

Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements & Rosters

Pension Application of Joseph Davidson R2690 VA
Transcribed and annotated by C. Leon Harris. Revised 3 July 2013.

State of Virginia } Ss
Tazwell [sic: Tazewell] County }

On this 28th day of march in the year of our Lord 1834 personally appeared before me John Davidson an acting Justice of the Peace in and for the County of Tazwell and State of Virginia Col. Joseph Davidson a resident of the County & State aforesaid aged Seventy 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 provision made by the act of Congress pass June 7th 1832

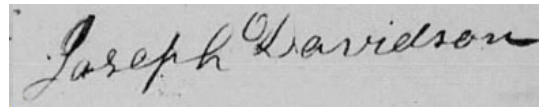
That he entered the service of the United States under the following named Officers and Served as herein Stated

That his moved from Crab Creek a tributary stream of New River in the eastern part of what was then [and still] called Montgomery County in the State of Virginia in the year 1772 to Cove Creek one of the Tribuary Streams of Blue Stone [Bluestone] River in the western part of the same County in that part which is now called Tazwell County and State aforesaid. That in the Spring of 1779 he was enrolled in a company of Militia under the Command of Captain James Moore That as early as the first day of Aprile in that year he was stationed with an embodied Corps under the command of the aforesaid Captain Moore in Davidsons Fort – which was situated on Cove Creek three miles above its mouth That this Fort was erected in the early part of the Indian War. That he continued in service this year until the 1st of November following

That as early as the 1st day of Aprile in the year 1780 he again entered the service of his Country and was stationed as before in Davidsons Fort under the Command of the aforesaid Captain James Moore. That he continued in service this year until the 1st day of November following when all signs of Indians disappeared and the People returned to their respective homes where they could remain in safety during the Winter. That in the year 1781 he again entered the service of his Country as an Indian Spy as early as the first of Aprile and continued in service until the 1st of November following that he was stationed this year as before in Davidsons Fort under the command of the aforesaid Captain James Moore that during the Periods which he has mentioned the settlement in the neighborhood of Davidsons Fort was verry much harrassed by the Indians and the People were kept in continual alarm

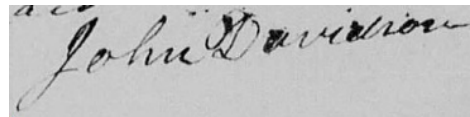
That in the Spring of the year 1782 as early as the 1st of Aprile he again entered the Service of his country and continued in Service until the first of November following. That he was Stationed as before in Davidsons Fort. That in the year 1783 he again Forted from the first of Aprile until the 1st of November in Davidsons Fort. That he thinks it was in the year 1782 in the month of July [see endnote] A party of Indians came into the settlement thirty five in number and murdered the family of Captain James Moore. the circumstances are these. that they had not goan to the Fort for safety they had at that time two or three men liveing in the family and had thought that they could defend themself against a small party of Indians but they had become careless and when the house was attact they were entirely off their guard that the family were all killed at the time with the exception of two or three who were killed after they were taken to the Indian towns Moore himself was about ninety yards from the House when he herd the firing he ran towards the House but on seeing so many Indians he gave a suden halt and was shot through by one of the Indians he immediately wheeled round and after running a short distance fell dead that he was commanded during the aforesaid periods by Captain James Moore until his death after which time he was under the Command of Captain George Pearis That in each of the years aforesaid there was a company of men sent from the Eastern part of Montgomery County to the assistance of their settlement owing to the scarcity of men in the settlement at that time they were not able to defend

themselves that a part of this company was stationed in Davidson Fort. That during the whole of the aforesaid Period he was stationed with an embodied Corps. That the nature of his services was to guard the Fort and go out occasionally on Spying excursions that his companion in this service was Richard Bailey that they generally went from Davidson Fort across Blue Stone River and from thence Round the dividing Ridge [probably Indian Ridge] between the Watters of blue Stone and those of the Guyann [probably Guyandotte River in present Wyoming County WV] and from thence round by the head of blue Stone River to Davidsons Fort. That during the whole of the aforesaid periods he was not engaged in any civil pursuits – (first interrogetary) That he was born in the State of Pennsylvania in the year Seventeen hundred & Sixty two (Second) that he has no Reccord of his age nor never saw one (Third) That he was living on Cove Creek in the County of Montgomery now Taswell and State of Virginia when called into service and that he has lived in the same neighborhood ever since (Fourth) that he was called into service by Order of the aforesaid Captains Moore & Peary [sic] (Fifth) That he has stated the names of his Captains in the foregoing part of his declaration and that he does not reccollect the names of the under Officers (Sixth) That he never received any written discharge for any of the Services he rendered his Country (Seventh) That he is known to Jno. B George & Erastus G Harman who can testify to his good Character for veracity and their belief of his Services as he states That he can further support his declaration by the Evidence of Eleanor Compton who were in the same Fort with him. He hereby Relinquishes every claim whatever to a pension or annuity except the preasant and declares that his name is not on the Pension Roll of the Agency of any State



