

Southern Campaigns American Revolution Pension Statements and Rosters

Pension Application of John Struthers R18262

PA

Transcribed and annotated by C. Leon Harris.

State of Ohio }
Trumbull County ss }

On this twenty sixth day of March in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty one, personally appeared in open Court before the Court of Common pleas of said county, now sitting, John Struthers a resident of the township of Coitsville in the county of Trumbull and State of Ohio, aged Eighty two 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, and served under the officers and in the manner, stated herein.

I was born in Cecil County in the State of Maryland on the 11th day of February 1759, according to the best of my knowledge, information and belief – having no record of that event; the record thereof being destroyed with other papers and affects of my father, in 1774, by the destruction of his house by fire. In 1773 migrated with my Father and his family, from Cecil County, to the head waters of the North Branch of Chartiers creek, then the utmost boundary of the few settlers towards the Ohio river in that region, now in Washington County, Pennsylvania. In 1774 the few settlers fled into the interior and erected forts for the ir protection at Bowlands & Whites, near the main branch of Chartiers, in the latter of which I performed an equal share of duty with the men, from the latter end of April till about the first of November. If it be true, it was then believed by many persons that Lord Dunmores [John Murry, Lord Dunmore, Royal Governor of Virginia] main object in his campaign of this year was to engage the savages as British allies, against the frontiers (and his subsequent conduct proved it) then, in the battle of Point Pleasant [10 Oct 1774] was shed the first blood in the war of Independence. I distinctly remember that when with my father, crossing the allegheny from the East, we met Lord Dunmore at Fausets [Fawcett’s] tavern, on or near the Laurel Hill, and it being announced to him that a Scotch man had arrived (my father was a Scotchman) he approached my father and having asked his name, he took him aside, and casting a look of disapprobation on me, my father told him I was his son, and I was permitted to hear the conversation, After extolling the Scotch for the most loyal subjects in his majestys dominions, he said, a crisis was approaching, and near at hand, when it was probable, there would be a rupture between the mother country and her american colonies, and exhorted my father to continue his alligiance to his liege sovereign, and, firmly, to withstand all attempts to seduce him. Notwithstanding all this, and much more on the same subject my father, as soon as civil government was established by the states took me with him to a justice of the peace and we both swore fidelity to the United States. This may be considered a digression, perhaps, and irrelevant.

Having no written discharge or evidence of my services, I must depend mostly upon my memory for the facts which I have to state. During the revolution, or the most of it, I kept a record of the principal events, in which I was concerned, but long since, with other papers considered of no value, they were destroyed. Nearly sixty years have elapsed since the termination of our struggle for independence, and I have been absent from the scenes of action, more than forty years.

Almost every one who was with me as a spy or an army scout, from its commencement till its termination in 1794 [sic] in which I performed my last tour of one month, has ceased to live. and of those who know any thing of my services there are but two persons, to my knowledge, now living, viz – John White Esqr, and my brother Thomas Struthers, who is younger than I am. I cannot specifically state dates,

The year 1775 was a time of peace and quiet to us, and the settlement progressed rapidly, a militia company was formed, and as Virginia had assumed jurisdiction over that part of the Country, I, (being then sixteen) was enrolled and in May 1776, was drafted for two months, and served that period under Capt. Robert Miller in the Blockhouse on Grants Hill, near fort Pitt (now Pittsburgh) as first sergeant and Clerk of the Company. The Captain, though a brave Irishman could but barely write his name. The only

military prowess performed during this tour was the capture or rather finding of five new bark canoes while on a scout up the allegheny river headed by Capt. Miller, we saw no Indians. We did not serve quite two months being relieved by our neighbors. Gen'l. [Edward] Hand commanded at this time in Fort Pitt; there was no militia officer, to my recollection, higher than Captain. names of Lieutenants I do not recollect. The summer of 1777 was a season of great alarm and the whole settlement from Fort Pitt to Kentucky was broken up. A number of families assembled at the house of my father, in order to erect a Fort, but hearing that families had collected at Hoaglands and Beelers [Samuel Beelor's] Eight or ten miles nearer to the Ohio for the same purpose, they only repaired the cabins as well as they could to resist an attack and remained in them during the summer; the others went on and built forts. It was early resolved to raise a small company of volunteers to act as spies and wood rangers. Captain James Scott, a brave and experienced officer offered his services, and appointed a place of rendezvous, and in a few days had upwards of twenty, of whom I was one enrol'd and ready to March with as much provision as we could conveniently carry We started about the first of May, as nearly as I can now state, and I state it accordingly to be on that day. The country traveled was from a few miles below Fort Pitt, down the Ohio, crossing Raccoon Creek Traver's and Tomlinson's runs, Cross creek, Kings and Hermans Creek, near their junction with the Ohio, passing on our way down Reardons and Hollidays Stations, where we occasionally drew provisions. From Hollidays cove we traveled the Country backward and forward carefully watching the Indian war paths, until we arrived at some one of the forts, or stations on the head waters of some of the streams above mentioned, in the vicinity of which most of our company resided, where we remained a day or two to get washing and mending done, and a recruit of provisions, and at every station, would spend an hour or two in the exercise of the tomahawk and rifle, not only for our own improvement in the use of these weapons of warfare, but also to alarm the savages, if they should be lurking in the neighborhood.

