

Southern Campaigns American Revolution Pension Statements and Rosters

Pension Application of William Steele R96

VA Sea Service/ VA Half Pay

Transcribed and annotated by C. Leon Harris. Revised 21 Jan 2022.

Pension Office

Feb. 6 1836

I certify that from an examination of the proof exhibited in support of the claim of the heirs of the late William Steele, dec'd. I am satisfied that he served as Lieutenant in the Virginia State Navy; that he left the service in the latter end of the year seventeen hundred and eighty one, after the reduction of the said Navy and that he died in the winter of 1792-3; that William Govan Steele and John Andrew Steele of Charleston, S. C., are the sons and only heirs of said William Steele, dec'd. that the case comes within the provisions of the act of July 5, 1832; And I do therefore give it as my opinion that they are entitled to the pay due under said act at the rate of one hundred and eighty two dollars and fifty cents per annum from the Thirty first of December seventeen hundred and eighty one to the first of December seventeen hundred and ninety two; and that William H. Todd, the attorney [of] the heirs is entitled to receive the amount.

[The handwriting in the following document is difficult to read, and this transcription should be used with more than usual caution.]

Memorandum

Wm Steele was a Lt of the Virginia State Navy and in service to the end of the war, he being a Prisoner on Perol [sic: prisoner on parole] and all Prisonier have been decided by the Courts of Va in service to the end of the war and paid commutation and interest and also been thus recognized and paid without a decision of the Courts. Referince is had to the case Valentine Thomas Dalton [W3610] a Prisoner with the Indians paid Commutation and interest through a Judgement of the Court of appeals of Va. To Churchill gibbs [sic: Churchill Gibbs S46002] a Lt & Prisioneir Paid through a Judgement of the Court of appials commutation and intrest in 1792 or 3, To Issac Holmes [sic: Isaac Holmes R15233] a Lt & Paymaster paid Commutation & interest as Lt by Va without the intervension of the Courts in 1794 he being a Prisonere of war Again of Capt Edwd Travis [Edward Travis R103] Paid by the departments at this place Commutation and interest as a Capt of Va State Navy.,
He being a Prisonier On Parole –

The claim of Lt Wm Steele is now Prisented Claiming the Commutation and interest as Lt of the Navy – deducting therefrom the sum received in Feby 1836 at this place by Wm H Todd the Atty of the admin[istrator of the estate]

for evidence of his being in captivity see the certificate of the Clerk of the house of delegates herewith. and also the decision of the Court of appials in 1830 in the Case of James Markham [R72]. Stating him to have been a Prisoner of war and in service to the end of the war (as all prisoners since (Virginia if she would could not make exchanges) for any further evidence which may be deemed necessary the commissioner is refered to the Vouchers on file in the third Auditores office on which the half pay Claim was allowed and paid in Feby 1836, It is requested that this Claim be taken up and disposed of as early as practicable. It will be seen that the Admin has refered me to his friend Exgovernor [William H.] Seward of New York and Judge Butler of South Carolina both now in the Senate of the US. But I wish neither collision or difficulty or to cost[?] on those questons[?]. I only want the case disposed of at the earliest [illegible word] and the unnecessary delay which it is wished to avoid
Washington 1st of March 1850
Henry Van Thorp
Agent for the Admin.

[The following was certified on 27 Feb 1850 as being an extract from the Journal of the House of Delegates of 5 Dec 1783.]

A Petition of James Markham, William Steel and John Kautzman [R59] was presented to the House and

read setting forth that at the dissolution of the Navy they were Prisoners of war: that no provision hath been made by law for persons in their situation and praying relief

[From [bounty-land records in the Library of Virginia.](#)]

These are to Certify that Mr William Steele a Lieut in the Navy of this State was Continued in the Service with the Capt's that was appointed by the Act of Assembly May 1780 to be continued in the Service, was taken in the State Ship Tempest. Given under my hand this 1st day of June 1783.
Copy B Stark James Barron Com[modore] [VAS1949]

I do certify upon Honour that I acted as a Lieut in the State Navy from Aug't 20th 1776 till April 26th 1781 when taken Prisoner by Arnold. [See endnote.]

