

Sgt. William Hill
(1763/1765–23 Feb 1806)
of
Wilkes & Greene Counties, Georgia,
Assistant Creek Agent under Col. Benjamin Hawkins & Choctaw Indian Agent,
Son of [Capt. John Hill](#)
by Timothy Dean Hudson

William Hill was the son of [Capt. John Hill](#) (1740/1745–c1817) [1], who commanded a company of North Carolina Militia who fought at the pivotal Battle of Guilford Courthouse on 15 March 1781. William himself served in the Georgia Militia and was designated as a “*refugee soldier*,” meaning he was among those Patriot soldiers who evacuated Georgia in 1779 or 1780. Little is known of William Hill’s early life, but he must have been born between about 1763 and 1765 in order to have seen military service in 1779–1781. His birth probably occurred in North Carolina, although the numerous John and William Hills have made precise identification of his family’s origins difficult to determine. William must have moved with his father to the “*Ceded Lands*,” later Wilkes County, Georgia, in the early 1770s.

William Hill served as a soldier in Lt. Col. Elijah Clark's Georgia Militia in about 1779–1782. On 2 February 1784, Lt. Col. Elijah Clarke said that

William Hill was an Inhabitant of this State prior to the Reduction thereof by the British Arms, and was a Refugee from the same, during which Time he cheerfully did his Duty as a Soldier and Friend to this and the United States.

Based on Col. Clark's statement, on March 25th, a Savannah official certified that William Hill was entitled to a warrant for survey of a 250-acre tract of land as a Bounty “*as a refugee*” soldier. On May 17th, the Secretary’s Office of Georgia’s Deputy Surveyor issued a warrant for survey for a 287½-acre tract of land in Washington County to William Hill. Georgia issued William Hill a grant for his 287½-acre tract on September 29th of that same year.

The location of William’s land helps to identify him as the son of John Hill of Greene County. The grant stated that William’s land adjoined that of Stouton Hayman, Jacob Bugg, and the Oconee River. Jacob Bugg either sold his land to Samuel Bugg or it passed to Samuel through inheritance, and in 1792, Samuel Bugg sold 200 acres on Richland Creek in Greene County. No other Buggs received either grants of or made deeds of land in Greene County. This places William Hill’s land in the triangular region of southwestern Greene County, formed from Washington in February 1786,

bounded westwardly by the Oconee River and eastwardly by Richland Creek. It either adjoined or lay near the land on Richland Creek surveyed for John Hill in 1785. While William Hill retained possession of his land, he was not a continual resident of Greene County, and his father paid the taxes on his land for him.

William Hill may have settled on his father's farm in Greene County in the latter 1780s, but he does not appear to have married and lived the traditional life of a young farmer. Instead, he was a career military man. He may have continued his military service after the Revolutionary War in the 1780s, but records do not exist for that period. In the early 1790s, he served as a military scout and spy from Greene County during the Oconee War. Between 1793 and 1796, he held the ranks of private, sergeant, and sergeant-major. One newspaper account described his activities in 1793 with the Georgia Militia as they pursued a group of Creeks who had attacked a white settlement. The militia tracked the Creeks across the Oconee River deep into Creek territory, but the overflowing Ocmulgee River blocked their path. William Hill volunteered to scout for a place for them to ford the river to continue their pursuit [2].

William Hill either did not marry or else his wife must have died soon after their marriage. In 1803, William Hill registered for Georgia's 1805 Land Lottery as a resident of Greene County. He registered as "*William Hill, son of Jno. Hill.*" Since he had only one entry in the lottery, we know that he was single at the time, either unmarried or a widower without children. William Hill had a fortunate entry, drawing a 202½-acre lot land in original Wilkinson County. State of Georgia officially granted him the tract on 18 December 1805 [3].

Beginning about 1797, William Hill began serving as the Assistant Agent for the Creek Agency, serving under U.S. Creek Agent Col. Benjamin Hawkins. Hill was stationed at Fort Wilkinson, near Milledgeville in Baldwin County. Hawkins' journals frequently mention William Hill, who witnessed or participated in most activities at the Creek Agency during this period, including the important negotiations leading to the 1802 Fort Wilkinson Treaty and the 1805 Treaty of Washington. For example, on 21 September 1804, William Hill wrote and published a letter written on behalf of Benjamin Hawkins. Hill signed the letter as "*Assistant Agent Creek Department*" [4]. In conjunction with his activities as Assistant Creek Agent, Hill made several trips to Washington, D.C. in the early 1800s.

In late 1805 or early 1806, the government appointed William Hill as Choctaw Indian Agent. In February 1806, while still at Fort Wilkinson, Georgia and before he assumed his new position, Hill became irrational and "*deranged*," injuring himself repeatedly in attempts to commit suicide. For

his own protection, officials imprisoned Hill in Fort Wilkinson's jail. Despite his incarceration, on 23 February 1806, William Hill managed to hang himself using a small piece of rawhide [5].

The Greene County Court appointed John Hill as his son's administrator, and over the next year, he handled the sale of his son's land holdings [6]. On 9 December 1809, John Hill, a resident of Greene County, sold the 202½-acre tract of land "*on the waters of Oconee River*" drawn "*by William Hill now deceased of Greene County son of John Hill,*" to his son, Joseph L. Hill, of Baldwin County for \$20 [7]. On 11 March 1811, Joseph L. Hill of Baldwin County sold the tract to Laurens County Commissioners for \$100, with his father witnessing the transaction [8].

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Notes

1. 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
2. “*The Augusta Chronicle, and Gazette of the State*” (Augusta, GA), 26 October 1793, p. 2, columns 1–2.
3. Georgia Secretary of State, Surveyor General, Land Grants; 1805 Land Lottery, Wilkinson County, District 1, p. 75 (“*William Hill of the County of Greene (son of John Hill)*,” Lot #232, 1st District, Wilkinson County, 18 December 1805).
4. “*The Augusta Chronicle, and Gazette of the State*,” 6 October 1804, p. 3, column 3.
5. “*Georgia Republican*” (Savannah, GA), 18 March 1806, p. 3, columns 2–3.
6. “*Columbian Centinel*” (Augusta, GA), July 25 (p. 3, column 4) and August 15 (p. 4, column 3), 1807.
7. Laurens County GA Deed Book C (1812–1814), p. 43 (John Hill “*of the County of Greene*” to Joseph Hill “*of the County of Baldwin*,” 9 December 1809).
8. Laurens County GA Deed Book D (1814–1815), pp. 174–175 (Joseph L. Hill “*of the County of Baldwin*” to John G. Underwood, William H. Mathes, Jethro B. Spivey, Benjamin Adams, and John Thomas “*Commissioners and their Successors in Office*,” 11 March 1811; witness: John Hill).

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