

Pension Application for Bernard Romans

R.8974 (Widow: Elizabeth) Married January 1779.

State of New York

City and County of New York SS.

On this fifth day of October A.D. 1845, personally appeared before me, Charles J. Dodge [????] and Judge of the Court of Common Pleas Mrs. Elizabeth Romans, and resident of the City, County, and State aforesaid who being first duly sworn according to law, doth on oath depose and say, that she is now eighty six years of age, past, and is the widow of Captain Bernard Romans deceased who was an officer in the Engineer Department in the revolutionary War, and attached to the American Army.

And she further saith, that she was married to the said Bernard Romans in the month of January 1779, and she now makes the following Declaration in order to obtain her pension under the Act of Congress passed A.D. 1832, having retrospective effect to 1831, which law grants pensions to the widows of Revolutionary soldiers and officers who were married prior to the expiration of the last term of service of their respective husbands.

And she further saith, that she believes that her said husband engaged in the American service in the defence of the liberties of the United States at a great personal sacrifice, being at that time a pensioner under the crown of Great Britain, for extraordinary services rendered that government. And also was at that time a salaried surveyor in her then Colonial Provinces, and further proof of the facts herein set forth she respectfully refers to the writings and books published by her said husband at or about the time of the American Revolution, and also to other historical works of that day.

And she further saith, that her said husband, as she was informed and believes, engaged first as captain or chief in command of a company or corps of engineers formed in the State of New York in the early part of the year 1775, as by the records of that day will more fully appear, and that he planned, laid out, and superintended the structure of some of the fortifications in the State of New York at that time.

And was also sent on a northern expedition, but how long he was on that expedition she does not know, but believes, he was subsequently ordered westward to Philadelphia in the State of Pennsylvania, and other of the Southern and frontier States, and was under the immediately command and direction of the commander in Chief of the American Forces, and of the authority of the Provincial Congress, as by reference to the records of that day will more fully appear.

And he so continued in the line of his duty as an officer until 1780, about eighteen months after the marriage of said Romans to this deponent, according to her first recollection, when he was ordered to go to the State of South Carolina, there to join the Southern Army, and shortly thereafter he sailed from New Haven or New London, in the State of Connecticut, for the place of is destination, and who, together with the vessel and crew with which he embarked, were shortly thereafter, while on their passage, captured by the British, and her said husband was carried a prisoner of

war to Montego Bay, Island of Jamaica, where he was held in captivity until the close of the year in 1783.

The British authorities, in the mean time, were applied to deliver him up by exchange for their own men then held as prisoners of war by this government, which exchange they refused to make, on account of his the said Romans ability to do so much injury to the British interests. And she further saith, that her said husband, as she was informed and believes, was shipped by the British authorities under the pretext of sending him thence to some part in the United States, and he was said to have died on his passage, though from circumstances attending his demise his friends had good reason to believe him to have been willfully murdered.

And she now claims the seven years half pay which she was then entitled to, according to the provisions of the law made for the benefit of the widows and orphans of revolutionary soldiers and officers who died in the service at that time, the benefits of which law she has never before claimed or received. And she now asserts her claim for her pension, being the amount paid her said husband per annum, and officers of his grade, and also for the half pay as aforesaid, to which she believes and is advised she is entitled.

And she does hereby empower, constitute, and appoint Wm. K. Hoyt, of New York, as her lawful Attorney, and Agency, to act in her name, place, and stead, in asserting and sustaining her claims according to law, ;with full powers of substitution or revocation, and to do every act of thing that he may conceive to be lawful and expedient to do on her behalf, in or appertaining to the claims herein asserted.
(Signed) Elizabeth Romans

Sworn to and subscribed on the day and year first above written. Charles J. Dodge, Alderman and Pleas Judge of County Court. January 15, 1846, James Conner, Clerk

Printed article, looks to be from a book.

Bernard Romans (1) was born in Holland, and qualified himself for the Profession of an Engineer. He was employed as such by the British Government some Time before the Revolution in the British-American Provinces; although the first Notice that we find of him is in a Manuscript in Harvard Library, written by John Girard Williams deBahm, where he is mentioned as a Resident of Florida, from 1763 to 1771, as a Draughtsman. (Fairbanks' *St. Augustine*, 165.) Yet it appears that, previous to his Employment in the Capacity of Engineer for the Construction of Defences in the Highlands, he was in the Enjoyment of a Pension from the British Crown, of about £ Sterling per Year, as Botanist in Florida. From a Paper on the Mariner's Compass, which he communicated to the American Philosophical Society (of which he was a Member, elected in 1771) we learn that he was still at St. Augustine in 1773. (Trans. II, 396). In 1775 he published in New York the first Volume of Natural History of Florida, the second Volume, although announced us *in prefs*, we do not find to have been issued. He also published the same Year, a Map of the Seat of Civil War In America. Whilst at the North he became imbued with the revolutionary Spirit, and

