

Pension Application for Alexander Gillis

R.4038

State of New York

Washington County SS

On this 16th day of September A.D. 1833 personally appeared before me one of the Judges of the Court of Washington County Common Pleas in and for said County Alexander Gillis a resident of the town of Argyle in the County of Washington and State of New York aged seventy nine years on the seventeenth day of December last past 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 7th 1832.

That he entered the service of the United States under the following named officers and served as herein stated.

That when he lived in the town of Argyle County of Washington and State of New York and in the Month of June A.D. 1777. The Committee of Safety (1) who had been appointed by the inhabitants of the town of Argyle aforesaid called on him this declarant to know whether he would accept of [sic] a Commission (2) to command a company of rangers so called at the time he accordingly volunteered and accepted. They thereupon gave him a written Commission Signed by the said Committee and he was sent out with his company as Scouting party and he went through the woods on to the frontiers to make discoveries of the State and condition of the enemy and make reports to the Said Committee or the nearest Military posts. That he was on his way at Whitehall then Skeenesborough, Lake George and during this campaign was to several places that he was continued in the Service until in the month of December when he reported himself and Company to the said Committee of Safety and they permitted him to retire during the Winter Season he further saith he Served and performed his duty faithfully six months as Captain of said Company.

This declarant further saith that his company at first consisted of Sixteen and no other officer that at the time of Bennington battle (3) he was on the out posts and also at the Battle of Still water (4) [Stillwater] he with his company was in the woods as a guard and a scout and was not imbodyed [embodied] with other Troops.

This declarant further Saith that while he lived in Argyle aforesaid and in the month of May he thinks in A.D. 1778 he was called into the service under his said commission and took the command of a company and was sent out as above and he marched through the woods and down Lake Champlain to Bullwaggers bay below Chimney [Point] and Crown Point and shifted from one place to another encamping in the woods during the night time and was continued in this campaign untill in the Month of October when he reported himself and men to the said Committee who discharged him for the winter season and he & men retired. That he served and performed the duties of a Captain five months at least.

This declarant further saith there were no others with him but his company and that the committee of Safety who gave him his commission were John Williams, (5) Alexander Webster (6) Wm. Todden, Wm. Taylor and James Beaty who have since departed this life. That he kept his said commission until the close of the war and long since he has lost it.

That while he lived in Argyle aforesaid and he thinks in the month of April A.D. 1779 he again volunteered and entered the Service having again the Command of a Company of Men— That Previously according to the best of his recollection, Gov. Chittenden (7) of the State of Vermont Sent him a commission to take the command of a company of Rangers solely for the purpose of patrolling and scouting in the woods and he accordingly took the command and marched his Men through the woods to Leysten Pond in Vermont and scouted about and around said pond and also on & about Tutis Creek and Lake Champlain on the Vermont side

encamping in the woods through the nights and he was continued in said service until in the Month of October when he was ordered to retire for winter quarter. That he served as a Captain during this campaign Six Months.

This declarant saith that in same years the Indians and Tories left and returned to Canada except those who lived in these parts as soon as October and some years he remained longer and when they retired his services were not to much needed, his main business was to protect the inhabitants and more particularly if he discovered a party of the enemy coming into the Interior to report the same which he was careful to purpose and did so frequently and often as it happened his reports were to the nearest Military Post by sending one of his men &c.

That while he lived in Argyle aforesaid and in the Month of May AD 1780 he again Volunteered under his Said Commissions being called upon by the Authority of Government and collected a Company or party and Marched through in the woods to Lake George Lake Champlain and as heretofore stated and was also sent to several other places sometimes by the officers commanding at Fort Edward and at Fort George thinks Col. Warner (8) Commanded the Forts and he was continued in the Service in this campaign until in November and was discharged for and during the winter that he served as a Captain commanding a company Six Months.

This declarant further says he sometimes drew his rations and a part of the time they lived on game they found in the woods taken care to take hard biskets with them that his services were very important to the safety of the inhabitants and to the success of our arms as the country was new and a good part of the people were Tories.

That while he lived in Argyle aforesaid and in the month of May A.D. 1781 he was [Colsant?] and he volunteered under his said Commissions and took the command of a company and scouted through the wood to Cambridge and from Fort Edward East North—West and South in several places does not remember the terms or number of times that he continued with his company in the service until in October when he was again discharged by the Commanding officer of the Fort at Fort Edward that he served as a captain in this campaign five Months.

This declarant says he was generally out having no Col. or Other officers but under the officers commanding military posts was sent to keep a look out.

