

Upper Fort Garry Field School Excavation 2014

Laura M. Hastings

University of Manitoba

Keywords: excavation, fur trade; Manitoban archaeology; history; Hudson's Bay Company; heritage; conservation; recovery; artifact identification; stratigraphy

Abstract

Continuing the excavation project of Upper Fort Garry begun in 1972, the Field School Excavation of 2014 determined the location of the southern and western wall foundations of the fort. Through meticulous site excavation, and employing archaeological methods such as trowel excavation, field school participants uncovered numerous artifacts from the era when the fort was in use, and aided in information gathering vital to the completion of Upper Fort Garry Heritage Provincial Park.

Introduction

The 2014 excavation of Bonnycastle Park (DILg-21) can be seen as further exploration into the activities of the Hudson's Bay Company as well as into the history of the Red River Settlement (modern-day Winnipeg, Manitoba), as begun in 1972 by J. V. Chism and continued by P. J. Priess, M. Kelly and G. Monks from 1978 to 1983 (Monks 1982:47). It can also be viewed as complimentary and beneficial to the creation of the Upper Fort Garry Heritage Provincial Park, which will include artifact displays and maps of Upper Fort Garry (Friends of Upper Fort Garry 2013).

Site History

Upper Fort Garry was constructed in 1835 by the British, with an extension of the northern part of the fort occurring in 1852 (Monks 1982:46). In 1846 the threat of war

between Britain and the United States was felt by those living in the Red River Settlement (Morrison 1970:167). Over time, the British Secretary of War, W. E. Gladstone, agreed to send troops to the Red River Settlement, of which half went to Upper Fort Garry and the other half to Lower Fort Garry by October 1846 (Morrison 1970:168). Papers from Major Crofton, the officer selected to command the Sixth Regiment of Foot, describe life at Upper Fort Garry. Life for the Regiment consisted of parade in the morning, inspection of the barracks, roll call, and leisure time (Morrison 1970:171). The swift movement of troops into the Red River Settlement by the British government turned out to be unnecessary, for by 1848 the threat of war subsided (Morrison 1970:173). The fort then became the seat of Louis Riel's Provisional Government in 1869 (Seaman 1920:53). In November 1869 the Hudson's Bay Company flag was hauled down and replaced with a Fleur-de-Lis and

shamrock design to signify John Bruce and Louis Riel's Provisional Government (Seaman 1920:55). Seaman (1920:55) states that by December 1869 Louis Riel was appointed President of the Provisional Government, however the Provisional Government lasted only until 1870 when Col. Wolseley and the regiment of the 60th Rifles entered the fort at the direction of the British Crown, forcing Riel and his constituents to flee (Government of Canada n.d.:52). By 1882 the fort had been demolished, except for the stone gateway in the north wall, as to make way for the streetcar system and the straightening of Main Street (Monks 1982:46). Several buildings had been constructed in the area of present day Bonnycastle Park by 1895, along with a Winnipeg Electric Streetcar Company car barn, located just outside of where the fort's west wall had been (Monks 1982:46). In 1897 the Hudson's Bay Company presented the north stone gateway to the City of Winnipeg (Seaman 1920:82). By 1960 the street car rails were removed and the park was landscaped heavily, involving the introduction of fill from unknown sources (Monks 1982:46).

Aims and Purpose

The aim of the excavation of selected areas within Bonnycastle Park (DILg-21) was to clearly identify the location of the south and west Upper Fort Garry wall foundations. By continuing the work conducted by the field schools from 1981-1983 as run by Dr. G. Monks and staff from the University of Manitoba, the 2014 field school was to determine at what depth below surface the fill level created by landscaping Bonnycastle Park ceased and fur trade era soil levels began. Additionally,

the creation of a heritage park in the location of the northern section of Upper Fort Garry would benefit from precise locations of the south and west walls of the southern area of the fort.