Given under my hand this 26th Aug't. 1783
Wm. Steele Leu't



To the Governor & Counsel of Virginia

The legal representatives of William Steele a Lieutenant of the State Navy of Virginia would represent, That said William Steele drew for his Services in his lifetime 2666 $\frac{2}{3}$ acres of land from Va on the 18th of august 1783 that he was one of those reported entitled to half pay during his life by the board of field officers of 1782, that he is entitled as the heirs beleives to 1333 $\frac{1}{3}$ acres more as a Lieutenant aforesaid they pray the allowance be made to them as has been made to others.

March 1834

[signed] Wm H Todd for the heirs

Petition for bounty land (additional)

Hrs of Wm. Steele Lieut. S. Navy

2666 $\frac{2}{3}$ acres of land have been received by this officer.

Wm. Steele was commissioned Lieut of the Tempest Feb'y 21, 1778. He was reported by a Board of Officers in 1784 as in service at the end of the war & entitled to half pay.

There is no proof of his having served six years, or more.

Resp'ly submitted

To his Excellency Govr Tazewell

John H. Smith Com'r &c/ May 14th 1834

N.B. no Lieut. in the Navy was entitled to more land, than a Lieut. in the land service – to wit to 2666 $\frac{2}{3}$ acres. If some have received more, others have no right, therefore & therefore alone, to ask it now.

To The Hon'l The Governor of Virginia

The Petition of Wm G & J A Steele devisees & only heirs at Law of Wm Steele dec'd your petitioners would state they are informed & believe their dec'd father entered the state navy of Va on the [illegible] day of July 1778 as a Lt of the same and served on the Tempest as such to the end of the war or untill captured & made prisoner of war. to sustain the facts they refer to J H Smiths report made in 1835 while acting as commissioner on Rev. Claims. also to the Navy Journals and the return of the board of officers of which James Baron was president in 1784. also the evidence on file in the Executive dept in which the original warrant of 2666 $\frac{2}{3}$ acres of land was issued. Your petitioners would state that they have made and filed before the executive of Va their petition for the additional 1333 $\frac{1}{3}$ acres of land due them in virtue of the services of Will Steele as a Lieutenant of the State Navy during the revolution to sustain which all the records were then [undeciphered] to but the same was rejected in 1836. as the claim is wholly of record & involves nothing but a legal rule to be determined on record evidence of facts no additional evidence is filed. A rehearing and full allowance is asked for most respectfully.

W G Steele J A Steele By W H Todd atto in fact

1838 Mar 27

This claim seems originally to have been properly allowed for bounty land as a Lieut. in the Navy – but a manifest error has been committed by a former Register [of the Land Office] in issuing the warrant. The warrant should be for bounty land as a Lieut. in the navy for the war doubling[?] the quantity received.

D Campbell [Gov. David Campbell]

NOTES:

On 27 Apr 1781 at Osborne's on James River, 20 mi below Richmond, Gen. Benedict Arnold destroyed or captured a large number of vessels of the Virginia Navy, including the *Tempest*.

An additional undated petition by Wm. G. and J. A. Steele states that they were of Charleston SC.

The file includes a copy of the last will and testament of William Steel signed on 10 Oct 1792 in Orangeburg District SC naming as heirs his wife "Rachell Steel" and his children, including William Govan Steele and the child with whom his wife was thought to be pregnant. He named his wife and Daniel Govan executors.

A letter dated 13 Feb 1835 refers to Colo. John Steele of Woodford KY and to Robert Steele of Franklin County.

[The Virginia Half Pay file contains 145 pages relating to two or three different sets of supposed heirs claiming the benefits due for the services of William Steele. Confusion arose when a pension agent, William H. Todd, learned that William Steele, a physician on Wadmalaw Island SC, had died without a will. Todd then approached his relatives to apply for additional bounty land and other benefits, thinking that this William Steele was Lt. William Steele, who actually died in Orangeburg SC, leaving his estate to his two sons. Todd explains the mistake near the end of the file.]

