

# Military and Commercial Storage Buildings

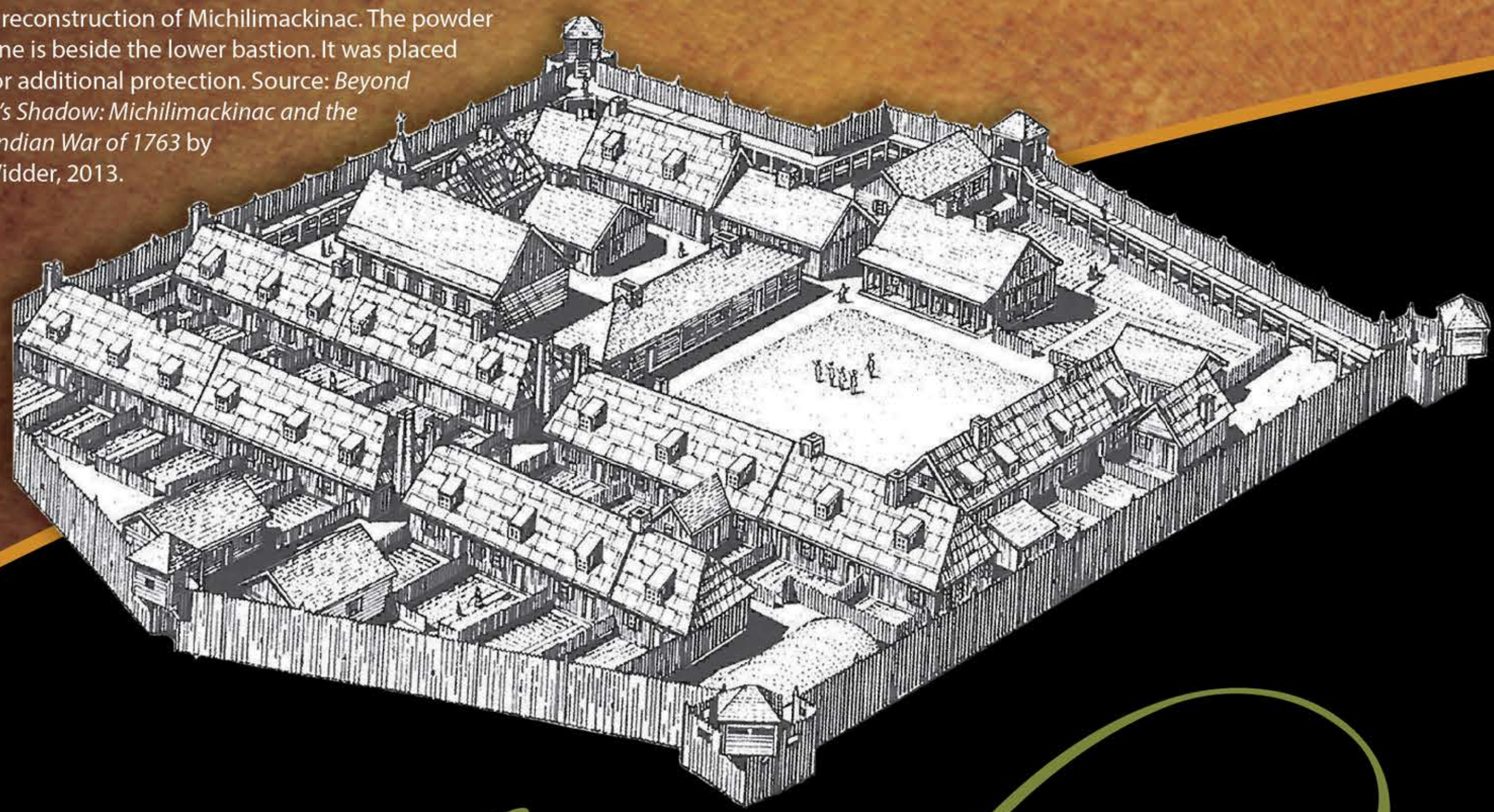
France expanded and sustained its sphere of influence in the North American interior by using forts as both military bases and sites of economic exchange. France's military presence and trading operations helped secure native allies.

## Military Storage Buildings

Soldiers used powder magazines to store gunpowder and munitions. The ability to dispense powder to French regulars and their native allies was key to French military strategy. Heavily fortified sites often had a more substantial powder magazine to store large amounts of powder and provided maximum security to prevent an explosion during an attack. Such forts boasted magazines built of expensive stone, while smaller forts made do with ones of cheaper wood and sod.

Thick walls supported the heavy roof. Ventilation in these buildings prevented a build up of black powder gases. Wooden magazines lacked daub insulation (clay and straw mixture), allowing the building to breathe, while stone ones had a window. Even with these precautions, soldiers and traders still feared living in close proximity to powder magazines.

Artistic reconstruction of Michilimackinac. The powder magazine is beside the lower bastion. It was placed there for additional protection. Source: *Beyond Pontiac's Shadow: Michilimackinac and the Anglo-Indian War of 1763* by Keith Widder, 2013.



▲ Top: Ruins of Fort de Chartres Powder Magazine. Bottom: Reconstructed Powder Magazine at Fort de Chartres

## Commercial Storage Buildings

Large forts like de Chartres (Illinois), Pontchartrain (Detroit), and Michilimackinac (Michigan) had massive storehouses as large as 90 x 30 feet and two stories high.

# Storehouses

These large storehouses contained a wide variety and large number of artifacts, which suggests that larger posts needed more space to store goods.

Smaller forts also had storehouses.

For example, Fort Ouiatenon (Indiana) had a small semi-subterranean *poteaux en terre* (posts in the ground) styled storehouse.

Fort St. Joseph's storehouse might have looked similar to Ouiatenon's because of the posts' similar size and location.

Although size and construction method varied by location, most storehouses lacked a fireplace, had shelves on the walls, and had basements. Traders also stored goods in their houses, basements, attics, or storage pits.



▲ Modern fur trade storehouse along the north shore of Lake Superior in Hovland, MN. Photo by Michael S. Nassaney.

Native Americans desired wampum (shell beads) for their use in political and ceremonial activities.



▼ Tinkling cones found at Fort St. Joseph. Native peoples used these cones for personal adornment.



▼ Lead seals like this one from Fort St. Joseph were attached to bolts of cloth, a common fur trade commodity.