Field Procedures

The excavation site, DILg-21, was initially broken up into three areas, with a fourth area added in the last two weeks of the field school session. These areas were designated by number, with individual units within these areas (*see Figure 1*). Individual units were randomly assigned to each field school participant by Dr. R. ten Bruggencate, whereby I was assigned to unit N86 E186 in Area 3, followed by an additional unit, N76.5 E175 in Area 1, near the end of the field school session. The unit designation was derived from an arbitrary datum point of N100 E100, as determined during the 1981 field season by Dr. G. Monks by using a City of Winnipeg Special Survey marker located on the south side of Assiniboine Avenue at Fort Street (Monks 1982:47). Units had been given datum markers prior to the field school students' arrival, as pegged in place and measured for elevation by Dr. G. Monks and Mr. K. Samuel. Initially the students marked out trenches with measuring tape and string in each area as determined by these datum markers, one in Area 1 which was one meter by two meters, two in Area 2, both one meter by three meters, and one in Area 3 which was one meter by five meters. Each trench area was then measured into one meter by one meter units. Snow fencing was erected to cordon the areas off from the rest of Bonnycastle Park, and areas for back dirt were determined. Photos were taken of each unit prior to breaking ground.

Depths were determined by using a string attached to the datum marker at ten centimeters below the datum marker's top, along with a line level and measuring tape. The surface level of each unit was determined via this method prior to excavation in order to determine the level depth below surface as well as depth below datum. Digging commenced with shovels for Areas 1 to 3, with screening not being done for the fill layer, however items were collected into a paper bag as they were found. Once the fill layer was excavated, excavation methods were changed to using trowels and excavating levels in five centimeter depths one quadrant at a time. This procedure was used in order to preserve three-point provenience for items found, with five centimeter arbitrary levels used due to an unknown soil stratigraphy. Dirt from each quadrant was screened separately via a 1/4" screen suspended by a wood tripod. Items found in situ were mapped onto Level Summary Record forms, then removed if they did not protrude into the level below, and collected in paper bags according to level and quadrant. Items found in screens were bagged with items found in situ for that level, however they were unable to be mapped onto the Level Summary record due to being out of context.

Toward the end of the field school session, additional areas and units were added to the site. Area 4 was roughly marked by Dr. R. ten Bruggencate using spray paint, with a trench one meter by two meters pegged in and then divided into one meter by one meter units. Additional units were also added to Areas 1 and 3 using spray paint. These units were then excavated via backhoe by workers from the Upper Fort Garry Park site on the

north side of Assiniboine Avenue, as close to the bottom of the fill level as possible. Following backhoe excavation, field school students attempted to straighten the sides of the new units and remove loose fill with shovels. After the cleanup of these new areas was complete, individual units were marked in using measuring tape and string. Units were covered at the end of each day with plywood and plastic to prevent rain water from entering the units as well as to prevent accidents from occurring when the field school was not on site.

Unit 1: N86 E186

Unit N86 E186 was situated in what was designated as Area 3 (*see Figure 1*). The designation of N86 E186 was derived from an arbitrary datum point of N100 E100 as determined by Dr. G. Monks in 1981 (Monks 1982:47). Unit N86 E186 had a datum point of 232.63 meters above sea level, as measured by Dr. G. Monks and Mr. K. Samuel. The surface of the unit was 32.5 centimeters DBD (depth below the datum point), giving the surface an elevation of 232.305 meters above sea level. The location of unit N86 E186 was thought by Dr. G. Monks to be within the south west warehouse of Upper Fort Garry. After excavation of unit N86 E186 was complete, a total of seven levels had been excavated, to a final DBD of 122.5 centimeters, 90 centimeters below the surface, at an elevation of 231.73 meters above sea level.

Level 1

Level 1 (32.5 centimeters to 92.5 centimeters DBD, 0 centimeters to 60 centimeters Depth Below Surface [DBS]) of N86 E186 had a ground cover of sparse

grass covered with pine needles from the pine tree next to the area. Level 1, the fill layer, was a mixture of soil compositions consisting of Munsell Colors 5Y 4/2 (Olive Gray), 2.5Y 5/1 (Gray) and 2.5Y 5/3 (Light Olive Brown) (Munsell 2000). The stratigraphic profiles (see Figures 6 and 7) from Unit N86 E186 show a clear definition between the fill layer and Level 2. Level 1 revealed many modern bricks as well as pieces of limestone with one rough surface and one milled surface, which Dr. G. Monks indicated is of modern origin as well. Excavation of Level 1 was conducted using a shovel, and the soil from this level was not screened.

Level 2

Level 2 (92.5 centimeters to 97.5 centimeters DBD, 60 centimeters to 65 centimeters DBS) soil consisted of mainly 2.5Y 2.5/1 (Black) (Munsell 2000). This was a clear distinction from the soil above, which Dr. R. ten Bruggencate determined to be the beginning of the fur trade era level. Excavation of Level 2 was conducted in quadrants by trowel to a depth of five centimeters, after which the soil from each quadrant was screened separately using 1.4" screen. Ceramic fragments were found within this level, notably a piece of blue transfer in the northeast quadrant with an unidentifiable pattern. A shard of bone was also found in this level, which was determined by Dr. G. Monks to be a piece of mammal long bone.

