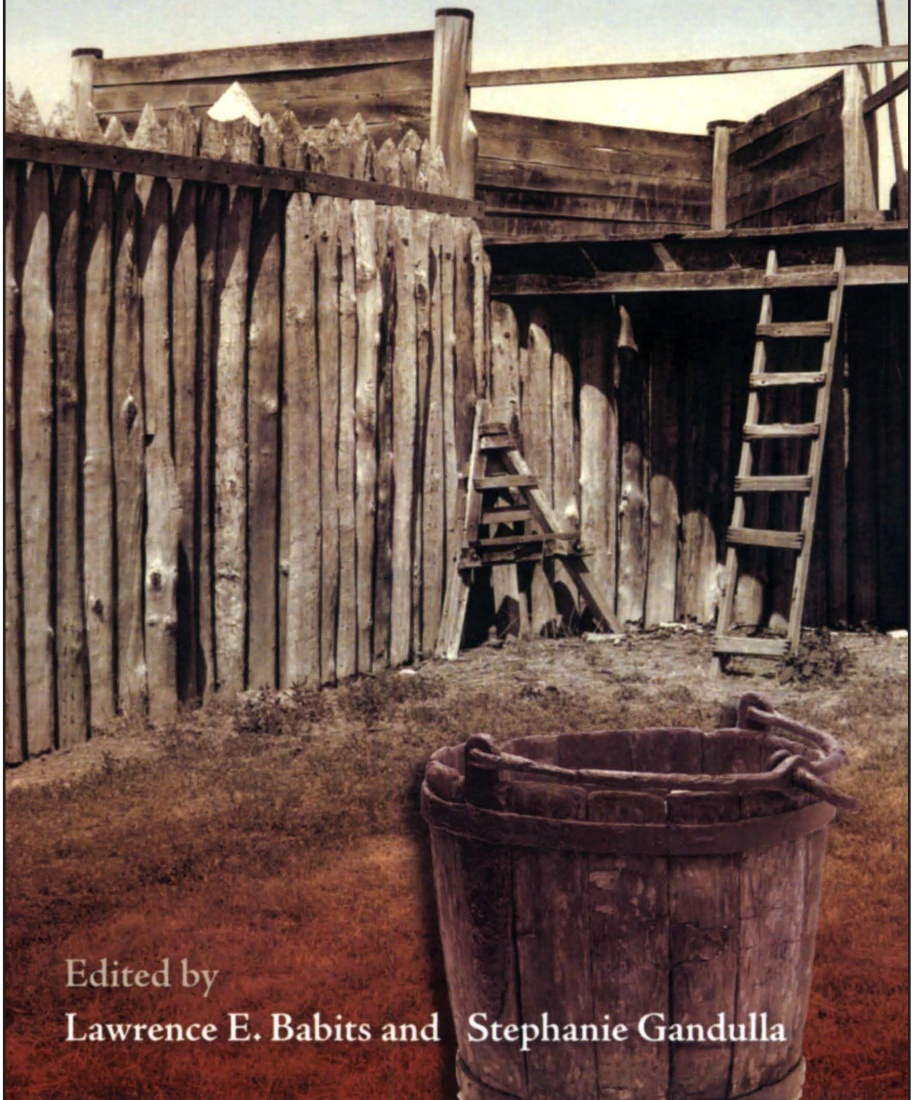


THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF French and Indian War FRONTIER FORTS



Edited by
Lawrence E. Babits and Stephanie Gandulla

"The best compilation of work about the French and Indian War to date."

—JAMES PARKER, coauthor of *Archaeology at Fort Mims: Excavation Contexts and Artifact Catalog*

"Provides images of life on the expanding American frontier of the mid-eighteenth century. A unique and significant discussion of the French and Indian War."

