

Southern Campaigns American Revolution Pension Statements & Rosters

Pension application of William Speer S11446 ¹

f98NC

Transcribed by Will Graves

3/4/11

[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.]

[p 11: Bounty land claim dated December 8, 1855 filed in Jefferson County Alabama by the veteran at which time he states he is then 97 years old, a more detailed description of his services is given in his application for a pension transcribed below.]

[p 21]

State of Alabama Jefferson County: On this 13th day of February 1856, Personally appeared before me H. H. Hancock a Justice of the Peace in and for said County William Speer aged ninety-seven years, a resident of Jefferson County State of Alabama: who being duly sworn according to law declares that he was a soldier in the War of the American Revolution, in the latter part of said war, and served three tours under the following Officers to wit, the first as a private under Captain Samuel Moseby in the Regiment commanded by Colonel Joseph Williams for a term of three months. Also a second tour of three months as an Ensign, in the Company commanded by Captain Henry Speer, in the Regiment commanded by Colonel Joseph Philips also another three months tour, as a private in the company commanded by Captain David Humphreys in the Regiment commanded by Colonel James Martin, making in all a service of nine months. All three tours were performed from the State of North Carolina. And he further states that he was honorably discharged at the end of each term of service. He further states, that his reason for never applying for a pension for his Revolutionary Services is, that he was in easy circumstances, and did not desire to be regarded as under the necessity of being supported by the General Government, having a sufficiency to live upon without the Government's aid, but his property having been placed in hands that squandered it, he is now brought to the necessity of applying to the General Government for a pension to support him in his declining years. On being asked where he was when Cornwallis surrendered, he answered "that he was in the service under Captain Humphreys in Wilmington, North Carolina, when the news of the surrender of Cornwallis reached there, which he states was in September or October 1781. He therefore hopes that sufficient proof has been made to entitle him to his pension.

Test: S/ G. C. Jacks

S/ William Speer, X his mark

Sworn to and subscribed before me the year and date above written

S/ H. H. Hancock, JP

State of Alabama Jefferson County: On this 15th day of May 1856 personally appeared before

¹ BLWt39215-160-55

me Joab Bagley, Judge of the Probate Court (which Court is a Court of Record) for the County and State aforesaid, William Speer, aged ninety-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 entered the service of the United States under the following named officers and served as herein stated – First a tour of three months as a private in the Company commanded by Captain Samuel Moseby in the Regiment or Battalion commanded by Colonel Joseph Williams. Secondly, a tour of three months as an Ensign in the company commanded by Captain Henry Speer, in the Battalion or Regiment commanded by Colonel Joseph Philips. Thirdly, as a private, for a tour of three months, in the company commanded by Captain David Humphries, in the Regiment or Battalion commanded by Colonel James Martin. He further states that he lived in Surry County North Carolina, at the time the above services were performed, the precise date of his entering or leaving the service he cannot state, but is satisfied it was at the close of the war in the years 1780 & 81. He further states that he was in service near Wilmington North Carolina when the news of the surrender of Cornwallis was received. He further states that he was drafted for the first tour but was a volunteer in both the others – Being quite young, when drafted, his Captain proposed to his father, that if he would furnish a packhorse for the service, his son might remain at home, which he states was done and that it was to be considered the same as if he had actually served the tour, this circumstance he omitted to state when he sent his first declaration a few weeks since to the pension office. In the second tour he states he was a volunteer and an Ensign under the Officers above named, he states that he volunteered in Surry County North Carolina and marched then to Salisbury North Carolina and from there to Henry County in Virginia where the term of service having expired he was dismissed. In his third tour he states he was a volunteer – that he volunteered in Surry County North Carolina and marched from there to Guilford where he joined the Guilford Troops, from there they marched to and fro through the country until, when near Wilmington North Carolina, the news of the surrender of Cornwallis being received, they were thereafter dismissed. He further states that he has no documentary evidence and that he knows of no person now living whose testimony he can procure who can testify to his service.

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, to his knowledge.

Sworn to and subscribed the day and year aforesaid.

S/ J. Bagley, Judge

S/ William Speer, X his mark

[Benjamin Tarrant, a clergyman, and L. G. McMillion gave the standard supporting affidavit.]

Interrogatories propounded by the Judge to the Applicant

1st Where and in what year were you born?

Ans. I was born on the Easton shore of Maryland in the year 1758

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

Ans. I have, and it is in the possession of my Granddaughter in this County

3rd Where were you living when called into service: where have you lived since the Revolutionary War and where do you now live?

Ans. When called into service I was living in Surry County North Carolina. Since the revolutionary war I have lived in Kentucky from 1801 until 1824 when I moved to Alabama where I have lived ever since

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

Ans. Orders were received by Colonel Martin Armstrong to call us in the service – the first term I was drafted, the other 2 I was a volunteer as above stated.

5th State the names of some of the regular officers who were with the troops when you served, such Continental and militia regiments as you can recollect and the general circumstances of your service.

Ans. There were no Regular troops with us. In addition to the officers named above, I remember the names of Major Gillespie, Captain Stewart and Captain Herolit and I further state that my deposition was taken in 1854 by the heirs of Capt Herolit to prove his services which paper I suppose is now on file in the Pension Office, and I further state that the reason why I never applied for a pension before is, that I was until a few years back in easy circumstances and had always remained so, I never would have applied to the Government for aid

6th Did you ever receive a discharge from the service, and if so, by whom was it given and what has become of it?

Ans. When I was a private under Captain Humphreys I received a discharge from him and left it with Abraham Estep my brother-in-law in North Carolina when I left there. When I was an Ensign in Captain Henry Speer's Company I received my commission from General Davidson and it may have been a Certificate of my election or appointment, which also was left with Abraham Estep in North Carolina, and I well also state, I was not engaged in any civil pursuit during the term of my services in the field.

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 in your services as a soldier in the revolution.

Ans. Doctor Samuel S Earle – General Moses Kelly, Hugh Morrow, Clerk Circuit Court, Thomas J Wright, Postmaster, Richard Hudson Sheriff, W A Walker Doctor, J R Smith, Baylis E Grace, former clerk of County Court, C. A. Walker, W. C. Eubanks, Honorable William S Mudd, Honorable John Camp and James K Jacks – Most or nearly all of them are to a Certificate now on file in the department which I made a few weeks ago. The last named Mr. James K Jacks has also certified (which is now on file in the Pension Office that he has known me for upwards of 44 years both in Kentucky and in this State, and that he always understood and heard it often stated I was a Soldier of the Revolutionary War.

[facts in file: the Captain Henry Speer referred to in the application is the brother of William Speer, the applicant: a daughter of the veteran, Mrs. Jacks, lived in 1856 in Jefferson County Alabama; reference is made in the file to other children of the veteran and to his wife, but none are named; James K Jacks and Gilbert C Jacks were living in Jefferson County Alabama in 1856 and are said to be related to the daughter of the veteran, Mrs. Jacks.]

[Veteran was pensioned at the rate of \$25.88 per annum commencing March 4th, 1831, for 7 months & 23 days service as a private in the North Carolina militia.]

WILLIAM SPEER: A HISTORY

By Eual D. Blansett, Jr. eualgayle@comcast.net

1. Introduction

This is a short history of William Speer. Every fact in this history that deals with the life of William Speer was taken from affidavits (depositions) and letters that were produced from February 8, 1854, to December 11, 1857, from land records, the census records, and from other documents.

William Speer was born in Somerset County on the eastern shore of Maryland in 1758 and died near Birmingham, Jefferson County, Alabama, in 1859 at the age of 101 years. The exact day and month of his birth and death are not known at this time. However, based on the ages in the affidavits, which were taken at different points in 1854, 1855, and 1856, it seems clear that William Speer was born in the latter half of 1758. In the affidavits taken on April 28, 1854, and July 20, 1854, William Speer was found to be 95 years old. In the affidavits taken on February 13, 1856, and May 15, 1856, William Speer was found to be 97 years old. The ages are consistent with each other. Based on the dates of the affidavits, it appears that William Speer's birthday had to have been after July 20.

An entry in an application for membership in the files of the Alabama Society of the National Society Sons of the American Revolution made by Jesse Eli Harrison Edwards on December 29, 1949, has some information about when William Speer was born and when he died, but it is not specific and it seems to contradict what was found in the legal statements taken from Mr. Speer. In the application of Mr. Edwards, he indicated that William Speer lived 101 years, six months, and 20 days. He also wrote that William Speer died near Gardendale in Jefferson County, AL, during "warm weather." Mr. Edwards included a reference to "Records in Family Bible of William and Millie Speer." It is possible that the family Bible contained the above-mentioned information. The last warm weather month in the east would probably be in September. If six months are subtracted from September, then the birth month would be in March. It is clear that March is not consistent with the dates of the affidavits.

2. The Revolutionary War Years

a. The Move to Surry County and the Start of the Revolutionary War

At some unknown date, Jacob Speer, the family of William Speer, took his family from southeast Maryland to Surry County, NC. Surry County was then and still is located along the border with Virginia and it was then much larger than it is today. It is located in the western one-third of the state.

