

Southern Campaigns American Revolution Pension Statements and Rosters

Pension Application of Peter Jennings S4436

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Transcribed and annotated by C. Leon Harris. Revised 9 Sep 2015.

For The purpose of obtaining the benefits of the act, Entitled “An act for the relief of certain surviving officers and soldiers of the Army of the Revolution,” approved on the 15th of May 1828, I Peter Jennings (A Black man) of the county of Rutherford and State of Tennessee, do hereby declare, that I enlisted in the Continental line of the Army of the Revolution for and during the war, and continued in its service untill its termination; at which period I was a Private in Captain Edgar’s Company of Regulars, in the first Regiment of Infantry of the continental line. [See endnote.]

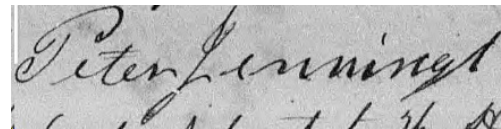
And I further declare, that I was not on the 15th day of May 1828 on the pension list of the United States

Witness my hand, this 13th day of August in the year 1828

Witness

W. T Christy

Simeon B Christy

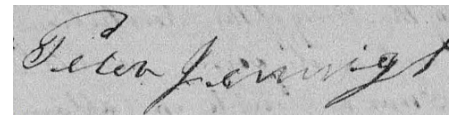


I Peter Jennings (A Black man) do hereby submit to the Hon. Richard Rush agent for the Surviving officers and soldiers of the Revolution the particulars of my sevice &c during my time of Service in the Revolution. I served in Col Brewster’s Ridgement (mostly black man) Major Tamage, Captain Edgar’s Company as above named. There was in the same Ridgement Lieutenant Pike, Lieutenant Ray – Hanly & Thos Jackson – with Capts. Richardson & Brooks, and several other Capts and Lieutenants that I cannot a this period mention. I served about four years before the taking of Lord Cornwallis [at Yorktown , 19 Oct 1781], and about ten months afterwards, before the close of the War and the issue of my discharge from Maj Tamage & others. I was discharged at the Town of Fairfield in the State of Connecticut, a few weeks after the taking of Forte Slongo on Long Island’s [Fort Slongo or Salonga, 3 Oct 1781; www.royalprovincial.com/history/battles/lrvrep7.shtml] and on our way to said Forte Col Brewster was wounded in the Belly by the Traitor Capt Haile & Company who no doubt supposed that we were after them – but the wound did not prove mortal. I will here mentions some of the persons who were in the part of the Company with me and whose names may be inscribed on the list of Revolutionary Soldiers. James James, Philip James, Brothers; & Ned Bradley. Three Black men, also Pomp Nichols from Purke Quanock Ned Sherman and [an] Indian, Corporal Eatonton, white man. David Harrisson and James Griffin white privates. I would also mention that General Layfayett [sic: Lafayette] recognized me when in Nashville [4 May 1825] and that I could get evidence of that fact by taking great paines, but hope that foregoeing evidence will be sattisfactory. August 13th 1828

Witness

W. T. Christy

Simeon B Christy



State of Tennessee } Court of pleas & quarter Sessions

Rutherford County } August term 1832

On this 23rd day of August 1832, personally appeared before Henry Trott, V. D. Cowen & James C. Mitchell Esquires, Justices of the Court of pleas & quarter sessions for the county and State aforesaid, now sitting in open court, Peter Jennings, a man of colour, a resident of the town of Murfreesboro’ in the County & State aforesaid, aged Eighty years, four months and twenty one days, 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 the 7th 1832. That he enlisted in the army of the United States, according to the best of his recollection in the year 1776 with Corporal Edenton and when

