

# **FORT ROUILLÉ EXCAVATION**

## **SUMMER 1982**

**Donald A. Brown**  
**Director, Fort Rouillé Excavation**

A joint project of the City of Toronto and the Toronto Board of Education. The Fort Rouillé project was initiated by the Toronto Board of Education French Language Advisory Committee and developed by the City of Toronto Sesquicentennial Youth Committee.

The Archaeological Excavation of Fort Rouillé has been funded by the City of Toronto, the Toronto Board of Education and the Ontario Heritage Foundation in co-operation with the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, Canadian National Exhibition Association, Metropolitan Separate School Board, Toronto Independent Schools, Toronto Board of Education French Language Advisory Committee and the Learnxs Foundation.

**Learnxs Press**  
**August 1983**

The publication of this report was made possible by generous grants from

**The Gannett Foundation**  
**The Toronto Sesquicentennial Board**

## 2) Lighter Dark Olive/Green

### Specimens

1R2A-100	1R2A-351
-212 (shoulder)	-569
-470	-570
-486	

## d) Olive/Green Glass (Case Bottles) (N = 34)

A total of 34 fragments were recovered. Although the sherds could be sorted into three piles of similar types of glass, it is impossible to discuss a minimum number of vessels for all were flat body sherd from case bottles.

Bottle fragments were found from 1R2A and the northern half of Structure A.

These square vessels with narrow necks commonly held liquids. Square vessels of similar colour but wide mouths could hold perishable and dry goods.

Both types were shipped in crates to lessen breakage and minimize wasted space. Hence the walls of the vessels could be quite thin.

### Specimens

#### 1) Thin flat pieces

1R2A-235b	1R2A-466	1R69-18
-341	-483	-18a
-464	-498	1R70-25
-465	-566	-26

#### 2) Thick flat pieces

1R2A-85	1R67-5
-105	1R69-42
	1R70-7

## 3) Thin melted pieces of flattish shape

1R2A-62	1R2A-205	1R2A-372	1R70-5
-84	-266	-397	-32
-86	-310	-474	
-112	-315	-476	
-135	-368	-500	

## III Trade Beads (N = 8)

(see Figure 42)

Seven trade beads have been found which are undoubtedly mid-18th century in date. An additional green seed bead is possibly Victorian in date and was adjacent to a Victorian intrusive pit.

All French beads are white and six are seed beads. The seventh is larger and would have been for a necklace or decorative piece.

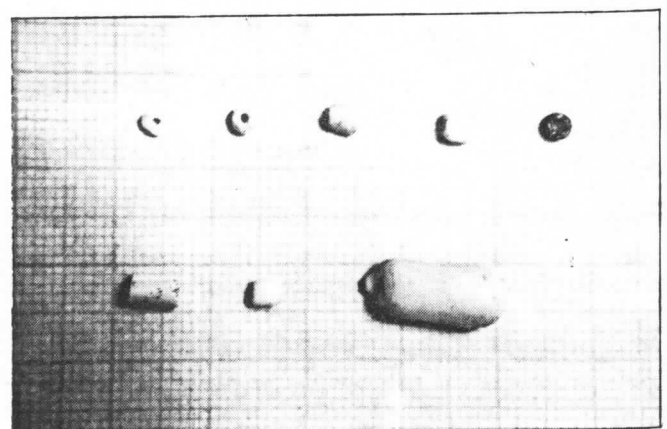


Figure 42, Trade Beads.

Figure 43 TRADE BEADS

	Location	Kidd(1970) Classification	Colour	Shape	Length (mm)	Width (mm)
Victorian	1R2A-41	11a26	Green	doughnut, milled edges	2.2	3.0
French	1R2A-140	11a13	White	doughnut, round end	2.2	3.2
French	1R2A-248	11a13	White	doughnut, round end	1.5	3.0
French	1R2A-390	11a13	White	tube, round end	3.0	3.0
French	1R2A-435	11a13	White	tube, round end	3.5	3.5

Trade Beads Continued	Location	Kidd (1970) Classification	Colour	Shape	Length (mm)	Width (mm)
French	1R69-30	11a13	White	tube, round end	3.5	2.8
French	1R2A-462	11a15	White	tube, round end	12.5	6.5
French	1R2A-491	1a5	White	tube, flat end	5.2	3.0

Specimen 1R2A-311 consists of a puddle of small white glass pieces which may have been several trade beads.

## IV Copper/Brass Artifacts

### a) Hinge (N = 1)

A small, self-contained type brass hinge was located in the west end of the east-west structure in 1R80 (Figure 44).

The length is 2.6 cm, width 0.55 cm and central hinge about 0.45 cm in cross-section. The pointed arms of the hinge are D-shaped in cross-section and have a narrow groove running the length of each arm. Three small holes for attaching the hinge to the box or container are found on each arm.

A hand-forged nail was found within the same wall feature and suggests a French date for the hinge.

Such a small hinge might have been used on a snuff or pill box. The delicate pin-sized nails for attachment would offer minimal support indicating that the container would not be able to sustain rough handling.

