

A DAY OF ARCHAEOLOGY AT MISSION ESCAMBE

June 29, 2012 John Worth Day of Archaeology 2012 Archaeology, Creek Indian, Danielle Dadiego, Eileen, Excavation, Florida, Katie Brewer, Marshalltown, Michelle Pigott, mission site, Molino, Nick Simpson, professor, Provenance, site supervisor, Spanish infantry, supervisor, Trowel

Today was pretty much a typical day of fieldwork at Mission San Joseph de Escambe in Molino, Florida. We are in our fourth field season out at the mission site, which between 1741 and 1761 was home to a small community of Apalachee Indians and a Franciscan friar, along with a small Spanish infantry garrison of 4 men for a decade, and a larger 16-man Spanish cavalry garrison for just over a year. Our crew, consisting of ten students and one professor, gathered as usual at 7:30 a.m. on site to begin work. The photo essay below will illustrate some of our normal daily activities as we gradually gather more and more information about the mission and its residents during the colonial era.



As shown above, upon arrival at the site, our first task is to unstitch our excavation units from the plastic sheeting covering them, which is carefully sealed with rows of sandbags every afternoon before we go home in order to avoid water damage in case of Florida's common afternoon and evening thunderstorms.



At the same time, the total station is set up and resectioned for use during the day, fixing the instrument at a known point with respect to our established site grid, and allowing us to take vertical and horizontal measurements in all our active excavation units throughout the day's work. Sometimes this must be performed again during the day, especially after lunch when heat and simple gravity may have altered the tilt of the total station. The photo below shows graduate supervisor Michelle Pigott working with her sister Eileen, volunteering this week at the site.

Before beginning any new work, each unit must be carefully cleaned of all loose dirt that may have fallen in from the walls or ground surface during the stitching operation, and then bags and tags must be labeled for each separate provenience to be excavated, and paperwork filled out before any new dirt can be excavated. Tools are unpacked and field notebooks updated to record daily site conditions, crew members present, and the objectives of the ongoing work.



Once everything has been properly staged for the day, excavation can begin in each unit, sometimes using flat shovels designed to slice off thin layers of sediment across each unit and provenience, hoping to see soil stains or *in situ* artifacts before proceeding any deeper. In the photo below, graduate supervisor Katie Brewer uses a flat shovel to excavate the uppermost deposits in a unit designed to track the course of a stockade wall constructed in 1760 at the site. More careful excavation requires the use of a trowel in order to exercise greater control over depth and speed of excavation. The Marshalltown 5-inch pointing

trowel is the instrument of choice. Below, site supervisor Danielle Dadiago excavates a portion of the stockade trench already exposed in her unit.



Below, undergraduate student Nick Simpson uses his trowel to remove loose dirt next to a profile excavated through a burned clay floor, possibly associated with the 1761 Creek Indian raid that destroyed the mission community.



Our next post will show more scenes from our day.