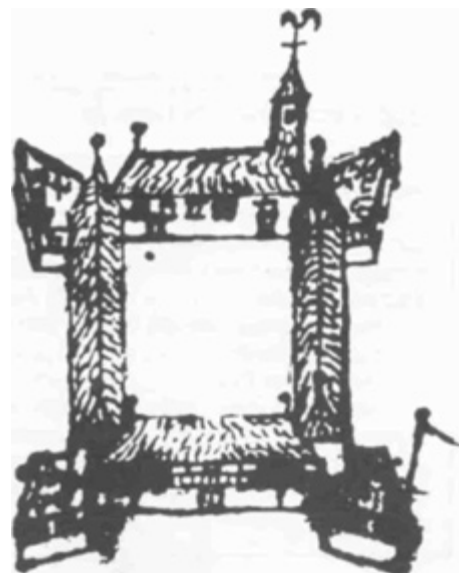


The Old Mobile Project Newsletter

Issue 16

Spring 1998



Old Mobile Archaeology Website

Since Issue 15 of this newsletter appeared last (all, the Center for Archaeological Studies' director and staff members (especially site designer Jo Ann Perkins) have been busily constructing an Internet website. In the absence of any exhibit facility in which to display the results of our past decade of excavations, a website seems the most effective means to convey our findings to the public — certainly less costly and perhaps even more effective than a museum exhibit, considering the rising popularity of the Internet.

The **Old Mobile Archaeology** website can be accessed via the University of South Alabama's homepage, or directly at <http://www.southalabama.edu/archaeology/>. (Many public libraries now offer Internet access to patrons, if you do not have a home computer.) We hope everyone receiving this newsletter will have an opportunity to view our new website, and that many of you will offer suggestions for future additions or changes.

Our website has six major components. A page on the **Center for Archaeological Studies** introduces the staff and describes our goals and activities. **Publications** has two sections: The Book Shop," which offers popular books and technical reports for sale; and "Newsletters," with images of back issues for ready reference.

Visits to archaeological excavations are an excellent way for the public to enjoy and learn about our prehistory and history. Unfortunately, public access to many of our recent excavations has been severely restricted, because either the landowner had concerns (or legal liability or ongoing construction posed threats to visitor safety. We can avoid all those obstacles and enable you to "virtually" **Visit Our Sites** on the Internet. So far, tours of Old Mobile, Bottle Creek, Port Dauphin, the Dauphin Island Shell Mounds, and sites at the Exploreum and Dog River Bridge are featured in this section. As laboratory analysis proceeds, information and illustrations will be added to these pages, and new ones will appear on recent excavations at Spanish Fort and the Augustin Rochon Plantation, as well as our survey of the Montrose potteries.

The Center's staff has always had a strong interest in French colonial America, extending well beyond our own excavations at Old Mobile and Port Dauphin. So we want to share some of our personal

favorites among French historic sites, in hope that you may decide to see them yourselves someday. Highlights of **French Colonies In America** are the Cahokia Courthouse and Fort de Chartres III. both in western Illinois, Port St. Jean-Baptiste in Natchitoches, Louisiana, and Fort Michilimackinac in modern-day Michigan. We've also included pages on Fort Toulouse in central Alabama, the LaPointe-Krebs House in Pascagoula, Mississippi, and the Fortress of Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia. Links to Internet websites for these and many other historic sites are also found on this page.

Color printing is seldom possible in scholarly publications due to high cost, but that consideration is moot on the Web. Therefore, we are planning several pages devoted to artifacts that deserve illustration in full-color to be fully appreciated. **Artifacts of Colonial Mobile** begins with a page on French faience, examining the stylistic types of that kind of pottery found at colonial sites in the Mobile area. Other artifact categories to be added in the coming year include Chinese porcelain and glass beads.

A sixth segment of the website provides **Educational Resources** to K-12 teachers who wish to incorporate archaeology into their regular curricula. Lesson plans adapted from "Intrigue of the Past: A Teacher's Activity Guide" (by Shelley J. Smith, et al., Bureau of Land Management, 1993) offer a hands-on approach to archaeology for young students. Preservation is also stressed, another important lesson in this world of rapidly disappearing archaeological sites. **Ashley Dumas**, the Center's education coordinator, continues to develop other resources for teachers (some involving 18th-century music and short video segments) that will be included in updates soon.

