

Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements

Pension Application of John Hewitt: W2618

Transcribed and annotated by C. Leon Harris

Virginia At a Circuit Superior Court of law and Chancery Continued and held at the Court house for the County of Botetourt on Tuesday the 5th day of September 1833-
“Declaration in order to obtain the benefit of the act of Congress passed 7th of June 1832
Virginia At Botetourt County Circuit Superior Court of law & Chancery held at the Court house September Term 1833 - Personally appeared John Hewitt before the Court who is a resident of the said County aged sixty nine years nine months and 21 days who being first sworn according to law doth make the following declaration, in order to obtain the benefit of the aforesaid Act of Congress that he was born on the 14th of November in the year one thousand and seven hundred and sixty three that his age was recorded in his fathers Bible but he has no record of it now the bible being lost, that he was born in that part of Augusta County which is now Botetourt County in the State of Virginia where he has always heretofore and now lives. That he enlisted as a Volunteer in the Service of the United States on the 8th day of September 1780 for the Term as well as he recollects of six months he was attached to a Company Commanded by Captain James Robinson which was ordered to be ready to march at a minutes warning but they did not receive orders to march till the 27th of October at which time he marched to Millers which was the place of rendezvous and on the 4th of November the said company commander, Capt'n. James Robinson and a company commanded by Capt'n. Alex'dr. Handley commenced their march to the Southern States Commanded by Major David Campbell. they joined Gen'l. [Daniel] Morgan two days after the Battle of the Cowpens [17 Jan 1781], and took the place of the Virginia Militia from Augusta and Rockbridge Counties who were about to be discharged and who acted bravely in the battle & who afterwards guarded the prisoners into Virginia - they were then sent down the Catawba River to act in concert with General Davidson where they were stationed at a place called McGowans ford [sic: Cowan's Ford; see note below] with orders to prevent the enemy from crossing the river by falling timber along the bank. In a few hours after we had made the necessary preparations to defend the ford a detachment of the Enemy appeared on the opposite side of the river just as we were about to fire on them they retired -

The next morning a few hours before day the British commenced a heavy fire of Cannon on General Davidson who defended a ford lower down the river after day light the enemy entered the ford and was opposed by a heavy fire of small arms from the North Carolina Militia under the command of Gen'l Davidson who was killed and the enemy forced the passage of the river in the meantime we were ordered to march and through a great fall of cold rain and a very dark night got into the road on which Gen'l Morgan had retreated on which they marched to Salisbury and from thence to the trading ford of the Yadkin river [about 8 miles northeast of Salisbury] where they overtook General Morgans Army before it had entirely got over the river [on 5 Feb 1781] which was very much swollen by the late rains and before the North Carolina Militia said to be commanded by General Stephens had got over the river at the break of day the next morning they were stationed above one half or three quarters of a mile up the river from the ford on the direct road to Salisbury where they remained under arms till about 10 O'clock the next night when they were attacked by a strong detachment of Infantry supported by Cavalry. there post was defended till overpowered by numbers and charged by the Cavalry they were compelled to retreat, and to avoid being cut down by the Cavalry they had to defend themselves in the best way in their power the Enemy then advanced rapidly but apparent with caution to the river at the ferry the boats were engaged all day & till sometime in the night transporting the troops and baggage over the river this was now accomplished with the exception of a small part of the baggage when the enemies Cavalry reached the ferry a Boat had just put off from the Shoar they fired on it with their pistols but did no injury in this Skirmish Capt'n. Handley and John Allen were taken prisoners and a few men killed and the most of them who escaped had to cross the river in Canoes after the scattered troops had reassembled they commenced their march the next night toward Guildford Court-house [sic: Guilford Court House] and when they arrived their they were permitted to make a short stay the enemy being detained by the flood in

the Yadkin river they then marched to a place called Bruces Cross roads [Summerfield NC] on the day [12 Feb 1781] that Colo. [Henry "Light Horse Harry"] Lee's Trumpeter [sic: 14-year-old bugler James Gillies] was cut to pieces by a party of the British Cavalry [Tarleton's dragoons]. they then retreated before the british army Cornwallace [sic: Cornwallis] till they crossed Dan river and entered Virginia [on 14 Feb]. after they crossed the Yadkin river the army was commanded by Colo. [Otho Holland] Williams and from the time they joined the army which was two days after the battle of the Cowpens they were employed night and day on the lines throwing every difficulty in their power in the way of the advancing enemy. they were without tents and frequently without provisions and by privation of rest in Sleep and every necessary Comfort & excessive fatigue which brought on sickness and death in this inclement season of the year. when they crossed Dan river the two Companies of Riflemen which at first consisted of one hundred and eleven men were reduced to seventeen men and the officers all gone except the Major who gave the remnant of his men a verbal discharge and he the said John Hewitt was one of the 17 men who were so discharged which was on the 23d day of February and that he arrived at home on the last day of the same month. Again he the said John Hewitt as a Volunteer was enrolled in Captain James Smith's Company on the 6th day of August 1781 he marched from Pattonsburg [now Buchanan] in the County aforesaid to little York [sic: Yorktown] where the british army under the command of Lord Cornwallace was besieged he was then put under the command of Maj'r Patrick Lockhart who as well as he recollects was under the command of Colo. Samuel Lewis. And after the British surrendered prisoners of War he as one of the said Smith's Company Guarded them to the Barracks four miles the other side of Winchester in Frederick County Virginia where he was discharged as well as he recollects on the 15th of November of the same year by Captain Smith or Lieutenant [Henry] Cartmill, he now does not recollect which of them- which discharge is now lost or mislaid he well recollects that there were four Companies of the Militia of the County aforesaid assembled for the purpose of procuring Volunteers, at the time he enlisted for the first of the above tours and that Colo. [George] Skillern in an address to the men stated that the Term of Enlistment was for six months- and on the second of the above Tours his enlisted he enlisted [sic] as a Volunteer and served in a company of Drafted men commanded by Capt'n Smith and that where he was discharged was about 180 miles from home & that he arrived at home on the 22nd of the same month Nov. 1781 he has no documentary evidence of the facts above stated but they are proved as to the first tour by Colo. [Richard?] Anderson who served that tour in the same company and as to his service in the second tour by John Tate who also served in that Tour and the general reputation of his being a soldier of the revolution by the Rev'd. Absalom Dempsey He the said John Hewitt 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. Sworn and Subscribed in open Court this 5th day of September 1833 [signed] John Hewitt
NB We were not under the Command of a Militia Colonel in the first tour and the petitioner John Hewitt was three months and twenty six days in the service in the first tour to the South and three months and eighteen days in the service in the 2nd Tour to the Seige of Little York the two tours set forth in the foregoing declaration in all six [sic] months and 14 days
[signed] John Hewitt

NOTE: Gen. William Lee Davidson was killed on 1 Feb 1781 while defending Cowan's Ford on the Catawba River in North Carolina. Hewitt's account suggests that he was stationed upstream from Cowan's Ford at Beattie's Ford, where the British made a show of attempting to cross.