

April 21, 2004

Steven J. Libert
Fairport International Exploration Inc.
12800 Rose Grove Drive
Oak Hill, VA 20171

Subject: Letter of support for the investigation of the potential Griffin shipwreck

Dear Steve:

As you know I have been discussing the shipwreck project with a few selected colleagues here in the Anthropology Department at the Field Museum. We are very excited at the prospect of this shipwreck being La Salle's missing Griffin. As I have mentioned to you in previous emails, there are several of us here that are very interested in the research potential of the Griffin and are excited at the prospect of working toward the excavation, interpretation and analysis, display, and publication of this find.

However, until we can determine that this shipwreck is more than a bowsprit, and that there is more to the ship under the sand and silt, and until we can confirm that it is indeed the Griffin, we can only confirm to you that we have research interest in the wreck. If we can confirm that the wreck is the Griffin then we would have more of an official interest and participation in the excavation, recovery, and display of the artifacts and wreck.

Until then, we cannot formally commit the Field Museum to anything more than the fact that some of the Anthropology Department curators and staff are interested in the research potential of the project. Later on in the investigation perhaps, the Field Museum may want to be more formally involved.

The background research I have been conducting on the Griffin, including construction methods, outfitting, departure point, distance traveled, etc., together with George Quimby's work on the Griffin are also consistent with the possibility that this may indeed be the resting place of La Salle's Griffin. In my firsthand observations of the shipwreck, the actual wood object appears to be a hand-hewn and purposely-shaped timber that would have been part of a sailing vessel. While we are somewhat unsure of its exact function without excavation and further analysis, the wood object appears to be a bowsprit without the lesser bowsprit attached, or perhaps part of a mast. The lower portion of the timber is nearly circular in shape, while the upper half has been sawn and cut with hand tools. As evidenced by adze and/or axe marks the timber has been squared

Exhibit A

off and shaped into more of a rectangular timber. The upper half also includes three wooden pegs (a fourth is missing, but the hole is present) protruding from the flat face of one side. Each peg has been shaped with an opening and closed at one end with a wood wedge. These pegs are spaced at regular intervals and are nearly identical in shape and size. They were likely used to connect the bowsprit and lesser bowsprit.

The bowsprit appears to be attached to a larger object below the sand and silt. No modern attachments (iron) were observed on the bowsprit. The construction is by hand and is somewhat unrefined. This is consistent with the construction method of the Griffin vessel as described by Father Louis Hennepin. The ship was constructed in the wilderness using locally available timber, and while under threat of attack.

The results of two separate c14 tests on two separate wood samples from the bowsprit are similar and indicate that the bowsprit may be of sufficient age to be from the Griffin, which sank in 1679. The Beta sample (183101) resulted in an age estimate of 140 ± 40 BP; although there were 5 intercepts. At 2-sigma calibration the sample indicates a 44.6% probability that the age of the bowsprit wood falls between 1668-1781. At 1-sigma calibration there is a 15.7% probability the age falls between 1676-1701. The second sample dated at the University of Arizona AMS lab (AA57787) resulted in an age estimate of 119 ± 37 BP. At 2-sigma calibration the sample indicates a 35.1% probability that the age of the bowsprit wood falls between 1676-1764. At 1-sigma calibration there is a 31.1% probability the age falls between 1684-1732. In both samples it appears that there is about a one in three chance that the bowsprit is old enough to be from the Griffin.

We support the investigation of this shipwreck, which may turn out to be La Salle's missing Griffin, the first sailing vessel to sail, and vanish, on the upper Great Lakes.

I would love to be able to join you on the sub-bottom profiling and side-scanning project in June. As I mentioned in our phone conversation, in the next few days I should know what my June schedule will be. We look forward to the results of the June project.

Sincerely yours,

Scott J. Demel, Ph.D.