

# FRONTIER DEFENSE

Colonizing Contested Areas in the Greenbrier Valley of West Virginia

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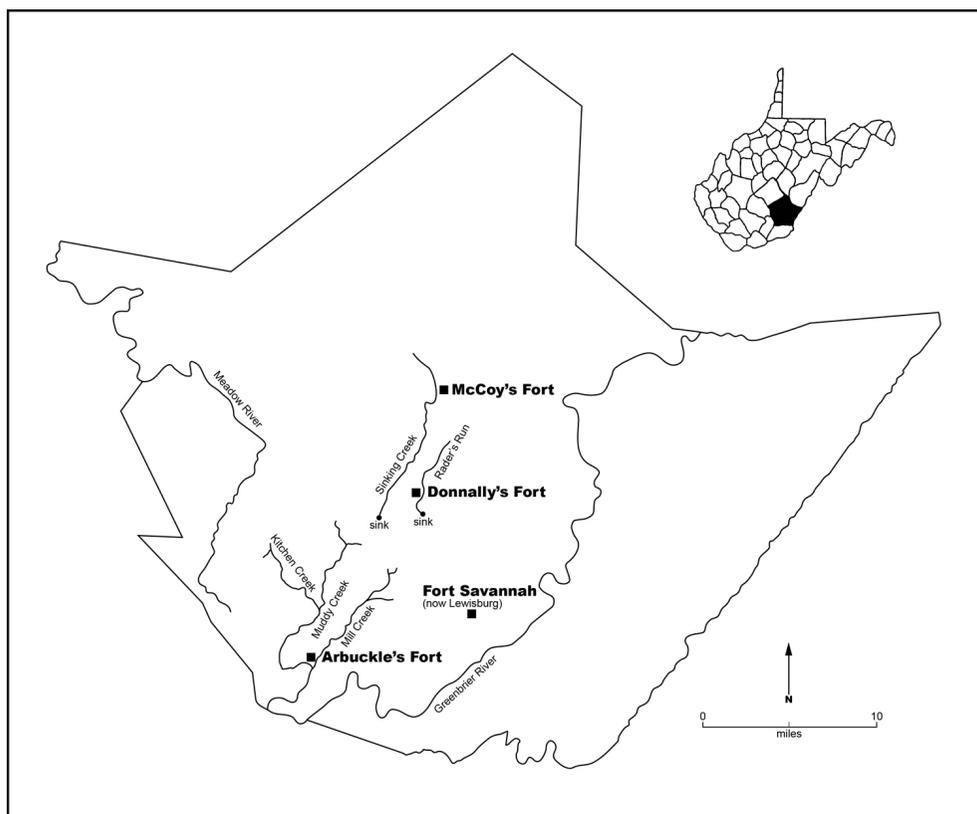
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This booklet explores the frontier defense of the Sinking and Muddy Creek drainages of central Greenbrier County, West Virginia in the late eighteenth century (**Figure 1**). In doing this study, we ask, “How did these Euro-American and enslaved African American settlers of western Virginia succeed in their colonization of a contested area?” Past studies show that key to this success was a *defensive system* composed of forts, militia and spies or scouts. But this was a generalized understanding; now we combine detailed documentary research and archaeology to gain a deeper understanding of how this frontier defensive system worked, what the forts looked like or the material culture the settlers used in them, and to what degree this defensive system was integrated into the broader community organization. And while this study focuses on these two discrete neighborhoods, the patterns documented here were duplicated in hundreds of others throughout the Mountain State in the eighteenth century.



**Figure 1** The Sinking Creek and Muddy Creek Neighborhoods.

## The Historical Context and Early Settlement

At the time of this settlement, these neighborhoods were part of the western frontier of Virginia, an area heavily contested between the new settlers and the Indians who had occupied the area for thousands of years. Euro-American settlements in the larger region had been attempted as early as the 1750s. When the French and Indian War began in 1754-1755, the colony of Virginia created and administered a frontier defensive system that included the construction of fortifications and the creation of a colonial military force known as the Virginia Regiment. These initiatives reinforced the construction of residential forts built in 1754 and 1755 and the activities of a colony supported county militia. However, the militia was not well organized, settlements were too dispersed for easy defense, and settlers were forced to retreat back to safer, more established eastern locations. Euro-American settlement resumed in the early 1760s, but the defensive system was still not strong enough to withstand the pressures of increased violence from Pontiac's War (1763-1764), and once again settlers retreated east. Settlers moved once again into western Virginia in 1769, following two important treaties, Fort Stanwix with the Iroquois and Hard Labor with the Cherokee. Though the settlers would later bear the brunt of the Shawnee's position that they had been left out of these negotiations, this resettlement proceeded at a rapid pace. And this time the settlers established a more effective local defensive system that consisted of a well-organized militia and a network of Indian spies or scouts who observed enemy movements. This system was strengthened by the construction of new forts by settlers and militia during Dunmore's War (1774) and the Revolutionary War (1775-1783). Though the defensive system was supplemented by offensive military campaigns such as Andrew Lewis' Point Pleasant campaign and the campaigns of George Rogers Clark and Lochlan McIntosh, the local defensive system remained crucial to the stability of the Euro-American settlement, which expanded into extreme western Virginia (now Kentucky) by the middle 1770s.

We know that locally, one of the earliest settlers along Muddy Creek was John Keeny (or Keeney), who was noted as being one of the two most western settlers on the Fry and Jefferson map of 1755. One of the earliest settlers in the Sinking Creek Valley was John Williams, who settled in about 1762 and was killed in the Shawnee raid of 1763, as was Frederick See on Muddy Creek, and people gathered at the Archibald Clendenin farm in the Great Levels west of present Lewisburg. Both the 1750s and early 1760s settlements had to be abandoned because of

Indian raids, with settlement resuming after the 1768 Treaties of Fort Stanwix (Iroquois) and Hard Labor (Cherokees). In 1769 and the early 1770s, the settlers included James and William McCoy, John (Jack), Richard, and David Williams, James and William Hughart, John Flynn, John Patton, and Andrew Donnally for the Sinking Creek area, with most of the settlement along Sinking Creek in the present settlements of Hughart and Williamsburg, along Little Sinking Creek (now called Rader's Run), and in the level to rolling sinkhole lands nearby. At the same time, settlers such as John and Michael Keeny, George See, John Viney, and William Hamilton returned to or entered the Muddy Creek area, where settlements were clustered along Muddy Creek itself, along Mill Creek, and up Kitchen Creek.

A complete list of adult males present in 1775 is shown in the **Appendix**, taken from the Botetourt County March and August 1775 tithable lists (the closest thing we have to an early census). The tithable lists shows 42 adult males in 35 households in the Sinking Creek community, and 48 adult males in 40 households in the Muddy Creek community. The names indicate that nearly all of these families originated in the British Isles or Ireland, although many of these settlers were first generation Americans. Names such as McCoy, Donnally, McClung, Keeny, and McFerren are known to have originated in the Ulster section of Ireland, with immigration and settlement occurring first in Pennsylvania or the Valley of Virginia in the 1730s to 1760s. Some of these families, including the Williams and McCoys and Hamiltons, were intermarried and likely immigrated to the Greenbrier Valley together. Many of them had experience in frontier warfare and defense from the French and Indian War era context further east. For example, Mill Creek Settler William Feamster's father Thomas Feamster had built a fort in Bath County, Virginia, so William would have been familiar with the concept.

Following the 1775 tithable list, the next closest things to a census are the 1783 tax rolls for personal property (listing polls [voting tax], slaves, horses, and cows) and land, listed by the head of household. These data are also shown in the **Appendix**. The personal property rolls show 38 adult voting males (polls) in 42 households in the Sinking Creek community and 51 adult voting males in 56 households in the Muddy Creek community. This shows considerable growth from 1775, especially for the Muddy Creek area. Sadly these records do not typically give information on women and children, but three of the 42 Sinking Creek listings are for women heading households – Jane McCoy, Sarah McCoy, and Elizabeth Ochiltree, all widows. These rolls indicate that both the Sinking and Muddy Creek communities included 10 enslaved persons.

These records not only provide a sense of the population, but also give our earliest information on the establishment of viable farms and the accumulation of wealth by the settlers. In 1783, farms in these two communities ranged from 50 to 1850 acres, with Andrew Donnally and Thomas Kincaid being the largest landowners in Sinking Creek and Muddy Creek, respectively (see the **Appendix**). The average farm size in 1783 was 313 acres for the Sinking Creek farms and 347 acres for the Muddy Creek farms. There were eight households in the Sinking Creek neighborhood and 18 in the Muddy Creek neighborhood that do not have an entry in the 1783 land roll but are listed in the 1783 personal property roll. It is uncertain that all of these households were truly landless, since these two rolls were enumerated separately, and sometimes a household might be missed by error, in one or the other roll. But likely a high percentage or even all of these households owned no land, perhaps renting it instead.

Only two men in the 1783 Sinking Creek neighborhood were taxed for slaves – Joseph McClung (one slave), and Andrew Donnally (nine slaves). In the Muddy Creek community, five men were taxed for slaves – William Feamster (two slaves), William Morris (three slaves), Samuel McClung (two slaves), Thomas Kincaid (one slave), and John Wilson (two slaves). Cattle and horse ownership were much more common and dispersed across the two communities, with Sinking Creek farmers owning between zero and 25 cattle, with a mean of seven cows, and zero to 20 horses, with a mean of seven horses. The larger horse owners in Sinking Creek included Andrew Donnally (15), James Donnally (20), John Flinn (15), James Hughart (18), Joseph McClung (20), Thomas McClung (13), James McCoy Jr (13), William McCoy (15), and John Patton (11). The larger cattle owners included most of these same men plus William Cavendish (15) and William Fullerton (12). Muddy Creek farmers owned a similar range of zero to 24 cattle and zero to 20 horses, with a mean of five cattle and six horses. The larger horse owners were James Jarrett (13), Michael Keeny (14), Thomas Keeny (10), Samuel McClung (20), and James Patterson (10). Large cattle owners included most of these same men plus William Hamilton (22), Martin Keyser (24), Peter Shoemaker (13), John Viney (16), William Morris (12), Thomas Carraway (12), Richard Humphries (15), and Conrad Yocum (22).

It is very interesting that the 1783 personal property tax roll for the Sinking Creek community was taken by militia Captain William McCoy, and the Muddy Creek community roll by former militia Captain, then Major, William Hamilton. The fact that the recording of personal property was the responsibility of the militia officers demonstrates

that the militia was more than just a military organization; it was the local political organization, and crucial to the establishment of these settlements. We will look into this situation more closely below.