[On 30 May 1830 William M. Steele, Sarah M. Steele, and Mary C. Steele of Knoxville TN appointed John M. Walker as their attorney to obtain benefits due for the services of their father, William Steele. The file includes letters addressed to a lumber merchant named Capt. William Steele and to a Dr. William Steele., both residing in South Carolina]

State of Kentucky Jessamine County Sct.

At a County Court held for said County on Monday the 18th day of November AD 1833, It was proven to the Satisfaction of the Court by the Testimony of Robert Steele and other Testimony. That William Steele a Lieutenant of the State Navy of Virginia died in the year 1800 in the State of South Carolina intestate and without ever having any children, and that his wife has long since died. And that said William Steele left at his death as his only heirs at law & distributees Margaret Steele, Mary Steele, Susan Steele, Jane Steele and Isabella Steele all his sisters. That the said Isabella Steele died without ever being married and intestate. That said Margaret the sister of said William Steele of the Navy intermarried with Samuel Steele, both of whom are now dead, having died intestate and left the following children viz. Mary Steele, Catharine Steele, Jane Steele, Nancy Steele & William Steele. that a portion of the aforesaid heirs married. That Mary lives in the State of Missouri, that Catharine lives in Greenbrier County Virginia, that Jane and William live in Tennessee. That said Nancy died in Augusta County Virginia an infant without issue and intestate. That Mary Steele a sister of William Steele of the Navy intermarried with David Steele, both of whom are now dead, and left the following children viz. Thomas Steele and Samuel C. Steele now residents of Jessamine County Kentucky. Nancy Steele who intermarried with Samuel Lam, that said Lam is now dead, leaving said Nancy a widow now of Harrison County Kentucky. Mary Steele who intermarried with William Scantlen who reside in Indiana. That Jane Steele the Sister of Wm. Steele of the Navy intermarried with Walter Cunningham both of whom are dead, leaving the following children, towit. John Cunningham of Jessamine County Kentucky Mary wife of Robt. Lowry, Jane wife of John Steele of Ohio, Isabella wife of Callam H. Bailey Nancy Drake a widow That Susan Steele a Sister of William Steele of the Navy intermarried with Thomas McNutt both of whom

are dead and left the following children viz. Samuel McNutt of Mercer County Kentucky Susan McNutt now the wife of David Dixon of Harrison County Kentucky & Sally McNutt who is now the wife of James Craig of Harrison County Kentucky which is ordered to be Certified.

And at a Court held for said County of Jessamine on the said 8th day of November 1833,

On the motion of John Cunningham one of the heirs and distributees of William Steele deceased, and he suggesting that there are Revolutionary rights or claims due the heirs of said William Steele dec'd and the heirs now residing in Kentucky appeared in Court in person or by their attorney in fact, and consented that the said John Cunningham might administer on the estate of said Wm. Steele dec'd. and receive and receipt for all the rights due them in virtue of the said Wm. Steeles Services in the Virginia State Navy or any other rights or claims due to them from said William Steeles estate and It also appearing to the Court that a portion of the property or estate of the said William Steele dec'd is within the Jurisdiction of this Court – Administration of all and singular the goods chattels rights and credits of the estate of said William Steele deceased is granted to the said John Cunningham who thereupon took the oaths of an administrator prescribed by law and together with John Perry, Thomas B Scott, Jasper Griffin & C. H. Bailey his Securities entered into & acknowledged bond in the penalty of Five thousand Dollars. Conditioned according to law.

[On 18 Nov 1833 John Cunningham appointed William H. Todd attorney to obtain any benefits for the service of William Steele.]

