

Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements

Pension Application of Richard Wall: S22032

Transcribed and annotated by C. Leon Harris

The State of South Carolina }
District of Charleston }

On this Nineteenth day of December Anno Domini One thousand Eight hundred and thirty two personally appeared before the Honorable Thomas Lee Judge of the United States of America for the District of South Carolina Richard Wall a resident of the City of Charleston in the State aforesaid aged Seventy eight 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 provision made by the act of Congress passed June 7th 1832. That in the year of our Lord 1779 he entered on board the Frigate Bon Homme Richard, commanded by Captain John Paul Jones as a volunteer in the Marine Department, in the port of L'Orient [Lorient] in France. That some time previous to the month of August in the said year he was advanced by Captain Jones to the rank of Cadet of Marines. That after leaving the port of L'Orient on a cruise when off the western Coast of Ireland it became necessary to tow the ships head from the land for which service a boats crew was ordered who whilst thus engaged in towing the ship seized the opportunity to effect their escape. The said Richard Wall with Cullen Lunt, Sailing Master and some of the crew were ordered to go in pursuit of the deserters and whilst engaged in performing this duty was captured by boats sent from the land to take them after in vain endeavouring to escape. The said Richard Wall was taken to Ireland from thence sent to England and then detained in Forton Prison near Portsmouth until the autumn of the year 1782, exposed to more than the usual hardships and privations a prisoner of war is usually compelled to submit to, being put on very short allowance and daily threatened with execution as a rebel and traitor to the British Government. After his discharge from prison the said Richard Wall entered on board the frigate South Carolina and served in the capacity of Midshipman - until she was captured [see note below]. And the said Richard Wall declares that as Cadet aforesaid of Marine, he had the rank of a midshipman. He hereby relinquishes every claim whatever to a pension or an annuity except the present and he declares that his name is not on the pension roll of any agency in any State.

[signed] Rich'd. Wall

The State of South Carolina }
District of Charleston } SS

On this 19th day of October Anno Domini one thousand eight hundred and thirty-three personally appeared before the Honorable Thomas Lee Judge of the United States of America for the District of South Carolina, Richard Wall a resident of the City of Charleston in the State aforesaid, aged Seventy nine Years, who being first duly sworn according to law, doth on his oath make the following declaration (in addition to and as an amendment of his declaration made on the 19th december 1832) in order to obtain the benefit of the provision made by the act of Congress, passed June 7 1832. that he was born in the County of Limerick in Ireland on the 25th day of December 1754. That he has no original record of his age, the same having been lost with the Bonne homme Richard. That when called into service, he was living at L'Orient in France and from the termination of the Revolutionary War to the present time, he has been living in Charleston South Carolina, where he is well known, particularly to the Honorable William Johnson - Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States and to the Honorable J. S. Richardson and E. H. Bay Associate Judges of the State Court of South Carolina. That he entered service in the Bonne Homme Richard in April 1779 as Cadet of Marines with the pay of a Midshipman and from that time until he was exchanged in April 1783 was in actual service and in no civil employment whatever, making four years. That in this estimate he includes the time he was a prisoner of War towit, three years, and until landed when exchanged as set forth in his former declaration, since all that time he was entitled to pay. That he never did receive and could not have received any discharge from the service because he was taken a prisoner and continued so until his arrival at Philadelphia. That he did not receive any written Commission

nor were any given out to any person whatever as far as he knows and believes. All the commission he ever received was a Breast plate given him by John Paul Jones to be worn as an evidence of his authority and rank. That John Mayrant Esquire is a material witness to substantiate his Declaration in the premises. that he resides in Sumpter [sic: Sumter] District in this State, is very infirm and incapable by reason of his infirmities, of appearing in Court, or of appearing before the Judge or Justice of a Court of record in said District, as Deponent has reason to believe. That said John Mayrant was also on board of the said Frigate Bon Homme Richard and has before given his Deposition in behalf of said Richard Wall on the application or Petition of the said Richard Wall to Congress in the beginning of the year 1826, for Prize money and wages, wherein the facts are all fully set forth, and sworn to and to which reference is craved. that there are no other persons known to him the said Richard Wall now alive who could substantiate the facts, (of their own knowledge) above set forth, except Captain Robert Wilson a respectable revenue officer in the City of Charleston who saw said Richard Wall on board of the Bon homme Richard at L'Orient. [signed] Rich'd. Wall

State of South Carolina }
City of Charleston } Captain Robert Wilson a Citizen of the United States and resident of the City of Charleston being duly sworn deposeth that in the year 1778 or 1779 being at that time a boy and apprenticed on board the ship Duke De Luzerne of Philadelphia, Thomas Bell Master, then on voyage at L'Orient in France he then and there knew of Mr Richard Wall, the person alluded to in the accompanying affidavit being then and there, to wit, at L'Orient and heard there of his being on board of the Bon Homme Richard. That in the year 1782 or thereabouts he the Deponent was in Philadelphia and there saw said Richard Wall and then and there understood that he the said Richard Wall was on board of the Frigate South Carolina and Deponent thinks that he saw him on board. That after the Declaration of peace of 1783 between the United States and Great Britain, he frequently saw said Richard Wall in Charleston where he now resides: and he hath every reason to believe and doth believe that the facts & particulars set forth in the Declaration of said Richard Wall are full and true.
[signed] Robert Wilson

NOTES:

On 4 Feb 1779 John Paul Jones took command of the *Duc de Duras*, renamed *Bonhomme Richard* in honor of Benjamin Franklin, and spent the next six months in France arming her. His famous engagement with the *Serapis* occurred 23 Sep 1779, after Wall was captured.

The frigate *South Carolina* was captured off New Providence, Bahama Islands, on 8 May 1782, before Wall stated he was released from prison.

A letter in the file states that Richard Wall died 5 Jan 1842 and refers to three surviving sons. Edmund L. Drago in *Charleston's Avery Center* (Charleston SC: History Press. 2006) adds the following: "Born in the county of Limerick, Ireland, in 1754, Richard Wall, the family's patriarch, traveled to France with his brother Gilbert to join the American fight for independence.... Exactly when Richard Wall married his wife, Amelia, a free person of color, is impossible to determine, but two of their sons, Lancelot and Edward, were baptized at St. Philip's between 1818 and 1830. The Wall offspring became a vital part of the city's elite free black community. Edward and Lancelot, tailors, belonged to the Friendly Moralist Society."