

Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Garner plantation sites in  
Northampton County, NC and Greensville County, VA.

C Edwin Garner, Ph.D.

Copyright January 2008

## ***Introduction***

The Civil War era maps of Major General Jeremy Gilmer were examined to determine the site of early Garner Plantations in Northampton County NC and Greenville County Va. These maps identified roads, railways, mills and plantations as part of the nascent Confederate Governments geographical department.

The Gilmer Map 44 illustrates the Greenville County Va region including the northwestern-most regions of Northampton County NC (Figure 1). Garner plantations were marked in the region of now present Gaston, NC (Figure 2). Analysis of the 3 sites immediately bracketing the Gaston region was given priority as the region is believed to be the site of plantations owned by the Colonial Planter Rev. William Garner Sr (~1745-1824).

## ***William Garner***

Reverend William Garner, Senior (about 1740-1824) was a planter, a militiaman in the Revolutionary War and a pioneering Baptist Minister. He owned property along the Virginia –North Carolina border alternately living between the two states. William is believed to be a descendent of the Garners of Isle of Wight County Va. Among his descendants are the Garners of the Virginia Southside and eastern North Carolina though this family has spread over the country in modern times.

William's association with the Kirby Creek neighbors of Joseph Garner suggests that William spent a portion of his early life in central Northampton County, North Carolina. William's first recorded purchase of land in Northampton County was November 11, 1772 (Deed book 5, Page 166 C.071.4003). For 40 pounds Virginia Money James Roy sold 200 acres of land to William along the Great Pocosin and along Poplar and Spring Branch. The Great Pocosin is located west of present day Murfreesboro, NC. He sold this land in June 1774 to a Burrell Lucy for 60 pounds Virginia Money, making a tidy 50% profit (Deed Book 5 p 287 C.071.4003). William likely used the proceeds of this sale to then purchase 1070 acres of land in Brunswick County VA from Joshan, James, and Lotty Sprayberry on 22 August 1774. This land was part of a Simeon Lane patent of 25 March 1762 (Brunswick County Deed Book 13, Page 64-65.) The location of William's Brunswick purchase can be surmised from analysis of patent data in 18<sup>th</sup> century Brunswick County (Figure 3 ). A careful comparison between the maps in Figures 2 and 3 will show that the land purchased in 1774 overlaps the location of the Fountain Creek Church, where William was pastor (Burkitt, 1850)

On December 23 1774 William Garner "of Brunswick Co., Colony of Virginia" purchased land in Northampton County from Henry Clarke (Deed book 6, page 32). He was obviously living in Virginia by late 1774. This land was located along the Falling Run. Though a resident of Virginia he also was a Northampton County, NC land owner since he purchased 100 acres below Beaver Pond Creek "adjoining his own land" from Peter Ware April 2, 1781 (Deed book 7, page 36); He also purchased from Benjamin Smith April 22, 1781 (Deed Book 7, page 48).

William also received two patents (total 180 acres) surveyed October 31 1794 from the state of North Carolina. The first patent, 175 acres, was surveyed:

Beginning at a corner white oak on the Falling Run running north 46degrees east one hundred and forty one poles to a corner gum in the head of Scott's Branch then down the said branch North eighty five degrees east twenty eight pole then down the said branch south twenty nine degrees east one hundred and twenty six pole to a pine corner east one hundred and thirty four pole to a corner sausphras (sassafras?) then north eighty west one hundred pole to a corner pine in the head of deep branch then south twenty seven degrees west three hundred and seventy four pole to the first station.

Witnessed by Samuel Garner, John Garner

The second patent, surveyed the same day, was described:

Beginning at a live oak on Anthony Tucker's line and in the middle prong of the falling run running south eighty five degrees east twenty six pole to a live oak in the fork of the falling run then up the north prong of the aforesaid run north twenty degrees east twenty four pole then along the said run north seventeen degrees west thirty to pole to Anthony Tuckers line thence along the said Tucker's line to the first station.

Witnessed by John Garner , Samuel Garner

These properties which were joined together along the Falling Run lines (as per instructions to the surveyor) are the properties left to Samuel in William's will (Northampton County Will book WB-3/307) . Falling Run is now known as Black Duck Creek (USGS).

William likely left Brunswick/Greenville County Va after 1788. William Garner was listed in the North Carolina census of 1790 as a resident of Northampton County. In 1800 William and his sons John and Samuel were listed in Northampton County . William also appeared in the U.S.census of 1810 and 1820 in Northampton. William listed 590 acres of land valued at 2360 dollars and 14 tithable slaves in the Northampton District 1 (west of present day Gaston) property tax lists of 1823 and 1824.

In 1805, "William Garner, his wife Sally, of Northampton County, North Carolina, Sally Camp, widow of Thomas Camp decd., Nancy Camp, Elizabeth Camp, Polly Hall who was formerly Polly Camp, heirs of Thomas Camp decd." sold 105 acres of land in Greenville County, Va to Isaac Walton, Jr of Greesville County. Note that a George Walton owned patent land adjacent to Simon Lane's patent land which was sold to William in 1784 (Figure 2).

