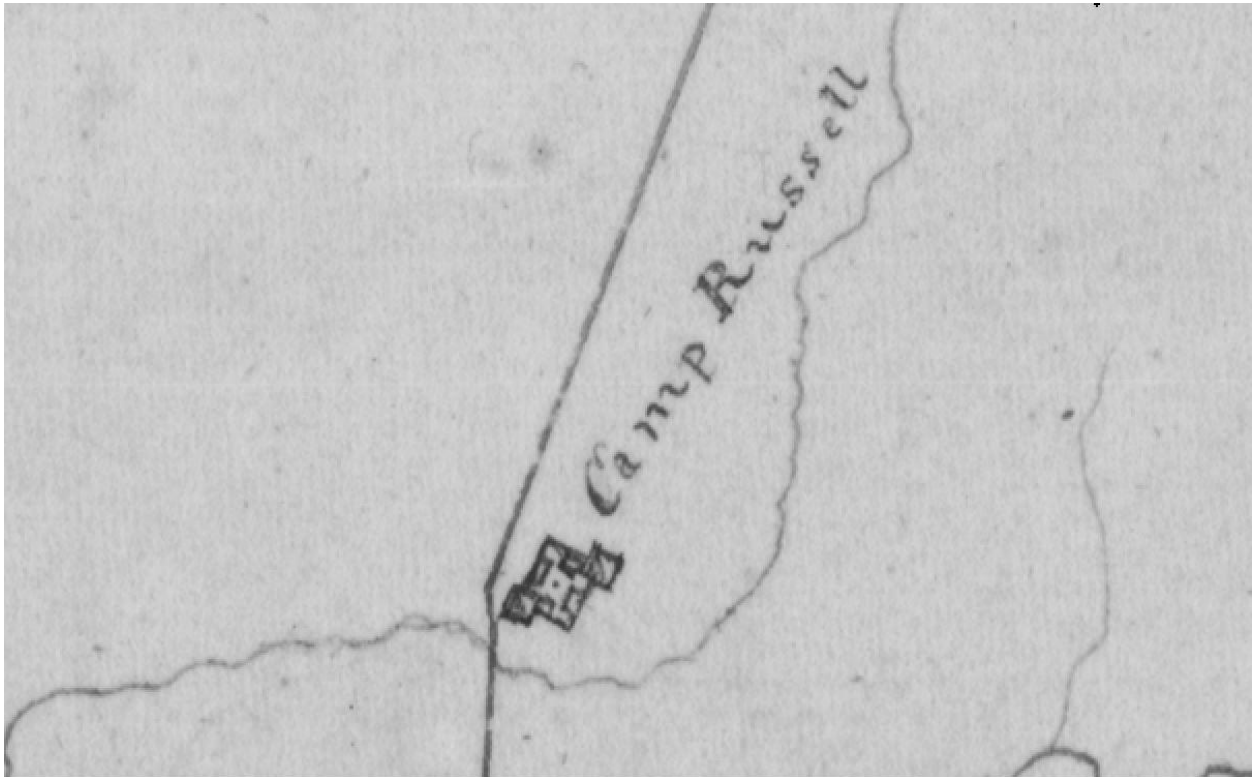


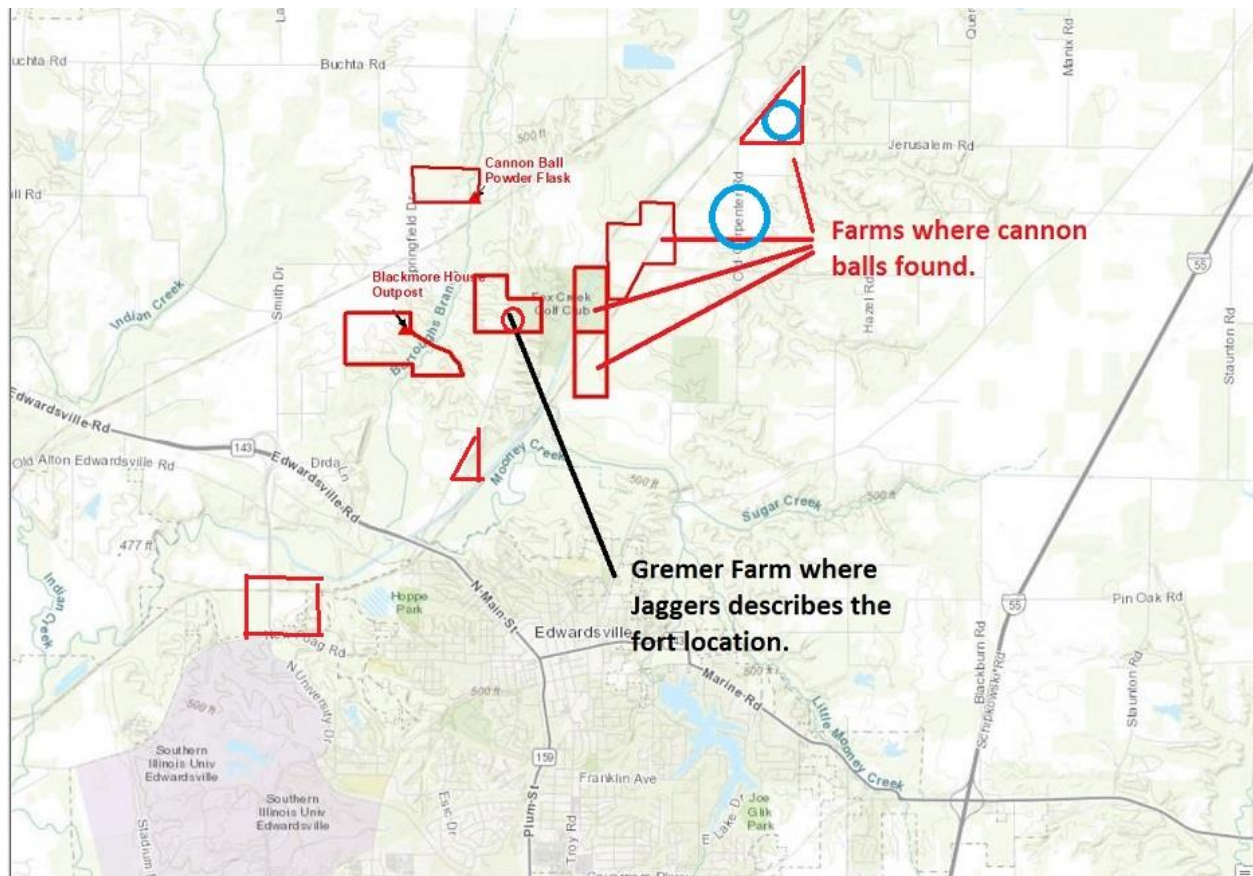
Arthur W. Jaggers and the location of Fort Russell

