

[Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements & Rosters](#)

Pension Application of Robert Bolling S6689

Transcribed and annotated by C. Leon Harris. Revised 8 Dec 2010.

Town of Petersburg }

State of Virginia }

On this 20th day of September 1832 personally appeared in open Court before Thos Wallace, Beverly Drinkard, Robt. Wilkins, & Francis Pace – Justices of the Court of the Town of Petersburg now sitting, Robert Bolling a resident of said Town and State of Virginia aged 73 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: Early in the spring of 1778 I enlisted as a private Soldier to the best of my recollection for a Term of twelve months, in a volunteer Corps of Calvary under the command of General Thomas Nelson as Captain, George Nicholas as first Lieutenant and Hugh Nelson as Second Lieutenant all of the State of Virginia. the said Corps of Cavalry amounting to one hundred men was embodied organized and trained at a small Town in the County of Caroline Va. called Port Royal, this corps was raised by Captain Thomas Nelson of York Town Va in pursuance of the recommendation of Congress of the 2nd March 1778, after remaining at Port Royal about 4 months we about the first of August 1778 marched to Philadelphia where we remained several days, & where on the 8th of August 1778 we were discharged after receiving the thanks of Congress, which was then and there sitting. (See Charles Lewis' Certificate of the 3^d Sept'r. 1832.) Early in the year 1780, I in the Capacity of Captain enlisted a number of men and formed a volunteer Corps of Cavalry by the direction of Col John Banister of Dinwiddie County who was then the commander of the Dinwiddie Militia, I marched said Troop of Cavalry on being organized to a small Town in County of Isle of Wight called Smithfield and there joined a large body of Militia under the Command of General Robert Lawson, and General Mullenburg [sic: Peter Muhlenberg] the Regular Continental Officer being then and there present in command, and served during that year. a detachment of British Troops I believe under the command of Genl [Alexander] Leslie then having invaded Norfolk & Portsmouth [sic: Portsmouth] which places they possessed several months. Early in the year 1781 I obtained several new recruits to said Troops, and about the month of May 1781 a strong army of British Troops commanded by General James Philips [sic: William Phillips] and Benedict Arnold invaded Virginia and advanced to Petersburg which Town they gained possession of [Battle of Blandford Hill, 25 Apr] after a warm resistance by the Virginia Militia in which Battle I the Captain of the said volunteer Troop acted commanding said Troop. The American Troops or army then at Petersburg were commanded by the Regular Officer Genl Baron Steuben. a few days after the capture of Petersburg General Philips died [of typhoid fever, 13 May] at my Mothers Residence in said Town being his head Quarters, the army was then commanded by Genl Arnold until the arrival of Lord Cornwallace [sic: Cornwallis, 20 May] from Carolina before the arrival of Cornwallace at Petersburg I with a part of my Troop under the command of Major Churchill Jones [Churchill Jones] a regular continental officer, was sent to detached toward Carolina to ascertain the line of Cornwallaces' approach to Petersburg, in which service two of my Troop were Captured. I was as Captain aforesaid also in a skirmish with a party of British Troops at Broadway on Appomattox River ten miles below Petersburg. After the departure of the British army from Petersburg I remained with my Troop in Prince George County near James River as a guard and immediately after the surrender at York [19 Oct 1781] we were discharged at Petersburg. I have no documentary evidence of my services. I was born in the year 1759 near the Town of Petersburg. I have my age recorded in my family Bible. When called into service I was living in Petersburg and have since always lived in said Town. I volunteered when called into service. the Regular officers with the

Troops where I served were Col. [Alexander] Dick and Major Holmes in addition to those above mentioned. I did not receive a regular Commission but was acknowledged by the Commanding Officers with whom I served as a Captain of a volunteer Troop of Cavalry and also by Thomas Jefferson then Governor of Virginia as per letter herewith inclosed. My neighbours who can testify their belief of my services as a Revolutionary soldier are Wm Clarke, Sam D Davies, Minton Thrift a clergyman, and Dan'l. C Butts

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.

