

# Fort Dobbs Gazette

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## Building History One Musket at a Time

In 1909, the Fort Dobbs chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution recognized a gem with an amazing story that needed to be told. For many of them, this story provided a personal connection with their ancestors and an outlet to highlight an important facet of North Carolina history. This gem was the site of an 18th century military fort named after the Royal Governor Arthur Dobbs.

These women worked incredibly hard to bring about the reconstruction of the fort and in 1973, they gave the property to the State of North Carolina with the hopes that the state would step in and reconstruct their beloved fort.

This legacy of passion and love for the site has in no way diminished over time. Fort Dobbs State Historic Site is blessed with an active Friends Group and loyal community supporters who are working tirelessly to make the fort reconstruction a reality.

As of now, the Friends of Fort Dobbs are working on a legal agreement with the State of North Carolina that will allow them access to the site and the rights

reconstruct the fort and a new bathroom facility. This project is estimated to cost around \$2,000,000.00. With this being said, we need help!

One way you can support the Friend's fort reconstruction effort is by participating in their raffle for a fully functioning replica of a French and Indian War era musket!



Tickets are 1 for \$10.00, 5 for \$40.00, 11 for \$90.00 or anything in between!

We accept, cash, credit or check and can take phone orders.

The raffle will be held on **Sunday April 1st at 3 PM** during our War for Empire event. You do not have to be present to win.

**All proceeds will go towards building the fort!!!!!!**

For tickets, please call us at **704-873-5882**

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Wayne Steelman, Maintenance Mech.  
Greg Jones, Historic Interpreter  
Drew Neill, Historic Interpreter  
Krystal Arrington, Site Assistant

## Dispatch from the Fort by Gennifer Reiter,



Happy 2012!!!! The new year brings with it many possibilities and opportunities for the staff, volunteers, and Friends of Fort Dobbs, as well as our other loyal supporters, in the region and the City of Statesville! We are looking forward to doing archeological research on-site at some point during the month of March. We are also gearing up for our annual event War for Empire! I personally invite you to join us for a fun and educational weekend.

If you are not able to make it to the event, then please feel free to visit us anytime during our regular operating hours. The bottom line is we are here to provide the community with excellent educational opportunities and we love the chance to share our passion for this site and its history. Join Scott, Wayne, Krystal, Drew, Greg, our numerous costumed and non-costumed volunteers and myself in making this one of the best years in the history of Fort Dobbs!

## War For Empire

In the 1750's Fort Dobbs stood in the center of a frontier engulfed in warfare. Former allies unleashed brutal attacks not only on each other's warriors, but also their women and children. On both sides of the Blue Ridge, homes burned and families mourned.

On March 31 and April 1, join hundreds of soldiers, American Indians, and settlers from the 18th Century as we look at the French and Indian War history of North Carolina. This free public program runs from 10am-4pm Saturday and 10am-3pm Sunday and includes



highlighted programs, demonstrations, and activities every half-hour, including military drill and weapons firings, period tradesmen, and a battle scenario that will be presented at 1:30 each day.

A special school day is planned for Friday, March 30. Students will learn about 18th Century life through demonstrations and hands-on activities. Space is limited and reservations are required.



For information on any part of the event, please contact Fort Dobbs at

(704) 873-5882 or visit [www.fortdobbs.org/events.htm](http://www.fortdobbs.org/events.htm).

## Living History Update

The "garrison" for Fort Dobbs started the year with a workshop on January 28th, discussing the art of interpretation, detailing the history of North Carolina's coastal fortifications during the French and Indian War, and allowing volunteers to work on uniform construction projects.

The first living history event of the year was held on February 25-26, marking the 252nd anniversary of the Cherokee attack at Fort Dobbs. Despite strong winds on Saturday, it was a great weekend, with a good turnout of soldiers, natives, and the public.

On February 5-6, Historic Interpreter Scott Douglas participated in a training refresher for the safety officers of NC Historic Sites. The two day course was

held at Fort Macon, on Atlantic Beach. This site, on Bogue Banks, was also the location of the other Fort Dobbs: an artillery battery constructed in 1755-1756 to guard Beaufort harbour.

As noted in the column above, the largest event of 2012; War for Empire, will be held at the end of March. This event is always a favourite for both our visitors and also for our volunteers who make it possible.

On Memorial Day weekend, several garrison members will be assisting with an event at the Bennett Place State Historic Site in Durham commemorating American soldiers through history.

Be sure to come out to the site on June 9-10 for a summer living history program!

