

Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements

Pension application of William Armstrong S30831

Transcribed by Will Graves

State of Kentucky, Caldwell County

On this 20th day of August 1832 personally appeared in open court before William Lander, Morton A. Rucker, Coleman Ratliff, James C. Weller, Esquires, justices of the County Court of said County, now sitting, at the Courthouse in Princeton, William Armstrong, a resident of said County & State, aged seventy nine years, who being first duly sworn according to law, doth on his oath, make the following declaration in order to obtain the benefit of the act of Congress passed June 7th 1832.

That he entered the service of the United States under the following named officers and served as herein stated: That in the year 1780 in the County of Lincoln, State of North Carolina (where he then lived) he was drafted in the militia of that state for a three months tour, against the British in South Carolina. That he was Commissioned a Captain of the Company from Lincoln and commanded as such in the expedition – that the rendezvous of the troops was near Charlotte, and his company was placed in the Regiment commanded by Colonel Alexander and General Griffith Rutherford commanded the Brigade, and William Rankin was Lieutenant of his company. From Charlotte we marched down the Yadkin River; and thence across Black River to Rugeley's Mill (a Tory) and there encamped for the night, but about 12 at night, the line of march was again formed, and we proceeded towards Camden – that the same night the advanced army guards had some skirmishing with the enemy's guards. That we joined the Main Army during the night, and at the dawn of day the battle of Camden commenced. That Rutherford's brigade, and perhaps others, were divided into platoons before the battle began, and the captains had command of these platoons instead of their Companies; and that he this applicant commanded a platoon on that memorable day instead of his company. He states, that he fought during the whole of the battle, and knows that he done his duty. The battle lasted but a short time, yet long enough to defeat General Gates [Horatio Gates], who, according to the general opinion acted dastardly on that occasion. The Continental troops, or a portion of them was commanded by General De Kalb, who was killed in that engagement, and I well remember, he was much lamented, and his untimely fall produced a general sympathy. I remember my own feelings to this day, and the circumstances are fresh in my remembrance. I will mention, that on our way to Camden, about 40 prisoners (British & Tories) were committed to my charge as Captain of the Company, who were guarded by my Company until they were sent above here for safe keeping. That shortly after the battle I and my company were discharged by Col. Dixon (if I mistake not) after having served out our term of service. At this time the Tories were very numerous, and had almost overrun the Country. I was appointed Captain of my company in Lincoln, and shortly after the battle of Camden I called out my company to Volunteer in defense of the Country, but to my mortification I found that but twelve men good and true – the rest having joined the Tories. With these I again entered the service as a Captain, and immediately joined Colonel Dixon, and remained under him two years. During which time my company was sometimes large & then smaller, as I could get man to serve; and touring all this time the service was most dangerous and laborious. The Tories had the ascendancy in point of numbers, and many times we were unable to oppose them and we frequently had to act defensively, owing to the want of men. The force under Colonel Dixon were incessantly employed against the Tories and scouting parties of the British – marching from point to point as occasion required, to relieve the Country, and had many skirmishes and engagements. Frequently I acted in the capacity of a spy, and had the command of a spy Company. At one time I had only eight man under me, and was sent out to Savis's Mill in Rowan County for the purpose of discovery, and on arriving there we found 42 footmen & 15 dragoons there before us. They had discovered our approach and lay in ambush & fired on us as we entered the Creek, but luckily killed none of us. We instantly turned to fire, but at the moment saw the dragoons advancing us from their ambush, on the opposite side of the Creek, and we were obliged

