

Southern Campaigns American Revolution Pension Statements & Rosters

Pension application of William Lenoir S7137

f56NC

Transcribed by Will Graves

rev'd 4/23/09 & 5/29/15

[Methodology: Spelling, punctuation and/or grammar have been corrected in some instances for ease of reading and to facilitate searches of the database. Where the meaning is not compromised by adhering to the spelling, punctuation or grammar, no change has been made. Corrections or additional notes have been inserted within brackets or footnotes. Blanks appearing in the transcripts reflect blanks in the original. A bracketed question mark indicates that the word or words preceding it represent(s) a guess by me. The word 'illegible' or 'indecipherable' appearing in brackets indicates that at the time I made the transcription, I was unable to decipher the word or phrase in question. Only materials pertinent to the military service of the veteran and to contemporary events have been transcribed. Affidavits that provide additional information on these events are included and genealogical information is abstracted, while standard, 'boilerplate' affidavits and attestations related solely to the application, and later nineteenth and twentieth century research requests for information have been omitted. I use speech recognition software to make all my transcriptions. Such software misinterprets my southern accent with unfortunate regularity and my poor proofreading skills fail to catch all misinterpretations. Also, dates or numbers which the software treats as numerals rather than words are not corrected: for example, the software transcribes "the eighth of June one thousand eighty six" as "the 8th of June 1786." Please call material errors or omissions to my attention.]

[p 8]

State of North Carolina, Wilkes County

On the 1st day of May 1833 personally appeared in open court before the Court of Pleas & Quarter Sessions of the County of Wilkes & State of North Carolina, now sitting, General William Lenoir, a resident in the County and State aforesaid aged about Eighty two 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 and served as herein stated -- In the year 1776, as well as this declarant can recollect, a regulation was made by the Government for a certain number of militia troops to be raised and held in readiness for service, which was denominated Minute Men and in obedience to this regulation Captain Jesse Walton of the County of Surry and province of North Carolina proceeded to raise a company of minute men in the said County to which this declarant voluntarily attached himself as a common soldier (although he was the Lieutenant of a militia company commanded by Captain Joseph Herndon) and very soon thereafter the company received orders to march towards the eastern or lower part of said Province to suppress an insurrection, usually known as the Scotch insurrection. The company set out immediately upon the march and this declarant proceeded with them for about 50 miles and assisted in the capture of a Tory Colonel, called Gideon Wright, whose house they surrounded in the night, and whom they conveyed to a local town called old Richmond, where he was disposed of in some manner not now within the recollection of this declarant. After this event, the declarant was taken sick upon the road, and was unable to travel, when Captain Walton discharged him and he made his way home with much difficulty. In this expedition, this declarant believes he served for two weeks. The calls for militia from the County of Surry to suppress the insurrection above mentioned, became very frequent and were repeated in quick succession, and as soon as this declarant was able to travel, he again volunteered himself as a Lieutenant of the company of militia to which he belonged, commanded by Captain Joseph Herndon, and immediately set out upon their march and had proceeded beyond the Shallow Ford of the Yadkin [River], a distance of about 60 or 70 miles from the place of rendezvous, when their orders were countermanded, and they were directed to return home. In a very short time however orders were again received for Captain Herndon to march with his company to the same point of distinction as before. This declarant again turned out as the Lieutenant of the Company and marched with them nearly the same distance as before, when they are orders were again

countermanded, and they were directed to return home. In these two expeditions, the declarant is satisfied he was in the public service at least five weeks.

As the County of Surry was a frontier County and the inhabitants much annoyed and alarmed by the frequent depredations of the Indians, it became necessary for the public safety and security that active and sufficient measures should be adopted to effect that object. This declarant was accordingly selected by the Colonel of the County and was ordered to raise a company of Rangers for the purpose of scouring the frontier settlements and protecting them against the incursions of the Indians. In obedience to these orders in the summer of the year 1776, this declarant did raise a company of volunteer Rangers and stationed themselves at some convenient point on the head waters of the Yadkin River, from whence they ranged the country along and bordering on the Blue Ridge [Mountains] for a considerable distance, also the country west of the said Ridge and between the waters of the Yadkin and New Rivers, the inhabitants of which, from the many depredations which had been committed upon them, & from the great danger of their situation, had been compelled to abandon and seek security in the interior settlements. In this service, the declarant believes he was engaged as Captain of the said Company for six weeks or upwards.

