

Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements & Rosters

Pension Application of Christopher Graham R4178
Transcribed and annotated by C. Leon Harris.

VA

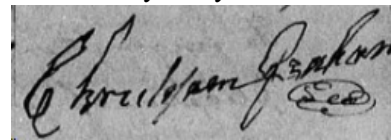
State of Kentucky }
County of Nelson } Ss

On this the 9th day of November 1842 Personally appeared before me Elijah Davis an acting Justice of the Peace in & for the Count of Nelson State of Kentucky, Mr. Christopher Graham who is prevented by reason of Bodily infirmity from appearing in open Court & who is a resident of the County of Nelson State of Kentucky and aged near 93 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 as herein stated. In the month of February or March 1779 He entered the service of the United States as a volunteer and an Ensign under the Command of Colonel Matthews [sic: Sampson Mathews], in the malitia service, and that he filled the office of Chief Commissary or Commissary General, and that his company was from Augusta County Virginia, and they marched down to Richmond, and below Richmond as far as Williamsburgh [sic: Williamsburg], which was the period of time in 1779 that Commodore Collier and General Matthews [sic: Col. Mathews] the British Commanders from New York landed at Portsmouth and Fort Nelson in Virginia [Commodore George Collier and Gen. Edward Mathew, May 1779], who afterwards entered Norfolk and made themselves masters of the principal places in that portion of Virginia and took great quantity of provision, many Thousand Barrels which had been prepared for the main Army of General Washington; and also quantities of stores and vast quantities of Tobacco fell in their power, and they burned and spread devastation and outrages in all that portion of Virginia which they became masters of. And that there was no general action with the British by his company and the other companies of malitia of virginia that assembled because they were not numerous enough to engage the British or prevent enormous cruelties perpetrated by them during their mentioned excursion and after the British had remained some weeks they evacuated Portsmouth and sailed for Charleston South Carolina [sic]. Declarant states that their were companies of malitia from Culpepper [sic: Culpeper] County Virginia & Rockbridge & Rockingham Countys also. That he remembers of being with his company from Augusta County Virginia, but that he misremembers their principal officers & thinks their was a Captain from Culpepper County of one of the Companies by the name of Towles and one by the name of Lillard[?], and a Colonel from Rockbridge County by the name of [John] Bowyer who was a Brother of Wm Bowyer [William Bowyer] who was an officer of the malitia of Augusta County. And as afsd they marched through Albemarle County and Hanover down to Williamsburgh, and that the said tour was about three months and two weeks in length he thinks. And that in the fall of 1780 and about the middle of September He Declarant again volunteered under General Matthews and Colonel William Bowyer in the malitia service as an ensign of the of malitia of Augusta County Virginia, and filled the office of Commissary General, and marched through Albemarle County Virginia and Hanover to Williamsburgh, which was the time the British General Leslie [Alexander Leslie, Nov 1780] came from New York and landed at Portsmouth in the lower part of Virginia with an army of upward of 3000 men who burnt and destroyed every thing of any value and particularly large magazines of Tobacco. And they remained some time at Portsmouth. declarant states that after the last mentioned tour expired he again volunteered under said General Mathews and Colonel Bowyer in the malitia service as an Ensign and filled the office of Commissary General or Chief Commissary and continued in actual service without loosing a day until about the first of September 1781 at which time he was taken sick; and was not in actual service after that, and was not at the surrender of Cornwallis [19 Oct 1781], as his illness was protracted and he never again recovered until the winter thereafter. And that with his afs'd. Company from Augusta County in the fall and winter of 1780, there were companys or Regiments of malitia from various counties in virginia.