to retreat through a Contiguous old field, and reserved our fire for more urgent necessity, as we expected to be pursued; but strange as it may seem, when we reached the other side of the field we halted, and looked back and discerned the enemy retreating in some haste. This movement of theirs was unaccountable, unless they supposed a large force was near at hand. They threw out their forage & precipitously retreated, and we in turn pursued them five or six miles, and might have killed and taken them all, if Col. Dixon had sent reinforcements, as I had requested by a messenger, but the reinforcement did not arrive in time to effect the object. About this time our service was uncommonly severe – Cornwallis was marching through the Country from Charleston towards Virginia, and almost every day we encountered some scouting party, and notwithstanding all our exertions the Country suffered much, and it was impossible for our forces to afford complete protection to the inhabitants. I myself suffered materially by them, having while out in service, been robbed of everything I had, and having lost five horses at one time by the Tories. I continued under Col. Dixon, in this service till the close of the war late in 1782 (about December) which was upwards of two years – indeed near three years but the precise time I cannot fix. I forgot to name one circumstance: at the battle of Ramsour's, Gillefall [sic] commanded the Whigs, and was killed there, and the Regiment to which I belonged would have been in the action, but the express did not arrive [in] time – this action was fought the 20 June as well as I remember. I was a Captain, regularly commissioned as such, during all the time of my service in the revolution, which could not be much short of three years. I could name many persons who served with me in the revolution, but I suppose they are all dead – I know of none living. And the Camden expedition one Cathey & Rutlege served my Company, and whether they are dead is a little uncertain but I suppose they are as I have not heard from them in a great while. I further state, that I know of no person now living who has a personal knowledge of my service – there is an old acquaintance (hand and old soldier to) living in an adjoining County, Livingston, named Thomas Brashin, who knew me in South Carolina, particularly since the war, and by him (and others) I can prove my character and standing in that Country, and by him I suppose I can prove the existence wants, of my said commission as a Captain in the revolution, which I kept many years; whose affidavit I can probably prove to work. I further declare, that I have no documentary evidence in my possession now, which would prove my Service, as I have lost my said commission a good many years ago, nor do I know of any such evidence, unless the Secretaries Office of North Carolina will afford it. But I have no means of examining it. He 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 whatever. And the said court propounded the several interrogatories as directed by the war department, and he answered as follows:

1st: When and in what year were you born?

Answer. I was born at Fog's Marrow, State of Pennsylvania on the 14th of February 1753.

2nd Have you any record of you age and if so, where is it?

Answer. I have my father's record of my age, drawn off in a Bible of my own at my own house.

3rd Where were you living when called into service? Where have you lived since the Revolutionary War and where do you now live?

Answer. I was living in the County of Lincoln State of North Carolina (to which I had moved from Pennsylvania when quite young) when I first entered the service, and after the war, I moved from there to Greenville district South Carolina (and the reason of my moving was this: I could not live in a neighborhood where nearly all had been Tories – there was no good blood between Whig & Tory). I lived in Greenville District until about 30 years ago, when I moved to this County & he or I have lived ever since.

4th How were you called into service; were you drafted; did you volunteer, or were you a substitute and if so for whom did you substitute?

Answer. I was drafted in the expedition to Camden, but for the rest of my service I volunteered.

5th State the names of some of the Regular Officers who were with the troops where you served, such

Continental and Militia Regiments as you can recollect and the general circumstances of your service.
Answer. I served altogether in the militia, and with the militia, except in the Camden expedition, and there I knew Gates, DeKalb and several others, but I was only a short time in Gates's Army, and did not become acquainted either with the officers or regiments, except the head Commanders. (He here proceeded, and related the general circumstances of his service, substantially as set forth above.)

6th Did you ever receive a discharge from the service; and if so by whom was it given; and what has become of it?

Answer. I did receive a commission as Captain, signed by Governor Caswell as well as I now remember of North Carolina, under which I held the office of Captain during all my service. After my Camden expedition I was recommissioned by Governor Burke as I think and under the last commissioned I performed a volunteer Service, which commissions are both worn out and lost.

7th State the names of persons to whom you are known in your present neighborhood, and who can testify to your character for veracity and good behavior and your services as a Soldier of the Revolution.

Answer. I have lived so long among them I reckon they all would vouch for me. I will name Honorable C. Lyon, Benjamin G. Rice, Jesse B. Pemberton, George Robertson and Rev. John Barnett and others if the Court require it.

