



**F**air greeting to you all. You will note that this issue has reached you somewhat early. I pushed the date back in order to get this information to any of you still interested in helping on the Chartres project. The work has been difficult, and promises to get worse, but I have no regrets that we have tackled such a major endeavor. Would I sound too cliché to say it has been “a learning experience?” While I can’t say the volunteerism from the guild has been overwhelming, enough of you have reached out to at least make me feel like such things are worth doing.

I have heard both praise and constructive criticism in relation to the project. The good things are what you might expect – the others, I hope to address.

A few of you have expressed an opinion that we should focus less on temporary structures and more on permanent sites. Why bring a stage set to Pennsic? Why not put that energy into something permanent?

To be honest, I agree with you. Although I have all too willingly thrown my life into utter chaos with this all-too-temporary project, I am prepared to shift away from temporary structures as soon as we come of that age – and I know many of you are already there. When we first met as a guild at last year’s Pennsic, I thought the chances of building permanent sites was “slim to none” for most of us. But I’m beginning to think otherwise. Just look at this issue’s letter section. Here’s a person with land, offering exactly what we have all talked about for decades. I have heard rumors

of a permanent site already existing in California. Like you, I feel this is a direction we want to be moving in, and I am resolved to do my best to gather the kind of materials that will help those of you reconstructing permanent structures. I would certainly appreciate any articles or leads to that effect.

As to the value of temporary “sets,” I look upon them breeding grounds for ideas, in the same way NASA’s missions used to spin off dozens of new technologies. For example, in the process of building the Chartres features, we have developed plans for period candelabras, learned how to create life-sized sculptures, experimented with lighting and stained glass, and done a lot of research on the religious mood of 16th century France, on what makes a space like this *sacred*.

Here then, is the crux of my reasoning. If I build a Norse longhouse or a Norman church or a British hillfort or a French cathedral, I want more than a nifty replica where I can hold events. I want to believe (however *medieval* that notion may be) that the people who created this place still haunt its environs, that their spirits are infused in the architecture, that their gods will hear my voice in this setting, and reveal some secret-beyond-words that a complex modern world can’t supply.

We may be asked one day whether any of what we have created serves a purpose beyond Disney World gimmickry. What separates us from them is a state of mind, I believe, and a motivation that comes from a deep place within – a need to know.

Enough. There’s still so much work to be done.

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