From the above data one can say that William initially was a resident and landowner of Northampton County, NC who moved from North Carolina to Brunswick County in 1774. He lived in Brunswick (now Greenville) County VA as a major land holder until at least 1788. By 1790 he had moved back to North Carolina where he resided until his death in 1824. Data from deed records suggest that William Garner had two separate properties, one along the Falling Run and another south of Beaver Pond Creek. Since these properties stayed within the family for several generations after his death, the locations of Garner households in Gilmer Map 44 are most likely the locations of William Garners original Northampton plantations.

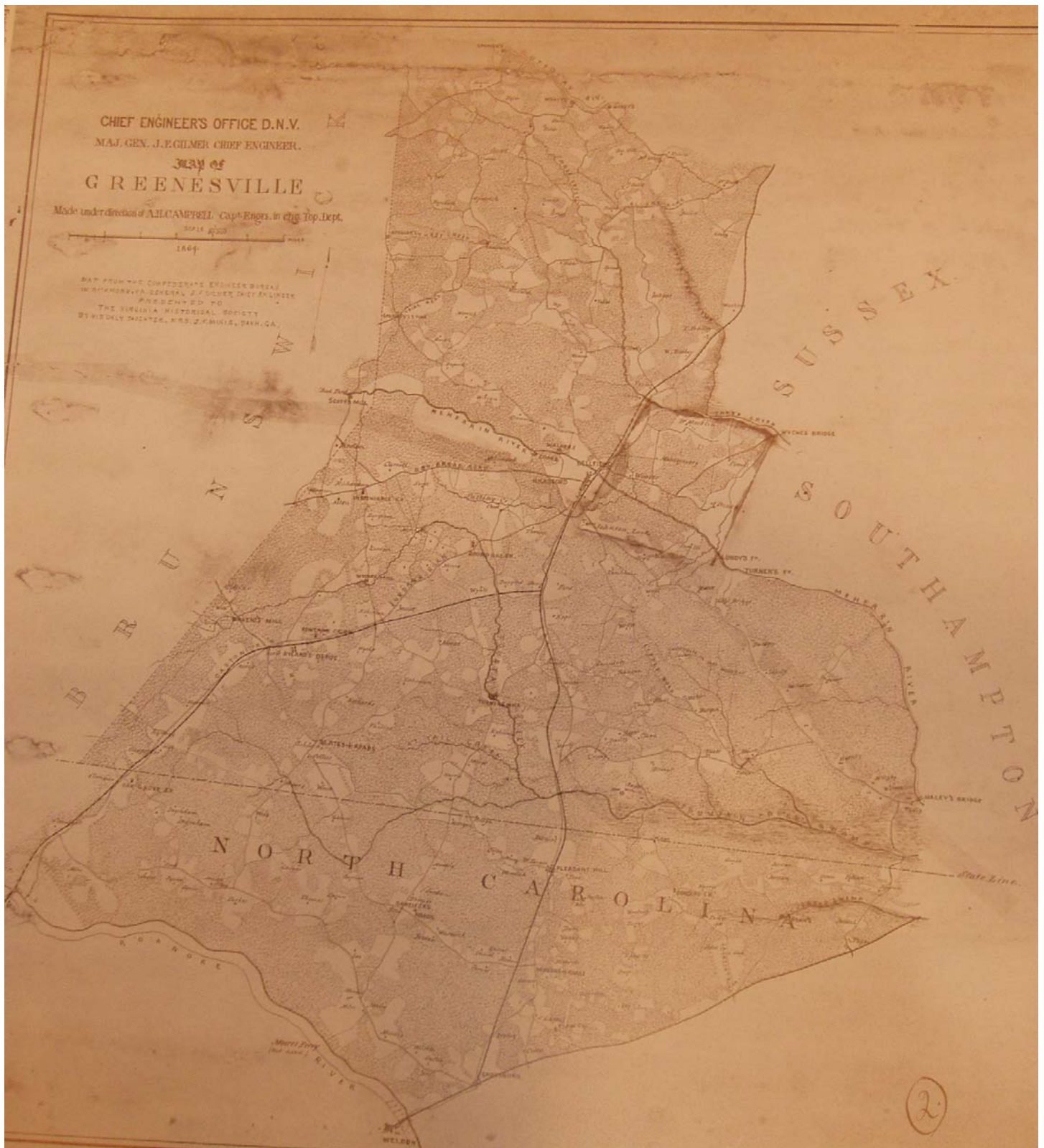


Figure 1. Gilmer Map 44. Area illustrated is Greenville County Va region including the northwestern-most regions of Northampton County NC. Lower left border of map is Roanoke River and lowermost feature is township of Weldon.





Figure 2. Detail Gilmer Map 44. Area illustrated is Northwestern Northampton County NC region. Creek that crosses NC/VA border is Beaver Dam Creek.