Level 3

Level 3 (97.5 centimeters to 102.5 centimeters DBD, 65 centimeters to 70 centimeters DBS) had soil that consisted of

mainly 10YR 3/1 (Very Dark Gray) (Munsell 2000). Level 3 was also excavated in the same manner as Level 2. The artifacts found in this level were mainly iron nails, ceramic, and various types of glass. Level 3 also contained a railway spike, quite rusted and later unidentifiable in the lab as to its manufacturer. Many of the ceramic fragments were printed with blue or black transfer, however the patterns were unable to be identified in the lab. Two shards of bone were determined by Dr. G. Monks as mammal long bone fragments.

Level 4

Level 4 (102.5 centimeters to 107.5 centimeters DBD, 70 centimeters to 75 centimeters DBS) was excavated in the same manner as Levels 2 and 3. The soil in this level was the same as in Level 3, Munsell Color 10YR 3/1 (Very Dark Gray) (Munsell 2000). Level 4 included many ceramic fragments, iron nails, bottle glass, as well as a piece of clay pipe stem and a metal ammunition ball, determined by Dr. G. Monks to be grapeshot. An iron stake was found, but unable to be removed as it went into the next level (Level 5).

Level 5

Level 5 (107.5 centimeters to 112.5 centimeters DBD, 75 centimeters to 80 centimeters DBS) consisted of the same soil as Levels 3 and 4, 10YR 3/1 (Very Dark Gray) (Munsell 2000). This level had significantly fewer artifacts, with just two iron nails, one shard of glass and one iron stake from Level 4 protruding into the next level.

Level 6

Level 6 (112.5 centimeters to 117.5 centimeters DBD, 80 centimeters to 85 centimeters DBS) consisted of the same soil as Levels 3 to 5, 10YR 3/1 (Very Dark Gray) (Munsell 2000). The iron stake from Levels 4 and 5 was unable to be removed in this level, as it extended deeper into the soil of Level 7. No other artifacts were found in this level.

Level 7

Level 7 (117.5 centimeters to 122.5 centimeters DBD, 85 to 90 centimeters DBS) consisted of the same soil as Levels 3 to 6, 10 YR 3/1 (Very Dark Gray) (Munsell 2000). Level 7 was excavated in the southwest and southeast quadrants only. No artifacts were found in this level other than the iron stake from Levels 4 through 6. The iron stake was unable to be removed in this level. Due to the lack of artifacts found, Dr. R. ten Bruggencate determined this unit was sterile, other than the iron stake that appeared to be of modern origin, and it was decided this unit would be closed.

Artifacts Recovered

A piece of blue transfer recovered from the southwest quadrant of Level 4 was identified to be of the Spode-Copeland pattern 'Violet' (Sussman 1979). The clay pipe stem fragment from the southeast quadrant of Level 4 was too small for the manufacturer to be determined, however it is similar to one type of clay pipe that was found in the 1981 excavation led by Dr. G. Monks (Monks 1982:58).

A piece of light aqua bottle glass with

the letters WINN printed on the base, found in the northeast quadrant of Level 4, was able to be identified as a beverage bottle manufactured by Blackwoods Winnipeg (Chopping 1978:104). The direction of the lettering and the estimated circumference of the container enabled the bottle to be determined as MWIN BA14, which was a 2 piece post mold manufactured bottle, with a container amount of 284.1 ml (Chopping 1978:104). Blackwoods Winnipeg operated from 1882 to 1921, which manufactured nonalcoholic beverages including Orange Crush, 7-Up, and Pepsi-Cola among others (Stock 1978:20).

Level 4 screening revealed a sherd of refined earthenware with yellow glaze. Lab comparisons between units were able to show that this piece of ceramic was found in additional units, notably in N86 E 188 Level 2 (59.5 centimeters to 64.5 centimeters DBS), where two fragments were found in the northeast and southeast quadrants respectively. An additional four fragments were found in N86 E189 Level 1 (63 centimeters to 73 centimeters DBS), no quadrant was assigned as all fragments from N86 E189 were found in the fill level. Due to the generic glaze and lack of pattern on all fragments, a manufacturer was unable to be identified.