In the latter part of the season the alarm was still kept up, and increased, by the attack (as was reported at the time) of two or three hundred Indians on Wheeling fort, and in this stage of alarm many others volunteered to protect the frontier, and so effectually was the country scoured from Hollidays Cove to Fort Pitt, that, though we had no triumphs in battle to record, nor defeats to lament, yet not an individual was massacred by the Savages in that region during this year. I ask credit for six months only during this season, that is from the first of May till in November when the cold weather forced the Indians to return to their towns, and I am quite confident that I served at least six months this year.

In the Spring of 1778 the Indians broke out earlier than usual and committed several murders on Ten Mile [Tenmile] Creek, which was then considered an interior settlement, and although not within the range of my excursions the preceding year was within ten or twelve miles of my fathers dwelling, I believe it was in March, and the whole settlement, from Wheeling upwards, was broken up, and retired into Forts, of which there was now perhaps too many, as from the paucity of males in each they could spare none to act as spies or wood rangers, and scarce enough to defend the forts if they should they should be attacked. On my return from an ineffectual scout, in pursuit of the Savages, who had committed these barbarities, though we passed two men whom they had murdered and scalped, and who were not yet cold, yet they escaped punishment; On my return from this Scout, which lasted but three or four days, a request was sent me from Hoaglands fort, to turn out with as many volunteers as I could collect. I did so, and deferring to my previous acquaintance with the woods and Indian war paths was (though among the youngest) elected to head about 15 or 16 active and brave men, and continued during the greater part of the season, that is from March to November, with short intervals to obtain amunition cloathing &c, on the same rout as in the preceding year, but not quite so extensive.

The result, however, was, that no Indian depredations were committed in that settlement during the whole season. The whole time would be about Eight months, but deducting the time, while at home recruiting though it might justly be reckoned in the service I ask credit for six months only, and I am well assured in my own mind that I served the time claimed that is six months, at least. In March 1779 I entered a volunteer in Captain David Vances Company of Mounted men, in Genl. [Lachlan] McIntosh's Campaign to Fort Lawrence on Tuscarawa [sic: Fort Laurens on Tuscarawas River near present Bolivar

OH], found my own horse, provisions, forage and accoutrements, and instead of being mounted, going out, carried a load of flour, or bacon on each horse. This was saved whilst the balance of the flour and meat was very much scattered through the woods and lost by reason of a salute fired from the garrison on our arrival. The next day after commencing our return it was ascertained that it would be more tedious, than was anticipated, and the general, sent an officer to request Captain Vance to proceed with all possible speed to Fort McIntosh [at present Beaver PA], and return with provision sufficient to subsist the army at least two days; and being piloted by friendly Indians along a path nearer than the main road, we met the army a considerable way back. I returned home in April and spent the remainder of the Indian season, on the same rout and in the same manner as during the two preceding summers; and during this season according to the best of my knowledge and belief I served, at least, six months

Early in the Spring of 1780 intelligence was received, I do not remember how, that a large body of Indians were on their march to devastate the whole country from Wheeling to Fort Pitt, This news was either not believed, or, at least not heeded, until a party of them, crossing below Wheeling had penetrated, nearly half way from the Ohio to Catfish Camp now the seat of Justice for Washington County [Washington], Pennsylvania. They had taken a number of prisoners, but becoming alarmed, speedily retraced their steps to the Ohio, and murdered all their male prisoners on the way. The main body of those who were expected to have ravaged Raccoon settlement it was supposed, never crossed the Ohio, but sent two of their warriors to reconnoiter, who approaching Dilloes fort [Matthew Dillow's Fort], late in the evening, spied two boys at play, and tomahawked and scalped them, within two hundred yards of the fort, and escaped, and it was supposed, that their report was rather unfavorable, and that they immediately commenced their retrograde march as no other mischief was done by them this season. Col Broadhead [sic: Daniel Brodhead] commanded at Fort Pitt, and this was the summer of his campaigns to the Muncy towns up the Allegheny river [sic: Munsey Towns, Aug 1779], and to Cershocton at the forks of Muskingum [sic: Coshocton Expedition, April 1781], at which two places he was supposed to have destroyed 500 acres of corn My services this year were of the same character with those of preceding years, and amounted according to the best of my knowledge and belief to, at least five months, commencing early in the Spring and terminating late in the Fall, and deducting such time, as was not occupied in active service.

