

Pension Application for Benjamin Williams

S.31479

State of New York

Niagara County SS

On this twenty seventh day of August in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty two personally appeared in open Court before me Robert Fleming First Judge of the Court of Common Pleas in and for the County and State aforesaid Benjamin Williams a resident of Lewiston in the County of Niagara and State of New York aged seventy two 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 7th 1832.

That he the said Benjamin Williams was born February 10th A.D. 1760 in Elizabeth Town Township County of Essex and State of New Jersey.

That he entered the service of his Country then United Colonies directly after the battle of Lexington in the Spring of 1775 he enrolling himself in a company commanded by Capt. Benjamin Cory belonging to Col. Jaques Regiment of the Essex County militia for the purpose of acquiring a knowledge of military maneuvers and exercise in which they were drilled weekly in anticipation that their service would be required in defence of their country.

That early in the spring of the year 1776 General Washington with the Continental and Militia being actively employed in fortifying the harbor and approaches to the City of New York, it was deemed advisable and prudent to throw up a line of fortification along the New Jersey shore opposite Staten Island (lying in New York bay) for the purpose of commanding the passage called the Sound which was very narrow between Essex County and the Island.

This deponent served that as a Volunteer private he was actively engaged in the erection of these fortifications and doing duty in or near them as guard & after their erection with some part or other of his regiment commanded by his Col. Jacques Majors Daniel Halsey and Hays in his Company commanded by Capt Benjamin Cory Lieuts Thomas Mulford and Cornelius Williams, and continued in the performance of such duty untill General Howe with the British Army landed in the summer on Staten Island which movement of the enemy placing them directly on the lines, required additional [Vigilans?] from the Essex County Militia and as the enemy continued to occupy Staten Island with a considerable force after General Howe had crossed the main body of his army on to Long Island in August, this deponent was assiduous in the discharge of the duties of a guard patrol scout &c under his officers during the whole period from the first landing of the enemy untill the later part of November following during the time of General Washington's retreat from Long Island New York, Harlem, White Plains and finally through New Jersey when the militia with whom this deponent had been service were obliged to abandon their defences along the old lines and retreat farther back into the country, the pursuing enemy occupying the towns and County adjacent to the main road from New York to Trenton.

This deponent returned home a distance of about two miles from Elizabeth Town (his mother being a widow) and here in the capacity of spy and active partisan continued to communicate intelligence to such of the militia of his regiment that continued covering in scattered parties a few miles back of the movement of the enemy and of such different excursions that from time to time they continued to make from their detachments along the Main road, once on Information commanded by him Capt Jonas Wade of Connecticut Farms, with a few militia surprised five British regulars, killed on, took three and one escaped. While New Jersey was thus over-run by the Enemy and great numbers of the Inhabitants were obtaining British protections, he disdained to apply for one.

After the battles of Trenton and Princeton, the militia of the Essex County became more emboldened and in January as he believes 1777 this deponent marched in the militia company of Capt. Jacob Crane of Westfield with other militia companies under the Command of their regimental officers and Col. Elias Dayton of one of the New Jersey Continental regiments, to the attack of the British forts at Elizabeth Town, which after a smart skirmish they succeeded in capturing, taking 72 Hessian Soldiers and 41 Highlanders Prisoners with their stores, arms, and baggage, directly after this he served under the Command of Capt John Craig of Rahway with other militia in guarding and escorting enemies Tories captured in that place or patrolling for the enemy who were in a state of alarm concentrating their forces at New Brunswick.

In the beginning of June General Washington having left his Quarters at Morristown and taken poste at Middlebrook a strong position much nigher the enemy—the British were continually making excursions from New Brunswick, harassing and plundering the Inhabitants of the surrounding Country, one considerable body of them marching through Woodbridge, penetrated to Westfield in Essex County one considerable body of them marching through Woodbridge, penetrated to Westfield in Essex County about twelve miles distant from Middlebrook here they were attached by a body of American Continental troops and the neighbouring militia.

