

Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements

Pension Application of William Mitchell S4221

Transcribed and annotated by Will Graves

Declaration in order to obtain the benefits of the act of Congress passed June 7th 1832

State of Tennessee

Rutherford County

Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions for said County open held for the County aforesaid at the Courthouse in Murfreesborough. Personally appeared William Mitchell a resident citizen of said county and State aged sixty eight years in open court before Varner D. Cowen, Samuel Jones & Henry Trott Justices of the said Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions the same being a Court of Record now sitting who being first duly sworn according to law, doth on his oath make the following declaration in order to obtain the benefits of the act of Congress passed June the 7th 1832. That he entered the service of the United States under the following named officers and served as herein stated—That he entered the service about the first of July 1780 at the age of sixteen years as a volunteer militia man at Hillsboro, North Carolina under the Command of Capt. John Graves,¹ Lieut. ___ Lea² and Ensign John McMullen³ and in a Regiment commanded by Col. Collier⁴ and attached to General Butler's Brigade, then called a division. General Butler⁵ was the highest in command when he rendezvoused at Hillsboro.⁶ They thence marched with the Division aforesaid to Lynches Creek in South Carolina, Genl. Gates⁷ head quarters passing Haw River at Butler's ford—the Yadkin [River] at Moore's ferry—thence down the Yadkin to the mouth of Rocky River and encamped at Galson's, a Tory, several days in consequence of a great flood in the river. We crossed Rocky River within a few hundred yards of its confluence with the Yadkin and then we passed by no remarkable places until we joined the main army at Gates' head quarters nor did we pass any town of note [from] the time we left Hillsboro until we arrived at head quarters at Lynches Creek South Carolina. At the Head quarters aforesaid he became acquainted with Genl. Gates the commander in chief, Generals DeKalb,⁸ Smallwood⁹ & Gist¹⁰ of the Regular or Continental Army. He also became acquainted with Col. Porterfield¹¹ of the Regular army who fell at Gates' defeat and Col. Armand who commanded the horse.

In a day or two after he joined the main army the whole army moved on towards Rugeley's Mills at which place the army lay several days and at dark on the 15th day of August 1780 struck our tents and took up our line of march for Camden district 13 miles where the main British army lay and when the advance of our army had marched about half way they met the British army in the dead of night and a severe and sore conflict ensued and being overpowered in numbers were compelled to retreat back to the main army where we lay upon our arms until day light. The British army had done the same, and about sun rise on the 16th day of August 1780 the two armies met in strife of arms and the issue is but too well known to the history of our country. Gates was defeated the army broken up, routed and dispersed over the country and the militia with heavy hearts and cast down spirits made their way to their respective homes as fast as they could. This declarant stood at home about 8 or 10 days when Col. Williams¹² of South Carolina who had been drove from home by the Tories raised a Regiment in Caswell County North

