

Fort/Station Russel at the North Fork of Broad River, also Known as Cove Creek, as Related by Soldiers

by

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Whether referring to Fort or Station Russel (Russell), the two terms refer to the same structure, located at the mouth of Cove Creek. This is a factual statement. Reaching conclusions regarding early Rutherford County and Old Tryon County history is often like solving a puzzle, putting the pieces together to see the whole picture. Research of the sources created in the time frame of the events and the testimony of persons thereunto is essential.¹ This is incredibly challenging when researching the colonial period, as many documents are no longer available. An example is the determination of the location of Fort/Station Russel based on documented facts. Misleading and unsubstantiated claims may result from a lack of thorough investigation and reliance on generalizations rather than documentary evidence. However, with time, effort, and persistence, one may eventually tie together enough historical evidence to reach the truth. This article supplements the article *Russell's Fort*, which appeared in The Genealogical Society of Old Tryon County's 2022 Fall *Bulletin*. That article required extensive research and produced evidence that Fort/Station Russel was at the mouth of Cove Creek. A claim has since been expressed by some, without accompanying documentation, that Fort Russel and Station Russel were two separate entities. This article provides additional evidence indicating that such a dichotomy did not exist.

During the colonial period, the terms fort and station were synonymous and interchangeable, as Tennessee State Historian Walter T. Durham (1924-2013) noted in his article "Frontier Stations" posted on the website of the Tennessee Historical Society. Durham wrote that "before 1796 on the Tennessee frontier, the terms 'station' and 'fort' were used interchangeably to mean a structure, or adjacent structures, that could temporarily house more than one family and protect settlers from Native American attacks"². Durham also noted that "early stations, or forts, usually took the name of the owner-occupant of the main or principal house."³ Numerous Revolutionary War pension applications in Rutherford County refer to **Potts Fort/Station, Russel Fort/Station, and Earle's Fort/Station**, among others along the Cherokee boundary, suggesting each was located on or adjacent to the property of its namesake.

Pension applications variously refer to Fort Russel and Station Russel with some individuals giving both names in the same statement without any distinction between the two terms. For example, some pension applications stated that Fort/Station Russel was on Broad River. The original land records of the upper **Broad River Basin** refer to the **North Fork of Broad River** and the **South Fork of Broad River**. Over time the same records refer to the **North Fork** as **Cove Creek** or **Broad River**, and the **South Fork** refers to **Main Broad River** or **Broad River**. An image of each quotation from the original pension applications is provided below immediately afterward the quotation. Handwritten upper-case and lower-case letters are frequently subject to interpretation and may be viewed differently by different readers without changing meaning.

The pension applications cited are those of *William Graham, William Williams, John McLain, Alexander McFadden, Joseph Williams* (widow *Sarah*), *Richard McClewer, Thomas Dalton*,

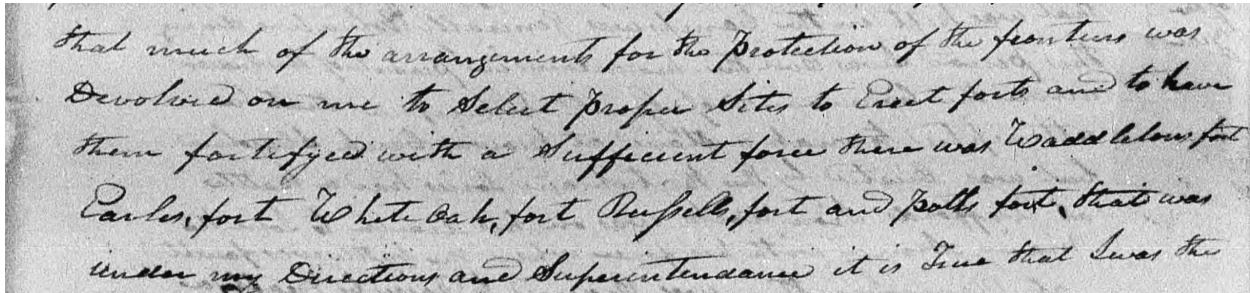
¹ Original Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty Land Applications are at the National Archives.

² Durham, Walter T., *Frontier Stations*, Tennessee Encyclopedia, October 8, 2017, <https://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/frontier-stations/> Walter T. Durham was the Tennessee State Historian from 2002 until his death in 2013.

³ *Ibid.*

James Gray, Drury Logan, Charles Lewis (widow Elizabeth), William Crane, James Ownbey, Anthony Dickey, and Absalom Awtry.

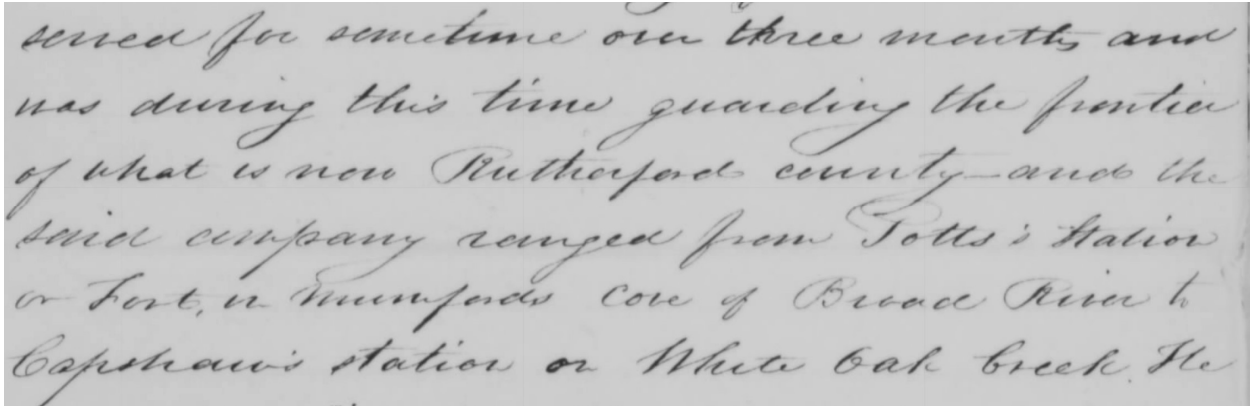
In his pension application *William Graham*, a Colonel in the Tryon County militia and later Lincoln County militia, states "... that much of the arrangements for the protection of the frontier was Devolved on me to Select proper Sites to Erect forts and to have them fortified with a Sufficient force there was **Waddletons fort, Earles fort, White Oak fort, Russells fort, and Potts fort** that was under my direction and superintendance ..."⁴