There was a Regiment from Culpepper, and he thinks Col Slaughter commanded, and there was an officer by the name of Triplett He thinks Captain Towles was with his company, and there were also troops from RockBridge under the afs'd John Bowyer, and there were troops likewise from Rockinham and Albemarle Countys. And about the last of the year 1780 or first of 1781 General [Benedict] Arnold a British General landed at Portsmouth with near 2000 men and that immediately commenced the most desperate ravages, he spared not his fury but visited it with vengeance upon the whole country through which he passed, and the malitia from various counties and and with the company or Regiment from Augusta compeled Arnold to retreat and take up his quarters at Portsmouth where he entrenched himself and placed out his guards, and the Americans camped at Camp Carson only twelve miles from Portsmouth, and they took three or four of the British out Posts or Pickets, and that he at Camp Carson during the afs'd service has had several hundred Barrels of provision for his troops, and that there they remained for sometime during the winter and that before they took up their camp at Camp Carson, they camped four or five days at Jerrico's mill [sic: Jericho Mills at Smithfield in Isle of Wight County]. And while they camped at Camp Carson or was encamped there, the Americans marched down within five miles of Portsmouth with the design of attacking Portsmouth, when they learned that the British fleet under General Philips [sic: William Phillips, 20 Mar 1781] with about 2000 men had arrived and joined Arnold. The Americans then evacuated their Position and also Camp Carson and retreated to Richmond and the British persued them and our men the whole country and destroyed at Osborne [Osborne's on James River 20 mi below Richmond, 27 Apr] a number of vessels and magazine of merchandize principally Tobacco, and also devoted to ruin Elizabethtown. The Americans were too weak to resist the British forces who marched up the south side of the James River and came to a town oposite Richmond Virginia [Manchester] where We the Americans crossed the River only a day or two before, which town was devoted to the flames by the British and which the Americans in Richmond were compelled to witness. About which time General Layfayette [sic: Lafayette] who had been sent by General Washington with about 1000 Light Infantry to take command of the whole forces in virginia marched from the head of Elk [present Elkton MD, 8-29 Apr] to Richmond and took the command upon himself, and marched toward Petersburg [sic: Petersburg] in order to prevent the junction of the troops of Cornwallis with those of Philips, but General Philips arrived with his Army at Petersburg first and joined Cornwallis [20 May], who remained several days at Petersburg, and took command of the British troops, and marched across James River & he thinks at Westover [25-26 May], and Gen'l Layfayette with the American Army took Post behind the Chickahominy River and the County of Hanover was exposed, and overrun by the British, and Conwallis sent Col. Tarlton [sic: Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton] a British officer to Charlottesville in Albemarle County [sic: Charlottesville, 4 Jun], where he took a portion of the Assembly that had met in that town and great quantitys of warlike stores and provision and destroyed every thing within his reach. the assembly then convened in Staunton. About the same time Baron Steuben of the American Army was posted at the junction of James & Ranna Rivers [sic: Point of Fork at James and Rivanna rivers] & who was routed by the British [5-6 Jun] and in his retreat suffered great loss, and the British took at the last mentioned post quantitys of magazines arms and munitions of war. Afterwards Cornwallis marched toward Richmond and als upon Williamsburgh which was then the Capitol of Virginia. Gen'l. Layfayette's troops had made their junction in the mean time with the troops of Baron Stubn and would had frequent skirmishes with the British f[o]raging parties and also made their junction with the troops of Gen'l. Wayne [Anthony Wayne, 10 Jun] who had been sent by Gen'l Washington to join LayFayette, and after which the Americans took many prisoners of the British of those who did not continue with the main British Army. Cornwallis then marched his troops toward the Banks of the James River, and the American Army followed him so closely that he was compeled to stop upon the North side of the River to repress[?] the impetuosity of our men, the Americans, and they fell with great impetuosity on the British troops, and Gen'l Layfayette orderd a retreat and lost some of his canon. Cornwallis sent his Cavalry after the American Army who took some American Prisoners. Gen'l LayFayette retreated from the Battle Ground at James Town [Battle of Green Springs Plantation, 6 Jul] to a Post between the rivers Mattapony and Pamunky [sic: Mattaponi and Pamunkey]. Cornwallis then

proceeded to Portsmouth, and remained only short time when he again marched his troops down the James River and took up his head quarters at Yorktown [1 Aug] and after which the American Army recrossed the Pamunky and took Post in the County of New Kent where they harrassed the British & prevented their excursions in this Country, & they proceeded as far down as Williamsburgh where the American Army was joined by about 2000 French troops which were brought to America by a French officer who Blocked up with his fleet the mouths of York and James Rivers [see endnote] In the mean time Cornwallis entrenched himself by all possible means – at which time Delarant was taken sick and was not again in service as his sickness was protracted and he never again recovered until the winter. He further saith that he was residing in Augusta County virginia at the Commencement of the Revolutionary war and that he was raised & born in said County of Augusta State of virginia and that he continued to reside there until 1791 when he removed to Nelson County Kentucky where he now resides. He further declares that he has no documentary evidence in support of his claim and that he received his Commissions as ensign and he thinks also his commissions as Commissary but of this last mentioned fact he is not now certain but that he knows he received his Commissions as ensign and that they were universally signed by the Commanding officer if he is not much mistaken but he cannot be mistaken in the fact that he received his Commissions. He also saith that he knows of no one now by whom he can prove his services in said war as his Brothers have all passed away and he knows of no one that ever lived in this neighborhood or any distance near him that could have testified for him or was conversant with his services in said war – Wherefor Declarant hereto sets his hand and seal the day and year aforesaid

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Charles Graham". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background. There is a small circular mark or stamp to the right of the signature.

[Certified by Reuben Medley, clergyman, and William Graham, “a Methodist Episcopal Class leader.”]

1st Where and in what year were you born?

Answer. I was born in Augusta County virginia on the 7th day of February 1750

2nd have you any record of your age; and if so where is it?

Answer. I have had the record of my age in the Bible and wher it is now I cannot say but suppose it to be in possession of one of my children or nephews.

