

Fort Dobbs and the Struggle for America

The French and Indian War

Throughout the first half of the 18th century, a series of conflicts between France, England, and other European countries set the stage for the Seven Years War. From 1754 to 1763, battles raged across five continents as the empires of Europe vied for control of precious colonial resources and territory. North America's part in this first world-wide war is known as the French and Indian War.

By 1750, the British colonial population had surpassed one million and began pushing westward. Meanwhile, France began to construct a series of forts along the Mississippi and Ohio rivers. In 1754, French forces began occupying land recently claimed by Virginia. Attempting to prevent further encroachment, Virginia Governor Dinwiddie called for military assistance from nearby colonies. North Carolina was the first of the other English colonies to respond. Eventually, North Carolina's soldiers would serve in five major campaigns, as far away as Pennsylvania and New York.

The United States had its origin in the French and Indian War. By 1763, the English and their allies had triumphed, but new taxes, meant to reduce Britain's enormous war debt, were levied without the consent of Colonial assemblies. Tensions mounted and, in 1775, exploded into open revolution. The French, humiliated and vengeful, gladly supported the Americans in their quest for independence.



Artist Robert Sawie's depiction of the fort in 1756

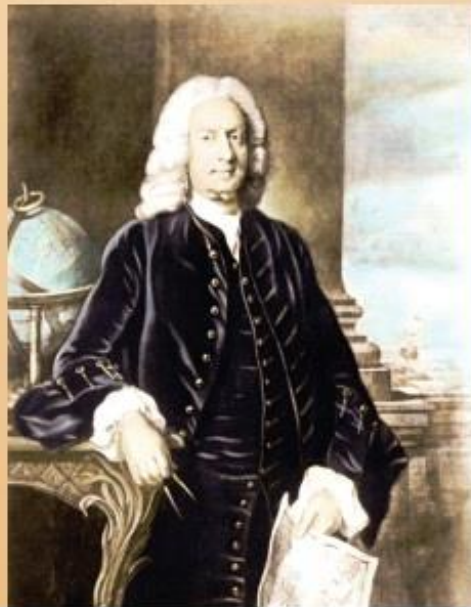


Col. Hugh Waddell

Fort Dobbs

When the war began, Royal Governor of North Carolina, Arthur Dobbs, looked to his colony's defense. As a former military officer, Dobbs was quick to recruit and arm companies of full-time provincial soldiers and have them construct forts at strategic points, including one on the western frontier.

Construction of Fort Dobbs began in the fall of 1755. Completed in 1756, observers described it as "A good and Substantial Building of the Dimensions following (that is to say) The Oblong Square fifty three feet by forty, the opposite Angles Twenty four feet and Twenty-two, In height Twenty four and a half feet... The Thickness of the Walls which are made of Oak Logs regularly Diminished from sixteen Inches to Six, it contains three floors and there may be discharged from each floor at one and the same time about one hundred Muskets the same is beautifully situated in the forks of



Gov. Arthur Dobbs

Fourth Creek a Branch of the Yadkin River."

The fort accommodated at least one company of fifty provincial soldiers, and included living space for officers, such as Hugh Waddell, who oversaw its construction and was commandant for much its occupation. Fort Dobbs also served as a supply depot and symbol of the Crown's regional control. This control was threatened when fighting broke out in 1759. After the indiscriminate murder of several warriors by Virginians, the Cherokee Indians took revenge on English settlers living near Fort Dobbs. The hostilities lasted more than two years and included an attack on the fort by a force of more than sixty Cherokees. By November of 1761, peace was finally restored.



The Historic Site Today

When the war ended, the North Carolina frontier quickly moved west and Fort Dobbs was closed. By 1766, the abandoned fort was in ruins and soon became



farmland. The site was nearly forgotten until 1909, when the Daughters of the American Revolution acquired it and eventually donated it to the State of North Carolina. Archaeological excavations, beginning in 1967,