By: Luke Moore, October 2022



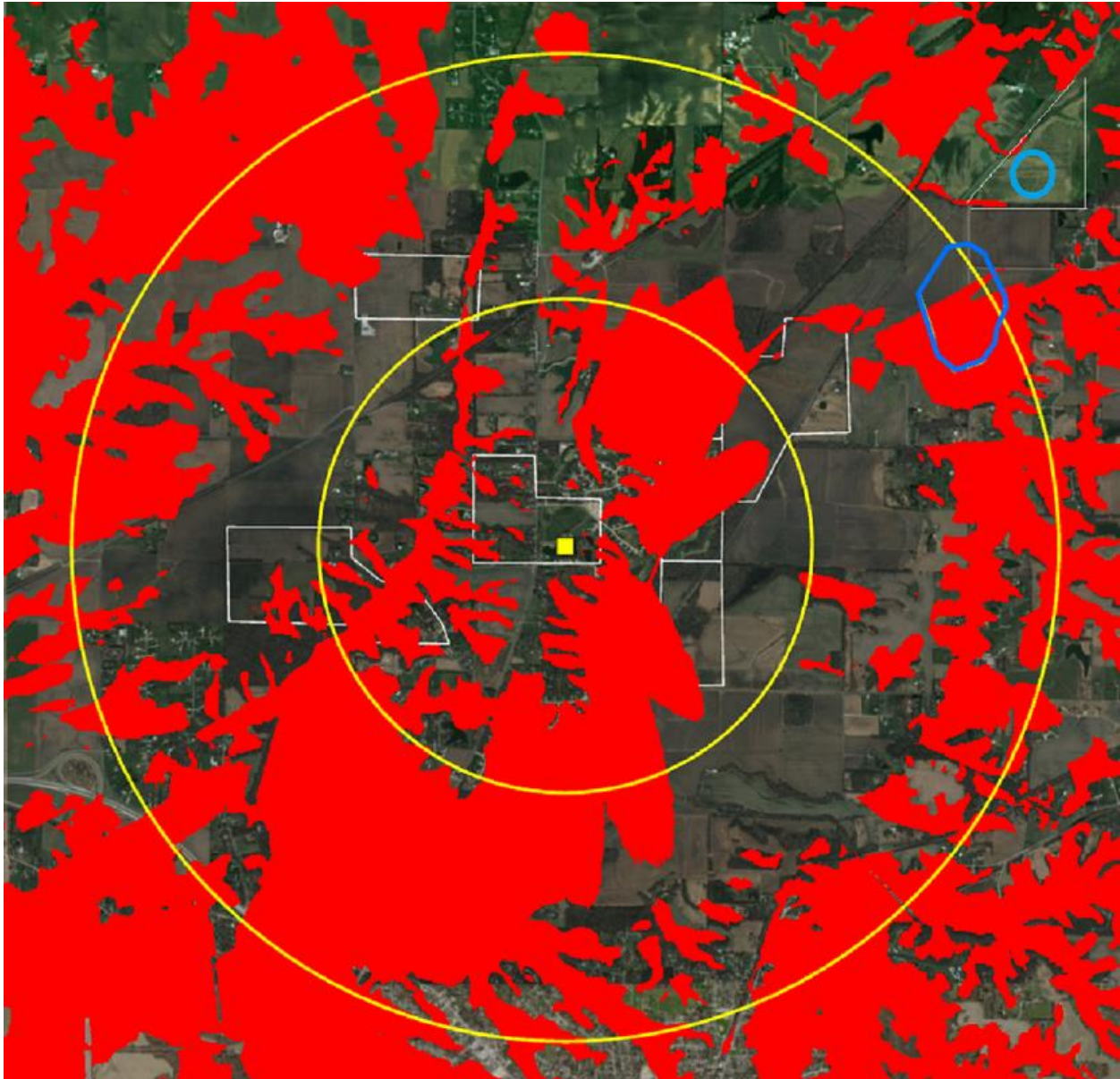
From Major Stephen H. Long's 1816 map of Illinois. Note the NE tilt of the structure, and the two blockhouse design at opposing corners.

Sometime in the 1950's or 1960's, Arthur W. Jaggers of Edwardsville wrote a brief 3 ½ page typewritten treatise describing the location of Camp Russell, or *Fort Russell* as it has become known locally. The report is unpolished and has several grammatical errors, but is direct and to the point including first-hand accounts. Mr. Jaggers doesn't waste the reader's time, opening with... *"From observations and findings we contend Fort Russell was located on what is now the Frank Miller Farm, formerly the Gremer Farm."* Historical plat maps of 1956 show the location of the Gremer/Miller farms place Jaggers' suggested location of the fort at the present site of the Fox Creek Golf Course. In his report, now in the archives of the Madison County Historical Society, he describes how in 1908 he, along with the noted local historians John Sutter, Charles Benedict and others, dug up a section of the stockade posts used in the construction of the War of 1812 fortification. From his report *"... dug and located large trunks of trees set upright and placed side by side... with huge stones buried to support the logs."* The report also describes how cannon balls were discovered on adjacent farms belonging to Dettmer, Trares and Brown, and identifies who found them. He also details how two cannon balls were located in Patterson Lake, the Daube Farm, including one he found himself at the Gremer Farm.



The red outlines represent the farm locations from plats that Jagers' identifies as cannon ball locations. Also included are three other farms where cannon balls were found, and reported in the local newspaper. The Blackmore Farm, near where the plaque was placed in 1912, the Bast Farm, appx. 1 mile south of the Gremer Farm, and the Schwettman Farm 2 miles south of the Gremer Farm. Also included on this image are the two lakes where cannon balls were found, possibly Lake Patterson, and the Daube Farm, represented by blue circles. The splashing of ordinance into bodies of water would have been a tempting target by the militia and soldiers during gun training at the fort.