Sworn to and subscribed the day and year aforesaid. [signed] Robert Bolling

In Council April 12 1781

Sir/ Reasons to believe that the enemy intend a movement across the Country towards Carolina have induced Maj'r General Baron Steuben to desire anxiously to have made up of a sudden a body of 200 cavalry. It is probable they will not be wanting a fortnight, but in any event they shall be discharged at the end of one month from their rendezvousing at Petersburg. Supposing it would be in your power to raise a number suddenly I take the liberty of troubling you as I do several other Gentlemen with the proposition. It will be necessary for the troopers to mount & equip themselves. Some good Swords it will be in our power to furnish and all of them with a shorter kind. So that the want of that article need not keep them from the field, their horses and accoutrements shall be ensured by the public against every thing but negligence, and the service shall be counted in lieu of a tour of Militia duty. We wish them to rendezvous as they are raised at Petersburg as the call, should it happen, will happen in a few days: the Command shall be arranged at the rendezvous. for so short a service it is hoped that no difficulties will arise on that head.

I am with great respect Sir

Your ms. ob. Serv't. [signed] Tho Jefferson

Capt. Rob't. Bolling

[No date or signature, but presumably by Bolling:]

It is a fact, that I rendered Military services, beyond the periods expressed in my certificate, but as our Country, was then invaded by a powerfull enemy, and the whole of the Inhabitants, were thrown into great consternation, and distress, I have limited the periods of my defined services, much within the extent of the public duties I performed; you must also allow something, for the great lapse of time, and its operation upon the human mind, since those events ocured; I wish therefore to be very guarded in my statements, and had rather give up much to my Country, than to take one cent, improperly from her. To illustrate my meaning in few words: I consider that I served my Country, as a regular Soldier, or Trooper, in a Corps of Cavalry, during a period of Six months; and afterwards, as a Captain of Cavalry in a Volunteer Troop of Horse, during a period of Eight months, in the Revolutionary War.

I John Grammer Clerk of the Hustings Court of the town of Petersbg Virginia & whose name is subscribed, as such, to the declaration made by Robert Bolling before the said Hustings Court, in order to obtain a pension, now upwards of seventy eight years of age —

At the desire of Mr. Bolling to state some facts within my knowledge and recollection. Do hereby declare and certify. That I have been a resident of the said town for upwards of Sixty years, all which, from his infancy to the present time, been acquainted with Mr. Bolling.

That at the time related by him in his declaration, in the year 1781 when our State was invaded and a British Army marched to Petersburg under Gen'ls. Phillips & Arnold who here met with resistance and a battle. I was present in that action. I had a Commission at that time as first Lieut. of Company Militia of the County of Dinwiddie from Patrick Henry dated in March 1778, the Governour of Virg'a. (which I now here exhibit) my Command being then on duty under other Officers, I equipped myself as a

trooper and joined the Continental Cavalry (a part of the first Regim't of Cavalry commanded by Colo. [William] Washington being then here under command of Major [Richard] Call of that Reg't, who commanded the Cavalry on that occasion; I was a private volunteer under him –

That Mr. Bolling as Captain with a Company of Volunteer Cavalry was in the action with us and continued with the Army on its march to the Coalpits in chesterfield County [at Midlothian], and with a detachment of the Cavalry & light troops sent down under command of Major Call, to fall in with the Enemy on their march fm. Petersbg to Manchester [across James River from Richmond] – and untill the arrival at Richmond of the Marquis LaFayette with some of the Continental Troops to the Aid of Virg'a. We received Order fm Gen'l. LaFayette on his arrival at Richmond [29 Apr] to march immediate, crossing James River at Tuckaho [sic: Tuckahoe] to Richmond, which we did with reasonable dispatch. I was present during all this, so was Mr Bolling with his Volunteer Troops –

On the Arrival of Gen'l. The Marquis LaFayette, he had the Command, I think in Virg'a. The Baron Stuben commanded before –

That the British Ships with the Army, after its retreat fm Manchester, fell down the James river perhaps somewhere about Brandon, where they remained for some days perhaps 8 or 10 – where landing their men, marched their Army to Petersburg a second time in the night, & surprised the place –

A day or two, I think, after this I was at Osbornes [10 mi below Richmond]; Gen'l. LaFayette then with the Army a little above, on James River. The General by an order to Major Churchill Jones, of the 3rd Reg't. I think of Continental Cavalry originally Baylors [George Baylor's] Regiment – who was stationed here about that time. Major Jones was directed to take Capt. Bollings Troop of Cavalry and proceed on to the south untill he could obtain certain information of the movements of Lord CornWallace with the British Army then in No. Carolina & suspected to be moving this way. At the desire of Major Jones I accompanied him this trip with Capt. Bollings Troop of Cavalry. We proceeded on to the south untill arriving at the Roanoke river, opposite the town of Halifax. There we got certain information that Lord Cornwallace with the British Army were then in halifax. That Colo Hamilton with a large Body of the British Cavalry had a little before crossed the river & passed along where we then were, a lower rout into North Carolina. Here, after returning a few miles perhaps about 6 miles to Shorts at the X roads, Major Jones, after writing, sent off one of Capt Bollings Troopers, with dispatches for Gen'l. L. Fayette.

