

Capt. John Hill
(1740/1745–c1817)
of
North Carolina & Wilkes & Greene Counties, Georgia

by Timothy Dean Hudson

This brief sketch describes the latter portion of the life of Capt. John Hill, while he lived in Greene County, Georgia from about 1786 until his death in late 1817. A more detailed, fully documented biography will be posted soon.

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At least two men named “*John Hill*” settled in the Province of Georgia by 1773, and the surviving records indicate that both of them lived in Wilkes County, Georgia immediately after the Revolutionary War. We identify these two men as:

1. John Hill of Wrightsborough, later Wilkes, Warren, Greene, & Jackson Counties.
2. John Hill of the Broad River Settlement, later Wilkes & Greene Counties

The John Hill of Wrightsborough served as a justice of the peace and legislator during the Revolutionary War, and he also served as an officer in the Georgia Militia. By mid-1781, this John Hill commanded of a company of Wilkes County Militia stationed at Fort Martin on the Ocmulgee River in Wilkes County, Georgia. Capt. Hill served as the fort's commander from mid-1781 until mid-1782, when he resigned. Capt. Hill was succeeded as commander of Fort Martin by Joseph Mims. Shortly after assuming command, Capt. Mims left the fort to get his horse, intending to head to see Col. Samuel Alexander stationed on the headwaters of the Ogeechee River in Wilkes County to secure ammunition for the fort. As soon as he got his horse, a group of Creek Indians

...rose up between the said Captain Mims and the Fort and ran him a little around the Fort and shot and killed him and scalped him, the said Captain Mims...

Capt. John Hill of Wrightsborough settled in Wilkes County after the Revolutionary War ended and obtained multiple land grants. His land lay in the portion of Wilkes that became Warren County, and he later moved to Jackson County.

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Biographical Sketch of Capt. John Hill

This sketch focuses upon the Capt. John Hill who lived in the Broad River Settlement in the “Ceded Lands,” the region that the Georgia General Assembly designated as Wilkes County in 1777. We have no reliable indication for precisely when John Hill's birth occurred. His eldest known child appears to have been born around 1763–1765, which places John Hill's birth no later than the mid-1740s. Given that he appears to have remained active until his death in late 1817, his birth probably occurred between 1740 and 1745, although possibly a few years earlier.

John Hill of the Broad River Settlement probably also served in the Georgia Militia, but precise details of his service in Georgia prior to 1780 are unknown. As conditions deteriorated in Georgia in 1779 and 1780 as the British tightened their noose around Charleston, South Carolina, it became unsafe for noncombatant Patriot families to remain in Georgia, leading to a mass exodus. John Hill took his family and left Georgia to escape the Tories and their Indian allies. Hill's stepson, Joseph Newton, later stated that they left Georgia and moved to Randolph County, North Carolina, and that *“this move was made in order to get rid of the Tories & Indians.”*

Randolph County, North Carolina was formed in 1778, and a John Hill paid taxes in Randolph County in 1779. It is not known if this man was the our John Hill, formerly of the Broad River Settlement in Wilkes County, Georgia. We do know that about September 1780, John Hill from Georgia began recruiting soldiers in Randolph County to serve in a militia company. It seems unlikely that he would have managed to raise a company there had he not performed previous military service while in Georgia.

Capt. John Hill's company rendezvoused at Salisbury, North Carolina, perhaps remaining there for some weeks or months. Following the Battle of Cowpens on 17 January 1781, several North Carolina militia units moved south to help disrupt the advance of the British Army under Lord Cornwallis. Capt. John Hill's company participated in the action at the Battles of Cowan's Ford and then the Patriot disaster at Torrence's Tavern on 1 February 1781. Capt. Hill's company regrouped and fought at the Battle of Guilford Courthouse on March 15th.

After that critical battle, Gen. Nathanael Greene ordered the North Carolina Militia discharged, and Capt. Hill discharged his men. However,

...notwithstanding we had received our discharges we were persuaded by our Capt. Hill to continue together for our own safety and that of the Country through which we had to travel, as the whole country was infested by the Tories, this was in the year 1781...