When referencing the farm locations on historical plat maps, the sites of the cannon balls mentioned form a radius around the golf course of today. The Patterson Lake location remains a mystery, as no label of this lake can be found on any plat or map. But there was a large, unidentified waterbody approximately 1 ½ miles NE of the fort's suggested location seen on old maps and the original GLO survey maps, which is now drained. Early 20th Century plat maps do identify a nearby farm as the Patterson property, so perhaps the name was transferred to the waterbody.

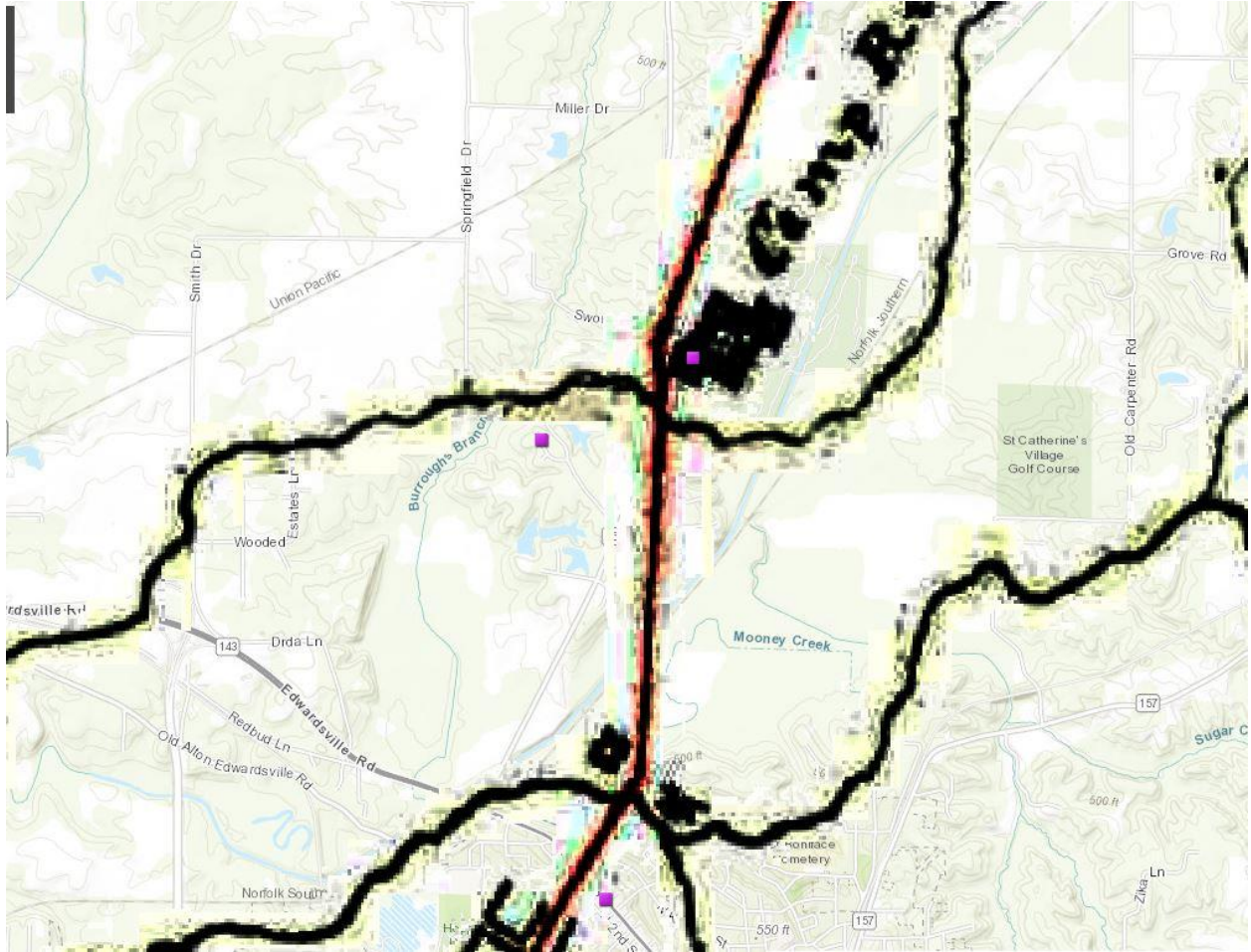


A view shed elevation model created by Tracy Garrison that measures the ground surface that would have been visible to the gun crew at Camp Russell if located at Fox Creek Golf Course. Tracy used the following data to create the attached image... with the gun placements within the two blockhouses on the 2nd floor, the gun crew would have been appx. 21' above ground surface elevation at the site. To accurately "sight" the gun range, the crews would have fired at a fixed target that they could see. The above image displays what surface could be seen by the crew, and in red what would have been out of sight. The white outlines are the farms Jagers describes as where cannon balls were found. The yellow circles are range rings of 1 mile each. All identified locations could have been sighted and are within the large gun ranges, and possible to have originated from the area where Jagers reported the site of the fort to be.

To proof Arthur Jagers claim, a copy of Major Stephen Long's Illinois Territory Map was used as a datum to measure distance, as he included a detailed rendition of Camp Russell. Secretary of War Crawford ordered Major Stephen Long to survey the Illinois Territory in 1816, to report on possible locations for defensive positions, and to acquire "...a general face of the country". A copy of Long's map of Illinois was located at the National Archive, and provides a detailed look at how Camp Russell appeared when Maj. Long passed the fort while on his trip up the Edward's Trace to Northern Illinois. Long used a sextant and chronometer to take positions along his trip, similar to ocean navigation to create his map. In order to overlay the Long Map onto modern topography, known landmark features were identified on his map and on contemporary maps, to gain a scale of distance. In this case, Piggott's Ferry location, Monk's Mound and Kirkpatrick's Mill sites were identified, measured, and calibrated onto Long's Map.



