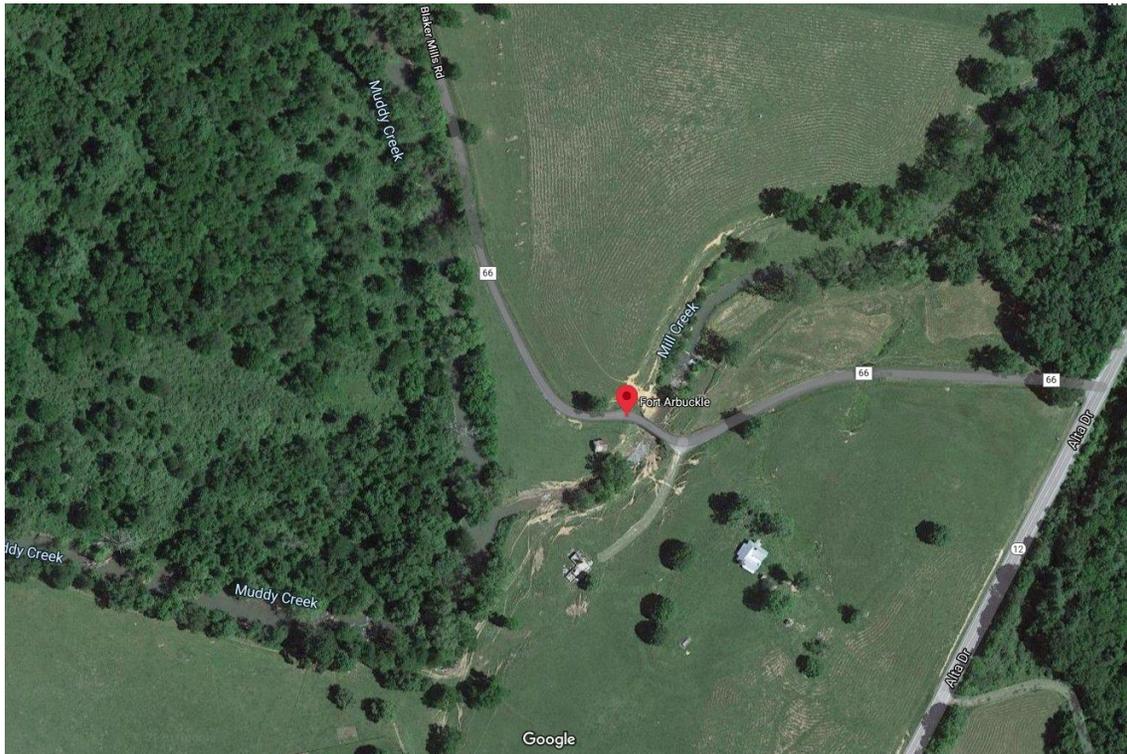


## Fort Arbuckle

Arbuckle's Fort was a Revolutionary-era frontier fort located in Greenbrier County, one of many forts that helped settlers to colonize Western Virginia.