In 1842, Sarah Knight, the widow of Capt. John Knight, one of Hill's fellow officers, identified Capt. John Hill as the stepfather of Joseph Newton, a man who served in his company of Randolph County Militia. Newton stated that several months after the Battle of Guilford Courthouse,

...we returned to the State of South Carolina on our way to the State of Georgia, where this deponent left his Stepfather & Mother and proceeded on to the State of Georgia....

Joseph Newton later moved to Pope County, Illinois, and he provided critical details regarding Capt. John Hill's military service in his application for a pension on 4 June 1838. Another pension application corroborated Newton's statements and helped identify the relationship between Capt. John Hill and his stepson, Joseph Newton [1].

John Hill received a warrant for survey of an 862½-acre tract of land in Washington County on 6 June 1785, with the warrant signed by S. Elbert and Col. E. Clarke. These were Maj. Gen. Samuel Elbert of the Georgia Militia, also commissioned as a colonel in the Continental Army, and Lt. Col. Elijah Clarke of the Wilkes County Militia. The 862½ acres given on Hill's warrant is precisely that allowed by:

575 acres "Captain in Militia"
287½ acres Georgia citizen

The signatures of Gen. Samuel Elbert and Lt. Col. Elijah Clarke on the warrant prove military service for John Hill in the Wilkes County Militia during the Revolutionary War [2]. The warrant for survey was for land in northern Washington County, a region that became Greene County, Georgia in February 1786. He began paying taxes on the land in 1788 [3], but the official grant was not signed until 19 September 1791 [4].

Little documentation is available on John Hill's wife. Statements made in the pension applications referenced earlier prove that Joseph Newton's widowed mother, Mary, married John Hill. It is unclear if she were Capt. Hill's first or second wife, how long she lived, and if she were the mother of any of Hill's children. This makes it impossible to determine if Hill's children were half-siblings to Joseph Newton, or if all of Hill's children were born prior to his marriage to Mary.

Capt. John Hill lived on his 862½-acre tract of land along Richland Creek, a tributary of the Oconee River, in what is now Greene County, Georgia, from about 1787 until his death in late 1817. Richland Creek flowed north from the Oconee River, the hotly contested boundary between the Creek Nation and Georgia during this period. During the Oconee War of 1786–1796, the Creeks made numerous raids on white settlements, and raids on John Hill's plantation resulted in the theft of horses, cattle, and hogs between 1788 and 1792 [5]. It is unclear precisely when he settled along Richland Creek near the county seat at Greensborough, but if he arrived by 1787, he was in close

proximity to the settlement when the Creeks attacked in November of that year, burning the wooden courthouse and a few cabins.

John Hill prospered in the three decades between his 1785 receipt of land on Richland Creek and his death in 1817, and he left a large estate at his death. He owned no enslaved people in 1788, but by 1815, he owned ten slaves of taxable age [6]. In his will, he directed his executors to sell his land, but he carefully divided his enslaved people among his children.

Hill's wife (or wives) predeceased him, and so his heirs were his children and grandchildren. They had an extended legal battle with the executor of his will that lasted for several decades after Hill's death. Although he died in 1817, the Greene County Court did not finally discharge his executor until 1846.

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Children of Capt. John Hill of Greene County, Georgia

Capt. John Hill wrote his will on 11 August 1817, apparently making provisions for all of his children then alive and the heirs of those who had already died. Several of his children objected to the terms of the will, and later filed a lawsuit insinuating that Hill was not in his normal mindset at the time he signed his will. The litigation kept his estate from being finalized until 1846 [1].

Based on the children he named in his will, together with records of his handling the affairs of a few of his children who died before him, the known children of Capt. John Hill are listed below. No known evidence indicates whether Hill's children were born to one or multiple wives. In particular, it is not completely clear that he had any children by the widow, Mary Newton, who was his wife by 1780. It does appear that his younger daughters were children of Mary, based upon their approximate ages.

