

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Fort Dobbs was constructed by North Carolina Provincial forces in the summer and fall of 1756. The site chosen was the end of a ridge in a fork of Fourth Creek, a tributary of the Yadkin. The fort commanded an excellent view to the north, east, and south. An inspection committee visited the fort in December, 1756, and described the central blockhouse-barrack as a "good Substantial Building. . .of Oak Logs. . .," forty by fifty-three feet, three stories high, and loopholed for defense. The description also mentioned "opposite Angles Twenty four feet and Twenty-Two. . . ." A short section of a narrow ditch archaeologically located suggests that the "opposite Angles" were palisade flankers or bastions at the southeast and northwest corners of the blockhouse. Archaeology confirmed the size of the structure. The cellar and unfinished powder magazine under the east end corresponds almost exactly to half of the forty by fifty-three foot area. A well, forty-one feet deep, was located adjacent to the southwest corner of the building. Documents refer to a palisade. Archaeology revealed an irregular star-shaped perimeter of ditch and parapet. The ditch appears to have been from seven to nine feet wide and from three to four feet deep. The earth excavated from this obstacle would have constructed a parapet of comparable size, upon which the palisade would have been located. The red clay which washed back into the ditch definitely confirmed that the bank was inside the ditch.

The Province abandoned the post in 1764 and the fort rapidly disintegrated. The land was farmed, with cotton being grown on the site as late as the 1930s. The Lloyd loam soils of the area are extremely susceptible to sheet erosion. During agricultural exploitation of the site, two feet of the ground surface has been washed away, and an additional six inches disturbed by the plow. When the Fort Dobbs Road was realigned during this century, the southeast corner of the parapet ditch was almost obliterated. In 1967 all that remained of the fort was a brush choked crater at the location of the well, and an almost imperceptible depression marking the site of the cellar.

The traditional fort location was confirmed in 1967 by historical research and test excavation. Further testing in 1968 located the major features. In 1969 three months of archaeology excavated 85 percent of the fort. Completion of the research will have to await relocation of the Fort Dobbs Road. At the end of the 1969 season the excavated features were stabilized and drains installed.

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SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian | 16th Century | 18th Century | 20th Century
 15th Century | 17th Century | 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1756-1763

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <u>history</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Fort Dobbs was North Carolina's only frontier post during the French and Indian War. The fort's tiny garrison was not only the frontier's main defense, but also participated in most of the southern intercolonial expeditions. The post's officer cadre soon dominated the colony's military leadership.

Small bands of French Indians had begun disrupting the Piedmont frontier in 1753. Upon his arrival in the colony in October, 1754, Governor Arthur Dobbs immediately realized the need for a frontier fort. At the first meeting of the assembly, he secured approval for the creation of a fifty man company to patrol the frontier. Command was given to a young Irishman, Hugh Waddell. In June, 1755, Dobbs and Waddell searched for a suitable site for a winter camp and possible fort. They desired a central location, north-south, from which to defend the frontier, in front of the major settlements, but behind the frontier fringe. A site too advanced could be cut off from settlers seeking refuge. They chose a hill on the Third Creek of the Yadkin. Fort Dobbs was constructed the following year at a comparable location less than ten miles north on the Fourth Creek.

The ranger garrison operating out of Fort Dobbs decreased the Indian raids, and in 1758 it joined Lord Pitt's offensive. The rangers marched north to join the Forbes' expedition, where Waddell commanded the entire North Carolina contingent.

The capture of Fort Duquesne opened a new phase in the war in the south. The French now concentrated on alienating the Cherokees from the English. Cherokee renegades conducted a few scattered raids along the Catawba and Yadkin early in 1759. North Carolina's provincial troops and militia, again under the command of Waddell, now a colonel, attempted to cooperate with South Carolina in a punitive expedition. The effort failed through the poor organization of the militia.

In the fall of 1759 word was received that a serious Cherokee outbreak could be expected. The fort's garrison had been reduced to thirty men by a budget-conscious Assembly. It and the local militia were put on the defensive by this larger threat. The first settlers were killed on February 10, 1760. The evening of February 27 a large band of Cherokees attempted to storm the fort, but were easily repulsed. For the remainder of the spring, war parties terrorized the frontier. In May

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	North Carolina	
COUNTY	Iredell	
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(Number all entries)

8.

the Assembly authorized additional troops, and the fort again became a center for offensive operations. The following year Waddell, and four hundred North Carolinians, joined Virginia and South Carolina in a two-pronged campaign against the Cherokees.

The defeat of the Cherokees, June 10, 1761, ended the war in the Carolina Piedmont. Early in 1763 the garrison was withdrawn from Fort Dobbs and in March, 1764, the stores were removed to Salisbury.