Sometime in the month of August of the same year (1776) a call was made upon the militia of Surry County for volunteers to march against the Cherokee Indians, and the company of Rangers under the command of this declarant not all being prepared to march immediately having just returned from the expedition above mentioned, this declarant accepted the appointment of first Lieutenant under Captain Benjamin Cleveland (who having a very large company was allowed two Lieutenants) & immediately set out upon their march under the command of Colonel Martin Armstrong, the Colonel of the County, and marched direct to the Pleasant Gardens in the County of Burke where they joined the troops under General Griffith Rutherford. After remaining some few days at the Pleasant Gardens organizing the troops and making the necessary arrangements for the expedition, they marched by the most direct, practicable route to the Cherokee Nation, the towns of which they found generally abandoned, there being only a few straggling Indians, women and children remaining in them. At what was called the Middle Towns, Captain Cleveland with a few of his men was stationed while the declarant, being appointed to the command of the remainder of the Company, marched with them under Colonel Armstrong and General Rutherford to the Hiwassee Towns, which they destroyed, and where they killed a few of the Indians. The South Carolina militia was to have met General Rutherford at the Middle Towns, but upon his arrival there, no intelligence could be obtained from them; he accordingly set out for Hiwassee as above mentioned. After the departure of General Rutherford from the Middle Towns, the South Carolina militia arrived there, and immediately set out for Hiwassee, with an expectation of joining General Rutherford at that place, but taking a different route from that pursued by General Rutherford, they were attacked on the way by party of Indians who had formed an ambuscade; but by the skillful and prudent conduct of the officers, they were soon dislodged with a considerable number killed, whom it is believed they carried off. In this engagement the South Carolina militia lost about 15 men killed, whom they buried in a swamp and upon them they constructed a pole causeway over which the troops marched as they returned from the Hiwassee to the Middle Towns. Upon returning to the Middle Towns the declarant again assumed his former command of Lieutenant, having served as Captain for 20 days. After having destroyed the Indian towns, together with all their stock, corn and other property that could

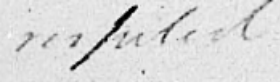
be found, the troops returned to North Carolina and dispersed to their respective homes. Although but few of the troops were killed in this expedition, yet a great number died after their arrival at home in consequence of their exposure, privations and fatigue, much of which this declarant suffered, but by the aid of a good constitution and the mercy of an overruling Providence, he survived. In this expedition, this declarant believes he served 70 days as Lieutenant, with 20 days as Captain above mentioned, would make a period of three months. After the return of this declarant to North Carolina, he was regularly appointed a Captain of the Company District in which he lived, in the manner practiced at that time, which appointment he continued to hold until the close of the Revolutionary War. In the year 1777 the County of Surry was divided by an Act of the Legislature, and this declarant by the division, was thrown into that portion which is now Wilkes [County]. His company district was however the same, and shortly after the division aforesaid, he was ordered by Colonel Benjamin Cleveland, who was Colonel of the County, to march with his company down Hunting Creek to detect some outlying Tories and others of suspicious character.. He accordingly set out with his company and as he believes was employed in this service for some weeks, though without success, but as he cannot recollect precisely how his men were occupied, he will state the period of his service on this occasion at three days. This service was performed as this declarant believes in the Spring of the year 1778. In the fall of the same year, this declarant was again ordered out by Colonel Cleveland to march his company with him (Col C.) over the Blue Ridge [Mountains] and down New River to the State of Virginia to detect and subdue some outlying and other Tories who infested that section of Country and after capturing several of them and restoring tranquility & apparent security to the settlements, they recrossed the mountains and dispersed to their homes. The Tories taken in this expedition were mostly permitted to go at large, after at an examination, in which they generally made recanting and positive promises of their faithful loyalty to the goals of independence and in some instances perhaps, Colonel Cleveland administered to them the oath of allegiance. In this expedition, this declarant was in service, as he believes, 26 days. Soon after their return from the western side of the Blue Ridge, this declarant was again ordered out with his company to march across the Brushy Mountain together with other troops under the command of Colonel Cleveland to subdue some Tories on lower Creek & its waters, and who kept the neighborhood in that quarter in a state of great alarm. In this expedition they captured a Tory by the name of Williams, from whom they endeavored to procure information as to other persons who were suspected, but who positively refused to give any, until Colonel Cleveland adopted the expedient of hanging him for a while to the limb of a tree or a bent down sapling, but which did not produce the desired effect until the dose was repeated a second time with more severity than the first. They were not able however to do anything more on this occasion than to give encouragement to the Whigs and alarm to the Tories, by which that quarter of the Country was restored to a state of tolerable security after which the troop under Colonel Cleveland returned home. In this expedition this declarant believes he was in service at least 20 days. The Tories however still continued to annoy many parts of the Country and in some instances committed great depredations upon the property and persons of the Whigs so that it became necessary to keep up a constant and ever watchful vigilance. In the month of May or June 1779 information was received by Colonel Cleveland that a Tory Captain by the name of Whitson together with a company under his command were committing great depredations on the waters of the Catawba [River]. Colonel Cleveland immediately ordered

