

# Stables dig yields tiny dinnerware

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A well no one knew was there is yielding dollhouse-sized dishes at the latest archaeological dig at the Pony Express Museum.

Mike Fisher, president of the St. Joseph Archaeology Society, reported the findings Tuesday, but was at a loss to explain what has been found or the source.

"We located the site of the well about a week ago, but weather forced a delay in excavating it," said Fisher, who says that the brick-lined well, which is about three feet in diameter, may be up to 15 feet deep.

"We were surprised by the presence of the well, because it would have been located within the old stables," Fisher said. "We know that indoor plumbing, or piped-in water came to this area about 1880, so we're assuming that the well was abandoned about that time."

The dig will continue until the bottom of the well is reached, Fisher said.

The first of the small dishes, which include plates about one inch in diameter, tiny pitchers with removable lids and tiny tea or coffee cups, were found just past the three-foot mark.

"So far, we've found over 100 of those dishes," Fisher said. "The staff of the St. Joseph Museum, including historian Jackie Lewin, is attempting to place them in time or find where they came from. We just don't know."

A number of other artifacts also have been filtered from the diggings. A number of shards from lamp chimneys have been found, along with several almost-complete chimneys.

A wash basin/water pitcher set made of ironstone china also has been unearthed. Those pieces carry the name J and G Meakin, Hanley, England. Fisher says he hopes that the missing fragments so they might be put back together.

"There was a lot of ironstone china made, so I'm not sure yet whether we can date those pieces. We're hoping we can," he said, talking while other members of his organization bustled around him in an effort to get as much work as possible done before bad weather comes again. More than 30 members of the archaeological group has assisted in the series of digs.

Another strange find in the dig was a few chunks of plaster of paris — unlike any within the present museum.

"This dig isn't like the one at Robidoux Row," Fisher said. "When we dug up there, we found a number of bitters bottles and whiskey bottles and we could find dates for them. What I'd like to find here is a coin with a date on it — or something autographed



## Tea for 20

**Above:** Excavators, from left, Mike Fisher, Robin Chappell, James Smith and Jim Burruss helped recover artifacts from a well behind the Pony Express Stables Museum on Wednesday.

**Left:** Miniature tea sets were among the discoveries. **Related story, page 3B.**

Staff photos by IVAL LAWHON JR.

*N-P 11-14-91*