

Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements & Rosters

Pension application of James La Fayette (Fayette) VAS807

[vsl 37VA](#)

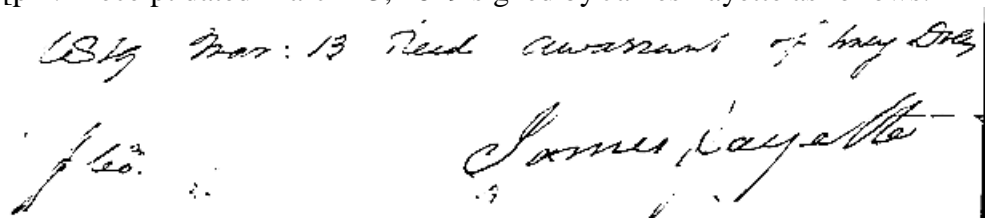
Transcribed by Will Graves

8/11/13 supp'd 4/4/15

[Methodology: Spelling, punctuation and/or grammar have been corrected in some instances for ease of reading and to facilitate searches of the database. Where the meaning is not compromised by adhering to the spelling, punctuation or grammar, no change has been made. Corrections or additional notes have been inserted within brackets or footnotes. Blanks appearing in the transcripts reflect blanks in the original. A bracketed question mark indicates that the word or words preceding it represent(s) a guess by me. Only materials pertinent to the military service of the veteran and to contemporary events have been transcribed. Affidavits that provide additional information on these events are included and genealogical information is abstracted, while standard, 'boilerplate' affidavits and attestations related solely to the application, and later nineteenth and twentieth century research requests for information have been omitted. I use speech recognition software to make all my transcriptions. Such software misinterprets my southern accent with unfortunate regularity and my poor proofreading fails to catch all misinterpretations. Also, dates or numbers which the software treats as numerals rather than words are not corrected: for example, the software transcribes "the eighth of June one thousand eighty six" as "the 8th of June 1786." Please call errors or omissions to my attention.]

[From [pension records in the Library of Virginia](#)] 37 page file

[p 2: Receipt dated March 13, 1819 signed by James Fayette as follows:



The image shows a handwritten receipt on aged paper. The text is written in cursive ink. The first line reads "13th Mar: 18 Recd award of my pay". The second line is partially visible and appears to say "of \$20.". The signature "James Fayette" is written in a large, flowing cursive script across the bottom of the receipt. There is a vertical line on the right side of the document, possibly indicating a page boundary or a margin.

[p 37: Receipt dated March 19, 1830 signed by the veteran as James Fayette and acknowledging receipt of his semiannual pension of \$20. The veteran died August 9, 1830.]

[This entire file consists of papers authorizing, dispersing and acknowledging receipt of a semiannual \$20 pension due the pensioner. There is no documentation providing the background for the pension. However, Bobby Gilmer Moss and Michael C. Scoggins, *African-American Patriots in the Southern Campaign of the American Revolution*. Blacksburg, SC: Scotia-Hibernia Press, 2004, 12-13 contains the following fascinating entry regarding this veteran:

Armistead, James (a.k.a. James Lafayette). [VA] he was born in 1760 and was a slave of William Armistead, a farmer who lived near the town of Williamsburg, New Kent County, Virginia. In mid-March 1781, at the age of 21, he volunteered to serve as a spy for the Marquis de Lafayette. He went to the headquarters of General Benedict Arnold, who had defected to the British, and became a guide and servant to Arnold's officers, all the while sending intelligence to Lafayette. When Arnold left Virginia and returned to the North, Armistead went to the camp of Lord Cornwallis at Portsmouth and became a waiter at Cornwallis' headquarters. He continued sending reports to Lafayette almost daily until August, when Cornwallis left Portsmouth and moved to Yorktown. Armistead then returned to Lafayette's camp and served until the war ended. On 21 November 1784 Lafayette wrote a certificate praising Armistead and the valuable service he had done for the American cause. Armistead sent the certificate to the Virginia Assembly and asked that he be declared a free man as a reward for his service. He also requested that his master be paid a reasonable price "for the loss of so valuable a

workman." In October 1786 the state paid William Armistead a fair price and James gained his freedom. From that time onward, he called himself James Lafayette. In 1819, he petitioned the Virginia Assembly for assistance, and was awarded \$60 and a pension of \$40 per annum. In 1824, when Lafayette visited Richmond, the Marquis greeted James as an old comrade. During his visit James sat for a portrait by the well-known artist James B Martin; this portrait still hangs in the Valentine Museum in Richmond. [Citations omitted].

[From [Digital Library of Virginia](#)] New Kent County Legislative Papers

To the Hon. the legislature of Virginia

The petition of James (alias, James Lafayette) Humbly Sheweth, That during the pendency of the revolutionary war, he was a slave the property of the late William Armistead of New Kent County – that contrary to the disposition of many in his situation, he felt an ardent desire to render to the American cause, all the service, of which he was capable, and for that purpose Solicited and obtained the consent of his said Master to Join in the Service under the Command of the French forces, General Delafayette [Lafayette] –. Hazardous indeed were the offices which your petitioner was appointed to perform. Having many times at the peril of his own life entered the British Camp, and conveyed to his General, Such information as was deemed highly beneficial to the American cause, in fact so highly were the Services of your petitioner estimated by the General under whom he served and Many others, that a petition was presented to the General Assembly of Virginia in the year 1786 praying for his emancipation, which his Country Granted without opposition as your petitioner was informed. For which Grateful act of his Country his heart will be filled with Gratitude so long as its Blood runs warm. It is with sorrow and reluctance, that your petitioner is compelled by the Irresistible laws of nature, again to throw himself on the liberality and Justice of his Country. He humbly begs leave to state to your Hon. Body, that Grateful for his liberation from slavery He has forborn to apply to his County, or Country, for assistance – until he has arrived at the age of Three score years & ten [70] – at which age he feels the awful truth, That though by reason of Strength man arrive to the age of four score years, yet is his Strength but Vanity. So soon passeth it away –

Your petitioner begs leave further to state that from a natural decline of his bodily powers, he has for several years found it extremely hard to acquire by labor a moderate Support – and feeling those Powers daily to decline, he awfully fears that without assistance he will not long be able to procure the necessaries of life – in tender consideration whereof he Humbly prays that your Hon. body will pass a law, allowing a small Sum for Immediate relief, and such moderate pension for the remnant of his days as in your wisdom shall seen Just – and as in duty bound will ever pray.

S/ James Lafayette¹

[Reverse]

Petition of James Lafayette

December 28th 1818

Referred to Claims

¹ very probably not the actual signature of the veteran because the handwriting is identical to the body of the document, and most documents of this type were copies made from the original

(Reasonable)
reported January 11th 1819
Bill drawn January 25th