## The Local Militia and Indian Spies (Scouts)

During the frontier period, the primary military force available was the local county militia, modeled on English precedents. All free white males aged 18 to 50, except those with vital occupations, were required to serve. Although the Governor was the overall commander, the militia was organized at the county level and led by the county lieutenant whose staff and company officers commanded the men. Each county had at least one regiment that was divided into five to ten companies of approximately 20 to 80 men and officers. The county lieutenant could order the militia to service within the county, but to take his regiments outside of the county he had to ask for volunteers. This geographical limitation of the militia caused much frustration among offensively minded officers. The militia was extremely important at home in broader ways too, for the earliest road work and tax collection was organized by militia companies. This would have given great power to the militia officers.

During the 1770s, as Dunmore's War and the Revolutionary War led to increased raids by Indians, local militiamen built and garrisoned local forts as well as the larger forts on the Ohio River. They also participated in military expeditions. Accounts given in pension applications suggest that partial or entire companies would guard a fort for anywhere from a few days to as long as six months. Militia companies were quite mobile and would move from fort to fort. Militiamen also protected farmers planting crops and pursued Indian raiding parties. According to militiaman James Gillilan, who was stationed at Renick's Fort just northeast of the Sinking Creek neighborhood,

*...in the summer season [we] would all turn out in a body and work each other's places by turns – whilst some were working others would be watching and guarding – to give alarm of the approach of Indians.<sup>1</sup>*

The use of "Indian spies" or scouts was another crucial element of the frontier defensive strategy. During the French and Indian War, spies functioned in an offensive capacity, gathering intelligence about the enemy and attacking them in their camps when possible. Spying parties often included hired American Indians as well. By the 1770s and 1780s, spies had become more defensive, roaming over the landscape

to look for enemy signs, especially in the warmer months when raiding was more of a threat, or they were given word of Indian activity. Given the widely dispersed nature of frontier farms and forts and the desire of most settlers to stay on their farms during the warmer months, only coming into the forts when absolutely necessary, this system was a critical aspect of frontier defense. The Revolutionary War pension application of Michael Swope, who lived and operated in the Greenbrier Valley, provides an example of this:

*...when [spies] saw signs of Indians they would fly from Fort to Fort and give the alarm so that preparations might be made for defensive operations by the people that were Forted and that those who had ventured out to work their corn might betake themselves to the Fort before the Indians would attack them....<sup>2</sup>*

We know from the pension applications that many men served in this duty. Their accounts suggest that most spying was undertaken by small groups of two to three individuals, depending on the circumstances. Some of the spies were volunteers and others were drafted or ordered out. All seemed to have provided their own clothing and arms and usually food. Spies were generally based at a fort, and many were operating in areas near their homes where they were familiar with the terrain. Period accounts describe going out on rounds of four to eight days, with a given circuit of thirty to seventy miles to traverse, perhaps stopping at other forts along the way and returning to the home fort for a rest of a few days. Extra spies were often posted at known passes and advance areas during times of particular danger. Pensioner John Bradshaw reported that he “...watched the gaps and low places in the mountains for thirty miles, to a point where they met the spies from Burnside’s Fort.”<sup>3</sup> His wording suggests that the spies from one fort had a recognized territory.

**Table 1**, drawn from the Revolutionary War pension applications and other records, shows militia companies from 1774 to 1781 for the Greenbrier and middle New River region, and their officers. The number of militia companies increased from seven in 1774 to 12 in 1781, the increase influenced by the increasing population but also by increased threats and actual Indian attacks over this period, especially in 1777 and 1778.

These same pension applications from men of the Sinking or Muddy Creek neighborhoods document that these local militia did sometimes serve beyond the local region. They reported marching to Fort Randolph or Fort Pitt, going on longer term expeditions to Kentucky and Ohio, or serving against Tories in southwestern Virginia. In some cases men joined or were drafted into the regular army, especially the 12th Virginia.

Area/Drainage	1781, N=12	1777, N=11	1774, N=7
Little Levels	Capt. George Clendenning	Capt. John Cook	Capt. John Cook
Spring Creek	Capt. Wm Renick	Capt. Andrew Hamilton	Capt. Robert McClannahan, Lt. Wm McCoy, Ensign Mathew Bracken, Serg. Thomas Williams
Sinking Creek	Capt. Wm McCoy	Capt. Andrew Donnally	
Great Levels	Capt. James Thompson	Capt. John Stuart	Capt. John Stuart
Great Levels	Capt. Hugh Miller	Capt. Samuel Brown	Capt. Matthew Arbuckle
Muddy Creek	Capt. Wm Hamilton	Capt. Wm Hamilton	
Howard's/Anthony's Creeks	Capt. Wm Ward	Capt. John Anderson	
Greenbrier River	Capt. James Graham	Capt. John Vanbibber	Capt. John VanBibber
Rich Creek	Capt. Archibald Woods		
Sinks/Monroe County	Capt. Thomas Wright	Capt. James Henderson	Capt. James Henderson
Indian Creek/Monroe County	Capt. John Henderson	Capt. John Henderson	Capt. John Lewis
Sinks/Second Creek	Capt. Samuel Glass	Capt. Hugh Gillespie	

**Table 1** Greenbrier Area Militia Companies (Greenbrier, Monroe, eastern Summers, southern Pocahontas counties).

Besides the militia duty, citizens also contributed to the defensive system. Many insights are provided by an unusual record group called Public Claims, where citizens could ask for reimbursement for services performed during the American Revolution. From these records, we can see that their contributions included driving cattle, guarding prisoners, loaning horses for short and long term, or finding stray horses, providing “rations” or “diets” for militia, and supplying the forts with cornmeal, beef, mutton, venison, and flour, and linen. The **Appendix** shows many examples, some of which were fairly substantial. Clearly it took many persons and a true community approach to make the late eighteenth century frontier defensive system work.

## Forts Within the Defensive System

The frontier forts anchored the local defensive system by providing operational bases for militia and spies, and serving as places of refuge for settlers in time of danger. Like the militia, the concept of a community

fort is an ancient one stemming from long-standing European traditions. Forts were initially mostly privately built, but by the spring of 1774 they were also being built by the militia. Although descriptions of West Virginia frontier forts are limited, these forts were generally made of logs and ranged from two story log houses or *blockhouses* to stockades with corner bastions and internal log buildings. Some stone structures might be considered *strong houses* or forts.

Besides their function to protect settlers, as well as garrison soldiers or militia, forts were usually located in the center of a settlement cluster or neighborhood, and served as economic and cultural centers. They were especially important as towns were not well established in this region until the late 1770s. One example of the importance of the forts can be seen in orders for road work, preserved in the county order books. Here the roads are often described by their geographical relationship to the forts.

Name	Acres	Value Land (pds)	Cows	Horses	Slaves
Arbuckle, Matthew	1240	189	8	2	2
Bratton, Wallace	250	56	10	8	0
Burnside, James	3750	515	23	15	1
Cook, Valentine	659	124	17	10	2
Day, John	560	81	13	7	0
Donnally, Andrew	1850	240	56	15	9
Ellis, John	200	45	9	6	0
Estill, Wallace	490	81	15	8	4
Feamster, William	800	210	10	14	2
Jarrett, David	280	46	20	5	0
Hamilton, William	375	112	22	9	0
Handley, John	450	101	16	11	1
Keeny, John	200	37	8	6	0
Knox, James	600	68	10	6	0
Lafferty, William	892	-	25	10	0
McCoy, William	400	90	13	15	1
Renick, William	1120	229	25	17	6
Stuart, John	2100	300	41	20	7
Thompson, James	230	43	14	7	0
VanBibber, John	200	37	19	6	2
Woods, Michael	-	-	13	12	1
Mean, Ft. Owner/Builder	832	137	18	10	2
Mean, Greenbrier County	239	37	8	5	0.3

Note: This table is drawn largely from the Greenbrier County tax roll of 1783.

- indicates data not available; does not imply a 0 value.

Forts were often built by, or on the land of, a prominent settler who donated land and materials, or supervised construction to gain prestige as well as defense. **Table 2** shows the wealth of fort owners/builders as compared to the county average: clearly these builders/owners were on the upper end of the economic scale. The fort owners/builders usually held a number of political or military offices during the Dunmore's War and Revolutionary War period. In our study area, Matthew Arbuckle and William Hamilton were captains (Hamilton, a major in 1782), William McCoy was a lieutenant then captain (1778+), and Andrew Donnally was a captain (1776-1778), lieutenant colonel (1778-1780) and then County Lieutenant (1781). Andrew Donnally was in fact one of the wealthiest and most influential residents of Greenbrier County.

Forts were always near a permanent water source such as a spring or creek and they were usually on a ridge or terrace, high, but not too high for settlers to reach. They were also on or near trails or roads. Militia built forts were more likely to be located for strategic reasons, while forts established at previously built houses might not be quite as strategic.

The distance between forts varied with population density, areas of cleared land, and exposure to danger. The Colony of Virginia's official French and Indian War "Line of Forts" were placed every 15 to 26 miles, but there were also private forts spaced between these. In the Greenbrier Valley, forts were located three to 10 miles apart during the Revolution. There was certainly some relationship between population density and forts, as shown in **Table 3**. Areas with more "tithables," or heads of households, typically had more forts.

**Table 2 (left)** Wealth of probable fort owners/builders.

**Table 3 (right)** Relationship of Tithables to Forts, August 1775.

Drainage	Tithables	Forts
Great Levels/Spring Creek	182	4
Sinking Creek	42	3
Muddy Creek	42	3
Howard's Creek	16	0
Anthony's Creek	18	0
Little Levels	31	2
Indian Creek-Sinks	92	7
Wolf Creek	20	2
Second Creek	21	1
Lower Greenbrier River	18	2
New River-Rich Creek	10	1

Living within these forts or stations may seem strange to us today, but it was normal to many of the 18th century settlers, at least for the warmer months when raids by Indians were most common. For most settlers, fortifying was highly seasonal, as described by Revolutionary War Pensioner Samuel Gwinn as follows:

*All the people of the settlements took their families to the forts in the summer months, where we farmed pretty much in common would turn out all in a body and work each other's corn and potato patches by turns whilst we would be working some would be watching for Indians and worked and watched by turns.<sup>4</sup>*

An interesting commentary on a sense of regional attachment to a fort site is provided in the memoirs of the Rev. Joseph Doddridge (1824:94-95):

*My reader will understand by this term [fort], not only a place of defense, but the residence of a small number of families belonging to the same neighborhood....The families belonging to these forts [emphasis added] were so attached to their own cabins on their farms, that they seldom move into the fort in the spring until compelled by some alarm, as they called it. Thus it often happened that the whole number of families belonging to a fort [emphasis added] who were in the evening at their homes were all in their little fortress before the dawn of the next morning.<sup>5</sup>*

## Forts of the Sinking and Muddy Creek Neighborhoods

Historic documents, particularly the Revolutionary War pension applications, indicate that there were three forts each in the Sinking Creek and Muddy Creek communities. The Sinking Creek forts were Andrew Donnally's Fort along Rader's Run (originally called Little Sinking Creek), William McCoy's Fort just north of present Williamsburg, and possibly a "Mud Fort" about a mile or two from McCoy's Fort. The Muddy Creek forts included one built by Capt. Matthew Arbuckle's militia company in 1774 at the confluence of Mills and Muddy Creeks (at Blaker's Mill), William Hamilton's Fort just east of Blue Sulphur Springs, and possibly a fort at William Feamster's on Mill Creek. Arbuckle's Fort is sometimes also referred to as Keeny's (or Keeney's) Fort since it was built on John Keeny's farm, and/or the Muddy Creek Fort in the Revolutionary War pensions. Within each neighborhood, the forts are one or two to six miles apart. Between the two neighborhoods, however, the forts are further apart, with Hamilton's and Donnally's being about 12 miles apart.