That when he lived in Argyle aforesaid and in the month of June AD 1782 he again was called upon and he volunteered and entered the service under his commissions and took the command of a Company or party and marched to his several places of distanations [destinations] as directed by Officers Commanding at Fort Edward as heretofore directed and was continued in his command with his company untill in November when his services was not needed and he was discharged. That he served in this Campaign six months as Captain Commanding a Company.

This declarant further saith he was bound to the service as a company of rangers under the orders of Government that he does not know as one of the men under him is not living that he frequently see New York State Troops and other troops and Militia and had very frequently reported the officers commanding both Cols and Gen's but he by reason of old age and consequent loss of memory cannot remember their names—and further the Captain's Commission he received from the Gov. of Vermont he has lost—but he did believe his commission was among his old papers but by searching carefully it cannot be found.

That he has no documentary evidence and that he knows of no persons whose testimony he can procure who can testify to his service except Nancy Gilcrist, David McDungall, Alexander McNael, Nathan Durkee whose affidavits are hereunto annexed & that

he cannot from bodily infirmity attend any court of Record without materially injuring his health.

He hereby relinquishes every claim whatever to a pension or annuity except the present and declares that his name is not on the pension roll of the agency of any state.

1st That he was born in the town of [Cokeact?] then called County of Orange now Rockland in state of New York in the year of 1753 in December.

2. That there is no record of his age to his knowledge.

3. That when he volunteered into the service he lived in the town of Argyle that since the revolutionary war he has lived in the town of Argyle where he now lives and has lived for more than 67 years.

4. That he volunteered into the service when he was called upon.

5. That the names of Regular Officers other than he has stated he cannot remember neither can he recollect the names of Continental or Militia Reg., that he cannot give a more general circumstances of his service there is in the body of his declaration.

6. That he never received a written discharge. That he received a Captains commission from the Committee of Safety for the said tours signed by John Williams- Alexander Webster—Todden—Taylor and James Beaty also he received a Captains commission signed by Gov. Chittenden of the State of Vermont—and that he has lost it and does not know where it is Must be destroyed.

That he is known in his present neighborhood to Ransom Stiles, George Mairs, Joseph Rouse, Samuel Hubbard, James Tennsept and many others who can testify as to his character for veracity and their belief of his services as a Soldier of the Revolution. (Signed) Alexander Gillis.

Sworn to and subscribed the day and year aforesaid before me. John Moss, a Judge of [blank]

The claim was denied, and so Alexander appealed to the Congress, Washington D.C.

25th Congress, 3d Session Rep[blot] 249 Ho. of Reps.

ALEXANDER GILLIS.

{To accompany bill H.R. No. 1120.}

February 6, 1839.

Mr. Bond, from the Committee on Revolutionary Pensions, made the following REPORT:
The Committee on Revolutionary Pensions, to which was referred the petition of Alexander Gillis, report:

The committee find a favorable report on file in this case; but the bill not having been acted on, they have re-examined the petition and evidence, and now adopt the former report, and submit a bill accordingly.

June 23, 1836.

The committee on Revolutionary Pensions, to which was referred the petition of Alexander Gillis, report:

The petitioner, Alexander Gillis, of the town of Argyle, county of Washington and State of New York, sets forth in his petition, which is verified by his own affidavit, and duly authenticated in the usual form, that he was seventy-nine years old on the 17th day of December, 1833, and served in the army of the United States during the revolutionary war. That in June, 1777, he resided in the town of Argyle before mentioned, and was commissioned

to command a company of rangers by the committee of safety of said town. That he received a written commission from the said committee of safety. That he took charge of his company, and continued out during the whole campaign in the service of the United States, until the month of December, when he reported himself and company to the Committee of Safety, and was permitted to retire during the winter. That he faithfully served, at this time, six months. That at the battle of Bennington petitioner was on the outposts, as well as at the battle of Stillwater, with his company, as a scouting party. In the month of May, 1778, he was again called into service, under the said commission, and took the command of his company. That he was ordered and marched down lake Champlain, and shifted from one place to another, as the service required, until the month of October in the same year, when he again reported himself and company to the said committee of safety, and was again discharged for the winter season. That he served, at this time at least five months.

Thomas Allen, Print.

Rep. [blot] 249.

The petitioner further states, that the names of the committee of public safety who signed the commission held by him were, John Williams, Alexander Webster, Mr. Todden, Mr. Taylor, and James Beatty, who are all dead; and his commission, which he kept until some time after the close of the war, he has since lost.

That in April, 1779, he again entered the service of his company of rangers, under a commission from governor Chittenden, of the State of Vermont, and was out upon the scout in the vicinity of lake Champlain until the month of October of the same year. The amount of service performed at this time was six months.

