



RELATIONS

occasional papers in colonial studies

1

Reconsidering Fort de Chartres

Foundation for Illinois Colonial and American Studies

Volume 1 2024

Relations

Occasional Papers in Colonial Studies

A Scientific and Historical Journal from
the **F**oundation for **I**llinois **C**olonial and **A**merican **S**tudies

VOLUME ONE

Reconsidering Fort de Chartres

1. Fort de Chartres in the Illinois Country
A New History of the Wooden Forts, Circa 1720 – 1747
Robert Mazrim, Margaret Kimball Brown, and Lawrie Cena Dean _____ Page 1
2. Rediscovering the 1732 Fortification
The 2011-2012 Archaeological Excavations at the Laurens Site
Robert Mazrim and Margaret Kimball Brown _____ Page 11



Relations: Occasional Papers in Colonial Studies

Volume 1 2024

Copyright 2024 Foundation for Illinois Colonial and American Studies. All rights reserved.

The Foundation for Illinois Colonial and American Studies

The Foundation for Colonial and American Studies (FICAS) was established in 2019 to preserve and express the legacy of the Indigenous, French, and Early American communities of the “Illinois Country” as they were during colonial and frontier periods of transition and settlement between ca. 1650 and 1850.

A 501©3 organization, FICAS conducts both archival and archaeological research, produces a publication series, provides online access to historical records, and maintains a research library, laboratory, and curatorial facility in Springfield, Illinois.

5255 Shepherd Road, Springfield, Illinois 62705
www.illinoiscolony.org

Fort de Chartres in the Illinois Country

A New History of the Wooden Forts, Circa 1720 – 1747

Robert Mazrim, Margaret Kimball Brown, and Lawrie Cena Dean
Foundation for Illinois Colonial and American Studies

Established shortly after Illinois was joined to Louisiana and immediately following the founding of New Orleans, Fort de Chartres was the administrative capital of the Illinois Country during most of the French regime (e.g. Alvord 1920, Belting 1948, Brown 2020, Ekberg 2000, Palm 1931). The French settled near the mouth of the Kaskaskia River in 1703, and by the late 1710s a French village and nascent parish had been established at Kaskaskia. An informal settlement of French traders was also located ten miles to the north (e.g. Brown 2020). The latter became the site of the first Fort de Chartres in 1719. Both locales were first inhabited by tribes of the Illinois - principally the Kaskaskia and Michigamea (Figure 1). While Kaskaskia quickly became the trading hub of the colony, Fort de Chartres and its associated village (Chartres) became the nucleus of French colonial government in Illinois. The fort and village of Chartres were abandoned shortly after the arrival of the British, and by the end of the eighteenth century the site of the original fort and most of the village had been destroyed by meanders of the Mississippi River.

Scholarship concerning the history and locations of Fort de Chartres has evolved over the last century, often following new archival or archaeological discoveries (Brown and Mazrim 2010, Jelks et. al. 1989). Discussions and interpretations of the fort based on the former have often utilized documents originally kept in French archives. While these have been dutifully cited, they have been rarely transcribed, translated, or even partially quoted. Thus, it has been difficult to follow or reproduce the interpretations of a complicated sequence of events that resulted in a number of “incarnations” of the physical fortification. Recently, a revised consideration of some of these documents, as well as a revisit to archaeological information, has resulted in a rather profound revision of the sequence of events and physical locations of the forts. This paper intends to clarify

these various interpretations and revisions. The focus here is on the sequence of wooden fortifications, predating the construction of the final stone fort in 1752.

Contemporary Accounts of Fort de Chartres 1723-32

Construction of the initial fortification known as Fort de Chartres began in 1719, under the supervision of Pierre Dugue de Boisbriant, the first commandant of the Illinois Country (e.g. Alvord 1987, Belting 1975, Brown 2020, Ekberg 2001). Located on the east bank of the Mississippi River, approximately 10 miles above Kaskaskia, the site of the fort was chosen (in part) due the preexisting presence of both a fledgling community of French traders (first known as “The Establishment”) and a considerable village of the Michigamea Tribe of the Illinois. Many years after the first fort was constructed, the motive for placing it at this location was discussed by Governor Vaudreuil:

“I have tried to inform myself as to the motives for this settlement. I have found that it was formerly the resort of the voyageurs of Canada by the Illinois River and the first place where they began to settle, as then being the center of the Illinois tribes who have since then much scattered. Therefore it had been given the preference when it was a question of placing a garrison with an officer to control the voyageurs and remedy the disturbances which they made among the tribes.”
(Pease and Jennison 1940: 262-263)

The Jesuit priest Charlevoix passed by the fort in October of 1721, ascending the river. He remarked:

“Half a league below [Kaskaskia] is Fort Chartres, about a musket shot from the river. M. Duquet de Boisbriant, a Canadian

gentleman, commands here for the company to which the place belongs.”
(Charlevoix 1766 (2): 163)

Charlevoix’s remark, that the fort was “about a musket shot from the river” clearly indicates that it was no more than about 100 yards from the shore.

Diron D’Artaguet, the Inspector General, made an early description of Fort de Chartres in 1723.

“We... arrived at five o’clock in the afternoon at Fort de Chartres which is on the bank of the Mississippi on the right as you ascend. Fort de Chartres is a fort of piles the size of one’s leg, square in shape, having two bastions, which command all of the curtains.”
(Mereness 1916: 69)

Bienville, Governor of Louisiana, mentioned the fort in 1723.

“The post [or French presence] of the Illinois is very old and there has never been any fort there except the one that M. Boisbriant built in 1721. This fort is situated on the bank of the Mississippi six leagues above the Kaskaskias where there is the largest number of French settlers.”
(Rowland and Sanders 1932: 514)

In 1723, Boisbriant contracted with a craftsman named Bienvenu for the completion of the place of business and counting house for the Company of the Indies. Presumably this was located within the walls of the first fort, for security. It was also clearly a well-finished building:

“Sieur Bienvenu will make the upper and lower flooring of the said structure, whitewashed on one side only and tongue and groove; two partitions for the corridor, whitewashed on both sides and tongue and groove; two other cross partitions to separate the offices, ...two folding street doors... the frames with glass panes for eight double casement windows.” (KM 23:5:13:1, Brown and Dean 1977: 809)

Both the 1723 and 1725 accounts describe the fort as located on the “bank” of the river. While the word “bank” might simply have been used as an alternative to “side” of the river, other descriptions of the locale suggest that the first fort was indeed located near the shoreline (as described by Charlevoix). The early settlement associated with the fort was also located near the riverbank. For instance, one house lot was described as being “on the water’s edge”, and another was situated on a lot “in the prairie on the bank of the Mississippi”. A blacksmith, Becquet, sold a forge, house, and lot that abutted the Mississippi River. A house sold to Frederic (the royal surgeon) was also located on the bank of the river. In 1724, a house and a two-*arpent* lot was described as “about fifteen feet from the wake and being near to be carried off by the current of the river.” (KM 24:10:2:1; 25:10:17:1; 25:10:17:1; 28:8:28:1; 24:5:6:1). River’s edge settlement continued throughout the period despite these problems, however (Brown 2020).

Evidence for new construction associated with the fort appears in 1725. In March of that year, a contract was made between several soldiers and the Company of the Indies (then in charge of the Illinois Country) to:

...pour faire les rigolles et planter les pieux du fort doubler le dit fort de pie [pied]... et faire des meurtrieres tout autour du fort de cinq pieds en cinq pieds sobligent aussy les denommez daracher les souches qui trouveront ou il faudra faire les rigolles et faire les dittes rigolles de trois pieds de profondeur, au moyen de quoy messieurs du conseil provincial .. fourniront aux dit soldats tout les outils necessaires pour faire le dit fort ...

... to make the trenches and plant the stakes of the fort, in order to double the said fort in surface and to make loopholes all around the fort at intervals of five feet. The aforementioned also undertake to pull up the tree stumps which will be found, where it will be necessary to make the trenches and to make the said trenches three feet [at least?] in depth, for

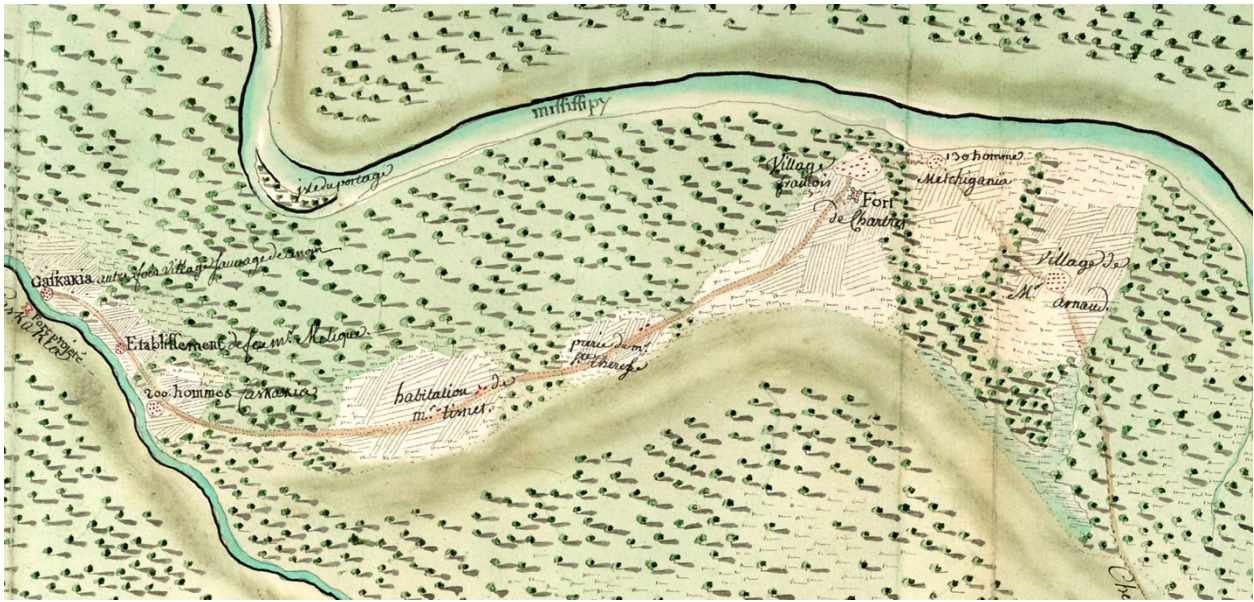


FIGURE 1: Detail from Ignace Francois Broutin’s 1734 “Map of part of Illinois”, showing Kaskaskia at the far left and Fort de Chartres on the right.

which reason the gentlemen of the Provincial Council ... will supply to the said soldiers all the tools necessary to construct the said fort...
(KM 25:3:12:2, Brown and Dean 1977: 843)

Since the 1980s, it has been assumed that this document referred to the construction of an entirely new fortification, hence the modern appellation “Fort II” (Jelks and Ekberg 1984: 77, Jelks et. al. 1989: 13, Meyer 1986: 3, Price 1980: 1-4). In 1920, Alvord wrote that the fort was “rebuilt” in 1727, but he did not provide a citation (Alvord 1987: 172). This was reiterated in 1948 by Belting, citing AN C13A II:89 - yet to be located for this study (Belting 1975: 18).

In 1932, Palm stated that there were three forts (Palm 1932: 113). However, her interpretation was that the 1720 fort was “destroyed” by flooding and not rebuilt until 1732. Importantly, she stated that the second fort was built “about one half mile further from the river”. Finally, she observed the construction of the stone fort beginning in the early 1750s, and the abandonment of the second fort in 1747. As will be discussed below, Palm’s interpretation was in fact the most accurate of all twentieth century researchers. Local collector and writer Irvin Peithmann was searching for an archaeological site associated with

“Fort II” further from the river at least as early as the 1970s, perhaps based on a reading of Palm.

The modern bifurcation of the 1720s fortification was probably codified by a brief descriptive article written by Anna Price in 1980 (Price 1980). That article appears to be the first study to specifically state that Forts I and II were separate structures, both dating to the 1720s. As discussed below, this seems to be based on a misreading of the 1725 document in the Kaskaskia Manuscripts collection, which had recently been published by Brown and Dean (1977). Following Price’s article, and its citation by Ekberg in his 1984 historical context for archaeological excavations at the Laurens site (conducted by ISU), the concept of two separate forts built before 1730 had become canon.

Returning to the 1725 document, the fact that new foundations were being excavated that year did indeed indicate new construction, but not necessarily the abandonment of one structure and the building of a separate one elsewhere. Further, a proposed second fort was interpreted as having been built of a “double” curtain wall (e.g. Jelks et. al. 1989). This concept may have stemmed from a misreading of the original French document, as the translation

published in 1977 simply read “to double the said fort with stakes” (Brown and Dean 1977: 843).

Dean revisited the document in 2020. While previously the phrase “*faire les rigolles et planter les pieux du fort doubler le dit fort de pie[d]...*” seems to have been read by some as meaning to dig trenches and “plant a double row of posts”, a more accurate translation reads to “*make the trenches and plant the stakes of the fort, [in order to] double the said fort in surface*”. In this instance, the partial phrase *de pie* (left out of the 1977 translation) is a common period spelling for *de pied* and it may be roughly rendered as “in footage” or “in size.” It does not refer to a double row of posts.

Thus, the construction project at hand in 1725 was to build an addition to the already-standing fortification, which would double its size. Further, the presence of tree stumps that required removal (as opposed to trees that required felling) suggests that the area had been previously cleared - perhaps to create a *glacis* for first incarnation of fort. “Fort II”, then, is simply an expansion of the smaller 1720 fortification.

After the fort was expanded, a new powder magazine was constructed (in November of 1725). That contract read:

... to furnish, as soon as possible to wit: forty pieces of squared lumber, ten feet in length, ten inches in thickness by five _____[illegible], twelve rafters ten feet long, three by three, also squared wood and sawn joists which the said Pradel can furnish, ten feet in length, one and a half inches thick, by nine or ten inches in depth... for the construction of the powder magazine.

(KM 25:11:20:1, Brown and Dean 1977 K391: 872)

Also in 1725 (the exact date is unknown as it is missing from the document), Joseph Catherine was hired to construct a *gallerie* (or porch) on the front of the Company’s building, measuring 50 *pieds* long and constructed with walnut sills (KM: 25:-:-1, Brown and Dean 1977 K358: 823).

Flooding apparently damaged the recently-expanded fort in 1727 (AN C13A II: 89-90, cited in Alvord 1987: 160).

It seems, by a letter from M. Desliettes, that the flooding of the river has caused horrible disorder in the Illinois and that Fort de Chartres has been destroyed. It would be advisable to build another one at La Prairie. Since the Company is extremely exhausted by all the expenses that this post has caused, without seeing that the slightest utility arises from them...[the Company] has ruled as follows: [...?] the Sieur Desliettes will be transferred to the village of the Kaskaskia in order, thenceforth to make his residence there; that he will live there and will fortify it, as he will deem to be good, but at his own expense, from the increase in his appointments, that has been granted to him.

(IHS Transcription of AN C13A 11: 89-90)

It is unclear if the move to Kaskaskia actually occurred, or to what level. The suggestion of the construction of a new fort “at La Prairie” may refer to the “prairie” above the old fort and village on slightly higher (and less wooded) ground, where indeed a new fort was eventually built. In any case, the recently remodeled (and recently flooded) fort remained standing and was soon reoccupied.

The villagers surrounding the fort remained concerned about the flood-prone site of the fort, as well as the church and the village itself. In April of 1728, Company of the Indies officials Perier and La Chaise wrote from New Orleans about an offer made to the Company by the villagers:

The habitants of the Illinois have presented to us a request, of which we are sending you a copy. They offer to move fort de chartres to the prairie and to furnish all the necessary stakes at their cost provided that you would be willing grant to each two Negres, by paying in flour on the terms of the other habitants...

(IHS Transcription of AN C13A 11: 27-46)

The Church of Ste. Anne, directly affiliated with the fort since its construction, was also of concern to the villagers – also likely due to recent flooding. In January of 1731, however, the church wardens decided to build a new

church and rectory further from the water's edge "in the prairie of the Establishment." The church was to be 30 by 50 feet and 11 feet "under the beams." The rectory was to measure 20 by 27 feet (KM 31.1.7.1)

By the summer of 1732, the Company of the Indies had relinquished its monopoly on the Illinois Country, returning it to the Crown. In June, an inventory of the fort was made, which clearly indicates it was still in use to some degree (AN C13 B1 F581). This was the structure built in 1719 and expanded in 1725.