that much of the arrangements for the protection of the frontier was Devolved on me to Select proper Sites to Erect forts and to have them fortified with a Sufficient force there was Waddletons fort Earles fort White Oak fort Russells fort and Potts fort that was under my Direction and Superintendance it is True that I was the

These five defensive structures are called stations and forts in pension applications. The pension applications do not suggest, nor is there any evidence there was a **Fort Russel and a Station Russel** at locations somewhat distant from each other.

The pension application of *William Williams* stated that he "...served for sometime over three months and was during this time guarding the frontier of what is now Rutherford County and the said company ranged from **Potts's Station or Fort** in Mumfords Cove of **Broad River** to **Capshaw's station on White Oak Creek...**"⁵



served for sometime over three months and was during this time guarding the frontier of what is now Rutherford county and the said company ranged from Potts's Station or Fort, in Mumfords Cove of Broad River to Capshaw's station on White Oak Creek. He

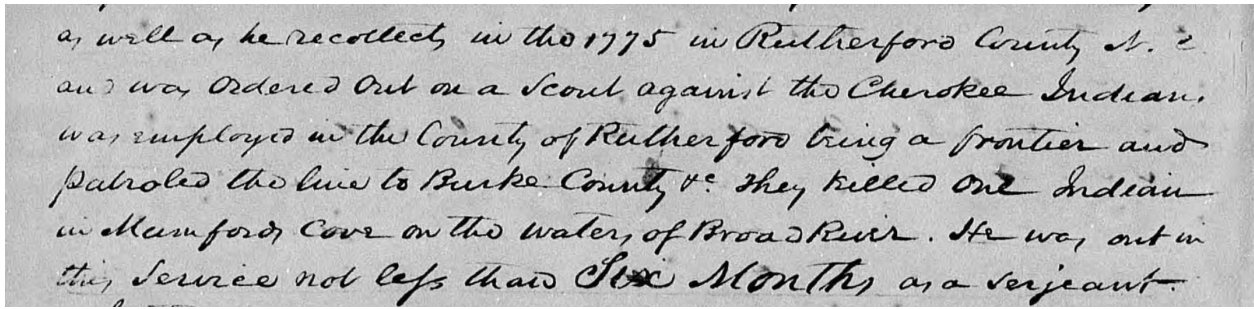
Not only does the Williams pension application demonstrate the interchangeability of the terms "**fort**" and "**station,**" but placing "**Potts Station or Fort**" on **Broad River** confirms the use of **Broad River** when referring to the **North Fork of Broad River or Cove Creek**.

John McLain, in his application, stated he "... was ordered out as a Scout against the Cherokee Indians was employed in the County of Rutherford being a frontier and patrolled the line to Burke County &c. they killed one Indian in **Mumfords Cove on the waters of Broad River...**"⁶

⁴ Revolutionary War Pension File S8624.

⁵ *Ibid.*, R11606.

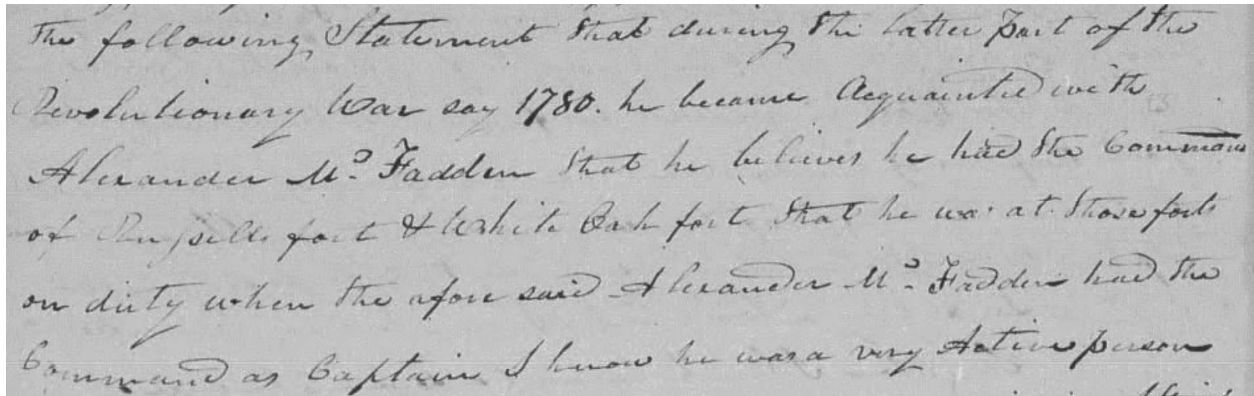
⁶ *Ibid.*, S31853.



... will as he recollects in the 1775 in Rutherford County N. C. and was ordered out on a scout against the Cherokee Indian. was employed in the County of Rutherford being a frontier and patrolled the line to Burke County &c they killed one Indian in Mumford's Cove on the waters of Broad River. He was out in this service not less than Six Months as a sergeant.