Governor Dobbs, in writing about the post before its construction, described the projected defense alternately as a small fort or as a fortified barrack. The completed fort was just such a hybrid. The massive log blockhouse-barrack could readily have sheltered two hundred men and their equipment, yet was capable of being defended by a handful.

Such small posts, designed to be defended against attacks by lightly armed irregulars, have a long history. In England precedents go back to the timber and earth castles of the Norman conquerors. The inspiration for Dobbs' design, however, probably came from the Irish bawns of the seventeenth century--fortified residences built by the English colonists for defense against the Irish. Such a model put Fort Dobbs outside the mainstream of eighteenth-century military engineering.

Most small frontier forts of the period were bastioned miniatures of major fortresses such as Crown Point. This was true not only of small forts designed to be defended against regular troops--such as Ligonier, Augusta, and Mercer's Fort--but also of similar scaled posts--Fort Prince George and Fort Loudoun on the Tennessee--which were only designed for defense against Indian attacks. Their major defense was a low extended perimeter protected by interlocking fields of fire. At Fort Dobbs, however, the emphasis was on compactness and verticality.

The major component of Fort Dobbs was its loopholed and bastioned barrack which loomed over its palisade like a Norman keep. The comparison is not inappropriate. The floor area of the log building was only slightly less than that of the major eleventh century keep at Castle Hedingham, Essex. Though not an exceptionally large building even by eighteenth-century military standards, Fort Dobbs was a very large log structure. Only two comparable size log buildings--the Gemein Haus at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and the Saron at Ephrata--have survived into the twentieth century.

The military strength of the barrack lay in its closed form. Unlike a palisaded perimeter, the structure had no wall which could be scaled. Once the door was securely fastened, an aboriginal enemy could only have defeated the garrison by chopping into the structure, or firing it. The complete crossfire along the foot of the walls provided by the bastions would have made this extremely difficult.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
North Carolina	
COUNTY	
Iredell	
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ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

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8. Initially the barrack and its flankers stood alone. While contemplated from the beginning, the perimeter defense was a later addition. It strengthened the fortification by preventing an enemy from rushing the loopholes and door of the barrack. Should a foe have penetrated the palisade, he would have been trapped in a narrow corridor. The addition was marred however, by crude design and construction. The angles of the trace were too shallow to provide adequate flanking power, and the northern ditch was never fully excavated. Though poorly executed, the additional defense created no break with the original design elements. The total width of the completed perimeter was a scant 100 feet. During the initial assault of the 1760 Cherokee attack the post appears to have been defended by only twenty men.

In mid-eighteenth century English America the closest parallels to Fort Dobbs are the New England garrison houses and palisaded block-houses such as Presqu' Ile. Neither, however, approached the scale of the North Carolina fort, or provided as adequately for flanking fire. However, it could be argued that the design of Fort Dobbs more adequately met the challenges of Indian warfare than the bastioned trace. This is illustrated by Pontiac's siege of Fort Pitt, then one of the largest fortresses in America. Ditches, ramparts, and heavy artillery proved inefficient against snipers and small night assaults. The garrison was forced to resort to such devices as setting beaver traps in the moat. After the siege was broken by a relief column, blockhouses were built to enfilade the ditch.

Architecturally Fort Dobbs is a unique, yet extremely successful improvisation to meet a common frontier problem. The absence of similar strongholds reflects the dominance of the bastioned perimeter in contemporary military engineering. It also is indicative of the poor organization of the American Indian, who was seldom able to seriously threaten a well-defended fort of any design. When an indigenous frontier military architecture did develop a generation later, it was based on a different form—the rectangular palisade with corner block-houses.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Cashion, Jerry. "Fort Dobbs." Unpublished manuscript, North Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1968.

Iredell County Records, Iredell County Courthouse, Statesville, North Carolina.

Iredell County Records, State Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina.

North Carolina Department of Archives and History, Research Laboratory for Historical Archaeology. IR 1: archaeological research notes, drawings.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		35° 49' 18"	80° 53' 40"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 9.5 acres

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
J. G. Zehmer, Survey Specialist; Sherry I. Penney, Survey Assistant

ORGANIZATION: State Department of Archives and History DATE: June 16, 1970

STREET AND NUMBER:
109 East Jones Street

CITY OR TOWN: Raleigh STATE: North Carolina CODE: 32

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

<p>As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/> State <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name <u>Dr. H. G. Jones</u></p> <p>Title <u>Director, State Department of Archives and History</u></p> <p>Date <u>June 16, 1970</u></p>	<p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p><u>Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</u></p> <p>Date _____</p> <p>ATTEST:</p> <p>_____ Keeper of The National Register</p> <p>Date _____</p>
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INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

