

Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements

Pension Application of John Williams R11588

Transcribed and annotated by Will Graves

State of North Carolina, Rutherford County

I John Williams a resident of said County aged seventy nine May next Born in Virginia Lunenburg County May 1752 Makes on oath the following declaration in order to obtain the Benefit of the Act of Congress passed the 7th June 1832.

I entered under Col. Archibald Little¹ one of the State Troops of North Carolina at Hillsborough in said State for eighteen months and was marched under his Brother William Little² to Wilmington in said State & was there stationed the whole of the time of my enlistment except such times as we were marched up the Cape Fear River to a place called the half way swamp³ to meet the Tories who were embodied at that place. I was marched up there twice in the Course of my servitude. I was in no battle & was honorably discharged by my captain Wm Little. I returned home. I was then drafted as a Militia Man from Caswell County North Carolina & Marched under Captain George Samuel for the relief of Charleston.⁴ When we got on as far as Orangeburg I obtained a furlough for three weeks & before I returned Charleston was taken. I was discharged by my Captain & returned home. The year of Gates Defeat⁵ I went a 3 months tour as a substitute for a drafted Militia man by the name of Benjamin Richard and marched under Captain William Harden from Caswell & joined Gates army near Camden. Whilst I was stationed there General Sumpter made a requisition for four hundred men to guard his prisoners & plunder consisting of two Brass Cannons & eighty waggons which he had taken from the British on the South side of Wateree near Camden.⁶ I was one of this detachment & were guarding the prisoners & heard the cannon during Gates Defeat. We pushed on to a point a little above the Mouth of Fishing Creek on the south side of Wateree where we halted about one o'clock the 16th day of August with our prisoners. I & my comrade John Dobbins halted to get some peaches when four British Cavalry passed us & directly Tarleton's⁷ troops followed on to attack Sumpter's Guard & cut them all to pieces whilst they were killing beeves & preparing to eat.⁸ Their arms [were] all out of their hands except those guarding the prisoners. I & my comrade dodged out of the way & crossed the Wateree & came up into Mecklenburg County, North Carolina near Charlotte & kept on home. I was called out in draft 3 weeks & was stationed 10 miles from Charlotte & was discharged by Gen. Davidson⁹ who was killed at the Catawba by Cornwallis men. Col. Williams¹⁰ came in to Caswell and I again enlisted for John Holliway[sic, Holloway] & marched & before we reached King's Mountain Ferguson was defeated & we were permitted to go home.¹¹ I volunteered to go against the Cherokees & marched from Caswell to Hillsborough & then through Salisbury & on up the Catawba & at or near a place called Greenlee's ford we met Genl Thomas Parsons who turned us back. General Rutherford¹² had men enough. I was about six weeks out this time. Upwards of thirty years ago I gave my papers to one William Twitty who said that he understood we were to be paid for our services & he never returned them nor do I know where they are.

Interrogatory the 1st is answered

2nd Interrogatory: Have you any record of your age

Ans. I have not. My oldest Brother raised me & told me my age. My father decd when I

was 3 years old.

Interrogatory 3. Where were you living when called into service Where have you lived since the revolution & where do now live

Ans I was living in Caswell County North Carolina when called into service and lived there until about forty two years ago. I removed to this County & have lived here until now where I am still living.

4th Inter How were you called into service

Ans. I was at Hillsborough in Orange County at a General Muster Col. Little was there as a recruiting officer & resided in that place and enlisted me as before stated. I have already stated that served two tours of duty as a substitute of three months each & six weeks as a volunteer to go against the Cherokees.

Interrogatory 5th I have answered as far as I can Recollect. I can say further I knew Genl DeKalb,¹³ who fell in Gates Defeat. I knew Gates. I saw General Marion¹⁴ & DeKalb part when he left the army a few days before Gates Defeat to go on some expedition. Gates Defeat was on Wednesday and we were cut up on Friday at Fishing Creek by Tarleton as already stated.

S/ John Williams [Seal]

I do further declare on oath that I am not on any pension roll whatever & do for the purpose of obtaining the above pension release & give up all claims to any other pension whatsoever.

S/John Williams [Seal]

¹ The military records of Col. Archibald Lytle indicate that he served in the Revolutionary War are as follows: (NC) Captain, 6 Apr 1776; Lieutenant Colonel, 6th NC, 26 Jan 1777; wounded at Stono Ferry, 20 Jun 1779; taken prisoner at Charleston, 12 May 1780; exchanged, 9 Feb 1782, Colonel, 30 Sept 1782; served to the close of the War. Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register of Officers of the Continental Army During the War of the Revolution*, The Rare Book Shop Publishing Company, 1914. He died in 1794 without issue.

² Captain William Lytle (1755-1829) was a captain commanding one of the companies in the regiment commanded by his brother, Lt. Col. Archibald Lytle. After the war, he moved to the area that became Murfreesboro, Tennessee. He is credited with founding that city.

<http://www.murfreesborotn.gov/visiting/history.htm>

³ This is not a reference to the Halfway Swamp at which forces under Francis Marion fought a skirmish on December 13, 1780. See, e.g., Patrick O'Kelley, *Nothing but Blood and Slaughter: The Revolutionary War in the Carolinas, Volume Two: 1780*, (N. p.: Blue House Tavern Press, Booklocker.com, Inc. 2004) (hereinafter cited as O'Kelley, *Slaughter 2*) 384-387. If anyone has information about a location in North Carolina known as Half Way Swamp, please share that information with SCAR.