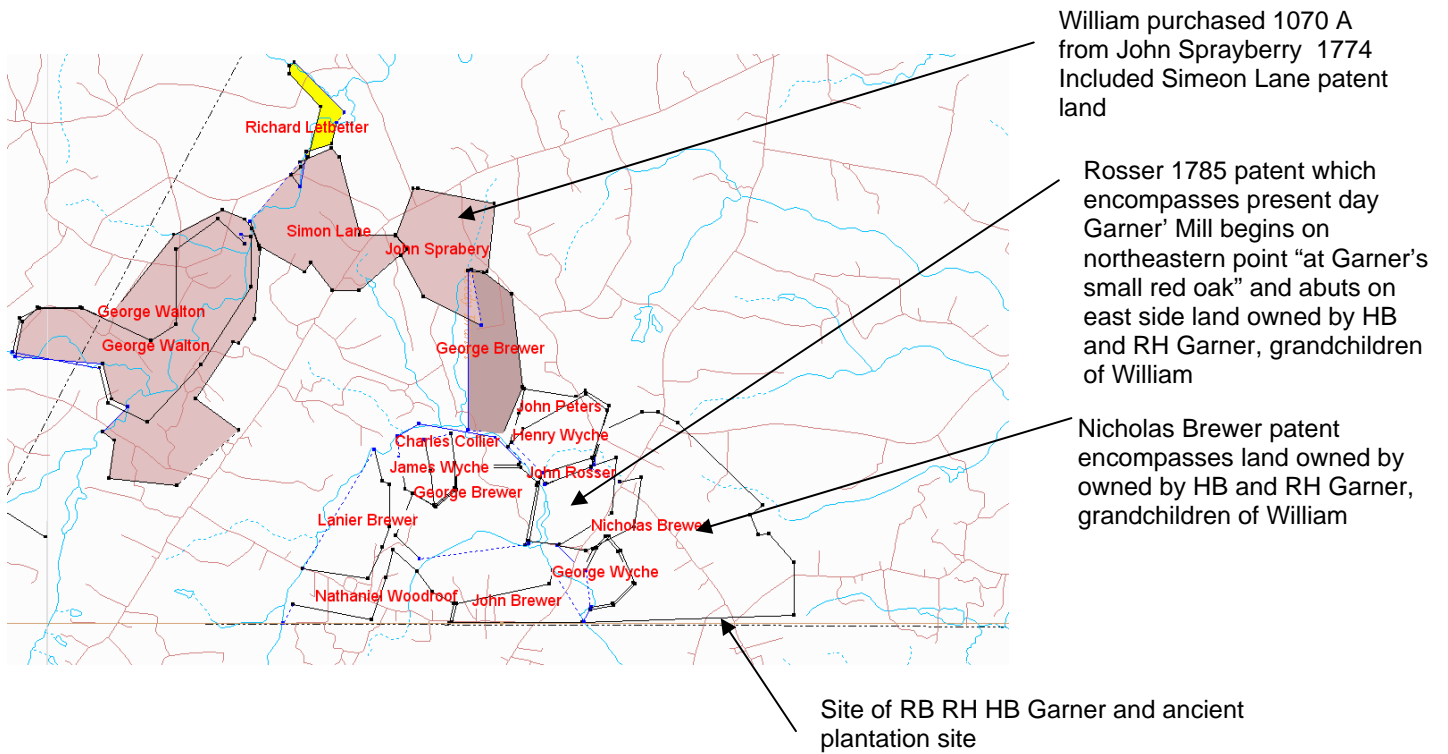


Figure 3. Patents from which the Spraberry properties purchased by Rev. William Garner, Sr in 1774 were originated, Greenville County, VA.



