

Southern Campaigns American Revolution Pension Statements & Rosters

Transcribed and Annotated by Patrick O'Kelley
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7th and Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20408

Robert L. English
Pension File #R3354

State of Virginia
Wythe County

On the 11th day of March in the year of our Lord 1839 personally appeared before the County Court of Wythe County, Robert English, a resident of said County; and State of Virginia, aged eighty-six years on the 17th day of this month, 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 passed June 7th 1832.

That about the commencement of the year 1775, being a minuteman, of a Rifle Company, in the County of Cumberland, and State of Pennsylvania, he marched as a volunteer to Boston in the State of Massachusetts, was in the Battle of Bunker Hill; the Officers remembered are General Putnam, Commander. Colonel not now remembered. Michael Crayson was his Captain.¹

¹ Captain Michael Cresap's of the Maryland Rifles. While at one of his homes in Oldtown, Maryland Cresap received word of his appointment as Captain of newly authorized Rifle Company. He was not very enthusiastic about this due to his poor health and his bad state of personal affairs. He accepted however, partly due to his father's statement, if Michael did not go he would. He started out with 20 riflemen from the immediate area. On the way to Frederick the strength had swollen to 130 men. Cresap's rifle company was the first southern unit to join General Washington around Boston at the beginning of the American War of Independence. Captain Cresap marched his company of riflemen 550 miles in 22 days. The march would take Cresap's life almost immediately, from illness. While at one of his homes in Oldtown, Maryland Cresap received word of his appointment as Captain of newly authorized Rifle Company. He was not very enthusiastic about this due to his poor health and his bad state of personal affairs. He accepted however, partly due to his father's statement, if Michael did not go he would. The Pennsylvania Gazette of 16 August 1775, described the company. "I have had the Happiness of seeing Captain Michael Cressap, marching at the Head of a formidable Company, of upwards of 130 Men from the Mountains and back Woods, painted like Indians, armed with Tomahawks and Rifles, dressed in hunting Shirts and Mockasons, and tho' some had traveled near 800 Miles from the Banks of the Ohio, they seemed to walk light and easy, and not with less Spirit than in the first Hour of their March. - Health and Vigour, after they had undergone, declared them to be intimate with Hardship and familiar with Danger - Joy and Satisfaction were visible in the Crowd that met them - Had Lord North been present, and assured that the brave Leader could raise Thousands of such like to defend his Country, what think you, would not the Hatchet and the Block have intruded upon his mind? I had an Opportunity of attending the Captain during his Stay in Town, and watched the Behaviour of his Men, and the Manner in which he treated them; for it seems that all those who go to War under him, do not only pay the most willing Obedience to him as their Commander, but every Instance of Distress look up to him as a Friend or a Father. - A great Part of his Time was spent listening to a relieving their Wants, without any apparent Sense of Fatigue or Trouble, when Complaints were before him he determined with Kindness and Spirit, and on every Occasion condescended to please without losing his Dignity. -Yesterday the Company were supplied with a small Quantity of Powder from the Magazine, which wanted airing, and was not in good Order for Rifles; in the Evening, however, they were drawn out, to shew the Gentlemen of the Town their Dexterity in shooting; a Clapboard with a Mark the Size of a Dollar, was put up; they began to fire off hand, and the Bystanders were surprized, few Shot being made that were not close to or in the Paper; when they shot for a Time in this Way, some lay on their

After serving in the neighborhood of Boston in Massachusetts, was marching to New York and being one of the guard of the baggage wagons, the whole were taken by a force of British Tories, the night following the Capture he made his escape and returned home, having escaped from the enemy. He had no discharge: he was in the service about seventeen months after getting home to Cumberland County, Pennsylvania.