Carolina of the North Carolinians and the refugees from Georgia and South Carolina then this declarant and his brother David¹³ joined said Regiment (which was of mounted gun men) in Capt. John McMullen's company of which said David Mitchell was Lieut. and Robert Culbertson¹⁴ ensign. This regiment was raised to go on an expedition against the Tories in South Carolina in Col. Williams' immediate neighborhood—On our march we crossed the Yadkin [River] near Salisbury and passed through Salisbury to Shelly's ford on the Catawba River then up through the opposite part of the State of North Carolina (an entire long region almost) and we passed along a small distance from the fort of the Blue Ridge towards South Carolina and while on that march we heard that Major Ferguson¹⁵ had embodied about two thousand Tories. We also heard that Cols Campbell¹⁶ & Shelby¹⁷ with their regiments were coming across the mountain to join Col. Cleveland¹⁸ to attack Ferguson. Col. Williams' Regiment also marched forward to unite with them and in Oct. 1780 we all united near Gilbertown an abusive village near the South Carolina line. We then made a forced march to overtake Ferguson at a place called the Fish dam ford where we understood he was encamped but when we arrived there we learned he had moved his camp for Kings Mountain. We then doubled our diligence because we learned he was aiming to join the main army at Charlotte. We arrived at the foot of Kings Mountain in sight of the enemy about two hours [?] sun in the morning¹⁹ and immediately ascended the mountain and the battle commenced & in which our Col. James Williams fell. The result of the battle is known to the country by history and need not be here stated. The next day we took up our retreat in consequence of having learned that Tarleton was on his way to attack us. We made a powerful march in consequence of which we lost many of the prisoners. We then turned our course along the foot of the range of the Blue Ridge and recrossed the Yadkin [River] at the Shallow ford and took our prisoners to the Moravian Town where they were guarded for a long time & in consequence of Col. Campbell's, Shelby's & Sevier's²⁰ Regiments had left us we were detained several weeks after the expiration of this tour designed for the expedition at first. This declarant will here state that by law of North Carolina a service of six weeks in the horse when the soldier would furnish his own horse should entitle him to a credit for three months service in the foot and that this declarant served on that expedition ten or eleven weeks—This declarant will here state that two or three days after Ferguson's defeat a general Court martial was held of the principal officers of which Col. Campbell was the President for the trial of the most wicked Tories such as had murdered and burned down houses; and ten of them were convicted and nine executed, one of them made his escape by getting his raw hide thongs off of his arms and legs and crawling between the feet of the great crowd that came to see them executed—he then rose up and ran and the guard durst not fire upon him for fear of killing some of their own people; none of the names of those executed are now recollected but that of Col. Mills²¹ who had been a very bad man. At the Moravian town the troops were kept as a guard over the Tory prisoners until the most malignant were sent to jail and the least guilty paroled. We were then discharged and went home.

Some short time after this declarant [had been at] home, some of the officers attached to the quarter Masters' department requested him to aid them in the duties of their station which he acceded to and did and then until sometime in January 1781 [when] he volunteered again as a militiaman in Capt. John McMullen's Company, David Mitchell Lieut. and afterwards joined the main army. McMullen went home and Capt.

Shadrack Hargis²² was placed at the head of the company. The head quarters of the army under Genl. Greene²³ was at or near Haw River. We then marched up the river to [?— looks like "roablstone"] bridge. We crossed there and marched up into the neighborhood of Guilford Courthouse: Cornwallis²⁴ army then lay at New Garden church about 8 or 9 miles from Guilford Courthouse. Genl. Greene had been maneuvering for some time before, he now felt himself strong enough for an engagement and he took his station on a piece of rising ground [?] mile nearly west of the courthouse & at the Eastward of an Old Quaker's farm whose name I have been informed was Binboon [could be Durbow, Benbow, Benboor] and the battle commenced about ten o'clock on the 15th day of March 1781—where was fought what might have been called a draw battle, for Cornwallis made a precipitant retreat towards Wilmington and Genl. Greene withdrew to the Iron works on Haw River or a branch thereof. At which place this declarant was discharged a few days after the battle and he and his brother Lieut. David Mitchell returned home to Caswell County North Carolina at which place he resided for a considerable time before and during the war and for several years thereafter. After this declarant returned home he was again engaged by the quarter Masters' Department on various duties until another requisition was made to pursue the Scald Headed Fanning²⁵ who had captured Hillsboro with his Tories and taken and destroyed most of the valuable papers and public documents and had taken all the state officers prisoner, Governor, Assembly &c.

This declarant entered this expedition in Capt. McMullen's company of mounted gunmen, Col. William Moore's²⁶ regiment and Genl. Butler's Division. A day or two before we got up with Butler a sharp conflict took place between our troops under the Command of Col. Mebane²⁷ (who was a regular officer who on being ordered from one place to another had called to see his father who lived in Orange [County] and he took the command at the request of the troops, the principal field officers Taylor and Butler being absent upon some other duty however they were [?]) and the Tories under Fanning at Lindley's Mill²⁸ where some thirty or forty of the Tories were killed and several of our little force were also killed and wounded. The Tories retreated before our main army could come up with them. Butler got up within a mile of them one night before he knew it, when he learned his new position, he became desperately alarmed (for he was a poor officer) and broke up his camp and marched off at right angles from Fanning's route and continued his forced march all night and until late the next day when we crossed the Cape Fear River at Everett's ford where we encamped several days. Butler then turned our course immediately down the Cape Fear River for Wilmington to Brown's Ferry on Cape Fear River where we crossed over and there encamped two or three days. We received reinforcement of Col. William Moore's Regiment, though our company was known and understood as being part of Moore's Regiment yet it did not join him until we crossed the river at Brown's ferry. Here Butler broke up his camp believing himself strong enough to cope with Fanning and set out on a forced march to overtake him although Fanning had received a reinforcement of about 300 British soldiers under the command of Major Craig²⁹ we overtook him at [?, looks like "Swingstous"] swamp. This declarant's brother Lieut. David Mitchell was officer of the day. The action was brought on under very auspicious circumstances. Butler took another panic supposing Fanning to have artillery and our Soldiers retreat; they have cannon and we cannot stand them and he, Taylor & Moore ran off with all who pursue their flight and but for the [?] and disinterested services of Col. Robert Mebane of whom this declarant already spoke the whole army

