

Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements

Pension Application of Primus Hall (Trask): W751

Transcribed and annotated by C. Leon Harris

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Suffolk Ss

On this thirteenth day of October in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and thirty five personally appeared in open Court before the Then Judge, Peter O. Thacher, Justice of the Municipal Court holden within and for the City of Boston Primas Hall sometimes called Primas Trask a man of colour and a resident in said City now aged seventy nine years and upwards who being first duly sworn accordi[ng: edge of page worn] to law doth on his oath make the following declaration for the purpose of obtaining the benefit of the act of Congress passed the 7th of Ju[ne] AD. 1832.

That he the said Primas was born in the City of Boston on the twenty ninth day of February Anno Domini 1756 in the family of David Walker in Beacon Street in said Boston, and at the a[ge] of one month old was given to Mr Ezra Trask of Beverly in the Cou[nty] of Essex who subsequently removed to the town of Danvers in said County in whose family he continued to live until the commencement of the revolutionary War, and that forepart of the month of January in [the] year one thousand seven hundred and seventy six he the said Pri[mas] enlisted in the town of Cambridge in the county of Middlesex as a soldier in the army of the Revolution for the term of one year in a company commanded by Capt Joseph Butler of Concord in said County, of the fifth Massachusetts Regiment commanded by Colo Thomas Nixon. The Majors name was Scammell. The name of the Lieutenant was Silas Walker, and Ensign Potter, Gad Smit[h?] and Wheeler were Sergeants.

He the said Primas further testifies that [he] served the full period of one year, and at Trenton in New Jersey, at [the] earnest solicitation of General Washington he volunteered for a period of six weeks which he faithfully served, and at Morristo[wn] in New Jersey was honourably discharged by General Washington, after the taking of Princeton in said State [3 Jan 1777]. The foregoing term of time completed thirteen months and a half service. During [his] service as before stated he was at the following stations and in [the] following battles to wit, First at Winter Hill near Boston, the winter of 1776, where were also stationed on said Hill and the vicinity of the same several Regiments to wit, Colonel Hite[el]'s], Colonel [John] Glover's, Colonel [John] Stark's, Graton's and others, and that [he con]tinued at said Station until after the British troops evacuated that City March [7th] 1776. Thence he marched to New York with the Army, and was stationed in the Bowery and was employed for some time in erecting Fortifications near Byards Hill. About [that?] time Colonel Nixon was at the place promoted to a Brigadier General and his brother, John Nixon who was Lieutenant Colonel assumed [the] command of the said fifth Regiment [see note below]. After this period he was [?]tined on Governor's Island in the harbour of New York, but was [ob]liged to evacuate the same, when the British took possession of [the] Island. He distinctly remembers that Major Walcott was Bearer of a flagg of truce demanding the surrender of the place [w]hich demand was disregarded and a cannonade commenced - that two of the Vessels of the enemy came beating up the narrows and that by General Washington's orders they were taken off the Island and in passing over to New York the Cockswain was killed by a chain shott fired from the Asia Man of War belonging to the enemy. Said Primas was after this stationed at the grand Battery in New York, but soon joined the Maine Army at Rattle-[sn]ake hills, and there had an action. After the engagement retreated [to] Harlem Heights and there had a skirmish [16 Sep 1776] - thence to Miles [Sq]uare and had another skirmish - thence to White Plains, and there had a Battle [28 Oct 1776] - thence crossed the Hudson River at Kings Ferry, and marched into New Jersey, and was under General [Charles] Lee at the time that General was surprised at Basking Ridge and taken prisoner [13 Dec 1776]. Then General [John] Sullivan took command, and marched the troops to Pennsylvania, to a place called Bristol and after remaining at Bristol a few days recrossed the Delaware, and attacked the Hessians at Trenton & Burlington and took them prisoners [26 Dec 1776], the Regiment to which said Primas belonged being station at the former place when his term of service of one year

expired, but [a]t the earnest request of General Washington he volunteered for the further term of six weeks, and during said service he was at the taking of Princetown [Battle of Princeton, 3 Jan 1777], and soon thereafter marched to Morristown in New Jersey and there received an honorable discharge from the Army signed by General Washington and returned home to Danvers in the Spring of 1777.

He further testifies that he again enlisted in the fall of the 1777 in the town of Danvers for three months, into a Militia Company commanded by Capt. Samuel Flint of said town and Lieutenant Herrick of Beverly and Colonel Johnson of Andover, and marched to Saratoga to join the Army under General [Horatio] Gates, who w[as t]hen acting against General Burgoyne; that he was in the second engagement between the two armies when the Hessian Brigade was together with eight pieces of British Artillery - that he distinct[ly] recollects the death of Captain Flint who together with L[ieutenant] Herrick were both killed in said Battle. that he was standing near his Captain when he received his mortal wound, and caught him in his arms to prevent his falling, but on observing that [he] bled profusely set him down against a tree when he expired immediately. This battle was fought in October [17th] 1777. After the surrender of Burgoyne he with the Regiment marched to Albany crossed the river at that place to Greenbush, continued down the Hudson River on the east side till they arrived at a place called East Chester on the shore of Long Island Sound, when his term of thr[ee] months service expired, and he was a second time discharged, again returned to the town of Darien.

He further testifies that in the year seventeen hundred and seventy eight [sic] he enlisted at Danvers for a further period of three months under Capt Woodbu[ry] of Cape Ann, and a Colonel whose name he has forgotten, but wh[o was] from Topsfield, and thence marched with the company to Rhode Island, and was stationed on the North part of said Island oppo[site] Tiverton, and was employed in building a Fort and keeping [edge of page worn] until his term had again expired and he was a third time disc[harged] from service. The French Fleet and Army under Count Rocham[beau] were at Rhode Island [landed 11 July 1780], the French troops being stationed on land above New Port on said Island at the time of his last tour above stated. that himself with another coloured man by the name of Manual were detached from Captain Woodbury's company and p[er]formed service with the French Corps of Sappers & Miners, and that the time he performed military duty in the three foregoing tours was nineteen months and a half.

He further testifies that in the years 1781 and 1782 he served twenty two months as Steward to and under Colonel Timothy Pickering of the United States Quarter Master department, and was with that Officer at Verplan[ck] Point [Westchesterr County NY], Philadelphia, Baltimore & other places, and was at Yorktown at the time that place surrendered to the American Army, un[der] General Washington & the French forces [19 Oct 1781], and went into [the] British Garrison in said town with Colonel Pickering and there assis[ted] him in taking an account of the enemy's specie deposited in the milita[ry] chests in said Fort. that after the troops marched to the norther[?] and were stationed at or near a place called Rattle snake hill near Newburg in the State of New York he received a final discharge from the Army and in the month of December 1772 [sic] he returned home to Danvers Massachusetts. He further testifies that while serving as Steward in the army aforesaid during the Revolutionary War at a place called Dumfries in the state of Virginia his pocket book was stolen from him containing his several discharges from [the] Army and he has not to this day heard any thing of them, and [th]at he has also lost his last discharge.

Said Primas further testifies that the reason why he has not claimed the benefit of the act of Congress of the 18th of March 1818 is in consequence of the amount of his property.

And 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] Primes Hall

NOTES:

Thomas and John Nixon appear to be confused here. It was John Nixon who was promoted from Colonel to Brigadier General in New York in Aug 1776.

On 21 June 1853 Ann Hall, 62, applied for a pension stating that she married Primus Hall

in Boston on 29 October 1817, and he died 22 March 1842. On 31 March 1855 she applied for bounty land, giving her age as 64. The file includes a copy of the marriage record of Primus Hall and Anna Clark.