—CLARENCE R. GEIER, coeditor of *Huts and History: The Historical Archaeology of Military Encampment during the American Civil War*

FORT TICONDEROGA, the allegedly impenetrable star fort at the southern end of Lake Champlain, is famous for its role in the French and Indian War. From barracks to bastions, many other one-of-a-kind forts were also instrumental in staking out the early American colonial frontier. This collection of essays presents an overview of the fortifications that guarded the frontiers and borderlands between Native Americans, French settlers, and Anglo-American settlers. Civilian, provincial, or imperial, the fortifications examined here range from South Carolina's Fort Prince George to Fort Frontenac in Ontario and Fort de Chartres in Illinois.

As Europeans and colonists struggled to control the lucrative fur trade routes of the northern boundary, these strongholds were part of the first serious arms race on the continent. Contributors to this volume reveal how the French and British adapted their fortification techniques to the special needs of the North American frontier. By exploring the unique structures that guarded the borderlands, this book reveals much about the underlying economies and dynamics of the broader conflict that defined a critical episode of the American experience.

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Front: Interior view of Fort Loudoun (Pa.) and oak bucket recovered from the well. Photographs by Stephen G. Warfel.

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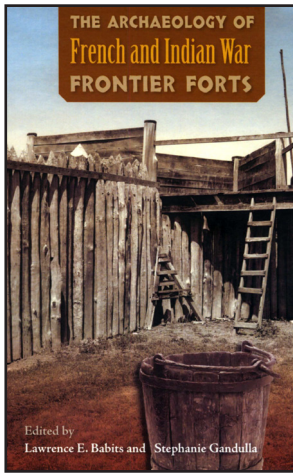
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The Archaeology of French and Indian War Frontier Forts

Edited by Lawrence E. Babits and Stephanie Gandulla. 2013. University Press of Florida, xx+303pp., 70 figures, 10 tables, glossary, references. \$79.95 (Cloth).

Reviewed by Vergil E. Noble, National Park Service, Midwest Archeological Center, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Among the earliest investigations in the emerging field of historical archaeology were J. C. Harrington's excavations performed in 1952 for the National Park Service at Fort Necessity, the site in southwestern Pennsylvania of an early battle (July 3, 1754) in the French and Indian War that ended with the surrender of British forces posted

there under the command of Col. George Washington. Harrington's pioneering work was undertaken to reveal the basic configuration and character of the short-lived, poorly documented outpost in order to inform its eventual reconstruction for heritage tourism. Now, more than sixty years later, with publication of *The Archaeology of French and Indian War Frontier Forts*, Lawrence E. Babits and Stephanie Gandulla have compiled a book that features archaeological studies conducted at nearly a dozen fortifications in North America that, to one extent or another, figured in the conflict.

The book begins with a chronology of the French and Indian War (1750–1765) and a brief introduction by co-editor Babits, which tells the reader something of previous scholarship on the subject and foreshadows the chapters that are to follow. We are then offered two historical chapters that provide much-needed context for the subsequent archaeological studies of various frontier forts. The first, *Clash of Empires* by R. Scott Stephenson, is a useful if necessarily cursory overview of the French and Indian War. This is particularly valuable for readers who are not familiar with this pre-Revolutionary conflict that was part of what some historians have called the first true “world war,” since the principals fought on both sides of the Atlantic during this period.

The second chapter, *Forts on the Frontier* by James L. Hart, is a very interesting explanation of military engineering principles that went into the design of fortifications in both Europe and North America. Here we learn the distinction between academic ideals and the irregularities in construction that obtained from local conditions and needs. As we see from the ensuing chapters, almost all of the fortifications considered in this volume were irregular, and archaeology in many cases has proved critical in determining how they departed from the classic designs of Vauban and others.

The editors then take the reader on a tour of 11 fortifications beginning in the Southeast, then moving north into Virginia, continuing on to Pennsylvania and New York, into the Great Lakes region, and finally to the Mississippi River Valley of southern Illinois. All of the forts examined have been subject to archaeological investigations to greater or lesser degrees. Some of the chapters report on relatively recent excavations, whereas others

employ data obtained from studies done decades ago. Most of the investigations were intermittent or of short duration, focusing on narrow questions of fort layout, but some like Fort Michilimackinac, where digs have been conducted every summer since 1959, have hosted more comprehensive, long-term excavation programs. Given these differences, it is not surprising that the state of archaeological knowledge reported among the studies is highly variable.

