

## Southern Campaigns American Revolution Pension Statements & Rosters

Pension application of Alexander Coffin W8617 <sup>1</sup> Mary Coffin f63SC  
Transcribed by Will Graves 1/21/09 rev'd 3/9/09 & 11/16/14

[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 8<sup>th</sup> of June 1786." Please call material errors or omissions to my attention.]

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Pension application of Alexander Coffin W8617

### Declaration

In order to obtain the benefit of the Act of Congress passed June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1832  
State of New York, City & County of New York

On this Twentieth day of April one thousand and eight hundred and thirty-three personally appeared in open Court before John T. Irving Esquire Judge of the Court of Common Pleas for the City and County of New York now sitting, Alexander Coffin, Junior, a resident of the City of New York aged Sixty-eight 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 7<sup>th</sup>, 1832.

That he was born in Nantucket State of Massachusetts on the fifteenth day of November A.D. one thousand seven hundred & Sixty four, as may appear by Family record now in the possession of his Father Alexander Coffin residing at Hudson in the State of New York.

That he entered the Naval service of these U. States, or perhaps more properly, the Naval service of the State of South Carolina sometime in the month of February or March one thousand seven hundred & eighty one, as a Midshipman on board the Frigate *South Carolina*,<sup>2</sup> carrying Forty Guns, & about Five hundred men under command of Commodore Alexander Gillon,<sup>3</sup> this applicant being at Amsterdam in Holland where the said Frigate was built, & was owned and commissioned, as he understood & believes, by the State of South Carolina.

That the names of the principal officers belonging to the said Frigate at the time of his

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<sup>1</sup> BLWt34935-160-55

<sup>2</sup> Lewis, James A., *Neptune's Militia: The Frigate South Carolina during the American Revolution*, Kent, Ohio, Kent State University Press, 1999.

<sup>3</sup> [Alexander Gillon W25629](#). Gillon, Alexander, a Representative from South Carolina; born in Rotterdam, Holland, in 1741; pursued an academic course; immigrated to London, England, and engaged in commerce; in 1766 settled in Charleston and established a large business; delegate to the Second Provincial Congress of South Carolina in 1775 and 1776; member of the first general assembly in 1776; was elected captain of the German Fusiliers of Charleston in May 1775; commodore of the South Carolina Navy in 1778 and was sent to France to procure vessels; joined the fleet of Spanish vessels in the capture of the Bahama Islands May 8, 1782; elected to the Continental Congress in 1784, but did not attend; delegate to the State convention which ratified the Federal Constitution in 1788; elected as an Anti-Administration candidate to the Third Congress and served from March 4, 1793, until his death at his plantation, "Gillon's Retreat," Orangeburg District, S.C., October 6, 1794; interment in the family burial ground at "Gillon's Retreat," Calhoun County, S.C.

<http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=G000211>. (viewed March 9, 2009).

entering & subsequently were, to the best of his recollection & belief as follows, viz. Capt. John Joyner, Lieutenants Nicholas Bartlett<sup>4</sup> of Marblehead & William Grinnell of Rhode Island, \_\_\_ White of Marblehead, Joshua Barney<sup>5</sup> of Maryland, \_\_\_ Marston of Boston, John Marrant [sic, John Mayrant]<sup>6</sup> of South Carolina, Sailing Master, Luke Mathewson of New York, succeeded by Fitzgerald [sic, Fitzgerald] of Connecticut, Captains, as there were two, of Marines, Michael Kellison and \_\_\_ Spencer both of South Carolina.

