

Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements & Rosters

Pension Application of Zachariah Piles W10896

Transcribed and annotated by C. Leon Harris

[The pension application of Zachariah Piles was not in the file, probably having been removed by District Attorney W. G. Singleton as part of his investigation of this, among many other, pension applications from Monongalia, Harrison, Lewis and other counties. For details, see pension application S6111 of David W. Sleeth. The following is Singleton's report, on the back of which he wrote "Fraud."]

Zachariah Piles \$36 66/100 [amount of his pension annually]

I the undersigned Zachariah Piles at the requisition of the Secretary of War give the following narrative of my age and Revolutionary Services to Wit: I shall be 77 years old the 15th July next - in the year in which the war commenced or in the next succeeding year (I cant tell which nor can I tell in what year the war did commence) I volunteered in west-augusty [sic: District of West Augusta] now Monongalia county) under Capt. Owen Davy. we [illegible word] about 30 men, to the head of Bufflow creek (Mon'a. Cty) [sic: Buffalo Creek now in Marion County WV] and built huts. remained there several weeks, and we then went to the junction of the West Fork & Taggarts Vally [sic: junction of West Fork River and Tygart Valley River at present Fairmont], and built Huts there also. at the latter place the term expired - after the forgoing service there was a fort Built on Duncards Creek called "Stradlers Fort" [also called Fort Statler, on Dunkard Creek] this Fort was built in the year in which the war commenced. my father lived near the fort on the opposite side of the Creek. I went to live with my father. - he, after the war broke out pretty Hot moved east of the allegany mountains [Alleghany Mountains] and left my brother & myself at the Fort to take care of place and property and to raise a crop on his place. my brother and myself remained at the Fort & my fathers place for some three years. when we first settled there the people of the Fort and settlement "put Shinn as Captain" who never had any commission. Shinn continued as captain about two years. upon his quitting the people of the settlement "put in James Troye [sic: James Troy, pension application S7747] as captain" he had no commission. - these men sent from a distance to guard the fort & settlement, "neither the settlers nor myself or brother were enrolled as part of the gard" the settlers, including my brother & myself were engaged in clearing land and raising crops, when ever the Indians came in the settlement (which was frequent) the settlers would turn out with the guard & pursue the Indians sometimes two or three days at a time. I never went out myself but two trips. in these two trips I was gone "Seven days" on one occasion some settlers were driven into the Fort by the Indians - Ten men including myself went after their plunder, we were attacked by the Indians. four were killed. four taken prissoners - myself & the other man escaped. in this expedition I was gone two days & received a wound from a Bullet in my Heel. after receiving this wound I went to Hampshire county, where my father then was. whilst there I was drafted and marched under Capt. Wiggins to the mouth of Big Beaver [at present Beaver PA], and aided in Building Fort McIntosh. Gen'l. [Lachlan] McIntosh with the greater part of the army marched from Fort McIntosh to Tuscarahua [sic: Tuscarawas River in present Ohio]. he left some men behind to guard Fort McIntosh. I was one of those left. I got home from this service about christmas - went out after harvest. - I am perfectly satisfied I was gone four months. - about two years after the last mentioned service Capt Scott of Mongalia raised a company of Raingers. I joined them - (about 25 men) as ranged around the settlement and guarded it against invasions from the Indians - the settler agreed to furnish Capt Scotts company with the necessary provisain. - they failed to furnish supplies - the company came in and dispersed - we were out two months and a half, no pay was promised, or was any received, either from the government or the settlers the forgoing comprises all my services. John Bookover [sic: Brookover; see endnote] wrote my declaration - by contract I agreed to give him one third of the amount drawn. In witness of all which I hereto subscribe my name. Nov'r. 9, 1834 -

I acquired & made the settlement or Tomahawk right of 400 acre of land

Witness

Zachariah hisXmark Piles

Isaac Cooper

Note. the certificate is restored & bond & security given for money & Interest.

W. G Singleton Nov'r. 20, 1834

Morgantown 12th Nov 1834

Col. J L Edwards [Commissioner of Pensions]

Sir Mr. Singleton informs me that he has finished the examination of the pensioners and applicants in this county [Monongalia], and amongst a few others thinks that Zachariah Piles is not entitled - as well as I recollect his declaration, which was first written by Mr. Haymond, I think Mr. S is mistaken. I promised Piles to write you for a copy of it, and the evidence, that I may examine into the case more particularly.

So far as I have observed, Mr. S. is indefatigably engaged. indeed he must have been so, for in less than ten days in this county, he must have travelled above 250 miles, judging from the route he took - he mentioned a few days since that no examination was to be made in Ohio & Brooke counties - I cannot see the propriety of omitting these counties, as all were indiscriminately suspended, altho' I have never heard any doubts except as to Ohio, and I cannot now recollect from what source - it may have proceeded from the impression that the Lewis company [agents from Lewis County soliciting fraudulent pension applications] have been there, altho' I do not know that that is the case.