When the Revolutionary War broke out on April 19, 1775, William was probably only 16 years old and just 17 years old at the most and he was still living with his family in Surry County. The family may have been living about two miles from a shallow ford in Yadkin River. The Yadkin River currently flows along the southern border of Surry County, but in 1775 it cut Surry County in half.

b. The Militia Structure in North Carolina

During the Revolutionary War, North Carolina was divided into six militia districts. They were Edenton, Halifax, Hillsborough, New Bern, Salisbury, and Wilmington. It appears that Surry County was within the Salisbury District, along with Rowan, Mecklenburg, Montgomery, and Guilford Counties. General Griffith Rutherford was commissioned on April 20, 1776, to lead the brigade from the Salisbury District.

Each district was responsible for supplying a brigade of militia regiments under the command of a brigadier general. In the command structure of the time, companies made up a regiment, regiments made up a battalion, and battalions made up a brigade.

Companies were normally commanded by a Captain; regiments by a Lieutenant Colonel; and, a battalion by a Colonel. The number of companies, regiments, and battalions at each level depended up the men available and the purpose of the units.

In any case, each county was required to furnish the brigade with at least one regiment. Each company consisted of at least 50 men who were further divided into five "divisions" One of the five divisions was reserved for the older and

more infirm. The other four divisions drew lots to see who would serve a particular three-month tour. When manpower fell below acceptable levels, North Carolina resorted to a draft.

c. William Speer and His Three Tours of Duty

(1)

While living in Surry County, NC, William Speer was drafted while he was still a very young man, but he never made it clear in his later affidavits the year he was drafted, but he did say that the draft order had been issued by Colonel Martin Armstrong. (Martin Armstrong came from a family with large holdings in Surry County and it was on land owned by Martin Armstrong that the first courthouse in Surry County was built.) It is possible that William Speer may not have reached his eighteenth birthday when he was drafted. In any case he was likely not 21 years old, which would make the year, at the most, 1778.

The most likely year was 1776. He was probably drafted shortly before October 1776, when 11 companies from Surry County took part in a military campaign against marauding Cherokee Indians who were supporting the British during the Revolutionary War. The Surry County Regiment of Militia was lead at that time by Colonel Joseph Williams. Whatever the age of William Speer, Captain Samuel Moseby, the commanding officer of the company in which William would have served, suggested that William stay at home and that his father Jacob furnish a pack horse to serve in his place. Jacob agreed and the pack horse was supplied. William later testified that it was understood that he would get credit for a three-month tour of duty as a Private. According to William Speer, the commanding officer of the regiment or battalion was Colonel Joseph Williams at the time of his being drafted. Not so coincidentally, Captain Moseby lead a company against the Cherokee Nation during the October 1776 campaign and the commanding officer of the regiment was Colonel Joseph Williams.

(2)

In a report issued on July 13, 1780, General Griffith Rutherford, commander of the Brigade of Salisbury District, indicated that the first and second draft had added 334 men to his brigade. The total included 66 men from Surry County, which included one Colonel and two Captains. From what is known, William was probably not a part of this draft.

In or about the latter part of 1780, William volunteered for a three-month tour of duty as an Ensign in the North Carolina Militia. His commission was received from General William Lee Davidson, who took over command of the Salisbury District when General Rutherford was captured at the Battle of Camden on August 16, 1780. Therefore, William's service would have been after the Battle of Camden. William was likely 22 years old at the time. An Ensign was the lowest ranking commissioned officer in the military during the Revolutionary War. The commanding officer of the company in which William Speer served was his older brother Henry Speer. The commanding officer of the regiment or battalion was Colonel Joseph Phillips. (Phillips had originally been appointed a Captain from Surry County on May 3, 1776.) William Speer also served in the same battalion or regiment as Captain William Hughlett, who commanded another company. The company of which William was a part marched from Surry County to Salisbury, Rowan County, NC, which is south of Surry County. From there, they marched to Henry County, VA, and, while at the last location, his tour of duty ended and he was discharged.

(3)

In the fall of 1781, William Speer volunteered for a third three-month tour of duty. General Rutherford, having been released by the British in a prisoner exchange, took command of the Salisbury District once again. This time William served as a Private in the company commanded by Captain David Humphreys. From another source, it has been determined that the officers were Lieutenant Benjamin Humphreys and Ensign Solomon Humphreys. The regiment or battalion was commanded by Colonel James Martin. His company marched from Surry County to Guilford County, NC, which is southeast of Surry County, to join the "Guilford Troops." From there they marched "to and fro" through the countryside. William was serving his third tour of duty and was camped near Wilmington, NC, when news of the surrender of General Lord Cornwallis reached William's unit. The surrender took place on October 19, 1791, at Yorktown, VA. William's third tour of duty ended shortly thereafter. William Southern likely served with William. He gave an affidavit in support of his pension and he served with Captain Humphreys on the march to Wilmington. Another soldier in the same company was John Maib, Sr. In another short history, which took a broader perspective of the campaign, explains that William's brigade, under the command of General Griffith Rutherford, was marching toward Wilmington, NC, to attack the British forces stationed there. However, the British, under the command of Major James H. Craig, who seemed to have heard about the surrender of General Lord Wallis before William Speer did, retreated from Wilmington, leaving it to be controlled by the Americans. Other companies went into Wilmington and found about 50 prisoners in poor physical condition.

William indicated that he received an honorable discharge at the conclusion of each tour of duty.

William Speer later recalled the names of some of the other officers who served at the same time as him, but who commanded other companies or who were in command at the regiment or battalion level. They were Major Gillespie, Captain William Hughlett, and Captain Stewart.

3. Marriage and Surry County, North Carolina

After completing his third tour of duty, William married Mildred Amelia "Millie" Estep in Rowan County, NC, on January 23, 1782. Since Rowan County is some distance from Surry County, it appears that maybe William and Millie met during his second tour of duty when his company spent some time in Rowan County. Despite the marriage haven taken place in Rowan County, the couple made their home in Surry County. At least seven, and perhaps eight, children were born to the couple during their years in Surry County.

William Speer appears to be in the 1790 federal census in Surry County. He was enumerated as a white male over the age of 16 years. He would then have been 31 or 32 years old. There were two boys below the age of 16 years and three females, one of whom would have been Millie.

William Speer also appears to be in the 1800 federal census in Surry County. He was enumerated as a white male 26 to 44 years old. He would have been 41 or 42 years old. Millie was also listed as being 26 to 44 years old. There was one female 16 to 26 years old (who would be Elizabeth), one female 10 to 15 years old (Susannah), one male 10 to 15 years old (Isaac), two females under ten years old (Patience and Catherine), and two males under ten years old (James and Abraham). In other words, there were two adults and seven children in the home. There is no room in this census for the researchers who believe that William Speer Junior was born in 1788 in Surry County. He does not appear in the 1790 federal census and he is not in this census. Otherwise there would have been two males 10 to 15 years old.

Isaac Speer indicated that his father William Speer left Surry County, NC, for Madison County, KY, in October 1801, even though William's father was still alive. At this time in history, the male children normally remained with their elderly parents to care for them until their deaths. However, the primary duty to care for the parents fell on the oldest child and William was not the oldest child. William would probably have been 43 years old when he left Surry County.

According to family tradition, the Speer family went to Boonesboro in Madison County because William was a friend of Daniel Boone. However, there does not appear to be any truth to this tradition. Daniel Boone was 24 years older than William and he had already blazed his Wilderness Road through the Cumberland Gap into Kentucky by 1775. Even though he founded Boonesborough, now Boonesboro, he seems to have left the area for Missouri in 1799, two years before William Speer and his family arrived. He did live in the Yadkin Valley in present-day Davie County from 1750 to September 1775, but his home was a considerable distance from Surry County. It is highly unlikely that the two ever met, much less became friends.

4. Madison and Cumberland Counties, Kentucky

William did not stay in Madison County too long. However, tragedy did strike his family while he was there. It is not clear how old William Speer Junior while the family was in Madison County, but one thing seems to be clear to several Speer family researchers: William Speer Junior died there. It appears that William Speer left shortly thereafter.

By 1803, it appears that William Speer was in Cumberland County, KY. It is not clear what drew him to this area, but the terrain of southern Cumberland County is very similar to that of Surry County, NC.

In the July Term of 1803, the County Court, in Certificate Numbered 592, William was granted 170 acres. On August 25, 1805, William had 170 acres surveyed on the headwaters of Kettle Creek in southern Cumberland County. Thereafter, he built a home on his land and he seemed to have settled in for the rest of his life.

While living in southern Cumberland County, William became reacquainted with Captain William Hughlett, who was living on the Wolf River about seven or eight miles south of William Speer. Major Hughlett, as he was now called, would visit with William Speer and both would talk about their experiences during the Revolutionary War. William's son Isaac remembers their talking about one occasion when they had to spend the night in a swamp. They piled up brush to sleep on so they wouldn't get wet during the night. Major Hughlett later sold his land and moved to western Tennessee.

The swamp mentioned above may have been Raft Swamp. A battle took place in the area near Big Raft Swamp and Little Raft Swamp in Hoke County, NC, on October 15, 1781. This was shortly before the surrender of General Lord Cornwallis.

On February 15, 1814, William Speer turned over title to his 170 acres to his daughter Patience Speer, who was then 21 years old and unmarried. He agreed to deed title to his 170 acres to Patience on condition that she take care of him and her mother for the rest of their lives. See Deed Book B, pages 421 and 422. Even though his father Jacob did not die until he was 77 years old, maybe William, who was then likely 55 years old, reckoned (wrongly, of course) that he might not have too many good years left in him. The whole arrangement may have seemed like a good idea while Patience was single. However, Patience married John Wesley Bivens on November 9, 1815, and that changed all of their circumstances. Whatever all of their expectations were in 1814, Patience's marriage apparently altered them. On September 12, 1817, Patience deeded the 170 acres back to her father. See Deed Book C, page 292. It appears that she could not take care of her new husband and her father at the same time. Or, more to the point is that her new husband wanted to leave Cumberland County. See below for an expanded explanation.

