

Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements & Rosters

Pension Application of Deborah Sampson Gannett S32722

Transcribed and annotated by C. Leon Harris

[Punctuation partly corrected.]

United States –

Massachusetts District –

Deborah Gannett, of Sharon, in the county of Norfolk, and District of Massachusetts, a resident and native of the United States, and applicant for a pension from the United States, under an Act of Congress entitled an Act to provide for certain persons engaged in the land and naval service of the United States, in the revolutionary war, maketh oath, That she served as a private soldier, under the name of Robert Shurtleff – in the war of the revolution, upwards of two years in manner following, Viz – Enlisted in April 1781 in the company commanded by Captain George Webb in the Massachusetts Regiment commanded then by Colonel Shepherd and afterwards by Colonel Henry Jackson – and served in said corps, in Massachusetts, and New York – until November 1783 when she was honorably discharged in writing, which discharge is lost. During the time of her service, she was at the capture of Lord Cornwallis [at Yorktown VA, 19 Oct 1781] – was wounded at Tarrytown [30 Aug 1779 or 15 Jul 1781] – and now receives a pension from the United States, which pension she hereby relinquishes. She is in such reduced circumstances as to require the aid of her country for her support –

[signed] Deborah Gannett

Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

NORFOLK, ss.— CIRCUIT COURT OF COMMON PLEAS

December Term 1820.

On this nineteenth day of December 1820 personally appeared, in open Court, being a Court of Record for said County, proceeding according to the course of the Common Law, with a jurisdiction unlimited in point of amount, keeping a Record of its proceedings, and having the power of fine and imprisonment, Deborah Gannett aged Sixty one years, resident in Sharon in said County of Norfolk who, being first duly sworn according to law, doth on her oath declare, that she served in the Revolutionary War, as follows. In Captain George Webb's Company of Infantry in fourth Massachusetts Regiment, first Brigade, commanded by General John Patterson, during the War, as a private Soldier – and that the number of my former Certificate was 13434. My former application was made 14th Sept'r 1818.

And I do solemnly swear, that I was a resident citizen of the United States on the 18th day of March, 1818; and that I have not, since that time, by sale, or in any manner, disposed of my property, or any part thereof, with intent thereby so to diminish it, as to bring myself within the provisions of an Act of Congress, entitled "An Act to provide for certain persons, engaged in the Land and Naval Service of the United States, in the Revolutionary War," passed on the 18th day of March, 1818; and that I have not, nor has any person in trust for me, any property, or securities, contracts, or debts, due to me; nor have I any income, other than what is contained in the schedule hereto annexed, and by me subscribed.

[signed] Deborah Gannett

Schedule of property belonging to Deborah Gannett

Wearing Apparel \$20.00

[signed] Deborah Gannett

BENJAMIN GANNETT.
(To accompany bill H.R.No. 184.)
December 22, 1837.

Mr. Morgan, from the Committee on Revolutionary pensions, made the following
REPORT:

The Committee on Revolutionary Pensions, to which was committed the memorial of Benjamin Gannett, have carefully re-examined the subject, and have resolved to adopt their report of a former session, viz: That the petitioner represents that he is the surviving husband of Deborah Gannett, to whom he was lawfully married on the 7th day of April. 1784; that she died on the 29th of April 1827 He also states, that in the early part of her life the said Deborah enlisted as a soldier in the army of the Revolution, under the assumed name of Robert Shurtleff, where she faithfully served her country three years, and was honorably discharged in November, 1783; that, on account of a wound received in the service, she received a pension as an invalid until the passage of the act of 18th March, 1818; and that she received a full pension under the act until her decease. The petitioner further states that the effects of the wound which she received followed her through life, and probably hastened her death. The petitioner represents himself to be eighty-three years of age, infirm in health, and in indigent circumstances. He states that he has two daughters dependent on charity for support. The petitioner prays that he may receive the amount of the pension of his wife, from the time of her decease, and that it may be continued to him until his death.