seems to have enjoyed the Friendship and confidence of Washington to an intimate Degree. It is supposed to have been at his suggestion that the New York Committee of Safety engaged his Services as Engineer, at \$50 per Month. He entered upon the Duties of that Office on the 29th August 1775, with the Encouragement of a Commission in the Continental Service. On the 18th of September he submitted his Plans and Estimates of the expenses of erecting the proposed Fortifications (4 Force's *Am Archives*, III, 732-36), and offered to contract for the Completion of the same at \$5,000, the Ordinance only excepted. The Committee, however, decided to employ him at a Salary equal to, the Pay of a Colonel in the Continental Army. On the 12th of October he applied to Congress for a Commission, with the Rank of Colonel. While his Application was pending the Commissioners became dissatisfied with his Proceedings, and the Matter was taken before the Continental Congress, for their Decision. The Controversy resulted in the Discomfiture of Mr. Romans, and Col. Smith was appointed to fill his Place. The Correspondence between him and the committee is given in the *Journals of Provincial Congress*, II, pp. 102-6. On the 8th February, 1776, he was commissioned Captain of a Company of Pennsylvania Artillery, (1) destined for the Invasion of Canada as a Part of the Northern Army. On the 18th of March he applied to the New Committee of Safety for Pay up to the Date of his new Commission, stating that the Time had expired in which he was to have appeared at the Head of his company, which want of Money prevented. The next we hear of him, he was sent back from Canada to Albany to be tried, in May, 1776, (*Am. Archives*, VI, 413), for Misconduct, "a String of Complaints" having been lodged against him; and on the 27th July following he was again tarried for some Difficulty with his Lieutenant. The Result of these Trials does not appear, but it is inferred that he was honourably acquitted; for early in November he was deputed by Gen. Gates to inspect the Works at Fort Anne and Skenesborough, the Condition of which he reported very intelligently; and in the same Month, the Pennsylvania Council of safety directed that he should be furnished with such Materials as he might require to perform an experiment, in order to give a Specimen of his Skill in destroying distant Objects by Fire. (5 *Am. Archives*, III.) Unfortunately we do not find the Result of this Experiment. Some Time during the Year 1776 he was introduced by Washington to Elizabeth Whiting of Wethersfield, Ct., whom he married 28th Jan. 1779. (*Records of Pension Office*.) A Miniature of her, beautifully executed by Romans, is still preserved. She died 12th May 1848, aged 89. A short Time before her Death she made Application for a Pension, which was rejected on the ground that the Service performed by Bernard Romans, however meritorious, was not Military, and therefore not provided for by the Pension Laws. Soon after his Marriage he was taken Prisoner by the British, and sent to England, where all Applications for his Release, at each Exchange of Prisoners, were invariably refused. Yet he enjoyed full local Liberty in England, upon his Parole as an American Officer, and pursued the Occupation of an Engineer with much pecuniary Success. After the Close of the War, in 1784, he is supposed to have embarked in England for New York, where his Wife continued to reside; but he never arrived at his destination, and all his Family could ever learn was, that he had been killed or thrown Overboard by some foul Play

of a Portion of the Ship's Crew, for the Sake of the Money he Possessed, while on the Passage. In 1778 he published at Hartford, Ct., the first Volume of his Annals of the Troubles in the Netherlands; and the second Volume was Printed at the same Place in 1782, (1) during his Residence in England. He also published in England, in 1779, A Complete Pilot for the Gulf Passage, a Subject which is treated of in his Work upon Florida. He left a Diary of the principal Portion of his Life, in which he claims to have been the first Surveyor in Florida. As a Mathematician, An Artist, and Author, or as a Publick Man, he seems to have been regarded by all, except the New York Committee of Safety, as a choice Spirit. He left one Son, Bernard Hubertus, born soon after his Father's Capture, who died near Havana of Yellow Fever, leaving on only Son of the same name, who survives, but is laboring under an Afflictive Malady, which bebars him even from the Society of his Family.

For many connecting Facts in this brief Sketch we are indebted to Peter Force, John M. Gardner, and George C. Whitney, Esqs., of Washington, S. Austin Alibone, Esq., of Philadelphia and to Dr. Dolby of New York.

(1) See Title in full in Duyckinek's *Cyc. Am. Lieterature*, 1, 303.

(1) The Names Rank, dates of Commissions and Times of Enlistment of the Officers and Privates of his Company, from Feb 8, to Nov. 28, 1776, when encamped at Ticonderoga, may be found in Saffell's *Records of the Revolution* p. 178

(1) As the Existence of this second Volume is often questioned, the exact title is her given: Annals | of the Troubles | in the |Netherlands |from the | Accession of Charles V | Emperor of Germany | A proper and seasonable mirror for the present Americans | collected and translated from the most approved Historians in the Native tongues | by Bernard Romans | Vol. II | Hartford | Hudson & Godwin. | M.D.CC.LXXXII.

General Schuyler to General Washington.

Albany, Friday, May 10, 1776.