State of Virginia }
Tazwell County }

On this 28th day of March in the year of our Lord 1834 personally appeared before me John Davidson an acting Justice of the Peace in and for the County of Tazwell and State of Virginia Eleanor Compton a Resident in the County of Tazwell and after being first duly Sworn according to law made Oath to the following Statement. That she has been well acquainted with Col. Joseph Davidson who has subscribed and sworn to the above or foregoing declaration for more than sixty years that she well Recollects the services of Col Davidson in davidsons Fort during the Periods that he has stated in his declaration namely from the year of 1779 to the latter end of the year 1783 That she was in the Fort where he was stationed during the whole of the aforesaid time. Sworn to before me the day and year aforesaid



[“Mr. Singleton” in the following letter was US District Attorney Washington G. Singleton, who investigated hundreds of pension applications in what is now West Virginia. For details see my appendix to the pension application of David W. Sleeth (S6111) <http://revwarapps.org/s6111.pdf>. There is no indication that Singleton investigated Davidson’s application.]

Ho. of Reprs. June 1836

J L. Edwards Esq. [Commissioner of Pensions]

Dear Sir I had the honour of receiving a letter from you some time since in which you informed me, that the claim of Joseph Davidson Esq. of Tazewell County Va. had been suspended untill Mr. Singleton, could make in person an examination of his claim. I have received a letter & the inclosed power from Mr. Davidson, which is intended to revoke any power or authority of those who have hitherto managed his claim, and he moreover denies having executed any power to them whatever. This

claim has long been suspended, and justice I think requires that Mr. Singleton, should make this examination in some reasonable time, and will I hope do so.

Very respectfully/ I am your Obt Servant/ Geo Hopkins

War Dept/ Pension Off/ June 1836

Sir [Hon G. W. Hopkins, House of Representatives] I have the honor to return you the letter of Col. Jos. Davidson & in reply to yours of 20 inst to state that it will be required of Col. Davidson to renew his application in strict conformity with the regulations herewith enclosed without awaiting the contemplated examination of Mr. Singleton.

Any other cases similarly situated within your district, can take the same course if you will be good enough to correspond with the Dept. respecting them.

[The following application was originally assigned number R2691. It and associated papers were later consolidated with the preceding in file numbered R2690.]

State of Virginia } ss
County of Mercer }

On this 8 day of January [1844] personally appeared in open court before the court of Mercer County now sitting Joseph Davidson a resident of Mercer County in the State of Virginia aged eighty seven 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 the 7th 1832

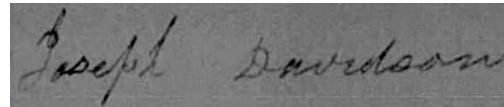
That he performed the services during the Revolutionary war herein stated

That in the year 1776 he lived with his Father on the western fronteer of Virginia, at which time there was great danger from the repeated incursions of hostile Indians into the settlements of the whites. As a measure of defence Captain James Moore an officer commissioned by the state of Virginia, was charged with the defence of the neighborhood & section of Country, lying on Bluestone & Clinch rivers about their sources; by Coln William Preston, who was the Colonel commandant of the Militia of Virginia in this region, which was then Montgomery County This declarant states that in obedience to the powers with which Capt More was invested, he was very frequently called into service, as an Indian "Scout" or Spy, in the company of Capt Moore. There was no fixed periods for the continuation of this duty but it was a thing of very repeated occurance a call being always made upon the men, whenever there was intelligence of an incursion of the Indians or when information was received of their lurking upon the borders of the settlements. Early in the spring of this year, (1776) Capt More upon hearing that a strong party of the Indians were lurking about the Mountains of Guyandott summoned his men to an expedition. This was the first service of any note that this declarant performed, he was marched on this expedition, as far as the "Islands" of Guyandott, where it was said that the Indians were encamped. They were gone however before the whites arrived. The party were absent on this service about one month. This declarant states that for the next four years, he performed this service on the frontier, as Indian Spy not constantly, but whenever necessity required. In the year 1777 or 78 & (This declarant cannot speak positively as to dates of so great a distance) there was erected on Blue Stone River, a fort as a protection against the Indians, in this fort this declarant was one of the guard, for the greater part of the time up to the close of the Revolutionary war – or rather the space of four years There was likewise about the same period a fort built on the head waters of Clinch River, in which this declarant did service as a guard for one winter. In february of the year 1781 as affiant thinks There was great alarm to the country from the supposed approach of the British army. The emergency was considered sufficiently important & pressing, for Col'n William Preston who commanded the Militia of this region to order out the men even from the very borders of the settlements, Capt Moore and his company, (of which this declarant was one) were ordered into service, & marched into North Carolina under the command of Coln W. Preston. Upon reaching Greens army [sic: Gen. Nathanael Greene's Southern Department], it was thought advisable by

the Col'n Preston that some of the men should return home, & this declarant was one amongst several others, who returned to the frontier, a short time before the battle of Guilford [sic: Guilford Courthouse NC, 15 Mar 1781] This service continued six weeks. From this time the service of this declarant consisted in the duties of and Indian Spy generally being frequently called out and being at all times ready to obey any call that might be made. Your declarant states that he has no documentary evidence to prove these facts and can only prove the general facts here stated by the testimony of one witness

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

Sworn to & subscribed the day and year aforesaid

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joseph Davidson". The ink is dark and the handwriting is somewhat slanted to the right.