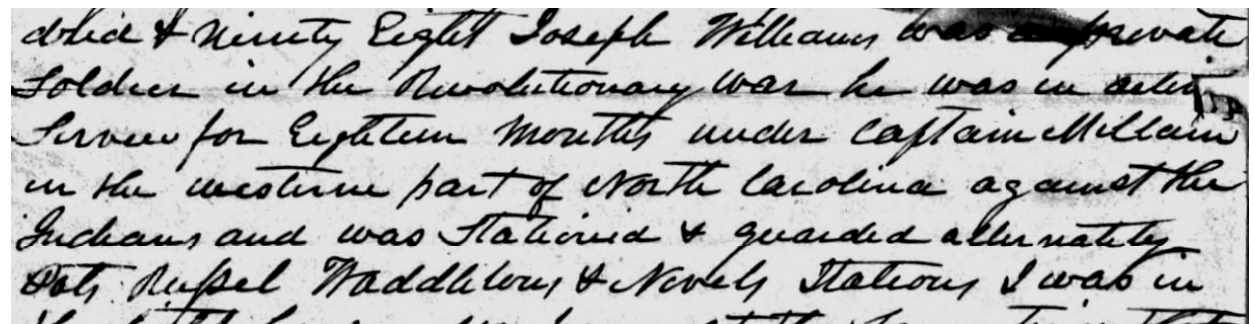
Mumford's Cove is on **Cove Creek**, several miles north of **Main Broad River**. McLain recognized **Cove Creek** as part of the **Broad River** basin.

In supporting affidavits for two pension applications, William Dalton used the terms station and fort interchangeably when referring to Fort/Station Russel. In support of *Alexander McFadden's* pension application, William Dalton stated "... that during the latter part of the Revolutionary War say 1780 he became acquainted with Alexander McFadden that he believes he held the Command of **Russells fort & White Oak fort** that he was at those forts on duty when the aforesaid Alexander McFadden had the Command as Captain ..." ⁷



The following Statement that during the latter part of the Revolutionary War say 1780. he became acquainted with Alexander M^d Fadden that he believes he had the Command of Russells fort & White Oak fort that he was at those forts on duty when the aforesaid Alexander M^d Fadders had the Command as Captain. I know he was a very Active person

William Dalton's affidavit in support of the application of *Joseph Williams* states, "...Joseph Williams was a private Soldier in the Revolutionary War he was in active service for Eighteen months under Captain McClain in the western part of North Carolina against the Indians and was Stationed & guarded alternately **Pots Russel Waddletons & Nevels Stations...**" ⁸.



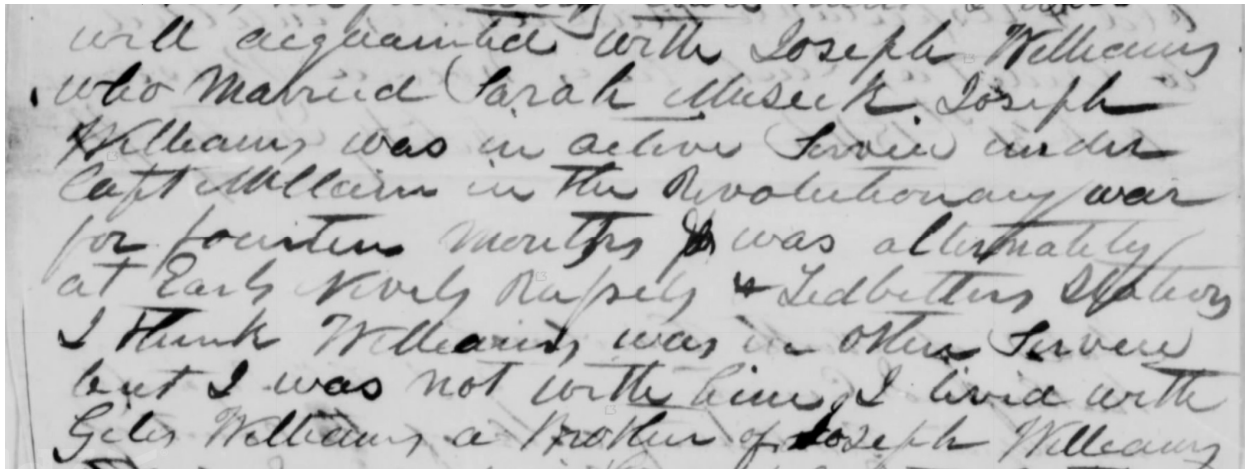
about & ninety eight Joseph Williams was a private Soldier in the Revolutionary War he was in active service for Eighteen months under Captain McClain in the western part of North Carolina against the Indians and was Stationed & guarded alternately at Pots Russel Waddletons & Nevels Stations I was in

In another statement in support of the application of the widow of Joseph Williams for benefits James Ownbey stated he was "...acquainted with Joseph Williams who married Sarah Musick. Joseph Williams was in active Service under Captain McClain [John McClain] in the Revolutionary

⁷ Ibid., S8887

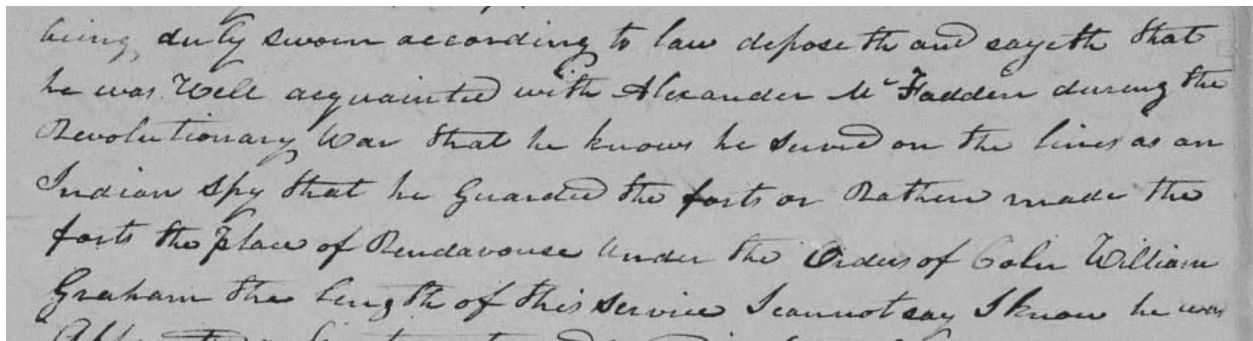
⁸ Ibid., W9891

War for fourteen months & was alternately at **Earls, Nevels, Russels & Ledbetters Stations** I think Williams was in other Service but I was not with him. I lived with Giles Williams a Brother of Joseph Williams ...”⁹