### b) Button (N = 1)

One composite button was found next to the chimney within Structure A.

The small vest or sleeve button is flat, 0.35 cm thick, and circular, 1.35 cm, in diameter with no decoration or crimping on the face.

The copper face is folded over a bone or wood core and holds the iron backing in place. A hole passes through the button and is filled with what may be an iron shank. No solder is evident.

The closest approximation to this button type is South's (1964:113-133) Type 25 dating to the early 19th century on British sites or Stone's (1974: 45-57) Class III with Class IV Category 1 Variety b backing and Class VI Category 3, Series A, Type 1 Variety a facing dating to mid-18th century at Michilimackinac. No identical buttons were found on any other French site and it is possible that this piece is 19th century in date.

### c) Wired Copper Tubing (Pipe?) (N = 1) (Figure 44)

An unidentified copper or brass object, tentatively identified as a homemade smoking pipe, was found near the chimney in 1R66.

A 7.95 cm long rolled and seamed tube (0.53 cm wide) has a second copper or brass tube, identical to the first, attached at one end. The attached piece appears broken.

The attachment is not professional: the shorter piece is splayed around a hole cut or drilled in the longer piece and is then latched together with thin wire. No solder is used on the seams or the attachment.

Although tentatively called a homemade smoking pipe, with the bowl broken off the small tube, the end of the long tube closest the pipe has not been plugged.

If the small tube had not fit snugly over a deliberate hole creating an elbow, the piece might have been identified as a homemade hollow key.

### d) Earring Bobkin (N = 1)

A simple copper or brass earring pendant was found in 1R2A. The present dimensions are 0.8 cm by 0.55 cm with the remains of a 0.3 cm loop at the top. (Figure 44).

The bobkin was manufactured by cutting an oval shape from a thin brass or copper sheet and then bent. The ring on top does not appear to have been soldered on but was cut with the body of the piece.

A search of the literature shows no earrings exactly the same as this type.

This earring was probably an item of trade but may have been worn by one of the people (men or women) living at the fort.

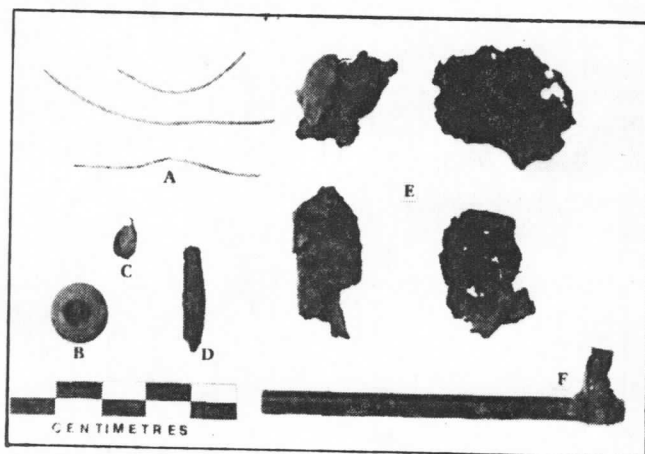


Figure 44, Copper/Brass. A—Wire; B—Button; C—Earring bobkin; D—Hinge; E—Kettle fragments; F—Pipe(?).

known to have lived only a few hundred metres away in the 1780s. Even this prime suspect would have been interested only in the metal and not the bones, broken glass and ceramic fragments.

The structural evidence suggests large numbers of people with possible billeting of people in buildings north of the

Lastly, two Native artifacts – a projectile point and a scraper – were found *in situ* within centimetres of each other, and further lithic debitage of Native origin comes from 1R2A. This would imply an early Indian occupation on the site. No structural evidence can be attributed to these inhabitants of several thousand years previous.

---

## Summary

As a result of the archaeological excavations and the comparisons made with the plans and documentary descriptions of both Fort Rouillé and contemporary French frontier forts and settlements, we are able to present the first updated picture of this fort since the work of Robinson in 1933.

Fort Rouillé, or Fort Toronto, was built on the edge of a slight promontory overlooking Lake Ontario. The immediate shoreline was not suitable for ship anchorage and all supplies must have been carried from landing points east of the fort (near modern Fort York) or west of the fort well beyond the modern CNE grounds, possibly in the area of Grenadier Pond.

The surrounding mixed deciduous forest was cleared, both to form an unobstructed view around the fort and to utilize the timber for construction purposes.

Five wooden buildings formed a small square approximately 29 metres to a side. The backs of the buildings acted as the curtains; a small *Place d'Armes* was formed by the inward facing sides of the buildings. All buildings were constructed in the French Canadian method called *pièces-sur-pièces*. There were no stone foundations, possibly because the fort was built in an area with relatively few stones, in the winter when the ground was frozen making digging very difficult and transport of building supplies by ship virtually impossible. The sills were laid directly on the clay ground surface as were the floorboards. Chimneys were of simple construction with a stone base and probably a wattle-and-daub flue or stack.