Early in the year 1781 the Indians made an incursion into the upper settlements of Buffalo Creek, and notwithstanding the vigilance and bravery of Col. David Williamson and his party, cruelly murdered several persons in his immediate neighborhood, and took others prisoners; this caused a general alarm through all the settlements and the people crowded into the forts, but still their great dependance for safety was on the volunteer spies and wood rangers, so I spent from April till November, at least five months, in scouring the frontier, and watching the Indian crossing places and war paths. In the fall of this year, too, was the first expedition of Col. Williamson to the Moravian towns of the Tuscarawas, in which I (at the risk of my popularity as a Soldier) declined taking a part. In the latter part of February 1782 the Indians Invaded the settlement of Raccoon, and murdered the family of a Mr Wallace and took John Carpenter prisoner, & took his two horses; he hower [however] soon made his escape & brought his horses with him. In March another expedition under Col. Williamson, started to the Moravian towns and destroyed them, with the inhabitants, amounting to nearly a hundred of all ages and sexes. [Gnadenhutten Massacre] In this also, I refused to be concerned. These occurrences were continued by the settlers as harbingers of great distress and suffering during the summer. Yet such was the vigilance of the settler and spies that no other mischief was done, save in one instance, and they paid dearly for their temerity.

The Indians had crawled up ten or twelve miles into the settlement, and captured an old lone man of the name of William Jackson and plundered his cabin, and retreated; but, so instant was the pursuit, they were overtaken at the river, before they had time to embark, and a skirmish ensued, wherein five Indians were killed, and the other wounded in the abdomen; he dropped into a deep hole in the run, on the bank of which he was standing and eluded search; he was often at Pittsburgh, after the peace, would shew his wound and exult in his dexterity in hiding himself; he said the white mans gun was double load; they made his head ache. Of the whites John Cherry was killed and Andrew Poe and the prisoner badly

wounded with the tomahawk; the latter received a deep gash in the shoulder, as he turned to run toward the whites on their approach. This was the only skirmish, that I recollect, that took place in that region during the revolutionary war. In the spring of this year, I was elected to the command of a Militia Company, and my attention to the duties of that office, caused necessarily a relaxation of my excursions on the frontiers, yet I spent at least two months in that service during the season, which added to the services heretofore stated will amount to two years and seven months – although from the lapse of so many years, and the absence of other data than memory, it is impossible to specify correctly the weeks and months spent as a volunteer on the frontier during the revolutionary war, yet I believe the statement, several months less than the services really performed. I am the more confirmed in this opinion by this, that in frequent conversations with several young men, my neighbors, who had listed for three years, and returned at the close of the war, it was admitted by all, that I and my companions, had actually served longer, and endured more fatigue and hardship than they had. These conversations, it is probable would not now be thought of, but that they were sometimes carried on with a considerable degree of acrimony; the regulars affecting to consider the volunteers as an inferior class, and these retorting on those, as a worthless set, not daring to set heads outside the gates, but under the protection of volunteers and so, on.

The regular Soldier performs duty during the summer and then retires to winter quarters, receiving pay and cloathing and rations for the whole year; the volunteer to who I belonged, performed at least an equal amount of service, and retired home during the winter, not receiving either pay or rations, and not even cloathing, for any part of the time, with the trifling exception of a little flour obtained now and then at the posts, or stations, and furnishing their own ammuniton. Justice therefore requires that, these volunteers, on applying for pensions, should have their time calculated, in the same rule, as the regulars. The few regulars stationed along the Ohio, from Pitt to Wheeling, and I here speak of them only, the only reliance placed on them, was, to defend the forts should they be attacked, Indeed it was admitted by every one, at the time, that the only security of the people along the river, and adjacent settlements was the vigilance of the volunteers, in watching their crossing places and war paths, and ferreting them out of their lurking places near the stations, and that by their means, principally, was the settlement saved from savage vengeance.

