

Captain Whorton's Other Forts: Where Were They? Part 2

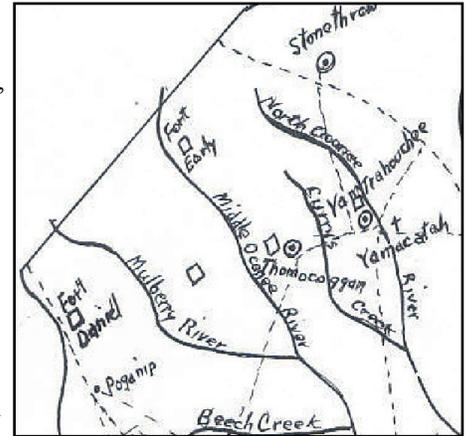
Research into the organization of militia in Georgia during the Creek Indian War has led to the conclusion that there were other active forts, besides Fort Daniel, in Jackson County in 1813-14. Part 1 of this study, appearing in the last GAB, presented a Georgia Journal paymaster notice from the August 24, 1814 issue, which indicated that pay would be issued at the Jackson county seat at Jefferson for men serving under the command of Captain Whorton at Forts Daniel, Floyd and Harrison (see Vol. VI: 3:1).

But same notice indicated that pay would be issued at Carnesville—county seat of Franklin County—for men serving under Whorton at Forts Early, Washington, and Madison. In Part 1, Fort Early, appearing on the “Elrod” sketch map (right), was identified in a letter from Hugh Montgomery, “as the one at the Federal Road about fifteen meters north of it.”¹ It is clear from the map, and another source cited below, that Fort Early was in Jackson County, not Franklin.

If Fort Washington is the same as the “Washington Barracks” on the Broad River from whence Gilmer began his march to Standing Peachtree with 11 Regulars - the old Fort Washington that was originally, Heard’s Fort - it was in Wilkes, not Franklin County. Yet, a summary of the accounts of Col. Dudley of Franklin County “for furnishing Sundry detachments of Militia with rations and Forage, who were stationed on the frontier line of Jackson, Franklin and Clarke Counties...”² suggests that it was in Franklin County, as was Fort Madison!

The Dudley summary includes a list of forts, by county, where he supplied, “Mounted Spies employed by Maj. Patton.” They were: in Franklin County, Ft. Washington and Ft. Madison; in Jackson County, Ft. Floyd, Ft. Daniel, Ft. Harrison, and Ft. Early, and in Clarke County, Ft. Smith and a fort or station at High Shoals. The last two would have been on the Appalachian River frontier. Still another document puts Fort Madison in Jackson County!

Fortunately, a 1797 “certificate of appraisement” for work done “in the County of Jackson at Fort Maddison,” was recently found at the Georgia Historical Society in Savannah.³ While it does not precisely locate this fort, it does indicate that it was a Jackson County fort, and was built by two Jackson County citizens. The document, courtesy of the Georgia Historical Society, contains other important information, not the least of which is a sketch plan of the fort (see insert on next page).



Segment of the “Elrod” map that was used in the March issue showing both Fort Early and Fort Daniel.



Several things stand out in this appraisement. First, the document states that, “Thomas Kennedy and Isham Williams, both citizens of Jackson County [have] made oath that two Blockhouses or Stations on our frontiers, which have been built in the County of Jackson at Fort Maddison by order of Executive of said State... are worth sixty four dollars and twenty five cents each and more if the law will allow it.”

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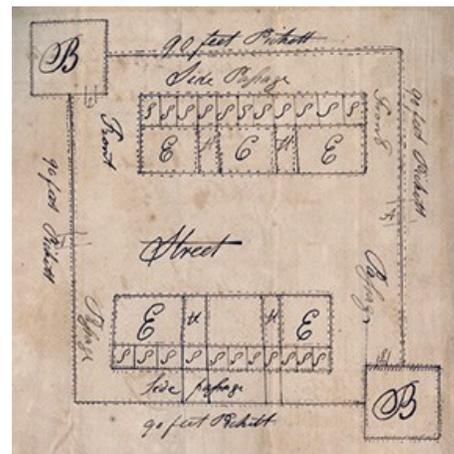
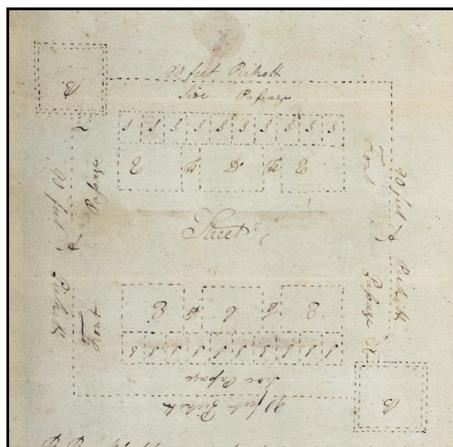
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What does this mean: “two Blockhouses or Stations”?

