

Preserving History Through Archaeology



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GWINNETT ARCHAEOLOGY BULLETIN

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Surprising Document Found in the Fort Harrison Search

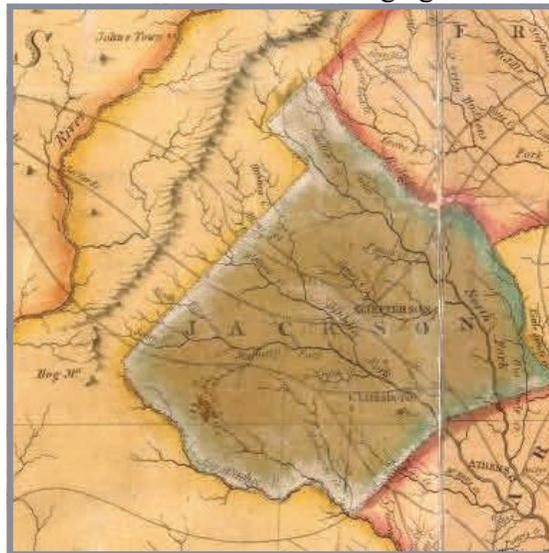
Article by Tyler Holman

In spite of the disappointment of two recent field surveys, a major breakthrough has been made in the search for Fort Harrison. A recently digitized War of 1812 pension application for a soldier named Wiley Pierce contains the most detailed description of the fort's location yet known along with significant implications for the history of Fort Daniel.

Historical records concerning Georgia's frontier forts are relatively scarce, and those which do exist tend to be administrative documents shedding only a little light on the men who actually served at them. Pension records offer a way to rectify that since they can provide firsthand accounts from enlisted men who otherwise left behind little for the historical record. Regarding

Fort Harrison, pension records like Pierce's are the only documents known to contain more than a passing reference to the fort.

If the age given on his pension is correct, Wiley Pierce



was born around 1792 in North Carolina and was in Jackson County, Georgia, by 1813 where, according to the application, he was drafted into Captain Joseph Whorton's company during the fall of 1813. By 1815, Pierce was on the move and appears to have passed through Tennessee before settling in Missouri, where he would spend the rest of his life.¹

In 1874 at the age of 81 Pierce dictated an account of his service on an application for a Federal pension for his time at Fort Harrison. He stated that he served around

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GARS/Fort Daniel News

- **GARS Meeting:** *Gwinnett Archaeological Research Society (GARS)* will be meeting on Tuesday, September 17 at Fort Daniel Historic Site beginning at 7PM. Dr. Jim D'Angelo along with other members will be speaking about the ongoing search for Fort Harrison. Recently discovered documents have been very helpful in rediscovering the fort's location.
- **Members in Print:** Two members of the Fort Daniel Foundation and GARS have articles published in the Fall issue of the Gwinnett Historical Society's quarterly newsletter, *The Heritage*. Dr. D'Angelo wrote a short article entitled "Archaeology in Gwinnett, 2019" in correlation with a reprint of Patrick H. Garrow's article, "Archaeology in Gwinnett, 1988." Tyler Holman did a major article entitled, "Drunken, Desperate Men: The Klans of Gwinnett, 1868–1872."
- **Congratulations:** GARS President and *Gwinnett Archaeology Bulletin* Editor Delana Gilmore has recently been selected by the Society of Georgia Archaeology (SGA) Board of Directors to head the editorial team of *The Profile*, a biannually newsletter of the SGA.
- **Retiring of Abby:** The ArchaeoBus, which has been a big attraction at the annual Frontier Faire, has officially been retired but still wants to work—only in a stationary location. Also known as *Abby*, the ArchaeoBus could be a wonderful addition to an entity serving as a unique hands-on, dynamic classroom, and museum. If you know an entity that might be interested, please contact [Rita Elliott](#) for more information.



