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Excavation at Fort Michilimackinac
Mackinac City, Michigan
1959 Season

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BALING SEALS

Total recovered—44. These very distinctive artifacts warrant a more complete description which will be presented in a later report. The seals appear to be of two basic types, a rivet type and a solid type. The rivet type, a flat disk of lead with a hole in the center joined by a thin neck to a smaller disk which could be passed through the hole in the larger disk and then flattened out, was used to mark bundles of trade blankets, and usually bears fabric impressions on its inner surfaces. Unfortunately, stamping the manufacturer's seal and spreading the rivet were achieved in one operation. This means that when the seal was broken the stamping was distorted or obliterated. The solid type of seal, a disk of lead pressed around a string or wire and stamped with the manufacturer's seal, may have been attached to bales of blankets, but could also have been affixed to bottle necks, bundles of hardware, and strings of trade beads.

The only recurring lead seal is one we call "CDI" from the letters impressed on the back in the center of a laurel-leaf wreath surrounded by a godroon border. The obverse of this solid seal is impressed with an involved design including a recumbent human figure surmounted by a field of fine diagonal lines containing twelve fleur-de-lis, in turn surmounted by a French crown. Of these eight seals, only three appeared to be in undisturbed provenience. This limited evidence indicates that this artifact, possibly a governmental seal, belongs in the 1740 to 1760 period.

Of the total assemblage of seals, 28 have French designs (fleur-de-lis) or words impressed on their surfaces, and 4 are British. Eighteen of the 28 seals which are French in type also come from proveniences early in the site history. One French blanket-bale seal bears the date 1733.

BARREL HOOPS

Total recovered 113 fragments and complete hoops. These artifacts appear to be later than 1765 in the site.

BEADS

Total recovered—671. Beads (See Plate I), since they so often appear in Indian burials of the historic period, should provide good time-markers for isolated sites. For that reason we feel it is important to withhold major statements about them until after our key-sort card analysis. The following, then, is in the nature of a preliminary statement.

Seed beads are by far the most numerous on the site, but they can be recovered only by washing dirt over fine window screening, a laborious process which was used only in a few control areas. Of the seed beads, a small, bright green bead seems to be early—characteristic of the years around 1730.

Stick beads are early, and probably were not used by British traders. The earliest bead, on the basis of provenience and feature associations, is a large, bright blue glass disk with inset designs of white ceramic paste consisting of a man-in-the-moon on the obverse and a comet with two stars on the reverse (See Plate I fig. *c*). On the Fort Michilimackinac site it is restricted to the second decade of the eighteenth century. The same bead has been found in an early site on Birch Island,¹ and in a Fox village site in Wisconsin dated at the turn of the eighteenth century.²

The most common beads in the site are a white, opaque, long, ovoid glass bead, a spherical opalescent glass bead, and a large, ovoid opalescent glass bead. These three apparently became popular at the fort around 1740, but, from the provenience, were also traded in smaller numbers through the late British period.

BELL.

Total recovered—26. These bells are grouped into small, or “hawk,” and large or “morris” classes, with 19 of the former and 7 of the latter. There appears to be no significant chronological difference between them since they appear in good associations from the first building period to the last.

BUCKLES

Total fragments recovered—69. We have not, to date, been able to distinguish valid chronological types within this assemblage. (See Plate II), mainly because no two buckles are alike. Thirty of the buckles are intricately designed, of brass or silver, and occasionally with rhinestone “jewels.” These we assume to be shoe buckles, as contrasted with the heavy, plain, brass belt buckles. A characteristic thin, iron, D-shaped buckle with two-pronged tongue (See Plate II fig. *b*) apparently was designed for canvas straps. From its provenience this common buckle appears to be part of the British soldier’s uniform.

BUTTONS

Total recovered—344. These artifacts, especially the buttons which can be identified with regiments, are our best time-markers for dating

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Built by French, in 1720.
Relinquished to British 1760.
Occupied by British troops
& Br. & Fr. merchants from
1761 - 1781 when fort was
abandoned.

Date:

1720 - 1781

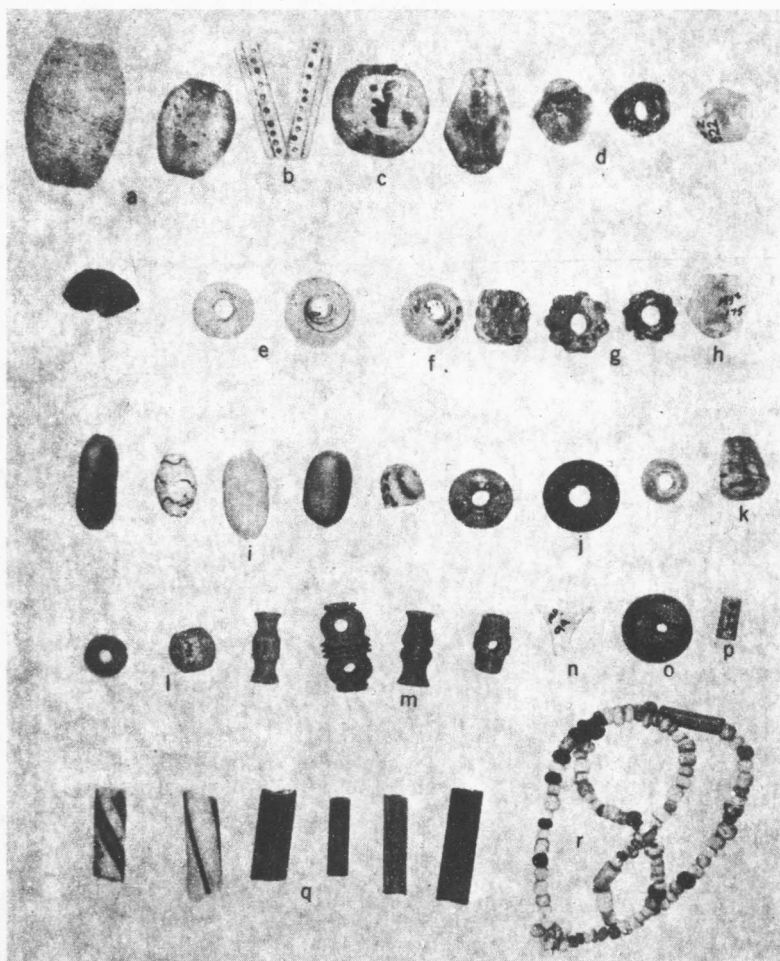


Plate I. The most common bead types from the site.

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| <p>a. large and small varieties of a white, opalescent, glass bead</p> <p>b. peculiar incised shell bead</p> <p>c. white paste on blue glass "man-in-the-moon" bead (early)</p> <p>d. varieties of molded, faceted, blue and amber beads</p> <p>e. varieties of spun, disk-shaped, brown and white beads</p> <p>f. spherical, light amber bead</p> <p>g. varieties of white and amber "mulberry" beads</p> <p>h. light amber, conical bead</p> <p>i. five long, ovoid, opaque glass beads.</p> | <p>j. three brown and light amber, transparent glass beads</p> <p>k. amber, conical, opaque bead</p> <p>l. spherical, bone and ivory rosary beads</p> <p>m. ivory segments from crosses</p> <p>n. shell terminus for the arm of a cross in a rosary</p> <p>o. spherical, local clay bead</p> <p>p. "wampum" stick bead of purple clam shell</p> <p>q. varieties of stick beads (early)</p> <p>r. varieties of small beads including vermillion-colored stick beads, and shell "wampum"</p> |
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