That the said Frigate being so commanded and officered as above mentioned after long waiting for an opportunity to put to sea & evade the British squadrons which were constantly cruising off the Texel; finally sailed from thence about the middle of September 1781, took an English prize in the North Sea which not being worth sending in was burned, they then proceeded North about, cruised a short time off the west coast of Ireland, took the British Privateer<sup>7</sup> *Alexander* of 16 guns & 70 or 80 men which they manned & ordered to a Port in France, meeting with no more prizes they then shaped their course for, & arrived at, Corunna in Spain about the middle of October for water & provisions & some necessary repairs, which detained them sometime, when ready they again put to sea, & off the coast of Portugal took a prize which was carried in company with the Frigate into Teneriffe [Tenerife<sup>8</sup>] where she was sold; from Tenerife they sailed the better part of November for the coast of America and arrived in January 1782 off the coast of South Carolina Charleston being then in possession of the British forces. That in the course of said cruise they one night fell in with a British fleet of Transports, under convoy of a sloop of war or two, but through mismanagement or wrong calculation, suffered them to get, before daylight, between the Frigate & the Land, & before she could then overtake them, they crossed Charleston Bar & so escaped.

That the Stores & provisions of the Frigate being nearly exhausted, they next shaped their course for the Havana for a fresh supply, & give the ship some very necessary repairs and on their passage to that Port they fell in with and captured 5 large British Jamaica men laden with sugar coffee rum &c &c which were carried, in company with the Frigate, into the Havana and they are sold by the Commodore for \$100,000 or upwards, as this applicant understood & he there received as his share of prize money about \$500, & in 1808 or 9 on the Certificate of Herman LeRoy Esquire he received from Charleston between 2 and three hundred Dollars more on the same account. That they arrived at the Havana sometime in the month of February 1782, where the Frigate was long detained having to go through a pretty thorough repair, to be hove down & caulk'd &c not then being coppered, and in the month of May as this applicant believes he obtained his discharge for the purpose of returning to his native country after so long an absence from it.

That by the Books of the said Frigate which this applicant afterwards saw at Charleston in the year 1791 he thinks & believes that he was attached to her in the capacity of Midshipman, as above stated, for the space of 14 or 15 months, but cannot positively state as he has no

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<sup>4</sup> [Nicholas Bartlett S33986](#)

<sup>5</sup> This MAY be the same man whose widow filed for a pension FPA W79. The widow in her application indicates that her husband was an officer in the US Navy during the Revolution, but gives no details as to the ships on which he served.

<sup>6</sup> [John Mayrant S32390](#)

<sup>7</sup> A privateer was an armed ship licensed in time of war by one country to capture shipping belonging to the licensing country's enemy. The license issued to these mercenary ships was called a letter of marque. The reward for acting under a letter of marque was that captured shipping became a prize, the ship and its cargo being sold and the proceeds distributed to the owners of the privateer and its crew.

<sup>8</sup> The largest of the Canary Islands in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Africa.

documentary evidence in his possession or within his reach to which he can refer.

And he further declares that he has lately caused inquiries to be made at Charleston aforesaid with the view of obtaining such documentary evidence as might be useful in substantiating the account of his services as herein before related, but has been informed in reply, that all such evidence relating to said Frigate and her employment during the period of his service on board of her, has been either lost or accidentally mislaid.

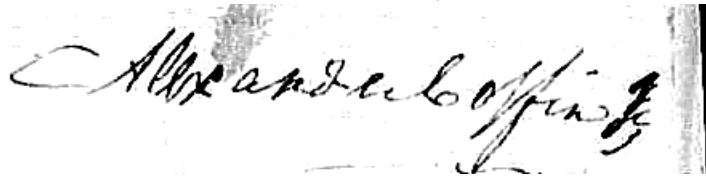
And in confirmation of the statements in this declaration contained this applicant refers to an affidavit of Herman LeRoy Esquire who was a passenger from Holland on board the said Frigate during the time he continued attached to her & who also left her at the Havana & who is acquainted with the nature of his services and the employment of the said Frigate during the period of the same, which said affidavit is to this declaration annexed.

And this applicant further states that since the revolutionary war he has resided in the States of Massachusetts and New York, and now resides in New York City.