Forgotten Frontier

**11th Annual Frontier Faire
Saturday, October 19, 2019**

10AM–4PM

Fort Daniel Historic Site

(2505 Braselton Highway/GA 124, Buford)

Admission:

Individual—\$2 Family—\$5

★ Storytelling by Barry Stewart Mann at 1PM ★

Public Archaeology ★ Fort Daniel Museum ★ Demonstrations

For information visit www.thefortdanielfoundation.org.

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two months of actual duty at a wage of \$8 per month. During that time Pierce stated that he was “engaged in making a fort . . . located on the Federal Road six miles south of Van’s Ferry on the Catahoochy [sic] River on the line between the State of Georgia and the Cherokee Indians.” Although it is never referred to by name in the pension, the description of the fort being on the Federal Road matches the location of Fort Harrison given on a certificate by Joseph Whorton on April 29, 1814 and signed “Fort Harrison, Jackson County Federal Roads [sic]” along with a variety of other circumstantial evidence.²

All of this, of course, aligns with Hugh Montgomery’s description of a fort “at the Federal Road, about 150 meters north of it.”³ When combined with historical and modern maps documentary evidence makes it possible to identify an approximate location for Fort Harrison with much more certainty than was previously possible. This has led to the identification of a hill on Martin Road near Flowery Branch as a possible location for Fort Harrison, and permission has been secured from the owners for a recently conducted informal metal detecting survey.⁴ (*See Page 6 for more details of the survey.*)

The application also gives a detailed description of the construction of Fort Harrison which confirms, as expected, that it was based on the same “Knox Plan” as Fort Daniel.⁵ Besides the construction of the fort itself, Pierce and the other men stationed at Fort Harrison during this period appear to have been relatively inactive: “. . . said command went into the woods—cut in and carried timber and made a fort and two Block Houses—that he was drafted for the period of six months⁶—but was disbanded and let go home when the command left the fort aforesaid—but ordered to hold himself in readiness to be called out at any time during the 6 months, but was not called out but one time.”⁷

A photograph of a handwritten document in cursive script. The text is written on aged, slightly yellowed paper. The handwriting is clear but somewhat slanted. The visible text reads: "months - but was not called out but one time - sometime during the winter of 1813 he was called to a fort at Hawk Mountain Fort in Jackson County, Georgia during an". The text is cut off at the end of the line.

That “one time” describes a potentially important episode in the history of Fort Daniel as the pension (*pictured above*) goes on to state that “sometime during the winter of 1813 he was called to Hawk Mountain Fort in Jackson County, Georgia during an Indian excitement and he remained at said Fort for 18 days until General Pinkney [sic] from South Carolina came to said fort with his command and the trouble settled.” As Pierce’s account was transcribed by a local ordinary in Dent County, Missouri, where Pierce was living at the time, *Hawk Mountain Fort* must be a misunderstanding of “Hog Mountain Fort,” which would mean that Pierce was stationed at Fort Daniel during this time. The “Indian excitement” could be correlated to a pay voucher which states that “the militia that assembled at or near the Hog Mountain about the 10th October last [1813] in consequence of an alarm produced for fear of the Indians,” but the chronology of the events Pierce described is uncertain at this time.

General Pinkney refers to Major General Thomas Pinckney who was Commander of the Southern Division of the US Army with overall command during the war with the Creeks. Unfortunately, Pierce’s reference to Pinckney’s presence at Fort Daniel does not align with Pinckney’s own correspondence and other official

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Documents that place him at or near Fort Hawkins at Macon during the time of this ‘Indian excitement’ at Hog Mountain.⁸ Nevertheless, Pierce’s reference to Pinckney is specific enough to suggest some element of truth, and the possibility remains for the involvement of men from his command or some other chronological confusion.

