

Back yard archaeologists seek European connection

Alce Collins
writer

It's easy to dig into the past of a town proud of its history. At this time, they're really digging Franklin Village. Archaeological diggers last weekend were searching for artifacts on the east corner of Franklin Road and 11th, where an office building will be constructed. The land may have been the site of the first buildings in Franklin, according to project director Jon Barth.

Barth confirmed this week that diggers have already found "one-inch thick layers of mortar in heavier concentration right near the corner and we're hoping it's related to that building."

RESEARCHING old maps and ledgers led Barth to believe that the building was there. "The maps show a building, but it's not precise as to what it was. Hopefully, we'll get a clue whether it was a dwelling, a blacksmith shop or whatever."

Barth this week said diggers also

have found ceramics that date to the early 1800s, square nails from the last century, clay pipe fragments and flakes from Indian projectiles.

The site of the dig rises from the corner to a hill, where construction is to begin soon on the three-story office building. The construction site is behind the Curiosity Shoppe location.

The Franklin Historical Society is underwriting the dig at the request of the Franklin Planning Commission, according to society president Charlotte Ellison.

Most of the diggers are members of the Clinton Valley Chapter of the Mich-

igan Archaeological Society. But some interested Franklin residents are helping out.

THE HISTORICAL Society has hired Dr. Richard Stamps of Oakland University to serve as consultant, and Stamps selected Barth as director.

Barth, a West Bloomfield resident, has a degree in archaeology and anthropology from Oakland University and worked on seven digs in Southeast Michigan last year.

Barth said the digging will be done only where the land will actually be disturbed by the new construction, its

parking lot and septic installation.

The developers have given the historical society until Oct. 25 to dig. "I believe we'll meet the deadline," said Barth.

"It's exciting and fun," said Ellison. "If we find something, it will be a bonus."

"WE'RE WORKING on the rise of the hill right now," said Barth, "then we'll move on to the hill. We expect to find more historic (before European contact) that pre-historic in Franklin," he continued. "European contact in Southeast Michigan was about 1700, but in Franklin it would have been a little later."

The procedure includes making test digs every 25 feet. "When we find something, we open it up. Over the

weekend we dug from 13 to 27 inches deep."

According to Ellison, the diggers have permission from the owners to go only to three feet. They dig only until undisturbed (sterile) soil is reached. "First we take off the sod," said Barth, "then dig. The dirt is sifted, then thrown back into the hole. We re-sod so that you wouldn't be able to tell after a good rain."

THE FINDINGS are being washed at Barth's house, and are then being sent to Oakland University for laboratory studies.

It will be a registered dig and the first in Franklin "as far as we can find out," said Ellison.

Franklin Police will be patrolling the area to keep out trespassers, she said.



DICK KELLEY/staff photographer

Barth, project director for the dig, believes layers of mortar being unearthed may be the remains of one of Franklin's first buildings.

MEET THE CANDIDATES

MONDAY, OCTOBER 11, 1982
at 7:30 p.m.

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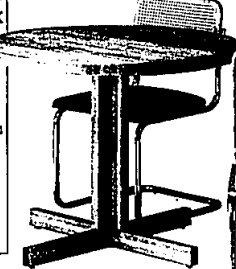
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