

Southern Campaigns American Revolution Pension Statements & Rosters

Pension application of John Hancock R4551 & W10086 ¹

f30NC

Transcribed by Will Graves

4/23/09 rev'd 12/11/15 & 4/3/17

[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. The word 'illegible' or 'indecipherable' appearing in brackets indicates that at the time I made the transcription, I was unable to decipher the word or phrase in question. 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 skills fail 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 material errors or omissions to my attention.]

[This is the same veteran whose application appears in W10086]

State of North Carolina Montgomery County

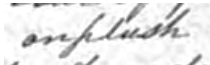
On this 24th day of July 1834 personally appeared before me Littleton Harris who being an acting Justice of the peace in and for the said County appeared John Hancock a resident of the United States in the County of Montgomery and State of North Carolina aged 74 years the 10th day of July 1834 who being 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 entered the service of the United States under the following named officers and served as herein stated.

The said John Hancock first states he entered the service of the United States as a soldier of the Revolution as he believes on the 2nd, 3rd or 5th of the month of October 1778 as a substituted soldier for Richard Clapton as one of the Militia of North Carolina in the County of Bute (now Franklin County by a division) for and during the service of five months at old Bute Court House under Col. Thomas Eaton, Capt. William Allen, Lieut. John Hopkins, and as he believes another man by the name of William Allen Ensign and Samuel Hancock orderly Sgt. (no other officers recollected at that time) from said C. House he was marched down through the interior of North Carolina to Elizabeth on Cape Fear River below Fayetteville NC where he met his General (Ash) [John Ashe] and there rendezvoused after meeting General Ashe and some other Militia troops of North Carolina. From thence he marched through a part of North Carolina towards the Cheraw Hills in SC until they got to the State line where some of the soldiers objected to crossing the line alleging that they were only drafted to serve in North Carolina but ultimately they crossed the State line & marched through by said C. Hills on to Charleston SC where he remained a short period; from thence he marched for Savannah River towards a place called the " Two Sisters" [Ferry] where the British were said to be but when they got news from there the British had evacuated the place he then marched up the Savannah River to Augusta in pursuit of the British then crossed the River into Georgia State and then marched to Brier Creek. There was a Bridge over or across said Creek, but the British had took it to pieces or destroyed it, and near said Bridge somewhat in the fork at or near the Confluence of the 2 streams (Brier Creek & Savannah River) he and the Army stationed some few days when and where the enemy or British assailed and attacked the American troops about the 3rd or 4th day of

¹ BLWt87014-160-55

March 1779 Just as his time or tour of 5 months service expired or was within one or 2 days of it -- at an anplush [sic, ambush?]² where the American troops were scattered and in the worst kind of order for battle owing as was generally supposed to the bad management of General Ashe. He further states that the contest resulted in the British taking about 4 or 500 of the Americans as prisoners out of 2500 and the said John Hancock states that he was taken as one of the prisoners at that time by the British and they carried him the said John Hancock down Savannah River to Savannah Town from there he was taken to a British prison ship of war & put on board of the Ship & kept until the last of September 1779 at the mouth of said River or bar about the distance of 20 miles from the mainland during which time he lost almost entirely the use of his limbs & and had as bad fair [fare] as a sick man could apparently have to live and finding no way to escape which had been anticipated by an exchange of prisoners, or to live, but to enlist in the British ranks which he done expressly in order to make his escape from the British provided he got well or able to do so in case an opportunity should occur and permit him. He states that after he enlisted he was put in the British hospital at Savannah (fall season 1779) in which he continued about twelve months (September the latter part 1780) in that space of time he had the smallpox desperately and other sickness after which time he entered the British ranks (hardly able to stand it) but marched with the British up to Augusta the rise of one hundred miles at which town he was stationed some few months in the British lines or ranks until he thought himself able to make his escape which he attempted and done some time in the earliest days in May 1781. He states he crossed Savannah River along into South Carolina to Ninety Six to the American Army commanded by General Green [sic, Nathanael Greene] about the 8th or 10th of May the aforesaid instant. He further states that he went personally to General Greene and told him his situation how he had been taken and imprisoned by the British and asked the General if he could give him an instrument of writing so that he could get home. He here states the declarations of General Greene he the General advised him the said John Hancock that it would be very dangerous for him to travel all the way home by himself (it might have been that the General thought if he had been taken again by the British or Tories that they would kill him without delay for his having left the British ranks), but he further states that General Greene after speaking as before advised him to volunteer his services as a soldier and serve as a soldier until he could get in his own State NC & which advice he took and entered the service as a volunteer at Ninety Six under General Greene (no others of the officers recollected but Col. Lee of the Light Horse in consequence of the whole of the officers being strangers). He further states that he remained at Ninety Six some length of time in guarding the British whom General Greene had mostly surrounded in their fortress until General Greene detached a small quantity of his men under some officers and him the said Hancock for one in order to convey a quantity of British, and a few Tory prisoners from Ninety Six South Carolina to Salisbury North Carolina a distance of about 100 or 150 miles which expedition & object he and the other detached troops done and performed about the 10th or 15th of July 1781 at which time he the said John Hancock received a discharge from the head officer of the detached troops to return home according to advice from General Greene and in said discharge he states there was a provision for him to get something on the road home to eat at the expense of the Government; but he states he cannot recollect the officer's name who gave him his discharge but he then returned home to old Bute County (now Franklin County) in the latter part of July 1781 thus ending a service at 5 months lacking perhaps one or 2 days as a Substituted soldier at the North Carolina militia and nearly 7 months

