In Search of Hillhouse Iron Works

In the GAB June 2014 issue I wrote about my thesis research in locating iron works that dated from the 1790s to the 1810s. In that article the Fergus Iron Works located in Madison County, Georgia was featured, and now that my thesis research is finished, I will like to examine the two iron works that were owned by David Hillhouse.

From a prominent Connecticut family David Hillhouse moved to Georgia in 1786. Hillhouse was a business entrepreneur from newspaper editor/printer to commissary agent for the Georgia militia. He received five land grants in Franklin County, Georgia (later parts of Jackson and Madison Counties); these grants equaled to over 12,000 acres. Because of the land grant acts Hillhouse used part of his grants to establish two iron works in the early 1790s: a blast furnace on the South Fork of Broad River below Furnace Creek and a forge at the confluence of Brush Creek and South Fork of the Broad River. (The forge was located about seven miles down the river from the furnace.)

Land deeds revealed that Hillhouse sold interests of the two iron works to several people from 1792 to 1798. In 1792 Hillhouse sold half interest of both iron works to his brother, Thomas Hillhouse, of New London County, Connecticut. However, a couple years later Hillhouse bought back the interest from Thomas. Then in 1796 Hillhouse sold three-fourths of interest in the iron works to Stephen Files with Roderick Easley owning one-fourth. Though Files’ ownership of the iron works was short-lived, it is during this period that the most information about products made by the iron works surfaced from newspaper notices and deeds.

From a newspaper notice (pictured on Page 2) Files announced that he bought the Hillhouse Iron Works and was taking orders of any articles of the “iron foundry line.” He renamed the furnace to Adullam, hired men to manage it, and took a

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GARS Monthly Meeting

For this month’s meeting GARS members are invited to attend a joint meeting with the Fort Daniel Foundation, which will be their annual meeting, on Thursday, January 15. See Page 4 for more details. The next regular meeting of GARS will be in February.
share of the profits. However, Files defaulted on the note to Hillhouse, which he owed about $14,000. The defaulted agreement listed materials used at the furnace and a listing of the products proposed to be made. Giving credit to the Adullam Furnace being a blast furnace, the list comprised of 620 pounds of bar iron, coal, iron ore, limestone, iron, and wood. In 1797 Hillhouse took back the ownership of the iron works and went into partnership with steamboat inventor, William Longstreet, and military man, Buckner Harris—both had one-fourth interest in the iron works. According to a deed dated November 24, 1798 Hillhouse gave up his interest in the Adullam Iron Works to Roderick Easley; with Hillhouse’s one-fourth interest Easley owned half. The county started to grow during this time, and a new courthouse was being built in Jefferson. A petition was presented to the Jackson County Inferior Court ordering that a road to be built from the Adullam Furnace to the new Courthouse. Remnants of the old road can still be seen today (pictured below).

Since there was a lot of information about the Adullam Furnace, it could be concluded that the Hillhouse Forge was only in operation for a short time. From a 1791 deed Alexander Gordon gave Hillhouse 200 acres on the South Fork of the Broad River, which at the time was part in Wilkes County and part in Elbert County. The deed does state that Hillhouse was erecting a forge. When he sold part of interest in the iron works to his brother, the deed also mentioned the forge. In the 1797 deed to Longstreet it does mention the land tract that Hillhouse received from Gordon but does not state forge as the previous deeds did. When Hillhouse finally sold his interest to Roderick Easley in 1798, it does mention the forge, but the early 1800s when Harris sold his interest in Adullam to Benjamin Easley, the forge was not mentioned. It could be concluded that the forge was probably no longer in operation at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and the land must have been sold.

In 1803 David Hillhouse passed away, and his wife Sarah took over his business ventures including the paper—where she became the first woman newspaper editor and printer. During the War of 1812 Buckner Harris served as a general. Under secret orders from President James Madison Harris lead American troops into Spanish-controlled Florida and occupied in northern Florida with his family until his assassination. (The governor of Spanish Florida offered a reward for Harris’ head.)

Using land deeds and a local history book as sources, Adullam Furnace was most likely in operation from 1791 to the early 1800s with Hillhouse Forge being in operation from 1791 to 1800. The source of iron is unknown; therefore, the iron ore was probably brought in from other places. In The History of Madison County, Georgia the author states that iron ore was mined in the area—though only small amounts were found. The fuel source could have been either charcoal for the Hillhouse Forge or coal for the Adullam Furnace (as it was mentioned in the default agreement for Files). The labor force used at both iron works was probably local people. However, when Hillhouse set up the agreement with Files, he deeded ten slaves to Files; these slaves may have worked at the furnace or on the farm that supplied food to the iron works.