It appears from a letter received from the commissioner of Pensions, that Deborah Gannett, deceased, was placed on the Massachusetts roll of invalid pensioners at \$48. per annum, which was afterwards increased to \$76. 80 per annum. This she relinquished in 1818, for the benefit of the act of March 18, 1818, She was placed under that law at the rate of eight dollars per month, from the 14th September, 1818, which she received up to the 4th March, 1827. It further appears from said letter, that the papers containing evidence upon which the original pension was granted, were burnt in 1814, when the British troops invaded Washington and destroyed the War Office with its contents.

On the 14th September, 1818, the said Deborah made her declaration, under oath, that she served as a private soldier, under the name of "Robert Shurtleff," in the war of the Revolution, upwards of two years, in manner following: Enlisted in April, 1781, in a company commanded by Captain George Webb, in the Massachusetts regiment commanded by Colonel Shepherd, and afterwards by Colonel Henry Jackson; that she served in Massachusetts and New York until November, 1783. when she was honorably discharged in writing; which discharge she has lost. She was at the capture of Cornwallis, was wounded at Tarrytown, and, up to the date of her declaration, she received a pension therefor.

P. Parson testifies, under oath, that she lived in the family of Benjamin Gannett more than forty-six years after he married Deborah Sampson; that she well knew that Deborah was unable to perform any labor a great part of the time, in consequence of a wound she received while in the American army, from a musket ball lodged in her body, which was never extracted. She also states that she saw Benjamin Gannett married to Deborah Sampson at his father's house in Sharon.

Benjamin Rhoad and Jeremiah Gould, the selectmen of the town of Sharon, in the State of Massachusetts, certify that they are acquainted with Benjamin Gannett, now living in said Sharon; that he is a man of upwards of eighty years of age; that he is destitute of property; that he has been an industrious man; that he was the husband of the late Deborah Gannett deceased, who for a time received a pension from the United States for her military services during the revolutionary war.

William Ellis, formerly a Senator in Congress, in a letter to the Hon. William Jackson, now a Representative in Congress, states that said Gannett has been a very upright, hard-laboring man, has brought up a large family, and is a poor man. He further states that he has long since been credibly

informed that said Gannett had been subjected to heavy expenses for medical aid for his wife, the said Deborah, for twenty years or more, and before she received a pension under the act of 1818, on account of wounds she received in the United States service. There are other certificates among the papers in this case, showing the physician's bill alone, for attendance on the said Deborah, to be more than six hundred dollars.

The committee is aware that there is no act of Congress which provides for any case like the present. The said Gannett was married after the termination of the war of the Revolution, and therefore does not come within the spirit of the third section of the act of 4th July, 1836, granting pensions to widows in certain cases; and were there nothing peculiar in this application which distinguishes it from all other applications for pensions, the committee would at once reject the claim. But they believe they are warranted in saying that the whole history of the American Revolution records no case like this, and "furnishes no other similar example of female heroism, fidelity, and courage." The petitioner does not allege that he served in the war of the Revolution, and it does not appear by any evidence in the case that such was the fact. It is not, however, to be presumed that a female who took up arms in defence of her country, who served as a common soldier for nearly three years, and fought and bled for human liberty, would, immediately after the termination of the war, connect herself for life with a tory or a traitor. He, indeed, was honored much by being the husband of such a wife; and as he has proved himself worthy of her, as he has sustained her through a long life of sickness and suffering, and as that sickness and suffering were occasioned by the wounds she received and the hardships she endured in the defence of the country, and as there cannot be a parallel case in all time to come, the committee do not hesitate to grant relief.

They report a bill granting to the petitioner a pension of \$80. per year from the 4th day of March, 1831, for and during his natural life.

NOTES:

Deborah Sampson has been the subject of numerous studies. See, for example, Krieg, S. 2011. "Maiden With a Musket." *Patriots of the American Revolution* 4(4), p 48 (Jul/Aug).

Ephraim Sampson, brother of Deborah Sampson Gannett, was also a Revolutionary soldier. The pension application (W11053) of his former widow, Mary Gibbs, includes extensive information about ancestors of Ephraim Sampson and Deborah Sampson Gannett.