In that inventory, the fort is described as square, measuring 25 *toises* on each face (approximately 160 feet) with four bastions. This, then, was the completed size of the remodeled fort. Further, as the 1725 document mentions "doubling" the size of the old fort, it seems likely that the 1719 "Fort I" was quite small – measuring approximately 80 feet on a side. The remodeled fort now also included four bastions (the original had only two), representing a proper "Vauban Plan" for fortifications of the era (e.g. Griffith 2006).

Within the expanded enclosure were several structures, including a building that served as a lodging for the commandant and storekeeper. This building measured 55 x 30 *pieds* (a *pied* is approximately one English foot) and was made of upright posts of walnut filled with *bousillage* (a mixture of clay and straw or other filler). The house had a hallway measuring eight by fifteen *pieds*, with a storehouse of the same dimensions at one end. The hallway was located in the middle of the building between two apartments, each of which included a hall, two chambers and a kitchen. The structure had eleven doors and ten casement windows. It was said to be five years old (constructed ca. 1727) and in good repair.

In addition, there was another house of the same dimensions and construction, used as a barracks, but it was said to be old with rotten sills. Also on the interior of the fort was a house (30 x 20 *pieds*) and a guardhouse (20 x 15 *pieds*). Outside of the fort was the old chapel (30 x 20 *pieds*) of post-in-earth construction.

Each of the four bastions of the fort enclosed structures measuring ten *pieds* square, one of which was a powder magazine of horizontal log construction with a "double planked" ceiling and floor, and a double door. The description of the powder magazine in this inventory corresponds well to the 1725 contract for the powder magazine, described above. A jail (with a pigeon house above), a stable, and a hen house occupied the other bastions.

In the 1732 inventory, the fort was already described as "constructed of stakes falling into ruin, supported only in one place to which the said stakes are nailed". The latter remark was a criticism of the manner in which the vertical posts were secured together (with only one horizontal rail). Such rapid deterioration may be explained by the 1727 report that stated that the fort had been "destroyed" by a flood, recommending a new fort "on the Prairie". The directors of the Company refused the suggestion of a new fort, however. Presumably the remodeled fort was repaired and remained in use, at least until late 1732 or early 1733 – or after the departure of the Company of the Indies.

A New Wooden Fort in 1733

The evidence of a truly "new" fortification (well away from the site of the first / expanded fort) appears in 1733, following the return of the colony to the Crown by the Company of the Indies. At the end of April, Commandant St. Ange mentioned (in a letter to Bienville) what appears to be the new construction project: "I have the honor to send you a plan of our fort drawn by Mr. Renault... Everything that has been done at the fort is not paid for and we still have quite a lot of work to do." (AN C13A 17: 248-251). This letter makes it quite clear that a new wooden fort was designed by Philippe Renault, and it implies that construction was undertaken in late 1732 or 1733. In 1920, Alvord appears to have found similar evidence, writing that St. Ange erected a new fort in 1732 "at his own expense" (Alvord 1987: 172). No citation was provided, however.

In April of 1734, Governor Bienville made a report (from New Orleans) that referred to this new fort, although not very favorably:

Mr. D'Artaguet, whom we had charged to give us news about the old fort, writes us that although it was reestablished only two years ago the piles are already partly decayed, that the buildings that are in it will not last long... (Rowland and Sanders 1932: 667)

Complicating matters, Bienville was complaining about the condition of the new fort (probably constructed of recycled posts from the 1725 remodeled fort) for a specific reason - to convince the French government to support the construction of a *stone fort*. Further, that stone fort was to be designed by Renault as well. Bienville had begun petitioning for such a fort as early as May of 1733 (Rowland and Sanders 1932: 616). While the stone fortification would not become a reality for another 20 years, it is clear that a *new wooden fort* was constructed under St. Ange's supervision in the fall of 1732 or spring of 1733 – apparently designed by Renault and with Bienville's at least tacit agreement (while he continued to press for a stone fort).

Prior to 2010, historians had spoken only of three incarnations of Fort de Chartres – the two discussed above, and the 1752 stone fort that stands today as a reconstructed State Historic Site. However, the location of *another* fortification was in fact hidden in plain sight. That is, an archaeological site (the Laurens site), located immediately east of the stone fort. The Laurens site was probably known to area collectors since the 1960s, but in 1981 Terry Norris noticed a vivid and well-defined soil stain at the location of the site on a 1928 Corps of Engineers aerial photograph (Brown and Mazrim 2010, Jelks et. al. 1989: 3).

Located on a slight rise was a dark square with what appeared to be four corner bastions, the northwest damaged by erosion (Figure 2). Remote sensing conducted across the area in 1980-81 located anomalies that were presumed to be palisade ditches associated with that fortification (Weymouth and Woods 1984). In 1983-84, limited archaeological testing was conducted by Illinois State University to examine these anomalies (Jelks and Ekberg 1984, Jelks et. al. 1989). Subsequent test units encountered positive evidence of substantial wall trenches very likely associated with two opposing walls of a fortification. Following the excavations, the site was

interpreted as that of the first Fort de Chartres, dating 1719-1725 (Jelks and Ekberg 1984, Jelks et. al. 1989).

As has been outlined above, Forts I and II were in fact at the same location (the latter an expanded version of the former), very near the riverbank and prone to flooding. Villagers had suggested relocating the fort “onto the prairie” (and away from the river) in 1727, although the Company of the Indies did not heed their advice. The inventory of 1732 (following the transfer of the fort back to the Crown) described the remodeled fort (what we now call Fort II) as measuring 25 *toises* on a side, equipped with four bastions, and suffering “ruin” probably caused by flooding. Finally, correspondence from early 1733 refers to the construction of a new fort under the supervision of St. Ange, and Bienville's 1734 report indicated that the fort had been “reestablished” around 1732.

The Laurens site is well away from the bank of the river as it was during the 1720s. In fact, the bulk of the associated village of Chartres was lost to the meander of the river before the close of the nineteenth century (e.g. Brown 2020). Thus, the Laurens site cannot be that of the first (and remodeled) fort.

Further, the artifacts recovered from the 1983-84 excavation include a preponderance of post-ca. 1730 faience styles (not recognized as such at the time) as well as post-1730 gun furniture. The latter was explained as deposits having been made into abandoned stockade trenches by soldiers living in a “later fort”, or by villagers living nearby. It was also suggested that the abandoned Fort I may have been overbuilt by later domestic features (Jelks et. al. 1989: 111). This suggestion was followed by Mazrim in a 2011 study of surface collections from the Laurens site, which concluded that a significant post-1730 occupation of the site was likely (Mazrim 2011: 206-207).

So why is the site still largely known as that of the 1719 fort? The support for the interpretation of the Laurens site as Fort de Chartres I in 1989 was based on three principal points.

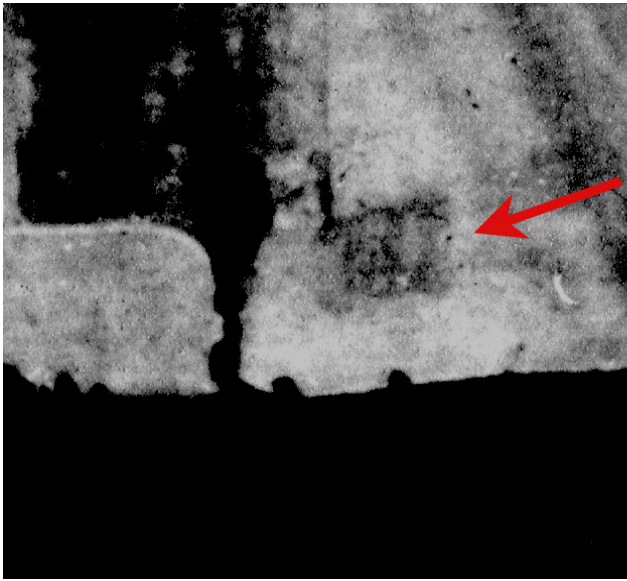


FIGURE 2: 1928 aerial photo, with distinctive soil stain in cultivated field.

- The size of the Laurens site fort suggests that it was Fort I. Measuring approximately 194 feet wide, this fort was too large to be the 25 *toises* (160 feet) structure described in 1732 (and assumed to be a separate “Fort II”). Further it was stated that this second fort was “a bit smaller than the first” (Jelks et. al. 1989: 13). However, there are no known period documents that describe the size of the fort as it was before 1725. And in fact (as discussed above), Forts I and II were the same structure - the latter simply being an expansion of the former. Thus, the remodeled “Fort II” was actually twice as large as “Fort I”, not the other way around. It should also be remembered that both were located near the river, while the Laurens site is located well away from the river channel of the mid-eighteenth century.
- The 1928 aerial photo depicts only two bastions. The reason for this interpretation is unclear, as a close examination of the image suggests four bastions, one of which (the northwest) may have been impacted by erosion affiliated with a drainage that still exists today (Figure 2). The outline of northeast bastion was defined archaeologically in 2011 (see following article in this issue).

- The wall trench segments examined in 1982-83 suggested only a single row of posts, and Fort II was built of a doubled-palisade. Again, this is based on an erroneous concept of a second fort of 1725, as well as a mistranslation of the 1725 contract, as discussed above.

By the 1980s, it was assumed that two separate forts had been constructed before 1725. The 1752-54 construction of the stone fort was well known, and thus researchers affiliated with the Laurens site excavations were left with what was in fact was a false choice: that of Fort I or Fort II. The five-year, pre-1725 “Fort I” was chosen as a more likely candidate, and the while there was a suggestion (archaeologically) of the possibility of a later fort (Jelks et. al. 1989: 112), the site was described as “almost certainly” Fort I, published as such, and is still understood as such by most visitors to the State Historic Site.

Forts I and II were in the same place, and the archaeological footprint was long ago washed into the Mississippi River. In fact, the well-defined archaeological imprint at Laurens represented a much longer occupation (20+ year) of a third incarnation of Fort de Chartres, built in late 1732 or early 1733. Archeologically, it is well represented by a wealth of circa 1730-1750 material culture. And the size of this fortification – 30 feet larger than the fort inventoried in 1732 - does indeed reflect a larger fortification than the old fort described a few months after the colony was returned to the Crown. The new fort, located “up on the prairie” as first suggested by the locals in 1728, remained in use at least as late as 1747. That year, it was described as being in poor condition, and that the magazine contained “not an el of cloth nor a particle of ammunition” (Alvord 1987: 487, citing New York Colonial Documents 10:143). The garrison was moved to Kaskaskia that year (KM 49.1.1.1), and the structure no longer served its original purpose. How long it remained standing is unknown.

In 1753, construction of the “fourth” fort – this time finally of stone – was begun. By 1754, the new fort was complete enough to accommodate at least some

of the government officials and soldiers who returned from Kaskaskia (KM 54:8:7:2). It remained in use until the British abandoned it in 1771.

Summary

The original Fort de Chartres, built in 1719-20, was quite small – measuring approximately 80 feet on a side and fitted with only two bastions. It was situated about 100 yards from the river shore. In the spring of 1725, the fort was expanded, doubling it in size and adding two more bastions. Flooding continued to damage the facility, but it was not destroyed. A detailed inventory of the 1720/25 fortification was made in 1732, prior to its transfer from the Company of the Indies to the Crown. In early 1733 and under the supervision of St. Ange, a new fort was (for the first time) built at a different location further from the river. Measuring 194 feet on a side with four bastions, this larger fortification was the longest-lived Fort de Chartres - in use at least 14 years and possibly longer. Probably dismantled in the mid-1750s after the near-completion of the stone fort (which stands as a reconstructed historic site today), the 1733 wooden fort ultimately became known as the Laurens site. By the late 1760s, the site of the 1720/25 fort had been washed into the river. Soon the water reached the stone fort, which was abandoned in 1771.

References Cited

AN = Archives Nationales, Archives des Colonies.

IHS = Illinois Historical Survey

KM = Kaskaskia Manuscripts

Alvord, Clarence W.

1987 *The Illinois Country 1673-1818*. Illinois Centennial Commission. Springfield, Illinois.

Belting, Natalia M.

1948 *Kaskaskia Under the French Regime*. Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale.

Brown, Margaret Kimball

2020 *Reconstructing an Eighteenth-Century Village: Chartres in the Illinois*. Village Publishers, Belleville, Illinois.

Brown, Margaret Kimball and Lawrie Cena Dean

1977 *The Village of Chartres in Colonial Illinois, 1720-1765*. Polyanthos Press, New Orleans.

Brown, Margaret Kimball and Robert F. Mazrim

2010 Revisiting the Forts and Village at Chartres in the Illinois Country. *Illinois Archaeology* 22(1): 134-137

Charlevoix, Pierre Francois-Xavier

1766 *A Voyage to North-America*. John Enshaw and James Potts, Dublin.

Ekberg, Carl J.

2000 *French Roots in the Illinois Country*. University of Illinois Press. Champaign.

Jelks, Edward B and Carl J. Ekberg,

1984 *Archaeological Explorations at the Laurens Site (11-R-125), Randolph County, Illinois*. Illinois State University Report. Normal, Illinois. Submitted to the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, Springfield.

Jelks, Edward B, Carl J. Ekberg, and Terrance J. Martin.

1989 *Excavations at the Laurens Site*. Studies in Illinois Archeology No. 5. Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, Springfield.

Mazrim, Robert F.

2011 *At Home in the Illinois Country: French Colonial Domestic Site Archaeology in the Midwest 1730–1800*. Studies in Archaeology No 9. Illinois State Archaeological Survey, Prairie Research Institute, University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign.

Mereness, Newton D.

1916 *Travels in the American Colonies*. Macmillan, New York.

Meyer, Herb

1986 *A Kaskaskia Chronology*. American Kestrel Books, Carbondale.

Palm, Mary Borgias

1931 *The Jesuit Missions of the Illinois Country 1673-1763*. Ph.D. Dissertation, St. Louis University. The Sisters of Notre Dame, Cleveland.

Pease, Theodore C. and Jenison, Ernestine

1940 *Illinois on the Eve of the Seven Years' War, 1747-1755*. Illinois Historical Collections, Volume 29. The Trustees of The State Historical Library, Springfield.

Price, Anna

1980 The Three Lives of Fort de Chartres: French Outpost on the Mississippi. *Historic Illinois* 3:1-4.

Rowland, Dunbar and A.G. Sanders

1932 *Mississippi Provincial Archives: French Dominion 1704-1743*. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Jackson, Mississippi.

Weymouth, John W.

1984 *A Magnetic Survey of the Laurens Site (11-R-125): The Second Season*. Report submitted to the Illinois Department of Conservation, Springfield.

Archaeological Testing at the Laurens Site

The Site of the 1733 Fort de Chartres

Robert Mazrim and Margaret Kimball Brown
Foundation for Illinois Colonial and American Studies

As discussed in the accompanying article, the Laurens site (11-R-125) is the location of the “third” incarnation of Fort de Chartres, constructed of wooden palisades in early 1733. The site is situated on a slight rise on the Mississippi River floodplain approximately 400 meters east of the fourth version of the fort, built of stone in the 1750s and standing today as a State Historic Site. Presently, the bulk of the Laurens site is located on the river side (south) of State Highway 155, and is owned by the State of Illinois. The 2011-2012 testing was conducted on the north side of the highway, on private property (Figure 1).

Research excavations in this locale were conducted in the fall of 2011 and again in the fall of 2012. Staff included crews from the Sangamo Archaeological Center and volunteers from the Illinois State Archaeological Survey and from the surrounding community.

The 2011 work consisted of six days of hand excavation of five test units. Those units, positioned within a surface concentration of limestones, encountered four subsurface features (Figure 2).