out the declarant with the company under his command together with some others who marched under Colonel Cleveland up the Yadkin River and across to the Catawba [River] in quest of Whitson and his company. While upon their march down the Catawba, Colonel Larkin Cleveland, a brother of Col. Benjamin, was badly wounded by a shot issuing from a high cliff of rocks, supposed to be from an outlying Tory who made his escape. This declarant was then detailed by Colonel Cleveland with about 40 men well mounted, and ordered to traverse the country between the Catawba River and the South Fork [of the Yadkin River], in quest of Whitson and his company, which they did for one whole night, but without success. After which Colonel Cleveland ordered the troops to return and march for home. In this expedition this declarant believes he was in service at least one month. A short time after this expedition was performed, Colonel Cleveland received information (at a period of the day late in the forenoon) that the Tories were embodying themselves towards the head of the Yadkin, upon which he immediately repaired to Wilkes C. H. [Wilkes Court House], a distance of 14 miles from his residence, where this declarant with what men he could collect—immediately joined him and by their united exertions succeeded in raising about 200 men and at daybreak on the following morning had marched to the place where the Tories were said to be, a distance estimated at 21 miles. Upon arriving in the neighborhood where the Tories had embodied, they ascertained that they had fled with great precipitation towards the south. They immediately pursued them with all possible speed as far as Lincolnton, but did not arrive there until after the celebrated battle at Ramsour's Mill [June 20, 1780] in which the Tories were triumphantly defeated. Upon hearing of this event, Colonel Cleveland with the troops under his command marched home. In this expedition this declarant believes he was in the service at least one month.

In the month of August or September 1780, this declarant was ordered by Colonel Benjamin Cleveland to march with his company southwardly against the British & Tories who were harassing the people in that quarter to great extremities. In the County of Burke (an adjacent County) Colonel Cleveland on receiving information that a body of about 100 Tories were in camp at Little John's Meeting House, a few miles in advance of his troops, ordered this declarant to select 75 men well mounted and approach the Tory camp until they could fire upon them and with a strict injunction to retreat without returning the fire in order to draw them into an ambush which he (Col C.) would form for that purpose. This order however was subsequently countermanded by sending an express after the party before they had reached the Tory camp and with an additional order that all the men should return except five, to be chosen by this declarant, with whom he should proceed and execute the original orders. Upon arriving at the camp, however, this declarant found it entirely abandoned. They then pursued their march until they advanced considerably further into the County of Burke where they joined a Regiment from Virginia under Colonel Campbell [William Campbell] and some militia from the North Western side of the Blue Ridge under the command of Cols Sevier [John Sevier] and Shelby [Isaac Shelby], together with the militia of the County of Burke under the command of Col Charles McDowell. With these reinforcements they all continued their line of march southwardly, and when they had proceeded into Rutherford County, they received information of the progress and advance of a large body of British and Tories under the command of Col Ferguson [Patrick Ferguson]. Upon receiving this information, orders were immediately given for every man that had, or could procure, a suitable horse to be ready to march at sunrise the next morning to oppose Col Ferguson. There being no regular officer, or even soldier except two, belonging to the

