

***Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project's
Annual Open House Weekend and Living History Village
Fort St. Joseph Historic Site, Riverfront Park, Niles, Michigan
July 26-27, 2008***

The event:

This is an invitation to form a BAR military camp at the Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project's Living History Village in Niles, Michigan. The Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project and Western Michigan University will be again hosting their Annual Open House event, July 26th & 27th, 2008. The Living History Village is one component of the FSJAP-WMU Open House. The Open house is free to the public and features Active Excavations and an Outdoor Museum. The Living History Village houses historical re-enactors demonstrating life at Fort St. Joseph, a French mission-garrison-trading post complex operating from 1691-1781. As such, the Living History Village is unlike other re-enactments in that its main purpose is to complement the archaeological research and to educate the public on 18th Century life. Re-enactors are also invited to tour the excavations and Outdoor Museum. Limited space is available for military units to camp and demonstrate on Saturday and Sunday July 26th and 27th, with set-up on Friday, July 25th. Saturday's schedule will include an opening ceremony, a battle and tactical weapons demonstration (TWD) simulating the 1781 Spanish Raid on the fort; Sunday will have tacticals as well as one afternoon battle (TWD), all organized by BAR officers. Events for women may be scheduled pending committee discussion. (An "after-hours" non-public men's team bayonet competition is tentatively planned for BAR participants). During the weekend, the FSJAP will also have some special events such as some small living history vignettes by various groups and official presentations, which will highlight the history of the fort and showcase the archaeological findings of the current excavation, including tours of the archaeological site and the Fort St. Joseph Museum.

Brief History:

As mentioned above, Fort St. Joseph's main history encompasses a rich French Colonial Heritage throughout its existence. The fort commanded the important portage between the Upper Kankakee River in northern Illinois and southern Lake Michigan all of which constituted the gateway to the Mississippi River. Many famous French commanders began their career at Fort St. Joseph; and it was one of the most successful trading posts in the frontier country. It was one of the British posts attacked during the Pontiac Indian Uprising in 1763, and while no major battles occurred there, it played a smaller, yet noteworthy role during the American Revolution. Due to its important location with regard to the fur trade, British war policy during the American Revolution sought to have Fort St. Joseph as a deterrent to the ever present threat of invasion of Detroit and Michilimackinac by American forces led by George Rogers Clark; as well as attempting to keep the resident French traders and regional Indian tribes loyal to the British Crown. In addition, after France and Spain joined the American cause, a combined Spanish/French militia expedition raided the fort in 1781, making it the only location in Michigan where the Spanish flag flew, thus aptly designating Niles as the "City of Four Flags".

After more than a century of searching, the site of Fort St. Joseph was discovered in 1998. Currently, archaeological excavations take place each summer under the auspices of Western Michigan University, the FSJ Archaeological Project, the City of Niles and its Fort St. Joseph Museum along with support from other local organizations such as Support the Fort, Inc.

The Site:

The Open House/Living History Village is located in the City of Niles Riverside Park, in downtown Niles alongside the St. Joseph River, which is adjacent to the original site of Fort St. Joseph. The park includes parking, rest room facilities, a covered picnic pavilion, and open areas for both the encampments and skirmish reenactments. The Park does not allow fire pits, therefore five meals will be provided over the weekend for participants (sponsored by the Fort St. Joseph Museum), along with ice available each day. Straw will also be available. SPACE IS LIMITED to 40 tents, and applications to camp are first-come, first-

served (although nearby motels are available thereafter and/or for those who might require this and nearby modern camping parking available, however NO HOOKUPS OR ELECTRICITY AVAILABLE). The following application (which is contained in the enclosed attachment) can be sent electronically as an attachment to the email address below to Ms. LisaMarie Malischke (although please also send a brief email notice to Dr. Todd Harburn that you have forwarded an application to register your unit and the number of men-at-arms planning to attend). Please put "FSJ" in the subject email line of your application; *OR* print and mail a completed application to: LM Malischke, 308 HILBERT STREET, APT 1, KALAMAZOO, MI 49006.

Event schedule and liability waiver will be emailed or sent in the future as RSVP's after your application has been received. Camp rules will be posted on the website at a later date.

Directions:

From the east and/or west, follow the Ohio-Indiana-Illinois Turnpike 80-90 to the South Bend Exit, IN-933 (M-51); turn north and follow M-51 (old US 33) from South Bend to Niles, Michigan (about 10 miles north); at Niles, M-51 is also named South 11th Street; turn west on Fort Street and proceed to Bond Street (where Fort Street ends and the Ft. St. Joseph huge "Rock" Monument/historical marker is located); turn right (i.e. north) and follow Bond Street (which is a dirt street) along the river for approximately ¼ mile until you arrive at Riverfront Park South entrance.

For those arriving to Niles from the north, follow Main Street through town (east to west), which curves south, merging into South Main Street i.e. M-51 and follow this south along the "commercial strip" until coming to Fort Street; then follow the directions as noted above.

Off-Site Accommodations:

Holiday Inn-Express
1265 South 11th Street (M-51)
Niles, Michigan 49120
1-269-684-3900

Niles Inn & Conference Center
930 South 11th Street (M-51)
Niles, MI 49120
1-269-684-3000

There is a variety of restaurants in the Niles area along South 11th Street (M-51), yet also an additional variety of motels and restaurants further south along M-51 towards South Bend (near Notre Dame University), approximately 9 miles south.

Event Information Contacts:

Event Application/Registration and Living History Village Coordinator – Ms. LisaMarie Malischke, FSJ
Archaeological Project Public Outreach Coordinator lisamariemal@yahoo.com

Battle/TWD Coordinator, BAR Liaison – Dr. Todd Harburn, teharburn@comcast.net