The deponent was actively engaged with the Enemy in this Battle and recollects that Col Elias Daytons regiment of New Jersey regulars were in the action after burning the Meeting house and several private buildings they commenced their retreat that night to New Brunswick. At Station Island, lying in New York bay, stretched along and opposite to that of Middlesex, Essex, and Bergen Counties in the State of New Jersey and was constantly occupied by the British troops from the Commencement to the close of the war, the Patriotic Militia of those counties were detailed by their several Field officers to perform tours of duty of a month at a time during the greater part of that period, among whom was this deponent often on detail from his militia Company or at other times frequent as a Volunteer and always prompt in case of alarm under the command of some one or other of the militia officers of Essex County.

After General Howe left New Brunswick, the Tories and disaffected assembled on Staten Island and became in conjunction with the British regular force stationed

there, very troublesome by the continued inroads and marauding parties they sent out the deponent was actively employed with other militia, often under different militia officers either of his own regiment or of those of the neighbouring counties, in cutting off the communication between the disaffected in the County and the enemy, restraining their plundering parties and capturing provisions intended for their use, one yoke of fat cattle in particular, intended for the Enemy he captured himself from one of the disaffected (although his opponent was armed with pistols) and which were confiscated by the legal authority; his activity and vigilance rendered him so obnoxious to the secret adherents of the Enemy, that he was privately fired at and various opportunities sought by the disaffected and Tories to capture him. These duties whether as guard, partole or in case of alarm, either detached on detail or acting as volunteer this deponent directly avers that he performed more or less from the Spring of 1776 untill the Spring of 1782 as his place of Nativity and residence was continuous to the lines of the enemy.

In the spring of 1778 his company among whom was himself commanded by Capt. Thomas Mulford of the Essex County militia hired substitutes by a general contribution from among the Company and who joined General Washington's Army previous to the battle of Monmouth. He among others remaining on the Lines near Staten Island continued performing different tours of duty more or less during the year and ensuing winter. The Tories and Enemy capturing a considerable number of the Inhabitants of Essex and the adjoining Counties conveyed thence to the Sugar House, provost prison &c in the City of New York to which these depredators required considerable vigilance and activity in the militia in which his deponent largely partook; General Washington was encamped during the Winter at Middlebrook to the best of his remembrance.

In the Spring of 1779 This deponent in a company commanded by Capt. Eliakim Little or Thomas Clark of the Militia he cannot at present say which marched with other in pursuit of the enemy through New Ark, Belleville, and Aquacanoë, where crossing the Passaic River into Bergen County, they had a pretty smart skirmish with the enemy at a place called the Cedars, who were compelled to retire to Hackensack. Shortly after his return, he became a substitute for one William Richardson on a secret militia expedition officers names not recollected except David Thurston who was adjutant, they marched from Morristown to Whippany thence to Paramus toward Bergen County but was taken sick and returned home on furlough—Sometime in the Summer of this year a large body of British regulars and Green coats (who were Tories) crossed from Staten Island to the Elizabeth Town Salt marshes in the night, pressed on to the town where they were met and opposed by a strong militia force under General Wynes, the deponent was in his regiment commanded by Col. Jaques and had a pretty severe skirmish with them when they marched by New Ark crossing the Passaic river in to Bergen County followed and harassed by the militia all the route with considerable loss to the enemy, from Bergen he thinks they recrossed to Staten Island.