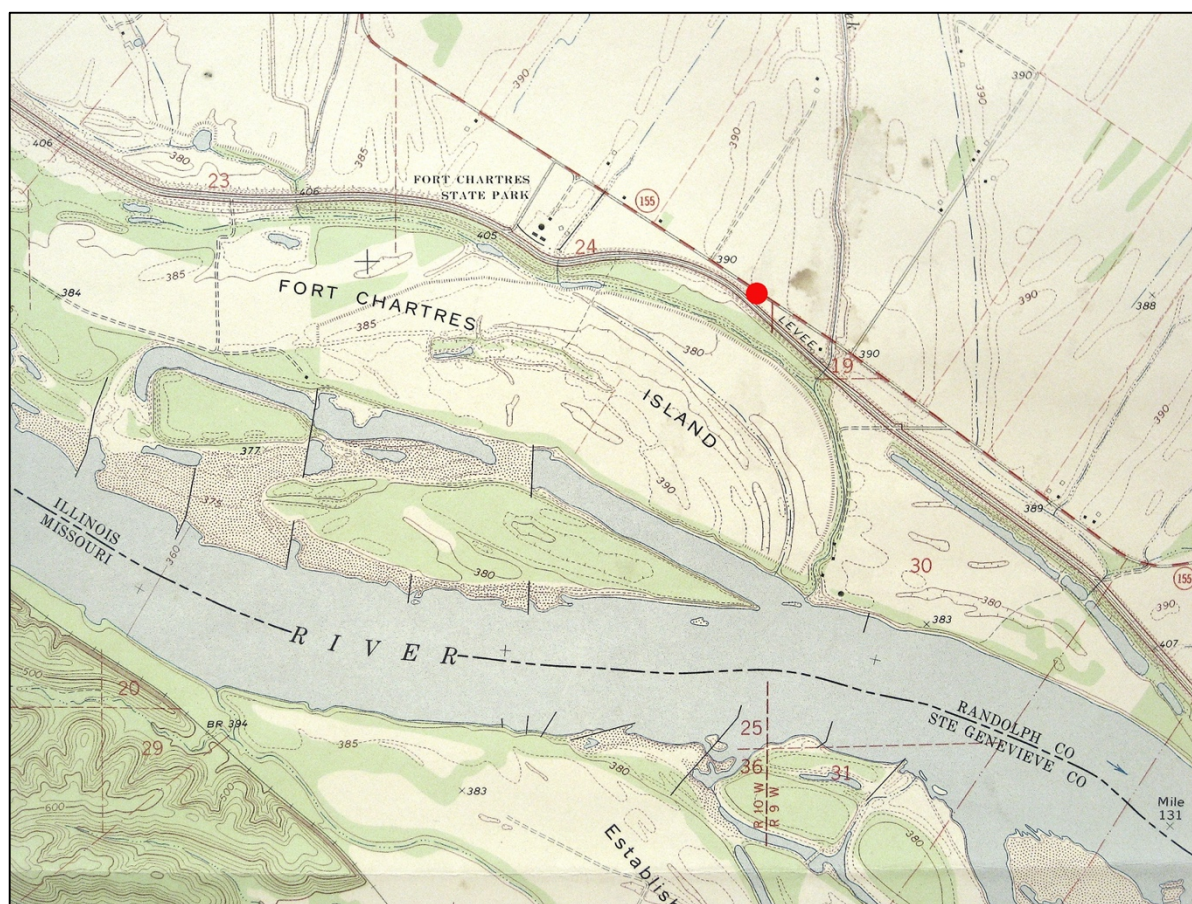


FIGURE 1: Topographical setting of the Laurens site.

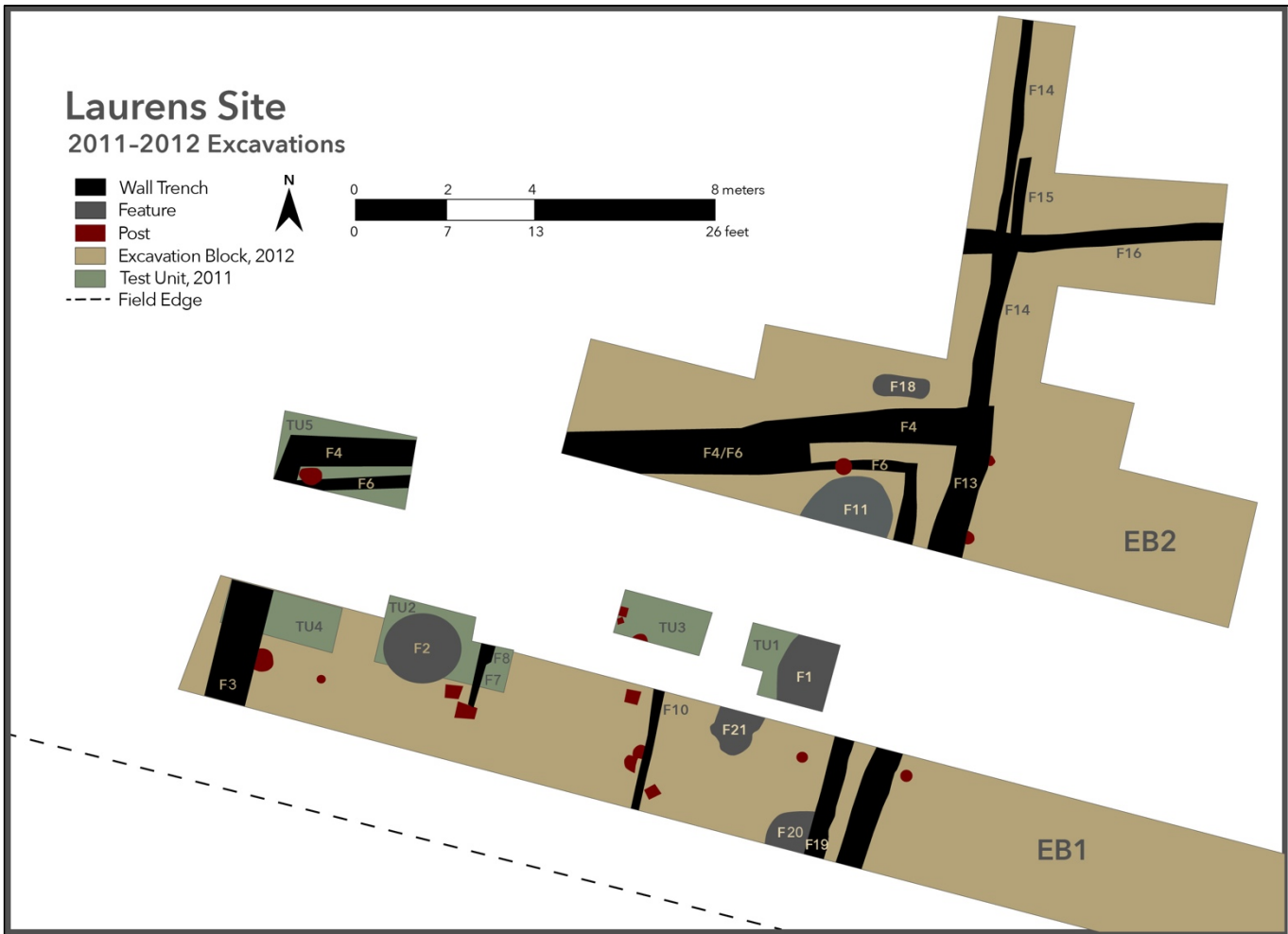


FIGURE 2: Base map of excavations 2011-2012.

In 2012, the investigations were expanded. The topsoil surrounding the test units, in an area defined by the surface scatter of limestone, was removed mechanically with a smooth-bucket backhoe. An additional 16 features were encountered, and were investigated over another 6-day period. Ultimately, the suite of features was interpreted as the archaeological reflection of the northeast bastion of the 1733 Fort de Chartres.

Previous Testing

In 1981, R. Terry Norris discovered a 1928 Corps of Engineers aerial photograph of the floodplain south of the stone fort. In a cultivated field situated on a slight rise, was a roughly square soil stain that strongly suggested a fortification with bastions (Figure 3).

Remote sensing over the area located anomalies that were presumed to be palisade ditches associated with that fortification. In 1983-84, Illinois State University conducted limited archaeological testing to examine these anomalies (Jelks and Ekberg 1984, Jelks et. al. 1989) (Figure 4).

Most of the features during the 1983-84 investigations (exposed in small sections below plowzone) were probably affiliated with the large, square soil stain seen in the aerial photo – the organic footprint of the 1733 fort. A total of 18 features were discovered in test unit excavations during 1983 and 1984 season. None were excavated in their entirety, and only six were partially excavated below the base of the plowzone.

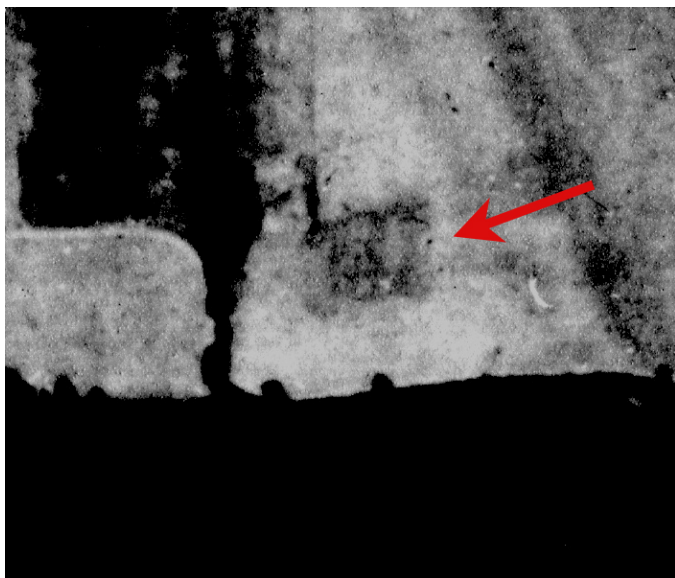


FIGURE 3: Aerial photo of soil stain associated with the archaeological footprint of the 1733 fortification.



FIGURE 4: View of 1983 ISU excavations.

Six of the 1983-84 features (1,5,6,7,9,11) were interpreted as “obvious” sections of wall trenches that defined three curtain walls of the fort, and one as a “tentative” section. Only one of these was actually excavated, however (Figure 5). That feature (Feature 5) was between 78-100cm wide and extended to a depth of 80-105cm deep, and exhibited a profile very similar to the Feature 3 wall trench found in 2011 (see below). It seems likely that the 1983 Feature 5 does indeed reflect a wall of the fort, and the best documented from that project. However, the “tentative” wall trench from 1984 (Feature 17) was actually a round pit, as was discovered during the 2011 revisit to the site. Thus, it seems premature to assess the size and shape of the main curtain walls of the fort with the data collected in 1983-84. And while the 2011-12 work clearly defined the limits of the northeast bastion, it did not expose sections of the main curtain walls.

Other features from the ISU study that were partially excavated below plowzone include four pits with obvious 18th century fill (Features 3/4, 12, 13, 15), as well as a basin-shaped pit (Feature 2) affiliated with a minor 1830s occupation of the site – probably in the form of a log dwelling.

2011 Testing

For the 2011 excavations, Grid North at 11-R-125 consisted of a line drawn perpendicular to Highway 155, east of magnetic north and in a direction toward the bluff line. A north-south datum line was then established from which to conduct investigations. A permanent iron pin was placed next to a powerline pole on the south side of Highway 155, approximately 300 meters west of One Mile Race Bridge.

Test Units 1 through 4 were established within a diffuse surface concentration of limestone (Figure 6). Each unit initially measured one by two meters, however Units 1, 2 and 4 were expanded to better expose subsurface features. Unit 1 was extended 50cm to the south to better expose Feature 1. Unit 2 was extended 50cm to the north to better expose Feature 2, and one meter to the east to expose a feature that was later determined to have been first mapped by ISU crews in 1983. Remnants of black plastic were still present atop this unexcavated feature, at the base of the plowzone (Figure 7). The unit extension encountered two additional small features (Features 7 and 8). Unit 4 was extended 50 cm to the west, to better expose Feature 3. Unit 3 encountered only two shallow posts and the extreme northern edge of what may be another pit feature.



FIGURE 5: View of 1983 excavation of Feature 5 stockade trench.



FIGURE 6: View of 2011 excavations.



Figure 7: Unit 2 base of plowzone, showing 1980s black plastic.

That unit was not expanded. Finally, Unit 5 was placed north of Unit 4 in an effort to define the Feature 3 palisade trench. As this unit immediately encountered a turn in the wall trench, it was excavated as a larger, 1.5m by 3m unit.

Test Units 1-4 were excavated in 20 cm levels. As the plowzone was generally about 30-35 cm thick, Level 2 in each of the units was only 10-15 cm thick. Level 3 in each unit represents this first level of feature fill. All soils (including the plowzone) from Units 1-4 were screened through 1/4-inch wire mesh. Debris density in the plowzone was generally very light, except when collected immediately over the larger pit features. However, over those features, debris became moderate to heavy within the bottom 5-8cm of the plowzone. The plowzone in Unit 5 was removed by hand and not screened. Feature fill was also excavated in arbitrary 20cm levels.

2012 Excavation Blocks

The 2012 field season was designed to better define the limits of the northeast bastion. As the 2011 testing found very little material in the A-Horizon, a smooth-bucket backhoe was used to incrementally remove the plowzone to a depth of approximately 30cm below surface. From this point, approximately 5cm of soil was removed by shovel scraping. Two east-west trenches were placed in such a way to intersect

sections of the bastion walls, and also to explore the central area inside the bastion. The second trench (EB2) was expanded to the north and east, in order to investigate a small network of trenches that were located outside of the northern limits of the fort (Figures 8-10).

Bastion Wall Trench Sections:

Outer Wall

Features 3, 4, and 13.

Three feature assignments represent three of the four outer walls that formed the diamond shaped northeast bastion of the fort. Specifically, the excavations exposed sections of the two “face walls” and one “flank wall” of the bastion. That bastion was composed of two face walls connecting to two flank walls (only one of which was exposed in the excavations) to form a diamond shaped enclosure.

Feature 3

Exposed in Unit 4, Feature 3 was the first recognized segment of the large, deep, wall trench that formed the northeast bastion of the fort. Specifically, Feature 3 was a section of the western wall of that bastion. In Unit 4, the trench measured approximately 105cm wide and extended to a maximum depth of 95cm below the modern surface. Its walls were nearly vertical. Two distinct rows of postholes are visible in the fill of the feature, and those posts were also visible as stains and impressions on the floor of the trench. The posts ranged from 25cm to 35cm in diameter.

In cross section, the Feature 3 trench exhibited clear evidence of modification during its use life – presumably for the repair of the palisade wall by the replacement of rotten posts (Figure 11). In the north profile of Unit 4 / Feature 3, five vertical zones of fill were evident:

- On the western edge of the trench, **Zone A** was sandy clay mottled with gray brown loam. Lacking any cultural material, this zone probably reflects the backfill of the initial wall trench dug during the construction of the fort in 1733.



Figure 8: 2012 excavation view showing modern levee across the state-owned portion of the Laurens site.



Figure 9: View of EB 1 looking toward grid east. Pit features are outlined in orange, and wall trenches in yellow.

Relations I: Archaeological Testing at the Laurens Site



Figure 10: 2012 Excavation Blocks 1 & 2, view toward grid north.

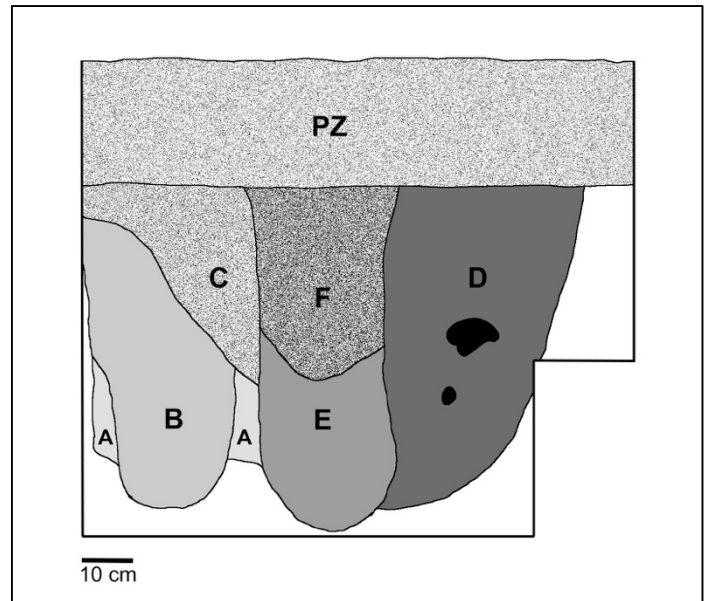


Figure 11: Profile of Feature 3 wall trench in north wall of Unit 4.

- **Zone B**, a silty gray loam mottled with clay, appears to represent a posthole affiliated with that initial palisade wall. The pulling of that post and the re-digging or expansion of the wall trench truncated this zone.
- That rebuilding activity is represented by **Zone C**, a silty, dark gray brown loam (mottled with charcoal) that may reflect the backfill against a second line of posts.
- Also associated with that redigging and replacement post setting activity is **Zone D**, which fills the eastern edge of the expanded palisade trench. This soil was similar to Zone C, but was greasier and more heavily laden with animal bones and other artifacts. This suggests that the soils used to backfill the trench (on what was the inside of the palisade wall) were more contaminated with occupation-related debris. In other words, the ground surface inside the fort was more littered with trash than the surface just outside of the palisade walls.
- Finally, **Zone E/F** represents the fill of a posthole associated with a secondary or replacement palisade wall. The upper portion of that fill (Zone F) was similar to Zone D, and probably reflects the old trench backfill slumping into the void when the post was pulled. At the bottom of the posthole, Zone E was looser and more heavily mottled, possibly reflecting the dislodging of the upper surface of the topsoil during the dismantling of the fort after ca. 1750.