Insofar as his service at Fort Daniel is concerned, Pierce is only listed as serving at Fort Harrison on Whorton’s muster roll, but this can be explained by understanding how the militia was organized during this period.⁹ The militia here were actually part of Booth’s 4th Regiment but were detached to build and serve in the forts. Whorton’s roster stated he was there for the period of January to March of 1814. The Georgia Militia was organized into groupings called *classes*. After one class had served 60 days, they were relieved by the second class and so forth. On the frontier when forts were not being constructed or staffed, men could be released to return home subject to immediate call back if their service was needed. For those researching the men who served at Fort Daniel and other forts, this raises the possibility that there were other men who were on active duty at other forts but may have been assigned to stints at other forts, Fort Daniel among them. Knowing this, it can be assumed that Pierce’s description was correct, and though he was at home, Pierce was still technically on “active duty” during this period.

Sadly, the pension office rejected Pierce’s application stating that the “claimant’s name is not borne on the rolls of Captain J. “Horton’s” Co., Georgia Militia,” despite the fact that a Private Wiley Pierce was (as stated above) clearly present on the rolls for Captain Whorton’s company from January 5, 1814 to March 5, 1814. He died while trying to appeal it in 1874 around the age of 82. ■ **TH**

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1. The Pierce family appears on the 1860 US Federal Census for Dent County, Missouri, with several children said to be born in Tennessee.
 2. Certificate, Captain J. Whorton, 29 April, 1814, Georgia Indian Depredations Claims, Georgia Archives.
 3. See GAB VII.8 page 4.
 4. Hugh Montgomery to Peter Early, F2MontbomeryHugh038C, Georgia Archives.
 5. See ‘Cultural Resource Management: Reconstruction’ in April 2016 issue of *GAB* for a discussion of the Knox Plan.
 6. Per Eli Stancel, The Federal government required the states to unify their standards for size of a force and enlistment period in 1813. Booth’s 4th Regiment conformed to this standard of a 6-month enlistment. However, the governor of Georgia allowed a small group of men to detach and stay in their home areas for the building of Forts for defense and he only required a 60 day service period.
 7. Georgia. Office of the Governor. *Executive Department Minutes, 1778-1989*.
 8. *Records of the United States Army Commands, 1784-1821: Records of Departments, Districts, Divisions, and Posts, 1813-15, Sixth Military District, 1813-15; Letters Sent, March 1813 – June 1815*.
 9. As described by Eli Stancel’s ‘Military Structure During the War of 1812’ in the May 2018 issue of *GAB*, and once again clarified by him here.

How Tree Rings Date an Archaeological Site

From an article by Erin Blackmore as featured on [The National Geographic Web site](#) on July 8, 2019

Archaeologists have a group of unlikely allies: trees. Dendrochronology, the scientific method of studying tree rings, can pinpoint the age of archaeological sites using information stored inside old wood. Originally developed for climate science, the method is now an invaluable tool for archaeologists, who can track up to 13,000 years of history using tree ring chronologies for over 4,000 sites on six continents. Trees don't grow their trunk uniformly; though they add a new ring each growing season, trunk growth is closely linked to climate conditions. Under ideal conditions, trees grow quickly—leaving wide annual rings behind (*as pictured below right*). During droughts, unseasonable cold, and other unusual conditions, growth slows leaving behind narrow rings.

In the early 20th century, astronomer Andrew Ellicott Douglass began studying trees in the American Southwest to learn more about how sunspots affected climate on Earth. When he realized that the rings of trees in the same area all had the same patterns, he decided to use them as a record of the area's historical climate.

Douglass eventually extended his work from living trees to wood used in ancient pueblo sites and began using them to piece together a regional chronology that could be used to date such archaeological sites. His research, which was partially funded by the National Geographic Society, helped push back the previously suspected dates for pueblos and changed the way archaeologists saw excavation sites.

Today, dendrochronology is a critical tool for helping date archaeological sites and artifacts. The term was derived from the ancient Greek words for tree (*dendron*) and time (*khronos*)

When archaeologists recover timbers during excavations, they either cut full cross-section or retrieve cross-section cores, then compare them to regional chronologies to find matching ring patterns and determine a site's age. Differing ages in specimens can reveal waves of construction at a particular site or reveal migration and trade patterns with pieces of wood that were not cut locally.

