

Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements & Rosters

Journal of Samuel Houston

VAX1

Transcribed by Will Graves

12/11/11

[Although not a pension application, it is felt that some of the memoirs, journals and diaries compiled by veterans should be included in this database in order to make those resources more readily available to researchers. The following is the memoir compiled by Rev. Samuel Houston, a Virginia militiaman at the time he compiled his diary. His diary was printed in full by William Henry Foote, D. D., in his *Sketches of Virginia: Historical and Biographical*, J. B. Lippincott & Co, Philadelphia, 1855, pp. 141-149.]

February 26th, '81

Monday, Feb. 26th. - We marched from Lexington to Grigsby's, and encamped.

Tuesday, 27th. - Marched fifteen miles, and encamped at Purgatory. I saw the cave.

Wednesday, 28th. - Marched from Purgatory to Lunies' Creek, twelve miles.

Thursday March 1st. - Marched from Lunies' Creek to a mile beyond Howard's; total seventeen miles. Drew liquor in the morning. I paid fifteen dollars for beer to Mrs. Brackinridge.

Friday, 2nd. - Marched from near Howard's past Rag Hal governed by President Slovenly; three or four of our men got drunk in the evening. Our march continued fifteen miles; en camped at Little Otter, Bedford.

Saturday, 3rd. - Marched from Little Otter to within two miles of New London; nineteen miles.

Sabbath, 4th. Marched two miles beyond New London to Mr. Ward's; in which march we pressed a hog, which was served without scraping. On this day I kept guard No. 16. The day's march was twenty miles.

Monday, 5th. Marched from Major Ward's; crossed Staunton river into Pittsylvania. I was on the fatigue to drive steers, but happily they had broken out of the pasture. Our march was eight miles, and encamped.

Tuesday, 6th. - Marched from Ward's about fourteen miles. We were searched, and Mr. Ward's goods found with James Berry and John Harris, who were whipped. The same were condemned to ten lashes for disobeying the officer of the day on Monday.

Wednesday 7th. - Marched from near Shelton's to Col. Williams' mill, about twelve miles; crossed Bannister, into which James McElroy fell; John Harris deserted, and James Berry was taken and sent to prison.

Thursday, 8th. - Marched from Col. Williams' to near three miles from Dan river. Some of the boys set the woods on fire, which the Major put out. Our day's journey nineteen miles.

Friday, 9th. - Marched from beyond Dan to the borders of N.C., six miles; we crossed Dan, where Gilmore's wagon had nearly sunk by the chain of the flat breaking. At this river some mean cowards threatened to return. This morning, Lyle, Hays and Lusk went to Gen. Green and returned. The same day deserted at Dan, Geo. Culwell.

Saturday 10th. - Marched from near three miles of Dan to head quarters, which we entered at twelve o'clock at night. In the evening we encamped six miles from H. Q. Soon after we decamped. Thirty miles.

Sabbath, 11th. Lay in camp. In the evening we were ordered to prepare for a march; after we were ordered to stay; after our orders for the future were read out, we cooked two

days' provisions.

Monday, 12th. - Marched first S. W. to the end of camp, then turned directly back, and stood some hours; at last we left camp at the High Rock, and marched near six miles. Again we turn back about a mile, and encamp near Haw river.

Tuesday, 13th. - We paraded several times, and at last fired in platoons and battalions; in doing which one of the North Carolina militia was shot through the head; a bullet glancing from a tree, struck Geo. Moore [George Moore] on the head--of our battalion. In the evening we marched from Haw river about three miles, and encamped.

Wednesday, 14th -Decamped at Reedy Creek, and marched to Guilford Court House, ten mile.

Thursday, 15th -Was a rainy in the morning. We often paraded, and about ten o'clock, lying about our fires, we heard our light infantry and cavalry, who were down near the English lines, begin firing with the enemy. Then we immediately fell into our ranks, and our brigades marched out, at which time the firing was ceased. Col. McDowell's battalion of Gen. Stephens' brigade was ordered on the left wing. When we marched near the ground we charged our guns. Presently our brigade major came, ordering to take trees as we pleased. The men run to choose their trees, but with difficulty, many crowding to one, and some far behind others. But we moved by order of our officers, and stood in suspense. Presently the Augusta men, and some of Col. Campbell's fell in at right angles to us. Our whole line was composed of Stephens' [Edward Stevens'] brigade on the left, Lawson's in the centre, and Butler's, of N. C., on the right. Some distance behind were formed the regulars. Col. Washington's [William Washington's] light horse were to flank on the right, and Lee [Henry "Light Horse Harry" Lee] on the left. Standing in readiness, we heard the pickets fire; shortly the English fired a cannon, which was answered; and so on alternately, till the small armed troops came nigh ; and then close firing be an near the centre, but rather towards the right, and soon spread along the line. Our brigade major, Mr. Williams, fled. Presently came two men to us and informed us the British fled. Soon the enemy appeared to us; we fired on their flank, and that brought down many of them; at which time Capt. Tedford was killed. We pursued them about forty poles, to the top of a hill where they stood, and we retreated from them back to where we formed. Here we repulsed them again; and they a second time made us retreat back to our first ground, where we were deceived by a reinforcement of Hessians, whom we took for our own, and cried to them to see if they were our friends, and shouted Liberty! Liberty and advanced up till they let off some guns; then we fired sharply on them, and made them retreat a little. But presently the light horse came on us, and not being defended by our own light horse, nor reinforced, --though firing was long ceased in all other parts, we were obliged to run, and many were sore chased, and some cut down. We lost our major and one captain then, the battle lasting two hours and twenty-five minutes. We all scattered, and some of our party and Campbell's and Moffitt's collected together, and with Capt. Moffitt and Major Pope, we marched for headquarters, and marched across till we, about dark, came to the road we marched up from Reedy Creek to Guilford the day before, and crossing the creek we marched near four miles, and our wounded, Lusk, Allison, and in particular Jas. Mather [James Mather], who was bad cut, were so sick we stopped, and all being almost wearied out, we marched half a mile, and encamped, where, through darkness and rain, and want of provisions we were in distress. Some parched a little corn. We stretched blankets to shelter some of us from the rain. Our retreat was fourteen miles.

