



Ruins of Noble Jones's Fortified House, 1934.

Photograph by Branan Sanders, FSA/OWI collection, Library of Congress.

When Noble Jones and his family settled on the Isle of Hope in 1736, they needed a house that would not only provide shelter, but also one that would also serve as a deterrent to potential Spanish soldiers intent on approaching Savannah from its watery backyard. The Joneses built their home using the abundant natural materials of the Georgia coast, on a site that overlooked a strategic stretch of the Skidaway River. They combined sand, water, oyster shells, and lime into a rough cement known as tabby, and they poured this material into wooden forms to harden. The resulting structure was both house and fort, with living quarters, an enclosed yard, and openings for firing through the walls. Rude wattle and daub huts surrounded the house, where they housed colonial marines and later slaves.

The tabby house served as the main living quarters on Wormsloe for three generations of the Jones family. A portion of the fort was demolished in the 1820s, and the tabby rubble was used in the construction of a new frame plantation house north of the original settlement site. During the 1880s, the De Renne family stabilized the remains of the fort to preserve them in their contemporary state. In the 1960s, archeological excavations led by William Kelso revealed the original plan of the fortified house, and recovered a number of colonial artifacts. Many of the objects from Noble Jones's day can be seen in the Wormsloe State Historic Site museum.