would have been probably cut to pieces at the swamp. But he rallied one hundred & fifty or two hundred of the troops and put them in order of battle and resisted the pursuit of Fanning who finding that a hard [?] conflict had again ensued supposed that Butler's whole force had fallen back to that point intentionally and thus he was induced to fall back in his turn and night closed the scene.³⁰ We then traveled 18 miles before we overtook our field officers; who were encamped in the plantation of Capt. Lucas where the depleted army encamped several days. We then took up the line of march for home and when we got in the neighborhood of Fayetteville, then called Cross Creek, this declarant attached himself to Col. Taylor's Regiment from Granville County who was then encamped near Fayetteville and in a short time the Col. heard that there was a small detachment of Tories encamped on Little River some 25 or 30 miles off Col. Taylor determined they should be broke up there and Capt. Kell³¹ (who was then a private) was chosen to conduct the expedition and volunteers were beat up for and some thirty, forty or fifty volunteered among whom was this declarant; a forced march was made the Tories were found and just as we were in the act of surrounding them they discovered us and broke for a swamp. We fired on them as they ran and took one of them that we executed and took the most of their arms and all their horses most of which had been stolen before from the Whigs and a good deal of plunder. We then returned to camp where this declarant received sometime [?]. He was then permitted to go home; and in one day after his arrival at home he substituted in the place of William Waite who was then a quarter master in Col. Moore's Regiment where he remained until the army was discharged finally and the war closed. That he was discharged at Hillsborough in Granville County North Carolina by Capt. Vincent Harrison about the first of November 1781.

This declarant hereby relinquishes every claim whatever to a pension or annuity except the present and declares that his name is not on the pension roll of the agency of any State.

[Declarant answers interrogatories giving the same information set forth above except (1) noting that he was born in Orange County NC in May 1765; (2) that he lived in Caswell County NC until 1815 when he moved to Rutherford County, Tenn.]

Sworn to & Subscribed this 23rd of August, 1832.

S/ Wm Mitchell

¹ John Graves (1749-1829) was a captain in the militia from Caswell County, North Carolina. He was in command of one of the militia companies from that state at the Battle of Camden. He was wounded at the Battle of Guilford County Courthouse in 1781. Katharine Kerr Kendall, "John Herndon Graves," *The Heritage of Caswell County North Carolina 1985* (Winston-Salem, N.C.: Hunter Publishing Co. for the Caswell County Historical Association, 1985) 240.

² This is probably Gabriel Lea, a resident of Caswell County, North Carolina, and an officer in the militia from that county. The blank for the first name of the officer appears in the original.

³ John McMullen was a militia officer who resided in Caswell County, North Carolina, during the American Revolution. He was active in a number of engagements fought in North and South Carolina. (See Pension Applications of Elisha Evans: S6830; Robert Culbertson: S21722). See, also, Bobby Gilmer Moss, *The Patriots at King's Mountain* (Blacksburg, S.C.: Scotia-Hibernia Press, 1990) (hereinafter cited as Moss) 181.

⁴ Probably John Collier who is listed in Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register of Officers of the Continental Army During the War of the Revolution April, 1775, to December, 1783* (Reprinted Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., Baltimore, 1967) (hereinafter cited as Heitman) 165.

⁵ Brigadier General John Butler (c1728-1786) was a legislator and militia officer throughout the Revolutionary War. As a commander of North Carolina militia forces, he participated in the siege of

Savannah, the Battle of Stono under Lincoln, the Battle of Camden, the Battle of Guilford County Courthouse, and the Battle of Lindley's Mill. Having joined his forces with those of Griffith Rutherford, he participated in containing the British at Wilmington until they evacuated that important port city. William S. Powell, ed., *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, 6 vols. (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1979-1996) 1: 290.