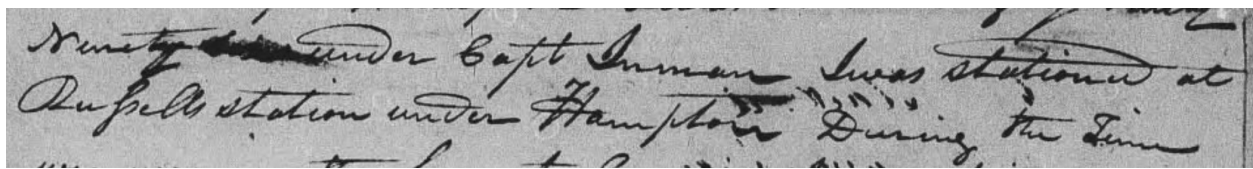
will acquainted with Joseph Williams who married Sarah Musek. Joseph Williams was in active service under Capt Williams in the Revolutionary war for fourteen months & was alternately at Earls Nevels Russels & Ledbetters Stations I think Williams was in other Service but I was not with him I lived with Giles Williams a brother of Joseph Williams

The supporting affidavit of Richard McClewer in *Alexander McFadden's* application reads "...being duly sworn according to law deposeth and saith he was well acquainted with Alexander McFadden during the Revolutionary War that he knows he served on the lines as an Indian spy that he guarded the forts or rather made the forts the place of Rendavouse under the Orders of Coln William Graham the length of this service I cannot say ..." ¹⁰



being duly sworn according to law deposeth and sayeth that he was well acquainted with Alexander McFadden during the Revolutionary War that he knows he served on the lines as an Indian spy that he guarded the forts or rather made the forts the place of Rendavouse under the Orders of Coln William Graham the length of this service I cannot say I know he was

In his own pension application, *Richard McClewer* stated he "... was stationed at **Russells station** under Hampton ..." ¹¹.



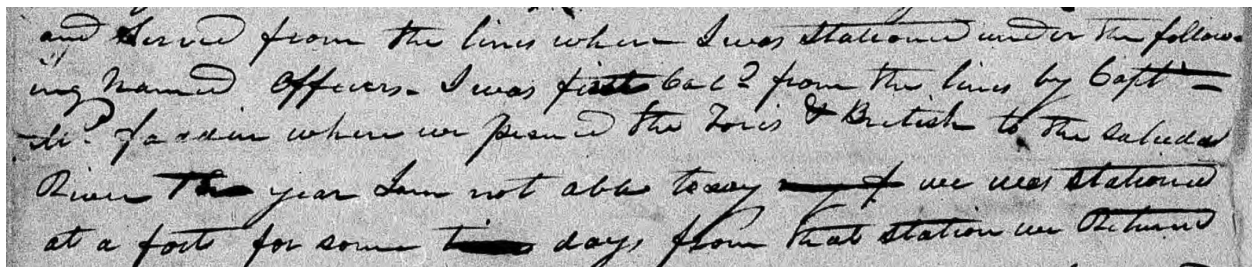
... served under Capt Inman I was stationed at Russells station under Hampton During the time

He also stated that he "... served from the lines where I was stationed under the following named officers. I was first cald from the lines by Capt. Mcfadden where we pursued the Tories & British to the Saluda River The year I am not able to say **we was stationed at a fort for some days from that station we Returned ...**"