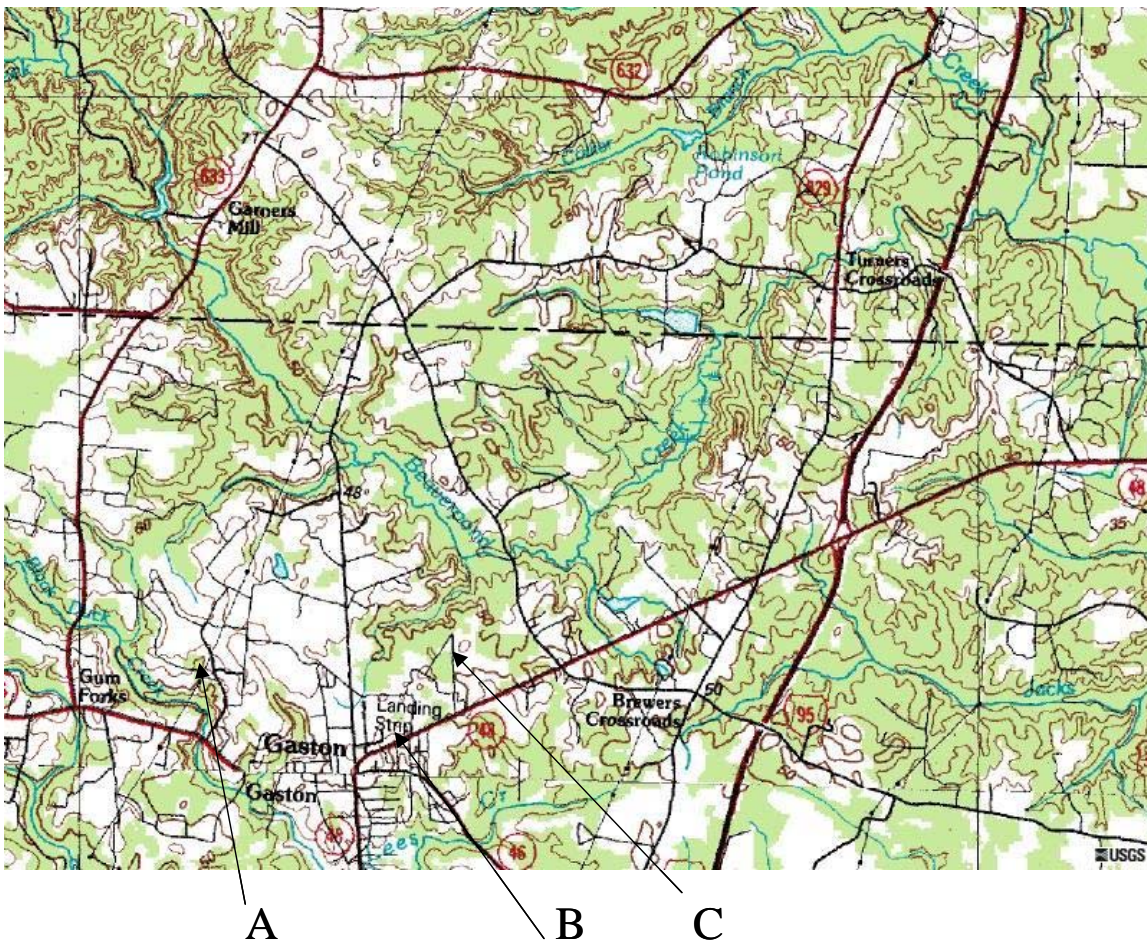


Figure 4. USGS map topological map of Gaston area, Northampton County, NC. Black Duck Creek (Falling Run) is at lower left and Beaver Pond Creek is stream crossing NC/VA border. Garners Mill is at upper left. Road bed of the “main road” follows NC HWY 46. Hypothesized Northampton Garner allied plantation sites A,B, C represent USGS Map unnamed cemeteries.

To identify potential plantation sites the locations of the Gilmer map Garner Plantations were compared with cemeteries located on USGS topographical maps (Figures 2 and 4, respectively). It was assumed that home sites occupied over several generations may also have family graveyards which may still be identified in detailed topological maps. Points with unidentified extant gravesites were identified on the USGS map which had similar placement as the plantation sites on the Gilmer map 44 (Figure 4). Close examination of detail maps indicate the presence of evidence that confirms the likelihood of older plantation sites.

#### *USGS Site A*

Analysis of USGS map sites west of present Gaston in the Gum Fork Region indicated another cemetery and potential plantation site (Figure 4). Factors contributing to this hypothesis were proximity to Site B, proximity to cemetery of the Moody and Squire families, who were allied with early to mid 19<sup>th</sup> century Garners, and, importantly, proximity to the vicinity of the Falling Run patent of William Garner. Falling Run is now known as Black Duck Creek (USGS).

These properties were joined together along the lines of the Falling Run. The instructions to the surveyor were to “Survey for Wm Garner a tract or parcel of land containing two hundred acres lying in Northampton County



between his lines and Nathaniel Norwoods lines and on the main road and on the north side of the Falling Run.” These are the properties given to Samuel Garner in William’s 1824 will.

The area of site A was explored in winter of 2005 with a focus on the unmarked cemetery identified in the USGS map in Figure 5. This site contained several marked graves of indeterminate age and a number of mid 20<sup>th</sup> century graves. There were no definitively identifiable Garner graves in this site but this does not rule out the potential that this was used as an early Garner graveyard.

## Detail Gum Fork Area

Other Western Gilmer Map Garner Site?