Mr. S. has decided against one of those, for whom I wrote the declaration, Purnell Houston [pension application S15467]. I still think he is in an error, but that you are to judge, for I suppose Houston will appeal to you thro' Hon. Mr. Wilson.

Why will not the Agent at Richmond pay the pension due to John Wilsons widow which you granted some time ago [probably pension application W6533]. she writes to me that it is suspended. I am very resp'ly Yours Thos. P. Ray

[Singleton sued Piles for recovery of the pension already paid to him, but on 3 Apr 1852 Singleton moved in court for dismissal of the suit against the executors of Piles's estate, John Piles and William Price.]

State of Virginia County of Monongalia

On the 31st day of July one thousand eight hundred and fifty six personally appeared before me William Price - a Justice of the Peace within and for the County and State aforesaid Susannah Piles aged 70 years a resident of said County, who being duly sworn, according to law, declares that she is the widow of Zachariah Piles, who was a private in the Company commanded by Captain Archabold Wiggins Col. Hite or Vanmeeter [sic: Garrett Vanmeter] under Gen'l. McIntosh in the war of the Revolution that her said husband served in 1778 at Fort McIntosh for six months and the the year 1780 or 1781 that her said husband served three months under Captain David Scott as an Indian spy on the waters of the Ohio River and that her said husband drew a pension under the act of Congress of the 7th of June 1832

She further states that she was married to the said Zachariah Piles in Greene County and State of Pennsylvania on the 6th day of July A.D. 1814 by one David Worley a Justice of the peace - and that her name before her said marriage was Susannah Lezar and that she has no record of her marriage And that her said husband died in said County of Monongalia on the 15th day of November A.D. 1840 and that she still continues a widow. she makes this declaration for the purpose of obtaining the Bounty land to which she may be entitled under the Act granting Bounty Land to certain Officers & soldiers who have been engaged in the Military service of the United States approved the 14 day of May 1836. She also declares that this is the only application that she ever made for bounty land and that she has never received Bounty land under any act of Congress.

Susannah herXmark Piles

State of Virginia

Monongalia County SS

Be it known that on this 23rd day of February in the year 1857 personally appeared before the County Court of Monongalia and State of Virginia Susannah Piles a resident of said County aged 71 years, who being first duly sworn according to law doth on her oath, make the following

declaration in order to obtain the benefits of the provision, made by acts of Congress passed July 7th 1838, March 3^d 1843, July 17th 1844, February 2nd 1848 and February 3^d 1853 granting pensions to widows of persons who served during the Revolutionary war, that she is the widow of Zachariah Piles who was a soldier in the revolutionary war and was a pensioner of the United States upon the Virginia agency, and resided in said County when he drew a pension for the proof of his services as a soldier she begs leave to refer to his declaration and the certificates Col. Dudley Evans and James Scott [see endnote] now on the files of the pension Office she further states that W. G. Singleton Esqr Commissioner appointed to examine the pension cases in Western Virginia done her husband great injustice in his report on his case from which report his name was dropped from the pension roll, and she asks that his name be restored on said pension roll. she also declares that she was married to the said Zachariah Piles to the best of her knowledge on the 7th day of July AD. 1813 that her marriage took place in the County of Green in the state of Pennsylvania that her maiden name before marriage was Susannah Lezar that she has no record of her marriage she further declares that her husband the aforesaid Zachariah Piles died on the 15th day of November 1840 in the said County of Monongalia and that she has remained his widow ever since that period, as will more fully appear by reference to the proofs hereto annexed.

Susannah herXmark Piles

Monongalia County State of Virginia

Edgar C. Wilson personally appeared before me the Presiding Justice for the county aforesaid, and made oath, That some years since he was counsel for Zachariah Piles, and Peter Haught [pension application S6981], formerly Revolutionary Pensioners, and whose names were stricken from the Pension Roll, through the report of Washington G Singleton Late district attorney - that this affiant from his examination of the subject at the time and since, believed, and still believes that said Singleton was mistaken in his Report, and that he acted without proper information, and oppressively toward said Pensioners, as well as others of like character April 27th 1857 - This affiant has no interest in this application - Edgar C. Wilson

