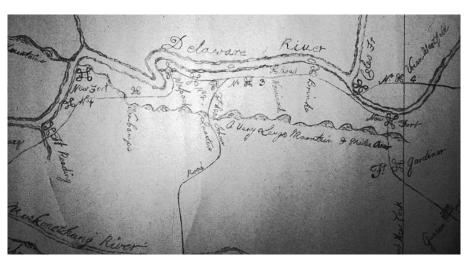
## **Exploring the Archeological Potential of French and Indian War Fortifications**

he era of the French and Indian War (1754-1763) is one of the most important periods of political change in colonial American history. Yet, despite the pioneering archeological research carried out at Fort Necessity in western Pennsylvania in the 1950s, <sup>1</sup> the archeology of the French and Indian War remains relatively understudied.

In February 1997, Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area (NRA) and the Anthropology Department of New York University (NYU) entered into a five-year cooperative agreement. Archeologists from the National Park Service and New York University agreed to investigate the archeological potential of a series of forts and blockhouses along the Delaware River within the park. The archeological research has been co-directed by John Wright, archeologist, Delaware Water Gap NRA, and Pam J. Crabtree, associate professor of anthropology, NYU. The National Park Service funded the project through the Systemwide Archeological Inventory Program. The program has provided research opportunities for over 20 undergraduate and graduate students at New York University and volunteer excavation opportunities for Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and students from the Eatontown, NJ, school district.

Jonathan
Hampton map of
the New Jersey
side of the
Delaware River
showing forts
constructed during the French
and Indian War.
(Kraft, 1977).



The Delaware Water Gap region is an ideal area to explore the archeology of the French and Indian War. In the 1750s, colonial legislatures from New York to Virginia authorized the construction of forts and blockhouses to protect their citizens from raids by Native Americans who were allied with the French. Portions of both the New Jersey and the Pennsylvania fortified lines are within the park boundaries. In addition, Jonathan Hampton, a trained surveyor who also served as quartermaster for the New Jersey garrisons along the frontier, prepared a map showing the locations of the forts and blockhouses along the New Jersey frontier in 1758.

The Hampton map, along with other archeological and documentary research, has helped guide our excavations.

In 1998, we began a three-year program of excavation at the site of Fort Johns, also known as Headquarters and Fort Shapanack. The Hampton map shows that the fort was located at the intersection of the Old Mine Road,<sup>2</sup> one of the oldest roads in the United States, and the military road that extended eastward to Elizabethtown. The late professor Herbert Kraft<sup>3</sup> of Seton Hall University had conducted preliminary excavations at Fort Johns during the mid-1970s. A 19th-century farmhouse, the Hull-Schnure house, was located on the property until

the early 1970s. Aerial photographs were taken of the site in 1939. In addition, an insert in the Hampton map showed a plan of Fort Johns Headquarters. A small stone house, approximately 26 by 52 feet, was located at the center of the fort; a square palisade surrounded it with bastions at the corners. A stone blockhouse, possibly for storage of munitions, was located along one side of the palisade.

We began our field project by identifying the locations of Professor Kraft's trenches, so that we could continue his pioneering



Foundation ruins of the possible blockhouse. NPS photo.

work. Professor Kraft's initial excavations had identified several structures, including a line of postholes and a rectangular stone structure, which may have been associated with the fort. Local oral traditions suggested that the stone structure, which served as a cowshed in the 20th century, was built on the foundations of the 18th-century blockhouse shown in the Hampton plan. In 1999, we excavated a section of the stone structure.

We recovered a large variety of artifacts from this excavation including pottery, glass, and metalwork. Among the more interesting objects we recovered were a 19th-century bottle for a patent medicine for treating worms and early Ball mason jars and lids. All of the objects that we recovered could be dated to the second half of the 19th century. No 18th-century objects were recovered. Our excavations suggest that the stone building is more likely to be associated with the 19th-century Hull-Schnure house than with the earlier French and Indian War fort.

In 1999, we also conducted additional excavations along the line of postholes first identified by Professor Kraft. We found that the postholes were associated with 19th- and 20th-century artifacts. The postholes probably represent a fence line associated with the Hull-Schnure occupation. We also excavated several test squares throughout the site in an attempt to identify the line of the 18th-century palisade. Our testing strategy did not identify the location of the fort's palisade.

In all three excavation seasons we dug a series of test pits in an attempt to locate the foundations of the small stone house that stood at the center of Fort Johns. We excavated several test

trenches to the east of the foundations of the Schnure house, as well as a small number of test pits on the north side of the military road. These trenches yielded a wide range of prehistoric and historic artifacts and cultural features. However, we were unable to locate the foundations of the 18th-century house. It is clear that the Fort Johns site was heavily disturbed when the Hull-Schnure house was destroyed in late 1974, and it is possible that the earlier 18th-century foundations were also obliterated at that time.

In the summer of 2001, we decided to explore Fort Nominack (Nomanoc), a fort located approximately eight miles north of Fort Johns. Fort Nominack stood as a ruin until the early 20th century<sup>4</sup> so its general location is known. Amy Sousa, a New York University student who took part in the 1998 excavation season as part of her senior honors thesis research, conducted preliminary archival research in Fort Nominack. In 2001, we mapped and tested the ruins of a building that had been identified as Fort Nominack in early archeological surveys of the park. This building may be an old barn on the property. We are currently consulting with area residents who remember the location of the Nominack ruins, and we hope to carry out further archeological testing of Fort Nominack in future seasons. In future years we also hope to look for the remains of Fort Hynshaw on the Pennsylvania side of the river.

## Notes

- J. C. Harrington, Washington's Fort Necessity: A Report on the Archeological Explorations at Fort Necessity National Battlefield Site, (Richmond, VA) (Conshohocken, PA: Eastern National Parks and Monuments Association, 1977).
- Herbert C. Kraft, The Minisink Settlements: An Investigation into a Prehistoric and an Early Historic Site in Sussex County, New Jersey (South Orange, NJ: Seton Hall University Museum, 1977).
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid
- <sup>4</sup> C. G. Hine, *The Old Mine Road, (New Brunswick, NJ, 1909)* (Rutgers, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1985).

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