3^d 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 residing in Augusta County Virginia when called into service and have lived since the Revolutionary war in Augusta County Virginia & in Nelson County Kentucky and I now live in Nelson County State of Ky

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

Answer. I volunteered for every tour of service and served in no other capacity than a volunteer

5th State the names of some of the Regular Officers who were with the troops where you served, such continental and malitia Regiments as you can recollect, and the General circumstances of your service?

Answer. General Layfayette Baron Steuben and General Wayne were the principal General or Regular officers who were with the troops where I served and the Regiments of General Layfayette and General Wayne were the principal continental Regiments that I now remember and the Regiments of Rockbridge County Rockingham County Albemarle County and Culpepper County are the principal Malitia Regiments that I now remember. And the general circumstances of my service are as follows. I volunteered in 1779 as an Ensign and filled the office of commissary and marched in my company down to Richmond and as far as Williamsburgh virginia and my company was a malitia company and there were other companies of malitia that was with my company and this tour was about three months and two weeks and in the fall of 1780 I again volunteered as an Ensign

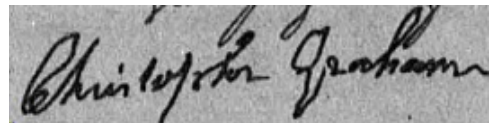
under Gen Matthews & Col Bowyer in the militia Regiment of Augusta County virginia and we marched down to Richmond and Williamsburgh virginia and manuev'd from place to place and there were Malitia Regiments again with ours from Rockbridge Rockinham Culpepper &c and I serve three months and again volunteered in my afsd. Regiment as an Ensign and filled the office of Commissary and continued by again volunteering until about 1781 and about the 1st of September of that year and we marched through the lower parts of virginia camped at Camp Carson Camped at Jerico mills and within five miles of Portsmouth crossed & recrossed the James River crossed Pamonkey took Post at Williamsburgh and join by 3000 French troops &c &c and should have mention the officers at Jamestown and witnessing the burning of Manchester oposite Richmond our retreat from Portsmouth &c and in all I served fifteen months as ensign of the militia of Augusta County virginia and filled the office of Commissary General or Chief Commissary.

6th Did you ever receive a commission; and if so by whom was it signed, and what has become of it?
Answer I always received my commissions as Ensign and the first was signed by my commanding officer Matthews and the second by General Matthews and the third by Mathews if I am not mistaken and the fourth by Bowyer and the fifth also. I am not exactly positive who signed my commissions but am now of opinion that they were signed as above stated – and what became of them I cannot for my life say.

7th State the names of Persons to whom you are known in your present neighborhood, and who can testify as to your character for veracity and their belief of your services as an officer of the Revolution?

Answer all of my acquaintances in the whole country can testify to my character and their belief of my services in the Revolutionary war as an officer. But my now immediate neighbors are Benjamin Duncan Moses Harrel William Weathers Nancy Harrel William Graham Robert Harrel and Mitchel Graham and they can testify to my character and their belief of my Services as Ensign & Commissary in said war.

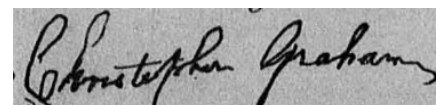
And I Christopher Graham do hereby relinquish my claim and every claim whatever to a Pension or annuity, except the present and Declares that my name is not on the Pension Roll of the agency of any State



State of Kentucky } [9 Nov 1842]

Nelson County } Personally appeared before me Elijah Davis an acting Justice of the Peace & and for said County Mr Christopher Graham & who after being duly sworn according to Law doth on his oath make the following Declaration by way of aiding his application for the benefit of the act of Congress passed the 7th day of June 1832. Towit that the reason he did not make and earlier application for the benefit of said act is that he removed from Virginia in the year 1791 and knew of but few persons that ever came to this country from virginia that were conversant with his services as an officer in the Revolutionary war and that those he knew of had died before the passage of said law and he knew not where to go to obtain proof of his services in said war and that he was too feeble to go to Virginia to attend to it, and he supposed that he was compelled to introduce positive proof of his services in said war and that he was able in his old age to live without it and thus it was neglected and he now prays an allowance for his services as an officer of fifteen months actual service and that he may be enrolled on the list of Revolutionary Pensioners.

[Certified by William Graham.]

