

**Fort Perry Reconnaissance,  
Marion County, Georgia**

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**The LAMAR Institute  
Savannah, Georgia  
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and Terry Jackson

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## Introduction

On June 4, 2010 several “interested parties” converged on the archaeological site of Fort Perry in rural Marion County, Georgia (Figure 1). Those attending this ad hoc meeting were Dan Barbaree (the present landowner of Fort Perry), Mike Bunn (Columbus Museum), Daniel Elliott (The LAMAR Institute), Fred Fussell, Don Gordy, Terry Jackson (Georgia Department of Community Affairs), James Storey, William Storey, Billy Wynn and Stephen R. White (Marion County Building Code and Zoning Administrator). This short report provides a brief history of Fort Perry and details the June 4<sup>th</sup> reconnaissance of this important historic site.



Figure 1. Project Area.

## Research Methods

The reconnaissance party walked to the fort site and immediately observed the visible traces of a large star-shaped earthwork, which was located in a large, fallow pasture. A series of GPS waypoints was recorded for the perimeter of the earthwork. This was accomplished by hand-held GPS units (recreational grade), so the geographic precision of the study location is approximate. One set of GPS data was collected using an Etrex GPS unit and another set of waypoints was collected using a Garmin 60CSx. Two datum points were established by iron rebar. These were spaced approximately 98 m apart on a bearing of 286 degrees. Averaged GPS coordinates were taken as waypoints for these data, which were: Datum 1--Zone 16, E734212, N3597213 and Datum 2—Zone 16, E734114, N3597239 (NAD 27).

The measured distance between Data 1 and 2, using a fiberglass metric tape, was 98 m but the measured distance between the two Garmin waypoints was 100 m. A margin of error of approximately 1 meter on both axes is acknowledged. When the waypoints were superimposed onto an aerial view on Google Earth, however, the waypoints appear to be accurate.

Once these two reference points were established a 98 m by 4 m grid of Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) data was collected. The baseline between Data 1 and 2 was the southwestern side of the grid and data collection. GPR radargrams began at Datum 1 and ended at Datum 2 and progress was to the northeast. Radargrams were spaced approximately 50 cm apart. The GPR survey was accomplished by Dan Elliott with the capable assistance of Mike Bunn and Stephen White.

The area covered by the GPR sample also was examined by Terry Jackson armed with a White's metal detector. None of the metal targets were excavated. Jackson noted a concentration of metal readings on the eastern portion of the survey area.

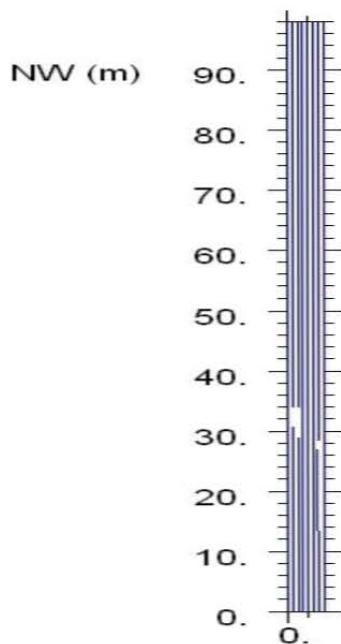


Figure 2. Radargram Plan Map, Fort Perry, 2010.

## History of Fort Perry

Fort Perry was a fortified place along the Federal Road in the Creek country. It is thought to have served as a supply fort for General Floyd's campaign against the Red Sticks in 1813-1814. The fort also functioned after the campaign, although its termination date as a garrisoned post is presently undetermined. Even after it was abandoned as a military post, Fort Perry served as an important landmark and place name along this segment of the Federal Road. Its history is not well known. A preliminary history of the place is presented below.

Construction of the Federal Road began in 1805 and was completed by 1810. In the vicinity later to become Fort Perry, the road followed the ancient Lower Trading Path, or Lower Creek Trading Path as it became known (Goff 1953; Southerland and Brown 1989). A tavern, known as Spain's Tavern, was established in the vicinity. The location became a way stop for travelers on the Federal Road. The exact chronology of Spain's Tavern remains to be determined, although the tavern and Fort Perry existed at the same time and Spain's Tavern outlived the fort.