He removed to Frederick County, Maryland when in the year 1776, as well as he remembered, he enlisted in the Maryland Line under Captain Henry Harman². Was recruiting Sergeant, the number of the Regiment not remembered. Field Officers remembered General Bill, Colonel Henry Shyock³, and Major Crush. When the Company was enlisted they marched to Baltimore where they were equipped and armed, thence they marched to Philadelphia thence by Trenton to New York, from New York they were driven by the British forces, and removed to Kings Bridge went up the North River. Was in the Battle of White Plains. After which battle crossed the River at the Fish Kills, and marched to Fort Lee, situated on the North side of the North River, and opposite to Fort Washington. Then crossed the river again to Fort Washington which was taken the same day by British and Hessians. Colonel Cadwallader and Magan (?) commanding the Americans.⁴

Backs, some on their Breast or Side, others ran 20 or 30 Steps and firing, appeared to be equally certain of their Mark - With this Performance the Company were more than satisfied, when a young Man took up the Board in his hand, not by the End but the Side, and holding it up, his Brother walked to the Distance and very coolly shot into the white; laying down his Rifle, he took the Board, and holding as it was held before, the second Brother shot as the former had done. - By this exercise I was more astonished then pleased. But will you believe me when I tell you that one of the Men took the Board and placing it between his Legs, stood with his Back to the Tree, while another drove the center. What would a regular Army, of considerable Strength in the Forest of America do with 1000 of these Men, who want nothing to preserve their Health and Courage, but Water from the Spring, with a little parched Corn, and what they can easily procure in Hunting; and who, wrapped in their Blankets in the Damp of Night, would choose the Shade of a Tree for their Covering, and the Earth for their bed?" When Cresap died, Lieutenant Moses Rawlings was promoted Captain to command the company. On 17 June 1776 the company was reorganized into the Maryland & Virginia Rifle Regiment as part of the Continental Army. Rawlings was second in command briefly as Commander Hugh Stephenson soon died in August 1776, Rawlings is promoted to command the regiment of nearly 250 men. The unit was then assigned by General Washington to be part of the Hudson River defenses at Fort Washington.

² Lieutenant Henry Hardman of the Maryland Flying Camp. The Maryland Flying Camp (or Maryland Rifle Company) raised around Frederick, Maryland, the frontier in the 18th century, was one of two rifle companies. Captain Moses Rawlings and late Captain Hugh Stephenson originally commanded these companies. By a resolution of June 27 Congress appointed Stephenson as Colonel of a rifle regiment to be made up of three unregimented rifle companies at New York and six additional to be recruited in the Maryland and Virginia. Captain Rawlings was appointed a Lieutenant Colonel and Captain Otho Williams as Major in the newly authorized Regiment. Stephenson died with a few weeks while on a recruiting trip to Virginia. Lieutenant Henry Hardman was a 3rd Lieutenant under Williams. He was not promoted to captain until 10 December 1776, when the British held him a prisoner.

³ Colonel Henry Shyrock commander of the Maryland Flying Camp

⁴ The Flying Camp was incorporated into Smallwood's Maryland Battalion and the Frederick County company became Captain George Stricker's Light Infantry Company. There were some Maryland Troops in Fort Washington when it fell, although the First Maryland had no been organized as such at the time; it was still "Smallwood's Battalion". Colonel Moses Rawlings was put in command of about 250 Virginia and Maryland riflemen and stationed a half-mile north of Ft. Washington at a small earthwork called Ft. Tryon. This unit was known as the Maryland and Virginia Rifle Regiment. Major Otho Williams from Maryland was the second in command. They skirmished with the Hessians from November 2nd to the 14th in 1776. On the 16th, Knyphausen's reinforced Hessian unit engaged them, ultimately pushing them out. Ward wrote, "For nearly two hours these courageous assaults {by the German troops} and this stubborn defense continued. But the rifles of the Americans became fouled by the frequent and long continued discharges. Man after man found that he could not drive home a bullet in a clogged barrel of his gun. The fire of the defenders waned and at last was too feeble to hold back the enemy, now nearing the top of the ascent. They had no bayonets to repel a charge with that weapon. A retreat was inevitable. Rawlings drew them back toward the fort {this even with much very close combat}. They gained it ahead of their pursuers. This was

He remained a prisoner of war in the British prison in New York from the time of the Surrender of Fort Washington until the June following. (The time of the escape being June by the fact that Rye was in bloom.) When he effected his escape and returned home to Maryland. He had no discharge having made his escape as a prisoner of war. His term of service had expired before he escaped from Fort Lee back to Fort Washington. The Regiment had set out for Philadelphia there to be discharged, but were recalled and sent as before stated to Fort Washington and captured. He was in the service and prisoner of war one year and eleven months, as near as he can remember.

