Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements & Rosters

Pension Application of Isaac Depew R2892 VA
Transcribed and annotated by C. Leon Harris.

Sullivan County }

On this 20th day of March 1852 personally appeared before me M. W. Fulkerson an acting Justice of the peace in and for said County, and I certify that the said Isaac Depew is aged ninety four years and who from age & debility is unable to attend the Court of the County in order to make his application in open court & called me to his own house to make the application for pension. He states on oath that he served through the greater part of the Revolution and in the tours and at the times & places as herein after set forth towit First, being a resident citizen of Bottatourt [sic: Botetourt] County Virginia He enrolled in captain Gilmores company, Col Christy's [William Christian's] command, in the year one thousand seven hundred & seventy six which enrollment was for about four months that he with Col christies men, under captain Gilmore was marched through the now western portion of Virginia into the then Indian Country now East Tennessee to what was called the Long Island on Holston [present Kingsport TN], & had engagements there with the Cherokee indians & served out the term of his enrollment & was discharged by his said Captain Gilmore He again enrolled himself (upon the Shawney Indians makeing incursions and aiding the British) in the County of Bottatout State of virginia under Captain Paxton, thinks in the year 1777 for three months tour & served said campaign on the indian or unsettled part of now Virginia known as the Greenbrier Country & was discharged by his said Captain Paxton at the expiration of his term of service

He again enrolled under Captain John Mills at the time the British were attempting to gain possession of the lead mines [near Fort Chiswell] in western Virginia to perform a tour of duty and guard said mines said enrollment he thinks was for a three months tour under Col William Preston of Virginia & marched to & continued in the vicinity of the lead mines, (now Wythe) until his term of service expired & was discharged by his said Captain Mills.

He again enrolled in Captain Mills company of Virginia militia in the County of Bottatourt to repel the British Army then marching through the South was commanded by Col. Campbill [sic: William Campbell] marched into North Carolina & was attached to General Greens [sic: Nathanael Greene's] command said service was at the time the British army was directing their movements toward Virginia thinks in the year 1780 or 1781 [Feb and March 1781] & was under the command of Genl Green until the expiration of his service which he thinks was six months & was discharged by his Captain Mills. He was again enrolled under Gl John Lewis Col Landon Carter was his captain he [illegible word] to perform a tour of duty to repel the cherokee Indians then in league with the British & served three months in that expedition into Cherokee country & remained until the expiration of his three months

He states that his service was continuous up to the year 1793 from the close of the last named tour being performed before the year 1783 which closed the Revolution and the service since not being provided for he only states that he served as a private & up to Captain, until 1793.

He hereby relinquishes every claim whatsoever to a pension or an annuity except the present and that his name is not on the roll of any agency in any state. He declares that from the passage of the act of June 7th 1832 he uniformly determined not to accept of the charity of his Government, indeed had regarded those who would apply as being destitute of patriotism seeing that they were fighting for their own [illegible word] & in preservation of their own liberties but life to him has been so long protracted that it has so far become a burden that necessity induces him to do what he would not when able to labour have done, &c

Interrogatories propounded by me the acting magistrate to Isaac Depew.

1st – Where and in what year were you born.

Answer. In the state of New Jersey Middlesex county in the year 1758 September 16th day

2 – Have you any record of your age & if so where is it?

Answer. None but the record in my Fathers Bible, which Bible I presume was taken from the county by some of his children

Where were you liveing when called into service where have you lived since the Revolutionary war & where do you now live?

Answer – I was living in the state of Va. Bottetourt County – & have lived ever since the year 1784 in the State of Tennessee

- 4th How were you called into service were you drafted did you volunteer or were you a substitute & if a substitute for whom. I never served in any other capacity but as a Volunteer
- 5th State the names of some of the regular officers who were with the troops where you served, such continental or militia Regiments as you recollect & the general circumstances of our services

Answer to 5th question, Gen'l Dan'l Morgan [Daniel Morgan] and Gen'l Nathaniel Green & Col Wm Campbell (who was a General after that time) I was in the Regiment of Col Wm Campbell at the Battle of Guilford [Guilford Courthouse, 15 Mar 1781] at Martinsville State of North Carolina

- 6th did you ever receive a discharge from the service by whom was it given & what has become of it? Answer to 6th question, I did receive a discharge from Gen'l. Green's armey by the hands of my Captain John Mills, which is lost or mislaid.
- 7th State the names of some of the persons known to you & by whom you can prove your character & reputation of service.

Answer to the 7th. I do not know any of my fellow soldiers who are now living, but I can refer you to many now living who can testify as to my veracity for truth & reputation of service Viz Doct John E. Cossen of Jonesboro Tenn Major Samuel Hunt.

[John E. Cossan stated that he had known Isaac Depew for more than 50 years and that he was "a man of high intellectual powers of sound patriotism & unexceptionable moral character." He further stated that "whilst all consided Isaac Depew was a Revolutionary Soldier, still his singular oposition to those who applied, & drew pensions was a subject of common conversation, & the said Depew branded all who were able to work & support themselves as being destitute of patriotism refuseing himself to become chargeable to the Government whilst able to support himself..."]

State of Tennessee } April 5th 1852 Washington County }

Then came into open Court Samuel Hunt Aged eighty one years past and made oath, that he has known Isaac Depew for more than fifty years. I served a campaign under said Depew as a captain in 1795 against the Cherokee Indians have acted as sheriff for thirteen years of my life in the County of Washington, & can state that Captain Depew is a man of unimpeachable character, & has been reputed from the information I had & was able to collect a soldier of the Revolution & I would from my knowledge of him [illegible word] his statement.

