

Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements & Rosters

Pension Application of James Ellison S6821

Transcribed and annotated by C. Leon Harris

State of Virginia } S

Monroe County }

On this 15th day of April 1833 personally appeared before me Hugh Caperton a Justice of the peace in and for said County James Ellison a resident in said County and state aforesaid aged 76 years the 20th of September 1833 who being 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 the 7th June 1832. He was born in the County of Mansfield New Jersey and moved to the County of Greenbrier [then Montgomery County] in the year 1771 (which is now Monroe County and was taken from Greenbrier). That he entered the service of the United States under the following named officers as a spy against the Indians and served as herein stated; that in the year 1776 from the 1st of June to the first of November in said year he was engaged as a spy by Capt. John Henderson of the militia in the said County of Greenbrier [sic: Montgomery] and Lieutenant Estell. That he would leave Cooks fort on Indian Creek [near present Red Sulphur Springs] go through the mountains and examine the passes on new River and up lick Creek and cross over to a Fort on Muddy Creek (a branch of Greenbrier river) which was called Keeney's Fort and then home; and continued this kind of service and examination during the time before mentioned in order to give intelgence to the Forts if the Indians should cross New river and come into the Country; that he was some times at the Fort, but always in readiness and generally out on duty as a spy and his officers relied on him. No Indians came into the Settlement during those five months. In the year 1777 about the first of September the Indians came into the Country, that he as a spy, hearing of the murder of Steel Lafferty at the mouth of Indian Creek, took from Cooks Fort with him two men, and went as speedily as possible to Lafferty's to save his family the distance was about 15 or 16 miles and arrived at the place in time to rescue them. The injury in this was not so great as in former years, and he was not on duty so frequently. In 1778 the Indians were very troublesome, being enraged at the death of their King Corn Stalk and others as friendly Indians at Point Pleasant [see endnote]; they came into the country burnt Farleys Fort on New River and attacked Donnelly' Fort in the Levels of Greenbrier [Fort Donnally near present Frankford] in the Spring of the year, (the month not recollected), that he was called on as a spy by Capt. Henderson and Lieutenant Estill, and continued for seven months; part of the time a man by the name of Boughman was with him, sometime Mathew Farley was with him, and some time a man by the name of Hamilton. They explored the Country between Indian Creek New river and Sewel mountain [Sewell Mountain]. The family of McKenny's, John Day a man by the name of Cavender and others were killed. He did nothing that summer and fall except except to act as a spy, and was prevented from raising a crop for the support of his family; that in the year 1780 he was not called on; he was Forted below the mouth of Indian Creek. He and Matt Farley went out of the fort to get corn in the Field, the Indians fired at them, he was wounded and taken prisoner. He was taken on to the top of the blue Stone mountain [Bluestone Mountain], where they stopped to eat some meat, and continued about 15 miles until it was nearly dark. Some of the Indians were before and some behind him; he stopped pretending to tie his moccasin which which permitted those before to get a short distance on, he sprang off, down a steep hill - was pursued about half a mile, but escaped and got back to the fort next morning. In 1781 he was ordered out as a spy by Lieut. John Woods he thinks, on the 1st of march in that year. On the 3^d. of March the family of Meeks were taken prisoners on Indian Creek; that he with Woods and a small party pursued the Indians to the head of paint creek, which was about sixty miles through the wilderness towards Kentucky where they overtook them at a place now called the painted trees. The Indians were fired on in their camp, one was killed and others wounded; the prisoners were taken from them, some horses and all their tomahawks. During the summer and until the 1st of November he was at different times out examining the pass ways by which the Indians were accustomed to come into the Country, and was ordered to hold himself in readiness at all times as a spy, which he did. In 1782 and 1783 he voluntarily made many

excursions in order to save the country from danger. In 1774 he volunteered to go from the Fort at Cooks on Indian Creek under Capt. John Henderson - joined Capt. Lewis and marched to Point Pleasant was in the battle at the point [Battle of Point Pleasant, 10 Oct 1774] in which 144 persons were killed and wounded. He marched on to the Indian towns on the Sciota [sic: Scioto] River. He left home about the 1st of June and returned in November, the day he does not recollect. When he was acting as a spy he was allowed five shillings per day; that he received part of his pay, but not all.

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.

[signed] James Ellison

Col John Hutchison [pension application S5585] after being duly sworn deposeth and saith that he has been well acquainted with James Ellison who was signed the foregoing declaration; that he has known him ever since the year 1776; that he knew he acted as an Indian Spy, that he was considered a one of the most active and inteligent woodsmen of that day; and the Inhabitants had great confidence in his courage and perseverance in guarding the Frontier; that he knew the said Ellison to be engaged in that employment for some years that he was taken prisoner as he states; and that he is a worthy respectable man and always has been since he knew him; As to the time he served he cannot tell. It was considered by the Inhabitants that his service was of great benefit to the Country.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 17th April 1833

[signed] John Hutchison

[Ellison was originally granted a pension of \$40 per year for 12 months service.]