he entered the service, he belonged to the 5th Regiment of Artillery of Blacks, in the Continental line, under the following named officers. He belonged to Capt'n. Vener Angel's company, in which a man by the name of Hawley, whose given name he does not now remember, was first Lieutenant, and a man whose name was Ray, Second Lieutenant, his given name not remembered. The Regiment was commanded by Col. Edward Oney, and a man whose name was Halsy, was first Major, and he thinks his given name was Joseph. Who his Second Major was, he does not remember. He thinks his Regiment joined General Washington's army at West Point; and after remaining there a few days, marched to Saratoga, where they remained a considerable length of time. At the same time they were encamped at Saratoga, thinks that Gen. Dickson, or Dickenson was encamped there with a division of Virginia Malitia, and he thinks he remembers Colonels Campbell & Ferguson were there in the Virginia Malitia. After remaining at Saratoga several weeks, he thinks his regiment was divided, and a part of it attached to the troops under the command of Gen. Green [sic: Nathanael Greene]; a part of it to the troops under the command of Gen. [Horatio] Gates; a part of it probably to the troops under Gen. Cadwallader [sic: John Cadwalader of PA]; and a part of it Gen. Washington retained with the troops under his immediate command. He remained with troops under Gen. Washington's immediate command; and he thinks the Regiment to which he was attached, was commanded by Col. Clifford, to whose regiment a Maj'r. Talbot [possibly Silas Talbot of RI] belonged, but he does not remember whether he was first or second Major. He does not remember the number of Col. Clifford's regiment, nor does he remember the Colonel's given name; nor the the given name of Maj'r. Talbot. He thinks James Starling was at this time his Captain; and that his Lieutenant's name was Bloomfield; but his given name, is not remembered. Shortly after this division was made of the black regiment, he thinks the battle of Trenton took place [26 Dec 1776], and he well remembers he was in that engagement. He has a distinct recollection that on the night of the 25th of December after he first entered the service as a regular soldier, which would be December 1776 if it was in that year he enlisted, and he thinks it was, Gen. Washington crossed his Troops over the Delaware about nine miles above Trenton and marched upon the enemy and attacked them by surprise. A part of the American forces he thinks were commanded by Generals Ewing & Cadwallader, the former of whom belonged to the Virginia troops [sic: James Ewing of PA]. The forces under their command he thinks were to cross the Delaware, higher up than the point at which declarant crossed with Gen. Washington, and were to attack the left wing of the enemy; but he well remembers the did not cross over, which he thinks was owing to the ice; for it was with extreme difficulty that Gen. Washington got his troops over, on account of the ice and the extreme cold weather. On account of Generals Ewing and Cadwallader failing to cross the river as had been previously arranged, we were compelled to make the attack with such forces alone as crossed over with Gen. Washington. The enemy so little expecting an attack from us, were thrown into great confusion, and we obtained a complete victory over them, killing many of them, and taking several hundred prisoners, who were principally Hessians. We also took a large amount of military stores, a number of pieces of Cannon, and a great many small arms. He thinks the greater portion of the enemy's forces were killed & taken prisoners. He thinks there was a Colonel, commanding the the Hessian troops killed, but does not remember his name [Lt. Col. Johann Rall]. There were but few on the side of the Americans killed and not many wounded; amongst the wounded, he thinks there was a Captain Washington [William Washington, later Lt. Col.], which he remembers from his being of the same name of his General – Washington. After this engagement he states he marched back across the Delaware with the prisoners and captured stores; and the prisoners, he thinks were conducted to Philidelphia. In a few days however, he returned with Gen. Washington to Trenton. They had not been long in possession of Trenton, when the British forces collected and marched towards Trenton for the purpose of giving battle, as was supposed; in fact they had actually commenced firing on the American troops in the evening and considerable cannonading took place between the two armies. The firing from our artillery, somewhat checked their advance upon us, and night coming on, they halted on the opposite side of a creek from us, and ceased firing. It was then supposed that they intended making a general attack upon us the next morning. We were ordered to light fires along our lines in our front, for the purpose, as declarant afterwards discovered, of deceiving the enemy; for instead of remaining at the fires

