

# 18<sup>th</sup> Century Log Cabin Reconstruction in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

## Schoenbrunn Native American Cabin Construction

Kent State University at Tuscarawas, New Philadelphia, OH

Friday, October 19, 2012

### Introduction

The 18<sup>th</sup> Century Log Cabin Reconstruction in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Symposium, co-sponsored by the Historic Schoenbrunn Village (the Village) and the Ohio Historical Society (OHS), was held on Friday, October 19, 2012 at Kent State University at Tuscarawas. The symposium provided an opportunity for experts and stakeholders to explore the best method to rebuild 18<sup>th</sup> century Ohio cabins. Additional goals included:

- To gain a shared understanding of how **this** cabin was built in a way that builds on research and experience from multiple perspectives,
- To identify criteria that can guide the process of restoring **this** cabin,
- To identify an approach for working collaboratively in restoring **this** cabin, and
- To restore trust and confidence that a collaborative process will be respectful and inclusive.

The larger context within which this symposium was held includes a recent effort to rebuild a specific cabin in the Village. The project was aborted when differences surfaced among stakeholders and people working on the rebuilding project. At the core of the concerns raised about what an authentic cabin would look like and how to build it. Rebuilding the cabin remains a goal of all concerned. The symposium provided a forum for moving forward.

The day was organized in two segments. During the morning a group of experts from different disciplines and perspectives made presentations on how to determine the most authentic method. During the late morning and early afternoon the experts, staff people and community volunteers discussed what they learned and how it would help them proceed.

### Expert Presentations

The experts each delivered a presentation focused on a particular question related to the authentic rebuilding of a cabin. Each provided a copy of their presentation. The presenters and their focus questions were:

- Dr. James O'Donnell, Professor Emeritus, Marietta College: As an expert on Native Americans in Ohio, how would you best predict the log cabin construction method used at Schoenbrunn Village? What factors would have influenced their mindset at this particular time?

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- Robert C. Glotzhofer, Senior Curator of Natural Science, Ohio Historical Society: Please share the natural setting of Ohio at this time and how that affected Schoenbrunn Village and the constructions of buildings there.
- Kristen Elizabeth Slaterry, Masters Student, Kent State University: Having focused your Masters Thesis on Schoenbrunn Village and conducted GPR there, What have you learned that you can add to the discussion on how cabins were constructed at Schoenbrunn? [Thesis: "A Ground Penetrating Radar Imaging of Schoenbrunn Village Archeological Site, Tuscarawas County", 2011]
- Susan Goerhing, former Site Director, Historic Schoenbrunn: Having operated the site and done extensive research on its history, how would you best predict the cabins would have been constructed and the mindset of the inhabitants of the Village? We are especially interested in the Moravian influence and how it factored in. Since Don Hustler cannot attend, any of the info from his book that you could factor in would be great as well.
- Donald F. Shaffer, Itinerant builder and volunteer with the Greentown Preservations Association (Lenape Village c. 1782 - 1812) located near present day Perrysville, OH: As an "itinerant" builder who travels from historical site to historical site and has been taught cabin construction in an "apprentice style" passed down over the years, how would you best predict cabin construction at Schoenbrunn Village based on what you have learned from your travels?

The first four presenters delivered their presentations and responded to a few questions. Donald Shaffer was not able to attend the symposium due to illness. His paper was distributed to participants as submitted. They were given time to read it and then discussed what they learned from the paper with the help of facilitator Chris Kloth, from ChangeWorks of the Heartland (CW).

All of the papers are attached to this document. In addition, the following bullet point summary is based on chart pad notes taken by CW during the discussion of Mr. Shaffer's paper. The participants were asked, "What does his document help us understand about how to determine what to do about the building in question?"

