

Matthew Talbott, and Our Oldest Document

By Donna Cox Briggs

Matthew Talbott’s story must begin with an explanation of how the Washington County Archives was established. I promise it will all tie together. In 2011, the county finally determined that there was, indeed, a need for a storage facility for the county records. Ned Irwin was hired as Washington County Archivist, and he went to work, ensuring that the county had a suitable place to house the oldest records in the state of Tennessee. In the summer of 2016, I was hired as his assistant, and we formulated a plan to move the older county records from the basement of the Washington County courthouse into the newly-renovated Washington County Archives, a former bank building on Main Street in Jonesborough, Tennessee.

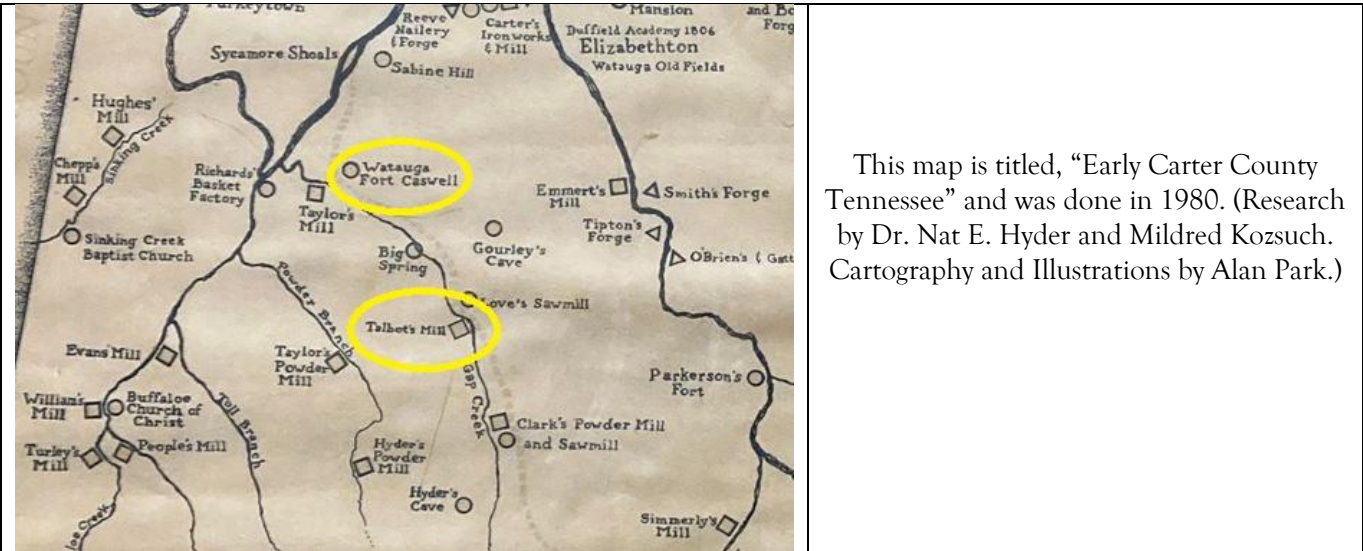
We began with one volunteer, Betty Jane Hylton, who was, and is still the President of the Friends of the Archives. The three of us moved large volumes on dollies, into our building. Ned and I would then shelve the volumes and prepare a guide. After a few weeks of working in this manner, we saw that we needed more volunteers to help with the loose papers. We added a couple more volunteers, and they began opening metal drawers and opening long-closed boxes, removing documents much older than we had imagined.

The volunteers began boxing up the loose records and my phone rang endlessly. “You have to come and see what we’ve found!!” was usually what they said. Ned and I would drop everything and run over to see what treasure had been located. It was during this early time that the document below was found. It is a promissory note from Matthew Talbott, dated 9 March, 1771, and it is the oldest document found in our collection.