## When it Was News, 1762

*Letter from Governor Dobbs to the Board of Trade of Great Britain, dated 30th April 1762.*

I have had a strong struggle with the Assembly to obtain an Aid to his Majesty... but to no purpose, they were as obstinate as mules, so that after two short prorogations to give them time to reconsider and reflect upon their Proceedings,...I... dissolved the Assembly and have appealed to their Constituents for their Behaviour. I have also upon the Resolution the Assembly agreed to of a Pitiful and scanty allowance of a few men to garrison the forts,...as also upon their denial of raising 134 Recruits for the regulars, the Quota fixed upon this Province by...His Majesty's Orders, and as no money has been raised by the Assembly, I have upon their Resolutions advanced my own money to raise the recruits with Expedition,...which I hope His Majesty will approve of...I have also upon these resolutions given out Commissions to raise a Company under proper Officers to garrison the forts, and have added 15 Men to the Garrison of Fort Johnston, where His Majestys horses and artillery are kept & mounted with proper clothing and Bounty money to raise the Company without loss of time,...

In my last I recommended three gentlemen to your Lordships to be made Councillors upon their being three Vacancies by the death of two of the Members Mr. Swann and Dawson but as George Moore one of those I mentioned declines being appointed I do now add Colo Hugh Waddell who has behaved exceeding well in our Expeditions upon the Ohio and against the Cherokees having had the Command of our Provincials and is settled in this Colony to be added to Colonel William Dry and Robert Palmer Esqre our Surveyor General whom I before recommended.



## Photos From the Frontier



Volunteers split firewood



Scott Douglas instructs recruits at Fort Macon



Firing the wall gun "Justina"



Doug Wood and Ed Robey render bear fat into grease



# Understanding Fort Dobbs

By Scott Douglas

In December of 1756, Francis Brown and Richard Caswell, acting under commission from the Royal Colony of North Carolina, made a formal report of their inspection of a newly completed western fort. They found it do be:

*"A good and Substantial Building of the Dimentions following (that is to say) The Oblong Square fifty three feet by forty, the opposite Angles Twenty four feet and Twenty-two, In height Twenty four and a half feet as by the Plan annexed Appears, The Thickness of the Walls which are made of Oak Logs regularly Diminished from sixteen Inches to Six, it contains three floors and there may be discharged from each floor at one and the same time about one hundred Muskets the same is beautifully scituated in the fork of Fourth Creek a Branch of the Yadkin River."*

With the end of the French and Indian War, Fort Dobbs was closed and its supplies were removed. In 1766, Governor William Tryon described it as, "a ruin." In the years following the American War for Independence, the log structure may have experienced a destructive fire and was certainly scavenged for usable building material, leaving an empty field by the turn of the 19th Century.

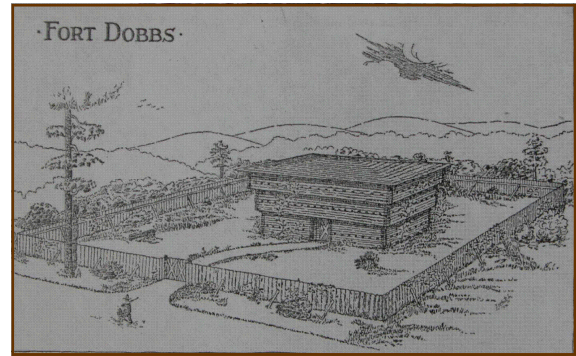


Richard  
Caswell

As none of the original plans for the fort have survived the passage of time, the seemingly brief description above has led to varying interpretations as to what the now long-decayed fort actually looked like. Research through archaeology, study of other similar forts, and review of period building practices, however, have enabled modern scholars to give the old fort shape again.

Interest in Fort Dobbs is not a modern phenomenon. As early as 1847, Statesville residents excavated the then-collapsed well of the fort in search of cannons that local legend claimed had been hidden therein. While failing to locate the guns, this dig marked the first time the fort site had officially been explored.

In 1909, the newly formed Fort Dobbs Chapter of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution took it upon themselves to preserve the site, acquiring several acres of land by gift and purchase during their sixty year ownership. The DAR hosted patriotic gatherings at the site, including a July 4th

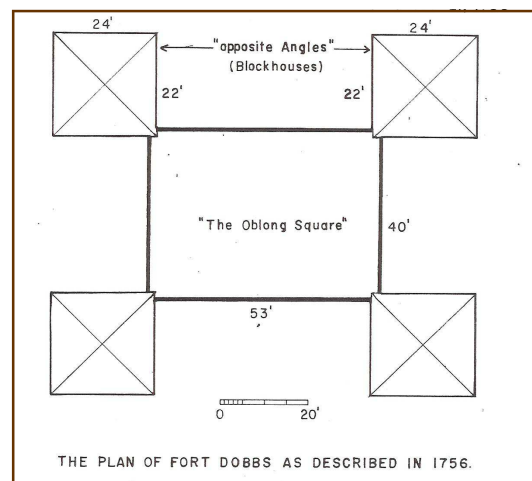


celebration in 1913 that was attended by more than 1,500 people and included a "sham battle."

