Pension Application of George Key W10162
Transcribed and annotated by C. Leon Harris

State of Missouri }  
County of Callaway }  
& Callaway Circuit Court }  Sct.

On this fifth day of June 1833 personally appeared before the Honorable David Todd, Judge of the circuit court of Callaway County aforesaid George Key a resident of said county of Callaway and State of Missouri aforesaid aged eighty 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 provisions made by the act of Congress passed June 7th 1832. That he entered the army of the United States in the year seventeen hundred and seventy six with Captain Samuel Jourdan Cabell [Samuel Jordan Cabell] and served in the sixth Virginia Regiment of Regulars of the continental line, in my first two years of enlistment under said Samuel Jourdan Cabell Alexander Rose 1st Lieutenant & Benjamin Toliver 2nd Lieutenant in s'd. regiment under the command of Colonel Stephens. I resided in Buckingham Amherst County Virginia when I was first enlisted in said company. We commenced our march from Amherst to old Williamsburg, which was our head quarters after remaining at Williamsburgh for some time we marched to Gwynns Island to oppose Lord Dunmore the former Governor of Virginia [Gwynn Island, Dunmore’s base May – July 1776], and after remaining about a month we returned to Williamsburgh where we remained until fall, we then started to go to cross creek [present Fayetteville] North Carolina, where it was supposed the British were, we got as far as Jamestown, & crossed our baggage over the river when we were countermanded to Williamsburgh where we remained until about the 10th of October, when we were ordered to the Jerseys to join General Washington, we marched through Maryland & Pensylvania into Jersey & to Burlington [Burlington] after marching about & [illegible word] we were ordered to make our escape from the British, where we retreated through the Jerseys over the Delaware river into Pennsylvania, where we remained until Christmas day when we recrossed the Delaware into the Jerseys marching towards Trenton, we marched most of Christmas night suffering much, but were told we were going for new clothes, we reached Trenton between daylight & sun up, & commenced the attack upon the Hessians, & after their surrender on the same evening started back to the former camping ground & reached the Delaware river on the same evening, which we crossed next morning, when we discovered two men had froze to death that night, some short time after this affair we recrossed the Delaware river into the Jerseys, & by a stolen march in the night we reached Princeton [3 Jan 1777], & there defeated a small body of the British army. We remained until in the latter part of spring when I had a three months spell of illness when I was again fit for duty. After this sometime I think in the month of September we were attached to [Col. Daniel] Morgan’s rifle regiment, & was marched beyond Albany to oppose Burgoynes army at still water [Stillwater]. There a party of Morgan’s troops were out scouting, & were attacked by the British, the British killed one man at the first fire, & the party retreated. Morgan rallied his men & was joined by General [Horatio] Gates. An attack was brought on between the two armies about 12 o’clock, & the action continued until night parted them. The British kept the ground, & we retired to our old encampment about 2 miles off. Here we lay for some days & Morgans men went out of the encampment in the afternoon & were met by the British a fight ensued between the two armies, & we beat the brittish back to their temporary encampment or fort. Here the British spiked a part of their cannon, threw some into the river, & endeavoured to retreat to Saratoga to cross the river by night. But when they reached the river they found a part of our army on the other bank ready to oppose their crossing, here there was some slight skirmishing, but the British finding themselves enclosed between the two parts of the army surrendered [formal surrender on 17 Oct 1777]. We then returned to
Pennsylvania six miles above Philadelphia to Germantown, where we staid a few days & passed over the Jersey side & went to Hattenfield where we whipped a small part of the yaugers [sic: Jaegers: German riflemen] & that night returned about one or two miles & next morning returned to the battle ground but was driven off by the shipping, we then returned to Germantown. We beat about here for some time watching the British in Philadelphia, who declined giving us battle, & Morgan marched us some distance off to a private house where we remained until our time expired having served two years being discharged by Col. [Richard] Butler under Morgan. I returned home to Amherst County staid a short time & sent to Bedford county where I remained about until I again joined the army under Captain John Rogers of the Light Infantry in November 1779. From Bedford County we took up our march for Fort Pitt at Pittsburgh but for want of shoes and clothing a part was compelled to stop on the way, & I together with such a could travel proceeded to Pittsburgh, here we remained until the breaking up of the ice in the spring of 1780 when we embarked in two small boats & proceeded to what was called the Illenois [sic: Illinois] settlement, which we reached about corn planting time, while remaining here we were informed in strawbury time that a party of indians about 400 strong on the other side of the Mississippi had killed about fifty persons in what was called the strawbury patch. We crossed the river & pursued the indians who then crossed the Illenois side & remained there abouts for three days, & then on the arrival of Colonel George R. Clark [George Rogers Clark] with two brass Cannon made their escape. In the month of June we returned this visit of the Indians going as the french said about one hundred leagues by water & about one hundred miles by land to their villages at Rock river. The Indians had fled, we burnt fourteen houses & destroyed a considerable quantity of young growing corn, when we started back to the settlement & being out of provisions we were compelled to kill a horse for subsistance about two pounds of which came to my share, which I then thought was pretty good eating. When on our way back we reached a small french village, where we procured some corn which we boiled in ashes until the husks slipped off on which with one small deer we lived until we reached the Illenois settlement. Here we continued until 1781 in February when embarked for the falls of Ohio [at present Louisville KY] where we continued until my two years were out when I was discharged by Lieutenant Colonel [John] Montgomery under Colonel George R. Clark having served in all four years as a private throughout. On this last tour of two years I joined the light infantry in November 1779 und Captain Jno. Rogers in Bedford County Virginia. I further state I have no written discharge, or written record of my age nor do I know of any in being. Nor do I know of person living who knew me as a revolutionary soldier, I being now in my eighty first year of age.

“I hereby relinquish every claim whatever to a pension or an annuity, except the present, & declare that my name is not on any pension roll of any agency in any state.” [signed] George Key

NOTE: On 16 April 1840 Susanah Key, 74, applied for a pension stating that she married George Key on 12 Oct 1785, and he died 15 Jan 1836. In summarizing his services, she added to the list of his engagements the capture of Cornwallis at Yorktown on 19 Oct 1781. The file includes a copy of a permission signed on 22 Aug 1785 by John Craighead of Bedford County for his daughter, Sucky, to be issued a license to marry George Key, witnessed by William Candler and John Key. There is also a copy of a bond signed on the same day by George Key and Robert Cowan for the marriage of Key to Sucky Craighead. Robert Craighead, brother of Susanah Key, stated that he was not present at the marriage because “they had to go fifteen miles to church with the view of get married and returned immediately to my Fathers,” and that they were married by Rev. Mr. Salisberry in Bedford County, and that George and Susanah Key and their family moved from Virginia to Callaway County in 1831. The date of George Key’s death was certified by Walter Kemp, Robert Craighead, and Martin Key.