

Preliminary Report on the Michilimackinac 2003 Archaeological Field Season

The 2003 excavation was a continuation of work carried out in 1966 and 1998-2002 on the easternmost unit of the south-southwest rowhouse within the palisade wall. The original structure was built during the 1730s. The 1749 Lotbinière map indicates that a Des Riviere owned the house. This is probably Jean Noel Desrivieres, a fur trader, and apparently a seasonal resident of the post. The structure was rebuilt in the 1760s and occupied by British foot soldiers for a time prior to the completion of the Soldier's Barracks. Based on analysis of artifacts recovered through 2001, Todd Reck has suggested that French-Canadian traders resided here in the late British era.



The 2003 field season ran from June 9 to August 24, with wrap-up work continuing through September 23. Dr. Lynn Evans, MSHP Curator of Archaeology, directed the excavation, with the assistance of field supervisor Yolanda Rico. Conrad Latuszek, Janie Bloomfield, Katyn Adams and Amy Roache were the crew members. Twenty volunteers provided a combined 676.5 hours of screening and excavation. This includes archaeology staff volunteering 145.5 hours when their paid positions ended. Due to budget cuts we had no full time interpreter this season. Instead, each archaeologist devoted one day a week, plus two more during the season to this task. This, combined with the reduction of the season to eleven weeks, first implemented in 2002, represents a loss of 856 hours of fieldwork, which in turn slows the overall progress on the project. Our goals for the season were to open all remaining quads in the project area, locate the

hearth and continue work on the root cellar.

The root cellar continued to be a fascinating area. The wall posts discovered in 270L30 quad 1 last summer continued deeper. Yolanda Rico excavated 270L30 quad 1 down to the level 280L30 quad 3 was left at the end of 2000 and began excavating both quads together. At the end of the season these quads were down to the level of 270L30 q2 as well. The root cellar fill continued to be rich in artifacts. Notable artifacts recovered this season include an intact three-part buckle, a fragmentary decorated brass button, a pewter Kings 8 regiment button, a gun worm and a stone Late Woodland point. To the north of the cellar wall, under the British north house wall trench (F.981), possible remnants of the original 1730s French house wall trench were discovered (F.1012).

Janie Bloomfield opened 270L20 quad 3, the northeastern-most quad of the project, which proved to be very interesting. Despite the presence of the early twentieth-century "pothunter" pit (F.965), portions of the British north house wall (F.981) were identified. The yard space north of the house contained several intriguing artifacts, including many barrel band fragments, a tremendous concentration of lead shot (over 1,000 pieces in levels 7-10), a burst .50" caliber gun barrel fragment and some flakes from working stone. A clay concentration (matrix 580) north of the wall is part of a clay apron noted along most of the north wall of the entire rowhouse, presumably a weatherproofing feature. Wood planks (F.1013) were found in the yard as well, perhaps clapboards or a porch stoop.

Moving to the south, we finally found the hearth in 270L20 quad 1 and 280L20 quad 3. This summer Amy Roache excavated in 280L20 quad 3, which was opened last year. Almost immediately she began finding clay, which resolved into what we believe is a clay hearth floor. This was left until Katyn Adams could excavate 270L20 q1, begun this summer, to the same depth, where the clay feature continued. These quads will be excavated in phase next season to better understand this feature. The soil above the hearth contained numerous artifacts, including fishhooks, a brass kettle lug, a knife blade fragment and a rosary bead in 270L20 quad 1. Among other artifacts, 280L20 quad 3 contained two diagnostic British artifacts, a creamware sherd and a .75" caliber musket ball. As expected from excavating the quad to the west, the early twentieth-century "pothunter" pit (F.965) continued in 270L20 quad 1. A Mentholatum jar was recovered from it this summer.

Conrad Latuszek continued excavating 280L20 quad1 this summer. The east wall of the house continues to be sporadic here. This quad has now gone deeper than the quad to the south. A very deep stone feature (F.986) was excavated immediately to the west in 1999.

Moving to the west side of the excavation, Lynn Evans completed 290L40 quad4, begun in 2001. There was nothing remarkable about this quad.

The last two quads to be opened were 290L40 quad 2 and 290L30 quad 1 in the southwest corner of the house. For the most part volunteers excavated here, although Amy Roache moved to 290L30 quad 1 after she exposed the hearth noted above. The south house wall trench should continue along the north edge of these quads from 290L30 quad 2, but has not been defined yet. The edge of the 1966 backfill has been defined in 290L40 quad 2.

Cataloging of this season's finds will take place this winter. All interpretations offered here are preliminary, subject to further excavation and analysis.

Lynn L.M. Evans
October 2003