5. The Move to Jefferson County, Alabama

While life fell back into its usual routine for farmers in southern Cumberland County, there were changes taking place to the south of them. A treaty in 1814 opened up territory for settlement in the area now comprising Jefferson County, AL. The territory of Alabama was created in 1817. Land opened up in Alabama north of the Tennessee River and settlement started in 1819. On December 14, 1819, Alabama was admitted to the Union. Shortly thereafter, land south of the Tennessee River to the Flint River was ceded by the Cherokee Nation. The lure of cheaper and more fertile lands was too powerful for some people.

In the meanwhile, Speer family researchers, particularly Virgil Long, indicate that Patience and John Bivens left Cumberland County for Humphreys County, TN. This apparently distressed their young daughter Lucinda so much that she would cry herself to sleep at night while telling her parents that she wanted to go back and live with "Grandpa Speer." Her parents finally agree to allow it. William Speer then rode down to Humphreys County, TN, picked up his granddaughter, and took her back to Cumberland County. She apparently stayed with her grandparents until she married Martin Young in Jefferson County, AL. She is probably the granddaughter mentioned in a later affidavit William Speer gave.

According to family tradition, Patience Speer may have married first to William Speer, a distant cousin. Lucinda was reputed to have been born to this marriage. Her birth was in or about 1810. When William Speer supposedly died in 1812, Patience and her daughter Lucinda moved back into the home of William and Millie Speer, Patience's parents. They lived there until Patience married John Wesley Bivens. Once can see how attached Lucinda had become to her grandparents.

By 1824, it appears that a group of family members had made the decision to leave Cumberland County for Jefferson County, AL. William, who was then at least 65 years old, apparently decided to go with them. It seems likely that the families settled in the area around Birmingham, the county seat of Jefferson County.

Other family members may also have been part of the trek to the south. It is clear that sons Isaac and Abraham stayed in Cumberland County. It also seems clear that son James Speer, who married Penelope Jacks, left for Jefferson County, AL. He appears to be the person by that name in Jefferson County at the time of the 1840 federal census. He was living in the same area as James K. Jacks, the husband of Catherine Speer. James Speer later migrated to Texas, where he eventually died.

In addition to Patience, two other daughters and their husbands joined their father. They were Catherine, who married James K. Jacks, and Mildred, who married Bennett Brake. James K. Jacks and Bennett Brake are in the 1840 federal census on the same page as James Speer and William Speer (Junior). This fact usually means they were all living in the same general area. Bennett Brake was enumerated right before William Speer (Junior).

Three years before William Speer arrived in Jefferson County, the community of Elyton or Ely's Town was founded. The community served as the county seat of Jefferson County from 1821 to 1871. Elyton has since been incorporated into Birmingham. It is currently bordered by 7th Street Southwest and Cotton Avenue in the West End. It appears that William became a part of the Elyton society and he soon mixed with the movers and shakers of Jefferson County.

6. Life in Jefferson County, Alabama

a. Social and Religious

William became a fixture in Jefferson County, AL. His participation in the Revolutionary War became legendary. His participation in that war was so well known that when Fourth of July Celebrations were held in Birmingham, William was always invited to take part. When William applied for a pension in 1855, his neighbors rallied around him and supported his application. Those that signed a statement on his behalf included a great deal of the elite of Jefferson County. They included H. Morrow, Clerk of the Circuit Court; Sheriff Richard Hudson; Nathaniel Hawkins, physician; Nathan Byars, Justice of the Peace; Moses Kelly, called "General," who became a Probate Judge by 1860; T. J. Adkins, Justice of the Peace; C. A. Walker, merchant; Thomas Wright, Postmaster; W. A. Walker, merchant; William Mudd, Judge; James Wilcox, farmer; Joseph R. Smith, physician; Thomas Sanford, tailor; Samuel Earle, physician and farmer; Lemuel G. McMillian, school teacher and son of wealthy farmer; G. I. Deason, physician; James W. Williams, wealthy farmer; Jacob Bagly, Judge of the Probate Court; B. E. Grace, farmer; Elijah Brown, farmer; and, Reuben Goolsby, farmer.

In addition to the social life that appeared to be a part of his everyday life, Mr. Speer also seems to have been a religious man. James K. Jacks, his son-in-law, indicated that he had been a near neighbor of Mr. Speer and he knew Mr. to be a man of truth and veracity and a member in good standing in the Methodist Episcopal Church. He indicated that Mr. Speer was a member both in Cumberland County, KY, and in Jefferson County, AL.

b. Land Purchases

On September 20, 1839, there were three parcels in Jefferson County, AL, that were purchased at the Register of the Land Office in Tuscaloosa, AL, by "William Speer of Jefferson County." William Speer would have been 81 years old when the purchases took place. He may have bought the land as an investment, hoping that the cost of land would go up and he could profit from his purchases.

The first parcel bore Certificate Number 20615. The land, which was located in Jefferson County, AL, was found in the Tuscaloosa District, Range 3 West, Township 16, Section 30, SE quarter of the SW quarter. The parcel amounted to 39.365 acres.

The second parcel bore Certificate Number 21330. The land, which was located in Jefferson County, AL, was found in the Tuscaloosa District, Range 3 West, Township 16, Section 31, NW quarter of the NW quarter. The parcel amounted to 39.975 acres.

The third parcel bore Certificate Number 21592. The land, which was located in Jefferson County, AL, was found in the Tuscaloosa District, Range 4 W, Township 16, Section 25, SW quarter of the SE quarter. The parcel amounted to 39.91 acres.

The three parcels mentioned above are located along the northwest edge of Jefferson County and, according to a source in Kimberly, Jefferson County, AL, near the Locust Fork of the Warrior River.

Although the connection seems tenuous with William Speer, others have William Speer as the purchaser of land in Jefferson County on September 20, 1839, under the name of "William Speer Junior of Jefferson County." The description of the land purchase is as follows: "the South East quarter of the South East quarter of Section twenty five in Township sixteen, of range four West, in the District, of Lands subject to sale at Tuscaloosa, Alabama, containing thirty nine acres and ninety one hundredths of an acre." The certificate number is 18639. To this writer, the purchase does not seem to have been made by William Speer. But, since it was made on the same day as those made by William Speer, there appears to be a family connection of some sort that needs to be clarified.

c. The Federal Censuses of 1830, 1840, and 1850

William Speer appears to be in the 1830 federal census for Jefferson County, AL. There is an entry in the name of "William Speer Sr" that has to be his. Unfortunately, the indexer for [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) has the entry indexed as "William Speer Jr" for some reason. The oldest male is 70 to 80 years old and the oldest female is 70 to 80 years old. These obviously represent William and his wife Mildred. In addition a strange one for William Speer. There is only one William Speer

For some reason, the older William Speer is not in 1840 federal census for Jefferson County, AL. The younger William Speer is there on page three. He had a family of eight and he was much too young for the older William Speer, who would have been 82 years old in 1840. The head of household and his apparent wife was 30 to 39 years old. This could be the William Speer Junior found on Certificate Number 18639. If William Speer, the son of William Speer, had been born in 1801 and had lived, then he would have been 39 years old in 1840. Maybe he did not die

early as some researchers think. Or, this may be a nephew of William Speer.

Even though the older William Speer was not in the census, a number of people that he named later as neighbors were in it. They were Moses Kelly (page 1), Lemuel G. McMillian (page 1), Hugh Morrow Jr. (page 1), James K. Jacks (William's son-in-law, page 3), Nathanael Hawkins (page 3), Baylis E. Grace (page 9), John Camp (page 11), Benjamin Tarrant (page 23), and Elijah Brown (page 23). If William Speer had been enumerated in the 1840 federal, he probably would have been in the earliest pages, which was probably the area known as Elyton.

William is also not in the 1850 federal census. He may have an excuse this time. According to family members who might have access to this information, his wife Mildred Amelia Speer died in 1850.

7. William Speer and William Hughlett

a. An Affidavit by Isaac Speer

In 1854, William was called upon to help one of the officers he knew during the Revolutionary War. It appears that he may have been found by the surviving daughter of William Hughlett because of his son Isaac Speer, who was deposed several months before William.

An affidavit was taken of Isaac Speer on February 8, 1854, in Cumberland County, Kentucky. The affidavit was taken at the request of the attorneys for Ann McColgan, the only surviving heir of William and Mary Hughlett, who at that time were deceased. She was attempting to obtain a pension under an act of Congress passed in 1832 to benefit Revolutionary War veterans. Ann McCogan was then living in Jackson County, Tennessee. Her attorneys were Samuel Long and Sam Bell Maxey of Albany, Clinton County, Kentucky.

This is a true and faithful rendering of the affidavit made by Isaac Speer in Cumberland County, KY, on February 8, 1854. All of the spelling, punctuation, and syntax errors were in the original document, which can be found on images (pages) 559 to 563 in the William Hughlett pension file on [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).

