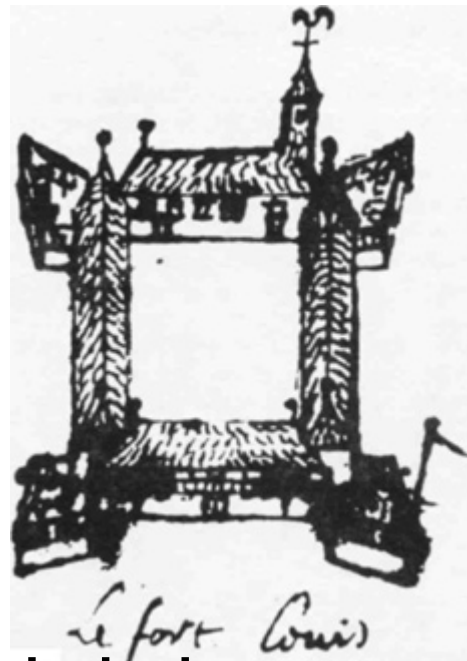


The Old Mobile Project Newsletter

Issue 12

Spring 1995



Excavations Inside the Krebs House (or Old Spanish Fort) in Pascagoula, Mississippi

The staff at the University of South Alabama's Center for Archaeological Studies, which is normally involved in research at the Old Mobile site, has been engaged in field work at two other colonial sites this year, the Krebs House in Pascagoula and the Dog River site in Mobile County, Alabama. We thought that readers of this newsletter might want to learn what has been discovered about later eighteenth-century life along the northern Gulf coast from excavations at these two sites.

The Krebs House is a very unusual building. Evidently the oldest standing structure in Mississippi, it is a timber-frame building with some walls of bousillage and some of tabby. The houses excavated at Old Mobile had walls of bousillage, a mixture of mud and Spanish Moss, as did many other eighteenth- and nineteenth-century buildings constructed in traditional French style in the Gulf region and the Mississippi River Valley. On the other hand, tabby construction (in which a mixture of oyster shells, lime, sand, and water was poured into wooden forms to create concrete walls), is usually considered a Spanish-colonial building tradition, and examples can be seen in St. Augustine, Florida, even today. However, the British in Georgia were also building with tabby by at least the 1740s. Tabby construction seems to

have been limited entirely to coastal locations, where abundant quantities of oyster shells could be found in abandoned Indian shell middens consisting of refuse from oyster harvesting and processing.

Today the Krebs House is jointly managed by the City of Pascagoula, Jackson County, and the Jackson County Historical Society as a public park known as the Old Spanish Fort (the origin of the name remains a mystery). In preparation for a major restoration of the structure by the New Orleans architectural firm, **Koch and Wilson Architects**, we were requested to conduct limited excavations inside the house to pursue archaeological research on the building's history initiated in 1979 by the University of Southern Mississippi and revived in 1992 by Goodwin & Associates of New Orleans. Our own research builds on and largely agrees with the conclusions of our predecessors on the site. In addition to answering specific questions about room construction sequence and the types of floors that once existed inside the house, we were asked to finally determine the date of original construction of the Krebs House.

In fact, we can be fairly precise about the original construction date, which was within a few years of 1775. It could not have occurred much earlier, because the tabby walls (which were the first ones built) were made from a Pascagoula Indian shell midden that had been occupied from around 1750 to 1770. If you look closely at the tabby walls, you can still see potsherds, animal bones, and even a few charred peach seeds mixed in with the oyster shells. Excavated tabby rubble contained many glass beads, a category of artifact that is eminently dateable, as are the various kinds of pottery found in it. So we know that the Krebs House was built either late in the British period, when the region was part of the colony of West Florida, or perhaps at the very beginning of the Spanish period, just after Governor Bernardo de Galvez conquered the region during the American Revolution.

The French-style bousillage walls, which form the western room and a partition inside the original tabby structure, were added during a major expansion and renovation that occurred around 1820, after the Pascagoula area became part of the state of Mississippi. Even though the Krebs House is not an ancient relic of the first French settlement of the region circa 1718 (as some

(Continued on next page)



An artist's reconstruction of a Rhenish salt glazed stoneware bottle, sherds of which were excavated at Structure 5, 1MB94; 1/4 scale. (Drawing by Elizabeth Mitchen.)

(Continued from Front Page)

had hoped), it is still a fascinating artifact of the colonial past. In its composite nature, the house mirrors the diverse European and Indian traditions that interacted and combined — with substantial African contributions — to produce the distinctive culture of the Gulf coast.

A survivor of several wars and innumerable hurricanes, the Krebs House will soon be restored to its 1920s appearance, to inspire new generations of visitors to explore our historical and archaeological past. If you would like to assist with this effort, you might consider joining the **Friends of Old Spanish Fort**, a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the house and museum. Individual membership is \$20.00, obtainable from the Jackson County Historical Society, 4602 Fort Avenue, Pascagoula, MS 39567. The park is open all year, except for major holidays.

