to be associated with the south wall of the house (F.1043), appearing around 2.40' below datum and ending at 3.95' below datum. The depth of F.1066 also raises interesting possibilities for the deep features encountered in the northwest area of the excavation during the 2019 season. No excavation was carried out on them in 2020.

Excavation continued in the southeast root cellar. A horizontal plank was uncovered, but cultural deposit continued under it. The most unusual artifact from this cellar this year was part of a bone-handled knife.

After much careful excavation, the edges of the south-central root cellar were better defined. It appears that it was constructed as part of the 1730s house. Although there were British demolition artifacts at its top, some French artifacts were found this summer. The most definitive was a *Compagnie des Indes* lead seal dating to 1717-1769.

The most intriguing artifact of the season came from the edge of this cellar. It was a brass sleeve button with a clear glass or rock crystal face with an intaglio bust of a bearded man. Beards were not common in European cultures in the eighteenth century, so he was not a contemporary figure. Research continues into Biblical, classical and historical possibilities. A classical figure would fit with our understanding of the British trader as a cosmopolitan person. A religious figure would fit in with a Roman Catholic French-Canadian resident, either in the French period or as a member of the household during the British era. Sleeve buttons were worn by both men and women.

Other interesting artifacts from this cellar included an intact heart-shaped “Jesuit” iconographic ring with a “V” motif and an iron breech plug. The breech plug was only the fifth gun part recovered from this house.

We opened the final quads along the 210 (south) line this season. The westernmost quad (210R30 q2) is now in the 1781 demolition rubble. As with other quads in previous seasons, it has yielded a variety of ceramic sherds, including a creamware handle, possibly from a pitcher, and a fragment of a polychrome tin-glazed earthenware teacup. The westernmost quad (210R50 q2) is at the modern/colonial interface.

In the deepest quad in this row (210R40 q2) a strip of gray sand cutting through gold sand was uncovered the final week of excavation. This is the first possible evidence for the north wall of the house.

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

Lynn L.M. Evans  
December 2020

Stone, Lyle M.

1974 *Fort Michilimackinac, 1715-1781: An Archaeological Perspective on the Revolutionary Frontier*. Michigan State University Museum, East Lansing/MISPC, Mackinac Island.

Current Status of Quads

210R30 q2 Level 12 - Demolition	210R40 q1 Level 18 - French interior house deposit	210R40 q2 Level 19 – French wall and interior house deposit	210R50 q1 Level 10– Interior house deposit	210R50 q2 Level Delta – modern/demolition interface
220R30 q4 Level 35- Sand on west, plank walls to east	220R40 q3 Level 34– Chinking feature, French root cellar	220R40 q4 Level 34 – French root cellar & sand	220R50 q3 Complete	220R50 q4 Complete
220R30 q2 Level 35 – edge of plank wall (NE) & sand	220R40 q1 Level 35- French root cellar	220R40 q2 Level 35-French root cellar	220R50 q1 W- Level 35-edge of French root cellar Rest - complete	220R50 q2 North - complete S - Level 47-Root cellar and sand
230R30 q4 Complete	230R40 q3 Level 36 –French root cellar SW- F1045	230R40 q4 NW half Level 36- French root cellar SE half - complete	230R50 q3 Level 46- Root Cellar,	230R50 q4 Level 46 –Root cellar
230R30 q2 Complete	230R40 q1 Complete	230R40 q2 Complete	230R50 q1 Complete	230R50 q2 Complete