

Southern Campaign American Revolution Pension Statements & Rosters

Pension application of James Briggs S15344

fn31SC[Mass/R.I.]

Transcribed by Will Graves

8/5/10

[Methodology: Spelling, punctuation and/or grammar have been corrected in some instances for ease of reading and to facilitate searches of the database. Also, the handwriting of the original scribes often lends itself to varying interpretations. Users of this database are urged to view the original and to make their own decision as to how to decipher what the original scribe actually wrote. Blanks appearing in the transcripts reflect blanks in the original. Folks are free to make non-commercial use this transcript in any manner they may see fit, but please extend the courtesy of acknowledging the transcriber—besides, if it turns out the transcript contains mistakes, the resulting embarrassment will fall on the transcriber. I use speech recognition software to make all my transcriptions. Such software misinterprets my southern accent with unfortunate regularity and my poor proofreading fails to catch all misinterpretations. I welcome and encourage folks to call those and any other errors to my attention.]

State of Massachusetts County of Bristol: SS

On this 16th day of August A.D. 1832 personally appeared in open Court, before the Honorable Hodijah Baylies¹ Judge of Probate &c for said County now sitting at Dighton in & for said County of Bristol by Adjournment, James Briggs, a resident of Dighton in the County of Bristol and State of Massachusetts, aged seventy-three 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 entered the service of the United States under the following named officers, and served as herein stated, as a substitute for Gideon Briggs a private Soldier in a company of infantry commanded by Captain Samuel Tubbs of Berkley, and said County, the Company was attached to a Regiment of infantry commanded by Colonel __Walker of Rehoboth, in said County. This enlistment was called the Eight months service -- your applicant served about this term of time. He entered the service in April 1775, and was discharged in December following, whilst in the performance of this service, he was stationed in the Towns of Dorchester and Roxbury, near Boston -- was in no Engagement. In proof of this service you have the testimony of Mr. George Pitts² who was a soldier in the same service, though not in the same company marked Number one. Your applicant enlisted as a private Soldier in a company of infantry, commanded by the aforesaid Captain Samuel Tubbs of Berkley County. This Enlistment was called the two months Service -- your applicant served about this term of time. He enlisted in February 1776, and was discharged the last of March or the forepart of April following, whilst in the performance of this service, your applicant was stationed at Winter Hill and at Dorchester Hill, near Boston, on the latter of which he assisted in the building of a fort -- was in no engagement -- was on Dorchester Hill, at the time, and also after the British Forces left Boston. In proof of this service you have the testimony of Mr. Thomas Rose³ who was in the same service and in the same company Marked Number Two. The two aforesaid enlistments, were service done in the service of the State of Massachusetts. Your applicant after being discharged from the latter service, returned to his home at Freetown. Shortly after his return home he went to Newport in the State of Rhode

¹ FPA BLWt96-400-Major. [This veteran's file does not contain the affidavit of Judge Baylies.]

² FPA W26897

³ FPA S30069

Island, where he enlisted as a private Soldier in a company of infantry commanded by Captain Abimalick[?] Riggs of said Newport -- the company was attached to a Regiment of infantry commanded by Colonel William Richmond of Little Compton in the State aforesaid; of which Regiment, William Martin of Providence in the State aforesaid, was Lieutenant Colonel. Your applicant was stationed at Newport aforesaid from whence, in October, he went on an expedition to Saugatuck on Long Island for the purpose of capturing some refugee Tories; they were captured with their commander, whose name was Smith, together with two sloops laden with wood and carried to New Haven Connecticut. From New Haven, we attempted to return to Newport, but we experiment such boisterous [?] weather that our boat floundered and a part of our company came near being drowned. After loosing our boat we returned to Newport by land, where we arrived in November. During this expedition, you're applicant, as well as others, suffered greatly from cold and fatigue. This enlistment was called the one years service in the State of Rhode Island, your applicant did not serve the term of one year, but about the time of between seven and eight months. He enlisted in April 1776 -- was discharged about the last of November. In proof of this Service you have the testimony of Jeremiah Hachaway [sic, Jeremiah Hathaway⁴] who was in the same service and in the same company Mark Number Three.