troops (and they having joined as militia men) nor no militia officer above the grade of Colonel, it was agreed that Col Campbell of Virginia should command the whole detachment. They accordingly took up the line of march at the appointed time (leaving behind all those who had been unable to procure horses) and on the way were joined by some militia from South Carolina under the command of Col. Williams [James Williams], which augmented their number to about 700 according to the best calculation which this declarant can make (the footman who were left behind amounting to about 1500); they continued their march all that day and all night, it being very dark and rainy and on the next day (being the 7th of October 1780) attacked Col Ferguson on Kings Mountain near the line between North & South Carolina, and after a hot engagement which lasted about three quarters of an hour, resulted in the total defeat of Col Ferguson and his whole Army, every man of which who was in camp at the commencement of the action being either killed or taken; the killed on the side of the enemy being estimated at two hundred & fifty, and on the side of the Whigs at Thirty two. The remainder of the Army amounting to nine hundred & thirty seven according to the best estimate which could be made from the papers of the commander were detained as prisoners of war. In this action this declarant received to wound from bullets, one in his side, and the other in his arm, and a third bullet passed through his hair above where it was tied. The next day the American army set out upon their return with the prisoners (seven hundred twenty-five of which as counted by this declarant, being able bodied men, exclusive of Officers, wounded, sick &c, were compelled to carry the guns which had been taken, many of them taking two guns each) and proceeded on until they met with the foot men which they had left behind as before mentioned, who were turned about and after a few days march, the Army halted in Rutherford County where a Court martial composed of field officers selected about thirty-two of the most abrasive of the Tories who had been taken, and ordered them to be hung. The execution of this order was proceeded in by hanging three at a time until nine were executed when the remainder were respited [?] ¹. The Army then proceeded on their march with the prisoners as far as the Moravian Towns in the County of Stokes, where they were stationed for a considerable time guarding the prisoners and until they were relieved by the substitution of other troops when this declarant with his company returned home. This tour of duty was generally estimated at three months but according to the best recollection of this declarant he was in actual service but Eighty-five days.

About the time of the approach of Lord Cornwallis from South Carolina, and before his arrival at Salisbury in this State, this declarant again volunteered himself together with his company and also with other officers from Wilkes County with their companies and set out upon their march to join General Greene [Nathanael Greene], expecting to meet with him at or near Salisbury. There being no field officers with the troops, a dispute arose on the way between this declarant and Captain Benjamin Herndon respecting their seniority, or who was entitled to assume the command, and being unable to determine it themselves, they agreed to leave it to the soldiers to make choice of a commander for that tour, when directions being given for the soldiers to follow the man of their choice, all but about six followed this declarant and he assumed the command accordingly. Before, however, they reached Salisbury, this declarant received information that Genl Greene had marched