And this applicant begs leave to state the names of His Excellency Martin Van Buren vice President of the United States, the Honorable Gulian C. Verplanck, C. C. Cambreleng, Campbell P. White, members of Congress from the State of New York, the Honorable Nathaniel Silsbee, US Sen. from Massachusetts, Col. John Trumbull and Herman LeRoy, Esqr. of the City of New York, to whom he has been long known in the City & State of New York & elsewhere and who can testify to his character for veracity and their belief of his services as herein before stated.

And this Applicant hereby relinquishes every claim whatever to a pension or annuity except the present and declares that his name is not on the Pension The of the Agency of any State.

S/ Alexander Coffin, Jr.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Alexander Coffin, Jr.", written in dark ink on a light-colored background. The signature is positioned above a vertical line.

Sworn to and subscribed the day and year first aforesaid

S/ Abm. Asten, Clk

I Gideon Lee, Mayor of New York City, do hereby certify, that I am well acquainted with Alexander Coffin, Jun<sup>r</sup> who has subscribed & sworn to the above declaration and believe him to be 68 years of age or more that he is reputed & believed in the neighborhood where he resides to have been engaged in the naval service of the United States during the revolution and I concur and that opinion.

S/ Gideon Lee

[pp 57-59: Contains an undated, unsigned draft of the veteran's pension application.]

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City and County of New York: Herman LeRoy of said City aged seventy-five years being duly sworn doth depose and say that he is well acquainted with Alexander Coffin Junior who has subscribed and sworn to the preceding declaration and believes him to be 68 years of age and that this deponent knew the said applicant whilst he was acting as a Midshipman on board the *South Carolina* Frigate in the years 1781 and 1782 as is stated in said applicant's declaration and this deponent further says that he was a passenger on board said frigate from Holland until he arrived at the Havana in the year 1782 and that the said applicant was then actively engaged on board the said frigate as such Midshipman and this deponent further states that he has heard the

above declaration read and to the best of his deponent's knowledge and recollection he believes the statements made by the said applicant to be true and that the said applicant is a man of good character and his statements are entitled to credit and further this deponent saith not.

Sworn and subscribed in open Court the day and year aforesaid.

S/ Abm. Asten, Clk.

S/ Herman LeRoy

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City and County of New York: John Trumbull of said City aged 77 years being duly sworn doth depose and say that he is well acquainted with Alexander Coffin Junior who has subscribed and sworn to the preceding declaration that he knew him as a Midshipman on board the *South Carolina* Frigate in the year 1781 while this deponent was a passenger from Holland to Corunna in Spain in said Frigate and that from his knowledge of the said applicant he believes him to have served as he states in the preceding declaration and that his statements are entitled to credit and further this deponent saith not.

Sworn & subscribed in open Court the day and year aforesaid

S/ Abm Asten, Clk

S/ John Trumbull

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State of Illinois County of Sangamon

Mary Coffin of Springfield, Sangamon County State of Illinois makes oath and says that she is the widow of Alexander Coffin Junior deceased, who was a pensioner of the United States -- received his pension in the City of New York, that the said Alexander Coffin Junior died at the City of New York on or about the first day of February A.D. 1836.

She further states that she was married to the said Alexander Coffin Junior in Hudson, Columbia County New York on the 10th day of May in the year 1816 by one Ezra Sampson a Minister of the Presbyterian Church and that her name before her said marriage was Mary Gelston and that there are two children of the said Alexander Coffin Junior by petitioner now living, whose names are as follows: Mary A. Pease, wife of E. B. Pease & Caroline J. Coffin—of children by his former marriage, Sarah Taylor, Haniel D. Coffin and Marion Craig only surviving children of the said Alexander Coffin Junior deceased, and that her husband received a pension up to the time of his death, and for all about 4 years previously.

She further more by these presents constitutes and appoints irrevocably F. E. Hassler, of Washington, DC, her true and lawful attorney to prosecute and demand from the United States government any pension or money or land that she may have right to -- hereby confirming her said upturn these lawful acts in the premises.

S/ Mary Coffin, Seal

The image shows a handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Mary Coffin". To the right of the signature is a circular seal impression, which appears to be a notary seal, though the text within it is mostly illegible due to the quality of the scan.