With this sequence in mind, it seems likely that the western half of the Feature 3 trench represents the original circa 1733 palisade wall. The width of this original trench is unknown, but was probably narrower than the combined Feature 3. The posts affiliated with that first palisade were approximately 25cm wide, and extended to a depth of about 90cm below modern ground surface. At least four posts were observed along this line in Unit 4.

At some point during the use life of the structure, at least some of these posts were pulled and the trench was widened to the east. This indicates that (at least in

the section exposed by Unit 4), reconstruction work was conducted primarily from the inside of the fort. Replacement posts were set to the east of the older ones, and these were set slightly deeper than their precursors - approximately 95-105cm below modern grade. The posts affiliated with the second wall may have been slightly larger (about 30-35cm in diameter) than those affiliated with the first. At least three posts were observed along this secondary line in Unit 4.

Traces or chunks of charcoal at the bases of both lines of postholes suggest that they were partially carbonized before they were set, probably to retard decay once in the ground. Manganese staining was also visible at the base of some of these posts, as well as across the base of what would have been the expanded palisade wall trench. This may indicate that water often collected at the base of the palisade trench, at least in places.

A small sample of artifacts was recovered from the upper levels of Feature 3 (Levels 2 and 3), primarily from the upper limits of Zones D and E and from the base of the plowzone. This material is probably affiliated with topsoil deposits that were disturbed during the demolition of the palisade wall after ca. 1750. The sample is composed primarily of large animal bones, as well as a concentration of lead sprue and waste from casting lead balls. Found with the lead waste are fragments of gang mold strips, as well as one untrimmed musket ball. A lead bale seal from the same deposit may have been destined for melting and reuse as well. The small Feature 3 artifact sample will be discussed below.

Feature 4

Feature 4 is a section of another substantial wall trench, which connects to the northern end of Feature 3 at an approximately 60-degree angle, forming what is presumed to be the northern wall of the northeast bastion of the fort. The trench was exposed in Unit 5, and in EB2. This trench is less substantial than Feature 3, and shows no signs of re-digging or repair.

Within a profile window in Unit 5, Feature 4 measured approximately 60cm wide at the base of the plowzone, and extended to a maximum depth of

90cm below ground surface (Figure 12). The walls of the trench were nearly vertical, and the base of the trench undulated from the impressions of upright posts. Those posts measured approximately 25cm in diameter. The fill of Feature 4 consisted of a single zone of dark gray brown silt loam, lightly mottled with yellow clay. Debris density in the fill of the trench was very light, and consisted of small pieces of fragmentary animal bone, traces of lime plaster, and a fragmentary brass button.

Within a profile window excavated in EB2, Feature 4 measured 50cm wide, and was filled with the same dark silty loam seen in Unit 5. The trench was not excavated to its base in the EB2 window, but the upper limits of the feature produced two fragments of an olive-green case bottle and two small fragments of animal bone.

Feature 13

Feature 13 represents the east wall of the bastion, exposed in EB1 and EB2 (Figure 13). A section of Feature 13 was partially excavated within EB1. There, the trench measured approximately 60cm wide and extended 85cm below surface. Within the excavation window, the posts in the Feature 13 trench were set against its eastern wall. Along the eastern wall of the trench, a slight “shelf” in the clay subsoil reflected a portion of the builder’s trench that was not excavated as deep as the portion of the trench used to seat the posts.

Unlike the western wall of the bastion (Feature 3), no evidence of repair was encountered, and a single zone of light gray brown silt loam represented the backfill against a vertical column of loose, darker loam mottled with the charcoal and burnt soil. The latter represented a posthole, filled with debris when the post was pulled from the trench. The artifact sample of Feature 13 fill recovered from EB1 is a reasonably large one for a wall trench at the site. The small sample is dominated by animal bones, but also includes a blue-green glass bottle base, a fragment of burnt faience, a fragment of an olive-green glass case bottle, and a small sherd from a small Indigenous bowl, possibly made in the southern Mississippi Valley (discussed below).

Bastion Wall Trench Sections: Inner Wall Features 6, 15, and 19.

Just inside the outer line of wall trenches was a shallower, secondary trench (Features 6, 15, 20). The passing of time between the construction of the outer wall in 1732 and digging of the trench for the inner wall is indicated by the superimposition of the latter over at least one activity-related pit feature (Feature 19). The secondary wall was placed only behind the two facing walls of the bastion. The two trenches were very close together, averaging 30-50cm apart. The inner wall trench was also shallower than the outer trench. With this in mind, the inner wall may have served two purposes. The secondary wall may have been intended as a support to unstable facing walls of the bastion, with shorter logs in the inner trench perhaps contain an earthen embankment. Such an embankment, however, may have also served as a “banquette” or elevated firing stand behind this portion of the bastion wall. However, the 50cm gap between the two walls seems too narrow to afford a true elevated walkway. As a comparison, the banquette at the stone fort was approximately one meter wide.

Feature 6

Feature 6 was a section of a second wall trench that runs parallel to Feature 4, separated by a gap of 30-40 cm. It was first encountered in Unit 5, and was also exposed in EB2 (Figure 12). Feature 6 was less substantial than Features 3, 4, and 13, which compose the outer palisade wall of the northeast bastion. Feature 6 was 50cm wide at the base of plowzone, and extended to a maximum depth of 80cm below modern surface. The walls of this trench were slightly less vertical than those of Feature 3 and 4, and the floor was more basin-shaped in profile. The darker fill of three postholes was noted during excavation. These posts measured 20cm wide or less, and did not leave impressions in the floor of the trench. Generally, the morphology of Feature 6 suggests that it supported a slightly less substantial wall. It was filled with a single zone of dark, clayey loam heavily mottled with yellow clay. Artifact density in this fill was very light. The window excavated within Unit 5 produced a small quantity of fragmentary animal



Figure 12: Excavation view of Features 4 and 6.

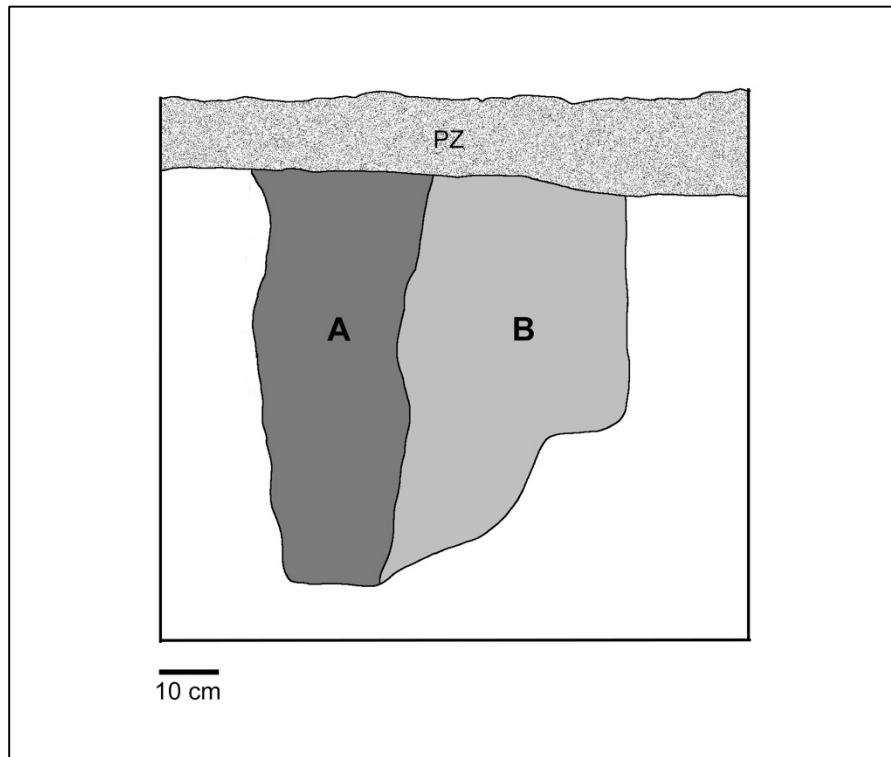


Figure 13: Feature 13 profile.

bone, two coarse earthenware sherds, and a single fragment of faience. The window excavated within EB2 produced three small bone fragments, and a delft hollowware rim sherd.

Adjacent to Feature 6 in Unit 5 was Feature 5, the impression of a post in the clay subsoil. That impression extended only 10cm into the clay, and its floor sloped downward toward the Feature 6 trench. Feature 5 is roughly circular in plan, and measured 30cm in diameter at the base of the plowzone. As there was no separation between the fill of features 5 and 6, it appears that they were dismantled and filled at the same time. The fill of Feature 5 produced no artifacts.

Feature 15

Feature 15 represents a section of the inner, secondary wall trench as it was exposed in EB2. The feature was exposed in plan, but not excavated. It measured 40cm wide, and was often difficult to separate from the adjacent Feature 13 trench at point of definition. A shallow window along the southern edge of the excavation block clarified the widths of both trenches. Feature 15 was separated from Feature 13 by less than 30cm at this point.

Feature 19

Feature 19 was a section of the interior wall trench exposed in EB1. It was excavated in two separate windows within EB2. The feature superimposed a basin-shaped pit (Feature 20) filled with burnt animal bone, charcoal, and container glass. Thus, the inner wall of the bastion must have been constructed sometime after the original outer wall.

The Feature 19 trench measured 45cm wide, and extended to a depth of 45cm below the surface (Figure 14). In window 1, evidence of two adjacent 15cm wide posts across the width of the trench was visible in the south profile, and another, smaller posthole was noted in the floor of the trench. Two of these posts were filled with carbonized wood at their bases, probably reflecting portions of the post themselves, which had been charred prior to setting - perhaps to inhibit decay. Small limestones were also found in association with the posts, possibly reflecting chinking used to stabilize the posts during the

construction of the wall. In window two, a series of five adjacent post impressions was visible on the floor of the trench. These posts ranged from 10cm to 20cm in diameter, and were set against the east wall of the trench. The positioning of the posts in Feature 19 suggests that they were intended to be as close to the outer wall as possible. The excavated sections of Feature 19 produced only five nails and a small number of animal bone slivers.

Bastion Interior Structure

Features 7 and 10.

A small structure was located roughly in the center of the northeast bastion of the fort. The structure was defined by two parallel wall trenches (Features 7 and 10) and a series of posts, which together represent the east and west walls of the building. The width of the structure was approximately four meters. The excavations did not expose the north and south walls. The wall trenches affiliated with this building were narrow and shallow, suggesting that it was not of substantial construction.

The possible remains of a limestone fireplace were found redeposited into Feature 11 (below). This debris may have been affiliated with the Feature 7/10 building, perhaps reflecting a fireplace built along its northern wall. Probe tests at the presumed location of that wall found no in-situ stone footing below plowzone, however.

Features 7 & 8

Features 7 and 8 were located 60cm west of Feature 2, in an expansion of Unit 2 designed to expose the feature recorded by ISU in 1983. That feature (ISU Feature 18) was not excavated in 1983.

Feature 7 was a shallow wall trench remnant measuring 20cm wide at the base of the plowzone, and extending to a maximum depth of 7cm below scraped surface (or approximately 35cm below the modern surface). It was slightly tapered in cross section. No posts were visible in the fill, which consisted of a single zone of dark brown, clayey loam. Feature 7 produced a large brass kettle ear, a single



Figure 14: Excavation view of posts at the base of the Feature 19 trench.

fragment of blue green bottle glass, and several pieces of clinker.

Feature 8 was either a large square post situated in a rough north-south line with Feature 7, or simply a continuation of the Feature 7 wall trench. The two features appeared to be separated by a 7cm gap. Its single zone of dark brown clayey loess produced no artifacts.

Associated with the Feature 7/8 wall were three post holes, two of which were numbered (PH 3 & 4). Post 3 was a large round post located 15 cm outside of the wall trench. It extended 8cm below the scraped surface. Post 4 was a large rectangular post positioned at the end of the Feature 7 trench. A smaller round (unnumbered) post was situated against this post. It seems likely that these two posts formed a jam for a door that interrupted the west wall of the structure. They were not excavated.

Feature 10

Feature 10 was the most intact wall trench affiliated with the building in the northeast bastion of the fort (Figure 15). It was 30cm wide at the surface of clay subsoil, and tapered slightly in profile. The trench reached a maximum depth of only 8cm below scraped surface, or about 40cm below ground surface. A series of post impressions were clearly visible along the base of the feature. These averaged 15-20cm in diameter.

Associated with the Feature 10 wall were four posts, three of which were numbered (PH 5,6,7). Post 5 was square and extended 20cm below scraped surface. Post 6 was square, and extended only 8cm below scraped surface. It produced a large nail. Post 7 was round and extended 12cm below scraped surface. The unnumbered post was adjacent to Post 6 and was round. It extended only 5cm below the scraped surface.

The fill of the Feature 10 trench produced a small piece of kettle brass cut into a square, a small rim sherd of a faience hollowware, and traces of plaster or lime mortar.



Figure 15: Excavation view of Feature 10 wall trench.

Bastion Interior Pit Features

Features 1, 2, 11, 20, and 21.

Feature 1

Feature 1 was an ovoid, basin-shaped pit encountered in Unit 1 (Figures 16 & 17). Only the western edge of the pit was exposed in plan, although the eastern edge of the feature was clearly located just beyond the eastern limits of the excavation unit. The pit measured approximately one meter wide and extended to a depth of 45cm below the ground

surface. The floor of the pit was flat bottomed, and sloped gradually upwards toward its east and west edges. The function of the pit is unknown. It was located inside the northeast bastion of the fort, approximately ten meters from the western wall of the bastion.

The fill of Feature 1 consisted of a single zone of dark brown, clayey silt loam. Several large, flat limestones were found in the pit, scattered within the post-abandonment fill. That fill was heavily laden with animal bones and domestic debris, much of which appears to have been deposited directly into the pit. Included in the feature sample are several long-neck French medicine bottles (*fiols*) that were discarded directly into the pit, a small sample of mid 18th century French faience and Italian Albisola earthenware, and a significant quantity of large cattle bones. The Feature 1 artifact sample will be discussed at length below.

Feature 2

Feature 2 was a large, circular, flat-bottomed pit encountered in Unit 2 (Figures 18 & 19). The pit measured 1.7m in diameter, and extended to a depth of 85cm below ground surface. The base of the pit was flat. The walls were nearly vertical in some places, and belled out in others. The pit was located approximately 2.5m from the western wall of the northeast bastion.

Feature 2 may have served as a cistern, to collect rainwater from the roof of the nearby structure - the western wall of which was located less than 50cm from the pit. The shallow depth of the pit may argue against this interpretation, however. There was no evidence of silting in the lower portions of the fill of the feature, but significant traces of manganese staining were noted on the clay floor of the pit. That staining, and the uneven bellying of the walls, may reflect long periods of standing water. The lack of silting may reflect a facility that was well-protected from ground surface erosion during its use life. Alternatively, the pit may have been used for food storage.

Found at the base of the plowzone, and covering most of Feature 2, was a sheet of damaged black



Figure 16: Excavation view of Feature 1.

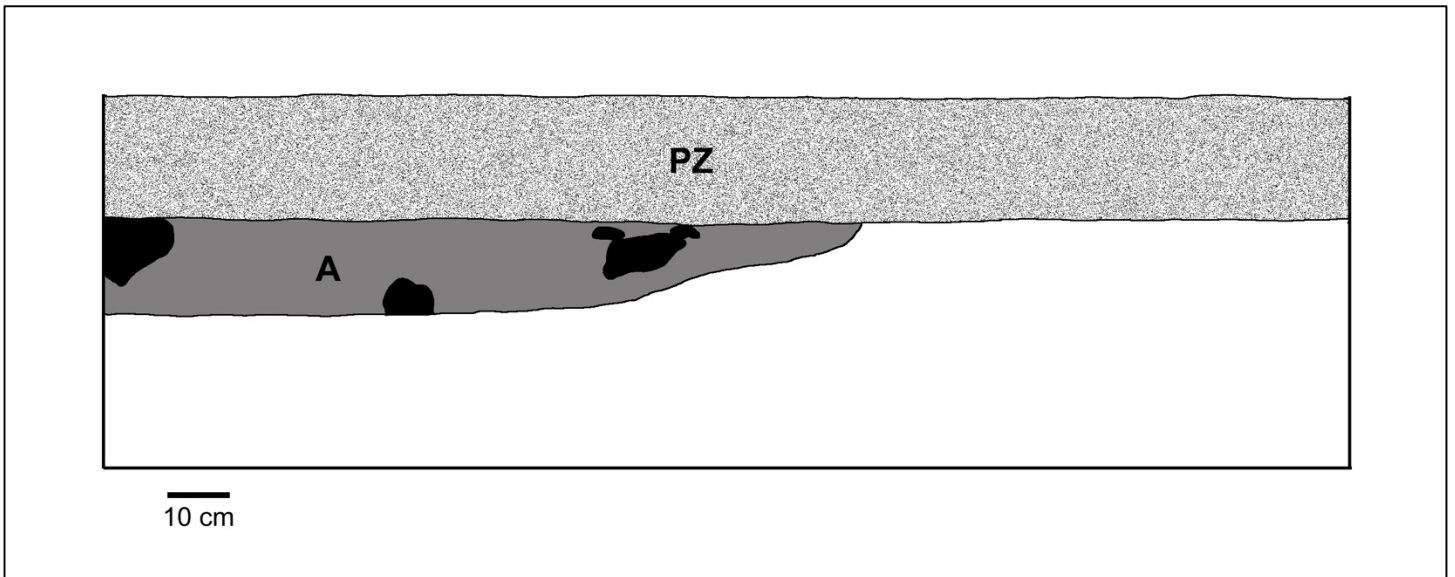


Figure 17: Profile of Feature 1.