we were marched off with all possible expedition towards Princeton where some regiments of the British troops were quartered. We reached there very early the next morning [3 Jan 1777] and made a vigorous attack upon them. Declarant has a perfect recollection of an occurrence which took place during this engagement, which will never be effaced from his memory. A part of our troops were driven back by the British and were thrown into much confusion. Gen. Washington perceiving it, seized a standard and rushed in front of our troops, and dashed several paces ahead towards the enemy, exclaiming "come on boys," or some such expression. His example had the desired effect of rallying our troops, and they followed the Commander with renewed ardour. While Gen. Washington was between the two armies at least one round was fired on each side, and he remained untouched. Soon after this occurrence, the British troops gave way and retreated into some public building, where we pursued them and kept up such a play of artillery upon them, that all those who had taken refuge, were compelled to surrender to us. In this engagement, the British were completely routed & defeated. Many of them were killed & wounded and a great number taken prisoners. The loss on the American side he thinks was inconsiderable. He remembers that General [Hugh] Mercer, who he believes belonged to the Virginia troops was severely wounded in this engagement, and thinks he shortly died of his wounds.

After the battle at Princeton we marched to Morristown and took up winter quarters, and remained there until some time in the spring. From Morristown, he marched to Middlebrook; from thence to Peek's-hill [sic: Peekskill NY] where some fortifications were erected. From this point he marched towards the Delaware river; and the army was occupied for several weeks in advancing & receding, marching & countermarching, sometimes toward Philadelphia, and then towards the Delaware, for several weeks, until the battle finally ensued at Brandywine [11 Sep 1777]. This engagement commenced early in the morning, and the attack was brought on by the British who were under the command of Lord Cornwallis. They crossed the creek about a mile above our forces, and made an attack upon our rear. We were about the same time attacked in front by a British General whose name is now not remembered [Wilhelm von Knyphausen]. The American troops were compelled to retreat with great loss. He thinks he retreated towards Chester and was pursued a considerable distance by the enemy. He well remembers seeing Gen. Lafayette in this engagement, and saw him receive a wound, which he thinks was in his right leg. He also remembers that there was another American General wounded, but he has forgotten his name. He thinks [incorrectly] Gen. [Benjamin] Lincoln was in this battle. Two or three weeks after the battle of Brandywine, Gen. Washington having received a considerable reinforcement from Virginia, marched us to Germantown and made an attack upon the British stationed there [4 Oct 1777]. The attack was made early in the morning, and from its sudden & unexpected character, the British forces were thrown into great disorder; but it being a cloudy, foggy morning it was difficult for our troops to keep in regular order, which caused considerable confusion amongst us; and the enemy rallying from the confusion into which they had at first been thrown, drove back our troops, and we were at length compelled to retreat with great loss. In this engagement an American General – [Francis] Nash was killed. After recovering from this defeat, we marched to a place called Whitemarsh, where we remained some time in expectation of an attack from the British, who had taken a position not far distant from us; they however, withdrew without making an attack, and we were marched to Valley Forge where we took up winter quarters. Declarant was at the battle of York town [siege of Yorktown, 28 Sep - 19 Oct 1781; see endnote]. When we reached there, Lafayette had been engaged in some severe fighting with the enemy. The principal fighting however after he reached the place, was with the artillery, with an almost constant cannonading was kept up. He well remembers the position of the french fleet on this occasion, which had taken a stand in the Patomac river [sic: Chesapeake Bay] to prevent Cornwallis from being reinforced by the British troops under the command of Sir Henry Clinton. He remembers that about two days before the surrender fourteen of the British soldiers deserted and came into the American encampment and surrendered themselves; and that from them we received a good information about affairs in the enemys camp. The Surrender he thinks was on the 18th [sic: 19th] October 1781. He has a most perfect recollection of the circumstances which occurred when Cornwallis surrendered up his sword, for he was present and saw this transaction. Cornwallis offered his sword to Gen. Washington, who stepped back and