Subscribed, acknowledged, and sworn to and before me, this 19th day of May A.D. 1853 and I further certify that I am not interested in this claim.

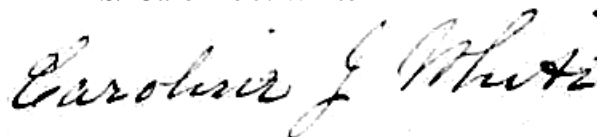
S/ Thomas Moffett, Judge of the County Court of Sangamon County, Illinois

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City, County and State of New York

Caroline J. White, being duly sworn, says that she is 52 years of age, that she is the wife of Dr. J. P. White and resides at No. 99 East Seventeenth Street in the City of New York; and that she was well acquainted with the late Capt. Alexander Coffin Junior in his lifetime; and that she was present at, and witness to, the marriage of the said Capt. Alexander Coffin Junior, and Mrs. Mary Gelston, in the City of Hudson, which took place as deponent thinks, in the year 1816 the marriage ceremony was performed by the Rev. Ezra Sampson -- and deponent further says that she was well acquainted with the said Mrs. Mary Gelston, now Mrs. Mary Coffin, before her said Marriage, and since, down to the present time; and that the said Mrs. Mary Coffin, the widow of the said Capt. Alexander Coffin Junior, is now living with her son-in-law Mr. Edward B. Pease in the City of Springfield, Illinois; and that deponent is not in any way, interested in this claim of Mrs. Mary Coffin for a pension.

S/ Caroline J. White



Subscribed and sworn to before me this 25th day of June 1855 and I further certify that Caroline J. White, the deponent, is a credible witness.

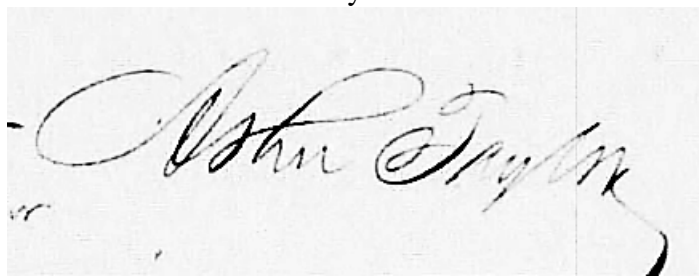
S/ Wm Currie, Commissioner

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City, County and State of New York

Asher Taylor, being duly Sworn, says that he is Secretary of the Market Fire Insurance Company of the City of New York, and resides at No. 186 West 32nd Street in said City, and is 54 years of age; and that he was well acquainted with the late Capt. Alexander Coffin Junior, in his lifetime; and with his wife Mrs. Mary Coffin -- that said acquaintance Commenced about the year 1819, in the said Capt. Alexander Coffin and Mary his wife were living together in the City of New York -- and this deponent further says that the said Capt. Alexander Coffin Junior died in the City of New York, in the year 1836, in the month of February as deponent thinks -- that deponent saw him the said Alexander, daily, during his last illness, and saw his coffin in the evening of the day on which he died, and attended his funeral, that said Alexander Coffin Junior, was, at the time of his death, as deponent understood and believes, an inspector of Customs in the New York Customs House; and the fact of his death and the exact date thereof, can probably, as deponent is informed, be proved by returns and vouchers of the Collector of the Court of New York, which should be on file in the Treasury Department at Washington -- and this deponent further says that he is not in any way interested in this Claim of the aforesaid Mrs. Mary Coffin for a pension.

S/ Asher Taylor



Subscribed and sworn to before me this 26th day of June 1855 and I further certify that Asher

Taylor the deponent is a Credible Witness  
S/ Thomas S. Hoffman, Commissioner of Deeds

[The veteran was placed on the federal pension roll at the rate of \$84 per annum payable at the New York City Agency commencing March 4, 1831. His widow was pensioned at the rate of \$90 per annum.]