

Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements & Rosters

Pension Application of David C. Dempsey W727 Peggy Dempsey VA
Transcribed and annotated by C. Leon Harris.

State of Tennessee } SS.
White County }

On this 15th day of July 1834 personally appeared before the Worshipful Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions for said County David C. Dempsey a resident citizen of the County of White and State aforesaid aged seventy six 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 provision made by the act of Congress passed June 7th 1832.

He states that as well as he can remember in the year 1778 [see endnote] he volunteered his services for Eighteen months in Richmond Virginia under Captain Barfield. From thence he was marched to Norfolk where he was attached to Captain Kertley's company [possibly Elijah Kirtley of Culpeper County]. The Regiment to which he belonged was under the command of Colonel Looney and Maj'r. Barfield. From Norfolk he was marched into North Carolina and the Yadkin River. From thence to Hillsborough where he had an engagement with the Tories. From thence he marched to the Cheraw Hills on Big Pedee [sic: Great Pee Dee River in SC] and there had a severe engagement with the Tories many of whom were destroyed. He then marched down the river to Bassi's Mills where he had another engagement with a company of tories commanded by Captain Murphree. [See endnote.] Murphree was shot through the breast by Maj'r. Barfield. He then marched to Camden where he joined General Greens [sic: Nathanael Greene's] Army and had a severe engagement with the British and the American troops defeated [Battle of Hobkirk Hill near Camden SC, 25 Apr 1781]. This declarant was here taken prisoner by the British and kept about four months. Whilst a prisoner he was taken to the High Hills of Santee in the town of Belville [see endnote] where he was exchanged and got back to his said company. He then marched to the Eutaw Springs and there had a severe engagement with the British [8 Sep 1781] to the no little mortification of the latter. From thence he marched to Monk's Corner [sic: Moncks Corner SC] where they again encountered the tories. This Declarant having served out his Eighteen months was discharged in the spring of 1780 [sic] to the best of his recollection. He asks a pension for the eighteen months service rendered his Country as above. He has no Documentary evidence, nor does he know of any person living whose testimony can be procured to establish the services rendered by him as aforesaid. He hereby relinquishes every claim to a pension or annuity except the present and declares that his name is not on the pension Roll of any agency in any State.

Answers to the questions prescribed by the War Department and propounded by the Court.

1. He was born in Petersburg Virginia in the year 1758 according to the best information he has.
2. He once had a record of his age which has been destroyed.
3. He was living at Richmond Virginia when he entered the service, since the Revolutionary War he has lived Lunenburg District North Carolina, Orange Burg [sic: Orangeburg] District South Carolina, Knox County Tennessee He now lives in White County Tennessee.
4. He volunteered as stated before.
5. He has stated the names of all the officers with the troops where he served with whom he was acquainted except Col. Sumpter [sic: Gen. Thomas Sumter of SC], Col. Henderson [probably Lt. Col. William Henderson of Sumter's Brigade] and Gen'l. [Francis] Marion.
6. He received a written discharge which was destroyed by fire.
7. He refers to the following persons in his present neighborhood who can testify to his character for veracity and their belief of his services as a soldier of the Revolution (Viz:) Timothy Couch, Robinson[?] Blankenship, Jeremiah Denton, James Scott & [illegible] B. Faris. There is no minister of the gospel in his neighborhood whose testimony he can procure. David hisXmark C Dempsey

State of Tennessee } SS.
White County }

This day being the 21st day of August A.D. 1834 personally appeared David C. Dempsey before the undersigned an acting Justice of the Peace in and for said County who being first duly sworn according to law doth on his oath make the following amended Declaration (his original Declaration being now present) in order to obtain the benefit of the act of Congress passed June 7th 1832.