State of Virginia Monongalia County towit

This day [28 Apr 1857] William G Brown of full age personally appeared before me the undersigned Justice of the peace in and for the county aforesaid and made oath that some time about 1834 or 35 Mr Singleton then U. S. attorney for the western district of Virginia came to the County of Preston and examined the claims of several persons in that county who were drawing pensions under the act of Congress of June 1832 and reported against the claims of two persons which the deponent now recollects to wit John Harman [pension application W7680] and Andrew Johnson [S15905] both of which were subsequently reinstated and affiant had no doubt at the time nor has he any doubt now that Mr Singleton was imposed upon by persons inimical to said pensioners and affiant further states that from his knowledge of the manner of said Singletons investigations he is inclined to believe that he be likely to report adversely to the claims of deserving soldiers of the revolution owing to the general and imperfect character of the evidence offered in support of their claims and the hastily and imperfect examinations he necessarily made in his excursions through the country and the affiant has no interest in this application

Wm G Brown

Fairmont Va. May 6th 1857

Geo C Whiting, Esqr Com Pensions

My Dr. Sir: My friend Mr Byrne, of Morgantown, Va, encloses with this the papers of Mrs Susannah Piles, widow of Zachariah Piles and who was stricken from the list of Revolutionary pensioners, so that by its reinstatement justice may be meted out to her. Among the affidavits of said papers will be found those of Sam'l. Minor, Esqr, and Capt John Lautz, and those also of the Hon's E. C. Wilson and Wm. G. Brown. I merely wish to say that Minor was a justice of the peace for 40 years, and Capt Lautz commanded a company in the War of 1812 - are the near neighbors of the family of Piles - and are of the very first respectability and character. Of Messrs Wilson and Brown I need not speak, both having represented this District ably in Congress and among the best men of the State.

This name was stricken from the rolls by Mr. Singleton of Winchester, the then Attorney in the Federal Court Western Va and the then commissioner appointed to investigate claims of the kind alleged to have been fraudulently obtained; and the reason given in this case is that Piles was too young to have performed the service for which he claimed his pension. [See note below.] These certificates I am sure will satisfy you correctly on that head. As Mr. Singleton was interested to the extent of a fee (\$20, I believe) many have thought he might be influenced thereby to decide adversely to the claimants. I make no such charge myself, nor know anything whatever touching the correctness of the allegation, but justice to both parties will justify the officers in scrutinizing such cases that injury shall not be done to either. About that time cases were fraudulently made up, but it may be that the claim against these resulted to the injury of many persons, and I have no doubt of it, who were justly entitled. Many such have been reinstated, & I ask the considerate attention of the Commissioner to this application of Mrs Piles

Very truly Z Kidwell [Zedekiah Kidwell, U. S. Congressman]

Morgantown Va July 30th 1857

Hon'l. George C Whiting Commissioner of Pensions

Dear Sir In your letter rejecting the application of Susanna Piles widow of Zachariah Piles dec'd. late a pensioner of the U. S. under the act of 1832, and from the report of W. G. Singleton in 1835, his name was dropped from the Pension Roll, you say in your letter the fact of his not making any effort to have his name reinstated operates against him &c. the facts are these W. G. S. was then U. S. attorney and brought suit soon after his report against said Piles & A Brown said Piles defended said suit until his death, and the case was decided a year or two after his death in his favour in 1852. his case and testimony offered on his behalf were examined by the Attorney for the U. S. George H Lee now one of the Judges of the Court of Appeals in this state, and also examined by Judge Breckenborough, the present Judge, and they decided in favour of said Piles, which I think should set a side said one sided report of said Singleton. he made himself unpopular in said examination of the Pensioners. he was afterwards nominated by President John Tyler, as Marshal for this district, and the Senate refused to confirm said nomination, from that fact, so I was informed by the Members of Congress from this district, and I consider that W. G. Singleton in his report done great injustice to said Piles. his widow can not read or write, and I am in hopes that you will reinstate his name on the Pension Roll.

Respectfully yours John P Byrne

[Punctuation partly corrected]

Mt. Morris, Greene Co. Penn'a.

March 15th 1858

Sirs: At the instance of Mrs. Susannah Piles, whose letter of attorney, authorizing me to act in the premises, accompanies this, I write you a fuller explanation than you may have received in relation to her claim for a pension under the act of Feby 3rd 1853.

Mrs. Piles, I am informed, made her application in Open Court, agreeable to your rules, in Feby 1857, through J. P. Byrne, Esqr. of Morgantown, Va, and Mr. Byrne informs me, if I understood him correctly, that her claim was suspended, because the application was too late. I think there must be misapprehension in this respect. The act of Feby 3 1853 certainly, either in express terms, or constructively, imposed no limitation as to the period in which those entitled to its benefits are to prefer their claims.

