

Fort Loudoun Well Restoration Project Progress

By Donna Leight

In 2023, the Board of Directors agreed to seek funding for and proceed with the Fort Loudoun Well Top Restoration Project. A committee was formed to determine the scope and details of the restoration. It was decided to focus on the well top only, restoring the stonework and adding safety features appropriate for the well. Extraction of artifacts from inside the well would be outside the scope of the project.

It is decided that the restored well would look similar to the 18th Century Well in the King's Bastion at Fortress Louisbourg in Nova Scotia, though the Fort Loudoun well has a larger diameter.



Well in the King's Bastion, Fortress Louisbourg



Runyon Pump & Well Service removing the well's hand pump

Well Pump Removal

On May 23, 2025, Runyon Pump & Well Service and members of the French & Indian War Foundation (FIWF) were at the Fort Loudoun Historic Site, as the hand pump that has sat atop the well for over 100 years was safely removed. Runyon donated their services, providing valued community support for the Fort Loudoun Well Top Restoration Project.

Concrete Slab Removal

On September 16, the inside of the Fort Loudoun Well saw the light of day for the first time in almost 100 years. The concrete slab that was placed sometime before 1932 was removed and the historic well was exposed. The water, 14 feet below the surface, looked clean and clear. The stonework was beautiful, with no signs of damage or stress.

The upper 5 feet of the well wall is dry laid stone with small stones or wedges, known as chinks, to fill gaps between larger stones. These chinking stones tighten up loose-fitting rocks and provide wall stability. No mortar was used. Bedrock stone can be seen below the upper laid stone. Auger marks are clearly visible in the bedrock walls, where miners bored holes in the rock that were then filled with black powder, capped, and lit. These small charges would break the rock which was then lifted in buckets to the surface. From 1757-1758, German miner John Christopher Heintz and his crew blasted through 100 feet of rock, at the direction of Colonel George Washington of the Virginia Regiment during the French & Indian War.

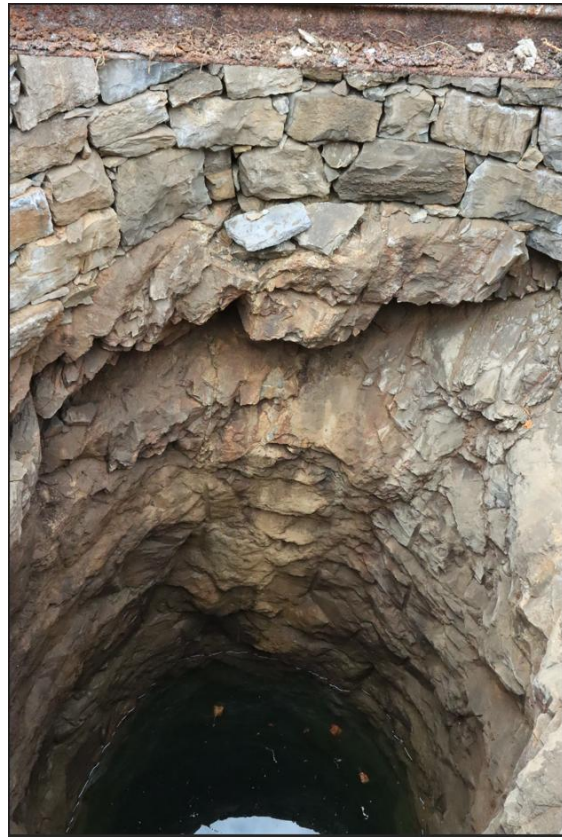
KEE Construction took great care to protect the well, recognizing its historical importance, as they removed the concrete slab and installed a hanging scaffold inside the well



KEE Construction at Work



Auger and Blast Holes



The Well Interior

Stonework

In October 2025, a detailed internal well inspection was performed by Edward Ashby of Ashby Masonry, Inc. While there were large voids in the bedrock and loose chinking stones, the well in excellent condition. Masons from Ashby Masonry, Inc. cleaned modern debris from rock outcroppings and added chinking stones were needed. The well interior is dry laid and no concrete was added.

In December and January, the ground surface of the well was stabilized. Soil was removed from between the stones at the surface and concrete was added. This is needed to provide a stable well top. It will be covered when the soil is replaced. Stone from the Fort Loudoun property was shaped and used to raise the well walls by 6" to ensure the well is above ground level for proper drainage around the well area.

Capstones are being cut to serve as the top layer of the well. These stones will be rough cut as opposed to smooth, reflecting what might have been seen in the 1700's.



Ashby Masonry, Inc. at work

Remaining Work

The next phase includes fabrication and installation of a fall protection grate, installation of a removable cover, and placement of a memorial bench. The final phase will include landscaping and interpretive signage.

The well is currently fenced in keep the public safe and has a temporary cover to protect it from weather and debris. If anyone is interested in seeing the well or supporting the project, they can contact the French & Indian War Foundation at FIWF419@gmail.com or call Donna Leight at (240) 344-3290.