Our website is part of an effort to inform and educate the public about the archaeological research conducted at the University of South Alabama, a process that should not run entirely in one direction, from us to you. If you have any ideas for new content, different directions, or novel approaches to presentation, please let us hear from you.

Logo based on a lead seal found at the Old Mobile site. The original seal bears the legend "COMP[AGNIE] DES INDES DE FRANCE 1701" and had been attached to cloth shipped from France to supply the colonists.



Old Mobile Archaeology Website

Educational Outreach

A second *Project Archaeology* workshop for school teachers (Grades 4-7) will be held at the University of South Alabama on June 25-26, 1998. Archaeologist Ashley Dumas and educator Anne Dalton will present *Project Archaeology* through the inservice training program offered by the College of Education at the University of South Alabama. The workshop provides teachers with 12 lesson plans that can help them integrate archaeology into their regular curricula. Based on *Intrigue of the Past*, a teacher's activity guide developed by archaeologists and educators with the Bureau of Land Management, this two-day training session also includes a tour of the archaeology lab and current information on archaeology in Alabama. For more information, call Ashley Dumas at (251) 460-7976.

Monument erected in 1902 at Twenty-Seven Mile Bluff to commemorate the founding of Mobile in 1702.



Certificate in Historical Conservation and Presentation

The University College of Cape Breton, in cooperation with the Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Park, will offer its second program in historical conservation and presentation July 2-31, 1998. Intended for people who work (or wish to work) at historic museums, archives and monuments, the program includes intensive classes at UCCB and laboratories and practicums at the Fortress. Some course topics are "Collections Management," "Archaeology and Material Culture," and "Presentation Methods." Last year's program included students from Canada, the United States, and Germany. For further information or registration materials, contact Tom Rendell immediately (Phone: 902-563-1150; Fax: 902-562-0119; e-mail: trendell@caper2.ussb.ns.ca).

Bibliophiles' Corner

Quebec's Ministry of Culture and Communication continues to publish important research on the archaeology and history of Place Royale, the location of Champlain's founding settlement at Quebec and the heart of the lower town. Most recent in a long series is "La construction a Place-Royale sous le Regime francais," by Georges-Pierre Leonidoff, Micheline Huard, and Robert Cote (*La collection Patrimoines, Dossier 98*. 477 pages, paper, 1996; \$19.95 CAN). The volume authoritatively covers methods and materials of construction, builder's tools (as exemplified in period engravings), and archival documentation of the Place Royale structures. Photographic details of the restored and reconstructed buildings in Place Royale illustrate the nuances of construction alluded to in the text.

Two other volumes in the series reprint reference works too long unavailable. "Les terres cuites communes des maisons Estebé et Boisseau," by Marcel Moussette (*La collection Patrimoines, Dossier 51*. 184 pages, paper, 1982; \$10.95 CAN), is a reissue of an important study of coarse earthenware pottery and floor tiles found in two privies at Place Royale. "Le verre et les terres cuites communes de la maison Perthuis a Place-Royale," by Camille Lapointe and Richard Lueger (*La collection Patrimoines, Dossier 101*, 243 pages, paper, 1997; \$11.95 CAN), reprints reports originally published in the 1980s. Lapointe's study of bottles, table glass, and window glass, and Lueger's analysis of coarse earthenware pottery from another Place Royale latrine are valuable comparative studies of collections dating largely from the early to mid-18th century. Volumes in the *Dossier* series can be obtained from Les Publications du Quebec, Case Postale 1005, Quebec (Quebec), G1K 7B5, Canada (or www.mcc.gouv.qc.ca on the Internet).

Originally published in 1917. Frank H. Severence's *An Old Frontier of France: The Niagara Region and Adjacent Lakes under French Control* (Heritage Books, 921 pages in two volumes, paper, 1998; \$61.00) is the first of that author's indispensable references to be reprinted by Heritage Books (1540E Pointer Ridge Place, Bowie, MD 20716), with others promised soon. Modern readers may find Severence's romantic style exasperating, but the range of his research remains impressive still.