The Whig Militia of the counties in New Jersey contiguous to the City of New York and that sea board at the commencement of the War had formed themselves into a body styling themselves "Minute Man" who when not on detailed duty as Guard to Were [where] ever ready to turn out and meet the enemy night or day to this body of men this deponent belonged untill the cessation of hostilities and marauding parties of the enemy found frequent employment for them in repelling their inroads. In the winter General Lord Sterling with a body of regulars and militia proved with Artillery crossed on the ice from Elizabeth Town to Staten Island (this being what is termed the hard winter) for the purpose of attacking the British posts, this deponent in his Company commanded by Capt Thomas Milford of the Militia accompanied this expedition, after some slight skirmishing the enemy abandoned their out posts and retreated to their fortifications at the Narrows which were deemed too strong to be forced, after the burning their barracks at Ryersons ferry the American troops entered brining off their captured Stores.

The troops under General Washington laying at Morristown this winter and in a suffering condition the deponent Voluntarily turned out with his own team and transported forage and provisions raised among the Inhabitants by contribution to their relief without receiving or expecting to remuneration for the same. Late in the fall previous toa this he crossed into other volunteers under Capt Nathaniel Fitz Vandolph of Middlesex to the surprise of the British guard on Staten Island and succeeded in capturing four, the remainder eight made their escape, it being night and they engaged at the moment of surprise in relieving guards.

In June 1780 General Kniphausen landed at Elizabeth Town in the night with a large British force and marched with Silence towards Morristown the American HeadQuarters they were discovered by the deponent and others while yet in the Town and he lost no time in communicating Intelligence of their movements to Col Elias Dayton of one [of] the New Jersey regular regiment who was stationed at no great distance and himself joined the assembling militia under the command of Major William Crane, in firing upon and harassing the enemy on their march, who were likewise vigorously opposed by Col. Dayton's regulars, at Connecticut Farms, they were held in check by the Continental troops aided by the Militia with a piece of artillery in charge of Captain Shakim Little, after setting fire to the Meeting house and more than half of the buildings in the place and with other outrages, shooting Mrs. Caldwell wife of the Revd James Caldwell the Presbyterian Clergyman and a noted Whig, while her child was in her arms and in her own house, they retreated that night to Elizabeth Town after having sustained a very considerable loss, harassed continually by the militia on their retreat in this battle he saw Lieut Moses Ogden of the New Jersey regulars lying dead in the road, shot thro the head; the enemy fortified in Elizabeth Town where they remained a week, during which time the neighbouring militia among whom was this deponent were continually employed in harassing their outposts and watching their movements, at the expedition of that time having been reinforced they once more marched in the night toward Morristown in two divisions one moving on the main direct the other on the Vauxhall had a harassing fire was kept

up on them by the Militia until their arrival at Springfield where they were met and opposed before and after their entrance into the Village by a large regular force detached by General Washington from Morristown for that purpose, they were commanded by General Green to the best of his deponents recollection, this force with the Militia checked their further progress and after burning the Meeting house and nearly every building in the place they commenced a rapid retreat to Elizabeth Town and thence during the night to Staten Island, harassed by the regulars and Militia, their loss was very considerable.

This deponent was actively engaged with the enemy during this action; and retreat, and saw Captain Nathaniel Fitz Randolph of the Militia shortly after he was mortally wounded by the enemy, among other regular officers in these engagements, many of whom at this distant day are forgotten, were Col.; Elias Dayton of the New Jersey Line, Capt. Henry and Lieutenant Edmund Thomas—

During the remainder of the year of 1780 through the course of the year 1781 and especially after the American Army left New Jersey for Yorktown and in fact until the Spring of 1782 this deponent continued to be detailed for duty by his officers standing guard patrolling and pursuing the Tories and Enemy's [enemies] parties, who were making continual inroads as usual in one of which they burned the meeting house, Court house and other buildings in Elizabeth Town at other times carrying off some of the best Whig Inhabitants or plundering and distressing others, so that this portion of New Jersey near their lines was in a continual State of alarms and suffered very severely from their secret predatory excursions, especially those of the Tories who were well acquainted with the Country, keeping the Essex militia of which this deponent was one active and vigilant, after the spring of 1782 a kind of tacit cessation of hostilities took place and continued until peace very much to the relief of the militia and Inhabitants.