Sworn to and Subscribed the day and year aforesaid. S/ William Armstrong, X his mark
[standard certificate of veracity and reputation given by Rev. John Barnett, George Robison, Kinsay Robison.]

State of Kentucky, Caldwell County: to wit

I Burr Caldwell a justice of the County Court for the County aforesaid, and one of the Commonwealths justices of the peace for said County, do hereby certify that on this day Thomas J. Brasher came personally before me, and being duly sworn, declared on oath that just after the Revolutionary War, he became acquainted with William Armstrong (who now lives in said County, and is an applicant for a pension) in the County or district of Greenville, State of South Carolina; that at that time, the said Armstrong was generally known and believed to have been a militia Captain in the Revolutionary War, and it was never doubted; that about this time a court martial was held in said district to try an officer who had insulted his Colonel when on parade, and the said Armstrong was a member of that Court (having been appointed Captain in that County, shortly after he removed there from North Carolina), and the officers of the court took rank according to their seniority – the youngest first giving their judgment on the trial; and to ascertain the rank of the officers of the court, the members produced their Commissions. That on this occasion, he the said Brasher was present, and saw a commission produced by the said Armstrong appointing him a Captain in the Revolutionary Service, signed by Governor Burke of North Carolina, as well as he recollects. This Commission was inspected by most of those present, and the said Brasher distinctly remembers to have read it over himself, and it was the only Revolutionary Commission then present. That he heard the said Armstrong inform the said court, that he had another older commission still, given by Governor Caswell, as well as he remembers, but the said Brasher does not now remember whether that Commission was ever produced. That the said Armstrong also produced his commission as Captain in the South Carolina militia given after his removal to that State. He further states that he has been well acquainted with the said Armstrong from that time to the present, and during all that time, in South Carolina & Kentucky the said Armstrong has sustained an unimpeachable character for honesty, probity & high respectability. That he, the said Brasher was sixty seven years of age, the 4th day of last November and did himself perform some service for his country towards the end of the war, but he is advised, not long enough to obtain a pension. And I do further certify that the said Brasher is well known to me, and has been for several years, and that he is a man of good character and standing, and that he is a credible person and that his statement is entitled to credit.

And I do further certify that also on this day, Catherine Brasher, came also personally before me (as a Justice aforesaid) and being by me duly sworn according to law, doth on her oath, state she is the sister of the said William Armstrong and has known him from her infancy; that she does know of his being in Service in the Revolutionary [War], commanding a company as a Captain – that she cannot tell the length of time he served, but she knows he was almost constantly engaged that a part of the time the said William was absent on duty, she the said Catherine remained with the said William's wife for company (for he was then married) and she further states, that her brother (the said William) often spoke of his commission – of his service in which he was engaged, and the said Catherine states that she distinctly remembers to have seen his Captain's commission, while he was in Service. That the said William then lived in Lincoln County, State of North Carolina. That the said Catherine is now about sixty two years of age from the best information she has, and at the time her brother was in the war, she was young, but was old enough to know and to remember distinctly, what she has here stated. And I do further certify, that the said Catherine is well known to me, to be a lady of excellent character, and very respectable standing & her statement is entitled to implicit credit. This the 10th day of December 1832.

S/ B. Caldwell, J. Pec.

State of Kentucky, Caldwell County

On this 20th day of May 1833, personally appeared in open court before William Lander, John W. Marshall, M. Lyon, Stephen Grove & Jas. A. Cartwright, Esqrs., justices of the County Court in and for said County & state, William Armstrong, resident of said County, aged eighty years, who being first duly sworn as the law directs, doth on his oath, make the following declaration, in order to obtain the benefit of the Act of Congress passed June 7th 1833 [sic, 1832]. (That he entered the service of the United States under the following named officers and served as herein stated, to wit:

During the revolutionary War I lived in Lincoln County, State of North Carolina, and was a militia Captain of a company in said County when I first entered the service of the United States, which was in the month of July 1780, and the following are the circumstances. Just after the appointment of Gates to the command of the Southern Army, orders were received by the militia officers to hold a draft for men to serve in that Army for three months. Accordingly, a draft was made, and Six were drafted out of my own company, as well as I remember. I was commissioned the Captain of the Company from Lincoln, and commanded as such during the expedition. We rendezvoused near Charlotte and my company was placed in Col. Alexander's Regiment and in the Brigade commanded by General Griffith Rutherford – one William Rankin was Lieutenant in my company. From Charlotte we marched down to Yadkin River, and thence across Black River to Rugeley's Mills, and there encamped for the night, but about 12 at night we received orders to hasten our march, and join the Main Army as soon as possible. The line of March was immediately formed, and we proceeded towards Camden. During the night, our advance guards had some skirmishing with the enemy's guards, and some time in the night we joined the Main Army. About the dawn of day the Battle of Camden commenced and soon ended in the defeat of our Army. Having joined the Main Army so short a time before the battle commenced, I am not able to describe the order in which Gates formed his men, but in regard to Rutherford's brigade, I distinctly remember it was divided into platoons, and on that day I had the command of a Platoon instead of my company. By whose fault this battle was lost I know not, but one thing I do know, it was not mine, for I know I done my duty. The blame was attributed to Gates but whether he was obnoxious to the charge I will not venture to say. At any rate, the loss was great, and the fall of DeKalb at the head of the Continentals was an irreparable loss. The bravery of this officer, and those under him, and the undaunted courage shown by them, when there was none to support them, created a Universal Sympathy for their sufferings, and no doubt served to increase the blame against Gates. As soon as our terms of service were out, we were discharged, which I think was in the month of October following, having fully served out the three months for which we were drafted. The success of the enemy at Camden gave the Tories great confidence, and they became more bold, more daring and more

numerous. Assisted by detached parties of the British, they marched through the Country almost with impunity, committing every sort of crime. They established posts in various places, and for a while seemed to have subjugated the Country. Yet there was a few who kept the field, and if tis not boasting to say so, I was one. About this time I was re-commissioned by the Governor of North Carolina, and appointed again a Captain in the militia of the state. Under this commission, I returned to Lincoln County to raise a volunteer company, and to join Col. Dixon who had the command of a Regiment of volunteer militia. But on my return to my old Company, I found but eight men who were good and true, the rest had joined the Tories. Such was the disaffection in that Country at that time. With these eight I took the field about the first of November 1780 and immediately joined Col. Dixon as a Captain of a volunteer Company of militia – after joining him my company was augmented and increased by adding to it such as were from Lincoln County, and who had volunteered and joined Colonel Dixon. This made my company more respectable. Col. Dixon was stationed in Lincoln at the time I joined him where we remained for some time for the purpose of restraining detached parties of the British and protecting the inhabitants from them, for at this time Cornwallis was marching his Army through Lincoln County, Northward. Cornwallis lay at Ramsour's, and then crossed the Catawba at Beatties Ford and at Cowan's, where General Davidson [William Lee Davidson] was killed in defending the pass. Our Regiment kept on the flanks of the enemy as much as possible and obstructed their march. We pursued them in this manner as far as Salisbury. Near this place, I was detached, at the head of eight men to Savis's Mill [Rowan County] for the purpose of discovery &c. On arriving there, we came suddenly on 42 footmen and 15 dragoons of the enemy. They had reached there before us, and discovering our approach lay in ambush and fired on us as we entered the Creek, but luckily killed none. We turned to fire, but at the moment, discerned the dragoons advancing on us from their ambuscade, we retreated across a contiguous old field with considerable haste. On arriving at the opposite side, we halted, and strange as it may seem, we were not only not pursued, but the enemy were retreating themselves in haste having thrown out there forage (for they were a foraging party). I ordered a pursuit in turn, and dispatched a messenger to Col. Dixon for aid, but none came in time to do any good, and they escaped – we were too few in number to affect anything ourselves. On the next day we returned. This was some time about the 1st February 1781. Cornwallis was at this time in the pursuit of General Morgan & Greene. Morgan having defeated Tarleton at the Cowpens in January previous and taken a good many prisoners was endeavoring to escape Northward with his prisoners, and Greene, being at the head of the other division of his Army, endeavored to form a Junction with Morgan, as Cornwallis was endeavoring to intercept Morgan. However, by good fortune, and great exertion, both escaped, and Greene proceeded on to Guilford where he made a stand and determined to fight. Dixon's Regiment stopped at Salisbury, and returned again to Lincoln [County] to oppose the Tories who were embodied in considerable numbers while the British Army was marching through the Country. On our return into that section of the state, we found the Tories in such numbers, that we were obliged to cross over the Catawba into Mecklenburg County, for we were too weak to oppose them. However we again returned in a short time, and moved from place to place as most needed our protection. Thus matters continued until the fall of that year (1781). For after the capture of Cornwallis at York in October of said year, the Tories in that quarter seemed disheartened, and it was not longer necessary for us to keep constantly in the field. Consequently, Col. Dixon came to the determination to disband his forces – at any rate for the present, and until they were wanted, and accordingly discharged his troops some time in the latter part of October 1781 (I do not now remember the precise day – it is impossible). During my service under Colonel Dixon, we were engaged in many enterprises, and many circumstances took place which I have not related; and indeed my memory does not enable me to describe particularly all the circumstances that happened. On my return from Camden, I found Col. Dixon engaged in raising a Regiment of volunteers for the defense of the Country, and I immediately joined him as before stated, and went into my old company to raise my quota of men – indeed get all I possibly could, and having been commissioned by the Governor of