Washington County } March the 13th day 1852 State of Tennessee }

Hon J E Heath [James E. Heath, Commissioner of Pensions]

Dear. I take my pen in hand to inform you of the great parade which has lately taken place concerning Isaac Depew, a revolutionary aged ninety odd years one of the most Honest men in the country in which he lives, the old man told me some few months ago that the government had give him all

that was promised a man by the name of Thomas Guinn took a magistrate some few days ago to the house of said Depew in order to make dictation in order to draw a pension & some other person from other parts of the country met there at the same time to make said pension; the old man utterly refused to go in the arrangement, & I understood he said it would be a curse to him if he applied for said pension Mr. John Blair drew up the papers for Mr Guinn, Shortly after the parties arrayed around the old man again and to a magistrate by the name of William Mills & I understand got up a declaration & when that was offered to the clerk to have the seal attached there to & traveled a distance of about fifteen miles the other party met them there To Wit Richard Humphry & some Others A When Mr Guinn returned the papers to Mr Blair in Jonesborough twenty miles from Blountville where the seal was attached to said papers he was met there by S K N Patten & others & a great fuss took place between the parties Patten swore he would draw said pension some of the heirs of Depew was with M Patten now sir with suspision that claim ought to be looked at the question is did Mr Depew want the pension or not, did he sign the declartion or not or did he swear before Mr Mills or not, if the pension is obtained I have no thought Mr. Depew wants it I take the liberty of writing these lines to your Honour, tho wrote in a hurrey the facts contained therein are true. Robert G Hale

[Listed as "Pension Agent" in the 1850 federal census.]

Hon J E Heath Jonesborough April 6 1852

Enclosed you will receive the application of Isaac Depew for pension under the act 7th June 1832. He stands solitary & alone of that patriotic band in this section, being 94 years of age, he never could consent to become chargeable to his Government until the grasp of old age had deprived him of the ability to support by manual labour. please have it examined & report to me

Robert & Hale

John Blair

respectfully/ your obt servt/ John Blair

Pension Office,/ July 27, 1852.

Sir [John Blair, Esq.]/ I have examined and filed the application of Isaac Depew for the benefit of the Act of June 7, 1832. The reason assigned for his failure to apply for a pension until this late day is not satisfactory, and it is very doubtful whether any of the service alleged is embraced by the pension laws. Before his claim can be admitted the service claimed must be sustained by the testimony of comrades, or other evidence equally satisfactory.

Jonesborough September 20th 1832

Sir:/ The pressure of other business has prevented my writing you sooner in reference to the claim of Isaac Depew, an applicant for the benefits of the act of 1832. in your communication of the 27th July you say "the reason assigned for his failure to apply for a pension until this date is not satisfactory." I am at a loss to know what is required to be satisfactory what would be required Depew is one of the most respectable men in his county. Shewed, that from principle he was opposed to the act of 1832 so far as it allowed pensions to persons able to support themselves. this was a subject of general notoriety. He was possessed of property as well as health & ability to subsist without the aid of the Government, & conscienciously refused the boon, he has lived to old age when declining health loss of property & inability to subsist by labour removes his well grounded objection in earlier life & he is left of the few survivors not one living in his County. The act of 1832 was liberal in its provisions & hundreds who did not need the aid obtained it without either record evidence of service or proof of associates, but according to your printed regulations, which I need not repeat, this was general so far as regarded the militia except Va & New hampshire Depew was a Virginia militia man, served in several calls, & his

service, if he served at all, must be embraced by the pension laws. I wish to know, if he is not found on the rolls of Va militia in your office as it seems they are all for the [illegible word] from the regulations under the act of 1832 so saying. If his name is not there found why it is in vain to further prosecute the claim – if there found certainly the pension laws do embrace his case. as to the calling in comrades at this day, it is like calling spirits from the deep, – they would not answer. I presume from the regulations that the rolls of the Virginia militia are in your office & if so if his name on search cannot be found then the matter must end – for comrades are gone as well as the almost universal band who served in that patriotic struggle, & if held to proof now the proof is gone. be pleased to inform me if you have the rolls of the militia in your office & if so whether his name is not there: as to his reason for not earlier applying it is a matter of such notoriety that all his neighbours know his reasons the hundreds of pensioners who came under the act of 1832 when congregated semiannually had the subject of Captain Depews objections to the healthy property holding soldiers drawing a pension

Respectfully/ John Blair

Pension Office/ Feby 14 1853

Sir [John Blair Esq]/ There is no evidence in this office of the service of Isaac Depew of Tenn. His service must be established by the testimony of those who served with him or were in a position to know of his service. I refer you to my letter of July 27 1852

NOTE:

Heath's reasons for denying Depew's claim are disingenuous. Contrary to his assertion, Depew's service was covered by the Pension Act of 1832, and dozens of applicants were pensioned for service in the same campaigns that Depew claimed.

In addition, the regulations of the pension office did not absolutely require that a militiaman submit a comrade's testimony or that his name be on a roster, except in the case of New Hampshire, where such rosters existed. (Rosters also existed for Virginia State troops, which is apparently the source of John Blair's belief that rosters for Virginia militiamen were in the Pension Office.) The Pension Office's own regulations state that for militiamen (except from New Hampshire) their declarations of service and statements certified by the court of two persons (one a clergyman if possible) attesting to the age of the applicant and his reputation as a Revolutionary soldier could serve as proof of service.

Finally, the regulations for administering the Act of 1832 do not require any explanation for a delay in applying.

It is likely that Depew's claim was actually rejected because of the letter by Robert G. Hale. For other cases in which claims were rejected based on unsworn allegations, with different reasons given for the rejection, see my endnote to the pension application of John Gibson R3996.