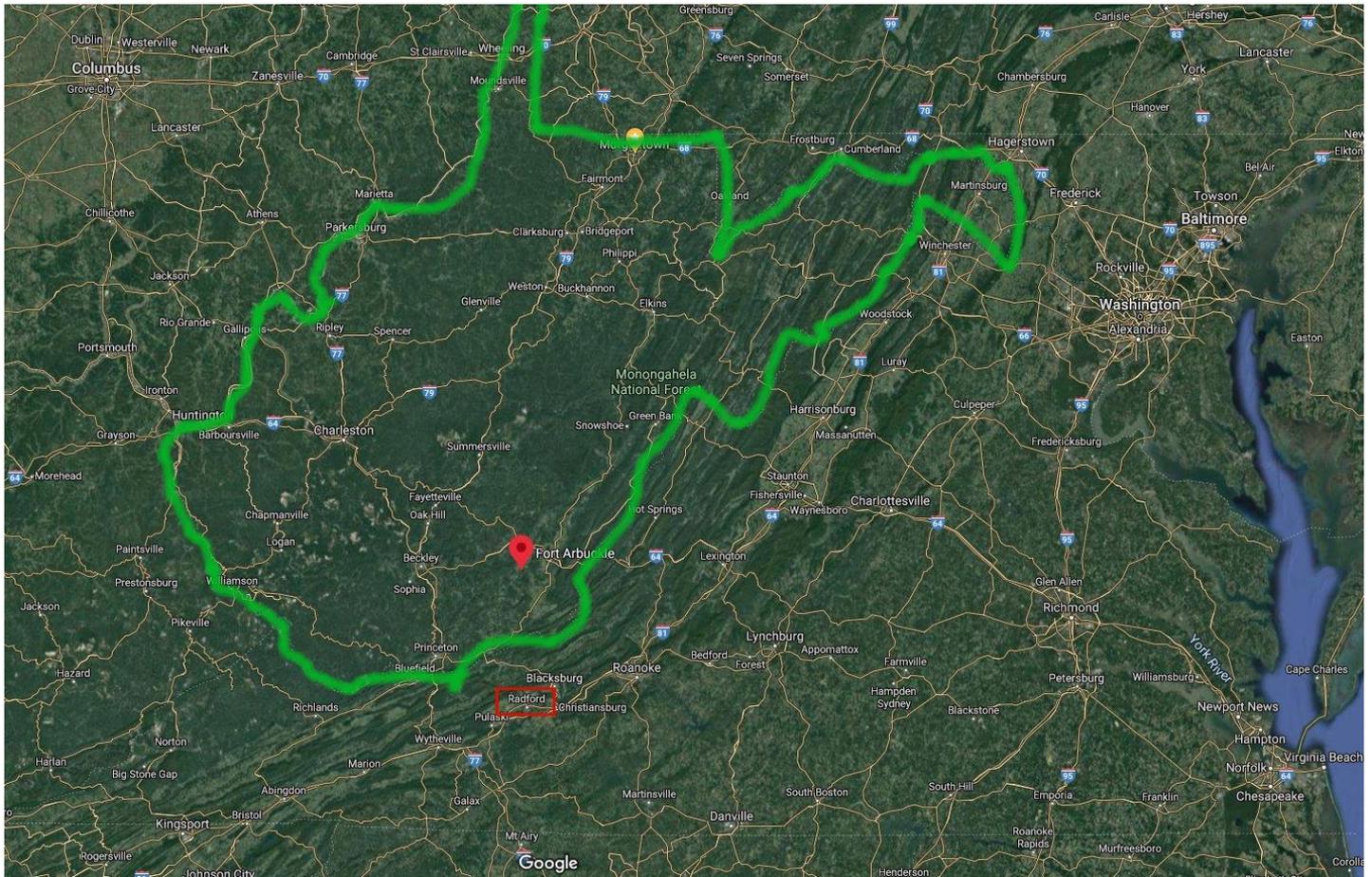


While the location of the fort was known, no written description of it is known to exist, and no trace of the fortification could be seen above the surface of the pasture that covers it. Much of what is known about the structure and the activities that took place inside it was uncovered during a series of excavations conducted in the 1990s by archaeologists Stephen and Kim McBride.



Arbuckle's Fort was built in 1774 by a local militia company commanded by Captain Matthew Arbuckle on a rise of land overlooking the place where Mill Creek flows into Muddy Creek. It was one of a series of forts built by militiamen to station troops and protect settlers from attack by native tribes who had caused them to abandon two earlier attempts at settling the area – one in the late 1750s and the other in the early 1760s. The fort was built near the site of attacks by Shawnees in 1763.

