

Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements

Pension Application of Benjamin Burch: W23743

Transcribed and annotated by C. Leon Harris

I Rebecca Burch aged upwards of Seventy years, for the purpose of availing myself of the benefits of the Second Section of the act of Congress of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 1836 entitled "An act granting half pay to widows or orphans where their husbands and fathers have died of wounds received in the military service of the United States in certain cases and for other purposes" do declare -

That Captain Benjamin Burch, deceased, to the best of my knowledge and belief entered into the regular service of the United States in the Revolutionary war, in or about the year 1779, in the Maryland line - and that he continued in service until the war was over & was regularly discharged and returned home - that he entered as a private & as I have been informed & do believe, he held the rank of Sergeant at his discharge, which was in the year 1783. That Benjamin Burch and myself were lawfully married by the Reverent Mr John Carroll (who was afterwards Arch Bishop of the Catholic Church in America) in the County of Prince George in the State of Maryland, soon after the return of Benjamin Burch from the war - the month I cannot positively state, but believe it was Septem'r - the year was 1784 - That my husband often informed me that he was in several battles during his service, the names or places of which I cannot state with certainty except that at Camden in South Carolina, which he always denominated as Gates Defeat [16 Aug 1780] from which he made good his retreat, after the regiment in which he belonged was nearly destroyed; and in his retreat found & joined Gen'l Sumpters forces [sic: Thomas Sumter's Brigade of Partisans], and was with them when they were surprized & defeated by Col Tarlton of the British Army [sic: Banastre Tarleton at Fishing Creek SC, 18 Aug 1780], where my husband was overpowered by a horseman & made a prisoner of war - was taken to Charleston, in South Carolina, and kept a prisoner about eleven months when he was exchanged & landed at Jamestown as well as I can now remember in Virginia, without hat, coat, jacket, stockings or shoes - with only an old & broken shirt & a pair of tattered & worn out short-breeches - in this state of nakedness & destitution he litterally begged his way home to Prince George County in Maryland  
Captain Burch during his life pertinaciously and constantly refused to apply for a pension or gratuity, on the ground of patriotic feeling, saying that he never would become chargeable to his country except for service rendered or the salary of the office he held for upwards of twenty years as principal and assistant Doorkeeper to the House of Representatives of the United States.

The names of the officers and the numbers of the Regiments under and in which my husband served I am unable to state. I have often heard him mention them, but they have entirely escaped my memory.

The marriage of myself and husband, with the birth of our children was duly entered in a family bible, as is usual in most families, which bible was stolen from the House in which we resided several years ago, and has never been recovered. I mention this fact as accounting for not stating the precise day of the marriage.

Capt. Burch died in the early part of May, I believe the 5<sup>th</sup> day, in the year 1832.

Rebecca herXmark Burch      [3 Dec 1836]

In addition to the within, I will take the liberty to state that my father Captain Benjamin Burch, repeatedly, in conversing upon revolutionary scenes, services & sufferings, stated that immediately upon clothing himself after his return from captivity in South Carolina, he rejoined the army, and was for awhile attached to Gunboats or flotilla or something of the kind in the Chesapeake & was in several severe brushes with the Enemy - that he was afterwards marched to the northward & was regularly discharged at Newburg in New York when the war was over - Whilst a prisoner he stated that he suffered much from cruelty & oppression because he would not abandon his countrys service & enter into that of Britain. The fortitude of many of his fellow prisoners he stated gave way & to prevent starvation & to obtain comfort

& preserve live, they entered the service of the Enemy. He preferred death & was nigh unto it from his adherence to his country. Whilst a prisoner he suffered to the last degree of human misery from a pestilent disease then not named, but which has become familiarly known as Yellow fever. These facts, of course, derived from the conversation of my father. It would make a mans hair stand on end & his blood boil to listen to his recitals.

Office Ho Rep's N-5      Dec 3, 1836                      [signed] J. Burch

District of Columbia}

County of Washington} SS.      On this twenty first of October 1854 personally appeared before the Orphan's Court of the County of Washington in the District of Columbia Elizabeth Wilson a resident of the City of Washington in the County and District aforesaid aged 43 years, who being first duly sworn according to law doth on her oath make the following Declaration in order to assert the claim of Benjamin Burch to the benefit of the provision made by the Act of Congress passed May 15, 1828. That he said Benjamin Burch enlisted in the Army of the United States in the year [blank] as a Sergeant in Colonel Rawlings Regiment of the Maryland Continental line and served as such until the end of the war to wit until the 15<sup>th</sup> of November 1783. That this service has been three times Officially Recognized and Decided by the Commissioner of Pensions and Heads of Departments by pensioning his widow Rebecca Burch under the several Acts of July 4<sup>th</sup> 1836 (second section), July 7, 1838 and March 3, 1843. That the said Benjamin Burch died on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of May 1832, and that his only children now living are Verlinda Wiltberger wife of Charles H Wiltberger Esq late Register of the City of Washington - Mildred Rhodes widow of William Rhodes, Susan Hewit widow of William Hewit deceased also late Register of the City of Washington and Elizabeth Wilson this Declarant, all of whom reside in the County of Washington in the District of Columbia. That he refers to the papers in the three Admitted cases of her mother said Rebecca Burch under the several Acts of 1836, 1838 and 1843 abovementioned for proof of the service of said Benjamin Burch, and proof of heirship in addition to that which is hereto annexed. [Power of Attorney follows.]

[signed] Elizabeth Wilson

I Thomas J Barrett depose that I am Sexton of the Burying Ground of St. Peters Church in Washington in the District of Columbia and that the following is the inscription on the Tomb-stone of Benjamin Burch late of Washington in the District of Columbia who was buried in said Ground, viz "Captain Benjamin Burch. He served his Country with fidelity and honour, throughout the war of the Revolution, and the war of 1812 with England. For 22 years he filled the responsible and honorable office of Doorkeeper of the House of Representatives of the United States. He was an upright, honorable, humane and brave man, and a professor of the Religion of Christ. Through life he possessed the confidence of his fellow citizens in an earnest degree and died it is believed without ever having had a personal enemy on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of May 1832 aged 71 years. This monument is erected as a small memorial of the undying love of an only son."

Sworn to and Subscribed before me on the 21<sup>st</sup> day of October 1854 and I certify that I am not interested or concerned in the foregoing pension claim of Elizabeth Wilson and that said Thomas J Barrett is a respectable and credible person.

NOTE: On 20 Feb 1839 Mildred M. Rhodes, widowed daughter of Benjamin Burch, residing in Washington, stated that her mother still lived on Capitol Hill in Washington. She stated that George W. Wilson, soon after he married her sister Elizabeth, wrote the family record in a new Bible, including her parents' marriage on 17 Sep 1784. She stated that her sister Martha married George J. Cain and moved to TN, taking the new Bible with her, and that it had been returned after her death two years before.