With Maj. Long's detailed map, a scale of distance could be determined, then overlaid onto modern topography. We estimated Camp Russell to be 1.7 miles north of Kirkpatrick's Mill, on the east side of the trail Long was travelling on.



Once a scale of the Long Map was determined, Tracy was able to rubber-sheet onto a modern map. The fort icon sits directly over the Fox Creek Golf Course in this image. Though the map was drawn in exaggerated scale, the distances (point to point) were drawn to scale.

With the datum of distance suggesting the Fox Creek location, surface anomalies were surveyed with the use of 1941 aerial photography, which shows the area prior to development of houses. The early black and white photographs are commonly used as they sometime detect past soil surface manipulation of older cultural sites.



This 1941 aerial is directly over the Fox Creek Golf Course Lake and Fairway. When looking at the partially harvested field between the house/barn and the trees to the east, a faint dark area appears. The fort was appx. 150' by 150', having been described as one half to one third of an acre within the stockade, and the darkened area seen fits this dimension. Jagers described three springs in his report at the site where they dug up the stockade remains... there is a large spring to the west (now fills the Fox Creek Lake impoundment) and two more springs on the east in the trees, which have also been impounded to create smaller ponds.

Soil surface impacted by cultural activity is sometimes referred to as a soil midden, which is basically organic waste (i.e. food waste, animal carcass remains, bone, human waste, etc.) and compaction of surface soil horizons. Vegetation and crops may appear darker as the underlying midden affects growth due to the impacted soil whether holding moisture, or increased nutrients of the midden. A section of wagon ruts were recently discovered at Honey Point in Macoupin County after 1941 aerials identified a midden striation seen in a bean field that led into the forest where the ruts were found intact, some 120 years after the trail was abandoned.



The same image with a ½ acre square enclosing the darkened surface anomaly. Please note the NE tilt of the square, as this aligns with not only Maj. Long's Map rendition of the fort, but also aligns with the old trail that passed its western wall. When looking at the west side of the square, a dark striation can be seen parallel to the western side, which is the old road, the Edward's Trace that Maj. Long was following in 1816.