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towards Virginia, and that Lord Cornwallis was then in or near to Salisbury. This declarant accordingly changed his course and took the direction towards Salem, crossing the Yadkin [River] at Enoch's ferry. On the way he succeeded by stratagem in retaking three British officers who had been taken prisoner by Col Morgan [Daniel Morgan] at the Battle of the Cowpens [January 17, 1781], but who had made their escape from the guard to whom they had been given in charge. He also captured several outlying Tories who were in company with said officers. This declarant in pursuing his march towards where he supposed Genl Greene was, camped all night very near the old Moravian Town, where he received information that the British Army was then in the town and not knowing where to find Genl Greene, he turned his course up the country in order to effect a juncture with Genl Pickens [Andrew Pickens], which he did near Mitchell's River in the County of Surry. Upon meeting with Genl Pickens this declarant selected about forty mounted infantry and joined him leaving the remainder of the troops which were under his command under the command of Captain Herndon, and immediately set out with Genl Pickens, pursuing their march toward Hillsboro at which place Lord Cornwallis then was. Genl Perkins having understood that Col Tarleton [Banastre Tarleton] with his dragoons and infantry had marched across Haw River, set off immediately in pursuit, having been joined by Col Lee [Henry "Light Horse Harry" the] with his Cavalry, they cross Haw River at Baker's [? word partially obscured] Ford, but before they were able to come up with Col Tarleton, they fell in with a body of Tories amounting perhaps to three or four hundred, under the command of Dr. Pyles [sic, John Pyle], a Tory Colonel, with whom they immediately engaged [February 25, 1781] and literally cut them to pieces, some however made their escape and some were taken prisoners. It was believed when the engagement first commenced that these troops were a part of Col Tarleton's infantry, but information subsequently received proved that they were not. In this engagement this declarant escaped without a wound himself; but had his horse wounded, and his sword broken. Genl Pickens, on receiving information that Col Tarleton was encamped at Col O'Neill's Mill, detached this declarant with a few men to reconnoiter his camp, which he did, and by which means ascertained that Col Tarleton had decamped about midnight and took the road toward Hillsboro, of which fact this declarant immediately apprised Genl Pickens, who set out forthwith in pursuit, but finding that he could not overtake him before he would arrive at Hillsboro, he abandoned the pursuit and turned his course up the north side of Haw River. On the second or third night after they abandoned the pursuit of Col Tarleton, information was received that the whole British Army was in pursuit of Genl. Pickens and was very near at hand. Col Lee with his dragoons having left Genl Pickens, Major Micajah Lewis, a very active Federal officer, went out to reconnoiter, and to ascertain the truth of the information which had been received, but unfortunately approaching too near to Tarleton's dragoons, believing them to be Lee's, he received several wounds which terminated his life. Genl Pickens pursued his march and in a few days joined Genl Greene near the High Rock Ford on Haw River. This declarant being at that time Clerk of the Court of Pleas & Quarter Sessions for Wilkes County, and the Session of the Court coming on in a few days, it became necessary for him to return home, he accordingly obtained leave and set out for home. In this expedition this declarant believes he served at least six weeks. This last tour closed the services performed by this declarant, during the revolutionary war, although considerable other services were performed by this declarant which are not enumerated here, and for which no claim is set up. This declarant was born on the 8th day of May 1751 in the County of Brunswick in the

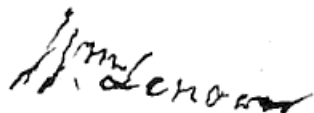
State of Virginia. The record of which was originally entered in his father's Bible and from which he took the record now in his possession. This declarant lived in the County of Surry (now Wilkes) N. C. when he was called into service. He has lived in the same County ever since the Revolutionary War and resides there at this time. The services performed by this declarant were all performed as a volunteer. The answer to the fifth interrogatory is contained in the general body of the declaration. This declarant states that as a soldier he never received any written discharge from the service. And that as an officer his Lieutenant's commission he believes was signed by Governor Caswell, but does not recollect by whom his commission as Captain was signed, nor cannot tell what has become of either as after the close of the war he was promoted to higher appointments, in the militia and paid no attention to the preservation of his old commissions. He further states that he has no documentary evidence to prove his service, and that he knows of no person whose testimony he can conveniently procure at this time you can testify to his service, except Captain Wm Gilreath,² who served with him a portion of the time, and who can prove a part of his services. He also refers to Genl Edmund Jones, Col Wm. P. Waugh & Major John Finley, as persons to whom he is well known in his present neighborhood, and who can testify as to his character for veracity and their belief of his services as a soldier of the revolution.

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 & subscribed the day & year aforesaid.