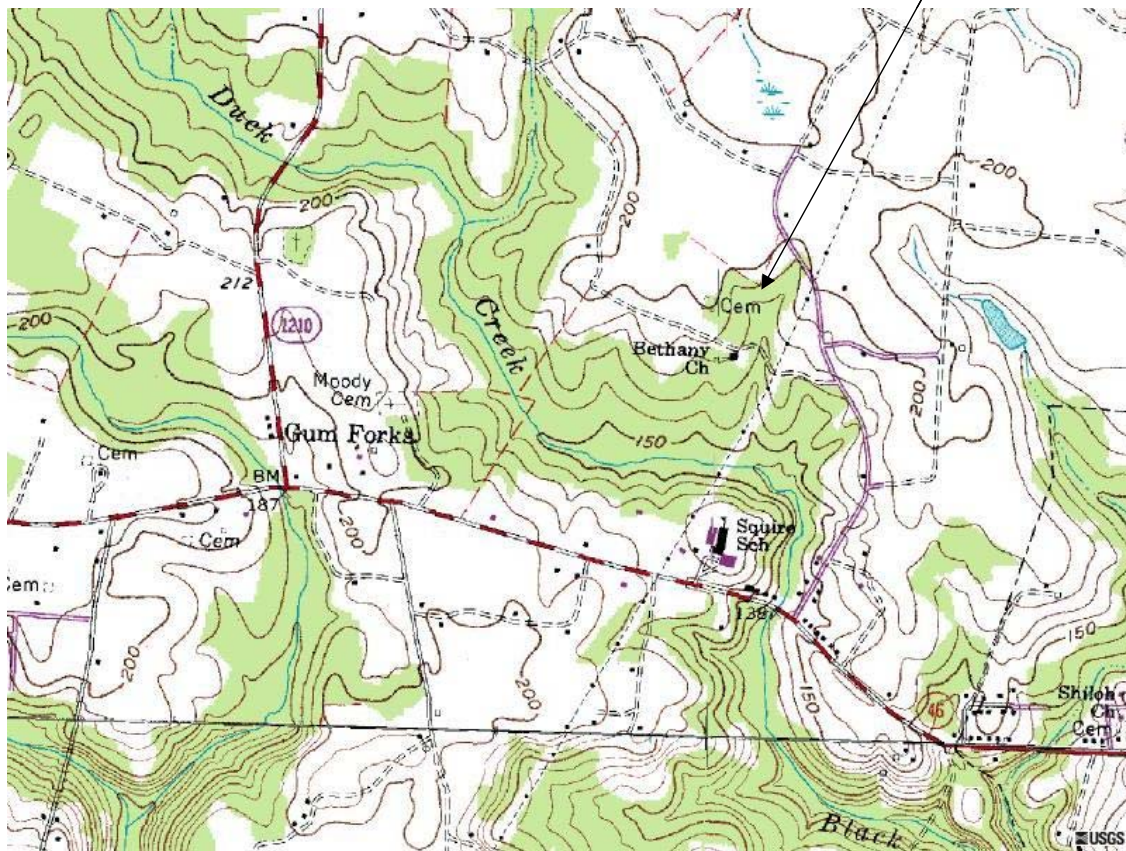


Figure 5. West Gaston Potential Garner Plantation Site A Cemetery.

### **USGS Site B**

Site B on the USGS map in Figure 4 had been previously discovered and positively identified as a potential plantation site through interviews and site visits. Present at this point are graves of Dr Presley Killingsworth Garner (1835-1861), E I Thomas, and Susan Garner Thomas from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century (Figures 6-7). In his will probated in Northampton county 1861, Dr P K Garner requested that his body be buried in the graveyard of his brother in law E I Thomas. Thus this point represents the location of the Thomas property, marked “b” on Figure 8. Though no images of the house have yet been secured, it is clearly the site of an early home for the following reasons: the presence of dwelling symbols at this site on older maps, the presence of hand formed bricks in piles suggesting a collapsed dwelling; tree growth in rectilinear patterns suggesting growth around a once standing structure and the cemetery.

Thus this USGS site B was identified as the location of the Gilmer Map site “b” (Figure 8).





Figure 6. P K Garner Graveyard, Gaston NC



Figure 7. Presley Killingsworth Garner (1835-1861) Gravestone Gaston NC.