He states that in his original Declaration he included all his service under one term of engagement and that by the letter of the Honorable J. L. Edwards [Commissioner of Pensions, pointing out that militia tours were seldom for longer than six months] he is informed that it is necessary that he should clearly show under what Officers he served and the number of his engagements &c which he now proceeds to do according to the best of his recollection upon the subject. His first engagement was as a volunteer for six months in the City of Richmond Virginia under captain Barfield. From thence he was marched to Norfolk where he was attached to the company commanded by Captain Kerthley. The Regiment to which he belonged was under the command of Col. Looney and Maj. Barfield (who had been promoted from captain to Maj'r.) From Norfolk he was marched to Hillsborough where he had an engagement as stated in his original Declaration. From thence he marched as before stated by him. In his march to Camden he crossed the Congaree river at Cooks ferry as well as he can remember where his six months having expired He substituted for five months for one Lewis Carn who was at that time in ill health. After he thus substituted he was under Captain Rhodes. He then marched and joined General Green's army and after the engagement he was taken prisoner at Rujaly's Mill a few miles from Camden [sic: Rugeley's Mill about 12 mi N of Camden] by the British and kept four months & was exchanged back as stated in his original Declaration and marched to the Eutaw Springs and had a second engagement with the British. He then marched to Monks corner where they had a rencounter with the tories. He here was forted and served out his five months exclusive of the four months that he was a prisoner that time not being suffered to be counted as any part of the five months for which he had substituted. He returned home to Richmond where he remained about eighteen days when he again volunteered for three months under captain Jacob Wanamaker. His Lieutenants name was Nicholas Weaver. The object of this expedition was to gow against the tories who had become remarkably troublesome between the waters of Santee and Four Holes. He marched from Richmond Virginia to the Yadkin River & crossed said stream at the Shallow ford. He then marched & crossed Little Peedee river at Gipsons ferry. Thence to Big Peedee and up the same to Cheraw Hills where he had an engagement with the tories many of whome were destroyed. Thence he marched down the river to Bass's Mills where he had another engagement with a company of tories commanded by captain Murphree, who was shot by Maj'r. Barfield who had arrived where he was the night before the engagement. He Maj'r. Barfield having been sent for by express. He then marched down to Warhie Neck [Horry Neck?] where he crossed Big Peedee & marched to the forks of Black River. He then marched to the Four Holes. Thence to Orangeburg where he was stationed & his three months having expired he was discharged and again returned home thus having served Eighteen months in all including the four months that he was a prisoner being informed that he is entitled to pay for that time as well as any other part of his service. He is ignorant, aged and infirm and states that the foregoing together with his original declaration furnishes the best information he can give the department in relation to his service & asks such pension as the same may entitle him to.

David hisXmark C. Dempsey

NOTES:

The starting date for the service claimed by Dempsey is inconsistent with the events described in the declaration, which are themselves confused and more likely to have been performed by a South Carolina militiaman.

I found no record of a Colonel Looney or Major Barfield of Virginia. "Maj'r. Barfield" apparently refers to a Tory commander of South Carolina, as noted in the next remark.

The engagement at "Bassi's Mills" evidently refers to a skirmish at Bass's Mill near present Pee

Dee SC in August 1781. Dempsey's declaration confuses the officers involved. Maj. Jesse Barfield commanded a group of Tories against Col. Morris Murphey, who was in Gen. Francis Marion's Partisan Brigade from South Carolina.

"town of Belville" probably refers to Belleville, the fortified plantation house of Col. William Thomson near present St. Matthews SC, then occupied by the British.

I found no record of a Captain Jacob Wanamaker or Lieutenant Nicholas Weaver from Virginia. A Jacob Wannamaker was an officer in the militia of Orangeburg District SC. See <http://revwarapps.org/w22394.pdf>.

David C. Dempsey was issued a pension certificate dated 11 Feb 1835 for \$30 per year for nine months service.

On 13 April 1853 and on 5 July 1853 Peggy Dempsey, about 60 or 61, applied for a pension stating that as Peggy Kyle she married David Dempsey on 26 March 1834 at his house, and he died about 1840 or 1841. The file contains a copy of a bond signed on 26 March 1834 by David Dempsey and Hayse Arnold for the marriage of Dempsey to Peggy Kyle, and also a marriage license of the same date.

The file includes the following letter (punctuation partly corrected):

Wrightsville/ Jan'ry 17th 1855

L. P. Waldo, Esq. [Commissioner of Pensions],

There was formerly a pension granted to David Dempsey, who died 7 years ago, for [ser]vices done in the American Army. He first married a Lady in North Carolina, with whom he lived many years but subsequent to his coming to Tenn, he left or abandoned her & cohabited illegally for some months with another woman, whom he afterwards married, without having obtained a divorce from his lawful wife. Since his, Dempsey's death, his unlawful wife has been drawing the Pension, which is justly due his first & legal & only wife. As she is getting very old, say 80 or 90 years, & has partly or partially lost her memory, I wish to know if her & Dempsey's marriage can be proven by her own Oath. She has forgotten, who was present at the time she & Dempsey were married, but is willing to swear they were lawfully married. There will be no difficulty in proving his Death And if a copy from the Marriage Registry would do, perhaps that could be obtained at Ashville [sic: Asheville] North Carolina. Please inform me what steps I should take to secure her rights & write by return mail & oblige

Yours Respectfully/ Thos. B. Matlock

N.B. I wish to know how much is due her for the last 7 years, provided the proof can be made [A note on Peggy Dempsey's pension certificate reads: "Pension drop'd from the roll in 1855 – she not being entitled to pension, the soldier having another wife living."]

In June 1868 Peggy Dempsey was living in Putnam County TN when she made an application for restoration of her pension, which was witnessed by Mary Chyle and Mary Walker. On 4 Aug 1868 and on 6 Oct 1869 she applied again apparently under the impression that her pension had been suspended as a result of the Civil War. She stated that she had lived in Putnam County since 1 Jan 1861 and had subsisted by "labour in carding & spinning & working her garden & other truck patches."