⁴ Charleston was besieged by the British under the command of Henry Clinton in the winter and spring of 1780. See, Carl P. Borick, *A Gallant Defense: The Siege of Charleston, 1780*, (Columbia, SC, The University of South Carolina Press, 2003.

⁵ This is a reference to the Battle of Camden fought on August 16, 1780. See, e.g., Mark M. Boatner, III, *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*, (Mechanicsburg, Penn.: Stackpole Books, 1994) (hereinafter cited as Boatner, *Encyclopedia*) 165-170. Horatio Gates (1728/9-1806) was born in England and served as an officer in the British Army. He was with Braddock at his defeat in the French and Indian War. He became a friend of George Washington and settled in Virginia. Upon the outbreak of the Revolution, he was commissioned as a Brigadier General in the Continental Line. He was credited with the defeat of Burgoyne at the Battle of Saratoga while commanding the Northern Department of the Continental Army. He was spent to command the Southern Department in the summer of 1780. Boatner, *Encyclopedia*, 412-415.

⁶ Sumter took some prisoners and supplies when he attacked loyalist forces in the Battle of Hanging Rock on August 6, 1780. Prior to the Battle of Camden, Sumter met with Gates and persuaded him to reinforce

Sumter with 100 Maryland Continentals, two cannon, and 300 North Carolina militiamen to protect Gates' right flank at the Catawba/Wateree River. The two brass cannons that Williams claims Sumter captured were in fact probably the field pieces provided to Sumter by Gates.

⁷ Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton (1754-1833) was a British cavalry officer much vilified for his allegedly excessively brutal tactics in fighting the Whigs. Anthony J. Scotti, Jr., *Brutal Virtue: The Myth and Reality of Banastre Tarleton*, Heritage Books, Inc., Bowie, Maryland, 2002. Tarleton left his own record of his activities in America during the Revolution and that record is still available in print. Banastre Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Provinces of North America*, Ayer Company Publishers, Inc, North Stratford, New Hampshire, Reprint Edition, 1999.

⁸ See, Michael C. Scoggins, "The Battle of Fishing Creek," *Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution*, Vol. 2, No. 8 (August, 2005), 20-23, for an excellent overview of the Battle of Fishing Creek. The battle of Fishing Creek was fought on August 18, 1780, and resulted in the defeat of Sumter and his forces. The battle is also referred to as Sumter's Defeat. O'Kelley, *Slaughter 2*, 177-286.

⁹ William Lee Davidson, c 1746-1781, was a North Carolina militia general. He was killed at the Battle of Cowen's Ford in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina on February 1, 1781, while opposing the re-entry of Cornwallis into North Carolina. Davidson College and Davidson County, both in North Carolina, were named in his honor. Boatner, *Encyclopedia*, 317-318.

¹⁰ After the success of the Whig militia forces at Musgrove's Mill on August 19, 1780, one of the commanders there, James Williams, took the prisoners captured at Musgrove's Mill to Hillsborough, North Carolina. The North Carolina Board of War gave Williams \$25,000 to raise mounted troops in North Carolina to fight in South Carolina. Williams is known to have recruited men in Stokes, Granville and Caswell Counties, North Carolina. The reference here is clearly to Col. James Williams. William T. Graves, *James Williams: An American Patriot in the Carolina Backcountry*, Writers Club Press, San Jose, 2002. What relation, if any, existed between Col. James Williams and John Williams, the pension applicant, is unknown.

¹¹ From the fact that John Williams did not get to King's Mountain in time to participate in the battle indicates that he must have been among the men not selected to make the rapid march from Cowpens to King's Mountain. From various accounts, it is known that approximately 1,500 to 2,000 Whig militiamen were gathered at Cowpens on October 6, 1780 and that, from this number, about 900 well mounted and armed men were selected to make a forced march to attack Ferguson's forces. Lyman C. Draper, *King's Mountain and its Heroes: History of the Battle of King's Mountain October 7th, 1780, and the Events Which Led to It* (1881; reprint, Johnson City, Tenn., The Overmountain Press, 1996).

¹² Griffith Rutherford (1731-c.1800) was commissioned as a brigadier general of the North Carolina state troops on June 26, 1776. He participated not only in the 1776 Cherokee Expedition but also in the battles at Ramseur's Mill and Camden. Wounded and captured at the latter engagement, he was held as a prisoner in Charleston and St. Augustine until November 1781 when he was exchanged and returned to the field to command the North Carolina forces at Wilmington. Mark M. Boatner III, *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*, Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, 1994), (hereinafter cited as Boatner, *Encyclopedia*) 953.

¹³ Baron Johan DeKalb (1721-1780) was a German-born soldier who was commissioned as a Major General in the Continental Army in 1777. He was in command of the Maryland and Delaware Continentals at the Battle of Camden. Severely wounded in that battle, he died three days after the battle while a prisoner of war.

¹⁴ Francis Marion (c 1732-1795) held the rank of captain of the Second Regiment of South Carolina State Troops in June 1775. This unit was taken into the Continental Line. Marion was promoted to major in November 1775; to lieutenant colonel in September 1776; and to colonel in September 1780. In addition, in late 1780, Governor Rutledge promoted him to the rank of Brigadier General in the South Carolina militia. He led his men into numerous skirmishes and engagements with the British after the fall of Charleston and earned the nickname of "Swamp Fox." Robert D. Bass, *Swamp Fox: The Life and Campaigns of General Francis Marion* (Sandlapper Publishing Co., Inc., Orangeburg, South Carolina, 1974)