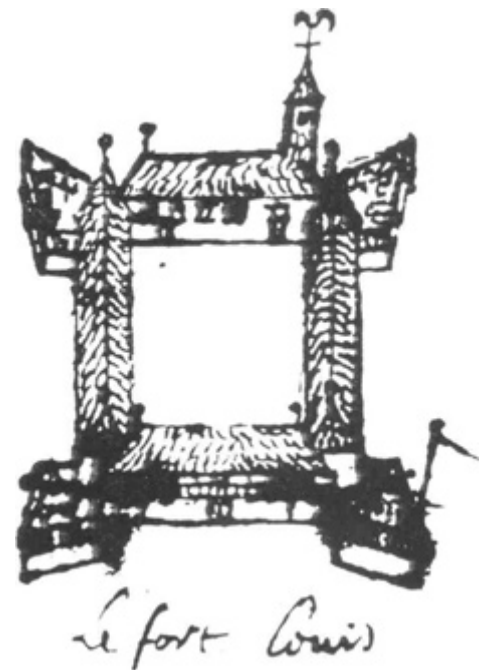


The Old Mobile Project Newsletter

Issue 3

Summer 1990



Archaeological Survey Locates Blacksmith Site

After several months of archaeological survey this spring at the Old Mobile site, the University of South Alabama research team has located the remnants of several structures in the French colonial town of Old Mobile. Most significant is the discovery of a blacksmith's shop located directly west of the Canadian voyageur's house excavated last year. The shop was situated on the outskirts of town next to a swampy stream, a sensible place for blacksmithing given the fire hazard associated with that activity. The bulk of the artifacts found during the limited excavations undertaken to date consists of scrap iron and iron slag in huge quantities, along with an abundance of charcoal and coal. Some of the earliest historical documents from Old Mobile refer to barrels of English coal sent from Europe for the colony's gunsmiths and blacksmiths.

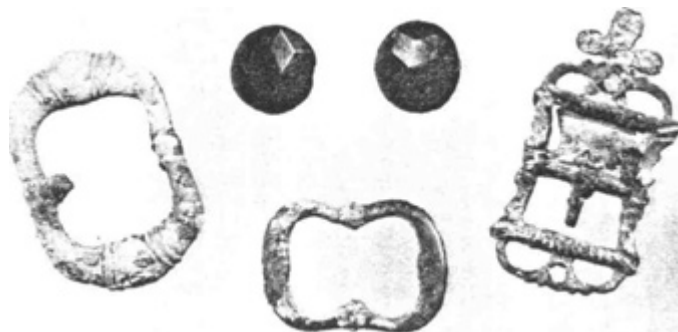
This particular site seems to have been involved in all sorts of metalworking. Here he patched copper and brass kettles and repaired long knives and dress swords. But the main activity evidently was iron forging, with scrap iron collected from town being reworked into nails, strap hinges, and many other objects. Unfortunately, the site's acid soils have caused thick corrosion to form on the surfaces of the iron artifacts. Before most of these artifacts can be identified, they will have to be x-rayed to determine the original form and whether any iron remains intact

beneath the rust. Those objects still containing solid iron will then be cleaned by electrolysis and chemically stabilized for preservation and further study.

Although few items of domestic refuse have been found, and the structure seems to have functioned principally as a forge rather than a dwelling, a few fragments of pottery and animal bones suggest that someone, perhaps an Indian slave or an apprentice, may have lived at the shop. Among the more unusual artifacts discovered there is a broken calumet pipe. Pieces of unfinished calumets, made of a distinctive red stone called catlinite found only in the Minnesota area, were recovered from the Canadian voyageur's house last summer. But the blacksmith shop pipe had been a finished specimen before it broke. This bit of evidence suggests that the inhabitants of Old Mobile may have used these pipes in individual dealings with local Indians.