Huntersville Va 17 Feby 1834

Dr Sir, An old Gentleman by the name of James Ellison an old Revolutionary Soldier and Indian Spy has been allowed a pension of Forty Dollars a year for his Revolutionary Services. It seems that the Old man rendered services during the War of the Revolution sufficient to entitle him to a Pension of Eighty dollars, but being a very illiterate old man and the Gentleman who drew his declaration not being familiar with the Act of Congress of the 7th June 1832 and the subsequent regulation of the War office has cut him out of half his Pension. The old Gentleman lives in Monroe County Va. and can prove his services. at the request of the old Soldier I wish to know the proper method to be pursued to obtain for him in his present situation such Pension as he is justly entitled to have. Your early attention and answer to this letter will confer a great favor on a very worthy old man a well as on yr. mo. obt. and Humble serv't.

Wm. W. Cord

To The Hon. Lewis Cass Secretary of War
or To J. L. Edwards Commissioner of Pensions

[The following report is by District Attorney Washington G. Singleton who investigated many pensioners from present West Virginia. For details see the pension application of David W. Sleeth (S6111) and the endnote.]

James Ellison - 1 yr. Va. Militia Col. Henderson &c

I the undersigned James Ellison make the following re-declaration of my services as a soldier in the war of the Revolution to Wit - On the 28th of Febuary last I was 78 years old. am a native of New Jersey. in the year 1768 I moved with my father to Augusty Co. [sic: Augusta County] Va and in the year 1771 my father settled in (now) Monroe Co. where I have lived ever since.

In the year 1776 I was ordered out by Jno. Henderson a Militia Capt. - I think about a dozen of us under James Estel went from Cooks fort in Monroe county down Indian creek to the mouth of Green brier river - then to the mouth of lick creek, thence up said creek to the head, crossed over to Muddy creek to Keney's Fort & thence back to Cooks fort. I think we started about the latter end of Sept'r. or first of October - dont suppose I was gone quite a month. it is impossible for me to remember with certainty how long I was in this service - we were rainging through the country to protect the settlers from Indian depradations. I furnished my own arms amunition & rations & received no pay -

in the year 1778 after the Indians had made an attact on Donley's Fort in Greenbrier

county Col. Samuel Lewis raised a company to pursue the Indians - I joined him. we pursued the Indians to Sewel Mountain some sixty or seventy miles I was in this service some 8 or 10 days. furnished my own arms amunition & rations. received no pay.

in the same year & shortly after the last preceeding expedition - the Indians came into the settlement (about 60 in number) and burnt a fort on New river. - I was ordered out by Capt Henderson with one other man for the purpose of ascertaining what damage the Indians had done & to report to him. I went on the expedition as required and was in it some 8 or ten days. - in the same year I was again ordered out by John Henderson and was in service on New River some 8 or 10 days.

in the year 1780 I moved down on New river and raised a crop of corn. whilst my self & my brother in Law was at work in our cornfield I was taken prissoner by a party of Indians and was carried by them some fifteen miles - I made my escape (after being a prissoner one day) & returned to my settlement.

in the year 1781 eight Indians came into the settlement. took a family & their Horses & cattle I was ordered to join Lt. Woods - I done so. when we pursued the Indians overhauled them - recovered the Prissoners & their property and brought them home - I was in this expedition some 7 or 8 days - during the war I lived a part of my time at Cooks Fort and a part at Farleys Fort - the people of the settlement were forted at some place or other when ever the indians came in we would all turn out and beat them of - then return to our respective settlement and engage in clearing our lands and working our little crops. - from the peculiar situation of the country in which we lived we were compelled to be on the watch all the time and although I was only in actual service under officers as above stated I nevertheless consider my self as haveing been in service all the war.

I made a settlement right some five miles from Farleys Fort. H. Alexander wrote my Declaration - I made it before a Justice. was unable to go to court. Mr. Alex. charged me nothing. Septr 6, 1835

Witness J W Kelley

James Ellison

NOTES:

In the fall of 1777 Chief Cornstalk, his son Ellinipsico, Red Hawk, and Petalla were murdered by American soldiers while being held as hostages.

On his report regarding Ellison, Singleton wrote "clearly Fraudulent." The most likely reason is that Ellison stated in his declaration that he had served for 12 months, but to Singleton he claimed actual service of less than six months, the minimum required for a pension. In addition, Singleton routinely labeled claims for such service against the Indians as fraudulent, even though those claims had previously been honored.