

Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements

Pension Application of William C. Smith S3924

Transcribed and annotated by C. Leon Harris

State of Tennessee } On this 18th day of April 1833 personally appeared in open court
Lincoln County } Before William F Long William F Smith & Samuel Todd Justices of
the court of pleas & Quarter sessions for the County and State aforesaid now sitting William c
Smith a resident of the County of Lincoln and State of Tennessee aged seventy one years who
being first duly sworn according to law doth on his oath make the following declaration in order
to obtain the benefit of the act of Congress passed June 7th 1832

That he entered the service of the United States under the following named officers and
served as herein stated

He was born in Mecklenburg County Virginia on the 4th day of March 1762 He has
always kept a record of his age until a few years past he had the misfortune to get his house
burnt and it was thereby Destroyed it was taken from his mothers prayer book

He volunteered in the latter part of the month of May 1779 [sic] at Hillsboro [sic:
Hillsborough] North Carolina for the term of nine months his Captain was Lewis Bledsoe
afterwards Major & Colonel Bledsoe. his lieutenant was Richard Frazier afterwards Major Frazier
his ensigns name he cannot now recollect his Colonel was Joseph Mabane [sic: Robert Mebane]
General Lincoln at that time was the commander of the Southern Division [see note below] and
was station somewhere in South Carolina he dont know precisely where Col Mabane received
orders to March to drowning creek on the lower part of North Carolina with his regiment to try
to rescue some prisoners which the Brittish and Torys had taken and to subdue and disperse the
Brittish and Torys who had Rendezvous on said creek and formed a large regiment and were
killing Robbing & taking prisoners and committing all kinds of Depredations they Marched
through Wake by Raleigh and straight on to Montgomery and on to Anson County NC where
Drowning Creek is [sic: was then] situated When we arrived at said creek we found a large
Company of Brittish and torys had united and formed a large regiment and were commanded By
Colonel Fanning [sic: David Fanning] and Major McGirth [sic: Col. Daniel McGirth] his Brittish
officers shortly after our arrival we had a hot battle on the south side of said creek [see note
below], which [illegible word] gloriously to the cause of Liberty. But a great number on both sides
were killed wounded and taken prisoners on the american side amongst the prisoners was
Governor [Thomas] Burke who they had taken before the battle [at Hillsborough, 12 Sep 1781]
the then acting Governor of the State of North Carolina after the above defeat the Brittish and
Tories retreated and collected a reinforcement about twenty miles above the head waters of said
creek at a place called Lindlys Mills [sic: Lindley's Mill in Alamance County on Cane Creek, about
35 mi N of the headwaters of Drowning Creek] Col Mabane ordered us to take up the line of
March and and persue on after them when we arrived at said Mills we found we were in advance
of the flanking Party of the Brittish & Torys by the intelligence of our spies we crossed the creek
below the mills but from the above intelligence we crossed back again dismounted and left a
small guard to take care of our horses then formed a line of Battle and marched about one
quarter of a mile and met the enemy and changed a few rounds of fire When they preceptably
retreated They sent word if we pursued them they would put to death the american prisoners
they had taken before and at the time of the Battle of Downing creek in the first engagement.
Col Mabane thought most expedient not to persue them immediately so we remained there a
short time In order to learn the maneuvers and to ascertain which way they were aiming. we
soon learned that they were aiming for Virginia and were going to take a kind of circuitous route
through the lower parts of North Carolina we discovered where they would cross the Roanoke
River and we by taken a direct course could get to the place where they intended to cross the
River Col Mabane ordered us to take up the line of March and to proceed to Halifax [sic: Halifax]
County and there to waite for the enemy to arrive We Marched through the Counties of
Cumberland Johnson & Nash and on to the place where they intended to cross the roanoak
River this applicant believes that it was in Halifax North Carolina where they stop and found
they were a head of the Brittish and torys some day or two travell and that the Brittish and Torys