The farther distance between the forts of different communities suggests that the population was clustered in certain areas rather than being evenly distributed across the landscape.

Arbuckle's Fort is different from the other forts in that it was built by a militia company in 1774 on land that Arbuckle did not own. Captain Arbuckle likely chose the fort's location for more military reasons, including a defensible location (ridge slope and top), access to water (Mill Creek), accessibility via a trail, and central location within the Muddy Creek community. John Keeny's property, on which Arbuckle's Fort was built, included Keeny's mill, which made it well known and accessible to neighbors who might need to come to the fort for protection.

The location of the other forts probably also took into account the above factors – defensibility, water, transportation, and distance to population clusters – but were also strongly influenced by the location of the builder/sponsor's home. Both Donnally's and McCoy's forts were located at their homes, and Hamilton's fort was located either at Hamilton's home or just adjacent to it, if he had a separate residence. According to local history author Ruth Dayton, "On near-by Mill Creek he [William Feamster] **also** [emphasis added] erected a small log fort, all trace of which has long since vanished."<sup>6</sup> Dayton's wording suggests that Feamster's house and fort were separate, but this is not completely clear. All we know about the "Mud Fort" is that pensioners John Patton and Jacob Chapman stated that they were stationed there and that it was about one mile from Patton's home, which was in sight of McCoy's Fort.

The residential location of Donnally's and McCoy's forts, while convenient, placed them in a lower and somewhat less defensible location relative to Arbuckle's Fort. The exact location of Hamilton's Fort is not known, but according to Emma Buster Henderson, great-granddaughter of William Hamilton,

*...there was a log house across the road [from the present brick house built by William Hamilton's son Jacob] at the foot of the Hamilton graveyard that my mother [Virginia Hamilton Buster] said had been a fort.<sup>7</sup>*

Our recent reconnaissance of this area suggests that this location may have been on a fairly defensible rise near Kitchen Creek, a branch of Muddy Creek. William Hamilton's home may have been either at this fort or on a somewhat lower ground to the west/southwest of the fort, closer to Jacob's house. The precise topographical settings of Feamster's and "Mud" Forts are not known.

The establishment and especially the design of the above forts, with the possible exception of Donnally's, is unclear from historic documents

alone. This is one area where archaeology can make a significant contribution. Arbuckle's Fort has no known descriptions but since it was built by a militia company, not located at a residence, and frequently occupied by militiamen between 1774 and 1782, it likely would have had a stockade fence. McCoy's and Hamilton's forts were either at or near their log homes, and definitely included at least one log building. Whether they were stockaded or not is unclear. William McCoy's home, which was until recently still standing, was a V-notched, 28 x 24 feet two-story log house, built circa 1769 according to McCoy family oral tradition. The pension applications of John Patton and John McFarren suggest that McCoy's Fort was probably garrisoned by militia as early as 1775 and throughout the Revolutionary War. William Hamilton settled along Kitchen Creek in 1773, where he built a log home of unknown size. The Revolutionary war pension applications suggest that Hamilton's Fort was first garrisoned as a fort in 1776 and occupied seasonally until 1782. The "Mud Fort" and Feamster's Fort were referred by pensioners as being occupied as "forts" or garrisons in 1778 and 1780, respectively, but may have also been utilized for defensive purposes somewhat earlier. Nothing more is known of the Mud Fort's structure. Regarding Feamster's Fort, one can only wish we knew what historian Ruth Woods Dayton meant in describing this fort as a "small log fort." Does "log" refer to a log house or a stockade? Possibly only archaeology can tell us, but first this site needs to be located.

Andrew Donnally's Fort, which is first mentioned as a fort or garrison in 1776 by Capt. John Stuart and Col. William Fleming, is the only one of these Sinking Creek/Muddy Creek forts with detailed historical descriptions. This was undoubtedly due to the major Indian attack there on May 29, 1778, which created a flurry of period letters and reports and a number of later descriptions and reminiscences. Descriptions of the fort by Capt. John Stuart and Anne Royalle are particularly useful. According to Stuart,

*...they had the advantage of a stockade fort round the house....The house formed one part of the front of the fort and was double, Hammon [Philip Hammond] and the negro [Dick Pointer] was in the kitchen....The firing of Hammond awakened the people in the other end of the house and upstairs....*<sup>8</sup>

Stuart later [1833] clarifies the relationship of the house to the kitchen when he stated that, "the kitchen making one end of the house, and there Hammond and the negro were." In this version Stuart also describes the fort as "a stockade fort around and adjoining the house." He also notes that the fort contained at least one bastion, port holes,

and at least one gate.<sup>9</sup> Anne Royalle, following an interview with battle participant Dick Pointer, wrote,

*Col. Donnally's house made a part of the fort, the front of it forming a line with the same, the door of the house being the door of the fort.*<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, according to both John Stuart and Dick Pointer (as written by Anne Royalle), Donnally's Fort consisted of his double-pen (house and kitchen), two-story log house with an intersecting and surrounding stockade that had at least one bastion and one gate. The stockade intersected the house along the front of the fort.

The documentation on the attack on Donnally's Fort is also of great interest for understanding how the defensive system, including clusters of forts and the militia, functioned during a time of extreme stress. This attack occurred on the morning of May 29, 1778, when a large body (50 to 300, accounts vary on the exact numbers) of Wyandot, Mingo, and probably Shawnee killed one man (John Prichet) outside of the fort and then assaulted the kitchen half of Donnally's house-fort. Fortunately, the Greenbrier settlers had been warned of this impending attack by John Pryor and Philip Hammond, who had followed, and then passed, the Indian force coming up the Kanawha Valley from Fort Randolph (at Point Pleasant). About 25-29 militiamen under Lt. Col. Andrew Donnally, Capt. William McCoy, and Lt. John Williams and 60 women and children had congregated into Donnally's Fort prior to the attack.

The initial morning assault on Donnally's kitchen was successfully defended by Philip Hammond and Dick Pointer, an enslaved man owned by Andrew Donnally, who fired at the Indians rushing the kitchen door. This attack awakened other militiamen and settlers within the fort, who withstood the attack alone until about 3 p.m. when 66 militiamen from Fort Savannah (Lewisburg) under Col. Samuel Lewis, Capt. Matthew Arbuckle, and Capt. John Stuart arrived to re-enforce the fort. The battle continued until the evening of May 29, when the Wyandot and Mingo force withdrew. Documented casualties included 17 dead on the Indian side and four on the militia/settler side. Three on the settler side, John Prichet, Alexander Ochiltree, and James Burns, were killed outside of the fort, and one, James Graham, was killed in a bastion of the fort. Two men, William Hamilton [not the Muddy Creek captain] and William Blake, were wounded.

Other settlers may have congregated in McCoy's Fort prior to the Donnally attack, and Muddy Creek settlers and militia went to both Arbuckle's and Hamilton's forts prior to, during, and after the Donnally attack. Interestingly, once Capt. William Hamilton learned of the size of

the Indian force attacking, or about to attack Donnally's Fort, he moved his men, and possibly other settlers, from his fort to Arbuckle's Fort. According to militiaman John Patterson,

*...the Garrison at Donlyes Fort [12 miles from Hamilton's Fort] was attacked by about two Hundred Indians and Capt. Hamilton supposing that his Fort was not strong enough to withstand an attack from such a force of Indians – ordered his men to march that night to Keeny's Fort [Arbuckle's Fort] which was situated five miles below on Muddy Creek....<sup>11</sup>*

Hamilton's action certainly suggests that Arbuckle's Fort was the strongest of the Muddy Creek forts. Hamilton's Fort was likely either a smaller stockade than Arbuckle's or simply a log house or blockhouse.

Following the Donnally's Fort attack, pensioners indicate that militiamen from nearby counties (including Botetourt, Augusta, Rockbridge, Montgomery, and Bedford) were sent to Greenbrier to help reinforce the community forts in anticipation of more attacks. Militiaman Jonathan Hughes, who was present at Renick's Fort on Spring Creek, stated that after the Donnally's Fort attack,

*It was expected that their next attack would be upon McCoy's Fort about 3 miles from Donnally's Fort [and] this applicant with a few other members of the company to which he belonged volunteered and hastened to the \_\_\_ of McCoy's Fort from which the Indians having made the anticipated attack were repulsed with considerable loss....<sup>12</sup>*

Historic documents suggest that after the Donnally battle and siege, many of the Indians left the area via the Kanawha River while others divided up into smaller raiding parties to attack other nearby settlers. One of these parties likely attacked McCoy's Fort the following day.

Documents state that Arbuckle's Fort was the site of two Indian attacks; one in late July or early August 1774 and one in September 1777. Regarding the 1774 attack, Maj. James Robertson stated,

*...this minet I got flying news of the Indians shooting at one of Arbuckle's Centery's on Mudy Creek. They say Likewise that they attacked one Kelly's yesterday about half a mile from that Fort where they Tombak'd Kelly and Cut him Vastly, but the men from the fort heard the Noise and Ran to their Assistance and drove the Indians off before they Eithor keill'd or sculp'ed Kelly.<sup>13</sup>*

No other casualties other than Kelly are known to have occurred during this raid. Local settler John Viney recorded the burial of one man near the fort in 1774. This could have been Kelly or another casualty.

The second attack on Arbuckle's/Keeny's Fort occurred on the evening of September 11, 1777. This was likely the same raiding party that attacked the James Graham House (at present day Lowell in Summers County) earlier that day and killed three settlers and kidnapped Graham's daughter Elizabeth. In a September 12, 1777 letter, Capt. John Stuart stated,

*...a number of guns were heard by sundry persons in our neighborhood supposed to be at muddy creek fort about sundown last night.*<sup>14</sup>

Stuart also requested at this time that a Sergeant's command be sent to Arbuckle's Fort,

*...to assist the people in muddy creek who is very few in numbers, and I am afraid will be much distress'd.*<sup>15</sup>

It is not known exactly who these Indians were, but they were likely Mingo and perhaps some Shawnee. No militia or settler casualties were reported from Arbuckle's Fort.