The known children of Capt. John Hill:

1. [William Hill](#) (1763/1765–23 Feb 1806) spent the early 1790s serving as a spy and scout for the Georgia Militia. In 1797, he was appointed as Assistant Creek Agent, and in 1806 as Choctaw Agent. For details of his life, see his biography linked to his name.
2. **Robert Hill** (1770/1780– aft. 1817) was apparently an older child of John Hill. He registered for the 1805 land lottery as a single man along with his brother [2]. Nothing further is known of him, and he presumably left Greene County, Georgia as a young man.
3. **Joseph Logan Hill** (c1776–aft. 1850) participated in activities against Creek depredations on his father's farm in the early 1790s during the Oconee War. In 1792, he accompanied a group of white men who tracked a party of Creek Indians who stole his father's livestock, following them across the Oconee River deep into Creek territory [3].

Joseph L. Hill moved to Baldwin County with his brother-in-law, William Blanks, about 1806 and lived there at least until the 1820s [4]. Despite being in his early forties, he enlisted as a private Capt. Samuel S. Steele's Company of Dragoons, Georgia Militia during the Creek War of 1813–1814. His company served in the Squadron of Cavalry commanded by Maj. Frederick Freeman. Joseph L. Hill enlisted on 21 August 1813 and served through 28 January 1814, a period of five months and seven days. He received payment of \$42.59 for his service. He brought his own horse to use in his service and received an additional payment of \$64.80 for use of his horse. He was discharged at Fort Hawkins on 28 January 1814 [5].

Joseph L. Hill moved from Baldwin County into Jasper County in the 1820s, and he lived in Jasper in 1830. His precise residence between 1830 and 1850 is uncertain. He may have lived

in Upson County, for in 1836, again despite his advanced age, he enlisted in the cavalry unit commanded by Capt. Cary W. Allen in the 1st Regiment Cavalry commanded by Col. Thomas Beall during the 1836 Creek War. He volunteered in Upson County on 16 May 1836 for three months, after which he was discharged at Columbus, Georgia in August 1836. Col. Beall certified that Hill served in the *"Upson Light Dragoons"* in 1836 and served during *"the Whole of the Creek War and whose Conduct met the entire approbation of this commanding officer."*

Joseph L. Hill continued his participation in the lawsuit against his father's executor in the 1840s, but it is unclear where he resided during this period. He may be the Joseph Hill who lived in Wilkinson County in 1850, although that man's age places his birth about 1782 in North Carolina. This birth year is too recent for our Joseph L. Hill, as surely a boy of only ten would not have been allowed to join a posse chasing a group of hostile Creek Indians in 1792.

Joseph L. Hill resided in Cobb County, Georgia on 17 January 1851, when he filed a bounty land application as a resident of that county [6]. He died sometime after that.

4. **Jane Hill** (1775/1785–c1816) married on 25 September 1799 in Greene County, Georgia to Capt. William Blanks (1755/1760–1823), son of Henry Blanks and Naomi Cox. She had only recently died when her father wrote his will in August 1817.
5. **Lilly Hill** (1780/1785 –1813) married about 1807 to John Askew (c1775/1785–1809), who died only two years after their marriage. Lilly's father helped her administer her husband's estate. She apparently became ill herself a few years later, for on 2 May 1812, she described herself as *"being weak in body but of sound and perfect mind"* when she wrote her will. She left furniture to her two young children, stipulating that the *"beds and furniture above named I leave in the hands of my Sister Elizabeth"* until her children came of age. She appointed her father as her executor, and her sister, Elizabeth, father, and brother-in-law, Thomas Riley, all witnessed her will. She died shortly after writing her will, with her sister and father presenting it to the Greene County Court in September 1812 [7].
6. **Mary Ann Hill** (1775/1788–1841/1859) either married a Mr. Hill as her first husband between about 1801 and 1803 or else she had a child born out of wedlock, as she was the mother of James P. Hill (c1802–aft. 1860), who married Lucy R. Baldwin on 10 January 1830 in Greene County. Mary Ann Hill married on 11 January 1818 in Greene County, Georgia to Dempsey Blanks (c1797–27 Sep 1869), the son of James Blanks (1755/1760–aft. 1820). Dempsey was a nephew to the husband of Mary Ann's sister, Jane. Mary Ann and Dempsey Blanks left Greene County, Georgia and moved to Alabama by about 1820. In 1830, they lived in Greene County, Alabama but moved into Lauderdale County, Mississippi by 1840.

