

# THE ST. AUGUSTINE RECORD

## Dig making way for watch tower

*Will be part of new Colonial Quarter*



*Archaeologist Chris Newman, center, transfers material onto a hanging screen while excavating the future site of a 35-foot tall, wooden observation tower at the Colonial Quarter on Tuesday afternoon, October 9, 2012. By DARON DEAN, daron.dean@staugustine.com By Douglas Jordan Special to The Record*

Crews officially broke ground this week on the Colonial Quarter project, and already, archaeologists digging at the eastern end of the property have uncovered a variety of small artifacts, some of it Native American dating to the pre-Spanish era.

Chris Newman, senior archaeologist with Archaeological Consultants Inc., and her crew have been doing shovel testing in specific areas where a 35-foot wooden watch tower is to be built, to make sure nothing historically significant is disturbed by the project.

“Obviously, this is a sensitive area, and we need to proceed cautiously,” Newman said. “This is very close to where they found evidence of the wooden Spanish fort last year.”

In 2011, St. Augustine City Archaeologist Carl Halbirt and his team uncovered remnants of what is believed to be one of the nine Spanish wooden forts that preceded the Castillo de San Marcos within yards of the current dig site.

Newman said Halbirt had stopped by her dig on Monday “to check our progress.” Halbirt and his crew are assigned to do the digging on any city-owned lands. The Colonial Quarter property is owned by the State of Florida.

The crew is concentrating on a couple of one by one meter holes in the soil, taking each shovelful and running it through two large sifting boxes, suspended by wooden tripods planted next to the dig site. The holes are two of four corners of the yet-to-be-built tower.

So far, they’ve found a combination of pottery bits, pearlware and creamware, bits of iron, nails, shell and bone buttons, fasteners and animal bones.

“It’s an assortment of things,” Newman said. “We will test and date what we’ve found later. Right now, we’re still in dig mode.”

The watch tower will be built of pine and will re-create one used centuries ago to warn St. Augustine of impending invasion, said Kari Cobham, spokesman for Colonial Quarter LLC, the company owned by Pat Croce of St. Augustine Pirate & Treasure Museum.

Colonial Quarter LLC was selected in June by the University of Florida to operate an authentic attraction in the city’s former Colonial Spanish Quarter Museum on St. George Street. Visitors will be able to climb the tower, which will overlook the Castillo de San Marcos and the bayfront, using specially installed stairs.

A “virtual viewfinder” at the top of the tower will show a panorama of the city as it existed while it was under construction in the late 1600s.

The tower is just one part of the larger project that will “encompass an immersive, hands-on visitor experience through St. Augustine’s 16th, 17th and 18th centuries” and include several compounds, such as a 16th-century Spanish military outpost and an 18th-century British garrison in the 14th colony of East Florida, Cobham said.

Some elements of the old Spanish Quarter will be brought back to life, such as the leather shop, the gunsmith and the Taberna de Gallo, which will be expanded.