We left Capt. Bolling here with his troop. I accompanyed Major Jones crossing the Roanoke to Williamsborough [probably Hillsborough] N.Ca. to have an interview with the Governour and Commanding officers of the Militia of that State, whom we met with there, & for whom I think Major Jones had some dispatches, or communications – after making we returned.

Colo. Hamilton with the British Cavalry making a Circuit came up in our Rear at Hixe's ford, made prisoner of one of Capt Bollings Troopers who had been left there on our way out as a Vedette – then met with the one who had major Jone's dispatches, and made prisoner of him also – as I afterwards understood – Our Army after that was generally on the North side of James River and I was not further with it. untill the Siege at York and the Capture of Lord Cornwallace there – [signed] J. Grammer

I Robert Bolling of the Town of Petersburg, and State of Virginia, aged Seventy three years; do hereby certify, and declare that in the capacity of Captain, of a volunteer Troop of Cavalry raised in the State of Virginia, during the Revolutionary War, I served my Country, during a period of three months, in the year 1780: And I also further certify and declare, that I served in the same capacity, as Captain, during a period of five months, in the year 1781. Given from under my hand this 15th day of October 1832.

[signed] Robert Bolling

NOTES:

John Crawford (pension application S8256) deposed that he marched with Bolling to Smithfield. Ann Roy Taylor, 70, formerly Ann Roy Fox of Port Royal, deposed that in spring 1778 she became

acquainted with "Robert Bolling Junior," and that he was trained as a volunteer cavalry trooper and sent to the North. Charles A. Lewis, 70, of Caroline County, deposed that he saw Robert Bolling training at Port Royal.

The file includes a letter dated 22 Dec 1845 indicating that the unnamed widow of Robert Bolling wished to apply for a pension but was not eligible because she married him after 1793.

The Oct 1904 issue of The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography (vol 12, 154-156) published a transcript of a letter written by Robert Bolling on 1 Oct 1832 and handed by his son Robert B. Bolling to Rev. Minton Thrift. A copy of the letter is at

<http://books.google.com/books?id=T1t2INXTF9AC&pg=PA154#v=onepage&q&f=false>

The letter adds the following details to the deposition: Lt. George Nicholas was from Albemarle County, and Lt. Hugh Nelson was brother of Capt. Nelson. In the tour commencing early in 1780 one of the commanding officers was Col. Josiah Parker. The name of his mother's estate where Gen. Phillips died was "Bollingbrook." His mother, Mary M. Bolling, together with four single daughters, were made prisoners. The two soldiers captured during the mission to North Carolina were John Butts and Thomas Walker. With the letter is the following:

"The following is a correct list of the troops of cavalry formed by Capt. Robert Bolling, and which served in the Revolutionary war in the years 1779, 1780 and 1781:

Robert Bolling, Captain.	John Scott, 1st Lieut.
Wm. Broadnax, 2nd Lieut.	John H. Briggs, Ensign.
John Butts,	Nicholas Parham,
Peter Woodliff,	John Smith,
Richard Bland,	John Starke,
Bret Randolph,	John Atkinson,
Thomas Walker,	Roger Atkinson,
Robert Walker,	John Stewart,
Esau Goodwin,	Francis Stewart,
Frederick George,	Henry Randolph,
John North,	Benjamin Kirkland,
Jeremiah Bonner,	John Watkins,
Robert Hodges [Robert Hedges, W11327],	Thomas Lanier,
Edward Avery,	John Kate,
Tuttle Hudson,	John Howell,
William Burton,	William Shore,
Irby Hudson,	William Scott,
David Walker,	John Nicholas,
John Morrison,	Thos. T. Bolling.

The John Butts mentioned above married Mary Anne, daughter of Daniel Parke Claiborne and Mary Anne nè Maury."