7. **Cynthia Hill** (1780/1790–1844) married on 18 July 1807 in Greene County, Georgia to James R. Campbell.
8. **Sarah Hill** [Sally] (1785/1793–1825/1830) married on 10 January 1808 in Greene County, Georgia to Thomas Riley (c1785–21 Nov 1830), son of John Riley (c1755–c1835).
9. **Martha Hill** (1785/1800–c1844) married after 1817 to John S. Lane, although it is unclear where they married. Martha Hill Lane moved to Mississippi, probably with her sisters, Mary Ann and Cynthia. Martha's brother-in-law, Dempsey Blanks, served as the administrator of her estate in Perry County, Mississippi in 1844 [8].
10. **Elizabeth Hill** (1785/1805–aft. 1830) survived through 15 September 1830, when the Greene County Superior Court ruled in favor of Elizabeth and her siblings in their lawsuit against Robert Rea, the executor of their father's estate. Elizabeth was apparently still single in 1830. Since all of her siblings either died or departed Greene County by 1830, she probably left and lived with one of them.
11. **Ann Hill** (1790/1810–aft. 1817) was alive in 1817 but had apparently died by September 1830, for she was not mentioned in the lawsuit against her father's executor along with her siblings [9].

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1817 Will of Capt. John Hill

[Greene County GA Will Book F or 4 \(1817-1842\), pp. 34-36; LDS Film #5756648, Images #374-375](#)

[Greene County GA Original Wills, LDS Film #5764273, Images #195-205](#)

Two versions of John Hill's will survive – the original version containing his original signature and the one recorded in the county will books. The version below is a verbatim transcription from the original will that carries Hill's signature.

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Georgia
Greene County  In the name of God amen,

*I **John Hill** of the county and State aforesaid being far advanced in the decline of life but of sound mind and Memory, do hereby constitute this my last Will and Testament and hereby making null and void all other will or wills made by me.*

Item first – It is my Will that my body may be decently buried and all my Just debts faithfully discharged by my Executors hereafter named.

*Item 2nd I give to my daughter **Elizabeth Hill** a Negro girl named **Malinda** with her future increase.*

*Item 3rd I give to my daughter **Maryan Hill** a Negro girl named **Syllar** and her future increase.*

*Item 4th I give to my daughter **Ann Hill** a Negro girl named **Betty** with her future increase.*

*Item 5th I give to my daughter **Martha Hill**, Three Negroes Viz: **Jim**, **Frank** and her child **Mary** together with their future increase.*

*Item 6th I give to my daughter **Sally Hill** formerly, but now **Sally Riley** Wife of Thomas Riley a Negro girl named **Reah** and her future increase.*

*Item 7th I give to my daughter **Martha Hill** another Negro woman by name **Jinny** to be disposed of as she thinks proper.*

*Item 8th I give to my grand daughters Viz. **Mattilda Blanks**, **Martha Blanks** and **Seleta Blanks**, daughters of **William Blanks** and **Jean Blanks** his Wife, who has lately deceas^d, Two hundred Dollars to be divided between them share and share alike, to be paid over to them by my Executors hereafter Named out of the sales of land.*

*Item 9th I give to my daughter **Scynthia Campbell** wife of **James R. Campbell** Five Dollars. I having given and provided for them heretofore, and Whereas the aforesaid **Scynthia Campbell** wife of **James R. Campbell** having been Unfortunate, I give to my daughter **Martha Hill** a Negro woman named **Phillis** to aid and assist my daughter **Martha Hill** in Making a support comfortably for her the aforesaid **Scynthia Campbell**.*

Item 10th It is my Will that my daughters **Elizabeth, Maryann, Martha, and Ann**, have each of them their Beds and furniture belonging to them also their Bridles and Saddles trunks or chests which are now known in the family to be theirs or claimed by them, also a Spinning Machine to be equally divided between them.

