

FINDS IN OLD QUEBEC CHURCH GROUNDS

While digging up the city-hall gardens before building an underground parking lot, workers found human remains among the ruins of the first Jesuit church in Quebec City. Taking over from the workers, archeologists unearthed two complete tomb-sites and three skulls, as well as pipes, pocket-knives and pieces of pottery, all dating from the French régime.

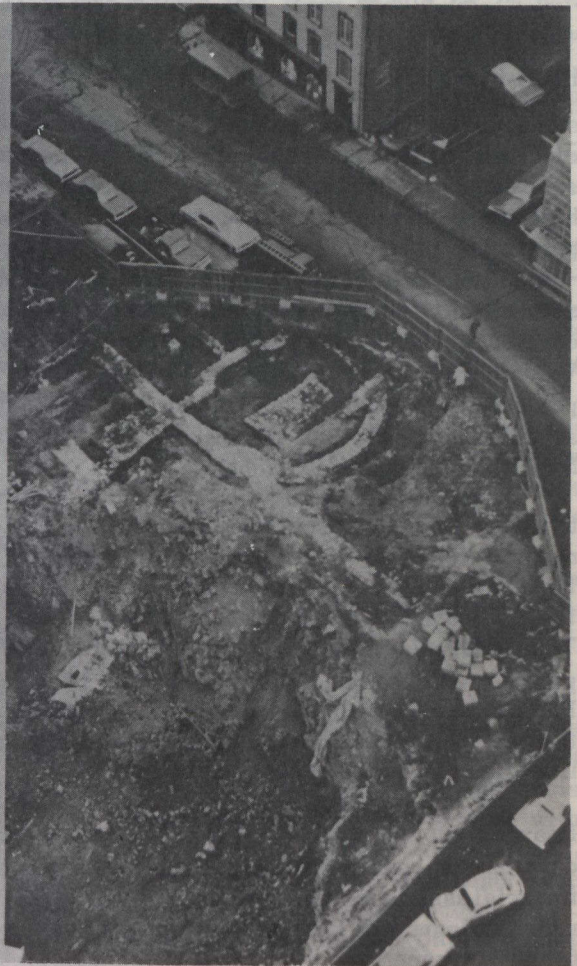
CHURCH USED AS ARMS DEPOT

The church, built in 1666, was slightly damaged during the 1759 bombardment by the British. Earlier, it was used for Protestant worship and then converted into an ammunition depot by troops who had requisitioned the Jesuit college adjoining the church. It was finally torn down in 1807 as it was becoming unsound. The foundation remained, however, at ground level until at least 1810. From 1844 to 1875, the grounds were used as a public market place.

Less than half of the foundation was investigated by archeologists; the other part lies under the present Des Jardins street. Old documents state that

from 1670 to 1794, the remains of 77 ecclesiastics were buried under the church. When it was demolished the remains were exhumed and buried elsewhere, most likely in the cathedral's crypt.

Archeologists uncovered traces of the apse's external walls, the right transept, part of the nave's internal wall, some of the railing supports of the high altar and of the altar of the right transept. Among the treasures discovered were a small engraved wedding ring, used, it is believed, by the Jesuits during wedding ceremonies, when the couple could not acquire one, china and English stoneware, cannon-balls and bomb fragments from the 1759 siege. Of the other items found on the site, most date from the nineteenth century. Archeologists believe that the 1807 demolition was executed with care, since only a few pieces of roof-slate imported from France were found, along with a few French bricks, nails, stones, possibly from the courtyard, together with pieces of hardware, worship artifacts and craftsmen's tools.



Upper left, the old Jesuit church; lower left, one of the unearthed tombs; right, aerial view of the foundation remains.