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"On this eighth day of February A D 1854, at the house of isaac Spear in cumberland County, Kentucky, before me Charles Smith a Justice of the peace for said County, personally appeared Isaac Speer, a resident citizen and farmer of said County, to one long and well known, born the twentieth day of April, one thousand Seven hundred eight four, who being first duly sworn says: that he was personally well acquainted with the late William Hughlett, or as he was commonly called Major Hughlett, That he first knew him in Surry County, North Carolina, where said Hughlett then lived, and where this affiant then lived (being but a small boys,) with his father William Speer, This affiant well recollects when about twelve or thirteen years old of going to what was then called a fair with his father said William Speer, where they met said William Hughlett, this fair was held at Huntsville in said County, and as well as this affiant recollects on the 1st Thursday, Friday and Saturday in May, He recollects distinctly that his father and said William Hughlett were extremely glad to see each other, and had a great deal of talk about their service together in the Revolutionary War, but this affiant was then small & he does not recollect all

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that was said, but he remembers hearing them speak of one very bad night they were out together and camped in a swamp and had to build up brush heaps to keep out of the water, This affiants father William Speer served a tour under said Hughlett as he had heard both Hughlett and his father say. This affiant remembers well when Said Hughlett was a Candidate for the Legislature, in North Carolina, and knows that several men said they would vote for him because they had served under him in the Revolutionary War and he was a good officer. He particularly recollects hearing his father and one John Dennis assign the above as the reason why there were for him. His best recollection is said Dennis said he served with him. This affiants grandfather Jacob Speer who lived within two miles of the shallow ford on Yadkin river gave a reaping before the election at which were a number of men and they were talking about the election, and his Hughletts friends assigned as the reason why he should be supported that he was a good officer in the Revolution and treated his men well, This affiant was then a boy and was not allowed to take a hand in the conversation, but remembers well what was said about it. He remembers that said Hughlett was elected once if not oftener, This affiant moved with his father from North Carolina to Madison County, Kentucky, in October 1801, and from thence to Cumberland County, Kentucky within a half mile of where

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now lives. The circumstances that he has spoken of took place before he moved to Madison County. He affiant

afterwards knew said William Hughlett and his family well in this Country. He knows that the very same William Hughlett he knew in North Carolina and who he heard there spoken of as a good officer in the Revolutionary War, is the very same man he knew in this Country. Said Hughlett lived in this Country on Wolf River, at the place where A. M. Craft now lives about seven or eight miles from where this affiant lives. Hughlett was always in the habit of stopping to see this affiant's father in passing backward & forward, & the old men would talk over their scrapes & times in the war. This affiant recollects after moving to this Country of seining for fish in company with said Hughlett who spoke to him of his affiant's father being a good Revolutionary soldier & that he had served a tour under him said Hughlett. This affiant has also heard his uncle Ben Speer say he had served a tour under him. His uncle Ben is now dead. The last time this affiant saw Hughlett was at a gathering at what is called the Boatman Race in this County in the year 1819 or 1821. I kept a [unknown two words that look like Staber Canoe] in those years & saw him at one of the times. Mary Hughlett afterwards moved to the Western District in Tennessee & there died as this affiant has often heard. He knew Mrs. McColgan who is an

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applicant as he is informed for the pension due the widow of said William Hughlett at his death, He saw not long since and knows she always been reputed to be a daughter of said William Hughlett. Major Hughlett was a man of good standing this Country. This affiant states that he is not related to the applicants & has no interest in the result of their application."

Isaac Speer signed the affidavit with his shaky signature, which was witnessed by Calvin C. Hughs and Elias Clark. Interestingly enough, the handwriting of the signature of Calvin C. Hughs is the same as the handwriting in the affidavit. It is possible that Calvin C. Hughs wrote out the affidavit because of his good penmanship. However, this conclusion has to be balanced by the attestation that followed Isaac Speer's signature. The handwriting of the attestation by Charles Smith is similar to the affidavit and is followed by the signature of Charles Smith, which bears a strong resemblance to the handwriting in the affidavit and attestation. Charles Smith may have signed the name of Calvin C. Hughs because Mr. Hughs could not sign his own name.

"Sworn to before me and subscribed by Isaac Speer in my presence, I certify that I have known him for thirty five years or long, and I have no hesitation in saying I believe his statements above to be true, and from my personal knowledge of him I believe his age is stated correctly, The interlineations were made before his statements were signed by him and the whole affidavit was read to him in my presence before subscribed & attested. The attesting witnesses are also well known to me." It was signed "Charles Smith J P C C.

b. An Affidavit by William Speer in 1854

On April 28, 1854, Nathan Byars, a Justice of the Peace of Jefferson County, Alabama, took the affidavit (or deposition) of William Speer. The affidavit was taken at the request of the attorneys for Ann McColgan, the only surviving heir of William and Mary Hughlett, who at that time were deceased. She was attempting to obtain a pension under an act of Congress passed in 1832 to benefit Revolutionary War veterans. Ann McCogan was then living in Jackson County, Tennessee. Her attorneys were Samuel Long and Sam Bell Maxey of Albany, Clinton County, Kentucky.

This is a true and faithful rendering of the affidavit (or deposition) made by William Speer in Jefferson County, AL, on 28 April 1854. All of the spelling, punctuation, and syntax errors were in the original document, which can be found on images (pages) 546 to 548 in the William Hughlett pension file on [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).

"On this 28 day of April 1854 before me the undersigned Nathan Byars Justice of the Peace for the County and State aforesaid [County of Jefferson, State of Alabama] personally appeared William Speer to me well known a resident citizen of the above named county and state aged ninety five years who being by me first duly sworn says that he was personally well and intimately acquainted with the late Wm Hughlett that said William Hughlett lived prior to the year 1800 in Surry County North Carolina when and where this affiant then lived That the said William Hughlett was a captain in the North Carolina Militia in the Revolutionary War, and served as such for the period of three months to this affiant's knowledge, how much longer this affiant does not know, This affiant served under his Brother Henry Speer Capt in the same Regiment at the same time that Captain Wm Hughlett served as Captain of another Company, that said Wm Hulett was afterwards Called Major Hulett when affiant knew Him in Kentucky, This affiant states that he knew Major Wm Hughlett in Cumberland County Kentucky, well that they frequently meet together, and talked about their being in the revolutionary war at the same time and in the same Regiment, that he the said affiant moved from Surry County north Carolina to Madison County Kentucky about the year 1801 or two that he afterwards moved to Cumberland County Kentucky about the year 1804 or five. and settled where he has been informed his son Abram now lives After he removed to Cumberland County, he renewed his acquaintance with the said william Hughlett who had settled on wolf River near the Tennessee line about 7 or Eight miles from this Affiants

residence This affiant often met said Hughlett who was in the habit of Calling to see him after their removal as above he knows him to be the same man he knew in North Carolina and knows him to be the same Wm Hughlett who was in the Revolutionary war at the time the said affiant was, and that he was a captain of a company of Militia during the tour that said affiant served, he does not recollect the name of Mrs Hughlett but believes it to be mary or polly That Maj Hughlett was a man in good standing and Respectability, He makes the above statements for the benefit of the heirs of his old and Esteemed friend and fellow soldier, having no interest of his own what Ever in the result of their application.”

William Speer made his mark (an “x”) at the end of the affidavit, with Nathan Byars and James K. Jacks as witnesses.

Nathan Byars then added these remarks:

“Sworn to and Subscribed in my presence by William Speer date above written his Statements were Read to him in my presence before subscribed & attested I am personally acquainted with affiant and Certify that I believe his Statements are Correct and his age Truly Stated”

c. A Reaction to the Affidavit by William Speer

After the affidavit was taken of William Speer, it was apparently sent to the law offices of Long and Maxey in Albany, KY. In turn, the affidavit was passed on to the Pension Office or Commission in Washington, D. C. After considering the affidavit, the commission apparently sent a letter to Long and Maxey asking for clarification. The commission wanted to know, for some strange reason, why William Speer had never made an application for a pension for his service in the Revolutionary War.

There may be three reasons for the request by the Pension Commission. The first reason may have rested totally on curiosity. It is possible that the commission, which appeared to consist of three members, was struck by the age of William Speer and they collectively wondered why he had not been interested in applying for a pension. The second reason may have its foundation in a keen desire by the commission to have William Speer apply for a pension. They may have been concerned for his welfare, as one of the last surviving soldiers from the Revolutionary War. The request may have been a way of pushing someone to urge William Speer to apply. The third reason could have dealt with an issue of proof. The commission may have doubted that William Speer ever served in the Revolutionary War and they wanted a good reason from him as to why he had not pursued a pension when it seemed from the point of view of a reasonable observer that he should have done so by that time.

On June 20, 1854, it appears that the attorneys for the daughter of William and Mary Hughlett sent a letter to person or persons unknown in Jefferson County, Alabama, asking that William Speer explain why he never applied for a federal pension. The tenor of the letter and the return address of Albany, KY, makes it fairly clear that the letter came from the law offices of Long and Maxey. The addressee of the letter may have been Nathan Byars, the Justice of the Peace who took the affidavit of William Speer on April 28, 1854.

The letter can easily be divided into four sections.

The first section explains to the recipient of the letter why the letter was being written: “they [the Pension Office] require Speer to state the reason why he never applied for a pension.”

The second section sets for reasons why William Speer might not have applied for a pension. The author of the letter indicates that he knew from William Speer’s children that he was in “easy circumstances” and had no need to file for a pension. However, the author of letter probably strikes at the real reason. William Speer saw applying for a pension in the same light as being destitute and having to be “placed on the County.” In other words, it would make him appear to be a pauper.