Figure 18: Excavation view of Feature 1.

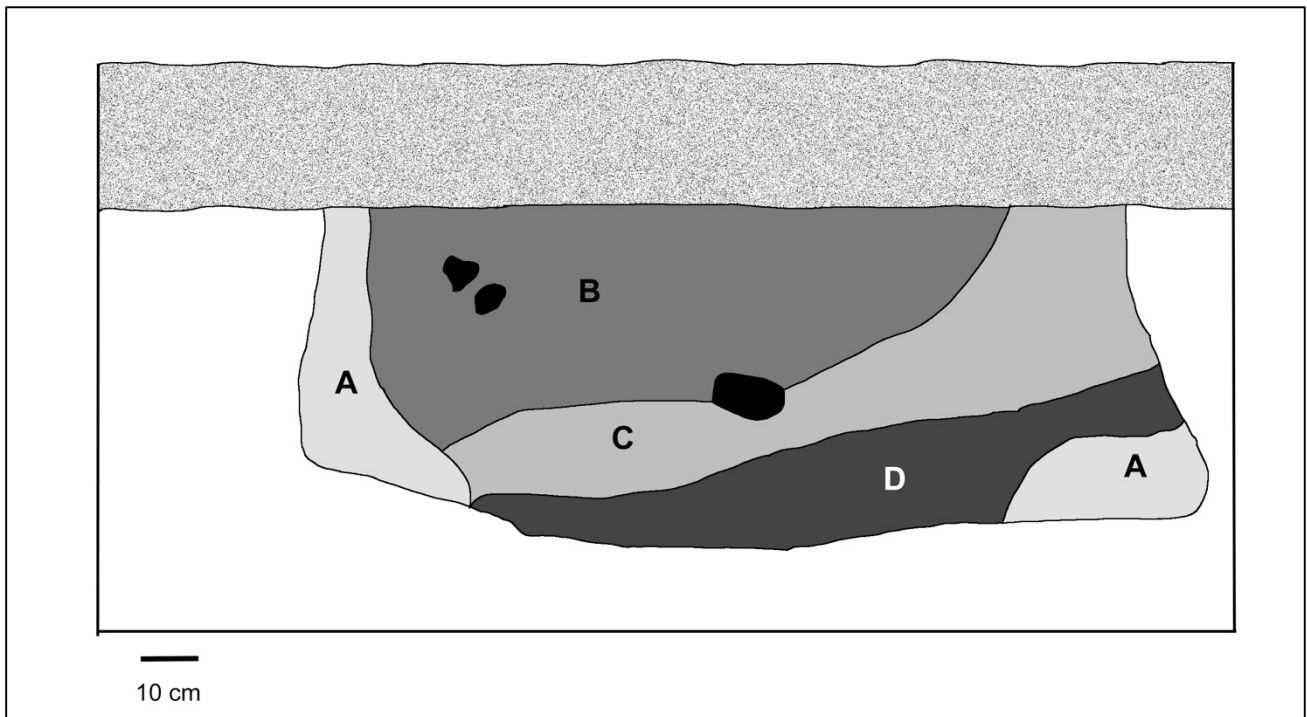


Figure 19: Excavation view of Feature 1.

plastic. It soon became clear that Unit 2 was coincidentally positioned almost directly on top of a hand-excavated trench (labeled ET 21) that had been placed in the cultivated field by Illinois State University in 1983. That unit exposed two features, which were labeled Features 17 and 18 in the 1989 report (Jelks et. al. 1989). Neither of the features was excavated in 1983. The published plan drawing of ISU ET 21 is nearly identical to that of the initial plan view of Unit 2, drawn in 2011.

In 1983, Feature 17 (Feature 2 in 2011) was interpreted as a segment of a palisade wall trench. The 2011 work, however, revealed it was in fact a round, flat-bottomed pit feature. Expansion of Unit 2 to the east encountered the same cultural disturbance mapped by ISU as Feature 18. The 2011 excavations, however, revealed that ISU Feature 18 is in fact two separate features (Features 7 and 8, discussed above).

The fill of Feature 2 consisted of four cultural zones. Along the east wall and across a portion of the floor near the west wall were layers of yellow clay slump (Zone A), which evidently occurred during the use life of the pit. The lowest zone of fill (Zone D) consisted of a silty dark gray brown loam, containing moderate amounts of animal bones, but less domestic debris than found in the zones above. Above this, Zone C was composed almost entirely of wood ash, mottled with burnt soil and laden with domestic debris. The artifacts in the ash were generally unburned. This zone may reflect the short-term use of the abandoned facility for a refuse pit, although little evidence of primary deposits of durable trash (with the exception of animal bones) was present. Zone B, the thickest cultural zone of fill, consisted of a dark, gray brown loam that was heavily laden with domestic debris, nails, and animal bone. This zone likely reflects borrowed topsoils used to rapidly fill the abandoned pit.

Feature 2 produced a large sample of redeposited domestic debris, as well as a moderate amount of animal bone. The debris density was greatest in Levels 3 and 4, and the sample skews toward kitchen and food service-related activities, with fewer “other” activity or clothing-related artifacts classes. The Feature 2 assemblage is the largest and most wide-ranging sample of artifacts recovered during the 2011

investigations. Temporally-sensitive ceramics consist of only of tin-glazed wares, primarily of French origins. These are dominated by post-ca.1730 Guilibaud style plates. The lack of British creamware from the sizable sample suggests a closure of the pit before the mid-to-late 1760s. This circa 1730-60 date range for temporally sensitive ceramics is mirrored by the smaller samples from Features 1 and 3 as well. The Feature 2 artifact sample will be discussed at length below.

Feature 11

Feature 11 was a large, regular, circular pit with slightly sloping walls and a flat bottom (Figures 20 & 21). It was 190cm in diameter, but extended only 75cm below ground surface. The clay floor of the pit was unusually hard packed. The pit was positioned in the extreme corner of the northeast bastion, less than 30cm from the interior eastern wall. There was no evidence that might suggest which feature was excavated first – the Feature 11 pit or the secondary wall trench.

The shape of Feature 11 was regular and carefully constructed. Like Feature 2, this pit seems too shallow to have served as a cistern, and in this case, possible evidence of standing water was not noted. Instead, the facility was presumably designed for storage - perhaps for fall garden produce. The hard-packed floor of the pit was unusual for the site, and may reflect its long-term use and occasional cleaning. The uppermost zone of fill consisted of a silt loam heavily mottled with burnt clay nodules and wood charcoal. Below this, a second zone of silt loam contained less charcoal and burnt clay. At the base of the pit, along its western half, a third zone consisted of compact ashy silt loam with fine charcoal mottles.

The upper two zones of fill were laden with a large number of limestones. Many of these were tabular or roughly rectangular in shape, suitable for building, and exhibiting signs of burning along one surface. It is possible that these stones reflect the demolition of a nearby fireplace, the remains of which were deposited into the abandoned Feature 11 pit. A large section of a cast iron cooking pot was also recovered from the upper fill zone.



Figure 20: Excavation view of Feature 11.

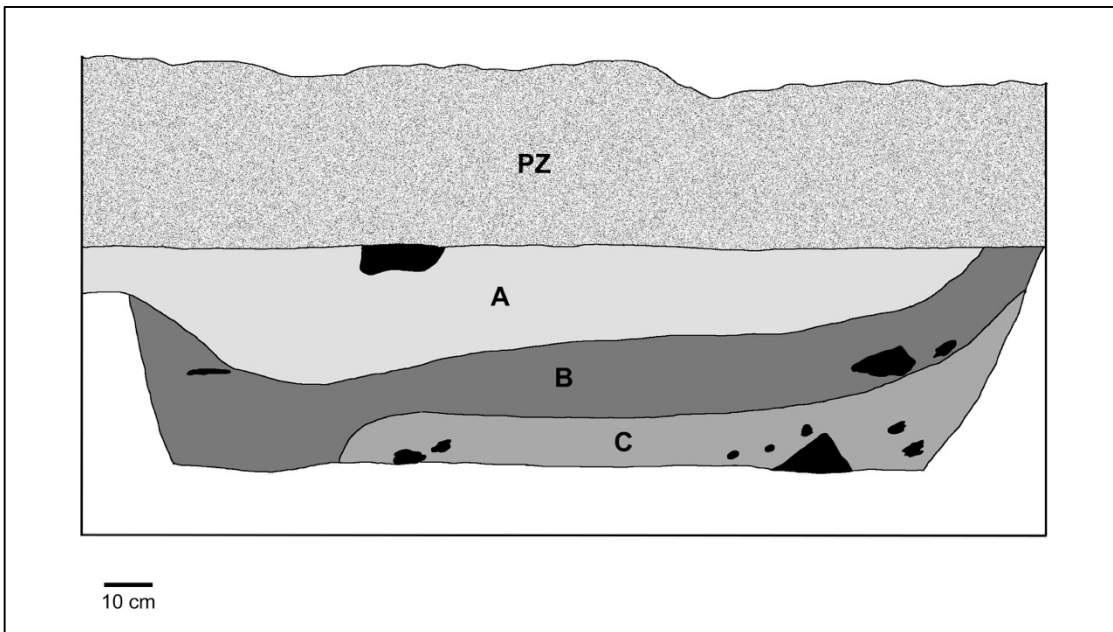


Figure 21: Excavation view of Feature 1.

Artifact density was greatest in Level 1. This deposit included the semi-primary deposit of broken bottle glass and fragments of the kettle mentioned above. Small amounts of redeposited domestic and architectural debris were recovered from the lower levels but considering the volume of fill excavated, the artifact density from Feature 11 is low.

Feature 20

Feature 20 was a shallow basin dug very near the eastern wall of the bastion, which was impacted by the construction of the interior secondary wall trench (Feature 20) after it was filled. The pit feature was ovoid in shape, at least 80cm wide, more than 100cm long, and extending to a depth of 25cm below modern surface. It extended into the southern wall of EB1, and was truncated on the east by Feature 20. It was filled with a dark brown clayey loam heavily mottled with charcoal and burnt soil (Zone A). Two heavy concentrations of wood charcoal were recognized in profile (Zone B). The original function of the pit is unknown.

The fill of Feature 20 produced primarily fragments of unburnt animal bone, together with wood charcoal, and very small amount of domestic debris. This includes a large section of the neck and shoulder of an olive-green wine or spirits bottle, a single rim sherd from a delft plate, a piece of cut kettle brass. The presence of the broken bottle and ceramic does suggest, however, that the bastion was occupied from some time prior to the construction of the Feature 19 wall trench, which intersected the pit.

Feature 21

Located just east of the Feature 7/10 structure in EB1, Feature 21 appeared as an amorphous, roughly ovoid stain at the base of the plowzone, with slightly scalloped edges. It measured one meter wide, and its northern edge extended into the northern wall of the excavation block. During excavation, the feature edges contracted rapidly and became more difficult to define. Extending to a maximum of 3cm below scraped surface, Feature 21 was either the base of a crude excavation into the 18th century topsoil, or possibly a slight depression created from pulling a small tree stump. It was filled with a dark gray brown clayey loam, mottled with some burnt clay and

charcoal. Only four small bone fragments, one nail fragment, and traces of plaster or mortar were recovered from the feature.

Exterior Fence Lines Features 14, 15, and 16.

A series of long, shallow trenches was found outside the limits of the northeast bastion, but connected to the “point” of the bastion wall trenches (Figure 22). The longest trench extended 9m north of the bastion, and continued beyond the limits of the excavation block. The wall trenches were too shallow to have supported tall posts, and the features are interpreted as foundations for ephemeral fencing, such as that used around a produce garden.



Figure 22: Excavation view of Features 14, 15 and 16.

Features 14 & 15

This trench is a bifurcated one, which intersected the corner of the bastion as a 40cm wide trench,

extending 4 meters north of the tip of the bastion. In profile, that trench tapered sharply to a width of 15cm. The trench extended 15cm below the scraped surface. Four meters north of its intersection with the bastion wall, Feature 14 split into two adjacent trenches. These were narrower (20cm), but extended to approximately the same depth below scraped surface.

Feature 16

The Feature 16 trench was perpendicular to Features 14 and 15, and presumably functioned the same as those trenches: to enclose and divide a produce garden. Feature 16 was 40cm wide at point of definition. It was not excavated.

Exterior Burial

Feature 18

Also located just outside of the northeast bastion was a single human burial (Figure 23). The grave was placed 50cm from the north wall of the bastion, or directly against that vertical log wall. The pit measured 130cm long, 70cm wide, and extended to a depth of

15cm below scraped surface at its deepest point. Plowing had significantly impacted the shallow burial, and the undisturbed portion of the skeleton was in a very poor state of preservation. Only a portion of the south half of the feature was excavated. The exposed remains were mapped in place and immediately covered over, in coordination with the State Historic Preservation Officer. No grave goods were noted in the southern portion of the feature.

The individual buried in Feature 18 appeared to be semi-flexed. The articulated right femur and tibia/fibula were partially exposed. No upper limbs were evident, and the right arm may have been removed by the plow. Ribs and cranial fragments were evident in the western end of the feature. Age and sex were undetermined, however, the length of the femoral shaft (~30cm) suggests an older child (>10yrs) or small adult. The proximal epiphysis was visible in cross section, but poor preservation made it unclear whether the epiphysis had fused. The small size of the feature also suggests a sub-adult age. If the individual was indeed buried in the flexed position, it seems likely that the grave was that of an Indigenous resident of the community.

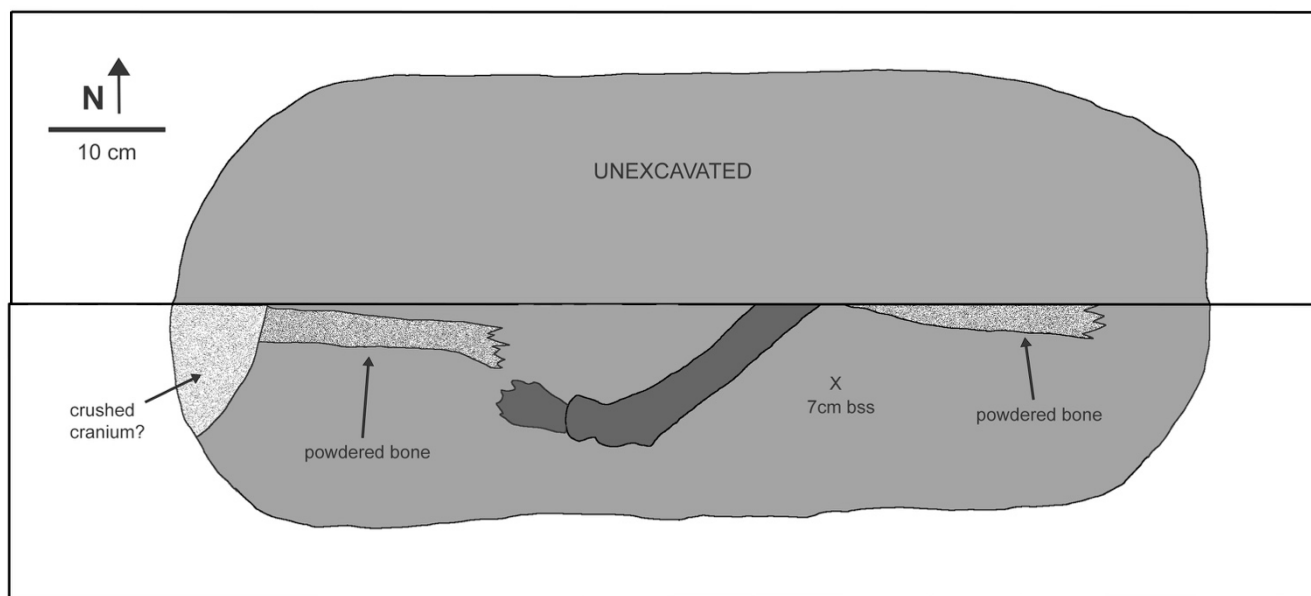


Figure 23: Plan view of Feature 18 grave.