The first construction of Fort Perry is attributed to General John Floyd and Georgia militia troops under his command in late 1813. Floyd and his army embarked from the Ocmulgee River area enroute on a campaign against the Red Sticks in the Tallapoosa River area of present-day Alabama. After leaving Camp Hope and Fort Hawkins on the Ocmulgee River, General Floyd established Fort Lawrence on the west side of the Flint River. He continued his march along the Federal Road and established Fort Perry. Floyd and his men then continued to the Chattahoochee River, which they crossed at Cusseta Town, and once on the other side, established Fort Mitchell. Floyd and his men forged westward to engage the Red Sticks at Atasi and another Upper Creek town on the Tallapoosa River in present day Macon County, Alabama. Floyd's men established additional supply forts in present-day Alabama, including forts Bainbridge and Hull.

Georgia militia records at the state archives include, "Muster and pay rolls of a detachment of Militia in the service of the state of Georgia stationed at Fort Perry on the Frontier of Tattnall County from January 18 to March 10, 1814" (Hays, 1941). The records refer to Fort Perry being on the frontier of Tattnall County. In 1814, the Altamaha River, forming the southern boundary of the county, was also the boundary of the state and the frontier with the Creek Nation. However, since there is no record of any other Fort Perry besides the one at the known site in present day Marion County, we assume that these records refer to this militia company serving there. We note that these men were serving a different term of service than those activated and federalized for service under Brigadier General John Floyd.

The detachment of Georgia militia soldiers, who were garrisoned at Fort Perry from January 18 to March 10, 1814 included:

- Captain Demay Holland
- Lieutenant Edmond P. Wester
- Sergeant Henry Sapp
- Private Israel Baxter
- Private Stephen Baxter
- Private John Buel/Buye
- Private William Eason

- Private Henderson Frier
- Private Silas Hunter
- Private Leonard Jackson
- Private Archibald Johnson
- Private Randal Johnson
- Private Joab Jones
- Private Daniel McNab
- Private James Sadler
- Private John Smith
- Lewis Hall (spy)
- James Kemp (spy)

Although Captain Holland was the ranking officer in the payroll and muster lists, Lieutenant Wester is identified as the commanding officer of the detachment. Wester served as a 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant for Georgia militia troops raised in Tattnall and Montgomery counties, Georgia in 1814 (Austin 1984:378). The two spies, Hall and Kemp, were assigned to Fort Perry by Major James Patton and they arrived on January 28, 1814. Although these 18 soldiers were in the Georgia militia, they were also considered in the Federal service during this period of war. Once their period of service had ended, however, most, if not all of these men returned to their homes.

Hodges noted in a family genealogy, “Lewis Hall Jr. and James Kemp served as spys in the war of 1812, stationed at Fort Perry on the frontier of Tattnall Co. from the 18 Jan. 1814 to the 10 Mar. 1814. The two spys were mounted on their own horses agreeably to the orders of Majr. James Patton. The muster roll was certified to be correct by Edmond Wester Lieutenant (Hodges, cited in Tuten 1991). Lewis Hall was Lewis Hall, Jr., who also was a resident of Tattnall County. He was granted a tavern and liquor licenses by the Inferior Court of Tattnall County in 1819 and he died in Tattnall County in 1821 (Genealogy.com 2010).

Brigadier General Joseph Graham, who commanded the brigade of the North Carolina and South Carolina militia who were sent to assist General Andrew Jackson in the Creek territory. Graham’s brigade arrived in the Creek country too late to participate in any major battles and his men were assigned various garrison duty at forts in the region, including forts Bainbridge, Burrows, Decatur, Hull, Jackson, Mitchell, and Perry. On April 6, 1814, Graham wrote from Fort Lawrence, located on the Flint River about 30 miles from Fort Perry, to Major General Thomas Pinckney. In that letter Graham noted, “Am about to march now 8 o’clock. I & Lieut. Leave the detachment for the frontier, expect to arrive at Fort Perry to night & each day following from post to post, expect Col. Pearson, if the weather be favorable, will proceed faster, as the Teams are lighter & no water courses in the way” (Graham 1904:154).