1. Type of wood matters
2. Longevity is an important consideration
3. The sill area also affects longevity
4. Hewn logs are used for permanent houses, which some people refer to as cabins

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5. Roof pitch varies
6. Upside down saddle notches helps
7. Notching matters
8. Shingles vary for longer or shorter term buildings
9. Chinking is important
10. Block logs (?)
11. Tools used...How we do it may matter
12. Desire to be authentic is strong
13. Plaster on the inside of more refined homes
14. Stone foundations were built on rocks from local creeks
15. Roof overhang...longevity...water

As the group reflected on what Mr. Shaffer wrote about construction it concluded that the general approach he used to begin rebuilding previously was a probably appropriate for houses in the village, but not the cabins. Research indicates that cabins were small, basic shelter that was used by new arrivals at the Village until they could build a permanent home on their lots. The building in question originally was a cabin.

The group believes the confusion during the aborted project was the result of unclear communication between OHS, the Village and Shaffer. Everyone involved was committed to authenticity. However, as will be documented later in this summary, there was not a clear, shared understanding of what authentic meant in the context of this particular project. Moving forward the partners in this collaborative project will have a structure and communication process that will be more effective.

### Dialogue

After a lunch break the participants reconvened to reflect on what they had learned in the morning and how it might help them advance the project. The dialogue began with a review of the overall goals of the Symposium by CW and establishment of a set of principles for assuring full participation in the dialogue. The handout provided for that conversation is attached.

CW facilitated three conversations based upon questions that emerged during the morning. The following bullet point summaries are based on chart pad notes from each conversation.

#### Authenticity: What does it mean to you?

1. Historically accurate - supported by references, documentation

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2. Experiential authenticity...
  - a. We are transported to the period and setting
  - b. It looks, feels, smells authentic
3. How it ends
  - a. Do it the old way
  - b. Recreate the original experience
4. Communicates how fits in the culture and daily life?
5. Educational aspect
  - a. Introduce the old tools
  - b. See the old tools
  - c. The educational impact of watching and/or doing the work
  - d. Bring in students to see the work done
  - e. Affordable
  - f. Use trained builders
    - i. People with the knowledge skills and attitudes that allow the person to both build authentically, and
    - ii. Provide an engaging educational experience.
    - iii. This may require different people in different roles working together.
6. Having variety that is congruent with both documentation of what was typical and normal variety within that framework
7. Evidence of life...it feels alive when people are there
  - a. It's not a picture or sterile 3D image of the place and period
  - b. Real people are doing things
  - c. Children might dress in character and help educate
8. But it must also be safe and accessible
9. Interpretation elements
  - a. Program activities
  - b. Permanent buildings
  - c. People with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to link the two in an engaging way
10. The place looks like it belongs there
11. Put the right building in the right location. (This cabin belongs in this location.)

What other considerations ought to drive the decision about what to do with this cabin?

*[Note: Slash marks indicate the number of people who agreed that the item ranked as a first or second priority in decision making.]*

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1. Aligned with educational mission /////
2. Considers cost and available resources ////
3. Cost to maintain and operate
4. What it adds to the site ///
5. How it enhances the experience ///
6. It should be alive, not a museum.
7. We need to be able to identify and engage the people with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to make this work in way that is consistent with our mission and vision.
8. Historical context is appropriate
9. Aesthetic appearance
10. Eventually add outhouses and menstrual huts
11. Determine if it is to be a short or long term structure
12. Determine a timeline for project to complete the project
13. Determine staffing demands
14. Site resources
  - a. People
  - b. Tools
  - c. Materials
15. Ability to attract
  - a. New money
  - b. New volunteers
  - c. More guests
16. It should be operated as a partnership, both locally and beyond...Partners with needed
  - a. Knowledge
  - b. Skills
  - c. Attitudes
  - d. Other Resources
17. Need a plan
  - a. Building plan
  - b. Education plan
  - c. Interpretive plan
  - d. Long range site development plan
18. Don't finish...keep building and expanding

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### Considering what we have learned today, what should be done next?

1. We need to build an example of the most basic type of temporary lodging.
2. We need it to be on the lot where it was originally located.
3. It should fit the criteria of what was known to be there: a cabin, not a house.
4. Make it different than the other three similar buildings located in the area.
  - a. Maybe locate it farther back in a way that would allow a house to be built closer to the front of the lot in the future.
  - b. Vary some other features that would be congruent with what reference sources suggest would be typical variability.
5. Do the project in a way that uses authentic materials and tools.
6. Create a smaller committee of partners and a point person (Karen Hassel)
7. Create a long term development plan...maybe 10 years.