The Many Hands of My Relations: French and Indians on the Lower Missouri, by Tanis C. Thorne (University of Missouri Press, 294 pages, cloth, 1996; \$39.95), explores the complex economic, cultural and social relationships that developed between French colonists of the upper Mississippi Valley and the native people of the lower Missouri during the late 18th century. Of particular interest is a close examination of the origins and eventual dispersal of metecommunities dependent on the fur trade.

Gordon M. Sayre's *Les Sauvages Americains: Representations of Native Americans in French and English Colonial Literature* (University of North Carolina Press, 384 pages, paper, 1997; \$19.95), examines the work of Charlevoix, Lafitau, Champlain, and de Lahontan for their use of images of Indians. Sayre argues that contact with Native American cultures led some colonists to question elements of their own cultural identities, reexaminations that inspired some key themes of the European enlightenment.

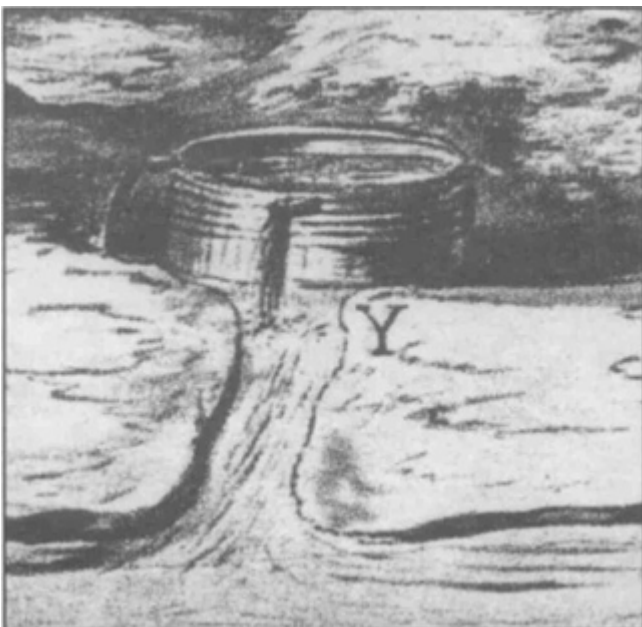
Finally, this newsletter writer has compiled a bibliography, entitled "The Archaeology of French Colonial North America" *Guide to Historical Archaeological Literature 5* (Society for Historical Archaeology, 149 pages, paper, 1997; \$20.00). Introducing the nearly 2,000 references to French colonial sites in Canada and the United States are two essays: a brief historical overview of the French colonial experience in North America and a critical analysis of the literature, each presented in English and in French. The volume can be obtained from the Society for Historical Archaeology, P.O. Box 30446, Tucson, AZ 85751-0446.

Port Dauphin Part II

Excavations last year at the village of Port Dauphin, original port for French Mobile, have provided us with a unique view of colonial life during the second decade of the eighteenth century. As described in the last newsletter, staff and students uncovered the foundations of a large building, occupied principally between 1715 and 1725, that may have served for a time as a tavern. Despite interruptions caused by record rainfall from storms and Hurricane Danny, the digging concluded successfully with the discovery of a barrel well. Consisting simply of stacked barrels, with ends removed, placed in a pit dug into sandy soil, barrel wells provided a ready water supply in coastal areas. Many have been found at Spanish sites in the Southeast, and at the French colonial Fortress of Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island, but this is the first we have excavated in Alabama.

Analysis of the artifacts proceeds apace. The first maker's mark we have seen on a French faience sherd found in the Mobile area - the initials C over N on the base of a Rouen-style, blue-on-white decorated cup - unfortunately remains unidentified. But we have made a bit of progress deciphering the inscription on a personal seal pendant. The accompanying sketch shows the engraved surface, reversed for readability, which has the legend "Lo Spirto Sol Ne Coglie." Literally translating the motto from archaic Italian as "It gathers the spirit from sun," "It" most obviously refers to the alembic sitting on a stove that is distilling brandy into a mid-seventeenth century style bottle. Maybe some Renaissance-type among the readership of this newsletter will recognize the source of this aphorism, and can tell us of any meaning deeper than the drinking reference (which does fit well with our previous interpretation of a tavern on site).

A barrel well depicted in a view of New Biloxi. 1720. by Jean-Baptiste Le Buteux (Ay re MS Map 147: courtesy of the Edward E. Ayer Collection. The Newberry Library. Chicago).