General Graham wrote from Vesuvius Furnace, North Carolina (after his return from the Creek war) to Governor William Hawkins on August 24, 1814 regarding the disposition of his troops, in which he noted, “Those who came on were placed under command of Capt. Hood; when they reached Fort Hawkins they found three companies of detached Georgia Militia drawing arms and designated to garrison the Forts Lawrence, Perry and Mitchell which had been committed to the charge of the South Carolina Regiment” (Graham 1904:176-177).

General Graham's comments about the "detached Georgia Militia" who were "designated to garrison" Fort Perry and the other two forts, may refer to the replacements for Lieutenant Wester and his company. Edmond P. Wester is listed in an 1820 sheriff's sale in Tattnall County, which indicates that he survived the war (*Georgia Journal and Messenger* 1820). Wester also served as Justice of the Peace in Tattnall County from 1813-1817 and he was listed in the 1820 census for Appling County, Georgia (Austin 1984:378).

Georgia state archives also contain the, "Proceedings of a court martial held at Fort Mitchell in the Creek Nation on Lieut. Larkin Clarke 15 September 1814. Courts Martial" (Hays, 1940). Lieutenant Clarke, also spelled in the document as Clark, was identified as having been in command at Fort Perry. He was dismissed after being found guilty of four charges. Although Clarke's unit is not directly identified the charges were preferred against him by Major William Wootton (sic), actually spelled "Wooten", who commanded a "Detachment of Georgia Drafted Militia", from August 1814 to February 1815, consisting of three companies, one of which was commanded by Captain Gilbert Greer, the judge advocate of this court. We might assume that Clarke served in Greer's company, but this is not certain. The records are unclear but Wooten's Detachment was probably composed of men from Jasper County. The report of this court martial was sent to Colonel Patrick Jack, commanding the 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment of US Infantry at Savannah (Smith, 2000).

A "Letter from Benjamin Hawkins, Indian Agent to Commandants of Forts Lawrence, Perry, Mitchell, from Fort Hawkins, November 3, 1814." simply informs us that Fort Perry was still in service at this time (Grant 1980). General David Blackshear commanded a portion of the Georgia militia in the Creek War. In a letter from Major General John McIntosh to Blackshear, dated January 9, 1815, McIntosh noted in a post-script, "P.S.—You can direct the battalion ordered to join me to march whatever way you may think most advisable, either by retracing their steps, or to take one of the ridges to Fort Perry" (Miller 1858:442).

The same is true during the 1<sup>st</sup> Seminole War when Fort Perry was mentioned in official government correspondence. On January 8, 1818, Indian Agent David B. Mitchell wrote from the Creek Agency to Georgia Governor William Rabun, stating,

Sir—The messenger who was sent below to propose terms of peace to the Seminoles, has returned; and the enclosed is the substance of his report, which I received by express.

The friendly chiefs and warriors are to meet me at this place on the 11th instant, and I have great hopes that our differences with the Seminoles can, with their assistance, be adjusted.

I understand that much apprehension prevails about the safety with which travellers can pass through the nation. It is my opinion there is not the least danger in travelling the road from fort Hawkins to the Alabama, by this place and fort Mitchell, but I would not advise travellers to use the road from fort Perry to fort Gaines, or indeed any road as low down as fort Gaines, for the present (Niles' Weekly Register 1818:390).

Thomas Woodward (1939) noted that, "near old Fort Perry, Tate became deranged; the cause I never learned". Another visitor noted, "Passed fort Perry, placed upon a hill with a redoubt about breast high, surrounded by a ditch" (*The Alabama Review* 1965:138).

Drury Spain, who operated a tavern at Fort Perry, gave an affidavit to Thomas Triplett, Acting Agent of Indian Affairs, on July 8, 1825, which was posted at “Fort Perry, Indian Nation”. Spain’s testimony was part of an official investigation (U.S. Congress 1827:439-440). The Marquis de Lafayette stopped at Spain’s Tavern on March 30, 1825, while on his trip along the Federal Road to Alabama (Georgia Historical Commission 1954).