Item 11th It is also my Will that my Son **Joseph Hill** have the sum of Five Hundred Dollars so soon as a collection can be made from the sale of my land.

Item 12th I give to my Son **Robert Hill** a Negro boy named **Peyton**.

Item 13th It is my Will that my granddaughter **Sena Askew** daughter of **John Askew** and **Lilly Askew** deceased have a negro Girl of Ten or Twelve Years Old out of my Estate so soon as the money can be collected and a purchase made on a fair price; provided the aforesaid **Sena Askew** should relinquish all claim to her Mothers claim on my Estate.

Item 13th It is also my Will that my little grandson **William Askew** have the sum of six Hundred Dollars out of my Estate to enable him to acquire his Education, but should my Executors discover his Talents insufficient in the acquirement my will is that the ballance [sic] of money be laid out to the best advantage for him.

Item 14th It is my Will that all my land which I am possessed of, and live on be sold to the best Advantage or a fair Price so soon as convenient, And that the sum of Three Thousand dollars arising from said sale be Appropriated for the use of purchasing again land, and building a comfortable house for my daughters who are now single or unmarried, Viz. **Elizabeth Maryann Martha, and Ann**; should any of my daughters aforesaid Marry my Will in that case that the Person so Marrying remove from said place immediately or as soon as the Nature of the case admit.

Item 15th It is my Will that the ballance [sic] of Money arising from the sale of my land be put out on lawful Interest by my Executors.

Item 16th And as to my Stock of all Kinds; farming tools Household and kitchen furniture, which has not otherwise been disposed of shall still remain for the use of **Elizabeth Maryann Martha and Ann**; but should they disagree in sentiment respecting said property my wish is that it be exposed to publick [sic] sale; And should a disagreement take place respecting the purchase of Land made out of the Three Thousand Dollars my Will is that said Land be sold and the Money arising from said Sale to be equally divided between my daughters Viz. **Elizabeth Maryann Martha and Ann**.

Item 17th Having reference to the 15th Item It is my Will that the ballance [sic] of Money Arising from the sale of my land be put out on lawfull [sic] Interest by my Executors for the term of seven years

and at the expiration thereof the principle and Interest shall be equally divided share and share alike amongst the Surviving Legatees.

*Item 18th And lastly I do hereby constitute and Appoint my trusty friends **Robert Rea** and **Elijah Robins** my Executors in this my last Will and Testament, hoping and trusting they may see it duly executed.*

August 11th 1817 – Given under my hand and seal in the presence of

E. Robins
Edw^d Smith
Saml. Ross

[signed] **John Hill**

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*Georgia Greene County Court of Ordinary
January Term 1818.*

*Personally appeared in open Court **Elijah Robins** one of the subscribing witnesses to the annexed will of **John Hill** late of said County dec^d who being duly sworn saith that he was a subscribing witness to the same and that he saw the said **John Hill** sign, seal & heard him acknowledge the same as his last will and testament and he believes him to be of perfect sound mind and memory at the time of his so doing and that **Edward Smith** & **Samuel Ross** were subscribing witnesses to the same together with himself.*

Sworn to in open court this 15th January 1818

Ebinezzer Torrence Clk

[signed] **E. Robins**

*Georgia
Greene County*

*Personally appeared before us **Samuel Ross** one of the subscribing Witnesses to the foregoing will who being duly sworn saith that he was a subscribing witness to the same and that he saw the Testator **John Hill** dec^d sign, seal and heard him acknowledge the same to be his last will and testament and that he believed the said **John Hill** dec^d to be of perfect sound mind and memory at the time of his so doing and that **Edward Smith** & **Elijah Robins** were together with himself and in his presence subscribing witnesses to the same.*

*Sworn to before us this
1st day of June 1818*

Perting (?) Grimes I.I.C.
(?) Porter I.I.C.
Clayborn Maddox I.I.C

[signed] **Saml. Ross**

Recorded 30th September 1819
Ebenezer Torrence Clk.