Impression from a personal stone seal, perhaps of carnelian, found at the Port Dauphin site. The legend, in Italian, reads 'LO SPIRTO SOL NE COGLIE,' which evidently means (literally) 'It gathers the spirit from sun.' (Drawing by Eric Perkins.)



Recent Discoveries

Archaeologists made several important discoveries last year at French colonial sites in the United States. Lynn Morand Evans completed the ninth and final season of excavations on the Southeast Row House inside **Fort Michilimackinac**, in northern Michigan. Built in the 1730s and occupied first by a French-Canadian family and, after 1761, by British soldiers, the house contained remains of two fireplaces, a British stone version superimposed on its French predecessor. Earlier still is a deep trench, perhaps part of the 1715 fort palisade that ran south of the house.

Shannon Lee Dawdy, of the Greater New Orleans Archaeology Program, last year investigated the French Quarter house known as Madame John's Legacy for the Louisiana State Museum. Although the construction date of the house is uncertain, artifacts and structural features suggest that some walls may have survived the terrible fire of 1788, which destroyed most of the old city, and were incorporated into the post-fire reconstruction. Analysis of the artifacts promises to illuminate the Creole origins of New Orleans culture, particularly in regards to diet. The author can be contacted by e-mail at: sldur@uno.edu.

Associated Press recently reported that the National Underwater and Marine Agency, a maritime preservation group founded by novelist Clive Cussler, claims to have discovered the wreck of **L'Aimable**, supply ship for La Salle's colonizing expedition to the Texas coast. The ship ran aground in February 1685 near the mouth of Matagorda Bay. Remains of La Salle's own ship, **La Belle**, were found and excavated in 1996-1997, yielding vast quantities of trade goods, several impressive bronze cannons, and a wealth of data on his lost colony.

Spanish Fort

Just before Christmas last year, the City of Spanish Fort entered into a partnership with the University of South Alabama to research and explore two important archaeological sites in that community. With a substantial cash contribution from the city that matched a grant from the Alabama Historical Commission, and with lots of enthusiastic volunteer assistance, the Center staff (directed in the field by Bonnie L. Gums) excavated the city's namesake and a nearby British-period plantation site.

Excavations at the Spanish Fort were designed to determine whether the presently visible earthworks, behind which a Confederate garrison withstood a long siege in March and April of 1865, were originally constructed by Spanish military engineers in 1780-1781. A deep trench across the moat and parapet, in the area of the fort's salley port, found evidence only of Confederate construction. Archival research, however, will continue as we try to discover the location of the original Spanish Fort.

After finishing the fort dig, staff, students, and volunteers shifted focus to the Augustin Rochon plantation site. Artifactual and documentary evidence suggests that the Rochons, who were a prominent Mobile family during the French and British periods, established their plantation on the Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay in the late 1760s. After the capture of British Mobile by a Spanish force in March 1780, the Rochons tried to carry on with their lives despite the occupation of The Village, a small community just to their south, by a Spanish garrison. In August they were drawn into the war (an

Outgrowth of the American Revolution) when a party of Choctaws, allied to the British, captured the family, burned their plantation, and carried them to Pensacola. The British commander there recognized Madame Rochon and ransomed her and her family from the Choctaws. But the hapless family seems not to have reoccupied their plantation home, judging from archaeological evidence.

After nearly three months of digging, a portion of the main house site and most of an adjacent outbuilding have been excavated. The main house is the first structure excavated in the Mobile area to show signs of a gallery, characteristic of French-style Creole cottages common in the late eighteenth and nineteenth-century Gulf coast. Ceramics from both structures include a fascinating mixture of French, British, Spanish, and Rhenish pottery types. Apparently the affluent Rochons were able to obtain a broader range of domestic goods than were normally available in contemporary British colonial sites on the eastern seaboard. While the Choctaws' destruction of the plantation late in 1780 put an abrupt and catastrophic end to plantation life at this site, the Choctaws also appear to have helped themselves to much of the buildings' contents prior to putting them to the torch. Even so, analysis of the artifacts and structural features will give us our best view yet of life in British West Florida from an archaeological perspective.

We are extremely grateful to the elected officials of Spanish Fort for offering to work with the University on this project, and the Center's staff will give several public talks on the discoveries made at both sites. We will also be developing an exhibit for display in Spanish Fort in the near future.