The basic meaning of “Blockhouse” is a fortified structure with ports or loopholes through which defenders may direct gunfire, sometimes with an overhanging second story. The blockhouse can be a stand-alone structure, such as the one at Fort Yargo that was a fortified residence, or can be integrated into a stockade wall along with one or more other blockhouses and or “bastions,” which were constructed for use with canon. These multi-component fortifications might also be referred to as a “Blockhouse fort,” “Stockade fort,” or “Blockhouse” for short. The same frontier defensive structures were sometimes also called “Stations.” Thus, we see military reconnaissance maps done for the Oconee Wars in the early 1790’s, marked with the locations of “Forts” and “Stations.” Although all were fortified in some way, some were private forts (like Yargo) while others, as marked on this certificate, were “Military.”

So, did Williams and Kennerly build two forts or two stations, or did they built two blockhouses at one fort? Though the terminology is a bit confusing, the apparent meaning is that they built the two blockhouses for Fort Madison, valued at \$64.20 each, the erection of the stockade walls and interior structures not being part of this contract. This interpretation is justified by a note on the back of the one of pages of the document which says, “2 Block Houses built at Fort Habersham by Lt. John Runnels.” Clearly two forts were not built at Fort Madison, nor were two built at Fort Habersham.⁴ And these were military in nature, State militia to be precise.

An example of a military or militia fort was the plan that President Washington sent, via his Secretary of War, Henry Knox, to Governor Mathews in 1794 in partial response to a request from the Governor for help during the 1780s - 1790s “Oconee War.” This plan (right a), referred to by us as, “The Knox Plan,” was uncovered at the Georgia Archives during early research on Fort Daniel, and we had wondered if this early plan could have been used in the construction of Fort Daniel 20 years later, or the earlier “fort at Hog mountain.” According the archived records of the Governor’s office, the plan had been “filed,” and apparently forgotten.



Apparently not! The “Maddison” plan (above right) belies that conclusion, and suggests that, at least by the end of the 1790’s decade, it was being used. The Fort Madison plan is virtually identical to the original 1794 plan, signifying that it was copied from the original, and was probably circulating as a “prototype”. Of course, this raises the likelihood that other forts from this period, built to be used by mounted militia, employed this design, and that the design may still have been in use by the time of the Creek Indian War during which Fort Madison was still in service.

Another thing that stands out is that Isham Williams is one of the men who worked as a contractor on the road from Fort Daniel to Standing Peachtree. He is also one listed on Fort Daniel invoices as having supplied meat to the garrison, and, according to Flanigan, was the contractor who built the first Court House after Gwinnett County was created.⁵ Both he and Kennerly, were citizens of Jackson County.

The final thing that stands out is that the certificate of appraisalment is filed in Wilkes County. Why such a certificate would not be filed in the County where the construction took place, or where the contractors were citizens, was perplexing to me, until Eli Stancel pointed out that in order for the builders of these military forts to be paid, they had to submit their “invoice” for certification, and this could be done in any Courthouse. Therefore, the builders might have gone to the Courthouse that was most convenient for them, this having nothing to do with where they were citizens, or where the fort was located. *Continue next page.*

If the place of certification is not necessarily a clue as to the location of the fort, the place where the paymaster was meeting the troops was probably not, either. We have seen that payments to troops who served at Fort Early and Fort Madison were being paid in Carnesville, even though both forts were in Jackson County, as were forts, Daniel, Floyd, and Harrison, whose troops were paid in Jefferson.

Unfortunately, none of this really helps us to precisely locate where these fort were, exactly, but we can say that there were these others besides Daniel and Early: Floyd, Harrison, and Madison. In the next part of this series we will look at Appalachian River Frontier where at least one of these forts may have been located. ■ JJD.

1. Hugh Montgomery to Peter Early, F2MontgomeryHugh038C, Georgia Archives.
2. Georgia military affairs, 1775-1842, Vol. 2, p.283-5, Georgia Archives.
3. Fort Madison Certificate MS 0263, The Georgia Historical Society, Savannah.
4. Habersham is another fort whose location is not known. Probably named after Joseph Habersham.
5. James Flanagan, History of Gwinnett County, 1818-1943. Vol. 1. p.149.