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imprisonment and 2 months or the rise as a volunteer in General Greene's troops making 7 months service as a soldier of the he Revolution & 6 months or the rise of imprisonment amounting in the whole for 13 months. And he the said John Hancock states that he never got but one pair of short need [sic, knee] breeches for all his trials, sufferings and pains that he endured in the Revolution as a soldier. He states that he was not in any battle but that at Brier Creek and that as before in the British hospital about 12 months and was only 6 months or the rise in the British ranks after he had enlisted before he made his escape as he had previously designed by enlisting into their ranks. He the said John Hancock further states that the discharge which he received at Salisbury NC from the head officer of the detached troops of General Greene he kept some time carelessly and did not think that it ever would be beneficial to him so that he has lost or mislaid said discharge many years ago which was the last discharge that he ever received owing to his having been taken at the end of the first 5 months tour as a prisoner. He further states that he has not any documentary evidence of his service nor does he know of any person now living, (since the death of his brother Samuel Hancock³ who recently died), whose testimony he can procure to prove his services as a soldier of the Revolution. The said John Hancock further states that in order to draw a pension he went to his Court in October 1832 and employed Mr. J L Gains to draw his declaration and send on his claim to the War Department for him which he done; but at the time he states Mr. Gains was thronged with much business several applicants and has he the said Hancock believes made some errors in some important points in drawing his declaration, otherwise, the officers of the War Department did according to their reasons given and sent to Mr. Gains relative to his claim, which were as was stated the cause of his claim's being rejected, but he hereby call the attention of the Honorable officers of the War Department to this declaration, because he states that it contains a true or historical sketch of the most important events that occurred during his service &c as far as he can recollect and which he believes will correct those errors.

He further states that he was born on the 10th day of July 1760 in the State of Virginia from his parents information and was brought by his mother to old Bute County (now Franklin County North Carolina) where he was raised & lived there 10 years & better after he returned from the War and then moved into Montgomery County North Carolina in December 1792 where he has resided ever since. He further states from the decline of age and bodily infirmity he is unable to travel the distance to his Court in order to have his declaration recognized in said Court without injury.

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 and subscribed the day and year aforesaid
S/ L. Harris, JP

S/ John Hancock

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John Hancock", written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

[Benjamin Bell & William Hearn gave the standard supporting affidavit.]

[Littleton Harris, in his attestation of the declaration, notes that John Hancock was a minister of the Gospel of the Methodist order.]

[p 5]

³ [Samuel Hancock S8687](#)

I Nancy Finch residing in the County of Davidson do hereby certify that I, in Franklin County, resided near John Hancock the within applicant who, as appears, having sworn to and subscribed to the foregoing Declaration and that I was knowing to his going out in the Revolutionary War and saw him soon after he returned to his residence from the Revolution as a soldier and that I heard him talk of his being taken a prisoner by the British and being kept some time before he could make his escape and of his sickness and pain which he endured whilst with the British.

