2-2-2015

Fort Williams - Glasgow, Kentucky (MSS 531)

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ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY

Fort Williams (also known as Fort Boyle and Fort Hobson) was a Civil War fortification located at Glasgow, Kentucky. Early in 1863, when Glasgow and Tompkinsville constituted the most important positions in southern Kentucky recaptured from the Confederates, Union troops began arriving at Cave City by train, then marching to Glasgow to join the 23rd Army Corps of General Henry M. Judah. From there, scouting parties traversed the area in search of Confederate raiders, especially John Hunt Morgan and his men. Major General Horatio G. Wright, Commander of the Department of the Ohio, ordered construction of a fortification at Glasgow to watch for Confederate incursions from the south, defend cavalry rendezvous, and protect the railroad embarkation point at Cave City. Completed in late summer 1863, the fort was officially named Fort Williams in May 1864 in honor of Brigadier General Thomas Williams, killed at the Battle of Baton Rouge in 1862. Troops did not camp inside the fort itself, but it enclosed multiple cannon positions and a few small structures, including a supply warehouse.

On 6 October 1863, the only significant engagement at Fort Williams took place when approximately 120 Confederate soldiers under the command of Colonel John M. Hughes staged a surprise raid on Glasgow, the fort, and surrounding encampments. Union troops retained control of Fort Williams for the rest of the war, but afterward it was abandoned and fell into disrepair as its earthworks collapsed and the surrounding trench filled with silt.

Interest in restoring the fort grew in the 1950s and 1960s, and a historical marker was placed on the site in 1969. In 1976, the Fort Williams Restoration Commission, seeking to restore the fort to the condition in which it existed prior to the attack by Colonel Hughes, secured funding for the project from the National Park Service, the Kentucky Heritage Commission, and the City of Glasgow. Restoration architect Charles Lessig conducted extensive research pertaining to the original construction and historical context of the fort. Dr. Jack M. Schock of the Department of Archaeology at Western Kentucky University conducted archaeological excavations in 1977-1978 to facilitate more accurate reconstruction. G. Reynolds Watkins, Consulting Engineers, Inc., Bowling Green, Kentucky prepared plans and specifications for the restoration under the supervision of Vice President Brents Dickinson III and Charles Lessig. The local project supervisor was Charles B. Honeycutt, chairman of the Fort Williams Restoration Commission. Funding limitations required a reduction in the original scope of the
project, but the reconstruction contract was awarded to Barton Construction Company, Inc. of Glasgow and work was completed in 1980.

**COLLECTION NOTE**

This collection contains material relating to the excavation and reconstruction of Fort Williams, Glasgow, Kentucky. The material dates primarily from 1977-1979, but includes some documentation of a restoration initiative in the 1950s and 1960s (Folder 3). Included are planning documents, correspondence, and budgets relating to the project concept and funding (Box 1, Folders 4, 5) as well as historical research gathered primarily by restoration architect Charles Lessig from the *Official Records*, contemporary letters and diaries, regimental histories and military sources on fortification construction and on munitions (Box 2). Also included are historical research reports (original and revised) by G. Reynolds Watkins (GRW) Consulting Engineers (Box 1, Folder 6), archaeological excavation reports by Dr. Jack Schock of WKU (Box 1, Folder 7), a contemporary diagram of the Fort (Box 2, Folder 5) and photographic proof sheets showing the fort site at the time of the excavation (Box 2, Folder 5).

**SHELF LIST**

**BOX 1**  
Fort Williams – Glasgow, Kentucky  
1967-1999  
95 items

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<tr>
<th>Folder</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Inventory</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Articles about Fort Williams and restoration</td>
<td>1967-1999</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Correspondence, research regarding historical marker, restoration</td>
<td>1956-1969</td>
<td>16 items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Contracts, correspondence, budgets, etc. relating to restoration</td>
<td>1976-1977</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Contracts, correspondence, budgets, etc. relating to restoration</td>
<td>1978-1979</td>
<td>33 items</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>“The History of Fort Williams 1863-1865” reports by GRW Consulting Engineers; letter of comment from Charles Lessig</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>3 items</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Reports on archaeological excavations</td>
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**BOX 2**  
Fort Williams – Glasgow, Kentucky  
1860-1978  
227 items

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Research from <em>Official Records</em></td>
<td>1862-1863</td>
<td>15 items</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Folder 2  Letters, military telegrams, contemporary documents regarding Fort Williams  1863-1864  49 items
Folder 3  Regimental histories, data regarding troops serving at Fort Williams  1867-1929, n.d.  21 items
Folder 4  Manuals, reports on construction of fortifications  1860-1865  10 items
Folder 5  Sketches, plans, photographs of Fort Williams  1862-1978  6 items
Folder 6  Miscellaneous research notes  n.d.  33 items
Folder 7  Miscellaneous research notes  n.d.  31 items
Folder 8  Miscellaneous research – Note cards  n.d.  54 items
Folder 9  List of oversized materials (shelved in C1-D7,#3)  1863-1978  8 items

BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD
MSS  FORT Williams – Glasgow, Kentucky  1860-1999
531
Correspondence, research, historical and archaeological reports, contracts, budgets and other documents relating to the 1970s excavation and restoration of Fort Williams, a Civil War fortification at Glasgow, Kentucky.
1½ boxes.  16 folders.  322 items.  Originals, photocopies, photographs.
1997.236.1

SUBJECT ANALYTICS
Archaeology – Glasgow
Boyle, Jeremiah Tilford, 1818-1871 – Relating to
Chelf, Frank Leslie, 1907-1982 – Correspondence B1,F3
Civil War, 1861-1865 – Fortifications – Glasgow
Civil War, 1861-1865 – Glasgow – Relating to
Hobson, Edward Henry, 1825-1901 – Relating to
Honeycutt, Charles Bethel, 1926-2004 – Correspondence
Lessig, Charles Walter, 1905-1994 – Correspondence
Schock, Jack M.
Williams, Thomas R., 1815-1862 – Relating to

Niedermeier/Jeffrey  02/02/2015

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