State of Tennessee } Came before me Joseph Marshal a Justice of the peace in and for said
Monroe County } County of Monroe William Stirling resident in said County aged about
sixty years, who after being duly sworn deposes, and says that he was well acquainted with William Steele
in the County of Lancaster Paxton District in the state of Pennsylvania for five or six years when Deponent
was a boy – that the said William at the age of about twentyfive years removed from the County of
Lancaster in the State of Pennsylvania to the County of Augusta in the State of Virginia some short time
before the Revolutionary war. That deponent had removed also to the County of Augusta in the State of
Virginia a few years, say two or three years before the said William Came there to reside, where Deponent
was again intimately acquainted with him until he left home in Augusta County to embark as Deponent
understood in the Navy during the war of the revolution. That deponent understood that the said William
was commissioned as a Lieutenant in the Navy and served for some time as such in the American service
during the revolutionary war. That Deponent was again acquainted with him after his return from the navy
in the County of Augusta aforesaid, that the said William removed from the County of Augusta to the
State of Georgia and settled in the Town of Savannah, where Deponent understood and believes he died
intestate about the year 1801 or 1802, without any children never having been married. That his father and
mother both died in the State of Pennsylvania before he removed from that State. that said William had the
following brothers & sisters towit, John Steele who lived and died in the State of Pennsylvania but whether
before or after the said William died Deponent cannot recollect. That he left several Children whose
names are not recollected, David Steele who is also dec'd & resided at the time of his death in the State of
Pennsylvania & died as Deponent understood without Children, Nancy Steele who Married a man by the
name of Boggs, Margaret Steele, who married her Cousin Sam'l Steele, another Sister whose name is not
recollected, who married a man of the name of McNutt, another whose name Deponent thinks was
Issabella married her Cousin Thomas Steele, another named Polly who married her Cousin David Steele,
and yet another Jane who married Walter Cunningham, – Issabella Steele died in Augusta County
aforesaid some time before her brother William, Deponent knows nothing about the deaths or families of
the other sisters except Margaret. Deponent was well acquainted with William Steele the only surviving
son and heir of the said Saml & Margaret who was named after his uncle the said Lieut. William Steele,
who died a few years since in the County of Blount in the State of Tennessee aforesaid leaving several
Children as deponent understands is heirs at law and further deponent saith not
[20 Dec 1833] [signed] Wm. Stirling

The affidavit of David Steele [S7605] taken in Augusta County Virginia, on the eight day of February 1834

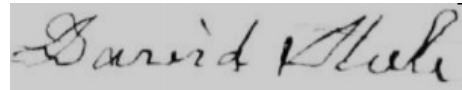
This affiant being in the 75 year of his age & first duly charged & sworn deposed & saith, that, he was well acquainted with William Steele, who was Commissioned a Lieutenant of the Virginia State Navy during the revolutionary war, that said William Steele was at the time he entered the service a citizen resident of Augusta County State of Virginia, that this affiant was distantly related to him, but has no interest in the claims of said William, that said William Steele left Augusta County State of Virginia and went into South Carolina and married a widow of that State as this affiant was always informed, & that he became a resident of said State of South Carolina, and that his wife died before him, and that he thereafter died & left as his sisters & heirs at law, Margaret Mary Issabella Jane & Alisabeth Steele, that said Margaret intermarried with Samuel Steele, they had numerous children who live in greenbriar Catharine Hanley & Nancy Evens Va Tennessee & Missouri

That Mary Steele the sister of s'd William married with David Steele that they are both dead & their Children live in Ky mostly as I am informed That Jane Steele intermarried with Walter Cunningham both of whom are dead & their Children live in Jessamine County Ky.

That Alisabeth intermarried with Thomas McNutt both of whom are dead the Children live in Ky

That ISSabella intermarried with Thomas Steele both of whom are dead, leaving the following persons their children Jane Steele & William Steele. Jane Intered married with John Moore and moved to the state of Kentucky and died leaving a number of children Thos. Moore the Eldest son William Steele is also dead leaving a widow in Rockbridge County Virginia with a number of Chirdren Thos Steele the Eldest son.

The foregoing individuals are all the Sisters of William Steele who was a Lieutenant of the State navy of Va, further this deponent saith not.



The deposition of Bartholomew Carroll of the City of Charleston South Carolina, to be used as evidence in the Departments of Washington City, on behalf of William Govan Steele and John Andrew Steele the devisees of William Steele deceased, who was an officer of the Virginia State navy.