Dendrochronology is more useful in some areas than others. In the tropics, for example, trees do not show distinct seasonal patterns, which makes tropical dendrochronology challenging. Wood must be well preserved to study effectively. Besides ancient people didn't necessarily build with wood, depriving archaeologists of a critical tool for studying them.

Nonetheless, the tool is used across disciplines like climatology and art history, and tree ring chronologies are even used to calibrate radiocarbon dating measurements. Laboratories like the University of Arizona's Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research train researchers and conduct ongoing research.

As tree ring data piles up, researchers have realized how valuable it can be. Tree ring patterns have recently been proven to match up with historical drought records and have revealed everything from changing indigenous forest management in the Central Amazon to the climate patterns that caused ancient Rome to rise and fall. Because of its cross-disciplinary use, dendrochronology has strengthened links between disciplines—and proven how valuable trees can be to archaeologists in search of more information about the sites they study. ■ NG



More Diggin's

- **Educator Open House at the Atlanta History Center:** Educators are invited to the Atlanta History Center for a FREE daytime event on **Saturday, September 14 from 9AM to 12PM**. Meet the education team and learn about the school tours, outreach programs, and educator resources. During this special event you get a sneak peek at the new *The Battle of Atlanta* cyclorama school tour, *Stories After the Battle: The Cyclorama and How We Remember*; experience the new Native American school tour, *We're Still Here: An Exploration of Cherokee History and Culture*; access to all of Atlanta History Center's exhibitions, historic houses, and gardens after the open house; and receive a 20% discount in the Museum Shop. Free admission for each educator and one guest. Educators must show current school identification. *Preregistration is required to reserve your spot to attend Educator Open House, so please register at the [Atlanta History Center Web site](#).*



- **Gwinnett Historical Society Monthly Meeting:** The next Gwinnett Historical Society meeting will be on **Monday, September 16** at the Historic Courthouse in Downtown Lawrenceville **beginning at 6:30PM**. Guest speaker Jason Wetzel will be talking about his book on Prisoner of War Camps in World War II Georgia. For information visit the [GHS Web site](#).

- **Winn Fair:** The 41st Annual Winn Fair hosted by the Gwinnett Historical Society will be held on **Saturday, October 5 at the Elisha Winn House (pictured left) from 10AM to 5PM**. Tour the historic house with period furnishings, one-room school, working blacksmith shop, old log jail, and barn. There will be demonstrations, arts and crafts, antique ven-

dors, reenactors, live country/bluegrass music, handmade quilt raffle, and food vendors. For more information please visit the [GHS Web site](#).

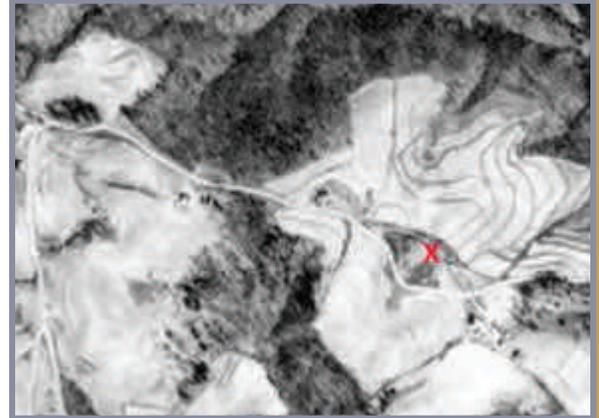
- **Haunted Halloween at the Atlanta History Center:** This annual event of ghouls and goblins will be on **Friday, October 18 beginning at 6:30PM**. Be prepared for thrills and chills as you walk through the Atlanta History Center's foggy gardens and haunted historic houses! Families are invited to experience the 33-acre campus after dark with fun kid-friendly activities and ghostly encounters. With the scare factors ranging from "all ages" to "twens, teens, and above," there are Halloween activities for everyone. Travel to a magical world of wizards and witches in the museum and then make your way to Swan House for a fun trick-or-treat experience. For those brave of heart get ready for bone-chilling trails and terrifying scenes around the grounds! Enjoy food for purchase and visit one of several cash bars for your favorite libation. This special holiday program is \$20 for not-yet members, \$15 for members, and \$10 for all children. For information visit the [Atlanta History Center's Web site](#).