I now state that to the best of my knowledge and belief, and of the truth of this statement I have no doubt, that I served for more than two years as an Indian Spy and Scout, for two months as a volunteer under Capt. Miller as hereinbefore stated, and for [blank] months as a volunteer in Genl. McIntosh Campaign above mentioned, and that in the whole I served at least two years and seven months, during the war of the revolution and for such service I claim a pension.

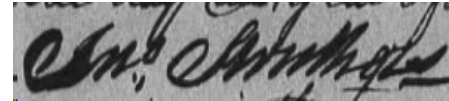
Subsequent to the war, and until 1798 I resided in Washington County Pennsylvania; in that year I came to Poland Trumbull County, Ohio, purchased a lot of land, and erected a cabin – and in the next year 1799, removed with my family to Poland, where I continued to reside until about thirteen years since when I removed to the adjoining town of Coitsville in the same, county and have resided there ever since.

I do 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.

To Gen'l. Simon Perkins, of Warren, Honl George Tod of Youngstown, Honl. Henry Manning of the same place, Honl. Elisha Whittlesey [sic: Elisha Whittlesey] of Canfield, and many others in Trumbull County, I am well known, and they can testify to my character for veracity and their belief of my service as a Soldier of the revolution.

I have often been told by those on whom I could rely that I was entitled to a pension for the services which I have related, but as I had lived independant of Government during the war, so I determined to live, as long at least, as I could hold my plough – that time is past, poverty had sought me in my old age, and the storms and peltings of more than four score winters have so battered my once firm constitution that my pride is considerably abated – and the late discovery of some of my associates alive (whom for years I had lost sight of and supposed dead) offer an opportunity for an application, for a pension, and I submit my claim to the Honorble the Secretary of War, with full confidence in his disposition to do justice. This application was not made at an earlier day because this applicant had no

certain knowledge or information of the passage of the law aforesaid until two or three years since & then supposed all dead who knew of his services
Sworn to and subscribed the day and year aforesaid



Penn'a Washington County Ss.

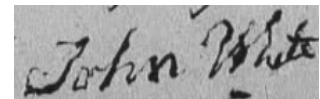
Personally appeared before the subscriber, one of the Commonwealths Justices of the Peace in & for the County aforesaid John White Esq'r., a respectable citizen of said County, who after being sworn according to law doth depose and say that he is well acquainted with John Struthers, an applicant for a pension, who at a very early period resided in this County and for many years has been a resident of Trumbull County Ohio – that during his residence in this County he was his neighbor and knew him well. He well recollects that he served several tours of military duty as a volunteer during the revolutionary war, but the particular years in which he served or the exact length of the tours his memory will not now serve him to say.

He recollects distinctly that he performed a tour of duty under General McIntosh from Chartiers creek Washington County where we resided to Fort Lawrence on the Tuscarawas which is now in the state of Ohio. The deponent served that tour of duty with him and on their return from Fort Lawrence left him at Fort McIntosh now Beaver. The year when this tour was performed he cannot now recollect but knows that it was between 1776 and 1781.

The said Struthers was for some years a deputy surveyor of the County of Washington and was always esteemed a man of integrity and honor.

Sworn & subscribed before me this 19th day of Apl. 1841.

James Blaine

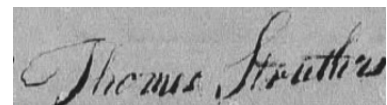


Washington County Penn'a. Ss.

Personally appeared before me one of the Commonwealth's Justices of the peace in & for the County aforesaid Thomas Struthers, a credible witness, who after being sworn according to law, doth declare and say, that altho' young during the Revolutionary war he has a very distinct recollection of the Indian depredations and war on the western Frontier from Fort Pitt, now Pittsburg, down the Ohio river to Wheeling. His father lived on Chartiers creek in Washington County in the vicinity of the depredations of the savages. The first summer of the war his fathers family fled into the interior and took shelter in a fort at John White's near the village now called Canonsburg. The next year or the year following the neighbors assembled at his fathers for mutual protection and concluded the safest way would be to raise some volunteers, wood rangers and spies to scour the frontier and thus relieve the settlers from the necessity of forting every summer. He recollects well that his brother John Struthers, who is now an applicant for a pension, joined the first company of that description that was raised in that region which was commanded by Capt. James Scott and was engaged in doing military duty the most of that Summer – the exact time he cannot say but is satisfied that he was out more than three months. He continued in that same service every summer till the close of the revolutionary war and altho' he cannot positively say how many months he served each summer he feels perfectly safe in saying that taking one year with another he served at least four months in each year. He feels further perfectly safe in declaring that he performed military duty in this way for at least five summers before the close of the Revolutionary war. He recollects of his going to the Tuscarawas in McIntoshes campaign as it was called but can't recollect the length of that tour, nor the year when it was performed. He recollects also that he the deponent served one month with him at Grays station on the Head waters of Ten mile and Wheeling which station was under the command of the John Struthers. He recollects that Col. Gabriel Blakeney [Gabriel Blakeny] commanded the Fort at Ricesons[?] station on the waters of Wheeling at the same time, but in what year he cannot recollect.