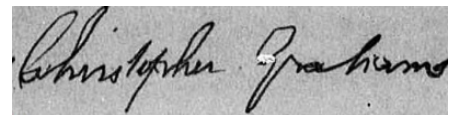


State of Kentucky }
Nelson County } Ss

On this the 20th day of May 1843 Personally appeared before me Haden E Stone an acting Justice of the Peace in and for the county and state aforesaid Mr Christopher Graham a resident of the said County of Nelson State of Kentucky and who after being first duly sworn according to Law doth on his oath depose and say that he on the 9th day of November 1842 made a declaration before Elijah Davis Esqr in order to obtain a Pension under the act of 7 June 1832, and in his declaration he endeavoured to narrate his service in the war of the Revolution with as much particularity as possible, and considering the loss of his memory to some extent he believes that he well and truly set forth his service and particularly the duration of the same or length of time of the same. Deponent further saith that when he made his said declaration he did not intend to convey the Idea that his tours were of longer duration than three months each, for they were of that length of time except the last tour which was not full three months on account of his taken sick before its termination. Deponent further saith that he volunteered as Ensign and filled the Office of Commissary in Chief for a three months tour and which tour terminated just before Christmas, and upon its termination he and the other officers returned to Augusta County, and upon their arrival, he and some of the officers and particularly the principal Officers again volunteered for another tour of three months, and when it terminated which deponent thinks was about the last of March, he volunteered for another of three months as said Ensign and filled the Office of Chief Commissary and deponent cannot say whether he returned back to Augusta County to volunteer or whether while at his station volunteer'd. And when the last mentioned tour terminated which declarant thinks was about the last of June or first of July 1781 he deponent again volunteered for another tour and before its termination he was taken sick and could not complete it. Deponent thinks the time he was taken sick was about the first of September 1781 thus making his actual service from the time he volunteered about the middle of September 1780 to the first of Sept 1781 of nearly one whole years duration, and deponent thinks he stated verbatim the same about the duration of his service in his declaration made before Elijah Davis on the 9th day of November 1842. Deponent further saith that he mentioned in his former declaration the circumstances, the stations or some of them, and the names of the Officers that attended his service, but from the loss of memory he cannot on what particular day or month state that he was at such a particular place or station. Deponent knows the names of most of the stations and the names of the immediate officers under and with whom his service was performed, and he has stated the same in his former declaration, but would not wish to try definitively to state at what particular part of his last several tours of service such and such particular officers were with him until the whole were enumerated. Deponent would now state that at Richmond virginia he remained some time and considered himself there stations and at Williamsburgh and likewise considered himself there stationed, and at a Station about 15 or 20 miles below Richmond he was stationed some time and which was near Colonel Birds [sic: Byrd's] old place and the name of the Station he does not now remember [probably Malvern Hill]. At Camp Carson he was stationed some time at which he lost an immense deal of provision for his troops. At Jerico mills he staid a short time. Deponent further states that he was at the above stations or some of them in the first of the year 1781 and the service afs'd. performed in the Summer of 1781 was of a moving character as they could not remain stationary at any one place any length of time Deponent thinks in his former declaration he made mention of the circuits of the travels of the Army &c.

And now having done all that he is enable to do, he respectfully prays that his claim may be duly considered, and an allowance made for the service by him so arduously and faithfully rendered for the United States above sixty years ago, and for which he has to this day remained unrequited.

Further deponent saith not May 20 1843

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

NOTES:

According to J. T. McAllister's *Virginia Militia in the Revolutionary War* Christopher Graham took the oath as Ensign on 11 May 1777. Commissions had to be signed by the governor. Each commissioned officer held his commission until he resigned or was removed.

The French troops were mainly infantry under Rochambeau. Comte de Grasse was the French officer whose fleet blocked Cornwallis's escape by York River.

On 9 Nov 1842 Robert M. Graham certified Christopher Graham's integrity and reputation as an officer, having known him for more than 40 years. On the same day William Weathers stated that Christopher Graham was "a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church and a man of high standing and of a high family, his Brother was long a Congressman from the State of Kentucky, and one of the family is the proprietor of the celebrated springs of Harrodsburgh Ky." On the same day Benjamin Duncan added that "Christopher Graham has been of the most splendid schollars of this country."

The file includes the following letter from the Pension Office to C. H. Trabue of Frankfort KY dated 7 Sep 1843:

"The add'l. & indefinite statement of Christopher Graham has been examined & filed. "It fails to comply with, if it does not evade, the requisition for more specific narrative of each term of service and no efforts have been made to adduce the proofs still attainable in Va which you were informed would be required of him.

"The quantum of service which he alleges he rendered in the Va. Militia in volunteer companies does not comport with our knowledge of the course of the Service – There were no 'volunteer Companies' as there was no authority to accept them. The militia were in all cases drafted and altho the drafts sometimes consisted of volunteers, yet each man was credited with the tour as a militia & exempted from future drafts untill the requisition again came to his class.

"His claim will not be allowed even for the smallest pension unless he produce the required evidence."

There were, fact, volunteer companies of militia, although Graham never claimed to have served in one. He merely stated that he and other officers volunteered. Recognizing that records of the militia were seldom kept, the pension act of 1832 required only that militia soldiers submit statements by two neighbors attesting to their character for veracity and their reputation as soldiers of the Revolution.