An advertisement placed on July 30, 1827 by a traveler named Hiram Warner on the Federal Road for his lost pocket book contains information on Fort Perry:

“LOST. On the Federal Road, between the house of Collin R. Uzell, at Old Fort Perry, and Spain’s Stand, at the Uchee Bridge, on Sunday, the 25<sup>th</sup> ult. A large calf-skin POCKET BOOK, containing one hundred and eighty-seven dollars in money, and several Promissory Notes...”(*Macon Weekly Telegraph* 1827a:160). It is interesting that Mr. Walker refers to the fort as “Old Fort Perry”, which suggests it was no longer used for military purposes. A related advertisement, placed by Cullin R. Izeel in the July 2, 1827 edition of the same paper reported:

STOLEN, FROM the undersigned, living near Fort Perry, on the night of the 13<sup>th</sup> Instant, a dark bay HORSE, (Stallion) with the right eye out, and a blemish in the left from the cut of a whip: switch tail, and blaze in the forehead. A liberal reward will be given for the restoration of the Horse, and an additional compensation for proof against the thief to conviction (*Macon Weekly Telegraph* 1827b:144).

Fort Perry’s existence as a social gathering place outlived its military function by several decades. Adiel Sherwood (1829:110, 282) wrote this terse entry for Fort Perry in his gazetteer, “Fort Perry is in Marion county, 30 miles W. of Fort Lawrence”. He listed Fort Perry as a stop along the road from Milledgeville to Pensacola. The fort is identified on Tanner’s 1834 map of Georgia, where a fort symbol is indicated just north of the main road (Figure 3). Fort Perry served as an election precinct as late as 1841 (Cobb 1851:1185). It was a militia district and a census precinct in subsequent decades. The Fort Perry Road was cited as a landmark when the boundary of Taylor County was established in 1852 and that road name continues to the present. Other surviving geographical indications of Fort Perry include Fort Perry Creek--a small stream that is located northwest of Fort Perry.

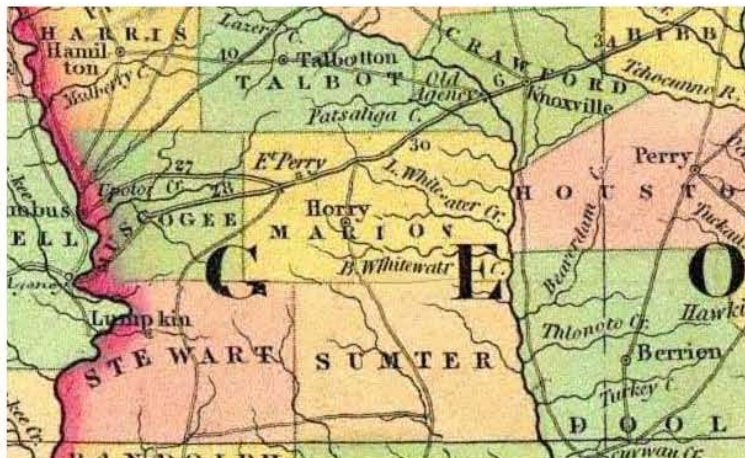


Figure 3. Portion of Tanner Map of Georgia Showing Fort Perry Vicinity (Tanner 1834).

Knight (1914:870) provided this information about the study area:

Fort Perry. Near Buena Vista, at Fort Perry, can still be seen the breast-works thrown up by the United States infantry, when they occupied this place as a stronghold during the Creek Indian wars. Just a short distance beyond, at Poplar Springs, quite a band of United States cavalry encamped after fording the Chattahoochee River. Both sites will probably be marked in time with appropriate memorials.

A historical marker, erected by the Georgia Historical Commission in 1958 on Georgia Highway 41, contains the following summary of Fort Perry:

One half mile due east lies the site of Fort Perry, along the Old Federal Road. A stockade fort, defended by block houses, this post was ordered erected by General John Floyd of Camden County, as he led a body of 400 Georgia Militiamen through this friendly Indian country to fight the Red Sticks across the Chattahoochee River in Alabama territory. Completed in October 1813, it was named in honor of Commandant Oliver Hazard Perry, Naval hero of the War of 1812, whose message from the Battle of Lake Erie that "We have met the enemy and they are ours" gave him immortal fame.