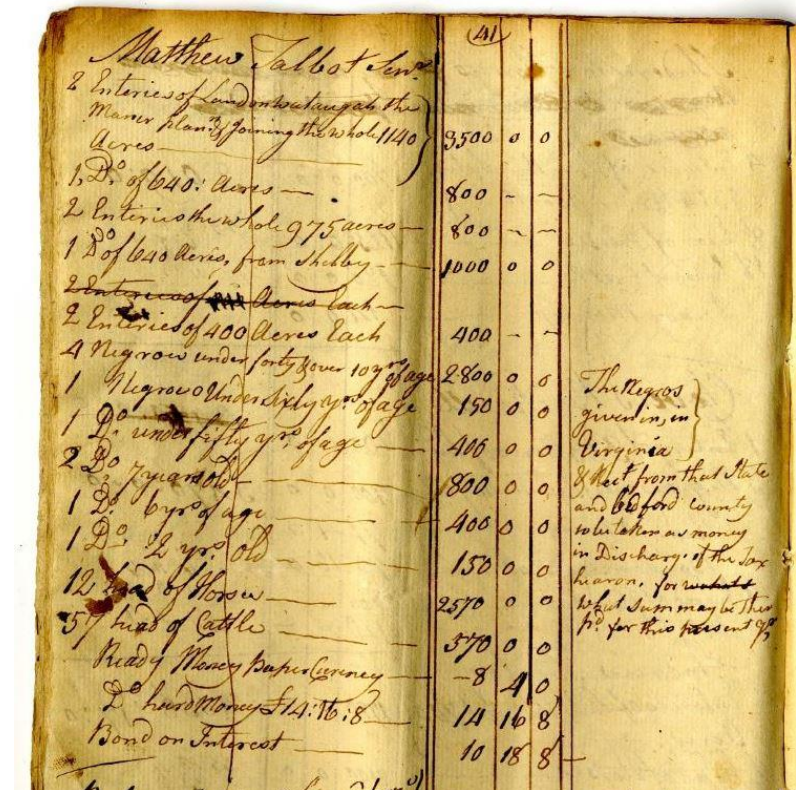


Transcription: I Mathew Talbott Do promas (sic) to pay or caus (sic) to be paid unto frances Donlany his heirs or assigns the full and just sum of fore (sic) pounds ten shilling Curent (sic) money of Virginia for Vaule Rese^d 9sic [value received] as Witness my hand this 9th Day of march 1771. Mathew Talbott

We knew the name, but none of us knew much about Talbott. Through online research, we discovered that he was from Virginia and was married to Mary Hale, a daughter of Nicholas Hale and Ruth Ann Long. It is likely that Matthew and his father-in-law were business partners in Virginia and moved to the Watauga Settlement together. Talbott built the first grist mill on Gap Creek about 1775.



The item below shows Matthew Talbott's listing on the 1779 Washington County tax list.