Your applicant again enlisted in a company of artillery commanded by Captain Joshua Sawyer of Newport aforesaid. The company was attached to a Regiment of artillery commanded by Colonel Robert Eliot of said Newport. Your applicant was stationed at Fogland Ferry, Patunet [?] and at Providence in the State of Rhode Island. He was in no Engagement. This enlistment was called the fifteen months service in the State of Rhode Island. Your applicant served about eleven months of the fifteen. He enlisted in April 1777 -- was discharged in March following 1778. In proof of this service you have the testimony of Jeremiah Hathaway who was in the same service and in the same company Marked Number four.

After the faithful performance of the aforesaid services, your applicant shipped at Boston on board a Schooner, her name, he does not recollect of which James Burton was master, and sailed for Charleston, South Carolina; whilst at Charleston, he shipped on board a letter of Marque Sloop called the *Fanny*, carrying eight guns, Allen and Patten commanders and sailed for St. Eustatis [sic, St. Eustatius], was captured on the voyage and carried into St. Christophers, where he was imprisoned from which imprisonment he escaped, got to St. Eustatius, from thence he came to Baltimore in the United States. In the winter of 1779, your applicant was at Charleston, South Carolina; he understood that a vessel was about to be taken up by the authority of the State of South Carolina for the purpose of carrying a cargo of produce to Boston, it being understood that in consequence of the [indecipherable word, could be "prevalence"] of a scarcity of provisions, the poor was suffering much from want, and that in a measure to reduce their distress, a vessel laden with produce, was [indecipherable word] to be sent to them by the State of South Carolina. Your applicant shipped on board a vessel thus employed, at the rate of \$16 per month -- the ship's name, was the *Eustis*, he believes; and was mounted with ten guns, the commander's name he does not recollect. The vessel taken up was formally a prized Ship, she underwent a thorough repair, in which your applicant assisted, and was put in competent order for the reception of the cargo, which was accordingly laden on board and consisted wholly or mostly of rice. We sailed from Charleston on our intended voyage to Boston, and proceeded as far as five fathom Hole, so called, but could not proceed to sea on account of the blockade, occasioned by the enemy's cruisers -- we returned back to Charleston -- again we sailed as far as five fathom Hole. Shortly after this last movement with the Ship, Charleston was besieged by the

⁴ S29864

enemy: our vessel was ordered back and stationed in Ashley River, for the purpose of cooperating in defense of the City, during this siege. In this interval, your applicant does not recollect that there was any considerable engagement, the Ship in which he was stationed, fired a few broadsides about the time the enemy began, or a short time at least before they began to retreat and leave the environs of the City.⁵ After the siege had terminated by the retreat of the enemy they contemplated voyage to Boston was given up, as your applicant understood -- he was at any rate, discharged, and paid off in good hard money, at the rate of \$16 per month. He served on board the *Eustis* about three months. Of this service your applicant can furnish no evidence, as he does not know of anyone living who knew or knows anything of the intended voyage. For the truth of the relation, the Government has only his firm and positive assertion on oath that it is true. He has been thus particular in the relation of circumstances, that perhaps, someone in the employ of the government, at the present time, may recollect or know something of the circumstances of the intended voyage he has related. Your applicant after his discharge from the *Eustis*, sailed two or three voyages or cruises in vessels called letters of Marque, from Charleston to St. Eustatius and back to Charleston again, during one of those voyages or cruises, the vessel in which he served captured a large pilot boat, having on board between two and three hundred stands up arms and a proportionable quantity of ammunition and carried her safely into Charleston. The boat was said to have been fitted out by order of the British General with the said arms &c on board for the purpose of guarding the Negro Slaves against their masters and the general cause of the Country. In the winter of 1780, your applicant was at Charleston, South Carolina, when it was again besieged by the British force. At this time he had accumulated by his industry about \$200, which was a considerable sum for him, at his time of life; and which was in merchandise, when the siege commenced, he was pressed into the service, as he understood by orders of General Lincoln, from on board a Letter of Marque Schooner, the name he does not recollect, of which Gabriel O'Brien was master: on board said Schooner your applicant was drawing \$16 per month: he was placed in white point Fort, so called, at one of the guns in the lower tier, where he served during the siege -- was included among those prisoners in the capitulation, who were sent to Philadelphia for exchange. After the capitulation took place, your applicant, as well as others, were not permitted to have any intercourse with anyone there; he consequently could not, and was not able to ascertain what had become of his property. He lost it all the fruits of two years labor. Your applicant for his services at Charleston never received one farthing or cent, except when exchanged at Philadelphia, a Passport, authorizing him to receive from any American commissary whom he might meet with or find on his way home to Freetown, Massachusetts, rations sufficient to last them four days -- he never saw or heard of any commissary until he arrived at Providence, in the State of Rhode Island, where he found one, to whom he thus [gave] his certificate or passport and obtained rations for four days. From Philadelphia to Providence your applicant traveled on foot and obtained his subsistence with some hard money which he had & which he had kept carefully concealed about his person during the siege and after the capitulation. In proof of the service at Charleston ~~He has obtained a certificate from the Honorable Hodijah Baylies who was an aid to General Lincoln during the siege and had the time of the capitulation. Mr. Baylies has no knowledge of your applicant, neither have your applicant any knowledge of him. He has furnished your applicant with a certificate of his belief that he was there at the siege and capitulation, from the relation he has~~