declined taking it, when Gen. Lincoln, who it had been he thinks previously agreed should receive it, stepped forward and accepted it from him. [See endnote.] Declarant remained at York town several weeks after the surrender; he thinks however he marched to Winchester Virginia with the British prisoners, and that Cornwallis was in company. [See endnote.] After he returned to York from Winchester, he remained there five or six days, at the end of which time he was discharged from the service. he received a written discharge from Captain Edgar, by whom his company had been commanded for some time; his former Captain having been compeled to retire from the service on account of bad health, when Capt'n Edgar succeeded to the command. He lost his discharge a few years after the war was over he thinks, on the eastern part of the Bahama Islands, where he was shipwrecked, being on a voyage in a merchantman bound from New York to Teneriff [sic: Tenerife] on a trading expedition.

It is impossible for declarant to remember every place through which he marched during a service of five or six years, or to detail all the occurrences with which he met during that time and in which he acted a part. He can only pretend to state important transactions, and occurrences to which his attention was particularly directed by some peculiar circumstance, upon which the mind would then fasten, so as not to let escape the recollection of the event.

Declarant enlisted in providence Rhode Island, where he at that time resided. He was born at Pequarock, three miles east of Fairfield, Conneticut.

He has never received a pension for his services, and he hereby relinquishes every claim whatever to a pension or annuity except the present, and he declares his name is not on the pension roll of the agency of any State.

Peter hisXmark Jennings

I Drury Lane [pension application W8015], residing in the county of Bedford and State of Tennessee, certify upon oath that I was a soldier of the revolutionary war; that he has been acquainted with Peter Jennings who has subscribed & sworn to the foregoing declaration, for about thirteen years and has always understood that he was a soldier of the revolutionary war, and that he believes it is so reputed & believed in the neighborhood where he resides, and that from frequent conversations with him in relation to the revolutionary war, and transactions therein with which I was well acquainted I entertain no doubt but that he was a soldier in said war in behalf of the United States.

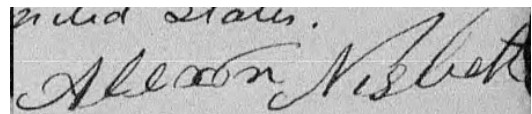
J R Laughlin, Clk

Drury hisXmark Lane

I Alexander Nisbett [Alexander Nisbett] residing in the county of Rutherford and State of Tennessee, certify upon oath that I have been acquainted with Peter Jennings who has subscribed & sworn to the foregoing declaration, and that he lives in the same neighborhood with him. I have always understood he was a soldier of the revolutionary war and believe it is so reputed & believed in his neighborhood. I farther state that I was myself a soldier of the revolution, and from frequent conversations with him in relation to the transactions of the war, have no doubt but that he did serve therein in behalf of the United States.

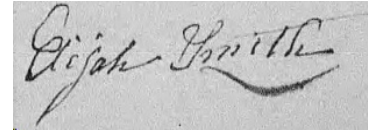
Sworn & subscribed to the day & year aforesaid

J R Laughlin Clk



State of Tennessee }
Rutherford County } On this 8th day of September 1832 personally appeared before me, William Gilliam an acting Justice of the peace, for the County of Rutherford and State of Tennessee, Elijah Smith [W10504], aged Seventy seven years & twenty six days, a resident of said Rutherford County, who, being first duly sworn according to law, doth, upon his oath, say that he was a Soldier of the revolutionary war, that in the winter of 1777 when the American troops were quartered at Valley forge, he was there as an assistant forage master under one Cocklerow, and that he knew there, a man of colour who belonged to the New England troops, and was in the artillery. He is acquainted with Peter Jennings,

a man of colour, now residing in Rutherford county aforesaid, and he believes him to be the same man he knew at Valley Forge. He does not remember him by name so as to state him to be the same man; but from his seize, and general appearance, so far as he can remember, and so far as it would correspond at so distant a period, he believes him to be the same; and from frequent conversations with him in relation to facts & circumstances which occurred there, which said Jennings remembers, and which he is confident he could not have known had he not been there, and especially from his narration of the circumstances of a man's being hung there, he is confident he is the same man, whom he then knew.



