

Preliminary Report on the 2024 Michilimackinac Archaeology Field Season

The 2024 field season was a continuation of the excavations carried out in 2007-2023 on House E of the Southeast Rowhouse. The main 2024 field season ran from May 28 to August 17, with preliminary work commencing May 20 and wrap-up continuing through August 23. Dr. Lynn Evans, MSHP Curator of Archaeology, directed the excavation, with the assistance of field supervisor Elizabeth Kerton-Schmit. The crew consisted of Leah Cunningham, Emily Doctor, Pax Johnson and Melissa Ripper. Five volunteers contributed a total of 159 hours of interpretation and excavation.

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 archaeological goals for the season were to complete the southeast cellar, to further define the central cellar, and to locate the north wall trench of the house. These were largely accomplished.

One of the reasons this project has taken so long is that the house has two cellars. Only a few houses at Michilimackinac have two cellars. We believe this is the sign of a successful trader with a lot of merchandise to store.

Nine seasons after it was defined, the excavation of the southeast cellar of the house was finally completed this year. The floorboard remnants, wall planks and cultural deposit were removed, exposing rocky beach sand. The last artifacts we found were bones from a mouse or other small rodent. The cellar would have been between five and six feet deep when the house was occupied.

The central cellar was only excavated for a few weeks this season. The posts and deposit continue. A few trade goods were recovered, including a broken hawk bell and a brass trade ring. This type of trade ring is sometimes referred to as a "Jesuit" ring, but by the eighteenth century they had lost their religious meaning and were merely secular trinkets in the fur trade.

The other focus for the season was excavating the area of the north wall of the house and the porch. Most of the trench for the north wall was well defined, with a few posts exposed on the west end of the trench. The east end of the trench was obliterated by a tree planted c.1910 in an early park beautification project.

When we removed the last patch of rubble from the 1781 demolition of the fort from among the tree roots, we found another brass "Jesuit" ring. Another notable artifact from this area was a fragment of Batavia Brown porcelain. Although one of the defining features of this house has been the variety of ceramics recovered, this is the first sherd of this type found.

The west end of the porch area yielded a few more interesting artifacts. A bent, one-foot-long section of one-inch-wide iron barrel band is a reminder of the important role of trade at Michilimackinac. The base of a glass goblet is more evidence for the fashionable lifestyle of the English trader who owned this house in the 1760s and 1770s,



The most unusual find of the season pre-dates the house. Several sherds from a Middle Woodland pot were found just above the rocky beach. The sherds are grit-tempered, with a squared-off lip. They are badly burned but appear to have been decorated by pressing cords into the surface of the clay when it was still wet. One hundred sixty-five similar sherds were found a few feet away during the excavation of House D in the 1990s. These sherds may relate to a small Laurel tradition fishing site east of the fort near the Mackinac Bridge. Thanks to Michael Hambacher and William Lovis for assistance in identifying the sherds.

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

Lynn L.M. Evans
November 2024

Current Status of Excavation

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|--|---|---|--|--|--|
| 210R30 q4 Level 24- Wall trench | 210R40 q3 Level 25- Wall trench | 210R40 q4 Level 25- Wall trench | 210R50 q3 Level 23- Tree roots and wall trench | 210R50 q4 Level 23- Tree roots and wall trench | Excavated with House D Complete |
| 210R30 q2 Level 17 – British house interior | 210R40 q1 Level 19 - French interior house deposit | 210R40 q2 Level 19 – French wall and interior house deposit | 210R50 q1 Level 21– Tree roots and Interior sub-floor deposit | 210R50 q2 Level 22– Tree roots and burned beach | Excavated with House D Complete |
| 220R30 q4 Level 36- Sand on west, plank walls to east | 220R40 q3 Level 36– Chinking feature, French cellar | 220R40 q4 Level 42 – French cellar & sand | 220R50 q3 Complete | 220R50 q4 Complete | Excavated with House D Complete |
| 220R30 q2 Level 36 – edge of plank wall (NE) & sand | 220R40 q1 Level 42- French cellar | 220R40 q2 Level 42- French cellar | 220R50 q1 Complete | 220R50 q2 Complete | 220R60 q1 Complete |
| 230R30 q4 Complete | 230R40 q3 Level 42 – French cellar | 230R40 q4 NW half Level 43- French cellar SE half - complete | 230R50 q3 Complete | 230R50 q4 Complete | 230R60 q3 Complete |

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| 230R30 q2 | 230R40 q1 | 230R40 q2 | 230R50 q1 | 230R50 q2 | Excavated with House D |
| Complete | Complete | Complete | Complete | Complete | Complete |