On July 30, 1975, the Fort Perry site was listed in the National Register of Historic Places (National Park Service 1994:157). As part of the nomination process the site was visited by archaeologists John R. Morgan and Marilyn Pennington who made recorded the site as Site 9MR4. They made a sketch map of the fort's ruins and other associated cultural features (Morgan 1976). The center point of the fort was at UTM Zone 16 Easting 734140, Northing 3597250 (NAD 27). The National Register property boundary was a four sided polygon that encompassed to fort as well as a building ruin and a segment of the old Federal Road.

## Archaeological Reconnaissance of Fort Perry

The archaeological reconnaissance of Fort Perry consisted of surface examination and site photography, GPR sampling, metal detection, and GPS waypoint recordation.

Surface evidence for Fort Perry consists of topographic clues. No artifacts dating to the Fort Period were observed on the surface. Aerial imagery available on Google Earth of the Fort Perry site was examined for evidence of the fort. The star pattern of the fort was clearly visible in the November 5, 2005 and September 9, 2009 images. It was not as apparent on earlier images. The 2005 photograph is shown in Figure 4 and the 2009 photograph is shown in Figure 5.

GPR sample survey was completed for a 98 meter by 3.5 meter section of the site. Two metal rebar data were established at the two ends of the GPR sample.

Figure 1 shows one example of a radargram profile collected from Fort Perry. This example (Radargram 11) is the easternmost line taken in the survey. Numerous strong radar reflections are evident in this view along the 98 m section. The most prominent of these is about 9 m from the southern (left) end. What is apparent from this view is the clustering of radar reflections in the buried zone from about 40-70 cm below the ground. This probably represents the debris field and zone of feature concentration for Fort Perry.

Figure 4 shows a series of GPR plan views at increasing depths (from left to right) for the Fort Perry sample block. One example of a GPR plan map also was uploaded onto the aerial image using Google Earth, as shown in Figure 6. As may be observed in this view, areas of strong radar reflection (shown in shade of dark blue) correlate with the fort's ditch work on either end of the GPR grid. Numerous strong GPR reflections also are scattered throughout the fort's interior and these are most clustered in the east central part of the fort. Many of these likely represent cultural features or dense buried deposits of artifacts or other human refuse. While this view provides only a glimpse of the radar imagery at the fort, it is sufficient to state that GPR technology is an excellent application to map the cultural resources at Fort Perry. A complete GPR survey of the fort and its surroundings could be accomplished in less than one week and it would likely yielded very useful information about the subsurface landscape at this National Register site.

GPS coordinates were collected along Fort Perry's perimeter ditch using a recreational-grade GPS handheld unit. These data were uploaded onto aerial photograph of the Fort Perry site using Google Earth, as shown in Figure 5. The orientation of the GPR grid also is overlain in that view.

The area covered by the GPR sample also was examined by Terry Jackson armed with a White's metal detector. Jackson was able to discern many areas of iron and other metallic concentrations within the fort area. None of the metal targets were excavated.





Figure 4. Aerial View of Fort Perry in 2005 (Google Earth 2010).



Figure 5. Aerial View of Fort Perry in 2009 (Google Earth 2010).

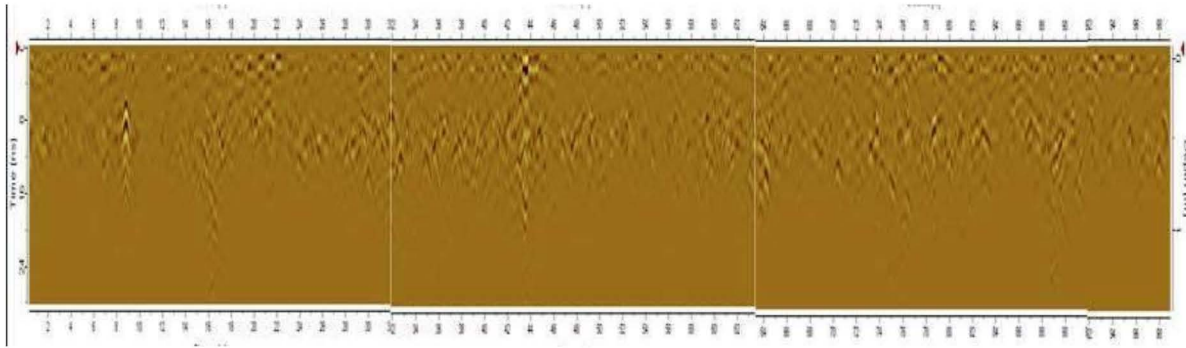


Figure 6. Example of Radargram 11, Fort Perry.