Virginia

In the County Court of Mercer January term 1844 Col Joseph Davidson personally appeared in Court where the following questions were proposed to him & to which he returned the following answers to wit

Q1 Where and in what year were you born?

Ans I the state of Pennsylvania in 1756.

Q2 Where were you living when called into service, where have you lived since the Revolutionary war; and where do you now live?

Ans In Montgomery County Va (Now Mercer County Va)

Q3 Have you any record of your age?

Ans I have not.

Q4 How were you called into service, were you draughted did you volunteer or were you a substitute only and if a substitute for whom?

Ans I was not a substitute, But was called out by Capt Moore

Q5 Can you name some of the regular officers who were with the troops where you performed your services

Ans yes; William Preston was Colonel and James More was Captain.

Q6 State the names of some of the persons to whom you are known in your present neighbourhood and who can certify to your character for veracity and their belief of your services as a soldier in the Revolution.

Ans Reuben Bailey James Moore William Shannon & William Witten.

Q7 Did you ever receive a discharge?

Ans No I did not

The deposition of William Witten a witness of 64 years of age taken before the undersigned justice of the peace in & for the County of Tazewell

The deponent states that he has been acquainted with Col'n Joseph Davidson for 43 years that he believes him to have been a soldier of the Revolution, and that he served as he states. This deponent further states that he has always understood from the general tradition of the country, that Col'n Davidson was a Revolutionary soldier.

Given under my hand as Justice of the Peace for Tazewell County this 15th day of March 1844
E. G. Harman J.P.

The deposition of James Moore a witness of 74 years of age taken before the undersigned Justice of the peace in and for the County of Tazewell

The deponent states that he was well acquainted with Col. Joseph Davidson for 60 or 65 years that he knew him to have been a soldier of the Revolution, and he served as a soldier under his Father
Given under my hand as Justice of the Peace for the County of Tazewell this 15th day of March
1844
Wm L. Moore

The deposition of Rubin Bailey [sic: Reuben Bailey] a witness of 73 years of age taken before the undersigned Justice of the Peace in and for the the County of Mercer

The deponent states that he was well acquainted with Colo Joseph Davidson for 60 yeares that he always after he came to the Cuntry undersud that he was a soldier of the Revolution and from his knowledge of s'd. Col. Joseph Davidson as a man of corectness and truth he fully believes he was a soldier as stated above

given under my hand as Justice of the Peace for the County of Mercer this 19 day of March 1844
John Davidson JP

Pension Office/ June 20, 1844

Sir [Hon. A. A. Chapman, Union, Monroe County Virginia], The declaration of Joseph Davidson, which you sent to this Office, has been examined and filed. The service which he alleges to have performed was not of that character provided for by the revolutionary pension laws. He was a frontier settler, and the State of Virginia, in order to encourage settlers, granted a certain quantity of land to each inhabitant on condition of his cultivating a certain number of acres, and the rights under the law were called Tomahawk Rights, on account of the frequent exposures of the settlers to the attacks of the Indians. The people in that region associated for their defence against the predatory incursions of the savages; but they were never called out to perform any military duty whatever by any of the Officers of the militia or regular forces. Each man defended his own fireside, or in company with two or three of his neighbors resorted to a block-house for defence. We never have granted a pension in such a case as this. The claim is therefore rejected. [See endnote.]

NOTES:

See also Joseph Davidson's statement supporting the pension application of his brother, William Davidson (R2695).

The massacre of Capt. James Moore's family actually occurred on 14 July 1786. James Moore, Jr. escaped because he was a captive of the Indians at the time.

In the unsigned 1844 letter from the Pension Office explaining the decision to reject Joseph Davidson's claim, nearly every statement is false. The pension act of 1832 explicitly lists Indian Spies as a category of service eligible for pensions. The explanation of the term "tomahawk rights" is incorrect. Col. William Preston and Capt. James Moore were militia officers commissioned by the state of Virginia. Preston and militia captains frequently called out militiamen in emergencies. The Pension Office did, in fact, grant pensions for the kind of service performed by Davidson until 1834, when James L. Edwards, the Pension Commissioner, decided that such service was not included under the pension act of 1832. For further discussion see my appendix to the pension application of David W. Sleeth (S6111).

On 1 Feb 1854 Robert W. Davidson, one of the children of Joseph Davidson, deceased, assigned power of attorney to Charles C. Tucker of Washington, DC to pursue the claim for a pension for Joseph Davidson's service. An unsigned letter dated the following Feb 22 replied, "My present impression is, that the service alleged cannot be regarded as military."