No Indian attacks were documented for Hamilton's Fort although there was an attack nearby in April 1780. Testimony of pensioner John Patterson suggests that this attack involved seven to nine Indians who attacked the home of Lt. Samuel McClung on Muddy Creek, wounding him, and further downstream, the home of James Monday (possibly the same as the James Mooney shown in the **Appendix**). Monday was mortally wounded and his wife and child captured. Captain Hamilton found Monday and took him to Hamilton's Fort, where he died. Patterson recalled in his pension application that William Hamilton had sent out a warning to the Big Levels area, and a call for reinforcements, but we have found no mention of further action from this raid. As noted above, Capt. Hamilton did fear his fort might be attacked in May 1778, and moved his garrison to the larger Arbuckle's Fort. Oral tradition in the Hamilton family holds that William Hamilton was at times on friendly terms with some local Indians who would visit at his house; this situation suggests a much more complex local settler/Indian relationship. No attacks were documented at either the Mud Fort or Feamster's Fort.

Who was stationed at these forts, and who was in charge? The Revolutionary War pension applications of local militiamen and a few period letters present information, albeit incomplete, on this topic, summarized in **Table 4**. Militiamen under Captain Andrew Donnally and later Captain William McCoy were stationed at Donnally's Fort from 1775 through 1782. This garrison duty would have occurred over a

**Table 4** Leadership at the Sinking Creek and Muddy Creek forts.

	Year	Commanding Officer(s)
<b>Muddy Creek</b>		
Arbuckle's Fort	1774-5	Capt. Matthew Arbuckle
"	1776	Capt. George Givens, Botetourt
"	1776	Capt. Andrew Hamilton
"	1776	Capt. ?
"	1777-82	Capt. Wm Hamilton
"	1778	Capt. Joseph Renfro, Bedford
Feamster's Fort	1780	? likely Wm Hamilton?
Hamilton's Fort	1775/6	Lt. (1775) or Capt.(1776 forward) Wm Hamilton
"	1778-82	Capt. Wm Hamilton
<b>Sinking Creek</b>		
Donnally's Fort	1775-6	Capt. Andrew Donnally
"	1775-7	Lt. Wm McCoy
"	1776	? one division
"	1776	Lt. under Capt. George Givens (Botetourt)
"	1777	Lt. Wm McCoy
"	1778	Capt. Wm McCoy, Lt. John Williams
"	1778	Col. Samuel Lewis (May)
"	1778	Capt. Samuel Campbell, Bedford
"	1779-82	Capt. Wm McCoy
McCoy's Fort	1775-82	Lt. (1775/6), then Capt. (late 1777 or early 1778) Wm McCoy
Mud Fort	5 years	Capt. Wm McCoy
"	1778	Capt. Wm Hamilton

\*data drawn largely from pension applications

three to six month seasonal round from late spring until early or middle fall. The number of militiamen within the fort in each of these years is unclear, except for 1778 when 25 to 29 militiamen were in the fort. Given that the Donnally/McCoy militia company was the local Sinking Creek company, it was probably divided between Donnally's Fort, McCoy's Fort, and possibly the "Mud Fort" for most years, although Donnally's Fort probably had a much larger share of these company militiamen.

As noted above, during and after the May 29, 1778 battle, Donnally's Fort was temporarily reinforced by men from Fort Savannah (Lewisburg), while after the battle, militiamen from Capt. Samuel Campbell's Bedford County company apparently stayed for a few months. Men from nearby Renick's Fort (which they described as at the forks of Spring Creek) in northeastern Greenbrier County to Jarrett's Fort on Wolf Creek in Monroe County, and some western Virginia counties, marched to or toward Donnally's Fort after the battle, but they did not stay and some even turned back as they received news that the battle was over.

Documentation on McCoy's Fort and the nearby Mud Fort are sparse. John Patton of Capt. William McCoy's Company stated in his pension application that he was stationed alternatively at either the Mud Fort or McCoy's Fort for five years during the Revolutionary War, but he does not give specific years. As noted above, Jonathan Hughes stated that he and some other men from Renick's Fort, described as located at the forks of Spring Creek, went to McCoy's Fort to reinforce it following the Donnally's Fort attack. John McFerren, also in Capt. Andrew Donnally's/Capt. William McCoy's Company, states in his pension application that he was "stationed at Donnally's Fort and another fort, but can't remember name" from 1775 to 1782<sup>16</sup>. This forgotten fort was probably McCoy's or the Mud Fort.

Interestingly, Jacob Chapman of Capt. William Hamilton's Muddy Creek Company states in his pension application that he was stationed at both Keeny's (Arbuckle's) Fort and Mud Fort in 1778. Although it is unclear, perhaps Muddy Creek militiamen were helping to reinforce the Mud Fort even though it was on Sinking Creek, much like the Renick's Fort men went outside their neighborhood to aid McCoy's Fort.

Revolutionary pension applications and period reports indicate that Arbuckle's Fort was garrisoned by militia under Captain Matthew Arbuckle in 1774-1775, under Capt. James Henderson, Capt. George Givens, and Capt. Andrew Hamilton in 1776, and Capt./Major William Hamilton from 1777-1782 (**Table 4**). Capt. Joseph Renfro's Bedford County Company also garrisoned this fort for a few months in 1778, probably after the Donnally's Fort battle. Arbuckle's (1774-1775) and later Hamilton's (1777+) commands were the local Muddy Creek militia company, while Henderson's (Sinks of Monroe) and Andrew Hamilton's (Spring Creek) were from nearby areas. Capt. Given's Company was from Botetourt County, but exactly where is unclear.

Revolutionary War pension applications indicate that William Hamilton's Fort was garrisoned by men from his company (or possibly Arbuckle's early) from 1775 and 1776, until 1782, while Feamster's Fort is only mentioned once, in 1780. It is unclear exactly how many militiamen were at each fort at a given time, but Arbuckle's Fort was likely the most heavily garrisoned. The only numbers mentioned were in a 1776 letter by Capt. John Stuart, where he stated that, "George Givens and 30 men were marching to the [Arbuckle's] fort."<sup>17</sup>

## Archaeology

We now turn to our best source on the design and layout of the forts: archaeology. Archaeological excavations have been conducted on one fort in the Muddy Creek drainage, Arbuckle's fort on Mill Creek, and on two forts in the Sinking Creek drainage, Donnally's Fort on Rader's Run, and McCoy's Fort north of Williamsburg. While the excavations of these three fort sites have varied in intensity, in each case the archaeology has greatly enhanced our understanding of the design, construction, and occupation of these three forts, giving us an idea of the range of variation.

Before a shovel was put into the ground, the background research was conducted. Starting in 1990, we examined primary and secondary documentary sources and interviewed local historians and site landowners. Two of these fort sites, Arbuckle's and Donnally's, were so locally well known that stone monuments had been erected on these sites in the early twentieth century, we think by the Daughters of the American Revolution or a similar organization (**Figure 2**). Local historians took us to these monuments, and to other known fort sites. In the case of McCoy's Fort, while its presence was known within the local community and the McCoy family, this site was not mentioned in local histories, and it was not until 2003, thirteen years into our fort study, that we learned about it. Many smaller forts are likely similarly known to only a relatively small circle of family descendants or local historians.

Once a probable fort location was identified, we were ready to begin an archaeological survey. In the case of Arbuckle's and Donnally's forts, there was little or no surface indication of each fort, so we began with

**Figure 2** Stone monument at Arbuckle's Fort, built in the early twentieth century on top of the blockhouse chimney foundation.



a combination of metal detecting and excavating small round holes called shovel test probes every ten feet to search for artifacts from the 1700s and/or subsurface structural evidence of the forts, known in archaeological terms as *features*. On both sites, we immediately found artifacts that confirmed the traditional location of these forts, including hand-wrought nails, cast iron kettle fragments, iron slag from blacksmithing, two prong forks, and gunflints. At Arbuckle's Fort we also found evidence that the historical stone monument was sitting on a chimney base, and that the site held at least two subsurface pits or cellars. A major difference between these two forts was the abundance of later nineteenth and twentieth century artifacts at Donnally's Fort (and house), suggesting a longer occupation, and the near absence of later artifacts at Arbuckle's Fort, suggesting a very short and exclusively military occupation.

The setting of McCoy's Fort was much different from the other two and required somewhat different methods. As noted above, William McCoy's log house was still standing, having been abandoned as a house and later enclosed within a frame livestock barn. The abundance of modern metal within the barn and surrounding barnyard prohibited metal detecting, so shovel test probes were excavated. These probes revealed fragments of dishes from types called *creamware* (1762 to 1830) and *pearlware* (1775 to 1840) and very thin (which means very old) window glass and hand-wrought nails. Also, just a few inches below the modern surface of straw and compacted manure, on the north end of the structure, we found the stone base of a chimney. This chimney helped confirm that the log structure had indeed been a house and not just an earlier farm outbuilding.

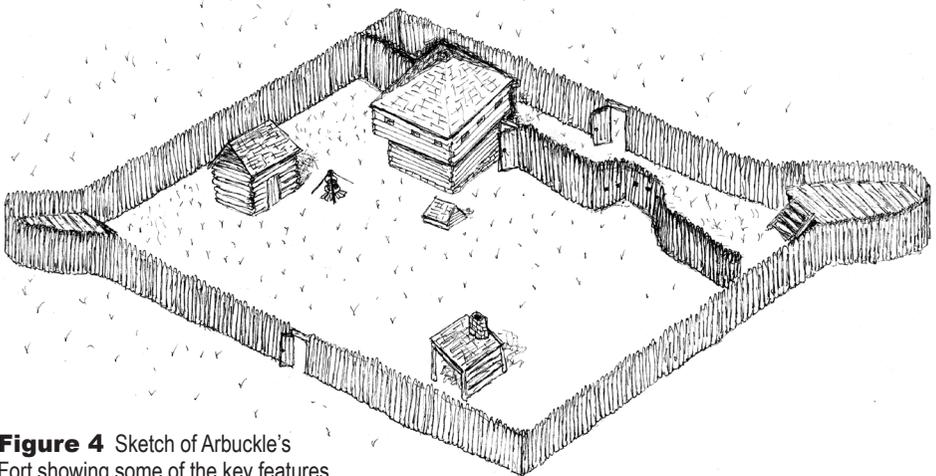
**Figure 3** Aerial photo of Arbuckle's Fort after delineation of the stockade line, showing the two bastions.



Early in our work at Arbuckle's Fort we identified a dark linear stain visible in the clay subsoil, not far from the monument. This stain was very significant, as it resulted from the trench the militia had dug to hold the vertical stockade logs. With the help of a backhoe, we followed this stain, which turned out to be a short stretch of internal stockading that connected from the chimney area to the main outer stockade. Once the main stockade was found, the entire outline was exposed, revealing a diamond shaped fort, with two bastions and connecting *curtain* walls from 100 to 120 feet long, enclosing about a quarter of an acre. This outline is shown in an aerial photograph in **Figure 3**.