Level 4 screening also revealed a fragment of white ceramic with a purple design (*see Figures 2 and 3*). Lab comparisons were able to match this fragment with a fragment from Area 2A Level 1 (0 centimeters to 86 centimeters DBS). Due to the small design, a manufacturer was unable to be identified.

Stratigraphy and Disturbances N86 E186

Stratigraphy throughout the unit was fairly consistent, with the fill level (0 centimeters to 60 centimeters DBS) being a consistent Munsell Color 5Y 4/2 and 2.5Y 5/3 (Munsell 2000). The section of the fill level that was soil color 2.5Y 5/3 was in a rather uniform square in the southeast corner of the unit. The stark change in soil composition and color at 60 centimeters below surface was a clear indication that the fill was placed on top of a different soil matrix, assumed to be the ground surface of the fur trade era. Within the fill level there were many disturbances from tree roots, which made shoveling difficult at times. Prior to excavation MTS assessed the site for cables and underground telephone wires, one of which was to run in a north south direction on the west edge of unit N86 E186; this cable was not encountered within the unit itself.

Unit N76.5 E175

Unit N76.5 E175 was located in Area 1 (See Figure 1). The elevation of the datum point was 232.97 meters above sea level. The surface of the unit was 46 centimeters below datum, giving the surface an elevation of 232.51 meters above sea level. Lab study revealed the unit to be located either within the west wall or just outside of the west wall. Time did not permit a full excavation of non-sterile layers, and was excavated only to a depth below surface of 95 centimeters, or 232.02 meters above sea level (141 centimeters DBD).

Level 1

Level 1 (46 centimeters to 121 centimeters DBD, 0 centimeters to 75 centimeters DBS) was excavated via backhoe, with the loose dirt and ragged sides of the unit being removed with a shovel. This method did not allow for collection of fill level objects. Level 1 consisted of Munsell Color soils 10YR 2/1 (Black), 2.5Y 4/2 (Dark Grayish Brown), and 2.5Y 3/1 (Very Dark Gray) (Munsell 2000).

Level 2

Level 2 (121 centimeters to 126 centimeters DBD, 75 centimeters to 80 centimeters DBS) was excavated in quadrants with a trowel to a depth of 5 centimeters, and soil was screened using a 1/4" screen. Level 2 screening revealed 4 shards of glass. Level 2 soil matrix consisted of Munsell Color 2.5Y 3/1 (Very Dark Gray) (Munsell 2000).

Level 3

Level 3 (126 centimeters to 131 centimeters DBD, 80 centimeters to 85 centimeters DBD) consisted of similar soil as Level 2, 2.5Y 3/1 (Very Dark Gray) (Munsell 2000). No artifacts were recovered in this level, however there were two bricks lodged into the north wall of the unit, which appeared to be of modern origin.

Level 4

Level 4 (131 centimeters to 136 centimeters DBD, 85 centimeters to 90 centimeters DBS) consisted of a similar soil matrix as Levels 2 and 3, Munsell Color 2.5Y 3/1 (Very Dark Gray) (Munsell 2000), with a section

of the west corner including Munsell Color 2.5Y 5/3 (Light Olive Brown) (Munsell 2000). Level 4 included many stones and rocks, but few artifacts other than glass shards.

Level 5

Level 5 (136 centimeters to 141 centimeters DBD, 90 centimeters to 95 centimeters DBS) was excavated in only the northeast and southeast quadrants due to time permits. The soil in these quadrants was the same as Levels 2 through 4, Munsell Color 2.5Y 3/1 (Very Dark Gray) (Munsell 2000). Excavation revealed a large piece of wood (*see Figure 6*), believed by Dr. G. Monks to be part of the Winnipeg Electric Streetcar Company rail way that stood in this location as noted above.

Stratigraphy and Disturbances N76.5 E175

Stratigraphy throughout the unit was fairly consistent horizontally (*see Figure 7*). The fill level (46 centimeters to 121 centimeters DBD, 0 centimeters to 75 centimeters DBS) indicates that much of the fill was from the same source, as the soil matrix is rather uniform in Munsell Color and consistency. The soil in Unit N76.5 E175 was fairly difficult to trowel through compared to Unit N86 E186, as the soil matrix was drier, more compact and fairly solidified. The abundance of rocks in Unit N76.5 E175 added to the difficulty. The unit included more modern era artifacts than fur trade era artifacts however, due to the fairly shallow depth below surface, at only 232.02 meters above sea level, compared with Unit N77.5 E176, which uncovered what was believed to be the west wall of the fort at 231.38 meters above sea level.