He removed from Frederick County, Maryland to Botetourt County in Virginia. About the first of March 1781 he substituted in the Militia, Officer remembered, Colonel Lynch⁵, (he was not of the same party or command) Captain George Hairston⁶, and Captain and Major Waller⁷, his Major. He went from Henry County, Virginia to which County he had moved from Botetourt; they marched to North Carolina and he was in the Battle of Guilford Courthouse in same month⁸ after this battle the militia dispersed and went home. He was in the service six weeks.

He shortly after substituted in a Light Horse Company called the Flying Camp under Captain Ayre Buckner (or Buckler) of Pittsylvania. The service performed by this troop was in the nature of a guard against the depredations of the British and Tory scouting parties: he was in the service six weeks.

He again substituted and marched to Little York, was present during the siege, and when Cornwallis. Officers remembered at Little York under whom he immediately served Colonel John Rentfro(?) and Captain Swingfield (?). He was in the service six weeks. After the capture of Cornwallis he removed to Fort Chiswell in Montgomery County and settled.

He also states that he went as a volunteer to the Illinois. They rafted down the Tennessee, burnt the towns and destroyed the property of the Chickamauga Indians on that river and then proceeded on to the Illinois and was at the taking of the Port on the Kaskakia River. His Officers were Colonel John Montgomery and Captain Thomas Quirk; service undertaken for a year but the time employed was about 8 months.⁹

To sum up he was forty months in the regular service and prisoner of war. Eighteen weeks a substitute in the Virginia Militia serving in North Carolina, Virginia, and at Yorktown and eight months with the Illinois Battalion the service undertaken was for a year. In all four years and four months.

He kindly relinquishes every claim whatever to a pension or amenity except the present, and he declares that his name is not on the pension roll of any agency in any state.

Sworn to and subscribed the day and year first above written.

Robert English

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(His Mark)

the hottest fight of the day and the longest." This was after a cannonade of nearly two hours and many feints against their position. After the surrender of the fort most officers released but the men were put on prison ships in the harbor where most died. Robert was able to escape

⁵ Colonel Charles Lynch commander of Lynch's Riflemen at Guilford Courthouse

⁶ Captain George Hairston of Major Thomas Rowland's Botetourt Militia in Colonel William Campbell Virginia Rifle Corps at Guilford Courthouse

⁷ Major George Waller, and Captain John Waller of Major Thomas Rowland's Botetourt Militia

⁸ March 1781

⁹ Colonel John Montgomery and Captain Thomas Quirk were in George Rogers Clark's Illinois Regiment, Virginia State Forces. George Rogers Clark did incredible feats with only a handful of men. He captured what was known as the Northwest Territory after defeating the British under the command of Colonel Henry Hamilton at Vincennes, Indiana. With only a few hundred men Clark gained possession of more land than what existed in the original 13 colonies. This included what would later be Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Missouri

And the said court(?) of county(?) declare their opinion that the above named applicant was a Revolutionary soldier and served as he stated.

Jonathan Matthew(?) Clerk of the Court of Wythe County aforesaid do hereby certify that this foregoing contains the original offerings(?) of the (?) Court in the matter of the application of Robert English for a pension.

In Testimony whereof I have herein(?) my hand and seal of officer this 12th day of March 1839.
Jo. Mathiews(?) etc, etc.

Land Officer, Annapolis, 30 July, 1839

Sir,

Your's of the 18th Inst(?), with the declaration of Robert English enclosed; was received. I have examined very carefully the records of the Revolution in this office, and they afford no evidence of his services, the declaration is herewith returned.

Very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,
G. G. Brewer

J. L. Edwards, Esquire