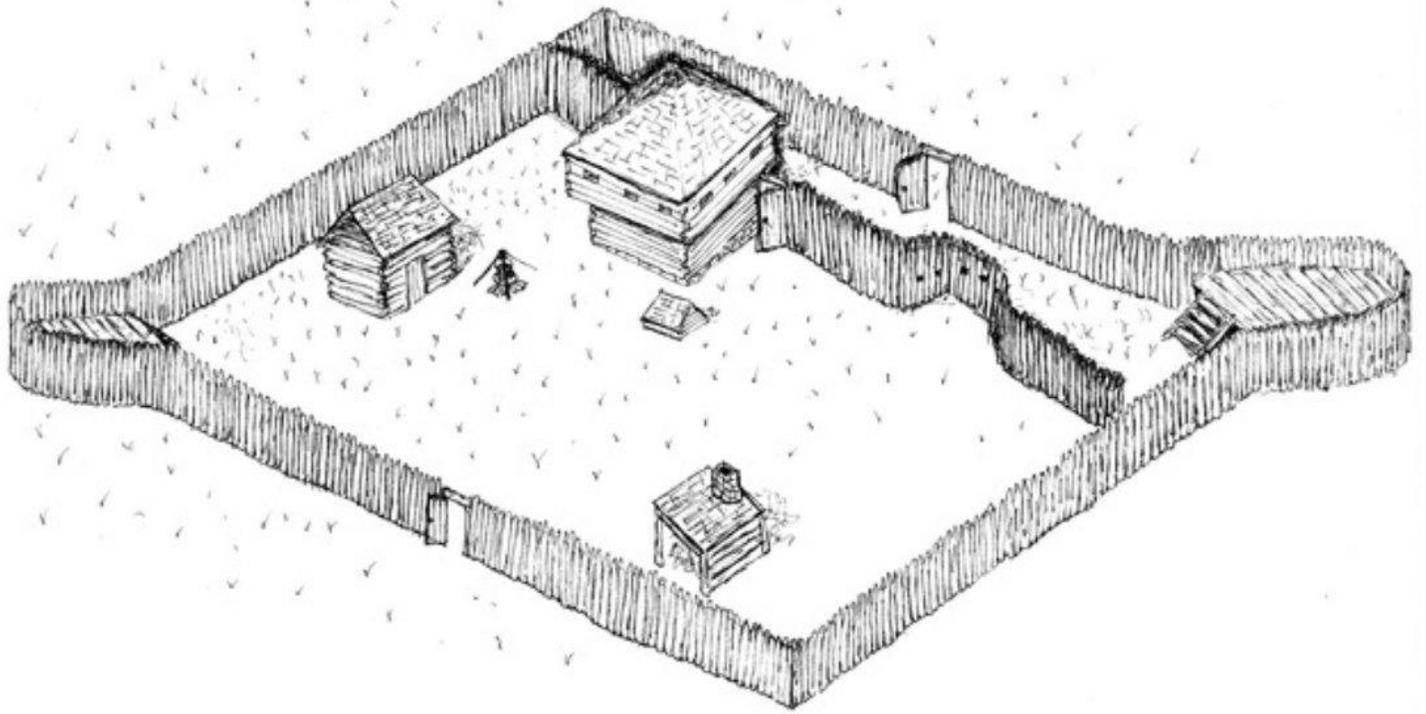
Fort Arbuckle was one of the first frontier forts in the area to be built as a freestanding, military structure and not a fortified component of a home.



Records indicate that the fort provided protection more than 40 families living in the Muddy Creek area. During the growing season, families spent much of their time at the fort, with one group of male settlers moving from farm to farm, planting and harvesting crops, while another group was on the alert for Indian attack.

The first military action at the fort took place in August 1774, within weeks of its completion, when Muddy Creek settler William Kelly was attacked by tomahawk-wielding Native American raiders about a half-mile outside the stockade. Sounds of the attack reached militiamen inside the fort, who ran to the scene and retrieved the deeply cut settler, who soon died of his wounds.

The fort was occupied throughout much of the Revolutionary War, during which the British encouraged native attacks on the Virginia settlers. Apparently the last time the fort was used was in 1783.



Excavations by the McBrides showed that a diamond-shaped stockade wall of vertical logs enclosed a quarter-acre area containing a blacksmithing site, cooking hearth, and stores of ammunition.

Animal bones found in the cooking area indicated that meat formed a large portion of fort occupants' diets. Hogs and cattle accounted for most of the bones, but deer, black bear, raccoon, rabbit, squirrel and groundhog bones were also found. A study of vegetable material found in the cooking area indicated that corn, fruits, nuts and berries were also eaten there.

The excavations at Arbuckle's Fort also produced numerous artifacts left by the site's earliest occupants, the region's native people. Projectile points dating back to the Archaic era – 3,000 to 10,000 years ago – were found at the fort site and in the field surrounding it.

Nearby there are remnants of a dam built to divert water for at least one of two gristmills that operated on Mill Creek. The first was Keeney's Mill, in operation when the fort was built in 1774. It was replaced by Blaker's Mill, built in 1794, which became the center of a small community that sprang up around it and continued to operate well into the 1900s.