The third section is a request that the affidavit by William Speer be done as quickly as possible. To facilitate the matter, the author of the letter enclosed \$2 to the addressee “for your trouble.” The author then entices the reader to promptness by promising further payment for any business that might be transacted between them in the future.

The fourth section is the longest and it is the form that the affidavit should take when completed.

d. A Second Affidavit by William Speer

The letter was successful in the sense that the sought-after affidavit was taken. However, if the author of the letter expected promptness, he did not get it. The affidavit was not taken until July 20, 1854. The affidavit was taken in

Jefferson County, AL, by W. W. Bagley, a Justice of the Peace. It addressed the concerns of the Pension Office. In addition, it followed the suggested format, word for word, as set forth in the letter mentioned above. The only variation was the word "me" inserted near the beginning of the affidavit.

This is a true and faithful rendering of the affidavit made by William Speer in Jefferson County, AL, on July 20, 1854. All of the spelling, punctuation, and syntax errors were in the original document, which can be found on images (pages) 499 in the William Hughlett pension file on [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).

"On this 20th day of July 1854, before me the undersigned a Justice of the peace for Said County personally came William Speer a resident citizen of said county to me well known aged 95 years and made oath in due form of law that in compliance with the requisitions of the pension Office, he states that his reason for never applying for a pension for his Revolutionary Services is that he was in easy circumstances, & did not desire to be regarded as under the necessity of being supported by the Government having sufficiency to live upon without the Govts aid, He makes this statement in addition to those heretofore made in support of the application of the heirs of William Hughlett."

8. William Speer Applied for a Pension

a. December 8, 1855, Application

Whatever the financial condition of William Speer on July 20, 1854, it apparently changed dramatically thereafter. On December 8, 1855, less than 17 months later, William Speer gave an affidavit under oath in order to obtain bounty land under an act of Congress passed in 1832. It should become abundantly clear to the reader of the letters and legal papers that were generated during the application process, that William had suffered physically and financially in the early 1850's. He apparently fell at some point and could no longer care for his needs. It may be that his bones gave out and he suffered a broken hip, from which injury he was not and probably could not recover. In addition, he turned over all of his property to his son-in-law James K. Jacks, who "squandered" the wealth. The fact that James K. Jacks was asked to participate in giving an affidavit on behalf of William may soften a bit any negative connotation that the word "squandered" might have had in the 1850's. It is possible that Mr. Jacks invested the wealth that William Speer had accumulated and the investments went sour. Whatever spin this writer may put on the word squander to give the reader some sympathy for Mr. Jacks, the end result was the same as if he had wasted in on booze, gambling, and wild women. Mr. Speer was left penniless. As a result, he sought comfort in knowing he could apply for both a pension and a land warrant from the federal government because of his service in the Revolutionary War. However, if Mr. Speer thought the process was going to be easy and that the result was assured, he learned some valuable lessons in the next eight and one-half months.

This is a true and faithful rendering of the affidavit made by William Speer in Jefferson County, AL, on December 8, 1855. All of the spelling, punctuation, and syntax errors were in the original document, which can be found on images (pages) 408 to 410 in the William Speer pension file on [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).

"On this 8th day of December one thousand eight hundred and fifty five, personally appeared before me a justice of the peace, within and for the County and State aforesaid [Jefferson County and State of Alabama] William Speer, who was a private in the company commanded by Captain Saml Moseby in the ___ Regiment commanded by Col Joseph Williams for a term of three months, also a second tour, as an Ensign in the company commanded by Captain Henry Speer in the ___ Regiment commanded by Col Joseph Phillips - for a term of three months, also a third tour as a private in the company commanded by Captain David Humphries in the ___ Regiment commanded by Col James Martin all three of these tours of service were performed in the war of the Revolution from the State of North Carolina and during the latter part of the war. He further states that He was honorably discharged at the end of each term of service - He makes this declaration for the purpose of obtaining the bounty land to which He may be entitled under the act approved March 3rd 1855 - He also declares that he has not received a warrant for bounty land under this or any other act of Congress nor made any other application therefor." William Speer then made his mark (an "x") at the bottom of the affidavit.

Witnesses to William Speer signing his declaration were L. G. McMillian and Gilbert C. Jacks. They declared as follows: "We L. G. McMillian and Gilbert C. Jacks residents of Jefferson County in the State of Alabama upon our oath declare that the foregoing declaration was signed and acknowledged by William Speer in our presence and that we believe from the appearance and statements of the applicant that he is the identical person he represents himself to be." Justice of the Peace N. M. Chabors or Habors and Sampson W. Harris, a member of the House of Representatives in Congress, then attested to the credibility of William Speer and that he was who he claims to be. We will hear more about Lemuel G. McMillian and Sampson Willis Harris.

b. Representative Sampson Willis Harris

However, perhaps it is time to give a quick biographical sketch of Sampson Willis Harris, who was a member of the Congressional House of Representatives when William Speer first applied for a pension:

Sampson Willis Harris was born in Elbert County, GA, on February 23, 1809. He obtained his early education from his mother and then attended the University of Georgia at Athens, from where he was graduated in 1828. He went on to study law and was admitted into practice in 1830. While practicing law in Athens, GA, he was elected to the State of Georgia House of Representatives and served in 1834 and 1835. He relocated to Wetumpka, Elmore County, AL, in 1838. He was thereafter elected solicitor of the eighth circuit in 1841 and then elected to the Alabama State Senate, where he served in 1844 and 1845. He ran for the United States House of Representatives as was elected as a Democrat to the Thirtieth Congress and to the four succeeding Congresses (March 4, 1847 to March 3, 1857). He decided against running in the 1856 elections. He died in Washington, D. C., April 1, 1857, one month after completing his last term in Congress. His remains were interment in Oconee Hill Cemetery in Athens, GA. Taken from *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774 - 2005*, by Andrew R. Dodge.

9. The Response by the Pension Office

On January 3, 1856, the Pension Office received from Sampson W. Harris the application by William Speer for a bounty land and "accompanying papers." On January 7, 1856, Commissioner Minot of the Pension Office responded by letter to Representative Harris. He indicated that the papers provided the Pension Office were insufficient under the 1855 statute to entitle William Speer to a land bounty. Mr. Minot made it very clear that there has to be documentary evidence from a record to prove service during the Revolutionary War. Parol evidence, that is evidence that is non-documentary, cannot be considered. However, Mr. Minot was kind enough to continue. He wrote that the testimony of witnesses was sufficient to establish a claim for a pension if the service was six months or longer. How much William Speer would receive would be determined by the length of service and the rank while serving. The only catch is that the evidence "be such as reasonably to satisfy this Office of the correctness of the claims."

10. The Reaction to the Pension Office

a. William Speer Gave a Second Affidavit

After receiving the letter from Mr. Minot, it appears that Mr. Harris notified William Speer or his representative of what Mr. Minot wrote. I suspect that the representative was Mr. Lemuel G. McMillian, who later was very active in promoting the interest of Mr. Speer before the Pension Office.

In response to the fact that no land bounty might be had under the then state of the evidence, William Speer took Mr. Minot's hint and applied for a pension. On February 13, 1856, William Speer appeared before H. H. Hancock, a Justice of the Peace, and had his affidavit taken.

The following is a true and faithful rendering of the affidavit made by William Speer in Jefferson County, AL, on February 13, 1856. All of the spelling, punctuation, and syntax errors were in the original document, which can be found on images (pages) 416 to 417 in the William Speer pension file on [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).

"On this 13th day of February 1856, Personally appeared before me H. H. Hancock - a Justice of the Peace in and for said County [Jefferson County, Alabama], William Speer aged ninety seven years, a resident of Jefferson County, State of Alabama: who being duly sworn according to law declares that he was a soldier in the War of the American Revolution, in the latter part of said war, and served three tours under the following Officers to wit, The first as a private under Capt Saml Moseby in the ___ Regiment commanded by Col Joseph Williams for a term of three months, Also a second tour of three months as an Ensign, in the company commanded by Capt Henry Speer, in the ___ Regiment commanded by Col Joseph Philips also another three months tour, as a private in the company commanded by Capt David Humphreys in the ___ Regiment commanded by Col James Martin; making in all a service of nine months. All these tours were performed from the State of North Carolina, And he further states, that his reasons for never applying before for a pension, for his Revolutionary services is, that he was in easy circumstances, and did not desire to be regarded as under the necessity of being supported by the General Government having a sufficiency to live upon without the Government aid; but his property having been placed in hands that squandered it, he is now brought to the necessity of applying to the General Government for a pension to support him in his declining years. On being asked where he was when Cornwallace [Cornwallis] surrendered? He answered "that he was in the Service under Capt Humphreys at Wilmington, North Carolina, when the surrender of Cornwallace [Cornwallis] reached there, which he states was in September or October 1781 - He therefore hopes that sufficient proof has been made to entitle him to his pension." William Speer thereupon made his mark. The affidavit was attested to by G. C. Jacks and it was sworn to and subscribed before Mr. Hancock.

James K. Jacks, William Speer's son-in-law, had his affidavit taken on the same day as William Speer. The following

is a true and faithful rendering of the affidavit made by James K. Jacks in Jefferson County, AL, on February 13, 1856. All of the spelling, punctuation, and syntax errors were in the original document, which can be found in the William Speer pension file on [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).