The War of 1812 concluded the year before Long's survey/mapping expedition in 1816. As Long's map shows that he camped at Kirkpatrick's Mill at Cahokia Creek, and not at the fort, it suggests that the fort was in disrepair and likely abandoned when Long saw it in the fall of the year. But given the detail of his rendition of the fort's footprint, it is likely enough of the old fort remained so he could record its unique structure onto his map. His rendition shows a square structure with only two blockhouses at opposing corners. Though unique, Fort's Wayne and Dearborn were also constructed in this manner as it allows a smaller force of soldiers to effectively cover its outer walls with musket fire at close range. Colonel Russell had stationed a small force of 30 regular Army soldiers, so the design enhanced defense of the structure.



Using the position of the darkened square anomaly, the image was transferred to contemporary aerals. In this image the position of the 1941 dark shape is seen as the surface appears today.

Also in our toolbox to check Mr. Jaggers' claim as to the fort's location at the old Gremer Farm is an 1819 roadmap created by Jacob Judy on behalf of the Madison County Commissioners. He was contracted to lay out a road to the Sangamon Country which created a very detailed map. Though Judy did not include the fort's structure on his map as it was likely carted off by locals for building supplies, he did present a precise measurement and path of the old trail followed by Maj. Long a few years earlier. Judy incorporated mile posts in his survey and included on his map.



The Judy Map rubber-sheeted onto modern mapping at the Fox Creek location. Note the “old” course of the trail... it stayed on its NNE trajectory until further north, then turning more north and NNW to follow the present day Rt. 159 R.O.W. This trajectory explains the NE tilt of the fort Long drew, plus the dark striation seen in the 1941 aerial. Territorial Governor Ninian Edwards built the western wall perpendicular with the old pathway. Years later the modern road changed course due to property boundaries. The old trail followed the best available ground for the passage of horse and oxen wagons, without regard to property lines of today.

A research request was made to the Illinois State Museum to see if any cultural sites were recorded in this area which may provide a clue. The area where the darkened square is seen was identified as a cultural site in the early 1990’s during a Pedestrian Survey, and was recorded in the State’s database as 11-*Ms*-1398. Time appropriate shards of ceramic and glass were identified. Yet even though a small group of avocational historians reportedly dug up a remnant of the fort on the Gremer’s Farm in 1908, why did the community remained split on the location of their Township’s namesake?

As a matter of fact, four years after John Sutter, Arthur Jagers and company dug up evidence of the fort, a Centennial Commission of Madison County's 100th year Anniversary placed a plaque designating the location of Fort Russell in the present day Fairfield Drive neighborhood, just off Springfield Road. They raised a flag, and held a play on the site for all the town to attend and celebrate Fort Russell. The area historical society held programs at the Blackmore Farm, where the Fort's location was believed by some to be. It is said that the Blackmore house was constructed in the early 1830's by beams removed from the fort's buildings.

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1200 See Pageant Given At Old Ft. Russell Site

EDWARDSVILLE, Sept. 30.—A crowd estimated at 1200 persons witnessed "A Pageant of Fort Russell," presented Sunday afternoon by a cast of 250 — including descendants of men and women active in defense of the once strongest fortification on the western frontier—near the old fort site two and a half miles north of here.

The pageant, written by R. Louise Travous, was sponsored by the recently-organized Edwardsville Chapter of Madison County Historical Society to stimulate interest in the county's early history.

Mrs. Ella Tunhell had charge of production, with Mrs. Otto Hermann directing pioneer episodes and Mrs. E. W. Schmidt, Indian scenes. Mrs. Ralph Kearney served as narrator for the two-hour performance, staged in seven episodes in forested ravine on the Blackmore farm, where the fort was located. Spectators were seated informally on camp stools and rugs on slopes of the natural amphitheater.

Scenes from the Indian past, when the Kickapoos inhabited the area, were followed by episodes depicting the arrival of pioneer settlers, building of Fort Russell—used as a headquarters by Governor Ninian Edwards for three years—mustering of the rangers and Indian uprisings during the

War of 1812. The post-war years, abandonment of the old fort and final exile of the Kickapoo tribe west of the Mississippi were depicted in the closing episodes.

One of the scenes was based on the Sunday afternoon massacre on Wood River in July, 1814, when a mother and six small children were killed by a band of Indians.

Background music was provided by the Lutheran Children's A Cappella Choir, directed by O. E. Firnhaber. Other music during the performance was provided by choruses and quartets. Indian dances and ceremonials were features of the well-staged performance.