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North Carolina	
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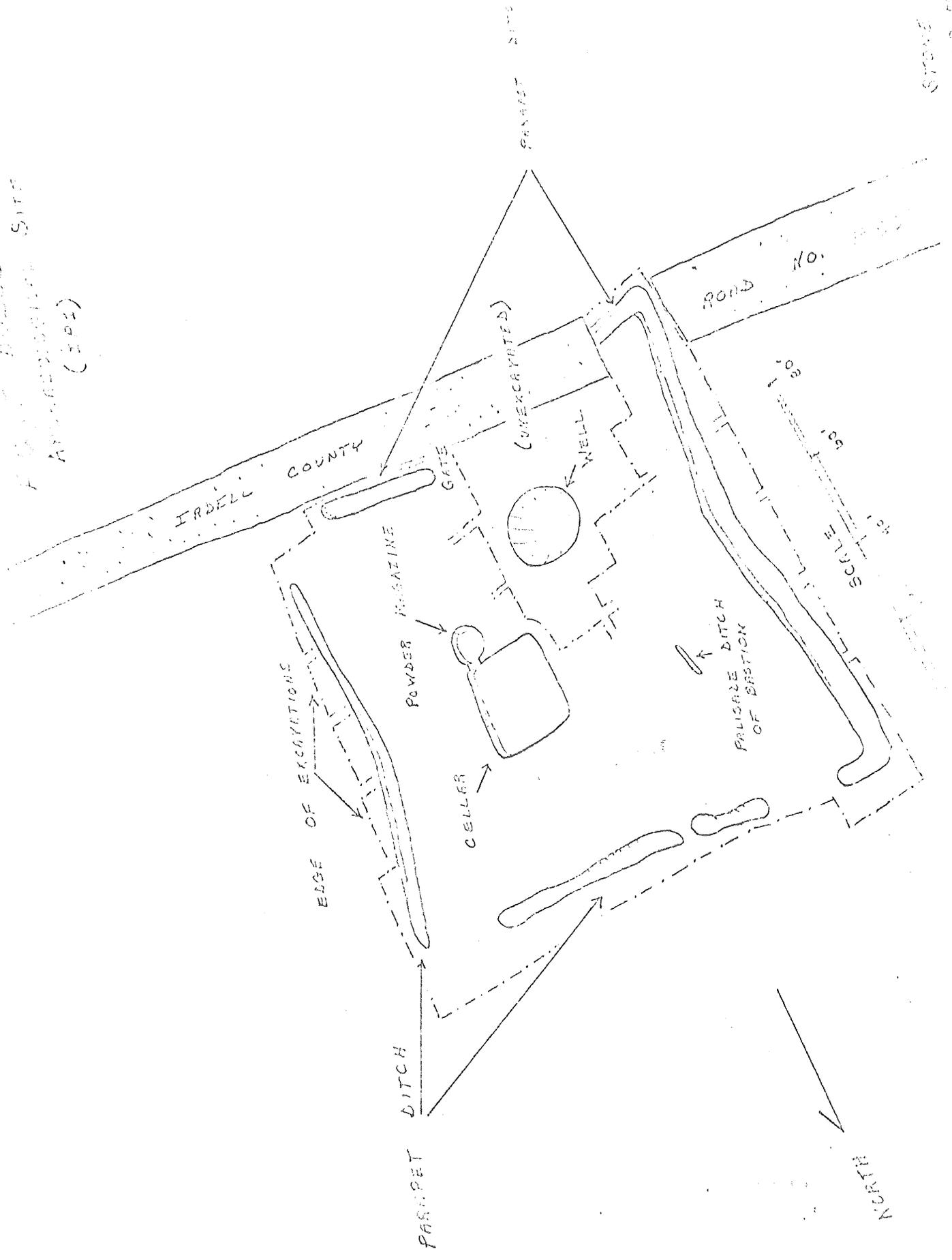
9. negatives, and artifacts.

Ramsey, Robert W. Carolina Cradle--Settlement of the Northwest Carolina Frontier, 1747-1762. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1964.

South, Stanley A. "Fort Dobbs of the Carolina Frontier." Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1967. (mimeographed)

FOOT DOGS
APPROXIMATE SITE
(IP1)

STONE
E-22-10



Fort Dobbs Road (S.R. 1930)
Statesville, North Carolina
Highway Map of Iredell County
North Carolina State Highway Commission
Scale: 2 1/4 miles
January, 1968

Latitude

degrees minutes seconds
35 49' 18"

Longitude

degrees minutes seconds
80 53' 40"

Statesville West Road

ID3