Test: S/ R. Martin, Clk

S/ Wm Lenoir



By S/ B. W. Cass, D. Clk

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On the day and year aforesaid personally appeared in open Court before the Court aforesaid Capt. William Gilreath a resident of the County aforesaid, and made oath that he was a soldier of the revolution and that he served with General William Lenoir the above applicant during three of the Tours of duty mentioned in the foregoing declaration and further that said three tours of duty as set forth and specified in the foregoing declaration as having been performed by the said General William Lenoir which come within the knowledge of this affiant were performed by him. This affiant further states that he has known the above applicant (General William Lenoir) for the space of fifty-seven years which embraced the whole period of the revolution, and that during that time he was esteemed and considered one of the most active and efficient Whigs in the Western part of North Carolina, and was generally acknowledge to have rendered very important services to the cause of independence during that trying and difficult period. This affiant further states that the performance of several of the other tours of duty enumerated in the foregoing declaration by the said General William Lenoir comes within the knowledge of this affiant, although he was not in actual service at the time, and further, that he has no hesitation in expressing his

² [William Gilreath S6888](#)

decided belief that the whole of the Services he never rated in the foregoing declaration were performed by the said General William Lenoir.

Sworn to & subscribed the day and year aforesaid

Test: S/ R. Martin, Clk by B. W. Cass, D. Clk

S/ William Gilreath

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "William Gilreath". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid, with a large initial 'W'.

[Thomas Fletcher, a clergyman, Edmund Jones, William P. Waugh & John Finley gave the standard supporting affidavit.]

[p 55]

Fort Defiance 16 May 1833

Dear Sir

Yesterday I received information from General Patterson that since my Declaration was forwarded to the War Department he has received return from the applications of William Gilreath & William Johnson Esquire both of whom claim pensions as Officers, but neither of whom could produce their commissions or other direct proof of the fact. The Commissioner of Pensions states that in every instance where a claim is set up for a pension as an Officer the Claimant must either produce his Commission or prove by direct testimony that he was duly commissioned; As neither was done in my case, there may be some doubt whether they will allow me pay as an Officer. He advised me to request you to write to the War Department on the subject and state what comes to your knowledge from information of my services &c.

Since I was Commissioned Col. of the Cavalry of the 5th division of Militia of North Carolina, and afterwards (to wit) in January 1795 was Commissioned Major General of said 5th Division, I have taken no care of any inferior Commissions and know not what has become of them.

I wish for the War Department not hastily to determine that I shall draw as a common soldier on the. I suppose by taking much trouble I could find men still living, that served under my Command in each of the Expeditions contained in my Statement, but I do not suppose I could find any that would now remember seeing my Commissions, and therefore to prove by direct testimony that I was Commissioned, is not in my Power, as there is no Record of any appointment Comprehended in my Statement, The practice was, for the Gov. to furnish blank Commissions to be filled up by Officers of various Ranks, for those elected by the Soldiers.

I performed in many instances considerable Military service which is not contained in my Statement Viz. in an Expedition to retake Col. Cleveland when captured by the Tories on New River, the first expedition to meet the Tories raised in the hollows and when ordered with my Company repeatedly to protect the Sheriff against Tories in the execution of his Office &c &c.

I have not preserved any of my Muster Rolls, and my memory is so impaired that it will be difficult to find direct proof of my Services in the different grades in which I served, if that would do instead of proving that I was Commissioned, But as my constable Object (by the advice of Friends) was to make application for a pension in order to have some Record

of my services for the satisfaction of posterity I had rather take any reasonable trouble than to have my services misrepresented.

I believe my Claim only amounts to 14 days as a Common soldier, 105 days as Lieut. and 340 days as Capt.

As you are acquainted with the Gentlemen of the War Department, if you will be so good as to write as above stated it will answer a better purpose than anything I could write on the subject.

With Friendship, sincere Your most Obedient
S/ Wm Lenoir

The Honbl. Lewis Williams³

[Facts in file: Veteran died May 6, 1839]

[p 30: Letter dated June 20, 1860 postmarked Lenoirs sent to the Honorable H. Maynard by J P Lenoir in which the correspondent refers to his grandfather William Lenoir of Wilkes County having died in May 1839

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[Veteran was pensioned at the rate of \$233.09 per annum commencing March 4 come 1831, for service as a private, Lieutenant & Captain in the North Carolina militia.]

³ This letter appears to be entirely in the handwriting of the veteran.