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“On the 13th day of February 1856, personally appeared before me the undersigned, a justice of the peace, within and for the State and County aforesaid [Jefferson County and the State of Alabama], James K. Jacks, who being duly sworn according to law states that he had been intimately and personally acquainted with William Speer who now makes application for a pension, for the space of about forty four years, fourteen years of the time in the Sate of Kentucky Cumberland County, and for the last thirty years in Jefferson County in the State of Alabama, He further states that during his acquaintance with Mr. Speer in Kentucky he heard Mr. William Hughlett frequently speak of being in the service at the close of the Revolutionary war with the said William Speer, and that he also frequently heard Speer speak of being in the Service with Mr. Hughlett and that they both were looked upon, at that day, in Kentucky, by all who knew them, as being two old soldiers of the Revolution - He further states that for the last thirty years, he has lived a near neighbor in this State, to Mr. Speer, and that during all this time Mr. Speer was, one among the first Revolutionary guests invited to attend our 4th of July Celebrations, which he cheerfully attended, until he became

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unable to travel - He further States that he has often heard Mr. Speer state, that the reason why he never applied for a pension was, that he had ample means to live upon, and that he did not want aid from the Government so long as he was in easy circumstances - He also states that Mr. Speer did have ample means to support him, till a few years back, when he placed in [his] property in the hand of those whose duty it was to support him, but his property has been squandered, and now he is in the care of a devoted daughter of a weakly constitution, who has to support him in his present helpless condition. He further states that Mr. Speer has all this time, both in Kentucky & Alabama, been looked upon as being an honest & upright man in all his transactions, & as for a man of truth and veracity no one stands fairer - He further states that ever since, & before he knew Mr. Speer he had been a member in good standing in the Methodist Episcopal Church” James K. Jacks was able to sign his own name at the conclusion of the affidavit.

b. The Community Response

On February 16, 1856, 21 citizens of the community of Elyton in Jefferson County, AL, signed a statement outlining how long they have known William Speer and why he needed the pension. The citizens appear to be a “who's who” of the community. The citizens who affixed their signature to the statement included H. Morrow, Clerk of the Circuit Court; Joab Bagley, Judge of the Probate Court; Richard Hudson, Sheriff; Nathaniel Hawkins, Physician.; Nathan Byars, Justice of the Peace; T. K. Atkins, Justice of the Peace; and, Joseph R. Smith, a very wealthy Physician. Amongst the group was Lemuel G. McMillian, a school teacher of means who would be a significant force in pushing the Pension Office to fast-track William Speer's application.

The statement was brief and to the point:

“The undersigned citizens of the County and State aforesaid [Elyton, Jefferson County, Alabama], do hereby sate, that we have been acquainted with William Speer, who no applies for a pension, for a long time, some of us, from twenty to thirty years, and know that he has always been considered a Revolutionary Soldier, having always been on of the guests invited to the 4. of July celebrations, and that he has heretofore withheld his application for a pension, from motives of independence and delicacy; but now having become extremely old and destitute, has concluded to make said application. We hope that the Department will give a favorable consideration to his application, believing as we do, that he is fully entitled to a Pension.”

Joab Bagley not only signed the statement above, he also penned his own version of Mr. Speer's circumstance on February 16, 1856, hoping, obviously, to tug at the hearts of the commissioners and perhaps to speed up the application process. He wrote that he was a near neighbor to Mr. Speer and he knew him to be “an honest man, none more so.” He believed that Mr. Speer was a soldier in the Revolutionary War and, therefore, he had always the right to a pension. However, he knew that Mr. Speer had not availed himself of the right because of his desire for independence. Unfortunately, Mr. Speer had been thrown into a destitute state not of his own doing. Mr. Speer had gone to live with his youngest daughter and her husband. In doing so, he had turned all of his property over to his son-in-law, who had always been prudent and industrious. The son-in-law unwisely lost all of Mr. Speer's property and he cannot now provide for Mr. Speer.

11. The Community Effort Continued

a. Sampson Willis Harris Pushes the Application

The application by William Spear, the statement of his friends, and Judge Bagly's comments were forwarded to the Pension Office for consideration by Sampson W. Harris, the representative to Congress from Jefferson County, AL. He also sent a letter to Mr. Minot that accompanied the items already mentioned. The letter was dated March 12, 1856. In the letter, Mr. Harris strongly recommended a pension for Mr. Speer. He urged a speedy examination of the evidence and noted that the leading people of Jefferson County were some of Mr. Speer's most ardent supporters. He also re-submitted Mr. Speer's application for a land bounty. Mr. Harris indicated that it should be considered by the Pension Office along with the application for a pension. Mr. Harris stressed that a bill was proceeding through the Senate that would put oral testimony on the same footing as documentary evidence.

b. Lemuel G. McMillian Got Results

A request was made by Lemuel G. McMillian of the Comptroller of North Carolina to produce records that would show that William Speer had been paid as a soldier with the North Carolina militia. George W. Brooks, the Comptroller of the State of North Carolina, did produce such records. He established the following payments to William Speer: (1) Book 4, page 22, 20 pounds, 14 shillings, 0 pence, Salisbury District, Sept 1782; (2) Book 23, page 154, 10 pounds, 4 shillings, 6 pence, Hillsborough Treasury Office, no date; (3) Book A 11, page 77, 9 pounds, 2 shillings, 0 pence, Hillsborough Treasury Office, no date; (4) Book A 23, page 92, 9 pounds, 10 shillings, 0 pence, Hillsborough Treasury Office, no date.

He certified his findings in this way:

"I Geo. W. Brooks Comptroller of the Public Accounts in and for the State aforesaid [State of North Carolina] do hereby certify that it appears of record in my office among the payments made by said State to Sundry persons for Military Service in the Revolutionary War as follows [summary of records] In testimony whereof I have hereunto Subscribed my name and affixed the Seal of my office at Raleigh N. C. this May 13th 1856."

The records from North Carolina were immediately brought to Sampson Harris, the member of the House of Representatives from Jefferson County, AL. On May 14, 1856, he wrote to Mr. I. Minot. In the letter, Mr. Harris made reference to the record that was enclosed and that it clearly showed that Mr. Speer received pay as a soldier in the Revolutionary War. Mr. Harris now urged Mr. Minot to accept it as sufficient proof to establish Mr. Speer's right to a pension and a warrant (land bounty). It should be mentioned at this juncture that the certification by the Comptroller of North Carolina was reviewed on some unknown date by the Pensions Office in the person of Ogden Niles and his conclusion was that the "Record evidence of seven months and twenty-three days service from the records of the Comptroller of North Carolina." However, that review came too late to halt the concerted effort by friends of Mr. Speer to hasten the review process and to secure a pension and a warrant for Mr. Speer.

12. William Speer Produced a Third Affidavit

On the next day, William Speer once again had his affidavit taken regarding his service as a Revolutionary War soldier. This affidavit included more details of his service and, therefore, of more interest to any genealogist. The following is a true and faithful rendering of the affidavit made by William Speer in Jefferson County, AL, on May 15, 1856. All of the spelling, punctuation, and syntax errors were in the original document, which can be found on images in the William Speer pension file on [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).

"On this 15th day of May One Thousand eight hundred and fifty Six personally appeared before me Joab Bagly Judge of the Probate Court (which Court is a Court of record) for the County and State aforesaid [Jefferson County and the State of Alabama], William Speer, aged ninety Seven years, who being first duly sworn according to law, doth on this 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 - First a tour of three months as a private in the company commanded by Captain Samuel Moseby in the Regiment or Battalion Commanded by Col. Joseph Williams - Secondly a tour of three months as an ensign in the company commanded by Captain Henry Speer in the Battalion or Regiment commanded by Col Joseph Phillips. Thirdly as a private, for a tour of three months in the company commanded by Capt David Humphries, in the Regiment or Battalion commanded by Col James Martin - He further states that he lived in Surry County North Carolina, at the time the above services were performed, the precise date of his entering and leaving the service he cannot state, but is satisfied it was at the close of the war in the years 1780 & 81 - He further states that he was in service near Wilmington N. C. when the news of the surrender of Cornwallis was received - He further states that he was drafted for the first tour but was a volunteer in both the others - Being quite young, when drafted, his Captain

proposed to his father that if he would furnish a pack horse for the service, his son might remain at home, which he states was done and that it was to be considered the same as if he had actually served the tour, this circumstance he omitted to state when he sent on his first declaration a few weeks since to the pension office - In the second tour he states he was a volunteer and an Ensign under the Officer above named, he states that he volunteered in Surry County N. C. and marched from there to Salisbury N. C. and from there to Henry County in Virginia when the tour of service having expired he was dismissed. In his third tour he states he was a volunteer - that he volunteered in Surry County N. C. and marched from there to Guilford where he joined the Guilford Troops, from there they marched to and fro thru the Country until, when near Wilmington N C, the news of the surrender of Cornwallis being received they were soon thereafter dismissed - He further states that he has no documentary evidence and that he knows of no person now living whose testimony he can procure who can testify to his service - He hereby relinquishes his 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, to his knowledge." L. G. McMillian and Benjamin Tarrant signed as witnesses to the affidavit given by William Speer.

Included with the affidavit dated May 15, 1856, were a series of questions and answers. The questions were asked by Joab Bagly, Judge of the Probate Court of Jefferson County, AL. The answers were given by William Speer. The following is a true and faithful rendering of said questions and answers. All of the spelling, punctuation, and syntax errors were in the original document, which can be found on images in the William Speer pension file on Ancestry.com.