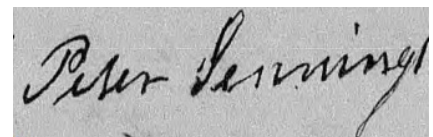
The Amended declaration of Peter Jennings (a man of colour) a citizen of Murfreesboro' Rutherford County Tennessee, in order to obtain a pension for his services as a soldier of the revolutionary war, under the provisions of an act of Congress passed June the 7th 1832.

On this 22nd day of May 1833 personally appeared in open court before John Fletcher, Henry D. Jamison and Varner D. Cowen, Justices of the court of pleas & quarter sessions of Rutherford county and State of Tennessee, now sitting, the above named Peter Jennings, and on his oath makes the following declaration in addition to his former declaration, made in said Court on the 23rd day of August 1832 before Henry Trott, Varner D. Cowen and James C. Mitchell Esquires, Justices of said court.

Declarant states he has no documentary evidence of his services as a soldier of the revolutionay war, and he knows of no person whose testimony he can procure who can testify as to his service, except Elijah Smith, who will prove that he saw declarant in the service of the United States at Valley Forge, and whose certificate given under oath is annexed to his original declaration.

Declarant states he has no record of his age. He is acquainted, with the Rev'd. Martin Clark a citizen of Murfreesboro', Rutherford county Ten. and with Major William Ledbetter, Clerk of the Circuit court of Rutherford County Ten. who he believes will testify as to his character for veracity, and their belief of his services as a soldier of the revolution. He believes that Robert Locke, William T. Christy, Rev'd. German Baker & James Holms will if called on make the same statements.

Sworn to & subscribed the day & year aforesaid



NOTES:

Some of the officers mentioned in Jennings's first two statements appear to have been in the 2nd Continental Regiment of Light Dragoons as listed on a roll covering the period 1776-1783 entitled "Size roll of officers & men of regiment & list of recruits, in book form" kept by Maj. Benjamin Tallmadge (S46412) <https://www.fold3.com/image/1/10194561>. These officers were apparently from Connecticut. The regiment was commanded by Col. Elisha Sheldon, not a Col. Brewster as stated by Jennings. Peter Jennings was not on the roll, nor were any of the others mentioned except for the following:

Capt. Edgar	Capt. David Edgar
Major Tamage	Maj. Benjamin Tallmadge
Lieutenant Pike	Cornet William Pike
Lieutenant Ray	Lt. Aaron Rhea
Hanly	Lt. Gideon Hawley
Thos Jackson	Lt. Thomas J. Jackson

In Jennings's 1832 declaration I could identify only the names expanded in brackets in the transcription.

In 1828 Jennings implied that he was at the taking of Fort Slongo on 3 Oct 1781, which would

make it virtually impossible for him to have been at the siege of Yorktown. His statement that he was discharged at Fairfield CT a few weeks after the taking of Ft. Mifflin is in direct contradiction to the claim that he was discharged at Yorktown some time after the siege.

Jennings's account of the surrender at Yorktown is accurate except that Cornwallis wasn't present. Claiming indisposition, he delegated the surrender to his second-in-command, Gen. Charles O'Hara. This is the reason Washington had his second-in-command, Gen. Benjamin Lincoln, accept the sword. After the surrender, Cornwallis was given parole and allowed freedom of movement. He did not go to Winchester.

A statement purportedly made by Peter Jennings on 24 Oct 1837 in support of the pension application of John Hagey (R4428) states that Jennings was at the Battle of White Plains, which occurred on 28 Oct 1776