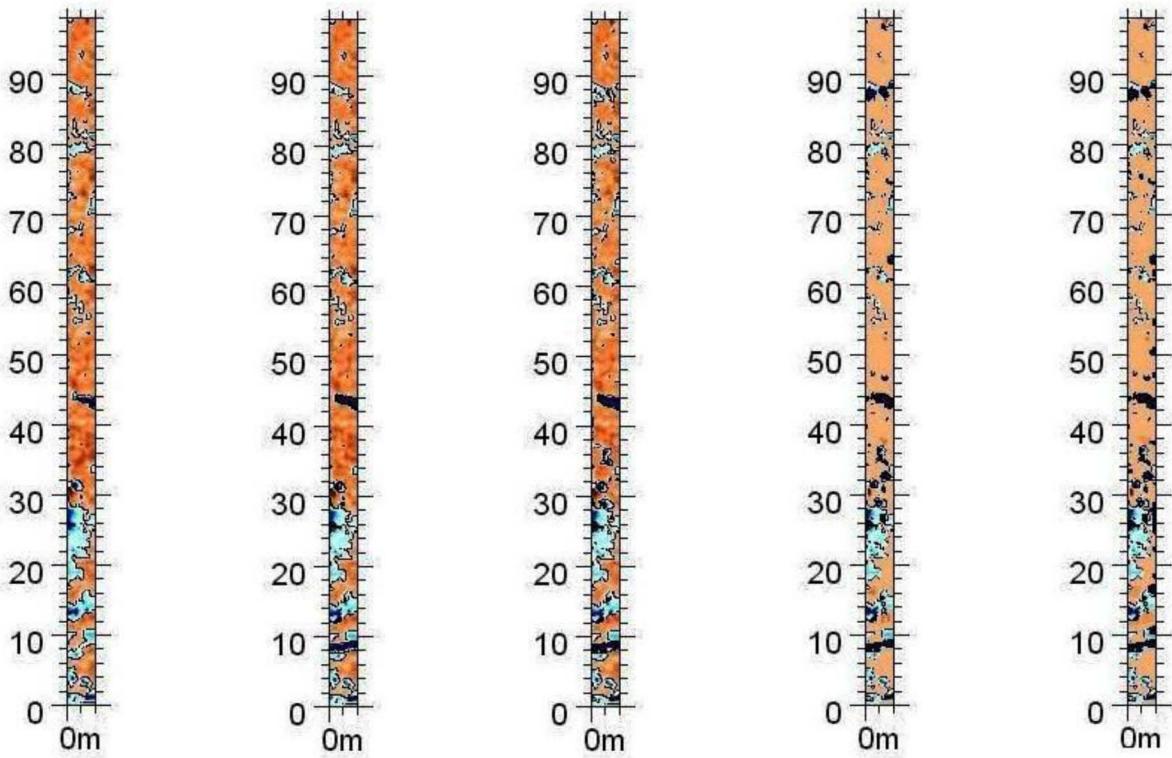


Figure 7. Series of GPR Plan Maps of Fort Perry Sample (increasing depth from left to right).