A technical report on our excavations inside the Krebs House is available from the Center (or Archaeological Studies, HUMB 34, University of South Alabama, Mobile, AL 36688. To obtain a copy of this 93-page illustrated report, please make your check (or \$8.00 payable to the "University of South Alabama;" Alabama residents should add 4% tax; Mobile County residents, 9%.

Marcel Giraud, 1900-1994

A pioneer historian of French colonial Louisiana. Marcel Giraud died on February 4th of this year in Nice, France. Giraud was primarily known (or his five-volume *Histoire de La Louisiana Francaise*, which covers the period from 1698 to 1731. Volumes I, II, and V are available in English translation from Louisiana State University Press. A reminiscence by Vaughan Baker on Giraud's life and works appeared in *Louisiana History* 35 (1994): 355-360.

Old Mobile Project Contacts

Archaeology Director:

Dr. Gregory A. Waselkov
Center (or Archaeological Studies)
University of South Alabama
Mobile, AL 36688
(205) 460-6911

University Liaison

Dr. J. Stephen Thomas
College of Arts & Sciences
University of South Alabama
Mobile, AL 36688
(205) 460-6280

The Dog River Archaeological Site

The other major research project in the Mobile area this year is still ongoing at the confluence of Dog River with Mobile Bay, just south of the modern city of Mobile. Construction of a new bridge across Dog River has necessitated extensive prior excavations, sponsored by the Alabama Department of Transportation, in order to retrieve information and artifacts from the site. Our excavations are thought to be in the general vicinity of a warehouse built by French colonists in 1702 somewhere near the mouth of the river. No evidence of this warehouse has ever been found, but foundation trenches from a 1740s-era French house were excavated nearby in 1991 by Julie Barnes Smith, directing a team from the University of Alabama's Division of Archaeology. This house was built in the *poteaux-en-terre* style with bousillage, and is thought to have been occupied by the Goudeau family.

Our own work has concentrated on a bayou, situated south of the French house site, that was filled in with clay in 1930. Prior to that date, numerous artifacts were deposited — mostly as refuse — in this waterlogged spot, where anaerobic conditions have helped to preserve organic items that normally would have decayed in a drier site. Such things as fragments of leather shoes, wooden pulley and barrel parts, and two large wooden boxes, each 8x3 feet in size, were excavated and are undergoing preservation. Most of these objects date to the early nineteenth century, but there is also evidence accumulating of a mid-eighteenth-century Native American occupation. Pottery similar to Creek Indian ceramics from central Alabama and Georgia suggests that the inhabitants could have been eastern Muskogean. The Chatots or Chacatos, who fled from Florida to Mobile in 1704 and 1705 with the Apalachees, are known to have lived near the mouth of Dog River after 1711. But they are usually thought (possibly incorrectly) to have been related to the western Muskogean Choctaws, whose pottery is very different from the types so far recovered. Other possible ethnic identities of the potters are Yamasees from eastern South Carolina and Georgia, or Alabamas from the vicinity of French Fort Toulouse, where Michel Goudeau had served as warehouse keeper. Upon completion of field work, a definitive analysis of the Dog River site and its artifacts promises to contribute substantially to our knowledge of French and Indian interaction on the Gulf Coast.



An artist's reconstruction of a Chinese porcelain plate, sherds of which have been excavated from Structure 14, IMB94: 1/2 scale. (Drawing by Elizabeth Mitchem.)

Bibliography of French Colonial Archaeology

In 1990 the Society for Historical Archaeology initiated a series of bibliographies, entitled "Guides to the Archaeological Literature of the Immigrant Experience in America." First in the series was *The Archaeology of Spanish Colonialism in the Southeastern United States and the Caribbean*, by Charles R. Ewen, and a volume on African-American archaeology by Theresa A. Singleton is scheduled for publication soon. *French Colonial Archaeology in Eastern North America and the Caribbean* will be compiled (by the editor of this newsletter) over the course of the next year. The scope will be French colonial archaeology broadly considered, ranging from sixteenth-century French Basque-Indian contact sites in the St. Lawrence Valley and Great Lakes region, to Huguenot sites in eighteenth-century English colonies, to French artifacts from Canary Islander sites in early nineteenth-century Louisiana, and, of course, all manner of sites and artifacts associated with the French colonies before 1763. The contents will cover all aspects of terrestrial and underwater archaeology: initial attempts at settlement; relations with Native Americans; domestic, religious, and administrative sites, both rural and urban; military sites; material culture and subsistence studies; and other specialized topics. All report and publication formats will be included, from peer reviewed articles to contract reports, unpublished theses to microfiche, conference papers to monograph series. As long as a reference is available for study at some identifiable location, it can be listed in this bibliography. My hope is to produce a comprehensive reference tool that accurately reflects the current state of French colonial archaeology in Canada, the United States, and the Caribbean. But help from many of you will be essential if this enormous topic is to be thoroughly documented. If you know of reports or publications on French colonial archaeology that should be included in this guide, particularly if they are part of the "gray literature" or are still "in press," please send bibliographic references to: Gregory Waselkov, Center for Archaeological Studies, HUMB 34, University of South Alabama, Mobile, AL 36688.