The Continual Search for Fort Harrison

At the end of last month Tyler Holman, Greg Beavers, and I, accompanied by Tyler's father, Randy, conducted an informal survey of a site that had potential for being the site of Fort Harrison. This was the third such survey this year, and each one was based on research that led us there. That is a story in and of itself that will appear in the October issue of the *Gwinnett Archaeology Bulletin*.

The hill that was chosen for this survey was based on a description of the fort's location gleaned from two historic documents: Hugh Montgomery's January 14, 1814 letter to Georgia's Governor in which he states that the fort is 150 meters north of the Federal Road (see GAB VII.8); and a recently discovered document in which a man who served at Fort Harrison states that it was on the Federal Road six miles from Vann's ferry (see Page 1). These documents narrowed down the search once again to one of a few possible elevated landforms on the north side of the road and immediately south of the new (as of 1812) boundary between Jackson County and Cherokee lands to the north.



One of these locations is a small hill on the north side of the Federal Road as seen in a 1944 aerial photo taken before the road was straightened (*pictured above right*). A red "X" marks the highest point of that hill, which is also about 150 meters north of the road. This is where our third survey was done. A property plat of the same hill (*pictured below*) shows the locations of the only positive metal detection hits and a brick home, complete with basement, on the only portion of the hill where a fort could have been situated.

A walkover of the central portion of the property indicated that the hill slopes to the Southwest from the house and drops off fairly sharply around its North, East, and South sides. Therefore, the only place the fort could have been is where the house now stands, and it could not have been any larger than Fort Daniel at 75' x 75' if not closer to 50' x 50'.



The scant number of artifacts recovered (besides modern debris) include: one heavily corroded 3" cut nail, two cut nail shanks, an identified cast iron fragment, a steel washer with machine cut hole, and another unidentified iron object. These will be presented in the October article but, by themselves, can't make the case for a fort (or other structure) having been here. ■ **JJD**

MEMBERSHIP FEES:

If you would like to join or renew your GARS membership, please contact Kay McKenna; and for FDF membership please contact Betty Warbington.



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Saving 152 Nassau Street

Excerpt from an article by Edgar Treiguts as featured on [WSB Radio Web site](#) on September 2, 2019

The fate of 152 Nassau Street remains cloudy after a court hearing in late August was delayed. However, one development recently is giving a preservationist a glimmer of hope the downtown Atlanta property might be saved. It's in the hands of a Fulton County Superior Court judge to determine the building's future. Until that happens, a demolition company's equipment will remain idle—as it has since early August when work was first halted by a court order

It was inside the Nassau Street address in 1923 Atlanta-area resident Fiddlin' John Carson recorded what are believed to be the first hits in the music genre today known as country music. Okeh Records used the building as a temporary recording space. There were other local musicians who also put their music down on wax. Fast forward to this summer, when a developer out of Myrtle Beach got a permit to demolish the

building. It has plans for a 21-story, "Margaritaville" themed hotel.

As the AJC has reported, preservationists including the group Historic Atlanta have been fighting to save the property from the wrecking ball. A lawsuit filed against Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms and City Planning Commissioner Tim Keane says the city didn't allow for due process when deciding to demolish the building.



Kyle Kessler is an Atlanta architect and preservationist. He tells WSB Radio his letter to the Georgia Historic Preservation Division about the building just got a response. "That in spite of that partial demolition that the building is still

'exceptionally significant,' and is eligible for listing on the National

Register," says Kessler.

He continues to state that there's a continuing groundswell of support for the property, which he hopes can sway a decision from the judge when she decides the fate of 152 Nassau Street. ■ **WSB**

GARS OFFICERS

www.thegars.org

President: Delana Gilmore
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To keep up with the latest digs and activities from GARS follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

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