

*The Legacy of Fort William Henry:  
Resurrecting the Past*

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figs., 2 tables. \$24.95 paper, \$19.99  
eBook.

Few in historical archaeology can claim as expansive a record of public-oriented publications as can David Starbuck. The Plymouth State University professor now boasts 16 books, his most recent being *The Legacy of Fort William Henry: Resurrecting the Past*. This is the second book by Starbuck on Fort William Henry, and a valuable update and redirection of his preceding work. Unlike Starbuck's earlier *Massacre at Fort William Henry* (University Press of New England, Hanover, NH, 2002), this book is less focused on examining the points of divergence and convergence between history, archaeology, and the novels of James Fennimore Cooper, and focuses much more intently on life and death inside the walls of the former and now-reconstructed fort.

The book does nod toward Cooper's work in a brief introduction and historical overview, emphasizing Cooper's novels' influence in helping maintain the popular awareness of Fort William Henry, as well as noting how the story of Fort William Henry as presented in Cooper's fictional accounts helped to shape popular perceptions of what it meant to be an American in the early 19th century. From there, Starbuck offers a history of the fort and its reduction in 1757 by the French and their Native American allies commanded by the Marquis de Montcalm. This

follows with a description of prehistoric finds at the fort, a subject that had been pushed to the back of the preceding work. From there, Starbuck discusses the work on the fort through the lens of archaeological projects, breaking them into chapters on the digs in the 1950s, 1990s, and 2000s. Following this is a chapter on forensic archaeology at the fort and one on the artifacts recovered across all project phases.

The final section is focused on the relevance of Fort William Henry today. This is a question continually asked throughout historical archaeology, and Starbuck offers that the memory of Fort William Henry and the ensuing massacre are still sore spots for many in the area, and that the fort during the French and Indian War should be remembered as the site where "our ancestors fought to maintain their identity as an English speaking people and where they fought to keep English customs and laws" (p. 99). While "our ancestors" elides the historical ethnic and social cleavages in American society, Starbuck's points—that the memory of this conflict for its pivotal role in determining our cultural legacy should not be overlooked, and should be an important part of the public interpretation of the fort and its archaeological research—are aptly stated.

One of the points that Starbuck makes several times in this work is that no new historical documents pertaining to Fort William Henry have been discovered in the past 70 years, meaning that archaeological work is the sole source of new stories to tell. This is set specifically in the context of Fort William Henry as a tourist destination, where

people take their photographs in the stocks, buy some old-timey souvenirs, and learn while being entertained. Archaeological work (Starbuck's and others') keeps creating new knowledge, which is in service to the professional historical and archaeological communities, but in the context of the site is also a needed public service that helps keep the site an attractive tourist locale. This holds true for many across the discipline, and a point that should be emphasized more widely.

The book is heavily illustrated and printed on glossy paper. Indeed, it has more figures than pages, and is a beautifully and tastefully accomplished work. The images cover the fort, the present interpretation, the history of fieldwork, the artifacts, and the archaeologists while engaged in fieldwork and analysis. While it is not a coffee-table book, the level of polish and communicativeness of the images would allow someone who had only a few minutes to glance through its pages to glean something of value from it.

Starbuck's work would serve well in an introductory historical archaeology class and fulfill several roles. Its narrative on the process of archaeology would be a useful instructional tool, particularly for working within tourist oriented sites. Indeed, the fort invites comparison with Colonial Williamsburg, St. Mary's City, and the like. Starbuck's ability to show connections between the fort and the

surrounding countryside make it also quite pertinent for the New York region. Finally, as it focuses on a major conflict, it would work well for a class in need of a conflict oriented reading.

This book is a combination of research report and a memoir on the project. This is much in keeping with Starbuck's style in his past work on Fort William Henry and the Line of Forts, with an easy conversational style that features Starbuck and other archaeologists as actors within the narrative. As a memoir, the book shows how archaeology can be used together with public history to educate, placing the archaeological findings in dialog with the public interpretation of the site. In recent years, archaeological work has built a better understanding of the role of Native Americans on both sides of the struggle for the fort, which, as Starbuck points out, counters many of the negative aspects of the received public perceptions of Native Americans. Hopefully future work will similarly amplify the place of the women and children who made Fort William Henry their brief home and who also perished or were made captives on the bloody day following the fort's surrender.

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