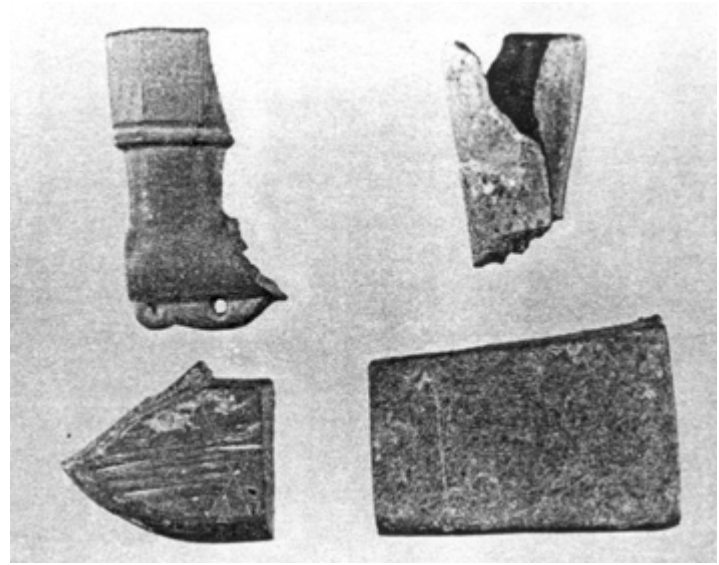
Since March, four team members have been systematically measuring off an archaeological grid over the site, every four meters placing a flag marked with north-south and east-west coordinates. This grid is the basis for a site map that is gradually taking shape. As each grid point is established, a small hole is dug and the dirt sifted to obtain an artifact sample. When artifact finds are plotted on the site map, clusters of artifacts indicate the locations of old structures. With about 15% of the site mapped and around 3,000 shovel tests dug so far, this survey will continue throughout much of this year. But the end result of this long process will be a detailed archaeological map of Old Mobile, which can be used in conjunction with the 1702 and 1705 historic maps to plan all future excavations at this site.

Two important goals of the survey are to discover the locations of the town cemetery and of Fort Louis. The fort (which contained the settlement's church, living quarters of the colony's foremost political and military leaders, and the royal warehouse) served as the "capitol" of the Louisiana colony, a vast portion of interior North America claimed by France, from 1702 until 1711. One large cluster of artifacts found near the Mobile River bluff may be the remains of the fort. Test excavations at this possible fort location are now underway, with major exploration to follow this fall.



Brass buckles and silver faceted cufflinks.

Pieces of catlinite partially sawed, whittled or drilled during the manufacture of calumet-style smoking pipes.



Old Mobile Memoirs

Early in January of 1702, as the French colonists began moving from their first tentative settlement on Biloxi Bay to Mobile Bay, Iberville ordered the construction of a warehouse near the east end of Dauphin Island. Here the colonists found a deep-water harbor, where ships from France could safely anchor and off-load their cargoes for transfer to bateaux and small sailboats, which linked this port with Old Mobile fifty miles to the north. Eventually about 20 French families settled on the island.

On September 9, 1710, an English pirate ship from Jamaica appeared off the island. By trickery the buccaneers captured all the villagers without firing a shot. For the next two days they looted the dwellings and the colony's warehouse, then burned most of the settlement. The fortuitous appearance of a Canadian voyageur, who shot one of the pirates, led the rest of the buccaneers to reboard their vessel, but it lingered nearby. The settlers, armed with a few hidden weapons, repulsed a second landing by the pirates intent on absconding with Baudreau de Graveline's cattle herd.

Destruction of the Dauphin Island settlement was a severe blow to the colony, which had not received supplies from France for three years. Furthermore, the inability of the garrison at Old Mobile to protect the port, or even learn of the attack until after the fact, was one consideration in the eventual decision to relocate Mobile near the head of the bay, 25 miles closer to the Gulf.