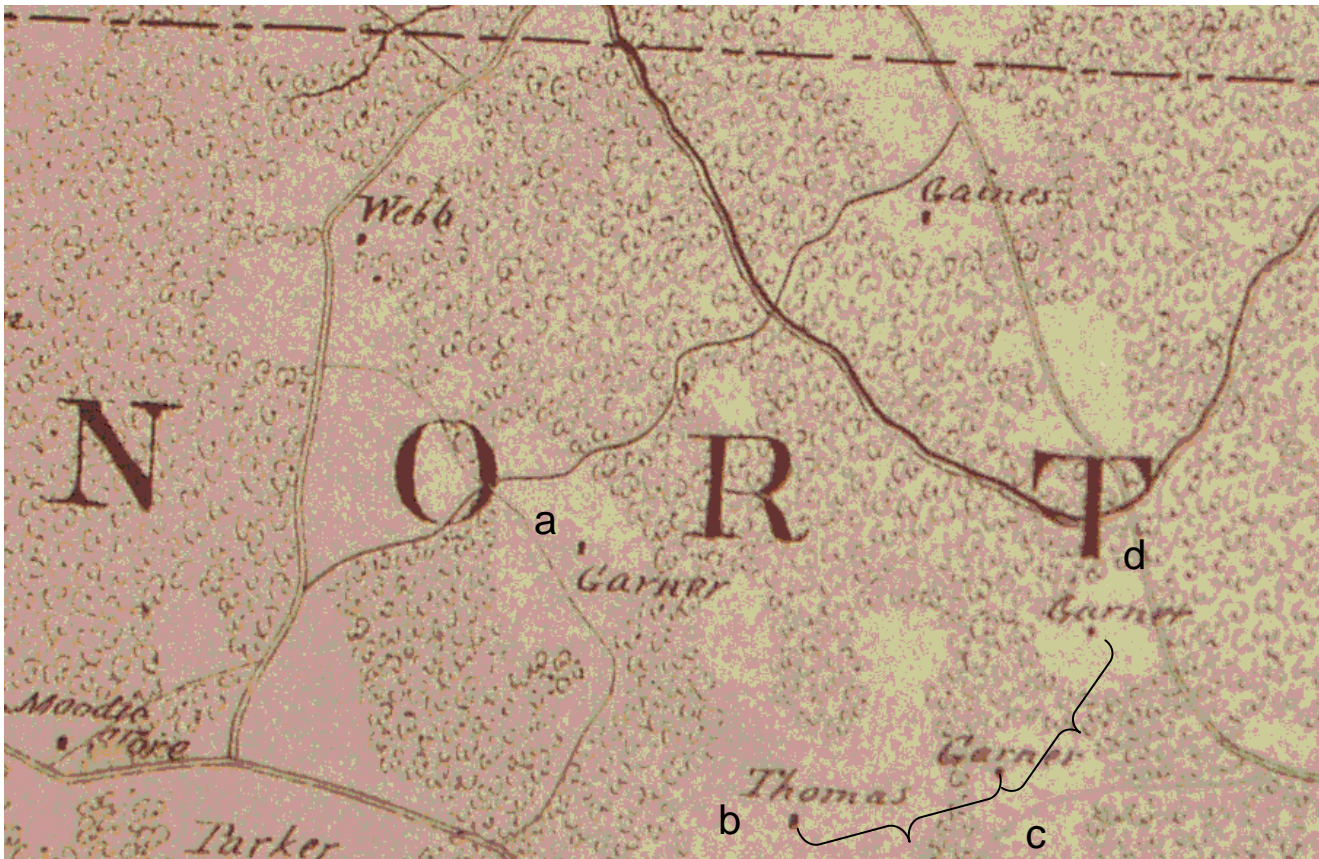
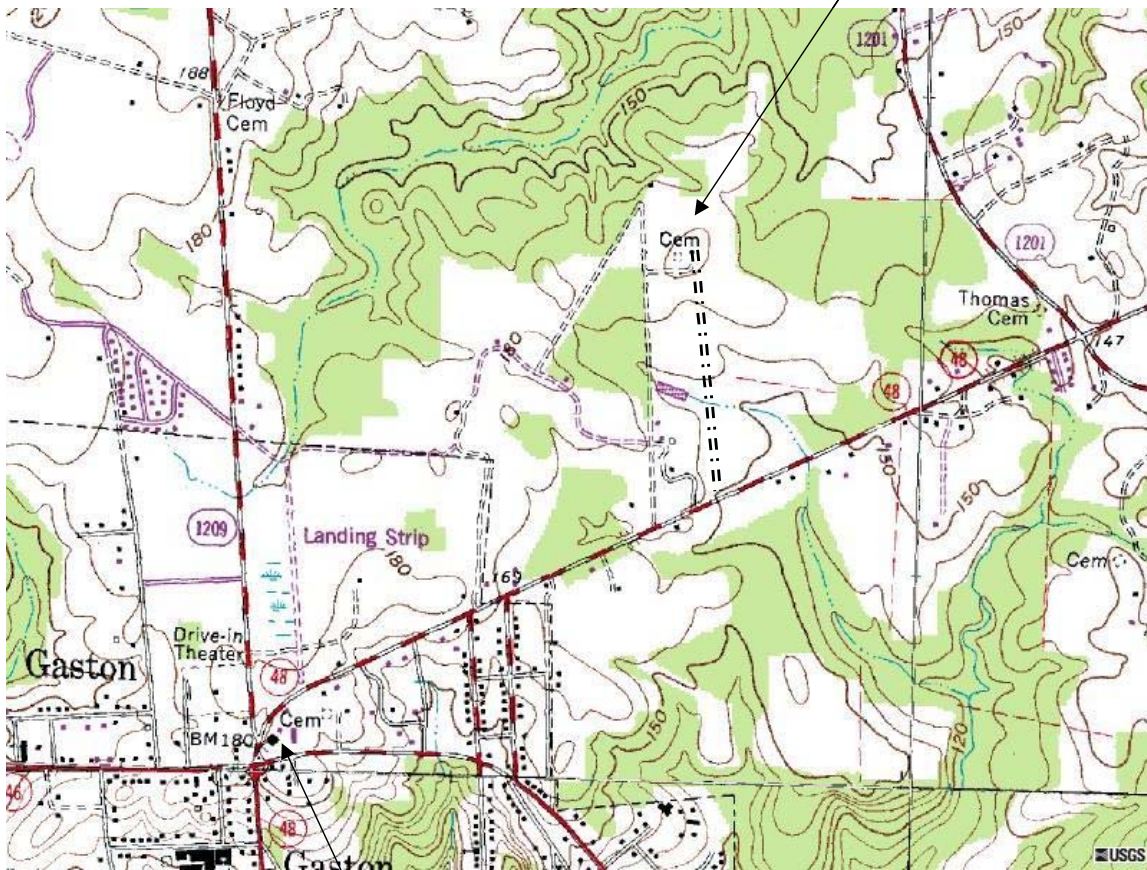


Figure 8. Detail of Gaston region Garner and allied plantations.

A potential site C, northeast of site B, was identified (Figure 4). Factors contributing to this hypothesis were proximity to Site B, proximity to cemetery of the Thomas family, a family that was allied with mid 19<sup>th</sup> century Garners.