Dear Sir:

I had the honour to receive your Excellency's favour of the 3d instant by Mr. Bennett, which was delivered on Wednesday evening.—General Sullivan arrived here at six that afternoon. Half an hour before that I returned from Fort George having embarked General Thompson with the last of his brigade on the morning of the preceding day. Immediately on the receipt of your Excellency's letter of the 29th, I ordered up an additional number of carpenters, some of whom have already left this place, and others are going off this day, so that I hope on Sunday, land on every succeeding day, to build eight boats; but, as I had not one left when General Thompson was moved and could build no more than six a day, I shall, on Saturday night, have only thirty completed, so that I fear it will be the 21st instant before the last of General Sullivan's brigade will embark, when I expect to have finished one hundred and ten batteaus, carrying thirty men each, besides the baggage, ammunition, and intrenching tools, and about ten barrels of pork if I can get that quantity at Fort George by that time, which I doubt much, as the troops have such an amazing quantity of baggage that they employ every carriage I can procure at this season, when forage is search, and when the licentiousness of some of the troops that

are gone on has been such that few of the inhabitants have escaped abuse, either in their persons or property, and fewer still of the wagoners and batteau men employed in the service many of whom have left us, and the whole threaten to do it unless the future conduct of the troops is more becoming. I have done all in my power to prevent this disgraceful conduct of the army; but Court Martials are vain where officers connive at the depredations of the men. I have ordered Captain Romans to be sent from Canada for trial here, as a string of complaints are lodged against him; and since my return from Fort George, have issued the most pointed orders.

I hope this day to send off the sixty barrels of powder your Excellency ordered here; the intrenching tools have already left this, and about six hundred barrels of pork and the first Regiment of General Sullivan's brigade is marched this morning.

It will be impossible to send more than half of the three hundred thousand dollars into Canada, as we are greatly in debt here, and our creditors exceedingly clamorous; that sum will be fully sufficient in Canada, until the Canadians agree to take our papers currency, which I am very fearful they will not; and if so even the flour and peas for the Army must be sent from hence, if it is possible to convey it there.

I met Colonel Wynkoop on his way to Ticonderoga, and soon after Lieutenant-Colonel Cortlandt, with orders for him to repair to the Highlands; but as, from the arrangement he showed me, I concluded that it would be countermanded, I suffered Colonel Wynkoop to proceed; and in the evening I was happy to see the counter orders. It is absolutely necessary that I should leave two of his companies in Tryon County, and the remaining six (one of which O'Hara's is at New-York will very little exceed three hundred men, one hundred and fifty of which are constantly required upon a road, where a hundred carriages, to set out every day, are to pass; seventy more, in addition to one hundred batteauxmen, are at least wanted to convey the provisions on part of Hudson's River; so that I shall only have about one hundred left to transport the provisions and stores across Lake George, which is not quite a sufficient number, and none for Lake Champlain, the garrisons of Crown-Point, Ticonderoga, the Landing Place and Fort George, and for opening Wood Creek, and cutting a road by that route—a work which out to be executed as soon as possible, but, wishing that as many troops as possible should go into Canada, I will detain the smallest number possible of VanSchaick's Regiment.

The tents are not yet arrived; the distribution shall be made agreeable to your Excellency's orders. The chain is to go on today, which I shall forward to General Arnold, with directions to fix it. I suppose it was intended for the Rapids of Richelieu. Captain Wynkoop and his company of Sailors are at Ticonderoga.

Surrounded with Indians, and under the necessity of giving a variety of directions, as I must return early to-morrow morning to Fort George, I must beg General Gates to Dispense with my answering his letters until my arrival there. I am extremely unhappy that I am not in a situation of complying with your Excellency's orders to make a return of the State of the Army, &c I have repeatedly applied to General Wooster for it, and for the several other returns which I ought to have had. The only one I ever received was the imperfect one I lately sent you from Fort George;

this omission has been the source of much embarrassment to me. I hope soon to comply with your orders on this head, as General Thompson promised to be as regular as possible in these matters.

Mr. Price arrived at Fort George the day before I left it, with a resolution of Congress, the subject matter of which is contained In the enclosed orders I have given to Mr. Price.-- Your Excellency will easily perceive that they are very crude; the necessity of sending him immediately into Canada, and the other pressing concerns which then occupied me, did not permit me time to reflect with that attention so important a business required.

I enclose your Excellency a return of the arms in Mr. Rensselaer's store. A considerable number of General Sullivan's brigade are still to be furnished; most of Wynkoop's regiment and the seven hundred unfit for service, are arms that have been exchanged, and very few are capable of being made useful.

I shall do myself the honour to write you from Fort George where is shall be better able to determine with certainty when the last troops will leave it.

I am, dear sir, with the most respectful sentiments, your Excellency's most obedient and most humble servant, (Signed) Philip Schuyler
His Excellency General Washington, &c.

It appears that Bernard Romans was in the Employment of the Congress as a Civil Engineer for building fortifications in the Highlands during the latter part of the year 1775 and in the beginning of the year 1776. This made him ineligible for a military pension.