Sworn and subscribed before me Apl. 19th 1841

James Blaine



Pen. Office/ May 5, 1841

Sir [Hon. Elisha Whittlesey, Auditor Gen'l. Post Office], The papers in the case of John Struthers have been examined. He claims for alleged service which consisted principally in watching against the hostile attacks of the Indians. In the early settlement of our western frontiers it was indispensably necessary in many instances to the safety of the inhabitants that the able bodied men of all ages should arm themselves in self defence against the savages of the wilderness. It is well known that for this purpose blockhouses were erected and that the people were obliged to resort to them for protection, and to range in small parties through the country for the purpose of giving information of the approach of the savages. This description of predatory warfare, however, was never considered of such a character as to place the persons engaged in it on the footing of soldiers drafted or enlisted for the general defence of the country; and such persons therefore are not provided for by the pension laws. [sic: see endnote] The applicant for such service can of course have no lawful claim to a pension. His claim has consequently been rejected; and the papers filed. Enclosed herewith is Mr Struthers letter to you

From the favorable representation which you have made as to the claimant's character, I regret extremely that it is not in our power to afford any relief in the case.

I am with much respect and esteem, Your obt. servant,
[Copy not signed, but probably by James L. Edwards, Commissioner of Pensions.]

Pension Office/ May 20, 1841

Sir [E. Whittlesey], In consequence of the conversation which I had with you yesterday, I have again examined the case of John Struthers, supposing that there might possibly have been some facts in the case indistinctly set forth, or not clearly understood on the first examination. I find, however, that his case is one of that description in which the Dep'n has never [sic] allowed a pension. If we have been laboring under mistaken views in the construction given to the act of June 7, 1832, so as to exclude any class of persons from the pension roll who were intended by Congress to have been provided for, it is greatly to be regretted; but if we are wrong, it would be difficult to say who, if any one, can be censured for the decisions, since the practice has been acquiesced in by all Members of Congress who have heretofore presented claims of persons engaged in protecting their habitations on the Indian frontiers. [sic: see endnote]

J E

NOTES:

The statement from the Pension Office that the kind of service performed by Struthers "was never considered of such a character as to place the persons engaged in it on the footing of soldiers drafted or enlisted for the general defence of the country" is false. The pension act of 1832 and the regulations for administering it explicitly provide for "Volunteers" and "Indian Spies." In the debate on the bill it was stated that "Every sentiment which has been stated in favor of extending the benefits of the pension system to the State troops and the militia, applies with equal force to volunteers." Many who applied for pensions for such service on the Virginia frontier before 1835 received them, and many who performed similar service on the frontiers of Pennsylvania and elsewhere continued to be granted pensions long after 1835. In 1835, however, James L. Edwards, the Commissioner of Pensions who approved the regulations, decided that defending the Virginia frontier as a volunteer or Indian Spy was not military service. Edwards's statement in his letter of 20 May 1841 that "the practice has been acquiesced in by all Members of Congress who have heretofore presented claims of persons engaged in protecting their habitations on the Indian frontiers" is also false. The pension files of numerous applicants rejected on these grounds contain letters from their Congressmen appealing the decision. While a Member of Congress Col. Joseph Johnson introduced a resolution to extend the benefit of the 1832 act "to those spies and rangers who served six months or more during the war of the revolution, whether such services were performed in an imbodied corps or otherwise." For further discussion, see my appendix to the pension application of [David W. Sleeth S6111](#).

On 5 Oct 1855 Matilda Galbraith, 45, of Coitsville, tried unsuccessfully to reopen the claim by

her father, who died on 31 December 1845 leaving no widow but the following children besides herself:
“Ann McBride now a widow, Mary Hirst wife of William D. Hirst, John Struthers, Ebenezer Struthers,
Thomas Struthers.”