⁵ The veteran appears to be referring to the second attach on Charleston made by forces under the command of Augustine Prevost in 1779. Charleston had earlier been attacked in the summer of 1776 and finally fell on May 12, 1780 when attacked a third time by forces commanded by Sir Henry Clinton.

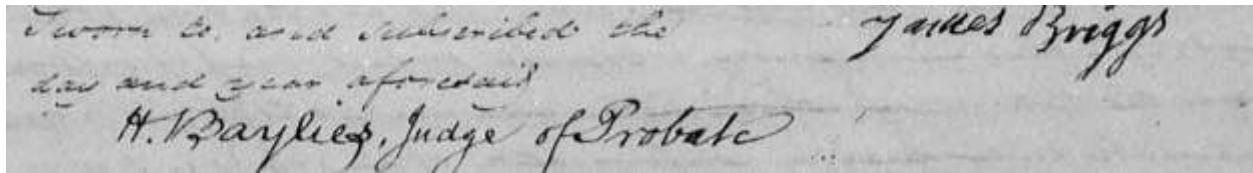
~~given him of events which took place, which he could not have done, had he not been there. At Charleston, your applicant, he thinks, served about three months.~~ Your applicant shortly after his return home to Freetown, from the siege and capitulation of Charleston, sailed on a voyage to Cape Francis from Somerset, Massachusetts, -- was taken a prisoner and put on board the prison ship *Jersey* at New York, where he suffered a most cruel imprisonment of five months -- after which time he was paroled. He deems it unnecessary to State anything further in relation to his participation in the events of the war of the Revolution, but would beg leave respectfully to observe that during the said war, he was almost the whole time of its continuance, in the public or private armies service of the Country, ~~and that the certificate of Judge Baylies is marked Number five;~~ and also the testimony of Simeon Chace Esquire in addition to that of Jeremiah Hathaway, as a further proof of his services in the artillery company commanded by Captain Joshua Sawyer, is Marked Number Six. Your applicant having thus stated his services he deems it now proper, to State his impression in relation to his monthly pay, whilst in the public service, while in the infantry company, he thinks it was forty shillings, or \$6.66 and two thirds of a cent per month; and in the artillery forty-five shillings, or \$7.50 per month. He has no writing or papers of any kind that enables him with precision & certainty to state the exact amount of his monthly pay, what he has stated, he states from memory entire -- the time of his enlistment or his entry into the service, and also the time of his discharge -- that his memory is tolerable corrected, may be informed from the testimony, which he has been enabled to obtain from respectable individuals, in confirmation of his services. One great and perhaps it is the only reason why your applicant does not particularly recollect the precise amount of his monthly pay was because the pay was so very poor in comparison with that of the services performed. That he paid little attention to what his wages were per month. In noticing the poverty of his pay, he would respectfully observe, that on being discharged from the service, in the company of Captain Sawyer, he received his pay in paper money -- \$60 of which, he was compelled to give for one pair of shoes. The remainder of his pay never turned to him any amount whatever. However well disposed your applicant might have been again to have enlisted in the service of the Country, he could not, without he could set at defiance [?] the wants and calls of nature—which is impossible in any one—he contented to Starve and go naked; as his pay would obtain for him neither food to eat or clothes to wear, while in the infantry

company, he would also respectfully say, that he found the Gun and accoutrements which he used in the service and also the clothes which he wore, except a light coat of small value which was given him by the Town of Freetown. He is now grateful for the allowance that the Government in its wisdom has thought proper to make to him, and to that of others, who for a certain term of time faithfully performed services in the [indecipherable word, looks like "conversion"] cause of the Country, and that great and eventful Struggle for liberty and independence. 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. He draws a pension from no source whatever either public or private.