And I further state that he was greatly disfigured by the sign of the smallpox which he had had during his absence from home at that time and that his character as for truth was irreproachable and soon after the war he became a Preacher of the Gospel and his conduct is and was consistent with his profession therefore from my personal knowledge of facts and of him I have every reason to believe and doth believe that he served as he states; and likewise he was reputed and believed in that neighborhood to have been a soldier of the revolution. Sworn to and subscribed before made this night day of August 1834

S/ Val Hoover, JP

S/ Nancy Finch, X her mark

[p 6]

State of North Carolina Montgomery County:

This day personally appeared before me Hardy Morgan one of the acting Justices assigned to keep the peace for the County & State aforesaid Samuel Hancock Resident of the County and State aforesaid and of the age of 75 years or thereabouts and made oath upon the Holy Evangelist of Almighty God that he was personally knowing to some of the Services of his Brother John Hancock, Rendered in the Revolutionary War; that is the said John Hancock Substituted himself in the place of Richard Clapton under the following named officers, to wit] Col. Thomas Eaton, Capt. William Allen Senior, John Hopkins the Lieut. -- he entered the service under the said officers at old Bute County Court House -- in said State; But at this time, now Franklin County: In October, about the year A.D. 1778 for a 5 months Tour which he served punctually until the Battle at Brier Creek where he was taken prisoner by the British (the Enemy) and did not Return home again, short of 2 years and a half and further this deponent saith not. Sworn to and subscribed before me this 7th day of February A.D. 1833.

S/ Sml Hancock

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sam Hancock", written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

S/ H. Morgan, JP

[The referenced application drawn by "Mr. Gains" does not appear to be in the file but it does appear in FPA W10086 and the transcription of it is set forth below. There is a letter dated May 28, 1852 from Edmund Deberry of Mount Gilead North Carolina inquiring as to the status of the claim indicating that the veteran was still then alive and seeking his pension.]

[misfiled and appears p 10 of FPA W10086]

State of North Carolina Montgomery County

On this 7th day of January 1833 personally appeared in open Court in the town of Lawrenceville in the County and State aforesaid before William Swearingen, Eli Harris & Archibald Graham Justices of the Court of pleas & quarter Sessions then in session John

Hancock of the County & State aforesaid aged 72 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.

This applicant states that he was born in the State of Virginia in the year 1760 July 10th but moved into North Carolina before he could remember to Bute County then called now Franklin. That he has a record of his age taken from his father's Book. That he entered the service of the United States in the year 1778 in October to the best of his recollection as a substitute in the place of one Richard Clapton who was drafted for a term of 5 months under one Capt. William Allen who raised a company in Bute County by draft. The lieutenant was named John Hopkins, Ensign William Allen. After the company was made up they joined others under the command of Col. Eaton when they marched to Elizabeth Town on the Cape Fear River below Fayetteville, which was a place of rendezvous where they joined the Army under Brig. General Ashe and one Col. Williams. After remaining a short time at that place the Army took up its march through a long leaf pine & sandy Country until they came to Pedee River which they crossed at a place called Cheraw Hills from thence they marched to Charleston where they remained a few days encamped in the suburbs of the Town leaving Charleston they marched into any to go to a place called the Two Sisters on Savannah River but before they arrived there the news came that the British had left that place and had gone up the Savannah River on the Georgia side when Ashe's Army marched up the same River on the South Carolina side to Augusta. There the American Army crossed the Savannah River and the British marched back down the River the American Army marched in pursuit of them until the British Army crossed Brier Creek and tore up the bridge after them, when Ashe's Army came up to the bridge Torn up, they went into Camp in the neighborhood where Brier Creek empties into the Savannah River and while the American Army was there encamped the British Army marched around and recrossed Brier Creek above and attacked Ashe's Army in their rear suddenly when Ashe did not expect an attack. The American Army were defeated and several hundred of them made prisoners one of which this affiant John Hancock was. The enemy were a detachment from General Provo's [sic, Augustine Prevost's] Army. After the battle was over the American prisoners were carried down to Savannah Town and kept him a few days and afterwards were carried by water to the prison ships at that time lying at the bar at the mouth of the River. This affiant states that Col. Phil [paper torn and text missing] from Chatham County was taken prisoner [paper torn and text missing] on board the same ship with himself. This affiant further states that he remained on board the ship a prisoner for about 6 months suffering greatly for the want of wholesome provisions and sickness until from continued confinement he partially lost the use of his limbs when he was taken to an Island called Wilmington Island and where all hopes of his being released had vanished he was induced from the fear of losing his life to enlist in the British service for certain term the exact time he does not recollect -- After he enlisted he was carried up to Savannah which was besieged by the Continental American and French armies. This affiant states that he remained in Savannah sick in the Hospital for some time and that when he recovered his health he was marched up the Country towards Augusta and at Augusta he deserted from the British and made his escape in the year 1781 in May or June as well as he recollects and joined the General Green's [sic, Nathanael Greene's] Army at Ninety Six as a volunteer until he could get an opportunity to return home. That he was sent by Greene with a company of soldiers who Guarded some British Prisoners to Salisbury in North Carolina where he met with an opportunity and returned home in July 1781 having been absent about 2 years and 9 months. This affiant states that after the War was over he lived in Franklin County until he