North Carolina, Captain of the Company for Lincoln in the expedition to Camden, and having previously been commissioned Captain of a Company in Lincoln, as such officer, I used every exertion to raise men for the defense of the Country. I entered into this last service under Colonel Dixon some time in the month of November 1780 (about the first of that month, and continued in that service without a days intermission, until about the last of October following. I remember distinctly we were not discharged until a short time after the battle of Yorktown and surrender of Cornwallis. I will mention, that during the year 1781 while I was out on service, the Tories came upon my plantation in Lincoln County, and destroyed nearly all my property, and amongst the rest, they took five horses from me.)

I declare that I have no documentary evidence in my possession at this time which would prove my service. My commissions I kept many years, but they are now lost and worn out; nor do I know of any person living who served with me in the Camden expedition, except one Joseph Henry who may possibly be living in North Carolina at this day, but this is quite uncertain as I have not heard from him for near 30 years. But I have sent to that Country in search of him, and if he did he found his evidence can be obtained. He served as a private in my company in the Camden expedition, and knows I was Captain in that expedition. I could mention others, but they are all dead long sense as I suppose. Nor do I know of any person now living who served in my company while under Colonel Dixon. Jeremiah Smith was one of them, but he died in the State of Tennessee, about six years ago. I know of no survivor of that Company but myself. I have a brother living in Giles County Tennessee, by whom I can prove that I did serve as a Captain; but at the time of my service, he also [was] in the service as one of the nine months men, or new levies as they were called, and did not serve with me, yet he does know what I have stated above is true. His evidence I will endeavor to procure. I have written by my friend Th Haynes to North Carolina for an exemplification of my Commissions, but the Secretary has answered that no record of militia Commissions was ever kept. (I send on this letter to the department as a part of this declaration). The Commission mentioned in his certificate I presume is not mine, as I never belonged to Captain Hogg's company and I suppose, that was amongst the state troops of North Carolina. I once sent in the evidence of Thomas J. Brasher and Katharine Brasher who prove the existence of my Commission. The Department has not said whether they are evidence was sufficient or no – I again transmit it, together with the evidence of Sarah Brasher, an old lady living in Livingston County who knew me in the time of the War, and who can prove some circumstances which will go to establish my claim. There is another old lady, Ann Armstrong, the wife of my brother John (who is dead) by whom I can prove my Commission, and my service, & her evidence I will also endeavor to obtain and transmit. These are all the witnesses I know of in the world—if they are sufficient – I shall be the glad. I am now very old, and afflicted with the palsy and cannot attempt again to prepare my case if this proves insufficient. I have fixed the time of my service as precise as my memory will serve me, and I served in but one grade, that of Captain of horse, except in the expedition to Camden, and then of Infantry, and for three months only – the balance being 12 months, and of horse. I hereby relinquish every claim whatever to a pension or annuity except the present, and declare that my name is not on the pension Roll of the Agency of any State will Territory whatever.