⁹ *Ibid.*, W9891

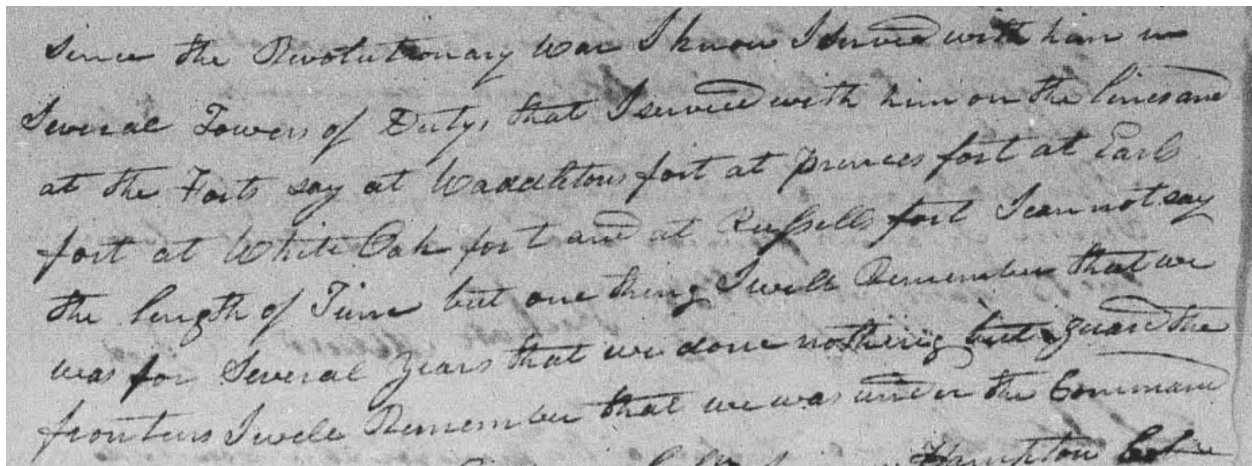
¹⁰ *Ibid.*, S8887

¹¹ *Ibid.*, S9428



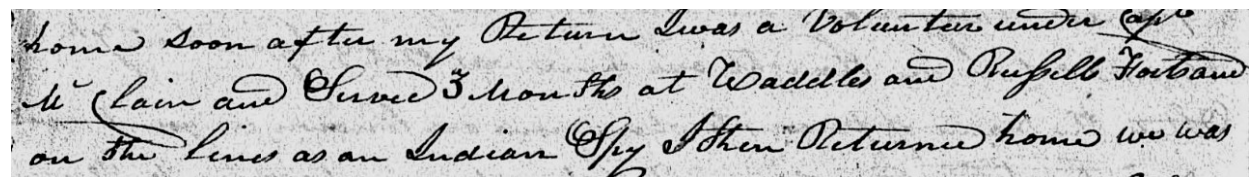
and served from the lines when I was stationed under the following named Officers. I was first called from the lines by Capt. McFadden when we joined the Tories & British to the Sabuda River. The year I am not able to say if we were stationed at a fort for some ~~two~~ days, from that station we returned

Danza Metcalf made an affidavit in support of Richard McClewer stating "... I know I served with him in Several Towers of Duty, that I served with him on the lines and at the Forts say at **Waddletons fort** at **Princes fort** at **Earls fort** at **White Oak fort** and at **Russells fort** I cannot say the length of Time but one thing I well Remember that we was for Several Years that we done nothing but guard the fronteers ..." ¹²



Since the Revolutionary war I know I served with him in Several Towers of Duty, that I served with him on the lines and at the Forts say at Waddleton fort at Princes fort at Earls fort at White Oak fort and at Russell fort I can not say the length of Time but one thing I well Remember that we was for Several Years that we done nothing but guard the fronteers I well Remember that we was under the Command

Thomas Dalton (brother of William Dalton) in his pension application stated that he Thomas "was a volunteer under Captain McClain and served 3 months at **Waddles and Russells Forts** and on the lines as an Indian Spy." ¹³



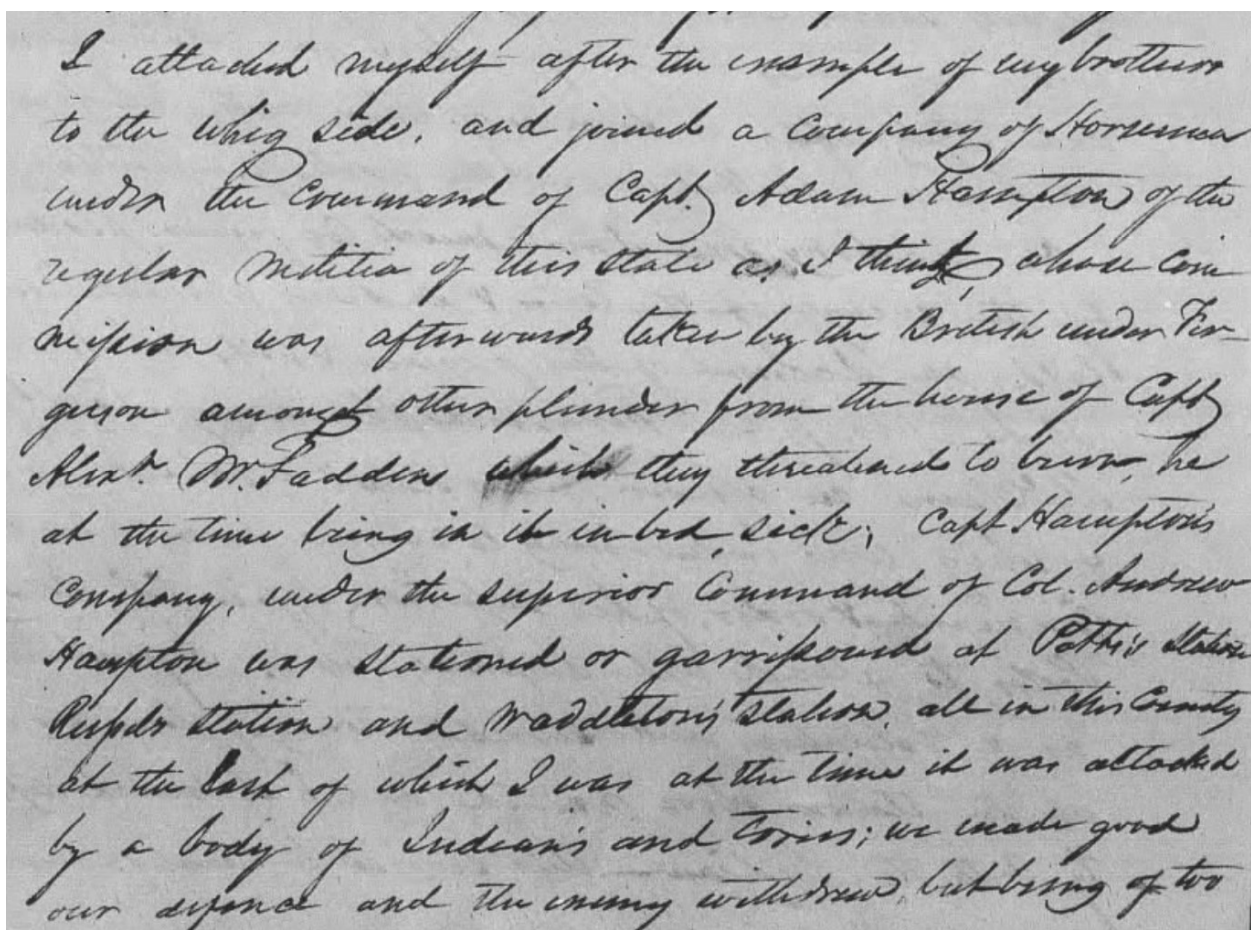
home soon after my Return I was a Volunteer under Capt. McClain and served 3 months at Waddles and Russell Forts and on the lines as an Indian Spy I then returned home we was

Thomas Dalton also stated "... I attached myself after the example of my brothers to the whig side, and joined a company of Horsemen under the command of Capt. Adam Hampton of the regular militia of this state as I think, whose commission was afterwards taken by the British under Furgerson amongst other plunder from the house of Capt. Alexr. McFaddens which they threatened to burn, he at the time being in it in bed sick; Capt Hampton's Company, **under the superior Command of Col. Andrew Hampton was stationed or garrisoned at Potts's Station Russels Station and Waddleton's Station** all in this County at the last of which I was at the time it was attacked by a body of Indians and tories; we made good our defence and the enemy withdrew ..." ¹⁴

¹² Ibid.