Material Culture

Artifact samples from the 2011-12 investigations include small samples of redeposited debris recovered from sections of the bastion wall trenches, three significant assemblages from three pit features, and a very small amount of debris recovered from plowzone contexts. The two most significant pit feature samples include a secondary deposit of material (Feature 2), and a primary deposit of debris as part of the closing of a small pit feature (Feature 1). Both were presumably generated from within the Feature 7/10 structure. Two additional pit features (Features 11 and 19) and a section of the exterior wall trench (Features 3 and 13) produced much smaller samples of secondarily-deposited debris.

Feature 2

The artifact assemblage recovered from Feature 2 provides the best glimpse into the activities that occurred within the northeast bastion over a number of years. It consists of a large sample of domestic, architectural, and faunal debris that was (for the most part) secondarily-deposited into the pit upon its abandonment. A few larger sections of coarse earthenware plates and some of the animal remains may represent primary deposits made while the pit was being filled in. It appears that the sample reflects debris affiliated with activities inside the adjacent Feature 10 structure, over a period of several years. Most of this material was probably discarded on the ground surface or in rubbish heaps near the building and was redeposited into Feature 2 after it ceased to be used as a cistern or storage facility.

CERAMIC AND GLASS CONTAINERS

The Feature 2 sample includes fragments of a minimum of 23 ceramic vessels (Figures 24 and 25). Nearly half of these are tin-glazed wares, followed closely by coarse earthenware (n=8). Two Chinese porcelain vessels and a single stoneware vessel complete the ceramic assemblage. The tin-glazed vessels consist primarily of faience plates or platters (n=8). These are decorated in Rouen tradition, Chinese-inspired border motifs pioneered by the potter Claude Guillibaud during the 1720s and 1730s (e.g. Brulon 1998:35, Genet 1980: 33). A Rim Style J

plate of the Provence tradition (Waselkov and Walthall 2002) is also present. A faience hollow vessel and what appears to be a small jar in brown faience are also present. The latter is somewhat unusual, as faience brune was generally a cooking ware (e.g. Blanchette 1981). However, the specimen from Feature 2 clearly consists of the foot of a small jar. A very similar artifact was recovered at the Trotier site in Cahokia (Mazrim 2011: 193). Two vessels appear to be of non-French origins; a plate of British delft, and a possible Spanish colonial majolica plate. Finally, two Chinese porcelain teacups complete the refined vessel assemblage from Feature 2. Both are decorated in underglaze hand-painted blue motifs.

At least eight lead-glazed coarse earthenwares are present in the Feature 2 sample. Half of these are deep serving dishes with wide, slightly channeled marleys. They are identical in size and shape, but their lead-slip glazes range from a pale-yellow green to a brick red. These glazes were applied only to the interiors of the dishes. The vessels are round, approximately 20cm in diameter, and 4cm deep. They have the appearance of having been manufactured by the same pottery, perhaps a bulk order purchased by the French government for use in their colonial installations. This may be supported by the fact that serving dishes of this kind are virtually unknown in domestic settings in Illinois (e.g. Mazrim 2011). Instead, wares of this kind more commonly take the form of deeper, multipurpose kitchen bowls. A fragment of one such bowl, a “Saintonge Plain” vessel, was recovered from the feature. It is made of a gray buff paste and glazed in a bright apple-green glaze characteristic of this ceramic tradition. The sherd is weathered and spalled, suggesting long-term use of this particular vessel.

Also included in the coarse earthenware assemblage is a lidded cooking vessel - perhaps a pipkin. It is represented by lid and rim sections. The lid is decorated with a pie crust-like edge, and is glazed on both sides. The vessel was approximately 20cm in diameter. Two type-indeterminate vessels complete the lead-glaze sample. A single stoneware vessel appears to be of French origin. It is represented by body sherds only, with salt glazed exteriors and unglazed interiors. The vessel may have been a small jug.

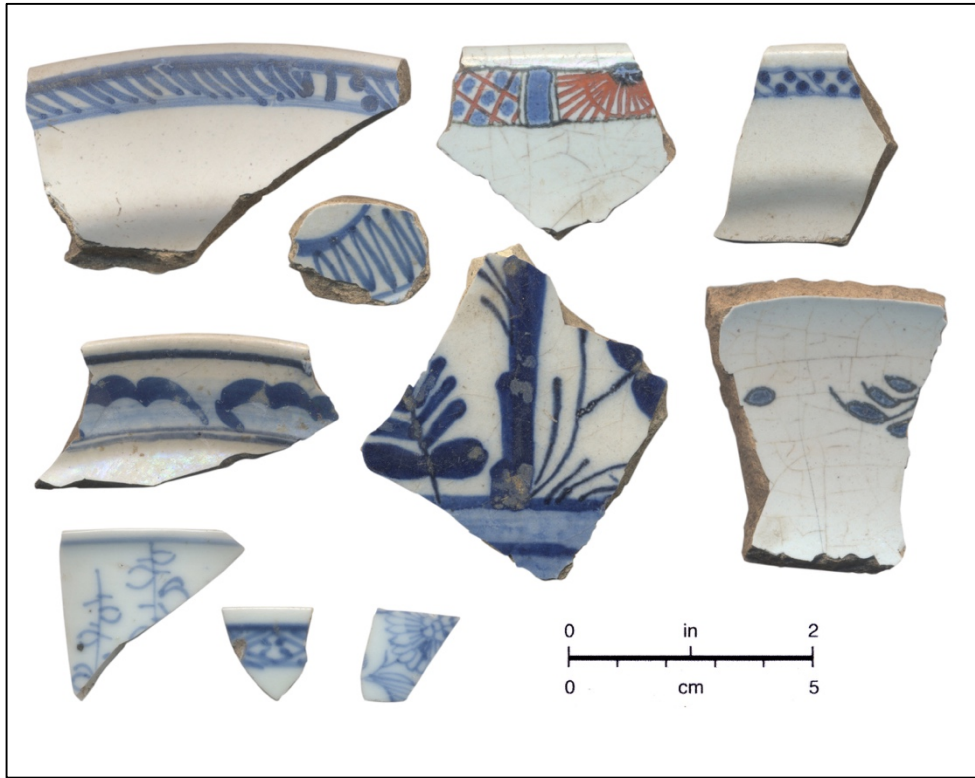


Figure 24: Selected tin-glazed and porcelain (bottom left) ceramics from Feature 2.

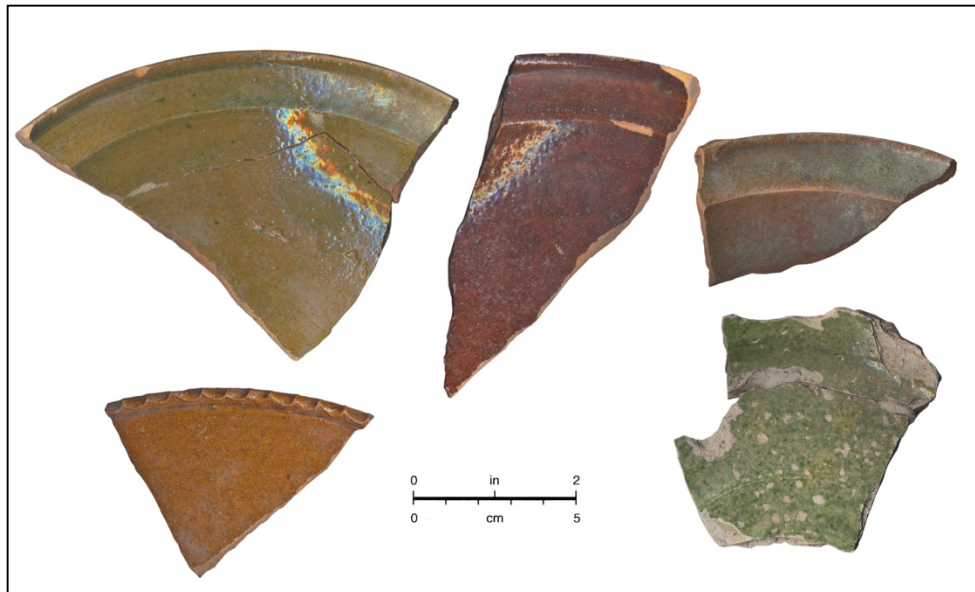


Figure 25: Selected lead-glazed coarse earthenwares from Feature 2.

Fragments of a minimum of five glass vessels were recovered from Feature 2 (Figure 26). All of these vessels are represented only by small sherds. Three are bottles, one is a flint glass tumbler, and the fifth is a type-indeterminate vessel. The bottles include an olive-green wine bottle, an olive-green case bottle (with four flat sides), and a blue-green *firole*, or narrow, long-necked vial used for medicines or scents. As a whole, the glass vessel sample from Feature 2 is unimpressive.

METALLIC VESSELS

Eleven pieces of scrap brass from an unknown number of brass kettles were found in Feature 2. All but one show signs of cutting, as a result of the recycling of damaged or worn-out kettles (for use in patches, rivets), or for clothing ornaments. The largest fragment measures 6cm long by 3mm wide.

TOOLS AND UTENSILS

Feature 2 produced several small tools and household utensils (Figure 27). No flatware of any kind is present in the sample. Sewing-related items include a complete pair of iron scissors (14cm long), a possible iron needle, and eight brass straight pins (3cm long). The tip of a possible lead writing stylus is also present in the sample. Two pieces of hand-forged iron may be fragments of two C-shaped strike-a-lights. Two pieces of cut antler appear to be homemade handle preforms (Figure 28). Both measure 10cm long.

Perhaps the most unusual finds in the Feature 2 sample were two candlewick trimmers (Figure 29). These utensils served only one purpose, to trim excessive wick length on burning candles. No such artifacts have been reported from 18th century contexts in Illinois, and thus two pair from a single feature at the fort comes as a surprise. One of the specimens is made of brass, and one of iron. Both have breaks that probably occurred during their use life, resulting in their discard in the midden or rubbish heap used to fill the abandoned facility.

ARMS AND AMMUNITION

Weapons related artifacts in the Feature 2 sample are few, considering the fort-related context of the sample (Figure 30). Of the 14 artifacts in this category, only two are musket balls. One of the balls (15mm diameter) is unfired, and one is partially

flattened. A small lead disc appears to be a piece of lead shot that has been intentionally flattened. Four gunflints include a French pistol flint and three fragments of larger French spalls. One of these is heavily worn.

Also part of this category are five pieces of lead casting waste and a strip of shot gang mold sprue that has been carefully folded up into a small bundle – probably in advance of melting in a small pot. One might assume that the quantities of shot and ball supplied to the fort by the French government would have made its home-manufacture irrelevant except for in extreme cases. However, the presence of ball/shot casting waste in this sample suggests that it must have been a somewhat common occurrence.

Finally, a fragment of a brass hand guard from a small, military issue sword was found in Feature 2. While gun parts are somewhat common at domestic sites, fragments of side arms such as these are generally known only from fortifications or Indigenous villages (Mazrim 2011, Mazrim and Weedman 2023).

SMOKING PIPES

Fragments of five smoking pipes were recovered from Feature 2 – a relatively large number considering the size of other artifact categories in the sample (Figure 31). One is an English, white clay, long-stemmed specimen, and the others are regionally-made stone pipe bowls. A plain bowl fragment and a single stem fragment represent the white clay specimen.

The four stone pipe bowls include one elbow or calumet-style bowl and three Micmac bowls. The former is made of Catlinite or other red stone, and consists of an undecorated section from the bowl-stem junction. The Micmac-style bowls are fashioned from limestone. Two of these are made of a buff-colored local limestone, and the third is of a dark black limestone. Similar black limestone Micmac pipes have been recovered from domestic contexts in the village of Cahokia, where they were presumed to date to the first half of the 18th century (e.g. Mazrim 2011: 172) The black pipe from the fort is small, and represented by a keel section only.



Figure 26: Selected container glass from Feature 2.

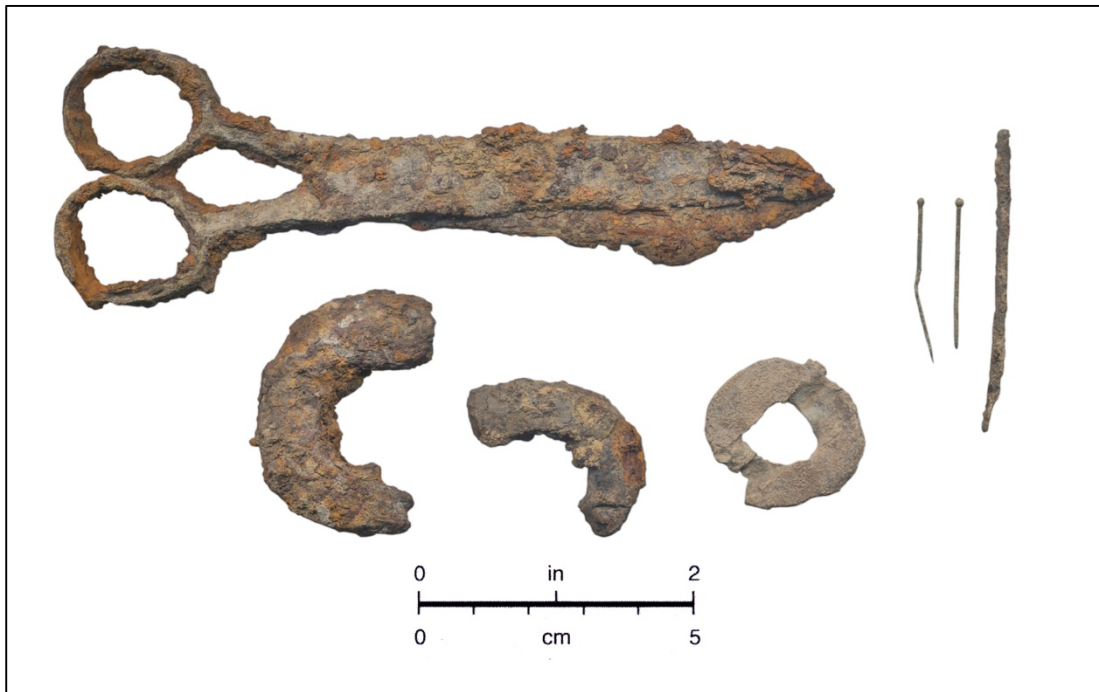


Figure 27: Scissors, possible fire steel fragments, bale seal, straight pins, and needle from Feature 2.



Figure 28: Possible tool handle preforms fashioned from cut antler, Feature 2.



Figure 29: Candle wick trimmers from Feature 2.

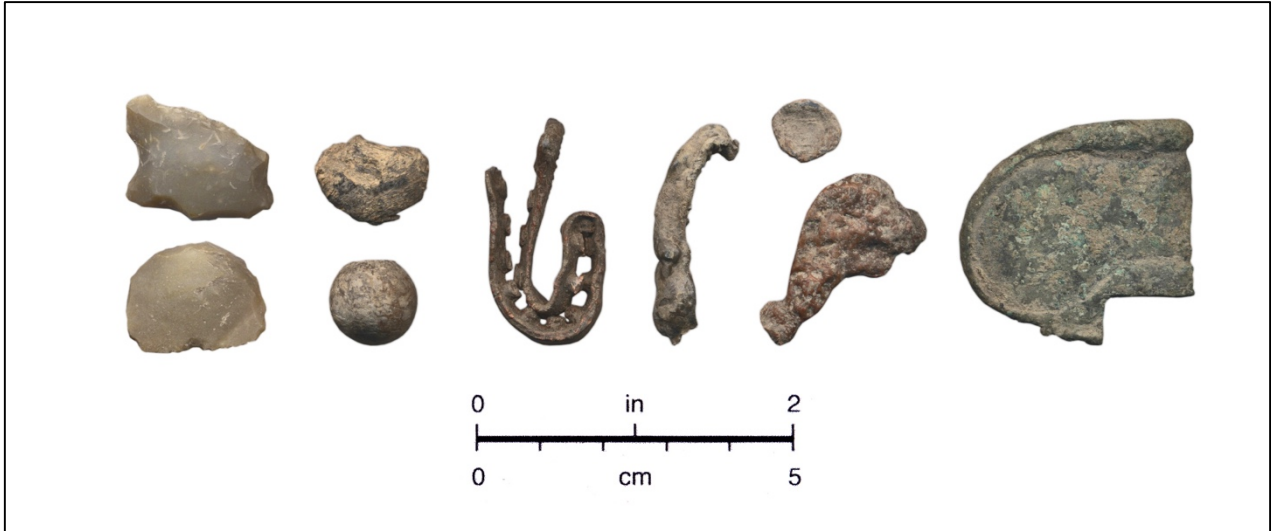


Figure 30: Gunflints, musket balls, lead sprue, and sword guard fragment from Feature 2.