"Interrogatives propounded by the Judge to the applicant

1st - Where and in what year were you born?

Ans - I was born on the eastern shores of Maryland in the year 1758 -

2nd - Have you any record of your age and if so where is it?

Ans - I have, and it is in the possession of my Grand daughter in this County

3rd Where were you living when called into service? where have you lived since the Revolutionary War? and where do you now live?

Ans - When called into service I was living in Surry County N. C. Since the Revolutionary War I have lived in Kentucky from 1801 until 1824 when I moved to Alabama where I have lived ever since

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

Ans - Orders were received by Col Martin Armstrong to call us into service - the first tour I was drafted the other two I was a volunteer as above stated

5th - State the names of some of the Regular Officers who were with the troops when you served? such Continental and Militia Regiments as you can recollect and the general circumstances of your service?

Ans - There were no Regular troops with us - In addition to the officers named above I remember the name of Maj Gillespie Capt Stewart and Capt Hewlit and I further state that my deposition was taken in 1854 by the heirs of Capt Hewlit to prove his services which paper I suppose is now on file in the Pension Office, and I further state that the reason why I never applied for a pension before is, that I was until a few years back in easy circumstances and had I always remained so I never would have applied to the Government for aid

6th Did you ever receive a discharge from the service and if so by whom was it given, and what has become of it? Did you ever receive a commission, and if so, by whom was it signed, and what has become of it?

Ans When I was a private under Capt Humphries I received a discharge from him and left it with Abraham Estep my brother in law in North Carolina when I left there - When I was Ensign in Capt Henry Speers Company I received my Commission from Genl Davison or it may have been a Certificate of my election or appointment, which also was left with Abrahm Estep in North Carolina, and I will also state, I was not engaged in any civil pursuit during the term of my services in the field

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 a Soldier of the Revolution

Ans - Doct Saml S. Earle Genl Moses Kelly Hugh Morrow Clerk Circuit Court, Thomas J Wright Post Master, Richard Hudson Shff W A Walker Doct I R Smith Baylis E. Grace, former Clk of County Court C A Walker W. C. Eubanks Hon Wm S. Mudd Hon John Camp and James K. Jacks - Most or nearly all of them are to a certificate now on file in the department which I made a few weeks ago - The last named Mr. James K Jacks has also certified (which is now on file in the Pension Office) that he has known me for upwards of forty four years both in Kentucky and in this State, and that he always understood and heard it often stated I was a Soldier in the Revolutionary War"

After John A. Winston, the governor of Alabama, declared that Joab "Bagley" was a Judge of the Probate Court in Jefferson County, AL, the Secretary of State of Alabama affixed the seal of the state to the affidavit of John Speer on May 20, 1856.

13. Lemuel G. McMillian Advocated for William Speer

a. His Letter to Sampson Willis Harris

After the signature of the Governor and Secretary of State were obtained, Lemuel G. McMillian wrote to his friend Representative Sampson Harris, who was then in Congress in Washington, D. C., on May 24, 1856, and included the declaration (affidavit) by William Speer, which was taken on May 15, 1856. In his letter, which is extremely well written, Mr. McMillian took every opportunity to support the facts in the declaration. He obtained a copy of a book entitled History of North Carolina, Volume 1, written by John H. Wheeler. He refers to the page numbers where the very officers William Speer mentioned in his affidavit could be found. He asked that Mr. Harris bring these references to the attention of the Pension Office. Next, he wrote that he had communicated with George W. Brooks, the Comptroller of North Carolina, and he had asked Mr. Brooks for any information that would show that William Speer had been a soldier in the Revolutionary War. If he found any, Mr. McMillian asked Mr. Brooks to send it to Mr. Harris. Mr. McMillian wrote Mr. Harris that he had received a letter from Mr. Brooks, dated May 13, 1856, indicating that Mr. Brooks had sent Mr. Harris a certificate that he hoped would "answer the old Gentleman's purpose in procuring a pension." Mr. McMillian urged Mr. Harris to proceed as quickly as possible to secure the pension and warrant for Mr. Speer, as Mr. McMillian did not feel that Mr. Speer would last much longer. Mr. McMillian referred to the helpless state of Mr. Speer because of a fall Mr. Speer had suffered. Mr. Harris must have sent Mr. McMillian's letter to Mr. Minot as it was included in Mr. Speer's claim file and can be read in the file on [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com).

b. His Letter to J. Minot

On June 5, 1856, Mr. McMillian wrote directly to Mr. Minot. Mr. McMillian had a number of reasons to communicate with Mr. Minot. First, he wanted Mr. Minot to know that the draft for the pension and the land warrant could be sent to him or handed directly to Sampson Harris. Second, he wanted Mr. Minot to speed up the decision-making process because William Speer was not in the best of physical shape and he was 98 years old, perhaps the oldest applicant ever for a pension. It appears that Mr. Speer fell at some point in the recent past and was at that time helpless. Mr. Speer was being taken care of by his daughter who was in feeble health herself. McMillian pointed out that land was currently selling for one dollar an acre, but the price was falling. Mr. McMillian wrote that he understood that Mr. Minot had a rule of taking applications in the order they were received, but he wanted Mr. Minot to make an exception in the case of Mr. Speer because of the extreme nature of his circumstances. Third, Mr. McMillian stressed that the evidence forwarded to the Pension Office was sufficient to establish that Mr. Speer had been a soldier in the Revolutionary War and was entitled to a pension and a warrant. He made particular reference to the documentary evidence that George W. Brooks had found that established Mr. Speer as a Revolutionary War soldier independent of Mr. Speer's affidavit.

c. Another Letter to J. Minot

On July 4, 1856, Mr. McMillian wrote Mr. Minot a second letter. It was written in response to a letter that Mr. Minot had penned to Mr. Harris. Mr. Minot wrote that there were deficiencies in Mr. Speer's application. He indicated that the application failed to declare the state where Mr. Speer's was residing when he entered the service each time. In addition, there was no documentary evidence that Mr. Speer was commissioned an Ensign. Mr. McMillian answered each of these issues in turn. He indicated that Mr. Speer declared in his affidavit that he lived in Surry County North Carolina when he entered into his three tours of service. If Mr. Minot did not know that, then Mr. Harris had either not yet given Mr. Minot Mr. Speer's affidavit or it had inadvertently been left out. As to the question of the rank of Ensign, Mr. McMillian felt that the data given to Mr. Minot from George W. Brooks should have settled that issue. He said the amount of money paid to Mr. Speer was more than that paid to a private.

d. Yet Another Letter to J. Minot

After Mr. McMillian wrote his letter to Mr. Minot, he received a reply. The letter from Mr. Minot no longer exists, but Mr. McMillian does refer to it in a letter he penned to Mr. Minot on July 27, 1856. The letter from Mr. Minot must have puzzled Mr. McMillian on one level and distressed him on another. Mr. Minot wrote that he had suspended Mr. Speer's application. Mr. McMillian wrote to Mr. Minot that he had spoken with Mr. Speer after he received Mr. Minot's letter. Mr. Speer said he lived in Surry County, North Carolina, when he entered the service and for many years afterwards. Mr. McMillian wrote that this information was in the declaration on file with the Pension Office and the form used for the declaration was one sent to Jefferson County by Mr. Minot himself. If the declaration did not contain the necessary information, Mr. McMillian asked that the proper form be sent so Mr. Speer could provide the necessary information. Mr. Speer would also add that he was the only William Speer in Surry County old enough to serve in the military. Mr. McMillian also wrote the Comptroller in North Carolina to search for any proof that Mr. Speer held the rank of Ensign, even though he already believes he provided that proof. Mr. McMillian asked that Mr. Minot addressed when directly when Congress adjourned, which was going to happen soon.

e. Another Letter to Sampson Willis Harris

Mr. McMillian then wrote a letter to Mr. Harris on July 7, 1856. He told Mr. Harris what he had just included in his letter to Mr. Minot. Mr. McMillian was fearful that Congress would adjourn before any action was taken on a bill that would allow oral testimony to be placed on the same level as documentary evidence. Mr. McMillian appeared to be frustrated about the delay. He feared that nothing was going to happen after Congress adjourned and that included any action on Mr. Speer's application. Mr. McMillian then made a concession that would break the chains binding the process. Mr. McMillian proposed that the pension application be processed with Mr. Speer's rank as private. He urged Mr. Harris to contact Mr. Minot immediately and make the proposal as outlined by Mr. McMillian, who hoped that the matter would be concluded before Congress adjourned. If Mr. Harris left Washington, D. C., then the warrant and the draft from the pension should be sent to Mr. McMillian as agent for Mr. Speer.

f. A Fourth Letter to J. Minot

Mr. Harris wrote to Mr. Minot on August 8, 1856. The handwriting is almost illegible. However, the letter indicates that Mr. Harris enclosed with his letter a declaration without any indication as to who may have been the person deposed. If it was the declaration of Mr. Speer from May 15, 1856, the Mr. Harris was derelict in waiting so long to present it to Mr. Minot. The delay was inexcusable. The rest of the letter can only be understood as a whole, as certain words cannot be read. It appears that Mr. Harris did stress that Mr. Speer's claim was a just one as it fell fairly with the provisions of the law. He closed by informing Mr. Minot to communicate with Mr. McMillian if no decision was forthcoming before Congress adjourned.