⁶ Hillsboro (also spelled Hillsborough) served as North Carolina's capitol throughout the American Revolution.

⁷ 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 sent to command the Southern Department in the summer of 1780 and suffered a humiliating defeat at the Battle of Camden in August of that year. On December 2, 1780 in Charlotte, he was replaced by Nathanael Greene as commander of the Southern Department. Boatner, *Encyclopedia*, 412-415. Heitman, 244.

⁸ 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. Heitman, 192; Boatner, *Encyclopedia*, 570-571.

⁹ William Smallwood (1732-1792) was a Continental Army general appointed by George Washington to succeed Baron Johan DeKalb, who died from wounds suffered in the Battle of Camden, as second in command of the Southern Department of the Continental Army. In addition to his duties in the Continental Line, North Carolina gave Smallwood command of its militia. When Nathanael Greene assumed command of the Continental Army in the South, he appointed Frederick von Steuben as his second-in-command. Smallwood objected to serving as a subordinate under von Steuben, so Greene reassigned Smallwood to Smallwood's home state of Maryland. Boatner, *Encyclopedia*, 1013.

¹⁰ Mordecai Gist (1743-1792) was a Continental Army general of the Maryland line. Boatner, *Encyclopedia*, 435-436.

¹¹ Charles Porterfield (1750-1780) was a Lt. Colonel in the Virginia Line. Wounded at the Battle of Camden, he died from those wounds after having received medical care from the British. Michael Cecere, *An Officer of Very Extraordinary Merit: Charles Porterfield and the American War for Independence* (N. P.: Heritage Books, 2004).

¹² James Williams (1740-1780) was a South Carolina militia commander. He served as a captain under Maj. Andrew Williamson in the First Battle of Ninety Six. He remained very active throughout the war and rose through the ranks to become the colonel in command of the Little River Regiment of Whig militia in 1778 or 1779. After the fall of Charleston, he challenged Sumter for command of the South Carolina backcountry militia but died from wounds sustained at King's Mountain. His death prevented a showdown between Williams and Sumter to succeed Williamson as commander of the backcountry militia. After the Whigs' victory over the Tories at Musgrove's Mill on August 18, 1780 in which Williams was one of the three commanders there, he was granted \$25,000 by the North Carolina Board of War and \$5,000 by South Carolina Governor, John Rutledge, to raise troops to continue the guerilla war against the British occupation of South Carolina. The mandate given to Williams by the NC Board of War expressly authorized him to raise troops in Caswell County and this pension application gives clear indication of Williams' successful efforts to raise such troops. William T. Graves, *James Williams: An American Patriot in the Carolina Backcountry*, Writers Club Press, San Jose, 2002.

¹³ David Mitchell was the brother of the declarant. David served as an officer in the North Carolina militia formed in Caswell County, North Carolina. See Pension Application W7460.

¹⁴ Robert Culbertson was a militia officer residing Caswell County, North Carolina at the time of the American Revolution. Pension Application: 21722.

¹⁵ Patrick Ferguson (1744-1780) was a Major in the 71st Regiment. As such, he served under Cornwallis and was charged with recruiting and training Tory militia in the western portions of North and South Carolina. At the time of the Musgrove's Mill engagement, he was believed to be somewhere close by the mill, but was in fact at Winnsboro, South Carolina. He was the commanding officer of the Tory militia units defeated at the Battle of King's Mountain on October 7, 1780. As a commissioned officer of the British Army, he was the only member of the regular army present at the battle. All of the other participants

were American Whigs or Tories militia members. M. M. Gilchrist, *Patrick Ferguson: 'A Man of Some Genius'* (NMS Publishing, Edinburgh, 2003)

¹⁶ William Campbell (1745-1781) was a Virginia backcountry militia leader. He was appointed to lead the Whig forces at King's Mountain. He was also present at the Battle of Guilford County Court House and at Yorktown, where he fell ill with "camp fever" and died August 22, 1781. Boatner, *Encyclopedia*, 172-173.

