

Archaeologists hope for pay dirt

Dig for artifacts resumes at Pony Express Stables

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Members of the St. Joseph Archaeological Society returned Friday to the rear of the Pony Express Stables Museum, looking for another mother lode of artifacts like those found there last fall.

While society president Michael Fisher made random probes with a thin steel rod, Margaret Elder and Ron Meiners reopened a dig the organization had begun last fall.

The archaeologists soon will open a new excavation site east

and slightly north of this one. The new site likely will be the last one, Fisher said.

The present dig is a 10-by-10-foot square located near the alleyway south of the museum, and south and west of the well the group discovered last fall.

At that time, the excavators not only discovered a well, but within the well discovered artifacts that were probably used to fill that well once city water was piped to the old building in the 1880s.

Some of those artifacts — a children's tea set with miniature plates and pitchers, a large basin-type pitcher, an 1881 penny, and numerous shards of glass and pottery, are now on display in the museum, along with several old-style square nails also recovered.

The well itself likely will become a part of a permanent muse-

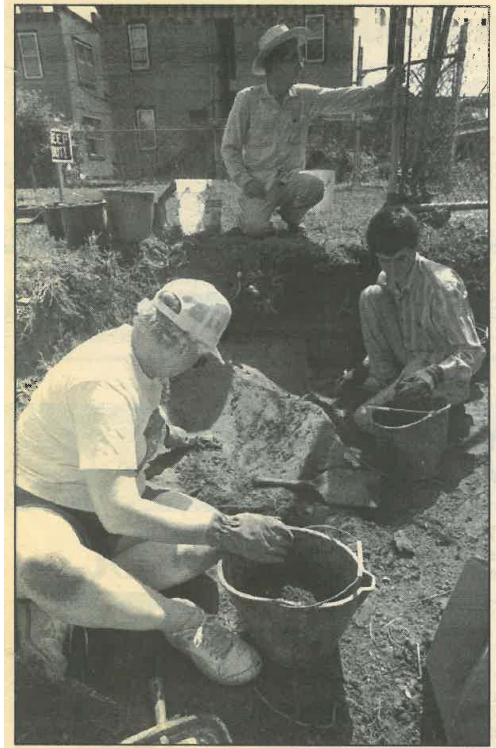
um exhibit at some time in the future — when the museum expands.

"It's my understanding that they plan to put a pump down in the well and use it to demonstrate how frontier families pumped water," Fisher said.

"We plan to go down another four inches or so at this site, then begin the new one," he added, noting that his ranks of volunteer excavationists had been thinned by vacations and work demands.

Meiners, from Maryville, is a senior at Northwest Missouri State University who is satisfying a scholastic requirement by participating in the dig. He will work with the group this summer, Fisher said.

"When we begin the new dig, we'll have a few more people," he said, adding that the digging will take place in the mornings.



Staff photo by ERIC KEITH

Mike Fisher watches over Margaret Elder and Ron Meiners as they excavate the original Pony Express stables.