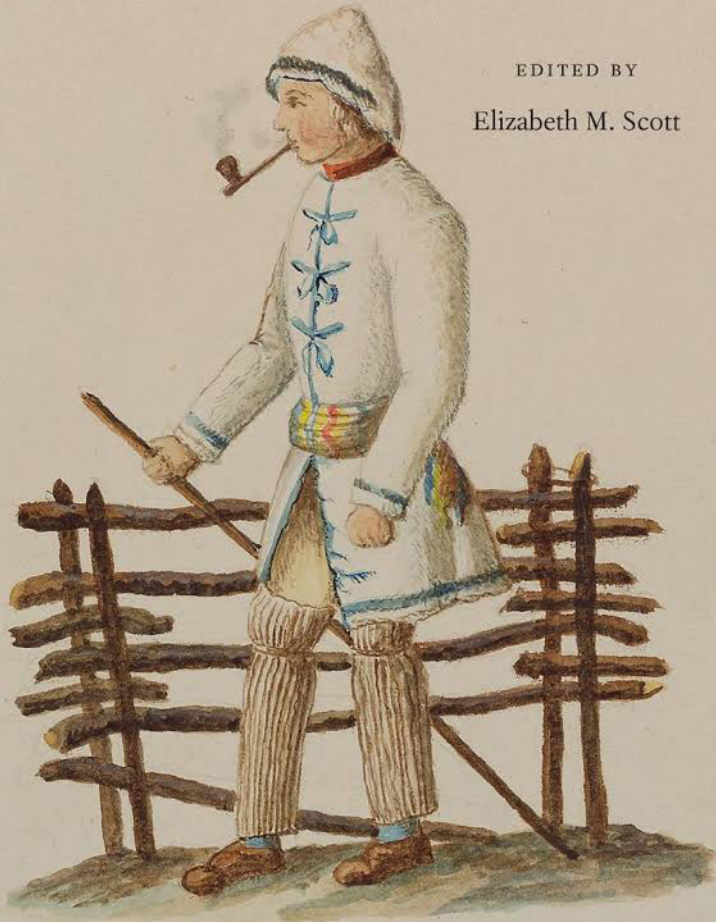


ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES
ON THE FRENCH IN THE
NEW WORLD

EDITED BY

Elizabeth M. Scott



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"This book has essentially created a new field of study with a surprising range of insights on the ethnicity, class, gender, and foodways of French speakers of European and African descent adapting to life under British, Spanish, or American political regimes."—**GREGORY A. WASELKOV**, author of *A Conquering Spirit: Fort Mims and the Redstick War of 1813–1814*

"Significant and intriguing. Strengthens the view that French colonists and their descendants are an important part of American heritage and that the worlds they created are significant to our understanding of modern life."—**JOHN A. WALTHALL**, editor of *French Colonial Archaeology: The Illinois Country and the Western Great Lakes*

CORRECTING THE NOTION that French influence in the Americas was confined mostly to Québec and New Orleans, this collection reveals a wide range of vibrant French-speaking communities both during and long after the end of French colonial rule. This volume highlights the complexity of Francophone societies, the persistence of their cultural traditions, and the innovative means they employed to cope with the cultural and environmental demands of living in the New World.

Analyzing artifacts including clay pipes, colonoware, and food remains alongside a rich body of historical records, contributors focus on how French descendants impacted North America, the Caribbean, and South America even after 1763. Taken together, the essays argue that communities do not need to be located in French colonies or contain French artifacts to be considered Francophone, and they show that many Francophone groups were composed of a mix of ethnic French, Métis, Native Americans, and African Americans. The contributors emphasize the important roles that French colonists and their descendants have played in New World histories.

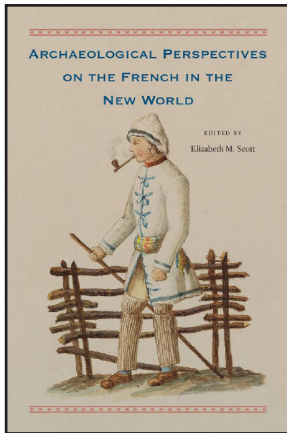
ELIZABETH M. SCOTT, former associate professor of anthropology at Illinois State University, is the editor of *Those of Little Note: Gender, Race, and Class in Historical Archaeology*.

Front: Ein Canadischer Bauer (A Canadian Farmer) by Captain Friedrich Konstantin von Germann, 1778. Watercolor. By permission of the Print Collection, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.
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Archaeological Perspectives on the French in the New World

Elizabeth M. Scott, editor. [University of Florida Press](#). 2017. xii+280 pp., 48 figures, 6 tables, glossary, index, references. \$89.95 (hardcover).

Reviewed by Jay Gitlin, Department of History, Yale University.

I am happy to tell other historians that this book contains fresh perspectives on the subject of the French in the New World well worth exploring. The marvelous introduction to this excellent edited volume made it immediately clear that historians and archaeologists are working two sides of

the same street, and we can and should proceed together. Editor Elizabeth Scott begins the book with a statement I hardly endorse:

“For many who live in the United States, the importance of the French colonial past to their sense of cultural identity goes largely unacknowledged and certainly unappreciated. Anglo-centric histories pervade the national consciousness, incorporating other Euro-American, Native American, and African pasts only as exotic sidebars...what predominates in the national narrative are the myths and stereotypes.” (p. 1)

The essays in this volume cover a broad range of places and spaces in the “French” New World (in quotes because the authors consistently include Native Americans and Africans in their discussions): French Azilum in Pennsylvania; Natchitoches, Louisiana; two on the Illinois Country and the *pays d’en haut*; three on the greater French Caribbean (Guiana, St. Croix, and the West Indies); the Acadian Diaspora; and the liminal world of the voyageurs. Although three of the authors teach in Québec, that place is not covered in the book.