One main feature of the Arbuckle's Fort stockade is the presence of bastions at the north and south ends. The orientation of these bastions with the cardinal directions suggests that surveying instruments were used in laying out the fort. Each bastion would have allowed militia stationed there to see along or "cover" two walls, so all four walls of the fort were protected. Postmold stains in each bastion suggest there were wooden platforms to provide a better view of the surrounding terrain. The stockade included a small gate, such as to admit a single person, not far from the southern bastion, and a slightly larger gate (perhaps to allow entry of a small wagon) to the west of the northern bastion.

In 1992 we began a program in partnership with the Greenbrier Historical Society to include local public school students in the excavations, and soon were bringing students from Concord University and the University of Kentucky to the site. From these efforts, many more



**Figure 4** Sketch of Arbuckle's Fort showing some of the key features revealed through archaeology, by Dr. Stephen McBride.

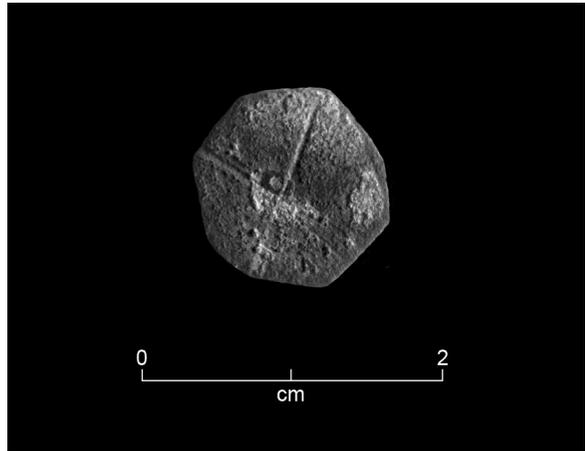
features of the fort were revealed. The internal stockade first identified on the east side of the chimney extended also to the west of the chimney, and included a small jutting-out area called a *redan* before it ended near the main outer stockade on the fort's west side. This redan would have functioned much like a bastion to provide better coverage of the stockade walls. This internal stockade is quite interesting, and poses the questions of whether it may have been the first stockade fence built, preceding the fully enclosed diamond shaped outer stockade and southern bastion, or if it was a "secondary" line of defense contemporaneous with the main stockade. We will come back to this question soon in a discussion of the artifacts found at Arbuckle's Fort.

Excavations revealed that the chimney base upon which the stone monument sat was in the center of a structure defined by sandstone foundation remnants. This kind of arrangement fits very well with what would be expected from a blockhouse, where an overhanging second story would have precluded an end chimney. Besides serving as a lookout and position from which to fire on an enemy, the blockhouse likely served as a place to store weapons and supplies, and would have provided sleeping shelter too. Just west of the blockhouse was a large cellar pit, encircled by postmolds. This feature is very likely a powder magazine.

Two very interesting specialized *activity areas* include a likely food preparation area in the northeast area of the fort, and a blacksmithing area in the northwestern area of the fort. The cooking area was first noticed when metal detecting turned up many fragments from cast iron kettles. Later excavation in this area revealed several large pits filled with refuse, primarily animal bone that would have been leftover from food preparation. These could have initially served as storage pits under small structures, then later filled with refuse when no longer needed for storage. Many of the key features found by archaeology are shown on an artist's sketch of the fort (**Figure 4**). Probably there were also areas of tents, or lean-tos, or other structures for sleeping or shelter, though we have not found evidence of these yet. A second internal line of stockading found very recently is not shown on **Figure 4**, but is shown in **Figure 7** below. These internal stockade lines remain somewhat mysterious, both as to their function and whether the various stretches of stockade were in use at the same time.

The blacksmithing area in the northern section of the fort, defined by a dense concentration of slag or metal residue, has yielded several informative artifacts, including a broken knife blade in a pit, and two small disks of metal, about the size of a modern dime and eight sided. One of the disks clearly has an X scratched into it (**Figure 5**). Artifacts

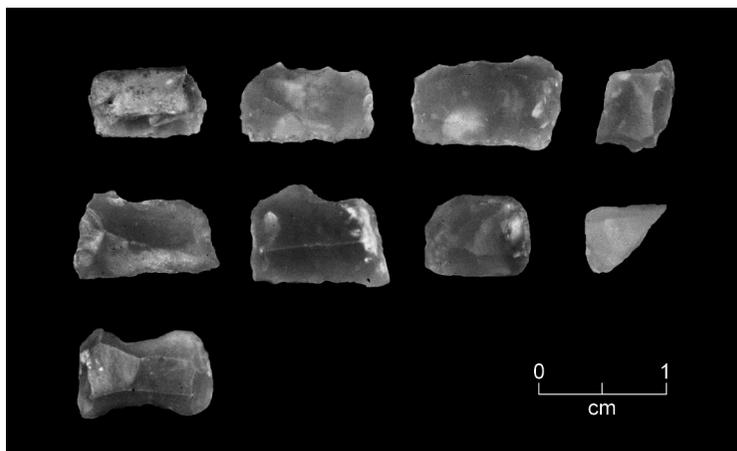
**Figure 5** Amulet with inscribed X found in the blacksmithing area of Arbuckle's Fort.



with Xs carved into them have been found on many slave house sites, where they are usually interpreted as a sort of amulet or good luck token, common within the West African BaKongo religious tradition. The knife found within the pit with the other disk in this same area is also very interesting, as knives were often seen as infused with power within the West African worldview. African Americans are not well-represented in the documentary record of frontier forts, so these artifacts are especially helpful to expand our thinking about their role in guarding the frontier. We know from tax records that fort builder Matthew Arbuckle owned two slaves (see **Table 2**).

The low frequency of items like ceramics or bottle glass underscores that the inhabitants were not able to bring much with them when they came to the fort. We know from the many chopped up animal bones, the leftovers from cooking, that meat played a large role in the diet of the fort inhabitants. These bones were mostly from medium to large domestic animals such as pigs and cows, but also bones from many animals which would have been hunted, such as deer, rabbit, squirrel, woodchuck, black bear, raccoon, and skunk. By looking at the different anatomical parts represented, zoo-archaeological specialist Dr. Terry Martin has concluded that the cattle and pigs were probably butchered at the fort, but the deer were *field-dressed*, with only the most usable portions brought back to the fort for cooking. We can also learn about diet from the tiny seeds preserved from cooking. Ethnobotanist Dr. Jack Rossen studied samples of rich *midden* or garbage-rich soil samples collected from Arbuckle's Fort and found mostly corn, fruits, berries and nuts. Wheat and barley seeds were also present but not as numerous as they typically are on later domestic sites.

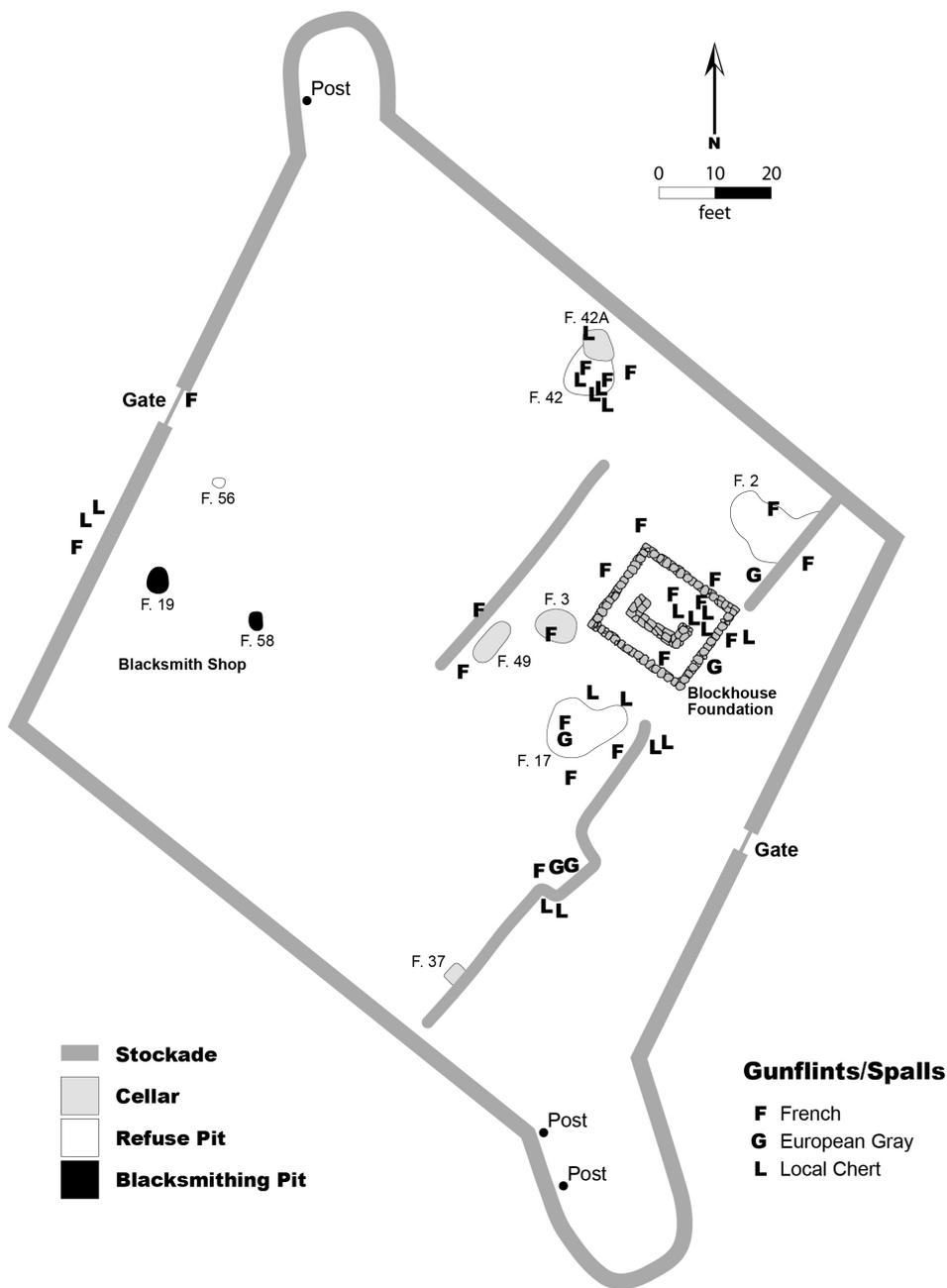
**Figure 6** Gunflints from Arbuckle's Fort.