Friday, 16th—As soon as day appeared, (being wet) we decamped, and marched through the rain till we arrived at Speedwell furnace, where Green had retreated from Guilfordtown, where the battle was fought, sixteen miles distant; there we met many of our company with great joy, in particular Colonel M'Dowell [McDowell]; where we heard that we lost four pieces of cannon after having retaken them, also the 71st regiment we had captured. After visiting the tents, we eat and hung about in the tents and rain, when frequently we were rejoiced by men coming in we had given out for lost. In the evening we struck tents and encamped on the left, when the orders were read to draw provisions and ammunition, to be in readiness, which order struck a panic on the minds of many. Our march five miles.

Saturday, 17th On account of the want of some of our blankets, and some other clothing, many proposed returning home, which was talked of in general in M'Dowell's battalion, till at last they agreed, and many went off; a few were remaining when General Lawson came and raged very much; and about ten o'clock all but M'Dowell came off. We marched twelve miles to the old Surry towns on Dan where we encamped.

Sabbath, 18th.—Crossed Dan, in our march touched on Smith's River on our left, at which place we received a little bacon and & bushel of meal. A little afterward, many went to a tavern where some got drunk and quarreled. We marched through the lower end of Henry County, and encamped on the borders of Pittsylvania &, which evening I opened the clothes in possession of Jo Weir. That same night Robert Wardlaw burned the butt of his gun. Our march was fifteen miles.

Monday, 19th.—Marched into Pittsylvania, and encamped with a Dutchman, where we got some meat. Our mess bought ten quarts of flour and some hoe-cake. The day's journey twenty-two miles. Our sick were lodged in the house, and Dr. Brown took care of them.

Tuesday, 20th—In the morning Dr. Brown and Captain Alexander disputed about the wagons. Near the middle of the day we left the wagons, and took off the great road under the direction of a pilot, whom some fearing he was leading us into a snare, they charged their guns. We crossed Stanton River, and dined, fifteen of us, at Captain Chiles, from which we marched two miles and encamped. In all fifteen miles.

Wednesday, 21st.—We paid Murphy one dollar a man, for horses to carry us over Goose Creek. Had breakfast with Mr. Butler, and three pints of brandy. In the evening was sick; came to Mr. Rountrees, where we lodged. I got a little milk and peach-dumpling, the rest a dinner of meat and so on. I lay in a bed with Jas. Blair, and the rest on the floor. Our day's march was twenty-one miles.

Thursday, 22nd.—My brother and I hired Mr. Rountrees' horses, and his son came with us to Mr. Lambert's, where, after he received forty-three dollars, he returned. We eat with Mr. Lambert, and paid him ten dollars each. I bought five books from him, and paid him four hundred and twelve dollars and a half. We crossed the mountain, and in the valley saw the wonderful mill without wheels, doors, or floors. In that same valley Jos. Boagle met us with brother's horses, and he with one of them went back for Robert McCormic. We proceeded to Greenlee's, got dinner, and when they came up crossed the river and came to Boagle's, where we lodged. Our day's march was thirty-two miles.

Friday 23rd.—Left Boagle's and came to brother William's. Here I conclude my journal of the expedition under Colonel M'Dowell against Cornwallis, the British General in North Carolina. Rockbridge County, Virginia, in the year 1781, March 23rd.

SAMUEL HOUSTON.

Note: the tombstone of Samuel Houston reads:

SACRED
to the memory of the
REV. SAMUEL HOUSTON,
who in early life was a soldier of the
Revolution,
and for 55 years a faithful minister of the
LORD JESUS CHRIST.
He died on the 20th day of January 1839,
aged 81 years,
in the mature and blessed hope of a
glorious resurrection
and of immortal life, in the kingdom of his Farther and his God.