Figure 31: Smoking pipes from Feature 2. Redstone elbow, limestone Micmac-styles (including an unfinished example on far right), and a British white clay bowl fragment (bottom left).

A bowl and a keel represent the buff-colored limestone pipes. The keel was poorly drilled, resulting in a break at the thin section of the neck. The bowl was broken from the neck of the pipe during manufacture, and its orifice has not been completely drilled out. This indicates that such pipes, usually attributed to Indigenous manufacture, were being made inside the walls of the fort. There is strong evidence that Micmac pipes were made by the French as well as the Indigenous residents of 18th century Illinois (e.g. Mazrim 2011: 75).

CLOTHING AND ORNAMENTS

Clothing-related artifacts consist of buttons, hasps, a buckle, and a religious medallion (Figure 32). Four buttons were recovered. Two of these are distinctive one-piece brass buttons with domed fronts, measuring 2cm in diameter. These are identical to several specimens recovered during the 1983 excavations at the Laurens site (within the limits of the fort). Such buttons are not common in domestic contexts, and it seems likely that these were used on military-issue vests or coats. They are quite common at the nearby Guebert site – the grand village of the Kaskaskia Tribe during the 18th century (Mazrim and Weedman 2023). A third button, cast in pewter, is similar in shape and size. Finally, a single-hole bone button (1cm in diameter) was probably originally covered in thread.

A brass wire hasp and a white metal hasp or loop were also found in Feature 2. A brass breeches buckle is cast with an ornate surface pattern, and measures 3cm long. A mass of copper-coated fibers was recovered from a lower zone of the feature fill. Such threads (known as “gold lace”) were commonly used on military coats of the 18th century (e.g. Brown 1971), but little can be said about these specimens due to their poor preservation. Finally, a brass religious medallion was found at the base of the cistern. It depicts an adult figure (Mary?) in profile, cradling the infant Jesus on the obverse, and an infant Jesus wearing a crown on the reverse. Such medallions are often interpreted as gifts from Jesuit priests to Indigenous residents, but the abundance of such ornaments at sites such as Fort Michilimackinac suggest they were also part of general Indigenous trade inventories (Mercier 2001, Schreiner 2017).



Figure 32: Hasps, buckle, buttons, and religious medal from Feature 2.

ARCHITECTURAL

Architectural debris from Feature 2 consists primarily of nails and clay daub. A moderate quantity of limestone was also recovered from the feature, but was not collected. That stone may have been used in a variety of applications at the fort. A total of 199 nail fragments were recovered from Feature 2, with the heaviest concentrations in Levels 3 and 4. Ninety-five are whole. All nails are hand-forged, with a wide variety of sizes present. These range from numerous small specimens (4cm) presumed to be shingling nails to much larger spikes (14cm), which appear less frequently. Approximately 20 ounces of burnt clay “daub” were also recovered. Fragments are generally small and friable, and may have originated in the lining of a fireplace.

MISCELLANEOUS OR UNIDENTIFIED

The back tab of a lead bale seal was recovered from Feature 2 (Figure 27). It has no markings, and measures 3cm in diameter. A brass disk, fashioned from an unusually thin piece of brass, is pierced near its center and measures 4cm in diameter. Its function is unknown. Two small nails have been modified by bending their tips into an open and a closed hook. Their original function is also unknown. The fill of Feature 2 also produced four pieces of brass wire, two of which have been twisted into spirals suggesting

that the wire was used as baling wire. A 31cm long piece of square iron bar stock was also recovered. Ten small pieces of thin brass scrap are present, most of which have been cut into narrow strips.

Feature 2 produced a single, large “clinker.” While it may have been produced by blacksmithing elsewhere in the fort, it is unusually heavy and does not appear to be intensely burnt, and may instead be partially smelted lead ore.

FAUNAL REMAINS

The faunal assemblage from the 2011-12 excavations was analyzed by Terrance Martin of the Illinois State Museum in 2013. The sample, retrieved principally from Features 1-3, is dominated by birds (MNI = 53-62). Duck (MNI = 12-15) and chicken (MNI=12) are the most frequently occurring. The most frequently occurring identifiable mammals (MNI = 23-33) include white tailed deer (MNI = 6-9) and cattle (MNI = 5-7). Finally, fishes (MNI = 16-19) are dominated by blue catfish (MNI = 8-9) and buffalo (MNI = 7).

Feature 1

In contrast to Feature 2, the artifact sample recovered from Feature 1 seems to reflect activities that occurred within the northeast bastion over a shorter period of time, represented by more primary deposits of debris.

CERAMIC AND GLASS CONTAINERS

The Feature 1 sample includes fragments of a minimum of 14 ceramic vessels, none of which were represented by fragments from other features at the site. Eight of these are French faience, six are coarse earthenwares, and one is a stoneware vessel (Figures 33 and 34).

The sample of faience is composed of plates (n=4), platters (n=3), and a single hollow vessel. The latter is a type-indeterminate brown vessel. Decorative motifs on the plates include two in Rim Style J (one of which is badly burnt), one in rim Style H, and one painted in an unclassified rim type. One of the platters is very large and thick bodied. It is painted in a complex variant of Rim Style C, which includes “Moustiers Orange” pigments as well as overglaze highlighting in gold. A second platter, painted in Rim Style L, is also

highlighted in overglaze gold paint. The third platter has a Rim Style G motif painted in “St. Cloud Polychrome” (blue with black highlights).

The unrefined ceramic assemblage is an eclectic one. Present are fragments of a Saintonge Plain kitchen bowl, three Albisola-Slipped vessels from northwestern Italy, a Dutch salve pot, and a salt-glazed stoneware type indeterminate vessel. The stoneware vessel is thin-bodied, and its glaze suggests Low Countries origins. The Dutch salve pot is represented by half of the vessel. It is 45mm tall and 5cm in diameter. The pot, used for viscous medicines or creams, is identical to specimens found in Amsterdam in 17th and 18th century contexts, but otherwise unknown in Illinois. The Albisola-Slipped vessels (glazed in a distinctive brick-red lead glaze decorated in manganese black trailing) include a dish, a lid from a covered pot, and a table bowl or pitcher. All are represented by small sherds.

METALLIC VESSELS

Two large fragments of a cast iron kettle were found in Feature 1. The size and shape of the vessel is difficult to determine from the body sherds recovered, but the vessel was clearly used in open-hearth cooking. A large fragment of a brass kettle was also found in the feature.

CONTAINER GLASS

In all other contexts within the northeast bastion, and as is typical to coeval domestic sites as well, container glass is generally represented by a few small sherds from a small handful of vessels. However, the glass sample from Feature 1 is markedly different. Here, a number of bottles were discarded into the pit shortly after they were broken and discarded, in a primary deposit that produced large sections and partially restorable vessels.

At least seven blue-green, long-necked, narrow-bodied *fioles* (or vials) were discarded into the pit upon its abandonment (Figure 35). Such bottles were generally used for substances such as scents or medicines (e.g. Harris 2000). These were probably the French equivalent to the American dip-molded apothecary vial, filled by druggists or physicians and identified with small paper labels. The vessels from

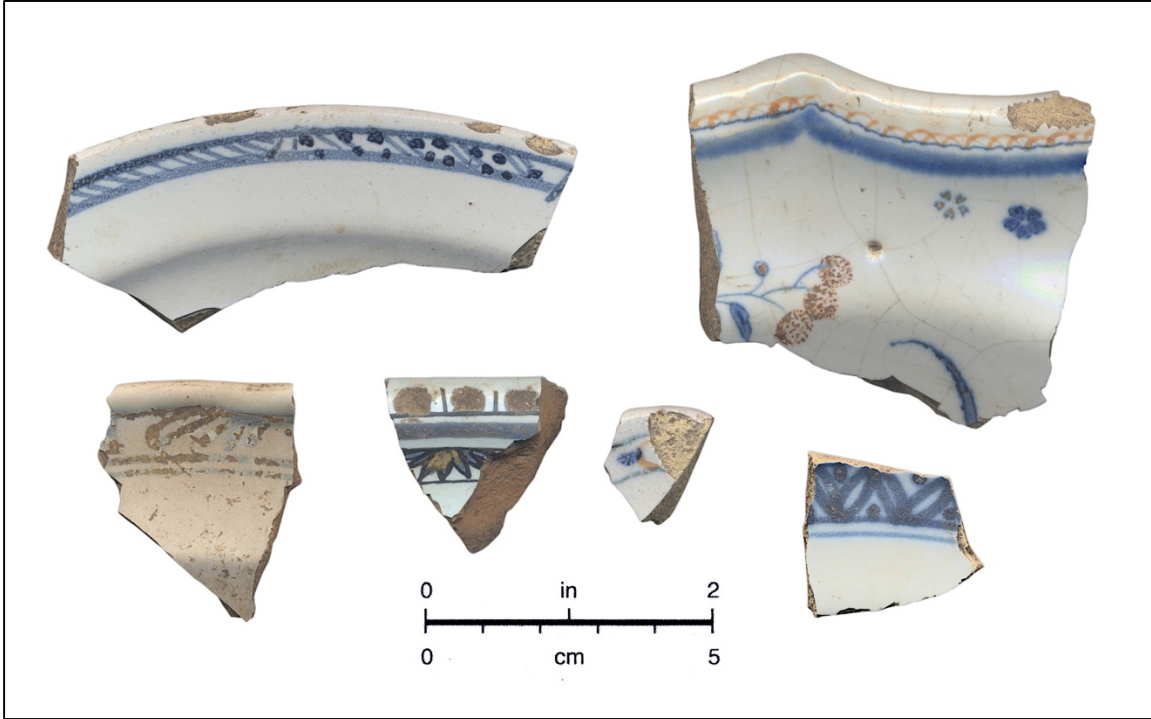


Figure 33: French faience from Feature 1.

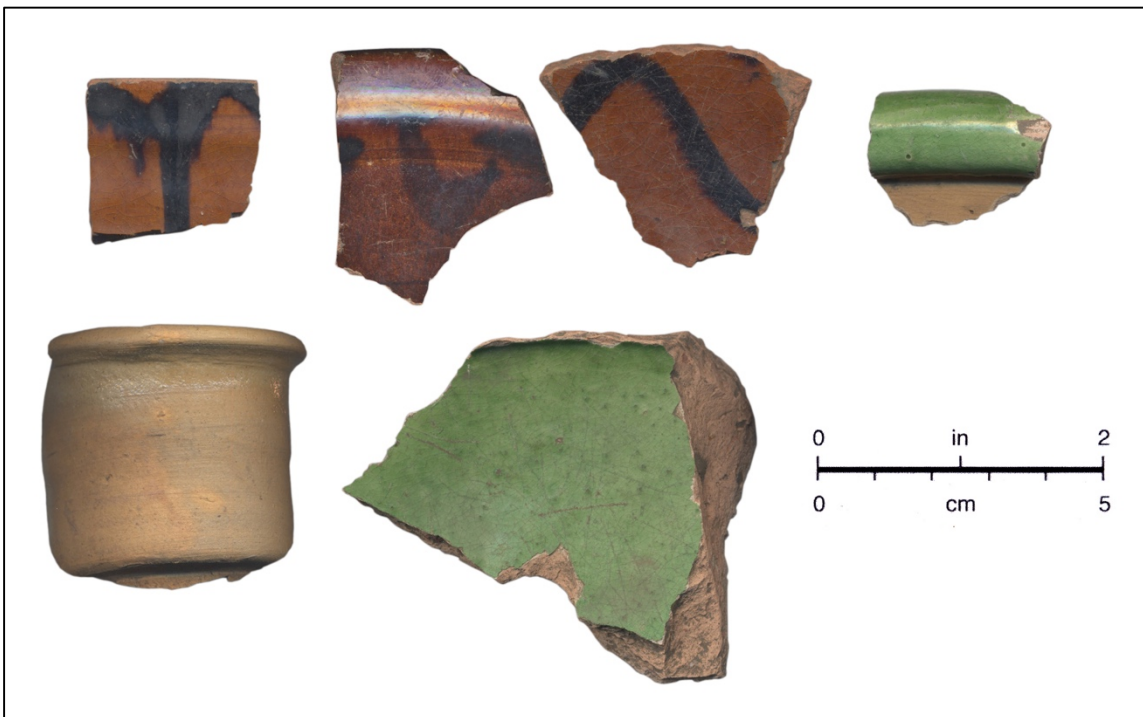


Figure 34: Smoking pipes from Feature 2. Redstone elbow, limestone Micmac-styles (including an unfinished example on far right), and a British white clay bowl fragment (bottom left).



Figure 35: Selected bottle glass from Feature 1.

Feature 1 are very thin-walled, with slightly kicked-up bases that are scarred with solid glass rod pontil marks. The necks are approximately 6cm long and finished with slightly rolled lips. The bases of the vials are 55mm in diameter, and the estimated height of the bottles is about 20cm.

Feature 1 also produced fragments of at least four wine bottles and an olive-green case bottle. One of the wine bottles may be part of the primary-deposit, while only a few smaller fragments represent the others. One lip fragment is finished with a typical French style, V-shaped, string lip.

OTHER ARTIFACT CLASSES

The Feature 1 pit produced few other artifact types, and for the most part appears to represent the semi-primary deposit of bottles, as well as the secondary disposal of some kitchen-related ceramics and kettle

fragments. The pit produced one unfired, “chewed” musket ball and two pieces of lead casting waste. A 10cm length of brass wire and a 35cm long iron bar (round in cross section) were also recovered. Three clinkers are present in the sample. While these were probably produced by blacksmithing elsewhere in the fort, one of these (like that found in Feature 2) is particularly heavy and yet not heavily burnt, and may be partially smelted lead ore. Finally, the pit produced three glass seed beads (1 white, 2 blue). Architectural items are restricted to hand-forged nails.

One fragment of stucco or plaster was found preserved in the pit feature (Figure 36). One surface exhibits smoothing marks and possibly traces of whitewash, while the reverse side is impressed with marks made by the logs onto which the clay was applied.

Other, Smaller Samples

FEATURE 11

Given its size and volume, Feature 11 produced a relatively small number of artifacts. The sample was dominated by animal bone. Feature 11 also produced a large quantity of tabular stone that may reflect the dismantling of a stone fireplace or chimney, affiliated with the Feature 7/10 structure. Approximately 50% of the feature (its northern half) was excavated.

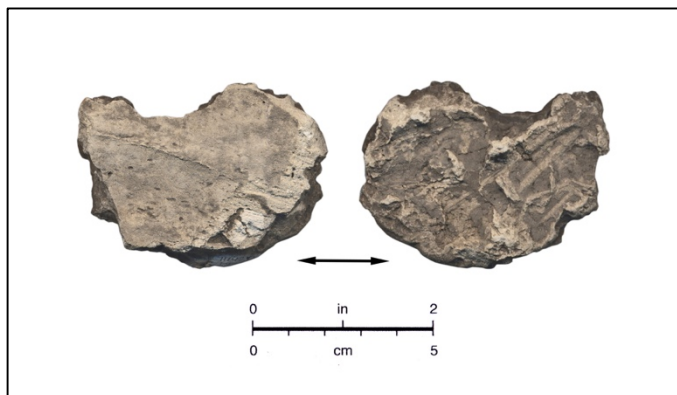


Figure 36: White-washed plaster or daub from Feature 1.

Recovered primarily from the upper-most zones of unplowed fill was a small sample of debris that was probably deposited as part of the demolition that filled the pit with stone and soil. Mixed with wood ash was a concentration of broken container glass, a small amount of tin-glazed ceramic sherds, and a large section of a cast iron kettle. This debris was presumably on hand when the fireplace was being dismantled.

The uppermost zone of unplowed feature fill produced most of the debris from Feature 11. Artifacts from that zone include the semi-primary deposit of a section of a large *flacon* bottle and a portion of a cast iron kettle. The bottle is of blue-green glass. It is square (6cm at the base) with a wide mouth neck. Approximately 35% of the vessel is present. The kettle section represents a vessel approximately 20cm tall, not including its (missing) legs. A large “D” shaped handle or lug is present on the surviving section. The kettle was about 25-30cm in diameter.

Also from Level 1 are fragments from two faience vessels: a plate with an unidentified blue rim design, and an undecorated sherd from what was probably a small salve pot. A fragment of a clasp knife handle (the iron midsection), two unfired musket balls (15mm in diameter), a small piece of lead casting waste, two brass straight pins, and 34 nail fragments complete the sample from the Level 1 deposit.