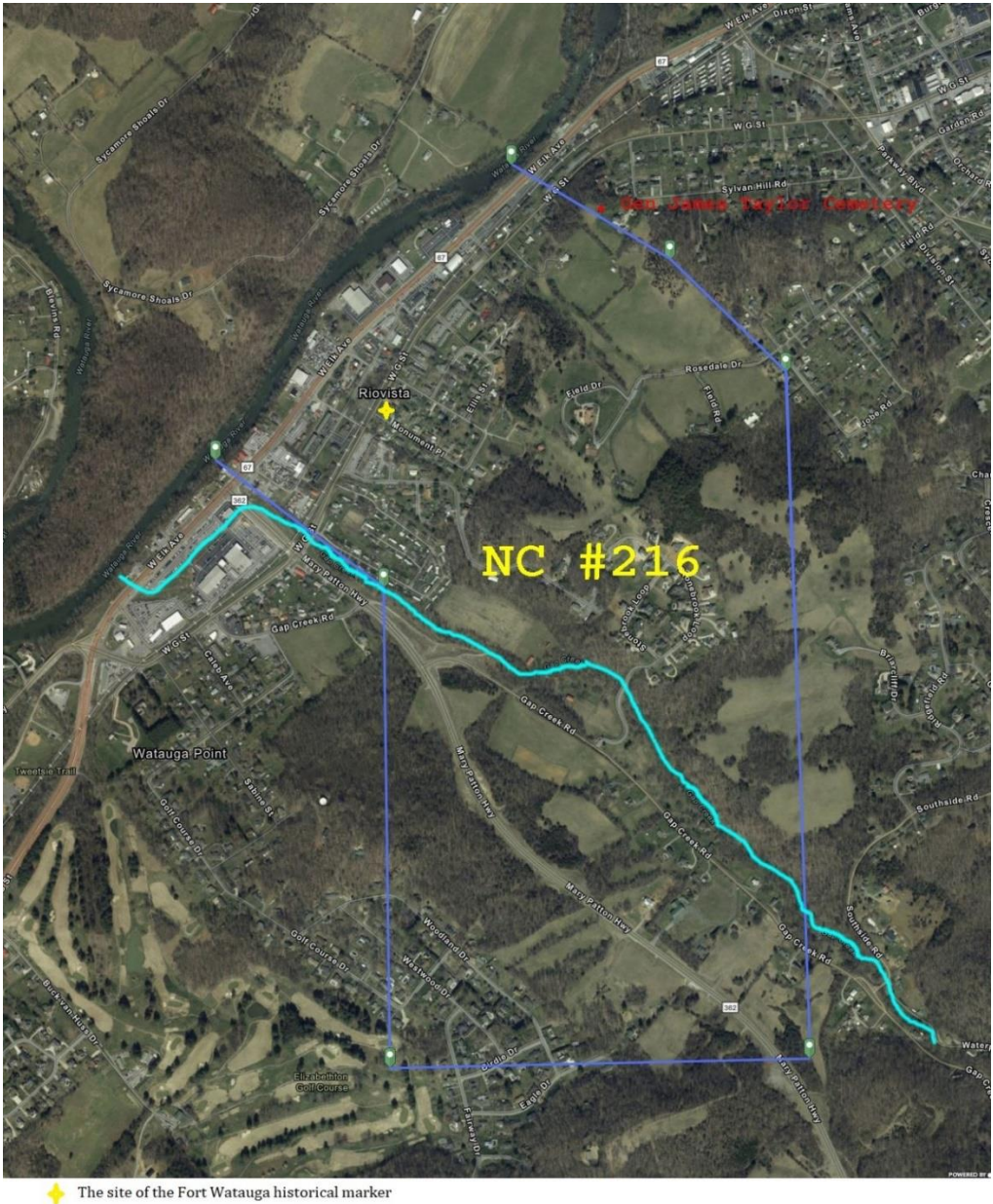


Matthew Talbot, Sen.

- 2 Entries of land on Wataugah, 1140 acres
- 1 Entry of 640 acres
- 2 Entries, the whole 975 acres
- 1 Entry of 640 acres from Shelby
- 2 Entries of 400 acres each
- 10 slaves
- 12 head of horses
- 57 head of cattle
- "Ready money paper currency" [over 32 pounds, likely Virginia currency]

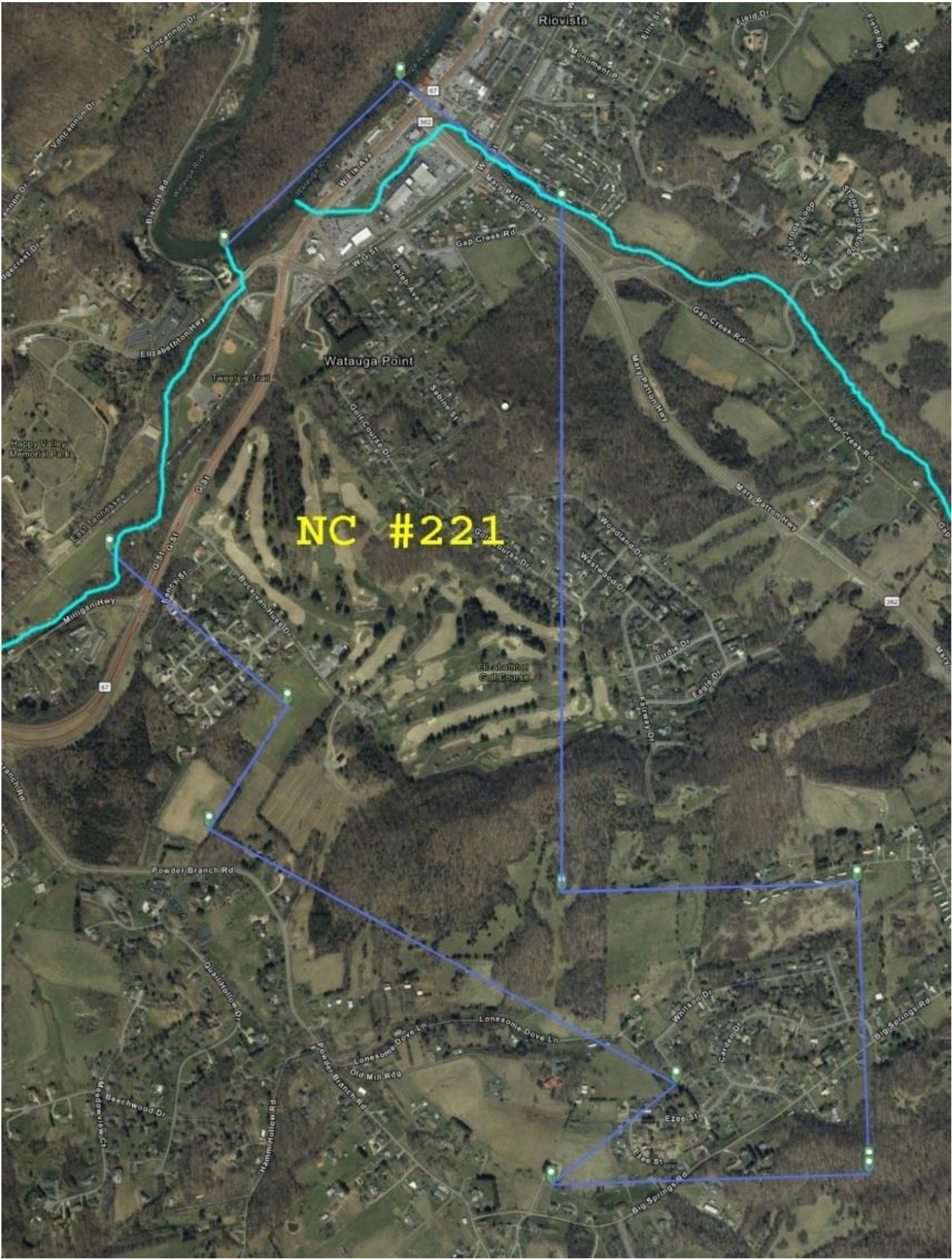
"The Negroes given in, in Virginia & Rect from that State and Bedford County to be taken as money in Discharge of the Tax hereon. For what sum may be then pd for this present yr."