During a pedestrian survey in July 2014 at the possible location of Adullam it was observed that mills were later built upon what were the remains of the blast furnace. Additionally, visible remains of the Hillhouse Furnace Military Station were evident; however, because of the vegetation the chimney stack was the only visible remnant (pictured right). The Adullam Furnace and Hillhouse Forge were short lived operations, but their records gave details about what these frontier iron works were capable of making and probably became a major supplier of iron to the military stations on the frontier. ▪ DMG
More Diggin’s

- **Throughout the month of January** the Gwinnett Environmental and Heritage Center (GEHC) will be having **Winter Hikes at McDaniel Farm**. Explore the winter forest at McDaniel Farm and experience the winter season. Learn how to be on the lookout for tracks, trails, and evidence of wildlife (pictured right). The program will end with the making of snacks for the birds. There is a program fee of $5 per person, and preregistration is required. To preregister or for more information please visit the [GEHC’s Web site](#).

- **Greater Atlanta Archaeological Society** (GAAS) will have their next meeting on **January 13** at the Ferbank Museum of Natural History beginning at 6:30 PM. The guest speaker will be Dr. Jim D’Angelo, who will be speaking on his recent visit to the world’s oldest temple, Gobekli Tepe, archaeological site dating to about 10,000 BCE located in the Southeastern Anatolia Region of Turkey.

- **Atlanta History Center** will be having a **FREE admission weekend on January 17–19**. Admission includes access to all History Center exhibitions, interactive experiences, and explorations at Smith Family Farm, Swan House, and 22-acre Goizueta gardens. For more information visit the [Atlanta History Center’s Web site](#).

- **Gwinnett Historical Society** will be meeting on **January 26** at the Gwinnett Historic Courthouse (located downtown Lawrenceville). The meeting will begin at 7 PM. For more information please visit the [Gwinnett Historical Society’s Web site](#).

- **Beginning on January 28 and ending on April 30** the GEHC will be hosting **Centuries of Childhood: An American Story**. Children will connect the stories of American history to their own experiences by learning about the lives of five historical children and their families. Each historical character will have its own distinct environment based on the time period and location in which they lived. By creating immersive environments with replicas of artifacts, home settings and traditional dress, children and families will feel like they are stepping into another time and place. For more information please visit the [GEHC’s Web site](#).

Cherokee County Museum Acquires Native American Artifacts

The Cherokee County Historical Society announced in December the acquisition of the Lamar and Mary Fowler Holcomb Native American collection, a significant number of artifacts collected from the Long Swamp archaeological site near Ball Ground, Georgia, over a period of 70 years. While some artifacts are to be displayed at the Cherokee County History Museum, the collection contains 16 pottery bowls and jars, ear spools, pipes, carved pottery figurine fragments, beads, and many other items.

Long Swamp site (9CK1) is a four-acre archaeological site on the north shore of the Etowah River. The site consists of a South Appalachian Mississippian culture village with a palisade and a platform mound. Long Swamp’s peak Native American occupation occurred from 1100 to 1200.

Portions of the site were excavated in 1938 by Robert Wauchope and again in 1949 by Lewis H. Larson, under the direction of Arthur Randolph Kelly. The site was surveyed by Southeastern Archeological Services in 2003 and 2004 and then thoroughly excavated by Edwards-Pitman Environmental, Inc. (You can view an [online article](#) about this excavation on the Society of Georgia Archaeology’s Web site.) The Historical Society is teaming up with the Georgia State University Anthropology Department to use the identification and classification of the artifacts as a teaching tool for students. — Associated Press
Fort Daniel News

- The Fort Daniel Foundation (FDF) Annual Meeting will be held on Thursday, January 15 from 7–9pm at the Gwinnett Administrative and Justice Center Room A. This is a joint meeting with GARS, and as always, the public is invited. In addition to the annual report of the Corporation (which will include updates on investigations at the supposed location of Fort Peachtree) the meeting will feature guest speaker and Georgia archaeologist, Scott Butler. Dr. Butler will speak on his work at the War of 1812 Point Peter Battery, Camden County. Many will recall that three forts were featured on the SGA War of 1812 Bicentennial Poster (pictured right). This southernmost fortification in the nation’s naval defense system was overrun by the British who destroyed the fort and barracks. Thousands of artifacts and features tell the story.

- FDF recently received donations from Rebecca Schindler in loving memory of Mimi Jo Butler, General John Clarke Chapter Daughters of 1812, and in honor of Major Tandy Watts Key; the General John Clarke Chapter, US Daughters of 1812; and Chuck Warbington, who received it from a friend in honor of Georgia Tech’s victory over the University of Georgia. These donations have been earmarked for the building of the blacksmith shop at Fort Daniel Archaeological Site.

GARS New Officers

At the Annual Christmas Party a special-called meeting was called to vote for the 2015 GARS officers. The results were: Treasurer, John Hopkins; Secretary, Christine Durgan; Vice President, Karen Lee; and President, Delana Gilmore.

Your GARS officers are planning new exciting places to visit and excellent speakers to be at the monthly meetings. If you have any suggestions for future field trips or guest speakers, please contact Delana Gilmore.