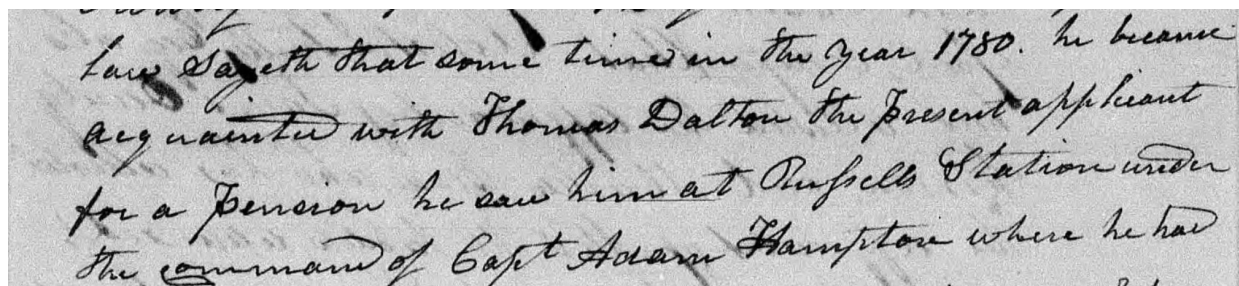
¹³ Ibid., W6983

¹⁴ Ibid.

A snippet of a handwritten manuscript in cursive script. The text describes a military experience during the Revolutionary War, mentioning a company of horsemen under Capt. Adam Hampton and a station attacked by Indians and Tories. The handwriting is dark ink on aged paper.

I attached myself after the example of my brethren to the Whig side, and joined a Company of Horsemen under the Command of Capt. Adam Hampton of the regular militia of this state as I think, whose Commission was afterwards taken by the British under Ferguson amongst other plunder from the house of Capt. M^r. W. Fadden which they threatened to burn, he at the time being in it in bed sick, Capt. Hampton's Company, under the superior Command of Col. Andrew Hampton was stationed or garrisoned at Potts's Station, Russells Station and Waddelton's Station, all in this County at the last of which I was at the time it was attacked by a body of Indians and Tories; we made good our defence and the enemy withdrew, but being of too

James Ownbey, also in support of Thomas Dalton's application, "... sayeth that some time in the year 1780 he became acquainted with Thomas Dalton the present applicant for a pension he saw him at **Russells Station** under the command of Capt Andrew Hampton ..." ¹⁵

A snippet of a handwritten manuscript in cursive script, similar to the one above. It continues the account of James Ownbey's acquaintance with Thomas Dalton in 1780. The handwriting is dark ink on aged paper.

sayeth that some time in the year 1780. he became acquainted with Thomas Dalton the present applicant for a Pension he saw him at Russells Station under the command of Capt Adam Hampton where he had

In **James Gray's** pension application Alexander McFadden under oath stated "... he was well Acquainted with Captain James Gray During the Revolutionary War and have lived a Neighbour to him from before the Revolution to the present day I served under him as Lieutenant in the year 1780 and 1781. I was with him at **Waddeltons Station and at Earls Station and at Russells Station on Broad River** under the Command of Colⁿ Robert Porter and on to the Indian Nation we was then under Colⁿ Singleton and Colⁿ Porter..." ¹⁶

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, S8594

In the County of personally appeared before me the Subscriber
 the Justice of the peace for said County, Alexander
 W. Fadden and after being duly sworn sayeth on oath that he was
 well acquainted with Captain James Gray during the Revolutionary
 War and have lived a Neighbour to him from before the Revolution
 to the present day I served under him as Lieutenant, in the Years 1780
 and 1781 I was with him at Waddell Station and at Earl Station
 and at Dupell's Station on Broad River under the Command of Col^l
 Robert Porter and on to the Indian Nation we was then under Col^l
 Singleton and Col^l Porter we was out on this Tower 3 Months this is

James Gray also states that he "... was at the Siege of 96 I continued there until the Siege was raised
 I think I was at that 4 or 5 Weeks I was under Capt. Inman I came ho[me?] from that place was
 appointed Captⁿ. by Col. Hampton and Ordered to guard fou[r] Stations Russells. Waddletons.
 White Oak & Earlses. ..."

= valily went on y...
 soon after that I was at the Siege of 96 I continued there untill the Siege was
 raised I think I was at that 4 or 5 Weeks I was under Captⁿ Inman I came ho
 from that place was appointed Captⁿ by Col. Hampton and Ordered to guard for
 Stations Russells. Waddletons. White Oak & Earlses. I was on that Tower m