Laboratory Activities

After the field season was complete, artifacts were brought to the lab in N311A Duff Roblin at the University of Manitoba for cleaning, cataloging, and identification. Procedures for cleaning ceramic and glass included wet cleaning with a soft toothbrush and water, while cleaning for organics and metal was completed with a soft dry toothbrush. Prior to cleaning, all artifacts were categorized according to which unit they were found in, and then further categorized into level, quadrant and item type. After cleaning was complete, artifacts were cataloged with item cards displaying site number, unit northing and easting, level, quadrant, depth below surface, depth below datum, the date recovered, excavator and description of the item. After cataloging was complete, I then attempted to identify ceramic sherds with pattern, bottle glass, and iron nails. Sources of information were provided, including a "Nail Book" (a compilation of information from various sources), a pattern book of Spode-Copeland ceramics, as well as books detailing ceramics found at Lower Fort Garry, among others. Unfortunately many of the ceramics recovered from units N86 E186 and N76.5 E175 were of such small size that identification was not possible, and many of the nails recovered were unable to be identified due to the amount of rust and breakage that had occurred. After identification was complete, pieces of ceramic and glass were compared to artifacts found in other units within the field site as mentioned above.

What These Artifacts Can Tell Us

Due to the vast amounts of fill level soil above the fur trade era ground level and soil matrix it is difficult to say if all artifacts found in Unit N86 E186 and Unit 76.5 E175 are indeed from those areas. The landscaping of Bonnycastle Park and the disturbances from utilities companies such as Manitoba Hydro and Manitoba Telecom Services also added to the inability to say with confidence that these areas are a true representation of fur trade era activities. Despite these disturbances, many artifacts found within these areas are similar to those found in the northern part of the fort (Monks 1982; 1983; 1984), which gives some indication that these areas were indeed part of the grounds of Upper Fort Garry during the time when the fort was in use.

Despite the lack of confidence in these artifacts, the discovery of the west wall in Area 1 at 231.38 meters above sea level, and the possible remnants of the south wall in Area 4, indicate that the excavation was worthwhile and achieved its goal of locating these wall foundations.

Conclusion

The purpose of this field school excavation was to locate the foundations of the south and west walls of Upper Fort Garry. These walls are believed to have been located, which signifies a completion of the aims and purpose of this excavation. While artifact analysis may not have been forthcoming in these specific quadrants as discussed above, it can be stated that the 2014 excavation of Bonnycastle Park was an overall success as Upper Fort Garry Heritage Provincial Park is near completion.

References

- Friends of Upper Fort Garry
2013 *Your Park*. Retrieved from <http://www.upperfortgarry.com/the-plan/>, accessed August 2014.
- Government of Canada
N.d. *Manitoba: the Key-stone Province of the Canadian Confederation*. Canada: no publisher.
- Monks, Greg
1982 Preliminary Report on Archaeological Excavations in Bonnycastle Park, 1981. *Manitoba Archaeological Quarterly* 6(3):46-61.
- 1983 Preliminary Report on Archaeological Investigations in Bonnycastle Park (Upper Fort Garry), 1982. *Manitoba Archaeological Quarterly* 7(4):3-29.
- 1984 Preliminary Report on Archaeological Investigations in Bonnycastle Park (Upper Fort Garry), 1983. *Manitoba Archaeological Quarterly* 8(3-4):30-50.
- Morrison, William R.
1970 The Sixth Regiment of Foot at Lower Fort Garry. In *Canadian Historic Sites Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History* No. 4. Pp. 167-173. Ottawa: Society for Historical Archaeology.
- Munsell, Albert H.
2000 *Munsell Soil Color Charts*. New Windsor: Munsell Color.

Seaman, Holly S.

1920 *Manitoba, Landmarks and Red
Letter Days, 1610 to 1920*. Winnipeg: H.
S. Seaman.

Stock, R. E.

1978 *A History of Carbonated Beverages
in Winnipeg*. Winnipeg: R. E. Stock.

Sussman, Lynne

1979 *Canadian Historic Sites:
Spode/Copeland Transfer-printed
Patterns*. Minister of Supply and
Services Canada. Quebec.