Talbott received two land grants, issued from North Carolina, Grants # 216 and 221. Both are in the Gap Creek area of Elizabethton. North Carolina Grant # 216 was issued for 500 acres, "at the mouth of Gap Creek" on October 4, 1782. (The light blue line on both maps follow Gap Creek.)



North Carolina Grant # 221 was for 640 acres and adjoined NC Grant # 216. It was described in Deed Book A as being “on the south side of Watogah River, on the mouth of Buflow Creek.” The grant also mentions a corner in Andrew Taylors line, a corner Michel Hiders line, corner in John Hughes line, corner in Thomas Talbots line, on the bank of Gap Creek.

(The light blue line on both maps follow Gap Creek.)



As Indian raids were common in the Watauga Settlement, Matthew Talbot erected a fort, called the Watauga Fort (also called Fort Caswell) on his property. This fort was located somewhere close to the area of the DAR marker that commemorates the settlement. You can find the marker at the corner of Monument Place and West G Street in Elizabethton.



The Daughters of the American Revolution
Fort Watauga Marker,
located at the corner of
West G Street and Monument Place,
Elizabethton, Tennessee



“To the memory of
THE PATRIOTS
who on their
way to
King’s Mountain
under
Sevier, Shelby
And Campbell
Assembled here
September 25,
1780”



Here was negotiated the Treaty of
Sycamore Shoals under which
Transylvania was acquired from the
Cherokees. March 19, 1775.

Originally, he was a part of the Episcopal Church, but with growing resentment toward England, prior to the American Revolution, he joined the Baptist church. He became a minister, and was the first pastor of Sinking Creek Baptist Church, the oldest Baptist church in Tennessee. The small log church (shown below) is in the original location and has many of the original logs intact. It is approximately three miles from Talbott’s mill, home, and fort.



image from Google Earth

Sinking Creek Baptist Church

Matthew Talbott, Sr. is an accepted patriot in both the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Sons of the American Revolution. Their records indicate that he was present at the Battle of Kings Mountain.

Talbott left our area of East Tennessee, and moved to Georgia. I was unable to confirm whether his wife was alive when he moved—online family trees showed her death as being either in Washington County NC or Georgia with varying dates. Matthew’s death date is more certain—October 12, 1812 (no sources given) and he is likely buried in Morgan County, Georgia, although the exact location of his grave is unknown.

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