Deponent States that he is now in the Seventy third year of his age; that he became acquainted with William Steele in the year of 1790 or 1791, while this deponent was merchandising in the City of Charleston, that William Steele was universally reputed a Captain of the Navy of Virginia that Captn. Steele as this deponent understood when he first came to Augusta Georgia, entered into merchandising there with one Hampton, by which he said to have lost estate; that Captn. Steele came to Georgia from State of Virginia, as this deponent understood and that previous to coming to Va. he came from Pennsylvania. That shortly after Capt. Steele came from Augusta to Orangeburgh District, he intermarried with Miss Rachel Govan of that district, and had by her a child William Govan Steele and died leaving his Wife enscent with Child, which was afterwards born and is now John Andrew Steele each of the Sons now live in the city of Charleston deponent some eighteen months after the death of Captain Steele intermarried with his widow and lived with her untill within a few months past, when she died in the City aforesaid. This deponent states that there was many papers relative to the Services of Captn. Steele placed in the hands of a Mr. Coulter of Virginia, which he presumes are lost by this time, That all his old letters which remained in this deponents possession were handed to his son John A Steele, and that there are few or none with deponent. Deponent states that William Steele made a Will or record in Orangeburgh District, where said Capt. Steele died. Captain William Steele was about five feet Eleven Inches high fair Complexion and light hair.

This deponent always understood that Captn. Steele served in the Virg'a Navy, but was first from Pennsylvania. This deponent states that he has often heard an officer by the name of Captain James Kennedy [W490] of the South Carolina line during the Revolution, speak of Capt. Steele's services in the Navy of the revolution, and all the information relative to Capt. Steele's Services is from reputation, he knew nothing of his own knowledge, neither of the executors named in Captn Wm. Steele's Will ever

acted, one was Daniel Govan the other this deponents Wife. Mr. Govan was accidentally killed (by a fall from his Horse) some Eight or ten years after the will was made. [signed] B'n. Carroll

Frankfort [KY] 12th Feby 1835

Sometime in the [illegible] of 1834 whilst in the City of Charleston So. Ca. I received a letter from Mr William H Todd of this place requesting me to make some inquires respecting a certain Wm Steele who as he had been informed died on the Island of Wadmalaw in that vicinity. The result of my enquiries were; that such a man had died there, that, previous to his death he had had Married a widow whoes name before her marriage to Steele I did not find out, nor do I now recollect at what time he died, but a schedule of his estate is of record in the ordinaires office in the City of Charleston, that he died without heirs, and that his estate was likely to be eschetd [escheated] to the state of So. Ca. in consequence of no one appearing to claim it as lawful heir. This last information I received from Mr Dobson who is the eschator for the City of charleston, and who told me he was then investigating the matter after investigating the subject as far as I did I was induced to the belief that Wm Steele above named was the same for whom Mr Todd was enquiring – my name being Steele it may not be improper to state that the individual spoken of above and myself are in nowise related as far as I know or believe and that I am not in any manner interested in the result of this business.
[signed] J. Steele [John Steele]

Captain Daniel Townsend of Edisto Island near Charleston So Ca being called on states that he was well acquainted with William Steele who died on Wadmalaw Island about 1805. that he Steele came to that Island some 40 years ago a small man very little upwards of five feet high dark complexion was called a practicing physycian and did practice some, that he was not old enough to have been in the army of the Revolution from his appearance when he first came among us on the Island, that I was myself a Lieutenant in the militia of So Ca during the Revolution and Mr Steele could not in my opinion have served as such. he never bore that reputation as having been in the revolution to the best of my recollection, reputation said Dr Steele came from Baltimore Md. I resided on the Island of Wadmalaw at the time said Steele came there. Said Steele intermarried with Mrs Patterson a widow of Dr Patterson
November 20th 1835
Charleston So. Ca.



The deposition of Jacob Rickenbacker, of Orangeburg District, in the state of South Carolina, to be used as evidence in the Department at Washington on behalf of William Govan Steele and of John Andrew Steele, the devisees of William Steele, deceased, who served as an officer in the Virginia State Navy.

Deponent states that he knew & well remembers the late Captain William Steele – that he was a tall, well made man, nearly six feet in height, of fair complexion – that he supposed he served in the Revolution as he heard him always addressed by a military title. that he knew him after his marriage with Rachel Govan, and to the time of his death, which took place many years ago. Farther than this deponent cannot say.
[signed] Jacob Rickenbaker

[8 Dec 1835. William Rowe on the same date made a similar deposition.]