

# Preserving History Through Archaeology



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## GWINNETT ARCHAEOLOGY BULLETIN

Pioneer Tech: Weapons for Defense of Fort Daniel.....	1	Legacy Corner.....	4
More Diggin's.....	3	Researchers Dated Timber Structure in Mississippi.....	5

### Pioneer Tech: Weapons for Defense of Fort Daniel

Article by Jerry Creager, Fort Daniel Foundation Legacy Member

The purpose of this article is not to discuss the history of Fort Daniel. There is plenty of information available to cover that topic, but to highlight the weapons used in the time period that Fort Daniel was active. The main purpose for Fort Daniel was to provide protection for settlers in the Western Georgia Territory. Although the War of 1812 was in progress, most of the fighting in this area was not with the British but with a small band of Muscogee Creek who occupied much of the area surrounding Fort Daniel.

There were two main types of firearms used in this time period: the musket and the rifle. Both of these having a flintlock mechanism for the ignition of the main powder charge (*pictured above*).

Muskets were generally used by US troops as well as the British and some Native peoples. Organized militias would have also used muskets. During the Revolutionary War there were two main types of muskets. The British had the *Brown Bess*, and the Americans

had the *Charleville*, which was manufactured in France. Later the US started manufacturing the *Springfield* 1812 model. Many of the same firearms used in the War of 1812 were the same used in the Revolutionary war.

The Brown Bess (*pictured on Page 2*) is a 75 caliber smooth bore musket that had been in use by the Brit-

ish from around 1722 to 1832. It had an effective range of around 100 yards, and its accuracy was questionable for anything over 50 to 75 yards.

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*continued from Page 1*



## BROWN BESS



## CHARLEVILLE



## SPRINGFIELD MODEL

The Charleville (*pictured middle left*) was similar to the Brown Bess but was a 69 caliber smooth bore. Range and accuracy was not too different from the Brown Bess. In the hands of a trained individual these muskets could be loaded and fired 3 to 4 times a minute.

The US Springfield 1812 (*pictured bottom left*) was developed around the Charleville 777 model but had many improvements not only to the weapon itself but to the way it was manufactured. It also was a 69 caliber smoothbore. The Springfield Model 1812 musket arrived too late to be of use in the War

of 1812 but would later become standard issue to regular infantry and militia units.

Unfortunately, I could not find any documentation as to the number of non-militia individuals in the area at the time Fort Daniel was constructed and occupied. There is little doubt that civilians were present and played an important part in the overall defense. This being the case I would say that probably all of the civilian men had their personal weapons which were most likely rifles. The difference between a smooth bore and a rifle is that the rifle has grooves in the bore that causes the ball to spin when fired. This spinning action increases the accuracy considerably as well as range. It was not uncommon for a good marksman to be able to hit a target at 200 yards. The downside of the rifle is that it took longer to load and fire than a musket. A good shooter might be able to get off two shots in a minute. Remember that most men (and some women) depended on their marksmanship to put game on the table. The weapon of choice for hunting was the rifle. This also applied to militia men when it came to their personal weapons. Most of the “longrifles” were made by local gun smiths and were usually quite expensive by local standards. They ranged from 32 to 45 caliber for smaller game and 50 to 54 caliber for larger game. If one could afford it, there would be ornately carved stocks and inlaid engravings on the brass or metal parts (*pictured above right*).