The narrow gate of the fort faced west and was flanked by the Guard House/Barracks (probably on the north side) and the Commandant's Quarters (unexcavated). Opposite the gate was the store in which items were traded with the local people. A building on the north side of the fort has been suggested as the blacksmith's house, but no evidence of a forge was found anywhere within the fort. A building on the south side of the fort is suggested as being the baker's house with the oven in or near the southeast bastion on the basis of brick pieces found in 1R2A which must have come from a nearby brick structure.

Four pointed bastions projected from each of the corners of the fort and these too were probably built *pièces-sur-pièces*. At the mouth or gorge of the northwest bastion was a small, roughly square structure of upright posts and covered with earth which was probably the powder magazine. A large clearing and possibly a fence are found at the northeast bastion. A forge or similar structure may have been located within this unexcavated feature.

To the north of the fort, protected by the bastions, were found two to four structures, again built *pièces-sur-pièces*.

Only a few nails were found in association with these buildings, implying a temporary nature, perhaps as barracks or store houses.

The daily lives of the men and women who lived in the fort are poorly represented by the artifacts. They had mixing bowls and storage vessels of French stoneware and both English and French glazed earthenwares. A piece of tin-glazed vessel, probably a faience plate, may hint at a less than bleak lifestyle, perhaps similar to that at Forts Niagara, Ouiatenon, and Michilimackinac. Lead crystal fragments from a decanter or stemware and the base of a tumbler also demonstrate European tastes. Wine for the fort's inhabitants was probably kept in the olive/green square case bottles and the dark green wine bottles. The blue/green bottles would have held other liquids such as medicine or oil.

The people relaxed smoking pipes of British manufacture, although Dutch pipes have also been found at other French sites. A small piece of a white ball clay object may have been a figurine used as a gaming piece similar to those found at Fort Niagara and Ouiatenon. A small copper hinge may have come from a snuff box.

Sickness on the frontier was eased by medicine held in a small clear glass phial; the only relief offered to an individual being operated on may have been the tooth marked musket ball. Documents requesting the Fort Niagara doctor are known. The final solution to the agonies of life was the cemetery noted north of the fort.

The civilian aspect of the fort is seen in a single copper vest or sleeve button. Such a garment may have been worn by a militiaman, a trader or an Indian customer.

Evidence of trade include the fragments of lead bale seals which once secured bundles of merchandise. Within those bundles were glass trade beads, iron knives, copper kettles copper wire for snares, and copper earrings – all were found in excavation.

The trade and personal items would have been stored in the buildings behind bolted doors (one door latch was found) or in shallow pits under the floorboards as noted in Structure A.

The Indians, who had lived in the area for thousands of years, as implied by the Late Archaic lithics, traded hides of black bear, wolverine and deer, all of which were noted in the faunal remains at the archaeological site. Other animals would have included beaver and other fur-bearing animals.

Local foods were consumed such as deer, turkey and fish. Domestic animals such as chicken, cow and dog were also recovered from the site. Imported foodstuffs such as pork, flour and peas would have supplemented the diet of the fort's inhabitants, but these remains have not been found by the excavators.

The military aspect of the fort is reflected in the numerous French gunflints found both in 1R2A and in a pit between Structures A and B. Many pieces of shot, normally used for hunting small game, were also found in both areas. The sprue from the local manufacture of ball and shot was found in 1R2A and near the chimney of Structure A.

As we can see the birth and life of the fort, so can we see its death. The final act of the garrison of this small military trading post was the destruction of Fort Rouillé in 1759 prior to its capture by the British. Charred animal bones, burnt gunflints, melted glass and lead all point to the fort's destruction by fire. Pockets of ash overlying the powder magazine and the east-west wall in 1R80/1R81 reaffirm this conclusion.

## Conclusions

As is the case with most archaeological research projects, the excavations and accompanying research of Fort Rouillé have produced more questions than they have answered.

The location of Fort Rouillé has been established exactly as surveyor Augustus Jones and local historian Dr. Henry Scadding stated. The Fort Rouillé monument is situated within the *Place d'Armes* and touches the southern structure. The erosion of the cliff and its stabilization in 1878 have resulted in the obliteration of the south half of the fort including the two bastions, the southern half of the store, possibly the Commandant's House and all of the southern building tentatively called the Baker's House in this report.

Most of the store has probably been destroyed by activities associated with the CNE landscaping, including the construction of a late 19th century or early 20th century storm drain, the growth of a massive chestnut tree which probably dates to the erection of the monument, and earlier archaeological excavations in the 1960's.

Part of the Commandant's Quarters and the gate still lie under the gardens and sidewalk south of 1R72/1R73. The northeast and northwest bastions are still potentially recoverable under the baseline sidewalk and two, or possibly three, outbuildings lie under and north of this same sidewalk.

Approximately 20% of the fort and outlying buildings has been exposed, 45% is thought to have been destroyed over



Figure 60 1R2A, Wood stains and artifacts.

the years, and 30% is still potentially recoverable (although much is lying under the modern sidewalks and the monument platform.

The evidence for Fort Rouillé consists of very thin, fragile horizontal stains, a few post moulds and the occasional

French post built 1750-51 in present-day Toronto;  
burned in 1759.