The first fort to be taken up, by contributor Marshall W. Williams, is a reworking of an earlier report on the excavations at **Fort Prince George** (1753–1768) in South Carolina. Williams was a crew member on the 1967–1968 project conducted there, and provides a descriptive summary of the interior buildings and defensive works revealed archaeologically in the two field seasons. We then move on to Carl Kuttruff's study of **Fort Loudon**, Tennessee, which was first investigated under the WPA in 1936, later in the mid-1950s and early 1960s, and finally in the mid-1970s before impoundment of the Little Tennessee River (and inundation of the fort site) by the TVA. Using a logical modification of Stanley South's artifact classification scheme, Kuttruff summarizes a detailed analysis of the more than 200,000 artifacts recovered at the fort and compares Loudon's disposal patterns with South's "Frontier Artifact Pattern". The last of the southeastern forts to be considered, North Carolina's **Fort Dobbs** (1756–1760), is reported by co-editor Babits, who makes use of some 40 years' worth of historical, archaeological, and interpretive investigations. Following a thorough summary of the archaeological evidence for the defensive works and interior features, Babits concludes with a conjectural rendering of what Fort Dobbs would have looked like during the French and Indian War.

Shifting to forts in Virginia, Robert L. Jolley presents a chapter on **Fort Loudon** (*the second of three fortifications with that name considered in this volume*). Commanded by George Washington from 1756 to 1758, the post saw only occasional use after the 1760s and was probably totally abandoned by the 1770s—certainly by the early nineteenth century. Using artifact data derived largely from three test trenches, Jolley also used a modification of South's "Frontier Artifact Pattern" classification scheme to compare Fort Loudon, Virginia, with four contemporary fortifications. He argues that discernible differences in artifact patterning could reflect the effects of status differences among the occupants, and perhaps also the fact that the subject fort was situated near a town. Next, Kim A. McBride considers the second **Fort Vause**, which was built in southwestern Virginia in 1756 and was probably abandoned in 1758. Strategically located along a major transportation route, Vause's fort served to guard against Indian raids. Although initial excavations took place there in 1968, the present chapter focuses on limited investigations conducted by the author and W. Stephen McBride in 2005 and 2006. Shovel testing, trenching, and a few test units revealed the well-preserved remains of three of the fort's four earthen bastions, though no evidence was recovered for curtain walls connecting the bastions. According to McBride, the earthen construction method used here is unlike any other fort built by the Virginia Regiment, and may reflect the need for haste in completing the fortification and the desire to have it stand extra strong. The last outpost to be considered in this geographical area,

Edwards's Fort, falls in modern-day West Virginia. This chapter, submitted by W. Stephen McBride, describes a private, rather than governmental, fort that protected neighboring settlers and supply lines passing through the region. Archaeological analysis focuses on results from the author's own investigations of 2001 and 2004, which included shovel testing, metal detecting, test-unit excavation, and backhoe trenching. Features discovered included a section of stockade curtain, the cellar and foundation of Joseph Edwards's house, several other cellars, and three oval pits interpreted as the remains of soldier huts. The statistical study of artifacts recovered indicates that refuse deposits show noticeable differences between the material culture of militia and civilians reflecting differences in status and sources of supply.