## Detail Gaston Area

Gilmer Map Garner Site Built 1825 Cemetery Extant



Dr PK Garner and Captain E I Thomas Cem. Gilmer Map Site

Figure 9. East Gaston Garner Plantation Site B and C Cemeteries.

### *USGS Site C*

The author visited the location of site C off of Hwy 48 N approximately 1.25 miles north of Gaston (Figure 9). No house was extant. However the present owner of the property showed me the house site and the graveyard (approximately 0.5 miles off highway) and confirmed that the property was the site of an old Garner “Big House” (Figure 10). The house was pushed down and buried in the early 1990s. The house, was identified as a Garner property by an inscription in the chimney masonry : “James Garner built 1825”. The cemetery was overgrown severely and it was difficult to find gravestones. The owner stated that several Garner graves were present including the grave of a Henry Garner.

Several Garner graves were found (Figure 11) supporting that the site was occupied by the Garners during the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. A winter visit was necessary to identify all headstones in the yard as the undergrowth was so thick that walking was nearly impossible. It is known that Henry Garner was the son of John Garner, Sr and the grandson of William Garner Sr (~1745-1824). The gravestones were transcribed as follows:



Transcript of Henry Garner Cemetery, Gaston , NC off Hwy 48.

**W. Paul Garner**  
1871-1945

**Martha J. Garner**  
Wife of J.G Garner  
Died May 2, 1907  
Age 70 Years  
Honored, Beloved and  
Wept  
Here Mother Lies

**John G. Garner**  
Died May 14 1896  
Age 81 years and 8  
months  
May the Resurrection  
Find Thee on the  
Bosom of thy God

**Joseph H**  
Son of J. G. and Martha  
J Garner  
Born Aug 16 1864  
Died Jan 18 1880  
Though Thou Art Gone  
Fond Memory Clings to  
Thee

**Sarah Jane**  
Wife of Henry Garner  
Born May 10, 1804  
Died Apr 15, 1864  
As a Wife Devoted  
As a Mother  
Affectionate  
As a Friend ever kind  
and true

**Henry Garner**  
Born Jan 10 1807  
Died June 26 1879  
May the Resurrection  
Find Thee on the  
Bosom of thy God

4 Unmarked Grave  
Depressions

Prior to dismantling the house, the owner photographed the house from several angles (Figures 12-14). The structure was a 2 ½ story frame house with tin roof (not original). . The house, according to local legend, was built over 7 years by slaves with the first part made from hand hewn timber and the second addition made with timbers made at the Garner's sawmill. This was confirmed by photos taken of both hand hewn and mill-sawn beams in the house interior. All joints were mortised and pegged. The stones in the foundation were carted onto the builders site from the Roanoke River and stone piles of the builder's culls are present along the tree ridge in the field behind the house site. The dug foundation was partly buried for coolness. Stone steps were built up and the principal entrances were into the second floor front and back. The raised front porches were removed prior to demolition. Additional entrances into the first floor were also present at the sides. This house design was common for early 19<sup>th</sup> century farm manor houses in the Roanoke Valley (Figure 15). Interior walls were plastered with horse and/or hog hair as a binder. Several outbuildings were present at the house site but dismantled prior to the demolition.

Thus this USGS site C was identified as the Gilmer Map site "c" (Figure 8).



Figure 10. Site of 1825 Garner Manor House site and Graveyard.



Figure 11. Gravestone uncovered during visit to Site C.





Figure 12. Western view (front) of 1825 Garner Manor House (USGS map site C).



Figure 13. Western view (rear) of 1825 Garner Manor House (USGS map site C).





Figure 14. Frontal view of 1825 Garner Manor House (USGS map site C).



Figure 15. Ivey house, Halifax, NC, built 1847. This house is a prototypical Roanoke Valley farm house and similar in design to the James Garner house.

### ***Estimation of plantation site locations.***

The positive identification of two out of the four Gilmer Garner allied plantation sites (Figure 8) presented an opportunity for the location of the remaining sites via simple geometric techniques. In figure 8, the distance between site b and c (distance bc) is approximately equivalent to the distance between sites c and d (distance bc~cd). Additionally, the distance between the westernmost site a and the easternmost site d is approximately 3 times the distance bc (distance ad~3bc). Further, the distance between site a and site b is approximately twice distance bc (distance ab ~2bc). By drawing a circle of radius bc from the location of site c, the approximate position of site d can be surmised as the intersection of that circle with the road just south of where it crosses Beaverdam Creek (Blue Circle, Figure 16). The intersection a circle of radius 3bc (orange figure) drawn from point c with the circle of radius 2bc (red circle) marks the probable location of the westernmost site a. Added confirmation of the position of the easternmost site d is noted by the intersection of circle 2bc (red circle) at the center of circle 3bc (orange circle).

Thus the position of the Gilmer map Garner plantation sites a, b, c, and d are located on the USGS topographical map as displayed in Figure 16.

### ***Confirmation of Additional Garner Plantation Site Locations***

Location of the ruins of manor house at the potential site of the easternmost plantation “d” was not evident from roadside observation. However, in the region of this site, there are several roads named for Garners and the presence of the households of several Garner families, suggesting a longtime presence of those carrying this name (Figure 17). Since this is private property with no cemetery access rights, further investigation of this location awaits.