In 1915, Mr. Leonard White sketched his version of what the fort may have looked like. The DAR hoped to reconstruct the fort along the lines of White's image and even entertained the idea of turning it into "a wonderful clubhouse" with "golf links...included in the scheme of improvement." White envisioned a three story structure with cantilevered floors, as was often done on smaller blockhouses. This version of the fort, however, completely ignored the reference to the "opposite angles" mentioned by Brown and Caswell.

Beginning in the late 1960's the State of North Carolina initiated the first of several archaeological studies of the site in an effort to better determine the location and dimensions of the old fort. As the digs progressed, each successive archaeologist came up with possible designs for the building based on what partial excavations of the site they had completed. Initially, archaeologists envisioned a small-scale "traditional" fort.

One version described Fort Dobbs as a fortification made up of a walled enclosure three stories high with firing platforms on the inside and four corners or "bastions" protruding from a central 40 by 53 foot rectangle. Another

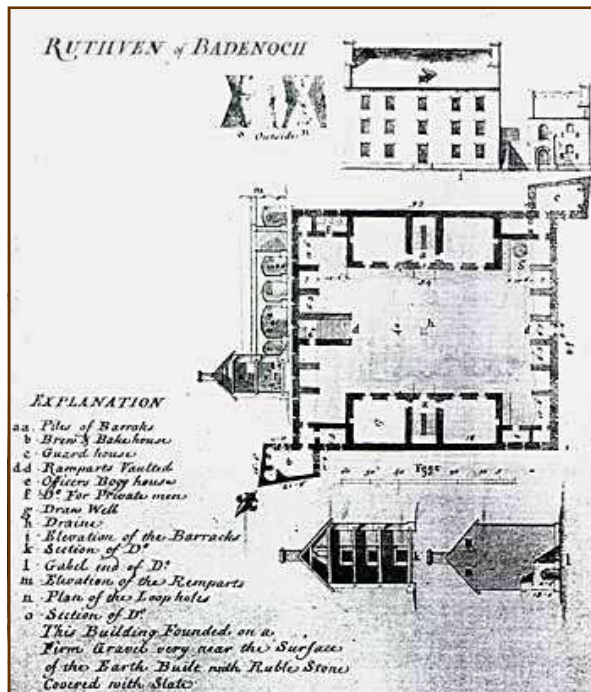




envisioned a central, rectangular wall of vertical sharpened logs (a palisade) with four small blockhouses, one at each corner.

Several problems with these earlier interpretations exist. For one thing, the fort is referred to as a “building” in the 1756 report; thus negating interpretations of an open air 53 by 40 foot enclosure. While the report does not mention how many flankers protrude from the main structure, study of several other fortified barracks and large blockhouses that are represented by surviving drawings, indicate that two flankers, on opposite ends of the building, were common and would certainly be more than adequate for providing enfilade fire on attackers approaching from any direction. Also, while Fort Dobbs was intended by the governor to be a stockade fort, archaeological work has not yielded any post holes or other stockade remains surrounding the site of the building.

Dr. Larry Babits extensively researched Ruthven barracks in Scotland in 2008-2009. One of several stone fortified barrack posts constructed along the English-Scottish border during the first half of the 18th Century, Ruthven may have shared many similarities with Fort Dobbs, including three story barrack buildings, opposite flankers, and being designed for a typical garrison of 50 men.

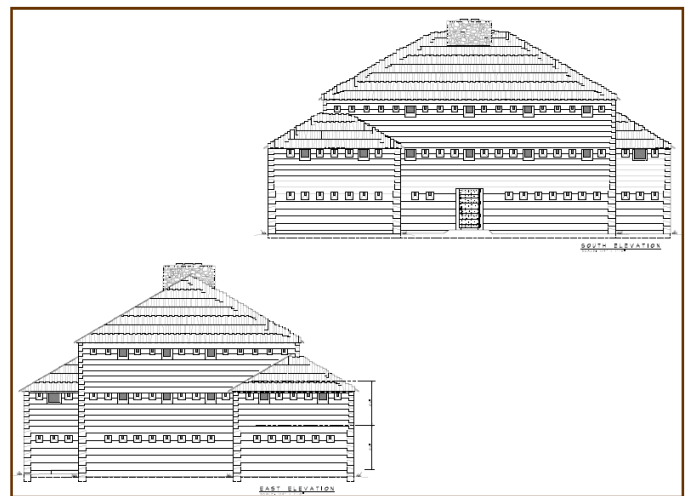


When combined, elements of Ruthven, other North American timber blockhouses, and the description of Fort Dobbs, result in a view of the fort very close to that which is accepted today: a three-story stacked timber structure with two flankers opposite each other. The walls of each floor are pierced with enough loop holes for approximately one hundred muskets to be fired per story. Artist Robert Steele's 2008 painting reflects this interpretation below:



As plans have been finalized for a reconstruction of Fort Dobbs, the basic structure has retained this form, though details of the size and number of windows, pitch of the roof, formation of the chimney, etc. have all benefitted from further study and research.