¹⁷ Isaac Shelby (1750-1826) Patriot militia officer. He was the first Governor of the State of Kentucky, being elected in 1792. Mark M. Boatner, III, *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*, Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg, PA., 1994, 1001. S. Roger Keller, *Isaac Shelby: A Driving Force in America's Struggle for Independence* (Burd Street Press, Shippenburg, Pennsylvania, 2000).

¹⁸ Benjamin Cleveland (1738-1806) was a North Carolina militia officer. Mark M. Boatner, III, *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*, Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg, PA, 1994, 234-5. Stephen O. Addison, *Profile of a Patriot: Colonel Benjamin Cleveland: Hero of Kings Mountain*, (self published, 1993).

¹⁹ The declarant's statement that the battle commenced in the morning is at variance with the vast majority of the contemporary accounts which indicate that the battle started around 3 o'clock in the afternoon of October 7, 1780.

²⁰ Colonel John Sevier (1745-1815) Patriot militia officer. He was the first Governor of the State of Tennessee. Boatner, *Encyclopedia*, 997. Francis Marion Turner, *Life of General John Sevier* (Johnson City, Tennessee, The Overmountain Press, 1997 reprint of the 1910 edition).

²¹ Lyman Draper lists the men hanged after being captured at King's Mountain as Col. Ambrose Mills, Capt. James Chitwood, Capt. Wilson, Capt. Walter Gilkey, Capt. Grimes, Lt. Lafferty, John McFall, John Bibby and Augustine Hobbs. 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) 340. A brief biographical sketch of Col. Miles is included on pages 481-482 of Draper's book.

²² Shadrack Hargis was a militia officer who resided in Caswell County during the American Revolution. Pension Application of Bennett Williams: S7956

²³ Nathanael Greene (1742-1786) was the commanding officer of the Southern Department of the Continental Army from December 2, 1780 when he assumed command from Gen. Horatio Gates in Charlotte, North Carolina, until the end of the War. Boatner, *Encyclopedia*, 453.

²⁴ Charles, second Earl and first Marquis, Cornwallis (1738-1805) was commander of the southern department of the British Army (under the overall command of Sir Henry Clinton) from June 1780 until his surrender at Yorktown in October 1781. Franklin B Wickwire; Mary Wickwire, *Cornwallis, the Imperial Years* (The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1980).

²⁵ David Fanning (1755-1825), from Randolph County, North Carolina, was a notorious Tory militia leader and renegade earning in North Carolina a reputation for brutality on a par with that of William ("Bloody Bill") Cunningham in South Carolina. Fanning wrote a fascinating account of his exploits. Lindley S. Butler, editor, *The Narrative of Col. David Fanning* (Briarpatch Press, Davidson, North Carolina, 1981). See, also, John Hairr, Colonel David Fanning: *The Adventures of a Carolina Loyalist* (Averasboro Press, Erwin, North Carolina, 2000).

²⁶ William Moore (c 1750-c Dec. 1823) was a militia officer residing in Caswell County, North Carolina during the Revolution. He is mentioned in a number of pension applications as commanding a regiment of North Carolina militia in various engagements throughout the war from the Cherokee Expedition in 1776 to the Battle of Lindley's Mill in September 1781. He filed his own pension application (S183) August 20, 1820 in which he claimed a pension based on disabilities resulting from a wound to his knee sustained at Pyle's Defeat in February 1781.

²⁷ Heitman, 387.

²⁸ The Battle of Lindley's Mill occurred on September 13, 1781 in what is today southern Orange County, North Carolina, just above the Chatham County line. Patrick O'Kelley, *Nothing but Blood and Slaughter: The Revolutionary War in the Carolinas, Volume Three: 1781*, (N. p.: Booklocker.com, Inc., 2005) 363-366. For a more thorough discussion of the battle, see Algie I. Newlin, "The Battle of Lindley's Mill" (Burlington, NC: The Alamance Historical Association, 1975).

²⁹ Sir James Henry Craig (1749-1812) was a Lt.-Col. in the 82nd Regiment of Foot and the commanding officer of the British garrison occupying Wilmington, North Carolina. In November 1781 following Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown, he withdrew his garrison from Wilmington.

³⁰ The description is of the skirmish known as Brown Marsh

³¹ James Kell files his own pension application. See NPA: S32357