Location of the ruins of manor house at the potential site of the westernmost plantation “a” was also not evident from roadside observation. However, this site is likely the location for the following reasons

In 1835, Samuel Garner, son of William Garner Sr, petitioned the court for partition of the Patent property of his father (DBX, pg Y). The remaining property, portioned to his brother William Jr, was left in Williams will to Thomas, son of Samuel. Thomas willed this to his Brother Bradford who then sold it to memers of the Turner family. In the region of this site, there are several roads named for Turners and the presence of the households of several Turner families, suggesting a longtime presence of those carrying this name.



Figure 16. Location of Garner Plantations on USGS map.

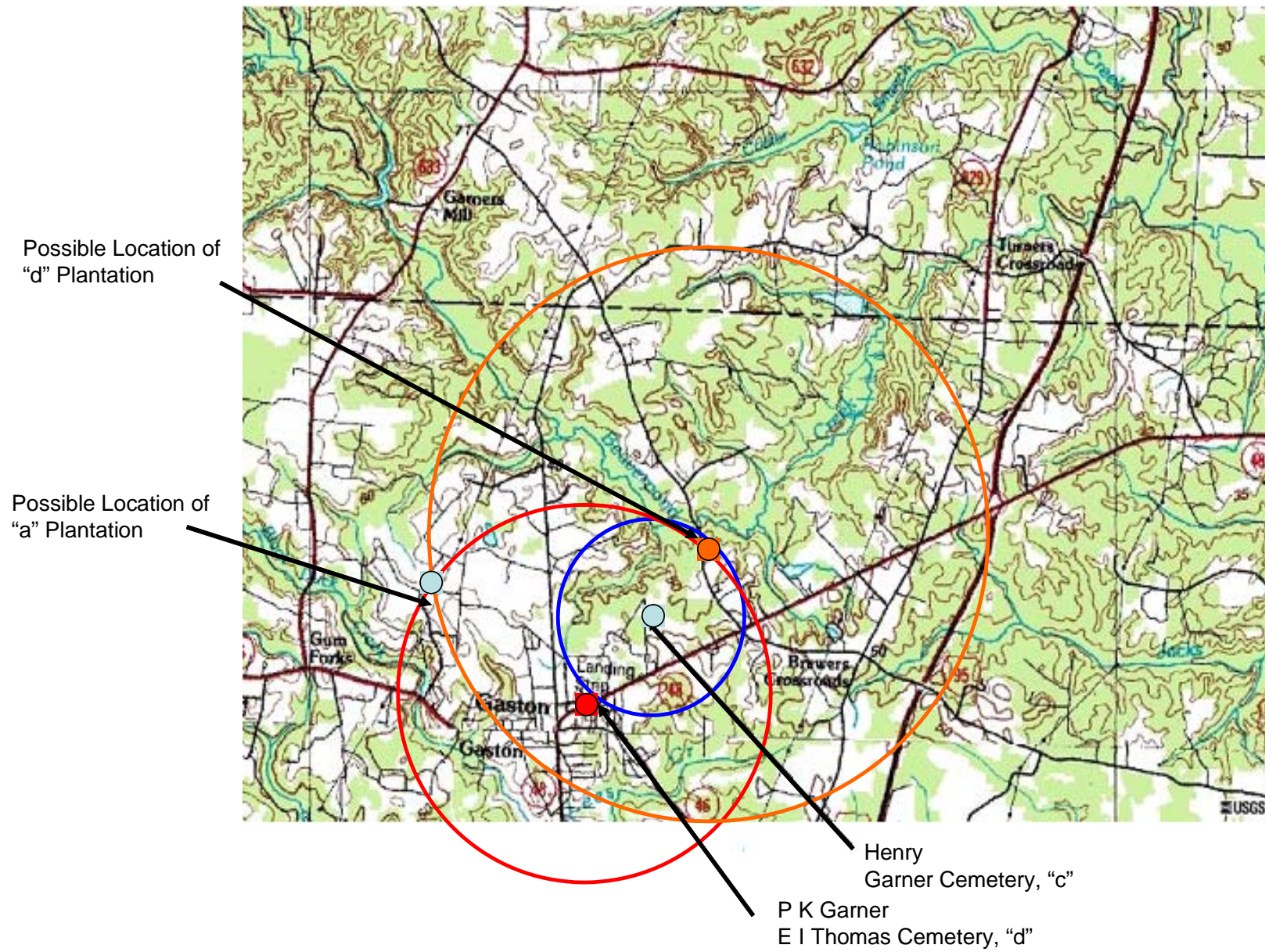




Figure 17. Erma Garner Lane at location of Garner Plantation Site “d”.



## References

(Lemuel Burkitt and Jesse Read, A CONCISE HISTORY OF THE KEHUKEE BAPTIST ASSOCIATION FROM ITS ORIGINAL RISE DOWN TO 1803 (Philadelphia, PA, 1803; revised and improved by Henry L. Burkitt, Philadelphia, PA, 1850, p.282).