

The Pace of War Quickens for North Carolina

Third in a series of articles intended to provide historical information about Fort Dobbs, its role in the French and Indian War, its significance in teaching the history of North Carolina's contribution to the eventual British Victory and as a window into a world wide conflict that shaped the future of the United States.

Captain Andrew's Bailey's command at Fort Dobbs was increased to 100 men in 1758 to assist a major British offensive. By summer the company was marching overland from the frontier to Pennsylvania to link up with 200 more North Carolina soldiers that had already embarked for the North. The total force from North Carolina was under the command of Fort Dobbs' former commander Hugh Waddell. When they linked up with the army they joined a rapidly growing force that consisted of British Regulars from England and Scotland, and provincial troops from Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware.

This army's goal was to capture Fort Duquesne, at the forks of the Ohio River, the French post that had been a thorn in the side of the British for 4 years. The march was slow and arduous, building roads and forts in the wilderness and constantly preparing for attacks by the French and Indians. The North Carolina troops were employed building many of the fortifications along the march. By the fall they were brigaded with the Virginia and Maryland troops, under the command of Colonel George Washington. They successfully repulsed a French and Indian attack on the army's advance post in October.

By November the French figured the British were moving too slowly to make a major attack, and dismissed much of their force. But the British kept marching. The fort's commander finally realized the impossibility of defending the post and burned it to the ground. Some of the first troops on the site were Waddell's North Carolinians. The site of the Fort was renamed Pittsburgh, in honour of William Pitt, the British Secretary whose plans and support for the war had made success possible.

By the time the fort was taken and the troops came back to Carolina relations with the Cherokee had dissolved and Fort Dobbs was put front and center in the developing Cherokee War. The war hit North Carolina with a ferocity it had not experienced before. By 1759 it was reported that, "the back Settlers had...mostly quitted their habitations, and taken shelter in Fort Dobbs." Cherokee raids struck up and down the frontier and word of, "another large Body of Indians on the Back of Anson and Rowan Counties" spread. Major Waddell was sent with more troops, and some light artillery, from the coast to secure the area.

In February of 1760, the fort itself was attacked. Waddell and 9 other men marched 300 yards out of the fort and were attacked by 60-70 Cherokee, who they fired on and were able to fall back to the fort. The fort suffered 3 men wounded and one boy killed. By 1761 was acting as the rendezvous point for 5 companies of provincials ordered to link up with Virginia troops and march against the Cherokee.

By the time the 400 North Carolina troops joined the Virginians the Cherokee were suing for peace. The war for North Carolina was over and officially ended in 1763. It had been predicted in 1756 that, "when this war is over our frontier will be extended beyond the mountains this [fort] is only occasional at present." Those words proved true. Fort Dobbs had fulfilled its varied functions during its six years of active service. With the threat from the French, their Indian allies and the Cherokee eliminated, the growth, that had lead to the very

formation of Rowan County before the war, could continue. With the prospect of moving further west and securing the land up to and beyond the mountains Fort Dobbs was no longer needed as a military post.

For more information on Fort Dobbs or North Carolina's role in the French and Indian War, please visit <http://www.fortdobbs.org>, call 704-873-5992 or visit the Fort Dobbs State Historic Site for an interpretative tour.