### Some additional themes and possible tasks that were noted

1. Develop a timeline for the project
  - a. Identify when volunteers can do the work
  - b. Identify when re-enactors can do the work
  - c. Identify professionals who could support the work
2. Video tape as much of the process as possible for potential
  - a. Interpretive tools
  - b. Fund raising tools
  - c. A possible documentary (and revenue stream?)
3. Creating an opportunity for “double-loop learning” model
  - a. Professionals or highly skilled volunteers teach local volunteers how to the work in the future
  - b. Conduct the session as a workshop that participants pay for
  - c. Make it possible for guests to observe the builders and learners building in real time
  - d. There are two groups which may be able to help develop and/or implement the model
    - i. Timber framers
    - ii. Round-log builders

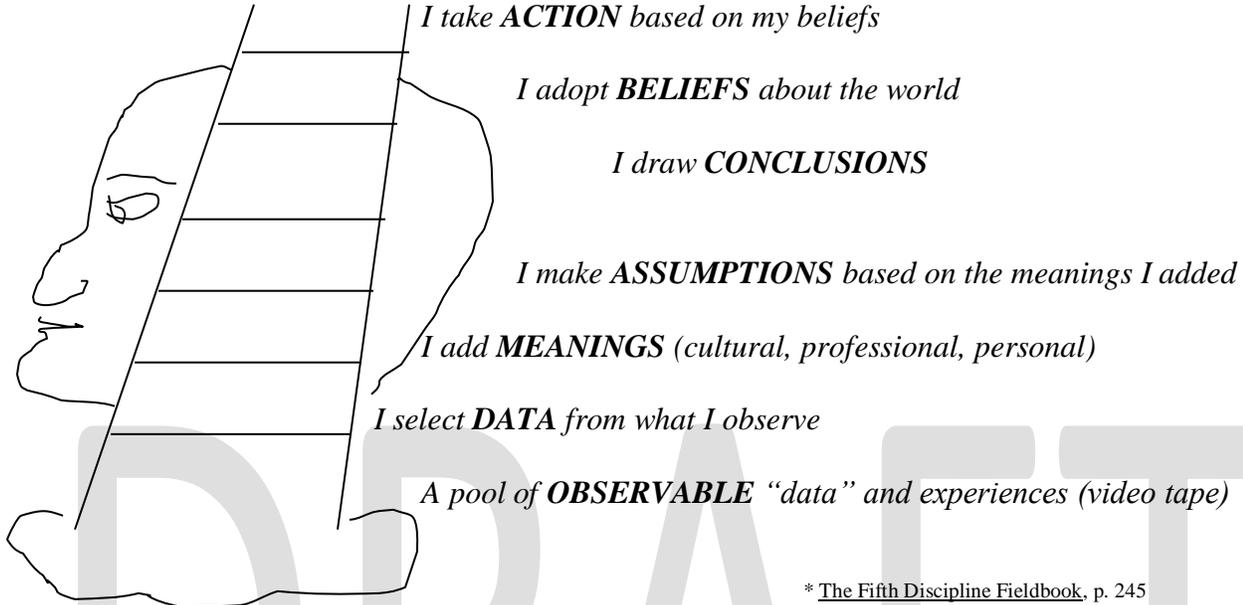
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### *Ladder of Inference:* \*



### **Principles of Dialogue**

The following “Principles of Dialogue” assist in using the Ladder of Influence in the practice of effective dialogue.

- Suspend assumptions & certainties...tell others what you believe and how you came to believe it
- Listen in the spirit of learning...learn how others view the world and how that influences their actions
- Ask questions in the spirit of curiosity...try to understand rather than moving to judgment
- Speak in the spirit of sharing & adding to the richness of the group...not to prove you are right
- Engage paradox and polarity...instead of either/or thinking try to use seeming contradictions as ways to discover common themes or new options.