Artifacts can also inform us about the defense of the fort. Defensive related items include arms and ammunition, such as a rifle site, lead balls of various caliber, and *gunflints*, specially shaped pieces of flint used to create the spark and set off the powder charge in a flintlock rifle. It is interesting how many of the gunflints found at Arbuckle's Fort are very small and worn out. Some of these are shown in **Figure 6**, all made of the honey colored variety of flint, from France or Italy. Darker gray English or Dutch-made *gunspalls* flints were also found, as were gunflints made out of local chert. This use of local chert, which generally were not quite as high quality as the European types, and the small and "used up" nature of these gunflints are likely related to the shortages experienced on the frontier. One gunflint, shown in the upper left in **Figure 6**, is so worn that the striking edge extended on to its lead patch or grip.

Important insights often come from the precise location of an artifact. The distribution of the gunflints is shown in **Figure 7**. The fact that many of these artifacts and all of the earlier gray *gunspalls* [flints made from a single flake] were found along the inner stockade fence or the blockhouse makes us believe that the inner stockade might have been built first, and perhaps was fired upon in the 1774 attack on the fort, as fired lead balls were found here as well.

One of the more interesting artifacts found at Arbuckle's Fort is a small glass document seal (**Figure 8**) that probably would have been set in a ring or cufflink, or something that could be worn on a chain or strap around the neck. This seal imprints the word "Liberty," also shown in **Figure 8**. It reminds us that this frontier defensive system was not just geared toward the conflict with local Indians, but took place within the larger setting of the American Revolution. Matthew Arbuckle, founder



**Figure 7** Distribution of gunflints at Arbutle's Fort.

**Figure 8** Liberty seal (left) found at Arbuckle's Fort, and its imprint (right) in letter wax.



of this fort, expressed this sentiment in a 1776 letter to Col. William Fleming, as follows:

*Sir, My country Shall Never have to Say I Dare not Stand the Attacks of the Indians or fly the Cause they are So Justly fighting for, on the Contrary I will Loose the Last Drop of My Blood in Defense of My Country when fighting for that Blessed Enjoyment Call(d) Liberty....*<sup>18</sup>

The structure of Arbuckle's Fort is somewhat "academic" and follows standard military protocol of the time in having at least two bastions (some forts had four) as part of its stockade. Finding the Arbuckle's Fort stockade helped us prepare for excavations at Donnally's Fort. While our initial 1990 survey efforts at Donnally's Fort were successful in terms of locating eighteenth century artifacts from all around the stone monument, we did not initially find any physical remains of the fort. This would have to wait until the winter of 2003 for a most unusual "accident." The landowner informed us that cows feeding near the monument sunk down into some soft mud and inadvertently revealed stones that appeared to be a laid into a foundation. As soon as the snow melted and the ground thawed we were able to investigate these stones, revealing the base of a large double chimney, one that matched with the historical descriptions of Andrew Donnally's Fort and house (**Figure 9**).

From this discovery, we conducted more fieldwork over the next few years, with the help of a class in archaeological field methods from West Virginia University. The historical accounts told us that the stockade fence at Donnally's Fort connected to the house. Once we found the chimney, and also a number of remnants of limestone piers that defined the corners of the house, we estimated where the stockade fence would have intersected the house at its southwestern side. Here we excavated a trench that we hoped would be perpendicular to the trench the militia



**Figure 9 (top)** Double chimney at Donnally's Fort.

**Figure 10 (bottom)** Stain of stockade trench, outlining a bastion at Donnally's Fort.

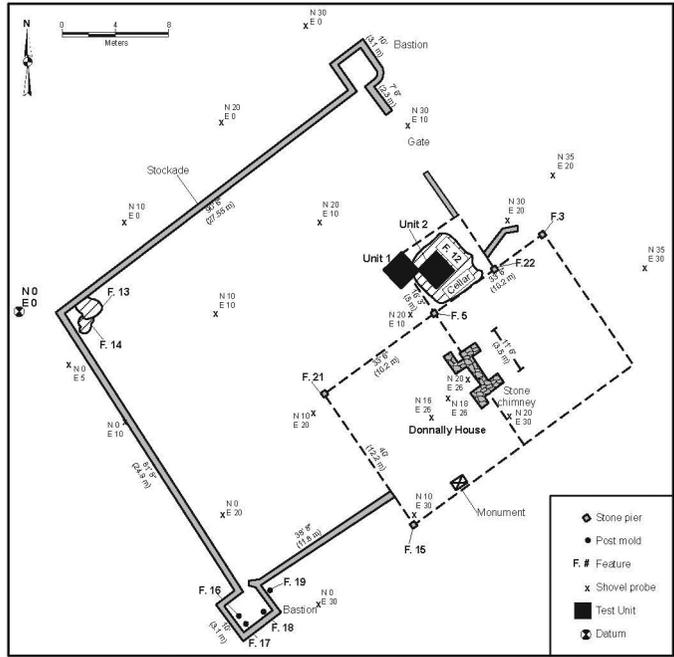
had excavated to hold the stockade logs. With quick success in this task, we next secured a backhoe to follow the stain of the stockade trench to outline the entire fort, like we had done at Arbuckle's Fort. This work showed that there were many similarities between Donnally's and Arbuckle's Fort. For example, both had two opposing bastions oriented to the north and south, though the Donnally's Fort bastions are a bit more square in shape (**Figure 10**) compared to the oblong shaped bastions at Arbuckle's. Evidence of several stone piers (one can be seen in **Figure 10**) and postmolds suggests the presence of a firing platform in the southern bastion of Fort Donnally, like those indicated in both bastions at Arbuckle's Fort. No evidence of a firing platform was found for the northern bastion of Fort Donnally. Stockade curtain walls of Donnally's Fort were about 82 and 90 feet long, slightly smaller than those at Arbuckle's Fort. There was of course one very big difference between Arbuckle's Fort and Donnally's Fort, the incorporation of the Donnally house into the fort, at its eastern corner. Here the house operated somewhat like a third bastion, as it would have provided a way to shoot down or guard more of the curtain walls (**Figure 11**).

We did not find a bastion in the western corner of Donnally's Fort, but instead found two pits inside the fort, each about one meter wide and one meter deep. These likely were privy (outhouse) pits. They also are marked on **Figure 11**. A 16.5-foot-wide gap in the stockade on the northeastern wall of the fort was likely for a gate. This gate was much larger than either of the two gates found at Arbuckle's Fort, but perhaps this is not surprising considering that the Donnally's Fort was a working farm, and would have needed to facilitate entry and exit of wagons.

Another feature, a large pit, was found just north of the house on what would have been its back side. This pit probably marked the location of a cellar enclosed underneath some sort of shed addition on the north side of Donnally's house, as shown on **Figure 11**. The cellar likely had more of a domestic house function but could have also been used like a powder magazine, to store powder, when the militia occupied the fort.

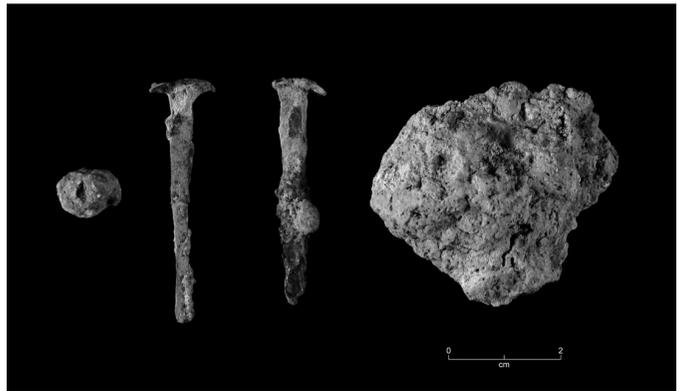
Many more artifacts were found at Donnally's Fort, compared to Arbuckle's, not unexpected since this site was not just a fort but the house of one of the wealthiest citizens in the county. Many post-fort period fragments of refined ceramics and bottle glass were found. Some of the potentially early and fort period ceramic fragments are shown in **Figure 12**, along with two lead balls that could be from the attack on the fort. A variety of other artifacts have been excavated from Donnally's Fort. Some, such as the *daub* or sun baked clay used to chink the stockade trench, or hand-wrought nails (**Figure 13**), may seem mundane but are

**Figure 11** Donnally's Fort layout and excavation units.



important as they likely relate to the building of the fort. One of the most interesting artifacts found at this site was a large key (**Figure 14**). Could this have been the key to the front door of the house and fort described in the historical accounts?!

The excavations at McCoy's Fort were different from those at Arbuckle's and Donnally's forts, partly because the fort's main building was still standing when we first encountered it, and because the surrounding ground had been heavily used as a barnyard. Because of this, and because of hope that the McCoy's Fort structure will someday be restored, we focused within and immediately adjacent to the log structure. McCoy's Fort had generally been protected by its enclosure within the frame barn that was likely constructed circa 1900. But damage from a tornado in 2005 and high straight line winds in 2012 had badly destabilized both the log and frame structures (**Figure 15**). Due to its condition, the site was placed on the Preservation Alliance of West Virginia's list of Endangered Sites in 2012. In the summer of 2013, the Williamsburg District Historical Foundation, with help from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, removed the badly leaning frame barn. The McCoy Fort logs were then numbered, removed, and secured for later restoration. Only at this point was it safe for intensive excavation of the area inside and adjacent to the remaining stone foundation.



**Figure 12 (top)**

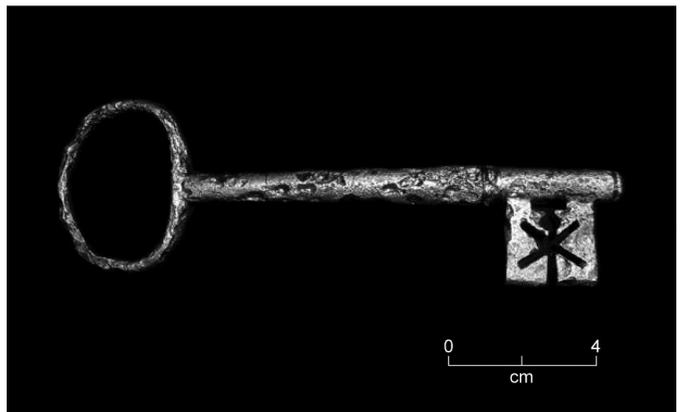
Pearlware, white salt-glazed stoneware, British Brown stoneware, and lead shot from Donnally's Fort.

**Figure 13 (middle)**

Lead shot, two hand-wrought nails, and clay daub from Donnally's Fort.

**Figure 14 (bottom)**

Large skeleton key from Donnally's Fort.



**Figure 15** McCoy's log house/fort within damaged circa 1900 frame barn.



In July 2013, with the help of over 200 Boy Scouts from the Reaching the Summit Community Initiative of the 2013 National Boy Scout Jamboree, we excavated completely around the stone foundation, extending out two meters on all sides. In October 2013, we came back with the help of Greenbrier County Eastern and Western Middle School 8th grade students to excavate the entire inside of the house and an additional row of large test units further out in what would have been the eastern yard, where the eighteenth century artifacts seemed more numerous.