came to Montgomery County where he now resides and has resided for nearly 40 years. This affiant states that there are no persons at this time who can testify as to his services except his brother Samuel Hancock⁴ whose affidavit is herewith transmitted: This affiant states that there might be others in Franklin County which is some distance from him who could state his services, but he is unable if they are living to procure their testimony. This affiant is known to Eli Harris, & Col. Hardy Morgan and others who can testify as to his standing for veracity and their belief of his services as a soldier of the Revolution.

This affiant hereby relinquishes every claim 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 and subscribed the day & year aforesaid.

S/ J. B. Martin

S/ John Hancock

[William Knight, a clergyman, and Hardy Morgan gave the standard supporting affidavit.]

[p 43 of [John Hancock W10086](#)]

State of North Carolina, Montgomery County: On this 16th day of December 1834 personally appeared before me Hardy Morgan one of the acting Justices of the Peace in and for said County, John Hancock, a resident of the County and State aforesaid who being first duly sworn according to law, doth on his oath make the following additional declaration as the aid and strength of further proof to a former or an original declaration made by him the said Hancock about the 24th of July last in order to obtain the benefit of the act of Congress passed June the 7th 1832.

He the said Hancock states that, from the rapid decease of his old fellow soldiers, his having moved from that County in which he first entered the service, & into which he returned from the Army of the Revolution, and his feeble body, and his unfortunate lot of his having been taken a prisoner, and having to return to the American Army in the best manner that he could, he cannot as he believes make altogether as such conclusive and comprehensive proof as is required by a letter from the War Department to his agent in answer to his application made last August; but he states he will give the best circumstantial proof &c that it is now in his power to do to the best of his knowledge believing at the same time the said act was passed for him as well as others and that the walls of our free and Republican Government does not require impossibilities of an honest man, nor does he believe that the Honorable Officers of the War Department ought to require them. He the said Hancock states that he will designate some of the American soldiers who were taken at Gen. Ashe's defeat at Brier Creek, and imprisoned with him at the same time by the British as mentioned in his preceding declaration in order that some of them perhaps may come within the scope of an acquaintance of the War Department &c to wit the fellow prisoners: Col. Elbert of the Regular troops from Virginia (so said), Col. Philip Alston of the North Carolina militia, an officer by the name of Williams who was a gallant soldier, one Fitner a fifer (perhaps from Virginia), (private) Jahu Stokely,⁵ John Carrel, Matthew Garrot, Edward McBride said to be a regular from Virginia, William Poplin,⁶ one Stokes a regular as he believes from Virginia, Moses Lambert, from North Carolina, John Vinson, John Rickman perhaps a regular, Benjamin Hays, & one Mills.

⁴ FPA S8687. A transcript of the affidavit of Samuel Hancock in support of the application of his brother for a pension can be found in the file [John Hancock R4551](#).

⁵ Thanks to Ann Blomquist for pointing out that this veteran's name appears in this application as Jahu Stokely, not John Stokely as I had transcribed it. The given name of this veteran is more frequently spelled Jehu (Jehu Stokely).

⁶ [William Poplin W10231](#)

He the said Hancock further states that after he left the British and came to General Greene's Army at Ninety Six South Carolina and volunteered and remained as described in his former declaration of July last he was detached with others to convey the prisoners to Salisbury at which place he received his discharge from the head officer but does not at this time recollect but one of the soldiers with whom he marched to Salisbury whose name was one Yerpin [could be Terpin] so the whole circumstance and nature of the case precludes his proof from the period at which he left the British lines to the end of his service with General Greene's troops except by his on oath because he states that no person left the British lines with him and there was no person in General Greene's Army with whom he had any personal acquaintance before that period except Terpin; and the acquaintance that he formed then among the soldiers was a limited one and time and old age has robbed him of that some time ago.

Sworn to and subscribed before me the day and year aforesaid

S/ H. Morgan, JP

S/ John Hancock

[William Harris & James Hurley gave the standard supporting affidavit.]