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Notes

Biographical Sketch of Capt. John Hill

1. Revolutionary War Pension Applications:
 - #R7635, Joseph Newton, North Carolina Militia, widow: Ann Newton, originally filed 4 June 1838 in Pope County, IL.
 - #R2421, William Crabtree, North Carolina Militia, filed 8 November 1842 in Kentucky. Crabtree served in the company of Capt. John Knight at the Battle of Guilford Courthouse. Knight's widow, Sarah Knight, filed statements on 9 September 1842 in Christian County, KY supporting the pension applications of Crabtree and Joseph Newton. She stated that *"she was also acquainted with Captain John Hill who was the stepfather of the said Newton, and Hill commanded a company of Militia during the Revolutionary War..."*
 - #R6030, Sarah Knight, widow of John Knight, filed 9 September 1842, Christian County Ky.
2. [Georgia Headright and Bounty Documents, 1783-1909, LDS Film #5139170, Images 284-285](#): Warrant to John Hill, 862½ acres in Washington County, 6 June 1785. Signed by "S. Elbert" and "E. Clark Col."
3. [1788 Greene County GA Tax Digest; LDS Film #7903320, Image #370](#): Capt. White's District, line #28: John Hill, 862½ acres Quality 2 land, one white poll, no slaves, value of property: £258 15s.
4. [Georgia Register of Grants Book VVV \(1791-1792\), p. 17](#): Georgia to John Hill, 860 acres in Washington County, bounded northeast by Peter Clymans, southeast by David Harrison, and *"on the other sides by Runland"* [Richland Creek].
5. Georgia Archives, References Services, RG 4-2-46, Indian Depredation Claims, Joseph L. Hill, John Hill.
6. Greene County GA Tax Digests:
 - [1788, LDS Film #7903320, Image #370](#): Capt. White's District, line #28: John Hill. His only property was his 862½ acres Quality 2 land. He owned no slaves.
 - [1815, LDS Film #8191031, Image #578](#): Capt. Samuel Hall's District #163, line #2: John Hill, 845 acres Quality two land on "R. Creek," granted to Hill; 250 acres Quality 3 land on "R. Creek," granted to "W. Hill;" one white poll, 10 slaves.

Children of Capt. John Hill of Greene County, Georgia

1. [Greene County GA Will Book F or 4 \(1817-1842\), pp. 34-36, LDS Film #5756648, Images #374-375; Greene County Original Wills, LDS Film #5764273, Images #195-205](#): Will of John Hill, signed 11 August 1817, filed with the Greene County Court at the January 1818 court session; opposition to will filed July 1818.
2. Graham, Paul K. *1805 Georgia Land Lottery: Persons Entitled to Draws*. Decatur, GA: The Genealogy Company, 2005, pp. 256-257. The following registered from Greene County, Georgia:
 - #813: John Hill Senr., two blank draws
 - #814: William Hill, *"son of Jno. Hill,"* one fortunate draw
 - #815: Robert Hill, one blank draw
3. Georgia Archives, References Services, RG 4-2-46, Indian Depredation Claims, Joseph L. Hill, John Hill.
4. 1807-1821 Baldwin County GA Tax Digests, LDS Film #7895985.
5. Compiled Military Service Record, Joseph L. Hill, private, Freeman's Squadron Cav., Georgia Militia, War of 1812.
6. National Archives and Records Service, Bounty Land Application, Joseph L. Hill, 1812, Private, Capt. Sam'l S. Steel, Maj. F. Freeman, 1st Ga. Cav., #3346, Bundle #183.
7. [Greene County GA Will Book 3 \(1806-1816\), p. 115](#) (Will of Lilly Askew, signed 2 May 1812, filed with Greene County Court in September 1812).
8. *"Southern Reformer"* (Jackson, MS), 1 February 1845, p. 4, column 5, *"Administrator's Notices."* This list of open estates included that of *"Martha Lane"* in Perry County, with Dempsey Blanks as the administrator, published on 13 November 1844.
9. [Greene County GA Superior Court Minutes, Vol. 7 \(1827-1830\), pp. 377-378; LDS Film #8627953, Image #216](#): Heirs of John Hill vs. Robert Rea, Executor of John Hill, 15 September 1830.

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