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The Joys of Urban Archaeology

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Fig. 18— View of dry moat on north side of Fort Stanwix. A well on the left and a privy on the right intrude into the scarp of the moat. White stakes in lower left mark remnants of wood picket line. Fort Stanwix National Monument. —*National Park Service Photo.*



Fig. 19— Some of material dumped into one of the excavated privies. Fort Stanwix National Monument. —*National Park Service Photo.*

Dick Ping Hsu was born in Chungking, China in 1942 and came to the United States in 1947. He received his B.A. from the University of Colorado and his M.A. from the University of Arizona. He has done extensive fieldwork in the Southwest before becoming an Archaeologist with the National Park Service in 1970.

THE JOYS OF URBAN ARCHAEOLOGY

by

Dick Ping Hsu

The title of this paper is partially facetious because of the many man-made intrusions into the site. Sewer lines, water mains, and gas mains have destroyed portions of the site without leaving any useful information; wells, cisterns, privies, and house foundations have also destroyed portions of the fort, but have compensated for it by containing evidence of the life-style of the people using them.

Fort Stanwix, located in Rome, N.Y., was erected by the British in 1758 to protect the portage between Wood Creek and the Mohawk River. In 1768 the Treaty of Fort Stanwix was signed with the Iroquois Confederacy and in 1777 the Continental Army withstood a three week siege.

The National Park Service began a three year archaeological project at Fort Stanwix in July, 1970. Reconstruction of the fort is one part of a large downtown urban renewal project undertaken by the city of Rome. The first season's excavations have defined the north, west, and south parameters of the fort with the location of the exterior dry moat. On the north side, a 150 foot section of the moat has been completely excavated. Its sides were cut at a 40° angle to the present surface. To prevent rapid erosion and slumping, sod was planted and pegged down with short wooden stakes. A few remnants of the stakes and the peg molds were uncovered on the scarp of the moat. A portion of the north casemate and the cellar of a barrack are interior fort features excavated to date.

The "joy" of urban archaeology is being able to study a culture, make hypotheses and test them with the aid of historical documentation. Most of the artifacts and structures excavated in 1970 belong to the 1830-1900 period of Rome's history. Several unidentified foundations, one well, and three privies have yielded the majority of artifacts. A great deal of data has been gotten from the material excavated from the privies. Dietary patterns from food remains, ailments from medicine bottles and relative wealth from china and other artifacts can all be surmized from the material collected from the privies. A wide variety of bottles, from small vials containing *Dr. McMunn's Elixer of Opium* to large bottles containing *Clarke & White's* mineral water have been excavated.

The china is the most interesting group of artifacts from the excavations. Most of the decorated ware is a blue transfer printed ironstone. The scenes depicted on the vessels are of either the Near East or the United States. The same patterns or scenes occur in all three privies even though users of these privies were on different economic levels. Fieldwork will start again in June, 1971.