were under the necessity of coming the road that Col Mabane and his regiment were encamped upon We now had sufficient time to select our Battle ground in such a maner that it would prove advantageous to us which was an old field grown up with thick shruberry on one side and a perfect glade on the other our orders were to conceal ourselves on the shrub side and to waite for the approach of the enemy who shortly made their appearance We saw and knew Gov Burke who was Barefooted and [illegible word or symbol; see note below] And when they arrived opposite to us we arose from our concealment and give them the Blast which come upon them like a thief in the night for they were wholly unprepared they betook themselves to flight we retook the whole number of prisoners and a considerable number of the Brittish and torys we then took up the line of March for head Quarters which was at that time this applicant believes was at or near Raleigh NC When we arrived within three miles of head Quarters we received intelligence that a party of Brittish and Torys had rendezvoused on Cape fear River near the Great Swamp an Gov Burke was escorted home by a few soldiers and the brittish & Tory prisoners under a sufficient guard was sent on to head Quarters the remainder of which your applicant was one under Col Mabane marched to the above named Rendezvous on By Fayetteville near Cross creek and on to the Raft Swamp which is in Roberson County South Carolina [sic: Robeson County NC] We arrived at the Samp [sic] a little before sun down and encamped a bout a quarter of a mile from the Brittish and Torys who was encamped in the Samp our Col thought it expedient to send out a Company of Spies in order to obtain the strength and situation of the enemy and the most aderesable mode of attack Col Mabane ordered out sixteen men an Ensign this applicant cannot now recollect his name and fifteen others amongst which number your applicant was one who proceeded to make discovery and before he had discovered them we had passed them when the fired upon us and took your Applicant and four others of the Whigs prisoners who were before and the Eleven others broke and ran Back to our Camp and were safe

They kept us until next morning about day light when the Whigs commence fire upon them and the Brittish and tories were so much alarmed that they called all hands into Battle except a very few who were left to guard us prisoners and had concluded that we had assoon suffer death as to be kept prisoners by the Brittish and Torys I then told my fellow prisoners that now was the time for us to make our escape they took me at my word and we all broke and run like heroes[?] But thanks be to kind providence when the guard fire after us they hit none but myself which was By a bullet which struck me about half way between the knee and ancle and passed through Between the two leg bones and come out of the flesh I was so much rejoiced at our fortunate escape that I never felt its pain until we reached our Camp although I experienced it sorely after I arrived at our Camp the americans soon quelled them and put them to flight our Col ordered us to [illegible word] take up the line of March for home we done so and went on till we arrived at a public store this applicant thinks it was in Montgomery County and there they were all discharged Your applicant was Dicharge by his Captain Lewis Bledsoe from whom he received it it and he kept it until some years ago he got his house burnt and it was Burnt in it at the time he was called in to service he was living in Wake County North Carolina he served nearly twelve month in this Tour but only Received a discharge for nine months the time for which he volunteered after they were discharged and on their way home Col Mabane his Captain and several others was going on to Wake County where they all lived they came across a tory [Henry Hightower] in an old field who Col Mabane knew and the Col swore he would take him or his life he charged upon him and the Tory broke and run and Col Mabane after him on his horse through the Old field in the field there was a gully and some grape vines had grown over it Colonel Mabane went to charge the gully and his horse got entangled in it and fell and threw him The Tory turned and shot Col. Mabane as he was getting up and kill him We Burried Col Mabane and this applicant returned home to Wake County North Carolina

He again volunteered in november 1780 at Hilsboro North Carolina for the term of six months his Captain was James Frazier his lieutenants name he cannot now recollect Richard Frazier Major Lewis Bledsoe Colonel General Nathaniel Green had been appointed Commander of the Southern Army in place of General Gates [sic: Nathanael Greene replaced Horatio Gates about 2 Dec 1780] we paraded at Hilsboro NC and had orders to March to the lower part of

North Carolina for the purpose of driving some tories out of the County We March through the Counties of orange Cheatham [sic: Chatham] Montgomery and down to Fayetteville to Cross creek where we came upon a party of tories and soon made them fly. we had orders then from Gen Green to keep continually in movement in the lower part of the state first from one part to another on the waters of Pee Dee and broad rivers we remained there for some time until we received orders from General Green to come up nearer the center of the state During the above time we had several tory skirmishes at this time news come come that Cornwallis had arrived in North Carolina with a large army [Feb 1781] for the purpose of taken the whole state General Green had before this [illegible word] regiments in Nearly all parts of the State whipping and driving the torys when he heard that Cornwallis had come over in to the State of NC He sent for all the [militia] regiments that were out to repair and assemble at Guilford County North Carolina as the brittish were expected there every day to commence an attack the regiment your applicant belonged to was at the time this news arrived in Chatham County NC The took up the line of March for guilford County NC and Marched with all speed for life to get to General Greens mane army before the Brittish Commenced the attack But when they arrived within a few miles of Guilford Courthouse North Carolina they heard the fireing of the guns and then were convenced that the battle had commence Col Bledsoe thought it most advisable not to March up until he could Learn how the armies were situated he then formed the line of Battle and we remained there until the firing ceased when we learned how we could get to the army in safety we Marched & joined Greens army that night which was encamped a short distance from Guilford Court house at [illegible] Iron works [Speedwell Iron Works on Troublesome Creek] this was one of the best fought Battles during the war Green & Lord Cornwallis exerted themselves at the head of their respective armies and although the americans were obliged to retired from the field of Battle yet the brittish army suffered an immense loss and could not persue the victory This action happened on the 15th day of March 1781 the Brittish tired of efort of fighting Green took up the line of march to South Carolina Green remained in North Carolina for some short time and he then proceed to South Carolina [early Apr] before he commend marching for South Carolina your applicants term of Service expired and he received a written discharge from his Captain James Frazier for the term of six months service at the time he was called into Service he was living in Wake County North Carolina after he was discharged he returned home he had always kept his discharged until he got his house burnt and it was burnt amongst his papers