Farther to the north, Stephen G. Warfel reports on **Fort Loudon** (1756–1765), Pennsylvania, located in the south central part of that state. Built to protect settlers from Indian raids, the outpost also served as a supply depot for an expeditionary force that drove the French out of western Pennsylvania. First excavated in 1977, later investigations from 1980 through 1987 form the basis for Warfel's summary of major features disclosed by fieldwork at the site. Nearly total exposure of the palisade revealed the basic configuration of the fort, including postmolds for three corner bastions. Further, interior work indicated the presence of the officers' quarters, barracks, a well, and several other features. These efforts informed the subsequent reconstruction of this third Fort Loudon reviewed in the volume. The next chapter, by the late Charles L. Fisher and Paul R. Huey, focuses on the forts at Crown Point, New York, on Lake Champlain—particularly the earlier French fort, **Fort Frédéric**. This chapter presents an interesting analysis of the fort based on historical documentation, but only once mentions archaeological research at the site in passing, with reference to the discovery of a trench connecting the main fort to newer works at its rear.

The Great Lakes region is represented by chapters on two fortifications, **Fort Frontenac** on the northeastern shore of Lake Ontario near Kingston, Ontario, and Fort Michilimackinac at the northern tip of Michigan's Lower Peninsula overlooking the Straits of Mackinac. Susan M. Bazley discusses Frontenac with frequent reference to archaeological investigations carried out over the past 25 years, enlightening the reader about the fort's construction and subsequent modifications, as well as its role in the French fur trade from the last quarter of the 17th century until the French and Indian War. Other than two pieces of solid cannon shot that may derive from the British siege of 1758, however, there is little direct archaeological evidence of events related to that conflict. **Fort Michilimackinac**, established as a fur-trading post by the French in 1715, figured only tangentially in the French and Indian War, having sent militia and allied warriors to help defend French interests in the Ohio Country, the St. Lawrence Valley, and elsewhere in the East. In this chapter, Lynn L. M. Evans deals primarily with archaeological evidence for structural evolution of the post, particularly an expansion that evidentially occurred in the 1730s. Considerable attention is also paid to two important maps of the post: a 1749 map drawn by a visiting French engineer and a 1765 map documenting the post essentially as it was received by the British after the war's conclusion.

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The last fort considered in this volume, *Fort de Chartres* on the Mississippi River below modern-day St Louis in southern Illinois, is also the most remote from the centers of conflict. The fact that this stone fortification was completed at the onset of the French and Indian War in 1754 is only coincidental, as it is the third Fort de Chartres to have been built in the immediate area—the first in 1719. As with Michilimackinac, Fort de Chartres saw no direct action in the war, but men were sent east to bolster defenses at French holdings elsewhere. In this chapter, David J. Keene examines construction of the fort walls and also performs an artifact frequency analysis comparing data derived here with data from Fort Michilimackinac and Fort Ouiatenon in Indiana. Differences are attributed to the fact that de Chartres was not a residential fur-trading establishment, but instead served as a social and economic center for the French colonies of the Illinois Country.

The book ends with a chapter by Babits that recapitulates highlights of each chapter before it and examines similarities and differences among the forts considered. The conclusion also includes an original comparative analysis of data from several of the French and Indian War forts shedding further light on South's "Frontier Artifact Pattern."

Inspired by a symposium held at the 2007 Society for Historical Archaeology meetings in Williamsburg, Virginia, this edited volume fills a large gap in the archeological literature related to the French and Indian War. Those chapters that deal principally with artifact-frequency analysis may provide comparative data for scholars working elsewhere, and the chapters that employ South's classification will demonstrate the utility of modifying the scheme to fit site-specific conditions. For the most part, feature descriptions in many of the chapters are unique to the forts they consider, though some, like the presumed soldier's huts at Edwards's Fort, may have broader implications for the interpretation of finds at other sites. Although most of the book's chapters consider sites well outside the heartland of the midcontinent, even the peripheral sites have potential relevance for archaeologist working in the region of *MCJA*'s immediate focus. *The Archaeology of French and Indian War Frontier Forts* should be of interest to anyone dealing with sites of the period and, more generally, with forts of any age. Babits and Gandulla are to be commended for assembling a fine collection of papers that shed light on a theme too long left obscured in the archaeological literature.

Book Review

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