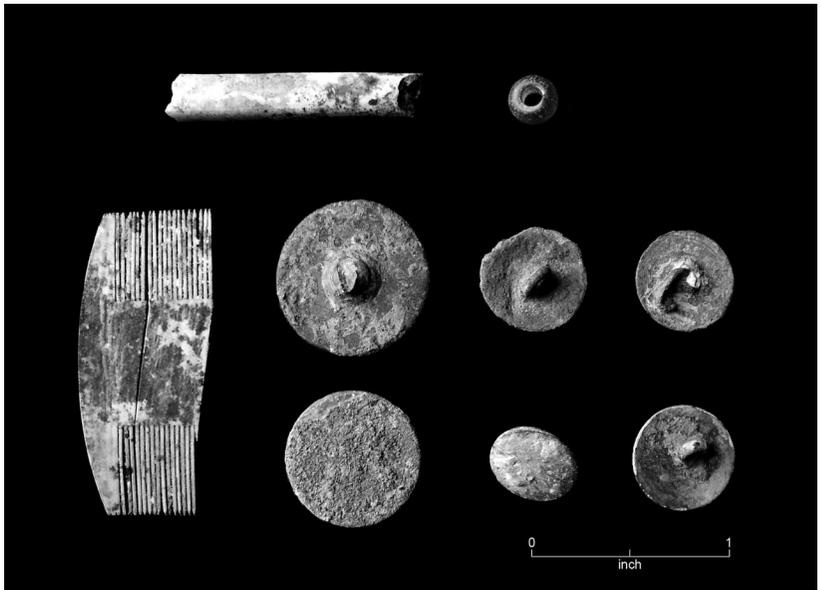
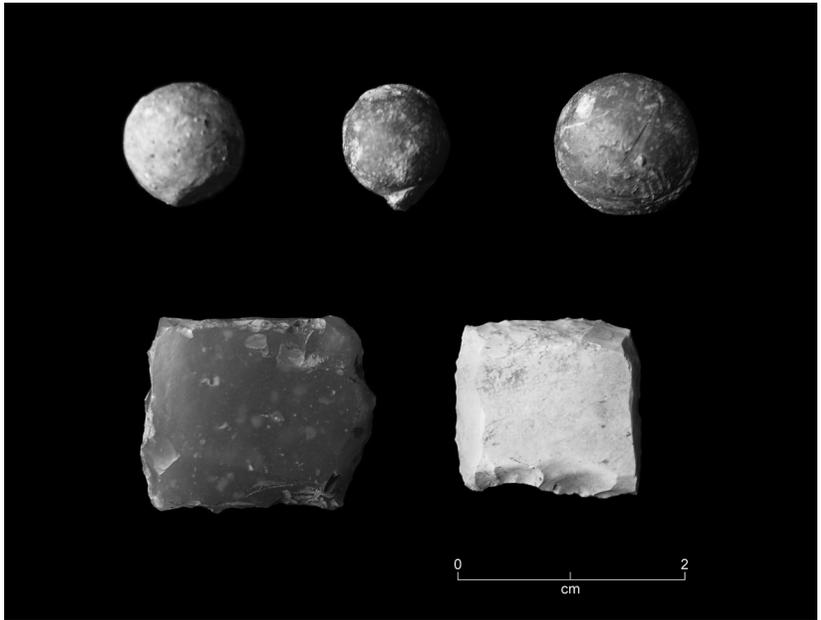
What did we learn? **Figure 16** shows the interior after excavation. The northern chimney base we had barely glimpsed in our initial survey is clearly in view in **Figure 16**. Though **Figure 16** does not show it well, a second chimney base was found at the southern end wall. It is shown in **Figure 17**. The excavations also revealed that the floor of the house was supported by a central block of stones. On either side of this block of stones we found holes from storage cellars. These cellars were pretty irregular in shape, but they would have sufficed to store vegetables over the winter months. They were likely accessed by some sort of trap door in the main floor, with the block of stones providing additional support.

Since we had excavated entirely around the foundation, extending out two meters, and did not see any evidence of a stockade trench, we knew this fort was not like Donnally's, where the stockade fence abutted the house. But perhaps there was stockade fencing further out from the house? To look for evidence of this, we utilized a tractor with a backhoe arm to excavate seven trenches radiating out in all directions from the



**Figure 16 (top)** Foundation and excavated interior of McCoy's house/fort, with pits and central stone support.

**Figure 17 (bottom)** Southern chimney base at McCoy's Fort.



**Figure 18 (top)** Lead shot and gunflints from McCoy's Fort.

**Figure 19 (bottom)** Lice comb, pipe stem, glass bead, and metal "coin" buttons from McCoy's Fort.

foundation. No evidence of a stockade was found. This is perhaps not surprising since McCoy's Fort was only about six miles from the more major Donnally's Fort, which did have a stockade fence and bastions. Construction of a stockade required major labor inputs, and possibly the McCoy's Fort militia occupations were never sufficient for this.

We also hoped the archaeology would help us understand exactly when the McCoy family left this log fort to move into a larger house they built just up the hillside to the northeast. To answer this question we turned to the many artifacts found inside and adjacent to the stone foundation of the log fort. We focused on the more typical domestic, house-related artifacts, such as the fragments of ceramics, bottle glass, and window glass. Most of these date from the 1770s to about 1850. Artifacts that likely date from the fort period include *white salt-glazed stoneware*, *redware*, *creamware* ceramics, and the gunflints and lead balls shown in **Figure 18**. The pipe stem, glass bead, lice comb, and metal *coin* buttons shown in **Figure 19** could be from the fort period or later.

The distribution of the artifacts was also very informative, as they were highly concentrated on the eastern side of the house, with relatively few artifacts on the western side. This makes us think the eastern yard was the back yard, since back yards were much more commonly used as areas of work and for disposing of garbage. This also makes sense because then the western yard, if it were the front yard, would be facing down the valley toward the other main early Euro-American settlement, that of the Williams family (of which William McCoy's wife Jane was a member). The Williams settlement grew into the town of Williamsburg, and was the focal point of the area's settlement.

## Summary and Conclusions

Historical documents and archaeology strongly suggest that the neighborhood (local community) was the economic, social, and defensive center of frontier society in the Greenbrier Valley. The local militia company, under a captain (Andrew Donnally and William McCoy for Sinking Creek and William Hamilton for Muddy Creek) acted not only as the unit of military organization for the community, but also as tax collectors, population enumerators, and road crew organizers for the community. Nearly all able bodied white men would be in the neighborhood militia company and they would spend much of the Indian raiding season (April-October or November) at one of the neighborhood forts, or on scouting (spying) duty, and taking turns guarding one another

as they worked each other's crops. Occasionally they would venture out on an offensive campaign outside the region or be sent to another community's fort as reinforcements. Documents point to another service provided by community members during wartime; providing foodstuffs, clothing, and even horses for the militia, or performing duties as diverse as guarding a Continental Army "deserter." The geographical foci of the frontier defensive efforts was the frontier forts, scattered throughout the landscape, often at the home of a militia leader, and serving as a refuge during times of danger and a base for the militia and scouts.

Archaeology at three of the Sinking Creek and Muddy Creek neighborhood forts has provided the first detailed evidence of their size and appearance. Both Arbuckle's and Donnally's forts were two bastioned stockades; with internal stockade lines and a blockhouse, blacksmith shop, cellar/magazine, and possible cabin at Arbuckle's, and a large double log house at Donnally's. Excavations at McCoy's Fort suggest that this fort was simply McCoy's two-story log house, since it had no evidence of a stockade.

Artifacts and animal bone from these three sites provide information on the material culture and daily life at the forts. For instance, ceramics and bottle glass were relatively rare during the Revolutionary era at these sites, suggesting the use of pewter or wooden dishes. This pattern was especially strong at Arbuckle's Fort, which was only a fort, and not a full-time farmstead like the other two forts. Arms artifacts, including gunflints, lead balls, and a few gun parts indicate the standard use of .45 to .50 caliber flintlock rifles. The distribution of these artifacts at Arbuckle's Fort, where more extensive excavation has taken place, reflect militia men's positions, and Indian firing during the 1774 and 1777 attacks. Animal bone suggests that most animal protein came from pork and venison although beef and small game were also eaten.

Of great interest was the discovery of African American amulets (charms) at the Arbuckle's Fort blacksmith area. Tax lists indicate that there were ten enslaved people in each of the two neighborhoods in 1783, but except for Dick Pointer, the hero of Donnally's Fort, we do not know the names of these people. Yet they all would have made contributions to frontier society.

As the Rev. Joseph Doddridge stated, in times of danger,

*...the whole number of families belonging [emphasis added] to a fort who were in the evening at their homes were all in their [emphasis added] little fortress before the dawn...."<sup>9</sup>*

Doddridge's use of the terms "belonging" and "their" illustrates the communal ownership of the neighborhood fort. Especially given the lack of towns in early Greenbrier County, these neighborhoods/communities and their forts were the hearts of frontier society. They greatly facilitated the settlement of a contested land, and are revered today by many descendants of those who "forted up" in the frontier period.

#### Footnotes (see Bibliography for complete citations)

- 1 Pension application of James Gillilan, R4029
- 2 Pension application of Michael Swope, R10366
- 3 Pension application of John Bradshaw, S6738
- 4 Pension application of Samuel Gwinn, S17992
- 5 Doddridge 1824:94-95
- 6 Dayton 1942:334
- 7 Buster Henderson n.d., Hamilton folder, North House Museum
- 8 Kellogg 1916:70-73
- 9 Staurt1833: 31, 3; Kellogg 1916:70-73
- 10 Royall 1826
- 11 Pension application of John Patterson, R8003
- 12 Pension application of Jonathan Hughes, S9591
- 13 Thwaites and Kellogg 1905:103-104
- 14 Thwaites and Kellogg 1912:81
- 15 Thwaites and Kellogg 1912:81
- 16 Pension application of John McFerren, R6712
- 17 Thwaites and Kellogg 1908:197
- 18 Thwaites and Kellogg 1908:195
- 19 Doddridge 1824:94-95

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This research has relied heavily on pension applications for Revolutionary War veterans. While we originally consulted these on microfilm at the National Archives, or from published sources such as McAllister (1913) or Johnson 1990 (see below), most pension applications are today available on internet sites such as Fold3 or Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements and Rosters. Pensions utilized include the following: Armstrong, Alexander S31525; Bradshaw, John S6738; Carlisle, William R1698; Chapman, Jacob S19237; Ellison, James S6821; Entsminger, John S42708; Gwinn, Samuel S17992; Hamilton, Capt. William R4513; Hamilton, Pvt William W9059; Hannah, David R4573; Harmon, John S1825; Hughes, Jonathan S9591; Jones, John W7920; Kelly, James S1544; Meadow, Josiah S7225; McFerren, John R6712; McKanny, James 2811; Patterson, John R8003; Robeson (sometimes Roberson), John S6017; Swope, Michael R10366; Telford, John S3776; Tanner, Samuel R10389; Telford, Robert S3775; Smith, Thomas R9865; Smith, William W6094; VanBibber, Peter S32566; Williams, David R11572; Williams, Richard R11613; Wilson, John S1936; Windsor, Jonathan R11703.