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In clinical tests conducted by medical doctors more than 100 persons lost 14 to 15 pounds average in a few weeks with the AYDS Vitamin Candy Reducing Plan.

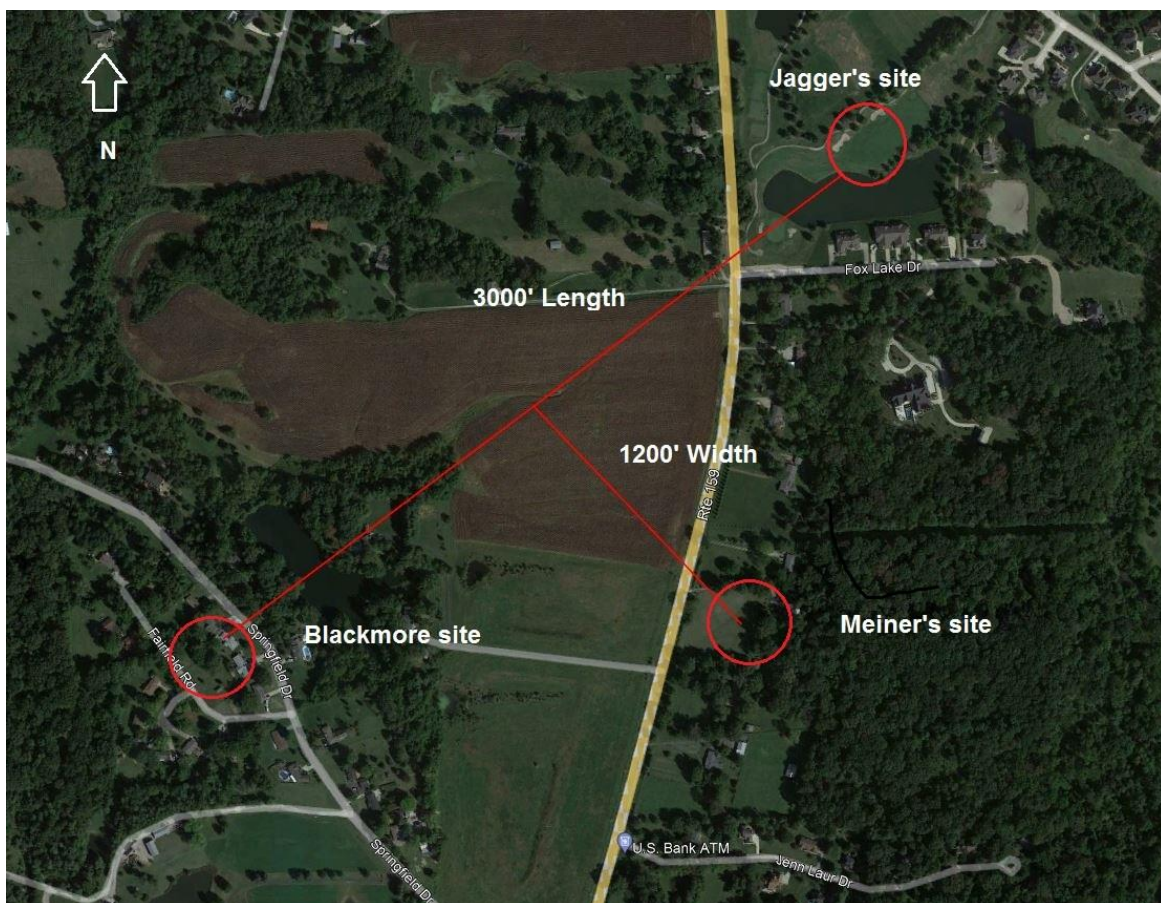
With this Ayds Plan you don't cut out any meals, starches, potatoes, meats or butter, you simply cut them down. It's simple and easier when you enjoy delicious (vitamin fortified) AYDS before each meal. Absolutely harmless. 30 days supply of Ayds only \$1.25. If not delighted with results MONEY BACK on the very first box. Phone

THEIFTY DRUG STORES
BARTH'S PHARMACY
Tear out this ad as a reminder.