The militia would most often have bayonets for which all of the above mentioned muskets would accept. The civilians would probably have a flintlock pistol and possibly a tomahawk. Much of the fighting was at close range and hand-to-hand. A tomahawk in the hands of someone who knew how to use it could be quite deadly. All of the above mentioned muskets and rifles are still manufactured today and are used by reenactors in all theaters of early American conflicts. Original antique firearms of this period are too valuable to risk firing or not in firing condition. ■ JC

# More Diggin's

- **BRAG Meeting:** Sister Society for Georgia Archaeology (SGA) Chapter Blue Ridge Archaeology Guild (BRAG) meets through Zoom on Wednesday, February 10 beginning at 7PM. The guest speaker will be Dr. Dennis Blanton. His talk is entitled *Conquistador's Wake: Tracking the Legacy of Hernando de Soto Through the Indigenous Southeast*. Join BRAG a few minutes before 7PM at: [https://ung.zoom.us/j/92336807425?](https://ung.zoom.us/j/92336807425?pwd=SIRtbUZmajlQbm1leldsK2k1cFFzZz09) This meeting will be recorded and available soon after the presentation at the BRAG [YouTube Channel](#). Dr. Blanton's presentation will describe the objectives and findings of a decade-long project at the Glass Site in Telfair County. Emphasis will be given to evidence of an encounter between the Native inhabitants of the Glass Site village and an early Spanish incursion. The implications of the findings, including the controversial nature of them, will also be discussed. Dr. Blanton is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at James Madison University in Virginia. He continues to pursue research in southern Georgia, an area for which he has deep affection. Most of the ongoing work still concerns late prehistoric and early "contact" period sites. Blanton formerly worked as the curator of archaeology at Fernbank Museum of Natural History in Atlanta.
- **Battle of Kettle Creek Celebration:** The 242nd Anniversary of the Battle of Kettle Creek "Revolutionary Days" will be held virtually through Zoom on February 13 beginning at 10AM. To register as a ceremony viewer through Zoom, please fill out the [registration form](#) through Google Forms by February 10.
- **Hill Mill Site Lab Day:** Join Gwinnett Archaeological Research Society (GARS) members on Saturday, February 20 from 1–3PM to analyze artifacts from historic Hill's Mill! These artifacts were recovered from the volunteer investigations conducted in 2020 by GARS members. You will have the opportunity to examine historic glass bottles, instruments, ceramics, clothing items, and more! By taking part in the analysis for this project, you will help to tell the story of Hill's Mill and contribute to our understanding of Gwinnett County history. Additionally, a full-length article about the discoveries at the Hills Mill site will be featured in the next *Gwinnett Archaeology Bulletin* (GAB).



## MEMBERSHIP FEES ARE DUE:

If you would like to join or renew your GARS membership, please contact Delana Gilmore; and for FDF membership please contact Cindy Horsley.



## Legacy Corner

*Stories of the men who were stationed at Fort Daniel and their descendants*

Recently, John Hyatt of St. Louis, Missouri wrote to the Fort Daniel Foundation officers about his family's connection to Fort Daniel. Below is his Fort Daniel legacy story:

I found out about Fort Daniel from Eli Stancel with whom I attended church at that time. I am a history enthusiast, a reenactor, and an avid amateur genealogist, so when I met Eli, we hit it off right away. I attended several local history events with him including an event at the Lawrenceville Female Seminary and the annual Elisha Winn House event.

I did not have any knowledge about Fort Daniel—much less any idea that I might have a family connection—but I was curious to learn what I could. As I walked around meeting people at my first Fort Daniel event, I came to the booth that had the lists of all the people who had served at Fort Daniel, and I began to look through it. To my surprise, two names from my family history studies jumped out at me—James Wilson and Ezekiel Dunagan.



When I married my wife, Shyral Stephens, in 1985, little did I dream that our families had connections to each other that go back to the time of the American Revolution (and beyond) including connections in the early settlement of Hall and Gwinnett Counties. As a genealogist and family historian, I began investigating her family tree as I was also investigating mine.

Shyral's great grandmother was Estie Dunagan who married W. Clarence McElhannon. Estie Dunagan was the great granddaughter of Joseph Ellis Dunagan and Lucinda Beall, the same family from which Georgia's First Lady Sandra (Dunagan) Deal is descended. Lucinda Beall was the daughter of General Frederick Beall, who ordered that Fort Daniel be built. Joseph Ellis Dunagan, Lucinda's husband, is the son of Ezekiel J. Dunagan, who appears on the Fort Daniel roll as a "spy"—or what we would call a "scout." Ezekiel Dunagan is also mentioned in

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documents by Sgt. Anthony Story of Jackson County as a spy for Fort Early and may have served at Forts Harrison and Floyd as well. Therefore, my wife, Shyral, is a descendant of two people who were involved in the building and defending of Fort Daniel, Gen. Frederick Beall and Ezekiel Dunagan, a scout.