Other unpublished sources utilized include the Hamilton and Feamster families at the North House Museum of the Greenbrier Historical Society in Lewisburg, WV; the 1775 tithable list, Surveyor Book, Botetourt County Courthouse, Fincastle, VA; and the 1783 personal property and land tax rolls for Greenbrier County (Virginia State Archives, Richmond, VA, and Greenbrier County Clerk's office, Lewisburg, WV).

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**Appendix** Study area households, taxation, and militia activity.

SINKING CREEK	1774 public claims	1780-82 public claims or county court order claim	1775 tithable lists	At 1778 Ft Donnelly attack	1783 tax roll Wm McCoy /slaves / horses /cows	1783 land roll: acres
Blake, John					1 /0 /3 /7	
Blake, Samuel					1 /0 /0 /0	
Blake, Thomas					1 /0 /1 /4	
Blake, William			1	X	1 /0 /2 /6	200
Burns, James*	3 days horse hire		2	X, killed		
Cavendish, Wm H.	Sundry	2 yrs tax commissioner, collect clothes & beeves	1	X	1 /0 /5 /15	925
Cooper, Spencer					1 /0 /7 /6	1014
Cooper, Thomas			1	X	1 /0 /3 /2	100
Cooper, William			1			230
Cutler, William				X		
Crain, William	37 lbs beef		1			
Cunningham, John*	1 day drive cattle		1			
Donnelly, Andrew (Capt)	Sundry	1 horse 9 days, 963 rations, service as Col 168 days in 1781, 350 lbs flour, 205 lbs bacon, 358 lbs beef	2		1 /9 /15 /56	1850
Donnelly, James			1	X	1 /0 /20 /2	300
Ellis, Thomas*	7 days work	84 rations	1	X	0 /0 /1 /0	
Ewings, Joseph		184 rations			1 /0 /2 /4	
Fenton, John				X	1 /0 /5 /6	100
Flinn, James					1 /0 /1 /8	100
Flinn, John				X	1 /0 /15 /0	300
Ford, Francis					1 /0 /4 /6	100
Fullerton, William			1		1 /0 /5 /12	
Graham, James			1	X, killed		
Graham, William		184 rations	1			
Gray, W				X		
Greer, Stephen				X		100
Gregory, Naphthalin			1			
Howard, Charles*			1		1 /0 /7 /6	192
Hugart, James		184 rations, 6 diets	2	X	2 /0 /18 /25	800
Hugart, James Jr				X		
Hughart, T				X		
Hughart, William		184 rations		X	1 /0 /6 /0	
Jones, William			1	X	1 /0 /5 /9	150
Jordan, James		20 lbs bacon	1	X	1 /0 /7 /9	280
Kirns, James					1 /0 /2 /0	
Kirns, John		US, keep deserter Continental Army			1 /0 /3 /4	
Lockridge, John				X	0 /0 /8 /15	100
McCaslin, John	63 lbs mutton		2			350
McClung, Joseph	Sundry		2		1 /1 /20 /19	400
McClung, Thomas					1 /0 /13 /20	400
McCoy, David					1 /0 /0 /0	150
McCoy, James Sr	Sundry, 1 day service		1			
McCoy, James Jr			1		1 /0 /13 /13	150
McCoy, Jane					0 /0 /7 /6	
McCoy, John			1			
McCoy, Sarah					0 /0 /8 /14	400
McCoy, William* (Capt)	336 lbs beef		2		1 /0 /15 /13	400
McFerrin, Andrew		184 rations	1		1 /0 /12 /11	400
McFerrin, John			1	X	1 /0 /7 /6	300
McGaraugh, Samuel		184 rations			1 /0 /3 /9	280
Miller, James	Sundry			X		450
Murphy, Lawrence			1			
Murphy, Patrick					1 /0 /3 /6	280
Ochiltree, Alexander /Elizabeth			2	X killed	0 /0 /4 /6 Elizabeth	230
Owens, George					1 /0 /1 /2	
Patton, John*			1		1 /0 /11 /12	200
Piper, John		167 rations	1		1 /0 /1 /5	50
Prichet, John				X, killed		
Sconce, James				X		
Smith, Peter			1			
Spencer, Thomas			1			
Varney, Samuel	20.5 bu. Indian meal		1			
Williams, David				X	1 /0 /0 /0	
Williams, John*	Sundry		1	Lt	1 /0 /8 /5	250
Williams, Richard *			1	Ensign	1 /0 /5 /5	400

\* = in Capt Arbuckle's Co. at Point Pleasant 1774

MUDDY CREEK	1774 public claims	1780-82 public claims	1775 titable lists	1783 tax roll of Wm Hamilton: poll /slaves / horses /cows	1783 land roll: acres
Alsbury, Thomas			1		
Belleau, John				1 / 0 / 1 / 0	
Belleau, Leander				0 / 0 / 2 / 0	
Butler, James				1 / 0 / 3 / 4	250
Campbell, James	1 beef		1		
Carraway, Thomas		74 rations		1 / 0 / 1 / 12	240
Childers, Reuben		74 rations		0 / 0 / 1 / 0	
Claypool, James				1 / 0 / 1 / 4	
Claypool, Joseph	660 lbs beef			1 / 0 / 4 / 7	317
Conner, John				1 / 0 / 2 / 2	300
Cooper, Abner		Scouting 30 days		1 / 0 / 4 / 4	
Cooper, Leonard		1 horse, 61 rations		1 / 0 / 1 / 3	
Cooper, Philip*			1		100
Cooper, Simon		Scouting 22 days, 74 rations		1 / 0 / 3 / 0	
Cooper, Thomas *			1	1 / 0 / 2 / 3	100
Crawly, James	5 days extra service		1		
Davis Aaron			1	1 / 0 / 2 / 8	100
Davis, James, Sr	Sundry		3		275
Davis, James, Jr	262.5 lbs beef		1		
Davis, Jacob			1	1 / 0 / 1 / 3	200
Draugher, William		74 rations		1 / 0 / 1 / 3	
Dunbar, John				1 / 0 / 1 / 0	
Feamster, William	Sundry, 1 hide, 1 horse		3	1 / 2 / 14 / 11	800
Griffith, James			2		
Griffith, William	1481 lbs beef, 74 rations	741 lbs beef, 145 rations	1	0 / 0 / 5 / 11	200
Hamilton, William (Capt)	Sundry, 1 hog, 1 steer	582 rations, 550 lbs flour, 339 lbs bacon, ammunition & forage for my horse, May-Nov	1	1 / 0 / 9 / 22	625
Hardy, John *	Sundry	74 rations	1	1 / 0 / 8 / 8	
Humphries, Richard (Ensign)	1.5 bushels corn	74 rations, 43 lbs bacon	1	1 / 0 / 8 / 15	330
Jackson, Francis	Sundry, 1 hog		1		
Jamison, Wm <sup>1</sup>			1		300
Jarrett, James (Ensign)	Sundry	148 rations	1	1 / 0 / 13 / 19	300
Jarrett, Jesse		74 rations		1 / 0 / 4 / 7	
Jarrett, Owen		71 rations		1 / 0 / 2 / 6	200
Jones, John *	8 days hire of horse, 56 rations	74 rations		1 / 0 / 3 / 7	450
Jones, Stephen				1 / 0 / 0 / 0	
Keeny, John Sr			2		
Keeny, John Jr **			1	1 / 0 / 6 / 8	200
Keeny, Michael	Hides & tallow, 2 days riding express, sundry	74 rations	1	1 / 0 / 14 / 12	400
Keeny, Thomas*		74 rations		1 / 0 / 10 / 3	200
Keyser, Martin	Sundry	74 rations, 6 yds linen	1	1 / 0 / 8 / 24	140
Kincaid, John				1 / 0 / 3 / 3	400
Kincaid, Thomas		1 gun, 7 diets		1 / 1 / 5 / 6	1590
Kitchen, James		194 rations		1 / 0 / 4 / 8	50
Kippers, John				0 / 0 / 2 / 0	
Lewis, George			1		
Lewis, Wilson		135 rations		0 / 0 / 7 / 9	100
Mathews, Barnabus			1		
McClung, Charles		74 rations		1 / 0 / 7 / 0	
McClung, Samuel, Lt **	Finding horse, 1 cow, 1 mare	170 rations	2	1 / 2 / 20 / 23	300
McClung, William			1		100
Mooney, James* <sup>2</sup>			1		
Morris, Leonard	4 days horse hire	74 rations		1 / 0 / 5 / 10	1000
Morris, John *		74 rations		1 / 0 / 8 / 8	180
Morris, William *	Damage to corn field, horse hire	1 horse, 74 rations, 678 lbs bacon		1 / 3 / 5 / 12	1200
O'Neal, Dennis			1		
O'Neal, John			1		
Patterson, James *	Sundry, 8 days extra service	127 rations	1	2 / 0 / 10 / 16	100
Scott, William **		74 rations	1	1 / 0 / 5 / 10	100
See, George *		74 rations	1	1 / 0 / 4 / 12	400
See, Michael		74 rations		1 / 0 / 5 / 9	260
Shepard, John		71 rations	1		
Shoemaker, John		74 rations		1 / 0 / 5 / 3	
Shoemaker, Peter*	19 days scout, 1 mare	74 rations	1	1 / 0 / 6 / 13	200
Shoemaker, Simon				1 / 0 / 3 / 0	
Shuck, Anthony *			1	1 / 0 / 4 / 4	100
Stephenson, Samuel			1		
Stroud, James		74 rations		1 / 0 / 4 / 5	100
Sullivan, Samuel			1		
Viney, John *	Finding 3 horses	74 rations	1	1 / 0 / 5 / 16	350
Walker, John				0 / 0 / 2 / 4	
Whealy, George		148 rations		1 / 0 / 1 / 5	
Wilson, John	40 diets, 1 horse			1 / 2 / 8 / 4	250
Windsor, Jonathan		74 rations		1 / 0 / 3 / 5	400
Yokum, Conrad		1 horse, 179 rations, 1 man, 2 horses, 1 day	2	1 / 0 / 9 / 22	
Yokum, George*		194 rations	1	1 / 0 / 5 / 4	800

\* = in Capt Arbuckle's Co. at Point Pleasant 1774, \*\* in Capt. Arbuckle's Co but not at Point Pleasant, <sup>1</sup>at Fort Donnally attack, <sup>2</sup>possibly same as the James Munday killed in a local attack in 1780



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