This deponent avers that the foregoing statement contains only some of the most prominent facts relative to his services for the United States during the revolutionary War as he was at various times and places too numerous to particularize under some one or other militia officer and much oftener with some of his brother militia men engaged with Scouting parties of the Tories and enemy, repelling their inroads or in seizing and capturing Cattle, provisions &c destined for the enemy by the disaffected, which were confiscated and cutting off as much as possible all communications with the British lines—and that there [their] duties and fatigues when not ordered on others by his officers he was frequent in the performance of both in the day and night time from the first landing of the enemy on Staten Island until the cessation of hostilities.

He likewise avers that the aggregate time employed by him in performing tours of duty of monthly detail, on guard garrison duty &c by command of his regimental officers, and in different expeditions, battles skirmishes &c with the Enemy at various times from the commencement to the close of the revolutionary war would considerably exceed two years of active service rendered by him to the United States, in the cause of Liberty as a soldier.

That he was well acquainted with Col William Washington of the Cavalry and Caleb [Hurt, Huet?], Joseph Gathen and Daniel Smith belonging to this Corps at one period while quartered in New Jersey the year he cannot recollect, He was likewise acquainted with Col. Elias Dayton, Col Mathias Ogden, Col Barber, Captains, Neal, Peatt, Pierson, Jeremiah Ballard, Joseph Bloomfield and Aaron Ogden, both which last have been Governors of New Jersey since then likewise with Lieutenants Edmund Thomas, William Shute, Jonathan Burcastle, Ephraim Whitlock, Shepard Bollock and Capt. Jonathan Dayton since Speaker of the house of Congress:--many of whom belonged to one or other of the New Jersey Continental regiments and with most of whom he has been engaged in some one or other engagements with the Enemy in New Jersey, they holding as high as he can recollect the rank by commission he has affixed to them, many of their given names at this distance of time he cannot remember.

He served under or was well acquainted at that period with General Wyndes, Col Jaques, Majors Daniel Halsey-Hays, John Craig, William Crane, Captain Benjamin Cory, Lieut afterwards Capt Thomas Mulford Capt John Scudder, Capt Thomas Clark, Capt Jacob Crane, Capt Anthony Morse, Capt Brant, Capt Jonas Wade, Capt Joshua Horton, Capt Samuel Meeker of the Cavalry, Capt Eliakim Little of the Artillery, and Capt Matthias Meeker, and Lieut Cornelius William of the Essex County Militia, Col Ellis Cook of Morris, and Capt Nathaniel Fitz Randolph of Middlesex with many others whom he cannot recollect. He was likewise well acquainted at that period with Abraham Clark one of the Regiment [fold] William Livingstons, the Patriotic Governor of New Jersey.

That at this present time he knows of no surviving witness he can bring to substantiate these services except John Cook who saw him at the battle of Springfield in 1780 and whose affidavit of that circumstance is forwarded with this statement.— Most of those who served with him or with whom he was acquainted during that arduous struggle for Independence being dead or if living at the present time are residing in places beyond the knowledge of this deponent.

That he has no discharge from the service, it is not being deemed requisite nor was one ever demanded. That he continued to reside in Elizabeth Town County of Essex and State of New Jersey untill the year 1821 when he removed to Monroe County and since to Lewiston Niagara County State of New York where he has resided ever since and still continues.

That the record of his age from his earliest recollection was entered in his Father's Family Bible or transcript from which a number of years since he carefully entered in his own where it remains among the records of his own family.

That he is well acquainted with Major Benjamin Barton, Leonard Sheppard, Isaac Colt Jun an Zena H Colvin Esquire Inhabitants of Lewiston Niagara County and State of New York who can testify as to his character for veracity and their belief of his srvice as a soldier of the revolution.

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. (Signed) Benj'm Williams

Sworn to and Subscribe this 27th day of August 1832 before me. R. Fleeming,
first Judge Vice Com Pleas.