A Small Fort Louis Takes Shape



Professional model builders are constructing a scale model of Fort Louis as a contribution to the Old Mobile Project by International Paper Company. The project is directed by Caldwell Whistler, who built the models on exhibit at Fort Conde, in downtown Mobile. Based on written descriptions and a 1705 sketch of the fort (see our newsletter logo), the 1/16" = 1 foot scale-model will be used in future exhibits and for educational purposes.

The Friends of Old Mobile Organization Underway

Bernard Diamond has been recruited by the executive committee to formally establish **The Friends of Old Mobile** as a non-profit organization. Mr. Diamond's previous experience in such matters includes work with the Mobile Geneological Society. To date, a draft of the constitution and by-laws has been presented to the executive committee, and a meeting of **The Friends** will be scheduled for later this year.

Jean-Baptiste and Suzanne Baudreau de Graveline

Born in Montreal in 1673, Jean-Baptiste Baudreau de Graveline accompanied Iberville on the original colonizing expedition to Louisiana. His property in Old Mobile bounded the town market and is scheduled for archaeological investigation in the near future. He soon became adept at trade, sailing twice to France in attempts to open markets for colonial furs and ores. While at the port of La Rochelle in 1709 Jean-Baptiste married Suzanne, a devout Protestant woman, and purchased the ship **Marguerite** on which they returned to the colony. By late summer of 1710 the couple owned a large herd of cattle and "the finest private home in the colony," a two-story structure on Isle Massacre (Dauphin Island). They and their property survived the English pirate raid on the island settlement the following year. Thousands of their descendants live along the Gulf coast and throughout the United States today.

The lives of these and other French colonists are chronicled in Jay Higginbotham's book, *Old Mobile: Fort Louis de la Louisiane, 1702-1711*.

We Appreciate Your Contributions

Numerous new members of **The Friends of Old Mobile** have contributed generously to support the continuing archaeological fieldwork underway at the site.

We are pleased to report that the J. L. Bedsole Foundation has recently awarded \$10,000 to the Old Mobile Project. This is the largest single award from a private foundation received to date, and it will help immensely in carrying on excavations planned for this summer. The Bedsole Foundation was established in 1952 by the late J. L. Bedsole, a respected business and civic leader in Mobile. The Foundation funds projects that promote the civic and economic development of Mobile and southwest Alabama.

Several contributions from individuals also should be mentioned. Mrs. Mabel Ward has made a contribution in honor of Dr. Samuel Eichold, a vice-chairman on **The Friends of Old Mobile** executive committee. Dr. Eichold was recently named "Mobilian of the Year" for his many years of outstanding service to the community. Other substantial contributions have been made by Mr. Robert Meaher and Mr. Augustine Meaher, Jr., who recalls visiting the site of Old Mobile around the year 1912.

The Alabama Historical Commission and the National Park Service, U.S. Department of Interior, recently awarded the University of South Alabama a matching grant of \$8,850 for archaeological survey at the Old Mobile Site. Contributions by **The Friends of Old Mobile** helped the University match this grant of federal funds. Mr. Larry Oaks, executive director of the commission, was instrumental in granting these funds, which are now being used in the search for the town cemetery and Fort Louis.

NEH Offers Matching Funds

The University of South Alabama has just received a large grant from the **National Endowment for the Humanities** to support archaeological research at Old Mobile. This "challenge grant" makes available \$30,000 this year, and \$40,000 for each of the next two years, if equal amounts can be raised as matching funds by **The Friends of Old Mobile**.

According to Richard Ekman, director of research programs at NEH, this is one of the largest grants the federal agency has ever committed to archaeology. There are several major research objectives for the next three years. By means of an intensive survey and testing of the entire town site, and the excavation of a representative sample of public buildings and households, we will learn what life was like for the inhabitants of Old Mobile between 1702 and 1711. Specifically, how did they adapt to this new environment, as reflected in their architectural styles, foodways, and material culture? In what ways were social and economic status differences a reflection of European French culture or dynamic adaptations to a multi-ethnic frontier? What was the role of Indians, enslaved and free, in this new society? And, how did the French colonists compete and interact with other Europeans, especially Spaniards, in the northern Gulf?