The remainder of the pit contained fewer artifacts. These include two more unfired musket balls (15mm), a large mass of lead casting waste, a single fragment of Westerdale stoneware, and 15 nail fragments. From near the base of the feature was a single, unusual olive-green bottle fragment. The shape of the piece is suggestive of a kick-up fragment, but it has a finished edge indicating that it in fact is a rim sherd. The vessel of which it was once part had a flaring mouth, approximately 10-12 cm in diameter. Van den Bossch (2001: 349) illustrates a short, wide mouthed “utility jar” in olive green glass that he attributes to English manufacture. The vessel from Feature 11 may have been of similar design, and perhaps contained cosmetic or medicinal unguents.

FEATURE 19

The shallow, basin-shaped pit Feature 19 produced a small amount of redeposited debris. This consists of a large section of the neck and shoulder from an olive-green wine or spirits bottle, and a single sherd from a second olive green bottle. A single rim sherd from a British delft plate is also present. It is decorated in a dense blue motif. Finally, a narrow strip of cut kettle brass completes the sample. The value of the Feature 19 assemblage lies in the fact that it assists in the interpretation of the construction of the Feature 20 interior wall trench, which superimposed the pit feature. The sample from Feature 19 suggests that the bastion was occupied for at least a short time before that wall was built. The small assemblage also reflects the earliest sample from within the bastion, probably dating to the early-mid 1730s.

FEATURE 3

The upper zones of fill within the large stockade trench (exposed in Unit 4) produced a small but noteworthy sample of redeposited debris. This material was probably originally deposited into the

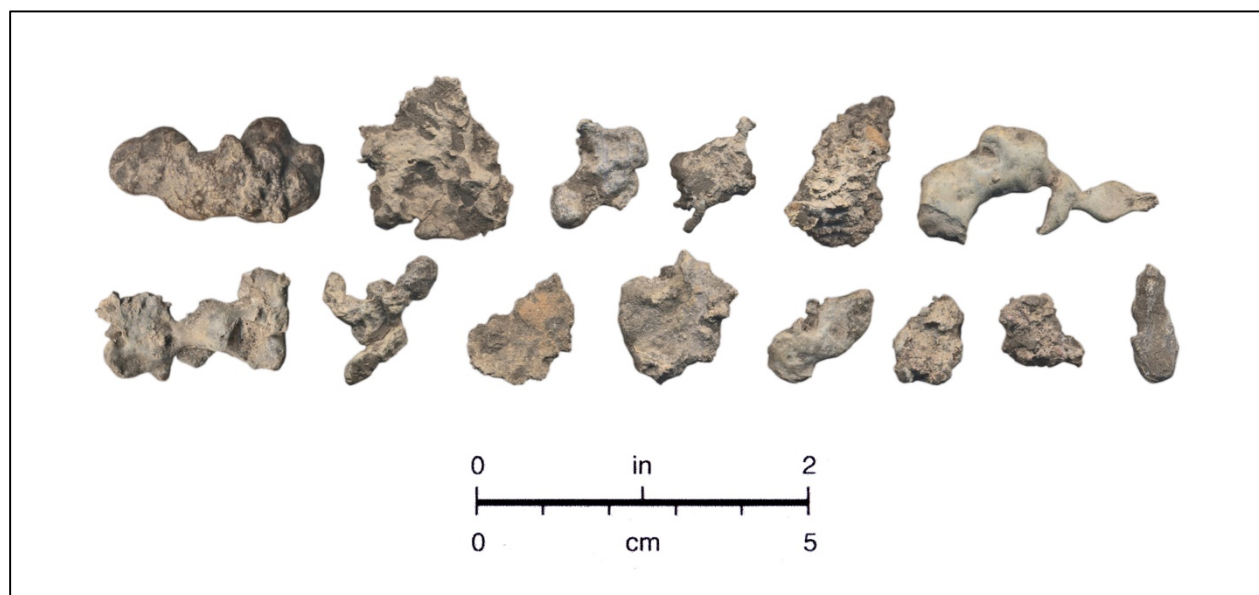


Figure 37: Lead casting waste from Feature 3

same rubbish heap or midden as the secondary deposits found in the adjacent Feature 2.

The bulk of the Feature 3, aside from animal bone, consisted of a concentration of lead items associated with the casting of ammunition. A mass of small pieces of casting sprue (47 pieces / 200 grams) has the appearance of lead spilled into loose dirt during the casting process (Figure 37). Affiliated with that debris were several lead items that may have been intended for recycling. These include two musket ball gang mold strips, a third lead strip from an unknown mold type, an unfired musket ball, and a bale seal.

The bale seal is stamped on its obverse with two rings of text surrounding three *fleurs de lis* (Figure 38). The outer ring contains the letters ___ION___DE S CHI___, and the inner ring ___STE_ E_ CONT___. The last phrase may be *visite et controle*, perhaps referring to textile inspections at the *Bureau de Viste* (Davis 2018: 34). The seal was probably affixed to a bale of goods imported to the magazine at the fort.

Feature 3 also produced a small number of domestic artifacts, including four ceramic sherds (3 tin glazed, 1 coarse earthenware), the base of a round *firole* similar to those found in Feature 1, and fragments of two olive green bottles. A French, spall type gunflint was also recovered from the feature.

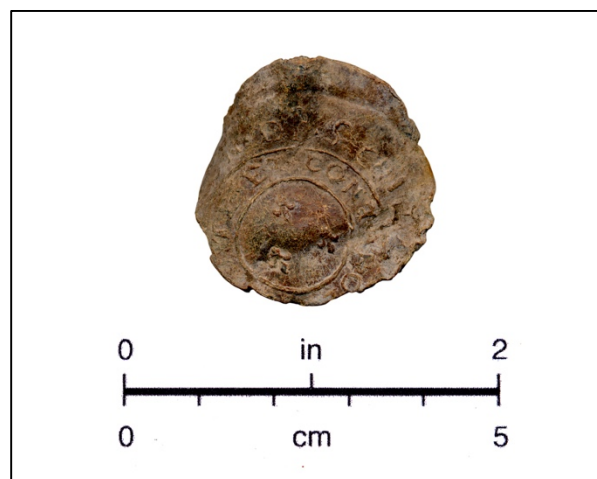


Figure 38: Lead bale seal from Feature 3.

OTHER NOTABLE ARTIFACTS

A very small-bodied sherd (15 mm) from an Indigenous-made vessel was found in the fill of the Feature 3 wall trench (Figure 39). The thin-bodied vessel may have been a small bowl, or perhaps a small bottle. The type of temper used in the fabrication of the vessel is not apparent. Both the exterior and interior surfaces are burnished. The exterior is engraved with a fine-line, crosshatched motif. The design on the small sherd is suggestive of late prehistoric and early historic Natchez or Caddoan types, such as those found in the mid-18th century Tunica cemetery at the Trudeau site (Brain 1979: 244

SUMMARY

Archaeology at the Laurens site indicates that the fort constructed in 1733 was not only the largest yet built in the Illinois Country, but also a formal one, using the basic geometry of the “Vauban” fortification plan common to French fortifications during the seventeenth and eighteenth century (e.g. Pollack 1991). Thus far, the archaeological view of this new fort comes principally in the form of a close look at its northeast bastion.

The face walls that formed the point of the bastion were approximately 15 meters (49 feet) long. The bastion wall was first constructed of posts set into a single trench that was approximately one meter deep. Behind the face walls of the bastion, the exterior wall was soon strengthened by a secondary wall, seated in a more narrow, shallower trench. This secondary wall may have simply strengthened the outer wall, or it may have supported a very narrow banquette. The two walls were very close together, separated by less than one meter.

The walls of the bastion were probably often repaired. Evidence of such repair (or partial replacement of rotten posts) was found in Unit 4, where the initial wall trench was dug out and widened. During the construction of various segments of the walls, the ends of posts were charred before setting into the ground. The maximum depth of the exterior wall trenches (about one meter) suggests that the walls of the fort were probably not much taller than three meters.

A small structure was located roughly in the center of the northeast bastion of the fort. The structure was defined by two parallel wall trenches and a series of posts. The width of the structure (east-west) was approximately four meters. The character of the trenches and posts suggest an insubstantial building. The possible remains of a limestone fireplace were found redeposited into a nearby pit (Feature 11). That pit, possibly intended for food storage, was round, shallow, and carefully constructed. Another nearby pit (Feature 2) may perhaps have served as a very shallow cistern, containing rainwater.

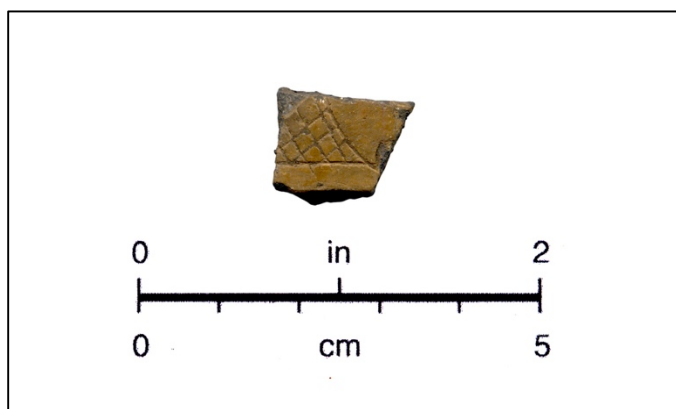


Figure 39: Indigenous pottery fragment from Feature 3.

245). A few vessels of southern Mississippi Valley origins have been found from the 18th century Guebert and Kolmer sites (Mazrim and Weedman 2023, Walthall 1992). At least one French probate inventory (1723) includes a reference to two “Natchez earthenware jugs of oil” (Belting 2003: 44).

From the scraped surface of the Feature 14 fence-line trench is a large sherd from a stoneware jar (Figure 40). Probably of French origins, it is salt-glazed on its exterior and unglazed on its interior. The vessel had a constricting neck finished with a ridged cordon rim. No other debris was found in this area (outside of the northeast bastion) and the vessel may have been used in a garden that was enclosed by short fencing.

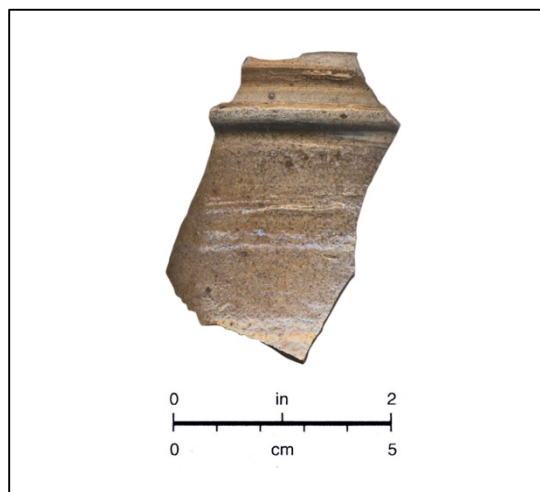


Figure 40: Stoneware jar fragment from Feature 14.

A series of long, shallow trenches found outside the limits of the northeast bastion may reflect shallow garden fencing outside of the fort, and on its *glacis*. Technically, this area should have been kept clear of vegetation for defensive purposes. But in this case, the generally quiet life of the fort may have allowed for unofficial domestic activities. Nearby, against the outside of the fort wall, was placed a shallow grave that contained the remains of a young adult - perhaps a member of the Illinois Tribe. It is unknown if that burial is part of a larger grave area.

The artifact samples from the 2011-2012 investigations at Fort de Chartres represent one of the few, and certainly the largest, feature-context samples of material culture affiliated with the halcyon days of the French regime in Illinois. In most cases, sites in Illinois with strong mid-century components also extend into the British and early American periods. This one does not, and was closed by the mid-1750s. Considered as a whole, the artifact sample from the northeast bastion of the fort represents a wide range of activities, only a few of which reflect the special function of the site.

Feature 2 produced a large secondarily-deposited sample that probably spans a number of years, while Feature 1 produced a primary deposit that reflects (at least in part) a single event. For the most part, the Feature 2 assemblage looks quite similar to those found in domestic contexts, although it contains a few artifact types not generally seen in domestic contexts. This includes several distinctive coarse earthenware dishes that are unknown in coeval domestic contexts and that may reflect purchases made by the French military intended for use inside the fort. The bale seal, probably used on a bundle of

imported cloth or clothing, would also be unusual in domestic contexts. A few military buttons and a sword fragment are the only direct expression of the military function of the facility. The paucity of gunflints and lead musket balls seems surprising, and may suggest the spatial segregation of storage and/or activities associated with arms and ammunition within the built environment of the fort.

The short-term, semi-primary Feature 1 sample contains a number of medicine-related vessels, including several narrow, long-necked *fioles* and a Dutch salve pot. Such bottles are very rare in domestic contexts in Illinois, and the presence of so many bottles, clustered in a primary deposit in Feature 1, seems noteworthy. These artifacts may suggest that a physician at the fort used the small structure in the northeast bastion. The Dutch salve pot is the first of its kind recognized in 18th century French colonial contexts in Illinois. It too may be associated with medical practice, but could also reflect common domestic activities.

Generally, the material reflection of life at the fort (at least in this bastion) seems to suggest one that was quite well appointed, with a variety of small tools and utensils, traditional pottery for the table, and some specialized food service vessels that may have been made to order for the military. Gold-highlighted faience platters, a range of food remains, and even two sets of candle wick trimmers from the same feature seem to reflect a well-supplied and comfortable domestic environment. The 2011-12 sample from Fort de Chartres is, in fact, one of our best archaeological representations of pre-1750 domestic life in this French colonial outpost. And life inside Fort de Chartres appears to have been every bit as comfortable and well-supplied as elsewhere in the colony.

REFERENCES CITED

- Belting, Natalia M.
2003 *Kaskaskia Under the French Regime*. Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale.
- Blanchette, Jean-Francois
1981 *The Role of Artifacts in the Study of Foodways in New France, 1720-1760*. History in Archaeology Number 52. National Historic Parks and Site Branch. Parks Canada. Ottawa.
- Brain, Jeffrey
1979 *Tunica Treasure*. Papers of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology 71. Harvard University, Cambridge.
- Brown, Margaret Kimball
1971 An Eighteenth Century Trade Coat. *Plains Anthropologist*. 16: 128-133.
- Brulon, Dorothee Guilleme
1998 *Histoire de la Faience Francaise: Paris & Rouen*. Charles Massin, Paris.
- Davis, Catherine
2018 Threads Across the Atlantic: Tracing the European Origins of Eighteenth Century Imported Cloth in New France Using Lead Seal Evidence from Three French Colonial Sites. Masters Thesis, Laval University, Quebec.
- Genet, Nicole
1980 *Les collections archeologiques de la Palace Royale: La Faience*. Dossier 31. Ministere des Affaires cultureless. Quebec.
- Harris, Jane E.
2000 Eighteenth-Century French Blue-Green Bottles from the Fortress of Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. *Studies in Material Culture Research*. Edited by Karlis Karklins. Society for Historical Archaeology. Anthropology Section, California University of Pennsylvania. California, Pennsylvania.
- Jelks, Edward and Carl J. Ekberg
1984 *Archaeological Explorations at the Laurens Site (11-R-125), Randolph County, Illinois*. Illinois State University Report, Normal. Submitted to the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, Springfield.
- Jelks, Edward B, Carl J. Ekberg, and Terrance J. Martin.
1989 Excavations at the Laurens Site. *Studies in Illinois Archeology No. 5*. Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, Springfield.
- Mazrim, Robert F.
2023 *The Material World of the Kaskaskia: Archaeology of the Eighteenth Century Guebert Site*. Research Series Volume 1. Foundation for Illinois Colonial and American Studies. Springfield.
- 2011 *At Home in the Illinois Country: French Domestic Site Archaeology in the Midcontinent, 1730-1800*. Studies in Archaeology Number 9. Illinois State Archaeological Survey. University of Illinois, Champaign.

Pollack, Martha D.

1991 *Military Architecture, Cartography, and the Representation of the Early Modern European City*. The Newberry Library, Chicago.

Van de Bossch, Willy

2001 *Antique Glass Bottles: Their History and Evolution (1500-1850)*. Antique Collectors Club. Suffolk.

Walthall, John A.

1992 Aboriginal Pottery and the Eighteenth-Century Illini. *Calumet and Fleur-de-Lys: Archaeology of Indian and French Contact in the Midcontinent*, edited by J. A. Walthall and T. E. Emerson. Smithsonian Institution, Washington.

Waselkov, Gregory, and John Walthall

2002 Faience Styles in North America: A Revised Classification. *Historical Archaeology* 36(1) 62-78.

