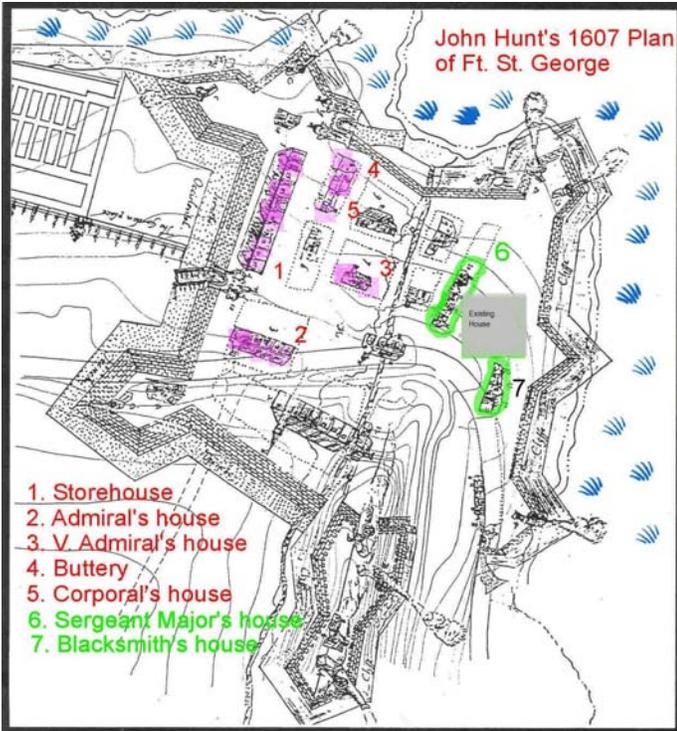


PHIPPSBURG OBSERVER

Phippsburg, Maine

~ July 2010 ~

Peter Hutchinson, editor



Evidence for structures listed in red found during 1995-2005; those in green during 2010 excavations. Atkins Bay and Kennebec River are north and east.

A Month in the Colony

June 1608 had to be a busy month at Fort St. George, at the mouth of the Kennebec River in today's Phippsburg, Maine. Since the landing of some 100 colonists at then-Sagadahoc in August 1607, they had done and gone through a lot— built a storehouse for offloading supplies and equipment from the two ships that brought them over, as well as a buttery to safeguard the kegs of beer and other liquors and foodstuffs. Small houses with stone fireplaces had been built for the colony's president and his admiral, as well as a few other leaders, although most of the men had to make do with structures not much better than lean-tos or shacks. In October 1607, with supplies limited, half the settlers were returned to England, and during the severe winter, President George Popham died. The remaining settlers stuck it out, though, and before the end of winter had already started to build a small ship for coastal trade with the James Town colony in the southern part of Virginia.

During June 2010, more than 400 years later, a team of archaeologists and volunteers under Dr. Jeffrey Brain of Salem's Peabody-Essex

Museum was able to continue the search for further remains of the Sagadahoc Colony. During previous years, excavation was limited to Maine state park land. The Hunt plan, however, identified two sets of buildings next to a house on private property next to the park: those associated with the *sergeant-major* and with the colony's *blacksmith*. This property recently changed hands, and the new owner gave permission for excavations around the house between Memorial Day and 3 July.



Finding evidence of the sergeant-major's house



Locating the blacksmith's house and forge.

Necessary Men

Two men who would have been essential to the Sagadahoc Colony, with dwellings designated on the Hunt Plan were the **Sergeant-Major** and the **Blacksmith**. The **sergeant-major** would have been in charge of a contingent of soldiers for defense against either local Indians or the French further north on the coast. The **blacksmith** would have been needed to make everything from nails to iron parts for the ship being built, repairs to armor and other metal equipment, even casting lead balls and shot for the colonists' weapons.



Lead musket ball with attached sprue (lead from casting mold).



Stock iron from the blacksmith site used to make nails, tools, ship parts

Good Queen Bess At Sagadahoc!



This may be the earliest English coin yet found in North America— this year at Fort St. George. It is a Queen Elizabeth I (1533-1603) shilling, minted between 1592-1595, and worth about \$20 when it was brought over with the colonists. (That's a ruffle, not a beard, below her chin.) It might have belonged to the sergeant-major, since it was found near a post-hole where his house would have been. Perhaps a good luck piece?

Artifacts Give Clues to the Past



Pipe bowl fragment of size and type used in early 1600s.



Square case bottle, typical for sea transport of liquor.



North Devon, England earthenware fragment, typical of early 1600s.



Probably a table knife, the wooden handle long gone.

Above are just a few of numerous objects and fragments from 1607-8 found during June 2010 at Fort St. George. The colonists sailed back to England in October 1608— on their own ship *Virginia of Sagadahoc*, which later returned to Jamestown as a coastal trading vessel. Our 2010 excavations have found that they had a fully operational blacksmith shop making metal repairs, ship parts, nails and other iron objects as well as their own ammunition.

The archaeology, even without much structural evidence other than a few post holes, suggests that both sergeant-major and blacksmith were housed where shown on the fort plan of 1607. But was the weather of June 1608 as nice as most of our days during June 2010? And did the sergeant-major and the blacksmith have ways to fend off the mosquitoes in their corner of the fort?

Dig Proves Blacksmith's Forge



At least three forge sites found built on or between ledges. Lots of dark ash and slag are proof positive of smithy operations.



Large iron ring was probably forged for ship use or mooring.



1-inch bellows tacks were used to fasten leather to the bellows frame.

Many hand-wrought nails, pieces of lead, even copper indicate the smith was able to work at many tasks. Magnetic iron ore was found on-site, indicating possible tries at making iron.



Magnetic iron ore Fort St. George Blacksmith site

Native Shell Heap Shows Earlier Site Use



Prehistoric arrow point found nearby



A state expert says the shell midden was formed 1200-1400 AD on edge of dig site.

Potsherds from shell midden



Remains of native pot (upper right)



< left, the dig crew; above, your happy editor/reporter