In Month of May 1781 he substituted for William Wellmouth for the term of three months a man by the name of Henton was Captain he has forgotten the name of his lieutenant William Hinton Colonel Henry Lane Major Nathaniel Green General at Hilsboro North Carolina was where he substituted they Marched from Hilsboro up to Guilford County and there joined Genl Greens army General Green was at this time on the eve of Marching to South Carolina to join General Marion [sic: see note] he heard that there was a small party of Torys collect at the Narrows of the Yadkin river and thought it most advisable not to take all the forces out of the state he therefore told Colonel Henton to take his regiment and go to the narrows of the Yadkin River and disperse the tories and to go to Raleigh NC as the legislature of the state was going to meet there in a few weeks and Guard it until he sent for him or until further orders Col Hinton Marched his regiment to the Narrows of the Yadkin and there we had two or three little Tory skirmishes and then Marched to raleigh where the legislature had Convened and there we remained until your applicants term of Service expired and he was discharged by is Captain By a written Discharge which was Burnt in his house when all his aforementioned discharges were burnt at the time he was called into Service he was living in Wake County North Carolina

He enlisted in Wilks [sic: Wilkes] County State of Georgia sometime in the spring of 1781 for the term of Twelve months his Captain was charles Williamson his lieutenant was Clem Harison Jo River[?] Major Clark General [probably Col. Elijah Clarke] they were called to fight the Indians the March from Wilks County to the Oconee River in the state of Georgia and there stationed up on the River they built a fort General Clark would Divide them out in Companys and they would take it by turns and go out In company and attacked the Indians they had frequent skirmishes with the Indians The Indians had crept up near Scotts Fort and taken two young women from the Cowpen who had went out to Milk and had carried them about twenty

Miles from the place we were stationed General Clark when he came to hear of the occurrence he ordered a large part of his men to pursue them and rescue the women our applicant was one of the company who went for that purpose We overtook them at the standing peachtree In the State of Georgia where they had taken up camp and were holding a consultation it was after night we Marched up on them and took them by surprise and rescued the two young woman and took a great number of the Indians prisoners we then returned to our fort we remained there sometime until your applicant was Discharge the war ceased and he was discharged his Captain Charles Williamson give it to him for six months the term he had served he enlisted for twelve months but was discharged at the end of six months his discharge was destroyed by the fire at the time he got his house Burnt at the time he was called into service he was living in Wilks County Georgia after the War was over he moved to Pendleton District South Carolina where he lived until about sixteen years ago he moved to Lincoln County Tennessee where he now lives He has no Documentary evidence and that he knows of no person whose testimony he can procure who can testify to his services

He swears that he has served as a private as above mention in defence of his Country not less than two years first nine months six months three months six months the length of time that has elapsed since the service And the consequent loss of Memory have occasioned a great many Circumstances and names of men and places to escape his recollection the time above set forth he positively served for which he claims a Pension

He is known in his present neighbourhood to William Mellenes[?] & Philip Kooner[?] Esqr
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 In the United States
Sworn to and subscribed the day and year aforesaid William hisXmark C Smith

NOTE: The sequence of events in Smith's deposition is confused. Gen. Benjamin Lincoln, commander of the Southern Division, was headquartered at Purysburg SC in May 1779, and he was captured at Charleston on 12 May 1780. The events described in Smith's first tour occurred more than a year later. The battle said by Smith to have occurred on Drowning Creek actually appears to have been the Battle of Lindley's Mill on 13 Sep 1781, after which the Tories retreated to Drowning Creek.

The battle and rescue of Gov. Burke described by Smith is apparently pure fiction. Burke had been taken to Wilmington NC, then by sea to Charleston, and finally to James Island from which he escaped on 16 Jan 1782. After the Battle of Guilford Courthouse Gen. Greene pursued Cornwallis as far as Ramsey's Mill on Deep River, then in early Apr left from there for South Carolina without returning to Guilford County. Greene's reason for going to South Carolina was not specifically to join Gen. Francis Marion, but to remove the British from their outposts.