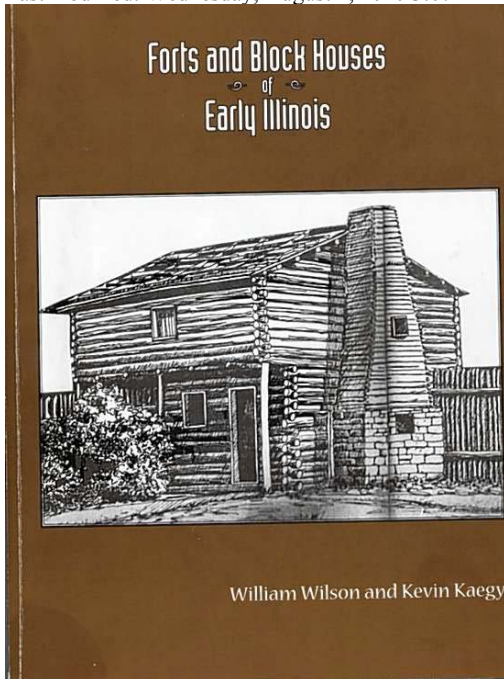


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SUBMITTED PHOTO Bill Wilson is co-author, along with Kevin Kaegy, of "Forts and Block Houses of Early Illinois." Wilson is chairing the Illinois War of 1812 Bicentennial Commission and is looking for the exact location of Fort Russell.

Where was Fort Russell? 1812 Bicentennial Commission trying to pinpoint location

By [Ken West](#)

Where was Fort Russell?

History buffs know the general whereabouts of the fort built northwest of Edwardsville during the War of 1812, but an effort is underway to nail down the fort's precise location. Bill Wilson, chairman of the Illinois War of 1812 Bicentennial Commission, invites the public to an Aug. 8 meeting to provide information about the fort.

"This is one of many programs we've designed across the state to celebrate the War of 1812," said Wilson, of Albers. "Fort Russell was important because it was the terminus for all fortresses in Illinois. Territorial Governor Ninian Edwards would hang his hat there."

But even with that hallowed history, after nearly 200 years, the exact location of the fort has been lost.

"We're asking people to bring their research, their maps, their knowledge so we can come to a consensus on where Fort Russell stood," Wilson said.

A historical marker will be placed to mark the site as part of the bicentennial celebration of the War of 1812, which will run five years. The Illinois Territory Rangers used the fort. Many such forts and blockhouses were built across Illinois to defend against marauding tribes allied with the British.

"There were no actual battles at Fort Russell," Wilson said. "But it was the center of military activity for the territory."

And it was vast.

"Madison and Bond counties were one county then, called Madison," Wilson said.

Jim and Lola DeGroff, of Troy, are helping Wilson in the bicentennial celebration. Jim DeGroff is vice chairman of the group and Lola DeGroff is the webmaster of the group's website: illinoiswarof1812bicentennial.org.

"We will have different presentations, some of them rotating, at area libraries," Jim DeGroff said.

One such exhibit began Sunday at the Granite City library. Four more exhibits are planned for Collinsville later this year.

"We believe it's important to know our heritage to know where we are and where we are going in life," Wilson said. "It's our job to interest parents and children and remind them how things were, how different things were and how much we take things for granted."

Contact reporter [Ken West](#) at 618-344-0264, ext. 101

If you go

What: Illinois War of 1812 Bicentennial Commission meeting

Where: Edwardsville Public Library, community meeting room

When: 2 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 8

More info: 618-248-5885