An article of a 1944 pageant with 250 people in the cast telling the story of Fort Russell. With some 1200 attendees, it was a large celebration at the Blackmore Farm, present day Fairfield Rd today.

There is also a *third* site where the fort was said to be, and was included the State's Cultural Database as 11-Ms-23, which is in the front yard of Larry and Pat Mosby on Rt. 159. The fort was reported to the State in the 1950's by Mr. Ed Meiners of Roxana, an avocational collector of artifacts. In 1953 the paper advertised Arthur Jagers and Charles Tuxhorn hosted a field trip open to anyone to attend a tour of the three disputed sites of Fort Russell. Even as far back as 1861, a letter was sent to Governor John Reynolds to ask if he knew where the fort was located. He replied that though he was there in 1813, he could not recall the exact location. But this is not surprising as this area was the leading edge of the American Frontier in 1812, and within a few short years, many residents moved on with the frontier's expansion opening new areas for settlement. We were a restless Nation! Sometime after Arthur Jagers hosted his tour in the early 1950's he typed his treatise that bluntly states the location of the fort. But it's his description of the fort that I think lost many believers, and when I first read his short description some ten years ago, I too questioned his conclusions and set his report aside for quite a while, looking for a location elsewhere. In his report he states the fort was *3000' long by 1200' wide*, an IMPOSSIBLY large structure in 1812.



The Jagers' document states the fort was a cross-shaped structure 3000' long by 1200' wide. The dimensions would have been impossible to construct in the day, but I think I know why he gave this description.

After much reflection on his efforts to show the fort's location, I think I know why he over-exaggerated the size of Fort Russell. He wanted to include all three sites... the Fox Creek site is 3000' NE of the Fairfield Rd site where the plaque was posted in 1912. And from this line, it's 1200' SE to the Meiner's site on Rt. 159. By describing the construction in this fashion, all the different locations, and their supporters, are right. I believe it was important to Arthur to offer an olive branch to everyone who disagreed with the various locations, yet being careful to being inclusive of everyone. So if the fort was not this monstrous sized fortification, and only ½ acre enclosed as most agree, then who is right? I was with a small group who dug test pits at the Meiners site over a period of several years (with MUCH thanks to the patient and accommodating Mosby Family!) but alas, we came up empty. We also dug up several other locations along Route 159, with no positive results. The SIUE performed remote sensing at the Fairfield Site, also with negative results. All that remains is the Fox Creek site, where we did perform metal detector surveys on the northern shore of the lake getting non-ferrous signal (i.e. lead, copper, etc.) but as it is a beautifully manicured and well maintained golf course, were unable to dig up and identify our targets. It would require a non-intrusive remote sensing survey, like a magnetometer or electrical resistivity meter to inspect under the sod without disturbing the surface. This technology does exist, but is expensive to perform requiring a technician with the experience in sub-surface surveying of cultural sites. Sadly, this technology is beyond our grasp, but am hopeful that someday could be realized by a learning institution or historical group.

Was Arthur Jagers right, placing the elusive Camp Russell at the old Gremer Farm, now Fox Creek? Until something else comes up for air, why not?

Arthur passed away in 1974 at the age of 89, living a full life and raising his family in Edwardsville. He was a veteran of WW1, and served the American Legion faithfully for many years. He was also a volunteer weather recorder for the local area for 27 years, and was proud of his time recording the daily weather for the paper, and his fellow citizens of Edwardsville.

Much thanks to Tracy Garrison, David Brady, the always supportive Dr. Mike Wiant, the fine folks at the Madison County Historical Society, and the multiple folks who allowed us to poke around their property looking for an elusive fort. Would also like to thank Dr. Greg Vogel and his students for their time and assistance looking under the Mosby's yard, and the fine folks at the Fox Creek Golf Course for allowing us to visit their beautiful facility. A special thank you to the family of Bob Monroe, whose time and expertise was most appreciated, and greatly missed.



Flags mark positive hits of ferrous and non-ferrous with detectors, but we were unable to dig. This is the 11-Ms-1398 Site location where time appropriate ceramic shards were recorded in the early 1990's, and where Arthur Jagers says he assisted digging up the old fort's stockade footing in 1908. Perhaps someday the fort will come up for air!

End