14. Another Statement by William Speer

On August 12, 1856, Mr. Speer gave yet another affidavit or deposition in his attempt to secure a land warrant and a pension. The following is a true and faithful rendering of said questions and answers. All of the spelling, punctuation, and syntax errors were in the original document, which can be found on images in the William Speer pension file on Ancestry.com.

"Personally appeared before me Whitehouse Hewitt an acting Justice of the Peace in and for the County and State aforesaid [Jefferson County and the State of Alabama] William Speer who being duly sworn according to law deposeth & saith that he resided in Surry County in the State of North Carolina with his father about Sixteen miles from Rockford the present County Seat, at each of the times he entered the service of the United States in the Revolutionary War, as set forth in his declaration, and that, after the close of the war, he continued to reside there, until 1801, when he removed to the State of Kentucky. He further States that he was the only individual by the name of William Speer in Surry County, at the time he entered the service - and that he knew of no one of that name in either of the Battalions or Regiments in which he served during his terms of service - He further States that sometime in February or March 1854 the heirs of William Hughlett of Kentucky, sent on here, and took his deposition to prove the services of their father; who served as Capt in the same Regiment with affiant, during his second tour of service, and that he believes said depositions are now on file with Wm Hughletts papers, in the pension office." William Speer affixed his mark to the affidavit. The deposition was witnessed by William Speer's son-in-law James K. Jacks, who signed his own name.

15. The Pension Approved

Little did Lemuel G. McMillian know when he penned his letter on August 8 that the Pension Board would approve a pension for William Speer before his letter would even arrive in Washington, D. C. And, obviously, William Speer had no idea of what was transpiring when he had his affidavit taken on the same day his pension was approved. The official form recording the action of the Pension Office, which is still contained with the pension file of William Speer, reads as follows: "William Speer of ___ in the State ___ who was a private in the ___ commanded by Captain ___ of the ___ commanded by ___ in the Revolution line for 7 mos & 23 days. Inscribed on the Roll of Tuscaloosa at the rate of 25 Dollars 88 Cents per annum, to commence on the 4th day of March, 1831. Certificate of Pension issued the 12th day of August 1856 and Sent to Hon. S. W. Harris H of R. Arrears to the 4th of ___." The action of the Pension Office was recorded by G. T. Getty, Clerk, in Vol. 8 page 107. The form had the numbers "33361" at the top, followed by the words "Alabama" and "Tuscaloosa." The form was amended at some point to add the "N. C. Lines" before the word "Revolution." This last amendment was incorrect, as William Speer was never a member of the Continental Line, the official military army of Congress during the Revolutionary War. He may have fought with the regular army from time to time, but he was not a member.

16. Lemuel G. McMillian Continued to Write

Not knowing that the Pension Office had already awarded William Speer a pension, Lemuel G. McMillian wrote yet another letter to Mr. Minot. This one was written on August 14, 1856. In the letter, Mr. McMillian referred to a letter

he had received from Mr. Minot on June 6, 1856, wherein Mr. Minot asked for an affidavit that stated where Mr. Speer was living when he entered the service each time. In response to that request, Mr. McMillian included the affidavit that Mr. Speer made two days earlier. Hoping the form of the affidavit would satisfy Mr. Minot, Mr. McMillian explained that the form had been suggested by William S. Mudd, one of the Circuit Court Judges. He further revealed that he had been contacted by the Comptroller of North Carolina, who said he could find no documentary evidence to show that Mr. Speer was an Ensign in the Revolutionary War. However, he indicated that the payments Mr. Speer received seemed to support his allegation that he was an Ensign during one of his tours of duty. Mr. McMillian wrote that if the inference of being an Ensign was not sufficient, then the pension and land warrant would have to be issued "as a private soldier." Mr. McMillian then asked for an early resolution in the matter. The rest of the letter deals with Mr. McMillian attempting to make sense of the delay that has occurred. He referred to the affidavit taken on May 15, 1856, that was sent to Mr. Harris to be given to Mr. Minot. He emphasized that William Speer was the only person of military age in Surry County, NC. He said if there were another William Speer who served, surely the Comptroller of North Carolina would have said so. He also referred Mr. Minot to the History of North Carolina written by "John H. Wheeler," noting that all of the officers named by Mr. Speer could be found in that book.

On August 26, 1856, Mr. McMillian to Mr. Minot once again. The letter was written because Mr. McMillian had received news from Mr. Harris that a pension had been granted to Mr. Speer. Mr. Harris had enclosed a Certificate from Secretary of the Interior R. McClelland in his correspondence with Mr. McMillian. Mr. McMillian thanked Mr. Minot for the "prompt attention" he gave to the matter. This had to have been done with tongue in cheek and with an eye towards the request he was going to make later in the letter. Mr. McMillian set forth the amounts that Mr. Speer was going to receive, which was \$25.88 per annum during his natural life, to be paid on March 4 and September 4 of each year. In addition, Mr. Speer was to receive \$647 for the period from March 4, 1831, to September 4, 1856. Mr. McMillian asked that the drafts be sent to him, as he was Mr. Speer's only agent. Mr. McMillian hoped he would receive the land warrant soon, as he had been told by Mr. Harris that it would be forthcoming. Mr. McMillian ended his letter by asking Mr. Minot to speed up the authorization of a land warrant for Avery Lolley. Mr. McMillian indicated that he personally would lose considerably if the warrant did not arrive by the middle of September.

Mr. McMillian wrote another letter on August 26, 1856. It contained the same information regarding the amounts and timing of the drafts to be sent to Mr. Speer. Mr. McMillian again asked that the drafts be sent to him. The content of the letter suggest that the letter was sent to the Department of the Interior, the agency that would be authorizing the drafts to Mr. Speer.

17. Land Warrant Was Authorized

According to the records maintained in William Speer's file, his land warrant application was given the number 238.242. He was awarded 160 acres on August 21, 1856. Across the face of the record evidencing the award is written "W39275 issd Augt 23/56." Interestingly enough, the word Priv (indicating Private) was crossed out and replaced with the word "Ensign." The summary of William Speer's military service included all three tours of duty. The award was recorded in Volume "L" or "T" - 2 - 29, whatever those last two numbers mean.

18. Further Action Requested

On December 11, 1857, a letter was written to the Pension Office, probably addressed to Mr. J. Minot, on behalf of Mr. Speer. The return address was the House of Representatives in Congress. The signature at the bottom of the letter was that of Jabez Lamar Monroe Curry, a member of Congress from Jefferson County, AL. The writer enclosed a petition from Mr. Speer and the writer asked for an increase in the pension that Mr. Speer was receiving, starting when the petition was received by the Pension Office. Apparently, Mr. Speer or his agent sent a letter to the member of Congress asking for the increase. The writer indicated that Mr. Speer would be willing to forego any further payments under the pension after March 4, 1858, if the increase were granted. Mr. writer indicated that no act of Congress was needed to accomplish the increase.

The Pension Office must not have acted promptly on the request, as Jabez Lamar Monroe Curry, the member of Congress who wrote the December 11, 1857, letter penned another one on February 11, 1858. In the letter, Mr. Curry asked that the application from Mr. Speer be withdrawn and returned to him. Mr. Curry also indicated that he would take the matter up in Congress.

No more action was taken regarding Mr. Speer's file with the Pension Office.

Here is a short biography of Jabez Lamar Monroe Curry:

Jabez Lamar Monroe Curry was born near Double Branches, Lincoln County, GA, on June 5, 1825. He moved with his father to Talladega County, AL, in 1838 and later entered the University of Georgia, from where he was graduated in 1843. He studied law at Harvard University and began his practice of law in Talladega County in 1845. His practice was interrupted by the war with Mexico. He served as a private in the Texas Rangers in 1846, but he was forced to resign because of ill health. After returning to Talladega, he served as a member of the State house of representatives in 1847, 1853, and 1855. He ran for the House of Representative seat when Sampson Willis Harris chose not to run for re-election. Mr. Curry was elected as a Democrat to the Thirty-fifth and Thirty-sixth Congresses and he served from March 4, 1857, to January 21, 1861, when he resigned his seat. Thereafter, he served as a deputy from Alabama to the Provisional Confederate Congress. When the Civil War broke out, he served as a Lieutenant Colonel of Cavalry in the Confederate Army. When the war ended, Mr. Curry did not return to law or politics. He chose a different path. He dedicated the rest of his life in service to his Lord and Savior. He became a preacher, but he was soon chosen to be president of Howard College in Alabama. He later became a professor at Richmond College in Virginia. He taught from 1868 to 1881. He was appointed Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to Spain on October 7, 1885, and served until August 6, 1888, when he resigned. One of his last honors was being sent to Spain as an Ambassador Extraordinary on the coming of age of the King on February 3, 1902. He died in Victoria, near Asheville, N. C., on February 12, 1903. He was buried in Hollywood Cemetery, Richmond, VA. Taken from **J. L. M. Curry: A Biography**, by Edwin A. Alderman and Armistead Gordon, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1911, by Andrew R. Dodge and printed in his book, **Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774 - 2005**.

19. The Civil War and Further Action

This writer searched the Congressional Record for any mention of William Speer's name. This writer could find none. However, the record was filled with speeches about the possible statehood of Kansas. It also contains a speech by Senator Butler from South Carolina condemning, in no uncertain terms, Senator Sumner from Massachusetts for his unprovoked attack on Senator Butler while Senator Butler was back in his home state for a brief moment of relaxation from the work of Congress. At the time he made his speech, the United States was just three years from falling into a Civil War that devastated the South and whose echoes reverberate into every level of society today.