The petitioner again, in 1780, entered the service, having been called upon by the authority of the Government, under his said commission, and marched through the woods to lake George and lake Champlain, and was sent to several other places by the commanding officers at Forts Edward and George. He thinks Colonel Warren commanded at this time. That he continued in such service until November in the same year, when he was again discharged. That he served at this time six months.

That in 1781 he was again called out, and served in the same capacity as before stated, five months.

That in 1782, he was again called out, and served under his commission as aforesaid, six months.

The proof of the petitioner's service is fully detailed in the affidavits of Nancy Gilchrist, Daniel McDougal, Alexander McNeal, Nathan Durkee, Simon Moss, Lydia Durkee, and Solomon Emmons.

The committee, under all the circumstances, are satisfied that the petitioner is entitled to a pension, but do not think that the character of the proof is sufficient to warrant them in recommending a full pension to him as a captain, in which capacity he claims to have served. The proof, however, in the opinion of the committee, entitles him to a full pension as a private; (9) and they have reported a bill for this purpose.

Mr. Bond, from the committee on Revolutionary Pensions, reported the following bill:

A Bill

Granting pension to Alexander Gillis.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representative of the United States of America in congress assembled, That the Secretary of War be, and he is hereby, directed to place the name of Alexander Gillis, of the county of Washington, in the State of New York, on the list of

revolutionary pensioners of the United States, at rate of eighty dollars per annum; to commence on the fourth day of March, eighteen hundred and thirty-one, and to continue during his natural life.

End Notes—R.4038—Alexander Gillis

1. The Charlotte County Committee of Safety Charlotte County was changed to Washington County in 1784.
2. So far no record of this appointment has been found. It is possible that the Committee of Safety paid for this Ranger Company out of their own funds. There is no mention of this appointment in the Proceedings of the Provincial Congress, Committee of Safety And Convention of New York Relating to Military Matters; in Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York, ed. Berthold Fernow, Vol. XV, State Archives, Vol. I, Weed, Parsons and Company, Printers, Albany, N.Y., 1887.
3. The Battle of Bennington was fought on August 16, 1777.
4. There were two major battles at Saratoga; they were on September 19, 1777 and October 7, 1777. Lieutenant General John Burgoyne surrendered his British forces on October 17, 1777.
5. Dr. John Williams was also the Colonel of the First Regiment of Charlotte County Militia.
6. Alexander Webster was the Lieutenant-Colonel under Colonel Williams. On June 25, 1778, Colonel Williams was dismissed from the service for defrauding the Continental Pay Office for false pay-rolls. Webster became commander of the regiment and was commissioned colonel on March 4, 1780.
7. Governor Thomas Chittenden.
8. Colonel Seth Warner commanded an Additional Continental Regiment. It was never numbered and was considered part of the New York Line. Colonel Warner's Regiment garrisoned the forts from Fort George to Fort Edward. Sometimes the Albany County Militia would be sent to reinforce Warner's Regiment in garrisoning these forts. In 1780, several companies of New York State Levies were also stationed at Fort Edward. Oddly enough, Alexander does not mention the raid lead by Major Christopher Carleton in October of 1780. Fort George and Ann were captured or surrendered, and killed and captured over 100 men besides laying waste to the countryside. This was exactly what his company was trying to prevent.
9. In an abstract of certificates delivered for Alexander Gilles and Colonel Webster's Regiment there was one certificate for his service as a private. Certificate No. 9491 for £0. . 14. . 2. FROM: Revolutionary War Rolls 1775-1783, Series M-246, Roll 77, folder 168 (Webster's Regt) and folder 174 (Williams' Regt.), National Archives, Washington, D.C. Alexander's name does not appear on any particular company muster roll for this regiment which so far very few are known or that have been located. The Argyle District Company was originally commanded by Captain Alexander Campbell. Campbell was then promoted to lieutenant-colonel of the regiment and then deserted to the enemy. Webster who had originally been appointed the second major of the regiment was promoted to lieutenant-colonel in place of Campbell. Edward Long was appointed Captain of the Argyle Company and was commissioned on April 4, 1778 as captain. This is probably the company that Gillis served in as a private. In Their Own Voices: Oral Accounts of Early Settlers In Washington County, New York, collected by Dr. Asa Fitch ed. By Winston Adler, Heart of the Lakes Publishing, Interlaken, New York, 1893, p. 54; Alexander is mentioned along with John and Archibald Gillis attending the burial of the John Allen Family. The Allen family lived in Argyle and were killed by Indians on

July 25, 1777. This is an excellent source for incidents in Charlotte County now known as Washington County.