I am also a descendant of a soldier who served at Fort Daniel, and who was closely connected to the Dunagan family. That is James Wilson (sometimes spelled Willson). James Wilson appears on the muster roll as a soldier serving under the command of Capt. Joseph Whorton (#47 on the roll. See GAB 2016, Vol. 8). James Wilson also appears in the list of old settlers in Dunagan's settlement in a document listing people who were living over the treaty line in "Indian Territory." James Wilson may have done his militia duty as a means of paying his taxes since there was little currency in circulation at this time.

James Wilson was also a Revolutionary War veteran who had served as a Captain under Colonel Thomas Neel from the New Acquisition District of South Carolina (York County today). After the war he moved to Jackson County, Georgia and appears there in 1803 as a juror in the minutes of the Superior Court. His daughter, Sophia, was also born in Jackson County in 1799. The location of his residence is not known at this time, so we do not know if he lived in the part of Jackson that was later formed into Gwinnett County in 1818. James Wilson also appears in the Roster of Revolutionary Soldiers in Georgia, where his death is recorded in 1824 in Monticello after his family had moved yet again.

James Wilson (or Willson) is my 5<sup>th</sup> Great-grandfather. His son was the Rev. James Riley Wilson, father of Benjamin Franklin Willson, whose daughter, Emily Willson married John A. Daniel, my great-great grandfather.

Since my wife Shyral Hyatt (maiden name Stephens) is the descendant of two veterans of Fort Daniel, and I am the descendant of a third, my children Brianna Elise Wilmot, and my son Jacob Asa Hyatt, may be unique in being descended from three veterans of Fort Daniel!

If you are a Fort Daniel Legacy member and would like for your story to be featured, please email [Cindy Horsley](#). Your family stories are a part of the legacy of Fort Daniel. ■ LC

# 13th Annual Frontier Faire



Saturday, October 16

10AM–4PM

Fort Daniel Historic Site  
(2505 Braselton Highway/GA 124, Buford)

# Preserving History Through Archaeology



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## Researchers Date Timbers from North Mississippi Structure to 1734

*Excerpt from an article featured on [USM Web site](#) on February 1, 2021.*

What began with a random phone call became an intense research project that led to remarkable discoveries by a group of professors and students at The University of Southern Mississippi (USM).

Assistant Professor of geography Dr. Tommy Patterson, Associate Professor of geography Dr. David Holt, and Associate Professor of geography Dr. Grant Harley joined forces to assist archaeologists in determining the age of timbers used in construction of the historic Colbert-Walker home site near Tupelo, Mississippi.

After nearly two years of painstaking analysis, the group formed a startling conclusion: pine wood from the Colbert-Walker structure could be traced back to 1734. What that means is that the former home represents one of the oldest, if not the oldest, dendro-dated (a scientific method of dating tree rings to the exact year they were formed) structures in



the Gulf South region.

Harley, who has since become a member of the faculty at the University of Idaho, points out that the Tupelo structure's 1734 date can be placed into historical context by comparing dates from other structures in the region: Timbers from the La Pointe-Krebs House in Pascagoula, Mississippi, were dated to 1757; timbers from a Jesuit plantation in New Orleans, Louisiana, were dated to 1762; timbers from the Deason House in Ellisville, Mississippi, were dated to 1835/36.

The Walker-Colbert home's construction has been traced to the 1850s. The USM research team has shown that it contains salvaged timbers that have persevered for more than 280 years. Future research aims to pinpoint the wood's origins. ■ **USM**

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