Old Mobile Site Featured in Exhibit

Artifacts from the Old Mobile site will be highlighted in a temporary exhibit, "Mobile in the Eighteenth Century," mounted by the Fine Arts Museum of the South in their downtown Mobile gallery, located at 300 Dauphin Street, from January 13 through February 28, 1995. This exhibit coincides with the annual meeting of the **Southeastern American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies**, which offers presentations on Spanish, French, British, and American literature, art, music and history. Of particular interest is the plenary address by Robert Darnton, "From the History of Books to the History of News and the Media in Eighteenth-Century Paris," Philippe Oszuscik's paper, "Beginning a New Identity in Colonial North America: The French in Old Mobile," and a Vivaldi-Mozart concert by *Musica Sacra* in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. The meeting runs from February 16-18 at the Radisson Admiral Semmes Hotel. This is the first week of Mardi Gras festivities, with parades scheduled every evening during the conference. For additional information, contact Caryl L. Lloyd, Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, University of South Alabama. Mobile, AL 36688; TEL/FAX: (205)460-6291/7130.

Friends of Old Mobile

The **Friends of Old Mobile, Inc.** - a non-profit association to promote and support the Old Mobile Project - invites you to become a supporting member by contributing \$25 (individual) or \$40 (family). Mail contributions to: Friends of Old Mobile, Inc., P.O. Box 6685, Mobile, AL 36660.



An artist's reconstruction of a Mexican-made, green Puebla Polychrome plate, sherds of which were excavated at Structure 3, 1MB94, 1/2 scale. (Drawing by Elizabeth Mitchem.)

Upcoming Meetings

The **7th North American Fur Trade Conference** will take place May 24-28, 1995, in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Contact Barry Moody or Bill Wicken for details (Gorsebrook Research Institute for Atlantic Canada Studies, Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada B3H 3C3; TEL/FAX: (902) 420-5688/5530. Although the program has not yet been announced, French colonial papers are invariably included in these conferences. For instance, a volume on the previous conference, *The Fur Trade Revisited*, edited by Jennifer S. H. Brown, W.J. Eccles, and Donald P. Heldman (Michigan State University Press, East Lansing, 1994), contains "French and Spanish Colonial Trade Policies and the Fur Trade among the Caddoan Indians of the Trans-Mississippi South," by Timothy K. Pertulla; "The Flow of European Trade Goods into the Western Great Lakes Region, 1715-1760," by Dean L. Anderson; "The Career of Joseph La France, *Coureur de Bois* in the Upper Great Lakes," by Helen Hornbeck Tanner; and "Crucifixes and Medallions from Michilimackinac," by Charles J. Rinehart, among many interesting contributions.

From May 31 to June 5, 1995, the **21st Annual Conference of the French Colonial Historical Society** will meet in Sydney, Nova Scotia. The conference schedule will soon be available from A.J.B. Johnston, P.O. Box 160, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia, Canada BOA 1MO; TEL/FAX: (902) 733-3535/2362. In addition to a wide range of conference papers (which covers all aspects of the French experience *outré mer*), there will be several receptions, an excursion to the Fortress of Louisbourg, an evening meal (featuring Cape Breton lobster) within the walls of the reconstructed eighteenth-century town, and presentations of period French as well as modern-day Acadian music and culture.

The Friends of Old Mobile Are Pleased to Welcome the Following New and Renewing Members

Wanna Elliott, Mobile, AL
Joy U. Klotz, Mobile, AL
Daniel T. McCall, Jr., Mobile, AL
Samuel McMillan, Mobile, AL
Ben W. Midgette, Axis, AL
Donald E. Pusch, Seabrook, TX
Horace L. Rhorer, Mobile, AL
Patrick A. Salin, Montreal, PQ
Nicholas Stallworth, Mobile, AL
Stephen R. Welford, Mobile, AL
Ann Wesley, Mobile, AL

NEH Funding Threatened

As most of you undoubtedly know, the **National Endowment for the Humanities** provided a major grant to help fund the first three years of archaeological research at the Old Mobile site. Most of this NEH funding took the form of a matching grant, which encouraged us to raise funds from the community (and beyond), from individuals and corporations that wanted to support the exploration of this colonial town site. Without that initial help, it would have been nearly impossible to establish and maintain the active excavation and analysis program still underway today. The benefits from that NEH-sponsored research will continue to accrue for years to come, in the form of future exhibits, public lectures, technical reports, articles and books. NEH, and affiliated state foundations, have actively fostered public participation in the humanities — through programs for teachers, lectures series, discussion programs in libraries, exhibitions, films, and in many other ways. The Alabama Humanities Foundation, for instance, supports over 700 programs every year that are attended by more than 100,000 people in more than 100 communities. Yet this extremely cost-effective government initiative is threatened with severe funding cuts. The "Contract with America" proposes a rescission of 1995 funds and 10% annual cuts over the next five years in both federal and state humanities spending. Instead of receiving praise as an example of intelligent government, NEH has been targeted as wasteful and unnecessary. Consider writing your Congressional representatives immediately to explain why NEH and state humanities foundations should continue to receive adequate federal support.

