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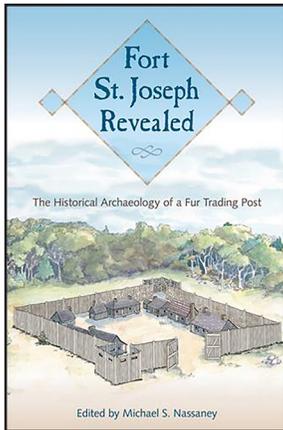
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Fort St. Joseph Revealed: The Historical Archaeology of a Fur Trading Post

Michael S. Nassaney, ed. 2019. [University Press of Florida](#). xiii+292 pp., 56 figures, 10 tables, references, index. \$90.00 (Hardback).

Reviewed by Robert Stark, Wilfrid Laurier University

The confluence of local interest, long sought site identification, excavation, field school, and public archaeology define the research and rapportage undertaken by Michael S. Nassaney and colleagues in this composite volume. The

ten chapters presented range widely in their foci and target audiences, from technical documentation to community outreach, population dynamics at the historic Fort St. Joseph fur trade fort and modern community engagement within the city of Niles, Michigan, where Fort St. Joseph is located.

While the volume has a singular narrative thread in its focus on research conducted to date at Fort St. Joseph, the bricolage of chapters contributed by colleagues, several of whom are former graduate students of Nassaney's, stand both on their own as complete documentary sources and as building blocks of the larger site documentation whole. Such composition lends the volume a markedly *festschrift* tone celebrating the research of Nassaney, the editor of this volume and author/co-author of 8/10 chapters. This is not a criticism, but rather a recognition of the instrumental role Nassaney has played over the last twenty-two years in identifying and documenting Fort St. Joseph.

The site of Fort St. Joseph itself evokes an air of mystery, being well known from historical sources but having effectively disappeared from the modern landscape. This “disappearance” spurred on a century long pursuit by local residents of the St. Joseph river region to re-identify the site. Local search efforts were eventually formalized under Support the Fort, Inc. (STF), at whose behest, in 1998, Western Michigan University (WMU) archaeologists under the direction of Nassaney were engaged to conduct an archaeological survey, which ultimately resulted in the re-identification of Fort St. Joseph and the initiation of what has to date been fourteen seasons of excavation.

The Fort St. Joseph in Niles, Michigan was initiated as a French fur trade fort on the banks of the St. Joseph River in 1691 before subsequently becoming a British outpost in 1761, and is not to be confused with the not too distant British Fort St. Joseph initiated in 1796 on St. Joseph Island, Ontario, adjacent to Michigan's Upper Peninsula. While these two forts are unrelated in a direct sense, the positioning of both within the Great Lakes region testifies to the long simmering tensions between European powers engaged in colonial expansion and the fur trade in the western Great Lakes (i.e. Huron, Michigan, Superior), a region of New France known as the *pays d'en haut*. The French fur trade comprised a network of 106 forts, trading posts, and missions across vast areas of North America, but it was the *pays d'en haut* that marked the bottleneck of control and regional power: where access to the Mississippi

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could be gained; where the Great Lakes drained into the Saint Lawrence river and the Atlantic beyond; where the French undermined supply chains to British factors at James Bay and the Hudson's Bay link to Europe by brokering trade opportunities in the Nipigon region. It is this reality that *Fort St. Joseph Revealed* illuminates.

Processes of glocalization, a portmanteau of "global" and "local" describing a global product with local adaptations, within the Euro-Indigenous contact zone defined by the environs around Fort St. Joseph abound within this volume. The re-purposing of European metal products into tinkling cones (Giordano and Nassaney in Chapter 4) and the utilization of imported fabrics for production of items such as *mitasses* (Davis in Chapter 5) reflect localized adaptations of materials crafted and utilized by European and Indigenous inhabitants of the region. The glocalization of product use presented within this volume sheds light on regional *métissage* processes of the fur trade era and more broadly on Métis ethnogenesis in the *pays d'en haut* and throughout much of what is today central-western Canada and adjacent regions of the United States of America. Within these broader areas of documentation the contributed chapters ask a number of questions, both explicitly and tacitly, about representation and who has the authority to interpret the past, particularly in terms of defining ethnicity, cultural affiliation, and the experiences of diverse groups residing at the coalface of colonial expansionist endeavours where multivocality more than a singular narrative defined the landscape.

Fort St. Joseph Revealed as an edited volume serves as a balance between site report, state of affairs, and cultural commentary. The ten chapters presented range from research on dedicated material culture topics (such as fabric in Chapter 5 and tinkling cones in Chapter 6), to cultural historical reconstructions from documentary (Chapter 2) and geospatial (Chapter 8) perspectives, to community engagement and public archaeology (Chapter 9).

Chapter 9 in particular addresses the challenges of integrating archaeology into school curricula and balancing archaeological inquiry with community engagement, effectively asking "how can archaeological sites give back to the communities in which excavations are undertaken?" In response to this question, this volume presents a well-balanced mediation on stakeholder groups and what archaeology means to modern communities. Chapter 9, in part, wrestles with how a balance can be struck between learning more about a site through continued excavation, an admittedly opaque process with limited public "wow factor," versus the desire of communities/stakeholders to undertake site reconstructions to make sites more easily interpretable to visitors and thus an increasingly viable tourism revenue source. While there are many paths that can be taken, it is clear that there is no one all-pleasing solution that can easily balance the various disparities between archaeological inquiry and public enthusiasm for archaeological sites.

In terms of audience, this volume will appeal most readily to researchers and students directly engaged with archaeological explorations of the fur trade and cognate areas. On a broader level, the commentary provided in regard to public archaeology and community engagement also provides a very useful roadmap of how archaeological projects and stakeholder communities can work together. *Fort St. Joseph Revealed* would make an excellent addition to university and museum research libraries.