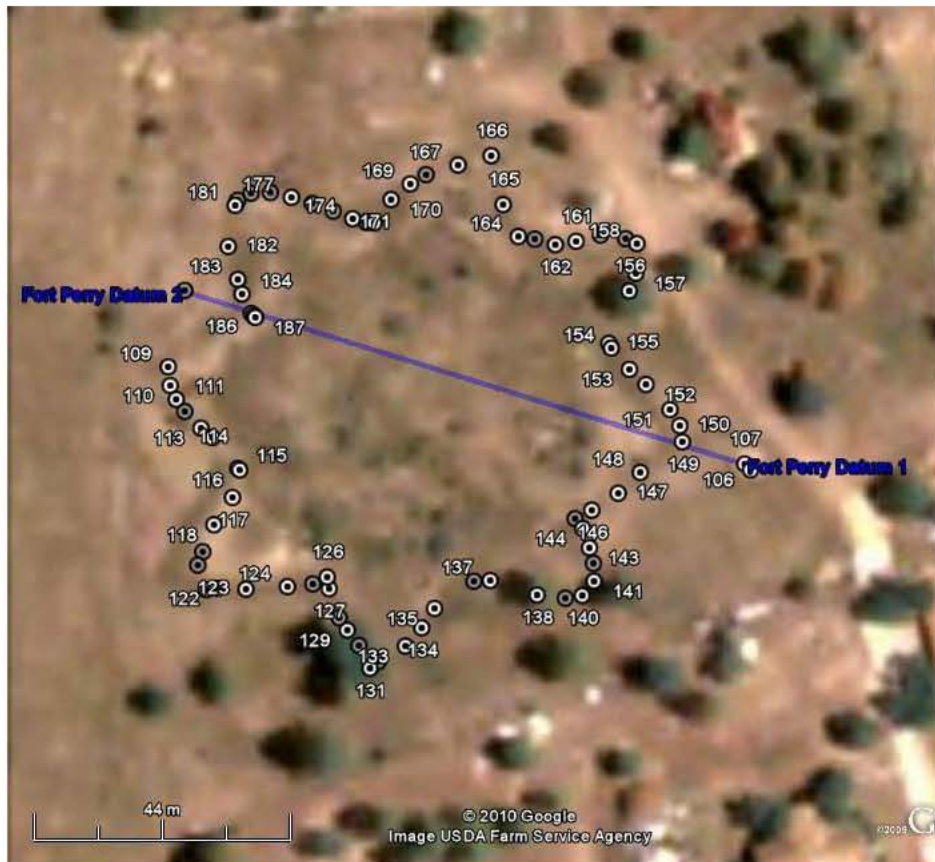


Figure 8. Aerial View of Fort Perry Showing GPS Waypoints and Radar Grid Orientation.



Figure 9. Aerial View of Fort Perry with GPR Plan Map Overlain.

## Summary

Fort Perry is a wonderful treasure for Marion County, Georgia. Preliminary reconnaissance of the site shows that it is well preserved and is likely to have excellent subsurface potential, if studied with proper archaeological techniques. Few examples of Star Forts remain in the southeastern U.S. At Fort Perry a complete examples lies visible from the air and was confirmed on the ground. Since 1976 Fort Perry has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places as a historic site. Surprisingly, it has escaped the attention of most archaeologists for more than three decades. Recent explorations at Fort Hawkins, in Macon, Georgia, and the approaching Bicentennial of the War of 1812 have focused attention on Georgia's War of 1812 heritage. Fort Perry embodies that heritage in an excellent way. It was a frontier fort in the hinterlands, a supply depot for General John Floyd during his 1813 campaign against the Red Stick Creeks. Later, it was garrisoned by North Carolina troops, who arrived late in the war. A mix of U.S. Army and state militiamen garrisoned the post. It must have been a lonely duty station with the loneliness broken by regular visits to Spain's Tavern, conveniently located just down the hill. Within the confines of this small earthen fort men passed time giving military service to the United States of America. No battles were ever fought at Fort Perry, at least none that have been historically documented, but the men served nevertheless. No doubt some died, either from disease or war wounds, while stationed there and the mortal remains of these Army veterans were probably buried nearby. Archaeological tools can be brought to bear to document this site, as it deserves, and may be able to locate graves of the fallen military veterans.

Fort Perry is presently located on private property. The landowner was most generous in allowing this study. The site may be one to consider for development as a historical interpretive park. Stakeholders on this subject, particularly including the landowner, should be gathered to discuss the prospects for such an endeavor. At the very least the story of Fort Perry and the men (and possibly women) who served there, is a story that should be told. The approaching bicentennial represents a wonderful opportunity to do so.

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