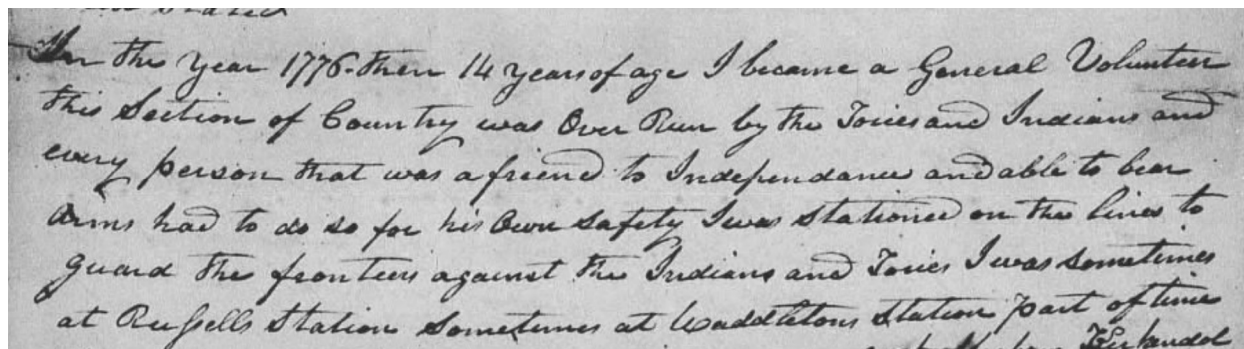
In a supplement to his original affidavit Gray states "on my Return home I was appointed a Captain
 by Colⁿ Hampton and Ordered to guard **four Stations Russels Waddelton- White Oak & Earls**
 ..." ¹⁷

on my Return home I was appointed a Captain by Colⁿ
 Hampton and Ordered to Guard four Stations Dupell
 Waddleton- White Oak & Earl. this was a Tower of
 During this service we had a battle on Parolote with
 British and Tories under Colⁿ M^r Dowell

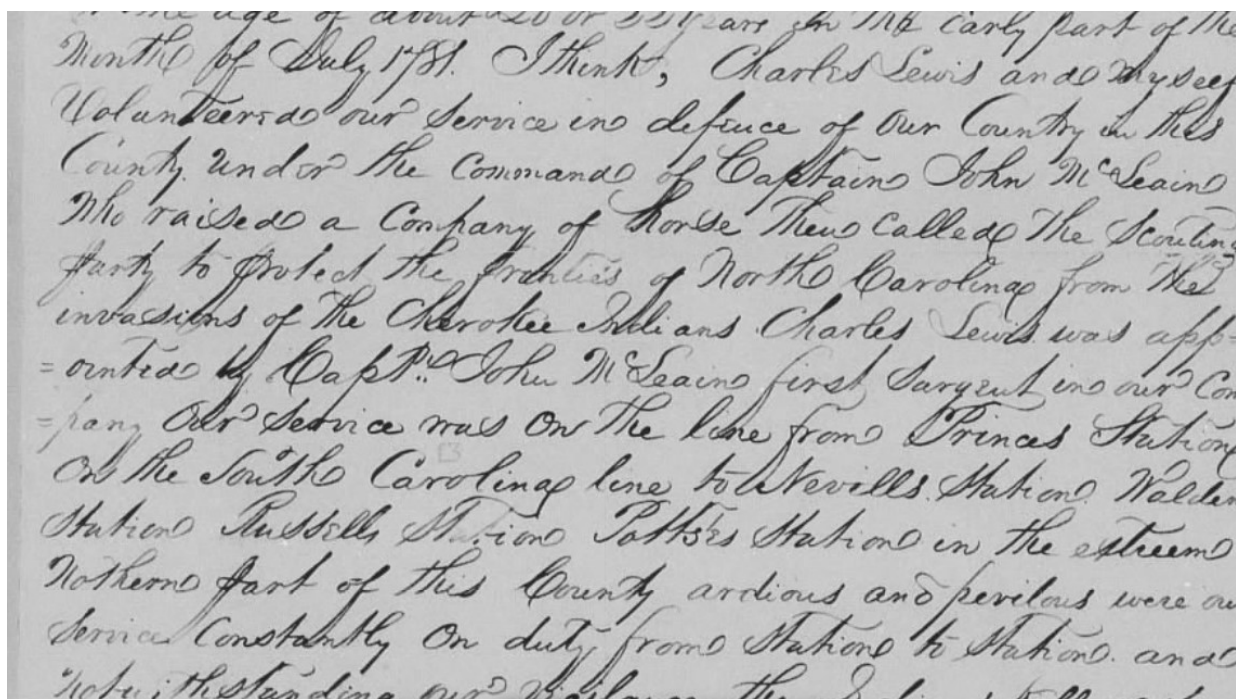
Drury Logan in his own pension application stated that "... In the year 1776 then 14 years of age I
 became a General Volunteer this Section of country was Over Run by the Tories and Indians and
 every person that was a friend to Independance and able to bear arms had to do so for his Own
 Safety I was stationed on the lines to guard the frontiers against the Indians and Tories I was

¹⁷ Ibid.

sometimes at **Russells Station** Sometimes at **Waddletons Station...**"¹⁸

A snippet of a handwritten manuscript in cursive script. The text reads: "In the year 1776. then 14 years of age I became a General Volunteer this Section of Country was Over Run by the Tories and Indians and every person that was a friend to Independance and able to bear Arms had to do so for his own safety I was stationed on the line to guard the frontiers against the Indians and Tories I was sometimes at Russells Station sometimes at Waddletons Station part of time at ...".

In the application of **Elizabeth Russell Lewis** (widow of **Charles Lewis**) William Dalton said "... Charles Lewis and myself Volunteered our Service in defence of our Country in this County under the command of Captain John McLeain who raised a company of horse then called the Scouting party to protect the frontiers of North Carolina from the invasions of the Cherokee Indians. Charles Lewis was appointed by Captⁿ. John McLeain first Sargent in our Company. Our Service was on the line from **Princes Station on the South Carolina line to Nevills Station Waldens Station Russells Station Potts'es station** in the extreem northern part of this County arduous and perilous were our Service Constantly On duty from station to station ..." ¹⁹

A larger snippet of a handwritten manuscript in cursive script. The text reads: "In the age of about 20 or 22 years in the early part of the month of July 1781. I think, Charles Lewis and myself Volunteered our Service in defence of our Country in this County under the Command of Captains John McLeain who raised a Company of Horse then called the Scouting party to protect the frontiers of North Carolina from the invasions of the Cherokee Indians Charles Lewis was appointed by Captⁿ. John McLeain first Sargent in our Company Our Service was on the line from Princes Station on the South Carolina line to Nevills Station Waldens Station Russells Station Potts'es Station in the extreem Northern part of this County arduous and perilous were our Service Constantly On duty from Station to Station. and notwithstanding our weakness the ...".