Zachariah Piles died in Nov'r. 1840, aged about 82 years, and was one of the earliest settlers and pioneers in this county, having come from the South Branch when a boy in 1775 or 1776. For twenty years of his active life - from 1775 to 1795, he participated in contests with the Indians, who, during that period made frequent irruptions on the settlements here. In no part of the Country were Indian alarms and atrocities more frequent than in Western Virginia & Pennsylvania, and I find, in an acquaintance and intercourse of twenty years with decendants of the first settlers, that if reliable tradition is taken, our most authentic history of Border Warfare is but the meagre outlines of the true history of this interesting region.

Piles carried to his grave a wound [sic], that ever after disabled him, received in the leg, in 1782 whilst a comrade who was with him was shot down and scalped by the Indians.

He claimed to have served under McIntosh between 1778 - 1780 — Captain Catt's

Company - and marched by Pittsburgh and Beaver to the Tuscarawas in what is now the State of Ohio.

I would respectfully refer you to a statement containing the declarations and statements of Richard Tennant that I sent some time since with the application of Jacob G. Haught for arrears claimed in behalf of the heirs of Peter Haught. The declarations of Tennant were as full in relation to the meritorious service of Zachariah Piles as of Peter Haught.

The course of this Government towards Piles and Haught was repulsive to the moral sense and patriotism of this whole neighborhood, and from what I can learn of the feelings pervading this community, at the time, W. G. Pendleton [sic] U. S. district attorney, at whose instance the small stipend allowed by the Government to Haught & Piles was suspended, would have stood a fine chance to be "tarred and feathered" for the dastardly course he pursued, if he had placed himself within reach of Lynch law.

E. C. Wilson and W. G. Brown, Esquires, who have both represented this district in Congress and are lawyers of high standing, both attest the entire incompetency of Singleton and say that of the numerous suits he instituted he never obtained judgement for the Govt. in a single instance. Acting from no consideration but the fees the Govt. paid him, as the facts abundantly show, it is surprizing that the mere opinion of such a man is taken by your office as conclusive against the meritorious claim of the soldiers whom you had previously pensioned upon evidence that must have been satisfactory under your rules. And the Govt. committed the further wrong through Singleton, that when it instituted suits, continued them for twenty years, and then withdrew the suits, giving the defendants no opportunity to adduce the facts in their possession going to establish the meritorious services of Piles and Haught.

You have issued Mrs. Piles a Bounty L. Warrant for 160 acres under the act of March 3^d 1853 as the widow of Zachariah Piles aforesaid. Hence you must have deemed upon a review of evidence upon which Piles was pensioned as a revolutionary soldier that it was conclusive and satisfactory.

In conclusion I will add that in this now densely settled neighborhood where Piles lived and was respected as a man of honesty and truth amongst the oldest residents who knew him, not one ever entertained a doubt touching his meritorious services in the revolutionary army, and in predatory excursions against the Indians as a ranger & spy, and it is equally notorious that several who served a few months in Indian campaigns in 1790 and who are 15 or 20 years younger than Piles would be if now living, are in the receipt of Pensions as "Revolutionary Pensioners"

Very Respectfully, Your obt. servt. J. V. Boughner
Hon Geo. C. Whiting, Commr. Pensions Washington City
[Written at the bottom: "Mr. Whiting will please close this case at once and oblige
Sharrard Clemens H[ouse] of R[epresentatives] April 15."]

NOTES:

The pension application of Peter Haught (S6981) includes the following by J. V. Broughner: "Haught, Piles, and Wade [George Wade S7829], were pensioned, through an agent named John Brookover, assisted by a Mr Wilson or some other attorney in Morgantown. The parties refused to pay Brookover an exhorbitant fee he demanded. Brookover took offence, visited Clarksburgh and informed W. G. Singleton, Esqr U. S. dist. attorney that the pensions were fraudulently obtained. Brookover was a cunning and unprincipled man, but very ignorant."

For the 23 Feb 1857 deposition by Susannah Piles, John Fetty, 84, and Gen. E. S. Pindall, 56, swore, "that they were personally well acquainted with Col. Dudley Evans now decd, and Capt. James Scott now decd. - that they were residents of this County - that they were highly credible persons - that said Evans was a Colonel in the war of 1812 - that said Scott drew a pension as a soldier of the Revolution [pension application S6067]."

In the federal census of the Western District of Monongalia County for 1830, before passage of the pension act under which Zachariah Piles applied, his age is listed as 70-80. He would therefore have been at least 16 and eligible for military service at the beginning of the Revolutionary War.

On 31 Oct 1868 Susannah Piles, 82, applied for an increase in her pension, witnessed by Uriak and Elmira Jane Piles. On the application it is noted that Susannah Piles "is very old &

feeble and is totally blind so that she is not able to go to the County Seat a distance of 15 miles...”