Today, more than a century after the site was first preserved and the Daughters of the American Revolution envisioned a replica of the old fort, The Friends of Fort Dobbs stand poised to undertake the task of rebuilding this important French and Indian War site. The result will be the culmination of decades of research by dozens of historians and archaeologists and will represent, to the best of our ability, that edifice that once guarded North Carolina's western frontier.



Plans by Architect Steven

### For Further Reading

- Babits, Lawrence and Tiffany Pecoraro: *Fort Dobbs 1756-1763: An Archaeological Study*. Greenville, NC, 2005
- Colonial and State Records of North Carolina.

## Relics of the Past

At the time of the French and Indian War, every infantry soldier enlisted into service would receive a “stand of arms” consisting of his firelock with strap, a waist belt, cartridge pouch, and bayonet with scabbard. A bayonet is an edged weapon that fixes to the muzzle of a weapon to turn it into a thrusting spear for use in hand-to-hand combat.

The earliest bayonets were little more than daggers with tapered handles which allowed them to be placed inside the muzzle of the firearm. These were known as “plug bayonets.” While effective for close quarter fighting, the major disadvantage of the plug bayonet was that the gun could not be fired with the bayonet in place! By the second quarter of the 18th Century, the plug had been superseded by the socket bayonet. A hollow socket was fixed over the muzzle and the blade was forged off to one side, allowing the firearm to be loaded and fired continuously with the bayonet in place. As seen below, the socket featured a channel cut at right angles which would slide over a lug soldered to the barrel of the musket and would serve to keep the blade from spinning around.



Fort Dobbs presently has one bayonet in its collection, though no edged weapons have been recovered at the site archaeologically. This one was placed on long-term loan from the private collection of Tom Nicastro. It is of Dutch manufacture, as were the 1,000 muskets received by North Carolina from the arsenal at the Tower of London in 1755. Dutch bayonets typically featured a flat, two-sided blade as opposed to the triangular blades of English manufacture and were often shorter than their English counterparts. This particular bayonet measures approximately 15 inches long overall, including an 11 inch blade. The socket is engraved with the characters “B N 407.” This marking likely corresponded to an identical mark on the musket to which the bayonet had originally been paired.

## Volunteer Spotlight



This edition’s Volunteer Spotlight focuses on Terry Ashbaugh. While born in Ohio, Terry has lived all over the country and in various parts of the world, having served in both the Navy Reserve and the US Army. After twenty years of active duty, he stayed in North Carolina, where he had last been posted, and now helps maintain and repair military vehicles at Fort Bragg as a civilian contractor.

Having lived near Fort Ligonier, Pennsylvania in his youth, Terry has always had a deep interest in history. “My grandmother took me to see the Fort, for the first time, when I was in the first grade and it made a huge impression on me. Reenacting was the next logical step...” Initially involved in Civil War reenacting, Terry attended the very first muster of the reconstituted Fort Dobbs garrison and helped to construct some of the site’s very first regimental coats. Terry himself had been involved in many time periods, exponentially expanding his wardrobe to cover just about everything from 1588 through 1783.

Terry has a sharp eye for authenticity and hand sews all his garments. He has even built several reproduction firearms from kits. He enjoys the camaraderie of the garrison and, while living a few hours away, tries to attend as many events a year as possible.

Fort Dobbs has come a long way since Terry first got involved, and we are grateful for all the time and effort he has contributed over the years.

**Thank You Terry!**

# FRIENDS OF FORT DOBBS ROLL CALL

The Friends of Fort Dobbs supports the mission of Fort Dobbs State Historic Site:

*"To preserve and interpret North Carolina's only French and Indian War fort."*

## THANK YOU NEW & RENEWING MEMBERS!

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Statesville, NC

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Penny Hill  
Statesville, NC

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Robert Gordon  
Statesville, NC  
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Statesville, NC

### Corporal:

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Salisbury, NC  
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Drs. Douglas & Laurel Eason  
Statesville, NC  
Thomas Welsh  
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Mr. Tom Foxx  
Banner Elk, NC  
Geit Johnson  
Statesville, NC  
Margaret Lewis  
Statesville, NC

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