Sworn to and subscribed the day and year aforesaid

S/ James Briggs

S/ H. Baylies, Judge of Probate



*I was to, and subscribed the
law and gave affidavit*
H. Baylies, Judge of Probate

James Briggs

[Abraham Gushee, a clergyman, and William Read gave the standard supporting affidavit.]

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1st Question Where and in what year were you born?

Answer I was born in Freetown in the County of Bristol and Commonwealth of Massachusetts on the 11th day of June 1759, as I have been told by my parents.

2nd Question Have you any record of your age and if so where is it?

Answered I know of no official Records of my age

3rd Question Where were you living when called into service: where have you lived since the Revolutionary War and where do you now live?

Answer During the Revolutionary war, when at home, and at the time of its termination, and a short time after its close, I resided and lived in said Freetown, afterwards removed to Dighton, where I have ever since resided, and do now reside.

4th Question How were you called into service; were you drafted; did you volunteer or were you a substitute, and if in substitute, for whom?

Answer I First entered the service as a substitute for Gideon Briggs, a private soldier, and served about eight months -- it was called the Eight months service. I next enlisted and served two months -- it was called the two months service. These two several services were performed in the service of the State of Massachusetts. I next enlisted and served about seven months -- it was called the one years service. I again enlisted and served about eleven months -- it was called the fifteen months service, oath of these two latter services were performed in the service of the State of Rhode Island. I next enlisted on board a ship, I think her name was the *Eustis*, and served about three months, in the Service of the State of South Carolina, and the next service I performed was by impressment by order of General Lincoln, at the siege and capitulation of Charleston, South Carolina. In the aforesaid services are specified and set forth in my declaration now before your Honor. It may not perhaps, be improper that I recapitulate the number of months I served the country, that is In the service of the State of Massachusetts 10 months; -- in the Service of the State of Rhode Island 18 months; -- in the Service of the State of South Carolina 3 months; and by impressment 3 months -- making the total number 34 months.

5th State the names of some of the regular officers who were with the troops when you served, such Continental and militia regiments as you can recollect and the general circumstances of your service.

Answer I have no distinct recollection of the names of any of the general officers in command of the troops, except that General Thomas was in command at Roxbury, and General Putman at Winter Hill: other than those which I have stated in my declaration. Troops were stationed near and around our Regiment, I do not now particularly recollect whether they were regulars or Militia, or who those officers were, who commanded them. I thought that my Enlistment was that of the Regular or Continental troops, so called, and I never knew anything to the contrary until I have been so informed -- that there was a difference between a State enlistment and that which was called Continental. The general transactions which took place during my service, and which [indecipherable word] to my knowledge, I have stated in my

declaration, as near as I can recollect.

6th Question Did you ever receive a discharge from the service, and if so, by whom was it given and what has become of it?

Answer I received regular discharges from the service every time after my term of enlistment had expired from the commanding officer authorized to give the same, and I received a Passport at the time I was exchanged at Philadelphia. I have now, none of these papers. I have mislaid or lost them, or perhaps they had been destroyed.

7th Question State the names of persons to whom you are known in your present neighborhood and who can testify as to your character for veracity and their belief in your services as a soldier in the revolution.

Answer I should presume that the respectable testimonies which I have produced in proof of my services in the war of the Revolution, and which is now before your Honor is and would be sufficient to impress upon the mind of anyone, that those services which I have stated in my declaration, were true and well and faithfully performed. Of those who have given testimony of my services; three of them reside in the said Town of Dighton, and two of them in my immediate neighborhood.

[Veteran was pensioned at the rate of \$89.32 per annum commencing March forth, 1831, for 10 months service as a private in the artillery, 14 months service as a private in the Infantry & service in the South Carolina Sea Service]