The essays are easy to navigate, in part, because of the consistent format of each chapter, beginning with a historical introduction; proceeding to an analysis of various sites, assemblages, and artifacts; and ending with a conclusion that addresses the impact of findings on our understanding of the various places, social relations, and identities. Each chapter also provides a kind of “historiographical” review of past archaeological efforts, and many of the chapters address theoretical issues. In addition, each essay includes an extensive and useful bibliography, and the small maps throughout the book are clear and perfect for classroom use.

The chapter which prompted me to review the book, “They Are Fit to Eat the Divil And Smoak His Mother”: Labor, Leisure, Tobacco Pipes, and Smoking Customs among French Canadian Voyageurs during the Fur Trade Era” by Rob Mann, was well worth the effort, and I will add it to the syllabus of my class on French North America. The editor summarizes this chapter perfectly as an exploration of “how French and Métis voyageurs maintained control over their labor and time, especially after the British took control of the Canadian fur trade” (p. 13). Noting that “a ‘pipe’ referred to both the distance covered between rest stops, when the voyageurs could take the time to fill and light a new pipe, and the rest stops themselves,” (p. 64), Mann provides the perfect blend of history and archaeology in his essay, touching on labor relations, social history and geography, and material

culture. His contribution has broad implications for the study of French North America, the fur trade, and working-class life in general. Noting the correlation between mobility and identity for the voyageurs, Mann includes a quotation from Johann Georg Kohl in 1850, who asked a voyageur "*Où je reste?*" The voyageur replied "*Je reste partout,*" and then stated that his father and grandfather had been voyageurs and had died "*en voyage.*" He expected the same fate, "*et un autre Chicot prendra ma place*" (p. 58).

Steven R. Pendery's essay on the "Archaeological Dimensions of the Acadian Diaspora" unpacks the application of the term "diaspora" and combines archeological insights, archival sources, and *lieux de mémoire* in an essay that reaches as far as the Acadian people. Emphasizing, as many of the authors in the book do, persistence and the maintenance of core values and identity, Pendery argues that cultural traits such as a communal work ethic and a dependence on extended kinship networks allowed the Acadians to create "multiple New Acadias across the Atlantic World," (p. 52) thus subverting the intentions of the British in the *Grand Dérangement* of 1755.

Michael S. Nassaney and Terrance J. Martin's essay on Fort St. Joseph in present-day southwest Michigan and Maureen Costura's chapter on French Azilum both use food to discuss cultural adaptation and the impact of frontier living. Nassaney and Martin conclude that the French, "in contrast to Native groups," "often chose to relinquish their former dietary practices," (p. 102). In this, French settlements often differed from English settlements—not due to some "essentialized" traits, but rather due to the circumstances of French and Native interactions. Their chapter also includes an absolutely fascinating discussion of "bones, marrow, and other fatty substances" (p. 96). By way of contrast, Costura finds that the lack of "first-choice foods" such as beef was probably a reason, even if not the primary reason, for the collapse of Azilum. Her essay includes an equally fascinating discussion of "*terroir*-based identities" (p. 150), French gastronomy, and the status of pork and *saucisson*.

Central to all the essays in the book is an effort to uncover the impact of colonial power on memory in creating what Erin N. Whitson describes as the "landscapes of forgetting (and the materiality of enslavement)" (chapter 5, p. 112). Whitson's essay on the Janis-Ziegler house in Ste. Genevieve and the following chapters by Morgan and MacDonald (chapter 7), Rousselle and Auger (chapter 8), and Kelly (chapter 9), covering Marie-Thérèse Coincoin's plantation in northwest Louisiana, the Loyola plantation on the island of Cayenne in Guiana, and sugar plantations in the French West Indies respectively, contain important discussions of "creolization" as the authors tease out distinctions between terms and pots. I think the essays do an admirable job of insisting upon the agency of all groups. As Morgan and MacDonald state, "in our view, 'original' cultures are not passively 'lost' over time (p. 156). Though I mostly agree with this position, we should, perhaps, ask ourselves: even if change can carry older meanings forward in time, is it possible that nothing is ever lost? Canadian geographer Jean Moriset once said quoting filmmaker André Gladu, "*Long live No-Name America! I'm not Speak French anymore, baby, but I play it.*" (Jean Moriset, "An America That Knows No Name" in Dean R. Louder and Eric Waddell, eds., *French America* [Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1983], p. 342) I have quoted this before but felt

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compelled to do so again. The possibility of loss only makes these excavations and interventions more urgent.

The volume's final essay, by Meredith D. Hardy, on the French era in St. Croix, was a revelation for the truly "messy" history of colonization it reveals. Hardy reminds us that we not only need to see the intersections of many cultures, we need to spend more time on the interactions between all colonial enterprises, large and small.

This edited volume succeeds on many levels—as a reference to past work, as a presentation of exciting new work in archaeology, and as a bridge between disciplines. Above all, the authors remind us that French, Native, and African peoples persisted. As Scott tells us, "When Lafayette toured the twenty-four American states in 1824–1825, every state had French or French-descended residents who were eager to renew or make acquaintances with him" (p. 16).