William Crane in his pension application stated he "... served two Tours of six months against the indians in Rutherford County then Tryon County under Capt Samuel Hunter in the years as well as he recollects of 1776 & 1777 he was mostly at a place called **Russells Station on broad River, ...**"²⁰

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, W5464

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, W4012

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2649

inconvenience, as he lived at the residence of his
house — That in addition to the service before mentioned he served
two Tours of six months against the Indians in Rutherford County
then Tryon County, under Capt Samuel Hunter in the years
as well as the months of 1776 & 1777 he was mostly at a
place called Russels Station on broad River, that the reason

James Owenby / Ownbey in his pension application stated he “... was placed at a station known by the name of **Russells Station at the mouth of Cove Creek** in said County where he remained for the space of three months ...”²¹

Brady and was placed at a station known by the name
of Russels Station at the mouth of Cove Creek in said
County where he remained for the space of three months
and was discharged. That he has no Documentary ev-

James Owenby’s recollection of and familiarity with the area is supported by his having been appointed to work on a road at the Rutherford County Court of Pleas & Quarter Sessions of October 10, 1785 when it was recorded: “Ordered that Joel Shelton Samuel King Thomas Haslip Shadrach Nettles James Ownby Charles Lewis Elias Morgan Thomas Morris Samuel Walker John Alfred Phillip [St]ice be and is hereby appointed a Jury to lay of and mark a Road the highest and best way from Moses Wrights [pl]antation on bills Creek to **the widow Russels on Broad River** & from thence the highest and best way to the Cove Road leading toward the Court House.”²²

Anthony Dickey in his pension declaration stated that “there was three Stations whare the inhabtons Was fled two for Safety **Jones Willi[a]ms in the cove the Wedo Russels on broad river Mr. Woddeltons Station White ock** we rangd round them Station evry week onless cald on other Besines.”^{23 24}

in our Company there was three
inhabitions was fled two for safety Jones Williams in
the Cove the Wido Russels on broad river M^r. Woddeltons
Station White ock we rangd round them Station evry
week onless cald on other Besines then worst in two week

Absalom Awtry in his pension application also referred to the station as the widow Russell’s Station: “...I entered the service of the revolutionary war in the spring of the year Seventeen Hundred and Eighty two in the State of North Carolina Lincoln County as a drafted Soldier under

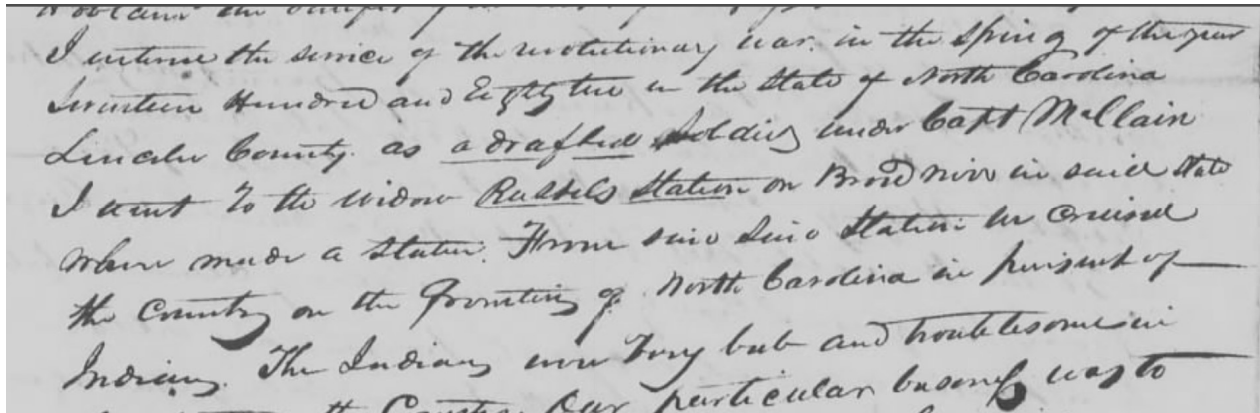
²¹ *Ibid.*, W3712

²² Rutherford Co., NC Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, October 1785.

²³ Warmack, Joann Anderson. “Anthony Dickey—Revolutionary War Pension Declaration,” *Bulletin of The Genealogical Society of Old Tryon County, N. C.*, August 2011.

²⁴ Wisconsin Historical Society, Lyman C Draper Manuscripts. Vol 1-3 GG, Mecklenburg Declaration. Pg 124.

Capt McClain I went to the **widow Russells Station** on Broad River in said State where we made a Station. From said said (sic) Station he cruised the Country on the frontiers of North Carolina in pursuit of Indians.”²⁵



Conclusion

This article presents sworn statements by soldiers referring to Fort/Station Russel in their Revolutionary War pension applications. In their applications, **Drury Logan** and **William Crane** recalled being at Russells Station and Russells Station on Broad River, respectively, as early as 1776, two years before George Russell purchased land at the mouth of Cove Creek on Broad River. If the year is correct, this may imply that George Russell inhabited the land before purchasing it, but this is only a conjecture. **Absalom Awtry**, in his application, refers to “widow Russells Station” as late as 1782. **Anthony Dickey** likewise refers to the station at “wedo Russels.” The sources created in the time frame of the events and the testimony of persons who served in the Revolutionary War provide evidence that the terms “**fort**” and “**station**” were interchangeable, whether speaking about **Fort/Station Russel** or the other forts/stations along the Indian boundary of Tryon and later Rutherford, County.

²⁵ Revolutionary War Pension File, R531