The end result of this archaeology will be a book on the discoveries made at the site, educational packets distributed to Alabama public school history classes, and interpretive artifact exhibits. But first we must meet the NEH challenge.

The following individuals and institutions have recently contributed \$500 or more to the Old Mobile Project:

Alabama Historical Commission, Montgomery, AL
The Bedsole Foundation, Mobile, AL
International Paper Company, Mobile, AL
Mr. Augustine Meaher Jr., Mobile, AL
Mr. Robert Meaher, Mobile, AL
University of South Alabama, Mobile, AL
College of Arts and Sciences
Coastal Research & Development Institute
Graduate School
Office of Academic Affairs


Become a Friend of Old Mobile

Current archaeological investigations at the site of Old Mobile depend on community support. The cost of this summer's survey and excavations will exceed \$30,000. Join **The Friends of Old Mobile** and help us learn more about colonial life along the northern Gulf coast. Contributors of \$25 or more will receive subsequent issues of the newsletter with reports on the latest discoveries. Contributions are tax deductible. Please make your check payable to "University of South Alabama Archaeology Fund," and send it to

The Old Mobile Project
c/o Dr. Stephen Thomas, Associate Dean
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Alabama
Mobile, Alabama 36688

*The Friends of Old Mobile are Pleased to
Welcome the Following New Members*

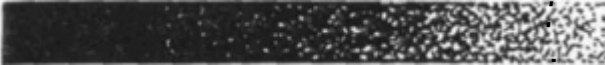
Mr Conrad Armbrecht, II, Mobile, AL
Mrs. Amiel W. Brinkely, Jr., Mobile, AL
Dr. Amy Turner Bushnell, Mobile, AL
Ms. Pauline Page Butler, New Orleans, LA
Ms. Norma S. Calametti, Mobile, AL
Mrs. Valerie Case, Mobile, AL
Ms. Catherine Clinton, Tuscaloosa, AL
Mr. Stephens G. Croom, Mobile, AL
Mr. & Mrs. A. Baker Dean, Jr., Opelika, AL
Mr. & Mrs. Francis Escoffier, Mobile, AL
Dr. & Mrs. Cyle Ferguson, Mobile, AL
Mrs. Hilda Fuller, Mobile, AL
Mr. Alfred Graveline, Palmer, MA
Ms. Katie S. Gwynn, Mobile, AL
Dr. & Mrs. J. G. Hair, Alexandria, LA
Mrs. Emily Hearin, Mobile, AL
Mr. & Mrs. N. H. Holmes, Mobile, AL
Col. & Mrs. Richard R. Johnson, Mobile, AL
Mr & Mrs. Gerald E. Jones, Bayou La Batre, AL
Mrs. Margaret C. Long, Creola, AL
Mr. Dwain G. Luce, Mobile, AL
Mr. James O. Mills, Gainesville, FL
Mississippi Coast Historical
& Genealogical Society, Biloxi, MS



Mrs. Gloria S. Moran, Pass Christian, MS
Mrs. Eugenie W. Parker, Mobile, AL
Mr. & Mrs. Charles Rodning, Semmes, AL
Ms. S. I. Slater, Fairhope, AL
Ms. Margaret Snellgrove, Greenville, AL
Mr. & Mrs. Luis M. Williams, Mobile, AL

*The Friends of Old Mobile
Executive Committee*

Jay Higginbotham, Chairman
John H. Friend, Jr., Vice-Chairman
Dr. Samuel Eichold, Vice-chairman
Bernard J. Diamond, President of the Friends
John Bertolotti, Secretary
Dr. Stephen Thomas, Treasurer
Pat Lomax, Site Security
Dr. Frederick P. Whiddon, Ex-officio Member
Dr. Gregory Waselkov,
Archaeological Project Director



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Dr. Stephen Thomas
College of Arts and Sciences
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