And the said Court propounded the following interrogatories to the said applicant, to which he made the subjoined answers in open Court.

1st: When and in what year were you born?

Answer. I was born at Frog's Marrow, State of Pennsylvania on the 14th day of February 1753.

2nd Have you any record of you age and if so, where is it?

Answer. I have a record of my age in a Bible at home, drawn from my fathers family record.

3rd Where were you living when called into service? Where have you lived since the Revolutionary War and where do you now live?

Answer. When I entered the service, and at all the time I did serve, I lived in Lincoln County, North

Carolina, but directly after the War, I sold my land there (being a neighborhood of Tories, and therefore disagreeable) and moved down into South Carolina, Greenville District, and lived there until about 30 years ago, when, I moved to this County where I have lived ever since.

4th How were you called into service; were you drafted; did you volunteer, or were you a substitute and if so for whom did you substitute?

Answer. I was never drafted at all, but volunteered in all my service. That is an error in my first declaration on this subject. And that, I only meant to say, the men were drafted. It came my turn to command the Company from Lincoln, and I did it.

5th State the names of some of the Regular Officers who were with the troops where you served, such Continental and Militia Regiments as you can recollect and the general circumstances of your service.

Answer. In the Camden expedition, I knew Gates, DeKalb and others whose names I do not remember. I remember a militia Regiment under Colonel Armstrong from towards the Yadkin River, and Battle of Camden, and my own Regiment. There were other Regiments in the Army, but I do not know the commanders. Afterwards, I served in a single Regiment of volunteers and during that time did not become acquainted with other militia regiments, though the Whigs were under different officers all over the state: Colonel Charles McDowell commanded a Regiment in Burke County, and Colonel Alexander in Mecklenburg County and others I could mention. (Here he repeated the general circumstances of his service as related in his declaration.)

6th Did you ever receive a commission; and if so by whom was it signed; and what has become of it?

Answer. I did receive two commissions. The first was signed by Governor Caswell and the other was signed by Governor William Martin, if I am not mistaken in his first name. This is my recollection of the Governors who commissioned the period I knew Martin before he was Governor. He was a small man, and a longer. Both of these commissions are worn out and gone, though I preserved them for several years.

7th State the names of persons to whom you are known in your present neighborhood, and who can testify to your character for veracity and good behavior and your services as a Soldier of the Revolution.

Answer: I am known by Hon. C. Lyon, George Robison, Benj. G. Rice, Jesse B. Pemberton, Rev. John Barnett, Rev. Robert A. Tapley, Alexander Maxwell and many others, all of whom can testify for me.

Sworn to and subscribed the day and year aforesaid.

S/ William Armstrong, X his mark

State of Kentucky, Caldwell County

James A. Whyte of the County & State aforesaid, being duly sworn Deposeeth and saith that from the first of the year 1779 until some time after the battle of Guilford he lived a short distance from the residence of William Armstrong in Lincoln County State of North Carolina and that said Armstrong is now living in the County & state first aforesaid, an aged Man. That he knows the said Armstrong was a Captain of a militia company in Lincoln County (where this deponent left it in 1781 under the command of Colonel Joseph Dixon and this deponent further saith that to the best of his recollection and belief that he the said Armstrong after Gates defeat and the surprise & defeat of General Sumter did as Captain command a company of militia in the revolutionary Army perhaps on a borders of North Carolina and between that and Camden in South Carolina, but of the points & places of duty he has no personal knowledge and he well remembers that the friends of America the Whigs were obliged to be active. None but those unfit for service through youth or old age would remain at home.

Sworn to the 28th day of January 1834 before me

S/ J. A. Whyte

S/ Wm Lander, JP